MA'ARIFUL QUR'AN

A Comprehensive commentary on the Holy Quran

Volume

By

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MA'ARIFUL-QUR'AN

By

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Volume 1

(Surah Al-Fatihah, Al-Baqarah)

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بسم الله الرحمن الرحیم

الحمد لله وكفى، وسلام على عباده الذين اصطفى

FOREWORD

by

Justice Maulanā Muḥammad Taqi Usmāni

Ma'āriful-Qur'ān is the name of a detailed Urdu commentary of the Holy Qur'ān written by my father Maulanā Mufti Muḥammad Shafi' (رحمة الله عليه). He was one of the eminent scholars who served as a professor and as a grand Mufti of Darul-Uloom Deoband, the well-known university of the Islamic Sciences in the sub-continent of India. In 1943, he resigned from Darul-Uloom, due to his active involvement in the Pakistan movement, and when Pakistan came into existence, he migrated to Karachi where he devoted his life for this new homeland of the Muslims and served the country in different capacities. He also established Darul-Uloom Karachi, an outstanding institute of Islamic Sciences on the pattern of Darul-Uloom Deoband, which is regarded today as the biggest private institute of higher Islamic education in Pakistan.

He was a prolific writer who left behind him about one hundred books on different Islamic and literary subjects. Ma'āriful-Qur'ān was the last great work he accomplished four years before his demise.

The origin of Ma'āriful-Qur'ān refers back to the third of Shawwal 1373 A.H. (corresponding to the 2nd of July 1954) when the author was invited to give weekly lectures on the Radio Pakistan to explain selected verses of the Holy Qur'ān to the general audience. This invitation was accepted by the author on the condition that he would not accept any remuneration for this service and that his lectures would be broadcast without any interference by the editing authorities. The permanent title of this weekly programme was

"Ma'āriful-Qur'ān" (The Wisdom of the Holy Qur'ān) and it was broadcast every Friday morning on the network of Radio Pakistan.

This series of lectures continued for ten years upto the month of June 1964 whereby the new authorities stopped the programme for reasons best known to them. This series of lectures contained a detailed commentary on selected verses from the beginning of the Holy Qur'ān upto the Sūrah Ibrāhīm (Sūrah no. 14).

This weekly programme of Radio Pakistan was warmly welcomed by the Muslims throughout the globe and used to be listened to by thousands of Muslims, not only in Pakistan and India but also in Western and African countries.

After the programme was discontinued, there was a flood of requests from all over the world to transfer this series in a book-form and to complete the remaining part of the Holy Qur'an in the shape of a regular commentary.

These requests persuaded the esteemed author to revise these lectures and to add those verses which were not included in the original lectures. He started this project in 1383 A.H. (1964) and completed the commentary of Surah al-Fatihah in its revised form and started the revision of Surah al-Baqarah. However, due to his numerous involvements he had to discontinue this task, and it remained unattended during the next five years.

In Shawwal 1388 (1969) the esteemed author suffered from a number of diseases which made him restricted to his bed. It was during this ailment that he restarted this work while on bed and completed Sūrah al-Baqarah in the same condition. Since then he devoted himself to the "Ma'āriful-Qur'ān". Despite a large number of obstacles in his way, not only from the political atmosphere of the country and the difficult responsibilities he had on his shoulders in different capacities, but also from his health and physical condition, he never surrendered to any of them and continued his work with a miraculous speed until he accomplished the work in eight volumes (comprising of about seven thousand pages) within five years only.

After appearing in a regular book-form, Ma'āriful-Qur'ān was highly appreciated and widely admired by the Urdu-knowing Muslims throughout the world. Thousands of copies of the book are still circulated every year, and the demand for the book is so increasing

that it has always been a problem for its publisher to satisfy the demand to its optimum.

A Few Words about the present English Translation of Ma'āriful-Qur'ān

Let me say a few words about the present English translation of the Ma'āriful-Qur'ān.

Although a large number of English translations of the Holy Qur'ān is available in the market, yet no comprehensive commentary of the Holy Qur'ān has still appeared in the English language. Some brief footnotes found with some English translations cannot fulfil the need of a detailed commentary. Besides, they are generally written by the people who did not specialize themselves in the Qur'ānic sciences, and their explanatory notes do not often reflect the authentic interpretation of the Holy Qur'ān. Some such notes are based on an arbitrary interpretation having no foundation in the recognized principles of the exegesis of the Holy Qur'ān, and are thus misleading for a common reader.

On the other hand, during the last few decades, the Muslim population has increased among the English speaking countries in enormous numbers. These people and their new generations need a detailed commentary of the Holy Qur'ān which may explain to them the correct message of the last divine book with all the relevant material in an authentic manner which conforms to the recognized principles of *tafsīr* (the exegesis of the Holy Qur'ān).

Since Ma'āriful-Qur'ān was the latest book written on these lines and was proved to be beneficial for a layman as well as for a scholar, it was advised by different circles that its English translation may fulfill the need.

It made me look for a person who might undertake the task, not only with his professional competence, but also with his commitment to serve the Holy Qur'ān.

Fortunately, I succeeded in persuading Prof. Muḥammad Ḥasan Askarī, the well-known scholar of English literature and criticism, to undertake the translation. In the beginning he was reluctant due to his strong sense of responsibility in the religious matters, but when I assured him of my humble assistance throughout his endeavor, he not

only agreed to the proposal, but started the work with remarkable devotion. Despite my repeated requests, he did never accept any honorarium or a remuneration for his service. He was a chain-smoker. But he never smoked during his work on Ma'āriful-Qur'ān, which sometimes lasted for hours.

In this manner he completed the translation of about 400 pages of the original Urdu book and 156 verses of the Sūrah al-Baqarah, but unfortunately, his sudden demise discontinued this noble effort. Strangely enough, the last portion he translated was the commentary of the famous verse:

ولنبلونكم بشيئ من الخوف والجوع ونقص من الاموال والا نفس والثمرات
وبشرالصابرين O الذين اذا اصابتهم مصيبة قالوا انا لله وانا اليه راجعون O

And surely, We will test you with a bit of fear and hunger and loss in wealth and lives and fruits. And give good tidings to the patient who, when they suffer a calamity, say, 'We certainly belong to Allah and to Him we are bound to return'.

Prof. Askari passed away in 1977, and due to my overwhelming occupations during the next 12 years, I could not find out a suitable person to substitute him. It was in 1989, that Prof. Muhammad Shamim offered his services to resume the translation from where Prof. Askari had left it. I found in him the same sincerity, commitment and devotion I had experienced in the late Professor. Moreover, he had decided to devote the rest of his life to the service of the Holy Qur'an without any financial benefit. Here again I tried my best to persuade him to accept some kind of honorarium, but it was in vain. He started his work from the Verse 158 of Surah al-Baqarah and has now completed the translation of the first two volumes of the original Ma'ariful-Qur'an and is working on the third volume.

Both Prof. Muḥammad Hasan Askari and Prof. Muḥammad Shamīm have insisted that their translations must be revised by me from the religious point of view. For this purpose, I have gone through the typescript of the translations of both of them and suggested some amendments where it was necessary.

The translation of Prof. Askari had been started at a time when the esteemed author of Ma'āriful-Qur'ān was still alive. We were fortunate to receive some guide-lines from the author himself. He had

advised the translators not to be too literal in translation to sacrifice the natural flow of the text. Moreover, he had emphasized that while rendering his book into English, the requirements of English readership must be kept in mind. Some discussions may be dispensed with. Similarly, many paragraphs may be condensed in the English version in order to avoid repetition.

The esteemed author had authorised me for suitable decisions in these matters. Both the learned translators, despite their earnest effort to reflect the original text as accurately as possible, have followed, in consultation with me, the said advices of the author himself. However they have never tried to sacrifice the original concept of the text for the beauty of language alone. Particularly, in the juristic discussions of the book, they have been very strict in the translation, lest some change in the style should creep in and distort the accurate connotation of the Islamic injunctions. In such places, the reader may feel some difficulty. However, a more concentrate reading can easily remove it.

Translation of the Holy Qur'ān

The original Urdu Ma'āriful-Qur'ān had not given a new translation of the Holy Qur'ān itself. Rather, the esteemed author had adopted the Urdu translations of Maulanā Maḥmoodul-Ḥasan (Shaikhul-Hind) and Maulanā Ashraf Ali Thānavī on which he based his commentary. While rendering the book into English, we had three options about the translation of the Holy Qur'ān:

(a) To adopt any one of the already available English translations of the Holy Qur'ān, like those of Arberry, Pickthall or Abdullāh Yousuf Alī.

(b) To translate the Urdu translations used in the Ma'āriful-Qur'ān into English.

(c) To provide a new translation of our own.

After a great deal of consideration and consultation, we elected to work on the third option, i.e. to prepare a new translation of the Holy Qur'ān. The reasons behind this decision were manifold which need not be detailed here. In short, we wanted to prepare a translation which may be closer to the Qur'ānic text and easier to understand. For this purpose, we formed a committee with the following members:

1. Prof. Muḥammad Shameem.
2. Mr. Muḥammad Wali Raazi.
3. This humble writer.

This committee has accomplished the translation of the Holy Qur'ān upto the Sūrah Yūsuf and is still going on with this project.

The committee has all the famous available translations of the Holy text before it, and after a deep study of the relevant material found in the classical Arabic commentaries, lays down the new translation in as simple expressions as possible. While doing so, we have tried our best that the different possible interpretations of the Qur'anic text remain undisturbed, and the new translation accommodates as many of them as practicable. We have tried not to impose on our reader a particular interpretation where several interpretations were equally possible. However, where the translation could not accommodate more than one connotation, we have followed the one adopted by the majority of the classic commentators including Maulanā Ashraf Alī Thānavī on whose translation the Ma'āriful-Qur'ān is based.

Despite all these sincere efforts, one cannot avoid the admission that the exact translation of the Holy Qur'ān is impossible. One cannot convey the glory and the beauty of the divine expression in any other language, let alone the English language which, despite its vast vocabulary, seems to be miserable when it comes to the expression of spiritual concepts. Therefore, even after observing all the precautions at our command, we feel that we were trying to translate a text which is - as Arberry has rightly put it - totally untranslatable.

However, this is another humble effort to convey the basic message of the Holy Qur'ān to a common reader in a simple manner. How far we have succeeded in this effort? Allah knows best.

The Scheme of the Translation

Now, here are some points to be kept in mind while consulting the translation.

1. Although the translators have tried their best to preserve not only the literal sense of the Holy text, but also the order of words and sentences, yet, while translating the idiomatic expressions, it is

sometimes felt that the literal translation may distort the actual sense or reduce the emphasis embodied in the Arabic text. At such places effort has been made to render the Quranic sense into a closer English expression.

2. Both in the translation of the Holy Qur'ān and in the commentary, a uniform scheme of transliteration has been adopted. The scheme is summarized in the beginning pages of the book.

3. The names of the prophets have been transliterated according to their Arabic pronunciation, and not according to their biblical form. For example, the biblical Moses has been transliterated as Mūsā عليه السلام, which is the correct Arabic pronunciation. Similarly, instead of biblical Abraham, the Qur'ānic Ibrāhīm عليه السلام and instead of Joseph, the Qur'ānic Yūsuf عليه السلام has been preferred.

However, in the names other than those of prophets, like Pharaoh, their English form has been retained.

4. A permanent feature of the original Urdu Ma'ariful-Qur'an is its "*Khulasa-e-Tafseer*" (Summary). Under every group of verses, the esteemed author has given a brief summary of the meaning of the verses to help understand them in one glimpse. This summary was taken from Bayān-ul-Qur'ān, the famous commentary of Maulanā Ashraf Alī Thānavī رحمة الله عليه. He has set up this summary by adding some explanatory words or sentences within brackets to his Urdu translation. The esteemed author of Ma'āriful-Qur'ān has reproduced this summary (after simplification in some places) with the heading of-Khulasa-e-Tafsīr خلاصه تفسير before his own commentary to the relevant group of verses.

While translating Ma'ariful-Qur'an into English, it was very difficult, rather almost impossible, to give that summary in the same fashion. Therefore, the translators have restricted themselves to the commentary of Ma'āriful-Qur'ān and have not translated the Khulasa-e-Tafsir خلاصه تفسير. However, where they found some additional points in the summary which are not expressly mentioned in the commentary, they have merged those points into the main commentary, so that the English reader may not be deprived of them.

It is only by the grace of Allah Almighty that in this way we could be able to present this first volume of this huge work. The second

volume is already under composing, and we hope that Allah سبحانه و تعالى will give us *tawfiq* to bring the next volumes as soon as possible.

Acknowledgments are due to all those who contributed their efforts, advices and financial support to this work. Those deserving special reference are Prof. Abdul-Wahid Siddiqi, Dr. Zafar Ishaq Ansari, Mr. Abubakr Varachia and Mr. Shu'aib 'Umar (both of South Africa) Dr. Muhammad Ismail (of U.S.A), and Mr. Altaf Barkhurdaria.

My elder brother Mr. Muḥammad Wali Raazi has been associated with the work right from its beginning, and has always been a great source of guidance, support and encouragement. He is a member of the committee set up for the translation of the Holy Qur'ān and his remarkable contribution, not only to the translation of the Holy Qur'ān, but also to the translation of the commentary is unforgettable. He, too, has been contributing his valuable time and effort to this project for years just for the sake of Allah. May Allah approve his contributions with His pleasure and bless him with the best of rewards both here and hereinafter.

As for Prof. Muhammad Shameem, the original translator of Ma'āriful-Qur'ān after the demise of Prof. Muḥammad Hasan 'Askari, all the formal words of acknowledgment seem to be miserably deficient for the valuable service he has rendered to this project. He has not only translated the book with precaution and love, but also devoted his whole life to the Holy Qur'ān and spared no effort to bring this volume into light. Out of his commitment to the cause, he did not restrict himself to the work of a translator, but also undertook the function of an editor and a proof reader and supervised all other minute details of the publishing process. His devotion, sincerity and hardwork is beyond any amount of admiration. May Allah grant him the best reward of His absolute approval for his noble work. *Amin*.

With these few words I am honoured to present this first volume to the readers. May Allah approve this effort and make it beneficial to the *Ummah*. *'Amin*.

Muḥammad Taqi Usmāni
Darul-Uloom, Karachi-14
10 Safar 1416
9 July 1995

TRANSLITERATION SCHEME

Arabic Letter	Name of Letter	English Transliteration
ا	الف -- Alif	a
ب	باء -- bā	b
ت	تاء -- tā	t
ث	ثاء -- thā	th
ج	جيم -- jīm	j
ح	حاء -- ḥā	ḥ
خ	خاء -- khā	kh
د	دال -- dāl	d
ذ	ذال -- dhāl	dh
ر	راء -- rā	r
ز	زاى -- zā	z
س	سين -- sīn	s
ش	شين -- shīn	sh
ص	صاد -- ṣād	ṣ
ض	ضاد -- ḍād	ḍ
ط	طاء -- ṭā	ṭ
ظ	ظاء -- ẓā	ẓ
ع	عين -- 'ayn	'
غ	غين -- ghayn	gh
ف	فاء -- fā	f
ق	قاف -- qāf	q
ك	كاف -- kāf	k
ل	لام -- lām	l
م	ميم -- mīm	m
ن	نون -- nūn	n
ه	هاء -- hā	h
و	واؤ -- wāw	w
ء	ہمزہ -- Hamzah	'
ى	ياء -- yā	y

Short Vowels

ـَـ	: Fatḥah	a
ـِـ	: Kasrah	i
ـُـ	: Ḍammah	u

Long Vowels

ا	: Shortened Alif	ā
آ	: Maddah Alif	ā
ى	: Maddah Yā	ī
	: Maddah Wāw	ū

Dipthongs

اى	:Alif and Yā	ay
او اؤ	: Alif and Wāw	aw (also au in some cases)

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

الحمدلله وكفى وسلام على عباده الذين اصطفى

PREFACE

This is an introduction comprising of some basic informations about the Holy Qur'ān its revelation, the history of its descention and preservation and similar other subjects. This introduction was written by me on the direction of my father, the esteemed author of Ma'āriful-Qur'ān. He wanted to write this introduction himself, but due his many other involvements and his deteriorating health, he could not do so. At this stage he directed me to write on these subject. When I started writing the introduction, it became a lengthy volume itself and it was not proper to include it in the Ma'āriful-Qur'ān as an introduction. Therefore, the book was published separately under the title of "Uloom-ul-Qur'ān" and I condensed its discussions to the present introduction, which was published in the beginning of the second edition of 'Ma'āriful-Qur'ān'.

This introduction is translated into English by Prof. Muhammad Shameem after he accomplished the translation of the first volume of Ma'āriful-Qur'ān. My book "Uloom-ul-Qur'ān" is now available in English also. Those who like detailed discussions on these subjects may refer to it.

Muḥammad Taqi Usmāni
11 Safar 1416 A.H.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
الحمدلله وكفى وسلام على عباده الذين اصطفى

Waḥy and its true nature

Since the Holy Qur'ān was revealed to our beloved prophet Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā صلى الله عليه وسلم by means of *Waḥy* (revelation), an understanding of some particulars about *Waḥy* is imperative at the very outset.

The need for *Waḥy*

Every Muslim knows that Allah Almighty has sent man into this world as a matter of test, and in return for his being obligated with certain duties, the whole universe has been placed at his service. For this reason man, once he is in the world, must do two things:

1. He should make the best use of this world, and of things created in it.
2. While using this world to his advantage, he should keep the injunctions of Allah Almighty in sight and do nothing that goes against His will and pleasure.

For these two functions man needs knowledge. Therefore, unless he knows the reality of this world, the properties of different things and the manner in which they can be put to use, he cannot use anything in this world to his advantage. Likewise, unless and until he knows the will of Allah Almighty as to what pleases Him and what displeases Him, it will be impossible for him to lead a life in line with the will of Allah Almighty.

So Allah Almighty, along with the creation of man, has created three things through which he could continue receiving knowledge of the above-mentioned matters of concern. These are:

1. Man's senses, that is, the eyes, the ears, the nose, the mouth, the hands and the feet.

2. The reason.

3. The *Wahy*.

Consequently, man finds out many things through his senses, many others through reason, and the knowledge of things he cannot get through these two sources are bestowed upon him through *Wahy*.

The arrangement between these three sources of knowledge is such that each one has its limits, and a particular sphere of activity beyond which it does not work. In natural sequence, the knowledge of things man collects through his senses cannot be deduced through bland reason. For instance, you know by seeing a wall with your eyes that its colour is white. But, should you close your eyes and try to find out the colour of that wall on the sole strength of your reason, this will then be impossible. Similarly, the knowledge of things that comes through reason cannot be discovered by senses alone. For instance, you cannot find out as to who made that wall by simply seeing it with your eyes or touching it with your hands. Not at all, you rather need reason to arrive at that conclusion.

In short, reason gives no guidance as far as the five senses work efficiently, and when the five senses become helpless, reason starts functioning. But, even the guidance given by this reason is not unlimited. This too stops at a certain limit. Then there are things the knowledge of which can neither be acquired through senses nor through reason. For instance, to find out about this very wall, as to what manner of its use will please Allah Almighty and what manner of its use will displease Him, is possible neither through senses nor through reason. In order to give man the answer to such questions, the source that Allah Almighty has prescribed is what is known as *Wahy*. And the method it follows is that Allah Almighty selects one of His servants, ordains him as His messenger and to him He reveals His Word. This Word is *Wahy*.

This makes it clear that *Wahy* is the highest source of knowledge for man which offers to him the answer to questions about his life which cannot be solved by means of reason and senses, but, he still

has to have that knowledge. This further explains that reason and perception alone are not enough to show man the way. It is rather all the more necessary, almost inevitable, that the Divine *Waḥy* be there for his guidance. Since *Waḥy* is basically needed where reason does not work, it is, therefore, not necessary that everything communicated through *Waḥy* be compulsively comprehended through reason. On the contrary, as reason is no help in finding out the colour of some object since that is the job of the senses, so is the knowledge of many religious beliefs, the gracious giving of which is the sole prerogative of *Waḥy* and not of reason. Furthermore, trusting reason alone for their comprehension is not sound and correct.

To begin with, it is totally senseless to discuss the issue of *Waḥy* with a person who, God forbid, does not accept the very existence of God. But, for a person who believes in the existence of Allah Almighty and has faith in His perfect power, it is not at all difficult to understand that *Waḥy* is a rational need, that it is possible and that it is there for real. If you have faith in the fact that this universe has been created by an absolutely powerful entity, He is the One who has sent man down here to accomplish some particular mission, how then is it possible to imagine that He, after once having created man, would leave him off in total darkness, without ever telling him why did he come into this world, what his duties were, where was he destined to go and how could he realize the purpose of his life? How could a person, whose sanity is still there, send one of his servants on a certain trip under a designated mission without ever telling him the purpose of the trip while he is leaving, nor explaining it to him later on through some message as to why he has been sent out there and what duties he is supposed to carry out during the trip? When a man of ordinary reason cannot do something like this, how can something like this be imagined with respect to the most Holy Lord of the Universe under Whose ultimate wisdom this whole system of the universe is functioning? After all, how is it possible that the Being, that did create such a mind-boggling system composed of the moon, the sun, the sky, the earth, the stars and the planets, would remain unable to institute some arrangement of communication with His servants, through which human beings could be given guidance about the purpose of their lives? If there is *'Īmān* or faith in the ultimate wisdom of Allah

Almighty, then admitting that He did not forsake His servants in the dark, will become all the more necessary; rather on the contrary, He has surely instituted some regular system for their guidance. And so, this very regular system of guidance is known as *Waḥy* (Revelation) and *Risālah* (Prophethood).

This makes it crystal clear that *Waḥy* is not only a religious belief but also a rational need the rejection of which amounts to a rejection of the ultimate wisdom of Allah Almighty.

The Modes of Descent

This sacred sequence of *Waḥy* (revelation) and *Risālah* (prophethood) came to an end with the last of the prophets, Muḥammad al-Mustafā صلى الله عليه وسلم . Nevermore, shall *Waḥy* descend upon any man, nor there is need for it. *Waḥy* used to come to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in several forms and modes. In a *hadīth* from Sahīh al-Bukhārī, Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها says that Sayyidnā Hārith ibn Hishām رضى الله عنه once asked the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم as to how did *Wahy* come to him. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said that 'there are times when I hear something like the chiming of bells and this mode of *Waḥy* is the hardest on me. After that, when this chime-sequence ends, that which has been said by the sound seems to have been committed to my memory. And there are times when the angel appears before me in the shape of a man.' (Sahīh al-Bukhārī, 2/1)

As regards the likening of the sound of *Waḥy* to the sound of bells in the *hadīth* cited above, Shaykh Muhyy al-Dīn ibn al-'Arabī has explained it by saying that, in the first place, the sound of *Waḥy* is continuous like the sound of a bell which does not break off in between; and in the second place, when the bell rings continuously, it generally becomes difficult for the listener to determine the direction of its sound because its sound seems to be coming from all directions. And the Divine Word too carries with it the distinction that it has no one single direction, in fact, the sound gives the impression of being heard from all directions. A correct realization of this phenomenon is just not possible without auditory experience, however, in order to bring this happening closer to common comprehension, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has simply likened it to the sound of bells. (Fayd al-Bari, 19,20/1)

With the descent of *Waḥy* in this mode, the Holy Prophet ﷺ came under very heavy strain. Sayyidah 'A'ishah رضی الله عنها says towards the end of this very *hadīth* that she had seen the coming of *Waḥy* to him during days of extreme winter. When the progression of *Waḥy* ceased, his blessed forehead would have already become dripping-wet inspite of the chilly weather. In yet another narration, Sayyidah 'A'ishah رضی الله عنها relates: When *Waḥy* came to him, his breath would seem to stop, the radiant face would change -- turning pale like the branch of a date palm, the front teeth would shiver from cold and he would perspire so much that its drops would roll like pearls. (Al-Itqan, 1/46)

On occasions, so much intensity would be generated in this state of *Waḥy* that the animal he would be riding at that time would sit down, wilting under his weight. Once, when he was resting his blessed head on the lap of Sayyidnā Zayd ibn Thābit رضی الله عنه there started the descent of *Waḥy* in that very posture. This released so much weight on Sayyidnā Zayd's thigh that it seemed to break. (Zad al-Ma'ad, 1/18,19)

There were times when a low-volumed sound of this *Waḥy* was sensed by others as well. Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی الله عنه says: When *Waḥy* came to him, a sound somewhat similar to the buzzing of honey-bees could be heard close to his most bright face. (Tabwib Musnad Ahmad, Kitab al-Sirah al-Nabaviyah, 20/212)

Under the second mode of *Waḥy*, an angel would come to him in some human form and deliver Allah's message. Generally, on such occasions, Sayyidnā Jibrā'īl علیه السلام used to come to him in the form of Sayyidnā Dihyah al-Kalbi رضی الله عنه . Certainly, at other times, he has come in other forms as well. In any case, this mode of the coming of *Waḥy* when it was brought by Sayyidnā Jibrā'īl علیه السلام appearing in human form, was the easiest on the Holy Prophet ﷺ . (Al-Itqan, 1/46)

The third mode of the coming of *Waḥy* used to be that Sayyidnā Jibrā'īl علیه السلام would appear as he was, without having taken on the shape of a man. But this has happened only thrice in his entire life-time. First of all, it was when the Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم had himself wished to see him in his real form and shape. The second time, it was in the Mi'rāj (the Ascent to Heaven), and the third time it was at Ajyād in Makkah al-Mukarramah during the very early days of

prophethood. The first two happenings stand proved authentically, however, the last one suffers from weak chains of authority and is, therefore, doubtful. (Fath al-Bari, 1/18,19)

The fourth mode is distinguished by a direct, non-intermediary, two-way conversation with Allah Almighty. This honour was bestowed upon the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم only once, that is, in Mi'rāj, while awake. In addition to that, once it was in a dream as well that he was in a conversing situation with Allah Almighty.

Under the fifth mode of *Waḥy*, it so happened that Sayyidnā Jibrā'il عليه السلام would, without appearing physically in any form whatsoever, let some words of the message fall into his heart. This is technically known as نفث فى الروع (*nafth fī al-rau'*: blowing into the heart) (Ibid).

The Chronology of the Revelation of the Qur'ān

The noble Qur'ān is, in fact, the Divine Word. It is, therefore, secure in the Preserved Tablet. The noble Qur'ān says: بَلْ هُوَ قُرْآنٌ مَّجِيدٌ فِي لَوْحٍ مَّحْفُوظٍ (Rather, it is the glorious Qur'an in the Preserved Tablet). (85:21-22)

Then, from the Preserved Tablet, its descention took place twice. Once, the whole of it had been sent to *al-Bayt al-'Izzah*, the most exalted House on the firmament of the world. The most exalted House (also known as *al-Bayt al-Ma'mūr*) is a House facing Ka'bah that exists in the firmament as the place of worship for angels. This descention took place on the Night of *Qadr* (rendered as the Night of Power in English). The second time it used to be revealed to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم gradually as needed, having reached its completion in twenty three years. These two modalities of the Qur'anic revelations become clear through the style of the noble Qur'ān itself. In addition to that, al-Nasā'i, al-Baihaqī and al-Hākim and others have reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه what can be summed up by saying that the first descention of the noble Qur'ān to the firmament of the world took place all at one time and the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was blessed with the second descention gradually. (al-Itqan, v. 1, p. 41)

Explaining the wisdom behind the first descention of the noble

Qur'ān on the firmament facing the world, Imam Abu Shamah has said that it aimed at demonstrating the exalted majesty of the noble Qur'ān, and at the same time, it was to tell the angels that this was the last Book of Allah which is ready for descention for the guidance of the people of the earth.

Shaykh al-Zurqānī makes yet another point when he says that this two-timed descention also aimed at stressing that this Book is beyond all doubts, and it stands preserved at two more places other than the blessed heart of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , that is, in the Preserved Tablet, and in the Exalted House. (Manahil al-'Irfan, v.1, p. 39).

It is almost agreed by all the scholars that the second gradual descention which was on the heart of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم began when his age was forty years. The beginning of this descention, as authentically reported, was in the Night of *Qadr*, and this was the date on which, some years later, the event of the Battle of Badr came to pass. However, nothing definite can be said about the exact date of Ramaḍān when this Night fell. There are some reports which identify that of the seventeenth Rāmaḍan, while others place it on the nineteenth, and still others which indicate the Night of the twenty-seventh. (Tafsir Ibn Jarir v. 10, p. 7)

The verses that came first

It is authentically said that the first verses to come to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم were the verses from which Sūrah al-'Alaq begins. As in Sahih al-Bukhārī, Sayyidah 'A'ishah رضى الله عنها while relating its background has said that the very first beginning of revelations to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم actually was through true dreams. Following that, came his zeal to worship in seclusion. During this period, he would spend night after night in the Cave of Ḥira' and stay in the state of *I'tikāf* devoted to his *'ibādah* (worship) when one day, right there in that cave, there came an angel from Allah Almighty and the very first thing he said was إِقْرَأْ (*Iqra'*: 'Read'). The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: مَا أَنَا بِقَارِئٍ :' I am unable to read.' After that, relating the event himself, he said that 'the angel, hearing this answer of mine, caught hold of me and embraced me with such force that I had to go through unbearable strain.' Then he released me and said: إِقْرَأْ :'Read'. I said: 'I am unable to read.' Thereupon, he seized me the third time,

gave a hard embrace and then released me. After that he said:

اِقْرَاْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِیْ خَلَقَ O خَلَقَ الْاِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ O اِقْرَاْ وَرَبُّكَ الْاَکْرَمُ
الَّذِیْ عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ O عَلَّمَ الْاِنْسَانَ مَالَمْ یَعْلَمْ O

Recite with the Name of your Lord who created, created Man out of a blood-clot. Recite and Your Lord is Most Generous who taught by the Pen, taught Man what he did not know. (96:1-3)

These were the first verses to be revealed to him. Thereafter, the coming of *Waḥy* stayed discontinued for three years. This period is known as the period of *fatrah*, that is, the period when *Waḥy* was discontinued for a short interval of time. Then, it was after three years that the same angel who had visited him in the Cave of Hirā' became visible to him between the heaven and the earth. He read to him the verses of Sūrah al-Muddaththir. Thereafter, the sequence of *Waḥy* was reactivated.

The Makki and Madani Verses

While looking at the titles of the Surahs of the Holy Qur'ān, you may have noticed the entry, *Makkī* (or Meccan, Makkan, *Makkīyyah*) with some Surāhs, and *Madanī* (Medinan, Medinite, *Madanīyyah*) with some others. It is necessary to understand correctly what it means. In the terminology of the commentators, the '*Makkī 'āyah*' means a verse that was revealed to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم earlier than he actually reached Madīnah by way of *hijrah* (emigration). Similarly, the '*Madanī 'āyah*' or the *Madanī* verse means that it was revealed after he migrated to Maḍinah. Some people take '*Makkī*' to mean that the verse concerned was revealed in the city of Makkah, and so the '*Madanī*' is supposed to have been revealed in Madīnah. This view is not correct because there are several verses which were not revealed in the city of Makkah, yet are called *Makkī* because they had already been revealed before *hijrah*. As such, the verses that were revealed in Minā, 'Arāfat, or during the Journey of Ascent (*Mi'rāj*) are also called *Makkī*. So much so, that the verses revealed during the journey of *hijrah* enroute Madīnah are also called *Makkī*. Similarly, there are several verses which were not revealed in the city of Madīnah, but they are *Madanī*. For example, there were several journeys that the Holy Prophet ﷺ had to undertake while

going many hundred miles away from Madīnah, and the verses revealed at all those places are called *Madanī* anyway. So much so that the particular verses that were revealed on the occasion of the Conquest of Makkah or the military campaign of Hudaybīyyah in the city of Makkah proper or its environs are also called *Madanī*. Accordingly, the Qur'ānic verse:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الْأَمَانَاتِ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا

> Surely, Allah commands you to fulfil trust obligations towards those entitled to them. (4:58)

is *Madanī* although it was revealed in Makkah al-Mukarramah. (al-Burhan, v. 1, p. 88, and Manahil al-'Irfan, v. 1, p. 88)

Then there are Sūrahs which are either totally *Makkī*, or totally *Madanī*. For instance, Sūrah al-Muddaththir is wholly *Makkī* and Sūrah 'Al-'Imran is wholly *Madanī*. But, on occasions, it has so happened that one or some *Madani* verses find a place in the Sūrah which is wholly *Makkī*. On other occasions, it has happened just the reverse. For instance, Sūrah al-A'raf is *Makkī*, but in it the verses from وَاسْأَلْهُمْ عَنِ الْقَرْيَةِ الَّتِي كَانَتْ حَاضِرَةَ الْبَحْرِ to وَإِذْ أَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِنْ بَنِي آدَمَ are *Madanī*. Similarly, Sūrah al-Ḥajj is Madanī but four of its verses, that is, those from وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْ رَسُولٍ وَلَا نَبِيٍّ إِلَّا إِذَا تَمَنَّىٰ to عَذَابُ يَوْمٍ عَقِيمٍ are *Makkī*.

This also makes it clear that the incidence of a Sūrah being *Makkī* or *Madanī* is generally conditioned by the nature of the majority of its verses and so it happened frequently that the initial verses of a Sūrah which were revealed before *Hijrah* were regarded as *Makkī*, although some of its verses may have been revealed later on following *Hijrah*. (Manahil al-'Irfan, v. 1, p. 192)

Characteristics of *Makkī* and *Madanī* Verses

The scholars of *Tafsir*, after having made a thorough investigation into the *Makkī* and *Madanī* Surahs, have come up with a set of characteristics that tell right off if a Sūrah is *Makkī* or *Madanī*. Some of these characteristics are recognized as universal rules while others hold good most of the time. The universal rules are as follows:

1. Every Sūrah in which the word كَلَّا (never) appears is *Makkī*. This word has been used 33 times in 15 Sūrahs, and all these verses are in the last half of the noble Qur'ān.

2. Every Sūrah in which (according to the Hanafīyyah) there appears a verse of *Sajdah* is *Makkī*.
3. Every Sūrah, with the exception of Sūrah al-Baqarah, in which the story of Ādam and Iblīs finds mention is *Makkī*.
4. Every Sūrah in which a permission of *jihād* or a description of its injunctions has been given is *Madanī*.
5. Every verse which mentions the hypocrites is *Madanī*.

The following characteristics are general and mostly frequent, that is, sometimes the contrary may happen, but usually and mostly it follows the said pattern:

1. In *Makkī* Sūrahs, generally, the form of address used is يَآ أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ (O people), and in *Madanī* Surahs it is يَآ أَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ آمَنُوْا (O believers).
2. The *Makkī 'Ayat* (Verses) and Sūrahs are generally short and brief while the *Madanī* verses and chapters are long and detailed.
3. The *Makkī* Sūrahs mostly consist of subjects such as, Oneness of Allah, Prophethood, affirmation of the Hereafter, the panorama of the Resurrection, words of comfort for the Holy Prophet ﷺ and events relating to the past communities, and in these, the number of injunctions and laws taken up is much less as compared with the *Madanī* Surahs where family and social laws, injunctions of *jihād* and expositions of limits and duties appear frequently.
4. In *Makkī* Sūrahs, most of the confrontation is against idolaters while in *Madanī* Sūrahs it is against the people of the Book and the hypocrites.
5. The style of *Makkī* Sūrahs is more majestic. It has profusion of metaphors, similies and allegories, and the vocabulary used is extensive. Contrary to this, the style of the *Madani* Sūrahs is comparatively simple.

This difference in the style of *Makkī* and *Madanī* Surahs initially owes its origin to a variety of conditions, circumstances and addressees. Muslims had to deal mostly with the idolaters of Arabia during their Makkan life. No Islamic state was born yet. Therefore,

during this period, more emphasis was laid on the correction of beliefs, reform of morals, logical refutation of the idolaters and the miraculous nature of the noble Qur'ān. Contrary to this, an Islamic state had risen in the Holy city of Madinah. People were rushing into the fold of Islam, group after group. Idolatery stood refuted intellectually. The ideological confrontation was now wholly against the people of the Book. Therefore, greater attention was paid to education in injunctions, laws, limits and duties, and on the refutation of the people of the Book. The style adopted matched these objectives.

The Gradual Revelation of the Noble Qur'ān

As said earlier, the noble Qur'ān was not revealed to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم suddenly and simultaneously. On the contrary, it was revealed, little by little, over a span of nearly twenty three years. At times, Jibrā'īl عليه السلام would come with a small verse, or even with some unit of a verse. Then, there were times when several verses would be revealed at one time. The smallest portion of the Qur'ān which was revealed as such is غَيْرُ أُولِي الضَّرَرِ (al-Nisā': 4:94) which forms part of a long verse. On the other hand, the whole of Sūrah al-An'am was revealed at one time. (Ibn Kathir, v. 2, p. 122)

Rather than being revealed all at once, why was the Qur'ān revealed little by little? The polytheists of Arabia had themselves put this question to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم . Allah Almighty has taken it upon Himself to answer the question in the following words:

وَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لَوْ لَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ الْقُرْاٰنُ جُمْلَةً وَّاحِدَةً ۚ كَذٰلِكَ لِنُثَبِّتَ بِهٖ فُؤَادَكَ وَرَتَّلْنٰهُ تَرْتِيْلًا ۝ وَلَا يَأْتُوْنَكَ بِمَثَلٍ اِلَّا جِئْنٰكَ بِالْحَقِّ وَاَحْسَنَ تَفْسِيْرًا ۝

> The disbelievers said, "Why has the Qur'ān not been sent down upon him all at once?" "(We did) like this, so that We may strengthen your heart thereby, and We have recited it very distinctly. They bring not to thee any similitude but that We bring thee the truth, and better in exposition" (25:32-33)

It is sufficient to understand a gist of the wisdom behind the gradual revelation of the Holy Qur'ān as stated by Imam al-Rāzī in his explanation of this verse. He says:

1. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was *ummiyy*, that is, being unlettered, he did not read or write. So, had the entire Qur'ān been

revealed at one time, it would have been difficult to remember and document. Contrary to this, Sayyidnā Musā عليه السلام knew reading and writing, therefore, the Torah was revealed to him at one single time.

2. If the entire Qur'ān had been revealed all at once, immediate compliance of all its injunctions would have become obligatory, and this would have gone against the wise graduation which has featured as a matter of concern in the Sharī'ah of our Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم

3. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had to go through ever-new tortures inflicted by his people. That Jibrā'il عليه السلام came, again and again, with the words of the noble Qur'an, made his stand against these tortures bearable, and gave strength to his heart.

4. A large portion of the Qur'ān is devoted to answers given to people who posed questions, while some other portion refers to various particular events. Therefore, the revelation of those verses was appropriate at the time when those questions were asked, or those events came to pass. This increased the insight of Muslims and when the Qur'ān unfolded that which was unseen, its truth became all the more manifest. (al-Tafsir al-Kabir, v. 6, p. 336)

Sabab al-nuzul: (Cause of revelation)

The verses of the noble Qur'ān are of two kinds. In the first place, there are the verses that Allah Almighty revealed on His own. Their revelation was not caused by some particular event or a question asked by someone. In the second place, there are those verses which were revealed in answer to some question or with reference to some event. This could be termed as the background of these verses. This background is known, in the terminology of the commentators, as the '*sabab*' of *nuzūl* ('cause' of revelation) or the '*shā'n*' of *nuzūl* (the 'background' of revelation). For instance, take the verse in Sūrah al-Baqarah:

لَا تَنْكِحُوا الْمُشْرِكٰتِ حَتّٰى يُؤْمِنَّ وَلَاَمَةٌ مُّؤْمِنَةٌ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ مُّشْرِكَةٍ وَّلَوْ اَعْجَبَتْكُمْ

Do not marry female associators unless they come to believe, and a Muslim slave girl is better than a female associator, even though she is liked by you. (2:221)

This verse was revealed in the wake of a particular event. During

the days of Ignorance, Sayyidnā Marthad ibn Abī Marthad al-Ghanavī رضی اللہ عنہ had a relationship with a woman, named 'Anaq. After embracing Islam, he migrated to Madīnah while that woman stayed behind in Makkah al-Mukarramah. There was an occasion when Sayyidnā Marthad visited Makkah al-Mukarramah on a certain business. 'Anaq came to him with an invitation to sin. Sayyidnā Marthad refused flatly and said: 'Now Islam has come between me and you, but should you so wish, I can marry you after clearing it with the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم.' After returning to Madīnah, Sayyidnā Marthad sought his permission to marry the woman he said he liked. Thereupon, this verse was revealed, and it prohibited marriage with *mushrik* women. (Asbab al-Nuzul by al-Wahidi, p. 38)

This event is the '*shā'n*' or '*sabab*' of *nuzūl* ('cause' or 'background' of revelation) behind the verse mentioned above. The background of revelation is, therefore, very important in the exegesis of the noble Qur'ān. There are many verses the meaning of which cannot be correctly understood unless the circumstances underlying their revelation become known.

The Seven Readings of the Holy Qur'ān

In order that the noble Qur'an becomes easily recitable, Allah Almighty has blessed the Muslim community with special convenience by allowing it to read the words of the Qur'ān in more than one way. If there are situations when a person is unable to pronounce some words in one manner, he could recite it in another. It appears in a *ḥadīth* of Sahīh Muslim that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم was once sitting by the pond of Banu Ghifar while Angel Jibrā'īl came and said: 'Allah Almighty has commanded you to ask your community to recite the Qur'ān following one method of reading.' He said: 'I seek from Allah His pardon and forgiveness. My people do not have the ability to do so.' Then, Angel Jibrā'īl returned to him and said: 'Allah Almighty has commanded you to let your people recite the Qur'ān following two readings.' He said: 'I seek pardon and forgiveness from Allah Almighty. My people do not have the ability to do even that.' Then, Jibrā'īl came the third time and said: 'Allah Almighty has commanded you to let your people recite the Qur'ān following three readings.' Again he said: 'I seek pardon and forgiveness from Allah Almighty. My

people do not have the ability to do even that.' Then he came the fourth time and said: 'Allah Almighty has commanded you to let your people recite the Qur'ān following seven readings. So, whichever of these they follow to read the Qur'ān, their recitation will be correct.' (Manahil al-'Irfan, v. 1, p. 33)

Accordingly, there is yet another *hadīth* where the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said:

إِنَّ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنَ اُنْزِلَ عَلٰى سَبْعَةِ أَحْرُفٍ فَاقْرَءُوْا مَا تَيَسَّرَ مِنْهُ

This Qur'an has been revealed covering seven versions. So from out of these, recite in a way that is easy on you.

What is meant by 'Seven Versions' in this saying of the Holy Prophet ﷺ ? There are several scholarly positions in this connection but according to scholars who have conducted painstaking and exhaustive research on the subject, the weightier meaning of this expression is that the variations found in different readings of the Holy Qur'ān are of seven types. These are as follows:

1. The difference in nouns: This includes the difference concerning singular, dual, plural, as well as, masculine and feminine. For instance, in one reading it is تَمَّتْ كَلِمَةُ رَبِّكَ, while in another, تَمَّتْ كَلِمَاتُ رَبِّكَ.

2. The difference in verbs: That there be past in one reading, the present in another and the imperative in yet another. For instance, it is رَبَّنَا بَاعِدْ بَيْنَ أَسْفَارِنَا in one reading, while رَبَّنَا بَعَّدَ بَيْنَ أَسْفَارِنَا in another.

3. The difference in the placement of diacritical marks: That which shows variance in *I'rāb*, which reflects variance in grammatical mode of a word and is demonstrated through desinential inflections, such as *kasrah*, *fathah*, *dammah*. For instance, reading لَا يُضَارَّ كَاتِبٌ as لَا يُضَارُّ كَاتِبٌ and ذُوالْعَرْشِ الْمَجِيْدُ as ذُوالْعَرْشِ الْمَجِيْدِ.

4. The difference caused by addition and deletion of words: That there be some word missing in one reading while it has been added on in another; for instance, the words تَجْرِى مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ appear in one reading while the words تَجْرِى تَحْتَهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ appear in another.

5. The difference of precedence and succession: That there is a word which precedes in one reading, while it succeeds in the other.

For instance وَجَاءَتْ سَكْرَةُ الْمَوْتِ بِالْحَقِّ and وَجَاءَتْ سَكْرَةُ الْحَقِّ بِالْمَوْتِ .

6. The difference caused by transposition: This happens when a word found in one reading is replaced by another word in another reading. For instance, نُنْشِزُهَا and نَنْشُرُهَا, also فَتَبَيَّنُوْا and فَتَثَبَّتُوْا , and طَلْحٍ and طَلْعٍ .

7. The difference caused by manners of reading: It includes variations in *tafkhīm* (velarization, making sound heavy), *tarqīq* (making a letter sound soft), *imālah* (inclination, bending the sound of a short vowel), *madd* (prolongation), *qasr* (to shorten), *hamz*: *hamza*tation (providing a letter with *hamzah*), *izhār* (clear pronunciation) and *idghām* (assimilation). It means that, by doing these, the actual word does not change but the mode of its pronunciation does change. For instance, the word, مُوسٰى is rendered as مُوْسَىْ in one of the readings.

Anyhow, many readings were revealed incorporating these seven types of different renderings. This difference between them really made no difference in meaning. The latitude so given was aimed at making recitation easy.

In the beginning, people were not totally used to the style of the Qur'ān, therefore, many readings were permitted within the radius of these seven types. But, it was the blessed practice of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that he would go through the entire revealed Qur'ān with Jibrā'īl عليه السلام during the month of Ramaḍān every year. The year he left this mortal world, that was the year he did so twice. This '*daur*' or meticulous re-reading of the Qur'ān is called العرضة الأخيرة (last review). On this occasion, many readings were abrogated. Only readings retained were the ones which continue to stay preserved to this day with uninterrupted succession.

Sayyidnā 'Uthman رضى الله عنه , during the period of his *khilafah*, arranged to have seven copies of the noble Qur'ān prepared in order to remove misgivings regarding the recitation of Qur'ān. He incorporated all readings in these seven copies by leaving the calligraphed verses of the noble Qur'ān without dots and desinences (the vowel-points) so that the text could be read in accordance with whichever reading one wished to follow from among the very readings cited. Thus most of the

readings merged into this script, and the readings that could not merge into the script were saved by him when he elected to have one copy written according to one reading, and another, in accordance with another reading. The community demonstrated such care and diligence in having the fondly-remembered readings collected in these copies that *Qirā'ah* developed into a branch of knowledge in its own right, and there rose hundreds of scholars, reciters and memorizers of the Holy Qur'ān who spent their entire spans of life to keep it preserved and protected.

What actually happened was that when Sayyidnā 'Uthman رضى الله عنه sent the seven copies of the noble Qur'ān to various areas, he had also sent particular reciters who could teach how to recite them. So, when these revered reciters reached their designated areas, they taught people to read the Qur'ān in accordance with their respective readings. These different readings spread out among people. At this stage, some people bequeathed their lives to memorize different readings, and in training others to continue the discipline. This is how the foundation of the 'science of readings' was laid and people from different parts of the Islamic world started turning to the masters of the discipline to achieve the highest of excellence in it. Some memorized only one reading, others did two or three or seven, or even more than that. In this connection, a standard rule was accepted as norm throughout the *ummah* and it was invariably followed everywhere. It stipulated that only such reading (*qirā'ah*) will be accepted as being the Qur'ān which fulfils three conditions:

1. There is room for it in the script of 'Uthmani' copies of the Qur'ān.
2. It conforms to the grammar of the Arabic language.
3. It should have, provenly -- with sound authority, originated from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, and be well-known among the masters of readings, that is, the Imāms of Qirā'ah.

A reading which lacks even one of these three requirements cannot be considered as part of the Qur'ān. Thus a large number of readings continued to be reported in uninterrupted succession. Then, as a matter of convenience, it so happened that an Imām started giving

instructions in one, or some selected readings, and that particular reading became identified with his name. Then, scholars started writing books to collect these readings. So, Imam Abu 'Ubayd Qāsim ibn Sallām, Imām Abū Ḥātim Sijistānī, Qāḍī Ismā'īl and Imām Abū Ja'far al-Ṭabarī were the first among those who compiled books in this field which included more than twenty readings. Then came the great scholar, Abū Bakr ibn Mujāhid (died 324 Hijrah) who wrote a book in which he had included readings from seven *qārīs* (reciters) only. This book of his became so popular that these readings from the seven *qaris* became much more famous as compared with those of other *qaris*. In fact, some people got used to thinking that these are the only sound readings coming in uninterrupted succession. Although, the truth of the matter is that 'Allāmah ibn Mujāhid has collected these seven readings in one place just by chance. He never meant that readings other than these were wrong or unacceptable. This act of 'Allāmah ibn Mujāhid created yet another misunderstanding when some people began to think that سبعة احرف (seven versions) means just these seven readings which have been collected by ibn Mujāhid. Although, it has been explained earlier that these seven readings are simply a part of sound readings, otherwise every reading that fulfils the above-mentioned three conditions perfectly is sound, acceptable and included within the seven versions (*Hurūf*) in which the noble Qur'ān was revealed.

The Seven *Qārīs*

Anyhow, the seven *qārīs* who became most famous as a result of this act of 'Allāmah ibn Mujāhid are:

1. 'Abdullah ibn Kathīr al-Dārī (died 120 Hijrah). He was fortunate enough to have seen Sayyidnā Anas ibn Mālik, 'Abdullāh ibn Zubayr and Abu Ayyūb al-Ansārī رضی اللہ عنہم from among the Companions. His reading became more famous in Makkah al-Mukarramah. Well-known among those who transmitted his rendition are Bazzī and Qambal, may Allah have mercy on them all.

2. Nafi' ibn 'Abd Al-Rahmān ibn Abī al-Nu'aym (died 169 Hijrah). He had the benefit of learning from seventy successors to the Companions who were direct disciples of Sayyidnā 'Ubayy ibn Ka'b, 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās and Abū Hurayrah رضی اللہ عنہم . His reading became more famous in Madīnah and among those who transmitted

his rendition, Abū Mūsā Qālūn (died 220 Hijrah) and Abu Sā'id Warsh (died 197 Hijrah) are better known.

3. 'Abdullāh al-Hisbī, better known as Ibn 'Āmir (died 118 Hijrah). He was fortunate to have seen Sayyidnā Nu'mān ibn Bashīr and Wāthilah ibn Asqā' رضي الله عنهم from among the Companions. He had learnt the art of Qur'ānic reading from Mughīrah ibn Shihāb al-Makhzūmī who was a disciple of Sayyidnā 'Uthman رضي الله عنه . His reading gained currency mostly in Syria, and more famous among those who transmitted his rendition are Hishām and Dhakwān.

4. Abū 'Amr Zabbān ibn al-'Alā (died 154 Hijrah). He has reported his rendition from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās and 'Ubayy ibn Ka'b رضي الله عنهم through *Mujāhid* and Sa'id ibn Jubayr. His reading became fairly well-known in Basrah. Abū 'Umar al-Dawrī (died 246 Hijrah) and Abū Shu'ayb al-Sūsī (died 261 Hijrah) are among the more famous transmitters of his rendition.

5. Hamzah ibn Ḥabīb al-Zayyāt, ex-slave of 'Ikramah ibn Rabī' al-Taymī (died 188 Hijrah). He is a disciple of Sulayman al-A'mash, who was a disciple of Yahyā ibn Waththāb, who was a disciple of Zirr ibn Ḥubaysh, and he had the benefit of learning from Sayyidnā 'Uthmān, 'Alī and 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنهم . Among his transmitters, Khalf ibn Hishām (died 188 Hijrah) and Khallād ibn Khālid (died 220 Hijrah) are more famous.

6. 'Āṣim ibn Abī al-Najūd al-Asadiyy (died 127 Hijrah). Through Zirr ibn Hubaysh, he is a disciple of 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنهم and through Abū 'Abd al-Rahman Sulamī and al-Asadīyy, he is a disciple of Sayyidnā 'Alī رضي الله عنهم . More famous among the transmitters of his rendition are Shu'bah ibn 'Ayyāsh (died 193 Hijrah) and Ḥafṣ ibn Sulaymān (died 180 Hijrah). Generally, the recitation of the Holy Qur'ān these days is made following the rendition of this very Ḥafṣ ibn Sulaymān.

7. Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn Ḥamzah al-Kisā'ī (died 189 Hijrah). Among his transmitters, Abū al-Ḥarith Marwāzī (died 240 Hijrah) and Abū 'Umar al-Dawrī (who is also a transmitter of Abū 'Amr) are better known. The readings of the later three became more common in Kūfah.

As it has been submitted earlier that several other readings, other than these seven, are sound and have been reported in uninterrrupted succession. However, when the misunderstanding that sound readings are limited to these seven started gaining currency, several scholars (for example, 'Allāmah Shadhā'ī and Abū Bakr ibn Mihrān) collected, instead of seven, ten readings in one book. Thereupon, the term, "*Al-qirā'āt al-'ashrah*" or "Ten Readings" became famous. In these ten readings, the readings by the following three were also included in addition to those of the seven mentioned above:

1. Ya'qūb ibn Isḥāq al-Ḥaḍramī (died 205 Hijrah). His rendition was famous mostly in Baṣrah.
2. Khalf ibn Hishām (died 205 Hijrah) who is also a transmitter of the rendition of Hamzah. His rendition was common mostly in Kūfah.
3. Abū Ja'far Yazīd ibn al-Qa'qā' (died 130 Hijrah). His rendition found wider currency in Madīnah al-Tayyibah.
4. Abū al-Faraj Shambūdhī (died 388 Hijrah) who was a resident of Baghdād.

Some scholars have counted Sulaymān al-A'mash among the fourteen *qārīs* in place of Shambūdhī. Out of these, the first ten readings are credited with uninterrupted succession as vouched by sound authority.

Other than these are *Shādhdh* or rare (Manahil al'Irfan with reference to Munjid al-Muqri'in by ibn al-Jazri).

The Preservation of the Holy Qur'ān

In the days of the Holy Prophet ﷺ

Since the noble Qur'ān was not revealed all at once, on the contrary, different verses from it used to have been revealed as and when appropriate, therefore, it was not possible from the very beginning to write and preserve it in a book form. So, during the initial stage of Islam, major emphasis was laid on memory as a means of preserving the noble Qur'ān. When *Waḥy* used to come in the very beginning, the Holy Prophet ﷺ would tend to repeat its words instantly so that they would be memorized well enough. Thereupon, Allah Almighty directed him through the verses of Sūrah al-Qiyāmah

that he need not repeat words in a hurry immediately as *Wahy* came. Allah Almighty would Himself endow him with a memory that he will be unable to forget the words of the *Waḥy* once its descention has been completed. So it was that the moment the Qur'ānic verses would come to him, they would be committed to his memory the next moment. Thus the blessed chest of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, was the most protected vault of the noble Qur'ān, in which there was no chance of even some common mistake, editing or alteration. Moreover, as a matter of additional precaution, he used to recite the Qur'ān before angel Jibrā'il عليه السلام every year during the month of Ramadān; and the year he left this mortal world he completed a cumulative review of Qur'ānic recitation (*daur*) twice with Jibrā'il عليه السلام (Sahih al-Bukhari with Fath al-Bari, p. 36, v. 9).

Again, as it was, he would not restrict his teaching of the Companions to just the meanings of the noble Qur'ān, but had them memorize its words as well. Then, the revered Companions were themselves so enamoured with the desire to learn and remember the noble Qur'ān that everyone of them was anxious to get ahead of the other. There were women who claimed no *mahr* (dower) from their husband except that they would teach the Qur'ān.

Hundreds of Companions, freeing themselves from all other concerns, had devoted their whole lives for this purpose. Not only did they memorize the Qur'ān but also went on repeating it within their nightly prayers. When someone migrated from Makkah al-Mukarramah and came to Madinah al-Tayyibah, says Sayyidnā 'Ubādah ibn Sāmit رضی اللہ عنہ, the Holy Prophet ﷺ would entrust him to one of us Ansars so that he could teach Qur'ān to the newcomer. The Mosque of the Prophet was so filled with voices generated by learners and teachers of the Qur'ān that the Holy Prophet ﷺ had to ask them to lower their voices so that mistakes are not made (Manahil al-'Irfan, 1/234).

So, within a fairly short time, there was on hand a large group of the noble Companions who had the glorious Qur'ān all committed flawlessly to their memory. Included in this group were, in addition to the Four Guided Caliphs, persons like Sayyidnā Ṭalḥah, Sayyidnā Sa'd, Sayyidnā Ibn Mas'ūd, Sayyidnā Ḥudhayfah ibn Yamān, Sayyidnā Sālim Mowla abī Ḥudhayfah, Sayyidnā Abū Hurayrah, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar, Sayyidnā 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbās,

Sayyidnā 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ, Sayyidnā 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar, Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Zubayr, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn al-Ṣā'ib, Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah, Sayyidah Ḥafṣah, Sayyidah Umm Salmāh, may peace be upon them all.

In short, memorization of the Qur'ān was given more emphasis in early Islam as this was the only protected and trust-worthy method given the conditions of that time. The reason is that the number of people who could read or write was very limited in those days. The means of publishing books, such as the printing press, etc., were not there. Therefore, in that situation, if writing was taken to be sufficient, it would have neither been possible to spread out the Qur'an on an extensive scale nor to protect it reliably. In its place, Allah Almighty had blessed the people of Arabia with a memory of such dimensions that thousands of poetic lines would normally rest in the memory of one person after another. Ordinary, run-of-the-mill villagers would remember by heart their genealogies and those of their families, and unbelievably enough - even those of their horses! Therefore, this power of memory was well utilized for the conservation and protection of the noble Qur'ān and it was through it that the verses and chapters of the noble Qur'ān reached all over into the far corners of Arabia.

The writing of *Wahy*

Besides having the Qur'ān committed to memory, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم made special arrangements to have the Qur'ān committed to writing as well. Sayyidna Zayd ibn Thābit رضى الله عنه says: 'I used to write down the words of *Waḥy* for him. When *Wahy* came to him he felt burning with heat and the drops of perspiration would start rolling down on his body like pearls. When this state would go away from him, I would present myself before him with a shoulder-bone or a piece (of something else). He would go on dictating and I would go on writing. When I would be finished with writing, the sheer weight of copying the Qur'ān would give me the feeling that my leg is going to break and I would never be able to walk. In any case, when I would be finished with writing, he would say: 'Read'. I would read it back to him. If there was a shortcoming, he would have it corrected and then let it be known to people (Majma' al-Zawaid with reference to Tabrani 1/156).

Besides Sayyidnā Zayd ibn Thābit رضى الله عنه , there were many other Companions who carried out the duty of committing the *Wahy* to writing. Some of those who can be specially mentioned, in addition to the Four Guided Caliphs, are Sayyidnā 'Ubayy ibn Ka'b, Sayyidnā Zubayr ibn 'Awwām, Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah, Sayyidnā Mughīrah ibn Shu'bah, Sayyidnā Khālid ibn al-Walid, Sayyidnā Thābit ibn al-Qays, Sayyidnā Abān ibn Sa'īd and others (Fath al-Bari, 9/18)

Sayyidnā 'Uthman says that it was the blessed practice of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that he, soon after the revelation of a certain portion of the Qur'ān, would pointedly instruct the scribe of the *Waḥy* to write it in such Sūrah after such and such verse (for details see Fath al-Bari, 9/18 and Zad al-Ma'ad 1/30).

Since paper was not available in Arabia during those days, therefore, these Qur'ānic verses were mostly written on stone slabs, parchments, date branches, bamboo units, tree leaves and animal bones. However, at times, paper pieces have also been used (Ibid., 9/11).

Thus, there existed, during the times of the Holy Prophet ﷺ , a copy of the noble Qur'ān which he had arranged to be committed to writing under his supervision. Although, it was not there as a formally prepared book, but it certainly was there in the form of various units of available writing materials. Along with it, it was also the practice of some revered Companions that they would make copies of the Qur'anic verses and keep them for personal recollection. This practice was common since the very early period of Islam. Accordingly, much before Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه embraced Islam, his sister and brother-in-law had in their possession verses of the Qur'ān which they had written and kept in book form (Sirah ibn Hisham).

Preservation: In the period of Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه

However, it was characteristic of all copies of the noble Qur'ān made during the days of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that they were either written on different available writing surfaces, for instance, a verse would appear on parchment, another on tree leaf and yet another on a bone; or they were not complete copies. One Companion would have only a single Sūrah in his record while someone else would have five or ten Sūrahs and some others will have only a few verses. Then there were Companions having in their possession explanatory sentences as well along with the text of the verses.

On these grounds, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه, during his tenure of Khilafah, thought it necessary to bring together all these scattered units of the Qur'ān and thus have them preserved. The motives and the methods behind this great achievement of his have been explained in detail by Sayyidnā Zayd ibn Thābit رضى الله عنه when he says: "One day, soon after the battle of Yamamah, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr sent a message calling me in. When I reached him, Sayyidnā 'Umar was present there. Sayyidnā Abū Bakr said to me: 'Umar has come just now and he tells me that a large group of *Ḥuffāẓ* (those who had committed the Qur'ān to memory) have met their death as martyrs in the battle of Yamāmah. If the *Ḥuffāẓ* of the noble Qur'ān continue to meet their *shahadah* (martyrdom) in this manner, I am afraid a large portion of the Qur'ān may just go extinct. So, in my view, you should begin the task of having the Qur'ān collected together under your order'. I said to 'Umar: 'How can we do what the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself did not do?' 'Umar replied: 'By God, this is for nothing but good.' After that, this is what 'Umar continued telling me, until I too started seeing the truth, and now, my view was the same as 'Umar's'. After that Sayyidnā Abū Bakr told me: 'You are young, and intelligent. We have no doubts about you. You have been working as a scribe of *Waḥy* as well under the supervision of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ , so you search and collect the verses of the noble Qur'ān'."

Sayyidnā Zayd ibn Thābit says: "By God, had these blessed people commanded me to haul some mountain, that would have been much less weightier than this duty of collecting the Qur'ān. I said to them: 'How are you doing something that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم did not do?' Sayyidnā Abū Bakr said: 'By God, this is good, nothing but good.' After that, this is what Sayyidnā Abū Bakr kept saying to me again and again until Allah Almighty put my heart at rest for the same view that was the view of Sayyidnā Abū Bakr and 'Umar. Consequently, I started searching for the Verses of the Qur'ān and it was from the branches of date palms, slabs of stones and hearts of people that I finally collected the noble Qur'ān." (Sahih al-Bukhari, Kitab Fada'il al-Qur'an)

At this point while we are dealing with the process of the collection of the Qur'ān, we should have a clear perception of the method used by

Sayyidnā Zayd ibn Thābit رضى الله عنه . As mentioned earlier, he was himself a *Ḥafiẓ* of the Qur'ān, therefore, he could have written down the whole Qur'ān from his memory. In addition to that, there were hundreds of *Ḥuffāẓ* (memorizers of the Qur'ān: plural of *Ḥafiẓ*) present at that time; the noble Qur'ān could have still been written down by entrusting the duty to a selected group from out of them.

Also, the copies of the noble Qur'ān committed to writing during the times of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم could have been used by Sayyidnā Zayd to make his copy of the Qur'ān. But he, guided by his caution and concern, did not limit himself to any one of the many methods available. On the contrary, by using all these methods simultaneously, he did not allow any verse to be included in his master copy of the Qur'ān unless he received written and verbal testimonies proving its uninterrupted succession. In addition to that, the verses that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had arranged to be written under his supervision, were still preserved by the Companions. Sayyidnā Zayd collected them together so that the new copy be made from them. Consequently, a public proclamation was made to the effect that anyone possessing any number of written verses of the noble Qur'ān should bring them over to Sayyidnā Zayd. When a written verse was brought to him by someone, he used to verify its authenticity by the following four methods:

(1) To begin with, he tested its reliability against his own memory.

(2) Then, Sayyidnā 'Umar too was a *Ḥafiẓ* of Qur'ān, and as proved by reliable reports, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه had assigned him too to work with Sayyidnā Zayd on this project. When someone came with some verse, Sayyidnā Zayd and Sayyidnā 'Umar used to receive it jointly (Fath al-Bari with reference to ibn Abi Dawud).

(3) No written verse was accepted until such time that two trustworthy witnesses had testified to the fact that the particular verse was written in the presence of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. (al-Itqan, 1/10)

(4) After that, these verses in writing were collated with collections that different Companions had prepared for themselves (al-Burhan fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an, by Zarkashi, 1/238).

If this functional methodology behind the collection of the Qur'ān

during the period of Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی الله عنه is kept in mind, it would become perfectly simple to understand what Sayyidnā Zayd ibn Thabit meant when he said: "I found the last verses of Sūrah al-Barā'ah beginning with: لَقَدْ جَآءَكُمْ رَسُوْلٌ مِّنْ اَنْفُسِكُمْ with Sayyidnā Abū Khudhaymah رضی الله عنه only. They were not found with anyone else except him."

This never means that no person other than Sayyidnā Abū Khudhaymah رضی الله عنه remembered these verses, or somebody else did not have these in the written form, or anyone other than him did not know of their being part of the Qur'ān. On the contrary, it means that these verses were not found with anyone from among those who were coming along with different verses written as dicated by the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Otherwise, as far as the fact of these verses being part of the Qur'ān is concerned, everyone knew it in an uninterrupted succession. There were hundreds of Companions who remembered it as well. Moreover, these were available in writing with Companions who possessed complete collections of the Qur'ānic verses. But, among those written separately under the supervision of the Holy Prophet ﷺ this verse was found only with Sayyidnā Abū Khudhaymah رضی الله عنه and not with anyone else (al-Burhan, 1/234-45).

So, in every way possible, it was with great caution and concern that Sayyidnā Zayd ibn Thābit رضی الله عنه, by collecting the Qur'ānic verses, wrote them out in an organized form on pages of paper (al-Itqan, 1/60).

But, each Surah was written in separate folios, therefore, this copy was composed of many folios. In the terminology of Qur'ānic Studies, this copy is called the "*Umm*" (literally, 'the mother', meaning 'the original') and it had the following features:

1. In this copy, the Qur'ānic verses were indeed arranged in accordance with the order identified by the Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم, but the Sūrahs were not so arranged, rather they were written separately (Ibid).

2. Incorporated in this copy were all seven *Hurūf* (versions) of the Qur'ān (which have been explained earlier). (Manhil al'Irfan, 1/246 and Tarikh al-Qur'an by al-Kurdi, p. 28)

3. Collected here were all verses the recitation of which has not been abrogated.

4. The purpose of having this copy made in writing was to prepare an organized document with the collective endorsement of the whole *ummah*, so that, reference can be made to it when needed.

These folios committed to writing on the orders of Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه remained with him during his life-time. Then, they remained with Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه . After the martyrdom of Sayyidnā 'Umar, they were transferred to the custody of Umm al-Mu'minīn Sayyidah Ḥafṣah رضى الله عنها . After the death of Sayyidah Ḥafṣah رضى الله عنها , Mārwan ibn al-Ḥakam had these burnt since the copies of Qur'ān ordered by Sayyidnā 'Uthmān رضى الله عنه were ready at that time, and a consensus of the *ummah* had already been reached to the effect that following these copies of the Qur'ān, in script and arrangement of Sūrahs, was obligatory. Marwān ibn al-Ḥakam thought it inadvisable to let any copy which was contrary to this script and arrangement remain in existence (Fath al-Bari, 9/16).

Preservation: In the period of Sayyidnā 'Uthmān رضى الله عنه

When Sayyidnā 'Uthmān رضى الله عنه became Khalīfah, Islam had grown out of Arabia reaching into the far-flung areas of Byzantium and Iran. As people from new areas embraced Islam, they would learn the noble Qur'ān from the Mujāhidīn of Islam or from the traders because of whom they had found the blessing of Islam. On the other side, you have already read that the noble Qur'ān was revealed incorporating seven versions with various readings, and different *Ṣaḥābah* (Companions) had learnt it from the Holy Prophet ﷺ in accordance with different readings, therefore, every Companion taught Qur'an to his disciples in accordance with that particular reading which they had themselves learnt from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم . In this manner, this difference in readings reached far-out countries. Until such time that people knew that the noble Qur'ān has been revealed incorporating seven *Ḥurūf* (versions) no harm was done by this difference. However, when this difference reached those far-out countries, and the fact that the noble Qur'ān has been revealed incorporating different readings was not fully publicised there, disputes among people started showing up. Some people began to insist on their reading as correct and that of others as incorrect. On

the one hand, these disputes posed the danger that people would fall into the grave error of declaring the readings of the noble Qur'ān which have followed in uninterrupted succession as incorrect. On the other hand, there was no such standard copy available throughout the Islamic world which could become the rallying authority for the entire *ummah*, except, of course, the copy committed to writing by Sayyidnā Zayd ibn Thābit رضی اللہ عنہ which was there in Madīnah. Since other copies were written individually, and in them, there was no provision to incorporate all the readings, therefore, the only reliable method to resolve these disputes was that copies which incorporate all valid readings be spread out all over the Islamic world, and then, by seeing them it could be decided as to which reading is correct and which, incorrect. Sayyidnā 'Uthmān رضی اللہ عنہ accomplished this very remarkable feat during the period of his *Khilāfah*.

Details of this feat, as given in *ḥadīth* narrations, inform us that Sayyidnā Hudhayfah ibn Yamān رضی اللہ عنہ was engaged in *jihād* on the Armenian-Azerbaijan front. There he noticed that differences were rising among people about readings of the noble Qur'ān. So, on his return to Madīnah, he went straight to Sayyidnā 'Uthmān رضی اللہ عنہ and once there, he pleaded: '*Yā Amīr al-Mu'minīn*! Before this *Ummah* falls a prey to differences in the Book of Allah like the Jews and Christians, you should do something about it.' Sayyidnā 'Uthmān asked: 'What is the matter?' In reply, Sayyidna Hudhayfah said: 'I was on a *jihād* mission fighting on the Armenian front. There I saw people of Syria following the reading of Ubayy ibn Ka'b which would not be familiar to the people of 'Iraq, and the people of Irān follow the reading of 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd which would not be familiar to the people of Syria. As a result of this, they are charging each other of being *kāfirs*.'

In fact, Sayyidnā 'Uthmān رضی اللہ عنہ had himself sensed the danger much earlier. He was told that there were cases right there in Madīnah al-Tayyibah itself where a teacher of the noble Qur'ān would teach the text to his disciples in accordance with one reading, and another teacher would do so in accordance with another reading. In this way, when the disciples of different teachers came together, differences would crop up between them, and there were occasions when this difference would extend to teachers, and they too, would declare each other's reading to be incorrect. When Sayyidnā

Hudhayfah ibn Yamān رضی اللہ عنہ too invited his attention to this danger, Sayyidnā 'Uthmān رضی اللہ عنہ convened a meeting of some highly-regarded Companions and sought their advice. He said: 'I have been informed that there are people who say to each other things like - "my reading is better than yours" - and this could touch the extreme limits of *kufr*. So, what is your opinion in this connection?' The Companions themselves asked Sayyidnā 'Uthmān رضی اللہ عنہ :'What are your own thoughts on this subject?' Sayyidnā 'Uthmān رضی اللہ عنہ said: 'I believe we should unite everyone on one Book so that we face no difference or division.' The Companions, approving of this opinion, supported Sayyidnā 'Uthmān رضی اللہ عنہ .

Consequently, Sayyidnā 'Uthmān رضی اللہ عنہ gathered people together and delivered a sermon and in it he said: "You who live so close to me in Madīnah, if you can falsify each other and differ with each other in respect of the readings of the noble Qur'ān, it is quite obvious that those who are far away from me will be indulging in falsification and disputation on a much larger scale. Therefore, let everyone get together and come up with a copy of the Qur'ān following which becomes obligatory for all."

With this in view, Sayyidnā 'Uthmān رضی اللہ عنہ sent a message to Sayyidah Ḥafṣah رضی اللہ عنہا requesting her to let them have the blessed folios of the Qur'ānic text (prepared under the orders of Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ which she had in her custody). He promised that these will be returned to her after copies have been made. Sayyidah Ḥafṣah رضی اللہ عنہا sent these pages of the Qur'ān to Sayyidnā 'Uthmān رضی اللہ عنہ. He then formed a group of four Companions which was composed of Sayyidnā Zayd ibn Thābit, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Zubayr, Sayyidnā Sa'īd ibn al-'Āṣ and Sayyidnā 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn Hārith ibn Hishām رضی اللہ عنہم اجمعین . This group was entrusted with the duty of making several copies from the original copy of Sayyidnā Abū Bakr's Qur'ānic folios and making sure that Sūrahs too are arranged in order. Out of these four Companions, Sayyidnā Zayd was an Ansāri, while the rest of the three were Qurayshis. Therefore, Sayyidnā 'Uthmān رضی اللہ عنہ said to them: 'When you and Zayd differ in respect of any portion of the Qur'ān (that is, differ as to how a certain letter should be written) you write it in the language of the Quraysh because the noble Qur'an has been revealed in their very language."

Basically, this duty was entrusted to only four distinguished persons named above, but later on, other Companions were also attached to help them out. (Fath al-Bari, pp. 13-15, v. 9)

They performed the following functions in connection with the writing of the Qur'ān:

1. In the copy prepared during the period of Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه , Sūrahs were not placed in sequence, rather each Sūrah was written separately. They wrote down all Sūrahs in their proper sequence in a single copy. (Mustadrak, 2/229)

2. The verses of the noble Qur'ān were written in a way so that all readings backed by uninterrupted succession could be incorporated within their script. Therefore, no dots or desinential marks were placed on them so that the text could be recited in accordance with all readings that are supported by uninterrupted succession. For instance, they wrote نىسرها in order that it could be read both نُنْشِزُهَا and نُنْشِرُهَا, because both readings are correct. (Manahil al- 'Irfan, 1/253-254)

3. Upto this time, there existed only one single copy of the noble Qur'ān - complete, authentically standard and collectively attested by the whole *ummah*. These distinguished persons prepared more than one copy of this newly organized *Muṣhaf* (copy of the Qur'ān).

It is generally believed that Sayyidnā 'Uthmān رضى الله عنه had accomplished the preparation of five copies, but Abū Hātim Sijistānī says that a total of seven copies were prepared. Out of these one was sent to Makkah al-Mukarramah, one to Syria, one to Yamān, one to Bahrain, one to Baṣrah and one to Kūfah, and one was preserved in Madīnah al-Tayyibah.

4. To accomplish the task cited above, these revered elders basically worked through the pages of the Qur'ān which were written during the times of Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه . But, along with it, as a matter of added precaution, they adopted exactly the same method that was employed during the times of Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه . Consequently, assorted copies of texts committed into writing during the days of the Holy Prophet ﷺ which were preserved by different Companions were recalled once again, and it was, by yet another collation with these, that the new copies were prepared. This time, a separately written verse of Sūrah al-Aḥzāb, مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ رِجَالٌ صَدَقُوا مَا عَاهَدُوا اللَّهَ عَلَيْهِ was

found with Sayyidnā Thābit al-Anṣārī رضی الله عنه only. As we have explained earlier, it does not mean that nobody else remembered this verse because Sayyidnā Zayd رضی الله عنه has himself said: 'While writing the copy of the Qur'ān, I could not find the particular verse of Sūrah al-Aḥzāb which I used to hear the Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم recite.' This shows very clearly that the verse under reference was something Sayyidnā Zayd and other Companions remembered very well. On the other hand, it also does not mean that this verse never existed in writing anywhere, because this verse was obviously there in the pages of the Qur'ān written during the times of Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی الله عنه. Besides that, obviously enough, this verse was also included in the copies of the noble Qur'ān which were written and preserved by the Companions on their own. But, like it was in the days of Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی الله عنه, this time too, all those scattered documents, available with the Companions in writing, were collected together, therefore, Sayyidnā Zayd رضی الله عنه and others with him did not write down any verse into these copies of the Qur'ān until such time when they did find it in those written documentations as well. As such, the fact was that other verses were found written separately too with several Companions, but this verse from Sūrah al-Aḥzāb was not found written separately with anyone else except Sayyidnā Khudhaymah رضی الله عنه.

5. After having these several standard copies of the Qur'ān prepared, Sayyidnā 'Uthmān رضی الله عنه had all copies personally kept by different Companions burnt so that all copies of the Qur'ān become uniform in terms of the script, incorporation of accepted readings and the order of chapters, leaving no room for any difference between them.

The entire *ummah* acknowledged this achievement of Sayyidnā 'Uthmān رضی الله عنه with admiration, and the Companions supported him in this venture. The only exception is that of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضی الله عنه who was somewhat unhappy about it, something that cannot be taken up here in its proper perspective. Sayyidnā 'Alī رضی الله عنه says:

"Say nothing about 'Uthmān unless it be in his favour because, by God, whatever he did in connection with copies of the Qur'ān was done in the presence of all of us, and with our advice and counsel." (Fath al-Bari, 9/15)

Steps Taken to Facilitate Recitation

After the afore-mentioned achievement of Sayyidnā 'Uthmān رضى الله عنه, the *ummah* reached a consensus on the rule that it is not permissible to write the text of the noble Qur'ān using any method other than the 'Uthmāni Script. Consequently, all copies of the Qur'ān were, later on, written in accordance with this method, and the Companions and their successors, may Allah be pleased with them all, by bringing forth repeatedly, reproductions of the standard 'Uthmāni copies of the Qur'ān, helped spread the noble Qur'ān on a vast scale.

But, the copies of the noble Qur'ān were still devoid of dots and vowel points or desinential marks which made it difficult for non-Arabs to recite them freely. As Islam spread out wide and deep in non-Arab countries, the need to add dots and vowel points became acute, in order that people may be able to recite them easily. Several steps were taken to achieve this purpose. Their brief history is as follows:

Inclusion of Dots

The practice of placing dots over or under letters was just not there among early Arabs, however, the readers were so used to this style that they had practically no difficulty in reading dot-less writing to the limit that they would easily distinguish between doubtful letters by referring to the context. Specially, there was no possibility of any doubt in the case of the noble Qur'ān because its preservation did not rest on writing, rather on the strength of memories, pursuant to which, Sayyidnā 'Uthmān رضى الله عنه had assigned *Qārīs*, accomplished reciters of the Qur'ān, along with its copies sent out to various parts of the Muslim world so that they could teach how to read it.

There are different reports as to who first placed dots on the copy of the noble Qur'ān. Some reports say that this feat was first accomplished by Ḥaḍrat Abū al-Aswad al-Du'ali رحمة الله عليه (al-Burhan, 1/250). Some say he did this under the instructions of Sayyidnā 'Alī كرم الله وجهه (Subh al-A'sha, 3/155). There are others who have said that Ziyād ibn Abī Sufyān, the Governor of Kufah, asked him to do this. Then there is yet another report which credits Hajjaj ibn Yūsuf with this feat who did it with the help of Ḥasan al-Basrī, Yaḥya ibn Ya'mur and Naṣr ibn 'Āṣim al-Laythī, may Allah's mercy be upon them all. (Tafsir al-Qurtubi, 1/63)

Marks for correct reading

In the beginning, like dots, the Qur'ān did not have any desinential marks either. Here too, reports are at variance as to who placed desinential marks first. Some say Abū al-Aswad al-Du'alī did it first while others claim that this was accomplished by Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf through Yaḥyā ibn Ya'mur and Naṣr ibn 'Āṣim al-Laythī. (Ibid)

Keeping in view all reports in this connection, it appears that desinential marks were first invented by Abū al-Aswad al-Du'alī, but they were not like what they are today. Instead, placed there for *fathah* was a dot (_•_) over the letter, for *kasrah* a dot (____) under the letter, for *ḍammah* a dot (_____•) in front of the letter; and there were two dots (_••_ or ____ or _••_) for *tanwīn* or nunnation. It was only later that Khalīl ibn Ahmad innovated the signs of *hamzah* (glottal stop) and *tashdīd* (doubling). (Subh al-A'sha, 3/160-161) After that, Hajjāj ibn Yusuf requested Yaḥyā ibn Ya'mur, Naṣr ibn 'Āṣim al-Laythī and Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, may Allah's mercy be upon them all, to simultaneously place dots and desinential marks on the text of the noble Qur'ān. On this occasion, the present forms of desinential marks were chosen to replace dots as expression of case signs. The purpose was to avoid confusing them with dots intrinsically belonging to letters.

Aḥzāb or *Manazil*

It was the practice of Companions and their Successors that they would complete the recital of the entire Qur'ān once every week. For this purpose, they had identified fixed portions for their daily recitation which is known as '*ḥizb*' or '*manzil*'. Thus the entire Qur'ān was divided over seven '*aḥzāb*' (plural of '*ḥizb*') '*manāzil*' (plural of '*manzil*'). (al-Burhan, 1/250)

Ajzā' or Parts

Today, the Qur'ān is divided over thirty '*ajz'ā*' (plural of '*juz*') or parts. This division in parts has nothing to do with the meaning of the Qur'ān. In fact, this division in thirty equal parts has been made to serve as teaching aid for children as, it will be noticed, there are places where the designated part ends with an unfinished statement. It is difficult to say with certainty as to who brought about this division of

the Qur'ān in thirty parts. Some people believe that Sayyidnā 'Uthmān رضى الله عنه had arranged to have these written in thirty different folio-units while their copies were being made, therefore, this division dates back to his time for sure. But, this humble writer was unable to find any proof of this position in the writings of earlier scholars. However, 'Allāmah Badr al-Dīn al-Zarkashī has written that the thirty parts of the Qur'ān have been known all along and they customarily appear in copies of the Qur'ān used in schools. (al-Burhan, 1/250; Manahil al-'Irfan, 1/402)

Akhmās and *A'shār*: The sets of Fives and Tens

Another sign used in Qur'ānic copies of early centuries was that they would write the word, *khams* (خمس : five) or its abbreviation (خ) after every five verses (on the margin); and the word, *'Ashr* (عشر : ten) or its abbreviation (ع) after every ten verses. The former kind of signs were called '*Akhmās*' (a pentad or group of five) and the later, '*A'shār*' (a decade or group of ten). Consequent to another difference among early scholars, these signs were considered permissible by some, and reprehensible or *makrūh* by others. Saying, with any degree of certainty, as to who was the first to place the signs, is difficult indeed. According to one view, Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf was its inventor, while another view credits this to an order of 'Abbasi Khalīfah, al-Ma'mūn (al-Burhan, 1/251). But, these two views do not appear to be sound since the idea of *a'shār* seems to be there during the times of the Companions. For example, *Masrūq*' a well-known *Tabi'ī*, says that with Sayyidnā 'Abdūllāh ibn Mas'ūd رضى الله عنه the placement of '*A'shār*' markings in the copy of the Qur'ān was *makrūh*. (Musannaf ibn Abi Shaybah, 2/497).

Rukū' or Section

Moreover, the signs of *Akhmās* and *A'shār* were abandoned later on but, yet another sign which continues on even to this day is the sign of *rukū'* or section. This has been determined in terms of the contents of the noble Qur'ān whereby a sign of *rukū'* (the letter ع on the margin) is placed at the conclusion of a statement. Inspite of his efforts, this humble writer was unable to locate anything authentic which would tell us as to who originated the *rukū'*, and in what period. However, this much is almost certain that the purpose of this sign is to identify an average portion of verses which could be recited in one *raka'ah*. It is called '*rukū'*' so that *rukū'* (bending position) could be made in *ṣalāh*

after reaching this point. There are 540 *rukūʻāt* in the whole Qur'ān. So, by reciting one *rukū'* in every *raka'ah* of *tarāwih*, it is possible to complete the recital of the entire Qur'ān on the night of the twenty seventh (Fatawa 'Alamgiryah, Fasl al-Tarawih, 1/94).

***Rumūz al-Awqāf*: Stop Signs**

Another useful step taken to facilitate recitation and phonetically correct pronunciation (*tilāwah* and *tajwīd*) was to provide signs with Qur'ānic sentences which could tell the nature of making a stop (breathing) there. These signs are known as the '*rumūz*' (signs) or '*alāmāt* (symbols) of *awqāf* (stops). Their purpose is to help a person who does not know Arabic to stop at the correct spot during his recitation, and thus, avoid causing a change in meaning by breaking his breath at the wrong spot. Most of these signs were first invented by 'Allamāh Abū 'Abdullāh Muḥammad ibn Tayfūr Sajāwandī, may Allah's mercy be upon him (Al-Nashr fi al-Qira'at al-'Ashr, 1/225). Details about these signs are given below:

ط : This letter ***Tā'*** is an abbreviated form of *al-waqf al-mutlaq*. It means that the statement stands completed at this point. Therefore, it is better to stop here.

ج : This letter ***Jīm*** is an abbreviation of *al-waqf al-jā'iz* and it means that it is permissible to stop here.

ز : This letter ***Zā'*** is an abbreviation of *al-waqf al-mujawwaz*. It means that making a stop here is correct all right, but the better choice is not to make a stop here.

ص : This letter ***Ṣād*** is an abbreviation of *al-waqf al-murakhkhaṣ*. It means that the statement has not yet been completed at this point but, because the sentence has become long, here is the place to breathe and stop rather than do it elsewhere (al-Mianh al-Fikriyyah, p. 63).

م : This letter ***mīm*** is an abbreviation of *al-waqf al-lāzim*. It means if a stop is not made here an outrageous distortion in the meaning of the verse is possible. So, it is better to stop here. Some phoneticians of the Qur'ān have also called this *al-waqf al-wājib* or the obligatory stop. But this is not '*wājib*' of *fiqh* which brings sin if abandoned. In fact, the purpose is to stress that making a stop here is the most preferable of all stops (al-Nashr, 1/231).

لا : This letter ***lā*** is an abbreviation of *lā taqif*. It means 'do not

stop here,' but it does not imply that making a stop here is impermissible, because there are certain places bearing this sign where making a stop brings no harm and making an initiation from the following word is also permissible. Therefore, the correct meaning of this sign is: If a stop is made here, it is better to go back and read over again. Initiation from the next word is not approved (al-Nashr, 1/233).

As far as the origin of these signs is concerned, it stands proved beyond doubt that they were invented by 'Allamāh Sajāwandī. In addition to these, there are some other signs as well that appear in the copies of the Qur'ān, for instance:

مع : This ***ma'*** is an abbreviation of "*mu'ānaqāh*". This symbol is inserted at a place where a single verse has two possible explanations. According to one explanation, the stop will be made at one given place, while according to another explanation, this will be at another place. So, a stop can be made at either one of the two places, but once a stop has been made at one place, it is not correct to stop at the other. For instance, take the verse ذٰلِكَ مَثَلُهُمْ فِى التَّوْرَاةِ ۚ وَمَثَلُهُمْ فِى الْاِنْجِيْلِ ۚ كَزَرْعٍ اَخْرَجَ شَطْأَهُ . If a stop is made here at التوراة , then it is not correct to stop at الانجيل and should a stop be made at الانجيل , then it is not correct to stop at التوراة . However, if a stop is not made at both places, that will be correct. It is also known as '*al-muqābalah*'. It was, first of all, pointed out by Imām Abū al-Faḍl al-Rāzī (al-Nashr, 1/237 and al-Itqan, 1/88).

سكتة : This is a symbol for ***saktah***. It means one should stop here breaking the sound but not the breath. This is generally inserted at a place where assimilated reading is likely to cause an erroneous projection of meaning.

وقفة : At this sign of ***waqfah***, one must stop a little longer than *saktah* (pause). But, breath should not break here too.

ق : This letter ***qāf*** is an abbreviation of *qīla 'alaihi l'waqf*. It means that some phoneticans of the Qur'ān identify a stop here while others do not.

قف : This word is '***qif*** which means 'stop' and it is inserted where the reader may possibly think that a stop was not correct there.

صلى : This is an abbreviation of ***al-waṣlu awlā*** which means 'it is better to recite in assimilated continuity'.

صل : This is an abbreviation of ***qad yuṣalū***, that is, some stop here, while others like to recite on in assimilated continuity.

وقف النّبى صلى الله عليه وسلم : This is marked at places where some *ḥadīth* report proves that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم stopped here while reciting.

The printing of the Holy Qur'ān

Before the advent of the printing press, all copies of the Qur'ān were calligraphed by hand, and for this purpose, there always has been, in every age, a large group of calligraphers whose sole purpose in life was nothing else except the calligraphy of the Qur'ān. The amount of hard work put in by Muslims in writing the words of the Qur'ān in ever better styles, and the way they demonstrated their intense emotional involvement with this great Book has a long and interesting history of its own which would need a regular book. This is not the appropriate place to go in such details.

With the invention of the printing press, the noble Qur'ān was first printed at Hamburg in 1113 Hijrah, a copy of which is still present in Dār al-Kutub al-Misriyyah. After that, several orientalists arranged the publication of the copies of Qur'an but they were not received with much approval in the Muslim world. After that, Mawlay 'Uthmān was the first person among Muslims who had one manuscript of the Qur'ān printed at St. Petersburg, a Russian city, in 1787 A.D. Similarly, another manuscript was printed in Qazān also. In 1828 A.D., the Qur'ān was printed by lithography on stone slabs in the Iranian city of Tehran. After that, printed copies of the Qur'ān became common throughout the world. (Tarikh al-Qur'ān by al-Kurdi, p. 186, and 'Ulum al-Qur'ān by Dr. Subhi Saleh; Urdu Translation by Ghulam Ahmad Hariri, p. 142)

An introduction to the science of *Tafsīr*

Now we can turn to the requisites of *'Ilm al-Tafsīr* or Exegesis. The literal meaning of '*tafsīr*' in the Arabic language is 'to open' or to explain, interpret or comment. Technically, the science of *tafsīr* is a branch of knowledge in which the meanings of the Qur'ān are explained and its injunctions and wisdoms are described openly and clearly (al-Burhan). Addressing the Holy Prophet ﷺ, the Glorious Qur'ān says:

وَاَنْزَلْنَا اِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ اِلَيْهِمْ

We revealed the Qur'ān to you so that you explain to the people what has been sent down to them(16:44).

Once again, the Qur'ān says:

لَقَدْ مَنَّ اللّٰهُ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ اِذْ بَعَثَ فِيْهِمْ رَسُوْلاً مِّنْ اَنْفُسِهِمْ يَتْلُوْ عَلَيْهِمْ اٰيَاتِهٖ وَيُزَكِّيْهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ

Surely, Allah did a great favour to Muslims when He sent a Messenger to them from among them who would recite His verses before them and purify them and teach them the Book and the Wisdom (3:164).

Keeping this in view, it should be noted that the Holy Prophet ﷺ did not only teach the words of the Qur'ān, but he also explained these in details. This is why, on some occasions, the revered Companions had to devote years together in learning a single Sūrah; details will, *inshallāh*, appear later on.

Until such time that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم graced this mortal world with his presence, seeking the explanation of any verse was not much of a problem. When the Companions faced any difficulty, they would turn to him and get a satisfying answer. But, later on after him, it became necessary that the *tafsīr* of Qur'ān be preserved as a permanent branch of knowledge so that, along with the words of the noble Qur'ān, its correct meaning as well stands protected and conserved for the Muslim *ummah*, and heretics and deviationists find no room there for distortion of its meanings. So, with the grace and *tawfīq* of Allah Almighty, this *ummah* accomplished this wonderful mission with such effeciency that today we can say without any fear of doubt or rejection that not only are the words of this last Book of Allah protected but also stands protected even that correct *tafsīr* and explanation which has reached us through the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his Companions who were ever-prepared to sacrifice their lives for him.

In what ways the Muslim *ummah* protected and preserved the *'ilm* (science) of *tafsīr*? What exrteme hardships they faced in this pursuit? How many stages did this struggle had to go through? All this has a long and fascinating history which cannot be taken up in the present

context (for this, please see *'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, a detailed work on this subject by this humble writer). The intention here is to state briefly as to what are the sources of Qur'ānic exegesis and how these sources have been utilized in explaining the noble Qur'ān by all those countless books on *'Ilm al-Tafsīr* available in every language. These sources are six in number:

The Sources of *Tafsīr*

1. The Glorious Qur'ān

The first source of the knowledge of *tafsīr* is the Holy Qur'ān itself. Accordingly, it happens very often that a certain point which is brief and requires explanation is invariably clarified by some other verse of the Qur'ān itself. For instance, there appears that sentence of prayer in the Sūrah al-Fātihah: اِهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيْمَ صِرَاطَ الَّذِيْنَ اَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ that is, 'Guide us in the straight path - the path of those on whom You have bestowed Your Grace...' Now it is not clear here as to who are those whom Allah Almighty has blessed. But, in another verse, they have been identified very clearly where it is said:

فَاُولٰٓئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِيْنَ اَنْعَمَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنَ النَّبِيّٖنَ وَالصِّدِّيْقِيْنَ وَالشُّهَدَآءِ وَالصّٰلِحِيْنَ

> So, these are the people whom Allah Almighty has blessed, being the prophets, their true followers, the martyrs (in the way of Allah) and the righteous. (4:69)

Therefore, when respected commentators explain some verse, they first check to see if a *tafsīr* of this verse is already there elsewhere in the noble Qur'ān itself. If it is there, they elect to go by it as their first choice.

2. The *Ḥadīth*

The words and the deeds of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم are called *Ḥadīth*, and as it has been stated earlier, Allah Almighty had sent him with the Qur'ān solely for the purpose that he should explain to people, openly and explicitly, the correct meanings of the noble Qur'ān. Consequently, he discharged this duty with grace and excellence both by his words and deeds. In fact his whole blessed life is, after all, a practical *tafsīr* of Qur'ān. It is for this reason that

respected commentators, in order to understand the Qur'ān, have laid the greatest emphasis on *Ḥadīth* as the second source, and it is in the light of *aḥadīth* that they have determined the meanings of the Book of Allah. However, because all sorts of narrations - sound, weak, and fabricated - are included in *Ḥadīth*, therefore research-oriented commentators do not accept a narration as trustworthy until it withstands the principles used in the scrutiny of *Ḥadīth* narrations. Hence, finding a *ḥadīth* report somewhere, looking at it, and then employing it to determine a certain *tafsīr* is not correct, because that report could be weak, even contrary to other stronger reports. This is really a very delicate matter, and venturing therein is the exclusive prerogative of those who have spent their years in mastering these fields of knowledge.

3. The Reports from the *Ṣaḥābah*

The noble *Ṣaḥābah* (Companions), may Allah be pleased with them all, had received their education directly from the Holy Prophet ﷺ . In addition to that, they were personally present on the scene when *Waḥy* came, and they had themselves witnessed all circumstances and backgrounds of the revelation of the Qur'ān. Therefore, naturally, the recorded statements of these blessed souls are far more authentic and trustworthy in explaining the noble Qur'ān; the later people cannot take that place. Hence, in the case of verses the explanation of which is not found in the Qur'ān or *Ḥadīth*, statements recorded from the noble Companions are given the highest priority. Consequently, if there is a consensus of Companions on the explanation of a certain verse, the commentators follow just that, and explaining it in any way, other than that, is not permissible. By the way, if the statements of Companions differ in the interpretation (*tafsīr*) of a certain verse, then the commentators who come later examine them in the light of arguments and determine as to which interpretation or explanation can be given preference. In order to handle this situation, there is an important corpus of rules and regulations already codified under the sciences of *Uṣūl al-Fiqh, Uṣūl al-Ḥadīth* and *Uṣūl al-Tafsīr* a detailed discussion of which is not appropriate here.

4. The Reports from the *Tābi'īn* or Successors

After Companions (*Ṣaḥābah*) come the Successors (*Tābi'īn*). The later are those who have learnt the *tafsīr* of Qur'ān from the

Companions. Therefore, their statements too have great importance in the science of *tafsīr*, although there exists a difference among scholars whether or not the statements of the *tābi'īn* are decisive evidences in *tafsīr* (al-Itqan, 2/179) but their importance is something which cannot be denied.

5. The Arabic Language

Since the noble Qur'ān was revealed in the Arabic language, therefore, in order to explain the Qur'ān, it is necessary to have a complete mastery over the language. There are several verses of the noble Qur'ān in the background of which there happen to be just no attending circumstances of revelations, or any juristic or scholastic question, therefore, in their *tafsīr* or explanation, the sayings of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم or the statements of the *ṣaḥābah* and *tābi'īn* are not reported. For that reason, the only means through which these can be explained is that of the Arabic language, and it is on th basis of language alone that they are elucidated. Besides that, should there be some difference in the *tafsīr* of a certain verse, then, in that case too, the science of linguistics is used to run a test of veracity between varying opinions.

6. Deliberation and Deduction

The last source of *tafsīr* consists of deliberation and deduction. The subtleties and mysteries of the noble Qur'ān are an ocean with no shore, no end. Therefore, the more a person, who has been blessed with insight into the Islamic sciences by Allah Almighty, deliberates in it, the more he discovers ever-new mysteries and subtleties. As a result of this, commentators do present the outcomes of their respective deliberations as well, but mysteries and subtleties so described are found acceptable only when they do not go against the five sources mentioned above. So, should a person, while explaining the Qur'ān, come out with a subtle point or independent judgment which is contrary to the Qur'ān and Sunnah, Consensus (*Ijmā'*), Language, or the statements of Companions and Successors, or stands in conflict with another principle of Sharī'ah, that will then have no credence. Some mystics (رحمهم الله) had started describing such mysteries and subtleties in *tafsīr*, but investigative scholars of the *ummah* did not consider these trustworthy because the personal opinion of any

person against the basic principles of the Qur'ān, Sunnah and Sharī'ah has obviously no weight. (al-Itqan, 2/184)

The rules relating to Israelite reports

Judaica or *Isrā'īliyyāt* are narratives which have reached us through Jews and Christians. It may be noted that early commentators used to write down all sorts of narrations which reached them from an identified source. Many of these narrations were straight Judaica. Therefore, it is equally necessary to know what they really are. The reality is that some noble Companions and their Successors first belonged to the religion of the people of the Book, later on when they became Muslims and learnt the Qur'ān, they came across several events relating to past communities in the Qur'ān and which they had also read in the books of their previous religion. Therefore, while referring to the events mentioned in the Qur'ān they would describe other details before Muslims which they had seen in the books of their old religion. These very details have entered into the books of *tafsir* under the name of '*Isrā'īliyyāt*'. Ḥāfiẓ ibn Kathīr, who is one of the authentic research scholars, has written that there are three kinds of '*Isrā'īliyyāt*':

1. Narrations the truth of which is proved from other evidences of the Qur'ān and Sunnah, for instance, the drowning of Pharoah and and the ascent of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام onto Mount *Tūr* (Sinai).

2. Narrations the falsity of which is proved from other evidences of the Qur'ān and Sunnah, for instance, it appears in Judaic narrations that Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام had become (God forbid) an apostate in his later years. Its refutation is proved from the Qur'ān. It is said there: وَمَا كَفَرَ سُلَيْمٰنُ وَلٰكِنَّ الشَّيٰطِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا :'It was not Sulaymān who became an infidel, but the devils did become infidels' (2:102). To cite yet another example, it finds mention in Judaic narrations that (God forbid) Sayyidnā Dawūd عليه السلام (David) committed adultery with the wife of his general (Uriah), or, having him killed through all sorts of contrivances, ended up marrying his wife. This too is a balatant lie, and taking such narrations to be false is imperative.

3. Narrations regarding which the Qur'ān, the Sunnah and the Sharī'ah are silent, such as the injunctions of Torah etc., are subjects about which silence is to be observed as taught by the Holy Prophet ﷺ

:'Neither confirm, nor falsify'. There is, however, a difference of opinion among scholars whether or not reporting such narrations is permissible. Ḥāfiẓ ibn Kathīr has given the decisive word by saying that reporting these is permissible all right but doing so is useless because they cannot be taken as authentic. (Muqaddamah Tafsīr ibn Kathīr)

A misconception about the *tafsir* of Qur'ān

Hopefully, details given above have made it clear that the *tafsīr* (exegesis or interpretation) of the noble Qur'ān is an extremely delicate and difficult undertaking for which getting to know the Arabic language alone is not enough. In fact, it is necessary to have expertise in all related branches of knowledge. Therefore, scholars say that a *mufassir* or commentator of the Qur'ān must have vast and deep knowledge of the syntax, etymology, rhetoric, and literature of the Arabic language, as well as, that of prophetic Traditions, principles governing jurisprudence and exegesis, doctrinal articles of belief and scholastics. The reason is that one cannot arrive at correct conclusions while explaining the Qur'ān unless there be that adequacy in these fields of knowledge.

It is regretable that a dangerous epidemic has overtaken Muslims lately whereby many people have started taking the sole reading ability of Arabic sufficient for the *tafsīr* (interpretation) of the Qur'an. As a result, anyone who gets to read ordinary Arabic starts passing out opinions in the domain of Qur'ānic exegesis. Rather, it has been noticed on occasions that people having just passable familiarity with the Arabic language, and who have yet to master their Arabic to perfection, take it upon themselves to engage in explaining the Qur'ān following their whims, even going to the limit of finding faults with classical commentators. Bad come to worse, there are some subtle tyrants who would, by simply reading the translation, imagine that they have become scholars of the Qur'ān, not even feeling shy of criticising commentators of great stature.

It should be understood very clearly that this is a highly dangerous pattern of behaviour which, in matters of religion, leads to fatal straying. As regards secular arts and sciences, everyone can claim to understand that should a person simply learn the English language and go on to study books of medical science, he would not be

acknowledged as a physician by any reasonable person anywhere in the world, and certainly not trustworthy enough to take care of somebody's life unless he has been educated and trained in a medical college. Therefore, having learnt English is not all one needs to become a doctor.

Similarly, should anyone knowing English hope to become an engineer just by reading through engineering books, it is clear that no sane person in this world would accept him as an engineer. The reason is that this technical expertise cannot be acquired simply by learning the English language. It would, rather, need a formal training in the discipline under the supervision and guidance of expert teachers. When these stringent requirements are inevitable in order to become a doctor or engineer, how can the learning of Arabic language alone become sufficient in matters relating to the Qur'ān and *Ḥadīth*? In every department of life, everyone knows and acts upon the principle that every art or science has its own particular method of learning and its own peculiar conditions. Unless these are fulfilled, the learner's opinion in given arts and sciences will not be considered trustworthy. If that is so, how can the Qur'ān and the Sunnah become so unclaimed a field of inquiry that there be no need to acquire any art or science in order to explain them, and anyone who so wishes starts passing out opinions in this matter?

Some people say that the Qur'ān has itself stated that: وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْآنَ لِلذِّكْرِ: 'And surely We have made the Qur'ān easy for the sake of good counsel.' And since the noble Qur'ān is a simple book, its explanation hardly needs much of a support from any art or science. But this argument is terribly fallacious, which is, in itself, based on lack of intellect and plenty of superficiality. The fact is that the verses of the Qur'ān are of two kinds. Firstly, there are the verses that offer general good counsel, relate lesson-oriented events and introduce subjects dealing with taking of warning and acting on sound advice. Examples of this are the mortality of the world, the accounts of Paradise and Hell, the discourses likely to create the fear of God and the concern for the Hereafter, and other very simple realities of life. Verses of this kind are undoubtedly easy and anyone who knows the Arabic language can benefit from their good counsel by understanding them.

It is in relation to teachings of this kind that, in the verse cited above, it was said that 'We have made them easy'. Hence, the word للذكر (for the sake of good counsel) in the verse itself is pointing out towards this meaning.

Contrary to this, the other kind consists of verses which include injunctions, laws, articles of faith and intellectual subjects. Understanding verses of this kind as they should be rightfully understood and deducing and formulating injunctions and rulings from them cannot be done by just any person unless one has the insight and permeating reach into the Islamic areas of knowledge. This is why the noble Companions, whose mother-tongue was Arabic and they did not have to go anywhere to get trained into understanding Arabic, used to spend long periods of time in learning the Qur'ān from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم . 'Allamāh al-Suyuti has reported from Imām Abū 'Abd al-Raḥman Sulami that the Companions, who formally learned the Qur'ān from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم such as Sayyidnā 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān and 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd and others, have told us that, after having learnt ten verses of the Qur'ān from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , they would not proceed on to the next verses until such time that they had covered all that was intellectually and practically involved in the light of these verses. They used to say:

فَتَعَلَّمْنَا الْقُرْآنَ وَالْعِلْمَ وَالْعَمَلَ جَمِيْعًا

We have learnt the Qur'ān, knowledge and action all in one. (al-Itqan 2/176)

Consequently, as reported in Mu'aṭṭā' of Imām Mālik, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنه spent full eight years memorizing Sūrah al-Baqarah alone and, as in the Musnad of Aḥmad, Sayyidnā Anas رضى الله عنه says that 'one of us who would learn Sūrah al-Baqarah and Sūrah 'āl-'Imrān had his status enormously raised among us.' (Ibid)

Worth noticing is the fact that these noble Companions whose mother-tongue was Arabic, who had the highest degree of expertise in poetry and letters and who would have no difficulty in having very long *qaṣīdah* poems perfectly committed to their memories with the least of effort, why would they need, just to memorize the Qur'ān and

understand its meanings, as long a time as eight years, and that too, for mastering one Sūrah? The only reason for this was that proficiency in the Arabic language was not enough to have a learning of the noble Qur'ān and areas of knowledge bearing on it. In order to do that, it was also necessary to seek the benefit of the teaching and the company of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . Now this is so obvious that the noble Companions inspite of having an expertise in the Arabic language and notwithstanding their being direct witnesses to the revelation, still needed the process of going through formal education at the feet of the blessed master in order to become the *'alims* of the Qur'ān, how then, after all these hundreds of years following the revelation of the Qur'ān, just by cultivating an elementary familiarity with Arabic, or by simply looking at translations, can anyone claim to having become a commentator of the Qur'ān? What a monsterous audacity and what a tragic joke with knowledge and religion! People who opt for such audacity should remember well that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said:

من قال فى القرآن بغير علم فليتبوا مقعده فى النار

Whoever says anything about the Qur'an without knowledge, then he should make his abode in Hell. (Abu Daw'ud, as in al-Itqan, 2/179)

And he has also said:

من تكلم فى القرآن برأيه فأصاب فقد أخطأ

Whoever talks about the Qur'an on the basis of his opinion, and even if says something true in it, still he made a mistake. (Abu Daw'ud, Nasa'i)

Famous Commentaries of the Qur'ān

Countless commentaries of the Glorious Qur'ān have been written since the blessed period of the Prophethood. In fact, no other book of the world has been served as much as the noble Qur'ān. Introducing all these commentaries is not possible even in some detailed book, much less in a brief introduction such as this. But, what we wish to do here is to introduce very briefly the major commentaries that have served as particular sources of Ma'ariful Qur'ān and which have been cited there time and again. Although, during the period the above commentary was being written, many commentaries and hundreds of books were constantly referred to, but here, the purpose is to limit the introduction to commentaries the references to which will appear

repeatedly.

Tafsīr ibn Jarīr

The real name of this *Tafsīr* is Jāmi' al-Bayān and it was compiled by 'Allamāh Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (died 310 Hijrah). 'Allamāh Tabarī is a highly rated commentator, *muḥaddith* (*ḥadīth* expert) and historian. It is said that he kept writing for forty years continuously and used to write forty pages every day (al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayah, v. 11, p. 145). There are charges of being *Shi'ah* against him, but researchers have refuted this charge and the truth of the matter is that he is a highly regarded scholar of the followers of the Sunnah, rather one of the *Shi'ite* scholars.

Being in thirty volumes, his *Tafsīr* enjoys the status of a basic source for later commentaries. In his explanation of the verses, he quotes different scholars and then goes on to prove the position which, according to him, is weightier, of course, with arguments and proofs. It must, however, be admitted that narrations of all sorts, sound and weak, have found a place in his commentary. Because of this, not every narration presented by him can be relied upon. In reality, he was aiming through his commentary to collect and compile all narrations that could become available to him, so that this collected material could be put to use later on. Conceded is the fact that he has given the chain of reporters along with each narration so that whoever wishes to investigate into the chain of narrators could do so and decide for himself if the narrations are true or false.

Tāfsīr ibn Kathīr

Ḥāfiẓ 'Imād al-dīn Abū al-Fidā' Ismā'īl ibn Kathīr al-Dimashqī al-Shafi'i (died 774 Hijrah), a distinguished research scholar of the eighth century, is the author of this commentary. It has been published in four volumes. Here emphasis has been laid on explanatory narrations. A special feature is his criticism as *ḥadīth* expert on different narrations, and from this point of view, this book holds a distinct place among all books of *Tafsīr*.

Tafsīr Al-Qurṭubī

Its full name is Al-Jāmī' li-Ahkām al-Qur'ān. It was written by the famous learned writer and research scholar of Andalusia (Spain), Abū 'Abdullāh Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad Abi Bakr ibn Farah al-Qurṭubī

(died 671 Hijrah). He was a follower of the Māliki school of *fiqh* and was known all over for his *'ibādah* and piety. The fact is that the basic objective of this book was to deduce juristic injunctions and rulings from the Qur'ān yet, while doing so, he has also provided the explanation of verses, research into difficult words, discussion of diacritical marks and elegance of style and composition, and related Traditions and Reports in his *Tafsir*, and quite ably so. This book is in twelve volumes and has been published repeatedly.

Al-Tafsir al-Kabir

This is the work of Imām Fakhr al-din al-Razi (died 606 Hijrah). Its real name is Mafatih al-Ghayb, but is popularly known as 'Tafsir Kabir'. Imām Rāzi is an *imām* of the theology of Islam, therefore, great emphasis has been laid in his *Tafsir* on rational and scholastic debates and on the refutation of false sects. But, the truth is that this *Tafsir* is, in its own way, a unique key to the Qur'ān as well. Furthermore, the pleasing way in which the meanings of the Qur'ān have been clarified and the mutual link of the Qur'ānic verses established, is all too praise-worthy. Most likely, Imām Rāzi himself wrote down his *Tafsir* as far as Sūrah al-Fath. Onwards from there, he could not complete. So, the remaining part of the *Tafsir*, from Sūrah al-Fatḥ to the end, was completed by Qādi Shihāb al-Din ibn Khalil al-Khawli al-Dimashqi (died 639 Hijrah) or Shaykh Najm al-Din Ahmad ibn Muḥammad al-Qamūli (died 777 Hijrah). (Kashaf al-Zunun v. 2, p. 477)

Imām Rāzi has particularly emphasised scholastic debates and the refutation of false sects in accordance with the dictates of his time, and while doing so, his discussions have become too lengthy at several places, therefore, some people have made the following comment on his *Tafsir*: فيه كل شيئ الا التفسير : 'There is everything in this (book) except the *Tafsir*.' But this comment is a terrible injustice to Tafsir Kabir. That which is the truth has already been stated above, namely, that this *Tafsir* enjoys a high rating as far as the resolution of the meanings of the Qur'ān is concerned. But, there are places where he has explained verses of the Qur'ān while moving away from the consensus of the *ummah*, however, such places are very thinly spread out in this book that goes on to eight volumes.

Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ

This was written by 'Allāmah Abū Hayyān al-Gharnāṭī al-Andalūsī (died 754 Hijrah) who was a master of syntax and rhetoric in addition to other Islamic fields of learning. As a result of this, his own *Tafsīr* is soaked in syntax and rhetoric. He places special stress on investigating into the words of every verse, the difference in structures and on points of eloquence.

Aḥkām al-Qur'ān by al-Jaṣṣāṣ

This was written by Imām Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ al-Rāzī (died 370 Hijrah) who occupies a distinguished place among Hanafi jurists. The deduction of juristic injunctions and rulings from the noble Qur'ān is the subject of this book. Instead of explaining verses in serial continuity, he has taken up the juristic details as called for by verses which consist of juristic injunctions. Several other books have also been written on this subject, but this book enjoys a prominent place among those.

Tafsīr al-Durr al-Manthur

This was written by 'Allāmah Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūtī (died 910 Hijrah). Its full name is 'al-Durr al-Manthūr fī al-Tafsīr bi l'Ma'thūr.' Here 'Allāmah al-Suyūtī has tried to collect all narrations about the *tafsīr* of Qur'ān he was able to find. Several *ḥadīth* scholars such as Hāfiz ibn Jarīr, Imām Baghawi, Ibn Mardūwayh, Ibn Hibbān and Ibn Mājah and others had already worked in this area on their own. 'Allāmah al-Suyūtī has assembled narrations presented by all of them in this book. But, rather than refer to complete chain of authorities along with narrations, he has found it sufficient to simply name the particular author who has presented that narration under his authority so that, if needed, one could go back to the work and investigate into the ultimate authority. Since his purpose was to put together a mass of narrations, as a result of which, all sorts of narrations, sound and weak, have found their way into his book. Hence, every narration allowed entry by him cannot be considered reliable without investigation into its authority. There are occasions when 'Allāmah al-Suyūtī does indicate with each narration the degree of its authority as well. But, as he is known to be fairly easy-going in respect of *ḥadīth* critique, it is still difficult to fully rely on that too.

Al-Tafsīr al-Maẓharī

This was written by Qāḍī Thanāullah Pānipatī (died 1225 Hijrah). He has named this *Tafsīr* as 'Al-Tafsīr al-Maẓharī' after the name of his spritual master, Mirzā Mazhar Jān-e-Jānān Dehlavī. This *Tafsīr* of his is very simple and clear, and extremely useful to locate brief explanations of Qur'ānic verses. Along with the elucidation of Qur'ānic words, he has also taken up related narrations in ample details, and in doing so, he has made an effort to accept narrations after much more scrutiny as compared with other commentaries.

Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī

The full name of this *Tafsīr* is 'Ruh al-Ma'ani fi Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azim wa al-Sab' al-Mathani' and it was written by 'Allāmah Maḥmud al-Ālūsī (died 1270 Hijrah), the famous scholar of the last period of Baghdad, and comprises of thirty volumes. He has made his best possible effort to make this Tafsīr comprehensive. There are exhaustive discussions on language, syntax, letters, style, and on jurisprudence, articles of faith, scholastics, philosophy, astronomy, mysticism and related narratives of Traditions. He has made an attempt to leave no intellectual aspect pertaining to a verse unexplained. In the case of *ḥadīth* narratives as well, the author of this work has been more cautious as compared to other commentators. From this angle, this is a very comprehensive commentary, and no future venture in connection with the Tafsir of the Qur'ān can now afford to ignore its help.

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AL-FĀTIHAH

(The Opening)
This Sūrah is Makkan, and comprises of seven verses

The Merits and Peculiarities of the Sūrah

This Sūrah (Chapter) of the Holy Qur'ān possesses a number of merits peculiar to it. Firstly, the Holy Qur'ān begins with it; the prescribed prayer begins with it; and even in the order of revelation this is the first Surah which was revealed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ in its complete form. Some verses of the Sūrahs Iqra' (al-'Alaq), al-Muzzammil and al-Muddaththir had no doubt been revealed earlier, but the first Sūrah to be revealed in a complete form is no other than this. Certain Companions of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم have reported that this was the first Sūrah to be revealed. Most probably they had meant that no Sūrah had been revealed in a complete form before this. Perhaps that is why the Sūrah has been named as '*Fātihatul-Kitāb*' (The Opening of the Book).

The other important peculiarity of the Sūrah is that it is, so to say, the quintessence of the Holy Qur'ān, and the rest of the Qur'ān is its elaboration. The Sūrah may thus be delineated for two reasons. Firstly, all that the Holy Qur'ān has to say is, in one way or another, related to either of the two themes, faith (*'Īmān*) and virtuous deeds (*al-'amal al-salih*), and the basic principles of the two have been

indicated in this Sūrah (See Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī and Rūh al-Bayān). That is why authentic Traditions (*Aḥadīth*) give to this Sūrah such titles as "*Umm al-Qur'ān*" (Essence of the Qur'ān), "*Umm al-Kitāb*" (Essence of the Book), "*Al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm* (Glorious Qur'ān).

Secondly, this Sūrah gives a special instruction to the man who begins the recitation or the study of the Qur'ān _ that he should approach this book with a mind cleansed of all his previous thoughts and opinions, seeking nothing but the Truth and the right path, praying to Allah for being guided in the right path. The Sūrah begins with the praise of Him before whom the request is to be submitted, and ends with the request for guidance. The whole of the Qur'ān is the answer to this request. The answer begins with the words: "*Alif Lām Mīm*. This is the Book", which is an indication that the guidance man had prayed for has been provided in this Book.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said, "I swear by Allah who is the master of my life, neither the Torah, nor the Evangile nor the Psalms of David have anything to compare with the Opening Chapter of the Qur'ān, and no other Chapter of the Qur'ān itself can compare with it." (Reported by the Companion Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه).

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has also said that this Sūrah is a cure for all kinds of illnesses. According to another Tradition (*Ḥadīth*), the Sūrah has also been named the "Cure" (*Al-Shifā*), (See Qurṭubī), and al-Bukhārī reports from the Companion Anas that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has called this Sūrah the greatest among all the Sūrahs of the Holy Qur'ān. (See Qurṭubī)

﴿ بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ ﴾

(I begin) with the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful.

Bismillāh is a verse of the Holy Qur'ān

There is consensus of all the Muslims on the fact that *Bismillāh al-Raḥmān al-Rahīm* is a verse of the Holy Qur'ān, being a part of the Sūrah al-Naml (The Ant); and there is also an agreement on that this

verse is written at the head of every Sūrah except the Sūrah al-Taubah. But there is a difference of opinion among the *Mujtāhids* (the authentic scholars who are entitled to express an opinion in such matters) as to whether this verse is an integral part of the Sūrah al-Fatihah or of all the Sūrahs or not. According to the great Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, it is not an integral part of any Sūrah except al-Naml, rather it is in itself an independent verse of the Holy Qur'ān which has been revealed for being placed at the beginning of every Surah in order to separate and distinguish one Sūrah from another.

The merits of *Bismillāh*

It was a custom in the Age of Ignorance (*Jāhiliyyah*) before the advent of Islam that people began everything they did with the names of their idols or gods. It was to eradicate this practice that the first verse of the Holy Qur'ān which the Archangel Jibrā'il brought down to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم commanded him to begin the Qur'ān with the name of Allah اِقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ:"Read with the name of your Lord."

The famous commentator al-Suyuti says that beside the Holy Qur'ān all the other divine books too begin with *Bismillāh*. Certain other scholars are of the opinion that *Bismillāh Al-Raḥmān Al-Rahīm* is peculiar to the Qur'ān and to the followers of Muḥammad ﷺ. The two views can be brought into agreement with each other if we say that all the divine books share the common trait of beginning with the name of Allah, but the words *Bismillāh Al-Raḥmān Al-Rahīm* are peculiar to the Holy Qur'ān, as is evident from certain Traditions (*Aḥadīth*) which report that in order to begin with the name of Allah anything he undertook, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم used to say the words بِاسْمِكَ اللّٰهُمَّ (*Bismikā Allāhumma*), but when the verse *Bismillah Al-Rahman Al-Rahim* was revealed, he adopted these words. Since then this practice was established through the verbal command of the Holy Prophet ﷺ or through his act or tacit approval). (See Qurṭubī and Rūh al-Ma'ānī)

The Holy Qur'ān again and again instructs us to begin what we do with the name of Allah. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said that no important work receives the blessings of Allah, unless it is begun

with His name. According to yet another *ḥadīth* (Tradition), closing the door of one's house, putting out the lamp, covering a vessel, should all be done with the recitation of *Bismillāh*. The Holy Qur'ān and the *aḥādīth* (Traditions) repeatedly instruct us to recite this verse while taking food, drinking water, performing the *wuḍū* (ablution), getting on a carriage or getting down from it. (See Qurṭubī)

By instructing man to begin everything with the name of Allah, Islam has given to the whole of his life an orientation towards Allah so that he may, with each step he takes, renew his allegiance to the covenant with Allah that nothing he does, not even his very being can come into existence without the will and the help of Allah. Thus, all the economic and worldly activities of man, each movement and gesture becomes transformed into an act of worship.[1] How brief is the action, which consumes neither time nor energy, and yet how immense is the gain -- it is a regular alchemy, transmuting the profane (*dunyā*) into the sacred (*dīn*); a disbeliever eats and drinks just as a Muslim does but in saying '*Bismillāh*' as he begins to eat, the Muslim affirms that it was not in his power to obtain this little morsel of food which has passed through innumerable stages from the sowing of the seed to the reaping of the grain corn, and which has during this process required the labours of the wind, the rain, the sun, of the heavens and of the earth, and of a thousand men -- and that it is Allah alone who has granted him this morsel of food or this draught of water by making it go through all these stages. A disbeliever goes to sleep, wakes up and goes about as much as a Muslim. But while going to sleep or waking up, the Muslim mentions the name of Allah, renewing his relationship with Him. Thus his economic and worldly needs and activities acquire the nature of the remembrance of Allah, and are counted as acts of worship. Similarly, in saying '*Bismillāh*' while getting on to a carriage, the Muslim testifies to the fact that it is beyond the power of man to produce this carriage and to procure it for him, and that it is only the infallible and divinely-created order of

1. This is the only way in which human life can, to use a word dear to modern cultural anthropology, be sacralized in any meaningful sense of the term -- Translator

things that has brought together from all the corners of the world the wood, the steel and other metals which have gone into the making of the carriage, as well as the mechanics who have given a particular shape to these components, and the driver -- and finally put all these into the service of man who can make use of the labour of this army of the creatures of man who can God by spending a few coins. And even these coins have not been created by him, it is Allah himself who has provided the complex ways and means of earning them. Veritably, '*Bismillāh*' is the legendary philosopher's stone which transmutes, not copper, but mere dust into the purest of gold. فَلِلّٰهِ الْحَمْدُ عَلٰى دِيْنِ الْإِسْلَامِ وَتَعْلِيْمَاتِهٖ :'So then, praised be Allah for the religion of Islam and its teachings.'

Ruling

'Before beginning to recite the Qur'ān, it is *sunnah* to first say أَعُوْذُ بِاللّٰهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطٰنِ الرَّجِيْمِ (I seek refuge with Allah from Satan -- the accursed) and then بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ (I begin with the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful). And during the *tilāwah* (the recitation of the Holy Qur'ān) as well, saying بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ : '*Bismillah*... at the beginning of each Sūrah, except the Sūrah Al-Bara'ah (al-Taūbah), is *Sunnah*.

Commentary

'Bismillāh': This phrase is composed of three words -- the letter '*Bā*', '*Ism*' and 'Allah'. The preposition '*Ba*' has several connotations in Arabic, three of which are appropriate to the occasion. All the three are applicable here: (1) Contiguity, or the close proximity between one thing and the other; (2) Seeking the aid of someone or something; (3) To seek the blessings of someone.

The word '*Ism*' has many lexical and intellectual nuances of meaning, the knowledge of which would not be essential for the average reader. It is sufficient to know that this word is translated in English as 'Name'.

The word, 'Allah' is the greatest and the most comprehensive of the divine names. According to some scholars, it is the 'Great Name', or '*Al-Ism al-A'zam*'. (According to the Tradition (*Hadith*), the Great Name carries with it such a benediction that a prayer is granted when this word has been uttered. Reports differ as to what this Great Name

is). The word 'Allah' refers to the Essence, and hence this name cannot be given to anyone except Allah. That is why this word has neither a plural nor a dual, for Allah is One and has no associate. In short, Allah is the name of that Ultimate Reality which comprehends in Itself all the attributes of perfection, which is the creator and sustainer, unique and peerless.

Thus, the phrase '*Bismillāh*' has these three respective significations according to the three connotations of the preposition '*Ba*':

(a) With the name of Allah

(b) With the help of the name of Allah

(c) With the *barakah* or benediction of the name of Allah.

But, in all the three forms, the phrase obviously remains incomplete unless one mentions the work which one intends to begin with the name of Allah or with its help or benediction. So, according to the rules of grammar, some verb is taken to be understood here which should be suitable for the occasion -- e.g., 'I begin or recite with the name of Allah.' Propriety demands that even this verb should be understood to occur after the phrase, so that one does actually begin with the name of Allah and the verb does not precede His name. The preposition '*Bā*' has, however, to be placed before the name of Allah, for it is an exigency of the Arabic language. But even in this respect the 'Uthmāni manuscript of the Holy Qur'ān prepared by the third Caliph 'Uthmān رضی اللہ عنہ has made the necessary modification in accordance with the consensus of the Companions of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم. The regular Arabic script requires the letter '*Bā*' here to be joined with the letter '*Alif* ', producing this shape -- بِاسْمِ اللّٰہِ. But the 'Uthmani manuscript has dropped the '*Alif*', and joined the letter '*Bā*' with the letter '*Sīn*', making the '*Bā*' look like a part of the word '*Ism*', so that the beginning is made, in effect, with the name of Allah. That is why the letter '*Alif* is not dropped in other combinations between the preposition '*Bā*' and the noun '*Ism*' -- for example, in the verse اِقْرَاْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ (*Iqrā' biismi Rabbik*), the '*Alif* is written along with the '*Bā*'. It is the peculiarity of '*Bismillāh*' alone that the letter '*Ba*' has been joined with the letter '*Sin*'.

Merciful) -- these two are the attributes of Allah Almighty. '*Raḥmān*' signifies one whose mercy is common to all, and extends to the whole universe, to everything that will be created in the future. On the other hand, '*Raḥīm*' signifies one whose mercy is perfect in all possible ways. That is why '*Raḥmān*' is the exclusive attribute of Allah and the word is employed only when one is referring to Him. It is not permissible to qualify any created being as '*Raḥmān*', for there cannot possibly be anyone else, beside Allah, whose mercy should be all-embracing and all-inclusive. Just like the word 'Allah', there is no dual or plural for the word '*Raḥmān*' too, because these words are in their signification exclusive to the One and Absolute Being which does not permit the existence of a second or a third. (Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī) The signification of the word '*Rahim*', on the contrary, does not contain anything which it should be impossible to find in a created being, for a man may be perfectly merciful in his dealings with another man. So, the word '*Rahim*' may justifiably be employed in the case of a human being -- as the Qur'ān itself has used the word in speaking of the Holy Prophet ﷺ which is: بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ (He is gentle and very merciful towards the Muslims).

Ruling: This would easily show that those who shorten names such as 'Abd al-Raḥmān or Fadl al-Rahman into '*Raḥmān*' are doing what is not permissible and are thus committing a sin.

Out of the 'Beautiful Names' (الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَى : *Al-Asmā' al-Ḥusnā*) of Allah Almighty and His attributes of perfection, only two have been mentioned in this verse - namely, '*al-Raḥmān*' and '*al-Rahīm*' -, and both have been derived from the root '*Rahmah*' (mercy), indicating the all-pervasiveness and perfection of divine mercy. It points to the fact that the creation of the heavens and the earth and the sustenance of the whole universe has no other motivation than making manifest Allah's quality of mercy. He Himself had no need of these things, nor could anyone compel Him to create them. It is His own mercy which has required the creation and sustenance of the whole universal order.

How aptly this was put in Persian by poet *Rūmī*:

مانبوديم و تقاضا ما نبود
لطفِ تو ناگفته مامی شنود

There was nothing -- neither our being nor our claim to be;
It was Thy mercy that heard our unsaid.

Injunctions and related considerations

The Holy Qur'an says: فَإِذَا قَرَأْتَ الْقُرْآنَ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطٰنِ الرَّجِيمِ :'When you recite the Qur'an, seek the protection of Allah against Satan, the rejected one'.

According to the consensus of *Ummah*, it is a *Sunnah* to say *ta'āwwudh*: أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطٰنِ الرَّجِيمِ 'before the recitation of the Holy Qur'an whether in *Salāh* or out of *Salāh* (*Sharah al-munyah*). Saying *ta'awwudh* is peculiar to the recitation of the Holy Qur'ān. Therefore, with the exception of *tilawah*, all other chores should be taken up by first saying *'Bismillāh'* only. Saying *ta'awwudh* is not a *sunnah* there. ('Alamgiri, Chapter 4 - Al-Karahiyah)

One should begin the recitation of the Qur'ān by reciting both أعوذ ... بالله (I seek the protection of Allah) and بِسْمِ اللهِ (*Bismillāhi*: I begin with the name of Allah). During the recitation, one should repeat *'Bismillāh'*, but not *'A'udhubillāh'*, when one comes to the end of a Sūrah (or Chapter) and begins the next Sūrah -- with the sole exception of the Sūrah 'Al-Bara'ah' (اَلْبَرَاءَة). If one comes upon this particular Sūrah in the course of the recitation, one should not say *'Bismillāh'* before reading it. But if one happens to begin the recitation of the Holy Qur'ān with this Sūrah, one should recite *'A'udhubillāh'* and *'Bismillāh'* both (Alamgiriah from Al-Muḥīt).

'Bismillāh al-Rahmān al-Rahim' is a verse of the Holy Qur'ān and a part of the verse in Sūrah 'al-Naml'; it is also a regular verse when it occurse between two Sūrahs. It must, therefore, be treated with as much respect as the Holy Qur'ān itself, and it is not permissible to touch it without having performed *wudu* (ablution). In the state of major ritual impurity (e.g., after the emission of semen, or during menstruation, or after child-birth), it is not allowed to even read this verse as recitation of the Holy Qur'ān before having taken a ritual bath. One may, however, recite it as a form of prayer before beginning a work, like taking one's meals or drinking water under all conditions.

Rulings:

(1) It is a *Sunnah* to recite *'Bismillāh'* after *'A'udhū-billah'* at the very beginning of the first *raka'ah* in the *salāh*. But views differ as to whether it should be recited in a loud or a low voice. Īmām Abū

Hanifah and certain other Imāms prefer it to be done in a low voice. There is a consensus on the point that '*Bismillāh*' should be recited at the beginning of all the succeeding *raka'ahs* too. This is unanimously considered to be a *Sunnah*; however, in some narrations, the reciting of '*Bismillāh*' at the beginning of every *raka'ah* has been identified as *wajib* or necessary.

(2) In the course of *salāh*, whether one is reciting the Holy Qur'ān loudly or silently, one should not recite '*Bismillāh*' before beginning a Sūrah just after the Sūrah 'Fatihah'. Such a practice has not been reported either from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم or from any of the first four *Khulafā'*. According to *Sharh al-munyah*, this is the view of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah and of Imām Abu Yusuf, and Shrah al-munyah, al-Durr al-Mukhtar, al-Burhan etc. prefer it to other views. But Imām Muḥammad considers it to be preferable that one should recite '*Bismillah*' if one is reciting the Holy Qur'an in a *salāh* offered silently. Certain reports attribute this view even to Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, and al-Shāmi has quoted some Muslim jurists in support of this view -- which has been adopted even in 'Bahishti Zewar' of Maulanā Thānavi. Anyhow, there is a complete agreement among the scholars that it is not *makrūh* or reprehensible for some one to recite '*Bismillāh*' in this situation.

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SŪRAH AL - FĀTIḤAH

(The Opening)

MAKKAN	VERSES: 7

بِسۡمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِيۡمِ ○

اَلۡحَمۡدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الۡعٰلَمِيۡنَ ○ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِيۡمِ ○ مٰلِكِ يَوۡمِ الدِّيۡنِ ○
اِيَّاكَ نَعۡبُدُ وَ اِيَّاكَ نَسۡتَعِيۡنُ ○ اِهۡدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الۡمُسۡتَقِيۡمَ ○
صِرَاطَ الَّذِيۡنَ اَنۡعَمۡتَ عَلَيۡهِمۡ غَيۡرِ الۡمَغۡضُوۡبِ عَلَيۡهِمۡ وَلَا
الضَّآلِّيۡنَ ○

With the name of Allah,
the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful.

Praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of all the worlds, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful, the Master of the Day of Judgment. You alone we worship, and from You alone we seek help. Guide us in the straight path -- the path of those on whom You have bestowed Your Grace, not of those who have incurred Your wrath, nor of those who have gone astray.

This Sūrah comprises seven verses. Of these, the first three are in praise of Allah, while the last three contain a request or a prayer on the part of man, which Allah himself has, in His infinite mercy, taught him. The verse in between the two sets has both the features -- there is an aspect of praise, and another of prayer.

The Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim reports from the blessed Companion Abū Hurayrah a *ḥadīth* (Tradition) of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم : "Allah has said, 'The *salāh* (i.e., the Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah) is equally

divided between Me and My servant. And My servant shall be given what he prays for." The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم continued: "When the servant says:

اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ

Praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of all the worlds,

Allah says: "My servant has paid his homage to Me." When he says:

اَلرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

The All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful,

Allah says: "My servant has praised Me." When the servant says:

مٰلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّيْنِ

The Master of the Day of Judgment,

Allah says, "My servant has proclaimed my greatness." When the servant says:

اِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَاِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِيْنُ

You alone we worship, and to You alone we pray for help,

Allah says, "This verse is common to Me and My servant. He shall be given what he has prayed for." When the servant says:

اِهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيْمَ

Guide us in the straight path...,

Allah says: "All this is there for My servant. He shall be given what he prays for." (Maẓharī)

The Sūrah begins with the words *Al-hamdulillāh*, signifying that all praise essentially belongs to Allah. Whosoever praises anything anywhere in the world is ultimately praising Allah. The sensible world contains millions of things which compel man's attention and admiration for their beauty and usefulness, but if one tries to look behind the veil of appearances, one would find in each and every thing the manifestation of the same creative power. Admiring anything that exists in the created world is no more than showing one's admiration

for a work of art or craft, which in fact is a praise of the artist or the craftsman. This small statement of the Holy Qur'ān opens a new perspective for man lost in the labyrinth of multiplicity, and shows him how the many are knit together in the same unity, and how all praise in reality belongs to One whose power is absolute, and that it is only in our ignorance or indifference that we regard this praise to be due to anyone else.

If there is only one Being in the whole universe who inherently deserves all praise, it necessarily follows from it that this Being alone should be worthy of adoration and worship. Thus we can see that although the phrase, *Al-hamdulillāh*, has been used to signify praise, yet, by implication, it cuts the very root of polytheism or the worship of created beings, and at the same time brings out in a self-evident manner the first and the basic principle of the Islamic creed -- Oneness of God.

The next phrase to follow in the Sūrah speaks of an attribute of Allah -- Lord of the Worlds. Lexically, the word, *Rabb* signifies 'one who nurtures'. And 'nurture' implies developing a thing by gradual stages in a manner which is conducive to its own good till it attains perfection. The word, *Rabb* is exclusive to the sacred Being of Allah, and cannot be employed in the case of any created being without adding some qualification, for a created being is itself in need of 'nurture', and cannot nurture anyone else.

Al-'ālamīn is the plural of *'alam* (world, universe, kingdom). "The worlds" include all possible forms of -- existence: the sky, the earth, the sun, the moon, stars, wind and rain, the angels, the jinns, animals, plants, minerals, and, of course, men. So, 'the Lord of all the worlds" means that Allah alone gives nurture to all the forms of existents that are to be found in this universe, or in the millions of universes that may lie beyond our own universe in the outer space. Imām Rāzī, the great commentator of the Holy Qur'ān, says that the existence of an indefinite space beyond our universe can be proved on the basis of rational argument, and it is also certain that Allah is All-Powerful, so it should not be at all difficult for Him to have created millions of other universes in this endless space. It has been reported from the Companion Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī رضی اللہ عنہ that there are forty thousand

worlds; our world, stretching from the East to the West, is only one of them, there being many more besides it. According to the well-known commentator *Muqatil*, the number of worlds is eighty thousand. (See Qurṭubī)

As for the objection that no man or animal can live in the outer space owing to the lack of the kind of air which should be compatible with the physical make-up of man, Imām Rāzī replies that the inhabitants of the worlds in the outer space need not necessarily have the same physical make-up as that of the inhabitants of our world which should make existence in space impossible for them, and suggests that their organic composition and the requirements for its nourishment and sustenance might just be totally different.

Imām Rāzī postulated these possibilities some eight hundred years ago without the help of the modern facilities for observation and exploration, yet the speculations of the scientists in the age of space travel endorse his view.

Seen in the light of this short phrase, 'Lord of the worlds', the universe reveals itself to be an incredibly complex, yet perfectly integrated order. From the heavens to the earth, from the planets and the stars to the particles of dust, everything is bound in a chain of being, and is performing the function assigned to it by Divine Wisdom. Man cannot obtain a little morsel of food unless a thousand forces of the sky and the earth work together to produce it. The universal order is there for man to contemplate, and to realize that, if Allah has put millions of His creatures in the service of man, man in his turn cannot be worthless or purposeless or meaningless.[2] The Holy Qur'ān is indeed very explicit and very insistent in reminding us that the universe is not absurd:

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَآءَ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا بَاطِلًا ذٰلِكَ ظَنُّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا فَوَيْلٌ لِّلَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنَ النَّارِ

We have not created in vain the heavens and the earth and what lies between them. That is the fancy of the disbelievers. But woe to the disbelievers in the fire of Hell. (38:27)

2. As do proclaim the current Western philosophies of the Absurd and of Unreason.

If the universe is not in vain or absurd, man too, whose purposes the universe has been made to serve, cannot be purposeless and meaningless. The Holy Qur'ān defines the Divine purpose in creating man and the goal of his existence in these words.

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوْنِ

I have not created the jinn and mankind except to worship Me. (51:56)

It may be said that the phrase 'the Lord of all the worlds' is in a way the proof of the claim made in the earlier phrase الحمدلله : (all praise belongs to Allah). When Allah alone is the ultimate cause for the nurture of the whole universe, He alone can, in reality, be worthy of praise. Thus, the first verse of the Surah, as we said before, combines in itself the praise of Allah and a subtle indication of the first and basic principle of the Islamic creed -- the oneness of God.

The second verse speaks of the Divine quality of mercy, employing two adjectives *Raḥmān* and *Rahīm*, both of which are hyperbolic terms in Arabic, and respectively connote the superabundance and perfection of Divine mercy. The reference to this particular attribute in this situation is perhaps intended to be a reminder of the fact that it is not through any external compulsion or inner need or any kind of necessity whatsoever that Allah has assumed the responsibility of nurturing the whole of His creation, but in response to the demand of His own quality of mercy. If this whole universe did not exist, He would suffer no loss; if it does exist, it is no burden to Him.

The third verse pays homage to Allah as 'the Master of the Day of Judgment or Requital': مٰلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّيْنِ . The word *Mālik* has been derived from the root, '*milk*' (ملك) which signifies possessing a thing in such a manner that one has the right and power to dispose of it as one likes (See Qamus). The word *Dīn* signifies 'Requital'. So, the phrase 'Master of the Day of Requital' implies total mastery on the Day of Requital. But there is no mention of the thing or things to which this mastery or possession would apply. According to the commentary, '*al-Kashshaf*', the phrase makes a general reference to cover everything. That is to say, on the Day of Requital the mastery over everything that exists will belong to Allah alone.

The Day of Requital is real and rational:

Before we proceed, let us consider two important questions: Firstly, what is this Day of Requital? Secondly, Allah being the Master, of everything even today as much as on the Day of Requital, why does this verse specifically mention the Day of Requital? The Day of Requital or the Day of Judgment is the Day appointed by Allah to recompense good or evil deeds.[3] The world is only the field of action, the place where one is required to perform one's duty, and not the place for receiving one's reward. The mere fact that man happens to be healthy and wealthy or powerful does not necessarily argue that he has won the pleasure and favour of Allah. Similarly, the mere fact that a man happens to be ill or poor or weak or miserable does not by itself indicates that he is the object of Allah's wrath. Even in the case of worldly life, would it not be a platitude to remark that a man sweating in a factory or an office does not consider it a misfortune? In fact, try to deprive him of this opportunity to sweat, and you would have earned his deepest displeasure; for beyond all this toil he can glimpse the reward he is going to get after thirty days in the shape of his wages.

It proceeds from this principle that the greatest sufferings in this world are the lot of the Prophets عليهم السلام and, after them, of the men of Allah, and yet we see them quite content and even happy. In short, physical well-being or worldly glory or luxury is no sure indication of one's virtue and truthfulness, nor is sorrow and suffering that of one's misdeeds and falsity. It may, however, happen that a man receives some punishment or reward for his deeds in this world. This never is the full recompense, but only a faint model which has been manifested to serve as an intimation or warning. The Holy Qur'an has spoken very clearly on this point:

وَلَنُذِيقَنَّهُمْ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ الْأَدْنَىٰ دُونَ الْعَذَابِ الْأَكْبَرِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ

And We shall surely let them taste a nearer punishment (in

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3. The verse qualifies Allah specifically as 'Master of the Day of Requital', and thus emphasizes a principle which is in itself of the highest import, and is particularly relevant to certain tendencies in the modern habits of thought. Contrary to the modern conviction which one finds reflected even in the so called "new interpretations" of Islam, individual or collective well being is not the be-all and end-all of human existence, nor is the physical world the place where good or evil deeds are recompensed -- Translator

> this world) before the greater punishment (in the other world), so that they may return (to the right path). (32:21)
>
> كَذَالِكَ الْعَذَابُ وَ لَعَذَابُ الْاٰخِرَةِ اَكْبَرُ لَوْكَانُوا يَعْلَمُوْنَ
>
> Such is the punishment; and the punishment of the other world is certainly greater, only if they knew. (68 : 33)

The sufferings of this world, as even its joys, are sometimes a trial, and sometimes a punishment, but never a full recompense, for the world is itself transitory. What really counts is the joy or suffering that will endure for ever, and which one will come to know in the other world beyond this world. Given the fact that good or evil deeds are not fully recompensed in this world, and the rational and just principle that good and evil not being equal in value, every deed should be rewarded or punished according to its nature, it readily follows that beyond this world there should be another world where every deed, big or small, good or evil, is to be judged, and then justly rewarded or punished. This the Holy Qur'ān calls *Al-Akhirah*: الآخرة (The world-to-come), or *Al-Qiyāmah*: القيامه (Doomsday or the Day of Judgment), or '*Yawm al-din*, (Day of Requital). The whole idea has been explained by the Holy Qur'an itself:

> مَا يَسْتَوِى الْاَعْمٰى وَالْبَصِيْرُ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ وَلَا الْمُسِيْٓءُ قَلِيْلًا مَّا تَتَذَكَّرُوْنَ O اِنَّ السَّاعَةَ لَاٰتِيَةٌ لَّارَيْبَ فِيْهَا، وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ O
>
> The blind are not equal with the seeing, nor the wrong-doers with those who believe and do good deeds. Yet you seldom reflect. The hour of retribution is sure to come, no doubt about it, yet most people do not believe. (40 : 58-59)

Who is the Master ?

Now, we come to the second question. It should be obvious, on a little reflection, to everyone that the real master of every particle of dust in the universe can only be He who has created and nurtured it, Whose mastery over everything is complete, having neither a beginning nor an end, covering the living and the dead, the apparent and the hidden, the seen and the unseen. On the contrary, the mastery of man is delimited by a beginning and an end; it has a 'before' when it did not exist, and an 'after' when it will exist no more. Man's mastery and control extends to the living, not to the dead, to the seen, not to

the unseen, to the external aspect of things, not to the internal. All this would show to those who can see that the real Master of the whole universe, not only on the Day of Requital but even in this world, is no other than Allah. Then why should this verse specify the Day of Requital ?

The verses of the Sūrah al-Mū'min / Ghafīr (Chapter 40) serve as a commentary on the phrase under discussion, and provide a clear account of the Day of Requital. The real and complete mastery over everything, no doubt, belongs to Allah alone even in this world. Yet Allah Himself, in His beneficence and wisdom, has granted a kind of imperfect, temporary and apparent mastery to man as well; and the *Sharī'ah*, in laying down laws for worldly affairs, has given due consideration to man's limited right to ownership. But today, in possessing lands or money or power, which has been given to him by way of trial, man has always been prone to get drunk with pride and vanity.[4] The phrase 'Master of the Day of Judgment' is a warning to man reeling in his forgetfulness and self-conceit, and an intimation that all his possessions, all his relationships with things and men are only short-lived, and that there shall come a Day when masters will no more be masters and slaves no more slaves, when no one will own anything even in appearance, and the ownership and mastery, apparent as well as real, of the whole universe will be seen to belong to none but Allah, the Exalted. The Holy Qur'ān says:

يَوْمَ هُم بَارِزُونَ لَا يَخْفَىٰ عَلَى اللَّهِ مِنْهُمْ شَيْءٌ لِّمَنِ الْمُلْكُ الْيَوْمَ لِلَّهِ الْوَاحِدِ
الْقَهَّارِ ۝ الْيَوْمَ تُجْزَىٰ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ لَا ظُلْمَ الْيَوْمَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ ۝

> The day they will present themselves (before Allah), and nothing of theirs will remain hidden from Allah (even apparently). 'Whose is the kingdom today?' Of Allah alone, the One, the Mighty. Today everyone will be recompensed for what he has done. Today no one will be wronged. Allah's reckoning is surely swift. (40:17)

The fourth verse إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ : 'You alone we worship, and from You alone we seek help' has a double aspect, one of praise and

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4. Specially the modern man living in the so-called 'humanistic civilization' when the sole drive and motivating force is the complacent belief in man's mastery.

another of prayer. A man's life is subject to three states of time -- past, present and future.

The first two verses of the Sūrah, اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ (All Praise belongs to Allah) and اَلرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ (the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful), remind man that, as far as his past and present are concerned, he owes everything to Allah alone, for it is Allah who created him out of nothing, endowed him with the best form in the universe, and with reason and intuition, and continues to sustain and nurture him in the present. The third verse: مٰلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّيْنِ (Master of the Day of Judgment) tells him that in the future too he will have to depend on Allah alone, for on the Day of Requital one cannot possibly have a helper other than Allah. The three verses having made it clear that man is totally and absolutely dependent on Allah in all the three states of his life, it logically and naturally leads to the conclusion that Allah alone is worthy of being worshipped, for in Arabic the word *'ibādah* (worship) connotes showing the utmost humility and submissiveness out of an intense respect and love for someone, and such an attitude of willing self-abasement cannot justly be adopted towards anyone except Allah. So, the phrase: اِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ (You alone we worship) expresses this very natural and logical conclusion. And once it has been understood that there is only one Being who can satisfy all our needs, it is equally natural and logical to turn for help in everything to Him alone. Hence the phrase اِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِيْنُ (to You alone we pray for help). Beside these two aspects, the fourth verse has another dimension as well. It teaches man not to worship anyone except Allah, not to consider anyone else as being really capable of satisfying his needs, and not to beg anyone else to satisfy these needs. It does not, however, go against this principle if, in praying to Allah, one mentions the name of a prophet or a man of Allah by way of a medium (*wasilāh*) for drawing the mercy of Allah upon oneself.

It may also be noticed that the phrase: اِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِيْنُ (to You alone we pray for help) does not mention the purpose for which help is being sought. According to most of the commentators, it generalizes the idea of the request to cover everything from acts of worship to all possible worldly or other-worldly concerns.

Then, acts of worship (*'Ibādah*) are not limited merely to prescribed prayers or fasting. Imām al-Ghāzzāli in his book 'Arba'in' has enumerated ten forms which worship can take:-

1. Prayers.
2. Prescribed Alms-giving.
3. Fasting.
4. Hajj or pilgrimage to Makkah.
5. Reciting the Holy Qur'ān.
6. Remembrance of Allah in all possible situations.
7. Earning one's livelihood in accordance with the regulations of the *Sharī'ah.*
8. Fulfilling one's obligations towards one's companions and neighbours.
9. Persuading people to act righteously and dissuading them from what is reprehensible and forbidden.
10. To follow the *Sunnah*, or the practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

Therefore, not associating anyone with Allah in worship means that one should not love or fear or depend on anyone else as one loves or fears or depends on Allah, nor should one repose one's hope in anyone else, nor should one consider obedience or submission or service to another as obligatory as the worship of Allah, nor make a votive offering or consecrate or dedicate anything to anyone or take a vow in the name of anyone similar to the way one does these things in the case of Allah, nor should one show complete self-abasement and total humility before anyone as one is required to do before Allah, nor should one engage in the particular God-oriented acts of worship for anyone other than Allah, acts which symbolize the farthest limits of self-abasement, such as, *ruku'* and *sajdah* (the bowing and prostrating in *salāh*).

The Prayer for Guidance

The last three verses of the Sūrah consist of a prayer on the part of man. In other words, Allah Himself, in His great mercy, has taught man what to pray for:

اِهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيْمَ ۝ صِرَاطَ الَّذِيْنَ اَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ ۙ۬ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوْبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّآلِّيْنَ ۝

Guide us in the straight path, the path of those on whom You have bestowed Your grace, not of those who have incurred Your wrath, nor of those who have gone astray.

The Implications of Guidance

A problem of highest significance arises here. The teaching with regard to the prayer for being guided in the straight path is addressed equally to all men or all Muslims and to saints and prophets who have already received guidance and are even a source of guidance for other men. Why should these repeatedly pray for something they already possess? The answer to this question depends on knowing all that is implied by guidance. The answer would, at the same time, remove all difficulties and confusions which arise in the minds of those who, not being familiar with the true signification of guidance, begin to suspect that certain verses of the Holy Qur'ān were contradicting certain others.

The Meaning of *Hidāyah* or Guidance

The best explanation of the word, *Hidāyah* (guidance) has been offered by Imām Raghib al-Isfaḥānī in his Mufradat al-Qur'ān, which can be summed up thus: *Hidayah* signifies leading someone towards his destination, gently and kindly; while guidance, in the real sense, issues forth from Allah alone, and it has several degrees.

The First Degree of Guidance

The first degree of guidance is general, and covers everything that exists in the universe -- minerals, plants, animals etc. It would surprise many to hear of guidance in relation to minerals. But the Holy Qur'ān makes it quite clear that all forms of existents in the universe, and every particle of dust possesses life, sensitivity, and even consciousness and understanding in its own degree and according to its own sphere of existence. Some of these existents possess more of this essence than others, and some less. Hence, those who have very little of it are considered to be inanimate and devoid of consciousness. The *Sharī'ah* too has recognized this difference, and such creatures have not been made to bear the obligation of observing the injunctions of Allah. The creatures which show obvious signs of life but not those of consiousness and reason are considered to be living, but not rational; whereas, creatures showing the signs of consciousness and reason, along with those of life, are called rational beings. Because of these differences in the degrees of consciousness, men and jinn alone, of all the existents in the universe, have been made subservient to the

injunctions of the *Sharī'ah* and accountable for their actions, for they alone have the necessary consciousness and understanding. But, it does not mean that other creatures or existents are totally devoid of life or sensitivity, or of consciousness and understanding. The Holy Qur'ān is very explicit on this point:

وَاِنْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ اِلَّا يُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِهٖ وَلٰكِنْ لَّا تَفْقَهُوْنَ تَسْبِيْحَهُمْ

> Nothing exists that does not celebrate His praise, but you do not understand their (mode of) praising. (17:44)

اَلَمْ تَرَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يُسَبِّحُ لَهٗ مَنْ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَالطَّيْرُ صٰٓفّٰتٍ كُلٌّ قَدْ عَلِمَ صَلَاتَهٗ وَتَسْبِيْحَهٗ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌۢ بِمَا يَفْعَلُوْنَ O

> Have you not seen that everything in the heavens and the earth proclaims Allah's purity, and the birds too that spread their wings? Each of them knows its prayer and its (mode of) praising. And Allah is aware of what they do. (24:41)

Evidently, one cannot extol and praise Allah without knowing Allah. It is equally evident that knowing Allah is the highest form of knowledge possible, and such a knowledge cannot be gained unless one possesses consciousness and understanding. These verses, therefore, show that everything that exists in the universe possesses life, sensitivity, understanding and consciousness, though it may not always be apparent to the ordinary observer -- a truth which has been endorsed by all the great religions, by certain ancient philosophers, and lately even by experimental science.

This, then, is the first degree of guidance which is common to minerals, plants, animals, men, jinns and all the forms of creation. The Holy Qur'ān speaks of this primary and general guidance in these words:

قَالَ رَبُّنَا الَّذِيْٓ اَعْطٰى كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلْقَهٗ ثُمَّ هَدٰى

> He gave to everything its distinctive form, and then guided it. (20:50)

Or, as we find in another Sūrah:

سَبِّحِ اسْمَ رَبِّكَ الْاَعْلَى O الَّذِيْ خَلَقَ فَسَوّٰى O وَالَّذِيْ قَدَّرَ فَهَدٰى O

> Celebrate the name of your Lord, the Most High, Who has

created all things, well proportioned them, and Who has determined and guided them. (87:1-2)

That is to say, Allah has given every creature a particular nature and function, and guided it in a way which should correspond to its station in the scheme of things. Thanks to this general guidance, everything in the universe is performing its allotted function with such marvellous efficiency. For example, it is the ears that hear a sound and not the eyes or the nose. Similarly, the nose smells but cannot see; the eyes see but cannot smell. In short:

إِنْ كُلُّ مَنْ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ إِلَّآ اٰتِي الرَّحْمٰنِ عَبْدًا ۝

There is nothing in the heavens and the earth but comes to the All-Merciful as a servant. (19:93)

The Second Degree of Guidance

Unlike the first, the second degree of guidance is not general but particular. It is limited to those creatures which are considered to be rational, that is, men and jinns. This kind of guidance comes to every man through prophets and revealed books. Some accept this guidance, and become believers (*Muslims*): some reject it and become disbelievers (*Kāfirs*).

The Third Degree of guidance

The third degree of guidance is still more particular, being special to true believers (*Mu'minīn*) and the God-fearing (*Muttaqīn*). Like the first degree, the third kind of guidance too descends directly to the individual from Allah, and it is called, *Tawfīq*. That is to say, Allah's grace provides a man with internal and external means and circumstances which should make it easy, and even pleasant for him to accept and act upon the guidance of the Holy Qur'ān, and difficult to ignore or oppose it. The scope of the third degree of guidance is limitless, and its levels indefinite.[5] Here is the sphere in which man, not only can, but is required to make a progress in the veritable sense of the term. The agency of this progress is the performance of virtuous

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5. Contrary to all the modern fictions about man's Evolution or Perfectibility or Progress which may pass for sound philosophy or science.

deeds[6]. All increase in virtuous deeds brings with it an increase in divine guidance. The Holy Qur'ān itself gives us the promise of such increase:

وَالَّذِينَ اهْتَدَوْا زَادَهُمْ هُدًى

As for those who follow the straight path, Allah will increase their guidance. (47:17)

وَمَنْ يُؤْمِنْ بِاللّٰهِ يَهْدِ قَلْبَهُ

And whoever believes in Allah, He guides his heart. (64:11)

اَلَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا

Those who strive for (literally, 'in') Us, We will surely guide them in Our paths. (29:69)

It is in this field of progress that we see even the greatest prophets and men of Allah striving, and it is an increase in divine guidance and help that they keep seeking to their last breath.

A Cumulative view of guidance

Keeping in mind the three distinct degrees of guidance, one can easily see that guidance is a thing which everyone does possess in some way, and yet no one, not even the greatest, can do without wishing to attain more of its advanced and higher stages. Hence, of all the prayers man can address to Allah, the most important is the prayer for guidance, which has been taught to us in the very first Sūrah of the Holy Qur'ān; and this prayer is as necessary for the greatest of prophets and men of Allah as for an ordinary Muslim. That is why the Sūrah Al-Fatḥ (Victory), in enumerating the material and spiritual benefits of the conquest of Makkah in the last days of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , also says: وَيَهْدِيَكُمْ صِرَاطًا مُّسْتَقِيمًا (and to guide you on the straight path) (48:20). When these verses were revealed, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had already received guidance and was a source of guidance for others. The good tidings of receiving guidance can, in this situation, have only one meaning that he attained some very high station of guidance at the time.

Guidance: Some notes of caution

In concluding this discussion about the different implications of

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6. As defined, it goes without saying, by the *Sharī'ah* and not by individual or collective fancy, or by custom and habits, or by the fads or fashions of the day.

'guidance' (*Hidāyah*), we repeat points that would help the reader of the Holy Qur'an avoid certain confusions and errors:

1. The Holy Qur'ān sometimes speaks of divine guidance as being general and common to believers and non-believers, in fact to all creatures, and sometimes makes it out to be particular and special to the God-fearing. So, the unwary may be led to sense a contradiction here. But once it is understood that one degree of guidance is common to all, whereas another degree is limited to particular cases, the doubt and confusion readily resolves itself.

2. On the one hand, the Holy Qur'ān reminds us again and again that Allah does not grant guidance to the unjust and the unrighteous; on the other hand, it repeatedly declares that Allah guides all. The misunderstanding which may arise here is also dispelled by a knowledge of the degrees of guidance. Now we can easily see that the general guidance is given to all without any distinction, but the third and very special degree of guidance is not granted to the unjust and the unrighteous.

3. The first and the third degrees of guidance pertain to a direct act of divine grace, and no prophet can have anything to do with it, for the function of the prophets is related only to the second degree.

Whenever the Holy Qur'ān speaks of Prophets عليهم السلام as guides, it is always referring to this second degree, and to it alone. On the other hand, when the Holy Qur'ān, addressing the noble Prophet ﷺ, says: إِنَّكَ لَا تَهْدِي مَنْ أَحْبَبْتَ (You cannot guide whom you please) (28:56), it is the third degree of guidance which is intended, that is to say, it is neither the function of a prophet nor is it in his power to provide *tawfīq* to anyone, in other words, to make it easy for anyone to accept guidance. [7]

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7. **Translator's Note**: In this context one should not overlook the popularity enjoyed in the West, since the rise of Protestantism, by the notion of a personal relationship with God on the part of the individual. This notion has in its turn produced a diffused yet very effective conviction that ethics can be made independent of religion, that the external or legislative aspect of religion is of no account, that prescribed rites are irrelevant to the so-called 'religious experience', and more monstrously still, that doctrines can be dispensed with altogether -- all of which betrays a total incomprehension of what constitutes a religion. The tendency has, in fact, begun to infect some of the modernist interpreters of Islam in one way or another, all of whom claim to be fulfilling the 'needs of the present age'. Attempts have been made even to exploit this notion for ulterior motives.

Continued

To sum up, the Qur'ānic prayer اِهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيْمَ (guide us in the straight path) is most comprehensive, and certainly, one of the most important prayers taught to man. No member of the human family can claim not to need it. No success, no prosperity in this or in the other world can really come without being on the straight path. Particularly so, for man lost in the anxieties of mortal life, the prayer for the straight path is an elixir, though people do not realize it.

Which 'path' is 'straight'?

Now, to come to the meaning of the 'straight path', it is the path which has no turns and twists. The term signifies the particular way of Faith which equally avoids the two extremes of excess and deficiency. One who follows the straight path would, in matters of doctrine and practice both, neither go beyond the limits nor fall short of them.

The last two verses of the Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah define and identify that 'straight path', something man has been prompted to pray for immediately earlier. The verse says: صِرَاطَ الَّذِيْنَ اَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ (The path of those on whom You have bestowed Your grace). As to who these people are, another verse of the Holy Qur'ān gives us details in the following words:

اَلَّذِيْنَ اَنْعَمَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنَ النَّبِيّٖنَ وَالصِّدِّيْقِيْنَ وَالشُّهَدَآءِ وَالصّٰلِحِيْنَ

Those whom Allah has blessed, namely, the prophets, the *Siddiqin*, the *Shuhadā'*, and the righteous. (4:69)

Continued In persuading the Muslim countries to look upon themselves as 'the eastern-most part of the West', the London ECONOMIST argues that Islam 'also implies a one-to-one relationship between the believer and the God he believes in, a direct contact without intermediary and in this relationship, in which a single God speaks directly to the core of a single man, is the basis of individualism. The Protestant ethic is grounded on precisely the same concept.' (May 17-23, 1975, page 82 of the Special Survey).

In the light of the discussion regarding the three degrees of guidance, it should not be difficult to see that the direct contact with God without intermediary pertains only to the first and third degrees, and not the second degree where the mediation of the prophets is indispensable. To attain the third degree may be necessary for making a spiritual progress, but Islam, or for that matter any authentic religion, is born out of the second degree of guidance. One cannot, indeed, enjoy the benefits of the third degree without having accepted the guidance of the second degree -- or, to use the Islamic terminology, without following the *Sharī'ah*.

These are the four categories of those who find favour with Allah. Among them all, the prophets are the greatest. The *Siddiqin* (the constantly true) are those who acquire spiritual perfection, and thus -- attain the highest rank among the followers of a prophet. In common parlance, they are called Men of Allah, or saints.[8] The *Shuhadā'* (martyrs) are those who sacrifice even their lives for the sake of their faith (or, who bear witness to the truth, as the word admits of both meanings). The righteous (the *Salihin*) are those who follow the *Shari'ah* completely, not only in the matter of obligations (*Wājibat*) but also with regard to commendable (*mustaḥabb*) actions. In everyday language they are called the pious or the virtuous or the good.

This verse, then, determines the straight path in a positive manner, identifying it with the path followed by men of these four categories. The next verse, by a process of elimination, does the same in a negative manner by saying:

غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوْبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّآلِّيْنَ ۝

Not of those who have incurred Your wrath, nor of those who have gone astray.

Those who have incurred Allah's wrath are the people, who inspite of being quite familiar with the commandments of Allah wilfully go against them out of a calculated perversity or in the service of their desires, or, in other words, who are deficient in obeying divine injunctions. This, for example, was the general condition of the Jews who were ready to sacrifice their religion for the sake of a petty worldly gain, and used to insult and sometimes even to kill their prophets.

As for الضَّآلِّيْنَ (those who go astray), they are the people who, out of ignorance or lack of thought, go beyond the limits appointed by Allah, and indulge in excess and exaggeration in religious matters. This, for example, has generally been the error of the Christians who exceeded the limits in their reverence for a prophet and turned him into a god. On the one hand, there is the rebelliousness of the Jews who not only refused to listen to the prophets of Allah but went on to kill them; on the other hand, there is the excessive zeal of the Christians who deified a prophet.

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8. If taken in an untainted religious sense, and certainly not if taken in one of the many modern vulgarized usages of the term where, for instance, you see the halo of spiritual glory over the head of a spy!

Thus, the essential meaning of the verse is that, in praying for the straight path, we do not ask for the path of those who are the slaves of their desires, perverse in thought and action, and deficient in performing their religious obligations, nor the path of those who are ignorant or unmindful or misled, and indulge in excess and exaggeration in religious matters, but wish for a path between these two extremes, which inclines neither towards excess nor towards deficiency, and which is as free of the promptings of desires as of doubts and confusions and of erroneous beliefs.

In short, the prayer for the straight path is the essence of the Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah. Since knowing and following the straight path is the real knowledge and the real achievement in this mortal world, a mistake in picking it up right takes peoples and nations to ruins; otherwise, there are even non-Muslims who claim to be seeking God and undertake stupendous labours to attain this end. The Holy Qur'ān has, therefore, defined the straight path so explicitly from a positive as well as eliminative point of view.

The Key to the Straight Path

But, before we proceed, there is another problem to be considered, the answer to which would open the door to a new and more comprehensive understanding. It would seem that in order to define the straight path it should have been sufficient to call it 'the path of the Prophet'صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم or 'the path of the Qur'ān', which should also have been more succinct and more explicit, for the whole of the Holy Qur'ān is really an explanation of the straight path, and the teachings of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم , an elaboration. But, setting aside the succinct and explicit form of expression, the Holy Qur'ān has taken up two verses of this short Sūrah for defining and delimiting the straight path positively and negatively, and has thus indicated that if one wishes to follow the straight path, one should seek such and such men 'those on whom Allah has bestowed His grace...', and adopt their way. Here, the Holy Qur'ān does not ask us to follow the 'path of the Qur'ān', for a book alone is not sufficient for the grooming of man; nor does it ask us to follow 'the path of the prophet', for the Holy Prophet ﷺ was not to be in this world for ever, and no other prophet was to come after him. So, in enumerating those whose teaching and example can help us attain the straight path, the Holy Qur'ān has, besides the prophets صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم , included those too, who will always be found living amongst us till the last day of the world -- namely, the

Siddiqin, the *Shuhadā'*, and the righteous.

For the purpose of indicating the manner in which one can find the straight path, the Holy Qur'ān has thus referred not to a book but to certain men. According to a *ḥadīth*, when the Holy Prophet ﷺ informed his Companions that, like earlier communities, his '*Ummah*' too would be divided into seventy or seventy-two sects, and that only one among them would be on the right path, they wanted to know as to which group it would be. The answer he gave also leads on to certain men of Allah, for he said: مَا أَنَا عَلَيْهِ وَأَصْحَابِي (That which follows my way and the way of my Companions). All this comes to mean that written books or oral traditions alone cannot teach, train and discipline man; for this, one has to be with knowing men, and learning from them. In yet other words, the real teacher and groomer of man has to be another man; a book cannot take that place all by itself. How curtly this was pointed out by Akbar, the famous Urdu poet-humourist, who said:

کورس تو لفظ ہی سکھاتے ہیں
آدمی، آدمی بناتے ہیں

which, in English, comes close to saying: "Courses teach words. But, men train men." This truth holds good even for spheres of everyday life.

No one has ever become a doctor, or an engineer, or even a cook or a tailor merely by reading a book. Similarly, studying the Holy Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth* on one's own cannot by itself be sufficient for the moral-spiritual education and training of a man; such a study must be carried on under the guidance of a specialist or a genuine scholar before it can be useful. It is common observation that,[9] many people today, though otherwise educated, cherish the erroneous notion that one can acquire a masterly knowledge of the Holy Qur'ān and *Hadīth* merely by reading a translation or at best a commentary.[10] But the error of such an enterprise is self-evident. Had a book in itself been sufficient for the guidance of men, there was no need for the prophets to be sent. But, Allah in sending us His Book, has also sent His Prophet to serve as a teacher and guide. In defining the straight path

9. Under the influence of the West, particularly that of Protestantism.

10. The illusion has been encouraged by the modernistic or pseudo-modernistic interpretations of Islam.

too, He has also enumerated those of His servants who find special favour with Him -- all of which argues that, in trying to understand the Book of Allah and to act upon it, one cannot solely rely on one's own study and judgment, but must turn to someone who knows.

The conclusion

Two things are necessary for the physical and spiritual well-being and success of man -- the Book of Allah which contains guidance for every sphere of human life, and the Men of Allah who help in making this guidance effective. The way to profit from the Men of Allah is to assess them according to the well-known principles of the Book of Allah. Those who do not conform to these principles should just not be regarded as Men of Allah. But, when one has found Men of Allah, in the real sense, one should seek their guidance in order to understand the meaning of the Book of Allah and act upon it.

Why the Schism?

As to the sectarian differences on this point, we may remark that there are two kinds of deviations in this respect. Some people elected to follow the Book of Allah alone, ignored the Men of Allah totally and gave no value to their teachings and explanations. Conversely, others adopted the Men of Allah as the only criterion of truth and became indifferent to the Book of Allah. Both these ways lead to fatal error.

Injunctions and related considerations

To recapitulate, the Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah begins with the praise of Allah. Then comes an affirmation on the part of man that he worships Allāh alone, and turns to him alone in the hour of need. That is, so to say, the oath of allegiance man offers to his Lord and Master. Finally, there is a prayer which covers all possible human needs and goals. Beside these, there are some related secondary considerations also which arise from the Sūrah. These are as follows:

The proper way of Praying to Allah

Through this particular mode of expression and through its structure, the Sūrah teaches man how to pray and how to make a request to Allah. The proper method is that one should begin by fulfilling one's obligation to praise Allah. Then, one should offer the pledge of complete allegiance to Allah to the effect that one does not regard anyone except Allah as being worthy of adoration and worship,

nor does one look upon anyone except Allah as having the real power to give help in one's distress or need. Finally, one should pray for what one wishes to have. And there is every hope that a prayer made in this manner will be granted. (See Ahkam al-Jaṣṣāṣ). The Sūrah also suggests that, in praying to Allah, one should pray for something so comprehensive that it includes in essence all possible human goals, for example, pray for being guided in the straight path, because if one can and does follow the straight path in everything that concerns this world or the other, one's material life or spiritual, one need not be afraid of stumbling or of being hurt.

Praising Allah is Man's Natural Demand

The first verse of the Surah teaches man to praise Allah. We praise someone either for a quality inherent in him or for a favour received from him. But the verse mentions neither. The implication is that the blessings of Allah are limitless. The Holy Qur'ān says: وَإِنْ تَعُدُّوا نِعْمَةَ اللهِ لَا تُحْصُوهَا (If you try to count the blessings of Allah, you will never be able to number them) (14:34 and 16:18). Leaving aside other things, if man only considers his own being, he would find that it is a microcosm -- in itself which contains in analogical form everything contained in the macrocosm, his body offers a parallel to the earth, the hair on it to the vegetation, his bones to the hills, his veins flowing with blood to the springs underground.[11]

Man, again, is composed of two parts, spirit and body, of which the spirit is obviously superior in value, while the body is subservient to it. In this inferior part alone, there are thousands of anatomical and biological wonders. There are supposed to be more than three hundred joints, but Allah has made each of them so strong that during the sixty or seventy years of an average man's life, they are in perpetual motion and yet do not need repairs. Of this Allah himself has reminded us:

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11. It may not be out of place to remark that this analogical view of man's relationship with the universe has been an essential feature of all traditional cosmologies. The Copernican cosmology, whatever its merits may otherwise be, has tended to dissolve this vision of things, leaving man, at least in the West, to grow more and more alienated from the universe -- till we have arrived at the viewers of the American television who are reported to have been more interested in a ball game than in man's first landing on the moon -- Translator

نَحْنُ خَلَقْنٰهُمْ وَ شَدَدْنَا أَسْرَهُمْ

It is We Who created them, and it is We Who endowed their joints with strength (76:28).

Or, take the example of the eye. One may spend a life-time and yet not fully know the manifestations of divine wisdom present in it. Or, take a single movement of the eye, and see how many blessings of Allah are involved in its functioning. Before the eye can see, internally it requires physical energy which in its turn is provided by food, air, water etc. And externally it requires the light of the sun which in its turn depends on a thousand other factors. That is to say, all the forces of the universe join together to make it possible for the eye to see even once. Now, try to calculate how many times does the eye see in a day, in a year, in a man's life-time. Similarly, the functions of the ears, the tongue, the hands and the feet, each brings into action the forces of the whole universe.

This is a kind of blessing which is equally available to every living man, be he a king or a beggar. In fact, all the greatest blessings of Allah are the common property of every living creature -- for example, air, water, light, the sun, the moon, the stars, in fact, everything that exists in the heavens and the earth, or between them, offers its benefits to all without distinction.

Then there are special blessings which divine wisdom has chosen to distribute unequally among men, some getting more and others less. This category includes wealth, honour, health, peace, knowledge and other acquisitions. Although the general blessings are obviously much more important and essential for human life than the special blessings, yet man in his naivete takes them for granted and never realizes what great gifts they are in spite of being common.

Now, human nature itself requires that in recognition of the innumerable blessings that keep descending on him at every moment of his life, man should, as far as he can, praise and continue to praise his Benefactor. It is to indicate this basic need of human nature that the Holy Qur'ān employs the word اَلْحَمْدُ : *'Al-ḥamd'* (Praise) as the first word of the very first Sūrah. Thus, the praise of Allah has been accorded a very high rank among the acts of worship. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has

said that when, on receiving some kind of a blessing from Allah, His servant says اَلْحَمْدُلِلّٰه: (Praise belongs to Allah), it is like giving something better in return for what he has taken (Qurṭubī, from Ibn Majah, as narrated by Anas رضی اللہ عنہ). According to another *ḥadīth* if a man, on receiving all possible blessings of the world, says: اَلْحَمْدُلِلّٰه (*Al-ḥamdulillāh*), his act is superior to all those blessings. Commenting on this *ḥadīth* and citing certain scholars, al-Qurṭubī says, the ability to repeat the phrase '*Al-ḥamdulillāh*' with one's tongue is in itself a blessing of Allah. According to another authentic *ḥadīth*, saying this phrase fills half the scale on the side of good deeds in the Balance. As to what praising Allah should actually mean, Shaqiq ibn Ibrāhīm explains that when one receives some gift from Allah, one should first of all recognize the Benefactor, then be content with what He has given, and finally never disobey Him as long as one has some strength left in the body, which again is a gift from Allah. (See Qurṭubī)

The second element in the phrase is *Lillah*, which is composed of the preposition *Lām* (Arabic equivalent of the letter L) and the noun 'Allah'. This preposition means 'for' and is used for particularization, showing the exclusive possession of a thing or quality. So, the phrase implies that not only is it the duty of man to praise Allah, but in reality all praise belongs exclusively to Him, and no one else in the universe is worthy of it. At the same time, and by way of a further blessing, Allah has, for the purpose of teaching man how to behave with his fellow beings, commanded him to thank those too through whom the gifts of Allah come to him, for one who does not see the need of thanking his human benefactor would not thank Allah too.

Self-Praise is not permitted

It is not permissible for a created being such as man to praise himself. The Holy Qur'ān says: فَلَا تُزَكُّوْا اَنْفُسَكُمْ هُوَ اَعْلَمُ بِمَنِ اتَّقٰى Do not pretend to be pure; He knows best who is really God-fearing) (53:32). That is to say, a man can be praised only if he fears Allah, but Allah alone knows to what degree a particular man possesses this quality, known as *Taqwā*. As for Allah praising Himself, the reason is that man is not capable of praising the glory and greatness of Allah in a befitting manner. Not to speak of others, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has

exclaimed: لَا أُحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ (I cannot properly praise You!). Therefore, Allah Himself has taught man the mode of praising Him.

Rabb is the exclusive attribute of Allah

The Arabic word '*Rabb*' (Lord) is applied to a person who not only possesses a certain thing, but is also fully capable of and responsible for nurturing it properly. Obviously, no one can act as '*Rabb*' with regard to the whole universe except Allah. So, the word, used in an absolute sense, is exclusive to Allah, and it is not permissible to address or describe anyone other than Allah as '*Rabb.*' A *ḥadīth* in the Ṣaḥiḥ of Muslim explicitly forbids a slave or servant to call his master a '*Rabb*'. The word may, however, be employed in the case of a man too in a relative sense -- that is, in relation to a particular thing, for example, '*rabb al-dar*' (master of the house) etc. (Qurṭubī).

Seeking help from Allah

According to the great commentator and Companion 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās, the verse إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ : 'You alone we worship, and from You alone we seek help' means that one worships Allah alone and no one else, and that one turns for help to Allah alone and to no one else. (Ibn Abī Hatim, Ibn Jarīr)

It has been reported from certain great scholars and saints of the earliest centuries of Islam that the Sūrah al-Fātiḥah is the secret (i.e., the gist) of the entire Holy Qur'ān, and this verse is the secret of the whole Sūrah, for the first sentence of the verse is a declaration of one's being free from *Shirk*, or from all desire to associate anyone with Allah, and the second sentence is an expression of one's being exempt from all wish to trust in one's own power and will. Such an affirmation would naturally lead to putting oneself in the hands of Allah in all concerns. The Holy Qur'ān again and again commands us to do so: فَاعْبُدْهُ وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَيْهِ :'Worship Him, and put your trust in Him'. (11:123); قل هو الرحمن اٰمَنَّا بِهٖ وَعَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْنَا :'Say He is the All-Merciful. We believe in Him, and we put all our trust in Him' (67:29); 0 رَبُّ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ لَا إِلٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ فَاتَّخِذْهُ وَكِيلًا :'He is the Lord of the East and the West; there is no god but He; so take Him for a guardian' (73:9). All these verses come to mean simply this -- a true Muslim should, in anything that he undertakes, rely neither on his own faculties nor on the help of a fellow creature, but should entrust himself completely to Allah, for He alone is All-Powerful, and He alone is the absolute helper.

Two doctrinal points emerge from this discussion. Firstly, it is totally forbidden to worship anyone except Allah, and associating anyone else with Him in worship is a deadly and unforgiveable sin. As we have already explained, *'Ibādah* (worship) signifies an utmost humility and willing self-abasement before someone out of the deepest love and veneration. If one behaves in this manner in relation to any created being, it is called *shirk* (association) in Islamic terminology. It basically follows from this definition of "worship" that "association" does not merely consist in attributing divine power to figures made out of stone or metal as idolators usually do; but obeying or loving or venerating someone to the degree which is reserved for Allah is also an "obvious association" (*al-shirk al-Jalii*). In recounting how the Jews and the Christians indulge in *shirk* (association), the Holy Qur'ān says: اِتَّخَذُوْٓا اَحْبَارَهُمْ وَرُهْبَانَهُمْ اَرْبَابًا مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ : 'They have taken their religious scholars and their monks as lords apart from Allah'. (9:31)

The Companion 'Adī Ibn Ḥatīm, who was a Christian before accepting Islam, asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ with reference to this verse as to why the Holy Qur'ān should blame the Christians for having taken their religious scholars as lords when they were never guilty of worshipping them. The Holy Prophet ﷺ in his turn asked him if it was not a fact that their scholars had declared many things as forbidden although Allah had permitted men to eat them, and that conversely they had declared as permissible what had been forbidden, and that the Christians obeyed their scholars in both the respects. 'Adī admitted that it was so. Therefore, the Holy Prophet ﷺ remarked that this was exactly how they 'worshipped' their scholars. This goes to prove that Allah alone has the right to establish what is permissible and what is forbidden. If one associates somebody else with Allah in this respect and, in spite of being familiar with the divine injunctions regarding what is permissible (*ḥalāl*) and what is forbidden (*haram*), goes against them, believing that someone other than Allah too can demand obedience in these matters, one is virtually worshipping him and being guilty of the sin of association (*shirk*). But, in order to guard against a possible misunderstanding, we may remark that this verse of the Holy Qur'ān, which condemns the worship of religious scholars, does in no way apply to the generality of Muslims who, not being

qualified to understand the Holy Qur'ān and the *Sunnah* by themselves or to deduce the injunctions of the *Sharī'ah* from them, naturally depend on an *Imām*, a *Mujtāhid*, a *Muftī* or a religious scholar and follow his instructions in these matters. In fact, such Muslims are only acting in accordance with the Holy Qur'ān and the *Sunnah*, and obeying divine commandments. For the Holy Qur'ān itself says:

فَاسْئَلُوْا أَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ O

Ask the men of knowledge, if you yourselves do not know. (16:43)

Another thing which comes under the category of association (*shirk*) is to make votive offerings to someone other than Allah; so does praying to someone else in time of need or distress, for, according to a Tradition (*Ḥadīth*), praying is also an act of worship. Similarly, adopting such practices as are in general considered to be the signs or symbols of association also constitute the same sin. For example, the Companion 'Adī ibn Ḥātim رضی اللہ عنہ relates that when he embraced Islam and presented himself before the Holy Prophet ﷺ with a cross hanging round his neck, the Holy Prophet ﷺ asked him to remove this idol. Although at this time the cross did not have the kind of signification for 'Adī which it has for Christians, yet he was asked to shun a symbol of 'association' externally as well. Among the symbols of 'association' are included practices like bowing (*rukū'*) or prostrating (*sajdah*) oneself before anyone except Allah, or going round a person or thing in the prescribed manner of the *tawāf* (circumambulation) of the *Ka'bāh*. Avoiding all such symbols of 'association' is a necessary part of the pledge of fidelity to Allah made in the phrase: 'You alone we worship'.

Seeking Allah's Help Directly and Indirectly

The other doctrinal point we mentioned is that one must turn to Allah alone for help and to no one else. This requires some clarification.

There is a kind of help which every man does seek from other men. The physical aspect of the universal order being what it is, it has to be so, and not otherwise. A tailor or tinker, a carpenter or a blacksmith, each is serving others, and everyone is obliged to seek his help. Seeking help of this kind neither is nor can be forbidden by any

religion, for it is part and parcel of the network of physical means provided to men by Allah. In the sphere of non-physical means too, it is quite permissible for one to seek the help of a prophet or a saint by asking him to pray to Allah in one's behalf, or to mention, while praying directly to Allah, the name of a prophet or a saint by way of a medium (*wasilāh*) for drawing divine mercy upon oneself. Explicit Traditions (*aḥādīth*) and implicit indications of the Holy Qur'ān fully justify this practice, and it would be wrong to condemn it as being forbidden or to include it among the various forms of association (*shirk*).

Now, what sort of supplication for help is it which can be addressed exclusively to Allah and to no one else? And, when does one fall into the sin of *shirk* (association) in asking someone other than Allah for help? In reply to the second question, we may say that in this context the sin of *shirk* or association arises in two forms. Firstly, one becomes guilty of association, if one seeks the help of an angel or prophet or saint or any creature believing him to be omnipotent like Allah. It is such an obvious heresy that even idolaters and associators in general consider it as such, for even they do not look upon their idols and gods as being omnipotent like Allah. The second is the form adopted by idolaters and associators. They admit that God alone is Omnipotent, but also believe that He has delegated a part of His power to an angel or a prophet or a saint or to a smaller god who exercises a full and independent authority in that area, and to whom one may pray for help in matters within his jurisdiction. This is the supplication which the Holy Qur'ān forbids, and against which it warns us in the phrase إِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ (to You alone we pray for help).

There is a simple reason for misunderstanding in this regard. Allah appoints many angels to perform quite a large number of functions even in the physical order of the universe; or, He makes many things happen through the prophets which are beyond the powers of man and which are called miracles (*mu'jizat*), as also other incredible wonders through the saints which are called *karāmat*. The appearance may easily lead a careless observer to ignore the reality, and to conclude from what he has seen that the angels or the prophets or the saints could not have worked such wonders if Allah had not

given them the necessary power and authority. This faulty argument which is no more than an illusion gives birth to the belief that the prophets or the saints enjoy absolute power and authority in their own degree. It is not so. Miracles and wonders are the direct acts of Allah, but they are manifested through prophets and saints so that people may recognize their spiritual station -- prophets and saints themselves have no powers to make such things happen. This fact is borne out by so many verses of the Holy Qur'ān. For example, the verse: وَمَا رَمَيْتَ إِذْ رَمَيْتَ وَلَٰكِنَّ اللَّهَ رَمَىٰ : 'When you threw, it was not you that threw, but Allah threw' (8:17) refers to a miracle of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in which he threw a handful of pebbles at an army of his enemies, and Allah willed it so that they smote the eyes of the whole army. The Holy Qur'ān attributes the act of throwing pebbles, not to the Holy Prophet ﷺ but to Allah Himself, which clearly shows that a miracle is manifested through a prophet ﷺ , but is in reality an act of Allah Himself. Similarly, when the people of Nūḥ, or Noah, عليه السلام demanded that, in order to establish his authenticity as a prophet, he should bring down on them the punishment and wrath of Allah, he replied: إِنَّمَا يَأْتِيكُم بِهِ اللَّهُ إِن شَاءَ :'Allah will certainly bring it down to you, if He so wills' (11:33), in other words, he declared that he himself could not bring down divine punishment on them by way of a miracle. Another verse of the Holy Qur'ān reports what a group of prophets said to their people in reply to a similar demand: مَا كَانَ لَنَا أَن نَّأْتِيَكُم بِسُلْطَانٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ :'We cannot give you proof, except by Allah's will' (14:11). This again was an admission that it was not in their power to produce a miracle, for all power rests in the hands of Allah. In short, it is not at all possible for a prophet or a saint to show a miracle whenever he likes and whatsoever he likes. The disbelievers used to demand specific miracles from the Holy Prophet ﷺ and from the earlier prophets عليهم السلام but Allah manifested only those which He Himself pleased, and not others. The Holy Qur'ān presents many such instances.

An ordinary example will make the discussion clear. In your room, you receive light from a lamp and air from a fan, but the lamp and the fan do not possess in themselves an absolute power to give you light and air, but need the electric current which they receive from the power house, and without which they cannot function. Giving you light

and air is, in actual fact, not the work of the lamp and the fan, but of the electric current which comes from the power house. Similarly, saints, prophets and angels, all depend on Allah in everything they do; it is Allah's power and will which makes things happen, though it manifests itself through prophets and saints as the electric current manifests itself through fans and lamps.

This example would also show that although prophets and saints have no power to make these things happen or come to be, yet their presence is not altogether irrevelant to what happens, you cannot have light and air in your room without there being a lamp and a fan. Likewise, you cannot have miracles or wonders without there being a prophet or a saint. There is, of course, a certain difference between the two situations. In spite of all the wirings and fittings being intact, you cannot have light without a lamp, nor air without a fan. But, in the case of miracles, Allah has the power, if He so wills, to manifest them even without the medium of prophets and saints. The usual way of Allah has, however, been that miracles are not manifested without the medium of prophets and saints; otherwise miracles would not serve the purpose for which they are intended.

To conclude, one must have firm faith in the doctrine that everything that happens is made to happen by the power and will of Allah, but it is also necessary to recognize the need for prophets and saints, and to admit their importance. Without such an admission, one would succeed neither in obeying divine commandments in the real sense nor in attaining Allah's pleasure exactly like the man who, being ignorant of the worth of lamps and fans, disregards them, and remains deprived of light and air.

The problems we have discussed above perplex many a mind. But the answer is essentially simple. Taking prophets and saints as a medium (*wasilāh*) for drawing divine mercy upon oneself is neither absolutely permissible nor absolutely forbidden. There is a condition attached to it. If one does so, believing a prophet or a saint to be all-powerful, it becomes an act of ***shirk*** (association) and is hence forbidden. But if one takes a prophet or a saint to be no more than a medium or a means, it is permissible. But one finds that in this matter people generally adopt either of the two extreme positions, outright

rejection of *wasilāh* or exaggerated veneration. The truth, however, lies between the two.

6. Success in this world and in the Hereafter

As we have said before, the prayer which the Holy Qur'ān has chosen to recommend to everyone, in every situation and for everything one does, is the prayer for being guided in the straight path. Just as success in the Hereafter depends on taking the straight path which leads one to Paradise, in the same way, if you come to think about it, success in all worldly concerns too depends on keeping to the straight path -- that is, on using the means and methods which habitually lead to the attainment of one's goal. Conversely, a little reflection will reveal that failure is always due to having strayed from the straight path. In view of the need for the straight path in worldly and other worldly concerns both, this is the prayer which should constantly be on the lips and in the heart of a true Muslim -- never as an empty verbal exercise, but with a sincere intention and with the meaning of the words fully present in the mind.

With Allah's help, the commentary on Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah ends here.

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SŪRAH AL-BAQARAH

(The Cow)

MADINITE	بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ	286 VERSES

The name and the number of verses

According to the *aḥadīth* of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the reports relating to his blessed Companions, the name of this Sūrah is Al-Baqarah. The *riwayah* or narration which prohibits this name is not authentic (Ibn Kathir). It comprises of 286 verses, 6201 words and 25500 letters (Ibn Kathir).

The period of revelation

The Sūrah is Madinite - that is to say, it was revealed at Madīnah after the Hijrah; some of the verses included here were revealed at Makkah at the time of the last Hajj of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, but, in accordance with the terminology of the commentators, they too are regarded as Madinite. This is the longest Sūrah in the Holy Qur'ān. It was the first Sūrah to be revealed at Madīnah, but different verses were revealed at different times, covering quite a long period so much so that the verses with regard to *riba* (interest or usury) were revealed in the last days of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم after the conquest of Makkah. Actually, the verse:

وَاتَّقُوْا يَوْمًا تُرْجَعُوْنَ فِيْهِ اِلَى اللّٰهِ

Fear the day when you will return to Allah (2:281),

is the very last verse of the Holy Qur'ān to be revealed - this happened on the 10th of Dhu al-Hijjah 10 A.H., when the Holy Prophet ﷺ was

in the course of performing his last Hajj, and only eighty or ninety days later he departed from this world, and the process of Divine Revelation came to an end for ever. (Qurtubi)

The merits of Sūrah Al-Baqarah

It is not only the longest Sūrah in the Holy Qur'ān, but also contains quite a large number of injunctions. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said: "Make a habit of reading the Sūrah Al-Baqarah, for reading it brings down on you the *barakah* or blessings of Allah, and neglecting it is a matter of regret, and a misfortune. And men of falsehood cannot overcome it". Al-Qurṭubī cites the blessed Companion Mu'awiyah to the effect that the men of falsehood referred to here are sorcerers, and the implication is that one who keeps reading this Surah becomes immune to the effect of black magic (Qurṭubi, from Muslim, as narrated by Abū Umamah Bahili). The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has also said that Satan flees from the house in which this Surah is read or recited. (Ibn Kathir from Hakim). Another *ḥadith* says that this Sūrah is the apex of the Holy Qur'ān, and that a retinue of eighty angels had accompanied each of its verses when it was revealed (Ibn Kathīr from Musnad Ahmad). The blessed Companion Abū Hurairaرضى الله عنه reports from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that there is a verse in this Sūrah which enjoys a superiority over all the other verses of the Holy Qur'ān, and that verse is the Verse of the *Kursi* (*Āyaṭ al-Kursī* 2:255) (Ibn Kathīr from Tirmidhī). The blessed Companion Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd says that ten verses of this Sūrah have such an efficacy that if one recites them at night, neither Satan nor *jinn* would enter one's house, nor would one and one's family be affiicted with illness or calamity or sorrow that night, and that if they are recited over a man suffering from a fit of madness, his condition will improve. The ten verses are these: the first four verses of the Sūrah, three verses in the middle (that is, the *Āyaṭ al-Kursī*, and the two following verses), and the last three verses of the Sūrah.

This Sūrah enjoys, with regard to its contents as well, a special distinction. Ibn al-'Arabī reports from his elders that in this Sūrah there are one thousand injunctions, one thousand prohibitions, one thousand subtle points of wisdom, and one thousand parables and references to historical events (Qurṭubī and Ibn Kathīr). That is why the

great Caliph 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ spent twelve years in learning and meditating over this Sūrah, and the blessed Companion Abdullāh ibn 'Umar spent eight years to learn it. (Qurṭubī)

As we have said, the Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah is the gist and the essence of the Holy Qur'ān. It deals with three basic themes - firstly, the affirmation of Allah as the Lord (*Rabb*) of the universe; secondly, the affirmation that Allah alone, and none else, is worthy of being worshipped; thirdly, the prayer for guidance. Thus, the Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah ends with the request for the straight path, and the whole of the Qur'ān is, in fact, an answer to this request - that is to say, the man who seeks the straight path will find it only in the Holy Qur'ān.

Hence it is that the Sūrah Al-Fātihah is immediately followed by the Sūrah Al-Baqarah which begins with the words, "That is the Book", indicating that this book is the straight path one has been seeking and praying for. Having defined the nature and function of the Holy Qur'ān, the Sūrah proceeds to state in a very brief manner the basic principles of the Islamic faith - namely, oneness of God, prophethood and hereafter (*Tawḥīd, Risālah, Ākhirah*). These principles have been presented in detail at the end of the Surah. In between, the Sūrah lays down the basic principles, and sometime even secondary rules in detail, for providing guidance to man in all spheres of life, modes of *'ibādah* (worship), ethics, individual and social behaviour, economic relationships, ways and means of improving oneself externally and internally.

Verses 1 - 5

الٓمٓ ۝ ذٰلِكَ الْكِتٰبُ لَا رَيْبَ ۛ فِيْهِ ۛ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِيْنَ ۝ الَّذِيْنَ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَ يُقِيْمُوْنَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَ مِمَّا رَزَقْنٰهُمْ يُنْفِقُوْنَ ۝ وَالَّذِيْنَ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِمَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكَ وَمَآ اُنْزِلَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ وَبِالْاٰخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوْقِنُوْنَ ۝ اُولٰٓئِكَ عَلٰى هُدًى مِّنْ رَّبِّهِمْ وَ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُوْنَ ۝

With the name of Allah,
The All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful.

Alif. Lam. Mim. That Book has no doubt in it - a

guidance for the God-fearing, who believe in the unseen, and are steadfast in *salah*, and spend out of what We have provided them; and who believe in what has been revealed to you and what has been revealed before you, and do have faith in the Hereafter. It is these who are on guidance given by their Lord; and it is just these who are successful. (Verses 1-5)

The Sūrah begins with the Arabic letters *Alif*, *Lām* and *Mīm* (equivalents of A, L and M). Several Sūrahs begin with a similar combination of letters, for example, *Ḥā, Mīm,* or *Alif, Lām, Mīm, Ṣād.* Each of these letters is pronounced separately without the addition of a vowel sound after it. So, the technical term for them is مُقَطَّعَات (*Muqatta'āt*: isolated letters).

According to certain commentators, the isolated letters are the names of the Surahs at the beginning of which they occur. According to others, they are the symbols of the Divine Names. But the majority of the blessed Companions and the generation next to them, the *Tabi'īn*, and also the later authoritative scholars have preferred the view that the isolated letters are symbols or mysteries, the meaning of which is known to Allah alone or may have been entrusted as a special secret to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم not to be communicated to anyone else. That is why no commentary or explanation of these letters has at all been reported from him. The great commentator Al-Qurṭubī has adopted this view of the matter, which is summarized below:

"According to 'Amir Āl-Sha'bī, Sufyān Al-Thawrī and many masters of the science of *Ḥadīth*, every revealed book contains certain secret signs and symbols and mysteries of Allah; the isolated letters too are the secrets of Allah in the Holy Qur'ān, and hence they are among the مُتَشَابِهَات (*Mutashābihāt*: of hidden meaning), the meaning of which is known to Allah alone, and it is not permissible for us even to enter into any discussion with regard to them. The isolated letters are not, however, without some benefit to us. Firstly, to believe in them and to recite them is in itself a great merit. Secondly, in reciting them we receive spiritual blessings from the unseen world, even if we are not aware of the fact. Al-Qurṭubī adds: "The Blessed Caliphs Abū

Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān and 'Ali, and most of the Companions like 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضی الله تعالی عنه, firmly held the view that these letters are the secrets of Allah, that we should believe in them as having descended from Allah and recite them exactly in the form in which they have descended, but should not be inquisitive about their meanings, which would be improper". Citing Al-Qurṭubī and others, Ibn Kathīr too prefers this view. On the other hand, interpretations of the isolated letters have been reported from great and authentic scholars. Their purpose, however, was only to provide symbolical interpretation, or to awaken the minds of the readers to the indefinite possibilities of meanings that lie hidden in the Holy Qur'ān, or just to simplify things; they never wished to claim that these were the meanings intended by Allah Himself. Therefore, it would not be justifiable to challenge such efforts at interpretation since it would go against the considered judgment of veritable scholars.

The sentence "That Book has no doubt in it" raises a grammatical and exegetical problem, for the first phrase in the Arabic text reads as "ذٰلِكَ الْكِتٰبُ" :*Dhālikal kitāb*. Now, the word *dhālika* (that) is used to point out a distant thing, while the word *kitāb* (book) obviously refers to the Holy Qur'ān itself, which is present before us. So, this particular demonstrative pronoun does not seem to be appropriate to the situation. There is, however, a subtle indication. The pronoun refers back to the prayer for the straight path made in the Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah, implying that the prayer has been granted and the Holy Qur'ān is the answer to the request, which gives a detailed account of the straight path to those who seek guidance and are willing to follow it.

Having indicated this, the Holy Qur'ān makes a claim about itself: "There is no doubt in it". There are two ways in which doubt or suspicion may arise with regard to the validity or authenticity of statement. Either the statement itself is erroneous, and thus becomes subject to doubt; or, the listener makes a mistake in understanding it. In the latter case, the statement does not really become subject to doubt, even if someone comes to suspect it out of a defective or distorted understanding - as the Holy Qur'ān itself reminds us later in

the same Sūrah: إِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِى رَيْبٍ :"If you are in doubt..." (2:23). So, in spite of the doubts and objections of a thousand men of small or perverse understanding, it would still be true to say that there is no doubt in this book - either with regard to it having been revealed by Allah, or with regard to its contents.

هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِيْنَ :"A guidance for the God-fearing": The Arabic word for the God-fearing is *Muttaqīn*, derived from *Taqwā* which literally means "to fear, to refrain from", and in Islamic terminology it signifies fearing Allah and refraining from the transgression of His commandments. As for the Holy Qur'ān being a guidance to the God-fearing, it actually means that although the Holy Qur'ān provides guidance not only to mankind but to all existents in the universe, yet the special guidance which is the means of salvation in the other world is reserved for the God-fearing alone. We have already explained in the commentary on the Sūrah "Al-Fātiḥah" that there are three degrees of divine guidance - the first degree being common to the whole of mankind and even to animals etc., the second being particular to men and *jinns*, and the third being special to those who are close to Allah and have found His favour, the different levels of this last degree being limitless. It is the last two degrees of guidance which are intended in the verse under discussion. With regard to the second degree, the implication is that those who accept the guidance will have the hope of being elevated to the rank of the God-fearing. With reference to the third degree, the suggestion is that those who are already God-fearing may receive further and limitless guidance through the Holy Qur'ān. This explanation should be sufficient to remove the objection that guidance is needed much more by those who are not God-fearing, for now we know that the specification of the God-fearing does not entail a denial of guidance to those who not possess this qualification.

The next two verses delineate the characteristic qualities of the God-fearing, suggesting that these are the people who have received guidance, whose path is the straight path, and that he who seeks the straight path should join their company, adopt their beliefs and their

way of life. It is perhaps in order to enforce this suggestion that the Holy Qur'ān, immediately after pointing out the attributes peculiar to the God-fearing, proceeds to say:

أُولٰٓئِكَ عَلٰى هُدًى مِّنْ رَّبِّهِمْ وَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُوْنَ O

> It is these who are on guidance given by their Lord, and it is just these who are successful.

The delineation of the qualities of the God-fearing in these two verses also contains, in essence, a definition of Faith (*'Īmān*) and an account of its basic tenets and of the fundamental principles of righteous conduct:

اَلَّذِيْنَ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَ يُقِيْمُوْنَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَ مِمَّا رَزَقْنٰهُمْ يُنْفِقُوْنَ O

> Who believe in the unseen, and are steadfast in *Salah* and spend out of what We have provided them.

Thus, the first of the two verses, mentions three qualities of the God-fearing - belief in the unseen, being steadfast in *Salāh*, and spending in the way of Allah. Many important considerations arise out of this verse, the most significant being the meaning and definition of *'Īmān* (Faith).

Who are the God-fearing

The Definition of *'Īmān*

The Holy Qur'ān has provided a comprehensive defination of *'Iman* in only two words يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالْغَيْبِ "Believe in the unseen". If one has fully understood the meaning of the words *'Īmān* and *Ghayb*, one will have also understood the essential reality of *'Īmān*.

Lexically, the Arabic word *'Īmān* signifies accepting with complete certitude the statement made by someone out of one's total confidence and trust in him. Endorsing someone's statement with regard to sensible or observable facts is, therefore, not *'Īmān*. For example, if one man describes a piece of cloth as black, and another man endorses the statement, it may be called *Taṣdīq* (confirmation) but not *'Īmān*, for such an endorsement is based on personal observation, and does, in no way, involve any confidence or trust in the man who has made the statement. In the terminology of the *Sharī'ah*, *'Īmān* signifies accepting with complete certitude the statement made by a prophet

only out of one's total confidence and trust in him and without the need of personal observation.[1]

As for the word *Ghaib*, lexically it denotes things which are not known to man in an evident manner, or which are not apprehensible through the five senses. The Holy Qur'ān uses this word to indicate all the things which we cannot know through the five senses or through reason, but which have been reported to us by the Holy Prophet ﷺ. These include the essence and the attributes of Allah, matters pertaining to destiny, heaven and hell and what they contain, the Day of Judgment and the things which happen on that Day, divine books, all the prophets who have preceded the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in short, all the things mentioned in the last two verses of the Sūrah Al-Baqarah. Thus, the third verse of the Sūrah states the basic creed of the Islamic faith in its essence, while the last two verses provide the details.

So, belief in the unseen ultimately comes to mean having firm faith in everything that the Holy Prophet has taught us - subject to the necessary condition that the teaching in question must have come down to us through authentic and undeniable sources. This is how the overwhelming majority of Muslim scholars generally define *'Iman* (See al-'Aqidah al-Tahawiyyah, 'Aqa'id al-Nasafi etc.).

According to this definition, *'Imān* signifies faith and certitude, and not mere knowledge. For, a mental knowledge of the truth is possessed by Satan himself, and even by many disbelievers - for example, they knew very well that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was truthful and that his teachings were true, but they did not have faith in him nor did they accept his teachings with their heart, and hence they are not Muslims.

The Meaning of 'Establishing' *Salāh*

2. The second quality of the God-fearing is that they are "steadfast in the prayer." The verb employed by the Holy Qur'ān here is

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1. It would be helpful to note that in the everday idiom of the West, and even in modern social sciences, "faith" has come to mean no more than an intense emotional state or "a fixe emotion". As against this, the Islamic conception of *'Imān* is essentially intellectual, in the original signification of "Intellect" which the modern West has altogether forgotten.

Yuqīmūna (generally rendered in English translations as "they establish", which comes from the word *Iqamah* signifying "to straighten out"). So, the verb implies not merely saying one's prayers, but performing the prayers correctly in all possible ways and observing all the prescribed conditions, whether obligatory (*Farḍ*) or necessary (*Wājib*) or commendable (*Mustahabb*). The concept includes regularity and perpetuity in the performance of *Ṣalāh* as also an inward concentration, humility and awe. At this point, it may be noted that the term does not mean a particular *ṣalāh*, instead, it includes all *farḍ, wājib* and *nafl* prayers.

Now to sum up - the God-fearing are those who offer their prayers regularly and steadfastly in accordance with the regulations of the Sharī'ah, and also observe the spiritual etiquette outwardly and inwardly.

Spending in the way of Allah: Categories

The third quality of the God-fearing is that they spend in the way of Allah. The correct position in this respect, which has been adopted by the majority of commentators, is that it includes all the forms of spending in the way of Allah, whether it be the *farḍ* (obligatory) *Zakāh* or the *Wājib* (necessary) alms-giving or just voluntary and *nafl* (supererogatory) acts of charity. For, the Holy Qur'an usually employs the word *Infaq* with reference to *nafl* (suspererogatory) alms-giving or in a general sense, but reserves the word *Zakāh* for the obligatory alms-giving. The simple phrase: مِمَّا رَزَقْنٰهُمْ : "Spend out of what We have provided them" inspires us to spend in the way of Allah by drawing our attention to the fact that anything and everything we possess is a gift from Allah and His trust in our hands, and that even if we spend all our possessions in the way of Allah, it would be proper and just and no favour to Him. But Allah in His mercy asks us to spend in His way "out of" what (مِمَّا) he has provided - that is, only a part and not the whole.

Among the three qualities of the God-fearing, faith is, of course, the most important, for it is the basic principle of all other principles, and no good deed can find acceptance or validity without faith. The other two qualities pertain to good deeds. Now, good deeds are many; one could make a long list of even those which are either obligatory or

necessary. So, the question arises as to why the Holy Qur'ān should be content to choose for mention only two - namely, performing *Ṣalāh* and spending in the way of Allah. In answering this question, one could say that all the good deeds which are obligatory or necessary for man pertain either to his person and his body or to his possessions. Among the personal and bodily forms of *'Ibādat* (acts of worship), the most important is the *Ṣalah*. Hence the Holy Qur'an mentions only this form in the present passage. As for the different forms of *'Ibadat* pertaining to possessions, the word *Infaq* (spending) covers all of them. Thus, in mentioning only two good deeds, the Holy Qur'ān has by implication included all the forms of worship and all good deeds. The whole verse, then, comes to mean that the God-fearing are those who are perfect in their faith and in their deeds both, and that Islam is the sum of faith and practice. In other words, while providing a complete definition of *'Īmān* (Faith), the verse indicates the meaning of Islam as well. So, let us find out how *'Īmān* and Islam are distinct from each other.

The distinction between *'Īmān* and Islam

Lexically, *'Īmān* signifies the acceptance and confirmation of something with one's heart, while Islam signifies obedience and submission. *'Īmān* pertains to the heart; so does Islam, but it is related to all the other parts of the human body as well. From the point of view of the Shari'ah, however, *'Īmān* is not valid without Islam, nor Islam without *'Īmān*. In other words, it is not enough to have faith in Allah and the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in one's heart unless the tongue expresses the faith and also affirms one's allegiance and submission. Similarly, an oral declaration of faith and allegiance is not valid unless one has faith in one's heart.

In short, *'Īmān*, and Islam have different connotations from the lexical point of view. It is on the basis of this lexical distinction that the Holy Qur'ān and Ḥadīth refer to a difference between the two. From the point of view of the *Sharī'ah*, however, the two are inextricably linked together, and one cannot be valid without the other - as is borne out by the Holy Qur'ān itself.

When Islam, or an external declaration of allegiance, is not

accompanied by *'Īmān* or internal faith, the Holy Qur'ān terms it as *Nifāq* (hypocrisy), and condemns it as a greater crime than an open rejection of Islam:

إِنَّ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ فِى الدَّرْكِ الْاَسْفَلِ مِنَ النَّارِ

Surely the hypocrites will be in the lowest depths of Hell. (4:145)

In explanation of this verse let us add that so far as the physical world goes, we can only be sure of the external state of a man, and cannot know his internal state with any degree of certainty. So in the case of men who orally declare themselves to be Muslims without having faith in their heart, the Sharī'ah requires us to deal with them as we would deal with a Muslim in worldly affairs; but in the other world their fate would be worse than that of the ordinary disbelievers. Similarly, if *'Īmān* or acknowledgment in the heart is not accompanied by external affirmation and allegiance, the Holy Qur'ān regards this too as *kufr* or rejection and denial of the Truth - speaking of the infidels, it says:

يَعْرِفُوْنَهٗ كَمَا يَعْرِفُوْنَ اَبْنَآءَهُمْ

They know him (that is, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم) as they know their own sons (2:146);

or in another palce:

جَحَدُوْا بِهَا وَاسْتَيْقَنَتْهَآ اَنْفُسُهُمْ ظُلْمًا وَّعُلُوًّا

Their souls knew them (the signs sent by Allah) to be true, yet they denied them in their wickedness and their pride. (27:14)

My respected teacher, 'Allāmah Sayyid Muḥammad Anwar Shāh used to explain it thus - the expanse which *'Īmān* and Islam have to cover in the spiritual journey is the same, and the difference lies only in the beginning and the end; that is to say, *'Īmān* starts from the heart and attains perfection in external deeds, while Islam starts from external deeds and can be regarded as perfect when it reaches the heart.

To sum up, *Īmān* is not valid, if acknowledgment in the heart does not attain to external affirmation and allegiance; similarly, Islam is not valid, if external affirmation and allegiance does not attain to confirmation by the heart. Imām Ghazzālī and Imām Subki both have arrived at the same conclusion, and in *Musāmarah*, Imām Ibn

al-Humām reports the agreement of all the authentic scholars in this respect.[2]

...who believe in what has been revealed to you and in what has been revealed before you, and do have faith in the Hereafter.

This verse speaks of some other attributes of the God-fearing, giving certain details about faith in the unseen with a special mention of

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2. Today one finds a very wide-spread confusion, sometimes amounting to a total incomprehension, with regard to the distinction between Islam and 'Īmān, essentially under the influence of Western modes of thought and behaviour and, to be more specific, that of the ever-proliferating Protestant sects and schools of theology. Since the middle of the 19th century there have sprouted in almost every Muslim country a host of self-styled Reformists, Revivalists, Modernists et al, each pretending to have understood the "real" Islam for the first time, and each adopting an extremist, though untenable, posture with regard to Islam and 'Īmān. On the one hand, we have people claiming that Islam is only a matter of the "heart" (a word which has during the last four hundred years been used in the West as an equivalent of "emotion" or, worse still, of "emotional agitation") or of "religious experience" (a very modish term brought into currency by William James). As a corollary, they stubbornly refuse to see the need for a fixed ritual or an ethical code, all of which they gladly leave to social exigency or individual preference. They base their claims on the unquestioned axiom that religion is "personal" relationship between the individual and "his" God. It is all too obvious that this genre of Modernist "Islam" is the progeny of Martin Luther with cross-pollination from Rousseau. On the other hand, we have fervent and sometimes violent champions of Islam insisting on a merely external performance of rituals - more often on a mere conformity to moral regulations, and even these, of their liking. They would readily exclude, and are anyhow indifferent to, the internal dimension of Islam. A recent modification of this stance (in the wake of a certain Protestant pioneering, it goes without saying) has been to replace divinely ordained rituals by acts of social service or welfare, giving them the status and value of acts of worship. Counselling on divorce, abortion, premarital sex and the rest of the baggage having already become a regular part of the functions of a Protestant clergyman, it would not be too fond to expect, even on the part of our Modernists, the speedy inclusion of acts of entertainment as well. There is still another variety of deviationists, more visible and vociferous than the rest, and perhaps more pervasive and pernicious in their influence, finding easy credence among a certain section of Muslims with a sloppy western-style education. While dispensing with the subtle distinctions between Islam and 'Īmān, they reduce Islam itself to a mere system of social organization, or even to state-craft. According to their way of looking at things, if Muslims fail to set up a social and political organization of a specified shape, they would cease to be Muslims. Applied to the history of Islam, this fanciful notion would lead **(Continued)**

faith in hereafter. Commenting on this verse, the blessed Companions 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd and 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی الله عنهم اجمعين have said that in the days of the Holy Prophet ﷺ God-fearing Muslims were of two kinds, - those who used to be associators and disbelievers but accepted Islam, and those who used to be among the people of the Book (that is, Jews and Christians) but embraced Islam later on; the preceding verse refers to the first group, and this verse to the second. Hence this verse specifically mentions belief in the earlier Divine Books along with belief in the Holy Qur'ān, for, according to the *Ḥadīth*, people in the second group deserve a double recompense, firstly, for believing in and following the earlier Books before the Holy Qur'ān came to replace them, and secondly, for believing in and following the Holy Qur'ān when it came as the final Book of Allah. Even today it is obligatory for every Muslim to believe in the earlier Divine Books except that now the belief has to take this form: everything that Allah has revealed in the earlier Books is true (excepting the changes and distortions introduced by selfish people), and that it was incumbent upon the people for whom those Books had been sent to act according to them, but now that all the earlier Books

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(Continued) to the grotesque conclusion that no Muslim had ever existed. These are only a few examples of the intellectual distortions produced by refusing to define Islam and 'Iman clearly and ignoring the distinction between the two. Contrary to all such modernizing deviations, Islam in fact means establishing a particular relationship of obedience and servitude with Allah. This relationship arises neither out of vague "religious experiences" nor out of social regimentation; in order to attain it, one has to accept all the doctrines and to act upon all the commandments specified in the Holy Qur'an, the Hadith and the Shari'ah. These doctrines and commandments cover all the spheres of human life, individual or collective, right up from acts of worship down to social, political and economic relations among men, and codes of ethics and behaviour, morals and manners, and their essential purpose is to produce in man a genuine attitude of obedience to Allah. If one acts according to the Shari'ah, one, no doubt, gains many worldly benefits, individual as well as collective. These benefits may be described as the raison d'etre of the commandments, but are in no way their essential object, nor should a servant of Allah seek them for themselves in obeying Him, nor does the success or failure of a Muslim as a Muslim depend on attaining them. When a man has fully submitted himself to the commandments of Allah in everything he does, he has already succeeded as a Muslim, whether he receives the related worldly benefits or not.

and Shari'ahs have been abrogated, one must act according to the Holy Qur'an alone. [3]

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3. Exactly as predicted by a Hadith, today we see all around us a proliferation of "knowledge" and of "writing". One of the dangerous forms the process has taken is the indiscriminate translation at least into European languages and the popularization of the sacred books of all possible religious and metaphysical traditions - not only the Hindu, the Chinese or the Japanese, but also the Shamanic or the Red Indian. The lust for reading sacred books has virtually grown into a mania, specially among the modern young people with their deep sense of being uprooted and disinherited, and all considerations of aptitude have been contemptuously set aside. In these circumstances, Muslims with a Western orientation are naturally impelled to ask themselves as to what they can or should make of such books which sometimes seem to offer similarities and parallels to the Holy Qur'an itself, and more often to the Sufi doctrines. The problem has already attained noticeable proportions, for in 1974 the government of Turkey found it necessary to ban the entry of certain Hindu sacred books like the Bhagavadgita and Upanishads. The correct doctrinal position in this respect is that it is obligatory for every Muslim, as an essential part of the Islamic creed, to believe in all the prophets and messengers of Allah and in the Divine Books (not in their distorted forms, but as they were originally revealed) that have specifically been mentioned by their names in the Holy Qur'an, and also to believe that Allah has sent His messengers and His books for the guidance of all the peoples and all the ages, and that Muhammad ﷺ is the last prophet and the Holy Qur'an the final Book of Allah which has come down to replace the earlier Books and Shari'ahs. As to the question of the authenticity and divine origin of a particular book held in reverence by an earlier religion or metaphysical tradition, a Muslim is not allowed to affirm such a claim unequivocally, nor should he unnecessarily reject such a possibility. In so far as contents of the book concerned agree with what the Holy Qur'an has to say on the subject, we may accept the statement as true, otherwise spiritual etiquette requires an average Muslim to keep quiet and not meddle with things which he is not likely to understand. As for reading the sacred books of other traditions, it should be clearly borne in mind that a comparative study of this nature requires a very special aptitude which is extremely rare, and hence demands great caution. A cursory reading of sacred books, motivated by an idle curiosity or by a craze for mere information, may very well lead to an intellectual disintegration or to something still worse, instead of helping in the "discovery of the truth" and the acquisition of "peace" which a comparative study is widely supposed to promise. Even when the aptitude and the knowledge necessary for the task is present, such a study can be carried out only under the supervision of an authentic spiritual master. In any case, we cannot insist too much on the perils of the enterprise.

An argument to the Finality of Prophethood

The mode of expression helps us to infer from this verse the fundamental principle that the Holy Prophet Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم is the last of all the prophets, and the Book revealed to him is the final revelation and the last Book of Allah. For, had Allah intended to reveal another Book or to continue. The mode of revelation even after the Holy Qur'ān, this verse, while prescribing belief in the earlier Books as necessary for Muslims, must also have referred to belief in the Book or Books to be revealed in the future. In fact, such a statement was all the more needed, for people were already familiar with the necessity of believing in the Torah, the Evangile and the earlier Books, and such a belief was in regular practice too, but if prophethood and revelation were to continue even after the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, it was essential that the coming of another prophet and another book should be clearly indicated so that people were not left in doubt about this possibility. So, in defining *'Īmān*, the Holy Qur'ān mentions the earlier prophets and the earlier Books, but does not make the slightest reference to a prophet or Book to come after the last Prophet ﷺ. The matter does not end with this verse. The Holy Qur'ān touches upon the subject again and again in no less than forty or fifty verses, and in all such places it mentions the prophets, the Books and the revelation preceding the Holy Prophet ﷺ but nowhere is there even so much as a hint with regard to the coming of a prophet or of a revelation in the future, belief in whom or which should be necessary. We cite some verses to demonstrate the point:

وَمَآ اَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ

And what We have sent down before you. (16:43)

وَلَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلًا مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ

And We have certainly sent messengers before you". (40:78)

وَلَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ رُسُلًا

And certainly before you We have sent messengers. (20:47)

وَمَآ اُنْزِلَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ

And what was revealed before you. (4:60)

وَلَقَدْ اُوْحِیَ اِلَیْکَ وَ اِلَی الَّذِیْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِکَ

And it has certainly been revealed to you and to those who have gone before you... (39:65)

کَذٰلِکَ یُوْحِیْٓ اِلَیْکَ وَ اِلَی الَّذِیْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِکَ

Thus He reveals to you and He revealed to those who have gone before you. (42:3)

کَمَا کُتِبَ عَلَی الَّذِیْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِکُمْ

Fasting is decreed (literally, written) for you as it was decreed for those before you. (2:183)

سُنَّةَ مَنْ قَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا قَبْلَکَ مِنْ رُّسُلِنَا

Such was Our way with the messengers whom We sent before you. (17:77)

In these and similar verses, whenever the Holy Qur'ān speaks of the sending down of a Book or a revelation or a prophet or a messenger, it always attaches the conditional phrase, *Min qabl* (before) or *Min Qablik* (before you), and nowhere does it employ or suggest an expression like *min ba'd* (after you). Even if other verses of the Holy Qur'an had not been explicit about the finality of the prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ and about the cessation of revelation, the mode of expression adopted by the Holy Qur'ān in the present verse would in itself have been sufficient to prove these points.

The God-fearing have Faith in the Hereafter

The other essential quality of the God-fearing mentioned in this verse is that they have faith in *Al-Ākhirah* (the Hereafter). Lexically the *Akhirah* signifies 'that which comes after something'; in the present context, it indicates a relationship of contrast with the physical world, and thus signifies the other world which is beyond physical reality as we know it and also beyond the sensuous or rational perception of man. The Holy Qur'an gives to the Hereafter other names too - for example, *Dar al-Qarar* (the Ever-lasting Abode), *Dar al-Hayawān* (the Abode of Eternal Life) and *Al-'Uqba* (the Consequent). The Holy Qur'ān is full of vivid descriptions of the Hereafter, of the joys of heaven and of the horrors of hell. Although faith in the Hereafter is included in faith in the unseen which has

already been mentioned, yet the Holy Qur'ān refers to it specifically because it may, in a sense, be regarded as the most important among the constitutive elements of faith in so far as it inspires man to translate faith into practice, and motivates him to act in accordance with the requirements of his faith. Along with the two doctrines of the Oneness of God and of prophethood, this is the third doctrine which is common to all the prophets and upon which all the Shari'ahs are agreed.[4]

Faith in the Hereafter: A revolutionary belief

The belief in the Hereafter, among Islamic doctrines, is the one whose role in history has been what is nowadays described as revolutionary, for it began with transmuting the morals and manners of the followers of the Holy Qur'ān, and gradually gave them a place of distinction and eminence even in the political history of mankind. The reason is obvious. Consider the case of those who believe that life in the physical world is the only life, its joys the only joys and its pains the only pains, whose only goal is to seek the pleasures of the senses and the fulfilment of physical or emotional needs, and who stubbornly refuse to believe in the life of the Hereafter, in the Day of Judgment

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4. There is a deplorable misconception with regard to the Hereafter, quite wide-spread among those who are not, or do not want to be, familiar with the Holy Qur'ān and who have at the same time been touched by the rationalism, materialism and libertarianism of the Western society, which makes them cherish certain mental and emotional reservations at least about the horrors of hell, if not about the joys of heaven. Some of them have gone to the preposterous length of supposing that these are the inventions of the 'Ulama' whom they describe as 'abscurantists' - of course, in the jargon of the Western Reformation and of the so-called Enlightenment. They ignore the obvious fact that faith in the Holy Qur'ān necessitates faith in every word of the Holy Qur'ān, and that it is not possible to affirm one part of the Book while denying another and yet remain a Muslim-- أَفَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِبَعْضِ الْكِتٰبِ وَتَكْفُرُونَ : "What, do you believe in one part of the Book and deny another?"(2:85) Moreover, these enlightened Muslims have never made a serious attempt to take into account the complex historical factors that led to the rise of the Enlightenment in Europe, nor the meaning of the subsequent development in ethical ideas. We may, therefore, give a few and very brief indications. There has been no dearth, even in the hey-day of the Enlightenment, of thinkers who have had no scruples in dispensing with ethics altogether which they look upon as superstition or tyranny and hence a blight for the human personality.

Continued

and the assessment of everyone's deeds, and in the requital of the deeds in the other world. When such people find the distinction between truth and falsehood, between the permissible and the forbidden, interfering with the hunt for the gratification of their desires, such differentiations naturally become intolerable to them.

Now, who or what can effectively prevent them from committing crimes? The penal laws made by the state or by any other human authority can never serve either as real deterrents to crime or as agents of moral reform. Habitual criminals soon grow used to the penalties. A man, milder or gentler of temperament or just timid, may agree to forego the satisfaction of his desires for fear of punishment, but he would do so only to the extent that he is in danger of being caught. But in his privacy where the laws of the state cannot encroach upon his freedom of action, who can force him to renounce his pleasures and accept the yoke of restraints? It is the belief in the Hereafter and the fear of Allah, and that alone, which can bring man's private behaviour in line with his public behaviour, and establish a harmony between the inner state and the outer. For the God-fearing man knows for certain that even in the secrecy of a well-guarded and sealed room and in the darkness of night somebody is watching him, and somebody is writing down the smallest thing he does. Herein lies the secret of the clean and pure society which arose in the early days of Islam when the mere sight of a Muslim, of his manners and morals, was enough to make non-believers literally fall in love with Islam. For

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(Continued) But even those thinkers who have recognised the indispensable need for regulations and rules, if not principles, for human conduct in order to preserve social order or to make social life possible, have in general had no qualms about discarding the very idea of divine sanction - despite the intimation of Voltaire, the arch-priest of relationalism, that man would have to invent God, even if He did not exist. As to the nature and origin of the ethical regulations and the sanction behind them, Western thinkers have from time to time tried to promote various agencies - the sovereign state, social will or convention or custom, the supposedly pure and innocent nature of man himself with its capacity for self-regulation, and finally biological laws. The second half of the twentieth century has witnessed the withering away of all these ethical authorities which has left the modern man without even a dim prospect of constructing a new illusion. It is only in this perspective that one can properly consider the significance of the belief in the hereafter for human society.

true Faith in the Hereafter, certitude must follow Oral Affirmation.

Before we proceed, we may point out that in speaking of faith in the hereafter as one of the qualities of the God-fearing, the Holy Qur'ān does not use the word *yu'minūna* (believe) but the word *yūqinūna* (have complete certitude), for the opposite of belief is denial, and that of certitude is doubt and hesitation. Thus, we find a subtle suggestion here that in order to attain the perfection of *'Īmān* it is not enough to affirm the hereafter orally, but one must have a complete certitude which leaves no room for doubt - the kind of certitude which comes when one has seen a thing with one's own eyes. It is an essential quality of the God-fearing that they always have present before their eyes the whole picture of how people will have to present themselves for judgment before Allah in the hereafter, how their deeds will be assessed and how they will receive reward or punishment according to what they have been doing in this world. A man who amasses wealth by usurping what righfully belongs to others, or who gains petty material ends by adopting unlawful means forbidden by Allah, may declare his faith in the hereafter a thousand times and the Sharī'ah may accept him as a Muslim in the context of worldly concerns, but he does not possess the certitude which the Holy Qur'ān demands of him. And it is this certitude alone which transforms human life, and which brings in its wake as a reward the guidance and triumph promised in verse 5 of this Sūrah:

أُولَٰئِكَ عَلَىٰ هُدًى مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

It is these who are on guidance given by their Lord; and it is just these who are successful.

Verses 6-7

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا سَوَاءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ ءَأَنذَرْتَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تُنذِرْهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ○ خَتَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ وَعَلَىٰ سَمْعِهِمْ وَعَلَىٰ أَبْصَارِهِمْ غِشَاوَةٌ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ○

Surely for those who have disbelieved, it is all the same whether you warn them or you warn them not: they would not believe. Allah has set a seal on their hearts and on their hearing, and on their eyes there is a

covering; and for them there lies a mighty punishment. (Verses 6-7)

After affirming the Holy Qur'ān as the Book of Guidance and as being beyond all doubt, the first five verses of the present Surah refer to those who derive full benefit from this Book and whom the Holy Qur'ān has named as *Mū'minūn* (true Muslims) or *Muttaqūn* (the God-fearing), and also delineate their characteristic qualities which distinguish them from others. The next fifteen verses speak of those who refuse to accept this guidance, and even oppose it out of sheer spite and blind malice. In the time of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم there were two distinct groups of such people. On the one hand were those who came out in open hostility and rejection, and whom the Holy Qur'ān has termed as *kafirūn* (disbelievers); on the other hand were those who did not, on account of their moral depravity and greed, had even the courage to speak out their minds and to express their disbelief clearly, but adopted the way of deceit and duplicity. They tried to convince the Muslims that they had faith in the Holy Qur'ān and its teachings, that they were as good a Muslim as any and would support the Muslims against the disbelievers. But they nursed denial and rejection in their hearts, and would, in the company of disbelievers, assure them that they had nothing to do with Islam, but mixed with Muslims in order to deceive them and to spy on them. The Holy Qur'an has given them the title of *Munāfiqūn* (hypocrites). Thus, these fifteen verses deal with those who refuse to believe in the Holy Qur'ān - the first two are concerned with open disbelievers, and the other thirteen with hypocrites, their signs and characteristics and their ultimate end.

Taking the first twenty verses of this Sūrah together in all their detail, one can see that the Holy Qur'ān has, on the one hand, pointed out to us the source of guidance which is the Book itself, and, on the other, divided mankind into two distinct groups on the basis of their acceptance or rejection of this guidance - on the one side are those who have chosen to follow and to receive guidance, and are hence called *Mū'minūn* (true Muslims) or *Muttaqūn* (the God-fearing); on the other side are those who reject the guidance or deviate from it, and are hence called *Kāfirūn* (disbelievers) or *Munafiqūn* (hypocrites). People of the first kind are those whose path is the object of the prayer at the

end of the Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah, صِرَاطَ الَّذِيْنَ اَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ : "the path of those on whom You have bestowed Your grace", and people of the second kind are those against whose path refuge has been sought غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوْبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّآلِّيْنَ "Not of those who have incurred Your wrath, nor of those who have gone astray.

This teaching of the Holy Qur'ān provides us with a fundamental principle. A division of mankind into different groups must, in order to be meaningful, be based on differences in principle, not on considerations of birth, race, colour, geography or language. The Holy Qur'ān has given a clear verdict in this respect:

خَلَقَكُمْ فَمِنْكُمْ كَافِرٌ وَّمِنْكُمْ مُّؤْمِنٌ

> "It was He that created you: yet some of you are disbelievers and some of you are believers" (64:2).

As we have said, the first two verses of this Sūrah speak of those disbelievers who had become so stubborn and obstinate in their denial and disbelief that they were not prepared to hear the truth or to consider a clear argument. In the case of such depraved people, the usual way of Allah has always been, and is, that they are given a certain kind of punishment even in this world - that is to say, their hearts are sealed and their eyes and ears stopped against the truth, and in so far as truth is concerned they become as if they have no mind to think, no eyes to see and no ears to listen. The last phrase of the second verse speaks of the grievous punishment that is reserved for them in the other world. It may be observed that the prediction that: لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ : "they shall not believe" is specifically related to those disbelievers who refused to listen to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and who, as Allah knew, were going to die as disbelievers. This does not apply to disbelievers in general, for there were many who later accepted Islam.

What is *Kufr* ? (Infidelity)

As for the definition of *kufr* (disbelief), we may point out that lexically the word means to hide, to conceal. Ingratitude is also called *kufr*, because it involves the concealing or the covering up of the beneficence shown by someone. In the terminology of the Sharī'ah, *kufr* signifies the denial of any of those things in which it is obligatory to believe. For example, the quintessence of *'Īmān* as well as the very

basis of the Islamic creed is the requirement that one should confirm with one's heart and believe with certitude everything that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has brought down to us from Allah and which has been established by definite and conclusive proof; therefore, a man who has the temerity to question or disregard even a single teaching of this kind will be described as a *kāfir* (disbeliever or infidel).

The meaning of '*Indhār*' (warning) by a Prophet

In translating the first of these two verses, we have used the English verb 'to warn' for the Arabic word *Indhār*. This word actually signifies bringing news which should cause alarm or concern, while *Ibshār* signifies bringing good news which should make people rejoice. Moreover, *Indhār* is not the ordinary kind of warning meant to frighten people, but one which is motivated by compassion and love, just as one warns one's children against fire or snakes or beasts. Hence a thief or a bandit or an aggressor who warns or threatens others cannot be called a *Nadhīr* (warner). The latter is a title specially reserved for the prophets عليهم السلام , for they warn people against the pains and punishments of the other world out of their compassion and love for their fellow men. In choosing this title for the prophets, the Holy Qur'ān has made the subtle suggestion that for those who go out to reform others it is not enough merely to convey a message, but that they must speak to their listeners with sympathy, understanding and a genuine regard for their good.

In order to comfort the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم the first of these verses tells him that some of the disbelievers are so vain, arrogant and opinionated that they, in spite of recognizing the truth, stubbornly persist in their refusal and are not prepared to hear the truth or to see obvious proofs, so that all the efforts he makes for reforming and converting them will bear no fruit, and for them it is all one whether he tries or not.

The next verse explains the reason, that is, Allah has set a seal on their hearts and ears, there is a covering on their eyes, all the avenues of knowing and understanding are thus closed, and now it would be futile to expect any change in them. A thing is sealed so that nothing may enter it from outside; the setting of a seal on their hearts and ears

also means that they have altogether lost the capacity for accepting the truth.

The Holy Qur'ān describes the condition of these disbelievers in terms of their hearts and ears having been sealed, but in the case of the eyes it refers to a covering. The subtle distinction arises from the fact that an idea can enter the heart from all possible directions and not from one particular direction alone, and so can a sound enter the ears; an idea or a sound can be blocked only by sealing the heart and the ears. On the contrary, the eyes work only in one direction, and can see only the things which lie in front of them; if there is a covering on them, they cease to function. (See Maẓharī)

Favour withdrawn by Allah is a punishment

These two verses tell us that the other world is the place where one would receive the real punishment for one's disbelief or for some of one's sins. One may, however, receive some punishment for certain sins even in this world. Such a punishment sometimes takes a very grievous form - that is, the divine favour which helps one to reform oneself is withdrawn, so that, ignoring how one's deeds are to be assessed on the Day of Judgment, one keeps growing in disobedience and sin, and finally comes to lose even the awareness of evil. In delineating such a situation certain elders have remarked that one punishment for an evil deed is another evil deed which comes after, and one reward for a good deed is another good deed which comes after. According to a *Ḥadīth*, when a man commits a sin, a black dot appears on his heart; this first dot disturbs him just as a smudge on a white cloth is always displeasing to us; but if, instead of asking Allah's pardon for the first sin, he proceeds to commit a second, another dot shows up, thus, with every new sin the black dots go on multiplying till the whole heart turns dark, and now he can no longer see good as good nor evil as evil, and grows quite incapable of making such distinctions. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم added that The Holy Qur'ān uses the term *Ra'n* or *Rain* (rust) for this darkness: as in Mishkāt from the Musnad of Aḥmad and Tirmidhī.

كَلَّا بَلْ رَانَ عَلٰى قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَّا كَانُوْا يَكْسِبُوْنَ

No. But what they did has rusted their hearts (83:14)

According to another authentic Ḥadīth reported by Tirmidhī from the blessed Companion Abu Hurairah رضی الله عنه the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said, "When a man commits a sin, his heart grows dark, but if he seeks Allah's pardon, it becomes clear again". (See Qurṭubī)

It should be carefully noted that in announcing that it is all one whether the Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم warns the disbelievers or not, the Holy Qur'an adds the condition *'Alaihim* (for them), which clearly indicates that it is all one for the disbelievers alone, and not for the Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم , for he would in any case get a reward for bringing the message of Allah to his fellow-men and for his efforts to teach and reform them. That is why there is not a single verse in the Holy Qur'ān which should dissuade the Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم from calling even such people to Islam. From this we may infer that the man who strives to spread the Word of Allah and to reform his fellow-men does always get a reward for his good deed, even if he has not been effective.

A doubt is removed

We may also answer a question which sometimes arises in connection with the second of these two verses that speaks of the hearts and the ears of the disbelievers having been sealed and of their eyes being covered. We find a similar statement in another verse of the Holy Qur'ān:

كَلَّا بَلْ رَانَ عَلٰى قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَّا كَانُوْا يَكْسِبُوْنَ

No. But what they did has rusted their hearts. (83:14)

which makes it plain that it is their arrogance and their evil deeds themselves that have settled on their hearts as a rust. In the verse under discussion, it is this very rust which has been described as 'a seal' or 'a covering'. So, there is no occasion here to raise the objection that if Allah Himself has sealed their hearts and blocked their senses, they are helpless and cannot be held responsible for being disbelievers, and hence they should not be punished for what they have not themselves chosen to do. If we consider the two verses (2:7 and 83:14) together, we can easily see why they should be punished - in adopting the way of arrogance and pride they have, wilfully and out of their own choice, destroyed their capacity for accepting the truth, and thus they

themselves are the authors of their own ruin. But Allah, being Creator of all the actions of His creatures, has in verse 2:7 attributed to Himself the setting of a seal on the hearts and the ears of the disbelievers, and has thus pointed out that when these people insisted, as a matter of their own choice, on destroying their aptitude for receiving the truth, Allah produced, as is His way in such cases, the state of insensitivity in their hearts and senses.

Verses 8-20

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَّقُوْلُ اٰمَنَّا بِاللّٰهِ وَبِالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ وَمَا هُمْ
بِمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ۝ يُخٰدِعُوْنَ اللّٰهَ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا ۚ وَمَا يَخْدَعُوْنَ اِلَّآ
اَنْفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُوْنَ ۝ فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ فَزَادَهُمُ اللّٰهُ مَرَضًا ۚ
وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ۢ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَكْذِبُوْنَ ۝ وَاِذَا قِيْلَ لَهُمْ لَا
تُفْسِدُوْا فِي الْاَرْضِ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُصْلِحُوْنَ ۝ اَلَآ اِنَّهُمْ هُمُ
الْمُفْسِدُوْنَ وَلٰكِنْ لَّا يَشْعُرُوْنَ ۝ وَاِذَا قِيْلَ لَهُمْ اٰمِنُوْا كَمَآ اٰمَنَ
النَّاسُ قَالُوْٓا اَنُؤْمِنُ كَمَآ اٰمَنَ السُّفَهَآءُ ۭ اَلَآ اِنَّهُمْ هُمُ السُّفَهَآءُ
وَلٰكِنْ لَّا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ۝ وَاِذَا لَقُوا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا قَالُوْٓا اٰمَنَّا ۚ وَاِذَا
خَلَوْا اِلٰى شَيٰطِيْنِهِمْ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّا مَعَكُمْ اِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُسْتَهْزِءُوْنَ ۝
اَللّٰهُ يَسْتَهْزِئُ بِهِمْ وَيَمُدُّهُمْ فِيْ طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُوْنَ ۝ اُولٰۗىِٕكَ
الَّذِيْنَ اشْتَرَوُا الضَّلٰلَةَ بِالْهُدٰى فَمَا رَبِحَتْ تِّجَارَتُهُمْ وَمَا كَانُوْا
مُهْتَدِيْنَ ۝ مَثَلُهُمْ كَمَثَلِ الَّذِي اسْتَوْقَدَ نَارًا ۚ فَلَمَّآ اَضَاۗءَتْ
مَا حَوْلَهٗ ذَهَبَ اللّٰهُ بِنُوْرِهِمْ وَتَرَكَهُمْ فِيْ ظُلُمٰتٍ لَّا يُبْصِرُوْنَ ۝
صُمٌّ ۢ بُكْمٌ عُمْيٌ فَهُمْ لَا يَرْجِعُوْنَ ۝ اَوْ كَصَيِّبٍ مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ فِيْهِ
ظُلُمٰتٌ وَّرَعْدٌ وَّبَرْقٌ ۚ يَجْعَلُوْنَ اَصَابِعَهُمْ فِيْٓ اٰذَانِهِمْ مِّنَ
الصَّوَاعِقِ حَذَرَ الْمَوْتِ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ مُحِيْطٌ ۢ بِالْكٰفِرِيْنَ ۝ يَكَادُ الْبَرْقُ
يَخْطَفُ اَبْصَارَهُمْ ۭ كُلَّمَآ اَضَاۗءَ لَهُمْ مَّشَوْا فِيْهِ ۙ وَاِذَآ اَظْلَمَ

عَلَيۡهِمۡ قَامُوۡا، وَلَوۡ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ لَذَهَبَ بِسَمۡعِهِمۡ وَاَبۡصَارِهِمۡ، اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىۡءٍ قَدِيۡرٌ O

And among men there are some who say, "We believe in Allah and in the Last Day", Yet they are no believers. They try to deceive Allah and those who believe, when they are deceiving none but their ownselves, and they are not aware. In their hearts there is a malady, so Allah has made them grow in their malady; and for them there lies a grievous punishment, for they have been lying. And when it is said to them, "Do not spread disorder on the earth", they say, "We are nothing but reformers." Beware, it is, in fact, they who spread disorder, but they are not aware. And when it is said to them, "Believe as people have believed," they say, "Shall we believe as fools believe?" Beware, it is, in fact, they who are the fools, but they do not know. And when they meet those who believe, they say, "We have entered Faith;" but when they are alone with their Satans, they say, "Indeed, we are with you; we were only mocking." It is Allah who mocks them, and lets them go on wandering blindly in their rebellion. These are the people who have bought error at the price of guidance; so their trade has brought no gain, nor have they found guidance. Their case is as if a man kindles a fire, and when it illuminates everything around him, Allah takes away their lights and leaves them in layers of darkness -- they see nothing. Deaf, dumb and blind, they shall not return. Or (it is) like a rainstorm from the sky carrying darkness, thunder and lightning; they thrust their fingers in their ears against thunderclaps for the fear of death, and Allah encompasses the disbelievers -- and lightning (all but) snatches away their eyes; every time a flash gives them light, they walk by it; and when darkness grows upon them, they stand still. And if Allah willed, He would certainly take away their hearing and their eye: surely Allah is powerful over everything. (Verses 8 - 20)

As we have seen, the Sūrah Al-Baqarah opens with the declaration that the Holy Qur'ān is beyond all doubt. The first twenty verses of the Sūrah delineate the features of those who believe in the Holy Qur'ān

and of those who do not -- the first five dealing with the former, under the title of *Al-Muttaqūn* (the God-fearing); the next two with those disbelievers who were quite open and violent in their hostility -- that is, *Al-Kafirūn* (the disbelievers or the infidels), and the following thirteen with those crafty disbelievers who claimed to be Muslims but, in reality, were not so. This second variety of the disbelievers has received from the Holy Qur'ān the name of *Al-Mūnāfiqūn* (the hypocrities).

Of these thirteen verses, the first two define the characteristic behaviour of the hypocrites thus:

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَّقُوْلُ اٰمَنَّا بِاللّٰهِ وَبِالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ

And among men there are some who say, 'We believe in Allah and in the Last Day',

yet they are no believers. They try to deceive Allah and those who believe, when they are deceiving none but their ownselves, and they are not aware. These verses expose their claim to be Muslims as false and deceitful, and show that they are only trying to be clever. Obviously, no one can deceive Allah - probably they themselves could not have had such a delusion. But the Holy Qur'ān equates, in a way, their attempt to deceive the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the Muslims with the desire to deceive Allah Himself (See Qurṭubi)

Such a desire, the Holy Qur'ān points out, can have only one consequence - they end up by deceiving no one but themselves, for Allah Himself cannot possibly be deceived, and Divine Revelation protects the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم from all trickery and deceit, so that the hypocrites themselves will have to bear, in the other world as well as in this, the punishment for their presumptuousness.

The third verse indicates why the hypocrites behave so foolishly and why they fail to see the folly of their course:

فِىْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ فَزَادَهُمُ اللّٰهُ مَرَضًا

In their hearts there is a malady, so Allah has made them grow in their malady.

Now, illness or disease, in the general medical sense, is a state in which a man has lost the balanced proportion of the elements within

him necessary to keep him healthy, so that his body can no longer function properly, which may finally lead to his total destruction. In the terminology of the Holy Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth, the word 'disease' is also applied to certain mental or psychic states (we are using the two terms in the original and more comprehensive sense) which hinder man from attaining any degree of spiritual perfection, for they gradually deprive him of the ability to perform good deeds, and even of ordinary human decency, till he meets with his spiritual death. The great spiritual master, Junaid of Baghdad, has said that just as the diseases of the body arise from an imbalance among the four humours, the diseases of the heart arise from a surrender to one's physical desires. According to the present verse, the disease hidden in their hearts is unbelief and rejection of the truth, which is as much a physical sickness as a spiritual one. It is all too obvious that being ungrateful to one's creator and nourisher and going against His commandments is to be spiritually sick. Moreover, to keep this disbelief concealed for the sake of petty worldly gains and not to have the courage to speak out one's mind is no less a disease of the soul. Hypocrisy is a physical disease too in so far as the hypocrite is always shuddering for fear of being exposed. Jealousy being a necessary ingredient of hypocrisy, he cannot bear to see the Muslims growing stronger in the world, and yet the poor hypocrite cannot even have the satisfaction of unburdening his heart of the venom. No wonder that all this tension should express itself in physical ailment.

As for Allah making them grow in their malady, it means that they are jealous of the growing strength of the Muslims, but it is Allah's will to make the position of the Muslims even stronger, as they can see for themselves, which feeds their bile and keeps the disease of their hearts growing.

The fourth and the fifth verses expose the sophistry of the hypocrites - their activities threatened to produce a general chaos and disorder, and yet, in their mealy-mouthed way, they pretended to be men of good will and to be serving the cause of peace and order. The Holy Qur'ān makes it clear that oral claims alone do not decide the question whether one is working for order or disorder, for what thief would call himself a thief? It depends on what one does, not on what

one says. If a man's activities do result in mischief, he will be called a mischief-maker, even if he had no such intention.

These two verses, thus, describe the state of their insensitivity and ignorance - they regard their defects as merits. The sixth verse shows the other aspect of this depravity - the merit of others (that is, the unalloyed faith of the Muslims) changes into a defect, and even becomes contemptible in their eyes.[5]

This verse also places before the hypocrites a criterion of true faith (*'Īmān*): آمِنُوا كَمَا آمَنَ النَّاسُ :"Believe as people have believed". According to the consensus of commentators, the Arabic word *Nās*: الناس (people) in this verse refers to the blessed Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ because it is just these 'people' who had embraced the Faith and had accepted the Holy Qur'ān as the word of Allah while it was being revealed. So, the verse indicates that the only kind of *'Iman* (faith) acceptable to Allah is the one which should be similar to that of the blessed Companions, and that the *'Īmān* of others would be worthy of the name only when they believe in the same things in the same way as the Companions did. In other words, the *'Īmān* of the Companions is a touchstone for testing the *'Īmān* of all the other Muslims; any belief or deed which departs from their faith and practice, however pleasing in its looks or good in its intention, is not valid according to the Sharī'ah. There is a consensus of commentators on this position. One should also notice that the hypocrites used to call the blessed Companions 'fools' (*Sufahā'*). This has always been the way of those who go astray - anyone who tries to show them the right path is, in their eyes, ignorant and stupid. But who could, the Holy Qur'ān points out, be more stupid than the man who refuses to see clear signs?

In the seventh verse, we see the double-facedness and trickery of the hypocrites. In the company of the Muslims, they would vociferously declare their faith in Islam; but, going back to their own

5. As for the hypocrites declaring openly that they were not prepared to believe as others did believe, and as for their dubbing the Muslims as fools, it is obvious that they could have been so outspoken only before the poor among the Muslims, otherwise they used to be very careful about keeping their disbelief concealed.)

people, would reassure them that they had never left the way of their ancestors, and had been meeting the Muslims only to make fun of them.

The eighth verse is a comment on this attitude of complacency and self-congratulation on the part of the hypocrites. They are mightily pleased with themselves in the belief that they can so easily make a fool of the Muslims and get away with it, while they are, in fact, only making a fool of themselves. For Allah has, in His forbearance and mercy, given them a long rope, but this is a provision for their being thrown into ridicule. It took place like this. Since the hypocrites saw no apparent signs of divine punishment descending on themselves, they were encouraged in their complacency and rebellion, so that the cup of their iniquity was full, and one day they were caught. Allah acted like this in response to their mockery; so, the Holy Qur'ān describes this divine action too as a mockery on the part of Allah.

The ninth verse shows the basic denseness of the hypocrites - how they failed to make use of the ordinary sense of discrimination. They had grown up in a pagan society, and knew very well what the way of the infidels was. Now they had become familiar enough with Islam too, and could easily see the difference. But, in their greed, and for the sake of petty worldly profit, they still chose disbelief as against Islam, and bartered away something as invaluable as *'Īmān* (faith) for something as worthless, and even harmful as *kufr* (infidelity). In giving the name of 'trade' or 'commerce' to this action, the Holy Qur'ān suggests that these worldly-wise men had no understanding even of the art of trading.

The last four verses bring out the miserable plight of the hypocrites with the help of two extended similes. The choice of two examples is meant to divide the hypocrites into two kinds of men. On the one hand were those in whom disbelief had taken deep roots, so that they had little inclination towards Islam, but pretended to be Muslims for worldly motives - the Holy Qur'ān compares them to the man who, having found light, again loses it, and is left in darkness. On the other hand were those who did recognize the truth of Islam, and sometimes wished to be genuine Muslims, but worldly interests would not allow them to do so, and they remained in a perpetual state of

hesitation and doubt - they have been likened to the men caught in a thunderstorm who move forward a step or two when there is a flash of lightning, but, when it is over, again get stuck. In the course of these parables, the hypocrites have also been warned that they are not beyond the power of Allah, and that He can, as and when He likes, take away their sight and hearing, and even destroy them.

Injunctions and related considerations

(1) It has sometimes been debated as to whether the distinction between *Kufr* (infidelity or disbelief) and *Nifāq* (hypocrisy) still holds good even after the days of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. The correct position with regard to this question is this. At that time, there were two ways of identifying a hypocrite and declaring him to be one - either Allah Himself informed the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم through revelation that such and such a man was not a Muslim at heart but a hypocrite, or a man through some word or deed overtly repugnant to the Islamic creed or practice showed himself up as a hypocrite, thus providing a clear evidence against himself. Divine revelation having ceased with the departure of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم from this world, the first way of identifying a hypocrite is no longer available, but the second way is still valid. That is to say, if a man is found, on certain evidence, to be guilty, in word or deed, of rejecting or opposing or distorting or holding in scorn the basic doctrines of Islam undeniably established by the Holy Qur'ān, the *Ḥadīth* and *ijmā'* (consensus), he would be regarded as a *Munāfiq* (hypocrite) in spite of his claim to be a true Muslim. The Holy Qur'ān gives such a hypocrite the name of a *mulhid* or heretic- الَّذِيْنَ يُلْحِدُوْنَ فِيْ اٰيٰتِنَا : "Those who distort Our verses", 41:40), and the *Ḥadīth* calls him a *zindīq*. One must also add that since the *kufr* (infidelity) of such a man has been proved by clear and definite evidence, the *Sharī'ah* will not put him in a separate category, but deal with him as it would deal with any other *kāfir* (infidel). That is why the authentic scholars are unanimous in concluding that after the departure of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم the question of hypocrites ceased to be a relevant one - now anyone who is not a genuine Muslim will be regarded as *kāfir*. The famous author, *Al-'Ainī*, in his commentary on Al-Bukhārī, reports from Imām *Mālik* that after the days of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم this is the only available means of identifying 'hypocrisy', and that a man who carries this mark could be called a hypocrite.

(2) A little reflection on these verses would reveal the true nature of Islam and *'Īmān* (faith) and also that of *kufr* (disbelief), for the Holy Qur'an reports the claim of the hypocrites to be Muslims: آمَنَّا بِاللّٰهِ :"we believe in Allah", (2:8), forthwith refutes this claim: وَمَا هُمْ بِمُؤْمِنِيْنَ :"yet they are no believers". In order to understand fully the implications of these verses, one should bear in one's mind the fact that the hypocrites in question were actually Jews. Now, belief in Allah and in Hereafter is, no doubt, an essential part of their creed as well; what was not included in their creed, as defined by their religious scholars, was the belief in the prophethood of Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم . In declaring their faith in Islam, the Jews very cleverly used to leave out the belief in the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and mention only two elements: belief in Allah and belief in the Hereafter. So far as such a declaration goes, they cannot be called liars, and yet the Holy Qur'ān refutes their claim to be Muslims, and regards them as liars. Why?

The fact is that, for one to be a Muslim, it is not sufficient merely to declare one's faith in Allah and the Hereafter in any form or manner which suits one's individual or collective fancy. As for that, associators of all kinds do, in one way or another, believe in Allah and consider Him to be Omnipotent[6] but the Holy Qur'ān does not allow any of these things to pass for *'Īmān* (faith). *'Īmān* or faith in Allah must, in order to be valid and worthy of the name, conform to what the Holy Qur'ān specifically lays down with regards to the divine names and attributes; similarly, belief in the Hereafter can be valid only when it is true to the specifications of the Holy Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth*.[7]

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6. Even peoples described by the Westerners as "savages" or "primitives - though "degenerates" would be far closer to the mark - have at least a vague notion of a Supreme Deity, and ususally very vivid ideas about the other world.

7. There is no end to the making of books, and no end to the making of gods and to the naming of gods - above all, in our own day. Reason, Nature, Man, Life, all having served their turn and grown rusty, are being replaced by more fancy names - "the ground of being" of the so-called Christian Existentialism, the ultimate "archetype of the Collective Unconscious" of Jungian psychology, and what not. They have lately invented a goldless theology too.

In the light of this explanation one can see that the Jews who pretended to be Muslims believed neither in Allah nor in the Hereafter according to these definite requirements. For, on the one hand, they regarded the Prophet 'Uzair or Ezra عليه السلام as the son of God, and, on the other, cherished the fond belief that the progeny of the prophets, no matter how it acted, would always remain 'the chosen of God', and would not be called to account on the Day of Judgment, or at the worst receive only a token punishment. These being their beliefs, the Holy Qur'ān rightly rejects their claims to faith in Allah and the Hereafter.

(3) As we have already said, verse 13 defines what *'Īmān* (faith) really is: اٰمِنُوْا كَمَآ اٰمَنَ النَّاسُ :"Believe as other men have believed". In other words, the criterion for judging one's claim to *'Īmān* is the *'Īmān* of the blessed Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and any claim to *Iman* which does not conform to it is not acceptable to Allah and to the Holy Prophet ﷺ . If a man has the presumption[8] to interpret an Islamic doctrine or verse of the Holy Qur'ān in a way which departs from the explicit and clear explanation provided by the Holy Qur'ān itself or by the Holy Prophet ﷺ , his individual opinion and belief, no matter how much it titillates the palate of his contemporaries or feeds their fancy, will have no value or validity in the eyes of the *Sharī'ah*. For example, the *Qādiānīs* [9] claim that like Muslims they too believe in the doctrine of the Finality of the Prophethood of Muḥammad ﷺ, but in this respect they deviate from what the Holy Prophet ﷺ has himself stated, and what the Companions believed in, and distort the doctrine so as to make room for the prophethood of Mirza Ghulam Aḥmad of Qādian; so, according to the indication of the Holy Qur'ān, they come under this indictment: مَا هُمْ بِمُؤْمِنِيْنَ :"They are no believers."

In short, if a man interprets an Islamic doctrine in a way which is repugnant to the *'Īmān* of the blessed Companions, and yet claims to be a Muslim on the basis of his adherence to this doctrine and also performs his religious duties exactly like Muslims, he will not be considered a *Mu'min* (true Muslim) until and unless he agrees to conform to the criterion of *'Īmān* laid down by the Holy Qur'ān.

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8. As is all too common these days.

9. Who style themselves as Ahmadis.

Removal of a doubt

We may also dispel a misunderstanding which often arises - and is more often made to arise with an ulterior motive - with regard to the famous dictum in the *Ḥadīth* and *Fiqh* (Islamic Jurisprudence) that the 'people of the Ka'bah' (*Ahl al-Qiblah*), that is, those who turn towards the Ka'bah in offering prescribed *Salah* cannot be branded as infidels. The verse under discussion clearly defines the meaning of the phrase, *Ahl al-Qiblah*. The term pertains only to those who do not deny any of the basic essential doctrines and commandments of Islam which are called the *Darūriāt* (essentials). For that matter even the hypocrites mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān used to offer their prayers exactly as the Muslims did; but turning towards Ka'bah while praying was not taken to be sufficient to make them acceptable as true Muslims, simply because they did not have faith in all the essentials of Islam as the blessed Companions did.

Lying is contemptible

(4) The verse اٰمَنَّا بِاللّٰهِ وَبِالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ :"We believe in Allah and in the Last Day" shows us how disgusting it is to tell a lie - even the hypocrites, with all their hostility to Islam, tried to refrain from it as far as possible. In claiming to be Muslims, they used to mention only their faith in Allah and in the Day of Judgment, but left out the faith in the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم for fear of telling a lie.

Misbehaving Prophets is to misbehave with Allah

(5) These verses denounce the hypocrites for trying to be clever with Allah Himself and to deceive Him, although no one among them could probably have had such an intention or even thought of such a possibility. What they were actually doing was to try to deceive the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the Muslims. Allah has equated this effort with an attempt to deceive Him, and has thus indicated that a man who is in any way impertinent to a prophet or a man of Allah is ultimately guilty of being impertinent to Allah Himself - this should be true above all in the case of the Holy Prophet ﷺ who stands in his station at the head of all created beings.

The curse of telling lies

(6) There is another subtle and very significant point here. According to these verses, the hypocrites would meet with a grievous

punishment for having told lies. Now, their greatest crime was disbelief and hypocrisy in matters of faith, and they had been committing other crimes as well, like nursing envy and malice against Muslims in their hearts and actually conspiring against them. And yet here the grievous punishment has been connected with their habit of telling lies. This is an indication that basically this nefarious habit was their real crime, which gradually led them to hypocrisy and disbelief. In other words, although hypocrisy and disbelief are much greater crimes, yet they arise from the habit of telling lies. That is why the Holy Qur'ān combines the sin of lying with the sin of idol worship in the same phrase:

فَاجْتَنِبُوا الرِّجْسَ مِنَ الْأَوْثَانِ وَاجْتَنِبُوا قَوْلَ الزُّورِ ۝

"Guard yourselves against the filth of idols and against telling lies" (22:30)

Who are reformers and mischief-makers

(7) As these verses report, when the hypocrites were asked not to spread disorder in the land through their prevarication and double dealing, they used to reply emphatically: إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُصْلِحُونَ :"We are nothing but reformers." The word *Innamā* (nothing but), used in the Arabic text, indicates not merely emphasis but exclusivity. So, their reply would mean that they were nothing but reformers, the servants of order, and that their activities could have nothing to do with disorder. Commenting on their reply, the Holy Qur'ān says:

أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ الْمُفْسِدُونَ وَلَٰكِن لَّا يَشْعُرُونَ ۝

"Beware, it is, in fact, they who spread disorder, but they are not aware."

Now, we learn two things from this comment. Firstly, the activities of the hypocrites did actually produce disorder in the land. Secondly, they did not indulge in these activities with the express intention or design of creating disorder - they were not even aware of the possibility that their actions could be the cause of disorder. For, among the things which spread disorder in the world, there are some which are commonly recognized to be mischievous and disorderly activities, and hence every sensible and conscientious man refrains from them e.g., theft, robbery, murder, rape etc.; on the other hand, there are some which in their external aspect do not appear to be mischief or

disorder, but, working unseen, they have the necessary consequence of destroying the morals of men which, in its turn, opens the door to all kinds of disorder.

This is exactly what the hypocrites were doing. No doubt, they refrained from theft, robbery etc.; it was on this count that they denied their being mischievous, and emphatically asserted that they were serving the cause of order. But all this while they had been freely giving vent to their malice and envy by conspiring with the enemies of the Muslims. These are things which finally bring man down to the level of beasts. Once he has lost his awareness of ethical values and human decency, even an average man becomes an agent of social disorder - of a disorder much greater than that released by thieves or robbers, or even beasts are capable of producing. For, the mischief of robbers and beasts can be controlled by the physical power of law and government. But laws are made and enforced by men. What happens to laws, when man has ceased to be man, can easily be witnessed all around us in the world of today. Everyone takes it for granted that humanity is on the march and the modern man is so far the ultimate in civilization; the network of educational institutions covers every hamlet on the face of the earth; legislative bodies keep buzzing night and day; organizations for the promulgation of laws spend billions, and circumlocution offices proliferate. And yet crime and disorder keep in step with the march of civilization. The reason is simple.

Law is not an automatic machine; it requires men to make it work. If man ceases to be man, neither laws nor bureaucratic agencies can provide a remedy for the all-pervading disorder. It is for this that the greatest benefactor of mankind, the Holy Prophet ﷺ, concentrated all his attention on making men real men - in all the plenitude of the term. Once this has been achieved, crime or disorder comes to an end of itself without the help of enormous police forces and extensive system of law-courts. As long as people acted upon his teachings in certain parts of the world, man saw a kind of peace and order prevail the like of which had never been witnessed before nor is likely to be witnessed when these teachings are abandoned or disregarded.

In so far as actual practice is concerned, the essence of the

teachings of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم is fear of Allah and solicitude for the assessment of one's deeds on the Day of Judgment. If these are absent, no constitution or legal code, nor administrative body or university can force or induce man to keep away from crime. Those who run the world in our day invent ever-new administrative measures to prevent crime, but they not only neglect the very soul of administration, the fear of Allah, but even deploy the means of destroying it - all of which has the necessary consequence that the remedy only helps to feed the malady.

To another aspect of the question, it is easy enough to find a cure for thieves and robbers and for all those who create disorder openly. But the miscreants who have been described in these verses always appear in the garb of reformers, brandishing colourful schemes of social amelioration which are only a mask for personal interests, and for raising the slogan, إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُصْلِحُونَ :"We are nothing but reformers." Hence it is that Allah, while asking men not to spread disorder on the earth, has also said in another place:

وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ الْمُفْسِدَ مِنَ الْمُصْلِحِ ط

"And Allah knows the one who makes mischief distinct from him who promotes good." (2:220)

This is an indication that Allah alone[10] knows the states of men's hearts and their intentions, and He alone knows the nature and consequences of each human deed as to whether it would help the cause of order or of disorder. So, to serve the cause of order, it is not sufficient merely to possess such an intention; much more essential than that is to orient oneself in thought and deed in harmony with the *Sharī'ah*, for an action may, in spite of the best intentions, sometimes result in mischief and disorder, if it is not guided by the *Sharī'ah*.

Verses 21-22

يَأَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ○ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ فِرَاشًا وَّالسَّمَاءَ

10. Can distinguish between order and disorder, for He alone.

بِنَآءً وَّاَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً فَاَخْرَجَ بِهٖ مِنَ الثَّمَرٰتِ رِزْقًا لَّكُمْ فَلَا تَجْعَلُوْا لِلّٰهِ اَنْدَادًا وَّ اَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ۝

O men, worship your Lord - who created you and those before you, so that you may become God-fearing - who made the earth a bed for you and the sky a roof, and sent down water from the sky, then through it brought forth, out of fruits, provision for you. So, do not set up parallels to Allah when you know. (Verses 21-22)

A review of verses linked together

The second verse of the Sūrah 'Al-Baqarah' provides the answer to the prayer made in the Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah, اِهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيْمَ:"Guide us in the straight path"- that is to say, the guidance man has prayed for is present in this book, for the Holy Qur'ān is from the beginning to the end a detailed account of the straight path. Then, the Surah proceeds to divide men into three groups according to whether they accept the guidance of the Holy Qur'ān or not. Three verses speak of the true and God-fearing Muslims, who not only accept but also act upon the guidance, and the next two verses of those disbelievers who oppose it openly.

Then come thirteen verses dealing with the hypocrites who are hostile to this guidance, but, for the sake of petty worldly interests or in seeking to harm the Muslims, try to keep their disbelief concealed and to present themselves as Muslims. Thus, the first twenty verses of the Surah, in dividing men into three groups on the basis of their acceptance or rejection of the guidance, indicate that the proper criterion for dividing men into groups is neither race or colour, nor language nor geography, but religion. Hence those, who believe in Allah and follow the guidance He has provided in the Holy Qur'ān, form one nation, and those who disbelieve form a different nation - the Holy Qur'ān calls the former the 'party of Allah' and the latter - 'the party of Satan' (58:19-22)

Then, the present verses (21 and 22), addressing the three groups together, present the message for which the Holy Qur'ān has been revealed. In asking men to give up the worship of created beings and to worship Allah alone, they adopt a mode of expression which not only

makes an affirmation but also supports it with arguments so clear that even an average man, only if he uses his common sense, cannot help being convinced of the Oneness of God.

Commentary :

In starting the address, verse 21 uses the Arabic word *An-nās*, which signifies man in general, or man as such - so, the word covers all the three groups we have just mentioned. And the message delivered by the verse is: اعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمْ : "Worship your Lord." The Arabic word *'Ibādah* (worship) connotes expending all energies one has in total obedience to somebody, and shunning all disobedience out of one's awe and reverence. (Rūh-al-Bayān) We have earlier explained the meaning of the word *Rabb* (one who gives nurture). Let us add that the choice of this particular name from among the Beautiful names of Allah is very meaningful in the present context, for the affirmation has thus been combined with the argument in a very short sentence. The word *Rabb* indicates that only He is, or can be, worthy of being worshipped, He is the final and absolute Cause of nurturing man - Who changes man through gradual stages of development from a drop of water into healthy, sentient and rational being, and Who provides the means for his sustenance and growth. This truth is so obvious that even an ignorant or intellectually dull man would, on a little reflection, not fail to see and admit that such a power of nurturing can belong only to Allah, and not to a created being. What can a creature do for man, when it owes its very existence to the Creator? Can a needy one come to the help of another? And if it appears to be doing so, the act of nurturing must in reality and ultimately belong to the One Being on whom both have to depend in order to exist at all. So, who else but the *Rabb* can be worthy of adoration and worship?

The sentence is addressed to all the three groups of men, and for each it has a different meaning. "Worship your Lord": the phrase calls upon the disbelievers to give up worshipping created beings and to turn to the Creator; it asks the hypocrites to be sincere and true in their faith; it commands the sinning Muslims to change their ways and try to be perfect in their obedience to Allah; and it encourages the God-fearing Muslims to be steadfast in their worship and obedience, and to make a greater effort in the way of Allah (Rūh-al-Bayān).

The two verses proceed to enlarge upon the theme by specifying certain special qualities of the *Rabb*: ٱلَّذِى خَلَقَكُمْ وَٱلَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ :"Who created you and those before you." This is a quality which one cannot even imagine to belong to a created being, for it can pertain only to the Creator - that is, the quality of giving existence to what did not exist before, and of producing from the darkness and filth of the mother's womb a creature as lovely and noble as man.

In adding to the phrase: ٱلَّذِى خَلَقَكُمْ :"who created you" the words, وَٱلَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ "and those before you," the verse shows that Allah alone is the Creator of all mankind. It is also significant that the verse mentions only "those before you" and not "those who will come after you", and through this omission suggests that there will not be any *Ummah* (a traditional community formed by all the followers of a prophet) to succeed the *Ummah* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, for no prophet will be sent down after the Last Prophet ﷺ, and hence no new '*Ummah*' will arise.

The final phrase of verse 21 لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ has been translated here as "so that you may become God-fearing". It may also be translated to mean "So that you may save yourselves from hell", or "So that you may guard yourselves against evil." But the point is that one can hope to attain salvation and paradise only when one worships Allah alone, and does not associate anyone else with Him.

Before we proceed, we must clarify a very important doctrinal point. The phrase (لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ) which has been translated here as "so that you may become God-fearing" employs the Arabic particle *l'alla* which indicates an expectation or hope, and is used on an occasion when it is not definite that a certain action or event would necessarily be actualized. Now, if one does really possess *'Īmān* (faith) and does really believe in *Tauḥid*, one would, in consequence definitely attain salvation and go to Heaven, as Allah Himself has promised. But here the certainty has been expressed in terms of an expectation or hope in order to make man realize that no human action by itself and in itself can bring salvation as a necessary reward. One can attain salvation and go to Heaven only by the grace of Allah alone. The ablility to perform good deeds, and *'Īmān* itself is only a sign of divine grace, not the cause.

The next verse recounts some other qualities of Allah with regard to the act of nurturing, with the difference that while verse 21 spoke of the bounties of Allah pertaining to the human self, verse 22 speaks of those pertaining to man's physical environment. Since man's being basically has two dimensions, one internal (*Anfus*) and the other external (*Āfāq*), the two verses, in a summary way, encompass all the kinds of blessings that descend on man from Allah.

Among the cosmic bounties, the first to be mentioned is the earth which has been made a bed for man. It is neither soft and fluid like water on which one cannot settle, nor hard like stone or steel that should make it difficult to be harnessed for man's purposes, but has been given a middle state between the soft and the hard for man to utilize it conveniently in his daily life. The Arabic word, *Firāsh* (bed), which literally means 'somethings spread out', does not necessarily imply that the earth is not round, for the great globe of the earth, in spite of being round, appears to be flat to the onlooker, and the usual way of the Holy Qur'ān is to describe things in an aspect which should be familiar to an average man, literate or illiterate, city dweller or rustic.

The other bounty is that the sky has been made like an ornamented and beautiful ceiling. The third is that Allah sent down water from the sky. This, again, does not necessarily mean that water comes down directly from the sky without the medium of clouds - even in everyday idiom, a thing coming down from above is said to be coming from the sky. The Holy Qur'ān itself, on several occasions, refers to Allah sending down water from the clouds:

ءَأَنتُمْ أَنزَلْتُمُوهُ مِنَ الْمُزْنِ أَمْ نَحْنُ الْمُنزِلُونَ ۝

"Did you send it down from the clouds, or did We send it?" (56:69)

وَأَنزَلْنَا مِنَ الْمُعْصِرَاتِ مَاءً ثَجَّاجًا

"And have sent down from the rain-clouds abundant water." (78:14)

The fourth bounty is to bring forth fruits with this water, and to provide nourishment to man from them.

The first three of these bounties are of an order in which man's effort or action, his very being even, does not enter at all. There was no

sign of man when the earth and the sky already existed, and clouds and rain too were performing their functions. As for these things, not even an ignorant fool could ever fancy that all this could be the work of a man or an idol, or of a created being. In the case of producing fruits and making them serve as nourishment for man, however, a simpleton may, on a superficial view, attribute this to human effort and ingenuity, for one can see man digging the earth, sowing the seed and protecting the plants. But the Holy Qur'an has, in certain verses, made it quite clear that human effort has nothing to do with the act of growing trees and bringing out fruits, for human activity accomplishes nothing more than removing the hindrances to the birth and growth of a plant, or protecting it from being destroyed. Even the water which feeds the plant is not the creation of the farmer - all he does is to make the water reach the plant at the proper time in a proper quantity. The actual birth and growth of the tree, and the putting forth of leaves, branches and fruits is the work of Divine Power, and of no one else. Says the Holy Qur'an :

أَفَرَأَيْتُم مَّا تَحْرُثُونَ ۝ أَأَنتُمْ تَزْرَعُونَهُ أَمْ نَحْنُ الزَّارِعُونَ

"Have you considered the soil you till? Is it you that give them growth or We ? " (56:63)

The only answer which man can find to this question posed by the Holy Qur'an is that undoubtedly it is Allah alone who makes the plants grow.

In short, this verse mentions four qualities of Allah which cannot possibly be found in a created being. Having learnt from these two verses that it is Allah, and no one else, who brings man into existence out of nothingness, and provides the means of his sustenance through the earth, the sky, the rains and the fruits, one cannot, if one possesses a little common sense, help acknowledging that Allah, and no one else, is worthy of all worship and obedience, and that the ultimate iniquity is to turn away from Him who made man exist and gave him the means of survival and growth, and to prostrate oneself before others who are as helpless as man. Allah has put man at the head of all His creatures so that the universe should serve him, while he should totally devote himself to the worship and remembrance of Allah and obedience to Him without distraction. But there are men so

given to their indolence and ignorance that they forget the One God, and in consequence, have to serve a billion gods.

In order to rescue men from this slavery to others, the Holy Qur'an says at the end of this verse:

فَلَا تَجْعَلُوا لِلّٰهِ اَنْدَادًا وَّاَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ۝

"So, do not set up parallels to Allah when you know."

That is to say, once one has understood that, in reality, Allah alone is the Creator and the Provider, one will have also understood that no one else can be worthy of worship and of being associated with Allah as an equal or rival god.

To sum up, these two verses call men to what is the essential purpose of sending down all the Divine Books and all the prophets - *Tauḥīd*, or the affirmation and the worship of the one God.

Tauḥīd is a doctrine which has an all-pervading and radically transforming impact on every sphere of human life, internal as well as external, individual as well as collective. For, once a man comes to believe that there is only One Being who alone is the Creator, the Lord and Master of the universe, who alone is all-powerful and ordains the slightest movement of the smallest atom, and without whose will no one can harm or do good to another - such a man, rich or poor, in joy or sorrow, would always look only towards that One Being, and gain the insight to discover behind the veil of apparent causes the workings of the same Omnipotence.

If our modern worshippers of 'energy' only had some understanding of the doctrine of *Tauḥīd*, they would easily see that power resides neither in steam nor in electricity, but that the source of all powers is the One Being who has created steam and electricity. To know this, however, one must have insight. The greatest philosopher in the world, if he fails to see this truth, is no better than the rustic fool who saw a railway-train move at the waving of a green flag and stop at the waving of a red flag, and concluding that it was the power of the green and red flags that controlled the movement of the huge train, made an obeisance to them. People would laugh at the rustic, for he did not know that the two flags are merely signs, while the train is actually run by the driver, or, better still, by the engine. A more

perceptive observer would ascribe the function to the steam inside the engine. But he who believes in the One God would laugh at all these wise men, for he can see through the steam, the fire and the water even, and discover behind the appearances the might of the One and Only Being who has created fire and water, and whose will makes them perform their allotted functions.

The Doctrine Of *Tauḥīd* : A source of peace in human life

Tauḥīd, the most fundamental doctrine of Islam, is not a mere theory, but the only effective way of making man a man in the real sense of the term - it is his first and last refuge and the panacea for all his ills. For the essence of this doctrine is that every possible change in the physical universe, its very birth and death is subject to the will of the One and Only Being, and a manifestation of His wisdom. When this doctrine takes hold of a man's mind and heart, and becomes his permanent state, all dissension ceases to exist and the world itself changes into a paradise for him, as he knows that the enmity of the foe and the love of the friend equally proceed from Allah who rules over the hearts of both. Such a man lives his life in perfect peace, fearing none and expecting nothing from anyone: shower him with gold, or put him in irons, he would remain unmoved, for he knows where it comes from.

This is the significance of the basic declaration of the Islamic creed, or لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ (there is no God but Allah). But, obviously, it is not enough to affirm the Oneness of God orally; one must have a complete certitude, and must also have the truth always present close to one's heart, for *Tauḥīd* is to see God as one, and not merely to say that He is one. Today, the number of those who can respect this basic formula of the Islamic creed runs to millions all over the world - far more than it ever did, but mostly it is just an expense of breath: their lives do not show the colour of *Tauḥīd*; or otherwise, they should have been like their forefathers who were daunted neither by wealth nor by power, awed neither by numbers nor by pomp and show to turn their back upon the Truth - when a prophet could all by himself stand up against the world, and say: ثُمَّ كِيدُونِ فَلَا تُنظِرُونِ :"So try your guile on me, then give me no respite" (17:195). If the blessed Companions and their successors came to dominate the world in a few years, the secret lay in

this *Tauḥīd*, correctly understood and practised. May Allah bless all the Muslims with this great gift!

Verses 23-24

وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِى رَيْبٍ مِّمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلٰى عَبْدِنَا فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِّنْ
مِّثْلِهِ وَادْعُوا شُهَدَآءَكُمْ مِّنْ دُونِ اللّٰهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ O
فَإِنْ لَّمْ تَفْعَلُوا وَلَنْ تَفْعَلُوا فَاتَّقُوا النَّارَ الَّتِى وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ
وَالْحِجَارَةُ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ O

And if you are in doubt as to that which we have revealed to Our servant, then bring a Sūrah the like of this, and do call your supporters other than Allah, if you are true. But if you do not - and you never shall - then guard yourselves against the fire, the fuel of which are men and stones. It has been prepared for disbelievers. (Verses 23-24)

The Guidance which the Holy Qur'ān provides to man rests on two basic principles - *Tauḥīd* (the Oneness of God) and *Risalah* (Prophethood). The two preceding verses (21 and 22) affirm the Oneness of God in presenting certain acts peculiar to Allah alone as a proof; these two verses (23 and 24) affirm the prophethood of Muḥammad ﷺ in presenting the word of Allah as a proof. In both the places, the mode of argument is the same. The preceding verses mention certain things which no one could or can do except Allah - for example, creating the sky and the earth, sending down water from the sky, bringing forth fruits with water; and the point of the argument is that since no one except Allah can do these things, no one else can be worthy of being worshipped. These two verses refer to a kind of speech which cannot possibly come from anyone except Allah, and the like of which no human being can ever produce just as the helplessness of man and other creatures in the matter of creating the sky and the earth etc. is a demonstration of the fact that these are the acts of Allah alone, in the same way the helplessness of all created beings in the matter of producing something equal to or resembling the Word of Allah is a demonstration of the fact that this is the Word of Allah alone. Here the Holy Qur'ān challenges all men the world over, those of the

present and those of the future, to produce even a small passage like this, if they suppose it to be the work of a man, for other men may also be capable of accomplishing what one man has achieved. In case individuals should fail in such an effort, the Holy Qur'ān allows them the facility of calling to their aid all possible helpers - they could even hold an international 'workshop' for the purpose. The next verse forewarns them that such a venture would never succeed, and threatens with the fires of hell, for having once acknowledged his inability to produce something to equal the Holy Qur'ān, which is a clear evidence of its being the word, not of man but of a Being who stands above all created things, if a man still persists in his disbelief, he is only seeking a place in hell. The Holy Qur'ān asks men to beware of such a fate.

The Miraculous Qur'ān is a prophethood of Muḥammad ﷺ

Thus, the verses, in emphasizing the miraculous character of the Holy Qur'ān, present it as the evidence of the prophethood of Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم and of his truth. No doubt, the miracles of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم are innumerable, each more marvellous than the other, but in mentioning only one of these here - one that pertains to the sphere of knowledge, namely, the Holy Qur'ān - Allah has pointed out that this is the greatest. Even among the miracles of all the prophets عليهم السلام this particular miracle has a special distinction. It has been the way of Allah to show His omnipotence by manifesting some miracles through each prophet or messenger. But each miracle appears with a certain prophet, and ends with him. The Holy Qur'ān, on the contrary, is a miracle which is to survive till the end of time.

As for the phrase : وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ :"And if you are in doubt," we may remark that the verse employs the Arabic word, *raib* for 'doubt'. According to Imam Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *raib* signifies a kind of hesitation or indecision or suspicion which has no basis, and can therefore be easily overcome with the help of a little reflection. That is why the Holy Qur'ān says that having this kind of doubt (*raib*) is not consistent with being a man of knowledge, even if he were not a Muslim:

وَلَا يَرْتَابَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتٰبَ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ

"So that the people of the Book and Muslims should have no doubt". (74:31)

Similarly, at the very beginning of the Sūrah Al-Baqarah the Holy Qur'ān refers to itself as the Book لَا رَيْبَ فِيْهِ :"In which there is no doubt (*raib*)." In the present verse again it uses the word *raib* to say: وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ :"if you are in doubt", the implication being that the truths enunciated by the Holy Qur'ān are so clear and evident that there is no room for any hesitation or indecision or suspicion to arise except for those who do not possess knowledge.

As for the people who hesitate in accepting the Holy Qur'ān as the Word of Allah, and suspect that it is the work of the Holy Prophet ﷺ or of some other man, the verse proposes an easy test - they should produce a passage (a Sūrah) resembling or equalling the Holy Qur'an in order to substantiate their claim; but if they fail, they should finally acknowledge the Holy Qur'an to be undoubtedly the Word of Allah. The Arabic word "*Sūrah*" means a "limited or definite piece"; as a technical term, a *Sūrah* is a passage of the Holy Qur'ān which has been set apart from other passages by Divine Commandment (*Waḥy*), there being 114 *Sūrahs* in the Holy Qur'ān, some long and others very short. The present verse uses the word *Sūrah* without the definite article "*Al*", and hence includes the shortest of the Sūrahs in the challenge thrown out to the doubters.

At this point, the objection can arise that the failure of one man or one group of men does not necessarily argue the inability of another man or group in the matter. The Holy Qur'ān meets this objection by declaring:

وَادْعُوْا شُهَدَآءَكُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ

"And do call your supporters other than Allah, if you are true".

The Arabic word used here is *Shuhadā'*, the plural or *Shāhid* which signifies 'one who is present'- a witness is called a *Shāhid*, for he has to be present in the court of law. In this verse, the word *Shuhadā'* refers either to men in general - implying that the doubters could call to their aid any men whatsoever from anywhere in the world -, or specifically to the idols of the disbelievers of Makkah who thought that these blocks of stone would appear on the Day of Judgment as witnesses in their favour.

The next verse foretells that the doubters shall never succeed, even

if they tried with all their individual or collective might, in producing a passage which could resemble the Holy Qur'ān. If they should still persist in their denial, the verse threatens them with the fire of Hell, which has already been prepared for such stubborn disbelievers.

The infidels of Makkah, history tells us, were ready to give up their very lives for the purpose of obliterating Islam. In throwing out to them this challenge, the Holy Qur'ān gave them an easy chance of accomplishing their purpose, and even hurt their tribal sense of honour by predicting that they would never be able to take up the challenge. And yet not a single contender came up for the trial, which was a clear admission of their helplesseness and an acknowledgment of the Holy Qur'ān being the Word of Allah. This fact establishes the Holy Qur'ān as the evident miracle of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . Since the challenge still stands, the miracle too lives on, and shall live to the end of the world.

The Holy Qur'ān: A living miracle

As for the Holy Qur'ān being a miracle, the subject has been thoroughly discussed in scores of books by the greatest scholars in all the ages and in different languages. We may mention a few outstanding ones: *Naẓm al-Qur'ān* by *al-Jāhiz*, written in the 3rd century A.H.; *'I'jāz al-Qur'ān'* by Abū 'Abdullāh Wāsiṭi, written early in the 4th century; a small book, 'I'jāz al-Qur'ān' by Ibn 'Isā Rabbānī, written later in the 4th century; a long and comprehensive book, 'I'jāz al-Qur'ān' by Qādi Abū Bakr Bāqillānī, written early in the 5th century; the subject has also been discussed at length in well-known books like 'Al-Itqan' by Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūtī, 'Al-Khasā'is al-Kubra' by the same author, 'At-Tafsīr al-Kabir' by Imām Rāzī, and 'Ash-Shifa' by Qādī 'Iyad; more recently still, 'I'jāz al-Qur'ān', by Mustafa Sadiq al-Rafi'i', and 'Al-Waḥy al-Muḥammadi' by Sayyid Rashīd Riḍā; and finally 'I'jāz al-Qur'ān' by Shabbir Aḥmad Uthmānī. We may, in passing, draw attention to another peculiar quality of the Holy Qur'ān that, beside comprehensive and voluminous commentaries, scores of books have been written on different aspects of the Book of Allah and on the innumerable considerations which arise from it.

We cannot provide even a brief resume of all that has been written

on the subject, the literature being so vast. We shall, however, give a few brief indications as to why the Holy Qur'ān is held to be a miracle of the Prophet of Islam: صلى الله عليه وسلم

Qualities that make the Qur'an a miracle

(1) The Holy Qur'ān is incomparable for its comprehensiveness even among the Sacred Books of the world; on the one hand, it brings to man the ultimate knowledge of a metaphysical order, and, on the other, provides guidance for all the spheres of human life, spiritual or physical, individual or collective. Those who suspect the Book to have been the product of a human agency should remind themselves of the simple fact that it appeared at a time and in a place which offered no facilities for acquiring the kind of education which is necessary for composing such a book - in fact, the Arabs were in those days known as the *Ummiyyūn*, 'the illiterates', and that the Book came through the Holy Prophet ﷺ who could not even read or write, and who had not tried to learn even the arts of poetry and rhetoric on which the Arabs prided themselves. This fact, in itself, is nothing short of a miracle.

(2) The Holy Qur'ān is, no doubt, a guidance for all men without any distinction of time or place, but the first to be addressed were the Arabs of the Age of Ignorance. In affirming that no human being could produce even a few verses comparable to its own, the Holy Qur'ān did not confine the challenge merely to the richness of meaning and the quality of wisdom, but included the mode of expression as well. Now, the 'illiterates' of Arabia had no pretensions to wisdom or knowledge, but they certainly fancied themselves for their eloquence - to them, the aliens were just 'The Dumb' *(Al-'Ajam)*. And some of them were so mad in their hostility to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that, if they could see a chance of hurting him in doing so, they would readily have slit their own throats out of sheer spite. And yet no one came forward to accept the challenge. This helplessness in a contest which should have been easy for a people so gifted with a spontaneous eloquence - does it not argue that the Holy Qur'ān is not the word of man, but the Word of Allah? As a matter of fact, the most discriminating among the contemporary Arabs did admit, though in private, that the Holy Qur'ān was inimitable; some of them had the honesty to say so in public and some accepted Islam, while others in spite of this

admission, could not give up the ways of their forefathers, or sufficiently overcome tribal rivalries, particularly their hostility to Banū 'Abd Munāf, the tribe of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to embrace Islam.

Jalāl al-Din al-Suyūti has, in his 'Al-Khasā'is al-Kubrā', reported a number of incidents which illustrate the point. When the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the Holy Qur'ān began to attract the attention of people even outside Makkah, the enemies of Islam became worried about the huge crowds that would assemble there for the annual pilgrimage and would be likely to fall under his spell. Their tribal chiefs wanted to find an effective strategem to prevent such a situation from arising, and they referred the problem to Walīd ibn Mughīrah, the eldest and the wisest among them. To begin with, they suggested that they could tell the pilgrims that the Holy Qur'ān was (May Allah forgive us for reporting a blasphemy) only the ravings of a lunatic. But Walīd could foresee that when the pilgrims heard the Holy Prophet ﷺ speaking with such lucidity and eloquence, they would immediately know that the allegation was not true. Next they thought of dismissing him as a mere poet. But Walid warned them that, an understanding of the arts of poetry being innate in most Arabs, the pilgrims would easily see that he was no poet. Then, they considered the possibility of putting him down as one of the soothsayers. But Walīd feared that they would again discover how false the imputation was, and would only turn against the accusers. In summing up his own impression of the Holy Qur'ān, he said: "By God, there is not a single man among you who knows more about Arabic poetry than me. And, by God, I find in this speech a kind of sweetness and grace which I have never found in the speech of any poet or of any eloquent man." After a good deal of thought, he finally advised them to accuse the Holy Prophet ﷺ of being a sorcerer who employed his black art in separating sons from fathers, and wives from husbands.

Exactly the same was the impression made by the Holy Qur'ān on many other people, who expressed similar views - for example, Nadr ibn Ḥārith, a tribal chief; Unais, the brother of the blessed Companion, Abū Dharr; As'ad ibn Zurārah, another tribal chief, and Qais ibn Nasībah of the Banū Sulaim tribe. Even the vilest enemies of the Holy

Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم like Akhnas ibn Shariq, Abu Sufyān and, of all persons, Abu Jahl himself are reported to have stealthily crept in the darkness of night to the house of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to hear him reciting the Holy Qur'ān, and to have been so entranced by the Word of Allah that they could not tear themselves away from the place till it was dawn. Yet they continued to be stubborn in their denial, for, as Abū Jahl confessed in so many words, they had been successfully vying with the tribe of Banū 'Abd Munāf in all possible virtues, but now that their rivals had produced a prophet, they could not come up with something to match the claim.

In short, the Arabs failed to take up the challenge of the Holy Qur'ān, and admitted their helplessness; nor has any one else succeeded in the attempt since then - all of which goes to show that the Holy Qur'ān can only be the Word of Allah, not of man.

(3) The Holy Qur'ān made many predictions about future events, and things turned out to be exactly as it had declared. For example, the infidels of Makkah were not prepared to believe the prophecy that the people of Rum, or the *Byzantians*, would finally rout the Persians after having suffered an initial defeat. The infidels made it a point of honour, and put a wager on it, but were humiliated to see the prophecy come true before the stipulated period of ten years was over.

(4) The Holy Qur'ān gives a clear account of some of the earlier prophets, of their Sharī'ah and of their peoples, and of many historical events since the beginning of the world. Even the best scholars among the Jews and the Christians did not possess such exact information. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , who had never attended a school nor been in the company of a learned man, could not have provided all these details for himself without having received the knowledge from Allah.

(5) Several verses of the Holy Qur'ān disclosed what certain people had tried to keep concealed in their hearts, and they had to confess that this was just what they had been thinking. We shall cite only two instances.

إِذْ هَمَّتْ طَّآئِفَتَانِ مِنكُمْ أَن تَفْشَلَا

"When two of your battalions thought of falling away. . ." (3:122)

and ,

يَقُولُونَ فِيٓ أَنفُسِهِمۡ لَوۡلَا يُعَذِّبُنَا ٱللَّهُ بِمَا نَقُولُ

"They say in their hearts, 'Why does Allah not punish us for what we say?'

(6) The Holy Qur'ān predicted that such and such men would not be able to do such and such things, and then it turned out that, in spite of having the power, they could not do these things. The Jews claimed to be the 'Chosen of God' and His friends. Since one is always eager to meet one's friends, the Holy Qur'ān asked them to substantiate their claim by wishing for death and for going back to Allah, but at the same time declared: وَلَن يَتَمَنَّوۡهُ أَبَدًا :"And they shall never wish for it" (62:7). Now, expressing a wish for death should not be difficult for anyone, if he wishes to establish his *bonafides*; for the Jews in particular, it would have been an easy way of refuting the Holy Qur'an. But, in spite of all their hatred for the Holy Prophet ﷺ, they knew in their hearts that the Holy Qur'ān was the Book of Allah, and feared that if they told a lie in this matter, they would actually die. And they kept quiet.

(7) When the Holy Qur'ān is recited (in Arabic, of course), it affects in a strange and indefinable way the heart of even a casual listener, Muslim or non-Muslim. History reports many instances of people accepting Islam merely because they happened to be passing by when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was reciting the Holy Qur'ān - such was the case, for example, of the blessed Companion Jubair ibn Muṭ'im.

(8) The best book in the world, if read four or five times, begins to lose its charm even for the most fervent admirer. But the peculiar quality of the Holy Qur'ān, and of it alone, is that the more one reads or recites it, the more eager one becomes to do so again and again. Even among the sacred books of the world, the Holy Qur'ān is unique in this respect.

(9) The sacred books of many religions have been lost or no longer exist in an integral and authentic form. But Allah has promised in the Holy Qur'ān that He Himself will protect this Book, and preserve it against the slightest change upto the end of time. During the fourteen

centuries of the history of Islam, millions of copies, written by hand or printed, have been spread all over the globe as no other sacred book has been. But in this respect the greatest miracle of the Holy Qur'ān is that in all the ages and in all the places where Muslims have lived, there have been millions of people who have known the Book by heart without the alteration of a single consonant or vowel. So, Allah has preserved His Last Book not merely in the shape of written words, but, above all in the hearts of men. Allah is Ever-Living, so will His Word live for ever beyond the interference of created beings.

(10) There is no other book which should comprehend all the forms of knowledge and wisdom in so short a space as does the Holy Qur'ān, fulfilling all possible spiritual needs of man, and providing him with guidance for all the spheres of his internal or external, individual or social activity.

(11) It is not merely a theoretical guidance that the Holy Qur'ān has offered. Which other book, sacred or otherwise, has had such a vast and deep impact on the history of mankind in such a short time? Which other book has brought about such a radical change in the individual and collective life of millions of men within the space of a few years ? For when the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم departed from this world, Islam had, in spite of all opposition and without the modern media of communication, already established a new order of life all over the Arabian peninsula, and within the next few decades the message of the Holy Qur'ān had reached India on one side, and Spain on the other. Can such pervasiveness be anything but a miracle?

Answers to some doubts

Before we leave the subject, we may also deal with certain doubts which have been expressed with regard to the miraculous nature of the Holy Qur'ān. It has, for example, been suggested that some people, at one time or another, must have taken up the challenge of the Holy Qur'ān, and produced something comparable to it, but their compositions have not been preserved and have not come down to us. But the objection is fanciful. The number of people hostile to Islam

has, in any age, been much larger than that of Muslims, and they have possessed far greater and much more efficacious means of publicity than Muslims ever have. If any seemingly successful attempt had been made to produce an imitation of the Holy Qur'ān, it would not only have been preserved but also been widely publicised. After all, the infidels of Makkah used to bring all kinds of wild and fanatic charges against the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. For instance, they accused him of having learnt all that he taught from the monk, *Buhīrā* whom he had met only once in Syria; or, they imputed the Holy Qur'ān to the authorship of a Roman slave who, being an alien, could not have been a master of the Arabic language and of the characteristically Arab form of eloquence - the Holy Qur'ān itself has reported this calumny. But even they, for all their venom, never pretended to have produced something resembling the Holy Qur'ān. Anyhow, whatever funny or flimsy attempts have been made to match the Holy Qur'an are on record in the books of history. For example, *Musaylama* of Yemen, known as the Great Liar, came out with a string of obscenities as a reply to the Word of Allah, but his own people dismissed them for what they were worth. At a later date, the famous man of letters, 'Abdullāh Ibn al-Muqaffa' thought of trying his wits against the Holy Qur'ān, but soon gave up in despair.[11]

The point, however, is that if someone had really produced even three or four verses comparable to those of the Holy Qur'ān, the matter could not have gone without being passed down to us at least by the enemies of Islam. Of late a different kind of objection has sometimes been raised. They say that the impossibility of successfully imitating a book does not by itself argue that it is the Word of Allah or a miracle, for poets like Shakespeare or Ḥāfiẓ too have never been imitated successfully. But a miracle is, by definition, something which occurs without the like means having been employed. Every poet or writer in the world, even the greatest, is known to have undergone a

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11. A latter-day adventurist has been the Irish novelist James Joyce who congratulated himself on having faced up to the Challenge of the Holy Qur'ān in his "Finnegans Wake". Soon recognized to be at least very funny, this book can already be seen to be going up in a smoke of jokes.

process of education and training in his art, and to have made use of certain means and methods which are humanly possible. But the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, as we have said before, did not even know reading or writing, and was never interested in learning the arts of eloquence. Moreover, it is not merely a question of literary style. In considering the Holy Qur'ān as a miracle, we must, above all, take into account the spiritual efficacy and the transforming power it has, and which it has been showing these last fourteen hundred years.[12]

Verse 25

وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ اَنَّ لَهُمْ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِیْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ ؕ كُلَّمَا رُزِقُوْا مِنْهَا مِنْ ثَمَرَةٍ رِّزْقًا ۙ قَالُوْا هٰذَا الَّذِیْ رُزِقْنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَاُتُوْا بِهٖ مُتَشَابِهًا ؕ وَلَهُمْ فِیْهَاۤ اَزْوَاجٌ مُّطَهَّرَةٌ ۙ وَّهُمْ فِیْهَا خٰلِدُوْنَ ۝

And give good tidings to those, who believe and do what is virtuous, that for them there are gardens beneath which rivers flow. Every time they are given a fruit from there to eat, they will say, 'this is what we have been given before'; and they are given one resembling the other. And for them there shall be wives purified; and there they are eternal. (Verse 25)

Verse 24 spoke of the fire of hell which has been prepared to

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12. We may conclude this discussion by quoting a passage from the well-known scholar of comparative religion and traditional civilizations, Frithjof Schuon: The superhuman value of a revealed Book cannot be apparent in an absolute fashion from its earthly form, nor from its conceptual content alone; in reality, the Divine and therefore miraculous quality of such a Book is of an order quite other than that of the most perfect dialectic or the most brilliant poetry. This quality shows itself first of all in a richness of meanings - a feature that is incapable of being imitated - and also in what might be called the underlying divine 'magic' which shines through the formal expression and proves itself by its results in souls, and in the world, in space and in time. Only this Divine substance can explain the spiritual and theurgic efficacy of the Qurā'nic verses, with its consequences in miraculously rapaid expansion of primitive Islam in the conditions in which it took place, as well as in the stability of Moslem institutions and the extraordinary fruitfulness of Islamic doctrine." ("Dimensions of Islam", London, 1970 page 55).

punish those who do not believe in the Holy Qur'ān; the present verse announces the reward for those who believe.

As for the fruits with which believers will be regaled in Paradise, some commentators say that this concerns only the fruits of Paradise which would be alike in shape, but each time different in taste. Others say that these fruits would resemble the fruits of the earth in shape alone, but their taste would be totally different. Anyhow, the point is that the believers would have a kind of joy in Paradise they had never known before, and that this joy would keep renewing itself at every moment.

Thus, the fruits of Paradise[13] may share a common name with the fruits of the earth, but they will be of a different nature.

The wives which the believers will have in Paradise, will be clean externally and pure internally - that is to say, free from everything that is physically disgusting like excrement and menstruation, and from everything that is morally disgusting like bad temper or unfaithfulness.

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13. We must sound a note of caution here. Our modernists have for some time been quite fond of asserting that in speaking of the fruits of Paradise and its other joys, the Holy Qur'ān has employed only a metaphysical mode of expression in order to suggest spiritual bliss which, by its very nature, is intangible. We do not mean to rule out the possibility or the desirability of analogical or symbolical interpretations of the verses of the Holy Qur'ān. In fact, many authentic Muslim scholars, particularly the Sufis, have made such attempts which have proved to be very illuminating in many ways. But no genuine Sufi has ever claimed that symbolical interpretation *(I'tibār)* is the same thing as exegesis (*tafsīr*), or that his own interpretation was exclusively the only valid one. The purpose of analogical interpretation has always been to serve as an aid in spiritual realization or in the elaboration of metaphysical doctrines, and not to negate or oppose the regular mode of exegesis. What our modern exegetes overlook in their zeal and in their simplicity is the obvious fact that if a thing is being used as a metaphor or a symbol, it does not necessarily argue that it does not exist objectively. In allowing for symbolical interpretations, we must carefully remember that since the Holy Qur'ān has spoken of the fruits of Paradise and of similar things, they must have an objective existence, though not a physical one (in the current sense of the word), and even though we have no knowledge as to their nature and state - all of which we can safely leave to Allah Himself. That way lies security, for that is the Straight Path.

The joys of Paradise will also be unlike the joys of the earth in that they will not be short-lived, nor will one have to be trembling with the fear of losing them, for the believers shall live in perpetual bliss for ever.

In giving these good tidings to those who believe, the Holy Qur'an adds another condition - that of good deeds -, for without good deeds, one cannot deserve such good tidings on the merit of *'Īmān* (faith) alone. *'Īmān* itself can, no doubt, save a man from being consigned to the fires of hell for ever, and every Muslim, even if he is a great sinner, will finally be taken out of hell, once he has undergone a period of punishment. But no one can altogether escape the fires of hell unless he has been doing good deeds defined by the Sharī'ah. (Rūḥ al Bayān: Qurṭubī)

Verses 26-27

إِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَسْتَحْىٓ أَنْ يَّضْرِبَ مَثَلًا مَّا بَعُوْضَةً فَمَا فَوْقَهَا ؕ
فَأَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا فَيَعْلَمُوْنَ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَّبِّهِمْ ۚ وَأَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ
كَفَرُوْا فَيَقُوْلُوْنَ مَاذَآ أَرَادَ اللّٰهُ بِهٰذَا مَثَلًا ۘ يُضِلُّ بِهٖ كَثِيْرًا
وَّيَهْدِىْ بِهٖ كَثِيْرًا ؕ وَمَا يُضِلُّ بِهٖٓ إِلَّا الْفٰسِقِيْنَ ۙ الَّذِيْنَ
يَنْقُضُوْنَ عَهْدَ اللّٰهِ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مِيْثَاقِهٖ ۪ وَيَقْطَعُوْنَ مَآ أَمَرَ اللّٰهُ بِهٖٓ
أَنْ يُّوْصَلَ وَيُفْسِدُوْنَ فِى الْأَرْضِ ؕ أُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْخٰسِرُوْنَ ۝

Indeed, it does not embarrass Allah to use as a parable, a gnat or what exceeds it. Now, as for those who believe, they know it is the truth from their Lord; while those who disbelieve say, "What could have Allah meant by this parable?" By this He lets many go astray, and by this He makes many find guidance. But He does not let anyone go astray thereby except those who are sinful - those who break the Covenant of Allah after it has been made binding, and cut off what Allah has commanded to be joined, and spread disorder on the earth - it is these who are the losers. (Verses 26-27)

In the foregoing verses, it was affirmed that the Holy Qur'ān does not admit of any kind of doubt, and that if someone should have a suspicion as to its being the Word of God, he should try to produce even a small Surah comparable to it. These two verses refer to an objection raised by the disbelievers with regard to the Holy Qur'ān, and provide an answer to them. They had been saying that had the Qur'ān been the Word of Allah, it would not have employed contemptible creatures like an ant or a gnat in its parables, for such a thing goes against the sublimity and majesty of Allah, when it would embarrass even a man with some sense of dignity. The Holy Qur'ān points out that when one intends to speak of a detestable thing or person or situation, in a parable, the use of a gnat or something even more contemptible neither transgresses the principles of eloquence or logic, nor does it go against the sense of dignity or modesty, and hence Allah does not feel shy in using such imagery. The Holy Qur'ān also shows that doubts of this kind arise only in the minds of those whom their disbelief has drained of all power to see things in a proper perspective, while such empty misgivings never touch the minds and hearts of true believers.

Qur'ānic Parables: Test and guidance

The Holy Qur'ān proceeds to suggest even a *raison d'etre* for the use of such parables: they serve as a test for men. In the case of those who are ready to think and to understand, they become a source of guidance; but for those who refuse to understand, out of indifference or out of a stubborn hostility and denial, they are a cause of greater confusion and misguidance. In elaborating this point, the Holy Qur'ān specifies that these parables throw into confusion only those disobedient and rebellious people who disavow the covenant they have made with Allah, break all those relationships which Allah has commanded them to keep intact, and consequently produce an ever-widening disorder and anarchy in the world.

Who is *fāsiq* ?

The Arabic word used by the Holy Qur'ān in speaking of the disobedient is *Al-fāsiqīn*, its root being *fasaqa* which means 'to go outside or to stray beyond a limit'. In the terminology of the *Sharī'ah*, *fisq* signifies 'going beyond the circle of obedience to Allah, or

transgressing the commandments of Allah'. Now, transgression does not stop at being merely disobedient in one's actions, but can sometimes lead to outright denial and disbelief. So, the word *fāsiq* is applied to a disbeliever (*kāfir*) as well - such a use of the word is frequent in the Holy Qur'ān. A Muslim who is a habitual sinner is also called a *fāsiq* - this is how the jurists (*Fuqaha'*) ordinarily use the word, making the *fāsiq* a counterpart of the *kāfir* on the opposite side. That is to say, a man who commits a major sin and does not repent, or who insists on committing minor sins and makes it a habit, would be called a *fāsiq* in the terminology of the *Fuqaha'*; on the other hand, a man who commits such sins publicly and openly without being ashamed of it is called a *fājir*. (See Mazharī)

Living by the Covenant with Allah

The Covenant which the transgressors disavow refers to the one that all men made with Allah before any of them came down to the earth. The Holy Qur'ān says that Allah brought together the spirits of all men, and asked them: أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ :"Am I not your Lord?" And they replied with one voice: بَلٰى : "Yes" (7:172). This acceptance and affirmation of Allah as their only Lord and Master requires that men should in no way be disobedient to Him. Allah's books and His prophets come down to the world to remind them of this Covenant, to renew it, and to teach them in detail how to act upon it. Now, those who break this Covenant, how can they ever be expected to learn from the prophets and the books of Allah?

Islamic concern about relationship to others

The cutting asunder of what Allah has commanded should be joined includes all kinds of relationships -- the one between Allah and His servant, the one between a man and his parents and relatives, between him and his neighbours and friends, between one Muslim and another, between one man and another. Actually, Islam means fulfilling one's obligations with regard to all these relationships, and this is also the way to follow the *Sharī'ah*. Deficiency in fulfilling these obligations produces all kinds of disorder among men, and thus the transgressors end up by being destructive for others and for themselves. It is these, the Holy Qur'ān says, who are the losers -- in this world as in the other.

Injunctions and related considerations:

(1) Verse 26 shows if one intends to explain something useful or essential for the spiritual guidance of one's readers or listeners, it is neither sinful nor reprehensible to refer to something which is generally supposed to be contemptible or dirty, nor does it go against the dignity of the writer or the speaker. Examples of the use of such images or parables occur in the Holy Qur'ān, the *Ḥadīth*, and in the writings of the Sūfīs and other great Muslim scholars, all of whom have disregarded the habitual idea of modesty or seriousness in the interest of the real object to be attained.

(2) The reference to the disavowing of one's covenant with Allah indicates that the infringement of a contract or agreement made with one's fellow men is a grave sin, which may have the consequence of depriving a man of the ability to do good deeds.

(3) Verse 27 shows that it is essential for us to maintain the relationships which the *Sharī'ah* has commanded us to keep intact, and that it is forbidden to break them. Indeed, religion itself signifies the divinely ordained laws which bind us to fulfil our obligations with regard to Allah (*Huqūqullāh*) and with regard to His servants (*Ḥuqūq al-'Ibād*). According to this verse, the fundamental cause of disorder in human society is the sundering of these relationships.

(4) The Holy Qur'ān says that real losers are those who go against divine commandments. There is a suggestion here that real loss pertains to the other world, the loss of this world being too small a thing to be worthy of serious consideration.

Verses 28-29

كَيْفَ تَكْفُرُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَكُنْتُمْ اَمْوَاتًا فَاَحْيَاكُمْ ثُمَّ يُمِيْتُكُمْ ثُمَّ
يُحْيِيْكُمْ ثُمَّ اِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُوْنَ O هُوَ الَّذِىْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مَّا فِى
الْاَرْضِ جَمِيْعًا ثُمَّ اسْتَوٰۤى اِلَى السَّمَآءِ فَسَوّٰهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمٰوٰتٍ
وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَىْءٍ عَلِيْمٌ O

"How is it that you deny Allah despite that you were lifeless and He gave you life, then He will make you die, then make you live again, and then to Him you will be

returned? It is He who created for you all that the earth contains; then He turned to the heavens and made them seven skies -- and He is the knower of all things." (Verses 28-29)

The earlier verses affirmed the existence and the Oneness of Allah, and prophethood, giving self-evident proofs and refuting the whimsical and false notions of the doubters and the disbelievers. These two verses speak of the blessings which Allah has showered on man, pointing out that all the same there are men who do not recognize the bounty of Allah and persist in their denial -- the suggestion being that if they do not want to take the trouble of considering the arguments which have been advanced by the Holy Qur'ān in the earlier verses, they should, as every man with an undistorted nature must, at least be grateful to their benefactor, for even this would be a way of realizing why they should be obedient to Allah.

The first of these two verses refers to the blessings which are particular to the very being of man -- that is to say, he had no life before Allah gave him existence. The second verse refers to the general blessings which are common to man and other creatures -- firstly, the earth and all that it contains and on which man's life immediately depends, and secondly, the skies with which life on earth is directly related.

Verse 28 begins by expressing surprise at those who insist on being ungrateful to Allah and on denying Him. On the face of it, the disbelievers had never denied Allah but only the Holy Prophet ﷺ, all the same, the Holy Qur'ān equates such a denial with the denial of Allah Himself.

Then, the verse reminds man that once he was "dead" (*amwāt*), or that he had no life. He existed, if at all, in the shape of billions of lifeless particles aimlessly floating; Allah brought them together, made them into a man, and gave them life.

The verse proceeds to warn him that Allah will take away his life, and then give it back to him a second time. This second life refers to the Day of Judgment when Allah will collect the lifeless and scattered particles of each and every man again, and give him a new life. Thus,

the first 'death' or 'state of lifelessness' was at the beginning before man received life from Allah; the second death comes when a man completes the life-span allotted to him; and the second life will be given on the Day of Judgment.

The verse ends by telling man that he will ultimately go back to Allah. This, of course, refers to the Resurrection when all men will rise from their graves, will be assembled for giving an account of their deeds, and be finally punished or rewarded according to what they had been doing in the world.

According to this verse, the chief blessing of Allah for man is life, for without life he cannot profit from any other blessing. This is obvious enough. But the verse counts death too as a blessing. It is so, because physical death is the door to the perpetual life of the other world after which there is no death.

In recounting the blessings which man has received from Allah, verse 29 refers to Allah having created for man "all that the earth contains." This small phrase comprehends all kinds of benefits which accrue to him from the earth and its produce. Then, the verse speaks of the creation of the sky and its division into seven skies or heavens, as they are usually called in English. In this context, the Holy Qur'ān uses the Arabic word, *Istawā* which initially means 'to stand upright, to climb', and thence signifies 'to turn or pay attention to something', and, in a wider sense, 'to take a straight and firm decision which nothing can hinder'. The implication here is that Allah being Omniscient and Omnipotent, it was not at all difficult for Him to create the universe, once He had decided to do so.

The life in 'Barzakh'
(The period between death and resurrection)

(1) Verse 28 shows that a man who does not apparently deny Allah, but refuses to accept the Holy Prophet ﷺ as the Messenger of Allah, and the Holy Qur'ān as the Book of Allah, would still be counted among those who do not believe in Allah.

(2) Verse 28 mentions only one kind of life which is to follow one's physical death - that is, the life which will begin on the Day of Resurrection - but says nothing about the life in the grave, although

the Holy Qur'ān and *Ḥadīth* explicitly speak of how people will be questioned about their faith in their graves, and will also receive some reward or punishment. Now, this life in the grave is something intermediary (*Barzakh*) between the life which man has in this world and one he will have in the other. In other words, it is a state in between the two, resembling the life one has while dreaming; it can be called a supplement to the life of this world as also a prelude to the life hereafter. In short, this intermediary life is not in itself a distinct entity, and hence need not be mentioned separately.

(3) According to verse 29, everything in the universe has been created for man. It means that there is nothing in the universe from which man does not derive some benefit in one way or the other, directly or indirectly. There are things which man uses physically as food or medicine; other things are useful for him without his knowing it; even poisonous or dangerous things do him some good; even things which are forbidden for him in one of their aspects, may in some other aspect be quite beneficial; finally, almost everything can serve to teach him a lesson or illuminate him in the interest of his life in the Hereafter. The great Sūfi Ibn 'Aṭā' remarks in connection with this verse: 'Allah has created the universe for you so that it should serve you and you should serve Allah. A wise man should thus know that he will certainly get what has been created for him, and should not, in worrying about it, forget the Being for whom he himself has been created' (Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ).

(4) On the basis of verse 29, some scholars have come to the conclusion that since everything in the world has been created for man, it is essentially legitimate (*Ḥalāl*) and permissible (*Mubāḥ*) for man to make use of everything, except the things which have been forbidden by the *Sharī'ah*. So, the use of a thing is to be regarded as lawful so long as the Holy Qur'ān or the *Ḥadīth* does not forbid it.

On the contrary, some other scholars say that the mere fact of a thing having been created for the benefit of man does not argue that it automatically becomes lawful to make use of it. So, the use of everything is essentially unlawful unless an explicit statement in the Holy Qur'ān or the *Ḥadīth*, or an argument based on them establishes the use of a thing as legitimate.

There are still other authentic scholars who have not taken sides in this controversy. Ibn Hayyan, in his commentary 'Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ', points out that this verse does not provide a valid basis for either of the two views, for the letter *lām* in the phrase خَلَقَ لَكُمْ : *khalaqa lakum* indicates causation, signifying that the universe has been "created for your sake." So, one cannot draw any conclusion from the phrase as to the use of everything being essentially legitimate or illegitimate. The injunction with regard to the legitimacy or the illegitimacy of the use of particular things have been provided elsewhere in the Holy Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth*, and it is obligatory to follow these injunctions.

(5) Verse 29 shows that the earth was created before the skies, as indicated by the word, ثُمَّ : *Thumma* ('then'). Another verse of the Holy Qur'ān seems to be saying the opposite: وَالْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ ذٰلِكَ دَحٰهَا : "He spread out the earth after this." (79:30) But it does not necessarily mean that the earth was created after the skies. What it actually implies is that although the earth had already been created when the skies came into being, yet a final shape was given to it after the creation of the skies. (Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, etc.)

(6) According to verse 29, the skies are seven in number. This shows that the opinion of the ancient Greek astronomers and some Muslim philosophers, who used to speak of nine heavens, was no more than a conjecture.

Verses 30-33

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً ط قَالُوٓا
أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَنْ يُّفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَآءَ ۚ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ
بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ ط قَالَ إِنِّيٓ أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ۝ وَعَلَّمَ اٰدَمَ
الْأَسْمَآءَ كُلَّهَا ثُمَّ عَرَضَهُمْ عَلَى الْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ فَقَالَ أَنْۢبِـُٔونِي بِأَسْمَآءِ
هٰٓؤُلَآءِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِينَ ۝ قَالُوا سُبْحٰنَكَ لَا عِلْمَ لَنَآ إِلَّا مَا
عَلَّمْتَنَا ۖ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ ۝ قَالَ يٰٓاٰدَمُ أَنْۢبِئْهُمْ بِأَسْمَآئِهِمْ ج

فَلَمَّآ اَنۡۢبَاَهُمۡ بِاَسۡمَآئِهِمۡ قَالَ اَلَمۡ اَقُلۡ لَّكُمۡ اِنِّىۡۤ اَعۡلَمُ غَيۡبَ
السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالۡاَرۡضِ وَاَعۡلَمُ مَا تُبۡدُوۡنَ وَمَا كُنۡتُمۡ تَكۡتُمُوۡنَ ۝

And when your Lord said to the angels, "I am going to create a deputy on the earth!" They said, "Will You create there one who will spread disorder on the earth and cause bloodsheds while we, along with your praises, proclaim Your purity and sanctify Your name?" He said, "Certainly, I know what you do not know." And He taught Ādam the names, all of them; then presented them before the angels, and said, "Tell me their names, if you are right." They said, "To You belongs all purity! We have no knowledge except what You have given us. Surely, You alone are the all-knowing, all-wise." He said, "O Ādam, tell them the names of all these." When he told them their names, Allah said, "Did I not tell you that I know the secrets of the skies and of the earth, and that I know what you disclose and what you have been concealing. (Verses 30 - 33)

The preceding verses recounted the general and some of the particular blessings of Allah, and asked man to recognize them and not to be ungrateful and disobedient to his Benefactor. Now, ten verses, beginning with the 30th, tell the story of the father of mankind, Ādam عليه السلام , in continuation of this theme and also by way of illustration. For, blessings are of two kinds - tangible and intangible. Food, water, money, houses, or lands are some of the tangible blessings; while honour, happiness or knowledge are intangible ones. The earlier verses were concerned with blessings of the first kind; these verses speak of those of the second kind - that is to say, how Allah bestowed the gift of knowledge on Ādam عليه السلام , made the angels prostrate themselves before him to show their respect, and gave men the honour of being his sons.

The creation of Ādam عليه السلام

The present three verses relate how Allah, having decided to create Ādam عليه السلام and to make him His deputy on the earth, spoke of it to the angels - seemingly by way of a trial, suggesting that they should

express their opinions in this matter. The angels submitted that they could not understand why men were being chosen to be the deputies, for some of them would shed blood and spread disorder on this earth. They thought that they themselves were more suited to perform this function, as the nature of angels is wholly good, no evil deed can possibly come out of them, they are totally obedient to Allah, and should hence be more capable of managing the affairs of the world. In replying to them, Allah first adopted the mode of authority, and told the angels that they knew nothing about the nature and the needs of deputation on the earth, and that Allah alone was the one to know it fully. The second answer was in the mode of wisdom - Ādam عليه السلام had been given preference over the angels on account of his superiority in the station of knowledge, because in order to function properly as a deputy on the earth one must know the names, the properties and the characteristics of the things to be found there, and the angels had no aptitude for this kind of knowledge.

(1) A question arises here as to why Allah chose to speak of His decision to the angels. Was it merely to inform them? Was it to seek their advice? Or, was it to make them express their opinion on the subject?

Why Allah discussed Ādam's creation with angels?

As for seeking advice, it is obvious enough that one turns for advice to wise and trustworthy people only when one cannot see all the aspects of a problem clearly, and does not want to depend on one's own knowledge and understanding alone, or when the rights of others are equal to one's own, and they too have to be consulted, as happens in the counsels of the world. Evidently, neither of the two situations obtain in the present case. Allah is the creator of the universe, and knows everything about the smallest particle of dust; He sees and hears everything, apparent or hidden. How can He stand in need of anyone's advice? Similarly, He does not run the universe under the parliamentary system, in which all have equal rights and everyone has to be consulted directly or indirectly. He is the Lord and Master, and all His creatures, be they men or angels, are His slaves - no one

has the right to question Him about His actions, and to ask Him why He did this or why He did not do that: لَا يُسْـَٔلُ عَمَّا يَفْعَلُ وَهُمْ يُسْـَٔلُوْنَ : "He cannot be questioned as to what He does, while they are to be questioned." (21:23)

In fact, Allah did not mean to seek the advice of the angels, nor was there any need for it, but He, in His wisdom, gave a mere statement the form of a consultation in order to teach men the advisability of mutual consultation. After all, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was a messenger of Allah, and all the information he needed in dealing with the affairs of the world could have been conveyed to him by means of revelation, and yet the Holy Qur'ān asks him to seek the advice of his Companions, so that the Islamic community should learn this lesson from him and the way of mutual consultation should be established through him. In short, this is the first *raison d'etre* of the mode of expression adopted by Allah. (Rūḥ al-Bayān)

The other has been suggested by the Holy Qur'ān itself. Before the appearance of man, the angels had taken it for granted that Allah would not create a being who should be superior to them and greater in knowledge - as has been reported in a narration coming down from the blessed Companion Ibn 'Abbās and cited by Ibn Jarīr in his commentary. But Allah knew that He would create a being who would be superior to all other creatures and greater than them in knowledge, and who would receive the gift of divine viceregency. So, Allah mentioned this in the assembly of the angels so that they may disclose what they had been thinking. Speaking according to their own lights, they very humbly submitted that a creature like man who carried within himself a tendency towards evil and disorder and who would not balk even at blood-shed, could not be expected to maintain peace and order on the earth, while they themselves, being free of all evil, and perfect in their obedience and devotion, could perform the function more satisfactorily. They did not mean to raise an objection to the choice which Allah had made, for angels are innocent of such sentiments; they were only being curious, and wanted to know the *raison d'etre* of such a choice.

To begin with, Allah gave them a very brief reply - إِنِّيْٓ أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ:

"I know what you do not know", implying that they are not aware of the nature and the requirements of divine viceregency, which had led them to suppose that only pure and innocent beings could fulfil the conditions necessary for such a responsible position.

Then, Allah demonstrated the truth to them in a vivid form. He gave to Ādam عليه السلام a kind of knowledge for which he alone had been endowed with the proper aptitude, and not the angels. That is to say, He taught him the names, the properties and qualities of all the existents, animate or inanimate. Angelic nature is not capable of such awareness - for example, an angel cannot really experience the pain of hunger and thirst, the tumult of passions, the torment from the bite of a scorpion or a snake, or the exhilaration from an intoxicant. Only Ādam عليه السلام had the capacity to learn such things, and he was taught to know them. Then, there is no indication in the Holy Qur'ān to show that he was taught in privacy, apart from the angels. It may well be that the teaching in itself was open to the angels as well as to him; his nature allowed him to receive it, and he learnt the lesson, while, they were impeded by their own proper nature, and could not. Or, it may be that the teaching did not take an external form at all, but that the Adamic nature was made to carry this particular kind of knowledge within itself without the need of a formal education, just as an infant does not have to be taught how to suck the mother's milk, or a duckling how to swim. As to the question why Allah, being omnipotent, did not change the nature of the angels and make them learn these things, we shall say that the question, in fact, boils down to this: Why did not Allah change the angels into men? For, if their nature had been altered, they would no longer have remained angels, but become men.

In short, through this demonstration Allah made the angels realize how wrong they were in supposing that He would not create any being superior to them in any way, and that they themselves were more suitable for being the viceregents of Allah than Ādam عليه السلام. Since they failed to name the things which Ādam عليه السلام could, they came to see that purity and innocence is not the criterion in choosing a deputy

or viceregent but the knowledge of the things which are to be found on the earth, of the ways of using them, and of the consequences which would follow from such a use.

We can also infer a general principle from the episode - it is necessary for a ruler to know fully the nature, the temperament and the peculiarities of the people over whom he is to rule, without which he cannot enforce justice and order. If one does not know the pain of being hungry, how can one deal justice to the man who has unjustly been kept hungry?

We may also point out that in expressing their opinion, the angels were neither raising an objection, nor being vain and proud, nor asserting their right; it was, on their part, only a humble submission, and an offer of their services. When they found that there was another being who was, with his special kind of knowledge, more suitable for the function, they as humbly acknowledged the fact and withdrew their earlier opinion in saying: سُبْحٰنَكَ لَا عِلْمَ لَنَآ إِلَّا مَا عَلَّمْتَنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ : "To You belongs all purity! We have no knowledge except what You have given us. Surely, You alone are the all-knowing, the all-wise." In the present context, the phrase, "To You belongs all purity" also has the implication that Allah is free from the charge of having withheld from the angels the knowledge which He gave to Ādam عليه السلام , for, being the all-knowing and the all-wise, He gives to each creature the kind and the degree of knowledge and understanding which He, and He alone, knows to be in consonance with the specific nature of that creature.

Another question which may arise out of this episode is: How did the angels come to know that man would shed blood? Did they possess the knowledge of hidden things and of divine secrets? Or, was it a mere conjecture on their part? Most of the authoritative scholars believe, on the basis of certain آثار : '*Athār*' or reports available about the blessed Companions, that it was Allah Himself who had informed the angels on this occasion as to how man would behave on the earth. (See 'Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī'). It is only then that they became curious about the *raison d'etre* of man being chosen as the viceregent in spite of his propensity to evil

Beside demonstrating the superiority of Ādam عليه السلام in knowledge, Allah dispelled the misgivings of the angels with regard to the evil propensities in man by the short and simple answer, إِنِّيٓ أَعۡلَمُ مَا لَا تَعۡلَمُونَ : "Certainly, I know what you do not know." There is a subtle suggestion here - what makes man fit for viceregency is just the peculiarity which, in the eyes of the angels, made him unfit for this function. For, a deputy or viceregent is needed on the earth just for the purpose of preventing blood-shed and disorder; if there is no possibility of disorder in a place, where is the need for sending there an administrator? Thus, it was the Divine Will and Wisdom that, just as Allah had created beings as innocent and sinless as the angels, or beings as totally evil as Satan and his progeny, or beings like the jinns in whom evil dominated over good, He would also create beings in whom good and evil should be equally mixed, who should try to conquer the evil in themselves and to grow in goodness so as to seek and attain the pleasure of their Creator.

Allah is the creator of the language

(2) This episode, according to Imām al-Aṣh'arī, shows that language as such has been created by Allah Himself, and not invented by man - its use by different kinds of men has later on produced the many forms of language.

(3) One should note a subtle suggestion here in the use of two words. In asking the angels for the names of things, Allah said, أَنۢبِـُٔونِي : "Tell Me"; but in commanding Ādam عليه السلام to do so, He said, أَنۢبِئۡهُم : "Tell them." The difference in the mode of expression shows that Ādam عليه السلام was given the rank of a teacher, and the angels that of pupils. It is thus an indication of his superiority over them. Another thing the episode indicates is that an increase or decrease is possible in the degree of knowledge the angels possess, for they were given, through Ādam عليه السلام , at least a primary knowledge about a thing which they did not know before.

Man is the viceregent of Allah on the earth

(4) These verses tell us that a viceregent was appointed to keep order on the earth and to promulgate divine laws. From here we learn the basic principles for the governance of men on the earth. The

ultimate sovereignty in the universe belongs to Allah Himself, as is explicitly stated in many verses of the Holy Qur'ān: إِنِ الْحُكْمُ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ : "Judgment belongs to Allah alone" (6:57); لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ : "The sovereignty of the skies and the earth belongs to Him alone" (9:116); أَلَا لَهُ الْخَلْقُ وَالْأَمْرُ : "Verily, His is the Creation and the Command." (7:54)

But He has, in His wisdom, chosen to send His viceregents to the earth for maintaining spiritual and temporal order. Their function is to announce and promulgate divine commandments, to teach men how to abide by these laws, and sometimes even to exercise temporal power as well as spiritual authority under divine guidance. The appointment is made directly by Allah Himself, and is in no sense a reward for the good deeds or the spiritual effort of the individual concerned. There is a total consensus of all the authentic scholars of the Islamic *Ummah* on the doctrine that prophethood is not a thing which one can attain through one's personal effort or on the merit of one's good deeds, but that Allah Himself, in His supreme knowledge and wisdom, chooses certain individuals for acting as His messengers, prophets and viceregents. The Holy Qur'ān has explicitly declared it in several verses: اَللّٰهُ يَصْطَفِىْ مِنَ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ رُسُلًا وَّمِنَ النَّاسِ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ سَمِيْعٌ بَصِيْرٌ : "Allah chooses His messengers from among the angels and from among men; surely Allah is All-Hearing, All-Seeing" (22:75); اَللّٰهُ أَعْلَمُ حَيْثُ يَجْعَلُ رِسَالَتَهُ : "Allah knows best whom to entrust with His message" (6:124).

These viceregents receive divine commandments directly from Allah, and then promulgate them in the world. The chain of viceregents began with Ādam عليه السلام and continued in the same way upto the Holy Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ .

The Holy Prophet ﷺ was the last Caliph of Allah on earth

(5) The Holy Prophet ﷺ came to the earth as the last viceregent (*Khalīfa*), the last Messenger (*Rasūl*) and the last prophet (*Nabiyy*) of Allah, endowed with certain special qualities peculiar to him which he does not share with any other prophet. We may mention some of these characteristics:

(a) Each of the earlier prophets was sent for the guidance of a particular country or people, and his authority was limited to his jurisdiction alone, - for example, Mūsā and 'Īsā - (Moses and Jesus

Christ (عليهم السلام) were sent to Banī Isrā'īl (the Israelites). But the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been sent for the guidance of all the men and all the jinns, and his authority extends to all the members of the two species. The Holy Qur'ān has declared the universality of his prophethood in these words: قُلْ يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اِنِّيْ رَسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ اِلَيْكُمْ جَمِيْعًا الَّذِيْ لَهٗ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الْاَرْضِ : "Say: O mankind, I am the messenger of Allah to you all, of Him to whom belongs the sovereignty of the skies and of the earth" (7:158). A *ḥadīth* of the *Sahīh* of Muslim reports the Holy Prophet ﷺ as having said that he had been made superior to all other prophets in six things. The first of these is, of course, the universality of his prophethood.

(b) Just as the viceregency and prophethood of all the earlier prophets was limited to particular peoples and countries, in the same way it was also limited to specific periods; when the age of one prophet was over, another prophet would come to take his place as the new viceregent. On the contrary, the Holy Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ has been sent by Allah as the last of all prophets; his prophethood is not circumscribed within a specific period, but shall last till the end of time.

(c) It has so happened that the teachings and the Sharī'ah of each of the earlier prophets would remain intact for a time, but then gradually people would start deviating from them and distorting them till they became unrecognizable; at this stage Allah would send a new prophet with a new Sharī'ah. But the Sharī'ah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ is to remain alive in its integral form upto the end of the universe. Allah has taken upto Himself the responsibility of protecting the words and the meanings of the Holy Qur'ān:

اِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَ اِنَّا لَهٗ لَحٰفِظُوْنَ

"It is We who have sent down the Remembrance (i.e. the Holy Qur'ān) and We are its Protector" (15:9).

Similarly, He has made a special provision for the preservation of the *Ḥadīth* which contains the teachings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that is to say, in spite of all the vicissitudes of time there shall remain till the Doomsday a group of people who will preserve these teachings and transmit them accurately to others, and who will receive help and protection from Allah Himself. Since Allah has ordained the survival

of the Holy Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth*, there is obviously no need for a new prophet or messenger or viceregent and no room for a new Sharī'ah.

(d) Contrary to the case of all the earlier prophets, the prophethood and viceregency of the last of them, Muḥammad ﷺ, is not limited to a particular period, but is to continue upto the end of time, and those who succeed him for the preservation of spiritual and temporal order in the world, are to be, not the viceregents of Allah, but the viceregents of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his deputies. A *ḥadīth* reported by al-Bukhārī and Muslim both says:

كانت بنو إسرائيل تسوسهم الأنبياء ، كلما هلك نبي خلفه نبي وانه ، لانبي بعدى وسيكون خلفاء فيكثرون

"The Israelites were governed by their prophets. When a prophet died, another would come to take his place. And beware, no prophet is to come after me. Of course, there will be my deputies (*Khulafā'*), and there will be many of them."

The issue of Caliphate after the Holy Prophet ﷺ

(e) Allah has ordained that after the Holy Prophet ﷺ his *Ummah*, or the Islamic community, shall as a body enjoy the privilege which has been that of the prophets عليهم السلام . That is to say, the *Ummah* as a collective body has been declared to be innocent and under the special protection of Allah Himself, so that it will never unanimously agree upon a doctrinal error or a deviation, and hence any decision which has been arrived at in religious matters through the consensus of the *Ummah* is to be regarded as manifestation of Divine Commandment. That is why the consensus of the *Ummah* has been accepted as the third source of the *Sharī'ah*, the first two being the Holy Qur'an and the *Hadith*. For the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has himself said, لن تجتمع امتى على الضلالة :"My *Ummah* shall never collectively agree upon error." And we have already referred to another *ḥadīth* which tells us that no matter how much the world has changed or how indifferent people have grown to the Truth, there shall always remain in the Islamic *Ummah* a group of people who will defend and preserve the Truth, and who will finally win.

(6) Since it has been ordained that the Islamic *Ummah* as a body

shall never go wrong, the responsibility of choosing a deputy to the Holy Prophet ﷺ has also been entrusted to it. Now, for the governance of the earth the legitimate way is that the *Ummah* should select a *Khalīfah* who, once chosen, would solely be responsible for the maintenance of spiritual and temporal order. And it is also possible that there should be a single *Khalīfah* for the whole world.

The first to succeed the Holy Prophet ﷺ as his deputies were the First Four Great *Khalīfahs*, known as *al-Khulafā' al-Rashidūn* (or the rightly-guided ones, commonly translated as the 'Orthodox Caliphs'), and the *Khilāfat* order functioned according to the proper principles upto the end of their time. So, their decisions are not merely temporary judgments, but have a permanent legislative value, and carry an authority in their own degree, for the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said, عليكم بسنتي و سنة الخلفاء الراشدين :'Follow my way steadfastly, and the way of the rightly-guided *Khalifahs*.'

After the age of the rightly-guided *Khalīfahs*, different rulers appeared in different regions, but none of them can be described as a *Khalīfah* of the whole Islamic community in the proper sense of the term, though they may be called the *Amīrs* of particular regions. When it became practically impossible for all the Muslims of the world to agree upon one man as their *Khalīfah*, and it became customary to have a separate *Amīr* for each region, people accepted the principle that the man who had been chosen or acknowledged by the majority of the Muslims in a country, should be called the *Amīr* of that country. The basis for this procedure has been provided by the Holy Qur'ān itself: وَأَمْرُهُمْ شُورٰى بَيْنَهُمْ :"And they conduct their affairs by mutual consultation" (42:38).

The modern legislative assemblies are a form of mutual consultation, with the difference that they are quite free to make whatever laws they like according to their own opinion, while an Islamic legislative assembly, its members and their *Amīr* all shall be bound by the law which Allah has sent us through the Holy Prophet ﷺ. There are certain specific conditions for the membership of an Islamic assembly as well as for the choice of an *Amīr*. And, most

important of all, laws must be made within the bounds of the basic principles laid down by the Holy Qur'ān and *Sunnah*, the authority of which the assembly cannot have the right to question.

Let me give a brief summary of the whole discussion. The verses which tell us of how Allah informed the angels about his intention to send a viceregent to the earth, provide us with some of the fundamental principles of the governance of man:-

(a) The sovereignty of the skies and of the earth belongs to Allah Himself.

(b) The function of promulgating the Commandments of Allah on the earth is performed by a viceregent who is at the same time a messenger of Allah and His Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم .

(c) The chain of such viceregents ends with the Holy Prophet ﷺ , for he is the last Messenger and Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم .

(d) Now the function of viceregency is performed by the deputies of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم .

(e) Such a deputy (*Khalīfah*) is to be chosen by the *Ummah* or Islamic community.[14]

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14. (1) Some Modernists have zealously taken to the habit of interpreting these verses as implying that man as a viceregent of Allah is required to make a 'progress' in 'Science' - that is, in the empirical study of physical phenomena; a so-called 'Muslim' translator of the Holy Qur'an has even had the temerity to translate the name 'Ādam' by the English word 'Man', thus denying the existence and prophethood of Ādam عليه السلام . In order to dispel such grave errors and distortions of word and meaning, let us point out that the 'names' which Allah taught to Ādam عليه السلام do not refer merely to the chemical or biological or psychological properties of things and men, but to their essential qualities and aptitudes - we are using the word 'essential' in the technical and metaphysical sense of the word in which it was originally used in the West too. Maulana Ashraf Alī Thānavi adds in his 'Bayān al-Qur'ān' that the knowledge of the 'names' even includes a knowledge of the injunctions of the Sharī'ah as to the distinction between the lawful and the unlawful. Then, there are many great Sūfis who maintain that Ādam عليه السلام was given the knowledge of 'the names of Allah' - not of all the divine names in detail, of course, for it is not possible for a created being to comprehend the Infinite, but of divine names in a summary form. This interpretation

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Verse 34

وَاِذۡ قُلۡنَا لِلۡمَلٰٓئِكَةِ اسۡجُدُوۡا لِاٰدَمَ فَسَجَدُوۡٓا اِلَّآ اِبۡلِيۡسَؕ اَبٰى وَاسۡتَكۡبَرَ وَكَانَ مِنَ الۡكٰفِرِيۡنَ ۝

And when We said to the angels: "Prostrate before Adam!" So, they prostrated, all but Iblis. He refused, and joined the infidels." (Verse 34)

The episode recounted in the foregoing verses has shown how the angels came to learn that Adam عليه السلام was superior to them in so far as he possessed the forms of knowledge necessary for the function of

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has been advanced by as authentic a commentator as Qadi Thanaullah of Pānipat in his 'Tafsīr al-Maẓharī'. In the explanation of this subtle point we may say that every thing that exists reflects some divine attribute, which in its turn is a manifestation of a divine name; thus, divine names are the essential principles or roots of all things, and one who knows divine names does also know things in their inner natures.

(2) With regard to the question of the viceregency of Allah, we cannot pass over a very serious distortion of the authentic doctrine which has been introduced by the Modernists and seems to be growing in currency. Under the influence of Western Humanism, and specially in their indifference to doctrinal matters, the Modernists have come to identify the prophet and the father of mankind, Ādam عليه السلام totally with the biological species called 'man', and have made out as if every individual member of this species, unconditionally and without any qualifications, is born to be a viceregent of Allah. The error has been promoted by a thoughtless misreading of *Sufi* metaphysical texts and *Sufi* poetry. What our Modernists have never cared to learn is the concept of degrees and their distinctions. The Sufis, no doubt, often speak of 'man' as being the viceregent of Allah, but what they are actually referring to is not a biological organism or species, but '*Al-Insān Al-Kāmil*', 'the Universal Man' - a term which the orientalists have wrongly rendered as 'the perfect man', thus introducing ethical implications in the sphere of pure metaphysics. In the writings of the Sufis, prose and poetry both, 'Man' also stands for 'the Total and Essential Reality of man' (*Al-Ḥaqīqah al-Jāmi'ah al-Insāniyyah*). Now, the Universal Man par excellence is the Holy Prophet ﷺ this is the first degree of "manhood" to which belong the *Aulia'* (Men of Allah or the great saints) and those rulers who dealt justice according to the *Sharī'ah.*

Then, there are lower degrees pertaining to the pious and the virtuous Muslims down to the lowest degree where stand people who are sinful, yet, being Muslims, can hope for salvation. Allah alone knows best as to

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divine viceregency, while they themselves did not, nor did the jinns. Now, Allah willed to manifest this superiority in a visible and concrete form. So, He commanded the angels to prostrate themselves before Ādam عليه السلام in his honour. They obeyed except Iblis or Satan who, in his pride, refused to do so.

If we go by the words of the Holy Qur'ān, the command was given to the angels alone, but, in excepting Iblis from those who obeyed, the text also suggests that the command was given to all the created beings that existed at that time and possessed understanding, including the jinns as well as the angels. But the Holy Qur'ān mentions the angels alone, because when superior beings like the angels were required to show their respect for Ādam عليه السلام, inferior creatures like the jinns must, it goes without saying, have been ordered to do the same.

Angels prostrate before Ādam

(1) In this verse, the angels have been commanded to prostrate themselves before Ādam عليه السلام. Another verse of the Holy Qur'an tells us that the parents and the brothers of Yūsuf (Joseph) عليه السلام on reaching Egypt, prostrated themselves before him (12:100). Evidently such a prostration cannot have been intended as an act of worship, for worshipping anyone other than Allah is an act of association (*Shirk*) and infidelity (*Kufr*), and hence cannot possibly be allowed by any

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who belongs to which degree; below the degree of the blessed Companions one can never speak with certitude. If we allow ourselves to associate vicrereregency with an ordinary Muslim, it would only be viceregency, so to say, by reflection, just as the *'Īmān* of every Muslim is only a reflection of the *'Īmān* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Any way, the necessary condition of receiving even a faint reflection of viceregency and "Manhood" is that one should be a Muslim, for, as the Holy Qur'ān has explicitly declared, 'Allah shall not now accept any faith except Islam.' As for attributing viceregency of "Manhood" to common man as such is concerned, it can at best only be viceregency, to use Aristotelean terms, in potency and not in act - it cannot be effective unless it is actualized through a total submission to the *Sharī'ah* and a strenuous spiritual effort and waiting upon the grace of Allah. In fact, the highest excellence open to man now is to be in word and deed and thought a perfect follower of the *Sunnah*, the way of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

Sharī'ah. So, it appears that in the days of the ancient prophets prostrating oneself before somebody must have been just an act of courtesy or a way of showing one's respect, and enjoyed the same value as we do in our own days things like a simple greeting, a hand-shake, the kissing of hand, or standing up in someone's honour. Imam Al-Jaṣṣāṣ has said in his *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* that it was permissible in the *Sharī'ah* of the earlier prophets عليهم السلام to prostrate oneself in honour of one's elders, but that the *Sharī'ah* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ has forbidden gestures like prostrating oneself, or bowing down very low or standing with one hand placed on the other in the manner of the *Salāh* before someone, all of which may suggest an act of worship, and has allowed only greeting (*Salām*) and hand-shake as a gesture of courtesy or respect.

It is easy to understand the *raison d'etre* of such a prohibition. Association, infidelity and the worship of anyone other than Allah are things which in their nature go against the very principle of *'Īmān* (faith), and cannot therefore be tolerated by any *Sharī'ah*. There are, however, certain acts and gestures which are not in themselves acts of 'association' or infidelity, but may, on account of the ignorance or indifference of people, become a prelude to 'association' and infidelity. So, the Sharī'ahs of the earlier prophets did not forbid such acts in an absolute manner, but prevented them from being used as the instruments of 'association' and infidelity. For example, making pictures of living things is not in itself an act of 'association' or infidelity, and was hence permissible in the earlier Sharī'ahs. In speaking of how the jinns used to serve Sulayman عليه السلام (Solomon) the Holy Qur'ān itself says: يَعْمَلُوْنَ لَهٗ مَا يَشَآءُ مِنْ مَّحَارِيْبَ وَتَمَاثِيْلَ :"They made for him whatever he liked - places of worship, and pictures." (34:13) Similarly, prostrating oneself before somebody as a gesture of respect was permissible in the earlier Sharī'ahs. But gradually the practice opened the way to 'association' and infidelity on account of people's ignorance and thoughtlessness, and even caused grave distortions in the Sharī'ahs of different prophets, which had to be rectified by other prophets and other Sharī'ahs.

Since the Holy Prophet ﷺ is the last of all the prophets and messengers of Allah, and his *Sharī'ah* is the last of all Sharī'ahs and is

to remain valid upto the end of time, Allah has, in order to protect it against all distortion, stopped every chink through which 'association' or idolatry could possibly enter. That is why this *Sharī'ah* has strictly forbidden all those practices which had at one time or another served as a means towards 'association' or idol-worship.

For example, making pictures of living things has been totally banned; prostrating oneself before somebody, even as a mark of respect, has been forbidden; it is not permissible to offer one's *Salah* (prayer) at those hours of the day which the infidels had reserved for worshipping their gods, for even this slight and external correspondence might lead to 'association'; and, according to a *Ḥadīth* reported by Muslim, one is not allowed to call one's slave an "'*abd*", nor is a slave allowed to call his master a "*rabb*" - the words respectively signify "a slave" and 'one who gives nurture', and are as such harmless, but they can be misconstrued, and may mislead ignorant slaves or helpless and subjugated people into the worship of their masters: hence the prohibition.

With regard to the question of prostration, we may add that, according to some authentic scholars, *Salāh*, the basic form of Islamic worship, comprises of four kinds of actions - standing upright, bowing, sitting down, and prostrating oneself; the first two of these, standing up and sitting down, are actions which one habitually does in the course of one's daily chores, and which one also performs as acts of worship in the course of a *Salāh* (prayer), but the other two, bowing down and prostrating oneself, are actions which one does not go through as a matter of habit, and which are characteristically associated with *Salāh* (prayer) and *'Ibādah* (worship); hence it is that the Islamic *Sharī'ah* has identified them with acts of worship, and forbidden the Muslims to bow down or prostrate themselves before anyone other than Allah.

Given that the Holy Qur'ān itself speaks of prostration as a mark of respect, one would wish to know on what grounds it has been affirmed that the Islamic *Sharī'ah* has forbidden this practice. As to this question, we may point out that several well-known narrations coming down to us from the Holy Prophet ﷺ through quite a large number of his blessed Companions, are there to establish that

prostrating oneself before somebody as a mark of respect is unlawful (*harām*). To cite only one such narration, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said that, if he could allow people to prostrate themselves before anyone other than Allah as a mark of respect, he would have commanded wives to prostrate themselves before their husbands. This clearly shows that prostration as a mark of respect is absolutely forbidden, and no allowance can, in this respect, be made in favour of any created being. We may add that the *Ḥadīth* we have just referred to has come down to us through twenty Companions, while, according to Tadrib al-Rawi, the famous book on the fundamentals of the science of *Ḥadīth*, a Tradition which has been reported by only ten Companions is called *Mutawātir*, and enjoys the same authority in the matter of injunctions as the Holy Qur'ān.

(2) The Holy Qur'ān describes Iblīs or Satan as an infidel. His infidelity does not arise from disobedience in his action, for, according to the *Sharī'ah*, giving up an obligation in practice is only a sin and a transgression, and does not constitute infidelity. Iblīs became an infidel, because he had defied and challenged a divine commandment, and had, in refusing to prostrate himself, virtually said that, in his opinion, Ādam عليه السلام was not worthy of it.

(3) Iblis had attained such a high degree in science and knowledge that he was called *Tā'ūs al-Malā'ikah* :"The Peacock Among the Angels." How did he, then, come to commit such a suicidal error? Some scholars say that it was because of his pride and vanity that Allah took back from him the wealth of knowledge and understanding, and hence he came to act like an ignorant fool. Others have suggested that his error was due to self-love and ambition. The famous commentary, 'Rūh al-Bayān' resolves the question by quoting a line of verse in Arabic which shows that once the aid of Allah has been withdrawn from a man, he can no longer save himself from sins, and all the effort he makes only serves to push him farther and farther into misguidance. May Allah, in his mercy, save all of us from such a fate! The commentary draws from it the conclusion that one should not be vain about one's learning or one's deeds or even about one's 'Īmān (faith), for *Īmān* is valid only if it lasts till one's final breath and into the first stage of one's journey to the other world.

Verses 35-36

وَقُلْنَا يٰاٰدَمُ اسْكُنْ اَنْتَ وَ زَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ وَكُلَا مِنْهَا رَغَدًا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمَا وَلَا تَقْرَبَا هٰذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ فَتَكُوْنَا مِنَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ۝ فَاَزَلَّهُمَا الشَّيْطٰنُ عَنْهَا فَاَخْرَجَهُمَا مِمَّا كَانَا فِيْهِ وَقُلْنَا اهْبِطُوْا بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ وَلَكُمْ فِى الْاَرْضِ مُسْتَقَرٌّ وَّ مَتَاعٌ اِلٰى حِيْنٍ ۝

And We said, "O Ādam, dwell, you and your wife, in Paradise, and eat at pleasure wherever you like, but do not go near this tree or you shall join the transgressors." Then, Satan caused them to slip from it, and brought them out of where they had been. And We said, "Go down, you all, some of you enemies of some; and on the earth there will be for you a dwelling place and enjoyment for a time." (Verses 35 - 36)

This is a continuation of the story of Ādam عليه السلام . When his superiority over the angels and his fitness for the role of viceregent had been announced to the angels and been acknowledged by them, and Iblis had been condemned as an infidel and expelled from Paradise on account of his pride and his defiance of divine authority, Ādam and Ḥawwā عليهما السلام (Eve), his wife, received a command from Allah to live in Paradise and enjoy its blessings. But they were also instructed not to eat the fruit of a particular tree. Now, having been disgraced because of Ādam عليه السلام , Iblīs or Satan had an account to settle with him, and as soon as he got the opportunity, he tricked them into eating from this tree. Because of this error on their part, they too were ordered to leave Paradise, and to go down and live on the earth. They were at the same time warned that their existence on the earth would no longer be full of perpetual bliss as it had been in Paradise, but that there would be dissension and enmity among men, their progeny, which would spoil the joy of earthly life.

Since these events took place after Ādam عليه السلام had been created and the angels had been commanded to prostrate themselves before him, some scholars have concluded from it that the creation of Ādam عليه السلام and the prostration of the angels took place somewhere outside Paradise, and that he was sent there later on. But the words of the Holy Qur'ān do not exclude the other interpretation that both the

events took place in Paradise, but that he had not been told at that time where he was to live, which was done later.

When Ādam and Ḥawwā عليهما السلام were sent to live in Paradise, they were allowed to eat whatever they liked 'at pleasure' - the Arabic word in the text being '*Raghadan*', which signifies provision for which one does not have to work, and which is never exhausted nor falls short. Thus, their life was totally free from all care.

They were commanded not to go near a certain tree - which was an emphatic way of asking them not to eat its fruit. The tree has not been given a specific name either in the Holy Qur'ān or in the *Hadith*. Some commentators say that it was wheat, others say that it was a fig-tree or a grape-vine. But it is not really necessary to make specific what the Holy Qur'ān has left vague. (See Qurtubi) [15]

According to the Holy Qur'ān, it was Satan who 'caused them to slip' (*azallahumā*). It clearly shows that the error and disobedience of Ādam and Hawwā عليهما السلام was not of the kind which technically constitutes a sin, but arose out of a misunderstanding produced by Satan. They ate the forbidden fruit, because Satan had cleverly deceived them. [16]

A question arises here as to how Satan got into Paradise for seducing Ādam and Hawwā عليهما السلام , when he had already been expelled from there for refusing to prostrate himself. There are many possible ways in which he can have played his trick. Possibly he never

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15. Even the Bible does not name the tree. As to the apple being the fruit concerned, it is only a popular misunderstanding arising from the fact that the Latin word "*Malum*" means an "apple" as well as a "sin, or evil."

16. We may note that in the previous episode the Holy Qur'ān used the name Iblīs - a word which comes from the root Balas, 'to be disappointed', and hence signifies "one who has lost all hope of receiving the grace of Allah." In the present episode he has been called *Al-Shayṭān* - a word which comes from the root *Shatn*, "to be far away", and hence signifies "one who has been removed far away from the mercy of Allah." Iblis is a proper name, while *Shayṭān* is the name of a genus. When the Holy Qur'ān speaks of *Al-Shayṭān*, it always refers to Iblis. But the common noun *Shaytan*, or its plural *Shayaṭīn* refers to the genus, which includes men and jinns both. It would be interesting to add that the root *Shayt* means 'the excess of anger and rage', and may possibly be the basis of the word *Shayṭān*.

met them, but planted the suggestion in their minds from afar - a thing which Satan can always do, and of which we have a specimen in the work of the hypnotists. It is equally possible that Satan, being one of the jinns whom Allah has given certain unusual powers denied to man, assumed the shape of a snake or of something else, and thus succeeded in entering Paradise. Perhaps it was because of this disguise that Ādam عليه السلام did not remember Allah's warning that Satan was his enemy. According to the Holy Qur'ān, Satan assured them on oath that he was one of their well-wishers (7:21). It apparently suggests that he did actually meet them, and speak to them face to face.

The Holy Qur'ān says that Satan فَأَخْرَجَهُمَا :"brought them out" of the state in which they had been living. In actual fact, they were 'brought out' under a divine command, but since Satan served as a means and as an intermediary, the action has been attributed to him.[17]

In commanding Ādam and Hawwā عليهما السلام to go down from Paradise, Allah also said, بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ: 'Some of you (shall be the) enemies of some.' If Satan had not been turned out of the skies till then, he is included in this address, the implication being that the enmity between Satan on the one hand, and Ādam and Hawwā' عليهما السلام and their progeny on the other, would continue on the earth too. But if Satan, as some scholars maintain, had already been expelled, then the addressees are Ādam and Hawwā' عليهما السلام and their progeny; the implication would now be that Ādām and Hawwā' عليهما السلام would have to undergo a double punishment, firstly that of being banished from Paradise, secondly that of seeing enmity arise among their children which must make life unpleasant for parents. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

They were also told that the earth would be a temporary dwelling-place for them, and that they would have to leave it too, which also meant that they would not find real peace of mind there.

Ādam and Hawwa in Paradise

(1) In allowing Ādam and Hawwā عليهما السلام to eat at pleasure, and

17. The words of the Holy Qur'ān do not in the least imply that Satan had any power whatsoever to act on his own. So, any Manichean dualism is totally out of the question.

in forbidding them to go near the tree, Allah used, according to the text of the Holy Qur'an, the verbs for the dual number, thus including both in the address. But in asking them to live in Paradise Allah did not address both of them, but said: أَنْتَ وَزَوْجُكَ : "You and your wife." This form of address yields two legal principles: (a) the husband is responsible for providing a dwelling-place for his wife (b) for the purpose of dwelling the wife is dependent on the husband, and she must live in the house in which her husband lives.

(2) In this context the Arabic word *'uskun* (live) suggests that their stay in Paradise was to be temporary, not permanent which is a usual condition for the ownership of a house. Allah did not say that Paradise had been given to them, but only asked them to live there, for Allah knew that certain things were going to happen on account of which they would have to leave this dwelling-place. Moreover, the right to 'own' a dwelling-place in Paradise is earned through *'Īmān* (faith) and good deeds, which one can acquire only after the Day of Judgment. The *Fuqahā'* (jurists) have derived from it the principle that, if a man asks someone to live in his house, the other man does not thereby acquire the ownership of the house nor the right to a permanent stay. (Qurṭubī)

(3) In allowing Ādam and Hawwā عليهما السلام to eat at pleasure, Allah used the verb for the dual number, and said: " كُلَا " meaning 'eat both of you'. This indicates that in the matter of food the wife is not subservient to her husband, but can eat whatever she needs or likes, as can the husband.

(4) Allah also allowed them to eat from wherever they liked. This shows that man has the right to move freely from one place to another according to his needs or wishes.

(5) Allah did not want them to eat the fruits of a certain tree, but as a precautionary measure He commanded them not to approach it even. It is from here that the *Fuqahā'* have derived one of the basic principles of Islamic law, which requires that the things or actions which are likely to serve as means to sin or as its instruments are equally forbidden. That is to say, there are certain things which are

not forbidden in themselves, but when there is a danger that in making use of them a man would become involved in an unlawful activity, they too have to be forbidden.

The Prophets are innocent of all sins

(6) As we have seen here, Ādam عليه السلام had been forbidden to eat the fruit of a certain tree, and had also been warned against the machinations of his enemy, Satan, and yet he had eaten the forbidden fruit. It is seemingly a sin, while the Holy Qur'ān, the *Ḥadīth* and rational arguments too establish the innocence and sinlessness of all the prophets. There is an absolute consensus of the four great Imams of Islamic law and of all the authentic scholars on the doctrine that each and every prophet is innocent of and protected against all sins, major or minor. Some people have suggested that prophets are not protected against minor sins, but the majority of authentic scholars does not agree with this opinion. (Qurṭubī) It is necessary for prophets to be thus protected, because they are sent down to be the guides of men - if a guide can go against the commandments of Allah and commit a sin, major or even minor, people would no longer be ready to trust his word or deed. If one cannot have trust and faith even in the prophets, how can the work of spiritual guidance be possible? Hence the necessity of prophets being sinless.

The Holy Qur'ān does, however, relate certain incidents which tend to suggest that a certain prophet committed a sin, and drew upon himself the displeasure of Allah. The story about Ādam عليه السلام eating the forbidden fruit is one such instance. According to the consensus of the authentic scholars, in all cases a prophet comes to commit an error through a misunderstanding or just forgetfulness, and it is never a deliberate and wilful transgression of divine commandment. As is well-known, a *Mujtahid* is one who possesses the necessary qualifications for finding out through analogical deduction the rule for a case regarding which no specific commandment is present in the Holy Qur'ān or the *Ḥadīth*; if he makes a mistake in determining the rule, he still receives a reward from Allah for having made the effort. The mistake made by a prophet is always of this nature, or is due to oversight and hence pardonable, and cannot be called a 'sin' in the technical sense. Moreover, a prophet, being under the protection of Allah, can never

show oversight or forgetfulness in things which are directly concerned with his prophetic and legislative function, but only in personal matters. (See al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ)

The station of the prophets, however, is so exalted, that even a little oversight on the part of a great man is considered to be a great error. That is why such slips on the parts of certain prophets have been described in the Holy Qur'ān as 'sins', and Allah has shown his displeasure too, although they are not 'sins' in their nature.

As for the error committed by Ādam عليه السلام commentators have advanced several explanations:-

(a) A certain tree was pointed out to Ādam عليه السلام as being forbidden. But it was not this particular tree alone that was intended, but all the trees of this kind. The *Ḥadīth* too relates a similar case. Holding a piece of silk and some gold in his hand, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that those two things were forbidden to the men in his *Ummah*. Obviously the ban does not apply to these very pieces of silk and gold alone, but to silk and gold as such. But it is quite possible for someone to imagine that only the particular pieces which the Holy Prophet ﷺ held in his hand were forbidden. Similarly, Ādam عليه السلام thought that the prohibition applied only to the particular tree which had been pointed out to him. Satan exploited this misunderstanding, and assured him on oath that, being a well-wisher, he could never advise him to do something which was wrong or harmful, and that the forbidden tree was quite different, and not the one from which he was asking him to pluck a fruit.

(b) Satan may have suggested to Ādam عليه السلام that the prohibition was valid only upto a period after he had been created, just as infants are denied heavy food till they have grown up, and that since Ādam عليه السلام had now grown stronger, the ban too had been lifted.

(c) It is equally possible that, when Satan told him that if he ate this fruit, the eternal bliss of Paradise would be guaranteed for him, Ādam عليه السلام forgot the prohibition. This verse of the Holy Qur'ān seems to give credence to such a possibility: فَنَسِيَ وَلَمْ نَجِدْ لَهُ عَزْمًا : "Ādam

forgot, and We did not find him steadfast." (20:115)

Anyhow, the essential point is that Ādam عليه السلام did not deliberately and wilfully disobey Allah; all that he did was an act of oversight or the kind of mistake which a *Mujtahid* can make. The error was not, properly speaking, a sin, but Ādam عليه السلام being so close to Allah, and in view of his station of a prophet, even this lapse was regarded as very serious, and described as a 'sin' in the Holy Qur'ān. But the Holy Qur'ān tells us that when he repented and prayed for pardon, Allah forgave him.

Verses 37-39

فَتَلَقّٰٓى اٰدَمُ مِنْ رَّبِّهٖ كَلِمٰتٍ فَتَابَ عَلَيْهِ ؕ اِنَّهٗ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ
الرَّحِيْمُ ٥ قُلْنَا اهْبِطُوْا مِنْهَا جَمِيْعًا ۚ فَاِمَّا يَاْتِيَنَّكُمْ مِّنِّىْ هُدًى
فَمَنْ تَبِعَ هُدَاىَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُوْنَ ٥ وَالَّذِيْنَ
كَفَرُوْا وَكَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَآ اُولٰٓئِكَ اَصْحٰبُ النَّارِ ۚ هُمْ فِيْهَا خٰلِدُوْنَ ٥

Then Adam learnt certain words (to pray with) from his Lord; so, Allah accepted his repentance. No doubt He is the Most-Relenting, the Very-Merciful. We said, "Go down from here, all of you. Then, should some guidance come to you from Me, those who follow My guidance shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve. As for those who disbelieve, and deny Our signs, they are the people of the Fire - they shall be there forever." (Verses 37-39)

Ādam's prayer to Allah

The earlier verses have related how Ādam عليه السلام came to commit an error through the seduction of Satan, and how he was commanded to leave Paradise and to go down to the earth. He had never experienced the displeasure of Allah before, nor heard such words of reproach. He could not bear it, and in the tumult of remorse at once wanted to beg humbly for pardon. But he was also afraid that by being importunate he might draw on himself more displeasure. Then, being a prophet, he knew Divine Majesty as ordinary men cannot. So, the fear and the awe dumbfounded him, and he could not utter a word. But Allah knows what passes through men's hearts, and He is also the

Most-Merciful and the Most-Generous. Seeing the agony of remorse in Ādam عليه السلام , Allah accepted his repentance, and his grace taught him the words of a prayer so that he could beg for pardon.

Thus pardon was granted to Ādam عليه السلام but Divine wisdom had all the same its own plans in sending him down to the earth - for example, starting through his progeny a new species, man, to be placed between the angels and the jinns; submitting men to the injunctions of the *Sharī'ah* by giving them the power of choice, however limited; instituting divine viceregency among them, and promulgating among them the prohibitions and the commandments of the *Shari'ah*, so that this new creature may be capable of making a spiritual progress and of attaining a station denied even to the angels. Allah had announced these purposes even before creating Ādam عليه السلام , when He said to the angels: إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً : "I am going to create a deputy on the earth." (2:30)

Descension of Adam was not a punishment

That is why the command for Ādam عليه السلام to go down to the earth was not withdrawn even when he had been pardoned: only the mode was now altered. Earlier the command had been given in the mode of authority, and the sending down to the earth intended as a punishment: hence the reference to the enmity among men. Now, it was in the mode of wisdom, and the sending down to the earth, an honour - the honour of viceregency. Hence the reference to things viceregency involves. In commanding Ādam and Hawwā عليهما السلام and their progeny to live on the earth, Allah told them that He would be sending down to men His guidance - that is, the injunctions of the Sharī'ah - through revelation, and that those who follow it faithfully shall be free from sorrow and anxiety - in other words, they shall not have to grieve about any loss in the past, nor to worry about some misfortune in the future.

In speaking of how Allah taught Ādam عليه السلام the words of a prayer so that he could offer his repentance properly, the Holy Qur'ān uses the word *Talaqqa*, which means 'accepting and welcoming a person or thing eagerly', and thus indicates his attitude in receiving the phrases. (See Kashshāf and Rūh al-Ma'ānī)

As to what these phrases were, different things have been reported from different Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, but the generally accepted report is that of the blessed Companion Ibn 'Abbās, رضى الله عنه according to which these phrases are just the ones which the Holy Qur'ān cites in a different place: رَبَّنَا ظَلَمْنَا أَنْفُسَنَا وَإِنْ لَّمْ تَغْفِرْ لَنَا وَتَرْحَمْنَا لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخٰسِرِيْنَ "Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves, and if You do not forgive us and have mercy upon us, we will surely be among the losers." (7:23)

The Arabic word for repentance is *taūbah* which means 'a return'. So, *taūbah* is not merely an emotional attitude as the English word, 'repentance' seems to suggest. The word *taubah* is used with reference to Allah as much to men. When the word *taubah* is employed in case of a man, it signifies a necessary combination of three things:

(a) Acknowledging one's sin as a sin, being ashamed of it and feeling remorseful.

(b) Giving up the sin altogether.

(c) Making up one's mind firmly never to indulge in it again.

If any one of these three elements is missing, the *taubah* is not genuine. Thus, it is not enough for one's salvation merely to utter the words of repentance, unless the words are supported by remorse for the sins committed in the past, abstinence from them in the present and determination of not giving way to them in the future. So much for the use of the word *taubah* with reference to man.

In the present passage, the Holy Qur'ān uses the word with reference to Allah, and the phrase concerned literally signifies 'Allah returned to Adam'. It means that Allah again turned to him with His mercy and grace, and accepted his *taubah*.

Injunctions and related considerations :

(1) Asked as to what a man should do if he happens to have committed a sin, several great scholars and Sūfis have been saying that he should do exactly what his first parents, Ādam and Hawwā عليهما السلام did - that is, he should be sincerely ashamed of his deed, make up his mind never to indulge in it again, and pray to Allah for His pardon as

they had: رَبَّنَا ظَلَمْنَآ أَنفُسَنَا وَإِن لَّمْ تَغْفِرْ لَنَا وَتَرْحَمْنَا لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَٰسِرِينَ :"Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves, and if You do not forgive us and have mercy upon us, we will surely be among the losers." (7:23) The prayer of Mūsā (Moses) عليه السلام was of the same nature: رَبِّ إِنِّى ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِى فَاغْفِرْ لِى :"My Lord, I have wronged myself. Forgive me." (28:16) And when Yūnus (Jonah) عليه السلام made a mistake, he too prayed: لَآ إِلَٰهَ إِلَّآ أَنتَ سُبْحَٰنَكَ إِنِّى كُنتُ مِنَ الظَّٰلِمِينَ "There is no God but You. Pure are you. I have certainly become one of the unjust." (21:87) (See Qurṭubī)

(2) As we have seen in the previous verses, the Holy Qur'an attributes the error of judgment to Ādam and Hawwā عليهما السلام both by using the verb *azallahuma* which indicates the dual number and thus means that Satan 'caused both of them to slip.' In recounting how Allah commanded them 'to go down' to the earth, the Holy Qur'ān again uses the verb for the plural number, thus including Hawwā عليها السلام in the command. On the contrary, in speaking of the *taubah* (repentance) of Ādam عليه السلام and the acceptance of his *taubah* by Allah, verse 37 mentions him alone, and, employing the verb for the singular, leaves out Hawwā عليها السلام . Even in other places, the Holy Qur'ān attributes the error to Ādam عليه السلام alone - for example, وَعَصَىٰٓ ءَادَمُ رَبَّهُۥ : 'Ādam disobeyed his Lord.' (20:121)

A possible explanation for the omission of Hawwā عليها السلام in such a context is that Allah wants woman to be kept hidden from prying eyes, and, in order to provide a cover for her, has not referred to her explicitly while speaking of sin and divine wrath. But when it comes to the question of *taubah*, the prayer which Allah taught to Ādam عليه السلام employs a verb in the plural number - "Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves", and thus the Holy Qur'ān leaves no room for the supposition that the error of Hawwā عليها السلام was not pardoned, or that she did not offer repentance. Moreover, woman being inclusive to man in most situations, it was not necessary to mention her specifically every time the story was told. (Qurṭubī)

(3) The Arabic word *Taubah* signifies much more than the English word 'repentance'; similarly, the words *Tā'ib* and *Tawwab* mean much more than simply 'one who repents.' Imam Al-Qurṭubī says that the word *Tawwāb* is used with reference to Allah as well as to man.

For example, the Holy Qur'ān applies the word to man in the phrase: اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحِبُّ التَّوَّابِيْنَ : "Surely Allah loves those who repent" (2:222) - and in *al-tawwabin*, 'those who return to Allah'; on the other hand, it speaks of Allah too as *al-Tawwāb* : هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيْمُ :"He is the Most-Relenting, the Very-Merciful." (2:37) So, with reference to man, the word signifies 'one who turns away from disobedience and sin, and returns to obedience', while with reference to Allah it signifies 'one who accepts repentance, and turns to man with mercy and grace'. There is another word, *Tā'ib* which also means 'one who returns', but it is not permissible to use this word with reference to Allah. For, in the case of Allah, only those nouns, adjectives and epithets are permissible which have been used in the Holy Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth* - all other words are disallowed, no matter what their lexical meanings are.

(4) Verse 37 shows that Allah alone has the authority to accept a man's repentance and to forgive his sins. By disregarding this principle, Jews and Christians fell into a great error, for they came to believe that if a priest or a saint forgave their sins, Allah too did the same. Even some ignorant Muslims behave as if they too entertain such a belief. But all such notions are doctrinally false. No religious scholar or saint, *'ālim* or *murshid*, has the authority to forgive sins; all he can do is to pray for the sinner, and seek Allah's pardon.

The obedient are freed of worries

(5) Verse 38 promises two great rewards to those who follow divine guidance - they will have no fear, and they will not grieve. Fear is the anxiety one feels in apprehending some trouble or pain in the future. Grief is the sorrow arising from the loss of something valuable or from one's failure in attaining a desired object. One can see that these two rewards comprehend all the possible forms of comfort and peace. Then, the text of the Holy Qur'ān makes a subtle distinction between the two. In saying that those who follow divine guidance will have no fear, it speaks in general terms and uses a noun - the Arabic phrase: لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ is to be translated literally as 'no fear upon them'. But in the next phrase وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُوْنَ , the Holy Qur'ān employs a verb, placing before it a pronoun as the subject. The literal translation of the

phrase is: 'they shall not grieve'. The implication here is that being totally free from all sense of loss is possible only to Men of Allah or the saints [18] who follow divine guidance in all its details; as for the others, no man whether an emperor or a billionaire, can help being grieved at the loss of a valued object or the frustration of a desire, all of which is but a necessary part of the scheme of things. The 'friends of Allah' do not have to grieve, because they annihilated their own desires and their very will in submitting themselves totally to the will of Allah. The Holy Qur'ān also tells us that those who go to Paradise will thank Allah for having removed from them all regret and sorrow: اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِیْٓ اَذْهَبَ عَنَّا الْحَزَنَ : "All praise belongs to Allah who has put away all sorrow from us" (35:34). It means that some degree of sorrow is inevitable for every human being except those who have perfected and made fast their relationship with Allah.

Let us make it clear that the verse does negate all grief and sorrow in the case of the 'friends of Allah', but the negation applies only to the loss of worldly things and the frustration of worldly desires. As for the anxiety about the other world and the fear of Allah and the deep sense of awe before His Glory, the 'friends of Allah' are far ahead of other men in these. It has been reported that the Holy Prophet ﷺ often appeared to be worried and in deep thought - this was not for fear of any trouble or loss in the worldly sense, but on account of his anxiety for his *Ummah*, and of his awe before Divine Glory.

Nor does this verse imply that prophets and saints should not feel the instinctive and all too human fear when confronted by things which are generally known to inspire dread. The Holy Qur'ān itself relates how the prophet Mūsā (Moses) علیہ السلام was struck with fear when his stick turned into a dragon: اَوْجَسَ فِیْ نَفْسِهٖ خِیْفَةً مُّوْسٰی : "Musa felt a fear in himself." (20:67)

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18. The word "Saints" is very weak and only an approximate translation of the Arabic phrase "Awliyā-Allah", 'the friends of Allah' - a concept which has only a faint resemblance with the Christian idea of a 'saint'. Consequently, the term 'men of Allah' has been used most frequently throughout this commentary.

But it was only an instinctive and physical fear, and the incident anyhow belongs to the early days of his prophethood, for when Allah said: لاتخف : 'Do not be afraid', the fear disappeared altogether. We may explain the incident in another way also. His fear did not arise as it does in the case of ordinary men, from the apprehension of some harm or hurt from the dragon, but from the likelihood that the extraordinary event might lead the Israelites into misguidance. So, this fear was not worldly, but other-worldly.

Verses 40-42

يٰبَنِيٓ إِسْرَآئِيلَ اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتِيَ الَّتِيٓ أَنْعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَأَوْفُوا
بِعَهْدِيٓ أُوفِ بِعَهْدِكُمْ وَإِيَّايَ فَارْهَبُونِ O وَآمِنُوا بِمَآ أَنْزَلْتُ
مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا مَعَكُمْ وَلَا تَكُونُوٓا أَوَّلَ كَافِرٍ بِهِ وَلَا تَشْتَرُوا
بِآيٰتِي ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا وَإِيَّايَ فَاتَّقُونِ O وَلَا تَلْبِسُوا الْحَقَّ بِالْبَاطِلِ
وَتَكْتُمُوا الْحَقَّ وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ O

O Children of Isra'il (the Israelites), remember My blessing that I conferred upon you, and fulfil the covenant with Me, so I fulfil your covenant, and have awe of Me alone. And have faith in what I have revealed, confirming what is already with you, and do not be the first to deny it, nor take a paltry price for My signs. And fear Me alone. And do not confound truth with falsehood, and do not hide the truth when you know. (Verses 40 - 42)

The Sūrah Al-Baqarah begins by speaking of the Holy Qur'ān itself, and tells us that although it provides guidance to all men, yet only true Muslims will derive a full benefit from it. The Sūrah proceeds to warn the disbelievers against the grievous punishment which awaits them in the other world, and also to delineate the misdeeds of the two kinds of disbelievers - those who deny openly, and the hypocrites. Then, addressing all the three groups, it urges upon them to worship Allah alone, and, presenting the Holy Qur'ān as a miracle which cannot be imitated by man, invites them to have faith in it. Next, the Surah recounts how Ādam عليه السلام was created to be

the viceregent of Allah, and thus shows the omnipotence and wisdom of Allah so that men may realize why they must obey and worship Him and never be disobedient to Him.

Now, in the days of the Holy Prophet ﷺ there were two kinds of people among the disbelievers and the hypocrites. On the one hand were *mushrikin*, idolaters and associators who did not possess any religious knowledge, were even otherwise mostly illiterate, and followed the customs of their forefathers - for example, the inhabitants of Makkah in general whom the Holy Qur'an calls the *Ummiyyūn* (the illiterate). On the other hand were those who believed in the earlier prophets, had a knowledge of the earlier Divine Books like the Torah and the Evangile, and were known as being well-educated. Some of them were the followers of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام (Moses), but did not accept Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام (Jesus) as a prophet - these were the *Yahūd* or the Jews. Others were the followers of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام, but did not believe that Sayyidna Mūsā عليه السلام was, being a prophet, divinely protected against all sin - these were the *Nasārā* or the Christians. On account of their belief either in the Torah or the Evangile or in both, the Holy Qur'ān calls these two groups *Ahl al-Kitāb* (the people of the Book). Being well-educated, they were respected and trusted by the people around them, and their opinion had a great deal of weight. If they came to the straight path, others too could be expected to follow their example.

The Jews predominated in Madīnah and its environs. The Sūrah Al-Baqarah is also Madinite. So, after dealing with the idolaters and associators, it addresses the people of the Book in a special manner, from verse 40 to verse 123. Adopting a persuasive and friendly tone, the Surah refers to the noble family to which they belong and the honour which they receive from the people on account of such an affiliation; then, recounting the blessings which Allah has been showering on them, it asks them to be aware of their many misdeeds and their sins, and invites them to come to the Straight Path. All this has been said, to begin with, in a very brief manner - four verses inviting them to Islam, and three to good deeds. Then comes a long and detailed address to them, at the beginning of which, as also just before the end, occur the words, *yā Banī Isra'il* (O children of Israel) -

the repetition is, of course, the usual rhetorical device for making the speech persuasive.

Isra'il is a Hebrew word, signifying 'the servant of Allah'; it is also the second name of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb (Jacob) عليه السلام . Certain scholars have remarked that among the prophets it is the Holy Prophet ﷺ alone who has several names, except for Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام who has two names, Ya'qūb and Isra'īl. The Holy Qur'ān addresses the Jews here, not as the "Children of Ya'qūb", but as the "Children of Isra'il", so that the title may remind them that they are the children of the 'the servant of Allah', and hence they should follow the example of their father in worshipping Allah alone and in obeying Him.

In verse 40, Allah asks the Israelites to fulfil His covenant - that is to say, the one they had made with Allah. According to Qatadah and Mujāhid, the following verse of the Holy Qur'ān refers to this covenant which had been mentioned in Torah as well (For the Covenant, see Exodus, ch. XXXIV) (165):

وَلَقَدْ اَخَذَ اللّٰهُ مِيْثَاقَ بَنِيٓ اِسْرَآئِيْلَ وَبَعَثْنَا مِنْهُمُ اثْنَيْ عَشَرَ نَقِيْبًا ؕ وَقَالَ اللّٰهُ اِنِّيْ مَعَكُمْ ؕ لَئِنْ اَقَمْتُمُ الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتَيْتُمُ الزَّكٰوةَ وَاٰمَنْتُمْ بِرُسُلِيْ وَعَزَّرْتُمُوْهُمْ وَاَقْرَضْتُمُ اللّٰهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا لَّاُكَفِّرَنَّ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّاٰتِكُمْ وَلَاُدْخِلَنَّكُمْ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ ج

Allah made a covenant with the children of Isra'il, and We raised up from among them twelve chieftains. And Allah said, 'I am with you. Surely, if you perform the prayer, and pay the alms, and believe in My messengers and help them, and lend to Allah a good loan, I will forgive your evil deeds, and I will admit you to gardens underneath which rivers flow' (5:12).

The covenant mentions acts like prayers and alms, but the most important clause is having faith in all the messengers of Allah including the Holy Prophet ﷺ . Hence, according to the blessed Companion Ibn 'Abbās, the covenant here signifies having faith in and obeying the Holy Prophet ﷺ (See Ibn Jarīr).

As for Allah fulfilling their covenant, the verse we have just quoted (5:12) makes the meaning clear - Allah will forgive the sins of those who fulfil the terms of the covenant, and will admit them to Paradise. Verse 41 makes it quite explicit that according to the covenant it is

obligatory for the Israelites to have faith in the Holy Qur'ān, for, after all, it has been sent down to confirm the essential teachings of the Torah. Now, the Israelite scholars were afraid that if they told the truth in this matter, they would be going against the public sentiment, and thus lose their adherents and income both. So, these three verses exhort them to speak the truth without fear, for Allah alone is worthy of being feared.[19]

Injunctions and related considerations

(1) Al-Qurṭubī remarks in his Commentary that Allah, in asking the Israelites to worship and obey Him, reminds them of the bounties and blessings He has showered on them, but in the case of the followers of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم He asks them to do so without mentioning His bounties: فَاذْكُرُونِي أَذْكُرْكُمْ : "Remember Me, I will remember you." (2:152)

This is a subtle suggestion which brings out the superiority of this *Ummah* over the others - the Islamic *Ummah* has a direct relationship with Allah, for it begins by recognizing the Benefactor, and through this knowledge recognizes His bounties; other peoples, on the contrary, begin by recognizing the bounties, and proceed through this medium to a knowledge of the Benefactor.

(2) Verse 40 shows that it is obligatory to fulfil the agreement one has entered into, and it is forbidden to break one's promise. The injunction has been stated explicitly in another verse: أَوْفُوا بِالْعُقُودِ : "Fulfil your agreements." (5:1)

According to a *ḥadīth* reported by Muslim, those who break their promises would, before being finally punished in the other world, be humiliated before the whole human race when it assembles together on the Day of Judgment, for a flag would be placed as a stigma beside everyone who has committed this sin, and the bigger the crime, the higher would the flag be.

19. Let us add that what the Holy Qur'ān confirms with regard to the Torah and the Evangile is the fact that they are the Books of Allah. As for the distortions which have from time to time been introduced into them, they are no part of the original texts, and hence the question of confirming such interpolated passages does not arise.

(3) Verse 41 asks the Israelites not to be the first to deny the Holy Qur'ān, although being a disbeliever is in itself the ultimate sin, whether one be the first or the last. The verse, in fact, suggests that the man who is the first to deny and disbelieve will not only incur the sin of his own denial but also bear the additional burden of the sin of misleading all those who follow his example; and will thus have to undergo a multiple punishment.

It follows from here that the man who is in any way responsible for others falling into any kind of sin will have to bear the burden of this sin along with the sinners; similarly, the man who in some way helps others to do a good deed will receive a reward for it along with them. Several verses of the Holy Qur'ān and the *aḥadīth* of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم repeatedly stress this point.

(4) Verse 41 warns the Israelites against taking a paltry price for His signs or verses (the Arabic word, *Āyāt* has both the meanings). The context makes it clear that it is forbidden to take money from people by misinterpreting or concealing the verses of the Book of Allah in order to please them or to serve their worldly interests. There is an absolute consensus of the *Ummah* on this point.

(5) As for the question of taking a wage for teaching the verses of the Holy Qur'ān or for reporting them correctly, verse 41 is not concerned with the matter. But it is an important question in itself whether it is permissible to accept wages for teaching the Holy Qur'ān. There is a divergence of views among the *Fuqahā'* (jurists) in this matter. Imām Mālik, Imām al-Shāfi'i and Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, consider such wages to be permissible, while the great Imām Abū Ḥanīfah and some other jurists hold them to be impermissible, for the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has forbidden the use of the Holy Qur'ān as a means of livelihood. But there has been a radical change in the circumstances since then. Formerly, those who taught the Holy Qur'ān used to receive a subsistence allowance from the *Baytul-Māl*, or the public exchequer of the Islamic state. But since Islamic society fell into a disorder, [20] they lost their financial support. The teaching of the Holy Qur'ān to children being a full-time job, the teachers could

20. Through the onslaught of Western imperialism and other factors.

not turn to difficult professions without interrupting this essential chain of transmitting the Word of Allah from generation to generation. In view of this situation, the jurists of the Hanafi school declared it permissible to accept wages for teaching the Holy Qur'ān. According to *Hidayah*, the famous book of *Hanafī* code, this should be the rule (*fatwā*) these days. Later jurists have extended the permission to similar duties like leading *Salāh* (*Imāmah*), calling for prayers (*Adhān*), teaching the *Ḥadīth* and the *Fiqh*, etc., for they are related to the teaching of the Holy Qur'ān, and the survival of Islām equally depends on them. (See al-Durr al-Mukhtār, al-Shāmī)

(6) The famous Ḥanafī scholar Shāmī has, in his commentary on "al-Durr al- Mukhtār" and in his own book "*Shifāl-'Alīl*", explained in great detail and with convincing arguments that the later jurists have allowed the acceptance of wages for the teaching of the Holy Qur'ān etc. only in view of an essential religious need which must be fulfilled, or the whole Islamic order would be disturbed; hence the permission should be limited only to such essential needs. It logically follows from this principle that paying or receiving wages for the recitation of the Holy Qur'ān for transmitting the reward to the dead or in the interest of some worldly purpose is forbidden, for it fulfils no essential religious need. Thus, the man who recites the Holy Qur'ān for wages in this manner and the man who pays him for it both commit a sin. When there is no merit earned in such a recitation, how can it be transferred to the dead? Al-Shāmī refers to many authoritative works like "*Tāj al-Sharī'ah*", 'Aynī's commentary on *Hidāyah*, the marginal notes by *Khayr al-Dīn Al-Ramalī* on "*al-Bahr al-Rā'iq*", etc., and specially cites *Al-Ramalī* to the effect that practices like paying for the recitation of the Holy Qur'ān beside the grave of a dead man or elsewhere in order to transmit the reward to him, have never been reported from the blessed Companions or their immediate successors or from other great scholars of the early centuries of Islām, and are hence an innovation (*Bid'ah*) in religion.

(7) Verse 42 explicitly shows that it is not permissible to mix truth and falsehood together in such a way that the addressee falls into a confusion as to what the truth is, and that it is forbidden to conceal the truth because of fear or greed.

Imām al-Qurṭubī has, in his commentary, related a very illuminating story in this context - a story which has come down to us through a chain of reliable reporters, and has been taken from the "Musnad" of Darimi.

During one of his visits to the Holy town of Madīnah, the Ummayyid Caliph Sulaymān ibn 'Abd al-Mālik wanted to meet someone who had lived with a Companion of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, if such a man was still alive. On being informed that Abū Ḥāzim was the only man of this kind left in the town, he sent for him .

The Caliph said to him, "Abū Ḥāzim, why have you shown such discourtesy and disloyalty?"

"How have I been discourteous or disloyal to you?"

"Everybody who is anybody in Madīnah has come to see me, but you haven't", complained the Caliph.

"O chief of the Muslims, may Allah protect you against saying something which is not true to the fact", replied Abū Ḥāzim "You have not been familiar with my name before today, nor have I ever seen you. Things being what they are, how could I come to meet you? Is it disloyalty or discourtesy?"

The Caliph looked around questioningly. Imām Zuhrī spoke up: "Abū Ḥāzim is right, and you are wrong."

Changing the subject, the Caliph asked: "Abū Ḥāzim, how is it that I don't like to die?"

"The reason is simple," Abū Ḥāzim said "You have made your world flourish, and turned your habitation in the other world into a desert. Naturally, you don't like to leave a flourishing city for a desert."

The Caliph admitted that it was true, and came out with another question: "What would it be like when we have to appear before Allah tomorrow?"

Said Abū Ḥāzim, "The man who has been doing good deeds will present himself before Allah like the man who returns from a travel to his loved ones, while the man who has been doing evil deeds will

appear like the slave who had run away and has now been brought back to his master."

The Caliph burst into tears, and said with a sigh, "I wish we could know how Allah would deal with us."

Abū Hāzim replied, "Assess your deeds in the light of the Book of Allah, and you will know."

"Which verse of the Holy Qur'ān can help us to do so?"

"Here is the verse: إِنَّ الْأَبْرَارَ لَفِي نَعِيمٍ وَإِنَّ الْفُجَّارَ لَفِي جَحِيمٍ : "Surely the righteous shall be in bliss, and the transgressors shall be in a fiery furnace." (82:13-14)

The Caliph remarked: "Allah's mercy is great; it can cover even the wrong-doers."

Abū Hāzim recited another verse: إِنَّ رَحْمَتَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ مِّنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ : "Surely the Mercy of Allah is close to those who do good deeds." (7:56)

The Caliph advanced another question: "Tell me, Abu Hazim, who is the most honorable among the servants of Allah?"

"Those who are mindful of their fellow-human beings, and possess the right kind of understanding to know the truth."

"Which is best among good deeds?"

"Fulfilling the obligations laid down by Allah, and keeping away from what He has forbidden."

"Which is the prayer that is likely to be accepted by Allah?"

"The prayer of a man for him who has done him some good."

"Which is the best form of charity?"

"Giving as much as one can, in spite of one's own need, to a man in misery without trying to make him feel grateful and without causing him pain by trying to put him off."

"Which is the best form of speech?"

"Speaking the truth plainly and unreservedly before the man who can harm you in some way or from whom you expect a favour."

"What kind of man is the wisest among the Muslims?"

"He whose actions are governed by obedience to Allah, and who invites others as well to it."

"What kind of man is the most stupid?"

"He who helps another man in committing some injustice, which comes to mean that he has been selling off his faith for serving the worldly interests of that man."

The Caliph agreed with all this, and then asked him pointedly, "What do you think of me?" Abū Hāzim wanted to be excused from replying to such a question, but the Caliph insisted that he should say a word of advice. Abū Hāzim said:

"O chief of the Muslims, your forefathers established their rule over the people with the help of the sword and against their will, after killing hundreds of men. Having done all this, they departed from the world. I wish you could know what they themselves are saying after their death and what people are saying about them."

Fearing that the Caliph would be displeased by such plain talk, one of his courtiers rebuked Abū Hāzim for having spoken so rudely. He replied: "No, you are wrong. I have not said anything rude but only what Allah has commanded us to say. For Allah has enjoined upon the *'ulamā'* to speak the truth before the people and not to conceal it." And he recited this verse of the Holy Qur'ān: لَتُبَيِّنُنَّهُ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا تَكْتُمُونَهُ : "You shall make it clear to the people and not conceal it." (3:187)

The Caliph asked, "Alright how can we reform ourselves now?"

Abū Hāzim said, "Give up your pride, acquire a spirit of fellow-feeling for the people, and give them justly what is due to them."

"Abū Hāzim, is it possible that you come to live with us?"

"May Allah protect me from it!"

"Why?"

"Because I am afraid that if I live with you, I might begin to like your wealth and your grandeur, and have to suffer a grievous punishment for it in the other world."

"Well, is there anything you need? What can we do for you?"

"Yes, I have a need. Please help me to save myself from Hell and to enter Paradise."

"This is not in my power."

"Then, there is nothing you can do for me."

The Caliph asked him to pray for him. Abū Hāzim made this prayer: "O Allah, if you approve of Sulayman, make the well-being of this world and the next easily accessible to him; but if he is your enemy, drag him by the hair towards the deeds you approve of."

The Caliph then asked him for some special advice. Abū Hāzim said: "I shall make it short. You should have the fear of your Lord and reverence for Him to the degree that He never finds you present at the place He has forbidden, and never finds you absent from the place where He has commanded you to be."

Later on, the Caliph sent one hundred gold dinars to him as a present. Abū Hāzim sent the money back with a letter, saying: "If these dinars are the wages for my words, then blood and pork are, in my eyes, cleaner than this money. If you believe that this money is my due from the public exchequer, then there are hundreds of *'Ulamā'* and servants of Islam. If you have sent the same amount to each one of them, I can accept the money, otherwise I do not need it."

Abū Hāzim's refusal to accept the wages for giving advice clearly shows that taking wages for an act of worship or obedience to Allah is not permissible.

Verses 43-46

وَاَقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتُوا الزَّكٰوةَ وَارْكَعُوْا مَعَ الرّٰكِعِيْنَ O
اَتَاْمُرُوْنَ النَّاسَ بِالْبِرِّ وَتَنْسَوْنَ اَنْفُسَكُمْ وَاَنْتُمْ تَتْلُوْنَ الْكِتٰبَ ؕ
اَفَلَا تَعْقِلُوْنَ O وَاسْتَعِيْنُوْا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلٰوةِ ؕ وَاِنَّهَا لَكَبِيْرَةٌ
اِلَّا عَلَى الْخٰشِعِيْنَ O الَّذِيْنَ يَظُنُّوْنَ اَنَّهُمْ مُّلٰقُوْا رَبِّهِمْ وَاَنَّهُمْ
اِلَيْهِ رٰجِعُوْنَ O

And be steadfast in *Salāh*, and pay *Zakāh*, and bow down with those who bow. Do you bid others to righteousness while you ignore your ownselves,

although you keep reciting the Book? Have you then no sense? And seek help through patience and prayer. And it is indeed exacting, but not for the humble in heart who bear in mind that they are to meet their Lord, and that to Him they are to return. (Verses 43 - 46)

In the last three verses and these four, Allah reminds the Israelites of the blessings He has bestowed upon them, and invites them to Islam and to good deeds. The earlier three verses were concerned with the true faith and doctrines; the present verses speak of good deeds, mentioning only the most important of them. It was usually the love of money and power that made it difficult for the Jews, specially for their scholars, to accept Islam. The verses prescribe the remedy for the twin diseases - they should fortify themselves with *Ṣabr* (patience) and *Salāh* (prayer).

"Patience" is a very weak translation of the Arabic word *Ṣabr*, which has three connotations: (a) bearing pain and misfortune patiently (b) restraining oneself from sin (c) being steadfast in obeying Allah.

Now, patience, in this wide sense, is the perfect remedy for the love of money. For, money cannot be an end in itself, but is sought only as a means of satisfying one's appetites; when a man has made a firm resolve not to follow his appetites like a slave, he will no longer need much money, nor will the love of money blind him to the distinction between his gain and loss. Similarly, *Salāh* is the remedy for ambition and the love of power. For, outwardly and inwardly both, *Salāh* involves the exercise of humility; naturally, the more one tries to perform it in the proper manner, the more it purifies him of the love of money and power, and of ambition and pride. These being the real substance of all spiritual disorder in man, once they are brought under control, it becomes easy for one to accept Islam and to be steadfast in one's faith.

Let us add that while patience (*Ṣabr*) requires only the restraining or giving up of excessive appetites and unnecessary desires, *Salāh*, in addition to all this, further requires the performance of certain actions, and also a temporary renunciation of perfectly lawful desires

and of many human needs which the Sharī'ah allows one to fulfil, e.g., eating, drinking, speaking, walking etc. - and, at that, making such a renunciation five times during the day and the night regularly at fixed hours. Thus, *Salāh* means performing certain prescribed actions and restraining oneself from all lawful or unlawful activities at fixed hours.

Once a man has decided to give up unnecessary desires, the instinctive urge itself loses its intensity in a few days. So, the exercise of patience is not, after all, so difficult. But offering *Salāh* entails submitting oneself to the conditions laid down by the Sharī'ah, observing the fixed hours, and giving up the basic human activities and desires, all of which is quite exacting for the instinctive disposition of man. So, one may very well raise an objection here: for the purpose of making it easy for a man to accept Islam and to be steadfast in his faith, the Holy Qur'ān prescribes *Ṣabr* and *Salāh*, but to use this remedy is in itself a difficult thing, specially the *Salāh* and its restriction - now, how can this difficulty be overcome? The Holy Qur'ān admits that performing *Salāh* regularly and steadfastly is, no doubt, exacting, and proceeds to show the way out of this impasse - *Salāh* is not a burden to the humble in heart.

To know the effectiveness of the remedy, we must know the disease, and find out why *Salāh* should be so burdensome. The human heart loves to roam about freely in the vast spaces of thought and fancy; all the organs of the human body being subservient to the heart, it requires them to be equally free. On the other hand, *Salāh* demands the renunciation of such freedom, - and prohibits eating, drinking, walking, talking etc. - a restriction which annoys the heart and is also painful for the human organs governed by it.

In short, *Salāh* is burdensome because the heart enjoys to keep the faculties of thought and imagination in a continuous motion. Motion being the disease, it can only be remedied by its opposite - restfulness. Hence, the Holy Qur'ān prescribes *Khushū'* (خشوع) a word which we have rendered into English by the phrase "humbleness in heart", but which actually signifies "the restfulness of the heart."

Now, the question arises as to how one can acquire this

"restfulness of the heart." Everyone knows through his own experience that, if one deliberately tries to empty one's heart of all kinds of thoughts and fancies, the effort rarely succeeds. The only way to achieve it is that since the human mind cannot move in two directions simultaneously, one should make it absorb itself in one thought alone so that all other thoughts may disappear by themselves without any effort on one's part. So, having prescribed "the restfulness of the heart", the Holy Qur'ān also prescribes a particular thought which will, if one absorbs oneself in it, drive away all other thoughts: once the movement of thought and fancy has been reduced to the restfulness of the heart, the performance of *Salāh* becomes easy; regularity in offering the ordained prayers gradually cures the disease of pride and ambition, and thus the way to the perfecting of one's faith grows smooth. Such is the well-ordered and beautifully integrated art of spiritual medicine that the Holy Qur'ān has given us! [21]

Now, the thought in which one should immerse oneself in order to acquire "the restfulness of the heart" has been explained by the Holy Qur'ān in describing "the humble in heart" - they are the people who bear in mind that they are to meet their Lord, when they shall receive the reward for their obedience, and also bear in mind that they are to return to Him, when they shall be required to present an account of their deeds. These twin thoughts produce hope and fear in the heart, and hope and fear are the best agents for inducing a man to devote himself to good deeds.

The prayer which the Holy Qur'ān prescribes is not a mere contemplation or meditation. *Al-Salāh*: الصلوٰة , in the terminology of Shari'ah, is a definite form of *'Ibadah* or worship, the mode of which is divinely ordained. As often as the Holy Qur'ān insists on the performance of the *Salāh*, it employs the word *Iqāmah*, except in one or two instances. Lexically, the word means "making a thing straight,

21. As against this stand the fanciful systems of thought - concentration, wearing a pseudo-mystical look and some-times an Eastern make-up but all spawned in the Angst-ridden West - things like Yoga and Transcendental Meditation, which serve only to derange an already disordered psyche.

or keeping it firmly in its place." A tree or a wall or anything which is vertical and straight, usually lasts long in its place; so, the word also signifies "establishing a thing or making it perpetual." Thus, the conjunction of the two words, *Salāh* and *Iqāmah*, in the Holy Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth* signifies, not merely offering the prayer, but performing the five ordained prayers steadfastly in the prescribed form at the prescribed hours and fulfilling all the necessary conditions. The Holy Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth* speak of the great rewards and blessings one can hope to receive for offering *Salāh*, and of other benefits which flow from it, but all of them are tied up with *Iqāmah* in the sense which we have just explained. For example, the Holy Qur'ān says: إِنَّ الصَّلٰوةَ تَنْهٰى عَنِ الْفَحْشَآءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ : "The *Salāh* restrains one from indecency and evil." (29:45) The prescribed prayer will bear these fruits only when one has been performing it in the full sense of *Iqāmah*. It follows from it that if one finds people who are quite regular in offering their prayers indulging in immodest or even evil activities, one should not have misgivings about the veracity of this verse, for these people have, no doubt, been praying, but not been observing the conditions of *Iqāmah*.

Verse 43 also speaks of paying *Zakāh*, the prescribed alms. Now, lexically speaking, the Arabic word زكوة : *Zakāh* has two significations: (a) to purify (b) grow. *Zakāh* is not a tax levied by the State or society, but, in the terminology of the Sharī'ah, means that portion of one's belongings which is set apart and spent in total accord with the injunctions of the *Sharī'ah*.

This verse is addressed to the Israelites, and does not by itself show that offering prayers and paying alms was obligatory for them before the days of Islam. But the following verse:

وَلَقَدْ اَخَذَ اللّٰهُ مِيْثَاقَ بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ وَبَعَثْنَا مِنْهُمُ اثْنَيْ عَشَرَ نَقِيْبًا ؕ وَقَالَ اللّٰهُ اِنِّيْ مَعَكُمْ لَئِنْ اَقَمْتُمُ الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتَيْتُمُ الزَّكٰوةَ

Allah made a covenant with the Israelites and raised among them twelve chieftains. And Allah said, 'I am with you. Surely, if you perform *Salāh* and pay *Zakāh*'. (5:12)

does show that the two things were obligatory for them, even if the external modes might have been different.

The verse proceeds to say: "Bow down with those who bow (in worship)." Lexically, the Arabic word *Rukū'* means "to bow down", and may hence be applied even to prostrating oneself (*Sajdah*), which is the ultimate form of bowing down. But in the terminology of the Shari'ah it pertains to the particular form of bowing down which has been prescribed for *Salāh*.

One may well ask why this particular gesture has been chosen for a special mention from among the different gestures involved in the *Salāh*. We would reply that it is a metonymy for *Salāh*, and a part has been made to stand for the whole - just as in verse 17:78 : قُرْآنَ الْفَجْرِ : "the recitation of the Qur'ān in the morning" refers to the morning prayers, and on several occasions in some *Hadith* narrations the use of the word *Sajdah* covers one set of movements (*Rak'āh)* in *Salāh* or even to the whole of it. Thus, the verse actually means: "Offer *Salāh* along with those who offer *Salāh*."

Salāh with _Jamā'ah_ : (congregation)

Then, there is a more comprehensive explanation for the specific reference to "bowing down" (*Rukū'*). The form of the ritual prayers ordained for the Israelites and others included prostrating oneself (*Sajdah*), but not bowing down. This particular way of bowing down called *Rukū'* is peculiar to the Islamic *Salāh* alone. Hence, *Rakī'in* or those who bow down (in worship) are, obviously enough, the members of the Islamic *Ummah*, and the verse, in effect, asks the Israelites to accept Islam, and to offer their prayers along with the Muslims.

The command, أَقِيمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ : "Be steadfast in *Salāh*", shows that *Salāh* is obligatory. The other command, وَارْكَعُوا مَعَ الرّٰكِعِيْنَ : "Bow down with those who bow (in worship)", establishes that *Salah* is to be offered in the company of other Muslims (*Jamā'ah*).

A very important question arises here - what is the degree of the obligation intended in this injunction? There is a difference of views among the *Fuqahā'* (jurists) on this point. According to a large body of blessed Companions, their successors and of the jurists of the *ummah*, it is necessary (*wājib*) to offer *Salāh* in a congregation, and it is a sin to give up the *Jamā'ah*. Some of the blessed Companions have gone to the length of holding that it is not permissible to offer *Salāh* all by

oneself without a proper excuse allowed by the Shari'ah. Verse 43, in its literal connotation, provides an argument in favour of this view. Moreover, certain *ḥadith* narrations too seem to suggest that the *Jamā'ah* is necessary(*Wājib*). For example, a *ḥadith* reported by Abu Dawud says that for a man living near a mosque *Salah* is permissible only in the mosque.

According to another *hadith* reported from the blessed Companion Abū Hurayrah رضی الله عنه by Imām Muslim, a Companion who was blind asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ for the permission to offer *Salāh* in his house, for there was no one to take him to the mosque and to bring him back. The Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم allowed him to do so, but, as he was leaving, asked him if he could hear the call for the prayers in his house. He said that he could. The Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم remarked: "In that case, you must come to the mosque." Another narration of the same *ḥadith* as reported by Abū Dāwūd adds that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: "Then, I see no room for making a concession in your case." Similarly, al-Qurṭubī cites a *ḥadith* from the blessed Companion Ibn 'Abbās رضی الله عنه who reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ once said: من سمع النداء فلم يجب فلا صلوة له إلا من عذر : "The man who hears the call for the prayers but does not go to the mosque for the *Jamā'ah*, has not offered his prayers at all, except that he should have some valid excuse." On the basis of such *aḥadith*, Companions like 'Abdullāh ibn Mās'ūd and Abū Musa al-Ash'arī رضی الله عنهم have ruled that if a man lives close enough to a mosque to hear the call for prayers and yet does not attend the *Jamā'ah* without a valid excuse, his offering of the *Salāh* at home is not acceptable. (Let us explain that hearing the call refers to the call made by a man possessing an average voice, and not to that made by a man with an extraordinarily loud voice or broadcast by a loudspeaker). Presented this far were arguments advanced by our revered elders who consider that *Salāh* with *Jamā'ah* is *wājib* or necessary.

On the other hand, the majority of the blessed Companions, their successors and later jurists hold that the *Jamā'ah* is a *Sunnah* which has been particularly emphasized (*Mu'akkadah*), and that among the *Sunnah* of this kind it is, like the *Sunnah* offered in *Fajr Salāh*, the most emphasized so as to come very close to being necessary. On the

basis of certain other verses and *Hadith* narrations, they interpret the imperative in "bow down with those who bow" as intended for emphasis only. As for the *ahadith* which appear to be saying that it is just not permissible for those who live near a mosque to offer their *Salah* at home, they say that these only mean that this is not the perfect way to offer the prayers.

The most comprehensive explanation of the matter has been provided by the blessed Companion 'Abdullāh ibn Mās'ūd, as reported by Imām Muslim: "The man who wishes to meet Allah tomorrow (i.e. the Day of Judgment) as a true Muslim, should offer these (five) prayers regularly and steadfastly in a place where the call for the prayers is habitually made (i.e. a mosque), for Allah has laid down for your Prophet certain ways of good guidance (*Sunnan al-Hudā*), and offering the five prescribed prayers with the *Jamā'ah* is one of them. If you offer these prayers at home," he added pointing towards a man, "as he does, keeping away from the *Jamā'ah*, you will have forsaken the *Sunnah* of your Prophet, and if you forsake the *Sunnah* of your Prophet, you will go astray. The man who (performs the *wudū'* or ablution and cleanses himself in the proper manner, and then) goes to a mosque, for every step that he takes, Allah forgives one of his sins, adds one good deed to his account and promotes him one rank higher. Our company was such that there was not a single man, except for people known for their hypocrisy who would offer their prayers at home away from the *Jamā'ah*, so much so that even when a man was ill or unable to walk, he was brought to the mosque with his hands resting on the shoulders of two men, and made to stand in the row of those who were praying."

This statement fully brings out the great importance of the *Jama'āh*, but at the same time defines its exact position by including it among the "ways of good guidance" (*Sunan al-Hudā*) which are, in the terminology of the *Fuqahā'* (jurists), called *Al-Sunan al-Mu'akkadah* (the *Sunnah* on which the greatest emphasis has been placed). Thus, if a man does not go to the mosque for *Jamā'ah* and offers *Salāh* at home without having proper excuse like illness, his prayers will be valid, but he will have earned the displeasure of Allah for having given up a *Sunnah* which comes under the category of *Mu'akkadah*. If neglecting

the *Jamā'ah* becomes habitual for him, he will be committing a grave sin. If all the people living in the vicinity of a mosque leave it deserted and offer their prayers at home, they become, in the eyes of the *Sharī'ah*, liable to punishment. Qādi 'Iyad says that if persuasion fails to mend such people, they must be challenged by a show of force. (Qurṭubi)

An admonition to preachers without practice

Verse 44 addresses the religious scholars of the Jews, and reprimands them for a strange contradiction in their behaviour - they used to advise their friends and relatives to follow the Holy Prophet ﷺ and to be steadfast in their Islamic faith, which shows that they regarded Islam as the true faith, but, being enslaved to their desires, were not prepared to accept this faith themselves, although they were regular readers of the Torah and knew how emphatically it denounces the scholar who does not act upon his knowledge. Though externally addressed to the Jewish scholars, the verse, in a larger sense, condemns all those who preach good deeds to others but do not act upon this principle, who ask others to have fear of Allah but show no such fear in their own behaviour. The *Ḥadīth* speaks in detail of the dreadful punishments these men will have to bear in the other world. The blessed Companion Anas reports that on the Night of the Ascension (معراج), the Holy Prophet ﷺ passed by some people whose lips and tongues were being cut with scissors made of fire; on being questioned as to who they were, the Archangel Jibrā'il علیه السلام (Gabriel) explained that they were certain avaricious preachers of the Holy Prophet's علیهم السلام *Ummah* who bade others to good deeds but ignored themselves. (Ibn Kaṭhīr). According to a *ḥadīth* reported by Ibn 'Asākir, certain people living in Paradise will find some of their acquaintances in the fire of hell, and ask them, "How is it that you find yourselves in hell, while we have attained Paradise just on account of the good deeds we had learnt from you"; those in hell will reply: "We used to say all that with our tongues, but never acted upon what we said." (Ibn Kaṭhīr)

All this should not be taken to mean that it is not permissible for a man who has himself been slack in good deeds, or is in some way a transgressor, to give good counsel or preach to others, nor that a man who has been indulging in a certain sin may not try to dissuade others

from committing that sin. For, doing a good deed is one form of virtue, and persuading others to do this good deed is another form of virtue in its own right. Obviously, if one has given up one form of virtue it does not necessarily follow that he should give up the other form as-well. For example, if a man does not offer his prescribed *Salāh*, it is not necessary for him to give up fasting too. Similarly, if a man does not offer his prayers, it does not argue that he should not be allowed to ask others to offer their prayers. In the same way, doing something prohibited by the Sharī'ah is one kind of sin, and not to dissuade those whom he can influence from this misdeed is another kind, and committing one kind of sin does not necessarily entail committing the other sin as well. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

Imam Malik has cited Sa'id ibn Jubayr as saying that if everyone decides to refrain from persuading others to good deeds and dissuading them from evil deeds on the assumption that he himself is a sinner and can have no right to preach to others until and unless he has purged himself of all sins, there would be no one left to give good counsel to people, for who can be totally free of sins? According to Ḥasan of Basra, this is exactly what Satan wants that, obsessed by this false notion of purity, people should neglect their obligation to provide religious instruction and good counsel to others. (Qurṭubī)

Maulana Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī used to say that when he became aware of a certain bad habit in himself, he would expressly denounce this particular tendency in his sermons so that the *barakah* of the sermon should help him to get rid of it.

In short, verse 44 does not imply that the man who has been indifferent to good deeds in his own life is not allowed to preach or to give good counsel, but that the man who preaches should not neglect good deeds in his own life. Now, a new question arises here - it is not permissible for a preacher and non-preacher alike to neglect good deeds, then why should the preacher alone be specifically discussed in this context? We would reply that such negligence is, no doubt, impermissible for both, but the crime of the preacher is more serious and reprehensible than that of the non-preacher, for the former commits a crime knowing that it is crime, and cannot plead ignorance as an excuse. On the contrary, the non-preacher, specially if he is illiterate , may be

committing the sin of not trying to acquire knowledge, but, as far as the transgression of the Sharī'ah is concerned, he can, to a certain degree plead ignorance of the law as his excuse. Moreover, if a scholar or a preacher commits a sin, he is actually mocking at the Sharī'ah. The blessed Companion Anas رضی اللہ عنہ reports from the Holy Prophet ﷺ that on the Day of Judgment, Allah will forgive illiterate and ignorant people much more readily than He will the scholars.

***Khushū'* : The Humbleness of Heart**

Verse 45 speaks of the humble in heart. The "humbleness of heart" (*Khushū'*), which the Holy Qur'ān and the *Hadith* speak of, connotes a restfulness of heart and humility arising out of the awareness of Allah's majesty and of one's own insignificance in comparison to it. This quality, once acquired, shows its spiritual fruitfulness in making the obedience to Allah and submission to Him easy and pleasant for one; sometimes it reflects itself even in the bodily posture and appearance of the man who has acquired it, for such a man always behaves in a disciplined and polite manner, is modest and humble, and seems to be "broken-hearted", that is to say, one who has lost all vanity and self-love. If a man does not bear genuine humility and fear of Allah in his heart, he does not, with all his external modesty and downcast looks, really possess the quality of *Khushū'* (humbleness of heart). In fact, it is not proper even to show the signs of *Khushū'* in one's behavior deliberately. On seeing a young man sitting with his head bowed down, the rightly-guided *Khalīfah* Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ said: "Raise your head! Humbleness of heart is in the heart." Ibrāhīm Nakha'i has said: "Humbleness of heart does not mean wearing rough clothes, eating coarse food and keeping the head bowed down. Humbleness of heart is to treat the high and the low alike in matters of truth, and to keep the heart free to devote itself entirely to Allah and to the performance of what Allah has made obligatory for you." Similarly, Ḥasan of Basra has said : "The Caliph 'Umar would speak loudly enough to be heard, whenever he spoke, would walk swiftly, whenever he walked, and would strike forcefully, whenever he struck a man. All the same, he undoubtedly was a man with a real humbleness of heart." In short, wearing deliberately and by one's own choice, the looks of a man who possesses the humbleness of heart is a

kind of self-delusion and a ruse of Satan, and hence reprehensible. But if a man happens to manifest such signs without knowing it, he can be excused. (Qurtubi)

Let us add that there is another word - *Khuḍū'* - which is often used along with *Khushū'*, and which appears several times in the Holy Qur'ān as well. The two words are almost synonymous. But the word *Khushū'*, according to its lexical root, refers to the lowering of the voice and of the glance when it is not artificial but arises out of a real modesty and fear of Allah - for example, the Holy Qur'ān says: "Voices have been hushed" (20:108). On the other hand, the word "*Khuḍū'*" refers to the bodily posture which shows modesty and humility - for example, the Holy Qur'ān says: "So their necks will stay humbled to it." (26:4) We must also define as to what, in the eyes of the Sharī'ah, the exact position and value of *Khushū'* is with regard to *Salāh*. The Holy Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth* repeatedly stress its importance as in: "And perform the prayer for the sake of My remembrance." (20:14)

Obviously, forgetfulness is the opposite of remembrance, and hence the man who becomes unmindful of Allah while offering *Salah*, is not fulfilling the obligation of remembering Allah. Another verse says: "Do not be among the unmindful." (7:205)

Similarly, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said: "The *Salāh* simply means self-abasement and humility." Says another *ḥadīth*: "If his prayers do not restrain a man from immodesty and evil, he goes farther and farther away from Allah." *Salāh* offered unmindfully does not obviously restrain man from evil deeds, and consequently such a man goes farther and farther away from Allah.

Having quoted these verses and *ahadith* in support of other arguments in his *Iḥyā' al-'Ulūm*, Imām al-Ghazālī suggests that *Khushū'* must then be a necessary condition for *Salāh*, and that its acceptability must depend on it. He adds that, according to the blessed Companion, Mu'ādh ibn Jabal and jurists as great as Sufyān al-Thawri and Ḥasan al-Basrī, *Salāh* offered without *Khushū'* is not valid.

On the other hand, the four great Imāms of Islamic jurisprudence and most of the jurists do not hold *Khushū'* to be a necessary condition

for *Salāh*. In spite of considering it to be the very essence of *Salāh*, they say that the only condition necessary in this respect is that while saying *Allahu Akbar* at the beginning of the prayers one should turn with all one's heart to Allah, and have the intention (*niyyah*) of offering the prayers only for the sake of Allah; if one does not attain *Khushū'* in the rest of the prayers, one will not get any reward for that part of the prayers, but, from the point of view of *Fiqh* (jurisprudence), one will not be charged with having forsaken *Salāh*, nor will one be liable to the punishment which is meted out to those who give up prescribed prayers without a valid excuse.

Imām al-Ghazālī has provided an explanation for this divergence of view. The *Fuqahā'* (jurists), he points out, are not concerned with inner qualities and states of the heart (*Aḥwāl*), but only enunciate the exoteric regulations of the Sharī'ah on the basis of the external actions of men's physical organs - it does not lie within the jurisdiction of *Fiqh* to decide whether one will get a reward for a certain deed in the other world or not. *Khushū'* being an inner state, they have not prescribed it as a necessary condition for the total duration of *Salāh*, but have made the validity of the prayers depend on the lowest degree of *Khushū'* - turning, as one begins the prayers, with one's heart to Allah and having the intention of only worshipping Him.

There is another explanation for not making *Khushū'* a necessary condition for the total duration of the prayers. In certain other verses, the Holy Qur'ān has clearly enunciated the principle which governs legislation in religious matters: nothing is made obligatory for men that should be beyond their endurance and power. Now, except for a few gifted individuals, men in general are incapable of maintaining *Khushū'* for the total duration of the prayers; so, in order to avoid compelling men to a task they cannot accomplish, the *Fuqahā'* have made *Khushū'* a necessary condition only for the beginning of the prayers, and not for the whole duration.

In concluding the discussion, Imām al-Ghazālī remarks that in spite of the great importance of *Khushū'* one can depend on the infinite mercy of Allah, and hope that the man who offers his prayers unmindful will not be counted among those who give up the prayers altogether, for he has tried to fulfil the obligation, has turned his heart

away from everything to concentrate his attention on Allah even for a few moments, and has been mindful of Allah alone at least while forming his intention for the prayers. Offering one's prayers in this half-hearted manner has, to say the least, the merit of keeping one's name excluded from the list of those who habitually disobey Allah and forsake the prescribed prayers altogether.

In short, this is a matter in which hope and fear both are involved - there is the fear of having incurred punishment as well as the hope of being ultimately forgiven. So, one should try one's best to get rid of one's laziness and indifference. But it is the mercy of Allah alone which can help one to succeed in this effort.

Verses 47-48

يٰبَنِيٓ اِسۡرَآءِيۡلَ اذۡكُرُوۡا نِعۡمَتِيَ الَّتِيٓ اَنۡعَمۡتُ عَلَيۡكُمۡ وَاَنِّيۡ فَضَّلۡتُكُمۡ عَلَى الۡعٰلَمِيۡنَ ۝ وَاتَّقُوۡا يَوۡمًا لَّا تَجۡزِيۡ نَفۡسٌ عَنۡ نَّفۡسٍ شَيۡـًٔا وَّلَا يُقۡبَلُ مِنۡهَا شَفَاعَةٌ وَّلَا يُؤۡخَذُ مِنۡهَا عَدۡلٌ وَّلَا هُمۡ يُنۡصَرُوۡنَ ۝

O Children of Isrā'īl (the Israelites), remember My blessing that I conferred upon you, and that I gave you excellence over the worlds. And guard yourselves against a day when no one shall stand for anyone for anything, nor shall intercession be accepted on one's behalf, nor shall ransom be taken from one and neither shall they be given support. (Verses 47-48)

Verse 47 asks the Israelites to call to their minds the blessing of Allah, so that the recognition of the benefits they have received may induce them to be thankful to Allah and thus to obey Him. The verse is addressed to the Jews contemporaneous with the Holy Prophet ﷺ, while the blessing had been received by their forefathers. The point is that when a man receives a special favour, his children and grand children too usually partake of the benefits flowing from it; in this sense, the Jews who are being addressed may be said to have received the blessing themselves.

As for Allah giving preference to the Israelites "over the worlds", the phrase means that they were given preference only in certain matters, or only over a large part of men - for example, over the contemporaries of the earlier Israelites.

The day referred to in verse 48 is the Day of Judgment. As for no one being able to suffice another on that day, the phrase should be understood in the sense of one man paying the dues on behalf of another man. Let us, for example, suppose that a man is found wanting in the performance of obligatory acts of worship like *Salāh* and *Sawm* (fasting), and another man should suggest that his own prayers and fasts may be transferred to the account of the former in order to make up the deficiency. Such a transaction shall not be possible on that day. Ransom, of course, means the money paid for securing the release of a criminal - this too shall be out of the question. As for intercession (*shafā'ah*) not being accepted, the phrase does not totally deny the possibility of intercession on the Day of Judgment; it only means that if a man does not have *'Īmān* (faith), no intercession in his favour shall be accepted. For the Holy Qur'ān makes it clear in certain other verses that Allah will allow intercession to be made on behalf of some people (53:26, 34:23, 2:55 etc.), and will disallow it in the case of those who do not possess *'Īmān* (21:28, 20:109). Since there would be no intercession on behalf of the latter, the question of its being accepted does not simply arise. 'Receiving support', in usual terms, means getting oneself released from a difficult situation with the help of a strong and powerful friend or patron. In short, none of the ways of receiving help possible in this world will be effective in the other world unless one possesses *'Īmān*.

A doctrinal point

On the basis of verse 48, the *Mu'tazilah* and some other groups of a more recent origin have denied the possibility of all intercession in favour of Muslims. But, as we have shown above, the negation of intercession applies only to disbelievers and infidels. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Verse 49

وَإِذْ نَجَّيْنٰكُم مِّنْ اٰلِ فِرْعَوْنَ يَسُوْمُوْنَكُمْ سُوٓءَ الْعَذَابِ يُذَبِّحُوْنَ

أَبْنَآءَكُمْ وَيَسْتَحْيُونَ نِسَآءَكُمْ ۚ وَفِي ذَٰلِكُم بَلَآءٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ
عَظِيمٌ ○

And when We delivered you from the people of the Pharaoh! They had been inflicting on you grievous torment, slaughtering your sons and leaving your women alive. And in all that there was a great trial from your Lord. (Verse 49)

Verse 47 had spoken of the special favours shown to the Israelites by Allah. Now, with Verse 49 begins the account of these favours.

Someone had made a prediction to the Pharaoh (فرعون) that a child was going to be born among the Israelites who would destroy his kingship. So, he began slaughtering all the male infants as soon as they were born. But he would spare the females, as there was nothing to fear from them, and, moreover, they could, on growing up, serve as maid-servants. So, even this leniency was motivated by self-interest. What the verse refers to as "a great trial" is either the slaughter of the sons - which was a calamity, and it is the quality of patience that is tested in a calamity - or the deliverance from the people of the Pharaoh - which was a blessing, and it is the quality of thankfulness which is tested when one receives a blessing.

The next verse gives us the details about this deliverance.

Verses 50 - 51

وَإِذْ فَرَقْنَا بِكُمُ الْبَحْرَ فَأَنجَيْنَٰكُمْ وَأَغْرَقْنَآ آلَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَأَنتُمْ
تَنظُرُونَ ○ وَإِذْ وَٰعَدْنَا مُوسَىٰٓ أَرْبَعِينَ لَيْلَةً ثُمَّ اتَّخَذْتُمُ
الْعِجْلَ مِنۢ بَعْدِهِۦ وَأَنتُمْ ظَٰلِمُونَ ○

And when We parted the sea for you; then We rescued you, and drowned the Pharaoh's people as you were looking on! And when We appointed forty nights for Mūsā, then you took to yourselves the calf thereafter, and you were unjust! (Verses 50-51)

Verse 50 refers to certain things which had happened in the days of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام (Moses). He, in his capacity as a messenger of Allah, continued efforts for a long time to make the Pharaoh and his

people see Truth, but when they persisted in their denial, Allah commanded him to take the Israelites along with him and leave Egypt surreptitiously. On their way, they came across a sea while the Pharaoh was behind him with his army in hot pursuit. Allah commanded the sea to split, and make way for Sayyidnā Mūsā and his people. So, they went over smoothly. But when the Pharaoh and his army followed them into the sea, it gathered the water back so that the Pharaoh and his men were drowned then and there.

Verse 51 refers to other incidents in the same story. When the Pharaoh had been drowned, the Israelites, according to one report, went back to Egypt, or, according to another, began to live somewhere else. Having at last found a peaceful existence, they now wished they could receive a *Sharī'ah*, or a religious code of laws, from Allah which they should follow. Allah answered the prayer of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام , and promised that if he came to the Mount *Tūr* (Sinai) and devoted himself to worship for a month, he would receive a Divine Book. He gladly obeyed the Commandment, and was granted the Torah. But he was ordered to continue to worship for ten days more, because he had broken his fast after a month and thus lost the special odour which rises from the mouth of a fasting person and which is very pleasant to Allah; so Allah commanded him to fast for ten additional days and regain that odour. Thus, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام completed forty days of total fasting and devotion. While he was on Mt. Sinai, something very odious happened to the Israelites. Among them there was a man called Samiriyy. He fashioned the figure of a calf out of gold or silver, and put into it some of the dust which he had picked up from under the hooves of the horse of Jibrā'il (the Archangel Gabriel عليه السلام), at the time when the Pharaoh and his army had been drowned by the Archangel. The golden calf immediately acquired life. The ignorant among the Israelites were so impressed that they started worshipping it.

Verse 51 calls them "unjust" for having committed this sin, for 'injustice' lies in putting things in the improper places, and idolatory is essentially just that.

A doctrinal point

Verse 50 speaks of the splitting of the sea, and clearly proves that

miracles do occur at the hands of prophets, which some Westernized Muslims have been trying to deny. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Verse 52

ثُمَّ عَفَوْنَا عَنْكُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ ذٰلِكَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُوْنَ ۝

Then We pardoned you, even after that, so that you be grateful. (Verse 52)

The Israelites were forgiven only when they had offered *Taubah* (repentance), as recounted in Verse 54. In saying that they were pardoned so that they might learn gratefulness, the present verse employs the Arabic word لعل : *La'lla* which indicates expectation. In the present context it does not mean that Allah had or could have any doubt or misgiving about this or any other matter; what the word implies here is just that when a man receives a pardon, the onlookers may expect him to feel grateful.

Verse 53

وَاِذْ اٰتَيْنَا مُوْسَى الْكِتٰبَ وَالْفُرْقَانَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُوْنَ ۝

Then We gave Musa the Book and the Criterion (of right and wrong) so that you find the right path. (Verse 53)

Torah is the book which was given to Sayyidna Musa عليه السلام .

In the language of the Holy Qur'ān, *al-Furqān* is a term signifying something which separates truth from falsehood or distinguishes the one from the other. In the present verse, it refers either to (a) the injunctions of the *Sharī'ah* which are to be found in the Torah, for the *Sharī'ah* resolves all the differences that may arise with regard to the doctrines or the practice of good deeds; or to (b) miracles which decide between a true or a false claim in a palpable manner; or even to (c) the Torah itself which has the twin qualities of being a Book of Allah and of being an instrument for separating truth from falsehood.

Verse 54

وَاِذْ قَالَ مُوْسٰى لِقَوْمِهٖ يٰقَوْمِ اِنَّكُمْ ظَلَمْتُمْ اَنْفُسَكُمْ بِاتِّخَاذِكُمُ
الْعِجْلَ فَتُوْبُوْٓا اِلٰى بَارِئِكُمْ فَاقْتُلُوْٓا اَنْفُسَكُمْ ذٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ

عِنْدَ بَارِئِكُمْ فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِنَّهُ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ ○

And when Musa said to his people: "My people, you have wronged yourselves by your taking the calf (as God). So, turn in repentance to your Creator and slay yourselves. That will be better for you in the sight of your Creator" Then, He accepted your repentance Indeed He is the Most-Relenting, the Very-Merciful. (Verse 54)

This verse describes the special mode of offering their *Taubah* (repentance) which was prescribed for the Israelites in this situation, -- that is to say, those who had not indulged in the worship of the golden calf should execute those who had. Similarly, in the Islamic *Sharī'ah* too, certain major sins necessarily entail capital punishment even when the sinner has offered this *Taubah* -- for example, life in return for a life in the case of intentional homicide, or death by stoning in the case of adultery established through proper evidence.

Then the Israelites acted upon this divine commandments, they became worthy of receiving the mercy and favour of Allah in the other world.

Verse 55

وَإِذْ قُلْتُمْ يٰمُوسٰى لَنْ نُّؤْمِنَ لَكَ حَتّٰى نَرَى اللّٰهَ جَهْرَةً فَاَخَذَتْكُمُ الصّٰعِقَةُ وَاَنْتُمْ تَنْظُرُوْنَ ○

And when you said, "Musa, we will never believe you till we see Allah openly!" So, the thunderbolt took you while you were looking on. (Verse 55)

Then Sayyidnā Mūsā (Moses عليه السلام) brought the Torah from Mount *Tūr* (Sinai) and presented it to the Israelites as the book of Allah, some of them were insolent enough to say that they could not believe it until and unless Allah Himself told them in so many words. With the permission of Allah, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام replied that even this condition would be fulfilled, if they went with him to Mount *Tūr*. The Israelites chose seventy men for this purpose. Arriving there, they heard the words of Allah with their own ears. Now, in their perversity, they invented a new ruse. It was not enough, they said, to hear the speech, for they could not be sure whether it was

Allah Himself who had spoken to them or someone else. But they promised that they would be finally convinced if they could see Allah with their own eyes. Since it is beyond the power of a living being to be able to see Allah in the physical world, they had to pay for their impertinence, and were killed by a thunderbolt -- the next verse reports their death.

Verse 56

ثُمَّ بَعَثْنٰكُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ مَوْتِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُوْنَ O

Then, We raised you up after your death, so that you be grateful. (Verse 56)

This verse refers to death, which suggests that the thunderbolt had killed them. Since the Israelites had always been mistrusting Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام , he feared that they would suspect him of having taken the men to a solitary place and got them slaughtered. So, he prayed to Allah to save him from such a vile accusation. Allah granted his prayer, and gave those a new life.

Verse 57

وَظَلَّلْنَا عَلَيْكُمُ الْغَمَامَ وَاَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَنَّ وَالسَّلْوٰى كُلُوْا مِنْ طَيِّبٰتِ مَا رَزَقْنٰكُمْ وَمَا ظَلَمُوْنَا وَلٰكِنْ كَانُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُوْنَ O

And We made the cloud give you shade, and sent down to you *Mann* and *Salwā*: 'Eat of the good things We have provided you'. And they (by their ingratitude) did Us no harm, but were harming only themselves. (Verse 57)

These two incidents took place in the wilderness of *Tīh*. The Israelites belonged to Syria, but had gone to Egypt in the time of Sayyidnā Yūsuf (Joseph عليه السلام), and settled there, while Syria itself had come under the domination of a people called the *'Amāliqah* (Amaleks). When the Pharaoh had been drowned and the Israelites could live in peace, Allah commanded them to go to war against the *'Amāliqah*, and to free their homeland. The Israelites started on the expedition, but, on approaching Syria, when they came to learn about the military strength of the foe, their courage failed them, and they

refused to engage themselves in the *Jihād*. Allah punished them for their disobedience, so that for full forty years they kept wandering about in a wilderness, and could not even go back to Egypt. The wilderness was not very vast, but only a stretch of some ten miles, lying between Egypt and Syria. They would make a day-long march in the direction of Egypt, and stop somewhere for the night. But, on getting up the next morning, they would always find themselves just where they had started from. Thus, they spent forty years wandering about in the wilderness in futile rage and exasperation. That is why the wilderness is called *Tīh*, which signifies 'having lost one's way'.

The wilderness was just a barren space without a tree or a building which could offer protection against heat or cold. There was no food to eat, and no clothes to wear. But in answer to the prayer of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام , Allah made a miraculous provision for all their needs. When they could not bear the scorching sun, Allah sent them the shade of a thin, white cloud. When they began to starve, Allah blessed them with *Mann* (manna) and *Salwā*. That is to say, Allah produced honeydew in abundance which they could easily gather. Hence it has been designated as *mann* which signifies "a gift or favour". Then, quails would not flee but come around them, so that they could catch the birds with little effort. The two things being unusual, the Holy Qur'ān says that Allah made them "descend" for the benefit of the Israelites. Similarly, when they were thirsty, Allah commanded Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام to strike a rock with his staff, which made twelve streams gush forth, as the Holy Qur'ān narrates in another place. When they complained of the thick darkness of the night, Allah produced for them a constant pillar of light. When their clothes began to wear out, Allah showed another miracle - their clothes would neither go dirty nor wear out, while the clothes of the children grew with their growth. (Qurṭubī)

Allah had commanded the Israelites to take as much of the miraculous food as they really needed, and not to store it for future use. But when they disobeyed this commandment, the meat began to rot. This is how they harmed, not Allah, but themselves.

Verse 58

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا ادْخُلُوا هٰذِهِ الْقَرْيَةَ فَكُلُوا مِنْهَا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمْ رَغَدًا وَّادْخُلُوا الْبَابَ سُجَّدًا وَّقُولُوا حِطَّةٌ نَّغْفِرْلَكُمْ خَطٰيٰكُمْ وَسَنَزِيدُ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ۝

And when We said, "Enter this town, and eat there to your heart's content wherever you will. And enter the gate prostrating and say: *Ḥiṭṭah* (we seek forgiveness) - so that We forgive your errors. And We shall give much more to those who are good in deeds." (Verse 58)

There are two views as to when this incident took place. According to Shāh 'Abd al-Qādir, when the Israelites grew weary of eating the same *Mann* and *Salwā* everyday and prayed for being granted the kind of food they were used to (2:61), they were commanded to go to a certain city where they could get what they wished for. So, the commandment in the present verse pertains to the mode of entering this city, and lays down the spiritual etiquette for action and speech on this occasion. On the other hand is the view that the commandment pertains to the city against which the Israelites had been ordered to engage themselves in a *Jihād*. They obeyed it only after their long wanderings in the wilderness, and conquered the city. The commandment reported in Verse 58 was sent to them through Sayyidnā Yūsha' (Joshua عليه السلام) who was the prophet among them at the time.

The discrepancy between the two views, which raises a question about the chronological sequence of the events, should not confuse us as to the nature of the stories narrated in the Holy Qur'ān. The Holy Qur'ān does not tell the stories for the sake of telling stories, the usual purpose of which is to provide entertainment. The real intention here is to draw certain conclusions from the stories, and to illustrate or point out certain spiritual principles. Now, the various episodes of a story help to bring out various principles. So, in view of a particular effect sought in a particular context, the chronological sequence of the episodes may be invented and the incidents re-arranged to serve the interest of the pattern of meaning that is intended. This is just what the Holy Qur'ān does; in fact, this is a quite usual literary method, and

the disturbance of the chronological order in the stories narrated by the Holy Qur'ān should not raise irrelevant questions in the mind of the reader - after all, in any and every piece of writing, or even speech, it is the intention which governs the ordering of the material.

The Verse holds out the promise that if the Israelites obeyed the commandment, their errors would be forgiven. On the basis of the first of the two views we have referred to, one must include among the errors their rejection of the *Mann* and the *Salwā* and their request for the normal kind of food. The demand was really insolent, but Allah promised that if they showed their obedience by following the new commandment, He would forgive this error too. Anyhow, the promise of pardon was general, and extended to everyone who was ready to obey the new commandment, while a special reward was promised to those who devoted themselves to good deeds sincerely and wholeheartedly.

The meaning of *Ihsan*

"We may add that 'sincerity' and 'wholeheartedness' are a very weak rendering in English of the essential quality of the text's *Muhsinūn* (rendered here as "those who are good in deeds"). This word comes from *Iḥsan* which signifies "doing a thing beautifully - that is, in the manner that is proper to it." Beside this lexical meaning, *Ihsan* has a technical meaning which has been defined in a famous *Ḥadīth*: أن تعبد الله كأنك تراه، فإن لم تكن تراه فإنه يراك : "Offer your prayers as if you can see Him, and if you do not see Him, He is seeing you (in any case)." (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Verse 59

فَبَدَّلَ الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا قَوْلاً غَيْرَالَّذِىْ قِيْلَ لَهُمْ فَاَنْزَلْنَا عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا رِجْزًا مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَفْسُقُوْنَ ۝

But those who were unjust substituted another word for the one that was set for them. So, We sent down upon those who were unjust a scourge from heaven, because they have been acting sinfully. (Verse 59)

This verse is a continuation of the preceding verse. Allah had

commanded the Israelites to keep, while entering the city, repeating the word *Ḥiṭṭatun* (which indicates repentance for one's sin and the request for pardon). But they replaced this word with another phrase by way of mockery, and started saying, *Ḥabbatun fī sha'īraḥ* (grain in the midst of barley), or *Ḥinṭatun* (wheat).

The punishment which descended on them was plague that wiped out seventy thousand men (Qurṭubī). In passing, we may recall a *hadith* which says that plague is a punishment for the disobedient, and a blessing for the obedient.

Injunctions and related considerations

The Israelites were punished for having changed a word ordained by Allah, and substituted a phrase of their own invention, thus distorting the meaning itself. According to the consensus of the *Fuqahā'* (Muslim jurists), a change in the words of the Holy Qur'ān, or of a *Ḥadīth*, or of a divine commandment which invents or distorts the actual meaning is impermissible.

This should be obvious enough. But there is another question -- is it permissible to change the words in such a way that the meaning does not suffer but remains intact? In his commentary, Imam al-Qurṭubī says that in certain texts and in certain kinds of speech the words are as much a part of the intention as the meanings and equally necessary for conveying an idea, and that in such a case it is not permissible to change the words. For example, in the *Adhān* (the call for prayers) it is not permissible to employ words other than those which have been laid down for the purpose by the *ḥadīth*. Similar is the case of the *Salāh*: the different things to be recited in them (like *Subḥanaka Allāhumma, At-Taḥiyyāt, Qunūt*) or the glorification of Allah during the *Rukū'* (bowing down) and the *Sajdah* (prostration) -- all these must be said exactly in the words which have been reported in the *ḥadīth*; substituting other words is not allowed, even if the meaning does not undergo a change.

This rule applies to each and every word of the Holy Qur'ān. All the Injunctions with regard to the recitation of the Holy Qur'ān strictly pertain to those words alone which Allah has revealed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ . According to the *ḥadīth*, the merit of reciting the

Holy Qur'ān is so great that for every letter that one reads or recites one gets the reward which one would get for performing ten good deeds. But if one reads a very accurate translation of the Holy Qur'ān or even an Arabic version in which the original words have been replaced by certain other words without injuring the sense, the *Sharī'ah* shall not accept it as a recitation of the Holy Qur'ān, and one will not get any reward of recitation for it. For, it is not the meanings alone which constitute the Holy Qur'ān; "Qur'ān" is the name of meanings inherent in the words revealed by Allah to the Holy Prophet ﷺ so that the two are inseparable from each other.

It appears from the present verse that Allah had commanded the Israelites to say this particular word, *Ḥiṭṭatun*, while offering their *Taubah* (repentance), and hence changing the ordained word was in itself a sin. They went so far as to distort even the meaning, and drew upon themselves the divine punishment.

Now, as for other kinds of speech in which it is the meanings that are really intended and not the words, the masters of the science of *Ḥadīth* and the jurists in general believe that in such places words can be changed provided that the meaning does not suffer but remains intact. Al-Qurṭubī has cited Imām Abū Hanīfah, Imām Mālik and Imām Shafi'ī; as holding the view that it is quite permissible to report a *ḥadīth* with regard to its meaning alone provided that the man who reports it should have a perfect knowledge of the Arabic language and also be familiar with the situation to which this particular *ḥadīth* pertains, so that he should not misinterpret the text or distort the sense.

On the other hand, certain masters of the science of *Ḥadīth* do not allow the slightest change in the words of a *ḥadīth*, and insist that it should be reported exactly in the words in which one has received it. This, for example, is the view of Muḥammad ibn Sīrīn, Qāsim ibn Muḥammad etc. Some of them even insist that if in reporting a *ḥadīth* a reporter has made a lexical mistake, the man who has heard the *ḥadīth* from him must, in his own turn, report it in exactly the same words including the mistake, only indicating what the correct word is likely to be. Such scholars cite a *ḥadīth* in support of their view. It has been reported that the Holy Prophet ﷺ advised a man to say this

prayer before going to sleep at night: اٰمَنْتُ بِكِتَابِكَ الَّذِیْٓ اَنْزَلْتَ وَنَبِيِّكَ الَّذِیْٓ اَرْسَلْتَ : "I have faith in Your Book which You have made to descend, and in Your Prophet whom You have sent." The prescribed prayer had the word *Nabiyy* (Prophet), but the man changed it for *Rasūl* (Messenger). The Holy Prophet ﷺ instructed him not to make a change, but to say the prescribed word *Nabiyy*. This shows that it is not permissible to change a single word in reporting a *ḥadīth*. Similarly, another *ḥadīth* says: نَضَّرَاللّٰهُ اِمْرَأً سَمِعَ مَقَالَتِیْ فَبَلَّغَهَا كَمَا سَمِعَهَا : "May Allah make the man flourish who heard my speech, and then conveyed it exactly as he had heard." This also indicates that it is necessary to report the exact words of a *ḥadīth* as one has received them.

Most of the jurists and the masters of the science of *Ḥadīth*, however, believe that although it is better to report a *ḥadīth* as far as possible in exactly the same words as one has heard without making any change intentionally, yet if one cannot recall the exact words, it is also permissible to report the meaning in one's own words, and that the words of the *ḥadīth* quoted above - "... conveyed it exactly as he had heard" - might also mean that one should report the meaning of a *ḥadīth* exactly and without any alteration. Obviously, changing the words does not necessarily go against this provision. Imām al-Qurṭubī has, in support of his view, pointed out that this very *ḥadīth* goes to prove that changing words, when necessary, is permissible, for this *ḥadīth* itself has come down to us in different words in different versions. As for the other *ḥadīth* in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ has insisted that the word *Nabiyy* should be recited and not the word *Rasūl*, one might explain it in this way. The word *Nabiyy* (prophet) carries the sense of sublimity much more than does the word *Rasūl*, for the latter is employed for any messenger whatsoever, while the former is reserved only for those who are specially chosen by Allah for being directly addressed through revelation (*Waḥy*), and who thus occupy a rank higher than all other men. There is another explanation too. As far as prayers are concerned, the words appointed for the purpose by Allah or by the Holy Prophet ﷺ have a much greater efficacy than any other words can have. (Qurṭubī) That is why those who prepare تعويذ : *ta'widh* (translated as 'charms' in absence of an exact counterpart) or *'awdhah*, or suggest words to pray are very careful in

keeping to the authentically reported words without the slightest change. So, one may say that the prayers which are considered to be very efficacious, should be included in the first category of speech in which not only the meanings but the words also must be carefully safeguarded, for both are equally intended.

Verse 60

وَاِذِ اسْتَسْقٰى مُوْسٰى لِقَوْمِهٖ فَقُلْنَا اضْرِبْ بِّعَصَاكَ الْحَجَرَ ؕ فَانْفَجَرَتْ مِنْهُ اثْنَتَا عَشْرَةَ عَيْنًا ؕ قَدْ عَلِمَ كُلُّ اُنَاسٍ مَّشْرَبَهُمْ ؕ كُلُوْا وَاشْرَبُوْا مِنْ رِّزْقِ اللّٰهِ وَلَا تَعْثَوْا فِى الْاَرْضِ مُفْسِدِيْنَ ۝

And when Musa sought water for his people! We said, "Strike the rock with your staff." So, gushed forth twelve springs from it. Each group of people came to know their drinking place. "Eat and drink of what Allah has provided, and do not go about the earth spreading disorder." (Verse 60)

This incident too belongs to the story of the wanderings of the Israelites in the wilderness. Parched with thirst, they requested Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام to pray to Allah for water. Allah commanded him to strike a certain rock with his staff. As he did so, twelve streams gushed forth out of the rock, one for each of the twelve tribes. Sayyidnā Ya'qūb (Jacob) عليه السلام had twelve sons, and each had a large family of his own. So, the families were considered as tribes, each with its own administrative organisation and its own head. Hence, the number twelve. What they have been asked to eat is the *Mann* and the *Salwā* (manna and quails), and the water is, of course, the one which had come out of the rock.

The Israelites have, in this verse, been asked not to spread disorder which in this context signifies disobedience to Allah and transgression of His Commandments.

The great Commentator al-Qaḍī al-Bayḍāwi points out that it is a great error [22] to deny miracles. When Allah has given a certain stone the unusual property of drawing iron to itself, it cannot be, logically

22. Even a great error in logic.

and rationally speaking, impossible that He should also give another stone the property of absorbing water from the earth and of releasing it again. Even this explanation is meant for those who take a superficial view of things. Otherwise, it is in no way impossible that Allah should produce water within a stone itself. Those who call it impossible do not actually understand the technical meaning of the term "impossible."

An answer to a doubt about the Israelites

It has been asked whether it is necessary, in times of drought, to offer formal prayers in order to beseech Allah for rains. The present verse tells us that Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام just prayed for water, and Allah made a miraculous provision. It shows that the essential thing in beseeching Allah for rains is just a prayer. In the *Shari'ah* of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, a mere prayer was considered to be sufficient for the purpose. According to Imām Abū Hanīfah, this principle holds good for the Islamic *Sharī'ah* too. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has, in this respect, acted differently on different occasions. An authentic *ḥadith* reports that once he went outside the city to the open space where the congregational prayers were held on the day of the *'Īd*, offered formal prayers, delivered a *Khuṭbah* (address), and then prayed to Allah for rains. According to another *ḥadīth* reported by Al-Bukhārī and Muslim from the blessed Companion Anas, once the Holy Prophet ﷺ prayed for rains while delivering the *Khuṭbah* on Friday, and Allah sent down rains.

No matter what form the prayer takes, all the scholars agree that it cannot be effective unless it is accompanied by a repentance for one's sins, a confession of one's powerlessness, a sincere expression of humility and an affirmation of servitude to Allah. So long as one persists in sin and transgression, one has no right to hope that the prayer would be answered. But if Allah may, in His mercy and benevolence, grant the prayer without this condition being fulfilled, it is His will, and He is All-Powerful.

Verse 61

وَاِذْ قُلْتُمْ يٰمُوْسٰى لَنْ نَّصْبِرَ عَلٰى طَعَامٍ وَّاحِدٍ فَادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ

يُخْرِجْ لَنَا مِمَّا تُنْۢبِتُ الْاَرْضُ مِنْۢ بَقْلِهَا وَقِثَّآئِهَا وَفُوْمِهَا
وَعَدَسِهَا وَبَصَلِهَا ؕ قَالَ اَتَسْتَبْدِلُوْنَ الَّذِیْ هُوَ اَدْنٰی بِالَّذِیْ
هُوَ خَیْرٌ ؕ اِهْبِطُوْا مِصْرًا فَاِنَّ لَکُمْ مَّا سَاَلْتُمْ ؕ وَضُرِبَتْ عَلَیْهِمُ
الذِّلَّةُ وَالْمَسْکَنَةُ ۗ وَبَآءُوْ بِغَضَبٍ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ ؕ ذٰلِکَ بِاَنَّهُمْ کَانُوْا
یَکْفُرُوْنَ بِاٰیٰتِ اللّٰهِ وَیَقْتُلُوْنَ النَّبِیّٖنَ بِغَیْرِ الْحَقِّ ؕ ذٰلِکَ بِمَا عَصَوْا
وَّکَانُوْا یَعْتَدُوْنَ O

And when you said, "Mūsā we will no longer stay on a single food: So, pray for us to your Lord that He may bring forth for us of what the earth produces -- its wheat, its lentils and its onions." He said, "Do you want to take the inferior in exchange of what is better? Go down to a town, and you will have what you have asked for." And disgrace and misery were stamped over them and they returned with wrath from Allah. That was because they used to deny the signs of Allah, and would slay the prophets unjustly. That was because they disobeyed and would go beyond the limits. (Verse 61)

This episode has been indirectly referred to in verse 58, and it also occurred in the wilderness of *Tīh*. The Israelites grew weary of eating the *Mann* and the *Salwā* (manna and quails) everyday, and wished to have ordinary vegetables and grain. Allah commanded them through Sayyidnā Mūsā علیه السلام to go to a certain town which lay somewhere in the wilderness, to till the land there, to grow to eat whatever they liked.

The Israelites were thus being ungrateful and impertinent. Even otherwise, it was so usual with them not only to transgress divine commandments but also to deny them outright. They had also been slaying a number of prophets at different times - they knew they were committing a misdeed, but their hostility to the truth and their stubbornness in disobedience made them blind to the nature of their conduct and its consequences. Through such persistent and wilful misdemeanour they drew upon themselves the wrath of Allah. Disgrace and degradation settled upon them for ever. That is to say,

they no longer had any respect in the eyes of others, nor magnanimity in themselves.

One form of this disgrace is that temporal power has been taken away from them for ever. For only forty days, however, - and that too when the Day of Judgment will have come close - the *Dajjāl* (Anti-Christ) belonging to the Jewish race, will have an irregular dominion like that of a robber. This cannot be described as having temporal power, in the proper sense of the term. Allah had made it quite clear to the Jews through Sayyidnā Mūsā (Moses عليه السلام) that if they continued to be disobedient, they would always have to live under the domination of other nations. Says the Holy Qur'ān: وَإِذْ تَأَذَّنَ رَبُّكَ لَيَبْعَثَنَّ عَلَيْهِمْ إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ مَن يَسُومُهُمْ سُوءَ الْعَذَابِ : "And when your Lord proclaimed He would send forth against them, unto the Day of Resurrection, those who should visit them with evil chastisement." (7:167)

As to how the Companions, their successors and the great commentators have interpreted the disgrace and degradation which has settled on the Jews, let us present a summary in the words of Ibn Kathīr: لايزالون مستذلين من وجدهم استذلهم وضرب عليهم الصغار : "No matter how wealthy they grow, they will always be despised by other people; whoever gets hold of them will humiliate them, and attach to them the emblems of servitude." The commentator Dahhāk Ibn Muzāhim reports from the blessed Companion 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās that the Jews will always remain under the domination of others, will be paying taxes and tributes to them - that is to say, they will themselves never have power and authority in the real sense of the term.

Another verse of the Holy Qur'ān also speaks of the disgrace of the Jews, but with some addition:

ضُرِبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الذِّلَّةُ أَيْنَمَا ثُقِفُوٓا إِلَّا بِحَبْلٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَحَبْلٍ مِّنَ النَّاسِ

And disgrace has been stamped over them wherever they are found, unless (saved) through a rope from Allah and through a rope from men." (3:112)

Now, the 'rope' or means from Allah refers to the case of those whom Allah Himself has, through His own commandment, saved from this disgrace - for example, children, women, or those who are totally devoted to prayer and worship and never go to war against Muslims.

The 'rope' or means from men refers to a treaty of peace with the Muslims, or a permission to live in a Muslim country on payment of the *Jizyah* (the tax levied on non-Muslims living in a Muslim country, which exonerates them from military service etc.) Since the Holy Qur'ān uses the expression "from men" and not "from Muslims", a third situation is also possible - the Jews may make political arrangements with other non-Muslims, live under their backing and protection, and thus be in 'peace'.

There is another aspect to the question - we must look into the nature of the exception that has been made in the verse which we have just cited. Now, when an exception is added to a statement, the exception may fall into either of these two categories: (1) What has been excepted formed, or still forms, a part of what it has been excepted from. For example, take this statement: "The tribe came except Zayd." Zayd was and still is a member of the tribe, but he has been excepted from it in so far as the act of coming is concerned. (2) What has been excepted did not form, or no longer forms, a part of what it has been excepted from. For example: "The tribe came except the donkey." The donkey, of course, never formed a part of the tribe, and he has been excepted from the act of coming in so far as the act pertains to the tribe. If the exception made in the present verse is of the first kind, then the statement would mean that all the Jews always and everywhere live in disgrace with the exception of two situations - protection provided to women and children etc. by the commandment of Allah Himself, or by a treaty of peace with the Muslims or with some non-Muslim nations. On the other hand, if the exception is of the second kind, the verse would mean that the Jews as a group would essentially and always remain in disgrace with the exception of some who may find protection under the commandment of Allah, or of some others who may receive support from other nations and thus disguise their own disgrace.

Thus, Verse 3:112 helps to elucidate Verse 2:61, and also dispels the doubt which sometimes arises in the minds of the Muslims at the sight of the so-called "Israeli state" imposed on Palestine. For, they find it difficult to reconcile the two things - the Holy Qur'ān seems to indicate that the Jews will never have a sovereign state, while they

have actually usurped Palestine and set up a state of their own. But if we go beyond the appearances, we can easily see that "Israel" is not an independent sovereign state, but only a stronghold of the Western powers which they have established in the midst of Muslim countries in order to protect their own interests; without the backing of these super-powers the Jewish "state" cannot survive for a month, and the Western powers themselves look upon the Israelis as their henchmen. The "Israeli state" has been living, as the Holy Qur'ān says, "through a rope from men," and, even at that, living as a parasite on the Western powers. So, there is no real occasion to have a misgiving about what the Holy Qur'ān has said on the subject.

Moreover, the half of Palestine which the Jews have usurped and the parasite state they have set up there is no more than a spot on the map of the world. As against this, we have vast expanses of the globe covered by Christian states, by Muslim states, and even by the states of people who do not believe in Allah at all. Can this tiny blot on the map and that too under the American-British umbrella, negate the disgrace which Allah has made to settle upon the Jews?

Verse 62

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالنَّصَارَىٰ وَالصَّابِئِينَ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ○

Surely, those who believed in Allah, and those who became Jewish, and Christians, and the Sabeans -- whosoever believes in Allah and in the Last Day, and does good deeds -- for them, with their Lord, is their reward, and there is no fear for them, nor shall they grieve. (Verse 62)

The previous verse spoke of how the Israelites drew upon themselves the wrath of Allah through their habitual insolence and disobedience. Now, this account may lead the listeners, or the Jews themselves, to suppose that, in view of such transgression, their *Taubah* (repentance), if they agree to offer it, would not be acceptable to Allah. In order to dispel such a misgiving, the present verse lays

down a general principle: no matter how a man has been behaving earlier, so long as he submits himself fully to the commandments of Allah in his beliefs and in his deeds both, he is acceptable to Allah, and will get his reward. It is obvious enough that after the revelation of the Holy Qur'ān, which is the last message of Allah, perfect obedience to Allah can only mean accepting Islam and following the Last Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ.[23] The verse, in effect, assures everyone that once a man has accepted Islām, all his former transgressions, whether in the matter of beliefs or in that of deeds, will be forgiven, and he will become worthy of receiving the rewards of the other world.

Let us note, in passing, that nothing is definitely known as to the beliefs and the practices of the Sabeans, and different opinions have been expressed on the subject. (Most probably they used to worship the stars).

One might also ask why the verse mentions the Muslims, for if it is an invitation to Islam, there is no need to extend the invitation to those who have already accepted Islam. But if we keep in mind the richly concentrated style of the Holy Qur'ān, and try to look beyond the literal sense of the words into the implications and suggestions contained in the verse, we would find that the inclusion of the Muslim factor has added a new dimension to the meaning. It is as if a king should, in a similar situation, say that his laws are impartially applicable to all his subjects, and that whosoever obeys them shall receive his reward for obedience irrespective of whether he has earlier been a friend or a foe. Obviously, the friend has always been loyal and obedient, and the warning and the promise have really been addressed

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23. Contrary to the flaccid fancies of some "modernizers" who are very happy with themselves over their "liberalism" and "tolerance", the present verse does not open the way to salvation for each and every "man of good will" irrespective of the creed he follows. If one reads the verse in its proper context and along with other relevant verses of the Holy Qur'ān, one will easily see that the verse, in fact, promises salvation in the other world only to those who accept Islām. It is an invitation to Islām extended to the Jews, the Christians, the Sabeans and, as a matter of fact, to the followers of all possible religions, and even to non-believers -- specific names only serve as examples.

to the foe. But the suggestion contained in such a formulation is that the favours of the king do not proceed from any personal attachment to the friends, but depend on the quality of obedience and loyalty, and hence the foes too will become worthy of his favours if they acquire the necessary quality. This is the *raison d'etre* of mentioning the Muslims along with the non-Muslims in this verse, which should never be taken to imply that salvation can be attained without accepting Islām.

We had better dispel another misunderstanding which is likely to arise from the wordings of the present verse -- and, which is actually being promoted by certain 'modernizers'. The verse mentions only two articles of faith of the Islamic creed -- faith in Allah and faith in the Day of Judgment. This should not be taken to mean that in order to attain salvation it is enough to have faith only in Allah and in the Day of Judgment. For, the Holy Qur'ān repeatedly declares that he who does not believe in the prophets, in angels and in the Books of Allah is not a Muslim. Faith in Allah is the first article in the Islamic creed, while faith in the Day of Judgment is the last. By mentioning only these two, the verse intends to say in a succinct manner that it is necessary to have faith in all the articles of the creed, from the first to the last. Moreover, it is through the prophets and the Books of Allah alone that man can acquire any knowledge of the essence and the attributes of Allah and of what is to happen on the Day of Judgment, while the Books of Allah are revealed to the prophets through an angel. So, it is not possible to have faith in Allah and the Day of Judgment until and unless one has faith in the angels, in the Books of Allah and in the prophets.

Verse 63

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَكُمْ وَرَفَعْنَا فَوْقَكُمُ الطُّورَ خُذُوا مَا آتَيْنَاكُمْ بِقُوَّةٍ
وَاذْكُرُوا مَا فِيهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ۝

And when We took pledge from you, and raised high above you the (Mount of) *Tūr*: "Hold fast to what We have given to you, and remember what is there in it, so that you may become God-fearing." (Verse 63)

Having received the Torah from Allah, Sayyidnā Mūsā (Moses عليه السلام) returned from Mount *Tūr* (Sinai) and recited it to the

Israelites. The injunctions contained in the Book were rather rigorous, but their conduct and habits of mind really called for such strict discipline. To begin with, they replied that they would not obey the injunctions until and unless Allah Himself told them that it was His book. Seventy men, as we have related above, were selected to go to Mount *Tūr* and to hear Allah attest the authenticity of the Torah. On their return, they bore witness to the Torah being a Book of Allah, but added something on their own to what Allah had actually said. For, they told the Israelites that Allah had allowed them to act upon the injunctions only as much as they could, and had promised to forgive them for what they could not accomplish. They had always and instinctively been prone to rebellion against Allah, then, the injunctions were, no doubt, stern, and now they got a new pretext for being negligent. So, the Israelites flatly refused to obey the injunctions, insisting that it was beyond their endurance to act upon such harsh regulations. In reply to this insolence, Allah commanded the angels to raise Mount *Tūr* and let it hang in the air above their heads as a threat that if they did not fulfil their covenant with Allah, it would fall on them and crush them. The Israelites, then, had no choice but to submit.

A doubt is quite likely to arise here. The Holy Qur'ān says in another place that force should not be used to make a man change his religion, while in the present instance it appears that force is being used. But, in fact, force is not being used to make the Israelites change their religion, for they had already accepted Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام as a prophet of Allah, and willingly made a covenant with Allah that they would act upon the Book of Allah, if one was given to them. So, they now stand as rebels, and are being threatened with dire punishment for persisting in their rebellion. This is exactly how even a secular state deals with rebels, and how it adopts towards them an attitude quite different from that towards aliens or enemies, for it leaves only two ways open to the rebel -- either to submit himself, or to lose his life. That is why it is only an apostate (*Murtadd*) who is, according to the Islamic *Sharī'ah*, condemned to capital punishment, and not an outright disbeliever. Moreover, the Israelites were being threatened with death as criminals and offenders against the law which they acknowledged to be the divine law, but which they refused to obey.

Verse 64

ثُمَّ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ ذٰلِكَ فَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهٗ
لَكُنْتُمْ مِّنَ الْخٰسِرِيْنَ ۝

Then even after that, you did turn away. So, had it not been for the grace of Allah upon you, and His mercy, you surely would have been among the losers.

(Verse 64)

The Israelites went against the Covenant they had made with Allah. The sin was so grave that one could have expected utter destruction and ruin to descend on them as a punishment. But Allah, in His mercy, spared them in so far as physical life is concerned, although they will have to pay for their treason in the other world. Allah's mercy is of two kinds. One is general and extends to believers and disbelievers alike -- its action is to be seen in the shape of worldly well-being and prosperity. The other is special, an pertains to believers alone -- it will manifest itself particularly in the other world in the shape of salvation and closeness to Allah.

It appears that the last phrase of the present verse has been addressed to the Jews who were the contemporaries of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . Since having faith in him is also a part of the Covenant, these Jews too have been included among those who had been guilty of infringement. In this verse, Allah asks them to realize that it is in His mercy alone that he has not, in spite of their treason, sent down on them the kind of catastrophic punishment in this world as used to descend on the other infidels and traitors who have gone before.

Since a number of authentic *aḥādīth* declare that it is the *barakah* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that catastrophic punishments no longer descend on any people, some commentators have identified this particular mercy and grace of Allah with the sending down of Muḥammad ﷺ as a Prophet and Messenger of Allah.

In order to emphasize what the present verse has said, the next verse tells the story of another group of earlier transgressors and of the dreadful punishment which overtook them all of a sudden.

Verses 65 - 66

وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمُ الَّذِينَ اعْتَدَوْا مِنْكُمْ فِي السَّبْتِ فَقُلْنَا لَهُمْ
كُونُوا قِرَدَةً خٰسِئِينَ ۝ فَجَعَلْنٰهَا نَكَالًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهَا وَمَا
خَلْفَهَا وَمَوْعِظَةً لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ ۝

And certainly you have known those among you who transgressed in (the matter of) the Sabbath. So, We said to them, "Become apes, living in disgrace." Thus, We made it a deterrent for those around and after them -- and a lesson for the God-fearing. (Verses 65 - 66)

This episode belongs to the time of Sayyidnā Dāwūd (David عليه السلام Allah had appointed Saturday as the Sabbath, or the sacred day, for the Israelites; it was specially set apart for prayers and worship, and hence fishing was prohibited on this day. But these people lived on the sea-shore, and were very fond of fish. Al-Qurṭubī says that the Israelites, at first, invented all sorts of clever pretences for catching fish on Saturday, and gradually started doing so openly. There now grew a division amongst them on this point. On the one hand were these transgressors, and, on the other, some scholars and pious men who tried to dissuade them from such disobedience. When the former paid no heed to them, the latter broke away altogether from the sinners, and began to live in a separate part of the town. One day they felt no sound was coming from the other part of the town. Growing curious, they went there and found that all the transgressors had been changed into apes. Qatādah says that the young ones had become apes, and the old ones swine. The apes could recognize their relatives and friends, and would approach them weeping out of remorse, and seeking their sympathy and help. Then all of them died after three days.

As to the question whether the apes and the swine we see today bear any kinship to these Israelites who had been metamorphosed, the correct position is that people who have been metamorphosed into beasts by Allah as a punishment cease to breed, and leave no progeny behind. According to a *ḥadīth* reported by Imām Muslim from the blessed Companion 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضى الله عنه, some people asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ whether the apes and the swine were the descen-

dants of the metamorphosed Jews. The Holy Prophet ﷺ reminded them that apes and swine existed in the world even before, and said that when Allah sends down this particular kind of punishment on a people, the race comes to an end with this, and there is no further breeding. [24]

Let us now go back to the verse under discussion. The people who witnessed the event, or heard of it, were of two kinds - the disobedient and the obedient. For the disobedient, it served as a 'deterrent', an example and a warning, which persuaded them to repent of their disobedience. For the obedient, it was a lesson and a reminder that they should be steadfast in their obedience. It serves these two purposes even now.

Injunctions and related considerations

We have been saying that the Jews who were changed into apes had used certain ruses or pretences to justify their sin in their own eyes. This brings us to a rather delicate question of *Fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence). Certain 'modernists' have quite shamelessly been busy maligning the master-jurists of Islam by suggesting that these mas-

24. Some 'modernizing' Muslims have tried to explain away this metamorphosis by suggesting that these disobedient Jews did not actually and physically turn into beasts, but that the change was only psychological in so far as they acquired the evil characteristics of apes and swine. To say such a thing is to deny an explicit statement of the Holy Qur'ān, which no Muslim can do, if he wishes to remain a Muslim. Moreover, in denying the possibility of physical change, the 'modernizers' are also denying the power of Allah, and putting limitations on it. Even as a piece of literary exegesis, the 'modernist' interpretation is flimsy. For, even before the punishment fell on them, these Jews had been displaying the moral and psychological traits of beasts: the greed of swine and the craftiness of apes. Where was, then, the change which the Holy Qur'ān declares to be a punishment for the offenders and a warning for others? Our 'modernists' are, in fact, all too ready to swallow without batting an eye-lid the most preposterous and unfounded notions, only if they come from the West. So, they have complete certitude with regard to Darwin's speculation, that the apes evolved into man, although no verifiable data has yet been gathered to support the contention; but when it comes to the statement in the Holy Qur'ān that men were changed into apes, they look askance at it, although this kind of change is rationally and logically as possible as the other.

ters have invented very intricate "stratagems" (*Ḥiyal*, plural of *Ḥīlah*) for helping the rich and powerful to infringe the laws of the *Sharīʻah* and get away with it. This is a petty calumny, and should not have been worthy of consideration except for the fact that such 'modernists' have had some success with the gullible and the ignorant by playing upon the Arabic word *Ḥīlah*. As everyone knows, the lexical meaning of a word is one thing, and its technical signification, when it is used as a term in some science, is another. In its literal sense, the word *Ḥīlah* no doubt means "a trick, a stratagem", but as a technical term in *Fiqh* it signifies a device for and a means of giving legitimacy to an action in a contingency by making certain necessary modifications in it in consonance with the *Sharīʻah*. Thus, it is not a way of by-passing the *Sharīʻah*, but of helping people to conform to it even in a situation where necessity or human weakness would compel them to go against it.

The present verse has a particular relevance to the question, and would help to clarify it a great deal. The transgression on the part of the Jews which the verse speaks of, and which drew upon them such dreadful punishment, was not a clear and explicit infringement of divine law, but the use of certain "tricks" which necessarily involved the negation of the divine commandment. For example, on Saturday they would tie one end of a cord to the tail of a fish and the other end to something on the shore, and leave the fish in the water; on Sunday, they would take it out and eat it. Such a ruse not only negates an injunction of the *Sharīʻah*, but is actually a mockery. That is why those who practised such "stratagems" were considered to be disobedient and rebellious, and subjected to dire punishment.

But this particular instance does in no way go to prove that the *Ḥiyal* are impermissible. We have explained the nature and purpose of such "devices" alone. Not only do they form an integral part of *Fiqh*, but some of them have actually been suggested by the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself . For example, bartering a kilo of good dates for two kilos of bad dates is, according to the *Sharīʻah*, a kind of usury. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has suggested a "device" (*Ḥīlah*) for avoiding the infringement of this regulation in a situation where such a transaction becomes necessary - that is, instead of bartering one commodity for

another, one may employ the exchange value of money: first sell two kilos of bad dates for two rupees, and then with the two rupees thus obtained buy a kilo of good dates. The intention in using this "device" is to conform to the *Sharī'ah*, and not to by-pass it. The negation of the *Sharī'ah* is neither intended here, nor does it actually take place. This principle holds good in the case of all the *Hīyal* which the *Fuqahā'* (jurists) have proposed in order to save people from practicing what the *Sharī'ah* has prohibited. It is a travesty of the truth to compare them to or represent them as the "tricks" employed by the Jews to negate and mock the *Sharī'ah*.

Verse 67

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسٰى لِقَوْمِهٖٓ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تَذْبَحُوا بَقَرَةً ۖ قَالُوٓا
أَتَتَّخِذُنَا هُزُوًا ۖ قَالَ أَعُوذُ بِاللّٰهِ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِنَ الْجٰهِلِينَ ○

And when Musa said to his people, "Allah commands you to slaughter a cow." They said, "Are you making us a laughing stock?" He said, "I seek refuge with Allah that I be one of the ignorant." (Verse 67)

According to *Mirqat*, a commentary on *Mishkat*, a man among the Israelites wanted to marry a girl, but her father refused. The suitor was so incensed that he killed the father, and disappeared. It is mentioned in *Ma'ālim al-tanzīl* which says on the authority of *Kalbī* that Allah had not yet sent down any injunction with regard to man-slaughter. If it was so, this shows that the incident happened before the Torah was revealed. Anyhow, the Israelites requested Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام to tell them how to trace the culprit. Under the commandment of Allah, he asked them to sacrifice a cow. As was their regular habit, they started raising all kinds of doubts and objections, of which the next verses give us the details.

Verses 68 - 71

قَالُوا ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُبَيِّنْ لَّنَا مَا هِيَ ۚ قَالَ إِنَّهٗ يَقُولُ إِنَّهَا بَقَرَةٌ لَّا
فَارِضٌ وَّلَا بِكْرٌ ۖ عَوَانٌ ۢ بَيْنَ ذٰلِكَ ۖ فَافْعَلُوا مَا تُؤْمَرُونَ ○ قَالُوا
ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُبَيِّنْ لَّنَا مَا لَوْنُهَا ۚ قَالَ إِنَّهٗ يَقُولُ إِنَّهَا بَقَرَةٌ

صَفْرَآءُ فَاقِعٌ لَّوْنُهَا تَسُرُّ النّٰظِرِيْنَ ○ قَالُوا ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُبَيِّنْ
لَّنَا مَا هِيَ اِنَّ الْبَقَرَ تَشٰبَهَ عَلَيْنَا وَاِنَّآ اِنْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ لَمُهْتَدُوْنَ ○
قَالَ اِنَّهٗ يَقُوْلُ اِنَّهَا بَقَرَةٌ لَّا ذَلُوْلٌ تُثِيْرُ الْاَرْضَ وَلَا تَسْقِى
الْحَرْثَ مُسَلَّمَةٌ لَّا شِيَةَ فِيْهَا قَالُوا الْـٰٔنَ جِئْتَ بِالْحَقِّ فَذَبَحُوْهَا
وَمَا كَادُوْا يَفْعَلُوْنَ ○

They said, "Pray for us to your Lord that He makes it clear to us what sort she be." He said, "He says she be - a cow neither too old, nor too young - of some middle age in between. Now, do what you are being asked to do." They said, "Pray for us to your Lord that He make it clear to us what colour she be." He said: "He says that she be a yellow cow, rich yellow in her colour, pleasing for all to look at." They said, "Pray for us to your Lord that He makes it clear to us of what sort she be, for we are confused about this cow, and if Allah wills, We shall certainly take the right course." He said, "He says that it be a cow which is not tractable for tilling the soil or in watering the fields, sound and without blemish." They said, "Now, you have come up with the truth." Then, they slaughtered her, although it did not appear they would do it. (Verses 68-71)

These Verses show how the Israelites were disposed to disobedience, and how this inclination expressed itself in different forms. The *Ḥadīth* says that if these people had obeyed Allah's commandment without raising so many doubts and asking unnecessary questions, such strict condition would not have been imposed on them, and the sacrifice of any cow whatsoever would have been accepted.

Verses 72 - 73

وَاِذْ قَتَلْتُمْ نَفْسًا فَادّٰرَءْتُمْ فِيْهَا وَاللّٰهُ مُخْرِجٌ مَّا كُنْتُمْ تَكْتُمُوْنَ ○
فَقُلْنَا اضْرِبُوْهُ بِبَعْضِهَا كَذٰلِكَ يُحْيِ اللّٰهُ الْمَوْتٰى وَيُرِيْكُمْ اٰيٰتِهٖ
لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُوْنَ ○

And when you killed a man, and began to push and pull

each other for it; while Allah was to bring forth what you were holding back. So, We said, "Strike him with a part of it." Similar to that, Allah revives the dead. And He shows you His signs, so that you may understand. (Verses 72-73)

The murderer had his supporters who wanted to hide his crime, and hence began accusing different people. But Allah willed that the criminal should be brought to book, and appointed a miraculous way of identifying him -- that is, the dead body of the murdered man should be touched with a part of the flesh of the sacrificial cow. When this was done, the dead man came back to life, announced the name of his murderer, and died again.

This miraculous event is a manifestation of the omnipotence of Allah, and Holy Qur'ān presents it as an argument against those who deny the Resurrection of the dead for the Last Judgment. Verse 73 says that this precedent should induce people to make use of their reason, and see that what has happened in a past instance can as easily happen in a future instance.

With regard to this event one may ask as to why Allah made the resurrection of the dead man depend upon his being touched with a part of flesh when he had the power to bring the man back to life without the intervention of any such device; or, one may ask as to why the dead man should have been brought back to life when the name of the murderer could have been revealed even otherwise. In answer to this, we shall say that Allah is omnipotent, and does not act under any kind of compulsion, but that all His actions proceed from His all-embracing wisdom. Moreover, it is He alone who knows, and can know, the *raison d'etre* of what He does. The Sharī'ah does not oblige us to discover the *raison d'etre* of each and every divine act, nor is it necessary or possible that we should be able to comprehend the *raison d'etre* in each case. The best way in such a case is to accept what Allah or the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said, and to keep quiet.

Let us say a word about the arrangement and sequence of the events. Verse 72 relates how a man was murdered, and how people started accusing each other. This is the beginning of the story which has been related earlier in Verses 67-71. This chronological order has

not been preserved in the narration, but inverted, and this re-arrangement has a subtle significance. This long section of the Sūrah (Chapter) has been dealing with the transgressions of the Israelites, and this is just what the Holy Qur'ān intends to bring out in narrating different stories, the narrating of stories not being an object in itself here. The present story is meant to show two misdeeds - firstly, committing a murder and then trying to hide it; secondly, raising uncalled-for objections to divine commandments. If the chronological order had been kept up, the readers would have supposed that it was only the first of these that was really intended, while the second was added only by way of completing the story. The present arrangement clearly shows that both the misdeeds have been equally emphasized.

Injunctions and related consideration

In this incident the statement of the murdered man was considered evidence for condemning the murderer, because Allah had informed Sayyidnā Mūsā علیہ السلام through revelation that the man would, on coming back to life, speak the truth. Otherwise, one cannot be declared as being guilty of murder without proper evidence, the rules of which have been laid down by the *Sharī'ah*.

Verse 74

ثُمَّ قَسَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ ذٰلِكَ فَهِيَ كَالْحِجَارَةِ أَوْ أَشَدُّ قَسْوَةً ۚ
وَإِنَّ مِنَ الْحِجَارَةِ لَمَا يَتَفَجَّرُ مِنْهُ الْأَنْهٰرُ ۚ وَإِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَشَّقَّقُ
فَيَخْرُجُ مِنْهُ الْمَاءُ ۚ وَإِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَهْبِطُ مِنْ خَشْيَةِ اللّٰهِ ۗ وَمَا
اللّٰهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ۝

When, even after that your hearts were hardened, as if they were like the rocks, or still worse in hardness. For surely among the rocks there are some from which rivers gush forth, and there are others which burst out and water flows from them, and there are still others which fall down in fear of Allah. And Allah is not unaware of what you do. (Verse 74)

The Sūrah has been relating a number of incidents which show that the Israelites were always prone to disobedience and rebellion

and had to undergo punishment again and again. Such an experience should have taught them humility and obedience. On the contrary, their hearts became all the more hardened against divine guidance. This insensibility led them into further misdeeds and transgressions. The present verse describes their degeneracy, and warns them that Allah knows everything they have been doing, and will punish them for their evil deeds.

In contrasting the hearts of the Israelites with stones, the verse refers to three states of the latter: (1) Some stones give forth a great amount of water. (2) Others give forth only a small quantity. (3) Still others do not give forth water, but fall down from their place for fear of Allah.

The first two of these states are a matter of everyday observation, but the third may be subject to doubt, for the ability to feel fear requires reason and sensibility, and the stones, as one supposes, do not possess these faculties. But reason is not always a necessary requisite for the ability to feel fear - after all, animals do feel fear, even though they do not possess reason. Sensibility is, of course, necessary. But there is no rational argument which should deny sensibility to minerals. For sensibility depends on life, and the minerals may possibly possess a kind of subtle life which man may not be aware of. In fact, scientists have recently discovered the signs of life and sensibility in minerals too. Anyhow, an explicit statement in the Holy Qur'ān carries a validity and an authority which no physical science or rational argument can dispute.

Then, we do not claim that fear of Allah is always the only cause which makes a stone fall down. For, the Holy Qur'ān itself says that this cause operates only in the case of some stones. So, there may be different causes which make stones fall down; some of these causes may be purely physical, while one of them may be the fear of Allah.

The order in which the three kinds of stones have been mentioned is very subtle, and, in view of the meaning and purpose intended, extremely expressive and significant. The verse places in the highest degree those stones whose affectivity is so strong that rivers gush forth from them, and provide sustenance to beasts and men. In

contrast to them, it has been suggested, the hearts of the Jews are so hard that they are incapable of feeling any sympathy for their fellow-men even in suffering and pain, and hence incapable of wishing to do them good. In the second degree come the stones which do serve the creatures of Allah, but to a lesser extent. But the hearts of Jews are harder than even these. To the lowest degree of affectivity belong those stones which do not benefit anyone, but can at least 'feel' the fear of Allah. But the Jews are devoid of even this minimum degree of sensitivity.

Verse 75

أَفَتَطْمَعُونَ أَنْ يُّؤْمِنُوا لَكُمْ وَقَدْ كَانَ فَرِيقٌ مِّنْهُمْ يَسْمَعُونَ
كَلَامَ اللّٰهِ ثُمَّ يُحَرِّفُونَهُ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا عَقَلُوهُ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ ○

Do you still fancy that they will believe you, although a group of them used to hear the word of Allah, and then, after having understood it, used to distort it knowingly? (Verse 75)

The Muslims used to take great pains in trying to make the Jews accept Islam. Having recounted so many stories of the perversity of the Jews, the Holy Qur'ān points out to the Muslims that they cannot expect such a people to be sensible, and asks them not to worry much about them. For, some of the Jews have been committing an even more heinous sin - they used to change and distort the Word of Allah in spite of knowing the ignominy of such a deed. So, the Holy Qur'ān wants the Muslims to realize that men who are so enslaved to their desires and so shameless in their pursuit of evil, cannot be expected to listen to anyone.

The "Word of Allah" mentioned in the verse refers to the Torah which the Jews had "heard" from the prophets, and the distortion pertains to the changes made in the words themselves or in the sense or in both; or it refers to the words of Allah which the seventy men had heard directly on the Mount *Tūr* (Sinai) where they had gone to seek divine confirmation of what Sayyidnā Mūsā (Moses عليه السلام) had been telling and the distortion pertains to their declaration before their people that Allah had promised to forgive them if they could not act upon certain commandments.

The Jews who were the contemporaries of the Holy Prophet ﷺ may

not have themselves been involved in some of these transgressions, but since they did not abhor the misdeeds of their forefathers, they are to be considered as their counterparts.

Verse 76

وَإِذَا لَقُوا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قَالُوا آمَنَّا وَإِذَا خَلَا بَعْضُهُمْ إِلَىٰ
بَعْضٍ قَالُوا أَتُحَدِّثُونَهُم بِمَا فَتَحَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمْ لِيُحَاجُّوكُم بِهِ
عِندَ رَبِّكُمْ ۚ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ O

And when they meet those who believe, they say, "We believe." But when some of them meet others in private, they say, "Do you tell them what Allah has disclosed to you so that they may thereby argue against you before your Lord? Have you, then, no sense?" (Verse 76)

Some of the Jews, seeing the growing power of the Muslims in Madinah and around it, pretended to have accepted Islam. In order to assure the Muslims of their sincerity and to win their favour, these hypocrites would now and then disclose to them that the Torah itself had given out the good tidings of the coming of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and mentioned the Holy Qur'ān. But when they met other Jews who openly declared their adherence to Judaism, they would admit that they were only trying to deceive the Muslims, and were otherwise quite loyal to their own faith. On such occasions, those of the other group used to reprimand them for revealing to the Muslims what they themselves were trying to keep concealed, for a knowledge of the relevant verses of the Torah could be very useful for the Muslims in order to defeat the Jews in their argument.

Verses 77 - 79

أَوَلَا يَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا يُسِرُّونَ وَمَا يُعْلِنُونَ O وَمِنْهُمْ
أُمِّيُّونَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا أَمَانِيَّ وَإِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا يَظُنُّونَ O
فَوَيْلٌ لِّلَّذِينَ يَكْتُبُونَ الْكِتَابَ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ ثُمَّ يَقُولُونَ هَٰذَا مِنْ
عِندِ اللَّهِ لِيَشْتَرُوا بِهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا ۖ فَوَيْلٌ لَّهُم مِّمَّا كَتَبَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ
وَوَيْلٌ لَّهُم مِّمَّا يَكْسِبُونَ O

Are they not aware that Allah knows what they conceal and what they manifest? And some among them are illiterate who have no knowledge of the Book but have some fancies, and they do nothing but make conjectures. So, woe to those who write the Book with their hands and then say, "This is from Allah", so that they may gain a small price out of it. Then, woe to them for what their hands have written, and woe to them for what they earn. (Verses 77-79)

Allah reminds the Jews that He is omniscient, and knows what they try to keep concealed as well as what they say or do openly. So, it would make no difference at all, if the hypocrites tried to conceal their infidelity from the Muslims, or the other group, not to disclose the verses of the Torah which speak of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . For, Allah Himself has, on different occasions, informed the Muslims in the Holy Qur'ān as to the hypocrisy of certain Jews and as to the testimony of the Torah also.

Verse 77 deals with the educated ones among the Jews, while Verse 78 speaks of those who were unlettered. These men had no knowledge of the Torah, and were even deficient in their understanding. Then, the Jewish scholars did not give them correct or proper information about their religion. No wonder, their minds were stuffed only with baseless superstitions which they found very pleasant and flattering.

Since the dishonesty of their scholars was the real cause of their superstitiousness, the crime of the former was greater than that of the latter. So, Verse 79 turns to the Jewish scholars. They were greedy and self-seeking, and in order to please the people for receiving money and respect from them, they used to misrepresent divine injunctions, going so far as to change the words of the Torah or distort the sense, pretending all the while that this was just what Allah had said or meant. The Verse 79 announces a grievous punishment for these two sins - distorting the Word of Allah and earning money by doing so.

A doctrinal point

Verse 78 says that the illiterate Jews follow their ظَنّ : *Ẓann*, that is to say, their fancies or conjectures. Some people do not pay any attention to the context in which the word has been used here, and

come to the erroneous conclusion that it is not legitimate to accept or follow any view or injunction based on *Ẓann*, which they always translate as "a fanciful supposition." This, no doubt, is one of the lexical meanings of the word, but only one. Let us explain that the Holy Qur'ān uses the word *Ẓann* in three ways:-

(1) To signify perfect certitude -"Those who are certain that they are going to meet their Lord" (2:46). (2) To signify the greatest likelihood - "And he said to him whom he thought was the more likely of the two to be released from the prison" (12:42). (3) To signify a mere fanciful supposition - as in the present verse. The *Ẓann* which the Holy Qur'ān prohibits us to follow is that of the third kind. This verse condemns the Jews for having followed this kind of *Ẓann* which consists in a fanciful opinion that is not supported by a respectable argument or goes against a valid one. On the contrary, it is necessary to follow the *Ẓann* of the first two kinds. When certain *aḥādīth* or certain arguments and conclusions in the *Sharī'ah* are described as resting on *Ẓann*, it is done according to the second signification of the word. One cannot avoid this kind of *Ẓann* in any sphere of life, and the *Sharī'ah* requires us to accept and follow it. Certain verses of the Holy Qur'ān, of course, condemn those who follow their *Ẓann*, but to apply this condemnation to all the possible cases, and to use such verses for rejecting all the legitimate arguments and injunctions of the *Sharī'ah* based on *Ẓann* is to betray one's ignorance of the Holy Qur'ān.

Verse 80

وَقَالُوا لَنْ تَمَسَّنَا النَّارُ إِلَّا أَيَّامًا مَّعْدُودَةً قُلْ أَتَّخَذْتُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَهْدًا فَلَنْ يُّخْلِفَ اللَّهُ عَهْدَهُ أَمْ تَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ۝

And they say, "The fire shall not touch us but for a few days." Say, "Have you taken a pledge from Allah and Allah will not go against His promise? Or, do you say about Allah what you do not know?" (Verse 80)

The claim of the Jews that they would not be sent to Hell for their sins, or, if at all, only for a few days, has been interpreted by the Commentators in different ways. One of them is as follows:-

The principle is common to all the Sharī'ahs that if a believer commits sins, he will receive a punishment in Hell for some time and in accordance with the degree and nature of his sins, but as he possesses *'Imān* (faith), he will not be assigned to Hell for ever, and will be released after having served his term. Now, the argument on which the assertion of the Jews was based was that since the *Sharī'ah* of Sayyidnā Mūsā (Moses عليه السلام) had not, in their view, been abrogated, they were true believers (*Mumins*), and had not turned into infidels (*Kāfirs*) by denying the prophethood of Sayyidnā 'Īsā (Jesus عليه السلام) and of Sayyidnā Muḥammad ﷺ ; hence - so the argument ran - if they were sent to Hell in punishment of some sin, they would again be taken out after a few days. This false assertion is, thus based on another false assertion. The Torah never declares that the *Sharī'ah* of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام is meant to last for ever. To claim perpetuity for it is an unfounded and false assertion, and hence the Jews who made such a claim and denied the prophethood of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and of Sayyidnā Muḥammad ﷺ , must on account of this denial be held to be infidels and disbelievers (*Kāfirs*). And no Book of Allah holds out to the infidels the promise that they would be released from Hell after a while. The present verse refers to such a promise as the "pledge" of Allah. Since Allah has never made such a promise, it goes to show that the Jews were making a baseless claim.

Verses 81 - 82

بَلٰى مَنْ كَسَبَ سَيِّئَةً وَّاَحَاطَتْ بِهٖ خَطِيْٓئَتُهٗ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ اَصْحٰبُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيْهَا خٰلِدُوْنَ ۝ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ اُولٰٓئِكَ اَصْحٰبُ الْجَنَّةِ هُمْ فِيْهَا خٰلِدُوْنَ ۝

Why not? Those who commit evil and are besieged by their sin, those are people of the Fire - there they shall remain for ever. And those who believe, and do good deeds, such are people of Paradise - there they shall remain for ever. (Verses 81 - 82)

Having refuted the claim of the Jews as baseless, the Holy Qur'ān lays down the divine law in this regard. Those who commit evil deeds knowingly and deliberately so that evil takes hold of them completely,

leaving no trace of goodness - such men shall go to the Hell, and live there for ever, without any intermission or release. But those who believe in Allah and the Holy Prophet ﷺ - whose *Sharī'ah* has now abrogated all the earlier Sharī'ahs and who do good deeds in conformity with the Islamic *Sharī'ah*,- it is these men who shall go to Paradise, and will live there for ever.

Let us explain how evil can take hold of a man so completely that no trace of goodness is left. This kind of thing happens only to infidels (*Kāfirs*), and not to Muslims, even when they are sinners. For, no good deed on the part of an infidel is acceptable to Allah on account of his infidelity; even the good deeds he has done before his apostasy and infidelity are lost, and rendered null and void. That is why on the Day of Judgment, infidels will have to show nothing but evil, in punishment of which they shall live in Hell for ever. On the contrary, men of faith will, to begin with, have the greatest and highest good deed to their credit - namely, faith (*'Īmān)* itself. Then, their secondary good deeds too are recorded in their account. So, they cannot be devoid of all goodness, and evil cannot be said to have taken hold of them completely.

In short, the infidel, according to this divine law, must always live in Hell. Since Sayyidnā Mūsā (Moses عليه السلام) was not the last prophet, but was followed by two other prophets, Sayyidnā 'Īsā (Jesus عليه السلام) and Sayyidnā Muḥammad ﷺ , the Jews turned into infidels by denying these two prophets. So, in accordance with this law, they too will be assigned to Hell for ever like other infidels, and their claim that they would be released from Hell after few days can now be seen to be totally false and baseless.

Verse 83

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَ بَنِيٓ إِسْرَآءِيلَ لَا تَعْبُدُونَ إِلَّا ٱللَّهَ وَبِٱلْوَٰلِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا وَذِي ٱلْقُرْبَىٰ وَٱلْيَتَٰمَىٰ وَٱلْمَسَٰكِينِ وَقُولُوا۟ لِلنَّاسِ حُسْنًا وَأَقِيمُوا۟ ٱلصَّلَوٰةَ وَءَاتُوا۟ ٱلزَّكَوٰةَ ثُمَّ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِّنكُمْ وَأَنتُم مُّعْرِضُونَ ○

And when We made the children of Israel take a pledge:

> **"You shall not worship anyone but Allah; and to parents you shall be good, and to near of kin and to orphans and the needy. And say to the people what is good, and be steadfast in *Salāh*, and pay *Zakāh*." Then, you went back (on your word), all but a few among you, and you are used to turning away. (Verse 83)**

This verse speaks of the pledge which Allah had made the Israelites take, and the few people it refers to as having been true to the pledge were those who acted upon the *Sharī'ah* of Sayyidnā Mūsā (Moses عليه السلام) as long as it was in force, and when it was abrogated, followed the *Sharī'ah* of Sayyidnā Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم

Injunctions and related considerations

(1) This verse brings out the basic elements common to Islam and all the earlier Sharī'ahs: *Tauhid* (the doctrine of Unity or Oneness); service to one's parents, relations, orphans and the needy; being gentle in speaking to all human beings; *Salāh* and *Zakāh*.

(2) The verse asks us to adopt a gentle tone and an open-hearted manner in speaking to others, whether they are good or evil, pious or impious, orthodox or aberrant, followers of *Sunnah* or adherents to partitive innovations in it. In religious matter, however, one should not try to hide the truth for the sake of pleasing people or of winning their approval. The Holy Qur'ān tells us that when Allah sent Sayyidnā Mūsā and Sayyidnā Hārūn (Moses and Aaron عليهم السلام) to the Pharaoh, He instructed them to use gentle and soft words (20:42). None of us who addresses another today can be superior to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام , nor can the man addressed be viler than the Pharaoh.

Talha ibn 'Umar recounts that once he said to the great master of the Sciences of Exegesis and *Ḥadīth*, 'Atā', "One can see around you people who are not quite orthodox in their beliefs. As for me, I am rather short-tempered. If such people come to me, I deal with them harshly." 'Ata' replied, "Do not behave like this," and, reciting the present verse, he added, "Allah has commanded us to speak to people politely. When Jews and Christians all are to be treated like this, would this commandment not apply to a Muslim, no matter what kind of a man he is?" (Qurṭubī)

Verse 84

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَكُمْ لَا تَسْفِكُونَ دِمَاءَكُمْ وَلَا تُخْرِجُونَ
أَنفُسَكُم مِّن دِيَارِكُمْ ثُمَّ أَقْرَرْتُمْ وَأَنتُمْ تَشْهَدُونَ O

And when We made you take a pledge: "You shall not shed one another's blood, and you shall not drive out one another from your homes." Then you agreed being yourselves the witness. (Verse 84)

This verse is a supplement to the previous verse, and speaks of the other articles of the pledge taken by the Israelites. They had agreed not to kill one another by engaging themselves in an internecine war, and also not to send their men into exile - that is to say, not to harass a man so as to force him to migrate.

They had willingly taken this pledge. Now, it may sometimes happen that one does not express one's willingness in so many words, but the manner of his speech suggests it. The agreement of the Israelites was not of this order, but as clear and explicit as the statement of a witness usually is.

Verse 85

ثُمَّ أَنتُمْ هَٰؤُلَاءِ تَقْتُلُونَ أَنفُسَكُمْ وَتُخْرِجُونَ فَرِيقًا مِّنكُم مِّن
دِيَارِهِمْ تَظَاهَرُونَ عَلَيْهِم بِالْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ وَإِن يَأْتُوكُمْ أُسَارَىٰ
تُفَادُوهُمْ وَهُوَ مُحَرَّمٌ عَلَيْكُمْ إِخْرَاجُهُمْ أَفَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِبَعْضِ
الْكِتَابِ وَتَكْفُرُونَ بِبَعْضٍ فَمَا جَزَاءُ مَن يَفْعَلُ ذَٰلِكَ مِنكُمْ
إِلَّا خِزْيٌ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يُرَدُّونَ إِلَىٰ أَشَدِّ
الْعَذَابِ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ O

Yet, here you are, killing one another, and driving a group of your own out of their homes, supporting each other against them in sin and aggression -- and if they came to you as prisoners, you would ransom them, though their very expulsion was unlawful for you! Do you, then, believe in some part of the Book, and disbelieve in some other? So, what can be the recompense of those among you who do that, except disgrace in

present life? And, on Doomsday, they shall be turned to the most severe punishment. And Allah is not unaware of what you do. (Verse 85)

This verse recounts how the Israelites broke the pledge they had willingly made. Allah had laid down three special injunctions for the Israelites: (1) They should not kill one another in an internecine war. (2) They should not force their own people into exile. (3) If they found a man from amongst them a prisoner of war, they should pay a ransom, and get him released. The Israelites disregarded the first two injunctions, and acted upon the third alone which they supposed easier to be carried out.

It happened like this. There lived in Madīnah two tribes, the *Aws* and the *Khazraj*, who were hostile to each other, and would often go to war. In the environs of Madīnah, there also lived two tribes of the Jews, the Banī Qurayẓah and the Banī Naḍīr. The former had friendly relations with the *Aws*, and the latter with the *Khazraj*. When the Aws and the *Khazraj* went to war against each other, the two tribes of the Jews also took part in the battle, each on the side of its own friends. In these battles, many Jews lost their lives or were rendered homeless as much as the non-Jews. In other words, the Jews of the Banī Qurayẓah tribe had a share in the slaughter and exile of the Jews of the Banī Nadīr tribe, and vice versa. However, when some of the Jews became prisoners of war, each of the two Jewish groups would persuade their respective friends among the non-Jews to accept a ransom and to release the prisoners. When they were asked why they showed such a solicitude for the prisoners, they would say that it was obligatory for them to get prisoners released. But when someone objected to their helping the non-Jews in slaughtering the Jews, they used to reply that it would be a real disgrace if they did not go to the aid of their friends, even if they were not Jews.

So, the present verse exposes their duplicity and their perversity. The Holy Qur'ān indicts their behaviour as "sin and aggression," and this suggests that the Israelites were infringing on two kinds of rights -- the right of Allah, by disobeying Him; and the right of His creatures, by inflicting pain and loss on them.

The verse proceeds to reprimand them for accepting certain

injunctions laid down in the Torah, while rejecting others, and following their own whims in both the cases. At the end, this long verse announces the grave punishment for such misdeeds the Israelites will have to bear in this world as well as in the other.

Let it be clearly understood that the Jews referred to in this verse had already become infidels (*Kāfirs*) by refusing to accept and affirm the prophethood of Sayyidnā Muḥammad ﷺ . But instead of referring to this aspect of their infidelity, the verse points out another aspect. It reprimands them for having faith (*'Īmān)* only in some part of the Book (Torah) and not having faith in some other. If we take the words of the present verse literally, it means that the Jews had become infidels by not having faith in some parts (that is to say, some injunctions) of the Torah. For, a Divine Book has to be accepted as a whole; to reject a part is to reject the whole, and clearly amounts to disbelief and infidelity (*Kufr*). But if we interpret the present verse in a different way, and take it to be reprimanding the Jews for not acting upon certain injunctions, then a question would arise here: How is it that the verse delineates their infringement of certain commandments as *Kufr* or infidelity, although a believer cannot be considered an infidel so long as he accepts, at least in principle, the distinctions between the *Ḥalāl* (lawful) and the *Ḥarām* (unlawful) exactly as laid down by the *Sharī'ah*? The answer to the question is that when a sin is very grave, the idiom of the *Sharī'ah* sometimes delineates it as *Kufr* (infidelity) in order to emphasize its gravity and its moral nature. This is also what the *ḥadīth* intends to do when it says: مَنْ تَرَكَ الصَّلَاةَ مُتَعَمِّدًا فَقَدْ كَفَرَ :"He who gave up the *Salāh* wilfully became an infidel."

This second interpretation does not, however, attenuate or modify the *Kufr* (infidelity) of the Jews of which they had already been guilty by denying the prophethood of Sayyidnā Muḥammad ﷺ .

The verse announces that the Jews will have to bear a punishment not only in the other world, but in this world too - in the shape of humiliation and disgrace. It took place as it had been foretold. In the time of the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself, the Jews of the Bani Qurayzah tribe had to lose their lives or to undergo imprisonment, and those of the Banī Nadīr tribe were expelled for having broken the pact they had earlier made with the Muslims.

A doctrinal point

Verse 85 announces the "punishment" for Jews. One may very well ask here why the direst punishment should be reserved for the Jews, and not for atheists, for the Jews at least believe in Allah. The famous Commentator 'Ālūsī says in his "Rūh al-Ma'ānī" that every punishment meted out to the infidels will be "the direst" in the sense that it will have no end or limit. So, what the verse implies is not that the punishment given to the Jews will be more severe than the one given to all the other infidels, but that they will be given the kind of punishment which is "the direst" in the sense of having no end or limit. In other words, the verse suggests that the punishment given to the infidels will be more severe than the one given to Muslim sinners. But if there are going to be different degrees in the punishment meted out to different kinds of infidels, it does not in any way go against the implications of this verse. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Verse 86

أُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرَوُا الْحَيٰوةَ الدُّنْيَا بِالْاٰخِرَةِ فَلَا يُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُمُ
الْعَذَابُ وَلَا هُمْ يُنْصَرُونَ ٥

Those are the ones who bought the worldly life at the cost of the Hereafter. So, punishment shall not be lightened for them, nor shall they be helped. (Verse 86)

This verse explains why the Jews will have to undergo such a severe punishment. They have been disobeying Allah in order to satisfy their desires and to enjoy worldly pleasures; they have also sacrificed for these things their salvation in the other world. Their sin being so great, Allah will not reduce or mollify their punishment, nor will He allow anyone to intercede on their behalf.

Verse 87

وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتٰبَ وَقَفَّيْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِ بِالرُّسُلِ وَاٰتَيْنَا
عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ الْبَيِّنٰتِ وَاَيَّدْنٰهُ بِرُوحِ الْقُدُسِ اَفَكُلَّمَا جَآءَكُمْ
رَسُولٌ بِمَا لَا تَهْوٰٓى اَنْفُسُكُمُ اسْتَكْبَرْتُمْ فَفَرِيقًا كَذَّبْتُمْ وَفَرِيقًا
تَقْتُلُونَ ٥

And, indeed, We gave Mūsā the Book, and after him We sent messengers, one following the other; and We gave clear signs to 'Īsā, the son of Mariam (Jesus, the son of Mary), and supported him with the Holy Spirit. Then, how is it that every time a prophet came to you with what does not meet your desire, you grew arrogant? So, you falsified a group (of the messengers) and killed others. (Verse 87)

The Qur'ān again reminds the Israelites how Allah in His mercy forgave them their transgressions again and again, and provided them with all the means of guidance. First of all, He gave them a Divine Book, the Torah, through Sayyidnā Mūsā (Moses عليه السلام); then, sent them a number of prophets; and, at the end of this line, sent down Sayyidnā 'Īsā (Jesus عليه السلام) along with clear and irrefutable evidences of his prophethood, like the Evangel and miracles, and appointed the Archangel Jibrā'il (Gabriel عليه السلام) to give him support.

The Archangel Jibra'il has often been called "Rūḥ al-Qudus" (the Holy Spirit) in the Noble Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth*. For example, in Verse 16:102 - قُلْ نَزَّلَهُ رُوحُ الْقُدُسِ - "Say: the Holy Spirit has brought it (the Noble Qur'an) down;" or in a couplet of the poet and blessed Companion Ḥassān ibn Thābit, reported in the *Ḥadīth*:

وجبريل رسول الله فينا

وروح القدس ليس له كفاء

Jibrā'il, the messenger of Allah, comes to us;
he is the Holy Spirit, the incomparable."

Allah helped and supported Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام through Jibrā'il عليه السلام in several ways. (1) He was conceived through the breath of the Archangel. (2) Jibrā'il عليه السلام protected him against being touched by Satan at the time of this birth. (3) The Archangel always accompanied him in order to defend him against the hostility of the Jews. (4) It was through him that Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام was raised to the heavens.

In spite of all these divine favours, the Jews persisted in their rebellion. They were so stubborn in the worship of their desires, that whenever the prophets brought to them certain divine injunctions which did not please them, the Jews would deny the prophets -- they

denied even Sayyidnā 'Isā --, or would kill them outright -- for example, they dealt in this vile manner with Sayyidnā Zakariyyā (Zachariah) and Sayyidnā Yāhya (John the Baptist) عليهم السلام.

Verse 88

وَقَالُوْا قُلُوْبُنَا غُلْفٌ بَلْ لَّعَنَهُمُ اللّٰهُ بِكُفْرِهِمْ فَقَلِيْلًا مَّا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ○

And they said, "Our hearts are veiled." Rather, Allah has cast damnation upon them for their disbelief. So, they believe just a little. (Verse 88)

The Jews used to say sarcastically that their hearts were "veiled", by which they meant that their hearts were so well protected against Islam that it could never touch them. This was their way of congratulating themselves on being staunch in their belief. The Holy Qur'ān points out that this is not the firmness of faith, but a damnation, for they deny Islam which now is the true religion, and stick to a religion which has been abrogated. They, consequently, possess only "a little" faith (*'Īmān)*. Since a little faith is not acceptable, they turn out to be infidels.

The little faith" which they possessed pertained to the doctrines which are common to Islām and Judaism - for example, belief in Allah, or belief in the Day of Judgment. But they did not accept Sayyidnā Muḥammad ﷺ as a prophet, and the Holy Qur'ān as the Word of Allah. So, their faith was not complete.

If the Verse describes 'the little faith' as *'Īmān,* it does so only in the lexical sense, for *'Īmān* signifies total certitude, even if it pertains to certain things, and not to others. But from the point of view of the *Sharī'ah*, such a partial faith cannot be described as *'Īmān*. The *Sharī'ah* would accept as valid only that *'Īmān* which affirms with certitude each and everything that the *Sharī'ah* requires one to affirm.

Verse 89

وَلَمَّا جَآءَهُمْ كِتٰبٌ مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللّٰهِ مُصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَهُمْ وَكَانُوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ يَسْتَفْتِحُوْنَ عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا فَلَمَّا جَآءَهُمْ

مَّا عَرَفُوْا كَفَرُوْا بِهٖ فَلَعْنَةُ اللّٰهِ عَلَى الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ○

And when there came to them a Book from Allah, which confirms what was with them, while earlier, they used to seek help against those who disbelieved, yet when there came to them that they did identify, they denied it. So the curse of Allah is upon the disbelievers. (Verse 89)

The Torah had in several places foretold the coming of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. In fact, the Jews themselves used to tell the Arabs that a new prophet and a new Divine Book was soon to come. But when the Holy Qur'ān came down from Allah, and even when they had recognized its authenticity, the Jews denied it out of sheer spite.

The verse says that the Holy Qur'ān confirms the Torah - it means that the Holy Qur'ān is a concrete evidence of the truth of the prophecies made in the Torah with regard to the coming of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and of the Holy Qur'ān. One who believes in the Torah cannot justifiably deny the Holy Qur'ān and the Holy Prophet ﷺ, for such a denial would involve a denial of the Torah itself.

Knowledge is not enough for *'Īmān*

One may want to know why the Holy Qur'ān calls the Jews *Kāfirīn* (infidels), when they did recognize the truth as truth, which should qualify them to be called "believers." Let us explain that *'Īmān* (faith) does not merely mean "knowing the truth", but really signifies "accepting the truth and affirming it deed-wise." Otherwise, Satan too will have to be called a believer, for he knows fully well what the truth is. In fact, this knowledge of the truth on the part of Satan intensifies the gravity of his *Kufr* (infidelity) all the more.

However, the next verse attributes the infidelity of the Jews to their malice.

Verse 90

بِئْسَمَا اشْتَرَوْا بِهٖٓ اَنْفُسَهُمْ اَنْ يَّكْفُرُوْا بِمَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ بَغْيًا اَنْ
يُّنَزِّلَ اللّٰهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ عَلٰى مَنْ يَّشَآءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهٖ فَبَآءُوْ
بِغَضَبٍ عَلٰى غَضَبٍ وَلِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ عَذَابٌ مُّهِيْنٌ ○

Vile is that for which they have sold out their selves: that they should deny what Allah has revealed, grudging that Allah should send down some of His bounty to whomsoever He wills from among His servants. So, they came out with wrath upon wrath. And for unbelievers there is humiliating punishment. (Verse 90)

Prophethood cannot be earned through one's own efforts or one's own merit; it is a special grace which Allah bestows on whomsoever He likes. But the Jews were so envious and malicious that they denied the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the Holy Qur'ān out of sheer spite. In doing so, they were questioning the will of Allah Himself. Thus, they earned divine wrath in two ways - firstly, for denying a true prophet; and secondly, for their envy and malice.

The Holy Qur'ān says that the Jews will have to undergo a punishment which would involve not only pain, but also disgrace and abasement. The latter condition has been added to suggest that this kind of punishment is peculiar to the infidels, and is not meant for a true Muslim at all, for a Muslim, no matter how great his sins are, will be punished for the purpose of being purified, not for being disgraced.

The next verse reports what the Jews used to say with regard to the Holy Qur'ān, which clearly shows their envy and malice as well as their infidelity (*Kufr*).

Verse 91

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ آمِنُوا بِمَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ قَالُوا نُؤْمِنُ بِمَا أُنزِلَ
عَلَيْنَا وَيَكْفُرُونَ بِمَا وَرَاءَهُ وَهُوَ الْحَقُّ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا مَعَهُمْ ۗ قُلْ
فَلِمَ تَقْتُلُونَ أَنبِيَاءَ اللَّهِ مِن قَبْلُ إِن كُنتُم مُّؤْمِنِينَ ۝

And when it is said to them, "Believe in what Allah has revealed," they say, "We believe in what has been revealed to us" -- and they deny what is beyond, whereas that is the truth, confirming what is with them. Say, "Why then have you been slaying the prophets of Allah earlier, if you were believers?" (Verse 91)

The Jews flatly refused to believe in any Book of Allah -- like the Evangel or the Holy Qur'ān - except in the Torah. This denial is a clear evidence of their infidelity (*Kufr*). Moreover, they also used to add that they believe in the Torah, for it had been sent down to them. This comes to mean that they denied the other Books just because they had not been sent down to them. Such an argument betrays their envy and malice.

The Holy Qur'ān refutes their argument in three ways:-

(1) When the truth and authenticity of the other Books has been established on the basis of irrefutable arguments, what does, then, this denial mean? If they had any doubts as to the arguments on the basis of which authenticity was being claimed for these Books, they could very well have voiced this doubt, and satisfied themselves on this point. But why this flat refusal to believe?

(2) The other Books, like the Holy Qur'ān, confirm the Torah. If one denies them, one at the same time denies the Torah itself.

(3) To slay a prophet is tantamount to infidelity (*Kufr*), according to all the Divine Books. Moreover, the prophets whom the Jews had killed were themselves Israelites, and their teachings, were based on the injunctions of the Torah. But the Jews not only killed these prophets, but also accepted the killers as their chiefs. This is a direct denial of the Torah, and falsifies their claim that they believe in the Torah.

In short, nothing that the Jews say or do is acceptable and valid from any possible point of view.

The next verses proceed to refute the Jews on several other counts.

Verse 92

وَلَقَدْ جَآءَكُمْ مُّوسٰى بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ ثُمَّ اتَّخَذْتُمُ الْعِجْلَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖ وَاَنْتُمْ ظٰلِمُوْنَ ۝

And certainly Moses came to you with clear signs, then you took to yourselves the calf thereafter -- and you were transgressors. (Verse 92)

The "clear signs" mentioned in the verse refers to the miracles which had manifested themselves even before the Torah was given to Sayyidnā Mūsā (Moses عليه السلام) -- for example, his staff that turned into a snake, the palm of his hand which shone brightly, the splitting of the sea to make a path for the Israelites, etc. These miracles were meant to affirm the Oneness of Allah and His omnipotence, and to provide an evidence for the prophethood of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام .

In refutation of the Jews, the verse points out that although they lay a claim to *'Īmān* (faith), yet have been falling into the sin of *Shirk* (association), which involves a denial not only of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام but even of Allah Himself.

Although the Jews who were the contemporaries of the Holy Prophet ﷺ , did not themselves take part in the worship of the golden calf, yet they respected such of their forefathers as had done so, and took their side. So, for all practical purposes, they too were guilty of the same sin.

The verse also suggests that no wonder if these people, whose forefathers denied Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام , should now be denying the Holy Prophet ﷺ .

Verse 93

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَكُمْ وَرَفَعْنَا فَوْقَكُمُ الطُّورَ خُذُوا مَا آتَيْنَاكُمْ بِقُوَّةٍ وَاسْمَعُوا قَالُوا سَمِعْنَا وَعَصَيْنَا وَأُشْرِبُوا فِي قُلُوبِهِمُ الْعِجْلَ بِكُفْرِهِمْ قُلْ بِئْسَمَا يَأْمُرُكُمْ بِهِ إِيمَانُكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ۝

And when We took pledge from you, and raised high the (Mount of) *Tūr* above you: "Hold fast to what We have given you, and listen" -- they said, "We have heard and disobeyed." And, on account of their denial, they were soaked with the love of the calf in their hearts. Say: "Evil is that which your faith enjoins upon you, if you are believers." (Verse 93)

In refuting the claim of the Jews to be authentic and true believers, the Holy Qur'ān again recounts an incident which it has

already referred to in Verse 63. When the Israelites succeeded, with the help of Allah, in escaping from Egypt and crossing the sea, they came upon a people who used to worship idols. They found this cult so attractive that they requested Sayyidnā Mūsā (Moses عليه السلام) to fabricate a visible and concrete god for them too. When he reprimanded them, they realized their error, and offered repentance. But repentance has many degrees. Since their repentance was not of a very high order, the darkness of their error did not altogether leave their hearts, but continued to grow, and finally manifested itself in the worship of the golden calf. As an act of penance, some of them had to be slain, and others, as some commentators report, were forgiven and not slain. Possibly the repentance of these latter was again of a low order. As for those who had not indulged in the worship of the calf, they did not hate the action of the worshippers of the calf as much as they should have. So, their hearts too carried a trace of the sin of association (*shirk*). So, either through the feebleness of their repentance or through a want of proper hatred for infidelity, their hearts became indolent in religious matters, so much so that when Allah asked them to take a pledge to follow the injunctions of the Torah steadfastly, Mount *Tūr* (Sinai) was suspended over their heads to threaten them.

This verse reports the Jews as having replied that they had heard the Command of Allah, but they would not obey, or would not be able to obey. It means that out of sheer fright they said (only with their tongues) that they had heard (that is to say, accepted) the Command of Allah. But there was no real consent in their hearts, and their posture and attitude was such as if they were saying that they would not or could not obey.

Having referred to such example of their perversity and rebellion, the Holy Qur'ān asks the Jews to have a look at themselves and also at their claim to genuine faith. Could a true faith ever inspire men to such deeds? If it is their brand of "faith" which leads them into such grave sins, then it cannot be a true faith. Hence their claim to be true believers is evidently false.

Verses 94 - 95

قُلْ اِنْ كَانَتْ لَكُمُ الدَّارُ الْاٰخِرَةُ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ خَالِصَةً مِّنْ دُوْنِ النَّاسِ فَتَمَنَّوُا الْمَوْتَ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ 0 وَلَنْ يَّتَمَنَّوْهُ اَبَدًام بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌۢ بِالظّٰلِمِيْنَ 0

Say: "If the Last Abode near Allah is for you purely, short of all people, then make a wish for death, if you are true." But they will never wish for it because of what their hands have sent ahead. And Allah is all-aware of the unjust. (Verses 94 - 95)

The Jews used to claim that the blessings of the other world were specially reserved for them, and were not, meant for any other people. Certain other verses of the Holy Qur'ān too refer to such a claim on the part of the Jews, and also of the Christians: قَالُوْا لَنْ تَمَسَّنَا النَّارُ اِلَّآ اَيَّامًا مَّعْدُوْدَةً : "They say: The fire will not touch us but for a few days" (2:80), وَقَالُوْا لَنْ يَّدْخُلَ الْجَنَّةَ اِلَّا مَنْ كَانَ هُوْدًا اَوْ نَصٰرٰى :"And they say: No one will enter Paradise except he who is a Jew or Christian" (2:111), وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُوْدُ وَالنَّصٰرٰى نَحْنُ اَبْنٰٓؤُا اللّٰهِ وَاَحِبَّآؤُهٗ :"And the Jews and the Christians said: We are the sons of Allah and His close friends" (5:18). What they meant in making such a claim was that since their own faith was the true one, they must certainly attain salvation in the other world -- the repentant and the forgiven being admitted to Paradise from the very beginning, the sinners finding release from the fires of Hell after undergoing a punishment for a few days, and the obedient receiving a welcome like sons and beloved friends.

The use of certain improper expressions like "sons of Allah" notwithstanding, these claims are in themselves quite correct, provided that they pertain to people who follow a true and valid faith. But the Jews (and the Christians as well) were still following a faith which had been abrogated, and was thus no longer valid -- a fact which nullified their claim. So, the Holy Qur'ān has refuted the claim again and again in different ways, and the present verse has adopted a special mode. The habitual method of settling a dispute is to have a discussion and let both the parties present their own arguments. Since the Jews knew they could not win, they fought shy of this normal way. So, the

Holy Qur'ān suggests an abnormal method, which would not call for much knowledge or understanding, but only put a little strain on the tongue. The proposed trial consists in this -- if the Jews are so sure of the blessings of the other world being reserved for themselves, they should declare that they wish to die, and this declaration would establish them as being genuine in their faith; but if they refuse to accept the challenge, it would show that they were liars. The Holy Qur'ān also predicts that they would never have the courage to go through the trial.

In view of their hostility to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, one could expect them to take up such a simple challenge very zealously. But they knew very well in their heart of hearts that the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the Muslims stood for the truth, while they themselves were the champions of falsehood, and were, in actual fact, infidels. So, they refused to go through the trial, for they were struck with awe, and feared that as soon as they had expressed the wish to die, death would come over them, and they would be sent to Hell. This recalcitrance is, thus, in itself an evidence of the truth of Islam.

Here we must note that the trial was proposed not for all the Jews of all the ages, but specially for those who were the contemporaries of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and who used to deny him out of sheer envy and malice, in spite of having recognized that he was a genuine prophet.

Nor should one raise the doubt here that they had perhaps accepted the challenge, and "wished" for death in their hearts, as the Holy Qur'ān seems to ask. For one, the Holy Qur'ān itself reports the prediction that they would never "wish for it." Secondly, if they could wish for death in their hearts, they must have declared it orally too, for their victory lay in just such a declaration, and this was a very easy way of refuting the Holy Prophet ﷺ. But they did not avail themselves of this opportunity.

Nor can one suppose that they did make an oral declaration, for the fact has not been reported, and thus has not come down to us. Such a supposition would be wrong, because the opponents of Islam have always outnumbered its adherents, and if such a thing had happened, they must have been trumpeting it aloud to show to the

world that the Jews had successfully passed the test proposed by the Holy Qur'ān itself.

Verse 96

وَلَتَجِدَنَّهُمْ أَحْرَصَ النَّاسِ عَلٰى حَيٰوةٍ ۚ وَمِنَ الَّذِيْنَ أَشْرَكُوْا ۚ
يَوَدُّ أَحَدُهُمْ لَوْ يُعَمَّرُ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ ۚ وَمَا هُوَ بِمُزَحْزِحِهٖ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ أَنْ
يُّعَمَّرَ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ بَصِيْرٌۢ بِمَا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ○

And you shall surely find them, of men, the most avid for life -- even more than the polytheists. Of them, one would love to be aged a thousand years. But it will not remove him from punishment to be so aged. And Allah is watchful of what they do. (Verse 96)

This verse shows the basic weakness of the Jews which did not allow them to accept the challenge proposed in Verse 94, and thus exposes the hollowness of their claim to the blessings of the other world being reserved for them. The Holy Qur'ān puts a special emphasis on the fact that the Jews loved physical life much more than did the Arab polytheists. Such an inclination should not have been surprising on the part of the latter, for, after all, they did not believe in the other world, and physical life was the be-all and end-all for them. But the Jews acknowledged the existence of the other world, and even had the illusion that they alone deserved its joys, and yet it was they who, above all others, wished to live in this world as long as possible. This very desire shows how baseless their pretention was, and how they themselves knew that they would have to face the fires of Hell in the other world, and that physical life was, as long as it lasted, a kind of protection against their final fate.

Verse 97 - 98

قُلْ مَنْ كَانَ عَدُوًّا لِّجِبْرِيْلَ فَإِنَّهٗ نَزَّلَهٗ عَلٰى قَلْبِكَ بِإِذْنِ اللّٰهِ
مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَهُدًى وَّبُشْرٰى لِلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ○ مَنْ كَانَ
عَدُوًّا لِّلّٰهِ وَمَلٰٓئِكَتِهٖ وَرُسُلِهٖ وَجِبْرِيْلَ وَمِيْكٰلَ فَإِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَدُوٌّ
لِّلْكٰفِرِيْنَ ○

Say, whoever be an enemy to Jibrā'īl (Gabriel) -- it is he who has brought it down upon your heart by the permission of Allah, confirming what has been before it, and a guidance and good tidings to the believers. Whoever be an enemy to Allah, His angels, and His messengers, and to Jibrā'īl and Mikā'īl, surely Allah is enemy to the disbelievers. (Verses 97 - 98)

The perversity of the Jews was very fertile, and gave them ever-new excuses for denying the Holy Prophet ﷺ. When they learnt that it was Archangel Jibrā'īl (Gabriel عليه السلام) who brought the Glorious Qur'ān to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, they said that the Archangel was their enemy, as it was through him that rigorous commandments or catastrophic punishments had always descended on them, and that for this reason they would not accept a Book which had been revealed through his agency. They also added that they could have accepted the Holy Qur'ān, if the Archangel Mikā'īl (Michael عليه السلام) had brought it down, for he is connected with rain and with divine mercy.

In refuting this argument, the Holy Qur'ān points out that Jibrā'īl عليه السلام is only a messenger, and has, acting only as a messenger, brought down the Holy Qur'ān under a divine command to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. So, why should the Jews be so particular about the messenger, and not look at the Book itself? As for the Book, it confirms the earlier Books of Allah, provides guidance to men, and gives good tidings to the believers. This being what the Divine Books are meant for, the Holy Qur'ān is evidently enough a Divine Book, and must, as such be obeyed. To deny it on account of one's hostility to Jibrā'īl عليه السلام is sheer stupidity or outright perversity. Now, as for the attitude of the Jews towards Jibrā'īl عليه السلام, the Holy Qur'ān declares that to be hostile to the angels (including Jibrā'īl and Mikā'īl عليهما السلام) or to the prophets is tantamount to being hostile to Allah Himself. Verse 98 puts down the enemies of angels and prophets as infidels (*Kāfirin*) in saying that Allah is the enemy of the infidels. In other words, those who deny or oppose the angels and the prophets will have their due punishment in the other world.

Maulana Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī has, in his "Bayān al-Qur'ān", warned against the possibility of very grave error that may arise with regard to the statement in Verse 97 that the Archangel Jibrā'īl (Gabriel عليه السلام) has "brought down the Book on the heart" of the

Holy Prophet ﷺ. The error would lie in drawing from this phrase the conclusion that Allah has not revealed the words of the Holy Qur'ān but only the meanings. Such a supposition is quite baseless, because many verses of the Holy Qur'ān itself mention the Arabic language as the vehicle of revelation in the case of this particular Book of Allah. That should leave no room for any doubt. Moreover, the "heart" perceives words as much as it does meanings; in fact, the perceiving agent is the "heart", while the ears etc. are only its instruments. Specially, in the state of revelation, the external organs of the senses become dormant, and the heart receives even the words directly without the intervention of the ears. Although we cannot understand the nature of revelation properly, yet, choosing a mundane analogy, one can say that while dreaming in our sleep we do hear words and remember them afterwards, in spite of our external sense of hearing having been suspended while we dreamt. This example should make it easy to see that the revelation of meanings to the heart does in no way preclude the revelation of words as well. Anyhow, it is a sin - and an intellectual dishonesty - to rely on one's own conjectures in defiance of a clear and definite statement in the Holy Qur'ān.

Verse 99

وَلَقَدْ أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ آيَاتٍ بَيِّنَاتٍ ۖ وَمَا يَكْفُرُ بِهَا إِلَّا الْفَاسِقُونَ O

And certainly We have revealed to you clear signs. And no one denies them except the sinful. (Verse 99)

In denying the Holy Prophet ﷺ, the Jews used to say that no clear evidence or sign of his prophethood had been revealed to him such as they could recognize and accept. In reply to this the Holy Qur'ān says that Allah has revealed a number of very clear signs and evidences of his prophethood which even they know and understand very well. So, their denial is not based on a lack of recognition or knowledge, but on their habitual disobedience, for, as a general rule, no one denies such evidence except those who are wilful and stubborn in their disobedience.

Verse 100

أَوَكُلَّمَا عَاهَدُوا عَهْدًا نَبَذَهُ فَرِيقٌ مِنْهُمْ ۚ بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ O

Would it always be that every time they enter into a

pact, a group from among them should throw it aside? In fact, most of them do not believe. (Verse 100)

Allah had, as the Torah itself reports, made the Jews take the pledge that they would have faith in the Holy Prophet ﷺ when he appeared. On being reminded of it, the Jews flatly denied even having taken such a pledge. Commenting on this effrontery, the Holy Qur'ān says that this is not the only instance of such a conduct on their part, for the Jews have, in fact, never fulfilled even those pledges which they acknowledge, and one group or another from among them has always been breaking the compacts they have entered into, specially with regard to religious matters. It can even be said that most of those who have been guilty of such gross violations, did not at all believe in the compacts which they made with Allah. Going against a pledge is only a sin and transgression, but having no faith in the pledge which one gives to Allah is outright infidelity.

The Holy Qur'ān specifically speaks of one group or another breaking the pledge, and not of all the Jews. For there were some among them who did fulfil the pledges, so much so that many Jews finally accepted Sayyidnā Muḥammad ﷺ as a true prophet, and joined the ranks of the Muslims.

Verse 101

وَلَمَّا جَآءَهُمْ رَسُولٌ مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللّٰهِ مُصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَهُمْ نَبَذَ فَرِيقٌ مِّنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتٰبَ كِتٰبَ اللّٰهِ وَرَآءَ ظُهُورِهِمْ كَأَنَّهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ۝

And when came to them a messenger from Allah, confirming what was already with them, some from among the people of the Book threw away the Book of Allah behind their backs, as if they did not know. (Verse 101)

The previous verse had told us how the breaking of pledges and disobedience had become a regular habit with the Jews. The present verse gives us the latest instance, which is the most relevant to the context.

The Torah had already given the Jews the good tidings of the coming of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . When he actually came with all signs which the Torah had indicated, thus confirming the Sacred Book of the

Jews, a large number of them refused to accept him as a prophet. In doing this, they were, in fact, denying the Torah itself, and behaving as if they know nothing of the prophecy, or even the Torah being a Book of Allah. Thus, they were being guilty of infidelity (*Kufr*) even in terms of the Torah itself.

Verses 102 - 103

وَاتَّبَعُوْا مَا تَتْلُوا الشَّيٰطِيْنُ عَلٰى مُلْكِ سُلَيْمٰنَ ۚ وَمَا كَفَرَ
سُلَيْمٰنُ وَلٰكِنَّ الشَّيٰطِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا يُعَلِّمُوْنَ النَّاسَ السِّحْرَ ۗ وَمَآ
اُنْزِلَ عَلَى الْمَلَكَيْنِ بِبَابِلَ هَارُوْتَ وَ مَارُوْتَ ۗ وَمَا يُعَلِّمٰنِ مِنْ
اَحَدٍ حَتّٰى يَقُوْلَآ اِنَّمَا نَحْنُ فِتْنَةٌ فَلَا تَكْفُرْ ۗ فَيَتَعَلَّمُوْنَ مِنْهُمَا
مَا يُفَرِّقُوْنَ بِهٖ بَيْنَ الْمَرْءِ وَزَوْجِهٖ ۗ وَمَا هُمْ بِضَآرِّيْنَ بِهٖ مِنْ اَحَدٍ
اِلَّا بِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ ۗ وَيَتَعَلَّمُوْنَ مَا يَضُرُّهُمْ وَلَا يَنْفَعُهُمْ ۗ وَلَقَدْ عَلِمُوْا
لَمَنِ اشْتَرٰىهُ مَا لَهٗ فِى الْاٰخِرَةِ مِنْ خَلَاقٍ ۗ وَلَبِئْسَ مَا شَرَوْا بِهٖٓ
اَنْفُسَهُمْ ۗ لَوْ كَانُوْا يَعْلَمُوْنَ O وَلَوْ اَنَّهُمْ اٰمَنُوْا وَاتَّقَوْا لَمَثُوْبَةٌ مِّنْ
عِنْدِ اللّٰهِ خَيْرٌ ۗ لَوْ كَانُوْا يَعْلَمُوْنَ O

And they followed what the devils used to recite in the reign of Sulaymān (Solomon) -- it was not Sulaymān who became an infidel, but the devils did become infidels, teaching people magic, and what had been sent down to the two angels, Hārūt and Mārūt, in Babylon. And these two did not teach anyone without having said, "We are nothing but a trial, so do not go infidel." Then, they used to learn from them that with which they could separate man from his wife. But they were not to bring harm through it to anyone, without the will of Allah. And they used to learn what harmed them and did no good to them. And they certainly knew that he who buys it has no share in the Hereafter. And, indeed, vile is the thing for which they sold themselves away. Only if they knew! And had they accepted the faith, and been God-fearing, the reward from Allah would have always been far better. Only if they knew! (Verses 102 - 103)

In connection with these two verses, some commentators have reported certain Judaic traditions, which have given rise to a number of doubts, especially in the minds of Muslims with a Western orientation. Maulanā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī has provided very simple and clear solutions to these exegetical problems, and we shall reproduce them here:-

(1) The Jews were impertinent and senseless enough to attribute magic and sorcery to a prophet -- namely, Sayyidnā Sulaymān (Solomon عليه السلام). So, in saying that they used to learn the black arts of the devils (*Shayātīn*), the Holy Qur'ān takes care to deny, as a parenthesis, such a vile allegation against Sayyidna Sulaymān عليه السلام.

(2) These verses condemn the Jews for indulging in black magic. In connection with the verses, some commentators have reported a long and well-known story about a woman called *Zuhrah*, which is not based on any authentic Islamic tradition. Those scholars who have found the story to be infringing the regulations of the Sharī'ah, have rejected it as mere fiction; but those who believe that it can be interpreted so as to come in line with the Sharī'ah, have not dismissed it totally. For the moment we are not concerned with the question whether the story is true or false. But what we would like to insist upon is the fact that a proper understanding does in no way depend on this story.

(3) The Jews knew very well that their indulgence in black magic was not only a sin, but also involved infidelity (*Kufr*). They could also see that such activities would do them no good even in this world, for their sorcery could not harm anyone except when Allah willed it so. Thus their practice went against their knowledge, and they made no use of their understanding to see this discrepancy. That is why the Holy Qur'ān, to begin with, states that they "knew", and then goes on to negate this 'knowledge' by saying, "Only if they knew!" For, if one does neither act upon what one knows nor tries to understand it properly, one's knowledge is no better than ignorance.

(4) There was a time when black magic had grown very popular in the world, particularly in Babylon. Seeing its astonishing efficacy, ignorant people began to confuse its effects with the miracles of prophets, and to suppose that the two were identical in nature. Some

even looked upon magicians as being holy men, and worthy of being obeyed; still others actually started learning and practising black magic as if it were a good deed bearing a divine sanction. [25]

In short, this extraordinary veneration for magic and magicians had become a potent source of misguidance. In order to eradicate this misunderstanding, Allah sent down to Babylon two angels, Hārūt and Mārūt, for informing the people as to the true nature of magic and as to its different forms, so that they should distinguish it from the miracles of prophets, and keep away from obeying magicians and practising magic themselves. Just as the prophethood of prophets is divinely confirmed through miracles, signs and rational or other arguments, in the same way the angelical nature of Hārūt and Mārūt was confirmed on the basis of different signs and arguments, so that people should listen attentively to them and follow their guidance.

This particular function was not assigned to the prophets for two reasons. Firstly, the need of the hour was to establish a distinction between the prophets and the magicians, and, the prophets being in a way a party to the dispute, it was proper that a third party should be the arbitrator. Secondly, the necessary distinction between the two could not, in a normal course, be defined without citing and reporting the verbal formulas employed in magic. Merely to report heretical speech is not in itself a heresy - this is a logical and rational principle, and the Sharī'ah too accepts it. So, the prophets could have been allowed to cite these formulas; but, they being a manifestation of divine guidance, Allah did not ask them to perform such a function, and chose two angels for the purpose. For, Allah's commandments are of two kinds -- those pertaining to *Takwīn* (creation and the cosmic order), and those pertaining to *Tashrī'* (legislation) -, and it is quite possible that sometimes the two may not seem to accord with each other. The order of creation is made up of good and evil both, and it is the angels through whom divine commandments are enforced in this sphere. So, the angels are made to do things which, in the perspective

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25. Just as there has been a sudden outburst of enthusiasm for the occult sciences in the West since the middle of the sixties in this century, particularly in America where even the universities have been inundated by it.

of the cosmic order, always lead to general good, but which, in so far as they necessarily involve some kind of partial disorder, are seen to be evil -- for example, the growth and upkeep of a human tyrant, or of a harmful beast, each of which is right in the context of the order of creation, but wrong from the point of view of the order of legislation. On the other hand, the prophets are entrusted only with the functions of the legislative order, which are, in their general as well as particular applications, nothing but good.

Although, in view of the ultimate purpose, this reporting of the formulas of magic too was related to the legislative order, yet there was probability -- which even materialized -- that a reporting of such formulas could give an incentive to the practice of black magic. So, Allah preferred not to make the prophets even an indirect means of such reprehensible activities. All the same, the prophets too were made to serve the main purpose by announcing the basic regulations of the Sharī'ah with regard to magic, though not the details pertaining to the minor rules derived from them, for that could have possibly given rise to temptation. We shall explain it through an analogy. The prophets have, for example, told us that it is forbidden to accept a bribe, and have also explained the nature of bribery, but have not given us the details as to how a bribe is given or taken, for a delineation of such minute details would have served only to teach men the different methods of giving or taking a bribe. Or, take an example from different branches of magic. If one utters a certain formula, one would, on getting up from the bed in the morning, find money under his pillow or in his pocket. The Sharī'ah makes it quite clear that such a practice is not, in principle, legitimate, but does not specify what that formula is.

In short, the two angels came down to Babylon, and started the work assigned to them -- that is to say, they used to explain the basic principles of magic, its different forms and the specific formulas, and then used to dissuade the people from getting themselves involved in these activities or with the magicians. Their work was exactly like that of a scholar who, finding that illiterate people sometime fall into uttering heretical words or phrases on account of their ignorance, should collect in his speeches or writings all such phrases that have

gained currency, and inform them as to what they must carefully avoid.

Now, all sorts of people started coming to the angels for seeking information about the nature and the specific formulas of a magic lest ignorance should lead them into error, in the matter of doctrines or that of deeds. In order to provide the correct teaching on this subject and to protect the people from error, the angels were scrupulous enough to make it a point to warn them of possible dangers in giving them the information. They insisted on making it quite clear that in allowing them to provide this kind of information to the people in general, Allah intended to put His servants through a trial, for He would see who uses this knowledge for protecting his *'Īmān* (faith) by recognizing evil and avoiding it, and who falls into misguidance by adopting evil that he has come to recognize as evil -- a choice which can easily lead one into *Kufr* (infidelity) in the matter of deeds or in that of doctrines. The angels repeatedly advised them to seek this dangerous information only with a good intent and to remain steadfast in this good intent, and not to misuse the knowledge so as to earn perpetual damnation.

The angels could not be more honest and forthright. So, they explained the basic principles of magic and even the subsidiary details to all those who were ready to take the pledge to remain steadfast in their faith. Of course, if anyone broke the pledge and fell into transgression or infidelity, it was his own business, and the angels could not be held responsible for it. Some were true to their promise, while many did not fulfil the pledge, and made their knowledge of magic a means of doing harm to people -- this in itself is sin and transgression, while some modes of magic actually involve infidelity (*Kufr*). Thus, through a misuse of their knowledge of magic, some turned into sinners and others into infidels.

Let us repeat that the angels had taught magic for the purpose of reforming the people and helping them to keep to the straight path, but those who misused this teaching did so out of their own perversity. An example would make the situation still more clear. Let us suppose that a man goes to a master of the Islamic sciences, who is an expert in the traditional branches of learning and in philosophy as well, and

who also acts upon his knowledge, and this man requests the master to teach him philosophy, ancient or modern, so that he may protect himself against the doubts raised by the philosophers with regard to Islamic doctrines, and may also be able to give a satisfactory reply to those who raise such doubts. Apprehending that he might turn out to be insincere, and might finally bring the knowledge of philosophy to the aid of false and anti-Islamic ideas, the master warns him against such an eventuality, and the man takes a pledge that he would not misuse his knowledge. Having satisfied himself, the master gives him a thorough training in philosophy. But the man, contrary to his promise, begins to accept the anti-Islamic and false theorizing of philosophers as the truth. Obviously, in such a case, the teacher can in no way be held responsible for the way the pupil behaves. Similarly, there can be no room for doubting the integrity of these two angels.

Although Allah Himself knows how things were, yet one can suppose that once the angels had done the work assigned to them, they must have been recalled to the Heavens. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

What is Magic ? Definition and effects

Since the study of magic has been enjoying a weird currency in the Western countries since 1968, and has sometimes been accepted as a part of academic research, we had better consider the subject at some length from the Islamic point of view. According to the authoritative Arabic dictionary "*Al-Qāmūs*", the word *Siḥr* (Magic) signifies an effect the cause of which is not apparent, whether the cause may actually lie in something which possesses a luminous quality (as the effect of certain phrases), or in things with an extra-sensory reality (as the effect produced by jinns and devils), or in the power of imagination (as the effect of hypnotism), or in things which are sensory yet hidden (as a magnet drawing to itself a piece of iron, when the magnet is concealed from the onlookers; or the effect of drugs, when they have been furtively administered; or the influence of stars and planets). The causes at work being numerous, the forms of magic too are numerous.

Magic and Charms

In everyday language, magic signifies those practices which

involve the co-operation of jinns and devils, or the exercise of the power of imagination, or the use of certain words or phrases. It is a rationally established proposition, accepted by ancient philosophers and by some of the modern ones as well, and equally confirmed by observation and experiment, that words and phrases in themselves possess a certain efficacy, and that when certain letters, words or phrases are recited or written down for a specified number of times, they produce certain specific results. Similar results are obtained by employing human hair or nails or the clothes worn by the person concerned, etc. - a practice which is usually described as the preparation of "Charms". All such things are commonly known as magic.

Siḥr or Magic: The Islamic view

But in the terminology of the Holy Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth*, *Sihr* (magic) refers to all those usual happenings which have been brought about with the active help of the devils (*Shayātīn*), won over through certain practices likely to please them. There are several ways of pleasing the devils. Sometimes one sings the praises of the devils, and sometimes recites formulas of a heretical nature which deny Allah or associate others with Him. The worship of stars and planets too gladdens their heart, as do certain evil deeds - for example, preparing a charm with the blood of a person killed unlawfully, or refusing to adopt the prescribed modes of purifying one's body, or living constantly and deliberately in a state of uncleanliness and impurity. Just as the aid of the angels can be won only through those modes of speech and action which they like (for example, remembrance of Allah, fear of Him and obedience to His commandments, cleanliness and purity, avoidance of all kinds of dirtiness, physical or otherwise, and good deeds in general), similarly the co-operation of the devils can be obtained through those modes of speech and action which are pleasant to them. That is why only those are successful in the practice of black magic who are habitually unclean and impure, avoid required purification and remembrance of Allah, and are given to all kinds of evil deeds - for example, it is usually during the period of menstruation that women become effective in the practice of black magic. So much for black magic or sorcery in the exact sense of the term. As for sleights of hand, mesmerism, hypnotism, or the tricks of

jugglers, they are sometimes described as magic only by an extension of the meaning of the word, or metaphorically. (Rūh al-Ma'ānī)

Kinds of Magic

In his "*Mufradāt al-Qur'ān*", Imām Rāghib al-Isfahānī says that there are several kinds of magic. Firstly, there are sleights of hand, like those of jugglers, which deceive the eyes of the onlookers, but have no further substance. Then, there are ways of influencing the imagination of others through the concentration of one's own powers of thought so that they begin to see or feel things which do not really exist as happens in mesmerism or hypnotism. Such a result is sometimes obtained with the help of the devils (*Shayātīn*) too. In speaking of the magicians of the Pharaoh, the Holy Qur'ān says: سَحَرُوٓا أَعْيُنَ النَّاسِ :"They cast a spell on the eyes of the people" (7:116). Or, in another place: يُخَيَّلُ إِلَيْهِ مِن سِحْرِهِمْ أَنَّهَا تَسْعَىٰ : "Through their magic Moses came to think that they (ropes turned into serpents) were running about" (20:66). Obviously, this piece of magic had to do with influencing of the imagination. The second of these verses employs a verb which has the same root as the noun *Khayāl* (thought), and hence clearly states that the ropes and the wands cast down by the magicians had neither turned serpents nor made any movement, but the imagination of Sayyidnā Mūsā (Moses عليه السلام) had been affected so as to see them running about in the shape of serpents. The Holy Qur'ān also indicates the other way of influencing men's imaginations which involves the help of the devils (*Shayātīn*):"

هَلْ أُنَبِّئُكُمْ عَلَىٰ مَن تَنَزَّلُ الشَّيَاطِينُ تَنَزَّلُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ أَفَّاكٍ أَثِيمٍ

> Shall I tell you on whom the devils descend? They descend on all those who are slanderers and sinners." (26:222)

Still another kind of magic is that which can change the very nature of a thing - for example, turning a man into a beast or into a stone. Scholars like Imām Rāghib al-Isfahānī and Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ deny that magic can totally change the nature of a thing, but confine the efficacy of magic only to influencing the imagination and to deceiving the eyes of the onlookers. This is also what the *Mu'tazilah* thought of the matter. But most of the scholars hold that neither the Sharī'ah nor any rational argument forbids the possibility of

trans-substantiation or the changing of one thing into another, like a living body turning into a stone. As for the well-known principle of the classical philosophers that the change of the "essences" (*Haqā'iq*) is not possible, it concerns the "essences" of the three categories - the Impossible, the Possible and the Necessary --, for, rationally speaking, it just cannot be that something impossible should become possible, or that something possible should become impossible. And as to the Holy Qur'ān putting down the magic of the Egyptian sorcerers as only an impact on the imagination, it does not necessarily mean that all the forms of magic should be no more than an influencing of the imagination. Moreover, certain scholars have seen an argument in favour of the possibility of trans-substantiation through magic in a saying of Ka'b al-Ahbār, reported by Imām Mālik in his Muwatta' on the authority of Qa'qa' ibn Hakīm: "Were it not for these phrases which I recite regularly, the Jews would have changed me into a donkey." "A donkey" is, no doubt, a usual metaphor for "a fool." But it is not proper to turn away, unecessarily, from the literal meaning to a metaphorical one. So, the sentence means just what it says - that if the recitation of the phrases had not protected him, the Jewish sorcerers would have changed him into a donkey. The saying, thus, establishes two things. Firstly, it is possible to change a man into a donkey; secondly, the phrases he used to recite had the property of making the magic of the sorcerers lose its efficacy. On being asked what these phrases were, the scholar Ka'b al-Ahbār taught his listeners the following words of prayer:

اعوذ باللّه العظيم الذى ليس بشئ اعظم منه وبكلمات اللّه التّامّات التى
لايجاوز هن برّ ولا فاجر و باسماء اللّه الحسنى كلها ماعلمت منهَا ومالم
اعلم من شرّما خلق وبرء وذرء . (اخرجه فى المؤطا باب التعوذ عندالنوم)

"I seek the protection of Allah the Great, greater than whom there is none; and I seek the protection of the perfect words of Allah which no man, virtuous or wicked, can even transcend; and I seek the protection of all the Beautiful Names of Allah, those of them which I know and those which I do not know, from the evil of everything which Allah has created, to which

He has given existence, and which He has spread (over the earth or the universe)."

To sum up, all the three forms of magic are possible, and can manifest themselves in actual fact.

Miracles

Now, let us turn to another important aspect of the question. Through prophets and saints certain events come into manifestation which normally and habitually never happen, and are hence designated as *Kharq al-'Ādah* (contrary to the habitual). The Islamic term for the miracles of prophets is *Mu'jizāt*, and for those of saints, *Karāmat*. The effects produced by such miracles are in appearance sometimes similar to those produced by magic. This external resemblance leads some ignorant people to confuse the one with the other, and they begin to have a reverence for magicians which is totally out of place. So, one must understand the difference between the two clearly.[26]

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26. **Editorial Note on معجزہ :*Mu'jizah* or Miracle**: For all the unusual events and unprecendented happenings the English language has but one word, 'Miracle' which makes it impossible for the reader in that language to mark the subtle difference in various forms of miracles. Briefly, therefore, the different forms of miracles with their distinct objections are explained here. It is hoped that this will help the readers have a clearer conception of *Mu'jizah*.

These terms are used in Arabic language to define and differentiate the unprecendented happenings and here each of them is explained, so as to clearly differentiate them. Qualitatively, there is, apparently no difference in all of them.

Mu'jizah is the unusual event which occurs at the hands of a prophet. It is purely an act of Allah. A prophet's own volition has no part in the working of it. For those who witness a *Mu'jizah* it is compulsory to believe in it.

Karāmah (كَرَامَة) -- another mode of unusual happenings -- is also an act of Allah; it appears at the hands of a Man of Allah (وَلِيُّ الله). The basic difference in *Mu'jizah* and *Karāmah* is that one who performs *Mu'jizah*, addresses himself as a prophet, a Man of Allah has no such claim. In both *Mu'jizah* and *Karāmah* the usual cause and effect link is absent. Things happen but without any cause; and there is usually a total transformation of the nature and behaviour of objects in *Mu'jizah* and *Karāmah*. What is required is a generalized belief in them. Allah chooses whoever He wills for *Mu'jizah* and *Karāmah*. No degree of stringent discipline can give the power to make the unusual happen.

Continued

The Difference between Miracle and Magic

The miracles of prophets and saints are different from magic, firstly, in their respective natures, and, secondly, with regard to the signs and indications attendant upon each. As for the difference in their natures, it lies in the fact that the results produced through magic depend on the law of causality as much as do the ordinary and usual events in the physical world, the only distinction being that the causes are in the latter case quite clear or easily observable, while in the former they are different for a common man to detect. Where the causes are evident, the effects are immediately referred back to them, and the events thus produced are not considered to be astonishing, but where the causes are hidden or obscure, the events produced by them arouse wonder and amazement, and those who are ignorant of the causes readily come to believe that the things have happened in contravention of the habitual laws of the physical universe.[27] What these people do not realize is that such happenings are as much due to certain causes as the habitual events - the cause in the case of extraordinary happenings often being the activity of a jinn or a devil (*Shaytān*). For example, a letter suddenly falls in front of a man, and on reading it he finds that the letter has been written just this day and is coming from a distance of ten thousand miles. Now, the onlookers would call it a "supernatural" event, for they do not know that Allah has given the power of doing such things to jinns and devils. Once one

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Continued

Irhaṣ (ارهاص) is also a kind of *Karāmah*. It heralds the coming of a prophet. It usually occurs at the hands of the one who is closely related to the prophet: the unprecedented happenings in the the life of Mariam, mother of prophet 'Īsā عليه السلام or the various unusual events that began occurring to and around Aminah -- the blessed mother of our Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم ; for instance, she had no pangs of birth, towards the close of the birth period she used to hear stranger voices greeting her, although she saw no one. It is compulsory to believe in such events of *Irhaṣ* as have been mentioned in the Qur'ān and believe in a general manner, that *Irhaṣ* is usually associated with the coming of a prophet.

27. In the West, they describe such events as being "supernatural", although the Latin word *Natura*, which is the equivalent of the Greek word *Phusis*, does, at least in its original sense, cover all that has been created, whether it lies in the domain studied by empirical science or beyond it.

comes to understand the means through which things of this nature take place, one would no longer see them as "supernatural", or even as being contrary to "habit". In short, all the results obtained through magical practices are, in fact, due to the operation of physical causes, but in the eyes of common people they acquire the illusory appearance of "supernatural" events, simply because the operative causes are hidden from them.

On the other hand, miracles happen directly under divine command without the intervention of physical causes. For example, the Holy Qur'ān tells us how the tyrant *Namrūd* (Nimrod) threw Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm (Abraham عليه السلام) into a blazing fire, and how Allah commanded the fire to grow cold for him, but not so cold as to do him harm -- and the fire obeyed the command, and, instead of scorching him, provided a place of safety. This was a direct divine act, and hence a miracle. Now, we sometimes hear of men who, having applied certain chemicals to their body, can enter a fire without being scorched. This is not a miracle, for the operative cause is of a physical nature - that is, the chemicals. These chemicals are not known to people in general, and they are deluded into believing such a performance to be a "supernatural" event going beyond the realm of "the habitual". The Holy Qur'ān itself leaves no doubt as to a miracle being directly an act of Allah Himself. In the Battle of *Badr*, the Holy Prophet ﷺ took up a handful of pebbles, and threw them at the army of the infidels, which blinded their eyes. Referring to this miracle, the Holy Qur'ān says: وَمَا رَمَيْتَ إِذْ رَمَيْتَ وَلَٰكِنَّ اللَّهَ رَمَىٰ :"When you threw (the pebbles), it was not you who threw, but Allah who threw (them)" (8:17). The statement is explicit enough, and means that the miraculous result produced by a handful of pebbles was not the work of the Holy Prophet ﷺ , but the act of Allah Himself.

Miracle and Magic: How to distinguish between them?

Having explained the difference between the nature of a miracle and that of magic, we must now turn to another important question -- the results produced by each of them being in appearance the same, how is the common man to know the difference between the two? In fact, Allah has given to each certain characteristic features which can help the common man to distinguish miracles from magic. Firstly,

miracles are manifested through those whom everyone knows to be clean in body, pure in deeds and God-fearing. On the contrary, magic shows its effectiveness through those who are unclean in body, dirty in deeds, shunning the worship of Allah and His remembrance. This is a distinction which everyone can observe with his own eyes. Secondly, Allah has so ordained things that if a man pretends to be a prophet and claims to perform miracles, and yet tries to practise magic, his magic is never effective, but he can be effective in magic so long as he does not lay a claim to prophethood.

Magic and Prophets

As to the question whether magic can have an effect on prophets, we shall say that it can. As we have explained above, magic operates through physical causes, and prophets are not immune to the influence of physical causes. Just as they feel the effects of hunger and thirst, fall ill and get healed through the operation of apparent physical causes, in the same way they can be affected by the hidden operations of magic, which are no less physical. Let us add that being affected by magic does in no way go against the dignity of the station of prophethood -- no more than would thirst or hunger. Authentic *aḥādith* report that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was affected by the magic spell cast by the Jews, that he came to know of it through revelation, and that he took certain measures to free himself of its effects. The Holy Qur'ān too tells us how Sayyidnā Mūsā (Moses عليه السلام) experienced the effects of magic when the sorcerers cast a spell on his eyes, and the ropes and the sticks thrown by them began to look like running serpents, so that he was really frightened (20:66,67).

Injunctions of the Sharī'ah with regard to Magic

As we have already said, *Sihr* (magic), in the terminology of the Holy Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth*, refers only to those practices in which one seeks the help of jinns and devils (*Shayāṭin*) by gaining their pleasure through the adoption of certain phrases or actions that involve infidelity (*Kufr*) and association (*Shirk*) or sin and transgression, and thus brings about certain extraordinary and unusual events. The magic of Babylon, mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān, was just this, and it is this form of magic which it condemns as infidelity or *Kufr* (Jaṣṣāṣ). According to Abu Mansur, the most valid and correct view in this respect is that each and every form of magic does

not, unconditionally and absolutely, constitute infidelity, but only that form which employs actions or speech contrary to the tenets of faith (*'Īmān*). (Rūh al-Ma'ānī)

As everyone knows, the Holy Qur'ān and the *Hadīth* repeatedly enjoin upon the Muslims to consider the *Shayāṭin* as one's enemies, to hate them and to curse them. Seeking to please them and to win their friendship, in contravention of such clear commandments, is in itself a sin. Moreover, they are pleased only when one indulges in *Kufr* (infidelity) or *Shirk* (association), and thus forfeits one's faith (*'Īmān)* altogether, or at least in disobedience and transgression, displeasing Allah and His angels by wallowing in dirt and impurity -- which becomes an additional sin. And if one makes use of magic for doing some harm to a human being unlawfully, it is still one more sin.

Thus, what the Holy Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth* call *Sihr* can never be free either of infidelity in the matter of faith, or at least of infidelity in the matter of actions. If, in order to please the *Shayāṭin*, one adopts actions or speech involving infidelity or association, one would be committing an act of real infidelity in the matter of faith; and even if one manages to avoid infidelity and association in speech or action, but indulges in other sinful activities, one would not remain free from infidelity in the matter of actions. This is what the Holy Qur'ān means when, in the present verses, it designates magic as *Kufr*.

To sum up, when magic employs actions or speech involving infidelity (such as seeking the help of *Shayāṭin*, or believing the stars and the planets to be effective in themselves, or claiming prophethood by presenting the results of magical procedures as miracles, etc), such a magic, according to the consensus, constitutes infidelity; and when magic does not involve acts of infidelity but only the commission of sinful acts, such a magic is a major sin.

Now, let us add some subsidiary injunctions with regard to magic.

(1) Since magic is not usually free from infidelity in the matter of faith or in that of action, it necessarily follows that it is forbidden to learn or teach or practice it. Some jurists, however, allow one to learn magic for the purpose of protecting Muslims from harm, but one must not try to learn more than is necessary.

(2) If in preparing charms and amulets the help of Jinns and *Shayāṭin* has been sought, they too come under the category of *Sihr*, and are thus forbidden. If the words employed in the charms are vague, and one does not exactly know what they mean but suspects that they are invocations addressed to idols or *Shayāṭin*, even such charms are forbidden.

(3) As for the other forms of magic beside the *Sihr*, like that of Babylon, condemned by the Holy Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth*, if they involve *Kufr* and *Shirk* in some way, they too are forbidden.

(4) If there is a form of magic which employs words or actions or other elements to which the Sharī'ah does not object, then it is permissible on condition that it is not used for a purpose which the *Sharī'ah* forbids.

(5) It is permissible to use the verses of the Holy Qur'ān, or the Divine Names or the words of the *Ḥadīth* in preparing charms and amulets, or as a recitation or invocation for gaining divine help in order to attain a desired end. But if such a use of the sacred texts or words is made for a reprehensible purpose, like doing harm to someone without an excuse, even that is forbidden. (Shamī, Fatāwā Qadī Khān)

A doctrinal point

Verse 102 says: "They could not thus do any harm to anyone, except with the permission of Allah". This shows that causes in themselves and by themselves cannot produce the effects one usually associates with them, and it is Allah who creates the effects as much as the causes. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Verse 104

يَاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَقُوْلُوْا رَاعِنَا وَقُوْلُوا انْظُرْنَا وَاسْمَعُوْا ۗ وَلِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ○

O those who believe, do not say "*Rā'inā*", but say "*Unẓurnā*", and listen. And for the unbelievers there is a grievous punishment. (Verse 104)

Among other perversities, some of the Jews invented a new mischief. When they presented themselves before the Holy Prophet

ﷺ, they would address him with the word *Rā'inā*, which, in Arabic, means "be mindful of us", but is, in Hebrew, a curse. The latter is what they intended, but the Arabs, not knowing Hebrew, could not see the point, and some Muslims too, with the Arabic sense of the word in mind, began to address the Holy Prophet ﷺ in the same manner to the great glee of the Jews who had thus found a way of insulting him openly, and had even tricked the Muslims into joining them. In order to frustrate the design of the Jews, the Holy Qur'an commands the Muslims to use the word *Unẓurnā* instead of *Rā'inā*, for the meanings of the two words are the same in Arabic. The verse also announces a dire punishment to the Jews for showing disrespect to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and for trying to be clever with him.

The verse describes the insolent Jews as *K¯firīn* (infidels), which means that being intentionally disrespectful t rds a prophet even in an indirect manner constitutes infidelity.

The verse shows that if a perfectly legitimate action on one's part provides room for others to commit illegitimate actions, even the legitimate action no longer remains lawful for one. For example, if a permissible action on the part of a scholar is likely to lead the ignorant into error and to induce them to do impermissible things, that permissible action will then become forbidden for him, provided that the action concerned is not essential according to the Sharī'ah and is not included among its objects. The Holy Qur'ān and the *Hadith* provide many instances of this nature. For example, before the advent of Islam the Quraysh had, in rebuilding the Ka'bah, made certain modifications in the design set by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm (Abraham عليه السلام). A *ḥadīth* reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ wished to demolish the present structure, and to build it again according to the Abrahamic pattern, but he did not do so, for such an action could have led ignorant people into misunderstanding and error.

In the vocabulary of the Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence, such injunctions are described as سدّ الذرائع : *Sadd al-Dharā'i:* "removing the means (to error)" and are accepted by all the jurists -- those of the Hanbali school being very particular about them. (Qurṭubī)

Verse 105

مَا يَوَدُّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْ اَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ وَلَا الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ اَنْ يُّنَزَّلَ

عَلَيْكُمْ مِّنْ خَيْرٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ وَاللّٰهُ يَخْتَصُّ بِرَحْمَتِهٖ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ط
وَاللّٰهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيْمِ O

Those who disbelieve from among the people of the Book, or idolaters, do not like that any good should come to you from your Lord. But Allah chooses for His grace whom He wills. And Allah is the Lord of great bounty. (Verse 105)

The previous verse told us how the Jews behaved towards the Holy Prophet ﷺ ; the present verse speaks of their behaviour towards Muslims in general. Some of the Jews used to assure the Muslims of their sincerity towards them, and to pretend that they would very much have liked the Muslims to have received from Allah religious doctrines and commandments superior to what they themselves had received, so that they too could accept them, but unfortunately Islam did not seem to be a better religion. The Holy Qur'ān refutes their claim to be the well-wishers of the Muslims, and declares that the infidels, whether they be the Jews or the associators, are so jealous of Muslims that they can never like the idea of their receiving from Allah any kind of blessing whatsoever. Of course, this jealousy can do no harm to the Muslims, for Allah is Beneficent and All-Powerful, and can shower his special blessings on whomsoever He chooses.

These Jews used to make two claims -- firstly, that Judaism was a better religion than Islam; secondly, that they were the well-wishers of the Muslims. They could not establish the first of these claims on the basis of any valid argument, and it remained an empty assertion. Moreover, the difference between Islam and Judaism does not primarily depend on the question of one being better than the other. For, when something new comes to abrogate something older, the latter is automatically given up -- and Allah has sent Islam to abrogate all the earlier religions. The fact being so obvious, the Holy Qur'ān says nothing in refutation of the first claim, and takes up only the second. The *mushrikīn* (associators) have been mentioned here along with the Jews for the sake of emphasis, and to point out that Jews cannot be the well-wishers of Muslims any more than *mushrikīn* can -- the two being alike in their hatred of Muslims.

Verses 106 - 107

مَا نَنۡسَخۡ مِنۡ اٰيَةٍ اَوۡ نُنۡسِهَا نَاۡتِ بِخَيۡرٍ مِّنۡهَآ اَوۡ مِثۡلِهَا ؕ اَلَمۡ تَعۡلَمۡ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىۡءٍ قَدِيۡرٌ ۝ اَلَمۡ تَعۡلَمۡ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ لَهٗ مُلۡكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالۡاَرۡضِ ؕ وَمَا لَكُمۡ مِّنۡ دُوۡنِ اللّٰهِ مِنۡ وَّلِىٍّ وَّلَا نَصِيۡرٍ ۝

Whenever We abrogate a verse or cause it to be forgotten, We bring one better than it or one equal to it. Do you not know that Allah is powerful over everything? Do you not know that to Allah alone belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth? And, you have none, other than Allah, to protect or help you. (Verses 106 - 107)

At first, Muslims used to pray with their faces turned towards the *Baytul-Maqdis* at Jerusalem; later on, Allah commanded them to turn towards the Ka'bah. Similarly, certain other injunctions were abrogated altogether, or replaced by others. This provided the Jews and some of the associators too with an occasion to taunt the Muslims, and to say that such changes were made by the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself and not by Allah. Their purpose was to sow the seed of doubt in the mind of the Muslims with regard to the Holy Qur'ān being a book revealed by Allah. They used to argue that if everything that Allah revealed was good, as the Muslims affirmed, why should one injunction be replaced by another? For, it would only mean that one of the two injunctions must be good, and the other evil, but no divine revelation can possibly be evil. Putting these two premises together, the Jews tried to draw the conclusion that the Holy Qur'ān could not be a revealed book.

The present verse refutes this line of argument, and, in effect, points out that abrogation does not mean replacing good with evil, or vice versa, which should imply the possibility of the presence of evil in divine revelation, but that everything that Allah reveals to His prophets is good, and that what has been abrogated is good as much as what abrogated it.

The verse declares that if Allah chooses to abrogate an injunction contained in a certain verse, while retaining the verse itself as a part of the Holy Qur'ān, or chooses to remove a verse from the memories of

men altogether, there is nothing objectionable in it, for Allah alone knows the wisdom that lies in His choice, and He makes these changes for the good of men. In fact, He always sends another verse or injunction better than, or at least equal to, what He has abrogated. Allah being omnipotent and omniscient, He possesses the authority to change His commandments as He likes, and He also knows what is good for men at a particular time, and makes these changes according to this knowledge. Men have no friend or helper except Allah. As friend, Allah keeps their good in view while laying down injunctions. As helper, He protects those who obey His commandments against the hostility of their foes - but if the obedient are to receive blessings in the other world greater than the harm they have to suffer in this world, the apparent domination of their foes does not really matter.

What is *Naskh*? (Abrogation)

Verse 106 speaks of Allah abrogating certain verses, or making men forget certain others. The first phrase of the verse, thus covers all the possible forms in which a verse of the Qur'ān can be abrogated. The Arabic word in the text is *Naskh*, which has two lexical meanings -- (1) to write, and (2) to abolish, to repeal. According to the consensus of all the commentators, the word has been employed in this verse in the second sense -- that is, the repeal or abrogation of an injunction. So, in the terminology of the Holy Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth*, *Naskh* (نسخ) signifies the promulgation of an injunction in place of another -- whether the later injunction merely consists in the repeal of the earlier or, substitutes a new regulation in its place. The other form of *Naskh* mentioned in this verse is that sometimes Allah made the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the blessed Companions forget a certain verse altogether. The commentators have cited several instances of this kind of *Naskh*, and the purpose in such cases has usually been to repeal a certain regulation.

The kinds of abrogation

Making laws and repealing them to promulgate new ones in their stead is a regular and well-known practice in human governments and institutions. But in the case of man-made laws abrogation takes place sometimes because the law-makers do not understand the situation properly while making a certain law, and have to change it when they

realize their mistakes, and sometimes because when a law is promulgated, it is in accord with the prevailing situation, but when quite unforeseen changes alter the situation, the law too has to be changed. But these two forms of abrogation are out of the question in the case of divine injunctions.

There is, however, a third form too. The lawmaker makes a law, knowing fully well that the circumstances are going to change in such a way that the law will no longer be suitable for the new situation; so, when the situation changes as he already knew, he changes the law too, and promulgates a new one which he had thought of at the very start. For example, a physician prescribes a medicine for a patient in view of his present conditions, but he knows that when the patient has been using it for two days, his condition will change and require a new medicine -- with this realization, he prescribes a medicine suitable for that day, but two days later, when circumstances have changed, he prescribes a new one. The physician can easily give the patient written instructions for the whole course of the treatment, with all the changes in the medicines duly indicated. But this would be putting too much burden on the already feeble patient, and there would also be the danger of some harm through a possible error or misunderstanding.

This is the only form of abrogation which can occur, and has been occurring in divine injunctions and in divine books. Every new Shari'ah and every new revealed Book has been abrogating many injunctions of the earlier Sharī'ah and of the earlier Book. Similarly, within the same Shari'ah, too, it has always happened that a certain law was in force for a time, but Divine Wisdom chose to abrogate it and to promulgate another in its place. A *ḥadīth* reported by Muslim says: لم تكن نبوة قط الا تناسخت : "There has never been a prophethood which did not abrogate some injunctions." This is a principle which it should not be difficult to understand. It was only some malicious and ignorant Jews who confused the divine abrogation of injunctions with the two forms of the repeal of man-made laws, and began, in their impudence, to taunt the Holy Prophet ﷺ - in reply to which, as we have said, these two verses were revealed. (Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Kaṭhīr etc.)

As for the Muslims, it was probably in their desire to avoid giving occasion to the enemies of Islam for such taunts that some from among

the *Mu'tazilah* tried to explain away the whole question of *Naskh*. Logically speaking, there is a possibility -- so ran their argument -- of abrogation in the case of divine injunctions, and the possibility cannot be denied on any rational ground, but abrogation has not actually occurred in the Holy Qur'ān, and there is no verse in the Holy Book which abrogates another (*Nāsikh*) and no verse which has been abrogated (*Mansūkh*). This view is attributed to Abū Muslim al-Isfahānī, but the *'Ulama'* in general have always rejected this opinion, and refuted the argument. Thus, we read in "Rūh al-Ma'ānī":

> واتفقت اهل الشرائع على جواز النسخ و وقوعه وخالفت اليهود غيرالعيسوية فى جوازه وقالوا: يمتنع عقلاً وأبو مسلم الاصفهانى فى وقوعه فقال: إنه و إن جاز عقلا لكنه لم يقع
>
> "The people belonging to all the Sharī'ahs are unanimous in accepting the validity of abrogation and its actual occurrence both. Only the Jews -- with the exception of their 'Isawiyyah sect have denied the possibility of abrogation, and Abū Muslim al-Isfahānī has denied its occurrence, for he says that it is rationally possible, but has not actually taken place."

Imām al-Qurṭubī says:

> معرفة هذا الباب أكيدة و فائدته عظيمة لاتستغنى عن معرفته العلماء ولاينكره الاّ الجهلة الاغبياء
>
> "It is essential to understand the question of abrogation, and great benefits flow from such an understanding, which no scholar can dispense with, and no one can deny abrogation except the ignorant and the dull-headed."

In this connection, al-Qurṭubī has related a very illuminating incident. The fourth *Khalīfah* Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنه saw a man preaching in the mosque. He asked the people what the man was doing. On being told that he was preaching, the blessed *Khalīfah* said: "He is not doing anything of the sort, but only announcing to the people that he is such and such a man and the son of such and such, and asking them to recognize and remember him." Calling the man to his side, he asked: "Do you know the injunctions which have been abrogated and those which have abrogated the earlier ones?" When he confessed that he did not, the *Khalīfah* turned him out of the mosque, and ordered him never to preach there.

It is not feasible to cite here all the sayings of the blessed Companions and their immediate Successors (*Tābi'īn*) which affirm the actual occurrence of abrogation in the case of injunctions laid down by the Holy Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth*. Some of these have been quoted, along with the evidence for the authenticity of the reports, in the commentaries of Ibn Jarīr and Ibn Kaṭhīr etc. and in "Al-Durr al-Manthur". As for the reports less strongly authenticated, they are just innumerable. That is why there has always been a total consensus of the *'Ulamā'* on the question of *Naskh*, except for Abu Muslim al-Isfahānī and a few others from among the *Mu'tazilah* who have denied the actual occurrence of abrogation -- but Imām Rāzī has, in his commentary, exposed in detail the hollowness of their opinion.

The terminology of the *Naskh*

It is also essential to keep in mind a certain distinction in the use of the word *Naskh* as a technical term of the Sharī'ah. The technical sense of the word implies changing an injunction, and replacing one injunction by another. Now, this change may consist in repealing an injunction altogether and replacing it by another (for example, fixing the Ka'bah as the Qiblah -- the direction towards which Muslims turn in their prayers -- instead of the *Baytul-Maqdis*); the change may equally consist in retaining an injunction but adding certain condition and provisions to it. The *'Ulama'* of the early period of Islam have used the word *Naskh* in this general and comprehensive sense which includes the total repeal of an injunction as well as a partial change in an injunction with the addition of certain conditions, provisions or exceptions. That is why the *'Ulamā'* of the earlier period have indicated some five hundred verses of the Holy Qur'ān which, according to them, have been abrogated.

But, according to the *'Ulamā'* of a later period, only that change is to be called a *Naskh* which cannot in any way be brought into consonance with an earlier injunction. Obviously, this approach greatly reduces the number of abrogated verses. For example, there are, according to al-Suyūṭi, only twenty such verses. Later on, Shāḥ Waliyyullah, seeking to bring the abrogated injunctions in consonance with the earlier injunctions, reduced the number of abrogated verses to only five -- these being the cases where later injunctions could not

be made to correspond with the earlier ones without far-fetched interpretations. This effort is highly commendable, because the basic postulate behind an injunction is its permanence, while abrogation goes against this postulate, and hence it is not proper to posit abrogation in a verse laying down an injunction which can, in some justifiable manner, be shown to be still valid.

But this effort to reduce the number of abrogated verses does not, and cannot in the least imply [28] that the presence of abrogation is in any way -- may Allah forgive us for reproducing a blasphemy -- a shortcoming or defect in the Holy Qur'ān or Islām, that the *'Ulamā'* have for the last fourteen hundred years been trying to remove it, that the ultimate inspiration came to Shāh Waliyyullāh whose extraordinary achievement lies in having reduced the number of abrogated verses to five, and that now one may wait for a few geniuses who would bring the number down to zero.

To adopt such an approach towards the question of "*Naskh*" is no service to Islam or to the Holy Qur'ān,[29] nor can it obliterate the profound investigations into truth of the matter made by the blessed Companions, their Successors, and the *'Ulamā'* of the generations that followed them during the last fourteen hundred years, nor can it stop the recriminations of the enemies of Islam. In fact, all it would do is to furnish a weapon to the present-day traducers of Islam and those who wish to rebel against Islam, who would now be saying that what the *'Ulamā'* of the Islamic *Ummah* have been maintaining on the subject for the last fourteen hundred years has finally proved to be wrong. May Allah forbid such a thing! If this door is opened, it would let in all kinds of disorders, and all the injunctions of the Sharī'ah would come under suspicion. Then, is there any guarantee that the results of this "modernistic" research would not turn out to be wrong tomorrow!

We have come across certain recent writings in which an attempt has been made to revive the argument of Abū Muslim al-Isfahānī.

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28. As the 'modernists' have been all too impatient to believe.

29. To which pretends the whole tribe of self-styled scholars, researchers, "experts in Islamic studies" and "revivificateurs of Islam."

Such writers begin with the assumption that the Arabic word *Mā* in verse 106 is not a relative or adverbial pronoun signifying "whenever", or "whichever" but a conjunction implying "if" that introduces a conditional clause; so, they translate the first phrase of the the verse not as "whichever verse We abrogate", but as "if We abrogate a verse", and say that the statement pertains to a supposition or to an imaginary situation as do the phrases beginning with the Arabic word *Law* (لو : if) -- for example: لَوْكَانَ فِيهِمَا اٰلِهَةٌ : "If there were in the sky and the earth another god beside Allah" (21:22) or إِنْ كَانَ لِلرَّحْمٰنِ وَلَدٌ: "If the All-Merciful had a son" (43:81). On this basis, they argue that abrogation is possible, but has never actually occurred. Such writers, we are afraid, do not show an intimate knowledge of Arabic grammar, for there is a great deal of difference between a condition suggested by the word *Mā* and the imaginary situation introduced by the conjunction *Law*. Moreover, it is on the basis of this verse itself that the blessed Companions have affirmed the occurrence of abrogation, and have even cited many instances. So have their Successors and all authentic Commentators. In view of such unanimity, the new-fangled interpretation cannot be acceptable. Even Shāh Waliyyullāh, in reducing the number of abrogated verses, has never thought of denying the fact of abrogation. In short, all the authentic and authoritative *'Ulamā'*, from the days of the blessed Companions down to our own day, have always affirmed not only the possibility, but also the actual occurrence of abrogation. This has been the position of all the *'Ulamā'* of Deoband too, without any exception.

The injunctions with regard to abrogation are too many and too intricate to be discussed here -- they properly belong to the books on the Principles of Jurisprudence.

Verse 108

اَمْ تُرِيْدُوْنَ اَنْ تَسْـَٔلُوْا رَسُوْلَكُمْ كَمَا سُئِلَ مُوْسٰى مِنْ قَبْلُ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّتَبَدَّلِ الْكُفْرَ بِالْاِيْمَانِ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ سَوَآءَ السَّبِيْلِ ۝

Or, do you rather want to ask your Prophet as Mūsā was asked earlier? And whoever takes to infidelity in exchanges of faith has certainly missed the straight path. (Verse 108)

Hostility to the Holy Prophet ﷺ had become so habitual to the Jews that they were always making insolent demands. Once they asked him to bring before them whole of the Qur'an all at once just as the Torah had been revealed. In reprimanding them for making such improper demands on the prophets of their time, the verse reminds them how their forefathers too had done the same -- for example, they had asked Sayyidnā Mūsā (Moses عليه السلام) to help them to see Allah openly with their physical eyes. In such cases, the intention of the Jews had never been to seek guidance or to satisfy their doubts or to strengthen their faith, but only to cast aspersions on a prophet, or to question the wisdom of Allah. The verse indicts this behavior as *Kufr* (infidelity). Such demands are improper, because there is a *raison d'etre* for everything Allah does, but divine wisdom alone knows what that is, and the creature has no right to determine the precise mode of his Creator's acts -- he should not even ask the why and wherefore of a divine action, but accept it and submit himself to the Divine Will.

If one takes this verse as having been addressed to the Muslims, it would mean that they are being warned against making improper demands on the Holy Prophet ﷺ .

Verses 109 - 110

وَدَّ كَثِيرٌ مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ لَوْ يَرُدُّونَكُم مِّنْ بَعْدِ إِيمَانِكُمْ كُفَّارًا ج
حَسَدًا مِّنْ عِندِ أَنفُسِهِم مِّنْ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الْحَقُّ ج فَاعْفُوا
وَاصْفَحُوا حَتّٰى يَأْتِيَ اللّٰهُ بِأَمْرِهِ ط إِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ
قَدِيرٌ ٥ وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتُوا الزَّكٰوةَ ط وَمَا تُقَدِّمُوا لِأَنفُسِكُم
مِّنْ خَيْرٍ تَجِدُوهُ عِندَ اللّٰهِ ط إِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ٥

Many among the people of the Book desire to turn you, after your accepting the faith, back into disbelievers -- all out of envy generating from their hearts, even after the truth has become clear to them. So, forgive and overlook till Allah brings out His command. Certainly, Allah is powerful over everything. And be steadfast in *Salāh*, and give *Zakāh*. And whatever good you send

forth for yourselves, you will find it with Allah. Certainly, Allah is watchful of what you do. (Verses 109 - 110)

Some of the Jews, pretending to be the well-wishers of the Muslims, were always inventing new stratagems to make them turn away from Islam, and, in spite of repeated failure in this effort, did not refrain from it. The verse warns the Muslims against their intentions, which are motivated, not by sincerity and friendship, but by envy -- which in its turn arises not from anything the Muslims do, but spontaneously from within themselves even after they have come to understand clearly what the truth is. The verse also asks the Muslims not to give way to their justifiable anger at such misconduct, but to forgive the Jews, and wait till Allah sends a new commandment with regard to such matters. Thus, the verse gives an indication that Allah is soon going to lay down a law for the preservation of peace and order on the earth which would guide the Muslims in dealing with mischief-makers -- the law, of course, being the permission to go to war against the enemies of Islam. The Muslims were actually conscious of their own weakness and the strength of their foe, and could have wondered how they would be able to act upon the new law. So, the verse reminds them that Allah's power extends over everything, small or big, ordinary or extraordinary.

The next verse asks the Muslims to continue offering their prayers and paying *Zakāh* and when the new law comes down, they can add the participation in a *Jihād* to these good deeds which they have already been performing. Nor should the Muslims suppose that until they can take part in a *Jihād*, mere prayers and fasting will not bring them the spiritual merit they desire; in fact, they shall receive a full reward in the other world for each and every good deed they perform, for Allah knows what people do, and not a particle of one's good deeds shall be lost.

This command to show forbearance towards the Jews was proper to the situations of the Muslims at that time. Later on, Allah fulfilled the promise made in verse 109, and sent down the injunction with regard to *Jihād*. Then, this new law was applied to the Jews as well as to other miscreants - in order to prevent disorder and to make peace

and order prevail on the earth, Muslims went to war against them, and the mischief-makers were either killed, or forced into exile, or made to pay *Jizyah.*[30]

Verses 111 - 113

وَقَالُوا لَن يَدْخُلَ الْجَنَّةَ إِلَّا مَن كَانَ هُودًا أَوْ نَصَارَىٰ ۗ تِلْكَ
أَمَانِيُّهُمْ ۗ قُلْ هَاتُوا بُرْهَانَكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ 0 بَلَىٰ مَنْ
أَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهُ لِلَّهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ فَلَهُ أَجْرُهُ عِندَ رَبِّهِ وَلَا خَوْفٌ
عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ 0 وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ لَيْسَتِ النَّصَارَىٰ عَلَىٰ
شَيْءٍ وَقَالَتِ النَّصَارَىٰ لَيْسَتِ الْيَهُودُ عَلَىٰ شَيْءٍ وَهُمْ يَتْلُونَ
الْكِتَابَ ۗ كَذَٰلِكَ قَالَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ مِثْلَ قَوْلِهِمْ ۚ فَاللَّهُ يَحْكُمُ
بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فِيمَا كَانُوا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ 0

And they say that no one shall ever enter Paradise unless he is a Jew, or a Christian. These are their fancies. Say, "Bring your proof, if you are truthful." Of course, whosoever submits his self to Allah and is good in deeds has his reward with his Lord, and there shall be no fear for such men, nor shall they grieve. And the Jews say: "The Christians stand on nothing" and the Christians say, "The Jews stand on nothing" -- and they both read the Book! Similarly, those who do not know say as they (the Jews and the Christians) do. So Allah will judge between them on the Day of Resurrection in what they used to dispute. (Verses 111 - 113)

The Jews and the Christians were hostile not only to the Muslims, but also to each other. They had forgotten the essence of religion -- that is, adherence to the true and authentic doctrines, and performance of good deeds as laid down by the Sharī'ah -- and had identified it with a mere affiliation to a racial or social community. Each of the two groups claimed that it had the exclusive right to go to

30. Which is a special levy on non-Muslims who live under the protection of the Islamic state and which absolves them from military service.

the Paradise, without having any argument to substantiate the claim. The Jews read the Torah, while the Christians read the Evangel, and they could have easily seen that the two Books confirm each other. Each party used to assert, in its malice, that the religion of the other was baseless. This gave an excuse to the *mushrikīn* (associators) who, in spite of their ignorance, began to say the same of both the religions.

The Holy Qur'ān dismisses these pretensions as mere fancy and self-delusion. It declares that other people too will go to Paradise who have, in their time, been following the Sharī'ah of their own prophet, and who, now that the Holy Qur'ān also has abrogated all the earlier Divine Books, follow the Islamic Sharī'ah. Verse 112 lays down the general principle in this respect, which is accepted by the followers of all the Divine Books. The essence of religion, whether it be Islam or Christianity or Judaism, lies in two things. (1) One should obey Allah in one's belief as well as in one's actions. (2) This obedience should not arise from expediency, but one should surrender oneself to divine commandments in all sincerity. Moreover, it is not enough to be worthy of Paradise merely to have a sincere intention to obey Allah, and then to invent, according to one's own fancy, the modes and forms of obedience, for it is absolutely essential that the forms of worship and the modes of obedience should be no other than those which Allah Himself has appointed through the agency of His prophets -- it goes without saying that since the revelation of the Holy Qur'ān this can only mean accepting and following the Islamic Sharī'ah. We may add that in connection with the first of these two principles, the Holy Qur'ān employs the Arabic word أَسْلَمَ : *Aslama* which signifies total submission to Allah, and in connection with the second word *Muhsin*, which signifies وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ : "one who performs good deeds" according to the Sharī'ah.

The differences between the Jews and the Christians

In so far as these verses deal with the claims of the Jews and the Christians, the point of the argument is this:- Having laid down the two principles the acceptance of which makes one worthy of Paradise, the Holy Qur'ān suggests that they should now try to find out who is really acting upon them. Obviously, one who keeps following an in-

junction even after it has been abrogated cannot be described as obedient, and hence the Jews and the Christians no longer deserve this title. After the abrogation of an injunction, obedience consists in acting upon the new injunction which has replaced the earlier one. This condition is now being fulfilled only by the Muslims who have accepted the latest and the last Prophet ﷺ and his Sharī'ah. Hence, they alone shall now be considered worthy of Paradise. The condition of one's being sincere in one's obedience excludes the hypocrites too, for the Sharī'ah counts them among the infidels, and thus assigns them to Hell.

Verse 112 also announces the reward of those who act upon these principles -- on the Day of Judgment, they shall have nothing to fear, nor shall they grieve, as angels will give them good tidings. As for the debates among the Jews, the Christians and the associators, Verse 113 declares that Allah will Himself decide the question finally on the Day of Judgment. In fact, the question has already been settled on the basis of what Allah has revealed in His Books as well as on the basis of rational argument; the final decision on the Day of Judgment will be of the visible kind -- those who follow the Truth will be sent to Paradise, while those who go after falsehood will be cast down in Hell.

These verses provide a warning to the Muslims as well, lest they too should delude themselves like the Jews and the Christians, and suppose that merely because they belong to the social community of Muslims and can, as such, claim to be Muslims, whereby they can dispense with the need to obey Allah and to follow the Sharī'ah, and yet receive the rewards Allah has promised to give to true Muslims. Even Muslims have no right to hope for these rewards until and unless they submit themselves totally, in thought and deed both, to the commandments of Allah and His Prophet ﷺ .

Verses 114 - 115

وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ مَّنَعَ مَسٰجِدَ اللّٰهِ أَنْ يُّذْكَرَ فِيهَا اسْمُهٗ وَ
سَعٰى فِىْ خَرَابِهَا أُولٰٓئِكَ مَا كَانَ لَهُمْ أَنْ يَّدْخُلُوْهَآ إِلَّا خَآئِفِيْنَ ۬
لَهُمْ فِى الدُّنْيَا خِزْىٌ وَّلَهُمْ فِى الْاٰخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيْمٌ ○ وَلِلّٰهِ

الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ فَأَيْنَمَا تُوَلُّوا فَثَمَّ وَجْهُ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ O

And who is more cruel than the one who prevents the mosques of Allah from His name being recited therein, and strives for their destruction? It was not for such men to enter them except in awe. For them there is disgrace in this world, and for them, in the other world, there is a mighty punishment. To Allah belongs the East and the West. So, whichever way you turn, there is the Face of Allah. Indeed, Allah is all-Embracing, all-Knowing. (Verses 114 - 115)

In order to understand these two verses, one should keep in mind three different incidents connected with the three groups hostile to Islam, all of which were, in one way or another, guilty of preventing people from worshipping Allah in mosques and of laying them waste.

(1) When Allah changed the Qiblah -- that is to say, commanded the Muslims to turn towards the Ka'bah in their *Salāh*, and not towards the *Baytul-Maqdis* --, the Jews raised all kinds of objections to it, and tried to produce in the minds of the Muslims doubts and misgiving which, had they taken root, would have led to the denial of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and to the giving up of prescribed *Salāh*, thus laying waste the mosque of the Holy Prophet ﷺ .

(2) The Romans had once invaded Jerusalem, and the ignorant among them had polluted the *Baytul-Maqdis*, which naturally prevented people from performing *Salāh* in this mosque. The Christians in a way looked upon the Romans as their ancestors; moreover, the humiliation of the Jews was in itself pleasing to them. Thus, in refusing to condemn this misdeed of the Romans, the Christians too were being indirectly responsible for laying waste the mosque.

(3) At the time of the peace of *Hudaybiyyah*, the *mushrikīn* (associators) did not allow the Holy Prophet ﷺ to enter Makkah and to perform the Hajj. So, this group too was guilty of the same sin.

According to the blessed Companion 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās, Verse 114 refers to the second of these three incidents -- the commentator

Ibn Jarīr too accepts this view. But the commentator Ibn Kathīr follows Ibn Zayd in preferring the third as being the occasion on which this verse was revealed. The Holy Qur'ān, however, speaks in general terms of "the mosques of Allah" so as to lay down a regular and permanent law, for all the peoples, covering all the possible cases of desecrating mosques and of hindering the "remembrance" (ذکر) of Allah in any way and thus laying them waste -- it denounces those who are capable of such a misdeed as being "unjust" or "cruel", and threatens them with humiliation in this world and dire punishment in the other, for the dignity of a mosque requires that one should enter it in a spirit of lowliness and respect, and with the fear of Allah in one's heart.

The prediction of the Holy Qur'ān came true. The groups which had been trying to lay waste the mosques were soon humiliated, and came under the Muslim rule. They are, of course, to meet a dire punishment in the other world for being disbelievers, but the punishment will be all the more severe on account of this additional sin.

The earlier verses have told us how each of these groups claimed to be on the right path. The present verse, in referring to their desecration of mosques, refutes this claim as being a shameless pretension on the part of those whose behaviour itself gives them the lie.

As for Verse 115, let us recall that the idolaters compelled the Holy Prophet ﷺ to migrate from Makkah to Madīnah, and thus separated him from the Ka'bah (the incident is, of course, known as the *Hijrah*). For some sixteen or seventeen months after that, the Muslims had to, under the commandment of Allah, turn towards the *Baytul-Maqdis* (at Jerusalem) while offering *Salāh*. But the Holy Prophet ﷺ felt a deep longing for turning towards the Ka'bah, and from time to time he would look upwards, waiting for the Archangel Jibrā'īl to come with a new commandment in this respect. Finally, such a commandment did come, and Allah changed the orientation (Qiblah). Speaking of this modification, the Holy Qur'ān says:

قَدْ نَرٰى تَقَلُّبَ وَجْهِكَ فِى السَّمَآءِ فَلَنُوَلِّيَنَّكَ قِبْلَةً تَرْضٰهَا فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَحَيْثُ مَا كُنْتُمْ فَوَلُّوْا وُجُوْهَكُمْ شَطْرَهٗ

We do see how you raise your face again and again towards

> the sky. So, We are going to give you the orientation which you desire. Therefore, turn your face towards the Holy Mosque at Makkah, and all of you too, wheresoever you may be, turn towards it." (2:144)

This new commandment naturally made the Muslims very happy, but the Jews, in their habitual malice, made it an occasion for taunting them and accusing them of going against the way of the earlier prophets.

Thus, there are two facets to Verse 115. On the one hand, it is an answer to the objection raised by the Jews; on the other hand, it brings comfort to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and to the blessed Companions. The verse points out that had Allah been limited to any one direction, a fixed and permanent orientation would have been necessary for worshipping Him, but that, being infinite and beyond all possible limitations and qualifications, He is the Lord of the East and the West and of all conceivable directions -- He is everywhere, and surrounds everything. Wheresoever a man turns, he shall find Allah "facing" him -- that is to say, ready to accept his prayers and to shower His bounties on him. Consequently, neither does the *Baitul-Maqdis* nor the Ka'bah enjoy an inherent or inalienable superiority; either of them can acquire a position of privilege only through divine ordination. All that matters is to obey the commandment of Allah, which alone can make one worthy of receiving His grace. In order to win His pleasure, one has to orient oneself according to what He Himself has determined. If, in spite of being infinite and free from all limitations, Allah has yet fixed a particular orientation, it is because He is Omniscient, and knows what is the best in a certain situation and for a certain people.

Although it is not possible for man to comprehend fully the wisdom which is inherently present in each and every divine commandment, yet the fixing of a definite orientation for *Salāh* has a very obvious *raison d'etre*. Whichever way one turns, one would, no doubt, find Allah "facing" him; but if one has to choose a direction every time one starts to pray, it would only mean a dispersion of one's attention. And when several men are offering their prayers jointly it would really be odd if each one of them adopts a different orientation. So, a fixed orientation for all helps the individual and the groups both in

acquiring the necessary concentration of mind and the sense of a joint purpose.

This explanation satisfactorily dispels the objection often raised by certain antagonists who accuse the Muslims of being "the worshippers of the Ka'bah." If, by way of self-justification, they should still assert that they too keep the idols in front of them while meditating or worshipping for the same purpose of attaining a state of concentration, the claim does in no way reinforce their accusation against the Muslims. Moreover, an impartial investigation into the respective attitudes and frames of minds would easily show how genuine the Muslims are in their claim to be worshipping no one but Allah, and how dubious the position of the others is in this respect. Even if we accept the claim that idols or icons are no more than a means to an end, one would, in employing idols as a "support", still be required to produce a relevant injunction from a Sharī'ah which has not been abrogated as yet. Today, the Muslims alone possess such a Sharī'ah.

Before we proceed, we must sound a note of caution. Verse 115 says that whichever way one turns, one would find "the face of Allah", and that Allah being "All-Embracing" surrounds everything. Wisdom lies in not trying to investigate unnecessarily into the meanings of these or similar statements. For, just as it is not at all possible for a creature to comprehend fully the "Being" (*Dhāt*) of Allah, it is equally impossible to comprehend the essential reality of the "Attributes" (*Sifāt*). All that man is required to do is to have a general faith in the Realities of the Divine Order - there is no obligation for him to look into the particularities of this sphere which is totally beyond human reach.

Injunctions and related considerations

Verse 114 lays down, or helps us to infer, some very important injunctions:-

(1) All the mosques in the world are equally worthy of respect. Just as it is a great sin to desecrate in any way the *Baytul-Maqdis*, or the mosque attached to the Ka'bah (*Al-Masjid al-Hārām*) or the mosque of the Holy Prophet ﷺ , the same prohibition holds good with regard to all other mosques. These three mosques, no doubt, enjoy a

superior position, and special respect is to be paid to them. The reward for offering prayers once in *Al-Masjid al-Haram* is equal to that of praying a hundred thousand times elsewhere; the reward for praying in the mosque of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and in the *Baytul-Maqdis* equals that of praying fifty thousand times. To make a long journey for the purpose of praying in any one of these three mosques is a meritorious act which makes one worthy of receiving a special *barakah*. On the other hand, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has forbidden it that one should make a long journey in order to offer one's prayers in a mosque other than these three, believing it to be a meritorious act.

The sanctity of the Mosque

(2) It is forbidden to prevent people, in any form or manner possible, from offering their prayers or "remembering" Allah in a mosque. An obvious form of such interference is not to allow someone to enter a mosque or to offer his prayers or to read the Holy Qur'an there. A less explicit form is to produce some kind of a noise in the mosque itself or play music nearby, and thus to disturb people in their prayers or in their "remembrance" (ذکر) of Allah. Similarly, if one starts reciting the Holy Qur'ān or "remembering" Allah loudly so as to disturb the people who are offering supererogatory prayers (*Nawāfil*) or themselves reading the Holy Qur'ān or silently "remembering" Allah (*Dhikr*), one is being guilty of the same sin. Therefore, the *Fuqahā'* (masters of Islamic jurisprudence) have forbidden this practice. But, if people are not present in the mosque, one may recite the Holy Qur'ān or make "*dhikr*" in a loud voice. On the basis of this principle we can also see that it is forbidden to beg or to collect donations even for a religious purpose while people are engaged in their prayers or in "*dhikr*."

(3) All the possible forms of laying waste a mosque are forbidden. This includes not only demolishing and destroying a mosque, but also producing conditions which result in a mosque being laid waste or deserted. For, laying waste a mosque implies that few, or only a few people should come there for offering their prayers. A mosque can be said to be flourishing, not on the score of the beauty of its architecture or of its ornamentation, but only when it is full of men who come to pray and to "remember" Allah. Says the Holy Qur'ān:

إِنَّمَا يَعْمُرُ مَسٰجِدَ اللّٰهِ مَنْ اٰمَنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ وَاَقَامَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتَى الزَّكٰوةَ وَلَمْ يَخْشَ اِلَّا اللّٰهَ

Only those do populate the mosques of Allah who believe in Allah and in the Day of Judgment, who are steadfast in *Salāh* and pay the *Zakāh*, and do not fear anyone but Allah" (9:18).

So, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has foretold that when the Day of Judgment comes close, the mosques of the Muslims would be beautifully designed and decorated and be apparently full of people, but they would in reality be deserted, for a few people would go there for the purpose of offering their prayers. We are also reminded of what the fourth *Khalīfah* and the blessed Companion 'Alī رضی اللہ عنہ has said. There are, according to him, six deeds which behove a man -- three of them pertain to the state when one is living at home, and the other three to the state when one is on a journey. The first three are -- to read the Holy Qur'ān, to populate the mosques, and to bring together a number of friends who wish to serve Allah and His faith. The other three are -- to spend out of what one has over one's needy companions of the way, to be polite to everyone, and to be cheerful with one's co-travellers so long as one does not go beyond the limits allowed by the Sharī'ah. What he means by "populating" the mosques is that one should enter them in a spirit of humility and with the fear of Allah in one's heart, and then engage oneself in prayers or in reciting the Holy Qur'ān or in making "*dhikr*." In opposition to this, the laying waste of mosques would mean that few, or only a few people should offer their prayers in them, or that a set of circumstances is allowed to develop which makes it difficult for those who are present to acquire the proper attitude of humility.

If Verse 114 was revealed on the occasion of the Peace of *Hudaybiyyah* when the *mushrikīn* (associators) of Makkah had prevented the Muslims from entering *Al-Masjid al-Ḥarām*, then it is quite obvious that laying waste a mosque does not merely mean demolishing it, but also that it is not being allowed to be used for the purpose for which it was built -- that is, for *Salāh* and for the *Dhikr* (remembrance) of Allah.

As for Verse 115, we have already pointed out that Allah not being

limited to any particular direction or place, the Muslims do not, in turning towards the Ka'bah, at all mean to worship it, but that this particular orientation has been fixed on account of certain other considerations. We have also noted that for sixteen or seventeen months after the *Hijrah*, the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the blessed Companions were made to turn towards the *Baytul-Maqdis* in their prayers under divine commandment. This was, so to say, a practical demonstration of the truth that one can find Allah in every direction, and that Allah's attention encompasses all possible directions and dimensions simultaneously. A further and permanent demonstration of the same truth is provided by the injunction with regard to supererogatory prayers (*Nawāfil*). That is to say, if one wishes to offer such prayers while travelling on a horse or a camel etc., it is not necessary for him even to turn towards the Qiblah, for he is allowed to keep his face towards the direction in which his horse is moving, and to offer his supererogatory prayers through the gestures of his head and arms. In fact, according to certain commentators, Verse 115 lays down just this rule with regard to supererogatory prayers. But one must bear in mind that this injunction applies only to that form of travel which involves animals like a horse or a camel that makes it difficult for one to turn towards the Qiblah. But in other forms of travel (e.g., in a train or a ship or an aeroplane) where it is not difficult to turn towards the Qiblah, one has to adopt the proper orientation even in offering supererogatory prayers. However, should the train or the aeroplane change its direction while one is still praying and there is no room for readjusting one's orientation accordingly, one can go on and finish the prayers in the same state.

Similarly, if one does not know the direction of the Qiblah, nor can correctly determine it on account of the darkness of the night or for some other valid reason, nor can find someone to provide correct information, the same rule would apply in this case too. In such a situation, one is allowed to follow one's conjecture, and to turn in the direction which seems to be the most likely. The direction one chooses would serve as the Qiblah. If, having finished one's prayers, one discovers that the choice of this particular direction was wrong, even then one's prayers would remain acceptable, and one would not have to repeat them.

Verses 116 - 117

وَقَالُوا اتَّخَذَ اللّٰهُ وَلَدًا سُبْحٰنَهٗ بَلْ لَّهٗ مَا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الْاَرْضِ كُلٌّ لَّهٗ قٰنِتُوْنَ ۝ بَدِيْعُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَاِذَا قَضٰٓى اَمْرًا فَاِنَّمَا يَقُوْلُ لَهٗ كُنْ فَيَكُوْنُ ۝

And they say: "Allah has got a son." Pure is He. Instead, to Him belongs all that there is in the heavens and the earth. All stand obedient to Him. Originator of the heavens and the earth, when He decides a matter, to it He simply says: "Be", and it comes to be. (Verses 116 - 117)

As the Holy Qur'ān reports in some other verses, some of the Jews called the Prophet Uzayr (Ezra عليه السلام) the son of God, as did the Christians in the case of Sayyidnā 'Īsā (Jesus عليه السلام) and most of them still do, while the *mushrikīn* of Makkah considered the angels to be the daughters of God. These two verses show the absurdity of such assertions. For, even on rational grounds, it is totally impossible that God should have offspring. Were it at all possible, the situation would necessarily involve either of the two alternative characteristics -- the offspring would belong either to the same genus as the father does, or to a different genus. If it belongs to a different genus, that obviously is a defect, while God should in order to be God, be free of all defects -- as reason itself requires, and as Verse 116 affirms. If the offspring belongs to the same genus, that too is a contradiction in terms, for God has no equal and no existent can belong to the same genus as He does.

Let us explain what we mean. God alone is the Necessary Being (*Al-Dhāt al-Wājib*), and hence necessarily carries within Himself the Attributes of Perfection which are peculiar to Him alone and which cannot exist in any one other than God. Now, if we deny a necessary attribute to a certain being, we automatically deny the existence of that being. So, no one other than God can be a necessary being. Insofar as "necessity" is in itself the essence of the Ultimate Reality, or an inalienable quality of the Ultimate Reality, any one other than God cannot share the Reality with Him. Hence, it would be a plain and simple contradiction in terms of claim that any one other than God can belong to the same genus.

Having refuted the false claims of the Jews, the Christians and the *mushrikīn*, the two verses proceed to demonstrate how and why the Attributes of Perfection are peculiar to Allah Himself and Him alone. Firstly, all that exists in heaven or earth belongs to Allah. Secondly, everything is also subservient to Him -- in the sense that no one can interfere with His omnipotence (for example, with His power to create and to destroy), even if some men may be lax in obeying the injunctions of the Sharī'ah. Thirdly, He is the Creator and the Inventor of the skies and of the earth. Fourthly, His power of creation is so mighty that when He wishes to do something (for example, wishes to create something), He does not need any instruments or helpers -- all that He does is to say, "Be", and the thing becomes what He wishes it to be. These four qualities are not to be found in anyone other than Allah. In fact, even those who attributed offspring to Him, believed in this truth. Thus, their claims to the contrary stand finally refuted.

The two verses give rise to certain other important considerations.

(1) If Allah has chosen to assign certain tasks to certain angels (for example, sending down rain or bringing to the creatures their nourishment), or has chosen to employ causes, materials or physical forces in order to produce certain effects, He has done so in His wisdom. So, it is neither permissible nor proper that men should look upon these angels or causes or physical forces as being effective agents in themselves, and turn to them for help in their need.

(2) The commentator al-Bayḍāwī has remarked that, Allah being the First Cause of the things, the earlier Sharī'ahs had allowed the use of the title "Father" for Him, but that the ignorant misunderstood and distorted the sense of "Fatherhood" so badly that to entertain such a belief or to apply this title to Allah has now been declared to be an act of infidelity (*Kufr*). As this practice can lead to all kinds of doctrinal disorders, it is no longer permissible to employ this particular word or a similar expression with reference to Allah. [31]

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31. As for creation taking place through the Divine Command, "Be", we would like to add a note, following the example of Maulanā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī in his "Bayān al-Qur'ān", for the benefit of those who happen to be interested in Western philosophy, or in Christian theology, or, worst of all, in the writings of the Orientalists and their translations of Sufi texts. Let us begin by saying that it is a mystery -- and we are

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Verse 118

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ لَوْلَا يُكَلِّمُنَا اللّٰهُ اَوْ تَاْتِيْنَآ اٰيَةٌ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ قَالَ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِّثْلَ قَوْلِهِمْ ؕ تَشَابَهَتْ قُلُوْبُهُمْ ؕ قَدْ بَيَّنَّا الْاٰيٰتِ لِقَوْمٍ يُّوْقِنُوْنَ ○

And say those who do not know: "Why is it that Allah does not speak to us, nor does a sign come to us?" So spoke those before them as these men do. Their hearts resemble each other. We have indeed made the signs clear for people who have certitude. (Verse 118)

The Jews, the Christians and the *mushrikin* used to deny the prophethood of Sayyidnā Muḥammad ﷺ and some of them did so out of sheer malevolence. In order to feel triumphant in this obstinacy, they would make absurd and impossible demands, two of which have

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using the word "mystery", not in the debased and the modern sense, but in the original meaning of the term which implies that certain realities are altogether beyond the reach of human understanding, and that certain other realities cannot and must not, even when partially or wholly understood, be given out to those who have no aptitude for receiving them, and that with regard to them it is advisable "to keep one's lips closed." In these matters, when and what one chooses to reveal is ultimately not the question of liberalism or democratism or egalitarianism, but that of "spiritual etiquette." Having repeated the warning given by Maulanā Thānavī himself, we shall do no more than explaining what "Bayān al-Qur'ān" says on the subject.

Regarding this particular mystery, there is a difference of approach between the two groups of the *Mutakallimin* (the masters of *al-'Ilm al-Kalām* or dialectical theology). According to the Asha'ri group, "Be, and it comes to be"(كُنْ فَيَكُوْنُ :*Kun fa Yakūn*) is a metaphorical or allegorical expression. That is to say, the phrase does not signify that Allah actually addressed an existent and commanded it "to be", but it is an allegorical illustration of His omnipotence, suggesting that there is no interval between an act of will on His part and its realization. The commentator al-Baydawi has adopted this view. But, according to the Maturidi group, the phrase literally means what it says. This approach to the subject, however, produces a difficult problem. A command is given only to an existent. If a thing does not exist at all, how can Allah address it? On the other hand, if a thing does already exist, it is superfluous to command it "to be." The problem can easily be resolved if we keep two considerations in mind. Firstly, this command does not

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been mentioned here. To begin with, they insisted that Allah Himself should speak to them, either directly as He speaks to the angels, or through the angels as He speaks to the prophets, and that He should Himself proclaim his injunctions to them so as to make the intervention of a new prophet unnecessary, or should at least announce that He had sent Sayyidnā Muḥammad ﷺ as a prophet, thus making it easy for them to have faith in him and to follow his guidance. Should Allah choose not to accept this demand, they were ready with another -- that is, Allah should send them a sign or proof in confirmation of his prophethood.

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belong to the order of *Tashrī'*: (تشريع : legislation) which requires the addressee to exist in actual fact and to possess understanding; it belongs to the order of *Takwīn* :(تكوين : creation) which is concerned with giving existence to non-existents.

This explanation, in its turn, brings us into the thick of a controversy that has muddled a great deal of Western philosophy and theology. We refer to the question of "creation arising out of nothingness" (Ex Nihilo), and the second of our two considerations will clarify it. It is usual enough to place "existence" (وُجُود : *Wujūd*) in opposition to "nothingness or non-existence" (عدم : *'Adam*). But it has also been said that non-existence does not exist. For, Allah is omniscient, and Divine Knowledge comprehends everything that has been, or is, or will be, so that what does not yet exist according to our reckoning, does already exist in Divine Knowledge. To use a different expression, everything past, present or future has its "pure" and "subtle" counterpart in Divine Knowledge. If Western terminology should be more easily comprehensible to some of our readers, we can call these Prototypes, Numbers, or Essences, or Ideas or Archetypes, but each time we will have to give a more refined and a higher signification to these terms than Pythagoras or Plato ever did. The Sūfis, however, call them "*Al-A'yān al-Thābitah.*" With the help of this explanation we can see that when Allah wishes to create a thing, He commands its Essence, which already exists in His Knowledge, "to be", and it "comes to be" -- that is to say, comes to be actualised in the world. Thus, "creation" does not arise out of "nothingness." Before a thing comes to exist as an "actuality" in the world, it already exists as a "potentiality" in Divine Knowledge. It is this "potentiality" to which the Divine Command "Be" is addressed. Hence, it is equally true to say that Essences do not exist, and to say that Essences do exist. The first statement pertains to the knowledge of the creatures, and the second to the Divine Knowledge.

At the end, we shall again insist that no good can come out of unnecessarily meddling with such delicate questions, specially if the purpose is no more than to seek a new sensation.

In reply to them, Allah puts this demand down as being no more than a foolish custom which has all along been unthinkingly practised by ignorant people even in the earlier ages. Then, the verse traces the origin of this demand to a distortion of the heart, in respect of which all the ignorant people, past or present, are alike, hence the parrot-like repetition of the same demand throughout the ages.

The first of these demands was, on the face of it, silly enough, for, with all the grossness of their minds and hearts, they had the audacity to place themselves on the level of angels and prophets. So, the Holy Qur'ān dismisses it as being unworthy of a reply. But in answer to the other demand, Allah reminds them that He has sent, not one, but a number of clear signs and proofs to confirm and establish the prophethood of Sayyidnā Muḥammad ﷺ . But these signs and proofs can be of help only to those who sincerely wish to know the truth and to attain certitude. As for those who are not in search of the truth, but enjoy being stuck in their malice and obstinacy, there is no help for them.

At this point, we had better say a word to resolve a difficulty that is likely to arise. The Jews and the Christians were "the People of the Book", and some of them were men of learning, and yet Allah calls them ignorant. Why? The reason is that although Allah had sent such a large number of clear signs and definite proofs to establish the prophethood of Sayyidnā Muḥammad ﷺ , yet they persisted in their denial. This is the mentality and the conduct of the ignorant.

Verse 119

إِنَّآ أَرْسَلْنٰكَ بِالْحَقِّ بَشِيْرًا وَّنَذِيْرًا وَّلَا تُسْئَلُ عَنْ أَصْحٰبِ الْجَحِيْمِ ۝

Surely, We have sent you with the truth, a bearer of good tidings, and a warner, and you will not be asked about the people of Hell. (Verse 119)

The implication of Verse 118 was that those who persisted in their denial of the Holy Prophet ﷺ did so out of sheer malice and ignorance, and could not be expected to reform themselves. Since he has been

sent as "the mercy for all the worlds", the thought of their being incorrigible was likely to make him sad on their account. So, in this verse Allah offers him a consolation. He has been sent down to men, bearing the truth and the genuine faith. His function is twofold -- to give glad tidings to those who accept the truth, and warnings of dire punishment to those who deny. Allah assures him that he will not be held responsible or taken to account for those who willingly pursue the way to Hell. All that he is required to do is to keep performing his own function, and not to worry as to who accepts the truth and who does not.

Verse 120

وَلَنْ تَرْضٰى عَنْكَ الْيَهُوْدُ وَلَا النَّصٰرٰى حَتّٰى تَتَّبِعَ مِلَّتَهُمْ ۗ قُلْ اِنَّ هُدَى اللّٰهِ هُوَ الْهُدٰى ۗ وَلَئِنِ اتَّبَعْتَ اَهْوَآءَهُمْ بَعْدَ الَّذِىْ جَآءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ ۙ مَا لَكَ مِنَ اللّٰهِ مِنْ وَّلِيٍّ وَّلَا نَصِيْرٍ O

And the Jews will never be pleased with you, nor will the Christians, unless you follow their faith. Say: "Guidance of Allah is, indeed, the guidance." And were you to follow their desires after what has come to you of the knowledge, there shall be no friend for you against Allah, nor a helper. (Verse 120)

Being anxious to save as many men as possible from misguidance and damnation, the Holy Prophet ﷺ took great pains to convince the deniers, and was specially lenient and gentle with the People of the Book. In this verse, Allah informs him that their denial is not due to lack of convincing arguments and proofs, but is motivated by pride and self-satisfaction, for each of the two groups -- namely, the Jews and the Christians -- believes its own religion to be the only genuine religion, and there is no likelihood of pleasing either of them until and unless the Holy Prophet ﷺ accepts their religion. The religions of the Jews and the Christians, no doubt, were once genuine and had been instituted by Allah. But each had since distorted its religion out of shape; moreover, in sending down Islam as the final Sharī'ah, Allah had abrogated all the earlier ones, and hence Islam had by now become the only Sharī'ah acceptable to Allah, and in this sense the only genuine and veritable "guidance" possible in this last of all the ages.

It is on account of the present distorted state of the earlier religions, and specially because of their having been abrogated by Divine Commandment that Verse 120 equates them with *Ahwā'* (the plural of *Hawā*) -- that is to say, personal desires, or individual opinions and baseless conjectures. Since the deniers are not willing to extricate themselves from their desires and fancies, it is not possible to please them without accepting their opinions -- a thing which a Messenger of Allah can never do. Should they affect a more friendly stance towards the Holy Prophet ﷺ , Allah asks him to say to them in plain and simple words that the only guidance worth the name is that which comes from Allah -- and He has already made it clear enough that Islam is now the only form of "guidance" acceptable to Him.

Now, supposing just for the sake of supposing that he should accept their fancies in spite of having received the Truth from Allah through revelation, the verse informs him that in such a case he would find no helper to save him from divine wrath. Other verses of the Holy Qur'ān, of course, definitely establish the fact that Allah is pleased and will always remain pleased with the Holy Prophet ﷺ , and thus he can never be the object of divine wrath. Since divine wrath necessarily follows upon the acceptance of baseless fancies, it is logically impossible for him to follow the opinions of the Jews and the Christians, as divine pleasure and divine wrath cannot be combined with each other. On the other hand, they can never be pleased with him unless he follows their wishes. Consequently, one cannot expect from them any change of heart. Hence, the purport of Verse 120 is to advise the Holy Prophet ﷺ not to worry too much about them. [32]

Verse 121

اَلَّذِيْنَ اٰتَيْنٰهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ يَتْلُوْنَهٗ حَقَّ تِلَاوَتِهٖ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِهٖ ؕ
وَمَنْ يَّكْفُرْ بِهٖ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْخٰسِرُوْنَ ○

32. Let us add that the warning is apparently addressed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ , but is really intended for deniers, the purpose being to make them realize the dire consequences of their vanity. In fact, divine wrath is already visible, for the warning has been administered to them, not directly but obliquely, which shows the contempt in which Allah holds them -- Translator]

Those to whom We have given the Book and they recite it observing the rights of its recitation, it is they who believe in it. And those who disbelieve in it, they are the losers. (Verse 121)

Verse 120 dealt with the hopeless condition of the opponents of Islam among the People of the Book. Now, the present verse turns, in the usual manner of the Holy Qur'ān, to the other aspect, and speaks of those Jews and Christians who were honest and just, and, having recognised the truth, affirmed the Holy Prophet ﷺ and accepted Islam.

The verse tells us how it has been possible for these men to effect a radical change in themselves. Allah has given a Book to the Christians as well as to the Jews. But, unlike most of their co-religionists, these men have been reading the Book "observing the rights of its recitation." That is to say, they have distorted neither the words nor the meanings, nor have they tried to misinterpret or conceal the prophecies about the coming of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . In other words, they have used their intellect in trying to understand the meanings, and their will in accepting the truth and in following it. It is they who acknowledge the Holy Qur'ān, and have faith in it. In doing so, they are actually affirming their own Books too and acting upon them insofar as their Books explicitly foretell the coming of the Last Prophet ﷺ and of the last Book of Allah. As for those who persist in their denial, they are bound to suffer the greatest loss, for they have refused to believe in the Last Revelation, and have, in fact, not shown much of a belief in their own Books, and not followed the guidance provided by them in this matter. [33]

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33. The commentary we have here is based on a report from the blessed Companion Ibn 'Abbās, according to whom this verse was revealed on the occasion of the arrival of forty Christians from Abyssinia who had accepted Islam. But other commentators believe that "those to whom We have given the Book" are the blessed Companions, and "the Book" is the Holy Qur'ān. As for reading the Book "observing the rights of its recitation", it means enunciating each word correctly and clearly, and keeping the fear and love of Allah present in one's heart while reading, and also the resolve to follow divine guidance and to obey divine commandments. The blessed second *Khalīfah* 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ has said that reading the Holy Qur'ān "observing the rights of its recitation" requires that when one comes to a description of Paradise, one should pray to Allah for granting one this abode, and when one finds a description of Hell, one should seek Allah's protection from it. (Ibn Abī Ḥātim)]

Verses 122 - 123

يٰبَنِىٓ اِسۡرَآءِيۡلَ اذۡكُرُوۡا نِعۡمَتِىَ الَّتِىۡٓ اَنۡعَمۡتُ عَلَيۡكُمۡ وَاَنِّىۡ
فَضَّلۡتُكُمۡ عَلَى الۡعٰلَمِيۡنَ ۝ وَاتَّقُوۡا يَوۡمًا لَّا تَجۡزِىۡ نَفۡسٌ عَنۡ
نَّفۡسٍ شَيۡـًٔا وَّلَا يُقۡبَلُ مِنۡهَا عَدۡلٌ وَّلَا تَنۡفَعُهَا شَفَاعَةٌ وَّلَا هُمۡ
يُنۡصَرُوۡنَ ۝

O children of Isrā'īl, remember My blessing that I conferred upon you, and that I gave you excellence over the worlds. And guard yourselves against a day when no one shall stand for anyone for anything, nor shall ransom be accepted from one, nor shall intercession be of benefit to him, nor shall they be given support. (Verses 122 - 123)

A large section of this Sūrah, ending with the previous verse, has been dealing with different aspects of the conduct of the Israelites (that is, the Jews) in the course of their history. This account had begun with the statement which has been repeated at the end in these two verses. The statement is of a general and principal kind, and the verses which come in between the beginning and the end are, so to say, a detailed demonstration of the statement. On the one hand, it encourages the Israelites to come back to the Straight Path by reminding them of the blessings which Allah has bestowed on them; on the other hand, it warns them of the consequences of their lapses by depicting the Day of Judgment. The purpose of repeating the statement at the end of the discussion is to make the two ideas sink deep into their minds. For, what is aimed at in a discussion is the affirmation of certain basic and general principles -- being succinct, they are easily kept alive in the mind, and, being comprehensive and readily applicable to particular situations, they make it easy for one to remember the details too. In the art of writing and speaking, it is considered to be one of the most effective means of carrying conviction that, before starting on a long analytical discussion of a subject, one should define the basic ideas very briefly and clearly which are always helpful in comprehending the details and the particularities, and that, in concluding the argument, one should repeat these ideas by way of a

summary. The repetition of the introductory statement here is of this very nature.

Verse 124

وَإِذِ ابْتَلَىٰٓ إِبْرٰهِـۧمَ رَبُّهُۥ بِكَلِمٰتٍ فَأَتَمَّهُنَّ ۖ قَالَ إِنِّى جَاعِلُكَ لِلنَّاسِ إِمَامًا ۖ قَالَ وَمِن ذُرِّيَّتِى ۖ قَالَ لَا يَنَالُ عَهْدِى الظّٰلِمِينَ ۝

And when his Lord put Ibrāhīm to a test with certain Words! And he fulfilled them. He said, "I am going to make you an *Imām* for the people." He said, "And from among my progeny?" He replied, "My promise does not extend to the unjust." (Verse 124) [34]

The great trials put to Ibrāhīm عليه السلام

The section dealing with the story of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام begins with Verse 124. It recounts how he was tried by Allah in different ways, how he came out of these trials successfully, and how he was rewarded. It also tells us that when Allah promised to make him a great guide to men, and their chief, (by conferring prophethood

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34. So far a whole section of this Sūrah has been dealing directly with the conduct of the Jews in the course of their history, and their present hostility to Islam, delineating the inner motives and mainsprings of this rabid opposition. As we have seen, they were proud of being the children of Jacob and of Abraham (Sayyidnā Ya'qūb and Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليهم السلام), and believed that, being the chosen people of God, they had the exclusive privilege of being the leaders of humanity, and hence the station of prophethood could not be conferred on anyone who did not belong to their race. Now, the Holy Qur'an proceeds, in the present section of the Surah, to refute this line of thought in an indirect manner, by telling the story of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام and of his elder son Sayyidnā Ismā'il (Ishmael عليه السلام). This section is going to suggest some essential considerations in answer to the denial of the Holy Prophet ﷺ on the part of the Jews:- (1) He alone can be a guide to humanity who is not unjust and not a transgressor, and has successfully gone through the trial imposed on him by Allah -- and these qualifications the Jews do not fulfil. (2) The Ka'bah, towards which the Muslims turn in *Salāh* and which is not acceptable to the Jews, had actually been built by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام , and hence

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on him, or by giving him a huge number of followers), he prayed for this reward to be bestowed on some from among his progeny too. Allah granted this prayer, but on one condition, which is also to serve as a general principle in this matter -- namely, that this dignity shall never be conferred on those who are disobedient and unjust, but on some of those from among his progeny who are obedient and just.

Now, Verse 124 gives rise to a number of very fundamental questions:- The purpose of a trial is to test the aptitude and worthiness of a man for a certain function, but Allah is all-knowing and knows every existent inside out. Then, what was the purpose of this trial? (2) What were the different forms of this trial? (3) What kind of success did Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام attain? (4) What is the nature of the reward he received? (5) What are the various aspects of the principle which defines the conditions necessary for receiving this reward ?

As for the purpose of the trials which Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was made to undergo, we shall point out that the Arabic word رب : *Rabb* (Lord) occurring in this verse provides the clue to the problem. In saying that it was Allah Himself who put him through the trials, the verse chooses to employ, out of all the Divine Names, the title *Rabb*

Continued

the orientation (Qiblah) of the Muslims is the same as was his. (3) The way of Islam is the Way of Ibrāhīm عليه السلام , and the Muslims alone are his real followers. (4) It was Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام himself who had prayed for the Last Prophet to be sent down to humanity, and hence one who at all wishes to follow his way cannot but affirm the Holy Prophet ﷺ and accept Islam. (5) It is wrong of the Jews to deny the Holy Prophet ﷺ merely on account of his not belonging to their race, for Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام had two sons, Sayyidnā Ismā'īl and Sayyidnā Isḥāq (Ishmael and Isaac عليهم السلام), and he had prayed for divine grace to descend on both of them (Genesis, ch. 17), so that the superiority enjoyed by the children of Isaac عليه السلام in their own time had now been transferred to the children of Ismā'īl عليه السلام . What these indications aim at is to show the Jews that if they wish to have a share in the grace of Allah, they had better acknowledge the Holy Prophet ﷺ and accept Islam, the last and now the only valid form of the Abrahamic Way -- **Translator.**

which indicates a specific Divine Attribute -- namely, that of making a thing attain the state of its perfection gradually and stage by stage. In other words, the trial of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was not the punishment for a crime, nor was it intended to uncover a hidden aptitude, but was a manifestation of this particular Divine Action, and a necessary part of the process of "nurturing" the prophet and making him reveal his inherent qualities to the world, so that he may be led, stage by stage, to assume his final station, already chosen for him by his Lord. We may note, in passing, that the Arabic text of the Verse places the object (*Ibrāhīm*) before the subject (*Rabb*), thus indicating the glorious position of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام among the prophets. We may also add that although it is Divine Knowledge and Will that chooses a man for prophethood, yet he is not allowed to assume this station until his aptitude and worthiness has openly shown itself for all men and angels to witness. This is just what had happened, as we have already seen in this Sūrah, in the case of the trial of Sayyidnā Adam عليه السلام before the angels.

As for the particular form in which Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was tried, the Holy Qur'ān only refers to certain "things" (*Kalimah* -- literally, "word"). According to most of the commentators, the "things" or "words" mean certain divine injunctions. But there is some difference of views among the blessed Companions and their immediate successors as to what these injunctions were, and how many. According to some, they were ten, and, according to others, thirty. But basically there is no opposition among these views, for all the injunctions which have been mentioned in this context were, in one way or another, meant to serve as trials and tests. This is what the great commentators like Ibn Jarīr and Ibn Kaṭhīr believe to be the truth of the matter. One thing is, however, quite clear. These trials were not like academic tests, nor were intended to gauge mental capacities or the grasp of mere theories; the purpose, on the other hand, was to test the readiness in obeying Allah and the steadfastness in submitting oneself to divine commandments. This helps us to see that what really has a value in the eyes of Allah is not theoretical hair-splitting, but actual deeds, within and without.

Let us now relate the story of some of the more important trials.

Since Allah intended to raise Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام to a specially exalted station among the prophets, and to confer on him the title of *Khalīlullāh* (the Friend of Allah), he was made to go through very severe trials. Not only his people, but his own family also was sunk deep in idol-worshipping; in opposition to their creed and customs, he was given *"Al-Dīn al-Hanīf"*, "the Pure Religion", and was asked to go out to his people, and to bring them back to the Straight Path. Unflinchingly he obeyed the divine command, and, with the courage and determination of the prophet that he was, he set out to wage a war against idol-worship and to call them to the unalloyed worship of the One God. This obviously drew upon him the ire of his people and of their king *Namrūd* (Nimrod), who finally decided to burn him alive in a blazing fire. Seeking, as he did, nothing but the pleasure of his Lord, he gladly let himself be thrown onto the pyre. Since he had succeeded in this test, Allah commanded: قُلْنَا يَا نَارُ كُونِي بَرْدًا وَسَلَامًا عَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ: "O fire, be coolness and safety for Ibrāhīm" (21:69). As one can see, the command was given to fire as such, and not to any particular one. Consequently, all fire, wherever it was present in the world, grew cold, and the fire set ablaze by *Namrūd* did so, too. Now, excessive cold is equally painful and killing - there is a region of extreme cold in Hell itself, called *Zamharīr*. So, in commanding fire to grow cold, Allah in His grace added the word *Salama* (be safe).

The second trial was that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was asked to leave his homeland, and to migrate to Syria along with his family. Then, he was commanded to leave even this country -- which he readily did, accompanied by his wife Hājirah (Hāgar - رضى الله عنها) and his infant son Sayyidnā Ismā'īl (Ishmael عليه السلام), and led by the archangel Jibrā'īl (Gabriel عليه السلام). (Ibn Kathīr) Whenever they passed through a fertile land, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام would wish to be allowed to settle there, but the archangel would inform him that Allah did not want him to do so. Finally, when they reached the barren desert which was destined to be the site of Makkah and where the Ka'bah was to be built, he was commanded to stay there. But now began a new trial, much more difficult for man to bear. He was ordered to leave his wife and son in the desert, and to go back to Syria. "The Friend of Allah" had so annihilated his own will and desire, and

was so anxious to obey his Lord that he did not allow even a moment to lapse between the command and its execution, and started on his journey without informing his wife. When she noticed that he was going away, she called after him -- but received no reply. Not even when she demanded why he was forsaking them in such a vast and lonely desert. But she was, after all, the wife of "the Friend of Allah", and could now see for herself how the matters stood. So, she asked if he had received a divine command. Only now Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام replied that it was so. Having understood the situation, she calmly remarked, "Alright, go. The Lord who has commanded you to part from us shall Himself look after us, and not let us be destroyed."

And she sat back in the desert, full of trust and peace, with the infant on her lap. But as time passed, thirst, her own and specially that of her suckling son, compelled her to leave it behind and to go in search of water. She climbed up and down the hills of Ṣafā and Marwah, but had, after seven attempts, to come back unsuccessfully. It is to commemorate this event that running seven times between the two hills has been made an obligatory part of the rites of the Hajj. As she returned to her son, the mercy of Allah descended in the form of the archangel Jibrā'il عليه السلام who made a spring of fresh water spout forth from the parched ground -- the same spring which is now called *Zamzam*. In a day or two, the water began to draw animals towards itself, and the sight of animals brought men to the place. By and by, the provisions necessary for human life became regularly available, and the future city of Makkah began to take shape.

The infant -- who was to become Sayyidnā Ismā'īl, عليه السلام -- began to grow up, and was soon able to take upon himself the usual functions of human life. Under divine permission, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام came now and then to see how his wife and son were doing. It is now that Allah chose to submit him to the greatest of all possible trials. The son had grown up in such unpromising circumstances, and been deprived of constant fatherly care and affection. Now, the father received the command to slaughter his son with his own hand. Says the Holy Qur'ān:

فَلَمَّا بَلَغَ مَعَهُ السَّعْىَ قَالَ يٰبُنَىَّ اِنِّىٓ اَرٰى فِى الْمَنَامِ اَنِّىٓ اَذْبَحُكَ فَانْظُرْ مَاذَا

تَرٰى ؕ قَالَ يٰۤاَبَتِ افۡعَلۡ مَا تُؤۡمَرُ سَتَجِدُنِىۡۤ اِنۡ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ مِنَ الصّٰبِرِيۡنَ O

> When he had reached the age of being able to help his father in his work, the latter said, 'My son, I see in a dream that I am slaughtering you. Now, say, what do you think?' He replied, 'My father, do as you have been bidden; you shall find me, if Allah so wills, one of the patient'. (37: 102)

Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام took his son to the wilderness of *Minā*, and fulfilled, so far as he himself was concerned, the divine commandment. But Allah did not really mean to have the son slaughtered, but only to test the father. If we consider the words of the Holy Qur'ān just cited, we shall find that in his dream, he had not seen the accomplishment of the slaughter, but only the act of slaughtering. And this much he did perform. In this respect, revelation came to him in the form of a dream, picturing the act, perhaps for this very reason - that is to say, Allah did not want to give him a verbal command to sacrifice his son. Hence, Allah commended him for having صَدَّقْتَ الرُّؤْيَا : "confirmed the dream" (37:105). In recompense for this total submission to divine will, Allah sent down a ram from heaven to be sacrificed in place of Sayyidnā Ismā'īl عليه السلام . Now, the annual sacrifice of sheep or goats etc. has been made a regular form of worship in commemoration of the way of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام .

In addition to those rigorous trials, a number of other restrictions were imposed on him in the shape of certain injunctions, which too, he fulfilled as devotionally. Ten of these commandments are known as the characteristics of the *Fitrah* and are concerned with the cleanliness and purification of the body. These ten have been made permanent injunctions for all the later *Ummahs* (or communities of believers) too, and the Last Prophet ﷺ has insistently commanded his followers to fulfil them.

Ibn Kathīr has reported from the blessed Companion 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās that thirty elements make up the whole of Islam, ten of which have been mentioned in Sūrah, ("Al-Barā'ah, or "Al-Tawbah"), the other ten in Sūrah 33 ("Al-Aḥzāb"), and the last ten in Sūrah 23 ("Al-Mu'minūn"). These two had formed a part of the trials of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, and he fulfilled these conditions with equal faithfulness.

Sūrah 9 lays down these ten qualities as being characteristic of true believers:

اَلتَّآئِبُوْنَ الْعٰبِدُوْنَ الْحٰمِدُوْنَ السَّآئِحُوْنَ الرّٰكِعُوْنَ السّٰجِدُوْنَ الْاٰمِرُوْنَ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ
وَالنَّاهُوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَالْحٰفِظُوْنَ لِحُدُوْدِ اللّٰهِ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ O

"Those who repent, those who worship (Allah), those who praise (Allah), those who keep a fast, those who bow down and prostrate themselves (before Allah), those who invite others to good deeds and forbid evil deeds, those who keep within the bounds fixed by Allah. And give good tidings to the true believers." (9:112)

And the ten qualities mentioned in Sūrah 23 are:

قَدْ اَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ الَّذِيْنَ هُمْ فِيْ صَلَاتِهِمْ خٰشِعُوْنَ O وَالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ عَنِ اللَّغْوِ
مُعْرِضُوْنَ O وَالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ لِلزَّكٰوةِ فٰعِلُوْنَ O وَالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ لِفُرُوْجِهِمْ حٰفِظُوْنَ O اِلَّا
عَلٰۤى اَزْوَاجِهِمْ اَوْمَا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُهُمْ فَاِنَّهُمْ غَيْرُ مَلُوْمِيْنَ O فَمَنِ ابْتَغٰى وَرَآءَ
ذٰلِكَ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْعٰدُوْنَ O وَالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ لِاَمٰنٰتِهِمْ وَعَهْدِهِمْ رٰعُوْنَ o وَالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ
عَلٰى صَلَوٰتِهِمْ يُحَافِظُوْنَ O اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْوٰرِثُوْنَ الَّذِيْنَ يَرِثُوْنَ الْفِرْدَوْسَ هُمْ
فِيْهَا خٰلِدُوْنَ O

"Those true believers shall certainly prosper who show humility in their *Salāh*, and turn away from idle activities, and are keen to purify themselves, and guard their private parts except from their wives and what their right hands own (bondswomen) - which is not blameworthy, but whoever seeks after more than that is a transgressor - and those who preserve what has been entrusted to them and also their covenant, and who are regular in performing their *Salāh*. Those are the inheritors who shall inherit Paradise, and they shall live there forever." (23:1-11).

And the ten qualities mentioned in Sūrah 33 are as follows:

اِنَّ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ وَالْمُسْلِمٰتِ وَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَالْمُؤْمِنٰتِ وَ الْقٰنِتِيْنَ وَالْقٰنِتٰتِ وَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ
وَالصّٰدِقٰتِ وَ الصّٰبِرِيْنَ وَالصّٰبِرٰتِ وَ الْخٰشِعِيْنَ وَالْخٰشِعٰتِ وَ الْمُتَصَدِّقِيْنَ
وَالْمُتَصَدِّقٰتِ وَ الصَّآئِمِيْنَ وَالصّٰٓئِمٰتِ وَ الْحٰفِظِيْنَ فُرُوْجَهُمْ وَ الْحٰفِظٰتِ وَالذّٰكِرِيْنَ
اللّٰهَ كَثِيْرًا وَّالذّٰكِرٰتِ اَعَدَّ اللّٰهُ لَهُمْ مَّغْفِرَةً وَّاَجْرًا عَظِيْمًا O

"Men and women who perform what Islam enjoins upon them,

men and women who are true believers, obedient men and obedient women, truthful men and truthful women, men and women who are patient, men and women who possess humility, men and women who give in charity, men who fast and women who fast, men and women who guard their private parts, men and women who remember Allah abundantly - for them Allah has prepared forgiveness and a great reward." (33:35)

A third question with regard to Verse 124 still remains to be answered - what degree of success did Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام attain in these trials? The Holy Qur'ān defines his accomplishment in these words: وَاِبْرٰهِيْمَ الَّذِىْ وَفّٰى : "And Ibrahim who paid his debt in full." (53:37)

As for the reward he received, Verse 124 itself has announced it: قَالَ اِنِّىْ جَاعِلُكَ لِلنَّاسِ اِمَامًا : "He (Allah) said - "I am going to make you an *Imām* for the people." The Arabic word *Imām*, which we have not translated here, lexically signifies "leader or chief or guide." Since the present verse is related to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام , the word *'Imām* in this context means, above all, "a prophet", though it includes the general sense of "leadership", too, as also of the title "Patriarch" which the Jews and Christians have given to him. Prophethood, let us repeat, cannot be won through personal effort; all the same, a prophet has to display his perfection in the thirty qualities we have just referred to, and even people of a lower scale must, in order to be worthy of leadership in a general sense, possess these qualities in their own degree. The Holy Qur'ān makes it quite plain in another place:

وَجَعَلْنَا مِنْهُمْ اَئِمَّةً يَّهْدُوْنَ بِاَمْرِنَا لَمَّا صَبَرُوْا وَكَانُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا يُوْقِنُوْنَ O

"And from among them We appointed some as leaders to guide men by Our command, when they were patient (in restraining themselves from disobedience), and had a sure faith in Our commandments." (32:24).

This verse gives a resume of the thirty qualities in the two words, *Ṣabr* (patience) and *Yaqīn* (sure faith, or certitude) - the second refers to the perfection of knowledge, and the first to the perfection of actual practice.

The last question pertains to the law which lays down that the station of a guide and leader would not be granted to the unjust and the disobedient. To hold this station is, in a way, to be a viceregent of

Allah, and hence this rank cannot be given to a rebel. It follows from this that Muslims, insofar as they have a choice in the matter, should not appoint as their ruler or representative a man who is a rebel against Allah or disobedient to Him.

The word *ẓālim* ("unjust") also shows us - and very explicitly, too - that each and every prophet is totally sinless before becoming a prophet as much as after becoming a prophet. Certain words in the Holy Qur'ān, which seem to suggest the contrary, have been employed, not in a literal or technical sense, but only metaphorically - for example, in the case of Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام . To interpret such expressions in the sense of technical "sin" constitutes a very grave doctrinal error, and an insistence on such an interpretation opens the way to further errors.[35]

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35. We may add a few words for the benefit of those who are anxious to adopt unquestioningly the literary and philosophical mores of the West. Since the Second World War, the writings of the Danish man of letters and thinker, Kierkegaard (who was a dilettante in theology too), have been casting a sort of paralysing fascination over the men of sensibility in the West. Particularly his book "Fear and Trembling", which deals with the trial of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام avowedly in the manner of a psychological novel, is supposed to have triggered into action a number of Existentialist philosophies, and even to have furnished the point of departure for all modernistic Christian theology, specially of the Protestant persuasion.

Now, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was, even according to the admission of Jews and Christians, a prophet, and not "l'homme moyen sensuel" which is the subject matter of the novel, of psychology, and, not the least, of the theology of the Dane.

Secondly, he did not merely have to go through emotional stress and strain, or through a problem of the conscience, or through a "crisis of identity" - the fear and the trembling, as the philosopher maintains -, but was equally tried in the matter of faithfully observing divine injunctions.

Thirdly, when he knew that Allah had chosen him to be a prophet, he did not grow silent and secretive and lonely - as the fancy of our literary artist would have us believe -, but proclaimed the fact to others. Without such a proclamation, he would not at all have been able to perform the function of a prophet. In fact, it has been said that "the Friend of Allah" would not take his daily meals until he had found a guest to share it with him. In short, all we wish to point out is that the nature of prophethood is a degree of reality which we can understand only partially, and that too only with the help of Divine Books, and hence it is not a sphere in which human fantasy may be allowed to roam at its sweet will.

Verse 125

وَاِذْ جَعَلْنَا الْبَيْتَ مَثَابَةً لِّلنَّاسِ وَاَمْنًا ۖ وَاتَّخِذُوْا مِنْ مَّقَامِ اِبْرٰهٖمَ مُصَلًّى ۖ وَعَهِدْنَآ اِلٰٓى اِبْرٰهٖمَ وَاِسْمٰعِيْلَ اَنْ طَهِّرَا بَيْتِىَ لِلطَّآئِفِيْنَ وَالْعٰكِفِيْنَ وَالرُّكَّعِ السُّجُوْدِ ○

And when We made the House a (sacred) resort for men, and a place of peace! And make from the station of Ibrahim a place of prayer. And We gave direction to Ibrāhim and Ismā'il: "Purify My House for those who are to circumambulate (make *Tawāf*) or stay in seclusion (do *I'tikāf*) or bow and prostrate (in prayer)." (Verse 125)

The History of Ka'bah

In the course of the story of Sayyidnā Ibrāhim عليه السلام , we now come to the building of the "House of Allah" - the Ka'bah. An answer is thus being given to the Jews who used to deny the Holy Prophet ﷺ on the ground of their assumption that prophethood could not be given to anyone outside their own clan, and who used to scoff at the Muslims for turning towards the Ka'bah in their prayers, and to believe that the Hajj was no more than a custom of the ignorant Arabs. The earlier verse had made it clear that prophethood could not be given to the unjust and the disobedient, even if they belonged to the progeny of Sayyidnā Ibrāhim عليه السلام - a rule which destroys the very basis of the presumptuousness and vanity of the Jews. The present verse reminds them that the Ka'bah was built under divine commandment by Sayyidnā Ibrāhim عليه السلام himself with the help of his son Sayyidnā Ismā'il عليه السلام , and thus suggests that the performance of the Hajj and the orientation towards the Ka'bah have both been instituted by divine decree, and that the Holy Prophet ﷺ is a direct descendant of Sayyidnā Ibrāhim and Sayyidnā Ismā'il عليه السلام , and is reviving the Abrahamic Way, which the Jews too must follow.

Verse 125 briefly outlines the history of the re-construction of the Ka'bah, the characteristic qualities of the "House of Allah" and the city of Makkah, and the injunctions with regard to the respect which has to be paid to this sacred place. The Holy Qur'ān returns to the subject again and again in different chapters, providing more details. We shall

cite Verses 26 and 27 from the Sūrah "Al-Hajj" which deals particularly with the annual pilgrimage:

وَاِذْ بَوَّاْنَا لِاِبْرٰهِيْمَ مَكَانَ الْبَيْتِ اَنْ لَّا تُشْرِكْ بِیْ شَيْـًٔا وَّطَهِّرْ بَيْتِیَ لِلطَّآئِفِيْنَ وَ
الْقَآئِمِيْنَ وَالرُّكَّعِ السُّجُوْدِ O وَ اَذِّنْ فِی النَّاسِ بِالْحَجِّ يَاْتُوْكَ رِجَالًا وَّعَلٰی كُلِّ
ضَامِرٍ يَّاْتِيْنَ مِنْ كُلِّ فَجٍّ عَمِيْقٍ O

> "And when We appointed for Ibrāhīm the place of the House: "You shall not associate anything with Me. And keep My House clean for those who circumambulate it, who stand there for the prayers, and who bow and prostrate themselves. And proclaim the pilgrimage among men, and they shall come to you on foot and on every lean camel too, coming from every deep ravine.." (22:26-27)

Ibrāhīm عليه السلام migrated to Makkah

Ibn Kathir reports from Mujāhid etc. that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was living in Syria when he received the revelation that Allah was going to indicate to him the site of the Ka'bah, which he was required to build and keep clean for those who should assemble there for performing the Hajj and offering the *Salāh*. In connection with the earlier verse, we have already told the story how he was led by the archangel Jibrā'il عليه السلام to the desert where the city of Makkah is now situated and where the remains of the earlier structure of the Ka'bah stood only in the shape of a mound, and how he was commanded by Allah to leave his wife and infant son behind and to return to Syria. He immediately started on the journey, but was naturally anxious about his wife and child. So, when he was out of ear-shot, he prayed to Allah for them, as has been reported in the Sūrah "Ibrāhīm":

رَبِّ اجْعَلْ هٰذَا الْبَلَدَ اٰمِنًا وَّاجْنُبْنِیْ وَبَنِیَّ اَنْ نَّعْبُدَ الْاَصْنَامَ O

> "My Lord, make this city a place of peace, and keep me and my sons away from worshipping idols." (14:35)

And he prayed further:

رَبَّنَآ اِنِّیْٓ اَسْكَنْتُ مِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِیْ بِوَادٍ غَيْرِ ذِیْ زَرْعٍ عِنْدَ بَيْتِكَ الْمُحَرَّمِ رَبَّنَا
لِيُقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ فَاجْعَلْ اَفْئِدَةً مِّنَ النَّاسِ تَهْوِیْٓ اِلَيْهِمْ وَارْزُقْهُمْ مِّنَ الثَّمَرٰتِ
لَعَلَّهُمْ يَشْكُرُوْنَ O

> "Our Lord, I have made some of my offspring dwell in a valley which is incultivable, close to Your Holy House that they may, Our Lord, be steadfast in the prayers. So, make the hearts of men tender towards them, and provide them with fruits, so that they may be thankful." (14:37)

In the earlier commandment which had brought him to his place, Allah had asked him to keep His House clean. He knew that Allah intended the House to be kept clean not only from external dirt but also from internal filth - namely, association (*Shirk*) and infidelity (*Kufr*). So, while departing from this barren desert where he was leaving his family but where a town was to grow, he prayed to Allah, firstly, to make it a place of safety and peace, and, secondly, to protect him and his children from idol-worship and association. "The Friend of Allah" had attained that degree of knowledge where one sees oneself as a mere nothing, and one makes no movement without a full realization of the truth that nothing happens independently of Divine Will, and that all one's actions and even inclinations rest in the hand of Allah. So, he turned to Allah Himself for help in being able to carry out the command to keep the House of Allah clean from association and infidelity. There is another subtle suggestion in this prayer. Allah had commanded that due respect should be paid to His "House." Now, there was a likelihood that some people might begin, out of sheer ignorance, to worship the Ka'bah itself. That is why Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام specially prayed for him and his children to be protected from association (*shirk*). Then, out of his love for his wife and son, he prayed to Allah to provide them, in His grace, with fruits in this barren and uncultivable land where he was leaving them under divine command.

A *ḥadīth* in Al-Bukhārī's collection of the Traditions (*Aḥādīth*) tells us in detail how the archangel Jibra'il appeared and made the spring of *Zamzam* flow in the desert, how some people from the tribe of *Jurhum* came and settled there, and how Sayyidnā Ismā'īl عليه السلام was married to a lady of this tribe. We also learn from different Traditions (*Aḥādīth*) of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that the command to settle near the Ka'bah and to keep it clean (mentioned in Verse 26-27 of the Sūrah

"Al-Hajj") was at that time addressed only to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, for his son was yet an infant. And in those circumstances the intention of the command was not to start the reconstruction of the Ka'bah but only to place the wife and the son of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام in this locality so that a human settlement should begin to take shape. On the other hand, the verse we are dealing with (2:125) repeats the same command to keep the House clean, but is addressed as much to Sayyidnā Ismā'īl عليه السلام as to his father, for the son had now grown into a young and married man, and could be included in the command to rebuild the Ka'bah.

A *ḥadīth* reported by Al-Bukhārī says that, on one of his periodic visits to his wife and son at Makkah, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام found his son sitting under a tree, making arrows. He informed the son that Allah had entrusted him with a special task, and asked him if he would help his father. The son was, of course, as ready to obey and to serve as ever. Allah had already indicated the spot and also the area where the Ka'bah was to be rebuilt. When they started digging the ground, the earlier foundations became visible, and it was on them that they began to raise the walls. The next verse speaks of this event - وَإِذْ يَرْفَعُ إِبْرٰهِمُ الْقَوَاعِدَ مِنَ الْبَيْتِ وَإِسْمٰعِيلُ : "When Ibrāhīm was raising up the foundations of the House, and Ismā'īl (too)." The order of the names indicates that the builder of the Ka'bah is Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, while the role of Sayyidnā Ismā'īl عليه السلام is that of a helper.

All the verses of the Holy Qur'ān on the subject of the Ka'bah either say that the location had been indicated by Allah Himself, or report the divine command to keep the House clean, but never suggest that a new House was to be built in a new place. This in itself shows that the Ka'bah already existed in some form. Indeed, the *Ḥadīth*, and history too, confirms this fact, and from these sources we learn that the earlier structure of the Ka'bah had either been destroyed at the time of the Deluge of Sayyidnā Nūḥ (Noah عليه السلام) or raised into the heavens, leaving the foundations buried in the ground. Hence, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm and Sayyidnā Ismā'īl عليه السلام were not the original founders of the Ka'bah, but had raised a new building on the earlier foundations.

As to who founded the Ka'bah for the first time and when, there is no fully authenticated *Ḥadīth* which could clarify this point. Certain narrations coming from the people of the Book, however, tell us that it was founded by the angels even before Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام came down to the earth. He built the Ka'bah a second time, or renovated it. This structure remained intact upto the time of the Deluge, which destroyed it, and left it a mere mound - the shape in which Sayyidna Ibrahim and Sayyidnā Ismā'īl عليه السلام found it. And they constructed a new building on the site. Since then, the Ka'bah has undergone certain alterations, but has never been demolished completely. Before the Holy Prophet ﷺ assumed the prophetic functions, the Quraysh of Makkah built the Ka'bah afresh, and he himself took part in this renovation.

Some injunctions related to the Haram

(1) The word *Maṯhābah*, used in this verse, comes from the root *Thaba* (signifying "to come back"), and thus denotes a place to which one returns again and again. This shows that Allah has given a position of privilege to the Ka'bah - it shall always remain a place where people will assemble from the four corners of the world, and would long to return to it again and again. Al-Qurṭubī reports the great commentator Mujāhid to have said that one never has enough of visiting the Ka'bah, but comes back every time with a greater longing to return, and to see it again. Certain scholars have remarked that one of the signs of one's Ḥajj having been accepted by Allah is that, on one's return, one should find in one's heart a greater desire to present oneself in the House of Allah again. This is borne out by the experience of those who have had the good fortune to be there - each visit, instead of slaking the thirst, rather increases it. Considering that Makkah has nothing to offer by way of a beautiful landscape or easy access or mundane comforts, yet, its power to draw millions of people to itself every year is nothing short of miracle.

(2) This verse says that Allah has made "the House" a place of peace. "The House" refers not only to the Ka'bah itself, but also to the whole area of the Mosque which surrounds it, and is called the *Ḥaram*. There are other instances in the Holy Qur'ān where the word "Ka'bah" or the expression *Baytullah* ("House of Allah") connotes the whole

area of the *Ḥaram*. For example, the phrase: هَدْيًاۢ بٰلِغَ الْكَعْبَةِ : "an offering to reach the Ka'bah" (5:95) refers to the *Ḥaram*, for the verse deals with the subject of animal sacrifice, while it is not legitimate to offer such a sacrifice inside the Ka'bah. So, Verse 125 means that the whole of the *Ḥaram* has been made a place of peace - that is to say, people have been forbidden from shedding blood or taking revenge within these precincts (Ibn al-'Arabi). In fact, this commandment was one of the residues of the Way of Ibrāhīm عليه السلام which were still alive in the Age of Ignorance (*Al-Jāhiliyyah*), and all kinds of bloodshed or battle, individual or collective, were held to be forbidden inside this sanctuary, so much so that a man would never let himself take his revenge, even if he came upon the murderer of his brother or father in the *Ḥaram*. The Islamic Sharī'ah has preserved this injunction. The ban was lifted only for the sake of the Holy Prophet ﷺ on the day of the conquest of Makkah, and that too only for a few hours, and was reimposed for ever immediately after - the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself announced it in his address on the occasion. (Al-Bukhārī)

Now, as for the man who commits, within these precincts, a crime for which the Sharī'ah has laid down a specific physical punishment (*Ḥadd*) or allowed the victim to be revenged (*Qiṣāṣ*), the *Ḥaram* will not provide sanctuary to him - the consensus holds that such a criminal will be duly punished. (Al-Jassas and Al-Qurtubi) For, the Holy Qur'ān itself says: فَإِنْ قٰتَلُوكُمْ فَاقْتُلُوهُمْ : "If they fight you [inside the *Ḥaram*], you may kill them." (2:191) There is, however, a difference of views among the masters of *Fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) on one point. What is to be done with the man who commits a crime outside, and then seeks a sanctuary in the *Ḥaram*? Even in this case, some masters would have the criminal punished in the manner prescribed by the Sharī'ah. On the other hand, Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, believes that if such men are allowed to save themselves from punishment in this manner, the *Ḥaram* would become an easy refuge for all kinds of criminals and disorder would prevail, but in view of the sanctity of the place, the criminal would not be punished inside the *Ḥaram*, but forced to come out, and then the punishment prescribed by the Sharī'ah would be duly given to him.

(3) The present verse mentions "the Station of Ibrāhīm." It is a

stone on which Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm ﷺ had stood while building the Ka'bah, and which miraculously acquired the print of his foot. (Al-Bukhārī) The blessed Companions Anas says that he has himself seen the mark on the stone. On the other hand, it has been reported from the blessed Companion 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās that the *Ḥaram* as a whole is the "Station of Ibrāhīm." Probably he meant that the two *rak'ahs* of the *Salāh* which this verse enjoins upon us to offer near the "Station of Ibrāhīm" after completing *tawāf* (circumambulation) of the Ka'bah, may be offered anywhere within the precincts of the *Ḥaram*, and that the prayers thus offered would be quite valid. Most of the *Fuqahā'* accept this view.

The *Maqam* of Ibrāhīm

(4) As to the commandment for making "the Station of Ibrāhīm" a place of offering one's prayers, the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself has explained it through his own words and actions on the occasion of his last Ḥajj. After completing the *tawaf*, when he reached "the Station of Ibrāhim," placed some yards away from the Ka'bah, he recited this very verse, and then offered two *rak'ats* on the other side of this stone, with his face turned towards the Ka'bah (Muslim). The *Fuqahā'* have inferred from this the rule that if one does not get the room to stand close to "the Station of Ibrahim," one may, while offering prayers, validly stand at any distance from it that one can, so long as the Ka'bah, as well as "the Station of Ibrāhim," is in front of him.

(5) This verse shows that it is necessary (*Wajib*) to offer two *rak'ahs* after the *tawāf* of the Ka'bah. (Al-Jaṣṣāṣ and Mullā 'Alī al-Qārī) But offering these prayers specifically behind the "Station of Ibrāhim" is a *Sunnah* (the Way of the Holy Prophet ﷺ). There is, however, no bar on offering these prayers at any other spot within the *Ḥaram*, for the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself has been reported to have offered them near the gate of the "House of Allah", as did the blessed Companion 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās, too (al-Jaṣṣāṣ). In his "Al-*Manāsik*", Mullā 'Alī al-Qārī says that if one is not, for some reason, able to offer these necessary (*Wājib*) prayers behind "the Station of Ibrāhīm," as required by the *Sunnah*, he may validly offer them anywhere he possibly can within the *Ḥaram*, or even outside. In fact, this is exactly what happened to Sayyidah Umm Salmah رضی اللہ عنہا , one of the wives of the

Holy Prophet ﷺ . On the occasion of her Last Hajj, she could not find the opportunity to offer these *Wājib* prayers inside the *Ḥaram*, and was able to do so when she was outside the city of Makkah itself. Most of the *Fuqahā'*, except Imām Mālik, hold the view that if circumstances compel one to offer these prayers outside the *Ḥaram*, one is not required to make an animal sacrifice by way of compensation.

(6) The divine command to طَهِّرَا بَيْتِيَ : "Keep My House clean" includes purifying it from physical and external dirt as much as from internal filth like infidelity (*Kufr*) and association (*Shirk*), and from impurities like greed, lust, envy, pride, vanity, hypocrisy, etc. Then, the use of the expression "My House" indicates that the commandment applies to mosques in general, for all the mosques are "the Houses of Allah", as the Holy Qur'ān itself has said فِي بُيُوتٍ أَذِنَ اللَّهُ أَنْ تُرْفَعَ : "In houses which Allah has commanded to be raised up" (24:36). Al-Qurṭubī reports that the Second *Khalīfah* 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ once heard a man shout in the mosque, and rebuked him for having forgotten where he was. That is to say, one should pay due respect to a mosque, and refrain from speaking loudly, and, above all, from saying something which the *Sharī'ah* has forbidden. In short, just as the *Ḥaram* must be kept clean from all kinds of dirt and filth, external and internal, so must every mosque. Those who enter a mosque must keep their bodies and their clothes free from dirt, filth and even from bad smells, and also keep their hearts free from *Shirk*, hypocrisy, pride, malice and greed etc. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has asked the people not to enter a mosque, if they have just eaten raw onion or garlic, and has also forbidden very small children and mad men to enter a mosque for fear of their polluting it.

(7) The verse shows that "the House of Allah" is meant for people to make *tawaf* of the Ka'bah, to do *I'tikāf* (to seek a retreat for worship and meditation), and to offer their prayers. In the case of those who come from outside to perform the Ḥajj, the *ṭawāf* carries greater merit than offering prayers. Lastly, the verse makes it clear that it is absolutely permissible to offer one's prayers inside the "House of Allah", whether the prayers are *farḍ* (obligatory) or *nafl* (supererogatory) (Jaṣṣāṣ).

Verses 126 - 128

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرٰهِيمُ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ هٰذَا بَلَدًا اٰمِنًا وَّارْزُقْ اَهْلَهٗ مِنَ الثَّمَرٰتِ مَنْ اٰمَنَ مِنْهُمْ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ ؕ قَالَ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَاُمَتِّعُهٗ قَلِيْلًا ثُمَّ اَضْطَرُّهٗۤ اِلٰى عَذَابِ النَّارِ ؕ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيْرُ ٥ وَاِذْ يَرْفَعُ اِبْرٰهٖمُ الْقَوَاعِدَ مِنَ الْبَيْتِ وَ اِسْمٰعِيْلُ ؕ رَبَّنَا تَقَبَّلْ مِنَّا ؕ اِنَّكَ اَنْتَ السَّمِيْعُ الْعَلِيْمُ ٥ رَبَّنَا وَاجْعَلْنَا مُسْلِمَيْنِ لَكَ وَ مِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِنَاۤ اُمَّةً مُّسْلِمَةً لَّكَ وَاَرِنَا مَنَاسِكَنَا وَتُبْ عَلَيْنَا ۚ اِنَّكَ اَنْتَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيْمُ ٥

And when Ibrāhīm said, "My Lord, make this a city of peace, and provide its people with fruits - those of them who believe in Allah and the Last Day." He said, "And the one who disbelieves I shall make him enjoy a little, then I shall drag him to the punishment of the Fire. And an evil end it is! And when Ibrahim was raising up the foundations of the House, along with Ismā'īl: "Our Lord accept from us! Indeed, You - and You alone - are the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing! And, our Lord, make us both submissive to You, and of our progeny a people submissive to You. And show us our ways of Pilgrimage and accept our repentance. Indeed, You - and You alone - are the Most-Relenting, the Very-Merciful." (Verses 126 - 128)

The prayers of Ibrāhīm عليه السلام

Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام always carried out the commandments of Allah without losing a moment, and was ready to make all kinds of sacrifices in His way, whether they involved worldly goods, or wife and children, or his own likes and dislikes. All the same, having affection and love for one's family is not only a natural urge in man, but also a divine commandment. This is what manifests itself in the present verses, where we find him praying for the well-being of his family in this world as much as in the other.

The prayer begins with the word *Rabb*, which lexically signifies "One who gives nurture." Thus, it teaches us the proper mode of praying to Allah, for this form of address in itself draws the mercy and

grace of Allah on the man who is praying. The first thing Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام prayed for was that Allah may turn the barren desert where he had left his family under divine commandment, into a city, so that his wife and son should not feel lonely, and that their daily needs should be easily satisfied. The same prayer occurs in Sūrah "Ibrāhīm" (14:35), but employs the construction *Al-balad* ("the city"), while the present verse employs *Baladan* ("a city"). The difference probably arises from the fact that the prayer reported here was made when the place was still a desert and Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام wished "a city" to grow in this barren land, while the prayer reported in Surah "Ibrāhīm" was made when "the city" had already risen and was quite well-known, for near the end of the same Sūrah we find him saying اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِیْ وَهَبَ لِیْ عَلَی الْکِبَرِ اِسْمٰعِیْلَ وَاِسْحٰقَ : "Praise be to Allah who has given me, in my old age, Ismā'īl and Isḥāq" (14:39), which suggests that the second prayer was made after the birth of Sayyidnā Isḥāq (Isaac عليه السلام), an event that occurred thirteen years after the birth of Sayyidnā Ismā'īl (Ishmael عليه السلام). (Ibn Kathīr)

Coming back to the verse under discussion, we see that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام also prayed for this city to be made "a place of peace" - that is to say, safe from slaughter and plunder as from calamities, and secure against the domination of the infidels. The prayer was granted. Makkah became a thriving city, which is now a place of pilgrimage for Muslims who come to it in millions every year. It also became safe and secure, for no infidel has ever been able to conquer it or dominate over it. The Holy Qur'ān itself narrates the story of "*Aṣḥāb al-Fil*" ("the People of the Elephant") who were destroyed for having ventured to invade Makkah. The city has also been safe from slaughter and plunder. Even before the advent of Islam, the Arabs in the Age of Ignorance, for all their deviation into infidelity and association, deeply respected the Ka'bah and its environs as a matter of their creed - in spite of being vengeful, they would never take their revenge so long as the enemy remained within the precincts of the *Ḥaram*. In fact, the inhabitants of Makkah themselves were respected throughout Arabia, and the trading caravans passing to and fro between Makkah and Syria or Yemen were never interrupted. Allah has given security even to birds and animals inside the *Ḥaram*, and

forbidden all kinds of hunting within this area. So, even birds and animals distinctly show a feeling of security inside the *Haram*, and are not scared of men. The sanctity of the place was emphasised and enforced by Islam even further. As for the slaughter which took place in the *Haram* at the hands of Hajjāj ibn Yūsuf or the *Qarāmitah*, it was the work of those who called themselves Muslims, and not an invasion by infidels. If a man chooses to set fire to his own house, it does not falsify the general rule of the security provided to it against outsiders. Moreover, incidents like these have been very rare since the days of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام , and, then, we also know the dreadful fate of those who had dared to pollute "the House of Allah." In short, Allah has, in answer to his prayer, made the city so secure that even the *Dajjāl* (Anti-Christ) shall not have the power to enter it.

Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام had also prayed for the people of Makkah to be provided with fruits. The surrounding land was uncultivable, but, in answer to the prayer, Allah made the neighbouring city of Tāif very fertile and productive in fruits, which started coming to Makkah. According to certain traditions of the Israelites, Tāif was originally situated in Syria, but was transferred to the present locality by the Archangel Jibrā'il عليه السلام under divine command.

The Ibrahimic wisdom

One may also notice that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام did not pray for the land of Makkah to be made fertile, but suggested in his prayer that the fruits might come to Makkah from somewhere else as an import. He probably intended that his descendants should not get unduly absorbed in agriculture, for his purpose in founding the settlement was that his people لِيُقِيمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ : "should be steadfast in the prayers." In other words, he wanted the essential function of his descendants to protect "the House of Allah" and to engage themselves in acts of worship. Otherwise, he could have prayed for Makkah itself to be made fertile, and Allah would have granted the prayer as easily.

The point becomes all the more clear if we consider the word *Thamarāt* (plural of *Thamarah* - "fruit"). This word appears in the same context again in another verse يُجْبٰى إِلَيْهِ ثَمَرٰتُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ : "the fruits of all kinds of things are drawn towards it (the city)" (28:57). If it is the

fruits of trees that are intended here, the word "*Yujbā*" ("drawn") is a sufficient indication that in granting the prayer Allah had not promised to produce them in Makkah itself, but to send them to the city from other places. On the other hand, the verse does not speak of "the fruits of all kinds of trees", but of "the fruits of all kinds of things." Obviously, the intention is to generalize the sense of "fruits" - a word which in common idiom implies the product obtained from a thing or an activity. The word should, then, cover not only the fruits of trees, but also the products of all kinds of crafts and industries in fact, all that is needed to sustain human life. Now, everyone can see for himself that Makkah possesses neither agriculture nor industry, and yet enjoys the benefits of these as much as any prosperous city in the world.

Verse 126 also provides an example of the rectitude of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام . The first phrase of his prayer for the well-being and prosperity of the people of Makkah seems to suggest that he wished to include the infidels as much as the faithful. But earlier when he had prayed for all his descendants without making any distinction between the faithful and the infidels (as reported in Verse 124), Allah had answered that the prayer would be granted in the case of the faithful, but not in the case of the unjust - that is, *mushrikīn* (associators). On that occasion, he had prayed for the position of *Imāmah* (leadership). But the fear of Allah and the solicitude for being totally obedient to Him was so deeply ingrained in the heart of "the Friend of Allah" that even in praying for the prosperity of his people the earlier proviso came to his mind, and he at once added a rejoinder to the effect that he was praying only for the faithful. Allah was pleased with his rectitude, and told him that the worldly prosperity would be given to the disbelievers too, but that in the other world the faithful would be the only ones to prosper, while the disbelievers would receive nothing more than the punishment due to them.

Verse 127 shows another essential quality of this great prophet. In obedience to Allah, he had left the fertile land of Syria and made his wife and child to settle in the barren desert, and now he was taking up the labour of building "the House of Allah." This was a moment when a man who had been bearing such hardships in the way of Allah could

normally be expected to feel satisfied with himself and relax in a mood of self-congratulation. But "the Friend of Allah" recognized the Majesty of Allah, and knew that no creature can possibly worship or obey his Creator as is His due, but within his own limited powers. Consequently, he also knew that in performing the hardest or the greatest tasks one should not be proud of one's attainment, but should, in all humility, pray to Allah to accept the little effort one has been capable of making - and that, too, with the grace of Allah Himself. That is exactly what Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام did when he started, along with his young son, to build the Ka'bah. That is to say, he prayed to Allah to accept this deed, for Allah hears all prayers, and knows the intentions of His creatures.

Verse 128 reports that he further prayed to Allah "to make" him and his son obedient to His commandments and to His Will. This prayer too proceeds from the same sense of fear and awe, and from the same knowledge. He has, all his life, been performing exemplary deeds of obedience, and yet he prays to "be made" obedient. It is so, because the more one grows in one's knowledge of Divine Majesty, the more one comes to realize that one is not being faithful and obedient as is due.

It is significant that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام included his descendants too in his prayer. This shows that the "men of Allah" who never hesitate in sacrificing themselves and their children in the way of Allah, yet love them deeply. All the same, they know what the proper requirements of parental love are, and how they should be fulfilled. This is something beyond the reach of average men, who suppose the well-being of their children to reside in physical health and comfort alone, and spend all their love and care on providing just this to their family. But those who have received the favour of Allah show a much greater solicitude for the spiritual well-being of their children than for the physical, being more anxious as to what happens to them in the other world than in this. So, the great prophet prayed to Allah to make a group from among his descendants fully obedient to Him. This prayer aims at another advantage as well. Experience tells us that if those who enjoy a respectable position in their community,

and their descendants keep to the right path, they are naturally held in esteem, and their conduct inspires others to reform themselves. (Al-Bahr al-Muhit) Allah heard this prayer too, and among the descendants of Sayyidna Ibrahim عليه السلام there has always been a group of people obedient to Allah and firm in the Straight Path. Even in the Age of Ignorance (*Jahiliyyah*) when the whole world, and Arabia in particular, was lost in the darkness of idol-worship and *Shirk*, there still remained some men from among his descendants who had faith in the One God, who believed in the other world, and were obedient to Allah - for example, Zayd ibn 'Amr bin Nufayl, and Quss ibn Sa'idah. It has also been reported that 'Abd al-Muttalib ibn Hashim, the grand-father of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, shunned idol-worship and *Shirk*. (Al-Bahr al-Muhit)

We might add an explanatory note about the word *Manasik* (the plural of *Mansik*) which occurs in Verse 128. This word signifies the different actions involved in the performance of the Hajj, and also the different places where the rites are performed - like *'Arafah*, *Muzdalifah* or *Mina*. Both the meanings of the word are intended here, and the substance of the last part of the prayer is that Sayyidna Ibrahim wanted the rites of the Hajj to be explained and their locations to be indicated. The verb which has been employed in this connection is *Arina* - "show us." Now, seeing is done through the eyes, and also through the heart. So, the different locations of the rites were shown to him through the Archangel Jibra'il عليه السلام, and the injunctions regarding the Hajj were explained in detail.

Verse 129

رَبَّنَا وَابْعَثْ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِّنْهُمْ يَتْلُوا عَلَيْهِمْ اٰيٰتِكَ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ۝

And, our Lord, raise in their midst a Messenger from among them, who should recite to them Your verses, and teach them the Book and the wisdom, and make them pure. Indeed You, and You alone, are the All-Mighty, the All-Wise. (Verse 129)

The prayer of Ibrāhīm عليه السلام for the Holy Prophet ﷺ

Let us start by commenting on certain words which occur in this verse. The Arabic word *Yatlū* (translated in English as "recite", or "read out") comes from the word *Tilāwah*, (تلاوة) which lexically signifies "to follow, to obey", but in the terminology of the Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth* denotes the recitation or reading of the Holy Qur'ān or of a Divine Book, for one who reads a Divine Book is also required to obey it fully. The word also suggests that it is obligatory to read the Holy Qur'ān exactly as it has been revealed by Allah, and not to add or subtract a word on one's own part, not even to change the pronounciation of a word which often may, in the Arabic language, change the very meaning of the word concerned. In his "*Mufradat al-Qur'ān*", Imām al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī says that the word *Tilāwah* cannot, in current idiom, be applied to the reading of any book other than the Word of Allah.

The word *Kitāb* (Book) in this verse, of course, refers to the Holy Qur'ān itself. As to the word *Ḥikmah* (usually translated in English as "wisdom"), it carries various meanings in Arabic - for example, arriving at the truth, justice, exact knowledge, etc. (al-Qamus). According to al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, when the word is used in speaking of Allah, it connotes the total and perfect knowledge of all existents, and flawless creation; but when applied to someone other than Allah, it connotes a proper knowledge of the existents, and good deeds. In connection with the present verse, Maulanā Maḥmūd al-Ḥasan has interpreted the word as "profound truths, or subtle realities", while Maulanā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī has taken it to mean "the art of understanding properly". The commentators from among the blessed Companions and their immediate successors, whose interpretations come directly from the teachings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself, have advanced different connotations of the word *Ḥikmah* - some say that it refers to the commentary and exegesis of the Holy Qur'ān, others believe that it means the proper understanding of the religion (*Dīn*), or the injunctions of the Sharī'ah, or such commandments of Allah which have been received through the word of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. But the truth of the matter is that in spite of the apparent variety of expressions used, the substance of all these statements is the same -

namely, the Way (*Sunnah*) of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the *Hadith*. This is the interpretation reported from Qatādah by Ibn Kathir and Ibn Jarir.

Commentary

Now, to proceed with the commentary, let us consider why Sayyidnā Ibrāhim عليه السلام , in praying for the well-being of his descendants in this world and in the other, requested Allah to send a prophet from among them. The reason is twofold. Firstly, the appearance of a prophet from among them would in itself be an honour and a blessing. Secondly, the prophet being a member of their own group, they would be thoroughly familiar with his past and present and with his ways, and thus find it easy to have trust in him, and to profit from his guidance. According to a *hadith*, in accepting this prayer Allah promised that this prophet would be sent in the last of all ages. (Ibn Jarir and Ibn Kathir)

According to a *hadith* reported by Imām Ahmad in his "Musnad", the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said that Allah had chosen him as the Last Prophet at a time when Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام was not yet born and only his clay was being prepared, and that he was the manifestation of the prayer of his father, Sayyidnā Ibrāhim عليه السلام , of the good tidings brought by Sayyidnā 'Isā (Jesus Christ عليه السلام), and of the dream seen by his mother. The good-tidings refer to the announcement made by Sayyidnā 'Isā عليه السلام , as reported in the Holy Qur'ān:

مُبَشِّرًا بِرَسُولٍ يَأْتِي مِنْ بَعْدِي اسْمُهُ أَحْمَدُ

> "I have brought the good-tidings of a prophet who is to come after me, and his name is Ahmad." (61:6)

And the mother of the Holy Prophet ﷺ had, during her pregnancy, seen in a dream that a light went out of her which illumined the places in far-off Syria. Then, the words of the present prayer of Sayyidnā Ibrāhim عليه السلام have been repeated in two different places in the Holy Qur'ān - once in Sūrah "'Al'Imrān" (Ch.3) and then in Sūrah "Al-Jumu'ah" (Ch. 62). Both the passages where these words have been repeated speak of the prophethood of Sayyidnā Muhammad ﷺ , and thus show that he is the prophet whom Sayyidnā Ibrāhim عليه السلام had prayed for.

All these verses - namely, the present verse from Sūrah "Al-Baqarah", and the other two from Sūrah "'Al-'Imrān" and Sūrah "Al-Jumu'ah" respectively - say the same thing about the Holy Prophet ﷺ in the same words. That is to say, they define the purpose of his being sent to the world as the Messenger of Allah and his functions as a prophet. These functions are threefold. Firstly, to recite the verses; secondly, to teach the Book and also to teach "wisdom"; and thirdly, "to purify" the people. Now, let us examine the three in detail.

(1) The verse speaks separately of "reciting" the Holy Qur'ān and of "teaching" it. Since "reciting" pertains to the words, and "teaching" to their meanings, the explicit distinction between the two shows that the words of the Holy Qur'ān are no less important in themselves and for themselves than their meanings, and that the recitation and preservation of the words is obligatory, and constitutes an act of worship. In order to understand this aspect of the question we have only to recall that the first and immediate listeners and disciples of the Holy Prophet ﷺ not only knew Arabic very well but were themselves very eloquent speakers of the language, some of them being even poets. For an audience like this it should have apparently been enough to recite the Holy Qur'ān, without any explanation or commentary, for them to be taught - in their case, the "reciting" and the "teaching" should have, for all practical purpose, become one and the same thing. Why has the Holy Qur'ān, then, mentioned them separately as two distinct prophetic functions?

If one considers the question seriously, one can easily draw two important conclusions. To begin with, one would come to see that the Holy Qur'ān is not like other books where meanings are the ultimate object, while words have only a secondary place as being no more than a vehicle for the ideas, and can hence tolerate minor changes and modifications so long as the meaning does not suffer. In the case of man-made books, it would thus be totally frivolous to go on reading the words without paying any attention to the meanings. On the contrary, in the case of the Holy Qur'ān the words are in themselves as necessary and inalienable a part of the intention as the meanings, and the Sharī'ah has laid down particular injunctions with regard to the words of the Holy Qur'ān. That is why in the Science of the Principles

of Islamic Jurisprudence (*Usul al-Fiqh*) the Holy Qur'ān has been defined as comprehending words and meaning both. In other words, if the meanings of the Holy Qur'ān are expressed in a different language, or even if certain other Arabic words are substituted for the revealed ones, such a version shall not be entitled to the name "Qur'ān", in spite of the meanings being intact. Consequently, if one were to recite this modified version in *Salāh*, one's prayers shall not be valid. Similarly, a reading of this version shall not bring one the reward promised in the *Ḥadīth* for the recitation of the Holy Qur'ān, nor shall any of the injunctions related to the Holy Qur'ān apply to it. Hence the *Fuqahā'* have forbidden the printing and publication of a translation of the Holy Qur'ān without the Arabic text. It is quite wrong to speak of an "Urdu Qur'ān" or "English Qur'ān", simply because a translation of the original into any language whatsoever cannot properly be called "the Qur'ān".

In short, the word *Yatlū* in the present verse leaves no doubt as to the fact that the "recitation of the verses" is an end in itself, for one does not "recite" meanings, but words. Of course, it goes without saying that Allah has sent the Holy Qur'ān for us to understand it and to follow its guidance. To be content with memorizing the words alone and being indifferent to the meanings would merely show one's ignorance of the nature of the Book of Allah, and one's ungratefulness. But there are so many people these days who suppose that the Holy Qur'ān is like other books, and believe that it is a waste of time to read or memorize its words without knowing what they mean. In view of this wide-spread error, we cannot insist too much on the truth that the recitation of the words of the Holy Qur'ān is in itself a regular act of worship and brings a great reward.

This is borne out by the practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his blessed Companions. They knew the meanings of the Holy Qur'ān as no one else can, and yet they never thought that once they had understood it and acted upon it, nothing more was required of them. On the contrary, they kept reciting the Holy Qur'ān again and again as long as they lived. Some of the Companions used to recite the whole Book of Allah in a single day, some in two days, and some in three. Reciting the Holy Qur'ān in one week has always been quite a

usual practice among the Muslims, which is indicated by the division of the Holy Qur'ān into seven stages (*Manāzil*). In fact, by instituting the recitation of the Holy Qur'ān as an act of worship, carrying a reward of its own, and by giving it a separate and regular position among the prophetic functions, Allah has been very merciful to those Muslims who are not for some reason yet able to understand the meanings, and has saved them from the misfortune of being indifferent to the words and thus being totally deprived of the blessings which flow from His Book. Even such Muslims should, no doubt, keep trying to understand the meanings too so that they may receive the blessings in full, and the ultimate purpose of the Revelation may be realized.

(2) According to the present verses, "teaching the Book" is a prophetic function distinct from "reciting the Verses". We can easily infer from it the principle that in order to understand the Holy Qur'an it is not sufficient merely to know the Arabic language, but that it also requires the "teaching" of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . As every one knows, in order to learn a science or art - be it medicine or engineering, or something as ordinary as cookery - it is not enough to read a book or to be proficient in a language. Had it been the only qualification required, one could have easily mastered all the sciences and the arts on which one could find books written in the language one knew. To learn the meanest craft, then, one needs the regular and constant guidance of a teacher. This being so, how can one hope to understand, unaided, the Holy Qur'ān which has something to say on the most difficult subjects possible, ranging from theology to philosophy and physics? Had a competence in the Arabic language been sufficient for this task, scores of Jewish and Christian scholars and men of letters in the Arabic countries today would have been counted among the greatest commentators as would have been Abū Jahl and Abū Lahab in the days of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . By distinguishing "the teaching of the Book" from "the reciting of the verses" as a distinct prophetic function, the Holy Qur'ān has underlined the fact that in order to understand the Book of Allah properly it is not enough, even for those who know Arabic very well, merely to listen to a recitation of the verses, but that such an understanding can be acquired only through the teaching of the Holy Prophet ﷺ , and that to separate the one from

the other, and to make an attempt at interpretation on one's own is no more than a self-delusion. Had it not really been necessary to explain and teach the meanings of the Holy Qur'ān, why should have Allah sent us a Messenger? There were many other ways of conveying His Book to men. But Allah knows everything, and is All-Wise. He knows that an understanding of His Book depends on the guidance of a teacher much more than that of human sciences and arts does - in fact, on the guidance, not of an ordinary teacher, but of one who in his turn receives guidance from Allah Himself directly through Revelation (*Waḥy*), and who is designated in Islamic terminology as a *Nabiyy* (Prophet) and a *Rasūl* (Messenger of Allah). According to the Holy Qur'ān itself, Allah has sent the Holy Prophet ﷺ to men for the express purpose of explaining to them in detail the injunctions and the meanings of the Divine Book - لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ : "So that you should explain to men what We have revealed for them". (16:44)

According to the present verse, the prophetic function of "teaching the Book" also includes the "teaching of *Ḥikmah*". As we have shown above, although this word carries various meanings in the Arabic language, yet, with reference to this verse and similar ones, the blessed Companions and their immediate successors have interpreted *Ḥikmah* as "the *Sunnah*" or the Way of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . It means that along with "teaching the Book" the prophetic functions include the teaching of the principles and modes of spiritual discipline. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has himself said, إِنَّمَا بُعِثْتُ مُعَلِّمًا :"I have been sent only as a teacher." From this, it necessarily follows that his followers are required to be disciples, and that every Muslim, man or woman, should as a Muslim be a life-long student, keen to learn what the Holy Prophet ﷺ has taught. If one cannot for some reason master the different sciences connected with the Holy Qur'ān and the *Sunnah*, one must try to acquire at least a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the basic doctrines of Islam and of the fundamental injunctions of the Shari'ah which are absolutely indispensable for every Muslim.

(3) "Purifying the people" is also an essential prophetic function. The Arabic word *Tazkiyah* denotes purifying a thing or person from all kinds of filth, internal as well as external. One can see for oneself what the different kinds of external filth are - the Sharī'ah has clearly

defined them. The internal varieties include, on the one hand, false beliefs like infidelity (*Kufr*), association (*Shirk*), or total reliance on some one other than Allah, and, on the other hand, pride, vanity malice, jealousy, love of worldly things, etc. Although the evil nature of such beliefs and tendencies has been fully explained in the Holy Qur'ān and the *Sunnah*, yet in making "the purification of the people" a distinct and separate prophetic function the present verse indicates that just as a mere knowledge of words and technical terms does not make one the master of a science or art, in the same way a knowledge, or even a proper understanding of its principles does not by itself make one perfect in the science or art concerned. To attain any degree of perfection one must also learn to put the principles into practice, and "realize" them in oneself and for oneself, which again requires the supervision of an authentic teacher and guide. In the Way of Sūfīs (*Tarīqah*) the function of the spiritual guide (*Shaykh*) is to help the disciple in obeying the injunctions of the Holy Qur'ān and the *Sunnah* so thoroughly that it becomes a matter, not of effort, but of habit - so to say, his very "nature". [36]

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36. At this point, we must sound a note of warning. It has grown, in our day, almost habitual to speak of Islam as "the religion of action" - if not of "activism". In such phrases, the implication is never absent that "action" is to be considered as an anti-thesis of "thought", and "practice" as that of "theory" - as if there is a dichotomy, and the two activities can hardly be reconciled with each other. And there is always the insinuation that in order to be worthy of any respect one must make an either/or kind of choice in favour of "action" and "practice" as against "thought" and "theory".

Such formulations are no older than four centuries, and are the necessary products of certain dilemmas which historically arose in the society of the Christian West. They do not and cannot, as such, belong to a religious or metaphysical approach to things. In so far as an activity can be described as specifically "human", it cannot be purely automatic, but is preceded by thought. In other words, all "practice" is governed by a "theory", and all "action" guided by "thought" or some principle, good or bad. The rule is so general that it applies even to the action of those who have been promoting the dichotomy. As far as the Islamic way of looking at things is concerned, it goes without saying that no action or practice, however good, can have the slightest merit or

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Now that we are on the subject of purification (*tazkiyah*), we might add another important consideration. From the days of the First Prophet to the days of the Last عليهم السلام , it has been the Way of Allah that in order to guide men and to show them the Straight Path, He has been sending them not only His Books but His prophets also. This indicates the general principle that for their guidance men need, on the one hand, a Divine Teaching revealed in the form of a Book, and, on the other, a human teacher in the form of a prophet who should train and discipline them into absorbing the divine guidance fully. Men need not merely one of these, but both. For, a man alone can be the teacher of another man, and not a book - which serves only as an aid. That is why Islam began with a Book and a Prophet, and the two, working together, produced a society of men who are unparalleled in history for their rectitude. For the coming generations too, the two basic principles of guidance have continued to function in the form of the Sharī'ah and "the Men of Allah". The Holy Qur'ān has emphasised the

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spiritual efficacy until and unless it carries a divine sanction. It logically follows that the foremost duty of a Muslim is to acquaint himself with divine commandments, and then to obey them. One can, if one likes, give to the first the name of "theory", and the second the name of "practice". But there is no dichotomy involved, nor any choice called for. No "practice" can be valid without being informed by "theory", and no "theory" can be of much avail without being put into "practice". It is "theory" which makes "practice" meaningful, and it is through "practice" alone that one acquires a true knowledge of "theory". They are not two entities, but only two ways of considering the same reality. What finally matters is "realization" - or making the essential truths "real" to oneself.

In the West itself, and as late as the end of the Middle Ages, there were people who knew that *theoria* and *praxis* went together in the terminology of spiritual disciplines. In fact, the Greek word does, in its original meaning, say all that we have been trying to explain here. For, even if "theory" in modern European languages has come to mean just a 'speculation', or a 'supposition', even a 'fancy', the Greek verb *theoreo* signified "to see", and the noun *theoros* denoted the "man who sees". Thus, *theoria* was not merely a fancy, but a truth which could be "seen", or actively realized.

point again and again. Let us quote a few instances: يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَكُوْنُوْا مَعَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ : "O believers, fear Allah, and be with the truthful"(9:119). In summing up the qualities of "the truthful" (*Al-Sādiqūn*), another verse ends with the words: أُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ صَدَقُوْا وَأُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُوْنَ : "It is they who are truthful, and it is they who are the God-fearing". (2:177) As we have explained in our commentary on the first chapter, the Sūrah "Al-Fātiḥah" is the quintessence of the Holy Qur'ān, and the essence of this Sūrah is the guidance towards the Straight Path (*Al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm*). Now, in order to indicate the Straight Path the Holy Qur'ān has, instead of calling it the Path of the Qur'ān or the Path of the Prophet or the Path of the *Sunnah*, spoken of the Men of Allah who can show the Straight Path to the seeker. Says the Holy Qur'ān: صِرَاطَ الَّذِيْنَ اَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوْبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّآلِّيْنَ : "... the path of those on whom You have bestowed Your grace, not of those who have incurred Your wrath, nor of those who are misguided". (1:7) Another verse provides greater specification - فَأُولٰٓئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِيْنَ اَنْعَمَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنَ النَّبِيّٖنَ وَالصِّدِّيْقِيْنَ وَالشُّهَدَآءِ وَالصّٰلِحِيْنَ : "Those on whom Allah has bestowed His grace - the prophets, the truthful, the martyrs and the righteous." (4:69) Similarly, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has, for the benefit of all the later generations of Muslims, explicitly named certain personalities who should be followed in religious matters: يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اِنِّيْ تَرَكْتُ فِيْكُمْ مَا اِنْ اَخَذْتُمْ بِهٖ لَنْ تَضِلُّوْا كِتَابَ اللّٰهِ وَعِتْرَتِيْ اَهْلَ بَيْتِيْ : " I am leaving behind me two things; if you stand firm by them you will never fall into misguidance - firstly, the Book of Allah, and, secondly, my descendants and the members of my family." (Tirmidhī) A *ḥadīth* reported by Al-Bukhārī says: اِقْتَدُوْا بِالَّذَيْنِ مِنْ بَعْدِيْ اَبِيْ بَكْرٍ وَعُمَرَ "After me, follow Abū Bakr and 'Umar." And a third *ḥadīth* says: عَلَيْكُمْ بِسُنَّتِيْ وَسُنَّةِ الْخُلَفَاءِ الرَّاشِدِيْنَ "You must adopt my way (the *Sunnah*) and the way of *Al-Khulafā' al-Rāshidīn*" - that is, the first four rightly-guided Caliphs.

In short, whether it be religion or the different sciences and arts, the acquisition of knowledge in the proper sense of the term depends on profiting from authentic books and authentic teachers. In the case of religion, however, people are, while turning to these two modes, liable to fall into the error of putting exclusive or excessive emphasis on one of them alone, which brings them more harm than good. Thus, there are, on the one hand, people who neglect the Book of Allah, and begin to adore their scholars and spiritual masters, without taking the

trouble of finding out whether they are obedient to the Sharī'ah or not. In fact, this has been the characteristic malady of the Jews and the Christians. Speaking of them, the Holy Qur'ān says: اتَّخَذُوا أَحْبَارَهُمْ وَرُهْبَانَهُمْ أَرْبَابًا مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ : "They have taken their rabbis and their monks as their lords apart from Allah." (9:31) Obviously, this is the royal road to *Shirk* (association) and *Kufr* (infidelity), on which millions have perished, and go on perishing. On the other hand, there are people who claim that the Book of Allah is by itself sufficient for them, and that in order to understand it they do not need the guidance of a teacher or a scholar or a spiritual master. This too is a form of misguidance, for an attempt to interpret the Book of Allah on one's own, without the aid of reliable specialists, inevitably draws one into all sorts of errors, makes one a slave of one's own desires and inclinations, and may, in some cases at least, lead one straight outside the pale of Islam. So, what one is required to do is to put each of these two means of knowledge in its proper place, and to profit from both. One should be quite clear about the basic principle in this respect - to Allah alone belongs the authority to lay down a commandment, and it is Allah alone we have been called upon to obey, while the Holy Prophet ﷺ is a means of helping us to know how Allah is to be obeyed, and one obeys Him on the ground that to obey the Holy Prophet ﷺ is to obey Allah Himself. Besides that, one should, when faced with difficulties in understanding the Holy Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth* or in acting upon them, turn for help, willingly and respectfully, to the words and deeds of the masters in these subjects, and consider it to be the key to the door of salvation.

There is a second conclusion to be drawn from the fact that the present verse includes the teaching of the Book among the prophetic functions. As we know, Allah has promised to safeguard the Holy Qur'ān Himself: إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ : "It is We who have revealed the Guidance, and it is We who watch over it." (15:9) Consequently, every single word, every consonant and every vowel of the Holy Qur'ān has remained intact upto this day, and shall remain intact as long the world lasts. Now, according to the present verse, the teaching of the Holy Prophet ﷺ is absolutely indispensable for a proper understanding of the Holy Qur'ān, and without this guidance it is not possible to act upon the Holy Qur'ān in a real sense. It logically

follows from it that the teachings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ should also receive divine protection in their own degree, and remain intact as a whole till the end of the world; otherwise, the preservation of the words of the Holy Qur'ān would not, by itself, fully serve the purpose for which Allah has revealed it. It goes without saying that the teachings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ are identical with what is called the *Sunnah* or the *Ḥadīth*. Although Allah has not promised the same degree of protection to the *Ḥadith* as to the Holy Qur'ān, and the words of the *Sunnah* have not been preserved exactly in the same manner as the words of the Holy Qur'ān, yet the prophetic interpretations too must, according to the present verse, remain intact, and it has, taken as a whole, remained intact upto this day. Whenever an attempt has been made to distort a *Ḥadīth* or to invent spurious ones, the specialists in the science have always exposed the fraud.

Thus, in accordance with the prediction implicit in the present verse, Allah has preserved the teachings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ from the days of the blessed Companions to our own day through fully authentic collections of the *Aḥādith* and through the masters of this subject. And this divine protection shall continue to the last day of the world. For, the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself has assured us that in his *Ummah* there shall always remain till the end of the world a group of authentic scholars who shall jealously and watchfully guard the Holy Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth* against all attempts at distortion or misrepresentation. This *ḥadīth* by itself gives the lie to some contemporary writers who have, for the ulterior motive of discrediting the injunctions of the Islamic Sharī'ah, been trying to propagate the notion that the whole body of the *Aḥādith* we possess is inauthentic and hence unreliable. But anyone who has eyes to see can easily understand the stratagem - if one cannot trust the *Ḥadīth*, one can no longer trust the text of the Holy Qur'ān. And this is exactly what the Westerners and their local allies want to accomplish - that is, to make the Muslims turn away from the Holy Qur'ān.

In the end, let us note that the three prophetic functions which Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm علیہ السلام referred to in his prayer, and which the Holy Prophet ﷺ was sent to perform, were fulfilled in his own life-time. In order to have an idea of the great transformation which

the recitation of the Holy Qur'ān, the teaching of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his purifying influence brought about in men, it is enough to see what the Holy Qur'ān says in praise of his Companions (رضی اللہ عنہم اجمعین):

وَالَّذِيْنَ مَعَهٗٓ اَشِدَّآءُ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ رُحَمَآءُ بَيْنَهُمْ تَرٰهُمْ رُكَّعًا سُجَّدًا يَّبْتَغُوْنَ فَضْلًا مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَ رِضْوَانًا

"Those who are with him are hard against the disbelievers, merciful to one another; you see them bowing and prostrating themselves (in prayers), seeking the bounty of Allah and His pleasure". (48:29).

Verses 130 - 132

وَمَنْ يَّرْغَبُ عَنْ مِّلَّةِ اِبْرٰهٖمَ اِلَّا مَنْ سَفِهَ نَفْسَهٗ ؕ وَلَقَدِ اصْطَفَيْنٰهُ فِى الدُّنْيَا ۚ وَاِنَّهٗ فِى الْاٰخِرَةِ لَمِنَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ ۝ اِذْ قَالَ لَهٗ رَبُّهٗٓ اَسْلِمْ ۙ قَالَ اَسْلَمْتُ لِرَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ۝ وَوَصّٰى بِهَآ اِبْرٰهٖمُ بَنِيْهِ وَيَعْقُوْبُ ؕ يٰبَنِىَّ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ اصْطَفٰى لَكُمُ الدِّيْنَ فَلَا تَمُوْتُنَّ اِلَّا وَاَنْتُمْ مُّسْلِمُوْنَ ۝

And who turns away from the faith of Ibrahim except the one who has debased himself in folly. And indeed We have chosen him in this world, and in the other world he is certainly among the righteous. When his Lord said to him, "Submit!" He said, "I submit myself to the Lord of the worlds." And Ibrahim exhorted the same to his sons, and so did Ya'qub: "My sons, Allah has certainly chosen for you the Faith. So, let not death overtake you but as Muslims." (Verses 130 - 132)

The earlier verses have defined the basic principles of the religion of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm علیہ السلام, called upon men to follow it, and warned them against the dangers involved in turning away from it. They have also refuted the claims of the Jews and the Christians to be the followers of this religion, while indicating Islam as the only religion which is now faithful to the Abrahamic Tradition, and which has, in its essentials, been the religion common to all the prophets. The present verses show the solicitude of the prophets علیہم السلام in giving religious and spiritual instruction and guidance to their descendants.

The Ibrahimic Way

Verse 130 speaks of the superiority of the religion of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام , from which arises his own spiritual station and glory in this world and in the other. This being so, anyone who turns away from this religion only displays his own stupidity.[37] Anyhow, the point is that only he can turn away from this religion who does not possess any understanding, or has totally lost it, for this alone is the religion of "Nature", and no one can deny it so long as his "nature", in the essential and integral sense of the word, remains intact. The superiority of this religion is shown by the simple fact that Allah conferred a special honour on Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام in this world and in the next on account of this very religion. As for the honour and greatness he received in this world, everyone knows how *Namrūd* (Nimrod) with all his might failed to impress him, how he accepted gladly to be thrown into the fire rather than give up the worship of the One God, and how the Lord of the worlds changed the fire into a garden for him, so that believers and non-believers alike finally came to recognize his uprightness and his unalloyed faith. The associators of Arabia were, after all, his progeny, and had, in spite of their idol-worship, always continued to hold him in great esteem, and even claimed to be his followers. Certain remnants of his religion were still present among them, though somewhat distorted by their ignorance - for example, the Hajj, the annual sacrifice of animals, hospitality etc. These are the manifestations of the special divine grace which had designated "the Friend of Allah" (*Khalīlullāh*) as the '*Imām*' of people. (2:124) So much for his greatness in this world. As to the next, Verse 130 has announced the exalted station Allah has granted him in the Hereafter.

Verse 131 defines the basic principle of the religion of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام . Allah asked him to submit himself, and he willingly and gladly agreed to submit himself to "the Lord of the worlds." Let us add that the word of command employed in this verse is *Aslim*, which

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37. Let us note that the relevant phrase in the Arabic text of this verse can be translated into English in three ways: (a) Such a man is stupid in himself (b) he has besotted himself, and allowed himself to become stupid (c) he is ignorant of his own self.

comes from the same root as the word Islam. It is difficult to find an exact English equivalent, for the word signifies "to obey, to submit oneself, to surrender one's will." Anyhow, we should notice that in reply to the divine command, he did not say, as one would have expected, أَسْلَمْتُ لَكَ : "I submit myself to you," but, more elaborately: أَسْلَمْتُ لِرَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ : "I submit myself to the Lord of the worlds." This particular form of reply expresses the attitude of respect and awe proper to the occasion, and includes the praise of Allah which the moment of receiving the honour of divine address demanded. It also carries a recognition of the fact that in submitting himself to the Lord of the worlds he was only performing the essential duty of a servant towards the Master of All, and doing it for his own benefit. The reply makes it clear that the basic principle of the religion of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام , and its very essence is contained in one word, Islam, which signifies total obedience and willing submission of oneself to Allah. It was to show to the world his perfect adherence to this principle that he was made to pass through all the trials before attaining his exalted station. *Islām*, or submission to Allah, is what the world has been created for; it is the end all the prophets and all the divine books have been sent to serve.

We also learn from this verse that the religion common to all the prophets عليهم السلام and the point on which all of them come together is Islam. Beginning with Sayyidnā Ādam upto the Last Prophet ﷺ, every messenger of Allah and every prophet has called men to Islam alone, and enjoined upon his followers to keep to this Straight Path. The Holy Qur'ān is quite explicit on this subject: اِنَّ الدِّيْنَ عِنْدَاللّٰهِ الْاِسْلَامُ : "Certainly, in the eyes of Allah the only religion is Islam" (3:19) and وَمَنْ يَّبْتَغِ غَيْرَ الْاِسْلَامِ دِيْنًا فَلَنْ يُّقْبَلَ مِنْهُ : "Whoso desires a religion other than Islam, it shall not be accepted of him." (3:85) In order to put the question in the proper perspective as also to avoid the risk of misunderstanding let us add a few remarks. All the religions which different prophets brought to the world had a divine sanction behind them, were essentially instituted by Allah Himself, and each of them was, in its own time, "accepted" in the sight of Allah. Consequently, each of these religions - whether one calls it Judaism or Christianity or something else - must in its essence be Islam, in the general sense of the word - namely, total submission to Allah.

But the religion of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام is distinguished from others by a peculiar characteristic - that is, he gave to his religion the name of Islam, and to his followers the name of Muslims. We have already seen in Verse 128 how he prayed for himself, his son and his progeny: رَبَّنَا وَاجْعَلْنَا مُسْلِمَيْنِ لَكَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِنَا أُمَّةً مُّسْلِمَةً لَّكَ: "And, our Lord, keep us both obedient (*Muslimayn*) to you, and make of our progeny a people (*Ummah*) obedient (*Muslimah*) to you." And now in Verse 132 we find him advising his descendants not to die without being sure that they have been Muslims. After him this distinction of being specifically called Muslims and "the Islamic *Ummah*" passed on, according to his own instruction, to the *Ummah* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Addressing the Muslims, the Holy Qur'ān says: مِلَّةَ أَبِيكُمْ إِبْرَٰهِيمَ هُوَ سَمَّىٰكُمُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ مِن قَبْلُ وَفِي هَٰذَا: "Be steadfast in the religion of your father, Ibrāhīm. He named you Muslims before this as well as in this (the Holy Qur'ān)." (22:78) When the Holy Qur'ān was revealed, the Jews and the Christians, and even the idol-worshippers of Arabia used to make the claim, each group on its own part, that they were the followers of the Abrahamic religion, but the Holy Qur'ān and its followers have made it quite evident that in this last phase of human history the religion of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and this alone, is the religion of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام - the religion of quintessential "Nature" (*Al-fitrah*).

In short, the essence of all the divine books, all the Sharī'ahs and the teachings of all the prophets is Islam - that is, turning away from one's desires in order to obey divine commandments, and giving up individual opinion in order to submit oneself to divine guidance. But we are grieved to see that there are thousands of Muslims today, who have forgotten this basic truth, and wish to pursue their own desires in the name of Islam. What appeals to them is that kind of interpretation (rather, misinterpretation) of the Holy Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth* which should flatter their desires. In fact, what they strive to do is to distort the Sharī'ah to suit their fancies, and to do it so cleverly that the idols they really worship should appear in the garb of religion.

Such men are, indeed, trying to be clever with Allah Himself who knows every particle of the universe and who can look into the deepest

recesses of the human heart - the Almighty before whom nothing avails but complete surrender and total submission.

What Islam requires of man is that he should set aside all his desires and inclinations, and seek, in everything he does, the pleasure of his Lord. And he can find this pleasure only when he knows the commandments of his Lord, and also performs these tasks exactly in the manner He has prescribed. This is what *'Ibādah* or worship is, in the real sense of the word. It is the perfection of this total obedience and submission and love which constitutes the final stage of man's spiritual development, which is known as the Station (*Maqām*) of *'Abdiyyah* (عَبْدِيَّة : Servanthood). This is the station where Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام received from Allah the title of *Khalilullāh* (the Friend of Allah), and the Last of All the Prophets the title of عَبْدِنَا :*'Abduna* (Our Servant). On the subsidiary levels of the Station of Servanthood stand the *Abdal*, the *Aqtāl*, the *Awliyā*, the men of Allah - the 'saints' of the Islamic *Ummah*, each in his own degree. This is the essence of *Tawhid* (the realization of unicity), on attaining which all one's fears and hopes become bound with Allah, and with no one else.

Thus, Islam signifies total obedience to Allah, and this obedience is possible only when one follows the *Sunnah*, the Way of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . The Holy Qur'ān has laid down the principle in very explicit words:

فَلَا وَرَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ حَتّٰى يُحَكِّمُوكَ فِيمَا شَجَرَ بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَجِدُوا فِيٓ أَنفُسِهِمْ حَرَجًا مِّمَّا قَضَيْتَ وَيُسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا ○

"By your Lord, they will never be true Muslims till they make you the judge regarding the disagreements between them, and find in themselves no resistance against your verdict, and surrender themselves in full submission." (4:65).

In the end let us clarify an important point. As reported in Verse 132, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام made his descendants promise that before they died they should make sure that they had been Muslims. It means that one should steadfastly follow the teachings of Islam throughout one's life, so that one receives the grace of Allah and remains a Muslim upto the last breath. A number of *ahādith* too say that one would die in the state which one has maintained in one's life,

and one would, on the Day of Resurrection, rise from the grave in the same state. This is the usual way of Allah with men - if His servant makes up his mind to do good deeds and also strives in this direction as best as he can, Allah helps him and makes the task easy for him. This principle does not in any way stand in opposition to what has been said in another *ḥadīth* to this effect:-

> A man keeps doing the kind of good deeds for which Paradise has been promised and it seems that there is only an arms's length between him and Paradise, and then all of a sudden his destiny overcomes him, and he starts doing what would lead him to Hell, and finally he reaches Hell; on the other hand, a man keeps doing what would lead him to Hell, and it seems that there is only an arm's length between him and Hell, and then his destiny overcomes him, and he starts doing what would make him worthy of Paradise, and finally he enters Paradise.

We have said that there is no contradiction involved, for some texts of this *ḥadīth* mention a proviso too - "as it appeared to people." That is to say, the first of these two men appeared in the eyes of the onlookers to be performing good deeds, while in fact he was doing just the opposite; similarly, the second man had from the outset been doing what would make him worthy of Paradise, though people thought him to be a sinner. (Ibn Kathīr) We conclude this discussion with the remark that the man who has been steadfast in doing good deeds, should trust the divine promise, rely on the usual way of Allah with His creatures, and hope that through the grace of Allah he would depart from this world in this blessed state.

Verses 133-134

أَمْ كُنْتُمْ شُهَدَآءَ إِذْ حَضَرَ يَعْقُوبَ الْمَوْتُ إِذْ قَالَ لِبَنِيهِ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ
مِنْ بَعْدِي ؕ قَالُوا نَعْبُدُ إِلٰهَكَ وَإِلٰهَ اٰبَآئِكَ إِبْرٰهِمَ وَإِسْمٰعِيلَ
وَإِسْحٰقَ إِلٰهًا وَّاحِدًا ۚ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ ○ تِلْكَ أُمَّةٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ ۚ لَهَا
مَا كَسَبَتْ وَلَكُمْ مَّا كَسَبْتُمْ ۚ وَلَا تُسْئَلُونَ عَمَّا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ○

Or were you present when death approached Yaqūb, when he said to his sons: "What will you worship after me"? They said, "We will worship your God and the God of

your fathers, Ibrāhīm, Ismā'īl and Isḥāq, the one God, and to Him we submit ourselves." Those are a people who have passed away. For them what they earned, and for you what you earned. And you shall not be questioned as to what they have been doing. (Verses 133-134)

The previous verses have defined the religion of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام and the essence of Islam. Now, these two verses bring before us another aspect of the question. Call it the religion of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام or Islam, it is in any case meant for the whole world. Then why have the descendants of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm and Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليهم السلام been specifically mentioned here, and why should have these two great prophets been so particular in giving this counsel to their sons? We shall say that these specifications show that love for one's progeny and solicitude for their well-being is in no way incompatible with the station of prophethood or even with that of "the Friend of Allah." For, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام , who was, on one occasion, not only willing but happy to be sacrificing his son in obedience to the commandment of Allah, did on a different occasion pray for the well-being of his progeny in this world and the other, and wished, while departing from this world, to offer them what was the greatest blessing in his eyes - namely, Islam. Verses 132 and 133 suggest this very principle. So, even prophets love their children, the only difference being that while ordinary men consider the good things of this world alone to be worthwhile and wish to leave to their children as much of these as they can, in the eyes of the prophets and their genuine followers the only thing that counts is *Īmān* (faith) and good deeds - in one word, Islam - and it is this eternal wealth which they wish and strive to transmit wholly to their descendants.

This practice of the prophets provides a special guidance to parents: just as they are keen to secure the worldly comfort and happiness of their children, they should pay equal, if not greater, attention to the discipline of their external and internal behaviour according to the requirements of the Shari'ah. Is it at all reasonable that one should strain every nerve to protect one's children from the heat of the sun, but leave them exposed to the fire of Hell?

From this example of the prophets we also learn that it is the duty of the parents and the right of the children that one should first of all

take care of the spiritual health of one's own children, and worry about others only afterwards. This principle rests on three considerations. Firstly, one's children are, on account of the special relationship with the parents, likely to accept the counsel more easily and thoroughly than others, and may later on be of great help in the efforts which one makes in the service of Islam.

Secondly, the easiest and the most effective way of transmitting the Truth to a whole people is that the head of each family should take upon himself the responsibility of teaching and training the members of his family. Employing a current and popular term, we may say that this localized and decentralized method distributes the responsibility over a large number of individuals, and teaching the families separately amounts finally to teaching the society as a whole. The Holy Qur'ān itself has laid down the principle: يَآ أَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ قُوٓا۟ أَنفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا : "O believers, guard yourselves and your families against a Fire." (66:6) In fact, the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself who is the Messenger of Allah for the whole of humanity and whose guidance shall remain valid upto the last day of the world, was commanded to convey the Truth first of all to the members of his family. Thus, the Holy Qur'ān says: وَأَنذِرْ عَشِيرَتَكَ ٱلْأَقْرَبِينَ : "And warn your clan, your nearest kin." (26:214) and وَأْمُرْ أَهْلَكَ بِٱلصَّلَوٰةِ وَٱصْطَبِرْ عَلَيْهَا :"And bid your family to offer *Salāh*, and be regular in them yourself." (20:132) And the Holy Prophet ﷺ always fulfilled these commandments.

Thirdly, one can observe for oneself that if the close relations or the members of his family do not support a man in what he wishes to teach, or do not seem to be acting upon it, his teachings do not succeed so well with others. When the Holy Prophet ﷺ took upon himself the prophetic function, the usual reply of his listeners was that he should first convince his own clan, the Quraysh, before turning to others. But when his own clan accepted Islam and the process had been completed at the time of the conquest of Makkah, the world saw, as the Holy Qur'ān reports يَدْخُلُونَ فِى دِينِ ٱللَّهِ أَفْوَاجًا : "People entering Allah's religion in throngs." (110:2)

The main reason for the ignorance and the indifference towards Islam which is wide-spread among the Muslims today, is that even when the parents themselves are good Muslims in every way, they

leave their children to themselves and let the social environment mould them in its own fashion. Their only worry is to see their children doing well in this world, and they never think of what will happen to them in the next. Let us pray that Allah, in His mercy, grant all of us the solicitude for the other world, and help us to make a genuine effort for acquiring the only wealth that can ever be: faith and rectitude!

Injunctions and related considerations

Verse 133 reports that the sons of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb (Jacob) عليه السلام promised to worship إِلٰهَ اٰبَآءِكَ إِبْرٰهِيمَ وَ إِسْمٰعِيلَ وَ إِسْحٰقَ :"The God of your father, Ibrāhīm and Ismā'īl and Isḥāq." This phrase indicates that the term "father" includes the grand-father as well. The blessed Companion 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه has deduced from this verse the rule that in matters of inheritance the grandfather shall be treated like the father.

Verse 134 tells us that the good deeds of one's forefathers shall not suffice one, if one has not been performing good deeds oneself, and that, similarly, one shall not have to suffer for the misdeeds of one's forefathers, if one's own account is clean. It follows upon this principle that children of *mushrikīn* (associators) and *Kafirīn* (infidels), if they die before having come of age, shall not be punished in the other world on account of the disbelief of their parents. The verse also refutes the claim of the Jews that irrespective of what they had been doing they would go to Paradise on account of the good deeds of their forefathers.

Let this be a warning to those Muslims who, being the descendants of the Holy Prophet ﷺ or of a saint, delude themselves with the hope that their sins would go unpunished in consideration of this privileged position. In fact, the Holy Qur'ān is very explicit and very insistent on this point. For example:

وَلَا تَكْسِبُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ إِلَّا عَلَيْهَا وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِّزْرَ أُخْرَىٰ

"Each man shall reap the fruits of his own deeds, and no one shall bear the burden of another" (6:164).

Addressing his own clan, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

"Beware, O Banu Hashim, let it not be that on the Day of

Judgment while others bring their good deeds with them, you on your part, having neglected good deeds, bring with you only the trust in being my relations, and so I have to tell you that on that day, I cannot save you from the wrath of Allah."

Another *ḥadīth* says: من بطابه عمله لم يسرع به نسبه :"He who has been pulled back by his deeds cannot be pushed forward by his ancestry."

Verses 135 - 136

وَقَالُوْا كُوْنُوْا هُوْدًا اَوْ نَصٰرٰى تَهْتَدُوْا ؕ قُلْ بَلْ مِلَّةَ اِبْرٰهٖمَ حَنِيْفًا ؕ وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ ۝ قُوْلُوْٓا اٰمَنَّا بِاللّٰهِ وَمَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْنَا وَمَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلٰٓى اِبْرٰهٖمَ وَاِسْمٰعِيْلَ وَاِسْحٰقَ وَيَعْقُوْبَ وَالْاَسْبَاطِ وَمَآ اُوْتِىَ مُوْسٰى وَعِيْسٰى وَمَآ اُوْتِىَ النَّبِيُّوْنَ مِنْ رَّبِّهِمْ ۚ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ اَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ ۖ وَنَحْنُ لَهٗ مُسْلِمُوْنَ ۝

And they said, "Become Jews or Christians, and you will find the right path." Say: "Instead, (we shall remain) the followers of Ibrāhīm, the upright, - and he was not one of the associators." Say (O, Muslims): "We believe in Allah, and in what has been revealed to us, and in what has been revealed to Ibrāhīm, Ismā'īl, Iṣhāq, Ya'qūb and his children, and in what has been given to Mūsā and 'Īsā (Jesus) and what has been given to the prophets from their Lord: We make no difference between any of them. And to Him we submit ourselves."
(Verses 135 - 136)

The earlier verses have defined the religion (*Millat*) of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام and established that its present form is Islam. Now, the Jews and the Christians, in spite of their pretension to be his followers, did not in actual fact follow his religion. Each of these two groups, instead of accepting Islam, used to ask the Muslims to accept its own religion in order to find true guidance. No doubt, each of these two religions was, in its own time and for its own time, a genuine religion, but in its present form each had become distorted, and had also been abrogated by Allah. So, in answer to them, Allah asks the Holy Prophet ﷺ to declare on his own behalf and on that of his followers that they are and shall remain steadfast in the religion of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام who shunned all kinds of association

(*Shirk*), who adored nothing but the One God and obeyed no one but Him, and whose religion, therefore, did not have even a trace of distortion. Then, in the second of these verses Allah asks the Muslims to declare the basic tenets of this religion too, which are as follows:- (1) Muslims believe in Allah and in the guidance which He has sent them through the Holy Prophet ﷺ . (2) They also believe in all the prophets Allah has sent from time to time - some of whom have been mentioned in this verse. (3) Some of the prophets may in some ways be superior to others, but it is essential for a Muslim to believe in all the prophets without making any distinction. (4) Muslims believe that the Sharī'ahs of all the prophets mentioned here were instituted by Allah Himself, but they have now been abrogated. So, Muslims follow the Sharī'ah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ , for this alone is now valid. (5) Muslims ultimately obey Allah alone, and submit themselves totally to Him.

In the second of these verses the progeny of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb (Jacob عليه السلام) has been described as '*Asbāṭ* or "tribes." The reason is that he had twelve sons, and the offspring of each son came to form a tribe. Allah so blessed his seed that in Egypt, Sayyidnā Yūsuf (Joseph عليه السلام) and his brothers made up a group of twelve men, but their lineage flourished, and when the Israelites left Egypt along with Sayyidnā Mūsā (Moses), their number ran into thousands. Another form of this blessing was that the progeny of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام included a large number of prophets.

Verses 137 - 138

فَإِنْ اٰمَنُوْا بِمِثْلِ مَآ اٰمَنْتُمْ بِهٖ فَقَدِ اهْتَدَوْا ۚ وَاِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَاِنَّمَا هُمْ فِیْ شِقَاقٍ ۚ فَسَيَكْفِيْكَهُمُ اللّٰهُ ۚ وَهُوَ السَّمِيْعُ الْعَلِيْمُ ۝ صِبْغَةَ اللّٰهِ ۚ وَمَنْ اَحْسَنُ مِنَ اللّٰهِ صِبْغَةً ۫ وَّنَحْنُ لَهٗ عٰبِدُوْنَ ۝

So, if they believe in the like of what you believe in, they have certainly found the right path. And if they turn away, they are nothing but in antagonism. Then Allah will suffice you against them, and He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing. The colouring of Allah! And who is better in colouring than Allah? And we are to worship none but Him. (Verses 137 - 138)

The definition of *'Īmān*

From the beginning of the Sūrah Al-Baqarah upto this place, different verses have been explaining the nature and essence *'Īmān* (faith), sometimes succinctly and sometimes in detail. Verse 137 defines *'Īmān* in a simple and short phrase which is at the same time so comprehensive that all possible details and explanations are inherent in it. The earlier verses having established that the only religion which is valid at present is Islam, this verse assures the Muslims that the Jews and the Christians can find the guidance only "if they believe just as you believe", or, in other words, "if they believe in what you believe in." The immediate addressees of the phrase "you believe" are the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his blessed Companions. Thus, in doctrinal matters above all, their *'Īmān* has been placed before us as a model, and the verse is essentially a divine commandment, laying down the fundamental principle that the only *'Īmān* acceptable to Allah is the one which was adopted by the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his blessed Companions, and that any doctrines or beliefs that deviate from it in the least are neither valid nor acceptable to Allah. That is to say, one should believe in Allah and His attributes, in the angels, in the Books of Allah, in the messengers and prophets of Allah and in their teachings exactly in the same manner as the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the blessed Companions did, without adding or substracting anything on one's own part and without advancing one's own interpretations or distorting the authentic meanings of the doctrines. Nor is one allowed to assign to the angels or the prophets a station higher or lower than the one assigned to them by the word or deed of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . Moreover, one is also required to be sincere and pure in one's faith, for the contrary would amount to hypocrisy (*Nifāq*).

This explanation helps us to see in its true proportions the situation of the heterodox sects among the Muslims - of those who make tall claims as to the genuineness of their *'Īmān,* but do not possess *'Īmān* in the full sense of the term. As for that, even the idolators of Arabia used to proclaim the authenticity of their *'Īmān* as do the Jews and the Christians even today, and as do even the heretics in every age, but since their faith in Allah, in the prophets and the angels, and in the Day of Judgment etc. did not conform to the *'Īmān* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ , it was not acceptable to Allah and was summarily rejected.

To give a few examples, some of the associators of Arabia used to deny the very existence of angels, while others considered them to be the daughters of God. Some groups among the Jews refused to obey the prophets and were so hostile to them that they came to assassinate a number of them, while other groups among the Jews and the Christians began to revere the prophets so extravagantly as to identify them with God Himself, or to place them on the level of God or to consider them the sons of God. These two attitudes are the two extremes of deviation, and are clearly seen, in the light of this verse, to be only two forms of misguidance.

According to the Shari'ah, it is, of course, obligatory for every Muslim to respect and love the Holy Prophet ﷺ , and if one lacks in this respect and love, one cannot be said to possess *'Imān* in the true sense of the term; all the same, let it be clearly understood that it is misguidance and association (*Shirk*) to make him the equal of Allah with respect to an attribute like knowledge or power. For, according to the Holy Qur'ān, the essence of *Shirk* lies in making someone other than Allah the equal of Allah with respect to a divine attribute, as is indicated by this verse: إِذْ نُسَوِّيكُم بِرَبِّ الْعَٰلَمِينَ : "And when we used to make you equal of the Lord of the worlds." (26:98) There are some Muslims who consider the Holy Prophet ﷺ to be omniscient and omnipresent like Allah Himself, and, in doing so, congratulate themselves upon showing the respect and love which is required of a Muslim, while they are only disobeying the Holy Prophet ﷺ and going against his teachings. They should learn from this verse that the respect and love for the Holy Prophet ﷺ which Allah demands from a Muslim is only that kind of respect and love which his blessed Companions had for him - neither more nor less than this, for either would be a deviation and a sin.

The terms Ẓilli and Burūzi are not valid

On the other hand, there are people [like the group called the Qadiānīs or the Aḥmadīs of Lahore] who have been deying the unambiguous and clear declaration of the Holy Qur'ān that Sayyidnā Muḥammad ﷺ is the last of all the prophets, and trying to make room for a new prophet. In order to serve this evil purpose, they have out of their own fantasy manufactured exotic forms of prophethood, and given to them equally fanciful names like *Burūz* (incarnation) or *Ẓill* (manifestation). The

present verse exposes this fraud as well, for the *'Īmān* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and of his blessed Companions does not show any trace of a belief in prophets of this genre, and anyone who pretends to such a belief is an avowed heretic.

Similarly, there are people whose minds and hearts are so befogged in modern materialism and the so-called "rationalism" that they find it difficult to accept the idea of the other world and the things that pertain to it, and then try to subject them to crooked interpretations, which they suppose to be an effort to make Islam more acceptable to the modern mind, and hence a great service to Islam. But, insofar as these interpretations transgress the commandment indicated in this verse - that is to say, they do not conform to the *'Īmān* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and of his Companions رضی الله عنهم اجمعین - they are totally false, and must be rejected. It is obligatory for a Muslim to believe without demur in what the Holy Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth* tell us with regard to the other world and all that pertains to it. For example, it is quite inadmissible to maintain that on the Day of Judgment men will be resurrected only "spiritually" and not bodily, or that the reward and the punishment in the other world will be "spiritual" and not physical, or that the "weighing of the deeds" is only a metaphorical expression. Let us insist once again that all such interpretations are doctrinally false and unacceptable to Allah - as the present verse has established.

Having defined the *'Īmān* which is acceptable to Allah, Verse 137 also points out that the enemies of Islam may yet remain unconvinced out of sheer obstinacy and malice. Allah asks the Holy Prophet ﷺ not to worry about them, for Allah will deal with them Himself, and protect His prophet. This promise has been made more explicitly in another verse: وَاللّٰهُ يَعْصِمُكَ مِنَ النَّاسِ : "And Allah will protect you against these people." (5:67) Subsequent events showed the fulfilment of this promise.

The Colour of Allah

Verse 138 delineates Islam as the "colouring of Allah", and explains this "colouring" as the unalloyed worship of Allah and total submission to Him. Verse 135 has identified Islam with "the religion of Ibrāhīm." If we put Verse 135 and 138 together, it becomes clear that essentially Islam - or any authentic religion, for that matter - is

the religion of Allah, and that the association of a religion with the name of a prophet can only be symbolised.

Verse 138 presents religion as "colouring" (*Ṣibghah*). The expression carries within itself several levels of meaning. But the immediate allusion is to a certain ceremony of the Christians. On the seventh day of its birth, they used to bathe an infant in coloured (probably yellow) water, which was supposed to be a substitute for circumcision, and a sufficient guarantee for the external and internal purification of the infant - the fast and indelible "colouring" of Christian faith, so to say. The verse suggests that this colour is wasted away with the water, without leaving a trace outside or inside, nor does this kind of baptism serve the purpose of circumcision and cleanse a man of physical impurity. And the verse declares that the only colouring worth the name is the colouring of a genuine and unabrogated religion - that is, Islam - the only colouring which can guarantee physical and spiritual purification, and the only one which shall remain. Then, the word *Ṣibghah* or "colouring" has a deeper meaning too. Just as a certain colour is openly and clearly visible to the beholder, the signs of genuine and pure *'Īmān* should shine through the face, the movements, the habits and the behaviour of a Muslim. In this sense, the verse is a commandment, asking Muslims "to dye" themselves in the "colouring of Allah", outwardly and inwardly by offering unalloyed worship to Him alone, by submitting themselves totally to His commandments, and by gladly accepting His will.

Verse 139 - 141

قُلْ أَتُحَآجُّونَنَا فِى ٱللَّهِ وَهُوَ رَبُّنَا وَرَبُّكُمْ وَلَنَآ أَعْمَٰلُنَا وَلَكُمْ
أَعْمَٰلُكُمْ وَنَحْنُ لَهُۥ مُخْلِصُونَ ۝ أَمْ تَقُولُونَ إِنَّ إِبْرَٰهِۦمَ
وَإِسْمَٰعِيلَ وَإِسْحَٰقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَٱلْأَسْبَاطَ كَانُوا۟ هُودًا أَوْ نَصَٰرَىٰ ۗ
قُلْ ءَأَنتُمْ أَعْلَمُ أَمِ ٱللَّهُ ۗ وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّن كَتَمَ شَهَٰدَةً عِندَهُۥ مِنَ
ٱللَّهِ ۗ وَمَا ٱللَّهُ بِغَٰفِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ۝ تِلْكَ أُمَّةٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ ۖ لَهَا
مَا كَسَبَتْ وَلَكُم مَّا كَسَبْتُمْ ۖ وَلَا تُسْـَٔلُونَ عَمَّا كَانُوا۟ يَعْمَلُونَ ۝

Say: "Would you argue with us about Allah, when He is

our Lord as well as your Lord? For us our deeds, and for you your deeds! And to Him we are faithful. Or, would you say that Ibrāhīm Ismā'īl, Isḥāq, Ya'qūb and their children were Jews or Christians?" Say: "Do you know better or does Allah?" And who can be more unjust than the one who conceals the testimony he has from Allah? And Allah is not unaware of what you do. Those are a people who have passed away. For them what they earned, and for you what you earned. And you shall not be questioned as to what they have been doing. (Verses 139 - 141)

These three verses bring to an end the section of the Sūrah in which certain claims of the Jews and the Christians have been refuted -- for example, their assertion that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm (Abraham), Sayyidnā Ismā'īl (Ishmael), Sayyidnā Ishāq (Isaac), Sayyidnā Ya'qūb (Jacob) and the prophets in his lineage -- عليهم السلام -- were either Jews or Christians, and the claim that they were the chosen people and would have the exclusive privilege of being sent straight to Paradise which would be denied to Muslims. The earlier verses have established that the religion of all these prophets was Islam, in the general sense of the term, but that the earlier Sharī'ahs have now been abrogated, and the title of "Islam" been specially given to the religion of Sayyidnā Muḥammad ﷺ . Should the Jews and the Christians still continue, in their stubbornness, to deny, Allah asks the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the Muslims to declare in plain and simple words that Allah, being the Lord of All, cannot show any special favour to any particular group of His creatures, and that on the Day of Judgment He will assess the Jews and the Christians as well as the Muslims according to what each has believed in and how each has been behaving - a principle which was accepted by the People of the Book too. The Muslims have also been asked to announce that they on their part recognize no other god but Allah, and have purified their religion of all traces of association (*Shirk*) - as against the Jews and the Christians who consider Sayyidnā 'Uzayr (Ezra عليه السلام) and Sayyidnā 'Īsā (Jesus عليه السلام) respectively to be "the Son of God", and whose religions have, moreover, been abrogated. In this respect at least, Muslims have a superiority over them. If the People of the Book should, on account of their affiliation with the earlier prophets, still keep insisting on their

own rectitude, the Muslims may ask them a basic question - who knows the truth better, Allah or the People of the Book? Allah has definitely and finally announced the truth in the Last Revelation, and the People of the Book themselves know that the religion of the earlier prophets was Islam. Yet they are trying to conceal the truth, and being unjust, in the gravest sense of the term. Allah knows what they have been doing, and will judge them according to their own deeds, and not according to the deeds of their ancestors. Thus, at the end of this section, Verse 141, which is a repetition of Verse 134, warns them against the consequences of their vanity and pretentiousness, and advises them to take care of themselves rather than relying on ancestral glory.

Verse 139 brings out the essential and peculiar characteristic of the Islāmic *Ummah* - it has purified itself of all possible admixture of *Shirk* (association), and devoted itself, externally and internally, to Allah. The Arabic word in the text is *Mukhlisūn*, the plural of *Mukhlis* which signifies "one who has purified himself", and which is allied to the word *Ikhlāṣ*, "the act of purifying oneself." According to Sa'īd ibn Jubayr, *Ikhlāṣ* consists in worshipping no one but Allah, associating no one with Allah, and doing good deeds only for the sake of obeying Allah, and not for the purpose of winning the admiration of the people. Certain spiritual masters have said that *Ikhlāṣ* is a deed which can be identified neither by men, nor by angels nor by Satan, and that it is a "secret" between Allah and His servant. [38]

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38. The word *Ikhlāṣ* is usually rendered into English as "sincerity" and *Mukhlis* as "sincere." It is to be doubted whether the word "sincerity" did, at any time and in any Western language, carry the full gamut of the meanings of the Arabic word *Ikhlāṣ*. Anyhow, the sense of the word "sincerity" has, in current usage, become not only perverted but sometimes actually inverted. The word used to imply a harmony between external action and inner inclination, along with the tacit assumption that the external action concerned was, if nothing else, at least socially acceptable to some degree. But "sincerity", as employed in our days, suggests a compliance with one's emotions or even with one's instincts. As such, the concept of "sincerity" is being used to justify and authorize fornication, or even murder. It is easy to see that such an idea of "sincerity" is the exact anti-thesis of *Ikhlāṣ*. For, one cannot attain even the lowest degree of

Continued

Verse 142

سَيَقُولُ السُّفَهَآءُ مِنَ النَّاسِ مَاوَلّٰهُمْ عَنْ قِبْلَتِهِمُ الَّتِى كَانُوا عَلَيْهَا قُلْ لِّلّٰهِ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ يَهْدِى مَنْ يَّشَآءُ اِلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ O

The foolish among the people will say: "What has turned them away from their Qiblah which they used to observe?" Say: "To Allah belong the East and the West. He guides whom He wills to a straight path." (Verse 142) [39]

Continued

Ikhlāṣ without forming a clear intention to obey the injunctions of the Sharīʻah as against letting oneself be guided by one's instinctual urges or emotional inclinations while the concept of "sincerity" in vogue requires one to ignore the Sharīʻah or even mundane considerations and to do the bidding of one's impulse of the moment, thus reducing man to an automaton at the mercy of his reflexes. Nor should we forget another serious aspect of the problem. There is another allied notion of "sincerity" which has been disturbing the peace of many pious people even in the past, but which has acquired a devastating intensity in our own days. This notion of "sincerity" demands one to seek fixity and unrelieved continuity in an emotional state, which is, of course, not possible for man as he is constituted. It so happens with some pious people that once they start seeking this kind of "sincerity" in offering their enjoined prayers, they find that they cannot keep up an unbroken concentration of mind, and are so frightened by this lapse that they sometimes give up offering their prayers, believing such worship to be "insincere" and hence invalid. Let us make it clear once for all that the only thing the Sharīʻah requires from us is to have the correct intention and attitude when we begin our prayers or perform any other good deed. This alone is the pre-requisite for attaining *Ikhlāṣ*, which, anyhow, is not a matter of emotions and affective states. In short, Islam requires us to perfect the quality of *Ikhlāṣ* as defined by the Shariʻah, and not to seek "sincerity" in the Western sense of the term, ancient or modern. For an elaborate treatment of the subject, see *Tarbiyyah al-Sālik* by Maulanā Ashraf ʻAlī Thānavī .

39. Some of the considerations arising from this verse have already been dealt with under Verses 114 and 115. As one can see, the present verse deals with taunts of the enemies of Islam - Jews, Christians and the *mushrikīn* (associators) - with regard to the change of the Qiblah (orientation) for *Salāh* .

The orientation of Qiblah

"Qiblah" signifies the direction to which one turns one's face. It goes without saying that a true Muslim turns in every form of worship towards Allah alone, and Allah is not limited to any particular direction but transcends all dimensions. The logic of this fact requires that in worshipping Him everyone should be free to choose any orientation that he likes, and that he should have the allowance to keep changing his orientation as it suits him. But Divine Wisdom found it more in the fitness of things that all the worshippers should turn to the same direction, and have a fixed orientation. For, worship has several forms, some of which pertain to a single individual, while others have a collective aspect too. Among the first are included fasting, remembrance of Allah (*dhikr*) etc. which can be performed in privacy, while the *Ṣalāh* and the Ḥajj are performed openly and in a congregation. The latter, beside being forms of worship, have a secondary function as well - that of providing a social and collective discipline to the Muslims. Obviously, the basic principle of social organization is the unity and integration of the individuals, on the firmness and solidity of which depends the strength of the social organization, whereas an improper emphasis on individuality encougages a disintegrating and fissiparous tendency.

As to what the principle of unity and integrity should be, different people have chosen different ways at different times. For example, some have adopted race or colour as the integrating principle, others have opted for the homeland or the geographical region, still others for language. But all these considerations are purely arbitrary and accidental; instead of bringing men together, they divide them, and produce, (as the newspapers show us every day) world-wide concussions. So, the revealed religions and the Sharī'ahs of the prophets عليهم السلام - the collective name for which is "*Islām*" - have not shown unnecessary regard to such arbitrary and accidental factors, but have, in determining the principle of integration and unity among men, established themselves on the only basis which can possibly be valid - that is, the unity of mind arising out of doctrinal unity.

In other words, Islam has called upon men not to become divided in the worship of a thousand false gods, but to join together in the

worship of the True God, the One, the Incomparable - the only worship which can draw men from the four corners of the world, men of the past, of the present and of the future, all into a single body of the Faithful. Then, in order to give this inner unity a visible form and also to reinforce it, certain external expressions of unity have also been prescribed. But in both the cases the basic principle has been that the unity in view should not be imposed by circumstances, but arise from an act of will and choice, and produce a spiritual brotherhood.

As to the accidental factors like race or colour or birth-place, Islam has given them their proper place in the social life of man, but has not allowed any of them to usurp the central position. It is only in the field where human will can exercise its power to choose that Islam has sought to establish unity among men, internal as well as external. Moreover, the consideration inherent in the relevant injunctions and regulations has been that the things which are to serve as the point of unity should be of such a nature that every human being - man or woman, literate or illiterate, townsman or rustic - can choose and adopt them with equal ease.

It is hence that the Islamic Sharī'ah has not imposed a single and rigid mode of dress or food or housing on all the peoples of the world, for, the climatic conditions and the needs and even the preferences of people living in different regions being different, such a uniformity would have made life difficult for them. Supposing that in making a certain form of dress obligatory, a certain minimum had been prescribed, such a regulation would, beside being inconvenient for some, have gone against the principle of moderation, and amounted to a rejection of Allah's bounties; on the other hand, if a more elaborate dress had been made compulsory, it would have been impossible for the poor to fulfil the conditions. So, instead of prescribing a uniform for all the Muslims, the Sharī'ah has permitted the different modes of dressing current among different peoples or regions, and has only laid down certain necessary restrictions - for example, the dress should cover a certain area of the body, specified separately for men and women; in choosing a particular form of dress one should avoid being prodigal or vain, nor should a dress be chosen for the sake of imitating non-Muslims.

In short, Islam has established as points of unity for the Muslims only such things as can be the objects of a free choice, are easy to adopt and do not entail undue hardship or expense - for example, keeping the ranks straight in congregational prayers; following the movements of the *'Imām* in such prayers strictly; adopting a single form of dress while performing the Ḥajj, etc.

Among these, one of the most important is the Qiblah or the orientation for the *Ṣalāh*. As we have said, Allah Himself is free of all dimensions whatsoever, but the establishment of a single and definite Qiblah provides an easy and concrete unifying principle for men. Now, had the matter of choosing a Qiblah been left to men to decide for themselves, it would in itself have become a cause of dissension and a conflict among them. So, it was necessary that a thing of such import be determined by Allah Himself. In fact, the angels had already laid the foundation of the Ka'bah, the House of Allah, even before Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام was sent down to the earth. This was the first Qiblah of mankind.

إِنَّ أَوَّلَ بَيْتٍ وُّضِعَ لِلنَّاسِ لَلَّذِي بِبَكَّةَ مُبَارَكًا وَّهُدًى لِّلْعٰلَمِيْنَ O

"Certainly, the first House which was built for men is the one at Makkah - blessed, and a guidance for the worlds" (3:96).

As we have pointed out above in our commentary on Verse 125, this continued to be the Qiblah upto the time of Sayyidnā Nūh (Noah عليه السلام), when the Ka'bah was destroyed by the Deluge. It was rebuilt, under divine command, by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm and Sayyidnā Ismā'il (Abraham and Ishmael عليهم السلام), and became their Qiblah. After that, the *Baytul-Maqdis* at Jerusalem was established as the Qiblah for the Hebrew prophets and their people. Even so, these prophets, according to Abū al-'Āliyah, used to offer their prayers in the *Baytul-Maqdis* in such a way that they should be facing not only the Rock (*Ṣakhrah*) but the Ka'bah also. (Qurṭubī)

When *Ṣalāh* was made obligatory for the Holy Prophet ﷺ, the Qiblah appointed for him was, according to some scholars, the Ka'bah which had already served as the Qiblah for his ancestor, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام . Some time after the *Hijrah* (his migration from Makkah to Madīnah), or, as some scholars maintain, a little before

that event, he received a divine commandment to turn towards the *Baytul-Maqdis*. (This particular commandment has not been reported in the Holy Qur'ān - a fact which shows the hollowness of the claim that the Holy Qur'ān can be fully understood without the help of the *Ḥadīth*.) According to a *ḥadīth* reported by Al-Bukhārī, he offered his prayers with the *Baytul-Maqdis* as his Qiblah for sixteen or seventeen months. The spot where he offered his prayers in this manner is still marked off in the mosque at Madīnah. (Qurṭubī)

The Holy Prophet ﷺ was, of course, obedience personified, and he continued to offer his prayers with the *Baytul-Maqdis* as his Qiblah according to the divine commandment, but at the same time he longed that the Ka'bah, which had been the Qiblah of Sayyidnā Ādam and Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليهم السلام may be established as his also. The Way of Allah being that He, in His grace, often fulfils the wishes of those of His servants who have found His favour, the Holy Prophet ﷺ hoped that Allah would grant this wish. The Holy Qur'ān describes the situation thus:

قَدْ نَرٰى تَقَلُّبَ وَجْهِكَ فِى السَّمَآءِ فَلَنُوَلِّيَنَّكَ قِبْلَةً تَرْضٰهَا فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ

"We have been seeing you turn your face to heaven. So, We will certainly assign to you a Qiblah that you would like. Now, turn your face in the direction of the Sacred Mosque (*Al-Masjid al-Ḥarām*) (2:144).

One should notice that the verse we have just cited does not employ the terms, "Ka'bah" or *Baytullah*, but the expression *Al-Masjid al-Ḥarām* (the Sacred Mosque). It indicates that for those who live far away from Makkah it is not necessary, while offering *Ṣalāh*, to have the Ka'bah itself exactly in front of them, but turning one's face in the direction of the "House of Allah" is quite sufficient. On the other hand, for those who are present in the Sacred Mosque or can see the Ka'bah from a distance, it is necessary to have the Ka'bah or some part of it exactly in front of them, failing which the prayers will not be valid.

Now, when the Ka'bah was finally established as the Qiblah sixteen or seventeen months after the *Hijrah*, some Jews, associators and hypocrites began to scoff at the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his Companions رضى الله عنهم اجمعين for being so capricious in the matter of

their Qiblah. The Holy Qur'ān reports this objection, adding that such an objection can come only from stupid people - just as earlier in this Sūrah those who turn away from the religion of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام have been described as people who have besotted themselves. In replying to this objection, the second part of the verse shows that their stupidity lies in not realizing that the East and the West both belong to Allah Himself, and that He guides whomsoever He likes on the straight path. The verse, thus, explains the meaning of adopting an orientation - that is to say, neither does the Ka'bah nor the *Baytul-Maqdis* by itself possess any exclusive merit in this regard, and it is the divine commandment alone which gives to it the distinction of being the Qiblah - it could have as easily chosen some other place to serve the purpose. Moreover, the only merit in adopting a particular Qiblah lies in one's obedience to the divine commandment and in one's total submission to the will of Allah, which is the basic principle of the religion of the founder of the Ka'bah, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. In fact, the Holy Qur'ān itself explains this truth in clear terms:

لَيْسَ الْبِرَّ اَنْ تُوَلُّوْا وُجُوْهَكُمْ قِبَلَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَلٰكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنْ اٰمَنَ بِاللّٰهِ

"Righteousness is not that you turn your faces to the East or the West; but righteousness is that one believes in Allah..." (2:177).

Or in an earlier Verse: اَيْنَمَا تُوَلُّوْا فَثَمَّ وَجْهُ اللّٰهِ : "So whichever way you turn, there is the Face of Allah." (2:115) These verses clearly define the meaning and significance of adopting an orientation - that is, the place which has been chosen to serve as the Qiblah does not possess any merit in its own right, but the special merit arises from its having been chosen by Allah, and similarly turning towards it constitutes a meritorious act only insofar as it shows a readiness to obey divine commandment. The *raison d'etre* of changing the Qiblah for the Holy Prophet ﷺ might well be to show to the people in a visible form that a Qiblah is not an idol to be worshipped but only a concrete expression of divine commandment, and may hence be changed as and when Allah wills. In fact, the very next verse (2:143) explicitly says that when the *Baytul-Maqdis* was earlier appointed as the Qiblah, it was intended to show who was willing to obey the Holy Prophet ﷺ and who was not.

Verse 142, thus, fully refutes the antagonists of Islam, and points

out that Allah guides whosoever He wills on the Straight Path - the Straight Path, of course, being the readiness to obey divine commandment without demur. And this Straight Path was granted to the Muslims by the grace of Allah. There is also the suggestion that in the matter of the injunctions of the Sharī'ah rectitude lies in obeying each and every divine commandment unquestioningly without being too curious about the *raison d'etre* of such a commandment. For, those who seek a *raison d'etre* usually do so because they wish to deny or denigrate or disobey the Sharī'ah.

According to a *ḥadīth* reported from Sayyidah 'Ā'isha رضی الله عنها in the "Musnad" of Imām Aḥmad, the People of the Book are specially jealous of the Muslims for three things - (1) in answer to the divine commandment to every *Ummah* (or religious community) to set aside a day in the week for worship, the Jews chose Saturday and the Christians, Sunday, while the Muslims opted for Friday which happened to be the favourite of Allah; (2) the Ka'bah was appointed as the Qiblah for the Muslims, and not for others; (3) the Muslims were given the privilege of saying *Āmin* while offering *Ṣalāh* behind an *'Imām.*

Verse 143 . . .

وَكَذٰلِكَ جَعَلْنٰكُمْ اُمَّةً وَّسَطًا لِّتَكُوْنُوْا شُهَدَآءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُوْنَ الرَّسُوْلُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيْدًا . . .

And in the same way We made you a moderate Ummah (community), so that you should be witnesses over the people, and the Messenger a witness to you. (Verse 143) [40]

The verse qualifies the Islamic nation (*Ummah*) with the objective *Wasat* which signifies "moderate, middle or central", and is usually applied to a thing considered to be the best of its kind. According to a

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40. The earlier verse has dealt with the subject of the Qiblah or the orientation for *Ṣalāh* and has indicated that the "Straight Path" is identical with a willing acceptance of the divinely ordained injunctions of the Sharī'ah. Since the Islamic *Ummah* has accepted these injunctions without the least hesitation, the present verse says, by way of parenthesis, a few words of praise for it, bringing out the superiority of the Islamic *Ummah* over other Traditional communities. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

hadith reported by al-Tirmidhi from the blessed Companion Abu Sa'id al-Khudri, the word *Wasat* is to be interpreted as "just" - in the sense of being "the best" (Qurtubi). The verse points out that just as Allah has granted to the Muslims a Qiblah which is superior to all other orientations, in the same way He has bestowed upon the Islamic *Ummah* the unparalleled distinction of being moderate, balanced and just - in short, the honour of occupying the central position among all the Ummahs or Traditional communities. This distinction will manifest itself in its full resplendence on the Day of Judgment. Those among the earlier Ummahs who had been denying their prophets would, on that day, pretend that they had never received a book from Allah nor had any prophet given them any kind of guidance. The Islamic *Ummah* would, then, be called upon to bear witness, and it would, testify that prophets had been coming from Allah in every age, and providing guidance to each and every people. The earlier Ummahs would raise the objection that since the Islamic *Ummah* did not exist at that time and could not possibly know what had been happening before it came into being, its testimony against the earlier peoples could not be valid. In reply to this, the Islamic *Ummah* would maintain that even if it was not an eyewitness to the events of the past, yet it had received an authentic report from the most reliable source of information that can possibly be - that is, from the Last Prophet ﷺ and from the Last Book of Allah. The Holy Prophet ﷺ himself would be called in as a witness, and he would confirm the testimony of his *Ummah*. (For details, see the various *Ahadith* reported in the collections of al-Bukhari, al-Tirmidhi, al-Nasa'i and Imam Ahmad).

The most moderate of all people

According to the present verse, the characteristic quality which confers a superiority on the Islamic *Ummah* over others is its being *Wasat* - (a word which has been variously translated into English as "midmost, moderate, just, intermediary, middle, central or justly balanced.") In order to explain the implications of the word *Wasat*, commentators have usually made use of another Arabic adjective *Mu'tadil* (signifying "moderate or temperate") and the noun *I'tidal*

which means "being equal"; both the words come from the root *'Adl* which signifies "to be equal, or to make equal." [41]

In this regard one would like to know why the superiority of a human group or individual should be made to depend on the quality of moderation. Let us begin this discussion with a quite tangible fact. All the medical systems, old or new, are unanimous in accepting the principle that the health of the human body depends on the temperateness of the different elements of which it is composed, and that illness or disease comes from a disturbance of this equilibrium. According to the ancient Greek medicine, which was further developed by the Muslims, these elements or "humours" are four in number - blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile -, and the humours produce four physical states in the body - heat, cold, wetness and dryness. As long as the four states are properly balanced against one another, the human body enjoys good health; but as soon as there is an immoderate increase or decrease in any one of them, the body becomes diseased, and if the balance is not properly restored in time, it may succumb to the forces of death. Similarly, in the ethical and spiritual sphere too health depends on temperateness and inner equilibrium, and illness arises out of intemperance and disequilibrium, which, if allowed to grow, results in spiritual death. At the same time, anyone who has eyes to see would readily discover for himself that the essence of manhood which places man at the head of all created beings, does not lie in the physical states of his body - that he, in fact, shares with all the animals - but in something higher and subtler: namely, spiritual perfection. As the great Sūfī poet Rūmī has said: "Manhood does not reside in the flesh, or in the fat or in the skin; manhood is nothing else than seeking to please the Friend." As to those who ignore this essential attribute of man and allow it to be destroyed in themselves, Rūmī says: "These people you see all around are non-human; they are not men, but only wear the masks of man."

The Universal Man

This being so, we are naturally led to the conclusion that he alone

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41. So, for the purpose of the present discussion we shall choose the English word "moderation" in order to explain certain essential features of the Islamic *Ummah*.

can deserve the title of *Al-Insān al-Kāmil* ("the Universal Man") who has attained ethical and spiritual equilibrium along with physical equilibrium. This quality has specially been granted to all the prophets عليهم السلام , and, in its most perfect form, to the Holy Prophet ﷺ who is thus "the Universal Man" par excellence. As for humanity in general, Allah has, on the other hand, created a stable and complex system of medicines, instruments and physicians for the physical well-being of man; similarly, He has, on the other hand, sent His prophets who bring divine guidance for man, and who are provided with a certain amount of requisite physical force too, so that they may promulgate this law of equilibrium and moderation in the world. The Holy Qur'ān defines the purpose of sending prophets and messengers of Allah to men, and of giving them Divine Books:

لَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ وَ اَنْزَلْنَا مَعَهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ وَالْمِيْزَانَ لِيَقُوْمَ النَّاسُ بِالْقِسْطِ وَاَنْزَلْنَا الْحَدِيْدَ فِيْهِ بَاْسٌ شَدِيْدٌ وَّ مَنَافِعُ لِلنَّاسِ

"Indeed, We have sent Our messengers with the clear signs, and We have sent down with them the Book and the Balance, so that men might uphold justice. And We have sent down iron in which there is great might, and many uses for men." (57:25)

Let us add by way of explanation that "the Book" is meant for producing inner equilibrium and temperateness in men, and "the Balance" for producing equilibrium in their social conduct and economic transactions - the "Balance" may also stand for the Sharī'ah of every prophet which helps us to define what "equilibrium" really is in its various applications in the different spheres of human life, and which serves to establish justice in the world.

Now, let us recall that the verse under discussion characterizes the Islamic *Ummah* with the word *Wasat* ("moderate, middle, central"). Our discussion must have made it clear that this simple word comphrehends all the qualities which it is possible for an individual or a community of men to possess in this world. Through such a characterization of the Islamic *Ummah*, the Holy Qur'ān has thus indicated that this *Ummah* possesses the essential quality of manhood to a degree of perfection that no other *Ummah* does, and that it is superior to all others in serving the purpose for which the whole

cosmic order has been created, and for which all the prophets and divine books have been sent.

The Universal Community

Certain other verses of the Holy Qur'ān define this essential quality of the Islamic *Ummah* in more specific terms. For example: وممن خلقنا امة يهدون بالحق وبه يعدلون : "Among those We have created there is an *Ummah* which guides by the truth, and by it dispenses justice." (7:181) That is to say, the Islamic *Ummah* displays its spiritual equilibrium in giving up the pursuit of individual desires and interests in order to follow divine guidance and try to make others too do the same, and in settling all kinds of disputes in the light of divine law without being influenced by the vested interests of a person or a group. Another verse is still more specific:

كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ اُمَّةٍ اُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَاْمُرُوْنَ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ

> "You are the best *Ummah* that has been brought forth for men, bidding to good deeds and forbidding evil deeds and believing in Allah." (3:110)

It is the best *Ummah*, for it has been granted a unique Prophet ﷺ who taught us to respect all other prophets, and a Book which is the most comprehensive and the most perfect of all the Divine Books, and has in itself been endowed with the quality of temperateness, moderation and equilibrium to a degree as no other *Ummah* does enjoy; it has been destined to be the recipient of the most subtle modes of knowledge, to outshine others in all the forms of faith and practice, and, above all, in the fear of Allah - its field of action not limited to any one country or race but extending all over the world, and infusing all the spheres of human existence. The phrase اُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ : "raised for mankind." (3:110) indicates that the very purpose for which it has been brought into being is to work for the good of men, and to help them find the way to salvation and to Paradise, its function and, so to say, its very insignia as an *Ummah* being to guide people towards good deeds and to dissuade them from evil deeds. This role of the Islamic *Ummah* has been formulated very succinctly in a *ḥadith*: اَلدِّيْنُ النَّصِيْحَةُ : "Religion consists in having the good of others at heart" - particularly of other Muslims. Let us add that the good deeds towards which this

Ummah is meant to guide others are those which have been defined as such by the Sharī'ah, while the evil deeds from which it is to dissuade them include infidelity (*Kufr*), association (*Shirk*), innovations in religion (*Bid'ah*), sins of different kinds, illegitimate customs, transgression of divine commandments, immoral or indecent actions, etc. As to dissuading people from evil deeds, this too may take various forms - it may require the use sometimes of the tongue, sometimes of the hand, sometimes of the pen and sometimes of the sword - in fact, it would include all the forms of *Jihād*. As far as the extensive and intensive display of this particular quality is concerned, no other *Ummah* can compare with the Islamic *Ummah*.

Moderateness: A Comparative View

Let us now consider how far the temperateness or the moderation of this *Ummah* is borne out by actual facts. Since it is not possible here to make a detailed comparative study of the respective beliefs and practices of all the Ummahs, we shall give only a few examples which would, we hope, satisfactorily establish the superiority of this *Ummah* over others.

First of all, let us take up the doctrinal aspect. In the case of the earlier Ummahs one would observe that on the one hand they took their prophets to be the sons of Allah and started worshipping them - قَالَتِ الْيَهُوْدُ عُزَيْرُ ابْنُ اللّٰهِ وَقَالَتِ النَّصٰرَى الْمَسِيْحُ ابْنُ اللّٰهِ : "The Jews said, 'Ezra is the son of Allah', and the Christians said, 'Christ is the son of Allah'." (9:30) -, and that on the other hand some people from among them, in spite of having recognized and acknowledged their prophet on the basis of his oft-repeated miracles, refused to obey him when he asked them to take part in a holy war, and bluntly said: اِذْهَبْ اَنْتَ وَرَبُّكَ فَقَاتِلَآ اِنَّا هٰهُنَا قٰعِدُوْنَ : "Go forth, you and your Lord, and fight; we will be sitting here." (5:24) We sometimes see even the spectacle of prophets being tortured by their own followers. On the contrary, we have the Islamic *Ummah* which has such a deep love for the Holy Prophet ﷺ that Muslims have, in every period of their history, taken it to be the greatest blessing to be able to sacrifice their own lives and even the lives of their wives and children at his call, and yet it has never exceeded the limit, and has placed the Holy Prophet ﷺ only in the station of a prophet and not in the station of Allah. In spite of knowing him to be the most perfect of

all the prophets, it has been calling him عبدالله ورسوله : "the servant of Allah, and His messenger." The doctrinal position with regard to him, as defined in the famous Arabic poem "*Qaṣīdah al-Burdah*", is that, short of attributing "the sonhood of Allah" to him (which the Christians do in the case of Christ, and which constitutes an act of infidelity), anything that one says in his praise would be correct; or, in the words of a Persian poet, addressing the Holy Prophet ﷺ :

بعد از خدا بزرگ توئ قصه مختصر

"In short, after God, you are the greatest."

When we turn from the doctrinal aspect to a consideration of the actual attitudes and practices in the matter of worship and rites, we again find similar excesses and aberrations on the part of earlier Ummahs. On the one hand, we see their religious scholars misinterpreting or changing the injunctions of their Sharī'ah and even distorting the Sacred Books for a few pieces of silver, and inventing all kinds of ruses to get rid of divinely ordained rites; on the other hand, we find people giving up the world altogether, imprisoning themselves in monastic cells, refusing to accept their share in the blessings of the physical world which Allah has not only granted to man but the enjoyment of which also He has permitted, and, in short, believing that imposing hardships on oneself carries the highest merit and is in itself an act of worship par excellence. The history of Islamic Ummah, on the contrary, presents a totally different picture. On the one hand, it has never adopted monasticism as the supreme form of religious life - in fact, Islam forbids such an attitude. On the other hand, through its readiness to sacrifice property and life, even children and all for the sake of the commandments of Allah and His Prophet ﷺ , the *Ummah* established its sway even politically over a considerable area of the world. It has demonstrated in its practice as no other *Ummah* has that religion is meant to be put into action in the market-places and the halls of power as much as in the mosques and the contemplative retreats. It is the Islamic *Ummah* which has shown the world how the poor in spirit can move about in the robes of kings, and the kings in spirit conceal themselves in the garb of beggars - all because the king as well as the beggar knows that the greatest dignity lies in being the servant of Allah.

In the sphere of human and social relations too, the earlier Ummahs have in their behaviour been guilty of excess in one way or another. On the one hand, we see an indifference to human rights and particularly an utter disregard of the rights of women, and, in general, a pursuit of individual interests and desires irrespective of the question of right and wrong. On the other hand, we have the display of an exaggerated sentimentality which forbids the eating of animal flesh, in spite of Allah having made it lawful, and which frowns upon the killing of an insect even accidentally. It was the Islamic *Ummah* and its Sharī'ah which established an equilibrium and a just order in the field of human relations. On the other hand, it set down a clear code of human rights, extended them to women as well, and prescribed that not only in times of peace but on the battle-field itself the enemies too must enjoy certain inalienable rights. On the other hand, it clearly demarcated every right and every duty, and put down every act of falling back from the prescribed mark or exceeding it as a crime. The Islamic Sharī'ah also taught that one should try to fulfil all of one's obligations towards others, but if one saw one's own rights suffer, one should exercise patience and forgiveness.

In the economic sphere too, the other Ummahs have been a prey to excesses of different kinds. For example, in our own age we have, on the one hand, the Capitalist system which pays no heed to the distinction between the lawful and the unlawful, and is totally blind to the welfare of the people, but exalts the amassing of wealth as the highest virtue; on the other hand are certain economic systems which have no respect for personal property. In actual fact, the essence of these two hostile systems is the same - the pursuit of worldly things as the be-all and the end-all of human life. Contrary to this, the Islamic Sharī'ah brings the conflicting elements into an equilibrium, giving to each its proper place. On the one hand, it does not allow the amassing of wealth to be made the ultimate end of man's effort, nor does it make human dignity depend on the considerations of money or rank or office. On the other hand, it promulgates certain principles for the distribution of wealth in a balanced manner so that no member of a society should be deprived of the basic necessities of life, nor should an

individual or a group appropriate all the available wealth. The things which can be shared in common by all the members of a society have been entrusted to public or joint control, while in certain specific things the right to private property has been fully respected. It made a clear-cut distinction between lawful (*Ḥalāl*) possessions and unlawful (*Ḥarām*) possessions, insisting on the spiritual merit of lawful possessions and laying down the rules for making use of them.

Injunctions and related considerations

(1) According to the present verse, Allah has made the Islamic *Ummah* an equitable and just, and hence a trustworthy community, "so that" it may be qualified to bear witness. From this we infer the legal principle that one who is not *'Ādil* (trustworthy - as defined by the Sharī'ah) cannot be acceptable as a witness in a court of law.

(2) According to al-Qurṭubī, this verse establishes *Ijmā'*: (إجماع), or the consensus of the Islamic *Ummah*, as one of the four deciding agencies in the matter of legislation. For, the very fact that Allah Himself has accepted this *Ummah* as a trustworthy witness as against the other traditional communities, shows that the consensus of this *Ummah* is a deciding factor in legislative matters, and that it is necessary (*Wājib*) to act upon it. Thus, the consensus of the blessed Companions has to be accepted by their successors, and that of the latter by the next generation.

According to Al-Tafsīr al-Mazharī, this verse establishes the principle that the deeds and actions of this *Ummah* which have been approved by a consensus are all of them commendable, for, if one were to admit the possibility of a consensus on an error, the *Ummah* cannot be characterized as being moderate and just.

Imām al-Jaṣṣāṣ adds that the dependability of the consensus is not particular to the time of the Holy Prophet ﷺ or of the blessed Companions, but that the consensus of the Muslims in any age whatsoever is equally trustworthy, for this verse is addressed to the whole *Ummah* which includes not only the contemporaries of the Holy Prophet ﷺ but also the succeeding generations of Muslims upto the

Day of Judgment. Thus, the Muslims living in any age whatsoever qualify as the witnesses of Allah whose agreement on a certain point becomes a deciding factor in matters of legislation, and who cannot arrive at a consensus on anything which should constitute an error or a deviation. [42]

. . . Verse 143

. . . وَمَا جَعَلْنَا الْقِبْلَةَ الَّتِي كُنْتَ عَلَيْهَآ اِلَّا لِنَعْلَمَ مَنْ يَّتَّبِعُ
الرَّسُوْلَ مِمَّنْ يَّنْقَلِبُ عَلٰى عَقِبَيْهِ وَاِنْ كَانَتْ لَكَبِيْرَةً اِلَّا عَلَى
الَّذِيْنَ هَدَى اللّٰهُ وَمَا كَانَ اللّٰهُ لِيُضِيْعَ اِيْمَانَكُمْ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ
بِالنَّاسِ لَرَءُوْفٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ۝

And We did not appoint the Qiblah which you used to observe except to know him who follows the Messenger as distinct from him who turns on his heels. And, it was burdensome indeed, but not on those whom Allah guided. And Allah is not to let your faith go waste. Certainly Allah is very kind, very merciful to the people. (Verse 143)

The History of the Qiblah

There is some difference of opinion among the blessed Companions and their Successors as to whether it was the *Baytullah* at Makkah or the "*Baytul-Maqdis*" at Jerusalem which was appointed as the Qiblah, when the five daily prayers were made obligatory in *Makkah al-Mukarramah* before the *Hijrah* (the migration of the Holy Prophet ﷺ from Makkah to Madīnah). According to the blessed Companion 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās, the first Qiblah was the *Baytul-Maqdis*, and continued to be so even after the Hijrah for some sixteen or seventeen

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42. Let us not, however, forget that consensus or *Ijmā'* in this context does not at all imply a sort of referendum on the basis of adult franchise, but means the agreement of a majority of such scholars as fulfil the necessary conditions for pronouncing a judgment in the matters of the Sharī'ah - that is to say, those who possess the authority to exercise *Ijtihād*. It goes without saying that once a consensus of this kind has been arrived at in any matter, the majority of the *Ummah* accepts it, and holds by it.

months, and it was only then that Allah commanded that the *Baytullah* be taken as the Qiblah. However, the practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ at Makkah was that he used to offer his prayers between *al-Hajar al-Aswad* ("the Black Stone") and *al-Rukn al-Yamāniyy* ("the corner facing Yemen") so that his face should be turned towards the *Baytullah* and the *Baytul-Maqdis* both at the same time. But this was no longer possible when he migrated to Madinah, and hence his keen desire that the *Baytullah* be appointed as the new Qiblah. (Ibn Kaṭhīr) But other Companions رضى الله عنهم اجمعين are of the view that when the five daily prayers were made obligatory at Makkah, it was the *Baytullah* which served as the Qiblah for the Muslims as it had for Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm and Sayyidnā Ismā'īl عليهم السلام . As long as the Holy Prophet ﷺ stayed at Makkah, he continued to observe this Qiblah. But after the *Hijrah*, Allah ordained a change in the orientation, and the *Baytul-Maqdis* was appointed as the Qiblah, which it continued to be for sixteen or seventeen months. Then came a new commandment, and the *Baytullah* was restored as the Qiblah. Al-Qurṭubī, relying on the authority of Abū 'Amr, prefers the second view to the first. The *raison d'etre* of these changes of orientation has been explained like this. When the Holy Prophet ﷺ came to Madīnah, he had to deal with the Jews, and in order to familiarize them with Islam he adopted their Qiblah under divine commendment. But, by and by it became evident that a stubborn people like the Jews would not easily give up their hostility to Islam. So, Allah allowed him to go back to the original Qiblah, which, being the Qiblah of his forefathers, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm and Sayyidnā Ismā'īl عليهم السلام , was naturally dearer to him. In fact, the mosque of Sayyidna Salih عليه السلام was oriented towards the *Baytullah*, as is shown by an incident reported by al-Qurṭubī from Abū al-'Āliyah al-Riyāhī. The latter once had a debate with a Jew concerning the orientation adopted by Sayyidnā Mūsā (Moses عليه السلام). The Jew insisted that the great prophet turned in his prayers towards the *Sakhrah*, The Dome of the Rock in the Sacred Mosque at Jerusalem, while Abū al-'Āliyah maintained that he stood near the *Sakhrah*, but his face was turned towards the *Baytullah*. Finally, the latter suggested that the dispute could be decided by having a look at

the mosque of Sayyidnā Ṣālih عليه السلام situated on a hill below the *Baytul-Maqdis*. And, on visiting the mosque, they found that it was oriented towards the *Baytullah*.

Now, according to those who prefer the first of the two views, the *raison d'etre* was that it was necessary at Makkah to differentiate the Muslims from the idol-worshippers and to emphasize the distinction between the two, and hence the *Baytul-Maqdis* was appointed as the Qiblah of the Muslims instead of the *Baytullah* which was at that time the Qiblah of the *mushrikīn*. Then, after the *Hijrah*, there arose a new need at Madīnah - that of highlighting the distinction between the Muslims and the Jews. So, the Qiblah of the Jews was given up, and the *Baytullah* was adopted as the Qiblah of the Muslims.

On account of the difference between these two views, the phrase "the Qiblah which you used to observe" has also been interpreted in two ways. On the basis of the first view, "the Qiblah" referred to in the present verse can only be the *Baytul-Maqdis* which was the first and earlier Qiblah; on the basis of the second, it can also be the Ka'bah which was the earliest and the first Qiblah. Anyhow, the real import of the verse remains the same in either case - the commandment with regard to the change in orientation is a test of the faith of those who claim to be the followers of the Holy Prophet ﷺ , which would openly demonstrate the distinction between those who are genuinely obedient to Allah and His Messenger ﷺ , and those who follow their individual opinion. History records that after this verse had been revealed, those who were weak in their faith, or were just hypocrites, forsook Islam, and even accused the Holy Prophet ﷺ of having gone back to the ways of his own people - that is, of the *mushrikīn*.

Injunctions and related considerations

(1) The present verse shows that sometimes an injunction based on the *Sunnah*, or the Tradition of the Holy Prophet ﷺ is abrogated by the Holy Qur'ān. As Imām al-Jaṣṣāṣ points out in his "Aḥkām al-Qur'ān", the Noble Qur'ān does not specify that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was ever commanded, before the *Hijrah* or after, to turn in his prayers towards the *Baytul-Maqdis*: we find the relevant evidence only in the

Ḥadīth and the *Sunnah*. It comes to mean that a practice which had been established by the *Sunnah* was abrogated by this verse of the Holy Qur'ān, appointing the *Baytullah* as the Qiblah.

(2) This verse also goes to show that the *Ḥadīth* of the Messenger of Allah too, in a certain respect, cannot be delinked from the Holy Qur'ān, and that the Holy Qur'ān recognizes the legitimacy of those injunctions which find no mention in the Holy Qur'ān but have been instituted by the *Ḥadīth* alone. For, the present verse clearly states at the end that prayers which had been offered, taking the *Baytul-Maqdis* as the Qiblah, as commanded by the Holy Prophet ﷺ, are altogether valid and acceptable to Allah.

(3) This verse helps us to resolve a delicate problem in Islamic jurisprudence pertaining to the "*Khabar al-Wāhid*" (which is a *Ḥadīth* reported by one or two persons only). The question which arises in this respect is whether an injunction laid down in the Holy Qur'ān, or definitely authenticated otherwise, can be abrogated by such a *ḥadīth*. The Hanafī school of jurisprudence holds that it cannot, while the reports concerning this verse suggest that it can do so, if strong indications are present to establish the authenticity of such a *ḥadīth*. For, al-Bukhārī, Muslim and nearly all the authentic collections of the *Aḥādīth* report the following circumstances from several Companions رضی اللہ عنہم اجمعین . When the divine commandment changing the Qiblah came down, the Holy Prophet ﷺ offered his prayers at the time of *'Asr* (or, according to other reports cited by Ibn Kaṭhīr, at the time of *ẓuhr*) facing the *Baytullah*. Some Companions, departing from the mosque, happened to pass by the mosque of the Banī Salamah tribe, and found these people offering their prayers in the direction of the *Baytul-Maqdis*. So, they called out to inform them that the Qiblah had now been changed, and that they had just offered their prayers along with the Holy Prophet ﷺ in the direction of the *Baytullah*. On hearing this, those people at once changed their orientation to *Baytullah* even in the course of the prayers. Nuwaylah Bint Muslim relates that women who were in the back row came forward, so that when the orientation had been changed, men were again in the front row and women in the back row. (Ibn Kaṭhīr) Thus the Banū Salmah tribe adopted the new Qiblah the very same day. But the news

reached *Qubā* the next day in the course of the *Fajr* prayers - as reported by Al-Bukhārī and Muslim from the blessed Companion Ibn 'Umar -, and the people of *Qubā* too turned towards the *Baytullah* in the course of the prayers. (Ibn Kathīr and Jaṣṣāṣ)

After citing these reports, Imām al-Jaṣṣāṣ concludes.

هذا خبر صحيح مستفيض فى أيدى أهل العلم قد تلقوه بالقبول فصار فى حيزالتواتر الموجب للعلم

"Although this *ḥadīth* is essentially a solitary report, (that is, *Al-Khabar al-Wāhid*), yet, having been generally accepted and also being supported by strong indication with regard to its authenticity, it has acquired the status of a *ḥadīth* that has been related by a number of trustworthy reporters in an uninterrupted succession -- a fact which always leads to certitude."

The Ḥanafī jurists agree with this conclusion. They must, however, face another question. This *ḥadīth* acquired general acceptance only much later, while the news of the change in the orientation must have been conveyed to the Banū Salamah tribe and this *ḥadīth* immediately without its being widely known? Al-Jaṣṣāṣ replies that not only these people but all the Companions already knew that the Holy Prophet ﷺ wished the *Baytullah* to be appointed as the Qiblah and had even been praying for it, and had begun to consider it quite probable that the injunction to retain *Baytul-Maqdis* as the Qiblah may not remain operative in the future. In other words, the probability of a change had made the continuation of the *Baytul-Maqdis* as the Qiblah a bit uncertain, and not definite. In view of this element of uncertainty, the *Khabar al-Wāhid* was considered to be quite sufficient for abrogating the earlier commandment. Otherwise, a *Khabar al-Wāhid* cannot justifiably abrogate a definite and final injunction laid down by the Holy Qur'ān.

(4) The present verse helps to resolve an important problem which has been the subject of a controversy: if the *'Imām* uses a microphone in leading *Ṣalāh*, would it be legitimate for the congregation to obey his call in their movements? If they can hear no more than the sound coming out of the loud-speaker, would it not invalidate their prayers?

As we have already noted, Al-Bukhārī reports a *ḥadīth* from the

blessed Companion 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar, relating how the people of *Qubā* turned towards the *Baytullah* even in the course of their prayers as soon as they heard the commandment about the change in orientation. Commenting on this incident, the great Ḥanafī scholar al-'Aynī says: فيه جواز تعليم من ليس فى الصلوة من هو فيها :"This *ḥadīth* establishes the rule that a man who is not offering his prayers may teach or instruct the man who is engaged in his prayers." In another place, al-'Aynī also adds that from this *ḥadīth*, al-Ṭaḥṭāwī has derived the rule that if a man engaged in his prayers hears the words spoken by one who is not so engaged, it does not invalidate his prayers ('Umdah al-Qārī).

Of course, the Ḥanafi jurists in general hold that if a man engaged in his prayers obeys the call of another man who is not participating in these prayers, it invalidates his prayers. What they, however, mean is that obeying someone other than Allah in the course of *Salah* invalidates it, but if one is actually obeying a divine commandment and the other man is acting only as a means of communicating this injunction to him, it does not invalidate the prayers at all. An example would make the point clear. If a man, joining the congregational prayers, finds that there is no room left in the first row, and that he would be the only one to stand in the second, he should, according to the jurists, pull someone back from the first row and make him join the second row along with himself. Now, on the face of it, the man who allows himself to be pulled back is obeying someone other than Allah in the course of the prayers, and this should invalidate his prayers. But, in fact, it is not so. The most authoritative book of Ḥanafi jurisprudence, "Al-Durr al-Mukhtār", lays down the rule that the prayers of this man are perfectly valid. As to why his prayers would not be invalidated, Al-Ṭaḥṭāwī explains that this man has not actually been obeying the new-comer, but following a divine commandment conveyed to him by the Holy Prophet ﷺ . Let us add that there are two different ways in which a man engaged in his prayers may obey the call of another man who is not participating with him in these prayers. (a) He may wish to please this man and to obey him. In such a case, the prayers would become invalid. (b) He obeys a commandment of the Sharī'ah, conveyed to him by the other man. In this case, he is essentially obeying a divine commandment, and hence his prayers would not become invalid. (Ṭaḥṭāwī)

This discussion should make it easy to resolve the problem about the use of a microphone by an *'Imām* in leading the congregational prayers. Technical experts hold that the sound coming out of a loudspeaker is exactly the sound produced by the *'Imām*. If it is so, there is no question of the prayers being invalid. But if we suppose that the sound transmitted by a microphone is not exactly the sound produced by the *'Imām*, but only an imitation of the sound, or a report of what he has been saying, even then it would be improper to suspect that the people offering their prayers have been obeying the command of the microphone. For, it is obvious enough that they have been obeying the commandment of the Holy Prophet ﷺ to follow the movements of the *'Imām* - the microphone does no more than inform them that the *'Imām* has, for example, bowed himself down or prostrated himself, and in accepting this information and following his movements, they obey the *'Imām* and not the instrument. And it is, of course, a divine commandment which requires us to obey the *'Imām* in the congregational prayers.

(5) There is a phrase in the present verse which requires some explanation: "And Allah is not to let your faith go waste." If we take *'Īmān* (faith) in its usual sense, the phrase would be interpreted like this. When the Qiblah was changed, some stupid people thought that the Muslims had forsaken Islam, and that their *'Īmān* had now become null and void. The verse assures the Muslims that Allah would not allow their *'Īmān* to go waste, and asks them not to fall prey to such senseless conjectures.

On the other, on the basis of certain *Aḥādīth*, some early commentators have interpreted the word *'Īmān* in the verse to mean the *Ṣalāh*. According to this interpretation, Allah assures the Muslims that the commandment changing the Qiblah would in no way affect the validity of the prayers they have been offering so far in the direction of the *Baytul-Maqdis* - Allah would not allow these prayers to go waste, for they are valid, and have already been accepted.

Al-Bukhārī has reported from the Companion al-Barā' 'Ibn 'Āzib, and al-Tirmidhī from the Companion Ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ that when the *Baytullah* was appointed as the Qiblah, people became worried about the fate of those Muslims who had been praying in the direction

of the *Baytul-Maqdis*, but had died before having the opportunity to pray in the direction of the *Baytullah*.

Verse 144

قَدْ نَرٰى تَقَلُّبَ وَجْهِكَ فِى السَّمَآءِ ۚ فَلَنُوَلِّيَنَّكَ قِبْلَةً تَرْضٰهَا
فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ ۚ وَحَيْثُ مَا كُنْتُمْ فَوَلُّوا
وُجُوهَكُمْ شَطْرَهٗ ۗ وَاِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ لَيَعْلَمُوْنَ اَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ
مِنْ رَّبِّهِمْ ۗ وَمَا اللّٰهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ۝

We have been seeing you turn your face to heaven. So, We will certainly assign to you a Qiblah that you would like. Now, turn your face in the direction of the Sacred Mosque (*Al-Masjid al-Harām*). And, wherever you be, turn your faces in its direction. Even those who have been given the Book know well that here is the truth from their Lord. And Allah is not unaware of what they do. (Verse 144)

The orientation to Qiblah

This verse begins by speaking of how deeply the Holy Prophet ﷺ wished that the Ka'bah be appointed as the Qiblah of the Muslims. This inclination has been explained in different ways, but there is no real contradiction involved in these different views. For example, it has been said that before prophethood was conferred on him, he used to follow, out of the impulsion of his own nature, the way of Sayyidna Ibrāhīm (Abraham) عليه السلام , and that when he began to receive the Revelation, the Holy Qur'an itself designated his Shari'ah as being in total accord with the Abrahamic Way. Moreover, the Qiblah of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام as well as that of Sayyidnā Ismā'il عليه السلام had been the Ka'bah. So, it was quite in the nature of things for him to wish that the Ka'bah be appointed as the Qiblah of the Muslims. An additional factor was that the Arab tribes, in spite of being associators, at least claimed to be the followers of the Abrahamic Way, and acknowledged the Ka'bah as their Qiblah in contradiction to the Jews. Once the Ka'bah had been made the Qiblah of the Muslims, the Arabs could be expected to find Islam more acceptable. As for the hope that the adoption of the *Baytul-Maqdis* as the Qiblah would bring the Jews closer to Islam, it had been dashed by the events of the last sixteen or

seventeen months, for the hostility of the Jews to Islam, fed by their vanity, had only been growing more intense.

Whatever be the motive, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was very keen to see the Ka'bah appointed as the Qiblah. Now, prophets are as close to Allah as man can ever be, and this exalted station teaches them to observe a very strict spiritual etiquette - they never submit a request before Allah until and unless they have received the permission to do so. This principle leads us to believe that the Holy Prophet ﷺ had already been allowed to pray for his wish to be fulfilled, and that he hoped his prayer would be granted. So, he used to turn his face again and again to the sky, anxiously waiting for an angel to appear and bring the injunction he had been wishing for.

In the present verse, Allah describes this state of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in an appreciative manner, and promises to assign him a Qiblah that he would like. Immediately after the promise, there follows the commandment: فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ : "Now turn your face in the direction of the Sacred Mosque." Here we find a manifestation of the subtle workings of divine grace - the Holy Prophet ﷺ was, to begin with, granted the joy of hearing a promise made, and, immediately after, the greater joy of seeing the promise fulfilled. (Qurṭubī, Jaṣṣāṣ and Maẓharī)

Injunctions and related considerations

As we have explained earlier, Allah is not confined to any direction or dimension - قُلْ لِّلّٰهِ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ : "Say: the East and the West both belong to Allah." (2:115) But in order to institute a communal unity among the Muslims scattered all over the world, Divine Wisdom thought fit to assign them a particular and definite orientation which could serve as a visible symbol of that unity. Now, this orientation could have as easily been provided by the *Baytul-Maqdis*. But the Ka'bah was finally chosen as the Qiblah in accordance with the wish of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and the injunction was announced in the present verse. The situation required that the Holy Qur'ān should use the phrase: 'Turn your face toward the Ka'bah, or toward the *Baytullah*.' But we actually find the Holy Qur'ān saying: "Turn your face in the

direction of *Al-Masjid al-Ḥarām*." This particular mode of expression helps to clarify several important questions with regard to the Qiblah.

Although, the Qiblah, to be precise, is the *Baytullah*, which is known as the Ka'bah, yet it is obvious that one can turn exactly towards the *Baytullah* only so long as one can see it with one's own eyes, and that for those who live at some distance and cannot see it directly, it would be too rigorous an obligation to fulfil, if they were required to turn exactly towards the *Baytullah* - in the case of distant towns, an exact orientation would be difficult and uncertain even with the help of the instruments and calculations. But the Islamic Shari'ah always aims at making things easy for people. So, the Holy Qur'ān has designated as the Qiblah, not the *Baytullah* or the Ka'bah, but *Al-Masjid al-Ḥarām* which covers a much wider area, and in the direction of which it is easy to turn even for those who live in far off places.

Then, a greater facility has been provided by the use of the word *Shaṭr*. This Arabic word signifies "the half of a thing", or "the direction in which a thing lies." According to the consensus of the commentators, here the word has been used in the second sense. So, the word itself points to the rule that in the case of places which are far from Makkah it is not even necessary for the prayers to be valid that one should turn exactly towards *Al-Masjid al-Ḥarām* - for, it is quite sufficient to turn only "in the direction" of the Sacred Mosque, as the Holy Qur'ān itself has indicated. (Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ).

Let us give an example to make the rule as clear as possible. For countries which lie to the East of Makkah (e.g. Pakistan or India), the direction of *Al-Masjid al-Ḥarām* means the West. So, if one turns towards the West, one's prayers would be valid enough. Since the point at which the sun sets in the summer is different from that where it sets in the winter, the *Fuqahā'* (the Muslim jurists) have decided that for the purposes of *Ṣalāh* in such countries, the West (the direction of the Qiblah in this case) lies in between these two points. In mathematical terminology it means that an area covering 48 degrees between these two points is to be taken as being the direction

of the Qiblah. That is to say, even if one inclines 24 degrees to the right or to the left of the point at which *Al-Masjid al-Ḥarām* is situated, one would still be considered to be praying in the right direction, and one's prayers would be quite valid. (For details, see "Sharḥ al-Chaghmīni, ch. IV)

This discussion should be enough to expose the ignorance and muddle-headedness of those who, finding a slight deviation of two or three degrees in the orientation of some mosques in Pakistan and India, have pronounced the prayers offered in these mosques to be null and void. Such baseless opinions only betray the desire on their part to produce confusion and bickering among the Muslims. Let us not forget that the Islamic Sharīʻah is meant for all men and for all the countries of the world, and will last till the Day of Judgment. Hence, the injunctions of the Sharīʻah pertaining to all the spheres of human life have been made easy to practise, so that Muslims living in farflung hamlets, mountains, forests or islands may act upon them only on the basis of their own observation and experience, without needing the help of scientific instruments or mathematical calculations. Thus, people living to the East of Makkah may take an area covering 48 degrees as their Qiblah - a deviation of five or ten degrees would not affect the validity of their prayers in any way. This has been made quite clear by a *ḥadīth* reported by al-Tirmidhi from the blessed Companion Abū Hurayrah رضى الله عنه which says: مَابَيْنَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَ الْمَغْرِبِ قبلَة : "The Qiblah lies between the East and the West." This *ḥadīth* is actually addressed to the people of Madīnah whose Qiblah lies, to be precise, in the direction of the South somewhere between the East and the West, but, in effect, the *ḥadīth* provides an explanation of the phrase "in the direction of *Al-Masjid al-Ḥarām*." This is the general principle; one should, however, make an effort to ensure, in laying down the foundation of a mosque, that the orientation towards the *Baytullah* is as exact as possible. The successors of the Blessed Companions and the generations following them had adopted a very simple method for determining the correct orientation: If there was a mosque built by the blessed Companions present in a town, the neighbouring mosques

were given the same orientation, and these in their turn used to serve as the models for the mosques in the villages or towns in the region concerned, thus setting up a chain which went on prolonging itself. Consequently, the method of determining the Qiblah in places far off from Makkah has always been this: If an old mosque is present in the vicinity, the new mosques should conform to its orientation, for in so many towns it is the blessed Companions themselves or their successors who have built mosques and determined their orientation which has been followed by later generations.

To conclude, the mosques which have so far been built are quite sufficient for the purpose of determining the orientation, and it is not proper to raise unnecessary objections and doubts in this respect - the Sharī'ah actually disapproves of such attempts at leading Muslims into perplexity. For, such a perplexity may sometimes have the consequence of making people suspect that in so far as the blessed Companions, their successors or the generality of Muslims have not been able to determine a mathematically correct orientation, their prayers have not been valid. Such a thought is not only false, but also betrays the insolence of the man who can harbour it. It is in view of this that Ibn *Rajab*, the famous Ḥanbalī scholar of the 8th century A.H., disapproves of the use of astronomical instruments and complex mathematical calculations for the purpose of fixing the orientation. He writes:

واما علم التسيير فاذا تعلم منه ما يحتاج اليه للاستهداء ومعرفة القبلة والطرق كان جائزا عند الجمهور ومازاد عليه فلا حاجة اليه وهويشغل عما هو اهم منه وربما ادى التدقيق فيه الى اساءة الظن بمحاريب المسلمين فى امصارهم كما وقع فى ذلك كثير من اهل هذا العلم قديما وحديثا وذلك يفضى الى اعتقاد خطأ الصّحابة والتابعين فى صلواتهم فى كثير من الامصار وهو باطل وقد انكر الامام احمد الاستدلال بالجدى وقال انما وردما بين المشرق والمغرب قبلة

"As for the science of astronomy, it is legitimate, according to the 'Ulamā' in general, to acquire it for its being helpful in de-

> termining the Qiblah or in finding one's way in a journey or the directions of the roads. A greater knowledge than this is not at all necessary (according to the Sharī'ah), for that may lead one to neglect more important things, and an indulgence in complex calculations may sometimes produce vile doubts about the mosques of Muslims in their towns - a weakness to which the amateurs of such sciences are all too prone. It may even lead one to believe that the prayers of the blessed Companions and their successors in certain towns had been invalid - a belief which is totally false. For this reason, Imām Aḥmad ibn Hanbal has forbidden the Pole-Star to be taken into consideration for determining the orientation, on the ground that the *ḥadīth* says no more than that the Qiblah lies between the East and the West."

As for deserted regions, forests or new settlements, etc. where no earlier mosques are to be found, the Sharī'ah lays down this rule on the basis of the practice of the blessed Companions and their successors: in such places one should arrive at an approximate determination of the Qiblah with the help of the Sun, the Moon and Pole-Star, these being the phenomena with which everyone is familiar enough; and if one still suspects some slight deviation, one should ignore it. For, according to *al-Badā'i'*, the authoritative work on Islamic jurisprudence, in places far off from Makkah, an approximately correct orientation, chosen on the basis of such general indications, stands for the Ka'bah, and all the injunctions pertaining to the Qiblah apply to the orientation selected in this manner. The Sharī'ah provides many illustrations of the basic principle involved here. For example, sleep is taken to stand for the passing of wind, and invalidates the *Wuḍū* (the prescribed ablution); or, a journey is taken to represent hardship, even when an actual journey does not involve it, and a man who is in the course of any kind of a journey is given all the concessions allowed by the Sharī'ah to a traveller. The principle requires that an orientation determined on the basis of general and familiar indications should be accepted as the Qiblah. The great scholar known as "Allāmah Baḥr al-'Ulum" lays down the rule thus in his "Rasā'il al-Arkān":

والشرط وقوع المسامتة على حسب مايرى المصلى ونحن غيرمأ مورين بالمسامتة على مايحكم به الالات الرصدية ولهذا افتوا ان الانحراف المفسدأن يتجاوز المشارق و المغارب

"The only condition necessary to be fulfilled in turning towards the Qiblah is that the man offering his prayers should be duly convinced that his face is turned in the direction of the Ka'bah. The Sharī'ah does not compel us to adopt exactly the orientation which can be obtained only with the help of astronomical instruments. So the 'Ulamā in general have come to the conclusion that a deviation invalidates the prayers only when the difference is as great as between the East and the West."

Those interested in a detailed discussion of the subject may consult my book in Urdu, "*Simt-e-Qiblah.*"

Verse 145

وَلَئِنْ اَتَيْتَ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ بِكُلِّ اٰيَةٍ مَّا تَبِعُوْا قِبْلَتَكَ ج وَمَا اَنْتَ بِتَابِعٍ قِبْلَتَهُمْ ج وَمَا بَعْضُهُمْ بِتَابِعٍ قِبْلَةَ بَعْضٍ ج وَلَئِنِ اتَّبَعْتَ اَهْوَآءَهُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ مَاجَآءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ اِنَّكَ اِذًا لَّمِنَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ۝

And even if you bring every sign to those who have been given the Book, they would not follow your Qiblah. And you are not to follow their Qiblah, nor are they to follow each other's Qiblah. And if you were to follow their desires after the knowledge that has come to you, you will then certainly be among the unjust. (Verse 145)

In continuing the discussion on the subject of the Qiblah, or the divinely-ordained orientation, the present verse provides yet another instance of the maliciousness of the People of the Book. It is not that they demand solid and convincing arguments in order to be able to accept the new injunction with regard to the Qiblah: it is sheer stubbornness which does not allow them to give their assent, and no proof in the world, declares the Holy Qur'ān, is ever going to satisfy

them. In fact, their two groups display an equal malice even towards each other - the Jews have adopted the *Baytul-Maqdis* as their Qiblah, while the Christians have chosen the East, and each group rejects the Qiblah of the other. On the other hand, the Holy Prophet ﷺ, cannot accept either of these two orientations, for the new Qiblah of the Muslims - the *Baytullah* - has been instituted by a divine commandment, and is never going to be abrogated. So, there is no likelihood of an agreement between the People of the Book and the Muslims in this matter. The *Baytul-Maqdis*, no doubt, had once been instituted by a divine commandment, but that commandment has now been abrogated. Anyone who follows an abrogated injunction, and ignores the new injunction which has replaced the earlier one, is actually disobeying Allah, and acting upon his individual opinion and personal desire. Naturally, it is impossible for the Holy Prophet ﷺ to follow the desires of the People of the Book. But, supposing for the sake of supposition, were he to do so even after having received a definite injunction through the *Waḥy* (Revelation), he would be counted among the unjust - that is, among those who disobey divine commandments. Such a situation, however, can never arise. Being a prophet, he is essentially sinless, and as such cannot possibly be among the unjust. From this principle it logically follows that it is impossible for him to favour the desires of the People of the Book, and to accept their Qiblah as his own.

Let us make it quite clear that this warning is outwardly addressed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, but is, in fact, intended for his *Ummah*, which is being asked to realize fully the gravity of the sin of ignoring or disobeying the injunction which has finally established the *Baytullah* as the Qiblah of the Muslims.

As for the phrase, وَمَآ أَنْتَ بِتَابِعٍ : "You are not to follow their Qiblah", it is meant to declare that the *Baytullah* shall now stay as the Qiblah upto the end of the world. Thus, the declaration refutes the scoffing allegation of the People of the Book that there was no stability in the Islamic injunctions, and that the Muslims might again adopt the *Baytul-Maqdis* as their Qiblah. (Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ)

Verses 146 - 147

الَّذِينَ اٰتَيْنٰهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ يَعْرِفُونَهٗ كَمَا يَعْرِفُونَ اَبْنَآءَهُمْ ۚ وَاِنَّ فَرِيقًا مِّنْهُمْ لَيَكْتُمُونَ الْحَقَّ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ ۝ اَلْحَقُّ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ فَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُمْتَرِينَ ۝

Those whom We have given the Book recognize him (The Holy Prophet) as they recognize their own sons. And, in fact, a group of them does conceal the truth while they know. The truth is from your Lord. So, never be among those who doubt." (Verses 146 - 147)

Verses 144 and 145 have told us how the People of the Book knew in their hearts that a divine commandment itself had instituted the *Baytullah* as the Qiblah of the Muslims, and yet denied this fact in public. Now, the two present verses show that their conduct towards the Holy Prophet ﷺ was equally dishonest and malicious.

The Torah and the Evangile had already foretold the coming of the Holy Prophet ﷺ , and set down the signs and indications which should help the people to recognize him. On the basis of the irrefutable evidence provided by their own Sacred Books, the Jews and the Christians knew him to be the promised Last Prophet ﷺ , but many of them refused to acknowledge him as such out of sheer obstinacy.

Let us add a word or two in order to explain the simile employed here by the Holy Qur'ān - that of man recognizing his own son without any doubt or ambiguity. As everyone knows, in bringing two terms into comparison with each other, a simile does not involve in this analogy all the aspects of these two terms, but only those which should be relevant to the occasion. So, in considering the present simile one should not allow one's imagination to roam far afield, and bring under discussion even those cases which happen to be illegitimate. For, the present simile intends to make a very simple and obvious point - since the son grows from infancy to manhood normally under the eyes of his parents, his face or general appearance is quite sufficient for his father to recognize him without any doubt or hesitation. The Jews and the Christians enjoyed the same kind of facility - or even certainty - in being able to recognize the Last Prophet ﷺ . So, to persist in denying

him was as dishonest as refusing to recognize one's own son should normally be.

And it was just this kind of gross dishonesty that the People of the Book were indulging in. Some of them, while denying the truth themselves, even tried to keep it concealed from others, although they knew fully well that this particular truth (that is to say, the new injunction with regard to the Qiblah) had been established by Revelation from Allah Himself.

The phrase, "The Truth is from your Lord", can also be interpreted in a general sense as providing a definition of the nature of truth - namely, that alone is truth which comes from Allah. One who has understood this fact can never allow himself to be in doubt with regard to this particular truth or to any other which has been revealed to a prophet by Allah.

Verses 148-150

وَلِكُلٍّ وِّجْهَةٌ هُوَ مُوَلِّيهَا فَاسْتَبِقُوا الْخَيْرٰتِ أَيْنَ مَا تَكُونُوا يَأْتِ
بِكُمُ اللّٰهُ جَمِيعًا إِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ O وَمِنْ حَيْثُ
خَرَجْتَ فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَإِنَّهُ لَلْحَقُّ مِن رَّبِّكَ
وَمَا اللّٰهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ O وَمِنْ حَيْثُ خَرَجْتَ فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ
شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَحَيْثُ مَا كُنتُمْ فَوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ شَطْرَهُ
لِئَلَّا يَكُونَ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَيْكُمْ حُجَّةٌ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْهُمْ فَلَا
تَخْشَوْهُمْ وَاخْشَوْنِي وَلِأُتِمَّ نِعْمَتِي عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ O

And for everyone there is a direction to which he turns his face. Strive, then, to excel each other in good deeds. Wherever you are, Allah will bring you all together. Allah is certainly powerful over everything. And from wheresoever you set out, turn your face in the direction of the Sacred Mosque (Al-Masjid al-Ḥarām). That, indeed, is the truth from

your Lord. And Allah is not unaware of what you do. And from wheresoever you set out, turn your face in the direction of the Sacred Mosque (Al-Masjid al-Ḥarām). And wherever you are, turn your faces in its direction, so that people should have no argument against you, except for those among them who are unjust - do not fear them, but fear Me! -, and so that I should perfect My blessing upon you, and that you may get the right path. (Verses 148 - 150)

The change of Qiblah

The question of religious orientation being of the highest significance for an *Ummah* (or a traditional community), these verses continue and enlarge upon the theme of the Qiblah, and lay down further *raisons d'etre* for the change.

It is, the commentators point out, an observable fact that every traditional community has had a religious orientation of its own, whether appointed by Allah or chosen by itself. This being so, why should anyone object, or wonder that Allah has appointed for the Islamic *Ummah* a Qiblah peculiar to it? After all, it is a regular and distinct Tradition in its own right - in fact, the last of all Traditions, which makes it all the more necessary that it must have a distinct Qiblah. Anyhow, once the divine commandment has been promulgated, the Muslims need not worry about the objections or the ridicule of others, but should, above all, concern themselves with the performance of good deeds (as defined by Allah and His Prophet ﷺ). They should, indeed, give up fruitless controversies and strive to excel in good deeds, for they have to appear before Allah on the Day of Judgment when they will be rewarded or punished according to their deeds.

The *raison d'etre* laid down in this verse requires that the Muslims should, whether staying at home or travelling, turn their faces in the direction of *Al-Masjid al-Ḥarām*, for that undoubtedly is the Qiblah appointed for them by divine commandment. It is obligatory for them to obey this as well as any other commandment, bearing in mind that Allah is not unaware of what men do.

In repeating this commandment, Verse 150 adds a third *raison d'etre*. The Torah and the Evangile had indicated that the promised Last Prophet would have the Ka'bah as his Qiblah. If the Muslims continued to pray with the *Baytul-Maqdis* as their Qiblah, the opponents of Islam would have found an argument to justify their denial of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . But the new commandment with regard to the Qiblah takes away the ground from under their feet, and at least the just ones among them can no longer raise this kind of objection. Of course, the stubborn and malignant ones would still carp - they would start saying that it was the *Baytul-Maqdis*, and not the Ka'bah, which had been the Qiblah of the earlier prophets, and that the adoption of the Ka'bah constituted an infringement of the established prophetic tradition. But the Muslims need not worry about defending Islam against such baseless objections, for the only thing which can be harmful to them is not the hostility of men but the disobedience to or disregard of divine commandments. So, in Verse 150, Allah asks the Muslims to fear, not the enemies of Islam, but Him alone. This is the only way to remain true to the divine guidance they have received - namely, Islam. This steadfastness, too, is a blessing from Allah, and the blessing will appear in its perfect glory in the other world when the Muslims shall, as a reward for their faithfulness, be admitted to Paradise.

Let us note that in announcing the commandment with regard to the change in orientation, Verses 144-150 address the listeners three times in the singular number and twice in the plural. In a general way, one can say that this repetition is meant for emphasis. The commandment fixing a new Qiblah not only provided an occasion for the glee of the opponents of Islam, but was also a very conspicuous and sudden change in the religious observances of the Muslims themselves, whose hearts would have remained perturbed without such an emphatic repetition. The reiteration also suggests that this is the final and definite decision with regard to the Qiblah, and that no further change can be expected in this matter.

Al-Qurṭubī has, however, explained this mode of expression in such a way that the repetition becomes something more than mere emphasis, and each phrase, in being repeated, acquires a new

implication. It goes without saying that the commandments in the singular number are addressed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself, and those in the plural to the blessed Companions and to the Muslims in general. Thus, the commandment in Verse 144 pertains to the situation of those who find themselves in Madīnah or in their own home-town, whatever that might be, and is intended to make it clear that the injunction is not particular to the mosque of the Holy Prophet ﷺ but applies to every town or village and to every quarter of a town. Verse 149 repeats the commandment with the addition of the phrase "from wheresoever you set out", which shows that the injunction now refers to the state of a journey. Since a journey involves different situations - for example, unbroken travel for several days at a time, or a short or long stay somewhere in the course of the journey -, Verse 150 repeats the injunction in order to cover all these situations.

Let us add that Verse 148 introduces the theme of orientation with the word *Wijhatun*, which lexically signifies "the thing one turns one's face to", and which has been interpreted by the blessed Companion Ibn 'Abbās as "Qiblah" or religious orientation. In fact, the word *Qiblatun* itself appears in the reading of the blessed Companion Ubayy ibn Ka'b, which leaves no ambiguity in interpreting the phrases. [43]

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43. Before we leave the subject, let us remark that nowadays quite a good number of people, especially those with a Western formation, approach the Holy Qur'ān as they do a book composed by a human author who pays due regard to what commonly passes as logic and sequential argument, and often do feel embarrassed or confused when they come across the close repetition of words and phrases in the Book of Allah, finding it impossible to explain or justify what is seemingly redundant. And it is not unlikely that this embarrassment may open the way to shame-faced misgivings and doubts even in the minds of those who wish to serve the cause of Islam in the modern world. What these men of good will tend to ignore is the elementary fact that the Word of Allah cannot be subservient to the rules of philosophical or literary composition, and that the reiteration of words and phrases, even of a sequence of sentences, is a regular mode of expression common to all the Sacred Books of the world. Moreover, the great orthodox (in the sense of unfailing adherence to the Qur'ān and *Sunnah*) commentators of the Holy Qur'ān have tried, each in his own way, to suggest the *raisons d'etre* of this device, and also to explain

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Injunctions and related considerations

(1) Verse 145 has already indicated to the Muslims that although Allah has now appointed a new and permanent Qiblah for the whole of mankind, yet the Jews and the Christians are not going to give up their respective orientations, nor shall the Muslims ever forsake their own. The People of the Book, anyhow, have no right to object to the Ka'bah being divinely chosen as the Qiblah of the Muslims, for - as Verse 148 reminds us - every traditional community (*Ummah*) has always had a Qiblah of its own, and so does the Islamic *Ummah*. Since the Muslims can be sure of their right to a Qiblah peculiar to them, and the People of the Book are not expected to listen to reason, Allah asks the Muslims in this verse not to engage themselves in fruitless discussions and futile disputes, but to "strive, then, to excel in good deeds." The Holy Qur'ān discourages unnecessary discussions, for they

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the possible implications of each particular instance of repetition. Some of the explanations pertaining to the verses we are concerned with here have been summarized by Maulanā Muḥammad Idris in his own commentary, from which we borrow the following resume:-

(1) The first declaration is addressed to those who reside in Makkah, the second to those who live in the Arabian peninsula, and the third to all men living anywhere in the world.

(2) The first is intended to cover all the situations and states, the second to cover all the places, and the third to cover all the periods of time.

(3) This passage of the Holy Qur'ān lays down three *raisons d'etre* for the change in the religious orientation; hence, the commandment has been affirmed afresh along with each argument.

(4) This was the first occasion in the Islamic Sharī'ah when a new commandment to abrogate an earlier one came. So, repetition was necessary to impress upon the minds of the people the multiple significance of the occasion and of the commandment.

(5) The abrogation of any commandment whatsoever is likely to give rise to all sorts of doubts, and to produce internal or external disorder. The naive cannot, anyhow, understand the why and how of an abrogation occurring in the case of a divine commandment. So, an emphatic reiteration becomes all the more essential.

make one neglect one's real task, which is to prepare oneself for one's death and for the other world. So, the verse ends with the rejoinder that on the Day of Judgment Allah shall bring all men together, and suggests that the desire to be safe from the criticism of others and the anxiety to win over them in disputes only betrays one's attachment to the temporal world, and that wisdom lies in caring more for what is everlasting.

(2) The expression "strive to excel" also indicates that one should hasten to perform a good deed (whether it be *Ṣalāh* (prayers)or *Ṣawm* (fasting) or the Ḥajj (pilgrimage) or *Ẓakāh* (giving of alms), etc.) as soon as one gets the opportunity to do so. For, the ability to do a good deed is a favour from Allah, and negligence in performing it amounts to ungratefulness and disrespect towards Allah. Hence, it is to be feared that procrastination in this matter may be punished with a withdrawal of the divine favour, and that the culprit may altogether lose the ability to perform good deeds. May Allah protect us from such a fate! The point has been made quite explicit in another verse:

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا ٱسْتَجِيبُوا لِلَّهِ وَلِلرَّسُولِ إِذَا دَعَاكُمْ لِمَا يُحْيِيكُمْ وَٱعْلَمُوٓا أَنَّ ٱللَّهَ يَحُولُ بَيْنَ ٱلْمَرْءِ وَقَلْبِهِۦ وَأَنَّهُۥٓ إِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ ۝

"O believers, respond to Allah and to the Messenger when he calls you to that which will give you life; and know that Allah does (sometimes) stand between a man and his heart, and that to Him you shall be mustered" (8:24).

(3) From this very expression - "strive, then, to excel in good deeds" - some of the *fuqahā'* (Muslim jurists) have drawn the conclusion that it is more meritorious to offer each of the five daily prayers as soon as the appointed time for it begins, or as early as possible, and have even cited the *aḥādith* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in support of this view, which is shared by Imām Shāfi'i. On the other hand, the great Imām Abū Hanīfah and Imām Mālik specify that it is more meritorious to offer certain prayers a bit late, as has been indicated by the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself through his speech or action, while the rest of the prayers should, of course, be offered as early as possible within the time prescribed. An example of the former is provided by Al-Bukhāri who reports from the blessed Companion Anas

the superior merit of offering the *'Ishā* prayers rather late in the night. The blessed Companion Abū Hurayrah also reports such a preference on the part of the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself (Qurṭubī). Similarly, Al-Bukhārī and Al-Tirmidhī report from the blessed Companion Abū Dharr that in the course of a journey once the blessed Companion Bilāl رضى الله عنهم wanted to recite *Adhān* (call for prayers) as soon as the time for the *ẓuhr* prayers began, but the Holy Prophet ﷺ asked him to wait till it was a bit cooler, and remarked that the heat of the noon-day is a part of the fire of Hell. In other words, the Holy Prophet ﷺ evidently preferred the *ẓuhr* prayers to be offered rather late in summer. On the basis of such *aḥādīth*, Imām Abū Hanīfah and Imām Mālik have come to the conclusion that although in the case of those prayers regarding which we have not been asked to offer them a bit late (for example, the *Maghrib* prayers), it is better to do so as soon as the appointed time begins, yet in the case of those prayers regarding which a specific indication does exist one should offer them somewhat later within the time prescribed. They add that if one wishes to act upon the commandment, "strive, then, to excel in good deeds", even in the latter case, then the only way to do so is not to delay the prayers when the desirable or commendable (*Mustaḥabb*) time has arrived.

In short, Verse 148 has, according to a consensus of all the *Fuqahā'*, established the principle that when the time for offering a prescribed prayer has arrived, one should not delay it without a valid excuse, which may either be a clear-cut specification in the Sharī'ah (as we have just defined), or a physical disability, like illness, etc.

Verses 151 - 152

كَمَآ أَرْسَلْنَا فِيكُمْ رَسُولًا مِّنكُمْ يَتْلُوا عَلَيْكُمْ ءَايَٰتِنَا وَيُزَكِّيكُمْ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ الْكِتَٰبَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُعَلِّمُكُم مَّا لَمْ تَكُونُوا تَعْلَمُونَ ۝ فَاذْكُرُونِىٓ أَذْكُرْكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوا لِى وَلَا تَكْفُرُونِ ۝

As also We have sent in your midst a messenger from among you, who recites to you Our verses, and purifies you, and teaches you the Book and the wisdom, and teaches you what you did not know. Remember Me, then, and I will remember you. And be thankful to Me,

and be not ungrateful to Me. (Verses 151 - 152)

These verses conclude the discussion on the theme of the Qiblah or religious orientation. So, Verse 151 repeats the second part of the prayer of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام with which the discussion had begun (Verses 127 - 129). He had, as one would recall, prayed Allah to accept his founding of the Ka'bah, and to send among his progeny a Messenger from among themselves. The subsequent discussion on the subject of the Qiblah has already shown that the first prayer has been heard and accepted. Now, Verse 151 declares that similarly the second request has also been granted, suggesting that since the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been sent in answer to the prayer of the founder of the Ka'bah, it is no wonder that it should be appointed as his Qiblah. Verse 151 has specifically mentioned that the new Prophet (Muḥammad ﷺ) is sent with the same attributes as specified by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام in his prayer, namely: (1) He recites to them the verses of the Qur'ān; (2) He teaches them the Book and the wisdom; (3) He purifies them; (4) He teaches them things which his listeners did not know of, nor could they be found in the earlier Divine Books or through individual reason.

Since Allah has, in granting the two prayers, sent such great blessings to mankind, Verse 152 asks men to "remember" Him as the Supreme Benefactor, and to render Him thanks by being obedient. As long as they do so, Allah will "remember" them in showering on them His material and spiritual blessings. The verse ends with the reminder that men should not be ungrateful to Allah in denying His blessings or in being disobedient.

In the light of this commentary, one can see that the word "as" (in Arabic, the letter *Kāf* which denotes a comparison between two terms) provides the link between Verse 151 and Verse 152. But, according to al-Qurṭubī, the word *Kāf* or "as" is connected with the first phrase of Verse 152 - فَاذْكُرُونِي : "Remember Me, then". Viewed in the line of this syntactical relationship, the two verses, taken together, would mean that the ability to "remember" Allah is as much a blessing for men as the ordination of the new Qiblah and the coming of the Last Prophet ﷺ, and hence it is the duty of men to render thanks to Allah, so that they may continue to receive His favours.

The merits of '*Dhikr*' (Rememberance)

ذکر : *Dhikr* or "Remembrance" essentially pertains to the heart, but in so far as the tongue is the interpreter of the heart the oral recitation of a Divine Name or a verse of the Holy Qur'ān is also described as *Dhikr*. In other words, oral *Dhikr* can be worth the name only when it is accompanied by the "remembrance" of the heart. As the great Sufi poet Rūmī points out, the recitation of a Divine Name can have no efficacy if one keeps thinking of cows and donkeys while repeating it mechanically with the tongue. One must, however, bear in mind that even a mechanical *Dhikr* without the heart being engaged in it is not altogether futile. It is related that the great Sūfī Abū 'Uthmān, hearing a man complain of such a situation, remarked that one should be grateful to Allah even for this favour of having drawn at least one organ of the body, the tongue, into His service. (Qurṭubī)

The merits of *Dhikr* are, indeed, innumerable. What greater merit could one wish for than the assurance that when a man "remembers" Allah, He too "remembers" him. Abū 'Uthmān once claimed that he knew the time when Allah remembered His servants. The listeners grew curious as to how he could determine this. He replied that, according to the promise made in the Holy Qur'ān, when a Muslim remembers Allah, He too remembers him, and thus everyone can know for himself that as soon as he turns to Allah and remembers Him, Allah too remembers him.

Let us add that Verse 152 means to say that if men "remember" Allah by obeying His commandments, He will "remember" them by granting His pardon and His rewards. The commentator Sa'id ibn Jubayr has, in fact, interpreted the *Dhikr* or "Remembrance" of Allah as obedience and submission to Him. He says:

فمن لم يطعه لم يذكره وان كثر صلاته وتسبيحه

"He who has not obeyed Him has not remembered Him, even though he has kept himself externally busy in offering (*nafl*: supererogatory) prayers and reciting His praises."

This explanation is fully supported by a *ḥadīth* cited by Al-Qurtubi on the authority of "Ahkām al-Qur'ān" by Ibn Khuwayz Mandadh. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said that one who has been obeying Allah - that

is, following the injunctions with regard to the lawful (*Ḥalāl*) and the unlawful (*Ḥarām*) - has truly been remembering Allah, in spite of being deficient in (*nafl*: supererogatory) prayers and fasting, while one who has been disobeying divine commandments has, in fact, forgotten Allah, in spite of devoting long hours to *nafl* prayers, fasting and recitation of His praises.

The great Sūfī Master Dhu al-Nun al-Misrī has said that the man who remembers Allah in the full sense of the term forgets everything else, and that, in reward of such a total absorption, Allah Himself takes care of all his concerns, and grants him something far more valuable for everything he loses. Similarly, the blessed Companion Mu'ādh رضی اللہ عنہ has remarked that in so far as winning absolution from divine wrath is concerned, no good deed on the part of man can compare with *Dhikr*. And in a *hadith* reported by the blessed Companion Abū Hurayrah رضی اللہ عنہ , Allah Himself says that so long as the servant keeps remembering Him and his lips keep moving in *Dhikr*, Allah is with him (for a more elaborate discussion of the subject, see *Dhikrullāh* by the author).

Verse 153

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اسْتَعِيْنُوْا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلٰوةِ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ مَعَ الصّٰبِرِيْنَ ○

O you who believe, seek help through patience and prayer. Surely, Allah is with those who are patient. (Verse 153)

As we have already seen, the enemies of Islam have been objecting to the change in the orientation of Qiblah, wishing to produce in the minds of the people doubts about the validity of Islam as a religion. The earlier verses have, in answering these objections, removed all such misgivings. But some of the enemies simply ignored the answers, and still persisted in their hostility. This situation was likely to dishearten the Muslims. So, the present verse nullifies such a re-action on the part of the Muslims by prescribing the method of overcoming one's grief or anxiety.

The patience and the *Ṣalāh*:

And the method consists in turning to patience and prayers, for

Allah assures us here that He is with those who are patient. This promise applies, above all, to those who offer prayers, whether *fard* (obligatory) or *nafl* (supererogatory), for prayers are the supreme form of worship.

In explaining the context, we have mentioned a specific situation, but the verse, in fact, identifies the elixir for all the ills which are a necessary part of human existence, whether they be wants and needs, or anxiety and suffering. The Holy Qur'ān itself has indicated; in a very subtle and eloquent way, the general efficacy of this remedy by employing a generalizing expression - "seek help" - without specifying the situation in which help is to be sought. (Maẓharī)

Now, the two ingredients of this remedy are patience and prayers. The Arabic term *Ṣabr* (صبر) is much more comprehensive than its usual English equivalent, "patience". Lexically, the word "*Ṣabr*" signifies "restraining oneself, or keeping oneself under control." In the terminology of the Holy Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth*, *Ṣabr* has three modes:-

(1) Restraining oneself from what the Sharī'ah has declared to be illegal or impermissible (*Ḥarām*).

(2) Forcing oneself to be regular in the observance of the different forms of worship and to be steadfast in obeying the commandments of Allah and the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

(3) To endure all kinds of trouble and pain - in other words, to understand clearly and to believe that it is the will of Allah to make one suffer, and to hope that one shall receive a reward for this suffering. With regard to this last point, let us add that, on the authority of the commentator Sa'īd Ibn Jubayr, Ibn Kathīr says that if one cannot help uttering a word of grief or a sigh of pain, it does not go against *Ṣabr*, or nullify it.

People generally identify *Ṣabr* with the third mode alone, and ignore the first two which are, indeed, more basic and essential. We cannot insist too much on the fact that all the three are equally obligatory, and that every Muslim is required to practice all the three forms of *Ṣabr*. In the terminology of Holy Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth*, *Al-Ṣābirūn* is the title of those who are steadfast in observing all the three forms with equal rigour. According to the *Ḥadīth*, people will

hear a call on the Day of Judgment, "Where are the *Ṣābirūn*?"; at this, those who had been constant in observing the three forms of *Ṣabr* will stand up, and they will be allowed to enter Paradise without having to present the account of their deeds. In citing this *ḥadīth*, Ibn Kathīr points out that it is corroborated by the Holy Qur'ān itself: إِنَّمَا يُوَفَّى الصَّٰبِرُونَ أَجْرَهُم بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ : "The *Ṣābirūn* shall certainly receive their full reward without reckoning." (39:10)

As for the second ingredient of the prescription, it is *Ṣalāh* (Prayer). Although *Ṣabr*, as we have just explained it, covers the different forms of worship, including prayers, all of them being its branches. *Ṣalāh*, however, has been mentioned separately, because that is the most perfect model of *Ṣabr*. For, in the state of *Ṣalāh*, one binds oneself to obedience and worship, and restrains oneself not only from all that is sinful or reprehensible but even from what is otherwise permissible - e.g., from eating or drinking or talking. Hence, *Ṣalāh* is a visible demonstration of *Ṣabr* which signifies keeping oneself under control in shunning everything sinful and in submitting oneself totally to obedience.

A remedy to all problems

Moreover, *Ṣalāh* does possess a special efficacy in releasing man from all kinds of trouble and pain, and in fulfilling all his needs. We may not be able to explain it rationally, but the efficacy is present as a characteristic quality in the very nature of prayers - as happens in the case of certain medicines too. But the efficacy shows itself only when prayers are offered in the proper way and according to the physical and spiritual etiquette laid down by the Sharī'ah. If our prayers seem to be fruitless, it is because we have been deficient in observing this etiquette, and have not turned to Allah in single-minded devotion and total submission. Let us not forget that, according to the *Ḥadīth*, whenever the Holy Prophet ﷺ was faced with a grave problem of any kind, he always hastened to offer *nafl* prayers, and through the *barakah* (benediction) of the prayers Allah came to his aid and resolved the problem satisfactorily.

As to how *Ṣabr* can save man from all kinds of trouble and pain and resove all his difficulties, the secret has been revealed in the last phrase of this verse - "Surely, Allah is with those who are patient."

That is to say, as a reward for *Ṣabr* man receives the honour of the "company" of Allah. And it goes without saying that when the might of the Lord of the Worlds Himself has come to the aid of a man, what pain or trouble can overcome him, and who can prevent his concerns from prospering?

Verses 154 - 157

وَلَا تَقُوْلُوْا لِمَنْ يُّقْتَلُ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ اَمْوَاتٌ ؕ بَلْ اَحْيَآءٌ وَّلٰكِنْ
لَّا تَشْعُرُوْنَ O وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوْعِ وَنَقْصٍ
مِّنَ الْاَمْوَالِ وَالْاَنْفُسِ وَالثَّمَرٰتِ ؕ وَبَشِّرِ الصّٰبِرِيْنَ O الَّذِيْنَ اِذَآ
اَصَابَتْهُمْ مُّصِيْبَةٌ ۙ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّا لِلّٰهِ وَاِنَّآ اِلَيْهِ رٰجِعُوْنَ O اُولٰٓئِكَ
عَلَيْهِمْ صَلَوٰتٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّهِمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ ۟ وَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُهْتَدُوْنَ O

And do not say of those who are slain in the way of Allah that they are dead. Instead, they are alive, but you perceive not. And surely We will test you with a bit of fear and hunger, and loss in wealth and lives and fruits. And give good tidings to the patient who, when suffering comes to them, say: "We certainly belong to Allah, and to Him we are bound to return." Those are the ones upon whom there are blessings from their Lord, and mercy. And those are the ones who are on the right path. (Verses 154 - 157)

Earlier, alluding to an unpleasant incident, patience and steadfastness were inculcated and the excellence of *Ṣābirūn* (the patient people) was mentioned. The next verses mention, in some detail, other unpleasant incidents and culminate in describing the excellence of patience, and perseverance in it. Those verses give preference to the theme of war with infidels over other themes for two reasons: first, the sacrifice of life is a grand sacrifice; whoever steadfastly endures this loss will, undoubtedly, learn to be patient on losses of lesser magnitude; second, it is relevant to the situation too, as the objectionist on the orientation of Ka'bah had been facing it.

Injunctions and related considerations:

According to Islamic traditions the dead person is given some kind of a "new life" in *Barzakh*[44] which develops in him a sensitivity to punishment and reward. Regardless of whether one is a believer or disbeliever, virtuous or vicious, this taste of life-in-*Barzakh* is given to everybody. However, the life there has many categories: one of them is for the general lot, while some others are for prophets and virtuous people. The later ones vary in their degree of excellence. A number of scholars have collected relevant facts to assert their points of views about the life-in-*Barzakh*. All of them cannot be summed up here. I will restrict myself here, to presenting the considered and the very balanced view of my worthy teacher Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī of Thāna Bhawan; incidentally, his view is in close conformity with the teachings of the Holy Qur'ān, as also, those of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

The Martyrs are not dead

One who dies in the cause of Allah is a *Shahīd* (Martyr) and, although, it is correct and even allowed to call him "dead", yet we are forbidden to regard their death like ordinary deaths. For, though, life in *Barzakh* is given to everybody which gives him perception of reward and punishment but *Shahīd* in the *Barzakh* life is qualitatively different from the one given to other persons. The distinction a *Shahīd* has over others in *Barzakh* is that in effect, for the fullness and sensitivity of life, his perception is, keener and deeper. As, for instance, the life sensation is there in finger tips, as also, it is there in heels, but the sensitivity of finger tips is sharper than that of heels. The effect of the finer life-quality of a *Shahīd* in *Barzakh* reaches his physical body as well; whereas ordinarily bodies remain unaffected. Consequently, a *Shahīd's* body does not waste away, decay or mingle with dust. On the contrary it retains it freshness and a semblance of being alive too. This is duly endorsed by *Aḥādīth* and observations. They are, therefore, reported as living and we are forbidden to call them dead. However, for all worldly purposes

44. An intermediary stage which begins with death and stretches till the Doomsday.

they are treated at par with the dead; their properties are divided and their wives can remarry. Lives of prophets in *Barzakh* have a further distinction. Their life-sensitivity is even finer and keener than that of *Shahids*. In *Barzakh* their bodies retain their life-quality and, in some ways, its manifestation is extended to this life as well; their properties are not divided and their wives cannot again enter into wedlock.

The most strong in the retention of this life-quality are the prophets, then are the *Shahids*, then the ordinary human beings. Nevertheless, according to some *aḥādith* some of the men of Allah and virtuous people share this excellence with *Shahids*. Apparently, those who die while exercising stringent discipline against their selves (مجاهدة النفس) are ranked with *Shahids*. In other words, though this verse specifically refers to *Shahids* as against the broad humanity, it does not, for that reason, exclude the virtuous and the truthful. If, therefore, the body of a *Shahid* returns to dust, as bodies of ordinary persons, generally do, the chances are that the person did not, perhaps, die in the cause of Allah which is the only criterion of martyrdom (*Shahādah*).

In case a person who fulfilled all the prerequisites of martyrdom and, beyond, any doubt, died in the cause of Allah and whose martyrdom (*Shahādah*) has been unmistakably and repeatedly demonstrated, his body must not, on the authority of a *ḥadith*, return to dust. If, in spite of *Ahādith*, the body mingles with earth (what, in fact, has made the author of Rūḥ al-Ma'āni doubt is how can, in spite of *Aḥādith*, the body of a *Shahid* be eaten away by earth) the explanation would be that according to *Ḥadith* the body would not return to dust; however, it does not deny the process of decay and decomposition caused by other factors like geo-chemical reaction, body enzymes, and bacteria. Niether does it confute the verse.

Other compound objects like weapons, medicines, food, and the commingling of various natural elements like water, fire and air had, undoubtedly, their effects on the bodies of prophets in this world and, obviously, the life-quality of *Shahid* in *Barzakh* is not superior to that of the prophets in this world; if, therefore, the other ingredients register their impact on the bodies of *Shahids* in *Barzakh* it does not

confute, in any sense, the meanings of *Ahādīth* which say the *Shahīds'* bodies are sacred to earth.

Another answer is that the distinction which *Shahīds* have over others is apparent from the fact that, comparatively, their bodies remain unspoiled for a pretty long time, although the liklihood of their disentegration in the longer run does exist. The aim of the *hadīth* should, therefore, be explained by saying that the immunity from decay for such a long time is, in itself, an excess on the customary behaviour of dead bodies. Eternal preservation, and preservation for a considerable long time, both are an "excess on the customary behaviour" of dead bodies.

By the words, " لَّا تَشْعُرُونَ ": "you perceive not", the Holy Qur'ān asserts the fact that the life in *Barzakh* transcends all sensory perceptions.

Patience in hardship: The way to make it easy

The nature and the significance of the severe test man is put to by Allah has been thoroughly discussed while explaining the verse وَإِذِ ابْتَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ رَبُّهُ : 'And when his Lord put Ibrāhīm to a test'.

Whatever their magnitude, accidents are unnerving. But a prior knowledge of such accidents makes it easier to bear them and be patient about them. Since the entire *Ummah* is addressed here, the *Ummah* should realize that the world is a place of hardships and labour; it is a place of ordeal. It will not, therefore, amount to impatience if one does regard such accidents as either strange or a remote chance. And as the *Ummah*, generally, displays the spirit of patience in all its deeds, the reward of Mercy is common to everyone who strives to be patient. But as the quality and degree of patience varies from person to person, everyone will be rewarded individually according to and commensurate with his quality of patience.

A formula of peace in hardship

That the patient people used to recite: إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ : 'We belong to Allah and to Him we are to return' is, in fact, an inculcation of the principle of virtue. The suggestion is that this is what the patient people should say as it brings excellent reward, relieves from the burden of sorrow and suffering and consoles effectively the grieved heart.

Verse 158

إِنَّ الصَّفَا وَالْمَرْوَةَ مِنْ شَعَآئِرِ اللّٰهِ ۚ فَمَنْ حَجَّ الْبَيْتَ اَوِاعْتَمَرَ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِ اَنْ يَّطَّوَّفَ بِهِمَا ۗ وَمَنْ تَطَوَّعَ خَيْرًا ۙ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ شَاكِرٌ عَلِيْمٌ ۝

Indeed the Ṣafā and the Marwah are among the marks from Allah. So whoever comes to the House for Ḥajj or performs the 'Umrah, there is no sin for him if he makes rounds between them; whoever comes up on his own with good, so Allah is Appreciating, All-Knowing. (Verse 158)

The subject of the Ka'bah, as we would do well to recollect, started all the way back from Verse 124 وَاِذِابْتَلٰٓى اِبْرٰهٖمَ رَبُّهٗ : 'And when his Lord put Ibrāhīm to a test', later opening with the statement that the Ka'bah was made a place for repeated convergence, a sanctuary, and a centre of divine worship as ordained (125). Then came the famous prayer of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام in which he requested Allah Almighty that he and his people be initiated into the correct method of performing the *manāsik*, the required rites, or acts of worship (126 - 129); which is inclusive of the Ḥajj and 'Umrah. We can now see that the centrality of the House of Allah as the place of worship has been expressed manifestly when it was declared to be the Qiblah, the direction and orientation of all *Ṣalāh*, no matter where it is performed; while at the same time, the importance of the House of Allah was established when it was made the objective in the performance of the Ḥajj and 'Umrah.

The present verse opens with the solemn declaration that the two hills, *Ṣafā* and *Marwah* adjoining the Ka'bah in Makkah, are tangible signs from Allah. Pilgrims walk briskly between them after they have made the *tawaf* of the Holy Ka'bah. This act of walking briskly or "making rounds" between them, as the Qur'an elects to call it, is known as *Sa'y*: سَعْى , a practice which was there even in the *Jāhiliyyah* and which made Muslims doubt its propriety. It is exactly this doubt Allah Almighty aims to remove here.

So, there it was in the earlier treatment of the subject that Allah Almighty eliminated the objection raised by disbelievers against the

instituting of the Ka'bah as the Qiblah of Muslim *Ṣalāh* and here, through a correlated assertion, the doubt of Muslims themselves as to the propriety of *Sa'y* in the Ḥajj and 'Umrah, of which the Ka'bah is the desired hub, has been removed.

That the text is closely bound together by this reason is not difficult to see.

Some terms and their meanings

1. The term, *Sha'ā'ir* in شَعَائِرِ اللّٰہ is the plural form of *Sha'īrah:* شعیرہ which means a sign, mark or token. So, the "*Sha'ā'ir* of Allah" signify what He has determined to be the marks of Islamic faith.

2. Lexically, Ḥajj means to aim, to intend; while, in the terminology of the Qur'ān and *Hadīth*, the act of deciding to go solely on a pilgrimage of the House of Allah and performing required rites while there, is called the Ḥajj.

3. Lexically, 'Umrah means *ziyārah* or pilgrimage; while, in the terminology of the Sharī'ah, the visit to *al-Masjid al-Ḥarām* and the doing of *tawāf* and *sa'y* there is called 'Umrah.

***Sa'y* between Safā and Marwah is Obligatory**

Details of the method that governs the performance of the Ḥajj, 'Umrah and *Sa'y* are easily available in books of *Fiqh*. It may be noted that *Sa'y* is a *mustaḥabb* (desirable or commendable) practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ according to Imam Ahmad; a *fard* (absolute obligation) according to Imāms Mālik and Shafi'ī; and a *wajib* (necessity) according to Imām Abū Hanīfah, which means, one who abandons it would have to slaughter a goat in compensation.

It is advisable to guard against a possible doubt that may arise while reading the words used in the verse under study. One may think that the Qur'ān simply says that making Sa'y between Safā and Marwah is 'no sin'; at the most, it proves that it is one of the many 'allowed' acts. This approach can be corrected by looking at the leading expression لَاجُنَاحَ :'no sin' which has been used here in relation to a question. The question related to all those idols sitting on top of the Safā and Marwah hills and it was to show their devotion to them that the people of the *Jāhiliyyah* used to do *sa'y* between Safā and Marwah,

and in which case, this practice should be *ḥarām* (forbidden). It is in answer to this doubt that it was declared, "there is no sin" in it. This being the real and authentic Abrahamic Tradition, there is no reason why it should be considered tainted with 'sin'? The 'malpractice' of a pagan band of people in this intervening period does not end up making a 'sin' of what is 'good' in the sight of Allah. The use of the expression 'no sin', therefore, does not go against its being *wājib* or necessary.

Verses 159 - 162

إِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَكْتُمُوْنَ مَآ أَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ الْبَيِّنٰتِ وَالْهُدٰى مِنْ بَعْدِ
مَا بَيَّنّٰهُ لِلنَّاسِ فِى الْكِتٰبِ أُولٰٓئِكَ يَلْعَنُهُمُ اللّٰهُ وَيَلْعَنُهُمُ
اللّٰعِنُوْنَ ○ إِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ تَابُوْا وَأَصْلَحُوْا وَبَيَّنُوْا فَأُولٰٓئِكَ أَتُوْبُ
عَلَيْهِمْ وَأَنَا التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيْمُ ○ إِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَمَاتُوْا وَهُمْ
كُفَّارٌ أُولٰٓئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ لَعْنَةُ اللّٰهِ وَالْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ وَالنَّاسِ أَجْمَعِيْنَ ○
خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا لَا يُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُمُ الْعَذَابُ وَلَا هُمْ يُنْظَرُوْنَ ○

Surely, those who conceal what We have revealed of clear signs and guidance - even after We have explained them for people, in the Book, upon them Allah casts damnation, and curse them those who curse. Yet, those who repent and correct and declare, their repentance I accept. And I am the most Relenting, the most Merciful. Indeed, those who disbelieved and died while they were disbelievers; upon them is the curse of Allah, and of angels, and of all human beings together, remaining therein forever. Neither will the punishment be lightened for them, nor will they be given respite. (Verses 159-162)

As part of the debated issue of Qiblah several verses earlier, the text has pointed out how the people of the Book went about concealing the truth concerning the prophethood of the Holy Prophet ﷺ for whom the Ka'bah was appointed as the Qiblah. It was Verse 146, where it was said:

ٱلَّذِينَ ءَاتَيْنَٰهُمُ ٱلْكِتَٰبَ يَعْرِفُونَهُۥ كَمَا يَعْرِفُونَ أَبْنَآءَهُمْ ۖ وَإِنَّ فَرِيقًا مِّنْهُمْ لَيَكْتُمُونَ ٱلْحَقَّ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ ۝

"Those whom We have given the Book recognize him (The Holy Prophet) as they recognize their own sons. And, in fact, a group of them does conceal the truth while they know."

Now the text, in order to conclude the subject, warns those who not only conceal the truth but, going further ahead in obstinacy, persist in their effort. The ultimate fate of this senseless persistence being all too obvious, Allah Almighty still extends the promise of His mercy and forgiveness to those who repent and reflect on what they did, retrace their steps and correct their negative attitude towards divine truth and, in order to demonstrate their positive stand, come forward and state the truth clearly and publicly. The natural consequence of such a reformed attitude would be that they will enter the fold of Islam believing in Allah and His prophet, which is the touchstone for any disbeliever's honest change of heart.

The duty of spreading the Islamic Knowledge

Verse 159 above stated that concealing from people clear signs and guidance revealed by Allah Almighty is a terrible crime which earns the curse of Allah Almighty Himself, as well as that of His entire creation. Let us point out to some injunctions that issue forth from this verse:

1. It is forbidden to conceal knowledge which must be disclosed and disseminated widely. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

من سئل عن علم يعلمه فكتمه الجمه الله يوم القيامة بلجام من النار

"Anyone who is asked about something (of religion) which he knows would, in the event that he conceals it, be brought forth by Allah on the Doomsday harnessed with a rein of fire." (Narrated by Abu Hurayrah and 'Amr ibn al-'As and reported by Ibn Majah - Qurṭubī)

According to the *fuqahā'* (Muslim jurists), this warning applies to a person who is the only one available in a given situation. If there are other knowledgeable persons present, he has the option of suggesting that the issue may be discussed with an *'ālim* who knows. (Qurṭubī and Jaṣṣāṣ)

2. Another very important rule that emerges from here is that one who himself does not possess the sound knowledge of religious injunctions and rulings should not try to explain them.

3. The third rule we find out is that answers to religious questions which are intricate, deeply involved and way beyond the comprehension level of common people should not be offered before them lest they fall a prey to some misunderstanding. This will not be considered as 'concealment of knowledge' since what is not allowed is the concealment of clear guidance given in the Qur'ān and *Sunnah* which it is rather necessary to disclose and disseminate widely. The expression مِنَ الْبَيِّنٰتِ وَالْهُدٰى : "of clear signs and guidance" in this verse releases a strong suggestion to this effect. It was about such questions that the blessed Companion 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd had said: 'If you recite *aḥādīth* which people do not understand fully, you will be throwing them into a nest of discord.' (Qurṭubī)

As reported in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنه has said: 'Disclose to the common people only that much of knowledge as they have the capacity to understand. Do you want them to deny Allah and His Messenger?' For, anything beyond their comprehension would breed doubts in their minds and the possibility is there that they may refuse to accept it.

This leads us to the rule that it is the responsibility of an *'ālim*, a religious scholar or a guide, to talk to people after he has assessed their ability to receive what is to be communicated. Such questions should not be brought up before a person who is likely to fall in error or misunderstanding. It is for this reason that Muslim jurists, while discussing such questions in writing, conclude with a standard warning tag of هذا مما يعرف ولا يعرف which means that the question under discussion is sensitive, therefore, a scholar should limit it to his comprehension and refrain from broadcasting it in public. It is reported that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said:

لاتمنعوا الحكمة اهلها فتظلموهم ولا تضعوها فى غير اهلها فتظلموها

"Do not withhold wisdom from those who deserve it, for if you do so, you will be unjust to them; and do not place it before those who do not deserve it, for if you do so, you will be unjust to it."

In view of these details, Imām al-Qurṭubī has deduced the ruling that an infidel who appears in polemics against Muslims - or a heresiarch (*mubtadi'*) who, being a combination of the heretic and the schismatic, invites people to his misleading ideas - should not be initiated into the Islamic disciplines unless it is absolutely ascertained that such teaching would correct his thinking.

Similarly, the executive authority of a time should not be given rulings which they could misuse to unleash a reign of terror over their citizens. Similarly again, the 'leaves' (*rukhsah*) given in religious injunctions and the stratagems (*ḥīlah*, plural: *ḥiyal*) should not be brought forth in public unnecessarily lest people get used to being 'excuse-seekers' while acting upon the injunctions of the faith. (Qurṭubī)

The *Ḥadīth* is equal to the Qur'ān by implication

The blessed Companion Abū Hurayrah, as reported in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī, has said: 'If this verse of the Qur'ān were not there, I would have not related a single *ḥadīth* before you.' The verse referred to here is the present verse which carries the warning of curse on concealment of knowledge. Some other Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, have been reported to have used similar words while narrating *Ḥadīth*.

These narrations tell us that in the view of the blessed Companions, the *Ḥadīth* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ enjoys some privileges mentioned in relation to the Qur'an. It may be noted that the verse in question warns those who may conceal what has been revealed in the Holy Qur'ān; it does not mention *Ḥadīth* as such. But, the blessed Companions ruled that the *Ḥadīth* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ was covered under this reference to the Qur'ān and that is why they thought that concealing the *Ḥadīth* would also put them under this warning.

The evil consequences of some sins

The exact words of the Holy Qur'ān in وَيَلْعَنُهُمُ اللّٰعِنُوْنَ :'And curse them those who curse', as obvious, have not identified those who do that. Commentators *Mujāhid* and *'Ikrimah* have said that this absence of specification suggests that they are cursed by every thing and every living being, so much so, that all animals and insects join in since their misdeeds hurt all created life forms. This is supported by a *ḥadīth*

from the blessed Companion, Barā' ibn 'Āzib where the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said that the word *al-lā'inūn* ('those who curse') refers to all animal life that moves on the earth. (Qurṭubī quoting Ibn Majah)

Cursing an individual is not permissible

From the words of the text وَمَاتُوا وَهُمْ كُفَّارٌ :'and died while they were disbelievers', commentators al-Jaṣṣāṣ, al-Qurṭubī and some others have formulated the view that it is not permissible to curse an infidel about whom it is not certain that he is to die in a state of infidelity. Now that we have no way of finding out for sure that a person will die in a given state, we are bound to obey the ruling that it is not permissible to curse an infidel by name. That the Holy Prophet ﷺ has cursed some infidels by name is explained by the fact that their death in a state of infidelity was divinely revealed to him. As far as the infidels as a whole are concerned, including the tyrants and the unjust, it is technically correct, if cursed without any particularization.

From this we also find out that the act of cursing is so grave that it has been disallowed even if the target be an infidel about whom it is not certain that he is going to die as one. If so, how can this become permissible if the target is a Muslim or, even if it is directed at an animal? Common people in Muslim societies seem to neglect this aspect of standard Muslim behaviour, specially our Muslim sisters who are prone to use very hard language about those they do not like among the circle of their acquaintances. It should be clearly understood that the act of cursing becomes effective not only by using the word, 'curse' but all synonyms used are subject to the same ruling. The word *'La'nah'* (curse) means: 'to remove away from the mercy of Allah Almighty'. Therefore, all damnatory swearing and cursing, whatever the shade, circumstance or language, falls under the purview of "*la'nah*" or 'curse'.

Verses 163 - 164

وَاِلٰهُكُمْ اِلٰهٌ وَّاحِدٌ ۚ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ الرَّحْمٰنُ الرَّحِيْمُ ۝ اِنَّ فِىْ خَلْقِ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ الَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَالْفُلْكِ الَّتِىْ تَجْرِىْ فِى الْبَحْرِ بِمَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ وَمَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ

مِنْ مَّآءٍ فَاَحْيَابِهِ الْاَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا وَبَثَّ فِيْهَا مِنْ كُلِّ دَآبَّةٍ ۪ وَّتَصْرِيْفِ الرِّيٰحِ وَالسَّحَابِ الْمُسَخَّرِ بَيْنَ السَّمَآءِ وَالْاَرْضِ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَّعْقِلُوْنَ O

And your god is one God: There is no god but He, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful. Surely, in the creation of heavens and earth, and the alternation of night and day, and the ships that sail in the sea with what benefits men, and the water Allah sent down from the sky, then revived with it the earth after its being dead, and spread over it of each creature, and in the turning of winds, and in the clouds employed to serve between heaven and earth: there are signs for those who have sense. (Verses 163 - 164)

When the *mushrikīn*, (the associators) of Arabia heard the verse وَاِلٰـهُكُمْ اِلٰهٌ وَّاحِدٌ : 'And your god is one God', all against their own belief, they were puzzled thinking how could there be just one single object of worship for the whole wide world. If this was a serious claim, there has to be some proof in support. That proof has been tersely encased in the present two verses.

Understanding *Tauḥīd*, the Oneness of Allah, in the wider sense:

Tauḥīd, the cardinal principle of Muslim faith as stated in Verse 163 has been proved repeatedly and variously, therefore, we limit ourselves at this point to a summary view of the principle as follows:

1. He is One in the state of His being, that is, there exists in the universe of His creation no entity like Him. He is without any duplicate or replica and without any equal or parallel. Such unshared and pristine is His station that He alone is deserving of being called the *Wāḥid*, the One.

2. He is One in claiming the right of being worshipped, that is, in view of the nature of His Being, the comprehensiveness of His most perfect attributes and the great charisma of His creation and its nurture, all human obedience, all *'ibādah*, all worship has to be for Him alone.

3. He is One in being free of any conceivable composition, that is, He is free of segments and fragments, units and organs, substances and elements, atoms and particles. There is just no way He can be analyzed or divided or resolved.

4. He is One in being the anterior and the posterior, that is, He existed when nothing did and He will remain existing when nothing will. Who then, if not Him, shall be called the *Wāḥid*, the only One? (Jaṣṣāṣ)

Now in Verse 164, there is a series of signs and proofs in support of the premise that Allah Almighty is really One. Stated simply, these can be grasped by the learned and the ignorant alike. How can one bypass the wonder of the creation of the heavens and the earth? Who can ignore the constant alternation of the night and the day? The message is simple and clear. Their origination and their perpetuity is the work of His perfect power alone and that there is absolutely no being other than Him who can take that credit.

Similarly, the movement of boats on the surface of waters, is a formidable indicator of Allah's power which gave water, a substance so liquid and fluid, the property of lifting on its back ships which carry tons and tons of weight all the way from the East to the West. Then, there is the movement of winds which Allah harnesses into the service of man, and in His wisdom, keeps changing their direction. These are great signs; they tell us that they were created and operated by a supreme being, the One who is All-Knowing, All-Aware, All-Wise. If the substance of water was not given a state in which the molecules move freely among themselves while remaining in one mass, a functional fluidity in other words, all this maritime activity would not be there. Even if this fluidity of sea-surface was there, help from winds was still needed in order to cover all those thousands of nautical miles across the seas of the world. The Holy Qur'ān has summarized the subject by saying:

إِنْ يَّشَأْ يُسْكِنِ الرِّيحَ فَيَظْلَلْنَ رَوَاكِدَ عَلَىٰ ظَهْرِهِ

"If He wills, He can still the winds, then, ships shall remain standing on the back of the seas." (42:33)

The use of the expression بِمَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ :'with what benefits men' points

out to the countless benefits that accrue to human beings when they mutually trade their goods through sea freighters. It is interesting to keep in mind the variations these benefits take from country to country and from age to age.

Then comes the marvel of water descending from the sky, drop by drop, released in a measure and manner that it hurts nothing. If it always came in the form of a flood, nothing would have survived, man or animal or things. Then, the raining of water is not all; it is the storage of water on earth that baffles the human ingenuity. Risking a simplicity, let us imagine if everyone was asked to store for personal use a quota of water for six month, how would everyone manage that? Even if such an impossible storage was somehow done, how could it be made to remain potable and hygienic all this time? Allah Almighty, in His infinite mercy, took care of this too. The Holy Qur'ān says:

فَأَسْكَنَّٰهُ فِى الْأَرْضِ وَإِنَّا عَلَىٰ ذَهَابٍۭ بِهِۦ لَقَٰدِرُونَ O

'Then, We made water stay in the earth, although, We were capable of letting it flow away,' (23:18)

But, nature did not allow this to happen. For the inhabitants of the earth, human and animal, water was stored in ponds and lakes openly. Then, the same water was lowered into the earth under the mountains and valleys in the form of an unsensed network of hidden pipelines of water accessible to everyone taking the trouble of digging and finding water. Further still, is it not that a huge sea of ice was stored out on top of the mountain ranges which is secure against spoilage and melts out slowly reaching all over the world through nature's own water lines.

To sum up, it can be said that Allah's Oneness has been proved in these verses with the citation of some manifestations of His perfect power. Commentators of the Qur'ān have taken up this subject in great details. Those interested may see al-Jaṣṣāṣ, al-Qurṭubī and others.

Verse 165

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَتَّخِذُ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَنْدَادًا يُحِبُّونَهُمْ كَحُبِّ

اللّٰهِ ۗ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اَشَدُّ حُبًّا لِّلّٰهِ ۗ وَلَوْ يَرَى الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْٓا اِذْ
يَرَوْنَ الْعَذَابَ ۙ اَنَّ الْقُوَّةَ لِلّٰهِ جَمِيْعًا ۙ وَّاَنَّ اللّٰهَ شَدِيْدُ الْعَذَابِ O

Among the people there are some who set up, aside from Allah, parallels whom they love as if it be the love of Allah, yet those who believe are most firm in love for Allah. Only if those who have acted unjustly would see - when they see the punishment - that all power belongs to Allah alone and Allah is severe in punishment. (Verse 165)

In the verses that appeared earlier, there was a strong and positive view of Allah's Oneness. Now the present verse points out to the error made by those who associate others in the divinity of Allah and think that they are caretakers of their needs. Their attachment to them reaches the proportions of love that is due for Allah alone.

In direct contrast to this profile of the polytheists, there are the true believers who love Allah alone, and very staunchly too, for a polytheist may turn away from his self-made god in the event of an impending loss, but a true believer reposes his total confidence in Allah, in gain and loss alike, retaining His love and pleasure as his lasting possession, never leaving his Creator whatever the odds against him be.

Now, returning back to the 'unjust', the Holy Qur'ān makes a subtle suggestion that the opportunity to correct their position was there; they could have recognized through their frustrations with their gods that they were helpless and that real power rested with Allah. But, they missed the opportunity and must now learn the hard way. So, the stern warning.

Verses 166 - 167

اِذْ تَبَرَّاَ الَّذِيْنَ اتُّبِعُوْا مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ اتَّبَعُوْا وَرَاَوُا الْعَذَابَ
وَتَقَطَّعَتْ بِهِمُ الْاَسْبَابُ O وَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ اتَّبَعُوْا لَوْ اَنَّ لَنَا كَرَّةً
فَنَتَبَرَّاَ مِنْهُمْ كَمَا تَبَرَّءُوْا مِنَّا ۗ كَذٰلِكَ يُرِيْهِمُ اللّٰهُ اَعْمَالَهُمْ
حَسَرٰتٍ عَلَيْهِمْ ۗ وَمَا هُمْ بِخٰرِجِيْنَ مِنَ النَّارِ O

> **When those who were followed disown those who followed, and they see the punishment and the bonds between them will be cut asunder! And those who followed would say, "We wish there be a return for us, so that we may disown them as they have disowned us." Thus Allah makes them see their deeds as remorse for them. And they are not to come out from the Fire. (Verses 166 - 167)**

Towards the end of the preceding verse it was said that the punishment of the Hereafter is severe. How severe it will be is now the subject of the present verse.

The severity of the punishment against which the polytheists have been warned will unfold itself when their leaders whom they followed will disown them as their votaries; and they both, the leaders and the led, will witness the punishment, and whatever bonds of leading and following may have existed between them would be snapped apart, very much like it happens in our mortal world when people share in the illegal but wriggle out when apprehended, so much so, that they would even go to the limit of refusing to recognize their accomplices!

When the so-called 'people' of their leaders will see this turnabout of theirs, they will fret and fume but will be unable to do anything about it except wishing that there be a return for them to the mortal world where they could, at least, square up with their greasy leaders - 'May be this time they come back to us seeking our allegiance which would be a perfect time to say no to them and to distance ourselves from them and to do to them what they did to us.'

But, what price are these dreams now? They are not going anywhere. They are stuck with 'their deeds which they see as remorse', and they all, the leaders and their followers, 'are not to come out from the Fire', since the punishment for shirk, the grave sin of associating partners with Allah, is to remain in the Fire for ever.

Verses 168 - 169

يَآيُّهَا النَّاسُ كُلُوا مِمَّا فِى الْاَرْضِ حَلٰلًا طَيِّبًا وَّلَا تَتَّبِعُوا

خُطُوٰتِ الشَّيْطٰنِؕ اِنَّهٗ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِيْنٌ ۝ اِنَّمَا يَاْمُرُكُمْ بِالسُّوْٓءِ وَالْفَحْشَآءِ وَاَنْ تَقُوْلُوْا عَلَى اللّٰهِ مَالَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ۝

O people, eat of what is in the earth, permissible and good, and do not follow in the footsteps of Satan; indeed, for you he is an open enemy. He only orders you evil and immodesty, and that you allege about Allah what you do not know. (Verses 168 - 169)[45]

The meaning of the words

The real meaning of the root word حل (*ḥalla*) in (*halālan ṭayyiban*: حَلٰلًا طَيِّبًا : permissible and good) is 'to open a knot'. In that sense, what has been made *ḥalāl* means that a knot has been opened and the restriction has been removed. The blessed Companion Sahl ibn 'Abdullāh رضى الله عنه has said: "Salvation depends on three things - eating *halal*, fulfilling (divine) obligations and following the *Sunnah* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ ." The word طَيِّب (*tayyib*) means 'good' as inclusive of the clean and the pure and covers the twin aspects of being lawful, permissible or *ḥalāl* and being naturally desirable.

The word خُطُوٰت (*khuṭuwāt*) is the plural form of خطوه (*khuṭwah*) which is the distance between the two feet when striding. Here the *khuṭuwāt* of *Shayṭān* means Satanic deeds.

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45. The previous verses refuted beliefs held by the *mushrikīn*; the present verses take up the ill effects of some of their pagan practices.

One of these was to release animals dedicated to their idols, whom they treated as sacred, refusing to derive any benefit from them. They took it to be unlawful. Straying further on, they even took this act of theirs as obedience of the divine will, a source of pleasing their Creator through the intercession of their idols.

It is in this background that Allah Almighty has given the right guidance in the present verse. Eating or using what Allah has provided on this earth - all that is good, pure and permissible - is the best rule. Avoiding something permissible on the assumption that doing so will please Allah is a Satanic thought. So, 'do not follow in the footsteps of Satan' who is an open enemy and what can you hope from an enemy but that he would keep pushing you towards the evil and the immodest, and that you attribute to Allah something for which you have no authority.

The word *sū'* in السُّوْءِ وَالْفَحْشَاءِ means something which bothers somebody good and reasonable. The word *fahshā'* covers what is immodest. Some commentators have said that *su'* here signifies sin as such, and *fahshā'* signifies major sins.

The expression إِنَّمَا يَأْمُرُكُمْ (*innamā ya'murukum*: 'he only orders you') means instigating a suggestion in the heart. The meaning can be seen more clearly in a *ḥadīth* from the blessed Companion 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud who said that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said: "The son of Ādam is influenced by a suggestion from the Satan and a suggestion from the angel. The Satanic suggestion has the effect of bringing forth the expedient gains in evil deeds and thereby opening the avenues of negating the truth, while the angelic suggestion promises reward and success for good deeds and leaves the happy effect of a heart in peace at its attestation of the truth."

Injunctions and Rulings

1. Polytheistic practices, such as releasing animals in the name of idols or dedicating them, whether big or small, to a saint or to anyone other than Allah has been declared unlawful in Verse 173 which follows. The present Verse (168) is not negating the unlawfulness of such an animal as wrongly conceived by some people. The objective of the verse is to stress that animals which Allah has made lawful should not be made unlawful by dedicating them to idols. Let them be what they are and use them for personal benefit. Why go about making things unlawful on your own which is a grave sin, and when it is dedicated to someone other than Allah it becomes impure and what is impure is unlawful.

2. If anyone dedicates an animal to anyone other than Allah out of ignorance or carelessness and wishes to make amends, he should resolve to retreat from his misdeed and repent on what he did, in which case, the meat of that animal will become lawful for him.

Verses 170 - 171

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمُ اتَّبِعُوا مَا أَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ قَالُوا بَلْ نَتَّبِعُ مَا أَلْفَيْنَا
عَلَيْهِ اٰبَآءَنَا ۗ أَوَلَوْ كَانَ اٰبَاؤُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ شَيْئًا وَّلَا يَهْتَدُونَ ۝

وَمَثَلُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا كَمَثَلِ الَّذِي يَنْعِقُ بِمَا لَا يَسْمَعُ إِلَّا دُعَاءً
وَنِدَاءً صُمٌّ بُكْمٌ عُمْيٌ فَهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ ٥

And when it is said to them: "Follow what Allah has sent down," they say: "Instead, we would follow what we found our fathers on." Is it so - even though their fathers used to understand nothing, nor had they been on the right path? The parable of those who disbelieve is like the one who hears nothing but a call and cry. They are deaf, dumb and blind, so they sense not. (Verses 170 - 171)

When these *mushrik* people were asked to follow the injunctions revealed by Allah through His Messenger, they refused to do so and insisted that they would rather follow the customary practice they had inherited from their fathers because, as they assumed, their models were divinely appointed to follow the way they adopted. Allah Almighty refutes this position of theirs by asking how could they go on following the ways of their fathers, under all conditions, to the exclusion of all other ways, even if their fathers did not understand much about the true faith, nor were they blessed with guidance given by their Lord?

In their lack of understanding, the verse says that the disbelievers resemble the scenario of a person shouting his call to an animal who hears nothing meaningful or significant except a bland cry. The disbelievers, in that state, do hear but not what is intended to correct them, so they are called 'deaf'; and they are tight-lipped when it comes to accepting the truth, therefore, they are 'dumb'; and since they do not see their benefit or loss, they are 'blind'. Consequently, with their vital senses so dulled, they seem to understand nothing.

Comments on the nature of *Taqlīd*:

No doubt, this verse (170) does censure the blind following of forefathers, but at the same time, it provides a rule and its attending conditions proving that following has its permissible aspect which has been indicated in لَا يَعْقِلُونَ (even though their forefathers used to understand nothing) and لَا يَهْتَدُونَ (nor had they been on the right path). It is from here that we find out that following the forefathers

mentioned in the text of the Qur'ān was censured because they lacked reason and guidance. 'Guidance' or the right path signifies injunctions revealed by Allah Almighty, openly and clearly, while *'aql* or reason stands for imperative guidance deduced by the great armed vision of *Ijtihād* from the recognized sources of Islamic Sharī'ah.

Now we can see that following the model of those identified in the text cannot be permitted because they do not have a revealed set of laws from Allah, nor do they have the ability to deduce injunctions from the Word of Allah. There is a subtle hint here which we would do well to note. In case, we are satisfied that a certain *'ālim* has the perfect knowledge of the Qur'ān and *Sunnah* and in the absence of a clear and direct instruction of the two sacred sources, he has the great expertise of a *mujtahid* so that he can, by analogical deduction, arrive at rulings from the texts of the Qur'ān and *Sunnah* - then, it is permissible to follow such *mujtahid 'ālim*. It does not mean that one has to obey 'his' injunctions and follow 'his person.' Instead, it means that one has to obey the injunctions of Allah alone to the total exclusion of others. But, since a direct and trustworthy knowledge of the injunctions of Allah (in all their ramifications) is not readily available to us due to our ignorance, we have to follow a *mujtahid 'ālim* in order to act in accordance with the injunctions of Allah Almighty.

From what has been said above, it becomes clear that those who hasten to quote verses of this nature against following the great *mujtahid imāms*, are themselves unaware of the proven meaning of these verses.

In his comments on this verse, the great commentator, al-Qurṭubī has said that the prohibition of following forefathers mentioned in this verse refers to following them in false beliefs and deeds. The aspect of following correct beliefs and good deeds is not included here as it has been very clearly projected in Sūrah Yūsuf in the words of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام :

إِنِّي تَرَكْتُ مِلَّةَ قَوْمٍ لَّا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَهُم بِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ كَافِرُونَ ۝ وَاتَّبَعْتُ مِلَّةَ آبَائِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ

"I have disassociated myself from the community of people

who do not believe in Allah and who deny the Hereafter and I have chosen to follow the community of my fathers, Ibrāhim and Isḥāq and Ya'qūb. (12:37-38)

This is good enough to prove that following forefathers in what is false is forbidden while it is permissible, rather desirable, in what is true.

Al-Qurṭubī has taken up the issue of following the *mujtahid imāms* within his comments on this verse. He says:

تعلق قوم بهذه الآية فى ذمّ التقليد (الى) وهذا فى الباطل صحيح امّا التقليد فى الحق فأصل من أصول الدين وعصمة من عصم المسلمين يلجأ إليها الجاهل المقصّر عن درك النظر

"Some people have quoted this verse to support their criticism against *Taqlīd* (following). As far as following the false is concerned, this is correct. But, this has nothing to do with following what is true which is, in fact, a basic religious principle, and a great means of protecting the religion of Muslims in as much as one who does not have the ability to do Ijtihād must rely on 'following' in matters of religion." (Volume 2, Page 194)

Verses 172 - 173

يَاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا كُلُوْا مِنْ طَيِّبٰتِ مَا رَزَقْنٰكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوْا لِلّٰهِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ اِيَّاهُ تَعْبُدُوْنَ ○ اِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَيْتَةَ وَ الدَّمَ وَلَحْمَ الْخِنْزِيْرِ وَمَآ اُهِلَّ بِهٖ لِغَيْرِ اللّٰهِ ۚ فَمَنِ اضْطُرَّ غَيْرَ بَاغٍ وَّلَا عَادٍ فَلَآ اِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ○

O those who believe, eat of the good things We have provided you and be grateful to Allah, if (really) you are to worship Him alone. He has only forbidden you: carrion, blood, the flesh of swine and that upon which a name other than 'Allah' has been invoked. So whoever is compelled by necessity, neither seeking pleasure nor transgressing, then there is no sin on him. Verily, Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. (Verses 172 - 173)

Earlier, the aim was to correct the error made by the *mushrikīn*

when they made unlawful what was good and permissible. Now, in the present Verse (172), the believers are being warned against falling into the same error. As a corollary, they are reminded of Allah's blessings and are taught to be grateful to Him.

Later, in Verse 173 it is said that the prohibited must remain prohibited and should never be treated as lawful, something the *mushrikin* used to do when they ate carrion or animals slaughtered in a name other than that of Allah. Also implied is the warning that it is an error to declare any animal, other than those specified, as unlawful.

Comments on juristic details follow.

The effects of eating *Ḥalāl* and *Ḥarām*

Verse 172 forbids eating that which is *ḥarām* and along with it, allows eating that which is *ḥalāl* in all gratefulness to Allah. The reason is that the act of eating *ḥarām* promotes evil instincts, kills the taste of *'ibādah* and makes the prayers ineffective. In contrast, eating *ḥalāl* generates inner light, creates a distaste for evil deeds, leads towards high morals, and creates a state in which the heart welcomes *'ibādah* and finds the very thought of sin sickening and of course, prayers are answered. Therefore, Allah Almighty has told all his prophets to eat from what is good and do what is righteous:

يَاأَيُّهَا الرُّسُلُ كُلُوا مِنَ الطَّيِّبٰتِ وَاعْمَلُوا صَالِحًا

O Messengers, eat of the good things and do the righteous. (23:51)

This shows that eating and using what is *ḥalāl* plays a vital role in doing what is good and virtuous. Similarly, living by the *ḥalāl* helps the chances of a prayer being answered while living by the *ḥarām* kills those chances. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said that there are many people, tired and distressed, who stretch their hands in prayer before Allah fervently calling 'O Lord, O Lord, yet *ḥarām* is what they eat, *ḥarām* is what they drink and *haram* is what they wear, how then, under these conditions, could they hope to have their prayers answered?' (The Ṣaḥīḥ, Muslim, and Tirmidhī as quoted by Ibn *Kathīr*)

The word إِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ (*innamā harrama*) is a restrictive particle, therefore, the sense of the verse is that Allah Almighty has forbidden only those things which have been mentioned later, other than which, nothing else is forbidden. So, in this verse, it is the word, *innamā*

which points out to the given sense, while in another verse (6:145): قل لَا أَجِدُ فِيمَا أُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ مُحَرَّمًا عَلَىٰ طَاعِمٍ the same thing has been stated more clearly. Here, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been asked to proclaim that, in what has been revealed to him, there is nothing *ḥarām* except the few things mentioned later on.

At this stage, we have a problem on our hands. The fact is that the unlawfulness of many things stands proved on the authority of other verses from the Qur'ān, and also from *ahādith*. If so, what would be the meaning of this 'restriction' and how are we to explain the negation of 'there is nothing *ḥarām* except the few things mentioned later on'?

For an answer, we can say that *ḥalāl* and *ḥarām* are not being discussed here in the absolute sense. Rather, they are discussed here with reference to those particular animals only which the polytheists of Makkah took as *ḥalāl* or *ḥarām* on the basis of their pagan beliefs. This has been pointed out in the previous verse where it is said that the polytheists of Makkah were used to declaring some *ḥalāl* animals as *ḥarām* for them and this practice was censured there. Now, it is in contrast to that situation that they are being told here as to how they do not stay away from certain animals which have been declared *ḥarām* for them, while, at the same time, they stay away from those that are *ḥalāl* in the sight of Allah. Therefore, the presence of the 'restriction' here should not be taken in the absolute sense as it is relative, specially in opposition to the polytheistic beliefs.

Now, the things that have been made unlawful (*ḥarām*) in verse 173 are four in number:

1. Dead animal (*Maitah*)
2. Blood (*Dam*)
3. The flesh of Swine (*Lahm al-khinzīr*)
4. An animal on which the name of anyone other than Allah has been called (*Wa mā uhilla bihī lighayrillāh*).

These four things have been further explained in other verses of the Holy Qur'ān, and in authentic *aḥadith*. Seen as a correlated whole, the following injunctions emerge from them, and they are being taken up here in some detail:

Injunctions about the dead animal

The dead animal is known in English as 'carrion' or carcass. In Islamic terminology, it means an animal not slaughtered in accordance with the requirements of the Sharī'ah. If it dies its own death without having been slaughtered or is killed by choking or aggressive hitting, it falls under the category of 'dead' and remains *ḥarām*. But, in accordance with another verse of the Holy Qur'ān: أُحِلَّ لَكُمْ صَيْدُ الْبَحْرِ وَطَعَامُهُ : 'Allowed to you is the game of the sea and its eating.' (5:96), slaughtering sea-life is not necessary as a condition; it is permissible even without it. It is on this basis that, in authentic *aḥādīth*, fish and locust have been determined as exceptions to the category of *maitah* (unslaughtered) and thus made *ḥalāl*. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said: 'Two things dead have been made lawful for us - the fish and the locust; and two forms of blood have been made lawful for us - the liver and the spleen.' (Ibn Kathīr from Aḥmad, Ibn Majah and Darqutni)

So, among animals, the fish and the locust are *ḥalāl* without slaughtering, even if they die their own death or get killed by somebody. However, fish that gets decomposed and starts floating on the surface is *ḥarām*. (Jaṣṣāṣ)

Similarly, an animal not within range for the hunter to slaughter can become *ḥalāl* without having been slaughtered if the hunter, after saying *Bismillāh*, inflicts a wound on it by means of a sharp-edged weapon such as an arrow. Merely being wounded is not enough; it is necessary as a condition that it be wounded with some sharp-edged weapon.

Injunctions and Rulings

1. If an animal wounded by a gun shot dies before it could be slaughtered, it would be taken as an animal that dies from a fatal strike with a baton or rock. This has been called مَوْقُوذَةٌ (*mawqūdhah*) in another verse of the Holy Qur'ān(5:3) where it has been classed as *ḥarām*. However, if the animal is slaughtered before it dies, it would become *ḥalāl*.

2. Some *'ulamā'* are of the opinion that the common bullet with a conical nose-top falls under the category of an arrow, but the view of the majority is that this too is not an arrow-like weapon, instead, it bores the flesh and tears it apart by the force of the explosive mixture

inside the bullet, otherwise, the weapon itself has no sharp edge which could inflict a wound on the animal. Therefore, an animal hunted with a bullet of this kind will not be permissible without slaughtering it.

3. In Verse 173, *maitah* or the dead animal has been declared *ḥarām* in an absolute sense, therefore, everything about it is *ḥarām*; eating its flesh, buying it or selling it, all included. The same injunction applies to all impurities (*Anjās*). Their use, buying and selling, even deriving any benefit from them are all *ḥarām*, so much so, that it is impermissible to voluntarily feed even an animal with carrion or anything else impure. However, should this be placed somewhere and be eaten by a dog or cat on its own, that would, then be permissible. What is not permissible is to feed them personally. (Jaṣṣāṣ, Qurṭubi)

4. In this particular verse the injunction declaring *maitah* or the dead animal as *ḥarām* appears to be general which includes all parts of *maitah*. But, this has been clarified in another verse (6:145) by the words: عَلٰى طَاعِمٍ يَّطۡعَمُهٗ which tells us that the eatable parts of the dead animal are forbidden. Therefore, the bones of the dead animal and the hair, which are not eatables, are clean and their use is permissible. The Holy Qur'ān in verse (16:80): وَمِنۡ اَصۡوَافِهَا وَ اَوۡبَارِهَا وَاَشۡعَارِهَا اَثَاثًا وَّمَتَاعًا اِلٰى حِيۡنٍ has permitted the use of hair of such animals in an absolute sense. The condition of slaughter is not there (Jaṣṣāṣ). Since the skin or hide of an animal carries impurities such as blood it is forbidden unless tanned. When tanned, it is permissible. Further clarifications can be seen in authentic *aḥādith*. (Jaṣṣāṣ)

5. The fat of the dead animal and everything made with it is forbidden. There is no way they can be used. Even buying and selling them are forbidden.

6. Avoiding the use of soap made from animal fat is good precautionary practice. However, it is not easy to find out for sure that fat from dead animals has been used in a particular product, therefore, some leeway exists. Another reason for its permissibility is that some of the blessed Companions such as, Ibn 'Umar, Abu Sa'id al-Khudri and Abū Mūsā al-Ash'ari have ruled that the fat of the dead animal is forbidden as far as eating is concerned, while they have permitted its

use externally, and therefore, they have allowed its buying and selling. (Jaṣṣās)

7. Cheese made from milk contains an ingredient called *infaḥa* in Arabic and 'rennet' in English. It is a mucous membrane lining taken out from the stomachs of suckling lambs or kids. It is used to coagulate or curdle milk. If rennet is taken out of the stomach of an animal slaughtered in the name of Allah, there is no harm in using it. The meat, fat etc. of an Islamically slaughtered animal are permissible. But, in the event they are taken from the stomach of an animal slaughtered un-Islamically, there is difference of views among Muslim jurists. Imāms Abū Hanīfah and Mālik consider it clean while Imāms Abū Yūsuf, Muḥammad and Thawrī and others call it unclean and impure. (Jaṣṣāṣ, Qurṭubī)

There is a strong likelihood that rennet from un-Islamically slaughtered animals is used in cheese made in non-Islamic countries, therefore, relying on the consensus of Muslim jurists, one must avoid using it. Under the juristic position taken by Imām Abū Hanīfah and Imām Mālik, leeway exists. Some cheeses made in western countries have pork-fat as one of their ingredients which, hopefully, can be seen on the wrapper or tin. All these are absolutely *ḥarām* and impure.

The blood

The second thing forbidden in the verse is blood. The word, *dam*, (pronounced a, 'sum' in English) meaning 'blood' has been used here in the absolute sense, but, in verse (6:145) of Sūrah al-An'ām, it has been subjected to a qualification, that is: مَّسْفُوحًا (that which flows). Therefore, *fuqahā'* agree that congealed blood such as, the kidney or spleen, are clean and permissible.

1. Since flowing blood is what is forbidden, the blood that remains on the flesh after slaughtering the animal is clean. The Muslim jurists, the blessed Companions and their successors and the *Ummah* in general agree on this. On the same analogy, the blood of mosquitoes, flies and bed bugs is not unclean. But, should this be significant, it has to be washed clean. (Jaṣṣās)

2. As eating or drinking blood is forbidden, its external use is also

46. In bio-chemistry, the enzyme rennin in present is rennet and is a milk-curdling agent.

forbidden. As the buying and selling and seeking any benefit from impurities is forbidden, the buying and selling of blood is forbidden and all income derived from it is also forbidden. This is because *dam* or blood in the words of the Holy Qur'ān has been forbidden in the absolute sense which includes all possible ways in which it can be used.

Blood Transfusion

Actually, human blood is a part of human body. When taken out of the body, it is rated as *najis* or 'impure', which would require that transfusion of blood from one human body to another be regarded as *ḥarām* for two reasons:

a) Since respecting the human body is necessary and this act is contrary to that respect.

b) Blood is heavy impurity (*al-najāsah al-ghalīẓah*) and the use of things impure is not permissible.

But, looking into the conveniences allowed by the Sharī'ah of Islam under conditions of compulsion and in general treatment of diseases, we come to the following conclusions:

To begin with, blood is no doubt a part of the human body but its transfusion into the body of another person requires no surgery. Blood is drawn out by means of a syringe from one human body and transferred to another by the same process. Therefore, it is like milk which forms in the human body and goes on to become the part of another human being. The Sharī'ah of Islam, in view of the need of the human child, has made nothing but milk as his or her initial food, making it obligatory on mothers to feed their children as far as they stay married to their respective husbands. After divorce, mothers cannot be forced to feed their children. To provide sustenance to children is the responsibility of the father; it is he who must arrange to have the child suckled by a wet-nurse, or request the mother to continue feeding the baby against payment. The Holy Qur'ān is very clear on this subject when it says:

فَإِنْ أَرْضَعْنَ لَكُمْ فَاٰتُوهُنَّ أُجُورَهُنَّ

"If they (your divorced wives) suckle (your children) for you, then, pay for their services." (65:6)

In short, milk which is a part of the human body has still been made permissible for children in view of their need. It is even permissible to use it medically for elders as well. It appears in *'Ālamgīriah*:

ولا بأس بأن يسعط الرجل بلبن المرأة ويشربه للدواء (عالمگیری ص ٤)

"There is no harm if female milk is dropped in the nose of a man to cure him of some disease, or even if it is given orally as medicine." (For further details on this subject see Al-Mughni by ibn Qudamah, Kitab al-Sayd, volume 8, page 602.)

If blood is dealt with on the analogy of milk, the analogy would not be too far-fetched, since milk is also an altered form of blood and shares with it the common factor of being a part of the human person. The only difference between them is that milk is clean while blood is not. So, the first reason of unlawfulness, that is, being a part of human body, is no more operative here. What remains is the aspect of its impurity. In this case too, some *fuqahā'* have permitted the use of blood on medical grounds.

Therefore, the correct position is that the transfer of human blood to another body does not seem to be permissible in Sharī'ah under normal conditions, but doing so under compulsive conditions on medical grounds is doubtlessly permissible. Compulsive conditions mean that the patient faces a life or death situation and no life-saving drug turns out to be effective or is just not available and there is a strong likelihood that the patient's life would be saved through the blood transfusion. If these conditions are met, giving of blood will be permissible under the authority of this Qur'ānic text which clearly permits the saving of one's life by eating the flesh of a dead animal, if compelled by necessity. However, in the event that there be no condition of compulsion or other medicines and treatments could work, the problem has been dealt with differently by different jurists; some say that it is permissible while others maintain that it is not. Details are available in books of *fiqh*. Those interested in the subject may wish to see my Urdu treatise entitled, 'The Transplanting of Human Limbs'.

The swine is forbiddan

The third thing forbidden in this verse is the flesh of the swine. It will be noted that it is the 'flesh' of swine which has been mentioned

here as unlawful. Al-Qurtubi explains this by saying that the aim here is not to restrict or particularize 'flesh' as such. In fact, all parts of the swine, the bones, the skin, the hair, the ligaments, are forbidden by the consensus of the Muslim community. The introduction of the word لَحْم (*lahm*: flesh) is to point out that the swine is not like other prohibited animals which can be purified by slaughtering, even if eating of them stays prohibited. The reason is that the flesh of the swine does not get purified even if the swine is slaughtered, as it is absolutely impure and unlawful. However, the use of its bristles to sow leather has been permitted in *Hadith*. (Jassas, Qurtubi)

The consecrated animals

The fourth thing forbidden in this verse is an animal dedicated to anyone other than Allah. This takes three known forms:

(1) The slaughtering of an animal to seek the pleasure of anyone other than Allah and calling the name of that 'anyone' while slaughtering it, is unanimously forbidden with the consensus of the Muslim community. This animal is *maitah*: dead. It is not permissible to derive any benefit from any of its parts because this is what the verse مَا أُهِلَّ بِهِ لِغَيْرِ اللهِ (173) clearly means without any difference of opinion.

(2) The slaughtering of an animal to seek the pleasure of anyone other than Allah, despite the fact that the animal was slaughtered by calling the name of Allah, is also forbidden in the Shari'ah. This is something a large number of ignorant Muslims do when they slaughter goats and sheep, even chicken, to seek the pleasure of elders and leaders, and they do this by calling the name of Allah at the time of slaughter. The *fuqaha'* agree that all such forms are *haram* and the animal slaughtered in this manner is a dead animal, a carcass. However, there is some difference of opinion about the reason. Some commentators and jurists maintain that this second situation is also what the verse مَا أُهِلَّ بِهِ لِغَيْرِ اللهِ (173) means to cover. It appears in the *Hawashi* of al-Baydawi:

فكل مانودی علیه بغیر اسم الله فهو حرام وان ذبح باسم الله تعالی حیث
اجمع العلماء لو ان مسلما ذبح ذبیحة وقصد بذبحه التقرب الی غیرالله
صار مرتدا وذبیحته ذبیحة مرتد

> Every animal on which a name other than that of Allah was called is *ḥarām*, even though it was slaughtered in the name of Allah. Therefore, *'ulamā'* agree that a Muslim, who slaughters an animal and intends to seek the pleasure of anyone other than Allah through it, will become an apostate, and the animal he slaughters will be taken as one slaughtered by an apostate.

In addition to this, it is said in Al-Durr al-Mukhtār, *Kitāb al-dhabā'iḥ:*

> ذبح لقدوم الامير و نحوه كواحد من العظماء يحرم لانه اهل به لغيرالله ولو ذكراسم الله
>
> Slaughtering an animal to celebrate the visit of a dignitary is *harām* because that comes under *mā uhilla bihi lighayrillāh* even though the name of Allah has been mentioned at the time of slaughter. (Volume 5, page 214)

Al-Shāmī concurs with this view.

There are others who have not gone to the extent of declaring that this situation is what *mā uhilla bihī lighayrillāh* means clearly since it would be a little burdened Arabic-wise to import the phrase for this situation, but it is on the basis of the commonality of cause, that is, because of the intention of seeking the pleasure of anyone other than Allah, that they have tied this too with *mā uhilla bihī lighayrillāh* and have declared it to be *ḥarām*. In the view of this humble writer, this view is the most sound, cautious and safe.

Nevertheless, there is a regular verse of the Holy Qur'ān which supports the unlawfulness of this situation, that is, وَمَا ذُبِحَ عَلَى النُّصُبِ. The word, *nuṣub* here means everything worshipped falsely. So, it signifies animals that have been slaughtered for false gods. Since, *wa mā uhilla bihī lighayrillāh* has been mentioned earlier, it tells us that *mā uhilla* clearly means the animal on which a name other than that of Allah has been recited at the time of its slaughter, and that *dhubiha 'ala n'nusub* appears in contrast to it where the reciting of a name other than that of Allah has not been mentioned. It simply means the act of slaughtering with the intention of pleasing idols. Included here are animals which have been, in fact, slaughtered to seek the pleasure of somebody other than Allah even though the name of Allah has been

recited at the time of slaughtering them. (This special note is from my teacher, Ḥakim al-ummah Maulānā Ashraf Ali Thānavī.)

Imam Al-Qurtubi has taken the same approach in his Tafsir where he has said:

وجرت عادة العرب بالصياح باسم المقصود بالذبيحة وغلب ذلك فى استعمالهم حتى عبر به عن النية التى هى علة التحريم

It was a customary practice of the Arabs that, at the time they were to slaughter, they would call aloud the name of the entity the slaughter was intended for. That was so much in vogue among them, that in this verse, their intention, that is, their seeking of the pleasure of one other than Allah, which is the real cause of forbiddance, was identified as *ihlal* or call. (Tafsir al-Qurṭubī, volume 2, page 307. Imam Al-Qurṭubī has based his findings on the *fatawa* or religious rulings of Sayyidnā 'Alī and Sayyidah 'A'ishah, may Allah be pleased with them both)

During the days of Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنه , Ghalib, the father of poet *Farazdaq* had slaughtered a camel and there is no report to confirm that the name of someone other than Allah was mentioned on it at the time of its slaughter. But, Sayyidnā 'Alī كرم الله وجهه decided that this too fell under the category of *ma uhilla bihi lighayrillah* and was *ḥaram*. The Companions, may Allah bless them all, accepted the verdict.

Similarly, Al-Qurṭubī reports a lengthy *ḥadīth* from Sayyidah 'A'ishah رضى الله عنها on the authority of Yaḥyā ibn Yaḥyā, the teacher of Imām Muslim. Towards the end, it says that a certain woman asked her: 'O *umm al-mu'minin*, some of our foster relatives are non-Arabs and they have one or the other festival going for them all the time. On these festivals, they send us gifts. Should we eat them or should we not?' Thereupon, Sayyidah 'A'ishah رضى الله عنها said:

اما ما ذبح لذلك اليوم فلا تاكلوا ولكن كلوا من اشجارهم

Do not eat what has been slaughtered for that day, but you can eat (fruits) from their trees. (Qurṭubī, volume 2, page 207)

To sum up, it can be said that the second situation in which the intention is to seek the favour of an entity other than Allah even though Allah's name is called at the time of slaughtering the animal

comes under the purview of the prohibition relating to *mā uhilla bihī lighayrillāh* for two reasons:

a. The commonness of cause, that is, because of the intention to seek the favour of an entity other than Allah.

b. It is also covered by the verse (5:3), and therefore, this too is forbidden.

3. There is a third situation also where an animal is released after cutting off its ear lobe or branding it in some other manner and this is done to seek the pleasure of an entity other than Allah and to make it an object of reverence paid to the same entity. The animal in this case was neither used in its normal functions nor intended to be slaughtered. Rather, slaughtering such an animal used to be held as unlawful. Such animals are not covered under the prohibition envisaged in verse 173 (*Mā uhilla bihī lighayrillāh*) or in verse 5:3 (*Ma dhubiha 'ala n'nusub*), instead, animals of this kind are known as *bahirah* or *sa'ibah* and according to the injunction of the Qur'an the practice of releasing them in that manner is *haram* as it would appear later under the verse: مَا جَعَلَ اللّٰهُ مِنْۢ بَحِيْرَةٍ وَّلَا سَآئِبَةٍ

However, it should be borne in mind that their practice of releasing an animal in this unlawful manner or their false beliefs about it do not render the animal itself unlawful. Rather, if such animals are held to be forbidden, it will amount to supporting their false beliefs. Therefore, this animal is lawful like any other animal.

But, in accordance with the principles of Muslim law, this animal does not go out of the ownership of its owner. It continues to be owned by him, even though, he thinks that it is no more his property and has been dedicated to someone other than Allah. This belief of the owner of the animal is false and, in accordance with the dictate of the Shari'ah, the animal continues to be in his ownership.

Now, if this person sells this animal or gives it as gift to someone, then, this animal will be lawful for the assignee. This is what people in some countries do when they endow goats or cows in the name of their idols or gods and leave them with the management of the temples to do what they like with them. Some of them sell these animals to Muslims as well. Similarly, some ignorant Muslims also do things like

that at shrines or graveyards. There they would leave a goat or a full-grown male domestic foul in the hands of the keepers who sell these out. So, those who buy such livestock or poultry from the keepers authorized by owners, for them, it is perfectly lawful if they buy, slaughter, eat or sell them onwards.

Nadhr lighayrillāh: Offering for any one other than Allah

Here we have a fourth situation on our hands which does not relate to animals but to things other than these. For instance, food or sweets offered against vows in the name of someone other than Allah by Hindus in their temples and by ignorant Muslims in shrines. This kind of *nadhr* or *mannat* in the name of someone other than Allah has also been declared *haram* because of the commonness of cause, that is, because of the intention to seek the favour of one other than Allah and which comes under the same prohibition as contemplated in *mā uhilla bihī lighayrillāh* as a result of which its eating, feeding, buying and selling all become *haram*. Details can be seen in the books of *fiqh* such as Al-Baḥr al-Rā'iq and others. This injunction is based on the analogy of the animals mentioned expressly in the text of the Holy Qur'ān.

Injunctions in situations of compulsion

In the verse under comment, after four things have been declared unlawful, the fifth injunction comes as an exception. The text says:

فَمَنِ اضْطُرَّ غَيْرَ بَاغٍ وَّلَا عَادٍ فَلَآ إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ

which means that the injunction has been relaxed for a person who is extremely compelled by hunger, and is not looking towards enjoying his food, nor is likely to go beyond the level of his need, then he, in that situation, will not incur any sin if he eats what is unlawful. There is no doubt about it that Allah Almighty is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. It will be observed that the burden of sin which accrues from eating the unlawful has been removed from the *mudṭar* : مُضْطَرٌّ : the one who is compelled by necessity and must save his life, if he fulfils two attending conditions. In the terminology of the *Shar'iah*, the word, *mudṭar* is applied to a person whose life is in danger. Ordinary pain or need cannot qualify a person to be known as *mudṭar*. So, for a person whose hunger has driven him to a point beyond which he must either eat or die, there is an option; he can eat things made unlawful

on two conditions. Firstly, the aim should be to save life and not to enjoy eating. Secondly, he must eat only as much as would serve to save his life; eating to fill up one's stomach or eating much more than one needs remain prohibited even at that time.

Special Note

Here, the eating of things forbidden even under a situation of compulsion (*idtirar*) has not been made lawful as such by the noble Qur'an, instead, the expression used is لَا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ (there is no sin on him) which means that these things continue to be *haram* as they are, but the sin of using what is *haram* has been forgiven because the eater has done so under the compulsion of necessity. There is a world of difference between making something lawful and the forgiving of sin. If the objective was to make these things lawful under compulsive need, a simple exception from the injunction of unlawfulness would have been enough. But, here the text does not rest at the simple exception, it rather elects to add the statement : لَا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ . By doing so, it makes a point, that is, what is *haram* remains *haram* as it is, and using it is nothing but sin, however, the *mudtar* (مُضْطَر), the compelled one, has been forgiven this sin.

Using the forbidden as a cure, in necessity

A person whose life is in danger can use what is forbidden as medicine to save his life. This too is proved by the verse under comment, but there seem to be some conditions as well which have been hinted there.

To begin with, there should be a state of compulsion, and a danger of losing life. This injunction does not cover ordinary pain or sickness. Then, there is the situation when no treatment or medicine works, or is just not available - the unlawful thing to be used as life-saving drug is the only option open. This is like the exception made in a state of extreme hunger which is valid only when something lawful is not available or affordable. The third condition is that it should be made certain that by using the unlawful, life will be saved. This is like the eating of a couple of morsels from unlawful meat by one compelled fatally by hunger should be enough to save his life. If there is a medicine which appears to be useful but there is no certainty that it would cure the

ailing patient, then, the use of this unlawful medicine will not fall under the purview of the exception made in this verse and therefore, it will not be permissible. Along with these three, there are two additional conditions which have been set forth in the verse, that is, one should not aim to enjoy it and use no more than one needs to use.

Given the restrictions and conditions that emerge from clear statements and subtle hints in the verse, every unlawful and impure medicine can be used internally or externally. It is permissible by the consensus of the jurists of the Muslim *ummah*. In a nutshell, these five conditions are as follows:

1. There be a state of extreme necessity, that is, one's life be in danger.
2. Another lawful medicine does not work, or is not available.
3. It should be normally certain that the disease will be cured by such medicine.
4. Enjoying the use of the medicine should not be the aim.
5. It should not be used any more than it is needed.

Using the forbidden as a cure without necessity

As far as situations of extreme necessity are concerned, the relevant injunction has been given in the text of the Holy Qur'ān and there is total agreement on that. But, about the question of using impure or *ḥarām* medicine even in common diseases, the jurists differ. Most of them say that, barring compulsion, and all those conditions mentioned above, it is not permissible to use *ḥarām* medicine, because the Holy Prophet ﷺ as reported in al-Bukhārī has said that Allah Almighty has placed no cure for the Muslims in *ḥarām*.

Some other jurists have used a particular episode reported in *Ḥadīth* to declare it as permissible. That episode relates to people of the *'Uraynah* tribe and has been reported in all books of *Ḥadīth* where it is said that some villagers came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ . They suffered from several diseases. He permitted them the use of camel milk, and urine, which cured them.

But, this episode has several possibilities which make the use of prohibited things doubtful. Therefore, the correct original position is:

Unless the conditions of extreme necessity exist in common diseases, the use of *ḥarām* medicine is not permissible.

However, later-day jurists, keeping in view the influx of unlawful and impure medicines in modern times, the general climate of suffering, and the weakness of people against it, have permitted the use of prohibited medicine on the condition that another lawful and pure medicine is not effective, or is not available. It is mentioned in Al-Durr al-Mukhtār, the well-known book of *Fiqh*:

اختلف فی التداوی بالمحرم و ظاهر المذهب المنع کما فی رضاع البحر ولکن نقل المصنف ثم وههنا عن الحاوی قیل یرخص اذا علم فیه الشفاء ولم یعلم دواء آخر کما رخص فی الخمر للعطشان

(علیه الفتوی، ومثله فی العالمگیریة ص ۳۵۵ ج ۵،)

There is difference of opinion in medication through the unlawful. Apparent religious ruling forbids it, as is mentioned in Al-Baḥr al-Rā'iq, Kitāb al-Riḍā' but the author has, at that point in *al-Riḍā'*, as well as here, reported from al-Ḥāwī al-Qudsī that some *'ulamā'* have permitted the use of the prohibited on medical grounds, if the cure is certain and there is no alternate available, which is like the permission granted to the critically thirsty to take a sip of liquor.

The conclusion

The details given above help us find out what we should do about modern medicines that originate mostly from Europe and America, specially those in which the use of alcohol as base or solvent, or the introduction of other impure ingredients, is known and certain. As for medicines in which the presence of unlawful and impure ingredients cannot be ascertained with any degree of certainty, their use would have a little more technical leeway, however, there is nothing like precaution, specially when the need is not that pressing. Allah Almighty knows best.

Verses 174 - 176

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ مَآ أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ الْكِتَٰبِ وَيَشْتَرُونَ بِهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا أُولَٰٓئِكَ مَا يَأْكُلُونَ فِي بُطُونِهِمْ إِلَّا النَّارَ وَلَا يُكَلِّمُهُمُ اللَّهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَٰمَةِ وَلَا يُزَكِّيهِمْ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ۝

أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرَوُا الضَّلَٰلَةَ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَالْعَذَابَ بِالْمَغْفِرَةِ فَمَآ أَصْبَرَهُمْ عَلَى النَّارِ ۝ ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ نَزَّلَ الْكِتَٰبَ بِالْحَقِّ وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ اخْتَلَفُوا فِي الْكِتَٰبِ لَفِي شِقَاقٍ بَعِيدٍ ۝

Verily, those who conceal what Allah has revealed of the Book and get out of it a small price, they eat nothing into their bellies but fire, and Allah will not speak to them on Doomsday nor will He purify them. And for them there is painful punishment - they are those who have bought the wrong way at the price of the right path, and punishment at the price of pardon. What an endurance on their part against the fire! All that is because Allah revealed the Book with the truth, and those who have disagreed about the Book are far out in schism. (Verses 174 - 176)

Mentioned in the earlier verses were unlawful things which are tangible. Now, the verses that follow take up the intangible deeds that have been made unlawful. These are evil deeds, inner and outer. For instance, religious scholars among the Jews were addicted to giving out false verdicts in favour of people who bribed them. They would go to the limit of distorting the verses of the Torah to suit the desire of their client. In this, there is a veiled warning given to the *'ulama'*, the religious scholars of the community of the Last of the prophets, that they should keep away from such practices and never fall short in disclosing the true injunctions of Allah for any material reason or vested interest of their own.

Earning money against the Faith

There is no doubt that people who conceal the contents of the Book of Allah and, in return for this breach of trust, collect insignificant worldly gains are simply eating fire. When comes the *Qiyamah* (Doomsday), Allah Almighty will not speak to them affectionately, nor will He purify them by forgiving their sins. Their punishment will be terrible for they are the kind of people who, during their mortal life, chose to abandon guidance and adopt error, and in the Hereafter, they missed forgiveness and became deserving of punishment. They must be very courageous in that they are all set to go into Hell. All these punishments to them are because they elected to stray away from the Book of Allah, something so clear and true. It is evident that they

must be victims of serious intransigence and are far out in schism, as a result of which they can expect to deserve a matching punishment.

Verse 175 tells us that a person who changes the injunction of Sharīʻah in his greed for worldly gains, he should know that these worldly gains he consumes are like embers of fire he is storing in his stomach because that is the ultimate end of his deeds. Some perceptive '*Ulamā*' have said that unlawful wealth is, in reality, the very fire of Hell, even though we do not sense it as such during our lifetime in the mortal world, but once one dies, his or her deeds will appear in the form of fire.

Verse 177

لَيْسَ الْبِرَّ اَنْ تُوَلُّوْا وُجُوْهَكُمْ قِبَلَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَلٰكِنَّ الْبِرَّ
مَنْ اٰمَنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ وَالْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ وَالْكِتٰبِ وَالنَّبِيّٖنَ ۚ وَاٰتَى
الْمَالَ عَلٰى حُبِّهٖ ذَوِى الْقُرْبٰى وَالْيَتٰمٰى وَالْمَسٰكِيْنَ وَابْنَ
السَّبِيْلِ ۙ وَالسَّآئِلِيْنَ وَفِى الرِّقَابِ ۚ وَاَقَامَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتَى الزَّكٰوةَ ۚ
وَالْمُوْفُوْنَ بِعَهْدِهِمْ اِذَا عٰهَدُوْا ۚ وَالصّٰبِرِيْنَ فِى الْبَاْسَآءِ
وَالضَّرَّآءِ وَحِيْنَ الْبَاْسِ ۗ اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ صَدَقُوْا ۗ وَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ
الْمُتَّقُوْنَ O

Righteousness is not that you turn your faces to the East and the West; but righteousness is that one believes in Allah and the Last Day and the angels and the Book and the Prophets, and gives wealth, despite its love[47], to relatives, and to orphans, the helpless, the wayfarer, and to those who ask, and (spends) in (freeing) slaves and observes the prayers and pays the *Zakāh*; and those who fulfil their promise when they promise and, of course, the patient[48] in hardships and sufferings and when in battle! Those are the ones who are true and those are the God-fearing. (Verse 177)

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47. Or, 'out of His love'.

48. Reflects the emphasis the Holy Qur'ān has given to *al-ṣābirīn* by changing the case from nominative to objective.

From the beginning to this point, the Sūrah al-Baqarah is reaching its half-way mark. Until now, the message was addressed mostly to its deniers since the truth of the Holy Qur'ān was the first thing to be established. In that context, mention was made of those who accepted it and those who rejected it, which was followed by providing proof of Allah's Oneness and the Prophethood. Then, recounted were Allah's blessings and favours on the progeny of Ibrāhim علیہ السلام right through the verse وَإِذِ ابْتَلَىٰ إِبْرَٰهِـۧمَ رَبُّهُۥ (2:124). Thenceforth started the issue of the Qiblah which continued until it was resolved when the status of *Safā* and *Marwah* was identified as a sign from Allah (Verse 158).

Then, the affirmation of Allah's Oneness was rightfully followed by a refutation of the principles and subsidiaries of *Shirk*, the act of associating others with Allah. The approach this far is full of warning mostly given to the deniers of the message of the Qur'ān; any reference to Muslims was only as a corollary.

The verses that follow contain nearly the other half of Sūrah al-Baqarah where the primary purpose is to educate Muslims in the principles and the subsidiaries of their religion and any address to non-Muslims is by implication only. This subject which continues through the end of the Sūrah has been unfolded by presenting and explaining the cardinal concept of *birr*, an umbrella word in Arabic used for what is good in the absolute sense and which combines in itself all acts of righteousness and obedience, inward or outward. So, when the verse begins, basic principles such as belief in the Book, spending of wealth in charity, fulfillment of promises and patience in distress have been stressed upon which, incidentally, include the basic principles behind all injunctions of the Holy Qur'ān. The fact is that the articles of belief, the deeds in accordance with them and the morals are the essence of all religious injunctions while all details fall under these basics. Thus, the verse actually houses all these three major departments.

The chapters of '*Birr*' (the virtures)

From this point onwards, the reader will find details of this comprehensive attribute of birr, the essence of which is 'obedience'. Many injunctions, in unison with suitable time and place, have been taken up as needed. Some of these are about Equal Retaliation, Will,

Fasting, *Jihād*, *Ḥajj*, Spending, Menstruation, *'Īlā'*, Oath, Divorce, Marriage, Post-divorce waiting period for women (*'Iddah*), Dower (*Mahr*), while *Jihād* and *Infāq* (spending) in the way of Allah find re-stress, and some aspects of buying and selling and witnessing appear proportionate to their need. The finale is good tidings and the promise of mercy and forgiveness.

Commentary

When *Baytullah*, the House of Allah at Makkah was made the Qiblah of the Muslims in place of *Baytul-Maqdis*, the Jews and Christians and the *Mushrikīn*, who were much too eager to find fault with Islam and Muslims, were stirred and they started coming up with all sorts of objections against Islam and the Holy Prophet ﷺ, detailed answers to which have been given in verses that have appeared earlier.

In the present verse, this debated issue has been closed in a unique manner when it was said that Faith cannot be restricted to the single aspect of turning to the West or the East when praying. These are directions in an absolute sense and thus cannot be turned into the very object of Faith to the total exclusion of other injunctions of the Shari'ah.

It is also possible that this is addressed to Jews, Christians and Muslims at the same time, the sense being that real *birr* (righteousness) and *thawāb* (merit) lies in obedience to Allah Almighty. The direction in which He wants us to turn automatically becomes merit-worthy and correct. In itself, the East or the West, or any other direction or orientation, has no importance or merit. Instead, the real merit comes out of one's obedience to the injunctions of Allah, no matter what the direction be. Upto the time the command was to turn towards the *Baytul-Maqdis*, the obedience to that command was an act deserving of merit, and now, when the command to turn towards the House of Allah at Makkah has come, obeying this command has become deserving of merit.

As stated earlier during the discussion of linkage of verses, a new sequence begins from this verse where the main body of the text comprises of teachings and instructions for Muslims with answers to

antagonists appearing there by implication. This is why this particular verse has been identified as very comprehensive in presenting Islamic injunctions. What follows through the end of Sūrah al-Baqarah is an explanation or elaboration of this verse. Given below is a detailed account of what the verse presents as a gist of the articles of faith, the modes of Allah's worship, dealings with people, and the moral principles.

Foremost are the articles of faith. These were covered under مَنْ اٰمَنَ بِاللّٰهِ: "That one believes in Allah." Then comes the act of following the articles of faith in one's deeds, that is, in Allah's worship and in dealings with people. Allah's worship is mentioned upto the end of واٰتی الزَّكٰوة : "And pays the *Zakāh*", then, dealings with people were covered under وَالْمُوْفُوْنَ بِعَهْدِهِمْ : "And those who fulfil their promise", concluding with the mention of morals under وَالصّٰبِرِيْنَ :" The patient." The final statement is that those who follow all these injunctions are true Muslims and they are the ones who can be called God-fearing.

While mentioning these injunctions, the verse has given a number of subtle but eloquent indications, for instance, the spending of wealth has been tied up with عَلٰی حُبِّهٖ : *'alā ḥubbihī* which has three possible meanings. Firstly, the pronoun in '*ḥubbihī*' may refer to Allah Almighty, in which case, it would mean that in spending wealth one should not be guided by material motives or the desire to show off. Such spending should rather be done out of love for Allah Almighty, whose exalted majesty requires that this be done with perfectly un-alloyed sincerity (in the sense of the genuine *ikhlas* of Arabic and not in the sense of some modern casual nicety).

The second possibility is that this pronoun refers to wealth, in which case, it would mean that, while spending in the way of Allah, only that part of one's wealth and possessions which one loves will be deserving of merit. Giving out throw-aways in the name of charity is no charity, barring the option of giving it to somebody who can use it, which is better than simply throwing things away.

The third possibility is that the pronoun refers to the infinitive آتی : *ātā* which emerges from the word إِيْتَاء :*'itā'* of the text, in which case, the meaning could be that one should be fully satisfied in the heart with what one spends, not that hands spend and the heart aches.

Imām Al-Jaṣṣāṣ has suggested the likelihood that all three meanings may be inclusive in the statement. It may be noted that, at this place, two forms of spending have been stated earlier which are other than *Ẓakāh*. *Ẓakāh* has been taken up after these two. Perhaps, the reason for this earlier mention could be the general negligence practiced in the liquidation of these rights on the assumption that the payment of *Ẓakāh* is sufficient.

This proves that financial obligations do not end at the simple payment of *Ẓakāh*. There are occasions, other than those of paying *Ẓakāh*, where spending out of one's wealth becomes obligatory and necessary (Jaṣṣāṣ and Qurṭubī). For instance, spending on your kin, when they have a valid excuse of not being able to earn their own living, is necessary; or there may be some needy person dying in poverty while you have already paid your *Ẓakāh*, then, it becomes obligatory for you to save his life by spending your wealth on the spot.

Similarly, building mosques and schools for religious education are all included in financial obligations. The difference is that *Ẓakāh* has a special law of its own and it is obligatory to take full care in paying the *Ẓakāh* in accordance with that law, under all conditions. While these other obligations depend on necessity and need; where needed, spending would become obligatory and where not needed, it will not be obligatory.

Special Note

A careful look at the text of the verse will show that those on whom wealth has to be spent, that is, the relatives, orphans, the needy, the wayfarer and those who ask, have all been described in one distinct manner, while the last head on the list has been introduced in another manner. It is clear that by adding فِیْ : *fī* in : وَفِی الرِّقَابِ "And (spends) in (freeing) slaves" the purpose is to point out that the amount spent will not reach the hands of the slaves owned by somebody as their personal amount which they can spend at will. Instead, the amount has to be spent in buying slaves from their masters and setting them free. Hence, the translation: 'And (spends) in (freeing) slaves.' After that, the statement, أَقَامَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتَی الزَّكٰوةَ : "And observes the prayers and pays the *Ẓakāh*" appears in the same manner as everything else has been mentioned earlier. Now, in order to introduce the chapter of dealings,

the style has been changed. And instead of using verbs, the nouns have been used. This denotes that one should have a continuing habit of fulfilling promises made. A chance fulfillment of a compact, something even a disbeliever or a sinner would accomplish once in a while is not enough to qualify a person for being included in the list.

The reason why the keeping of promises has been chosen to represent dealings with people is simple. A little thought would show that staying by a contract entered into or the fulfilling of a promise made, is the essence of all dealings, such as buying and selling, leasing, renting and partnership.

Similarly, while referring to the moral principles or the inner deeds, only *ṣabr* (patience) is mentioned in the verse, because *sabr* means to control the human self and guard it against evil. Even a little reflection can lead to the conclusion that *ṣabr* is the very essence of all inner deeds; through it, high morals can be achieved and through it, low morals can be eliminated.

Yet another change in style made here concerns the use of the word وَالصّٰبِرِيْنَ and not وَالصّٰبِرُوْنَ on the pattern of وَالْمُوْفُوْنَ which appeared immediately earlier. Commentators call it نصب على المدح : *naṣb 'ala l'madḥ* which means that the word *madh* (praise) is understood here and the word *al-ṣabirīn* is its object. This means that among the righteous, the *ṣabirīn* (the patient) are worthy of special praise since *sabr* gives one special power to perform righteous deeds.

In short, this verse holds in its fold important principles of all departments of Faith and its eloquent hints tell us the degree of importance of each one of them.

Verses 178 - 179

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِصَاصُ فِى الْقَتْلٰى ۭ اَلْحُرُّ
بِالْحُرِّ وَالْعَبْدُ بِالْعَبْدِ وَالْاُنْثٰى بِالْاُنْثٰى ۭ فَمَنْ عُفِىَ لَهٗ مِنْ اَخِيْهِ
شَىْءٌ فَاتِّبَاعٌۢ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَاَدَاۗءٌ اِلَيْهِ بِاِحْسَانٍ ۭ ذٰلِكَ تَخْفِيْفٌ مِّنْ
رَّبِّكُمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ ۭ فَمَنِ اعْتَدٰى بَعْدَ ذٰلِكَ فَلَهٗ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ○ وَلَكُمْ
فِى الْقِصَاصِ حَيٰوةٌ يّٰٓاُولِى الْاَلْبَابِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُوْنَ ○

O those who believe, the *Qiṣāṣ* has been enjoined upon you - freeman for a freeman, slave for a slave and female for a female. If one is then forgiven something by his brother, then there is pursuing as recognized and payment to him in fairness. That is a relief from your Lord, and mercy. So, whoever exceeds the limit after all that, for him there is painful punishment. And vested in the *Qiṣāṣ*, there is life for you O people of wisdom, perhaps you will be God-fearing. (Verses 178 - 179)

From the brief introduction to the nature of righteousness appearing in verses before this, the text now enters into the description of related subsidiary injunctions. Under the first injunction in this connection, the verse prescribes the law of *Qiṣāṣ* (even retaliation), that is, the killer will be killed, irrespective of the status of the parties involved. If the aggrieved party somewhat relents on its own and forgives the *Qiṣāṣ*, but does not forgive the offence totally, it will become necessary for the killer to pay *diyah* (دية) or blood-money as fixed, in a fair manner, and promptly. The claimant too, should pursue the matter in a recognized manner causing no harassment to the defendant. This law of blood-money and pardon is a relief granted by Allah Almighty in His grace, otherwise, there would have been no choice but to face the punishment of death. If, after all that, anyone crosses the limit set by Allah, such as, the filing of a false or doubtful case of murder, or a post-pardon re-opening of a murder case, he will be severely punished. In the end, the verse points out that wise people should have no difficulty in seeing that the law of even retaliation does not take life, instead, it gives life, for such a deterrent law will make people fear the punishment of killing somebody and thus lives will be saved.

There is life in '*Qiṣāṣ*'

Literally, the word, *Qiṣāṣ* means likeness. In usage, it denotes 'even retaliation' or to return like for like. In Islamic juristic terminology, *Qiṣāṣ* means the equal retaliation of an aggression committed against the body of a person. This retaliation is allowed only with a condition that the principle of "like for like" is strictly

observed. This has been explained more clearly later on in verse 194 of this very Sūrah which says:

فَاعْتَدُوْا عَلَيْهِ بِمِثْلِ مَا اعْتَدٰى عَلَيْكُمْ

So, agress against him in the like manner as he did against you.

And also in the concluding verses of Sūrah al-Naḥl, the same rule has been covered:

وَاِنْ عَاقَبْتُمْ فَعَاقِبُوْا بِمِثْلِ مَا عُوْقِبْتُمْ بِهٖ

And, if you retaliate, then retaliate just as you have been oppressed against. (16:126)

Therefore, as a term of the Shari'ah, the *Qisas* is a punishment for killing or wounding in which the principle of equality or likeness is taken into full consideration.

Rulings

1. The principle of even retaliation is applied exclusively in cases of culpable homicide when someone has been killed intentionally with a lethal weapon causing injury and blood-loss.

2. In a homicide of this nature, the killer is killed in even retaliation - 'free man for a free man, slave for a slave, and female for a female - and similarly, a man for a woman. The mention of 'free man for a free man' and 'female for a female' in this verse refers to a specific event in the background of which it was revealed.

On the authority of Ibn Abī Hatīm, Ibn Kathīr has reported that, just before the advent of Islam, war broke out between two tribes. Many men and women, free and slaves, belonging to both, were killed. Their case was still undecided when the Islamic period set in and the two tribes entered the fold of Islam. Now that they were Muslims, they started talking about retaliation for those killed on each side. One of the tribes which was more powerful insisted that they would not agree to anything less than that a free man for their slave and a man for their woman be killed from the other side.

It was to refute this barbaric demand on their part that this verse was revealed. By saying 'free man for a free man, slave for a slave and female for a female' it is intended to negate their absurd demand that a free man for a slave and man for a woman should be killed in

retaliation, even though he may not be the killer. The just law that Islam enforced was that the killer is the one who has to be killed in *Qiṣāṣ*. If a woman is the killer why should an innocent man be killed in retaliation? Similarly, if the killer is a slave, there is no sense in retaliating against an innocent free man. This is an injustice which can never be tolerated in Islam.

This verse means nothing but what has been stated earlier, and we repeat, that the one who has killed will be the one to be killed in *Qiṣāṣ*. It is not permissible to kill an innocent man or someone free for a killer, woman or slave. Let us hasten to clarify that the verse does not mean that *Qiṣāṣ* will not be taken from a man who kills a woman or from a free man who kills a slave. In the very beginning of this verse the words الْقِصَاصُ فِي الْقَتْلَى : "The *Qiṣāṣ* has been enjoined upon you in the case of those murdered" are a clear proof of this universality of application. There are other verses where this aspect has been stated more explicitly, for instance, in اَلنَّفْسُ بِالنَّفْسِ (the person for the person).

3. If, in a case of intentional killing the murderer is given full pardon, for instance, should both of the two surviving sons of the deceased pardon and forego their right of retaliation, the killer is free of any claim against him. In case the pardon is not that full, for instance, as illustrated above, one of the two surviving sons does pardon the killer while the other does not, the result will be that the killer will stand released right there from the retaliatory punishment, but the one who has not pardoned the killer will be entitled to half of the blood-money (*diyah*). In Sharī'ah, this *diyah* amounts to one hundred camels or one thousand dinars or ten thousand *dirhams* or approximately nineteen pounds of silver according to current weights and measures.

4. The way an incomplete pardon makes payment of blood-money necessary, in the same manner, a mutual settlement between parties concerned on a certain amount makes retaliation inapplicable and payment of the agreed amount becomes necessary. This, however, is governed by some conditions which appear in books of *fiqh*.

5. Under the Islamic law, the inheritors of the person killed, whatever their number, will inherit and own the right of retaliation and blood-money in accordance with their share in the inheritance. If

blood-money is taken, it will be distributed among the inheritors in accordance with their share in the inheritance. And should *Qiṣāṣ* (even retaliation) become the choice, the right of *Qiṣāṣ* will also be commonly shared by all. Since *Qiṣāṣ* is indivisible, the pardon given by any one of the inheritors will hold good and the pardon will become inclusive of the right of retaliation held by other inheritors. However, they shall receive the blood-money amount according to their share.

6. It is true that the right of even retaliation is vested in the legal heirs of the persons killed but, in accordance with the consensus of the Muslim community, they do not have the right to settle the score all by themselves, in other words, they cannot kill the killer on their own, instead, they have to seek the help of a Muslim ruler or his deputy to realize their right. The reason is that *Qiṣāṣ* is an intricate issue when it comes to details which are simply out of reach for an average person. Therefore, the legal heirs of the person killed, not knowing the particular circumstances when retaliation does, or does not become necessary, may commit some sort of excess under the heat of their anger. So, by a unanimous agreement of the scholars of the Muslim community, it is necessary that the right of retaliation be secured and made effective through the agency of an Islamic government. (Qurṭubī)

Verses 180 - 182

كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذَا حَضَرَ أَحَدَكُمُ الْمَوْتُ إِنْ تَرَكَ خَيْرًا الْوَصِيَّةُ
لِلْوَالِدَيْنِ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ حَقًّا عَلَى الْمُتَّقِينَ ۝ فَمَنْ
بَدَّلَهُ بَعْدَ مَا سَمِعَهُ فَإِنَّمَا إِثْمُهُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ يُبَدِّلُونَهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ
سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ۝ فَمَنْ خَافَ مِنْ مُوصٍ جَنَفًا أَوْ إِثْمًا فَأَصْلَحَ
بَيْنَهُمْ فَلَا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ۝

It is enjoined upon you, when death probes anyone of you and he leaves some wealth, to bequeath for the parents and the nearest of kin in the approved manner, being an obligation on the God-fearing. Then, whoever changes it after he has heard it, its sin will only be on those who change it. Surely, Allah is all-hearing, all-knowing. But, whoever apprehends slant or sin from a testator and puts things right between them,

then there is no sin on him. Surely, Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. (Verses 180 - 182)

The Qur'ānic view of making will

Literally, *al-waṣiyyah* means an order to do something, either in the lifetime of the maker of *waṣiyyah* or after his death. But, in commonly accepted usage, it refers to what must be done after death. It can be translated as the will or bequest.

Out of the many meanings the word *khayr* has in Arabic, 'wealth' happens to be one of them, for instance, in the verse وَإِنَّهُ لِحُبِّ الْخَيْرِ لَشَدِيدٌ (Surely he is passionate in his love for good things) where, according to the unanimous agreement of commentators, *'khayr'* means 'wealth'.

In early Islam, when shares in inheritance were not fixed by the Sharī'ah, the rule was that a dying person could make a will within the one third of inheritance, leaving behind in the name of his parents and relatives in whatever proportion he chose. This much was their right; the rest went to children. This injunction appears here in this verse.

The making of a will made obligatory for one who is leaving behind some wealth has three aspects:

1. No shares except those of children are fixed for any other inheritors in what is being left by the dying person. These are to be determined through the will made by him.
2. Making a will for such relatives is obligatory on the dying person.
3. Making a will for more than one third of the inheritance is not permissible.

Out of these three injunctions, the first one was abrogated by the 'verse of inheritance' as determined by most of the Companions and their immediate successors. Ibn Kathīr has reported from the blessed Companion, 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas that this injunction was abrogated by the 'verse of inheritance' which is as follows:

لِلرِّجَالِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا تَرَكَ الْوَالِدٰنِ وَالْأَقْرَبُونَ وَلِلنِّسَاءِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا تَرَكَ الْوَالِدٰنِ
وَالْأَقْرَبُونَ مِمَّا قَلَّ مِنْهُ أَوْ كَثُرَ نَصِيبًا مَّفْرُوضًا ○

For men there is a share in what the parents and the nearest

> of kin have left, and for women there is a share in what the parents and the nearest of kin have left, be it is small or large - a determined share. (4:7)

In another narration of the *ḥadīth* from him it has been said that the 'verse of inheritance' has abrogated the making of will in the name of those who have a fixed share in the inheritance, while the injunction to make a will in favour of those relatives who do not have a share in the inheritance still holds good. (Jaṣṣāṣ, Qurṭubī)

It should, however, be borne in mind that according to the consensus of the Muslim *Ummah* it is not obligatory on the dying person to necessarily make a will in favour of relatives who have no fixed shares in the inheritance. Therefore, the obligatory character of a *waṣīyyah* in their favour is also abrogated (Jaṣṣāṣ, Qurṭubī). Now, making a will in favour of such relatives is only a desired (*mustaḥabb*) act, and that, too, is subject to their need.

Now the second injunction regarding the obligation of making a will also stands abrogated in accordance with the consensus of the Muslim *ummah*. It was abrogated by that famous *ḥadīth* (*al-ḥadīth al-mutawātir*: the veracity of which stands ensured through an uninterrupted chain of transmitters from many sides who are unlikely to agree on a lie) which was part of the sermon delivered before some one hundred and fifty thousand Companions on the occasion of his last Hajj when he said:

ان الله اعطى لكل ذى حق حقه فلا وصية لوارث (اخرجه الترمذى وقال حديث حسن صحيح)

> Allah has Himself given everyone, who has a right, his right. So, there is no will for any inheritor. (Tirmidhī)

The same *ḥadīth*, as narrated by Sayyidnā ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه , has the following additional words:

لاوصية لوارث الا ان تجيزه الورثة

There is no will for any inheritor unless all inheritors permit.

The essence of the *ḥadīth* is that Allah Almighty has Himself fixed the shares of the inheritors, therefore, the executor need not make a will anymore, in fact, he does not even have the permission to make a will in favour of an heir; however, should other inheritors allow the enforcement of such a will, it will then be permissible.

Imām Al-Jaṣṣāṣ says that this hadith has been reported from a group of the blessed Companions and the jurists of the Muslim community have accepted it unanimously, therefore, this is an uninterruptedly ensured *ḥadīth* which makes the abrogation of the verse of the Qur'ān permissible.

Imām Al-Qurṭubī has said that the scholars of the Muslim community unanimously agree that an injunction which comes to us through the Holy Prophet ﷺ and we know about it with full certitude, as is the case with *mutawātir* and *mashhūr* reports, it will be at par with the injunction of the Holy Qur'ān and will have to be taken as the command of Allah Almighty. Therefore, the abrogation of some verse of the Holy Qur'ān from a *ḥadīth* of this kind is no case for doubt. Although the *hadith* which invalidates a will in favour of an heir is a solitary report, (*Al-Khabar al-Wāhid*), however, the fact that this *ḥadīth* comes from the sermon of the last Ḥajj of the Holy Prophet ﷺ when he openly proclaimed this before the largest ever gathering of the blessed Companions, and then their consensus and the consensus of the Muslim community make it clear that this *ḥadīth* is, according to them, absolutely proven, otherwise in the presence of the slightest doubt, they would have never abandoned the verse of the Qur'ān and agreed to this abrogating command through the *ḥadīth*.

The third injunction stills holds good with the unanimous approval of the Muslim *ummah* in which it is not permissible to bequeath more than one-third of what one leaves behind. However, should the inheritors allow the bequest of more than one third, even the whole of what one leaves behind, it shall be permissible.

Rulings

1. As stated earlier, now making a will is not necessary to cover relatives whose shares have been fixed by the Holy Qur'ān. In fact, this is not permissible without the permission of other inheritors. However, relatives who do not hold a legal share in the inheritance can be bequeathed upto one third of the total.

2. In this verse a particular will was mentioned which was to be made by a dying person about what he left behind. This stands abrogated. But, making a will is still necessary, specially for a person who owes to others or holds something in trust. He should make sure

that these are taken care of in his will. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said in a *ḥadith* that a person who has some rights of other people due against him, then, he should not let three nights pass on him by which he does not have his written will with him.

3. As for the right to make a will covering the one-third of his property, one has the right to make some change in this will or cancel it totally during his life time.

Verses 183 - 184

يَاأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى
الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ۝ أَيَّامًا مَّعْدُودَاتٍ ۚ فَمَنْ كَانَ
مِنْكُمْ مَّرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ ۚ وَعَلَى الَّذِينَ
يُطِيقُونَهُ فِدْيَةٌ طَعَامُ مِسْكِينٍ ۖ فَمَنْ تَطَوَّعَ خَيْرًا فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّهُ ۚ
وَأَنْ تَصُومُوا خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ ۖ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ۝

O those who believe, the fasts have been enjoined upon you as were enjoined upon those before you so that you be God-fearing. Days (of fasting are) few in number. However, should anyone of you be sick or on a journey, then a number from other days. And those who have the strength, on them there is a ransom: the feeding of a poor person. Then whoever does good voluntarily, that is better for him. And that you fast is better for you, if you know. (Verses 183 - 184)

Commentary

Literally, *Ṣawm* means 'to abstain'. In the terminology of Islamic law, *Ṣawm* means 'to abstain from eating, drinking and sexual intercourse; with the conditions that one abstains continuously from dawn to sunset, and that there is an intention to fast'. Therefore, should one eat or drink anything even a minute before sunset, the fast will not be valid. Similarly, if one abstained from all these things throughout the day but made no intention to fast, there will be no fast here too.

Ṣawm or 'fasting' is an *'ibādah*, an act of worship in Islam, regarded as its pillar and sign. The merits of fasting are too numerous to be taken up at this point.

Past communities and the injunction to fast

The verse makes it obligatory for the Muslims to fast in a specified period, but the command in this respect has been accompanied by the statement that the obligation of fasting is not peculiar to them. The fasting had also been enjoined upon the earlier Ummahs (communities of the past prophets). The reference to the earlier Ummahs in the verse shows the importance of fasting on the one hand, and gives an encouragement to the Muslims on the other. It indicates that although there may be some inconvenience in fasting but the same inconvenience was also faced by the earlier communities. This brings a psychological comfort to the Muslims, because if an inconvenience is faced by a large number of people, it becomes easier to bear. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

The words of the Qur'ān, اَلَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ (those before you) have been used in a general sense including all religious communities from Sayyidnā Ādam to the last of the Prophets ﷺ . This tells us that, like *Ṣalāh*, fasting has also been enjoined upon every *Ummah* of every prophet without an exception.

Commentators who interpret مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ (before you) to mean 'the Christians' take it just as an example, not aiming to exclude other communities. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

The verse simply says that fasts have been enjoined on Muslims as were enjoined on past communities. From this it does not necessarily follow that the fasts enjoined upon the earlier communities were fully indentical in all respects with the fasts enjoined upon this *Ummah*. There may have been differences in the number and the timings of the fasts etc. and, actually, there has been such a difference. (Rūḥ al Ma'ānī)

By saying لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُوْنَ (so that you be God-fearing), the text has pointed out to the inherent quality of fasting which contributes significantly to one's ability to become abstaining from the sins and God-fearing. Fasting grows into man a power which helps him control his desires, which is really the foundation of *Taqwā*, the very special term of the Holy Qur'ān which has been tentatively translated as fear of God, abstinence, and the warding of evil.

Fasting When Sick

Verse 184 gives concession in the matter of fasting to a 'sick'

person and to a person 'on journey'. The word 'sick' used here refers to a person who cannot fast without an unbearable hardship or has strong apprehension that his illness will be aggravated. The words "and (Allah) does not want hardship for you"occuring in the following verse (185) have a clear indication to this effect. This position is also accepted by the consensus of the Muslim jurists.

Fasting When In Travel

It will be noticed that while giving concession to a traveller, the Qur'ānic text elects to use the phrase أَوْ عَلٰى سَفَرٍ (or on a journey) rather than the word, *musāfir* or 'traveller'. This is to point out that leaving home and going out is not enough to claim the exemption. The duration of the travel should be somewhat longer since the expression, *'alā safarin* means that one should have 'embarked' on a journey which does not mean going five or ten miles away from home. But, the precise duration of this journey has not been mentioned in the words of the Holy Qur'ān. Guided by the statement of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the subsequent practice of his blessed Companions, the great Imām, Abū Hanīfah and many jurists have fixed this distance to be what can be covered in three days by walking in three daily stages. The later-day jurists have put it as 48 miles.

The other ruling that comes out from the same phrase, *'alā safarin* is that a traveller who leaves his home shall be entitled to having been exempted from fasting only upto the time his travel continues. It is obvious that stopping in between to rest or take care of something does not cut off his onward travel in the absolute sense, unless his stay be for a considerable period of time. This very considerable period of time has been set at fifteen days following a statement of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Anyone who intends to stay at a given place for fifteen days shall not come under the umbrella of *'alā safarin*, therefore, he shall not be deserving of the leave granted to one on 'a journey'.

Ruling. Right from here comes the ruling that anyone who intends to stay out for fifteen days, not at one place but at different places and towns, he shall continue to remain in the status of a 'traveller' and thereby shall continue to enjoy the concession of being 'on a journey' because he is in the state of *'alā safarin.*

Making *Qaḍā'* of the missed fast

The words of the text, فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ literally translated as 'then, a number from other days' mean that a sick person or a traveller is obligated to fast during other days making the number match the number of days he could not fast. The purpose is to tell people that fasts abandoned because of the compulsion of sickness or journey must be replaced by making *qaḍā'* of them. Rather than using a simple statement to the effect that 'their replacement is on them', the Qur'ānic text has said: فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ which suggests that a sick person or a traveller will have to make *qaḍā'* only when the sick person becomes healthy and the traveller returns home and gets to live on for the number of days he is required to replace the fasts he missed. So, one who dies before this happens, *qaḍā'* of fasts will not remain obligatory on him, nor will he be required to make a will for the payment of ransom (*Fidyah*).

Ruling. In the Qur'anic provision, 'a number from other days', there is no restriction on *qaḍā'* fasts, they could be seriatim or random; the choice is open. Therefore, a person who has missed his fasts for the first ten days of Ramaḍān, could first fast in lieu of his tenth or ninth fast of Ramaḍān and replace the earlier ones missed later on; this brings no harm. Similarly, one can fast with gaps at his convenience which would be quite permissible since the wordings of the Qur'ān in فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ (then, a number from other days) leave the possibility open.

The *Fidyah* or Ransom for a Missed Fast

The verse وَعَلَى الَّذِيْنَ يُطِيْقُوْنَهٗ means that those who have the strength to fast and are not restricted by sickness or travel, but do not wish to do it for some reason, they have the option of paying, in lieu of a fast, ransom in the form of charity. However, along with this leave, it was simply added: 'And that you fast is better for you' .

This injunction was valid in the early days of Islam when the purpose was to familiarize people to fasting. In the verse that follows, that is, فَمَنْ شَهِدَ مِنْكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ (so, those of you who witness the month must fast therein), this injunction was abrogated for normal people. However, according to the consensus of the *Ummah*, it remained

applicable to the people of very old age and to those who suffer from a permanent illness with no hope of recovery (Jassas and Mazhari).

All Imāms of *Hadīth*, such as, al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, al-Nasā'ī, al-Tirmidhī, al-Ṭabarānī and others have reported from the blessed Companion Salma ibn Akwa': 'When the verse وَعَلَى الَّذِيْنَ يُطِيْقُوْنَهٗ (and on those who have the strength) was revealed, we were given the choice of either fasting or paying *fidyah* for each fast. However, when the other verse, فَمَنْ شَهِدَ مِنْكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ (those of you who witness the month must fast therein), was revealed, this choice was withdrawn and fasting alone became necessary for those who had the strength.

A long *ḥadīth* from the blessed Companion, Mu'ādh ibn Jabal رضی اللہ عنہ reported in the Musnad of Aḥmad describes three changes that came in *Ṣalāh* during the early period of Islam, as well as, three changes in *Ṣawm*. The three changes brought in the injunctions of fasting are as follows:

When the Holy Prophet ﷺ came to Madīnah, he used to fast for three days in a month, and on the tenth of Muḥarram. Then the command to observe fasts in the month of Ramaḍān was revealed. Under the verse كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ (the fasts have been enjoined upon you), there was an option either to fast or to pay ransom, with a preference given to fasting. Then, Allah Almighty revealed the other verse, (those of you who witness the month must fast therein), which took away the option given to those who had the strength, and ordained fasting as the only alternative. However, the command remained valid for the very old who could pay ransom for fasts they missed.

After these two changes, there was a third change. In the beginning, the permission to eat, drink and have marital intimacy after *ifṭār* was valid only if one did not sleep after breaking his fast Sleeping was taken to be an indicator of the beginning of the next fast in which, naturally, eating and drinking and marital intimacy are prohibited. Then, Allah Almighty revealed the verse, أُحِلَّ لَكُمْ لَيْلَةَ الصِّيَامِ الرَّفَثُ اِلٰى نِسَآئِكُمْ (It is made lawful for you, in the nights of fast, to have sex with your women), which made it permissible to eat, drink and have sex during the night until the break of dawn. The eating of *suḥūr* or *seḥrī* soon after getting up in the early hours of dawn was declared to be the

sunnah. This is corroborated by *aḥādīth* in al-Bukhārī, Muslim and Abū Dāwūd. (Ibn Kaṭhīr)

The amount of Ransom and other rulings

The ransom of one missed fast is half *ṣā‘* of wheat, or its cost. Half *ṣā‘* is equivalent to approximately 1.632 kilograms. After finding out the correct market price of wheat, the amount should be given to a poor person which will be the ransom of one missed fast. It should be borne in mind that this amount should not be given as part of wages given to those engaged in the service of a mosque or *madrasah*.

Ruling 1. The amount of ransom for one fast should not be distributed between two recipients. Similarly, it is not correct to give the ransom amount for several fasts to one person on a single date. Although, some scholars permit this, yet, as a matter of precaution, it is better not to give the ransom amount of several fasts to one person on one single date. However, if someone does not observe this precaution, the ransom may be treated as valid. (See Shāmi, Bayān al-Qur'ān, Imdad al-Fatawa)

Ruling 2. Should someone be in a position that he cannot even pay the ransom due, he should simply seek forgiveness from Allah through *istighfār* and have an intention in his heart that he would pay it when he can. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Verse 185

شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِیْٓ اُنْزِلَ فِیْهِ الْقُرْاٰنُ هُدًی لِّلنَّاسِ وَ بَیِّنٰتٍ مِّنَ
الْهُدٰی وَالْفُرْقَانِ ۚ فَمَنْ شَهِدَ مِنْکُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْیَصُمْهُ ؕ وَمَنْ کَانَ
مَرِیْضًا اَوْ عَلٰی سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ اَیَّامٍ اُخَرَ ؕ یُرِیْدُ اللّٰهُ بِکُمُ الْیُسْرَ
وَلَا یُرِیْدُ بِکُمُ الْعُسْرَ ۫ وَلِتُکْمِلُوا الْعِدَّةَ وَلِتُکَبِّرُوا اللّٰهَ عَلٰی
مَا هَدٰىکُمْ وَلَعَلَّکُمْ تَشْکُرُوْنَ O

The month of Ramaḍān is the one in which the Qur'ān was revealed as guidance for mankind and with vivid features of (earlier) guidance and the Criterion (of right and wrong); so those of you who witness the month must fast therein and should anyone be sick, or on a journey, then, a number from other days. Allah wants ease for you and does not want hardship for you.

And all this because you may complete the number and proclaim the *Takbīr* of Allah for having guided you and that you be grateful. (Verse 185)

The merits of the month of Ramaḍān

The present verse is an extension of the previous brief verse and also an assertion of the great merit the month of Ramaḍān holds in its fold. This is an extension because the expression أَيَّامًا مَّعْدُودَاتٍ (Days few in number) in Verse 184 is a bit vague and which has been explained out in the present verse by saying that those counted number of days mean the days of the month of Ramaḍān. As far as the merit of this month is concerned, it has been said that Allah Almighty has chosen this month to reveal Scriptures. Consequently, the Holy Qur'ān was revealed in this very month. According to a narration from the blessed Companion Wāthilah ibn Asqā' appearing in the Musnad of Aḥmad, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that Abrahamic scriptures were revealed on the first of Ramaḍān, the Torah on the sixth, the Evangile on the thirteenth and the Qur'ān on the twenty fourth of Ramaḍān. In another narration from the blessed Companion Sayyidnā Jābir, it appears that Zabūr (the Book of Psalms) was revealed on the twelfth of Ramaḍān and the Evangile on the eighteenth. (Ibn Kaṭhīr)

All previous Books mentioned in the *ḥadīth* cited above were revealed on dates given in their entirety. It is a peculiarity of the Holy Qur'ān that it was sent from the Preserved Tablet down to the Firmament of the Earth in one night of the month of Ramaḍān, all of it. But, it was revealed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ gradually during a period of twenty three years.

The night of Ramadan when the Qur'ān was revealed was the Night of Power as mentioned by the Qur'ān itself when it said: إِنَّا أَنزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةِ الْقَدْرِ (We have revealed it in the *Laylatu l'Qadr,* the Night of Power). The *ḥadith* cited above places it on the twenty fourth of Ramaḍān and according to Sayyidnā Ḥasan, the Night of Power falls on the night of twenty fourth which aligns this *ḥadīth* with the statement of the Qur'ān. Should this alignment be unacceptable, the fact remains that the statement of the Qur'ān is above everything else, in which case, whatever night is the Night of Power that shall be regarded to be what the Qur'ān intends.

The next sentence فَمَنْ شَهِدَ مِنْكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ (those of you who witness the month must fast therein) carries many pointers to injunctions relating to fasting. The word, *shahida* is derived from *shuhūd* which means presence. The word, *al-shahr* means the month. It denotes the month of Ramadan here which has been identified above. The sentence, therefore, means that it is obligatory for one who is 'present' in the month of Ramaḍān that he fasts throughout that month. The general choice of paying ransom for not fasting, mentioned in the previous verse, was concelled by this sentence and fasting is now the only alternative in force.

As for the 'witnessing' of the month or being 'present' in the month of Ramaḍān, it simply means that a person finds the blessed month of Ramaḍān with ability to fast. In other words, he or she should be a Muslim, sane, pubert, resident and well-purified from all impurities including those of menstruation and childbed. Therefore, the persons who lacked the initial ability to fast throughout the month, such as, the disbelievers, the minor, the insane, they are not subject to the obligation of fasting, because the verse obligating the fasts did not intend them. As for those who did have the personal ability but were compelled at some time by a legally acceptable excuse, such as, a woman in menstruation or childbed, or a sick person or one on a journey, these have, in a way, found the month of Ramadan in a state of ability, therefore, the injunction in the verse applies to them. However, because of temporal compulsion, relief from fasting has been granted at that particular time, but *qaḍā'* will be necessary later on.

Rulings

1. The verse tells us that fasts of Ramaḍān become obligatory only on the condition that one finds the month of Ramaḍān in a state of ability to fulfil the obligation. Therefore, anyone who 'finds' the whole of Ramaḍān will come under obligation to fast during the entire month of Ramaḍān. Anyone who 'finds' somewhat less of it, he will fast for the number of days he finds in Ramaḍān. So, should a disbeliever embrace Islam in the middle of Ramaḍān, or a minor becomes pubert, they will have to fast from that point onwards; they will not do *qaḍā'* fasts for the previous days of Ramaḍān. However, the insane person, being a Muslim adult, does have the personal ability to observe fasts;

so, should he regain his sanity during any part of Ramaḍān, he shall become obligated to do *qaḍā'* fasts for the previous days of Ramaḍān. Similarly, should a woman in menstruation or childbed become purified in the middle of Ramaḍān, or a sick person becomes healthy, or a traveller becomes a resident, *qaḍā* fasts for the previous days of Ramaḍān will become obligatory on them.

2. How does one 'find' or 'witness' the month of Ramaḍān? According to Islamic law, it is proved in either of the three ways:

a) One gets to have a sighting of the Ramaḍān moon with his own eyes.

b) The sighting of the moon is proved through some trustworthy witness.

c) In the absence of the two conditions cited above, thirty days of the month of Sha'ban will be completed following which the month of Ramaḍān will set in.

3. If, on the eve of the twenty ninth of Sha'bān, the new moon is not visible on the horizon because of clouds or bad weather conditions, and at the same time, there comes no witness of moon-sighting as admissible under Islamic law, the next day will be known as the 'day of doubt': يَوْمُ الشَّكِّ (*yawm al-shakk*) because the possibility exists that the moon may have really been there on the horizon but could not become visible due to unclear horizon as it is also possible that the moon was just not there on the horizon. On such a day, since 'the presence of the month' or the 'finding of Ramaḍān' or being a 'witness' to it does not apply, therefore, fasting for that day is not obligatory, instead, it is *makrūh* (reprehensible) to fast on that day. It has been forbidden in the *ḥadīth* so that *farḍ* and *nafl*, (the obligatory and the supererogatory) do not get mixed up with each other (Jaṣṣāṣ).

4. In countries where days and nights extend over months, the 'finding of Ramaḍān' does not, obviously, seem to apply. The situation would require that people living there should not fast. As far as *Ṣalāh* is concerned, *al-Huluwani* and *al-Qabali* from among the Hanafī jurists have ruled that such people will be bound to observe *Ṣalāh* in accordance with the timings of their own day and night. For instance, in a country where dawn follows immediately after *maghrib*, there the

Ṣalāh of *'Ishā'* will just not be obligatory. (Shāmi) This makes it necessary that in an area where the day lasts for six months, people would have only five Salahs in six months and, for that matter, they will witness no Ramadan coming there, therefore, fasting will not become obligatory for them. Maulanā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavi has, in Imdād al-Fatāwā, taken this very position.

Note:

In the sentence مَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُم مَّرِيضًا اَوْعَلٰى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ اَيَّامٍ اُخَرَ (should anyone be sick, or on a journey, then, a number from other days), the sick and the travelling have been granted leave that they may not fast at that time. When the sick person regains his health and the traveller returns home, they can make up for the days they missed by doing *qaḍā'* fasts. It will be recalled that this injunction had appeared in the previous verse, but now that the choice of paying *fidyah* (ransom) for not fasting has been cancelled, a doubt could creep up in relation to the concession granted to the sick and the travelling, that it may have been abrogated as well, therefore, the provision was positively repeated.

Verse 186

وَاِذَا سَاَلَكَ عِبَادِىْ عَنِّىْ فَاِنِّىْ قَرِيْبٌ اُجِيْبُ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِ اِذَا دَعَانِ فَلْيَسْتَجِيْبُوْا لِىْ وَلْيُؤْمِنُوْا بِىْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْشُدُوْنَ ٥

And when My servants ask you about Me, of course, I am near. I respond to the call of one when he prays to Me; so they should respond to Me, and have faith in Me so that they may be on the right path. (Verse 186)

Allah is near His servants

Injunctions and merits concerning fasting and Ramaḍān were mentioned in three previous verses. This strain continues even after the present verse when details of fasting and *I'tikāf* appear in a long verse. In between, this brief verse has been introduced to persuade servants of Allah to obey the commands of Allah by recognizing how He, in His special grace, hears and answers their prayers. There is no doubt about fasting being a difficult obligation despite many concessions and permissions. It is to make the trial bearable that

special grace has been mentioned - 'I am near My servants. When they pray, I answer their prayers and take care of what they need.'

Under these conditions, it is befitting that servants of Allah should bear by hardships that come during the performance of given injunctions. Ibn Kaṭhīr has pointed out to another wisdom behind this sentence appearing in the middle of injunctions of fasting. According to him, this verse gives a hint that a prayer (دعا :*du'ā*) made at the completion of a fast is accepted, therefore, one should be very particular about making prayers at that time. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said:

للصائم عند فطره دعوة مستجابة

> The prayer made by one who is fasting at the time of his *ifṭār* is accepted.

This is why the blessed Companion, 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar would assemble his family members around him at the time of *ifṭār* and would pray.

Ruling

By saying إِنِّي قَرِيبٌ (I am near) in this verse, it has been hinted that prayer should be made slowly and quietly; to raise voice while praying is not desirable. This is confirmed by the background in which this verse was revealed. According to Ibn Kathir, a visitor from a village asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ : "Tell me if our Lord is near us, then, we shall pray in a lowered voice; and if He is far, we shall call Him with raised voices." Thereupon, this verse was revealed.

Verse 187

أُحِلَّ لَكُمْ لَيْلَةَ الصِّيَامِ الرَّفَثُ إِلَىٰ نِسَآئِكُمْ هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَّكُمْ
وَأَنتُمْ لِبَاسٌ لَّهُنَّ عَلِمَ اللَّهُ أَنَّكُمْ كُنتُمْ تَخْتَانُونَ أَنفُسَكُمْ
فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَعَفَا عَنكُمْ فَالْـَٔانَ بَاشِرُوهُنَّ وَابْتَغُوا مَا كَتَبَ
اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا حَتَّىٰ يَتَبَيَّنَ لَكُمُ الْخَيْطُ الْأَبْيَضُ مِنَ
الْخَيْطِ الْأَسْوَدِ مِنَ الْفَجْرِ ثُمَّ أَتِمُّوا الصِّيَامَ إِلَى اللَّيْلِ وَلَا

تُبَاشِرُوْهُنَّ وَاَنْتُمْ عٰكِفُوْنَ فِى الْمَسٰجِدِ ط تِلْكَ حُدُوْدُ اللّٰهِ فَلَا تَقْرَبُوْهَا ط كَذٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللّٰهُ اٰيٰتِهٖ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُوْنَ O

It is made lawful for you, in the nights of fast, to have sex with your women. They are a cover for you and you are a cover for them. Allah knew that you were betraying yourselves, so He relented towards you and pardoned you. So now you can have sexual intimacy with them and seek what Allah has destined for you and eat and drink until the white thread of the dawn becomes distinct from the black thread; then complete the fast upto the night, and do not have sexual intimacy with them while you are staying in mosques for *I'tikaf.* These are the limits set by Allah, so do not go near them. Thus Allah manifests His signs to the people that they may be God-fearing. (Verse 187)

Explained here in this verse are the remaining injunctions of fasting including the injunction relating to *I'tikāf.*

Commentary

The opening words of the verse, أُحِلَّ لَكُمْ (*uhilla lakum*: 'It is made lawful for you') tell us that the act made lawful through this verse was unlawful before. According to a narration by the blessed Companion, Barā' ibn 'Āzib appearing in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, in the early days when the fasts of Ramaḍān were made obligatory, the permission to eat, drink and have marital intimacy with wives was subjected to the condition that one does not sleep after breaking of the fast. So, as the practice was, a post-*ifṭār* nap rendered all these conveniences unlawful. Some Companions ran into difficulties due to this restriction. The blessed Companion, Qays ibn Sarma al-Ansārī is reported to have reached home after a hard day's labour. The time of *ifṭār* was near and there was nothing to eat. His wife said that she would go out and somehow get him something to eat. When she returned she found her husband asleep, obviously because he was so tired from his day-long work. Now, when he got up, eating had become unlawful. He went on to fast for the next day in the same condition with the result that by afternoon, he fainted (Ibn Kaṭhīr). Similarly, some Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, were

embarrassed getting involved in marital relations with their wives after they had taken a post-*iftār* nap. It was after such happenings that the present verse was revealed in which the first rule was cancelled and permission was given to eat, drink and have marital relations, even if this was after getting up from the post-*iftār* nap. In fact, the permission was extended much further when the eating of *suḥūr* or *ṣehrī* towards the fag end of the night, after getting up from the night's sleep, was declared to be a *sunnah*. This has been clearly stated in *Ḥadīth* narrations. The present verse outlines this very injunction.

The literal meaning of the Qur'ānic word رَفَث (*rafath*) is, no doubt, general and covers everything a husband suggests, says or does in making his wife consent to his desire, but there is a total agreement of the Muslim *Ummah* that, at this place, it means sexual intercourse.

It is important to bear in mind that the order or rule which has been abrogated by this verse, that is, the unlawfulness of eating and drinking after having taken a nap, has not appeared in the text of the Holy Qur'ān anywhere. The noble Companions acted in accordance with this rule as set by the Holy Prophet ﷺ (as narrated by Ahmad in his Musnad). This rule is abrogated by the verse only after giving it the authenticity of a divine command. In other words, the verse first establishes the rule in force as the divine command and then,it was for the sake of convenience that it was abrogated. From here we find out that some rules provenly set by the *Sunnah* can also be abrogated through the Qur'ān. So, in the Islamic law, the decision of the Messenger of Allah has the same authority as the injunction of the Holy Qur'ān.

Eating *Ṣehrī* :

The correct time when fasting begins and all eating and drinking turns unlawful has been fixed through a delicate similitude in the verse حَتّٰى يَتَبَيَّنَ لَكُمُ الْخَيْطُ الْاَبْيَضُ مِنَ الْخَيْطِ الْاَسْوَدِ ('until the white thread of the dawn becomes distinct from the black thread'). Here, the darkness of the night has been likened to the black thread and the light of the dawn to the white thread. In order to eliminate the chances of extremism, the qualifier حَتّٰى يَتَبَيَّنَ (becomes distinct) was added which means that one should not act like the chronically skeptical to believe

all eating and drinking to be unlawful earlier than the break of dawn, nor should one become so heedless as to go on eating and drinking even after having become certain of the light of dawn. In fact, the certainty of the break of dawn is the line of demarcation between eating and drinking and the intended fast. Before one arrives at this certainty, it is not correct to take eating and drinking as *haram*. Similarly, after the certainty, any indulgence in eating and drinking shall be *ḥarām*, and is a source which may lead to the spoiling of the fast, even if it exceeds the limit for a minute. The latitude and leeway allowed in eating *suḥūr* remains valid only upto the time one is not certain of the break of dawn. Particular incidents of this nature attributed to some blessed Companions have been reported when they continued eating and drinking well past the break of dawn. This was because they were not yet 'certain' of the dawn and refused to listen to those who favoured to stop much earlier.

In a *ḥadīth*, the Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said: 'The *adhān* of Bilāl should not stop you from eating *suḥūr* because he calls the *adhān* well ahead in the night. Therefore, you continue eating and drinking, even after having heard Bilāl's *adhān*, until such time that you hear the *adhān* called by Ibn Umm Maktum because he calls the *adhan* precisely at the break of dawn' (Bukhārī and Muslim).

Because of the partial reporting of this *ḥadīth*, some contemporaries misunderstood its provision when they suggested that there is no harm if eating and drinking is continued for a little while even after the *adhān* of *Fajr* and consequently, made it permissible for a person, who woke up late while the *adhan* of *Fajr* was being called, that he can hasten to eat something. The fact is that the *ḥadīth* quoted above has very clearly said that it was necessary to stop eating or drinking with the *adhān* of Ibn Umm Maktum which was called precisely at the break of dawn. In addition to that, the Holy Qur'ān has itself established the deadline which is the 'certainty' of the break of dawn. Giving people the permission to eat and drink even one minute beyond that is a contravention of the textual imperative of the Holy Qur'ān. As for the narrations reported from the noble Companions and early elders of the community regarding the subject of convenience in *ifṭār* and *suḥūr*, these can be explained, keeping the

text of the Holy Qur'ān in view, by saying that they aim to avoid excessive precautionary self-restriction well before one becomes certain of the break of dawn. Imām Ibn Kaṭhīr has also explained these narrations as based on the factor mentioned above. Otherwise, how could even a common Muslim tolerate an open contravention of the Qur'ānic command? One could not even dream of something like this coming from the blessed Companions, specially so, when the Holy Qur'ān has right here at the end of this verse, emphasised special precaution in this respect. Notice how فَلَا تَقْرَبُوهَا (so, do not go near them) has been added to تِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللّٰهِ (These are the limits set by Allah) which explains the point made earlier.

Ruling :

All that has been said here is about people who are at a place from where they could see the break of the dawn with their own eyes and thus become 'certain' of it, moreover, if they have the additional advantage of a clear horizon and the personal ability to recognize the initial light of the dawn, then, it is necessary that they should act directly by looking at the horizon. Where the case is other than this, for example, the horizon is not in open view, or it is not clear, or one does not know how to identify the break of dawn, people determine its time by other signs or calculations. Obviously, for them there will be a time when the certain break of dawn would not be that certain. If it remains doubtful, what should people do then? Imām al-Jaṣṣāṣ, in his Ahkam al-Qur'ān, has answered this question by saying that, in a condition such as this, it will be desirable not to go ahead and eat or drink with considered volition, but, should anyone eat or drink something in a state of doubt, well ahead of becoming certain of the break of dawn, he will not be a sinner. However, should it prove later that dawn had set in at that time, keeping a fast as *qaḍā'* will become necessary. For instance, if moon is not sighted on the eve of Ramadan and people do not fast, but the sighting of the new moon on the 29th was proved later on through witnesses, then, in that case, those who did not fast that day under the impression that it was the 30th of Sha'bān did not become sinners thereby, however, the *qaḍā'* of that particular fast will become due on them, a position on which there is a unanimous agreement of the community. Similarly, if someone breaks

his fast close to sunset on a cloudy day and the sun turns out to be still there on the horizon later on, then such a person, for that matter, will not be a sinner but he has to do the necessary *qada'* for the spoiled fast.

The explanation given by Imām al-Jaṣṣāṣ makes it clear that one who wakes up late and the usual calls of *adhān* were being made, which necessarily makes it certain that dawn has appeared, then if such a person eats anything knowingly, he will not only be a sinner but also be bound to do *qaḍā'*. If he eats in a state of doubt, the sin will be committed but *qaḍā'* will still be due with the added factor of reprehensibility in a certain degree.

The worship of *I'tikāf*

Literally, *I'tikāf* means to stay at some place in seclusion. In the terminology of the Qur'ān and *Sunnah*, *I'tikāf* is the act of staying in a mosque under particular conditions. The universality of the word فِى الْمَسٰجِدِ ('in mosques') proves that *I'tikāf* can be performed in every *masjid* (mosque). The juristic condition that *I'tikāf* can be done only in a *masjid* where congregational prayers are regularly held and that *I'tikāf* is not correct in a desolate *masjid* where congregational prayers are not held, is really a derivation from the very sense of a *masjid* since *Ṣalāh* with *jamā'ah* (prayer in congregation) is the main purpose of making a *masjid*, otherwise, individual *Ṣalāh* can be offered in a house, a shop, anywhere.

Ruling

1. That eating, drinking and marital intimacy are all lawful in the night of fasts has been stated earlier in the verse. In the state of *I'tikāf*, the permission to eat and drink in the night remains the same as it is for everybody else, but it is different when it comes to intimacy with women which is not permissible in the state of *I'tikāf*, not even in the night. Therefore, the verse gives the necessary injunction in this connection.

2. The rules of *I'tikāf*, such as, doing *I'tikāf* while fasting and not coming out of the *masjid* without pressing needs recognized by Islamic law, are partly derived from the very word of *I'tikāf* and partly from the sayings and acts of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

Observe the limits of Allah

Towards the end of the verse, by saying تِلْكَ حُدُوْدُ اللّٰهِ فَلَا تَقْرَبُوْهَا ('These are the limits set by Allah, so do not go near them'), it has been hinted that the forbiddance of eating, drinking and marital intimacy while fasting are the limits set by Allah. One should not even go near them because, if you go near them, you may cross those limits. This is why overindulgence in gargling while fasting is *makrūh* (reprehensible) as it holds the danger of water slipping into the throat; also *makrūh* is the use of some medicine inside the mouth; again, equally *makrūh* is the kissing and hugging of one's wife. Similarly, it is better to stop eating and drinking a couple of minutes ahead of the time allowed for *ṣeḥrī* or *suḥūr* just as a matter of precaution, and also, delaying the *iftar* a couple of minutes. Becoming heedless and ease-prone in these matters is against this command from Allah.

Verse 188

وَلَا تَاْكُلُوْٓا اَمْوَالَكُمْ بَيْنَكُمْ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتُدْلُوْا بِهَآ اِلَى الْحُكَّامِ لِتَاْكُلُوْا فَرِيْقًا مِّنْ اَمْوَالِ النَّاسِ بِالْاِثْمِ وَاَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ○

And do not eat up each other's property by false means, nor approach the authorities with it to eat up a portion of the property of the people sinfully, while you know (all that). (Verse 188)

Previous verses dealt with injunctions relating to fasting in which the use of lawful things has been forbidden during a fixed period and fixed timings. Now in this verse, the acquisition and use of *ḥarām* or unlawful wealth or property has been forbidden. This has a thematic congruity since the real purpose behind fasting, an act of worship, is nothing but to make man get used to abstaining from what is lawful for him. If he can do that, there is every likelihood that abstaining from what is totally unlawful will become all the more easier for him. There is yet another correspondence here. It is necessary that one must make an effort to break his or her fast with what is *halal*. Anyone who goes through the rigours of fasting throughout the day but ends up breaking his fast in the evening with what is *ḥarām* shall only find his fast unacceptable in the sight of Allah.

Commentary

This verse forbids the acquisition and use of wealth and property by unlawful means. It will be recalled that the acquisition and use of things by lawful means has been stressed upon in Verse 168 of Sūrah al-Baqarah as follows:

يَاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ كُلُوْا مِمَّا فِى الْاَرْضِ حَلٰلًا طَيِّبًا وَّلَا تَتَّبِعُوْا خُطُوٰتِ الشَّيْطٰنِ اِنَّهٗ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِيْنٌ O

O people, eat of what is in the earth, permissible and good, and do not follow the footsteps of Satan; indeed, for you he is an open enemy.

Again, the same command appears in Sūrah al-Nahl:

فَكُلُوْا مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللّٰهُ حَلٰلًا طَيِّبًا وَّاشْكُرُوْا نِعْمَةَ اللّٰهِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ اِيَّاهُ تَعْبُدُوْنَ O

So, eat from what Allah has provided for you, permissible and good, and be grateful for the blessing of Allah, if it is Him you worship. (16:114)

The criterion of good and evil in earning

The whole world agrees that money and materials are needed and that life depends on them. So does it agree that there are favoured and permissible ways of acquiring them and there are undesirable and forbidden ways as well. Virtually the whole world looks down upon theft, robbery, and fraud, but people do not generally have some sound criterion to determine if these means are permissible or impermissible, may be this is just not possible since it relates to the well-being of the peoples of the entire world and affects humanity as such. Therefore, a universal criterion, sound and reasonable, can only come from the Lord-Creator of all the worlds through the medium of revelation. Otherwise, if human beings were themselves given the choice of forging their own criterion, naturally, those who give it a legal framework will think more about their nation, country or community and, as customary, this would be different from what would be thought about other nations and countries. Even if this exercise was done through an international body representing the whole world, that too, as experience shows, cannot satisfy all human beings. As a result, there will be legal injustice ending up in nothing but wars and chaos.

The virtues of the Islamic economic system

The Law of the permissible and the forbidden enforced by the

Sharī'ah of Islam comes clearly through divine revelation, or is derived from it. That law - reasonable, natural and comprehensive - is the only law that can work for every nation, country and community and could be the much wanted guarantee of peace. The reason is that everything of common utility has been left as such under this divine law, specially things to which all human beings claim equal rights, such as, the air, water, vegetation, heat, unowned forests and the produce of uninhabited mountain growth. These are the commonly shared property of all human beings; it is not permissible for anyone to take these over as an owner.

Then there are things which, if shared, would disturb human society, or generate conflict and violence. For these the law of private ownership is promulgated. The law that governs the initial ownership of a land or its produce is different from the law of the transfer of ownership. The law has been so formulated that no human being shall be left deprived of the necessities of life, of course, on condition that he puts in his effort to acquire these. Special attention has been given to the consideration that no man usurps the rights of others, or brings loss to them, and thereby, concentrates capital in the hands of a few individuals. Under the law of the transfer of ownership - whether it is in accordance with the divine injunctions relating to post-death inheritance or takes effect through buying and selling as agreed upon by parties concerned - it was made binding that there should be absolutely no fraud or deception in the transaction and also, there should remain no such ambiguity or insufficiency which might lead to mutual bickering and dispute in the future.

Also taken into consideration is the factor of consent in transactions. It has to be made sure that the consent given by parties concerned is genuine and that such consent has not been extracted under pressure. In Islamic law, all transactions known as void, invalid or sinful have some defect inherent in the deal. At places, it could be plain fraud, at others, a return for some unknown thing or act. On occasions, someone's rights are usurped or self-interest is promoted by bringing loss upon others, or the rights of the general public are illegally disposed off. A very important reason why interest, gambling and their likes have been prohibited is that they are harmful to public

interest. As a result of their evil presence in a society, some individuals get to grow as parasites while the whole community is thrown into poverty. Even if such transactions were to be carried out by a mutual consent of the parties involved, such transactions shall not be permissible because they are nothing but a formalized crime against the whole community. The present verse covers all such impermissible situations and aspects. It is interesting to note that the Holy Qur'an uses the word أَمْوَالَكُم : (*amwālakum*) in وَلَا تَأْكُلُوٓا أَمْوَالَكُم بَيْنَكُم بِالْبَاطِلِ translated as 'and do not eat up each other's property by false means' which basically means 'your property'. This expression has a subtle indication to the fact that those who encroach upon the property of others must think that the other person would also have the same sort of love and concern for his property as the encroacher has for his own. If the defendant was to encroach upon the offender's property unlawfully, he would certainly be hurt.

In addition to this, the verse may be releasing yet another suggestion. When someone encroaches upon the property of someone else, and if everybody else started doing this as common practice, the natural consequence would be that others would encroach upon his property, giving him what he gave to others. Looked at from this angle, encroaching upon someone's property unlawfully is really an invitation to others to come and encroach upon the encroacher's property, equally unlawfully. For a moment, imagine what would happen to a society where the cult of adulteration in articles of daily use becomes a common practice. There will be a dealer, who earns a little more by adulterating butter with cheaper oil or fat, who will then go to a milk shop and the milkman will give him milk adulterated with water. If he needs spices, these will be adulterated. The same experience will be repeated when he goes to buy medicines. So, one person earns more by adulteration while the other person takes that extra earning out of his pocket and the third person does the same to the second and the vicious circle goes on and on ad nauseum. The adulterer feels good about what extra he puts in his coffers but he never looks at the hole under it for he keeps nothing of that extra in reality. Therefore, anyone who snatches the other person's money or property by false means, in fact, opens the door to the unlawful plundering of his money and property.

In relation to this verse, there is yet another point one should bear in mind. The words of this divine injunction are general: 'And do not eat up each other's property by false means'. This includes the usurping of someone's property, and theft, and robbery, through which money or property belonging to someone is taken away by force. Then, there is interest, gambling, bribery and all defective sales and transactions which are also impermissible under the dictates of the Islamic law, even though, there be the certitude of consent given by concerned parties. Again, any money or property acquired through lying or a false oath, or earnings which have been prohibited by Islamic law, even though one has personally sweated out to earn it, are all *ḥarām*, unlawful and false. Though the words of the Qur'ān forbid 'eating' quite clearly, but the drive of the meaning here is not restricted to 'eating' as such, instead, it means 'using' in the absolute sense; it could be by eating, drinking, wearing or by any other mode of use. Metaphorically, all such uses are covered under the expression 'to eat,' for instance, A ate up the property of B, which is only a manner of saying, even though all that may not be what can be 'eaten'.

The Background of Revelation

This verse was revealed in the background of a particular event which relates to a land dispute between two of the noble Companions. The case came up for hearing in the court of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The plaintiff had no witnesses. The Holy Prophet ﷺ asked the defendant to take an oath in accordance with Islamic legal norm. He was all set to take the oath when the Holy Prophet ﷺ recited the following verse before him as a matter of good counsel:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَشْتَرُونَ بِعَهْدِ اللّٰهِ وَاَيْمَانِهِمْ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا اُولٰٓئِكَ لَاخَلَاقَ لَهُمْ فِى الْاٰخِرَةِ

Surely, those who take a small price out of the covenant of Allah and out of their oaths, for them there is no share in the Hereafter. (3:77)

When the Companion heard this verse which warns those who try to take over someone's property through a false oath, he abandoned his intention to take that oath and surrendered the land to the plaintiff. (Ruh al-Ma'ani)

So, this was the background under which this verse was revealed. To begin with, it forbids the acquiring of someone's property by

unlawful means, then towards the later part, it warns against the filing of false cases, taking of false oaths and the giving or commissioning of false witnesses. Forbidding all these, it has been said:

وَتُدْلُوْا بِهَآ اِلَى الْحُكَّامِ لِتَاكُلُوْا فَرِيْقًا مِّنْ اَمْوَالِ النَّاسِ بِالْاِثْمِ وَاَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ

which means: 'Do not take property cases to the authorities, so that through them, you eat up some portion of the property of the people sinfully while you do know that you have no right therein and you are simply putting up a false case.'

The words وَاَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ : (while you know) at the end of the verse tell us that a person, who claims something on the basis of misunderstanding and files a suit in the court to acquire it, will not be covered by this warning. In an event of this nature, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said:

> انما انا بشر وانتم تختصمون الى و لعل بعضكم ان يكون الحن بحجته من بعض فاقضى له على نحوما اسمع منه فمن قضيت له بشئى من حق اخيه فلا ياخذنه فانما اقطع له قطعة من النار (رواه البخارى و مسلم عن ام سلمة رضى الله عنها)
>
> I am human and you bring your disputes to me. May be one of you is more eloquent with his case than the other and I decide in his favour on the basis of what I hear from him. So, should he get anything from what is the right of his brother, he should not take it because, in that case, I shall be alloting him a plot from Hell. (Bukhārī and Muslim from Umm Salmah رضى الله عنها)

The Holy Prophet ﷺ has made it clear in his saying quoted above that a Muslim judge may give a judgement under some misunderstanding in which the legal right of one party is being unlawfully given to the other, then, such a court judgment will not make the thing lawful for him. Also true is the converse, that is, it does not become unlawful for one to whom it is lawful. In short, the judgment of a court does not make the lawful unlawful, or the unlawful lawful. If anyone succeeds in grabbing something belonging to somebody else through a court by means of fraud, false witness or oath, the curse of having done that will weigh heavy on his shoulders and he should, thinking of the ultimate accountability in the Hereafter and appearance in the court of Allah, the All-knowing, the All-Aware, leave it off.

However, according to Imām Abū Hanīfah, if in transactions involving a contract or an annulment where the *Qādī* or judge have

authority under Islamic law, the *Qāḍī* gives a judgment, even if it be on the basis of a false oath or witness, that judgment will render the contract or the annulment valid under the Islamic law. The rules of lawful and unlawful will stand imposed on it, although, the curse of lying and engineering false witnesses will hang round his neck.

Ḥalāl brings blessings; *Ḥarām* produces evil:

There are several places in the Holy Qur'ān where the abstention from the unlawful and the acquisition of the lawful has been stressed upon in many different ways. It has also been pointed out in a verse that human deeds and morals are enormously affected by eating what is lawful. If one does not eat and drink *ḥalāl* things, it is almost impossible to expect good moral and righteous deeds coming from that person. It was said in the Holy Qur'ān:

يَاَيُّهَا الرُّسُلُ كُلُوْا مِنَ الطَّيِّبٰتِ وَاعْمَلُوْا صَالِحًا اِنِّيْ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ عَلِيْمٌ

> O messengers, eat of the good things and be righteous in deeds. I am aware of what you do. (23:51)

In this verse, it will be noted that eating of the lawful has been combined with the command to do what is righteous. The hint is that righteous deeds can issue forth only when man eats and drinks what is lawful. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has himself made it clear in a *ḥadīth* that the address in this verse is, no doubt, to prophets, but this command is not restricted to them alone, instead, all Muslims are charged with it. Towards the end of this *ḥadīth*, he also said that the prayer of a person who eats what is unlawful is not answered. The Holy Prophet ﷺ adds that there are many people who take great pains in their acts of worship, then raise their hands in prayer before Allah Almighty and say, 'O Lord, O Lord' but what they eat is *ḥarām*, what they drink is *ḥarām*, what they wear is *haram*, if so, how can this prayer of theirs be answered?

A great portion of the teachings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been devoted to the great task of saving his *ummah* from the unlawful and calling it to the use of what is lawful. He said:

> 'One who ate *ḥalāl*, followed the *sunnah* and people were not hurt by him, he will go to Paradise.' The blessed Companions said, 'O Messenger of Allah, right now these things are common in your community. Most Muslims observe these

> strictly.' He said:' Yes! In future too, in every age, there will be people who shall abide by these rules.' (This *ḥadīth* has been reported by Tirmidhī and he calls it *sahih*)

In another *ḥadīth*, the Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said to the blessed Companion 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar:

> There are four traits, if these are in you and you have nothing else in the world, they shall suffice you. Those four traits are: Guarding a trust, telling the truth, good morals and being particular in eating what is *ḥalāl*.

The blessed Companion Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ رضی اللہ عنہ requested the Holy Prophet ﷺ to pray for him so that he may become one of those whose prayers are accepted. He said:

> O Sa'd, make what you eat permissible and pure, and you shall become one whose prayers are responded to. And by Him in whose hands rests the life of Muḥammad, when the servant of Allah slips a morsel of what is *ḥarām* into his stomach, no deed of his is accepted for the next forty days. And a person whose flesh is made of unlawful acquisitions, for that flesh the fire of Hell is the only recipient.

The blessed Companion 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

> By him in whose hands rests my life, no servant of Allah becomes a Muslim unless his heart and tongue become Muslim and until his neighbours become secure from his distressing deeds. And when a servant acquires the unlawful and then gives it in charity, that is not accepted; and if he spends out of it, it stays deprived of blessings; and if he leaves it behind for his inheritors, it becomes his wherewithal for the trip to Hell. Surely, Allah Almighty does not help an evil wash off another evil, but He does help the washing away of an evil deed with a good deed.

Questions man must answer on the Day of Resurrection

The blessed Companion Mu'ādh ibn Jabal رضی اللہ عنہ reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

> ما تزال قدما عبد يوم القيامة حتى يسأل عن اربع عن عمره فيما افناه و عن شبابه فيما ابلاه وعن ماله من اين اكتسبه وفيما انفقه وعن علمه ماذا عمل فيه (البيهقى ، ترغيب)

No servant of Allah shall move a step on Doomsday unless he is made to answer four questions; firstly, about his life, in what did he spend it out; secondly, about his youth, in what did he consume it; thirdly, about his wealth, where from did he earn it and in what did he spend it; and fourthly, about his knowledge, how far did he act in line with it.' (Al-Bayhaqi, Targhib)

The blessed Companion, 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ once gave a sermon in which he said:

O Emigrants, I seek the refuge of Allah Almighty against five traits of character lest they should grow into you: firstly, against immodesty, for when immodesty prevails in a people they are hit by plagues, epidemics and ever-new diseases not even heard of by their elders; and secondly, against cheating in weights and measures, for when this disease grips a people, they are hit by famine, price-hikes, rigorous labour and over-work and oppressive rulers; and thirdly, against non-payment of *Zakāh*, for when people do not pay *Zakāh*, rains are stopped; and fourthly, against the religious apathy of people, for when a community breaks its covenant with Allah and His Messenger, then Allah Almighty makes alien enemies sit over them who snatch away what belongs to them without any justification; and fifthly, against the apathy of ruling authority, for when the rulers of a people fail to decide matters in accordance with the Book of Allah because the injunctions revealed by Allah Almighty do not suit their fancies, then Allah Almighty causes mutual hatred and disputations descend upon them. (This narration has been reported by Ibn Mājah, al-Bayhaqī and others and al-Ḥākim has called it '*Ṣaḥīḥ*' according to the standard set by Muslim.)

May Allah Almighty give us and all Muslims the most perfect ability to stay safe against such unfortunate happenings.

Verses 189-191

يَسْـَٔلُوْنَكَ عَنِ الْاَهِلَّةِ ۭ قُلْ هِىَ مَوَاقِيْتُ لِلنَّاسِ وَالْحَجِّ ۭ وَلَيْسَ
الْبِرُّ بِاَنْ تَاْتُوا الْبُيُوْتَ مِنْ ظُهُوْرِهَا وَلٰكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنِ اتَّقٰى ۚ
وَاْتُوا الْبُيُوْتَ مِنْ اَبْوَابِهَا ۠ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُوْنَ ۝
وَقَاتِلُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ الَّذِيْنَ يُقَاتِلُوْنَكُمْ وَلَا تَعْتَدُوْا ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ

لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِيْنَ ○ وَاقْتُلُوْهُمْ حَيْثُ ثَقِفْتُمُوْهُمْ وَاَخْرِجُوْهُمْ
مِّنْ حَيْثُ اَخْرَجُوْكُمْ وَالْفِتْنَةُ اَشَدُّ مِنَ الْقَتْلِ ۚ وَلَا تُقٰتِلُوْهُمْ عِنْدَ
الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ حَتّٰى يُقٰتِلُوْكُمْ فِيْهِ ۚ فَاِنْ قٰتَلُوْكُمْ فَاقْتُلُوْهُمْ ۗ
كَذٰلِكَ جَزَآءُ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ○

They ask you about the new moons. Say: They are indicative of time for the people, and of the Ḥajj. And it is not righteousness that you come into your houses from their backs but righteousness is that one fears Allah. And come to the houses through their doors. And fear Allah so that you may be successful. And fight in the way of Allah against those who fight you and do not transgress. Verily, Allah does not like the transgressors. And kill them wherever you find them and drive them out from where they drove you out, and *Fitnah* (to create disorder) is more severe than to kill. And do not fight them near *Al-Masjid al-Ḥarām* unless they fight you there. However, if they fight you (there) you may kill them. Such is the reward of the disbelievers.

(Verses 189 - 191)

The theme of righteousness which started from Verse 177 still continues. The six injunctions that have appeared so far relate to even retaliation, bequest, fasting, *I'tikāf* and abstention from the unlawful. Now come those of *Hajj* and *Jihād* prior to which it was clarified that lunar months and days will be followed in Hajj and in other religious obligations. Also erased here is a custom of *jāhiliyyah* (days of ignorance) which required people in *Iḥrām* to go into their houses, if needed, from the back even if it had to be through a hole in the wall bored for this purpose, as they thought it was prohibited to enter houses from the front door when in *Iḥrām*. They even rated it as 'righteousness'. So, it is immediately after the mention of Ḥajj that Allah Almighty tells them that entering the houses from the backs is no righteousness. Real righteousness lies in abstaining from what has been made unlawful by Allah. Since coming into houses through their doors is not forbidden, the question of abstaining from it does not arise. So, those who wish to go into their houses should enter through their doors, but the center-piece of all principles is that people must

keep fearing Allah so that they can hope to have the best of both the worlds.

Verse 190-191 carry the injunction relating to fighting with disbelievers. It was the month of Dhul-Qa'dah in the year 6 A.H. that the Holy Prophet ﷺ began his journey to the sacred city of Makkah in order to perform *'Umrah*. Makkah was still controlled by the *mushrikin* (the infidels). They did not allow him and his Companions to go into the city and *'Umrah* could not be performed as intended. It took a great deal of negotiating to arrive at the agreement that the Muslims would perform *'Umrah* next year. This pact is known as the 'Peace of *Hudaybiyyah*'; a detailed explanation of the verse in this context will appear later.

Commentary

Reported in the first Verse (189) there is a question asked by the noble Companions and its answer given by Allah Almighty. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās says that the Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ had a distinct mannerliness of their own. On account of the great respect they had for him, they asked very few questions from their Prophet ﷺ. This is contrary to the practice of the communities of the past prophets who asked many questions and thus failed to observe the etiquette due before a prophet. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās adds that the total number of questions asked by the noble Companions as mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān is fourteen, one of which has just appeared above: إِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي : 'And when My servants ask you...' (186). The other question is right here. Other than these, there are six more questions appearing in Sūrah al-Baqarah itself. The rest of the six questions come up in various other Surahs.

It is mentioned in the present verse that the noble Companions asked the Messenger of Allah about the new moon as it appears in the early part of the month, having a shape different from the sun. The new moon begins as a thin crescent slowly growing into full circle, then, it starts reducing itself in the same manner. So, they asked either about its cause or about the wisdom underlying its gradual growth. Both possibilities exist. But the answer given states the wisdom and benefit behind it. Now, if the question itself was concerned with the wisdom and benefit behind the waning and waxing of the new moon, then the answer obviously synchronizes with the

question. But, if the question aimed at finding out the cause of the waning and waxing of the new moon, which is far away from the mannerliness of the noble Companions, then the answer, by electing to state its wisdom and benefit rather than its reality, simply hints that finding out the reality of the heavenly bodies is not an area under man's control anyway, and then, for that matter, the knowledge of its reality is not necessary for any practical purpose, neither in this world nor in the Hereafter. Therefore, the question of reality is absurd. What could be asked and what could be explained is that there are certain benefits that accrue to us through the waning and waxing, the setting and the rising of the moon in this manner. Therefore, in response to this, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was told that he should tell them that their benefits tied to the moon are that they will find it easy to determine the time factor in their transactions and contracts, and to know about the days of the Ḥajj.

The Lunar Calendar is the Islamic choice

This verse tells us no more than that the moon will help identify the count of months and days on which rest transactions and acts of worship, such as, the Ḥajj. The same subject has been dealt with in Sūrah Yūnus in the following manner:

وَقَدَّرَهُ مَنَازِلَ لِتَعْلَمُوا عَدَدَ السِّنِينَ وَالْحِسَابَ

And determined it (the moon) by stations, that you might know the number of the years and the reckoning. (10:5)

This tells us that the benefit of having the moon pass through different stages and conditions is that people may find out through it the count of years, months and days. But, in a verse of Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl, this count has been connected to the sun as well in the following words:

فَمَحَوْنَا آيَةَ اللَّيْلِ وَجَعَلْنَا آيَةَ النَّهَارِ مُبْصِرَةً لِتَبْتَغُوا فَضْلًا مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَلِتَعْلَمُوا عَدَدَ السِّنِينَ وَالْحِسَابَ

Then We erased the sign of the night and brought out the sign of the day to see, so that you seek the blessing from your Lord and get to know the number of years and the reckoning. (17:12)

Although this third verse proves that years and months can be counted with the help of a solar calendar also, yet the words used by

the Holy Qur'ān with regard to the moon very clearly indicate that the lunar calendar is a fixed choice in the Sharī'ah of Islam, specially in prescribed acts of worship which relate to a particular month and its dates; for instance, the months of Ramaḍān and Ḥajj, as well as injunctions related to the days of Ḥajj, Muḥarram and *Lailatul-Qadr* are all tied to the sighting of the new moon, all this because in this verse, by saying هِىَ مَوَاقِيْتُ لِلنَّاسِ وَالْحَجِّ (They are indicative of time for the people and of the Hajj), it has been established that the lunar calendar is the one to be trusted upon in the sight of Allah, although, the count of months can come out of a solar calendar as well.

The Sharī'ah of Islam has opted for the lunar calendar because it is based on something which every sighted person can see on the horizon and be informed accordingly; the knowledge of it is equally easy for the scholars, the ignorant, the villagers, the islanders and the dwellers of the mountains. This stands in contrast with the solar calendar which depends on meteorological equipment and mathematical computations which cannot become the common personal experience of everybody so easily. Then comes the matter of religious observances, the *'ibādat*, where the lunar calendar has been fixed as an obligation. This has also been favoured in social and business transactions because it serves as a basis for the acts of Islamic worship, and a symbol of Islamic identity, notwithstanding the position of the solar calendar which has not been prohibited juristically, the only condition being that the use of the solar calendar should not become so widespread that people forget all about the lunar calendar. If this happens, it would necessarily affect the obligatory *'ibādat* like Fasting and Ḥajj adversely, a sampling of which is visible in our time, in offices and businesses, government and private, where the solar calendar is being used with such frequency that many people do not seem to even remember all Islamic months by name. Apart from the juristic position of the lunar system, this situation is a deplorable demonstration of our lack of will to approach and uphold such a matter of national and religious identity with a sense of self-respect. It is not difficult to use the solar calendar only in office situations where one has to deal with non-Muslims as well, but for the rest of office correspondence, private dealings and dailv requirements the lunar calendar may be used with

advantage, that is, if this is done, the user will earn the *thawāb* of performing a *farḍ 'alā al-kifāyah* (an obligation which, if performed by some, suffices for others), and of course, national identity will be preserved.

Ruling

From the verse لَيْسَ الْبِرُّ بِاَنْ تَاْتُوا الْبُيُوْتَ مِنْ ظُهُوْرِهَا (And it is not righteousness that you come into your houses from their backs) comes the ruling that something which the Sharī'ah of Islam has not classed as 'necessary' (*wājib*) or has not given it the status of an act of *'Ibādah*, should not be taken as 'necessary' or an act of *'Ibādah* on one's own. This is not permissible. Similarly, taking something to be a sin while it is permissible under Islamic law is a sin in itself. This is exactly what those people had done. Entering houses through doors was permissible under religious law, yet they made it out to be a sin, while coming into the house from its back by breaking through the wall was not 'necessary' under the religious law, yet they made it out to be necessary. This was why they were admonished.

The reason why *bid'āt* (innovations in religious matters) are not permissible is that unnecessary things are taken to be necessary like the obligatory - *farḍ*, or *wājib*. Or, things permissible are taken to be forbidden or unlawful. This verse makes it very clear that doing so is prohibited, and incidentally, this gives us the guiding rule in thousands of acts in vogue.

***Jihād*: To fight in the way of Allah**

That *Jihād* and *Qitāl* or fighting against disbelievers was prohibited prior to the emigration to Madīnah is a fact the entire Muslim community agrees upon. All verses revealed during that time advised Muslims to be patient against pains inflicted on them by disbelievers, even to ignore and forgive when they can. It was after the emigration to Madīnah that the first command to fight against them came through this verse (as said by al-Rabī' ibn Anas and others). Another narration from Sayyidnā Abū Bakr al-Siddīq رضى الله عنه says that the first verse relating to this subject is: اُذِنَ لِلَّذِيْنَ يُقٰتَلُوْنَ بِاَنَّهُمْ ظُلِمُوْا : "Leave is given to those who are fought against because they were wronged", but according to a majority of the blessed Companions and their successors, the first verse commanding to fight the disbelievers is

this very verse from Sūrah al-Baqarah while the verse which has been identified as the first verse on this subject by Sayyidnā Abū Bakr al-Siddiq, that too, being among the very initial verses revealed, could be called the first.

The command in this verse is that Muslims should fight only those disbelievers who come to fight against them. It means that there are other people too who do not take part in fighting, such as, the women, the children, the very old, the priests and monks and others devoting themselves to quiet religious pursuits, and the physically handicapped, and those casual labourers who work for disbelievers and do not go to fight along with them; it is not permissible to kill such people in a *Jihād*. The reason is that the command in the verse is restricted to fighting those who come to fight Muslims. The kind of people mentioned above are not all fighters. That is why Muslim Jurists رحمهم الله , have also ruled that should a woman, an old man or religious person take part in actual fighting along with disbelievers or be helping them in any manner in their fight against the Muslims, then, killing them is permissible because they come under the purview of ٱلَّذِينَ يُقَٰتِلُونَكُمْ :'those who fight you'. (Mazharī, Qurṭubī and Jaṣṣāṣ)

The battle orders of the Holy Prophet ﷺ given to the *mujahidin* of Islam at the time of *Jihād* carry a good explanation of this injunction. In a *hadith* from al-Bukhārī and Muslim, as narrated by the blessed Companion 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar, it is said:

نهى رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم عن قتل النساء والصبيان

'The Holy Prophet ﷺ has prohibited the killing of women and children.'

The following instructions from the Holy Prophet ﷺ given to the Companions going on *Jihād* have been narrated in a *ḥadith* from Sayyidnā Anas which appears in Abū Dāwūd: 'Go for *Jihād* in the name of Allah adhering to the community of the Messenger of Allah. Do not kill anyone old and weak, any young child or any woman.' (Mazharī)

When Sayyidnā Abū Bakr al-Siddiq sent Yazid ibn Abi Sufyān to Syria, he gave him the same instructions. Also added there is the prohibition of killing the religiously-devoted, the monks and priests, and the labourers employed by disbelievers, specially when they do not take part in fighting (Qurṭubī).

The expression وَلَا تَعْتَدُوا (and do not transgress) towards the end of the verse, according to the majority of the commentators means - 'do not go beyond the limit in fighting as to start killing women and children'.

As already explained briefly in the opening remarks, the verse 191, that is, وَاقْتُلُوهُمْ حَيْثُ ثَقِفْتُمُوهُمْ وَأَخْرِجُوهُم مِّنْ حَيْثُ أَخْرَجُوكُمْ (And kill them wherever you find them and drive them out from where they drove you out...), was revealed after the happening at *Hudaybiyyah* at a time when the Holy Prophet ﷺ decided, in accordance with the condition agreed upon in the Peace Treaty of *Hudaybiyyah*, to embark on a journey to Makkah to perform the *qaḍā'* of *'Umrah* along with his Companions, something he was stopped from doing a year before by the disbelievers of Makkah. The noble Companions, on the eve of this projected journey, had started to worry about the disbelievers who could not be trusted upon in a peace treaty. If they chose to be aggressive, as they did a year before, what option are they going to take? Thereupon, the words used in the present verse gave them the permission to meet the challenge of their aggression and kill them where they find them. And if they could, it was permissible for them to drive the disbelievers out from where they had driven the believers out.

Since Muslims, during their entire Makkan period, were made to stay away from fighting against the disbelievers and were repeatedly asked to forego and forgive, so much so, that the noble Companions were, before the revelation of this verse, under the impression that killing disbelievers was bad, and prohibited. It was to remove this misconception that it was said: وَالْفِتْنَةُ أَشَدُّ مِنَ الْقَتْلِ :"And *Fitnah* is more severe than to kill," that is, it is true that to kill someone is a terribly evil act, but more terrible and severe is what the disbelievers of Makkah have done by insisting on their *kufr* and *shirk* (infidelity and the associating of others with Allah) and by stopping Muslims from fulfillling their religious obligations, and from performing Hajj and *'Umrah*. It is to avoid this greater evil that killing them has been permitted. The word, *Fitnah* in the verse (not translated for want of a perfect equivalent in English) inescapably means *kufr* and *shirk* and to prevent Muslims from fulfilling their religious obligations of *'ibādah*. (Jaṣṣāṣ, Qurṭubī and others)

Since the generality of the words 'kill them wherever you find them' might lead to the misconception that killing the disbelievers is allowed even in the precincts of *Ḥaram*, this generality has been particularized in the next sentence of the verse by saying:

وَلَا تُقٰتِلُوْهُمْ عِنْدَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ حَتّٰى يُقٰتِلُوْكُمْ فِيْهِ

And do not fight them near *Al-Masjid al-Ḥarām* unless they fight you there.

That is, 'you should not fight them close to *Al-Masjid al-Ḥarām*, which includes all its environs in Makkah, unless they themselves start fighting you there.'

Rulings

1. In the *Ḥaram* (the sacred precincts) of Makkah, it is just not permissible to kill even a bird or animal, let alone the human beings. However, this same verse tells us that in the event someone starts killing somebody else within the sacred precincts, then, that other person is permitted to fight back in defence. There is a consensus of the jurists on this point.

2. It also comes out from this verse that the prohibition of initiating *Jihād* or *Qitāl* is restricted to *Al-Masjid al-Ḥarām* and its environs to which the sacred precincts extend in Makkah. At other places, just as the defensive *Jihād* is necessary, the initiating of *Jihād* and *Qitāl* is also valid.

Verses 192 - 195

فَاِنِ انْتَهَوْا فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ○ وَقٰتِلُوْهُمْ حَتّٰى لَا تَكُوْنَ
فِتْنَةٌ وَّيَكُوْنَ الدِّيْنُ لِلّٰهِ ۚ فَاِنِ انْتَهَوْا فَلَا عُدْوَانَ اِلَّا عَلَى
الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ○ اَلشَّهْرُ الْحَرَامُ بِالشَّهْرِ الْحَرَامِ وَالْحُرُمٰتُ قِصَاصٌ ۚ
فَمَنِ اعْتَدٰى عَلَيْكُمْ فَاعْتَدُوْا عَلَيْهِ بِمِثْلِ مَا اعْتَدٰى عَلَيْكُمْ ۠
وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ ○ وَاَنْفِقُوْا فِيْ
سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ وَلَا تُلْقُوْا بِاَيْدِيْكُمْ اِلَى التَّهْلُكَةِ ۚ وَاَحْسِنُوْا ۚ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ
يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ○

But if they desist, then indeed, Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. And fight them until there is no *Fitnah* any more, and obedience remains for Allah. But, if they desist, then there is no aggression except against the transgressors. The holy month for the holy month, and the sanctities are subject to retribution. So when anyone aggresses against you, agress against him in the like manner as he did against you. And fear Allah and be sure that Allah is with the God-fearing. And spend in the way of Allah and do not put yourselves into destruction. And do good. Of course, Allah loves those who do good. (Verses 192 - 195)

Commentary

1. When the Holy Prophet ﷺ decided to travel to Makkah in the year 7 A.H. to perform his *qaḍā' 'Umrah* as envisaged in the peace treaty of *Hudaybiyyah*; his Companions who were to accompany him knew that disbelievers could not be trusted with treaties, or peace. It was quite possible that they may start fighting. Now, the blessed Companions had a problem before them. They thought if this fighting came, it would have to be within the sacred precincts of Makkah, which is not permissible in Islam. This doubt was answered in Verse 191 by stating that the sanctity of the sacred precincts of Makkah must certainly be observed by Muslims, but should the disbelievers start to fight within the sacred limits, then, it is permissible for them to fight back in defence.

2. The second problem that bothered the noble Companions was about the month, which was Dhul-Qa'dah, being one of the four known as the 'sacred months' wherein fighting anyone anywhere was not permissibe. Now, the Muslims thought if the disbelievers of Makkah started fighting against them how could Muslims fight a defensive battle during a 'sacred month'? The verse under reference (194) was revealed to answer this doubt. The answer is that, the way a state of defence grants an exception to observing the sanctity of the *Ḥaram* of Makkah, in the same manner, it allows an exception to observing the sanctity of the 'sacred months' also.

Ruling

There are four 'sacred months': Dhul-Qa'dah, Dhul-Ḥijjah, Muḥarram which are consecutive and the fourth is Rajab. Even before Islam,

fighting in these months was considered unlawful and the disbelievers of Makkah too used to observe their sanctity. Even in the early days of Islam, right through the year 7 A.H., this law was in force which is why the noble Companions were perplexed. Later, according to the consensus of the *Ummah*, this unlawfulness of fighting was abrogated and the permission to fight was given, but it is still preferable not to initiate fighting in these four months without the need to defend. Therefore, it can be said that the sanctity of the 'sacred months' has not been abrogated totally, but it holds good like the sanctity of *Ḥaram*. Both of them have been subjected to an exception for the the sake of defence.

Spending for *Jihad*

The verse 195 introduces the tenth injunction under the theme of 'righteousness' which began in Verse 177. So, in وَأَنْفِقُوْا فِىْ سَبِيْلِ اللهِ : (And spend in the way of Allah...), Muslims have been obligated to spend money and materials according to the need of *Jihād* ordered in the way of Allah. From here, jurists have deduced the ruling that Muslims have some other financial obligations as well in addition to the mandatory obligation of *Ẓakāh*, but these are neither permanent nor bound by a 'threshold' or quantity, instead, it is obligatory on all Muslims to provide everything as and when needed. Of course, should there be no need, nothing remains obligatory. The expenditure on *Jihād* is included under this provision.

The literal meaning of the next sentence in this verse وَلَا تُلْقُوْا بِاَيْدِيْكُمْ اِلَى التَّهْلُكَةِ as translated in the text are obvious. The verse forbids Muslims from throwing themselves into destruction by their own choice. However, the question remains: What does the expression, 'put yourselves into destruction', mean here? Commentators have explained it in different ways. The blessed Companion, Abū Ayyub al-Ansārī said: 'This verse was revealed about us. We can explain it best. It was when Allah gave Islam authority and power, we started talking that '*Jihād*' was not necessary any more, and that we could stay home and take care of our wealth and property'. Thereupon, this verse was revealed which made it clear that 'destruction' at this place means 'the abandonment of *Jihad*'. This proves that the banishing of *Jihād* from Muslim lives is the cause of their degradation and

destruction. This is why the blessed Companion Abū Ayyub al-Ansārī spent his entire life in *Jihād*, out of Madīnah, his home, so much so, that he met the end of his life in Constantinople (Istanbul), Turkey and was buried there.

The same approach to the meaning of this verse has been reported from the earliest authorities in *Tafsīr*, such as, Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās, Ḥudhayfah, Qatādah, Mujāhid and Ḍaḥḥāk. Sayyidnā Barā' ibn 'Āzib said that to lose hope in the mercy and forgiveness of Allah is to go for personal destruction voluntarily; therefore, to lose hope in Forgiveness is forbidden. Others say that exceeding the limit while spending in the way of Allah so much so that the rights of the family are compromised thereby, is the act identified as 'putting yourself into destruction'; so, such excess in expenditure is not permissible. Still others think that the verse makes it unlawful to throw oneself into an offensive fighting in a situation when it is already obvious that one will be unable to do anything against the enemy other than dying at their hands.

Notwithstanding the apparently various interpretations of this verse, al-Jaṣṣāṣ synthesizes these by saying that all these rules can be inferred from this verse.

The last sentence of the verse (195): وَأَحْسِنُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ : (And do good. Of course, Allah loves those who do good), gives an incentive to do everything nicely. The Holy Qur'ān calls this *Iḥsān*. Now, doing something nicely, can take two forms. When *iḥsān* relates to *'Ibādah* (worship), its meaning has been explained by the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself in the well-known *ḥadīth* of Jibrā'īl where he said that 'you should worship Allah as if you are seeing Him, and if you cannot achieve that degree of perception, then you should, at the least, believe that Allah Almighty is seeing you'.

And when it (*Iḥsān*) relates to social transactions and dealings, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has explained *Iḥsān* by saying (as reported in the Musnad of Aḥmad on the authority of the noble Companion Mu'ādh) that 'you should like for others what you like for yourselves, and in the same manner, you should dislike for others what you dislike for yourselves' (Maẓharī).

Verses 196 - 203

وَاَتِمُّوا الْحَجَّ وَالْعُمْرَةَ لِلّٰهِ ۭ فَاِنْ اُحْصِرْتُمْ فَمَا اسْتَيْسَرَ مِنَ
الْهَدْيِ ۚ وَلَا تَحْلِقُوْا رُءُوْسَكُمْ حَتّٰى يَبْلُغَ الْهَدْيُ مَحِلَّهٗ ۭ فَمَنْ
كَانَ مِنْكُمْ مَّرِيْضًا اَوْ بِهٖٓ اَذًى مِّنْ رَّاْسِهٖ فَفِدْيَةٌ مِّنْ صِيَامٍ
اَوْ صَدَقَةٍ اَوْ نُسُكٍ ۚ فَاِذَآ اَمِنْتُمْ ۣ فَمَنْ تَمَتَّعَ بِالْعُمْرَةِ اِلَى الْحَجِّ فَمَا
اسْتَيْسَرَ مِنَ الْهَدْيِ ۚ فَمَنْ لَّمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامُ ثَلٰثَةِ اَيَّامٍ فِى الْحَجِّ
وَسَبْعَةٍ اِذَا رَجَعْتُمْ ۭ تِلْكَ عَشَرَةٌ كَامِلَةٌ ۭ ذٰلِكَ لِمَنْ لَّمْ يَكُنْ اَهْلُهٗ
حَاضِرِى الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ ۭ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَ اعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ شَدِيْدُ
الْعِقَابِ ۝ اَلْحَجُّ اَشْهُرٌ مَّعْلُوْمٰتٌ ۚ فَمَنْ فَرَضَ فِيْهِنَّ الْحَجَّ
فَلَا رَفَثَ وَلَا فُسُوْقَ وَلَا جِدَالَ فِى الْحَجِّ ۭ وَمَا تَفْعَلُوْا مِنْ خَيْرٍ
يَّعْلَمْهُ اللّٰهُ ۭ وَتَزَوَّدُوْا فَاِنَّ خَيْرَ الزَّادِ التَّقْوٰى ۡ وَاتَّقُوْنِ يٰٓاُولِى
الْاَلْبَابِ ۝ لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ اَنْ تَبْتَغُوْا فَضْلًا مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ
فَاِذَآ اَفَضْتُمْ مِّنْ عَرَفٰتٍ فَاذْكُرُوا اللّٰهَ عِنْدَ الْمَشْعَرِ الْحَرَامِ
وَاذْكُرُوْهُ كَمَا هَدٰىكُمْ ۚ وَاِنْ كُنْتُمْ مِّنْ قَبْلِهٖ لَمِنَ الضَّاۗلِّيْنَ ۝ ثُمَّ
اَفِيْضُوْا مِنْ حَيْثُ اَفَاضَ النَّاسُ وَاسْتَغْفِرُوا اللّٰهَ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ
غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ۝ فَاِذَا قَضَيْتُمْ مَّنَاسِكَكُمْ فَاذْكُرُوا اللّٰهَ كَذِكْرِكُمْ
اٰبَاۗءَكُمْ اَوْ اَشَدَّ ذِكْرًا ۭ فَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَّقُوْلُ رَبَّنَآ اٰتِنَا فِى الدُّنْيَا
وَمَا لَهٗ فِى الْاٰخِرَةِ مِنْ خَلَاقٍ ۝ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَّقُوْلُ رَبَّنَآ اٰتِنَا فِى
الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَّفِى الْاٰخِرَةِ حَسَنَةً وَّقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ ۝ اُولٰۗىِٕكَ
لَهُمْ نَصِيْبٌ مِّمَّا كَسَبُوْا ۭ وَاللّٰهُ سَرِيْعُ الْحِسَابِ ۝ وَاذْكُرُوا اللّٰهَ
فِىْٓ اَيَّامٍ مَّعْدُوْدٰتٍ ۭ فَمَنْ تَعَجَّلَ فِىْ يَوْمَيْنِ فَلَآ اِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ ۚ وَمَنْ
تَاَخَّرَ فَلَآ اِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ ۙ لِمَنِ اتَّقٰى ۭ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّكُمْ اِلَيْهِ
تُحْشَرُوْنَ ۝

وقف النبی صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم

And accomplish the Ḥajj and the *'Umrah* for Allah, but if you are restricted, then whatever available of the animal offering. And shave not your heads until the offering reaches its place. But if anyone of you is ill, or has some trouble with his scalp, then there is a ransom through fasting or alms giving.

And when you are safe, then, whoever avails the advantage of the *'Umrah* alongwith the Ḥajj, shall make whatever available of the animal offering.

And whoever finds none shall fast for three days during Hajj, and for seven days when you return; thus they are ten in all. This is for him whose family are not residents of *Al-Masjid al-Ḥarām.* And fear Allah and be aware that Allah is severe at punishment. The Ḥajj is (in) the months well-known. So whoever undertakes Ḥajj therein, then there is no obscenity, no sin, no quarrel in the Ḥajj. And whatever good you do, Allah shall know it.

And take provisions along, for the merit of provision is to abstain (from asking). And fear Me, O men of understanding. There is no sin on you that you seek the bounty of your Lord (by trading).

Later, when you flow down from 'Arafāt, recite the name of Allah near *Al-Mash'ar al-Ḥarām* (the Sacred Monument) and recite His name as He has guided you while before it, you were among the astray. Then flow down from where the people flowed, and seek forgiveness from Allah. Certainly Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful.

And once you have fulfilled your rites, recite the name of Allah, as you would speak of your forefathers or even with greater fervor. Now among the people there is one who says: "Our Lord, give to us in this world...;" and he, in the Hereafter, has no share. And there is another among them who says: "Our Lord, give us good in this world and good in the Hereafter and save us from the punishment of Fire." For them there is a share of what they have earned, and Allah is swift at

reckoning. And recite the name of Allah during the given number of days. Then whoever is early in leaving after two days, there is no sin on him and whoever remains behind, there is no sin on him, if he is God-fearing. And fear Allah and be sure that you are going to be gathered before Him. (Verses 196 - 203)

Injunctions concerning Ḥajj and *'Umrah*

In the series of injunctions appearing under the theme of 'righteousness' which has started from verse 177, the eleventh injunction relates to the Ḥajj. Since it is tied to Makkah al-Mukarramah and Ka'bah, the House of Allah, therefore, some relevant questions have been covered partly under the subject of Qiblah from verse 125 to 128 of Sūrah al-Baqarah. They begin from وَإِذْ جَعَلْنَا الْبَيْتَ مَثَابَةً and end, at وَأَرِنَا مَنَاسِكَنَا , then, at the conclusion of the discussion on Qiblah, the injunction of *Sa'y* between *Ṣafā* and *Marwah* has been taken up in verse 158, إِنَّ الصَّفَا وَالْمَرْوَةَ , as a corollary. Now, Verse 196 - 203, from أَتِمُّوا الْحَجَّ وَالْعُمْرَةَ to فَمَنْ تَعَجَّلَ فِي يَوْمَيْنِ , the eight consecutive verses, present injunctions and questions about *Ḥajj* and *'Umrah*.

The Ḥajj, with the strong consensus of the entire Muslim *Ummah*, is a pillar among the cardinal pillars of Islam and an important obligation. It has been clearly emphasised in the many verses of the Holy Qur'ān and in numerous authentic *aḥādīth*.

According to the majority opinion, the Hajj became an obligation in the third year of *Hijrah*, that is, in the year the battle of *Uḥud* was fought, through the verse وَلِلَّهِ عَلَى النَّاسِ حِجُّ الْبَيْتِ (and as a right of Allah, it is obligatory on the people to perform Ḥajj of the House) of Sūrah Āl 'Imrān (Ibn Kathīr). In this verse, conditions of the obligation of Ḥajj have been stated and a stern warning has been given to those who do not perform Ḥajj in spite of having the ability to do that.

Out of the eight verses before us, the first verse وَأَتِمُّوا الْحَجَّ وَالْعُمْرَةَ (And accomplish the Ḥajj, and the *'Umrah* for Allah) was revealed, as agreed upon by the commentators, pertaining to the event of *Hudaybiyyah* which took place in the year 7 A.H. This tells us that the purpose of the verse is not to declare the initial obligation of the Ḥajj; that has been stated already. Instead, the intention here is to convey some special injunctions governing *Ḥajj* and *'Umrah*.

The Injunction about *'Umrah*

However, Sūrah Āl 'Imrān which declares Ḥajj as an obligation restricts itself to Ḥajj alone; *'Umrah* is not mentioned there, while the present verse mentions *'Umrah*, but does not state whether it is basically 'necessary' or 'obligatory'. It rather says that a person who begins Ḥajj or *'Umrah* by going into *Iḥrām*, then, it becomes *wājib* or necessary for him to complete that, very much like voluntary prayers or fasting where the rule is that after one starts them, their completion becomes necessary. Therefore, we do not find out from this verse the answer to the question: Is *'Umrah wajib*, or is it not? It simply tells us that once one starts it, it becomes *wajib* or necessary for him to complete it.

Ibn Kathīr cites, with reference to al-Tirmidhi, Aḥmad and al-Bayhaqi, a report from the blessed Companion Jābir that he asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ : 'Is *'Umrah wājib*?' He said: 'Well, not *wājib*, but that you do it is better and meritworthy.' (According to al-Tirmidhī, this *ḥadīth* is *hasan ṣaḥīḥ*). This is why Imam Abu Hanīfah, Imām Malik and others say that *'Umrah* is not *wajib*, but a *sunnah*. Looking back at the statement in the present verse that completing Ḥajj and *'Umrah* after one has gone into *Iḥrām* becomes *wājib* or necessary, we face the question as to what happens if, after entering into the state of *Iḥrām*, there comes up some sort of compulsion which makes it impossible to complete the Ḥajj and *'Umrah*. What has to be done in such cases has been clarified in the succeeding sentence which begins with "but if you are restricted."

Rules concerning *Iḥrām*

As this verse pertains to the event of *Hudaybiyyah* where the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his Companions were in a state of *Iḥrām* and the disbelievers of Makkah had stopped them from entering Makkah and performing *'Umrah*, thereupon came the injunction that the *fidyah* or ransom to get released from the *Iḥram* is to offer the sacrifice of an animal, such as, a goat, cow or camel whichever is easy to get. After the sacrifice has been offered, *Iḥrām* can be removed, but within the next sentence وَلَا تَحْلِقُوا رُءُوسَكُمْ : (And shave not your heads) it has also been pointed out that removing the *Iḥrām*, which is legally possible only after having shaved or close-trimmed the hair on the head, is not

permissible until the sacrificial animal of the person in a state of *Iḥrām* reaches its destined spot and is actually slaughtered.

The expression 'reaching its place', according to Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, means that it should be taken into the sacred precincts of the *Ḥaram* and slaughtered there. If one cannot do it personally, he can authorise someone else to do it on his behalf. The situation of being 'restricted' by an enemy is clearly mentioned in this verse. Imām Abū Ḥanīfah and some other jurists are of the view that if somebody is unable to complete Hajj or *'Umrah* (after wearing *Iḥrām*) because of sickness, he can also avail of the concession given by this verse, because the words 'if you are restricted' are so general that they include the restriction imposed by sickness also.

The manner in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ has practiced the instructions given in the Holy Verse is sufficient to disclose that although it is allowed in such an emergent situation to remove the *Iḥrām* after offering a sacrifice, yet it will remain obligatory to perform the Ḥajj or the *'Umrah* afresh as a *qaḍā'* (whenever the circumstances allow to do so). That is why the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his Companions did perform the *'Umrah* next year as a *qaḍā'* for the *'Umrah* missed by them at *Hudaybiyyah*.

In this verse, the shaving of the head has been indentified as the signal for removing the *Iḥrām* which proves that shaving the head (*ḥalq*) or trimming the hair (*qasr*) in a state of *Iḥrām* is forbidden. In view of this, the next injunction tells us the way out for one who faces a compelling need to shave his head in a state of *Iḥrām*.

Shaving in the state of *Iḥrām*?

In the text of the Holy Qur'ān, it is said: فَمَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ مَّرِيْضًا أَوْبِهٖ أَذًى مِّنْ رَّأْسِهٖ , that is, if one is forced to shave hair on the head, or any other part of the body, because of some ailment or irritating lice, one can do so in proportion to the need, but it has to be redeemed by giving *fidyah* in the form of fasting, charity or sacrifice. The place for sacrifice is fixed; it has to be offered within the limits of *Ḥaram*. There is no such fixed place for fasting and charity; these obligations can be accomplished anywhere. The number of fasts and the amount of charity find no mention in the words of the Holy Qur'ān, but in a *ḥadīth* of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, the Holy Prophet ﷺ prescribed in a similar situation faced

by the noble Companion Ka'b ibn 'Ujrah that he should fast for three days or give 1/2 *sā'* of wheat as charity to six needy persons. This 1/2 *sā'* comes to approximately 1.632 kilograms of wheat or its price in cash.

Combining Ḥajj and *'Umrah* during Ḥajj months

Before the appearance of Islam, the Arabs in *Jāhiliyyah* would not combine Ḥajj and *'Umrah* during Hajj months, that is, after the advent of Shawwal. They thought it was a sin. Towards the end of this verse, their misconception was corrected by restricting the prohibition on combining Ḥajj and *'Umrah* during the months of Ḥajj to only those who live within the limits of *Miqāt* because it is not difficult for them to return for *'Umrah* after the Ḥajj months. But, for those coming from outside the *Miqāt* limits, it was declared permissible because it is not easy for them to make a special trip exclusively for *'Umrah* all the way from such distances. *Miqāt* is one of the several stations appointed by Allah Almighty on every route leading to Makkah from all over the world and it has been made obligatory on everyone proceeding to Makkah to wear *Iḥrām* at this point to perform Ḥajj or *'Umrah*. Going beyond this appointed place without *Iḥrām* is a sin. The verse لِمَنْ لَّمْ يَكُنْ أَهْلُهُ حَاضِرِى الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ means just this, that is, combining Ḥajj and *'Umrah* is permissible only for a person whose family does not live within the environs of *al-Masjid al-Ḥarām*, or in other words, within the limits of the appointed stations known as *Miqāt*.

However, those who combine the Ḥajj and *'Umrah* during the Ḥajj months are obligated to demonstrate their gratefulness for having been allowed to combine two acts of *'Ibādah*. This gratitude is expressed by offering a sacrifice, if one is capable of that. This sacrifice may be offered by slaughtering a goat, cow or camel whichever is easy. But, one who is financially incapable of doing so, he is obligated to fast for ten days, the first three within the Ḥajj days completing them by the ninth of Dhul-Hijjah, the rest of seven fasts he can complete after the Hajj at a place and time of his choice. He could do so while living in Makkah or when he returns home. If a person fails to fast for three days during the Ḥajj days, for him, in the view of revered Companions, and Imām Abū Hanīfah, offering a sacrifice is mandatory. As soon as

it is possible, he can have the sacrifice offered in the *Ḥaram* through someone he knows (Jassas).

Al-Tamattu' and *Al-Qirān*; the two kinds of Ḥajj

Combining the Hajj and *'Umrah* during Ḥajj days takes two forms. The first method is to enter into *Iḥrām* for Ḥajj and *'Umrah* both right from the *Miqāt*. This is known as *Al-Qirān* in the terminology of *hadith*. Under this method the release from the *Ihram* is tied with the release from the *Iḥrām* of Ḥajj. The pilgrim has to stay in a state of *Iḥrām* until the last day of Ḥajj. Under the second method it is possible to enter into *Iḥrām* exclusively for *'Umrah* from a *Miqāt* and after reaching Makkah al-Mukarramah, and performing the fixed rites of *'Umrah* one can get out of the *Ihram*. After that, when getting ready to go to Minā on the eighth of Dhul-Hijjah, he should enter again into the *Iḥrām* of Ḥajj right within the *Ḥaram*. This is technically known as *Al-Tamattu'*. Literally, the word *Tamattu'* covers both methods since it means 'to have the benefit of combining Ḥajj and *'Umrah* both' which is equally applicable to both the methods detailed above. The words فَمَنْ تَمَتَّعَ (Then, whoever avails of the advantage) in the present verse of the Holy Qur'ān have been used in this general sense.

The warning against violation of rules

The verse 196 ends up with the words 'Fear Allah' which is a command to adopt *Taqwā* - a Qur'ānic term which has no equivalent in the English language, and denotes the attitude of fearing and abstaining from doing anything against rules set by Allah Almighty. This command has been followed by a warning: وَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ شَدِيْدُ الْعِقَابِ (and be aware that Allah is severe at punishment) which means that anyone who knowingly acts against the injunctions revealed by Allah Almighty, for him the punishment of Allah is severe. The people who go in our days for Ḥajj or *'Umrah* are widely negligent of this warning. To begin with, they do not make the necessary effort to find out the rules of Ḥajj and *'Umrah*. Then a good many do not follow the rules strictly, even if they have the knowledge. Bad guides or careless fellow pilgrims sometimes make one miss the obligatory acts, let alone the *sunnah* and the proper etiquette of the pilgrimage. May Allah bless all of us with the ability to correct what we do.

The Ḥajj Months: Prohibitions

We now move to the second verse out of the eight that deal with

the rules of Ḥajj, which is: اَلْحَجُّ أَشْهُرٌ مَّعْلُوْمٰتٌ : 'The Ḥajj is (in) the months well-known'. The word, *ashhur* is the plural of *shahr* meaning the month. It will be recalled that in the previous verse it was said that one who enters into *Iḥrām* with the intention of doing Ḥajj or *'Umrah* must complete it as prescribed. Out of these two, there is no fixed date or month for *'Umrah* which could be done anytime during a year. But, for Ḥajj, the months and the dates and timings of what one must do are all fixed. It is for this reason that the verse opens with the clarification that the Ḥajj (unlike *'Umrah*) has some fixed months which are already known. The months of Ḥajj have been the same from *Jāhiliyyah* also; they are Shawwal, Dhul-Qa'dah and the first ten days of Dhul-Hijjah as it appears in the *ḥadith* as narrated by the blessed Companions Abū Umamah and Ibn 'Umar (Maẓharī).

That the Ḥajj months begin from Shawwāl means that it is not permissible to enter into the *Iḥrām* of Ḥajj before it. According to some *Imāms*, the Ḥajj would simply not be valid with a pre-Shawwal *Ihram*. Imām Abū Ḥanīfah rules that the Ḥajj thus performed will be considered valid, but it will be *makrūh* (reprehensible) (Maẓharī).

The verse 197, that is فَمَنْ فَرَضَ فِيهِنَّ الْحَجَّ فَلَارَفَثَ وَلَا فُسُوْقَ وَلَا جِدَالَ فِى الْحَجِّ stresses upon the etiquette of Ḥajj and makes it necessary for everyone in the state of *Iḥrām* to strictly abstain from three things: *rafath*, *fusūq* and *jidāl*, which are being explained here in some detail.

A comprehensive word, *Rafath* includes marital intercourse, its prelimineries, including an open talk about love-making. All these things are forbidden in the state of *Iḥrām*. However, an indirect or implied reference to the act of love-making is not prohibited.

Literally *fusūq* means "transgression". In the terminology of the Holy Qur'ān, it means 'disobedience', the general sense of which includes all sins. Early commentators have taken it here in this general sense of the word but the blessed Companion 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar has interpreted the word '*fusūq*' here to mean only the acts which are prohibited and impermissible in the state of *Iḥrām*. It is obvious that this interpretation is more suitable to the occasion because the prohibition of sins as such is not peculiar to *Iḥrām*; they are forbidden under all conditions.

Things which are not sins in themselves but do become impermis-

sible because of the *Iḥrām* are six in number. (1) Marital intercourse, its prelimineries, even lovetalk. (2) Hunting land game, either hunting personally or guiding a hunter. (3) Cutting hair or nail. (4) Using perfume. These four things are equally impermissible for men and women both when in a state of *Iḥrām*. The remaining two basically concern men: (5) Wearing stitched clothes. (6) Covering the head and the face. According to Imām Abū Ḥanīfah and Imām Mālik, it is also not permissible for women to cover their face while in a state of *Iḥrām*, therefore, this too is included in the common *Iḥrām* prohibitions.

The first of the above six things, that is, intercourse and its correlatives, though included under *fusūq*, has yet been separated from it, and has been introduced separately through the word *Rafath*, stressing thereby the importance of abstaining from it when in a state of *Iḥrām*. This is because 'amends' can be made for the contravention of other *Iḥrām* prohibitions through *kaffārah* (expiation). But, should one fall into the misfortune of indulging in intercourse before the *Wuqūf* of 'Arafāt (stay in 'Arafāt) Ḥajj itself becomes null and void and a fine in the form of a sacrifice of a cow or camel becomes obligatory and the Ḥajj will have to be performed all over again. Because this aspect was so important, the text has mentioned it expressly.

The word '*jidāl*' means an effort to upturn the adversary, therefore, a rough altercation or quarrel is known as *jidal*. This word being very general, some commentators have taken it in the usual general sense, while others, keeping in view the place of Ḥajj and the importance of *Iḥrām*, have particularized the sense of *jidāl* here with a specific quarrel. In the age of ignorance, people differed about the prescribed place of *Wuqūf* (staying). Some thought staying in 'Arafat was necessary, while others insisted that Muzdalifah was the prescribed place to stay and, therefore, did not consider going to 'Arafāt as necessary. They even claimed that it was where Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام had stayed. Similarly, they differed in the timings of the Ḥajj as well. Some would do their Ḥajj in Dhul-Hijjah while some others would do it earlier in Dhul-Qa'dah and then, they would all quarrel among themselves around the subject and charge each other of having gone astray. The Holy Qur'ān said *Lā jidāl*, no quarrel, and put an end to all quarrels. What was proclaimed was the truth - the obligatory stay has to be

made in 'Arafāt, then, the necessary stay in Muzdalifah, and Ḥajj has to be performed in no other days but those of Dhul-Hijjah. Once the divine command is there, quarreling is forbidden.

According to this interpretation, the prohibition given in the verse is restricted to those acts only which are normally permissible, yet, they have been forbidden because of the *Iḥrām*, just as the permissible acts of eating and drinking are forbidden in the state of Fasting and *Ṣalāh* only.

But some commentators have taken *fusūq* and *jidāl* in the general sense. According to them even though the *fisq* and *jidāl* are sins, and deplorable at all places and under all conditions, but their sin becomes all the more grave in the state of *Iḥrām*. If one could think about the blessed days and the sacred land of the *Ḥaram* where everyone comes to perform *'ibādah* at its best with fervent chants of *labbayk*, telling their Lord 'Here we are at Your call', with the garment of *Iḥrām* reminding them all the time that the pilgrim is devoted to his act of *'ibādah* within the sight of Allah, how could one stoop to do what is prohibited by Allah; obviously, under such condition, any act of sin or any act of entanglement with dispute turns into sinfulness at its worst.

Taking this general sense into account, one can see the wisdom behind the prohibition of obscenity, sin and quarrel as the place and time of Ḥajj have their peculiar conditions in which one might fall a victim to these three. There are times when one has to stay away from his family and children for a long time in a state of *Iḥrām*. Then, men and women perform Ḥajj rites at *Maṭāf* (the place around the Ka'bah where *tawaf* is made) and *Mas'ā* (place between *Ṣafā* and *Marwah* were *Sa'y* is made) and at 'Arafāt, Muzdalifah and Minā with hundreds and thousands of people coming in contact with each other. In such an enormous gathering of men and women, it is not so easy to control one's inner desires, therefore, Allah Almighty has first taken up the prohibition of obscenity. Then, since so many people are around at a given time, all deeply devoted to performing their prescribed rites, there are also occasions where sins such as theft creep in, therefore, came the instruction: *lā fusūq* (no sin). Similarly, during the entire Ḥajj trip, there are many incidents where people could get to quarrel

with each other because they are cramped for space or for some other reason. The injunction: *lā jidāl* (no quarrel) is to eliminate such possibilities.

The eloquence of the Qur'an

The words in the verse: فَلَا رَفَثَ وَلَا فُسُوْقَ وَلَا جِدَالَ translated literally as 'then there is no obscenity, no sin, no quarrel ...' are all words of negation, that is, all these things are not there in Hajj, although the object is to forbid them, which could have taken the form close to saying - do not be obscene, do not be sinful and do not quarrel. But, the possible prohibitive imperative has been replaced here by words of negation and thereby the hint has been given that such doings have no place in Hajj and cannot even be imagined in that context.

After proclaiming basic *Iḥrām* prohibitions, the sentence: وَمَا تَفْعَلُوْا مِنْ خَيْرٍ يَّعْلَمْهُ اللّٰهُ (And whatever good you do, Allah shall know it) instructs that abstaining from sins and the contravention of the *Iḥrām* during the blessed days of Hajj and at sacred places is not enough. Taking a step farther, one should consider this occasion to be something that comes once in a lifetime, therefore, it is all the more necessary that one should make an effort to stay devoted to *'ibadah*, the *Dhikr* (ذکر: also transliterated as *'Thikr'*, or *'Zikr'*, meaning 'remembrance') of Allah and good deeds. The assurance given is that every act of virtue and every demonstration of goodness from a servant of Allah shall be in the knowledge of Allah and, of course, shall be rewarded generously.

The sentence that follows immediately: وَتَزَوَّدُوْا فَاِنَّ خَيْرَ الزَّادِ التَّقْوٰى : 'And take provisions along, for the merit of provision is to abstain (from asking)' aims to correct those who leave their homes for Hajj and *'Umrah* without adequate preparation claiming that they do so because they have trust in Allah. Obviously, they have to ask for help on their way, or worse still, they themselves go through privation and suffering and in the process, bother others as well. Hence, the instruction has been given that provisions needed for the proposed trip for Hajj should be taken along. This is not against *tawakkūl* or trust in Allah; it is rather, the very essence of *tawakkul*, which conveys the sense that one should first acquire and collect the means and resources provided by Allah Almighty to the best of one's capability and, then, place his trust (*tawakkūl*) in Allah. This is the exact

explanation of *tawakkūl* reported from the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Forsaking all efforts to acquire means of subsistence (*tark al-asbab*) and calling it *tawakkūl* is sheer ignorance.

Trading or earning during the Ḥajj

Verse 198: لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ تَبْتَغُوا فَضْلًا مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ : 'There is no sin on you that you seek the bounty of your Lord (by trading)' was revealed in a particular background of the *Jāhiliyyah* when the people of Arabia had distorted all rules of worship and social dealings by injecting in them all sorts of absurd customs rendering acts of devotion into amusement. They would not even spare the sacred rites of Hajj when they added to them ridiculous doings out of their wild imagination. In the great gathering at Minā, they would set up special bazaars, hold exhibitions, and put up trade promotion devices. But after the appearance of Islam when Muslims were obligated with Ḥajj, all these absurd customs were eliminated. The noble Companions رضى الله عنهم اجمعين, who would stake anything to seek the pleasure of Allah and to follow the teachings of His Messenger, started suspecting the validity of even the acts of trading or working for wages during Ḥajj days. They thought that earning in this manner is an outgrowth of the age of ignorance, may be Islam shall forbid it absolutely, so much so, that a certain person came to the blessed Companion 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar and asked: 'We are in the business of renting our camels. We have been doing it since long. People hire our camels to go for their Ḥajj. We go with them and perform our Ḥajj. Is it that our Ḥajj will not be valid?' Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar said: 'Some one came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and asked the same question you are asking me. The Holy Prophet ﷺ did not reply to his question at that particular time until the verse : لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ تَبْتَغُوا فَضْلًا مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ was revealed. Then, he called for that person and said, 'Yes, your Ḥajj is valid.'

In short, this verse makes it clear that a person, who earns some profit by trading, or wages by working, incurrs no sin. However, the practice of the disbelievers of Arabia whereby they had turned the Ḥajj into a trade fair was reformed through two simple words of the Qur'ān to the effect that they can earn if they have to, but let them earn what they do as a favour and blessing of Allah Almighty, and be grateful for it, never making it a material exercise of minting money. The words, فَضْلًا مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ : 'the bounty of your Lord' point out to this factor.

Then, the expression: لَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ preceding the words referred to above means that 'there is no sin on you' in this indulgence in earning which has a built-in hint that avoiding this indulgence too, if possible, is still better because it affects the ideal of perfect sincerity so desirable in the Ḥajj.

This whole issue, in fact, revolves round the original intention of a person. If his basic intention is to earn money through trading or employment but he has decided to perform the Ḥajj as an adjunct, or both the intentions are equally kept in mind, then, this is contrary to the ideal of sincerity and it will reduce the reward of Ḥajj and the blessings of Ḥajj would not fall to his lot as they normally would. And should it be that he leaves his home with the basic intention to perform his Ḥajj, but runs into unforeseen problems accidentally resulting in a shortage of Hajj expenses or needs of subsistence, he then, could go for a little earning through trading or employment to offset his shortage of need-oriented funds. This is, in no way, contrary to the ideal of sincerity. However, for one who has to do so, it is much better that he leaves the five special days of Ḥajj rites free of any engagement in trading or employment. Instead, he should devote these days to nothing but *'ibādah* and *dhikr* of Allah. This is the reason why some *'ulamā'* have ruled that trading or employment during these special days of Ḥajj are forbidden.

Staying in 'Arafāt and Muzdalifah:

The next statement in the same verse (198) is:

فَإِذَآ أَفَضْتُم مِّنْ عَرَفَٰتٍ فَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ عِندَ الْمَشْعَرِ الْحَرَامِ وَاذْكُرُوهُ كَمَا هَدَىٰكُمْ وَإِن كُنتُم مِّن قَبْلِهِ لَمِنَ الضَّآلِّينَ ۝

> Later, when you flow down from 'Arafāt, recite the name of Allah near *al-Mash'ar al-Ḥarām* (the Sacred Monument) and recite His name as He has guided you, while before it, you were among the astray.

The verse tells us that, on the way back from 'Arafāt, it is necessary (*wājib*) to stay overnight in Muzdalifah and to recite the name of Allah there, specially as taught.

Literally, 'Arafāt is plural in number. This is the name of a particular plain. Its geographical boundries are well-known. This plain

is located outside the limits of *Ḥaram*. All *ḥujjāj* (Ḥajj pilgrims) must reach and stay there between noon (*zawāl*) and sunset (*ghurūb*) hours. This is the most important obligation of Ḥajj for which, if missed out, there is no alternative in the form of *kaffārah* (expiation) or *fidyah* (ransom).

Several causes have been cited for the name, 'Arafāt. Out of these, the clearer explanation is that 'Arafāt is a plain where man gets to know his Lord and, through his *'ibādah* and *dhikr*, learns how to get closer to Him,and in addition to that, Muslims from the East and the West meet and know each other by direct contact.

Emphasis has been laid in the text on the stay near *al-Mash'ar al-Ḥarām* on the way back from 'Arafāt after having spent the day there and after having departed the plain soon after sunset. *Al-Mash'ar Al-Ḥarām* is the name of a mountain which is located in Muzdalifah. The word, '*al-mash'ar*' means 'sign' or 'symbol', and '*ḥaram*' being 'sacred', the name signifies that this mountain is a sacred monument to Islam. The plain adjacent is called Muzdalifah. It is necessary (*wājib*) to spend the night on this plain and offer the combined prayers of *Maghrib* and *'Ishā'* at one time in Muzdalifah. The Qur'ānic expression: فَاذْكُرُوا اللّٰهَ عِنْدَ الْمَشْعَرِ الْحَرَامِ translated as 'recite the name of Allah near *al-Mash'ar al-Ḥarām*' certainly includes all kinds of the remembrances of Allah, but here it particularly means the offering of two prayers at one time, that is, offering *Maghrib* with *'Ishā'*. This is the special act of *'ibādah* peculiar to the plain of Muzdalifah. Perhaps, the sentence that follows: وَاذْكُرُوْهُ كَمَا هَدٰىكُمْ (recite his name as He has guided you) is indicative of this aspect. It is said that one should remember Allah and recite His name in the manner He has taught without adulterating it with personal opinions because personal deduction would have demanded that the *Ṣalāh* of *Maghrib* be offered at the time set for it and the *Ṣalāh* of *'Ishā'* at its own time. But, on that day, Allah Almighty favours that the *Ṣalāh* of *Maghrib* be delayed and offered along with *'Ishā'*. From the Qur'ānic statement cited above, recite His name as He has guided you', we see the emergence of yet another basic ruling that man is not independent in worshipping and remembering Allah, that is, he cannot worship Him as he wishes and he cannot remember Him as he chooses. Instead, every *'ibādah* and

dhikr of Allah demands the observance of special rules of etiquette. These have to be performed as stipulated; doing it otherwise is not permissible. Then, Allah Almighty does not like any substraction or addition, nor any change in its prescribed time or place, even though the change may lead to an increase in the act of worship. It is observed that people tend to add some features in voluntary prayers and acts of charity from their side without having any reason approved by the Shari'ah, and going a step farther, they take it upon themselves as something necessary while Allah and His blessed Messenger did not declare it as necessary, and last but not the least, such people have the audacity to regard those who do not do all that as in error. This verse exposes their false position by saying that such additional forms of worship reflect the practice of *Jāhiliyyah* when the disbelievers had used their personal opinions and choices to concoct forms of worship and had limited the serious act to few customs.

The third verse (199): ثُمَّ أَفِيضُوا مِنْ حَيْثُ أَفَاضَ النَّاسُ وَاسْتَغْفِرُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (Then, flow down from where the people flowed, and seek forgiveness from Allah. Certainly, Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful) was revealed in a particular background. The Quraysh of Arabia being the custodians of the Ka'bah enjoyed a unique position of influence and distinction in the country. During the days of *Jāhiliyyah*, while everyone went to 'Arafāt, the Quraysh would, in order to demonstrate their unusual importance, stop at Muzdalifah and stay there. They said that, being the custodian of the Ka'bah and the care-takers of the *Ḥaram*, it was not proper for them to go out of the limits of the *Ḥaram*. Since Muzdalifah is located within the sacred limits of the *Ḥaram* and 'Arafāt is out of it, they would seize upon the excuse, stay in Muzdalifah and it was from there that they came back. The truth was that they loved to show off their pride and arrogance and made it a point to keep common people at a distance. Their erroneous conduct thus apprehended, Allah Almighty commanded them to go where everyone goes, that is, into the plain of 'Arafāt, and then, return from there with everyone else (it will be noted that in the accompanying translation of the text, the Qur'ānic word *afiḍū* has been rendered into English literally with the word, 'flow' which succinctly suggests mingling with the multitude, something shunned by the Quraysh of *Jāhiliyyah*).

To begin with, behaving special and staying disconnected from

others is a standing act of arrogance which must almost always be avoided, particularly during the days of Ḥajj where the garment of *Iḥrām* and the homogeneity of place and purpose teach the lesson that all human beings are equal, the distinction of rich and poor, learned and ignorant, big and small does not exist here, therefore, such display of assumed distinction, and that too in a state of *Iḥrām*, further increases the degree of crime.

Human equality in practice

This statement of the Holy Qur'ān teaches us an important principle of social living which demands that the the people of a higher status should not cut off their relations with those of a lower status; they should rather behave like members of a large family in their different forms of subsistence, stay and movement. This creates mutual brotherhood, concern and love, removes the walls between the rich and the poor, the employer and the employee. It was during his last sermon of Ḥajj that the Holy Prophet ﷺ openly declared for all times to come that no Arab is superior to non-Arab and no white person is superior to a black person. Superiority depends on *Taqwā* and *Iṭā'ah* (the fear of Allah and the obedience to His command). Therefore, those who wanted to establish a distinct status for themselves by staying at Muzdalifah, contrary to the rest, were told that this act of theirs was a sin and they must seek forgiveness for it so that Allah Almighty may forgive them and bless them with His mercy.

The prohibition of *Jāhilī* customs at Minā

In the verses 199 to 201, some *Jāhilī* customs have been corrected. One of these was that the Arabs of the *Jāhiliyyah* would, once they had finished their rites at 'Arafat and Muzdalifah and performed their *tawāf* and sacrifice and stay in Minā, hold gatherings to recite poetry and to eulogize the achievements of their forefathers. Such gatherings were obviously devoid of the remembrance of Allah. It was strange that they elected to waste such blessed days in activities which were of no consequence in relation to what they were supposed to do there. Therefore, they were told that, as soon as they have completed their *Iḥrām* rites and come to stay at Minā, they should dedicate their stay to the remembrance of Allah and leave out the practice of indulging in

the reminiscences of their forefathers, specially the boastful claims about their achievements. Better still was to remember Allah, not them, and that too with greater attachment and fervor. There was nothing like being engaged in the *dhikr* of Allah. So, the Holy Qur'ān guides Muslims to shun the customs coming from the age of ignorance, specially in the great days of Ḥajj they have been blessed with, which are exclusively reserved for *'ibādah* and *dhikr* and have merits and blessings of their own, a gift from Allah which may not be available again if lost through carelessness.

In addition to that, the Ḥajj is a special act of worship which one gets to perform only after a long and generally exacting journey, separation from family and business and great expense of money and time. That unforeseen circumstances prevail is not a far-out prospect. It is quite possible that one fails to achieve the long-cherished objective of Ḥajj, inspite of all efforts and expenses. Now, if Allah Almighty has, in His infinite grace, removed all impediments and one has accomplished his Ḥajj obligation by successfully performing all required rites, then, the occasion calls for gratitude which further demands that one should keep busy in remembering Allah, avoid wasteful gatherings, engagements or conversations. Compared with the time spent by the people of *Jāhiliyyah* in forefather tale-telling which brought them no benefit here, or there, the thing to do here is the *dhikr* of Allah which is all radiance and benefit for this world, and for the Hereafter. No doubt, contemporary Muslims do not follow the custom of *Jāhiliyyah* any more by holding poetic recitals to eulogize their family trees, but there are thousands of Muslims from all over the world who still spend out these precious days of Ḥajj in wasteful gatherings, entertainments, amusements, shoppings and similar other pursuits of personal satisfaction. This verse is enough to warn them.

Some commentators have explained this verse by dwelling upon the analogy of 'father' used here, in some detail. They say that one should remember Allah as one remembered his father during his childhood when he was dependant on his father for everything. If man were to think when he is young, adult and rational, is he not far more dependant on Allah Almighty at all times and under all conditions, certainly much more than a child was on his father? As for the boastful claims about the honour of their fathers, something the people

of *Jāhiliyyah* used to make, this verse eliminates that too by saying that real honour comes through the *dhikr* of Allah. (Rūḥ al-Bayān)

Moderation in religious and worldly pursuits

Besides what the people of *Jāhiliyyah* used to do during their stay at Minā, some of them had another habit during the Ḥajj. Normally, they would be engaged in acts of devotion to Allah, yet when it came to making a prayer, they would focus all their attention to praying for worldly needs, such as, comfort, wealth, honour and their likes, showing no concern for the life to come. It was to correct this sort of approach in supplication that it was said that there are people who would use the great occasion of Ḥajj to pray for the insignificant gains of the present life and forget the Hereafter. For such people the Hereafter holds nothing because their conduct shows that they have gone through the obligation of Ḥajj merely in a formal manner, or have done it to earn prestige in their society. To please Allah and to earn salvation in the Hereafter are objectives alien to them.

It may be noted at this point that the verse mentions those who pray by saying: رَبَّنَآ اٰتِنَا فِى الدُّنْيَا (Our Lord, give to us in this world ....) which does not include the word, حَسَنَةً (good). This indicates that they do not care to have what is really good even in this mortal world, on the contrary, they are so drunk with their craze for material things that nothing short of a constant fulfilment of their desires would satisfy them. They just do not bother to check if it is good or bad, procured rightly or wrongly or what people think about them.

This verse extends a serious warning to those Muslims as well who prefer to pray for their material ends only even at the unique time of Ḥajj and at places so sacred, devoting most of their concerns towards that goal. There are many rich people who themselves pray, or request others they hold in esteem to pray for them, not for deliverance from the accounting of the *Ākhirah*, but for increase in their wealth, growth in business, and for other worldly concerns. There are many who, by their profusion in *waẓā'if* and *nawāfil* (voluntary acts of worship), come to believe that they are very devoted, pious and special. In reality, hidden behind this facade is the same love of the mundane life. Then, there are respected people who maintain relations with pious elders of

their time, as well as show their regard for deceased saints and *walīs*, but the prevailing aim of such relationships is the vague hope that their *du'ā* and *ta'widh* (prayers and spiritual charms) will work for them, wordly hardships will stay away, and their belongings shall be blessed. For such people too, this verse has special instructions. Stressed here is the fact that this whole affair rests in the hands of Allah who is All-Knowing and All-Aware. Everyone must assess his or her deeds, specially the intention behind whatever is done during the Ḥajj or *Ziārah*, which includes all *waẓā'if*, *nawāfil*, *du'ā* and *ṣalāh*. Then, towards the later part of the verse, Allah Almighty refers to His virtuous and favoured servants - may be some of them are less prosperous in a material way - by saying:

مَنْ يَّقُوْلُ رَبَّنَآ اٰتِنَا فِى الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَّفِى الْاٰخِرَةِ حَسَنَةً وَّقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ O

And there is another among them who says: "O our Lord, give us good in this world and good in the Hereafter and save us from the punishment of Fire."

The word, حَسَنَةً: (*ḥasanah*) used here is inclusive of all that is good, inwardly or outwardly. For instance, *ḥasanah* or 'good in this world' shall include personal and family health, increase and benedictory sufficiency (*barakah*) in lawful livelihood, the fulfilment of all needs, virtuous deeds, desirable morals, beneficial knowledge, honour and prestige, strength of faith, guidance into the straight path and perfect sincerity in *'ibādāt*. Similarly, *ḥasanah* or 'good in the Hereafter' shall cover everything from the Paradise, with its countless and endless blessings to the pleasure of Allah Almighty and the privilege of seeing Him.

In short, this *du'ā* is a compedium of all prayers in as much as it encompasses the entire range of man's wordly and other-worldly objectives. Apart from enjoying peace in the world, and peace in the Hereafter, the verse, refers in the end to the safety from 'the punishment of Fire' as well. It was for this reason that the Holy Prophet ﷺ used to pray with these words very frequently :

رَبَّنَآ اٰتِنَا فِى الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَّفِى الْاٰخِرَةِ حَسَنَةً وَّقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ O

Rabbanā 'ātinā fid-dunyā ḥasanah, wa fil-'ākhirati hasanah, wa qinā 'adhaban-nār.

Our Lord, give us good in this world and good in the Hereafter and save us from the punishment of Fire.

It is *masnūn* to make this prayer particularly while making *tawāf*. This verse also corrects those ignorant dervishes (so called mystics) who think that real *'ibādah* lies in praying for the Hereafter alone and claim that they do not, on that count, care much about the mortal world. In reality, such a claim is false, for man depends on fulfilling his worldly needs not only for his life and sustenance, but also for performing the acts of worship and obedience. Without these, serving the objectives of faith would become impossible. Therefore, the blessed practice of the prophets of Allah has been that they prayed to Allah for the good of both the worlds. One who thinks that praying to Allah for the fulfillment of his worldly needs is against the norms of piety and spiritual dignity is unaware of the great station of prophethood, and ignorant of man's own role in this mortal world. So, what is required is that one should not focus all his attention on his material needs as if they were the very purpose of life, but he should, along with it, show far more concern for what would happen to him in the Hereafter, and pray for it.

In the concluding part of this verse, the end of the other class of people who pray for the good of the *dunyā* (mortal world) and *ākhirah* (Hereafter) both has been stated by saying that they will be rewarded in both the worlds for their correct and righteous conduct and for their prayers. Following that, it has been said: وَاللّٰهُ سَرِيْعُ الْحِسَابِ (And Allah is swift at reckoning) because His all-pervading knowledge and most perfect power is sufficient to assess the life-long deeds of each and every person who ever breathed in His creation; for this He needs none of those computing mechanisms and means on which only man depends. So, the time will soon come when He shall make man account for what he did, and it will be on the basis of that accounting that he will spread out His reward and punishment.

The emphasis on remembering Allah in Minā

In the last of the eight verses relating to injunctions about Ḥajj, that is, وَاذْكُرُوا اللّٰهَ فِيْٓ اَيَّامٍ مَّعْدُوْدٰتٍ (And recite the name of Allah in the given number of days), the Ḥajj pilgrims have been asked to engage themselves in the remembrance of Allah so that their Ḥajj meets a perfect ending and their post-Ḥajj life becomes correct and fruitful.

These 'given number of days' refer to أيام التشريق : (*ayyām al-tashrīq*) during which it is necessary (*wājib*) to say *takbīr* (which is, الله اكبر الله اكبر لا اله الا الله والله اكبر الله اكبر ولله الحمد).

Immediately following is a clarification of the duration of stay at Minā and the deadline for throwing pebbles at the three Pillars. This was an issue debated by the people of *Jāhiliyyah*. Some thought it was necessary to stay at Minā upto the 13th of Dhul-Hijjah and throw pebbles at the three Pillars. According to them, to come back from Minā on the 12th was impermissible and those who did so were sinners. Similarly, others regarded coming back on the 12th necessary, and staying there through the 13th, a sin. Both were corrected in this verse by saying: فَمَنْ تَعَجَّلَ فِىْ يَوْمَيْنِ فَلَآ إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ وَمَنْ تَأَخَّرَ فَلَآ إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ : 'Then whoever is early (in leaving) after two days there is no sin on him and whoever remains behind, there is no sin on him ...' thereby proving that both parties calling each other sinners are involved in excess and error.

The correct position is that Ḥajj pilgrims have the option of acting on either of the two permissions. However, it is better and preferable to stay there through the third day (that is, 13th of Dhul-Hijjah). Jurists say that one who leaves Minā before sunset on the second day (i.e. 12th of Dhul-Hijjah), it is not necessary for him to do his *ramy* (throwing of pebbles on the three Pillars) for the third day. But, should the sun set while he is still in Minā, it does not remain anymore permissible for him to leave Minā until he has done his *ramy* for the third day. However, the *ramy* for the third day has a special concession that it can also be done between the post-morning and pre-noon hours.

If we look at the manner in which the choice of returning from Mina has been given to the *Ḥujjāj* - no sin if they return on the second day and no sin if they return on the third day - we shall realize that all this is for the convenience of one who fears Allah and obeys His commands, for he really deserves the Ḥajj, as said elsewhere in the Holy Qur'ān: إِنَّمَا يَتَقَبَّلُ اللّٰهُ مِنَ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ which means that Allah Almighty accepts (acts of prayer and worship) only from those who are God-fearing and obedient. Now, one who has been involved in sins much before Ḥajj, continued being negligent even during the Ḥajj and was callous enough not to abstain from sins even after Ḥajj, his Ḥajj is certainly not going to be of any good to him, although, the formal obligation has

been validly fulfilled, releasing him from the possible crime of not having performed the Ḥajj.

Closing this eight-verse unit, it was said: وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّكُمْ اِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُوْنَ (And fear Allah and be sure that you are going to be gathered before Him), where He shall make you account for all your open and hidden deeds and give you the reward and punishment for these. This last line is really the essence of all Ḥajj injunctions given in these verses. It means that one should keep fearing Allah during the special days of the Ḥajj guarding oneself from any shortcoming in the prescribed acts of Ḥajj, as he should keep fearing Allah after the Ḥajj guarding himself against any pride of performance, and keep abstaining from sins because, on the day human deeds shall be weighed on the Balance, his sins will eat away his good deeds, that is, they will nullify the effect and weight of those good deeds. In a *ḥadith* about the great *'ibādah* of Ḥajj, it has been said that one who returns after having accomplished his Ḥajj, is so cleansed of his sins as if he was born on that day. This is why those performing Ḥajj have been instructed to maintain the quality of *Taqwā*, (that vital sense of responsibility before Allah). Being one who has been purified from sins, it is necessary to take all possible precautions against what tempts man to fall into sin so that one can earn the best of both the worlds, the *dunyā* and the *ākhirah*. If this is not done and the performer of Ḥajj goes back to a life of sin, even after such a cathartic experience, he shall find that the elimination of his past sins by forgiveness is not going to be of any use to him. Contrary to this, the *'ulamā'* have said that one who returns from his Ḥajj with his heart free from the love of *dunya* and attracted to the concern for the *ākhirah*, his Ḥajj is accepted and his sins are forgiven and his prayers are answered. From place to place during the Ḥajj, people pledge their obedience to Allah before His House, how can these pledges be thoughtlessly broken after the Ḥajj? If those who are lucky to perform their Hajj are a little more mindful of this factor, they might stay by their solemn pledge later on.

A pious elder said: 'When I returned from Ḥajj, it was by chance that a suggestion of sin crept into my heart whereupon I heard a voice

from the Unseen: Didn't you perform the Ḥajj? Didn't you perform the Ḥajj? This voice became a wall between me and that sin. Allah Almighty protected me.'

As against this, there is the case of another pious man from Turkey, who was a disciple of the famous Maulanā Jāmī. He was in such an unusual state of spiritual excellence in his normal life that he used to observe a halo of radiance over his head. He went to perform his Hajj, but after his return he discovered that he has lost that unusual state totally. He talked about it to his master, Maulanā Jāmī. He said: 'Before your Hajj, you had the gift of humbleness, you wept before Allah thinking of yourself as a sinner. After your Ḥajj, you became proud and picked up the airs of someone righteous, spiritually elevated. Therefore, this very Ḥajj of yours became the cause of your pride and that is why you lost that state of radiance.'

The emphasis on *Taqwā* (the fear of Allah) towards the conclusion of Ḥajj injunctions has yet another secret. It goes without saying that Ḥajj is a great act of *'ibādah*. Once it has been accomplished, that eternal adversary of man, the Satan, generally injects into man's heart the thought of self-righteousness which simply ruins all his deeds. Therefore, the final word said was about the need to fear Allah and the necessity to obey Him, not only before the Ḥajj and during the Ḥajj , but also after the Ḥajj when one must become much more particular in fearing Allah and alert in abstaining from sins by conscious effort, lest all that one has done in the form of the *'ibādah* of Ḥajj goes waste.

اللهم وفقنا لما تحب وترضى من القول والفعل والنية

O Allah, give us the ability to do what You love and are pleased with - in word, deed and intention.

Verses 204 - 207

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يُّعْجِبُكَ قَوْلُهٗ فِى الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَيُشْهِدُ اللّٰهَ عَلٰى مَافِىْ قَلْبِهٖ وَهُوَ اَلَدُّ الْخِصَامِ ۝ وَاِذَا تَوَلّٰى سَعٰى فِى الْاَرْضِ لِيُفْسِدَ فِيْهَا وَيُهْلِكَ الْحَرْثَ وَالنَّسْلَ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يُحِبُّ

الْفَسَادَ ٥ وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُ اتَّقِ اللَّهَ أَخَذَتْهُ الْعِزَّةُ بِالْإِثْمِ فَحَسْبُهُ جَهَنَّمُ وَلَبِئْسَ الْمِهَادُ ٥ وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَشْرِي نَفْسَهُ ابْتِغَاءَ مَرْضَاتِ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ رَءُوفٌ بِالْعِبَادِ ٥

And among men there is one whose words, in this life, attract you; he even makes Allah his witness on what is there in his heart, while he is so stiff-necked when quarreling. And once he turns back, he runs about in the earth trying to spread disorder therein, and to destroy the tillage and the stock; and Allah does not like disorder. When it is said to him, "Fear Allah", he is overcome by the arrogance (he has) for sin. The hell is then enough for him, and it is, indeed an evil bed to rest. And among men there is one who sells his very self to seek the pleasure of Allah. And Allah is compassionate to His servants. (Verses 204 - 207)

In the previous verses, it was said that there are two kinds of those who make prayers. Some wish to have everything right here in this world, others pray for the good of both worlds, the mortal and the eternal. In the present verse, the same two kinds have been identified as those who are hypocritical and those who are sincere.

Verses 204-206 refer to a hypocrite, Akhnas ibn Shurayq known for his eloquence. He would come to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and try to impress him with his sworn allegiance to Islam, but no sooner did he walk out of his company than he would get busy with his anti-Muslim mischief-making. Any effort to make such a person fear Allah takes him to the other extreme when he pleases his pride through sin. So, 'the Hell is enough for him.'

Commentary

The last verse (207) portrays the true, the sincere Muslim who would stake his very life to achieve the good pleasure of Allah Almighty. This verse has been revealed to honour the sincere Companions who offered unmatched sacrifices in the way of Allah. It has been reported by Ḥākim, Ibn Jarīr and Ibn Abī Ḥātim, with sound authorities, that this verse was revealed in connection with a particular event relating to the blessed Companion Ṣuhayb al-Rūmī. It has been reported that soon after he left Makkah on his emigration

route to Madīnah, he was accosted on his way by a group of disbelievers of the Quraysh. Seeing this, Companion Suhayb dismounted, took position, pulled out all the arrows from his quiver and said to the group: 'O tribe of Quraysh, you all know that I am far better in archery than any of you here. My arrow never misses its target. Now, I swear by Allah that you shall not reach me until there remains even one arrow in my quiver. Then, after arrows, I shall use my sword as long as I can. Only after that you can do what you can. However, if you want to make a deal, I can tell you where my money is in Makkah. You go and take that and let me go my way.' The confronting group of Quraysh agreed to do so. When Companion Ṣuhayb reached Madīnah, safe and unharmed, he went to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and told him everything about the incident. Upon this, he said twice:

ربح البيع ابايحيى ربح البيع ابايحيى

> Profitable was your deal Abū Yaḥyā, profitable was your deal Abū Yaḥyā!

The revelation of the verse under reference in connection with this particular event confirms the blessed comment made by the Holy Prophet ﷺ .

However, some commentators cite similar events relating to other noble Companions as the background of the verse's revelation (Mazharī).

Verses 208 - 210

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا ادْخُلُوْا فِى السِّلْمِ كَاۤفَّةً وَّلَا تَتَّبِعُوْا
خُطُوٰتِ الشَّيْطٰنِ اِنَّهٗ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِيْنٌ ○ فَاِنْ زَلَلْتُمْ مِّنْۢ بَعْدِ
مَا جَاۤءَتْكُمُ الْبَيِّنٰتُ فَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ عَزِيْزٌ حَكِيْمٌ ○ هَلْ
يَنْظُرُوْنَ اِلَّآ اَنْ يَّاْتِيَهُمُ اللّٰهُ فِيْ ظُلَلٍ مِّنَ الْغَمَامِ وَالْمَلٰۗىِٕكَةُ
وَقُضِيَ الْاَمْرُ وَاِلَى اللّٰهِ تُرْجَعُ الْاُمُوْرُ ○

O those who believe, enter Islam completely, and do not follow the footsteps of Satan. Surely, for you, he is an open enemy. And if you slip, even after clear signs have come to you, then you must know that Allah is mighty, wise. They are looking forward to nothing but

that Allah comes upon them in canopies of cloud with the angels and the matter is closed. And to Allah all matters are returned. (Verses 208 - 210)

The previous verses ended with a word of praise for the sincere. As sincerity (*ikhlāṣ*) can sometimes touch the limits of excess inadvertently, that is, one does intend to come up with more obedience, but that obedience, when observed carefully, turns out to be exceeding the limits set by the Sharī'ah and *Sunnah*. This is called *bid'ah*. This can be explained through the example of the blessed Companion 'Abdullāh ibn Salām and others who were, previous to their Islam, known scholars among the Jews. Since Saturday was the sacred day of rest (the Sabbath) in Judaism, and camel-meat was unlawful, they thought, once they were in Islam, to bring about some sort of a synthesis between the two faiths, through which they could continue to honour Sabbath as it was necessary under the law of Moses while Islam did not require dishonouring it; and similarly, they could simply avoid eating camel-meat in practice while believing that it was lawful, for it was unlawful in the law of Moses but Islam does not make it obligatory to eat it. Thus, they thought that they would stay in touch with the law of Moses and still not go against the Sharī'ah of Muḥammad ﷺ , something that appealed to them as a stronger demonstration of obedience to divine laws and a closer approach to matters of faith. Allah Almighty corrects this thought in the present verse which aims to establish that Islam is an obligation in its totality. It is total and perfect only when what is not necessary in Islam is not considered to be a part of it. To take such thought or practice as part of the Faith is a Satanic slip which may bring far more severe a punishment than common sins would.

It is in this background of the verse's revelation, that believers have been asked to 'enter Islam completely', not making allowances for a faith other than Islam - a divisive approach which makes one an easy target of Satan. Therefore, the prohibition 'do not follow the footsteps of Satan', an enemy who would cheat you into taking to something which obviously looks very much like your Faith, but happens to be totally contrary to it in reality. After having received clear laws and rules that lead to the straight path, there is no justification left for any deviation. Those who still slip, they must

remember that Allah is Mighty, having the power to punish, and Wise too, lest one should misread any delay in punishment which comes when His Wisdom so dictates. Using an eloquent image, the text goes on to question the ultimate acceptance of truth at a time when it shall no longer remain worth accepting and all matters of reward and punishment shall revert to Allah with no power existing other than Him, why then would anyone become quixotic enough to stand against a Power so obvious, the result of which could be nothing but destruction.

Commentary

The word, سِلْم : (*silm*) in ادْخُلُوا فِی السِّلْمِ كَافَّةً translated here as 'enter Islam completely', is used to convey two meanings, 'peace' and 'Islam'. At this place, according to the consensus of the Companions and their successors, it means Islam (Ibn Kathīr). The word كَافَّةً : (*kāffah*) means 'totally' and 'universally'. In the structural scheme of the sentence, this word appears as *hal* (an adverb, qualifying the verb before it with a particular state). There are two possibilities here. Firstly, the word be taken as the *hāl* of the pronoun in ادْخُلُوا : (*udkhulū*) in which case the translation would be referring to the condition of the believers while entering Islam, which must be 'complete'. This would mean that their entire person, hands and feet, eyes and ears, feeling and thinking, after having embraced the Faith should all be within the parameters of Islam and the obedience to Allah. This is to warn against a state of being in which one may be physically carrying out the dictates of Islam while the heart and the mind are not fully satisfied, or in case, the heart and the mind are satisfied, yet what one does physically remains outside the pale of Islam.

Secondly, it is possible to take the word, *silm* as the *hāl* or indicated state of the Faith in Islam, in which case, the translation would be referring to the perfect and complete state of Islam in which the believers must enter. So, 'entering Islam completely' would mean that one must accept all injunctions of Islam, not that one accepts some and hesitates about others. Since Islam is the name of that particular way of life which has been given through the Qur'ān and *Sunnah*, therefore, it does not matter, which facet of life it concerns, it may be beliefs and acts of worship or social dealings or business transactions or government and politics or trade and industry or any other field; what

matters is one's entry into Islam as a complete system, an organic whole, unified, indivisible.

The gist of the two approaches given above is that no Muslim shall be deserving of calling himself a Muslim unless he accepts all Islamic injunctions truly and sincerely from the deep recesses of his heart, irrespective of the department of life they belong to, irrespective of whether they concern the outward physique of the body or the heart and the mind.

The background of the verse's revelation mentioned earlier in the introductory remarks also shows that one must keep nothing but the teachings of Islam in sight, practice it in its entirety which will, in consequence, make Muslims independent of all religions and nations.

Special Note

The verse holds out a stern warning to those who have got Islam all tied up with *masjid* and *'ibādāt* (mosque and the performance of acts of prescribed worship) neglecting injunctions relating to social living and business and personal dealings as if they were no part of religion. This negligence is wide-spread among the 'technically' religious people who do not seem to care much about rights and dealings, specially social rights. It appears that they do not regard these injunctions to be the injunctions of Islam, neither do they make an effort to find out what they are, or try to learn them in an orderly manner, nor think of acting in accordance with these injunctions. We seek refuge with Allah.

As regards the possibility of 'Allah Almighty and the angels coming upon them in canopies of clouds,' this will be on Doomsday. The correct position is that such coming of Allah Almighty belongs to the *Mutashābihāt*, statements of hidden meaning, about which there is a standard policy practiced by the majority of the blessed Companions, the Tābi'īn, their successors, and the revered elders of the Muslim *ummah*, that is, one must believe in its truth and avoid worrying about as to how this would happen because it is beyond human reason to find out the reality and the nature, the whats and the hows of the 'Being' and the Attributes of Allah Almighty, and this too is included therein.

Verses 211 - 212

سَلْ بَنِيٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ كَمْ اٰتَيْنٰهُمْ مِّنْ اٰيَةٍۭ بَيِّنَةٍ ؕ وَمَنْ يُّبَدِّلْ نِعْمَةَ
اللّٰهِ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا جَآءَتْهُ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ شَدِيْدُ الْعِقَابِ ۝ زُيِّنَ لِلَّذِيْنَ
كَفَرُوا الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَا وَيَسْخَرُوْنَ مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا ۘ وَالَّذِيْنَ اتَّقَوْا
فَوْقَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يَرْزُقُ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ ۝

Ask the Children of Isra'il how many a clear sign We have given them. And whoever changes the blessing of Allah after it has come to him, then Allah is severe at punishment. Adorned is the present life for those who disbelieve and they laugh at those who believe while those who fear Allah shall be above them on the Day of Resurrection. And Allah gives, to whom He wills, without measure. (Verses 211 - 212)

Immediately earlier, it was said that opposing truth after clear signs have come, deserves punishment. The first verse here (211) cites the case of the elders of Banī Isrā'īl who were punished for their hostility to truth despite clear signs given to them.

Rather than follow the blessed guidance given to them, they chose to stray away from it and, as a result, underwent punishments, for instance, they received the Torah which deserved being accepted but they denied it, consequent to which, they were threatened with Mount Sinai coming down upon them. Again, they heard the Word of Allah which they should have loved and respected but they tinkered with doubts in it and consequently, were struck dead by lightening. Then, again, they were delivered from the Pharaoh through a passage-way made by parting the river, but they showed no gratitude, instead, took to the calf for which they were killed. Further again, they should have been grateful when *Mann* and *Salwā* was sent for them but they disobeyed and spoilage set in. When they showed their distaste for it, it stopped coming, throwing them into the toil of growing their own food. Lastly, the chain of prophets that appeared among them from time to time should have been a matter of great satisfaction for them, yet they started killing them for which they were punished, having been deprived of power.

In the wake of such misdeeds, some of which find mention in the

earlier part of Sūrah al-Baqarah, the divine law is that one who changes the blessings or clear signs of Allah, specially after it has come to him when he should have followed its guidance rather than turn back and go astray, then, the ultimate must come to pass, that is, Allah Almighty punishes such a deviant severely.

In the second verse (212), the real cause of the opposition to truth has been identified as the love of *dunyā* (the worldly life) and its material gains. One of the effects of this attitude shows up in the derogatory stance taken against those who love their faith. The reason is simple. When materialism overpowers, the urge for faith evaporates. In fact, people would go to the limit of abandoning their faith when it happens to be against their worldly interests and would even have the audacity to laugh at those who love and practice it. So, it should not be strange that many chiefs among the Israelites and the ignorant among polytheists would make fun of poor Muslims. It is in this context that the Holy Qur'ān says: 'Adorned is the present life for those who disbelieve' because of which 'they laugh at those who believe', although, these Muslims who have said no to *kufr* and *shirk* shall be in a state better than that of the disbelievers on the day of *Qiyāmah* (Doomsday), for the disbelievers will be in *Jahannam* (Hell) and the believers, in *Jannah* (Paradise).

The last sentence carries a warning for those who pride on their brute economic strength because it is Allah who 'gives, to whom He wills, without measure'. So, all this depends on divinely-ordained destiny and not on personal excellence or influence. As such, it is not necessary that one who is respected for personal possessions happens to be a recepient of honour with Allah as well. The truth is that real honour cannot be anything other than what turns out to be valid in the sight of Allah. That being that, would it not be a plain 'absence of sense' if one stands on the crutches of worldly riches and claims honour for himself and looks down upon the less fortunate as mean? The real consequence of such attitude shall be unravelled on the Last Day.

It has been reported that Sayyidnā 'Alī رضی اللہ عنہ said: 'Anyone who takes a Muslim man or woman low in status because of his or her hunger, Allah Almighty will put him to disgrace before a gathering of

all, from the first to the last. And anyone who falsely accuses a Muslim man or woman of a weakness, Allah Almighty would put him on a high mound until he falsifies himself.' (al-Qurṭubī)

Verse 213

كَانَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَّاحِدَةً فَبَعَثَ اللّٰهُ النَّبِيّٖنَ مُبَشِّرِيْنَ وَمُنْذِرِيْنَ
وَاَنْزَلَ مَعَهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ بِالْحَقِّ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ فِيْمَا اخْتَلَفُوْا
فِيْهِ وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ فِيْهِ اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوْهُ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا جَآءَتْهُمُ
الْبَيِّنٰتُ بَغْيًا بَيْنَهُمْ فَهَدَى اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لِمَا اخْتَلَفُوْا فِيْهِ
مِنَ الْحَقِّ بِاِذْنِهٖ وَاللّٰهُ يَهْدِيْ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ اِلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ ۝

All men used to be a single *Ummah*. Then Allah sent prophets carrying glad-tidings and warning and sent down with them the Book with the Truth to judge between people in what they disputed. And none but those to whom it (Book) was given disputed it after clear signs had come to them, led by envy against each other. Then Allah, by His will, guided those who believed, to the truth they disputed. And Allah guides whom He wills to the straight path. (Verse 213)

Earlier, the real cause of the opposition to truth has been identified as the love of the worldly life. Now, the present verses point out that, all along the lanes of time, Allah has been showing clear signs to establish the true faith, yet the seekers of the mundane benefits have been working against it to safeguard their material interests.

Commentary

Stated in the verse is the fact that there was a time when all human beings used to belong to one single community having common religion and belief - a faith, true and natural. Then came differences in temperaments and tastes, opinions and thoughts, consequently giving birth to contradicting beliefs, making it impossible to distinguish the true from the false. It was in order to make truth distinct from error and to show people the straight path of truth that Allah Almighty sent prophets with Books and revelations. After what the prophets عليهم السلام

did by way of moral education, people split apart in two groups. The first group welcomed the guidance sent by Allah Almighty and accepted to follow the prophets عليهم السلام . These are known as true Muslims. The second group belied the Scriptures and the prophets and refused to follow them. These are known as *kāfirs* or disbelievers. The opening statement in the verse كَانَ النَّاسُ اُمَّةً وَّاحِدَةً translated as 'all men used to be a single *ummah*', needs some explanation. Imām Rāghib al-Isfahānī has said in his *al-Mufradāt* that the word, *ummah* signifies a set of people gathered together for reasons of faith, time or place. This element of unicity could be that of beliefs and ideas, or that of presence in a geographical area at a given time, or that of heredity, language, colour and its likes. So, the sense of the statement is that there was a time when all human beings used to be a composite group. Two considerations emerge here which need elaboration:

Firstly, what sort of unity is stipulated in this verse? Secondly, what was the time when this unity existed? The first question was settled by the last sentence of this very verse which mentions the differences that came up later on, and that the prophets were sent to determine the true way out of the multiplicity of ways. It is obvious that the prophets and Scriptures sent to resolve these differences were not dealing with the differences in issues of heredity, language, colour, country or period. Instead, it was the difference of ideas and beliefs. This comparative examination tells us that the unity mentioned in this verse means the unity of ideas and the unity of beliefs.

So, as the sense of the verse appears now, there was a time when all human beings belonged to one set of beliefs. What was that set of beliefs? Two possibilities exist here. Either they were united under the belief of God's Oneness, or lived together under a state of disbelief and error. However, according to the majority of commentators, the weightier opinion is that all of them were united under the belief of God's Oneness. A verse to this effect appears in Sūrah Yūnus as well:

وَمَا كَانَ النَّاسُ اِلَّآ اُمَّةً وَّاحِدَةً فَاخْتَلَفُوْا وَلَوْلَا كَلِمَةٌ سَبَقَتْ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ لَقُضِىَ بَيْنَهُمْ فِيْمَا فِيْهِ يَخْتَلِفُوْنَ O

All men used to be a single *ummah*. Then, they split. Had it not been the initial will of your Lord (that the true and false and the good and bad shall exist simultaneously in this mortal

world) all their disputes would have been settled once for all (leaving no trace of the enemies of truth). (10:19)

In Sūrah al-Anbiyā', it was said:

إِنَّ هٰذِهِ أُمَّتُكُمْ أُمَّةً وَّاحِدَةً وَّأَنَا رَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوْنِ O

This *ummah* of yours is a single *ummah* and I am your Lord. So, worship Me. (21:92)

Also in Sūrah al-Mu'minūn, it was said:

إِنَّ هٰذِهِ أُمَّتُكُمْ أُمَّةً وَّاحِدَةً وَّأَنَا رَبُّكُمْ فَاتَّقُوْنِ O

This *ummah* of yours is a single *ummah* and I am your Lord. So, fear Me. (23:52)

All these verses indicate that the unity referred to here is the unity of belief and faith in the true religion.

Now, we have to determine the period of this universal human unity. The commentators of the Holy Qur'ān among the blessed Companions, Ubayy ibn Ka'b and Ibn Zayd said that the period refers to the period of '*'Azal'* (eternity without beginning) when the spirits of all human beings were created and asked أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ (Am I not your Lord?) to which every soul without exception said, 'Yes, You are our Lord'. That was the time when all human beings were on one true belief the name of which is Islam, the Faith. (Qurṭubī)

The blessed Companion 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās said that the period of this unity of belief dates back to the time when Sayyidnā Ādam came into this world with his wife. They had children who multiplied. All of them believed in the religion of Ādam and followed his teachings, specially that of God's Oneness. All of them, except *Qābil* (Cain), were obedient to the religious law.

In the Musnad of al-Bazzār, there appears an addition to the statement of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās cited above which says that this unity of belief prevailed from the time of Sayyidna Adam to that of Sayyidnā Idrīs. Upto that time all of them followed Islam and *Tauhīd*, and the period in between them is that of ten *qarns*. Probably, *qarn* means a century which sets the period at one thousand years.

Some others have said that the period dates back to the time of the deluge in the days of Sayyidnā Nūḥ in which all living were swept

away except those who had boarded the ark with Sayyidnā Nūḥ. When the flood subsided, those who survived were all Muslims, monotheists and followers of the true faith.

In reality, all these three statements are not contradictory; all three periods were such that people were one community and followed the true faith.

The second sentence in the verse says:

فَبَعَثَ اللّٰهُ النَّبِيّٖنَ مُبَشِّرِيْنَ وَمُنْذِرِيْنَ وَاَنْزَلَ مَعَهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ بِالْحَقِّ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ فِيْمَا اخْتَلَفُوْا فِيْهِ

> Then Allah sent prophets carrying glad-tidings and warning and sent down with them the Book with the Truth to judge between people in what they disputed.

It is worth noting that the first sentence said that all men used to be a single *ummah*, and in the second, this statement has been ramified by saying that Allah sent prophets and Books to resolve disputes. Obviously, the two sentences do not seem to synchronize because the cause of sending prophets and Books is the disputation of people, which did not exist at that time. However, the answer is very clear. The verse means that during the early period of human life, people adhered to one true faith, later on differences crept in, which led to disputations following which came the need to send prophets (عليهم السلام) and Books.

Something still remains. When mention has been made of a single *ummah* above, why is it that the incidence of differences has not been mentioned? Those who are blessed with some insight into the wisdom behind the style of the Holy Qur'ān would not find it difficult to answer the question, for the Holy Qur'ān, while relating past events, does not report the whole story anywhere, instead, it eliminates parts in between, which could be understood contextually. For instance, there is the prisoner in the story about Sayyidnā Yusūf عليه السلام who, after his release, came to the king and asked that he be sent to Sayyidnā Yusūf عليه السلام in order to seek an interpretation of the royal dream. This proposal of the prisoner is all that the Holy Qur'ān relates, then, the conversation begins with يُوسُفُ أَيُّهَا الصِّدِّيقُ. The text does not say that the king liked his proposal and sent him to the

prison-house to see Sayyidnā Yusūf عليه السلام and that he reached there, then, addressed him. The fact is that reading the text with sentences earlier and later makes all this simple to understand.

Similarly, the mention of differences after the mention of a united community in this verse was not considered necessary because the advent of disputes is something known by the whole world all the time. What needed to be expressed was that, before all these overflowing disputes, there was a time when all human beings used to follow one true religion. This is what was stated. Now, the disputes visible all over the world were not something that should have been expressly identified. This was unnecessary. Nevertheless, very pointedly it was said that Allah Almighty did provide for the removal of these disputes through guidance. The words of the text say: فَبَعَثَ اللّٰهُ النَّبِيّٖنَ that is, 'Allah Almighty sent prophets, عليهم السلام' who were to carry glad-tidings of eternal peace and bliss to those who follow the true Faith and to give warning of the punishment of Hell to those who turn away from it. Then, Allah helped prophets through His revelations and Books which were to make truth distinct from error in matters of beliefs and ideas. The text, after that, points out to the outcome. Inspite of the prophets and Books with open truths, the world split itself into two groups. There were some who did not accept this clear guidance, and strangely enough, the first to deny this guidance were those to whom these prophets and verses were sent, that is, the Jews and the Christians. Far more astonishing is the fact that there was no possibility of any doubt or misgiving in Scriptures which were neither beyond their understanding nor were likely to throw them into confusion. In fact, these people knew and understood it, yet it was their lust for taking an opposite stand which made them deny it.

Then, there was the second group who were enabled to follow the straight path by Allah Almighty and they became the ones to say yes to the lead given by prophets, messengers and divine books sincerely and whole-heartedly. These very two groups have been identified in Sūrah al-Taghābun as follows:

خَلَقَكُمْ فَمِنْكُمْ كَافِرٌ وَّمِنْكُمْ مُّؤْمِنٌ

Allah Almighty created you, then, some of you became disbelievers and some of you, believers. (64:2)

To sum up, the gist of the sense in the verse كَانَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَّاحِدَةً (All men used to be a single *ummah*) is that all human beings were initially and universally followers of the true faith. Then, temperamental multiplicity gave way to the promotion of self-interest which caused disputes to surface, so much so that a time came when beliefs too were disputed which in turn reached a point when the very root, the fine line of distinction between the true and the false, got all mixed up. Thereupon, Allah Almighty sent prophets عليهم السلام and His Books to guide people to the right path and to bring them back to the same true faith on which human beings already were. But, despite all guidance and very clear signs, there were some who dutifully followed these and there were others who, out of their obstinacy and hostility, took the road of denial and deviation.

Injunctions and related considerations

1. The verse tells us that Allah Almighty sent His prophets and Books into this mortal world for no other purpose but that people, who had left the single *ummah* following the true faith and branched out into different sects, should again be assembled into the same one community. Whenever people wavered from the right path, Allah sent a prophet, and a Book so that they act accordingly. The coming of prophets as a medium of reform and salvation continued when they again deviated which resulted in the coming of another prophet and another Book with the express purpose of putting people back on the right track, that is, on the straight path shown by their Lord. This is like health, a single fact of life as compared to diseases which are too many. When a certain disease showed up, Allah prescribed the appropriate medicine and regimen. Another disease brought another set of treatment.

Finally, came the most comprehensive of all prescriptions, one that will be ideally successful against all diseases until such time that Allah wills to keep this world going. This perfect prescription, a comprehensive blueprint of all diagnostic considerations, treatment par excellence, the most complete of all previous prescriptions which pre-empts all future possibilities of treatment, is none but that of Islam. For this came the last of the prophets ﷺ, and with him came the Qur'ān. There used to be the recurring problem of Scriptures being interpolat-

ed, prophetic teachings being lost which necessitated the sending of new prophets and new Books in the past. This was set right when Allah Almighty Himself took the responsibility of seeing that the Holy Qur'ān remains protected against interpolations or changes. Then, to make sure that the teachings of the Holy Qur'ān remain intact in their original form and live right through the Day of Doom, Allah Almighty promised to create and sustain a set of people from the community of Muḥammad ﷺ, a group which will always adhere to the true Faith, keep circulating the correct teachings of the Qur'ān and *Sunnah* among Muslims all over the world without ever flinching against any opposition or hostility. Therefore, after this, it was inevitable that the doors of prophethood and the coming of revelation be closed for ever. So, came the final proclamation, that of the end of prophethood.

Let there be no misgiving that during the course of history the coming of prophets and Books were ever a source of division or dissension between people. What is true, as stated earlier, is that all prophets and divine Books aimed at assembling people around one true faith to which they initially adhered.

2. We also discover here that the two-nation theory of Muslim and non-Muslim, the identification of nationhood on the basis of religion is exactly what the Qur'ān aims to support in فَمِنْكُمْ كَافِرٌ وَّمِنْكُمْ مُّؤْمِنٌ cited above. Along with it, we can also clearly see that the real foundation of the two-nation theory stands on raising a united nationhood, which flourished in the very beginning and which was based, not on the factor of the country of origin, but on believing in the Truth and following the straight path. The Qur'ānic statement: كَانَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَّاحِدَةً (All men used to be a single *ummah*) stresses that there used to be real national unity in the beginning of the world when people followed the true faith. Disputes came later. Then came the prophets who invited them to that real unity. Those who rejected their call cut themselves off from this united nationhood and were known as a separate nation.

3. The third lesson we learn from this verse is that evil people have always elected to oppose every prophet and every divine Book and have been even eager to line up their maximum forces against them.

This being the customary situation allowed to prevail by Allah Almighty, people who have the strength of faith in their hearts should not feel bad about the chronic pursuit of intrigues and hostility by the evil ones against them. Very simply, just as the disbelievers took to the ways of their elders in the form of denial, hostility and prophet-bashing, all true Muslims on the straight path should take to the consistent practice of their elders, the great prophets عليهم السلام , by staying patient against injuries inflicted on them, nevertheless, keep calling them to the true Faith with wisdom, sound advice and good grace. Perhaps, it is because of this congruity of purpose, that the next verse counsels Muslims to maintain a stance of forbearance and patience against all situations of distress.

Verse 214

أَمۡ حَسِبۡتُمۡ اَنۡ تَدۡخُلُوا الۡجَنَّةَ وَلَمَّا يَاۡتِكُمۡ مَّثَلُ الَّذِيۡنَ خَلَوۡا مِنۡ
قَبۡلِكُمۡ مَسَّتۡهُمُ الۡبَاۡسَآءُ وَالضَّرَّآءُ وَزُلۡزِلُوۡا حَتّٰى يَقُوۡلَ الرَّسُوۡلُ
وَالَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا مَعَهٗ مَتٰى نَصۡرُ اللّٰهِ اَلَاۤ اِنَّ نَصۡرَ اللّٰهِ قَرِيۡبٌ O

Do you think that you will enter Paradise despite that there have not yet come upon you circumstances as of those who have passed away before you? They were afflicted by hardship and suffering and were so shaken down that the prophet, and those who believed with him, began to say: "When the help of Allah (will come)"? Behold, the help of Allah is near. (Verse 214)

The previous verse has said how hostile the disbelievers have been to prophets and believers and, in a way, has comforted Muslims hurt by the mockery of disbelievers that there is nothing new about this antagonism. This has been there all the time. Further from this point, the present verse recounts the enormous amount of suffering faced by past prophets and believers at the hands of hostile disbelievers. This too is to console Muslims that they should be patient against the hostility of disbelievers as ideal happiness can only be achieved by getting ready and working hard for the Hereafter.

Commentary

There are two things worth serious attention in this verse:

1. Apparently, this verse seems to indicate that nobody shall enter Paradise unless he goes through hardships and sufferings, although, Qur'ānic statements and sayings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ prove that many sinners will enter Paradise simply because of the grace, mercy and forgiveness of Allah Almighty, and that they shall undergo no hardship either. This is because hardship and suffering have different levels. The lowest degree is to resist against one's own desiring self and the Satan, or to strengthen the bases of one's beliefs by countering the forces working against the true Faith. This degree of achievement is within the grasp of every Muslim. Further on, there are the middle and the higher levels. The degree of one's strenuous effort shall be the degree of one's entry in to Paradise. Thus, nobody remains untried by effort and struggle and the resulting hardship and suffering. In a *ḥadīth,* the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said:

اشد الناس بلاء الانبياء ثم الامثل فالا مثل

The hardships faced by the prophets are the hardest faced by men, after that, by those closer to them.

2. The second point one must note here concerns the prophets and their followers. That they reached a point of suffering when they cried out as to when will the help of Allah come, was not because of any doubt since that would be against the dignity of their station. In fact, the call was made in the background of Allah's promised help for which the time and place was left undetermined. As such, using these words in a state of distress indicated the desire for early help. Making such a prayer is not against one's trust in Allah (*tawakkul*) or against the station of prophethood. On the contrary, the fact is that Allah Almighty favours the earnest supplication of his servants. Who else other than the prophets and the pious of the community would be more deserving of what Allah likes?

Verse 215

يَسْـَٔلُوْنَكَ مَاذَا يُنْفِقُوْنَ ۬ قُلْ مَآ اَنْفَقْتُمْ مِّنْ خَيْرٍ فَلِلْوَالِدَيْنِ وَ الْاَقْرَبِيْنَ وَالْيَتٰمٰى وَالْمَسٰكِيْنِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيْلِ ؕ وَمَا تَفْعَلُوْا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِهٖ عَلِيْمٌ ○

They ask you as to what they should spend. Say:

"Whatever good you spend is for parents, kins, orphans, the needy and the wayfarer. And whatever good you do, Allah is all-aware of that." (Verse 215)

Commentary

Imperatives such as - 'leave disbelief and hypocrisy and enter Islam completely', 'listen to none when it comes to obeying the command of Allah', 'spend your wealth and give your life to seek the pleasure of Allah' and 'show fortitude against all sorts of hardships and sufferings' - have been emphatically mentioned in previous verses. Now, from this point onwards, there appear some details concerning this obedience which relate to one's wealth, life and other matters of marriage and divorce. All these form part of the general theme of righteousness which continues.

This statement of details is very special as these come in answer to questions raised by the noble Companions before the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The answer to questions asked came directly from Allah through the medium of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. If this were to be said in other words, one could say that the *Fatwā* (religious ruling) was given by Allah Almighty Himself. This too is correct because Allah Almighty has, in the Qur'ānic verse قُلِ اللّٰهُ يُفْتِيكُمْ فِيهِنَّ :'Say: Allah answers you about them...' (4:127) attributed the act of giving *Fatwā* to Himself. Therefore, there is nothing strange about this attribution.

It is also possible to say that these *fatāwā* (plural of *fatwā*) come from the Holy Prophet ﷺ which have been communicated to him through revelation. Anyway, what has to be realized is that the religious injunctions described in this section as answers to some questions asked by the noble Companions carry a significance of their own. Throughout the Holy Qur'ān, such special injunctions in the form of questions and answers appear at nearly seventeen places. Seven out of these happen to be right here in the Sūrah al-Baqarah, one in Sūrah al-Mā'idah and one in Sūrah al-Anfāl. These nine questions are from the noble Companions. Then come two questions in Sūrah al-A'rāf and one each in Sūrah Banī Isrā'il, Sūrah al-Kahf, Sūrah Ṭā-Hā and Sūrah al-Nazi'āt making a total of six questions, which were asked by the disbelievers. All these have been answered in the Holy Qur'ān.

The blessed Companion and commentator of the Holy Qur'ān,

'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās has said: 'I have not seen a set of people better than the Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ who, (despite their great attachment to matters of Faith and their deep love for and close relationship with the Holy Prophet ﷺ) asked very few questions.' The questions asked relate to a total of thirteen problems only, which have been answered in the Holy Qur'an because these noble souls never asked a question unless absolutely necessary (Qurtubi).

In the present verse (215), the *istiftā'* or questions asked by the noble Companions has been reported in the words, يَسْـَٔلُوْنَكَ مَاذَا يُنْفِقُوْنَ : 'They ask you as to what they should spend'. The same question has been repeated in verse 219 in the same words: وَيَسْـَٔلُوْنَكَ مَاذَا يُنْفِقُوْنَ but the answer to this one question has been given differently in the present verse (215) and later on, in verse 219.

Therefore, it is necessary to first understand the wisdom behind the two answers to one single question. This wisdom becomes clear by looking at the background in which these verses were revealed. For instance, the present verse was revealed in a particular situation when the Companion, 'Amr ibn Jamūh had asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ the question: ماننفق من أموالنا وأين نضعها ؟ (Ibn al-Mundhir - Mazharī) that is, 'what do we spend from our wealth, and where?' According to a narration reported by Ibn Jarir, this question was not that of Ibn Jamuh alone, rather, it was from Muslims in general. The question has two parts, that is, what and how much should be spent, and where should it go or who should be the recepients.

Let us now look at the second verse (219) which begins with the same question. The background of its revelation as narrated by Ibn Abī Ḥātim is as follows. When the Holy Qur'ān commanded Muslims to spend in the way of Allah, some Companions رضى الله عنهم اجمعين came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and requested an elaboration of the injunction. They wished to find out what 'money' or which 'thing' they should spend in the way of Allah. This question has one simple unit of inquiry, that is, what should they spend. Thus, the two questions somewhat differ in their approach. The first question consisted of the 'what' and 'where' of spending. The second question is restricted to 'what' only. The Qur'ānic answer to the first question shows that the second part of the question, that is, where should they spend, has been

given more importance and answered frontally and clearly. However, the first part of the question, that is, what should they spend, was answered as a corollary, and considered sufficient. Now let us go back to the two parts as they appear in the words of the Holy Qur'ān. About the first part, that is, where should they spend, it has been said:

مَا أَنفَقْتُم مِّنْ خَيْرٍ فَلِلْوَالِدَيْنِ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ

Whatever good you spend is for parents, kins, orphans, the needy and the wayfarer.

Then, the other part of the question, that is, what should they spend, was answered as a corollary through the words, وَمَا تَفْعَلُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ : 'And whatever good you do, Allah is all-aware of that'. The hint is that Allah Almighty has not placed any restriction on you as to the amount of what you should spend. The fact is whatever you spend in accordance with your capability will become deserving of a matching reward with Allah.

In short, the considered explanation of the heads of expenditure was given in the first verse (215), perhaps, in view of the real concern of the questioner about where to spend. Then, the question, what should they spend, was answered as a corollary and considered sufficient. The later verse (219) where the question was limited to what 'money' or what 'thing' should they spend was answered by saying: قُلِ الْعَفْوَ (Say: "The surplus"). These two verses yield some rules of guidance about spending in the way of Allah.

Rulings

1. These two verses are not concerned with the obligatory *zakāh* because the threshold of holdings for the obligatory *Zakāh* is fixed, and the obligatory ratio of spending under it has also been fully determined through the Holy Prophet ﷺ. None of these two have been specified in the verses under discussion. This tells us that the two verses refer to voluntary charities (*al-Sadaqāt al-nāfilah*). This also removes the doubt about the inclusion of parents as recepients of spending under verse 215, although, giving *Zakāh* to parents is not permissible under the teaching of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The reason is simple. These two verses have nothing to do with the obligation of *Zakāh*.

2. Another rule of conduct which emerges from this verse is that even the gift given or food served to parents and other near of kin, if the intention is to obey Allah Almighty in doing so, will be included under spending in the way of Allah and will deserve reward with Him.

3. Consideration should be given, while making voluntary charities, to spending only what is extra to personal needs. Spending while hurting one's own family, over-riding their due rights and subjecting them to straightened circumstances is no act of merit. Similarly, one who does not pay back his debt yet goes on squandering money in voluntary charities is not liked in the sight of Allah.

The statement about spending 'the surplus' (*al-'afw*), that which is extra to needs, has been interpreted as an obligatory injunction by the blessed Companion Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī and others. According to them, it is not permissible to hold in one's possession any money or materials surplus to needs even after paying of *zakāh* and fulfilling all rights due; it is necessary (*wājib*) to give everything extra to needs as charity (*ṣadaqah*). However, the majority of Companions, their successors (the Tābi'in) and the great *imams* of the Faith interpret the Qur'ānic verses in question to mean that whatever has to be spent in the way of Allah should be surplus to needs. It does not mean that one has to give in charity (*ṣadaqah*) everything surplus to need as something necessary or *wājib*. Moreover, this later position is what the consistent practice of the blessed Companions proves.

Verses 216 - 218

كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِتَالُ وَهُوَ كُرْهٌ لَّكُمْ وَعَسَىٰ أَنْ تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئًا
وَّهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ وَعَسَىٰ أَنْ تُحِبُّوا شَيْئًا وَّهُوَ شَرٌّ لَّكُمْ وَاللّٰهُ
يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ○ يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الشَّهْرِ الْحَرَامِ قِتَالٍ
فِيهِ قُلْ قِتَالٌ فِيهِ كَبِيرٌ وَصَدٌّ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللّٰهِ وَكُفْرٌ بِهِ
وَالْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَإِخْرَاجُ أَهْلِهِ مِنْهُ أَكْبَرُ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ وَالْفِتْنَةُ أَكْبَرُ
مِنَ الْقَتْلِ وَلَا يَزَالُونَ يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ حَتَّىٰ يَرُدُّوكُمْ عَنْ دِينِكُمْ إِنِ
اسْتَطَاعُوا وَمَنْ يَّرْتَدِدْ مِنْكُمْ عَنْ دِينِهِ فَيَمُتْ وَهُوَ كَافِرٌ
فَأُولٰئِكَ حَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَأُولٰئِكَ أَصْحٰبُ

النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خٰلِدُونَ 0 اِنَّ الَّذِينَ اٰمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا
وَجٰهَدُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللّٰهِ اُولٰٓئِكَ يَرْجُونَ رَحْمَتَ اللّٰهِ وَاللّٰهُ غَفُورٌ
رَّحِيمٌ 0

Fighting is enjoined upon you, while it is hard on you. And it could be that you dislike something, when it is good for you, and it could be that you like something when it is bad for you. Allah knows and you do not know. They ask you about the sacred month, that is, about fighting in it.

Say, "Fighting in it is something grave but, in the sight of Allah it is far more grave to prevent from the path of Allah, to disbelieve in Him, and *al-Masjid al-Ḥarām*, and to expel its people from there and *Fitnah* (to create disorder) is more grave than to kill." And they will go on fighting you until they turn you away from your faith if they could. And whoever of you turns away from his faith and dies infidel, then they are those whose deeds have gone waste in this world and in the Hereafter. And they are people of the Fire. They shall be there for ever.

As for those who believed and those who migrated and carried out *jihad* in the way of Allah, they do hope for Allah's mercy and Allah is Forgiving, Very-Merciful. (Verses 216-218)

Explanation in brief:

Verse 216 establishes the obligatory nature of *Jihād* even though it may be burdensome for some temperaments. In this case, the truth is that it is Allah Almighty who knows the reality of everything while man does not possess the full range of that knowledge. Therefore, one should not decide on things being good or bad as prompted by personal desires, rather, one must say yes to the command of Allah and follow it consistently as the most expedient course of action.

Verse 217 begins with a question which was asked by some disbelievers from the tribe of Quraysh. It has been reported that some Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ were by chance confronted by disbelievers while on a journey. During the engagement, one disbeliever got killed at their hands. The day this happened was the

first of the month of Rajab which, according to the calculation of the Companions, was the 30th of the *Jumādā al-Ukhirah*. It may be noted that Rajab is one of the 'sacred' months. So, the disbelievers taunted Muslims by saying that they did not even honour the sanctity of the 'sacred' month. The Muslims were worried and asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ about it. According to some narrations, as stated above, some disbelievers themselves came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and raised the question as a matter of objection.

The answer given is that 'fighting in a sacred month, is something grave' (but, Muslims did not do so intentionally, instead, this came to pass inadvertantly because of a misunderstanding about the date). Moreover, what the disbelievers have committed is more grave than this, because the disbelief, the placing of idols in the Holy Mosque and the expelling of Muslims from there is a greater evil than killing a disbeliever in a state of war.

Injunctions and related considerations

1. The injunction declaring *Jihād* as obligatory appears in the first of the three verses under comment in the words: كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِتَالُ : "Fighting is enjoined upon you..." which means that '*Jihād* has been made obligatory on you'. These words apparently seem to say that *Jihād* is obligatory on every Muslim in every condition. Some other verses of the Qur'ān and the sayings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, however, have clarified that this obligation is not absolute, that is, every Muslim is not charged to perform it as *Farḍ 'Ayn*, (absolute and mandatory obligation on every Muslim) instead, it is *Farḍ 'alā al-Kifāyah* whereby, should a group of Muslims come forward to discharge this obligation, other Muslims would be considered absolved from it. However, should there remain just no group ready to discharge the obligation of *Jihād* at any time or in any country, the result will be that all Muslims will fall into the sin of abandoning an obligation. The saying of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in the *ḥadīth*: الجهاد ماض إلى يوم القيامة means that it is necessary that there be, right upto the Day of Doom, a group of Muslims which keeps discharging the obligation of *Jihād*. Another verse of the Holy Qur'ān says:

فَضَّلَ اللّٰهُ الْمُجٰهِدِيْنَ بِاَمْوَالِهِمْ وَاَنْفُسِهِمْ عَلَى الْقٰعِدِيْنَ دَرَجَةً وَّكُلًّا وَّعَدَ اللّٰهُ الْحُسْنٰى

And Allah has given precedence to *mujāhidīn*, who carry out *jihād* with their properties and lives, over those who sit away, and Allah has promised good for both. (4:95)

Here, the promise of good has been extended to those also who may not be able to take part in *Jihād* because of some compulsive excuse or because of engagement in some other religious service. It is obvious that the promise of good would have never been made for those who are absent from *Jihād*, in the event that it were an absolute obligation on every individual Muslim. Similarly, this is what appears in another verse:

فَلَوْ لَانَفَرَ مِنْ كُلِّ فِرْقَةٍ مِّنْهُمْ طَآئِفَةٌ لِيَتَفَقَّهُوْا فِى الدِّيْنِ

Why could a small group from every large community of yours not come forward so that they pursue understanding in religion? (9:122)

Here, the Holy Qur'ān itself suggests a division of work whereby some Muslims carry out *Jihād* and some keep serving the cause of religious education. This can be done only when *Jihād* is *Fard 'alā al-Kifāyah* and not *Farḍ 'Ayn*.

In a *ḥadīth* appearing in al-Bukhārī and Muslim, it is said that a person sought the permission of the Holy Prophet ﷺ to take part in *Jihād*. He asked him: 'Are your parents alive?' He said, 'Yes, they are alive.' He said: 'Then, go. Serve your parents and earn the reward of *Jihād*'. Incidentally, this also tells that *Jihād* is a *Farḍ 'alā al-Kifāyah*. When a group from among the Muslims is staunchly discharging the obligation of *Jihād*, remaining Muslims can engage themselves in other services and duties. But, should there come a time when the 'Imām' or the leader of Muslims gives a general call under the compulsion of need and invites all Muslims to take part in *Jihād*, then, *Jihād* becomes an absolute obligation on everybody. In Sūrah al-Taubah, the Holy Qur'ān says:

يٰاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مَالَكُمْ إِذَا قِيْلَ لَكُمُ انْفِرُوْا فِىْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ اثَّاقَلْتُمْ

O those who believe, what has happened to you that, when you are asked to come out in the way of Allah, you become heavy? (9:38)

This verse carries the injunction relating to the general call of *Jihād* mentioned above. In the same way, should it be that

disbelievers, God forbid, invade an Islamic country and the group engaged in defence is not fully capable of it, being weak or insufficient in number, then, at that time as well, this obligation becomes 'contagious', passing on from that first group to all Muslims close by, as an equally effective obligation. And in case, they too are weak or incapable, the obligation will pass on to Muslims close to them. This situation may reach a point when *Jihād* becomes an absolute obligation on each and every individual Muslim all over the world. It is in view of these verses from the Holy Qur'ān that the majority of Muslim jurists and scholars of *ḥadith* have set up the rule that *Jihād* is *Farḍ 'alā al-Kifāyah* under normal conditions.

2. Therefore, as far as *Jihād* remains a *Farḍ Kifāyah*, it is not permissible for the off-spring to go for *Jihād* without the permission of their parents.

3. It is not correct for one who has a debt to pay to take part in this *Farḍ Kifāyah* until such time that he clears his debt off. But, should there come a time when, either due to a general call for *Jihād* or an aggressive encirclement of Muslims by the disbelievers, *Jihād* becomes *Farḍ 'Ayn*, an absolute obligation on all, then, no condition such as that of the permission of parents or of the husband or of the creditor remains operative. Towards the end of this verse, it is as a mode of persuasion that *Jihād* has been identified as something which may, temperamentally, appear 'hard' but one must remember that human intelligence and effort fails so many times when it comes to the outcome. It is not at all surprising that the most intelligent person around may take the beneficial to be harmful and vice versa. If everyone was to look back into the events of his or her life, it will be noticed right there that there was something they were going after as beneficial turned out ultimately to be very harmful, or there was something they were avoiding as harmful which later on proved to be very beneficial. This scenario of human reasoning and planning failing time and again is a matter of repeated experience, therefore, it was said that fighting in the way of Allah may obviously appear to be a loss of life and property, yet the time will come when realities will be unveiled and we shall find out that this loss was no loss, instead, it was the ultimate in gain, and a source of eternal peace.

The injunction relating to fighting in the 'sacred' months:

The second of the three verses under comment here proves that fighting is forbidden in Rajab, Dhul-Qa'dah, Dhul-Hijjah and Muharram, the four 'sacred' months. In the same way, there are several verses of the Holy Qur'ān where fighting has been very clearly forbidden during the sacred months, for instance: مِنْهَآ أَرْبَعَةٌ حُرُمٌ ذٰلِكَ الدِّيْنُ الْقَيِّمُ :'Four of them are sacred. That is the right religion' (96:36). Then there is the saying of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in the famous address of the Last Ḥajj: منها أربعة حرم ثلاث متواليات ورجب مضر: 'Four (months) from among them are sacred, out of which three are consecutive and the (fourth) is Rajab of *Muḍar*'. These Qur'ānic verses and *ḥadīth* narrations prove that fighting is *ḥaram* in the four months mentioned and this forbiddance is good for ever.

In this connection, 'Atā ibn Abī Rabāḥ, a leading early exponent of Qur'anic exegesis declared on oath that this injunction is there to stay for ever. Several others among the respected Successors (*Tabi'īn*) regard this injunction as provenly unabrogated, but in accordance with the ruling of the majority of Muslim jurists as stated by al-Jaṣṣāṣ,this injunction is one of the abrogated ones as maintained by a consensus of jurists and fighting is no more forbidden in any month.

Now comes the question as to which verse of the Holy Qur'ān abrogates this injunction. Jurists have taken different positions in this respect. Some say the verse قَاتِلُوا الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ كَآفَّةً :'And fight the disbelievers, all of them' (9:36) abrogates it. Many others regard the verse فَاقْتُلُوا الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ حَيْثُ وَجَدْتُّمُوْهُمْ :'Slay the disbelievers wherever you find them' (9:5) as its abrogator. They have taken the word: حَيْثُ here in the sense of 'anytime' meaning thereby that the disbelievers should be killed in whatever month or time they are found. Some have said that the abrogator of this injunction is the very conduct of the Holy Prophet ﷺ since he himself besieged the city of Ta'if during the 'sacred months' and it was during the 'sacred months' that he sent the noble Companion 'Āmir al-Ash'arī on the military expedition of *Awṭās*. On these grounds, Jurists in general, regard this injunction as abrogated, al-Jaṣṣāṣ calls it وهو قول فقهاء الأمصار : 'This is what the majority of the jurists says'.

Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī, under comments on this verse, and al-Bayḍāwī, under the explanation of the first section of Sūrah al-Barā'ah have

reported a consensus of the community on the abrogation of the forbiddance of fighting during the 'sacred months' (Bayān al-Qur'ān). However, al-Tafsīr al-Mazharī answers all these arguments by saying that the sanctity of the 'sacred months' is clearly present in the verse known as *Āyah al-sayf* or the Verse of the Sword, that is :

إِنَّ عِدَّةَ الشُّهُورِ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ اثْنَا عَشَرَ شَهْرًا فِيْ كِتَابِ اللّٰهِ يَوْمَ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضَ مِنْهَآ أَرْبَعَةٌ حُرُمٌ

'The number of months, with God, is twelve (mentioned) in the book of Allah, the day that he created the heavens and the earth; four of them are sacred' (9:36).

Of the verse relating to fighting, this verse was the last one to be revealed and the Address of the Last Ḥajj which was delivered only 80 days before the Holy Prophet ﷺ passed away clearly indicates the sanctity of the 'sacred months'. For this reason, the verses quoted cannot be regarded as abrogative of this injunction. Moreover, the siege of Ṭā'if did not take place in the month of Dhul-Qa'dah. It was in Shawwāl, therefore, this too cannot be regarded as its abrogator. But, it can certainly be conceded that the absolute forbiddance of fighting in the 'sacred months' which seems to reflect from the verse referred to holds an exception whereby it would become permissible for Muslims to defend themselves, or counter attack the aggressor if disbelievers themselves start the fighting during these months. This much, then, can be termed as abrogated, which finds a clarification in the verse اَلشَّهْرُ الْحَرَامُ بِالشَّهْرِ الْحَرَامِ : 'The holy month for the holy month' (2:194).

The gist of the discussion is that initiating a fight during these months is forbidden for ever, but in the event that disbelievers mount an attack on Muslims, then, Muslims are permitted to fight back in their defence. Al-Jaṣṣāṣ has reported the narration of the blessed Companion Jābir ibn 'Abdullāh who said that the Holy Prophet ﷺ did not fight in any of the 'sacred months' until such time that the initial fighting was started by the disbelievers.

The evil consequences of Apostasy

Towards the end of the verse (217), it has been said that the act of turning into an apostate after having become a Muslim shall be dealt with under the injunction حَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ فِى الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ : that is, they shall be those whose deeds have gone waste in this world and in the Hereafter.

Here are some injunctions relating to the apostates:

1. Some examples of 'deeds going waste in this world' are that the wife of an apostate goes out of the bond of marriage; if a relative of an apostate dies a Muslim, he gets no share in the inheritance; all obligations such as prayers and fasting fulfilled in one's state of Islam are reduced to nothing; for such a person funeral prayers are not offered and he or she is not buried in the graveyard meant for Muslims.

'Deeds going waste in the Hereafter' means that one gets no reward for acts of worship and enters the Hell to stay there for ever.

2. Should an apostate become a Muslim once again, at least this much is certain that he could hope to salvage himself away from Hell in the Hereafter, while during the remaining tenure of his life in the mortal world, the injunctions of Islam will be operative for him. But, there is a difference of opinion among jurists about what would happen to a person who has already done his Hajj - would it be obligatory on him, given the capability, to do it all over again, or would it not? Similarly, in the Hereafter, would the reward for his previous religious performances, such as prayers and fasting, revert back to him, or would they not? Imām Abū Ḥanīfah says that it is obligatory on him to do his Ḥajj again and he does not subscribe to the opinion that he will be rewarded for his previous prayers and fastings while Imām Shāfi'ī differs on both issues.

3. For one who is basically a disbeliever, the position is that the reward for his good deeds in a state of disbelief is held in abeyance. If there comes the time when he embraces Islam, he gets a matching reward for all such deeds, but in the event that he dies an infidel, everything goes waste. The *Ḥadīth* statement: أسلمت على ماأسلفت من خير : 'You have embraced Islam with all the good deeds which you have performed earlier' means just this.

4. In short, the fate of an apostate is worse than that of an original disbeliever. This is why *Jizyah* can be accepted from an original disbeliever while a male apostate who does not return to Islam is killed. If the apostate is a woman, she is imprisoned for life. The reason is that their conduct insults Islam and the insult of such a binding authority deserves no less a punishment.

Verse 219

يَسْـَٔلُوْنَكَ عَنِ الْخَمْرِ وَالْمَيْسِرِ ۭ قُلْ فِيْهِمَآ اِثْمٌ كَبِيْرٌ وَّ مَنَافِعُ لِلنَّاسِ ۡ وَاِثْمُهُمَآ اَكْبَرُ مِنْ نَّفْعِهِمَا ۭ

They ask you about wine and gambling. Say, "In both there is great sin, and some benefits for people. And their sin is greater than their benefit. (Verse 219)

Commentary:

This verse forms part of the series of questions asked by the noble Companions. These are as they appear in this Surah along with the answers given. Here, the question is about wine and gambling which has been answered by Allah Almighty by pointing out that the use and practice of these two things breeds major sins while people may also get some benefits from them, but the sin they release is far too grave than the benefit they give, implying that both these are worth abandoning.

Since these two issues are very serious, they need a somewhat detailed inquiry into their nature and the injunctions relating to them.

The prohibition of wine, and related injunctions:

When Islam came, drinking was common practice as part of the general state of *Jāhilī* customs. When the Holy Prophet ﷺ emigrated to Madīnah, people of that city were also accustomed to wine and gambling. Common people were infatuated with these in view of their obvious benefits. They had no idea of the evils inherent in these practices. However, it is the usual practice of Allah that there are, in every nation and in every country, sensible people who use reason to control their temperaments. They would not go near an emotional urge if it goes against the dictates of reason. In this regard, the station of the noble Prophet ﷺ was way high, for he had a built-in distaste for things which were going to be declared *ḥaram* later on. Even among the blessed Companions there were some who had not touched wine during the days it was an open practice. It was after reaching Madīnah al-Tayyibah that some Companions became deeply concerned about the evil effects of these two involvements. It was due to this concern that Sayyidnā 'Umar al-Fārūq and Mu'ādh ibn Jabal along with some Anṣārī Companions presented themselves before the Holy

Prophet ﷺ and told him how wine and gambling not only spoil man's reason but also cause financial loss and sought his advice in this connection. It was in answer to their question that the present verse was revealed. This is the first verse in which the elementary step to stop Muslim from wine and gambling was taken.

What the verse says is clear from its translation, and its explanation which follows immediately. It may be added here that the word, '*Ithm*' or sin includes everything that may become a preliminary to sin. For instance, wine dulls senses and weakens the power of reason, something basic to human excellence. Human reason acts as a brake against human indulgence in evil deeds. Once reason is blocked out, the door is opened for all sorts of evil deeds.

It will be noted that drinking has not been clearly identified as something unlawful in this verse, but its evils has certainly been pointed out, which may lead man into many sinful activities. In a way, this takes the form of a good counsel urging man to abandon it. That is why, soon after the revelation of this verse, some noble Companions took this good counsel of the Holy Qur'ān so seriously that they stopped drinking then and there. There were some others among them who thought that the verse, in fact, has not declared wine as *ḥaram*; it has, instead, identified it as a cause of sin in as much as it does lead to evils religiously undesirable, so, if they can manage to keep themselves immune from such evils, what harm could there be if they continued drinking? Consequently, so they did, until came a day when the blessed Companion, 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Awf رضی الله عنه invited some of his friends from among the noble Companions at his home. When dinner was over, everybody started drinking wine as usual. In the meantime, came the time for *Maghrib ṣalāh*. Everybody stood up for *salah* and selected one of them to lead the prayers. The Imam began his recitation from the Holy Qur'ān, but drunk as he was, he recited the Sūrah al-Kāfirūn all wrong. Thereupon, the second step against drinking was taken and the following verse was revealed:

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ لَا تَقْرَبُوا۟ ٱلصَّلَوٰةَ وَأَنتُمْ سُكَٰرَىٰ

O those who believe, do not go near *Ṣalāh* when you are intoxicated. (4:43)

Here, drinking was declared to be absolutely unlawful at the time

of the *Ṣalāh*. Other times remained open. Some of the noble Companions had totally stopped drinking following the revelation of the first verse deducing from it that something which stops one from *Ṣalāh* cannot hold any good at all. And now that *Ṣalāh* has been prohibited in a state of intoxication, one should keep his distance from that which deprives one from *Ṣalāh*. However, since wine was not forbidden clearly and explicity during hours other than those of *Ṣalāh*, there were some who continued drinking during other hours until when there occured yet another incident. This time it was the blessed Companion, 'Itbān ibn Mālik who invited some Companions, Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ being one of them. Once the dinner was over, wine was served in accordance with the custom. Then, turning to another customary Arab practice at that time, the intoxicated party started talking poetry and began reciting their respective accomplishments and excellences. The Companion Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ recited a *Qaṣīdah*[49] poem in which he satirized the Ansār (helpers) of Madīnah and eulogized his own tribal affinities. This made an Ansāri youngman angry and he hit Sa'd with a jaw-bone from a camel causing severe injury on his head. Sayyidnā Sa'd came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and complained against that Ansāri youngman. At that time, the Holy Prophet ﷺ raised his hands in prayer and said: اللهم بين لنا فى الخمر بيانا شافيا , that is, 'O Allah, give us a clear and conclusive guidance in the matter of wine'. Thereupon, the third verse regarding wine, that of Sūrah al-Mā'idah, was revealed with details declaring wine to be absolutely unlawful. The verse is as follows:

يَآاَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ اٰمَنُوٓا اِنَّمَا الْخَمْرُ وَ الْمَيْسِرُ وَالْاَنْصَابُ وَالْاَزْلَامُ رِجْسٌ مِّنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطٰنِ فَاجْتَنِبُوْهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُوْنَ O

O you who believe! wine and gambling and stone altars and drawing of lots with arrows are only an abomination, a work of Satan; so shun it, that haply you may prosper. (5:90)

The gradual forbiddance of wine

Being supreme in His authority, Allah alone knows the real wisdom behind all divine imperatives, but a close look into the Islamic legal code reveals that the Sharī'ah of Islam has left ample room for

49. An Arab poetical form introduced by the modern poet, Garcia Lorca in the West.

human emotions when following its dictates. This is to give man the least possible inconvenience. The Holy Qur'ān has itself said: لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللّٰهُ نَفْسًا اِلَّا وُسْعَهَا :'Allah does not obligate anyone beyond his or her capacity' (2:286). It was the demand of this mercy and wisdom that made Islam go slow on forbidding wine.

The gist of the Qur'ānic history of forbidding wine through a gradual process is that it has revealed four verses on the subject. As said earlier, one of these verses belongs to Sūrah al-Baqarah, the explanation of which you are reading through now. Here, wine has been identified as sin-prone, a corrupting agent. The mention of wine has been left at that point. It has not been 'forbidden'. This, in a way, is a manner of saying that the habit of drinking is worth leaving, but the direct command to quit drinking was not given.

The second verse لَا تَقْرَبُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاَنْتُمْ سُكٰرٰى :'do not go near *ṣalāh* when you are intoxicated' (4:43) appears in Sūrah al-Nisā'. Here, wine was declared to be unlawful during *ṣalāh* hours. At other times, the choice remained open.

The third and the fourth verses belong to Sūrah al-Mā'idah. In these two, as mentioned earlier, wine was declared to be unlawful clearly and absolutely.

The Sharī'ah of Islam used the method of gradual prohibition of wine for the simple reason that it would have been much too hard on human temperament to cut away from the habit of a life-time, specially so the habit of addiction to intoxicants. Scholars have said: فطام العادة أشد من فطام الرضاعة : that is, it is harder to change an ongoing habit for man than it is for a child used to suckling at his mother's breast. So, moving wisely, Islam first stressed on its evil, then prohibited it only at the time of *ṣalāh* and finally after the passage of a certain time, it was absolutely forbidden.

However, the wisdom that required a gradual process before the prohibition had equally required that once the prohibition is promulgated, it should be implemented with its full force. That is why the Holy Prophet ﷺ , in the early stages, warned people against the use of wine and told them how it invited divine punishment. He said that wine was the source of evils and indecencies and one who indulges in it can go on to commit even the worst possible sins.

In a *ḥadīth*, he said 'Wine and Faith cannot be combined.' These narrations appear in al-Nasā'ī. In the Jāmi' of al-Tirmidhī, there is a narration from the blessed Companion Anas which reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has cursed ten people in relation to wine, being the crusher or presser or squeezer, the distiller, the user, the server, the carrier, the receiver (the one for whom it is carried), the seller, the buyer, the giver (as gift), and the one who uses the income arising from it. This verbal teaching and persuasion was not all that he stopped at, he took practical steps and made a legally binding proclamation that whosoever has any wine in possession should deposit it at an appointed place.

The matchless obedience of the blessed Companions

As soon as the first order came to them, the noble Companions, obedient and responsive as they were, lost no time and took out all wine stored in their homes for personal use and poured it out on the streets then and there. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar, رضی اللہ عنہ has reported that at the time when the proclaimer appointed by the Holy Prophet ﷺ went around the streets of Madīnah announcing that wine was forbidden, whoever had a vessel of wine in his hands, threw it away right where he was and whoever had cups or goblets or flasks of wine in the house, brought these out and smashed them off. Sayyidna Anas was happily busy serving wine to a gathering of friends at that time. Present there were great Companions like Abū Ṭalḥa, Abū 'Ubaydah ibn Jarrāh, Ubaiyy ibn Ka'b and Suhayl رضی اللہ تعالی عنہم اجمعین . When the voice of the proclaimer struck their ears, everybody present said, 'Now, pour all this wine down on the ground and break all cups and goblets and ewers and pitchers.' In some narrations it is said that it was immediately with the announcement that wine had become unlawful that everyone who had a cup of wine reaching close to his lips was electrified and threw it away right there. That day, wine was flowing down the streets of Madīnah like a stream of rainwater, and as a result of that, it remained usual in the streets of Madīnah for a long time that rains would reactivate the smell of wine soaked in the ground, as well as its colour, which would show up on the surface.

When people were ordered to deposit whatever wine they had at a given place, not much was left there to deposit except the limited stock

of wine casks and bags, available in the market for commercial sales. So obedient were the noble Companions that they deposited those too at the designated place without the least hesitation. The Holy Prophet ﷺ went there personally and slit many leather wine-bags with his own blessed hands and let the rest be slit apart by other Companions.

Another Companion, a businessman who imported wine from Syria happened to be on a business trip in Syria. He had taken his entire capital with him against which he bought a stock of wine for commercial sales. When he returned with his cargo, he came to know that wine had been declared *ḥaram* before he could enter the city limits of Madīnah. Having heard about the ban on wine, the Companion who was a model of devotion and sacrifice, and who was also returning home after investing all his capital and labour hoping to make a big profit out of it, quietly stacked it on a wayside hillock, came down to see the Holy Prophet ﷺ asking him about this stock of his: 'What should I do?' The Holy Prophet ﷺ ordered him, in accordance with the Divine command, that he should tear out all those leather bags and pour the wine in them down on the ground. This wonderful lover of Allah and His Messenger did not hesitate for a moment. Using his own hands, he poured forth all his invested capital on the sands of that hill-slope. This too is a great miracle of Islam, and a demonstration of mind-boggling and virtually unrivalled obedience that came about during this episode. Imagine how difficult it is to shake off the habit of being used to something while these people were chronically habituated to consuming wine and could not stay away from it even for a little while. For them, it was just that command from their Lord proclaimed by His prophet which brought about such an instant change in their habits that they started hating the same wine and gambling they were so addicted to.

Islamic strategy for a social change

The verses above and the events connected with them present before us a model of active Muslim response to the law making wine unlawful. One may call it a miracle of Islam or a unique outcome of prophetic teaching and training or the inevitable end-product of Islamic methodology of social change, the fact is that its effectiveness was phenomenal. Compared to this was the attempt at prohibition made in the United States with the support of experts, lobbies, law,

media and constitutional amendment which failed in the face of much increased use of liquor making the authorities cancel their plans. What is the secret behind this enormous difference?

The secret is that Islam has never depended on law alone as the tool of social reform. Law not being sufficient, it has first prepared and fine-tuned the minds of its people tempering their attitudes with the golden prescription of a deep devotion to and worship of their Creator, moderation in worldly living and a genuine concern for the life to come. The great revolution brought in this manner produced matchless men who would eagerly come forward to sacrifice their life, property, honour, anything and everything at one call from their prophet. This task of preparing men who would match the mission continued throughout the Makkan period by means of rigorous spiritual training. Once such a devoted group of people was ready, then came the law. No doubt, the Americans too did their best utilizing the vast powers of the media, but they had everything with them except the concern for the life to come while the concern for the Hereafter was the very life-blood of Muslims.

The golden prescription is still there, very much valid, waiting for peaceless people round the world to use it. Let the wise think.

The good and evil of wine

The 'good' in wine is popularly known as a certain taste and a feeling of well-being, professed increase of temporary energy, and a given glow on the face. Being transient, these benefits hardly stand against the array of evils it breeds. Take the human body first. Drinking causes mal-function of the stomach, reduces desire to eat, affects facial contours, inflates the waistline, hurts the liver and the kidneys and becomes a contributor to all sorts of diseases. Reason does not work under the influence of hard drinks which goes beyond the time one claims to have become sober. The hangover turns out to be as bad. Wine, a tempting stimulant and a much romanticized poison works slowly, inspite of the spirited defence put up by its users. The fact is that drinking not only harms them but affects their children as well.

Socially, drinking may become the cause of mutual malice and enmity which is a great evil in the sight of Islamic law. It is for this reason that the Holy Qur'ān particularly mentions this evil in Sūrah al-Mā'idah:

إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ الشَّيْطٰنُ أَنْ يُّوقِعَ بَيْنَكُمُ الْعَدَاوَةَ وَالْبَغْضَاءَ فِي الْخَمْرِ وَالْمَيْسِرِ

The Satan only wants that hositility and hatred come to stay between you through wine and gambling. (5:91)

One of the most harmful drawbacks of drinking shows up when a person under its influence lets out his guarded secrets. It becomes much more disasterous if the culprit happens to be a state functionary in possession of vital government secrets. Passing these out to an enemy agent can cause great damage to the state through a coup, a political loss or a challenge to national defence. Clever spies are always on the look out for such opportunities.

So, the habit of drinking is not only an evil in itself but a mother of other evils as well making men ready to commit the worst possible crimes against their fellow-beings.

The physical evils of drinking are too well-known to recount here while its spiritual evils are equally obvious. Wine is harmful because the Holy Qur'ān says: وَيَصُدَّكُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللّٰهِ وَعَنِ الصَّلٰوةِ : 'It prevents you from remembering Allah and from the *Ṣalāh*'. Then, the question asked by the Holy Qur'ān is: 'Would you then desist?'

The forbiddance of wine: A complete view

Upto this point, we have discussed four verses of the Holy Qur'ān which deal with the unlawfulness of wine, and its forbiddance. It seems appropriate that yet another mention of intoxicants made by the Holy Qur'ān in Sūrah Al-Nāḥl in a different context should be brought into focus here so that we have all Qur'ānic statements concerning wine and intoxicants in one complete frame of reference. The said verse is as follows:

وَمِنْ ثَمَرٰتِ النَّخِيْلِ وَ الْاَعْنَابِ تَتَّخِذُوْنَ مِنْهُ سَكَرًا وَّرِزْقًا حَسَنًا اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ
لَاٰيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَّعْقِلُوْنَ ۝

And of the fruits of the palms and the vines, you take therefrom an intoxicant and a good provision. Surely, in that there is a sign for a people who understand. (16:67)

In verses preceding the one above, mention was made of Allah's blessings which cause production of human food through unique mechanisms. It was said:

وَإِنَّ لَكُمْ فِى الْأَنْعَامِ لَعِبْرَةً نُّسْقِيكُم مِّمَّا فِى بُطُونِهِ مِن بَيْنِ فَرْثٍ وَدَمٍ لَّبَنًا خَالِصًا سَآئِغًا لِّلشَّرِبِينَ ۝

And surely in the cattle there is a lesson for you; We give you to drink of what is in their bellies, between filth and blood, pure milk, sweet to drinkers. (16:66)

The text uses the word, '*nusqīkum*' which means 'We gave you milk to drink' implying that it needs no further human processing. Following this, it was said that man procures things to eat, as well as, makes things which benefit him. Here, the hint is that human processing plays some part in procuring what he eats and in making what he uses to his advantage. And it is as a result of the entry of the human factor that two types of things were produced. One of these is an intoxicant known as wine while the other is 'a good provision', such as the dates and the grapes which can be used fresh off the palms and vines or can be dried and stored for later use. In short, Allah Almighty, in His perfect creativity, gave man fruits such as dates and grapes and gave him the added right to use them as food. Now what he makes out of them is his choice, either make intoxicants out of them and thereby spoil his reason, or use them for food and energy. According to this explanation, this verse cannot be used to argue in support of the lawfulness of intoxicating wine. The reason is simple. Here, the purpose is to describe the gifts of nature and to point out to the different forms in which they could be used which is all part of the same Divine blessing. For instance, consider all that man eats and things man uses to his advantage. There are many who use these in ways that are impermissible but, the incidence of someone using things wrongfully does not preclude a blessing from remaining a blessing. So, the context of the statement needs no details as to which use is permissible or impermissibe, however, there is a subtle indication embedded here too. If we look at how '*sakar:* intoxicant' has been counter-poised by '*rizqan ḥasana*': 'a good provision', we would realize that an intoxicant is not a good provision. The majority of commentators take *sakar* to mean something that intoxicates. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī, Qurṭubī and Jaṣṣāṣ)

There is a consensus of the *Ummah* that these verses are Makkan while the unlawfulness of wine was revealed later on in Madīnah

al-Tayyibah. Even though wine was lawful at the time these verses were revealed and Muslims used to indulge in wine generally yet, even at that stage, a hint was made in the verse that indulging in wine is not good. Later on, came the Qur'ānic command which clearly and forcefully made wine unlawful.

The prohibition of Gambling

The word, *maisir* is an infinitive and lexically means 'to distribute'. One who distributes is called *yāsir*. During the days of *Jāhiliyyah*, several types of games of chance were common in Arabia. In one of such games, they used to slaughter a camel following which they would gamble while distributing shares from the meat. Some used to get more than one share while others remained deprived of even one. The one who thus remained deprived had to pay for the whole camel. The meat was, of course, distributed among the poor; the gamblers did not use it themselves.

The catch in this particular game of chance was that it benefited the poor while, at the same time, it demonstrated the philanthropy of the gamblers. That is why this game was considered a matter of pride by them. Anyone who would not participate in it was chided as miserly and wretched.

It is because of the relevance of distribution that *Qimar* is given the name of *Maisir*. All Companions, and Successors to them, hold the unanimous view that the word, *Maisir* includes all forms of *Qimār* or gambling and that all of them are *ḥaram* or unlawful. Ibn Kathīr in his Tafsīr and al-Jassās in Aḥkam al-Qur'ān report that the blessed Companions 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās, Ibn 'Umar, Qatadah, Mu'awiyah ibn Ṣāliḥ, 'Atā and Tā'wūs said: ألميسر القمار حتى لعب الصبيان بالكعاب والجوز that is, *Qimār* (of all kinds) is *Maisir* - even the games of children with dices and walnuts.

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās said: ألمخاطرة من القمار that is, *Mukhāṭarah* (to put something on stake) falls under Qimār (Jaṣṣāṣ). Ibn Sirin said: 'That which involves stakes is included in *Maisir*' (Rūḥ al-Bayān).

Mukhāṭarah or 'stake' is a deal which revolves between profit and loss, that is, there may be a chance that one gets a lot, and also, that one gets nothing. This is very much like what we find in all sorts of modern lotteries. All these types are included under *Qimār* and *Maisir*

or gambling, and are *ḥaram*. Therefore, *Maisir* or *Qimār* or gambling has been defined as a deal in which the act of making a person the owner of something of value depends on a contingency the two sides of which are equal, and consequently, there are two equal possibilities of taking total profit or absorbing total loss (Shāmi, Kitab al-Khatar wa l'ibahah, volume 5, page 355). For instance, it is quite possible that the penalty falls on A, and it is also possible that it falls on B.

To sum up, the rule is that all kinds and forms in vogue - in the past or current today or likely to emerge in the future - shall all be called *Maisir* and *Qimār* and gambling. Prize-awarding cross-word puzzles (in which the participants are charged a fee) and commercial lotteries, the generally known among whatever other forms they may have, are all included under gambling. However, should there be a prize offered by one side only, stipulating that it will be given to one who performs a certain feat, that would not matter subject to the condition that no fee is taken from that person. The reason is that, in this case, the deal does not hang between benefit and harm, but hangs between benefit and no-benefit.

Therefore, in authentic *aḥādīth*, chess and backgammon and their likes have been declared unlawful where money or property is staked in a win or lose situation. Should there be money staked in playing cards, that too will be included under *Maisir*.

In Ṣaḥiḥ Muslim, there is a report from the blessed Companion Buraydah رضی اللہ عنہ which states that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that one who plays backgammon is like one who dyes his hands in the flesh and blood of pork. Sayyidnā 'Alī کرم اللہ وجہہ said that chess is included in *Maisir*, that is, gambling. Sayyidna 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar said that chess is much worse than backgammon. (Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr)

During the early days of Islam, gambling was permissible like drinking. When the verses beginning "غُلِبَتِ الرُّوْمُ" in Sūrah al-Rūm were revealed where the Holy Qur'ān foretold that the Byzantines have no doubt lost to their rivals - the Persians, but, after a few years, the Byzantines will prevail once again. When the disbelievers of Makkah denied the prophecy, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr al-Siddīq رضی اللہ عنہ challenged them with a bet, something like *Qimār*, proposing that should the Byzantines prevail in so many years the disbelievers will have to pay a

certain amount. The bet was approved. When this prophecy of the Qur'ān actually came to pass, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr made sure that he got the waged amount from the disbelievers and brought it to the Holy Prophet ﷺ who expressed his pleasure with what had happened but asked him to give away the bet-money in charity. This is significant because Allah had kept His Messenger ﷺ protected from something that was permissible at that time but was going to be made impermissible later on. This is why he always kept aloof from wine and gambling, and there were particular ones among the noble Companions who also remained protected against these. It appears in a narration that the angel Jibra'il told the Holy Prophet ﷺ that Allah Almighty likes four character-traits in Ja'far al-Tayyar. He asked Sayyidnā Ja'far al-Ṭayyār as to what these four traits were. He said, 'Till now, I have never talked about these before anyone. Now that Allah Almighty has told you about them, I submit and relate these four to you. I saw that wine ruins reason, so I never went near it. I saw that idols cause no benefit or harm to anyone, so I never indulged in idol-worship even during the days of *Jāhiliyyah*. Since I have an acute sense of honour concerning my wife and daughters, so I never committed adultery. Then, I realized that lying is unbridled meanness, and a terrible disgrace, so I never told a lie even in *Jāhiliyyah*'. (Rūḥ al-Bayān)

Social ill-effects of gambling

The Holy Qur'ān has said the same thing about *Qimār* or gambling as it has said about wine, that is, in it, there are some benefits as well, but the harm it brings is greater than its benefits. Everyone knows this sort of benefit can make a pauper an overnight millionaire, but there are very few people who know how evil the practice is economically, socially and spiritually.

In gambling, speaking briefly, the gain of one person is dependent upon the loss of the other. The total gain of the winner is an outcome of the total loss of the loser because this transaction does not increase the (national) wealth or production. The amount of wealth remains as it was. What happens through this game of chance is that one is sucked dry of his wealth which then reaches the other, therefore, *Qimār* is a blanket undoing of a people, and the death of human morality. Isn't it that man, who should be an agent of public good, a

model of sympathy and sacrifice, stoops to the level of a beast while gambling, and starts seeing his life in the death of his brother, and finding delight in his distress, and searching for gain in his loss, and goes about harnessing all his abilities to promote his selfishness? Contrary to this are the permissible forms of transactions in trade where parties buy and sell releasing profits for both. Then, wealth circulates and increases through exchange of commercial commodities and the buyer and seller both find it beneficial.

To begin with, gambling is harmful because the addicted gambler comes to be deprived of the very habit of earning his livelihood, because he always keeps dreaming that he will simply sit and grab what belongs to the other person in no time through a bet, specially so as it involves no hard work. Some scholars have said that gambling has been called *Maisir* (as derived from the word '*yusr*' meaning 'easiness') because one can easily take possession of what belongs to the other through it. Even if gambling deals revolve around a small number of people such as two or four, their harmful effects mentioned above show up very clearly. But, here we are in this modern age, called 'the age of progress' by those handicapped by superficial vision and lack of insight into its aftermath, where we see wine of all sorts given new names and labels, where ever-new kinds of interest and ever-innovative corporate methods to promote it have been invented, commandeered and given the safe name of 'banking'; so it is with gambling where thousands of dubious forms have found currency. Some of these are so highly collective that the amount of contribution from a whole nation keeps adding up bit by bit, and in case there is a loss, that gets spread out over everybody and thus does not become conspicuous. When an amount from this total 'take' reaches the hands of one person, his gain appears to be prominent, therefore, people tend to look at his personal gain but pay no heed to the collective loss of their nation or country. Consequently, they are trapped into believing that these new kinds may as well be valid, although present here are all those harmful effects which are found in gambling confined to a small group of two or four people. Looked at from another angle, the harm brought by this large-scale gambling is much worse than that released by the older form of gambling, for its evil effects are far-reaching and spell out the ruin of a whole nation. As evident, the natural result of this practice will be that wealth belonging to the common people of the community will go on decreasing while the

capital of some capitalists will go on increasing further. Inevitably then, the entire wealth of the nation will shrink and come to be concentrated into the hands of a limited number of individuals and a limited number of families. This can be witnessed everyday in stock markets and in other forms of *Qimār*. Now, Islamic economic strategy has an important principle of its own. It declares that every deal which siphons the wealth of a whole community out into the coffers of a few capitalists is *ḥaram*, unlawful and forbidden. The Holy Qur'ān itself, while stating the principle of the distribution of wealth, has proclaimed: كَيْلَا يَكُوْنَ دُوْلَةًۢ بَيْنَ الْاَغْنِيَآءِ مِنْكُمْ . It means that the principle of distributing spoils of war among different segments of the society given by the Holy Qur'ān aims to make sure that wealth does not shrink and concentrate in the hands of a few capitalists.

Gambling, like wine, becomes the cause of mutual disputes reaching the limits of hatred and animosity, so fatal in a civilized society. To quote once again, the Holy Qur'ān mentions the evil of gambling in the following words:

اِنَّمَا يُرِيْدُ الشَّيْطٰنُ اَنْ يُّوْقِعَ بَيْنَكُمُ الْعَدَاوَةَ وَالْبَغْضَآءَ فِى الْخَمْرِ وَالْمَيْسِرِ وَيَصُدَّكُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللّٰهِ وَعَنِ الصَّلٰوةِ

The Satan only wants hostility and hatred to come to stay between you through wine and gambling, and to prevent you from remembering Allah and from the *Ṣalāh*. (5:91)

The effect of gambling, like that of wine, is that one gets recklessly involved in it, becoming unable to attend to the remembrance of Allah, and the prayer. Perhaps, this is why the Holy Qur'ān has elected to mention wine and gambling side by side in an identical manner since *Qimār* or gambling has an intoxicating pull of its own which makes one ignore the concern of what is good or bad for him.

As partly mentioned earlier, the basic evil in gambling is that one can falsely devour what belongs to others through this method without any reasonable compensation or brotherly consideration. This is what the Holy Qur'ān prohibits in the following words: لَا تَاْكُلُوْٓا اَمْوَالَكُمْ بَيْنَكُمْ بِالْبَاطِلِ : (And do not eat up each other's property by false means) (2:188).

The destroyer of many a home, the ill effects of gambling do not remain restricted to the gambler alone. They affect his whole family and become contagious to a much larger social circle because people may have entered into transactions, contracts and loan deals with him which will hurt all concerned in the event of his becoming insolvent.

Finally, in the background of rising social addiction to various *Qimār* forms, it is useful to keep in view that this evil distorts one's natural attitude to work and rivets it on imagined gains. Rather than concentrate on his physical or mental skills to increase his earnings steadily, one starts getting fixed on finding ways and means to usurp the earnings of others.

That is why the Holy Qur'ān has said: وَإِثْمُهُمَآ أَكْبَرُ مِن نَّفْعِهِمَا that is, the evils of wine and gambling are greater than their benefits.

Some juristic rules and related notes:

In this verse, the acknowledgement of some benefits of wine and gambling has been combined with the instruction to desist from them which helps us deduce the rule that the presence of material benefits in some thing or act is not contrary to its being declared *ḥaram* under the Islamic law. We know that a certain medicine or food item is called harmful if its harmful effects are far stronger than its benefits. If this was not so, nothing in this world, not even the worst, would turn out to be totally devoid of any benefit. A deadly poison, the snake and the scorpion and the wild beasts, they all have their benefits but, speaking generally, they are called harmful and people are told to watch out against them. Similarly, keeping in view the essential sense, things the evils of which are greater than their benefits are declared *ḥaram* or unlawful under the Shari'ah. None of the crimes such as theft, robbery, adultery, kidnapping and fraud are devoid of some benefit, for had they been totally benefitless no sane person would ever go near them, even though the most perfect people in all such crimes are those known for their tact and intelligence. This tells us that some or the other benefit does show up in all crimes but, since their harmfulness is greater than their benefit, no sane person stands up to declare them as useful and permissible. It is under this principle that the Sharī'ah of Islam has made wine and gambling unlawful.

2. This verse also provides the rule that the elimination of evil takes precedence over the acquisition of benefit, that is, should something give a certain benefit along with causing some harm, it becomes necessary to abandon the benefit in order to stay safe against the harm. In other words, a benefit which comes with harmfulness attached to it is ignored.

Verses 219 - 221

وَيَسْـَٔلُونَكَ مَاذَا يُنفِقُونَ قُلِ الْعَفْوَ كَذٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللّٰهُ لَكُمُ
الْاٰيٰتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَفَكَّرُونَ O فِى الدُّنْيَا وَالْاٰخِرَةِ وَيَسْـَٔلُونَكَ عَنِ
الْيَتٰمٰى قُلْ اِصْلَاحٌ لَّهُمْ خَيْرٌ وَاِنْ تُخَالِطُوهُمْ فَاِخْوَانُكُمْ
وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ الْمُفْسِدَ مِنَ الْمُصْلِحِ وَلَوْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ لَاَعْنَتَكُمْ اِنَّ
اللّٰهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ O وَلَا تَنْكِحُوا الْمُشْرِكٰتِ حَتّٰى يُؤْمِنَّ
وَلَاَمَةٌ مُّؤْمِنَةٌ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ مُّشْرِكَةٍ وَّلَوْ اَعْجَبَتْكُمْ وَلَا تُنْكِحُوا
الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ حَتّٰى يُؤْمِنُوْا وَلَعَبْدٌ مُّؤْمِنٌ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ مُّشْرِكٍ
وَّلَوْ اَعْجَبَكُمْ اُولٰٓئِكَ يَدْعُوْنَ اِلَى النَّارِ وَاللّٰهُ يَدْعُوْٓا اِلَى الْجَنَّةِ
وَالْمَغْفِرَةِ بِاِذْنِهٖ وَيُبَيِّنُ اٰيٰتِهٖ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُوْنَ O

And they ask you as to what they should spend. Say, "The surplus". This is how Allah makes His verses clear to you, so that you may ponder on this world and the Hereafter. And they ask you about the orphans. Say, "To work for their good is good. And if you live with them jointly, they are, after all, your brethren. And Allah knows the one who makes mischief distinct from the one who promotes good. And if Allah had wished He would have put you in trouble. Surely, Allah is Mighty, Wise.

And do not marry the 'Mushrik' women unless they come to believe; and a Muslim slave-girl is better than a 'Mushrik' woman, even though she may attract you; and do not give (your women) in marriage to 'Mushrik' men unless they come to believe; and a Muslim slave is better than a 'Mushrik' even though he may attract you. They invite to the Fire when Allah invites, by His will, to the Paradise and to forgiveness, and makes His verses clear to the people, so that they may observe the advice. (Verses 219 - 221)

The first part of verse 219 related to the question asked about wine and gambling, a detailed explanation of which appears in previous pages.

The second part of the verse appearing here relates to another question -- about how much should be spent in charity. The answer given is '*al-'afw*' which has been translated here as 'the surplus'. It means that one should not, by such spending, get into personal trouble in the material life of this world, or by wasting away somebody's due right, get into the pain of answerability in the life to come.

Verse 220 features yet another question in a series of several posed by the noble Companions. This question relates to the combining of the cost of maintenance of orphans. Since there was general lack of carefulness about the rights of orphans in pagan Arabia, as elsewhere, warning was given that consuming what belongs to the orphans is like filling bellies with embers of Hell. Consequently, the recepients of this warning were so scared that they, out of preventive measure, started preparing and storing meals given to orphans separately. In case the child ate less, food was left over and, naturally so, got decomposed. The reason: It was not permissible for them to use food which belonged to the orphans, nor did they have the right to give what belonged to the orphans in charity. This was a matter of sheer discomfort and a source of loss to the orphans as well. Therefore, the situation was brought to the notice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ following which came the guidance given in this verse.

It is being said here that the purpose is not to compromise the welfare of the orphaned children. Since their welfare is served better through a joint expense system, there is nothing to worry about, for they are brothers-in-faith and brothers do share.

The above permission has been hemmed by a warning that Allah watches over the performance of guardians in this matter. He could have, by setting up a harder code of conduct, put them in trouble because He is All-Powerful. But, He has provided an easier code of conduct because He is All-Wise and does not obligate people with what they cannot do.

Verse 221 carries an injunction relating to marriage with *Mushrikīn* (those who associate partners with Allah). The commentary which follows explains the injunction in some detail.

Inter-Marriage between Muslims and *Kāfirs* is Prohibited

In the verses under discussion an important ruling has been given. It states that the marriage of Muslim males with *Kāfir* (disbelieving in

Islam) females and the marriage of *Kāfir* females with Muslim males is not permissible. The reason is: *Kāfir* males and females become the cause that leads man into the Hell. Marital relations demand mutual love and harmony and without these the real purpose behind such relationship remains unrealized. If such close relations of love and affection are established with *Mushrikīn* or disbelievers, the inevitable effect will be that Muslims may emotionally tilt towards *Kufr* and *Shirk* or, in a lesser degree, the very abhorrence of *Kufr* and *Shirk* may just not remain there in their hearts. Consequently, they too, may get involved with *Kufr* and *Shirk* and thereby end up in Hell. Therefore, it was said that these people call everyone to come to Hell while Allah Almighty calls man to Paradise and to His forgiveness and, for this purpose, states His injunctions openly and clearly so that people follow the wise counsel. Let us consider a few points at this stage:

1. If the word, *Mushrik* in this verse is taken to mean non-Muslims as a whole it would be necessary to exempt non-Muslim women of the *Ahl al-Kitab* (the people of the Book) from the purview of this injunction, because it is expressly stated in another verse that:

وَالْمُحْصَنٰتُ مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ

And good women from among those given the Book before you (marriage with whom is lawful for you). (5:5)

But if the word *Mushrik* is taken to mean specially those non-Muslims who are not from amongst the *Ahl al-Kitāb* (People of the Book i.e. the Jews and the Christians), this verse needs no exception, because it covers only those non-Muslims who do not believe in any prophet and scripture.

2. Let us take the second important point. The Qur'ān forbids marital relations between Muslims and disbelievers for the reason that such close relations could become the source of involvement in *Kufr* and *Shirk*. Now this is apparently true of all non-Muslim groups. Why then, the women from amongst the *Ahl al-Kitāb* (the Jews and the Christians) have been excluded?

The answer is obvious. The difference the people of the Book have with Islam is relatively lesser and lighter as compared with other non-Muslims. Islamic belief is tri-polar, that is, *Tauhīd* (Oneness of

God), *Ākhirah* (Hereafter) and *Risālah* (Prophethood). Out of these, if we consider the belief in *Ākhirah*, even the Jews and Christians from amongst the people of the Book agree with Muslims in accordance with their original faith, wherein, very similarly, it is *kufr* (infidelity) even in their original faith to attribute partners with God. That the Christians, in their love for Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام , and in their over-enthusiasm towards respecting him, entered the borders of *Shirk*, is a different matter.

Now the basic difference that remains is that they do not believe in Muḥammad as His Messenger ﷺ . In Islam, this belief is cardinal. Without it, no one can become a true Muslim. However, the fact remains that the difference the people of the Book have is lesser and lighter as compared with other non-Muslim groups. Therefore, the danger of corruptibility is not that great here.

3. A question may be raised here that the difference between the people of the Book having been declared lighter, it was made permissible for Muslim men to marry their women. So the converse of this proposition, that is, the marriage of Muslim women with non-Muslim people of the Book, should also be permissible. But a little reflection will be sufficient to establish the basic difference between the two situations. Women are somewhat weaker by nature. Then the husband has been given a controlling and care-taking role. So the likelihood of a woman being impressed by his beliefs and views is not that remote. Therefore, should a Muslim woman stay in a marriage relationship with a non-Muslim *Kitābī*, (Christian or Jew) the chances of her belief being spoiled are strong.

Contrary to this, should a non-Muslim *Kitābī* woman (Jew or Christian) live married to a Muslim man, it is unlikely in principle that her ideas will impress the husband. Is someone takes to a converse position in total disregard of the normal principles and falls prey to his wife's instigation, it will be because of his own fault.

4. Let us clarify another doubt which may be raised here. The marital relations may influence both the parties equally. Therefore, if there is an apprehension that a Muslim spouse will be influenced by his or her counterpart in the matter of faith, there is also a counter possibility that the non-Muslim spouse will be influenced by his or her

Muslim spouse, whereupon he or she will embrace Islam. Both possibilities being equally open, the marital relations between Muslims and non-Muslims should not have been prohibited.

But the wisdom behind this prohibition is that where the danger of a harm and the hope of a benefit are equally applicable, then the reasonable attitude will be to pay more attention to preventing harm than to seeking benefit. There is a well-known Persian saying: عقلمند تریاق بیقین وزهر بگما نخورد i.e. A wise man does not eat the antedote with certainty and the poison with doubt. On the basis of this principle, the hope of the non-Muslim spouse embracing Islam has been ignored, and the apprehension of a Muslim spouse being impressed by the anti-Islamic faith or behaviour has been effectively taken care of.

5. The fifth point worth considering is that the meaning of the permission to Muslim men to marry Jewish and Christian women under formal *nikāh* (marriage contract) is simply to state that such *nikāh*, if made, will become valid and the children born out of this wedlock will be legitimate. But there are statements in *aḥādith* which prove that even this *nikāh* is not viewed with favour. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said that a Muslim should seek to marry a woman who fully observes Islamic faith and conduct -- so that she becomes for him a source of strength in their joint pursuit of their faith, and their progeny may have the opportunity to grow up under their care as practising Muslims. When marriage with a non-practising Muslim woman was not looked at with favour, how would it become favourable in the case of some non-Muslim woman? This is why Sayyidnā 'Umar al-Fārūq رضی اللہ عنہ , on learning that such marriages are finding alarming currency in Irāq and Syria, stopped these with an executive order which pointed out that such marital relations cause corruption in Muslim families both religiously and politically. (Kitāb al-Athar-lil-Imam Muḥammad). The effect of such marriages in contemporary times when non-Muslim people of the Book, the Jews and the Christians, have a record of political deception, political marriages, entry into Muslim families with persuasion techniques and spying objectives is too obvious and has been admitted by Christian writers themselves as reported in some details by Major General Akbar in his book, *Ḥadith-e-Difā'*,

with proper references. It appears that Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه was virtually looking into the future as it would come to be.

Specially in our days, there is another important reason for avoiding marital relations with the People of the Book. If the lives of a majority of contemporary Europeans (and Americans), who are called Jews and Christians, and are registered as such in their census records, were researched it will be discovered that an enormous lot of them have nothing to do with Christianity or Judaism. They are atheistically irreligious. They do not believe in Sayyidnā 'Isā عليه السلام, or in the Bible. They do not believe in Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, or in the Torah -- not even in God or a Day of Judgment. It is obvious that such people do not come under the purview of the Qur'ānic injunction permitting marriage (with the people of the Book). *Nikāh* (marriage) with their women is absolutely *ḥaram* (unlawful). It is clear that such people do not qualify for the exception given in the Qur'ānic verse :

وَالْمُحْصَنٰتُ مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ أُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ

And good women from among those given the Book before you (marriage with whom is lawful for you).

Therefore, *nikāh* (marriage) with their women, like those of other non-Muslims, is absolutely *ḥaram* (unlawful).

Special notes from Bayān al-Qur'ān by Maulanā Ashraf 'Ali Thānavī

1. It is not correct to marry women from among the group of people who, on the basis of their name and identity, are considered from among the people of the Book but are not proved to be so after a scrutiny of beliefs. For instance, common people these days take white westerners to be generally Christians although some of their beliefs have turned out to be totally atheistic under critical observation. How can people who do not believe in God, in the prophethood of Jesus Christ and in the Bible as revealed scripture be Christians?

Marrying a woman from such a group of people is not correct. Those who marry women from the West without finding out what is involved therein make a gross mistake.

2. Similarly, it is not correct to give a Muslim woman in marriage to a man who, in his outward status, is supposed to be a Muslim but whose beliefs are identical with those of a non-Muslim. And should

such corruption of beliefs occur after having been married, the *nikāh* or the marriage-contract breaks *ipso facto*. For instance, a large number of Muslims, in ignorance of their religion and under the influence of the so-called 'modern thinking', ruin their beliefs. It is, therefore, obligatory for the guardians of a girl that they should first investigate into the beliefs of the proposer before they accept the proposal.

Verses 222 - 223

وَيَسْـَٔلُوْنَكَ عَنِ الْمَحِيْضِ ۭ قُلْ هُوَ اَذًى ۙ فَاعْتَزِلُوا النِّسَاۗءَ فِي
الْمَحِيْضِ ۙ وَلَا تَقْرَبُوْهُنَّ حَتّٰى يَطْهُرْنَ ۚ فَاِذَا تَطَهَّرْنَ فَاْتُوْهُنَّ مِنْ
حَيْثُ اَمَرَكُمُ اللّٰهُ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحِبُّ التَّوَّابِيْنَ وَيُحِبُّ
الْمُتَطَهِّرِيْنَ ۝ نِسَاۗؤُكُمْ حَرْثٌ لَّكُمْ ۠ فَاْتُوْا حَرْثَكُمْ اَنّٰى شِئْتُمْ ۡ
وَقَدِّمُوْا لِاَنْفُسِكُمْ ۭ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّكُمْ مُّلٰقُوْهُ ۭ وَبَشِّرِ
الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ۝

And they ask you about menstruation. Say: "It is an impurity. So, keep away from the women during menstruation; and do not have intimacy with them until they are cleansed. But when they are cleansed, then go unto them from where Allah has commanded you. Surely Allah loves those who are most repenting, and loves those who keep themselves pure. Your women are for you a soil to cultivate. So, come unto your soil from where you will, and advance something for yourselves, and fear Allah and know that you are to meet Him and give good news to the believers." (Verses 222 - 223)

No sexual intercourse during menstruation

The basic purpose of these verses is to declare the prohibition of having sexual intercourse with a woman in a state of menstruation. If someone committed sexual intercourse in such a state either unknowingly or carelessly, he has to make *Taubah* (repentance). In this context it has been said in the verse 222 that "Allah loves those who are most repenting."

The verse 223 points out to the lawful ways of having sexual intercourse with one's woman. The permission of such intercourse has been subjected to two conditions. Firstly, it should take place at a time when the woman is pure from her menstruation. Secondly, carnal intercourse is not allowed at all. This verse begins with a comprehensive remark: "Your women are for you a soil to cultivate." Here the woman has been compared with a soil, while the husband has been compared with a cultivator. This is to indicate that the sexual intercourse has not been allowed for satisfying the sexual lust only, but also to make it a valid source for having children. By using this expression the Holy Qur'ān has given a subtle indication to the prohibition of carnal intercourse, even with one's wife, because it can never be a productive act, and there is no question of 'cultivation' therein.

Subject to these two conditions (namely, the purity of the woman from her menses, and avoiding the carnal intercourse) one can enjoy whatever way he wishes to have sexual intimacy with his wife. In this context, it has been said, "Come to your soil from where you will". It indicates that in so far as the ultimate place (of penetration) is a 'soil' (which stands for the female vagina which is productive like a soil), one can elect whatever way he likes to reach this ultimate place. Thus, lying over the woman or beside her or beneath her, acceding to the vagina from any side, front or back, sitting or kneeling -- all these and similar other positions are allowed while performing sexual intercourse subject to the two conditions mentioned above.

Verse 224

وَلَا تَجْعَلُوا اللّٰهَ عُرْضَةً لِّاَيْمَانِكُمْ اَنْ تَبَرُّوْا وَتَتَّقُوْا وَ تُصْلِحُوْا
بَيْنَ النَّاسِ ۚ وَاللّٰهُ سَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ ٥

And do not make Allah, through your oaths, a barrier against your doing good, fearing Allah and setting things right between people. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. (Verse 224)

The Verse warns those who swear in the name of Allah that they will not do some vituous deeds or that they will not effect a compromise between two groups. The Verse reminds them that by this

behaviour they are using the name of Allah as a barrier against the good deeds, which is a severe violation of the sanctity of the name of Allah, and they must avoid it in any case.

Verse 225

لَا يُؤَاخِذُكُمُ اللّٰهُ بِاللَّغْوِ فِيْٓ اَيْمَانِكُمْ وَلٰكِنْ يُّؤَاخِذُكُمْ بِمَا
كَسَبَتْ قُلُوْبُكُمْ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ حَلِيْمٌ 0

Allah does not hold you accountable for what is ineffectual in your oaths, but holds you accountable for what your hearts have caused. And Allah is Forgiving, Forebearing. (Verse 225)

Note:

The *laghw* or ineffectual oath has two meanings:

(i) In the first case it means a false oath sworn without volition over something in the past, or it could have been sworn with volition while the oath-taker considers it to be true in his supposition. For example, guided by his information and supposition, one ends up declaring on oath that a certain person has arrived while that person had not arrived in reality. Similarly, if someone swears on oath for something in future unintentionally, while he has been actually wanting to say something else, but the words of oath come out of his lips mistakenly, this type of oath also falls in this category. All these three types are not an act of sin and that is why they are called *laghw* or ineffectual. This act will not be reprehensible in the Hereafter (*Ākhirah*). As compared to this, the oath which has been declared reprehensible is the one that has been uttered intentionally knowing it to be false. This is known as *ghamūs* (perjury), and is an act of sin, but according to the Ḥanafiyyah, it does not require *kaffarah* or expiation. Therefore, *laghw*, in the sense explained earlier, involves no *kaffārah* more obviously, (because it is not a sinful act). The verse under discussion exclusively takes up these two categories that carry no *kaffārah*.

(ii) *Laghw* also means that which has no *kaffārah*. It will be called as *laghw* because it does not entail the liability of *Kaffārah* in this world.

Given this meaning, the word, *laghw* is inclusive of *ghamūs*, which being an act of sin, however, does not require *kaffārah*.

As compared to this, the oath that requires *kaffārah* is called *mun'aqidah* (that which is established, confirmed: *fait accompli*). For instance, if someone intentionally declares on oath to the effect that he or she would or would not perform a certain act, then, acting contrarily requires *kaffārah*. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Verses 226 - 227

لِلَّذِيْنَ يُؤْلُوْنَ مِنْ نِّسَآئِهِمْ تَرَبُّصُ اَرْبَعَةِ اَشْهُرٍ فَاِنْ فَآءُوْا فَاِنَّ
اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ O وَاِنْ عَزَمُوا الطَّلَاقَ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ سَمِيْعٌ
عَلِيْمٌ O

Those who swear to abstain from their wives have four months of waiting. Therefore, if they revert back, Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. And if they resolve to divorce, Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. (Verses 226 - 227)

Note:

If someone takes an oath that he will not have sexual intercourse with his wife, the case has four situations:

(A) No time-limit was fixed.

(B) A time-limit of four months was fixed.

(C) A time-limit of more than four months was fixed.

(D) The limit was identified as less than four months.

So, situations A, B and C are termed in Sharī'ah as *'Īlā'* (إيلاء). The injunction covering these situations is: If the oath-taker breaks his oath within four months and resumes sexual intercourse with his wife, he will have to come up with *kaffārah* for his oath while his *nikāh* (marriage) remains intact. And should it be that the time-limit of four months did expire and the oath-taker did not break his oath, an irrevocable divorce on his wife will become effective, that is, taking her back without remarriage does not remain correct any more. However, if they, by mutual consent, enter into marriage this will be correct. *Ḥalālah* (an intermediary marriage of the woman with a third person) is not required. The injunction in the fourth situation is: If the oath is

broken, *kaffārah* will be required and if the oath is completed, the marriage, even then, will remain valid. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Verse 228

وَالْمُطَلَّقٰتُ يَتَرَبَّصْنَ بِاَنْفُسِهِنَّ ثَلٰثَةَ قُرُوْٓءٍ ؕ وَلَا يَحِلُّ لَهُنَّ اَنْ يَّكْتُمْنَ مَا خَلَقَ اللّٰهُ فِيْٓ اَرْحَامِهِنَّ اِنْ كُنَّ يُؤْمِنَّ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ ؕ وَبُعُوْلَتُهُنَّ اَحَقُّ بِرَدِّهِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ اِنْ اَرَادُوْٓا اِصْلَاحًا ؕ وَلَهُنَّ مِثْلُ الَّذِيْ عَلَيْهِنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ ۪ وَلِلرِّجَالِ عَلَيْهِنَّ دَرَجَةٌ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَزِيْزٌ حَكِيْمٌ ○

And the divorced women shall keep themselves waiting for three periods. And it is not legal for them to conceal what Allah has created in their wombs, if they do believe in Allah and in the last day. And their husbands are best entitled to take them back in the meantime if they want a settlement. And women have rights similar to what they owe as recognized, though for men there is a step above them. And Allah is Mighty, Wise. (Verse 228)

A great verse defining the status of man and woman

This verse contains a rule of Sharī'ah concerning the mutual rights and duties enjoined upon men and women and explains the degree of their role. Important details of this very rule appear before this verse, and again, after the verse, through several sections.

The place of women in Islam

At this point, it seems pertinent to explain to some extent the status given by Islam to women. If understood in its full perspective, it will certainly lead to the conclusion that a just and moderate social system would not have required more than this. It may be noted that this is the crucial place, any deviation or departure from which becomes a great danger for man's life here and in the Hereafter.

Deliberation would reveal that two things serve as the necessary basis for the survival and development of this world. These are: woman and wealth. But, a look at the other side of the coin shows that this twosome is also a source of disturbance, bloodshed and tribulation. Further deliberation would easily help one reach the

conclusion that although these two, given their real place in life, are instrumental in the progress of this world, yet, as and when, they are aimlessly moved away from their real place, they are capable of shaking the world like an earthquake.

The Qur'ān has given man a way of life, a system. Both these human factors have been assigned their correct respective places in a way that they yield the maximum benefits to the total exclusion of peacelessness. The proper place of wealth, the sources of its acquisition and the ways of spending it, as well as, a just system of the distribution of wealth is a regular field of knowledge. A detailed discussion of this subject will *Inshā Allāh* appear on some other occasion . My published treatise entitled, 'The Distribution of Wealth' could serve as an indicator of basics.

Being discussed here, at this point, is woman and her rights and duties. About this, the verse under reference states: As there are rights of men over women which must be given, so there are rights of women over men which must be given. However, the quantum of difference that must be recognized here is: Men have a 'step' above women. Almost the same subject has appeared in Sūrah Al-Nisā' in this manner:

اَلرِّجَالُ قَوّٰمُوْنَ عَلَى النِّسَآءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللّٰهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ وَّبِمَآ اَنْفَقُوْا مِنْ اَمْوَالِهِمْ

> Men stand care-takers of women, since Allah has made some of them excel the other, and because they have spent of their wealth. (4:34)

The status of women in pre-Islamic society

Before Islam, in the age of ignorance (*Jāhiliyyah*), it was common practice that women were equated with articles of home use. They would be bought and sold like cattle. She had no right whatsoever in relation to her marriage. She had to go where she was sent by her guardians. Far from being entitled to some share in the inheritance from her relatives, she herself was treated as a piece of inheritance like any other household item. She was considered as something owned by men while she owned nothing. And, even that which she allegedly owned she could not spend without the permission of men.

However, her husband had all the right in the world to spend that which belonged to her as and how he elected to do so. She did not even have the right to question. So much so that some groups from amongst the European countries which are considered to be among the most civilized in the world today had reached the limit where they did not even accept that women were human beings!

Women had no place in religion. They were considered unfit for worship, and for Paradise. In some synods of Rome, it was decided after mutual consultations that she was a dirty animal which had no soul. Usually, it was considered permissible for a father to kill, or even, bury her daughter alive. In fact, this act was judged to be a mark of honour and a standard of nobility. There were some who held the opinion that anybody who killed a woman did not have to pay blood-money or be charged with retaliatory action. And should the husband die, the wife too was burnt alive with his dead body. Following the birth of the noble Prophet ﷺ and before his prophethood, in the year 586, France showed its compassion for women by passing a resolution, of course after great deliberation and controversy, that woman is after all a human being, but she has been created for the sole purpose of serving man!

In short, the whole world, and all nations and religions that inhabited it, had been treating women with callousness that makes one tremble with fear. For this poor creature, there was no reason, no justice, anywhere.

Ransomed be our lives for him who came as mercy for the worlds (ﷺ), and for the true religion which opened the eyes of the people of this world, taught man to respect man, made justice and equity the law, men were made responsible for the rights of women parallel to their own rights on them. Woman was made free and independent. She became the owner of her life and property, similar to men. No man can, even if he be a father or grandfather, force a woman to marry someone. Should she be given in marriage without her consent, the act remains dangling on her consent. If she says no, it stands annulled. No man has any right to spend anything from that which belongs to her, without her consent and approval. After the death of her husband or after having been divorced by him, she becomes independent and she

cannot be compelled by anyone for anything. She gets a share in the inheritance of her relatives just like men. To spend on her and to keep her happy has been declared an act of *'ibādah* (worship) under the blessed law of Muḥammad, on him be peace and blessing. Should the husband fail to give the rights due, she could, through an Islamic court, force him to do so or to divorce her.

Man's guardianship is essential for peace and order

Not giving women their due rights was ranked as injustice, oppression, stinginess and villainy which was erased by Islam. Similarly, leaving them to go their way with an unbridled liberty from the guardianship and care of men, and to make them earn their own sustenance and life support amounts to wasting her rights and destroying her genius. Neither does she deserve that fate in view of her physique nor does that great mission of bringing up children and the charge of family management, which has been naturally entrusted to her, deserve it.

In addition to that, women are, when deprived of the guardianship and care of men, a great danger for the whole human society, a situation that is bound to create all sorts of disturbances, including riots and bloodshed, as a matter of daily routine. That is why the noble Qur'an, while stating the mandatory rights of women, also declared وَلِلرِّجَالِ عَلَيْهِنَّ دَرَجَةٌ that is, men are a step above women which, in still other words, amounts to saying that men are responsible for them as their caretakers.

As it was in the first age of ignorance before Islam, all nations of the world, by keeping women as a household item or a dumb animal, had fallen prey to this mistake. So it came to pass that, following Islam's age of decadence, there started a later age of ignorance. Here the first mistake is being matched by yet another mistake, as a reaction in the opposite direction, when efforts are being made continuously to get rid of even this much degree of precedence men have over women. As a result, obscenity and shamelessness became common, the world became a home of conflicts and disorder, and bloodshed became so cheap that the first age of ignorance remained no match anymore. There is an Arab saying: الجاهل إما مفرط أومفرط which means: The ignorant man never stays on moderation. If he decides to stay from acting excessively, he slides into a behaviour of neglect.

This is the prevailing attitude in the world of today. There was that time when they were not even prepared to call or understand women as a member of the human race. Now they have advanced to the limit that the 'yoke' of man's guardianship and caretaking of women, which is perfectly wise and suitable universally for men, and women, is being thrown away, the ill consequnces of which are becoming visible everyday. And believe it, unless they bow down before this noble statement of the Qur'an, such disorders will go on increasing day by day.

Governments today make new laws incessantly to bring peace into the world. New institutions are established for this purpose. Millions are spent but the source of disorders goes unnoticed by them. If a Commission of Inquiry was to be established to determine the causes of disorder, bloodshed and internecine wars, it is likely that the cause of more than fifty percent of such crimes will turn out to be woman and her unbridled freedom. But, in the contemporary world, the prevailing pursuit of desires has confounded even the best of minds. No corrective check against the worship of desires is even entertained.

May Allah Almighty enlighten our hearts with the light of faith and help us act according to the guidance given in His Book and in the conduct of the Holy Prophet ﷺ because that is our blessed capital both in in this world and in the Hereafter.

A Conflict and its Resolution

We find out from this verse that the Qur'ān tells the husband and wife about duties assigned to each, whereby men have been placed under obligation to give women their rights, in the same manner as women have been placed under obligation to give men their rights. This indicates that each party should watch out on the fulfillment of its respective duties rather than go after demanding rights. And should they succeed in doing so, the very issue of demanding rights will cease to exist, because the duties of men are the rights of women and the duties of women are the rights of men. When duties are taken care of, rights will be automatically fulfilled. These days the root of all troubles lies in the attitude of people who are alert to their rights but negligent of their duties.

As a result, rights are demanded on a war footing as is evident

from the current confrontation between governments and masses, husbands and wives and between other authorities and their challengers. This indicator of the Qur'ān has modified the confrontational aspect of the issue by stressing that everyone should make all possible effort to fulfil his or her duties and when it comes to his or her own rights try to overlook any infringements gently, forego and forgive. If this teaching of the Qur'ān could become common universal practice, homes, families, even countries and governments will find that most of their conflicts have been resolved for good.

Man's higher position over woman is for discipline only

A universal system in the world, the human nature and the best interests of women themselves required that men be not only given a particular sort of controlling and care-taking right over women, but that it be rather made incumbent on them. This is what has been stated in the verse اَلرِّجَالُ قَوّٰمُوْنَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ : 'Men stand care-takers of women.' But, this does not necessarily entail that all men are superior to all women because being superior in the sight of Allah wholly depends on belief and good conduct. In Divine dispension, the increase or decrease in degrees operates in synchronization with the degrees of belief and conduct. Therefore, in matters relating to the Hereafter, it is not necessary that men alone should continue to have that step or degree above women. This too is possible and, as elaborated in Qur'ānic verses and *Ḥadīth* narrations, this is what would come to pass -- that some women, through their obedience to and worship of Allah, will become superior to many men with their degree of precedence rising higher than many a men.

Although the Holy Qur'ān, while describing the injunctions of Sharī'ah, according to its own clear stress, declares that men and women are absolutely equal and the injunctions where there is some difference have been expressly explained, but the address is generally to men and the gender used is masculine. This treatment, however, is not peculiar to the noble Qur'ān. Governments too, use the masculine gender in their laws fairly commonly, although the law is universally applicable to men and women both.

One immediate reason for this is the very difference identified in the verses of the noble Qur'ān, that is, for men there is a step above women.

The second consideration, perhaps implied here as well, may be

that *satr* (concealment) is better even when there is a discussion about *mastūrāt* (women: the concealed ones). But, when women realized that the noble Qur'ān does not address them directly at various places like it does address men, the venerated mother of the faithful, Sayyidah Umm Salmah رضى الله عنها pointed this out to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and thereupon the following verse of the Sūrah Al-Ahzāb was revealed:

إِنَّ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمٰتِ وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنٰتِ وَالْقٰنِتِينَ وَالْقٰنِتٰتِ

> Submitting men and submitting women, believing men and believing women, obedient men and obedient women ... (This appears in details in Nasā'ī, Musnad Aḥmad and Tafsīr Ibn Jarīr etc.)

where women were clearly and expressly identified along with men which implies that the status of women is no less than men in obedience to Allah and in His worship, in being near Him and His approval, and in the ranks of Paradise.

According to a report in Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr, some Muslim women came to the the blessed wives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and asked about the general absence of any mention of Muslim women in the Holy Qur'ān, while it does mention men at several places, and also refers to the blessed wives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ from among women. Thereupon, the verse referred to above was revealed.

To sum up, it can be said that a certain measure of precedence and authority in regulating the affairs of worldly life is for the good of women and that wisdom so dictates. Other than that, there is no difference in the reward and retribution for deeds, good or bad, and in the degree of merit attained in the Hereafter.

The same subject appears in the noble Qur'ān with much more clarity in the following manner:

مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثٰى وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَنُحْيِيَنَّهٗ حَيٰوةً طَيِّبَةً

> And whosoever male or female, does a righteous deed, while he (or she) is a believer, we shall assuredly get him (or her) to live a goodly life. (16:97)

After these preliminary remarks let's ponder over the words of the original verse under discussion. It was said: وَلَهُنَّ مِثْلُ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِنَّ : "And women have rights similar to what they owe" that is, their rights are

incumbent upon men similarly as the rights of men are incumbent upon them. Here the rights of women were mentioned before the rights of men, one reason for which is that man after all, given his physical power and God-given precedence, manages to wrest his rights from women anyway. The concern should be for the rights of women since they cannot habitually wrest their rights by force.

There is yet another hint here which suggests that men should take the first step to give the rights of women. However, the similarity and equivalency declared by the use of the word *mithl* (مِثْل : like, similar) in the text here could just never mean that the kind of job men do should also be done by women, or vice versa, because the distribution of work and respective duties for men and women are naturally different. In fact, it means that it is obligatory that rights belonging to both be observed equally and mutually and that the punishment for any negligence or shortcoming be also equal.

It is worth observing at this point how the noble Qur'ān has, in a sentence so small, miniaturized a whole roster of rights and duties since all rights women have over men and all rights men have over women are included under the sense of this verse. (Muhit) Simply by adding one more word بِالْمَعْرُوْف (*bi l'ma'rūf:* justly, uprightly, kindly, courteously, according to the practice approved by the Sharī'ah, or simply - "as recognized", a closer expression used in the accompanying translation of the verse) the possible occurrence of mutual controversies was eliminated. It was established that rights should be given using the *ma'rūf* method because the meaning of *ma'rūf* includes that which is neither prohibited nor impermissible under the dictates of the Sharī'ah nor does it have any element of hardship or excess under common habit or custom or *'ūrf*. The purport is that observing the routine of legal provisions is not enough, instead, it will be examined that, according to *'ūrf* or customarily approved practice, the other party does not in any case suffer from pain or loss. That which is judged to be a source of pain and loss, in view of *'ūrf*, will be forbidden and remain impermissible, for instance, coldness, indifference or such behaviour or conduct which causes pain. These can hardly be covered under an article of law but the word *bi l'ma'rūf* does encompass them. After that it was said: وَلِلرِّجَالِ عَلَيْهِنَّ دَرَجَةٌ :'Though for men there is a step

above them.' The well-known meaning and sense of this verse is that despite the rights of the parties being equal, Allah Almighty has bestowed upon men a certain degree of precedence and authority over women. That there is great wisdom in doing so has been hinted at by the use of the words وَاللّٰهُ عَزِيْزٌ حَكِيْمٌ :"And Allah is Mighty, Wise" towards the end of the verse. Giving the meaning of this sentence, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ تعالٰی عنهما has added that Allah Almighty has given men a degree of precedence as compared to women, therefore they should act with much more forbearance. Even if women fall short of giving them their rights, the degree of their precedence is such that they should bear by it, be patient and do nothing to desist from giving them their rights. (Qurṭubī)

Verses 229 - 230

اَلطَّلَاقُ مَرَّتٰنِ فَاِمْسَاكٌۢ بِمَعْرُوْفٍ اَوْ تَسْرِيْحٌۢ بِاِحْسَانٍ وَلَا يَحِلُّ لَكُمْ اَنْ تَاْخُذُوْا مِمَّآ اٰتَيْتُمُوْهُنَّ شَيْـًٔا اِلَّآ اَنْ يَّخَافَآ اَلَّا يُقِيْمَا حُدُوْدَ اللّٰهِ فَاِنْ خِفْتُمْ اَلَّا يُقِيْمَا حُدُوْدَ اللّٰهِ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا فِيْمَا افْتَدَتْ بِهٖ تِلْكَ حُدُوْدُ اللّٰهِ فَلَا تَعْتَدُوْهَا وَمَنْ يَّتَعَدَّ حُدُوْدَ اللّٰهِ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ O فَاِنْ طَلَّقَهَا فَلَا تَحِلُّ لَهٗ مِنْۢ بَعْدُ حَتّٰى تَنْكِحَ زَوْجًا غَيْرَهٗ فَاِنْ طَلَّقَهَا فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَآ اَنْ يَّتَرَاجَعَآ اِنْ ظَنَّآ اَنْ يُّقِيْمَا حُدُوْدَ اللّٰهِ وَتِلْكَ حُدُوْدُ اللّٰهِ يُبَيِّنُهَا لِقَوْمٍ يَّعْلَمُوْنَ O

Divorce is twice; then either to retain in the recognized manner or to release in fairness. And it is not lawful for you to take back anything from what you have given them, unless both apprehend that they would not be able to maintain the limits set by Allah. Now, if you apprehend that they would not maintain the limits set by Allah, then, there is no sin on them in what she gives up to secure her release. These are the limits set by Allah. Therefore, do not exceed them. And whosoever exceeds limits set by Allah, then, those are the transgressors.

Thereafter, if he divorces her, she shall no longer remain lawful for him unless she marries a man other than him. Should he too divorce her, then there is no sin on them in their returning to each other, if they think they would maintain the limits set by Allah. And these are the limits set by Allah that He makes clear to a people who know (Verses 229 - 230).

Commentary

The injunctions governing *ṭalāq* (divorce) and *nikāh* (marriage) appear in several verses throughout the Qur'ān but the verses mentioned here consist of cardinal rules of procedure in cases of divorce. To understand these, it is necessary to know the status of *Nikāh* in the Sharī'ah of Islam.

Marriage, divorce and the rules governing them

One commonly known aspect of *Nikāh* (marriage) is that of a mutual transaction and contract similar to transactions in buying and selling and in loans and payments. The second aspect is that of *Sunnah* and *'Ibādah*. On this, there is a consensus of the whole *ummah* that *nikāh*, being far above ordinary transactions and contracts, has the status of *'Ibādah* and *Sunnah* (the act of worshipping Allah and following in the footsteps of the Prophet ﷺ). Therefore, in order that *nikāh* be duly solemnized, there are, by the consensus of the *ummah*, some peculiar conditions which are not found in ordinary transactions of buying and selling.

First of all, *nikāh* cannot take place between any man and any woman. Governing this, there is an absolute law of the Sharī'ah under which several categories of men and women cannot be joined together in the bond of marriage.

Secondly, for all transactions and contracts, in order that they be concluded and finalized, witness is no condition. A witness is needed when parties differ, but *nikāh* is not such a transaction. Here, in order that it be concluded, the physical presence of witnesses is a pre-condition. If a man and woman, the two of them mutually agree to have their marriage solemnized without witnesses, and even if, any one of the two never differs or retreats, that marriage is, according to the Sharī'ah, still invalid, unless both respond to the proposal and acceptance before witnesses. However, the *Sunnah* is that '*nikāh*' must

be solemnized with a public announcement. Similarly, there are many other conditions and rules of decorum that are either necessary or *masnūn* in marriage.

According to Imām Abū Hanīfah, and several other leading Muslim jurists, the aspect of *'Ibādah* (worship) and *Sunnah* in *nikāh* dominates over the aspect of transaction and contract. Evidences from the Qur'ān and *Sunnah* support it.

After this brief familiarity with the real nature of marriage, let us understand divorce. The outcome of *ṭalāq* (divorce) is to terminate the transaction and contract of *nikāh* (marriage). Just as the Sharī'ah of Islam, by giving *nikāh* the status of an act of *'Ibādah*, has kept it at a level higher than common transactions and contracts and has imposed on it several restrictions, very similarly, the termination of this deal has not been left free, as in common transactions, where the parties may terminate the deal as and when they elect to do so, and go on to make a fresh deal with someone else. It has rather made a pointedly wise legal framework which has been described in the verses under reference.

According to the drift of Islamic teachings, the transaction and contract of *nikāh* should be for the whole life-span. The point of departure where it has to be broken or terminated should never be reached because the discontinuation of this deal affects not only the parties involved but goes on to destroy children, and their children, and at times, it may even cause whole families and tribes to end up with disturbed relations, which in turn, badly infects the whole society. Therefore, the teachings of the Qur'ān and *Sunnah* have taken all necessary steps to remove impediments that may cause the breaking of this deal. The focal drive of instructions given in the Qur'ān and *Sunnah* covering all problems and situations relating to the married couples is that this relationship should always keep on becoming stronger and stronger and may just never break. Should disagreements crop up, instructions were given to first try and understand each other's point of view and talk it out, and in the event of failure, ways of restraint, hard advice and warning were identified. Should the tussle become serious and these elementary steps do not bring a resolution of crisis, the parties were then expected to set up a

panel for arbitration comprising of the members of their immediate families who could help patch up the differences. The emphasis on making members of the family as sole arbitrators in the verse حَكَمًا مِّنْ أَهْلِهِ وَ حَكَمًا مِّنْ أَهْلِهَا :'Then send one arbitrator from his people and one from her people' is certainly very wise since the tussle, if it escapes the immediate family circle, will only aggravate the situation and the parties may draw further apart.

But there are occasions and situations when all efforts for reconciliation fail and the parties in conflict rather than benefit by the desired results of the *nikāh* relationship, feel that being married together is a mutual punishment. Under such conditions, terminating this husband-wife relationship becomes, in itself, a way-out promising comfort and peace for the parties. Therefore, the Sharī'ah of Islam did not, as did some other religions, patently confirm that the marriage relationship must remain unbreakable under all conditions. Going a step ahead, it has framed a specific law for divorce and the dissolution of marriage. The right of divorce was given to man alone in whom the ingredients of thought, end-perception and forbearance were more pronounced than in a woman. This free choice was not given in the hands of women so that the disposition of being overtaken by transitory emotions, which is more pronounced in women as compared to men, may not become the cause of divorce.

But women too, were not totally deprived of this right lest they are left with no alternative but to keep groaning under the cruelty of her husband. She was given the right to take her case to a court presided by a judge who qualifies as such under the rules of Sharī'ah, present her complaint, prove her case, and get the marriage annulled, or secure a divorce. Then, as it is, Allah Almighty did entrust man with the free choice of divorce, but at the very first instance, it was declared that the use of this choice was very much detested and disapproved in the sight of Allah. It was permitted only in extreme situations of compulsion. It appears in *Ḥadīth*: أبغض الحلال إلى الله الطلاق : Divorce is the most detested of lawful things with Allah.

The second restriction placed stipulated that this choice should not be used in extreme anger or fleeting displeasure. It was due to this wisdom that the pronouncing of divorce was forbidden during the

period of menstruation, as well as, during a *ṭuhr* (the state of purity) in which the husband has had sexual intercourse with the wife. The pronouncing of divorce during menstruation and in a *tuhr* marked by intimacy was forbidden on the basis that it would become the contributing reason to elongate the *'iddah* or 'waiting period' of the woman, which will aggravate her pain and worry. For these two situations, the noble Qur'ān has this to say: طَلِّقُوهُنَّ لِعِدَّتِهِنَّ that is, divorce -- if it has to be given -- should be given at a time when the *'iddah* of the woman does not become longer without any reason. If divorce became effective during menstruation, that particular menstruation will not be counted in *'iddah*. The count of *'iddah* will begin from the next menstruation. And in a *ṭuhr* marked with intimacy, the chances of pregnancy exist, which would elongate the period of *'iddah*, upto the time of delivery. Another reason for fixing the time of *tuhr*, mentioned earlier for the pronouncement of divorce is that it is quite possible that in the meantime the anger goes away, forgiveness and recompense follow and the very idea of divorce is withdrawn.

Now under the third restriction, the method adopted in breaking the marriage- contract and its annulment was not kept identical with that of the transactions and contracts of common buying and selling activity which releases the parties concerned of all obligations instantly once the contract is annulled. The first deal is all over and everybody gets the option to enter into another contract with some other party. In fact, in order to sever the marriage-relationship, *ṭalāq* has been subjected to three stages. Then it was topped with the restriction of *'iddah* since a lot of residual effects of the *nikāh*-relationship will remain active until the completion of *'iddah*. Another marriage will not be lawful for the woman. Some restriction on the man would also continue.

The fourth restriction stipulates if divorce was given once or twice in clear and unambiguous words, *nikāh* did not break instantly on the pronouncement of *talaq*; the marriage relationship continues till the completion of *'iddah*. If the husband revokes the *talāq*, the previous *nikāh* will remain valid.

This choice of *rujū'* (revocation or the act of taking back one's divorced wife) was restricted to only one or two *ṭalāqs*, so that some

cruel husband may not make a practice of giving *ṭalāqs*, and then take her back and keep her as some captive. Therefore, came the injunction: If someone pronounces the third *talāq* as well, he now has no choice of *rujū‘* (revocation), that is, he cannot take his wife back. In fact, even if they wish to remarry after mutual agreement, their being joined together in marriage a second time is not lawful, except in a peculiar manner which has been described later on.

The verses under study consist of important injunctions relating to this system of divorce. Now let us ponder over the words of these verses. In the beginning of the verse it was first said: اَلطَّلَاقُ مَرَّتٰنِ that is, '*ṭalāq* is twice'. Then, in the process of these two ṭalāqs, a certain flexibility was provided by virtue of which the marriage was not totally annulled; instead, the man has the choice to return to his wife and retain her in his marriage. Or, he may elect not to do his *rujū‘* (revocation) from the earlier pronouncements, allow the *‘iddah* to be completed and once the *‘iddah* is over, the marriage relationship will be terminated. This subject was stated in the words فَإِمْسَاكٌ بِمَعْرُوْفٍ أَوْتَسْرِيْحٌ بِإِحْسَانٍ (then either to retain in the recognized manner or to release in fairness) that is, either, one must revoke divorce and retain his wife in his marriage, or, allow her *‘iddah* or the waiting period to be completed nicely and generously so that she can become free.

The third *ṭalāq* (pronouncement of divorce) still remains unmentioned while the text takes up another problem in between, which generally comes up for discussion under such conditions. The problem is that there are some cruel husbands who neither wish to retain their wives, nor care about their rights, nor give them divorce. The wife is placed in a situation of duress while the husband, taking advantage of her helplessness, demands some money or property from her, or as a last resort, demands that the *mahr* (dower) be forgiven, or returned in lieu of divorce. The Qur'ān declares this to be *ḥaram* (unlawful). It was said:

وَلَا يَحِلُّ لَكُمْ أَنْ تَأْخُذُوْا مِمَّا اٰتَيْتُمُوْهُنَّ شَيْئًا

that is, it is not *ḥalal* (lawful) for you that, in return for *talāq*, you take back from them money or *mahr* (dower) or anything else given by you.

However, one exception was made in which forgiveness or return of

mahr (dower) was made permissible. Where the woman feels that she cannot do justice to the rights of her husband because of difference in temperaments and the man too, feels the same way, then this becomes a situation in which it is also permissible that divorce be given or taken in lieu of the forgiveness or return of *mahr* (dower).

After dealing with the above problem, the third *ṭalāq* was mentioned in this manner فَإِنْ طَلَّقَهَا فَلَا تَحِلُّ لَهُ مِنْ بَعْدُ حَتّٰى تَنْكِحَ زَوْجًا غَيْرَهُ that is, if that person goes on to pronounce the third *talaq* as well (something not liked by the Sharī'ah), the transaction of *nikāh* shall stand totally annulled. He has exhausted his choice to revoke his divorce and take his wife back. And since he transgressed the limits of Sharī'ah by unnecessarily giving the third *ṭalāq*, he must now have his punishment whereby it is not possible for them to remarry each other even if both of them agree to do so. Now, in order that they could remarry each other, the condition of such *nikāh* is that the woman (after completing her period of *'iddah* following *ṭalāq*) should enter into marriage with another man, fulfil matrimonial obligations and live with this other husband. Thereafter, if by chance that other husband also divorces her (or dies), she could remarry the first husband after completing her *'iddah*. The last sentence of the verse says:

فَإِنْ طَلَّقَهَا فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا أَنْ يَّتَرَاجَعَا

Should he too divorce her, then there is no sin on them in their returning to each other.

Detailed injunctions regarding three divorces at a time

A close look at the style of the noble Qur'ān makes it explicitly clear that the right method of pronouncing *ṭalāq* stipulated by the Shari'ah is that one should, at the most, reach the limit of two talaqs and it is not appropriate to reach to the extent of a third *ṭalāq*. After the use of words اَلطَّلَاقُ مَرَّتٰنِ in verse 229, the third *ṭalāq* is identified in the words فَإِنْ طَلَّقَهَا (Then, if he divorces her) wherein the letter ان (if) is note-worthy. Here the hint in question is visibly present. Otherwise, the third *talāq* could simply be expressed by saying الطلاق ثلث :'The divorces are three.' Now the text, to the exclusion of expressions to this effect, has an expression of its own which carries a clear hint that one should not reach the stage of the third *ṭalāq*. This is why Imām Mālik

and several other jurists did not just permit the third *ṭalāq*. They call it *ṭalāq al-bid'ah* (the innovated *ṭalāq*: divorce without the authority of the Qur'ān and *Sunnah*). Some other jurists have ruled that three *talaqs* are permissible only on condition that these three talaqs be pronounced separately in three *ṭuhr*s (the state of post-menstrual purity). In the terminology used by these jurists this too has been termed as *ṭalāq al-sunnah*. But none of them are proposing by this term that giving three talaqs in this manner is desirable, and is according to the *Sunnah*. In fact, this was given the name of *ṭalāq al-sunnah* as opposed to *ṭalāq al-bid'ah* for the simple reason that this form does not amount to *bid'ah* (an innovation in settled religious practice).

The gist of that which stands proved regarding the *ṭalāq* count, on the authority of the guidance given by the Qur'ān and *Sunnah*, and the practice of the Companions of the the Holy Prophet ﷺ and their followers is this: When no option, except that of *ṭalāq*, is left, the best method of pronouncing *talaq* is to pronounce one *ṭalāq* during the state of *ṭuhr* (purity) in which sexual intercourse has not taken place. Then, let this one *ṭalāq* stay as such. As soon as the *'iddah* finishes, the *nikāḥ* relationship will automatically be finished with it. The Muslim Jurists have called it *al-ṭalāq al-ahsan* and the respected Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ have declared it as the best method of *ṭalāq*.

Ibn Abi Shaybah has reported from Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm al-Nakha'ī that the noble *saḥābah* favoured the method in which, after giving one *ṭalāq*, nothing is done thereafter and the *'iddah* of *ṭalāq* -- three menstruation periods -- are allowed to expire so that the woman would become free.

From the words of the noble Qur'ān mentioned earlier, the permission to pronounce upto two ṭalāqs can also be deduced, but by the use of the word مَرَّتَانِ (twice) it has been pointed out that two talaqs should not be given in one utterance and at one time but should be given separately in two *ṭuhr*s (states of purity). The use of ألطلاق طلاقتان (Two *ṭalāqs* are permissible) could also have helped prove the permission of two ṭalāqs but the word مَرَّتَانِ suggests that the two ṭalāqs

should be given at two separate occasions, that is in two separate *ṭuhrs* (states of purity).[50] (Rūh al-Ma'ānī)

In short, the limit of two talāqs stands proved from the words of the Qur'ān. Therefore, by consensus of Imāms and *fuqahā'* (Muslim Jurists), this *talāq* is included in *Sunnah*, that is, it is not a *bid'ah* (innovation). That the third *ṭalāq* is undesirable is clearly indicated in the Qur'ānic diction itself. That this is undesirable has not been questioned by anyone.

As to how detested and reprehensible the third *ṭalāq* is stands proved by a *ḥadīth* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . Imām al-Nasa'ī reports on the authority of Maḥmud ibn Labid that:

أخبر رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم عن رجل طلق أمرأته ثلاث تطليقات جميعا فقام غضبانا ، ثم قال: أيلعب بكتاب الله وأنابين أظهركم حتى قام رجل و قال: يا رسول الله ألا أقتله ؟

> The noble Prophet ﷺ was told about a man who had divorced his wife by pronouncing three talaqs simultaneously. He rose in anger, then said: 'What is this game being played with Allah's Book while I am present amongst you?' In the meantime, a man stood up and said: Yā Rasūlallāh! should I not kill him? (Nasa'ī, Kitāb al-Ṭalāq, vol.2, p. 98) [51]

Based on this, Imām Mālik and some other leading *fuqahā'* (jurists) have ruled that the third *ṭalāq* is absolutely impermissible and that it is *ṭalāq al-bid'ah* (a divorce based on innovation in religious practice and not supported by the Qur'ān and *Sunnah*). Other Imāms, by saying that three talaqs given in three *ṭuhrs* (states of purity) are included under *sunnah ṭalāq*, have though excluded it from the purview of *ṭalāq al-bid'ah*, but there is no difference of opinion as to its being undesirable.

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50. The use of the adverb, 'twice' to stand for the Qur'ānic word, '*marratan*' in the accompanying translation is to cover this element of sequence and deferment for, lexically, 'twice' means -- on two occasions or two times.

51. Ḥāfiẓ Ibn al-Qaiyyim has ruled that the *isnad* of this *hadīth* is *sahīh* according to the conditions prescribed by Muslim (Zad al-Ma'ad). 'Allamah al-Mardini, in his *al-Jauhar al-Naqi*, calls the *sanad* of this *hadith* -- *sahih*, Ibn Kathir terms the *isnad* as excellent and Ibn Hajar finds this 'narrated by the reliable'.

To summarize, it can be said that the three stages of *ṭalāq* (divorce) established by the Sharī'ah of Islam in the form of three ṭalāqs, do never mean that crossing these three stages are necessary or better. Instead, the intent of the Sharī'ah is that the very initial step towards divorce is a detestable and reprehensible act. If such a step has to be taken under dire compulsion, it is only proper that its lowest possible stage, that is, one (pronouncement of) *talāq* be considered sufficient, allowing *'iddah* (the waiting period) to take its course. Once the *'iddah* is over, this very one *talāq* will become sufficient to sever the husband-wife relationship and the woman shall become free to marry another person. This method of *ṭalāq* is called *aḥsān*, that is, the best. In this method there is wisdom, and an element of advantage as well, since the option of reconciliation will remain open for the parties concerned in the event only one *ṭalāq* has been given in clear words to that effect. Only taking the *ṭalāq* back before the expiry of *'iddah* will be sufficient to sustain the *nikāh*. And after the *'iddah* has expired, the *nikāh* will, no doubt, be broken and the woman set free, but there still will remain room for reconciliation between them, and should they reconcile and wish to remarry each other, the fresh *nikāh* could be solemnized immediately.

But, should a person who does not stick with this method of *aḥsan ṭalāq* and goes on to pronounce one more *ṭalāq* in clear and unambiguous words during the period of *'iddah*, he then, completes two stages of the severance of *nikāh*, which was unnecessary, and certainly not approved by the Sharī'ah. However, two stages stand completed anyway. But the position, inspite of the completion of these two stages, stays where it was, that is, the choice of *raj'ah* (revocation) or return (to one's wife) during the period of *'iddah* remains open and a fresh *nikāh* could be made by the mutual agreement of the parties concerned after the expiry of the period of *'iddah*. The only difference is that the husband has, by reaching the count of two talaqs, broken one more chain of his choices and arrived at the borderline from where the pronouncement of just one more *ṭalāq* by him would end the matter for ever.

For one who has gone through these two stages of *ṭalāq*, the instruction given later is: فَإِمْسَاكٌ بِمَعْرُوفٍ أَوْتَسْرِيحٌ بِإِحْسَانٍ :'Then either to retain in the recognized manner or to release in fairness.' Here two

injunctions have been communicated through the words فَإِمْسَاكٌ بِمَعْرُوفٍ. Firstly, revocation during *'iddah* does not require fresh *nikāh*; instead, only *imsāk*, that is, retaining one's wife by revoking the *ṭalāq* is sufficient. If this was done, the marriage relationship will stand reinstated on the very basis of the previous *nikāh*.

Secondly, through this, the husband was instructed to take steps to effect his *raj'ah* (revocation) only if he intends to correct the situation and looks forward to living in peace and harmony; if not, he should pass this option so that the marriage relationship ends following the completion of *'iddah*. The concern here is that *raj'ah* (revocation) may not be done just to harass the woman without any intention of correcting the situation.

To match this, it was said: أَوْ تَسْرِيحٌ بِإِحْسَانٍ. The word, *Tasrīḥ* means to untie, to free, to release. Through this, it was pointed out that in order to sever relations, no additional *ṭalāq*, or for that mater, no other action is necessary. That the *'iddah* (waiting period) expires without revocation is, in itself, sufficient to end the marriage relationship.

Abu Dawud reports on the authority of Abū Razīn al-Asadī that, following the revelation of this verse, a man asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ: 'Allah Almighty has said: أَلطَّلَاقُ مَرَّتٰنِ (Divorce is twice). Why the third *ṭalāq* was not mentioned here?' He said: 'The expression تَسْرِيحٌ بِإِحْسَانٍ (To release in fairness) which follows immediately, is the third *ṭalāq*.' (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī). It means, according to the consensus of *'ulamā'*, that the act of the total severance of marriage relationship which would come out of the third *ṭalāq*, would be taken care of by this mode of action, that is, by not revoking the divorce during the period of *'iddah*. Now, just as, by placing the restrictive condition of بِمَعْرُوفٍ (in recognized manner) along with إِمْسَاكٌ (retaining), the instruction was given that the wife, if retained after the revocation of *ṭalāq* pronouncement (*raj'ah)*, should be retained in good grace. Very similarly, by placing the restrictive condition of بِإِحْسَانٍ (in fairness) along with تَسْرِيحٌ (release), the instruction was given that *ṭalāq* is the dissolution of transaction and gentlemen go through their transactions and contracts in good taste and manners and in the event dissolution of contract becomes necessary, that too, should not be done with anger or altercation, instead, that should be done with charity, kindness and grace, for instance, while saying goodbye to the divorced wife, let her depart with some presents, such as clothing and its likes. This is mentioned in the Qur'ān:

وَمَتِّعُوهُنَّ عَلَى الْمُوسِعِ قَدَرُهُ وَ عَلَى الْمُقْتِرِ قَدَرُهُ

So, give them benefit -- the rich man according to his means and the poor one according to his means. (2:236)

And, if he, in spite of this, elects not to do so, rather, going a step farther, pronounces the third *ṭalāq* as well, he now has reached a dead end where he has, quite unreasonably and unnecessarily, done away with all his options, ignoring in that process, graces allowed by the Sharī'ah. The punishment he now deserves is that *raj'ah* (revocation) will not be possible, and without the wife marrying someone else, the couple's being re-united in marriage will also be not possible.

Three divorces given unlawfully are effective

The immediate, rational and conventional answer to this question is that the nature of an act in being a crime and a sin does not stop it from taking effect anywhere. Killing unjustly is a crime and a sin. But one who is shot with a bullet, or struck with a sword, gets killed after all. His death does not wait to discover if the bullet was fired legally or illegally. Stealing is a crime and a sin by the consensus of all religions, but that which has been stolen as such leaves the possession of the owner anyway. Similarly, all sins and crimes are hemmed in by the same situation -- that their being sin and crime does not stop them from taking effect.

In accordance with the dictates of this principle, the false steps taken, such as, the ignoring of concessions given by the Sharī'ah and shooting upto three talaqs unnecessarily, bypassing all choices of *ṭalāq* one has, no doubt, became a cause of anger for the Holy Prophet ﷺ as stated in the previous report, and for this reason, this act was considered 'undesirable' by the consensus of the *ummah*, and 'impermissible' by some; but, if inspite of all this, someone has taken such a step, it should bring forth the same effect as would be that of a permissible *ṭalāq*, that is, three talaqs become effective and not only the choice of *raj'ah* (revocation) but also the very choice of fresh *nikāh* stands negated.

And the decision of the Holy Prophet ﷺ is a testimony that he, in spite of his showing anger against giving three divorces, enforced the three talaqs, several incidents relating to which appear in books of *aḥādīth*. The *'ulamā'* who have written regular books on this subject

have collected these incidents therein. Recently, "*Umdah al-Athath*', a book written on this subject by Maulanā Abū al-Zāhid Muḥammad Sarfarāz has been published and is sufficient enough. Quoted here are only three *aḥādith*.

The report by Maḥmud ibn Labīd mentioned earlier with reference to al-Nasa'i does record the expression of extreme anger by the Messenger of Allah on the giving of three talaqs at one time, so much so, that some *ṣaḥābah* (Companions) thought that the person deserved being killed. But this is not reported anywhere that he ruled the man's *ṭalāq* to be a revocable *ṭalāq* and let the man have his wife back.

On the contrary, the second report that follows clearly indicates that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has enforced the three simultaneous talaqs of Sayyidnā 'Uwaymir in spite of displeasure. Very similarly, Qādī Abū Bakr ibn al-'Arabī has, in relation to the previously quoted *hadīth* of Mahmud ibn Labid, reported that the Holy Prophet ﷺ had enforced his three talaqs similar to the three talaqs of Sayyidnā 'Uwaymir. His words are:

فلم يرده النبى صلى الله عليه وسلم بل امضاه كما فى حديث عويمر العجلانى فى اللعان حيث امضى طلاقه الثلاث ولم يرده

So, the Holy Prophet ﷺ did not reject it. He enforced it instead. As it appears in 'Uwaymir al-'Ajlānī's *ḥadīth* of *li'ān*, the Holy Prophet ﷺ had enforced his three talaqs and had not rejected it.

The second *ḥadīth*, that of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها appears in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī in the following words:

ان رجلا طلق امرأته ثلاثا فتزوجت فطلق فسئل النبى صلى الله عليه وسلم اتحل للاول قال حتى يذوق عسيلتها كما ذاقها الاول

A man pronounced three talaqs on his wife. When the woman married elsewhere, the other husband also divorced her. The noble Prophet ﷺ was asked: 'Is this woman *ḥalal* (lawful)?' He said: 'Not unless the other husband has had intimacy with her as was done by the first husband.'

The words of the the report indicate that the three talaqs were given at the same time. Commentaries on *Ḥadīth*, such as Fath

al-Bārī, 'Umdah al-Qārī, al-Qastalānī, confirm this reading of the report, that is, three ṭalāqs were given at the same time. And the *ḥadīth* carries the decision thereupon, that the Holy Prophet ﷺ made these three ṭalāqs effective and ruled that, unless there occurs marital intimacy with the second husband, she will not become lawful for the first husband, simply by having been divorced by the former.

The third report is that of Sayyidnā 'Uwaymir al-'Ajlānī, who did his *li'ān* (لعان : sworn allegation of adultery) against his wife in the presence of the Holy Prophet ﷺ , and following that, he said:

فلما فرغا قال عويمر كذبت عليها يا رسول الله ان امسكتها فطلقها ثلاثا قبل ان يامره النبى صلى الله عليه وسلم

So when they were through with *li'ān*, 'Uwaymir said: 'I shall be telling a lie if I retained her'. Then, he gave her three ta-laqs before the Holy Prophet ﷺ could give his verdict. (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī including Fath al-Bārī Sahih Muslim page 289, volume1)

And Abū Dharr رضى الله عنه has, on the authority of Sayyidnā Sahl ibn Sa'd, reported this incident in the following words:

فانفذه رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم وكان ماصنع عند رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم سنة قال سعد حضرت هذا عند رسول الله صلى عليه وسلم فمضت السنة بعد فى المتلاعنين ان يفرق بينهما ثم لا يجتمعان ابدا

Then the Holy Prophet ﷺ enforced it, and that which happened in the presence of the Holy Prophet ﷺ became established as *Sunnah*. Sa'd says: 'On this occasion, I was present when this occured before the Holy Prophet ﷺ . So, following that, the practice became common that they should be separated after which the two should never be united. (Abū Dāwūd)

In this *ḥadīth*, it is proved with full clarity that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has enforced the three simultanously-pronounced ṭalāqs of Sayyidnā 'Uwaymir ruling these as three.

And in the previous report of Maḥmud ibn Labīd as well, as corroborated by the report of Abū Bakr ibn al-'Arabī, it is mentioned that three talaqs were enforced but, even if this was not so, at least this much is not reported anywhere that the Holy Prophet ﷺ ruled it to be one revocable divorce pronouncement, and allowed the husband to retain his wife.

To sum up, the three *aḥādīth* under reference prove that, despite the fact of three simultaneous talaqs which invited the extreme anger

of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, their consequence, in any case, was that all three talaqs were ruled effective.

The action taken by Sayyidnā Fārūq Al-A'ẓam:

Now the above discussion proves this much that holding three talaqs as three was a decision of the Holy Prophet himself ﷺ. However, at this point, an incident related to Sayyidnā Fārūq Al-A'ẓam رضی اللہ عنہ, which has been reported in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim and several other books of *Ḥadīth*, raises a problem. The words are:

عن ابن عباس رضى الله عنهما قال : كان الطلاق على عهد رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم وأبى بكر و سنتين من خلافة عمر طلاق الثلث واحدة فقال عمر بن الخطاب: إن الناس قداستعجلوا فى أمر كانت لهم فيه أناة فلوأمضينا عليهم ، فأمضاه عليهم (صحيح مسلم ج ١ ص ٤٧٧)

It has been reported from Sayyidnā ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہما that during the times of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and during the first two years of the caliphate of Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ three talāqs were taken as one. So, Sayyidnā 'Umar said: 'People are becoming haste-prone in a matter in which there was a room for deferment for them. Therefore, it would be appropriate if we enforce it on them.' Then he enforced it on them. (Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, page 477, volume 1)

This declaration of Sayyidnā 'Umar al-Fārūq was made publicly in the presence of *Ṣaḥābah* (Companions) and *Tābi'īn* (their successors) -- after consultation with *Ṣaḥābah* having expertise in *Fiqh*. Rejection or hesitation by any one of them has not been reported. Therefore, Imām Ibn 'Abd al-Barr al-Māliki has reported a consensus on this; the following words appear in al-Zurqāni Sharḥ al-Mu'attā:

والجمهور على وقوع الثلاث بل حكى ابن عبدالبر الإجماع قائلا: ان خلافه لايلتفت إليه ، (زرقانى شرح مؤطا ج ٣ ص ١٦٧)

The overwhelming majority of the scholars of Sharī'ah is of the view that three simultaneous talaqs become effective. In fact, Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, while reporting *ijmā'* (consensus) on this, has said: 'The contrary of this is not worth consideration.' (al-Zurqāni: Sharḥ al-Mu'attā: page 167, v.3)

And Al-Nawawī says in Sharḥ Muslim:

قال الشافعى و مالك و أبو حنيفة وأحمد وجماهير العلماء من السلف والخلف يقع الثلاث ، وقال طاؤس وبعض أهل الظاهر: لايقع بذلك إلا واحدة (شرح مسلم ج ١ ص ٤٧٨)

Imām al-Shāfi'i, Imām Mālik, Imām Abū Hanifah, Imām Ahmad and a large number of earlier and later *'ulamā'* have said that three talaqs do become effective. And Tāw'ūs and some Zāhirī adherents have said what becomes effective with this is one *ṭalāq* only. (Sharḥ Muslim, page 475, volume 1)

Imām al-Tahāwi says in Sharḥ Ma'ānī al-Athār:

فخاطب عمر رضى الله عنه بذلك الناس جميعا ، وفيهم أصحاب رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم، رضى الله عنهم الذين قد علموا ما تقدم من ذلك فى زمن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم، فلم ينكر عليه منهم منكر ولم يدفعه دافع . (شرح معانى الاثارج ٢ ص ٢٩)

So, Sayyidnā 'Umar addressed people on this subject publicly, and present among those were Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ who knew about the method practiced prior to this during the time of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. But no one from among them challenged it and no one from among them rejected it. (Sharḥ al-Ma'ānī p. 29, v.2)

In the event cited above, no doubt, the course of action for the Muslim community has been laid down with the consensus of *Ṣaḥābah* and *Tābi'īn*, warning that giving three talaqs simultaneously is certainly a cause of the anger of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and therefore undesirable, but despite this, anyone who commits this mistake will end up finding that his wife has become unlawful for him, and thereafter, not to become lawful again, unless she goes through the process of marrige and divorce with another man.

Intellectually and theoretically, two questions arise here. First: As stated earlier with the support of several *ḥadīth* reports, it stands proved that the Holy Prophet has himself enforced three talaqs on those who gave three talaqs simultaneously. They were not permitted by him to revoke the divorce pronouncements or enter into a fresh marriage contract. What would then be the meaning of what Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās said in relation to this incident, that is, during the times of the Prophet, during the Siddiqī caliphate, and upto to two

years, during the Fārūqī caliphate, three ṭalāqs were taken as one when Sayyidnā Fārūq al-A'ẓam gave the ruling about three ṭalāqs.

The second question is that if it is accepted that three ṭalāqs were taken as one during the times of the Holy Prophet and the Siddiqi caliphate, how it was that Sayyidnā Fārūq al-A'ẓam رضی اللہ عنہ changed this decision? And even if, supposedly, a mistake was made by him, how did all the *Ṣaḥābah* present there accept it?

Both these questions have been answered variously by respected *fuqahā'* and *muhaddithīn*. The most clear and unburdened answer given is the one by Imam Nawawi which he has reported in *Sharh* Muslim calling it 'the most authentic (اصح)' suggesting that this executive order of Sayyidnā Fārūq al-A'ẓam and the total agreement (اجماع) of the noble *Ṣaḥābah* upon it, should be related to a particular form of three ṭalāqs in which someone might say three times: 'You are divorced, you are divorced, you are divorced' -- or he might say: 'I divorce you, I divorce you, I divorce you'.

This situation, meaning-wise, has two possibilities. (1) The pronouncer may have said these words with the intention of giving three ṭalāqs. (2) The three repeated pronouncements were simply for the sake of emphasis without any intention of giving three ṭalāqs, and it is obvious that the knowledge of intention can come only through the statement of the pronouncer. During the blessed times of the Holy Prophet ﷺ truth and honesty were common and dominant. If, after using such words, someone stated that he did not intend to give three ṭalāqs, instead, the words were said repeatedly just for the sake of emphasis, the Holy Prophet ﷺ would then confirm his sworn statement and rule that this was only one ṭalāq.

This is corroborated by the *ḥadīth* of Sayyidnā Rukāna رضی اللہ عنہ which says that he had divorced his wife with the word, '*albattah*'. This word was spoken for three ṭalāqs in common Arab usage but the sense of three was not clear in it. Sayyidnā Rukāna رضی اللہ عنہ said: 'I never intended three ṭalāqs with this word. In fact, I wanted to give one ṭalāq'. The Holy Prophet ﷺ put him on oath to which he swore. Then, he ruled it to be only one ṭalāq.

This *ḥadīth* appears in al-Tirmidhī, Abū Dāwūd, Ibn Majah and al-Dārimi with different chains of authorities and in different words. Some of the words also indicate that Sayyidnā Rukāna رضی اللہ عنہ had given three ṭalāqs to his wife. But, Abū Dāwūd has preferred the position that Sayyidnā Rukāna, in reality, had given ṭalāq by using the

word *'albattah'* (البتة). Since this word was used for three ṭalāqs in common usage, some narrator has interpreted it as three ṭalāqs.

In any case, this *ḥadīth* proves, as generally agreed upon, that the Holy Prophet ﷺ ruled Sayyidnā Rukāna's ṭalāq to be one only when he declared on oath that he did not intend to give three ṭalāqs. This too, indeed, proves that he had not pronounced the words of three ṭalāqs explicitly and clearly, otherwise there would have remained no possibility of his having not intended three ṭalāqs and consequently, there would have been no need to question him.

The incident clarifies that if the words of ṭalāq had two possibilities about whether the husband had actually intended to give three ṭalāqs or he had used the words of divorce thrice just for the sake of emphasis, and had actually intended to give one ṭalāq only, the Holy Prophet ﷺ ruled only after a solemn declaration under oath, that it was one because those were the days of truth and honesty and the chance that someone would take a false oath was far too remote.

This practice continued during the caliphate of Sayyidnā Siddīq al-Akbar and during the first two years of the caliphate of Sayyidnā Fārūq al-A'ẓām. It was during his time that Sayyidnā Fārūq al-A'ẓām realized that the standard of truth and honesty was on the decline now, and according to the prophecy made in *ḥadīth* will further decline in the future. On the other hand, incidents became numerous wherein those who pronounced the words of divorce three times started declaring that their intention was that of one ṭalāq only. It was then realized that should the practice of ruling (three ṭalāqs as) one ṭalāq following confirmation of the statement of intent by the pronouncer of ṭalāq continue like this into the future, it will not be too far when people start misusing this concession given by the Sharī'ah and go about lying that their intention was for one ṭalāq just to take a wife back. All *Ṣaḥābah*, finding the intelligence and far-sightedness of Sayyidnā Fārūq al-A'ẓām in the management of religion (*dīn*) as correct, agreed with him. These were blessed people who knew the thinking of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . They came to the conclusion that, should he be present in their particular time, surely he too, would not rule on the basis of the intention hidden in hearts and on the statement given by the person concerned. Therefore, the law he made

for this purpose declared that whosoever repeats the word of *ṭalāq* three times will find his very three ṭalāqs ruled as effective. His contention -- that he had intended to give only one *ṭalāq* -- would not be considered (in the courts) as valid.

In the foregoing incident related to Sayyidnā Fārūq al-A'ẓam, the words of the report themselves confirm the subject under discussion. He said:

إن الناس قداستعجلوا فى أمر كانت لهم فيه اناة فلوأمضينا عليهم

> People are becoming haste-prone in a matter in which there was a room for deferment for them. Therefore, it would be appropriate if we enforce it on them.

This explanation of the executive order of Sayyidnā Fārūq al-A'ẓam رضى الله عنه , and the consensus of the noble *Ṣaḥābah* on it, is confirmed by *Ḥadīth* reports as well. It automatically supplies answers to the two questions referred to above.

The problem is resolved as we know that a particular *ṭalāq* (divorce) given by the word 'three', or the repetition of the word *ṭalāq* with the intention of 'three', were ruled as three after all -- even during the time of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . The ruling of 'one' concerns a *ṭalāq* in which *thalāth* or 'three' is not mentioned clearly or in which the act of giving three talaqs is not admitted and instead, it is claimed that the count of three was for emphasis only.

Then the other question -- when the Holy Prophet ﷺ had already ruled three divorce prnouncements to be one, why did Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه act otherwise and how did the noble Companion agree with it? -- is also eliminated because, in this particular situation, Sayyidnā 'Umar has blocked the indiscriminate use of the leave given by the Holy Prophet ﷺ . God forbid, there is no trace of doubt here about any decision of the Holy Prophet ﷺ having been reversed.

Now that all doubts have been removed, let Allah be praised. The purpose here does not warrant going into comprehensive and exhaustive details on the subject of three talaqs. That appears in extensive details in *Ḥadīth* commentaries and several *'ulamā* have explained it in detailed treatises. Here, this much is sufficient to understand the subject. And Allah is our supporter and helper.

Verses 231 - 232

وَإِذَا طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَآءَ فَبَلَغْنَ أَجَلَهُنَّ فَأَمْسِكُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ سَرِّحُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ وَّلَا تُمْسِكُوهُنَّ ضِرَارًا لِّتَعْتَدُوا وَمَنْ يَّفْعَلْ ذٰلِكَ فَقَدْ ظَلَمَ نَفْسَهٗ وَلَا تَتَّخِذُوٓا اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ هُزُوًا وَّاذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَمَآ أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِّنَ الْكِتٰبِ وَالْحِكْمَةِ يَعِظُكُمْ بِهٖ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَاعْلَمُوٓا أَنَّ اللّٰهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ○ وَإِذَا طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَآءَ فَبَلَغْنَ أَجَلَهُنَّ فَلَا تَعْضُلُوهُنَّ أَنْ يَّنْكِحْنَ أَزْوَاجَهُنَّ إِذَا تَرَاضَوْا بَيْنَهُمْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ذٰلِكَ يُوعَظُ بِهٖ مَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ ذٰلِكُمْ أَزْكٰى لَكُمْ وَأَطْهَرُ وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ○

And when you have divorced women, and they have reached (the end of) their waiting period, then, either retain them as recognized or release them as recognized. And do not retain them with wrongful intent resulting in cruelty on your part. And whoever does this actually wrongs his own self. And do not take the verses of Allah in jest, and remember the grace of Allah on you and what He has revealed to you of the Book and the wisdom giving you good counsel thereby. And fear Allah, and be sure that Allah is all-knowing in respect of everything.

And when you have divorced women and they have reached (the end of) their waiting period, do not prevent them from marrying their husbands when they mutually agree as recognized. This is how advice is given, to one of you who believes in Allah and in the Hereafter. This is more pure and clean for you. And Allah knows and you do not know. (Verses 231 - 232)

Commentary:

In the previous two verses, it will be recalled, important rules of the law of *ṭalāq* (divorce) were given. Also delienated there was the just and moderate system of divorce in Islam. Now some other relevant injunctions and rulings have been mentioned in the verses under discussion (231 - 232).

Special instructions for revocation of divorce or annulment of marriage

The first rule given in the first verse is: When women divorced revocably reach near the completion of their *'iddah* (waiting period), the husband has two choices; either he may revoke his divorce and let her continue to be married to him or he may not revoke his divorce, discontinue the *nikāh* relationship and release her totally.

But along with both these choices, the noble Qur'ān places a restriction which requires that a wife, if retained, must be retained in accordance with a manner well-recognized and should it come to a parting of ways, even then, the parting should be in accordance with the rule as approved by the Sharī'ah. Here, the word بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ (in fairness), which appears separately at both the places, suggests that there are some conditions and rules governing the choice of retaining, similarly as there are, in the choice of releasing. When choice is made from either of the two options, it must be done in accordance with the method prescribed by the Sharī'ah and not under the heat of spot anger or sentiments. Some of these rules of Islamic law appear in the Qur'ān itself. Rest of the details have been given by the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

For instance, should the thought of ugly consequences of separation after the incident of divorce produce a change of heart in favour of revoking it and keeping the marriage intact, then the Sharī'ah has a method. It stipulates that the purpose in doing so should be to wash out past anger and displeasure and resolve to live anew in good family relationship with intention to give her the due rights. The purpose should not be to hold the woman in captivity or to harass and torture her. Therefore, the following words were said in the verse under reference: وَلَا تُمْسِكُوْهُنَّ ضِرَارًا لِّتَعْتَدُوْا , that is, 'do not retain them with intent to harm them unjustly'.

The other method of *raj'ah* (revocation) has been mentioned in Sūrah Al-Ṭalāq:

وَاَشْهِدُوْا ذَوَىْ عَدْلٍ مِّنْكُمْ وَاَقِيْمُوا الشَّهَادَةَ لِلّٰهِ

> And let two trustworthy persons from amongst you be witnesses; then, let witness be given if needed, precisely for the sake of Allah, (without fear or favour). (65:2)

It means that anyone intending to take his wife back by *raj'ah* (revocation) should invite two trustworthy Muslims to act as witnesses. Out of the many advantages it has, one is the possible use of these witnesses in case there is a legal claim against *raj'ah* filed by the woman.

Moreover, if the rule of having witnesses on *raj'ah* is not observed there is a possibility that someone, out of selfishness or Satanic instigation, comes up with a claim, even after the *'iddah* has expired, that he had already done his *raj'ah* (revocation) before the expiry of *'iddah* (waiting period).

In order to eradicate these evils, the Holy Qur'ān has directed that the act of revocation should have two trustworthy witnesses.

Looking at the other side of the matter, it is also possible that hearts remain heavy and anger does not go away even after the long span of *'iddah* which has given them sufficient time for thinking. So, a termination of relationship may seem to be the choice, in which case the danger of hostile emotions flaring up is acute, which again may become contagious -- starting from two persons, it could envelope two families and could become, for both, a danger for both this world and the Hereafter. To offset this danger, it was briefly said: أَوْ سَرِّحُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ : 'Or release them in fairness,' that is, if you have to leave or free a wife and sever your relationship with her, that too, must be done in accordance with the recognised method. Some details of this method are given in the noble Qur'ān itself; rest of the details stand proved through what the Holy Prophet ﷺ said and did.

For instance, in the preceding verse, it was said: وَلَا يَحِلُّ لَكُمْ أَنْ تَأْخُذُوا مِمَّا آتَيْتُمُوهُنَّ شَيْئًا that is, do not take back (without a valid ground admitted by the Islamic Law) that which you have already given to the woman as *mahr* (dower), in return for the divorce, or go about demanding some other compensation.

Then, in the following verse, it was said: وَلِلْمُطَلَّقَاتِ مَتَاعٌ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ حَقًّا عَلَى الْمُتَّقِينَ , that is, 'for all divorced women, there is some benefit as recognized rightly due on those who fear Allah'. The explanation of مَتَاعٌ : *matā'* or compensatory benefit to be given to a divorced wife is that she should be given some present or cash or a set of clothing at the least. Thus the fulfillment of some rights of the divorced wife has been made

mandatory for the divorcing husband while the fulfillment of some others has been assigned to him in the form of kind treatment and good conduct. This is a chaste lesson in high morals and social manners which points to the fact that, just as the marriage was a transaction and mutual contract, the divorce is the termination of a transaction. There is no reason why the termination of this transaction should be a hotbed of enmity and hostility. The final annulment of the transaction should also be done decently and compassionately, that is, following *talaq*, the divorced wife should be given some benefits.

The details of this 'benefit' are that he should allow her to stay in the family house during *'iddah*, pay for her total sustenance, pay the full amount of *mahr* (dower) if still unpaid while intercourse has already occurred; and in case the incident of divorce has occurred before intercourse, then half of the dower should be paid in good cheer. All these are obligatory rights which have to be given to a divorced woman necessarily; however, it is not only desirable but excellent as well, if the divorced wife, on her parting day, goes with some cash or at the least, with a set of clothing as parting gift. *Ṣubḥān Allāh,* what a decent teaching it is -- all that customarily causes quarrels and fights and takes families to ruin has been so wisely transformed into everlasting goodwill and peace.

After all these injunctions, it was said: وَمَنْ يَّفْعَلْ ذٰلِكَ فَقَدْ ظَلَمَ نَفْسَهٗ, that is, anyone who acts against these divine commands will harm none but himself. It is obvious that Hereafter (the life to come) will be the place where every injustice and cruelty will be avenged in the sight of Allah and the oppressor is not going to move one step forward unless the oppressed is avenged.

If we ponder with discernment and hindsight, we shall discover that, if some oppressor gets away with his cruelty against the oppressed, the evil consequences of this act do disgrace him, more than often, right here in this world. He may or may not comprehend it, but fairly often, he is overtaken by misfortunes which make him taste at least some retribution of his oppression during his life of the mortal world. This is what Shaykh Sa'dī, mercy be on him, said in a Persian couplet:

پنداشت ستمگر که جفا برما کرد
برگردنِ وے بماند وبرما بگذشت

The oppressor presumed that he had hit me.
But his weapon boomeranged back into his neck while it sailed past me!

The noble Qur'ān has an approach which is wise, and a style that is special, when it does not describe law in the manner penal laws of the world are described. It rather explains its injunctions in a sympathetic and persuasive manner, showing its wisdom and describing the series of losses man suffers while acting against it, which, if duly understood, will render one incapable of embarking on such crimes. So, behind every law there comes the reminder that man must fear Allah and that man should never forget his accountability in the Hereafter.

Do not make a marriage and divorce a plaything

The second rule presented in this verse is that the word of Allah should not be taken lightly as some amusement: ولا تتخذوا آيات الله هزوا : 'And do not take the verses of Allah in jest.' According to one explanation of the expression -- playing games with the verses of Allah or making a mockery of it -- means acting against Divine ordinances in matters of marriage and divorce. The second explanation reported from Sayyidnā Abū al-Dardā' رضی اللہ عنہ is that some people during pre-Islam Arabia would give divorce or free a slave, then they would go back on their word and start saying that this was all in fun; *ṭalāq* (divorce) or *'itāq* (to free a slave) was not intended. Thereupon, this verse was revealed which gave the ruling that anyone going through divorce and marriage, even if it be playfully or jokingly, would find these enforced and the plea of 'having no intention' will not be accepted as valid.

The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said that there are three things in which acting seriously, or in jest, are both equal: One -- *talāq* (divorce); two - *'itāq* (to free a slave); three -- *nikāh* (marriage) (reported by Ibn Marduwayh from Ibn al-'Abbas and Ibn al-Mundhir from 'Ubadah ibn al-Samit).

This *ḥadīth* has been reported from Sayyidnā Abū Hurayrah in the following words:

ثلاث جدّهن جدّ وهزلهن جدّ: النكاح والطلاق والرجعة

It means that there are three things which take effect equally whether done seriously or jokingly. These are: The marriage, the divorce and the revocation of divorce. (Mazhari)

The Islamic law governing these three is: Should a man and a woman go through the process of offer and acceptance before witnesses, even if it be without any intention or just in jest, the marriage stands solemnized anyway. Similarly, if divorce is given in clear words, without any intention, or just in jest, divorce takes effect; or revocation, if done, becomes valid too. Similarly again, if a slave is playfully declared to be free, the slave becomes free. Jest or fun are not taken as valid excuses.

After stating this injunction, the noble Qur'ān then educates man, in its unique style, how he should obey Allah Almighty and fear the consequences of the life to come (*ākhirah*). It was said:

وَاذْكُرُوْا نِعْمَتَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَمَآ اَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِّنَ الْكِتٰبِ وَالْحِكْمَةِ يَعِظُكُمْ بِهٖ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمٌ ۝

That is, 'And remember the grace of Allah on you and what He has revealed to you of the Book and the wisdom giving you good counsel thereby. And fear Allah, and be sure that Allah is all-knowing in respect of everything' -- It means: He knows the secrets hidden in your hearts, your intentions and your purposes. Therefore, when you have to release your wife from your marriage bond by giving divorce, you should do so with the intention of avoiding mutual disputes, loss of mutual rights and doing injustice, and not with the intention of releasing anger on your wife or disgracing or hurting her.

The basic rules of giving a divorce

The third rule identified in this verse is: Should a man be left with no other option but divorce, then the basic and true method in the view of Sharī'ah and *Sunnah* is that he should give one revocable divorce in clear and unambiguous words so that the choice of taking the wife back remains open. Words that cause sudden severance of marriage relationship should not be spoken. This is known as *al-ṭalāq al-bā'in*, the divorce that cannot be revoked. In addition to this, reaching three talaqs must be avoided following which even fresh marriage between the couple becomes *ḥaram* (unlawful). This point is indicated by the use of the universal and unqualified words in طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَآءَ

(when you have divorced women), because the injunction contained in this verse covers only one or two revocable ṭalāqs. It does not concern the irrevocable three talaqs; but the Holy Qur'ān, by not mentioning any related qualification, has suggested that the real *ṭalāq* (divorce) is none other than the revocable *ṭalāq* as approved by the Sharī'ah. Other forms are not devoid of repugnance or undesirability.

Rules of the remarriage of the divorced women

The second verse stops the unjust treatment meted out to divorced women, that is, they are discouraged to marry again. In some cases the first husband generally opposes the idea of his divorced wife marrying someone else and considers this to be a violation of his honour. In some families, even guardians of the divorced woman stop her from marrying a second time -- some of them often do that out of greed hoping to let her marry only when there is some financial gain for them. There are times when the divorced woman agrees to remarry her former husband but the guardians and relatives develop a sort of hostility towards him after the incident of divorce. As such, they oppose their remarriage even after both of them agree to it. Stopping free women, without any valid reason admitted by Islamic law, from marrying at their choice, is a grave injustice whether it comes from the former husband or from the guardians of the woman. This injustice has been prevented through this verse.

This verse was revealed in the background of an incident of this nature. It appears in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī that Sayyidnā Ma'qil ibn Yasār رضی اللہ عنہ had given his sister in marriage to someone. He divorced her and the period of *'iddah* expired as well. Following that, this man was sorry for what he did and wished to remarry her. His wife, that is, the sister of Ma'qil ibn Yasār رضی اللہ عنہ also agreed to it. When this man talked to Ma'qil about it, he said, of course, in anger against the man's act of divorce: 'I did you an honour. I gave you the hand of my sister and you did this to me. You divorced her. Now you have come again to me so that I can let you marry her once again. By Allah, she will not go back in your *nikāh* now.'

There was another incident concerning a cousin of Sayyidnā Jābir ibn 'Abdullāh رضی اللہ عنہ similar to the one above. Thereupon, this verse was revealed in which the approach of Ma'qil and Jābir رضی اللہ عنہما was declared to be undesirable and impermissible.

The noble *Ṣaḥābah* (Companions) were true lovers of Allah Almighty and His Messenger ﷺ . Such was the beneficence of the verse that Ma'qil ibn Yasār's anger cooled down as he heard it. He himself went to his former brother-in-law and gave his sister in his marriage once again and then gave *kaffārah* (expiation) for his oath. Similarly, Jābir also carried out the instruction.

Keeping in view the form of address used here, this verse includes husbands who have given a divorce as well as the guardians of the women. Both have been commanded: فَلَا تَعْضُلُوهُنَّ أَنْ يَنْكِحْنَ أَزْوَاجَهُنَّ إِذَا تَرَاضَوْا بَيْنَهُمْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ: that is, 'do not prevent them from marrying their husbands when they mutually agree with fairness.' They may even be their previous husbands who had divorced them or they may be others. But a condition has been imposed here which is: إِذَا تَرَاضَوْا بَيْنَهُمْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ, that is, 'when they mutually agree with fairness.' It means: When a man and woman agree to marry in accordance with the rules set by the Sharī'ah, then, do not stop them from getting married. Here it was hinted that the absence of an agreement between the two, or compulsion from any quarter, is a valid reason for people around to stop them. Or, it may be that there is mutual agreement of the couple but it is not in accordance with the method prescribed by the Shari'ah. For instance, the couple may agree to live together without marrying; or may, in between them, enter into a new *nikāh* illegitimately after three talaqs. Still more, should there be an intention to marry another husband during the period of *'iddah*, every Muslim, specially those closely related to the man and woman concerned, have a right to stop them from doing so. In fact, it is *wājib* or obligatory to stop them within the limits of one's ability.

Similarly, if a girl wishes to marry outside her *kaf'*(كفو : equal, like) without the permission of her guardians, or wishes to enter into *nikāh* (marriage) on a dower which is less than her *mahr al-mithl* (a dower approximately similar to the one customary in her family) then this affects the family. Since she has no right to do this, her consent is also not in accordance with the method prescribed by the Sharī'ah. In this situation, the guardians of the girl have a right to stop her from this

marriage. However, the words إِذَا تَرَاضَوْا :'When they mutually agree' do point out that a sane and pubert girl cannot be given in marriage without her consent or permission.

Towards the end of verse 232 there are three sentences appearing one after the other. The first one is: ذٰلِكَ يُوْعَظُ بِهٖ مَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ : It means: 'These injunctions are for those who believe in Allah and the Last Day.' Here it was hinted that the necessary outcome of believing in Allah and the Last Day, (the Day of Judgment) is that man should observe, practice and be bound by these Divine injunctions *in toto*. Those who fall short in following these injunctions should realize that their *'Īmān* or belief is in disarray.

In the second sentence, it was said: ذٰلِكُمْ أَزْكٰى لَكُمْ وَأَطْهَرُ , that is, 'adherence to these injunctions is for you a modality of purity and cleanliness.' It has been suggested here that the result of acting contrary to these injunctions is defilement with the pollution of sin, and involvement in discord and strife; for instance, if sane, pubert and young girls were categorically prevented from marriage, it would, on one hand, be an act of cruelty to them and a denial of their rights and on the other, this would put their modesty and chastity in danger. Thirdly, if God forbid, they get involved in sin, the resulting curse will also fall on those who prevented them from marrying. And it is quite possible that, much before the curse of the life to come (the *ākhirah*), the misfortune of these helpless women may drive men to the outside limits of wars and murders, as is not uncommon even now. If that happens, much before the curse of the *ākhirah*, their deeds will become a curse for them right here in this world. And if they were not, categorically at least, prevented from marriage, but were forced to enter into marriage with a person not of their choice and liking, that too will result in perpetual hostility, discord and strife, or *talaq* (divorce) and *khul'* (خلع : Divorce at the instance of wife against compensation). Its unpleasant effects are obvious. It was, therefore, said that in not preventing them from marrying the husbands of their choice there is for you easy access to purity and cleanliness.

In the third sentence it was said: وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ , that is, 'and Allah knows (that which is good for you) and you do not know'. The purpose of this statement is that people who prevent divorced women

from marrying see some benefits coming to them according to their conjecture, for instance, the notion of retaining honour and prestige or the hope of extracting some money on the pretext of their marriage. In order to remove this Satanic deception and unjust expediency, it was said: Allah Almighty knows very well what is suitable or beneficial for you -- so, when injunctions are given, these considerations are already taken care of. Since you do not know the reality of things and the end of affairs, you go ahead with your imperfect thoughts and faulty opinions, taking such things to be suitable or beneficial at times, while in them there is nothing but ruin and destruction for you. The assumed honour and prestige that you uphold will be rolling in dust if divorced women were to go out of control. And when you think of illegitimate monetary gains, it is likely that these may get you involved in intrigues and conflicts which may become dangerous not only for your money but also for your life.

The Qur'ānic strategy about the enforcement of a law

At this point here, the Holy Qur'ān presents a law to the effect that preventing divorced women from marrying as they choose is prohibited. Now, in order that acting in accordance with this law becomes easy, and that a climate of acceptance is generated in the public mind, these three sentences have followed after the initial declaration of the law. In the first sentence man is induced to be ready for action in accordance with this law by warning him against the accountability of the Day of Judgment and the subsequent punishment of crimes. In the second sentence, man is persuaded to abide by the law by telling him about evils caused by acting against it and many a harm that such contravention may bring to humanity. In the third sentence it was said that your own betterment lies in abiding by the law given by Allah Almighty. If, in acting against it, you have some expedient gain in mind, that then, is an outcome of your short-sightedness and insensitivity to consequences.

This manner and style of the Holy Qur'ān does not end here; in fact, it runs throughout all injunctions. When a law is identified, along with it comes the warning that Allah is Almighty and that there is accountability and punishment in the Hereafter. With the beginning and the end of each law there are affixes and suffixes like اِتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ (Fear

Allah) and إِنَّ اللّٰهَ خَبِيرٌۢ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ (Allah is All-Aware of what you do) and إِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ (Allah is watchful of what you do). The Qur'ān is, for the whole world, and for the generations to come till the Day of Doom (*Qiyāmah*), a complete code of life, and a law covering all aspects of living. Of course, it does describe restrictive ordinances and legal punishments, but the manner in which these are handled is unique, not to be found in the law books of the whole world. The diction it has is more sympathetic than authoritarian. In the description of each law, there is an objective approach that no man should, by disobeying it, become deserving of punishment. This is not something like the governments of the contemporary world which make a law, publish it and then anyone who acts against it is left out to go through his punishment.

Moreover, a rather long-term benefit that comes out of this method of Qur'ān and its special style, is that man, once he has sensed it, does not start abiding by the law simply because he knows that acting against it would bring some sort of punishment in the mortal world; much contrary to this, he starts worrying about the displeasure of Allah Almighty and the punishment that would come in the Hereafter (*ākhirah*) and this very concern of his renders his outside and inside, his open and his secret, all even -- one and indivisible. He cannot act against the law even at a place where there are no chances at all of his being policed, openly or secretly, because he believes that Allah Almighty, great is His Majesty, is present everywhere, watching and knowing everything down to the minutest particle. This is the reason why every Muslim abided by the law considering it to be an ideal of his life as a result of the principles of clean social living taught by the Qur'ān.

Aside from identifying limits and restrictions of law, the distinction of a Qur'ānic system of government is that by using the tools of persuasion and warning, it raises the standards of human morals and character to heights where legal limits and restrictions become second nature to him, before which he makes his personal desires and preferences take the back seat. A hard look into the history and governments of nations and the roster of crimes and punishments they offer would show that law alone has never reformed

any nation or individual. The police and the army alone have never succeeded in rooting crimes out unless the fear of Allah Almighty and the realization of His supreme greatness is impinged on human hearts. That which helps prevent crimes is, in reality, the fear of Allah and the fear of accountability on the Day of Judgment. If this is not there, nobody can keep anybody away from crimes.

Verse 233

وَالْوَالِدٰتُ يُرْضِعْنَ اَوْلَادَهُنَّ حَوْلَيْنِ كَامِلَيْنِ لِمَنْ اَرَادَ اَنْ يُّتِمَّ
الرَّضَاعَةَ ؕ وَعَلَى الْمَوْلُوْدِ لَهٗ رِزْقُهُنَّ وَكِسْوَتُهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ ؕ
لَا تُكَلَّفُ نَفْسٌ اِلَّا وُسْعَهَا ۚ لَا تُضَآرَّ وَالِدَةٌ ۢ بِوَلَدِهَا وَلَا
مَوْلُوْدٌ لَّهٗ بِوَلَدِهٖ ۗ وَعَلَى الْوَارِثِ مِثْلُ ذٰلِكَ ۚ فَاِنْ اَرَادَا فِصَالًا
عَنْ تَرَاضٍ مِّنْهُمَا وَتَشَاوُرٍ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا ؕ وَاِنْ اَرَدْتُّمْ اَنْ
تَسْتَرْضِعُوْۤا اَوْلَادَكُمْ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ اِذَا سَلَّمْتُمْ مَّاۤ اٰتَيْتُمْ
بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ ؕ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَاعْلَمُوْۤا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ بَصِيْرٌ O

And mothers suckle their children full two years; it is for one who wants to complete the (period of) suckling. And on him, to whom the child is born, falls the provision of food and clothing for them (the mothers) with fairness. Nobody is obligated beyond his capacity. No mother shall be made to suffer on account of her child, nor a man to whom the child is born, on account of his child. And on the heir it falls likewise. Now, if they want to wean, with mutual consent, and consulation, there is no sin on them. And if you want to get your children suckled (by a wet-nurse), there is no sin on you when you pay off what you are to give, as recognized. And fear Allah and be sure that Allah is watchful of what you do. (Verse 233)

The injunctions of suckling the children by the mothers

This verse contains injunctions relating to *raḍā'ah* (رضاعة) or the suckling of children. It will be recalled that in verses appearing earlier and later than this, the injunctions of *ṭalāq* (divorce) have been taken up. In between, there appear injunctions relating to the suckling of

children, because it generally happens that issues concerning the feeding and upbringing of children are disputed following a divorce. Since these disputations lead to violence, this verse offers moderate injunctions which can be carried out easily and appropriately by man and woman both. For the two situations of suckling and weaning, whether these show up during the period of marriage, or after divorce, a system was suggested which helps stop mutual bickering, or injustice to any of the parties.

For instance, it was said in the first sentence of the verse:

وَالْوَالِدٰتُ يُرْضِعْنَ أَوْلَادَهُنَّ حَوْلَيْنِ كَامِلَيْنِ لِمَنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يُّتِمَّ الرَّضَاعَةَ

that is, 'And mothers suckle their children for full two years' -- unless there be some strong compelling reason which leads to weaning before that time.

Some rules concerning *raḍā'ah* or suckling of children come out from this verse; these are:

Suckling of children is an obligation of the mother

Naturally suckling is an obligation of the mother. If she does not feed without a valid reason or because of some hostility or displeasure, she will be a sinner. And she cannot accept any payment for suckling from her husband, as long as she is married to him because that is her own duty.

The total period of suckling

The second rule is about the total period of suckling which is two years. Unless there be some special reason, it is the right of the child that this period be completed.

From this we also know that the total time given for suckling is full two years after which suckling should not be done. However, on the basis of some verses of the Qur'ān and reports from *aḥādīth*, Imām Abū Ḥanīfah ruled that if it was carried on over a period of 30 months or two and a half years, all the legal effects of suckling shall be applicable and if this was done because of the weakness of the child, a legitimate excuse, it would then be no sin either. But breast-feeding a child after completing two and a half years is unanimously *ḥaram* (forbidden).

In the second sentence of this verse, it was said:

وَعَلَى الْمَوْلُوْدِلَهٗ رِزْقُهُنَّ وَكِسْوَتُهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ لَا تُكَلَّفُ نَفْسٌ اِلَّا وُسْعَهَا

> And on him, to whom the child is born, falls the provision of food and clothing for them (the mothers) with fairness. Nobody is obligated beyond his capacity.

The first point that must be noted here is that the Qur'an uses the word وَالِدَاتُ for mothers but while referring to the father, it opts for اَلْمَوْلُوْدُلَهٗ : 'to whom the child is born' leaving out the smaller word والد , although the said word, *'walid'* (father) does appear elsewhere in the Qur'an, for instance: لَا يَجْزِيْ وَالِدٌ عَنْ وَّلَدِهٖ : '(Fear the Day) when no father shall be of avail to his child' (31:33). But the use of *al-mawludi lahu* in place of *walid* in this setting has a secret behind it. The whole of Qur'an has a unique method and style so it does not describe any law in the way governments of the mortal world do. It rather presents it in a sympathetic and affectionate manner, a manner in which it could become easy for human beings to accept it and act accordingly.

Since the father has been obligated to pay for the expenses of the child, even though the child belongs to the father and the mother both, it was possible that the father could take this injunction to be somewhat burdensome, therefore, the expression *al-mawludi lahu* ('tc whom the child is born') was preferred over *walid* ('father'). The meaning of this expression -- 'to whom the child is born' -- suggests that, no doubt both father and mother share in the birth of the child, but the child is, however, ascribed to the father. The lineage comes from the father. Now that the child is his, the responsibility of the child's expenses should not be heavy on him.

Responsibilities of mothers and fathers

The third rule of Islamic law given in this verse is: While suckling the child is certainly the responsibility of the mother but the sustenance of the mother, inclusive of all necessities of life, is the responsibility of the father and this responsibility continues as far as the marriage or the post-divorce waiting period of wife (*'iddah*) continues. When divorce and *'iddah* have matured, the responsibility of the husband towards the expenses of his wife will end, but the father will con tinue to be obligated to pay for the suckling of the child. (Mazhari)

The standard of wife's liabilities

When the husband and wife are both affluent, matching expenses will be obligatory. When both are poor, correspondingly matching expenses will be obligatory. On this much there is total agreement. However, the Muslim jurists differ if both have a different financial status. Following al-Khassāf, the author of Hidāyah has ruled that should the woman be poor and the man rich, her expenses will be medial, that is, higher than those of the poor and lower than those of the rich. According to al-Karkhī, the status of the husband will be the criterion. In Fath al-Qadīr, *fatwā* has been reported on this position from many jurists. (Fath al-Qadīr, pp 422, v.3)

In the verse under discussion, after stating injunctions, the Qur'ān says: لَا تُضَآرَّ وَالِدَةٌ بِوَلَدِهَا وَلَا مَوْلُوْدٌ لَّهٗ بِوَلَدِهٖ , that is, 'no mother shall be made to suffer on account of her child, nor a man to whom the child is born, on account of his child.' It means that the father and mother of the child should not stonewall each other. For instance, the mother may be unable to suckle the child due to some excuse but the father may start forcing her to do so, hoping that she being the mother of the child, would finally melt down and suckle the child. Or, take the case of a mother who has no excuse, yet she refuses to suckle the child hoping that the poor husband, being the father of the child would, in one way or the other, find the means to have the child suckled elsewhere.

Forcing or not forcing a mother for suckling

The fifth rule deduced from لَا تُضَآرَّ وَالِدَةٌ بِوَلَدِهَا (No mother shall be made to suffer on account of her child) appearing above is that it is not permissible for the father to compel the mother to suckle the child if she refuses to do so under some excuse, or need. And if the child refuses to be suckled by another woman, or also refuses to feed on any milk other than that of his or her mother, the mother will then be compelled to feed the child. This rule we know from وَلَا مَوْلُوْدٌ لَّهٗ بِوَلَدِهٖ (nor a man to whom the child is born, on account of his child).

Wages of suckling for a divorced woman

The sixth rule that we learn about is: If the mother demands wages to suckle, she has no right to do that as long as she is married to her husband or is within the post-divorce waiting period. Here her maintenance, which is the responsibility of the child's father, is

enough in itself. Asking for additional wages amounts to harming the father. The situation changes if the post-divorce waiting period has expired and the responsibility of maintenance is all over. Now, if this divorced woman demands from the father wages to suckle her child, the father will have to pay it -- since not doing so amounts to a loss to the mother. However, the condition is that she should ask for the same amount of wages as is taken by some other woman. If she asks for more, the father will have the right to engage a wet-nurse to suckle the child in her place.

The responsibility of suckling an orphan

Later in the subject verse, it is said: وَعَلَى الْوَارِثِ مِثْلُ ذٰلِكَ . It means: If the father is not alive, the responsibility for arranging to have the child suckled falls on the person who is the legal heir (*wārith*) of the child and a *maḥram* (person with whom marriage is prohibited for ever); that is, those who are entitled to be inheritors of the child, if he dies, would be the ones responsible for his sustenance in the absence of the father. If, there be more than one heir like him, everyone will share that responsibility in proportion to their share in the inheritance. Imām Abū Ḥanifah explained that assigning the responsibility of having the orphaned child suckled to the heirs also tells us that the sustenance of a minor child will continue to be, even after weaning, a charge of the heirs since there is nothing special about milk, the purpose is to have the expenses of the child covered. For instance, if the mother of the orphaned child and his grandfather are both alive, these two then, are his *maḥram*, and heirs as well. Therefore, the maintenance of the child shall be borne by both of them in proportion to their share in the inheritance, that is, the mother will bear one-third and the grandfather, two-thirds. Herefrom we also know that the right of the orphaned grandson on his grandfather is much stronger than the rights of his own adult sons, since he is not responsible for the sustenance of his adult child, while the sustenance of the orphaned grandson is obligatory on him. However, a grandson has not been given a share in inheritance in the presence of sons, because it is against the principle of inheritance and justice, as giving a share to the farther in presence of the nearer children is not rational in itself and is certainly, against the *ḥadith* لاولی رجل ذکر (for the nearest male) in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī. Nevertheless, the grandfather does have

the right to make some provision in his will for the orphaned grandson, if he feels there is need to do that. This will could even turn out to be higher than the share of sons. Thus the need of the orphaned grandson was taken care of, while at the same time, the principle of inheritance -- that in the presence of the nearer, the farther should not receive -- remained intact.

The injunctions of weaning

After that, it is said in the subject verse:

فَإِنْ أَرَادَا فِصَالًا عَنْ تَرَاضٍ مِّنْهُمَا وَتَشَاوُرٍ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا

that is, if the mother and father of the child, after mutual consultation and agreement, decide that they have to wean the child earlier than two years, because of the inability of the mother or some sickness of the child, then there is no sin involved here as well. The condition of 'mutual consultation and agreement' was placed for the reason that in weaning the child, his or her welfare should be the paramount concern. Making the child a target-board of mutual differences and quarrels is undesirable.

Injunctions of suckling by a nurse

In the end, it is said:

وَإِنْ أَرَدْتُّمْ أَنْ تَسْتَرْضِعُوٓا أَوْلَادَكُمْ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذَا سَلَّمْتُمْ مَّآ اٰتَيْتُمْ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ

It means: If you wish, for some expedient reason, to have your children suckled by a wet-nurse in place of the mother, even then there is no sin in doing so. However, the condition is that the wages settled with the wet-nurse be paid in full. If the wages were not paid as settled, the sin thereof will rest with the parents.

From this we learn that should a father realize that the feed of the mother, who is willing to suckle, is not good for the child, he has the right to stop the mother from suckling and get a wet-nurse to do that.

From this we also learn that the wages or salary of the woman employed for suckling should be negotiated and settled clearly so that there is no dispute later on; and then let the settled wages be handed over to her at the appointed time and let there be no postponement or evasion.

After stating all these injunctions relating to *raḍāʻah* (suckling), the Qur'ān once again returns to its special manner and style whereby

it brings into focus the fear of Allah Almighty and the concept of His all-encompassing Knowledge so that acting in accordance with law becomes easy, and one remains bound by it under all conditions, seen or unseen. It is said: وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ بَصِيْرٌ that is, 'keep fearing Allah and know for sure that Allah Almighty is fully watching over your open and secret, and your seen and unseen, and He is aware of all intents and purposes hidden in your hearts.' Any party that acts against these injunctions of suckling and weaning or takes a decision in this connection disregarding the welfare of the child, shall deserve punishment.

Verses 234-235

وَالَّذِيْنَ يُتَوَفَّوْنَ مِنْكُمْ وَيَذَرُوْنَ اَزْوَاجًا يَّتَرَبَّصْنَ بِاَنْفُسِهِنَّ
اَرْبَعَةَ اَشْهُرٍ وَّعَشْرًا ۚ فَاِذَا بَلَغْنَ اَجَلَهُنَّ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِيْمَا
فَعَلْنَ فِيْٓ اَنْفُسِهِنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرٌ O وَلَا
جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِيْمَا عَرَّضْتُمْ بِهٖ مِنْ خِطْبَةِ النِّسَآءِ اَوْ اَكْنَنْتُمْ
فِيْٓ اَنْفُسِكُمْ ۚ عَلِمَ اللّٰهُ اَنَّكُمْ سَتَذْكُرُوْنَهُنَّ وَلٰكِنْ لَّا تُوَاعِدُوْهُنَّ
سِرًّا اِلَّآ اَنْ تَقُوْلُوْا قَوْلًا مَّعْرُوْفًا ۚ وَلَا تَعْزِمُوْا عُقْدَةَ النِّكَاحِ
حَتّٰى يَبْلُغَ الْكِتٰبُ اَجَلَهٗ ۚ وَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِيْٓ
اَنْفُسِكُمْ فَاحْذَرُوْهُ ۚ وَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ حَلِيْمٌ O

And those among you who pass away and leave wives behind, their wives keep themselves waiting for four months and ten days. So, when they have reached (the end of) their waiting period, there is no sin on you in what they do for themselves as recognized. And Allah is All-Aware of what you do. There is no sin on you if you hint as a proposal to the women or conceal it in your hearts. Allah does know what you will mention to them. But do not make a promise to them secretly, except that you speak in a recognized manner. And do not resolve upon a contract of marriage until the prescribed time is reached. And be sure that Allah knows what is in your hearts. So, fear Him and be sure that Allah is most Forgiving, Forbearing. (Verse 234-235)

Some injunctions relating to *'Iddah*

1. For one whose husband dies, it is not correct to wear perfume or make-up or use *kohl* [52] or hair oil, beauty-treat unnecessarily, apply henna and dress gaudily. It is also not correct to talk about the second marriage in clear and unambiguous words as appears in the succeeding verse. In addition to this it is also incorrect to stay overnight in homes other than one's own. The text's "*yatarabbaṣna bi anfusihinna*" translated as "keep themselves waiting" hint towards these avoidances. And this is also the injunction for the woman who has received an irrevocable divorce, that is, in which revocation is not possible. However, it is not right for her to go out of the house even during the daytime unless there is an extreme compulsion.

2. Another rule most people are not aware of is: If the husband dies on the night of the new moon, these months will be completed in accordance with the lunar calendar. Their being of 29 or 30 days makes no difference. But, if he died after the night of the new moon, all these months will be completed as of 30 days each. In all, 130 days will be completed. And when this period expires, and the same time when the death occurred comes, *'iddah* will be over.

And now a word concerning what was said about women -- "There is no sin on you in what they do for themselves as recognized." This teaches us that it becomes obligatory on others to stop one who acts against the Sharī'ah, of course, if they have the ability or power to do so. Otherwise, these people too become sinners. And the expression, *bi l'ma'rūf* ('with fairness' or 'as recognized') means that the marriage solemnized should be correct, and permissible according to the Sharī'ah; all conditions of its being lawful should be observed.

Verses 236 - 237

لَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِنْ طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَآءَ مَا لَمْ تَمَسُّوْهُنَّ اَوْ تَفْرِضُوْا
لَهُنَّ فَرِيْضَةً ۚ وَّمَتِّعُوْهُنَّ ۚ عَلَى الْمُوْسِعِ قَدَرُهٗ وَعَلَى الْمُقْتِرِ قَدَرُهٗ ۚ
مَتَاعًا ۢبِالْمَعْرُوْفِ ۚ حَقًّا عَلَى الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ۝ وَاِنْ طَلَّقْتُمُوْهُنَّ مِنْ

52. *Surma*: collorium, claimed to be an inorganic lead compound -- 'Galena', which has been erroneously translated as 'Antimony' by Western writers. Since 'Antimony' is a known ingredient of modern sophisticated explosives, this age-old eye-cosmetic has gone out of fashion and favour.

قَبْلِ اَنْ تَمَسُّوْهُنَّ وَقَدْ فَرَضْتُمْ لَهُنَّ فَرِيْضَةً فَنِصْفُ مَا فَرَضْتُمْ
اِلَّآ اَنْ يَّعْفُوْنَ اَوْ يَعْفُوَا الَّذِىْ بِيَدِهٖ عُقْدَةُ النِّكَاحِ ۭ وَاَنْ تَعْفُوْٓا
اَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوٰى ۭ وَلَا تَنْسَوُا الْفَضْلَ بَيْنَكُمْ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ
بَصِيْرٌ O

There is no sin on you if you divorce women when you have not yet touched them nor fixed for them an amount. So, give them benefit, a rich man according to his means and a poor one according to his means -- a benefit in the recognized manner, an obligation on the virtuous. And if you divorce them before you have touched them, while you have already fixed for them an amount, then there is one half of what you have fixed, unless they (the women) forgive, or forgives the one in whose hand lies the marriage tie. And it is closer to *Taqwa* [53] that you forgive. And do not forget being graceful to one another. Surely, Allah is watchful of what you do. (Verses 236 - 237)

Commentary

Keeping dower and consummation in view, divorce can be of four situations. The injunction concerning the first two of these has been stated in these verses. (1) Dower is not fixed and consummation has not taken place. (2) Dower is fixed but consummation has not taken place. (3) Dower is fixed and consummation has taken place. Here the fixed dower will have to be paid in full. This injunction appears elsewhere in the Holy Qur'ān. (4) Dower has not been pre-fixed but divorce was given after consummation. Here full *mahr al-mithl* (a dower as in the divorcees' family) will have to be paid. It means the amount of the dower will be the same as customarily given in the immediate family circle of the woman. This too has been taken up in yet another verse of the Holy Qur'ān.

The injunction related to the first two situations has been stated in the verses appearing here. Out of the two, the injunction for the first situation is: No dower is due but it is obligatory for the husband to

53. The sense of being responsible to Allah.

give something on his own to the woman -- the least being a set of clothes. In fact, the Holy Qur'ān has not fixed any amount for this gift. However, it does indicate that the affluent should give in accordance with their capacity, which carries an element of persuasion for the man of means who should not behave tight-fisted in this act of grace. Sayyidnā Ḥasan رضى الله عنه , in a situation like this, gave a gift of twenty thousand *dirhams* to the divorced woman, and Qādī Shurayh, that of five hundred *dirhams*; and Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه has said that the lowest degree here is to give one set of clothes. (Qurṭubī)

In the second situation, when the woman's dower has been fixed before marriage and divorce occurs before actual consummation, the injunction says that the man shall be obligated to pay half of the dower already fixed. However, should the woman forgive, or should the man pay the whole, this will be a matter of free choice, as is evident from the verse:

إِلَّآ أَنْ يَّعْفُوْنَ أَوْيَعْفُوَا الَّذِىْ بِيَدِهٖ عُقْدَةُ النِّكَاحِ

Unless they (the women) forgive, or forgives the one in whose hand lies the marriage tie. (2:237)

The use of the word *ya'fū* ('forgives') to cover even the payment of full dower, perhaps, reflects the customary Arab practice of the payment of dower amount simultaneously with the marriage. If so, the husband has become, in the event of a pre-consummation divorce, deserving of taking half of the dower back. Now, if he yields voluntarily and does not take his half back, this too, would virtually be an act of forgiving. And the act of forgiving has been declared more merit-worthy, and closer to *Taqwā* (the sense of being responsible to Allah, commonly rendered as piety or fear or righteousness in absence of an exact equivalent); because this forgiveness symbolically indicates that the severance of the bond of marriage was also done with magnanimity and good grace, which is the objective of the Shari'ah and certainly, deserving of great merit -- the forgiveness could come from the woman, or from the man, it does not matter.

Explaining the words of the verse اَلَّذِىْ بِيَدِهٖ عُقْدَةُ النِّكَاحِ (in whose hands lies the marriage tie), the Holy Prophet ﷺ has himself said: ولى عقدة النكاح الزوج , that is, 'the husband is the guardian (*walī*) of the bond of mar-

riage.' This *ḥadīth* appears in Dārquṭnī as narrated by 'Amr ibn Shu'ayb from his father on the authority of his grandfather, and also from Sayyidnā 'Alī رضی اللہ عنہ and Sayyidnā ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ (Qurṭubī).

This also proves that the authority to continue or terminate the bond of marriage rests with the husband. It is he who can pronounce *ṭalāq* (divorce). The woman cannot divorce her husband.

Verses 238 - 239

حَافِظُوا عَلَى الصَّلَوٰتِ وَالصَّلٰوةِ الْوُسْطٰى وَقُوْمُوْا لِلّٰهِ قٰنِتِيْنَ ﴿٢٣٨﴾ فَاِنْ خِفْتُمْ فَرِجَالًا اَوْ رُكْبَانًا ۚ فَاِذَآ اَمِنْتُمْ فَاذْكُرُوا اللّٰهَ كَمَا عَلَّمَكُمْ مَّا لَمْ تَكُوْنُوْا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٢٣٩﴾

Take due care of all the prayers, and the middle prayer, and stand before Allah in total devotion. But if you are in fear, then (pray) on foot or riding. And when you are in peace, recite the name of Allah as He has taught you what you did not know. (Verses 238 - 239)

Commentary

Based on the authority of some *aḥādīth*, a very large number of '*ulamā*', have said that *al-salāt al-wusṭā* or the middle *ṣalāh* is the *ṣalāh* of '*Aṣr* because there are before it, two Salāhs during the day, that of *Fajr* and *Ẓuhr*; and after these come two evening Salāhs, that of *Maghrib* and '*Ishā*'. Special emphasis has been placed on it because this is a time in which most of the people are busy in their professional work.

Incidentally, the Qur'ānic word, *Qānitīn* meaning obedient or submitting, rendered here as 'stand before Allah in total devotion', has been explained in *Ḥadīth* as denoting *sukut* or motion-less silence.

It was through this very verse that talking in *ṣalāh* was forbidden. Earlier, talking was permissible. The verse 239 has allowed a special way of offering prayers in the state of 'fear' i.e. the state of war. In such a state, one can offer *ṣalāh* (prayer) while standing, with a condition that he can stand in one place without moving, and can make the gesture of *sajdah* in a lower position than he makes in *rukū*'. However, *ṣalāh* cannot be performed while walking. If it is not possible to perform the prayer in the said manner, such as at the time of actual

fighting, then, it is permissible to delay the prayer and to offer it later as *qaḍā'*.

Verses 240 - 242

وَالَّذِيْنَ يُتَوَفَّوْنَ مِنْكُمْ وَيَذَرُوْنَ اَزْوَاجًا ۚ وَّصِيَّةً لِّاَزْوَاجِهِمْ مَّتَاعًا اِلَى الْحَوْلِ غَيْرَ اِخْرَاجٍ ۚ فَاِنْ خَرَجْنَ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِيْ مَا فَعَلْنَ فِيْٓ اَنْفُسِهِنَّ مِنْ مَّعْرُوْفٍ ۚ وَاللّٰهُ عَزِيْزٌ حَكِيْمٌ 0 وَلِلْمُطَلَّقٰتِ مَتَاعٌۢ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ ۚ حَقًّا عَلَى الْمُتَّقِيْنَ 0 كَذٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ اٰيٰتِهٖ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُوْنَ 0

And those among you who pass away and leave wives behind are to make a will in favour of their wives to benefit them for one year without being expelled. Then, if they move out, there is no sin on you in what they have done for themselves of the recognized practice. And Allah is Mighty, Wise. And the divorced women deserve a benefit as recognized, being an obligation on the God-fearing. This is how Allah makes His verses clear to you, that you may understand. (Verses 2:240 - 242)

The text now returns to the subject of divorce mentioned in verses 234-237. The command to take due care of all prayers (verses 238-239) put in between was to remind that the real thing in life is a constant orientation towards Allah, not only in prayers where it is more pronounced, but also in social relationships such as marriage and divorce, rather, in all areas of one's life. The message is: Follow rules set by Allah in your ultimate interest.

Verses 240-242 cited above give guidance on the provision of residence and maintenance for widows which has been explained in the commentary which follows.

1. In the Age of Ignorance, the period of waiting for a widow was one year, and in Islam, it came to be four months and ten days rather than one full year as we already know from يَتَرَبَّصْنَ بِاَنْفُسِهِنَّ اَرْبَعَةَ اَشْهُرٍ وَّ عَشْرًا :'They keep themselves waiting for four months and ten days,' in Verse 234, explained earlier. However, women were given a certain advantage in this respect. Those were the days when the injunction of

inheritance was not revealed and a wife's share in the inheritance was yet to be determined; in fact, the rights of all others simply revolved around the will of the deceased, as we have already learnt from the explanation of the verse 2:180. Therefore, it was made obligatory that a woman should be allowed to live in the premises of her late husband's house for one full year if she so desires. It was also mandatory under this arrangement that she be given her maintenance during this period out of what has been left behind by her husband. This rule is mentioned in this verse. Husbands have been instructed to make wills to this effect. Since this was the right of the woman and she had the choice to receive or leave it, therefore, it was not permissible for the inheritors to evict her out of the house, but it was permissible for her not to live in that house at her discretion, and leave her due for the inheritors. The condition, however, was that *'iddah* or the waiting period of four months and ten days be completed. After the completion of this period she could leave the house of her husband and could enter into a new marriage with another person. This is what is meant by the Qur'anic expression: "Then, if they move out, there is no sin on you in what they have done for themselves of the recognized practice." However, going out during the period of *'iddah* and getting married was all counted as sin -- not only for the woman concerned but also for those who could stop her yet did not do so. When 'the verse of inheritance' was revealed, the woman received her ordained share in the house and in all other items of inheritance on the strength of which she had the choice to live in her section of the house and spend out of her share in the inheritance after the completion of four months and ten days, and this verse was abrogated.

Verse 241: The divorced women deserve a benefit

Providing compensatory benefits ('مَتَاع : *matā*') for divorced women has also been dealt with in verses earlier than this, but that was restricted to two types of divorced women who were divorced before privacy and consummation. The first case of providing compensatory benefits was the giving of a set of clothes. The second case was of providing compensatory benefit in the form of half of the dower. Now remains the case of divorcees who were divorced after privacy and consummation. Here, providing compensatory benefits to one whose dower has already been fixed lies in giving her the full amount of dower or

maḥr. For one whose dower has not already been fixed, a post-consummation divorce will make it obligatory to give her *maḥr al-mithl* or 'equivalent dower' (as customarily given in the immediate family circle of the woman). If the word 'benefit' used in this verse is taken to mean 'dower', its payment is obligatory according to these details. However, if we take *matā'* to mean a particular benefit, that is, the giving of a gift or set of clothes, then giving this to a particular type of divorced woman is obligatory which has been pointed out earlier. In the rest of the cases, this is *mustaḥabb* or desirable. And should *matā'* be taken to mean maintenance or *nafaqah*, then it is obligatory until the expiry of *'iddah* in the case of a divorce after which *'iddah* has to be observed. The divorce may be revocable (رجعی) or irrevocable (بائن) -- it does not matter. To sum up, the verse, by using universally applicable words, covers all situations.

Verses 243 - 244

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ خَرَجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ وَهُمْ أُلُوفٌ حَذَرَ الْمَوْتِ فَقَالَ لَهُمُ اللَّهُ مُوتُوا ثُمَّ أَحْيَاهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَلَٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَشْكُرُونَ ۝ وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ۝

Have you not seen those who being in thousands, left their homes to escape death? So, to them Allah said, "Be dead." Then He raised them alive. Surely, Allah is all-gracious to people, but most of the people are not grateful. And fight in the way of Allah, and know that Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. (Verses 243 - 244)

Commentary

In a uniquely eloquent manner, the two verses (243, 244) appearing above and verse 245 which follows, present guidance that prompts the sacrifice of one's life and possessions in the way of Allah Almighty. Consequently, before stating related injunctions, an important event of history has been taken up which makes it clear that death and life are subservient to the destiny determined by Allah. Going into a battle in *jihād* is not the cause of death, and running away from it, out of cowardice, is not the means to avoid death.

On the authority of revered Companions (*Ṣaḥābah*) and their successors (*Tābi'in*), Tafsir ibn Kathir explains this event as follows:

There was a group of Israelites in a city which was struck by plague or some other epidemic. The whole group, some ten thousand in number, panicked. Leaving the city out of fear of death, all of them went out to camp in an open plain located between two mountains. Allah Almighty, in order to impress upon other peoples of the world that no living being can escape death by running away from it, sent two angels who stood on the two ends of the plain and sent forth some sort of shrill cry which caused all of them to drop dead instantly. Not one of them was left alive. When the people living in the adjoining area heard about this event, they hurried to the site. Making arrangements to shroud and bury ten thousand human beings was no easy task. They, therefore, enclosed the whole area with a fence of boughs making a hovel-like shed for the corpses which, in due course, were decomposed leaving bare bones lying around. After a long time, one of the prophets of Bani Israel, whose name has been identified as *Ḥizqil* or Ezekiel, passed through this location. He was amazed to see human bone structures strewn all over inside an enclosed shed. The whole story of these people was related to him through revelation. Prophet Ezekiel, عليه السلام prayed Allah to bring these people back to life. Allah Almighty answered his prayer and he was asked to address those crumbled bones in the following manner: ايتها العظام البالية أن الله يامرك أن تجتمعى 'O bones, old and worn, Allah commands you to gather together (joint by joint, as you were).'

These bones received the command of Allah Almighty through the words of the Prophet and obeyed it. Isn't it that these very bones are considered by the whole world, devoid of reason and consciousness but they too, like every single particle of the world, are oriented to Divine commands and, possess senses and perceptive ability in proportion to their state of being, and are obedient to Allah Almighty. This is what the Holy Qur'ān points to in the verse: أَعْطَىٰ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلْقَهُ ثُمَّ هَدَىٰ (20:50). It means that Allah Almighty created everything and then gave it (built-in) guidance in proportion to its state of being. The great poet, Maulanā Rūmi has said about such phenomena:

خـــــــاك و بـاد و آب و آتـش بـنـده انـد

بـامـن و تـو مـــــــــرده بـاحـق زنـده انـد

Dust, air, water and fire have been bonded together;
To me and you they are dead; to God they are alive.

So, when every human bone found its proper place at the behest of a single call, the Prophet was commanded to give yet another call to them as follows:

أيتها العظام إن اللهَ يأمرك أن تكتسى لحما و عصبا وجلدا

O bones, Allah Almighty commands you to wear your muscles, flesh, nerves and skin.

Immediately following the call, every skeleton of bones turned into a complete corpse under their very eyes. Then came the command that their souls be addressed as follows:

أيتها الأرواح إن الله يامرك أن ترجع كل روح إلى الجسد الذى كانت تعمره

O souls, Allah Almighty commands you to return to your respective bodies you once inhabited.

As the call was given, all corpses stood up alive before their very eyes and started looking around in wonder. They were saying: سبحانك لا إله إلا انت : 'Sacred are You (O Lord); there is no god but You.'

This formidable event was not only a thought-provoker for the wise of the world, its philosophers and thinkers, and certainly, a decisive argument against the deniers of the Last Day, but was also a guidance for mankind pointing out that running because of the fear of death, be it from *jihād* or from plague or some other epidemic, is just not possible for one who believes in Allah Almighty and in the fate He has determined -- the one who is certain in his belief (*'īmān*) that there is a time for death; it cannot come a second earlier, and it cannot be postponed to a second later. Therefore, this effort to run from death is not only redundant and wasteful, but also goes on to become the cause of Allah Almighty's displeasure.

Now let us look at this incident through the words of the Holy Qur'ān. To relate the event, it says: أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ خَرَجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ that is, 'Have you not seen those who left their homes to escape death?'

It must be noted here that this incident belongs to a time thousands of years before the Holy Prophet ﷺ . He just cannot be asked to see it. What then, is the purpose of saying أَلَمْ تَرَ : 'Have you not seen?' Commentators have said that, in all situations where the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been addressed with the words: أَلَمْ تَرَ (Have you not seen?) -- although the incident belongs to a time earlier than him, and it cannot be 'seen' by any stretch of imagination -- the act of seeing (*rū'yah*) stands for seeing through the heart (*rū'yah al-qalb*), which means seeing through knowledge and insight. In still other words, 'Have you not seen?' appears on such occasions in the sense of اَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ :'Did you not know?' But there is wisdom in allowing this situation to be expressed through the Qur'ānic form : اَلَمْ تَرَ . It points out that this incident is patently known and seen and that this incident is as certain as if it is being seen today, and is worth seeing too. The addition of the word اِلٰى (*ilā*: toward) after الم ترَ : 'Have you not seen?' helps pointing out in this direction as based on the nuances of the language.

Immediately following this, they have been identified as being fairly large in numbers --وَهُمْ اُلُوْفٌ (being in thousands). As to what the exact number was, there are various reports, but in accordance with the rules of Arabic language, this word *ulūfun* is *jam' al-kathrah* (plural of multitude), which is not used for something less than ten. This tells us that their number was not less than ten thousand.

After that, it is said: فَقَالَ لَهُمُ اللّٰهُ مُوْتُوْا that is, Allah Almighty said to them: 'Be dead'. This command of Allah Almighty could both be direct, or indirect -- through an angel, as it is in another verse (36:82): إِذَا أَرَادَ شَيْئًا أَنْ يَقُوْلَ لَهٗ كُنْ فَيَكُوْنُ which means : When He wishes to do something, He bids it to be, so it comes to be.

After that, it is said: إِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَذُوْ فَضْلٍ عَلَى النَّاسِ that is, surely Allah Almighty is immensely graceful to human beings. This includes the grace He showed to that particular group of people from the Bani Israel by bringing them back to life, as well as the grace He has shown to the community of Muḥammad ﷺ by telling them about this incident and by making it a model lesson for them.

In the end, to awaken the negligence-prone man, it was said: وَلٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَشْكُرُوْنَ : 'But most of the people are ungrateful.' It means

that human beings do behold thousands of demonstrations of Divine grace and mercy, yet most of them show no gratitude.

Related Injunctions and Rulings

This verse helps us identify some facts and injunctions. These are as follows:

Divine decree overcomes human planning: No effort can be effective against that which has been determined by Allah (*Taqdīr*) and running away from *jihād* or plague or its likes cannot help one save his life (*Tadbīr*), nor being in it can become a cause of death. The fact is that death comes at an appointed time; it can neither be earlier nor later.

Rules pertaining to the place of epidemic: It is not permissible to escape out from an area affected by plague and its likes for safety elsewhere. In addition to this, as said by the noble Prophet ﷺ, it is not correct for other people to go there. It appears in *Ḥadīth*:

> إن هذا السقم عذب به الأمم قبلكم فإذا سمعتم به في الأرض فلا تدخلوها ، وإذا وقع بأرضٍ وأنتم بها فلا تخرجوا فرارا
>
> Allah Almighty has, through this disease (plague), punished peoples who were before you. So, when you hear about its spreading in a certain area, do not go there; and if it spreads in an area where you already are, do not go out escaping from it. (Bukhārī and Muslim and Ibn Kathīr)

It appears in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī that Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ once embarked on a journey heading for Syria. When he reached *Sarāgh*, a place near *Tabūk* bordering Syria, he came to know that the whole of Syria was affected by a severe plague. This was regarded as a great calamity in the history of Syria. This plague is known as '*Amawās*', because it started from a town called '*Amawas*' (located near *Baytul-Maqdis*) and spread throughout the country. Thousands died and became *shahid* in this plague including many *Ṣaḥābah* and *Tābi'in* (Companions and their Successors).

When Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ heard about the severity of the plague, he decided to stay where he was and sought the advice of the noble Companions, رضی اللہ عنہم اجمعین whether they should go into Syria at

such a time, or they should return back. There was not one blessed person present during the consultations who was aware of any guidance from the Holy Prophet ﷺ about this matter. Later, Sayyidnā 'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Awf رضی اللہ عنہ narrated the following *ḥadīth* :

إن رسولَ الله صلّى الله عليه وسلّم ذكر الوجع فقال: رجز وعذاب عذب به الأمم ثم بقى منه بقية فيذهب المرّة ويأتى الأخرى فمن سمع به بأرضٍ فلا يقدمنّ عليه ومن كان بأرض وقع بها فلا يخرج فراراً منها

The Holy Prophet ﷺ referring to the disease (plague) said: This is a punishment that was inflicted on some peoples; later on some of it remained. This remainder goes away for some-time, then returns. So, one who hears that a certain area is affected by it, he should not go there; and one who is already there, he should not go out running from it (the plague). (al-Bukhari and others)

When Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ heard this *ḥadīth*, he ordered his men to return. Sayyidnā Abū 'Ubaydah رضی اللہ عنہ , the governor of Syria was present on the occasion. Taking notice of the orders given by Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ , he commented: أفرارا من قدر الله (Do you want to run from Divine destiny?) In reply, Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ said: 'O Abū 'Ubaydah, I wish this was said by someone else' meaning thereby 'a comment like this, and that too from you, is certainly surprising.' Then he said: نعم نفر من قدر الله إلى قدر الله : 'Yes, we do run from Divine decree to (nothing but) Divine decree' meaning thereby -- 'whatever we are doing we are doing in obedience to none else but Allah and His command which the Messenger of Allah ﷺ has explained to us.'

3. There is great wisdom in the prophetic sayings about plague: In accordance with the *ḥadīth* stated above, we have been told that it is prohibited for outsiders to enter an area affected by plague or its likes; while it is equally prohibited for those who live there to run for their lives from that area.

In addition to this, the basic Islamic belief is that neither going anywhere is the cause of death, nor running from anywhere is the source of deliverance from it. Keeping this cardinal belief of Islam in view, the given instruction is based on very far-sighted stances of wisdom.

(1) Let's look at the first element of wisdom in stopping outsiders

from going into a plague-affected area. Isn't it quite possible that someone may be at the fag end of his years and should he die because of this disease, it might have occurred to the deceased at some stage before his death that he might have lived had he not come into that area. Not only him, others might also think that his death occurred because he came there; although, whatever happened was pre-ordained. His age was no more than that. No matter where he lived, his death had to come at that particular time. It may be noted that the belief of Muslims has been saved from indecision through this instruction lest they should fall a victim to misunderstanding.

(2). The second aspect of wisdom here relates to the guidance Allah Almighty has given to man that he should not go where there is a danger of being harmed, or an apprehension of being killed; in fact, he should do his best to keep away from everything that could cause harm or death. Not only that, it has been made binding on every man to save his life. This rule demands that one should, keeping his total trust and belief in Divine decree, take all necessary precautionary measures without any negligence. One of these measures is that he should not go to a place where his life may be in danger.

Similarly, the instruction, that residents of an area infected with plague should not escape out of their fearing death, has its own merits:

a) The first wise counsel has a social and collective nature. For instance, should this escaping in panic become contagious, the rich and the powerful in the area would certainly run away. But, what would happen to those who are incapable of going anywhere. To begin with, left all alone, they will be terrified to their death. Then there will be sick among them -- who will take care of them? Should they die, who will manage their burial?

b) The second point of wisdom here tells that there will be some among the people present in that area who would be carrying germs of this disease. If they travel in that condition, they are likely to suffer more from all sorts of hardships. If they get sick while travelling, who knows what would come upon them. Ibn al-Madini has quoted the saying of scholars: مافر أحد من الوباء فسلم : 'One who runs from an epidemic never stays safe.' (Qurṭubī)

c) There is still a third element of wisdom here. Isn't it that people infected by germs of the disease would be potential carriers of the epidemic wherever they go? If they elected to stay where they are, with patience and in trust, they might possibly get rid of the disease. And if, death was pre-ordained in this very disease, they will have the proud rank of *shahādah* (martyrdom) because of their patience and perseverance, as has been pointed out in *Ḥadīth*.

Imām al-Bukhārī has reported from Yaḥyā ibn Ya'mur that Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah al-Ṣiddīqah رضی اللہ تعالی عنہا told him that she had asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ about plague when he informed her that this disease was a punishment sent to a people who were to be punished by Allah's will. Then, Allah made it mercy for true believers. So, a slave of Allah who stays on with patience and peace in his locality believing that no harm can touch him except that which Allah has decreed for him -- for such a person the merit in return shall be equal to that of a *shahīd*.

And this also explains the *ḥadīth* in which it is said: 'The plague is *shahādah* (martyrdom) and one who dies in the plague is a *shahīd* (martyr).' (Qurṭubī, vol.3, p. 235).

Some Exceptions

The words used in the *ḥadīth* are: فلا تخرجوا فرارا منه (You should not go out running from it) which tell us that a person who goes somewhere else, not because of the fear of death, but because of some other pressing need, will not be affected by this prohibition. Similarly, if someone has a firm belief that he cannot escape his destiny wherever he goes, but he wants to go simply for change of climate, he is also exempted from this prohibition.

Similarly, if a person enters an area affected by plague because of some pressing need while he firmly believes that death will not come to him just because he is coming here -- since death is subservient to the will of Allah, it will be permissible for him to go there.

(3) The third principle inferred from this verse is: that it is also not permissible to desert *Jihād* from fear of death. This question has been taken up elsewhere in the noble Qur'ān in greater details, where some special situations have been exempted.

The subject dealt with in this verse reappears in yet another verse which deals with those who run away from *Jihād* or do not take part in it. It is said:

أَلَّذِينَ قَالُوا لِإِخْوَانِهِمْ وَقَعَدُوا لَوْ أَطَاعُونَا مَا قُتِلُوا قُلْ فَادْرَءُوا عَنْ أَنْفُسِكُمُ الْمَوْتَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِينَ

> Some people (who did not themselves take part in *jihād*) say (about those who do take part in *jihād*, and die as *shahīds*) 'These people did not listen to us, therefore, they were killed. If they had listened to us, they would have not been killed.' (The blessed Prophet ﷺ was commanded to) tell them: 'If you have the power to escape death, why worry about others, worry about your own selves and rescue yourselves from death', (that is, whether or not you go in *jihād* does not matter; death will come to you even when sitting home).

It is a marvel of nature that the greatest commander of the Muslim army in the early days of Islam, Sayyidnā Khālid ibn Walīd رضی اللہ عنہ, who was known as the 'sword of Allah' and who spent his entire Islamic life in *jihād*, did not meet his death as a *shahīd* on the battlefield! He died on his sick-bed, at his home. Close to his hour of death, lamenting over his dying on bed, he said to his family: 'I participated in so many great battles in *jihād*. I do not have a single part on my body, which has no wound-mark inflicted by swords and spears; but here I am, dying like a donkey on my bed. May Allah Almighty give no rest to cowards. Let them hear my advice.'

The incident relating to the Bani Israel was brought in this verse as an introduction. In the next verse appears the injunction relating to *jihād* and *qitāl* (fighting in the way of Allah) which was the real purpose in introducing this story, that is: Do not take going on *jihād* as going into the jaws of death and do not assume that running away from *jihād* will deliver you from your appointed time of death. Better still, obey the injunctions of Allah Almighty and achieve the best of both the worlds. Allah Almighty is the Hearer and Knower of all you say and do.

The third verse (245), which follows, deals with the merits of spending in the way of Allah.

Verses 245

مَنْ ذَا الَّذِىْ يُقْرِضُ اللّٰهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا فَيُضٰعِفَهٗ لَهٗٓ اَضْعَافًا كَثِيْرَةً ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يَقْبِضُ وَيَبْصُۜطُ وَاِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُوْنَ ۝

Who is the one who would give Allah a good loan so that Allah multiplies it for him many times? And Allah withholds and extends, and to Him you are to be returned.

Commentary

1. In يُقْرِضُ اللّٰهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا (who would give Allah a good loan?) the word 'loan' refers to good deeds and to the act of spending in the way of Allah. This was expressed figuratively as *qarḍ* (literally, 'loan'), otherwise everything belongs to Allah. It simply means that whatever you spend will surely be returned to you (in the form of a reward in the Hereafter) just as a loan is surely returned. The promise of increased or multiplied return appears in a *ḥadīth* which declares that a date spent in the way of Allah is so increased by Allah Almighty that it outgrows the mountain of *Uḥud*.

Giving 'loan' to Allah Almighty has also been explained as the giving of actual loan to His slaves i.e. the human beings and thereby helping them in their hour of need. So, the act of giving loan has been credited with great merit in *Ḥadīth*. The noble Prophet ﷺ said:

ما من مسلم يقرض مسلما قرضا مرّة إلا كان كصدقته مرتين

For every Muslim, who gives loan to another Muslim, it will be equal to having given *ṣadaqah* (charity) twice. (Mazhari with reference to Ibn Majah)

2. Hearing this verse, says Ibn al-'Arabī, people split in three groups. The first group is that of those unfortunate people who, after hearing this verse, said: 'Muḥammad's Lord is poor, and we are rich.' The reply to this comment was given by another verse:

لَقَدْ سَمِعَ اللّٰهُ قَوْلَ الَّذِيْنَ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّ اللّٰهَ فَقِيْرٌ وَّنَحْنُ اَغْنِيَآءُ

Allah has surely heard the saying of those who said, "Allah is poor and we are rich". (3:181)

The second group is that of those who, hearing this verse, elected to act against it and adopted miserliness as their way of life. The love

and greed of material possessions so tied them down that they remained deprived of the very ability to spend in the way of Allah.

The third group is that of sincere Muslims who lost no time and acted as directed by the verse giving the best of their possessions in the way of Allah, such as is the case of Companion Abū al-Daḥdāḥ and others. When this verse was revealed, Sayyidna Abu al-Daḥdāḥ رضی اللہ عنہ presented himself before the Holy Prophet ﷺ and asked him: 'O Messenger of Allah, may my father and mother be sacrificed to you, does Allah Almighty need loan from us, although He is *Ghanī*, the one who needs no loan?' The Holy Prophet ﷺ said: 'Yes, Allah Almighty does wish to grant you entry in Paradise through it.' Hearing this, Sayyidnā Abū al-Daḥdāḥ رضی اللہ عنہ said. 'Let the Messenger of Allah ﷺ stretch his hand forward.' He stretched his hand forward. Now Abū al-Daḥdāḥ started saying:

> 'I own two date farms. I own nothing except these. I give the loan of these two farms of mine to Allah Almighty.'

The Holy Prophet ﷺ said to him: 'Dedicate one of these as *waqf* (endowment) in the way of Allah and keep the other to take care of your family needs.' Abū al-Daḥdāḥ said: "You be my witness that I 'spend' the better of the two farms which has six hundred date trees in the way of Allah." He said: 'Allah will bless you with Paradise in return.'

Abū al-Daḥdāḥ رضی اللہ عنہ came to his house and told his wife about it. She too was very pleased with this wonderful deal. The noble Prophet ﷺ said:

كم من عذق رداح و دار فياح لأبى الدحداح

> Countless trees laden with dates and spacious palaces are eagerly waiting for Abū al-Daḥdāḥ (in Paradise). (Qurṭubī)

3. While returning *qarḍ* (loan), paying a little more than taken is a favourable practice only if any increase on the amount of loan has not been made a pre-condition. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

ان خياركم أحسنكم قضاءً

> The best person among you is the one who fulfils his obligation (loan) in a good manner.

If increase or premium has been made a condition, then, that is *haram* (unlawful), and it is *ribā* (interest) as well.

Verses 246 - 251

اَلَمْ تَرَ اِلَى الْمَلَاِ مِنْۢ بَنِیْٓ اِسْرَآءِیْلَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مُوْسٰی ۘ اِذْ قَالُوْا
لِنَبِیٍّ لَّهُمُ ابْعَثْ لَنَا مَلِكًا نُّقَاتِلْ فِیْ سَبِیْلِ اللّٰهِ ؕ قَالَ هَلْ
عَسَیْتُمْ اِنْ كُتِبَ عَلَیْكُمُ الْقِتَالُ اَلَّا تُقَاتِلُوْا ؕ قَالُوْا وَمَا لَنَآ اَلَّا
نُقَاتِلَ فِیْ سَبِیْلِ اللّٰهِ وَقَدْ اُخْرِجْنَا مِنْ دِیَارِنَا وَ اَبْنَآئِنَا ؕ فَلَمَّا
كُتِبَ عَلَیْهِمُ الْقِتَالُ تَوَلَّوْا اِلَّا قَلِیْلًا مِّنْهُمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِیْمٌۢ
بِالظّٰلِمِیْنَ 0 وَقَالَ لَهُمْ نَبِیُّهُمْ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ قَدْ بَعَثَ لَكُمْ طَالُوْتَ
مَلِكًا ؕ قَالُوْٓا اَنّٰی یَكُوْنُ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ عَلَیْنَا وَنَحْنُ اَحَقُّ بِالْمُلْكِ
مِنْهُ وَلَمْ یُؤْتَ سَعَةً مِّنَ الْمَالِ ؕ قَالَ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ اصْطَفٰىهُ عَلَیْكُمْ
وَزَادَهٗ بَسْطَةً فِی الْعِلْمِ وَالْجِسْمِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ یُؤْتِیْ مُلْكَهٗ مَنْ یَّشَآءُ ؕ
وَاللّٰهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِیْمٌ 0 وَقَالَ لَهُمْ نَبِیُّهُمْ اِنَّ اٰیَةَ مُلْكِهٖٓ اَنْ یَّاْتِیَكُمُ
التَّابُوْتُ فِیْهِ سَكِیْنَةٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ وَبَقِیَّةٌ مِّمَّا تَرَكَ اٰلُ مُوْسٰی
وَاٰلُ هٰرُوْنَ تَحْمِلُهُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ ؕ اِنَّ فِیْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰیَةً لَّكُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ
مُّؤْمِنِیْنَ 0 فَلَمَّا فَصَلَ طَالُوْتُ بِالْجُنُوْدِ ۙ قَالَ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ مُبْتَلِیْكُمْ
بِنَهَرٍ ۚ فَمَنْ شَرِبَ مِنْهُ فَلَیْسَ مِنِّیْ ۚ وَمَنْ لَّمْ یَطْعَمْهُ فَاِنَّهٗ مِنِّیْٓ
اِلَّا مَنِ اغْتَرَفَ غُرْفَةًۢ بِیَدِهٖ ۚ فَشَرِبُوْا مِنْهُ اِلَّا قَلِیْلًا مِّنْهُمْ ؕ فَلَمَّا
جَاوَزَهٗ هُوَ وَالَّذِیْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مَعَهٗ ۙ قَالُوْا لَا طَاقَةَ لَنَا الْیَوْمَ
بِجَالُوْتَ وَجُنُوْدِهٖ ؕ قَالَ الَّذِیْنَ یَظُنُّوْنَ اَنَّهُمْ مُّلٰقُوا اللّٰهِ ۙ كَمْ مِّنْ
فِئَةٍ قَلِیْلَةٍ غَلَبَتْ فِئَةً كَثِیْرَةًۢ بِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ مَعَ الصّٰبِرِیْنَ 0
وَلَمَّا بَرَزُوْا لِجَالُوْتَ وَجُنُوْدِهٖ قَالُوْا رَبَّنَآ اَفْرِغْ عَلَیْنَا صَبْرًا
وَّثَبِّتْ اَقْدَامَنَا وَانْصُرْنَا عَلَی الْقَوْمِ الْكٰفِرِیْنَ 0 فَهَزَمُوْهُمْ
بِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ ۙ وَقَتَلَ دَاوٗدُ جَالُوْتَ وَاٰتٰىهُ اللّٰهُ الْمُلْكَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَ
عَلَّمَهٗ مِمَّا یَشَآءُ ؕ وَلَوْلَا دَفْعُ اللّٰهِ النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ ۙ

لَفَسَدَتِ الْاَرْضُ وَلٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ ذُوْفَضْلٍ عَلَى الْعٰلَمِيْنَ 0

Did you not see a group from the children of Isrā'il, after (the time of) Mūsā when they said to a prophet of theirs: "Send us a king so that we may fight in the way of Allah." He said: "Is it (not) likely, if fighting is enjoined upon you, that you would not fight." They said: "What is wrong with us that we would not fight while we have been driven away from our homes and our sons?" But, when fighting was enjoined upon them, they turned away, except a few of them. And Allah is All-Aware of the unjust. And their prophet said to them: "Allah has sent you 'Ṭālūt' [54] as king. They said: "How could he have kingship over us when we are more entitled to the kingship than he? And he has not been given a wide measure of wealth." He said: "Allah has chosen him over you and has increased his size in knowledge and physique. And Allah gives His kingship to whom He wills. And Allah is All-Embracing, All-Knowing." And their prophet said to them: "The sign of his kingship is that the Ark shall come to you having therein tranquility from your Lord, and the remains of what the House of Mūsā and the House of Harūn had left, carried by the angels. Surely, in it there is a sign for you, if you are believers." So, when 'Ṭālūt' set out along with the troops, he said: "Allah is going to test you by a river, so, whoever drinks from it is not my man, and whoever does not taste it is surely a man of mine, except the one who scoops a little with his hand." Then, they drank from it, except a few of them. So, when he crossed it and (crossed) those who believed with him, they said: "There is no strength with us today against 'Jālūt'[55] and his troops." Said those who believed that they were to meet Allah: "How many small groups have overcome the large groups by the will of Allah. And Allah is with the patient." And when they faced 'Jālūt' and his troops they said: "Our Lord, pour out patience on us, make firm our feet and help us against the disbelieving people." So, they defeated them

54. Known in the Bible as Saul.
55. Known in the Bible as Goliath.

by the will of Allah, and Dāwūd killed 'Jālūt', and Allah gave him the kingdom and the wisdom and taught him what He willed. Had Allah not been pushing back some people by means of some others, the earth would have been spoiled. But Allah is all-gracious to all the worlds. (Verses 246 - 251)

Commentary

1. Verse 246: إِذْ قَالُوا لِنَبِيٍّ لَّهُمُ ابْعَثْ لَنَا مَلِكًا نُّقَاتِلْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ (When they said to a prophet of theirs: "Send us a king so that we may fight in the way of Allah)."

These people from the Banī Isrā'il had abandoned the injunctions given by Allah Almighty. When the infidel Amalekites were made to rule over them, they began thinking about correcting the situation. The name of the prophet mentioned here is Samuel (Arabic: شموئيل , Hebrew: *Shemuel*).

Verse 248: The story of Tālūt and Jālūt

The Banī Isrā'il used to have the legacy of a wooden chest (also identified as the Ark of the Covenant). Moses and other prophets of Bani Isra'il would keep this chest in the frontline of the battlefield. Its *barakah* (blessing, benediction) used to give them victory. When *Jālūt* (جالوت : Goliath) overcame Banī Isrā'il, he took this chest away with him. When Allah Almighty willed the return of the chest, it so happened that the infidels were struck by some epidemic or calamity at places where they carried this chest. Five cities were turned desolate. Nonplussed, they loaded it on two bullocks and drove them off. Then, the angels took control of the bullocks and made it reach Talut's doorsteps. (*Tālūt* is the Qur'ānic name of the king known in the Bible as Saul) When the Bani Isra'il saw this sign, they believed in the kingdom of *Tālūt*, who then mounted an attack on *Jālūt* while the weather was very hot.

Verse 249: قَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مُبْتَلِيكُم بِنَهَرٍ (He said: Allah is going to test you by a river).

The wisdom behind this test, as perceived by this humble commentator, appears to be as follows. Not difficult to imagine is the excitement created on such occasions but there are not many who would stay firm in their hour of trial. And should such a time come,

the weakness shown by such people becomes contagious making others panic as well. Allah Almighty willed that such people be pruned out. This purpose was accomplished by this test, which is very appropriate, because steadfastness is necessary in fighting. So, being patient, when water is made available without asking in a state of intense thirst, is a proof of steadfastness, and dashing for water is a proof of its absence. Later on comes the unusual: Those who drank too much water became mysteriously more incapacitated. This has appeared in Rūh al-Ma'ānī on the authority of Ibn Abī Ḥātim from Ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ . Now the events and sayings mentioned in this story tell us that there were three kinds of people among them:

(1) The weak in faith who failed to make the grade in their hour of trial.

(2) The perfect who fully succeeded in their trial but did feel concerned about how low they were in numbers.

(3) The most perfect who did not bother even about that.

Verse 252

تِلْكَ اٰيٰتُ اللّٰهِ نَتْلُوْهَا عَلَيْكَ بِالْحَقِّ ۭ وَاِنَّكَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ 0

These are the verses of Allah that We recite to you with all veracity, and certainly you are among the Messengers. (Verse 252)

Since the affirmation of the prophethood of the noble Messenger of Allah ﷺ is also a major objective of the Holy Qur'ān, it has been so asserted as and when the occasion warrants. That he is correctly reporting the event (in verses 246-251), while he neither learnt it from someone nor heard it anywhere nor saw it, is a miracle which is a sound proof of his prophethood. Verse 252 here (and verse 253 which follows) demonstrate this proof.

It is being said here that these verses in which this event has been mentioned 'are the verses of Allah that We recite to you with all veracity' and this proves that 'you are certainly among the Messengers.'

Verse 253

تِلْكَ الرُّسُلُ فَضَّلْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ ۘ مِنْهُمْ مَّنْ كَلَّمَ اللّٰهُ

وَرَفَعَ بَعْضَهُمْ دَرَجٰتٍ ۚ وَاٰتَيْنَا عِيْسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ الْبَيِّنٰتِ وَاَيَّدْنٰهُ بِرُوْحِ الْقُدُسِ ۗ وَلَوْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ مَا اقْتَتَلَ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَآءَتْهُمُ الْبَيِّنٰتُ وَلٰكِنِ اخْتَلَفُوْا فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ اٰمَنَ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ كَفَرَ ۗ وَلَوْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ مَا اقْتَتَلُوْا ۗ وَلٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَفْعَلُ مَا يُرِيْدُ ۝

Those are the messengers some of whom We have given excellence over some others. Among them there is he whom Allah spoke to, and some of them He raised steps higher. And We gave clear signs to 'Isa, the son of Maryam (Jesus, the son of Mary) and supported him with the Holy Spirit. And if Allah so willed, those succeeding him would have not fought against each other after clear signs had come to them. But they disagreed among themselves. So, there were some who believed and there were some who disbelieved and if Allah so willed, they would have not fought against each other. But Allah does what He intends. (Verse 253)

Commentary

1. In Verse 253, beginning with تِلْكَ الرُّسُلُ ('those are the Messengers'), the purpose is to give solace and comfort to the noble Prophet ﷺ since the deniers refused to recognize his prophethood, inspite of the fact that it was conclusively proved, as has been stated in the verse 252: وَاِنَّكَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ (And certainly you are among the Messengers.) as well. This situation caused him pain. Therefore, Allah Almighty made him aware of the coming of other prophets too, in varying degrees of station, but universal belief was not witnessed in any of their communities -- some supported while some others opposed. However, this too has its wise considerations which may not necessarily be visible to everyone, but this much is important that one should generally believe that there is definitely a certain wisdom behind this.

2. Since the words تِلْكَ الرُّسُلُ فَضَّلْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ (Those are the Messengers some of whom We have given excellence over others) in this verse clearly indicate that some prophets are given higher status than others, we have a difficulty on our hands when we compare this with a *hadith*, where the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said:

لاتفضلوا بين أنبياء الله

Do not seek preference among prophets.

لا تخيرونى على موسى

Do not give me precedence over Mūsā.

لا أقول إن أحدا أفضل من يونس بن متى

I cannot say if anyone is better than Yūnus ibn Mātta.

These *aḥādith* so obviously forbid the giving of preference to some prophets over some other prophets.

The reply is: These *aḥādith* mean to tell us not to give preference to some prophets over some others, without any proof, out of our own opinion. This is because a prophet's having higher status means that he has a high station in the sight of Allah. Obviously, this knowledge cannot be acquired through conjectures and surmises but should such a proof come from the Qur'ān and *Sunnah*, establishing the precedence of some prophets over some others, then it will be necessary to believe in it.

Now, as to his saying: لا أقول إن أحدا أفضل من يونس بن متى (I cannot say if anyone is better than Yūnus ibn Mātta) and لا تخيرونى على موسى (Do not give me precedence over Mūsā), this is related to the time when he was not given the knowledge that he has precedence over all other prophets. This was disclosed to him later on through revelation and he did tell the noble Companions about it. (Mazharī)

3. As regards the statement مِنْهُمْ مَّنْ كَلَّمَ اللّٰهُ (Among them there is he whom Allah spoke to), it may be noted that the conversation with Mūsā علیہ السلام may be without an angel as intermediary, but it certainly was not without *ḥijāb* (obstruction of view). So, there remains no conflict of meaning with what has been stated in the verse: مَا كَانَ لِبَشَرٍ اَنْ يُّكَلِّمَهُ اللّٰهُ (It belongs not to any mortal that God should speak to him) (42:51), in which conversation without *ḥijab* has been negated. However, post-death conversation without *ḥijāb* is possible, so this verse from Sūrah al-Shūrā relates to the life in this world.

Verse 254

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْۤا اَنْفِقُوْا مِمَّا رَزَقْنٰكُمْ مِّنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ يَّاْتِىَ يَوْمٌ

لَّا بَيْعٌ فِيهِ وَلَا خُلَّةٌ وَّلَا شَفَاعَةٌ ۗ وَالْكٰفِرُونَ هُمُ الظّٰلِمُونَ ۝

O those who believe spend from what We have given to you before comes a day when there is no trading, no friendship, no intercession. And the disbelievers are the unjust. (Verse 254)

Commentary

Many injunctions relating to acts of worship and dealings with human beings have been taken up in this Sūrah, specially all those a person dislikes to obey finding them burdensome. Then, the most difficult act is to 'spend' one's life and possessions; and when you look at Divine injunctions relating to most situations they either relate to a man's life or his possessions. And when a man falls into the trap of sin, it is either caused by his love of life or expediency of possessions in most cases. As such, the love for these two is the root of sins, and the defence against and the deliverance from it is the object of all acts of obedience. It is for this reason that, following the injunctions relating to worship and social transactions, the subject of 'fighting' and 'spending' in the way of Allah were taken up. The first appeared in وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللّٰهِ (And fight in the way of Allah) (244) and the second in مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يُقْرِضُ اللّٰهَ (Who is the one who would give Allah a good loan?) (245) After that, the former was emphasized by the story of *Tālūt*, and now, emphasis is being laid on the later by أَنْفِقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنٰكُمْ (Spend from what We have given to you) (254). Since a large number of affairs relating to the worship of Allah and dealings with human beings depend on spending out of what Allah has given, this subject has been dealt with in a greater detail. Therefore, the sections that follow have, in most of them, a discussion of the second aspect, which is, the 'spending' out of one's possessions. To sum up, it means: The time to act is still there. In the Hereafter, deeds are not on sale. They cannot be borrowed from a friend either. Once caught by the punishment, one cannot be released on someone's intercession, unless Allah Himself forgives.

Verse 255

اَللّٰهُ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَۚ اَلْحَیُّ الْقَیُّوْمُ ۚ لَا تَاْخُذُهٗ سِنَةٌ وَّلَا نَوْمٌ ؕ لَهٗ مَا فِی السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِی الْاَرْضِ ؕ مَنْ ذَا الَّذِیْ یَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهٗۤ اِلَّا

بِإِذْنِهٖ ۭ يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ ۚ وَلَا يُحِيْطُوْنَ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنْ
عِلْمِهٖٓ اِلَّا بِمَا شَاۗءَ ۚ وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ ۚ وَلَا يَـــُٔـوْدُهٗ
حِفْظُهُمَا ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيْمُ O

Allah: There is no god but He, the Alive, the All-Sustaining. Neither doze overtakes Him nor sleep. To Him belongs what is in the heavens and what is on the earth. Who can intercede with Him without His permission? He knows what is before them and what is behind them. And they encompass nothing of His knowledge except what He wills. His *Kursī* (chair) extends to the Heavens and to the Earth, and it does not weary Him to look after them. And he is the High, the Supreme. (Verse 255)

The merits of Ayāt-al Kursī

This is the greatest verse of the noble Qur'ān. *Aḥādith* carry statements featuring its wonderful merits and blessings. It appears in the Musnad of Aḥmad that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said that this verse is the most meritorious of all. According to another *ḥadīth*, the Holy Prophet ﷺ asked Sayyidnā 'Ubayy ibn Ka'b رضى الله عنه : 'Which is the greatest *āyah* (verse) of the Qur'ān?' Sayyidnā 'Ubayy ibn Ka'b رضى الله عنه said: '*Āyah al-Kursī*'. Approvingly, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: 'O Abū al-Mundhir, may Allah bless you in your knowledge.'

Sayyidnā Abū Dharr رضى الله عنه asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ : 'O Messenger of Allah, which is the greatest *ayah* (verse) of the Qur'ān?' He said : '*Āyah al-Kursī*'. (Ibn Kathīr from Ahmad in Al-Musnad).

Sayyidnā Abū Hurayrah رضى الله عنه has reported the Holy Prophet ﷺ saying: 'There is a verse in Sūrah Al-Baqarah which is the *Sayyidah* (the Chief) of the verses of the Qur'an. The Satan leaves the house where it is recited.'

According to a *ḥadīth* in al-Nasā'i, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: If someone recites *Āyah al-Kursī* after every *fard ṣalāh*, nothing stops him from entering Paradise except death.' It means that, immediately after death, this person will start witnessing the traces of Paradise and its comfort and tranquillity.

This verse describes the Oneness of Allah's being and attributes in

a unique manner -- He is living, He hears and sees, He speaks, He is self-existent, He is eternal and everlasting, He is the innovator and creator of the entire universe, He is above changes and effects, He is the master of the whole universe, He is so exalted in His majesty that no one can speak before Him without His permission; He is the wielder of such absolute power that the tremendous function of creating the universe, sustaining it and making it work steadily, does not cause him to tire or relax. So all-encompassing is His knowledge that not the minutest possible atom or drop, open or hidden, could stay out of it. This is, in brief, the core sense of the verse. Now let us take up the meanings of its words in some details.

This verse has ten sentences. The first sentence is: اَللّٰهُ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ : 'Allah: There is no god but He.' The word, اَللّٰهُ (Allah) is like a proper noun for Allah's being. It means: 'the Being who combines all perfections and is free of all shortcomings.' 'There is no god but He' explains this Being. It says that there is absolutely nothing worth worshipping except this Being.

The second sentence is: اَلْحَیُّ الْقَیُّوْمُ : 'The Alive, the All-Sustaining.' The word 'حَیٌّ' means 'the living' in Arabic. Out of the Divine names, the introduction of this word is to emphasize that He is Ever-living and Ever-lasting. He is above and beyond death. The word قَیُّوْمٌ is derived from *Qiyām* which means 'to stand' and *qā'im* refers to 'one who stands.' The words, *Qayyūm* and *Qayyām* are forms of exaggeration. They mean: 'one who himself stands firmly and keeps others sustained and supported, all simultaneously.' *Qayyūm* is an attribute of Allah Almighty with which no created being can be associated, for what depends on others for its own existence and survival can hardly be expected to support something else. Therefore, a human being should not be called, '*Qayyūm*'. It is not permissible. People who corrupt the name, *'Abdūl-Qayyūm* (the slave of the *Qayyum*) by casually using just the second part -- *Qayyūm*, commit a grave error resulting in their sinfulness.

The combination of *Hayy* and *Qayyūm* from among the attributive names of Allah Almighty is الاسم الاعظم (*al-ism al-a'ẓam:* the Great Name) according to several revered elders. Sayyidnā 'Ali رضی اللہ عنہ says: 'There was a time during the Battle of *Badr* when I wished I could see what

the Holy Prophet ﷺ was doing. On arrival, I saw him in the state of *sajdah*, (the prescribed prostration) constantly saying, يَا حَيُّ يَا قَيُّوْمُ يَا حَيُّ يَا قَيُّوم.

The third sentence is: لَا تَأْخُذُهٗ سِنَةٌ وَّلَا نَوْمٌ :'Neither doze overtakes Him nor sleep.' The word (سِنَةٌ : *sinatun*) denotes drowsiness which is the preliminary effect of coming sleep, while the word, نَوْمٌ : *nawm* refers to full sleep. The sense of the sentence; is that Allah Almighty is above and beyond states of drowsiness or sleep. When the word, *Qayyūm*, appearing in the previous sentence; told man that Allah is holding in perfect working unison the whole universe, which includes in itself, all skies and earths and all there is in them -- one could stray on to the idea, naturally so, in view of man's instinctive inquisitiveness, that the sacred 'Being' doing such a stupendous task must, at some time, feel tired, and need due moments of rest and sleep. In this second sentence of the text, man, who has limited knowledge and insight, and limited power, was warned that he should not measure Allah on his analogy or that of other created beings, never taking Him as similar to one's own self. He is above and beyond similarities and analogies. His power is absolutely perfect before which these doings are neither difficult nor tiresome and that His sacred being is above and beyond all sense-effects, weariness, exhaustion, drowsiness and sleep.

The fourth sentence is: لَهٗ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ : 'To Him belongs what is in the havens and what is in the earth.' The letter (*lām*) appearing in the very beginning, has been used to denote ownership. Thus it means that everything on the earth or in the heavens is all owned by Allah Almighty. He is the authority, and may do whatever He deems fit with them.

The fifth sentence is: مَنْ ذَا الَّذِيْ يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهٗٓ اِلَّا بِاِذْنِهٖ :'Who can intercede with Him without His permission?' Here are some points implied in this sentence:

To begin with, when Allah Almighty is the master-owner of the entire universe and there is no one above Him, certainly then, no one is entitled to question Him about anything He does. In the wake of a command that flows from Him, the option of saying why and wherefore does not exist for anyone. However, someone interceding on someone's behalf was possible. This too has now been made clear that no mortal could even dare breath in the most exalted Presence of Allah

Almighty; but there are servants of Allah Almighty who have received the favour of His approval and acceptance and who would be specially allowed to speak and intercede. In short, recommendation or intercession, from anyone for anyone, will not be possible without Divine permission. It appears in *Ḥadīth* that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: 'On the day of resurrection, I shall be the first to intercede on behalf of all human communities'. This is called *al-Maqām al-Maḥmūd*, the praised station, which is one of the distinctions of our noble Prophet ﷺ

The sixth sentence is: يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ : 'He knows what is before them and what is behind them.' It means that Allah Almighty is aware of all the states and events surrounding them. 'Before' and 'after' may also mean that Allah Almighty is aware of all states and events before their birth and after their birth. It is also possible that 'before' refers to states and events that are open to men, and 'after' denotes states and events that are hidden. If so, it would mean that the human knowledge covers certain things and does not cover certain others. Some things are open before a human being and some are hidden. But, before Allah Almighty all these are equal. His knowledge encompasses all these things equally. Incidentally, there is no contradiction in these two senses, which are both included in the scope of the verse.

The seventh sentence is: وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنْ عِلْمِهِ إِلَّا بِمَا شَاءَ :'And they encompass nothing of His knowledge except what He wills.' It means that man and the rest of the created beings cannot cover even a part of Allah's infinite knowledge except a certain part which Allah Almighty Himself allows to be given out of His knowledge. This is all one can know. Here it has been made clear that the all-encompassing knowledge of every particle in the universe is a particular attribute of none but Allah Almighty. No man, no created being can claim to have a share in it.

The eighth sentence is: وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضَ :'His *Kursī* extends to the Heavens and to the Earth.' It means that His *Kursī* (translated as chair or base of power) is so magnified that its spatial infinity houses, within itself, the seven heavens and the earth. Allah Almighty is above and beyond sitting and standing and all spatial location and

placement. Such verses should not be taken up on the analogy of our own states and affairs. The comprehension of the state of being, and the reality of His attributes, is above and beyond human reason. However, there are authentic narrations in *aḥādith* which simply tell us that *'Arsh* (translated as 'throne', being a seat of authority) and *Kursi* (chair) are heavenly bodies many times larger than the heavens and the earth.

Ibn Kathīr has reported from Sayyidnā Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī رضی الله عنه that he asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ as to what the *Kursī* was and what did it look like. He said: 'By Allah, who is the master of my life, the seven heavens and the earth as compared with *Kursī* are like the small circle of a finger-ring lying on a huge plain.'

In some other narrations it has been stated that *Kursī* as compared to *'Arsh* (Throne) is also like the circle of a finger-ring on a huge plain.

The ninth sentence is: وَلَا يَؤُدُهُ حِفْظُهُمَا :'And it does not weary Him to look after them.' It means that supporting the two magnificent creations of the heavens and the earth is not the least burdensome for Allah Almighty since doing so, with the perfect power of the Absolute Master, is easy.

The tenth and the last sentence is: وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ :'And He is the High, the Supreme.' It means that He is most exalted and great in majesty. In the previous nine sentences, the perfections of Allah's being and His attributes were stated. After having seen and understood these, every rational human being is bound to acknowledge that all honour, power and superiority belongs to none but the same Allah Almighty. To sum up, these ten sentences epitomize a description of Allah's Oneness and His perfections with clarity, and in detail.

Verse 256

لَآ إِكْرَاهَ فِى الدِّينِ ۖ قَد تَّبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَىِّ ۚ فَمَن يَكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوتِ وَيُؤْمِنۢ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدِ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَىٰ لَا انفِصَامَ لَهَا ۗ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ○

There is no compulsion in Faith. The correct way has become distinct from the erroneous. Now, whoever rejects the Rebel and believes in Allah has grasped the

strongest ring that never breaks. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. (Verse 256)

Commentary

One who holds on to Islam firmly stays protected against destruction and deprivation. It was for this reason that such a person was likened to one who holds on firmly to the 'ring', the looped support of a strong rope, and thus manages to avoid falling down. As there is no danger of such a rope breaking apart and causing a fall, so there is no danger of destruction or loss in Islam -- should somebody just abandon the rope, that would be an entirely different matter. And should somebody abandon Islam itself, that would be an entirely different matter too. (Maulanā Thānavi: Bayān al-Qur'ān).

Keeping this verse in view, some people raise objections. They say this verse tells us that there is no compulsion in faith, although the teaching of *jihād* and *qitāl* (fighting) in Islam appears contrary to this principle.

Looking at this a little carefully, we can find out that the objection is not valid, since the teaching of *jihād* and *qitāl* in Islam is not to coerce people into accepting Faith. Had it been so, why would there be Islamic injunctions of *jizyah* to provide an umbrella of security for *kuffār* (disbelievers) which protects their life, property and honour? In fact, this is to remove disorder, strife or *fasād*, for Allah Almighty dislikes *fasād*, which is what the *kuffār* are after. Therefore, Allah Almighty says:

وَيَسْعَوْنَ فِى الْأَرْضِ فَسَادًا ۚ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُفْسِدِينَ ۝

And they go about the earth spreading disorder and Allah does not like those who spread disorder. (5:64)

It is for this reason that Allah Almighty has ordained that the *fasād* created by these people should be removed by *jihād* and *qitāl*. So, killing such people is like the killing of serpents, scorpions and their harmful likes.

Islam has firmly banned the killing of women, children, the aged and the crippled etc., even in the heat of *jihād* on the battlefield, since they are incapable of creating disorder. Similarly, it has stopped the killing of those who become law-abiding citizens by promising to pay *jizyah* (compensatory dues paid by free non-Muslims under Muslim

rule against guarantee of the security of their life, property and honour).

This approach of Islam makes it clear that it does not force people to accept and enter Faith, rather far from it, by using it as a method of stopping oppression in the world, it hopes to establish justice and equity and peace and security. When Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه invited an old Christian woman to accept Islam, she said in reply: أنا عجوز كبيرة والموت إلى قريب : 'I am an old woman nearing death.' Hearing this, Sayyidna 'Umar did not force her to come into the fold of Islam. In fact, he recited this very verse: لَآاِكْرَاهَ فِى الدِّيْنِ that is, 'there is no compulsion in Faith.'

Really and truly, coercion and compulsion to make one accept a faith are not possible at all because faith is not related to outward physical response; it relates to the heart. Coercion and compulsion affect nothing but the outsides of physique and this is all that is affected by *jihād* and *qitāl* (fighting in the way of Allah). Consequently, it is just not possible that people can be forced to accept faith through these measures. This proves that the verses of *jihād* and *qitāl* are not contradictory to the verse: لَا اِكْرَاهَ فِى الدِّيْنِ (There is no compulsion in Faith). (Mazharī, Qurṭubī)

Verse 257

اَللّٰهُ وَلِيُّ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا يُخْرِجُهُمْ مِّنَ الظُّلُمٰتِ اِلَى النُّوْرِ ۗ وَالَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْٓا اَوْلِيٰٓـُٔهُمُ الطَّاغُوْتُ يُخْرِجُوْنَهُمْ مِّنَ النُّوْرِ اِلَى الظُّلُمٰتِ ۭ اُولٰۗىِٕكَ اَصْحٰبُ النَّارِ ۚ هُمْ فِيْهَا خٰلِدُوْنَ O

Allah is the Protector of those who believe. He brings them out of the depths of darkness into the light. As for those who disbelieve, their friends are the Rebels. They bring them out from the light into the depths of darkness. Those are people of Fire. There they remain for ever. (Verse 257)

Commentary

This verse also tells us that faith (*'Īmān*) is the greatest blessing and disbelief (*kufr*) is the greatest misfortune, and that there is darkness in friendship with those who disbelieve (*kuffār*).

Verse 258

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِي حَاجَّ إِبْرٰهِمَ فِي رَبِّهِ أَنْ آتٰهُ اللّٰهُ الْمُلْكَ إِذْ
قَالَ إِبْرٰهِمُ رَبِّيَ الَّذِي يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ قَالَ أَنَا أُحْيِي وَأُمِيتُ قَالَ
إِبْرٰهِمُ فَإِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَأْتِي بِالشَّمْسِ مِنَ الْمَشْرِقِ فَأْتِ بِهَا مِنَ
الْمَغْرِبِ فَبُهِتَ الَّذِي كَفَرَ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظّٰلِمِينَ ۝

Did you not see the one who argued with Ibrāhīm about his Lord, because Allah had given him kingship. When Ibrahim said: "My Lord is the One Who gives life and brings death," he said: "I give life and I bring death." Said Ibrāhīm: "Allah brings the sun out from the East, now, you bring it out from the West." Here, baffled was the one who disbelieved. And Allah does not put the unjust people on the right path. (Verse 258)

The verse refers to Namrūd, the emperor of Babylon, who denied the very existence of God and had a debate with Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام on this issue. Allah has given him political power over a large territory. He should have been grateful to his Lord. But, on the contrary, his political power inflated him with pride and arrogance; he started denying the very existence of Him. It is in this context that the Holy Qur'ān says: 'the one who argued with Ibrāhīm about his Lord, because Allah had given him kingship."

In the course of argument, he asked Ibrāhīm عليه السلام about the basic attributes of God. He replied, "My Lord is the One who gives life and brings death." The foolish king did not understand the real nature of 'giving life' and 'bringing death.' Therefore, he argued that he, too, can kill anyone through his order and bring thereby death to him and can also let off a person sentenced to death and give thereby life to him. Obviously, his argument was totally absurd, because 'giving life' means to give life to something lifeless[56] .

When Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام felt that his addressee is unable to understand the real nature of 'giving life' and 'bringing death,' he

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56. And 'bringing death' means power which may remove the life from every living creature without a necessary intervention of an apparent cause.

switched over to another argument and said, "Allah brings the sun out from the East, now, you bring it out from the West." Here the king was baffled and could not answer the Abrahimic argument. But even after the truth became clear to him, he did not accept the guidance. Hence the Qur'ānic statement: "And Allah does not put the unjust people on the right path."

Injunctions and related considerations

1. It is evident from the words used in the verse that if an infidel is given political power or a high worldly status, there is no harm (for a Muslim) in referring to him as a holder of that position (Qurṭubī).

2. The verse also affirms the permissibility of having debate with such an infidel in order to manifest the difference between right and wrong.

3. Some people doubt the validity of the last argument of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm علیہ السلام, because Namrūd could have refuted it by a counter demand from Ibrāhīm علیہ السلام and could have said, "If there is a God, let Him bring the sun out from the West."

But it is obvious that he could not come out with this counter-demand. The reason is that as soon as he heard the argument, he came to the conclusion that (he himself or anybody else cannot bring out the sun from the East or the West and) it is surely a divine function which proves the existence of God. And once it is proved that it is God who brings the sun out from the East, it necessarily follows from it that He has the power to bring it out from the West also. The king also came to the conclusion that Ibrāhīm علیہ السلام is the messenger of Allah, and if the prayed Allah to bring out the sun from the West, Allah will do it, in which case such a miraculous event may bring a revolution against him and he may be deprived of his kingdom. Therefore, he did not make such a demand and having no other answer, was baffled with the argument. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Verse 259

اَوْ كَالَّذِیْ مَرَّ عَلٰی قَرْیَةٍ وَّهِیَ خَاوِیَةٌ عَلٰی عُرُوْشِهَا ۚ قَالَ اَنّٰی
یُحْیٖ هٰذِهِ اللّٰهُ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا ۚ فَاَمَاتَهُ اللّٰهُ مِائَةَ عَامٍ ثُمَّ بَعَثَهٗ ؕ قَالَ

كَمْ لَبِثْتَ ۖ قَالَ لَبِثْتُ يَوْمًا أَوْ بَعْضَ يَوْمٍ ۖ قَالَ بَل لَّبِثْتَ مِائَةَ
عَامٍ فَانظُرْ إِلَىٰ طَعَامِكَ وَشَرَابِكَ لَمْ يَتَسَنَّهْ ۖ وَانظُرْ إِلَىٰ
حِمَارِكَ وَلِنَجْعَلَكَ آيَةً لِّلنَّاسِ ۖ وَانظُرْ إِلَى الْعِظَامِ كَيْفَ
نُنشِزُهَا ثُمَّ نَكْسُوهَا لَحْمًا ۚ فَلَمَّا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ قَالَ أَعْلَمُ أَنَّ اللَّهَ
عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ○

Or, (did you not see) the example of the one who passed through a town collapsed on its roofs. He said: "How shall Allah revive this after it is dead?" So, Allah made him dead for a hundred years, then raised him saying: "How long did you remain (in this state)?" He said: "I remained (like this) for a day or part of a day". Said He: "Rather, you remained (thus) for a hundred years. Just look at your food and your drink; neither has spoiled. And look at your donkey. And (We did like) this to make you a sign for people -- and look at the bones how We raise them, then dress them with flesh." So, when it was clear to him, he said: "I know that Allah is Powerful over everything." (Verse 259)

Verse 260

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ أَرِنِي كَيْفَ تُحْيِي الْمَوْتَىٰ ۖ قَالَ أَوَلَمْ تُؤْمِن ۖ
قَالَ بَلَىٰ وَلَٰكِن لِّيَطْمَئِنَّ قَلْبِي ۖ قَالَ فَخُذْ أَرْبَعَةً مِّنَ الطَّيْرِ
فَصُرْهُنَّ إِلَيْكَ ثُمَّ اجْعَلْ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ جَبَلٍ مِّنْهُنَّ جُزْءًا ثُمَّ
ادْعُهُنَّ يَأْتِينَكَ سَعْيًا ۚ وَاعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ○

And when Ibrāhīm said: "My Lord, show me how You give life to the dead." He said: "Is it that you do not believe?" He said: "Of course, I do, but it is just that my heart be at peace." He said: "Then, take four birds and tame them to your call, then put on every mountain a part from them, then give them a call, and to you they shall come running. And know that Allah is Mighty, Wise." (Verse 260)

Commentary

This is the third story taken up in the above verse (260). The gist of

the story is that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm (Abraham) عليه السلام sought from Allah Almighty the favour of being shown as to how He would bring the dead back to life. Allah Almighty asked him why he had made such a request. Was it because he did not believe in His perfect power which controls everything? Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام explained his true state of mind. In fact, there was no question of his being suspicious about the Resurrection, because the infinite power of Allah is manifest every moment to every sensible person both in the universe and in his own being. However, it is a part of human nature that unless one sees an unusual event happening before his own eyes, he keeps wondering how and in what manner it is going to happen. Such thoughts often disturb one's peace of mind. It was in this context that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام made a request to Allah for witnessing the procedure of the revival of the dead.

Accepting this request, Allah Almighty provided for him an exceptionally unusual scenario for personal sighting which, at the same time, was to show a resolution of all doubts and misgivings the disbelievers nursed. That scenario was activated when he was commanded to get hold of four birds and keep them as pets. When they grow so domesticated that they come to him at his call and he too starts knowing them well enough so that there remains no doubt about a stranger bird taking their place; then he should kill those four birds, make mince-meat of everything -- bones, feathers all included - dividing it in several portions. After that, using his own discretion, he should place one portion each on top of a different hill. Then he was to call them. *Inshallāh*, they shall come back to life by the perfect power of Allah Almighty and come running to him.

In Tafsīr Rūh al-Ma'ānī, on the authority of Ibn al-Mundhir, it has been narrated from Sayyidnā Ḥasan رضی اللہ عنہ that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام did what he was commanded to do. When he called them, then in no time, bone to bone, feather to feather, flesh to flesh, everything took its original form, the birds became alive and came running to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. Allah Almighty said: 'O Ibrāhīm, this is how, on the Day of Resurrection, I shall assemble in no time all parts and bodies, and breath life into them.'

The Qur'ān has used the expression يَأْتِينَكَ سَعْيًا :(and to you they shall come running). These particular words mean that the birds will come

running, which tells us that they will not come flying because if they came flying across the sky, the doubt -- that they went out of sight and were replaced in the process -- would remain. Now if they came running on the ground, they will be fully in sight. Through this happening, Allah Almighty made Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام see a sample indicator of life after death, following resurrection, which helped resolve, through visual experience, all doubts expressed by polytheists and disbelievers.

That there is rising after death and that there is life in the Hereafter give disbelievers their greatest difficulty in comprehension. They think man becomes dust after death, then somewhere this dust scatters away with the wind, somewhere it flows away with water, somewhere it reappears in the form of trees and planted fields, so much so that its particles spread out to the far sides of the world. Now to gather these scattered parcels and human parts and to infuse life into them are things short-sighted man finds difficult to understand because he measures everybody on the scale of his own power and status, and does not deliberate in the non-analogous Power above him!

Although, should he peep a little into his own being, he would start seeing that, even today, his existence is a collection of parts and particles spread all over the world. The mother and father through whom man comes into being and the food that goes to make their blood and body are themselves nothing else but particles brought together from different corners of the world. Then comes the post-birth period, deliberation in which will show that the food causing growth, causing formation of blood and flesh is totally composed of different particles coming from all over the world. The milk that man drinks is part of some cow or water buffalo or goat and these composed parts came into those animals through the fodder that they have eaten. Who knows the chaff and grain in their fodder came from which country and who can tell how the winds roaming round the world have introduced particles from many an unnamed land into their nurture. So, one can only marvel in how many ways and from how many corners of the world the perfect power and the precise plan of Allah Almighty has accumulated in the body of one man the whole wide world's produce, its grains and fruits and everything else man eats and uses as medicine, and which become part of his body.

If man, negligent and short-sighted, would for a moment leave the world aside and get on with doing a little research on his own body, he would discover that his being itself is composed of so many parts some of which belong to the East, some to the West, some to the South and still some to the North. Right this day, the precise plan of Divine power has accumulated in his body all those particles scattered around the world, and after death, these particles will disperse again in the same manner. Now, why should it be at all difficult for His perfect power to assemble them a second time? Specially so, when He was the One who had assembled these scattered particles in his being.

Some related questions and their answers

The incident mentioned in the above verse raises certain questions:

1. To begin with, why did Ibrāhīm عليه السلام raise this question at all while he was, in accepting faith in the perfect power of Allah Almighty, the foremost believer out of the whole world of his time?

This has already been answered earlier when it was said that the question raised by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was not, in reality, based on any doubt. The purpose of the question was to reaffirm that Allah Almighty will raise the dead on the Day of Resurrection. Given His perfect power, this was not distant or surprising in any manner at all; it was rather absolutely certain. But raising the dead to life is beyond man's power. He never saw a dead person rising to life. Then, the act of raising the dead to life could take different modes and forms. Now it is man's nature that he keeps inquiring into modes and forms of that which he does not know by visual experience. In doing so, his thoughts wander in different directions as a result of which he bears by the pain of mental distraction. The state that helps remove this mental distraction and is replaced by a heart at rest is called *sukūn* or peace. This is what Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام sought through his request.

Incidentally, the difference between *'Īmān* (faith) and *Itmī'nān* (peace) also comes out from this discussion. *'Īmān* is the name of that voluntary belief or certainty, which man receives about something not seen or known, by trusting the *Rasūl* (messenger of Allah) while *Itmī'nān* refers to peace of the heart. There are times when one does perfectly believe in something not seen, but there is no peace of heart

because its modes and forms are not known. This peace can come only by visual experience. Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm Khalīlullāh عليه السلام was also a perfect believer in life after death -- his question was simply concerned with the modality of man's being raised to life.

2. When Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm Khalīlullāh عليه السلام , had simply asked as to how the dead will be raised and had no doubt in the actual raising of the dead, the question is: How can the Divine interrogation: أَوَلَمْ تُؤْمِنْ:'Is it that you do not believe?' be explained? It would seem that there was no occasion for it.

The answer is that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام had meant to say that there is no doubt in the actual happening, but the question can be taken in two senses, the obvious one relates to this very position, that is, he wished to inquire how the dead will be raised. But the words of the question may also point out to a second sense which is prompted by doubt in or denial of the real power. For instance, you see a heavy package and you are sure that such and such a person cannot lift it and then, to test his capacity, you challengingly tell him -- let's see how you lift it. Since anybody could have taken Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm's عليه السلام question in this wrong sense, therefore, Allah Almighty, in order to free Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام from this possibility, addressed him with أَوَلَمْ تُؤْمِنْ so that he could say بَلَىٰ (*balā*: yes, why not) in reply, and thus get past the ambush laid out by liars and accusers.

3. At least, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm's question settles this much that he was not at peace concerning the problem of life after death, although it has been reported from Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنه that he said: 'If curtain is raised from that which is unseen, it will add nothing to my certainty and peace since I enjoy perfect peace through my very faith in the unseen'. Now, when some of his followers enjoy such an elevated state of peace how can it be that the very 'friend of Allah' will remain without it?

In this connection, let us be clear that *Itmī'nān* or peace of heart has its own gradations. There is an *Itmī'nān* that the men of Allah (*awliā'* Allah) and the True (*siddīqīn*) have. Then there is an exalted grade of *Itmī'nān* which is given to the general line of prophets عليهم السلام . And there is a grade even above it which is bestowed upon the special ones in the form of visual experience.

Surely, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm Khalīlullāh عليه السلام had the degree of peace which Sayyidna 'Ali رضى الله عنه had, even a higher degree of *Itmī'nān* which is special to the station of prophethood. In this degree of *Itmī'nān*, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was superior to all his followers. Now what he is respectfully asking for is that highest degree of *Itmī'nān* which is bestowed upon the very special prophets -- as it was with our Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم who was granted special *Itmī'nān* by means of a visual experience of Paradise and Hell.

In short, using this question as an excuse to say that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام did not have peace of heart is not correct. Avoiding that, we can simply say that the absolutely perfect peace of heart which comes in the wake of visual experience was not there and that was why he had made this request.

Towards the end of the verse it was said: إِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَزِيْزٌ حَكِيْمٌ , that is, Allah Almighty is All-Powerful and All-Wise. Through *'Azīz*, the perfect power of Allah was pointed to, and through '*Ḥakīm*' (the All-Wise), it was indicated that it is in Allah's wisdom that visual experience of life after death is not granted to everyone, otherwise it is not at all difficult for Allah to make every man see it for himself. But, in that case, the superior quality of having faith without seeing (الايمان بالغيب : *al-'īmān bi l'ghayb*) will not be there.

Verses 261 - 266

مَثَلُ الَّذِيْنَ يُنْفِقُوْنَ اَمْوَالَهُمْ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ كَمَثَلِ حَبَّةٍ اَنْۢبَتَتْ
سَبْعَ سَنَابِلَ فِيْ كُلِّ سُنْۢبُلَةٍ مِّائَةُ حَبَّةٍ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ يُضٰعِفُ لِمَنْ
يَّشَاۗءُ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيْمٌ O اَلَّذِيْنَ يُنْفِقُوْنَ اَمْوَالَهُمْ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ
اللّٰهِ ثُمَّ لَا يُتْبِعُوْنَ مَآ اَنْفَقُوْا مَنًّا وَّلَآ اَذًى ۙ لَّهُمْ اَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ
رَبِّهِمْ ۚ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُوْنَ O قَوْلٌ مَّعْرُوْفٌ
وَّمَغْفِرَةٌ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ صَدَقَةٍ يَّتْبَعُهَآ اَذًى ۭ وَاللّٰهُ غَنِيٌّ حَلِيْمٌ O
يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تُبْطِلُوْا صَدَقٰتِكُمْ بِالْمَنِّ وَالْاَذٰى ۙ كَالَّذِيْ
يُنْفِقُ مَالَهٗ رِئَاۗءَ النَّاسِ وَلَا يُؤْمِنُ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ ۭ فَمَثَلُهٗ
كَمَثَلِ صَفْوَانٍ عَلَيْهِ تُرَابٌ فَاَصَابَهٗ وَابِلٌ فَتَرَكَهٗ صَلْدًا ۭ

لَا يَقْدِرُوْنَ عَلٰى شَيْءٍ مِّمَّا كَسَبُوْا ۭ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ
الْكٰفِرِيْنَ 0 وَمَثَلُ الَّذِيْنَ يُنْفِقُوْنَ اَمْوَالَهُمُ ابْتِغَاۗءَ مَرْضَاتِ
اللّٰهِ وَتَثْبِيْتًا مِّنْ اَنْفُسِهِمْ كَمَثَلِ جَنَّةٍ بِرَبْوَةٍ اَصَابَهَا وَابِلٌ
فَاٰتَتْ اُكُلَهَا ضِعْفَيْنِ ۚ فَاِنْ لَّمْ يُصِبْهَا وَابِلٌ فَطَلٌّ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ بِمَا
تَعْمَلُوْنَ بَصِيْرٌ 0 اَيَوَدُّ اَحَدُكُمْ اَنْ تَكُوْنَ لَهٗ جَنَّةٌ مِّنْ نَّخِيْلٍ
وَّاَعْنَابٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ ۙ لَهٗ فِيْهَا مِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرٰتِ ۙ
وَاَصَابَهُ الْكِبَرُ وَلَهٗ ذُرِّيَّةٌ ضُعَفَاۗءُ ښ فَاَصَابَهَآ اِعْصَارٌ فِيْهِ نَارٌ
فَاحْتَرَقَتْ ۭ كَذٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللّٰهُ لَكُمُ الْاٰيٰتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَفَكَّرُوْنَ 0

The example of those who spend in the way of Allah is just like a grain that produced seven ears, in each ear a hundred grains. And Allah multiplies for whom He wills. And Allah is All-Embracing, All-Knowing.

Those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah, then do not supplement their spending with boasting about favour nor with teasing, they have their reward with their Lord and there is no fear for them nor shall they grieve.

Saying something proper and forgiving is better than a charity followed by teasing. And Allah is All-Independent, Forbearing.

O those who believe, do not nullify your charities by boasting about favour, and teasing, like the one who spends his wealth to show off before people and does not believe in Allah and in the Last Day. So, his example is like a rock on which there is dust, then came over it a heavy rain and left it barren. They have no ability to gain anything out of what they have done. And Allah does not give guidance to the people who disbelieve.

And the example of those who spend their wealth to seek the pleasure of Allah and to make firm their souls is like a garden on a hill on which there came a heavy rain and it yielded its produce twofold. Even if there comes no heavy rain, drizzle does. And Allah is watchful of what you do.

Would any of you wish to have a garden of dates and grapes with rivers flowing beneath it, and for him there are all kinds of fruit, and old age befalls him and he has children who are weak, then comes upon it a whirlwind with fire therein, and it is all burnt? This is how Allah makes the signs clear to you so that you may ponder. (Verses 261 - 266)

Commentary

This is the thirty-sixth section of Sūrah Al-Baqarah which begins from verse 262. Left now are five sections of Surah Al-Baqarah out of which the last section carries some basic principles. The earlier four sections, from 262 to 283, have a total of 21 verses which present special instructions and points of guidance concerning financial transactions. If these were to be followed *in toto*, the problem of an ideal economic order which the whole world is worrying about will be automatically solved. Right now we see capitalism, socialism and communism (despite its fall in U.S.S.R) polarizing or readjusting against each other. The confrontation between these systems has reduced the world to a hotbed of internecine aggression. Stated in these verses is an important aspect of the economic order of Islam. It has two parts:

1. It teaches how to spend that which is extra to your needs to help the poor and the needy. This is known as *Ṣadaqah* and *Khayrāt* (roughly translated as charity and alms).

2. It declares that taking and giving of *ribā* (interest, usury) is *ḥaram* (unlawful) and gives directions on how to stay on guard against it.

Out of these sections, the first two consist of the merits of *sadaqah* and *khayrāt*, inducement towards these, and related injunctions and points of guidance. The last two sections deal with the unlawfulness and forbiddance of *ribā*-based dealings, and with permissible ways of giving and taking loans.

The verses given above make a three-unit statement as follows:

1. The merit of spending in the way of Allah.

2. Conditions which make *sadaqah* and *khayrāt* acceptable and merit-worthy with Allah.

3. Attitudes that destroy *sadaqah* and *khayrat* when good goes and sin stays.

After that there are two similitudes:

1. The first relates to the charities (*nafaqāt* and *sadaqāt*) which are acceptable with Allah.

2. The second relates to the charities (*nafaqāt* and *sadaqāt*) which are unacceptable and invalid.

Thus, these are five subjects that appear in this section. Before we discuss these subjects, it is necessary to know that the Holy Qur'ān has pointed out to spending in the way of Allah at several places with the word, إِنْفَاقٌ (*infāq*: spending) and at several others, with the words, إِطْعَامٌ (*iṭ'ām*: feeding) or صَدَقَةٌ (*sadaqah*: charity) or إِيْتَاءِ الزَّكوٰةِ (*itā' al-zakāt*: paying the obligatory *zakāh* properly). A careful look at these Qur'ānic words and the way they have been used shows that the words -- *infāq*, *it'ām* and *sadaqah* -- are general and as such incorporate all sorts of charitable spendings that aim to seek the good pleasure of Allah. These spendings may be *fard* and *wājib* (obligatory) or *nafl* and *mustaḥabb* (commendable, or desirable, or preferred). It may be noted that the Qur'ān has used a distinct word إِيْتَاءِ الزَّكوٰةِ for the obligatory *zakāh* which indicates that there are special requirements in receiving and giving of this particular *sadaqah*.

In this section, the word used more often is *infāq* while the word, *sadaqah* has been used less often, which indicates that the statement here covers general charities and deeds of generosity, and the injunctions given here include and incorporate all sorts of charities and spendings in the way of Allah.

A similitude of spending in the way of Allah

In the first verse it is said that people who spend in the way of Allah, that is, in *Ḥajj* or in *Jihād*, or on the poor, on widows and orphans, or on relatives and friends to help them out, can be likened to one who sows a good grain of wheat in the field from which grows a plant on which sprout seven ears and each ear yields hundred grains. As a result, one grain was worth a total yield of seven hundred grains.

The outcome is that one who spends in the way of Allah receives in return (reward in the Hereafter) on the scale of one to seven hundred,

that is, spending one cent could bring the merit of seven hundred cents.

It appears in authentic and reliable *aḥādīth* that the *thawab* or merit or reward for one good deed is returned ten-fold, and could reach seven hundred-fold. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه has said: The reward of spending one *dirham* in *Jihād* and Ḥajj is equal to seven hundred *dirhams*. Ibn Kathīr has reported this with reference to the Musnad of Aḥmad.

To sum up, this verse tells us that spending one unit of money brings forth the reward of seven hundred units.

Conditions that make charity a worship

But, the Qur'ān has not, in its wisdom, put this subject in a few clear words. It has rather used the form of a similitude featuring a grain of wheat which has a subtle hint towards the labour of a farmer who can hope to get an yield of seven hundred grains out of one grain sown only when the grain is good, and the farmer sowing it should be fully conversant with the art of farming, and the soil where the grain goes should be good too, because, should even one of these factors remain missing, either this grain will be wasted leaving no grain to come out, or it would just not yield enough to reach the production ratio of one grain to seven hundred grains.

Similar to this, there are the same three conditions for the acceptance and increased return of good deeds generally, and of spending in the way of Allah particularly. These conditions are:

1. That which is spent in the way of Allah should be clean, pure and *ḥalal* (lawful) for it appears in *Ḥadīth* that Allah Almighty accepts nothing except what is clean, pure and *ḥalal*.

2. One who spends should be good in intentions and righteous in deeds. An ill-intentioned and showy spender is like that ignorant farmer who throws away the grain on a spot where it is wasted.

3. The one to whom *sadaqah* (charity) is given should also be deserving of it. It should not be wasted by spending on the non-deserving.

Thus, the similitude unfolds for us the great merit spending in the

way of Allah has, along with the three conditions as well, which stipulate that one should spend from *ḥalal* earnings, and the method of spending should also conform to *Sunnah*, and that one should literally search for the deserving in order to spend on them. Just getting rid of what your coffers hold does not entitle you to receive this merit.

The correct and *masnūn* (according to *Sunnah*) method of giving *sadaqah* has been pointed out in the second verse. It is said that people who spend in the way of Allah and do neither publicise their favour after having spent, nor cause any pain to those on whom they have spent, their reward is secure with their Lord. For them there is no danger in the future, and no sorrow of the past.

Conditions that make charity go in vain

Two negative conditions governing the acceptance of *sadaqah* have been stated in this verse:

1. Do not publicise your favour after spending.

2. Do not consider the receiver practically disgraced, and do nothing to cause him insult or pain.

In the third verse: قَوْلٌ مَّعْرُوفٌ (saying something proper), these two conditions for acceptance of charitable gifts in the sight of Allah have been further explained. Incidentally, these were introduced in the earlier verse. To repeat, when you spend in the way of Allah, do not show off the favour, and when you give something to somebody do nothing to make him feel insulted, or to cause him pain.

This was explained by saying that it is a thousand times better to offer some reasonable and appropriate excuse before the person who asks, if the giver feels he is unable to give under conditions of duress; and should the person asking anger the giver by impolite behaviour, it is also a thousand times better to forgive than to give him a charity which is followed by giving him pain. Allah Almighty is Himself *Ghanī* and *Ḥalīm*, need-free and forbearing. He needs nothing from anyone. One who spends does so for his own good. That being so, an intelligent human being should keep this in mind while spending in the way of Allah, that he is not favouring anybody, and that he is spending for his own good. And should one sense ingratitude on the part of people

treated well, he should subject himself to the divine attribute of 'forbearing', show obedience and forgive and forget.

In the fourth verse, the same subject has been taken up differently with a little more emphasis. It was said: Do not waste your charities: verbally -- by causing your favour to be known; or practically -- by causing pain.

This makes it clear that any form of favour-flashing or needy-bashing, after an act of charity renders such charity null and void. There is no reward for it.

In this verse, one more condition governing the acceptance of *sadaqah* has been added by saying that one who spends for public exposure, for name and fame, and does not believe in Allah Almighty and the Day of Resurrection, can be likened to be acting in a situation where he sows a grain on a clean rock which has collected a layer of soil, then comes the rain and washes the whole thing clean. Such people will never reap what they have sown and Allah Almighty will not let the disbelievers see the way. From this we know the condition that governs the acceptance of *sadaqah* and *khayrāt* -- spend only to seek the good pleasure of Allah Almighty and with the intention of getting *thawāb* (reward) in the *ākhirah* (Hereafter). Never do it with the intention of having public exposure, name and fame. Spending with the intention of earning name and fame is wasting what you spend. And should a true Muslim, who does believe in the Hereafter, expend something simply for name, fame, and under hypocritical motivation, he too, would not get any *thawāb* (reward) for it. Moreover, there is a hint here in the use of the additional sentence ولا يؤمن بالله (And does not believe in Allah); perhaps, it aims to suggest that hypocrisy and name-seeking is not just the sort of thing a person who believes in Allah Almighty and the Day of Resurrection would ever do since hypocrisy is a sign of something being wrong with his faith.

The meaning of وَاللّٰهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ : 'Allah Almighty will not show disbelievers the way' towards the end of verse 264 is that the Qur'ānic guidance is universal. It is common to all human beings. But, disbelievers do not take notice of this guidance, rather go a step farther and make fun of it. As a result, Allah Almighty lets them be deprived of the very *taufīq*, the ability to accept guidance. The effect is that they do not accept any guidance.

In verse 265, the fifth under discussion, the acts of charity which

are acceptable in the sight of Allah Almighty as valid spendings, have been illustrated with an example. It is said that those who spend in the way of Allah, solely and sincerely, to seek nothing but His pleasure, and thus fortify their selves with steadfastness, are in a situation where there is a fruit farm located on some mound, then it is hit by heavy rains, then it brings forth double of its usual yield. And should it be that the rain is not that heavy, a light drizzle would become sufficient for it and Allah Almighty sees and knows what you do.

Here the merits of spending in the way of Allah, surely with sincerity of intention, and obedience to conditions set, has been made clear through this similitude. The message is: Spending with good intention and sincerity, even if it be just a little, becomes enough and helps one receive the gains of the Hereafter.

In verse 266, the sixth under discussion, the statement, that *sadaqah* can be rendered void and rejected if one acts against conditions set forth for the acceptance of charitable spendings, has been illustrated with yet another example. It was asked: Does anyone among you like that he owns a fruit farm, growing dates and grapes with streams flowing underneath, and trees laden with all sorts of fruits -- then comes old age for the owner and he has children and a family that cannot stand on their own. Under these conditions comes a whirlwind through the farm with fire in it and which burns the farm out. This is how Allah Almighty brings forth illustrative parallels so that you may think.

It means that spending in charity against given conditions is like hoping to be investing profusely in the Hereafter, but with Allah Almighty this investment comes to naught.

It may be noted that there are a series of qualifications added to this similitude-for instance, 'came his old age, he has children too and the children are young and weak.' These have a purpose. Isn't it that a person, if young, can look forward to having a new farm when his old farm burns out? Then, a person who has no children, and no hope to reactivate his burnt farm, he will not be so worried about his livelihood since a single man can get by even in adversity, one way or the other. Then there is the situation of one who has children, who are good and young with the hope that they would help the father out. In such a situation, a person is not that shocked even if his farm is burnt or plundered since he is free of the needs of his adult children who can

themselves carry him through. In short, these three riding restrictions were introduced to describe the intensity of need when it was said that a person who spent his capital and labour and set up a fruit farm; the farm became ready and started yielding fruit as well. In this condition, came his old age and the days of weakness. Now this person has children and family. The children are very young and weak. Under these circumstances, should the farm he groomed burn out, his shock would be severe and the pain caused would be limitless.

Similarly one who has given his charity with hypocrisy is as if he set up a farm. Then came death after which his condition became equal to that of the old man who cannot earn his living and cannot set up the farm all over again. This is because human deeds cease to be after death. Similarly, an old man with children and family needs that his previous earnings be safe so that they can be used during old age. If, in this condition, his farm and his belongings burn out, there will be no limit to his pain and distress. Very much like this, the *sadaqah* and *khayrāt*, the spendings in charity, which were made hypocritically or for self-promotion, will not come to help him exactly when he would need them most.

Summarising this whole verse, it could be said that *ikhlās* or sincerity is one big condition governing the acceptance of *sadaqah* and *khayrāt* with Allah. This sincerity means that one should spend exclusively for the good pleasure of Allah Almighty without any admixture of self-promoting ends.

Now let us look at all the verses in this whole section once again. We shall discover that there are six conditions governing the acceptance, in the sight of Allah, of spendings in His way (*sadaqah* and *khayrāt*). These are:

1. Spend from *ḥalal* belongings.
2. Spend according to the prescribed practice (*Sunnah*).
3. Spend in proper place.
4. Do not remind of favour after having done it.
5. Do nothing to insult the reciever.
6. Spend with sincerity of intention, exclusively for the good pleasure of Allah Almighty, never doing it for the sake of name and fame.

The second condition, that is, spending according to *Sunnah*,

means that one should be careful while spending in the way of Allah that rights due to someone may not be usurped. This is no act of *thawāb* (reward) that one indulges in *sadaqah* and *khayrāt* (charity) by stopping or limiting the necessary expenses on his family without their assent. Depriving the needy inheritors and bequeathing the whole inheritance or giving out everything in *sadaqah* and *khayrāt* is against the teachings of *Sunnah.*

Then there are a thousand forms of spending in the way of Allah. The *sunnah* method requires that the place to spend must be selected carefully giving thought to involved factors of importance, need, urgency etc. Usually people who spend do not bring these into consideration.

The essence of the third condition is that spending at a place or in a cause with even good intention is not good enough. This will not suffice to make it an act of *thawāb*. It is also necessary that the place or cause of spending should be permissible and commendable in the sight of the Sharī‘ah. If a person was to bequeath his property for impermissible games and amusements he would be deserving of *‘adhāb* (punishment) rather than *thawāb* (reward). This holds good for all other possible avenues of investment which are not desirable in the view of the Sharī‘ah.

Verses 267 - 274

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اَنْفِقُوْا مِنْ طَيِّبٰتِ مَا كَسَبْتُمْ وَمِمَّآ اَخْرَجْنَا
لَكُمْ مِّنَ الْاَرْضِ ۠ وَلَا تَيَمَّمُوا الْخَبِيْثَ مِنْهُ تُنْفِقُوْنَ وَلَسْتُمْ
بِاٰخِذِيْهِ اِلَّآ اَنْ تُغْمِضُوْا فِيْهِ ۭ وَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ غَنِيٌّ حَمِيْدٌ O
اَلشَّيْطٰنُ يَعِدُكُمُ الْفَقْرَ وَ يَاْمُرُكُمْ بِالْفَحْشَاۗءِ ۚ وَاللّٰهُ يَعِدُكُمْ
مَّغْفِرَةً مِّنْهُ وَفَضْلًا ۭ وَاللّٰهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيْمٌ O ۖ يُّؤْتِي الْحِكْمَةَ مَنْ
يَّشَاۗءُ ۚ وَمَنْ يُّؤْتَ الْحِكْمَةَ فَقَدْ اُوْتِيَ خَيْرًا كَثِيْرًا ۭ وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ
اِلَّآ اُولُوا الْاَلْبَابِ O وَمَآ اَنْفَقْتُمْ مِّنْ نَّفَقَةٍ اَوْ نَذَرْتُمْ مِّنْ نَّذْرٍ
فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَعْلَمُهٗ ۭ وَمَا لِلظّٰلِمِيْنَ مِنْ اَنْصَارٍ O اِنْ تُبْدُوا
الصَّدَقٰتِ فَنِعِمَّا هِىَ ۚ وَاِنْ تُخْفُوْهَا وَتُؤْتُوْهَا الْفُقَرَاۗءَ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ

لَكُمْ ۚ وَيُكَفِّرُ عَنكُم مِّن سَيِّـَٔاتِكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ ○
لَيْسَ عَلَيْكَ هُدَاهُمْ وَلَٰكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَهْدِي مَن يَشَاءُ ۗ وَمَا تُنفِقُوا
مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَلِأَنفُسِكُمْ ۚ وَمَا تُنفِقُونَ إِلَّا ابْتِغَاءَ وَجْهِ اللَّهِ ۚ وَمَا
تُنفِقُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ يُوَفَّ إِلَيْكُمْ وَأَنتُمْ لَا تُظْلَمُونَ ○ لِلْفُقَرَاءِ
الَّذِينَ أُحْصِرُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ ضَرْبًا فِي
الْأَرْضِ يَحْسَبُهُمُ الْجَاهِلُ أَغْنِيَاءَ مِنَ التَّعَفُّفِ تَعْرِفُهُم
بِسِيمَاهُمْ لَا يَسْأَلُونَ النَّاسَ إِلْحَافًا ۗ وَمَا تُنفِقُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَإِنَّ
اللَّهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ ○ الَّذِينَ يُنفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُم بِاللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ سِرًّا
وَعَلَانِيَةً فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِندَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ
يَحْزَنُونَ ○

O those who believe, spend of the good things you have earned and of what We have brought forth for you from the earth, and do not opt for a bad thing, spending only from there, while you are not going to accept it at all, unless you close your eyes to it. And know that Allah is All-Independent, Ever-Praised.

Satan frightens you of poverty and bids you to indecency, and Allah promises you forgiveness from Him, and grace as well. And Allah is All-Embracing, All-Knowing. He gives wisdom to whom He wills. And whoever is given wisdom is certainly given a lot of good. And only the men of understanding do observe the advice.

And whatever spending you do and whatever vow you make, Allah knows it all. And for the unjust, there are no supporters.

If you make the alms open, it is good enough, and if you keep it secret and give it to the needy, it is far better for you. And this will write off part of your sins. And Allah is All-Aware of what you do.

It is not for you to put them on the right path. Rather, Allah puts on the right path whom He wills. And whatever good you spend is for your own selves, and

you shall not spend but to seek the pleasure of Allah. And whatever good you spend, shall be paid to you in full, and you shall not be wronged.

(Let your charities be) for the needy who are confined in the way of Allah, unable to move about in the land. An ignorant person takes them to be rich on account of their abstinence. You know them by their appearance. They do not beg people importunately. And whatever good you spend, Allah is All-Aware of it.

Those who spend their wealth night and day, secretly and openly, they have their reward with their Lord, and there is no fear for them, nor shall they grieve. (Verses 267 - 274)

Commentary

The preceding section dealt with spending in the way of Allah. Now further details related to this appear in the seven verses of the present section. These are as follows:

(1) Verse 267: يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓا۟ أَنفِقُوا۟ (إلى قوله) غَنِىٌّ حَمِيدٌ :'O those who believe, spend ... Allah is All-Independent, Ever-Praised.'

On the basis of the circumstances in which this verse was revealed, the word: طَيِّبَ (*tayyib*: plural, *tayyibāt*) has been interpreted to mean 'good' since some people used to bring things which were bad and that was why this verse was revealed. Some commentators have interpreted the word, *tayyib* (good) to mean *ḥalal* (lawful) relying on the generality of the word since something is prefectly good only when it is *ḥalal* (lawful) as well. So, according to this interpretation, the verse emphasizes that the thing given in charity must be from one's lawful income. However, according to the first interpretation, the stress on this condition will have to be proved by other sources. Let us remember that this is for a person who has something good yet elects to spend something not good as مَاكَسَبْتُمْ (you have earned) and اَخْرَجْنَا (We have brought forth) do indicate that good things are available with the person making charity, while the sentence لَاتَيَمَّمُوا الْخَبِيْثَ مِنْهُ تُنْفِقُوْنَ (and do not opt for a bad thing spending only from there) proves the spending of something not good deliberately. As for the one who just does not possess anything good, he shall be exempted from this prohibition. His giving, even if it be bad, shall be accepted.

Some scholars have deduced from the expression, مَاكَسَبْتُمْ (what you

have earned), the ruling that it is permissible for the father to eat out of the earnings of his son. This is based on a *ḥadīth*:

أولادكم من طيب أكسابكم فكلوا من أموال أولادكم هنيئا

Your children are a good part of your earnings, so eat out of the income of your children cheerfully. (Qurṭubī)

Injunctions relating to the lands of *'Ushr*

The word اخرجنا (*akhrajnā*: We have brought forth) in مِمَّا أَخْرَجْنَا لَكُم مِّنَ الْأَرْضِ (What We have brought forth for you from the earth) hints that *'ushr* is obligatory on *'ushrī* lands. Based on the generality of this verse, Imām Abū Ḥanīfah has deduced that *'ushr* is *wājib* or obligatory on every produce, big or small, yielded by *'ushrī* land. The verse وَآتُوا حَقَّهُ يَوْمَ حَصَادِهِ (And pay the due thereof on the day of its harvest; 6:141) in Sūrah Al-An'ām is open and clear in support of the obligatory nature of *'ushr*.

'Ushr (عشر : the tenth or twentieth part) and *Kharāj* (خراج : land tax) are two technical terms used in Islamic Sharī'ah. There is a common factor between these two. Both have an aspect of tax in them when levied on lands by an Islamic state. However, there is a difference. *'Ushr* is not just a tax. On the contrary, its real nature is more of an act of monetary *'Ibādah* (worship) than tax. This is similar to *Ẓakāh*, for which reason, it is also called زكوة الارض (*zakāh al-ard*: the *zakāh* of the land). *Kharāj* is straight tax which carries no aspect of *'Ibādah*. Since Muslims are capable of *'ibādah* and are obligated to do that, the part of land-produce taken from them is known as *'Ushr*. Since non-Muslims are not obligated with *'Ibādah*, that which is levied on their lands is named *Kharāj*. There is another practical difference between *Zakāh* and *'Ushr* -- *Zakāh* becomes due on gold, silver and goods of commercial value after the passage of one year while *'Ushr* becomes obligatory immediately after the produce is harvested from the land.

There is yet another difference -- *'Ushr* is dropped if the land produces nothing, but *Zakāh* remains obligatory at the end of the year on gold, silver and goods of commercial value even if there is no profit at all. This is not the place to discuss details relating to the problems of *'Ushr* and *Kharāj*. These can be seen in books of *Fiqh*. Incidentally, this humble writer has discussed this subject in some details in his book, *Niẓām al-Arāḍī* which also contains special injunctions concerning lands in Pakistan and India.

(2) Verses 268-269: اَلشَّيْطٰنُ يَعِدُكُمُ الْفَقْرَ (الی قوله) وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ اِلَّآ اُولُوا الْاَلْبَابِ : "Satan frightens you of poverty ... and only the men of understanding do observe the advice."

When a person is obsessed with the idea that spending in charity will cause him poverty, when he does not pick up the courage to go ahead and spend - even after hearing the warning of Allah Almighty - and continues feeling that he should not spend out of what he has, and when, turning away from the Divine promise, his mind takes him to rely on the promise of Satan, he should better be sure that this apprehension of his is being generated by Satan. He should never say that he has never seen Satan, so how could he take orders from him? Conversely, should he come to think that not only his sins will be forgiven by spending in charities, but also his wealth will be blessed with increase - he should then be sure that this thought has come from Allah for which he should be grateful to Him. Allah's treasure never runs short. He knows fully well - the open, the hidden, the intentions, the deeds - everything about everyone.

Al-Ḥikmah: Meaning and Explanation

(3) Verse 269: يُؤْتِی الْحِكْمَةَ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ : "He gives wisdom to whom He wills."

The word, الحكمة (*al-ḥikmah*: wisdom) appears repeatedly in the Holy Qur'ān, and at every place, its meaning has been explained differently. In Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, all positions taken by commentators have been assembled at this point. These come to nearly thirty, however, towards the end it was said that all these positions are close together and there is no contradiction among them. The only difference is that of interpretations. The word, *ḥikmah* is the verbal noun of *'iḥkam* (the first letter, *hamzah* with *kasrah*) which means 'to complete what is said or done with all its properties and requisites.'

This is why the verse وَاٰتٰىهُ اللّٰهُ الْمُلْكَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ : 'And Allah gave him the kingdom and the *ḥikmah*' (2:251) which concerns Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام, was explained in al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ in the following manner:

The real meaning of *ḥikmah* is to place everything whereto it belongs and this can only be accomplished ideally through prophethood. Therefore, *ḥikmah* has been interpreted as prophethood here.

Imām Rāghib al-Isfahānī has said in *Mufradāt al-Qur'an*: "When the word, *ḥikmah* is used for Allah Almighty, it denotes the

comprehensive knowledge and solid creative excellence of all things; and when attributed to the non-Divine, it means the rightly-guided knowledge of what exists, and the action which corresponds to it.

This sense has been interpreted in different words. Somewhere it means, the Qur'ān; elsewhere, the *Ḥadīth*. Then at different places, it carries different meanings, such as "the authentic knowledge", "the righteous deed", "the True Word", "the wisdom", "the understanding of religion", "correctness of opinion" and "the fear of Allah". Incidentally, the last meaning appears in *Ḥadīth* as well: رأس الحكمة خشية الله , that is, "the real wisdom is the fear of Allah". The word, *ḥikmah* in the verse يُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ (teaches them the Book and the wisdom - 3:164) has been explained as "*Ḥadīth* and *Sunnah*" by the *Ṣaḥābah* and the *Tābi'īn* (the Companions and the Successors). Some commentators hold the opinion that *ḥikmah* in the verse يُؤْتَ الْحِكْمَةَ (whoever is given wisdom) under discussion covers all these things.

This is the more evident view; more so, since the words of the Qur'ān وَمَنْ يُّؤْتَ الْحِكْمَةَ فَقَدْ أُوتِيَ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا : "And whoever is given wisdom is certainly given a lot of good" do hint in that direction as they mean that the *ḥikmah* covers a lot of good. Allah knows best.

(4) Verse 270: وَمَا أَنْفَقْتُمْ مِّنْ نَّفَقَةٍ (الى قوله) وَمَا لِلظّٰلِمِيْنَ مِنْ أَنْصَارٍ : "And whatever spending you do ... and for the unjust, there are no supporters."

Here, "and whatever spending you do" covers all spendings - those in which all related conditions are observed and those too, in which all or some conditions are not observed. For instance, it may not be in the way of Allah but be in the ways of sin; or the act of giving may be mixed up with hypocrisy; or may be followed by making a show of the favour before the receiver; or it may not be *ḥalal* (lawful) and good.

Similarly, all votive offerings (نذور : *nudhūr*) come under the general purview of نذر (*nadhr*: singular: votive offering), for instance, it includes the *nadhr* of monetary *'ibādah* in accordance with which *nadhr* has been introduced alongwith *infāq* (spending) and may also include *nadhr* of physical *'ibādah*. It may be absolute, or dependent on something else; or it may or may not have been fulfilled. The purpose of saying all this is that Allah Almighty knows all these things and He shall recompense for them duly. This was made known so that people are persuaded to observe limits and conditions and be warned of their

non-observance. The word الظّٰلِمِيْنَ (*al-ẓalimin*) in the text refers to the unjust, the transgressors, who do not observe the necessary conditions. To them was given clear warning.

(5) Verse 271: اِنْ تُبْدُوا الصَّدَقٰتِ فَنِعِمَّا هِيَ (الی قوله) وَاللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرٌ : "If you give the alms openly, it is good enough, ... and Allah is All-Aware of what you do".

Obviously, this verse covers all types of charity, whether obligatory or supererogatory, and it is more preferable to perform all of them as secretly as possible. To observe secrecy in a charitable act has religious merits, because it is far from the possibility of *riyā'* (show off), and more graceful for the receiver who can feel shy about receiving charity in public. It is also beneficial from an earthly point of view, because it does not disclose the amount of wealth one owns.

It should, however, be kept in mind that the preferability of observing secrecy is a matter of principle. There may be situations where it becomes more preferable to perform an act of charity openly for some external reasons, such as removing some accusation (of not paying *zakāh*, for instance) or to persuade others to follow the example. Such exceptional cases do not negate the basic principle in any way.

Immediately after the instruction of concealing the '*Ṣadaqāt*', the holy verse says, يُكَفِّرُ عَنْكُمْ مِّنْ سَيِّاٰتِكُمْ (This will write off part of your sins). It does not mean that the expiation of evil-deeds is confined to the charity made in secret only. In fact, a charity made in public also carries the same benefit. But the reference to expiation here is in the context that even if someone feels a secret charity as useless in this world, he should not feel depressed, because Allah will forgive his sins, and that is a great gain for him.

(6) Verse 272: لَيْسَ عَلَيْكَ هُدٰىهُمْ (الی قوله) وَاَنْتُمْ لَا تُظْلَمُوْنَ : "It is not for you to put them on the right path ... and you shall not be wronged."

It has been clarified in this verse that a *sadaqah* given to a non-Muslim also carries a reward in the life to come. As the basic purpose of a Muslim in making a *sadaqah* is to get that reward, he should not confine himself to giving it to the Muslims only and to avoid giving it to the poor non-Muslims in the hope that this attitude will persuade them towards Islam, because a Muslim is not charged

with bringing non-Muslims to the right path. He should seek his own benefit (the reward in the Hereafter) which can also be achieved through giving *sadaqah* to a non-Muslim.

Let us be clear at this point that *sadaqah* referred to here is *nafl* (supererogatory or voluntary charity) which can be given to a *dhimmī* (a non-Muslim citizen of a Muslim state) as well. The obligatory *Zakāh* is not meant here since it is not permissible to give that to anyone except a Muslim (Mazharī). It is not permissible to give any kind of *sadaqah* to a *ḥarbī* (a non-Muslim citizen of a non-Muslim state) and, however, it is permissible to give the *dhimmis* all other types of *sadaqat*, obligatory or supererogatory. *Zakāh* is not included in the verse.

(7). Verse 273: لِلْفُقَرَآءِ الَّذِيْنَ أُحْصِرُوْا فِىْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ (الى قوله) فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِهٖ عَلِيْمٌ : "For the needy who are confined in the way of Allah ... Allah is All-Aware of it'.'

Here the word, *al-fuqarā'* (the needy: those who need support for their physical sustenance) covers all those who cannot engage themselves in other jobs because of their religious preoccupation.

... يَحْسَبُهُمُ الْجَاهِلُ اَغْنِيَآءَ مِنَ التَّعَفُّفِ ... : "An ignorant person takes them to be rich on account of their abstinence."

This verse tells us that a *faqīr* (the one who does not own the *nisab* of *zakāh*) wearing expensive dress will not be taken as 'need-free' because of that. Instead, he would be regarded as *faqīr*. Paying *Zakāh* to such a person will be correct. (Qurṭubī)

... تَعْرِفُهُمْ بِسِيْمَاهُمْ ... : "You know them by their appearance."

This tells us that it is correct to give rulings based on circumstancial evidence. For instance, if a dead body is found wearing *zunnar* (waist-cord which is a symbol of some pagan religions), and is uncircumcised, it will not be buried in the graveyard of Muslims. (Qurṭubī)

... لَا يَسْئَلُوْنَ النَّاسَ اِلْحَافًا ... :"They do not beg people importunately."

On the surface, this verse gives the sense that they do not solicit importunately but it does not negate soliciting without importunity, as is the actual interpretation of some commentators. But, in accordance with the consensus of commentators, it means that they just do not ask; لأنهم متعففون عن المسألة عفة تامة (totally refrain from asking) (Qurṭubī).

(8). Verse 274: اَلَّذِيْنَ يُنْفِقُوْنَ اَمْوَالَهُمْ بِالَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ : "Those who spend their wealth night and day."

Presented in this verse is the great reward and excellence of those who are used to spending in the way of Allah. They are those who, under all conditions and circumstances, during the day and during the night, secretly and openly, keep spending in the way of Allah in all sorts of ways. By implication, it was also stated that there is no time fixed for charities, i.e., *sadaqah* and *khayrāt*. There is no restriction of night or day. Similarly, spending in the way of Allah, secretly and openly, is an act of *thawāb* both ways, however, the condition is that it should be done with sincerity (*ikhlās*), and not to earn name and fame. The excellence of spending secretly is limited to a situation where there be no pressing need to spend out openly; and where such a need does exist, spending there openly is certainly better.

Based on the authority of Ibn 'Asākir, there is a report in Rūh al-Ma'ānī which says that Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ spent forty thousand *dinars* in the way of Allah - making it ten thousand during the day, ten thousand during the night, ten thousand openly and ten thousand secretly. Some commentators have said that this very event related to Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ was the background of the revelation of this verse. There are other views also regarding the circumstances of its revelation.

Verses 275 - 281

الَّذِيْنَ يَاْكُلُوْنَ الرِّبٰوا لَا يَقُوْمُوْنَ اِلَّا كَمَا يَقُوْمُ الَّذِيْ يَتَخَبَّطُهُ
الشَّيْطٰنُ مِنَ الْمَسِّ ؕ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمْ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّمَا الْبَيْعُ مِثْلُ الرِّبٰوا ۘ
وَاَحَلَّ اللّٰهُ الْبَيْعَ وَحَرَّمَ الرِّبٰوا ؕ فَمَنْ جَآءَهٗ مَوْعِظَةٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّهٖ
فَانْتَهٰى فَلَهٗ مَا سَلَفَ ؕ وَاَمْرُهٗٓ اِلَى اللّٰهِ ؕ وَمَنْ عَادَ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ
اَصْحٰبُ النَّارِ ۚ هُمْ فِيْهَا خٰلِدُوْنَ ○ يَمْحَقُ اللّٰهُ الرِّبٰوا وَيُرْبِى
الصَّدَقٰتِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ كَفَّارٍ اَثِيْمٍ ○ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا
وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ وَاَقَامُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتَوُا الزَّكٰوةَ لَهُمْ اَجْرُهُمْ
عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ ۚ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُوْنَ ○ يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ
اٰمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَذَرُوْا مَا بَقِيَ مِنَ الرِّبٰوٓا اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ○

فَاِنْ لَّمْ تَفْعَلُوْا فَاْذَنُوْا بِحَرْبٍ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ ۚ وَاِنْ تُبْتُمْ
فَلَكُمْ رُءُوْسُ اَمْوَالِكُمْ ۚ لَا تَظْلِمُوْنَ وَلَا تُظْلَمُوْنَ ۝ وَاِنْ كَانَ
ذُوْ عُسْرَةٍ فَنَظِرَةٌ اِلٰى مَيْسَرَةٍ ۭ وَاَنْ تَصَدَّقُوْا خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ
تَعْلَمُوْنَ ۝ وَاتَّقُوْا يَوْمًا تُرْجَعُوْنَ فِيْهِ اِلَى اللّٰهِ ۗ ثُمَّ تُوَفّٰى كُلُّ
نَفْسٍ مَّا كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُوْنَ ۝

Those who take *ribā* (usury or interest) will not stand but as stands the one whom the demon has driven crazy by his touch. That is because they have said: "Trading is but like *ribā*." And Allah has permitted trading, and prohibited *ribā*. So, whoever receives an advice from his Lord and stops, he is allowed what has passed, and his matter is upto Allah. And the ones who revert back, those are the people of Fire. There they remain for ever.

Allah destroys *riba* and nourishes charities. And Allah does not like any sinful disbeliever. Surely those who believe and do good deeds, establish *Salāh* and *Zakāh* have their reward with their Lord, and there is no fear for them, nor shall they grieve.

O those who believe, fear Allah and give up what still remains of the 'riba' if you are believers. But if you do not, then listen to the declaration of war from Allah and His Messenger. And if you repent, yours is your principal. Neither you wrong, nor be wronged.

And if there be one in misery, then deferment till ease. And that you leave it as alms is far better for you, if you really know. And be fearful of a day when you shall be returned to Allah, then everybody shall be paid, in full, what he has earned. And they shall not be wronged. (Verses 275 - 281)

The prohibition of *Riba*

From these verses begins the description of the forbiddance of *ribā* and the injunctions relating to its unlawfulness. This issue is very important from different angles. On the one hand, there are the severe warnings of the Qur'ān and *Sunnah* and on the other, it has been taken today as an integral part of the world economy. The desired

liberation from it seems to be infested with difficulties. The problem is very detail-oriented and has to be taken up in all possible aspects.

First of all we have to deliberate into the correct interpretation of these verses of the Qur'ān and into what has been said in authentic *aḥādīth* and then determine what *ribā* is in the terminology of the Qur'ān and *Sunnah*, what transactions it covers, what is the underlying wisdom behind its prohibition and what sort of harm it brings to society.

The second aspect of *ribā* is intellectual and economic. Is it true that *ribā* guarantees the economic development of the world, so much so, that its suspension will categorically result in the destruction of trade and general economic activity? Or, this whole evil cycle is nothing but the brain-child of those heedless of Allah Almighty and the Hereafter. Otherwise, all economic problems can be solved without it as well. Going a step further, we can even say that the economic peace in the world depends on the elimination of *ribā*, let alone the resolution of its problems. *Ribā* is the greatest cause of the economic maladies of the world.

This second aspect involves the discussion of an economic problem under which come long debates which are not related to the interpretation of the Qur'ān, therefore, we shall restrict ourselves to dealing with the first aspect only, which requires no less details either.

Here we have a total of six verses which state the prohibition of *ribā* and set forth related injunctions. Out of these, the first sentence of the first verse points out to the sad end of those involved in *ribā* transactions and to the disgraceful and dishevelled nature of their rising on the day of resurrection. It is said that those who consume *ribā* do not stand except like a man who has been driven crazy by the embrace of some satan or jinn. It appears in *ḥadīth* that the word, *la yaqumunā* or 'do not stand' means the rising of the dead from their graves on the day of resurrection in the sense that the dealer in *ribā*, when he rises from his grave, will rise like the mad man who has been driven crazy by some satan or jinn.

The first thing we find out from this sentence is that a human being can faint or go mad under the influence of jinns and satans and

the observations of those who have had such experience prove it. Ḥāfiz Ibn Qaiyyim al-Jawziyyah رحمه الله has confirmed that physicians and philosophers have conceded that epilepsy, fainting or madness are caused by several different reasons, one of which, at times, could also be the input of jinns and satans. Those who reject this have no other argument in their favour except that obviously it is too far out to believe.

The second point to be noted here is that the Qur'ān does not say that the consumers of *ribā* will rise in a state of madness or insanity. Instead, it refers to a peculiar condition of lunacy or fit or stupefaction - as if someone has been embraced by Satan and driven crazy. Perhaps, this carries the hint that a person struck with lunacy or fit is, at times, found inactive and silent while usually these people will not be found in that dormant state. Instead, they would be identified by their ranting, raving and crazy doings as a result of the satanic touch.

Perhaps, there might be yet another hint here. It is commonly noticed that human senses come to a flat nothing after fainting or insanity following a sickness; the very feeling of pain or punishment is just not there. But these people will not be found in that inert state. On the contrary, they would feel, with full sensitivity, the pain and the punishment like one shadowed by a demon.

Now, at this point, we have to look for a certain compatibility in crime and punishment. When punishment comes from Allah Almighty, for a person or group, against a certain crime, it is certainly appropriate to the crime. Therefore, raising the consumers of *ribā*, without sense, on the day of resurrection is perhaps indicative of a certain parallelism. Isn't it that the consumer of *ribā* is so drunk with his greed for money that he is neither kind to anyone poor, nor does he blush before anyone for what he does? Since he was really senseless during his lifetime in the world, he was raised on the day of resurrection in that same condition. Or, may be, he was so punished because, in the mortal world, he demonstrated his lack of reason as reason, that is, he declared *ribā* to be like trade; therefore, he was made to rise all deprived of his sanity.

Also noteworthy here is the fact that the verse uses the expression *ya'kūluna* or 'eating' of *ribā* and, by application, means the taking and

using of *riba*. This may be in eating or clothing or housing and its furnishings. But, it was identified with the act of 'eating' because that which is eaten cannot possibly be retrieved, contrary to other type of uses where things can be taken back. Therefore, total possession and monopoly are expressed through the word, 'eating'. This metaphor is found, not only in the Arabic language, but in Urdu, Persian and several other languages (English: 'eat', or the stronger word, 'devour').

After that, comes the second sentence, in which, giving the reason for this punishment of the consumers of *riba*, it has been said that these people have committed two crimes. One: They consumed the prohibited (*haram*) by dealing in *riba*. Two: They took it to be lawful (*halal*) and, in reply to those who declared it to be *haram*, they said that buying and selling is very much like *riba*. Just as 'profit' is derived from *riba*, so is profit derived from buying and selling. If *riba* is *haram*, trade should be *haram* too, although it is not prohibited in the sight of anyone.

Here, given the dictates of the situation, they might have said that *riba* is also like trade so, when trade is *halal*, *riba* should be *halal* too. But they, by changing the style of their statement, took a sort of mocking plunge at those who said that *riba* was *haram*, thereby telling them in effect - 'if you say *riba* is *haram*, then you must say that trade is also *haram*'.

In the third sentence, in reply to what these people said, Allah Almighty negated their position by saying that these people regard *riba* as equal to trade, although there is a world of difference between the two in accordance with the will and command of Allah Almighty. When He has made the one *halal* and the other, *haram* - how could they be equal?

Keeping this reply in mind, we should note that the objection raised by those people (the defenders of *riba*) was based on a purely rational argument. They were simply saying that since both activities aimed at earning profit, their governing injunction should also be one and the same. Praise be to Allah Almighty that He did not answer their rational doubt by a parallel rational explanation. Rather on the contrary, answering in His wisdom, He said that Allah Almighty is the absolute, sovereign master of all and He alone knows the harm and

benefit, the good and bad of everything, most comprehensively. When He declares something to be *ḥalal*, and something else to be *ḥaram*, you should immediately realize that there must be some loss or harm or evil in that which has been declared *ḥaram*, even if one does or does not see through it. This is because the actual reality of this whole system, and the benefit and harm that lies therein, can only be encompassed by the same *'Ālim* (the Knower) and *Khabīr* (the Aware), from Whose reach of knowledge the minutest particle of the world cannot escape. The individuals or groups in this world can identify their expedient gains and their losses, but they just cannot claim to have encompassed the entire range of benefits and harms affecting the whole wide world. There are things that appear to be beneficial for a certain person or group but, when looked at in the perspective of the whole nation or country, the same things prove to be harmful.

Following that, it is said in the third sentence that a person, who had collected some money before *ribā* was declared *ḥaram*, and who repented after *ribā* was declared *ḥaram*, and promised to himself that he would not go near it in the future, he then, will find that the amount so collected belonged to him based on the outward dictate of the Sharī'ah. Now remains the inward affair, that of his sincere, heart-felt abstinence, or that of his possible hypocritical repentance, that will be retired as a matter between him and His Lord. If the repentance comes from the heart, it will be beneficial in the sight of Allah, otherwise it will pass into nothingness. Common people have no right to doubt about it. However, one who hears good counsel, yet elects to revert to the same erroneous pattern of word and deed, for such people Hell is the place to go since this act of eating *riba* is a sin. And since their saying, that *ribā* is *ḥalal* like trade, is *kufr*, they will, for that reason, live in Hell for ever.

In the second verse (276), it was said that Allah Almighty eradicates *ribā* and lets *sadaqāt* (charities) grow. Here *sadaqat* were introduced with *riba* by virtue of a unique congruity. It will be noted that there is contradiction in the very nature of *riba* and *sadaqah*, then their outcomes are also contradictory, and generally, those who engage in these two have contradictory intentions and objectives.

The contradiction in nature can be explained by the fact that in

sadaqah one gives to others what belongs to him without any reward or return, while in *ribā*, that which belongs to others is taken without any compensation or return. The intention and the objective of those who are engaged in these two activities is contradictory because one who gives *sadaqah* elects to lessen or exhaust what belongs to him exclusively for seeking the pleasure of Allah Almighty and for earning merit in the Hereafter; while the *ribā*-taker is eager to collect impermissible increase on the capital he already has. That the outcome of both is contradictory is made clear by this verse which says that Allah Almighty erases the gains obtained through *ribā* or takes away its *barakah* (blissful abundance); and increases the wealth, or its *barakah* for the giver of *sadaqah*. The result is that the objective of the greedy in pursuit of wealth is not achieved, while one who spends in the way of Allah, and who was quite happy with a little decrease in his belongings, finds it full of Divine *barakah* whereby his wealth increases, or its end-products do, and their benefits accumulate.

At this point, it may be interesting to find out what is the meaning of erasing *ribā* and increasing *sadaqāt* in the verse. Some commentators have said that this erasing and increasing relates to the Hereafter where the *ribā*-consumer will find his wealth of no avail; it might as well become a curse for him; while those who are engaged in acts of *sadaqah* and *khayrāt* will find that their wealth has become a source of eternal blessings. This is absolutely obvious in which there is no doubt. However, according to the consensus of commentators, the position is that the erasing of *ribā* and the increasing of *sadaqah* is most certainly related to the Hereafter, but some of its traces are observed in this world as well.

The money or property of which *ribā* becomes a part is sometimes destroyed taking with it all that was before it. This is a common sight in markets of *ribā* and stocks where millionaires and capitalists of yesterday become insolvents and paupers of today. No doubt, there are chances of profit and loss in *ribā*-free business activities and there are many businessmen who face losses in business deals but a loss that turns a millionaire into a beggar is witnessed only in *ribā* markets and stock exchanges. There are so many statements of the experienced and the knowledgeable which say that the wealth collected through *ribā*

may increase faster and higher, but it generally does not survive long enough to run through children and their successors. In between, comes some calamity and effaces everything out. Sayyidna Ma'mar said that they have heard from their elders that forty years hardly pass on the *ribā*-consumer when *muhaq* (major loss) overtakes his wealth.

May be, the wealth or property does not go to ruins outwardly, but this much is quite certain that its benefits, utilities, and blessings will go away. Since this is no secret that gold and silver are not desirable or useful as such. They cannot remove hunger or thirst. They cannot help beat the heat or serve as quilt and wrap in winter. Neither can they be used as clothes or utensils. The only purpose for which a wise person goes through thousands of exercises to procure and secure these can hardly be anything else except that gold and silver are means to procure things that go to make man's life pleasant and that he may live a life of comfort and self-respect. Then comes man's natural wish that his children and relatives should also enjoy the same comfort and self-respect as he did.

These are the sort of things that can be called the benefits and utilities of wealth and property. As a result, we can safely say that one who procures these benefits and utilities has his wealth increased in a sense, even though it may appear to have decreased, and one who procures these benefits and utilities on a lower scale has his wealth decreased in a sense even though it may appear to have increased.

After having understood this, let us compare the two activities of *ribā* dealings and *sadaqah* and *khayrāt*. It will soon be noticed that the wealth of the *ribā*-consumer, no doubt, appears to be increasing, but that increase is akin to the swelling of the human body. The increase in swelling is after all an increase of the body itself. But no sane person would like to have this sort of increase because he knows that this increase is a certain knock of death. Similarly, no matter how increased is the wealth of the *ribā*-consumer, he remains, for ever, deprived of its fruits, that is, comfort and honour.

Perhaps, at this point, a doubt may bother someone in view of the comfort and status enjoyed by the *ribā*-consumers of today. Here they are with their mansions and villas, living in every luxury money can

buy, attended by servants and maids, having the best to eat, drink and sleep - necessities and absurdities all rolled in one. A little thought here would lead every sane person to differentiate between the articles of comfort and comfort itself. There is a big difference between the two. The articles of comfort are made in factories and sold in markets. These can be procured aginst gold and silver, but that which is known as comfort, peace and bliss, is neither made in any factory nor sold in any market. This is mercy (*rahmah*) which comes directly from Allah Almighty. There are occasions when this cannot be procured no matter how much one holds in his possession. Just think of the comfort of a sound sleep. In order to have it, we can certainly do our best - make a sleep-oriented house which is the best possible, perfect arrangement of air and light, cooling, heating, handsome looking furniture, the bed, the mattress, the pillows, all chosen ideally - but can we be sure that sleep will come just because all this helpful paraphernalia is there? If you have never personally experienced this, there are thousands who cannot sleep due to some disease, and who would say no. Reports from a country, so wealthy and 'civilized' as USA, reveal that seventy per cent people cannot sleep without sleeping pills. There are times when even these do not work. You can buy from stores things to make you sleep but you cannot buy sleep from any store at any price. Similar is the case of other articles of comfort and enjoyment. You can buy these articles against money but it is not necessary that you do experience comfort and enjoyment.

Again, after having understood this, if we look closely at what happens to the consumers of *ribā*, we shall find that they have everything in the world except what we know as real peace and comfort. So intoxicated they are in turning their ten million into fifteen and fifteen into twenty that they have no time to eat, or dress up, or be with their wives and children. There are factories to take care of. There are foreign ships to watch. Anxieties after anxieties chase them day and night. With them they sleep and with them they rise. How terrible of these crazy people who have confused comfort with articles of comfort, and therefore, they are far far away from it.

This is a view of their so-called 'comfort'. Now let us think of their ideas of status, prestige and fair name. The fact is that such people

become hard-hearted and merciless. Taking advantage of the poverty of the poor and the low income of the low-income people becomes their very occupation. Like parasites, they suck their blood to feed their own bodies. Since that is that, it is just not possible that people will ever respect them. Revealing are the accounts of the money-lenders of India and the Jews of Syria. If you see them as they are, you will find that their coffers are filled with gold and silver and precious stones yet they are given no respect in any group of human beings in any corner of the world. Moreover, the inevitable outcome of this cruel practice of theirs is that the poor start grudging and hating them, so much so that in the world of today most wars are an expression of this grudge and hate. It is the confrontation between labour and capital that introduced the ideologies of socialism and communism in the world. The subversive activities of communism are a result of this grudge and hate. The whole world has become a burning cauldron of killings and confrontations because of these. This much accounts for their personal comfort and social prestige. Experience bears out that *ribā*-earnings never make even the life of their children pleasant. Either the earnings go to waste or, because of its curse, they too, remain disgraced and deprived of the real fruits of wealth. People may perhaps be deceived by the example of the *ribā*-consumers of the West, wondering how rich they all are and how do their next and their next generations flourish. To this, I have already answered by presenting a brief outline of their so-called prosperity.

Here it can only be added that they really are like some man-eater who nurses his body by feeding on the blood of other human beings, and then a group of some such people go to live in a community of their own, and you take someone to that locality to show him how healthy and prosperous all of them happen to be. But an intelligent visitor who is interested in the welfare of humanity will never want to limit his visit to this locality alone; on the contrary, he would also want to see those localities where the blood of people has been sucked dry leaving them half dead. One who has seen the totality of such localities can never be happy with the locality of fat man-eaters. He can never say that this act of theirs is the way of human progress; on the contrary, he will have no option but to declare this as destruction of all that is human.

Set against this is the case of those who give *sadaqah* and *khayrāt*. You will never find them running after money so anxiously. They may have lesser articles of comfort but they shall be found having more satisfaction and peace of heart, which is real comfort, as compared to those who have all those supporting articles. Consequently, they shall be looked at with respect and admiration by every human being of the world.

يَمْحَقُ اللّٰهُ الرِّبٰوا وَ يُرْبِی الصَّدَقٰتِ

Allah destroys *riba* and nourishes charities.

In short, the above statement of the verse is very clear in relation to the Hereafter. However, if we wish to understand, with a little effort, it is equally open in respect of this worldly life. This is what is meant by the *ḥadith* in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

إن الربو و إن كثر فإن عاقبته تصير إلى قل

No matter how much *ribā* increases, it will decrease ultimately. (Musnad Ahmad and Ibn Majah)

At the end of the verse (276), it is said: وَاللّٰهُ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ كَفَّارٍ أَثِيْمٍ which means that Allah Almighty does not like any disbeliever, any sinner. Here it has been indicated that those who just do not hold *ribā* as *ḥaram* have fallen into *kufr* (disbelief); and those who do know it to be *ḥaram*, yet get involved with it, are sinners, transgressors or *fāsiq*.

The third verse (277) mentions the great reward of peace and comfort that awaits the truly believing and practising Muslims, who are steadfast in *Salāh* and *Zakāh*. Since, in the verse previous to this, the punishment of Hell and the disgrace the consumers of *ribā* will be facing was mentioned, so in accordance with the general style of the noble Qur'ān, the merit - in *Ākhirah* - of the believing-practising Muslims, those steadfast in *Salāh* and *Zakāh*, was mentioned alongside.

The gist of the fourth verse (278): يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَ ذَرُوْا مَا بَقِيَ مِنَ الرِّبٰوٓا اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ : "O those who believe, fear Allah and give up what still remains of the *ribā* if you are believers" is that, after the revelation that prohibited *ribā*, the giving and taking of the amount of *ribā* that remained due against anyone was also prohibited.

Explaining this, it can be said that *ribā* was rampant all over

Arabia before it was prohibited by revelation. When verses earlier than the present one brought forth its prohibition, Muslims - following their Qur'ān-oriented habit - abandoned all their *ribā*-related dealings. But some people had claims of unpaid *ribā* amounts on some others. In that connection, it so happened that Banū Thaqif and Banū Makhzūm, two Arab tribes, had mutual *ribā* dealings and people from Banū Thaqif had claims of unpaid *ribā* amounts against Banū Makhzūm. When Banū Makhzum became Muslims they, after having made their commitment to Islam, thought it to be impermissible to pay back the amount of *ribā* due. On the other side were Banū Thaqif; their people started pressing their claim. Since these people had become Muslims, but did have a mutual peace agreement, the people of Banū Makhzum told them that they had now entered the fold of Islam and had no intention of spending their Islamic earnings in paying off *ribā*.

This dispute rose in Makkah. That was a time after the conquest of Makkah. Sayyidnā Mu'ādh رضی اللہ عنہ (according to another report, Sayyidna 'Attab ibn 'Asid رضی اللہ عنہ) was the Amir of Makkah, governor of the city, appointed by the Holy Prophet ﷺ . He reported this dispute in writing to him requesting his guidance. It was in this background that this verse of the Qur'ān was revealed, the gist of which is that all previous dealings involving *ribā* should be terminated after entry into the fold of Islam, also no previous *ribā* amount should be realized. The principal was all that could be taken.

When this Islamic law was enforced, the Muslims were already bound by it. The non-Muslim tribes who had accepted the Islamic law as party in peace treaties, they too, were bound by it. But, in spite of this, when the Holy Prophet ﷺ announced this law in his famous Address of the Last Hajj (حجة الوداع), he made it a point to say that this law does not carry behind it the financial interest of any individual, or nation, or Muslims themselves. This has been brought into force to reconstruct, reform and better the whole humanity. Therefore, first of all, we let go large amounts of *ribā* owed by non-Muslims to Muslims. Now they too should have no excuse in leaving off the amount of *ribā* they claimed. As he said in his Address:

ألا أن كل ربا كان فى الجاهلية موضوع عنكم كله لكم رءوس أموالكم لاتظلمون ولا تظلمون و أول ربا موضوع ربا العباس بن عبد المطلب كله

(ابن كثير بحواله ابن أبى حاتم)

which means that the *ribā* content of all *ribā* dealings made in the age

of ignorance stood forsaken. Now everyone will get the principal and no one will get the extra amount of *ribā*. 'Neither shall you be able to do injustice to anyone by charging an increased amount, nor shall anyone be able to do injustice to you by decreasing the amount of your principal.' And the first *ribā* that was surrendered was the *ribā* of Sayyidnā 'Abbās ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib رضی اللہ عنہ , large amounts of which were due on non-Muslims in the form of *ribā*.

The subject verse refers to this happening and sets out the injunction to leave off all standing *ribā* amounts.

As the verse opens addressed to Muslims, they were first given the command of اِتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ that is, 'fear Allah.' Given after that was the injunction covering the real issue. This is the same unique style of the Qur'ān which distinguishes it from all the law books of the world. When a law, which is somewhat difficult to act upon, is given, it has the prefixes and suffixes of accountability of deeds before Allah Almighty, and the punishment and reward of the Hereafter, so that Muslim minds and hearts become prepared to act upon it; the injunction is announced after that. Here too, the forsaking of the amount of matured *ribā* could weigh heavy on human disposition, therefore, said first was اِتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ (fear Allah). After that, came the injunction: ذَرُوْا مَا بَقِيَ مِنَ الرِّبٰوا that is, 'leave off *ribā* that remains.' Towards the end of the verse it was said: اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ that is, 'if you are believers.' Here it was indicated that *'Īmān* (faith, belief) requires that Divine injunctions should be followed faithfully. Acting otherwise negates *'Īmān*. Since this injunction was somewhat heavy on temperaments, اِتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ (Fear Allah) was added before it, and اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ (If you are believers) after it.

After that, in the fifth verse (279), severe warning has been given to those who act contrary to this injunction. They are told if they do not abandon *ribā*, they must face a declaration of war from Allah Almighty and His Messenger. So severe is this warning that any other warning of such severity does not appear anywhere in the Qur'ān in relation to any other sin, no matter how great, except *kufr* (disbelief), of course. The verse then closes with the words: وَاِنْ تُبْتُمْ فَلَكُمْ رُءُوْسُ اَمْوَالِكُمْ لَا تَظْلِمُوْنَ وَلَا تُظْلَمُوْنَ that is, 'if you repent and resolve to leave off the remaining amount of *ribā* in future, you will get your principal.

Neither will you be able to do injustice to anyone by extracting more than your principal, nor will anyone be able to do injustice to you by decreasing or delaying the return of your principal.' Here the receipt of the principal has been conditioned by saying that you repent, and resolve that you will abandon *ribā* in future, and only then, you shall get your principal.

Evidently this indicates if repentance (*Taubah*) was not done by resolving to give up *ribā*, receiving the principal will no more be in order. Here are the related details. Take the case of a person who just does not believe that *ribā* could be *ḥaram* and therefore, he does not repent and resolve that he will have nothing to do with *ribā* anymore - then this person goes out of the fold of Islam and becomes an apostate (مرتد : *murtadd*). The injunction governing an apostate is that his belongings go out of his possession. As a consequence, that which he has earned during the period he was a Muslim, goes to his Muslim inheritors, and that which he earns after involvement with *kufr* is deposited in the *Baytul-Mal* (بيت المال : the Exchequer of an Islamic State). Therefore, should his non-repentance be because he considers *ribā* to be *ḥalal*, he will not be entitled to receive even his principal. And if he does not go to the limit of considering *ribā* as *ḥalal* but, nevertheless, in actual practice, does not stop getting involved with it and, on top of that, gangs up with his kind and stands in confrontation with the Islamic government, he then is a rebel. His belongings too, are confiscated and placed as trust in the *Baytul-Mal*, so that it could be given back to him when he repents. Perhaps, it is to point out to such details that it was said in the form of a condition: فَإِنْ تُبْتُمْ فَلَكُمْ رُءُوسُ أَمْوَالِكُمْ which implies that, if you do not repent, even your principal will be held back.

After that there is the sixth verse (280) which, in comparison to the anti-human claim of *ribā*, has stressed upon pure moral behavior of showing lenience to the poor and the have-nots. It is said that, if your borrower is too poor to pay back your loan, the provision of *Sharī'ah* is that he be given time until he has the means, and should you forgive him your loan, it is much better for you.

The general habit of *ribā*-consumers is that they, once they know that their borrower is poor and cannot pay the loan back at the

appointed time, add up the *ribā* amount in the principal unleashing a vicious series of *ribā* over *ribā*, even increasing the rate of *ribā* in that process.

Here Allah Almighty, the wisest of all law-givers, gave the law that a genuinely poor borrower who is unable to pay back his loan should not be harassed. Instead, he should be given respite until such time that he becomes capable of doing so. Along with it was given the inducement to forgive the loan which is more beneficial for the lender.

The word, *sadaqah* has been used here by the Qur'ān to mean the act of forgiving. The hint given is that this forgiveness will become an act of charity in your case and will bring forth great merit. As for the statement - 'if you forgive, that is better for you' - it can be said that this action was obviously a matter of total loss for them because they were not only being asked to surrender *ribā* but also were going to lose their own principal! Still, the Qur'ān called it 'better' (*khāyr*). There are two reasons for this:

1. This betterment will be witnessed soon after the transitory life of this world when, in lieu of this insignificant earning, one will get the eternal blessings of Paradise.

2. Perhaps there may be yet another hint towards the possibility that one will himself see how good comes out of his deeds. There will be *barakah* (increase, bliss) in what one has. The essence of *barakah* is that a little serves to take care of a lot more needs, even without a quantitative increase in what one has. As such, it is commonly witnessed that there is unlimited *barakah* in the wealth of those who spend in *sadaqah* and *khayrāt*. The little they have serves to take care of so many needs which will never be liquidated with large amounts of money spent by those whose money is *ḥaram* (unlawful).

Then there is the wealth not blessed with *barakah*. One never realizes the purpose for which it is spent. Or, it so happens that such rich people have to spend huge amounts of money on undesirable heads such as medicines, treatment and consultancy fees, which is something the poor do not face. First of all, Allah Almighty blesses them with health which frees them from spending on their treatment and, in case they do fall ill, ordinary treatment gives them their health back. Seen from this angle, forgiving the poor person the loan due to

him, which is apparently a matter of loss, becomes under this Qur'ānic teachings, a beneficial act.

This teaching of giving respite to a poor borrower has also been commended in authentic *aḥādīth* some of which are reproduced below.

According to a *ḥadīth* in the Mu'jim of al-Tabarānī, a person who wishes to be under the shadow of divine mercy when there will be no other shadow for anyone to hide under, he should treat the poor borrower with lenience and deferment, or forgive him the debt, if it comes to that.

Another *ḥadīth* similar to this appears in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim as well. It is said in a *ḥadīth* from the Musnad of Aḥmad that the person who grants respite to a penniless borrower will get a daily *thawāb* of *sadaqah* in proportion to the amount due against that borrower. And this calculation covers the act of giving respite well before the deadline for repayment arrives; and when the deadline for repayment does arrive and the borrower does not have the means to pay, the respite given at that time will bring forth for the giver of respite a daily *thawāb* of giving twice that amount in *sadaqah*.

Another *ḥadīth* says that a person who wishes that his prayer be answered, or his misfortune be removed, he should give respite to the penniless in debt.

In the last verse (281), there appear again the subjects of the fear of the Last Day, its accounting, its rewards and punishment, at which end these verses containing the injunctions of *ribā*. It was said in this last verse:

وَاتَّقُوا يَوْمًا تُرْجَعُونَ فِيهِ إِلَى اللَّهِ ثُمَّ تُوَفَّى كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ O

> That is, fear a day on which all of you will be assembled before Allah when everyone will be fully and equitably recompensed for his deeds and they will not be wronged.

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه says that this verse is the last in the order of its revelation. No other verse was revealed after that. Thirty-one days later, the Holy Prophet ﷺ left this mortal world. There are other reports which say that this happened after only nine days.

Upto this point, the explanations have been restricted to the verses

of Sūrah al-Baqarah which concern the injunctions of *ribā*. Dealing with the unlawfulness and prohibition of *ribā*, there are in the noble Qur'ān seven verses of Sūrah al-Baqarah cited above, one verse in Sūrah Al-'Imrān and two verses in Sūrah al-Nisā'. There is yet another verse in Sūrah al-Rūm the explanations of which differ. Some have taken it too in the sense of usury or interest, while others hold that it has some other connotation. Thus there are ten verses of the Holy Qur'ān which carry the injunctions of *ribā* or interest.

Before we get to know the whole truth about *ribā*, it seems appropriate that the translation and explanation of the rest of the verses which appear in the Sūrahs Al-'Imrān, al-Nisā' and al-Rūm, should be given here so that it becomes easy for us to understand the true nature of *ribā* in the combined perspective of all these verses.

Verse 130, of Sūrah Āl-'Imrān (3) reads as follows:

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ لَا تَأْكُلُوا۟ ٱلرِّبَوٰٓا۟ أَضْعَٰفًا مُّضَٰعَفَةً ۖ وَٱتَّقُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ○

O those who believe, do not eat *Ribā* (usury or interest) multiplied many times. And fear Allah, so that you may be successful.

There is a special event behind the revelation of this verse. In pre-Islam Arabia, the general pattern of *ribā* transactions was that loans were given on *ribā* for a set period of time; when that period expired and the borrower was unable to pay it back, he was given an extension of time on the condition that the amount of *ribā* was to be increased. Similarly, if payment was not made even on the expiry of the second deadline, the amount of *ribā* was further increased. This fact is mentioned in general books of *Tafsīr*, specially in *Lubāb al-Nuqūl*, on the authority of *Mujāhid*.

The verse was revealed to eradicate this inhuman custom of pre-Islam Arabia. Therefore, by saying أَضْعَٰفًا مُّضَٰعَفَةً (*aḍ'āfam'Muḍā'afatan*: multiplied many times) in the verse, their prevailing practice was condemned and they were warned on their selfishness and anti-community conduct, and naturally so, it was declared prohibited. This does not mean that *ribā* will not be prohibited if it happens not to be multiplied many times, because the absolute prohibition of *ribā* has

been very clearly stated in Sūrah al-Baqarah and Sūrah al-Nisā', irrespective of its being doubled or multiplied many times. This is like it has been said at several places in the Holy Qur'ān: لَا تَشْتَرُوْا بِاٰيٰتِىْ ثَمَنًا قَلِيْلًا (Do not take a paltry price in exchange of My verses). The expression 'paltry price' was used here to indicate that even if the kingdom of the whole world was taken in exchange for the Divinely revealed verses, the price will still be 'paltry.' It does not mean that taking a paltry price against the verses of the Qur'ān is *ḥarām*, but taking a higher price would be permissible. Similarly, the expression أَضْعَافًا مُّضٰعَفَةً (multiplied many times), has been introduced only to focus attention on their shameful method and it is not a necessary condition for the prohibition.

Moreover, if we think about the prevalent methods of *ribā*, we will reach the conclusion that once the habit of taking *ribā* is settled, the *ribā* does not remain simple *ribā* anymore; it necessarily becomes doubled and multiplied because the amount accrued from *ribā* becomes a part of the total amount owned by the creditor and, when he further circulates this additional amount of *ribā* on interest or usury, the *ribā* becomes multiplied. Should this chain action go on building up, nothing can stop it from becoming أَضْعَافًا مُّضٰعَفَةً (multiplied many times). This way every *ribā* will end up increasing several times.

Having dealt with verse 130 of Sūrah Āl-'Imrān, let us now look at the two verses, 160 and 161 of Sūrah al-Nisā' which concern *ribā*. These are as follows:

فَبِظُلْمٍ مِّنَ الَّذِيْنَ هَادُوْا حَرَّمْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ طَيِّبٰتٍ أُحِلَّتْ لَهُمْ وَبِصَدِّهِمْ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ كَثِيْرًا ۙ وَّأَخْذِهِمُ الرِّبٰوا وَقَدْ نُهُوْا عَنْهُ وَأَكْلِهِمْ أَمْوَالَ النَّاسِ بِالْبَاطِلِ ۚ وَأَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ مِنْهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيْمًا ۝

So, for the transgression of those who became Jews, We prohibited for them the good things earlier made lawful for them and for their preventing (people) frequently from the way of Allah, and for their taking *ribā* (usury or interest) while they were forbidden from it, and for their eating up the properties of the people by false means. And We have prepared, for the disbelievers among them, a painful punishment.

These two verses tell us that *ribā* was equally prohibited under the law of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام . When the Jews opposed it, they were

appropriately punished in their worldly life when they started devouring the unlawful just out of greed for the mortal gains of the world, consequently then, Allah Almighty declared some lawful things prohibited for them.

Verse 39 of Section 4 in Sūrah al-Rūm is as follows:

وَمَا اٰتَيْتُمْ مِّنْ رِّبًا لِّيَرْبُوَا۟ فِيْٓ اَمْوَالِ النَّاسِ فَلَا يَرْبُوْا عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ وَمَا اٰتَيْتُمْ مِّنْ زَكٰوةٍ تُرِيْدُوْنَ وَجْهَ اللّٰهِ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُضْعِفُوْنَ ۝

And what you give in usury, that it may increase upon the people's wealth, increases not with God; but what you give in alms, desiring God's Face, - they shall receive recompense manifold. (30:39)

Some commentators have taken this verse, like others mentioned earlier, to be dealing with interest or usury in view of the use of the word *ribā* meaning 'increase' in the text. According to them, the verse means that money does seem to increase apparently by taking interest, but in fact, it does not. It is like the case of a person whose body gets swollen. Obviously this 'increases' his body but no sane person would be happy with this sort of 'increase'. On the contrary, he would regard it as death in the offing. As compared to this, the giving of *zakāh* and *sadaqah* does seem to decrease the wealth apparently, but that is no decrease in fact, rather on the contrary, it is the source of thousands of increases. It is like someone who takes purgative as system-cleanser or lets blood as a therapeutic measure; he looks weak on the outside and seems to miss something in his body but those who know regard this 'decrease' to be a fore-runner of his 'increase' in health and strength.

According to some scholars of *tafsīr*, this verse does not refer to the prohibition of usury or interest at all, rather, the word *'ribā'* used in that verse refers to a gift presented to someone, not in good faith, but with the intention that it would bring back some better gift in return from the receiver. The gifts of this type are in vogue in some communities at the time of marital ceremonies Since this type of giving is to seek selfish ends and not to seek the pleasure of Allah Almighty, therefore, it was said in the verse that by doing so your wealth may seem to increase, but actually it does not increase with

Allah, while that which is given as *zakah* and *sadaqat* to seek the pleasure of Allah Almighty goes on to double and redouble with Allah.

According to this explanation, the sense of the verse will match with what was said addressing the Holy Prophet ﷺ in another verse (74:6): وَلَا تَمْنُنْ تَسْتَكْثِرُ that is, do not do favour to anyone with the intention that it may bring to you some added benefit in return.

This second explanation appears to be obviously weightier in connection with this verse of Surah al-Rum. Firstly, because Surah al-Rum is Makki. Although, it is not necessary that every verse in a Makki Surah is revealed in Makkah, yet there exists strong probability that it is so unless proved otherwise. And in case the verse is Makki, it cannot be interpreted to carry the sense of the prohibition of *riba* because the prohibition of *riba* came by revelation in Madinah. In addition to this, the subject dealt with earlier than this verse also indicates a tilt towards this explanation. There it was said: فَاٰتِ ذَا الْقُرْبٰى حَقَّهٗ وَالْمِسْكِيْنَ وَابْنَ السَّبِيْلِ ذٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ لِّلَّذِيْنَ يُرِيْدُوْنَ وَجْهَ اللّٰهِ which means: 'Give to the relative his due, and to the poor and the wayfarer. This is better for those who seek the pleasure of Allah.'

In this verse, it has been stated that spending on relatives, the poor and the wayfarers can become an act of *thawāb* only on the condition that the intention behind it should be that of seeking the pleasure of Allah Almighty. Then, following that, in the verse under discussion, it was further explained that financial help given to someone with the hope that it will bring back greater return from the receiver of the help is certainly no spending in the way of Allah where the purpose is hardly to seek His pleasure. As a result, this will bring no *thawāb*.

Anyhow, there are, beside this particular verse, several other verses cited earlier which do deal with the prohibition of *ribā*. Out of these, there is the verse from Surah Al-'Imran which prohibits doubled and multiplied *ribā*; the rest of the verses state the prohibition of *ribā* as such. These details, at the least, clear this much that *ribā* is *haram* (unlawful) anyway, be it doubled and multiplied, simple or compound. It may be kept in mind that the degree of its being *ḥaram* is so severe that a declaration of war has been made on behalf of Allah and His Messenger against those who challenge the injunction.

Some additional details about *Ribā*

Since *ribā* has become the supporting pillar of the prevailing trading system today, it is commonly noticed that people are usually disposed to balk at the idea of its unlawfulness when confronted with its prohibition under the verses of the Book of Allah and the Traditions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . Rather than understand and explain its real nature, they tend to diffuse the issue with excuses. I wish to state humbly that the issue has to be first analysed and discussed sanely by taking up each aspect in its proper setting, without which we are sure to end up confusing issues. There are three parts of this discussion:

1. What is the real nature of *ribā* in the Qur'ān and *Sunnah*, and what forms it does it cover?
2. What is the wisdom behind the prohibition of this *ribā*?
3. Granted that *ribā*, no matter how evil it may be, has become a pillar of the economic system all over the contemporary world. Now if we were to abandon it, under injunctions of the Qur'ān, how will the system of banking and trade run?

To begin with, the word, ربا (*Ribā*) is a well-known word in the Arabic language. This word was known, not only since the blessed appearance of the noble Prophet ﷺ , but also during the time when Arabia was pagan and the Qur'ān was not yet revealed. Moreover, the verses of Sūrah al-Nisā' also tell us that the word *ribā* and its related dealings were equally well-known during the times of the Torah, where too, it was declared *ḥaram* (unlawful).

It is obvious that *ribā* was known since ages in Arabia and its environs. Continuous transactions were being made as an established custom. When the Qur'ān was revealed, it not only prohibited *ribā* but also gave the information that *riba* was made unlawful for the community of Mūsā عليه السلام as well. How then, can the nature of this word become something so ambiguous that it starts presenting difficulties in understanding and explaining its meaning and applications?

This is the reason why, in the year of Hijrah 8, when the verses of Sūrah al-Baqarah relating to the unlawfulness of *ribā* were revealed, there appears no report from the noble Companions anywhere which

may indicate that they had to face any doubt in understanding the real nature of *ribā*, and that they had to go as far as to verify it with the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself, something they did in other matters. On the contrary, just as they immediately acted upon the injunction prohibiting liquor the moment it was revealed, very similarly, they abandoned all *ribā* transactions the moment the injunction prohibiting *ribā* was revealed. The Muslims just cancelled all *ribā* amounts that non-Muslims owed to them on all their deals made before the prohibition. Then, the case of Muslims who did not wish to give *ribā* amounts they owed was brought to the court of the *Amīr* of Makkah. He inquired the Holy Prophet ﷺ . The deciding injunction was revealed by Allah Almighty through the verses of Sūrah al-Baqarah which declared that it was also not permissible now to give or take *ribā* amounts that belonged to the previous times.

Here the non-Muslims might have found the ground to question as to why should they suffer loss of money because of an injunction of Islamic law? Therefore, in order to offset that possibility, the Holy Prophet ﷺ made it clear in his Address of the Last Hajj that this injunction of Islamic law affects, not only the non-Muslims, but also the Muslims in an equal degree. And the very first amount of *ribā* that was written off was the enormous amount which belonged to Sayyidnā 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ , the respected uncle of the Holy Prophet ﷺ .

In short, when *ribā* was prohibited, its meaning was no secret. It was a known practice. It was the same *ribā* as the Arabs used to give and take it and called it as such. The Qur'ān made it *ḥaram*, and the Holy Prophet ﷺ enforced the ruling, not in the form of some moral teaching, but as the law of the land. However, he did include certain forms of transactions under *ribā* which were not generally held to be *ribā*. It was the determining of these very forms that posed difficulties for Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ , and here it was that the leading jurists of Islam differed; otherwise, the real *ribā*, which the Arabs knew by that very name, was never doubted or questioned by anybody as there was no reason to do so.

Now let us find out what *ribā* the Arabs were used to. The renowned commentator, Ibn Jarīr has reported from Sayyidnā Mujāhid that the *ribā* practised in pagan Arabia which was prohibited

by the Qur'an consisted of giving loan for a fixed period and then taking a fixed increase over and above the principal. If the loan was not paid back on the fixed date, an extension of time was granted on condition that the *riba* was to be further increased. The same information has been reported from Sayyidna Qatadah رضى الله عنه and from other leading commentators. (Tafsir Ibn Jarir, page 62, volume 3)

Abu Hayyan al-Gharnati, the famous commentator from Andulusia (Spain) has, in his commentary - al-Bahr al-Muhit, reported the same form of *riba* prevailing in pagan Arabia, that is, they advanced a loan, took their 'profit' on it, and if the time for repayment was to be extended beyond the first due date, they increased the amount of interest in that proportion. This was called *riba*. These were the people of the same pagan Arabia who said that taking 'profit' when they give their money on loan should also be permissible similar to buying and selling where taking 'profit' is permissible. The Holy Qur'an declared this to be *haram* and made it clear that the injunctions governing buying and selling were different.

The same subject has been authentically narrated in all reliable books of *Tafsir*, such as, Tafsir Ibn Kathir, al-Tafsir al-Kabir and Ruh al-Ma'ani etc.

Ibn al-'Arabi has said in Ahkam al-Qur'an:

الربو فى اللغة الرباوة والمرادبه فى الاية كل زيادة لايقابلها عوض (ج ٢ ص ١٠١)

> Lexically, *riba* means increase, and in the verse, it means the increase against which there is nothing in exchange but a loan and its time.

Imam al-Razi has said in his *Tafsir* that *riba* takes two forms. It could be *riba* in trading transactions, and in loans. This second form was what commonly prevailed in *Jahiliyyah* or pagan Arabia. The known practice was that they would give their money on loan to someone for a fixed period of time and receive 'profit' against it every month. If the borrower failed to pay back at the appointed time, the time-limit was extended on condition that the amount of *riba* was to be further increased. This was the *riba* of the Age of Ignorance (*Jahiliyyah*) which was declared *haram* (unlawful) by the Holy Qur'an.

In Ahkam al-Qur'an, Imam al-Jassas defines *riba* as follows:

هوالقرض المشروط فيه الأجل وزيادة مال على المستقرض

The loan given for a certain time on condition that the borrower will pay an increased amount above the principal.

In *ḥadīth*, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has defined *ribā* by saying:

كل قرض جرنفعا فهوربا

The loan that draws profit is *ribā*.

This *ḥadīth* appears in al-Jamī' al-Saghīr and al-Azizī calls it *ḥasan*.

To sum up, the giving of loan and then taking 'profit' on it is *riba*, which was widely known and practised during the *Jāhiliyyah* in Arabia, which was clearly declared *haram* by the subject verse of the Holy Qur'ān, and which was abandoned by the noble Companions the moment these verses were revealed, and the Holy Prophet ﷺ enforced its prohibition through his judgments in the legal suits. As there was no ambiguity in its connotation, nobody faced any doubt or difficulty in understanding the term.

However, the Holy Prophet ﷺ did include some forms of buying and selling within the range of *ribā* which the Arabs did not take as *ribā*. For instance, in the buying and selling of six commodities on barter basis, he ruled that they be exchanged like for like, equal for equal, and hand-to-hand. Any deviation in measure, more or less, and any credit-oriented transaction with regard to these commodities will also fall within the purview of *ribā*. These six commodities are gold, silver, wheat, barley, dates and grapes.

Under the same principle, the Holy Prophet ﷺ , after the revelation of the verses of *ribā*, ruled that some forms of transactions in vogue known as *al-muzābanah*[57] and *al-muhāqalah*[58] come under *ribā*, and therefore, declared them to be *haram*. (Ibn Kathīr with reference to Mustadrak Ḥakim, page 327, Volume 1).

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57. *Al-muzābanah* (المزابنة) is the sale of fruit upon its tree by taking fruit already plucked on the basis of conjecture.

58. *Al-muhāqalah* (المحاقلة) is the sale of grains, such as wheat, chick-peas etc, still in the ears of their standing crop by taking dried and husked wheat or chick-peas on the basis of conjecture. Since conjecture has the possibility of things turning out less or more, it was prohibited.

Here the question worth consideration was: Are these six commodities particular as such, or there are other commodities also which fall under the same injunction? If there are some, what shall be the the basis for including other commodities under the same rule? What forms shall be taken to have come under *riba*? This was the difficulty faced by Sayyidna 'Umar رضى الله عنه because of which he said:

إن آية الربوا من آخرما نزل من القرآن وإن النبى صلى الله عليه وسلم قبض قبل أن يبينه لنا فدعوا الربوا والريبة

The verse of *riba* is among the last verses of the Qur'an. The Holy Prophet ﷺ was taken away before he could make its details clear for us. So give up not only *riba* but also all the doubtful transactions. (Ahkam al-Qur'an, Jassas, page 551 and Tafsir Ibn Kathir, with reference to Ibn Majah, page 328, volume 1).

Here Sayyidna 'Umar, رضى الله عنه is talking about the particular forms of buying and selling transactions, and their details, which were not taken as *riba* in *Jahiliyyah*. Bringing these under the category of *riba*, the Holy Prophet ﷺ made them *haram*. As regards the main *riba*, which was commonly known in Arabia and which was abandoned by the noble Companions and was enforced by the Holy Prophet ﷺ announcing its prohibition publicly during his Address of the Last Hajj, it was not possible at all that Sayyidna 'Umar رضى الله عنه would have faced any difficulty or doubt in understanding it. Moreover, when Sayyidna 'Umar رضى الله تعالى عنه did face doubt in certain forms of *riba*, he resolved the problem by proposing that the forms where there is the least doubt of *riba* should also be abandoned.

But it is surprising that some of those who are slavishly impressed by the veneer of glamour, wealth and the interest-based trading system of today, have deduced from this saying of Sayyidna 'Umar that the sense of *riba* had thus been left abstract and that there is room for personal opinion here, the error of which has already been proved by a lot of material before us. In Ahkam al-Qur'an, Ibn al-'Arabi has strongly refuted those who had used the words of Sayyidna 'Umar to classify the verses of *riba* as abstract.He says:

ان من زعم ان هذه الاية مجملة فلم يفهم مقاطع الشريعة فان الله تعالى ارسل رسوله الى قوم هو منهم بلغتهم وانزل عليه كتابه تيسيرا منه بلسانه

ولسانهم والربا فى اللغة الرباوة والمرادبه فى الاية كل زيادة لايقابلها عوض

> He who claimed that this verse is abstract did not understand the clear and confident affirmation of the Sharī'ah because Allah Almighty sent His messenger to a people of whom he was one, sent him (speaking) in their language, revealed His Book to him so that they comprehend it easily in their language, and in their language the word *ribā* means 'increase'; and in the verse, it means the increase that has no financial consideration against it, (but simply time).

Imām al-Rāzī has said in his commentary that *ribā* is of two kinds - the *ribā* on loans and the *ribā* of taking more on barter. The first kind was well-known in *Jāhiliyyah* and people during those days used to transact it freely. The second kind is what comes through the *ḥadīth* which rules that increase or decrease in the barter of certain commodities is also included under *ribā*.

It appears in Ahkām al-Qur'ān of al-Jassās that *ribā* is of two kinds - the *ribā* in buying and selling and the *ribā* without buying and selling. The *ribā* of *Jāhiliyyah* belonged to this very second kind. By definition it means the loan on which 'profit' is taken on the basis of time duration. Ibn Rushd has, in Bidayah al-Mujtāhid, taken the same view, and has further proved the unlawfulness of the *ribā* of taking 'profit' on loans, on the authority of the Qur'ān, the *Sunnah* and the consensus of the Muslim community.

In Sharh Ma'ānī al-Athar, Imām al-Tahawī has taken up this subject in great detail. He has said that the *ribā* mentioned in the Qur'ān is, openly and clearly, the *riba* that was given and taken on loans, and it was known as *ribā* in *Jāhiliyyah*. After that, it was through the statement of the Holy Prophet ﷺ , and his *Sunnah*, that the other kind of *ribā* became known, and which was identified with increasing, decreasing or non-cash dealing in particular types of buying and selling activity. That this *ribā* is also *haram* stands proved by repeated *aḥādīth* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . However, in the absence of fully clear details governing this kind of *ribā* some Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ faced difficulty and jurists differed. (op cit., page 232, vol. 2)

Shāh Waliullāh has said in *Hujjatullāh al-balighah* that these are two separate things. One is the *ribā* in real terms, and the other is that which is included in the prohibition of *ribā*. The *ribā* in real terms means something additional claimed over the principal in a transaction of loan. But the *ḥadīth* has included in the prohibition a transaction of bartering certain commodities whereby an additional measure is claimed in exchange of the same commodity. When it appears in the *ḥadīth* of Sahih al-Bukhari that لاربا إلا فى النسيئة : "There is no *riba* except in *nasi'ah* {loan}", it simply means that the real and primary *ribā*, the one that is commonly understood and termed as *ribā*, is nothing but taking 'profit' on loans. Excepting this, all other kinds have been annexed with it by extending prohibition to all of them.

Summing up the discussion

1. *Ribā* was already a known transaction before the revelation of the Qur'an. The taking of increase on loans given for a certain time was called *ribā*.

2. The noble Companions, all of them, abandoned this *ribā* the moment its unlawfulness was revealed in the Qur'ān. None of them had any difficulty or doubt in comprehending or explaining its meaning.

3. In the barter transactions of six commodities it was declared by the Holy Prophet ﷺ that whenever any one of these is bartered with a similar commodity, both of them must be equal in weight or measure. Any increase or decrease in such transactions has been declared as included in the prohibition of *ribā*. This much was expressly told by the Holy Prophet ﷺ . But the question was whether this special type of prohibition is restricted to these six commodities alone or it extends to some other commodities also, and if it extends to some other commodities, on what basis one can identify those commodities. This question needed a deeper insight into the juristic issues involved, and the Muslim jurists came out with different suggestions to answer this question. It was this very question that agitated the mind of Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه . Since the Holy Prophet ﷺ had not stated these rules himself and because doubt lurked therein, Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه regretfully wished how good it would have been if the Messenger of Allah ﷺ had set the relevant rules himself which would have given

them peace of mind in doubtful situations. Then he said that not only *ribā*, but also the very doubt of *ribā*, wherever it may be, should be avoided.

4. It is certain that the real and primary *ribā*, which the Muslim jurists have called "*ribā al-Qur'ān*" (the *ribā* of Qur'ān) or "*ribā al-Qard*" (the *riba* of loan), is exactly what was known and practised in Arabia, that is, claiming 'profit' on loan against the time allowed for repayment. Other kinds of *ribā* identified in *hadīth* are all annexed to this very *ribā* and come under the injunction governing it. As regards the difference of opinion that rose in the community was exclusively related to this second type of *ribā* deals. The first kind of *ribā* is called '*ribā al-Qard*' or "the *ribā* of Qur'ān"; that it is categorically *ḥaram* (forbidden) has never been disputed in the Muslim community.

In short, the *ribā* of today which is supposed to be the pivot of human economy and features in discussions on the problem of interest, is nothing but this *ribā*, the unlawfulness of which stands proved on the authority of the seven verses of the Qur'ān, of more than forty *aḥādīth* and of the consensus of the Muslim community.

The second kind of *ribā* which occurs in buying and selling is neither common in practice, nor requires any discussion here.

Upto this point, effort was made to clarify the meaning of *ribā* as contemplated in the Qur'ān and *Sunnah*, which is the first step towards understanding the problem of interest.

The Wisdom behind the Prohibition of *Ribā*

Now comes the second part of the discussion which relates to the wisdom behind the prohibition of *ribā* and to the spiritual and economic harms of *ribā* transactions because of which Islam has declared it to be such a major sin.

First of all, we should realize that there is nothing in the entire creation of the world which has no goodness or utility at all. Even in serpents, scorpions, wolves, lions, and in arsenic, that fatal poison, there are thousands of utilities for human beings. Is there anything in this vastness of nature which could really be called bad? Take theft, robbery, villainy, bribery - not one of these remains without this or that benefit. But, it is commonly recognized in every religion and

community, in every school of thought, that things which have more benefits and less harms are called beneficial and useful. Conversely, things that cause more harm and less benefit are taken to be harmful and useless. Even the noble Qur'ān, while declaring liquor and gambling to be *ḥaram*, proclaimed that they do hold some benefits for people, but the curse of sins they generate is far greater than the benefits they yield. Therefore, these cannot be called good or useful; on the contrary, taking these to be acutely harmful and destructive, it is necessary that they be avoided.

The case of *ribā* is not different. Here the consumer of *ribā* does have some temporal benefit apparently coming to him, but its curse in this world and in the Hereafter is much too severe as compared to this benefit.

An intelligent person who compares things in terms of their profit and loss, harm and benefit can hardly include things of casual benefit with an everlasting loss in the list of useful things. Similarly, no sane and just person will say that personal and individual gain, which causes loss to the whole community or group, is useful. In theft, and in robbery, the gain of the gangster and the take of the thief is all too obvious, but it is certainly harmful for the entire community since it ruins its peace and sense of security. That is why no human being calls theft and robbery good.

After these introductory remarks, let us look at the problem of *ribā*. A little deliberation will show that its spiritual and moral loss as compared to the casual or transitory profit earned by the *ribā*-consumer is so severe that it virtually takes away the great quality of being 'human' from him. Again, it should be borne in mind that the transitory gain that comes to him is restricted to his person only. As compared to this, the entire community, victimized by economic crisis, suffers great loss. But, strange are the affairs of the world. When something becomes the craze of the time, its drawbacks go out of sight. One looks for nothing but gains - no matter how small, mean and casual be those gains. Nobody cares to look at the harm lying under them - no matter how fatal and universal it may be.

Custom and practice act like chloroform on human temperaments. They make them insensitive. There are very few individuals who

would investigate into prevailing customs and practices and then try to understand how beneficial or harmful they are. Bad coming to worse, even if such harms are identified and people are openly warned of the dangers, the conformity to prevailing custom and practice is such that the right course is just not taken.

Ribā has become an epidemic in modern times holding the entire world squeezed in its clutches. In fact, it has so reversed the very taste of human nature that the bitter has started tasting sweet. That which is the cause of economic ruin for the entire humanity is being dished out as the solution of economic ills. The situation is such that a thinker who raises his voice in protest is brushed aside as crazy.

All this is what it is. But a physician of humanity must remain the physician he is. Should he, after having closely observed that epidemic has spread in an area and treatment has become ineffective, start thinking of telling people that there is just no disease around and everything is fine, he then becomes a killer of humanity robbing it of its potential. It is the duty of a really expert physician of human affairs, even at a time such as this, that he should continue telling people about the disease and its harmful effects and keep suggesting ways it could be cured.

The prophets عليهم السلام come to reform human society. Whether or not they will be heard is something they never worry about. If they had waited for people to hear and obey them, *kufr* and *shirk* would have certainly filled the whole world. Incidentally, who believed in the *kalimāh* لا إله إلا الله : "There is no God but Allah" when the Last of the Prophets ﷺ was ordained by Allah for its preaching and teaching?

Although *ribā* is taken to be the backbone of contemporary economy, but the truth of the matter is, what some Western thinkers have themselves admitted, that it is no backbone of economics, rather on the contrary, it is a worm grown in and feeding on it.

But it is regrettable that even theoreticians and scientists of today are unable to free themselves from the stranglehold of custom and practice and do some serious thinking in this direction. How is it that even the experience of hundreds of years fails to attract their attention towards the ultimate outcome of *ribā* or interest, which is nothing

except that peoples and communities around the world suffer from want and hunger, become victims of many an economic crisis and the poor grow poorer. As compared to their fate, some capitalists take advantage of the wealth of the whole community, become its leeches sucking blood from the body of the community and helping themselves to grow and prosper. The gall of these intellectuals is indeed surprising. When this reality is presented before them, they would like to refute us by taking us to the market places of U.S.A. and E.E.C. so that we could observe the blessings of interest. They like us to be impressed by the prosperity they have acquired through it. In fact, this is like taking us to show the blessings of acts committed by some nation of man-eaters and telling us how chubby and flushed with 'health' they are in their residences and work-places. Then to top that assertion, effort is made to prove on this basis, that this act of theirs is the best of acts.

However, in answer to that, any sane and just person would simply suggest that the 'blessings' of the act of man-eaters cannot be observed in the habitat of the man-eaters. One has to go to other habitats where lie dead bodies in thousands and thousands on whose blood and flesh these beasts have grown. Islam and the Shari'ah of Islam can never accept such an act as correct and useful, as a result of which, the humanity in general and the Muslim community in particular becomes a target of destruction while some individuals, or their groups, go on prospering.

Economic Drawbacks of *Ribā* or Interest

If there was no other defect in *ribā* except that it results in the gain of some individuals and the loss of the whole humanity, that one and very defect would have been enough to justify its prohibition and hate-worthiness, although, it does have many other economic drawbacks and spiritual disasters.

First of all, let us understand how *ribā* is the gain of particular individuals and the loss of a community in general. The hackneyed method of *ribā* practised by usurers was so crude that even a person of ordinary commonsense could see how it benefitted a particular person and harmed the community in general. But 'the new enlightenment' of today, or shall we call it 'the new darkness', by producing 'purified'

liquor through mechanical processing and aging, by inventing new and fancy forms for theft and robbery, and by innovating novel covers for evil and immodesty, has made everybody so 'civilized' that watchers of the surface are unable to see the evil hidden behind. Very similar to this, in order to continue the practice of *ribā* or interest, individual money-lending counters have been replaced by joint stock companies called banks. Now, to throw dust in everybody's eyes, consumers are 'educated' that this modern method of *ribā* is good for the whole community because common people do not know how to run a business with their money, or cannot do so due to shortage of capital, so money they all have goes as deposit in banks and everyone of them manages to get, no matter how little, some profit in the name of interest. In addition to that, big businessmen are given the opportunity to borrow money on interest from banks, invest in big business and reap the benefits. Thus interest has been made to appear as some sort of 'blessing' which is reaching all individuals of the community!

However, a little honesty will show that this is a grand deception which, by transforming dirty distilleries into posh hotels and hooker-dens into cinemas and night clubs, has been released to present poison as antidote, and the harmful as beneficial. Intelligent people have no problem in seeing through the deceptive covering placed on anti-moral crimes. They know it has inevitably increased crimes, spreading its poison more acutely than ever before. Similar is the case of *ribā*, the new form of which, by making the masses have a sip of an insignificant percentage of interest, has made them accomplices in their crime; while at the same time, they opened for themselves limitless opportunities to keep committing this crime.

Who does not know that this insignificant percentage of interest doled out by 'saving' banks and post offices to clients cannot, by any means, take care of their living expenses. They are, therefore, forced to go for manual labour or seek a job. Business is something they hardly think of themselves, and if somebody does play with the idea for a while, the problem is that the capital of the entire community sits in the banks and the shape of things in business is such that a person with a small capital can hardly make an entry there unless he wishes to commit suicide. The reason is that banks can advance a major loan

only to one who has sound credit and large business. One who has a million can get a loan of ten millions. He can run a business valued ten times more than his personal capital would allow. In contrast, the man with a small capital has little or no credit rating; the banks do not trust him enough to advance a loan ten times more than his worth. One who owns a thousand can hardly get an even thousand, let alone ten thousand. Take the case of a person who owns a hundred thousand and runs a business worth a million by using nine hundred thousand of bank money. Suppose he earns a profit of one per cent which means he has earned a ten per cent profit on his hundred thousand. In comparison, a person who uses his personal hundred thousand in business, will earn a profit of no more than one per cent on his hundred thousand, which would be hardly enough to cover even his operating expenses. Then there is yet another factor; the man with a large capital can buy raw material from the market at a price so low and discounted which the small capitalist cannot get. As a result, the man with a small capital is rendered helpless and needy. Should he, secretly pursued by his misfortune, put his foot into some such business already monopolized by big capitalists, they will then, taking him to be an unwelcome partner in their godhood, make the market collapse, even if it be at their cost, making the small capitalist lose all his capital and profit. This is why business gets monoplized by some individuals who happen to be big capitalists.

Let us consider some other injuries caused by this interest-oriented economic system:

1. First comes the great injustice inflicted on the community when a whole set of people are deprived of the opportunity to engage in real business, and are reduced to economic slavery of big capitalists, who elect to give them a 'profit' of their choice as some tip.

2. Another loss that affects the whole country comes through the monopolization of market rates of commodities made possible by this system. They sell high and fill their coffers by emptying the pockets of the whole community. Worse still, they have the evil choice of stopping the sale of their holdings in order to further increase prices by design. If these selfish people were not allowed to feed on the combined capital of the community through the agency of banks, and if they were left

with no other alternative but to run their business with their personal capital, things would be different. The small capitalist would have been saved from distress and these self-serving people would not be sitting as demi-gods on all trading options. The investors with a small capital, by showing profits in business ventures, would have given impetus to others. More and more businesses would come up managed by separate staffers giving livelihood to thousands of needy individuals besides making business profits fairly widespread, and of course, the general availability of merchandise in the market would be favourably affected. The reason is competition which motivates a businessman to reduce his margin of profit.

In short, this Machiavellian method has infected nations and communities with a fatal disease, apart from the brain-washing it has done which makes the patient take disease as the cure.

3. Now let us look at the third economic disaster engineered through bank interests. Here is a person with a capital of ten thousand and he goes in business worth a hundred thousand, the additional capital advanced by a bank as interest-bearing loan. If by chance, he is hit by loss, his capital sinks and he goes insolvent then the outcome is interesting. Just imagine that he bears only ten per cent of the loss, while the rest of the loss, that is ninety per cent, is absorbed by the whole community, whose money he had borrowed from the bank to invest in his business. Even if the bank writes off the loss as an interim measure, it is clear that the bank is the pocket of a nation, and the loss will ultimately hit the nation. The outcome is that the borrowing capitalist was the sole owner of the profit as far as the profit kept coming, leaving nothing or very little for the community. When came the loss, it was passed on to the whole community.

4. Yet another economic drawback of *ribā* lies in the predicament of the borrower on interest when he is hit by a major loss. Once this happens he is unable to survive anymore. To begin with, he never had enough capital the loss of which he could cushion. The loss throws him into a double distress. Not only does he lose his profit and capital but also, at the same time, gets buried under the bank loan for the liquidation of which he has no means. As compared to this, should he lose his entire capital in an interest-free business, he would, at the most become penniless but, burdened with debt he definitely will not be.

In 1954, the cotton business of Pakistan suffered, to use a word of the Qur'ān, with the calamity of *muhāq* (محاق : destruction by loss). The Government rescued the businessmen at the cost of millions of rupees but nobody bothered to realize that all this was a curse of *ribā* or interest, for the simple reason that cotton dealers had invested mostly bank-borrowed capital in this business. Their own capital was insignificant. As Divine decree would have it, the cotton market fell so sharply that its price zoomed down from rupees one hundred and twenty-five to just ten rupees. The cotton traders were rendered incapable of returning money to cover bank margins. Left with no choice, the market was closed down and an SOS was sent to the Government. The Government stepped in and bought off the stocks, not at rupees ten, but at the raised price of ninety rupees. Thus it took upon itself the loss of millions and saved these traders from going insolvent. Whose money did the Government have? Naturally, it belonged to the same helpless poor nation, the Muslim *ummah*!

In short, the naked result of banking business is that some individuals reap benefits out of the capital of the entire community and the loss, when it comes, is made to fall on the whole nation.

The design for deception

You have already seen how *ribā* and interest prey on communities and nations and how some individuals are promoted instead. Along with it, you would do well to discover yet another demonstration of evil genius. When the consumers of *ribā* realized, out of their own experience as well, what the Qur'ān has said: يَمْحَقُ اللّٰهُ الرِّبٰوا - that is, earnings of interest have to suffer from the calamity of *muḥāq*, from loss and destruction, as a result of which one has to go insolvent - they established two permanent institutions: The Insurance and the Stock Exchange. They saw that losses in business occur for two reasons. One of these takes the form of natural calamity like the drowning or burning of a ship or some such mishap of some other nature. The other could be that market rates of stock in hand go lower than its purchase price. The capital invested in both these situations is the jointly owned capital of the community, not that of the individual capitalist, therefore, the loss of the community is higher, and that of the individual capitalist, minimal. But they did not stop at that. In order

to shift even this minimal loss factor on to the shoulders of the community, they floated insurance companies which hold the capital of the community, just as banks do. When some natural calamity inflicts losses on these consumers of *ribā*, they use the medium of insurance to shift, not just partial, but the entire loss to the jointly held capital of the community.

People think that insurance companies are God's mercy as they rescue the sinking. But should they observe and think honestly, they would start seeing the same deception here too. Isn't it that their capital was formed by contributions from the community enticed by the promise of help in the event of unforeseen accidents. The truth is that the advantage of receiving large sums of money is derived by capitalists of higher rating, who would, on occasions, burn or bang their own car or get it stolen in order to buy a new one out of the insurance claim. At the probability rate of one or two percent there would be a couple of lucky fellows who might get some money because of accidental death.

Then there is the second kind of institution, the stock exchange which served as a defensive shield against price slumps. This speculative contraption was used to spread out the ill-effects of deals over every individual of the community, transferring thereby the loss coming to them onto the community once again.

This brief account, it is hoped, may have given you at least the idea that bank interest and the business it helps to flourish is the cause of want, hunger and economic incapacity of the entire humanity. Of course, some wealthy individuals have their wealth further increased through this method which results in the unmaking of the community and the making of some individuals who hold the key to the accumulated capital of the country or nation in their hands. Generally governments did notice this enormously disturbing phenomena but the cure they came up with was to increase the income tax rate for big capitalists, so much so that the maximum rate was set almost close to hundred per cent, which was all designed to funnel capital from them back into the national treasury.

But, as a result of such laws and as everyone knows, factories and businesses started maintaining fictional or doctored accounts. In order

to hide a lot of capital from the Government, money once again started going into private treasuries.

To sum up, it is universally clear that concentration of wealth in the captivating hands of few individuals of a nation is highly injurious to the economic health of the country. This is why income tax rates are pushed so high, but experience bears out that this was no cure to the disease. Maybe the reason is that the disease was not correctly diagnosed, and the real cause remained undiscovered. This sort of treatment reminds one of the Persian line saying: 'you closed the door for safety without finding out that the enemy was sitting inside the house'.

The reason why wealth concentrates in the hands of big capitalists is nothing but interest-oriented business and the unjust profiteering from national wealth by particular individuals. Unless we put an end to this in accordance with the teachings of Islam and unless we promote the practice that everyone goes in business with 'his' capital only, this disease cannot be cured.

A doubt and its answer

The question arises here when public money is deposited in banks some benefit does trickle on to people, no matter how little it may be. Maybe, the big capitalists did manage to extract more benefits out of it. But what would happen if this system of depositing money in the banks was not there? The whole thing will end up being what it was in old days when money used to stay in underground chests, which was of no immediate use to the owner, or to anybody else.

The answer to this is that Islam has, on one hand, by declaring interest or *riba* to be *ḥaram* (unlawful), closed the door on the concentration of national wealth in the hands of a known few capitalists, while at the same time, it has, by imposing the obligation of the levy of *zakāh*, compelled every owner of the above-threshold capital not to keep his capital frozen but invest it in business. Should a person hoard up his money or gold, and since *zakāh* is a recurring obligation to pay, he will still be giving out the fortieth part of his holdings as *zakāh* every year, as a result of which whatever he has will not be there anymore. Therefore, every sane person will have to put his capital in some useful enterprise, enjoy its benefits and allow others to share it with him

and then, from the profit that he makes, he pays his *zakāh* 'properly' as required.

The obligation of *zakāh* ensures progress in business

We know that paying *zakāh* properly has a great utility of its own. It aims to help the poor and the needy in the community. Similarly, this obligation is a wonderful method of persuading people to go in business, so that the economic status of Muslims is upgraded. It is clear when everybody realizes that frozen capital gets no profit, on the contrary, the fortieth part is invariably chiselled away at the end of each year, he will have to think of investing his money in some business. But his business will not follow the model of one man running a business on the strength of capital supplied by millions of people. That model works on interest. Since marketing money is *haram*, every wealthy person will seek to go in business on his own. And when it so happens that big capitalists are left with no choice but to engage in business supported by their personal capital, those with a small capital will not face the sort of difficulties in business take-offs that confronted them in the event they sought bank loans on interest to run a larger business. Thus the whole country will benefit by the universalization of business and its profits. When this happens, the poor and the needy in the country would certainly become beneficiaries of the system.

Interest: The spiritual ills:

Upto this point we were talking about the economic destructivity of interest. Now let us see how interest-oriented business so adversely affects the morals, and the spiritual potential of man:

1. Sacrifice and generosity are great qualities in human morals. Giving comfort to others at the cost of personal discomfort is wonderful. Interest-loaded business invariably leads to the extinction of this emotional refinement. A compulsive consumer of interest would hardly bear to see somebody else rising up to his level with the help of personal effort and capital. That he would think of passing some benefit to somebody from his resources is a far cry.

2. Rather than be merciful to the distressed, he is on the look out for an opportunity to take undue advantage of his distress.

3. The constant devouring of interest results in increasing greed for

money to limits where he is all intoxicated, not knowing good from bad - totally heedless of the sad end of what he is doing.

Is it impossible to run a business without interest?

A discussion of the nature of *ribā* and the ills it plants and promotes in this world and in the Hereafter has already appeared in some details. Now remains the third part relating to the solution of the problem. We have seen its economic and spiritual drawbacks and we know clearly that it has been strictly forbidden in the Qur'ān and *Sunnah*. But the problem is that *ribā*, of all the things, is sitting solid as the sheet-anchor of business in contemporary society. This is the wheel on which runs world business. How can we get free from its hold? These are times when getting rid of the banking system would mean closing down all business.

This can be answered by pointing out that a disease, once it spreads out and becomes an epidemic, certainly poses problems. Treatment does become difficult but useless it is not. Efforts made to correct the system do succeed finally. However, what is needed in the process is patience, steadfastness and courage. It is in the noble Qur'ān itself that Allah Almighty has also said:

وَمَا جَعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِى الدِّيْنِ مِنْ حَرَجٍ

Allah has not burdened you with any hardship in religion. (22:78)

Therefore, there must be a way to avoid *ribā* in which there is no economic loss, doors of national and international business are not closed, and salvation from *ribā* is also achieved.

To begin with, it is generally thought that, given the governing principles of banking as seen from the outside, banking system depends on *ribā*. Without it the banks just could not run. But, this thinking is categorically incorrect. The banking system could still survive as it is even without *ribā*. It could rather come out in better shape, beneficial and useful. However, in order to do so, it is necessary that a group of experts in Sharī'ah and banking should, by consultation and cooperation, reconstruct its operating principles. With their proposals and projections, success will not remain far. When the day comes, the day when the banking system is run on the principle of Sharī'ah, the whole world will, *Inshallāh*, witness the real *summum bonum*, the great good of the nation and the community it

brings in its wake. However, this is not the place to explain these principles and rules based on which the banking system could be run without *ribā*.[59]

Ribā is presently 'needed' for two reasons. If needed in business, that can be taken care of by amending the current banking rules. The second compulsion, why the poor and the needy get involved with *riba* or interest, is that of their inevitable accidental needs. The best solution to this situation is already present in Islam in the form of *zakāh* and obligatory *ṣadaqāt*. But, because of heedlessness towards religion and the sources of its knowledge, even the system of *zakāh* has been left inoperative (or ineffective). There is a countless number of Muslims who do not think of *zakāh*, and for that matter, even *salāh*. Those who do pay *zakāh*, specially the gentlemen with large capital holdings, do not bother to calculate strictly and thus do not pay the full *zakāh* amount due. Then there are those who do pay the full amount of *zakah* due, but their doing so is mechanical, sort of getting rid of it by taking it out of their pockets and be done with. Although the Divine injunction, does not simply call for the taking out of *zakāh*, it rather bids that *zakāh* be paid properly and paying properly can be accomplished correctly only when it is carried to those who deserve it and who are given proprietory rights over it. Now let us imagine how many Muslims there are who would take the trouble of finding the deserving and then arrange to have their *zakāh* reach them? No matter how lacking in financial resources the Muslim *ummah* may be, but should it be that every *zakāh*-obligated Muslim pays his *zakāh* fully and properly, and adopts the correct method of so paying it by identifying the deserving and making sure that they receive it in their hands and as their possession, then no Muslim will ever need to get involved with interest-bearing borrowing. Of course, when it so happens that a just Islamic government comes into being and operates in accordance with rules laid down by the Sharī'ah, and an Islamic

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59. This humble writer had, in consultation with some *'ulamā'*, prepared a draft proposal of interest-free banking way back, and this wạs approved by some experts as practical in present day perspective. There were some who even put this in practice but finally, it did not work due to apathy of businessmen, and of course, the non-availability of Government sanction. نالی اللہ المشتکی

Baytul-Māl is established under its aegis, and in which is deposited the *zakāh* of *amwāl ẓahirah* of all Muslims, then this *Baytul-Māl* can take care of the need of everyone needy. Should a situation call for a larger loan, this can be given without interest. Similarly, the unemployed can be inducted into the work force by arranging to have them run small shops and stores or by engaging them into a unit of industry. True was the remark made by some European expert who said that Muslims, if they strictly followed the system of *zakāh* they have, will soon find that there is nobody poor and distressed in their community.

In short, just because practices of interest have spread out these days like some epidemic, it is incorrect to take for granted that abandonment of interest-based business would amount to economic suicide, and therefore, modern man is helpless when involved with interest-based dealings in business.

This much is, however, conceded that such an abandonment is surely difficult for one or many individuals unless a whole nation, or a determined major party, or an Islamic government itself resolves to accomplish this objective with full and consistent attention. But this phenomena cannot be taken as an excuse for justifying *ribā* in principle.

What has been said here has two aims:

1. Muslim groups and governments who can accomplish this task correctly should focus their attention in this direction to free Muslims, rather the whole world, from the accursed effects of interest.

2. At least, all of us should start knowing what is right and correct in this respect. The disease should be recognized as a disease. Taking or giving interest is a sin but taking the *ḥarām* to be *halāl* is a much greater sin. At the least, this could be avoided. The practical sin does have some sort of outward benefit but this second sin against knowledge and belief, that effort be made to prove interest as *ḥalāl*, is greater than the first one. It is absurd and wateful as well because there is hardly any financial loss in regarding interest as *ḥarām* and confessing any involvement with it as sin. Doing so will close no business down. But the confession of a crime does become fruitful

when one gets the *tawfiq* (God-given ability) to repent at some time when one could think of ways to avoid it.

In the end, I present some *aḥādīth* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ to further strengthen the statement of above-mentioned aims. These re-assert the same Qur'ānic verses where *ribā* has been strongly prohibited and where warnings of severe punishment have been given to those involved in it. The purpose is to bring about, at least, a sense of awakening - the realization that a sin is a sin, and the concern that something should be done to abstain from it. Perhaps, the minimum change that can come out of this is not to make two sins out of one by treating the *ḥarām* as *ḥalāl*. Thus we shall be saved from seeing even highly righteous and observing Muslims who would spend nights in *tahajjūd* (pre-dawn *nafl salāh*) and *dhikr* of Allah (remembrance of Allah), yet when they reach their store or factory in the morning, they would not even think that, by indulging in dealings of interest and gambling, they are committing some sin!

Sayings Of The Holy Prophet ﷺ

About *Riba* or Interest:

عن النبى صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: اجتنبوا السبع المبقات ، قالوا: يا رسول الله ! والسحر ، وقتل النفس التى حرم الله إلا بلحق ، وأكل الربوا ، وأكل مال اليتيم والتولى يوم الزحف ، وقذف المحصنات الغافلات .

(رواه البخارى و مسلم وابوداؤد والنسائى)

"Abstain from the seven disasters." The people asked him: "What are they, O Messenger of Allah?" He replied: "To ascribe partners to Allah, to practice sorcery, to unjustly kill one whom Allah has declared inviolable, to take *ribā* (interest or usury), to exploit the property of an orphan, to escape at the time of war and to slander the chaste women who are believers, unwary."

قال النبى صلى الله عليه وسلم : رءيت الليلة رجلين أتيانى ، فأخرجانى إلى ارض مقدسة فانطلقنا حتى أتينا على نهر من دم فيه رجل قائم وعلى شط النهر رجل بين يديه حجارة ، فأقبل الرجل الذى فى النهر ، فإذا أراد أن يخرج رمى الرجل بحجر فى فيه، فرده، حيث كان، فجعل كلما جاء

ليخرج رمى فى فيه بحجر، فير جع كما كان، فقلت: ماهذا الذي رأيته فى النهر؟ قال اكل الربا ، (رواه البخارى، هذا فى البيوع مختصرا)

This night I saw two men who came to me and brought me to a sacred land. We walked until we reached a river of blood, wherein a man was standing, and another man was standing on the bank of the river with some stones before him. Then the man who was standing in the river came forward, and when he intended to come out of the river, the other man threw a stone at his mouth, and turned him back to the place where he was earlier - thus he began to do the same with him whenever he tried to come out of the river by throwing a stone at him and turning him back. I asked him, "What is that which I have just seen going on?" He replied, "He is the one who used to take *ribā* (interest or usury).

لعن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم اكل الربا ومو كله وكاتبه ، و شاهديه ، و قال: هم سواء (رواه مسلم وغيره)

The Messenger of Allah cursed the one who accepts *ribā* (interest or usury), the one who pays it, the one who writes it and the persons who gives witness to it, and said, "They are all alike."

عن النبى صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: أربع حق على الله أن لايد خلهم الجنة ولايذيقهم نعيمها: مدمن الخمر، واكل الربا، وأكل مال اليتيم بغير حق، والعاق لوالديه (رواه الحاكم)

There are four kinds of people about whom Allah has decided not to admit them to Paradise and not to let them taste its bliss: The one who is addicted to wine, the one who takes the *ribā*, the one who exploits the property of an orphan and the man who is disobedient to his parents.

عن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: الدرهم يصيبه الرجل من الربا أعظم عندالله من ثلاثة وثلثين زنية يزنيها فى الإسلام (رواه الطبرانى)

A *dirham* a man receives as *ribā* (interest or usury) is, in the sight of Allah, more serious than thirty three acts of fornication or adultery in Islam.

عن ابن عباس رضى الله عنهما قال: نهى رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم

أن تشترى الثمرة حتى تطعم وقال: إذا ظهرا لزنا والربا فى قرية فقد أحلوا بأنفسهم عذاب الله (رواه الحاكم)

The Holy Prophet ﷺ has forbidden the fruits to be sold or purchased before they are eatable, and said, "When *zinā* (adultery) and *ribā* (usury or interest) become rampant in the people of a town they themselves invite the punishment of Allah.

ما من قوم يظهر فيهم الربا إلا أخذوا بالسنة، وما من قوم يظهر فيهم الرشا الا أخذوا بالرعب (رواه احمد)

The society in which *ribā* becomes rampant is punished with famine, and the society where bribe is rampant is punished with horror (of others).

قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم : رأيت ليلة أسرى بى لما انتهينا إلى السماء السابعة فنظرت فوقى، فإذا أنا برعد وبروق وصواعق، قال فأتيت على قوم بطونهم كالبيوت فيها الحيات ترى من خارج بطونهم، قلت: يا جبرئيل! من هؤلاء؟ قال هؤلاء أكلة الربا (رواه احمد)

On the night (of Ascension: *Mi'rāj*) when we reached the seventh sky, I looked upwards and saw thunder, lightnings and thunder-claps. Then I came accross some people whose stomachs seemed to be houses full of snakes - one could see them from the the outside of their stomachs. I asked Jibrā'il: "Who are they?" He replied: "They are those who used to take *ribā* (interest or usury)."

وروى عن عوف بن مالك رضى الله عنه قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم إياك والذ نرب التى لاتغفر، الغلول، فمن غل شيئا أتى به يوم القيامة وأكل الربا (الحديث)

Abstain from sins which are not forgiven: Embezzling of the spoils, for whoever embezzles anything will come with it on the Day of Judgment, and the other sin is *ribā*.

عن أنس رضى الله عنه عن النبى صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: إذا أقرض الرجل الرجل فلا يأخذ هدية (مشكوة)

When a man gives a loan to a person he must not accept a gift (presented by the debtor).

To sum up, presented here were seven verses of the Holy Qur'ān and ten sayings from the *aḥādīth* of the noble Prophet ﷺ which concern the definition of *ribā*, and its nature, and point out to the disasters it brings in the world. This much is enough for a thinking and feeling Muslim. For those interested in a more comprehensive research on the subject and a more detailed discussion on the remaining aspects may see *Mas'ala-i-sūd*, a separate book in Urdu on the problem of interest published by this humble writer.

Verse 282 - 283

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا تَدَايَنْتُمْ بِدَيْنٍ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُسَمًّى
فَاكْتُبُوهُ ۚ وَلْيَكْتُبْ بَيْنَكُمْ كَاتِبٌ بِالْعَدْلِ ۚ وَلَا يَأْبَ كَاتِبٌ أَنْ
يَكْتُبَ كَمَا عَلَّمَهُ اللَّهُ ۚ فَلْيَكْتُبْ وَلْيُمْلِلِ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِ الْحَقُّ
وَلْيَتَّقِ اللَّهَ رَبَّهُ وَلَا يَبْخَسْ مِنْهُ شَيْئًا ۚ فَإِنْ كَانَ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِ
الْحَقُّ سَفِيهًا أَوْ ضَعِيفًا أَوْ لَا يَسْتَطِيعُ أَنْ يُمِلَّ هُوَ فَلْيُمْلِلْ
وَلِيُّهُ بِالْعَدْلِ ۚ وَاسْتَشْهِدُوا شَهِيدَيْنِ مِنْ رِجَالِكُمْ ۖ فَإِنْ لَمْ
يَكُونَا رَجُلَيْنِ فَرَجُلٌ وَامْرَأَتَانِ مِمَّنْ تَرْضَوْنَ مِنَ الشُّهَدَاءِ أَنْ
تَضِلَّ إِحْدَاهُمَا فَتُذَكِّرَ إِحْدَاهُمَا الْأُخْرَىٰ ۚ وَلَا يَأْبَ الشُّهَدَاءُ إِذَا
مَا دُعُوا ۚ وَلَا تَسْأَمُوا أَنْ تَكْتُبُوهُ صَغِيرًا أَوْ كَبِيرًا إِلَىٰ أَجَلِهِ ۚ
ذَٰلِكُمْ أَقْسَطُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَأَقْوَمُ لِلشَّهَادَةِ وَأَدْنَىٰ أَلَّا تَرْتَابُوا ۖ إِلَّا
أَنْ تَكُونَ تِجَارَةً حَاضِرَةً تُدِيرُونَهَا بَيْنَكُمْ فَلَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ
أَلَّا تَكْتُبُوهَا ۗ وَأَشْهِدُوا إِذَا تَبَايَعْتُمْ ۚ وَلَا يُضَارَّ كَاتِبٌ وَلَا شَهِيدٌ ۚ
وَإِنْ تَفْعَلُوا فَإِنَّهُ فُسُوقٌ بِكُمْ ۗ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۖ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ اللَّهُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ
بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ○ وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ وَلَمْ تَجِدُوا كَاتِبًا
فَرِهَانٌ مَقْبُوضَةٌ ۖ فَإِنْ أَمِنَ بَعْضُكُمْ بَعْضًا فَلْيُؤَدِّ الَّذِي اؤْتُمِنَ
أَمَانَتَهُ وَلْيَتَّقِ اللَّهَ رَبَّهُ ۗ وَلَا تَكْتُمُوا الشَّهَادَةَ ۚ وَمَنْ يَكْتُمْهَا
فَإِنَّهُ آثِمٌ قَلْبُهُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ عَلِيمٌ ○

O those who believe, when you transact a debt payable

at a specified time, put it in writing. And let a scribe write it between you with fairness. And no scribe should refuse to write as Allah has educated him. He, therefore, should write. And the one who owes should give the dictation, but he must fear Allah, his Lord, and should not curtail anything from it. And if the one who owes is feeble-minded or weak or cannot himself give the dictation, his guardian should dictate with fairness. And have two witnesses from among your men. And if two men are not there, then one man and two women from those witnesses you are pleased with, so that if one of the two women errs the other woman may remind her. And the witnesses should not refuse when summoned. And, be not loath to write it down, as payable at its time, no matter how short or long. That is more equitable with Allah and more establishing for the evidence and nearer to that you fall not in doubt, unless it be a cash deal you carry out among yourselves. In that case there is no sin on you if you do not write it. And have witnesses when you transact a sale. And neither scribe nor witness should be harmed. And if you do, it is certainly a sin on your part. And fear Allah. And Allah teaches you. And Allah is All-Knowing in respect of everything.

And if you are in travel, and find no scribe, then (resort to) security, taken in possession. However, if one of you trusts the other, then the one who has been trusted upon should fulfil his trust, and should fear Allah, his Lord. And do not conceal the testimony. And whoever conceals it, his heart is, surely, a sinner. And Allah is All-Aware of what you do. (Verses 282 - 283)

The Qur'ānic injunctions on Loan

An important principle of the Law of Dealings, or the Law of Contracts in modern legal terminology, has been taken up in the verses appearing above. Following this, appears a specific principle of the general rules of evidence.

These are times when writing is the rage. The written word has taken the place of human speech but think of the days of fourteen hundred years ago when almost the entire business of the world was conducted verbally. The principle of writing and retaining documents

did not just exist. It was the Qur'ān which first pointed out to its importance and said:

إِذَا تَدَايَنتُم بِدَيْنٍ إِلَىٰٓ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى فَاكْتُبُوهُ

When you transact a debt payable at a specified time, put it in writing.

Two principles have been stated here. These are:

1. A written document should be prepared while concluding a transaction on deferred payment basis, so that it may be availed of in cases of error or refusal.

2. While making a transaction on deferred payment basis, it is necessary that the due date of its payment should be determined. It is not permissible to defer the payment for an indefinite period of time because this can open the doors of dispute. This is why the Muslim Jurists have stressed that the time limit so set should not have any ambiguity at all. It should specify the exact date and month. There should be nothing vague about it, for instance, the time of the harvesting of crops cannot be fixed, because the time of harvesting may vary subject to weather conditions. Since writing was not common in those days (and even after writing has become so common, the majority of world population is the same as does not know how to write), it was possible for the scribe of the agreement to write down what was not intended, thereby causing undue loss or gain to one or the other party. Therefore, it was said:

وَلْيَكْتُب بَّيْنَكُمْ كَاتِبٌۢ بِالْعَدْلِ

And let a scribe write it between you with fairness.

Firstly, the instruction given here requires that the scribe should not be prejudiced in favour of one of the parties. On the contrary, he should be impartial so that there remains no scope for doubt or concern for anyone. Secondly, the scribe was instructed to write justly. Let him incur no permanent loss on himself by working for the vanishing gain of others. After that, the attention of the scribe has been drawn to the fact that Allah Almighty has given him the ability to write, for which he can show his gratefulness by not refusing to write.

As to who should initiate the writing of the document, it was said:

وَلْيُمْلِلِ الَّذِى عَلَيْهِ الْحَقُّ

And the one who owes should give the dictation.

For instance, if a person has made a purchase on credit, then he is the one who should dictate the entries of the document because this will be a written agreement on his behalf. In order to offset the possibility of any addition or deletion in the written document, it was said:

وَلْيَتَّقِ اللَّهَ رَبَّهُ وَلَا يَبْخَسْ مِنْهُ شَيْئًا

But he must fear Allah, his Lord, and should not curtail anything from it.

It some times happens that the person incurring debt is fickle-minded, or superannuated in age, or a minor, or mute, or the speaker of a language not known to the scribe. Since such a person does not have the ability to dictate a document, it was said that, in a situation like this, his *walī* or guardian should dictate the written agreement. The need for a guardian in respect of the insane and the minor is obvious since all their affairs are handled through a guardian. The guardian of the mute, or the speaker of the language unknown to the scribe could also do this, and should he make somebody his representative, it would still be possible. Here, the word, '*walī*' in the Qur'ān covers both meanings.

The rules of witnessing

Upto this point the statement was limited to the writing or dictating of documents in transaction. Later on, it is enlarged by saying that the writing of the document should not be taken as sufficient. It should rather have witnesses as well so that, in case there is a dispute, the appearance of witnesses in the court could help resolve it. This is why the Muslim jurists, may Allah's mercy be upon them, have said that simple writing of an agreement is not a conclusive proof in the sight of Islamic Sharī'ah. Unless there is an oral evidence of witnesses, as approved by the Sharī'ah, on the agreement, no decision could be taken on simple writing. Common courts of today also follow the same practice when they do not take a decision unless there is a verbal evidence to prove the document.

The number of witnesses

Now follow some important rules of evidence:

1. It is necessary according to Islamic rules of evidence that there be two men, or one man and two women. One man alone, or only two women are not sufficient witnesses in common dealings.

The qualifications of witnesses

2. The witnesses should be Muslims. The Qur'ānic expression: مِن رِّجَالِكُمْ : 'from among your men' points out in this direction.

3. The witnesses should be trustworthy and just whose word could be relied upon. They should not be sinners and liars. This injunction is contained in مِمَّن تَرْضَوْنَ مِنَ الشُّهَدَاءِ : 'from those witnesses you are pleased with.'

Refusing the act of witnessing is a sin

After that, the Holy Qur'ān directs the people that they should not refuse to be witnesses when it is required from them, since evidence is the way to revive truth and the method to resolved disputes. Even if there is a trouble in giving evidence, it should to be tolerated, taking it as a national duty. Following that, emphasis was laid on writing down the document of deeds. It was said that the agreement, big or small, should invariably be written down: 'And, be not loath to write it down, as payable at its time, no matter how short or long.' Of course, if there is a hand-to-hand transaction, not involving any debt, it could be left unwritten. However, as a precuationary measure, two witnesses should be taken to confirm the agreement anyway, just in case there arises a dispute between the parties concerned. For instance, the seller may say that the price was not received, or the buyer may charge that he did not receive everything he bought. Evidence of witnesses will serve well in deciding this dispute.

Witnesses should not suffer

When the verse began, scribes were instructed not to refuse writing or testifying agreements. In this case, it was possible that people would give them more trouble than necessary.. Therefore, it was said towards the end of the verse:

وَلَا يُضَآرَّ كَاتِبٌ وَّلَا شَهِيدٌ

And neither scribe nor witness should be harmed.

It means that, in order to protect one's own rights and benefits, one

should not disturb the rights and benefits of others. Then it was said: وَإِنْ تَفْعَلُوا فَإِنَّهُ فُسُوقٌ بِكُمْ : 'And if you do, it is certainly a sin on your part.'

This tells us that causing harm to the scribe or the witness is prohibited. For this reason, the Muslim jurists have said that the scribe who demands his wages while writing, or the witness who claims his legitimate two-way conveyance allowance, are entitled to get it as a matter of their right. Not paying these dues is included under the scope of harming them, and is, therefore, impermissible. No doubt, under its system of justice, Islam has forced the witnesses to appear in court, and has made the concealment of evidence a grave sin; but at the same time, the other side of the picture has also been duly taken care of, so that people are not made to stay away from testifying. It was the effect of this two-way precaution that truthful and selfless witnesses were available in every case, and cases were decided easily and quickly true to the demands of justice. When the modern world bypassed this Qur'ānic principle, the whole court system went to pieces. Real and true witnesses in cases became virtually extinct. Everyone was compelled to shy away from appearing as a witness. The reason is simple. Being identified as a witness means trouble. If the case involves the police and a crime, the chief of the police station would call the witness everyday and any time, and on occasions, would have him sit there for hours. Even in civil courts, the witness is treated as if he was some sort of criminal. Then the dates of the case keep changing endlessly. New dates are given on which the poor witness is bound to come leaving his business, job and needs. If he fails, the threat of an arrest-warrant hangs over his head. Therefore, every decent person engaged in earning his livelihood has been forced to take the appearance in court as punishment for no crime of his, and therefore, he has been left with no choice but to avoid it as far as he can. Professional witnesses are all you get and they make no distinction between the lie and the truth. The Holy Qur'ān, after emphasizing these basic ingredients, helps eliminate these malpractices by saying at the end of the verse:

وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ۝

> And fear Allah. And Allah teaches you. And Allah is All-Knowing in respect of everything.

It will be noted that this verse carries many injunctions. Some

Muslim jurists have deduced twenty important juristic rulings from this verse. We should also keep in mind the recurring style of the Qur'ān whereby, before and after giving a particular law, it creates an inner impulse to follow Divine injunctions by introducing the fear of Allah and the fear of the Day of Retribution. It is in accordance with this method that the verse was concluded with an exhortation to fear Allah and to remember that there is nothing hidden from Him. If you try any contravention, under any impermissible pretext whatsoever, you will still remain unable to cheat Allah.

The second verse takes up the following two subjects:

1. In cases involving a credit deal, it is quite permissible for a person to keep something as mortgage to secure his debt. But the Qur'ānic word مَّقْبُوضَةٌ (taken in possession) indicates that deriving any benefit out of the thing mortgaged is not permissible for him. The only right the mortgagee has is to keep the thing in his possession until the time when his debt is cleared. Any benefit that accrues from it rightfully belongs to the original owner.

2. Secondly, it was said that the person who knows the correct situation in a disputed matter should not withhold his testimony. If he does withhold it, his heart is a sinner. The heart has been identified as the sinner because somebody might think his sin was restricted to the tongue (which failed to speak up). But it was in the heart that he first decided to do what he did and therefore, the sin of his heart comes first.

Verse 284

لِلّٰهِ مَا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِى الْاَرْضِ ۗ وَاِنْ تُبْدُوْا مَا فِىْٓ اَنْفُسِكُمْ اَوْ تُخْفُوْهُ يُحَاسِبْكُمْ بِهِ اللّٰهُ ۗ فَيَغْفِرُ لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَيُعَذِّبُ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ○

And to Allah belongs what is in the heavens and what is in the earth. And if you disclose what is in your hearts or conceal it Allah shall make you account for it, then He shall forgive whom He wills and punish whom He wills. And Allah is powerful over everything. (Verse 284)

Commentary

The earlier verse mentioned the injunction to reveal evidence and forbade its concealment. This verse is also a complement of the same subject. Here, warning has been given that it is *ḥarām* (unlawful) to conceal evidence. 'If you concealed the truth of a matter knowingly, your Lord who is all-Knowing and all-Aware, will make you account for it' - this interpretation of the verse has been reported from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās, 'Ikrimah, Sha'bī and Mujāhid رضی اللہ عنہم اجمعین (Qurṭubī).

Taken in the general sense of the words, this verse is universal, and covers all articles of faith, modes of worship and mutual dealings (*I'tiqādāt*, *'Ibādāt* and *Mu'āmalāt*). This is exactly what Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās has said in his well-known commentary on this verse.

The verse means that Allah Almighty will make all His created beings give an account of all their deeds. It will include deeds they have actually done, and those they were determined to do but kept them secret in their hearts and were never able to do. This conforms to the report of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar appearing in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and Muslim: 'I have heard from the Holy Prophet ﷺ that the believer will be drawn near his most exalted Lord when Allah Almighty will make him recall his sins one by one and will ask him if he knew that he had committed those sins. The believer will confess. Allah Almighty will say: 'I concealed your sins in the life of the world and never allowed this to be known to others. Today, I forgive that.' He will be given the Book of Good Deeds, while the sins committed by disbelievers and hypocrites will be announced before everybody.

It appears in another *ḥadīth* that Allah Almighty will say on the day of Doom (*Qiyāmah*): 'This is the Day when hidden things will be surveyed and secrets concealed in hearts will be laid out in the open. And (forget not that) My angels charged with writing down your deeds wrote down only those visible on the outside, and I know what angels do not know, nor did they write those in your Book of Deeds. Now I tell you all about it and ask you to stand and answer. I shall forgive anyone I will and I shall punish anyone I will.' True believers will then be forgiven and the disbelievers (*kuffār*) will be punished. (Qurṭubī)

Here a doubt may arise in view of the *ḥadīth* in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said:

إن الله تجاوز عن أمتي عما حدثت أنفسها مالم يتكلموا أو يعملوا به

Allah Almighty has forgiven my *ummah* all that they thought of in their hearts unless they said or did it.

It shows that there is no punishment or wrath on the volition of the heart. Imām al-Qurṭubī has said that this *ḥadīth* relates to the worldly effects of an act. Divorce, freeing of slaves, sales, and gifts are not authentically concluded by a simple volition of the heart unless they are done verbally or practically. Since the verse refers to the effects of an act appearing in the Hereafter, there is no contradiction here. However, other *'ulamā'* have answered this doubt by saying that the *ḥadīth*, in which forgiveness of things hidden in the heart has been mentioned, refers to the involuntary thoughts that enter the human heart without volition; in fact, they would still keep coming even if one tried to stop them. Allah Almighty has forgiven such involuntary thoughts for this *ummah*. The accounting that has been identified in the above-mentioned verse relates to what man intends and proposes with his choice and volition. It means that he not only nurses these in his heart, but also tries to put into them in practice. It does not matter if he is unable to act upon them due to accidental causes. He will still have to account for these firm intentions on the Day of Doom (*Qiyāmah*). Therefrom things rest with Allah Almighty. He, in His grace, may then forgive anyone He wills and punish anyone He wills, as it has already appeared in the *ḥadīth* of al-Bukhārī and Muslim referred to above.

Since a surface view of the words used in the verse under discussion includes both kinds of thoughts, be they voluntary or involuntary, the noble Companions got extremely worried when this verse was revealed. They asked themselves if involuntary thoughts too became subject to accounting and censure, who could escape and stay safe? When they carried their anxiety to the Holy Prophet ﷺ , he instructed them all to firmly resolve to obey and act in accordance with the Divine imperatives, and say سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا that is, we heard, and we obeyed. The noble Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all, did exactly what they were told to do, upon which the following

statement of the Qur'ān was revealed: لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللّٰهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا :'Allah burdens not anyone beyond his or her capacity.'

This verse clarified that involuntary thoughts will not be subjected to accounting and censure. This gave the noble Companions their peace of mind. This *ḥadīth* has been reported in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās (Qurṭubī). The whole verse is coming next.

According to al-Tafsīr al-Maẓharī, out of the deeds made *farḍ* (obligatory) or *ḥarām* (unlawful) for human beings, some have a physical aspect. Included there are *Salāh*, *Ṣawm*, Ḥajj and all dealings. Then there are injunctions and deeds that relate to man's heart, his inner dimension, his *bāṭin*. Everything concerning matters of belief and articles of faith (*'Īmān* and *I'tiqād*) belongs right there. As for *kufr* and *shirk*, disbelief and polytheistic associationism, they are most unlawful and impermissible; and these too belong to the human heart. Also related to the heart are good morals, such as, humility, patience, contentment, generosity and many more. Similar is the case of bad morals, such as, arrogance, envy, grudge, greed and the craze for worldly gains and others of their kind. All these are absolutely *ḥarām* (unlawful) in a certain degree. They too do not relate to man's outward physique - his limbs, his body parts. They belong to the heart, to the *bāṭin*, the inner dimension.

In this verse, it has been made known that the way an accounting of outward deeds will be taken in *Qiyāmah*, very similarly, inward deeds too will have to be accounted for. Even unintentional sins will be called to account. The placement of this verse at the end of Sūrah al-Baqarah has great wisdom behind it because Sūrah al-Baqarah is such an important and consequential Sūrah of the Holy Qur'ān, that a fairly large part of Divine injunctions appears in it. It gives important fundamental and subsidiary instructions regarding life in this world and in the life to come. Then it holds within its fold details concerning *Salāh*, *Zakāh*, *Ṣawm*, *Qisās* (even retaliation), Ḥajj, *Jihād*, *Ṭahārah* (prescribed state of purity), *Ṭalāq* (divorce), *'Iddah* (waiting period), *Khul'* (divorcement sought by wife), *Raḍā'ah* (suckling), unlawfulness of liquor and interest and methods which are permissible or impermissible in matters of loans and deals. It is for this reason that,

in *ḥadith*, this Surah has also been called سنام القرآن (*Sinām al-Qur'ān*: the highest peak of the Qur'ān).

Let us bear in mind that *ikhlāṣ* or pristine sincerity is the essence behind what we do in carrying out all these injunctions. In other words, doing something or abstaining from something should both be for nothing but the pleasure of Allah Almighty. On no account should these be tainted with a desire for public recognition or some other selfish motives. It is obvious that *ikhlāṣ* (sincerity) is related to human heart, the *bātin*. If *ikhlas* is there, everything comes out right. It was for this reason that man was warned through this verse at the end of the Sūrah, by telling him that, in carrying out obligations or in abstaining from the prohibited, it was quite possible to dodge people around, to find an excuse and to get away with it. But, Allah Almighty is *'Alīm* and *Khabīr* (All-Knowing and All-Aware). Nothing is hidden from Him. Therefore, let one do what one must but let him be sure that there is someone there - his *Raqīb* and *Ḥafīẓ*, the One Who is watching and guarding over him, and Who is recording all that is happening to him, externally and internally, and a full accounting of which has to be given on the day of Resurrection. The noble Qur'ān, by cultivating this unique spirit in human beings, has posted on human hearts a sentry on guard, in the form of the fear of Allah and the concern of the Hereafter. So, before and after every law, the sentry whistles, as a result of which, they are scared of breaking any Divine Law even in the darkness of nights and the privacy of homes.

Verses 285 - 286

اٰمَنَ الرَّسُوْلُ بِمَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْهِ مِنْ رَّبِّهٖ وَالْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ ؕ كُلٌّ اٰمَنَ
بِاللّٰهِ وَمَلٰٓئِكَتِهٖ وَكُتُبِهٖ وَرُسُلِهٖ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ اَحَدٍ مِّنْ رُّسُلِهٖ
وَقَالُوْا سَمِعْنَا وَاَطَعْنَا غُفْرَانَكَ رَبَّنَا وَاِلَيْكَ الْمَصِيْرُ O
لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللّٰهُ نَفْسًا اِلَّا وُسْعَهَا ؕ لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَعَلَيْهَا مَا
اكْتَسَبَتْ ؕ رَبَّنَا لَا تُؤَاخِذْنَآ اِنْ نَّسِيْنَآ اَوْ اَخْطَاْنَا ۚ رَبَّنَا وَلَا تَحْمِلْ
عَلَيْنَآ اِصْرًا كَمَا حَمَلْتَهٗ عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِنَا ۚ رَبَّنَا وَلَا

تُحَمِّلْنَا مَا لَا طَاقَةَ لَنَا بِهِ ۚ وَاعْفُ عَنَّا ۗ وَاغْفِرْ لَنَا ۗ وَارْحَمْنَا ۚ أَنتَ مَوْلَانَا فَانصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ ۝

The Messenger has believed in what has been revealed to him from his Lord, and the believers as well. All have believed in Allah, and His angels and His Books, and His Messengers. "We make no division between any of His Messengers," and they have said: "We have listened, and obeyed. Our Lord, Your pardon! And to You is the return."

Allah does not obligate anyone beyond his capacity. For him is what he has earned, and on him what he has incurred.

"Our Lord, do not hold us accountable, if we forget or make a mistake and, Our Lord, do not place on us a burden such as You have placed on those before us. And our Lord, do not make us bear that for which we have no strength. And pardon us. And grant us forgiveness. And have mercy on us. You are our Lord. Help us, then, against the disbelieving people." (Verses 285 - 286)

Commentary

These are the last two verses of Sūrah al-Baqarah. Great merits have been attributed to these two verses in authentic *aḥādīth*. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said that one who recites these two verses during the night, they will be sufficient for him.

As narrated by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that Allah Almighty has sent forth these two verses out of the treasures of Paradise and the '*Raḥmān*' had already written them by His own hand two thousand years earlier than the creation of all things and beings. One who is able to recite them after the *Salāh* of '*Ishā*', they will stand for *Tahajjūd* in his case. As it appears in the Mustadrak of al-Hakim and in Bayhaqi, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that Allah Almighty has concluded Sūrah al-Baqarah with these two verses, which have been given to me in His grace from out of the special treasure that lies under the '*Arsh*·(Divine Throne). Therefore, you should make special effort to learn these verses, and at the same

time, teach your women and children how to recite them. This is why Sayyidnā 'Umar and Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنهم اجمعين said that they thought that anybody who has any sense in him would never go to sleep without having recited these two verses.

Meaning-wise, these verses have many special features. One of the distinct ones is that they come at the end of Sūrah al-Baqarah where most of the injunctions of Sharī'ah appear briefly, or in detail, such as, those dealing with the articles of faith, modes of worship, mutual dealings, morals and social living etc. Here, the first of the two verses opens with words of praise for the Muslims who are true and obedient, those who said yes with all their heart to all injunctions ordained by Allah, and were all set to carry them out. In addition to being an assertion of Allah's infinite mercy, the second verse also answers the doubt which started bothering the noble Companions when verse 284, the one preceding these two, was revealed. The words of the said verses, as mentioned earlier briefly, were: وَإِنْ تُبْدُوْا مَافِيْٓ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَوْتُخْفُوْهُ يُحَاسِبْكُمْ بِهِ اللّٰهُ , that is, whether you manifest that which is in your hearts, or conceal it, Allah will call you to account for it. Here the verse was actually referring to the accounting of whatever one does with his or her choice and volition. Unintentional thoughts and errors were just not included under its purview. However, the words of the Qur'ān were general because of which people surmised that man will be taken to account even for thoughts that entered his mind without his intention. Nervously excited, the noble Companion presented themselves before the Holy Prophet ﷺ and said: '*Yā Rasūl* Allāh, till now we thought that we shall be called to account for only those deeds that we do with our will and choice, and we shall not be called to account for thoughts that cross our minds involuntarily. But this verse seems to tell us that every thought that enters our minds will be subject to accounting. This way it is extremely difficult to escape punishment.' Although, the Holy Prophet ﷺ knew the correct intended meaning of the verse but he, in view of the generality of its words, did not elect to say anything on his own. Instead, he waited for the *Waḥy* (revelation) and instructed the Companions that they should obey whatever Allah Almighty ordains for them. It may be easy or difficult to carry out, but it is not the way of a true Muslim to show the slightest of hesitation in accepting Allah's command when it comes. As soon as you hear the command of

Allah, say: سَمِعۡنَا وَأَطَعۡنَا غُفۡرَانَكَ رَبَّنَا وَإِلَيۡكَ ٱلۡمَصِيرُ , that is, 'We have listened, and obeyed. Our Lord, Your pardon! And to You is the return.'

The noble Companions did exactly what they were told by the Holy Prophet ﷺ , although their minds were still ticking with the apprehension that building a security shield against involuntary intrusions of thoughts was enormously difficult indeed! Thereupon, Allah Almighty revealed these last two verses of Sūrah al-Baqarah. Here the first one praises Muslims while the other gives a correct explanation of the verse that created doubt in the minds of the noble Companions. Now let us look at the words of the first verse. These are:

ءَامَنَ ٱلرَّسُولُ بِمَآ أُنزِلَ إِلَيۡهِ مِن رَّبِّهِۦ وَٱلۡمُؤۡمِنُونَۚ كُلٌّ ءَامَنَ بِٱللَّهِ وَمَلَٰٓئِكَتِهِۦ وَكُتُبِهِۦ وَرُسُلِهِۦ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيۡنَ أَحَدٖ مِّن رُّسُلِهِۦۚ وَقَالُواْ سَمِعۡنَا وَأَطَعۡنَاۖ غُفۡرَانَكَ رَبَّنَا وَإِلَيۡكَ ٱلۡمَصِيرُ ○

The Messenger has believed in what has been revealed to him from his Lord, and the believers as well. All have believed in Allah and His angels and His Books and His Messengers. "We make no division between any of His Messengers," and they have said: "We have listened, and obeyed. Our Lord, Your pardon! And to You is the return."

The first seven words of this verse admire the Holy Prophet ﷺ . It may be noted that the verse does not address him by his name, but, by calling him '*Rasūl*', his honour and dignity have been made clear. The word, 'the believers' follows immediately after that. It means that just as the Holy Prophet ﷺ firmly believes in the revelation (*Waḥy*) from Allah, so do the true Muslims in general. The style chosen for this sentence is also worth consideration. The major part has been used to describe the state of the *'īmān* (belief) of the Holy Prophet ﷺ , then, the *'īmān* (belief) of the general Muslims has been described separately. This indicates that, although the Holy Prophet ﷺ and all Muslims share in the wealth of *'īmān* as such, still there is a great difference between the two in terms of the relative degrees of *'īmān*. The knowledge of the Holy Prophet ﷺ is based on seeing and hearing while the knowledge of other Muslims takes the form of *'īmān bi l'ghayb* or 'believing without seeing' as based on the *'ru'yat'* or 'seeing'

of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

After that come details of the *'iman* (belief) which was common between the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the Muslims in general. This *'iman* consisted of the belief that Allah Almighty does exist and that He is One and that He is endued with all the perfect attributes, and that there are angels, and that all Scriptures and all Messengers sent by Allah are true.

After that it was clearly stressed that the 'believers' of this *ummah* (Muslim community) will do nothing as was done by past communities when they planted seeds of discord among messengers of Allah by accepting some as prophets and by denying that status to others. The Jews accepted that Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was a prophet, the Christians accepted that Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام was a prophet, but that the Last of the prophets, Sayyidnā Muḥammad ﷺ was a prophet was not accepted by them.

Praised here is the distinction of this *ummah* which is made of people who do not reject any prophet. This is followed by words of admiration for what the noble Companions had said when so directed by the Holy Prophet ﷺ :

سَمِعْنَا وَ أَطَعْنَا غُفْرَانَكَ رَبَّنَا وَإِلَيْكَ الْمَصِيْرُ O

We have listened, and obeyed. Our Lord, Your pardon! And to You is the return.

After that comes the second verse where the doubt, which could have risen during the comprehension of some sentences in the previous verse, has been removed in a style that is very special. It will be recalled that the question was as to how one would escape punishment if thoughts concealed in hearts were also made subject to accounting. It was said: لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللّٰهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا :'Allah burdens not anyone beyond his or her capacity.' Therefore, thoughts that enter the heart without one's intention and control and are not translated into action, stand all excused in the sight of Allah Almighty. Deeds, that are undertaken with choice and volition will be the only ones apprehended and called to account.

A little detail will show that there is an outward aspect of human deeds which concerns what is done with the hand, head, eye, tongue

and other parts of the body. This is further divided into two kinds. The first reflects what is done with choice and volition. This is voluntary, such as, to speak by choice or to beat somebody by choice. The second kind is involuntary, that which just issues forth without choice or volition, for instance, saying something other than what one actually intended to say, or a palsied hand moving unintentionally caused pain to somebody. Here everyone knows that accounting and retribution, reward and punishment are particularly related to voluntary deeds. As far as non-voluntary deeds are concerned man is neither obligated nor constrained therein, and certainly, there is no *thawāb* (reward) or *'adhāb* (punishment) on them.

Similarly, the deeds relating to one's heart are also of two kinds. The first one is voluntary, for instance, the belief in *kufr* and *shirk*, which one has implanted firmly in one's heart with intention and choice, or the arrogance one assumes as a result of conscious and wilful self-pride, or the making of firm resolution to start drinking. The second kind is the non-voluntary, for instance, the entry of some evil thought in one's heart without volition and intention. Here too, the accounting, the reckoning and the reprehensibility covers voluntary deeds only, and does not cover non-voluntary deeds.

By this explanation given by the Qur'ān itself, peace was restored in the hearts of the noble Companions. They were satisfied that there was no accounting, reckoning, punishment or reward on non-voluntary thoughts. The same subject has been further clarified towards the end by saying: لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَعَلَيْهَا مَا اكْتَسَبَتْ , that is, man is rewarded for what he intends to do and is punished for what he elects to do.

But it should be borne in mind that the drive of the meaning of this verse is that, one will initially face direct reward or punishment for what is done with intention and volition. However, the indirect coming of reward or punishment after any such deed which was not intended, is not contrary to this. This provides an answer to the doubt that there are times when man faces reward or punishment even without intention and volition. In this context, several other verses of the Qur'ān and many reports from *aḥādith* prove that one who does something good which persuades others to act similarly, then its reward will continue reaching the original doer of the good deed as

long as the later followers of the original deed continue with their good deeds. Similar is the case with one who gives currency to an evil way; he too will be incurring its curse as the original innovator of this evil way when later people follow him, and keep getting involved with the sin for all times to come.

Similarly, narrations in *ḥadīth* prove that one can transmit the reward of one's good deeds to any other person. It is clear that in all these situations, man is receiving reward or punishment without intention and volition.

Here is an answer to this doubt. It is obvious that this reward and punishment did not reach a person directly, but it reached him through the medium of another person. In addition to that, one's own act and choice do surely play a role in making another person a medium of *thawāb* for onself. The reason is that whoever adopts a good or evil way initiated by someone, then in his doing, there certainly is a role played by the voluntary act of the original person, even if he did not intend to release such particular effect. Similar is the case of a person who does his *isāl al-thawāb* (the prayer for transmittal of reward) for somebody only when he has done him some favour. In view of this, the said reward and punishment of somebody else is, in reality, the reward and punishment of one's own deeds.

The noble Qur'ān, towards the far end, teaches Muslims to make a special *du'ā* or prayer in which forgiveness has been sought on commission of some act because of forgetfulness or neglect or mistake. It was said:

رَبَّنَا لَا تُؤَاخِذْنَآ إِنْ نَّسِيْنَآ أَوْ أَخْطَأْنَا

Our Lord, do not hold us accountable, if we forget or make a mistake.

Then it was further said:

رَبَّنَا وَلَا تَحْمِلْ عَلَيْنَآ إِصْرًا كَمَا حَمَلْتَهٗ عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِنَا رَبَّنَا وَلَا تُحَمِّلْنَا مَالَا طَاقَةَ لَنَا بِهٖ

Our Lord, do not place on us a burden such as You have placed on those before us. And our Lord, do not make us bear that for which we have no strength.

Indicated here are the severe restrictions placed on the Banī Isrā'īl (Israelites), such as, a piece of cloth could not be made fully pure unless cut or burnt, or that repentance could not be accepted without killing. Alternately, it could mean that punishment should not visit us as it visited the Bani Isra'il following their evil deeds.

In short, Allah Almighty bestowed His best when He promised the acceptance of all these prayers through His *Rasūl*, the last among the prophets, may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him.

ولله الحمد اوله و آخره وظاهره وباطنه وهوالمستعان

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MA'ĀRIFUL-QUR'ĀN

By

MAULĀNĀ MUFTI MUḤAMMAD SHAFI'

Translated by

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Maulānā Muḥammad Taqi 'Usmani

Volume 2

(Sūrah 'Āl-'Imrān, Al-Nisā')

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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

الحمد لله رب العالمين، والعاقبة للمتقين، والصلاة والسلام على سيد المرسلين، وعلى آله واصحابه اجمعين، وعلى كل من تبعهم باحسان الى يوم الدين

PREFACE

by
Justice Maulānā Muḥammad Tāqī Usmānī

It is a matter of honour and privilege for me to present the second volume of Ma'ariful-Qur'ān. The first volume was welcomed by the readers from all over the world and the stock of first edition came to an end within a very short period. It shows the great interest and enthusiasm of the readers towards an authentic and detailed commentary of the Holy Qur'ān. At the same time there was an increasing demand that the remaining volumes should be published as soon as possible. It was by the grace of Allah that we were able to complete the second and third volumes almost simultaneously and we hope that the third volume will also appear soon after the present one, *inshallah*.

As I have explained in my introduction to the first volume, the translation of the first volume was a combined effort of Professor Muḥammad Ḥasan Askari and Professor Muḥammad Shamīm. The present volume is exclusively translated by the latter, however, the whole manuscript has been revised and edited by me. I am extremely grateful to Prof. Muḥammad Shamīm who, not only undertook the work with his usual sense of commitment and objectivity but also accepted the amendments suggested by me during my revision. The translation of the Qur'anic texts is a joint effort of three members of the committee formed for the purpose, namely, Prof. Muḥammad

Shamīm, Muḥammad Wali Raazi and myself.

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I hope this volume will also be appreciated by the readers. May Allah bless this effort with his approval and make it beneficial for the *Ummah*.

Muḥammad Taqi Usmani
Darul-Uloom, Karachi-14
27 Muharram 1419
24 May 1998

TRANSLITERATION SCHEME

Arabic Letter	Name of Letter	English Transliteration
ا	الف -- Alif	a
ب	باء -- bā	b
ت	تاء -- tā	t
ث	ثاء -- thā	th
ج	جيم -- jīm	j
ح	حاء -- ḥā	ḥ
خ	خاء -- khā	kh
د	دال -- dāl	d
ذ	ذال -- dhāl	dh
ر	راء -- rā	r
ز	زاى -- zā	z
س	سين -- sīn	s
ش	شين -- shīn	sh
ص	صاد -- ṣād	ṣ
ض	ضاد -- ḍād	ḍ
ط	طاء -- ṭā	ṭ
ظ	ظاء -- ẓā	ẓ
ع	عين -- ‘ayn	‘
غ	غين -- ghayn	gh
ف	فاء -- fā	f
ق	قاف -- qāf	q
ك	كاف -- kāf	k
ل	لام -- lām	l
م	ميم -- mīm	m
ن	نون -- nūn	n
ه	هاء -- hā	h
و	واؤ -- wāw	w
ء	ہمزہ -- Hamzah	’
ى	ياء -- yā	y

Short Vowels

	: Fatḥah	a
	: Kasrah	i
	: Ḍammah	u

Long Vowels

ا	: Shortened Alif	ā
آ	: Maddah Alif	ā
ىِ	: Maddah Yā	ī
وُ	: Maddah Wāw	ū

Dipthongs

اى	:Alif and Yā	ay (also ai in some cases)
او اؤ	: Alif and Wāw	aw (also au in some cases)

Sūrah 'Āl-'Imrān

Verses 1-6

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

الٓمّٓ ﴿١﴾ اللّٰهُ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّوْمُ ﴿٢﴾ نَزَّلَ عَلَيْكَ
الْكِتٰبَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَاَنْزَلَ التَّوْرٰىةَ وَالْاِنْجِيْلَ
﴿٣﴾ مِنْ قَبْلُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ وَاَنْزَلَ الْفُرْقَانَ ۗ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا
بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيْدٌ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ عَزِيْزٌ ذُو انْتِقَامٍ ﴿٤﴾ اِنَّ
اللّٰهَ لَا يَخْفٰى عَلَيْهِ شَيْءٌ فِى الْاَرْضِ وَلَا فِى السَّمَآءِ ﴿٥﴾
هُوَ الَّذِيْ يُصَوِّرُكُمْ فِى الْاَرْحَامِ كَيْفَ يَشَآءُ ۗ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ
الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ ﴿٦﴾

With the name of Allah
the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful.

Alif Lām Mīm. [1] **Allah: There is no god but He, the Alive, the All-Sustaining.** [2] **He has revealed to you the Book with the truth confirming what has been before it, and sent down the Torah and Injīl**[1] [3] **(the Evangile) earlier to give guidance to mankind, and sent down the *Furqān* (the Criterion of right and wrong). Surely, those who have rejected the verses of Allah, for them there is severe punishment. And Allah is Mighty, Lord of Retribution.** [4] **Surely, Allah is such that nothing is hidden from Him, either in the earth or in the heaven.** [5] **He is the one who shapes you in the wombs as He likes. There is no god but He, the Mighty, the Wise.** [6]

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1. Whenever the Holy Qur'ān speaks of the 'Torah and the Injīl' it refers to the original books revealed to the prophets Moses and Jesus عليهما السلام. This should not, therefore, be confused with the present Old and New testaments.

This is the first section of Sūrah 'Āl-'Imrān, the third Sūrah of the Holy Qur'ān. It will be recalled that at the end of the Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah a prayer for guidance to the straight path was made. After that, by beginning the Sūrah Al-Baqarah with الٓمٓ ۚ ذٰلِكَ الْكِتٰبُ لَارَيْبَ فِيْهِ (This Book which has no doubt in it), it was pointed out that the prayer made in Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah for guidance to the straight path has been accepted and Allah Almighty has sent down this Qur'ān which provides guidance to the straight path. Then came many injunctions of the Islamic law taken up briefly or in details. As a corollary to this, frequent mention was made of the hostility of the disbelievers and the need to confront them. Towards the end, this sequence was concluded with وَانْصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ (Help us, then, against disbelieving people) - in the mode of prayer. Since the prayer was made in order that Muslims could confront and prevail over the disbelievers, it was in consonance with that prayer that, in the following Sūrah 'Āl-'Imrān, the text deals with the modalities of dealing with disbelievers, as well as, with the need to carry out *Jihād* against them, verbally and physically. This is, so to speak, an elaboration and extension of وَانْصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ (Help us, then, against disbelieving people).

A Summary of Meanings

These first five verses of Sūrah 'Āl-'Imrān explain the doctrine of *Tauḥīd,* the Oneness of Allah, which is the basic point of difference between Islam and other religions and between a disbeliever and a true Muslim. Those who believe in the Oneness of Allah (and in all His prophets - عليهم السلام) are Muslims and those who do not so believe are known as disbelievers or non-Muslims. The first verse of this section presents a rational proof of the Oneness of Allah; the second verse, the reported proof[1], followed by an answer to some doubts nursed by disbelievers towards the later part.

The first word, *Alif Lām Mīm* (الم) at the head of the first verse belongs to the special set of words used by the Qur'ān which are words of hidden meaning and are known as *Mutashābihāt,* the real meaning of

1. In the terminology of Islamic theology, a proof based on rational argument is called rational proof while a proof based on a verse of divine book or on a declaration made by an authority or a report narrated by a trustworthy person is called a reported proof.

which is a secret between Allah and His Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم, and the details of which appear a little later in the section. In the words اللهُ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ (Allah: there is no god but He) which follow immediately, the doctrine of the Oneness of Allah has been put forth as a categorical declaration. It means that there is absolutely nothing worthy of worship other than Allah.

Then come the words . . . اَلْحَيُّ الْقَيُّوْمُ (the Alive, the All-Sustaining) which lay out a rational proof of the Oneness of Allah. The essence of the argument is that worship means to present oneself before somebody in utter submission and humility. It, therefore, requires that the one who is being worshipped must occupy the highest point of honour and power and who has to be most perfect from all angles. From this it is obvious that anything which cannot sustain its own being, rather is dependent upon somebody else for its very existence, could hardly claim to have any honour or power in its own right. Therefore, it is crystal clear that all things in this world which have no power to come into being by themselves, nor can they sustain it - be they idols carved in stone, or water, or trees, or angels and apostles - none of them is worthy of worship. The only Being worthy of worship is the One who has always been Alive and Present and shall always live and sustain. Such a Being is none but Allah; there is none worthy of worship but Him.

Verse 3 which follows carries the reported proof of the Oneness of Allah. Briefly stated, it means that the principle of *Tauḥīd* as described in the Holy Qur'ān is not something peculiar to the Qur'ān or the Prophet of Islam. On the contrary, Allah Almighty has sent Scriptures such as the Torah and the Injīl, and His prophets, in earlier times. And this was they all professed and this was they all brought as the message. When the Qur'ān came, it simply confirmed their truth. It did not present any new claim which could pose problems for people in its understanding or acceptance.

The last two verses further fortify the doctrine of *Tauḥīd* on the ground that the attributes of encompassing knowledge and unlimited power are strong proofs of His being the One who possesses the eternal and all-encompassing knowledge and whose power controls everything, and that He is the only One who rightly deserves to be wor-

shipped. Any one having imperfect knowledge and limited power cannot be entrusted with this exalted station.

Tauḥīd a consistent belief preached by all prophets

Verse 2 gives a reported proof in some detail. The agreement of a large number of people on a certain principle from the very beginning of humanity may be taken as a natural proof of it's reality, if they belong to different times and places, having no means of communicating with each other.

Keeping this in view, we see that Sayyidna Ādam عليه السلام was the first prophet who presented the message of *Tauḥīd* before human beings. That the message would remain effective after him through his progeny is not difficult to conceive. But, after a passage of time when the ways of the progeny of Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام shifted away from the original message, there comes Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام (Noah) who calls people towards the same principle. After a long passage of time, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm, Ismā'il, Isḥāq and Yāqūb عليهم السلام born in Iraq and Syria rise with the same call. Then follow Sayyidnā Mūsā, Hārūn and other prophets in that order who all subscribe to the same principle of *Tauḥīd* and invite people to the same. Then, after another long passage of time, Sayyidnā 'Isā rises with the same call. In the end, it is Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā صلى الله عليه وسلم who graces the world with the common call of all prophets.

This is the golden chain of prophets from Sayyidnā Ādam to the Last of the Prophets صلى الله عليه وسلم upto whose time some one hundred and twenty four thousand blessed prophets were born in different periods, speaking different languages, living in different countries. All of them told and taught the same truth. Most of them did not even have the chance to meet each other. They were in an age when, communication through writing was not in vogue, which could make it possible for one prophet to have access to the books and writings of another and might help him to pick up the call of the earlier prophets as his own. Instead, what happened is that everyone from among them appeared centuries apart from each other, and had no source of information about other prophets, except the revelation received by him from Allah Almighty. The consensus of such a large group of persons consisting of not less than one hundred and twenty four thousand men of

different times and places may be enough for establishing the principle, even regardless of their intrinsic trustworthiness. But when one looks at the personal qualities of the noble prophets, and at the highest possible standards of truth and justice set by them, one has to believe that their message is true and their call authentic.

It is narrated in some *aḥādīth* that some Christians came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and engaged him in a conversation about religion. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , by the will of Allah, presented these two verses as arguments confirming the Oneness of Allah. The Christians had no answer to refute them.

Lastly, while referring to the absolute power and wisdom of Allah Almighty, verse 6 invites one's attention to the fact that Allah shapes all men and women in the wombs of their mothers according to His supreme wisdom which has created billions of men and women with clear distinguishable features establishing the identity of each individual distinct from all others. He is, therefore, the only One who should be worshipped.

Verse 7

هُوَ الَّذِىٓ اَنۡزَلَ عَلَيۡكَ الۡكِتٰبَ مِنۡهُ اٰيٰتٌ مُّحۡكَمٰتٌ هُنَّ اُمُّ
الۡكِتٰبِ وَاُخَرُ مُتَشٰبِهٰتٌ ؕ فَاَمَّا الَّذِيۡنَ فِىۡ قُلُوۡبِهِمۡ زَيۡغٌ
فَيَتَّبِعُوۡنَ مَا تَشَابَهَ مِنۡهُ ابۡتِغَآءَ الۡفِتۡنَةِ وَابۡتِغَآءَ تَاۡوِيۡلِهٖ ۚ وَمَا
يَعۡلَمُ تَاۡوِيۡلَهٗۤ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ ۘ وَالرّٰسِخُوۡنَ فِى الۡعِلۡمِ يَقُوۡلُوۡنَ اٰمَنَّا بِهٖ ۙ
كُلٌّ مِّنۡ عِنۡدِ رَبِّنَا ۚ وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ اِلَّاۤ اُولُوا الۡاَلۡبَابِ ﴿۷﴾

He is the One who has revealed to you the Book. A number of its verses are *Muḥkamāt* (of established meaning) - and those are the principal verses of the Book - and others, *Mutashābihāt* (whose definite meanings are unknown). Now those who have crookedness in their hearts go after such part of it as is *mutashābih* seeking (to create) discord and searching for its interpretation while no one knows its interpretation except Allah. And those well-grounded in knowledge say: "We believe therein; all is from our Lord." And only the men of understanding do observe the advice. [7]

Moving from the affirmation of the principle of Allah's Oneness, the text now answers some doubts raised against it. As stated briefly a little earlier, this verse was revealed in a specific background. Once a group of Christians came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and started talking about religion. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم refuted their doctrine of Trinity in details and proved the Oneness of Allah with reference to the eternal existence, the perfect power, the all-encompassing knowledge and the most unique creativity of Allah Almighty who had to be One and indivisible. The Christians had to accept these premises and once *Tauḥīd* was proved, the converse, that is, the belief in Trinity was also proved untenable. The Christians then expressed their doubts about some words of the Holy Qur'ān in which Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام i.e. Jesus Christ has been called '*Rūhullāh*' (the Spirit of Allah) or '*Kalimatullāh*' (the Word of Allah), which according to them led to prove that Sayyidnā 'Īsā had a share in the divinity of Allah.

Through this verse, Allah Almighty has put an end to these doubts by saying that such expressions are in the category of *Mutāshābihāt* where the outward meaning is not intended; they are, rather, a secret between Allah and His Messenger, the reality of which cannot become manifest to others for whom it is not even appropriate to go about determining the possible meanings of these words. One has to have faith in them by believing that whatever Allah Almighty has elected to mean through them is the truth. It is not permissible to dig deeper and mount further researches in this direction.

Meaning of محکم : *Muḥkam* and متشابہ : *Mutashābih*

Allah Almighty has, by mentioning محکمات : *Muḥkamāt* and متشابہات : *Mutashābihāt* right there in the beginning, pointed out towards a general principle which, if understood, could eradicate many doubts and disputes. The principle is that the Holy Qur'ān has two kinds of verses; one is known as the *Muḥkamāt* (of established meaning) and the other as the *Mutashābihāt* (whose definite meanings are unknown).

Muḥkamāt is the name of verses the meaning of which is open and clear to one who knows the rules of Arabic grammar fairly well. But when the meanings and explanations of particular verses are not clear to such a person, then, such verses are called the *Mutashābihāt*. (Maẓharī, v.2)

Allah Almighty has called the first kind of verses, that is, the *Muḥkamāt* - ام الكتاب : *'Umm al-Kitāb'* (which has been translated literally as 'mother verses') meaning thereby that such verses are the very root and essence of all teachings, and the meanings and explanations of which are free of doubt or ambiguity.

Since the exact intention of the second kind of verses, that is, the *Mutashābihāt,* remains ambiguous and uncertain, therefore, the correct method of their interpretation would be to harmonize them with the first kind, that is, the *Muḥkamāt.* Then, the rule is that any interpretation of the *Mutashābihāt* which goes against the first kind should be rejected absolutely and only that interpretation should be given credence which is not against the verses of established meaning (*Muḥkamāt*). For example, the Holy Qur'ān has clarified the position of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام (Jesus Christ) by saying إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا عَبْدٌ أَنْعَمْنَا عَلَيْهِ (he is nothing but a servant upon whom We have bestowed Our blessing- 43:59), or as elsewhere in the Qur'ān, by إِنَّ مَثَلَ عِيسَىٰ عِندَ اللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ آدَمَ خَلَقَهُ مِن تُرَابٍ (the example of 'Īsā before Allah is like that of Ādam whom He created from clay - 3:59).

These and several other verses like them show it clearly that Sayyidnā 'Īsā Masīḥ, عليه السلام , is a chosen servant of Allah created by Him. Therefore, the claim of Christians investing him with godhood and sonship is not correct.

Now, if someone closes his eyes towards all these verses which have an established meaning and unnecessarily coils with the expressions, كلمة الله (the Word of Allah) and وروح منه (a spirit from Him) and their likes from the category of *Mutashābihāt* (verses whose definite meanings cannot be ascertained) and starts deducing from them meanings which are against the *Muḥkamāt* of Qur'ān and other consistent statements, then, that would be a simple case of going astray and being obstinate.

The real meanings of *Mutashābihāt* are known to Allah alone. It is He who, in His mercy and favour, informs anyone He chooses of whatever part of the unknown He wills. Therefore, it is not correct to try and impose a certain meaning based on one's personal opinion.

The purpose of the statement, فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ زَيْغٌ 'now those who have

crookedness in their hearts...' is that people who are gentle in nature do not go about investigating much about *Mutashābihāt*. Instead, they accept these verses and simply believe in them taking these as the true Word of Allah. They realise that He, due to some wise consideration of His, did not reveal to us their meaning. This approach is, indeed, the safest and the most cautious. But, quite contrary to this, there still are people with crookedness in their hearts. They, with eyes closed, go on investigating and deliberating on *Mutashābihāt* to justify meanings that suit their fancies so that they can lead people astray. For such people, stern warnings have appeared in the Qur'ān and *Ḥadīth*.

Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی الله عنها says that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: When you see people busy investigating into the *Mutashābihāt*, stay away from them because these are the same people Allah has talked about (in the Qur'ān). (Bukhari, v.2)

In another *ḥadīth*, he said: I have three apprehensions about my people (*ummah*): (1) That they become wealthy and start to envy each other resulting in rifts and bloodshed; (2) that the Book of Allah is trifled with (that is, even the uninitiated and ignorant claim its perfect understanding through translations) and that which is not supposed to be understood (*Mutashābihāt*) becomes the very object of deliberations and investigations although Allah alone is the One who knows their meaning; (3) that they allow their knowledge, once it has increased, go to waste by forsaking efforts to increase it further. (Ibn Kathīr with reference to Tabarāni)

Who are the ones 'well grounded' in knowledge as identified towards the end of the verse: وَالرَّاسِخُوْنَ فِی الْعِلْمِ يَقُوْلُوْنَ اٰمَنَّا بِهٖ ? Muslims scholars have offered different explanations in this connection. The weightier position is that the reference here is to *ahl al-sunnah wa al-jama'ah*, the main body of Muslims who give credence only to that interpretation and explanation of the Holy Qur'ān and Sunnah which has been authentically reported from the blessed Companions, the righteous generations following them and upon which there is the consensus of the Muslim community, and who believe that the *Muḥkamāt* (verses of established meaning) of Qur'ān are its axis and centre, and who, humbly confessing their limitations of knowledge and insight, leave to Al-

lah the real meanings of *Mutashābihāt* which are beyond their comprehension and conceptualization. They are never proud of their knowledge, howsoever perfect it may be, nor of the strength of their faith. Instead of that , they constantly pray to Allah seeking steadfastness from Him, and His grace and mercy. They do not have mischief-prone temperaments which would instigate them to follow *Mutashābihāt* alone as the object of their intellectual pursuit. They take both, the *Muḥkamāt* and the *Mutashābihāt*, to be the truth because they firmly believe that both kinds of verses have emanated from one single source. But, the need to find out the meanings of the *Muḥkamāt* was, of course, useful and essential for us. This Allah Almighty has not kept secret. The meanings of such verses have been made very open and clear. Since Allah Almighty has elected not to disclose the meanings of *Mutashābihāt* to us due to some wise consideration of His, it is simply not necessary for us to find it out. That we believe in them as they are is quite sufficient. (Abridged from Maẓharī)

Verses 8 - 9

رَبَّنَا لَا تُزِغْ قُلُوبَنَا بَعْدَ إِذْ هَدَيْتَنَا وَهَبْ لَنَا مِن لَّدُنكَ رَحْمَةً ۚ إِنَّكَ أَنتَ الْوَهَّابُ ﴿٨﴾ رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ جَامِعُ النَّاسِ لِيَوْمٍ لَّا رَيْبَ فِيهِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُخْلِفُ الْمِيعَادَ ﴿٩﴾

"Our Lord, do not let our hearts go crooked after You have given us guidance, and bestow upon us mercy from Your own. Surely, You, and You alone, are the Bestower. [8] **Our Lord, You are going to assemble all the people on a day in which there is no doubt. Verily, Allah does not go back on His promise."** [9]

Sequence

The previous verse mentioned 'those well-grounded in knowledge' who, in spite of their excellent knowledge, were not proud of their excellence. Instead of that, they elected to have faith in what comes from their Lord. The present verse mentions yet another excellence of theirs - that they pray for steadfastness on the right path, not for any worldly gains, but for salvation in the life-to-come.

Commentary

The first verse (8) shows us that guidance and straying are from

Allah alone. When Allah intends to guide someone, He makes his heart tilt towards what is good and right; and when He decides to let someone go astray, He turns his heart away from the straight path.

This is just as it was said in a *ḥadīth* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ : There is no heart which is not there in between the two of Allah's fingers - He makes it firm on the truth as long as He wills, and turns it away from the truth when He wills.

He is Allah, absolute in power. He does what He wills. Therefore, those who are concerned about how to remain firm in their faith, they go to the source - requesting and praying Allah for steadfastness. The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم always used to pray for it as it appears in a *ḥadīth:* يَا مُقَلِّبَ الْقُلُوبِ ثَبِّتْ قُلُوبَنَا عَلَى دِينِكَ (O reverser of hearts, make our hearts firm on the faith chosen by You). (Maẓharī)

Verses 10 - 12

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَنْ تُغْنِيَ عَنْهُمْ أَمْوَالُهُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُهُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا ۖ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمْ وَقُودُ النَّارِ ﴿١٠﴾ كَدَأْبِ آلِ فِرْعَوْنَ وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ۚ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا فَأَخَذَهُمُ اللَّهُ بِذُنُوبِهِمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿١١﴾ قُلْ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا سَتُغْلَبُونَ وَتُحْشَرُونَ إِلَىٰ جَهَنَّمَ ۚ وَبِئْسَ الْمِهَادُ ﴿١٢﴾

"Surely, those who disbelieve, their wealth and their children shall not at all suffice them a bit against Allah. And those are the fuel of the Fire [10] **- a case similar to that of the House of Pharaoh and those before them. They denied our signs. So, Allah caught them for their sins. And Allah is severe at punishment.** [11] **Say to those who disbelieve: "You shall soon be overcome and gathered into Hell. And it is an evil bed to rest."** [12]

Sequence

The text now shifts from the verbal confrontation with disbelievers on the warnings about the coming physical encounter as pointed out in verse 12 - 'You shall soon be overcome (by Muslims)' - while the verses earlier (10 and 11) serve as the introduction.

Commentary

Some readers of verse 12: قُلْ لِّلَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا سَتُغْلَبُوْنَ, just cited, above may have some doubt about disbelievers being overcome because this is not the case with all disbelievers of the world. But, this doubt is unfounded as the disbelievers referred to here are the disbelievers and Jews of that particular time - from among whom, the pagans were overcome when killed or taken prisoners, and the Jews were overcome through killing or imprisonment as well as through *Jizya* and extradition. Therefore, this 'overcoming' of disbelievers mentioned in the verse simply does not refer to disbelievers universally.

Verses 13

قَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ اٰيَةٌ فِىْ فِئَتَيْنِ الْتَقَتَا ؕ فِئَةٌ تُقَاتِلُ فِىْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ وَاُخْرٰى كَافِرَةٌ يَّرَوْنَهُمْ مِّثْلَيْهِمْ رَاْىَ الْعَيْنِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يُؤَيِّدُ بِنَصْرِهٖ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ؕ اِنَّ فِىْ ذٰلِكَ لَعِبْرَةً لِّاُولِى الْاَبْصَارِ ﴿١٣﴾

"There was a sign for you in the two groups who faced each other: One group fighting in the way of Allah, and the other disbelieving, seeing themselves as twice of them, with open eyes. And Allah gives strength with His help to whomsoever He wills. Indeed, there is a lesson therein for those who have eyes." [13]

Sequence

In the previous verses, the disbelievers were informed that they will be overcome. Now, cited in this verse is an example of how the prophecy has been fulfilled.

Commentary

This verse refers to the Battle of Badr in which the disbelievers had about 1000 men, 700 camels and 100 horses, while the Muslim *mujāhidīn* were just over 300, having a total of 70 camels, 2 horses, 6 armours and 8 swords. The encounter was certainly strange as each combating group saw the opponent being twice its own numbers. The sighting of so many Muslims inspired awe in the hearts of the disbelievers, while Muslims who saw the disbelievers as twice of them turned to Allah more fervently. They had hopes of Allah's help, and ultimate victory, because they had placed their total trust in Allah, were

steadfast and sincerely believed in the promise of Allah revealed to them in the following words:

إِنْ يَكُنْ مِّنْكُمْ مِائَةٌ صَابِرَةٌ يَّغْلِبُوْا مِائَتَيْنِ

If there be among you a hundred patient ones, they shall overcome two hundred. (8:66)

If the actual number of disbelievers which was three times more than their own were to be realized by Muslims, they may have been overawed. This state of sighting the numbers of the other group as twice its own was at a particular time. At another time each of the two combating groups felt the other one as low in numbers, as it would appear later in Sūrah al-Anfāl.

To sum up, it can be safely said that making a small group of people with very little to fight against a much stronger group and score a victory, as prophecied in Makkah, is an unusual event full of lessons for the observant and the discerning.

Verses 14 - 17

زُيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ حُبُّ الشَّهَوٰتِ مِنَ النِّسَآءِ وَالْبَنِيْنَ وَالْقَنَاطِيْرِ الْمُقَنْطَرَةِ مِنَ الذَّهَبِ وَالْفِضَّةِ وَالْخَيْلِ الْمُسَوَّمَةِ وَالْاَنْعَامِ وَالْحَرْثِ ؕ ذٰلِكَ مَتَاعُ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ۚ وَاللّٰهُ عِنْدَهٗ حُسْنُ الْمَاٰبِ ﴿۱۴﴾ قُلْ اَؤُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِخَيْرٍ مِّنْ ذٰلِكُمْ ؕ لِلَّذِيْنَ اتَّقَوْا عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ جَنّٰتٌ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا وَ اَزْوَاجٌ مُّطَهَّرَةٌ وَّرِضْوَانٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ بَصِيْرٌۢ بِالْعِبَادِ ﴿۱۵﴾ ۚ اَلَّذِيْنَ يَقُوْلُوْنَ رَبَّنَآ اِنَّنَآ اٰمَنَّا فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوْبَنَا وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ ﴿۱۶﴾ اَلصّٰبِرِيْنَ وَالصّٰدِقِيْنَ وَالْقٰنِتِيْنَ وَالْمُنْفِقِيْنَ وَالْمُسْتَغْفِرِيْنَ بِالْاَسْحَارِ ﴿۱۷﴾

It has been made attractive for people to love the desires; that is, the women, the children, the hoarded heaps of gold and silver, the branded horses, the cattle and the tillage. That is an enjoyment of the worldly life. And with Allah lies the beauty of the final resort. [14]

Say: "Shall I tell you what is far better than that? For those who fear (Allah), there are with their Lord gardens beneath which rivers flow where they shall live for ever, and wives purified, and approval from Allah. And Allah is watchful over His servants" [15] **- those who say: "Our Lord, surely we have believed, so forgive us our sins and save us from the punishment of the Fire"** [16] **(and those who are) the patient, the truthful and the devout, who spend (in Allah's way) and who seek forgiveness in pre-dawn hours."** [17]

Sequence

That the hostility of disbelievers should be countered with *Jihad* against them was the theme in several previous verses. Now, in these verses the text explains the reason why the disbelievers indulge in hostility against Islam and Muslims. The reason for this and for all evil deeds is, in fact, the love of the worldly life. There are all sorts of people who line up against the truth - some driven by greed for wealth or power, some goaded by lust and some in defence of false ancestral customs. All this is just to grab a share in the temporal enjoyments of the present life which has been described in these verses.

Commentary

The limits of one's love for worldly enjoyments

The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has said: حُبُّ الدُّنْيَا رَأْسُ كُلِّ خَطِيْئَةٍ. It means that the love of *dunyā* (worldly life or worldly enjoyments) is the main source of all errors. The first verse here names some of the most desired things and says that they have been made to look attractive and therefore, people go after them enticed by their glamour brushing aside any concerns for the life to come, if there be any.

It will be noted that things named here are the center of attraction for human beings, out of which, women come first and then the children. For whatever man goes about procuring is because of the needs of his family - wife and children - to share it with him. Then come other forms of wealth and possessions - gold, silver, cattle and tillage - which attract people secondarily.

Why has man been made in a way that he is temperamentally attracted to these things? The answer is that Allah has done so in His ultimate wisdom. Let us consider:

1. If man was not naturally inclined to and even enamoured with these things, all wordly business would have gone topsy-turvy. Why would someone sweat on farms and fields? Why would a wage-earner or an entrepreneur burn themselves out in an industry, or a business-man would put his capital and labour in buying and selling things? The secret was that the people of the world were made to grow and survive through this instinctive love for such things whereby they would go about collecting and preserving these. The worker goes out to earn some money. The well-to-do goes out to hire a worker for his job. The trader brings forth his best merchandise for display waiting for a customer to earn something from. A customer goes to the shopping mall to buy things he needs to live or be happy with. If we think about it, we shall realize that it was the love for what is desirable in this mortal world which brought them out of their homes, and in this silent process, gave the world a strong and ongoing social system.

There is yet another element of wisdom behind it. If man had no liking for the blessings he finds in the mortal world, he would obviously have no taste or desire for blessings promised in the world to come. That being the case, why would he ever take the trouble of doing what is good and thus become deserving of Paradise, and not doing what is evil and thus become safe from Hell?

There is still another element of wisdom which is more significant for consideration here. Is it not that man, with love for these things in his heart, has been put to a test as to who becomes engrossed in the enjoyments of the present life and forgets the life to come, and who comes to realize the real and temporal nature of these things, shows concern for them only in proportion to his needs, and then channels all his efforts into deeds that would make his next life good and safe? The wisdom behind the adornment of such things has been pointed out elsewhere in the Holy Qur'ān itself:

إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا مَا عَلَى الْأَرْضِ زِينَةً لَّهَا لِنَبْلُوَهُمْ أَيُّهُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا

We made whatever there is on the earth its adornment so that We can test as to who among them acts best. (18:7)

The verse cited above clearly shows that the glamourizing of such desirable things is an act of God based on many wise considerations

However, as for verses where such glamourization of things has been attributed to Satan - for example, زَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ اَعْمَالَهُمْ (the Satan has made their deeds look attractive to them - 8:48; 16:63; 27:24; 29:38.) - there the reference is to things that are evil, religiously and rationally; or, the reference is to a false sense of adornment which is evil because it transgresses the limits set by Allah. Otherwise, it is not absolutely bad to adorn the lawful things. In fact, there may be a few benefits in doing so. Therefore, this act of placing attraction in things in some verses has been attributed to Allah, as stated above.

Let us summarize our discussion so far and see how it works for us in our practical life. We now know that Allah created, in His grace and wisdom, all good things of life in this world, made them look attractive and - worthy of man's effort to acquire them so that man can be tested. This is one of Allah's many acts of wisdom to see whether the man gets swayed by the glamour of the fleeting enjoyment of things, or remembers the Creator of these things, or the man forgets the very Creator of his own being as well. Aided by this realization, does man make these things a medium through which to know and love Allah; or, is it that he would elect to get totally lost in the love for these known transitory things, and forget all about the real Master and Creator before Whom he must appear on the Last Day and account for whatever he did.

On the one hand is a person who has the best of both worlds. He enjoys the blessings of the present life and uses its means for success in the life to come. For him, the enjoyments of the mortal world did not become a road-block; rather, they proved to be the milestones which led him safely into a prosperous Hereafter. But, for the other person these very things became the causes that led him to squander his chance of having a good life in the Hereafter, and also became the very cause of perennial punishment. Frankly, if we were to look a little deeper, we would realize that these things become a sort of punishment for him right here in this world as well. For such people, the Holy Qur'ān says:

فَلَا تُعْجِبْكَ اَمْوَالُهُمْ وَلَآ اَوْلَادُهُمْ اِنَّمَا يُرِيْدُ اللّٰهُ لِيُعَذِّبَهُمْ بِهَا فِى الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا

So, their wealth and children should not attract you. Allah wants to punish them with these in this lowly life - 9:55.

Thus, the lesson is that we can seek good things of life with moderation and even store them in accordance with our genuine needs. In this lies the ultimate good of this life and the life to come. Using them in prohibited ways, or indulging in them so excessively that one forgets the post-death reality of *Ākhirah* is nothing but self-destruction. The poet-sage, Maulānā Rūmī has illustrated this very eloquently when he said;

آب اندر زیر کشتی پشتی است
آب درکشتی هلاك کشتی است

He says that things of this world with which we surround ourselves are like water, and the heart of man is like a boat in it. As long as the water remains beneath and around the boat, it is good and helpful, and certainly guarantees the very purpose of its being there. But, if water gets into the boat, it makes the boat capsize and destroys all that was in it. Similarly, man's wealth and possessions are means of convenience for his role in this world and in the life to come - provided that they do not enter into his heart, sit there, and kill it in the process. Therefore, the verse under discussion, immediately after mentioning some specially desirable things of the world, presents the essential guideline for human beings by saying:

ذٰلِكَ مَتَاعُ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَاللّٰهُ عِنْدَهٗ حُسْنُ الْمَاٰبِ

That is an enjoyment of the worldly life. And with Allah lies the beauty of the final resort. (3:14)

In other words, it means that all these things are there simply to serve a purpose in man's mortal life in the present world and certainly not to have him fall in love with things for their own sake, for the real beauty of the experience lies in one's ultimate resort with Allah in blissful eternity enjoying what would never perish, diminish or weaken.

In the second verse that follows (15), the same subject has been further cleared by saying:

قُلْ اَؤُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِخَيْرٍ مِّنْ ذٰلِكُمْ لِلَّذِيْنَ اتَّقَوْا عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ جَنّٰتٌ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا وَاَزْوَاجٌ مُّطَهَّرَةٌ وَّرِضْوَانٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَاللّٰهُ بَصِيْرٌ بِالْعِبَادِ

Say: "Shall I not tell you what is far better than that? For

those who fear Allah, there are with their Lord gardens beneath which rivers flow, where they shall live for ever, and wives purified, and approval from Allah. And Allah is watchful over His servants."

Here, the address is to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم who is being asked to tell those who become obsessed with imperfect and perishable blessings they find in the present life that he is in a position to lead them on to far better blessings. These shall be the lot of those who fear Allah and are obedient to Him. These blessings are, 'gardens beneath which rivers flow, wives purified and favours from Allah' - the last being the ultimate man can and should aspire for.

It will be recalled that in the preceding verse (14), the total count of blessings that infatuate man was given as six - women, children, heaps of gold and silver, fine horses, cattle and tillage. As compared to that, only three blessings of the Hereafter, that is, the gardens of Paradise, wives purified and the approval from Allah have been identified. Out of the rest, children were not mentioned because man loves children during his life in the world as children help and strengthen him in what he does and through them his name lives on. But, in the Hereafter he would not need such help, nor would he 'die' in which case he may have to look for an heir. Apart from this, whoever has children would have them all in the Paradise. Whoever has no children in the mortal world would, to begin with, just not have the desire to have them in the Paradise. Should someone desire that he may have children, Allah Almighty would bless him with children. According to a *ḥadīth* in Jāmi' al-Tirmidhi, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'If a dweller of Paradise wishes to have children, the process of pregnancy, birth and growth of the child will be completed in no time and he would have what he wished for.'

Similarly, gold and silver were not mentioned in relation to the Paradise because gold and silver are needed in the mortal world as material things are bought against them or anything else one needs can be procured through them. In the Hereafter, there will be just no need to buy anything or sell anything or pay for anything. Instead of that, whatever the dweller of Paradise needs will be instantly provided. Incidentally, the Paradise itself is not without gold and silver.

Some sayings of the Prophet ﷺ mention that some places of Paradise will have bricks of gold and silver masoned one after the other. However, in view of the uniqueness of that life, gold and silver were not considered worth mentioning.

Now the horses. In the world of our experience, horses help cover distances. In the other world, there is no travel and no riding but, sound *ḥadīth* reports do prove that fine horses will be presented before the dwellers of Paradise on Fridays which they will ride to go and meet friends and relatives. As is evident, horses were not worth mentioning in this context, which is also true about cattles and farms and their produce. The services they provide have already been provided in the Paradise by Allah Almighty without their medium.

However, should there be someone there who for some unnecessary reason wishes to try farming, he will have his wish granted. As it appears in some reports in al-Ṭabarānī, everything needed for farming will be assembled instantly for such a person. Thereafter the whole process of ploughing, seeding, ripening and cutting will be accomplished in no time and he will have what he wished for before him. So, among the blessings of the *Ākhirah,* the mention of 'wives purified' was considered sufficient because the Holy Qur'ān has another promise for the people of Paradise: وَلَهُم مَّا يَشْتَهُونَ (And for them there is what they wish for). After such a comprehensive declaration, there remains no need to individually mention any particular blessing. Those that have been mentioned are blessings already there without any need to ask for these.

The last and most important blessing mentioned is the approval of Allah Almighty - something one cannot easily conceptualize - after which there is no danger of displeasure from Allah. According to a *ḥadīth*, when the people of Paradise would have settled down there, happy and content without having any desire remaining unfulfilled, Allah Almighty will speak to them asking if they are happy and if they need anything. They will say: Our Lord, You have given us everything, what else could we ever need. Allah Almighty would say: Now I give you the greatest of all blessings - you all have My approval that I will never be displeased with you, and nearness for ever.

Since the danger of Allah's displeasure does not exist in Paradise,

there is also no danger that the blessings of Paradise will ever be taken back or reduced.

It is the very subject of these verses that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has summarized in the following *ḥadīth*:

"الدنيا ملعونة و ملعون ما فيها الا ما ابتغى به وجه الله" وفى رواية "الا ذكر الله وما والاه او عالمًا او متعلماً"

'Wordly life is cursed and cursed is what is in there, except what is used to seek the pleasure of Allah'. According to another narration: '... except the *Dhikr* (Remembrance) of Allah and what Allah likes and except *'Ālim* (religious scholar) and *Ṭālib 'ilm* (student in religion).'

This *ḥadīth* has been reported by Ibn Mājah and al-Ṭabarānī on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه .

Verses 18 - 19

شَهِدَ اللّٰهُ اَنَّهٗ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ۙ وَالْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ وَاُولُوا الْعِلْمِ قَآئِمًاۢ بِالْقِسْطِ ۭ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ ﴿١٨﴾ اِنَّ الدِّيْنَ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ الْاِسْلَامُ ۣ وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ اِلَّا مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا جَآءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ بَغْيًاۢ بَيْنَهُمْ ۭ وَمَنْ يَّكْفُرْ بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ سَرِيْعُ الْحِسَابِ ﴿١٩﴾

Allah bears witness that there is no god but He - and (so do) the angels and the men of knowledge - being the One who maintains equity. There is no god but He, the Mighty, the Wise. [18]

Truly, the religion in the sight of Allah is Islam. And those who have been given the Book did not differ (among themselves) except after the knowledge had come to them, (and all this) due to envy against each other. And whoever denies the verses of Allah, then, Allah is swift at reckoning. [19]

The subject of *Tauḥīd* (Oneness of Allah) which began with the opening of Sūrah 'Āl-'Imrān reappears in the first verse in a very special manner. Out of the three witnesses mentioned here, the evidence

of Allah Almighty is in a figurative sense. It means that the being and the attributes of Allah and the manifestations of His power and creativity all over are open signs of His Oneness. Then there are the Messengers and Books sent by Allah, all confirming that truth. The second testimony mentioned is that of angels who are close to Allah. They carry out His instructions and bear testimony (knowing and seeing) that Allah alone is worthy of worship.

The third witness is that of the men of knowledge. This expression, *ulul-'ilm,* means the blessed prophets and men who have the knowledge of Islam. Imām al-Ghazālī and Ibn Kathīr find this a matter of great honour for *'Ulamā* for Allah has mentioned their witness along with His, and that of angels. It is also possible that the term, *ulul-'ilm* (the men of knowledge) may, in an absolute sense, be referring to those who, by conducting an inquiry based on sound intellectual principles, or by deliberating into this universe, could acquire the knowledge of the unity of Allah Almighty - even if they are not *'ālim* or 'men of knowledge' in the traditional sense, whose knowledge is acquired under a formal discipline from Islam's own original sources. The next verse (19) clearly settles that the only faith (*dīn*) acceptable to Allah is Islam. Thus, totally excluding any other faith or religion as acceptable to Allah, the verse completes the subject of Allah's Oneness, any opposition to which is doomed.

Related considerations

Merits of the verse meaning "Allah bears witness"

The verse beginning with شَهِدَ اللّٰهُ: *'shahidal-lāhu'* has a special elegance. Imām al-Baghawī, the renowned *mufassir* reports that two leading Jewish scholars came to Madinah from Syria. With the township of Madīnah before them, they started talking to each other about the looks of the place which matched the prophecy in Torah that the last of the prophets would be living here. Later, they came to know that someone very pious lives here and whom people refer to as the prophet. They went to see the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم . Their very first sight of him reminded them of all attributes which Torah had predicted he would have. They presented themselves before him and said: "You are Muḥammad?" He said: "Yes." Again, they said: "You are Aḥmad?" He said: "Yes, I am Muḥammad, and Aḥmad." Then they said:

"We are going to ask you a question. If you answer it correctly, we shall embrace Islam." He said: "Go ahead and ask." They asked: "Which is the greatest witness in the Book of Allah?" This verse of '*shahādah*' (witness) was revealed as an answer to this question. He recited it for them. Both of them embraced Islam immediately.

According to a *ḥadīth* in the Musnad of Aḥmad, when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم recited this verse in 'Arafat, he said right after that:

وَاَنَا عَلٰى ذٰلِكَ مِنَ الشّٰهِدِيْنَ يَا رَبِّ

And to that, O my Lord, I too am a witness. (Ibn Kathīr)

And a narration from Imām al-A'mash says: Whoever recites this verse and then says: وَاَنَا عَلٰى ذٰلِكَ مِنَ الشّٰهِدِيْنَ يَارَبِّ (And to that, O my Lord, I too am a witness), Allah Almighty will say to the angels on the Last Day: 'My servant has made a promise while I am the Foremost to keep a promise when I make it, so let my servant be admitted into Paradise.' (Ibn Kathīr)

Another *ḥadīth* from Sayyidnā Abū Ayyub al-Anṣārī رضى الله عنه narrates that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'Whoever recites *Ayah al-Kursī* (2:255) and the *Ayah* شَهِدَاللّٰهُ : *Shahidal-lāhu* (3:18) and قُلِ اللّٰهُمَّ مَالِكَ الْمُلْكِ: *Qulil-lāhumma mālik al-mulki* upto بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ : *bighairi ḥisāb* (3:26,27), Allah Almighty will forgive all his sins, admit him to Paradise and take care of seventy (i.e. plenty) of his needs, the simplest of these being his forgiveness.' (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī with reference to Dailamī)

Dīn and Islam: An Explanation of the Two words:

The word, *Dīn* (دين) has more than one meaning in the Arabic language, one of them being 'the way'. In the terminology of the Qur'ān, the word, *Dīn* is used to stand for principles and injunctions which are common to all prophets from Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام to the last of the prophets, Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā صلى الله عليه وسلم . The words, '*sharī'ah* (شريعة) or '*al-minhāj*' (المنهاج) or the word, '*madhhab*' (مذهب) from among the later-day terms, are used to cover subsidiary injunctions, which have been different during different ages and different communities. The Holy Qur'ān says:

شَرَعَ لَكُمْ مِّنَ الدِّيْنِ مَا وَصّٰى بِهٖ نُوْحًا

Allah made you follow the same religion with which He bound

Nūḥ (and other prophets) - 42:13.

This tells us that the *dīn* of all our blessed prophets was one and the same, that is, belief in the most perfect Being and Attributes of Allah, in His being free of all shortcomings and that He alone is worthy of worship, believing in this from the depth of one's heart and confirming it verbally; belief in the Day of Judgement, in the final reckoning of deeds, the reward and the punishment and in Paradise and Hell and in every prophet and messenger sent by Him and in all commandments and injunctions brought by them, believing all this in one's heart and confirming such belief verbally as well.

Now the real meaning of the word, *Islam* is to submit oneself to Allah and be obedient to His commands. Given this meaning, those who believed in the prophets and messengers of their time and were obedient to the commands of Allah they brought to them, were all entitled to be called Muslims, and their religion was Islam. It was in this sense of the word that Sayyidnā Nūḥ said: وَأُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ (I have been commanded that I be from among the Muslims - 10:72) and therefore, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام described himself and his community as Muslims when he said: رَبَّنَا وَاجْعَلْنَا مُسْلِمَيْنِ لَكَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِنَا أُمَّةً مُسْلِمَةً لَكَ (Our Lord, make us Muslims, the submitting ones to Thee, and from our progeny a community of Muslims submitting to Thee - 2:128). And it was in this very sense of the word that the disciples of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام said: وَاشْهَدْ بِأَنَّا مُسْلِمُونَ (And bear witness that we are Muslims - 3:52)

Sometimes this word is applied particularly to the *dīn* and *sharī'ah*, the religion and the law brought finally by the last among the prophets, Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā صلى الله عليه وسلم . This law abrogated all previous ways in religion and this shall sustain right through the Day of Judgment. Given this meaning of the word *Islam*, it becomes particular to the religion brought by the prophet of Islam and to the large community of his followers. In a well-known *ḥadīth* of Jibra'īl, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has explained Islam in this very manner.

The word, 'Al-Islam' as it appears in the verse here carries the likelihood of both meanings. If the first meaning is taken, it would mean that the only religion acceptable with Allah is Islam, that is, becoming obedient in complete submission to the commands of Allah, believing

in all prophets of all times and in whatever commandments they brought, by acting accordingly. Although, the religion brought by Ḥadrat Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم has not been specially identified here, yet, in persuance of the general rule, once the last among the line of prophets had been sent, the belief and practice of all injunctions he brought becomes binding, and inclusive under this rule. As such, the outcome will be that the religion acceptable during the period of Sayyidnā Nūḥ was what he brought; during the period of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm, what he brought. Similarly, the Islam of the period of Sayyidnā Mūsā was what came in the form of the tablets of Torah and the teachings of Moses and the Islam of the period of Sayyidnā 'Īsā was what came as Injīl and the teachings of Jesus, عليهم السلام. At the end of this chain of prophets, the Islam of the period of Sayyidnā Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم, the last among the prophets, shall be what took shape on the pattern given by the Qur'ān and Sunnah.

Now if we take the second meaning of *Islam*, that is, the Sharī'ah the way and law brought by the last of the prophets صلى الله عليه وسلم, the verse would come to mean that in this period of time only that religion of Islam which is true to the teachings of the noble prophet ﷺ is the one acceptable. No doubt, previous religions too, during their age of currency, were known as Islam, but they are now abrogated. So, the end-result is the same both ways, that is, during the age of every prophet, the religion acceptable in the sight of Allah is that particular Islam which conforms to the revelation and teachings credited to that prophet. No religion, other than this, even if it be a previously abrogated one, is acceptable and certainly not deserving of being called "Islam" at a later stage. The Sharī'ah of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm was the Islam of his times. When the time of Sayyidnā Mūsā came, the abrogated laws of that code did not remain the Islam of his time. Similarly, any laws of Moses abrogated during the time of Sayyidnā 'Īsā were not to be labelled as Islam any more. It is exactly like this when laws and injunctions of previous religious codes were abrogated during the time of the Last of the prophets ﷺ, they no more remained valid as Islam. Therefore, whatever meaning of Islam is taken, general or particular, in relation to the community being addressed by the Holy Qur'ān, the outcome of both is nothing but that, following the appearance of the noble Prophet ﷺ, the only religion which shall be deserving of the

name, *Islam*, will be the one that conforms to the Qur'ān and the teachings of the blessed recepient of revelations and that alone shall be acceptable in the sight of Allah. Since no other religion is acceptable to Allah, it cannot become a source of salvation either. This subject has appeared in the Holy Qur'ān in many verses separately. The exact words used in one such verse are: وَمَنْ يَبْتَغِ غَيْرَ الْإِسْلَامِ دِيْنًا فَلَنْ يُّقْبَلَ مِنْهُ that is, whoever seeks a religion other than Islam, it will not be accepted from him (and what is done under its dictates shall be wasted).

Salvation in our times depends on Islam: Even good deeds and morals from a non-Muslim are not acceptable.

These verses have very clearly hit at the root of the atheistic approach which endeavours to bracket Islam and disbelief (*kufr*) on the same footing in the name of tolerance preached by Islam, thereby claiming that every faith of the world - Judaism, Christianity, even paganism - can each become the source of salvation, on condition that its followers perform good deeds and observe good morals. This, in reality is a veiled attempt to demolish a principle of Islam and to prove that Islam is nothing of substance. It is something limpid and imaginary which could be moulded to fit into whatever religion one chooses, even if it is *kufr* or disbelief! The verses of the Holy Qur'ān, those appearing here and a large number of others, have very explicitly stressed that the light and darkness cannot be the same. Similarly, it is grossly absurd and impossible that Allah would like disobedience to and rebellion against Him just as He likes obedience and submission. Whoever denies even one basic principle of Islam, he is, without any shadow of doubt, a rebel to Allah and the enemy of His Messengers, no matter how impressing he may appear in his other deeds and formal morality. Salvation in the Hereafter depends, first of all, on obedience to Allah and His Messenger. Whoever remains deprived of it, not one of his deeds is credible. The Holy Qur'ān says for such people:

فَلَا نُقِيْمُ لَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَزْنًا

> We shall not assign weight to their deeds on the Day of Judgement - 18:105.

In verse 19: وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتَابَ اِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَآءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ بَغْيًا بَيْنَهُمْ, after declaring that 'the religion in the sight of Allah is Islam', the text moves on

to explain why the people of the Book went about disputing the prophethood of Sayyidnā Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم and challenging Islam as false. They did this, not because they had any doubts in this connection for they knew the truth of the matter through their own scriptures, but because they were scared of losing their ground against Muslims. So, it was their malice towards Muslims, their love for power and influence and their arrogant self-image as traditional leaders which drove them to these altercations.

Finally, it was said: وَمَنْ يَّكْفُرْ بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ سَرِيْعُ الْحِسَابِ that is, 'whoever denies the verses of Allah (as the people of the Book did), then, Allah is swift at reckoning'. The swiftness of this reckoning can be well imagined as it starts initially soon after death when man passes into the state known as '*barzakh*'. But the detailed accounting for one's deeds shall take place on the Day of Judgement when he will have to account for his doings in the minutest detail. Then, the penchant for disputing truth will be exposed. The people who denied the truth will discover their worth and the punishment it calls for shall become known to them.

Verse 20

فَاِنْ حَآجُّوْكَ فَقُلْ اَسْلَمْتُ وَجْهِىَ لِلّٰهِ وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَنِ ؕ وَقُلْ لِّلَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ وَالْاُمِّيّٖنَ ءَاَسْلَمْتُمْ ؕ فَاِنْ اَسْلَمُوْا فَقَدِ اهْتَدَوْا ۚ وَاِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَاِنَّمَا عَلَيْكَ الْبَلٰغُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ بَصِيْرٌۢ بِالْعِبَادِ ﴿۲۰﴾

Then, if they argue with you, say: "I have submitted myself to Allah, and (so did) those who have followed me." And say to those who have been given the Book, and to the unlettered: "Do you submit?" If they submit, they will be on the right path. And if they turn back, then you have only to convey. And Allah is watchful over His servants. [20]

The Sūrah began with the confirmation of Divine Oneness and the refutation of Trinity. Answered here are argumentations in which the disbelievers and deniers among the people of the Book persist - even after the truth of Islam has been proved conclusively. The advice against such ongoing and unnecessary disputations is that the acceptance or rejection of disputers should be of no use to a believer who

simply has to declare that he and those with him have entered the fold of Islam being in no doubt about its truth. The Holy Prophet ﷺ was entrusted with the mission of calling the people of the Book, the Jews and Christians, and the disbelievers of Arabia to submit to Allah and embrace Islam which will be for their own good for they will be on the right path. In case they continue to maintain their hostile attitude, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been comforted here by saying that his duty is only limited to conveying the message of Allah and His commandments. That the message does not seem to get across to them, as they elect to reject rather than accept, should really not be a matter of concern for him. This is something Allah will take care of in His own way for He is in full sight of what His servants are doing.

Verses 21 - 22

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْفُرُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَيَقْتُلُونَ النَّبِيِّينَ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ
وَيَقْتُلُونَ الَّذِينَ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْقِسْطِ مِنَ النَّاسِ فَبَشِّرْهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ
أَلِيمٍ ﴿٢١﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ حَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ
وَمَا لَهُمْ مِنْ نَاصِرِينَ ﴿٢٢﴾

Surely, those who disbelieve the verses of Allah and slay the prophets unjustly and, from people, slay those who bid justice, to them give tidings of a painful punishment. [21] **Those are the ones whose deeds have gone waste in this world, and in the Hereafter, and for them there are no helpers.** [22]

In the earlier part of the Sūrah, the text mostly beamed at the Christians. In verse 20, 'those who have been given the Book' includes both Christians and Jews. Now, verses 21-22 here, talk about some of the unusual doings of Jews. Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī while commenting on this verse reports a *ḥadīth* from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم as narrated by Ibn Abī Ḥātim. While explaining this verse, he said that Banī Isrā'īl slew forty three prophets at one and the same time. One hundred and seventy pious elders stood up asking them to uphold justice. They slew them as well on the same day. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

In verse 21, 'those who disbelieve the verses of Allah' refers to Jews who did not believe in the Injīl and the Qur'ān. 'Slay the prophets

unjustly' means that they know that they are doing so without justice. 'Those who bid justice' are people who teach moderation in deeds and morals.

Because of this whole set of their terrible deeds, verse 22 says that all their good deeds have gone waste both here and there, and when they are punished, they will find no one to assist them.

Verses 23 - 25

اَلَمْ تَرَ اِلَى الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوْا نَصِيْبًا مِّنَ الْكِتٰبِ يُدْعَوْنَ اِلٰى كِتٰبِ
اللّٰهِ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ يَتَوَلّٰى فَرِيْقٌ مِّنْهُمْ وَهُمْ مُّعْرِضُوْنَ ﴿٢٣﴾
ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمْ قَالُوْا لَنْ تَمَسَّنَا النَّارُ اِلَّآ اَيَّامًا مَّعْدُوْدٰتٍ وَّغَرَّهُمْ
فِيْ دِيْنِهِمْ مَّا كَانُوْا يَفْتَرُوْنَ ﴿٢٤﴾ فَكَيْفَ اِذَا جَمَعْنٰهُمْ لِيَوْمٍ
لَّا رَيْبَ فِيْهِ وَوُفِّيَتْ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُوْنَ
﴿٢٥﴾

Did you not see those who have been given a share from the Book? They are invited to the Book of Allah in order that it may decide between them. Then, a group from them goes back turning their faces away. [23] **That is because they have said: "The Fire shall not touch us except for a few days." And deceived they are in their faith by what they have been forging. [24] Then, how (will it be) when We gather them on a day in which there is no doubt, and everybody will be paid, in full, for what he has earned. And they shall not be wronged.**[25]

While dealing with the subject of Jews, as in verses 21-22, the text goes on to censure a particular claim of theirs in the present verse. The address is to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the reference is to the Torah given to the Jews who would have found it enough for them if they were really looking forward to guidance. But they elect to be indifferent because they say and believe that the fire of Hell will not touch them except for a few days, after which, according to their supposition, they would be forgiven. This, it has been said, is self-deception caused by what they have been forging for themselves like

their belief that they were the progeny of prophets and therefore, they will escape punishment in the fire of Hell.

Jews contended that they had worshipped the calf for 40 days and so they will incur punishment, if any, for the same period only.

Verses 26 - 27

قُلِ اللّٰهُمَّ مٰلِكَ الْمُلْكِ تُؤْتِی الْمُلْكَ مَنْ تَشَآءُ وَتَنْزِعُ الْمُلْكَ مِمَّنْ تَشَآءُ ۙ وَ تُعِزُّ مَنْ تَشَآءُ وَتُذِلُّ مَنْ تَشَآءُ ؕ بِيَدِكَ الْخَيْرُ ؕ اِنَّكَ عَلٰی كُلِّ شَیْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿۲۶﴾ تُوْلِجُ الَّيْلَ فِی النَّهَارِ وَ تُوْلِجُ النَّهَارَ فِی الَّيْلِ ۫ وَتُخْرِجُ الْحَیَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَتُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتَ مِنَ الْحَیِّ ۫ وَتَرْزُقُ مَنْ تَشَآءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ ﴿۲۷﴾

Say: "O Allah, O Lord of the Kingdom, You give kingdom to whom You will, and take kingdom away from whom You will; and You bestow honour on whom You will, and bring disgrace to whom You will. In your hand lies the good. You are surely powerful over everything. [26] **You make the night enter into the day, and make the day enter into the night; and You bring the living out from the dead, and bring the dead out from the living, and You give to whom You will without measure."** [27]

In these verses, Muslims have been taught and prompted to make a particular prayer which, in a subtle way, gives an indication that they are going to overpower disbelievers. This has its proof in the background in which these verses were revealed. When the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم promised that Byzantine and Persia will be taken, the hypocrites and the Jews laughed at the idea. Thereupon, this verse was revealed. [1]

Commentary

The background of Revelation:

An episode from the Battle of Khandaq

The recurring defeat of the disbelievers of Makkah at Badr and Uḥud and their general failure to register any gains in their hostility

1. Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī from al-Wāḥidī, from Ibn 'Abbās and Anas رضى الله عنهما

against Muslims coupled with the growing strength of Muslims and the rise of Islam had made them very nervous, almost reckless. The whole thing ended up in a conspiracy. The disbelievers of Arabia, the Jews and the Christians all joined in a united front against Muslims and resolved to attack Madīnah and fight a conclusive battle. This they did, determined to eradicate Islam and Muslims from the face of the earth. The battle is called 'al-Aḥzāb' in the Qur'ān, and 'Khandaq in history, because the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had decided in consultation with his Companions that a *khandaq* or trench be dug around parts of Madīnah to block the unhindered attack of the enemy during this battle.

According to narrations in al-Baihaqī, Abū Nu'aim and Ibn Khuzaimah, when the task of digging the trench was entrusted to the Islamic army, the plan was to allot the digging of a forty hand-span long trench to a group of ten men each. This trench was several miles long and fairly deep and wide, so that the enemy would find it impossible to cross over. Then, the digging had to be completed in the shortest possible time which made the noble Companions put in whatever time and energy they had in this effort, so much so that they found it difficult to leave the job and take time for even the most pressing of their needs. They were working non-stop on hungry stomachs. Surely, a modern army engineering service with its latest equipment would have not found this kind of job any easier to handle. Here, it was the power of faith which made the completion of this difficult assignment possible.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was taking part in this digging operation as an individual like everybody else. By chance, the diggers came upon a huge rock in a certain part of the trench. Those who were assigned to dig that part of the trench tried their best to break it apart but they became helpless and gave up. They asked Sayyidnā Salmān al-Fārisī رضى الله عنه to go to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , tell him about the problem and seek his instructions in this connection. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم immediately came at the spot, took the pickaxe in his blessed hands and struck at the rock. The rock was shattered into pieces and from it rose a streak of light which illuminated the area far and wide. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'In this light, I see the palaces and buildings of Hirah in the country of Persia.

He struck again and a second beam of light rose. He said: 'In this light, I was shown the red palaces and buildings of the Byzantinians.' When he struck the third time and the flame beamed its light around, he said: 'In this I was shown the great palaces of San'ā in Yemen.' Then, he said: 'I share the good news given by Jibra'īl with you that my community of Muslims will prevail over all these countries.'

When the hypocrites of Madīnah heard about it, they found an occasion to ridicule Muslims - 'just look at these people, here they are all scared of the enemy, digging trenches without eating and resting, not knowing for sure if their own lives will be safe, yet they are dreaming of running over Persia, Byzantine and Yemen!' It was in answer to a people so unfair and unjust that Allah Almighty revealed the verse:

قُلِ اللّٰهُمَّ مٰلِكَ الْمُلْكِ تُؤْتِي الْمُلْكَ مَنْ تَشَآءُ وَتَنْزِعُ الْمُلْكَ مِمَّنْ تَشَآءُ وَتُعِزُّ مَنْ تَشَآءُ وَتُذِلُّ مَنْ تَشَآءُ بِيَدِكَ الْخَيْرُ اِنَّكَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ

Say: "O Allah, O Lord of the Kingdom, You give kingdom to whom You will, and take kingdom away from whom You will; and You bestow honour on whom You will, and bring disgrace to whom You will. In Your hand lies the good. You are surely powerful over everything." (3 : 26)

Appearing in the form of a prayer, this verse so eloquently brings into focus the most perfect power of Allah as it manifests itself in the rise and fall of nations and in the revolutions that rock countries. At the same time it gives a hint that the prophecy made by the Holy Prophet ﷺ will come to pass and Persia and Byzantine will fall to Muslims. Here, enemies of Islam have been warned that they have not learnt their lesson from the rise and fall of past wielders of power for they judge events and personalities from the material angle while the truth is that all powers and governments of the world are in the hands of the most pristine power of Allah, the One in whose hands lies all honour and disgrace. There is no doubt that He is capable of making the poor and the meek sit on thrones and wrest power from kings and monarchs. Why then, should it be difficult for him to choose these ragged believers digging trenches to rule over Persia, Syria, Iraq and Yemen?

Things usually considered bad may ultimately prove not to be that bad:

Towards the end of the verse, the expression بِيَدِكَ الْخَيْرُ translated as

'in Your hand lies the good' needs some explanation. It will be noticed that in the earlier part of the verse both giving and taking of power and bestowing of honour and bringing of disgrace were mentioned side by side. It would have seemed in keeping with the occasion if the word, *'sharr'* (evil) would have been coupled with *'khair'* (good). But, the text elects to use the word, *'khair'* (good) alone and thereby points out to something real and significant in human affairs. The point worth noting is that a person or a people may regard something as unwelcome, and it may even be so for that particular person or people, but looked at from the wider angle of the whole community of nations, it may not be really evil. The Arab poet, *Mutanabbi* has put it very succinctly when he said:

مَصَائِبُ قَوْمٍ عِنْدَ قَوْمٍ فَوَائِدُ

The calamities of one group are the gains of another.

In short, the evil of things we regard as evil is partial. Looked at from its relationship to the Creator of the Universe and the Lord of all there is, and viewed in the perspective of the totality of the world of our experience, nothing is really evil or bad as such. So given the wisdom, the power and the consideration of the created universe as a whole, everything is good, *'khair'* as the verse sees sufficient to say.

The second verse (27) demonstrates that Allah controls all spaces and heavenly bodies and employs the sun and the moon to make the days longer than nights and the nights longer than the days at His will and command.

Mentioned after that is His unrivalled power of 'bringing the living out from the dead' such as, a chick from an egg, or a human infant from the sperm, or a tree from a seed and of 'bringing the dead out from the living' such as eggs from birds and beasts, sperm from humans or fruit from trees and dried grain from plants.

If we were to take 'the living' and 'the dead' in a broad and general sense, this will become inclusive of the learned and the ignorant, the perfect and the imperfect and the believer and the disbeliever (the Muslim and the *Kāfir*). It only goes to show that Allah's perfect power exercises absolute control over all phenomena, both physical and spiritual, through which He can make a Muslim out of a *Kāfir,* a perfect

believer out of a staunch disbeliever, a scholar out of an ignorant person - if He so wills. And if He so wills, He can let a believer turn into a disbeliever or a rustic into a scholar. He brought Ibrāhīm out of an idol-worshipper. He let the son of Prophet Nūḥ remain an infidel. Strange but true, the son of an *'ālim* (scholar) can remain illiterate and the son of someone illiterate can become an *'ālim*.

A discerning reader will not fail to notice the eloquent order in which Allah's most perfect power that reigns and runs the universe from the cosmos to the soul of man has been demonstrated so effectively.

The special merit of this verse:

Imām al-Baghawī reports a *ḥadīth* from the Holy Prophet ﷺ in which he said: It is Allah's promise that anyone who recites, after every Ṣalāh, the Sūrah al-Fātiḥah, Āyah al-Kursī, two verses of 'Āl-'Imrān, that is شَهِدَ اللّٰهُ اَنَّهٗ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ (2:18) and the present verse from قُلِ اللّٰهُمَّ مٰلِكَ الْمُلْكِ to بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ (26-27), He will make his abode in Paradise, and have him placed in the Sacred Enclosure, and bless him with His mercy seventy times every day, and fulfil seventy of his needs, and protect him against every envier and enemy and make him prevail over them.

Verses 28 - 30

لَا يَتَّخِذِ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ اَوْلِيَآءَ مِنْ دُوْنِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ۚ وَمَنْ
يَّفْعَلْ ذٰلِكَ فَلَيْسَ مِنَ اللّٰهِ فِيْ شَيْءٍ اِلَّآ اَنْ تَتَّقُوْا مِنْهُمْ
تُقٰىةً ۗ وَيُحَذِّرُكُمُ اللّٰهُ نَفْسَهٗ ۗ وَاِلَى اللّٰهِ الْمَصِيْرُ ﴿٢٨﴾ قُلْ اِنْ
تُخْفُوْا مَا فِيْ صُدُوْرِكُمْ اَوْ تُبْدُوْهُ يَعْلَمْهُ اللّٰهُ ۗ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي
السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿٢٩﴾
يَوْمَ تَجِدُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ مُّحْضَرًا ۚ وَّمَا عَمِلَتْ
مِنْ سُوْٓءٍ ۚ تَوَدُّ لَوْ اَنَّ بَيْنَهَا وَبَيْنَهٗٓ اَمَدًا ۢ بَعِيْدًا ۗ وَيُحَذِّرُكُمُ اللّٰهُ
نَفْسَهٗ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ رَءُوْفٌ ۢ بِالْعِبَادِ ﴿٣٠﴾

The believers must not take the disbelievers as friends instead of the believers. And whoever does that has no relation with Allah whatsoever, unless you guard

yourselves against an apprehension from them. And Allah warns you of Himself and to Allah is the return. [28] **Say: "Whether you conceal what is in your hearts or reveal it, Allah will know it." And He knows what is in the heavens and what is in the earth. And Allah is powerful over everything.** [29] **On the day, when everybody shall find brought before him whatever good he did and whatever evil he did, he will wish that there were a long distance between him and that (day). And Allah warns you of Himself. And Allah is compassionate to (His) servants.** [30]

Commentary

In these verses, Muslims have been instructed not to take disbelievers as their friends. Those who act against this instruction have been sternly warned: Those who take them as friends will find that their bond of love and friendship with Allah has been cut off. Any emotionally involved friendship that comes from the heart is absolutely forbidden (*Ḥarām*). However, a formal friendship at the level of mutual dealings is, no doubt, permissible; but, that too is not favoured if unnecessary.

Verses dealing with this subject have appeared at many places in the Holy Qur'ān with varying shades of meaning. It was said in Sūrah al-Mumtaḥinah:

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا عَدُوِّى وَعَدُوَّكُمْ أَوْلِيَآءَ تُلْقُونَ إِلَيْهِم بِالْمَوَدَّةِ ،

O those who believe, do not take My enemy and your enemy as friends having love for them. (60:1)

Then, towards the end it was said:

وَمَن يَفْعَلْهُ مِنكُمْ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ سَوَآءَ السَّبِيلِ

And whoever from among you does this he has gone astray from the right path. (60:1)

Elsewhere it was said:

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا الْيَهُودَ وَالنَّصَٰرَىٰٓ أَوْلِيَآءَ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَآءُ بَعْضٍ
وَمَن يَتَوَلَّهُم مِّنكُمْ فَإِنَّهُ مِنْهُمْ

O those who believe, do not take Jews or Christians as friends (for) they are friends among themselves. And whoever has friendship with them, he is one of them. (5:51)

And it appears in Sūrah al-Mujādalah:

لَا تَجِدُ قَوْمًا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ يُوَادُّونَ مَنْ حَادَّ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَلَوْ كَانُوا آبَاءَهُمْ أَوْ أَبْنَاءَهُمْ أَوْ إِخْوَانَهُمْ أَوْ عَشِيرَتَهُمْ

You shall not find those who believe in Allah and in the Hereafter having friendship with those who have enmity with Allah and His messenger, even though they may be their fathers or sons or brothers or members of their tribe. (58:22)

Relations with disbelievers

In verses cited above and in many other verses of the Holy Qur'ān, Muslims have been strongly prevented from *'Muwālat'* with non-Muslims, that is, from indulging in relations based on love and friendship. Looking at these clear instructions, non-Muslims who are not aware of the true intention and application of this rule start thinking that the religion of Muslims does not seem to have any place for toleration or bilateral relations or even common courtesy.

On the other hand, there are a large number of verses from the Holy Qur'ān, the words and acts of the noble Prophet ﷺ, the practice of the rightly-guided *Khulafā'* and other revered Companions, which bring to light injunctions and actual modes of dealing with non-Muslims by way of favour, compassion, generosity, sympathy and concern, which has little or no parallel in world history. A superficial look on these different attitudes may sense a sort of contradiction therein. But, this feeling is a result of only a cursory study of the true teachings of the Qur'ān. If we collect all verses of the Qur'ān, relating to this subject which appear at several different places and study them all together, we shall find nothing which could bother non-Muslims nor shall there remain any doubt of contradiction in the text of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth. With this need in view, given below is a full explanation of this point which will, hopefully, bring forth the distinction between various shades of friendship and the reality behind each of them. In addition to this, we shall also get to know what levels of friendship are permissible or impermissible and also the reasons why a certain level has been disallowed.

The truth of the matter is that there are different degrees or steps or levels in relations between two persons or groups. The first degree

of such relations comes from the heart, that of affection and love involving intense emotional commitment. This is called *Muwālāt* or close friendship. This sort of friendship is restricted to true Muslims. A Muslim is not permitted to have this kind of relationship with a non-Muslim.

The second degree is that of *Muwāsāt,* which means relationship based on sympathy, kindness and concern. It includes charitable help and support, condolence and consolation and any well-meaning attitude of wishing well. Barring disbelievers who are at war with Muslims, this kind of relationship is permissible with all other non-Muslims. A detailed explanation of this approach has appeared in Sūrah al-Mumtaḥinah (60:8) :

لَا يَنْهٰكُمُ اللّٰهُ عَنِ الَّذِيْنَ لَمْ يُقَاتِلُوْكُمْ فِى الدِّيْنِ وَلَمْ يُخْرِجُوْكُمْ مِّنْ دِيَارِكُمْ اَنْ تَبَرُّوْهُمْ وَتُقْسِطُوْٓا اِلَيْهِمْ

Allah does not forbid you from treating those who do not fight you on your faith, nor have they driven you out of your homes, with benevolence and equity.

The third degree is that of *Mudārāt* which means relations based on customary cordiality, adequacy in courtesy, pleasant and friendly behaviour and mannerly politeness. This too is permissible with all non-Muslims, specially so, when the objective is to present them with some beneficial aspect of the Faith, or when they are guests, or the purpose is to stay safe from any possible harm coming through them. The words, اِلَّآ اَنْ تَتَّقُوْا مِنْهُمْ تُقٰىةً (unless you guard yourselves against an apprehension from them) appearing in this verse mean this degree of *Mudārāt* which, in other words, means that *Muwālāt* or friendship with disbelievers is not permissible except when you are in a situation where you want to defend yourself against them. Since *Mudārāt* or sympathetic relations somewhat resemble *Muwālāt* or friendship, it was exempted from the category of *Muwālāt* . (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

The fourth degree is that of *Mu'āmalāt* or dealings. It means dealings and transactions in business or employment or wages or industry or technology. These too are permissible with non-Muslims, except when such dealings harm the general body of Muslims. The continued practice of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , the rightly-guided *Khulafā'*

and other Companions prove it so. It is on this basis that Muslim jurists have prohibited the sale of arms to disbelievers who are at war with Muslims. However, trade and activities allied to it have been permitted. Also allowed is having them as employees or being employed in their plants and institutions.

To sum up, as for the four degrees of relations with non-Muslims, we now know that friendship which binds a Muslim in very close ties with non-Muslims is not permissible under any condition. Relations based on benevolence, humane interest and concern are permitted with all but the belligerent ones. Similarly, politeness and friendly treatment is also permissible when the purpose is to entertain a guest, convey Islamic teachings to non-Muslims or to stay safe against being hurt or harmed by them.

Now, let us look at what our noble Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , who graced this world as the universal mercy, did for non-Muslims. He demonstrated such compassion, generosity and politeness while dealing with them that it would be difficult to find its example in the world history. When Makkah was in the grip of famine, he personally went out to help his enemies who had made him leave his home town. Then, came the conquest of Makkah. All these enemies fell under his power and control. He set all of them free saying: لَا تَثْرِيْبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْيَوْمَ which means - 'Not only that you are being given amnesty this day, we are not censuring you at all for your past tyranny against us either.' When non-Muslim prisoners of war were presented before him, he treated them with such tenderness which many cannot claim to have done even in respect of their children. The disbelievers inflicted on him all sorts of injuries and pain but he never raised his hand in revenge. He did not even wish ill of them. A delegation from the tribe of Banū Thaqīf who had not embraced Islam upto that time came to visit him. They were given the honour of staying in the Mosque of the Prophet, a place regarded by Muslims as most honourable.

Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه gave stipends and allowances to needy non-Muslim *dhimmīs*, an elegant conduct the examples of which are spread all over in the accounts of dealings credited to the rightly-guided *Khulafā'* and the noble Companions. Let us bear in mind that all these were in one or the other form of *Mu'wāsāt* (concern)

or *Mudārāt* (cordiality) or *Mu'āmalāt* (dealings). It had nothing to do with *Muwālāt* or close and intimate friendship which had been forbidden.

The aforesaid explanations clarify two things: firstly, Islam teaches its adherents all possible tolerance, decency and benevolence while dealing with non-Muslims; secondly, the superficial contradiction sensed with regard to the verse forbidding friendship with non-Muslims stands removed.

However, there is a possible question which still remains unanswered. The question is: 'Why has the Qur'ān chosen to so strongly block close friendship with disbelievers, so much so that it has not allowed it in favour of any disbeliever under any condition? What is the wisdom behind it? One of the reasons, a particular one, is that Islam does not see man existing in this world like common animals or jungle trees and blades of grass which sprout, grow, flourish and die and that is the end of it. Instead of that, man's life in this world is a purposeful life. All stages and phases of his life, that is, his eating, drinking, standing, sitting, sleeping, waking, even his living and dying, all revolve around a central purpose. As long as what he does conforms to this purpose, all he does is correct and sound. If these are against that purpose, then, they are all wrong. The poet-sage Rūmī said it so well:

زندگی از بہر ذکر و بندگی ست

بے عبادت زندگی شرمندگی ست

The purpose of life is to remember the Creator and serve Him well

Life without that devotion is nothing but shame

In his view and in the view of all right-minded people, when man abandons this purpose, he does not remain the human being he was created to be:

آنچہ می بینی خلافِ آدم اند

نیستند آدم غلافِ آدم اند

What you see is a crowd of anti-men

They are not men, they are just the shell of men

The Holy Qur'ān has made human beings declare this purpose as their solemn creed in the following words: قُلْ اِنَّ صَلَاتِیْ وَنُسُکِیْ وَ مَحْیَایَ وَمَمَاتِیْ لِلّٰہِ

(My prayer and my sacrifice and my life and my death are all for Allah, the Lord of the Worlds." (6:162)

Now, when it stands established that the purpose of man's life is to obey and worship Allah, the Lord of the worlds, everything else including all affairs of life in this world -- business, government, politics, personal and social relations -- must invariably follow this purpose. It follows, therefore, that those who are against this purpose are the worst enemies of man. Since Satan is the foremost in this enmity, the Holy Qur'ān says: إِنَّ الشَّيْطٰنَ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ فَاتَّخِذُوْهُ عَدُوًّا ، (Surely, Satan is your enemy, so take him as enemy. 35:6).

Thus, those who follow the alluring dictates of the Satan and oppose the injunctions of Allah brought by the blessed prophets عليهم السلام can hardly be the kind of people to deserve deep love and friendship based on close ties and any degree of intimacy. It is just not possible for a person who has a definite purpose in life, and who has all his friendships and enmities, agreements and disagreements subservient to this central purpose, to do something like this. The same subject has been stated in a *ḥadīth* from al-Bukhārī and Muslim in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said: مَنْ اَحَبَّ لِلّٰهِ وَاَبْغَضَ لِلّٰهِ فَقَدِ اسْتَكْمَلَ اِيْمَانَهُ ، (Whoever loves for the sake of Allah and hates for the sake of Allah alone, has perfected his faith) (Bukhārī and Muslim). From here we know that *'Īmān* or faith remains incomplete unless man subordinates his love and friendship and his hatred and enmity to Allah Almighty. Therefore, any deep emotional commitment by a true Muslim in the known forms of love and friendship has to be exclusively for one who is with him all the way in the pursuit of this noble purpose and certainly obedient to what his Lord has commanded him to do. This is why the Holy Qur'ān has, in verses cited at the beginning of the commentary, said that the one who maintains relations based on deep love and friendship with disbelievers is one of them.

The last verse (30) says that 'Allah warns you of Himself' lest you should indulge in friendship with disbelievers for the sake of fleeting interests and objectives and thus invite the anger of Allah. And since close friendship (*Muwālāt*) relates to the heart and the affairs of the heart are known to none but Allah, it is possible that a person may actually be intensely in love for and friendship with disbelievers, but

may deny it verbally. Therefore, the earlier verse (29) has already covered it by saying: "whether you conceal what is in your hearts, or disclose it, Allah shall know it." No denial or false claim is tenable before Him.

Verses 31 - 32

قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ
ذُنُوبَكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿٣١﴾ قُلْ أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ ۖ
فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْكٰفِرِينَ ﴿٣٢﴾

Say (O Prophet): "If you do love Allah, follow me; Allah shall love you and forgive you your sins. And Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful." [31]

Say: "Obey Allah and the Messenger." Then, should they turn back, Allah does not love the disbelievers." [32]

Sequence

In previous verses, there was affirmation of Allah's Oneness and the condemnation of disbelief in it. Affirmed now is the belief in prophethood as well as the necessity of following the Messenger so that we stand informed that the rejection of prophethood or refusal to obey the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is also an act of disbelief (*kufr*) like the rejection of the Oneness of Allah.

Commentary

Love is something secret. Whether or not a person loves another person, or loves less or more, are questions which cannot be answered precisely. There is no measure or yard-stick to determine the truth of the matter except that one makes an educated guess based on visible conditions and dealings, for love leaves traces and signs which could help in recognizing it as such. Now, in these verses, Allah Almighty tells those who claimed that they loved Allah and hoped to be loved by Him above the real criterion of His love. In other words, if a person living in the world of today claims that he loves his Creator and Master, then, he must test it on the touch-stone of his obedience to the Messenger, that is, match it against the frequency and quality of where and how he has been following him. Once this is done, the genuine and the fake of it will be exposed right there. How much true a person

turns out to be in his claim will be visible from how much he makes it a point to follow the noble prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , using the guidance brought by him as the guiding force in his life. The same test will show that the weaker a person is in his claim, so equally weak he shall be in his obedience to the prophet.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said:

> He who obeyed Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم obeyed Allah and he who disobeyed Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم disobeyed Allah. (Tafsīr Maẓharī, v.2)

Verses 33 - 34

إِنَّ اللّٰهَ اصْطَفٰىٓ اٰدَمَ وَنُوْحًا وَّاٰلَ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَاٰلَ عِمْرٰنَ عَلَى الْعٰلَمِيْنَ
﴿٣٣﴾ ذُرِّيَّةًۢ بَعْضُهَا مِنْۢ بَعْضٍ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ سَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿٣٤﴾

Verily, Allah has chosen Ādam and Nūḥ and the House of Ibrāhīm and the House of 'Imrān over the worlds, [33] **some of them being a progeny of the others. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.** [34]

In these verses a reference has been made to some past prophets to comfort the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم since disbelievers did not obey him because they doubted his prophethood. It is for their guidance that names of some past prophets have been cited to help remove such doubts. However, these prophets have been referred to very briefly as the main purpose is to mention Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام which follows immediately because he will come again to this world and will work with the followers of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , therefore, it is necessary for the Muslims to know his identification.

Verses 35 - 36

اِذْ قَالَتِ امْرَاَتُ عِمْرٰنَ رَبِّ اِنِّىْ نَذَرْتُ لَكَ مَا فِىْ بَطْنِىْ
مُحَرَّرًا فَتَقَبَّلْ مِنِّىْ ۚ اِنَّكَ اَنْتَ السَّمِيْعُ الْعَلِيْمُ ﴿٣٥﴾ فَلَمَّا
وَضَعَتْهَا قَالَتْ رَبِّ اِنِّىْ وَضَعْتُهَآ اُنْثٰى ۗ وَاللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا
وَضَعَتْ ۗ وَلَيْسَ الذَّكَرُ كَالْاُنْثٰى ۚ وَاِنِّىْ سَمَّيْتُهَا مَرْيَمَ وَاِنِّىْٓ

أُعِيذُهَا بِكَ وَذُرِّيَّتَهَا مِنَ الشَّيْطٰنِ الرَّجِيمِ ﴿٣٦﴾

When 'Imran's wife said: "O my Lord, I have vowed what is in my womb to be exclusively for You. So, accept (it) from me. You, certainly You, are the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing." [35]

So, when she delivered her, she said: "O my Lord, I have delivered her, a female child" - and Allah knows better what she has delivered, and the male is not like the female - "and I have named her Maryam, and I place her and her progeny under Your shelter against Satan, the rejected." [36]

Commentary:

In the religious code of earlier prophets, there was a method of worship through which a child, out of one's children, could be freed from all worldly services and devoted exclusively for Allah. Following this practice, the mother of Sayyidah Maryam made a vow during her pregnancy that she would let the newborn serve Baitul-Maqdis in the way of Allah and that she would not put the child on worldly chores. Sayyidah Maryam's mother thought that she will deliver a male child. But, when she delivered a girl, she was full of remorse thinking that a girl would not be able to do this duty. But Allah Almighty, out of His consideration for the sincerity of Sayyidah Maryam's mother, accepted that very girl and thereby made her status distinct from any other girl of the world.

From here we learn that a mother holds a certain measure of guardianship over her child in respect of his or her education and training, for Sayyidah Maryam's mother would have never vowed if the mother had no right of guardianship over her child. Similarly, it proves that a mother too has the right to give a name to her child. (al-Jassas)

Verse 37

فَتَقَبَّلَهَا رَبُّهَا بِقَبُولٍ حَسَنٍ وَّأَنْۢبَتَهَا نَبَاتًا حَسَنًا ۙ وَّكَفَّلَهَا زَكَرِيَّا ۚ كُلَّمَا دَخَلَ عَلَيْهَا زَكَرِيَّا الْمِحْرَابَ ۙ وَجَدَ عِنْدَهَا رِزْقًا ۚ قَالَ يٰمَرْيَمُ أَنّٰى لَكِ هٰذَا ۖ قَالَتْ هُوَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللّٰهِ ۖ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَرْزُقُ مَنْ يَّشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ ﴿٣٧﴾

So, her Lord accepted her, a good acceptance, and made her grow, a good growth, and made Zakariyya her guardian. Whenever Zakariyya visited her in the Arch, he found with her some food. He said: "Maryam, from where has it come for you?" She said: "It is from Allah. Surely, Allah gives whom He wills without measure." [37]

Commentary

In order to fulfil her vow, Sayyidah Maryam's mother took her to the Mosque of Baitul-Maqdis and talked to the care-takers and worshippers at the Mosque, Sayyidnā Zakariyyā being one of them, and told them that she had vowed to dedicate the child in the service of God and therefore, she could not keep the child with her. She asked them to take her and keep her.

Sayyidnā 'Imrān was the Imām of this Mosque. He had died during the pregnancy of Maryam's mother, otherwise he would have been the most deserving person to have taken charge of the child, being the father and the Imām of the Mosque. Therefore, every keeper and worshipper of the Mosque wished to take her in his custody. Sayyidnā Zakariyyā pleaded his bid for custody by saying that his wife was Maryam's aunt and she being next to her mother certainly deserved to keep her. But, people did not agree to prefer him over the others. Finally, everybody agreed to draw lots, which turned out to be fairly strange as it would appear later. Here too, it was Sayyidnā Zakariyyā عليه السلام who turned out to be the winner.

So, he got custody of Maryam. According to some reports, he employed a wet-nurse to have her suckled. Other reports say that she just did not need to be suckled. She grew up able to sit and walk and Sayyidnā Zakariyyā عليه السلام put her in a good house adjacent to the Mosque. When he went out, he locked the house and opened it on return. This has been stated briefly in the present verse.

Verse 38

هُنَالِكَ دَعَا زَكَرِيَّا رَبَّهٗ ۚ قَالَ رَبِّ هَبْ لِيْ مِنْ لَّدُنْكَ ذُرِّيَّةً طَيِّبَةً ۚ اِنَّكَ سَمِيْعُ الدُّعَآءِ ﴿٣٨﴾

Thereupon, Zakariyyā prayed to his Lord. He said: "O

my Lord, grant me from Your own (power) a goodly progeny. Verily, You are the listener of the prayer." [38]

Commentary

1. While looking at the first sentence of this verse - هُنَالِكَ دَعَا زَكَرِيَّا رَبَّهٗ (Thereupon, Zakariyyā prayed to his Lord) - we should bear in mind that Sayyidnā Zakariyyā had no offspring upto that time. He had grown old and one usually does not have children in that age, although he firmly believed that Allah, in His ultimate power, could change the usual phenomenon and bless him with an offspring even at his advanced age. But he had not personally witnessed the unusual divine acts - such as he did when he saw unusual and out-of-season eatables provided for Sayyidah Maryam - and that was why he did not have the courage to extend his hand of prayer for an offspring. Now when he saw the miracle with his own eyes, he was persuaded for such prayer under the belief that Allah, who can provide a servant with out-of-season fruits, would also bless him with an offspring, even in this late age, and so he prayed.

2. The second sentence of the verse - قَالَ رَبِّ هَبْ لِيْ مِنْ لَّدُنْكَ ذُرِّيَّةً طَيِّبَةً: 'He said: "O my Lord, grant me from Your own (power) a goodly progeny."' - tells us that making prayers to have children is a blessed practice of the prophets and the righteous.

In another verse Allah Almighty has said: وَلَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلًا مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُمْ اَزْوَاجًا وَّذُرِّيَّةً: "And We sent messengers before you and provided them with wives and children"- (13:38). It means that children are among the blessings of Allah which were bestowed on the Holy Prophet ﷺ as well as on other prophets.

Now, should someone try to stop the birth of children, by any means, he will not only rebel against nature but will also deprive himself of having acted in harmony with the common and agreed practice of prophets علیہم السلام . The Holy Prophet of Islam صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has given great importance to the question of marriage and children, so much so that he did not allow anyone to avoid married life and children inspite of his capability, and refused to take such a person as a member of his community of followers. He said:

(۱) اَلنِّكَاحُ مِنْ سُنَّتِيْ

(٢) فَمَنْ رَغِبَ عَنْ سُنَّتِي فَلَيْسَ مِنِّي
(٣) تَزَوَّجُوا الْوَدُوْدَ الْوَلُوْدَ فَإِنِّي مُكَاثِرٌ بِكُمُ الْأُمَمَ

(1) Marriage is my *sunnah* (way).
(2) So, whoever turns away from my *sunnah*, he is not from me.
(3) Therefore, marry a woman who is loving and fertile, for I shall compete with other communities on the basis of your numbers.

In another verse, Allah Almighty praises those who pray before Him to have a wife in marriage, have children and have them grow good and righteous. He says:

وَالَّذِيْنَ يَقُوْلُوْنَ رَبَّنَا هَبْ لَنَا مِنْ اَزْوَاجِنَا وَذُرِّيّٰتِنَا قُرَّةَ اَعْيُنٍ

And those who say: "O our Lord, bless us with such among our wives and our children as be the delight of our eyes. (25:74)

Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, رحمه الله, says that the Qur'ānic expression - '*qurrata a'yun*' (literally: coolness or lustre of the eyes; meaning someone dearly loved and cherished) - here means that the maker of prayer sees his children and wife devoted in obedience to Allah.

It appears in a *ḥadīth* that Umm Sulaym رضی الله عنها requested the Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم to pray for his attendant, Sayyidnā Anas. He made the following prayer for him:

اَللّٰهُمَّ اَكْثِرْ مَالَهٗ وَ وَلَدَهٗ وَ بَارِكْ لَهٗ فِيْمَا اَعْطَيْتَهٗ

O Allah, increase his wealth and his children and make him prosper in what You have bestowed on him.

It was the outcome of this very prayer that Sayyidnā Anas رضی الله عنه had about a hundred children and was also blessed with an ample measure of wealth.

Verse 39

فَنَادَتْهُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ وَهُوَ قَآئِمٌ يُّصَلِّيْ فِي الْمِحْرَابِ ۙ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يُبَشِّرُكَ بِيَحْيٰى مُصَدِّقًا ۢ بِكَلِمَةٍ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَ سَيِّدًا وَّحَصُوْرًا وَّنَبِيًّا مِّنَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ ﴿٣٩﴾

So then, the angels called out to him, while he stood

praying in the Arch, saying: "Allah gives you the good news of Yaḥyā (John) who shall come to confirm a word of Allah and shall be a chief, abstinent (from women), a prophet and one of the righteous." [39]

Commentary

1. The expression, كَلِمَةُ اللهِ : 'a word of Allah' refers to Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام. This term is used for him because he was created, in an unusual manner, simply by the will and command of Allah - without a paternal linkage.

2. The second quality of Sayyidnā Yaḥyā has been described by the word, '*ḥaṣūr*' translated here as 'abstinent'. It means that he was very particular about keeping himself shielded from temptations, that is, from things one habitually enjoys. When we say one abstains from enjoyments of life, the statement includes abstinence even from fulfilling the desires of things allowed, for example, good food, good dress and marital life and things like these. Since the quality of abstinence has been mentioned here in a positive frame of reference, it obviously seems to suggest that this is the better way, although *aḥadīth* prove the higher merit of living in the bond of marriage. In this situation, the considered opinion is that one whose condition is similar to that of Sayyidnā Yaḥyā عليه السلام and who is so absorbed in the thought of his life-to-come that he feels no need to have a wife nor has the time and frame of mind to fulfil the rights of his wife and children, then, for such a person this is the better choice. It is because of this particular reason that *aḥadīth* which describe the merit of marriage come up with a restrictive clause as well, that is, مَنِ اسْتَطَاعَ مِنْكُمُ الْبَاءَةَ which means that one who can marry and is capable of fulfilling the due rights of his wife, should marry, for this is better for him; otherwise, he is not advised to marry. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Verses 40 - 41

قَالَ رَبِّ اَنّٰى يَكُوْنُ لِىْ غُلٰمٌ وَّقَدْ بَلَغَنِىَ الْكِبَرُ وَامْرَاَتِىْ عَاقِرٌ ؕ قَالَ كَذٰلِكَ اللّٰهُ يَفْعَلُ مَا يَشَآءُ ﴿۴۰﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ لِّىْٓ اٰيَةً ؕ قَالَ اٰيَتُكَ اَلَّا تُكَلِّمَ النَّاسَ ثَلٰثَةَ اَيَّامٍ اِلَّا رَمْزًا ؕ وَاذْكُرْ

رَبَّكَ كَثِيرًا وَسَبِّحْ بِالْعَشِيِّ وَالْإِبْكَارِ ﴿٤١﴾

He said: "O my Lord, how shall I have a boy when old age has come upon me and my wife is barren?" Said He: "That is how Allah does what He wills." [40]

He said: "O my Lord, set for me a sign." Said He: "Your sign is that you shall not be able to speak to people for three days except through gestures. And remember your Lord much and proclaim His purity at evening and at morning." [41]

Commentary

We have already seen that Sayyidnā Zakariyyā عليه السلام believed in the absolute power of Allah and had seen its manifestation repeatedly and that he had himself made the prayer and knew of its acceptance as well, what then, did he mean by asking: 'how shall I have a boy?' The truth of the matter is that the question asked by him was not because of any doubt in the absolute power of Allah. Quite contrary to this, the purpose of the question was to find out the state in which this was to happen: whether the present extreme old age of both of them would remain just as it was, or would that state be changed. The eloquent reply given in كَذٰلِكَ اللّٰهُ يَفْعَلُ مَا يَشَآءُ (That is how Allah does what He wills) makes it clear that they were to remain at the same age and that they would have an offspring in that very state. This resolves any doubt that may be entertained at this point. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

2. With reference to verse 41, Sayyidnā Zakariyyā's purpose behind requesting a sign (of pregnancy) was to be happy at the prospect and thus be enabled to show their gratitude all along even prior to the actual birth of the child. So, Allah gave him the sign stated above.

The sign given was remarkably suitable to its purpose. His request for a sign was prompted by his wish to show his gratefulness. Now, the sign set for him leaves him incapable of doing anything but this. Even a hundred signs would have not done what this one sign did and, of course, the noble purpose he had on his mind was all too well-accomplished. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

3. The last phrase: إِلَّا رَمْزًا (except through gestures) in this verse tells us that in a situation where speech is not possible because of a

valid reason, gesture would be deemed as its substitute. Consequently, it appears in a *ḥadīth* that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم asked a maid-servant: اين الله ('Where is Allah?'). She pointed out towards the sky. He said: 'This maid-servant is a Muslim.' (al-Qurṭubī)

Verses 42 - 43

وَإِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ يٰمَرْيَمُ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ اصْطَفٰكِ وَطَهَّرَكِ وَاصْطَفٰكِ عَلٰى نِسَآءِ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٤٢﴾ يٰمَرْيَمُ اقْنُتِىْ لِرَبِّكِ وَ اسْجُدِىْ وَارْكَعِىْ مَعَ الرّٰكِعِيْنَ ﴿٤٣﴾

And when the angels said: "O Maryam, Allah has chosen you and purified you and chosen you over the women of all the worlds. [42] **O Maryam, stand in devotion to your Lord, and prostrate and bow down with those who bow."** [43]

Commentary

1. In verse 42, the sentence: وَاصْطَفٰكِ عَلٰى نِسَآءِ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ (and has chosen you over women of all the worlds) refers to all women in that period of time. Therefore, the statement سَيِّدَةُ نِسَآءِ اَهْلِ الْجَنَّةِ فَاطِمَة (Fatimah is the foremost among women of the Paradise) appearing in *ḥadīth* does not contradict it.

2. It will be noticed that, in the last sentence of verse 43: وَارْكَعِىْ مَعَ الرّٰكِعِيْنَ (and bow down with those who bow) while giving an order to bow down, the imperative has been qualified with the words "with those who bow"- but no such qualification appears while giving an order of prostration. This apparently seems to hint that people generally do not observe due concern while making *rukū'* (bowing). They tend to bend a little, then resume the standing position (as if in a hurry). This kind of *rukū'* (bowing) is closer to standing (*qiyām*). As said earlier, it apparently seems to suggest that Allah Almighty, by mentioning the qualification 'those who bow', has given a model to be followed so that one's bowing in prayer could become similar to those who bow fully and perfectly as due.

Verse 44

ذٰلِكَ مِنْ اَنْۢبَآءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوْحِيْهِ اِلَيْكَ ؕ وَمَا كُنْتَ لَدَيْهِمْ اِذْ يُلْقُوْنَ

اَقْلَامَهُمْ اَيُّهُمْ يَكْفُلُ مَرْيَمَ ۖ وَمَا كُنْتَ لَدَيْهِمْ اِذْ يَخْتَصِمُوْنَ ﴿٤٤﴾

This is a part of the news of the unseen We reveal to you. And you were not with them when they were casting their pens (to decide) who from among them should be the guardian of Maryam, nor were you with them when they were quarreling. [44]

Commentary

This verse presents an argument to prove the prophethood of Sayyidnā Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم by referring to happenings in the lives of Sayyidnā Zakariyyā and Sayyidah Maryam عليهما السلام . These took place in the remote past and there is no likelihood of their being seen or heard or read, specially so, by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , which by itself proves that his being so informed of the unknown was beyond the ordinary course of learning. He had just no way of finding out such details by any obvious means at his command. Hence, the truth is that this information was revealed to him as part of the message he gave to others. The text very eloquently states that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was not there to see them drawing lots (by throwing their reed pens in water, based on prior agreement that the owner of the pen which flows against the current shall be the winner), nor was he present on the scene when they were initially quarreling about the custody of Maryam before agreeing upon the drawing of lots.

The rule governing *Qur'ah* (قرعة) (to the drawing of lots) according to Ḥanafī jurists, is that *Qur'ah* (drawing of lots) cannot be given a decisive role in determining the rights known and fixed in Islamic Law. Drawing lots in such a situation is included under *Qimār* (gambling). For example, if something is jointly owned by several persons and a lot is drawn to decide that the one whose name comes out in the lot shall take the whole thing; or, in the case of a child whose parentage is disputed, a lot is drawn and the one whose name comes out in the lot drawn is taken to be the father. Drawing lots in such cases is not allowed in Shari'ah. As for rights which depend upon opinion, *Qur'ah* is permissible in them, for instance, while alloting portions of a joint property, A is given the eastern portion and B, the western, by drawing a lot. This is permissible because this was permissible even without having to draw lots by a mutual agreement of the parties con-

cerned or by a decree of a judge. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

In other words, it can be said that in a situation where the rights of all parties are equal and the purpose of the lot is only to allocate equal portions to each of them and to decide as to which portion is for whom, then drawing a lot is permissible.

Verses 45 - 46

إِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ يٰمَرْيَمُ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُبَشِّرُكِ بِكَلِمَةٍ مِّنْهُ اسْمُهُ الْمَسِيحُ
عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ وَجِيهًا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَمِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِينَ ﴿٤٥﴾
وَيُكَلِّمُ النَّاسَ فِي الْمَهْدِ وَكَهْلًا وَّمِنَ الصّٰلِحِينَ ﴿٤٦﴾

When the angels said: "O Maryam, Allah gives you the good news of a word from Him whose name is Masīḥ 'Īsā, the son of Maryam (the Messiah Jesus, son of Mary) a man of status in this world and in the Hereafter and one of the nearest. [45] **And he shall speak to the people in the cradle as well as in the middle age, and shall be one of the righteous."** [46]

The previous verse (44) appeared parenthetically between the present verses 45 - 46 and verses 42 - 43 and the purpose was to affirm the prophethood of Sayyidnā Muḥammad صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم . The present verse resumes with the story of Sayyidah Maryam which actually prepares the ground for a fuller account of the birth, mission and miracles of Sayyidnā 'Īsā علیہ السلام .

Commentary

One of the qualities of Sayyidnā 'Īsā علیہ السلام mentioned in this verse is that 'he shall speak in the cradle' which means that he will speak while still a child, although no child has the ability to do so. When soon after the birth of infant Jesus, as mentioned in another verse, people chided Sayyidah Maryam on the basis of a false accusation, this new-born infant, Sayyidnā 'Īsā علیہ السلام spoke up, saying: انی عبداللہ (I am a servant of Allah). Then following immediately, it was said that he will also talk to people when he will be in the later middle of his age (*kahl*). It is worth noting here that the incidence of speaking in infancy was certainly a sign and a miracle and it is quite appropriate to mention it at this point. But, speaking to people during one's middle age is very normal, something everyone does no matter whether he is

a Muslim, or a non-Muslim, learned or illiterate. Why has this been mentioned here as something special? What could it mean?

One answer to this question appears in Bayān al-Qur'ān by Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī who says that the real purpose here is to particularly focus on the miraculous nature of meaningful infant speech. The reference to the speech in the middle age is there to indicate that his childhood speech too would not be the usual baby-talk, rather it would be rational, even learned and eloquent, as man does in his advanced years. If we were to look into the true historical background of Sayyidnā 'Īsā, we would discover that this reference to him as speaking to people in his middle age provides a great standing argument in favour of the Islamic position which, according to the Qur'anic belief, is that Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام has been raised alive onto the heavens.

Ḥadīth narrations prove that Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام, while so raised, was in the approximate age bracket of 30-35 years which is youth at its best. Middle age, *kahl* in Arabic, was something he never reached during his life in this world. So, his talking to people in his middle age can happen only when he were to grace this world once again with his presence. Therefore, the way his childhood speech was a miracle, his speech in the middle age could be nothing else but another miracle.

Verse 47

قَالَتْ رَبِّ اَنّٰى يَكُوْنُ لِيْ وَلَدٌ وَّلَمْ يَمْسَسْنِيْ بَشَرٌ ؕ قَالَ كَذٰلِكِ اللّٰهُ يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَآءُ ؕ اِذَا قَضٰٓى اَمْرًا فَاِنَّمَا يَقُوْلُ لَهٗ كُنْ فَيَكُوْنُ ﴿٤٧﴾

She said: "O my Lord, how shall I have a son while no human has ever touched me?" Said He: "That is how Allah creates what He wills." When He decides a matter, He simply says to it "Be", and it happens." [47]

The glad tidings given by the angel (verse 46) regarding the birth of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام without a father surprised Sayyidah Maryam as she was a virgin. She wondered how would it happen. Would that be a Divine miracle or would she be asked to marry a man? The Divine answer eliminates the latter possibility. Not restricted by it, 'Allah creates what He wills', that is, His will is all sufficient to bring something into existence. He needs no medium or cause. It is only His com-

mand "be" which makes things come into existence.

Verses 48 - 51

وَيُعَلِّمُهُ الْكِتٰبَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَالتَّوْرٰىةَ وَالْاِنْجِيْلَ ﴿٤٨﴾ وَرَسُوْلًا
اِلٰى بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ ۙ اَنِّيْ قَدْ جِئْتُكُمْ بِاٰيَةٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ ۙ اَنِّيْٓ اَخْلُقُ
لَكُمْ مِّنَ الطِّيْنِ كَهَيْـَٔةِ الطَّيْرِ فَاَنْفُخُ فِيْهِ فَيَكُوْنُ طَيْرًاۢ بِاِذْنِ
اللّٰهِ ۚ وَاُبْرِئُ الْاَكْمَهَ وَالْاَبْرَصَ وَاُحْيِ الْمَوْتٰى بِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ ۚ
وَاُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا تَاْكُلُوْنَ وَمَا تَدَّخِرُوْنَ ۙ فِيْ بُيُوْتِكُمْ ۗ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ
لَاٰيَةً لَّكُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿٤٩﴾ وَمُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيَّ مِنَ
التَّوْرٰىةِ وَلِاُحِلَّ لَكُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِيْ حُرِّمَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَجِئْتُكُمْ بِاٰيَةٍ
مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ ۫ فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَاَطِيْعُوْنِ ﴿٥٠﴾ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ رَبِّيْ وَرَبُّكُمْ
فَاعْبُدُوْهُ ۗ هٰذَا صِرَاطٌ مُّسْتَقِيْمٌ ﴿٥١﴾

And He shall teach him the Book and the Wisdom, and the Torah and the Injīl, [48] **and (shall make him) a messenger to the Children of Isrā'il (who will say to them): "I have come to you with a sign from your Lord, that is, I create for you from clay something in the shape of a bird, then I blow in it, and it becomes a living bird with the will of Allah; and I cure the born-blind and the leper and I cause the dead to become alive with the will of Allah; and I tell you of what you eat and what you store in your homes. In it there is surely a sign for you, if you are believers."** [49]

"And (I have come to you) confirming what is before me, the Torah, and to make permissible for you some of what was prohibited to you. And I have come to you with a sign from your Lord. So, fear Allah and obey me. [50] **Allah is surely my Lord and your Lord. So, worship Him. This is the straight path."** [51]

1. Verse 48 recounts the august virtues of Sayyidnā 'Īsā who would be born blessed with the honour of learning from Allah: Scriptures, Wisdom and specially the Torah and the Injīl; and that he will be sent as a Messenger of Allah to all of the Children of Isrā'īl.

2. The message he will carry to them will be his argument in favour of his prophethood. In order that they believe, enumerated in verse 49, there are four signs or miracles that he would perform, being enough for willing believers.

3. Verse 50 says that Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام will declare that he has come to confirm Torah which was revealed before his coming and to make lawful what remained unlawful for them in the law of Moses. This means that the unlawfulness of some things in the earlier code would stand abrogated by the new one, (that of Sayyidnā 'Īsā) whose station of prophethood was the conclusive argument for that claim of abrogation. The proof of his truth were the signs from their Lord.

4. Once his prophethood is established, verse 51 states that Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام will ask them to beware of any contravention of Divine commandments, fear Allah, and follow his teachings in matters of religion which, in a nutshell, are that 'Allah is my Lord and your Lord' (the ultimate in belief) and 'Worship Him' (the ultimate in deeds). This, then, is the straight path which helps perfect the ideal combination of beliefs and deeds, leads to the way of salvation and is the source of communion with Allah.

Ruling:

Making the shape of a bird was the making of a picture, something permitted in that Sharī'ah. In our Sharī'ah, its permissibility was abrogated.

Verses 52 - 53

فَلَمَّآ اَحَسَّ عِيْسٰى مِنْهُمُ الْكُفْرَ قَالَ مَنْ اَنْصَارِيْٓ اِلَى اللّٰهِ ؕ قَالَ الْحَوَارِيُّوْنَ نَحْنُ اَنْصَارُ اللّٰهِ ۚ اٰمَنَّا بِاللّٰهِ ۚ وَاشْهَدْ بِاَنَّا مُسْلِمُوْنَ ﴿٥٢﴾ رَبَّنَآ اٰمَنَّا بِمَآ اَنْزَلْتَ وَاتَّبَعْنَا الرَّسُوْلَ فَاكْتُبْنَا مَعَ الشّٰهِدِيْنَ ﴿٥٣﴾

So, when 'Īsā sensed disbelief in them, he said: "Who are my helpers in the way of Allah?" The disciples said: "We are helpers of Allah. We believe in Allah; and be witness that we are Muslims." [52]

"Our Lord, we have believed in what You have re-

vealed, and we have followed the messenger. So, write us down with those who bear witness." [53]

Following blessed predictions mentioned earlier, Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام was born with all promised signs. As a messenger sent to Banī Isrā'īl, he presented his call to them supported by miracles to prove his prophethood. But, the Banī Isrā'īl were adamant and kept on rejecting him as a prophet, even going to the limit of being physically hostile to him.

The text now identifies the very first followers of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام, brings to light their real creed, expressed first before their prophet and then (in verse 53), reiterated it in the form of a prayer before their Lord.

Commentary

The word, '*ḥawāriyy* (singular of '*al-ḥawāriyyūn*') appearing in verse 52 (translated as 'the disciples'), is a derivation from *ḥawār* which lexically means whiteness. In the religious terminology, the title of '*ḥawāriyy*' has been given to the sincere disciples or companions of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام either because of their sincerity or the purity of their heart, or because of their white dress. Likewise, the Companions of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم have been called, *ṣaḥābiyy* (plural, *saḥābah*).

Some commentators have given the number of the disciples as twelve. Incidentally, the word '*ḥawāriyy*' is also, at times, used in the absolute sense of 'helper' or 'supporter'. It is in this very sense that it was said in a *ḥadīth:* "Every prophet has a *ḥawāriyy*, that is, a sincere companion; Zubair is my *ḥawāriyy*' (Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī)

An Important Note:

Verse 52 states that Sayyidnā 'Īsā looked for helpers in the way of Allah only when he sensed hostility from disbelievers, and not at the initial stage of his call. As obvious, he had risen to the task all alone obeying the command of his Lord without worrying about setting up a 'party' in advance. When came the need, he found a group around him. A little thought here would show that every worthy mission demands such determination and courage.

Verses 54 - 55

وَ مَكَرُوْا وَمَكَرَ اللّٰهُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ خَيْرُ الْمٰكِرِيْنَ ﴿٥٤﴾ اِذْ قَالَ اللّٰهُ يٰعِيْسٰۤى اِنِّىْ مُتَوَفِّيْكَ وَرَافِعُكَ اِلَىَّ وَمُطَهِّرُكَ مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَجَاعِلُ الَّذِيْنَ اتَّبَعُوْكَ فَوْقَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْۤا اِلٰى يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ ۚ ثُمَّ اِلَىَّ مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَاَحْكُمُ بَيْنَكُمْ فِيْمَا كُنْتُمْ فِيْهِ تَخْتَلِفُوْنَ ﴿٥٥﴾

And they made a move, and Allah made a move. And Allah is the best of those who make moves. [54]
When Allah said: "O 'Īsā, I am to take you in full and raise you towards Myself, and cleanse you of those who disbelieve, and place those who follow you above those who disbelieve, upto the Day of Doom. Then to Me is your return, whereupon I shall judge between you in what you have been differing in." [55]

Commentary

In these verses the miraculous event of the Ascension of Sayyidnā 'Īsā (Jesus Christ) has been mentioned. "And they made a move" refers to the evil designs of the Jews who planned to arrest him and to get him crucified.

The next sentence i.e. "and Allah made a move" refers to the plan designed by Allah Almighty to save his prophet 'Īsā from their ill designs. They sent one of them to Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام to arrest him and Allah changed his face totally and made him resemble Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and raised Sayyidnā 'Īsā to heavens, while that person was crucified under the mistaken identity. How Allah had planned to save 'Īsā عليه السلام from their clutches was disclosed to him when his enemies came to arrest him. The details of these disclosures have been mentioned in verse 55.

Explanation of important words in the verse

Some sects which deny, contrary to the belief of the entire Muslim community, the Ascension of Sayyidnā 'Īsā (Jesus Christ), his being alive in the heavens and his descension towards the later times, have

worked through the words and meanings of these verses to open doors of distortion in the Qur'anic text. Therefore, it seems appropriate that these words be explained in some details.

Let us begin with وَاللّٰهُ خَيْرُ الْمٰكِرِيْنَ translated as 'and Allah is the best of those who make moves'. The word, *makr* in Arabic denotes a subtle and secret move or plan. If this is for a good purpose, it is good; and if this is for a bad purpose, it is bad. It was why the restriction of *saiyy* (سيئ : evil) was placed with *makr* (مكر: move, plan) in: وَلَا يَحِيْقُ الْمَكْرُ السَّيِّئُ اِلَّا بِاَهْلِه (And evil plan besets none but its perpetrator - 35:43).

The Qur'anic word, *makr,* is used exclusively for conspiracy, evil plan and strategy in the everyday idiom of the Urdu language (in which this commentary was originally written), therefore, it should not be equated with the Arabic usage. This is the reason why Allah has been called: خَيْرُ الْمٰكِرِيْنَ : *'Khair al-Mākirīn'* here.

The verse means that the Jews started making a series of conspiracies and secret schemes against Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام going to the limit of convincing the ruler of the time that he was a heretic (God forbid) all bent upon changing the Torah and was going to make apostates of everybody. The ruler ordered the arrest of Sayyidnā 'Īsā. While this was the scene on one side, the subtle and secret move made by Allah Almighty was countering their evil plans more effectively, which has been mentioned in the verses coming next.

The word, *'Mutawaffi'* in اِنِّيْ مُتَوَفِّيْكَ takes *'tawaffī'* as its verbal noun with its root being *'wafyun.'* Lexically, the word means 'to take in full'. This being its real meaning, its derivations *wafā, īfā'* and *'istīfā'* are used to convey that sense. In fact, the real meaning of *tawaffī* is 'to take in full' which is universally confirmed by all lexicons of the Arabic language. Since man completes his appointed time at the hour of death and the spirit or soul given by Allah is taken back fully and conclusively, it is in that context that this word is also used figuratively in the sense of death. A simple form of death is the daily sleep of human beings. For this too, the Holy Qur'ān uses the same word when it says:

اَللّٰهُ يَتَوَفَّى الْاَنْفُسَ حِيْنَ مَوْتِهَا وَ الَّتِيْ لَمْ تَمُتْ فِيْ مَنَامِهَا

'Allah takes away lives of the living at the time of their death and of those that do not die, in their sleep'. (39:42)

Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Taimiyyah says in *al-Jawāb al-Ṣaḥīḥ* (v. 2, p. 83):

التوفى فى لغة العرب معناها القبض والا ستيفا ء وذلك ثلاثة انواع، أحدها التوفى فى النوم، والثانى توفى الموت، والثالث توفى الروح والبدن جميعًا

Al-tawaffī, in the Arabic language, means: to exact fully or take in full. It takes three forms; the first: to take in sleep; the second: to take in death; and the third: to take the soul and the body all together.

In Kulliyāt Abū al-Baqā', it is said:

التوفى الاماتة وقبض الروح، وعليه استعمال العامة او الاستيفا ء واخذ الحق وعليه استعمال البلغا ء

Al-tawaffī is putting to death and exacting of the soul in common usage while, in the classical usage, it is taking in full and the exacting of the due right.

Therefore, the majority of scholars have translated the word, متوفيك: '*mutawaffika*' in the verse under study in the sense of 'taking in full'. This means that Allah will not leave Sayyidnā 'Īsā in the hands of the Jews, rather He would take him away which would be in the form that he would be risen unto Him in the heavens.

This is how the words 'I am to take you in full' have been interpreted by the majority of the scholars. However, some authentic commentators of the Holy Qur'ān have interpreted these words in the sense of 'giving death' also, but they do not mean that the death of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام will occur at the hands of his enemies. The true meaning of the verse, according to these commentators is as follows:

Allah Almighty said two things to comfort Jesus at a time when the Jews were bent on killing him. One: That his death will come, not at their hands in the form of killing, but that it would be a natural death. Two: In order to rescue him from the evil designs of those people, Allah Almighty will, at that time, raise Jesus towards Him. This explanation is exactly what has been reported from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه as quoted by al-Suyūṭī in his al-Durr al-Manthūr v. 2, p. 36 on the authority of several narrators.

The gist of this *tafsīr* or explanation is that *tawaffī* does mean giving death, but there is the element of precedence and sequence in the words used. The fact of رَافِعُكَ (I shall raise you) will come first and that of مُتَوَفِّيكَ (I shall give you death) later. Now at this point, the wisdom behind mentioning the phenomenon of the earlier lies in the hint that it gives about the events which are to come later on. It means that raising towards Allah will not last for ever; it would be temporary and then, he would return to the mortal world and prevail over enemies and later on, death will come to him in a natural way.

Thus, the event of his return from heaven and his death after having established his victory in the world was not only a miracle but a consummation of the honour and integrity of Jesus, علیه السلام. In addition to that, the unfounded Christian belief in the divinity of Jesus was also refuted. Had it not been so, the event of Jesus being raised towards the heavens alive would have further strengthened their false belief that he too was Living and Eternal like Allah. Therefore, by introducing the word مُتَوَفِّيكَ (pointing out to his death) first, all those misconceptions which might have arisen from 'raising of Jesus' have been refuted in advance.

The reality is that disbelievers and polytheists have always been vehemently opposed to prophets, علیهم السلام. And parallel to that there has been the customary practice of Allah - when a people unto whom a prophet has been sent stick to their own opinion, do not listen to the prophet and do not believe in him even after having witnessed the miracles, then, one of the following two counter-actions were taken: Either those people were annihilated through some natural calamity as was done with 'Ād and Thamūd and the peoples of Prophets Lūṭ and Ṣāliḥ علیهم السلام ; or, alternatively Allah would instruct His prophet to migrate from the habitat of disbelievers and go to some other place. It was there that they were provided with such power and glory that they finally achieved victory against the people whom they were sent to. For example Prophet Ibrāhīm, علیه السلام migrated from Iraq and sought refuge in Syria. Similarly, Prophet Mūsā (Moses) علیه السلام, migrated from Egypt and came to Madyan. Finally, the Last prophet, Muḥammad ﷺ migrated from Makkah and came to Madīnah. It was from there that he finally attacked Makkah and conquered it. This raising of Jesus to

the heavens to outmaneuver the threatening designs of the Jews was, in fact, an act of emigration in its own way following which he would return to this world and achieve total victory over the Jews.

Now comes the question as to why this emigration of his, quite separate from the rest, has the heavens as the destination? So, for that matter, Allah Almighty has Himself said about him that his case is like that of Ādam, عليه السلام. The way in which Ādam's birth differs from the normal birth of the rest of creation, (i.e., without a father and a mother) so it is that the birth of Jesus took a miraculous form different from the normal birth of human beings; and his death too, taking a unique and unmatched form, will materialize after hundreds of years following his return to the world -- unprecedented indeed. Why then, should one be surprised if his emigration too follows some such unique pattern?

These marvels of nature led the ignorant among Christians into believing and declaring that he was God, while deliberation into the various aspects of these very marvels, are clear proofs of his servitude as a human being to God, obedience to the Divine will and the demonstration of human traits. It is for this reason that the Holy Qur'ān has made a pointed reference to the refutation of belief in the Godhood of Jesus on all such occasions. The raising towards the heavens would have made this doubt all the more strong. Therefore, by bringing the word *mutawaffīka* (I am to take you in full) earlier, this doubt was totally eliminated. Thus we come to realize that this verse, no doubt, aims at negating the Jewish plans since they were all set to crucify and kill Jesus, عليه السلام, and that Allah Almighty made their plans come to nothing. Moreover, this precedence and sequence of words became the mode of refuting the Christians as well, that Jesus was no God who was never to die but that a time will come when he too will meet his death.

In his Tafsīr Imām al-Rāzī has said that such precedence and sequence occurs frequently in the noble Qur'ān in order to cover similar expedient considerations under which an event due later has been mentioned first while an event due earlier has been placed after that. (al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr, v. 2, p. 48)

As for وَرَافِعُكَ إِلَيَّ (And I shall raise you towards Me), the meaning is clear. Addressing Jesus here, it has been said: 'I shall raise you to-

wards Me'. Every one knows that Jesus is not the name of just the spirit but that of the spirit and the body of Jesus. Now taking the raising of Jesus in the sense that the act of raising was spiritual only, and not physical, is all wrong. As far as the word, *raf'* (رفع : raising) is concerned, there are occasions when it is also used to indicate raising of ranks as it appears in the following verses of the noble Qur'an:

رَفَعَ بَعْضَكُمْ فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ دَرَجَاتٍ

... And raised some of you in ranks over others (6:165).

يَرْفَعِ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مِنْكُمْ وَالَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْعِلْمَ

... and Allah will raise up in rank those of you who believe and those who have been given knowledge (58:11).

So, it is obvious that the word, *raf'* : raising, in the sense of the raising of rank or status has been used figuratively in view of the context of the aforementioned verses. There is no reason here to ignore the real meaning and go by that which is figurative. Moreover, by using the word, *ilā* : الى (towards) alongwith the word, *raf'* (رفع : raising), at this particular place, the possibility of such a figurative meaning has been totally eliminated. What is said in this verse is رَافِعُكَ اِلَيَّ : *rāfi'uka ilaiyya*: I shall raise you towards Me. Then there is the verse from Sūrah al-Nisā' (4:158), which refutes the belief of Jews; there too, what was said is: وَمَا قَتَلُوْهُ يَقِيْنًا بَلْ رَّفَعَهُ اللّٰهُ اِلَيْهِ that is, the Jews certainly did not kill Jesus, instead, Allah raised him towards Himself. This later expression is used for nothing but the raising alive of the spirit and the body.

Explained this far were the words of the verse.

Allah Almighty's Five Promises to Jesus

In the verse under reference, Allah Almighty made five promises to 'Īsā عليه السلام vis-a-vis the Jews:

1. The first promise was that his death will not come at the hands of the Jews through killing. It will be a natural death coming at its appointed time and that appointed time will come close to the Day of Doom, when 'Īsā عليه السلام will come down from the heavens onto the earth as reported in details in sound aḥādīth transmitted through unbroken chains, part of which will appear later.

2. The second promise was to raise him towards the heavens in the

existing situation. This was fulfilled right then. The report of this fulfillment was given in Sūrah al-Nisā' (4:158) by saying:

وَمَا قَتَلُوْهُ يَقِيْنًا بَلْ رَّفَعَهُ اللّٰهُ اِلَيْهِ

Certainly, the Jews did not kill him, instead; Allah Almighty raised him towards Himself.

3. The third promise was: وَمُطَهِّرُكَ مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا , that is, to have him cleansed of false accusations brought on him by his enemies. That promise was fulfilled when the last of the prophets صلى الله عليه وسلم came and refuted all false accusations of the Jews. For instance, the Jews threw slanders on the parentage of Sayyidnā' 'Īsā عليه السلام because of his having been born without a father. The noble Qur'ān refuted this slander by declaring that he was born without a father because such was the power and will of Allah. And that too does not call for much of a surprise. More surprising is the birth of Ādam since he was born without both a father and a mother.

The Jews accused Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام of claiming to be God. There are many verses in the noble Qur'ān in which, contrary to this accusation, Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام has been reported to have publicly confessed his being human and a servant and bondsman of Allah.

4. The fourth promise appears in وَجَاعِلُ الَّذِيْنَ اتَّبَعُوْكَ فَوْقَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا (and placed those who follow you above those who disbelieve) which means that his followers will be made to overcome those who deny and oppose him. This promise was fulfilled in the sense that following here means the belief in and confession of the prophethood of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام. The belief in and the practice of all injunctions ascribed to him is not a pre-condition. Thus the Christians and the Muslims both fall in this category as they believe in the prophethood and messengership of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام . However, this is a different matter that holding this much of belief is not enough to bring forth salvation in the Hereafter. Instead, the salvation in the Hereafter depends on believing in all injunctions brought by Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام . One of the instructions given by Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام was that his followers should believe and have faith in the last of the Prophets (صلى الله عليه وسلم), who would come after Jesus departs. The Christians did not follow this instruction in matters of faith and belief, therefore, they deprived them-

selves of salvation in the Hereafter while Muslims acted in accordance with that too, therefore, they became deserving of salvation in the Hereafter. But, part of the promise which relates to having dominant authority over Jews was dependent on the prophethood of Sayyidnā 'Isā عليه السلام only. That dominance in the world has always been the fate of Christians and Muslims vis-a-vis the Jews, and surely, so shall it be through the Day of Judgement.

From the time when Allah Almighty made this promise right upto now, it has always been the case that the Christians and Muslims have dominated the Jews. The world has seen the establishment of their empires. The existence of the present state of Israel cannot make the truth of this position doubtful for several reasons. To begin with, and in reality, this state is no more than a manifestation of the military might of Russia and the Christians of Euro-American origin which they have established and maintained against Muslims. As soon as Russia, America and countries of Europe withdraw their patronage, the world will itself witness the instant collapse of this state and its disappearance from the map of the world. Therefore, people who can see the reality do realise the actual position of Israel or the Government of the Jews. It is by no means a manifestation of the domination of Jews. If, just for the sake of argument, it is taken to be their own state, even then, who would - in his right frame of mind - deny that, given the totality of Christians and Muslims, they are wielders of lesser influence and are much subjugated with fear. Even if we were to leave this aspect aside, we know that a temporary domination by the Jews close to the Day of Judgement has been reported in the authentic reports of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Now if this world is destined to exist for any considerable period of time and if the Day of Judgement is close, that domination too is not contrary to the reports which Muslims consider authentic. Moreover, such short-lived occupation cannot be given the name of a state or government especially when it is based on a conspiracy hatched by the Christians and the communists.

5. The fifth promise, that of giving a decision in respect of such conflicts in faith on the Day of Judgement will certainly be fulfilled on its appointed time as it has been indicated in the verse:

ثُمَّ إِلَيَّ مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَأَحْكُمُ بَيْنَكُمْ

Then, to Me is your return, whereupon I shall judge between you. (3:55)

JESUS: The question of his life and second coming:

The Jews are the only people in the world who say that Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام was crucified, killed and buried following which he never returned to life. What happened really and truly has been clarified in verse 158 of Sūrah al-Nisā' in the Holy Qur'ān. Then, in وَمَكَرُوا وَمَكَرَ اللّٰهُ (And they made a move, and Allah made a move.) of the present verse, it has been pointed out that Allah Almighty made the sinister move of the enemies of 'Īsā recoil upon those who had gone into the house to kill Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام . It was one of them that Allah Almighty changed to look exactly like Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and then He raised Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام alive onto the heavens. The words of the verse are as follows:

وَمَا قَتَلُوهُ وَمَا صَلَبُوهُ وَلٰكِنْ شُبِّهَ لَهُمْ

And they did not kill him and they did not crucify him, but they were deluded by resemblance (4:157).

Details regarding this will appear under the commentary on Sūrah al-Nisā'.

The Christians said that Jesus was, no doubt, killed on the cross but was brought back to life once again and raised onto the heavens. The verse under reference has refuted this false notion as well. It is stressed here that similar to the Jews who were rejoicing after killing their own man, the Christians fell a victim to the same mistaken identity by believing that it was Jesus who got killed on the Cross, and as such, the Christians too became the victims of mistaken identity. This is obvious from the Qur'ānic statement شُبِّهَ لَهُمْ (they were deluded by resemblance) just like the Jews were deceived by mistaken identity.

As opposed to the view of these two groups, there is the Islamic belief, stated here in this verse and in several other verses clearly, which says that Allah Almighty raised him alive onto the heavens in order to rescue him from the Jews. He was not to be killed and he was not to be crucified. He is in the heavens alive and it will be close to the Day of Judgement when he shall come down from the heavens, lead the Mus-

lims to victory over the Jews, and finally, he will die a natural death.

There is a consensus of the entire Muslim community on this belief. Ḥāfiẓ ibn Hajr, in his *Talkhīṣ al-Ḥabīr,* has reported this consensus (page 319). This belief, and the consensus of the community on it, stands proved on the authority of several verses of the Holy Qur'ān and reports from *mutawātir* aḥādīth transmitted through an unbroken chain of reporting. However, this is not the place for its detailed discussion, and not necessary either. The reason being that scholars of the community have already taken up this question in special books with full clarity giving detailed answers to those who dispute in the Ascension of the Christ. For instance, the Arabic work, *'Aqīdatu l'Islām fī Ḥayāti* 'Īsā عليه السلام by Ḥujjatu l'Islām Maulānā Sayyid Muḥammad Anwar Shāh al-Kashmīrī, Ḥayāt-e-'Īsā عليه السلام , (the Life of Jesus) in Urdu by Ḥaḍrat Maulānā Badr 'Alam Muhājir Madani, Ḥayāt-e-Masīḥ عليه السلام in Urdu by Maulānā Sayyid Muḥammad Idrīs and hundreds of other books or essays dealing with this question have been widely published and circulated. While carrying out the orders of his respected teacher, Maulānā Sayyid Muḥammad Anwar Shāh al-Kashmīrī, this writer had collected more than one hundred *mutawātir* aḥādīth identified by him which prove in an undeniable manner that Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام was raised alive and that he will return close to the Day of Judgement. This collection in book form and entitled, *Al-Tasrīḥ bimā Tawatara fī Nuzūl al-Masīḥ* has been recently published from Beirut with marginal notes and commentary by 'Allāma 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghuddah, a revered scholar of Allepo, Syria.

Ḥāfiẓ ibn Kathīr while explaining the verse وانه لعلم للساعة of Sūrah Al-Zukhruf (43:61) has said:

وقد تواترت الاحاديث عن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم انه اخبر بنزول عيسى عليه السلام قبل يوم القيامة اماما عادلاً الخ

> There are aḥādīth from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , narrated in an uninterrupted succession, that he proclaimed the coming of 'Īsā عليه السلام before the Day of Judgment as a just leader.

At this stage I would like to draw the attention of the reader to a point which, if noticed even with a small measure of sanity and justice,

would leave no room for any doubt regarding this question. The point is that in the eleventh section of Sūrah 'Āl-'Imrān, Allah Almighty while refering to past prophets deemed it sufficient to refer to prophets Ādam, Nūḥ, 'Āl-Ibrāhīm and 'Āl-'Imrān briefly in one single verse. After that, it was in nearly three sections and twenty two verses that reference was made to Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and his family with meticulous detail - something which has not been made in that manner even in respect of the Last of the prophets صلى الله عليه وسلم to whom the Qur'ān was revealed. Note the detailed mention of the grandmother of Jesus, her pledge, the birth of his mother, her name, her upbringing, the conceiving of Jesus by his mother then the detailed narrative of his birth, followed by the description of what his mother ate and drank, after child birth, her return to the family with the newborn child, their blames and curses, first the gift of eloquence to the newborn as his miracle, then his growing up and call to his people, opposition faced and the help of disciples, the hostile attempts by the Jews to trap and kill him, his being raised alive onto the heavens - then complete details of his additional traits, his looks, physique, dress and its likes - these are accounts which have not been taken up in the whole spectrum of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth in respect of any prophet or messenger with that much of detail. This point is an open invitation to everyone to think as to why did this happen and what was the wisdom behind it.

Even a moment's reflection here makes it clear that the Last of the prophets صلى الله عليه وسلم, being the final prophet and messenger with no apostle to come after him, took special care to guide his community about conditions that it was going to face right through the Day of Judgement. He therefore, took upon himself to identify those who would be worthy of the community's following. He, as a matter of principle, described them with a profile of their general qualities. There were other blessed people whom he identified by name and emphatically asked the community to follow them. Other than these, he also marked out the astray and the deviating who posed a danger to the faith of the community.

Of the mischief-makers who were to come after the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم the most notorious was Dajjāl (the anti-Christ) the imposter of the Messiah, whose disturbing wickedness was terribly deviation-prone. Therefore, the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم related many de-

tails of his profile, attending conditions and distinguishing traits, so that there remains no room for the community to doubt about his being a mischief monger whenever he appears. Similarly, among the later day religious reformers and power-worthy elders, Sayyidna 'Isa عليه السلام is the most distinguished whom Allah Almighty blessed with the station of prophethood, kept him alive in the heavens to come to the rescue of the Muslim community during the wicked period of Dajjal (anti-Christ) and appointed him to kill Dajjal close to the Day of Judgement. This is why it was deemed necessary that the community should be given the most clear indications of his person and qualities as well, so that no human being remains in doubt while identifying Sayyidna 'Isa عليه السلام when he comes, the second time.

There are many elements of wisdom in this treatment.

Firstly, should the community find it difficult to identify 'Isa (Jesus Christ) عليه السلام , the very purpose of his coming will be negated. If the Muslim community will not identify and cooperate with him, how could he help and support them? Secondary, although Sayyidna 'Isa عليه السلام will not come into the world at that time designated as Prophet, but he would come to lead the Muslim community as the *Khalifa* (viceregent) the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , the personal station of prophethood that he has will not be taken from him. Instead, he would be like the governor of a province or state who continues to hold that position even if he has gone out to visit some other province or state for some reason. Therefore, even though he is not as a governor in that province, the office of the governorship has not been *ipso facto* taken away from him. Similarly, Sayyidna 'Isa عليه السلام will not be without his attribute of prophethood at that time, and the way the rejection of his prophethood was infidelity earlier, so infidelity it shall be at that time. Now the Muslim community which has already nursed and shown its faith in his prophethood as based on the guidance of the Qur'an would fall into the grievous error of rejection, if it fails to recognize him when he comes. So, clarifying his signs and attributes in a greater measure was extremely necessary.

Thirdly, since the event of the coming of Sayyidna 'Isa عليه السلام will take place towards the later years of this mortal world, chances were - given the ambiguity in his marks of identification that some other per-

son could come up with the claim of being Messiah, the son of Mary, in which case, these indicators will serve well to refute and reject any such claim. This is what happened in pre-partition India where Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian claimed that he was the promised Messiah. The scholars of the Muslim community refuted his claim on the basis of these very cited indicators.

In short, here and at other places, the very fact of such detailed description concerning Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام is in itself indicating that his reappearance is due close to the Day of Judgement and that he would return to the world. This humble writer has taken up this subject in full details in his Urdu treatise entitled Masīḥ Maw'ūd kī pahchān (Identifying the Promised Messiah) which may be consulted for these details.

Verses 56 - 58

فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَأُعَذِّبُهُمْ عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِّن نَّاصِرِينَ ﴿٥٦﴾ وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ فَيُوَفِّيهِمْ أُجُورَهُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٥٧﴾ ذَٰلِكَ نَتْلُوهُ عَلَيْكَ مِنَ الْآيَاتِ وَالذِّكْرِ الْحَكِيمِ ﴿٥٨﴾

Now, as for those who disbelieve, I shall punish them, a severe punishment, in this world and in the Hereafter; and for them there are no helpers. [56]

And as for those who believe and do good deeds, He (Allah) will give them their rewards in full. And Allah does not like transgressors. [57]

This We recite to you of the Verses and the Message that is full of wisdom. [58]

Sequence

In the previous verse (56), it was said that Allah will be the final judge and decision-maker in what they used to differ in between themselves. This verse describes that decision.

Commentary

Are the sufferings of this world beneficial for the next life?

The words "I shall punish them in this world and in the Hereafter"

in verse 56 may create a little doubt. Since the statement here relates to the judgement to be pronounced on the Last Day, how can the statement -'I shall punish them in this world and in the hereafter'- be explained as this world of ours would not exist at that time and even though it exists today, but the judgement is to be given on the Day of Resurrection?

This difficulty can be resolved by turning to an analogy. This saying is similar to the saying of a judge to a culprit -'Right now I am sending you to the jail for a year; if you misbehave there, I shall make it for two years'- which simply means that those two years will be counted from the day the punishment is being awarded. Based on this, it is certain that following any misbehaviour the two-year punishment will become effective. So, given the misconduct, the validity of this whole will regulate itself for one more year as 'add-on'.

The same applies here as the punishment in the world has already been given; now the punishment of the Hereafter will be added on and the sum-total will be finally executed on the Last Day, that is, having been punished in the world will not serve as expiation for the punishment of the Hereafter. This is contrary to the condition of believers who, when struck by suffering in the mortal world, have their sins forgiven and find the punishment due in the Hereafter lightened or warded off. For this reason, a hint to this effect has been made in لَا يُحِبُّ الظَّالِمِينَ (and Allah does not like transgressors -v. 57), that is, believers are dear because of their belief and the beloved ones are always treated in such a manner. The disbelievers are detested because of their disbelief and those detested do not receive such treatment. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Verses 59 - 63

إِنَّ مَثَلَ عِيسَىٰ عِندَ اللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ آدَمَ ۖ خَلَقَهُ مِن تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ قَالَ
لَهُ كُن فَيَكُونُ ﴿٥٩﴾ الْحَقُّ مِن رَّبِّكَ فَلَا تَكُن مِّنَ
الْمُمْتَرِينَ ﴿٦٠﴾ فَمَنْ حَاجَّكَ فِيهِ مِن بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ
فَقُلْ تَعَالَوْا نَدْعُ أَبْنَاءَنَا وَأَبْنَاءَكُمْ وَنِسَاءَنَا وَنِسَاءَكُمْ
وَأَنفُسَنَا وَأَنفُسَكُمْ ثُمَّ نَبْتَهِلْ فَنَجْعَل لَّعْنَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَى

الْكٰذِبِيْنَ ﴿٦١﴾ إِنَّ هٰذَا لَهُوَ الْقَصَصُ الْحَقُّ ۚ وَ مَا مِنْ إِلٰهٍ إِلَّا اللّٰهُ ۚ وَإِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ ﴿٦٢﴾ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلِيْمٌ بِالْمُفْسِدِيْنَ ﴿٦٣﴾

Surely, the case of 'Īsā, in the sight of Allah, is like the case of 'Ādam. He created him from dust, then said to him, "Be", and he came to be. [59] **The truth is from your Lord. So, do not be of those who doubt.** [60]

So, if someone argues with you in this after what has come to you of the knowledge, say, "Come, let us call our sons and your sons, our women and your women, ourselves and yourselves, then pray and invoke the curse of Allah upon the liars." [61]

This is, indeed, the true narration. And there exists no god but Allah. And Allah is surely the All-Mighty, the All-Wise. [62]

So, should they turn back, Allah is all-aware of the mischievous. [63]

The event of *Mubāhala* and the refutation of heretics.

The background of these verses is that the Holy Prophet ﷺ sent an ultimatum to the Christians of Najrān which included three options in the order given below:

1. Accept Islām, or

2. Pay *jizya* (a levy on free non-Muslims under Muslim rule), or

3. Get ready for a war.

After mutual consultation, the Christians sent a delegation to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم consisting of Shuraḥbīl 'Abdullāh b. Shuraḥbīl and Jabbār ibn Fayḍ to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم . They came and began their talks on religious issues. When they, in their effort to prove the godhood of Jesus, took their debate to the extremes of dispute, that was the moment this verse of *Mubāhala* was revealed. Thereupon, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم invited the Christians to join in the *Mubāhala* confrontation (a form of resolving disputes by praying to Allah, the details of which shall shortly be discussed) and quite readily, he himself came out with Sayyidah Fāṭimah رضى الله عنها ,

Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنه and their sons, Ḥasan and Ḥusain رضى الله عنهما along with him all set for the *Mubāhalah*. Looking at this, Shuraḥbīl said to his two comrades: 'Look, you already know that he is a prophet of Allah and getting into a *Mubāhalah* confrontation with a prophet means certain death and destruction for us. So find out some other way to get out of this fix.' His comrades asked him as to what he thought it could be. Shuraḥbīl said: 'I think the best solution is to opt for a truce as advised by the prophet'. So, on this everybody agreed. As a result, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم made peace by fixing a levy on them which was accepted by them as well. (Tafsīr ibn Kathīr, v. 1).

The Meaning of *Mubāhalah*

As stated earlier, verse 61 has instructed the Holy Prophet ﷺ to invite his opponents (Christians) to *Mubāhalah* which literally means 'mutual prayer' but in the terminology of Islāmic Sharī'ah it refers to a particular form of resolving religious disputes. When the argumentations from both sides fail to resolve a religious issue, the parties jointly pray Allah to cast His curse on whichever of the two parties is false. Since curse means 'moving someone far away from the divine mercy', - and moving far away from mercy is being close to divine wrath-- therefore, the essence of the meaning is: Wrath be on the liar. As such, whoever is the liar shall face the evil consequences whereupon the truth will become evident before the disbelievers as well. Invocation in this manner is called '*Mubāhalah*'.

Originally, the *Mubāhalah* can be carried out by the disputants only; they can simply get together and pray. It is not necessary that all their family members are assembled. However, if all the family members participate in the *Mubāhalah,* it becomes more effective. (That is why the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was instructed to invite the family members of both sides).

'Son' includes grandson

In verse 61 the words 'our sons' does not mean 'our' sons as of the loins only. Instead, the sense is general. They may be sons or grandsons, because this is how the word is used in common usage. Therefore, the grandsons of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , namely Sayyidnā Ḥasan and Sayyidnā Ḥusain رضى الله عنهما , as well as Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنه the son-in-law of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم

are all included in the words: 'our sons'.

Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنه has another additional reason for being included in the 'sons' of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, because he had grown up under the patronage of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم who had treated him like his own son.

It is, therefore, evident that Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنه is included in the words: 'our sons'. Some *Shī'ites* have claimed that since he was not the son of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم he could not be referred to by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم as 'our son'. Through this notion the *Shī'ites* conclude that Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنه was included in the words 'ourselves', therefore, he was the immediate successor of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم.

The fallacy of this argument is evident from what has been discussed above.

Verse 64

قُلْ يَآ اَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ تَعَالَوْا اِلٰى كَلِمَةٍ سَوَآءٍۢ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ اَلَّا نَعْبُدَ اِلَّا اللّٰهَ وَلَا نُشْرِكَ بِهٖ شَيْـًٔا وَّلَا يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضًا اَرْبَابًا مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ ۭ فَاِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَقُوْلُوا اشْهَدُوْا بِاَنَّا مُسْلِمُوْنَ ﴿٦٤﴾

Say, "O people of the Book, come to a word common between us and you that we worship none but Allah, that we associate nothing with Him and that some of us do not take some others as lords instead of Allah." Then, should they turn back, say, "You be witness that we are Muslims."[64]

Commentary:

Important Principles of *Tablīgh* and *Da'wah*:

This verse: تَعَالَوْا اِلٰى كَلِمَةٍ سَوَآءٍۢ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ unfolds an important principle of *Tablīgh* (Preaching) and *Da'wah* (Preaching Islām). The principle requires that a person, who desires to carry his call to a group which holds beliefs and ideas different from his own, should follow a particular method. That method is to induce that group to unite only on what they both can agree to, for instance, when the Holy Prophet ﷺ gave

the Byzantine ruler, Hiraql (Heraclius) the call to Islām, he picked up a particular point on which there was mutual agreement, i.e., on the Oneness of Allah Almighty. That invitation is reproduced below:

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم، من محمد عبد الله ورسوله الى هرقل عظيم
الروم، سلام على من اتبع الهدى، اما بعد فانى ادعوك بدعاية الاسلام
اسلم تسلم يؤتك الله اجرك مرتين فان توليت فان عليك اثم اليريسين،
يٰٓاَهۡلَ الۡكِتٰبِ تَعَالَوۡا اِلٰى كَلِمَةٍ سَوَآءٍۭ بَيۡنَنَا وَبَيۡنَكُمۡ اَلَّا نَعۡبُدَ اِلَّا اللّٰهَ
وَلَا نُشۡرِكَ بِهٖ شَيۡـًٔا وَّلَا يَتَّخِذَ بَعۡضُنَا بَعۡضًا اَرۡبَابًا مِّنۡ دُوۡنِ اللّٰهِ (البخارى)

I begin with the name of Allah who is All-Merciful, Very-Merciful. From Muḥammad, servant of Allah, and His messenger: To Heraclius, the Byzantine emperor. Peace be on him who takes the right path. After that, I invite you to the call of Islām. Embrace Islām and be in peace. Allah will bestow upon you a twofold reward, but should you turn away, then, on you shall be the sin of your subjects. "O people of the Book, come to a word common between us and you that we worship none but Allah, that we associate nothing with Him and that some of us do not take some others as Lord instead of Allah." (Al-Bukhārī)

The statement, 'you be witness...' in the last sentence of the verse teaches us a lesson, that is, should someone refuse to accept the truth, even after it has been proved clearly, then the proper course is to re-state one's own belief and conclude the conversation. Entering into further debate and verbal altercation is not appropriate.

Verses 65 - 68

يٰٓاَهۡلَ الۡكِتٰبِ لِمَ تُحَآجُّوۡنَ فِىۡۤ اِبۡرٰهِيۡمَ وَمَاۤ اُنۡزِلَتِ التَّوۡرٰىةُ
وَالۡاِنۡجِيۡلُ اِلَّا مِنۡۢ بَعۡدِهٖ ؕ اَفَلَا تَعۡقِلُوۡنَ ﴿٦٥﴾ هٰۤاَنۡتُمۡ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ
حَاجَجۡتُمۡ فِيۡمَا لَكُمۡ بِهٖ عِلۡمٌ فَلِمَ تُحَآجُّوۡنَ فِيۡمَا لَيۡسَ لَكُمۡ بِهٖ
عِلۡمٌ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يَعۡلَمُ وَاَنۡتُمۡ لَا تَعۡلَمُوۡنَ ﴿٦٦﴾ مَا كَانَ اِبۡرٰهِيۡمُ
يَهُوۡدِيًّا وَّلَا نَصۡرَانِيًّا وَّلٰكِنۡ كَانَ حَنِيۡفًا مُّسۡلِمًا ؕ وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ
الۡمُشۡرِكِيۡنَ ﴿٦٧﴾ اِنَّ اَوۡلَى النَّاسِ بِاِبۡرٰهِيۡمَ لَلَّذِيۡنَ اتَّبَعُوۡهُ وَهٰذَا

النَّبِيُّ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ۗ وَاللَّهُ وَلِيُّ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٦٨﴾

O people of the Book, why do you argue about Ibrāhīm while the Torah and the Injīl were not revealed until after him? Have you, then, no sense? [65]

Look, this is what you are - you argued about what you had knowledge; why then do you argue about what you have no knowledge? And Allah knows and you do not know. [66]

Ibrāhīm was not a Jew, nor a Christian. But he was upright, a Muslim, and was not one of those who associate partners with Allah. [67]

The closest of people to Ibrāhīm are those who followed him, and this prophet, and those who believe. And Allah is guardian of the believers. [68]

Commentary

The argumentation referred to in verse 65 was to decide whether Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام followed the way of the Jews, or that of the Christians. The futility of their exercise already stood exposed as both these ways in religion appeared long after the revelation of the Old and New Testaments. These just did not exist before that. How, then, could it be claimed that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام adhered to these ways?

Verse 66 points out to the hollowness of their approach when they indulged in their argumentation on the basis of incomplete knowledge. That they would venture to do so on the basis of no knowledge could hardly he explained. The truth is that only Allah knows the way of Ibrāhīm عليه السلام .

That way has been described in Verse 67.

Verse 68 declares that the closest of people to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm were those who followed him during his time and now the closest to him is the Prophet of Islām, Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā صلى الله عليه وسلم and so are the believers in him and in past prophets. These believers are the community of Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم and their guardian is Allah and He will reward them for their belief.

Verses 69 - 71

وَدَّتْ طَّآئِفَةٌ مِّنْ اَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ لَوْ يُضِلُّوْنَكُمْ ؕ وَمَا يُضِلُّوْنَ اِلَّآ اَنْفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُوْنَ ﴿٦٩﴾ يٰٓاَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ لِمَ تَكْفُرُوْنَ بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ وَاَنْتُمْ تَشْهَدُوْنَ ﴿٧٠﴾ يٰٓاَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ لِمَ تَلْبِسُوْنَ الْحَقَّ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتَكْتُمُوْنَ الْحَقَّ وَاَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٧١﴾

A group from the people of the Book loves to mislead you, while they mislead none but themselves and they do not realise. [69]

O people of the Book, why do you disbelieve in the signs of Allah while you are yourselves a witness? [70]

O People of the Book, why do you confound the truth with falsehood, and conceal the truth when you know? [71]

Commentary

Verse 69 exposes the cherished desire of the people of the Book to mislead Muslims away from the true faith they are on. The text, then, firmly declares that the victim of their effort to misguide is no one other than themselves, something they do not realize.

Verse 70, addressing the people of the Book, asks them as to why they disbelieve in the signs of Allah, such as the verses in Torah and Injīl which prove the prophethood of Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم because the denial of his prophethood amounts to declaring these verses to be false which is infidelity, although they themselves confirm these as true. This is an admonition on their error in belief.

Proceeding further, Verse 71 admonishes them for confusing the real statement, that is, the prophecy about the prophethood of Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم with the fictitious, that is, the interpolated statements or false exegesis. The crucial question being asked is as to why would they conceal the truth of the matter despite knowing the truth, and knowing that they are hiding it.

The words in اَنْتُمْ تَشْهَدُوْنَ (you are yourselves a witness - 70) and in اَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ (you know - 71) should not be taken to mean that disbelief will become permissible for them if they do not attest to the truth or have no

knowledge about it. This is because *kufr* (disbelief) is intrinsically an abominable thing to practice. This is prohibited under all conditions. However, the mention of *kufr* (disbelief) after knowledge and attestation is to increase the impact of reproachment.

Verses 72 - 74

وَقَالَتْ طَّآئِفَةٌ مِّنْ اَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ اٰمِنُوْا بِالَّذِيْٓ اُنْزِلَ عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ
اٰمَنُوْا وَجْهَ النَّهَارِ وَاكْفُرُوْٓا اٰخِرَهٗ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُوْنَ ﴿٧٢﴾
وَلَا تُؤْمِنُوْٓا اِلَّا لِمَنْ تَبِعَ دِيْنَكُمْ ط قُلْ اِنَّ الْهُدٰى هُدَى اللّٰهِ لا اَنْ
يُّؤْتٰٓى اَحَدٌ مِّثْلَ مَآ اُوْتِيْتُمْ اَوْ يُحَآجُّوْكُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّكُمْ ط قُلْ اِنَّ
الْفَضْلَ بِيَدِ اللّٰهِ ج يُؤْتِيْهِ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ط وَاللّٰهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿٧٣﴾
يَّخْتَصُّ بِرَحْمَتِهٖ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ط وَاللّٰهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيْمِ ﴿٧٤﴾

And a group from the people of the Book said, "Believe in what has been revealed to the believers in the early part of the day, and disbelieve at the end of it, so that they may turn back. [72] **And do not believe except in those who follow your faith." Say, "(Real) guidance is the guidance of Allah." (But all that you do is due to your envy) that someone is given what is similar to that which you have been given, or that they argue against you before your Lord. Say, "The bounty is in the hands of Allah. He gives it to whom He wills. And Allah is All-Embracing, All-Knowing.** [73] **He chooses for His grace whom He wills. And Allah is the Lord of great bounty."** [74]

Some from among the people of the Book chose a strategy of deception in order to mislead Muslims. According to their agreed plan, they would declare their belief in the Qur'ān in the morning and then reject it in the evening. They thought that this quick about-turn would create doubts in the minds of Muslims about Qur'ān and Islām and they might turn away from their faith thinking that there must be something wrong with Islām visible to such learned people who were open-minded enough to accept it first. They also made it a point to reserve their feinted declaration of belief in Islām to hoodwink Muslims only! Their true belief, they planned, would be affirmed before none

but only those who follow their own creed. The rule was: Sincerity with the later, expediency with the former!

That these tricks are low is proved later in Verse 73 when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been asked to declare that their clever moves are not going to work for them since Guidance given to servants of Allah is certainly from Allah. So, it is He who, with Guidance in His control, can make whoever He will steadfast on that Guidance. No one can succeed in weaning such a person away from it with any trick, plan or enticement whatsoever.

The reason why they act in the way they do is envy, that is, they envy Muslims as to why they were given the Scripture, or they envy their supremacy in religious argument. It is because of this envy that they keep working to bring about the downfall of Islām and of the community that adheres to it.

That this envy is based on not knowing the nature, timing and wisdom of Allah's grace and mercy is explained in the later part of verse 73 and in verse 74.

Verse 75

وَمِنْ اَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ مَنْ اِنْ تَاْمَنْهُ بِقِنْطَارٍ يُّؤَدِّهٖٓ اِلَيْكَ ۚ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ اِنْ تَاْمَنْهُ بِدِيْنَارٍ لَّا يُؤَدِّهٖٓ اِلَيْكَ اِلَّا مَا دُمْتَ عَلَيْهِ قَآئِمًا ۗ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمْ قَالُوْا لَيْسَ عَلَيْنَا فِى الْاُمِّيّٖنَ سَبِيْلٌ ۚ وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ الْكَذِبَ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٧٥﴾

And among the people of the Book there is one who, if you entrust him with a heap (of gold or silver), will give it back to you; and among them there is one who, if you entrust him with a single *dinār*, he will not give it back to you unless you keep standing over him. This is because they have said, "There is no way we can be blamed in the matter of the unlettered." And they tell lies about Allah knowingly. [75]

Sequence

In the previous verses (70-72), breach of faith committed by the people of the Book was mentioned. This included disbelieving in the

verses of Allah, confusing the truth with what is false, concealing the truth and conspiring to mislead Muslim believers.

In the verse cited above (75), their breach of trust in matters of property has been mentioned. Since some of them happened to be trustworthy, both types were identified.

Commentary

Praising good qualities in some non-Muslim is correct

In this verse (75), some people have been praised for their trustworthiness. If this 'some' refers to those among the people of the Book who had embraced Islām, praising them poses no problems. But, in case, it does not refer to Muslims particularly and instead, refers to the people of the Book in the absolute sense including non-Muslims as well, then the situation generates the question: When no act of a *kāfir* (disbeliever) is acceptable why praise them?

The answer is that for an action or deed to become acceptable is a different matter and having a word of praise for it is something else. From praising something it does not follow that it is acceptable with Allah. The purpose is to point out that something good, even if it be that of a *kāfir* (disbeliever), is good enough in a certain degree, the benefit of which he receives in the form of good reputation in the mortal world, and of course, in the Hereafter, in the form of a reduction in punishment for his disbelief.

This statement also makes it clear that Islām does not resort to prejudice and short-sightedness. On the contrary, it shows open-hearted appreciation of the excellence of even its adversary in respect of his achievements.

It is from this verse: إِلَّا مَادُمْتَ عَلَيْهِ قَآئِمًا (unless you keep standing over him - 75) that Imām Abū Ḥanīfah has deduced the ruling that the lender has the right to keep pursuing the borrower until he receives his due. (Qurṭubī, v. 4)

Verses 76 - 77

بَلٰى مَنْ اَوْفٰى بِعَهْدِهٖ وَاتَّقٰى فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿٧٦﴾ اِنَّ
الَّذِيْنَ يَشْتَرُوْنَ بِعَهْدِ اللّٰهِ وَاَيْمَانِهِمْ ثَمَنًا قَلِيْلًا اُولٰٓئِكَ لَاخَلَاقَ

لَهُمْ فِى الْاٰخِرَةِ وَلَا يُكَلِّمُهُمُ اللّٰهُ وَلَا يَنْظُرُ اِلَيْهِمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ وَلَا يُزَكِّيْهِمْ ص وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿٧٧﴾

Why not? Whoever fulfils his pledge and fears Allah, then, Allah loves the God-fearing. [76] **Surely, those who take a small price out of the covenant of Allah and out of their oaths, for them there is no share in the Hereafter, and Allah will not speak to them, nor will He look towards them on the Day of Doom, nor will He purify them. And for them there is a painful punishment.** [77]

Sequence

Earlier, in يَقُوْلُوْنَ (they say - 75), there was a refutation of the claim made by the people of the Book. Onwards from there, in verses 76-77, the same refutation has been re-asserted and the merit of fulfilling a commitment as well as the condemnation for its breach have been clarified.

Commentary

'Ahd (pledge or covenant) is what gets settled between parties concerned after mutual discussions and by which both of them have to abide. Contrary to this is وعدہ : *wa'dah* or promise which issues forth from a single side, that is, *'ahd* (pledge or covenant) is bilateral while *wa'dah* (promise) is unilateral.

That commitments should be fulfilled has been stressed in the Qur'ān and Sunnah time and again. For instance, right here in verse 77 cited above, five warnings have been given to those who break their solemn pledge:

1. They will have no share in the blessings of the heaven. In a ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has said that one who usurps the right of a Muslim under false oath makes the fire of Hell compulsory for himself. The narrator of the ḥadīth asked if the Fire will become compulsory even if this concerned something very insignificant? In reply, he said: Even if this be the green bough of a tree. (Muslim vide Maẓharī)

2. Allah Almighty will not speak to them with glad tidings.

3. Allah Almighty will not look at them mercifully on the Day of Doom.

4. Allah Almighty will not forgive them their sins since they wasted away the rights of a servant of Allah through breach of trust, and Allah will not forgive what a human being owes to another human being. In Islāmic terminology, this is known as the *ḥaqq al-'abd* or the right of a servant of Allah.

5. And a grievous punishment shall await them.

Verses 78 - 80

وَإِنَّ مِنْهُمْ لَفَرِيقًا يَلْوُونَ أَلْسِنَتَهُمْ بِالْكِتَابِ لِتَحْسَبُوهُ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَمَا هُوَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَيَقُولُونَ هُوَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ وَمَا هُوَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ وَيَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٧٨﴾ مَا كَانَ لِبَشَرٍ أَنْ يُؤْتِيَهُ اللَّهُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحُكْمَ وَالنُّبُوَّةَ ثُمَّ يَقُولَ لِلنَّاسِ كُونُوا عِبَادًا لِي مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلَٰكِنْ كُونُوا رَبَّانِيِّينَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تُعَلِّمُونَ الْكِتَابَ وَبِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَدْرُسُونَ ﴿٧٩﴾ وَلَا يَأْمُرَكُمْ أَنْ تَتَّخِذُوا الْمَلَائِكَةَ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ أَرْبَابًا ۗ أَيَأْمُرُكُمْ بِالْكُفْرِ بَعْدَ إِذْ أَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿٨٠﴾

And among them there is indeed a group who twist their tongues in (reading) the Book, so that you may deem it to be from the Book, while it is not from the Book. And they say, "It is from Allah", while it is not from Allah. And they tell lies about Allah knowingly. [78]

It is not (possible) for a man that Allah gives him the Book, the wisdom and the prophethood, then he starts saying to the people "Be my worshippers aside from Allah" rather, (he would say), "Be men of the Lord; as you have been teaching the Book, and as you have been learning it." [79]

Nor is it (possible for him) that he bids you to hold the angels and the prophets as Lords. Shall he bid you to disbelief, after your having become Muslims? [80]

Commentary

It was during the presence of the deputation from Najrān that

some Jews and Christians had said: 'O Muḥammad, do you want us to worship you the way Christians worship Jesus, son of Mary?' He said: 'I seek refuge with Allah that we worship someone other than Allah or call on others to do so. Allah Almighty has not sent us to do that.' Thereupon, this verse was revealed.

The infallibility of the Prophets

The verse implies that a person whom Allah invests with the Book, the Wisdom and the power of making decisions, and places him on the great station of prophethood is always faithful to his mission when he communicates the Divine message to people and calls on them to become His faithful servants. That he starts moving people away from the worship of only one God and starts asking them to become his own worshippers or the worshippers of some other creatures is something he can never do. If so, this would mean that the one whom Allah had sent as his messenger did not, in fact, deserve this designation. Any government of this world, when appointing someone to an office of responsibility, always takes two factors into consideration:

1. Does the incumbent have the ability to comprehend and execute government policy?

2. How far can he be expected to execute government directives, and to hold its subjects in a stable stance of loyalty? No king or parliament would ever appoint someone as its representative or ambassador about whom there exists the least doubt of indulging in anti-government activity, or deviation from its policy or directives. However, it is possible that the government may have failed to make a correct assessment of a person's ability or loyalty. But with Allah even that element of doubt does not exist. If He knows about a man that he would not over-step the bounds of loyalty and obedience to Him, even in the slightest degree, then it is impossible that he could, later on, prove to be contrary to that assessment. Otherwise, it would mean that Divine knowledge is defective (we seek refuge with Allah!) Right from here, the question of the *'iṣmah* [1] (infallibility) of the prophets, عليهم السلام, becomes clear. Now that the blessed prophets are free of mi-

1. *'Iṣmah'* means a special protection given to someone by Allah which makes him refrain from sins. For the purpose of brevity we may translate it as 'infallibility' - editor.

nor sins, how can the probability of doing *shirk* (the major sin of associating others with Allah) or making revolt against Allah remain valid?

In this, there is the necessary refutation of the Christians who claimed that it was Masīḥ عليه السلام who asked them to have belief in his sonship and godhead. Also chastised were the Muslims who had gone to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم trying to find out if it was all right for them to prostrate before him rather than greet him with the usual *salām*. Also admonished were the people of the Book who had invested their rabbis and monks with the station of God. Refuge with Allah! (Tafsīr 'Usmānī)

Verses 81 - 84

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ اللّٰهُ مِيْثَاقَ النَّبِيّٖنَ لَمَآ اٰتَيْتُكُمْ مِّنْ كِتٰبٍ وَّحِكْمَةٍ ثُمَّ
جَآءَكُمْ رَسُوْلٌ مُّصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَكُمْ لَتُؤْمِنُنَّ بِهٖ وَلَتَنْصُرُنَّهٗ ۚ قَالَ
ءَاَقْرَرْتُمْ وَاَخَذْتُمْ عَلٰى ذٰلِكُمْ اِصْرِيْ ۚ قَالُوْٓا اَقْرَرْنَا ۚ قَالَ
فَاشْهَدُوْا وَاَنَا مَعَكُمْ مِّنَ الشّٰهِدِيْنَ ﴿٨١﴾ فَمَنْ تَوَلّٰى بَعْدَ ذٰلِكَ
فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْفٰسِقُوْنَ ﴿٨٢﴾ اَفَغَيْرَ دِيْنِ اللّٰهِ يَبْغُوْنَ وَلَهٗٓ اَسْلَمَ مَنْ
فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ طَوْعًا وَّكَرْهًا وَّاِلَيْهِ يُرْجَعُوْنَ ﴿٨٣﴾ قُلْ
اٰمَنَّا بِاللّٰهِ وَمَآ اُنْزِلَ عَلَيْنَا وَمَآ اُنْزِلَ عَلٰٓى اِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَاِسْمٰعِيْلَ
وَاِسْحٰقَ وَيَعْقُوْبَ وَالْاَسْبَاطِ وَمَآ اُوْتِيَ مُوْسٰى وَعِيْسٰى
وَالنَّبِيُّوْنَ مِنْ رَّبِّهِمْ ۖ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ اَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ ۫ وَنَحْنُ لَهٗ مُسْلِمُوْنَ
﴿٨٤﴾

And when Allah made the prophets take pledge: (saying) "If I give you a book and wisdom, then comes to you a messenger verifying what is with you, you shall have to believe in him and you shall have to support him." He said, "Do you affirm and accept my covenant in this respect?" They said, "We affirm." He said, "Then, bear witness, and I am with you among the witnesses." [81]

Then those who turn back after this they are the sin-

ful.[82]

Are they, then, seeking a faith other than that of Allah while to Him alone submits whosoever there is in the heavens and the earth, willingly or unwilling, and to Him they shall be returned? [83]

Say, "We believe in Allah and in what has been revealed to us and in what was revealed to Ibrāhīm, Ismā'īl, Isḥāq, Ya'qūb and the descendants, and in what has been given to Mūsā, 'Īsā (Jesus) and the prophets, from their Lord: We do not differentiate between any of them. And to Him we submit ourselves." [84]

Commentary

Three Covenants with Allah Almighty

There are three kinds of pledges Allah Almighty has taken from His servants:

1. One of them has been mentioned in Sūrah al-A'rāf (الاعراف) under ألست بربكم : *alastu bi rabbikum* (Am I not your Lord? - 7:172) The purpose of this pledge was to bring round the whole human community to believe in the being of God and in His universal Lordship since the whole edifice of religion rests on this very corner-stone. Unless this belief is there, the lead given by reason and reflection can be of no positive use in the field of religion. Additional details on this subject will, *inshal-lah,* appear where due.

2. The second pledge is mentioned in verse 187 of the present Sūrah in the following words:

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ اللّٰهُ مِيثَاقَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتٰبَ لَتُبَيِّنُنَّهُ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا تَكْتُمُونَهُ

And when Allah took pledge from those who were given the Book: "You shall make it known to people, and you shall not conceal it." (3:18)

This pledge was taken exclusively from the *'ulamā'* (religious scholars) of the people of the Book asking them not to hide the truth but to state it clearly and openly.

3. The third pledge has been described in the present verse:

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ اللّٰهُ مِيثَاقَ النَّبِيّٖنَ لَمَآ اٰتَيْتُكُمْ مِّنْ كِتٰبٍ وَّ حِكْمَةٍ

And when Allah made the prophets take pledge: (saying) "If I

give you a book and wisdom... (3:81)

The purpose and place of the pledge

To answer as to where did this third pledge take place, it can be said that it either took place in the spiritual world on a metaphysical plane or in our physical world by means of revelation. Both are probable. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

As for the meaning of *Mīthāq* (pledge) the Holy Qur'ān has itself mentioned its contents. However, with regard to the relevant subject of this pledge, sayings differ. Sayyidnā 'Alī and Ibn 'Abbās رضی الله عنهما say that this was about the Last Prophet, صلی الله علیه وسلم . It means that Allah Almighty had taken this pledge from all prophets solely in respect of Muḥammad صلی الله علیه وسلم . The pledge was that they should, if they appear in his blessed time, believe in him, give him help and support, and leave behind instructions for their respective communities to do the same.

Ṭa'wūs, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and Qatādah (رحمهم الله) say that this pledge was taken from the prophets so that they help and support each other mutually. (Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr)

This later statement can also be substantiated from what Allah Almighty has said in Sūrah al-Aḥzāb:

وَاِذْ اَخَذْنَا مِنَ النَّبِيّٖنَ مِيْثَاقَهُمْ وَمِنْكَ وَمِنْ نُّوْحٍ وَّ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَ مُوْسٰى وَ عِيْسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ وَاَخَذْنَا مِنْهُمْ مِّيْثَاقًا غَلِيْظًا (الاحزاب)

And when We took from the prophets their pledge, and from you, and from Nūḥ and Ibrāhīm and Mūsā and 'Īsā son of Maryam - and We took from them a firm pledge. (33:7)

This is because the pledge was taken in order that they support and attest each other. (Tafsīr Aḥmadī)

In reality, there is no contradiction in the two explanations cited above, therefore, both can be brought to bear on the meaning. (Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr)

There may be a doubt here. One may say that Allah Almighty is All-Knowing and All-Aware. He certainly knows that Muḥammad ﷺ will not be appearing in this world during the presence of any prophet. If so, asking prophets to believe in him seems to be of no use. But, a

little deliberation would bring its usefulness into clear focus. One will realize that the moment they declare a firm intention to believe, as commanded by Allah Almighty, in the prophethood of Sayyidnā Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم , the paradigm of most sublime attributes, it will be right from that point of time that they will become entitled to Divine blessings. (Sāwī vide Jalālayn)

The final and universal prophethood

In verse 81 beginning with the words: وَإِذْ أَخَذَ اللّٰهُ مِيْثَاقَ النَّبِيّٖنَ (And when Allah made the prophets take pledge:), it has been clearly stated that Allah Almighty took a firm pledge from all prophets, which was: When, during your lifetime there comes another prophet - who will certainly reaffirm the message of past prophets and their books - then, it is necessary for the prophet who is present at that time that he not only believes personally in the veracity and prophethood of the new prophet but also instructs others to do so. From this absolute rule set by the Qur'ān, it becomes very clear that Allah Almighty must have taken a pledge from the prophets about Sayyidnā Muḥammad ﷺ as well, quite similar to what 'Allāmah al-Subkī has stated in his treatise entitled التعظيم والمنة فى لتومن به ولتنصرنه . He says: 'In this verse, the word, *rasūl* (messenger) refers to Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم ; and there has never been a prophet from whom Allah Almighty had not taken the pledge to believe in his prophethood and provide help and support to him; and there has not been one single prophet who did not bequeath to his community the legacy of believing in and helping and supporting him; and, if the noble prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had appeared during the times of the prophets, it is he who would have been the prophet to (be obeyed by) all of them, and all of them would have been part of his community.'

This tells us that his status is not restricted to his being simply the prophet of his community; he is the prophet of prophets as well. So, he himself says in a hadīth: 'If Mūsā (Moses) was living today, he too would have had no option but to follow me.'

At yet another occasion, he said: 'When 'Īsā عليه السلام (Jesus) will come, he too will act in accordance with the noble Qur'ān and the rules set forth by your prophet'. (Tafsīr ibn Kathīr)

Thus, from here we learn that his prophethood is 'universal and in-

clusive' and that all previous religious codes stand absorbed in his Sharī'ah. What is being said here also brings into a bright focus the correct meaning of his saying: بُعِثْتُ إِلَى النَّاسِ كَافَّةً (I have been sent to all human beings). It shows that taking this ḥadīth to mean that his prophethood extends from his time to the Day of Judgement is not correct. Instead, the time duration of his prophethood is so extensive that it begins before the prophethood of Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام as the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has himself said in a ḥadīth: كنت نبيا و آدم بين الروح والجسد (I was a prophet even when Ādam was in a state between spirit and body). That he will be the first to step forward for intercession on the Day of Resurrection, and that the entire progeny of Ādam عليه السلام will assemble under his flag and that he led the prayers at a congregation of all prophets in Bayt al-Maqdis on the Night of Ascenst (*Mi'rāj*) are all signs of this leadership which is great and universal.

Verse 85

وَمَنْ يَّبْتَغِ غَيْرَ الْإِسْلَامِ دِيْنًا فَلَنْ يُّقْبَلَ مِنْهُ ۚ وَهُوَ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنَ الْخٰسِرِيْنَ ﴿٨٥﴾

And whoever seeks a faith other than Islām, it will never be accepted from him, and he, in the Hereafter, is among the losers. [85]

Commentary

The literal meaning of 'Islām' is 'submission and obedience.' As a term 'Islām' stands for submission to that particular religion which Allah Almighty has sent through his prophets to guide human beings, because fundamental principles are the same in the religious codes of all prophets عليهم السلام .

Correspondingly, there are occasions when 'Islām' is used in that general sense, while there are other occasions when it is used exclusively to identify the Last Sharī'ah which was revealed to the Last of the Prophets عليهم السلام . Both these kinds of application are present in the Holy Qur'ān. That the past prophets called themselves 'Muslim' and their communities, the 'Muslim' community, stands proved under the authority of several wordings of the Qur'ānic text. Concurrently, this name has also been used as a particular name of the community the Last of the Prophets:

هُوَ سَمّٰكُمُ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَفِيْ هٰذَا

It was He who named you Muslims before, and in this (Qur'an). (22:78)

In short, every Divine religion which came through a prophet is also called 'Islam'. Then, it is also used as a particular title for the Muslim community. Now, the question is as to which sense does the word, 'Islam', carry at this place in the Holy Qur'an?

The correct position is that, no matter which of the two meanings is taken, it does not make much of a difference in terms of the outcome, since the name of 'Islam' given to the religion of past prophets was for a limited group of people and a specified period of time.

That was the 'Islam' of that time. Restricted to the specific group or community, that 'Islam' was not meant to serve as a universal code for all times to come. As such when a particular prophet departed and was replaced by another prophet, 'Islam' (i.e. the specific code) of that time ceased to be operative. The 'Islam' of the said time was to be what the new prophet presented. Obviously, there was no difference between these different codes in so far as the fundamentals are concerned, however, the subsidiary injunctions might differ. As for the 'Islam' given through the last Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, it will remain unabrogable and will serve as a permanent code right upto the Day of Judgment. And, in accordance with the cited rule, all previous religions stand abrogated after the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been sent.

Now, they are not Islam as such anymore. Instead, Islam is the name of that particular religion which has reached us through the Holy Prophet, Muhammad al-Mustafa صلى الله عليه وسلم. Therefore, it appears in authentic *ahadith* that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'Had Musa been living this day, following me would have been incumbent upon him too.' In yet another *hadith,* he has been reported to have said that 'Isa, when he appears close to the Day of Resurrection, he too, inspite of holding his distinction and office of prophethood, would follow no other religious code except that of his (the Prophet of Islam).

Therefore, at this place, no matter what sense is taken of Islam - the general or the particular - the outcome of both is the same, that is,

after the coming of the Last of the Prophets, عليهم السلام, only that religion, and that alone, will be termed as Islām which has come to the world through him. On belief in that alone depends the salvation (*najāt*) of all human beings for it is their indispensable need. This explains what has been said in the present verse: 'Whoever seeks a faith other than Islām, it will never be accepted from him.'

Details about this subject have already appeared under the commentary on the verse (3:19).

Verses 86 - 91

كَيْفَ يَهْدِي اللّٰهُ قَوْمًا كَفَرُوْا بَعْدَ اِيْمَانِهِمْ وَشَهِدُوْٓا اَنَّ الرَّسُوْلَ حَقٌّ وَّجَآءَهُمُ الْبَيِّنٰتُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٨٦﴾ اُولٰٓئِكَ جَزَآؤُهُمْ اَنَّ عَلَيْهِمْ لَعْنَةَ اللّٰهِ وَالْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ وَالنَّاسِ اَجْمَعِيْنَ ﴿٨٧﴾ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا ۚ لَا يُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُمُ الْعَذَابُ وَلَا هُمْ يُنْظَرُوْنَ ﴿٨٨﴾ اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ تَابُوْا مِنْۢ بَعْدِ ذٰلِكَ وَاَصْلَحُوْا ۟ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿٨٩﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا بَعْدَ اِيْمَانِهِمْ ثُمَّ ازْدَادُوْا كُفْرًا لَّنْ تُقْبَلَ تَوْبَتُهُمْ ۚ وَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الضَّآلُّوْنَ ﴿٩٠﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَمَاتُوْا وَهُمْ كُفَّارٌ فَلَنْ يُّقْبَلَ مِنْ اَحَدِهِمْ مِّلْءُ الْاَرْضِ ذَهَبًا وَّلَوِ افْتَدٰى بِهٖ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ وَّمَا لَهُمْ مِّنْ نّٰصِرِيْنَ ﴿٩١﴾

How shall Allah give guidance to a people who disbelieved after they had accepted Faith and testified that the Prophet is true and the clear signs had come to them? And Allah does not give guidance to the unjust people.[86] **The punishment of such people is that upon them is the curse of Allah, and of the angels and of the human beings altogether.** [87]

They remain under it forever. Neither will the punishment be lightened for them, nor will they be given respite, [88] **except those who repent afterwards and mend their ways; then, Allah is All-Forgiving, Very-**

Merciful.[89]

Those who disbelieve after having accepted Faith and then increase in disbelief, their repentance shall never be accepted. And they are the ones who have lost the right path. [90]

Those who disbelieve and die as disbelievers, even an Earth-full of gold shall never be accepted from any of them, even if one were to offer it as ransom. They are the ones for whom there is a painful punishment, and for them there are no helpers. [91]

Commentary

The removal of a doubt:

On a superficial view of the verse كَيْفَ يَهْدِى اللّٰهُ : 'How shall Allah give guidance...' (86), there emerges a doubt that whoever turns an apostate receives no guidance afterwards, although, the fact is contrary to this. There are many who, after having become apostates, re-embrace the faith and become recipients of guidance.

The answer is that the withholding of guidance mentioned here is in accordance with common usage. For instance, some criminal when punished by a certain ruler may say, 'I have been given a special treatment by the ruler with his own hands.' And in answer to him, it is said: 'Why are we going to give a special treatment to such a criminal?' That is, there is just no special treatment called for in this case, while it does not mean that such a person cannot, in any way, become deserving of special treatment even if he behaved well. (Bayan al-Qur'an)

Verse 92

لَنْ تَنَالُوا الْبِرَّ حَتّٰى تُنْفِقُوْا مِمَّا تُحِبُّوْنَ ۬ وَمَا تُنْفِقُوْا مِنْ شَىْءٍ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِهٖ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿۹۲﴾

You shall never attain righteousness unless you spend from what you love. And whatsoever you spend, Allah is fully aware of it. [92]

Sequence of Verses

In the previous verse (91), it was said that charity from disbelievers and deniers was not acceptable with Allah. In this verse, believers have been told about acceptable charity and the etiquette governing it.

Commentary

Let us first understand what بر : *birr* means and what it really signifies so that the whole sense of the verse becomes clear in our minds.

The literal and real meaning of the word بر : *birr* is the perfect fulfillment of someone's rights. It is also used in the sense of charity, performance of good deeds and nice conduct. The word بر : *barr* and بار : *bārr* is used for a person who fulfills, fully and totally, all rights due on him. The expression بَرًّا بِوَالِدَتِي (good to my mother - 19:32) and بَرًّا بِوَالِدَيْهِ (good to his father and mother - 19:14) has been used in the Qur'ān in this very sense. It has been used there as a personal attribute of prophets who fulfilled the rights of their parents fully and perfectly.

The plural form of this very word بر : *barr* is ابرار : *abrār* which has been used frequently in the Qur'ān. It has been said:

إِنَّ الْأَبْرَارَ يَشْرَبُونَ مِنْ كَأْسٍ كَانَ مِزَاجُهَا كَافُورًا

Surely the righteous shall drink of a cup the mixture of which is camphor - 76:5.

Again at another place it is said:

إِنَّ الْأَبْرَارَ لَفِي نَعِيمٍ عَلَى الْأَرَائِكِ يَنْظُرُونَ

Surely the righteous shall be in bliss, upon furnished thrones gazing - 83:22,23.

yet again there is:

وَإِنَّ الْفُجَّارَ لَفِي جَحِيمٍ

And surely, the sinners shall be in hell ablaze - 82:14.

The last verse above also tells us that the antonym of بر :*birr* is فجور : *fujūr* (disobedience, sinfulness).

In al-Ādab al-Mufrad of Imām al-Bukhārī and in Ibn Mājah and the Musnad of Aḥmad, it has been reported from Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said: 'Stick to speaking the truth because truth is a companion of بر : *birr* (righteousness) and both these are in Paradise; and abstain from lying because that is a companion of *fujūr* (sin) and both these are in Hell.'

The verse 177 of Sūrah al-Baqarah (2) says:

لَيْسَ الْبِرَّ اَنْ تُوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ قِبَلَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَلٰكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنْ اٰمَنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ

Righteousness is not that you turn your faces to the East and the West; but righteousness is that one believes in Allah and the last Day... 2:177.

After giving a list of good deeds in this verse, all of them have been classed as بر : *birr* (righteousness). The subject verse also tells us that, of the wide range of righteous deeds, the most preferred form of righteousness is to spend the most cherished things in the way of Allah. The verse further tells us 'you can never claim to have righteousness unless you spend out of what you hold dear.' Thus the meaning is that the perfect fulfillment of the the rights of Allah Almighty and a total self-unburdening from it cannot come to pass unless we spend in the way of Allah what we hold dear to our hearts. This very perfect fulfillment of due rights has also been translated as 'perfect good' or 'excellence in doing good' or 'the great merit'. To sum up, the sense here is that entering the ranks of the *'abrār'* (the righteous) depends on sacrificing in the way of Allah that which one holds dear.

The enthusiastic obedience of *Ṣaḥābah*

The noble Companions رضی اللہ عنہم اجمعین who were the first addressees of the Qur'ānic injunctions and the direct disciples of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم really loved to carry out the injunctions of the Qur'ān in letter and spirit. When this verse was revealed, each one of them surveyed as to what they loved most out of what they had. Consequently, requests started coming before the Holy Prophet ﷺ that these be spent in the way of Allah. Sayyidnā Abū Ṭalḥah رضی اللہ عنہ was the richest person among the *Anṣār* (the helping residents) of Madinah. He was the owner of a fruit farm located right across the mosque of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم . It had a well called *Bi'r Ḥā'*. Now, in place of this farm, there is, in front of Bāb al-Majīdī, a building known as Isṭifā Manzil where pilgrims to Madinah stay. But, in a corner north-east from it, this *Bi'r Ḥā'* still exhists by the same name.[1] The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم used to visit this farm once in a while and

1. This building and well have now been demolished due to the extension of the Mosque. (Translator)

drink water drawn from *Bi'r Ḥā'*. He liked the water from this well. This farm belonging to Sayyidnā Ṭalḥah was very precious, fertile, and the dearest of all that he owned. After the revelation of this verse, he presented himself before the Holy Prophet ﷺ and said: 'I hold *Bi'r Ḥā'* the dearest of all that I own. I wish to 'spend' it in the way of Allah. I request you to use it for whatever purpose you like.' He said: 'That farm is a high-yield property. I think it is appropriate that you distribute it among your kith and kin.' Sayyidnā Abū Ṭalḥah, accepting the suggestion made by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم distributed it among his relatives and cousins (al-Bukhārī and Muslim). This ḥadīth also tells us that charity is not restricted to spending on the poor and the needy, but it is equally charitable and meritorious to give it to one's own family and relatives.

Sayyidnā Zayd ibn Ḥāritha رضى الله عنه came with a horse and said that he loved it more than anything else he owned and that he wanted to 'spend' it in the way of Allah. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم accepted it. But, after having taken it from him, he gave it to his son Sayyidnā Usāmah رضى الله عنه. Zayd ibn Ḥāritha was somewhat disappointed about that thinking that his charity has found its way back into his own home. But, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم comforted him by saying: 'Allah Almighty has accepted this charity of yours'. (Tafsīr Mazharī vide Ibn Jarīr, and others)

Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه had a bond-maid he liked most. He freed her for the sake of Allah.

Similarly, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar had a bond-maid he loved. He freed her in the name of Allah.

In short, the gist of the verse under reference is that the complete fulfillment of the rights of Allah, the perfect good and excellence in doing good can be achieved only when a person spends something out of his dearest belongings in the way of Allah. Worthy of our attention and retention are some of the following aspects highlighted in this verse:

The word *birr* in this verses is inclusive of all charity, obligatory or voluntary:

1. First of all, this verse motivates spending in the way of Allah.

Some commentators take this to mean obligatory charity such as *zakāh* while others take this to be voluntary (*Nafl*: supererogatory) charity. But, according to a consensus of respected researchers in the field, it has been established that its sense is general and includes both obligatory and voluntary charities. Then there are the recorded actions of the noble Companions, as cited above, which bear witness that these charitable initiatives taken by them were voluntary.

Therefore, the sense of the verse is that you give in the way of Allah whatever it may be, the obligatory *zakāh* or the voluntary charity, but that perfect excellence and merit will blossom out from them only when you spend in the way of Allah what you like and love. Not that you pick out the spare, the useless or worthless things as if you were trying to get rid of the burden of charity and as if it was some sort of punitive tax on you. This subject has been taken up more clearly in another verse of the Qur'ān which is as follows:

يَاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اَنْفِقُوْا مِنْ طَيِّبٰتِ مَا كَسَبْتُمْ وَمِمَّآ اَخْرَجْنَا لَكُمْ مِّنَ الْاَرْضِ
وَلَا تَيَمَّمُوا الْخَبِيْثَ مِنْهُ تُنْفِقُوْنَ وَلَسْتُمْ بِاٰخِذِيْهِ اِلَّآ اَنْ تُغْمِضُوْا فِيْهِ

O those who believe, spend of the the good things you have earned and of what We have brought forth for you from the earth and do not opt for a bad thing spending only from there while you are not going to accept it at all unless you close your eyes to it... - 2:267.

So, the outcome is that picking out the bad and the useless to give in charity is unacceptable; contrary to that is the acceptable charity which earns full merit and which is nothing but what is spent out of one's dear belongings.

Moderation in charity:

2. The second ruling comes out of the hint made in the word مِمَّا (from what) in the verse. That is, the purpose is not to spend away everything one likes and loves *en masse* in the way of Allah. Instead, the purpose is to spend whatever has to be spent from the good things. Spending in this way will bring the full reward of charity.

In charity, what counts is sincerity:

3. The third ruling is that spending the cherished is not tied to spending something of high value. Instead, by spending what one likes

and holds dear, no matter how small it may be in quantity or cost, one would still become deserving of this '*birr*' or righteousness. Ḥasan al-Baṣrī says, 'Whoever spends sincerely for the good pleasure of Allah, even if that be a single date-fruit alone, that too is good enough to make one deserving of the great merit and perfect righteousness promised in the verse.'

Alternative for those who have nothing to spend:

4. On the outside, it appears from the verse that poor people who do not have much to spend will remain deprived of the great good and righteousness mentioned here. It is because it has been said in the verse that this great good cannot be achieved without spending one's cherished belonging while the poor and the needy just do not have anything through which they could reach the station of righteousness. But, a little deliberation would show that the verse does not mean that those who wish to have the great good and the great merit cannot achieve that by any means other than that of spending out of their cherished possessions. Contrary to that, the fact is that this great good can be achieved by some other means as well, such as, *'Ibādah, Dhikr, Tilāwah* of the Qur'ān and abundance of *nawāfil*. Therefore, the poor and the needy can also become the recipients of this great good through other means as it has been clearly explained in Ḥadīth narrations.

What is meant by things you love?

5. This is the fifth question. Another verse of the Qur'ān tells us that something liked and loved means that the thing is working for him and that he needs it, not that it be spare and useless. The Holy Qur'an says: وَيُطْعِمُونَ الطَّعَامَ عَلَىٰ حُبِّهِ مِسْكِينًا which means that "the favoured servants of Allah feed the poor although they need it themselves." (76:08) Similarly, in yet another verse, this subject has been further clarified as follows: وَيُؤْثِرُونَ عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ وَلَوْ كَانَ بِهِمْ خَصَاصَةٌ They (the favoured servants of Allah) prefer others over their ownselves even though they themselves are in need. (59:09)

Spending the extra and the spare too is not devoid of merit:

6. The sixth ruling given in this verse is that entry into the fold of perfect good, great merit and ranks of the righteous depends on spending one's cherished possessions in the way of Allah. But, it does not

necessarily follow that there is just no merit in store for one who does spend out of what is extra to his needs. On the contrary, as it is said towards the end of the verse: "وَمَا تُنفِقُوا مِن شَيْءٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ" that is, 'And whatsoever you spend, Allah is fully aware of it,' the sense of the text in the verse is that while the achievement of the perfect good and entry into the ranks of the righteous, no doubt, depends on spending cherished possessions specially; however, no charity is devoid of merit irrespective of whether one spends the cherished or the extra. But, what is certainly undesirable and prohibited is getting into the habit of always picking out the extra and the bad to spend in the way of Allah. But, a person who not only spends good things he likes in charity but also gives away things which are extra to his needs, e.g., left-over food or used clothing, defective utensils or articles in use, does commit no sin by including these in his acts of charity. He would definitely earn a reward for those too. As far as spending of cherished possessions is concerned, he would thereupon achieve the great good and find his entry into the ranks of the righteous as well.

Also stated in this last sentence of the verse is that Allah is fully aware of the real quality of what man spends and knows whether or not it is dear to him, and if he is spending it for the good pleasure of Allah, or for pretense and publicity. The mere verbal claim by somebody that he is spending what he cherishes in the way of Allah is not enough for this purpose. Keeping vigil over him is the One, the all-Knowing, the all-Aware who is cognizant of the secrets of the heart - He is watching and knows what is the true worth of the spending in His way.

Verses 93 - 95

كُلُّ الطَّعَامِ كَانَ حِلًّا لِّبَنِي إِسْرَاءِيلَ إِلَّا مَا حَرَّمَ إِسْرَاءِيلُ
عَلَىٰ نَفْسِهِ مِن قَبْلِ أَن تُنَزَّلَ التَّوْرَاةُ ۗ قُلْ فَأْتُوا بِالتَّوْرَاةِ
فَاتْلُوهَا إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٩٣﴾ فَمَنِ افْتَرَىٰ عَلَى اللَّهِ
الْكَذِبَ مِن بَعْدِ ذَٰلِكَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٩٤﴾ قُلْ صَدَقَ
اللَّهُ ۗ فَاتَّبِعُوا مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا ۖ وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ

﴿٩٥﴾

Every (kind of) food was lawful for the children of Isrā'īl, except what Isrā'īl had made unlawful for himself well before the Torah was revealed. Say, "Then, bring the Torah and recite it, if you are true." [93]

Then, after all this, those who forge the lie and attribute it to Allah, they are the transgressors. [94]

Say, "Allah has spoken the truth. So, follow the Faith of Ibrāhīm, the upright -- and he was not one of the associators." [95]

Commentary

In the verses appearing above, there is a continuity of arguments against positions taken by the people of the Book. At some places, it concerns Jews and at others, the Christians. One such argument, which has been reported in Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī on the authority of Wāḥidī and al-Kalbī, recounts the incident when the Holy Prophet ﷺ stated his adherence to the community of Abraham with reference to all fundamentals of the religious code, and most of the subsidiaries, the Jews objected by saying: 'You eat camel meat and partake of its milk although these were unlawful for Abraham.' The Holy Prophet ﷺ said: 'No, this was lawful for him.' The Jews said: 'All that we consider unlawful has continued to be unlawful since the days of Naoh and Abraham to the point that this unlawfulness reached us.' Thereupon, Allah Almighty revealed the verse: كُلُّ الطَّعَامِ كَانَ حِلًّا لِّبَنِيٓ إِسْرَآئِيلَ: 'Every (kind of) food was lawful for the children of Isrā'īl - 93' to refute the Jewish claim in which it is said that before the revelation of Torah, all things were lawful for the children of Isrā'īl except the camel meat which Isrā'īl (Jacob) عليه السلام himself had denied to eat for a particular reason, and then it remained unlawful for his progeny also.

The fact, as narrated by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās in an authentic report, is that Jacob suffered from Sciatica. He had taken a vow that he would abandon what he liked most in what he ate if Allah Almighty cured him of the disease. He was cured and camel meat was what he liked most, so he abandoned it. (See Al-Ḥākim and al-Tirmidhī as quoted by Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī). Then, it so happened that this prohibition which started because of a vow continued among the Banī Isrā'īl as a divine injunc-

tion. It seems their code recognized a vow as a cause of unlawfulness of something lawful, like in our own Sharī'ah, a vow may make the permissible acts as obligatory. However, a vow or pledge which renders things unlawful is, in reality, an oath which is not permissible in our Sharī'ah. In fact, in such a case, it is obligatory to break the oath and make amends by making *Kaffārah.* This is in accordance with what Allah Almighty has said in the verse لِمَ تُحَرِّمُ مَآ اَحَلَّ اللّٰهُ لَكَ (... why do you forbid what Allah has made lawful for you? - 66:1) (See al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr)

Verse 96

اِنَّ اَوَّلَ بَيۡتٍ وُّضِعَ لِلنَّاسِ لَلَّذِىۡ بِبَكَّةَ مُبٰرَكًا وَّهُدًى لِّلۡعٰلَمِيۡنَ ﴿۹۶﴾

The first house set up for the people is surely the one in Makkah having blessings and guidance for all worlds. [96]

Commentary:

The above verse points out to the distinction and superiority of the House of Allah, the Ka'bah, as compared to the houses, and even mosques, of the whole world. There are several reasons for this status, which have been mentioned in this verse, namely:

1. Among the true houses of worship in this world, the Ka'bah enjoys the distinction of being the first.

2. It is full of blessings.

3. It is a source of guidance for the entire world.

The gist of the words used in the verse is that the first House designated for people by Allah is none other than the one which is in Makkah. It means that the Ka'bah of Makkah is the first House of Worship in this world. One possible interpretation of this phrase may be that the first house of all the houses of the world was made for Divine worship exclusively, in which case, there would have been no place of worship or place of residence prior to it. Ādam عليه السلام was a prophet of Allah. Given his stature and the eminent position as Allah's vicegerent, it is likely that he, soon after his appearance on the earth, elected to first build the House of Allah even before building his own

residence. It is for this reason that Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar, Mujāhid, Qatādah and others from among the Companions and their successors are of the opinion that the Ka'bah is the first house of the world. Then, it is also possible that houses where people lived may have already been made earlier but this may have been the first ever House made exclusively for worship. This very view has been reported from Sayyidnā 'Alī رضی اللہ عنہ .

Al-Baihaqi, in his book, Dalā'il al-Nubūwwah, has reported on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Amr ibn al'Ās رضی اللہ عنہ that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said: 'After the arrival of Sayyidnā Ādam and Sayyidah Ḥawwā' علیہما السلام into the mortal world, Allah Almighty commanded them through angel Jibra'īl that they should build the House of Allah (the Ka'bah). After they had fulfilled the command, they were asked to go round it (in *ṭawāf*). They were told that they were the first among people and this house was the first House (of worship) appointed for people (Ibn Kathīr).

As it appears in some reports, this structure of the Ka'bah built by Sayyidnā Ādam was there upto the time of Sayyidnā Nūḥ. It collapsed during the Flood and its traces were obliterated. Following that, it was re-built by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm علیہ السلام on the same foundations. When the structure collapsed again due to some accident, a group from the tribe of Jurhum raised it once again. When yet another collapse came, the Amalkites rebuilt it. When it collapsed close to the early period of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم , the Quraysh built it all over again in which the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم himself participated and helped place the Black Stone with his blessed hands. But, the structure raised by the Quraysh was a little different from the original foundation laid down by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm in as much as they had left out a section of the House of Allah which is known as Ḥatīm. There were two doors in the original Abrahamic structure of the Ka'bah, one for entry and another on the back for exit. The Quraysh retained just the one door in the east (for entry and exit).

The third change they made was to raise the level of the entry door much higher than the ground level of the House of Allah so that everybody could not go in there easily; this was to restrict the entry only to those who were permitted by Quraysh. The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم

said to Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها : 'I wish I could demolish the present structure and raise it all over again exactly in accordance with the Abrahimic foundation. By doing this I shall be correcting the arbitrary deviation from the Abrahimic foundation made by the Quraysh, but this action is likely to create a misunderstanding among Muslims who are new and whose knowledge is not yet perfect, therefore, I shall leave it as it is for the time being.' The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم did not live for very long to implement his wishes in his lifetime.

But, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Zubayr رضى الله عنه , the nephew of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها had heard this saying of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . When he came to rule Makkah al-Mukarramah following the *Khulafā al-Rāshidīn*, he had the structure of the House of Allah demolished and had it rebuilt in accordance with the saying of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the original foundation of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام . He ruled Makkah al-Mu'azzamah for a brief period only. The tyrant of the Muslim community, Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf invaded Makkah and Haḍrat 'Abdullāh was martyred. After assuming control of the government, and abhorrent as he was to the idea that this feat of 'Abdullāh ibn Zubayr remains a source of fame for the martyred ruler, he started a smear campaign that 'Abdullāh ibn Zubayr was wrong in what he did and that the Ka'bah should be kept the way it was left to posterity by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم . Using this excuse, he once again demolished the structure of the House of Allah and had it built anew similar to the one made earlier by the Quraysh during the days of *Jāhiliyyah*. Some Muslim rulers who succeeded Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf intended, on the strength of the aforementioned ḥadīth, to rebuild the House of Allah all over again in accordance with the ḥadīth of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . But, the master-jurist of that period, Sayyidnā Imām Mālik ibn Anas gave a *fatwā* to the effect that re-demolishing and re-building the House of Allah at this stage will render the House of Allah a plaything in the hands of rulers who will follow. Every ruler who comes next will do exactly this to earn fame for himself. Therefore, it is appropriate that it be left the way it is. The entire *ummah* accepted it. This is the reason why the structure built by Ḥajjaj ibn Yūsuf is what remains even to this day. There have been damages, dilapidations and the process of repairs has continued ever since.

These narrations, first of all, tell us that the Ka'bah is the first house of the world, or at least, the first house of worship. While the Holy Qur'ān does mention that the House of Allah was built by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm and Ismā'il following His will and command, there are simultaneous indicators suggesting that these revered prophets did not go through the initial layout for its construction. Instead, they built it in accordance with previous foundations, because the real foundation of the Ka'bah was already there. From what is said in the Holy Qur'ān, i.e. وَإِذْ يَرْفَعُ إِبْرَاهِيمُ الْقَوَاعِدَ مِنَ الْبَيْتِ وَإِسْمَاعِيلُ (and when Ibrāhīm was raising up the foundations of the House along with Ismā'il - 2:127) we get an indication that 'the *Qawā'id* or the foundations of the House of Allah were already there. It appears in Sūrah al-Ḥajj: وَإِذْ بَوَّأْنَا لِإِبْرَاهِيمَ مَكَانَ الْبَيْتِ (and when we settled for Ibrāhīm the site of the House - 22:26)

This too is suggestive of the fact that the site of the House of Allah had continued as pre-determined since earlier times. The first verse lends support to the view that its foundations were already there.

When Sayydinā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was commanded to build the House of Allah, as in some reports, he was led by an angel on to the site of the Ka'bah and its previously existing foundations hidden under sand dunes.

In any case, the verse under reference does prove one of the merits of the Ka'bah, that is, it is the first ever house or place of worship. It has been reported in a ḥadīth from the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* that Sayyidnā Ab Dharr رضى الله عنه asked the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, 'Which is the first ever *masjid* in the world?' He said, 'al-Masjid al-Ḥarām.' He submitted again, 'Which *masjid* comes after that?' He said, 'Masjid Bayt al-Maqdis.' He asked once again, 'What time span separates their building?' He said, 'Forty years.'

In this *ḥadīth*, it is in relation to the new edifice of the House of Allah that the intervening period between its construction and the initial construction of Bayt al-Maqdis has been determined. As a matter of fact, there are reports which prove that the initial construction of Bayt al-Maqdis was undertaken by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام forty years after the construction of the Ka'bah. Then comes the construction of Bayt al-Maqdis by Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام. This too was not a new structure with new foundations, like the Ka'bah. Instead, Sayyid-

na Sulayman عليه السلام rebuilt it on the original Abrahimic foundations. Thus, there remains no contradiction between reports.

The Ka'bah has always been an object of reverence and respect. This fact is pointed out in the expression وُضِعَ لِلنَّاسِ (set up for the people) in this verse under discussion hinted therein is that the respect and honour in which this House of worship is held will not be limited to a particular nation or group. Instead, the whole humanity will hold it in respect. Allah Almighty has placed a built-in aura of dignity and awe in its presence which draws in the hearts of people automatically.

Here, the word '*Bakkah*' means 'Makkah al-Mu'azzamah'. It does not matter whether you say that the letter '*mīm*' has been substituted for '*bā*' since, in common Arab usage, '*mīm*' is substituted for '*bā*', or simply say that '*Bakkah*' is an alternate name for 'Makkah'.

The Blessings of the Ka'bah

The second merit of Baytullah (the Ka'bah) stated here in this verse is that it is blessed. The word, '*mubārak*' has been derived from '*barakah*' which means 'to grow' and 'to sustain'. You can look at this growth factor from two angles. Something may grow in a way that it visibly increases in quantity, but the other possible way of growing is that it adds nothing noteworthy to its quantity, yet it turns out to be so useful in so many situations that it would have usually needed much more to do the same job. In that sense this too could be regarded as 'growth' or 'increase'.

The Ka'bah is full of blessings outwardly and inwardly. The outward blessings it has are quite obvious. Inspite of Makkah and its environs being a desert, dry and barren, all sorts of fruits and vegetables and items of need are available in all seasons and at all times. Not only that these are enough for the people of Makkah, it is much more than that. These suffice for all visitors from everywhere in the world. And everyone knows the volume of visitors, specially during the Hajj season, when hundreds and thousands of people from the farthest corners of the world assemble there whose count outnumbers the residents of Makkah by at least four or five times. This huge multitude of people stays there, not for a few days, but for months together. Even, apart from the Ḥajj season, there is hardly a time of the year when thousands of people from outside do not come in and go out of here. It

may be noted that, during the Ḥajj season particularly when hundreds and thousands of people from outside assemble there, it has never happened that articles of use could have gone out of the market and become unavailable. Even, animals of sacrifice which are slaughtered there by each and every person, at least on the average of one per person, and there are some who sacrifice more, are always available there. It is not that special arrangements are made to import these from other countries. In the words of the Holy Qur'ān, i.e. يُجْبٰىٓ اِلَيْهِ ثَمَرٰتُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ (Brought toward it are fruits of everything - 28:57), there is a clear indication of this phenomena.

This was a view of the outward blessings which, of course, are not the ultimate objective. The spiritual, the inward blessings are so numerous that it is impossible to count them. There are important *'ibādāt,* the acts of worship, which are special to the Ka'bah. The great reward and the spiritual blessings that come from them totally revolve around the Baytullah, such as the Ḥajj and 'Umra. Then, there are some other *'ibādāt* the merit of which increases several degrees when done in al-Masjid al-Ḥarām. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said that a man offering *ṣalāh* at his home will get *thawāb* for one *ṣalāh*; and if he does that in the *masjid* of his locality, he will get the reward for twenty five *ṣalāhs;* and one who does that in a *Jāmi'* (big congregational mosque) will get the reward for five hundred *ṣalāhs;* and should he offer his *ṣalāh* in al-Masjid al-Aqṣā, he will get the reward for one thousand *ṣalāhs*; and in my *Masjid*, he gets the *thawāb* for fifty thousand *ṣalāhs*, while in al-Masjid al-Ḥarām, that of one hundred thousand *ṣalāhs*. (This narration has been reported by Ibn Mājah and Ṭaḥāwī and others).

As far as the merits of *Ḥajj* are concerned, Muslims generally know the Ḥadīth which declares that a Muslim who performs his Ḥajj obligations correctly is so cleansed of his past sins as if he was born on that day, all pure and pristine. Obviously, all these are spiritual blessings of the Baytullah. These very blessings have been identified by the word هُدًى towards the end of the verse: مُبَارَكًا وَّهُدًى لِّلْعٰلَمِيْنَ (having blessings and guidance for all worlds).

Verse 97

فِيۡهِ اٰيٰتٌۢ بَيِّنٰتٌ مَّقَامُ اِبۡرٰهِيۡمَ ۚ وَمَنۡ دَخَلَهٗ كَانَ اٰمِنًا ؕ وَلِلّٰهِ عَلَى النَّاسِ حِجُّ الۡبَيۡتِ مَنِ اسۡتَطَاعَ اِلَيۡهِ سَبِيۡلًا ؕ وَمَنۡ كَفَرَ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَنِىٌّ عَنِ الۡعٰلَمِيۡنَ ﴿۹۷﴾

In it there are clear signs: The station of Ibrāhīm! And whoever enters there is secure. And as a right of Allah, it is obligatory on the people to perform Ḥajj of the House -- whoever has the ability to manage (his) way to it. And if one disbelieves, then Allah is independent of all the worlds. [97]

Commentary

Three distinctions of Baytullah

Related in this verse are distinctions and merits of the House of Allah, that is, the Ka'bah. Firstly, it has many signs of Allah's power, one of them being the station of Ibrāhīm (Maqāmu Ibrāhīm). Secondly, one who enters there becomes a recepient of peace and remains protected; he cannot be killed by anybody. Thirdly, it is obligatory on all Muslims around the world that they make the Ḥajj of the House of Allah, subject to the condition that one has the means and the ability to reach as far as there.

The signs of Allah's Power:

Since the time the foundations of Baytullah were laid out, Allah Almighty has, because of its enormous blessings provided protection to the people of Makkah against enemy attacks. When Abrahah invaded Makkah with his army of elephants, Allah Almighty, in His most perfect power, destroyed them through birds. Those who enter the sacred precincts of Makkah, men and women, even animals, stand protected.

When there is rainfall on a certain side of Baytullah, it has been observed that countries situated on that side are favoured with substantial rainfalls. Another unusual sign relates to the Jamarāt, the granite pillars on which every pilgrim throws seven pebbles each, everyday for three days. A couple of million or more pilgrims go there every year. Had these pebbles remained there, the Jamarāt would have been buried under a mountain of pebbles. The fact is that any huge de-

posits of pebbles are not visible there after the passage of three days of Ḥajj, except some scattered pebbles the cause of which is, as stated by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, that angels pick up these pebbles and the pebbles left there belong to people whose Ḥajj is not accepted for some reason. This is why it is forbidden to pick up pebbles lying near the Jamarāt and throw them on the pillars, as part of Ḥajj rites, since they are from the unaccepted ones.

In his comments on this phenomenon, Shaykh Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī has said in al-Khaṣā'iṣ al-Kubrā that there are some miracles of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم which still live and stand, and shall continue right through to the Day of judgement and everyone shall see them. One of these, of course, is the unmatched presence of the Holy Qur'ān itself which cannot be matched even if the whole world joined its forces. This inability persists all the same as it was during the blessed days of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and shall continue to persist like that right through to the Day of Judgement. Every Muslim, no matter of what period of time, shall be able to challenge the whole world: فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِّن مِّثْلِهِ (Then, produce a Sūrah like it -10:38).

So is the miracle of Jamarāt as stated above. Similarly there is the statement of the Prophet عليه السلام in respect of Jamarāt. He has stated that pebbles thrown on these pillars are picked up by the angels in a manner invisible to mankind. The few pebbles left belong to those unfortunate people whose pilgrimage is not accepted by Allah. The Prophet's statement has stood the test of time for centuries in a row and it will continue upto the Great Day. This is one of the continuing miracles of the Prophet عليه السلام and a major sign of Allah in respect of the revered house of Ka'bah.

The Station of Ibrāhīm :

From among the signs associated with the Ka'bah there is the great sign - The 'Maqāmu Ibrāhīm' which has been mentioned separately in its own right. The Station of Ibrāhīm is the name of the stone on which Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام stood while building the edifice of Baytullah (the Ka'bah). There are narrations reporting that the stone raised itself along with the rising level of construction and came down automatically when so required. The footprints of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام are still there on this stone. Obviously, that an inert and

unconscious stone is invested with sudden intelligent volition to respond to functional needs and elevate itself, or come down, or that it is given the ability to assume the plasticity of wax and let a perfect print of feet appear on its surface, are all signs of the most perfect power of Allah reflecting the superior merit of Baytullah.

This stone used to be on the ground close to the door of the Baytullah. When came the Qur'anic command: وَاتَّخِذُوا مِنْ مَّقَامِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ مُصَلًّى (And make the station of Ibrahim a place of prayer - 2:125), this stone was removed from there, considering the convenience of those who made *tawâf,* and placed in front of the Baytullah, but at some distance outside the *mataf* (the area where *tawaf* is made) close to *Bi'r Zamzam* (the well of *Zamzam*, the original site of which is now marked with a black marble circle on the floor of the Baytullah with the legend inlaid in Arabic). Later, it was secured in a small structure behind which the two post-*tawaf raka'at* were offered. The present position is that the station of Ibrahim has been placed securely in a strong metal-crystal casing, but it is the particular stone inside it which is the 'Maqamu Ibrahim'. Offering the post-*tawaf salah* comprising two *raka'at* behind or close to it is more merit-worthy. But the appellation, 'Maqamu Ibrahim' taken in a literal sense, covers the entire al-Masjid al-Haram, the Sacred Mosque. Therefore, Muslim jurists have ruled that offering the two *raka'at* after *tawaf* anywhere within the Sacred Mosque would satisfy one's obligation.

'Whoever enters Baytullah is secure':

The second peculiarity of the Ka'bah mentioned in the verse is that 'whoever enters it is secure'. This statement has different aspects. Firstly, it is true in the legal sense, for Allah Almighty has ordained that one who enters there should not be molested or killed; even if a person kills someone or commits some other crime and goes into the sanctuary, he too should not be punished in there. Instead of that, he should be compelled to come out of the *Haram* and when he does come out of the *Haram*, the punishment due will then be given. This is how an entrant to *Haram* gets the protection of Divine law.

The second form of security provided to the entrants of *Haram* is factual. In the very design of Divine creation, Allah Almighty has caused awe and reverence for Baytullah to take roots in the hearts of

people. Even the Arab tribes of *Jāhiliyyah,* inspite of all their evil practices, were ready to sacrifice their lives to uphold the honour of Baytullāh. That they were all too wild and warring is well-known, yet they held the *Ḥaram* in such esteem that a son whose father was killed would say nothing to the killer and quietly move away from him inspite of his burning rage for revenge.

The only time fighting was allowed within the *Ḥaram* area was for a few hours through a revelation from Allah Almighty. The occasion was the conquest of Makkah and the permission was restricted to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in order that he could cleanse the Baytullāh and serve an important objective of faith. Soon after the conquest, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم made an express announcement to this effect and stressed that the original unlawfulness of fighting in the *Ḥaram* continues to be valid for ever.

As far as the case of Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf is concerned who, after the time of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , took armed action against Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Zubayr رضى الله عنه in Makkah, resorting to killings and terror. Since his action was a grave sin and a flagrant violation of law and Ka'bah's sanctity, in the sight of the entire community which hated him for what he did, therefore, it does not affect the divine declaration of Ka'bah's sanctity. It is also difficult to say that he violated the built-in sanctity of Baytullah as such intentionally, for Ḥajjāj himself did not believe in the lawfulness of this action of his; he knew that he was committing a serious crime but he became overwhelmed by political and administrative considerations.

However, the truth is that the Muslim community at large has always held the *Ḥaram* and Baytullāh in the highest possible esteem and has always regarded fighting or quarrelling in the sacred precincts as one of the most ugly sins. This is a unique mark of Baytullah, universally and exclusively.

The obligation of Ḥajj: A Distinction of Baytullāh

Allah Almighty has made the Ḥajj of Baytullāh an obligation subject to the condition that one has the necessary means and ability to reach there. Having 'means' can be explained by saying that one should have resources surplus to his basic needs which could help him take care of the cost of travel, to Baytullāh and back home, and the

expenses incurred during stay in the Holy Land. It is also necessary that his 'means' should be good enough to cover the expenses of his family until his return, for this is an standing obligation on him. Then, one should not be physically handicapped, being unable to see, or use hands and feet, for a handicapped person would not have the ability to go that far and complete the many requirements of the Ḥajj.

As women are not legally permitted to travel without a *Maḥram* (marriage with whom is prohibited), they would be considered 'able' to embark on their Hajj if they are travelling with a *Maḥram* making his Ḥajj whether the *Maḥram* is bearing his own expenses or the woman pays for his expenses as well. Similarly, the route taken to reach the Ḥajj site should also be secure since this too is part of the condition of 'ability'. If peaceful conditions do not exist on the Ḥajj route and there is an acute danger to life and property, then, it would mean an absence of the 'ability' to perform Ḥajj.

Literally, Ḥajj means 'to intend'. What it means in terms of prescribed religious observance is already stated in the Holy Qur'ān itself, that is, the *ṭawāf* of the Ka'bah, the stay in 'Arafāt, and in Muzdalifah. Remaining details have been made clear by the Holy Prophet ﷺ through his words and deeds. So, after the announcement that the Ḥajj of Baytullāh is an obligation, it was said:

وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَإِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَنِيٌّ عَنِ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ

And if one disbelieves, then Allah is independent of all the worlds.

Included here, undoubtedly, is the person who intentionally rejects the belief that Ḥajj is obligatory. It is obvious that such a person cannot be considered a Muslim. He is a disbeliever indeed, for the description: "And if one disbelieves" fits him clearly and comprehensively. Then, comes the case of one who does believe that Ḥajj is an obligation, yet he does not, inspite of having the means and the ability, perform it. He too, in a way, is no less a denier of the Divine command. In his case, the words: "and if one disbelieves" will apply in the form of admonition and warning since this person is acting like disbelievers who do not perform Ḥajj. In the process, such a person acts just like one of them.

This is why Muslim jurists, رحمهم الله, have said that this is a severe warning to those who do not perform Ḥajj inspite of having the means and the ability to do so and thus, by this heedless act of theirs, they become the likes of disbelievers. Let us seek refuge with Allah from such a fate.

Verses 98 - 101

قُلْ يٰۤاَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ لِمَ تَكْفُرُوْنَ بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ ۖ وَاللّٰهُ شَهِيْدٌ عَلٰى
مَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٩٨﴾ قُلْ يٰۤاَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ لِمَ تَصُدُّوْنَ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ
مَنْ اٰمَنَ تَبْغُوْنَهَا عِوَجًا وَّ اَنْتُمْ شُهَدَآءُ ؕ وَ مَا اللّٰهُ بِغَافِلٍ
عَمَّا تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٩٩﴾ يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْۤا اِنْ تُطِيْعُوْا فَرِيْقًا مِّنَ
الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ يَرُدُّوْكُمْ بَعْدَ اِيْمَانِكُمْ كٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿١٠٠﴾
وَكَيْفَ تَكْفُرُوْنَ وَاَنْتُمْ تُتْلٰى عَلَيْكُمْ اٰيٰتُ اللّٰهِ وَ فِيْكُمْ
رَسُوْلُهٗ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّعْتَصِمْ بِاللّٰهِ فَقَدْ هُدِىَ اِلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ

﴿١٠١﴾

Say, "O people of the Book, why do you disbelieve the signs of Allah while Allah is witness to what you do?"[98]

Say, "O people of the Book, why do you prevent those who believe from the way of Allah seeking crookedness in it while you are witnesses (of the truth)? And Allah is not unaware of what you do." [99]

O those who believe, if you obey a group from those who have been given the Book, (before you) they will turn you infidels after your having believed. [100] **And how do you disbelieve while it is to you that the verses of Allah are recited, and present amidst you is His Messenger? And whoever holds on to Allah, he is surely guided to the straight path.** [101]

Commentary

Several verses earlier, the text was dealing with the people of the Book, their false beliefs and their doubts. Then, appeared the mention

of Baytullāh and Ḥajj. Now once again, the people of the Book are the addressees. These verses relate to a particular event. There was a Jew, Shammās ibn Qays, who harboured a chronic malice against Muslims. Once, when he saw two Anṣār tribes, Aws and Khazraj, gathered together amiably at one place, his malevolence got the better of him and he went about looking for ways to sow seeds of discord between them. Finally, he set up a man suggesting to him that these two tribes have fought a much long-drawn war in pre-Islām days and both parties had recited poetical compositions highlighting their tribal pride. So why not recite these self-congratulating poetical compositions while both sit together. The moment these poems were recited there, emotions rose high, there were charges and counter-charges to the limit that the place and time of a fresh war was all set. When the Holy Prophet ﷺ heard about this, he came to them and said: 'What is all this? Here I am present amidst you and you are doing this after having become Muslims and after having become united and friendly with each other. This is sheer ignorance. Do you want, in this state of yours, to revert to *kufr*?'

They took the warning to their heart. They knew this was a slip caused by Satan. They embraced each other, wept and repented. These verses were revealed in the background of this event.

This event appears in Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī as narrated by Ibn Isḥāq while there are others who narrate it from Zaid ibn Aslam. This subject continues through several verses after this. Here, the verses begin with an admonition to the people of the Book who had engineered this intrigue, and this admonition has been done with great eloquence when, before admonishing them for what they did, they were taken to task for their disbelief as well, which meant that it would have made better sense if they themselves had taken to the right path, and become Muslims, rather than devoting themselves to distract others to the wrong track. Following this, Muslims have been addressed, and served with a word of caution, specially when they have by their side, the Book and the Messenger of Allah, two powerful, never-failing sources, which would help them stay firm in their belief.

The expression وَمَنْ يَعْتَصِمْ بِاللّٰهِ translated as 'And whoever holds on to Allah' means one who stays firm in, and totally committed to, his *'īmān*

or faith, for *'i'tisām'*, the act of holding on to Allah firmly, denotes that one should affirm His Being and His Attributes, be staunchly faithful to what He has ordained, and in the process, be sure not to be lured into supporting the position of any adversary whoever that may be. One who acts in this manner 'is surely guided to the straight path'. It means that such a person is on the 'straight path', and being on the 'straight path' is the key to all that is good and beneficial which the Word of Allah promises to him.

Verses 102 - 103

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ حَقَّ تُقٰتِهٖ وَلَا تَمُوْتُنَّ اِلَّا وَاَنْتُمْ
مُّسْلِمُوْنَ ﴿۱۰۲﴾ وَاعْتَصِمُوْا بِحَبْلِ اللّٰهِ جَمِيْعًا وَّلَا تَفَرَّقُوْا ص
وَاذْكُرُوْا نِعْمَتَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ اِذْ كُنْتُمْ اَعْدَآءً فَاَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوْبِكُمْ
فَاَصْبَحْتُمْ بِنِعْمَتِهٖٓ اِخْوَانًا ج وَكُنْتُمْ عَلٰى شَفَا حُفْرَةٍ مِّنَ النَّارِ
فَاَنْقَذَكُمْ مِّنْهَا ط كَذٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ اٰيٰتِهٖ لَعَلَّكُمْ
تَهْتَدُوْنَ ﴿۱۰۳﴾

O those who believe, fear Allah, a fear which is His due, and let not yourself die save as Muslims. [102]

And hold on to the cord of Allah, all of you, and be not divided. And remember the blessing of Allah upon you: When you were enemies to each other, and He brought your hearts together, then you, with His grace, became brothers. And you were at the brink of a pit of Fire, then, He saved you from it. This is how Allah makes His signs clear to you, so that you may take the right path. [103]

Commentary

In the previous verses, Muslims were warned that the people of the Book, and others, want them to go astray from the right path so Muslims must remain vigilant of their moves and take steps to counter their anti-Muslim activities.

In the two verses appearing here, two important principles have

been given which go to make the collective strength of Muslims impregnable. These are:

1. *Taqwā*

2. Unity

The first principle appears in the first of the two verses. The second principle follows in the second verse. The first principle stated in the said verse is that one must 'fear Allah', that is, one should organize and manage his life with a full sense of responsibility before Allah, avoiding all that is forbidden or undesirable, doing so in a manner 'which is His due'.

What *Taqwā* is?

In Arabic, the word, '*Taqwā*' is used to denote avoidance and abstinence. It is translated as 'fear' in the sense that things one is asked to abstain from are nothing but things that cause fear, or alert one to the danger of Divine retribution.

Taqwā has its own degrees, the lowest is to avoid *Kufr* and *Shirk*, that is, disbelieving in Allah and His Message and attributing partners to His Divinity. In this sense, every Muslim can be counted as *Muttaqī* (one who has the quality of *Taqwā*), even if he is involved in sins. At several places in the Holy Qur'ān, the words, '*Muttaqīn*' (plural of *Muttaqī*) and '*Taqwā*' have been used in that sense as well. What is really desirable falls under the second degree of *Taqwā*, that is, to avoid that which is disliked by Allah and His Messenger. The merits and blessings of *Taqwā* enumerated in the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth have been promised on this degree of avoidance and abstinence.

As far as the third degree of *Taqwā* is concerned, this is a high station destined for prophets, عليهم السلام , their devoted deputies and men of Allah, for it is not within the grasp of everybody. To stand guard over one's heart against the onslaught of what does not relate to Allah, and to keep it filled with the remembrance of Allah and the desire to seek His pleasure, are great assignments.

The meaning of Taqwā 'as due'

While giving a directive to attain '*Taqwā*' the Holy Qur'ān has qualified the word of *Taqwā* with حَقَّ تُقٰتِهٖ (a fear which is His due) which means that one should seek to attain a degree of *Taqwā* which it inherently

deserves.

This has been explained by the blessed Companions, 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd, Rabī', Qatādah and Ḥasan al-Baṣrī رضی اللہ عنہم in the following words:

حَقَّ تُقٰتِہٖ ھو ان یُّطاع فلا یُعصی ویذکر فلایُنسی ویُشکر فلایُکفر (البحر المحیط)

'A fear which is His due' means that one obeys, then does not disobey; remembers then does not forget; and is grateful, then does not become ungrateful.' (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ)

The above explanation has also been reported with its chain of authorities ascending to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم himself.

Major commentators have explained the sense of the above report differently. For instance, some say that the due fear of Allah means that, in obedience to Allah, one should dismiss all derogatory criticism, no matter where it comes from, always standing firm on what is just, even if, by being just, he has to hurt his own self, or his children, or his parents. Some say, that one can never hope to achieve '*Taqwā* as due' unless he protects his tongue.

There is another verse in the Holy Qur'ān where it is said:

اِتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ

Fear Allah as much as you can. (64:16)

According to the blessed Companions, Ibn 'Abbās and Ṭāwūs, this is really nothing but an explanation of حَقَّ تُقٰتِہٖ (a fear which is His due). It means that should one be doing his best, using all his attention and energy to guard against evil, the obligation of *Taqwā* shall stand fulfilled. If one, who has already done everything he could, happens to fall a victim to something impermissible, that would not be considered being against '*Taqwā* as due'.

The statement which follows immediately: فَلَا تَمُوْتُنَّ اِلَّا وَاَنْتُمْ مُّسْلِمُوْنَ (and let not yourself die save as Muslims) tells us that *Taqwā* is, in reality, the whole of Islām since the total obedience to Allah and His Messenger, and the total avoidance of disobedience both to Allah and His Messenger is what *Taqwā* is all about; and this is what Islām is.

The command in the verse, 'and let not yourself die save as Muslims' raises a possible doubt as man does not control death, it may come anytime, anywhere. This doubt is removed when we consider the *ḥadīth*:

كَمَا تَحْيُوْنَ تَمُوْتُوْنَ وَكَمَا تَمُوْتُوْنَ تُحْشَرُوْنَ

'As you live, so shall you die; and as you die, so shall you be raised.'

Therefore, anyone who is determined to live his entire life by the tenets of Islām, and to the best of his determination and ability, acts accordingly, his death will definitely come, God willing, on a state of Islām. Now, about some *ḥadīth* narrations where it is said that there will be people who may have spent a life-time of good deeds, yet the entire roster of such deeds shall go waste because of something awful they did later. Such fate can befall those people only who did not act with sincerity and steadfastness from the very beginning. And Allah knows best.

UNITY: The second principle of collective Muslim strength:

In the second verse, 103: وَاعْتَصِمُوْا بِحَبْلِ اللّٰهِ جَمِيْعًا (And hold on to the cord of Allah, all of you), the golden principle of unity has been presented with great eloquence and wisdom, for the principle, being the only effective binding factor, has been identified before the command to unite was given, following which, came the prohibition of disunity and chaos.

Elaborating this a little, it can be said that unity is something good and desirable, a premise generally approved by all human beings, no matter what place, time, religion or life style they adhere to. A person who considers fights and disputes as something useful, and good in themselves, would be hard to find anywhere. This is why all groups and parties around the world invariably ask people to unite, but experience shows that all is not well in world affairs. No doubt, everybody agrees that unity is useful, and necessary, yet humanity is divided apart in sects, groups and parties. Then, there is a whole chain of sects within sects and parties within parties, reaching the limits of absurdity where even the unity of two people, in the real sense, has become a myth. A few people get together, agree on something under the

driving force of temporary objectives; then, no sooner do interests get served, or remain unrealized, unity evaporates in thin air, and instead, there remains the fall-out of mutual bickering and hostility.

With a little deliberation, it will become clear that every group, every sect, almost every person would like to unite people on some self-made programme, while the position is that other people have their own self-made programmes. So, rather than agree with them, they invite others to line up under their programme. Therefore, all calls for unity end up in break-ups and chaos among parties and persons. Thus, stuck in this quagmire of differences, humanity at large is the loser.

Therefore, the Holy Qur'ān has not stopped at giving sermons on unity and order, instead, it has also come forward with a just principle which would help achieve and sustain the desired state of affairs in the world, something in which no group should find a ground for differences. The truth of the matter is that imposing a system or programme conceived by one or some members of the human race on other human beings, and hoping that all of them will accept it unanimously, is simply against commonsense, and justice, and is nothing but cheeky self-deception. However, the system and the programme given by the Creator-Sustainer of all the worlds, the *Rabb al-'Ālamīn,* is something all human beings should naturally agree upon. No rational human being can deny it on principle. Now, the only possible inroad to difference here can show up in the actual identification of the system given by the Sovereign of Sovereigns, the *Rabb,* the Lord. Which is it? The Jews say it is the system of the Torah, the Christians say it is the system of the Evangile; both say it was sent by God and it is necessary to act upon it. The approach goes as far as even the polytheists, who have groups among them attributing their respective religious rites to none but god.

But, if man could rise a little above his group prejudice and the blind following of forefathers, using his own God-given reason, he would stand face to face with the reality without any frills; the reality that the Last of the Prophets, صلى الله عليه وسلم, has come with the last message of Allah Almighty in the form of the Holy Qur'ān and that, at this point of time, there is no other system or living pattern acceptable

in the sight of Allah Almighty. Leaving this wider focus aside, we can turn to the first and present addressees of the Qur'ān, the Muslims who believe that in the world as we have found it, the Holy Qur'ān is the only way of life revealed by Allah Almighty without any shadow of doubt in it, and since Allah Almighty has Himself taken the responsibility of protecting it, there is just no possibility of interpolation or change in it right through to the Day of Judgement. With this position in view, I leave the part of the subject dealing with non-Muslim groups for some other occasion and say to Muslims alone who, being believers in the Qur'ān, have no other alternative line of action except this. If different parties among Muslims were to unite on the system of the Holy Qur'ān, thousands of their differences based on group, race and country would be resolved instantly, which block the road to human progress. Whatever difference may remain among Muslims, would possibly be in the understanding and the interpretation of the Qur'ān. If such difference stays within limits, it is neither blameworthy nor harmful to collective human living. In fact, the existence of such difference of opinion among the learned is natural. Therefore, exercising restraint and observing limits should not be so difficult to manage. Contrary to this, if our parties, were to go on fighting in complete disregard to the Qur'ān then, they would not be left with any possibility of correction. It is this chronic dissension and disorder which the Holy Qur'ān has sternly forbidden, and it is because of this abandonment of a great Qur'ānic principle that our community at large is wasting its potential by succumbing to chaos and factionalism. The Holy Qur'ān, in the present verse, shows us the way as to how we can eliminate this tendency to become divided when it says:

وَاعْتَصِمُوْا بِحَبْلِ اللّٰهِ جَمِيْعًا

And hold on to the cord of Allah, all of you.

Here, حبل الله (the cord of Allah) means the Holy Qur'ān. The blessed Companion, 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd is the narrator of the *ḥadīth* in which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been reported to have said:

كتاب الله هو حبل الله الممدود من السماء الى الارض

The Book of Allah is the cord of Allah, extended from the heavens to the earth.

In another narration of the *ḥadīth* by the noble Companion, Zayd ibn Arqam, the words are: حبل الله هو القرآن : The cord of Allah is the Qur'ān (Ibn Kathīr).

In Arabic usage, the word, '*ḥabl*' also means 'covenant' and, in an absolute sense, it covers everything that can be used as a connecting link. The metaphor of 'cord' has been used for the Qur'ān or the Faith to suggest that this is the connecting link which, on one side, establishes the lines of communion between those who believe and their Lord, while, on the other side, it brings all those who believe close together, forming one group.

In short, this one statement of the Qur'ān is full of wise rules of conduct. To begin with, it can be said that man must firmly act in accordance with the way of life revealed by Allah Almighty, that is, the Holy Qur'ān. Then comes the unity of action, that is, all Muslims should join hands to act in accordance with it. The result will be that Muslims will become united and organized as if they were a group holding on to the same cord firmly, turning the whole group into a powerful single body. The Holy Qur'ān has explained this mystique of Muslim unity more clearly in another verse where it was said:

إِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ سَيَجْعَلُ لَهُمُ الرَّحْمٰنُ وُدًّا

Surely, those who believe and do good deeds, among them the All-Merciful Allah shall create (mutual) affection. (19:96)

Also present here is a subtle analogy focused on Muslims holding fast to the Book of Allah. Their effort resembles the effort of those who would grip a strong rope while climbing and thus remain protected against a fall. So, the hint is: If Muslims keep holding on to the Book of Allah with their total strength, all in unison, no satan will ever succeed in dividing them. As a result, like their individual life, the collective strength of the Muslim community as well shall become stable and impregnable. Keeping a firm grip on the Qur'ān is something which helps in uniting scattered forces through which a dead nation gets new life. God forbid, if Muslims break away from it, it is certain that their national and collective life will be ruined, and when this happens, their individual life is not likely to fare any better.

Islam is the only source of the Muslim Unity

Unity and agreement need a centre of attraction or a common idea. This idea of a centre has been different with different peoples of the world. Somewhere it was race and tribal affinity. For instance, among the tribal complex of Arabia, Quraysh was one nation and Banū Tamīm another. There were other places where colour was the criterion, with black people taken as one nation, and the white people as another. There were still other places where the geographical or lingual factor was the centre of unity making Indian one nation and the Arab, another. Then there were areas where people rallied around ancestral customs drawing a line between those who follow these customs and those who do not, for instance, the Ārya Samājists in India.

The Holy Qur'ān, bypassing all these, made the Book of Allah basis of unity, that is, the system revealed by Allah Almighty. In a single stroke, it declared that Muslims are a nation attached to '*Ḥablillāh*', the cord of Allah, and those who disbelieve are another nation, not attached to this strong 'cord' or 'rope'. The statement: خَلَقَكُمْ فَمِنْكُمْ كَافِرٌ وَّمِنْكُمْ مُّؤْمِنٌ (It is He who created you. So, some of you are infidels and some of you are believers) means just this. So, the unifying factors of geography, race, tribe or language do not deserve to be the centre of affinity for man generally has no control over them. One cannot have them by personal effort or choice. Black cannot become white, a Qurayshī cannot become a Tamīmī, an Indian cannot become an Arab. Such unities can exist in a very limited frame; they can never claim to have assembled the whole humanity under their umbrella hoping to have the entire world gathered on a united platform. This is why the Holy Qur'ān has made the Divinely revealed way of life as the centre of unity, something one can elect to have for himself. Everyone from the East or the West, black or white, speaking Arabic or English or any other language, coming from any family, any tribe, any human group, can freely make this centre of unity his own as the most rational and correct choice available. Then, humankind can come close together around this centre and become brothers and sisters to one another.

What is needed is a little impartial thinking, a slight rising above

custom, prejudice and habit, as a result of which, the seeker shall be striking the best bargain of his life. Hopefully, he will discover for himself the way of life revealed by Allah Almighty, understand it, and follow it holding fast on to this strong medium of communion with Allah. As a result of this, the whole humanity will become beneficially concentric, having the centre of God-given guidance in common. Consequently, every individual member of this great brotherhood will be able to tune his deeds, material and spiritual, to the jointly accepted way of life from Allah.

Here is the principle, wise and correct, of which Muslims can be proud, and confident when inviting others to join in. Unfortunately, conspiracies hatched by the Europeans, for centuries to crush the Muslim unity have succeeded in dividing the ranks of those who claim to be Muslims.

Now they have themselves accepted the differences of race, language and nationalities as the dividing forces, and the link of Muslim unity stands severed by the concept of Arabs and Non-Arabs, Indians and non-Indians etc. The Holy Qur'ān proclaims a universal reality, loudly and openly, time and again, that these distinctions are ill-founded and divisive and any unity based on them shall remain irrational and false. Acentericity is not the solution for Muslims who have no choice but to 'hold on to the cord of Allah', all of them, as a way of life. This has given them a place of honour earlier, and if there is yet another success destined for them, this is how it would come again.

Before we move on to the second part of the verse, let us remember the two distinct instructions given to Muslims in this verse, that is, they should first live by the system prescribed for them by Allah Almighty, then, they should hold fast to 'the cord of Allah' all together. This is how the Muslim *ummah* gained ascendance in the past and there is no reason why, it will not rise again.

This far the discussion revolved around the positive aspect of unity among Muslims. The text now takes up the negative aspect when it says: وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا (And be not divided). This is another example of the peculiarly wise style of the Holy Qur'ān when it would highlight the positive aspect first, then identify the negative, and forbid the later. In

another verse, it was said:

وَاَنَّ هٰذَا صِرَاطِيْ مُسْتَقِيْمًا فَاتَّبِعُوْهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا السُّبُلَ فَتَفَرَّقَ بِكُمْ عَنْ سَبِيْلِهٖ

> Surely, this is the straight path, so, follow it. And do not follow (other) ways which will cause you to become separated from His way. (6:153)

Since disunity is the first and the last reason behind the destruction of a nation, therefore, the Holy Qur'ān has repeatedly forbidden it in various ways. It has been said in another verse:

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ فَرَّقُوْا دِيْنَهُمْ وَكَانُوْا شِيَعًا لَّسْتَ مِنْهُمْ فِيْ شَيْءٍ

> Those who have made divisions in their religion and become sects, you have nothing to do with them. (6:159)

Also narrated in the Holy Qur'ān are events concerning communities led by their prophet's عليهم السلام, communities which fell into temporal and eternal disgrace because of their mutual disputes and disunity which turned them away from the honest pursuit of their central purpose of life.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said that there are three things Allah Almighty has liked for you while there are three others He has disliked. The ones He has liked are as follows:

1. That your worship should be for Allah alone and that you should not attribute partners to His divinity.
2. That you should hold on to the Book of Allah firmly and avoid disunity.
3. That you should have goodwill for those in authority from among you.

The three things which cause Allah's displeasure are:

1. Unnecessary argumentation.
2. Needless asking.
3. Wastage of resources.

(Ibn Kathīr from Abī Hurairah)

Differences and their Limits

A question that remains unanswered is: Is every difference to be

despised or is there a sort of difference which can be called unblameworthy? The answer is: Every difference is not blameworthy or despicable. A blameworthy difference is one in which individuals and groups stay away from the Qur'ān and think in terms of their whims and wishes. But, should it be that everyone stays united in and around the Qur'ān and at the same time, continues to accept the explanation and detail coming from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , and then, on the basis of God-given natural ability and intellectual quality, expresses differences in opinion about subsidiaries of religion, in which case, this difference will be natural and Islām does not forbid it. The difference among the blessed Companions and their Successors, and among leading juristic authorities was of this nature. It was nothing but this difference that was called a 'mercy' for the community. However, if these very subsidiary debates were to be invested with the status of the mainstream of religion, and differences arising out of them were to become a cause of controversy, confrontation, insult and vilification, then, this too will be considered blameworthy.

The Blessing of Brotherhood

The text, after making the two aspects of unity clear, points out to the conditions prevailing among pre-Islām Arabs. Because of tribal rivalries, incessant warfare and long-drawn blood feuds, the entire nation was on the brink of total ruin. What saved them from the fire of hatred was nothing but this blessings of Islām. So, it was said:

وَاذْكُرُوْا نِعْمَتَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ اِذْ كُنْتُمْ اَعْدَآءً فَاَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوْبِكُمْ فَاَصْبَحْتُمْ بِنِعْمَتِهٖۤ اِخْوَانًا ۚ وَكُنْتُمْ عَلٰى شَفَا حُفْرَةٍ مِّنَ النَّارِ فَاَنْقَذَكُمْ مِّنْهَا

And remember the blessing of Allah upon you: When you were enemies to each other, and He brought your hearts together, then you, with His grace, became brothers. And you were at the brink of a pit of the Fire, then, He saved you from it. (103)

In other words, by erasing out deep-seated enmities going back to centuries, Allah Almighty made them brothers to each other through the benediction of Islām and the noble Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم . This made their life worth living, materially and spiritually, establishing between them such exemplary friendship that even their enemies found it awesome. Where in the whole wide world would they have

found this brotherly unity, this enormous blessing of Allah, even if they were to spend the combined treasures of the world?

If we recollect what was said in the opening remarks under these verses, we can see very clearly that the present verse helps eliminate the mischief engineered by the wicked when they tried to disunite the tribes of Aws and Khazraj by reminding them of their past feuds. The lesson is: Once in Islām, division is unthinkable.

Unity among Muslims depends on obedience to Allah:

The above statement of the Holy Qur'ān unravels yet another mystery. We now know that, in reality, Allah Almighty is the Master of hearts. Activating mutual love and consideration in the hearts of a people is purely a Divine blessing. Obvious alongwith it is the fact that one can become deserving of the blessings of Allah only through obedience to Him. With disobedience and sin, one cannot hope to have this reward.

It also follows from here that for Muslims, if they desire to have a stable organization among them, and unity, the only alternative open is that they should make obedience to Allah their life style. This point has been hinted at towards the end of the verse where it was said:

كَذٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ اٰيٰتِهٖ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُوْنَ

This is how Allah makes His signs clear to you, so that you may take the right path. (103)

Verses 104 - 105

وَلْتَكُنْ مِّنْكُمْ اُمَّةٌ يَّدْعُوْنَ اِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَيَاْمُرُوْنَ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ
وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ ؕ وَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿١٠٤﴾ وَلَا تَكُوْنُوْا
كَالَّذِيْنَ تَفَرَّقُوْا وَاخْتَلَفُوْا مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا جَآءَهُمُ الْبَيِّنٰتُ ؕ وَاُولٰٓئِكَ
لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيْمٌ ﴿١٠٥﴾

And there has to be a group of people from among you who call towards the good, and bid the Fair and forbid the Unfair. And it is these who are successful. [104] **And do not be like those who became divided and fell into disputes after the clear signs had come to them. And for them there is grave punishment.** [105]

Commentary

In the previous verses (102 - 103), Muslims were given two principles which guarantee their collective well-being. If everyone practiced *Taqwā*, and made Islām his linkage with Allah, the result will be that individual life will be corrected and the collective strength of Muslims will come in its wake.

In the present verses وَلْتَكُنْ مِّنْكُمْ (104 - 105), yet another dimension of the proposed system has been added. It has been said here that Muslims are not to rest at the correction of what they think and do individually; but they should, alongwith that, be affectionately concerned with the good of other brothers and sisters in faith. By doing so, the whole community shall have the benefit of keeping its stance correct at all times, and at the same time, this will guarantee closer mutual cooperation and unity.

Collective well-being of Muslims depends on two things:

These are:

1. Self-correction through *Taqwā* and a firm hold on the 'cord of Allah' through the Qur'ān and the Faith.
2. The correction of others through call (*da'wah*) and positive propagation.

The second article of guidance appears in the opening verse which says: 'and there has to be a group of people from among you ...' So, the gist of the previous and the present verses is that one must correct his or her deeds and morals in the light of what Allah Almighty has sent as the Law, and with it, one must be concerned that other Muslim brothers and sisters do the same. The subject appears in Sūrah al-'Aṣr:

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّٰلِحَٰتِ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالْحَقِّ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالصَّبْرِ

Except those who believe and do good deeds and invite each other to truth and invite each other to patience. (103:2,3)

In order that Muslims have a firm bond of unity, they must relate to Allah, and in order that this bond stays firm through the ages, it is necessary that Muslims consider it their obligation to enjoin what is good in accordance with the dictates of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah on their brothers and sisters in faith, and to stop them from what is not

good. The purpose is that 'the cord of Allah' should not slip out of one's hands. This was succinctly illustrated by my well-known teacher, Shaykh al-Islām, Maulānā Shabbīr Aḥmad 'Uthmānī رحمة الله عليه who said:

> "There is no way this 'cord of Allah' can break. That one loses his hand-hold on it is, of course, possible."

It is to offset this danger that the Holy Qur'ān asks Muslims to go on educating other brothers and sisters in faith exhorting them to good deeds and holding them back from the bad ones. This will become a collective effort to stay with Allah and His commands and collective will be their gains in this mortal world and in the Hereafter. There are other proofs in the Holy Qur'ān which show that the responsibility of mutual self-correction has been placed on the shoulders of each Muslim.

Cited above, you have seen the statement made in Sūrah al-'Aṣr. Elsewhere, in this very Sūrah 'Āl-'Imrān, it is said:

كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُوْنَ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ

> You are the best Ummah raised for mankind. You bid the Fair and forbid the Unfair. (3:110)

As is clear, here too, the obligation - 'to bid the Fair and forbid the Unfair' - has been assigned to the whole community. That they discharge this responsibility is the reason that they are placed higher over other communities. Similarly, there are a large number of sayings of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in this connection. As narrated in Tirmidhī and Ibn Mājah, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said:

والذى نفسى بيده لتأمرن بالمعروف ولتنهون عن المنكر اوليوشكن الله ان يبعث عليكم عقابا من عنده ثم لتدعنه فلا يستجيب لكم

> By Him in whose hands is my life, you must bid the Fair and forbid the Unfair lest Allah inflicts upon you a severe punishment; you shall then pray to Him (for mercy) but your prayer shall not be answered.

In another *ḥadīth*, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

من رأى منكم منكرا فليغيره بيده، فان لم يستطع فبلسانه، وان لم يستطع

فبقلبه، وذلك اضعف الايمان

> Whoever from among you sees that an evil is being committed then, he should change it with his hands. And if he is unable to do that, then, with his spoken word. And if he is unable to do even that, then, with his heart (i.e., abhor it taking it to be evil) and this is the weakest degree of faith.

All these citations leave no doubt about the fact that the duty of bidding the Fair and forbidding the Unfair falls on every individual of the community. The liability will, however, be proportionate to everyone's ability, which is true in the case of all other Islāmic injunctions. You may have noticed in the *ḥadīth* just quoted above that the obligation varies with ability.

Now, each function requires a different ability. First of all, the ability to bid the Fair depends on a correct knowledge of the Fair and the Unfair as such. One who cannot distinguish between the two or does not have a full knowledge of his undertaking would not be the right person to go out to others to bid the Fair and forbid the Unfair. Obviously, this would create disorder instead of discipline. It is quite possible that such a person may, because of his lack of knowledge, forbid something Fair or bid something Unfair. So, one who does not know the Fair and the Unfair is obligated to find it out, get to learn the *Ma'rūf* and *Munkar* as determined by the *Sharī'ah* of Islām and then he can go ahead and make these known to others as part of his community service. Let this be clear that until such time that one has acquired the pre-requisites of this mission, it is not permissible for him to stand up for this service. These days there are places where many ignorant enthusiasts would stand and deliver a sermon without knowing the Qur'ān or the Ḥadīth, or worse still, sections of common people would use hearsay to pick up arguments with others as to how something should or should not be done. This method is not proper to correct the Muslim society. Indeed it will result in more disputes and bring destruction to it.

Similarly, it is also included in 'to bid the Fair' that there be no formidable danger or unbearable harm likely to affect the person involved. Therefore, it was said in the *ḥadīth* quoted above that one should stop sin with his hands, that is, by this strength. If he is unable

to do so, let him do it with his tongue. If he is unable to do so with his tongue, he should at the least consider it bad in his heart. It is obvious that 'not being able to stop it with his tongue' does not just mean that this person's tongue cannot move. It simply means that he strongly apprehends that, should he open his mouth and speak the truth, his life will be taken or he will be subjected to some other serious injury or loss. In such a case, this person will not be taken as 'able' and he will not be called a sinner for the abandonment of bidding the Fair and forbidding the Unfair. It would be an entirely different matter, if he elects to stake his life and property in the way of Allah, bear all losses and still goes ahead and bids the Fair and forbids the Unfair, which is something many blessed Companions and their Successors have been reported to have done. This is determination at its highest, and a feat of great merit which raised their status in this world and in the Hereafter. But, what they did was not obligatory on them.

The nature of this obligation requires that one bid the Fair and forbid the Unfair in what is necessary; this would be obligatory. If done in what is commendable; the act too would remain commendable. For instance, the five *ṣalāts* are obligatory, therefore, giving good counsel to the non-performer of *ṣalāh* will become necessary on everyone. The *nawāfil* (optional prayers) are classed as commendable or desirable, therefore, giving good counsel on these will be commendable. Here, etiquette would require that while advising someone to do a commendable act, soft language and attitude must be adopted in all cases. Similarly, while inviting to an obligatory act, one should start with softness. However, he may resort to firmness in attitude if one rejects the soft call outright. It is common sight these days that people tend to object in case of what is commendable or indifferent rather strongly, but remain silent when people abandon what is obligatory.

In addition to this, this obligation will become operative for everybody when one actually sees something forbidden being done before his eyes. For instance, there is a person who is seeing that a Muslim is drinking wine, or stealing or raping, he will then be obligated with the duty to stop it to the best of his ability. If all this is not happening before his eyes, he is not liable to discharge this duty. Rather, this is the duty of the Islāmic government to inquire into the crime, investi-

gate and punish the criminal.

The words of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , من رأى منكم منكرا (Whoever from among you sees th t an evil is being committed) point out to this principle.

Then comes another level of this function - that there be a dedicated group among Muslims devoted exclusively to the mission of calling people to the Faith and giving them right guidance towards it. Its single mandate and activity should be that it keeps calling people to the Qur'ān and the Sunnah through word and deed. When it sees people less inclined towards what is good, or sees them indulging in evils, it should not fall short of pointing out what is good and preventing people from taking to the evil, of course, according to its ability. It should be realized that this great mission can be carried out fully and effectively only when the performers have a complete knowledge of questions involved, as well as, when they are conversant with methods that go to make the call effective in the light of Sunnah. It is for this reason that a particular group of Muslims has been charged with this responsibility as they are likely to take care of all ramifications of this effort.

So, in the present verse:

وَلْتَكُنْ مِّنْكُمْ أُمَّةٌ يَّدْعُوْنَ إِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَيَأْمُرُوْنَ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ

it has been said: And there has to be a group of people from among you who call towards the good and bid the Fair and forbid the Unfair.

The first part of the verse, وَلْتَكُنْ مِّنْكُمْ أُمَّةٌ translated as (And there has to be a group of people from among you) gives a hint that the presence of this group is necessary. In case, a government does not shoulder this responsibility, it will become obligatory on Muslims that they should establish and operate such a group, because the vital role of the *Ummah* depends on the existence of such a group. What are the major features of this group? The Qur'ānic answer is: يَدْعُوْنَ إِلَى الْخَيْرِ (who call towards the good). It means that this call of theirs shall be their primary objective. What does *'khayr'* or 'good' mean? The Holy Prophet ﷺ has himself explained it by saying: الخير هواتباع القرآن وسنتى that is, *'khayr'* means following the Qur'ān and my Sunnah. (Ibn Kathīr)

Seen in a restricted sense, 'to bid the Fair and to forbid the Unfair' could have been taken to mean that doing so shall be needed only on special occasions when the evil or 'the Unfair' (*munkarat*) are seen being committed. But, the expression يَدْعُوْنَ إِلَى الْخَيْرِ (who call towards the good) in the beginning makes it clear that the function of this group will be to call towards the good, even when evil practices are not seen, or time may not have come to perform something obligatory.

For example, it is known that in the period between sunrise and *Zawal* (noon) no *ṣalah* is prescribed by the Shari'ah. But this group shall continue even in this period, to exhort people to perform *ṣalah* when it is due. Or, take fasting which may not be due at a particular time, the month of Ramaḍan being far away, but that group will not shelve its duty and become complacent. Instead, it will keep reminding people about the month of Ramaḍan in advance, stressing on them that fasting will be obligatory at that time. In short, calling people to good will be the intrinsic duty of this group for all times to come.

Then, this 'call towards good' has two sub-levels:

1. Calling non-Muslims towards '*khayr*', that is, Islam. This involves all Muslims. It means that every Muslim, in general, and this group, in particular, is responsible for giving the call of Islam, both by words and acts, to all peoples of the world. Therefore in a verse which enjoins *jihad* on Muslims, the true Muslims have been defined and praised in the following words:

اَلَّذِيْنَ اِنْ مَّكَّنّٰهُمْ فِى الْاَرْضِ اَقَامُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتَوُا الزَّكٰوةَ وَاَمَرُوْا بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَنَهَوْا عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ

that is, 'true Muslims are those who when We endow them with authority in a land the first thing they do is to establish a system of obedience to Allah on His earth, of which *ṣalah* is an outward expression, and raise their financial system on principles governed by *zakah*, and they make the bidding of the Fair and the forbidding of the Unfair their very purpose of life.' (22:41)

Only if, the Muslim community of today were to take to extending their call towards good to other peoples as their objective, all ills that have crept into our social frame through the blind following of non-

Muslim nations shall cease to exist. When a community resolves to unite for this great objective and becomes sure that it has to forge ahead among the nations of the world and that the responsibility of teaching and training them falls on its shoulders, will find that all its disunities have disappeared and there remains nothing but that wonderful goal in sight. The secret of the successes achieved by the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his noble Companions, رضى الله عنهم اجمعين, lies hidden behind this effort. It appears in a *ḥadīth* that the Holy Prophet ﷺ recited this verse وَلْتَكُنْ مِّنْكُمْ (And there has to be a group of people from among you) and then said: This special group is the group of the noble Companions (Ibn Jarīr). This is because each individual from among these blessed souls considered himself personally charged with the responsibility of calling people to good.

2. The second sub-level of this noble function is to call Muslims themselves towards the good. This means that *tablīgh* or the act of conveying the message of Allah should be done by all Muslims generally, and by the special group particularly, among Muslims, fulfilling the duty of *da'wah* imposed by the Qur'ān.

Again this call takes two forms as given below:

a). The first form will be that of a general and open call to good through which all Muslims will be educated into necessary injunctions and morals which have to be followed in Islām.

b). The second call would be particular and selective through which the objective will be to produce experts in the Muslim community, experts in the sciences of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. Another verse of the Holy Qur'ān leads in this direction:

فَلَوْلَا نَفَرَ مِنْ كُلِّ فِرْقَةٍ مِّنْهُمْ طَآئِفَةٌ لِّيَتَفَقَّهُوْا فِى الدِّيْنِ وَلِيُنْذِرُوْا قَوْمَهُمْ اِذَا رَجَعُوْٓا اِلَيْهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَحْذَرُوْنَ

> So, why should it not be that a group from every section of them goes forth, so that they may acquire perfect understanding of the Faith, and so that they may warn their people when they return to them, that they may be cautious. (9:122)

Further on, this responsibility-bearing group has been identified as carrying the additional distinction of يَأْمُرُوْنَ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ , that is, 'they bid the Fair and forbid the Unfair'.

The word, '*ma'ruf*' literally means 'recognized' but as a Qur'anic term it includes all good enjoined by Islam, and promoted by all prophets during their respective ages. Since what is good is known and recognized, it has been referred to as '*ma'ruf*'.

Similarly, the word, '*munkar*' literally means 'non-recognized" or 'alien", but as a Qur'anic term it includes all evils and disorders about which it is well-known and recognized that the Holy Prophet ﷺ declared them to be impermissible.

Keeping this in view, another point is worth-consideration. The Holy Qur'an could have used the word '*wajib*' (what is obligating) instead of '*ma'ruf*', and the word '*ma'asi*' (sins) instead of '*munkar*', but it did not do so. The selection of the words '*ma'ruf*' and '*munkar*' may be indicative of the principle that the subject of bidding the Fair and forbidding the Unfair must be an act which is recognized by the entire Muslim *Ummah* as 'fair' or 'unfair' without any difference of interpretation. As for the rules deduced through *ijtihad*, which have always been open for the different interpretations offered by the capable Muslim jurists, they should not be made an issue during the process of الامر بالمعروف والنهى عن المنكر: 'bidding the fair and forbidding the unfair'[1] It is a pity that such a wise Qur'anic principle is being generally neglected in the Muslim community, and the Muslims are made to fight each other on the secondary issues which can admit different interpretations. People tend to consider such efforts as some feat of piety while the evils which are held by the entire *ummah* unanimously as sins and are being committed in the community receive much less attention and often go unchecked.

Towards the conclusion of the verse, the commendable end of the group described therein has been enshrined in the following words:

وَأُولَٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

And it is these who are successful.

It simply means that, in reality, success is achieved by such people alone.

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1. It means that if a recognized school of Islamic jurisprudence, such as Hanafi school adopting a particular interpretation of Islamic law, has held an act as 'fair', the holders of an opposite view like Sh'afi'ites should not blame or reproach the former for their action, and vice versa. (editor)

Primarily, this description applies to the great group of the Companions of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم . They were the ones who rose with the great objective of calling towards the good and of curbing what is bad and in a very brief period of time conquered the entire world of their time. There were power centres of Byzantine and Persia which could not stop them and they went ahead teaching lessons in morality and purity and ushering around the light of righteousness and Godliness wherever they went.

Having established that Muslims have a distinct mission to convey and preach the God-oriented message of good, the text moves on to warn Muslims with the words:

وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ تَفَرَّقُوا وَاخْتَلَفُوا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْبَيِّنٰتُ

And do not be like those who became divided and fell into disputes after clear signs had come to them. (105)

It means that Muslims should not be like Jews and Christians who, even after clear injunctions of Allah Almighty had reached them, became divided in the implementation of the basic code of faith simply because they preferred to follow the dictates of their desires. Thus, thrown in violent mutual disputations, vocal and physical, they brought Divine punishment upon themselves. This verse is, in fact, a complement of وَاعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللّٰهِ جَمِيعًا (verse 103) where Muslims were asked to seek unity and strength by attaching themselves to Allah's commands, individually and collectively, which helps make an entire community act like one body, one person, one entity. Then comes the perpetual mission of *da'wah*, the act of calling people to good, the process of bidding the Fair and forbidding the Unfair. These nurture and strengthen that unity. After that, by saying وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا (and be not divided) in verse 103 and وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ تَفَرَّقُوا (And do not be like those who became divided) in the present verse, Muslims have been asked to learn a lesson from past communities which were destroyed by mutual dissensions with the good counsel that they should do their best to stay safe against this disease.

The type of divisiveness censured in this verse is a division that shows up because of arrogant and egotistic self-assertiveness, be it in the fundamentals of religion or in its subsidiaries. The statement

after clear signs had come to them' is an obvious indicator towards this explanation. The truth is that all fundamentals of religion are clear. Even some subsidiaries are so clear that they allow no margin of disagreement, unless of course, there be a selfish motive behind it.

However, there are subsidiary issues not so definite and clear. They may have no clear support from the texts of the Holy Qur'ān and Sunnah, (rather they are deduced by the scholars on the basis of analogy) or the text on which they are based is open to different interpretations. The resulting difference of opinion in the understanding of these subsidiaries is not included in the sense of this verse. The well-known authentic *ḥadīth* narrated by al-Bukhārī and Muslim from the blessed Companion, 'Amr ibn al'Āṣ, is more than enough to permit it. In this *ḥadīth* the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said that one who does *Ijtihād* (conducting a competent inquiry within the framework provided by the Sharī'ah to resolve a religious issue) and comes up with a ruling which is correct, he gets a twofold reward; and if he makes a mistake in his *Ijtihād,* he gets one reward.

This tells us that an *Ijtihād* made by a competent scholar even if it turns out to be erroneous, is still worthy enough for a reward provided utmost effort has been made. How can this be regarded as blameworthy? So, the difference of opinion resulting from *Ijtihād* undertaken by the blessed Companions and the great Imāms has absolutely no connection with the present verse. According to Sayyidnā Qāsim ibn Muḥammad and 'Umar ibn 'Abdul-'Azīz رحمة الله عليه , the difference of opinion among the noble Companions is a source of mercy and ease for people (as in Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī from al-Baihaqi and al-Mudkhal).

Ruling on difference of opinion

Let us have a clear understanding of a serious matter of principle which arises out of this discussion. When we talk about differences in *Ijtihād,* we mean an *Ijtihād* which is permissible under the *Sharī'ah* of Islām. (There is no such thing as an *Ijtihād* outside the ramifications of the *Sharī'ah*). In a *Sharī'ah*-based *Ijtihād,* one or the other *Imām* may elect a view to stand by according to his line of thought, but the fact shall remain that, in the sight of Allah, only one of these views is true while other views are not so true. But again, the decision as to which is true and which is not rests with Allah Almighty, who will

bestow, on the Day of Resurrection, a twofold reward on the *Imām* and *'Ālim* who arrives at the correct ruling through his *Ijtihād*. Also rewarded on this Day, will be the one whose *Ijtihād* was not correct. In short, nobody except Allah has the right to sit on judgement in the difference of interpretation and say that this is true and that is false. However, to the best of one's understanding and insight whichever side one thinks is closest to the Qur'ān and the Sunnah he may say that, as far as he thinks, his choice is correct, although the possibility of its being incorrect cannot be ruled out and that which is the opinion on the other side, different from his chosen option is regarded as incorrect, with the possibility of that it may be correct in the sight of Allah. This is something all leading Imāms of *Fiqh*, the masters of Muslim jurisprudence, agree upon.

So, the rule becomes clear that no side taken in a difference of interpretations is *'munkar'* or 'unfair' and open to objection. Thus it will not be subjected to reproach under the authority of يَأْمُرُوْنَ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ (Bid the Fair and forbid the Unfair). More so, when it is not unfair, raising an objection against what does not fall under the 'Unfair' would itself be regarded as unfair. This must be avoided. This is a rule most educated people do not fully comprehend these days or simply neglect it. They do not desist from abusing and verbally attacking others who think otherwise with all sorts of derogatory remarks and fretting. Inevitably, this leads to internecine confrontation and rampant disunity among Muslims, a phenomenon visible all over the Muslim world.

It has been already said that a difference of interpretation, if it corresponds to the principles of *Ijtihād*, does not go against the injunction وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوْا (and be not divided) and, therefore, it is not blameworthy. But, the way this difference is being handled these days, when quarrelsome debates around the tertiary subjects are being nursed as if they were the very basis of Muslim faith. Unfortunately this is what results in mutual confrontation and abuse. It can be said without any shade of doubt that this behaviour is certainly an open violation of the same Qur'ānic injunction وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوْا (and be not divided). It is, most certainly, objectionable and totally contrary to the way of our learned elders, the blessed Companions and their Successors. There is no

precedent for this type of behaviour among the early scholars (the Companions and their disciples) who were the best of our community. That anyone was ever blamed on the basis of difference of opinion in matters of interpretation in this manner is something unheard of. For instance, Imām Shāfi'ī and other Imāms, may Allah have mercy on them all, rule that in a *ṣalāh* offered in a congregation behind an imām, all those offering their prayer behind him must recite the Sūrah al-Fātiḥah as an obligation. Given this ruling anyone who does not fulfil this obligation will not have offered his *ṣalāh* at all. Parallel to this is the view of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, may Allah have His mercy on him, according to whom it is not permissible for one who prays behind an imām to recite his own Sūrah al-Fātihah, therefore, the Ḥanafiyah do not recite it while offering prayers in a congregation behind an imām. But, nowhere during the entire history of Muslim community there is any report saying that the followers of the Shāfi'ī school considered Ḥanafiyah as the deserters of the obligation of *ṣalāh* or that their prayers are not complete. They have never been blamed or criticised in the manner one would criticise and attack the evil acts forbidden by the Sharī'ah.

Imām ibn 'Abd al-Barr has, mentioned the attitude of the early scholars and the revered elders in the following words:

عن يحى بن سعيد قال ما برح اهل الفتوى يفتون فيحل هذا ويحرم هذا فلا يرى المحرم ان المحل هلك لتحليله ولا يرى المحل ان المحرم هلك لتحريمه (جامع بيان العلم، ص ٨٠)

> Those who are entitled to give *fatwā*, have always been issuing *fatwās*. One of them would rule (concerning injunctions not covered under the texts) that something is lawful while the other will rule it to be unlawful. But, the latter takes the former doomed to perdition, nor does the former think that the later is doomed to perdition. (Jami' Bayān al-'Ilm, p. 80)

An important note of caution

All this discussion about *Ijtihād* relates to the one carried out under the standard rules governing it. The very first condition is that *Ijtihād* can be resorted to in questions and issues about which there is no categorical decision available in the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. Or, it

may be that such decision is not clear and susceptible to more than one interpretation. Or, it is possible that a combination of some verses of the Qur'ān and some narrations of the *ḥadīth* may be apparently contradictory. In situations such as this, only those who possess the necessary pre-requisites to carry out *Ijtihād* will be entitled to do so. *Ijtihād* is no easy matter. It requires the most perfect expertise (in the real and full sense of the term) of all disciplines related to the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth, a comprehensive and perfect knowledge of the Arabic language, and a comprehensive knowledge of the sayings of the blessed Companions and their Successors. Therefore, anyone who dabbles in questions which have been settled by authoritative texts and comes up with opinions contrary to those of leading authorities, then this difference of opinion will not fall under the category of *Ijtihād* as envisaged by the Sharī'ah..

This will also be true about the person who does not fulfil the conditions of *Ijtihād*. What he says does not affect the question at all. This tendency has unfortunately become fairly visible in Muslim societies. Those who consider themselves educated (in modern sciences) have started to express their personal opinions relating to matters that have been settled in the Qur'ān and Sunnah. This is ignorance at its ugliest. These are issues where even Imāms and *mujtahids* would not dare speak. How can the exercise of so called *Ijtihād* be acceptable from a person who does not even possess the knowledge of Islāmic sciences let alone the highest level of learning required for *Ijtihād*.

Verses 106 - 109

يَوْمَ تَبْيَضُّ وُجُوهٌ وَّتَسْوَدُّ وُجُوهٌ ۚ فَاَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ اسْوَدَّتْ
وُجُوْهُهُمْ ۚ اَكَفَرْتُمْ بَعْدَ اِيْمَانِكُمْ فَذُوْقُوا الْعَذَابَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ
تَكْفُرُوْنَ ﴿١٠٦﴾ وَاَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ ابْيَضَّتْ وُجُوْهُهُمْ فَفِيْ رَحْمَةِ اللّٰهِ ؕ
هُمْ فِيْهَا خٰلِدُوْنَ ﴿١٠٧﴾ تِلْكَ اٰيٰتُ اللّٰهِ نَتْلُوْهَا عَلَيْكَ بِالْحَقِّ ؕ
وَمَا اللّٰهُ يُرِيْدُ ظُلْمًا لِّلْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿١٠٨﴾ وَلِلّٰهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ
وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ ؕ وَاِلَى اللّٰهِ تُرْجَعُ الْاُمُوْرُ ﴿١٠٩﴾

On a day when faces shall turn bright and faces shall

turn dark, as for those whose faces turn dark, (they shall be questioned): "Did you disbelieve after you had accepted the Faith? Now taste the punishment because you have been disbelieving." [106]

And as for those whose faces turn bright, they rest in Allah's mercy. They are there for ever. [107]

These are the verses of Allah We recite to you with all veracity. And Allah wants no injustice for (anyone in) the worlds. [108]

And to Allah belongs what is in the heavens and what is in the earth. And to Allah all matters are returned. [109]

Commentary

The meaning of 'bright' and 'dark' faces:

This expression appears in the Holy Qur'ān at several places, for instance:

وَيَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ تَرَى الَّذِيْنَ كَذَبُوْا عَلَى اللّٰهِ وُجُوْهُهُمْ مُّسْوَدَّةٌ

On the day of Doom, you shall see those who lied against Allah (with) their faces blackened. (39:60)

وُجُوْهٌ يَّوْمَئِذٍ مُّسْفِرَةٌ ضَاحِكَةٌ مُّسْتَبْشِرَةٌ وَوُجُوْهٌ يَّوْمَئِذٍ عَلَيْهَا غَبَرَةٌ تَرْهَقُهَا قَتَرَةٌ

Some faces on that day shall shine, laughing, joyous. Some faces on that day shall be dusty, overspread with darkness. (80:38)

وُجُوْهٌ يَّوْمَئِذٍ نَّاضِرَةٌ اِلٰى رَبِّهَا نَاظِرَةٌ

Faces on that day shall be radiant, looking towards their Lord. (75:22)

In these verses, several words such as, *'bayāḍ', 'sawād', 'ghabarah', 'qatarah', and 'naḍirah',* have been used to carry the same sense. In the English translation, where applicable, they appear in italics. According to the majority of commentators, 'brightness' signifies the brightness of the light of Faith, that is, the faces of believers shall be resplendent with the light of Faith, fresh and smiling due to happiness (as a result of rewards bestowed upon them by Allah). 'Darkness' signifies the darkness of disbelief, that is, the faces of the

disbelievers will be covered with the gloomy anguish of disbelief and the added soot of sin and transgression would turn them still darker.

Who are these people?

Commentators have explained the identity of the people with 'bright and 'dark' faces variously. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه says that the faces of the followers of Sunnah shall be 'bright' and those of the followers of *Bid'ah* (innovation in the revealed Faith, not intended by Allah and His Messenger, nor by his learned dark Companions). Ḥaḍrat 'Aṭā' رحمة الله عليه says that the faces of the *Muhājirīn* and *Anṣār* shall be 'bright' and the faces of the Banī Qurayzah and Banī Naḍīr shall be 'dark' (Qurṭubī).

Imām Tirmidhī narrates a *ḥadīth* from Sayyidnā Abū Umāmah رضى الله عنه which identifies these as relating to the Khawārij, the oldest sect of rebels), that is, the 'dark' faces shall belong to the Khawārij, and the 'bright' faces to those whom they shall kill. The *ḥadīth* is given below:

قال ابو امامة كلاب النار شرقتلى تحت اديم السماء، وخير قتلى من قتلوه
ثم قرأ: "يَوْمَ تَبْيَضُّ وُجُوهٌ وَتَسْوَدُّ وُجُوهٌ"

When Sayyidnā Abū Umāmah was asked if he had heard the *ḥadīth* from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, he replied, while counting on his fingers, that he would not have narrated this *ḥadīth* had he not heard it from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم seven times (Tirmidhī).

Sayyidnā 'Ikrimah رحمة الله عليه says that 'dark' faces shall belong to those from among the people of the Book who did confirm the coming of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم before he was ordained. But when he had been given prophethood they did not accept and support him. On the contrary, they started falsifying him (Qurṭubī).

There are other explanations as well, other than those cited above, but they all lead to the same conclusion, and are not contradictory. Imām al-Qurṭubī has said in his *Tafsīr* that the expression يَوْمَ تَبْيَضُّ وُجُوهٌ وَتَسْوَدُّ وُجُوهٌ in the verse means that the faces of sincere Muslims shall be 'bright' but the faces of all those who may have altered their religion, or may have become apostates and disbelievers, or may be concealing their hypocrisy in their hearts, shall be 'dark'.

Some special notes:

In the verse Allah Almighty has mentioned the *bayāḍ* first, and the *sawād* or darkness after it. But, in the verse which follows: فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ اسْوَدَّتْ وُجُوهُهُمْ (As for those whose faces turn dark), *sawād* or darkness has been made to appear before *bayāḍ* or brightness, although the sequence of the original statement required that the mention of brightness appear first at this place as well. This reversal of the order seems to indicate that Allah Almighty has pointed out to His main purpose of creation. That purpose is to bless His creation with His mercy; punishment is not the objective. So, those with bright faces come first as they deserve the mercy and merit from their Lord. People with dark, anguished faces were mentioned later as the ones who deserve punishment. Towards the close of the verse, the statement فَفِي رَحْمَةِ اللَّهِ (They rest in Allah's mercy) is meant to stress upon the great mercy of the Creator. One cannot miss observing that those deserving of mercy were identified immediately at the beginning of the verse and again, at the end of the verse, and very affectionately indeed. The mention of those whose faces shall turn dark remains in between. All this points out to His limitless, endless mercy, clearly suggesting that human beings were certainly not created to serve as an exhibit or manifestation of Divine punishment; instead, they were created to flourish under the sunshine of Allah's mercy.

2. About the statement, 'they shall rest in Allah's mercy', the blessed Companion Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضی الله عنه says that '*raḥmah*' or 'mercy' in the verse means '*Jannah*' or 'paradise'. Here too, the wisdom behind giving the name 'mercy' to 'paradise' is, quite obviously, that man, no matter how worshipful and pious he may be, shall not enter Paradise unless it be through the sole mercy of Allah Almighty. The reason is that being devoted in acts of worship is no feat of human excellence as such. On the contrary, the very ability to do so is, in itself, a gift of Allah. So, '*ibādah*' or worship does not, in itself, create an inherent right to enter Paradise. It is Allah's mercy alone through which one can enjoy the bliss of Paradise. (al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr)

3. The sentence فَفِي رَحْمَةِ اللَّهِ (they rest in Allah's mercy) is immediately qualified by هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ (they are there for ever). This means that the mercy in which the believers shall rest will not be temporary; it

would be forever and eternal. This blessing will never be taken away or reduced in their case. In contrast to this are those whose faces shall turn dark; for them, it has not be expressly mentioned if they shall be in that state for ever.

Sinning man earns his own punishment:

The verse فَذُوقُوا الْعَذَابَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْفُرُوْنَ (106) (now taste the punishment because you have been sinning) indicates that the punishment on that Day is not from Allah but that it is as consequence of what man has earned while living his mortal life, for the truth is that the blessings of paradise and the hardships of hell are simply a changed form of our very deeds. So, later on in verse 108, it was said: وَمَا اللّٰهُ يُرِيْدُ ظُلْمًا لِّلْعٰلَمِيْنَ (and Allah wants no injustice for {anyone in the worlds} which means that Allah has no intention of being unjust to His creation. Whatever reward or punishment there is, is nothing but justice and very much the perfect expression of the divine wisdom and mercy.

Verse 110

كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ اُمَّةٍ اُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَاْمُرُوْنَ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ ۗ وَلَوْ اٰمَنَ اَهْلُ الْكِتٰبِ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَّهُمْ ۗ مِنْهُمُ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ وَاَكْثَرُهُمُ الْفٰسِقُوْنَ ﴿۱۱۰﴾

You are the best *Ummah* raised for mankind. You bid the Fair and forbid the Unfair and believe in Allah. And if the people of the Book had believed, it would have been better for them. Of them, there are the believers, while most of them are the sinners. [110]

Sequence

In previous verses, Muslims were asked to take special care in order to remain steadfast in their faith, bid the Fair and forbid the Unfair. In the present verse, it has been further emphasised that these are the very reasons why Allah Almighty has conferred upon the *Ummah* of Muḥammad, may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, the status of '*Khayr al-Umam*', the best of communities, dignified and elevated, when it does what it has been charged to do.

Why the best of communities?

The Holy Qur'ān has, in different verses, given several reason for

declaring the *Ummah* of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم as the best *Ummah*, the most important of which has appeared in Sūrah al-Baqarah, that is:

وَكَذٰلِكَ جَعَلْنٰكُمْ اُمَّةً وَّسَطًا

> And in the same way We made you a moderate *Ummah* (community). (2:143)

A detailed explanation of this verse can be seen in Volume I of this commentary. This portion deals with the major reason why the *Ummah* of Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم has been called the best of human communities. There it has been pointed out that moderation is its great characteristic and that it is visible in all department of its collective life.

In this particular verse, another reason has been given. The reason is that this community has been raised for the sole purpose of dispensing good to all beings created by Allah. It has been actually charged with the function of remaining concerned with their spiritual and moral reformation. Seen in the perspective of past communities, it was this community which contributed most in the mission of 'bidding the Fair and forbidding the Unfair', even though this was already enjoined upon past communities as mentioned in authentic *aḥādīth*. However, to begin with, several past communities did not have *Jihād* as a religious obligation, in which case, the mission of 'bidding the Fair' could only be carried out by heart and tongue only. Available with the followers of Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم is a third option of 'bidding the Fair', that of the power of the hand, which also includes all sorts of *Jihād*. Then, the enforcement of Islāmic laws through the agency of the government is also a part of it. In the case of other communities, distinguishing features of religion were gradually obliterated by general inertia. The obligation of *amr bi l'ma'rūf*, the ordained mission of bidding the Fair, also stood totally forsaken. As far as this *Ummah* of his is concerned, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ made this prophecy:

> In this *Ummah*, there shall be right through the day of Doom, a group of people which will remain firm and stick to (the task of) bidding the Fair and forbidding the Unfair.

The second distinguishing feature of this community is that they 'believe in Allah': تُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ. At this point one may ask why should this be a distinguishing feature of the Muslim community as belief in Allah has been the common factor between all past prophets and their communities. The answer is clear. No doubt, belief as such is common to all, but the degrees of perfection in belief differ. The degree of preference given to the community of Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم has a class of its own as compared to past communities.

Towards the end of the verse, it has been said about the people of the Book that there are some Muslims among them. This refers to those who had confirmed the prophethood of our Holy Prophet ﷺ such as, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Salām and others.

Verse 111

لَنْ يَّضُرُّوْكُمْ اِلَّآ اَذًى ۭ وَاِنْ يُّقَاتِلُوْكُمْ يُوَلُّوْكُمُ الْاَدْبَارَ ۣ ثُمَّ لَا يُنْصَرُوْنَ ﴿١١١﴾

They shall never (be able to) cause you any harm except a little hurt. And if they fight you, they will turn their backs on you, then they shall not be helped. [111]

Commentary

In previous verses (98-101), it was shown how hostile to Muslims the people of the Book were and how they planned to bring religious harm to them. Mentioned in the present verse are their plans to harm Muslims materially. The last sentence carries the prophecy that they shall not succeed.

This prophecy of the Holy Qur'ān was proved true when, during the entire period of prophethood, the people of the Book were unable to overcome the noble Companions who are the primary addressees here. This applies particularly to the Jewish tribes who had tried to sow seeds of discord among the Companions. The outcome was that these people were disgraced; some paid *jizya*, some were killed while others were exiled.

The next verse (112) makes the description complete.

Verse 112

ضُرِبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الذِّلَّةُ أَيْنَ مَا ثُقِفُوٓا إِلَّا بِحَبْلٍ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَحَبْلٍ مِّنَ النَّاسِ وَبَآءُو بِغَضَبٍ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَضُرِبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَسْكَنَةُ ۚ ذٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا يَكْفُرُونَ بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ وَيَقْتُلُونَ الْأَنْبِيَآءَ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ ۚ ذٰلِكَ بِمَا عَصَوا وَّ كَانُوا يَعْتَدُونَ ﴿١١٢﴾

Disgrace has been stamped over them wherever they are found, unless (saved) through a source from Allah and through a source from men, and they have returned with wrath from Allah, and misery has been stamped over them. All this because they used to deny the signs of Allah and to slay the prophets unjustly. All this because they disobeyed and used to cross the limits. [112]

Commentary

The meaning of disgrace and wrath cast on the Jews:

A detailed discussion on this subject has already appeared under comments on verse 61 of Sūrah al-Baqarah where the text has not mentioned any exception. This can be seen in Volume I of this commentary. It also covers the exception given in the present verse - إِلَّا بِحَبْلٍ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَحَبْلٍ مِّنَ النَّاسِ.

Briefly, the verse means that the Jews shall remain stamped with disgrace and misery except under two situations:

1. Though a Covenant of Allah. For example, a minor child or woman shall not be killed. (This exception is meant by the words 'through a source from Allah').

2. Through a treaty obligation, that is, بِحَبْلٍ مِّنَ النَّاسِ (through a source from men). Such patronage may cause their disgrace and misery not to become manifest. The specific words used in the Holy Qur'ān i.e., a source from men, cover all men, believers and disbelievers. The possibility that they live with freedom after making a peace treaty with Muslims is included here. Also possible is the situation that they may come under the protection of other non-Muslim powers through a peace treaty (or informal collaboration strategy), a situation that prevails in the form of the present-day state of Israel. To discerning

people all over the world, it is no secret that the state of Israel is really a joint encampment of the West. Behind all the facade of power they appear to have is the power of others. If the U.S., U.K., Europe, and USSR too, were daring enough to withdraw their patronage of Israel, it would not survive for a day. Allah knows best.

Verses 113 - 117

لَيْسُوا سَوَآءً ؕ مِنْ اَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ اُمَّةٌ قَآئِمَةٌ يَّتْلُوْنَ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ
اٰنَآءَ الَّيْلِ وَهُمْ يَسْجُدُوْنَ ﴿١١٣﴾ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ وَ
يَاْمُرُوْنَ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَ يُسَارِعُوْنَ فِي
الْخَيْرٰتِ ؕ وَاُولٰٓئِكَ مِنَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ ﴿١١٤﴾ وَمَا يَفْعَلُوْا مِنْ خَيْرٍ
فَلَنْ يُّكْفَرُوْهُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌۢ بِالْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿١١٥﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لَنْ
تُغْنِيَ عَنْهُمْ اَمْوَالُهُمْ وَلَآ اَوْلَادُهُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ شَيْـًٔا ؕ وَاُولٰٓئِكَ
اَصْحٰبُ النَّارِ ۚ هُمْ فِيْهَا خٰلِدُوْنَ ﴿١١٦﴾ مَثَلُ مَا يُنْفِقُوْنَ فِيْ
هٰذِهِ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا كَمَثَلِ رِيْحٍ فِيْهَا صِرٌّ اَصَابَتْ حَرْثَ قَوْمٍ
ظَلَمُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ فَاَهْلَكَتْهُ ؕ وَمَا ظَلَمَهُمُ اللّٰهُ وَلٰكِنْ اَنْفُسَهُمْ
يَظْلِمُوْنَ ﴿١١٧﴾

Not all of them are alike: Among the people of the Book there are those who are steadfast; they recite the verses of Allah in the night hours and they prostrate; [113] **they believe in Allah and the Hereafter, and bid the Fair and forbid the Unfair, and race towards the good deeds. They are among the righteous.** [114] **And whatever good they do, they shall never be deprived of it. And Allah is All-Aware of the God-fearing.** [115]

Surely, those who disbelieve, neither their wealth nor their children shall help them against Allah; and they are the people of the Fire. They shall be there for ever. [116]

The example of what they spend in this worldly life is just like a wind which, having chill within, hit the tillage of those who wronged themselves, and

destroyed it. And Allah has not wronged them, instead, they wrong themselves. [117]

In verse 110, it was said that among the people of the Book there are those who believe, yet most of them are disbelievers. Details appear in the present verse which gives a complementary profile of those who believed from among the people of the Book, and by becoming Muslims, they adopted the distinguishing hallmarks of the Faith that go to make believers the best of communities.

Soon after praising those who had embraced Islām from among the people of the Book, the text censures those of them who did not embrace Islām and insisted on retaining their stance of disbelief, not realizing that their wealth and their children will be unable to save them from the punishment of Allah and Hell shall be their eternal abode.

Verse 117 declares through a similitude that disbelievers simply waste what they spend in this worldly life, for belief in Islām is a precondition in order that such spendings be acceptable with Allah, of whatever sort they may be. The similitude stresses the fact that disbelievers inflict this injustice upon themselves when their spendings go to waste in this world and remain rewardless in the Hereafter. If they were not to wrong themselves, if they were to embrace Islām, they would have been like other Muslims who, on suffering a worldly loss, are compensated by Allah through reward and forgiveness of sins, as reported in *aḥādīth*.

Verse 118 - 120

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا بِطَانَةً مِّن دُونِكُمْ لَا يَأْلُونَكُمْ
خَبَالًا ط وَدُّوا مَا عَنِتُّمْ ج قَدْ بَدَتِ ٱلْبَغْضَآءُ مِنْ أَفْوَٰهِهِمْ ج وَمَا
تُخْفِى صُدُورُهُمْ أَكْبَرُ ط قَدْ بَيَّنَّا لَكُمُ ٱلْءَايَٰتِ إِن كُنتُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ
﴿١١٨﴾ هَٰٓأَنتُمْ أُولَآءِ تُحِبُّونَهُمْ وَلَا يُحِبُّونَكُمْ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِٱلْكِتَٰبِ
كُلِّهِۦ ج وَإِذَا لَقُوكُمْ قَالُوٓا ءَامَنَّا ج وَإِذَا خَلَوْا عَضُّوا عَلَيْكُمُ
ٱلْأَنَامِلَ مِنَ ٱلْغَيْظِ ط قُلْ مُوتُوا بِغَيْظِكُمْ ط إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ عَلِيمٌۢ بِذَاتِ

الصُّدُورِ ﴿١١٩﴾ إِنْ تَمْسَسْكُمْ حَسَنَةٌ تَسُؤْهُمْ وَإِنْ تُصِبْكُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ يَفْرَحُوا بِهَا ۖ وَإِنْ تَصْبِرُوا وَتَتَّقُوا لَا يَضُرُّكُمْ كَيْدُهُمْ شَيْئًا ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ مُحِيطٌ ﴿١٢٠﴾

O those who believe, do not take anyone as insider but from your own selves. They would spare no effort to do you mischief. They want you to be in trouble. Malice has come out of their mouths while what is concealed in their hearts is far worse. We have made the signs clear to you, provided that you understand. [118]

Look, you are the ones who love them and they do not love you. And you believe in the Book, in all of it. And when they meet you, they say, "We believe", and when they are alone they bite their finger-tips out of rage against you. Say, "Die in your rage." Surely, Allah is All-Aware of what lies in the hearts. [119]

If something good happens to you, it annoys them and if something evil befalls you, they are delighted with it. And if you keep patience and fear Allah, their cunning shall not harm you at all. And Allah is All-Encompassing of what they do. [120]

Commentary

These verses were revealed in a particular background. There were Jewish settlements around Madīnah. They had old friendly ties with the tribes of Aws and Khazraj. Individuals from these tribes were also on friendly terms with other individuals from the Jewish settlements. In their tribal capacity too, Aws and Khazraj were to the Jews their neighbours and allies. When these two tribes embraced Islām, they continued to maintain their old ties with them. Individuals from these tribes saw no problems in meeting their old Jewish friends with the same love and sincerity. But, Jews were so hostile to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the religion brought by him that they were unwilling to be sincere and loving to anyone who had said yes to the prophetic call and had embraced Islām. So, they outwardly went along with the same old relationships with the Anṣārs of Madīnah, but inwardly they had turned into their enemies. The apparent friendship they had allowed to remain became their cover which they utilized in their

sinster efforts to foment trouble among Muslims so that their unity could be disintegrated. They even went to the limit of banking on this feigned friendship with Muslims to find out their organizational secrets and pass them on to the enemies.

It is this hypocritical behaviour of theirs which Allah Almighty has asked Muslims to guard against. We have been given an important rule of conduct when it was said:

يَاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَتَّخِذُوْا بِطَانَةً مِّنْ دُوْنِكُمْ

O those who believe, do not take anyone as insider but from your own selves.

The word, *biṭānah* used here means a friend, confidant, one with whom secrets are shared. The lining or inside part of a dress which stays close to the body is also known as *biṭānah*. Derived from *baṭn* (inside), it is used in everything opposed to *ẓahr* (outside). That which is outside is *ẓahr* and that which is inside is *baṭn*. In garments, the outer part is *ẓihārah* and the inner part touching the body such as a lining is called *biṭānah*. [There is an expression in English - 'hand in glove'- which comes close to this sense, even if partly. It means 'to be on very intimate terms'.] Similarly, the expression, *biṭānatu-th'thawb* (بطانۃ الثوب) lends the metaphor of friend, confidant, one who comes to know internal secrets and that is how the word, *biṭānah* is used to carry that sense. The well-known, and quite reliable lexicon of Arabic, *Lisān al-'Arab* explains *biṭānah* as follows:

بطانة الرجل صاحب سرّہ وداخلة امره الذی یشاوره فی احواله

It means that a person's *biṭānah* is one who knows his secrets, has access to his affairs in which he seeks his advice. Rāghib al-Isfahānī in his *Mufradāt* and al-Qurṭubī in his *Tafsīr* have given the same meaning. (The word, '*biṭānah*', translated here as 'insider' is an effort to cover some of these important shades of meaning.)

So, it has been enjoined upon Muslims through this verse that they should not take persons other than those from their own community as confidants and advisers, in a way that leads one into spilling the sensitive secrets of one's own government, community or state. No doubt, under the shade of its universal mercy, Islām has given unusual instructions to Muslims in order that they treat non-Muslims with

compassion, goodwill, beneficence, kindliness and tolerance, and not leaving it at that, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has put these in actual practice in all affairs concerning non-Muslims. But, at the same time, and in perfect wisdom, binding instructions were given so as to make sure that the organized body of Muslims and its particular hall-marks stay protected. A Muslim cannot be permitted to go beyond a certain limit when developing or promoting relations (unilateral, bi-lateral or multi-lateral) with those who disbelieve in or practice hostility against the Law of Islām. This is so because such an action throws the doors of harm and danger open both for the individuals and the community. This arrangement is clear, reasonable, appropriate, and very necessary to give secure frontiers to the individuals as well as to the Muslim state.

About non-Muslims resident in Islāmic states or those tied with Muslims through a treaty, the teachings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his most emphatic instructions for their protection are all part of the Islāmic law. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said:

من آذى ذميا فانا خصمه و من كنت خصمه خصمته يوم القيمة

Whoever harms a *Dhimmī* (protected non-Muslim), I shall be his opponent on the Day of Judgement and I always defeat the one whom I oppose. (Reported by Ibn Mas'ūd)

In another *ḥadīth,* he said :

منعنى ربى ان اظلم معاهدا ولا غيره

My Lord has prohibited me to wrong the one protected by a treaty, or anyone other than him. (narrated by Sayyidnā 'Alī)

In yet another *ḥadīth*, he said:

الامن ظلم معاهدا اوانتقصه اوكلفه فوق طاقته اواخذ منه شيئا بغير طيب نفس منه فانا حجيجه يوم القيمة

Beware, whoever wrongs a non-Muslim protected by treaty, or usurps his right, or obligates him to do what is beyond his power, or takes from him something without his genuine consent, then, I shall be the advocate for him (the said non-Muslim) on the day of Judgement.

Side by side with these concessions and considerations for non-

Muslims, instructions were given to Muslims that they should protect their distinct group cohesion by not trusting enemies of Islām and Muslims with their secrets. Ibn Abī Ḥātim narrates that Sayyidnā 'Umar ibn Al-Khaṭṭāb رضى الله عنه was asked to appoint a young non-Muslim as the chief manager and scribe in his office since he was very good at that. Thereupon, he said:

قد اتخذت اذا بطانة من دون المؤمنين

> If I were to take him in, in that case, I will be taking an insider from among non-Muslims (which is against the Qur'anic authority).

Imām al-Qurṭubī, famous scholar and commentator of the fifth century says, with marked pensive longing, that contravention of this teaching of the Qurān has produced evil results for Muslims:

وقد انقلبت الاحوال فى هذه الازمان باتخاذ اهل الكتب كتبة وامناآء
وتسودوا بذلك عند جهلة الاغنياء من الولاة والامرآء

> Things have so changed these days that Jews and Christians were trusted with secrets and considered trustworthy through which they were able to prevail over the ignorant rich, the rulers and the chiefs.

Even today, in a state established under a particular ideology, a person who does not subscribe to this ideology cannot be admitted into the inner echelons of power as a confidant. In Russia and China, a person who does not believe in communism is not given any responsible office or, farther still, trusted with state secrets. A close study of the decline of Muslim states would reveal several reasons behind it. One of the oft-repeated ones will be that Muslims had entrusted their sensitive affairs in the hands of non-Muslim confidants. This policy was an active factor in the decline of the Ottoman Caliphate as well.

The reason why this command has been given is explained soon after. Starting from لَا يَأْلُوْنَكُمْ خَبَالًا (they would spare no effort to do you mischief) and ending at ان كنتم تعقلون (provided that you understand), the text warns Muslims that they should not take anyone other than their own Muslim brothers as insiders on their affairs, for no other group, be they Jews, Christians, hypocrites or other disbelievers, could be their genuine well-wishers. Contrary to that, they are always on the

look out for opportunities to hoodwink and hurt them materially and spiritually. They are always plotting to harm them in this worldly life as well as to take them away from the enjoined pursuits of their Faith. All this is what the Muslims can see for themselves, but the venom that lies hidden in their hearts is far too fatal. However there are times when they are enraged with their deceptive cool front thrown off and the fangs of their deep hostility become clearly visible. Why would an intelligent person take such people as his confidant? Allah Almighty has pointed out who they are and what has to be done about them. Now it is upto him who understands what is involved here.

The sentence وَدُّوْا مَا عَنِتُّمْ (they want you to be in trouble) is a perfect mirror of the mentality of disbelievers. Here, the in-depth teaching is that no non-Muslim can ever be the real friend and well-wisher of Muslims.

After that, in verse 119: هَآ اَنْتُمْ اُولَآءِ تُحِبُّوْنَهُمْ, Muslims have been told that 'it is certainly strange that you go about loving them as friends, yet they are no friends of yours. Indeed, they are your worst enemies. Still more unusual is the situation because you believe in all Scriptures without any reservations as to the people they address, the time when they were sent down and the prophet they were revealed to. Contrary to this, they do not accept your Book and your Prophet. Their belief in their own Books is not correct either. Given this state of affairs it would have been expected that they should have been affectionate towards you and you should have been the ones to give them a cold shoulder. But, what is happening here is just the reverse of what it should have been.'

The mentality of disbelievers has been further clarified by saying: اِنْ تَمْسَسْكُمْ حَسَنَةٌ in the first part of verse 120 which has been translated as, 'if something good happens to you, it annoys them and if something evil befalls you, they are delighted with it.'

How can Muslims remain protected against the aftermath of sinster moves of the hypocrites and the deadly hostility of opponents? For this, a simple and effective prescription was suggested in:

وَاِنْ تَصْبِرُوْا وَتَتَّقُوْا لَا يَضُرُّكُمْ كَيْدُهُمْ شَيْئًا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِمَا يَعْمَلُوْنَ مُحِيْطٌ

And if you keep patience and fear Allah, their cunning shall

not harm you at all. Surely, Allah is All-Encompassing of what they do.

Ṣabr and *Taqwā*: Panacea for Muslims

The Holy Qur'ān has prescribed *ṣabr* (patience, endurance) and *Taqwā* (fear of Allah) as an effective measure against all hardships. This elemental teaching has been conveyed to Muslims not only here but also at many other places in the Qur'ān. For instance, in the section that follows immediately, it has been said:

بَلٰٓى ۙ اِنْ تَصْبِرُوْا وَتَتَّقُوْا وَيَاْتُوْكُمْ مِّنْ فَوْرِهِمْ هٰذَا يُمْدِدْكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ بِخَمْسَةِ اٰلَافٍ مِّنَ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ مُسَوِّمِيْنَ

Why not? If you stay patient and fear Allah and they come upon you in this heat of theirs, your Lord will reinforce you with five thousand of the angels having distinct marks. (3:125)

Here, the promise of divine help has been made conditional upon *Ṣabr* and *Taqwā*.

In Sūrah Yūsuf, it has been said:

اِنَّهٗ مَنْ يَّتَّقِ وَيَصْبِرْ

Whoever fears Allah and keeps patience ... (12:90)

Here too, prosperity and success have been tied with *Ṣabr* and *Taqwā*. Towards the end of this very Sūrah, *Ṣabr* is being proposed in the following words:

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اصْبِرُوْا وَصَابِرُوْا وَرَابِطُوْا وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُوْنَ

O those who believe, be patient, be more patient than others, and guard your frontiers, and fear Allah so that you may be successful. (3:200)

Once again, prosperity and success have been made dependent on *Ṣabr* and *Taqwā*.

The two words, *Ṣabr* and *Taqwā*, though looking like a short title, are nevertheless very comprehensive. They contain within themselves a successful rule for all aspects of individual and collective life as well as public, government and military affairs.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said, as narrated by Sayyidnā

Abū Dharr رضى الله عنه :

عن ابى ذر قال قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلمً انى لاعلم اية لواخذ الناس بها لكفتهم "ومن يتق الله يجعل له مخرجا" الاية (رواه احمد)

I know a verse which, if people were to take to it, would suffice them. And that is: 'And whoever fears Allah, for him He shall make a way out (of the difficulties) - 65:2.'

Verses 121 - 123

وَاِذْ غَدَوْتَ مِنْ اَهْلِكَ تُبَوِّئُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ مَقَاعِدَ لِلْقِتَالِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ سَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿۱۲۱﴾ اِذْ هَمَّتْ طَّآئِفَتٰنِ مِنْكُمْ اَنْ تَفْشَلَا ۙ وَاللّٰهُ وَلِيُّهُمَا ؕ وَعَلَى اللّٰهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿۱۲۲﴾ وَلَقَدْ نَصَرَكُمُ اللّٰهُ بِبَدْرٍ وَّاَنْتُمْ اَذِلَّةٌ ۚ فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُوْنَ ﴿۱۲۳﴾

And when you left your house in the morning in order to place the believers in positions for fighting. And Allah is all-Hearing, all-Knowing. [121] **When two of your groups were about to lose heart, while Allah was their guardian. And it is in Allah alone that the believers must place their trust.** [122] **And Allah certainly supported you at Badr when you were weak. So, fear Allah that you may be grateful.** [123]

Sequence

In the previous verses, it was said that no power could harm Muslims if they observed patience and fear of Allah (*ṣabr* and *taqwā*). Now, the temporary set-back faced by Muslims during the battle of Uḥud was due to their failure to observe these rules of conduct fully. The present verses remind Muslims of what happened during the battle of Uḥud, and also, of their victory at the battle of Badr.

Commentary:

Before we proceed to explain these verses, it is appropriate that we have before us a sequence of events that came to pass at Uḥud.

The background of the Battle of Uḥud:

It was the month of Ramaḍān, Hijrah year 2, when the Quraysh

army and Muslim *mujāhidīn* fought a battle at Badr in which 70 well-known *kuffār* (disbelievers) of Makkah were killed and an equal number was taken prisoners. This defeat, disastrous and disgraceful as it was, and really the first instalment of Divine punishment, incensed the Quraysh; their search for revenge knew no bounds. The relatives of Quraysh chiefs who were killed at Badr, appealing to the traditional Arab pride, resolved that they would not rest until they have avenged their defeat at Badr at the hands of the Muslims. They proposed to Makkans that the sale proceeds from things brought in by their trade caravan from Syria should be spent on nothing but this war so that they can avenge the slaying of their comrades by Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم and his companions. To this, everybody agreed and it was in the Hijrah year 3 that the Quraysh, along with several other tribes as well, marched out to mount an attack on Madīnah. The invading force included even women so that they could appeal to the sense of honour their men had and implore them not to retreat, if they ever did.

When this armed force of three thousand strong, all laced with weapons and other logistics, pitched up its tents near the mountain of Uḥud, about three or four miles outside Madīnah, the Holy Prophet ﷺ went into consultation with Muslims. In his blessed opinion, warding off the enemy by staying in Madīnah was easy and more likely to succeed. This was the first time that the leader of the hypocrites, 'Abdullāh ibn Ubayy, who outwardly went along with Muslims, was asked to give his opinion, which turned out to be the same as that of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم . But, some zealous Muslims, who were unable to take part in the Badr encounter and were intensely eager to lay down their lives in the cause of Islām, insisted that they should go out and fight the enemy in the open so that the enemy does not take them to be cowards. To this, the majority turned.

In the meantime, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم went to his house and when he came out, he had his armour on. At that point of time, some people thought that they had forced him, against his opinion, to lead the fight outside Madīnah in the open. Realizing what they did

was wrong, they submitted to him that he could act according to his opinion and stay in Madīnah. The answer was: 'It does not behove a prophet, once he has put on his armour and taken up his arms, to put them off without fighting.' This one sentence is sufficient to clarify the difference between a prophet and a non-prophet. A prophet cannot show weakness in that capacity. Then, here lies a lesson for the community as well.

When the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم left Madīnah on his way to confront the enemy, he had about a thousand men with him, but the hypocrite 'Abdullāh ibn Ubayy broke off enroute with about three hundred men, saying: 'When my advice was rejected and action was taken on the advice of others, why should we fight and why should we endanger our lives?' Obviously, most of his comrades were hypocrites, yet there were some Muslims too who swallowed the bait and tugged along with them.

Finally, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم reached the battlefield with a total of seven hundred *mujāhidīn*. He personally took charge of the action area setting up all arrangements in a formal military manner. The formations of his men were so placed that the mount of Uḥud remained on their rear. Sayyidnā Muṣ'ab ibn 'Umayr was made the standard-bearer and Sayyidnā Zubayr ibn 'Awwām, the commander of the mounted troops. Sayyidnā Ḥamzah was given the command of the unarmoured. On the rear, there was some likelihood that the enemy may cut his way in from that side. So, he positioned a company of fifty archers (arrow-shooters) on a hillock in the rear and ordered them to stand on guard against any attack from that side. They were specifically instructed not to bother about the fighting down the hill, irrespective of whether they win or lose, and were told that they just do not have to move from their appointed place.

The command of the company of archers was given to Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Jubayr. As for the Quraysh, they had gone through the battle of Badr and they too went into battle formations in an orderly manner.

The Battle of Uḥud [1]

When the battle started, Muslims had an upper hand right from the beginning, so much so that the enemy forces went into total disarray. Muslims thought they had won and turned toward the spoils. At this point, the archers who were appointed by the Holy Prophet ﷺ to guard the rear also noticed that the enemy was on the run and they too started coming down from the mountain leaving their assigned battle station. Their commander, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Jubayr reminded them of the emphatic command of the Holy Prophet ﷺ not to move from their place of duty and tried his best to stop them. But, except a few, others took the plea that as the order was tied with time they should now go and be with the rest. Khālid ibn Walīd, who had not yet embraced Islām, was commanding a company of Makkan disbelievers. Making timely use of this opportunity, he went round the hill, went up through a pass and made a surprise attack. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Jubayr رضى الله عنه and the small number of men left with him tried their best to stop them but they were unable to do so and the chargers were able to pounce on Muslim forces down the hill all of a sudden. This situation made the running enemy turn back and reinforce the attack. The fate of the battle was totally reversed. Muslims were so confused with this unexpected turn of the battle that a major portion of them scattered away from the battle field. However, some Companions were still holding on resolutely. In the meantime, a rumour went round that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has met his *shahādah* (martyrdom). This shattered the nerves of his Companions and most of them lost heart. At that time, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was in the midst of about ten or twelve very devoted Companions. He was

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1. The strategy used in this battle shows that the Prophet of Islām was not only a perfect leader and teacher, but also a creative military strategist, something not known in the world of that time. Comparing the battle plans of the two camps, Tom Under, a twentieth century historian says in his book, The Life of Muhammad that his opponents had courage and bravery but it was he who broke new ground in the management of warfare. The Makkan disbelievers fought recklessly and haphazardly while he used great foresightedness, strict discipline and efficient organization as additional assets.

injured. Defeat was about to come when, in the right moment, the Companions scattered on the battlefield came to know that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was alive. They regrouped themselves around him and moved him away towards the hill safely.

This defeat which made Muslims terribly upset was temporary, and there were causes behind it. The Holy Qur'ān comments on each cause in extremely measured words and exhorts Muslims to be cautious in the future.

Lessons from the events of Uḥud :

The events of the battle of Uḥud have in them a treasure of good advice and wise guidance for all Muslims. It will be recalled that the Qurayshi disbelievers had brought women with them so that they could excite them to fight and, in case of a retreat, put them to shame and exhort them to go back into the battle. The Holy Prophet ﷺ saw that Hindah, the wife of Abū Sufyān, was leading a group of women who were chanting poetical compositions to arouse the fighting passions of their men. They were saying:

ان تقبلوا نعانق ونفرش النمارق

اوتدبروانفارق فراق وا مق

that is, 'if you fight right on and win, we shall embrace you and make a soft bed for you, but, if you turn back, we shall make you miss our love.'

In contrast, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم may Allah bless him, was saying this in his prayer:

اللهم بك اصول و بك اقاتل حسبى الله ونعم الوكيل

that is, 'O Allah, from Thee I draw my strength and for Thee and in Thy name, I attack and fight. Sufficient for me is Allah, the only one good to trust.'

This prayer, every word in it, is demonstrating how Muslims should strengthen their connection with Allah not only in peace, but also in war, a pattern of behaviour which is drawing a line of clear distinction between Muslims and other nations.

2. Victory in war comes from Allah and not from piles of hardware.

Let us look at this lesson through the tightly-held frame of this battle. Is'nt it that the noble Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all, left behind them indelible marks of gallantry, sacrifice and dedication, the class of which would be difficult to match in history? Sayyidnā Abū Dujānah رضی الله عنه had turned his body into a shield for his beloved Prophet taking all in-coming arrows on his back. Sayyidnā Ṭalḥah رضی الله عنه had his body all perforated with arrow-heads, but he still did not leave his blessed master unprotected. Sayyidnā Anas ibn al-Naḍīr رضی الله عنه, the uncle of Sayyidnā Anas ibn Mālik رضی الله عنه was absent from the battle of Badr which he regretted very much and longed to make amends whenever he could get the first opportunity to take part in a Jihād in the company of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

A little later, came the battle of Uḥud and Sayyidnā Anas ibn al-Naḍīr was in it. When Muslims had scattered away and the disbelievers of Quraysh were coming in overwhelming strength, he started to mount his charge, sword in hand, when he met Sayyidnā Sa'd who was going with the group of those who had scattered away from the battlefield. He called out to him, "O Sa'd, where are you going? I smell the scent of Paradise in this valley of Uḥud.' Saying this, he charged ahead and it was after a tough fight that he finally laid his life in the way of Allah. (Ibn Kathīr)

Sayyidnā Jābir رضی الله عنه says, "when Muslims became scattered, there were only eleven Companions left with the Holy Prophet ﷺ, Sayyidnā Ṭalḥah رضی الله عنه being one of them. The forces of Quraysh were surging forward. The Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم said, 'Who is going to take care of them?' Sayyidnā Ṭalḥah رضی الله عنه responded immediately, 'I shall do that, O Messenger of Allah.' Another Companion, an Anṣārī, said, 'I am at your service.' He asked the Anṣārī Companion to go, who fought, and fell a martyr. Then came another pressure wave. He asked the same question again. Sayyidnā Ṭalḥah offered himself as before. He was all impatient to hear the command of the Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم so that he could go ahead. He, once again, sent some other Anṣārī Companion and Sayyidnā Ṭalḥah's wish remained unfulfilled. Thus, it was seven times that the Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم asked the question and every time Sayyidnā Ṭalḥah was not permitted to go while other Companions were permitted to go and

meet their *shahādah* (martyrdom).

3. Muslims were few in number, yet they won at Badr. Comparatively, they were more in number at Uhud, yet they lost. Here too, for Muslims there is a lesson to learn: Muslims should not rely on their numerical or material strength, military hardware or logistic support, but they should make sure that they take victory as something which comes by the grace of Allah Almighty and therefore, they must always watch out that their relationship with Allah remains strong.

What happened at the battle of Yarmūk is worth remembering. The officer-in-command at the war front wrote to Sayyidnā 'Umar, the Khalīfah at Madīnah, requesting reinforcements in view of a reduced number of fighters. The reply that he gave is reproduced below:

"قد جاءني كتابكم تستمدونني واني ادلكم على من هو اعز نصراً واحصن جندا الله عزوجل فاستنصروه فان محمدا صلى الله عليه وسلم قد نصر في يوم بدر في اقل من عدتكم فاذا جاءكم كتابي هذا فقاتلوهم ولا تراجعوني". (مسند احمد، ابن كثير)

"Your letter reached me. You have requested reinforcements and I direct you to One who is most-powerful support-wise and most-protecting army-wise, that is, Allah, the Mighty, the Exalted. So, seek help from Him - because Muhammad, may Allah bless him, was helped on the day of Badr despite their being fewer in numbers. So, when this letter of mine reaches you - fight. And do not turn back to me." (Ibn Kathīr, with reference to the Musnad of Ahmad)

The narrator says, when they received this letter, they mounted an attack in the name of Allah, all of a sudden, against the formidable forces of disbelievers who were defeated. Sayyidnā 'Umar knew that victory or defeat for Muslims does not depend upon numbers. Instead, it depends upon trust in Allah, and on His help. This fact has been clearly stated by the Holy Qur'ān with reference to the battle of Hunayn:

يَوْمَ حُنَيْنٍ إِذْ أَعْجَبَتْكُمْ كَثْرَتُكُمْ فَلَمْ تُغْنِ عَنْكُمْ شَيْئًا

"(Remember) the day of Hunayn when you became proud about your numbers, then, nothing worked to your advantage. (9:25)

Now, let us turn to the explanation of these verses:

1. Verse 121 begins with the words, وَاِذْ غَدَوْتَ مِنْ اَهْلِكَ (When you left your house in the morning in order to place the believers in positions for fighting).

This is an example of the miraculous style of the Holy Qur'an, specially when it reports events. It does not describe any event in its total detail as a matter of general principle. Events, or their details are taken up only when they carry with them implied points of guidance. For instance, a particular secondary detail, such as the time of leaving the house, has been identified through the word, غَدَوْتَ (*'ghadawta'*); and *hadith* narrations prove that this morning was that of the seventh of Shawwal, Hijrah year 3.

Then comes the description of the point from where this expedition started. The word, مِنْ اَهْلِكَ indicates that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was with his family at that time and when the time came to leave, he left, leaving his family behind him, even though this attack was aimed at Madinah. These secondary details have guidance built in them. When there is the command of Allah, it is expected that the love of family and home should not stop one from obeying it. It will be noticed that details of what happened between the period of leaving the house and reaching the war front remain undescribed. Instead, the first thing done on the war front has been described as تُبَوِّئُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ مَقَاعِدَ لِلْقِتَالِ, the placing of believers in positions for fighting.

The verse ends with the words, وَاللّٰهُ سَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ (And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing). By reminding Muslims of these attributes of Allah, it has been pointed out that everything said by the two parties at that time was all in the knowledge of Allah Almighty, and absolutely nothing of what happened to the two of them remains hidden from Him, and so shall it be with the end of the war; that too, is not hidden from Him.

Next comes verses 122 beginning with the words, اِذْ هَمَّتْ طَّآئِفَتٰنِ مِنْكُمْ اَنْ تَفْشَلَا (When two of your groups tended to lose heart while Allah was their guardian). These 'two groups' refer to the Bani Harithah of the tribe of Aws and Bani Salamah of the tribe of Khazraj. These 'two groups' lost the courage to fight when they saw the hypocrite,

'Abdullāh ibn Ubayy and his men breaking away. But, Allah, in his grace, helped them come out of this state of apprehensiveness. Here, the fact was that their weakness was caused by the thought, and certainly not because of any weakness in faith. Ibn Hishām, the famous historian of Muslim battles has made this very clear. Then, the very Qur'ānic statement, وَاللّٰهُ وَلِيُّهُمَا (while Allah was their guardian) is a testimony to their perfect faith. Therefore, some elders from these two tribes used to say: "No doubt, the verse contains a complaint against us, but at the same time it bears a good news for us in the words: وَاللّٰهُ وَلِيُّهُمَا (while Allah was their guardian).

3. Towards the end of the verse, it has been said: "And it is in Allah alone that the believers must place their trust." Here, it has been made clear that Muslims should not rely on their superiority in men and materials. Not that they have to ignore material needs of the combat; of course, they should have whatever they can get together subject to their means, but the crucial thing is that they must place their total trust in Allah, and Allah alone. The apprehension of weakness that overtook Banū Ḥārithah and Banū Salāmah was caused by this material lack of strength. Therefore, *tawakkul* or trust in Allah was suggested as the treatment of all sorts of apprehensions.

Tawakkul is one of the superior human qualities. It does not mean that one should cut off all his connections with the effort to collect material support. On the contrary, one should collect what is obviously needed to the best of his ability, use it, and then, let Allah take care of the outcome. It is also necessary that one should not become proud of what has been collected as material assets, instead, "We trust in Allah" should be the sole concern. The good example of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is before us. That he himself organized the fighting strength of Muslims during this *Jihād*, assembled weapons and other war materials to the best of his ability, prepared battle plans appropriate to the time and place. Once on the war front, he set up entrenchments with combat-ready Companions placed therein. These were all part of the material-functional management of the battle. By making use of these with his own blessed hands, our beloved master, the last and foremost of prophets, demonstrated that material facilities are also a blessing of Allah Almighty. Ignoring them

or turning away from them cannot be called what *tawakkul* is. Here, the attitude of a Muslim slightly differs from that of a non-Muslim. A Muslim would, given his ability and means, collect all sorts of necessary material support, yet when it comes to trust and *tawakkul* that he would place in none but Allah. The non-Muslim is bereft of this spiritual dimension for he relies on his brute material strength. The manifestation of this difference has been common sight throughout all Islāmic battles.

4. The focus now turns to a particular battle where Muslims had demonstrated perfect *tawakkul* and Allah Almighty had blessed them with support and success. The reference to the battle of Badr, in the following words, has appeared in this very context.

وَلَقَدْ نَصَرَكُمُ اللّٰهُ بِبَدْرٍ وَّاَنْتُمْ اَذِلَّةٌ

And Allah certainly supported you at Badr when you were weak. (123)

Badr : Location and Importance

Badr is located about eighty miles south-west of Madīnah and used to be a halting-place while travelling between Makkah and Madīnah, before the modern *Ṭarīq al-Hijrah* was commissioned into service which bypasses it.

At that time, Badr was known for its abundance of water, something very important in the desert zones of Arabia. The first armed encounter between believers and disbelievers came to pass at this spot on Friday, Ramaḍān al-Mubārak, Hijrah year 2 which fell on March 11, 624 A.D. On a superficial view, this battle appears to be a local tribal war, but the truth is that it has charted a revolutionary course in the history of the world, therefore, the Holy Qur'ān calls it *Yawm al-Furqān* (a day of distinction). According to Professor Philip Hitti, this was Islām's first clear victory.

The expression وَاَنْتُمْ اَذِلَّةٌ translated as 'when you were weak' means that 'you were, at that time, few in numbers and materials'. According to strong and authentic narrations, the number of Muslims was 313. This 'army' had two horses and seventy camels. On these, they took their turns while riding.

The verse ends with the statement: فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُوْنَ (So, fear Allah, that you may be grateful). This may remind one of the many places in the Holy Qur'ān where *Taqwā* (fear of Allah) and *Ṣabr* (patience) have been prescribed as a security shield against the machinations of the hypocrites and the harmful effects of hostile enemies. Right here, in these two behaviour models, there lies the secret of an entire organized struggle, and clear victory, that comes in its wake. As mentioned elsewhere, *taqwā* and *ṣabr* have not been mentioned here, in conjunction. Instead, *taqwā* has been considered sufficient for, in reality, *taqwā* is such a comprehensive human attribute that *ṣabr* too gets to be included therein.

Verses 124 - 129

إِذْ تَقُوْلُ لِلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ اَلَنْ يَّكْفِيَكُمْ اَنْ يُّمِدَّكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ بِثَلٰثَةِ اٰلَافٍ
مِّنَ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ مُنْزَلِيْنَ ﴿١٢٤﴾ بَلٰٓى ۙ اِنْ تَصْبِرُوْا وَتَتَّقُوْا وَيَاْتُوْكُمْ
مِّنْ فَوْرِهِمْ هٰذَا يُمْدِدْكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ بِخَمْسَةِ اٰلَافٍ مِّنَ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ
مُسَوِّمِيْنَ ﴿١٢٥﴾ وَمَا جَعَلَهُ اللّٰهُ اِلَّا بُشْرٰى لَكُمْ وَلِتَطْمَئِنَّ
قُلُوْبُكُمْ بِهٖ ۗ وَمَا النَّصْرُ اِلَّا مِنْ عِنْدِ اللّٰهِ الْعَزِيْزِ الْحَكِيْمِ
﴿١٢٦﴾ لِيَقْطَعَ طَرَفًا مِّنَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْٓا اَوْ يَكْبِتَهُمْ فَيَنْقَلِبُوْا
خَآئِبِيْنَ ﴿١٢٧﴾ لَيْسَ لَكَ مِنَ الْاَمْرِ شَيْءٌ اَوْ يَتُوْبَ عَلَيْهِمْ
اَوْ يُعَذِّبَهُمْ فَاِنَّهُمْ ظٰلِمُوْنَ ﴿١٢٨﴾ وَلِلّٰهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا
فِي الْاَرْضِ ۗ يَغْفِرُ لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَيُعَذِّبُ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ
رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿١٢٩﴾

When you were saying to the believers, "Shall it not suffice you that your Lord should help you with three thousand of the angel sent down (for you)?" [124] **Why not? If you stay patient and fear Allah and they come upon you even in this heat of theirs, your Lord will reinforce you with five thousand of the angels having distinct marks.** [125] **And Allah did it only that it be a good news for you and that your hearts may be at rest with it. And help is from none but Allah, the All-**

Powerful, the All-Wise. [126] **That He may cut off a flank of disbelievers or throw them down in disgrace, and they go back frustrated.** [127] **You have no authority in the matter, unless Allah forgives them or punishes them, as they are unjust.** [128] **And to Allah belongs what is in the heavens and what is in the earth. He forgives whomsoever He wills and punishes whomsoever He wills. And Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful.** [129]

Commentary

In the previous verses, the battle of Badr was cited in relation to the battle of Uḥud. Briefly stated there was the unseen support from Allah Almighty given to Muslims. In the present verses, some details of that support have been mentioned. Also stated is the wisdom behind the sending of angels.

One may naturally ask a question here. When Allah Almighty has endowed His angels with such power that just one of them could overturn an entire habitation, very much like what happened with the land of the people of Lūṭ عليه السلام which was overturned single-handedly by the angel Jibra'il, why was it necessary to send out an army of angels? In addition to that, given the introduction of angels onto the battlefield, the obvious result should have been the total annihilation of every single infidel.

The Holy Qur'ān has, itself, given the answer in the verse وَمَا جَعَلَهُ اللّٰهُ اِلَّا بُشْرٰی. It means that the purpose behind the sending of angels was not really to help score a victory on the battlefield. Instead, the purpose was to give the believers the good news of victory to comfort them and to strengthen their hearts. This is very clear from the words اِلَّا بُشْرٰی (only that it be a good news) and لِتَطْمَئِنَّ قُلُوْبُكُمْ (that your hearts may be at rest) in the text. Far more clear are the words of Sūrah al-Anfāl about this event: فَثَبِّتُوا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا (So, make those who believe firm - 8:12). Here, the address is to the angels and they have been asked to see that Muslims do not get anxious and that their hearts stay firm.

How can hearts be made to stay firm? There are many possible ways, one of them could be through their spiritual input, something not too dissimilar to the direct beaming of attention as practiced by mystic *shaykhs*.

The possibility of doing this in several less complex forms also exists. For instance, they may simply assure the believers that angels are standing ready to help them - by appearing before them, by their voice signs or by some other method - as was witnessed in the battle of Badr where all these methods were used. In fact, in one exegetic explanation of the verse فَاضْرِبُوْا فَوْقَ الْأَعْنَاقِ (So, strike over the necks - 8:12), this address is to the angels. According to some *ḥadīth* narrations, when an angel decided to attack a disbeliever, the head of the disbeliever slid of his body all by itself.[1] It has also been reported that some noble Companions heard the voice of Jibra'il saying, 'Charge, Haizūm!' [2] Some of them saw some angels (Muslim). All these sensory experiences are part of the same chain of Divine support. Evidences prove that the angels of Allah did a few things to impress upon Muslims that the angels too are participating in fighting as a sort of assurance that His support through the angels is there. As said earlier, their objective was far from winning a war for the believers. Their real mission was to comfort Muslims and to give their hearts strength. That the obligation of *Jihād* has been placed on men in this mortal world, and that is how they are enabled to deserve merits and ranks in the Hereafter, is a clear proof of this view. If Allah Almighty had willed that countries be conquered through armies of angels, the very name of disbelief and disbelievers would have been effaced from the face of the earth, not to say much about governments and empires. But, in this system of the material world, Allah Almighty has not just willed it so. Here, disbelief and faith, obedience and sin shall continue to exist side by side. The great divide shall come on the Day of Resurrection when the true and the false shall become all distinct.

The rationale of the promises:

Let us now turn to the promises of angelic help in the battle of Badr. The verse of Sūrah al-Anfāl carries the promise of one thousand angels. In the present verse of Sūrah 'Āl-'Imrān, the promise begins with three thousand, then goes up to five. What is the wisdom behind this?

The fact is that Muslims noticed the thousand-strong force of the

1. From Sahl ibn Ḥanīf vide Al-Ḥākim and Baihaqī.

2. The steed of Jibrā'il.

enemy in the battle of Badr, as stated in Sūrah al-Anfāl, and compared it with their total count of three hundred and thirteen, so they invoked the help of Allah Almighty against such heavy odds. Thereupon, came the promise of one thousand angels, implying thereby that the number of their enemy shall be matched by an identical number of angels. The words of the verse are:

إِذْ تَسْتَغِيثُونَ رَبَّكُمْ فَاسْتَجَابَ لَكُمْ أَنِّي مُمِدُّكُم بِأَلْفٍ مِّنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ مُرْدِفِينَ

When you were calling your Lord for help, so He responded to you (saying): I am going to support you with one thousand of the angels, one following the other. (8:12)

Even after this verse, the same purpose behind the sending of angels was made clear by saying: "And Allah did it, only that it be a good news for you, and that your hearts may be at rest with it."

Then comes the present verse of Sūrah 'Āl-'Imrān. Here, the promise of three thousand angels was probably made due to the reports received by Muslims that Kūrz ibn Jābir Muḥāribi was marching towards the battlefield of Badr with his tribal forces in support of the disbelievers of Makkah (as in Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī). The actual position in the confrontation was that the enemy forces were already three times larger than those of Muslims, who were somewhat disturbed by this news. Thereupon, a promise of three thousand angels was made so that the ratio is reversed and the number of Muslims goes three times higher than that of the enemy.

After that, right there towards the end of this verse, this number was increased, subject to conditions, to five thousand. The conditions were:

A. That Muslims shall hold on firmly to the great qualities of *ṣabr* (patience) and *taqwā* (fear of Allah).

B. That they come under enemy attack all of a sudden.

Out of these two conditions, the second one did not just materialize, therefore, the promise of the number, five thousand, did not remain effective. Granted that the second condition of the promise did not come to pass, major commentators and historians differ as to the actual fulfillment of the promise - was it in the form of five thousand or three thousand only? All these positions have been mentioned in

Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī.

From the verse لَيْسَ لَكَ مِنَ الْأَمْرِ شَيْءٌ (You have no authority in the matter) (128), the text returns to the main event of Uḥud after a brief mention of the event of Badr in between. This verse was revealed in the background of the battle of Uḥud where the Holy Prophet ﷺ lost one of his teeth, the lower right premolar, to be exact. His face injured, he is reported to have uttered: 'How shall such people prosper, people who do this to their prophet, although that prophet is calling them towards God?'. Thereupon, this verse was revealed.

According to yet another story from the Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been reported to have invoked evil fate for some disbelievers, whereupon came the revelation of this verse in which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been counselled to remain patient and forbearing. [1]

Verses 130 - 131

يَاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَاْكُلُوا الرِّبٰوٓا اَضْعَافًا مُّضٰعَفَةً ۖ وَّاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿١٣٠﴾ وَاتَّقُوا النَّارَ الَّتِيْٓ اُعِدَّتْ لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿١٣١﴾

O those who believe, do not eat *Ribā* (interest) doubled and multiplied. And fear Allah so that you may be successful. [130] **And fear the Fire that has been prepared for the disbelievers.** [131]

The meaning of doubled and multiplied

The detailed rules regarding '*ribā*' and the philosophy underlying its prohibition have been discussed thoroughly in Sūrah al-Baqarah verses 275-278 (Volume 1 of this commentary). However, it may be pointed out here that words اَضْعَافًا مُّضٰعَفَةً (doubled and multiplied) used in this verse do not mean that the prohibition of '*ribā*' is restricted only to a transaction where the interest is doubled or multiplied. In fact, these words are not used in a restrictive sense, because it is evident from Sūrah al-Baqarah that '*ribā*' or interest is prohibited in any case, even though its rate is not so high as to make it doubled or multiplied.

1. Bayān al-Qur'ān.

These words are used only to explain the factual position prevalent at that time, and to indicate its unjust and evil nature. Moreover, these words also suggest that even the interest charged is simple and not compound, yet once a person is engaged in the business of interest he does not stop at charging interest in one transaction only. Rather, he reinvests the income of interest in another loan transaction, and keeps investing the interest proceeds in similar transactions again and again, and thus the ultimate result is that the original interest charged through the first transaction is doubled and multiplied.

Verses 132 - 133

وَأَطِيعُوا اللّٰهَ وَالرَّسُولَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ ﴿١٣٢﴾ وَسَارِعُوٓا إِلٰى
مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا السَّمٰوٰتُ وَالْأَرْضُ ۙ أُعِدَّتْ
لِلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿١٣٣﴾

And obey Allah and the Messenger so that you may be blessed. [132] **And race one another towards Forgiveness from your Lord and towards a paradise the width of which spans the heavens and the earth. It has been prepared for the God-fearing.** [133]

Commentary

In the previous verse, Muslims were commanded to abstain from interest-based dealings, a sin which deprives them of the quality of *taqwā*, (the fear of Allah, the sense of responsibility before Him).

The present verses stress the positive aspects of *taqwā* and complement the earlier subject alongwith the promise of reward for those who observe it. Worth remembering throughout one's life is the second point which will serve him well if taken as the guiding light and the constant orientation. Allah Almighty has made it clear in these verses that the obedience to Allah and His Messenger does not become genuine and effective through lip-service alone. Instead, the obedient ones are known by what they are and what they do, by their traits of character and their deeds.

The obedience of Allah and His Messenger

The first verse, in a brief statement, presents a cardinal command of Faith in the following words: وَأَطِيعُوا اللّٰهَ وَالرَّسُولَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ (And obey Allah

and the Messenger so that you may be blessed). Here, in order that one becomes deserving of Divine mercy, the obedience to Allah Almighty has been declared necessary and binding, and along with it, the obedience of the Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم has been made equally necessary and binding. This is something not limited to this verse alone. It has been repeatedly stressed throughout the Holy Qur'ān. The pattern of combining the command to obey Allah Almighty, immediately followed by the command to obey the Messenger, appears in the Qur'ān again and again. These continued and constant statements of the Holy Qur'ān are there to remind human beings that these are the basic principles of Islām and *'Īmān*. The first part of the Faith is to affirm and declare the existence of God, His Oneness, and that man is there to worship and obey Him. The second part is the confirmation of His Messenger, and of obedience to him.

Also worth noting are the statements of the Holy Qur'ān which prove that, whatever the noble Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم says is by Divine permission and not on his own. The Holy Qur'ān says:

وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوٰى اِنْ هُوَ اِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُّوْحٰى

And he (the messenger) does not speak out of his own desire. It is not but a revelation revealed (to him) (53:3)

From this, we arrive at the conclusion that the obedience to the Messenger is the very same as the obedience to Allah. It is nothing separate from it. In Sūrah Al-Nisā' (4:80), the Holy Qur'ān has made it more clear in the following words:

مَنْ يُّطِعِ الرَّسُوْلَ فَقَدْ اَطَاعَ اللّٰهَ

And whoever obeys the Messenger, he surely obeys Allah. (4:80)

With this in view, the question is: Why have the two 'obediences' been stated separately? What purpose does it serve? Specially so, when this appears as a consistent feature in the Holy Qur'ān where we see both 'obediences' being commanded side by side.

To unfold the secret, we can say that Allah Almighty sent a Book to guide man in this world, and a Messenger. The Messenger was charged with the following duties:

(1) That he convey to people the verses of the Holy Qur'ān precisely and exactly in the form they were spoken when revealed.

(2) That he should cleanse people of outward and inward impurities.

(3) That he should teach the community, not only the contents of the Book, but also its purpose.

(4) That he should teach people wisdom along with the Book.

This subject appears at several places in the Holy Qur'ān almost identically in the form of:

يَتْلُوا عَلَيْهِمْ اٰيٰتِهٖ وَيُزَكِّيْهِمْ وَ يُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ

... who recites to them His verses and makes them pure and teaches them the Book and the wisdom ...

This tells us that the obligatory functions of the Messenger are not simply limited to conveying the Qur'ān to the people. There is more to it in that the Messenger is also responsible for teaching the Book, and clarifying its message. Also obvious is the fact that the addressees of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم were the eloquent people of Arabia who had command over the finer points of the Arabic language. Teaching of the Holy Qur'ān to them could never mean that they were to be taught the literal meaning of the Qur'ānic words, for they themselves understood all that perfectly well. Instead, the purpose of this teaching and clarification was, and could be nothing else, that an injunction of the Qur'ān stated briefly or in a summary form should be clarified and elaborated upon by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and communicated to people with the help of a revelation which did not form a part of the Qur'ān (*waḥy ghayr al-matluww*': the unrecited revelation). On the other hand, this was inspired into his blessed heart. The verse of the Holy Qur'ān إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحٰى (It is not but a revelation revealed) cited a little earlier, points in this direction.

Let us understand this through some instances. There are a good many occasions in the Holy Qur'ān where the text does not go beyond saying: أَقِيمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتُوا الزَّكٰوةَ (Establish the *ṣalāh* and pay the *zakāh*). Even if units of prayer come to be mentioned, such as *qiyām*, *rukū*' and *sajdah*, they remain totally undefined. The modality, outward and inward, is just not there. It was angel Jibra'il who came as

commanded by Allah and taught all the details through demonstration before the Holy Prophet ﷺ. This was how the Holy Prophet ﷺ conveyed the word and the deed to the people of his *Ummah*.

There are details about the payment of *zakāh*: What are thresholds? How much has to be paid on each threshold? What part of a person's possessions is *zakātable*? What part is non-*zakātable*? How much from threshold resources goes *zakāt*-free?: All such details were given by the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم . He even had these committed to writing as executive orders and passed on to several Companions.

Take yet another example. They Holy Qur'ān says: لَا تَأْكُلُوْٓا اَمْوَالَكُمْ بَيْنَكُمْ بِالْبَاطِلِ (And do not eat up each other's property by false means - 2:188).

Now there are deals and transactions of all sorts, such as buying and selling, rentals, tenancy, wages and many more. What forms are unjust, inequitable or harmful to public interest, and therefore, *bāṭil* or false? All these details were given to the community by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم by the leave of Allah. Similarly, this is true about all legal rulings of Islāmic Law.

Since all such details were conveyed to the community by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in fulfillment of his prophetic mission and under the guidance of Divine revelation, and since these details do not appear in the Holy Qur'ān, there was the likelihood that the uninitiated may be deceived into believing that these detailed rulings were not given by Allah Almighty and, therefore, they do not have to be carried out necessarily as part of one's obedience to Allah. It is for this reason that Allah Almighty has made the obedience of the messenger binding alongwith the obedience to Him, at various places in the Qur'ān, repeatedly. As such, the obedience of the Messenger is really nothing but the obedience of Allah Almighty, but, given its external appearance and detailed description, it is somewhat different from that. In view of this, it has been emphasised time and again that orders given by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم should be obeyed as if they were the very orders of Allah the obedience of which was mandatory. These may be there in the Qur'ān, open and clear, or may just not be there. They were still equally binding on the community.

This was a matter of crucial importance, not limited to someone falling in doubt. In fact, there were chances that the enemies of Islām would find an excuse to inject chaos in a basic Islāmic principle, and thereby make an effort to lead Muslims away from the right path. Therefore, the Holy Qur'ān has dealt with this subject in a variety of ways, in addition to its literal stress on the obedience to the Messenger. It has informed the blessed community of Muḥammad ﷺ that his duties include not only the teaching of the Book but also the added teaching of wisdom, pointing out to the fact that there are elements other than the words of the Book, which are also included in his teachings. That part too, identified as wisdom, has to be followed by Muslims as a matter of obligation.

As said earlier, the Holy Qur'ān used a variety of ways to focus on the same subject. For instance, it was said: لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ which means that the purpose behind sending the Messenger is that he should explain for people the meanings and objectives of the verses revealed to him. (16:44) Then, there is the oft-quoted verse:

مَآ اٰتٰىكُمُ الرَّسُوْلُ فَخُذُوْهُ وَمَا نَهٰىكُمْ عَنْهُ فَانْتَهُوْا

> Whatever the Messenger gives you, take it, and whatever he forbids you, refrain from it (59:7).

All these ramifications have been placed there lest there comes a person saying: 'We have been obligated to follow only that which appears in the Qur'ān; what we do not find in the Qur'ān, to that we are not obligated.' Perhaps, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم had fore-seen the problems which were to arise later when some people, in order to get rid of the teachings and explanations of the Messenger of Allah, would say 'For us, the Book of Allah is sufficient.' The Holy Prophet ﷺ has described this possibility in a *ḥadīth*, very clearly. The *ḥadīth* has been reported by al-Tirmidhī, Abū Dawūd, Ibn Mājah, al-Baihaqī and Imām Aḥmad in the following words:

لا الفين احدكم متكئا على اريكته ياتيه الامر من امرى مما امرت به اونهيت عنه فيقول لا ادرى ماوجدنا فى كتاب الله اتبعناه

> ... Lest I find one of you, reclining on his coach making comments on an order from my orders in which I bid some-thing or forbid something, saying, 'This we do not know. We

only follow what we find in the Book of Allah'.

Conclusion:

In short, the repeated stress on the obedience of the Messenger alongwith the obedience of Allah Almighty, as well as, specific instructions to follow the dictates of the Messenger at various places are there to counter the dangerous ignorance of a person who may venture to separate the details of Qur'ānic injunctions described by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , and available in the treasure-house of his *aḥādīth*, making it look like something foreign to the obedience of Allah, and consequently may hasten to reject them. The reality is that they cannot be separated:

گفته او گفته الله بود
گرچه از حلقوم عبد الله بود

What he said was said by Allah
Voiced, though, it was by a slave of Allah

Race towards forgiveness, towards Paradise :

The first command was: 'Obey the Messenger'. (132) The second command is: 'Race one another towards Forgiveness from your Lord and towards Paradise.' (133) Here, Forgiveness stands for the means of obtaining forgiveness, that is, good deeds which bring forth forgiveness. There are several exegetic views reported from the blessed Companions and their immediate successors. Though expressed differently, they convey the same theme. Out of the noble Companions and their successors, may Allah be pleased with them all, Sayyidnā 'Alī explained it as 'the fulfillment of obligations', Ibn 'Abbās as 'Islām', Abū al-'Āliyah as 'Hijrah', Anas ibn Mālik as 'al-Takbīr al-Ūlā (the first call of *Allahū Akbar* in *ṣalāh*)', Sa'īd ibn Jubayr as 'perfection of obedience', Ḍaḥḥāk as 'Jihād' and 'Ikrimah as '*Taubah* (repentance)'. The outcome of all these sayings is that Forgiveness covers all good deeds which become the means of obtaining Divine forgiveness.

At this point two things need our attention. First comes the resolution of an apparent contradiction which may be felt when one notices that the present verse carries a command to race one another towards Forgiveness and Paradise, while through another verse: لَا تَتَمَنَّوْا مَا فَضَّلَ اللّٰهُ بِهٖ بَعْضَكُمْ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ (And do not covet something by which Allah has made

some of you excel some others - 4:32), the very seeking of other merits and ranks has been prohibited.

The answer is that *faḍā'il* (merits, ranks, virtues) are of two kinds. The first kind relates to that which cannot be achieved by man, being beyond one's power and control. We can call these 'non-electable.' For example, colour or beauty or birth in a morally high family cannot be chosen and acquired. The other kind is something man can achieve by effort. These can be called voluntary or 'electable'. So, the reason why the effort to acquire non-electable merits, even its very desire, has been prohibited for the simple reason that they have been given to His created beings by Allah Almighty Himself in His infinite wisdom. It is something beyond human effort. Why run after them? All such efforts will lead to nothing but envy and malice. Let him who has been given a particular colour of his skin keep desiring to have some other colour. What is he going to get out of his desire? Nothing. However, there is a vast range of meritworthy deeds. One could, and would, make his mark there. That is why we have been asked to accelerate our efforts in that direction. This is not something restricted to one verse. The exhortation appears in several verses. Somewhere it is said: فَاسْتَبِقُوا الْخَيْرَاتِ (Try to get ahead of one anther in good deeds - 2:148, 5:48). Elsewhere it is said: وَفِي ذَٰلِكَ فَلْيَتَنَافَسِ الْمُتَنَافِسُونَ (And in this, then, aspire the aspirers.) (83:26)

Let us consider the advice of the sage who said: 'If one has a natural or physical handicap which is beyond his power to correct, he should remain contended (with his handicap) and unaffected by the achievements of others. He should go on doing what he does. For, if he were to pine over his handicap and envy the achievements of others, he would be unable to perform to his capability, and ultimately, he would end up doing nothing or very little.'

The second point worth considering is that Allah Almighty has mentioned 'Forgiveness' first and the 'Paradise' after it. May be, this is to suggest that entry into Paradise is impossible without Divine Forgiveness. The reason is obvious. Man may spend a life-time doing good and abstaining from the evils. Still the aggregate of his good deeds cannot pay the price of Paradise. What will take him to Paradise is only Forgiveness of His Lord, and His grace. The Holy Prophet ﷺ

has said:

سَدِّدُوْا وَقَارِبُوْا وَاَبْشِرُوْا ، فَاِنَّهٗ لَنْ يُّدْخِلَ اَحَدًا الْجَنَّةَ عَمَلُهٗ ، قَالُوْا : وَلَا اَنْتَ يَا رَسُوْلَ اللّٰهِ؟ قَالَ: وَلَا اَنَا اِلَّا اَنْ يَّتَغَمَّدَنِيَ اللّٰهُ بِرَحْمَتِهٖ

> Strive to be straight and true, take the middle course and seek glad tidings (of Allah's grace), for one's deeds shall not take anyone into the Paradise'. People said: 'Not even yours, O Messenger of Allah?' He said: 'Not even mine, unless it is that Allah covers me up with His mercy.' (al-Targhīb wa al-Tarhīb, with reference to al-Bukhārī and Muslim).

In short, our deeds are not the price of Paradise. But, as is the customary practice of Allah, He does bestow His grace upon a servant who does what is good. In fact, one who is given the very ability to do good deeds is really given the signal that Allah is pleased with him. So, let none of us be tardy in the performance of what is good. Since Divine forgiveness is the primary factor in one's entry into the Paradise, the text takes this importance into consideration and does not present forgiveness in the absolute sense. It has, rather, elected to say: مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ (Forgiveness from your Lord.). By doing so, the text highlights Allah's attribute as the Lord, showing thereby His added grace and mercy for His servants.

The second object towards which man is being asked to hasten is Paradise. It has been said here that the Paradise is as wide as whole of the heavens and the earth. Since human mind cannot conceive any greater vastness than that of the heavens and the earth within the confines of his experience, the Paradise has been likened to them. This is a manner of saying that Paradise is very vast, so vast that it can accommodate the entire heavens and the earth in its vastness.

When the width of the Paradise is so great who can imagine its length which should be even greater?

All the above discussion is based on the assumption that the Arabic word عرض (*'arḍ*) means 'width'. However, there is another possible interpretation adopted by some commentators. According to them the word "*'arḍ*" is also used in the meaning of 'price'. If the word is taken here in this sense, the verse would mean that Paradise is not an ordinary commodity; the entire heavens and the earth are its price.

With such an object of unimaginable worth and magnitude, what else should one do but hasten towards it.

Al-Razi in his 'al-Tafsir al-Kabir explains this point as follows:

قال ابو مسلم: ان العرض هنا ما يعرض من الثمن فى مقابلة المبيع اى ثمنها لوبيعت كثمن السموت والارض و المراد بذلك عظم مقدارها وجلالة خطرها وانه لا يساويها شئ وان عظم .

> Abu Muslim says that *'al-'ard'* in this verse means that which is offered against the object of sale as its price. In other words, if a price were to be put on Paradise, the heavens and the earth together with whatever is in them will be its price. The purpose is to demonstrate the most exalted status of the Paradise which remains unmatched by anything in its greatness.

Another statement about the Paradise is given in the end by: أُعِدَّتْ لِلْمُتَّقِيْنَ (It has been prepared for the God-fearing.) This tells us that Paradise has already been created. Clear indicators in the Qur'an and Hadith seem to suggest the existence of Paradise on the seventh heaven which is its surface.

Verses 134 - 138

اَلَّذِيْنَ يُنْفِقُوْنَ فِى السَّرَّآءِ وَالضَّرَّآءِ وَالْكٰظِمِيْنَ الْغَيْظَ وَالْعَافِيْنَ عَنِ النَّاسِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ﴿١٣٤﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ اِذَا فَعَلُوْا فَاحِشَةً اَوْ ظَلَمُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ ذَكَرُوا اللّٰهَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوْا لِذُنُوْبِهِمْ ۟ وَمَنْ يَّغْفِرُ الذُّنُوْبَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ ۟ وَلَمْ يُصِرُّوْا عَلٰى مَا فَعَلُوْا وَ هُمْ يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿١٣٥﴾ اُولٰٓئِكَ جَزَآؤُهُمْ مَّغْفِرَةٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّهِمْ وَجَنّٰتٌ تَجْرِىْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا ؕ وَنِعْمَ اَجْرُ الْعٰمِلِيْنَ ﴿١٣٦﴾ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ سُنَنٌ ۙ فَسِيْرُوْا فِى الْاَرْضِ فَانْظُرُوْا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُكَذِّبِيْنَ ﴿١٣٧﴾ هٰذَا بَيَانٌ لِّلنَّاسِ وَهُدًى وَّمَوْعِظَةٌ لِّلْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿١٣٨﴾

...Those who spend in prosperity and adversity and those who control anger and forgive people. And Allah loves those who do good [134] **- and those who, when they happen to commit a shameful act or wrong themselves, remember Allah, then, seek forgiveness for their sins - and who is there to forgive sins except Allah? - and do not persist in what they have done, knowingly.** [135] **Their reward is forgiveness from their Lord and gardens beneath which rivers flow where they shall live forever. And excellent is the reward of those who work.** [136] **A number of behaviour patterns have passed before you. So, traverse the land, and see what was the fate of those who belied (the prophets).** [137] **This is a declaration for mankind, and a guidance, and a lesson for the God-fearing.** [138]

Commentary

God-fearing Muslims can be identified by the traits of their character and the marks of their manner. So many benefits lie hidden behind their example and practice. This is the subject of the present verses.

Allah Almighty has made God-fearing Muslims to live as models for others. For instance, the Holy Qur'ān has, at so many places, emphasised the need to seek guidance and benefit from the company of the men of Allah. The verse: صِرَاطَ الَّذِيْنَ اَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ (the path of those whom You have blessed - 1:6) from Sūrah al-Fātiḥah clearly indicates that the straight and correct path of Faith has to be learnt from these very favoured servants of Allah. Then, there is the exhortation: كُوْنُوْا مَعَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ .. (be with the truthful - 9:119) which shows how useful the company of such people really is. But there are all sorts of people in the world, including the clever ones who would pose as good and try to impersonate the genuine ones. For this reason, it was necessary to draw a fine line of distinction between the true and the false and to show how the favoured men of Allah can be identified by their special traits of character. Once this is known, people would abstain from wrong leaders and guides and would use the God-given guidance to first become sure of the true ones and then follow them.

By having identified the traits and marks of God-fearing Muslims, and having stated that they are the ones deserving of ultimate success

and of elevated stations in Paradise, the righteous have been given a good news (of receiving the same reward, if they follow them) and the evil-doers are exhorted and persuaded to mend themselves and follow the God-fearing.

This is exactly what has been hinted at in هٰذَا بَيَانٌ لِّلنَّاسِ وَهُدًى وَّمَوْعِظَةٌ لِّلْمُتَّقِيْنَ (This is a declaration for mankind, and a guidance, and a lesson for the God-fearing - 3:138), appearing towards the end of these verses. While describing the traits and marks of the God-fearing, the qualities relating to human rights and social behaviour have been mentioned first, and the qualities relating to the rights of Allah after them. This is to indicate that the rights of Allah, despite their supreme status above all rights, are not meant to benefit Allah in any way. Allah does not need any of them, nor does he stand to suffer in any way whatsoever, if they are not fulfilled.

His Being is absolutely free of all these concerns. The one who worships Him is the one who gains. Moreover He is Very-Merciful, therefore, whenever a person falls short in the fulfillment of His rights, he may regret any time for what he did, turn to Him and repent genuinely and sincerely, whereby all his sins can be instantly forgiven from that eternal fountain of Mercy and Nobility. Contrary to this, there is the case of the rights of the servants of Allah - man has to fulfil these. In addition to that, if A has rights against B and B does not fulfil those rights, naturally A runs into loss. It is not that easy to forgive and forget loss suffered by one human being at the hands of the other. Therefore, *Ḥuqūqul-'Ibād* or the rights of the servants of Allah have particular importance of their own.

Moreover, the correct balance in our universal order and the reformed pattern of our human society hinges on the fulfillment of mutual rights. A slight short-fall in this direction can trigger disorders, fights and wars. Conversely, should high morals be inculcated and practiced, even enemies would turn into friends. Feuds raging through centuries can subside into peace and bliss. This is one more reason why traits and marks relating to human rights have been taken up first.

Verse 134 announces the first of these traits as follows:

The habit of spending in the way of Allah in prosperity and adversity:

The verse reads: اَلَّذِيْنَ يُنْفِقُوْنَ فِى السَّرَّآءِ وَالضَّرَّآءِ (Those who spend in the way of Allah in prosperity and adversity). It means that they are so used to spending for the good pleasure of Allah that they do spend whatever they can under all conditions, be it prosperity or adversity - more from more and less from less. Three points of guidance emerge from this statement:

1. That those poor should not consider themselves to be totally free from the obligation of spending in the way of Allah. By doing so, they may be depriving themselves of the open opportunity to spend in His way, for the status of spending one dollar out of a thousand dollars is the same with Allah Almighty as is the status of spending one penny out of a thousand pennies. For all practical purposes, the way the owner of a thousand dollars does not find it all that difficult to spend one dollar in the way of Allah, very similarly, the owner of a thousand pennies should not really be hurt by spending one penny.

2. On the other hand, the point made here is that those who keep on spending within the limitations of their capacity to spend, specially when their circumstances are straightened, would discover to their delight that, by doing so, the blessed style of giving and the wonderful habit of sharing with others less fortunate has come to stay and that it will not go extinct. May be, the very benedictory quality of such conduct draws mercy from Allah Almighty and He, in His infinite grace, bestows on such a person new openings and new increases in his means of sustenance.

3. Yet another beneficial aspect of this guidance is worthy of serious notice. Think of one who is in the habit of spending what he has on other human beings, making it possible for them to benefit through his efforts, helping the poor, the needy and the deprived. It is obvious that such a person would never even think of usurping the rights of others against their wishes.

So, the core of this quality of character is that true Muslims, the God-fearing and the favoured servants of Allah, are always on the look out for opportunities to pass on benefits to other human beings irrespective of their being rich or poor. There was an occasion when Sayy-

idah 'Ā'ishah, may Allah be pleased with her, gave away one, just one piece of grape in charity because she had absolutely nothing with her at that time. According to another early report, there was a time when she gave one onion in charity. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said:

اتقوا النار ولو بشق تمرة وردوا السائل ولو بظلف شاة

> Guard yourself against the Fire even if it be by giving a piece of date in charity and do not turn back one who begs empty-handed even if it be by giving a cloven hoof from a goat.

In a ḥadīth reported by Imām al-Rāzī in his al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr it is said that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , on a certain day, exhorted people to spend in charity. In response, those who had gold and silver with them lost no time in giving these out in charity. Somebody brought date-flakes because he had nothing else to give away. The date-flakes were accepted and given in charity. Then came another person who said: 'O Messenger of Allah, I have nothing to spend in charity, however, I am known as a man of honour among my people, so I give my sense of honour in charity, after which I shall never be angry with a person in future, no matter how much he insults me.'

The teachings of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the way they were understood and practiced by the noble Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all, make it obvious that spending in the way of Allah is not limited to the well-to-do and the wealthy. This quality of character can also be possessed by the poor and the less fortunate. They too can have that great attribute by spending in the way of Allah a little of whatever they can in proportion to their respective capacities.

Not By Wealth Alone: Other Options of Spending in the Way of Allah:

It is important to note at this point that the Holy Qur'ān uses the word يُنفِقُونَ which means that they spend in the way of Allah under all conditions, of prosperity and of adversity. However, it does not determine the 'what' of spending. The generality of the statement here seems to suggest that it includes, not only money, but everything else that can be 'spent'. For example, one who 'spends' his time and labour in the way of Allah, he too shall be credited with the quality of *infāq fī*

sabīlillāh or spending in the way of Allah. The *ḥadīth* quoted above supports this view.

The Wisdom behind the mention of prosperity and adversity:

May be, these are the two conditions of life in which man habitually tends to forget Allah. He will do that when very rich and upto the neck in luxury. He could also do that, fairly often, when worrying about his adversity. So, the verse clearly settles that the favoured servants of Allah are unique in their character who never forget Allah, neither in luxury nor in distress.

How aptly the last Moghul Emperor of Dehli, Bahadur Shah Ẓafar made this Qur'ānic idea the subject of his poetry when he said:

ظفر آدمی اس کو نہ جانیے گا خواہ کتنا ہی صاحب فہم و ذکا

جسے عیش میں یاد خدا نہ رہی جسے طیش میں خوف خدا نہ رہا

'O Ẓafar, not much of a man is he,
no matter how wise he be,
He who does not remember Allah when wealthy,
he who does not fear Allah when angry.

From Rage and Revenge to Forgiveness and Favour:

This leads us to the next hallmark of a true Muslim. It has been said that they, if hurt by someone, do not flare up in anger and do not lose their self-control. Going a step further, they do not submit to the dictates of their anger and do not go for a revenge. Not only that, they simply surrender their option of taking revenge and actually forgive the wrong-doer from the depths of their heart. Not stopping at this high enough moral achievement, they rise still higher by doing good to the person who had caused pain to them. This one quality of character seems to be a combination of almost three qualities - to subdue anger, to forgive the offender, and then, being good to him. All these three things have been so eloquently identified in the present verse (134):

وَالْكٰظِمِيْنَ الْغَيْظَ وَالْعَافِيْنَ عَنِ النَّاسِ وَاللّٰهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ

... and those who subdue anger and forgive people. And Allah loves those who do good...

While explaining this verse, Imām al-Baihaqī has narrated an amazing episode from the life of Ḥaḍrat 'Alī (Zainul'ābidīn) ibn Sayyidnā Ḥusain رضی اللہ تعالی عنہما . The report says that his maid was

helping him in his *wuḍū* (ablution) when, all of a sudden, the water-pitcher slipped out of her hands spilling water all over Haḍrat 'Alī (Zainul'ābidīn) ibn Sayyidnā Ḥusain رضی اللہ تعالی عنہما. His clothes got wet. In was natural that he would be angry. The maid sensed the impending danger and lost no time in reciting the following verse of the Qur'ān: وَالْكٰظِمِيْنَ الْغَيْظَ وَالْعَافِيْنَ عَنِ النَّاسِ (...and those who suppress anger and forgive people). Hearing this, the venerated scion of the Prophet's household lost whatever rash of anger he may have felt. He became totally silent. The maid then recited the second sentence of the verse: وَاللّٰهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ (And Allah loves those who do good). Since this sentence implicitly instructs people to be good to others and thus be loved by Allah, so Haḍrat 'Alī (Zainul'ābidīn) ibn Sayyidnā Ḥusain once he heard it, said: 'All right, go. I give you your freedom.' (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī with reference to Baihaqī)

Forgiving people their mistakes and short-comings is a quality that ranks very high in human morals. Besides, its merit in the life-to-come is much higher. In *ḥadīth*, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has been reported to have said:

> "On the Day of Resurrection, a proclamation will go forth from Allah Almighty asking if anyone had any rights due to Him. If so, let him stand. Those who shall rise on that occasion will be the ones who would have forgiven the injustices done to them by people in their life on earth."

In yet another *ḥadīth*, it has been said:

> من سره ان يشرف له البنيان وترفع له الدرجت فليعف عن من ظلمه ويعط من حرمه ويصل من قطعه
>
> "Anyone who likes to have lofty palaces in Paradise and wishes to have his ranks elevated, should forgive the one who has done injustice to him and present gifts to the one who has never given him anything and join up with the one who has severed relations with him."

At another place in the Holy Qur'ān, the text is far more clear when it teaches the great moral of doing good to those who do evil and establishes how enemies turn into friends through this noble method. There it was said:

ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ فَإِذَا الَّذِي بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ عَدَاوَةٌ كَأَنَّهُ وَلِيٌّ حَمِيمٌ

Repel evil with what is best, then the one, between whom and you there is enmity, shall become as if he was a fast friend. (41:34)

This was the supreme measure of the moral training given to His noble Messenger by Allah Almighty. The guideline given to him was:

صِلْ مَنْ قَطَعَكَ وَاعْفُ عَمَّنْ ظَلَمَكَ وَاَحْسِنْ اِلٰى مَنْ اَسَاءَ اِلَيْكَ

Join with him who severs relations with you and forgive him who does injustice to you and do good to him who is bad to you.

The moral grandeur of the Holy Prophet, may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, is unique and eminent. We can only think of the blessing of his teachings which so successfully ingrained even in his servants morals and traits of character similar to his own. Being the distinctive feature of a true Islamic society, there are hundreds and thousands of models visible in the lives of the Companions, their successors and among the venerated elders of the Muslim community.

There is an apt incident in the life of the great Imām Abū Ḥanīfah. Someone accosted him in a busy market place and heaped all sorts of insults and invectives on him. The great Imām controlled his anger and said nothing to him. He went home, took out a considerable quantity of gold and silver coins, put them in a gift-wrapped tray and went out to the home of his confronter. He knocked at his door. When this person came out, he presented this tray full of coins before him saying: 'Today, you did something very good to me. You gave me (something) of your good deeds (that you had done). It is in gratitude of this great favour of yours that I am presenting this gift to you.' The Imām's unusual conduct naturally affected the man. He repented and got rid of his bad habit for ever. After asking for Imām's forgiveness, he entered into his circle as a disciple and finally became a great scholar.

Upto this point, the text describes qualities of character that relate to the fulfillment of human rights. Following this, come qualities that relate to the rights of Allah where it has been said that true Muslims do not disobey Allah. Should they ever fall in sin under the compulsions of human weakness, they immediately turn to Allah, repent,

seek His forgiveness and resolve to abstain from that sin in future.

This character of true Muslims appears in the text in the following words:

وَالَّذِيْنَ إِذَا فَعَلُوْا فَاحِشَةً أَوْ ظَلَمُوْآ أَنْفُسَهُمْ ذَكَرُوا اللّٰهَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوْا لِذُنُوْبِهِمْ وَمَنْ يَّغْفِرُ الذُّنُوْبَ إِلَّا اللّٰهُ وَلَمْ يُصِرُّوْا عَلٰى مَا فَعَلُوْا وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُوْنَ

...and those who, when they happen to commit a shameful act or wrong themselves, remember Allah, then, seek forgiveness for their sins - and who is there to forgive sins except Allah? -- and they do not persist in what they have done, knowingly. (135)

The verse tells us that involvement in sin is caused by one's negligence in remembering Allah. So, the instruction is: If a sin has been committed, one should immediately turn to Allah, renew the zeal to obey Him and start remembering Him as He should be remembered.

Another point of guidance here tells us that forgiveness of sins depends on two things:

1. To regret past sins, seek pardon for these and to pray for forgiveness.

2. To resolve fully not to go near them in future.

May Allah Almighty bestow upon us the good fortune to become possessed with these supreme morals identified by the Holy Qur'ān. *Āmīn*.

Verses 139 - 143

وَلَا تَهِنُوْا وَلَا تَحْزَنُوْا وَأَنْتُمُ الْأَعْلَوْنَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿١٣٩﴾ إِنْ يَّمْسَسْكُمْ قَرْحٌ فَقَدْ مَسَّ الْقَوْمَ قَرْحٌ مِّثْلُهٗ ؕ وَتِلْكَ الْأَيَّامُ نُدَاوِلُهَا بَيْنَ النَّاسِ ۚ وَلِيَعْلَمَ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَيَتَّخِذَ مِنْكُمْ شُهَدَآءَ ۚ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿١٤٠﴾ وَلِيُمَحِّصَ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَيَمْحَقَ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿١٤١﴾ أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَنْ تَدْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ وَلَمَّا يَعْلَمِ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ جٰهَدُوْا مِنْكُمْ وَيَعْلَمَ الصّٰبِرِيْنَ ﴿١٤٢﴾

وَلَقَدْ كُنْتُمْ تَمَنَّوْنَ الْمَوْتَ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ تَلْقَوْهُ فَقَدْ رَأَيْتُمُوهُ وَأَنْتُمْ تَنْظُرُونَ ﴿١٤٣﴾

And do not lose heart and do not grieve, and you are the upper-most if you are believers. [139] **If you receive a wound, they have received a similar wound. And such days We rotate among the people, so that Allah may know those who believe and let some of you be martyrs -- and Allah does not like the unjust** [140] **-- and so that Allah may purify those who believe and eradicate the disbelievers.** [141]

Do you think that you shall enter Paradise despite that Allah has not yet known those of you who carry out Jihād nor has He known those who are steadfast. [142] **And you had been longing for death before you faced it. Now, you have seen it with your open eyes.** [143]

Once again, Muslims are being consoled through these verses about what happened to them at the Battle of Uḥud. They are being told that, under the customary practice of Allah, the disbelievers are the ultimate losers; it does not matter if Muslims have not scored a victory at this time because of their strategic mistake, but should they stick to the demands of their Faith, that is, perseverance and fear of Allah, it will be the disbelievers who shall be the ultimate losers.

Commentary:

The Battle of Uḥud has been fully described earlier in this Sūrah through which we already know that the initial success of the Muslim army turned into a defeat in this *Jihad* because of some of their own shortcomings, although they had already scored an earlier victory (at Badr). Seventy noble Companions sacrificed their lives on this occasion. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was hurt. But, inspite of all this, Allah Almighty let the balance of the Battle tilt in favour of Muslims and the enemy retreated.

This temporary defeat and setback came because:

1. The Muslim archers could not abide by the standing orders given to them by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم due to a difference of opinion. Some favoured holding on to the position they already held;

others saw no need to stay there and opted for the collection of spoils with everybody else.

2. The news that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been martyred on the battlefield weakened their resolve to fight.

3. The difference came up in something very serious, that is, the explicit command of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , the obedience to which was mandatory.

So, these three mistakes by Muslims resulted in a temporary setback. No doubt, this temporary setback was later on turned into final victory for them, yet Muslim *mujāhidīn* were virtually torn apart with wounds. Dead bodies of their most valiant fighters were strewn before their eyes. Even the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was wounded by the merciless enemy. Disappointed, dismayed, they were also terribly shocked over their own mistakes. In short, Muslims were on the horns of a dilemma. They were pining over the past and there was acute danger that they may become weak in the future and the duty of leading the people of the world entrusted to them may be hampered. In order to cover these two gaps, the Holy Qur'ān came up with the declaration:

وَلَا تَهِنُوْا وَلَا تَحْزَنُوْا وَاَنْتُمُ الْاَعْلَوْنَ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ

And do not lose heart and do not grieve, and you are the upper-most if you are believers. (139)

So, the message given to Muslims in the opening verse under comment is: Do not let weakness or inertia come near you in the future and do not pine over what has gone by. Finally, it is you who shall prevail, if you hold on to the path of faith and belief, having total confidence in the promises made by Allah Almighty, never ever turning your backs on obedience to the Prophet and *Jihād* in the way of Allah.

In other words, the object was to impress upon Muslims that they should not waste their time and energy by feeling sorry for whatever mistakes they have made in the past. Instead, they should devote to ways and means which make things right for them in the future. For success after failure, strong faith and an unflinching obedience to the Messenger of Allah are certain guarantees of a bright future. If

Muslims persist with these qualities, they are bound to be victorious ultimately.

This call of the Qur'ān made broken hearts throb again. Sulking bodies were aglow with a fresh spirit. Just imagine how Allah Almighty groomed the men carrying His message and gave Muslims for all times to come a principle and a rule of procedure whereby it was made necessary that Muslims should never shed tears over dead issues. Instead, they should do all they can to get together the means to strength and power. Then, right along with it, it was made very clear that supremacy and glory can be achieved through one, and only one, basic source, which is, having faith and fulfilling its demands. The demands of Faith include among other things, preparations which must be made in view of an impending war. It means that it is necessary to consolidate military power, assemble and make ready all relevant hardware, and harness all other means to that end, of course, in proportion to ability and capacity. The events of the Battle of Uḥud, from the beginning to the end, are a testimony to all these considerations.

The second verse that follows gives consolation to Muslims from another angle. It has been said that if Muslims were wounded or hurt in that particular battle, so also were those fighting against them. If seventy Muslim men were martyred with many wounded, is it not that they had condemned an identical number of their enemies to Hell, and wounded many, a year ago? Then, in this very battle, many a men from the enemy ranks were killed and wounded initially. So, when the text says:

إِنْ يَمْسَسْكُمْ قَرْحٌ فَقَدْ مَسَّ الْقَوْمَ قَرْحٌ مِّثْلُهُ ؕ وَتِلْكَ الْاَيَّامُ نُدَاوِلُهَا بَيْنَ النَّاسِ

If you receive a wound, they have received a similar wound.
And such days we rotate among the people ...

it guides us to another important principle and rule of procedure.

In this mortal world, the customary practice of Allah Almighty is to cause the days of hardship and ease, pain and comfort, suffering and peace occur among people by turns. If, for some reason, a falsely-motivated power succeeds in getting a short-lived upper hand, the group motivated by the truth should not lose heart and come to think

that, from this point onwards, they are always doomed to nothing but defeat. Instead of taking this negative attitude, they should rather go about finding out the causes of that defeat, and once they have discovered those, they should take corrective measures and eliminate all possibilities of repeating those mistakes. In the end, the group motivated by the truth shall emerge as the ultimate victor.

Verses 144 - 145

وَمَا مُحَمَّدٌ اِلَّا رَسُوْلٌ ۚ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ ؕ اَفَا۟ئِنْ مَّاتَ
اَوْ قُتِلَ انْقَلَبْتُمْ عَلٰۤى اَعْقَابِكُمْ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّنْقَلِبْ عَلٰى عَقِبَيْهِ فَلَنْ
يَّضُرَّ اللّٰهَ شَيْـًٔا ؕ وَسَيَجْزِى اللّٰهُ الشّٰكِرِيْنَ ﴿١٤٤﴾ وَمَا كَانَ
لِنَفْسٍ اَنْ تَمُوْتَ اِلَّا بِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ كِتٰبًا مُّؤَجَّلًا ؕ وَمَنْ يُّرِدْ ثَوَابَ
الدُّنْيَا نُؤْتِهٖ مِنْهَا ۚ وَمَنْ يُّرِدْ ثَوَابَ الْاٰخِرَةِ نُؤْتِهٖ مِنْهَا ؕ
وَسَنَجْزِى الشّٰكِرِيْنَ ﴿١٤٥﴾

And Muḥammad is but a messenger, there have been messengers before him. So, if he dies or is killed, would you turn back on your heels? And whoever turns back on his heels can never harm Allah at all. And Allah shall soon reward the grateful. [144] **And it is not the choice of a person to die without the will of Allah, death being a time-bound destiny. And whoever seeks the return in this world, We shall give him out of it, and whoever seeks the return in the Hereafter, We shall give him out of it. And We shall soon reward the grateful.** [145]

Commentary

Related to the battle of Uḥud, these verses recount events which have a particular significance of their own for several reasons. As such, the Holy Qur'ān devotes four to five sections of the Sūrah 'Āl-'Imrān to the sequence of victory and defeat at the battle of Uḥud and to the natural points of guidance underlying these.

In the first verse out of those appearing above, the warning which is rather frightening, given to the noble Companions on an act of indiscretion by some of them, actually settles a matter of principle. A little

deliberation shows that there was a secret behind the temporary debacle suffered by the Muslims, the wounding of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, the spreading of the news that he had passed away and that some Companions lost heart because of it: that secret was nothing but that Muslims should come to understand this basic principle and become practically firm when the challenge comes. This principle of Islam was bipolar. First of all it must be fully realized that Islam gives great importance to the unique respect and love given to the Holy Prophet ﷺ , so much so that it has been made an integral part of Faith and the slightest deviation or weakness in this delicate matter has been equated with straight *kufr,* disbelief or infidelity. Then, at the same time, it was equally important to ensure that Muslims should not fall a prey to the same disease that afflicted the Nazarenes and Christians. They exaggerated the respect and love due to Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه الصلوة والسلام by taking it to the extremes, invested him with partnership in the divinity of Allah Almighty and started to worship him.

When, at the time of the temporary setback suffered by Muslims at the battle of Uḥud, someone started the rumour that the Holy Prophet ﷺ had passed away, the agony that seized the noble Companions - a very direct, very natural reaction indeed - is something everybody cannot experience or reckon even in its most modest measure. Only he who has the knowledge of and feeling for the supreme love and devotion the noble Companions had for the prophet could come close to guessing the kind of agony and distress faced by them at that time. It really takes the full knowledge and realization of the sacrifices made by these blessed souls who, out of their unflinching devotion and love for their most dear mentor and the messenger of Allah, staked everything they had - money, property, children and their very lives for his sake, considering their sacrifices as the most desirable achievement of this mortal life, and proving it by their deeds.

Just imagine what would have happened to these devotees of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم when this shocking news came to them, specially so when the battle was in full cry, defeat was looming large after the initial victory, Muslims were losing ground and in this heat of the moment, they come to know the passing away of someone who was the very pivot of their struggle and the symbol of all their hopes.

The natural outcome of this situation was that a large group of the noble Companions started retreating from the battlefield in a state of confusion. This retreat from the battlefield was no doubt a result of fleeting confusion and in the least, without any indication of turning away from Islam. The truth of the matter was that Allah Almighty intended to mould into a group the Companions of His Messenger who were pious and angelic and who could become role models for the whole world. It was for this reason that an ordinary mistake by them was considered to be very serious. Therefore they were addressed on their retreating away from the battlefield in a fashion similar to what it would have been, had they deserted the fold of Islam. With this expressing of wrath, warning was given that all obligations of Faith, Worship and *Jihād* are for Allah who is Living and Eternal. Even if the news that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم had been martyred on the battlefield were to be true, that would have been something which was to come to pass when appointed. Losing heart and abandoning the dictates of Faith were responses that did not behove those in their position. Therefore, it was said:

وَمَا مُحَمَّدٌ إِلَّا رَسُولٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ ۚ أَفَإِنْ مَاتَ أَوْ قُتِلَ انْقَلَبْتُمْ عَلَىٰ أَعْقَابِكُمْ ۚ وَمَنْ يَنْقَلِبْ عَلَىٰ عَقِبَيْهِ فَلَنْ يَضُرَّ اللَّهَ شَيْئًا ۗ وَسَيَجْزِي اللَّهُ الشَّاكِرِينَ

And Muḥammad is but a messenger, there have been messengers before him. So, if he dies or is killed, would you turn back on your heels? And whoever turns back on his heels can never harm Allah at all. And Allah shall soon reward the grateful.

Here, Muslims are being warned that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is going to leave this mortal world on one or the other day but they have to hold on to the Faith firmly after him as well, in the same measure as they did during his blessed times. From here, we also come to know that the injury caused to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم during that temporary setback and the news of his passing away on the battlefield was concealed divine arrangement through which all that could happen to the noble Companions after him was revealed during his very life-time so that any slip in their conduct of affairs could be corrected in the very words of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم as a result of which it could be ensured that these ardent lovers and devo-

tees of the Messenger of Allah do not lose their coolness under exacting conditions, specially when this event of the passing away of the Messenger of Allah does actually take place. This is exactly what happened later on when the noble Companions, even the greatest among them, were overwhelmed with the severest emotional shock at the time of his passing away. At this juncture, it was Sayyidnā Abū Bakr, may Allah be pleased with him, who used the authority of Qur'ānic verses such as these to explain the situation to them as a result of which all of them were able to accept the truth and control their emotions.

The need to learn that crucial lesson has been taken up in the second verse as well. In order to teach steadfastness under calamities and hardships, it has been said that the death of every human being lies written with Allah Almighty. Fixed is its date, the day and the time. Death cannot come to take one away before that, nor could one continue to live after that. If so, getting scared about a certain death means nothing.

Now, towards the end, there comes an admonition about one of the apparent causes of this incident. As stated earlier, the Companions who were posted by the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم as guards on the hill in the rear saw that fellow Muslims were busy collecting spoils following the initial victory. Some of them started thinking about the fact of victory following which there was no need for them to stay at their post. If so, they concluded, why should they too not go in there and take part in the collection of spoils? So, they moved away from where they were ordered to be. Thereupon, it was said:

وَمَنْ يُّرِدْ ثَوَابَ الدُّنْيَا نُؤْتِهٖ مِنْهَا وَمَنْ يُّرِدْ ثَوَابَ الْاٰخِرَةِ نُؤْتِهٖ مِنْهَا وَسَنَجْزِى الشّٰكِرِيْنَ

And whoever seeks the return in this world, We shall give him out of it, and whoever seeks the return in the Hereafter, We shall give him out of it. And We shall soon reward the grateful. (145)

Here, it has been hinted that they made a mistake when they abandoned the duty assigned to them by the Holy Prophet ﷺ in order to collect spoils. At this point, let us keep in mind that, in its real

sense, the collection of spoils is not the same as the unabashed pursuit of the material which has been condemned in the Sharī'ah of Islam. On the contrary, collecting spoils, depositing it in safe custody and spending it where it must be spent is all a part of *Jihād*, and for that matter, an act of worship. So, the Companions who took part in this mission never did it for sheer material gain, for they would have been entitled to receive their due share in the spoils of war even if they had not actively participated in the collection of spoils as guaranteed under the Islamic Law. Therefore, it cannot be said that these blessed Companions abandoned their post of duty under the temptation of worldly gains. But, as explained earlier under comments on the first verse (144), even minor mistakes made by major people draw more attention. Even an ordinary deviation from their duty is taken to be serious and they are admonished for that. This applies here as well. Granted that their collecting of spoils could be related with the desire to make worldly gains, at the most in some minor way; and equally granted is the possibility that this small connection had not influenced their hearts; yet, it was to take the morals of the noble Companions to the highest possible level that this act of theirs was identified as 'the seeking of return in this world' so that even the tiniest speck of worldly temptation fails to find its way into their hearts.

Verses 146 - 148

وَكَأَيِّنْ مِّنْ نَّبِيٍّ قُتِلَ مَعَهُ رِبِّيُّوْنَ كَثِيْرٌ فَمَا وَهَنُوْا لِمَآ
أَصَابَهُمْ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ وَمَا ضَعُفُوْا وَمَا اسْتَكَانُوْا ۗ وَاللّٰهُ
يُحِبُّ الصّٰبِرِيْنَ ﴿١٤٦﴾ وَمَا كَانَ قَوْلَهُمْ إِلَّآ أَنْ قَالُوْا رَبَّنَا
اغْفِرْلَنَا ذُنُوْبَنَا وَإِسْرَافَنَا فِيْٓ أَمْرِنَا وَثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَنَا وَانْصُرْنَا
عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿١٤٧﴾ فَاٰتٰهُمُ اللّٰهُ ثَوَابَ الدُّنْيَا وَحُسْنَ
ثَوَابِ الْاٰخِرَةِ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ﴿١٤٨﴾

And there has been a number of prophets along with whom have fought many men of Allah, and they did not lose heart for what they suffered in the way of Allah,

nor did they become weak, nor did they yield. And Allah loves the steadfast. [146] **And they had nothing else to say except that they said: 'Our Lord, forgive us our sins and our excesses in our conduct, make firm our feet and help us against the disbelieving people.'** [147] **So, Allah gave them the return in this world and also the better rewards in the Hereafter. And Allah loves those who do good.** [148]

Connected with previous verses where Muslims were admonished for some of their shortcomings during the battle of Uḥud, the present verses cite examples set by men of Allah from earlier communities showing how steadfast they were on the battlefield, something which should be emulated by the present addressees.

The explanation of some words:

1. *Ribbiyūn* (رِبِّيُّوْنَ): a derivation from *Rabb* (رَبّ) like *Rabbānī* (رَبَّانِی) meaning 'of the *Rabb* or Lord' which has been rendered as men of Allah in the present translation. According to Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī, here the use of the vowel sound 'i' in place of 'a' is irregular. Some commentators take '*Ribbiyūn*': رِبِّيُّوْنَ to mean 'many groups'. In their view, this is derived from the word, '*Ribbah*' (رِبَّۃ) which means 'the group'. Now, as to who is meant here by '*Ribbiyūn*': رِبِّيُّوْنَ (men of Allah), it has been reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās and Ḥasan al-Baṣrī that this refers to '*ulamā'* (religious scholars) and '*fuqahā'* (juriconsults). (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī).

2. '*Istakānū*' (اِسْتَکَانُوْا) has been derived from '*istakānah*' (اِسْتِکَانَۃ) and means 'to be subdued and rendered weak and immobile' (Bayḍāwī).

3. '*Wahanū*' (وَهَنُوْا) has been derived from '*wahn*' (وَهْن) and means 'to lose heart under suffering' or 'wilt under pressure.'

Commentary

After citing the example of men of Allah fighting along with previous prophets who remained undeterred and unweakened against heavy odds, the Holy Qur'ān mentions another great quality of the men of Allah who, inspite of their own sacrificing conduct, kept praying to Allah Almighty to:

1. Forgive their past sins,

2. Condone any shortcomings that may have crept in during their present *Jihād* efforts,

3. Enable them to remain steadfast and

4. Make them prevail over enemies.

These prayers carry some important guidelines for Muslims by implication.

Never be proud of a good deed

A true Muslim who knows things as they are is not supposed to wax proud of what he accomplishes by way of a good deed. No matter how great the accomplishment or how exacting the struggle in the way of Allah, he just does not have the right to pat himself on his back, for his very accomplishment of a good deed, in all reality, is the direct outcome of nothing but the grace and mercy of Allah Almighty. In fact, no good deed can even issue forth without it. It appears in a *ḥadīth*:

فو الله لولا الله ما اهتدينا
ولا تصدقنا ولا صلينا

> Had it not been for the grace and mercy of Allah, we would have not received guidance in the straight path, nor we would have been able to pay *zakāh* and perform *ṣalāh*.

Seek Forgiveness from Allah under all conditions:

As for a good deed one gets the ability to perform, the truth lies in realizing that it is not within one's control to perform that deed exactly in accordance with the demands of the supreme magnificence of the One who holds the reins of the Creation and Command in His hands. No matter how hard one tries to do things correctly but falling short is inevitable, specially when it comes to doing things as is the due and right of Allah. Therefore, the seeking of forgiveness is also necessary during the very course of such a deed.

Pray for steadfastness and consistency in good deeds:

It is not possible to predict the continuity of a good deed. Who can say for sure that he will be given the ability to go on doing his good deed in the future also just as he is doing it now? All this is a matter of what is known as *Taufīq*, the God-given ability to perform what is good. Therefore, we should repent over any shortcomings in what we are doing in the present and pray that Allah makes us steadfast and

persistent in the future. For a true Muslim, this prayer should become his second nature.

It should be noted that the prayer for the forgiveness of past sins, appearing first, is a subtle hint to the fact that pain caused or defeat suffered in this mortal life is, more than often, a reflection of one's past sins which can be cured through repentance and seeking of forgiveness.

The last verse promises a good reward for the men of Allah in this world as well as in the other. It means that, right here in this mortal world, Allah Almighty gives them ultimate supremacy over the enemies and grants them success in their mission. Then comes the reward in the Hereafter. That reward is certainly the real one, an ideal state of peace and happiness which will never fade out. This factor has been pointed out by the addition of the word حُسْنُ : (*ḥusn*: beauty) before 'return in the Hereafter' which makes it read:

وَحُسْنَ ثَوَابِ الْآخِرَةِ

And the better reward in the Hereafter. (148)

Verses 149 - 150

يَاأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنْ تُطِيعُوا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يَرُدُّوكُمْ عَلَىٰ أَعْقَابِكُمْ فَتَنْقَلِبُوا خَاسِرِينَ ﴿١٤٩﴾ بَلِ اللَّهُ مَوْلَاكُمْ ۖ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ النَّاصِرِينَ ﴿١٥٠﴾

O those who believe, if you obey those who disbelieve they will make you turn back on your heels, then you shall turn losers. [149] **Instead, Allah is your Lord, and He is the best of all helpers.** [150]

When Muslims faced a temporary setback during the battle of Uḥud and rumours went around that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been martyred, the hypocrites found an occasion for mischief under the shadows of a battle nearly lost. They said to Muslims: 'Now, that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is no more with us, why should we not go back to our old faith and thus get rid of all conflicts between us?' This shows how ugly the conduct of hypocrites was and how avowed an enemy they were to Muslims.

In the verses appearing above, Muslims have been instructed not to listen to such enemies, nor to make them a party to any consultations among themselves, nor follow any advice given by them.

In the previous verses, it will be recalled, the instruction was to follow the men of Allah; here, the instruction is not to act upon the advice of hypocrites and anti-Islam people. Indeed, the instruction is to continue taking guard against them.

The Qur'ānic expression, 'they will make you turn back on your heels', means that the real objective of anti-Islam people is to disengage Muslims from their Faith through engineered suspicion either overtly or covertly, the later method being designed and implemented in a manner which serves to gradually decrease the love and honour of Islam from their hearts resulting in a reversal of their position. Thus, those aiming to push Muslims in a state of loss cannot be their friends, even if they claim to be.

The statement, '...Allah is your Lord and He is the best of helpers' tells Muslims to place their trust in Allah and rely on His help alone. Even if their antagonists come up with plans of help, Muslims should not go by these against the injunctions of Allah and the Messenger.

Verses 151 - 152

سَنُلْقِي فِي قُلُوبِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا الرُّعْبَ بِمَا أَشْرَكُوا بِاللَّهِ مَا لَمْ يُنَزِّلْ بِهِ سُلْطَانًا ۚ وَمَأْوَاهُمُ النَّارُ ۚ وَبِئْسَ مَثْوَى الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٥١﴾ وَلَقَدْ صَدَقَكُمُ اللَّهُ وَعْدَهُ إِذْ تَحُسُّونَهُمْ بِإِذْنِهِ ۚ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا فَشِلْتُمْ وَتَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ وَعَصَيْتُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا أَرَاكُمْ مَا تُحِبُّونَ ۚ مِنْكُمْ مَنْ يُرِيدُ الدُّنْيَا وَمِنْكُمْ مَنْ يُرِيدُ الْآخِرَةَ ۚ ثُمَّ صَرَفَكُمْ عَنْهُمْ لِيَبْتَلِيَكُمْ ۚ وَلَقَدْ عَفَا عَنْكُمْ ۚ وَاللَّهُ ذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٥٢﴾

We shall put awe into the hearts of those who disbelieve, since they have associated with Allah something for which He has not sent any authority.

Their ultimate place is the Fire. And evil is the abode of the unjust. [51] **And Allah has surely fulfilled His promise to you when you, with His will, were killing them off** [1] **until you showed weakness and disputed in the matter and disobeyed after He had shown you what you liked. Among you there were some who were seeking the mundane and among you there were others who were seeking the Hereafter. After that He reversed your position against them, so that He may test you. And, of course, He has forgiven you. And Allah is All-Gracious to the believers.** [152]

The previous verses referred to Allah Almighty as 'the best of helpers'; recounted here are some incidents of Allah's help.

The word, *sulṭān*, rendered here as 'authority' includes all revealed or rational bases of their position. The promise of casting awe and fear into the hearts of the disbelievers in this verse was made in the background of the battle of Uḥud when the disbelievers of Arabia marched back to Makkah without any obvious reason and inspite of defeat overtaking Muslims (Bayḍāwī). However, after having covered a certain distance on their way to Makkah, they awoke to their folly. When they thought of marching back to Madīnah, Allah Almighty filled their hearts with such awe and fear that they could not muster the courage to do so. The most they could do was to hire a Madīnah-bound villager to go there and tell Muslims that they were coming back. But, this whole deal came into the knowledge of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in Madīnah through revelation. He marched to Ḥamrā' al-Asad to apprehend them but they had already run away from there.

This was the background in which the present verse was revealed.

The verses that follow recount, as pointed out earlier, Allah's help and support for Muslims in the battle of Uḥud.

Commentary:

The High Station of the Noble Companions:

As obvious, the noble Companions made an error of judgement during the battle of Uḥud which forms the subject of admonition and

1. These verses refer to the battle of Uḥud.

correction in the previous continuity of verses. But, equally worth noticing here are the graces of Allah Almighty showered on the noble Companions side by side with the element of warning. To begin with, by saying لِيَبْتَلِيَكُمْ (so that He may test you) it was made clear that this temporary setback did not come as punishment, rather, it was to test them. Then, comes the statement, وَلَقَدْ عَفَا عَنْكُمْ , which very clearly proclaims: 'And, of course, We have forgiven you.'

Did the Noble Companions tilt towards the material?

As stated in the verses, the noble Companions were split in two groups at that time; some sought the mundane while others sought the Hereafter. The question is as to what was done by these revered Companions which identifies them with the seekers of the mundane. Obviously, it was their intention to go and collect spoils which has been equated with the seeking of the mundane. Let us now figure out the reality. If they had held on to their assigned post of duty and, as a result, had not taken part in the collection of spoils, would it have made their due share in the spoil any lesser? And, did their participation entitle them to some larger share? The Law of Spoils as authentically proved by the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth is common knowledge. They, as the first observers of the operation of the Law, knew it beyond doubt that their due share in the spoils was under no condition subject to being more or less. The fact was that their share in the spoils would have remained the same whether they helped in the collection of spoils or remained on guard at the appointed place of duty.

Keeping this in view, it is obvious that their action cannot be classed as the unqualified pursuit of the material. Instead of that, it is participation in what *mujāhidīn* are supposed to do. However, given the workings of human nature, the thought of spoils entering their hearts at that time is not totally unimaginable. But, Allah Almighty has His ways with people; He very much likes to see the hearts of the Companions of His Messenger clean and untouched even by the remotest idea of any tilt towards material possession. So, this very idea of going to possess things of *dunyā* has been equated with 'seeking of the mundane' which explains the element of divine distaste for the action.

Verses 153 - 155

إِذْ تُصْعِدُونَ وَلَا تَلْوُونَ عَلَىٰ أَحَدٍ وَالرَّسُولُ يَدْعُوكُمْ فِي أُخْرَاكُمْ فَأَثَابَكُمْ غَمًّا بِغَمٍّ لِّكَيْلَا تَحْزَنُوا عَلَىٰ مَا فَاتَكُمْ وَلَا مَا أَصَابَكُمْ ط وَاللَّهُ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٥٣﴾ ثُمَّ أَنزَلَ عَلَيْكُم مِّن بَعْدِ الْغَمِّ أَمَنَةً نُّعَاسًا يَغْشَىٰ طَائِفَةً مِّنكُمْ لا وَطَائِفَةٌ قَدْ أَهَمَّتْهُمْ أَنفُسُهُمْ يَظُنُّونَ بِاللَّهِ غَيْرَ الْحَقِّ ظَنَّ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ ط يَقُولُونَ هَل لَّنَا مِنَ الْأَمْرِ مِن شَيْءٍ ط قُلْ إِنَّ الْأَمْرَ كُلَّهُ لِلَّهِ ط يُخْفُونَ فِي أَنفُسِهِم مَّا لَا يُبْدُونَ لَكَ ط يَقُولُونَ لَوْ كَانَ لَنَا مِنَ الْأَمْرِ شَيْءٌ مَّا قُتِلْنَا هَاهُنَا ط قُل لَّوْ كُنتُمْ فِي بُيُوتِكُمْ لَبَرَزَ الَّذِينَ كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقَتْلُ إِلَىٰ مَضَاجِعِهِمْ ج وَلِيَبْتَلِيَ اللَّهُ مَا فِي صُدُورِكُمْ وَلِيُمَحِّصَ مَا فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ ط وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ ﴿١٥٤﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَوَلَّوْا مِنكُمْ يَوْمَ الْتَقَى الْجَمْعَانِ لا إِنَّمَا اسْتَزَلَّهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ بِبَعْضِ مَا كَسَبُوا ج وَلَقَدْ عَفَا اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ ط إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ حَلِيمٌ ﴿١٥٥﴾

When you were going away, not even turning to look at anyone, and the Messenger was calling you from behind you. So, He awarded you sorrow for sorrow, so that you should not grieve (in future) on what you lost, nor on what you suffered. And Allah is All-Aware of what you do. [153]

Then, after the grief, He sent down tranquility upon you - a drowsiness overtaking a group of you. And another group was worrying about their own selves, cherishing thoughts about Allah which were not true - thoughts of ignorance. They were saying, "Is there anything in our hands?" Say, "The whole thing belongs to Allah." They conceal in their hearts what they do not disclose to you. They say, "If we had any say in the matter, we would have not been killed here." Say, "If you were in your homes, those destined to be killed

would have come out all the way to their (final) lying-places." And (all this was done) so that Allah may test your inner qualities and may purify what is in your hearts. And Allah is All-Aware of what lies in the hearts. [154]

Surely, those of you who turned back on the day when the troops faced each other, Satan had but made them slip for some of their deeds. And, of course, Allah has forgiven them. Certainly, Allah is Most-Forgiving, Forbearing. [155]

These verses form part of the several previous verses relating to the battle of Uḥud. The first verse here mentions the sorrows of the *ṣaḥābah*, the noble Companions of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم . The long succeeding verse describes the antidote. The third verse reiterates that the form of defeat they faced was no punishment. It was a test to separate the true and sincere Muslims from the hypocrites. Finally comes the repeated proclamation that the mistake made by the noble Companions has been forgiven.

Commentary :

In the first verse here, the Holy Qur'ān describes the exit of the Companions from the battlefield, their inability to come back even when called by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in person, the consequent grief that afflicted him because of their conduct and, later on, the incidence of the Companions feeling sorry for the sorrow they brought on their master. According to *ḥadīth* narrations, when Sayyidnā Ka'b ibn Mālik called out to them, Muslims heard his call and reassembled.

The author of Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī resolves this by saying that the first call came from the Messenger of Allah himself which could not be heard by the Companions and they kept going the way they were going. That was the time when Sayyidnā Ka'b ibn Mālik called. Everybody heard him and reassembled.

In Bayān al-Qur'ān, Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī has said that the real reason for this confusion was the news that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has fallen a martyr on the battlefield. When he called, there was obviously no refutation of the news with the call. Even if his voice can be

taken to have reached the retreating Companions, the possibility remains that it was not recognized. Finally, when Sayyidnā Ka'b ibn Mālik called out, his call included a refutation of this news mentioning the fact that the Messenger of Allah was alive. On hearing this, everybody took a sigh of relief and reassembled. As far as the displeasure of Allah and the sorrow of His Messenger are concerned, these can be explained by saying - if they had stayed unagitated and firm, they could have recognized the calling voice.

The Hardships at Uḥud: A Test, not Punishment :

The noble Companions as evident from: وَلِيَبْتَلِيَ اللّٰهُ مَا فِيْ صُدُوْرِكُمْ (154), were actually tested through their sufferings at the battle of Uḥud. This was no punishment. The objective was to make true and sincere Muslims distinct from the hypocrites. The mode was a 'test of inner qualities'.

The eloquent Qur'ānic expression اَثَابَكُمْ غَمًّا (He awarded you sorrow), which is suggestive of punishment, can be resolved by saying that the outward form was, no doubt, that of punishment but the real purpose was a sort of affectionate correction, something similar to a well-meaning reprimand from a father to his son or a teacher to his student. In common usage, this can be called a punishment of some sort, but this is, in all reality, a form of training and correction. This is very different from a pure legal punishment.

Why did Muslims suffer at Uḥud ?

The last part of verse 154 beginning with لِيَبْتَلِيَكُمْ (so that Allah may test) seems to indicate that the cause of hardships faced by Muslims was this wise divine arrangement. But, the statement: اِنَّمَا اسْتَزَلَّهُمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ بِبَعْضِ مَا كَسَبُوْا in the verse (155) following immediately seems to suggest that some past mistake of theirs is the cause of this Satanic effect.

The answer is that the particular past mistake was the obvious reason which gave Satan the incentive to make them slip once again, an effort in which the Satan incidentally succeeded. But there was much more to it; there were wise arrangements made by the Creator behind this slip and its outcome. These have been covered under the expression لِيَبْتَلِيَكُمْ :'so that Allah may test'. In Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī, a report from Zajjāj says that the Satan made them recall some of their sins in the presence of which they hesitated to appear before their Lord. So they moved away from *Jihād* hoping to fight later on following

personal correction and thus meet Allah as martyrs in *Jihād*.

One sin becomes the Cause of another:

From the last verse we discover that one sin drags in yet another sin, very much like one good deed which pulls in another good deed. In other words, all deeds - good and bad - have a sort of magnetic pull of their own. When a person accomplishes a good deed, experience shows that other good deeds become easy on him. His very heart starts desiring to do what is good and righteous. Similarly, a person who commits a sin finds that it has cleared the way for other sins. His very heart starts desiring to do what is sinful. Therefore, some elders say: ان من جزاء الحسنة الحسنة بعد ها، وان من جزاء السّيئة السيئه بعدها 'the ready reward of a good deed is another good deed which a person is enabled to accomplish and the ready punishment of an evil deed is another evil deed the way to which has been cleared by the first.'

In Masā'ilus-Sulūk, Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī has said: 'As explained in *ḥadīth,* sin makes the heart dark and when the heart goes dark, Satan prevails.'

The position of the Noble Companions in the sight of Allah Almighty :

As briefly stated earlier, the mistakes made by some noble Companions at the battle of Uḥud were intrinsically serious. The majority from among the fifty Companions who were commanded by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to guard a hill-top strategic point, with clear instruction not to leave their duty-post, no matter what happens at the battle front underneath, moved away from their assigned place. Granted that the reason for their abandonment of the post of duty was an erroneous independent judgement, as they thought their side had won the battle. The order to guard their post, according to their view, had been carried out, therefore, they thought, they could go down and join in with the rest of Muslims. But, in reality, their action was in clear contravention of definite instructions given by the Holy Prophet ﷺ . This mistake of theirs motivated them to leave the battlefield, no matter how this is explained, as reported earlier from Zajjāj. Moreover, this retreat from the battlefield took place while the Messenger of Allah was with them unmoved from the front line and calling them back from behind them. If this situation is viewed without reference to

personalities and circumstances that action would certainly be classed as a very serious breach of conduct in a military encounter. In fact, of the many blames imputed to various Companions under the unfortunate genre of *Mushājarāt* (the mutual quarrels and armed confrontations between the noble Companions which took place after the Holy Prophet ﷺ) this would be rated as the most serious.

But, something more worthy of consideration is what Allah Almighty has done in their case inspite of all their mistakes. Stated right here in the present verses, is how their grief was physically changed into tranquility through drowsiness. Then, they were told that their suffering was no punishment; it was a matter of test. Then came the clearly worded proclamation of forgiveness for them. It will be recalled that these have appeared earlier, yet they have been reaffirmed here. There is an element of wisdom behind this repetition. The first time it was said, the purpose was to comfort the noble Companions themselves. Incidentally, here is a refutation of what the hypocrites said to Muslims. They chided them for not acting on their advice, as a result of which they (the Muslims) suffered all those hardships.

In short, all these related verses make it very clear that the Companions of the Messenger of Allah hold a unique position of affection in His sight inspite of such serious mistakes made by them. Not only that they have been pardoned and forgiven but actually they have been blessed with much more. They have been made special recipients of Allah's grace and mercy. This is what comes from Allah Almighty Himself through the authentic words of the Holy Qur'ān. A similar case, as reported in *ḥadīth,* relating to Sayyidnā Ḥāṭib ibn Abī Bilta'ah was brought before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم . He had written a letter to the *mushrikīn* (disbelievers) of Makkah in which he had passed on information about Muslims living in Madīnah. When the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was told about it through a revelation, the letter was intercepted. The noble Companions were very angry with Sayyidnā Ḥāṭib ibn Abī Bilta'ah for what he had done. Sayyidnā 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with both of them, asked for permission to behead that 'hypocrite'. But, the Holy Prophet ﷺ knew that Ḥāṭib was no hypocrite; he was a true, sincere Muslim but he had made a

mistake inadvertently. So, he forgave him his mistake and declared that he was was one of the people (veterans) of Badr and, perhaps, Allah Almighty has enforced general pardon for all participants of Badr. (This narration appears in all authentic books of *aḥādīth*).

The Noble Companions: Lesson for Muslims :

It is based on this affirmation that the followers of Sunnah and Jamā'ah (*ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah*: Muslims who adhere to the practice of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and that of his blessed Companions رضى الله عنهم اجمعين) find the confirmation of their belief and practice. That is, even though the noble Companions are not above sin, for sins can be and have been committed by them, but despite this, it is not permissible for the Muslim community to ascribe any evil or defect to them in a derogatory manner. When Almighty and His Messenger ﷺ forgave such serious slips and errors coming from them and dealt with them generously and mercifully and gave them the great station of رضى الله عنهم ورضواعنه : 'may Allah be pleased with them and may they be pleased with Allah,' how can anyone claim to have the right to talk about anyone of them in a derogatory manner ?

This is why Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنه , on hearing somebody satirize Sayyidnā 'Uthmān al-Ghanī and some noble Companions by saying that they had run away from the battlefield, the reference being to this incidence at Uḥud, said, 'Nobody has the right to criticize that which Allah has expressly proclaimed to have been forgiven (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī).

Therefore, all doctrinal source-books of the *ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah* unanimously agree that it is *wājib* or necessary to honour the position of the noble Companions and to abstain from criticizing, mocking or speaking ill of them. It appears in al-'Aqā'id an-Nasfiyah:

ويكف عن ذكر الصحابه الا بخير

It is necessary that one should not talk about the Companions except in a good manner.

In Sharh al-Musāmarah, Ibn Humām has said:

اعتقاد اهل السنة تزكية جميع الصحابة والثناء عليهم

The belief of the followers of the Sunnah is that all Compan-

ions were purified and that they be remembered with praise.

This is what appears in Sharḥ Muwaqif:

يجب تعظيم الصحابة كلّهم والكف عن القدح فيهم

It is obligatory to honour the Companions, all of them; and avoiding satire or criticism against them is equally mandatory.

Abridged below is what Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Taymiyyah has said in al-'Aqidatul Wāsiṭiyah:

"It is a cardinal belief of *Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jama'ah* that Muslims must refrain from accusing or criticizing any Companion of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in the matter of disagreements or armed conflicts which may have come up among them. There is a reason for this. Most of the narrations imputing drawbacks in them which have creept into history are a pack of lies planted by enemies. They simply have no truth in them. Then, there are others in which the reality has been reversed by additions and alterations. Even if, there was some truth about something, that has to be taken as the independent judgement of the Companions in which they have no choice. Going a step further, we can assume a situation where they may not be helpless but be capable of using their choice, then, what works there is the Divine Law إِنَّ الْحَسَنَاتِ يُذْهِبْنَ السَّيِّئَاتِ that is, good deeds make up for the bad ones. And it is more than obvious that nobody can claim equality with them in the matter of good deeds. The good they did cannot be matched by the good done by anybody else. Similarly, nobody else can be more deserving of the mercy and forgiveness of Allah Almighty as compared to them. Therefore, nobody has the right to sit on judgement against them and call their deeds to account and in that process, criticise or speak ill of them."

Verses 156 - 158

يَاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَكُوْنُوْا كَالَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَقَالُوْا لِاِخْوَانِهِمْ اِذَا ضَرَبُوْا فِى الْاَرْضِ اَوْكَانُوْا غُزًّى لَّوْكَانُوْا عِنْدَنَا مَا مَاتُوْا

وَمَا قُتِلُوْا ۚ لِيَجْعَلَ اللّٰهُ ذٰلِكَ حَسْرَةً فِیْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ يُحْيٖ وَيُمِيْتُ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ بَصِيْرٌ ﴿۱۵۶﴾ وَلَئِنْ قُتِلْتُمْ فِیْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ اَوْ مُتُّمْ لَمَغْفِرَةٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَرَحْمَةٌ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّا يَجْمَعُوْنَ ﴿۱۵۷﴾ وَ لَئِنْ مُّتُّمْ اَوْ قُتِلْتُمْ لَاِ الَى اللّٰهِ تُحْشَرُوْنَ ﴿۱۵۸﴾

O those who believe, do not be like those who disbelieve and say about their brethren while they travel on the earth or are involved in fighting, "Had they been with us, they would have not died nor would they have been killed." The result is that Allah makes it a remorse resting in their hearts. And Allah gives life and brings death. And of what you do, Allah is watchful. [156]

And if you are killed in the way of Allah or die, the forgiveness from Allah, and mercy, is far better than what they accumulate. [157] **And if you die or get killed, it is towards Allah that you shall be gathered.** [158]

The saying of the hypocrites in verse 156 here is an extension of what was cited in verse 154 earlier : لَوْ كَانَ لَنَا مِنَ الْاَمْرِ شَیْءٌ مَّا قُتِلْنَا هٰهُنَا :"If we had any say in the matter, we would have not been killed here." Since there were chances that sincere Muslims may be affected by such doubt-creating devices used by hypocrites, Muslims were asked through these verses to remain unconcerned with such sayings and doings and adhere to the belief that the span of life and the time of death are ordained by Allah alone.

Verse 159

فَبِمَا رَحْمَةٍ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ لِنْتَ لَهُمْ ۚ وَلَوْ كُنْتَ فَظًّا غَلِيْظَ الْقَلْبِ لَانْفَضُّوْا مِنْ حَوْلِكَ ۖ فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِی الْاَمْرِ ۚ فَاِذَا عَزَمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللّٰهِ ۗ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَوَكِّلِيْنَ ﴿۱۵۹﴾

So, it is through mercy from Allah that you are gentle to them. Had you been rough and hard-hearted, they would have dispersed from around you. So, pardon them and seek Forgiveness for them. And consult them

in the matter, and once you have taken a decision, place your trust in Allah. Surely, Allah loves those who place their trust in Him. [159]

Even though, the mistake made by Muslims and the abandonment of the battle front by them had caused grief to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, he did not reproach them for this because of his high morals and his natural way of forgiving and forgetting. He did not even deal with them sternly as may have been in order. But, Allah Almighty willed to see that the Companions of His Messenger are comforted and the sense of shock and shame they had for their mistake is washed away. So, in this verse, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is being asked to deal with them more gently and affectionately and consult with them in matters of concern.

Commentary:

The traits of a patron

The Companions of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم loved him far beyond the concerns of their own lives and belongings. When they made a mistake acting against his express instructions, there were two dangers. Firstly, it could further increase their sense of shock and affect their normal emotional-rational response. They could even lose hope of mercy, especially when they realized what mistake they had made and how disobedient they had been to the command of their leader. This danger was already eliminated in the previous verse where 'We awarded you sorrow for sorrow' means that the return of this mistake has already been given right here in this mortal world and the account in the Hereafter lies clean.

Secondly, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was hurt as a result of this mistake, physically. The spiritual discomfort was already there. It was likely that these two factors may contribute to making the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم unhappy with his Companions which, in turn, may become a hinderance in his mission to teach and train them. In order to counter this likelihood, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was asked to forgo their mistake, forgive their shortcoming from the depth of his heart and deal with them gently and affectionately in the future as well.

The subject has been taken up with unusual delicacy of style in the

Holy Qur'ān which, as a corollary, covers some important points of guidance.

1. The diction used to convey the related command to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is eloquently suggestive of his personal praise, as well as that of his unique human majesty, that is, he has these attributes in him already built in.

2. The addition of فَبِمَا رَحْمَةٍ (So, it was through mercy from Allah) before the statement is there to affirm that the presence of such attributes of perfection in his person is but through Divine mercy. This is no personal perfection in its own right. Then, by placing the word, '*raḥmah*' (mercy) in an indefinite form, hint has been made towards the great and extensive spread of Allah's mercy which, in turn, makes it very obvious that this mercy is not restricted to the noble Companions only, but extends in full to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم himself for Allah has made him identified with such perfect attributes.

3. The third point made here establishes that the presence of the qualities of gentle manners, good morals, forgiveness and generosity in him serve a purpose. Had these been not there in him, the mission of educating human beings with which he is charged would have never been accomplished as desired. Rather than seek to correct and raise the level of their morals in his company, people would have run away from him.

The Etiquette of *Da'wah*:

By combining elements cited above, there emerges a set of distinct qualities necessary for preaching, no matter what form it takes. Anyone who embarks on the mission of inviting people to Allah, explaining His guidance and calling people towards the right conduct in their best interest, must first inculcate these qualities in him. The reason is obvious. When a possible 'rough' or 'hard-hearted' approach, even if it happens to come from the very dear Messenger of Allah Almighty, has not been considered fit, who else can dare to gather people created by Allah around him with hostility and negative morals and still hope to seek a change in their behaviour.

In this verse, Allah Almighty has said: 'Had you been rough and hard-hearted, they would have dispersed from around you.' This indi-

cates that harshness, in conduct or language, is sheer poison for a *da'wah* worker or a leader conveying Allah's message to people. This is a sure way to undo what one intends to achieve.

Then, the verse says: فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ 'So, pardon them'. This indicates that a *da'wah* worker or reformer of people should never punish them for their mistakes. Instead, he should forgive and forgo. It is important that he does not get excited or angry when his listeners speak ill of him. The truth is that he should rise higher and treat his tormentors with compassion and leniency.

Soon, after that, the verse says: وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ 'And seek forgiveness for them'. This seeking of forgiveness for them from Allah Almighty points out to an unusual rule of behaviour. Not only that he should remain patient in what is painful, the Messenger is being asked not to forget seeking their good with utmost sincerity. The best that can be wished for them is their salvation in the life-to-come, the good that waits for them in *Ākhirah*. So, the Messenger is being asked to pray for their forgiveness in order that Allah spares them from His punishment.

Finally, it has been said: وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِى الْاَمْرِ :'And consult them in the matter' which means that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is to seek their advice in matters of concern so that they are fully satisfied and emotionally at peace, as the Messenger of Allah, by following this instruction, will be giving an external form to his intention of doing what is good for them. Thus, the act of his asking them to sit in consultations with him will become an act of mollifying grace.

After having asked the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to consult with his Companions, the verse concludes with the instruction on final decision-making. As regards consultation, the Holy Qur'ān has given clear injunctions at two places. The first one appears right here in the verse under commentation while the second one appears in a verse of Sūrah al-Shūrā (42:38) where one of the qualities of true Muslims has been identified as وَاَمْرُهُمْ شُوْرٰى بَيْنَهُمْ (Every matter of theirs is settled by mutual consultation). There are places where the instruction to consult appears secondarily, for instance, under injunctions relating to suckling in Sūrah al-Baqarah (2:233) where it is said: عَنْ تَرَاضٍ مِّنْهُمَا وَتَشَاوُرٍ (Now, if they want to wean, by mutual consent, and consultation, there is no sin on them). The matter of consultation involves some important

problems and rulings, therefore, it needs to be explained in some detail which follows.

1. The Meaning of اَمْر : Matter and شُوْرٰی : Consultation.

The word *amr* is applied for several shades of meaning in the Arabic language. In common usage, it refers to any saying or doing which is of great importance. It is also used to mean an injunction, order, command, rule or authority, the last one being what is meant in the Qur'ānic expression اُولِی الْاَمْرِ (*uli l'amr*). Then, the word is also applied to mean a particular attribute of Allah Almighty which finds mention in several verses of the Holy Qur'ān, such as: اَلَا لَهُ الْخَلْقُ وَالْاَمْرُ (Beware, for Him alone is the creation and the command - 7:54); اِلَيْهِ يُرْجَعُ الْاَمْرُ كُلُّهٗ (To Him the whole matter shall be returned - 11:123), اِنَّ الْاَمْرَ كُلَّهٗ لِلّٰهِ (The whole thing belongs to Allah - 3:154); اَمْرُهٗٓ اِلَى اللّٰهِ (His matter is upto Allah - 2:275) and according to authentic scholars, the use of the word, *amr,* in قُلِ الرُّوْحُ مِنْ اَمْرِ رَبِّيْ (Say: 'The spirit is by a command of my Lord') (17:85) carries the same meaning as identified in the verses appearing immediately above.

As far as the meaning of the word, *amr,* in the Qur'ānic verses وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِي الْاَمْرِ (And consult them in the matter -3:159) and وَاَمْرُهُمْ شُوْرٰى بَيْنَهُمْ (And a matter of theirs is (settled) by a consultation between themselves -42:38) is concerned, it can be said that there is the possibility to assign both the first as well as the second. If it is said that the word has been used here in the first sense while the second meaning is inclusive therein, that would not be something far-fetched since affairs relating to command and authority are all very important. Therefore, the word, *amr* as used in the verses quoted immediately above means every matter or affair which is particularly important irrespective of whether it belongs to the area of authority or mutual dealings.

The Arabic words, *shūrā* (counsel), *mashwarah* (consultation) and *Mushāwarat* (mutual consultation) mean the soliciting of advice and counsel in something that needs deliberation. Therefore, the expression وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِي الْاَمْرِ in the present verse means that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been commanded here to consult with or seek the advice of his noble Companions in matters that need deliberation, which include those of authority and government.

Similarly, the verse from Sūrah al-Shūrā cited above - وَأَمْرُهُمْ شُوْرٰى بَيْنَهُمْ - means that in every important matter (which) needs deliberation, whether it belongs to the field of authority and government or to something important other than these, the customary practice of true Muslims is that they work through mutual consultation.

2. The Status of Consultation in Islamic Law

From the statements of the Holy Qur'ān cited above and from related *aḥādīth* of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , it becomes clear that mutual consultation in a matter likely to have more than one opinion, whether it be related to the concerns of authority or to an issue other than that, is a *sunnah* of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the noble Companions رضى الله عنهم and is a source of blessings in the mortal world and in the eternal life of the Hereafter. This view has the support of the Holy Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth. As far as matters which relate to people, such as the affairs of authority and government, are concerned seeking consultation in them is obligatory. (Ibn Kathīr)

In his Shu'bul-'Īmān, al-Baihaqi has reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said: 'A person who intends to do something, then goes in consultation and comes up with a decision to do or not to do that, he gets from Allah Almighty guidance towards an option which is correct and beneficial.'

It appears in *aḥādīth*: 'When your rulers are from the best among you and your rich people are generous and your affairs are decided through mutual consultation, then, to live on the surface of the earth is better for you. And should your rulers be the worst among you and your rich people be close-fisted and your affairs be entrusted to women, then, to be buried under the earth shall be better than your continuing to live.'

It means that, when the worship of desires overpowers you, so much so that you, ignoring all concerns of the good and the bad, the harmful and the beneficial, simply to seek the goodwill of a woman, entrust your affairs in her hands, then, for you, death is better than living through those times. Otherwise, seeking the opinion of a woman as well while making consultations is no taboo, and certainly not prohibited. This is proved by the consistent practice of the Holy

Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his blessed Companions. In the verse from Sūrah al-Baqarah (2:233) cited a little earlier, the Holy Qur'ān has said: 'Now, if they want to wean, by mutual consent, and consultation, there is no sin on them.' Since this matter here concerns the woman, therefore, consultation with the woman has been specially made binding on the man.

In a *ḥadīth*, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been reported to have said: المستشار مؤتمن اذا استشير فليشره بماهو صانع لنفسه :'The person whose counsel is sought is a trustee. When he counsels, then, he must counsel with what he would propose to his ownself (to do otherwise is a breach of trust)'. This *ḥadīth* has been reported with good authority from Sayyidnā 'Alī by al-Ṭabarānī in al-Mu'jam al-Awsaṭ (see al-Maẓharī).

At this point, it is necessary to bear in mind that consultation is an act of Sunnah only in situations where some clear and categorical injunction from the Qur'ān or *Ḥadīth* does not exist. Otherwise, in the presence of a clear and categorical injunction of the Sharī'ah, no consultation with anybody is needed. This is not permissible either. For example, if somebody went about consulting in - 'should I make my *ṣalāh* or should I not?' 'Should I pay my *zakāh* or should I not?' or 'Should I perform my Ḥajj or should I not?' - then, this would be absurd. These are not things you consult about. They are absolutely mandatory under the Sharī'ah of Islam. However, the option of making consultation about how to go for Ḥajj is open and one can seek advice on questions like - should he go this year, or next; should he go by sea, or by air; should he go by land, or by some other method.

The same holds true about *zakāh*. One can consult about where and on whom it has to be spent, for the Sharī'ah has left these on the choice of the payer.

In a *ḥadīth*, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been reported to have explained this himself. Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنه says that he asked the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم : 'If, after you, we are confronted by a situation the injunction for which has not been explicitly revealed in the Qur'ān, and about which we have heard nothing from you as well, what are we supposed to do?' The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'For a matter like this, get together from among you pious men who are consistently devoted to the worship of their Lord and who have deep

and extensive understanding of the Faith (*fuqahā'*) and decide the matter following their mutual counsel. Do not decide on the basis of someone's solitary opinion.'

The first, out of the two things that we learn from this *ḥadīth* is that consultation is not restricted to worldly affairs. Instead, the fact is that mutual consultation in situations where clear *nuṣūṣ* (plural of *naṣṣ* meaning textual authority) from the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth in matters governed by the injunctions of Sharī'ah do not exist is an act of Sunnah. We can say that mutual consultation will be an act of Sunnah if made in situations where textual authority from the Qur'ān and Sunnah is not available. The second rule we learn is that advice should be taken from people who are known for their understanding of the Faith and devotion to their obligations to Allah (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī) Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, to whom the deduction given above is credited, has reported another *ḥadīth* from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضی اللہ عنہ which says: استرشدوا العاقل ولا تعصوه فتندموا (Seek counsel from the wise person and do not act against it, otherwise you will regret.).

By putting the above two *aḥādīth* together, we learn that two qualities are necessary for the members of the consultative council. Firstly, they should be wise, perceptive and advice-worthy, and secondly, they should be pious and devoted to *'ibādah*. In other words, they should be deserving of giving advice and should be God-fearing in their conduct. If the matter to be discussed involves problems relating to Islamic Law, it is incumbent that they be *faqīh* (juriconsult: expert in Islamic Law and Jurisprudence) as well.

Consultation of the Holy Prophet ﷺ with his Companions

The verse under discussion here orders the Holy Prophet ﷺ to consult his Companions رضی اللہ عنہم. This raises a certain difficulty here. Is'nt it that he is the Messenger of Allah and the blessed recipient of revelation? Why, then, should he need to consult anyone? Since, everything can come to his knowledge through the medium of revelation from Allah Almighty, some scholars interpret this command to consult by saying that the Messenger of Allah was neither in need to be counselled, nor anything he did depended on such counsel. The command to consult given to him is simply to honour the blessed Companions and mollify their broken hearts. But, Imām Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ does not

agree with this view. According to him this is not correct, for being involved in consultation - while knowing that one's counsel will not be acted upon, nor would it affect any proceedings of the agenda - will make the whole thing ineffectual. If so, no heart will be mollified and no honour will be sustained. Instead, the truth of the matter is that a course of action to be taken by the Messenger of Allah is identified through revelation directly by Allah Almighty. This holds good in all general matters. But, there are certain matters which, under the dictates of the wisdom and mercy of Allah Almighty, are left to the opinion and discretion of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم . It is in such matters alone where consultation is needed, and these are the kind of matters in which he has been commanded to seek consultation. The history of the consultative sittings of the Messenger of Allah confirms this view.

When the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم consulted with the Companions about the battle of Badr, they said that should he ask them to jump into a river, they would do just that; and if he commanded them to march to a far out place such as Bark al-Ghamad, they will be with him; and they would never act like the companions of Mūsā عليه السلام who said: 'Go, you and your Lord, and fight the disbelievers' - 5:24; on the contrary, we shall fondly submit: 'You lead the way, we shall fight the enemy with you, in front of you and in the rear and the right and the left.'

Similarly, he consulted them about the battle of Uḥud asking them if they should defend Madīnah by staying inside the city limits or should they go out of the city limits and confront the enemy in the open. The general opinion of the Companions was that they should do the latter and this was what he accepted to do. In the battle of Khandaq, the question of accepting peace under the terms of a particular treaty came up for discussion. Sayyidnā Sa'd ibn Mu'ādh and Sa'd ibn 'Ubādah رضى الله عنهم opposed the proposed treaty on the grounds that it was inappropriate. It was the opinion of these two Companions that he finally accepted. When he went into consultations on a matter pertaining to Hudaybiyyah, the opinion of Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه was the basis of his final decision. The Companions were also consulted following the incident of *Ifk* (false imputation against Sayy-

idah 'Ā'ishah (رضی اللہ عنہا) but this and all other matters pointed out were those in which no particular position to be taken by the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم was determined through revelation.

To sum up, being a prophet, a messenger and a recepient of revelation is not a bar against consultation. Moreover, in the case of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم it cannot be said that his seeking of counsel from the Companions was ever designed to please them artificially, or that it was virtually ineffectual in the conduct of affairs. On the contrary, the truth is that there were many occasions when he accepted the opinion of those present during consultation even if it happened to be against his own. In fact, in some situations where a particular line of action had not been determined for the Holy Prophet ﷺ through revelation, and in its absence he had worked through consultation, there is great divine wisdom. The objective is that the practice of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم comes to be established for all future generations of Muslims. Thus, the seeking of consultation as a Sunnah shall become binding on the whole *ummah* of the Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم Imagine when he himself has not been left free of the need of consultation who else can claim to be free of such need? For this reason, the method of mutual consultation always continued to be operative during the blessed times of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his noble Companions رضی اللہ عنہم particularly in matters where there was no clear injunction in the Qur'ān and Sunnah. When the Holy Prophet ﷺ passed away from this mortal world, the noble Companions continued following his practice. Still later, mutual consultation was resorted to as the modality to deduce rulings of Islamic Law in matters where clear injunction was not found in the Qur'ān and Sunnah. This was actually the method taught by the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم in answer to a question put by Sayyidnā 'Alī رضی اللہ عنہ.

4. The Status of Consultation in an Islamic State:

As stated earlier, the Holy Qur'ān has given clear instructions about *mashwarah* or consultation at two places. One appears right here in the verse under study; the other one comes up in verse 42:38 of Sūrah al-Shūrā where one of the many qualities of true Muslims has been mentioned as وَأَمْرُهُمْ شُورَىٰ بَيْنَهُمْ which means that their affairs are settled by mutual consultation. At both these places the word, *amr*

(matter) has been mentioned along with *mashwarah* (consultation). Discussed in detail earlier, the word, *amr,* signifies any important saying or doing, while at the same time, it is applied to injunction, rule or authority or government. No matter which of the two meanings is taken, consultation in the affairs of the government emerges as invariably necessary, based on these verses. If one elects to take this to mean the affairs of the government, then, the necessity is all the more obvious. In case, the word is taken in its general sense, the affairs of a government being important and far-reaching in effect, would still be considered as affairs in which consultation will be inevitable. Therefore, it is one of the duties of the Muslim *Amīr,* the chief executive of the community, that he should seek the counsel of those responsible for the affairs of the government in matters that are important. The verses of the Qur'ān quoted above and the consistent practice of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, and of the rightly-guided Caliphs is a clear proof of this requirement.

These two verses not only highlight the need for consultation very clearly, they also point out to some basic principles of Islam's system of government, and its constitution. The Islamic government is a government by consultation in which the *amīr* or chief executive is chosen by consultation and definitely not as a matter of family inheritance. It is a *barakah* of Islamic teachings that this principle is recognized all over the world, in one or the other form, so much so that hereditary monarchies too are moving towards this arrangement, willingly or unwillingly.

But, let us go back 1400 years in history when the super-powers were Cyrus and Ceaser. The common factor between them was that they both headed hereditary empires and the authority of government was vested in their own persons. Thus, one man ruled millions, not on the basis of ability or capacity, but on the strength of the cruel principle of hereditary possession of sovereignty. This form of government, an insult to all human beings, was the way all over the world except Greece where the early teachings of a democratic order of life had yet to translate into principles that would go on to establish a stable government. Instead of that, these ideas relegated into a branch of Aristotelian philosophy. As opposed to this, Islam demolished the

unnatural principle of government through heredity and gave the choice of appointing and dismissing the chief executive to the people - a power they could use through their representatives shouldering the responsibilities of the affairs of the state. The world, once stuck in the quagmire of traditional monarchy, came to know bout this natural and just system through Islamic teachings and this happens to be the spirit of a system of government we now know as democracy.

But, modern democracies, since they appeared as a reaction to cruel monarchies, came out with an equal lack of moderation. They went on to give the masses the sense of being the absolute, the ultimate entity, an unbridled sovereign of the system of government and the law of state, to the extent that their minds and hearts became alienated from the very concept of God, the Creator of the earth and the heavens and of all human beings, not to say much about the concept of His real Sovereignty and Rule, which comes as a result of that cardinal belief. Now the situation has reached a stage where their 'democracy' has started taking the restrictions imposed by Allah Almighty on public choice - which in itself was conferred on human beings by Him - as something of a burden, contrary to justice and equity (of their brand).

The way Islamic Law liberated the whole world from Cyruses, Ceasers and other despotic monarchies, it has also shown the way of God to western democracies trying to hide from Him behind secular curtains. Islam's way is no more a secret. Its teachings clearly say that the rulers and the ruled, the governments and their peoples are all subject to the Law given by Allah Almighty. The masses, their representative assemblies, law-making, appointment and removal of office-holders must operate within the parametres set by Allah Almighty. It is their duty to see that full consideration is given to ability and merit, in the choice of the chief executive, holders of offices and responsible positions. In addition to that, their honesty and trustworthiness should be weighed and tested. When it comes to selecting the chief executive of their government, they must select the one who is the best of all in knowledge, fear of Allah, honesty, trustworthiness, ability and political experience. Even this chief executive, elected though he may be, is not totally free, unchecked and despotic. He has to seek counsel

from those who are capable of giving such counsel. The Holy Qur'ān bears witness to this and so does the constant practice of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and of the great rightly-guided Caliphs, may Allah be pleased with them all. Who else can claim to be more just than them?

Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه has said:

لَا خِلَافَةَ اِلَّا عَنْ مَشُوْرَةٍ

There is no *Khilāfah* (Caliphate) unless it be with consultation. (Kanzul-'ummāl vide Ibn Abī Shaybah)

Government by consultation is a basic Islamic requirement so much so that a chief executive or head of the state, if he ever unfetters himself from the need for consultation or takes counsel from those who are not fit to give counsel from the point of view of the Sharī'ah of Islam, has to be removed of necessity.

ذكر ابن عطية انّ الشورى من قواعد الشريعة وعزائم الاحكام ومن لايستشير اهل العلم والدّين فعزله واجب، هذا مالا خلاف له (البحر المحيط لابى حيان)

It appears in al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ of Abī Hayyān: Ibn 'Atiyyah رحمه الله said that Consultation is one of the basic principles of Islamic Law and Faith. He who does not consult with those who know must be removed as a matter of obligation. This is what nobody differs about.

By making consultation mandatory, the blessings that would benefit the Islamic state and its citizens could be measured by what the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said about consultation. Ibn 'Adī and al-Baihaqī have reported from Sayyidnā ibn 'Abbās رضى الله تعالى عنه that when this verse was revealed, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: 'Allah and His Messenger do not need this consultation, but Allah Almighty has certainly made it a source of mercy for my community' (Bayān al-Qur'ān).

The purport is, if Allah Almighty had so willed, He would have conveyed everything to His Messenger through revelation. It was within His power not to leave any need for consultation in anything. But, it was in the best interest of the Muslim community that Allah Almighty helped establish the practice of consultation through His

Messenger. This is why many matters were left without any mention and about which no particular revelation was sent down. About these, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was instructed to seek consultation.

5. Consultation: Decision-Making after a difference of opinion:

What happens when opinions differ on a certain matter? Would it be decided on the contemporary parliamentary principle? Would the chief executive be compelled to enforce the decision of the majority? Or, would he have the right to take a course of action on the basis of powerful arguments and obvious welfare of the state, coming from any side, no matter whether in a majority or a minority? From the Holy Qur'ān and Ḥadīth and from the constant practice of the noble Prophet ﷺ and his Companions, it cannot be proved that the *amīr* of Muslims, their head of the state is helplessly bound by the decision of the majority. On the contrary, some hints from the Qur'ān and clarifications from the Ḥadīth and the practice of the Companions make it very evident that the *Amīr* can, in the event of a difference of opinion, use his discretion and go by any of the several courses of action, irrespective of the fact that it comes from the majority or the minority. There is no doubt that the *Amīr* will do his best to look into other opinions as well to satisfy himself fully, but should the majority come to agree on one opinion, this could, at times, become a source of satisfaction to him.

A close look at this verse would show that the Holy Prophet ﷺ, after he has been commanded to seek counsel, is being told: فَإِذَا عَزَمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللّٰهِ : '...and once you have taken a decision, place your trust in Allah'. Here, the word, *'azm* in *"azamta'* meaning a firm decision, one way or the other, has been ascribed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The text does not say, *'azamtum*, a second person plural, which would have suggested the participation of the Companions in the final making and enforcing of the decision. This hint proves that, once the process of consultation has been completed, the decision and its enforcement is the valid prerogative of the chief executive. There were times when Sayyidnā 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb would give his decision based on the opinion of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās, if his opinion was weightier argument-wise, something done even when present there would be Companions more senior than Sayyidnā ibn 'Abbās in age, learning

and seniority. There were many occasions when the Holy Prophet ﷺ has preferred the opinions of the revered *Shaykhayn* Abu-Bakr and 'Umar رضی الله عنهما against the majority of other Companions to the limit that people thought this verse was revealed for consultation with these two only. Ḥākim reports from Sayyidnā ibn 'Abbās in his Mustadrak:

عن ابن عباس فی قوله تعالی (وشاورهم فی الامر) قال ابوبکر و عمر (رضی الله عنهما) (ابن کثیر)

Ibn 'Abbās says, that the pronoun in '*shāwirhum*' (consult them) refers to Abū Bakr and 'Umar رضی الله عنهما . (Ibn Kathīr)

The narration of Kalbi is clearer than this:

عن ابن عباس قال نزلت فی ابی بکر و عمر وکانا حواریي رسول الله ﷺ و وزیریه وابوی المسلمین

Ibn 'Abbās says that this verse has been revealed for consulting with Abū Bakr and 'Umar. These two were special Companions of the Messenger of Allah and his Ministers and the patrons of Muslims. (Ibn Kathīr)

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah's blessings and peace be upon him, had once addressed Sayyidnā Abū Bakr and 'Umar رضی الله عنهما in the following words:

لواجتمعتما فی مشورة ما خلفتکما ط

When you agree on an opinion, I do not decide against you. (Ibn Kathīr with reference to the Musnad of Aḥmad)

A doubt and its answer:

It is not likely that someone objects to this procedure of decision-making saying that all this is against democracy, a model of one-man rule and that this system might hurt the rights of the masses.

The answer is that the Islamic system of government has already taken care of this problem, for it has not given the masses the absolute right to make anyone they wish the *amīr* of an Islamic state. On the contrary, the mandate given to them requires that they must select a person they think is the best of all in knowledge, conduct, functional ability, Godliness and honesty, and then elect him to be the *amīr*. Now a person who has been elected in view of such elegant qualities and attributes should certainly not be subjected to restrictions usually

placed on the dishonest, the sinful and the debauch. Doing this would be against reason and justice, an act of discouragement to the genuine servant of people and a hinderance in the promotion of community-oriented action.

6. Do what you can, then place your trust in Allah:

At this point, specially at the conclusion of the verse, it is very important to bear in mind that this instruction has been given after having prescribed consultation in all important affairs including those of government. The crucial guideline given here is: Even after having made all preparations, when you finally decide to go ahead and do what has to be done, then that is the time when you do not simply (place your) trust in your reason, opinion, plans or preparedness but, instead of that, you should place your trust in Allah alone, for all these considered plans are in the direct control of the supreme Planner of all affairs and matters. With this in view, the less is said about human beings and their plans is better. Man himself is witness to the futility of his plans in the thousands of events in his life-time.

The statement, 'And once you have taken a decision, place your trust in Allah' also clarifies that placing one's trust in Allah does not mean that the efforts to provide means and make plans should be abandoned. The fact is that placing one's trust in Allah while leaving off means near at hand is contrary to the blessed practice of prophets, and against the teachings of the Holy Qur'ān. However, if one sits idle dreaming about distant means and irrelevant concerns, or if one relies solely on means and plans as effective agents and ignores the Prime Causer of means and the Planner-par-Excellence of all affairs and plans, then this would certainly be against *tawakkul*, the placing of trust in Allah.

Verses 160 - 171

إِن يَنصُرْكُمُ اللَّهُ فَلَا غَالِبَ لَكُمْ ۖ وَإِن يَخْذُلْكُمْ فَمَن ذَا الَّذِي
يَنصُرُكُم مِّن بَعْدِهِ ۗ وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٦٠﴾ وَمَا
كَانَ لِنَبِيٍّ أَن يَغُلَّ ۚ وَمَن يَغْلُلْ يَأْتِ بِمَا غَلَّ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ۚ ثُمَّ
تُوَفَّىٰ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ ﴿١٦١﴾ أَفَمَنِ

اتَّبَعَ رِضْوَانَ اللّٰهِ كَمَنْۢ بَآءَ بِسَخَطٍ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَمَاْوٰىهُ جَهَنَّمُ ؕ
وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيْرُ ﴿١٦٢﴾ هُمْ دَرَجٰتٌ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ بَصِيْرٌۢ بِمَا
يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١٦٣﴾ لَقَدْ مَنَّ اللّٰهُ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ اِذْ بَعَثَ فِيْهِمْ
رَسُوْلًا مِّنْ اَنْفُسِهِمْ يَتْلُوْا عَلَيْهِمْ اٰيٰتِهٖ وَيُزَكِّيْهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ
الْكِتٰبَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ ۚ وَاِنْ كَانُوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ لَفِيْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿١٦٤﴾
اَوَلَمَّاۤ اَصَابَتْكُمْ مُّصِيْبَةٌ قَدْ اَصَبْتُمْ مِّثْلَيْهَا ۙ قُلْتُمْ اَنّٰى هٰذَا ؕ
قُلْ هُوَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اَنْفُسِكُمْ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ
﴿١٦٥﴾ وَمَاۤ اَصَابَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْتَقَى الْجَمْعٰنِ فَبِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ وَلِيَعْلَمَ
الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿١٦٦﴾ وَلِيَعْلَمَ الَّذِيْنَ نَافَقُوْا ۚ وَقِيْلَ لَهُمْ تَعَالَوْا
قَاتِلُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ اَوِ ادْفَعُوْا ؕ قَالُوْا لَوْ نَعْلَمُ قِتَالًا
لَّاتَّبَعْنٰكُمْ ؕ هُمْ لِلْكُفْرِ يَوْمَئِذٍ اَقْرَبُ مِنْهُمْ لِلْاِيْمَانِ ۚ يَقُوْلُوْنَ
بِاَفْوَاهِهِمْ مَّا لَيْسَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَكْتُمُوْنَ
﴿١٦٧﴾ اَلَّذِيْنَ قَالُوْا لِاِخْوَانِهِمْ وَقَعَدُوْا لَوْ اَطَاعُوْنَا مَا قُتِلُوْا ؕ
قُلْ فَادْرَءُوْا عَنْ اَنْفُسِكُمُ الْمَوْتَ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿١٦٨﴾
وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِيْنَ قُتِلُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ اَمْوَاتًا ؕ بَلْ اَحْيَآءٌ
عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ يُرْزَقُوْنَ ﴿١٦٩﴾ فَرِحِيْنَ بِمَاۤ اٰتٰىهُمُ اللّٰهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ ۙ
وَيَسْتَبْشِرُوْنَ بِالَّذِيْنَ لَمْ يَلْحَقُوْا بِهِمْ مِّنْ خَلْفِهِمْ ۙ اَلَّا خَوْفٌ
عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُوْنَ ﴿١٧٠﴾ يَسْتَبْشِرُوْنَ بِنِعْمَةٍ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ
وَفَضْلٍ ۙ وَّاَنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُضِيْعُ اَجْرَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿١٧١﴾

If Allah helps you, there is none to overcome you. And if He abandons you, then, who is there who could help you after that? And in Allah the believers should place their trust. [160]

And it is not (conceivable) for a prophet to misappro-

priate the spoils. And whoever misappropriates, shall bring forth, on Doomsday, what he misappropriated. Then, everybody shall be paid, in full, what he has earned. And they shall not be wronged. [161]

How then, could one who submits to the pleasure of Allah be equal to him who returns with displeasure from Allah? And his ultimate place is the Fire. And what an evil end it is. [162]

They are of various ranks with Allah. And Allah is watchful of what they do. [163]

And Allah has surely conferred favour on the believers when He raised in their midst a messenger from among themselves who recites to them His verses and makes them pure and teaches them the Book and the Wisdom, while earlier, they were in open error. [164]

And how is it that, when you suffered a hardship the twice of which you had inflicted upon them, you say, "Where did this come from?" Say, "This is from your ownselves. Allah is surely Powerful over everything."[165]

And whatever you suffered on the day when the two troops faced each other was with the will of Allah and in order to know the believers [166] **and in order to know those who are hypocrites. And it was said to them, 'Come on, fight in the way of Allah, or defend." They said, "Had we known it to be a fight we would have certainly followed you." That day, they were nearer to disbelief than they were to Belief. They utter from their mouths what is not in their hearts. And Allah is the most-knowing of what they conceal.** [167]

Those who said about their brethren, while themselves sitting, "Had they obeyed us, they would have not been killed." Say, "Then repel death from yourselves if you are true." [168]

And never take those killed in the way of Allah as dead. Rather, they are alive, with their Lord, well-provided, [169] **happy with what Allah has given them of His grace; and they feel pleased with the good news, about those who, after them, could not join them, that there shall be no fear for them nor shall they grieve.** [170]

They feel pleased with blessing from Allah, and grace, and with the fact that Allah would not let the reward of the believers be lost. [171]

In the first verse (160) here, the recurring sense of grief that gripped the noble Companions after what happened at the battle of Uhud is being removed through elegant counsel.

Verses 161-164 declare that the station of Allah's messenger is free of failings, that he exhibits the highest standard of trustworthiness, and that the very presence of his on the face of the earth is a great blessing and a favour shown to the people of the world.

Verses 165-167 explain the reason why Muslims faced hardships at Uhud, while refuting the view of the hypocrites alongwith it in verse 168.

Towards the end, in verses 169-171, it has been said that those who lay down their lives in the way of Allah achieve the ultimate success, real, permanent and full. Details follow.

Commentary:

The verse مَا كَانَ لِنَبِيٍّ اَنْ يَّغُلَّ translated as, 'And it is not (conceivable) for a prophet to misappropriate the spoils - 161', has a particular background of its revelation. As a corollary, the problem of '*Ghulūl*', that is, misappropriation in the spoils, comes into focus.

Misappropriation in the spoils: A sin which cannot be ascribed to any prophet by any stretch of imagination:

The background, as narrated by al-Tirmidhī, is that a sheet was found missing from the spoils collected in the battle of Badr. Some people said that the sheet may have been, perhaps, taken by the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم . If those who said that were hypocrites, the source speaks for itself. May be, this came from a less-initiated Muslim thinking that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم had the right to do that. Thereupon, this verse was revealed which said that *ghulūl* is a great sin to be punished severely on Doomsday and that the very thought of linking this sin to a prophet is an ugly audacity, for prophets are free of all sins (معصوم : *ma'ṣūm*).

The word, *ghulūl* is also used in the absolute sense for *khiyānah*, a breach of trust, (misappropriation, pilferage and stealing). This is also

applied particularly to misappropriation in the spoils as the crime of stealing from the spoils is far more serious as compared to common thefts and filchings since spoils belong to the whole Muslim army as a matter of right. So, whoever steals from it steals from hundreds and thousands of people. Even if there comes the thought of making amends at some later stage, it would be very difficult to give back to everyone what was due to be given, or seek their forgiveness for the injustice done. This is contrary to other types of thefts where the owner of the stolen property is known. In this case, there is the chance that one may repent, if Allah gives the ability to do so, and that which was stolen could be returned back to the owner, or one could, at the least, exonerate himself from the blame by seeking forgiveness from him. This is illustrated by what happened at one of the battles fought by Muslims. Someone who had secretly withheld a portion of wool from the spoils thought about it after the distribution of the spoils was over. He brought it before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم hoping to return it. But he, inspite of being 'mercy for the worlds' and far more generous to his community than fathers and mothers could ever dream to be for their children, he returned it back to him saying: How can I distribute it over the whole army now? Now it is you who would present yourself with it on the Day of Doom.

Therefore, the punishment for *ghulūl* or misappropriation is more severe as compared to common thefts. What else could be more severe for the misappropriator when he, before the eyes of the whole creation on the plains of resurrection and retribution, will find himself disgraced with what he had stolen all stacked on his neck? A narration from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah appearing in Al-Bukhārī and Muslim reports that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'Watch out, lest I see one of you with a camel loaded round his neck (and the announcement being made that this person had stolen a camel from the spoils). If this person asks me to intercede on his behalf, I shall tell him frankly that I had conveyed what Allah had commanded, now I cannot do anything about it.'

May Allah protect us from this disgrace of the Day we rise again which, according to some narrations, will be so hard on those who face it that they would wish to be sent to the fires of *Jahannam* in lieu of this terrible disgrace.

Misappropriation in *Waqf* properties and government Treasuries comes under *Ghulūl*: غلول

The same rule applies to mosques, religious schools and institutions, *khanqāhs* and properties of *awqāf* (endowments) since they represent the contribution of millions of Muslims. If an unfortunate misappropriator was to go about seeking to be forgiven for his evil act, how could he possibly go to each one of those millions. The same rule holds good for public or government treasury (*Bayt al-Māl*) because all citizens of a country have a right in it. One who steals from it steals from everyone. But, the problem is that these very holdings are such that a single owner does not sit over them. The caretakers become negligent. Avenues of pilferage abound. It is in such moneys and properties that a lot of thefts and misappropriations have become rampant all over the world with most people heedless to the evil end that awaits them. They do not realize that this is a terrible burden to haul onto the plains of Resurrection, not to speak of the punishment of Hell that is bound to come as a result of this crime. Then, last but not the least, comes the sad deprivation from the promised intercession of the Messenger of Allah. Let us all seek refuge from such a fate !

The Prophet of Islam: a great blessing for the Humanity

Verse 164 speaks of the great favour Allah has shown to the Muslims by sending the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم towards them. The basic functions assigned to him are also mentioned in the same verse. These are the same functions which were attributed to him in the prayer of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام as referred to by the Holy Qur'ān in Sūrah al-Baqarah. The details of these functions have already been discussed in the first volume of this book under the said verse (2:129).

What is new in the present verse is the statement: 'And Allah has surely conferred favour on the believers'. Two points about this statement are worth mentioning here:

(1) The words 'on the believers' in this verse apparently mean that the advent of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was a favour conferred on the Muslims only while at another place the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been held as رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ :'the Mercy for all the worlds' which includes both Muslims and non-Muslims. In order to resolve this apparent contradiction one must understand that the particularization of this

quality with 'believers' in the present verse is very much like saying that the Holy Qur'ān is 'guidance for the God-fearing' (هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ) while the fact that the Holy Qur'ān is a guidance for the whole humanity is clearly proved by other verses of the Qur'ān. However, there are places where this universal status of the Qur'ān has been particularized to the God-fearing. There is a common reason operating at both places, that is, the beneficial coming of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is a great blessing and a great favour for the Muslim and the non-Muslim alike, just as the Qur'ān is a Book of Guidance for the entire humanity, but the true Muslims and the God-fearing are the only ones who derived the fullest benefit out of these. At some places, therefore, the blessing and the guidance, were particularized with them.

(2) In order to explain the primary statement in the verse which declares that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is the greatest possible blessing and favour for the believers or for the whole humanity, it can be said that the statement hardly needed any explanation, only if modern man was not all that blind to the spiritual side of life and, at the same time, was sacrificing every good thing for the sake of naked material gains. Had this not been so, every reasonable person would have found out the reality of this great blessing all by himself without anybody having to tell him about it. But, the problem is that modern man has turned out to be no more than the smartest animal among the animals of the world. Tell him about 'favour' and 'blessing' and he would immediately start seeing what fills his stomach and whets his desires. He has practically stopped thinking about the basic reality of his being which is *rūḥ*, his spirit. That something good should happen to it and that something can go wrong with it are concerns he pays no heed to, not in the least. Therefore, there is the need to explain that man is not simply a being of bones and flesh. That is certainly not his reality. The reality of man is his *rūḥ*, the spirit which is contained within him. So far as this *rūḥ* is there in his body, man is what man is. His claims to humanity stand proved. He may be weak or he may be dying, nobody can dare usurp his property or take his rights away from him. But, once this *rūḥ* leaves his body, he ceases to be man, no matter how strong and well-built he may be with all parts of his body in their ideal form and shape. His ceasing to be what he was means that he now has no personal right in his own property and possessions.

Prophets come into the world to nurture the human spirit correctly, to make human beings out of men so that actions which issue forth from their bodies turn out to be beneficial to humanity and that they do not go about the world hurting other human beings like beasts and snakes. Instead of that, they should also think about their end and start working for the everlasting life of the Hereafter. Our blessed Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم who leads the way among the great company of prophets علیہم السلام has a unique majesty when it comes to the mission of making men real human beings. This was exactly what he did during his Makkan life. The men he turned out formed a society of human beings which stands way ahead of even the angels. Never had the earth, nor the heavens, seen such men, each one of them, a living miracle of the Messenger of Allah, may the blessings of Allah be upon him. What happens after them? The answer is that he left behind his own footprints, and theirs, as well as teachings and the methods to institute and promote, which can be followed and acted upon. Those who do so sincerely and honestly can still reach the stations that were reached by the noble Companions. These teachings are there for the entire humanity to benefit from. Therefore, his having graced this world and his being born generous is a great favour shown to the universal kingdom of human beings, though true Muslims are the ones who have reaped the fullest benefit from these blessings.

The Wisdom behind the hardships of the Muslims at *Uḥud*

The subject of verse 165, أَوَلَمَّآ أَصَٰبَتْكُم translated as, 'And how is it that, when you suffered a hardship the twice of which you had inflicted upon them...' has appeared in several previous verses. Here, it comes for the sake of emphasis and further clarification because Muslims were very much disturbed as a result of this incident, so much so that some of them could not resist wondering why should they be suffering in that manner (أَنَّىٰ هَٰذَا) while they were in the company of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, doing *Jihād*.

In this verse, Muslims are being reminded that the hardship they were facing that day was only half of what they had already inflicted earlier at the battle of Badr, for seventy Muslims were martyred at Uḥud while seventy disbelievers were killed at Badr and seventy

others from them were taken prisoners by Muslims. The purpose behind this reminder is that Muslims should think positively in their present state of depression in view of the fact that they had already won a battle, inflicting a loss on the enemy twice as much as they had themselves suffered at their hands. Now, a winner like this need not surrender to sorrow and grief in the event defeat comes once, or less.

Secondly, and primarily too, the purpose of saying, قُلْ هُوَ مِنْ عِنْدِ أَنْفُسِكُمْ 'This is from your ownselves' at the end of this verse, is to tell Muslims that the hardship they have faced is not because the enemy is stronger or his forces overwhelming, but all that has been caused by some of their own shortcomings, that is, they fell short in obeying the command of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم .

Immediately later, in verse 166, the words *fa bi idhnillāhi*: فَبِإِذْنِ اللّٰهِ indicate that whatever happened there was with the leave and will of Allah Almighty operating behind which are many wise divine arrangements, some of them having been explained earlier. One such wise arrangement is that Allah will 'see' His true believers, and the hypocrites too, that is, the sincerity of Muslims and the hypocrisy of the hypocrites will become so clear that everybody could see it for himself. Here, the reference to Allah's knowing or seeing means seeing in the perspective of our own sense-experience in the mortal world. Otherwise, as far as Allah is concerned, He knows and sees everything, all the time. So, the wise arrangement became all the more clear when, at the time of the trial, the hypocrites bowed out of the harm's way while true Muslims stood undaunted in the middle of the battle front. Incidentally, there is another cause of comfort here in the martyrdom of Muslims in the battle, for Allah has conferred such rewards on them so that others should envy them. So, very appropriately, in: وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِيْنَ قُتِلُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ, the special merits of martyrs have been taken up in the verse that follows (169).

The special merits and ranks of those who sacrifice their lives in the way of Allah

In addition to this statement of the Holy Qur'ān, the merits of the martyrs have been taken up in great detail in sound *aḥādīth*. According to Imām Al-Qurṭubī, the *shuhadā'* (martyrs) have different ranks and states of being which should be taken into consideration

while looking at descriptions in *Ḥadīth* narrations.

The very first distinction of martyrs mentioned here is that they have not died; rather, they have begun to live eternally. At this point, it is worth noticing that their death and burial in a grave is something physically witnessed and realized by many, yet the Qur'ān has, in several verses, clearly instructed that they should not be addressed or taken as dead. What does this mean? If this was supposed to be an interim state of life, after death and before resurrection, referred to as the state of *Barzakh* in Islamic terminology, that would not take us very far, for that is something commonly experienced by believers and disbelievers both, when the spirit continues to live after physical death and goes through a question-answer situation following which the true and the righteous among Muslims are welcomed to comfort and the disbelievers and the sinners are consigned to the punishment of the grave. This is proved by the Qur'ān and Sunnah. Now, that the interim life of *Barzakh* is established as common to all, what is so special about *shuhadā'* (martyrs) ?

The answer is given by this very verse where it is said that the *shuhadā'*, i.e., those killed in the way of Allah, are blessed with provisions of Paradise from Him, and it is obvious that '*rizq*' (provision or sustenance) is needed by and given to the living. From here we know that sustenance starts reaching the *shahīd* (martyr) immediately after the *shahīd* leaves the frame of his life in the mortal world. In this manner, the *shahīd* enters into a special type of life right away from that point of time, something which has a status distinct from that of 'the dead' of our common experience (Qurṭubī).

There are no easy answers to questions such as - what is that distinct status and what is the nature of that life? The only answer is that its reality remains unknown to all except to the Creator of the universe; nobody has the power to know what is it - nor is there, for that matter, any need to know. Nevertheless, there are times when the effect of their special life does show up on their bodies buried in this world, that is, the earth they rest in does not eat them up but leaves them good and intact (Qurṭubī). There have been many incidents where this phenomena has been physically witnessed.

So, in summation, their first merit as pointed out in this verse is

their distinct perennial life; the second is their being well-provided from Allah and the third (فَرِحِينَ بِمَآ اٰتٰهُمُ اللّٰهُ) is that they shall always be happy with Allah's blessings and grace. The fourth (وَيَسْتَبْشِرُونَ بِالَّذِينَ لَمْ يَلْحَقُوا بِهِمْ) merit is the good news given to them about their relatives and circle of friends they left behind in the mortal world that they too shall deserve the same blessings and ranks with their Lord if they remain good in deeds and are active in *Jihād* (170-171).

Al-Suddī says that a *shahīd* is informed beforehand when one of his close friend or relative is about to die. The news that a certain person was coming to them makes them as happy as one would usually be when an old friend, long separated by time and distance, comes to meet him.

The background of the revelation of this verse as narrated by Abū Dawūd on sound authorities from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās is as follows. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said to the noble Companions: 'When your brothers-in-faith fell martyrs at the battle of Uḥud, Allah Almighty placed their spirits in the bodies of green birds and set them free. They get their sustenance from the streams and fruit-trees of the Paradise following which they return to special candelabrums held suspending for them underneath the 'throne' (*'arsh*) of the All-Merciful. When they noticed the luxury of their life there, they said, 'Can anyone tell them (their grieving friends and relatives in the world) about how we live here so that they stop grieving about us and go about striving in *Jihād* as we did.' Allah Almighty said, 'We shall let them know about this state of yours.' Thereupon, this verse was revealed (Qurṭubī).

Verses 172 - 175

اَلَّذِيْنَ اسْتَجَابُوْا لِلّٰهِ وَالرَّسُوْلِ مِنْۢ بَعْدِمَآ اَصَابَهُمُ الْقَرْحُ ؕ لِلَّذِيْنَ اَحْسَنُوْا مِنْهُمْ وَاتَّقَوْا اَجْرٌ عَظِيْمٌ ﴿١٧٢﴾ اَلَّذِيْنَ قَالَ لَهُمُ النَّاسُ اِنَّ النَّاسَ قَدْ جَمَعُوْا لَكُمْ فَاخْشَوْهُمْ فَزَادَهُمْ اِيْمَانًا ۖۗ وَّقَالُوْا حَسْبُنَا اللّٰهُ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيْلُ ﴿١٧٣﴾ فَانْقَلَبُوْا بِنِعْمَةٍ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَفَضْلٍ لَّمْ يَمْسَسْهُمْ سُوْٓءٌ ۙ وَّاتَّبَعُوْا رِضْوَانَ

اللّٰهِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ ذُوْفَضْلٍ عَظِيْمٍ ﴿۱۷۴﴾ اِنَّمَا ذٰلِكُمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ يُخَوِّفُ
اَوْلِيَآءَهٗ ۖ فَلَا تَخَافُوْهُمْ وَخَافُوْنِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿۱۷۵﴾

Those who responded to the call of Allah and the Messenger, even after they had received the wound, for those of them who did good and feared Allah there is a great reward [172] **-- those to whom people said, "The people have gathered against you; so, fear them." It increased them in Faith and they said, "Allah is all-sufficient for us, and the best one to trust in."** [173]

So, they returned with bounty from Allah, and grace, with no evil having even touched them -- and submitted to the pleasure of Allah. And Allah is the Lord of great bounty. [174]

It is none but that Satan who frightens (you) of his friends. So, do not fear them. And fear Me if you are believers. [175]

Commentary :

The subject of the previous verse was the battle of Uḥud connected with which is the battle of Ḥamrā' al-Asad which forms the subject of the present verse. Ḥamrā' al-Asad is a place eight miles away from Madīnah.

The background of this event, mentioned briefly under introductory remarks about verse 151, is that the disbelievers of Makkah left the battlefield of Uḥud, reached a certain distance where they realized that they had made a mistake by retreating. Since they had almost won the battle, they should have gone for the final assault and finished off the Muslim forces. The thought so gripped them that they started getting ready to march back to Madīnah. But, Allah Almighty cast such awe and fear in their hearts that they found it more convenient to march back home to Makkah. They still left a message with a passing group of travellers to Madīnah asking them to give a warning to Muslims that they were coming back after them with all their awesome strength. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم found this out through a revelation and he reached Ḥamrā' al-Asad in hot pursuit (Ibn Jarīr, cited by Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī).

It appears in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī that, on the second day of Uḥud, the

Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم made an announcement before his *mujāhidīn* that they have to pursue the disbelievers but the attacking company will be composed of those who were active participants in yesterday's battle. Two hundred *mujāhidīn* rose following this announcement.

A report in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī states that seventy people stood up following the announcement by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم as to who was ready to go after the disbelievers. Among those were people who had been severely wounded in the battle a day earlier, some even had to be helped in walking. This blessed company marched to apprehend the disbelievers. When they reached Ḥamrā' al-Asad, they met Nu'aym ibn Mas'ūd who told them that Abū Sufyān has assembled together a much larger force once again and he is all set to invade Madīnah and eliminate its people. Injury-ridden and much weakened Companions heard this disturbing news yet it was in one voice that they said: 'We do not know him': حَسْبُنَا اللّٰهُ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيْلُ (Allah is sufficient for us and He is the best caretaker.)

On the one hand there was this news broken to Muslims so they get terrorized, but nothing of this sort happened to them. On the other hand, there was the instance of Ma'bad al-Khuzā'ī, a man from the tribe of Banī Khuzā'ah. He was on his way to Makkah. Though not a Muslim, he was a well-wisher of Muslims - his tribe was an ally of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم . So, when he saw Abū Sufyān repenting his retreat from Madīnah and all too resolved to go back and fight, he told Abū Sufyān: 'You are making a mistake by thinking that Muslim forces have become weak. I have just passed by a huge army of theirs camped at Ḥamrā' al-Asad. Armed with an array of men and materials, they are about to set out in hot pursuit against you.' This report from him put the awe of Muslim forces in his heart.

This event has been related in three verses (172-174) given above. It has been said in the first verse (172) that despite injuries and hardships from the Battle of Uḥud, when Allah and His Messenger called them up for another *Jihād*, they were ready for that too. Worth noticing at this point is the fact that the Muslims being praised here had two distinguishing features. The first one appears in مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَآ اَصَابَهُمُ الْقَرْحُ (even after they had received the wound) which means that those

who responded to the call of Allah and His Messenger were people wounded at the Battle of Badr. Seventy of their brave companions had met their martyrdom on the battlefield while they themselves were riddled with injuries all over their bodies, yet when they were called to serve again, they immediately agreed to join the *Jihād*.

The second distinctive feature has been mentioned in the words: لِلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا مِنْهُمْ وَاتَّقَوْا (for them who did good and feared Allah) which established that these people were not simply some great achievers on the battlefield striving incessantly and staking their lives for a noble cause, but they also imbibed in their person the highest virtues of *Iḥsān* (righteous conduct) and *Taqwā* (fear of Allah). Thus, this very blessed combination of virtues is the cause of their great reward.

Removing a doubt

Let there be no doubt about the word: مِنْهُمْ (literally 'of them') used here. It should not be taken to mean that all these people were not armed with the virtues of *Iḥsān* and *Taqwā* - only some of them were. The simple reason is that the preposition مِنْ : *min* (of, some of) used here is not divisive or partitive. It is, rather, doubtlessly narrative which is confirmed by the very opening words of this very verse: اَلَّذِينَ اسْتَجَابُوا (Those who responded to the call). From this, it is clear that such response and submission simply cannot materialize without having the qualities of *Iḥsān* and *Taqwā* ingrained in one's personality. That is why most commentators have declared that the preposition مِنْ : *min* (of, some of) has been used here in the narrative sense. In short, the essential meaning of the verse is that all these people had rewards waiting for them.

Striving to achieve something good even at the cost of one's life is not enough unless there is total sincerity behind it

Anyway, this particular mode of address leads us to an essential rule of conduct which is: No matter how good is an effort made and no matter how many sacrifices of wealth and life one makes to achieve that end, it can be reward-worthy in the sight of Allah only when it is simultaneously backed by *Iḥsān* and *Taqwā*. Therefore, the essence of the observation is that the deed undertaken must be for the good pleasure of Allah alone. Otherwise simple feats of bravery, some of which come even at the cost of one's dear life, are just about no lesser

among disbelievers as well.

In its ultimate reality, the command of the Messenger of Allah is the command of Allah.

In this event, it will be recalled that the command to pursue the disbelievers was given by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. This does not find mention in any verse of the Holy Qur'ān. But, in this particular verse, when the obedience of those people is praised, the command was attributed to both Allah and His Messenger as evident from the words of the text: اَلَّذِيْنَ اسْتَجَابُوْا لِلّٰهِ وَالرَّسُوْلِ (172): 'Those who responded to the call of Allah and the Messenger.' This proves very clearly that the command which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم gives is also the command of Allah even though it has not been mentioned in the Book of Allah.

As for those irreligious deviants who reject *Hadīth* and belittle the status of the Messenger of Allah by restricting it to that of a courier (God forbid), a simple statement, that Allah Almighty has openly declared the command of the Messenger as His own, should be enough to understand the truth - if understanding is what they seek. This statement, moreover, also makes it clear that the Messenger can, also by himself and at his discretion, set up rules in accordance with expedient considerations, and all such rules have the same status as that enjoyed by the commandments of Allah.

The Definition of *Iḥsān*

Mentioned several times during the comments given above, the word *Iḥsān* generally means the performance of good deeds with the best of effort and discretion. However, the basic definition of *Iḥsān* was given by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم himself as reported in the well-known '*ḥadīth* of Jibra'īl'. The actual words are:

اَنْ تَعْبُدَاللّٰهَ كَاَنَّكَ تَرَاهُ فَاِنْ لَمْ تَكُنْ تَرَاهُ فَاِنَّهٗ يَرَاكَ

> That is, worship Allah as if you are seeing Him; and if it is not possible for you to (imagine that you) see Him, then, (imagine that) He sees you anyway.

The Definition of *Taqwā*

The word, *Taqwā*, has been interpreted variously but the most comprehensive definition is what was given by the blessed Companion 'Ubayy ibn Ka'b رضى الله عنه when Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه asked him as

to what *Taqwa* really was. Sayyidna Ubayy ibn Ka'b said: 'O Commander of the Faithful, you may have certainly passed by pathways full of thorns, have you not?' Sayyidna 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ said, 'Several times, of course.' Sayyidna Ubayy ibn Ka'b رضی اللہ عنہ asked, 'What did you do at that time?' Sayyidna 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ said, 'I folded the hang of my dress and walked carefully.' Sayyidna Ubayy ibn Ka'b said, 'Enough. You said it. This is what *Taqwa* means. This mortal world of ours is a bed of thorns, full of the thorns of sins, therefore, one should live in this world in a way that one does not get entangled in the thorns of sin. The name of this attitude to life is *Taqwa,* the highest capital gain one can dream of.' The blessed Companion, Sayyidna Abu al-Darda' رضی اللہ عنہ used to recite the following verse quite often:

يَقُوْلُ الْمَرْءُ فَائِدَتِيْ وَمَالِيْ ، وَتَقْوَى اللّٰهِ اَفْضَلُ مَا اسْتَفَادَا

"People say, 'my gain' and 'my money' while, really, the fear of Allah (*Taqwa*) is the best of what is gained."

In the second verse (173), more praises have been showered on the noble Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all, who so courageously stepped forward to join this *Jihad*. The words of the verse are:

اَلَّذِيْنَ قَالَ لَهُمُ النَّاسُ اِنَّ النَّاسَ قَدْ جَمَعُوْا لَكُمْ فَاخْشَوْهُمْ، فَزَادَهُمْ اِيْمَانًا

--- those to whom people said, "The people have gathered against you; so, fear them." It increased them in Faith ...

That is, blessed are such people who heard the news that the enemy has assembled a big fighting force against them and also the advice that they should fear them and avoid fighting - still, this news further increased the fervour of their faith. The reason is simple: When these blessed people had agreed to obey Allah and His Messenger, they had realized right from day one that the path they have chosen to travel on is full of dangers. There will be difficulties and impediments at every step. Their passage will not be easy. They will be stopped. Even armed efforts will be made to suppress their revolutionary movement. Thus, when these noble people came across such hardships, the power of their Faith increased to levels higher than before and, as a result, they worked harder, more selflessly, more than ever.

As obvious, the Faith of these noble souls was perfect from the very first day they had embraced Islam, therefore, the reference to the increase in Faith in these two verses (172-173) means the increase in the qualitative contents and end-results of Faith. Even this state of the Companions who readily responded to the call of Allah and His Messenger has been specially mentioned at this point by saying that they kept reciting: حَسْبُنَا اللّٰهُ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيْلُ (173) all along their march to the *Jihād* mission. The sentence means: Allah is all-sufficient for us and the best one to trust in.

Let us consider an important rule of conduct at this point. It is a fact and we know it too well that no one in this world can claim to have placed his trust in Allah, a degree more pronounced than the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his noble Companions. But, the form and manner of such trust was different. He would never think of sitting back forsaking all physical means available and end up saying: Allah is all-sufficient for us - He will bless us with victory while we sit out and do nothing! No. This did not work like that. Instead, he gathered the noble Companions together, infused a new fighting spirit in the hearts of those injured, prepared them for the *Jihād*, both materially and spiritually before marching out. It means that he collected and used all physical means which were available to him and it was only after that he said: 'Allah is all-sufficient for us.' This, then, is the most authentic form of *Tawakkul* (Trust in Allah) taught by the Holy Qur'ān, personally practiced by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and this was what he made others around him do. All physical means which we have in the life of this world are blessings from Allah. Rejecting or abandoning them amounts to being ungrateful to Him. Placing trust in Allah after having forsaken available physical means is no Sunnah (established practice) of the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم. However, if there be someone comprehensively overwhelmed by his state of being, he could be deemed as excusable while being unable to observe this precept of the Sharī'ah. Otherwise, the most sound practice is no more than what has been curtly expressed in a Persian poetic line:

بر توکل زانوے اشتر به بند

Before placing trust, do tie your camel.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has himself stated the meaning of

this very verse: حَسْبُنَا اللّٰهُ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيْلُ (173) 'Allah is all-sufficient for us, and the best one to trust in,' while deciding a case reported in *Hadith* :

As reported by Sayyidna 'Awf ibn Malik رضی اللہ عنہ, a case involving two men came up for hearing before the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم. He gave his verdict. The man who lost the case heard the verdict in perfect peace and started walking out with the words: حَسْبِيَ اللّٰهُ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيْلُ (Allah is all-sufficient for me, and the best one to trust in) on his lips. The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم asked: 'Bring this man to me.' He said to him:

إِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَلُوْمُ عَلَى الْعِجْزِ وَلٰكِنْ عَلَيْكَ بِالْكَيْسِ فَإِذَا غَلَبَكَ أَمْرٌ فَقُلْ حَسْبِيَ اللّٰهُ وَ نِعْمَ الْوَكِيْلُ

> Allah censures inaction but it is your duty to use means, following which, when you find yourself powerless against odds, then say: 'Allah is all-sufficient for me, and the best one to trust in.'

The third verse (174) recounts the blessings which descended upon these noble Companions for their brave response to the call of *Jihad* and for saying: حَسْبُنَا اللّٰهُ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيْلُ (Allah is all-sufficient for us, and the best one to trust in). It was said:

فَانْقَلَبُوْا بِنِعْمَةٍ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَفَضْلٍ لَّمْ يَمْسَسْهُمْ سُوْٓءٌ وَّاتَّبَعُوْا رِضْوَانَ اللّٰهِ

> So, they returned with bounty from Allah, and grace, with no evil having even touched them -- and submitted to the pleasure of Allah.

Allah Almighty bestowed on them three blessings:

1. Such awe and terror was placed in the hearts of disbelievers that they ran away because of which the Companions remained protected against the rigours of fighting on the battlefield. Allah Almighty has used the very word *Ni'mah* for what we refer to as blessing.

2. The second blessing conferred on them was the opportunity to engage in trading in the market of Ḥamra' al-Asad. The benefits yielded by such financial transactions were called '*Faḍl*' or the bounty from Allah.

3. The third and the highest of the three blessings was the attainment of the pleasure of Allah which these blessed souls received in

this *Jihād* in a special manner.

حَسْبُنَا اللّٰهُ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيْلُ : *Ḥasbunallāhu wa ni'mal-wakīl*: A wonderful prayer for all of us

The blessings of this prayer cited by the Holy Qur'ān were not limited to the Companions of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in any restrictive sense. The fact is that anyone who recites this prayer devotedly with a genuine sense of faith will share in such blessings.

Muslim scholars and spiritual masters have said that one who recites this verse a thousand times with true faith, and prays, will find that Allah Almighty has not rejected his prayer. Reciting this verse under the stress of frustrations and difficulties is a proven panacea.

The fourth verse (175) tells Muslims that the real agent behind the report that the disbelievers are coming back is Satan himself who would love to see Muslims overawed. In other words, Satan is threatening Muslims with the strength of his friends - his cohorts, the disbelievers. Thus, one of the two objects of the verb يُخَوِّفُ : *yukhawwifū* [frightens (you)] has been left out in the text. The one mentioned is in '*auliyā'ahū*' (of his friends) while the one understood but not mentioned is 'you' as it would be in يُخَوِّفُكُمْ : *yukhawwifukum* (frightens you).

In the end, the verse exhorts Muslims not to fear such threats. What is necessary is that Muslims must continue fearing Allah, the natural outcome of which will be that a true Muslim will always think twice before embarking on anything that means disobedience to Allah. The truth of the matter is that, with Allah's help and support on ones' side, no harm can come from any side.

The Fear of Allah: What does it mean?

The imperative in the present verse obligates Muslims that they must always keep fearing Allah. In another verse, يَخَافُوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ مِّنْ فَوْقِهِمْ (They fear their Lord above them-16:50) those who do so have been praised. Some revered elders have explained it by saying that fearing Allah does not mean that one should be scared stiff or sit back in tears. Far from it, a God-fearing person is one who leaves everything which may become a source of Allah's displeasure or punishment.

Abū 'Alī al-Daqqāq, may Allāh's mercy be upon him, says that Abū

Bakr ibn al-Fuwarrak was sick so he paid him a visit. When Abū Bakr saw him, he was in tears. Abū 'Alī consoled him by saying that there was nothing to worry about, Allah Almighty will give him health soon enough. Abū Bakr corrected Abū 'Alī's impression and said that he was certainly not weeping because of any fear of death. What he really worried about was his fate after death lest he may be awarded some punishment then. (Qurṭubi)

Verses 176 - 178

وَلَا يَحْزُنْكَ الَّذِيْنَ يُسَارِعُوْنَ فِى الْكُفْرِ ۚ اِنَّهُمْ لَنْ يَّضُرُّوا اللّٰهَ
شَيْئًا ۗ يُرِيْدُ اللّٰهُ اَلَّا يَجْعَلَ لَهُمْ حَظًّا فِى الْاٰخِرَةِ ۚ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ
عَظِيْمٌ ﴿١٧٦﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اشْتَرَوُا الْكُفْرَ بِالْاِيْمَانِ لَنْ يَّضُرُّوا
اللّٰهَ شَيْئًا ۚ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿١٧٧﴾ وَلَا يَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْٓا
اَنَّمَا نُمْلِىْ لَهُمْ خَيْرٌ لِّاَنْفُسِهِمْ ۚ اِنَّمَا نُمْلِىْ لَهُمْ لِيَزْدَادُوْٓا اِثْمًا ۚ
وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّهِيْنٌ ﴿١٧٨﴾

Those who hasten towards disbelief should not make you grieve. They cannot harm Allah at all. Allah intends not to spare for them any share in the Hereafter. And for them there is a mighty punishment. [176] **Certainly, those who bought disbelief in exchange of Belief cannot harm Allah at all. And for them there is a painful punishment.** [177] **And those who disbelieve should not think that the time We give them is good for them. In fact, We give them time only that they may increase in sin. And for them there is a humiliating punishment.** [178]

Previous verses mentioned the treachery and ill-will of the hypocrites. The present verses comfort the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, asking him not to grieve over the mischiefs made by the disbelievers for they cannot harm him in any way.

The last verse (178) carries a refutation of the false notion about disbelievers: How can they, while obviously prospering in the present world, be regarded as victims of Allah's wrath and rejection?

Commentary

Material affluence of disbelievers is, after all, an extension of Divine punishment

Let there be no doubt about the worldly well-being of disbelievers for one may be tempted to believe that since Allah Almighty has given respite, long life, security and comfort to disbelievers so that they go on increasing in their crimes, they should, then, be taken as innocent. Far from it, because the verse means that Muslims should not feel upset about this temporary respite and affluence given to disbelievers as all this worldly wealth and power in their hands - despite their disbelief and disobedience - is nothing but a form of the very punishment destined for them. Today, they do not realize it. But, once they leave the mortal world, they would. They would discover to their dismay that all those articles of comfort they acquired and spent in sin were, in reality, the very embers of Hell. This is corroborated by several other verses of the Qur'ān. For instance, in إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُعَذِّبَهُم بِهَا (Allah intends to punish them with it - 9:55) which means that the wealth and power of disbelievers and their vulgarly luxurious consumerism should not be a matter of pride for them for this is nothing but an instalment of that very punishment from Allah which will cause their punishment in the Hereafter to increase.

Verse 179

مَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيَذَرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَلَىٰ مَا أَنتُمْ عَلَيْهِ حَتَّىٰ يَمِيزَ الْخَبِيثَ مِنَ الطَّيِّبِ ۗ وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُطْلِعَكُمْ عَلَى الْغَيْبِ وَلَٰكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَجْتَبِي مِن رُّسُلِهِ مَن يَشَاءُ ۖ فَآمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ ۚ وَإِن تُؤْمِنُوا وَتَتَّقُوا فَلَكُمْ أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١٧٩﴾

Allah is not to leave the believers in what you are in unless He separates the impure from the pure. And Allah is not to inform you of the unseen. But Allah selects from His messengers whom He wills. So, believe in Allah and His messengers. And if you believe, and fear Allah, then, for you there is a great reward. [179]

The previous verse (178) answered the question about disbelievers as to why they, being the detested ones in the sight of Allah, are in possession of all sort of wealth, property and other means of luxurious

living?

The present verse (179), in sharp contrast, removes the doubt about true believers as to why they, being the favoured servants of Allah, are tested with all sorts of hardships? Being favoured required that they should have been the ones living in comfort surrounded by its paraphernalia !

Commentary

The wisdom of making a believer distinct from a hypocrite through practical demonstration rather than through a revelation.

It has been said in this verse that Allah Almighty has His way of making a sincere believer distinct from a hypocrite through which He generates such situations of hardship as would expose the hypocrisy of the hypocrites practically. This distinction, though, could also be made by identifying hypocrites by name through a revelation. But, the later course was not taken because it would have not been wise. The whole range of wisdom behind what Allah does is known to Him alone. However, one wise consideration in the present context could be: If Muslims were told about a person being a hypocrite through revelation, they would have had no difficulty in dealing with them carefully, but this would have not provided them with a clearly demonstrated proof necessarily acceptable to the hypocrites - for, they would have still insisted: 'You are wrong. We are true Muslims.'

Contrary to this, the distinction was made practically. The introduction of hardship put the hypocrites to test in which they failed and ran away. Their hypocricy was demonstrated and exposed practically and openly. Now they did not have the cheek to claim that they were true, sincere and believing Muslims.

The manner in which the hypocrites were exposed yielded yet another benefit for Muslims when their formal relationship was also severed with the hypocrites. Otherwise, maintaining a state of discord in the heart with a veneer of formal social dealing would have been equally harmful ethically.

The Unseen when communicated to anyone is no Knowledge of the Unseen as such

This verse tells us that Allah Almighty does not inform everyone

about Unseen matters through the medium of revelation (*Waḥy*). However, He does inform His chosen prophets in this manner. From this, let no one hasten to doubt that prophets too have become sharers in the Knowledge of the Unseen or the knowers of the Unseen! The reason is that the Knowledge of the Unseen which is particularly attributed to the being of Allah Almighty cannot be taken as being shared by any created being. Doing so is *Shirk* (the crime of ascribing partners to Allah). The particular Knowledge is fortified by two conditions:

1. This should be intrinsic to the being, not given by anyone else.

2. This has to be all-comprehensive, encompassing all universes, the past and the future - a Knowledge that covers even the minutest particle without any possibility of anything remaining hidden from it. As for things of the Unseen the information of which is given to His prophets by Allah Almighty through the medium of revelation (*Waḥy*), they are not, really, the Knowledge of the Unseen as such. They are, rather, news of the Unseen given to prophets, something about which the Holy Qur'ān itself has used the expression أَنۢبَآءِ الْغَيْبِ (news or reports of the Unseen) at several places :

مِنْ أَنۢبَآءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوحِيهَآ إِلَيْكَ

... a part of the news of the Unseen We reveal to you. (11:49)

Verses 180 - 186

وَلَا يَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ يَبْخَلُونَ بِمَآ ءَاتَىٰهُمُ اللَّهُ مِن فَضْلِهِۦ هُوَ خَيْرًا لَّهُم ۖ بَلْ هُوَ شَرٌّ لَّهُمْ ۖ سَيُطَوَّقُونَ مَا بَخِلُوا۟ بِهِۦ يَوْمَ الْقِيَٰمَةِ ۗ وَلِلَّهِ مِيرَٰثُ السَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ ﴿۱۸۰﴾ لَّقَدْ سَمِعَ اللَّهُ قَوْلَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوٓا۟ إِنَّ اللَّهَ فَقِيرٌ وَنَحْنُ أَغْنِيَآءُ ۘ سَنَكْتُبُ مَا قَالُوا۟ وَقَتْلَهُمُ الْأَنۢبِيَآءَ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ وَنَقُولُ ذُوقُوا۟ عَذَابَ الْحَرِيقِ ﴿۱۸۱﴾ ذَٰلِكَ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ أَيْدِيكُمْ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَيْسَ بِظَلَّامٍ لِّلْعَبِيدِ ﴿۱۸۲﴾ الَّذِينَ قَالُوٓا۟ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَهِدَ إِلَيْنَآ أَلَّا

نُؤْمِنَ لِرَسُوْلٍ حَتّٰى يَاْتِيَنَا بِقُرْبَانٍ تَاْكُلُهُ النَّارُ ؕ قُلْ قَدْ جَآءَكُمْ
رُسُلٌ مِّنْ قَبْلِىْ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ وَبِالَّذِىْ قُلْتُمْ فَلِمَ قَتَلْتُمُوْهُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ
صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿۱۸۳﴾ فَاِنْ كَذَّبُوْكَ فَقَدْ كُذِّبَ رُسُلٌ مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ جَآءُوْ
بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ وَالزُّبُرِ وَالْكِتٰبِ الْمُنِيْرِ ﴿۱۸۴﴾ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَآئِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ ؕ
وَاِنَّمَا تُوَفَّوْنَ اُجُوْرَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ ؕ فَمَنْ زُحْزِحَ عَنِ النَّارِ
وَاُدْخِلَ الْجَنَّةَ فَقَدْ فَازَ ؕ وَمَا الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَآ اِلَّا مَتَاعُ الْغُرُوْرِ
﴿۱۸۵﴾ لَتُبْلَوُنَّ فِىْٓ اَمْوَالِكُمْ وَاَنْفُسِكُمْ ۟ وَلَتَسْمَعُنَّ مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ
اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ وَمِنَ الَّذِيْنَ اَشْرَكُوْٓا اَذًى كَثِيْرًا ؕ وَاِنْ
تَصْبِرُوْا وَتَتَّقُوْا فَاِنَّ ذٰلِكَ مِنْ عَزْمِ الْاُمُوْرِ ﴿۱۸۶﴾

And those who are miserly with what Allah has given them out of His grace should not take it as good for them. Instead, it is bad for them. They shall be forced, on the Doomsday, to put on round their necks the shackles of what they were miserly with. And to Allah belongs the inheritance of the heavens and the earth. And of what you do, Allah is All-Aware. [180]

Allah has surely heard the saying of those who said, "Allah is poor and we are rich." We shall write down what they said, and their killing of the prophets unjustly; and We shall say, "Taste the punishment of the flaming fire. [181] **This is due to what your hands sent ahead and that Allah is not cruel to the slaves."** [182]

(There are) those who said, "Surely, Allah directed us that we should not believe in a messenger unless he comes to us with an offering to be eaten up by the fire." Say, "A number of messengers have come to you, before me, with clear signs and with what you have said. So, why did you kill them, if you are true? [183]

Then if they belie you, so messengers have been belied before you. They came with clear signs and the Scriptures and light giving Book. [184]

Every soul has to taste death. And it is on the Doomsday that you shall be paid your rewards in full. So, whoever has been kept away from the Fire and admitted to Paradise, he has really succeeded. And the wordly life is nothing but an asset, full of illusion. [185]

Of course, you shall be tested in your wealth and yourselves. And, of course, you shall hear much of what hurts, from those who have been given the Book before you and from those who associate (others with Allah). And if you observe patience and fear Allah, then these are among matters of determination. [186]

Anomalies in the conduct of Jews were mentioned at the beginning of Sūrah 'Āl-'Imrān (21-25). The text now reverts back to the same subject. The verses cited above carry related topics. In between, there are words of comfort for the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم as well as those giving good counsel to Muslims.

Commentary

The first (180) of the seven verses (180-186) appearing here repudiates miserliness and carries a warning for those who practice it.

The Definition of Miserliness and the punishment it brings

In the terminology of the Sharī'ah of Islam, miserliness (*Bukhl*) refers to the act of not spending that which it is obligatory to spend in the way of Allah. Therefore, miserliness is forbidden (*ḥarām*). Besides, it carries a stern warning of Hell for its practitioners. As for occasions where spending is not obligatory (*wājib*) but only recommended (*mustaḥabb*), then not spending there is not included under the miserliness which is forbidden. However, this too is called miserliness in its general sense. As said earlier, this kind of miserliness is not forbidden (*ḥarām*) but against the preferred choice (*khilāf aulā*) it certainly is.

Appearing in *Ḥadīth*, there is another word - *Shuḥḥ* - also used in the sense of *Bukhl* or miserliness. By definition, it means not spending what it was obligatory to spend - one may go even farther than that by remaining consumed with greed to increase one's wealth. This then, shall be a crime much more severe than ordinary miserliness. Therefore, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said:

لَا يَجْتَمِعُ شُحٌّ وَإِيْمَانٌ فِيْ قَلْبِ رَجُلٍ مُسْلِمٍ أَبَدًا

> That is, miserliness (*shuḥḥ*) and faith (*'Īmān*) can never coexist in the heart of a Muslim. (Qurṭubī)

The punishment for miserliness (*Bukhl*) mentioned in this verse: 'They shall be forced, on the Doomsday, to put on round their necks the shackles of what they were miserly with' has been explained by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in the following words reported by Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه :

> 'Anyone Allah blessed with some wealth and who did not pay the *zakāh* due on it properly will find his or her wealth turn into a deadly snake shackled round the neck chomping at the person's mouth from one to the other end of the lips and saying: 'I am your wealth. I am your capital gain.' Thereafter, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم recited this verse (180). (Al-Nasā'ī, from Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī)

The second verse (18) warns Jews against their grave act of effrontery and mentions its punishment. According to the background of the event, when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم presented the Qur'ānic injunctions relating to *Zakāh* and *Ṣadaqāt* (charities), the arrogant Jews started saying that Allah had surely become poor and needy while they were rich, or else why would He go about asking us to give? We seek refuge with Allah from such effrontery. Obviously, they would have hardly believed in the absurd statement they made but, in all likelihood, they would have said so to prove that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was, God forbid, false in his statement. Their argument was: If these verses of the Qur'ān are true, then, it necessarily follows that Allah be poor and needy! This absurd argument of theirs being false in itself was not worth responding to because the injunction of Allah Almighty was not for His benefit; it was, rather, for the benefit of the owners of wealth themselves in this world and the hereafter. But, it was termed as giving loan to Allah elsewhere because repayment of a loan is necessary and certain in the sight of every good person. Similar is the case of charity given by someone, the repayment of which Allah Almighty takes upon Himself as if it was the payment of loan taken from someone. Anyone who believes in Allah Almighty as the Creator and Master of everything would never stoop to entertain the kind of doubt from these words of the verse which is there in the saying of the insolent Jews. For this reason, the

Qur'ān has certainly refrained from answering this doubt. Instead, it has simply restricted itself to announcing that they shall be apprehended and punished for this effrontery of theirs, for having falsified the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and for having made fun of him. It was said that their insolent words will be put on record in 'writing' so that the final evidence goes against them on the Day of Judgment and they are punished for what they did. Otherwise, Allah Almighty needs no writing.

Along with this act of effrontery committed by the Jews, yet another crime of theirs has been mentioned, that is, they not only falsified the prophets and mocked at them, they even went to the limit of killing them! That such people could falsify and flout any prophet or messenger of Allah hardly remains surprising.

Staying emotionally satisfied with disbelief in and disobedience to Allah is also an equally grave sin

Worth noticing at this point is the fact that those being addressed by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the Qur'ān are the Jews of Madīnah while the incident of the killing of prophets belongs to a time much earlier than theirs, that is, to the time of Sayyidnā Yaḥyā and Sayyidnā Zakariyyā, may peace be on them. Now, the question is: How is it that the crime of the killing of the prophets referred to in this verse was attributed to these addressees? The reason is: The Jews of Madīnah were quite satisfied with this act committed by their Jewish predecessors, therefore, they too were counted as those who fall under the injunction governing killers of prophets.

Imām al-Qurṭubī has said in his *Tafsīr* that 'remaining satisfied with disbelief (*kufr*) is also included under disbelief and disobedience' which is a major juristic ruling in Islam. A saying of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم explains it further. He said:

> 'When a sin is committed on God's earth, following which, the person who is present on the spot opposes that sin and considers it to be bad, then, such a person shall be deemed as not present there, that is, he is no accomplice in their sin. And, a person who, though not present physically yet is quite satisfied with this act of sinners, then, this person shall be considered, despite his absence (from the scene of sin), an accomplice in their sin.'

In the later part of the present verse (181) and in the third verse (182), the text recounts the punishment to be meted out to such loud-mouthed people by saying that they shall be consigned to the Hell to experience the taste of burning in fire which is but the outcome of their own deeds and certainly no injustice from Allah. The fourth verse (183) takes up the case of a false accusation made by these very Jews who came up with an excuse in order to reject the prophethood of the Messenger of Allah. Their contention was that, during the period of past prophets, there used to be a method under which charities and offerings were placed in the centre of an open ground or on top of a hill where heavenly fire came and burnt these to ashes. This used to symbolize that offerings were accepted. But, to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and to his community, Allah Almighty had given the unique distinction that charities were not left to be consumed by heavenly fire. They were given to the poor and needy among Muslims. Since the later method was contrary to the former, the disbelievers found an excuse to say: If you were a prophet, you too would have been given the miracle whereby the heavenly fire would have consumed the offerings and charities. They, not resting at that, became audacious enough to fabricate lies against Allah Almighty claiming that 'He has taken pledge from them to the effect that they are not to believe in a person who is unable to cause the miracle of the coming of a heavenly fire which burns the charitable offerings.'

Since this claim of the Jews that Allah had taken a pledge from them was false, there was really no need to counter it. So, to disarm them through their very proven saying, Allah Almighty said: If you are true in saying that Allah has taken such a pledge from you, then, the past prophets who had obliged you by showing the miracle of your choice whereby the heavenly fire consumed the offerings certainly deserved that you should have at least believed in them! But, what actually happened is that you did not spare them either. You still falsified them. In fact, you went to the extreme of transgression by killing them.

Let no one have any doubt here despite the fact that while this claim of the Jews was absolutely false, may be, if this miracle did come to pass at the hand of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم chances were that

they would probably have come to believe. Such a doubt is unfounded because Allah Almighty knew that these people were saying such things simply out of hostility and obstinacy. Thus, even if the miracle they demanded came to pass, they would have still not believed.

In the fifth verse (184), the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been comforted by saying that he should not grieve at being falsified by his adversaries for this is something faced by all prophets in the past.

Thoughts of the Hereafter heal all sorrows and remove all doubts

The sixth verse (185) puts a sharp focus on the ultimate reality of things in a situation when sometime somewhere disbelievers come to enjoy ascendency one way or the other and they have all the luxury they can think of in this world. Contrary to this, Muslims have to face some hardships, some difficulties and a certain paucity of worldly means. There is nothing surprising about it and certainly no occasion to be grieved, for no follower of a faith or philosophy can ignore the reality of life that sorrow and happiness in this world are both short-lived. No living creature can escape death. As for the comfort and discomfort experienced in this world, they vanish, more than often, right there with relevant changes in circumstances - or, just in case, no change takes place during the life of this world, it is certain that everything will end with the knock of death. Therefore, worrying about this short-lived cycle of comfort and discomfort should not become the chronic concern of a wise person. One should, rather, have concern for what would happen after death.

So, the verse (185) tells us that every living being shall taste death and once in the Hereafter, there shall come the reward and punishment of deeds which will be severe and long drawn as well. This is what a wise person should worry about and prepare for. Given this rule of conduct, one who stays away from Hell and finds entry into the Paradise is really the successful one. May be this happens at the very beginning as would be the case with the most righteous servants of Allah. Or, it may come to pass after having faced some punishment as would be the case with sinning Muslims. But, Muslims - all of them - will finally have their deliverance from Hell and the blessings of Paradise will become theirs for ever. This will be contrary to what happens

to disbelievers - Hell will be their eternal resting place. If they wax proud over their short-lived worldly gains, they are terribly deceived. That is why it was said at the end of the verse: 'And the worldly life is nothing but an asset, full of illusion.' Strange is the anatomy of this deception, for reckless material enjoyments here become the source of great hardships in the Hereafter and conversely, most of the hardships faced here become the treasure of the Hereafter.

People of Falsehood hurting people of Truth is a natural phenomena: Patience (*Ṣabr*) and piety (*Taqwā*) cure everything

The seventh verse (186) was revealed in the background of a particular event which has been briefly referred to a little earlier in verse 181. According to relevant details, when verse 245 of Sūrah al-Baqarah: مَنْ ذَا الَّذِيْ يُقْرِضُ اللّٰهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا (who is the one who would give Allah a good loan) was revealed, it eloquently equated the givings of charities to the giving of loan to Allah thereby indicating that all givings in charity in the life of this world will be recompensed with a certainty like that of someone returning a loan taken. An ignorant or hostile Jew reacted by commenting in the following words: اِنَّ اللّٰهَ فَقِيْرٌ وَّ نَحْنُ اَغْنِيَآءُ (Allah is poor and we are rich). Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ was angry at his effrontery and slapped him. The Jew complained to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم. Thereupon, the verse: لَتُبْلَوُنَّ فِيْٓ اَمْوَالِكُمْ وَاَنْفُسِكُمْ الاٰية (Of course, you shall be tested in your wealth and yourselves) was revealed. This verse instructs Muslims that they should not show weakness when called to stake their wealth and life in the defence of their Faith or when they are hurt by the vituperations of the disbelievers, the polytheists and the people of the Book. All this is nothing but a trial for them. The best course for them is to observe restraint, be patient and keep to their real objective in life which is the achievement of the perfect state of *Taqwā*, (a state in which one fears Allah and remains answerable to Him all the time). In such a state Muslims should not worry about replying to the effrontery by antogonists.

Verses 187 - 189

وَاِذْ اَخَذَ اللّٰهُ مِيْثَاقَ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ لَتُبَيِّنُنَّهٗ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا
تَكْتُمُوْنَهٗ ۡ فَنَبَذُوْهُ وَرَآءَ ظُهُوْرِهِمْ وَاشْتَرَوْا بِهٖ ثَمَنًا قَلِيْلًا ؕ

فَبِئْسَ مَا يَشْتَرُوْنَ ﴿١٨٧﴾ لَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَفْرَحُوْنَ بِمَآ اَتَوْا
وَّيُحِبُّوْنَ اَنْ يُّحْمَدُوْا بِمَا لَمْ يَفْعَلُوْا فَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّهُمْ بِمَفَازَةٍ مِّنَ
الْعَذَابِ ۚ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿١٨٨﴾ وَلِلّٰهِ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ
وَالْاَرْضِ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿١٨٩﴾

And when Allah took pledge from those who were given the Book: "You shall make it known to people, and you shall not conceal it." So, they threw it away behind their backs and bought a small price out of it. So, evil is what they buy. [187]

And do not think of those who are delighted with what they did and love to be praised for what they never did - so, do not think of them as being in a position to escape the punishment. And a painful punishment is there for them. [188] **And to Allah belongs the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth. And Allah is powerful over everything.** [189]

In continuation of the description of evils practiced by the Jews mentioned in previous verses, the first of the present two verses (187) takes up yet another evil practice of theirs. This is their habit of going back on solemn pledges and covenants - for Allah Almighty had taken pledge from the people of the Book that they would communicate the commandments of Allah appearing in the Torah freely, openly and universally and that they would not conceal any injunction out of their selfish ends. The people of the Book broke this covenant. They concealed injunctions. Not only that, they were audacious enough to show their pleasure about having acted in this manner and taking this deed of theirs as commendable.

Commentary

Concealing the Knowledge of Faith is forbidden and waiting or manipulating to be praised without practicing it is deplorable

The three verses cited above describe two crimes committed by scholars from the people of the Book along with their subsequent punishment.

As pointed out earlier, they were commanded to tell their people about injunctions revealed in the Book of Allah freely and openly

without any effort to curtail or hold back what was in there. Although, they were explicitly instructed not to hide any commandment, yet they elected to ignore the pledge they had made, out of their worldly considerations and personal greed. They did hide a good many commandments from their people.

Secondly, they had the problem of personally staying aloof from acting righteously while, at the same time, they had no qualms of conscience in wishing to be praised without acting the way they were expected to.

As for the incidence of hiding the commandments of the Torah, it has been reported in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās. He narrates that the Holy Prophet ﷺ asked the Jews about something mentioned in the Torah. They concealed the truth and told him something contrary to what was said in the Torah - and they left his company all pleased with their exercise in evil congratulating themselves on their deceit. Thereupon, this verse which carries a warning for them was revealed.

As for the other statement - 'they love to be praised for what they never did' - it refers to the hypocrites among the Jews who would make excuses at the time of *Jihād*, sit home and celebrate how well they were able to dodge the hardships of *Jihād*. When the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم returned from *Jihād*, they would go to him, take false oaths, offer excuses and, on top of that, they would demand that this act of theirs be praised. (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī)

The Holy Qur'ān condemns them for both these attitudes. From here, we know that concealing the knowledge of Faith and the injunctions of Allah and His Messenger is forbidden (*Ḥarām*). But, this forbiddance applies to the kind of concealment which was practiced by the Jews for they used to conceal Divine injunctions to promote their own worldly interest and, in this process, they made people pay for it. However, if an injunction is not broadcast publicly due to some expedient religious consideration, such an action would not fall under the purview of this ruling. This problem has been taken up by Imām al-Bukhārī under a separate subject heading supported by relevant *Ḥadīth* narrations. According to him, there are occasions when there is the danger that masses would fall prey to misunderstanding and

disorder by publicising a certain injunction openly. If an injunction is allowed to remain unpublicised on the basis of such a danger, it does not matter.

The rule about doing a good deed is simple. If anyone does a good deed, then looks forward to be praised for it - or, worse still, takes elaborate steps to make this happen - then, despite having done what one did, this act will be deemed blameworthy under the Islamic legal-moral norms. And should one elect not to do that good deed at all, that would, then, be taken as far more blameworthy. As for the natural desire to do something good and thereby earn a fair name, it is not included under the purview of this ruling - unless, of course, if one does not make unusual projections to earn that fair name (Bayān al-Qur'ān).

Verses 190 - 194

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ الَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ ﴿١٩٠﴾ الَّذِيْنَ يَذْكُرُوْنَ اللّٰهَ قِيَامًا وَّقُعُوْدًا وَّ عَلٰى جُنُوْبِهِمْ وَيَتَفَكَّرُوْنَ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هٰذَا بَاطِلًا سُبْحٰنَكَ فَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ ﴿١٩١﴾ رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ مَنْ تُدْخِلِ النَّارَ فَقَدْ أَخْزَيْتَهُ، وَمَا لِلظّٰلِمِيْنَ مِنْ أَنْصَارٍ ﴿١٩٢﴾ رَبَّنَا إِنَّنَا سَمِعْنَا مُنَادِيًا يُّنَادِيْ لِلْإِيْمَانِ أَنْ اٰمِنُوْا بِرَبِّكُمْ فَاٰمَنَّا رَبَّنَا فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوْبَنَا وَكَفِّرْ عَنَّا سَيِّاٰتِنَا وَتَوَفَّنَا مَعَ الْأَبْرَارِ ﴿١٩٣﴾ رَبَّنَا وَاٰتِنَا مَا وَعَدْتَّنَا عَلٰى رُسُلِكَ وَ لَا تُخْزِنَا يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ، إِنَّكَ لَا تُخْلِفُ الْمِيْعَادَ ﴿١٩٤﴾

Surely, in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and in the alternation of night and day, there are signs for the people of wisdom, [190] **who remember Allah standing and sitting, and (lying) on their sides, and ponder on the creation of the heavens and the earth (saying:) "Our Lord, You have not created all this in vain. We proclaim Your purity. So, save us from the punishment of Fire.** [191] **Our Lord, whomsoever You**

admit into the Fire, You have disgraced him indeed. And for the unjust there are no supporters. Our Lord, We heard a herald calling towards Faith: 'Believe in your Lord.' And We believed. [192] **Our Lord, forgive us, then, our sins, and write off our evil deeds, and take us unto You with the righteous.** [193] **And our Lord, give us what You have promised us through Your messengers, and do not put us to disgrace on the Day of Doom. Surely you do not got back on Your promise."** [194]

Verse 189 appearing immediately earlier particularly and strongly stressed upon *Tauḥīd*, the Oneness of Allah. So, the verse (190) which follows here, presents the proof of *Tauḥīd* and, along with it, mentions the merit of those who act strictly in accordance with the dictates of *Tauḥīd* and, by implication, it also motivates others to do the same.

In addition, the earlier mention of pain caused by the disbelievers bears congruity to the verses appearing presently. This can be understood in the background in which the disbelievers, out of hostility, requested the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that he should turn Mount Ṣafā into solid gold. Thereupon, this verse was revealed indicating that there were so many proofs confirming the Truth all around them - why would they not deliberate in them?

As for the reality of their request to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, it was not motivated to find out the Truth. Instead, it was out of hostility - so, they would have still not believed, even if their request was granted.

Commentary

The background of Revelation

Commenting on the background of revelation concerning these verses, Ibn Ḥibbān in his Ṣaḥīḥ and Ibn 'Asākir in his History have reported that the Companion 'Aṭā ibn Abī Rabāḥ رضى الله عنه went to Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها and said to her: 'Of the things about the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, tell me what you saw as most unique out of the many states of his life.' Thereupon, Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah said: 'Which state are you talking about? In reality, everything about him was unique. Yet, I would tell you about one very unique event. It so happened that the noble Prophet, may Allah bless and protect him, came to me one night and entered into the comforter with me. Then,

he said: 'Allow me to worship my Lord.' He rose from the bed, made *Wuḍū* and stood up for *Ṣalāh*. And in this standing position of *Qiyām*, he wept, so much so that his tears trickled down his blessed chest. Then, he bent down for *Rukū'* and there too he wept. Then he did his *Sajdah* and kept weeping in the *Sajdah* very much like before. Then, he raised his head and continued weeping until came the morning. Sayyidnā Bilāl came in and informed him about the time of the *Fajr Ṣalāh*. Sayyidnā Bilāl says: I submitted: 'my master, why do you weep like that? Is'nt it that Allah Almighty has forgiven you all your past and future sins?' He said: 'So then, should I not continue to be a grateful servant of Allah? And in offering this gratitude of mine, why should I not shed tears, specially tonight when Allah Almighty has revealed this blessed verse to me :

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ...

Surely, in the creation of the heavens and the earth... (190)

After that, he said: "Ruined is the person who recited these verses but failed to deliberate therein."

So, in order to deliberate into this verse, let us begin by answering some questions first.

What does 'the creation of the heavens and the earth' mean?

Since *Khalq* is a verbal noun which signifies creation or origination, it means that there are, in the creation of the heavens and the earth, great signs of Allah Almighty. Therefore, all those Divinely created beings and things in the heavens and the earth also get to be included therein. Then, among these created beings there are kingdoms after kingdoms - each having different types and states - yet each and every such created being is comprehensively pointing out to its Creator. Then, going a little deeper, one would discover that 'the heavens' is inclusive of all heights and 'the earth' covers all lows. Thus, high or low, all dimensions owe their existence to Allah Almighty.

The different forms of 'the alternation of the night and day'

Let us now determine the meaning of 'the alternation of the night and day'. The word '*Ikhtilāf*' translated here as 'alternation' is derived from the Arabic usage: اختلف فلان فلانًا (Such and such person arrived after

such and such person). So, the Arabic expression translated as 'the alternation of the night and day' means that the night goes and the day comes and when the day goes, night comes.

The word *Ikhtilāf* translated here as 'alternation' could also be taken to mean increase or decrease. For example, during winter, the night is long and the day is short; while during the summer, the order is reversed. Similarly, the difference between the night and day is also caused by the difference in the geographical location of countries. For example, countries closer to the North Pole have longer days as compared to areas farther away from it. So, it should not be difficult to infer from each such phenomena the essential proof of the most perfect power of Allah Almighty.

What is the meaning of the word, *Āyāt* ?

Āyāt (آيات) is the plural of *Āyah* (آية) and is used to express more than one single meaning. Miracles are known as *Āyāt*. It is also applied to the verses of the Holy Qur'ān. It is also used in a third sense, that of proof and sign. Here, in the present context, this very third sense is what is intended - meaning that, in these manifestations, there are great signs of Allah, and the proofs of His power.

Wise are those who believe in Allah and always remember Him

To determine the meaning of the expression اولو الالباب, we look into the word '*albāb*' which is the plural of *lubb*. Lexically, it means the essence. Since the essence of everything is its sum-total and the key to its nature and uses, therefore, human wisdom has been called *lubb*, for wisdom is the essence of human nature. Thus, '*albāb*' means 'the people of wisdom'.

Now the problem before us is how to identify the people of wisdom because the whole world claims to be wise. Not even a moron would be ready to admit being devoid of wisdom, reason or sense. Therefore, the Holy Qur'ān has told us about some signs which are, in fact, the most sound criterion of wisdom. The first such sign is Faith in Allah. Think of the knowledge which comes from the senses such as hearing, seeing, smelling and tasting and communication, something also found in non-rational animals. Now, it is the job of wisdom or reason to arrive, through signs, circumstantial evidence and proofs, at a particular conclusion which is beyond sense-perception and through which it may

become possible to grasp the final link of the chain of causes.

Keeping this rule in view, just think about this universe around us. It should not be too difficult to realize that this wonderfully organised system - comprising the heavens and the earth and containing the whole of creation in between them which is further streamlined by the most deft management of everything, big or small, existing therein - certainly points out to a special Being that has to be the highest and the foremost in terms of Knowledge, Wisdom, Power and Authority. A Being who originated and fashioned all these components with the wisest of consideration and under Whose intention and will this whole system keeps operating. That Being, as obvious, can only be that of the most-exalted Allah. How well some spiritual master has put it in a few words:

هر گیا هے که از زمین روید ، وحده لا شریك له گوید

Every blade of grass sprouting from the earth
Says: He is One; there are no partners in Him.

That human intentions and plans keep failing everywhere all the time is a matter of common experience. These cannot be called the prime movers and operators of this universal system. Therefore, the outcome of the deliberation into the creation of the heavens and the earth and into what has been created in them is, as wisdom dictates, living to know, obey and remember Allah. Anyone unmindful of it does not deserve to be classed as wise. Therefore, the Holy Qur'ān has given the following sign of the wise:

اَلَّذِيْنَ يَذْكُرُوْنَ اللّٰهَ قِيَامًا وَّقُعُوْدًا وَّعَلٰى جُنُوْبِهِمْ

That is, the wise are those who remember Allah - standing and sitting and (lying) on their sides (191).

In other words it means that they are engaged in the remembrance of Allah under all conditions and at all times.

From here we find out that the thing which our modern world takes as the criterion of reason and good sense is simply a deception. Catering to greed, some people take accumulation of money as their ideal of intelligence. There are others who love to equate human intelligence with scientific inventions and electronic applications and for them, these are the power. But, real good sense lies in the message

brought by the prophets and Messengers of Allah Almighty, for they, proceeding through knowledge and wisdom and advancing from the low to the high in the chain of causation, skipped the intermediary stages. Granted that human beings moved from raw materials to machines and science gave them access to power through utilization of energy generated in many ways. But, higher intelligence demands that human beings take that real giant step farther ahead so that they can discover that the main agent of human accomplishment is certainly not the water or clay or iron or copper or some other material, not even the machines that generate power. This function was accomplished by none else but the One who created the fire, the water and the air through which human beings were enabled to control technology and energy:

کار زلفِ تست مشک افشانی اما عاشقاں
مصلحت راتہمتے بر آ ھُوئے چین بستہ اند

Spreading the scent of musk is the function of Your tresses
But, those who love You have, out of expediency,
ascribed the credit to the Chinese deer!

Let us understand this through the commonplace example of an ignorant dweller of some distant jungle who reaches a railway station and notices that such a huge railway train stops at the flash of a red flag while it starts moving at the flutter of a green one. Then, should he say that these red and green flags must have super power as they can stop and move such a powerful engine of the big train. Obviously, all sensible people would dismiss the ignoramus telling him that no power is vested in these flags. Instead, power rests with the person who is sitting in the engine room and stops or moves the train by watching these signals. But, someone smarter might reject the assumption that the engine driver had any instrinsic power to move or stop the train. His strength had nothing to do with it. He will go a step farther and attribute this power to the mechanical parts of the engine. But, a scientist would bypass cold mechanics of the engine and ascribe the real power to the steam which has been generated in the engine through heat and water. But, that is as far as the so-called scientific thinking goes. At this point, comes the thinking of the prophets, may peace be upon them, who would be telling these tyrants of their intel-

lect: If the ignoramus who took the flags or the driver or the engine parts as the respository of power was in error, so are those who take sources of energy powerful by themselves - intellectually, they too are in error! The prophets would ask them to take yet another step forward so that they could lay their hands on the lost end of this tangled ball of string. May be, by doing so, they could have access to the final link of the great chain of caused things and there they could find the answer that the ultimate master of all power is none else but the One who created all forces which were harnessed to achieve human models of power.

It is not difficult to deduce from what has been said here that those who get to know Allah and remember Him at all times and under all conditions are the only people who deserve to be called 'the wise'. It is for this reason that the Holy Qur'ān has defined the 'People of Wisdom' as اَلَّذِيْنَ يَذْكُرُوْنَ اللّٰهَ قِيَامًا وَّقُعُوْدًا وَّعَلٰى جُنُوْبِهِمْ : '... those who remember Allah standing and sitting, and (lying) on their sides.'

It is on this basis that Muslim jurists have answered the case of a deceased person who, before his death, made a will that his property be given to the wise. As to who will be given this property, they have ruled that those who will deserve this are abstaining scholars who do not seek unnecessary material resources and are averse to the blind pursuit of the worldly, for they are the wise ones in the real sense. (al-Durr al-Mukhtār, Kitābul-Waṣiyyah)

Also worth attention at this point is the fact that the Sharī'ah of Islam has not enjoined abundance in any other mode of worship except *Dhikr*. But, about *Dhikr*, the command is: وَاذْكُرُوا اللّٰهَ ذِكْرًا كَثِيْرًا (Remember Allah remembering abundantly). The reason is that all modes of worship, other than *Dhikr*, have some conditions and rules without observing which those acts of worship are not considered to have been duly performed. This is contrary to *Dhikr* which can be performed at all times and under all conditions whether standing, sitting, lying, with or without *wuḍū*. Perhaps, this verse is indicative of this element of wisdom.

The second sign of the people of wisdom given in this verse is that they deliberate in the creation of the heavens and the earth:

يَتَفَكَّرُوْنَ فِيْ خَلْقِ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ

And ponder on the creation of the heavens and the earth - 191.

Here we need to determine the meaning of this act of 'pondering' and the level at which it operates.

The Arabic words, *Fikr* and *Tafakkur*, literally mean to ponder, to deliberate and think about something which is an effort to arrive at its reality. From this verse we find out that this act of pondering is also an act of worship and very much like the *Dhikr* (Remembrance) of Allah. The difference is that the objective of *Dhikr* is the remembrance of the Being and Attributes of Almighty Allah while the objective of *Fikr* and *Tafakkur* or thinking and deliberation relates to His creations. This is because the perception of the reality of the Divine Being and the Attributes is beyond human reason. Deliberation of this aspect results in nothing but wonder. The great poet, Rumi said:

دور بینان بارگاہِ الست ، غیر ازیں پے نبردہ اندکہ ہست

Expert watchers of the Court of the Being of the Covenant
Found out nothing but that He is.

In fact, this is an area of inquiry where excessive deliberation in the Being and Attributes of Almighty Allah could, at times, cause one's imperfect reason to stray into error. Therefore, the greatest among spiritual masters have emphatically advised:

تَفَكَّرُوْا فِيْ اٰيَاتِ اللّٰهِ وَلَا تَتَفَكَّرُوْا فِي اللّٰهِ

Deliberate in the signs of Allah, but do not deliberate in Allah.

It means that there are signs in what Allah has created. One should think about these signs. But, one should not deliberate into the very Being and Attributes of Almighty Allah for that is beyond one's reach. One can see everything in the light of the sun. But, should one wish to see the sun itself, his eyes would get dazzled. Who is Allah? What is He like? These are questions all wise thinkers and spiritual masters have answered by suggesting :

نہ ہر جائے مرکب تواں تاختن

کہ جاہا سپر باید انداختن

You do not have to mount an assault on every field of inquiry
For, there are places where you should simply surrender.

However, thinking about creation inevitably leads one to realize the presence of its Creator. Look at the enormous expanse of the sky above us with the sun, the moon and the many planets and stars bound with the solar and lunar system under firm and pre-determined laws working so well for thousands of years without being serviced or refurbished in some workshop. Then, there is this earth of ours, its rivers and mountains holding many marvels of creation, the trees, animals and hidden minerals, and the air that circulates in between the heavens and the earth and the rains that come and the electricity generated therein. This whole system so elaborately set up leads every sane person who is willing to think and understand that there is some special Being which is far ahead of everyone in power and control. This is what *Ma'rifat* is, the stage of knowing, realizing. So, this kind of deliberation which leads to the discovery of the Divine is an act of worship, a great one indeed. For this reason, Ḥaḍrat Ḥasan Baṣrī said: تفكر ساعة خير من قيام ليلة (Ibn Kathīr) which means: An hour spent in thinking about the signs of Allah is better and far more useful than a whole night standing in worship.

Ḥaḍrat 'Umar ibn 'Abdul-'Azīz has characterized this deliberation as a superior act of worship (Ibn Kathīr).

Sayyidnā Ḥasan ibn 'Āmir رضى الله عنه said that he had heard from many noble Companions that deliberation is the light of faith.

Ḥaḍrat Abū Sulaymān al-Dārānī said: When I go out from my house, everything I cast my glance on makes me realize that it contains one or the other blessing of Allah for me and that in its presence I have a good source of learning my lesson (Ibn Kathīr). So, the knowers of the secrets of the self have always maintained:

Every blade of grass sprouting from the earth
Says: He is One and in Him there is no partner.

Ḥaḍrat Sufyān ibn 'Uyaynah has said: Reflection is a beam of light entering your heart.

Hadrat Wahb ibn Munabbih said: One who thinks a lot will understand reality, and who understands will arrive at sound knowledge, and who has sound knowledge is bound to act accordingly (Ibn Kathīr).

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ said: A pious man saw an ascetic sitting at a spot with a graveyard on one of his sides and a garbage dump on the other. The passing pious man remarked - You have two treasure troves before you, one of them is the human treasure known as graveyard and the other is the treasure of wealth and property turned into refuse and filth. These two treasures are enough to learn your lesson. (Ibn Kathīr)

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ used to go out of the city into some wilderness with the express purpose of training and teaching his heart. When he reached there, he would ask the spot of land: Where are those who lived here? (این اھلک؟) After that, he would answer his own question by saying: Everything must perish save the presence of His being (كُلُّ شَىْءٍ هَالِكٌ اِلَّا وَجْهَهٗ). (Ibn Kathīr). This was how he summoned and preserved the remembrance of Afterlife in his heart.

Ḥaḍrat Bishr al-Ḥāfī said: If people pondered over the greatness of Almighty Allah, it would have become impossible for them to remain sinful and disobedient.

Sayyidnā 'Īsā علیہ السلام said: O you who were created weak, fear God wherever you are. Live in the world like a guest. Make prayer places your home. Let your eyes weep fearing God, let your body remain patient and let your heart keep reflecting. Used to this, worry not about tomorrow's bread.

It is this kind of thoughtfulness and concern that these verses identify as the superior quality of wise people. Pondering over the creation of Almighty Allah, such people get to know their Creator and are personally convinced of the temporality of the physical world. This is a superb act of worship resplendent with the light of faith. Similarly, those who see and experience the signs of Almighty Allah yet get entangled with the superficial glamour of what has been created - as a result of which they fail to know their real master - is rank heedlessness and very much juvenile. Sages have warned that whoever fails to learn a lesson from the universe before his eyes will find that the ability of his heart to realize the truth has corroded in proportion to his heedlessness. The eager protagonists of scientific progress all too engrossed in their breakthroughs fail to pay heed to their own ultimate fate. Consequently, the speed with which developments in scien-

tific inquiry unfold the secrets of Allah's creation is also the speed at which they are receding farther away from reality and God. Commenting on the post-industrial revolution thinking, Akbar of Allahabad, poet, humourist, said:

بھول کر بیٹھا ھے یورپ آسمانی باپ کو

بس خدا سمجھا ھے اس نے برق کو اور بھاپ کو

Europe has forgotten the Father in the Heaven
For them, electricity and steam are as good as God.

It is about such visionless people with the dead weight of education and culture on their backs, the Holy Qur'ān says:

وَكَأَيِّنْ مِّنْ اٰيَةٍ فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ يَمُرُّوْنَ عَلَيْهَا وَهُمْ عَنْهَا مُعْرِضُوْنَ

And there are so many signs in the heavens and the earth which these people pass by with faces turned askance paying no heed to them - 12:109.

Now, as we move to the last part of this verse (191), رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هٰذَا بَاطِلًا (Our Lord, You have not created all this in vain), we can clearly see that this is the outcome of pondering over the signs of Allah's power. It means that there is nothing purposeless in Allah's creation. On the contrary, there are thousands of wise considerations behind it. Things have been harnessed to serve human beings with man being the user of resources in the whole universe. This should make human beings see that the universe has been created for their benefit and in their interest. Likewise, every human being has been created to obey and worship Allah. This is his or her purpose of life.

Further on, from verses 192 to 194, there appears a set of pleas and prayers from such people, people who realized that this universe is no exercise in futility and that is is brimming with open proofs of the great power and wisdom of its Creator. So, once they knew their Creator and Sustainer, they submitted before Him.

1. The first request they make is: قِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ : Save us from the Fire.

2. The second request is: Save us from the disgrace of the Hereafter for whoever is condemned to the Fire stands humiliated before the whole world. Some scholars have said that humiliation on the plains of Ressurection will be so disgraceful a punishment that one

would wish to be cast into the (fire of) Hell but that the multitudes present on that fateful day do not get to hear about his or her misdeeds.

3. The third request is: 'We have heard the message given by the herald sent by You, that is, the message of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and we believed in him. So, forgive our major sins and expiate our shortcomings and misdeeds and give us death in the company of the righteous, that is, make us a part of their group.'

These three requests were aimed at safety against punishment and pain and loss. The fourth request is about promised blessings, the blessings of Paradise promised through the noble prophets. This prayer for blessings is being made with the added request that there be no disgrace on the Day of Judgment. In other words, the request is to be excused from the torturous procedure of accounting (for all of one's deeds), disgrace (as a result of misdeeds) and then forgiveness (on account of Allah's mercy). The prayer is for outright forgiveness for Allah does not go back on His word. What is the purpose of this submission and re-submission? The purpose is to say: O Allah, enable us to become deserving, and a beneficiary of this promise (made by You), and enable us to remain steadfast so that we breath our last in this world with faith in our heart (ایمان) and busy doing what is good in Your sight (عمل صالح).

Verses 195 - 199

فَاسْتَجَابَ لَهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ أَنِّي لَا أُضِيعُ عَمَلَ عَامِلٍ مِّنكُم مِّن
ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنثَىٰ ۚ بَعْضُكُم مِّن بَعْضٍ ۚ فَالَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا وَأُخْرِجُوا
مِن دِيَارِهِمْ وَأُوذُوا فِي سَبِيلِي وَقَاتَلُوا وَقُتِلُوا لَأُكَفِّرَنَّ عَنْهُمْ
سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ وَلَأُدْخِلَنَّهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ ۚ ثَوَابًا مِّنْ
عِندِ اللَّهِ ۚ وَاللَّهُ عِندَهُ حُسْنُ الثَّوَابِ ﴿١٩٥﴾ لَا يَغُرَّنَّكَ تَقَلُّبُ
الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فِي الْبِلَادِ ﴿١٩٦﴾ مَتَاعٌ قَلِيلٌ ثُمَّ مَأْوَاهُمْ
جَهَنَّمُ ۚ وَبِئْسَ الْمِهَادُ ﴿١٩٧﴾ لَٰكِنِ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا رَبَّهُمْ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٌ

تَجْرِیْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِیْنَ فِیْهَا نُزُلًا مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَمَا عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ خَیْرٌ لِّلْاَبْرَارِ ﴿۱۹۸﴾ وَاِنَّ مِنْ اَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ لَمَنْ یُّؤْمِنُ بِاللّٰهِ وَمَاۤ اُنْزِلَ اِلَیْكُمْ وَمَاۤ اُنْزِلَ اِلَیْهِمْ خٰشِعِیْنَ لِلّٰهِ ۙ لَا یَشْتَرُوْنَ بِاٰیٰتِ اللّٰهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِیْلًا ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمْ اَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ سَرِیْعُ الْحِسَابِ ﴿۱۹۹﴾

So, their Lord answered their prayer, "I do not let go to waste the labour of a worker from you, male or female. You are from one another. So, those who emigrated, and were expelled from their homes, and were tortured in My way, and fought, and were killed, I shall certainly write off their evil deeds, and shall certainly admit them into gardens beneath which rivers flow, being a reward from Allah. And it is Allah with Whom is the beauty of reward. [195] **The moving of the disbelievers about the earth should not deceive you.** [196] **It is just a little enjoyment. After that their resort is Hell, and it is an evil abode.** [197] **But those who fear their Lord, for them there are Gardens beneath which rivers flow, where they shall live forever - hospitality from Allah. And what is with Allah is best for the righteous.** [198] **And surely, among the people of the Book there are those who believe in Allah and in what has been sent down to you and what has been sent down to them humbling themselves before Allah. They do not barter away the verses of Allah for paltry (worldly) gains. They have their reward with their Lord. Surely, Allah is swift at reckoning.** [199]

Mentioned in verses previous to this were some prayers made by good believers.

The first verse (195) appearing above reports that these prayers have been accepted and believers have been given the good news that great rewards have been marked for their good deeds. In the second and third verses (196-197), Muslims have been instructed not to be deceived by the apparent affluence and worldwide maneuvering of disbelievers for this is transitory and the punishment which follows in its wake is eternal.

The fourth verse (198) reasserts the promise of the lasting blessings of Paradise for Muslims who always keep fearing Allah.

The fifth verse (199) particularly mentions the great reward that awaits those Muslims who used to be from among the People of the Book but chose to embrace Islam as their faith.

Commentary

While explaining the statement: لَاُكَفِّرَنَّ عَنْهُمْ سَيِّاٰتِهِمْ (I shall certainly write off their evil deeds) in Verse 195, Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī has restricted it to the forgiveness of sins and shortcomings relating to the fulfillment of the rights of Allah. The reason is that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said in *Ḥadith* that debts are not included under the purview of this verse. The rule is that the person concerned or his heirs should pay off the debt or have it forgiven. There is no other alternative in this case unless Allah Almighty is specially generous for someone and puts it in the heart of the wronged party that they should relent and forgive. This would, then, be a different matter. In fact, with some, this would also be the case.

So, let us keep in mind that all sins are forgiven following *Hijrah* (Emigration) and *Shahādah* (Surrendering life in the way of Allah, martyrdom) but the forgiveness of debts and other rights of people (*Ḥuqūqul-'Ibād*) has not been promised.

Verse 200

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اصْبِرُوْا وَصَابِرُوْا وَرَابِطُوْا وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿۲۰۰﴾

O those who believe, be patient, be more patient than others, and guard your frontiers, and fear Allah, so that you may be successful. [200]

This is the last verse of Sūrah 'Āl-'Imrān. The advice given here is quintessential for all Muslims.

Commentary

There are three things in the verse Muslims have been charged with. These are *Ṣabr, Muṣābarah* and *Murābaṭah*. The fourth element is *Taqwā* which is a necessary ingredient of all three. Their meanings are being given below.

Literally, the Arabic word '*Ṣabr*' means 'to hold' or 'to tie'. In the terminology of the Qur'ān and Sunnah, *Ṣabr*' is the effort made to control and defend one's slippery self against what is temperamentally unpleasing. This '*Ṣabr*' (roughly translated as 'patience' for want of an exact equivalent) takes three forms:

1. Patience with Duties: It means that everything commanded by Almighty Allah and His Messenger must be obediently pursued, no matter how burdensome the adherence to them may appear to be. The aim is to keep one's self almost rivetted to carry out injunctions despite hinderances.

2. Patience against Sins: It means holding the desiring self back from whatever has been prohibited by Allah and His Messenger, no matter how desirable and appealing it may be.

3. Patience in Distress: It means enduring in hardship and forbearing in pain and avoiding excessive anxiety. Such patience requires that all pain and comfort be taken to have come from Allah and from this realization comes the strength to keep one's self under control.

The word, '*Muṣābarah*' is a derivation from *Ṣabr*. It means staying firm and steadfast against the enemy.

The word, '*Murābaṭah*' comes from '*Rabṭ*'. Root-wise, it means 'to tie' and it is for this reason that '*Ribāṭ*' and '*Murābaṭah*' are taken to mean 'to tie horses' and 'get ready for war'. The Holy Qur'ān has used '*Ribāṭ*' in وَمِنْ رِبَاطِ الْخَيْلِ (of trained horses - 8:60) in that very sense. However, in the terminology of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth, this word has been used in two senses:

1. To secure Islamic frontiers for which it is necessary to be armed with military hardware, conventional or modern, so that the enemy abstains from venturing against Islamic frontiers.

2. To be so observant of and bound by making *Ṣalāh* with *Jamā'ah* that one starts looking forward to making the next *Ṣalāh* soon after having performed one.

Both these are highly acclaimed acts of worship in Islam. Out of their numerous merits, some are being given below:

***Ribāṭ*: The Guarding of Islamic Frontiers**

Staying along the Islamic frontiers to guard the area in battle-ready condition is known as '*Ribāṭ*' and '*Murābaṭah*'. It takes two forms. Firstly, there may be no danger of war breaking out, the border is secure and the duty is limited to being vigilant enough to ward off any impending threat. Under such condition, it is quite permissible for those on duty to start living there with their families and earn their living through farming or some such occupation. Under this condition, if the real intention is to guard and defend Islamic borders and living and earning there remains subservient to this intention, this person will get the reward for 'staying in the way of Allah' (رِبَاطٌ فِیْ سَبِیْلِ اللّٰہِ), even if he never fights. But, anyone whose real intention is not to guard and defend Islamic frontiers but would simply be there to eke out a living - even if he gets the chance of guarding the borders casually - this person will not be considered as 'one who stays in the way of Allah'. The other eventuality may be that the border is threatened by possible enemy attack. Under such condition, keeping women and children close by is not correct; only those who can fight against the enemy should live there. (Qurṭubī)

There are countless merits in both these cases. In the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī, it has been reported from Sayyidnā Sahl ibn Sa'd Sā'adī that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said: *Ribāṭ* for a day in the way of Allah is better than whatever there is in the whole world. In the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim, it has been reported from Sayyidnā Salmān that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said: *Ribāṭ* for a day and night is better than fasting for a whole month and standing in prayers for the entire night. Should one die in that state, the daily reward for his act of staying in the way of Allah will continue to reach him for ever. His sustenance will keep coming from Almighty Allah and he will stay protected against the Satan.

Abū Dawūd reports from Fuḍālah ibn 'Ubayd that the Holy Prophet

صلى الله عليه وسلم said: The roster of deeds credited to the person who dies ends with his death except in the case of a *Murābiṭ* (one who stays in the way of Allah) whose roster of good deeds goes on multiplying right through to the Day of Judgment and he remains covered against (the fear of punishment) on account of the scrutiny of deeds in his grave.

These narrations indicate that the act of staying in the way of Allah (*Ribāṭ*) is superior even to every charity the benefit of which keeps going on and on (*Ṣadaqah Jāriyah*). This is because the reward for charity the benefits of which continue lasts only upto the time people keep benefiting from the endowment of house, land, book or library. Once this benefit stops reaching people, the incumbent reward also stops. But, the reward of the person who stays in the way of Allah is not going to stop until the Day of Judgment. The reason is that Muslims as a community can continue doing what is good only when they are well-protected against enemy attacks. Thus, the act of a person who stays on to defend Islamic frontiers becomes the cause of good deeds performed by all Muslim in a peaceful setting. Therefore, the reward of such *Ribāṭ fī sabīlillāh* (staying in the way of Allah) will continue until the Day of Judgment. In addition to that, the reward for whatever other good deeds he used to do during his life in the world will continue without his having to actually do them. This is as it appears in ibn Mājah in an authentic narration from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah where he reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

من مات مرابطا فى سبيل الله اجرى عليه اجر عمله الصالح الذى كان يعمله واجرى عليه رزقه وامن من الفتان وبعثه الله يوم القيمة امنا من الفزع (تفسير القرطبى)

One who dies in a state of *Ribāṭ* in the way of Allah, the reward of whatever good he used to do in his mortal life will continue and so will his sustenance and he will stay protected against Satan and Allah will raise him on the Day of *Qiyāmah* free from fear. (Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī)

The merits mentioned in this narration are subject to the condition that the person meets his death while staying on the border to guard Islamic frontiers. But, there are other reports which indicate that his

post-death reward will still continue even if he were to return alive back to his family.

Sayyidna Ubayy ibn Ka'b narrates that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: The reward for sincerely guarding the weak border area of Muslims for one day, other than those of Ramadan, is superior to the reward for continuous fasting and nightly worship for one hundred years. *Ribat* for one day in Ramadan is superior to fasting and nightly worship for one thousand years (the narrator has expressed some doubt about the later). Then, he said: If Allah sends him back to his family in good health, no sin will be recorded in his name for a thousand years while good deeds will continue to be entered in his roster and the reward for his act of having stayed at the border to defend Islamic frontiers will keep coming to him until the Day of Judgment (Qurtubi).

Offering *Salah* with *Jama'ah* and waiting for the next is also 'staying in the way of Allah'

Sayyidna Abu Salaman ibn 'Abdur-Rahman narrates that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: I tell you something because of which Almighty Allah would forgive your sins and raise your spiritual status. These are: Making *Wudu* precisely and perfectly despite chilly weather or pain or wound because of which the washing of body parts that must be washed while making *wudu* may appear to be hard to do; and going to the *Masjid* time and again more than often; and waiting to make the next *Salah* following the one already made. Then, he said: ذلكم الرباط : For you, this is the *Ribat* (staying to guard Islamic frontiers in the way of Allah).

After having reported this *hadith*, Imam al-Qurtubi has said that in the light of this *hadith* it can be hoped that a person who adheres to the practice of waiting between two prayers with congregation will receive the reward which has been mentioned in *ahadith* for *Ribat* in the way of Allah.

Special Note:

In this verse, Muslims have been instructed to remain patient which is possible any time under all conditions. Relevant details have

appeared earlier. The second instruction given is to be more patient than others which is to be demonstrated while fighting disbelievers. The third instruction relates to a situation when an armed conflict with disbelievers is likely and there is the danger that fighting may erupt anytime. Finally comes the instruction to observe *Taqwā* (fear of Allah) which is the essence of everything one does and on which depends the Divine acceptance of what has been done. This set of instructions is the sum of almost all injunctions of the Sharī'ah. May Almighty Allah give all of us the best of ability to act in accordance with these instructions.

The Commentary on
Sūrah 'Āl-'Imrān ends here.

Sūrah Al-Nisā'

Verses 1 - 2

بِسۡمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلنَّاسُ ٱتَّقُوا۟ رَبَّكُمُ ٱلَّذِى خَلَقَكُم مِّن نَّفۡسٍ وَٰحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنۡهَا زَوۡجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنۡهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَآءً ۚ وَٱتَّقُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ ٱلَّذِى تَسَآءَلُونَ بِهِۦ وَٱلۡأَرۡحَامَ ۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيۡكُمۡ رَقِيبًا ﴿١﴾ وَءَاتُوا۟ ٱلۡيَتَٰمَىٰٓ أَمۡوَٰلَهُمۡ ۖ وَلَا تَتَبَدَّلُوا۟ ٱلۡخَبِيثَ بِٱلطَّيِّبِ ۖ وَلَا تَأۡكُلُوٓا۟ أَمۡوَٰلَهُمۡ إِلَىٰٓ أَمۡوَٰلِكُمۡ ۚ إِنَّهُۥ كَانَ حُوبًا كَبِيرًا ﴿٢﴾

With the name of Allah, The All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful.

O men, fear your Lord who created you from a single soul, and from it created its match, and spread from the two, many men and women. And fear Allah in whose name you ask each other (for your rights), and surely, Allah is watchful over you. [1] **And give the orphans their property, and do not substitute what is bad for what is good, and do not eat up their property alongwith your own. It is, surely, a great sin.** [2]

Sequence

The last verse of Sūrah 'Āl-'Imrān was concluded with an exhortation to *Taqwā*, the fear of Allah. The present Sūrah begins with *Taqwā* in the mode of command. The previous Sūrah mentioned some battles, described the manner of treating antagonists, condemned misappropriation in battle spoils and took up several other matters. In the earlier part of the present Sūrah, there are injunctions about rights related to one's own people which must be fulfilled while living and inter-acting with them, such as, the rights of orphans, relatives and wives (known as *Ḥuqūqul-'Ibād*: the rights of the servants of Allah). But, there are some rights which are justiciable, that is, their fulfillment can be enforced through law, like common transactions of buying and selling. The rights involved in lease, tenancy and wages can be

settled through mutual agreements and arbitration; should a party fall short in fulfilling settled rights, these can be legally retrieved and enforced. But, the fulfillment of the rights of those in one's own charge - children, parents, husband and wife, and orphans - and the rights of other relatives which fall on each other - all depend upon civilized behaviour, respect, loving and caring, and above all on that genuinely heart-felt desire to do what is good for them. These are behaviour patterns which cannot be weighed on a scale of things. That they be determined fully and perfectly through mutual agreements is also much too difficult. Therefore, there is just no other method of their fulfillment except having the fear of Allah and the fear of what would happen in the life to come. This is known as *Taqwā* and the truth of the matter is that this power of *Taqwā* is more effective than the combined powers of government and law. Hence, the Sūrah opens with the command of *Taqwā* when it says: يَاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوْا رَبَّكُمُ (O men, fear your Lord).

The word, '*ittaqū*' translated here as 'fear' means 'fear acting against your Lord' which perhaps is the reason why the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم used to recite this verse as part of his address while solemnizing a marriage. Therefore, reciting it in the *Khuṭbah* of *Nikāḥ* is a perenniel revival of the Sunnah. Here, the form of address in the verse is worth attention. It says: يَاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ (O men) which includes all human beings, men or women, and whether they are present at the time of the revelation of the Qur'ān or shall continue to be born right through to the Day of Doom. Then, alongwith the command of '*ittaqū*' (fear) the word used is '*Rabb*' (Lord) which has been selected out of the most fair names of Allah. This is to point out that the fear of Allah so enjoined has a justification and wisdom of its own. The Being totally responsible for man's nurture the manifestations of Whose Lord-worthiness he witnesses every moment of his life, certainly deserves all the awe one is capable of. The very thought that anyone could rise in antagonism and defiance against Allah is terribly dangerous.

Immediately after, the text brings into focus the most exalted majesty of the Lord by saying that He created human beings, all of them, in His wisdom and mercy. Here it was quite possible to create and cause to be present, whatever it was to be, in more than one way.

But, He chose to have one way and one form, a very particular one, when he created all human beings from the one and only human being, that is, Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام, and thus it was that He tied all of them in a strong bond of brotherhood. So, it is not only the fear of Allah and the fear of *Ākhirah* (Hereafter) which demand man's allegiance to the Lord of all creation, but this bond of brotherhood between human beings also requires that rights of humanity - of mutual sympathy, well-being and collective good - be fully discharged. And between man and man, let there be no one high or low in race or caste, in colour or language, and that all such distinctions be never made the criterion of good or bad, nobility or meanness. Therefore, it was said: الَّذِىْ خَلَقَكُمْ مِّنْ نَّفْسٍ وَّاحِدَةٍ وَّ خَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيْرًا وَّ نِسَآءً meaning 'who has created you from a single soul (that is, Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام who is the father of all human beings), and from it created its match (that is, his wife, Ḥawwā' (Eve), and spread from the two, many men and women (in the world)'.

In short, this verse serves as an introduction to injunctions which are going to appear in this Sūrah. The purpose here is to dissuade human beings from becoming the usurpers of Divine rights, while at the same time, by telling them that they all are the children of the same father, the wonderful humane dimension of love, mutual sympathy and concern was given as the working hypothesis of common living, so that the mutual rights of relatives, orphans and married couples could be fulfilled right from the heart at the very grass-root level.

Towards the end of verse 1, the exhortation to fear Allah has been beamed at man from yet another angle. Is'nt it that man demands his rights from others in the name of Allah and exacts what he wants from them? It means that one who expects others to fear Allah should do that himself as well. The last word, *wal-arḥām,* is there to warn that any shortcoming in taking good care of near relations, whether from the side of one's father or mother, should be avoided.

The second verse emphasizes the rights of orphaned children and establishes rules to protect their property.

The commentary which follows takes up the last two aspects of near relations and orphans in some detail.

Commentary

Treating Near Relations Well:

The word, '*al-arḥām*' in verse 1 is the plural of *raḥim*. *Raḥim* is womb. The womb of the mother is the home of the child until born. Since this womb is the source of blood relationship, the act of maintaining relations in that line is called *ṣilatur-raḥim* in Arabic (literally, umbilical link or bond or relationship). The converse of it, that is, showing carelessness and indifference towards natural linkage based on blood relationship is identified as *qaṭ'-al-raḥim* (literally, umbilical delinkage, meaning cutting off relationship with one's kin).

The noble *aḥādīth* have laid great emphasis on bonds of kinship. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said:

من احب ان يبسط له فى رزقه وينسأ له فى اثره فليصل رحمه

> Whoever likes to have his livelihood made plentiful and his age extended for him should maintain good relations with his near of kin. (Mishkāt, p. 419)

This *ḥadīth* tells us about two benefits that issue forth from treating near relations well. The merit of the Hereafter vouchsafed, this fair treatment of one's kin has its benefits in this life as well, that is, it removes straightenings from his livelihood and blesses his age with more good years.

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Salām رضى الله عنه says: When the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم came to Madīnah al-Tayyibah and I presented myself before him, the very first words from him which fell into my ears were:

يا ايها الناس افشوا السلام ط واطعموا الطعام وصلوا الارحام، وصلوا بالليل والناس ينام، تدخلوا الجنة بسلام

> O men, make a practice of greeting each other with *salām*, and feed people (for the pleasure of Allah), and treat near relations well, and pray by night while people sleep - you will enter Paradise in peace. (Mishkāt, p. 108)

In another *ḥadīth*, it has been reported that *Ummul-Mu'minīn* (the Mother of the Faithful) Sayyidah Maymūna رضى الله عنها had freed her bond woman. When she told the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم about it, he said:

لواعطيتها اخوالك كان اعظم لاجرك

Had you given her to your maternal uncle, your reward would have been greater. (Mishkāt, p. 171)

Although, Islam motivates people to free slaves and rates it as one of the finest acts of merit, yet the status of treating relatives fairly has been given more importance. There is another narration on the same subject in which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been reported to have said:

الصدقة علي المسكين صدقة وهي على ذى الرحم ثنتان صدقة وصلة

Charity to the needy is just charity, while to a near relative it becomes two fold: charity and kinship. (Mishkāt, p. 171)

Hence, a simple change in the end-use of charity yields two types of merits.

As opposed to this there is the attitude of cold-shouldering or severing of blood relationships. How stern are the warnings given in *ḥadīth* reports against this can be imagined from the following two *aḥādīth*:

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

(١) لا يدخل الجنّة قاطعٌ

1. A breaker of (blood) relationships shall not enter Paradise. (Mishkāt, p. 419)

(٢) لا تنزل الرحمة على قوم فيه قاطع رحم

2. Mercy shall not descend upon a people among whom there is a breaker of (blood) relationships. (Mishkāt, p. 420)

The statement in the last sentence of this verse: إِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيْبًا (and surely, Allah is watchful over you) motivates human hearts to fulfil rights as and when they are due because Divine watchfulness implies awareness of whatever there is in human hearts - intentions, scruples, motives - everything. Doing things half-heartedly, formally, or for fear of possible embarrassment, without any genuine desire to serve, shall remain acts unacceptable to Allah. Incidentally, from here we find out why Allah should be feared - because He is watchful over everyone, always. As pointed out elsewhere too, this is typical of the

usual style of the Holy Qur'ān when it does not introduce laws in sheer cold print like the laws of the governments of this world, but puts them forth in the manner of education, training and affection by not restricting itself to the word of law alone, but by combining it with the grooming of minds and hearts as well.

The Rights of the Orphans and the Protection of Their Property:

The first verse stressed upon the care and concern for kinship in an absolute sense. Then came the general emphasis on the fulfillment of rights that issue forth from it. Now, the second verse carries the command to protect the properties of the orphans, as well as the prohibition of any misappropriation therein because the guardian of an orphaned child is usually one of his relatives. Therefore, this too has a bearing on the fulfillment of the rights of kinship.

The word, *'al-yatāmā'* in the first sentence of verse 2: وَاٰتُوا الْيَتٰمٰٓى اَمْوَالَهُمْ (And give the orphans their property), is the plural of *al-yatīm* (the orphan). Literally, it means the lone or the unique. Therefore, a pearl that resides in its shell all alone is called *Ad-Durr al-Yatīm* (literally, 'the orphan-pearl'). In the terminology of Islamic law, a *yatīm* is a child whose father has died. Incidentally, among animals, a *yatīm* is an offspring whose mother has died (Qāmūs). When a child attains maturity, that is, becomes pubert, he is no more referred to as *yatīm* in the terminology of Islamic law as it has been clarified in a *ḥadīth* which says: لايتم بعد احتلام that is, 'Orphanhood ends with puberty'. (Mishkāt, p. 284)

If orphaned children have property, either gifted to them or received by them through someone's inheritance, then, the responsibility of protecting this property, as well as the orphan himself, falls on the shoulders of the person who is the guardian of the orphan. It does not matter whether the guardian of the orphan was appointed by the father of the orphan himself before his death, or by the government. It is part of the guardian's duty that he should certainly cover all costs incurred on the necessary maintenance of the orphan from what he owns, but he should not give what the orphan owns into his possession before he has reached the age of maturity because he, being an immature minor, may lose it somewhere. So, the statement: 'give

the orphans their property', in this verse, has been clarified a little later in verse 5 where it has been said that the property of the orphans should be given to them after it is certain that they have become mature and do have the ability to distinguish between what is good for them and what is not.

Therefore, the meaning of 'give the orphans their property' in this verse should be taken in the sense of protecting their property so that it could be given to them at its appropriate time. Furthermore, there is a clear hint in this sentence towards the extent to which the guardian of the orphan is responsible for his welfare. It is being said here that his responsibility is not limited to just that he himself refrains from eating up or squandering the property of the orphan, but it is also an integral part of his duties that he should do everything possible to protect, guard and conserve the property in the best of state, capable of being handed over to him when mature.

The second sentence: وَلَا تَتَبَدَّلُوا الْخَبِيْثَ بِالطَّيِّبِ prohibits the substitution of bad things for the good ones. There were people who would let the number of things owned by the orphan stay unaltered, but would take something good from there and substitute it with something bad they themselves had. For example, swapping a lean goat for a healthy one, a bad coin for a good one, and things like that. Since, this too is a breach of trust in respect of the property of the orphan, and in the event that someone driven by his naughty self comes up with the excuse that he has not 'taken' what belonged to the orphan, he has rather 'exchanged' it. So, the Holy Qur'ān has forbidden it explicitly. Now, this forbiddance not only covers the substitution of one's bad things for the orphan's good things, but it also covers any attempt by the guardian to enter into any deal with some other person which results in a loss for the orphaned child.

The third sentence: وَلَا تَأْكُلُوْٓا اَمْوَالَهُمْ اِلٰٓى اَمْوَالِكُمْ (and do not eat up their property alongwith your own) obviously aims to forbid the eating up of the orphan's property through impermissible methods whether it is consumed from the jointly-held property of the guardian and the orphan, or that it is held separately and consumed from there. But, the general practice is that the guardian would hold what belongs to the orphan with his own personal holdings, would himself consume

out of there and let the orphan do the same. Since no separate accounting is involved here, even a religiously observing Muslim may fall into thinking that there was no sin in doing so. It was for this particular reason that the prohibition of consuming what belongs to the orphan by pooling it with one's own was mentioned here and warning was given to either keep the property of the orphan absolutely separate and spend from it separately so that there remains no danger of any excess; or should one elect to have a joint-expense system, then, the accounts maintained should be so clear that one can be sure of not having spent anything belonging to the orphan on his own person or in his interest. A detailed explanation of this has already appeared in وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ الْمُفْسِدَ مِنَ الْمُصْلِحِ (2:220) - Section 27 of Sūrah al-Baqarah, Volume 1 of this commentary.

The style of expression here gives a hint that those who misappropriate the property of orphans are generally the people who have properties of their own as well. So, it is by implication that such people have been reproached for stooping down to eat up the property of the orphans unlawfully while they have their own lawful belongings at hand - a shameful act indeed.

It will be noted that verse (2) mentions the prohibition of "eating" the property of the orphan because "eating" is one of the major end-uses of what one possesses. But, in common usage, every act of using up, consuming and exhausting is referred to as "eating up" - whether this be by 'using' or by 'eating'. The expression, "*lā ta'kulū*" (do not eat up) in the Holy Qur'ān carries this very sense of the usage, included in which are all sorts of impermissible uses. Therefore, spending anything from the property of the orphan unlawfully by any means whatsoever is absolutely *ḥarām* (forbidden).

The verse ends with the admonition, إِنَّهُ كَانَ حُوبًا كَبِيرًا (It is, surely, a great sin.) Here, the word '*ḥūb*', as said by Sayyidnā ibn 'Abbās, comes from the Ethiopean language. It means: 'major sin'. It is used in Arabic for the same meaning. The sense is that any unlawful appropriation or use of the orphan's property, be it because of lack of supervision or substitution of something bad for something good or because of consuming the orphan's assets as mixed up with one's own, is a great sin after all.

The stern warning to those who eat up the property of an orphan appears later towards the end of this section (4:10).

Verse 3

وَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا تُقْسِطُوا فِي الْيَتٰمٰى فَانْكِحُوا مَا طَابَ لَكُمْ مِّنَ النِّسَآءِ مَثْنٰى وَثُلٰثَ وَرُبٰعَ فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا فَوَاحِدَةً أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ ذٰلِكَ أَدْنٰى أَلَّا تَعُوْلُوا ﴿٣﴾

And if your fear that you will not do justice to the orphan, then, marry the women you like, in twos, in threes and in fours. But, if you fear that you will not maintain equity, then (keep to) one woman, or a bond-woman you own. It will be closer to your not doing injustice. [3]

Sequence

In the previous verse, guardians were warned against pilferage or misappropriation in the property of orphans. The present verse is an extension of the basic command from another angle. Here they are warned against any attempt to marry orphaned girls under their guardianship hoping to get away by fixing a dower of their choice and claiming their properties as additional benefit.

So, the Holy Qur'ān has very clearly declared that every excuse, device or strategem set up to usurp the property of the orphan is impermissible. It is the duty of the guardians that they should protect the rights of the orphans honestly.

Commentary

Orphaned girls: Violation of their rights and its prevention:

During *Jāhiliyyah* guardians holding orphaned girls under their charge used to pick up the ones who had good looks or owned properties of value and marry them or arranged to have them married to their sons. They would fix the dower of their choice, usually the lowest, and maintained them in whatever manner they elected for they were the very guardians and caretakers for them. Their fathers were not there to take care of their rights who would have certainly given them in marriage to a suitable person after full deliberation on all aspects a daughter faces in married life and would have made sure that they

remain happy and well-covered.

There is a narration in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī from Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی الله عنها which reports that an incident of this nature came to pass during the blessed time of the Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم. There was someone who had an orphaned girl under his guardianship. He had a fruit-farm in which this girl held a share. This man married the orphaned girl and, rather than give her dower and things from his pocket, took her very share in the farm in his possession. Thereupon, the following verse was revealed:

وَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا تُقْسِطُوا فِي الْيَتٰمٰى فَانْكِحُوا مَا طَابَ لَكُمْ مِّنَ النِّسَآءِ

> And if you fear that you will not do justice to the orphans, then marry the women you like...

It means that if you apprehend that after marrying a girl under your guardianship, you cannot do justice to her, then, instead of marrying her, you should marry other women of your choice.

The Marriage of Minors

The word, '*yatāmā*' in this verse means orphaned girls. In the terminology of the Sharī'ah, a '*yatīm*' is a boy or girl who has not yet attained the age of puberty. So, this verse proves that the guardian of an orphaned girl does have the right to give her in marriage while she is a minor and has not attained the age of puberty, but on condition that this decision is based on wisdom and the future welfare of the girl. This is to avoid unfair practices common in some communities where a grown up girl is married to a child without any regard for the difference in their ages or without any investigation into the living conditions or character of the boy.

The orphaned girls who have attained the age of puberty are, no doubt, entitled to choose their husbands freely on the basis of their majority. Nevertheless, girls (in traditionally Islamic societies) tend to be modest and shy and usually would not come out strong or freely express their opinions in matters relating to their marriage inspite of being major and having the right to choose. As a result, they are likely to accept what their guardians do for them in good faith. If so, it is the bounden duty of guardians that they too should stay clear from taking any step that may violate the rights of orphaned girls.

In short, this verse lays down the injunction that total vigilance should be observed to make sure that the marital rights of orphaned girls are not violated in any manner whatsoever. However, the responsibility of enforcing this injunction ha not been directly placed on the shoulders of the government as is usual with laws promulgated by governments. Instead of that, people themselves have been commanded to fear Allah and do what is right. That is, should they apprehend injustice in marrying orphaned girls, they must cast off the idea and marry elsewhere from a wide range of choices available.

Added to this Divine motivation to abide by prescribed law is the responsibility placed on its enforcing agencies in the government. It is their duty to oversee that there occurs no such violation of rights in the society. If it does, they must use the force of law to ensure that these rights are fulfilled as due.

Polygamy and its currency before Islam

That one man could have more than one wife was something considered permissible in all religions of the world even before the advent of Islām. The custom prevailed in Arabia, India, Iran, Egypt, Babylon and among peoples elsewhere. Its natural validity cannot be denied even to this day. The Europeans of the present age tried to break away from the practice of their predecessors and made multiplicity of marriage impermissible. It resulted in the multiplicity of concubines and girl-friends retained out of wedlock. It was the validity of the natural that there has been a consistent opinion bank in the West (though not so effective) which recognizes the efficacy of plurality of marriage. Davenport, the well-known Christian writer has deduced from the Bible that plurality of wives is not only favourable but is a source of blessing from God. Others such as Father Nixon, John Milton and Isac Taylor have supported this view strongly. Similarly, Vedic teachings permit unlimited number of wives, even in tens and thirteens and twenty sevens, at one time. Shri Krishna, a highly respected deity among Hindus, had hundreds of wives.

The truth of the matter is that a religion or law which aims to establish an infra-structure of chastity and modesty and considers the eradication of adultery as necessary has no way out except that it permits plurality of wives. Apart from being a preventive measure

against adultery, it serves as a remedial approach to the problem of comparatively larger female population in some areas as compared to that of men. If such permission was not granted, mistresses and prostitutes will proliferate. This is why nations which do not permit plurality of wives must live in rampant adultery (calling it 'free sex' hardly changes the reality). Even in our own time, if we look at the state of nations in Europe and America, we will see that they look down on what they call polygamy and put a ban on plurality of wives, but they permit a man to practice adultery with as many women as he can get under the cover of 'friendship', (and unlimited are the euphimisms invented to give it other names, such as, 'relationship', 'affair', 'consenting adults', 'union', 'partner' to get around the ban). Saying no to marriage and yes to adultery is certainly very strange!

To be short, we can say that the custom of taking a large number of wives was prevailing before Islam without any imposition of limits. The history of nations and beliefs shows that no religion or law had drawn a line in this matter, neither the Jews and Christians, nor the Hindus and Aryans or the Zoarastrians.

During the early period of Islam, this custom continued without being limited. As a result, people initially took too many wives to satisfy their greed. Later on they could not do justice to all of them and these wives of theirs lived like prisoners bound in the chains of marriage. Under such conditions, the idea of an equitable treatment of wives was practically non-existant. It was all a matter of personal choice or whim which could make the darling of the day a history of tomorrow. The concern for standing rights was a far cry.

It was the Holy Qur'ān which stopped this great injustice prevailing in the human society at large. It restricted the plurality or multiplicity of wives by declaring that keeping more than four women under the bond of marriage was forbidden (*ḥarām*). In addition to that, stern warning was given against any contravention of the Divine command which emphatically demanded that equality in fulfilling the rights of women taken into the bond of marriage at the same time must be maintained faithfully. The words of the verse are:

فَانْكِحُوْا مَا طَابَ لَكُمْ مِّنَ النِّسَآءِ مَثْنٰى وَثُلٰثَ وَرُبٰعَ

The expression مَا طَابَ : *'mā ṭāba'* in this verse, as explained by Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Ibn Jubair and Ibn Mālik, may the mercy of Allāh be upon them, means مَا حَلَّ : *'mā ḥalla'*, that is, women who are lawful for you.

There are others who, taking the literal meaning of *'mā ṭāba'*, have explained it to mean, 'whom you like'. But, there is no contradiction here. It could simply mean, 'women you like out of your natural inclination and that they be lawful for you in terms of the Sharī'ah as well.'

On the one hand, permission has been given in this verse that more than one wife can be conjoined in marriage in twos, threes or fours; while, on the other, after having taken the number to four, restriction was placed that more than four women cannot be taken in marriage at one given time.

This particular restriction of the Holy Qur'ān was made much more clear by a ruling given by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم . It has been reported that, soon after the revelation of this verse a person by the name of Ghailān ibn Aslamah al-Thaqafī embraced Islam. At that time, he had ten wives who had also embraced Islam. Pursuant to the Qur'ānic injunction, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم asked him to select and retain four and release the rest by giving them divorce. Ghailān ibn Aslamah al-Thaqafī obeyed the command, retained four women and severed his marital link with the rest (Mishkāt, p. 274, with reference to al-Tirmidhī and Ibn Mājah). Citing another incident appearing as a complement of this very narration in the Musnad of Imām Aḥmad will not really be out of place as it also relates to the rights of women.

According to this report, Ghailān ibn Aslamah had retained four women in accordance with the rule of Sharī'ah, but during the Caliphate of Sayyidnā 'Umar, رضى الله عنه he divorced them as well and distributed all his assets among his sons. When Sayyidnā 'Umar found this out, he summoned him and said: "You have done this to deprive these women from your inheritance which is a gross injustice. So, revoke the divorce you have given to them right now and take your assets back from your sons, and if you do not do this, then, beware of a severe punishment."

Qais ibn al-Ḥarith al-Asadī رضى الله عنه says: 'When I embraced Islam,

I had eight wives. I mentioned this to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. He said: "Keep four of them and divorce the rest." (Abū Dawūd, p. 304)

According to a report in Musnad al-Imām al-Shāfi'ī, when Sayyidnā Nawfal ibn Mu'āwiyah ad-Daylamī رضى الله عنه embraced Islam, he had five women in his *nikāh*. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم asked him too to divorce one woman. This incident appears in Mishkāt as well (p. 274) with reference to Sharḥ al-Sunnah. In short, the blessed practice of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his noble Companions very clearly illustrates the meaning of this verse, that is, conjoining more than four women in the bond of marriage is *ḥarām* (forbidden).

The Noble Wives of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم

The class of his person and the excellences of his virtues make the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم mercy and blessing personified. The main purpose of his life in this mortal world was to spread the call of Islam, purify people and teach the Qur'ān. He, by his word and deed, made the teachings of Islam radiate all over the world. His unique style shows that he practiced what he taught. As such, there is no department of human life which can claim not to need the guidance of a prophet. So, right from the establishment of congregational prayer to maintaining good relations with wives, upbringing of children, even to the purificatory aspects of the human call of nature, there exists a roster of verbal and practical instructions left by him in the books of *Ḥadīth*. They tell us in great details the things he did inside the walls of his home, how he related to his wives and how he answered questions posed by women who visited his home for this purpose. Such questions can be counted in hundreds, questions that highlight the intermediacy of his blessed wives through whom the Muslim *ummah* received necessary guidance. Any other setting for this purpose would have been hard to bring about. So, this crucial religious need, the need for education, teaching and propagation made it all the more imperative that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم marry the wives he did. Think of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها. There are some two thousand and ten narrations reported from her. They cover a wide range of subjects which includes the explanation of the injunctions of the Holy Qur'ān, religious questions and their answers, morals and manners and the *Sīrah* of the Prophet of Islam. The narrations reported from Sayyidah

Umm Salmah رضی اللہ عنہا reach upto three hundred and seventy eight. All these are readily available in books of *Ḥadīth*. In A'l-mul-Muwaqqi'īn (v.1, p.9), Ḥāfiẓ Ibn al-Qaiyyim has said: If the *fatāwā* (religious rulings) of Sayyidah Umm Salmah رضی اللہ عنہا which she gave after the demise of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم were to be collected it could become a treatise on its own.

The high rank Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا has in the narration and knowledge of *Ḥadīth* and in jurisprudence and rulings is far too well-known to repeat here. Her disciples alone come to around two hundred. She was the beacon light of religious knowledge for an uninterrupted period of forty eight long years after the demise of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم and was highly effective in carrying his mission forward.

These brief remarks about two blessed wives of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم have been given here just to serve as an example, otherwise there are many more *ḥadīth* narrations originating from others as well. Obviously, the benefits of such religious teaching and preaching came through the good offices of these sacred ladies.

That the Prophet of Islam had the most exalted of objectives in sight, that he came in the golden line of great prophets, and that, as such, he saw the whole world as a unit and thought about correcting all human relationships individually, collectively and in families and in nations are spiritual ideals the modern man, the desire-driven robot of today, is simply incapable of conceptualizing. The most a he or she can do is to think of everybody else on his or her own personal analogy. This chronic malady in the intellectual makeup of the atheists and orientalists of West has taken them to feeling comfortable in perversity, the end-product of which is their mal-assessment of the otherwise unchallengable character of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم . According to their limits of 'civilized' thinking, his many marriages were simply an expression of his sexual desires (God forbid). To say the least, it can be said that anyone sane and just can never interpret his marriages to have issued forth from that source only if he were to even glance at his life and character.

Right before the eyes of the Quraysh tribe of Makkah, he led a blame-free life in a way that he, when twenty five, married an aged

widow with children (whose two earlier husbands had died) and went on living with her for the next twenty five years. It was also during this period that he used to leave home, sometimes for as long as a month, and stay in seclusion at the Cave of Ḥirā devoting his time to the remembrance of his Lord. All his marriages came after his blessed age was beyond fifty. The first fifty years of his life, specially his younger years and his youth, were all too visible to the people of Makkah. Nobody, not even an enemy, ever found an occasion to point an accusing finger at him about anything that could put his pristine piety and purity in doubt. His enemies tried whatever arrows they had in their quiver. They accused him of being a magician, a sorcerer, a poet, madman, liar, fabricator. But, they never dared say anything, not one word, about his innocent life, about whatever could refer to any crookedness of extra-marital sex or passion.

Under these conditions, would it not be worth exploring as to why someone who had spent fifty years of his life in such righteousness and piety and in such peaceful abstinence from the good things of life, would be compelled to marry more than once? What was the urge? Anyone with the least fund of justice in him would not see any other reason behind this plurality of such marriages as being stated here. Now, let us go a little farther. Let us look at the very reality of these marriages as to how they came to pass.

From age twenty five to the blessed age of fifty, Sayyidah Khadījah رضى الله عنها lived with him as the only wife. When she died, the marriage with Sayyidah Saudah and Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها was solemnized. But, it was Sayyidah Saudah who came to live with him while Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها continued to live with her father in view of her minority. It was after some years (in year 2 of the Hijrah) that Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah came to live with him at Madīnah Munawwarah. This is the time when he was in his fifty fourth year. At this age he had two wives. What is known as plurality of marriages starts from this point. After one year, his marriage with Sayyidah Ḥafṣah took place. After some months, Sayyidah Zainab bint Khuzaymah رضى الله عنها came into his *nikāḥ* but died only eighteen months later. According to one report she lived only three months as his wife. Then, he was married to Sayyidah Umm Salmah رضى الله عنه in 4 A.H. and to Sayyidah

Zainab bint Jaḥsh رضى الله عنها in 5 A.H. This is the time when he was fifty eight. At this fairly advanced age, he had four wives, although he could have had four wives immediately after the Qur'ānic permission given to Muslims that they could, if need be, keep four wives. But, he never did this. Later, he married Sayyidah Juwayriyyah رضى الله عنها in 6 A.H., Sayyidah Umm Ḥabībah رضى الله عنها in 7 A.H., Sayyidah Ṣafiyyah رضى الله عنها in 7 A.H. and Sayyidah Maymūnah رضى الله عنها later on in the same year.

To sum up, we see that he lived with only one wife upto the age of fifty four years. In other words, he lived for twenty five years with Sayyidah Khadījah and four to five years with Sayyidah Saudah. After that, when he was fifty eight, he had four wives, the rest of the blessed wives came to live with him within a period of 2-3 years.

It is worth mentioning here that, out of all the wives he had, there was only one who was married to him as a virgin, that is, the Mother of the Faithful, Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah al-Ṣiddīqah رضى الله عنها . Other than her, all wives, may Allah sanctify their honour, were widows (with the exception of lady Zainab bint Jaḥsh) - some of them were the ones who were already married twice and their husbands had died. This plurality, incidentally, came to pass in his later years.

Let us not forget that his noble Companions, both men and women who had seen him in the state of Islam, loved him dearly. They would have laid down their lives at his command. If he was so inclined to do, he would have married none but virgin wives. In fact, there was nothing to stop him from keeping a wife for one or two months and then take new ones in their place. But, he never did this.

There is yet another fact which needs to be mentioned here. Our master, Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā صلى الله عليه وسلم was a true prophet of Allah and a prophet is no man of the mundane. He never follows his desires. What he does, he does with the leave and will of Allah. Once his prophethood is accepted, all objections stand eliminated. But, should there be one who not only refuses to accept a prophet as a prophet but goes a step farther and accuses that he allowed himself to take many wives to seek sexual gratification, then, such a person will be told: If this was so, why would the noble prophet proclaim the restriction against himself in matters relating to

plurality of marriages, something which finds mention in the verse لايحل لك النساء من بعد (It is not lawful for you to take (more) wives after this - 33:52). That he proclaimed this restriction against his own self, openly and conclusively proved that whatever he did, he did with the leave and will of his Lord. As pointed out earlier, the educational benefits because of this plurality of marriages that reached the Muslim community, as well as the very injunctions of Islam, are really so many and so detailed that they can just not be taken up here even at their briefest. Those who study books of *Aḥādīth* would realize the truth of this statement. However, we do present here brief notes to serve as indicators.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had married Sayyidah Umm Salmah رضى الله عنها after her husband, Sayyidnā Abū Salmah had died. When she came to live with him in his house alongwith her children from her previous husband, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم took care of her children and brought them up with love and concern. Thus he demonstrated through his conduct the way of loving and caring one must follow when bringing up step children. Of his blessed wives, she was the only one who came with her children. If none of his wives was like her, this aspect of the upbringing of step children would have remained practically undemonstrated and the vast community of Muslims would have remained deprived of any guidance in this matter. Her son, 'Umar ibn Abī Salmah رضى الله عنه says: I was brought up in the lap of the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم . Once, while eating with him, I was dunking my hand everywhere in the bowl. He said: سم الله وكل بيمينك وكل مما يليك (Say the name of Allah and eat with your right hand and eat from what is in front of you) - (Bukhārī, Muslim, from Mishkāt, p. 363).

Sayyidah Juwayriyyah رضى الله عنها came as a prisoner of *Jihād*. Like other prisoners, she too became one of the distributed and found herself in the share of Thābit ibn Qays or his cousin. But, she succeeded in making a deal with her master. The deal was that she would give him a certain amount of money against which he will release her. After making this arrangement, she came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and sought financial assistance from him. He said: 'Shall I not tell you something much better than this? That I pay

on your behalf and marry you?' She agreed with pleasure. Thereupon, he paid the amount due on her behalf and married her. This resulted in something unusually benign. Hundreds of Sayyidah Juwayriyyah's people had by that time passed into the ownership of the noble Companions because all of them had come as prisoners. When the Companions found out that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had married her, all of them released their respective slaves out of deference to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم . Just imagine how elegant the propriety of their behaviour was, how genuine, how sublime. It was in view of their emotional realization that all these people have now become connected with the family of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in bonds of inlawship, that they simply could not have the audacity to keep them as slaves. So, they set all of them free. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها says about this incident:

فلقد اعتق بتزويجه ايّاها مائة اهل بيت من بنى المصطلق فما اعلم امرأة اعظم بركة على قومها منها

> Because of his marriage with Juwayriyah, one hundred families from Banū al-Musṭaliq became free. I know no other woman who proved to be greater in blessing for her people.

Sayyidah Umm Ḥabībah رضى الله عنها had become a Muslim in Makkah during the early days of Islam alongwith her husband. Later on, both husband and wife migrated to Ethiopia as members of a caravan of several men and women. After reaching there, her husband became a Christian and it so happened that a few days later, he died. The Holy Prophet ﷺ proposed to her through the good offices of Najāshī (Negus, Emperor of Ethiopia) which she accepted and it was in Ethiopia that the same Najāshī gave her in marriage to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم . It is interesting to note that Sayyidah Umm Ḥabībah رضى الله عنها was the daughter of Sayyidnā Abū Sufyān رضى الله عنه . He was, at that time, the leader of the group which regarded hostility to Islam as its main objective in life. They were always on the look-out for excuses to hurt Muslims and torture the Prophet of God. If they ever got the chance they would have not hesitated for a moment to eliminate him once and for all. When he found out about this marriage, he uttered the following words involuntarily: هوالفحل لا يجدع انفه literally: 'He is a man of valour. His nose cannot be cut off'. The sense

was that the Holy Prophet ﷺ is a man of honour. It is not easy to disgrace him. Here we are doing our best to disgrace him and there we see, right under our noses, that our daughter has become his wife.'

In short, this marriage proved to be a weapon of psychological warfare. The ambitions of the leader of the *kāfirs* against Muslims were watered down. That this marriage brought in its wake political gain for Islam and Muslims can hardly be denied in terms of the importance and need for it. This gain is certainly something God's far-sighted and wise Messenger had, in all likelihood, in sight.

Apart from the present summary view, those who have deeper access to the *Sīrah* would find many more elements of wisdom in his plurality of marriages. The treatise entitled, Kathratul-Azwāj-li-Ṣāḥibil-Mi'rāj by my venerated master, Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī, is useful.

The details we have provided here are there to remove the golden trap laid out by atheists and orientalists. Though unfortunate, yet the truth is that this trap sucks in a lot of educated but ignorant Muslims. They go into the spider's web and do not return because they do not know the *sīrah* of the noble prophet and the history of Islam directly from their authentic sources. Their knowledge of everything Islamic comes from (anti-Islam) books written by the so-called orientalists.

Only one wife where injustice is likely

Let us now see what the Qur'ān says after allowing upto four wives. It says:

فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا فَوَاحِدَةً أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ

> But, if you fear that you will not maintain equity, then, (keep to) one woman, or a bondwoman you own - 4:3.

From here we find out that having more than one wife is permissible and appropriate only on condition that equality can be maintained among all wives as required under the Sharī'ah of Islam, and that the rights of all can be duly fulfilled. If one does not have the capability to discharge his obligations in this manner, the rule is to keep to only one wife. As stated earlier, the injustice of multiple marriages during *Jāhiliyyah* without any considerations of rights of wives had made a mockery of this field of human relationship. So, the

Qur'ānic command was: If you are unable to do perfect justice between wives, then restrict yourself to no more than one, or make do with a bondwoman you may own. At this point, please keep in mind that the Qur'ānic expression مَا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُكُمْ which means 'a bondwoman one may have', has very special conditions under which such possession becomes possible, conditions which generally do not just exist these days. Therefore, the act of starting to live with someone out of wedlock, just by declaring that she was a 'bondwoman' owned by the person involved, as something allowed by the Sharī'ah of Islam, is *non sequitor* and patently *ḥarām* (unlawful). Any more details about it would simply be out of place here.

The outcome (to be seen as a whole) is that the Qur'ān has permitted having four wives in marriage which means that marriages entered into within this limit will be correct and permissible. But, under such a contingency, that of having more than one wife, it will be obligatory (*wājib*) to maintain justice and equality between them. Doing otherwise is a grave sin. So, anyone who thinks of having more than one wife should first think about all those factors and conditions around him and, more importantly, look into himself, introspect, weigh, deliberate and figure out realistically whether or not he has the ability, or the capability or quality to treat all of them equally and justly without causing the least infringement of their rights. If strong likelihood exists that one will not be able to come up to the standard and most probably will fail to maintain such justice and equality, then, having the audacity to go ahead and step into the bonds of more than one marriage is really a thoughtless plunge into a grave sin. One must stay away from doing something like this and, human condition being what it is, living with only one wife should be considered quite sufficient.

Speaking legally, if a person marries more than four women in a single offer and acceptance, the marriage shall be void *ab initio* because nobody has the right to have more than four wives. As far as marriages within the limit of four are concerned, they shall be deemed as valid marriages all right, but any shortcoming in treating wives equally and justly will be an act of grave sin. In addition to that, any infringement of a wife's rights can be challenged in an Islamic Court and the aggrieved wife can receive redress from there.

The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has laid great emphasis on maintaining full equality and justice between all wives and he has given stern warnings against those who do otherwise. Above all, he has demonstrated the desirable ideal through his own conduct, reaching the outer limits of treating his wives equally even in matters in which equality is not mandatory.

In a *ḥadīth*, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has said: 'Anyone who has two wives and he cannot fulfill their rights equally and justly, shall be raised on the Day of Doom in a condition that one of his shoulders will be drooping down.' (Mishkāt, p. 278)

We should, however, keep in mind that this equality of treatment is necessary in things which are within the control of man. For example, the coverage of personal expenses and parity in overnight stays. As for things out of man's control, such as the natural inclination of his heart which might tilt towards one of them, there is no accountability there for this is not a matter of choice. However, the binding condition is that this tilt should not affect matters which are within man's control. Our noble prophet, may Allah bless him for ever and ever, treated his venerated wives with full equality in everything within his control, yet he pleaded with his Lord:

اَللّٰهُمَّ هٰذَا قسمی فِیْمَا اَمْلِكُ فَلَا تلمنی فِیْمَا تَمْلِكُ وَلَا اَمْلِكُ

O Allah, this is my 'equalization' in what I control. So, do not hold me accountable in matters You control and I do not.

Obviously, something even an infallable Messenger of God is not able to do, how can someone else claim to have the ability to do it? Therefore, in another verse of the Holy Qur'ān, this 'matter out of man's control' has been mentioned in the following words:

وَلَنْ تَسْتَطِيْعُوْٓا اَنْ تَعْدِلُوْا بَيْنَ النِّسَآءِ

And you shall be unable to maintain perfect equality between the women - 4:129.

Here, it has been made clear that love and the tilt of the heart are something out of man's control. It is beyond man's power to achieve perfect equality of treatment in what comes from the territory of the heart. But, even this involuntary conduct has not been left totally

unchecked and unbalanced. In order to correct it, it was said: فَلَا تَمِيْلُوْا كُلَّ الْمَيْلِ (So, do not tilt, the full tilt). It means: If you love one of your wives more than the other, there is nothing you can do about it. But, total indifference and heedlessness towards the other wife is not permissible even under this situation. The justice and equality mentioned in the sentence فَاِنْ خِفْتُمْ اَلَّا تَعْدِلُوْا فَوَاحِدَةً (If you fear that you will not maintain equity, then {keep to} one woman) refers to the same justice in matters of choice and volition, any discrepancy in which is a great sin. So much so, that a person who sees the danger of his getting involved with this sin has been instructed not to marry more than one woman.

A doubt and its answer

Because some people have lost sight of details given above, they have fallen into a strange error. When they compare the verse under discussion, 4:3, and the verse quoted just a little earlier, 4:129, they are confused. They think: Here is this verse from Sūrah al-Nisā' which carries the command: 'If you fear that you will not maintain equity, then (keep to) one woman. Then, there is this second verse which says categorically that justice and equality (among wives) is just not possible. As a result, they doubt, having more than one wife should not be permissible. But, such people should ask themselves: If, through these verses, Allah Almighty aimed at putting a cap over more than one marriage, what need was there to go into all these details? Why would the Qur'ān say: فَانْكِحُوْا مَا طَابَ لَكُمْ مِّنَ النِّسَآءِ مَثْنٰى وَ ثُلٰثَ وَرُبٰعَ that is, 'marry women you like, in twos and threes and fours?' And then, what would be the meaning of saying: فَاِنْ خِفْتُمْ اَلَّا تَعْدِلُوْا that is, 'if you fear that you will not do justice' - for, in this situation, injustice is certain. How can we then explain the element of fear which would become meaningless?

In addition to this, the words and deeds of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the noble Companions رضی الله عنهم اجمعين and their consistent practice prove the fact that having more than one wife (upto four) was never prevented in Islam. The truth of the matter is what has been stated earlier, that is, the first verse of Sūrah al-Nisā' talks about justice and equality in what man can do by choice while the second verse points out to man's inability to control lack of equal treatment when it comes to love and emotional inclination. Therefore, these two verses have no contradiction, nor does it prove that plurality of marriages is abso-

lutely forbidden.

Towards the end of the verse, it was said: ذٰلِكَ أَدْنَىٰٓ أَلَّا تَعُولُوا (It will be closer to your not doing injustice). In this verse, the word أَدْنَىٰ ('*adnā*') has been derived from دُنُوٌّ (*dunuwun*) which means nearness and the other word لَا تَعُولُوا (*lā ta'ūlū*) is from عَالَ يَعُولُ، مَالَ يَمِيلُ which means inclination or tilt. Here it has been used in the sense of impermissible inclination culminating in injustice and wrong-doing.

It means 'what you have been told in this verse (that is, in absence of being unable to do justice, having only one wife or making do with one's bondwoman) is something which, if you elect to follow it, will help you in staying safe from doing any injustice and the chances of any additional oppression and transgression will be eliminated.

There is a doubt here: When a man has one wife, there will be just no chance of injustice. Why then, it was said, by adding the word, '*adnā*' that 'it will be closer to your not doing injustice', instead, the statement should have been something to the effect that it will make you totally safe from this injustice.

The answer is: The addition of the word, '*adnā* (closer) in the text is there to point out to all those people who would not hesitate in inflicting all sorts of injustices on even one wife. So, to block this source of injustice, the absence of more than one wife is not enough. In this situation, however, the likelihood does exist that the danger of injustice will decrease and you will come closer to justice. But, the complete deliverance from injustice and oppression will only be possible when the rights of one wife are totally and fully given and she is treated fairly and generously, forgiving her shortcomings and being patient with her crooked ways.

Verse 4

وَءَاتُوا النِّسَآءَ صَدُقَٰتِهِنَّ نِحْلَةً ۚ فَإِن طِبْنَ لَكُمْ عَن شَىْءٍ مِّنْهُ نَفْسًا فَكُلُوهُ هَنِيٓـًٔا مَّرِيٓـًٔا ﴿٤﴾

And give the women their dower in good cheer. Then, if they give up some of it out of their own sweet will, you may have it to your advantage and pleasure. [4]

In the previous verse, the objective was to remove the injustice

done to women through the multiplicity of marriages. This verse takes up a particular right of women and aims to remove the injustice practiced in this matter. This is the right of *mahr* (dower).

Commentary

In pre-Islam Arabia, injustices in the payment of dower took many forms:

1. To begin with, the dower which was the right of the girl being given in marriage, was not given to her. Instead, the dower was taken by the guardians of the girl directly from the husband - rank injustice indeed. To get rid of this practice, the Holy Qur'ān said: وَآتُوا النِّسَاءَ صَدُقَاتِهِنَّ (and give the women their dower). This command is addressed to the husbands so that they themselves give their wives their dowers and not give these to others. Also addressed here are the guardians of the girls with the instruction that they should, in case they happen to receive the dower meant for the girls, give it straight to the girls and make sure that they themselves do nothing to put the money in personal use without the permission of the girls.

2. Another injustice related to the attitude of the giver of the dower. If someone had to pay it and realised that there was no way out, he would be very sour and unhappy and do it unwillingly as if he was paying a penalty. This injustice was removed through the use of the word, نِحْلَةً : *niḥlah,* since *niḥlah* in Arabic usage means 'giving something cheerfully'.

So, the verse here teaches that the dower of women is their right which must be fulfilled as a matter of obligation. Since, as a rule, all obligatory rights must be discharged cheerfully, so it should be in the case of dower, that is, 'give in good cheer'.

3. Yet another injustice regarding the payment of dower was that many husbands, taking advantage of the powerlessness of the wife, would use pressure and make them forgo and forgive their dower. This act of theirs hardly brought forth real forgiving of the standing right, but they, on their part, went about free of the concern for dower which, according to their thinking, was 'forgiven'.

To eradicate this injustice, it was said in the verse: فَإِنْ طِبْنَ لَكُمْ عَنْ شَيْءٍ مِّنْهُ نَفْسًا فَكُلُوهُ هَنِيئًا مَّرِيئًا . It means: 'if these women give up some of it out of their

own sweet will, you may have it to your advantage and pleasure.'

The point is that exacting forgiveness by pressure or compulsion from an unwilling wife is an exercise in futility. Nothing gets forgiven in this manner. But, should it be that they themselves elect, out of their free choice and will, in its most genuine sense, to forgo or forgive a part of the dower, or return it to you after they had already taken it, then, this is permissible for the husbands, and correct as well.

Surely, these injustices which the Holy Qur'ān aims to remove in this verse prevailed at peak during *Jāhiliyyah*. But, very regretably, some of these practices of pre-Islam days still survive among Muslims. There are tribes and geographical areas where one or the other such injustice is not difficult to find. All Muslims must stay away from being a party to such injustices.

The restriction of "out of their own sweet will" placed in this verse, has a secret of its own. The truth of the matter is that, according to the standard rule of Islamic Sharī'ah, even the smallest portion of what belongs to someone is not lawful for someone else unless permitted gladly. The standard rule was set by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم when he said:

اَلَا لَا تَظْلِمُوْا ، اَلَا لَا يَحِلُّ مَالُ امْرِءٍ اِلَّا بِطِيْبِ نَفْسٍ مِّنْهُ (مشكوة شريف ص ٢٥٥)

Beware, do no injustice. Remember, a person's property is not lawful (for the other) unless it be through his sweet will. (Mishkāt, p. 255)

This is a great principle from which many details issue forth.

Even in our own times, there are women who very much doubt that they are going to get their dower. They think asking for it is not going to please anybody, nor the refusal to forgive will make anyone any happier. So, like it or not, they just forget and forgo. This kind of forgiveness is not trustworthy. My respected teacher, Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī used to say that the real touchstone of forgiving gladly is to first hand over the amount of the dower in the hands of the wife, as its owner, who may later give it to the husband out of her own sweet will without any pressure. This attitude of giving gladly should also be practiced as the operating principle in the inheritance of sisters and wives. It is not too uncommon that, following the death of the mother

or father, sons take over the whole property and do not give the girls their share. If the usurpers were bothered by moral or religious considerations in some degree, the most they would do is to go and excuse themselves before their sisters. Since they know that they are not going to get their share under this situation anyway, they simply go along and forgive against their will. In addition to this, the share belonging to the surviving wife is not given to her after the death of the father. Particularly, a step mother just does not get hers. All this amounts to open usurping of rights. The only exception is that, should anyone forgive gladly, that forgiveness is possible, and valid.

Ḥaḍrat Thānavī also pointed out that the text is talking about the willingness of the whole human self and not simply the happiness of the heart which alone is not enough to make someone's property lawful for the other. People who give money in bribes, or interest, do so after a good deal of calculations, and many apparent gains, but this is not giving gladly, and not trustworthy either. If such people were to probe their conscience and come out with the truth, the truth would be that their self would flatly refuse to agree to such giving. This is why good cheer and sweet will have been given the deciding role.

If donations are sought for mosques, religious schools or for any other need, there too it is necessary to see that the giver is doing it freely and gladly. If a donation is given under pressure from anyone having tribal, social or legal authority or influence, without the free choice and will and pleasure of the giver, then, it is not lawful to accept and use this donation. Instead, it would be returned to the giver.

As for the word صَدُقَاتِ : *ṣaduqāt* appearing in the verse, it is the plural form of *ṣaduqah*. The words, *ṣaduqah* and *ṣudāq* signify the dower of women. In Mirqāt Sharḥ Mishkāt, Mullā 'Alī Qārī writes: وَسُمِّيَ بِهٖ لِاَنَّهٗ يظهر به صدق ميل الرجل الى المرأة . It means that dower is referred to as *ṣaduqah* or *ṣudāq* because its root, *ṣadaqa* (صدق) signifies truth. Since dower too shows the true attitude of the husband towards his wife, the congruity was good enough to let dower be called *ṣudāq* or *ṣaduqah*.

The words, هَنِيْٓـًٔا : *hanī'an* and مَرِيْٓـًٔا : *marī'an* appearing at the end of the verse are attributive modifiers. The word, *hanī'ān* (from *han'ā* and *hanū'a* and *hanī'ā*) means something received without having to go

through labour and pain. When this refers to food, it means good food which is eaten and digested easily and becomes a healthy part of the human body.

The word, *marī'an* (from *mara'ā*: to be wholesome) is also used in the same sense and is very close to each other. For this reason, some translators have made one word, in the sense of 'wholesome', stand for both.

Verses 5 - 6

وَلَا تُؤْتُوا السُّفَهَآءَ اَمْوَالَكُمُ الَّتِیْ جَعَلَ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ قِیٰمًا
وَّارْزُقُوْهُمْ فِیْهَا وَاكْسُوْهُمْ وَقُوْلُوْا لَهُمْ قَوْلًا مَّعْرُوْفًا ﴿٥﴾
وَابْتَلُوا الْیَتٰمٰی حَتّٰۤی اِذَا بَلَغُوا النِّكَاحَ ۚ فَاِنْ اٰنَسْتُمْ مِّنْهُمْ
رُشْدًا فَادْفَعُوْۤا اِلَیْهِمْ اَمْوَالَهُمْ ۚ وَلَا تَاْكُلُوْهَاۤ اِسْرَافًا وَّبِدَارًا اَنْ
یَّكْبَرُوْا ؕ وَمَنْ كَانَ غَنِیًّا فَلْیَسْتَعْفِفْ ۚ وَمَنْ كَانَ فَقِیْرًا فَلْیَاْكُلْ
بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ ؕ فَاِذَا دَفَعْتُمْ اِلَیْهِمْ اَمْوَالَهُمْ فَاَشْهِدُوْا عَلَیْهِمْ ؕ
وَكَفٰی بِاللّٰهِ حَسِیْبًا ﴿٦﴾

And do not give the feeble-minded your property which Allah has made a means of support for you, and do feed them out of it, and clothe them, and speak to them in fair words as due. [5]

And test the orphans until they reach a marriageable age then, if you perceive in them proper understanding, hand over to them their property. And do not consume it extravagantly and hastily lest they should grow up. And whoever is rich he should abstain and whoever is poor he should consume in fairness. So, when you hand over to them their property, have witnesses upon them. And Allah is sufficient for reckoning. [6]

Sequence

The injunction to give orphans their property, and the women, their dower, has appeared in previous verses. This may lead one to think that the property of the orphans and women should under all

conditions, be given to them, even if they cannot handle relevant transactions and are incapable of protecting their property interests. To remove this misunderstanding, it has been said in these verses that properties should not be handed over to the feeble-minded. Instead, they should be watched and tested to determine the age and time when they exhibit the ability to protect their property and the discernment of spending out of it, it is then that their property should be handed over to them.

Commentary

Do protect what you own

These verses affirm the role of property in man's economic effort which gives him the desire to protect it. Then, at the same time, the general weakness shown in the protection of properties has been corrected. There are people who, giving in to natural love, hand over properties to inexperienced minor children and ill-informed women which usually results in the wastage of the property and the quick poverty which follows in its wake.

Do not hand over properties to the feeble-minded

The most revered exegete of the Holy Qur'ān, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ says: 'The guidance the Holy Qur'ān gives in this verse is: Do not, by handing over all your property to feeble-minded children and women, become dependent on them. Since Allah Almighty has made you the guardian and the manager, you should, rather, hold the property in your safe custody and keep spending from it as necessary in order to feed and clothe them. And should they, even then, demand to take possession of the property, explain to them honestly, fairly and reasonably in a way which neither breaks their heart nor causes the property to be wasted. For instance, say something like:' All this is there for you. Just grow up a little more and you will have it all.'

Based on this *tafsīr* of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ , the sense of the verse covers all women, children and others who are feeble-minded and inexperienced, to whom it is dangerous to hand over properties since it may result in their loss, irrespective of the fact that they may be one's own children, or orphans, or the fact be that the property may belong to such children and orphans themselves, or to

the guardians. The same *tafsīr* has been reported from Sayyidnā Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī رضى الله عنه and the renowned *mufassir*, al-Ṭabarī has also adopted the same view.

The context of the earlier and later verses may, though, lead one to particularize this injunction too with orphaned children, yet, the generality of words remains there as such and which includes all children, orphans and non-orphans. And perhaps, the form of address in '*amwālukum*' (your properties) may have the special wisdom that it is inclusive of the properties of the guardians as well as that of the orphans. The suggestion is that the properties of the orphans, until such time that they become mature and discerning, remain under the guardian's safe custody and responsibility as if these properties, so to say, were like their own. It will be recalled that the fact of the matter - that the properties of the orphans have to be given only to them - has been made very clear in verse 2 : وَاٰتُوا الْيَتٰمٰٓى اَمْوَالَهُمْ (And give the orphans their property). After this, there remains no reason for any doubt.

Protecting property is necessary. Wasting it is a sin. A person killed while defending his property is a *shahīd* (martyr). This is similar to being killed in defence of one's life which makes one deserving of the great reward of *shahādah* (martyrdom). The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said:

مَنْ قُتِلَ دُوْنَ مَالِهٖ فَهُوَ شَهِيْدٌ

> Whosoever is killed while protecting his property is a *shahīd* (that is, he is counted among Muslim martyrs in terms of Divine reward). (Bukhārī, v.1, p. 337 - Muslim, v.1, p.81)

He has also said:

نعما بالمال الصالح للرجل الصالح

> For a good man, his good and clean property is the best asset of his life. (Mishkāt, p. 326)

Yet another saying of his is:

لَابَأْسَ بِالْغِنٰى لِمَنِ اتَّقَى اللّٰهَ عَزَّوَجَلَّ

> Being rich is not harmful for one who fears Allah, the Mighty, the Exalted. (Mishkāt, p. 491)

The last two *aḥādīth* quoted above tell us that the wealth possessed by a righteous and God-fearing person is not harmful for him because such a person, by virtue of being God-fearing, will abstain from spending it in what is sinful. The anti-wealth teachings of many Muslim saints and mystics apply to none but those who spend their lustily-earned wealth for sinful purposes and thus go on to make it the cause of their punishment in the Hereafter. Also, since man is naturally inclined to abandon, once he is rich, all concerns of moderation in his spendings, as well as the very anxiety to see that he stays safe against other sins - that is why staying away from wealth has been considered desirable. God bless our earlier people; they would earn, more or less, as needed, were grateful to Allah and ended up being happy that they have succeeded in saving their skins from being ultimately 'audited' for the whats and hows and whereas of spending their wealth, if they had it. But, in our time, people do not care much about matters of faith; they are more attracted to material things; they are all too ready to abandon their faith at the slightest provocation, not because there is some discomfort involved. Rather, they would do that lest they go against fragile fashion, or trend, or some borrowed norm of contemporary society. Therefore, it is important that people earn lawfully and conserve their earnings. For such people, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has said:

كَادَالْفَقْرُ اَنْ يَّكُوْنَ كُفْرًا

Poverty can take one to the point of being a disbeliever. (Mishkāt, p. 439)

Sayyidnā Sufyān al-Thawrī رضی اللہ عنہ elaborates this by saying:

كان المال فيما مضى يكره، فاما اليوم فهو ترس المؤمن

Previously, owning and keeping wealth was not considered good, but today, this wealth is a shield of the true Muslim.

He has also said:

مَنْ كَانَ فِيْ يَدِهٖ مِنْ هٰذِهٖ شَيْئًا فَلْيُصْلِحْهُ، فَاِنَّهٗ زَمَانٌ اِنِ احْتَاجَ كَانَ اَوَّلَ من يبذل دِيْنَهٗ

Whoever has any of this (wealth) in his hands should make it serve him well for these are times when, in the event of some

need, one is likely to first 'spend' his faith in order to take care of that need. (i.e. the desire to fulfill one's need has become more important than the obligation to follow one's faith)
(Mishkāt, p.491)

The injunction to test the ability and understanding of minors

Once we know from verse 5 that minors should not be entrusted with properties until such time that their ability to discern and decide stands proved, the injunctions to educate and test such children to determine their ability follow in the next verse (6).

Verse 6: وَابْتَلُوا الْيَتٰمٰى حَتّٰٓى إِذَا بَلَغُوا النِّكَاحَ translated as 'and test the orphans until they reach marriageable age;' means that children, well before they become pubert and marriageable, should be tested through small assignments of buying and selling in order to determine their ability to conduct themselves in transactions on their own. This process of practical experimentation should continue right through upto the age of marriageability, that is, when they become pubert and mature. This is the time of special assessment. Now it should be determined if they have become smart and self-reliant in their affairs. Once this is sensed as 'dependable', it is time to hand over their property to them.

In short, given the nature of children and the factors involved in the growth of reason and intelligence among them, they have been divided in three stages. One: minority (before puberty). Two: After puberty. Three: After self-reliance, and discretion in conducting personal affairs (*Rushd* as opposed to *Safāhah*). During the first stage, the guardians of children have been instructed to educate and train them by providing for them hands-on experience, that is, let them become smarter by conducting small dealings in buying and selling on their own. The expression: وَابْتَلُوا الْيَتٰمٰى (and test the orphans) in this verse means exactly this. It is from here that Imām Abū Ḥanīfah رحمة الله عليه has deduced the ruling that the transactions of buying and selling entered into by minor children with the permission of their guardian are sound, valid and operative.

In accordance with the other injunction, when children become mature, pubert and marriageable, the guardian should check up their state of growth at that stage in terms of experience, intelligence and dealings, and once it becomes clear that they understand their profit

and loss and handle their affairs and dealings in a satisfactory manner, their property should be handed over to them.

The Age of Maturity

Along with the injunction of maturity (*bulūgh*) in this verse, the Holy Qur'ān has also answered the question as to the 'age' when a child would be taken as mature (*bāligh*) by saying: إِذَا بَلَغُوا النِّكَاحَ translated as 'until they reach marriageability'. Here, it has been indicated that real maturity is not tied up with any particular count of years. Rather, it depends on particular indicators and signs experienced by adults entering the threshold of adulthood. When, in terms of these indicators and signs, they would be regarded fit to marry, they would be considered mature, even if their age does not exceed thirteen or fourteen years. But, should it be that such signs of maturity just do not show up in some child, he shall be considered mature in terms of age, a position in which Muslim jurists vary. Some fix eighteen years for boys and seventeen for girls; some others have fixed fifteen years for both. With the *Ḥanafiyyah*, the *fatwā* is on the position that the boy and the girl shall both be considered mature under the Islamic law after they have completed their fifteenth year. irrespective of whether or not signs of maturity are found.

The Perception of Proper Understanding : How to find it? An Explanation of 'آنَسْتُمْ مِّنْهُمْ رُشْدًا'

The injunction of the Qur'ān is: 'then, if you perceive in them proper understanding, hand over to them their property.' Now, what is the time of this 'proper understanding' (*rushd*)? The Holy Qur'ān has not elaborated on this final limit of time. Therefore, some Muslim jurists leaned towards favouring the view that the properties of children should not be handed over to them until it has been determined that they do have full and proper understanding. Instead, these will stay under the safe custody of the guardian as usual, even if this state of affairs continues for the rest of life.

But, in accordance with the verification of the issue by Imām Abū Ḥanīfah رحمه الله , at this point the absence of 'proper understanding' refers to the state affected by childhood. Within ten years after maturity, the effect of childhood is gone. So, there are fifteen years as the age of maturity (*bulūgh*) and ten years as the age of proper under-

standing (*rushd*). Once these 25 years are reached, such proper understanding is most likely to be achieved; something which was not possible due to the barriers of childhood, and later, younger years. Then, it should be noted that the Holy Qur'ān uses the word, '*rushdan*' in its indefinite form whereby it is suggesting that full understanding and perfect sense are not absolute conditions. A reasonable measure of understanding is also sufficient for this purpose on the basis of which their properties could be given to them. Therefore, even if perfect understanding has not been achieved despite the long wait of twenty five years, even then, their properties will be handed over to them. As far as perfect understanding and wisdom is concerned, there are people who do not get to achieve these throughout their entire lives. They always remain simple, innocent and rather shy and slow in conducting their practical dealings. They will not be deprived of their properties because of this. However, should there be someone totally insane, he will be governed by a separate rule since such a person always remains in the category of immature children. His property will never be handed over to him until his insanity disappears, even if his entire life were to pass in insanity.

The Prohibition of Undue Spending from the Property of Orphans

As we know, the verse instructs that the property of the orphans should not be handed over to them until a certain degree of understanding and experience is perceived in them. Naturally, for this purpose, one will have to wait for some more time. In that case, it was probable that the guardian of the orphan could commit an excess against the interests of the orphan. So, the verse goes on to say:

وَلَا تَأْكُلُوهَآ إِسْرَافًا وَّبِدَارًا أَنْ يَّكْبَرُوا

And do not consume it extravagantly and hastily lest they should grow up.

Here, the guardians of the orphans have been prevented from two things: Firstly, from spending out of their property extravagantly, that is, from spending over and above normal needs; and secondly, from starting to spend out from their property way before the need to do so, as if in a hurry, thinking of the near future when their wards would grow up and their property would have to be given to them and the

guardian's control will be all over.

The orphan's guardian, if needy, can take out some of his expenses from the orphan's property

Does a person, who spends his time and labour in the upbringing of an orphan and is devoted to the protection of his property, have the right to take an honorarium for his services from the property of the orphan? The rule is given towards the later part of the verse when it is said: وَمَنْ كَانَ غَنِيًّا فَلْيَسْتَعْفِفْ (And whoever is rich he should abstain). It means that a person who is need-free as he can take care of his needs through some other means, then, he should not take any payment for his services from the property of the orphan, because this service is an obligation on him. Receiving payment for it is not permissible. Then, it was said: وَمَنْ كَانَ فَقِيرًا فَلْيَأْكُلْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ (and whoever is poor he should consume in fairness). It means that the guardian of an orphan who is poor and needy and has no other source of earning his livelihood, he can consume a reasonable amount from the property of the orphans for his sustenance in a measure that is just about right to cover his basic needs.

Having witnesses while handing over property

The verse concludes with: فَإِذَا دَفَعْتُمْ إِلَيْهِمْ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فَأَشْهِدُوا عَلَيْهِمْ ، وَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ حَسِيبًا : It means: 'when you hand over to them their property (after having gone through the period of test and trial), have (some reliable and pious people as) witnesses upon them (so that there is no dispute later). And (remember that) Allah is sufficient for reckoning (for He has a count of everything within His sight).

Payment for services rendered to country, community and *Awqāf*

The contextual extension of the verse yields an important juristic rule and principle. It concerns people who supervise *Awqāf* (religious endowments, trusts and estates) or manage mosques and religious schools or head institutions of Muslim states or hold charge of similar other services rendered for the country and community, services the rendering of which is known in Islamic terminology as *farḍ 'ala l'kifāyah* (an obligation which, if discharged by some, will absolve others). For these gentlemen too, the superior and more meritorious conduct is - of course, if they have sufficient assets to take care of the

necessary expenses needed to maintain their family - that they should not take anything from these institutions or from the public exchequer of the government. But, should it be that they do not have funds of their own to sustain themselves and they devote their earning time to such service-oriented activities, then, they have the right to take such funds from these institutions in proportion to their need. Please do notice the condition which is: 'in proportion to need'. A lot of people fix an insignificant monthly emolument shown on paper to satisfy legal requirements but they go on spending by various other means on their person and on their family recklessly, much much beyond it. There is just no remedy for this lack of caution except the fear of Allah. The last words of the verse: وَكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ حَسِيْبًا (and Allah is sufficient for reckoning) invite everyone, masses or classes, to realize that the man who stays untouched by unlawful acquisitions will be the man who fears the final accounting by Allah. وبالله التوفيق : And the ability to do so comes from Allah.

Verses 7 - 10

لِلرِّجَالِ نَصِيْبٌ مِّمَّا تَرَكَ الْوَالِدٰنِ وَالْاَقْرَبُوْنَ وَلِلنِّسَآءِ نَصِيْبٌ
مِّمَّا تَرَكَ الْوَالِدٰنِ وَالْاَقْرَبُوْنَ مِمَّا قَلَّ مِنْهُ اَوْ كَثُرَ نَصِيْبًا
مَّفْرُوْضًا ﴿٧﴾ وَاِذَا حَضَرَ الْقِسْمَةَ اُولُوا الْقُرْبٰى وَالْيَتٰمٰى
وَالْمَسٰكِيْنُ فَارْزُقُوْهُمْ مِّنْهُ وَقُوْلُوْا لَهُمْ قَوْلًا مَّعْرُوْفًا ﴿٨﴾
وَلْيَخْشَ الَّذِيْنَ لَوْ تَرَكُوْا مِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّةً ضِعٰفًا خَافُوْا عَلَيْهِمْ
فَلْيَتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَلْيَقُوْلُوْا قَوْلًا سَدِيْدًا ﴿٩﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَاْكُلُوْنَ
اَمْوَالَ الْيَتٰمٰى ظُلْمًا اِنَّمَا يَاْكُلُوْنَ فِيْ بُطُوْنِهِمْ نَارًا وَسَيَصْلَوْنَ
سَعِيْرًا ﴿١٠﴾

For men there is a share in what the parents and the nearest of kin have left. And for women there is a share in what the parents and the nearest of kin have left, be it small or large - a determined share. [7]

And if the kins and the orphans and the needy are present at the time of distribution, give them some of it

and speak to them in fair words. [8]

And those people should be fearful who, if they leave behind some helpless children, would remain anxious for them. So, they should fear Allah and say what is right. [9]

Surely, those who eat up the property of the orphans unjustly, they only eat fire into their bellies, and soon they shall enter a blazing Hell. [10]

Right from the opening of Sūrah Al-Nisā', the theme of universal human rights, particularly those relating to family life, has been appearing regularly. Verses before those dealt with the rights of orphans. The four verses here also take up particular rights of women and orphans which relate to inheritance.

The first verse (7) refutes the custom of *Jāhiliyyah* under which women were just not allowed to inherit. The verse declares their entitlement to their share as fixed by Islamic law and strictly forbids any attempt to decrease their due right. Since the subject concerned those who had a determined share in inheritance, and it is not uncommon that when such distribution is being made, some persons from among the poor and the orphans do make their appearance on the occasion, therefore the second verse (8) lays down the rule that they should be treated benignly. But, this command is not obligatory; it is, rather, commendatory.

The third and fourth verses (9, 10) also emphasize the importance of injunctions relating to orphans.

Commentary

The right to inherit from parents and other nearest of kin

Before Islam, orphans and women, the weaker links in the human chain, had been victims of all sorts of injustice. To begin with, none of their rights were recognized as such. Even if one of these was conceded, who could wrest it from men and hope to hold it safe? Such power and authority did not exist.

The breakthrough came when Islam championed their cause, legalized their rights and instituted safeguards to see that these stay secure against infringements. All this happened in the background when nations around the world had allowed these two weaker units of

human society to remain deprived of their natural and obligatory rights. Such was the state of the law of inheritance. The pre-Islam Arabs seemed to have lived by the the very principle that the one deserving of inheritance is the one who rides a horse, fights against enemies and collects battle spoils. (Ruḥ al-Ma'ānī), v. 4, p. 21). As quite obvious, women and children could not live by this principle. So, according to their principle of inheritance, only a young and adult boy could become the inheritor. A girl was absolutely out of consideration for this purpose, irrespective of whether she was major or minor. And a boy too, if minor and immature, would not be deserving of inheritance.

There was an incident during the blessed time of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم when a Companion, Sayyidnā Aws ibn Thābit رضى الله عنه died. He left behind two daughters, a minor boy and his wife as the inheritors. But, very much like the old Arab custom, two of his cousins from the father's side came and took the whole property in their possession and just gave nothing to anyone from among the children and wife of their deceased brother. This may have been so because, according to their customary practice, a woman was absolutely out of the pale of inheritors, major or minor. This conveniently ruled out the wife and the two daughters. As far as the boy was concerned, he was a minor and, therefore, he too was excluded from inheriting anything. As a result, the two paternal cousins became the inheritors of the whole property.

Inspite of what happened, the widow of Sayyidnā Aws ibn Thābit رضى الله عنه still wanted that these cousins who had taken possession of the entire property left by her deceased husband might as well marry the two orphaned daughters so that she is relieved of the concern for their marriage. But, as they did not accept this proposal too, she went to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and narrated to him her sad story and explained the destitution of her children. Since, by that time, the 'verse of inheritance' was yet to be revealed in the Holy Qur'ān, the noble Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم withheld his response. His heart was at peace; he was confident that this unjust practice will be removed through Divine revelation. Thereupon, the following verse was revealed:

لِلرِّجَالِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا تَرَكَ الْوَالِدَانِ وَالْأَقْرَبُونَ وَلِلنِّسَاءِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا تَرَكَ الْوَالِدَانِ
وَالْأَقْرَبُونَ مِمَّا قَلَّ مِنْهُ أَوْ كَثُرَ نَصِيبًا مَّفْرُوضًا

For men there is a share in what the parents and the nearest of kin have left. And for women there is a share in what the parents and the nearest of kin have left, be it small or large - a determined share.

After that came the second verse of inheritance which contains the details of shares. The second section of this Sūrah comprises these details. So, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم followed the injunctions of the Qur'ān, gave the wife the one-eight of the total inheritance and distributed the rest of the property over the son and the daughters of the deceased in a way that the half of it went to the boy and the remaining half was shared equally by the two girls; and the cousins, since they were not the nearest of kin as compared to children, were excluded. (Ruḥ al-Ma'ānī)

The rule of inheritance

This verse lays down the rule relating to the law of inheritance as a corollary to some of its injunctions, which is: مِمَّا تَرَكَ الْوَالِدَانِ وَالْأَقْرَبُونَ (... in what the parents and the nearest of kin have left.) The two words, '*al-wālidān*' (the parents) and '*al-aqrabūn*' (the nearest of kin) spell out two basic principles of inheritance. The first one is the bond of birth which exists between children and their father and mother and which has been described through '*al-wālidān*.' The second one is the general kinship which is the sense of the word, '*al-aqrabūn*'. According to the correct interpretation, the word, '*al-aqrabūn*' covers all kinds of family relationships. This may be the mutual bond of birth as in children and their parents; or, it may be of the other kind as in general family relationships; or, these may be relations established through marital connection. The word, '*al-aqrabūn*' covers all, but parents were set apart specially because of their importance. Then, this word has also established another principle of inheritance, that is, the mere fact of kinship is not enough for a claim on inheritance. Rather, it is necessary that the heir is nearest in kinship, for - if the degree of nearness or closeness were not made the standard condition - the inheritance of every deceased person would have to be, of necessity, distributed over the entire human population of this wide world. The reason is simple

to understand because everyone is the offspring of one father and mother, Adam and Eve, peace be on them. Be it close or not so close, there does exist some sort of mutual relationship in everyone. When it comes to distribution of inheritance, it is, to begin with, beyond the realm of possibility. However, speaking academically, if such an arrangement was somehow made, the resulting distribution of property would be something like one insignificant particle for each which will be no good for anyone. So, it was necessary that, given the pivotal position of kinship in the matter of inheritance, the principle should be: If choice has to be made from a collection of different relatives, then, the nearest of kin should be preferred over the farther ones and, in the presence of the nearest, the farthest should not be given a share. However, if there are relatives who are all declared to be the nearest at the same time, even if the nature of nearness in them be different, then, all of them will deserve a share in the inheritance as the father and mother alongwith children, or wife etc., for they all are the nearest, though the nature of nearness differs.

In addition to that, this very word, '*al-aqrabūn*' establishes that the way men are sharers in inheritance, so are women and children, who too cannot be deprived of this right, for kinship of children, parents or any others, is the same in a boy and girl as far as the fact of being related is concerned. A boy is born to his parents and so is a girl, who is born to them. When the right to inherit depends on being related, there is no sense in depriving a small child or a girl.

Another point about the style of the Holy Qur'ān is worth noticing here. Instead of mentioning the entitlement of women in a separate sentence, the Holy Qur'ān could have easily merged it with the entitlement of men in a single sentence, by saying, "For men and women both there is a share...." But the Holy Qur'ān has elected to mention the entitlement of both sexes in two separate independent sentences, even though it seems to be a repetition. This is to emphasize the fact that the right of women in inheritance is quite independent and is as important as the right of men.

Furthermore, this very word, '*al-aqrabūn*' also tells us that the distribution of property left behind is not based on the criterion of need; it is, rather, based on the criterion of nearness in kinship. There-

fore, it is not necessary that the one more needy among the relatives should be the one more deserving of a share in inheritance. On the contrary, the one nearest in kinship to the deceased will be the one more deserving of a share in the inheritance as compared to the farther - even though, the farther may be poorer and more needy. If we set aside the principle of nearness in kinship and use the need or the beneficial effects for some relatives as the criterion, it can neither turn into a rule nor can it take the form of a settled and solid law, because any criterion, other than nearness in kinship, will inevitably be temporary as based on opinion because poverty and need or usefulness are not permanent. Conditions change. Levels change. Under such conditions, there will appear a host of claimants and those responsible for settlement would have a hard time in arriving at decision.

The problem of an orphaned grandson's inheritance

If this Qur'ānic principle is understood clearly, the problem of an orphaned grandson's inheritance - which has been made to look like a disputed issue for no sound reason - resolves itself automatically on the basis of a categorical decision. In other words, if an orphaned grandson is more needy as compared to the son, but, in accordance with the law of '*al-aqrabūn*' (the nearest in kinship), he cannot claim a share in the inheritance because he is not 'the nearest' in the presence of the son, other arrangements have been made to take care of his needs. One such arrangement appears in the next verse.

This religious position has been opposed by none but some of the contemporary, westernized modernists. Other than these, the entire Muslim *Ummah* has been holding the belief, as clarified by the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth, that the grandson will not inherit in the presence of a son of the deceased, irrespective of whether his father is dead or alive.

The right of inheritance is operative in everything owned by the deceased

The phrase مِمَّا قَلَّ مِنْهُ أَوْ كَثُرَ (be it small or large) in this verse corrects another custom practiced by some ignorant people where some things or properties were assigned to special inheritors. For example, a horse or some weapon like a sword could only be inherited by young males as a matter of right. Others were deprived of these. The instruction given by the Holy Qur'ān makes it very clear that in everything under the

ownership of the deceased, be it big or small, there is a standing right of all inheritors. It is not permissible for any inheritor to keep anything special for himself before the total inheritance has been formally distributed according to rules.

Fixed shares in inheritance have been determined by Allah

The last phrase نَصِيْبًا مَّفْرُوْضًا (a determined share) in verse 7 is to stress that different shares fixed for different inheritors in the Holy Qur'ān have been determined as such by Allah Almighty. Nobody has any right to add or delete or change or transpose any of these by personal opinion or analogical deduction.

Inheritance is a compulsory transfer of ownership

This particular word, مَّفْرُوْضًا (*mafrūḍan:* determined) throws light on yet another principle, that is, the ownership which passes on to inheritors through the law of inheritance is automatic and compulsory. It does not require the acceptance or consent of the inheritor nor is it necessary that he be satisfied with it. The fact is that, even if he were to make a clear declaration that he will not take his share, still then, he is the owner of his share in the sight of the Shari'ah. But, if he does not want to keep his share, he may, after having become the owner, gift it to somebody or sell it or distribute it, in accordance with the rules of Sharī'ah.

A sign of goodwill to other relatives

It is likely that there are some relatives of the deceased who cannot receive a share from his inheritance according to the rules of Shari'ah. At the same time, it is obvious that everyone does not know the details of the system of share distribution. Generally, every relative would like to have some share out of the inheritance. Therefore, relatives who have been excluded under the provisions of the Islamic law of inheritance may feel disappointed at the time of the distribution of inheritance, specially so when they are physically present at that time, and more so when there are some orphans and poor and needy among them. A scenario in which other relatives are walking away with their respective shares while they simply look on is terrible.

Now look at the beauty and delicacy of the Qur'ānic arrangement of things. On the one hand, there is the just rule offered by the Qur'ān itself - that the nearer in kinship shall exclude the farther. On the

other hand, there is that wonderful concern for the disappointment of 'the excluded farther'. Therefore, a regular verse (8) has been devoted to carry the necessary instruction as to how this situation will be handled:

وَاِذَا حَضَرَ الْقِسْمَةَ اُولُوا الْقُرْبٰى وَالْيَتٰمٰى وَالْمَسٰكِيْنُ فَارْزُقُوْهُمْ مِّنْهُ وَقُوْلُوْا لَهُمْ قَوْلًا مَّعْرُوْفًا

It means that distant relatives, orphans and the needy who are to be excluded from having a share in the inheritance and who, nevertheless, show up at the time of its distribution, then, it is the moral obligation of those who get a share in the inheritance that they voluntarily give them some of it, which would become an act of charity for them, and certainly, a modality of reward from Allah. At a time like this, when wealth and property are coming to them, without their having made any effort, simply through the mercy of Allah Almighty - then, their own hearts should beat with the urge to give whatever they can, in the way of Allah, an example of which appears in another verse (Al-An'ām: 6:141) cited below:

كُلُوْا مِنْ ثَمَرِهٖٓ اِذَآ اَثْمَرَ وَاٰتُوْا حَقَّهٗ يَوْمَ حَصَادِهٖ

> That is, eat the fruit of your farm when it bears fruit and on the day of its harvesting give away the due (of the poor and the needy) on it.

In short, the fact that distant kindred, orphans and the needy assemble at the time of the distribution of inheritance should be no cause of irritation. On the contrary one should be grateful to Allah that He has bestowed on him something he did not work for, therefore, it will be good to give away a part from it as a token of gratitude. In fact, one should take it as a God-sent opportunity to let these people have a little from what they have received which would certainly compensate the sense of deprivation faced by these people. Incidentally, this includes and covers the grandson of the deceased who was excluded from the inheritance.

His uncles and paternal aunts should actually be pleased to give him something each from their respective shares.

The statement at the end of the verse (8): وَقُوْلُوْا لَهُمْ قَوْلًا مَّعْرُوْفًا (and speak

to them in fair words) gives the guideline in case these people are not satisfied with the manner and quantum of what they get but start demanding a share equal to that of everybody else, then, this demand being unjust and contrary to Sharī'ah, there is no way to satisfy it, however, instead of behaving to them in a crude manner which may hurt their feelings, the actual rules of Sharī'ah should be explained to them in a polite manner. They can be told that they do not have a share in the inheritance as stipulated by the rule of Islamic law and that which has been given to them has been given to them as a gift. At this point, one should make sure that the gift or donation given to such people does not come out of the total property inherited. Here it is important that the donation should be made by adult inheritors present, from their respective shares. Such gifts from the shares of the minor and the absent are not allowed in Sharī'ah.

Fear Allah while distributing inheritance

The third verse (9) addresses Muslims in general exhorting them to make it certain that the inheritance of the deceased reaches his children fully and fairly. They must abstain from any mode of action which may affect the share of the children adversely. The general sense of the verse covers the eventuality when one sees a Muslim making a will or disposing property off in a manner which could cause damage or loss to his children and other inheritors. If so, one must stop him from such bequeathal or such disposal, very much like what the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم did when he stopped the blessed Companion, Sayyidnā Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqās رضى الله عنه from giving the whole, or half, of his property in charity (*Ṣadaqah*), allowing him to give only one-third of his property as such (Mishkāt, Bāb al-Waṣāyā, p. 265), because, 'If the whole, or half of the property was given in charity, the share of the inheritors would have either been all consumed, or curtailed.

Also included in the general sense of the verse is that guardians of the orphaned children should protect their property and give it to them in full when they become mature. They should take pains to accomplish this mission of trust and never let the least negligence on their part affect their duty; if they wish that others treat their children well after them, without causing them any harm or injustice, then,

they should treat the children of others - the orphans - in the same manner.

Misappropriation of the property of the orphans

The fourth verse (10) carries a severe warning for those who pilfer or dispose off the property of orphans unlawfully. It declares: 'Surely, those who eat up the property of the orphans unjustly, they only eat fire into their bellies, and soon they shall enter a blazing Hell.'

This verse equates the property of the orphan with the fire of Hell. Many commentators have interpreted this metaphorically, that is, eating the property of the orphans unjustly is like stuffing one's stomach with fire - because this is what is going to happen to him ultimately in the Hereafter. But, those with deeper insights and proofs do not support the presence of some figure of speech here. According to them, whatever is eaten up from the property of the orphan unlawfully is, in reality, nothing but fire - even though, it may not look like fire at that time. This is like somebody saying that the match-box in his hand was fire, or the piece of arsenic, a killer. Obviously, handling a match-box does not burn the hand, nor does arsenic kill a man by simple handling, not even by putting it in the mouth. However, a slight friction reveals that somebody who called the match-box a fire was right; and similarly, once the arsenic goes down the throat, we know that the one who called arsenic a killer was true. Common generalizations of the Holy Qur'ān also support the view that whatever deeds, good or evil, man is doing, these very deeds are the trees, the flowers and the fruits of Paradise, or the embers of Hell - even though, their form here is different, but these will come forth on the Day of Doom transformed in their true forms. The Holy Qur'ān says: وَوَجَدُوْا مَا عَمِلُوْا حَاضِرًا (Kahf - 18:49) that is, on the Day of Doom, they shall find what they did - present! In other words, the punishment and the reward they shall see will be, in reality, the result of their own deeds.

It appears in some narrations that those who devour the orphan's property unjustly will be raised on the Day of Doom in a state that flames of fire will be seen coming out from inside their bellies through their mouths, nostrils, ears and eyes.

And the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said that a set of people will be raised on the Day of Doom with their mouths erupting with fire. His

noble Companions asked as to who these could be. He said: "Have you not read it in the Qur'ān? (which says): إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَأْكُلُونَ أَمْوَالَ الْيَتَٰمَىٰ ظُلْمًا (those who eat up the property of the orphans unjustly)." (Ibn Kathīr, v.1, p. 456)

The gist of the meaning of the verse is that the property of the orphan eaten up unjustly will be, in reality, the fire of Hell, though it may not be sensed as fire at that time. It is for this reason that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has given very clear instructions to observe most stringent precaution in this matter. Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه narrates that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: أُحَرِّجُ مَالَ الضَّعِيفَيْنِ الْمَرْأَةَ وَالْيَتِيمِ (I warn you to abstain from the property of the two weak ones - the woman and the orphan.) (Ibn Kathīr, v.1, p.456)

A review at this point shows that the entire first section of Sūrah al-Nisā' contains injunctions relating to orphans. They bid protection of the property of the orphans, avoidance of encroaching on their property as one's own and the giving of their due share from the property they have received in inheritance; and they forbid the hasty consumption of the property of the orphans for fear of their growing mature and assuming its control, or the taking of orphaned girls in marriage and lowering their dower, or to usurp their property. In the end the text says that eating up the property of the orphan unjustly is filling of bellies with fire because, after their death, such people will be recompensed by fire filled in their bellies. Mark the use of the word, '*ya'kulūna*' and the warning given to those who 'eat up' the property of the orphan. It means that using the property of the orphan in whatever manner it may be - eating, drinking, consuming, utilizing - is totally unlawful, and a sure cause of Divine wrath. The punishment of eating up what belongs to somebody else unjustly and without any right covers all sorts of uses.

When someone dies, the right of every inheritor attaches itself to everything he owns, to each and every part, to everything big or small. It is tragic that the minor children of the deceased become orphans. Mostly, such children face a certain degree of injustice and excess in every home and everyone who assumes control of the property after the death of the father of these children - whether an uncle or elder brother or mother or some guardian or trustee - falls into doing things forbidden in this section. To begin with, they just go on postponing the

distribution of the property for years together, spending a little here and there to feed and clothe these children. After that, they open up and become all too liberal in spending this jointly-held property on religiously unacceptable practices, customs and wasteful heads of expenditure. They would even spend it on their own person and go on to the limit of manipulating legal documents entering the names of their own children in place of the orphans. These are things hardly a home remains unaffected from.

The donations made for orphans in religious schools and orphanages must be spent on them. Not spending these on the orphans is a form of 'eating up' the property of the orphan.

Rulings

1. Inheritance includes everything owned by the deceased, even the clothes on the dead body. People tend to give these out in charity without realizing that they belong to what has been left by the deceased. There are places where copper utensils are given out to the poor well before the total property is formally distributed, although minors and absentees from among the inheritors have rights in all such things. The proper method is to first distribute the property in accordance with whatever shares are to be received by children, wife, parents, sisters and anyone else as stipulated by the Islamic law of inheritance. Once the ownership passes to sharers, it is upto them who can, if they so desire willingly, give away part of it in charity on behalf of the deceased. If the receivers of such shares wish to do that jointly, let them make sure that they are all adults, for the permission of the minor is not valid. As far as inheritors who are absent are concerned, nothing can be taken from their shares without their permission.

2. The sheet spread over the *Janāzah* while carrying the deceased to the graveyard is not part of the required shroud (*Kafn*). It is not permissible to buy it from the proceeds of the property left by the deceased, because that is something held jointly. However, if someone was to cover the cost on his own, that would be permissible. There are places where a prayer-mat is torn out of the cloth purchased for the shroud and is used by the Imām who leads the *janāzah* prayers. The mat is later given to the Imām. This expense is extra to the needed shroud and it is not permissible to buy it from the proceeds of the hith-

erto combined inheritance.

3. In some areas, new utensils are procured for bathing the deceased and which are broken after use. First of all, there is no need to buy new ones for a bath can be given using utensils already in the house; and if, for any reason, they have to be purchased, then, breaking them is not permissible. It not only amounts to wasting of property but also means causing loss to orphans and absent inheritors whose due rights are attached to the total property.

4. Any expenses before the distribution of inheritance, such as entertainment of guests or charity and alms, are totally impermissible. Giving charity and alms in this manner brings no merit or reward for the deceased. In fact, such giving under the notion that it will bring good returns for the departed soul is a far greater sin. The reason is simple. After the death of a person, all his property belongs to the inheritors in proportion to their respective rights in it. Then, there are orphans among them. Giving away things in charity from the combined property which includes the share of the orphan is like stealing from somebody's property and giving it in charity on behalf of the deceased. This is not correct. First distribute the property, then, let the inheritors give in charity from their shares for the good of the deceased, if they so desire.

It is better not to go for charity and alms from the combined inheritance even before the actual distribution, even though it be with the permission of inheritors. This is because the permission of whoever is an orphan among the inheritors is not just valid right from the outset. As for the adult ones, it is not necessary that their 'permission' comes out of their willing heart. It is quite possible that they are left with no option but give their permission lest they are disgraced before others. In other words, they may say yes with a heavy heart just to ward off the sense of shame.

Let us look at an anecdote ascribed to a pious elder, which will further clarify the issue. This pious elder went to visit a sick Muslim. He had hardly sat with the patient for a little while when the latter died. The sage immediately put out the lamp burning there and gave someone the money to buy oil and re-light the lamp with it. When people around asked him for the reason of his doing so, he said that

this lamp was under the ownership of this person until such time that he was alive and it was correct to use that light. Now that the deceased has left this mortal world, his inheritors have the necessary right over everything he owned. So, it is only through the permission of all inheritors that we can use this lamp and since all of them are not present here, this lamp was lighted at a personal cost.

Verse 11

يُوصِيكُمُ اللّٰهُ فِيٓ اَوْلَادِكُمْ لِلذَّكَرِ مِثْلُ حَظِّ الْاُنْثَيَيْنِ ۚ فَاِنْ
كُنَّ نِسَآءً فَوْقَ اثْنَتَيْنِ فَلَهُنَّ ثُلُثَا مَا تَرَكَ ۚ وَاِنْ كَانَتْ وَاحِدَةً
فَلَهَا النِّصْفُ ؕ وَلِاَبَوَيْهِ لِكُلِّ وَاحِدٍ مِّنْهُمَا السُّدُسُ مِمَّا تَرَكَ اِنْ
كَانَ لَهٗ وَلَدٌ ۚ فَاِنْ لَّمْ يَكُنْ لَّهٗ وَلَدٌ وَّوَرِثَهٗٓ اَبَوٰهُ فَلِاُمِّهِ الثُّلُثُ ۚ
فَاِنْ كَانَ لَهٗٓ اِخْوَةٌ فَلِاُمِّهِ السُّدُسُ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ وَصِيَّةٍ يُّوْصِيْ بِهَآ
اَوْ دَيْنٍ ؕ اٰبَآؤُكُمْ وَاَبْنَآؤُكُمْ لَا تَدْرُوْنَ اَيُّهُمْ اَقْرَبُ لَكُمْ نَفْعًا ؕ
فَرِيْضَةً مِّنَ اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلِيْمًا حَكِيْمًا ﴿١١﴾

Allah directs you concerning your children: for a male there is a share equal to that of two females. But, if they be (only) women, more than two, then they get two-third of what one left behind. And if she be one, she gets one-half. And for his parents, for each of them, there is one-sixth of what he left in case he has a child. But, if he has no child and his parents have inherited him, then, his mother gets one-third. And if he has some brothers (or sisters), his mother gets one-sixth, all after (settling) the will he might have made, or debt. Your fathers and your sons - you do not know who, out of them, is closer to you in being beneficial. All this is determined by Allah. Surely, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise. [11]

People entitled to inheritance were briefly mentioned in verse 7 of the previous section which also carries details about some kinds of those so entitled. Also given there are their shares under different circumstances. More details in this connection shall be appearing later towards the end of this Sūrah. Remaining shares have been identified

in *aḥādīth.* Muslim jurists have collected and codified all details of the rules of inheritance from the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth, giving it the status of a permanent science which, in Islāmic terminology, is known as *'Ilmul-Farā'iḍ* (the Science of the Laws of Inheritance).

The present verse (11) describes shares for children and parents along with some related aspects of inheritance.

INHERITANCE

Preliminary Rights on the Property of the deceased

According to the principles of Islāmic law, the expenses incurred on the shrouding and burial of a Muslim deceased should be the first thing to be paid out of the property left behind by him. This should be done in accordance with Sharī'ah avoiding the extremes of extravagance or stinginess. After that, his debts should be paid. If the amount of his debts is just equal to the property left by him, or even more than that, then, there will be no distribution of inheritance and no application of any will. And in case there remains some property after paying debts, or if there are no debts, then, subject to any will made by him which should not be a will of sin, then, this will should be carried out to the extent of one-third of his remaining property. If someone makes a will for his entire property, it will not take effect. Such will shall be considered valid for only one-third of his property. The fact is that making a will for more than one-third of the property is not appropriate; and if it is done with the intention of excluding inheritors, it becomes a sin.

Once the debts are paid and the will has been applied within one-third, the rest of the property should be distributed among the legal heirs, details of which are available in books of *Farā'iḍ,* the Muslim law of inheritance. Incidentally, if the deceased has made no will, then, following the payment of debts, the whole of the remaining property shall be distributed as inheritance.

The share of children

As it has appeared in the previous section, the distribution of inheritance shall be on the principle of الاقرب فالا قرب (the nearest, then, the nearest). Since the children of the deceased and his parents are

the nearest, therefore, they inherit under all conditions. These relations are the nearest and most direct of all relationships that human beings have, others being indirect. So, the Holy Qur'ān takes up their shares first and beginning from the share of children, it says:

يُوصِيكُمُ اللَّهُ فِي أَوْلَادِكُمْ لِلذَّكَرِ مِثْلُ حَظِّ الْأُنْثَيَيْنِ

> Allah directs you concerning your children: for a male there is a share equal to that of two females.

This is a universal rule which entitles boys and girls both as recipients of inheritance, determines the shares of each and, at the same time, unfolds the operative rule in the event the deceased leaves behind both male and female children when their shares in the property will be distributed in a way that each boy gets twice that of a girl. For instance, if someone leaves behind one boy and two girls, the property will be split in four portions or shares out of which 2/4 will be given to the boy and 1/4 to each girl.

The importance of giving shares to girls

The Holy Qur'ān demonstrates visible concern to ensure that girls are given their share when it mentions the share of girls as a basis for determining the share of boys. In other words, instead of saying - 'for two females there is a share equal to that of one male'- it has elected to say: لِلذَّكَرِ مِثْلُ حَظِّ الْأُنْثَيَيْنِ (for a male there is a share equal to that of two females.) Those who do not give shares to sisters on the pretext that they have forgone their right are in error, because their sisters usually do not forgo their rights willingly. Done reluctantly, with the knowledge that they are not going to get anything anyway, they think, why create bad blood between brothers and sisters? Such an act of forgiving is not valid under Islamic law. Their claim remains due against brothers - and those who usurp inheritance are terrible sinners. In case minor girls hold shares in such inheritance, not giving them their shares is a sin committed twice by usurping the share of a legal heir and by devouring the property of an orphan.

As part of further explanation later, the share of girls has been described by saying:

فَإِنْ كُنَّ نِسَاءً فَوْقَ اثْنَتَيْنِ فَلَهُنَّ ثُلُثَا مَا تَرَكَ

It means that, if there is no male child and there are only girls and

they are more than one, then, they shall get two-third of the inherited property in which all girls will be equal sharers. The remaining one-third will go to other rightful heirs of the inheritance, such as the parents of the deceased, wife or husband. Two girls and more than two will all share in the two-third.

The share of 'more than two' girls appears in the Qur'ānic verse very clearly فَوْقَ اثْنَتَيْنِ (more than two). However, if there are two girls only, they are governed by the same rule which governs more than two. The proof appears in Ḥadīth:

عَنْ جَابِرِ بْنِ عَبْدِاللّٰهِ قَالَ خَرَجْنَا مَعَ رَسُوْلِ اللّٰهِ صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ حَتّٰى جِئْنَا اِمْرَءَةً مِنَ الْاَنْصَارِ فِی الاسواف فجاءت المرءة بابنتين لها فقالت يا رسول الله هاتان بنتا ثابت بن قيس قتل معك يوم احد وقد استفاء عمهما مالهما وميراثهما كله ولم يدع مالا الا اخذه فما ترى يا رسول الله فوالله لا تنكحان ابدا الا ولهما مال، فقال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: يقضى الله فى ذلك و قال نزلت سورة النسآء "يوصيكم الله فى اولادكم" الاية فقال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم ادعوا لى المرءة وصاحبها فقال لعمهما اعطهما الثلثين واعط امهما الثمن وما بقى فلك، (ابوداؤد كتاب الفرائض، وبمعناه فى الترمذى ابواب الفرائض)

Sayyidnā Jābir ibn 'Abdullāh has reported the following event: "Once we went out with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ until we passed by an Anṣārī woman in the neighbourhood of Aswāf. The woman came along with her two girls and said: O Messenger of Allah, these two girls are daughters of Thābit ibn Qays (my husband) who fell a martyr at the battle of Uḥud while with you. The uncle of these girls has taken possession of whatever they had of their entire inheritance and has left nothing for them. What do you say about it, O Messenger of Allah? By Allah, these girls can never hope to be taken in marriage by anyone unless they have some assets. Then, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: Allah will decide in this matter

Sayyidnā Jābir رضی اللہ عنہ says: When this verse of Sūratun-Nisā' يُوْصِيْكُمُ اللّٰهُ فِیْٓ اَوْلَادِكُمْ was revealed, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: Call that woman and the man she mentioned (the brother of her deceased husband who had taken possession of his entire property). He said to the uncle of the girls: Give the girls two-

thirds of the entire property; their mother, one-eighth and what remains is for you.

(Abū Dāwūd, Kitāb al-Farā'iḍ & Tirmidhī, Abwāb al-Farā'iḍ)

In the case mentioned in the *ḥadīth*, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم gave out two-third to two girls as well, following the very rule of more than two which appears in the verse of the Holy Qur'ān under reference.

After that, it was said: وَاِنْ كَانَتْ وَاحِدَةً فَلَهَا النِّصْفُ It means: If the deceased left behind one girl only and no other children, then, she will get one-half of what her father or mother have left behind. The rest will go to other inheritors.

The share of parents

The text, moving to the share of the parents of the deceased, mentions three states:

1. Firstly, the deceased may have left behind parents who are still alive, and children too, whether only one boy or girl, in which case, the father and mother will get 1/6 each. The legacy that remains will go to children, wife or husband. There are particular circumstances when some of the remainder returns back to the father which is in addition to the one-sixth fixed for him. In the terminology of *'Ilmu'l-Farā'id* (The Science of the Laws of Inheritance), such entitlement is known as the entitlement of "*Ta'ṣīb*: تعصيب (Agnatic kinship).

2. Secondly, under a situation when the deceased has no children, brothers or sisters, but does have parents still living, the mother will get 1/3 of the inherited property while the father will get the remaining two-third. This rule governs a situation when the husband or the wife of the deceased is not alive to share in his inheritance. If the husband or wife is present, their share will be taken out first and from what remains, 1/3 will go to the mother and 2/3 to the father.

3. Thirdly, under a situation when the deceased has no children but does have brothers and sisters whose number is two, whether two brothers or two sisters, or more than two, then, under that situation, the mother will get one-sixth and, if there are no other heirs, the remaining 5/6 will go to the fathe. As evident, the presence of brothers and sisters has reduced the share of the mother, but the brothers and

sisters will get nothing because the father is nearer as compared to brothers and sisters. What remains will go to the father. In this situation, the share of the mother has come to 1/6 instead of 1/3. In the terminology of '*Farā'iḍ*', this is known as "*Ḥajb al-Nuqṣān*". The presence of these brothers and sisters causing reduction in the share of parents, irrespective of whether they are real or whether they are from the same father but different mother or whether from the same mother but different father, under all such conditions, their presence will reduce the share of the mother - subject to their being more than one.

The text, after describing the fixed share, says:

ءَابَآؤُكُمْ وَأَبْنَآؤُكُمْ لَا تَدْرُونَ أَيُّهُمْ أَقْرَبُ لَكُمْ نَفْعًا فَرِيضَةً مِّنَ اللّٰهِ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا

It means: 'These shares for children and parents have been determined by Allah Almighty Himself in His infinite wisdom because He is Wise and He knows everything. The shares fixed have great considerations behind them. If the distribution of inheritance was left to your opinion, you would have made beneficialness the criterion of such distribution. But, who will be the best to receive or deliver real benefit is something which would have been difficult for you to ascertain with any measure of certainty. Therefore, 'nearness in kinship' was preferred to 'being beneficial' as the criterion of the injunction.

This verse of the Holy Qur'ān clearly declares that the shares of inheritance determined by Allah Almighty are settled injunctions from Him. Nobody has any right to enforce opinion or to increase or decrease its stipulations. These should be accepted whole-heartedly This command from everyone's Creator and Master is based on what is wise and beneficial for human beings. There is no aspect of benefit outside the expanse of His knowledge and there is no command He gives bereft of some or the other element of wisdom. Man cannot, all by himself, recognize his gain and loss in the real sense. If this question of the distribution of inheritance was left to man's personal opinion, it was certain that man would not have decided correctly because of his limitations in understanding and, as a result of which, lack of moderation and justice would have affected the distribution of

inheritance. So, Allah Almighty, in His most exalted majesty, took this responsibility in His hands so that justice and equity reign supreme in the distribution of property and the capital left by the deceased circulates in the hands of competent inheritors in a manner which is just and equitable.

Verse 12...

وَلَكُمْ نِصْفُ مَا تَرَكَ أَزْوَاجُكُمْ إِنْ لَّمْ يَكُنْ لَّهُنَّ وَلَدٌ ۚ فَإِنْ كَانَ لَهُنَّ وَلَدٌ فَلَكُمُ الرُّبُعُ مِمَّا تَرَكْنَ مِنْ بَعْدِ وَصِيَّةٍ يُّوصِينَ بِهَا أَوْ دَيْنٍ ۚ وَلَهُنَّ الرُّبُعُ مِمَّا تَرَكْتُمْ إِنْ لَّمْ يَكُنْ لَّكُمْ وَلَدٌ ۚ فَإِنْ كَانَ لَكُمْ وَلَدٌ فَلَهُنَّ الثُّمُنُ مِمَّا تَرَكْتُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ وَصِيَّةٍ تُوصُونَ بِهَا أَوْ دَيْنٍ ﴿١٢...﴾

And for you there is one-half of what your wives left behind, in case they have no child. But, if they have a child, you get one-fourth of what they left, after (settling) the will they might have made, or debt. And for them (the wives) there is one-fourth of what you left, in case you have no child. But, if you have a child, they get one-eight of what you left, after (settling) the will you might have made, or debt. [12...]

Upto this point, the text has described the shares of those competent to inherit, those who had the affinity of lineage and birth with the deceased. The present verse talks about some others who do have the competence but are not related by lineage. Instead, they are related by marriage. Details appear in the Commentary.

Commentary

The share of the husband and the wife

In this part of verse 12, the shares of the husband and the wife have been determined. The share of the husband has been mentioned first, perhaps to show its importance because after the death of the wife, the husband becomes part of some other family. If the wife dies at the home of her parents with her assets too being there, her people may avoid giving the share due to the husband. By describing the right of the husband first, the Holy Qur'ān has possibly condemned

this practice. To explain in details, it means that in case the deceased wife has left no child behind, the husband will get, after the payment of debt and execution of will, one-half of the total property left by the deceased. Out of the remaining half, other heirs, such as the parents of the deceased, her brothers and sisters, will get their shares according to rules set for them.

If the deceased wife has left children - one or two or more, whether male or female, either from the same husband, or from some previous husband, then, the present husband will get, after the payment of debt and execution of will, one-fourth of the total property left by the deceased woman. Shares from the remaining three-fourth will go to other heirs.

If it is the husband who dies leaving his wife behind and leaves no children, the wife will get, after the payment of debt and the execution of will, one-fourth of the total property left by the deceased. And if he has left a child - either from the present wife or from some other wife - she will get, after the settlement of debt and will, a one-eight share. And if the deceased husband had more than one wife, all alive at the time of his death, the attending details shall remain the same, however, the share prescribed for the 'wife' (i.e. 1/4 or 1/8) shall be divided equally between all the wives. In other words, every woman will not get a share of one-fourth and one-eighth. Instead, all wives will share the one-fourth or one-eight equally. Then, under both these conditions, the inheritance which remains after settling the share of the husband/ wife will be distributed among other heirs left by them.

Ruling

It must be ascertained before the distribution of inheritance that the *mahr* (dower) of the wife has been paid. If the deceased has not paid the *mahr* of his wife, this will be taken as debt, and will have to be paid first from the total property, like all other debts. The inheritance will be distributed only after that. It should be noted that the woman, after having received her *mahr*, shall go on to receive her fixed share in the inheritance as a competent inheritor. And in case, the property left by the deceased is not more than the value of dower, and nothing remains after it is paid, the entire property will be given to the woman against her debt of *mahr* very much like other debts and,

as a result, no heir will receive any share from the inheritance thus used up.

... Verse 12

وَإِنْ كَانَ رَجُلٌ يُّوْرَثُ كَلٰلَةً أَوِ امْرَأَةٌ وَّلَهٗٓ أَخٌ أَوْ أُخْتٌ فَلِكُلِّ وَاحِدٍ مِّنْهُمَا السُّدُسُ ۚ فَإِنْ كَانُوٓا أَكْثَرَ مِنْ ذٰلِكَ فَهُمْ شُرَكَآءُ فِي الثُّلُثِ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ وَصِيَّةٍ يُّوْصٰى بِهَآ أَوْ دَيْنٍ ۚ غَيْرَ مُضَآرٍّ ۚ وَصِيَّةً مِّنَ اللّٰهِ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ حَلِيْمٌ ﴿...١٢﴾

And if the man being inherited, or the woman, is *Kalālah* (having no father or son to inherit) and he has a brother or a sister, then, for each of them there is one-sixth. And if they are more than that, they shall be sharers in one-third, after (settling) the will that might have been made, or debt, causing no damage. All this is prescribed by Allah. And Allah is All-Knowing, Forbearing. [...12]

After having made a brief mention of rights of relations emerging from lineage and marriage, the text now introduces the injunction which covers the inheritance of a particular deceased who has left no children or parents, details of which appear below

The inheritance of *Kalālah*

This later part of verse 12 describes the injunction relating to the inheritance of *Kalālah*. There have been many definitions of *Kalālah*. Al-Qurṭubī reports these in his *Tafsīr*. According to the most well-known definition, 'A person who dies leaving no ascendants and descendants is *Kalālah*.'

'Allāmah al-Ālūsī, the author of Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī says that *Kalālah* is really a verbal noun used in the sense of *Kalāl'* meaning 'to become exhausted' which denotes 'weakness'. The name *Kalālah* has been applied to every relationship other than that of father and son because that relationship is weak as compared to the relationship of father and son.

Moreover, the word, *Kalālah* has also been applied to the deceased who left no son or father to inherit, as well as to the inheritor who is

neither the son nor the father of the deceased. The lexical derivation requires that the word, ذُو : *dhū*, should be deemed as understood though not expressed explicitly. Thus *Kalālah* will be taken in the sense of *Dhū Kalālah*, meaning 'one having weak relation'. Later on, the word also came to be applied to the property left as inheritance by a deceased having no son and father.

In gist, if a person, man or woman, dies and leaves behind neither father nor grandfather nor children, but does leave a brother or sister from the same mother and different father, the brother will get 1/6 and, if there is none, the sister will get 1/6. However, if they are more than one (for example, there may be one brother and one sister, or two brothers and two sisters) then, they all will share one-third of the entire property of the deceased. Here, the male will not get twice that of the female. 'Allāmah al-Qurṭubī says:

وَلَيْسَ فِي الْفَرَائِضِ مَوْضِعٌ يَكُوْنَ فِيهِ الذَّكَرُ وَالْاُنْثٰى سَوَآءً اِلَّا فِيْ مِيْرَاثِ الْاُخُوَّةِ لِلْاُمِّ

The share of the brother and sister

Let it be clear that this verse refers to the share of *Akhyāfī* brothers and sisters (i.e. from the same mother and different fathers; also referred to as half-brothers and half-sisters). Though, this restriction has not been mentioned in the present verse, but consensus holds it as creditable. The *Qirā'ah* or rendition of Sayyidnā Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ رضی اللہ عنہ in this verse is: وَلَهٗ اَخٌ اَوْ اُخْتٌ مِنْ اُمِّهٖ (and he has a brother or sister from his mother) as has been reported by al-Qurṭubī, al-Ālūsī, al-Jaṣṣāṣ and others. Although this rendition has not come to us through *tawātur* (a consistent narration of a very large number of persons in all ages) but because of the consensus of the entire Muslim *ummah*, it is worth practicing. Another clear proof is that Allah Almighty mentions the inheritance of *Kalālah* at the end of Sūrah Al-Nisā' as well. If, it has been said there, there is one sister, she will get half. And if there is one brother, he will inherit the entire property of his sister. And if there are two sisters, they will get 2/3. And if there are several brothers and sisters, the male will be given twice that of the female. This injunction appearing at the end of the Sūrah refers to *'Ainī* (real and full) brothers and sisters, and to *'Allātī* (from the same father and

different mothers) brothers and sisters. If *'Allātī* and *'Ainī* brothers and sisters were to be included here, it will cause a contradiction in injunctions.

The issues regarding will (*Waṣiyyah*)

The shares of inheritance have been described thrice in this section and it has been said that this distribution of shares comes after the execution of will and the payment of debt. As it has been stated earlier, one-third of what remains of the property, after taking care of the cost of the funeral for the deceased, and payment of debts, shall be applied to the execution of the will. If the will exceeds the extent of one-third, it is not legally enforceable. According to the rule of Sharī'ah, the payment of debt comes before the execution of will. If the entire property is used up in paying debts, there will be no will to execute and no property to distribute. At all the three places where 'will' has been mentioned, 'it' appears before 'debt'. As obvious, this gives the impression that the right of 'will' precedes 'debt'. Removing this misunderstanding, Sayyidnā 'Alī رضی اللہ عنہ said:

انكم تقرأون هذه الاية مِنْ بَعْدِ وَصِيَّةٍ تُوْصُوْنَ بِهَآ اَوْدَيْنٍ، وان رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قضى بالدين قبل الوصية . (مشكوة بحواله ترمذى ص ٢٦٤)

(You recite the verse: مِنْ بَعْدِ وَصِيَّةٍ تُوْصُوْنَ بِهَآ اَوْدَيْنٍ that is, 'after settling the will they might have made, or debt' [where 'will' comes first] but [practically] the Holy Prophet, may peace be upon him, has settled, 'debt' before 'will').

Still, we have to know the point as to why will follows debt 'practically' while, in words, it has been mentioned earlier. In this connection, the author of Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī has this to say:

وتقديم الوصية على الدين ذكراً مع ان الدين مقدم عليها حكما لاظهار كمال العناية بتنفيذها لكونها مظنة للتفريط فى ادائها الخ .

It means that the mention of will before debt in this verse is to emphasize upon the enforcement of the wills. Since the beneficiary of a will deserves it without any price paid by him, and often without having a kinship with the testator, it was likely that the inheritors ignore to enforce it or, at least, may cause unnecessary delay in its execution, because they may have not liked to see the property that

was to be inherited by them going to somebody else. So, it was to keep up the importance of will that it was mentioned before debt. Then, it is also not necessary that every person incurs a debt, and if a person incurs it during his life-time, it is not necessary, that the said debt remains unpaid upto the time of his death. And even if the debt was due to be paid at the time of death, even then, since the claim of debt comes from the debtors to which the inheritors cannot say no, the likelihood of any shortcoming in this respect is slim. This is contrary to the case of will in which the deceased, when he bequeaths part of his property, earnestly desires that he should invest it in something good which serves as ongoing charity on his behalf. Since, there is no chance of a claim on this bequeathed property from any side, there was a possibility that the inheritors themselves might fall into some sort of shortcoming, so, it was to offset this likelihood that the 'will' has been mentioned first everywhere as a special measure.

Rulings

1. If there is no debt and no will, the entire property, after taking care of the funeral expenses, will be distributed over the inheritors.

2. Making a will in favour of a heir is not lawful. If someone makes a will in favour of his son, daughter, husband or wife, or for someone else who is going to get a share in his inheritance, then, this will is not enforceable. The inheritors will get what is coming to them as their share in the inheritance. They are not entitled to more than that. The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said in his famous address on the occasion of his last Ḥajj:

إِنَّ اللّٰهَ قَدْ اَعْطٰى كُلَّ ذِىْ حَقٍّ حَقَّهٗ فَلَا وَصِيَّةَ لِوَارِثٍ ۔ (مشکوۃ بحوالہ ابوداؤد ص ٢٦٥)

(Surely, Allah has given every person his (or her) right. So, there is no will for an inheritor.) (Mishkat with reference to Abū Dāwūd, p. 265)

However, should other inheritors permit, the will made in favour of a particular inheritor, may be executed first and, then, the rest of the property may be distributed in accordance with the method laid down by the Sharī'ah, in which the particular inheritor will also get his fixed share from the inheritance. Some *ḥadīth* narrations do carry the excep-

tion of إِلَّا أَنْ يَّشَآءَ الْوَرَثَةُ (unless inheritors wish). (as in al-Hidāyah).

The words غَيْرَ مُضَآرٍّ (causing no damage) appearing after the rules of inheritence of *Kalālah* have a special significance. They are to warn that even though the execution of the will and paying off the debts have precedence over the shares of the heirs, yet this rule should not be misused to cause harm to the genuine inheritors.

If anyone makes a will or makes a false admission of indebtedness so as to deprive inheritors, then, he is doing something strictly forbidden and is committing a major sin.

There are many ways damage can be done through debt and will. For example, one may deliberately lie that he is in debt, just to let that be given to a friend or somebody else. Or, he may show something special which he owns personally as something he holds in trust for somebody so that it can stay out of the total inheritable property. Or, one may make a will for property beyond the extent of one-third. Or, he lies about an unpaid loan he gave to somebody and says that the debt was paid off so that it does not pass on to the inheritors. Or, one may, during his illness culminating in death (مرض الموت), make a gift of more than one-third in the name of somebody.

These are forms of causing damage. Every legator who is going to bid farewell to this mortal world should do his best to stay away from causing such damages during the last moments of his life.

It should be noticed that although the words 'causing no damage' have appeared only with the rules relating to *Kalālah*, however, the rule laid down by them is general and is also understood at two previous places where the precedence of will and debt has been mentioned in these verses. Therefore, it is not the *Kalālah* only who should refrain from causing harm to his inheritors, but the same rule applies to all persons who wish to make a will.

The emphasis on distribution according to fixed shares

Towards the end of the verse, after the shares of inheritance have been described, Allah Almighty has said: وَصِيَّةً مِّنَ اللّٰهِ (All this is prescribed by Allah). It means that it is imperative to act upon whatever has been prescribed in relation to shares as fixed and the payment of debt and the execution of will as emphasized. Being a

mandate and injunction of supreme significance, one should do nothing to contravene it. Then, as additional warning it was said: وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ حَلِيْمٌ (And Allah is All-Knowing, Forbearing). It means that Allah knows everything and He has apportioned these shares knowing everybody's true state of being as in His knowledge. Whoever obeys and acts in accordance with these injunctions, this good deed of his shall not remain outside the reach of His knowledge. And whoever contravenes these injunctions, this evil conduct of his shall certainly appear as it is in the knowledge of Allah for which he shall be held accountable.

In addition to that, if a deceased person has caused damage to his heirs through debt or will, Allah knows that as well. So, one should never be fearless from Allah's punishment. However, it is quite possible that Allah Almighty may not punish a person right here in this mortal world, because He is Forbearing. But, the one who disobeys and acts in contravention should better not deceive himself by thinking that he really got away.

Verses 13 - 14

تِلْكَ حُدُوْدُ اللّٰهِ ۭ وَمَنْ يُّطِعِ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ يُدْخِلْهُ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْھٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا ۭ وَذٰلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيْمُ ﴿١٣﴾ وَمَنْ يَّعْصِ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ وَيَتَعَدَّ حُدُوْدَهٗ يُدْخِلْهُ نَارًا خَالِدًا فِيْهَا ۠ وَلَهٗ عَذَابٌ مُّهِيْنٌ ﴿١٤﴾

These are the limits set by Allah. And whoever obeys Allah and His Messenger, He will admit him to gardens beneath which rivers flow, remaining there for ever. And that is a great success. [13] **And whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger and crosses the limits set by Him, He shall admit him to the Fire, remaining there for ever. And for him there is a humiliating punishment.** [14]

Commentary

It is the consistent style of the Holy Qur'ān that whenever it has described the beliefs and injunctions prescribed by Allah, it is followed by promises of reward or warnings of punishment.

This is what has been done here in these two verses after mentioning the rules of inheritance. The purpose is to stress upon Muslims to obey these injunctions.

SOME ADDITIONAL RULES OF INHERITANCE

A Muslim cannot inherit from a *Kāfir*

Although, the distribution of inheritance is based on nearness of kinship, but there are certain exceptions to this rule. First of all, the deceased and his inheritor should not be from two different religions. Therefore, a Muslim will not inherit from any *kāfir* and no *kāfir* from a Muslim, no matter what lineal relationship they may have between them. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

لَايَرِثُ الْمُسْلِمُ الْكَافِرَ وَلَا الْكَافِرُ الْمُسْلِمُ (مشكوة ص ٢٦٣)

(The Muslim does not inherit the *kāfir*, nor does the *kāfir* (inherit) the Muslim.) (Mishkāt, p. 263)

This rule relates to a situation when a person is a Muslim or a *kāfir* by birth. But, if a person who was first a Muslim, turned away from Islām and became an apostate and died or was killed in that state of apostasy, all his earnings while being a Muslim shall go to his Muslim inheritors, and whatever he may have earned after his apostasy shall be deposited in the *Bayt al-Māl* (Public Exchequer).

But, if a woman becomes an apostate, all her property, whether acquired during her days of Islam or during apostasy, shall go to her Muslim inheritors. However, an apostate as such, man or woman, shall not inherit from any Muslim nor from any other apostate.

The inheritance of the killer

If someone kills a person from whose property he was entitled to receive a share, he shall no longer remain his inheritor and shall be excluded from the inheritance of the person whom he has killed.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: اَلْقَاتِلُ لَايَرِثُ (مشكوة ص ٢٦٣) (The killer shall not inherit.) (Mishkāt, p. 263) However, some forms of *qatl al-khaṭā'* (accidental or unintended homicide) are excepted from this rule, details of which appear in books of *Fiqh*.

The inheritance of the unborn child

If a person leaves some children and his wife is pregnant, then this

unborn child will also be counted among inheritors. But, since it is either difficult or uncertain to determine the sex or the number of children in the mother's womb, it would be appropriate to postpone the distribution of inheritance until the birth of the child. If, the distribution of property has to be made necessarily, then, as an expedient measure, one must suppose two situations in terms of a boy or a girl and distribute to the inheritors the lesser portion coming out of the two situations. The remaining should be held for the child-to-be-born.

The inheritance of a woman in the period of *'iddah*

In case a person divorces his wife and the divorce is revocable, and this person dies before the revocation of the divorce and the expiry of his wife's waiting period, then this woman will get a share in the inheritance, for the marriage is in force.

If a person divorces his wife during his sickness culminating in his death, even though the divorce is irrevocable or pronounced thrice, and he died before the expiry of the waiting period, even then, this woman will get a share in the inheritance. And in order to make her inherit, the longer of the two waiting periods shall be taken as operative in the following manner

The waiting period following a divorce is three menstrual periods and the waiting period following the death of the husband is four (lunar) months and ten days. The waiting period out of the two which lasts longer shall be prescribed as the waiting period for the aforesaid woman so that the woman may get a share in the inheritance as far as possible.

And if a person divorces his wife, irrevocably or by pronouncing it thrice, prior to any sickness culminating in his death and, a few days later he passes away during the period of his wife's waiting period, then, she will not get a share in the inheritance under this situation. However, if the divorce given was revocable, she will inherit

Ruling:

If a wife secures a separation from the husband at her own instance (خلع : *khul'*) within the period of his sickness which culminates in his death, then, she will not be an inheritor, even though her husband may die during her waiting period.

The inheritance of '*aṣbāt*'

There are twelve heirs for whom specified shares have been settled and fixed by the Shari'ah known as *Farā'iḍ*. These heirs are called اصحاب الفروض *aṣḥābul-furūḍ*, that is, 'the possessors of obligatory shares in inheritance as determined in the Holy Qur'ān.' These have been explained earlier. If there is no heir from the category of *aṣḥābul-furūḍ* or there remains some property after shares have been given to *aṣḥābul-furūḍ*, this remainder or residue is given to *'aṣbah* (agnatic heir, or residuary). There are times when one person alone inherits in both capacities. There are other situations when the children of the deceased and his father too become *'aṣbah* and so do the offspring of the father, that is, the brother.

There are several kinds of *'aṣbāt* or agnates, details of which appear in the books of *Farā'iḍ*. To illustrate, here is an example: *Zayd* died leaving behind four heirs - wife, daughter, mother and uncle. *Zayd's* property will be divided into a total of twenty four shares. Half of these, that is, twelve shares will go to the daughter, three shares to the wife against her 1/8, four shares to the mother against her 1/6, and the residue of five shares will go the uncle in the capacity of his being *'aṣbah,* the nearest male agnate.

Rulings

1. If there are no *'aṣbāt* (agnatic heirs) the residue of the property following the distribution of shares to *aṣḥābul-furūḍ*, is also given to them. In the terminology of *'Ilmul-farā'iḍ,* this is known as the principle of *Radd* or Return since the residue 'returns' to them in proportion to their shares. However, the husband or the wife is not entitled to this 'return' and they are not given any more than their specified shares.

2. If there is no one from *aṣḥābul-furūḍ* and no one from *'aṣbāt* either, the inheritance goes to *Dhawil-Arḥām* (maternal kinsmen). There is a large list of *Dhawil-Arḥām* which includes maternal grandsons and grand daughters, offspring of sisters, paternal aunts, maternal uncles, and aunts. Since the subject has lot more details which cannot be taken up in the present context, it is hoped that comments already offered will be sufficient.

Verses 15-16

وَالّٰتِىْ يَاْتِيْنَ الْفَاحِشَةَ مِنْ نِّسَآئِكُمْ فَاسْتَشْهِدُوْا عَلَيْهِنَّ اَرْبَعَةً مِّنْكُمْ ۚ فَاِنْ شَهِدُوا فَاَمْسِكُوْهُنَّ فِى الْبُيُوْتِ حَتّٰى يَتَوَفّٰهُنَّ الْمَوْتُ اَوْيَجْعَلَ اللّٰهُ لَهُنَّ سَبِيْلًا ﴿١٥﴾ وَالَّذٰنِ يَاْتِيٰنِهَا مِنْكُمْ فَاٰذُوْهُمَا ۚ فَاِنْ تَابَا وَاَصْلَحَا فَاَعْرِضُوْا عَنْهُمَا ۗ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ تَوَّابًا رَّحِيْمًا ﴿١٦﴾

And those of your women who commit the shameful act, then have four witnesses from among you. So, if they do testify, then confine those women to their homes until death overcomes them or Allah prescribes a way for them. [15] **And those two of you who commit it, torture them both. But if they repent and amend, turn away from them. Surely, Allah is Most-Relenting, Very-Merciful.** [16]

Sequence

In previous verses, the objective was to correct the malpractices of the days of ignorance committed about orphans and inheritances. The people of *jāhiliyyah* also used to subject women to cruel treatment. They had certain other evil customs also, such as marrying prohibited women.

The present verses are meant to correct such customs, however, it has been permitted that if a woman commits a proven guilt, she can be punished. This subject of correcting the evil customs will continue through the next two or three sections

Commentary

These verses prescribe punishments for men and women who commit *zinā*, (adultery or fornication). If this comes from women, the first verse requires the presence of four male witnesses to prove it. It means that the executive authority before which the case goes should call for four qualified witnesses to prove *zinā*. Then, it is necessary that all the witnesses are male. The testimony of women in this connection is not valid.

Since the guilt of *zinā* is of extremely grave nature which not only

violates honour and modesty, but also brings bad name to the family, Islam has taken very strict attitude while setting the standard of evidence to prove this guilt. Firstly, there came the condition that witnesses have to be men; the evidence of women was not considered valid. Secondly, the number of the required witnesses is raised to four. As obvious, this condition is very hard to meet. It is something which can very seldom take place. This strict approach was taken so that the husband of the woman, his mother or (another) wife or sister do not level undue accusations against her out of personal spite. It was also to check that other ill-wishing people do not get any chance to release their personal hostility by accusing her falsely. Testimony to *zinā* by less than four individuals renders their evidence invalid in which case the complainant and the witnesses may all be charged as liars and the *Ḥadd* of *Qadhf* (punishment for false accusation) becomes operative against them for having falsely accused a Muslim.

It has been very clearly said in Sūrah An-Nūr:

لَوْلَا جَآءُوْا عَلَيْهِ بِاَرْبَعَةِ شُهَدَآءَ ۚ فَاِذْلَمْ يَاْتُوْا بِالشُّهَدَآءِ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ هُمُ الْكٰذِبُوْنَ

which means that those who cannot produce four witnesses are liars.

Some revered elders, describing the wisdom behind the need to have four witnesses, have said that since this case involves two individuals, man and woman, this one single case comes, so to speak, under the purview of one rule for two cases. Since each case requires two witnesses, so four witnesses will be necessary in this case.

Towards the end of the verse, it is said that should they both repent and correct themselves, then, leave them. It means that, in case they have repented after punishment, they should not be disgraced and punished any more. It does not mean that the act of repentance has absolved them of the punishment because this repentance has been mentioned after punishment as obvious from the ramification of the letter *fā'* (literally, "then, turn away", which has been left as understood in the present translation). However, in case repentance has not been made, reproach is in order even after punishment.

No definite *Ḥadd* (punishment) has been described in these two

verses of the Holy Qur'ān. What has been said here is limited to "torture them" and "confine the fornicating women to their homes". No particular method of such "torture" has been described either, and this has been left to the discretion of the authorities. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه says that torture here means that they should be verbally reproached and put to shame, as well as, given physical punishment such as hitting with hands and shoes ... This statement reported from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه appears to be illustrative. The fact of the matter is that this whole thing has been left to the discretion of the authorities.

In the order of revelation, the injunction 'to torture' the adulterers came first, and it was later that the women guilty of adultery were ordered to be 'confined to their homes'. While giving this command, the Holy Qur'ān has mentioned two limits for the period of their confinement. The words used are: "Confine those women to their homes until death overcomes them or Allah prescribes a way for them". It means that such women shall be confined to their homes till their death, however, if Allah prescribes some other punishment for them while they are still alive, then that punishment will replace the punishment of confinement. That new (expected) punishment has been referred to in this verse as 'a way' prescribed by Allah. Later this 'way' as promised in this verse was prescribed and was revealed. Interpreting the word 'way' used in this verse, Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه says, يعنى الرجم للثيب والجلد للبكر (that is, stoning to death, for the married and lashing for the unmarried.) (al-Bukhārī, Kitāb al-Tafsīr, v.2, p. 657)

This "way" stands proved through clear statements of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم himself where the relevant injunctions for the married and the unmarried have been described separately. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had pronounced the *Ḥadd* punishment of *zinā* in the case of Sayyidnā Mā'iz ibn Mālik رضى الله عنه and a woman from the tribe of Azd. Since both of them were married, they were stoned to death. In addition to that, a couple from among the Jews of Madinah was also stoned to death because of *zinā* and this judgment against them was pronounced on the authority of an injunction of Torah.

The injunction relating to the unmarried offender is mentioned in Sūrah al-Nūr of the Holy Qur'ān itself:

اَلزَّانِيَةُ وَالزَّانِيْ فَاجْلِدُوْا كُلَّ وَاحِدٍ مِّنْهُمَا مِائَةَ جَلْدَةٍ

(The fornicator, woman or man, administer each one of them - a hundred lashes.) - (24:2)

A verse of the Holy Qur'an was also revealed earlier to cover the injunction of *rajm* (stoning to death), but its recitation was later on abrogated. However, the injunction itself was retained as operative.

Sayyidna 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ has said:

إِنَّ اللّٰهَ بَعَثَ مُحَمَّدًا بِالْحَقِّ وَأَنْزَلَ عَلَيْهِ الْكِتٰبَ فَكَانَ مِمَّا أَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ تَعَالٰى اٰيَةَ الرَّجْمِ رَجَمَ رَسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَرَجَمْنَا بَعْدَهٗ وَالرَّجْمُ فِيْ كِتَابِ اللّٰهِ حَقٌّ عَلٰى مَنْ زَنٰى إِذَا أَحْصَنَ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ وَالنِّسَآءِ (بخاری و مسلم - مشکوۃ ص ۳۰۹)

(Surely, Allah sent Muhammad صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم with the truth and sent down to him the Book. Then, in what was revealed by Allah Almighty there was the verse of *Rajm*. The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم stoned and we stoned after him and the revealed injunction of *Rajm* stands proved against every one who commits *zina* despite being married, whether man or woman.) (al-Bukhari, Muslim, as in Mishkat, p. 309)

To sum up, the injunction of 'torturing' and 'confining to homes' which appears in these verses was abrogated after the subsequent revelation of the legal *Hadd* punishment of *zina*, that is, one hundred lashes or *Rajm* will be mandatory. More details in this connection will, God willing, appear in the commentary on Surah al-Nur

Homosexuality

The above discussion was based on the assumptions that both verses 15 and 16 relate to the fornication or adultery committed between men and women. However, some commentators of the Holy Qur'an, including Qadi Thanaullah Panipati, are of the view that verse 16 refers to homosexual act committed between two males. Verse 16 is translated as follows:

"And those two of you who commit it (the shameful act), torture them both".

Here the Arabic word used for 'those two of you is a musculine pronoun which presumes males on both sides. On this basis, these

commentators have opined that this verse relates to two males committing unnatural shameful act, i.e. homosexuality. The commentators, who take both verses as referring to fornication or adultery, refute this argument on the principle that in general usage musculine expressions include feminine also. Be that as it may, the possibility of a reference to homosexuality in this verse cannot be ruled out. Therefore, it is pertinent here to give some details about the severe prohibition of homosexuality. Here are some Traditions of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his noble Companions on this subject:

عن أبى هريرة رضى الله عنه أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: لعن الله سبعة من خلقه من فوق سبع سموته وردّد اللعنة على واحد منهم ثلاثاً ولعن كل واحد منهم لعنة تكفيه، قال: ملعون من عمل عمل قوم لوط، ملعون من عمل عمل قوم لوط، ملعون من عمل عمل قوم لوط، . (الحديث)

As narrated by Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: "Allah has cursed seven types of his creatures from above the seven heavens. He has cursed one of them thrice, while has cursed the others one time which is enough for them. (About the one whom He has cursed thrice) He has said, "Cursed is he who did what the people of Lot did. Cursed is he who did what the people of Lot did. Cursed is he who did what the people of Lot did." (At-Targhib wat-Tarhib)

وعن أبى هريرة رضى الله عنه عن النبى صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: أربعة يصبحون فى غضب الله ويمسون فى سخط الله، قلت: من هم يا رسول الله؟ قال: المتشبهون من الرجال بالنساء والمتشبهات من النساء بالرجال، والذى يأتى البهيمة، والذى يأتى الرجال .

Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه reports that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: "Four types of people are, when they begin their day, under the wrath of Allah and when they reach their evenings they are under the rage of Allah." I asked: "Who are they, O Messenger of Allah?" He said: "Men who imitate women and women who imitate men and he who goes unto animals and he who goes unto men". (op. cit.)

وعن ابن عباس رضى الله عنهما قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم : من وجدتموه يعمل عمل قوم لوط فاقتلوا الفاعل والمفعول به .

As narrated by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہما , the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said: "If you find someone doing what the people of Lot did, kill both the doer and the one with whom it is done. (op. cit.)

In At-Targhīb wat-Tarhīb cited above, Ḥāfiẓ Zakī al-Dīn has said that four caliphs, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr, Sayyidnā 'Alī, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Zubayr and Hishām ibn 'Abdul-Mālik رحمہم اللہ تعالی had condemned those guilty of sodomy to the fire. In this connection, he has also related, on the authority of Muḥammad ibn Al-Munkadir, an event to the effect that Sayyidnā Khālid ibn Walīd رضی اللہ عنہ wrote a letter to Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ reporting that there was a man in a certain Arabian locality with whom they did what is done with women. Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ called a meeting of the noble Companions, - Sayyidnā 'Alī رضی اللہ عنہ being one of them. He said that a sin like that was not committed by any human group except one, and they all knew how Allah Almighty dealt with those people. He proposed that the man be condemned to fire. Other Companions concurred and Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ decreed accordingly.

In the *Ḥadīth* narrations quoted above, the act of the people of Lūṭ has been repeatedly mentioned. The reference is to the people to whom Sayyidnā Lūṭ علیہ السلام (Lot) was sent as their prophet. Apart from their disbelief in the Divine Message and the Messenger, and their ascribing all sorts of partners to Allah, they were also addicted to this abominably unnatural practice. When the preachings and teachings of Sayyidnā Lūṭ علیہ السلام had no effect on them, the angels acted as commanded by Allah Almighty. They physically lifted the habitations of these people off the ground, then a flip upside down, and down they threw the whole thing back on the ground. Details will, *Inshāllāh*, appear in the Commentary on Sūrah al-A'rāf.

The *ḥadīth* narrations given above related to homosexual act. There are other narrations which carry the severest of warnings against indulging in the unnatural act (anal intercourse) with women:

عن ابن عباس رضی اللہ عنہما أن رسول اللہ صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم قال:
لاینظر اللہ عز وجل إلی رجل اتی رجلاً أو امرأۃ فی دبرھا

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ narrates that the Holy Prophet

صلى الله عليه وسلم said: "Allah Almighty does not look (mercifully) at the man who commits anal intercourse with a man or woman."

عن خزيمة بن ثابت قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: ان الله لايستحى من الحق، ثلاث مرات، لا تأتوا النساء فى أدبارهن

Sayyidnā Khuzaimah ibn Thābit رضى الله عنه says that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said : Allah does not get embarrassed by stating the truth. He said this thrice. Then, he said: "Do not go unto women anally."

وعن أبى هريرة رضى الله عنه أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: ملعون من أتى امرأة فى دبرها

Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه narrates that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: "Cursed is he who goes unto women anally." (At-Targhib wat-Tarhib)

وعنه أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: من اتى حائضاً أو امرأة فى دبرها أوكاهنًا فصدّقه، فقد كفر بما انزل على محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم.

He also narrates that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: "One who goes unto a woman in menstruation, or in her anus or goes to a soothsayer (*kāhin*) and accepts his statement relating to the unknown, then, such people have rejected what was revealed to Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم ."

As for a fixed punishment for this evil act, there is a difference of opinion among Muslim jurists, details of which are available in books of *Fiqh*. Nevertheless, the nature of such punishments reported by them is as severe as it can be, such as, burning into fire, bashing under a wall felled over, throwing down from a height, stoning and beheading with a sword.

Verses 17 - 18

إِنَّمَا التَّوْبَةُ عَلَى اللَّهِ لِلَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ السُّوٓءَ بِجَهَالَةٍ ثُمَّ يَتُوبُونَ مِن قَرِيبٍ فَأُولَٰٓئِكَ يَتُوبُ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ ۗ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا ﴿١٧﴾ وَلَيْسَتِ التَّوْبَةُ لِلَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ السَّيِّـَٔاتِ

حَتَّىٰٓ إِذَا حَضَرَ أَحَدَهُمُ الْمَوْتُ قَالَ إِنِّي تُبْتُ الْـٰٔنَ وَلَا الَّذِيْنَ
يَمُوْتُوْنَ وَهُمْ كُفَّارٌ ۚ أُولٰٓئِكَ أَعْتَدْنَا لَهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيْمًا ﴿١٨﴾

The relenting taken by Allah upon Himself if for those who do evil in ignorance then repent shortly there after. So, Allah relents towards them. And Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise. [17]

And the relenting is not for those who do the evil deeds until when the time of death approaches one of them, he says, "Now I repent", nor for those who die while they are still disbelievers. For them We have prepared a painful punishment. [18]

Repentance was mentioned in the previous verse. Now, given in the present two verses are conditions under which repentance is or is not accepted.

Commentary

Repentance from a deliberate sin

At this point, it should be noted that the Holy Qur'ān has used the words "in ignorance" which apparently gives an impression that the repentance may be accepted when a sin is committed unintentionally and unknowingly. But if it is committed deliberately, it will not be acceptable. However, according to the explanation of this verse given by the noble Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all, the word, "*jahālah*" (ignorance) here does not mean that a sinning person is not aware of a sin as sin, or has no intention or volition to commit a sin. Instead, it means that it was the insensitivity and heedlessness of a person towards the evil end of sin and its ultimate punishment which became the cause of his audacity to venture into sin, even though he knew a sin as sin, and had approached it with intention and volition as well.

In other words, the word, "*jahālah*" or ignorance used here is in the sense of carelessness or stupidity. This is supported by an evidence in Sūrah Yūsuf. Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام (Joseph) had said to his brothers: هَلْ عَلِمْتُمْ مَّا فَعَلْتُمْ بِيُوْسُفَ وَأَخِيْهِ إِذْ أَنْتُمْ جَاهِلُوْنَ Here the brothers have been called, "*jāhilūn*", the ignorant ones, although what they did was not the outcome of any error or forgetfulness but they had done that know-

ingly and with full deliberation. Yet, it is because of their heedlessness towards the evil end of their act that they have been called "*jāhil*" (ignorant).

Abū al-'Āliyah and Qatādah report that the noble Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all, agreed that كل ذنب اصابه عبد فهو جهالة عمدا كان أوغيره , that is, 'any sin committed by a servant of Allah is, anyway, an act of ignorance, be it deliberate or otherwise.'

The master of exegesis, Mujāhid said: كل عامل بمعصية الله فهو جاهل حين عملها "Every one who is doing anything in disobedience to Allah is, for that matter, ignorant while doing it," even though, on the outside, he may appear to be a person of great learning. (Ibn Kathīr)

In his Tafsīr, al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, Abū Ḥayyān has said: "This is just like what has been reported in a *ḥadīth* - لايزنى الزانى وهو مؤمن , that is, 'a person who commits *zinā* (adultery) will not be doing so while in a state of being a true Muslim.' It means that the time when he succumbed to the temptation of this evil act, that was the time when he was flung far off from the demand of his faith. For this reason, Sayyidnā 'Ikrimah said : امور الدنيا كلها جهالة , that is, 'everything one does in this mortal world - outside the framework of obedience to Allah - is ignorance.' The logic is very obvious since the person disobeying Allah is preferring short-lived pleasures over those ever-lasting; and, anyone who takes the punishment which will last for ever and ever in exchange for this short-lived series of pleasures cannot be called rational, sensible or smart. Such a person would be universally termed as ignorant, even if he knows the evil of his act and has all the intention and resolve to go ahead with it.

The gist of the discussion so far is that the sin that a man commits, deliberately or mistakenly, gets committed due to nothing but '*jihālat*' or ignorance. Therefore, there is a consensus of the entire Muslim *ummah* on the principle that the repentance of a person who commits some sin deliberately can also be accepted. (al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ)

Incidentally, there is another point worth attention in the present verse which prescribes a condition for the acceptance of repentance - that one should repent soon without delaying it. The Qur'ānic words are: "Shortly thereafter." What does "shortly" signify and how much

time will come within the limit of "shortly"? The Holy Prophet ﷺ has himself explained this in a *ḥadīth* in the following words: إِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَقْبَلُ تَوْبَةَ الْعَبْدِ مَالَمْ يُغَرْغِرْ. The *ḥadīth* means that Allah Almighty accepts the repentance of His servant until the time he passes into the throes of death and his soul struggles to get out of his rattling throat.

Muḥaddith Ibn Marduwayh has narrated from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ that he heard the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم saying: 'A believing servant of Allah who repents from his sin a month before his death, or repents a day or a moment earlier, Allah Almighty shall accept his repentance, the condition being that the repentance should be genuine and sincere. (Ibn Kathīr)

In short, the explanation of "*min qarīb*" (shortly thereafter) given by the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم himself tells us that virtually man's whole life-time comes under "*qarīb*" and, as such, any repentance which is offered well before death shall be acceptable. However, the repentance made by man while in throes of death is not acceptable. Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī in his Tafsīr Bayān al-Qur'ān, has elaborated the subject by saying that man faces two conditions when close to death. Firstly, there is the condition of utter hopelessness when all medicines and efforts fail and man comes to realize that death is round the corner. This is known as the state of "بأس" i.e., conscious suffering. The second condition relates to what comes after, that is, when the pangs of the departure of human soul begin and the fated time of *ghargharah* (the onomatopoetic rattling sound emerging from the throat, a herald of approaching death) comes close. This is known as the state of يأس i.e., total despair. The first condition, that is, the condition of conscious suffering comes within the sense of "*min qarīb*" and the repentance made at that time is accepted; but, the repentance in the second condition, that is, the condition of total despair, is not acceptable, for this is a condition when the angels and things belonging to the Hereafter may start appearing before the dying person, and they are not included in the sense of "*min qarīb*".

This explanation given by the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has been pointed out by the Holy Qur'ān itself in the following verse (i.e. verse 18) where it is expressly mentioned that repenting, after the sure signs of death are visible, is not accepted.

So, in the light of this explanation the addition of "*min qarīb*" (shortly thereafter) in this verse serves to indicate that the very life-span of man is limited in time, and death, which he may think is far away, may actually be quite near.

"Relenting taken by Allah upon Himself" is a form of promise the fulfillment of which is certain. Otherwise the truth is that Allah Almighty does not necessarily owe anything to anyone.

The second verse (18) describes those whose repentance is not acceptable with Allah, those who fearlessly go on committing sins throughout their entire lives yet, when death stands on their head and the withdrawal of their soul is set in motion and the angels of death start becoming visible, they start offering repentance. How could their repentance become acceptable when they kept running wild with their lives and wasted all opportunities of repenting while there was still time to repent. This is very much like Pharaoh and his people who called out while drowning that they were ready to believe in the Lord of *Mūsā* (Moses) and *Ḥārûn* (Aaron). Naturally, they were told that their declaration of faith at that time was of no consequence, because the time set for it was all over.

The same thing has been pointed out in the last sentence of the verse which says that Allah also does not accept the repentance of those who die while they are still disbelievers. What is the worth of a declaration of faith right in the middle of one's match with death facing the pangs of the withdrawal of the soul from the body? This confession or this declaration of faith is out of tune with the time and quite worthless now as their punishment stands prepared for them.

What is repentance?

After the literal explanation of these two verses, it seems necessary to define *Taubah* or repentance and determine its real nature and status. In his 'Iḥyā' al-'Ulūm, Imām al-Ghazālī has identified three different situations with regard to committing sins:

The first state is that of total sinlessness, that is, no sin has ever been committed. This is either the hallmark of angels or that of the prophets, may peace be on them. The second stage of getting involved in sin comes when one takes the initiative and ventures into sin and then repeats and persists with it, never feeling ashamed or regretful

and never thinking of stopping and abandoning it. This is the degree of the satans and the devils. The third station belongs to human beings, the children of Adam who, immediately after having committed a sin, regret it and resolve firmly not to go near it in future.

This tells us that failing to repent after committing a sin is the style of devils exclusively. Therefore, it is the consensus of the entire Muslim *ummah* that *Taubah* is obligatory. The Holy Qur'ān says:

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا تُوبُوٓا إِلَى ٱللَّهِ تَوْبَةً نَّصُوحًا ط عَسَىٰ رَبُّكُمْ أَن يُكَفِّرَ عَنكُمْ سَيِّـَٔاتِكُمْ وَيُدْخِلَكُمْ جَنَّٰتٍ تَجْرِى مِن تَحْتِهَا ٱلْأَنْهَٰرُ

(O those who believe, repent before Allah, a sincere repentance; may be your Lord removes from you your sins and admits you to gardens beneath which rivers flow.) (66:8)

How generous is the mercy of our Lord! A man spends a whole lifetime in disobeying Him. Nevertheless, when he repents sincerely before his death, not only his sins are forgiven, but he receives much more when he is admitted into the circle of favoured servants of Allah and made an inheritor of Paradise.

In a *ḥadīth,* the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been reported to have said: اَلتَّائِبُ حَبِيْبُ اللّٰهِ وَالتَّائِبُ مِنَ الذَّنْبِ كَمَنْ لَّاذَنْبَ لَهٗ that is, 'one who repents from sin is loved by Allah and one who has repented from sin is like one who had never committed a sin.' (Ibn Mājah)

According to some narrations, if a servant of Allah repents from a sin and his repentance finds acceptance with Him, he is not only absolved from having to account for it, but the very record in writing posted by the angels is erased out from his book of deeds so that he may not be disgraced either.

However, what is necessary is that the repentance is genuine and is offered in sincerity. This repentance stands on three pillars. Firstly, one should regret over and feel ashamed about what he or she has done. According to *ḥadīth,* إِنَّمَا التَّوْبَةُ النَّدَم, that is, '*Taubah* is (another name of) remorse'. Secondly, one should immediately leave off the sin he has committed and he should, for the future too, firmly resolve to stay away from it. Thirdly, one should think of making amends for what has gone by, that is, he should try to take measures to rectify what

has happened in sin to the best of his ability. For example, if he has missed a prayer or a fast, he should make up for it by doing what is known as *qaḍā* (compensatory worship). If one does not remember the correct number of such missed prayers and fasts, he should think, calculate and come to an estimated number and then go on to offer *qaḍā* for these in all seriousness. If one finds it impossible to do so all at one time, he could offer, with each *ṣalāh* due at its time, one *qaḍā* of each *ṣalāh* he missed throughout his life, which is commonly known as '*umrī qaḍā*. In the same way, one should do his best to make up, as and when convenient, for obligatory fasts he missed by offering *qaḍā* fasts. May be one has not paid the obligatory *zakāh* due on him; he should, then pay the *zakāh* due on him for previous years as well, paying it all or paying it gradually. God forbid, if one has usurped someone's right, he should return it back to him and if he has hurt someone, he should seek his forgiveness. But, should it be that one does not regret what he has done, or, despite being regretful, he does not leave off that sin for future, then, this repentance is no repentance even though it may be said a thousand times, as so delightfully put in verse by a Persian poet:

توبه برلب سبحه برکف دل پُر از ذوقِ گناه
معصیت راخنده می آید از استغفارِ ما

Repentance on the lips, rosary in hand
and a heart full of the taste of sin
Sin laughs at my style of seeking forgiveness!

The point being made here is that man, once he repents as stated earlier, and despite having been in all sorts of sins, becomes a servant dear to Allah. And should it ever be that, out of human weakness, one does fall into sin yet another time, he should immediately renew his repentance in the fond hope that this time, like every other time, Allah Almighty shall, being Most-Forgiving, relent towards him. Let me conclude with yet another Persian couplet which says:

این درگهِ ما درگهِ نومیدی نیست   صد بار اگر توبه شکستی باز آ

This is the Court of My Presence,
not the Court of Despair.
Even if you have broken (the promise in) your repentance
a hundred times, come again!

Verses 19 - 21

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا يَحِلُّ لَكُمْ أَنْ تَرِثُوا النِّسَاءَ كَرْهًا ۖ وَلَا
تَعْضُلُوهُنَّ لِتَذْهَبُوا بِبَعْضِ مَا آتَيْتُمُوهُنَّ إِلَّا أَنْ يَأْتِينَ
بِفَاحِشَةٍ مُبَيِّنَةٍ ۚ وَعَاشِرُوهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ۚ فَإِنْ كَرِهْتُمُوهُنَّ
فَعَسَىٰ أَنْ تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئًا وَيَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ فِيهِ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا ﴿١٩﴾
وَإِنْ أَرَدْتُمُ اسْتِبْدَالَ زَوْجٍ مَكَانَ زَوْجٍ وَآتَيْتُمْ إِحْدَاهُنَّ قِنْطَارًا
فَلَا تَأْخُذُوا مِنْهُ شَيْئًا ۚ أَتَأْخُذُونَهُ بُهْتَانًا وَإِثْمًا مُبِينًا ﴿٢٠﴾
وَكَيْفَ تَأْخُذُونَهُ وَقَدْ أَفْضَىٰ بَعْضُكُمْ إِلَىٰ بَعْضٍ وَأَخَذْنَ مِنْكُمْ
مِيثَاقًا غَلِيظًا ﴿٢١﴾

O those who believe, it is not lawful for you that you should forcibly take women as inheritance. And do not hold on to them so that you may get away with some of what you have given them, unless they commit a clearly shameful act. And live with them in the recognized manner. And if you dislike them, then it is quite likely that you dislike something and Allah has placed in it a lot of good. [19]

If you want to take a wife in place of the one (you have), and you have given her a lot, then do not take back anything from it through imputation and open sin? [20]

And how can you take it when you have had access to each other and they have taken a firm covenant from you. [21]

Sequence of verses

Repentance was mentioned in the previous verses in proportion to the related requirement of the text. Before this, there was a series of injunctions pertaining to women. The present verses too carry some more imperatives against the excesses suffered by women at the hands of their husbands, even heirs. Details appear in the Commentary.

The aim is to correct such social disorders. It may be noted that husbands have been particularly addressed in عَاشِرُوهُنَّ (live with them).

Verses 20 and 21 conclude the subject.

Commentary

Women before Islam: Eradication of Injustices

Given in these three verses are steps taken to eliminate injustices to which women were commonly subjected:

1. The most glaring of these was that men used to act as owners of the life and property of women, so much so, that a woman taken in marriage was passed on as a piece of property after her husband's death, on to his heirs. They were considered as the new owners and inheritors of the property, plus the wife. They could, if they wished to, marry her or give her in marriage to somebody else against payment. The son of the husband from another wife could himself marry her after the death of his father. When a living human being has been taken as an article of ownership, what would have happened to the normal property is all too obvious. This one basic social ill became the cause of hundreds of other unjust practices against women, some of which are pointed out below:

(a) If a woman received some property in inheritance or some gift from her parents, the poor thing stayed deprived of it. Everything received in her name was devoured by men at her husband's home.

(b) If, somehow the woman did come in possession of her share of the property, men would prevent her from remarrying so that she could not take her share out of the house - they wanted her to die right there where she was, leaving her property which they could possess after her.

(c) In some places there was the practice that if the husband did not like his wife because of whimsical factors and not because of any shortcoming of the wife, then, while he skipped relating to her as his wife, did not get rid of her by giving her a divorce. This was to harass her to the limit that she was forced to give him back the jewellery and dower money he had given her; or, if he had not yet given these as due, he expected that she would forgo her claim before she could hope to be released. There were situations when the husband, despite having divorced her would not let the divorced wife remarry so that she breaks up and returns to him the amount of dower he had given her,

or forgoes the dower still unpaid.

(d) On occasions, following the death of her husband, his heirs would not let the widow remarry. They would do so either to satisfy their false sense of prestige, or to let her go only after they get something for themselves in the deal.

As said earlier, all these injustices were perpetrated on the basis of the central assumption that man owned not only the property but also the very life of the woman. The Holy Qur'ān struck at the very root of this evil which produced other injustices and openly declared:

يَآيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا يَحِلُّ لَكُمْ اَنْ تَرِثُوا النِّسَآءَ كَرْهًا

> O those who believe, it is not lawful for you that you should forcibly take women as inheritance.

The word "forcibly" does not appear here as a condition which would have given the impression that their becoming owners of women with the later's approval was all right, but this restriction has been introduced here as a statement of fact. It means that taking over the charge of the life and property of women as self-appointed owners without any legal or rational basis whatsoever could, obviously, be only "forcibly". How could a woman, in her normal senses, ever agree to such a proposition? (al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ). This is why the Sharī'ah of Islam does not accept her approval in this matter as effective. If any woman, so out of her mind, approves of being owned by somebody, the Islāmic law is not willing to concede this position.

The common method of preventing injustice and disorder would be to use a prohibitive order, but the Holy Qur'ān has avoided this common method at this place and has expressed the element of prohibition by negating the lawfulness of this act by saying: لَا يَحِلُّ لَكُمْ , 'it is not lawful for you'. Here, in addition to stressing upon the severe sinfulness of this matter, the purpose may also be to indicate that, should it be that someone does go on to marry an adult woman without her consent and permission, the marriage thus entered into shall not be lawful and, in fact, it is null and void. Being totally *non-sequitur*, no husband-wife relationship between the man and woman gets established from such a marriage, nor do the injunctions of inheritance or lineage follow from it.

Similarly, if someone forces a woman and takes back the dower he had given her, or compels her to forgo the outstanding dower, this forced return or forgiveness is not valid in the sight of the Sharī'ah. Money or property taken in this manner do not make them lawful for the man, nor does it cause any due right to be forgiven. This subject has been further clarified in: وَلَا تَعْضُلُوْهُنَّ لِتَذْهَبُوْا بِبَعْضِ مَآ اٰتَيْتُمُوْهُنَّ.

It means: 'Do not prevent women from marrying at their choice with the intention of taking back what you, or a relative, have already given to them as dower or gift.' So, the giving and the taking back of dower is inclusive of the incidence of making the woman forgive the dower the payment of which is due, fixed and agreed upon. Whether one forces the woman to return the dower amount already paid or forces her to forgo the dower still outstanding, both are impermissible and patently *ḥarām* (forbidden). Similarly, whatever has been given to the wife as gift, or something of which she has become the 'owner', cannot be taken back by the husband, or the heirs, for it is not lawful for them to do so. However, this rule applies only to a situation where anything has been assigned to her as an owner. If something was given to her for a temporary use, like jewellery or any other article, not making her the owner of it, then, that simply does not enter into the 'ownership' of the wife and, therefore, asking for their return is not forbidden.

The text, after that, by saying: اِلَّآ اَنْ يَّاْتِيْنَ بِفَاحِشَةٍ مُّبَيِّنَةٍ exempts some such situations under which it becomes permissible for the husband to take back what he has given, including the dower. It means that should the woman commit an act which is clearly shameful and which naturally compels the man to divorce her, then, this will be a situation in which it does not matter if the husband holds back the word of divorce until such time that the woman returns the dower he had given her or forgoes the outstanding dower, if that is the case.

According to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ, Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا and Hadrat Ḍaḥḥāk رحمہ اللہ and others, the word, *"fāhisha"* (translated as 'a shameful act') here means disobedience to the husband and indecent abuses against him; while, Abū Qilābah and Ḥasan al-Baṣrī رحمہ اللہ take it to mean immodesty and adultery in this particular place. Thus, the sense would come to be: If these women

happen to commit some shameful act or they behave disobediently and vituperatively which forces the husband to think of a divorce, then, this being a fault of the woman, the husband has the right to hold her in the bond of marriage, until he receives back what he had given her, or has the outstanding dower forgiven by her.

The next two verses (20, 21) also enlarge upon this subject. Here it has been said that, should it be that the woman has just not shown any contumacy or immodesty, but the husband, following his own physical desire and pleasure, intends to marry another woman in her place, then again it will not be permissible for him to claim anything from her in exchange of divorce, even though he had given her a lot of wealth. Similarly, it will not be allowed for him to force her to forgo the dower due against him. This is because there is no fault of the woman and the cause which makes the dower due and payable has been vacated, that is, they have been married and have had their privacy with each other. Now, the husband has no right to take back what he has given her or make her forgo the dower.

That the taking back of this amount is an injustice and sin has been later on described in three stages.

First, it was said: أَتَأْخُذُونَهُ بُهْتَانًا وَإِثْمًا مُّبِينًا that is, 'do you want to take it through imputation and an open sin?"

This sentence refers back to the previous verse (19) where it was laid down that the husband has no right to take back the dower from his wife except when she has committed a shameful act. On the basis of this principle the present verse (20) says that if you take back the dower from your wife, it will mean that you are imputing her for a shameful act, because it is the only situation where your claim may be rightful. Since your wife has not committed a shameful act, your claim to the dower is a false imputation which is an open sin.

Secondly, in the following sentence in verse 21, it was said: وَكَيْفَ تَأْخُذُونَهُ وَقَدْ أَفْضَىٰ بَعْضُكُمْ إِلَىٰ بَعْضٍ that is, how can you now take back what you had given her when not only the marriage has been solemnized, but you have also had access to each other in privacy? For, in this situation, whatever has been given, if against dower, the woman certainly deserved it. She now owns it because she surrendered herself to her

husband. The idea that it could be returned is senseless. Even if this money or property given by the husband was presented or gifted, even then, it is not possible that it could be returned because what a husband and wife give to each other as gift cannot be taken back. Such claim of its return is neither permissible in Sharī'ah, nor is it legally enforced. So, marital bond prevents the taking back of what has been given as gift.

The same subject has been stated in the last sentence of verse 21: واخذن منكم ميثاقا غليظا (and they have taken a firm covenant from you). This 'covenant' is the bond of marriage which is solemnly attested to with the name of Allah before a gathering of people following a *khuṭbah*.

To sum up, once this marital covenant has been made and mutual privacy has brought the couple close together, to force the woman to return what was given to her is open injustice and tyranny. All Muslims must abstain from it.

Verses 22 - 24

وَلَا تَنْكِحُوا مَا نَكَحَ اٰبَآؤُكُمْ مِّنَ النِّسَآءِ اِلَّا مَا قَدْ سَلَفَ ؕ اِنَّهٗ
كَانَ فَاحِشَةً وَّمَقْتًا ؕ وَسَآءَ سَبِيْلًا ﴿۲۲﴾ حُرِّمَتْ عَلَيْكُمْ
اُمَّهٰتُكُمْ وَبَنٰتُكُمْ وَاَخَوٰتُكُمْ وَعَمّٰتُكُمْ وَخٰلٰتُكُمْ وَبَنٰتُ الْاَخِ
وَبَنٰتُ الْاُخْتِ وَاُمَّهٰتُكُمُ الّٰتِيْۤ اَرْضَعْنَكُمْ وَاَخَوٰتُكُمْ مِّنَ
الرَّضَاعَةِ وَاُمَّهٰتُ نِسَآئِكُمْ وَرَبَآئِبُكُمُ الّٰتِيْ فِيْ حُجُوْرِكُمْ مِّنْ
نِّسَآئِكُمُ الّٰتِيْ دَخَلْتُمْ بِهِنَّ ۚ فَاِنْ لَّمْ تَكُوْنُوْا دَخَلْتُمْ بِهِنَّ فَلَا
جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ ۚ وَحَلَآئِلُ اَبْنَآئِكُمُ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ اَصْلَابِكُمْ ۙ وَاَنْ
تَجْمَعُوْا بَيْنَ الْاُخْتَيْنِ اِلَّا مَا قَدْ سَلَفَ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ غَفُوْرًا
رَّحِيْمًا ﴿۲۳﴾ وَالْمُحْصَنٰتُ مِنَ النِّسَآءِ اِلَّا مَا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُكُمْ
كِتٰبَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَاُحِلَّ لَكُمْ مَّا وَرَآءَ ذٰلِكُمْ اَنْ تَبْتَغُوْا
بِاَمْوَالِكُمْ مُّحْصِنِيْنَ غَيْرَ مُسٰفِحِيْنَ ؕ فَمَا اسْتَمْتَعْتُمْ بِهٖ مِنْهُنَّ
فَاٰتُوْهُنَّ اُجُوْرَهُنَّ فَرِيْضَةً ؕ وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِيْمَا تَرَاضَيْتُمْ

بِهٖ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ الْفَرِيْضَةِ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلِيْمًا حَكِيْمًا ﴿٢٤﴾

And do not marry those of women whom your fathers had married except what has passed. It is indeed shameful and detestable, and it is an evil practice. [22]

Prohibited for you are your mothers, your daughters, your sisters, your paternal aunts, your maternal aunts, daughters of brother, daughters of sister, your mothers who suckled you, your sisters through suckling, mothers of your wives and your step-daughters under your care who are born of your women with whom you have had intercourse - but if you have not had intercourse with them, then there is no sin on you. And the wives of your sons from your loins, and that you combine two sisters (in wedlock), except what has passed. Surely, Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful.[23]

(And also prohibited are) the women already bound in marriage, except the bondwomen you come to own. It has been written by Allah for you. All except them have been permitted for you to seek (to marry) through your wealth, binding yourself, (in marriage) and not only for lust. So, whoever of them you have benefited from, give them their due as obligated. And there is no sin on you in what you mutually consent to after the (initial) settlement. Surely, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise. [24]

The present verses are an extension of the description of evil practices common in *Jāhiliyyah* which have been taken up earlier. A detailed discussion appears in the Commentary.

Commentary:

These verses give details of *muḥarramāt*, that is, women with whom marriage is prohibited. Some of them are prohibited for ever, never becoming lawful under any condition. Some are not permanently prohibited. They become lawful under some particular circumstances.

There are three kinds of permanently-prohibited women referred to in the first category. They are those by kinship, by fosterage and by relationship through marriage, and are permanently prohibited. The kind mentioned at the end remains prohibited until they are bound in marriage with someone else.

An explanation of the verses follows with relevant part of the verse appearing in the lead:

وَلَا تَنْكِحُوْا مَا نَكَحَ اٰبَآؤُكُمْ (And do not marry those of women whom your fathers had married) (verse 22): During the days of *Jāhiliyyah,* people had no qualms when they went ahead and married the wife of their father after his death. In this verse, Allah Almighty has prohibited this shameful practice; an evil which invites His wrath. How can someone keep calling a woman his mother for a long time and yet stoop so low as to make her his wife after the death of the father?

Ruling:

1. Marrying the legally wedded wife of the father has been declared unlawful in this noble verse. There is no restriction here to indicate marital consummation by the father. So, the fact that the father has married a woman is enough to forbid the son from entering into marriage with that woman. It will never be lawful. Similarly, it is not correct for the father to marry the wife of his son, even if the marriage of the son is limited to formal '*nikāḥ*' and his wife has not yet come to live with him. (Ibn 'Abidīn)

2. If the father has fallen into illicit relations with some woman, even then it will not be permissible for the son to marry that woman.

حُرِّمَتْ عَلَيْكُمْ اُمَّهٰتُكُمْ (Prohibited for you are your mothers): It means that it is unlawful to marry one's own mother and the word, "*ummahātukum*" (your mothers), includes all grandmothers, paternal or maternal.

وَبَنٰتُكُمْ (and your daughters) means that it is unlawful to marry one's own real daughter, and the daughter of the daughter, and the daughter of the son.

In short, marrying a daughter, grand-daughter, great-grand-daughter; maternal grand-daughter, great-grand-daughter is all unlawful. As for marrying a step-daughter, from a different husband, whom the wife has brought with her, there are details which will appear later. As regards the son or daughter who are not real but have been adopted, it is permissible to marry them or their offspring, subject to the provision that such marriage is not unlawful due to some other consideration. Similarly, if a person fathers a daughter by

indulging in *zinā* with a woman, the girl thus born will be governed by the rule which applies to a daughter and marriage with her too will not be correct.

وَاَخَوٰتُكُمْ (and your sisters): Marrying one's own real sister is unlawful, as well as marrying an *'allātī* sister (half-sister from the same father but different mother), and also marrying an *akhyāfī* sister (half-sister from the same mother but different father).

وَعَمّٰتُكُمْ (and your paternal aunts): Marriage with the real sister of one's father, his half-sister from their father's side and his half-sister from their mother's side is unlawful. It means that one cannot marry any paternal aunt from the three kinds described above.

وَخٰلٰتُكُمْ (and your maternal aunts): Marriage with a sister of one's mother, whether real (*ḥaqīqī*) or half-sister from their father's side (*'allātī*) or half-sister from their mother's side (*akhyāfī*), is unlawful.

وَبَنٰتُ الْاَخِ (and daughters of brother): It means that marriage with one's nieces is also unlawful, whether they be *ḥaqīqī, 'allātī* or *akhyāfī.* Marriage with the daughters of all three types of brothers, real or half, as given above, is not lawful.

وَبَنٰتُ الْاُخْتِ (and daughters of sister): It means that marriage with one's maternal nieces is also unlawful, whether the sisters be *ḥaqīqī* or *'allātī* or *akhyāfī.* The daughters of such sisters cannot be taken in marriage.

وَاُمَّهٰتُكُمُ الّٰتِىْٓ اَرْضَعْنَكُمْ (and your mothers who suckled you): This refers to women who, even though they are not the real mothers, are treated in Sharī'ah like mothers in the sense that marriage with them is as prohibited as with one's real mother. The quantity or the frequency of feed makes no difference; the said unlawfulness stands established under all eventualities. Muslim jurists refer to this as the unlawfulness through fosterage.

However, it is necessary to remember that this unlawfulness through fosterage gets established when suckling takes place at a time which is the usual time for it during childhood. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said: "اِنَّمَا الرَّضَاعَةُ مِنَ الْمَجَاعَةِ": Fosterage is only from hunger" which means that the unlawfulness that becomes established through suckling shall come into effect only when suckling has taken place at a

time when the child has no other option but to suckle and grow through it. (al-Bukhārī and Muslim)

According to Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, this period ranges between the birth of the child and when he or she is two and a half years old. According to other Muslim jurists which includes his special disciples, Imām Abū Yūsuf and Imām Muḥammad رحمهما الله تعالى the period of suckling is two years only, therefore, if a boy or girl suckles at the breast of a woman after the age of two years, the prohibition of marriage due to fosterage will not come into affect.

وَأَخَوٰتُكُم مِّنَ الرَّضَاعَةِ (and your sisters through suckling): It means that marriage with sisters related through the bond of fosterage is also unlawful. Going in details, it works out that a woman who suckles a boy or girl during the days of suckling becomes their foster-mother, and her husband becomes their foster-father, and the offspring of that woman become his brothers and sisters, and the sisters of that woman become their maternal aunts, and the elder and younger brothers of her husband become the foster-uncles of these children, and the sisters of the husband of that woman become the paternal aunts of these children; and thus, in between all of them, the relationship of fosterage resulting in prohibition of marriage is established. The marriage which is mutually unlawful as based on the relation of kinship becomes equally unlawful as based on the relation of suckling. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said: يحرم من الرضاعة ما يحرم من الولادة (Bukhārī) (That which becomes unlawful by kinship becomes unlawful by fosterage). Another narration from the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim as in Mishkāt, page 273, says: ان الله حرم من الرضاعة ماحرم من النسب (Surely, Allah has prohibited through fosterage what He has prohibited through kinship.)

Rulings:

1. If a boy and a girl were suckled by a certain woman, the two of them cannot be married to each other. Similarly, marriage with the daughter of a foster-brother and foster-sister is also not possible.

2. Marriage with the lineal mother of foster-brother and foster-sister is permissible. It is also lawful to marry the foster-mother of the lineal sister of foster-sister; and the foster-sister of the lineal sister.

3. The unlawfulness of marriage becomes established if the feed is

received by the child during the days of suckling either through the mouth, or the nose. Should it be that the feed is given to the child by any other inlet, or it is injected in, then, the unlawfulness of fosterage will not come to be established.

4. No feed other than the feed from the woman suckling the child (for example, milk from animals or male humans), establishes fosterage.

5. If the feed is mixed in medicine or in milk from a goat, cow or buffalo, the unlawfulness of marriage as based on suckling shall be established only when the quantity of the woman's feed measures more, or when it is at least equal. But, if the woman's feed is less than that, this unlawfulness shall not come to be established.

6. If male mammalian glands happen to lactate, it does not go on to prove the unlawfulness of marriage from suckling.

7. If a woman lets a child mouth her nipple, but there is no certainty that the child has sucked the feed in, then this will not establish the unlawfulness through suckling and it will not affect the lawfulness of marriage, because the prohibition of marriage is not established where actual suckling is doubtful.

8. If a man marries a certain woman while some other woman claims that she has suckled both of them, then, should both of them confirm it, it will be decided that the marriage was incorrect. However, should both of them reject the claim it will not be mandatory on the spouses to vacate the marriage, however, if the woman appears to be God-fearing and a practicing Muslim, it is preferable for the spouses to opt for separation through divorce.

9. The witness of two practicing Muslims is necessary in order to prove unlawfulness through suckling. This will not be proved by the witness of one man or one woman. But, since this is a very serious matter involving the whole life being *ḥalāl* or *ḥarām* a precautionary attitude will always be advisable. Therefore, some Muslim jurists have ruled that if one intends to marry a woman, and only one practicing Muslim testifies that they are foster brother and sister, it will not be permissible for them to contract marriage. And if the evidence of one witness, male or female, comes forth after they have married each

other, even then, it will be safe and prudent for them to opt for voluntary separation.

10. According to the recognized rules of evidence, the testimony of one man and two women is equal to that of two male witnesses. Therefore, even if one man and two women testify the fact of suckling, the foster-relationship will stand proved.

وَأُمَّهٰتُ نِسَآئِكُمْ (and the mothers of your wives): Also unlawful to husbands are the mothers of their wives. Here too, the word, "*ummahāt*" includes all grandmothers of wives, maternal, paternal, lineal or foster.

Ruling:

1. Just as the mother of a legally wedded wife is unlawful, very similarly, equally unlawful is the mother of a woman with whom one has slept assuming her to be his wife, (while, in fact, she was not his wife) or with whom *zinā* (adultery) has been committed, or who has been touched lustfully.

2. The initial bond or marriage, in itself, renders the mother of one's wife unlawful for him. It means that even if the husband has never slept with his wife, her mother is still unlawful for him to marry.

وَرَبَآئِبُكُمُ الّٰتِىْ فِىْ حُجُوْرِكُمْ مِّنْ نِّسَآئِكُمُ الّٰتِىْ دَخَلْتُمْ بِهِنَّ (and your step-daughters under your care who are born of your women with whom you have had intercourse): When one marries a woman and sleeps with her after the marriage, the daughter of that woman from another husband becomes unlawful for him, and so do her grand-daughters, both paternal and maternal. Marriage with them is not permissible. But, if the husband has not yet slept with his wife and has divorced her after the contract of marriage, then her daughter or grand-daughter will not be unlawful for him. But, following *nikāḥ*, if one touches his wife lustfully, or looks at her private part with sexual desire, then this too, will be taken as having sex with her, therefore, it will make the daughter of that woman unlawful.

The words "your women" used in this context are general. Therefore, it is not the legally wedded wife only whose daughters are unlawful for the husband, but the same rule applies to a woman who

is not really wedded to the person, but he has had sexual intercourse with her either under the wrong impression that she is his wife, or in adultery. The daughter and grand-daughter of such women will also become unlawful for him.

وَحَلَآئِلُ اَبْنَآئِكُمُ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ اَصْلَابِكُمْ (and the wives of your sons from your loins): The wife of one's own son is unlawful, and the universality of 'son' includes grandsons, paternal or maternal. So, marriage with their wives shall not be permissible.

مِنْ اَصْلَابِكُمْ (from your loins): This particular restriction is used here to exclude the adopted son. Marriage with his wife is lawful. As far as a foster son is concerned, he is governed by the rule which governs the lineal son, therefore, marriage with his wife too is unlawful.

وَاَنْ تَجْمَعُوْا بَيْنَ الْاُخْتَيْنِ (and that you combine two sisters in wedlock): Also unlawful is the combining of two sisters in the bond of marriage. They may be real sisters or half sisters from the father's side or sisters from the mother's side (*ḥaqīqī, 'allātī, akhyāfī*). They may be sisters by lineage or sisters by fosterage. This rule covers all of them. However, when one sister has been divorced it is permissible to marry another sister, but this permissibility becomes effective only after the period of *'iddah* has expired. Marriage during *'iddah* is not permissible.

Rulings:

1. Just as one cannot combine two sisters in his marriage, it is also unlawful for him to combine a paternal aunt and her niece, and a maternal aunt and her niece. They too cannot be combined in marriage with any one person. As reported in al-Bukhārī and Muslim, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has said:

لَا يُجْمَعُ بَيْنَ الْمَرْأَةِ وَعَمَّتِهَا وَلَا بَيْنَ الْمَرْأَةِ وَخَالَتِهَا (بخاری و مسلم)

> Do not combine a woman with her paternal aunt, nor a woman with her maternal aunt

2. Muslim jurists have mentioned the general principle that any two women, out of whom, if one was supposed to be a male, then, their marriage with each other would turn out to be incorrect according to Islamic law, thus two women of this kind cannot be combined in marriage with one man.

الا ماقد سلف (except what has passed): It means that whatever has been the practice during *Jāhiliyyah* will not be called to account. These words have also appeared in verse 22. There too, the meaning is the same, that is, that which came to pass during *Jāhiliyyah* has passed. Now that Islam has been embraced, past deeds will not be taken into account, but it is necessary to abstain from them in future.

In the same way, it is necessary at this time of the revelation of what was unlawful that separation be made if one holds the wife of his father, or two sisters, in marriage. In the case of two sisters, it is compulsary that one sister be separated.

As narrated by the blessed Companion, Sayyidnā Barā , Ibn 'Āzib, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم had sent Sayyidnā Abū Burdah ibn Niyar to execute a man because he had married the wife of his father. (Mishkāt, p. 274)

Ibn Fīroz Dailamī narrates from his father: 'When I embraced Islam, I had two sisters married to me. I went to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم with the problem.' He said: "Separate by divorcing one and keeping the other." (Mishkāt, p. 274)

These narrations tell us that just as it is not lawful, after embracing Islam, to contract marriage with father's wife or to combine two sisters in marriage, similarly it is also unlawful to maintain such marriages, if they have been contracted by someone before he embraced Islam.

إِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا (Surely, Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful) means that anything people did erroneously before the advent of Islam will be overlooked by Allah Almighty once they have embraced Islam and they can be sure that He will turn to them with the great reach of His mercy.

وَالْمُحْصَنٰتُ مِنَ النِّسَآءِ (the women already bound in marriage): It means that women having husbands have also been made unlawful. So far as a woman is married to a person, no other person can marry her. From here, it becomes very clear that a woman cannot live with more than one husband simultaneously. There are some ignorant and loud-mouthed people in our time who have started saying - when men are allowed to take more than one wife, women too should have the

permission to enjoy more than one husband. This tasteless bravado is totally contrary to this noble verse. People who indulge in such flippant display of ignorance do not see that plurality of wives is a blessing which has been historically endorsed in all religions and societies. But, for a woman, having more than one husband at the same time is not only a headache for her in person, but it is also disgraceful for those two men who become husbands to one woman. This weird arrangement is not only shameless, but also leaves no possibility of any offspring being born lineally sound. When many men benefit from one woman, there will remain no method of attributing the fatherhood of the child so born to any one of the participating husbands. Such an obnoxious demand can only be made by those who are totally hostile to the graces of humanity, those who have buried their sense of shame once and for all and those who are supporting the movement to deprive human beings of blessings that issue forth from the recognized channel of parents and children bound in a charter of mutual rights. When lineage goes unproved, who is going to be charged with the responsibility of taking care of mutual rights and duties?

Even if this is looked at purely in terms of nature and reason, there seems to be no justification for the provision of several husbands for one woman:

1. The basic purpose of marriage is procreation. Seen from this angle, several women can certainly become pregnant from one man, but one woman cannot become pregnant from several men. She will become pregnant from none but one. What has thus happened is that, given the presence of several husbands, the procreating ability of all husbands, except one, was totally wasted on that count. They ended up with nothing beneficial except the lone satisfaction of their sexual drive.

2. Experience shows that woman is a genre more delicate than man. For a major portion of the year, she does not remain physically amenable to intimacy. There are conditions and circumstances in married life when it is not possible for her to fulfill the rights of even one husband, let alone more than one husband seeking her physical attention.

3. Since man is healthier and stronger in terms of physical power

as compared to woman, man should, if his sexual strength is above average and he cannot find satisfaction by limiting himself to one woman, have the opportunity, of course by permissible means, to marry twice and thrice. If this is not allowed, he will take to impermissible ways of satisfying his desires, and in that process, he will ruin the whole society. But, the likelihood that woman could bring about such ruination is very remote.

This question is so important in the Sharī'ah of Islam that it has not only ruled the second marriage of a woman unlawful when she is already married to someone else, but it also goes farther when it rules that, should the husband of a woman divorce her, or die, she still cannot marry another person until after the expiry of her *'iddah* or waiting period.

إِلَّا مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ (except the bondwomen you come to own): This sentence is an exception from the rule set in وَالْمُحْصَنَٰتُ مِنَ النِّسَآءِ (the women already bound in marriage).

It means that it is not permissible that a woman who already has a husband be taken in marriage by another person, unless she comes in the ownership of a person as a bondwoman. This happened when Muslims had to carry out *jihād* against the infidels of *Dār-al-ḥarb* (a non-Muslim state without a treaty of peace with the Muslims). As a result of a valid war with them women prisoners might have been brought to the Islamic state. If their non-Muslim husbands remained behind in their original non-Muslim State, their bond of marriage with them used to be terminated by their entry into the Islamic state, and it was lawful for a Muslim to marry her, if she was a Christian, a Jew or had embraced Islam. Similarly, if the head of the Islamic state opted to make her a bondwoman and had given her to a participant in the war as his share in the spoils, he could also enjoy her company. However, this marriage or enjoyment was permissible only after she goes through at least one menstruation period after her entry into the Islamic state. If it appeared that she was pregnant from her previous husband, it was necessary to wait until she delivers the child.

Rulings:

1. If a disbelieving woman embraces Islam in Dār al-Ḥarb while her husband is a disbeliever, she will be released from the bond of

marriage with him after the expiry of three menstrual periods.

2. If a disbelieving woman embraces Islam in Dār al-Islam and her husband is a disbeliever, then, the local legal authority should induce the husband to think about accepting Islam. If he refuses to become a Muslim, the Muslim judge should bring about a separation between the two. This separation will be taken as the divorce after which, the woman completes her period of *'iddah* and becomes free to marry any Muslim of her choice.

كِتٰبَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ (It has been written by Allah for you): It means that the unlawfulness of marriage with women identified by Allah is something determined by Him.

وَاُحِلَّ لَكُمْ مَّاوَرَآءَ ذٰلِكُمْ (All except them have been permitted for you): It means that women other than those whose unlawfulness has been mentioned upto this point are lawful for you; for example, the daughter of an uncle, the daughter of a maternal aunt, the sister born of a maternal uncle, and the wife of a maternal or paternal uncle - after their death or after they have divorced her - subject to the condition that any other reason of prohibition does not exist. In addition to that, there is the wife of an adopted son who can be lawfully married after he divorces, or dies; so also, if one's wife dies, he can marry her sister - these being some of the many lawful options available. All these have been covered under the generality of مَّاوَرَآءَ ذٰلِكُمْ (All except them).

Ruling:

It is not permissible to have more than four wives simultaneously. Detailed comments on this subject have already appeared in the beginning of Sūrah Al-Nisā'. Not finding any reference to this in the immediate context of the present verses should not lead anyone to misunderstand that, may be, the generality of the Qur'ānic words, مَّاوَرَآءَ ذٰلِكُمْ (All except them) allows unrestricted marriage with women. Besides the women, marriage with whom is unlawful as declared in the Holy Qur'ān, there are several others in this category as mentioned in the noble *Aḥādīth,* indications of which appear in the Qur'ānic verses also and to which we have been pointing out in our comments.

اَنْ تَبْتَغُوْا بِاَمْوَالِكُمْ (that you may seek {to marry} through your wealth):

It means that the description of women unlawful for marriage is there to induce you to look for lawful women with the help of your wealth and enter into marriage with them. In Aḥkām al-Qur'ān, Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣaṣ رحمة الله عليه writes that this part of the verse tells us two things. Firstly, marriage cannot materialize devoid of dower (even if the parties to marriage decide between themselves that the marriage will take place without dower, still, dower will be necessary, details of which are available in books of *Fiqh*.) Secondly, it tells us that dower (*mahr*) should be something which can be termed as "*māl*" (inclusive of wealth, property, assets etc.) According to the Ḥanafiyyah, *mahr* (dower) should not be less than ten *dirhams*. One *dirham* is equivalent to 3 1/2x17 grains Troy of silver.

مُّحْصِنِيْنَ غَيْرَ مُسَافِحِيْنَ (binding yourself in marriage, and not only for lust): It means that one should seek lawful women with the help of one's assets and it should be clearly understood that the seeking of women is to safeguard modesty and chastity, which is the crucial purpose of a marriage. And it is through marriage alone that the desired objective has to be achieved and certainly not through spendings to find women for *zinā* (fornication). This tells us that, no doubt the fornicators too spend out of their assets, but that spending is patently unlawful, and benefiting from a woman who has been procured by such spending is never lawful. The addition of غَيْرَ مُسَافِحِيْنَ[1] (not for lust) here serves two purposes. As obvious, it forbids *zinā* (fornication) while it also points out that the purpose of *zinā* is nothing but to run after lust and to waste one's semen for unlawful enjoyment - because it is not aimed at the seeking of children and the preservation of the human race. Muslims must stay chaste investing their strength where it is due in the best interest of human procreation, the method of which is to have a wife in marriage, or a bondwoman - in case one comes to have one.

فَمَا اسْتَمْتَعْتُمْ بِهٖ مِنْهُنَّ فَاٰتُوْهُنَّ اُجُوْرَهُنَّ فَرِيْضَةً (So, whoever of them you have benefited from, give them their due as obligated): 'Benefiting' in this verse refers to coition and it means that the payment of full dower is

1. Literally, it means 'flowing of water' and indicates to seeking ejaculation out of lust. (Editor)

due on the husband only when he had benefited from her company by having sex with her. If, after the initial marriage contract the wife has not come to live with the husband who thus does not get the opportunity to 'benefit' from her company, and he divorces her before having that opportunity, the payment of *mahr* (dower) due against him becomes half. Special attention has been drawn in this verse to the situation when, once this 'benefit' has been received from some woman, the payment of her *mahr* becomes obligatory on all counts. Any shortcoming in doing so is against the letter and spirit of Muslim law. Moreover, the universal human sense of honour dictates that consequent to the purpose of marriage having been achieved, there should be no failing or delaying in giving the wife her due - however, the Sharī'ah gives the woman the additional right that she can, if the *mahr* (dower) is prompt (*mu'ajjal*), refuse to go to her husband until the payment of the *mahr* has been made to her.

The unlawfulness of *Mut'ah*

The root of the Arabic word, إستمتاع : *istimtā'* is ع - ت - م (mīm - tā - 'aīn) which means to derive benefit. Any benefit derived from a person or from wealth, property, assets etc. is called *istimtā'*. According to Arabic grammar, the addition of the letters س : *sīn* and ت : *tā* to the root of any word gives the meaning of seeking. Based on this lexical explanation, the simple and straight sense of the Qur'ānic expression, إستمتعتم (you have benefited), as understood by the entire Muslim *ummah* from the revered early elders to their successors and followers, is just what we have stated a little earlier. But, a sect[1] says that it means the conventional *mut'ah* and, according to its adherents, this verse proves that *mut'ah* is *ḥalāl* (lawful). Therefore, it is pertinent here to give a brief account of *mut'ah* and its unlawfulness.

Mut'ah which was in vogue before the advent of Islam was a temporary contract between a man and a woman for having sexual relationship between them for a specified period in exchange of money or a specified kind offered by the man to the woman. This type of contract, which was never meant to create permanent rights and obligations of marriage, was clearly prohibited by the Holy Qur'ān and Sunnah, however, this particular sect claims that it is still *ḥalāl*

1. [i.e. the Shi'ites] (editor).

(permissible). They sometimes seek support to this claim from the present verse just on the ground that the word '*mut'ah*' has been derived from the same root wherefrom the word إِسْتَمْتَعْتُمْ used in this verse has been derived. Obviously, this argument is too far-fetched, and the present verse itself is sufficient to refute it, because before the word إِسْتَمْتَعْتُمْ , the Holy Qur'ān has used the words مُحْصِنِيْنَ غَيْرَ مُسَافِحِيْنَ (binding yourself in marriage and not only for lust) which clearly prove that the sexual relationship approved by the Holy Qur'ān is the only one which aims at chastity through the permanent bond of marriage, and not a relationship based on satisfying lust for a temporary period which has been termed by the Holy Qur'ān as 'flowing water'.

Now, it is obvious that the contract of *mut'ah* has nothing to do with this concept. It neither creates permanent rights and obligations, nor does it bring about a family set-up, nor does it aim at having children and maintain chastity. It is nothing but to satisfy the sexual desire for a short period of time.

As a result, the woman with whom *mut'ah* is done is not given even the status of a wife who could inherit from her very pragmatic counterpart - who, for that matter, does not even have the grace to count her among his recognized wives. The reason is very simple as the purpose here is nothing but sexual gratification, an attitude which drives men and women to keep hunting for ever-new sex-partners in a temporary setting. If this be the state of affairs, *mut'ah* (referred to as temporary marriage) can never be taken as the guarantor of modesty and chastity; it is, on the contrary, its very enemy.

Therefore, the Qur'ānic words مُحْصِنِيْنَ غَيْرَ مُسَافِحِيْنَ are more than enough to rule out the possibility of *mut'ah* being meant by the present verse.

The author of *Hidāyah* has attributed to Imām Mālik that, according to him, *mut'ah* is permissible. But, this attribution is totally incorrect as clarified by the commentator of *Hidāyah* and other respected scholars who say that the author of *Hidāyah* has attributed this view to Imām Mālik inadvertently.

However, there are some of those who claim that Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه believed in the lawfulness of *mut'ah* right upto his later years, although this is not so. Imām al-Tirmidhī, devoting a

chapter to "*mut'ah*", has reported two *aḥādīth*. The first one is as follows:

عن علی بن أبی طالب أن النبی صلی الله علیه وسلم نهی عن متعة النساء وعن لحوم الحمرا لأهلية زمن خيبر

'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib رضی الله عنه reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ on *the occasion of the battle of Khyber, prohibited mut'ah with* women and from (eating) the meat of domestic donkeys.

This *ḥadith* appears in al-Bukhārī and Muslim as well. The second *ḥadīth* reported by Imām al-Tirmidhī is given below:

عن ابن عباس قال: إنما كانت المتعة فى أول الإسلام حتى إذا نزلت الاية الا على ازواجهم اوما ملكت ايمانهم قال ابن عباس: فكل فرج سواهما فهو حرام

Ibn 'Abbas رضی الله عنه says: *Mut'ah* was there only in the early period of Islam until the verse - (إِلَّا عَلَىٰ أَزْوَاجِهِمْ أَوْمَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُمْ) - was revealed. Then, he said: All private parts other than these are unlawful (that is other than those of the legally wedded wife and the bondwoman one may come to have).

Nevertheless, this much has to be said that Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضی الله عنه took *mut'ah* to be permissible upto a certain time. Then, it was on the good counsel of Sayyidnā 'Alī رضی الله عنه (as in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, v.1, p.452) and under the chastening impact of the noble verse: إِلَّا عَلَىٰ أَزْوَاجِهِمْ أَوْمَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُمْ that he revoked his earlier position, as indicated in the narration from Tirmidhī.

It is very strange that the sect which believes in the lawfulness of *mut'ah* - despite its claim to love and obey Sayyidnā 'Alī رضی الله عنه - elects to oppose no less a person than him on this particular issue.

The author of Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī reports from Qāḍī 'Ayāḍ that *mut'ah* was lawful before the battle of Khayber, but it was made unlawful during it. After that, it was declared lawful on the day of the Conquest of Makkah, but it was after three days that it was proclaimed as unlawful for ever.

There is yet another point worthy of our attention. The Qur'ānic statement:

وَالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ لِفُرُوْجِهِمْ حَافِظُوْنَ اِلَّا عَلٰى اَزْوَاجِهِمْ اَوْمَا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُهُمْ فَاِنَّهُمْ غَيْرُ مَلُوْمِيْنَ ۔

(And those who guard their private parts, save from their wives or from their bondwomen, then, they are not blame-worthy).

is so explicit that it admits of no other interpretation. It shows the unlawfulness of *mut'ah* very clearly. Seeking flimsy support from some rare and unauthentic readings is absolutely incorrect.

To sum up our earlier submissions, there is no absolute proof to support the view that the Qur'ānic word, اِسْتَمْتَعْتُمْ (you have benefited) refers to conventional *mut'ah*. This is just a remote possibility which can never override the absolute proof contained in اِلَّا عَلٰى اَزْوَاجِهِمْ اَوْمَا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُهُمْ cited above. Specially, keeping in view the well-settled principle of Islamic jurisprudence, that where two arguments or two interpretations are equally possible, the one supporting prohibition is always preferred.

Ruling:

Like *mut'ah*, a time bound marriage is also unlawful. A time-bound marriage (termed in Islamic jurisprudence as *al-nikāḥ al-muwaqqat*) is a marriage entered into for a fixed time. The difference between the two is that *mut'ah* is done by using the words of *mut'ah*. A time-bound marriage is done by saying the word, *nikāḥ* which is normally used for regular marriage.

وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِيْمَا تَرَاضَيْتُمْ بِهٖ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ الْفَرِيْضَةِ (And there is no sin on you in what you mutually consent to after the {initial} settlement): This sentence in the verse means that *mahr* or dower which has been fixed mutually is not, in the real sense, absolute and definitive, and something to which nothing could be added or deleted. On the contrary, a husband can add something on his own accord on the fixed *mahr,* and the wife too, if she so desires, willingly and happily, can forgo a part of her *mahr,* or the whole of it. The generality of the words also allows a situation where a woman willingly agrees to defer the payment of a dower which was originally settled to be prompt.

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلِيْمًا حَكِيْمًا (Surely, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise): The addition of this sentence towards the end of the verse tells us two things. Firstly, that All knows. He is aware of everything. His injunctions are

there to be complied with. If somebody acts against these and even if a judge, a ruler, or any other human being ever gets to find out about it, Allah, in His most exalted state of being, knows all about this and everything else. One must keep fearing Him under all circumstances. Secondly, that the injunctions He has revealed are all based on *ḥikmah* or wisdom. In essence, *Ḥikmah* (Allah's wisdom) is too deep to be understood by everyone. The injunctions concerning what is unlawful and lawful as given in these verses, whether or not one understands their cause, reason or justification, must be believed in, accepted and obeyed. This is because, even though we may not know the *raison d'etre*, the cause, reason or justification, it hardly matters, for the Creator and the Master of the Command, Allah Almighty certainly knows it all, being the All-Knowing, the Wise.

There are many people, educated but ignorant, visibly spread out in our contemporary Muslim and non-Muslim societies, who go about gopher-like, searching for the causes of Divine injunctions. When they fail to find any, they side-track the need to comply with the injunction by saying that the Word of God was, God-forbid, contrary to the requirements of the modern age, or worse still, unsuitable. The words of the verse have silenced such people for ever by telling them: 'You are ignorant. Your Creator is All-Knowing. You lack understanding. Allah is All-Wise. Do not make your reason the touchstone of the Truth.'

Verse 25

وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَسْتَطِعْ مِنْكُمْ طَوْلًا اَنْ يَّنْكِحَ الْمُحْصَنٰتِ الْمُؤْمِنٰتِ
فَمِنْ مَّا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُكُمْ مِّنْ فَتَيٰتِكُمُ الْمُؤْمِنٰتِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ
بِاِيْمَانِكُمْ ؕ بَعْضُكُمْ مِّنْۢ بَعْضٍ ۚ فَانْكِحُوْهُنَّ بِاِذْنِ اَهْلِهِنَّ
وَاٰتُوْهُنَّ اُجُوْرَهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ مُحْصَنٰتٍ غَيْرَ مُسٰفِحٰتٍ وَّلَا
مُتَّخِذٰتِ اَخْدَانٍ ۚ فَاِذَاۤ اُحْصِنَّ فَاِنْ اَتَيْنَ بِفَاحِشَةٍ فَعَلَيْهِنَّ
نِصْفُ مَا عَلَى الْمُحْصَنٰتِ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ ؕ ذٰلِكَ لِمَنْ خَشِيَ
الْعَنَتَ مِنْكُمْ ؕ وَاَنْ تَصْبِرُوْا خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿۲۵﴾

And the one who cannot afford to marry the free Muslim women, then (he may marry) the one you own of the Muslim girls. And Allah knows best about your faith. You are similar to each other. So, marry them with the permission of their masters and give them their dues, as recognized, they being bound in marriage, not going for lust, nor having paramours. So, once they have been bound in marriage, then, if they commit a shameful act, they shall be liable to half of the punishment prescribed for the free women. That is for those of you who fear falling in sin. And that you be patient is better for you. And Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [25]

It is in continuation of the injunctions relating to marriage which have been appearing earlier that the text now takes up the option of marriage with bondwomen who qualify as such under the stipulations of the Sharī'ah of Islam. Then, the injunction of *Ḥadd* punishment concerning them has been added along since the status of a bondman and bondwoman is different from a free man and a free woman. Detailed explanation follows.

Commentary

The word, طَوْل (*ṭaul*) in the Qur'ānic text signifies power, capability and means. The sense of the verse is that one who does not have the capability or means to marry free Muslim women, can marry Muslim bondwomen. This clearly indicates that one should, as far as possible, marry only a free woman and simply not marry a bondwoman. But, should it be that one has to marry a bondwoman, he should look for a Muslim bondwoman

This is the very juristic position of Imām Abū Hanīfah according to whom marrying a bondwoman, specially a bondwoman from the people of the Book (Jews or Christians) while having the power and means to marry a free woman, is *makrūh* (not desirable)

According to Imām Shāfi'ī and other Imams, marrying a bond-woman while having the power and means to marry a free woman is unlawful (*ḥarām*), and marrying a bondwoman from the people of the Book is absolutely impermissible.

In short, to avoid marrying a bondwoman is, under all conditions,

certainly better for a free man. However, if one has to do so under personal lack of choice, marrying a Muslim bondwoman is better. The reason is that the offspring from a bondwoman becomes automatically bonded to the owner of the bondwoman. Furthermore, there remains the danger that the offspring from the non-Muslim bondwoman could adopt a religion other than Islam following the example of the mother. So, in order to resuce the children from bondage and to ensure that they remain Muslims, it is necessary that the mother of the children should be free. If she is a bondwoman, let her, at the least, be necessarily a Muslim, so that the faith of the child remains secure for future flowering. For this reason, respected scholars have said that marrying a free woman from the people of the Book is, no doubt, correct, but, staying away from doing so is better; and in a time like this, its importance is much too obvious to be emphasized as Jewish and Christian women usually marry Muslim men to influence the husband himself, and his children, into adopting their religion.

This much established, the text then says: وَاللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ بِاِيْمَانِكُمْ بَعْضُكُمْ مِّنْ بَعْضٍ : It means that Allah is fully aware of your faith, that is, *'Īmān* or faith is the criterion of precedence. It is very likely that a bondman or bondwoman may be far ahead of free men and women on the scale of faith. Therefore, the option of marriage with a Muslim bondwoman should not be taken as absolutely contemptible. Instead the fact that she has faith in Islam should be appreciated. The expression بَعْضُكُمْ مِّنْ بَعْضٍ appearing at the end, translated here as 'you are similar to each other', means that human beings, free or in bondage, all come from one species, the children of Adam and all were born of only one soul. That one is better than the other depends on *'Īmān* (faith) and *Taqwā* (righteous conduct in fear of Allah, the Creator). According to al-Tafsīr al-Maẓharī, 'these two sentence are there for people to get familiarized with and become acceptance-prone to marriage with bondwomen and get rid of any attitude of contempt for such marriage

فَانْكِحُوْهُنَّ بِاِذْنِ اَهْلِهِنَّ وَاٰتُوْهُنَّ اُجُوْرَهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ (So, marry them with the permission of their masters and give them their dues): It means that, should they refuse to give permission, the marriage of the bondwoman will not be correct because the bondwoman does not possess the control over her person. The same rule governs the bondman as he too cannot marry

without the permission of his master.

Then it was said that one who marries a bondwoman should pay her *mahr* (dower) promptly, honestly and gracefully, that is, without hedging and delaying, and making sure that the payment is made in full, and that no trouble is caused to the bondwoman in this matter just because she happens to be a bondwoman. The juristic position taken by Imām Mālik in this connection is that *mahr* (dower) is the right of the bondwoman. Other Imāms say that the master of the bondwoman is the one who shall become the owner of what is received in payment of the dower of the bondwoman.

مُحْصَنٰتٍ غَيْرَ مُسٰفِحٰتٍ وَّلَا مُتَّخِذٰتِ اَخْدَانٍ (they being bound in marriage, not going for lust, nor having paramours): It means that marriage with Muslim bondwomen should be contracted while they are observers of chastity being neither "*musāfiḥāt*", that is, open fornicators, nor keepers of clandestine paramours. It may be noted that the text, though refers to the seeking of chaste bondwomen for marriage at this place, yet it is also much better to stay away from marrying a fornicating free woman as well.

Since this verse has declared that if one cannot afford to marry a free woman, the second option for him is to marry a bondwoman. This also proves that *mut'ah* (متعہ) is not permissible, because, had *mut'ah* been permissible, a person who could not afford to marry a free woman could have gone for the easiest alternate by doing *mut'ah* [1] as it would have gratified his sexual desire and, in addition to that, the relative financial burden of this deal would have been much less than that of a regular marriage. Furthermore, the Qur'ānic words مُحْصَنٰتٍ غَيْرَ مُسٰفِحٰتٍ identify the trait of the bondwomen - an observer of chastity while being bound in marriage and no fornicator. Now, as far as *mut'ah* is concerned, it is all '*safḥ*', nothing but spillage and rank whoredom. One woman gets used by several men in short spans of time. The offspring, if it comes, cannot be credibly ascribed to anyone. There goes the benefit of procreation. What becomes of the unique reservoir of human strength all such people possess, is simply that the whole thing goes down the drain just to oblige the wanton pursuit of sex.

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1. For details see the commentary (on verse 24) in the previous section.

فَإِذَآ أُحْصِنَّ فَإِنْ أَتَيْنَ بِفَاحِشَةٍ فَعَلَيْهِنَّ نِصْفُ مَا عَلَى الْمُحْصَنٰتِ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ : It means that after the bondwomen have been bound in marriage and their observance of chastity has been given a safe cover, if they commit *zinā*, an act of shame, they shall be liable to half of the punishment prescribed for the free women. This refers to unmarried free women. If unmarried free man and woman happen to commit *zinā*, the punishment is one hundred lashes, which appears in Sūrah An-Nūr (24:2). As for the married man and woman committing *zinā* (adultery), the punishment is *rajm* which is death by stoning. Since this particular punishment cannot be reduced to half, all four Imāms agree on the position that the punishment of *zinā* committed by a bondman or bondwoman, married or unmarried, is fifty lashes. The injunction relating to the bondwomen has been mentioned in the present verse, but the question of the bondman too becomes clear from the obvious analogy of the text.

ذٰلِكَ لِمَنْ خَشِيَ الْعَنَتَ مِنْكُمْ : It means that the permission to marry a bondwoman is for a person who apprehends that he might fall into the sin of fornication.

وَأَنْ تَصْبِرُوا خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ (And that you be patient is better for you); that is, if a person, despite the apprehension of falling into *zinā*, exercises restraint and keeps himself morally pure rising above the pull of his sexual desire, then, this state of being is better than that one marries bondwomen.

وَاللّٰهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (And Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful): It means that, no doubt, marrying bondwomen is *makrūh* (not desirable) yet, should one go on to do something in this line, Allah Almighty will still forgive him. Then, He is Very-Merciful too, because He allowed marriage with bondwomen and did not make it totally prohibited.

Special Note

Bondmen and bondwomen mentioned in the explanation of the present verse represent the *Shar'ī* bondmen and bondwomen. Men and women from among the disbelievers who were taken prisoners during *Jihād* were given to the Mujāhidīn as part of the distribution of spoils by the Amīr al-Mu'minīn, the Chief Executive of Muslims. These prisoners became the bondmen and bondwomen. Their offspring too remained in bondage (with the exception of some cases which appear in due details in books of *Fiqh*). Today Muslims have forsaken taking

up *Jihād* in the manner prescribed by the Sharī'ah of Islam, ignored the demands of their *Jihād,* have entrusted the options of peace and war in the hands of the enemies of their religion and have themselves become chained to principles and policies which have nothing to do with the Sharī'ah of Islam. Since that point of time Muslims departed from the pivot, they ended up being deprived of what was known as a bondman and bondwoman.

Common domestic servants in our own time are not 'bondmen' and 'bondwomen' because they are free.

In some parts of the world, children are sold out or enslaved. This is absolutely and totally *ḥarām* (forbidden). They do not become 'bondmen' and 'bondwomen' by doing that.

Verses 26 - 28

يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُبَيِّنَ لَكُمْ وَيَهْدِيَكُمْ سُنَنَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ وَيَتُوبَ عَلَيْكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٢٦﴾ وَاللَّهُ يُرِيدُ أَنْ يَتُوبَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَيُرِيدُ الَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ الشَّهَوَاتِ أَنْ تَمِيلُوا مَيْلًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٢٧﴾ يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ أَنْ يُخَفِّفَ عَنْكُمْ وَخُلِقَ الْإِنْسَانُ ضَعِيفًا ﴿٢٨﴾

Allah intends to make clear to you and to guide you to the ways of those before you and to relent towards you. And Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise. [26]

And Allah intends to relent towards you while those who follow the desires want you to deviate a great deviation. [27]

Allah intends to make things easy on you. And man has been created weak. [28]

Sequence

Mentioned in the previous verses were details of injunctions. Now, in the present verses, Allah Almighty points to his blessings and favours saying that your being obligated with these injunctions is for your own good, even though you may not be able to understand its manifestation in details. Then, along with it, there is the motivation to

follow the divine injunctions. Finally, there is the message of alert against the evil intentions of the misguided who wish ill of you and would like you to stray far away from the straight path.

Commentary

Following the description of several injunctions relating to marriage, the present verses say that Allah Almighty is making His injunctions very clear and explicit for you, and He is putting you in line with the ways of the noble prophets and the righteous who have come earlier. Do not think that these details of what is unlawful and what is not are there for you alone. The fact is that communities, earlier than you, were also charged with such injunctions. Those who acted in accordance with them were rewarded with Allah's favour.

As for those who follow the dictates of their desires, which includes fornicators, adulterers and nations and peoples adhering to false creeds who just do not recognize the restrictions of *ḥalāl* and *ḥarām* and make no distinction between lawful and unlawful would very much like you too to move away from the straight path and start giving ear to their false intentions and crooked ways. Be on your guard against them. There are creeds where it is all right to marry women - marriage with whom is not proper. Then there are many atheists who favour the very elimination of the institution of marriage as something out of tune with modern times. Not content with what they call "living together", there are people in some countries who are talking about women as a shared item of enjoyment. All this comes from people who take orders from their desiring self. Some Muslims, subscribing to Islam yet weak in their faith, when they keep company with disbelievers and atheists of such inclinations, fall a prey to their lustful claims and begin to think that their own religion is out-dated and that the position of the enemy is the very epitome of human progress. They do not realize that they have been framed into believing that people with such ideas are modern and forward-looking, something they start wishing their own religion could have permitted. Refuge with Allah from such spineless surrendering! The best policy is to take the warning given by Allah Almighty and stay away from owning and practicing ideas and ways of people with dispositions so wicked.

After this, in the first part of verse 28, it was said:

يُرِيْدُ اللّٰهُ اَنْ يُّخَفِّفَ عَنْكُمْ : It means that Allah, great in His majesty, intends to make things easy on you, that is, prescribes injunctions which can be carried out by everyone obligated with them. If one cannot afford marrying free women, permission has been given to marry bond-women. Parties to a marriage were given the right to settle the dower by mutual consent. Also given was the right to marry more than one woman under circumstantial necessity, of course, on condition that justice is not compromised.

At the end, in the second part of verse 28, the text says: وَخُلِقَ الْاِنْسَانُ ضَعِيْفًا (And man has been created weak). It means that man is weak by nature, and constituted desire-prone. If man was asked to stay away from women, totally and absolutely, he would have been a hopeless performer when it came to obeying the injunctions of Allah. It was, in view of his weakness and limitations, that he was not only permitted to marry women, but also that he was induced to do so. It goes without saying that the post-marriage life of a couple offers great benefits of mutual self-realization and most of all they enjoy the blessings of a sight that is untainted and a character that is unalloyed. This mutual purity of the couple increases the moral quality of life for both of them, making them strong, self-reliant and happy. So, marriage is a smart mutual contract to remove any chances of weakness that may afflict men and women - a peerless method indeed.

Verses 29 - 30

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَاْكُلُوْۤا اَمْوَالَكُمْ بَيْنَكُمْ بِالْبَاطِلِ اِلَّاۤ اَنْ تَكُوْنَ تِجَارَةً عَنْ تَرَاضٍ مِّنْكُمْ ۗ وَلَا تَقْتُلُوْۤا اَنْفُسَكُمْ ۗ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ بِكُمْ رَحِيْمًا ﴿۲۹﴾ وَمَنْ يَّفْعَلْ ذٰلِكَ عُدْوَانًا وَّظُلْمًا فَسَوْفَ نُصْلِيْهِ نَارًا ۗ وَكَانَ ذٰلِكَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ يَسِيْرًا ﴿۳۰﴾

O those who believe, do not eat up each other's property by false means unless it be a trade with your mutual consent. And do not kill yourselves. Indeed, Allah has been Very-Merciful to you. [29]

And whoever does that out of aggression and injustice,

We shall cast him into fire. And this is an easy thing for Allah. [30]

Sequence

Looking back from the beginning of Sūrah Al-Nisā', we see that it points out to the creation of all human beings from one father and mother and to the fact that all of them are bound in one big bond of brotherhood which suggests that rights of human beings at large have to be guarded and fulfilled. Then came a detailed statement about orphans and women which was followed by the injunctions of inheritance stressing upon the fulfillment of the rights of other relations in addition to those of the orphans and women. Pursuant to this came the injunctions of marriage telling about women who can be lawfully married and about those with whom marriage is unlawful, because marriage is a transaction and contract which entitles someone to enter into a woman's life and property.

The present verses bid the protection of human life and property and forbid any uncalled for intrusion into that area - whether those human beings are men or women, related or unrelated, Muslim or non-Muslim with whom there is a no-war pact in force. (Tafsīr al-Mazharī)

Commentary

While prohibiting to eat up the property of others the actual words used in the verse are: أَمْوَالَكُمْ بَيْنَكُمْ which have been translated as 'each other's property' against the very literal, 'your property in between you'. There is a consensus of Commentators that these words certainly carry the sense that nobody should eat up the property of the other by false means. The sense of the expression also includes, as indicated by Abū Ḥayyān in Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, that anybody should eat up his own property in that manner - for example, spend it on what is religiously sinful, or is straight extravagance. That too comes under the purview of this verse and is forbidden.

The word لَا تَأْكُلُوْا in the verse literally means, 'do not eat'. But, in common usage, it means, 'do not usurp the property of another person by false means whatever they may be by eating or drinking or using. In common parlance, the unauthorized use of what is owned by someone else is indicated by the idiom, 'eating up', even though it may not be eatable. The word, "*bāṭil*" which has been translated as "false

means" covers, in the view of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd and the majority of blessed Companions, all other forms which are impermissible and are forbidden by the Sharī'ah. Included thereunder are theft, robbery, usurpation, breach of trust, bribery, interest, gambling and all false transactions. (al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ)

False Means as explained by the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth

As for the Holy Qur'ān, it has used one word بالباطل (by false means) to declare that all wealth and property acquired by false means is unlawful. After that, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was entrusted with the duty of providing details. It was he صلى الله عليه وسلم who explained the details of every impermissible transaction.

From this we also find out that the many details of impermissible methods of buying and selling mentioned in the *aḥādīth* of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم are really an elaboration of this Qur'ānic injunction. Therefore, all those injunctions are, in a way, the very injunctions of the Qur'ān. Whatever injunctions of Sharī'ah have appeared in the *aḥādīth* of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم they all have a common feature - they all elucidate upon one or the other Qur'ānic injunction. It makes no difference whether we do or do not know that this is an explanation of a certain verse.

Permissible Methods

The first part of verse 29 explained above declares that devouring the other person's property by false and disapproved methods is unlawful. Then, in order to exempt permissible methods from the ruling of unlawfulness, it was said in the second part of the same verse: إِلَّآ أَن تَكُونَ تِجَٰرَةً عَن تَرَاضٍ مِّنكُمْ which means that the wealth and property of others which has been acquired through trade by mutual consent is not unlawful.

Although there are, besides trade, several other means and methods which are equally permissible - for example, borrowing, gift, charity, inheritance - but, generally the most recognized and commonly practiced form of one person's property passing into the possession and control of someone else is no other than trade. Then, trade is generally understood to be a buying and selling activity. But, according to al-Tafsīr al-Maẓharī, dealings related with service, labour and tenancy are also included in trade, because in *bai'* (sale) what is

acquired is *māl* (property) for *māl,* while in *ijāra* one gets *māl* for service and labour. Trade covers both.

The reason why trade alone, out of the permissible forms of acquiring wealth and property from others, has been singled out here in this verse is that trade and labour are the best means of earning livelihood out of a variety of those open to man. Sayyidnā Rāfi' ibn Khadīj رضی اللہ عنہ says that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم when asked as to which mode of earning was the purest and the most lawful, said:

عمل الرجل بيده وكل بيع مبرور (مظهری و ترغيب وترهيب)

"Man's work with his own hands, and all honest sale transactions (not false and fraudulent) (Al-Mundhiri, Al-Targhīb, and Mazharī).

Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudhrī رضی اللہ عنہ narrates that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said:

التاجر الصدوق الامين مع النبيين والصديقين والشهداء (ترمذی)

"The truthful and trustworthy trader shall be with the prophets and the truthful and the martyrs". (Tirmidhī)

And Sayyidnā Anas رضی اللہ عنہ narrates that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

التاجر الصدوق تحت ظل العرش يوم القيمة - رواه الاصبهانی (ترغيب)

"The truthful trader shall be under the shade of the Throne on the Day of Doom." (reported by al-Isfahānī, al-Targhīb)

Special Conditions of Clean Earning

According to a narration from Sayyidnā Mu'ādh ibn Jabal رضی اللہ عنہ the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said:

"The cleanest earning is the earning of the traders, on condition that, when they talk, they do not lie; and when they are asked to hold something in trust, they commit no breach of trust; and when they buy something from someone, they do not start finding faults in it; and when they sell their own stuff, they do not praise it (unrealistically); and when they have a debt to pay, they do not evade payment; and when they have a debt to recover from someone, they do not harass him." (Isfahānī, as quoted by Mazharī)

For this reason, it was said in another *ḥadīth*:

ان التجار يبعثون يوم القيمة فجارا الامن اتقى وبر وصدق (اخرجه الحاكم عن رفاعة بن رافع)

"Traders will be raised on the Day of Doom as the sinners except him who fears Allah, acts righteously and says what is true." (al-Ḥākim, from Rifā'ah b. Rāfi')

Trade and Mutual Consent :

The words "unless it be a trade with your mutual consent "in verse 29 lay down two conditions for the validity of a transaction through which the property of another person may lawfully be acquired. Firstly, it must be a transaction of trade which requires exchange of properties. Therefore, the transactions of gambling, speculation and usury or the transactions of sale where the commodity does not exist are forbidden and are not valid in Sharī'ah, because these transactions cannot be termed as trade, even though they are effected in the name of trade.

Secondly, the transaction must be effected with the mutual consent of the parties. Therefore, if there is trade, where the object of sale does exist, but the mutual consent of the parties is not there, even then, the sale is invalid and impermissible. Thus, these two forms are included under "eating up each other's property by false means". Muslim jurists call the first form, *albai' al-bāṭil'*, while the second form is given the name, '*al-bai' al-fāsid*'.

To explain the first condition, we can say that trade is the name of the exchange of one commodity with the other. Having commodity on one side and having no commodity against it is not trade. It is deception. The same holds good for interest-based transactions where the amount of interest is a return for the time allowed in a loan - and this 'time' is no 'commodity'. The same thing happens in speculation and gambling. Here, the commodity does exist on one side, but the existence of a commodity against it is doubtful. Similarly, there are transactions based on forward trading where the commodity does not exist but a deal is made for its sale / purchase. Here you have commodity on one side and nothing but a promise on the other. Therefore, this is just

not trade. If fact, this is deception and a kind of fraud. Therefore, Muslim jurists have ruled it to be *al-bai' al-bāṭil*, a void transaction of sale. The explanation as given here eliminates all impermissible forms of trading.

As for the second condition, it covers a situation where a property is being exchanged for another property. Both do exist, but the transaction of exchange did not take place with mutual consent. Although this is a trade, yet it is a wrong and invalid type of trade. Therefore, it has been called '*fāsid*' (invalid) and is not allowed.

The reality of the condition of mutual consent

However, there is a third kind in which there is commodity on both sides, and apparently the transaction has been effected with mutual consent, but the consent of one party has been obtained by compulsion and not by his free will. Therefore, this third kind is also included in the second one. For example, a person or company collects articles of daily use from all over the market, builds up a stock, raises prices on the higher side and starts selling. Since this is not available elsewhere in the market, the customer has no choice but to buy it from him at whatever price he may be selling it. In this situation, though the customer himself walks into the store and, obviously, buys it with his consent, but this 'consent' is an outcome of compulsion and therefore, it is null and void.

Similarly, if a husband makes the conditions of living with his wife so thorny that she is compelled to forgo her due dower, then, this expression of 'consent' made by her while abandoning her right to receive the dower, is not considered as consent in the real sense of the term.

Or, take the example of a person who discovers that he is not going to get his valid job done without offering a bribe, and he becomes ready to offer a bribe, then, this willingness and consent is not of his own free will. Therefore, it is legally null and void.

Thus, it becomes very clear that the restriction in إِلَّآ أَنْ تَكُوْنَ تِجَارَةً عَنْ تَرَاضٍ مِّنْكُمْ (unless it be trade with your mutual consent) justifies only those forms of buying, selling and trading the justification of which stands proved on the authority of the *aḥādīth* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . Muslim

jurists have simply codified them. So, all forms of buying, selling and trading prohibited and impermissible in the Sharī'ah of Islām stand excluded from the approved core. To sum up, this one word of the Holy Qur'ān provides the key to the wonderful treasure of Muslim jurisprudence on the subject of *al-buyū'* and *al-ijāra*.

The third sentence of the first verse (29) says: وَلَا تَقْتُلُوٓا اَنْفُسَكُمْ which has been literally translated here as 'and do not kill yourselves.' According to the consensus of commentators, this includes suicide; as well as, killing each other unjustly. The first sentence of the verse described the property rights of human beings at large and stressed that they be guarded. The present sentence, the third one we have before us right now, covers their right of life. Property has been mentioned in this verse earlier than 'life', probably because injustice and negligence are very common in matters relating to property rights. No doubt, unjust killing is far more grave, yet customarily its frequency is lower. Hence, it comes later.

Verse 29 closes with the statement: اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ بِكُمْ رَحِيْمًا which means that the injunctions given in this verse -- 'do not eat up each other's property by false means' or 'do not kill anyone unjustly' -- are injunctions that come to you as Divine Mercy, so that you can take your guard against falling into these misdeeds and thereby become liable to punishment in the life to come, and also that you may stay safe from punishments which could afflict you right here in the present life.

After that, the next verse (30) says: وَمَنْ يَّفْعَلْ ذٰلِكَ عُدْوَانًا وَّظُلْمًا فَسَوْفَ نُصْلِيْهِ نَارًا . It means: If, despite the instructions of the Holy Qur'ān, anyone acts otherwise, and knowingly, aggressively and unjustly, takes what belongs to someone else, or kills anyone unjustly, Allah will cast him into Fire. Here, the restriction of 'aggression' and 'injustice' shows that, should this happen out of forgetfulness or mistake, it is not included in this warning.

Verse 31

اِنْ تَجْتَنِبُوْا كَبَآئِرَ مَا تُنْهَوْنَ عَنْهُ نُكَفِّرْ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّاٰتِكُمْ وَنُدْخِلْكُمْ مُّدْخَلًا كَرِيْمًا ﴿٣١﴾

If you abstain from the major (sins) out of what you

have been forbidden from, We shall write off your minor sins and shall admit you to a noble entrance. [31]

Righteous Deeds : *Kaffārah* of Minor Sins

Kaffārah is what makes amends, an expiation. So the meaning is that righteous deeds will be taken as *Kaffārah* for minor sins which will thus be written off, resulting in reward instead of punishment and Paradise instead of Hell. This is in accordance with authentic *aḥādīth* where it has been stated that when a person makes *wuḍū* for *ṣalāh*, the act of washing each part of his body becomes the *Kaffārah* for sins; the washing of the face becomes the *Kaffārah* for sins committed by the eye, the ear, the nose; gargling becomes the *Kaffārah* for the sins of the tongue; washing feet a washes way the sins of the feet - and when he walks towards the *masjid,* every step he takes brings with it the *Kaffārah* of sins.

Major Sins are forgiven by *Taubah* alone

From the verse, we find that the expiation of sins through righteous deeds such as *wuḍū, ṣalāh* and the rest, which appear in *aḥādīth*, concerns minor sins. As for major sins, they are not forgiven without *Taubah* (Repentance); and for minor sins, the condition is that one should have made the effort to stay away and remain safe from major sins. This leaves us with a note of warning - if someone, while staying involved in major sins, goes on performing his *wuḍū'* and *ṣalāh*, then this *wuḍū'* and *ṣalāh* and other righteous deeds will not at all expiate for even his minor sins, let alone the major ones. It is a warning that when a person appears on the fateful Day of Resurrection, carrying the heavy burden of his major and minor sins, he will find no helping hand to make his burden any lighter.

It will be recalled that some major sins were mentioned in the previous verses alongwith the warning of severe punishment for those who commit them. It is a peculiar style of the Holy Qur'ān that when it warns of punishment against a sin, it is generally followed by some aspect of persuasion towards obedience.

In the present verse too, a particular Divine reward has been mentioned and people have been persuaded to acquire it by staying away from major sins, in which case, Allah Almighty will forgive their minor sins on His own. Thus, cleansed of all sins, major and minor,

one could look forward to entering the home of honour and peace, the garden of Paradise.

The two kinds of sins

This verse tells us that there are two kinds of sins. Some of them are *kabīrah*, that is, major sins; others are *saghīrah*, (termed as *Saiyyāt*, in this verse) that is, minor sins. He who musters enough courage and succeeds in staying away from major sins, has been given a promise by Allah Almighty that He will forgive his minor sins on His own.

Now, the act of staying away from major sins also includes the act of fulfilling all obligations (*farḍ* and *wājib*) because neglecting or abandoning obligations is a major sin in itself. Thus, we come to the conclusion that if one dutifully fulfills all obligations and succeeds in saving himself from all major sins, Allah Almighty will overlook his minor sins.

Defining Major and Minor Sins

The word, "*Kabā'ir*" used in the verse is the plural of '*kabīrah*' meaning 'major sins.' Before we proceed further, we should understand the nature and identification of 'major sins'. Also, we should know the definition of minor sins, and their number. Being an important subject, scholars of the Muslim community have devoted regular books to throw light on this subject from various angles.

Let us, first of all, realize that sin, in the absolute sense, is the name of an act which is against the command and the will of Allah Almighty. Starting from this particular point, you will be able to see that the sin known as '*saghīrah*' or, technically, a minor sin, is, in fact, no minor sin for that matter. To disobey Allah Almighty and to oppose His will is, invariably, a grave crime. Therefore, based on this view, a large number of scholars of the Muslim community have ruled that every disobedience of Allah and every opposition to His will is nothing but '*kabīrah*' or major sin. The distinction between '*kabīrah*' and '*saghīrah*', major and minor sins, is made only when these are compared to each other. It is in this sense that the blessed Companion, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās has been reported to have said: كل مانهى عنه نهو كبيرة which means that 'Any act forbidden by the Sharī'ah is a major sin.'

In short, a sin which is technically known as minor does not mean that people should go about indulging in it neglectfully, indolently or just ignore it as something ordinary. On the contrary, the fact is that a minor sin, if done with nerve or heedlessness, does not remain minor anymore - it becomes a major sin. A good example of a major and a minor sin, as given by some sage, is that of a small scorpion and a big scorpion, or that of a large ember and a tiny spark, for man cannot bear the pain given by any of these. Therefore, Muḥammad ibn Ka'b al-Qurazī said that the greatest act of worship offered for Allah is to give up sins. The *'ibādah* or worship by people, who offer prayers and remember Allah, yet do not give up sins, is not accepted. The famous mystic, Fuḍayl ibn 'Ayāḍ said: 'The lighter you take a sin to be, the greater it will become with Allah as a crime.' The most righteous elders of the Muslim community used to say: Every sin is a courier of *kufr* which invites people to manners and morals typical of disbelievers.

According to the Musnad of Aḥmad, Sayyidnā 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا wrote a letter to Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah رضی اللہ عنہ in which she said that a servant of Allah who disobeys Allah Almighty finds his fans become fault-finders, and friends turn into enemies. Heedlessness towards sins is the cause of man's permanent ruination. It appears in an authentic *ḥadīth* that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said: When a true believer falls in sin, a black dot appears on his heart. If, after that, he repents and seeks forgiveness from Allah, this dot disappears. If he does not repent, this dot keeps on increasing, so much so that it covers his whole heart. In the Qur'ān, the name given to this dot is '*rayn*', as in كَلَّا بَلْ رَانَ عَلٰى قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَّا كَانُوْا يَكْسِبُوْنَ that is, their evil deeds have rusted their hearts - 83:14.

However, it is necessary that there be a method to distinguish between sins in terms of corruption they cause, evil results they bring and harmful outcome they produce. Thus, it is because of this need to differentiate that a certain sin is called 'major' and a certain other 'minor'.

Major Sins

The definition of '*kabā'ir*', as indicated in the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth and as explained by the most revered elders, is that a sin on which a

Hadd or punishment has been prescribed in the Qur'an or Sunnah to be enforced in this present life or on which words of curse or *la'nah* have appeared, or on which stern warning of Hell has been mentioned, are all major sins. Similarly, every sin the evil outcome of which is equal to or more than a major sin shall be counted as a major sin. Also, a sin done with a rebellious attitude or done as a permanent habit is also included in the major sins.

Someone said before Sayyidna Ibn 'Abbas رضی اللہ عنہ that the number of major sins was seven. He said: 'Not seven. Say seven hundred, which is better.' In his book Al-Zawajir, Imam Ibn Hajr al-Makki has given a list of all such sins with their full explanations, sins which are included under *kaba'ir* in accordance with the definition given above. The number of major sins listed in his book reaches upto four hundred and sixty seven. The truth of the matter is that some scholars have considered it sufficient to count prominent major sins only and thus the number they have come up with is lower. Others who went in details and dealt with all divisions and sub-divisions of the subject came up with a higher number. Therefore, this is not much of a contradiction. The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has himself pointed to many sins as being major. Then, as appropriate under given circumstances, he has also named them in threes and sixes and sevens or even more elsewhere. From this, the scholars of the Muslim community came to the conclusion that the purpose is not to determine any particular number as a universal statement. Rather, each number mentioned in a *hadith* relates to particular occasions or circumstances where that particular number was deemed appropriate in the given situation.

In a *hadith* of al-Bukhari and Muslim, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has been reported to have said: I warn you against the top ones from among the major sins. They are three in number - to associate a created being as a partner in the divinity of Allah, to disobey parents and to give false witness or to lie. In yet another narration of al-Bukhari and Muslim, it has been reported that someone asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ as to what could be the greatest of all sins. He said: 'That you ascribe partners to Allah although He has created you.' He was then asked as to the greatest of all sins after that. He said: 'That you kill your child for fear of his sharing in your sustenance and that

you will have to feed him.' He was again asked as to the greatest of all sins after that. He said: 'Committing adultery with the wife of your neighbour.' Since the protection of the family of a neighbour is the responsibility of all human beings very much like the protection of one's own family, therefore, the gravity of this crime becomes twofold.

According to yet another *ḥadīth* reported by al-Bukhārī and Muslim, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'That someone uses abusive language for his parents is also one of the major sins.' Surprised, the noble Companions asked: 'O Messenger of Allah, how is it possible that someone starts using abusive language against his very own parents?' He said: 'Yes. A person abuses the parents of another person as a result of which the later abuses the parents of the former. This too is as if he had abused his own parents, because he was the one who became the cause of those abuses.'

As in a narration of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has counted - *shirk* (ascribing partners to Allah), unjust killing, eating up of the property of an orphan by false means, devouring income from interest, deserting the battlefield of *jihād*, false accusation against chaste women, disobedience to parents and the desecration of the Holy Ka'ba - among major sins. In some *ḥadīth* narrations, the eventuality - that a person winds up living in a country of disbelievers (*dār al-kufr*) and emigrates to a country of believers (*dār al-Islām*), but later, leaves the country to which he has migrated and goes back to live into the country of disbelievers - has also been ruled as a major sin.

There are other narrations of *aḥādīth* where some of the forms of behaviour cited below have been included in the list of major sins, such as, taking a false oath, holding back water in excess of one's need and refusing to share it with those who need it, to learn magic, and to practice magic. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said, 'Drinking is the greatest of major sins'; he also said: 'Drinking is the mother of all shameful deeds,' because once drunk, man can fall into any conceivable evil. There is another *ḥadīth* where he said: 'The gravest major sin is that one imputes to his Muslim brother a fault which stains his character.' According to one *ḥadīth,* one who brackets two *ṣalāhs* (time-bound prescribed prayers) at one time without an excuse approved by the Sharī'ah has committed a major sin. It means that he did not

perform a *ṣalāh* at the time it was due, but performed it as *qaḍā* (missed) prayer along with another *ṣalāh*. Some *ḥadīth* narrations declare that losing hope in the mercy of Allah Almighty is also a major sin; and so it will be in the event if one becomes careless or daring enough to forget all about His punishment and retribution. Another narration rules that making a will to bring loss to an inheritor or to reduce his share in the inheritance is also one of the major sins.

And it appears in a narration from the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم once spoke the words: 'Destitutes, losers, they are ruined.' He repeated this three times. Sayyidnā Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī رضی اللہ عنہ asked: 'O Messenger of Allah, who are these unfortunate people?' He replied: 'One: a person who lets his trouser or wrap or shirt or robe hang all the way down below his ankles; two: one who spends something in the way of Allah, then publicizes his favour; three: one who, inspite of his old age, indulges in shameful deeds; four: one who, despite holding a position of authority, tells lies; five: one who, despite having a family, waxes proud; six: one who gives his hand of allegiance in the hands of a worthy Imām or master just for the sake of material gains.

Concluding in the same vein, we refer to another *ḥadīth* from al-Bukhārī and Muslim which proclaims that the back-biter will not be admitted into the Paradise. And a *ḥadīth* in Nasā'ī and the Musnad of Aḥmad enlarges on the theme by saying that some kinds of people will not be admitted into the Paradise, that is, the drinker, the disobeyer of parents, the unjustified severer of relations with kinsmen, the publicizer of a favour, the diviner of the unseen through jinns, satans and other mediums and the *dayyūth* (دیوث), a wittol or cuckold who is so contented with his shamelessness that he never stops his wife and family members from going the way of immodesty. And a *ḥadīth* from the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim says that *la'nah* or the curse of Allah is for one who sacrifices an animal for anyone other than Allah.

Verses 32 - 33

وَلَا تَتَمَنَّوْا مَا فَضَّلَ اللّٰهُ بِهٖ بَعْضَكُمْ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ ؕ لِلرِّجَالِ نَصِيْبٌ مِّمَّا اكْتَسَبُوْا ؕ وَلِلنِّسَآءِ نَصِيْبٌ مِّمَّا اكْتَسَبْنَ ؕ وَاسْئَلُوا

اللّٰهَ مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ بِكُلِّ شَیْءٍ عَلِيْمًا ﴿۳۲﴾ وَلِكُلٍّ جَعَلْنَا مَوَالِیَ مِمَّا تَرَكَ الْوَالِدٰنِ وَالْاَقْرَبُوْنَ ؕ وَالَّذِيْنَ عَقَدَتْ اَيْمَانُكُمْ فَاٰتُوْهُمْ نَصِيْبَهُمْ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلٰی كُلِّ شَیْءٍ شَهِيْدًا ﴿۳۳﴾

And do not covet something by which Allah has made some of you excel some others. For men there is a share of what they earned and for women, a share of what they earned. And pray to Allah for His grace. Surely, Allah is All-Knowing in respect of everything. [32]

And for everyone We have made heirs in what the parents and the nearest of kin have left. And as for those with whom you have made a pledge, give them their shares. Surely, Allah is a Witness over everything. [33]

In the injunctions of inheritance appearing previously, it was mentioned that, given the conditions, for a male there is a share equal to that of two females. There are other proved aspects of male precedence as well. So, Sayyidah Umm Salmah رضی اللہ عنہا once said to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم : 'Our share in the inheritance is half. Then, there are such and such elements of difference between us and men...'

Her purpose was not to raise an objection. Rather, she wished to be a man and to deserve the merits restricted for men. There were other women who wished: 'Had we been men, we would have taken part in *Jihād* and the merit of *Jihād* would have been ours.'

A woman asked the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم : 'A man gets a double share in the inheritance and the witness of a woman is half as compared with a man - does that mean that we shall be getting a half reward for all of our acts of worship?' Thereupon, the present verse was revealed in which an answer to both these statements has been given. The answer to Sayyidah Umm Salmah was given by 'and do not covet...' and the answer to the last-mentioned woman was given by 'for men there is a share...'

Commentary

Coveting the Unacquirable

In this verse (32), coveting things, traits and merits given to others has been prohibited, for they are not acquirable by effort. The reason is that when a man finds himself lacking in wealth, comfort, beauty, merit, knowledge and similar other states of being, he naturally experiences a surge of envy which urges him to come, at least, at par with that person, or, if possible, be ahead. But, he does not always have the capability or power to make his wish come true because there are merits and excellences which have nothing to do with man's own efforts and acquisitions. They are simply the blessings of nature, for example, being a man or being the scion of a prophet's family or having been born in the family of a ruler or having been born beautiful. So, one who does not have access to these blessings can never obtain them by effort even if he were to spend a whole life-time devoted to that pursuit. A woman cannot become a man, nor can one choose to be born in the family of a prophet, or change his physique - become tall and handsome, acquire all beautiful features of his choice - because, this is not within his power. He simply cannot acquire these in the real sense, no matter how much he struggles with his medicines, treatments and devices. Consequently, when he finds himself incapable of matching the other person, his inner self starts playing with the idea that it would be wonderful if such blessings were snatched away from him (the other person) as well, so that, he too becomes either equal or lower than him. This is envy, a terribly, shameful and damaging trait of human morals, which is the cause of so many disputes, disturbances, killings and ravages in this world.

This verse of the Holy Qur'ān closes the doors of disorders by saying: وَلَا تَتَمَنَّوْا مَا فَضَّلَ اللّٰهُ بِهٖ بَعْضَكُمْ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ. It means that Allah Almighty, in His infinite wisdom, has blessed people with all sorts of merits and excellences. He gave someone a particular quality, then gave someone else yet another quality; less to some, more to some others. In this matter, everyone should rest pleased with his or her destiny and stay clear from the envious desire to become the possessor of the other person's merits and excellences, for the end-result of this game of desires is nothing but a biting sense of personal loss, and of course,

that awful sin of envy.

It may sound a little simple, but the truth of the matter is that anyone Allah Almighty elects to be a man should be grateful for it, and anyone He elects to be a woman should be pleased with being just that, realizing that, had she been a man, may be, she could have failed to fulfil the responsibilities placed on a man, and would have thus ended up being a sinner. Then, anyone created beautiful by Allah Almighty should be all the more grateful for having been so blessed; and, anyone lesser in looks should also not grieve thinking of the good that may lie hidden behind this destiny, for being blessed with beauty does not necessarily guarantee good. It might have the recipient land into some unwelcome state of trial or corruption. Again, anyone who is a true lineal descendant of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم should thank Allah Almighty for the great blessing of this lineal connection; and, anyone who does not have this connection should neither worry about it, nor should he go about longing for it, because this is something which cannot be acquired by effort, and if one still insists on coveting it, what he would get involved with will be nothing but sin and the gain he would make would be nothing but a broken heart and an aching soul. So, rather than pine for a lineage one does not have, the best policy is to think about one's own doings. Let these be good and righteous. Once a person enhances himself with such spiritual strengths, he can be ahead of those with higher or better lineage.

Striving to excel others in good deeds is different

There are verses of the Holy Qur'ān and the sayings of the noble Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم which exhort people to excel each other in good deeds. In other words, this is an open field in which it is all right to look at the trail of merits and excellence left by others. Indeed, people have been persuaded to make all possible efforts to acquire them. Now, this relates to deeds within man's control, and which can be acquired by learning, training and working. For example, if a person is impressed with someone's intellectual merits, practical life and excellent morals, he can, by all means, strive to acquire these qualities. This is very desirable, and praiseworthy. As such, the present verse does not contradict it. In fact, the later part of the same verse (32), that is, لِلرِّجَالِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا اكْتَسَبُوا وَلِلنِّسَاءِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا اكْتَسَبْنَ is actually supporting this view. It

means that men will get a share of what they acquired with their effort and conduct, and the same will be true for women who will get a share of what they acquired with their effort and conduct. One is not likely to miss the hint here - that effort and struggle in the acquisition of merits and perfections do not go waste. On the contrary, every man and woman will definitely get a return, a share of his or her effort. From here, we also know that desiring to have someone's intellectual-moral excellence as combined with his model practical conduct, and then going ahead to see the fruition of these desires through effort and struggle, is certainly desirable and praiseworthy. Removed in the process here is an error which is committed by a lot of people who tend to do things not knowing what they are doing. Some of them become so devoted to their desire to acquire merits which cannot be acquired that they ruin their otherwise peaceful life right here in this mortal world. And if, bad come to worse, they are fired with envy, that is, they start wishing - 'if I do not have this blessing, may this be taken away from the other' - then, the very chances of salvation in the life to come also stand destroyed because of the grave sin of envy committed by him.

Moreover, there are another kind of people as well who lack courage, avoid action, or just have no sense of honour and shame, who do not even try to acquire merits which can be acquired. Such people, when approached with good counsel, would come back immediately, blaming their destiny and fate which is no more than an effort to camouflage their own timidity and inertia. The present verse has resolved this problem by stating a wise and just rule which is: Man's effort is ineffective in acquiring merits which he does not control, such as, being high-born or handsome. Merits like these should be resigned to fate and one must be content with the divinely determined state he is in, and be grateful to Allah Almighty. Coveting anymore than that is absurd, ineffectual, meddlesome - an act which leaves behind nothing but a handful of sorrows.

As for merits which can be acquired by effort, wishing to have them is useful, only if such a wish is supported by the necessary struggle to achieve. Let us keep in mind that the verse carries the promise that the effort so made will not be wasted and everyone will get a share of what he or she worked for.

Referring back to injunctions prohibiting the unjust use of someone's property and the unjust taking of someone's life (29), Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ points out that this verse aims to seal the very source of these crimes, and it is for this purpose that instructions have been given to stop people from coveting others who are ahead of them in wealth, comfort or influence. A little thought will reveal that theft, robbery and other illegitimate ways of usurping someone's property, or to kill and destroy, are crimes which sprout from one particular emotional attitude. A person, when he finds the other ahead of him in wealth and other material acquisitions, first feels the pinch in his heart wishing to come at par with him, or even wishes to become superior to him. Then, it is the intensity of this desire which pushes him all the way to go ahead and commit these crimes. The Holy Qur'ān, as said earlier, has blocked the source of these crime by blocking the very desire of the unacquirables and the unobtainables of life.

To ask for Allah's grace is the ideal way

After that, the verse moves on to instruct by saying: وَاسْئَلُوا اللّٰهَ مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ (And pray to Allah for His grace). It means, 'when you see someone excel in one or the other graces of life,' the ideal conduct is, 'not to wish to come at par with the other person in respect of that particular excellence, but that you should pray to Allah asking for graces and blessings from Him.' The reason is that Allah's grace appears in different forms for everyone. For some, wealth is a blessing from God for, if they were to become paupers, they might have fallen victims to sin and disbelief. For some others, grace lies in the very pecuniary circumstances they are in, for if they were to turn rich, they might have succumbed to thousands of sins. Similarly, for some, grace appears in the form of power and influence, while for some others, the unremembered and the unattended, the grace of Allah manifests itself in that very state. A look at the reality of things around would have told him that power and influence, if these were to be his lot, might have caused his falling into many a sin. Therefore, the verse instructs - when you ask Allah, do not ask for some fixed quality of life, instead, ask for His grace so that He, in his His infinite wisdom, opens the doors of His blessings on you.

Trust His Wisdom and Knowledge

The verse concludes by saying: إِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا (Surely, Allah is All-Knowing in respect of everything.) Here, the hint is that the arrangement of things made by Allah Almighty is the very quintessence of wisdom and justice. Whoever has been created and sustained in whatever condition it may be is an arrangement perfectly matched with the ideal demand of wisdom and justice. But, man is not fully aware of the consequences of what he does. This is something only Allah knows best and thus He also knows how suitable it is to keep anyone in a given condition.

The law of inheritance: Reiteration of the wisdom in it

While describing the background in which the present verse was revealed, which appears in the introductory remarks preceding the Commentary, it was stated that some women, when they found out that men have been given a share equal to that of two women, wished they were men so that they too would be getting a doubled share. In a relevant manner, the law of inheritance was reiterated in the second verse (33) and it was tersely said that all shares determined therein are based on perfect wisdom and justice. Since human reason cannot encompass the totality of factors that contribute to the order or disorder of the created universe, it is obvious that it cannot arrive precisely at those elements of wisdom which have been taken into consideration in determining the laws of Allah Almighty. Therefore, whosoever has been allotted whatsoever share should be pleased with it, and be grateful for it.

Inheriting through pledge

The giving of a share on the basis of a pledge mentioned at the end of verse 33 refers to a practice during the initial period of Islam. This was later abrogated by the verse أُولُوا الْأَرْحَامِ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلَىٰ بِبَعْضٍ (As for the womb - relatives, some of them are closer to some...) (33:6) Now, if other heirs exist, a pledge or mutual contract between two parties does not affect the inheritance in any manner whatsoever.

Verses 34 - 35

اَلرِّجَالُ قَوّٰمُوْنَ عَلَى النِّسَآءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللّٰهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلٰى

بَعْضٍ وَّبِمَآ اَنْفَقُوْا مِنْ اَمْوَالِهِمْ ۭ فَالصّٰلِحٰتُ قٰنِتٰتٌ حٰفِظٰتٌ
لِّلْغَيْبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ اللّٰهُ ۭ وَالّٰتِيْ تَخَافُوْنَ نُشُوْزَهُنَّ فَعِظُوْهُنَّ
وَاهْجُرُوْهُنَّ فِي الْمَضَاجِعِ وَاضْرِبُوْهُنَّ ۚ فَاِنْ اَطَعْنَكُمْ فَلَا تَبْغُوْا
عَلَيْهِنَّ سَبِيْلًا ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلِيًّا كَبِيْرًا ﴿٣٤﴾ وَاِنْ خِفْتُمْ شِقَاقَ
بَيْنِهِمَا فَابْعَثُوْا حَكَمًا مِّنْ اَهْلِهٖ وَحَكَمًا مِّنْ اَهْلِهَا ۚ اِنْ يُّرِيْدَآ
اِصْلَاحًا يُّوَفِّقِ اللّٰهُ بَيْنَهُمَا ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلِيْمًا خَبِيْرًا ﴿٣٥﴾

Men stand caretakers of women since Allah has made some of them excel the others, and because they have spent of their wealth. So, the righteous women are obedient, guarding in absence with the protection given by Allah. As for women whose disobedience you fear, convince them, and leave them apart in beds, and beat them. Then, if they obey you, do not seek a way against them. Surely, Allah is the Highest, the Greatest.[34]

And if you fear a split between them, send one arbitrator from his people and one from her people. If they desire to set things right, Allah shall bring about harmony between them. Surely, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware. [35]

Under injunctions concerning women, appearing earlier, discrimination against them by withholding or wasting their rights was prohibited. Now, the present verses describe the rights of men.

Commentary

Verse 34 opens with an important statement: اَلرِّجَالُ قَوّٰمُوْنَ عَلَى النِّسَآءِ which has been translated as 'men stand caretakers of women.' *Qawwām, qayyām or qayyim* in Arabic denotes a person who holds the responsibility or has the duty and charge to manage a job or run a system or take care of what has to be done about something, controlling all related factors therein. The standard role of a man, with regard to women, has been mentioned in this verse through the word, '*qawwām*' which has been translated in various ways, the most common being in the sense of '*ḥākim*' or one who rules, governs, or decides. Other alternates used are guardians, custodians, overseers and protectors. When

taken in the sense of a carer, a functional head, and not in the political sense of a ruler or dictator, the '*qawwām*' or *ḥākim* of the Qur'ān offers a base of understanding from common experience. It is obvious that, for any group-living, big or small, or for any organized system, it is rationally and customarily necessary that the group or system have some head or chief or authority so that he can arbitrate in the event of a difference and take decisions to run affairs smoothly. That such authority is needed in the running of countries, governments and states is universally accepted and practiced. This need, as felt in modern times, was also felt in the older tribal social organizations where the chief of a tribe was taken as the authority for that tribe. Why would a family organization, a micro-sample of the larger organizations, would not need someone to head, maintain and run the system? Of course, the need is there and Allah Almighty, in His infinite wisdom, elected men for this responsibility because their natural capabilities are more pronounced than those of women and children.

This is such an open and obvious fact of human life that no sane human being, man or woman, can say no to it; and its denial does not change reality.

The gist of the matter is that, as seen from وَلِلرِّجَالِ عَلَيْهِنَّ دَرَجَةٌ (and for men, there is a step above them) and from اَلرِّجَالُ قَوّٰمُوْنَ عَلَى النِّسَآءِ (men stand caretakers of women), the message is that the rights of women are as incumbent upon men as the rights of men are upon women, and the rights of both are similar to each other, with only one exception that men have a certain precedence in functional authority, although this too is hemmed with other balancing factors. As explained in other verses of the Holy Qur'ān, this mantle of authority placed on the shoulders of men is not that of a dictator and a tyrant. While exercizing this authority, man is bound by the supreme law of Islam, the Sharī'ah. He must act on the principle of consultation and follow good counsel. He just cannot act at the spur of his whim or his wild instincts. The command given to him is: وَعَاشِرُوْهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ It mean: Treat women well, as recognized.

This aspect of having mutual consultation appears in another verse (2:233) where it was said: عَنْ تَرَاضٍ مِّنْهُمَا وَتَشَاوُرٍ . Here men have been instructed to act in consultation with wives in family affairs. After this

clarification, the technical authority of man should not be a source of heart-burning for women. Still, in view of the probability that women may take this arrangement unhappily, Allah Almighty did not restrict the text on proclaiming the authority of man, but explained two reasons for this authority. One reason relates to the wisdom of creation which is beyond the control of any human being, and the other refers to a factor which comes through one's efforts and endeavour.

The first reason has been mentioned in the words: بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللّٰهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ It means that Allah Almighty has made some excel the others (in some qualities) under His exclusive wisdom and consideration. This is like the sacred environs of Makkah where a particular House of Worship was declared by Allah as His House and Qiblah (the orientation), and in Jerusalem, a special honour was given to the Bayt al-Maqdis. Similar is the case with the precedence of men. This is a God-given grace. Men have done nothing to get it and there is nothing wrong with women that they do not have it. It is simply based on the wisdom of creation, an exclusive privilege of the Creator.

The second reason relates to what is achieved with effort. This reason is pointed out by the words وَبِمَآ اَنْفَقُوْا مِنْ اَمْوَالِهِمْ which mean that men spend their money, pay dower and take the responsibility of meeting all needs of women. Hence, the precedence.

At this point, a comment from Ibn Ḥibbān in al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, is worth attention. He says, 'These two reasons in support of the authority of men also prove that the right to authority does not get to be established simply by force. Rather, this right can be deserved on the basis of one's competence and capability.

The Qur'ānic eloquence in describing the precedence of men

It is noteworthy that the Holy Qur'ān, while giving the first reason for the precedence of men, has not opted for an expression like - فَضَّلَهُمْ عَلَيْهِنَّ : 'because He made men excel women', On the contrary, it has elected to give a deeper significance to the statement by using the expression: بَعْضَهُمْ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ , that is, 'made some of them excel the others'. The wisdom here is not difficult to see. The Arabic expression بَعْضَهُمْ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ has a subtle indictation to the fact that men and women are part of each other. Therefore, there is a hint that the precedence of men, even if proved in one or the other field, will not go beyond being similar to

the precedence of man's head over his hand, or of his heart over his stomach. So, just as the precedence of man's head over his hand does not diminish the role and the importance of the hand, similarly, the precedence of man does not cause any lowering of the status of women, because both of them are parts of each other's body - if man is the head, woman is the body.

Some commentators identify yet another hint here. According to them, this precedence men have over women is in terms of genus. As far as individuals are concerned, it is quite possible that a woman may excel a man in her qualities and practical accomplishments, so much so that a woman may be superior to some individual men even in the qualities of a care-taker.

The role of men and women: The principle of function

The second reason given for the precedence of men, is that they spend their earnings to take care of women. Here too, there are some points to ponder. To begin with, it removes the possible doubt that may creep up due to the share of men being twice that of women as described in the verses of inheritance. This is done by the present verse when it declares that all financial responsibilities rest with men. As for women, all her financial responsibilities before her marriage rest with her father and after marriage, these pass on to the husband. With this in view, giving a twofold share to a man is not really too much, for it zooms back to women after all.

Now let us pursue the second hint about an important principle in life. The principle is that woman, in terms of her creation and nature, should not be subjected to go out, work and earn her own livelihood. Also, the very attributes of her being are hardly conducive to her running around offices and markets, doing jobs and laborious work to earn a livelihood. So, to keep her safe from roughing it out like men, Allah Almighty has placed her total responsibility on men. Before she is married, her father takes care of her, and after her marriage, she becomes the responsibility of her husband. Woman, as opposed to her sweating it out in the work places in the name of income, career or liberation, has been made the means of human procreation. Then, the responsibility of being mothers of children and that of managing and holding the house and the family together has also been placed on her

shoulders. Man cannot handle the burdens of responsibilities in these areas.

Keeping this in view, it is not possible to deduce that the status of women has been reduced by making them dependent on men in the matter of her expenses. There is no value judgement being made here. This is no more than a functional distribution of duties, except that, the inter-acting precedence between duties which exists elsewhere exists here too. In short, the two reasons given show that the precedence of men does not lower the status of women, nor does this hold any special gain for them. Whatever gain there is, it reverts back to women after all.

The profile of a good wife

The verse begins, with a working rule - that man is charged with a duty-bound authority over women. The text then describes women, the good ones and the bad ones. It says: فَالصّٰلِحٰتُ قٰنِتٰتٌ حٰفِظٰتٌ لِّلْغَيْبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ اللّٰهُ. It means that women who are righteous accept this rule of the precedence of men and obey them, and when they are not with them, they stand guard on their own selves, as well as on what the husband has earned for the family. It goes without saying that the protection of the personal honour and modesty of a woman, and that of everything else in the house under her charge are basic to the happiness that lies behind a successful home management. Although the duty of a woman to guard herself and to look after the home is not restricted to a situation where the husband is not at home, but is equally applicable during his presence also, yet the Holy Qur'ān has mentioned the state of his 'absence' only, because it is in the absence of the husband that a woman is more susceptible to showing negligence; therefore, this situation has been mentioned in express terms. The message is that what has to be avoided is showing a lot of concern and alertness while men are present in the house, but neglecting to abide by these rules of conduct when they are out of sight.

It was, most probably, in explanation of this verse that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

خَيْرُ النِّسَآءِ اِمْرَأَةٌ اِذَا نَظَرْتَ اِلَيْهَا سرتك، وَاِذَا اَمَرْتَهَا اطَاعَتكَ، وَاِذَا غِبْتَ عَنْهَا حفظتك فى مالها و نفسها

> "The best of women is a woman who, when you look at her, makes you pleased with her; and when you ask her to do something, she obeys you; and when you are absent, she guards her self, and her belongings."

Since these responsibilities placed on women, that is, the guarding and protection of their modesty, and of what the husband leaves in her charge, are not that easy to take care of, therefore, Allah Almighty has, immediately after it, declared: بِمَا حَفِظَ اللّٰهُ that is, Allah Almighty helps women when they so protect. It is with His support known as the *Taufīq* of Allah, that they succeed in grappling with these heavy responsibilities. Had this not been there, the temptations of self and satan stand surrounding every man and woman all the time. Then, women are particularly weaker in some areas of capabilities as compared to men, yet, when it comes to carrying out these responsibilities, they tend to be much stronger than men. All this is an outcome of Allah's *Taufīq* and help. This is the reason why women, as a general rule, are less involved in sinful immodesties as compared to men.

The merit of women who cooperate with their husbands, as evident from this verse, has also been widely reported in several *aḥādīth*. In one such *ḥadīth*, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said that, for a woman who is dutiful to her husband, there are birds in the air and fish in the sea and angels in the skies and beasts in the forests who pray for her forgiveness by the Lord. (al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ)

How to correct an uncooperative wife

The text turns to women who are either straight disobedient to their husbands or fail to cooperate with them in running family affairs in the recognized manner. The Holy Qur'ān gives men three methods of correcting their behaviour. These are to be followed in the order they have been mentioned. So, the verse says: وَالّٰتِیْ تَخَافُوْنَ نُشُوْزَهُنَّ فَعِظُوْهُنَّ وَاهْجُرُوْهُنَّ فِی الْمَضَاجِعِ وَاضْرِبُوْهُنَّ It means: If you fear or face disobedience from women, the first step towards their correction is that you should talk it over with them nicely and softly. Still, if they remain adamant and do not change their attitude by conciliatory counsel alone, the next step is not to share the same bed with them, so that they may realize the displeasure of the husband as expressed through this symbolic separation, and may feel sorry for their conduct. The Holy Qur'ān uses the

words: فِى الْمَضَاجِعِ at this point, meaning 'in beds'. It is from here that Muslim jurists have deduced that this staying apart should be limited to 'beds' and not to the 'house' itself. In other words, the woman should not be left alone in the house, something which is bound to hurt her feeling much more and which makes the possibility of further straining of relations far stronger.

A Companion reports:

قُلْتُ يَا رَسُوْلَ اللّٰهِ مَاحَقُّ زَوْجَةِ اَحَدِنَا عَلَيْهِ قَالَ: اَنْ تُطْعِمَهَا اِذَ اَطْعَمْتَ وَتَكْسُوْهَا اِذَا اكْتَسَيْتَ، وَلَا تَضْرِبِ الْوَجْهَ وَلَا تقبّح وَلَا تَهْجُرْ اِلَّا فِى الْبَيْتِ

(مشكوة، ص ۲۸۱)

I said: 'O Messenger of Allah, what right do our wives have on us?' He said: 'That you feed them when you eat; provide them with apparels to wear when you have these for yourselves; and do not hit the face; and do not say abuses to her; and do not leave them apart unless it be within the house. (Mishkāt, p.281)

If this gentle admonition fails to produce any effect, some corrective form of a little 'beating' has also been allowed as a last resort, of course, in a manner that it does not affect the body, nor goes to the undesirable limits of hurt or injury to the skin or bones. As for slapping or hitting on the face, it is absolutely forbidden.

The first two methods of admonition, that is seeking to convince and leaving apart in beds, are more or less an exercise in nobility against arrogant lack of compromise. Prophets and their righteous followers have spoken in favour of it. That they practiced what they preached is also a proved fact. But, this third method of admonition, that is, beating, has been permitted as a forced option in a particular mode. Right along with this option given to men, it appears in *ḥadīth*: وَلَنْ يَّضْرِبَ خِيَارُكُمْ which means that 'good men among you will never beat women.' Thus, such an action is nowhere reported from the blessed prophets of Allah.

According to a narration from the daughter of Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه as reported by Ibn Sa'd and al-Baihaqī, the beating of women was absolutely prohibited in the early days, but this resulted in their becoming much too oppressive, following which the permission was

reinstated.

The present verse relates to one such event, which can be termed as the background of its revelation. Sayyidnā Zayd ibn Zuhayr رضى الله عنه had married his daughter, Sayyidah Ḥabībah رضى الله عنها to Sayyidnā Sa'd ibn Rabī' رضى الله عنه During a dispute over something, the husband slapped her. Sayyidah Ḥabībah complained to her father. He took her to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم . He declared that Ḥabibāh has the right to hit Sa'd as hard as he did. Hearing this decision of their master, they started back home to take their revenge upon Sa'd. Thereupon, this verse was revealed in which the beating of women as the very last option has been permitted, and no retaliation or revenge against men was allowed. So, soon after the revelation of this verse, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم called both of them back and asked them to abide by the injunction from Allah Almighty, and abrogated his first directive permitting the seeking of revenge.

Towards the end of the verse, it is said: 'Then, if they obey you, do not seek a way against them'. It means that should the women mend themselves after that triple-stepped approach, men should forgive and forgo the past events and avoid looking for ways to find fault with them on flimsy issues as the power of Allah controls everything.

Conclusions

What comes out as a basic principle from this verse is that, no doubt the rights of men and women are similar as detailed in previous verses, yet great care has been taken to ensure that the rights of women are duly fulfilled because they are weaker as compared to men and cannot wrest rights from men by using their physical power. But this equality in rights does to mean that there should be no difference of given graces or functional precedences between men and women. That men have been given a degree of precedence over women is a manifestation of Divine wisdom and justice. There are two reasons for it:

1. The genus of man, in view of its mental-physical excellences, has God-given precedence over the genus of woman, which is not possible for the woman to acquire. The case of individuals and rarities is a different matter.

2. Men take care of everything women need from what they earn and have. The first reason given above is something over which men or women have no control, while the second reason is something which becomes operative by choice and effort. It can also be said here that according to the commonsense and justice, there should be two things present while deciding as to who, from among the children of one father and mother, shall be technically authorized to take care of the other. First: Whoever is so authorized should have the mental-physical capability to carry out the demands of authority. Second: The agreement and pleasure of the one to be taken care of under such authority. The first reason mentioned by the Holy Qur'ān (in the words بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللّٰهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ) focuses on the ability of man to function with authority while the second reason (mentioned in the words وَبِمَا اَنْفَقُوْا مِنْ اَمْوَالِهِمْ) refers to the agreement and pleasure of the party which would operate under that authority. It is obvious that at the time of marriage when a woman, in consideration of her dower and total maintenance, agrees to enter into the marital bond - she agrees to the authority of the husband and accepts it with pleasure.

In short, the principle of family life given in the first sentence of the present verse is that, despite the rights of men and women being equal in almost everything, there is, for men, a certain precedence laced with authority vis-a-vis women, and they operate thereunder.

Under this basic principle, there came to be two classes of women in practical life. One of them stood by this basic principle, abided by their convenant, accepted the functional authority of man and obeyed him in deference to the wise Divine arrangement. Then there was the other class of women which failed to live by this principle in its fullness. As for the first-mentioned class, it provides for itself a perfect guarantee of family peace and well-being. It needs no correction of course in its life.

Such correction is, however, very much in order for the second class of women. For this purpose, the second sentence of the verse offers a compact system which would help correct things within the four walls of the house and the tussle between the husband and the wife would be diffused and settled for good right there without any third party having to intercede in between them. So, men have been

told: If you sense some lack of cooperation from women, the first thing you should do is to talk to them explaining things in a way which helps change their mind and attitude. If that works, the issue is resolved right there. The woman is rescued from a permanent sin and the man from an aching heart, and the two of them from some ever-stinging anguish. Now, if this person-to-person talk fails to bring results, the second stage is to sleep on a separate bed as an indicator of your displeasure, and may be as a device to bring about a change of attitude through the sending of a warning signal. This is ordinary admonition but good enough for a warning. If the woman gets the message, the dispute ends right there. But, if she ignores even this soft measure of correction and persists with her crooked ways, there is the third step in which token beating is also permitted, the extreme limit of which is that it should produce no effect on the body. The use of this method of admonition (beating of woman) was not liked by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم who, quite on the contrary, said that gentlemen would not do that. However, if this token reprimand as the last resort does result in normalcy of relations, the main objective stands achieved anyway. That men have been given three options to correct women in this verse is coupled with the words فَإِنْ أَطَعْنَكُمْ فَلَا تَبْغُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ سَبِيلًا said at the end of it. It means that, should the women start listening to you after these three-step ways of correction, do not go for hair-splitting and start levelling more accusations. The better course is to forgo, realizing that the measure of precedence over women given to you by Allah Almighty is not absolute, for the precedence of Allah Almighty hangs heavy over you. If you exceed the limits set for you, it will be you who is going to take the punishment.

The role of the family arbitrator in disputes

The arrangement described so far was to help tempers cool off within the privacy of the house keeping it restricted to the married couple. But, there are times when the family feud becomes long-drawn. It may be because the woman is temperamentally obstinate and contumacious, or it may be the fault of the man who may have been unjustly oppressive. Whatever it actually is, one thing is certain that the unfortunate tussle will not remain restricted within the four walls of the house; it will definitely spread out. Then, as usual, supporters of one party will go about maligning the others with all sort

of accusations. This will cause tempers of parties to rise and what started as the disagreement of two individuals will turn into a confrontation between two families.

It is to block the road to this terrible discord that, in the second verse, the Holy Qur'ān addresses government authorities of the time, the guardians of the parties concerned and their supporters, and the general body of Muslims, and suggests a decent method which would cool down tempers, shut out avenues of accusations and make a compromise between the affected parties possible, so that the dispute which, no doubt, could not remain restricted to the couple's home, would at least be settled within their families and not go to a court of law to become public knowledge.

This particular method requires that concerned officials of the government or the guardians of the parties or a body of Muslims which has the necessary integrity, influence and authority should take charge and appoint two arbitrators to hep bring about a compromise between the parties concerned - taking one arbitrator from the man's family and the other from that of the woman. At both these places, the Holy Qur'ān has used the word, "*ḥakam*" for these appointees whereby it pin-points the necessary qualifications of these two persons, that is, they should have the capability to decide the dispute between the two parties; and this capability, as obvious, will be found in a person who is both knowledgeable and trustworthy.

In short, the rule that emerges from here is that a "*ḥakam*" or arbitrator from the man's family and another from that of the woman should be appointed and sent to the husband and wife. Now, as for what they are going to do when they meet them and as to what rights they have in this matter - this the Holy Qur'ān does not determine. However, it does add a remark at the end: إِنْ يُرِيدَآ إِصْلَاحًا يُوَفِّقِ اللّٰهُ بَيْنَهُمَا which means: If these two arbitrators desire to set things right, Allah Almighty will help them bring about harmony between the husband and the wife. So, two things emerge from this sentence:

1. If both arbitrators have good intentions and genuinely wish to bring about peace between the dissenting couple, there will be unseen help from Allah Almighty and they shall succeed in their mission, and it will be through their efforts that Allah Almighty will create love and

harmony in the hearts of the couple. This leads to the conclusion that, in cases where mutual rapport is not restored, it may be because one of the arbitrators lacks perfect sincerity while pursuing the goal of peace-making.

2. The purpose of appointing these two arbitrators, as also understood from this sentence, is to bring about peace and amity between the husband and the wife and does not include anything beyond that. However, it would be something else if the parties affected by the mutual dispute agree to appoint these two arbitrators as their representatives and their attorneys in all respects in which case they would be admitting that any decision given by the two arbitrators jointly will be acceptable to and binding on both of them. Under this situation, the two arbitrators shall have absolute authority to decide their case. If both agree on divorce as the solution, they can effect a divorce. If they both decide that the women should be released under *khul'*, a form of dissolution of marriage, the *khul'* shall come into effect, and their decision shall be binding on the parties. From among the pious elders, this is the position held by Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and Imām Abū Ḥanīfah. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī, etc.)

Cited in this connection is an incident which occurred in the presence of Sayyidnā 'Alī كرم الله وجهه. There too, one finds the proof that the two arbitrators referred to above do not have any intrinsic right other than that of making peace between the husband and wife - unless, of course, the parties concerned authorize them fully to decide as they deem fit. This incident, as narrated by 'Ubaidah al-Salmānī, appears in the Sunnan of al-Baihaqī and is being reported below.

A man and a woman came to Sayyidnā 'Alī كرم الله وجهه along with groups of people accompanying both. Sayyidnā 'Alī asked them to appoint an arbitrator, one from the man's family and another from the woman's. When arbitrators were appointed, he addressed them both: 'Do you know your responsibility? Do you know what you have to do? Hear me. If both of you agree to keep the husband and wife together and make peace between them, then do it. And if you come to the conclusion that matters cannot be set right between them or that they will not stay right later on, and both of you concur with the option that a separation between them is the expedient course, then do it.' When

the woman heard this, she said: 'I accept this. Let these two arbitrators act in accordance with Divine law and I shall accept any decision they give whether it meets my wishes or goes against.' But, the husband said: 'Separation and divorce are things I am not going to accept under any condition. However, I authorize the arbitrators to ask me to pay whatever financial penalty they impose and let my wife return to me in peace.' Sayyidnā 'Alī كرم الله وجهه said: 'No. You too should authorize the arbitrators in the same manner as was done by the woman.'

From this incident, some *mujtahid Imāms* deduced the principle that these arbitrators have an inherent authority to divorce as was done by Sayyidnā 'Alī who asked the parties concerned to do that, while the great Imām Abū Ḥanīfah and Ḥasan al-Baṣrī have taken the position that, had it been an inherent power of the arbitrators to divorce there was no need for Sayydinā 'Alī to obtain the authorization from the parties concerned. Here, the very effort to seek the agreement of the parties is a proof of the fact that these arbitrators do not have such an inherent power. Nevertheless, they do become authorized if the husband and wife delegate the necessary authority to them.

This teaching of the Holy Qur'ān opens a new outlet of resolving mutual disputes, something which saves people from the botheration of going to courts and government officials and gives them an opportunity to iron out a good deal of their disputes and claims through family-oriented arbitration.

Arbitration in other disputes as well

Muslim jurists say that the appointment of two arbitrators to make peace between two parties in dispute, is not limited to the disputes between a husband and a wife. It can be profitably used in other areas of discord. In fact, it should be so used, specially when the parties involved are related to each other, because a court decision is a short-term solution of the basic problem. What happens after is that such decisions leave the germs of hatred and hostility in the hearts of those affected and which reapear after a passage of time in forms that are much too unpleasant. Sayyidnā 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, had promulgated an order for his judges which said:

رُدُّوا الْقَضَاءَ بَيْنَ ذَوِى الْأَرْحَامِ حَتّٰى يَصْطَلِحُوْا فَإِنَّ فَصْلَ الْقَضَاءِ يُوْرِثُ الضَّغَائِنَ (معين الحكام، ص ٢١٤)

"Send disputes between relatives back to them so that they make peace with the help of each other, as a court decision breeds heart burnings and hostility.

Although this Fārūqī directive concerns disputes rising in between relatives, yet, the reason given in this directive (that is, court decisions tend to create hatred ad hostility in hearts) is a reason which covers not only the relatives but non-relatives as well. Wisdom lies in saving all Muslims from mutual hatred and hostility. Therefore, the Muslim jurists are of the view that it is appropriate for officials and judges that they, before hearing the cases formally, should make an effort to find a way out whereby the disputing parties get together and agree on mutual conciliation. (See al-Tarāblusi, Mu'īn al-ḥukkām p.214 and also Ibn al-Shaḥnah: Lisān al-ḥukkām).

Though brief, yet these two verses present a comprehensive system of family life which, if put into practice, could help eliminate a lot of disputes, hatreds and hostilities from the world. Men and women would live in peace among their families, secure against all those local dissensions which turn into all sorts of tribal, racial, national, even international feuds.

In the end, let us recapitulate the great Qur'ānic mechanism of how to quash family feuds - a virtual gift to the whole world:

1. Resolve family disputes within the house using one method after the other.

2. When this is not possible, government officials or the kinsfolk make peace between the disputing parties through two arbitrators, so that, the dispute does not go out of the larger family circle, even if it goes out of the house itself.

3. When this too is not possible and the matter goes to the court finally, it is the duty of the judicial authority to investigate into the case background of both parties and come up with a decision which is just.

It may be noted that by saying إِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلِيْمًا خَبِيْرًا (Surely, Allah is All-

Knowing, All-Aware) warning has been given to the two arbitrators as well to the effect that they should keep in mind that no injustice or crookedness from them will go unnoticed for they shall be appearing before the Being who knows all and is aware of everything.

Verses 36 - 38

وَاعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ وَلَا تُشْرِكُوْا بِهٖ شَيْـًٔا وَّبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ اِحْسَانًا وَّبِذِی
الْقُرْبٰی وَالْيَتٰمٰی وَالْمَسٰكِيْنِ وَالْجَارِ ذِی الْقُرْبٰی وَالْجَارِ الْجُنُبِ
وَالصَّاحِبِ بِالْجَنْۢبِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيْلِ ۙ وَمَا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُكُمْ ؕ اِنَّ
اللّٰهَ لَا يُحِبُّ مَنْ كَانَ مُخْتَالًا فَخُوْرَا ﴿۳۶﴾ ۨالَّذِيْنَ يَبْخَلُوْنَ وَ
يَاْمُرُوْنَ النَّاسَ بِالْبُخْلِ وَيَكْتُمُوْنَ مَآ اٰتٰهُمُ اللّٰهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ ؕ
وَاَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ عَذَابًا مُّهِيْنًا ﴿۳۷﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ يُنْفِقُوْنَ اَمْوَالَهُمْ
رِئَآءَ النَّاسِ وَلَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَلَا بِالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّكُنِ
الشَّيْطٰنُ لَهٗ قَرِيْنًا فَسَآءَ قَرِيْنًا ﴿۳۸﴾

And worship Allah and do not associate with Him anything, and be good to parents and to kinsmen and orphans and the needy and the close neighbour and the distant neighbour and the companion at your side and the wayfarer and to those owned by you. Surely, Allah does not like those who are arrogant, proud, [36] **those who are miserly and bid people to be miserly, and conceal what Allah has given them of His grace -- and We have prepared for the disbelievers a humiliating punishment** [37] **-- and (for) those who spend their wealth to show off before people and do not believe in Allah and the Last Day. And for whomsoever Satan is a companion, then, evil he is as a companion.** [38]

Sequence

It will be noticed that human rights have remained the main focus of attention since the beginning of the present Sūrah upto this point. These related to orphans, the women and inheritance. Taken up now are rights of parents, relatives, neighbours and those of human beings in general. Since a perfect fulfillment of these rights is possible only at

the hands of a person whose orientation to Allah, His Messenger and to the answerability of the Last Day is correct and strong, and who avoids miserliness, arrogance and affectation, being impediments to all positive efforts, the text presents the need to believe in the Oneness of Allah, to avoid any association with His pristine divinity, and to stay away from the rejection of the meeting on the Last Day. Also taken to task are ways of the disbelievers who disobey the Messenger of Allah and revel in their miserliness.

Commentary

The reason why *Tauḥīd* precedes rights

There are many wise considerations in opening the roster of rights with the exhortation to worship Allah alone and not to associate with Him anything in that worship. One of these, and a basic one indeed, is having the fear of Allah and the conscious concern to fulfill His rights. A person who is neglectful on that score can hardly be expected to remain particular about fulfilling the rights of anybody else. He will find one or the other excuse to satisfy his immediate circle of relatives and friends, to keep his prestige in the society or to escape the law of the government. What really forces him to honour human rights, watched or unwatched, is nothing but the fear of Allah and the sense of responsibility before Him. This fear and this *taqwā* is achieved through nothing but *tauḥīd,* the firm belief in the Oneness of Allah to the total exclusion of everything else in that unicity. This is why it was appropriate to remind man about the Oneness of Allah and the need to worship Him before describing the rights of relatives and others.

The rights of parents come first after the message of *Tauḥīd*

By taking up the rights of parents immediately after the command to worship Allah as is His due, it is being suggested that, no doubt all blessings and favours are really from Allah Almighty, yet seen in terms of worldly means, the frequency of favours received by man, closest next to those of Allah Almighty, are those he receives from his parents. This is because they are, given the chain of causation, the very fountain-head of their being. And in all those stages of trial from the birth of a child to his young age, the parents are the ones who take care of the being, sustenance and growth of man to the best of their ability and God-given means. This is why the command to worship and

obey Allah has also been supplemented with the mention of the rights of parents at other places in the Holy Qur'ān. At one place it is said: أَنِ اشْكُرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيْكَ (Be grateful to Me, and to your parents.) (31:14). At another place, it is said: وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ لَا تَعْبُدُونَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا (And when We made the children of Isra'il take a pledge: You shall not worship anyone but Allah; and to parents you shall be good...) (2:83).

In the verses quoted above, the text does not say that one should fulfil the rights of parents or serve them. The word used here is *Iḥsān* (doing good) which, being far more comprehensive, includes spending to support them as needed, to be of service to them physically when so required, not to talk to them in a voice too sharp or too loud causing disrespect, not to say anything to them which may break their heart, and not to treat their friends and well-wishers in any manner which hurts them. On the contrary, one should do everything possible to comfort and please them. Even if the parents have fallen short in fulfilling the due rights of children, the children should never take it as an excuse for their own ill-treatment.

Sayyidnā Mu'ādh ibn Jabal رضی اللہ عنہ says that, out of the ten things the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم had asked me to be particular about, one was: 'do not associate anyone with Allah even if you are killed or burnt alive'; and the second was: 'Do not disobey or hurt your parents even if they ask you to leave your children and family.' (Musnad Aḥmad)

Besides the great emphasis laid on obedience to parents and on treating them well as in the sayings of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم there are countless merits and grades of reward promised for those who do so. A *ḥadīth* in al-Bukhārī and Muslim reports that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said: 'One who wishes to have his earnings and life increased by the blessing of Allah should fulfill the rights of his relatives.' A narration in Tirmidhī says: 'The pleasure of Allah lies in the pleasure of the father and the displeasure of Allah, in the displeasure of the father.' Al-Baihaqī reports in Shu'ab al-'Īmān that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said: 'When a son who is obedient to his parents looks at them with love and regard, every glance of his brings forth for him the reward of an accepted Ḥajj.' According to another narration from al-Baihaqī, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said: 'Allah

Almighty forgives most sins but one who disobeys and hurts his parents is condemned to face all sorts of unforeseen troubles right here in this mortal world, much before the ultimate reckoning of the Hereafter.'

The emphasis on treating relatives well

After having mentioned parents, the verse emphasizes the good treatment of all relatives. A very comprehensive and well-known verse of the Qur'ān which the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم very often used to recite at the end of his sermons, presents the same subject in this manner:

إِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ وَإِيْتَآءِ ذِى الْقُرْبٰى

Still recited in the *Khuṭbah* during Friday prayers all over the world, the verse means: 'Allah commands you to do justice and be good to all and to fulfill the rights of the relatives. (16:90)' This includes serving relatives to the best of one's ability, as well as keeping in touch with them. Sayyidnā Salmān ibn 'Āmir رضی اللہ عنہ reports that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said: '*Ṣadaqah*, when given to the poor and needy, surely brings the reward reserved for such charity, but, when given to a kinsman, it brings a twofold reward - one for the charitable giving and the other for having fulfilled the rights imposed by kinship.' (Musnad Aḥmad, Nasāi, & Tirmidhī)

Let us keep in mind that the need to fulfill the rights of parents is the first priority followed by that of relatives in general.

The rights of the orphans and the needy

The third group mentioned in the verse is that of 'the orphans and the needy' whose rights were already taken up in some detail earlier in the Sūrah. But, by recalling it under the general head of relatives, the hint given is that one should consider helping orphaned children and helpless people as necessary as one would do for his or her own relatives.

The rights of the neighbour

Then appears 'the close neighbour' at number four, and the distant neighbour,' at five. The Arabic word, '*al-jār*' means 'the neighbour'. The verse describes its two kinds - the close and the distant. These two kinds have been explained variously by the noble Companions may

Allah be pleased with them all.

Generally, commentators say that 'a close neighbour' is one who lives next to your house, and 'the distant neighbour' is one who lives at some distance from it.

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنهما said that 'a close relative' means one who is a neighbour and a relative at the same time which makes him the holder of two rights; and 'the distant neighbour' means one who is simply a neighbour and is no relative and who has, therefore, been mentioned later.

Some commentators have said that 'a close neighbour' is one who is part of the Muslim community and is a Muslim while 'a distant neighbour' refers to a non-Muslim neighbour.

The truth of the matter is that the words of the Holy Qur'ān lend to all these probable meanings. It is no doubt reasonable and lawful to have a difference in degrees between different neighbours, either on the basis of their being relative or non-relative, or on the basis of their being Muslim or non-Muslim. However, it is agreed upon that a neighbour, close or distant, related or unrelated, Muslim or non-Muslim, has the essential right that he be helped and cared for to the best of one's ability.

However, a person who has some other right as well, besides his right as a neighbour, he will have a degree of precedence as compared to others. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has himself explained this when he said: 'Some neighbours have one right, some others have two, still some others have three. The neighbour with one right is a non-Muslim with no bond of kinship; the neighbour with two rights is not only a neighbour but a Muslim too; the neighbour with three rights is a neighbour, a Muslim and a relative, all in one. (Ibn Kathīr)

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'Jibra'īl has always been telling me to be helpful and caring with one's neighbour, so much so that I started thinking that may be the neighbours will also be included as sharers in inheritance. (al-Bukhārī and Muslim)

According to a narration in al-Tirmidhi and the Musnad of Aḥmad, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'The best and the most superior is the best in relationship with his neighbours'. And a *ḥadīth* in the

Musnad of Aḥmad reports: 'It is not permissible for a neighbour to eat his fill while his next door neighbour is hungry.'

The right of the Companion at your side

Mentioned at number six is 'the companion at your side'. Translated literally, it includes a travel companion sitting by your side in a rail compartment, an aeroplane, a bus or a car. It also includes a person who is sitting with you in any common meeting.

The way the Sharī'ah of Islam has made the rights of regular neighbours, close or distant, a matter of obligation, it has likewise made equally obligatory the right of good company enjoyed by a person who sits next to somebody for a little while in some meeting or journey - which includes everyone, Muslim or non-Muslim, related or unrelated, as equals. The instruction to treat such a person nicely is significant, the lowest degree of which is that you cause no pain to anyone with your word or deed, you say nothing which may hurt the feelings of the other person, you do nothing which embarrasses, annoys or troubles him, such as, a puff of cigarette blown towards his face, or a spit of things chewed deposited by his side, or a style of sitting which leaves very little space for the other person to sit.

No wonder, if people started following this instruction of the Holy Qur'ān, the common disputes between passengers of trains, particularly in countries with overcrowded modes of transportation, would be all over - if everyone were to think that he needs just about enough space to seat one person. This much is his right, but he does not have the right to occupy anymore space beyond that. The person sitting next to him has as much right to sit in that train as he does.

Some commentators have said that 'a distant neighbour' includes everyone who works by your side in some job or vocation, in industry or wage-earning, in office work, whether on the station of duty, or in travel. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

The right of the wayfarer

This appears at number seven. A wayfarer is a person who, during your tavel status, comes to you, or becomes your guest. Since this stranger Muslim or non-Muslim has no relative or friend around in the given situation, the Holy Qur'ān by considering his predicament as a

human being - has made the fulfillment of his right too as something obligatory. It means that one should treat him well, as much as possible and convenient.

The rights of bondmen, bondwomen, servants and employees

Concluding the list at number eight, it is said: وَمَا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُكُمْ (and those owned by you) which means bondmen and bondwomen owned. Their right too - that they be treated well - has been made equally obligatory. It means that one should not fall short in making sure that they have food to eat and dress to wear, and also that they are not burdened with jobs beyond their ability to handle.

Though, given the lexical meaning of the verse which is clearly referring to 'the owned', that is, the bondmen and bondwomen, but as based on the same analogy and on the sayings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ these rules cover servants and employees as well, for they too have the same right. There should be no niggardliness or delay in giving them their due salary, meals and so forth, and also that they are not burdened with jobs beyond their ability.

Arrogance hinders the fulfillment of rights

The last sentence of verse 36: اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُحِبُّ مَنْ كَانَ مُخْتَالًا فَخُوْرًا (Surely, Allah does not like those who are arrogant, proud) is really a unifying complement of what has been said immediately earlier. In other words, anyone falling short of fulfilling the rights of the eight kinds of people serially mentioned earlier, must be none else but the arrogant and the proud - those who have an offensively heightened sense of superiority and those who love lording over others to exact esteem from them. May Allah keep all Muslims safe from it.

There are many *aḥādīth* carrying stern warnings against arrogance and pre-Islāmic vainglory:

عن ابن مسعود رضى الله عنه قال قال رسول الله ﷺ لايدخل النار احد فى قلبه مثقال حبّة من خردل من ايمان ولا يدخل الجنة احد فى قلبه مثقال حبّة من خردل من كبر (مشكوة ص ٤٣٣ بحواله مسلم)

Sayyidnā Ibn Mas'ūd رضى الله عنه has narrated that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: 'A person who has in his heart faith worth the weight of a mustard seed will not go to the Hell; and a person who has in his heart arrogance worth the weight of a

mustard seed will not go to Paradise.' (Mishkāt, p. 433, vide Muslim)

Quoted here is another *hadīth* which also carries a definition of arrogance:

عن ابن مسعود رضى الله عنه قال قال رسول الله ﷺ لا يدخل الجنة من كان فى قلبه مثقال ذرة من كبر فقال رجل ان الرجل يحب ان يكون ثوبه حسنا ونعله حسنا ، قال إن الله تعالى جميل يحب الجمال، الكبر بطر الحق وغمط الناس (مشكوة ص ٤٣٣ بحواله مسلم)

Sayyidnā Ibn Mas'ūd رضى الله عنه has narrated that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'Whoever has in his heart arrogance worth the weight of a particle will not go to Paradise.' Then, someone asked: 'How about people who like that their clothes be good, and their shoes too ... (Is this arrogance?)' He said: 'Allah is beautiful; He likes beauty. Arrogance is wanton disregard of the (other person's) right and the holding of people in contempt.' (Mishkāt, p. 433,vide Muslim)

Then begins verse 37 with اَلَّذِيْنَ يَبْخَلُوْنَ which describes the nature of the arrogant who are stingy in giving rights which it is obligatory to give, fail to understand their responsibilities and go on to the negative extreme of persuading others to take to this bad habit through their word and deed.

The verse has used the word, '*bukhl*' (niggardliness) to describe this trait of character, a word which, in the generally approved sense, is applied for shortcoming in giving financial rights. But, looking at the background of the verse's revelation, it becomes obvious that the word, '*bukhl*' has been used here in its general sense which includes close-fistedness in money and knowledge both.

A narration from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه tells us that this verse was revealed about the Jews of Madīnah. They were very arrogant, and extremely miserly. When it came to spending money, they were miserably miserly. They also concealed the knowledge they received through their Scriptures which carried the prophecies about the coming of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم . These also included clear signs of his appearance. But, the Jews, despite being convinced of these prophecies, acted niggardly. They never acted to fulfill the

dictates of this knowledge, neither did they pass on the message to others who could act in accordance with it.

Based on this, it is then said that people who are miserly with wealth given by Allah - in matters of knowledge and faith - are ungrateful to Allah and fail to acknowledge His blessings. For them Allah has prepared a humiliating punishment which they cannot escape.

About the merit of giving and the demerit of miserliness, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said:

> ما من يوم يصبح العباد فيه الا ملكان ينزلان فيقول احدهما اللهم اعط منفقًا خلفا ويقول الاخر اللهم اعط ممسكا تلفًا (بخاری و مسلم)
>
> "Every morning two angels descend. One of them says: 'O Allah, bless him who spends in the way of good'; and the other says: 'O Allah, send destruction on (the wealth of) the miser.'" (al-Bukhārī & Muslim, from Abū Hurairah رضی الله عنه).
>
> عن اسماء رضی الله عنها قالت قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم انفقی و لا تحصی فيحصی الله عليك ولا توعی فيوعی الله عليك وارضخی ما استطعت (بخاری و مسلم)
>
> 'Give. Do not calculate, for Allah will then calculate in your case. And do not withhold, for Allah will then withhold in your case. And give whatever you can." (al-Bukhārī & Muslim from Sayyidah Asmā' رضی الله عنها).

Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضی الله عنه narrates that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

> السخیّ قريب من الله، قريب من الجنة، قريب من الناس، والبخيل بعيد من الله، بعيد من الجنة بعيد من الناس قريب من النار والجاهل سخی احب الى الله من عابد بخيل . (ترمذی)
>
> "The generous person is close to Allah, close to Paradise, close to people; while the miser is far from Allah, far from Paradise, far from people - close to the fire; and the generous ignoramus is dearer to Allah than a miserly devotee. (a person who has devoted himself for worship)" (Tirmidhī)

Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd رضی الله عنه narrates that the Holy Prophet ﷺ

said:

وعن ابى سعيد قال قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم خصلتان لا تجتمعان فى مؤمن، البخل وسوء الخلق (ترمذى)

"Two traits cannot get combined in a true Muslim: miserliness and bad morals." (Tirmidhī)

In verse 38, beginning with the words, وَالَّذِيْنَ يُنْفِقُوْنَ another trait in the character of the arrogant has been described. Ordinarily they themselves hold back any spending in the way of Allah and persuade others to do the same. Nevertheless, when they wish to show off before people, they do spend. Since these people do not believe in Allah and the Last Day, the question of spending their wealth for the good pleasure of Allah and with the intention of earning rewards in the life-to-come just does not arise. Such people are the accomplices of Satan, therefore, the end of it all will be no different than the end of their comrade Satan.

This verse tells us that the way it is disgraceful to be niggardly and tardy in fulfilling due rights, very similarly, it is also extremely bad to spend to show off or to spend on heads which are purposeless. A good deed aimed at drawing applause from people - and which is not for Allah exclusively - is a deed not acceptable in the sight of Allah. In *ḥadīth*, it has been declared as *shirk* (associating others in the divinity of Allah).

Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه narrates that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

قال الله تعالى انا اغنى الشركاء عن الشرك من عمل عملا أشرك فيه معي غيرى تركته وشركه

"Allah Almighty says: I am absolutely free of any need to have partners. Whoever does a (good) deed and associates in it someone else with Me, I leave him (unhelped) with this deed (of associating partners with Me)".

Sayyidnā Shaddād ibn Aws رضى الله عنه narrates that he heard the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم say:

وعن شداد بن اوس قال سمعت رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم من صلى

يرائى فقد اشرك، ومن صَام يرائى فقد اشرك، ومن تصدّق يرائى فقد اشرك

(احمد بحواله مشكوة)

"Whoever performed *ṣalāh* to show off, committed *shirk*; and whoever fasted to show off, committed *shirk*; and whoever gave in charity to show off, committed *shirk*." (Aḥmad, as cited by Mishkāt).

Sayyidnā Maḥmūd ibn Labīd رضى الله عنه narrates that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

عن محمود بن لبيد انّ النبى صلى الله عليه وسلم قال ان اخوف ما اخاف عليكم الشرك الاصغر، قالوا يا رسول الله وَمَا الشرك الاصغر؟ قال الرّيا ء

(احمد بحواله مشكوة)

"What fills me with grave apprehensions about you is the minor *shirk*." The Companions asked: "O Messenger of Allah, what is the minor *shirk*?" He said: "*riyā'* (i.e. to do a good deed just to show off"). (Aḥmad, as cited by Mishkāt)

Here, a narration from al-Baihaqī adds that, on the Day of Doom, when the reward for good deeds will be given out, Allah Almighty will say to the persons committing *riyā'* i.e. the persons who did good deed just to earn the applause of the people:

"Go to those you wanted to see you doing good deeds in the mortal world and then find out for yourself if they have the reward for your deeds."

Verses 39 - 42

وَمَا ذَا عَلَيْهِمْ لَوْ اٰمَنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ وَاَنْفَقُوْا مِمَّا رَزَقَهُمُ اللّٰهُ ۭ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ بِهِمْ عَلِيْمًا ﴿٣٩﴾ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَظْلِمُ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ ۚ وَاِنْ تَكُ حَسَنَةً يُّضٰعِفْهَا وَيُؤْتِ مِنْ لَّدُنْهُ اَجْرًا عَظِيْمًا ﴿٤٠﴾ فَكَيْفَ اِذَا جِئْنَا مِنْ كُلِّ اُمَّةٍ بِشَهِيْدٍ وَّجِئْنَا بِكَ عَلٰى هٰٓؤُلَاۗءِ شَهِيْدًا ﴿٤١﴾ يَوْمَئِذٍ يَّوَدُّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَعَصَوُا الرَّسُوْلَ لَوْ تُسَوّٰى بِهِمُ الْاَرْضُ ۭ وَلَا يَكْتُمُوْنَ اللّٰهَ حَدِيْثًا ﴿٤٢﴾

What harm was there for them if they had believed in

Allah and the Last Day and spent out of what Allah had given them. And Allah knows all about them. [39]

Surely, Allah does not wrong even to the measure of a particle. And if it be a good deed, He multiplies it and gives a great reward out of His Own pleasure. [40]

How would it, then, be when We shall bring a witness from every community and shall bring you over them as a witness. [41] **On that Day, those who have disbelieved and disobeyed the Messenger shall wish that the earth be levelled with them. And they shall not conceal anything from Allah.** [42]

Previous verses carried the condemnation of those who refused to believe in Allah and in the *Ākhirah* and were miserly. The present verses persuade people to believe in Allah and the *Ākhirah* and engage in the gainful activity of spending in the way of Allah. Then, towards the end (41-42), a description of the trying situations prevailing on the plains of Resurrection appears to warn people, who refuse to believe and refuse to do what is good, of their evil end.

Commentary

In the first verse (39): وَمَاذَا عَلَيْهِمْ لَوْ اٰمَنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ, it is said: What conceivable harm could have affected them if they had believed in Allah and the Last Day and spent out of what Allah had given them? What is so tough, difficult or frightening about it? All these are as easy as they come. Going by them, taking to them and believing in them does not hurt or harm or cause any inconvenience. Why then, would someone elect to be disobedient, the certain outcome of which is nothing but disaster in the *Ākhirah*?

The text, then, says: اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَظْلِمُ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ (40), that is, Allah Almighty does not allow the reward of good deeds from anyone be reduced in any manner or quantity whatsoever. In fact, He adds extra rewards, in multiples, in special Divine favours, and the life of *Ākhirah* will witness this supreme mercy of the Lord.

With Allah, the least human measure of *thawāb* or reward is that one good deed gets recorded as ten. Then, this does not stop at that; through sheer mercy and grace, Allah bestows manifold increase into this treasure of good deeds. Some *ḥadīth* narrations tell us that there

are deeds the reward for which rises as high as two million times. The truth of the matter is that Allah is *al-Karīm*, the most-noble, the most-generous - He Himself, in His limitless mercy and grace, so increases the quantum of his blessing on His servants that it simply cannot be counted or measured in our human terms. The extents of His generosity and the dimensions of His very Being are beyond human conceptualization - who can dare calculate the uncalculable?

Incidentally, the word, "ذَرَّة : *dharrah*" appearing in this verse has been translated here as 'particle' following the generally recognized meaning it carries. However, some commentators have pointed out that *'dharrah'* is the name of the smallest kind of red ant which the people of Arabia used to cite as an example of something very light and insignificantly small.

In the verse (41) beginning with: فَكَيْفَ إِذَا جِئْنَا مِنْ كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ , there is an invitation to visualize, in range and depth, the gravity of what will happen on the site of the Last Day. Also intended is an admonition to the disbelievers from the tribe of Quraysh. Their anxiety would know no bounds when every prophet of every community would appear as a witness to the good or bad deeds of his respective community on the Last Day - and Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم too, the last of the prophets, will appear as a witness over his community - and he would give witness in the Divine Court particularly about such disbelievers and polytheists declaring that these people saw open signs and miracles, yet they belied and rejected them and ultimately refused to believe in 'The Divinity and my Prophethood'.

According to a narration in al-Bukhārī, the Holy Prophet ﷺ asked Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضى الله عنه to recite the Qur'ān to him. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh said: 'You want to hear it from me, although the Qur'ān was revealed to you?' He said: 'Yes. Recite.' Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd says: 'I started reciting Sūratun-Nisā' and when I reached the verse: فَكَيْفَ إِذَا جِئْنَا مِنْ كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ بِشَهِيدٍ (41), he said: "Enough for now;" and when I raised my eyes to look at him, I saw tears trickling from his blessed eyes.'

'Allāmā al-Qasṭalānī writes: This verse caused a full view of the *Ākhirah* to be present before his eyes and he thought about the people of his community who were short on or lacking in good deeds and that

was why tears started flowing from his eyes.

Special Note:

Some commentators have said that the word, هٰٓؤُلَآءِ (them), in this verse (41) points to the disbelievers and hypocrites present during the age of prophethood. Some others say that it refers to the entire community right through the Day of Doom. This is so because, as indicated in some *ḥadīth* narrations, the deeds of his community are being continuously presented before him. Nevertheless, from here we know that the prophets of past communities will appear as witnesses over their respective communities and that the Holy Prophet ﷺ too will testify to the deeds of his community. This textual style of the noble Qur'ān tells us that there is to be no prophet after him who could appear as a witness over a possible community of his - otherwise, the Qur'ān would have mentioned him and his community and the testimony he would give. Seen from this angle, this verse is a proof of the finality of prophethood as well.

In يَوْمَئِذٍ يَّوَدُّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا, the text mentions the state of utter despair faced by disbelievers on the Last Day. That day they would wish to go extinct rather than face its ordeal, to become a patch of the earth underneath, or wish that the earth would crack open, suck them in leaving nothing on top but dust mingled with dust, so that they would be delivered of the scrutiny and retribution of that fateful time. (The statement: لَوْ تُسَوّٰى بِهِمُ الْاَرْضُ (42) has been translated here literally to express, in some measure at least, the power and poignancy of the original Qur'ānic expression, as: 'shall wish that the earth be levelled with them.)

The same wish appears in Suratun-Nisā' where it was said: وَيَقُوْلُ الْكٰفِرُ يٰلَيْتَنِيْ كُنْتُ تُرٰبًا . This will be on the plains of Resurrection when the disbelievers will see that all animals have been turned into dust after having exchanged the retribution of each other's excesses. They too, would pine for an end like this wishing to have become all dust.

Finally, the verse says: وَلَا يَكْتُمُوْنَ اللّٰهَ حَدِيْثًا (And they shall not conceal anything from Allah - 42). It means that these disbelievers will be unable to keep anything about their beliefs and deeds concealed from Allah. Their own hands and feet will confess. The prophets will testify and, of course, present there will be everything on record in their

Books of Deeds.

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه was asked: "At one place, the Holy Qur'ān says: 'And they shall not conceal anything from Allāh' (4:42); while, at another place, it says: 'By Allah, Our Lord, we were no *mushriks'* (6:23) - Is there, as it seems, any contradiction between the two verses?" To this he replied: What will happen is that when the disbelievers will begin to see that nobody except true Muslims is being admitted into the Paradise they would decide to refuse point-blank that they had ever committed *shirk* or any other evil deed, in the hope that the plan works and results in their salvation. But, soon after this refusal of theirs, the very parts of their body would testify against them, which would totally frustrate their plan to conceal the truth about their deeds. That will be the time when they will confess everything. Hence: "They shall not conceal anything from Allah".

Verse 43

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ لَا تَقْرَبُوا۟ ٱلصَّلَوٰةَ وَأَنتُمْ سُكَٰرَىٰ حَتَّىٰ تَعْلَمُوا۟ مَا تَقُولُونَ وَلَا جُنُبًا إِلَّا عَابِرِى سَبِيلٍ حَتَّىٰ تَغْتَسِلُوا۟ ۚ وَإِن كُنتُم مَّرْضَىٰٓ أَوْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ أَوْ جَآءَ أَحَدٌ مِّنكُم مِّنَ ٱلْغَآئِطِ أَوْ لَٰمَسْتُمُ ٱلنِّسَآءَ فَلَمْ تَجِدُوا۟ مَآءً فَتَيَمَّمُوا۟ صَعِيدًا طَيِّبًا فَٱمْسَحُوا۟ بِوُجُوهِكُمْ وَأَيْدِيكُمْ ۗ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ كَانَ عَفُوًّا غَفُورًا ﴿٤٣﴾

O those who believe do not go near *Ṣalāh* when you are intoxicated until you know what you say, nor in a state of 'major impurity'[1] - save when you are traversing a way - until you take a bath. And if you are sick, or in travel, or one of you has come after easing himself, or you have touched women, and you find no water, go for some clean dust and wipe your faces and hands (with it). Surely, Allah is most-pardoning, most-forgiving. [43]

The Background of this Revelation

This is about an incident relating to Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنه which

1.Stands for *Janābah* which signifies a ritual impurity caused by sexual intercourse or seminal discharge, in passion or dream, after which it becomes obligatory to take a bath.

has been mentioned in Tirmidhī. It was before liquor was forbidden that Sayyidnā 'Abdul-Raḥmān ibn 'Awf رضی اللہ عنہ had invited some Companions for dinner at this home. As customary, liquor was served before dinner. When everybody had finished eating, time came for the Maghrib *ṣalāh*. Sayyidnā 'Alī رضی اللہ عنہ was asked to lead the prayer. He made a grave error while reciting the well-known Sūrah al-Kafirūn in the *ṣalāh* under the effect of intoxication. Thereupon, this verse was revealed in which warning was given that *ṣalāh* should not be performed in a state of intoxication.

Commentary

Commands prohibiting liquor came gradually

Allah Almighty has blessed the Sharī'ah of Islam with a particular distinction - its rules have been made easy. One such rule in this golden chain concerns drinking which was an old addiction in Arabia. This was a national habit, and pastime, involving everyone but a particular few who had a sort of God-given distaste and abhorrance for liquor all along. Naturally right-minded, they never went near this foul habit. One such example is that of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم. He never touched liquor even before he was called to prophethood. And everyone knows that habit, any habit, the urge and compulsion to have something, is really difficult to leave. This is all the more true about the habit of drinking or getting intoxicated by some other means. It so overpowers man in its clutches that he just cannot think otherwise. To him a farewell to drinking means a welcome to death.

Drinking has always been unlawful in the sight of Allah and when people entered the fold of Islam, saving Muslims from it was very much in order. But, had it been declared unlawful all of a sudden, people would have found obedience to this command extremely hard to carry out. So, the shift was gradual. First come partial prohibition. People were warned of the evil effects of drinking which aimed at motivating them to abandon the habit. As a result, the instruction initially given in this verse was limited to asking people not to go near *ṣalāh* while in a state of intoxication. The purpose here was to emphasize that *ṣalāh* is *farḍ*, an obligation - when the time for *ṣalāh* comes, one must rise, intend and offer it as due, and that one should not be drunk during *ṣalāh* timings. This approach helped Muslims realize

that drinking is really something bad for it stops them from performing *ṣalāh* properly. There were many blessed souls among them who made a spot decision to abandon the habit once and for all. There were others who started thinking seriously about its evils. Finally, when the verse of Sūrah al-Mā'idah carrying the absolute command which declared liquor as impure and unlawful was revealed, drinking was forbidden under all conditions.

Ruling: Based on the rule that performing *ṣalāh* in a state of intoxication is forbidden, according to some commentators, it is also not correct to perform *ṣalāh* when one feels so sleepy that one cannot control what one says. This restriction appears in a ḥadīth as follows:

اذا نعس احدكم فی الصلوٰة فلیرقد حتی یذهب عنه النوم فانه لایدری لعله یستغفر فیسب نفسه (قرطبی)

'If one of you feels drowsy in *ṣalāh*, he should go to sleep for a little while so that the effect of sleep disappears, otherwise he would not know that, rather than seeking forgiveness (from Allah), he may (actually) be cursing himself.' (Qurṭubī)

Editor's Note[1]

Although the verse was initially revealed to prohibit offering *ṣalāh* in a state of intoxication, however, some other situations have also been dealt with in which offering *ṣalāh* is not permitted. These are the states of impurity which are of two kinds. The first kind is the state of 'major impurity' or '*janābah*' which is caused by sexual intercourse or by ejaculation with sexual desire by whatever means. This state of impurity has been referred to in the above verses by the word "جُنُباً" which is derived from *janābah* and has been translated as 'major impurity'. In this state one cannot offer *ṣalāh* unless he purifies himself by having the prescribed bath (*ghusl*).

The second kind of impurity is called 'minor impurity' (الحدث الأصغر) which is caused by any act breaking the *wuḍū'*, like easing oneself or passing a flatus etc. In this state also one is not allowed to offer *ṣalāh*,

1. In the original book there was no explanation of other rules mentioned in the verse. The exteemed author has felt it sufficient that these rules are mentioned in the Urdu translation alongwith the خلاصه تفسیر . For the benefit of English readers, I have added this note - Muhammad Taqi Usmani.

but the way of purifying oneself from this kind of impurity is much easier. Instead of having a bath one can release himself from it by making *wuḍū'* (prescribed ablution). In both situations it is necessary to use water, either for having a bath or for making *wuḍū'*. But there may be situations where the use of water is not possible due to its unavailability or is extremely difficult due to illness. In both these situations the above verses have provided an easier alternative for having a bath or making *wuḍū'*. The alternative is to strike the hands on a clean dust and then wipe the face and the wrists with it. This procedure is called '*Tayammum*' and has been taken by the Sharī'ah as a symbol of ritual purification where the actual act of purification through water is not possible or is extremely difficult. After making *tayammum* one is held to be purified for a temporary period until he is able to use water. The procedure of *tayammum*, being the same for both major and minor impurities, it has been prescribed in one sequence for both kinds. The words "أَوْجَآءَ أَحَدٌ مِّنكُم مِّنَ الْغَآئِطِ" ('i.e. or one of you has come after easing himself') refer to the 'minor impurity' while the words "أَوْ لَٰمَسْتُمُ النِّسَآءَ" (i.e. 'or you have touched women') stand for having sexual intercourse[1] causing major impurity. In both situations, it has been laid down that if someone is too sick to use water, or is on journey where he does not find water, he can have recourse to making *tayammum*.

The above discussion may explain the rules of impurities and their purification as laid down in the above verses. However, one point needs further elaboration:

While the Holy Qur'ān has prohibited to 'go near *ṣalāh*' in a state of major impurity the rule has been made subject to one exception which is expressed in the words إِلَّا عَابِرِى سَبِيلٍ (i.e. 'save when you are traversing a way'). This exception has been interpreted by the Muslim Jurists in different ways. According to the most commentators, including the Ḥanafī jurists, this exception refers to the state of travelling when water is not available. It, therefore, means that one cannot go near *ṣalāh* in a state of major impurity without having taken a ritual bath (*ghusl*), however, if he is 'traversing a way' in the sense that he is on

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1. This explanation is based on the Ḥanafī view.

journey and does not find water, he can offer *ṣalāh* without taking bath after making *tayammum* as explained in the next sentence.

Conversely Imām al-Shāfi'ī interprets the exception in a totally different manner. He says that 'going near *ṣalāh'* means 'entering a mosque' and it is prohibited for a person to enter a mosque in a state of 'major impurity'. However, if he intends to go somewhere else, but passes through a mosque as a passer-by, he can do so. The Ḥanafī jurists do not accept this view. Based on the first interpretation, they say that the verse has no relevance with 'entering the mosque'. It refers to offering prayers, as is evident from the background in which it was revealed. The prohibition of entering a mosque in the state of impurity is based on some other sources, and it is not allowed, even for a passer-by, to enter a mosque with intention to go somewhere else. (Editor).

The rule of *Tayammum* is a blessing, and a distinction of the Muslim community

It is certainly a great favour granted by Allah Almighty that He, in His mercy, has made something else to take the place of water, something which is much more easily available than water. Obviously enough, land mass and dust are available everywhere. It appears in a *ḥadīth* that this is a convenience bestowed upon the community of Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم exclusively. As for necessary rules governing the making of *Tayammum* (also referred to in English, and interestingly too, as the 'dry ablution'), these are commonly available in books on *ṣalāh*, (in English as well). Standard juristic works can be consulted for further details.

Verses 44 - 46

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا نَصِيبًا مِّنَ الْكِتٰبِ يَشْتَرُونَ الضَّلٰلَةَ
وَيُرِيدُونَ أَنْ تَضِلُّوا السَّبِيلَ ﴿٤٤﴾ وَاللّٰهُ أَعْلَمُ بِأَعْدَآئِكُمْ ط
وَكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ وَلِيًّا ق وَّكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ نَصِيرًا ﴿٤٥﴾ مِنَ الَّذِينَ هَادُوا
يُحَرِّفُونَ الْكَلِمَ عَنْ مَّوَاضِعِهٖ وَيَقُولُونَ سَمِعْنَا وَعَصَيْنَا
وَاسْمَعْ غَيْرَ مُسْمَعٍ وَّرَاعِنَا لَيًّا بِأَلْسِنَتِهِمْ وَطَعْنًا فِي الدِّينِ ط
وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ قَالُوا سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا وَاسْمَعْ وَانْظُرْنَا لَكَانَ خَيْرًا

لَّهُمْ وَاَقْوَمَ ۙ وَلٰكِنْ لَّعَنَهُمُ اللّٰهُ بِكُفْرِهِمْ فَلَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا ﴿٤٦﴾

Have you not seen those who have been given a share from the Book? They buy misguidance and want that you (too) lose the way. [44] **And Allah knows your enemies best. And Allah is enough as friend and Allah is enough as supporter.** [45] **Among the Jews there are some who move words away from their places and say, "We hear and disobey," and "Hear. May you not be made to hear," and "*Rā'inā*," twisting their tongues and maligning the Faith. And if they had said, "We hear and obey," and "Hear," and "Look after us," it would have been better for them, and more proper, but Allah has cast His curse on them due to their disbelief. So, they do not believe except a few.** [46]

In verses previous to this, the stress was on acting with *Taqwā* in mutual dealings. In between came some rules pertaining to *'Ibādah, Ṣalāh* and their corollaries since they instill man with fear of Allah, promote concern for the life-to-come and help in seeing that dealings come out right and smooth.

The present verses take up the matter of dealings with enemies. It brings into sharp focus the wicked tricks, in word and deed, as practiced by the Jews, and then gives a view of what is true and correct. This last aspect is in a way an exhortation to Muslims that they should be careful in choosing the words they use to say what they have to say, for mincing words is not their style.

Verse 47

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ اٰمِنُوْا بِمَا نَزَّلْنَا مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا مَعَكُمْ مِّنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ نَّطْمِسَ وُجُوْهًا فَنَرُدَّهَا عَلٰٓى اَدْبَارِهَآ اَوْ نَلْعَنَهُمْ كَمَا لَعَنَّآ اَصْحٰبَ السَّبْتِ ؕ وَكَانَ اَمْرُ اللّٰهِ مَفْعُوْلًا ﴿٤٧﴾

O those who have been given the Book, believe in what We have revealed confirming what is with you before We rub off faces and turn them shaped like their backs, or curse them as We cursed the people of Sabbath. And what Allah wills is destined to occur. [47]

In the previous verse (46), there was a description of the Jewish stance against Islam which ranged from flat denial to laboured falsification, something born out of the desire to misrepresent, alter and ridicule. The present verse addresses them directly and commands them to believe in the final revelation and demonstrate their confirmation. Should they continue ignoring the warning and remain hostile, they should really be concerned with the chilling prospects of what their fate would be as a consequence of their ill choice.

Commentary

Note 1: The Qur'ānic expression: فَتَرُدَّهَا عَلَىٰٓ أَدْبَارِهَا (and turn them shaped like their backs) admits of two probabilities in this act of turning. It could either be that the features of the face are eliminated and the whole face is turned around towards the back; or, it may be that the face is flattened like the nape of the neck, devoid of all features, 'effaced.' (Maẓharī, Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

Note 2: When will this be is a question posed and answered by Commentators in great details. Discussing this deconfiguration (*ṭams*) and transmutation (*maskh*), some of them have said that this punishment will come upon the Jews before the Day of Doom, while others have said that this punishment did not come to pass because some of the Jews had entered the fold of Faith.

Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thanavī رحمه الله has said: 'In my opinion, that question simply does not arise because there is no single word in the Qur'ān which would suggest the proposition: If you do not believe, the punishment of *ṭams* and *maskh* will definitely materialize. In fact, it suggests probability, that is, given their crime, they do deserve this punishment, and should He spare them from the punishment, that would be His mercy.'

Verses 48 - 50

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَغْفِرُ أَنْ يُشْرَكَ بِهِ وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُونَ ذَٰلِكَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ ۚ
وَمَنْ يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدِ افْتَرَىٰ إِثْمًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٤٨﴾ أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى
الَّذِينَ يُزَكُّونَ أَنْفُسَهُمْ ۚ بَلِ اللَّهُ يُزَكِّي مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَلَا يُظْلَمُونَ
فَتِيلًا ﴿٤٩﴾ انْظُرْ كَيْفَ يَفْتَرُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ ۖ وَكَفَىٰ بِهِ

اِثۡمًا مُّبِيۡنًا ﴿٥٠﴾

Surely, Allah does not forgive the ascribing of a partner to Him and forgives anything short of that for whomsoever He wills. And whoever ascribes a partner to Allah has tailored a great sin. [48]

Have you not seen those who claim sanctity for themselves? In fact, Allah sanctifies whom He wills and they shall not be wronged even to the measure of a thread of a date-stone. [49] **See how they fabricate a lie against Allah, and it is enough to be an open sin.** [50]

The previous verse carried an admonition for those who refused to believe. But, from among those to whom this admonition has been addressed, some could finally be forgiven, which admits of the probability that all these other addressees may, perhaps, be also forgiven. Therefore, the text goes on to explain that this group of people will not be forgiven because of their *kufr* or disbelief. This also refutes the Jewish claim that they shall be forgiven.

Commentary

Shirk: A definition, and some forms

The words of the Qur'ānic text in اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَغۡفِرُ اَنۡ يُّشۡرَكَ بِهٖ (Surely, Allah does not forgive the ascribing of a partner to Him) demonstrate that the set articles of faith relating to the Being and Attributes of Allah Almighty are the *sine qua non* of religion and holding any belief similar to these in favour of whoever and whatever He has created is *shirk*. Some of the forms it takes are as follows:

***Shirk* in Knowledge:** This is the ascribing of a partner to Allah in matters of knowledge (*'ilm*), for example believing that a certain pious person or a spiritual master or the head of a mystical order knows about everything in this universe all the time. Other forms could be asking an astrologer or a fortune-teller or a diviner about things that are going to take place in a person's life, things which belong to the unseen world, an exclusive domain of Allah; or, to take omen (*fāl*) from the words written by a pious person and believing that it has got to happen; or, calling someone from a considerable distance and believing that the person has become all aware of the call; or, keeping a fast dedicated to someone other than Allah.

***Shirk* in Power:** This is ascribing to others the powers and rights which are the exclusive domain of Allah as for example, taking someone to have the power and authority to provide gain or inflict loss. It includes things like asking someone to grant wishes or to ask for sustenance, and children.

***Shirk* in 'Ibādah:** This means the ascribing of a partner to Allah in acts of worship (*'Ibādah*) which is the sole due of Allah. Some of the forms it could take are to go down in *sajdah* (prostration) for anyone, to release an animal dedicated in the name of somebody, making ceremonious offering for a person or thing, living or dead, to make a vow (*mannat, nadhr*) in someone's name; to make *ṭawāf* (rounds, circumambulation) of someone's grave or house; to give preference to someone else's word, or custom, as against God's own command; to make bows before anyone in the manner of a *rukū'*, the bowing position peculiar to Muslim prayer; to slaughter an animal in the name of someone; to take the affairs of the mortal world as subservient to the effect and influence of stars; to regard some month as ill-omened, wretched; and things like that.

Indulgence in self-praise

Let us now turn to the word of Allah in: أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ يُزَكُّونَ أَنفُسَهُم (Have you not seen those who claim sanctity for themselves?) Since the Jews claimed sanctity for themselves, Allah Almighty censures them in this verse as a strange lot attributing sanctity to themselves and then having the audacity to tell others that this is so. Amazing indeed!

From here we learn that it is not permissible for anyone to claim and broadcast his or her sanctity, or that of others. This is forbidden on three counts:

1. The cause of self-praise is mostly pride and arrogance. So, in reality, what is forbidden is pride and arrogance.

2. As to the end of man, only Allah knows if it will come in a state of *Taqwā* and *Ṭahārah*, that is, in a state when one is still God-fearing spiritually and free from major and minor impurities physically. Therefore, claiming sanctity for oneself is contrary to being God-fearing. As such, Sayyidah Zaynab daughter of Abī Salamah رضی اللہ عنہا narrates that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم asked her: 'What is your name?' Since, at that time, her name was *Barrah* (which means pure

from sins), so, that was what she told him. He, then, said: لَا تُزَكُّوْا اَنْفُسَكُمْ، اَللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ بِاَهْلِ الْبِرِّ مِنْكُمْ، سَمُّوْهَا زَيْنَبَ ، (رواه مسلم بحواله مشكوة) (Do not claim sanctity for yourselves (that is, do not claim purity and freedom from sins) because it is Allah alone who knows best as to who among you is of the righteous. He, then, named her Zaynab (instead of Barrah). (Mazharī)

3. The third reason for this prohibition is that such a claim gives people the false idea that the person making that claim is nearer to Allah because he is free of all faults, although this is a lie, for no mortal man is free of one or the other shortcoming. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Ruling: If impediments mentioned above do not exist, one can speak about one's trait of character as an expression of gratitude for Allah's blessing. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Verses 51 - 52

اَلَمْ تَرَ اِلَى الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوْا نَصِيْبًا مِّنَ الْكِتٰبِ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالْجِبْتِ وَالطَّاغُوْتِ وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ لِلَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا هٰٓؤُلَآءِ اَهْدٰى مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا سَبِيْلًا ﴿٥١﴾ اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ لَعَنَهُمُ اللّٰهُ ۖ وَمَنْ يَّلْعَنِ اللّٰهُ فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهٗ نَصِيْرًا ﴿٥٢﴾

Have you not seen those who have been given a share from the Book? They believe in Jibt [1] and Ṭāghūt [2] and say concerning those who disbelieve, "They are better guided in their way than those who believe." [51] **Those are the ones whom Allah curses, and the one whom Allah curses you shall find no helper for him.** [52]

A description of the evil traits of Jews has been appearing from the previous verse beginning with: اَلَمْ تَرَ اِلَى الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوْا نَصِيْبًا مِّنَ الْكِتٰبِ يَشْتَرُوْنَ الضَّلٰلَةَ - الخ (44). The present verses also deal with the same subject.

Commentary

What is *Jibt* and *Ṭāghūt*?

Two words, 'al-Jibt' and 'al-Ṭāghūt' have been mentioned in the present verse (51). What do they mean? Commentators have explained

1. Jibt: Originally, the name of an idol which was also used later on for every false god as well as for sorcery.

2. Ṭāghūt: Literally signifies the arrogant. It is also used for Satan, and for evil and falsehood.

it variously. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās, Ibn Jubayr and Abū al-'Āliyah رضى الله عنهم have said that '*Jibt*' comes from the Ethiopian language and refers to a magician while 'Ṭāghūt' signifies a soothsayer.

Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه says that '*Jibt*' means magic and 'Ṭāghūt' means Satan. Sayyidnā Mālik ibn Anas رضى الله عنه is reported to have said that everything worshipped other than Allah is covered by the name 'Ṭāghūt'.

Imām al-Qurṭubī says that the view of Sayyidnā Mālik ibn Anas رضى الله عنه, being more inclusive, is generally preferred because it also has its support from the Holy Qur'ān where it is said: أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ (Worship Allah and avoid Ṭāghūt.) (16:36) But, really, there is no contradiction as such in these different views. They all can be implied in one or the other sense, as Jibt was essentially the name of an idol after all, but it was later on that it came to be applied to other things and beings worshipped other than Allah. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

The present verses in the background of their revelation

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه narrates that two chiefs of the Jews, Ḥuyayy ibn Akhṭab and Ka'b ibn Ashraf came along with a group of theirs, after the battle of Uḥud, to meet the Quraysh at Makkah. The Jewish Chief, Ka'b ibn Ashraf met Abū Sufyān and promised to collaborate with him in his fight against the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. The people of Makkah told Ka'b ibn Ashraf that they were a people who cheated by making false promises. Then, they challenged them to prostrate before two particular idols (Jibt and Ṭāghūt) there, if they really meant what they had said.

So, in order to assure the Quraysh, he did exactly that. After that, Ka'b told the Quraysh: 'Let thirty people from among you and thirty people from among us come forward so that we declare our resolve before the Lord of the Ka'bah that all of us will jointly fight against Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم.

The Quraysh liked this proposal from Ka'b and this was how they opened a united front against Muslims. After that, Abū Sufyān told Ka'b: 'You are learned people. You have the Book of Allah with you. But, we are totally ignorant. Now, you let us know what do you think about us - tell us if we are on the right path, or is it Muḥammad? ﷺ

Ka'b asked: 'What is your religion?' Abū Sufyān said: 'We slaughter our camels for the Ḥajj. We offer their milk to pilgrims, and entertain guests. We maintain good relations with our kin. We make *ṭawāf* of the House of Allah and perform 'Umrah. Contrary to this, Muḥammad ﷺ has abandoned his ancestral religion and he has cut himself off from his own people and, on top of that, he has challenged our ancestral religion by introducing a new religion of his own.'

Hearing all this, Ka'b ibn Ashraf said: 'You people are on the right path. Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم has gone astray.'

Thereupon, Allah Almighty revealed these verses and, thus, exposed their lying and deceit. (Ruḥ al-Ma'ānī)

The blind pursuit of material gains sometimes makes man surrender religion and faith

Ka'b ibn Ashraf was a distinguished scholar among the Jews. He believed in God and worshipped none but Him. However, when the ghost of overweening personal desires overpowered his mind and heart, he offered to join forces with the Quraysh against Muslims. As we already know, the Quraysh put forth the condition that he should prostrate before their idols. He swallowed this bitter pill to achieve his personal end. Here, we see that he squarely stooped to fulfil the condition imposed by the Quraysh, something contrary to his religion, but he made no effort to stand by his religious beliefs and did not show the courage to part ways with them on so crucial an issue. The Holy Qur'ān mentions a similar incident elsewhere concerning Bal'am ibn Bā'ūr. It says: وَاتْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَاَ الَّذِيْٓ اٰتَيْنٰهُ اٰيٰتِنَا فَانْسَلَخَ مِنْهَا فَاَتْبَعَهُ الشَّيْطٰنُ فَكَانَ مِنَ الْغٰوِيْنَ (Recite to them the news of the one who was given Our signs, then he eased out from it and followed the Satan, and he was one of those who seduce people to err.) (7:175)

Commentators say that Bal'am ibn Bā'ūr was a great scholar and a mendicant who wielded spiritual powers. But, when he launched his sinister plans against Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه الصلوة والسلام in an effort to achieve his personal desires, he was unable to achieve anything against him, but what did happen was that he himself ended up being accursed and went astray.

This tells us that religious knowledge as culled from a book is not

enough to guarantee the desired benefit. What is needed is action sought by the knowledge. This will not be possible unless one totally abstains from material greed and from the pursuit of carnal desires. Otherwise, man would not stay strong enough to resist against sacrificing something so dear as his religion on the altar of his desires. In our own time, we have the kind of people who would abandon their true creed just to achieve their material and political goals. Some of them would go for the extra effort to dress up their secular beliefs and views with the garb of Islam. Such people care less about the grave Covenant between God and man, nor do they worry much about what would happen to them in the *Ākhirah*. All this happens when one abandons his true and right creed and starts following the signals of the Satan.

The curse of Allah causes disgrace here and hereinafter

The Qur'ānic word, '*la'nah*' (translated as 'curse' in absence of a more exact equivalent) means being far removed from the mercy of Allah, extremely debased and disgraced. Anyone under '*la'nah*' from Allah cannot be close to Allah. For such accursed ones admonitions are very stern. The Holy Qur'ān says: مَلْعُوْنِيْنَ اَيْنَمَا ثُقِفُوْٓا اُخِذُوْا وَقُتِّلُوْا تَقْتِيْلًا (The accursed, wherever they be, are to be caught and killed massacre-like.) (33:61) This is their disgrace in the present life - the disgrace in the *Ākhirah* will be far too grim to contemplate.

Who deserves the '*la'nah*' of Allah?

The words of the Holy Qur'ān in verse 52: وَمَنْ يَّلْعَنِ اللّٰهُ فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهٗ نَصِيْرًا state that anyone under the curse of Allah has no helper to help him in that predicament. The point to ponder is: Who are these people who become deserving of this '*la'nah*' from Allah?

According to a ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has cursed the giver of interest, the receiver and the consumer of interest, and its writer and the one who bears witness to it, the whole lot of them, all of them equally involved in the sin. (Narrated by Muslim as in Mishkāt)

There is another hadīth in which he said: مَلْعُوْنٌ مَنْ عَمِلَ عَمَلَ قَوْمِ لُوْطٍ (Cursed is he who does what the people of Lūṭ عليه السلام used to do). Narrated by Razīn and appearing in Mishkāt, the reference is to the male homosexual. Then, he said: 'Allah sends his curse on the thief who would not stop from stealing even very small things like eggs and

ropes, and in retribution to which, his hand is cut off.' (Mishkāt)

In another ḥadīth, he said:

لَعَنَ اللّٰهُ اٰكِلَ الرِّبٰوا وَمُؤْكِلَهٗ وَالْوَاشِمَةَ وَالْمُسْتَوْشِمَةَ وَالْمُصَوِّرَ

"Allah curses the eater of interest, and its feeder, and the woman who tattooes another woman and the woman who tattooes herself, and the picture-maker." (Bukhārī, from Mishkāt)

In yet another ḥadīth, he has said: 'Allah sends His curse on liquor, its consumer and its server, its seller and purchaser, its squeezers, its handlers, transporters and orderers, on all of them.' (Abu Dāwūd, ibn Mājah, from Mishkāt)

In still another ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said: 'There are six types of people I have cursed and Allah Almighty has also cursed them - and every prophet is blessed with the acceptance of his prayers - those six are:

(1) One who commits excess in the matter of Allah's Book;

(2) and one who rises to power by force and terror, then honours a person disgraced by Allah and brings disgrace on a person honoured by Allah;

(3) the denier of destiny determined by Allah;

(4) one who takes as lawful what has been made unlawful by Allah;

(5) the person in my progency who rules what has been forbidden as lawful;

(6) and the one who gives up my way (*sunnah*).' (Baihaqī in Al-Mudkhal from Mishkāt)

In another ḥadīth, he said: لَعَنَ اللّٰهُ النَّاظِرَ وَالْمَنْظُوْرَ إِلَيْهِ 'Allah curses the ogler and the ogled at.' It means that the curse of Allah falls on anyone who looks at someone in an evil way, someone who is a non-*Maḥram*, that is, someone outside the count of those in the family he is permitted to see because marriage with them is forbidden for ever. This is why such a *nāẓir*, the onlooker of the other, comes under the curse of Allah. As for the *manẓūr ilaihi*, the one who is looked at lustfully, the same curse will apply subject to his or her having deliberately and invitingly

caused such a look to be cast.

Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضی اللہ عنہ narrates:

لَعَنَ رَسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ الرَّجُلَ يَلْبَسُ لِبسَةَ الْمَرْأَةِ، وَالْمَرْأَةَ تَلْبَسُ لِبسَةَ الرَّجُلِ

"The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has cursed the man who dresses like a woman and the woman who dresses like a man. (Mishkāt)

The following report from Abū Dāwūd appears in Mishkāt:

عن عائشة رضى الله تعالى عنها أن امراة تلبس النعل، قالت لعن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم الرجلة من النساء

"Someone told Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا about a woman who wore (men's) shoes. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah said: 'The Messenger of Allah ﷺ has cursed the woman who takes to masculine ways.'

A narration from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ reports:

عن ابن عباس رضى الله عنهما قال: لعن النبى صلى الله عليه وسلم المخنثين من الرجال، والمترجلات من النساء و قال اخرجوهم من بيوتكم

(رواه البخارى بحواله مشكوة)

"The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has cursed the effeminate from among men (who, in dress and looks, emulate women-like transvestites) and he has cursed the masculinized from among women (who, in dress, looks and ways, act man-like). And he said: 'Expel them out of you homes.' " (Bukhārī, from Mishkāt)

Also from al-Bukhārī comes the report that Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضی اللہ عنہ said:

لعن الله الواشمات والمستوشمات والمتنمصات والمتفلجات للحسن المغيرات خلق الله

"The curse of Allah be on the tattooers and the tattooed, on the pickers of eye-brows and the cleavers of teeth as aids to beauty - they are the makers of alteration in the creation of Allah."

Rules about *La'nah*

La'nah is the denouncing of something or the calling down of evil on someone. 'Curse' is the most widely used equivalent for it. Two formal substitutes for 'curse' in this sense are 'execration' and 'imprecation'. 'Execration' is the face-to-face denunciation or the ill wished, while 'imprecation' is somewhat privately expressed. Call it by whatever name, the act of invoking '*La'nah*' is a terrible thing to do. Because of the amount of evil it releases, corresponding heavy restrictions have been placed against its use. Invoking *La'nah* against a Muslim is *ḥarām* (forbidden) and the sole condition when this can be done against a *kāfir* (disbeliever) is that the imprecator must be sure that the disbeliever will die clinging to his disbelief. Given below are some authentic sayings of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم on this subject:

عن ابن مسعود قال قال رسولُ الله صلى الله عليه وسلم ليس المؤمن بالطعّان ولا باللعان ولا البذى (الترمذى بحواله مشكوة)

"According to Sayyidnā Ibn Mas'ūd رضى الله عنه, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'A true Muslim is no taunter or imprecator, nor is he foul-mouthed.'" (Tirmidhī, from Mishkāt)

عن ابى الدرداء قال سمعت رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم يقول: إنّ العبد إذا لعن شيئًا صعدت اللّعنة إلى السماء' فتغلق ابواب السماء دونها، ثمّ تهبط الى الارض فتغلق ابوابها دونها، ثم تاخذ يمينًا وشمالاً، فاذا لم تجد مساغًا رجعت الى الّذى لعن فان كان لذلك اهلاً والا رجعت الى قائلها (رواه ابو داؤد بحواله مشكوة)

"Sayyidnā Abū al-Dardā' رضى الله عنه says that he heard the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم say : 'When a servant of Allah curses something, the curse goes up towards the sky whereupon the doors of the sky are closed on it. After that, it comes down towards the earth whereupon the doors of the earth are closed on it (that is, the earth does not accept this curse). After that, it takes a right, and then a left, but, as it finds no access anywhere, it returns to the one who was cursed. So, if he is really deserving of it, on him it falls; otherwise, it returns back to its pronouncer and falls on him." (Abū Dāwūd, cited by Mishkāt)

عن ابن عباس ان رجلا نازعته الريح رداء ه فلعنها فقال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: لا تلعنها فانها مامورة، وانه من لعن شيئا ليس له بأهل رجعت اللعنة عليه . (رواه الترمذی بحواله مشكوة)

"It has been reported by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضی الله عنه that the wind swooped away the sheet-cloak of a man and he cursed the wind, whereupon the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'Do not curse it for it is under orders (from Allah) and (remember) whosoever curses something which does not deserve the curse, then, the curse returns to none but him." (Tirmidhī, cited by Mishkāt, p. 413)

Rulings:

1. Unless it is known about a particular person that he has died in a state of *kufr* (disbelief), invoking *La'nah* on him is not permissible - even though he may be a sinful person. Based on this principle, Allāmah Ibn 'Ābidīn has advised against cursing Yazīd. But, should it be on a particular *kāfir* whose death in a state of disbelief is certain, for instance, Abū Jahl and Abū Lahab, then, it is permissible. (Shāmī, v.2, p.836)

2. Cursing without naming anyone is permissible, for example, saying: 'God's curse upon liars (or tyrants)! '

3. Literally, *La'nah* means being far removed from the mercy of Allah. In the terminology of the Sharī'ah, when applied to disbelievers, it refers to their being far far off from the mercy of Allah; and when it is applied to Muslims, it refers to their having fallen down the level of the righteous (reported by Shāmī from al-Quhistānī, v.2, p.836). Therefore, praying that the good deeds of a Muslim may decrease is also not permissible.

Verses 53 - 55

أَمْ لَهُمْ نَصِيبٌ مِّنَ الْمُلْكِ فَإِذًا لَّا يُؤْتُونَ النَّاسَ نَقِيرًا ﴿٥٣﴾ أَمْ يَحْسُدُونَ النَّاسَ عَلَىٰ مَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِن فَضْلِهِ ۖ فَقَدْ آتَيْنَا آلَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَآتَيْنَاهُم مُّلْكًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٥٤﴾ فَمِنْهُم مَّنْ آمَنَ بِهِ وَمِنْهُم مَّن صَدَّ عَنْهُ ۚ وَكَفَىٰ بِجَهَنَّمَ سَعِيرًا ﴿٥٥﴾

Is it that they have a share in the kingdom, while in that case, they would give nothing to the people, not

even to the measure of a tiny pit on the back of a date-stone? [53]

Or, is it that they are jealous of people over what Allah has given them of His bounty while We have given to the House of Ibrāhīm the Book and the wisdom and We have given to them a great kingdom? [54]

So, there were some among them who believed in it and there were others among them who turned away from it. And enough (for the latter) is *Jahannam*, a fire ablaze! [55]

Linked with previous verses, the description of Jewish traits of character continues in the present verses as well.

Commentary

Admonishing Jews for being unreasonably envious

The knowledge, the grace, the high rank and the grandeur of mission given by Allah Almighty to the Noble Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم made Jews all too jealous. Verses 53 and 54 strongly admonish this attitude of theirs, giving two reasons why their envy was unreasonable. The first reason appears in verse 53, while the second, in verse 54. But, the outcome of both is the same. The drift of the argument is: 'What is the basis of your envy? If this is because you think you are the real inheritors of the kingdom and what he has been blessed with is actually yours, obviously then, this is all wrong. As it is, right now you have no kingdom. Even if you came to have some of it, you are not the kind to give anything to anybody. If your envy is based on the realization that the kingdom, no doubt, did not pass from you onto him, still, the question remains, why did it have to go to him at all. What relevance does he have with having a kingdom? The answer given was: He too comes from the family of prophets who have ruled over kingdoms before him. So, the kingdom has really not come to a stranger. Your envy, therefore, is unreasonable.'

The definition and rules of envy

'Allāmah al-Nawawī, the Commentator of Muslim, defines *Ḥasad* as : اَلْحَسَدُ تَمَنِّيْ زَوَالِ النِّعْمَةِ (Muslim, v.2). It means that *Ḥasad* (envy) is a desire to see the other person's blessing somehow disappear, and this is ḥarām (forbidden).

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said:

لا تباغضوا ولا تحاسدوا ولا تدابروا، وكونوا عباد الله اخوانًا، ولا يحل لمسلم ان يهجر اخاه فوق ثلاث .

"Do not hate and do not envy and do not turn your backs on each other. Instead, become servants of Allah, as brothers. And it is not lawful for a Muslim that he abandons his brother for more than three days." (Muslim, v.2)

In another ḥadīth, he has said:

اياكم والحسد، فإن الحسد يأكل الحسنات كما تاكل النار الحطب

"Beware of envy, for envy eats up good deeds as the fire eats up wood." (Abū Dāwūd, cited by Mishkāt)

Sayyidnā Zubayr رضى الله عنه narrates that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

عن الزبير رضى الله عنه قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم : دب اليكم داء الامم قبلكم، الحسد والبغضاء هى الحالقة، لا أقول تحلق الشعر، ولكن تحلق الدين

"Stealthily creeping into you is the disease of earlier peoples - envy; and hatred, which is a shaver. I do not say that it shaves hair, but it does shave the religion off." (Aḥmad and Tirmidhī, cited by Mishkāt)

Envy, whether it be on account of someone's worldly, or spiritual excellence, is ḥarām (forbidden) on both counts, as the words أَمْ لَهُمْ نَصِيبٌ مِّنَ الْمُلْكِ (Is it that they have a share in the kingdom?) seem to point out towards worldly excellence, while the words الْكِتٰبَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ (54) (the Book and the wisdom) are indicative of spiritual excellence.

Verses 56 - 57

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِاٰيٰتِنَا سَوْفَ نُصْلِيهِمْ نَارًا ۖ كُلَّمَا نَضِجَتْ جُلُودُهُمْ بَدَّلْنٰهُمْ جُلُودًا غَيْرَهَا لِيَذُوقُوا الْعَذَابَ ۗ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَزِيزًا حَكِيمًا ﴿٥٦﴾ وَالَّذِينَ اٰمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ سَنُدْخِلُهُمْ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِينَ فِيهَآ أَبَدًا ۖ لَهُمْ فِيهَآ أَزْوَاجٌ مُّطَهَّرَةٌ ۖ وَنُدْخِلُهُمْ ظِلًّا ظَلِيلًا ﴿٥٧﴾

Those who have disbelieved in Our verses, We shall certainly make them enter a fire. Whenever their skins are burnt out, We shall give them other skins in their place, so that they may taste the punishment. Surely, Allah is All-Mighty, All-Wise. [56]

As for those who have believed and have done good deeds, We shall admit them to gardens beneath which rivers flow, remaining there for ever, for them, there are wives purified. And We shall admit them to a shade ever-stretched. [57]

Particular believers and disbelievers were mentioned in the previous verses. Stated now is the reward and punishment of a believer and a disbeliever as a universal rule.

Commentary

Explaining the highly apocalyptic statement كُلَّمَا نَضِجَتْ جُلُودُهُمْ بَدَّلْنٰهُمْ in verse 56, Sayyidnā Mu'ādh رضی اللہ عنہ says that as soon as their skin is burnt out it will be replaced - and this will be with such speed that the skin will be replaced a hundred times in one moment.

Sayyidnā Ḥasan al-Baṣrī says:

تاكل النّار كلّ يوم سبعين الف مرة، كلما اكلتهم قيل لهم: عودوا فيعودون كما كانوا (اخرج البيهقى عن الحسن بحوالة مظهرى ج ٢)

"The fire will eat them everyday seventy thousand times. When it would have eaten them up, they will be commanded: 'Return'. So, they shall return to be as they were." (al-Baihaqi, as quoted by Maẓharī)

According to a narration in al-Bukhārī and Muslim, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said:

عن النبى صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: ان اهون اهل النار عذابا رجل فى اخمص قدميه جمرتان يغلى منهما دماغه كما يغلى الرجل بالقمقم (رواه البخارى و مسلم، بحواله الترغيب والترهيب ج ٤ ص ٢٣٩)

"Lightest in punishment among the people of fire will be the man in the sole of whose feet there will be two smouldering embers the heat from which will keep his brain boiling like a cauldron boiling to the brim." (Almundhiri, al-Targhib v.4, p.239)

An explanation of 'purified wives'

According to Ḥākim, Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī رضى الله عنه narrated that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: The women of *Jannah* will be pure, that is, pure from menstruation, defecation, urination and nasal mucus.

Mujāhid adds to the above by saying: 'They shall also be pure and free from procreation and seminal impurity.' (Maẓharī)

Let us now look at the last two words: ظِلًّا ظَلِيْلًا in verse 57. Here, by mentioning ظليل after ظل it has been mentioned that the shade in Jannah will be dense and ever-present. This is like saying: شَمْسٌ شَامِسٌ or لَيْلٌ لَيْيلٌ which indicate that the blessings of Paradise will last for ever.

Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه narrates that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

> ان فى الجنة لشجرة يسير الراكب فى ظلها مأة عام مايقطعها ، اقروا إن شئتم و ظل ممدود
>
> "There is a tree in Paradise. If a rider were to ride under its shade for a hundred years, he will still not cross it. Read, if you wish, وَظِلٍّ مَّمْدُوْدٍ (A shade, ever-extended, ever-stretched)."

Explaining ظِلًّا ظَلِيْلًا , Rabī' ibn Anas said:

> هوظل العرش الذى لايزول
>
> "That is the shade of the Throne (*al-'arsh*) which will never decline."

Verses 58 - 59

إِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الْأَمٰنٰتِ إِلٰٓى أَهْلِهَا وَإِذَا حَكَمْتُمْ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ أَنْ تَحْكُمُوْا بِالْعَدْلِ ۚ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ نِعِمَّا يَعِظُكُمْ بِهٖ ۚ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ سَمِيْعًا ۢ بَصِيْرًا ﴿٥٨﴾ يٰٓأَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا أَطِيْعُوا اللّٰهَ وَأَطِيْعُوا الرَّسُوْلَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ ۚ فَإِنْ تَنٰزَعْتُمْ فِيْ شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوْهُ إِلَى اللّٰهِ وَالرَّسُوْلِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ ۚ ذٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَّأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيْلًا ﴿٥٩﴾

Surely, Allah commands you to fulfil trust obligations

towards those entitled to them and that, when you judge between people, judge with fairness. Surely, good is what Allah exhorts you with. Surely, Allah is All-Hearing, All-Seeing. [58]

O those who believe, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you. Then, if you quarrel about something, revert it back to Allah and the Messenger, if you believe in Allah and the Last Day. That is good, and the best at the end. [59]

Commentary

The background of the revelation of these verses

The first of the two verses cited above was revealed in the background of a particular event which related to the custodial service of the Ka'bah, an office of great honour even before the advent of Islam. Those who were appointed to serve the House of Allah in a particular area of responsibility were regarded as people of great prestige and distinction in the community. Therefore, different areas of services were distributed over different people. It was from the time of Jāhilliyah that, during the days of Ḥajj, the service of providing drinking water to pilgrims from the well of Zamzam was entrusted to Sayyidnā 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ, the revered uncle of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. This was known as Siqāyah. Some other services similar to this were in the charge of Abū Ṭālib, another uncle of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Likewise, the custodial duty of keeping the keys to the House of Allah and of opening and closing it during fixed days had been given to 'Uthmān ibn Ṭalḥah.

According to a personal statement of 'Uthmān ibn Ṭalḥah, the Ka'bah was opened every Monday and Thursday during the period of Jāhilliyah and people would use the occasion to have the honour of entering the sacred House. Once before Hijrah, the Holy Prophet ﷺ came with some of his Companions in order to enter the Ka'bah. 'Uthmān ibn Ṭalḥah had not embraced Islām until that time. He stopped the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم from going in, displaying an attitude which was very rude. The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم showed great restraint, tolerated his harsh words, then said: 'O 'Uthmān, a day will come when you would perhaps see this key to the Baytullāh in my hands when I shall have the power and choice to give it to anyone I

choose.' 'Uthmān ibn Ṭalḥah said: 'If this happens, the Quraysh will then be all uprooted and disgraced.' He said: 'No, the Quraysh will then be all established and very honourable indeed.' Saying this, he went into the Baytullāh. After that, says Ṭalḥah, when I did a little soul-searching, I became convinced that whatever he has said is bound to happen. I made up my mind that I am going to embrace Islam then and there. But, my own people around me vehemently opposed the idea and everybody joined in to chide me on my decision. So, I was unable to convert to Islam. When came the conquest of Makkah, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم called for me and asked for the key to Baytullāh, which I presented to him.'

In some narrations, it is said that 'Uthmān ibn Ṭalḥah had climbed over the Baytullāh with the key. It was Sayyidnā 'Alī رضی اللہ عنہ who, in deference to the order of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, had forcibly taken the key from his hand and had given it to the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

So he went into the Baytullāh, offered his prayers there, and when he came out, he returned the key to Ṭalḥah saying: 'Here, take it. Now this key will always remain with your family right through the Last Day. Anyone who will take this key from you will be a tyrant.' (By this he meant that nobody has the right to take back this key from Ṭalḥah) He also instructed him to use whatever money or things he may get in return for this service to Baytullāh in accordance with the rules set by the Sharī'ah of Islam.

'Uthmān ibn Ṭalḥah says: 'When I, with the key in my hand, started walking off all delighted, he called me again, and said: 'Remember 'Uthmān, did I not tell you something way back? Has it come to pass, or has it not?' Now, I remembered what he had said before Hijrah when he had said: 'A day will come when you will see this key in my hand.' I submitted: 'Yes, there is no doubt about it. Your word has come true.' And that was the time when I recited the *Kalimah* and entered the fold of Islam.' (Maẓharī, from Ibn Sa'd).

Sayyidnā 'Umar ibn Al-Khaṭṭāb رضی اللہ عنہ says: 'That day, when the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم came out of the Baytullāh, he was reciting this very verse, that is, إِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الْأَمٰنٰتِ إِلٰٓى أَهْلِهَا (58). I had never heard him recite this verse before this.' Obviously, this verse was revealed to him inside the Ka'bah exactly at that time. Obeying the Divine

command in the verse, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم called 'Uthmān ibn Ṭalḥah again and made him the trustee of the key, because 'Uthmān ibn Ṭalḥah when he had given the key to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , had said: 'I hand over this article of trust to you.' Although, the remark he made was not technically correct as it was the sole right of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to take whatever course of action he deemed fit. But, the Holy Qur'ān has, in this verse, taken into consideration the nature of trust involved therein, and directed the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to return the key to none else but 'Uthmān, although, that was a time when Sayyidnā 'Abbās and Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنهم had both requested that, since Baytullāh's offices of water supply and custodial services (Siqāya and Sidāna) were in their respective charge, this service of the Key-Bearer of the Ka'bah may be entrusted to them. But, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم preferred to follow the instruction given in this verse, bypassed their request and returned the key to 'Uthmān ibn Ṭalḥah. (Tafsīr Maẓharī)

This was the background in which this verse was revealed. At this point let us bear in mind an important rule on which there is a consensus. The rule is that even if a Qur'anic verse is revealed in a particular background, the rule laid down by it in general terms must be taken as of universal application and must not be restricted to that particular event.

Now, we can turn to the meanings and exegetic aspects of these verses.

The Holy Qur'ān says: إِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الْأَمٰنٰتِ إِلَىٰٓ أَهْلِهَا . It means: 'Surely, Allah commands you to fulfill trust obligations towards those entitled to them.' As to who is the addressee of this command, there are two probabilities: It could have been addressed to the general body of Muslims, or it could have been addressed particularly to those in authority. What is more obvious here is that the verse is addressed to everyone who holds anything in trust. This includes the masses and also those in authority.

The emphasis laid on fulfilling trust obligations

The functional outcome of the command in the verse is that everyone who holds anything in trust with him is duty-bound to see that trust obligations are faithfully fulfilled and that the rightful

recipients have in their hands what is their due. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has laid great stress on the fulfillment of trust obligations. Sayyidnā Anas رضى الله عنه says: 'It must have been a rare sermon indeed in which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم may not have said the following words:

لَا إِيْمَانَ لِمَنْ لَا أَمَانَةَ لَهُ، وَلَا دِيْنَ لِمَنْ لَا عَهْدَ لَهُ

"One who does not fulfill trust obligations has no Faith (*'Īmān*) with him; and one who does not stand by his word of promise has no religion (*Dīn*) with him." (Reported by al-Baihaqī in Shu'ab al-'Īmān)

Breach of Trust is a Sign of Hypocricy

According to narrations from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah and Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنهم appearing in al-Bukhārī and Muslim, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , while describing the signs of hypocricy on a certain day, pointed out to a particular sign which was: 'Give him an *amānah* and he will do *khiyānah*.' It means when an hypocrite is charged with a trust obligation, he will commit a breach of trust.

Kinds of trust obligations

Here, worth pondering is the Qur'ānic use of the word, Amānāt which is in the plural form. This is to hint that *amānah* (trust obligation) is not simply limited to cash or kind which someone may have entrusted to someone else for safe-keeping until demanded, which is the most prevailing and commonly understood form of *amānah*. The cue is that there are other kinds of *amānah* as well. For example, the incident mentioned earlier under the background of the revelation of this verse does not have any financial aspect to it. The key to the Baytullāh was not a financial asset. Instead, this key was a symbol of the office of the serving keeper of the Baytullāh.

The offices of authority and government are trusts from Allah

This tells us that offices and ranks of government, whatever they may be, are all handed over to the recipients as trust from Allah. Those who receive it are its *amīn* (trustees). This covers all officials and everyone else in authority who wield the powers of appointments and dismissals. For them, it is not permissible that they give any office or job or responsibility to anyone who is not deserving of it in terms of his relevant practical expertise or intellectual capability. Instead of doing that, it is incumbent on those in authority that they must make

a serious search for the most deserving person for every job, every office within the jurisdiction of the government.

Cursed is he who appoints somebody undeserving to any office

In case, it is not possible to find the most perfect person for an office, someone with the most desirable qualifications and capabilities, someone who combines in himself all required conditions, then, preference may be given to the one who is superior-most in terms of his capabilities and trustworthiness from among the many of those available.

In a ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has been reported to have said: If a person, who has been charged with some responsibility relating to the general body of Muslims, gives an office to someone simply on the basis of friendship or connection of some sort, without finding out the capability or merit of the person concerned, the curse of Allah falls on him. Not accepted from him is any act of worship which he has been obligated with (*farḍ*) nor any of that which he offers voluntarily (*nafl*), all along till the time he enters the Hell. (Jam'ul-Fawā'id, p. 325)

In some narrations it is reported that whoever entrusts a person with an office of responsibility, although he knows that there is another person more suited and more deserving for that office, then, he has committed a breach of trust against Allah, against His Messenger and against all Muslims.

The chaos and corruption seen in many systems of governance these days is a sad consequence of ignoring this Qur'ānic teaching, as offices are distributed on the basis of connections, recommendations and bribes. The result is that undeserving and unmerited people usurp offices they are not fit to occupy, doing nothing but harassing millions of God's own people, and in the process, destroying the very edifice of the system.

Therefore, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said:

اذا وسد الامر الی غیر اهله فانتظر الساعة

"When the responsibility of affairs is placed under the charge of those who are not deserving of and fit for it, then, wait for the Day of Doom (that is, there is no solution for this chaos)."

This instruction appears in a ḥadīth from Kitāb al-'Ilm of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī.

To recapitulate, let us remember that the Holy Qur'ān uses the plural form for trust obligations, that is, '*Amānāt*', and thus gives the hint that trust obligations do not simply relate to property or other financial assets held in trust by one person on behalf of the other. Instead of that , it has many kinds, included wherein are offices of the government.

There is a ḥadīth where the Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم has said: اَلْمَجَالِسُ بِالْاَمَانَةِ (Meetings are a kind of trust). It means that anything said in a meeting is a matter of trust restricted to it. Reporting and publicizing what transpired there without the permission of participants is not permissible.

Similarly, another ḥadīth says: اَلْمُسْتَشَارُ مُؤْتَمَنٌ It means: 'The consultant is a trustee.' It is incumbent on him that the counsel he gives must be, in his best judgement, most beneficial for the seekers of the advice. If he gives an advice which he knows is not in the best interest of the seeker of the advice, he has committed a breach of trust right there. Similarly, if someone confides you with his secret, it becomes an article of trust kept on his behalf. Disclosing it to anyone without his permission is a breach of trust. So, the present verse tells us to be very particular in fulfilling all such trust obligations as due.

It was just the explanation of the first sentence of the first verse which has brought us this far. Now, we proceed with the explanation of the second sentence of the first verse (58) which reads: وَاِذَا حَكَمْتُمْ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ اَنْ تَحْكُمُوْا بِالْعَدْلِ (when you judge between people, judge with fairness). What is obvious here is that the mode of address in the verse refers to those in authority who decide cases of dispute. Taking their cue from here, some commentators have concluded that the addressee in the first sentence is the same as in the second, that is, those in authority. This does not take into consideration the leeway that exists here too, very much like it is in the first sentence, that is, the probability exists that both office-holders and masses are included in this address for the simple reason that among the common people at large the usual practice is to appoint a neutral arbitrator to judge and decide between disputing parties. However, there is no doubt that, at the first sight,

the addressees of both these sentences appear to be none but those in authority. Therefore, it can be said that their addressees are, primarily, those in authority; while, secondarily, this address is also directed at all those who are keepers of trusts, and who have been appointed to arbitrate in some case.

It should be noted that Allah Almighty has said: بَيْنَ النَّاسِ that is, "between people"; and not anything like, 'between Muslims' or 'between believers.' Thus, the hint given is that all human beings are equal in the sight of the decider of cases in dispute. They may be Muslims or non-Muslims, friends or enemies, or they may belong to the same country, colour, language, or may be from another country, differ in colour and speak a different language. Those who have been made responsible to judge between them are duty-bound to cast aside all these connections and give their decision guided by whatever be the dictate of truth, right and just.

Equity and justice guarantee world peace

In a nutshell, it can be said that the first sentence of this verse carries the command to fulfill trust obligations, while equity and justice have been enjoined in the second. Between the two, the fulfilment of trust obligations has been given precedence. Perhaps, the reason for this may be that the establishment of a system that guarantees equity and justice all over a country is just not possible without it. It means that those who hold power in a country must, first of all, fulfill their trust obligations, a bounden duty which has to be discharged correctly and properly. Consequently they must appoint only those to the offices of the government who prove to be the best of the lot in terms of their ability to perform the required job and in terms of their trustworthiness and honesty. In this matter, no backdoors should be opened by acting on the basis of friendship, relationships, connections, recommendations and bribes. If this is not done, the result will be that gangs of the undeserving, and the incapable, or hosts of usurpers and tyrants will take over all offices and entrench themselves. When this happens, those at the highest level of power and authority cannot, even if they genuinely wish to usher an era of equity and justice in the country, do anything about it. The whole thing will just become impossible because these very officials of the

government are supposed to be the functionaries of the government through which it acts. When these officials turn pilferers of the trust or are flatly incapable of performing the duty entrusted to them, how can equity and justice be installed in a system?

Specially worth-remembering in this verse is that Allah Almighty has, by equating offices of the government with the trust obligations, made it clear at the very outset that *amānah* or whatever is held in trust should be handed over, properly and duly, to the person who is its rightful owner. It is not permissible to dole out what is held in trust to some beggar or someone needy just out of pity or mercy; or, it is also not correct to give out something held in trust just to fulfill the rights of some relative or friend. This is about *amānah* as it relates to common trust holdings. Not too different from this are trust obligations seen in broader perspective. Very similar are the offices of the government on which hinges a whole roster of things that have to be done in the best interests of the masses of men and women created by Allah Almighty. These too are trusts. They too have to be returned. But, they must be handed over to those who are its rightful, deserving recipients, those who have the ability to do what is required of them, have the qualification, the capability, and are clearly the best of those suitable and available for this office, and finally, are clearly superior to those in line in terms of their honesty and trustworthiness. If this office is given to anyone else other than these, this will be deemed as a contravention of the Divine instruction, that is, the trust obligations will not have been fulfilled as is their due.

Giving offices of government on the basis of regional or provincial considerations is an error of principle

Furthermore, this sentence of the Wise Qur'ān has removed the common error which has be adopted as a rule of law in many countries and constitutions of the world whereby the offices of the government have been declared as the right of the people of a country. Because of this error of principle, laws had to be enacted to guarantee the distribution of government offices on the basis of the ratio of the population. As such, every province or state of a country has fixed quotas. A person from another province or state cannot be appointed on the quota of one province, no matter how deserving and trustworthy he

may be and no matter how undeserving and evil-doing the man from the latter may be. The Qur'ān has openly proclaimed that these offices are not rights to be claimed by somebody. Instead, they are trusts which can be given only to those who deserve it. They may belong to one province or the other, one zone or the other. However, there is nothing wrong in preferring to appoint a person belonging to the area where the government has to have an office. Actually, there may be many beneficial considerations behind it, but, the condition is that the essential ability and trustworthiness of the incumbent must be checked and found satisfactory before such an appointment.

State structure and some golden principles

So, from within the framework of this brief verse, some basic principles emerge. These are:

1. By beginning the first sentence of the verse with إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ (Surely, Allah commands you ...), it has been clearly indicated that the real command and rule is from Allah Almighty. All rulers of the mortal world are the carriers of His command. This establishes that the supreme authority, the ultimate sovereignty belongs to none but Allah Almighty.

2. The offices of the government are not the rights of the residents of a country which could be distributed on the basis of the ratio of population. They are, trust obligations placed on our shoulders by Allah Almighty which can be given only to those who are capable and deserving of them.

3. Man's rule on this earth can be legitimate only as a deputy or trustee. While formulating the laws of the land, he will have to be bound and guided by the principles laid down by Allah Almighty, the Absolute Sovereign, and which have been given to man through revelation.

4. It is the standing duty of those in authority that they should, whenever a case comes to them, give a judgement based on equity and justice without making any discrimination on the basis of race, country of origin, colour, language, even religion and creed.

After having enunciated these golden principles of state structure, it has been said towards the end of the verse that the counsel thus

given to man is good counsel, good as it can be, because Allah hears everyone. He observes the state of a person who does not have the ability to speak, not even the power or means to protest. Therefore, the principles made and given by Him are such as will be practice-worthy in every country, every age, always. Principles and orders made by human minds are restricted within the parameters of their environment. They have to be inevitably changed when circumstances change. So, the way those in authority were the addressees in the first verse (58), people at large have been addressed in the second verse (59) by: 'O those who believe, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you.'

'Those in Authority':

Lexically, أُولِي الْأَمْرِ (*uli'l-amr*) (translated here as 'those in authority') refers to those in whose hands lies the management and administration of something. Therefore, Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās, Mujāhid and Ḥasan al-Baṣrī the earliest commentators of the Qur'ān, may Allah be pleased with them, have said that *uli'l-amr* fittingly applies to scholars and jurists (*'Ulamā'* and *Fuqahā'*) since they are the succeeding deputies of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the proper regulation of religion is in their hands.

Then, there is a group of commentators, including Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه , which says that *uli'l-amr* signifies officials and rulers who hold the reins of government in their hands.

However, it appears in Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr and al-Tafsīr al-Maẓharī that this expression includes both categories, that is, the scholars and jurists as well as the officials and rulers because the system of command is inevitably connected with these two.

A surface view of this verse shows three 'obediences' being commanded here - of Allah, the Messenger and those in authority. But, other verses of the Holy Qur'ān have made it very clear that command and obedience really belong to none but Allah - from Him the command and to Him the obedience. The Qur'ān says: إِنِ الْحُكْمُ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ " 'The command belongs to none but Allah.' But, the practical form of the obedience to His command is divided over four parts.

Forms of obedience to Allah's commands

1. First of all come commands about something which Allah Almighty has Himself revealed very explicitly in the Holy Qur'ān and which do not need any explanation - for example, the extremely serious crime of *shirk* and *kufr* (the ascribing of partners to the divinity of Allah, and disbelief); the worship of Allah, the One; the belief in *Ākhirah*, the life-to-come, and in Qiyāmah, the Last Day; and the belief in Sayyidnā Muḥammd al-Muṣṭafā صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم as the Last and True Messenger of Allah; the belief in and the practice of *Ṣalāh* (prayers), *Ṣawm* (fasting), Ḥajj (pilgrimage) and *Zakāh* (alms) as *farḍ* (obligatory). All these are direct Divine commands. Carrying these out means a direct obedience to Allah Almighty.

2. Then, there is the second part consisting of *aḥkām* or commands which needs to be explained. Here, the Holy Qur'ān often gives a terse or unspecified command the explanation of which is left to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم . Now, the explanation or enlargement of the subject which the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم takes up through his aḥādīth is also a kind of *waḥy* (revelation). If these explanations, based on personal judgment, miss something or fall short in any way, correction is made through *waḥy*. Finally, the word and deed of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم as it is in the end, becomes the interpretation of the Divine command.

Obedience to the Divine commands of this nature is, though, the very obedience, of the commands of Allah Almighty in reality, but, speaking formally, since these commands are not physically and explicitly the Qur'ān as such - they have reached the community through the blessed words of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم - therefore, obedience to them is academically said to be an obedience to the Messenger which, in reality, despite being in unison with obedience to the Divine, does have a status of its own if looked at outwardly. Therefore, throughout the Holy Qur'ān, the command to obey Allah has the allied command to obey the Messenger as a constant feature.

3. The third category of *Aḥkām* or commands are those which have not been explicitly mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān or in the Hadīth, or if they do appear in the later, the narrations about such commands found in the enormous treasure-house appear to be conflicting. In the

case of such *aḥkam*, Mujtahid 'Ulamā (scholars having the highest multi-dimensional expertise in religious knowledge through original sources) delve into the established texts of the Qur'ān and Sunnah along with a close study of precedents and parallels offered by the problem in consideration, giving their best thought and concern to arrive at the appropriate rule of conduct while staying within the parameters of the imperatives of the sacred texts. This being so, the obedience to these rules is one and the same as the obedience to the Divine because it has been, in all reality, deduced from the Qur'ān and Sunnah. But, when seen formally, these are known as juristic edicts or *fatāwā* as popularly understood and are attributed to religious scholars.

Under this very third category, come the *Aḥkām* which are free of any restrictions from the Qur'ān and Sunnah. In fact, here people have the choice to act as they wish. This, in the terminology of the Sharī'ah is known as *Mubāhāt* (plural of *Mubāh* meaning 'allowed'). The formulation, enforcement and management of orders and rules of this nature has been entrusted with rulers and their officials so that they can make laws in the background of existing conditions and considerations and make everybody follow these. Let us take the example of Karachi, the city where I live. How many post offices should there be in this city? Fifty or hundred? How many police stations? What transit system will serve the city best? What rules to follow in order to provide shelter for a growing population? All these areas of activity come under Mubāhāt, the allowed, the open field. None of its aspects are rated Wājib (necessary) or Ḥarām (forbidden). In fact, this whole thing is choice-oriented. But, should this choice be given to masses, no system would work. Therefore, the responsibility of organizing and running the system has been placed on the government.

Now, returning to basics it can be said that, in the present verse, the obedience to those in authority means obedience to both *'ulamā'* and *ḥukkām* (religious scholars and officials). According to this verse, it becomes necessary to obey Muslim jurists in matters which require juristic research, expertise and guidance as it would be equally necessary to obey those in authority in matters relating to administrative affairs.

This obedience too is, in reality, the obedience to the *aḥkām* or commands of Allah Almighty. But, as seen outwardly, these commands are not there in the Qur'ān or the Sunnah. Instead, they are either enunciated by religious scholars or the officials. It is for this reason that this particular call for obedience has been separated and placed at number three and given the distinct identity of 'obey those in authority'. Let us keep in mind that, the way it is binding and necessary to follow the Qur'ān in the specified textual provisions of the Qur'ān and follow the Messenger in the specified textual provisions of the Messenger, so it is necessary to follow Muslim jurists in matters relating to jurisprudence, matters which have not been textually specified, and to follow rulers and officials in matters relating to administration. This is what 'obedience to those in authority' means.

Obedience to authority in anti-Sharī'ah activities is not permissible

If we look at verse 58 and the command to 'judge between people with fairness' along with the command to 'obey those in authority' in verse 59, we can see a clear hint to the effect: If the Amīr, the authority in power, sticks to *'adl* (justice), obedience to him is *wājib* (necessary); and should he forsake justice and promulgate laws against the Sharī'ah, the *amīr* will not be obeyed as far as those laws are concerned. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said: لاطاعة لمخلوق فى معصية الخالق. Literally, 'there is no obedience to the created in the matter of disobedience to the Creator,' which means that such obedience to the created as makes disobedience to the Creator necessary is not permissible.

Another point which emerges from the statement: "And you judge between people, judge with fairness" (verse 58), is that a person who does not have the ability and the power to maintain equity and justice should not become a Qāḍī (judge), because "judging with fairness" is *amānah*, the great charge of the fulfillment of a trust obligation, something which cannot be guarded, defended and fulfilled by a weak and incapable person. Relevant to this is the case of Sayyidnā Abū Dharr رضى الله عنه who had requested the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that he may be appointed as the governor of some place in the Islamic state. In reply, he said:

يا اباذر انك ضعيف وانّها امانة وانها يوم القيمة خزى وندامة الا من اخذ بحقها وادى الذى عليه فيها (رواه مسلم بحواله مظهرى)

"O Abū Dharr, you are weak and this is an office of trust, which may, on the Day of Doom, become the cause of disgrace and remorse, except for one who has fulfilled all his trust obligations, fully and duly (that is, he will be spared of that disgrace)." (Muslim, in Maẓhari)

The just person is the favourite servant of Allah

There is a ḥadīth in which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been reported to have said: 'The just person is loved by Allah and he is the closest to Him, while the unjust person is cast far away from the mercy and grace of Allah.'

According to another ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said to his noble Companions: 'Do you know who will be the first to go under the shade of Allah?' They said: 'Allah and His Messenger know this best.' Then, he said: 'These will be people who, when truth appears, hasten to accept it; and when asked, they spend their wealth; and when they judge (between people), they do it as fairly as they would have done for themselves.'

The Proof of *Ijtihād* and *Qiyās*

Finally, let us now refer to the statement: فَإِنْ تَنَازَعْتُمْ فِى شَىْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللّٰهِ وَالرَّسُوْلِ in verse 59 (Then, if you quarrel about something, revert it back to Allah and the Messenger.)

This 'reverting back to Allah and the Messenger' takes two forms:

1. Revert to *aḥkām*, the code of commands as mandated in the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah.

2. If the textually-mandated *aḥkām* do not exist, the act of reverting back will be accomplished by analogical deduction (*Qiyās*) as based on their precedents.

The words of the expression: فردوه (revert it back) are general, thus being inclusive of both forms.

Verses 60 - 64

اَلَمْ تَرَ اِلَى الَّذِيْنَ يَزْعُمُوْنَ اَنَّهُمْ اٰمَنُوْا بِمَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكَ وَمَآ اُنْزِلَ

مِنْ قَبْلِكَ يُرِيْدُوْنَ اَنْ يَّتَحَاكَمُوْٓا اِلَى الطَّاغُوْتِ وَقَدْ اُمِرُوْٓا اَنْ يَّكْفُرُوْا بِهٖ ؕ وَيُرِيْدُ الشَّيْطٰنُ اَنْ يُّضِلَّهُمْ ضَلٰلًاۢ بَعِيْدًا ﴿٦٠﴾ وَاِذَا قِيْلَ لَهُمْ تَعَالَوْا اِلٰى مَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ وَاِلَى الرَّسُوْلِ رَاَيْتَ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ يَصُدُّوْنَ عَنْكَ صُدُوْدًا ﴿٦١﴾ فَكَيْفَ اِذَآ اَصَابَتْهُمْ مُّصِيْبَةٌۢ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ اَيْدِيْهِمْ ثُمَّ جَآءُوْكَ يَحْلِفُوْنَ ۖ بِاللّٰهِ اِنْ اَرَدْنَآ اِلَّآ اِحْسَانًا وَّتَوْفِيْقًا ﴿٦٢﴾ اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ يَعْلَمُ اللّٰهُ مَا فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ ۗ فَاَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ وَعِظْهُمْ وَقُلْ لَّهُمْ فِيْٓ اَنْفُسِهِمْ قَوْلًاۢ بَلِيْغًا ﴿٦٣﴾ وَمَآ اَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ رَّسُوْلٍ اِلَّا لِيُطَاعَ بِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَلَوْ اَنَّهُمْ اِذْ ظَّلَمُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ جَآءُوْكَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا اللّٰهَ وَاسْتَغْفَرَ لَهُمُ الرَّسُوْلُ لَوَجَدُوا اللّٰهَ تَوَّابًا رَّحِيْمًا ﴿٦٤﴾

Have you not seen those who claim that they have believed in what was revealed to you and what was revealed before you? They want to take their disputes to the Ṭāghūt while they were ordered to reject it. And the Satan wants to mislead them to a remote wrong way. [60]

And when it is said to them, "Come to what Allah has revealed and to the Messenger," you will see the hypocrites turning away from you in aversion. [61]

But, how will it be when they will come to suffer a calamity because of the acts of their own hands, then they will come to you swearing by Allah, "We meant nothing but to promote good and bring about harmony." [62]

Those are the ones Allah knows what is in their hearts. So, ignore what they are and give them good counsel and speak to them about themselves in appealing words. [63]

And We did not send any Messenger but to be obeyed by the leave of Allah. And had they, after having wronged themselves, come to you and sought forgiveness from Allah and the Messenger sought forgiveness

for them, they would have certainly found Allah most-relenting, very-merciful. [64]

Verses previous to these carried the command to revert back to the mandate given by Allah and the Messenger in all matters. In the present verses which follow, the act of reverting to laws contrary to the Sharī'ah has been censured.

Commentary

The background of the revelation of these verses

There is a special incident behind the revelation of these verses, the details of which identify a hypocrite by the name of Bishr. He got into a dispute with a Jew. The Jew said, "Let us go to Muḥammad ﷺ and ask him to settle our dispute.' But, Bishr, the hypocrite, did not accept this proposal. Instead, he came up with a counter-proposal suggesting that they go to a Jew, Ka'b ibn Ashraf and let him give a decision. Ka'b ibn Ashraf was a tribal chief among the Jews and was a sworn enemy of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his Muslim followers. It was a strange coincidence that a Jew would leave his chief aside and elect to go by the judgement of the Holy Prophet ﷺ , while Bishr, who called himself a Muslim, would bypass him and elect to go by the judgement of the Jewish chief. But, there was a secret behind it. Both of them were certain that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم will give a judgement which is bound to be true and just. It will be free from apprehensions about any tilt or favour or misunderstanding. Since the Jew was on the right in this dispute, so he had more confidence in the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم as compared to his own chief, Ka'b ibn Ashraf. Bishr, the hypocrite was in the wrong, therefore, he knew that the Prophet's judgement will be against him - even though he claimed to be a Muslim while his adversary was a Jew.

However, after some mutual cross talk between them, both of them agreed upon the option of going to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and requesting him to give a decision in their dispute. So, the case went to him. He made relevant investigation in the case which proved that the Jew was in the right. Consequently, he gave a decision in his favour. But, on the other side, there was Bishr, a pretending Muslim, who lost his case before him. He was not pleased with this judgement, so he hit upon a new plan - to persuade the Jew to somehow agree to go to

Sayyidnā 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb رضى الله عنه and have him give a decision in their case. The Jew agreed. There was a secret here too. Bishr was under the impression that Sayyidnā 'Umar is usually hard on disbelievers so he would, rather than decide in favour of the Jew, decide in his favour.

Thus, they both reached Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه . The Jew told him everything about the incident and also narrated to him how the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had already given his decision in this case and that 'this man was not satisfied with it and had, therefore, brought his case before you.'

Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه asked Bishr, "Is this what really happened?" He confessed that this is how it was. Thereupon, Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه said: "All right, you wait here, I am coming." He went into the house and came out with a sword which he swung to finish the hypocrite off, saying: "This is the decision for him who is dissatisfied with the decision of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم" (This incident appears in Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās as narrated by Tha'labī and Ibn Abī Ḥātim).

Most commentators have also added that, following this incident, the heirs of the hypocrite thus killed filed a suit against Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه accusing him of having killed a Muslim without adequate legal authority as admitted by the Sharī'ah of Islām. To strengthen their case, they submitted interpretations of his *kufr* (disbelief) in words and deeds in order to prove his being a Muslim. In the present verse, Allah Almighty has unfolded the reality behind the case, confirming that the person killed was a hypocrite, and thus it was that Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه was absolved.

Also reported are some other incidents of this nature where people had bypassed clear Islamic legal verdict to finally accept the decision of a soothsayer or astrologer. It is possible that the present verse was revealed about all such incidents.

The explanation of verses

The first verse (60) exposes the claim of those who say that they have believed in earlier scriptures, the Torah and the Evangile, and now believe in the Book (the Qur'ān) revealed to the Holy Prophet

Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم . That is, earlier in time, they were a part of the community of the people of the Book, then they entered the fold of Islam and became a part of the Muslim community. The verse warns that this claim of theirs is simply a verbal camouflage for their hypocricy. Their hearts are stuffed with the same old disbelief which has come out in the open during this dispute when Bishr, bypassing the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , proposed that the Jewish chief, Ka'b ibn Ashraf be the judge in that dispute and, in addition to that, later when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم gave a clear and just decision, he found it unacceptable.

The comment which follows immediately, employs the word, "Ṭāghūt" which has been left untranslated. Lexically, "Ṭāghūt" primarily means 'one who exceeds the limits.' In usage, the Satan is referred to as Ṭāghūt. In this verse, carrying the dispute to Ka'b ibn Ashraf has been equated with carrying it to the Satan. The reason could be that Ka'b ibn Ashraf was himself a satan personified, or it could be that bypassing a decision under the God-given law and preferring a decision contrary to it can only come from the teaching of the Satan. About anyone who follows this course, it is clear that he has virtually taken his case to the court of none else but the Satan. Therefore, right there in the end of this verse, there appears the warning that those who follow the Satan, the Satan will mislead them to a remote wrong way.

The second verse (61) tells us that turning away from the decision of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , given under the dictates of the Sharī'ah in matters relating to mutual quarrels and disputes, can never be the response of a Muslim. One who does it has to be a *munāfiq* (hypocrite). Thus, when the disbelief of this hypocrite was practically exposed through his dissatisfaction with the decision of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , his being killed by Sayyidnā 'Umar became all the more justified, because he no more remained a *munāfiq* (hypocrite) and, in fact, became an open Kāfir (or apostate). Therefore, it was said; 'And when it is said to them, "Come to what Allah has revealed, and to the Messenger," you will see the hypocrites turning away from you in aversion.'

The third verse (62) exposes as false all interpretations advanced by

those who bypassed decisions given under God-given laws only to turn to decisions which were contrary to it. Their plea, in gist, was that they did not bypass the Messenger of Allah for any reason of lack of belief in the truth of his station and mission and that they did not prefer the decision of others over his decisions as if it was the ultimate Truth. Rather, they claimed, there were expedient considerations which led them to taking this course of action. For instance, one such expedient consideration was that, a case going to the Messenger of Allah would have meant that the decision would have been strictly legal, true and just - devoid of any options of mutual patch-up and tolerance (of 'other' factors not necessarily just). Naturally, articulating deceptively, they said they took the case somewhere else so that something good shows up for both parties through a mutual conciliation.

As evident, they came up with all these interpretations only when their secret was revealed and their wickedness and hypocricy came out in the open and their man was killed at the hands of Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ . In short, it was a consequence of their evil deed which brought upon them the disgrace or disaster of an accomplice killed, following which they started making statements on oath with all sorts of excuses and interpretations. Allah Almighty, in this verse, makes it very clear that these people are liars in their oaths and interpretations and that everything they have done, they have done because of their disbelief and hypocricy. Their pattern of behaviour is that, when called to come to the Book of Allah and to His Messenger, they would turn away, all averse - which is no hallmark of a true Muslim. But they, as the verse says, would become all alert once they get into trouble as a result of their own evil deeds - like when the exposure of their breach of trust or hypocricy brings shame on them, or when it leads to the killing of their man - then, they come to the Messenger swearing by Allah that they meant nothing but good. That they took their case to somebody else was not because they did not believe in the Prophet, or that they doubted the veracity of his judgement, but that their aim was to promote good and bring about harmony between the disputing parties.

The fourth verse (63) comes up with the answer. It says that Allah

is all-aware of the disbelief and hypocricy rooted in their hearts. All their interpretations are false, and their oaths, an excercise in lying. So, the Holy Prophet ﷺ is being asked to ignore their excuses and reject their charge of excess against Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه , as the disbelief of this particular hypocrite had become manifest.

After that, towards the end of this verse (63), the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been asked to give good counsel to the rest of the hypocrites as well, in a way that may touch their hearts, that is, tell them to fear what lies beyond the present life and invite them to follow the path of Islam sincerely, or remind them of their likely worldly punishment in the event they stuck to their hypocricy which might be exposed some day, some time, and they might as well meet the same fate as did Bishr, the hypocrite.

The fifth verse (64) begins by stating a universal Divine principle: 'And We did not send any Messenger but to be obeyed by the leave of Allah.' It means that any Messenger who was sent by Allah was sent so that everyone obeys the rules set by him in accordance with the will and command of Allah Almighty. In that case, the inevitable consequence will be that anyone who opposes the rules set by the Messenger will be dealt with in the manner disbelievers are dealt with. Therefore, whatever Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه did turned out to be correct. Following this appears an advice in the best interest of the hypocrites indicating that they would have done better if, rather than indulge in false oaths and interpretations, they would have confessed their error and presented themselves before him seeking forgiveness from Allah, and the Messenger too prayed for their forgiveness, then, Allah Almighty would have certainly accepted their repentance.

At this place, for the repentance to be acceptable, two things have been made binding: That they present themselves before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and that he then prays for their forgiveness. Perhaps, the first reason is that they violated the great station of prophethood bestowed by Allah Almighty on His noble Messenger ﷺ and caused him undue pain by disregarding the decision given by him. So, in order that their repentance over their crime becomes acceptable, the condition that they present themselves before the Holy Prophet ﷺ and that he prays for their forgiveness was imposed on them.

Although, this verse (64) was revealed in the background of a particular incident relating to the hypocrites, yet its words yield a general ruling which stipulates that anyone who presents himself before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and he prays for his forgiveness, he will definitely be forgiven. And 'the presence before the Holy Prophet ﷺ,' as it would have been during his blessed life in this mortal world, holds the same effect even today as the visit to the sacred precincts of the Mosque of the Prophet and the act of 'presenting' oneself before the blessed resident of the sanctified mausoleum falls within the jurisdiction of this rule.

Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنه has said: "Three days after we all had finished with the burial of the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم a villager came and fell down close to the blessed grave. Weeping bitterly, he referred to this particular verse of the Qur'ān and addressing himself to the blessed grave, he said: 'Allah Almighty has promised in this verse that a sinner, if he presented himself before the *Rasūl* of Allah, and the *Rasūl* elects to pray for his forgiveness, then he will be forgiven. Therefore, here I am, presenting myself before you so that I may be blessed with your prayer for my forgiveness.' People personally present there at that time say that, in response to the pleading of the villager, a voice coming out from the sanctified mausoleum rang around with the words: قَدْ غُفِرَ لَكَ meaning: You have been forgiven. (al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ)

Verse 65

فَلَا وَرَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ حَتّٰى يُحَكِّمُوكَ فِيمَا شَجَرَ بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَجِدُوا فِيٓ أَنْفُسِهِمْ حَرَجًا مِّمَّا قَضَيْتَ وَيُسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا ﴿٦٥﴾

So never, by your Lord, never shall they become believers unless they make you the judge in the disputes which arise between them, then find no discomfort in their hearts against what you have decided and surrender to it in total submission. [65]

Commentary

Not accepting the decision of the Holy Prophet is *Kufr*

This verse, while projecting a powerful view of the highly exalted

station of the noble Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , presents a very explicit statement concerning the need to obey him, something conclusively proved by so many verses of the Holy Qur'ān. The verse opens with the ultimate oath, "by your Lord", following which Allah Almighty proclaims that nobody can become a Muslim unless he accepts the verdict of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم willingly, calmly and fully to the extent that there remains even in his heart not the slightest strain because of this verdict.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is himself the exerciser of God-given authority over his community in his capacity as the Messenger of Allah and he is thus responsible for adjudicating in every dispute that may arise. The authority he excercises in making decisions certainly does not depend upon his being made a judge by some litigants. We should also keep in mind that Muslims have been asked to make the prophet their judge because people are generally not satisfied with judgements delivered by someone appointed by the government as compared with an arbitrator they themselves choose to have. But, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is not only the ruler of a state, he is a Messenger of Allah, protected against sins by Him, and sent as mercy for the worlds, and also a loving father for his community - so, the compassionate instruction given is that, whenever a situation of conflict arises in social or religious matters, the contesting parties are duty-bound to make the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم the arbitrator and judge and have him give the final verdict, and once the verdict has been given by him, let them all accept it whole-heartedly and act accordingly.

The Authority of the Holy Prophet ﷺ extends to all times

Commentators say that acting in accordance with this command of the Holy Qur'ān is not restricted to the blessed times when he graced this mortal world. After him, the verdict of the sacred Law left by him, is nothing but his own verdict. Therefore, the rule reigns supreme right through the Last Day, the rule that guidance should be sought by turning directly to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم during his blessed life-time, and after him, one must turn to his Sharī'ah which is, in all reality, a return to him, may Allah bless him for ever and ever.

Some problems and their solutions

1. To begin with, as already stated earlier, the rule is that a person who is not satisfied with the decision given by the Holy Prophet ﷺ , in every dispute and in every problem or issue, is not a Muslim. As we already know, this was the reason why Sayyidnā 'Umar killed the person who was not satisfied with the decision given by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم following which he carried the case to Sayyidnā 'Umar for an alternate judgement. The heirs of the person killed went to the court of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم with a suit against Sayyidnā 'Umar accusing him of having killed a Muslim without a valid legal reason. It is important to note here, and this has not been taken up earlier, that the following words, when the case was presented before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , came out spontaneously from his blessed lips: " ماكنت أظن أن عمر يجترء على قتل رجل مؤمن " (that is, I never thought 'Umar will ever dare killing a believing Muslim). This proves that the higher authority, when approached with an appeal against the decision of a lower authority, should not take sides with his subordinate authority, but should come up with a decision based on justice and fairness alone, as it has been illustrated above where the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم expressed his displeasure over the decision of Sayyidnā 'Umar - before the revelation of the verse had a bearing on this incident. Once this verse was revealed, the reality came out in the open that the person killed was not a believing Muslim as confirmed by this verse.

2. The second ruling which emerges from the expression: فِيمَا شَجَرَ (in the disputes which arise) settles that it is not restricted to dealings and rights alone; it covers articles of belief, ideas and many other theoretical problems. (al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ) Therefore, given such a wide spectrum of intellectual and social activity, it is not unlikely that things could go to the undesirable limits of mutual differences in views and ways when confronting a certain problem. When this does happen, it is the duty of a Muslim not to continue mutual disputation, instead of which, both parties should revert back to the Holy Prophet ﷺ , and when he is not with them personally, they must revert back to his Sharī'ah to search for the solution of their problems.

3. The third rule of self-assessment that we find from here is:

Doing something, which was provenly said or done by the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, with a heavy heart is a sign of weakness in faith (*'Īmān*). For example. there are occasions when the Sharī'ah has allowed the performance of *ṣalāh* by making *tayammum* in place of the regular *wuḍū* with water; now, if a person feels uneasy and not so satisfied with the idea of making the symbolic *tayammum* in place of a regular *wuḍū* he would very much like to do, then, he should not take this attitude of his as a sign of *taqwā* or piety, instead, he should take it to be caused by some spiritual sickness. Who can be more *muttaqī*, more God-fearing than the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم? If the form and condition in which he allowed people to perform their prayers while sitting - and he himself performed it while sitting - does not find favour with a person looking for the satisfaction of his heart, and he elects to undergo unbearable hardship by insisting to stand and perform his prayer in that position, then, he better be sure that there is some sickness is his heart. However, if a person, whose pain or discomfort or need is not that acute, elects not to use the leave (*rukhṣah*) given to him by the Sharī'ah and, instead of that, chooses to take the path of high determination (*'azīmah*) which is, then, correct in accordance with the very teaching of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. But feeling any strain in utilizing the leaves (*rukhsah*) granted by the Sharī'ah as some sort of absolute rule is no *taqwā*. It is for this reason that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said: إِنَّ اللّٰهَ تَعَالٰى يُحِبُّ اَنْ تُؤْتٰى رُخَصُهٗ كَمَا يُحِبُّ اَنْ تُؤْتٰى عَزَائِمُهٗ (that is, 'the way Allah Almighty is pleased with what is done with high determination, so is He pleased with what is done by using leaves).'

The best method of general *'Ibādāt* (acts of worship), *Adhkār* (plural of *dhikr*: the remembrance of Allah), *Aurād* (plural of *wird:* self-allotted voluntary recitations, made privately in specified hours of the morning or night), *Durūd* (prayer to Allah that peace and blessings be on the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم), and *Tasbīḥ* (glorification of Allah) is no different than what used to be the routine of the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself and which was, after him, followed consistently by his noble Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all. All Muslims must, as a matter or personal obligation, find these out from the authentic and sound narrations of ḥadīth so that they can make them an integral part of their daily routine of life.

Special Note

Details given above clearly show that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was not only a reformer and moral leader but was a just ruler as well, an authority of such class and majesty that his judgement was declared to be the very criterion of belief and disbelief, a distinguishing feature between *'Īmān* and *Kufr*, as evident from the incident relating to Bishr, the hypocrite. To make this prophetic station more explicit, Allah Almighty has, at many places in His sacred Book made the obedience of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم mandatory along with His own due obedience incumbent on all believers. Thus, the Qur'ān says: أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ (Obey Allah and obey the Messenger - 3:32; 3:132; 4:59; 5:92; 24:54; 47:33; 64:12). Then, elsewhere it says: مَنْ يُطِعِ الرَّسُولَ فَقَدْ أَطَاعَ اللَّهَ (Whoever obeys the Messenger, he really obeys Allah - 4:80).[1]

A little deliberation in these verses will unfold the radiant grandeur of his authority, a practical demonstration of which became manifest when Allah Almighty sent to him His Law so that he can decide cases in accordance with it. Therefore, it was said: إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ لِتَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِمَا أَرَاكَ اللَّهُ (that is, 'We revealed to you the Book with the truth so that you may judge between people by what Allah makes you see.') (4:105)

Verses 66 - 68

وَلَوْ أَنَّا كَتَبْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ أَنِ اقْتُلُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ أَوِ اخْرُجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِكُمْ مَا فَعَلُوهُ إِلَّا قَلِيلٌ مِنْهُمْ ۖ وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ فَعَلُوا مَا يُوعَظُونَ بِهِ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُمْ وَأَشَدَّ تَثْبِيتًا ﴿٦٦﴾ وَإِذًا لَآتَيْنَاهُمْ مِنْ لَدُنَّا أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٦٧﴾ وَلَهَدَيْنَاهُمْ صِرَاطًا مُسْتَقِيمًا ﴿٦٨﴾

And if We had prescribed for them that they should kill themselves or that they should migrate from their homeland, they would have not done it, except a few of them. And if they had done what they were advised to do it would have been better for them, and more effective in making (them) firm. [66] **And in that case, We would have certainly given them a great reward** [67]

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1. For a detailed treatment of this aspect, please see "The Authority of Sunnah" by Muhammad Taqi Usmani.

and we would have certainly led them to a straight path. [68]

The present verses and those appearing immediately earlier were revealed in the background of an incident relating to Bishr, the hypocrite. As we already know, he had first proposed Ka'b Ibn Ashraf, the Jew as the adjudicator of his dispute, but, later on, mutual discussions forced him to go to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم for this purpose. Since the judgement of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم was against him, he did not accept it and went to Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ for a totally fresh decision.

When the news of this incident got around in the city of Madīnah, the Jews chided Muslims by saying: 'What sort of people you really are? Here you are believing in a Messenger of Allah and claiming to follow him, yet you do not accept his decisions! Look, in order that their repentance be accepted, the Jews were commanded to kill each other. This was a severe command, but we obeyed it, so much so that seventy thousand of our people were killed. If you were given a command like that, what would you have done?' Thereupon, the verse: وَلَوْ أَنَّا كَتَبْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ (And if We had prescribed for them ...) was revealed. It means: If these hypocrites, or all common people, disbelievers or believers, were charged with some severe command, such as that of self-killing or migration like the Banī Isrā'īl were ordered to do, very few of them would have, being what they are, obeyed this command.

On the one hand, there is a stern warning here for people who try to seek the solutions of their disputes, not from the Messenger of Allah, or not from the Law and Way of the Messenger of Allah, but take it elsewhere. On the other hand, it answers the chiding of the Jews because this state of affairs fits the hypocrites and certainly not those who are firm in their faith as true Muslims. This is proved by what happened when this verse was revealed. Someone from among the noble Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all, said: 'Allah did not put us through this trial.' When this statement was relayed to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, he said: 'There are people in my community in whose heart Faith is entrenched firm like mountains.' Ibn Wahab says that this statement was made by Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ.

According to another narration, when Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه heard this verse, he said: 'Had this command been prescribed, by God, I would have been the first to sacrifice myself and my family to obey it.'

According to some other narrations, when this verse was revealed, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'If this command to self-kill or migrate had come from Allah, Umm 'Abd (meaning Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضى الله عنه) would have definitely acted accordingly.' As for migration, the noble Companions acted faithfully and selflessly when they left their homes in Makkah, left their properties and businesses, and migrated to Madīnah.

Towards the end of the verse (66), it has been said that, difficult though it may seem, yet doing so in obedience to their Lord's command would turn out to be better for them in the end. This will make their faith more firm, bringing a great reward from Allah, and the blessing of being guided to the straight path.

This great reward promised here in the end of verse 67 for those who obey Allah and His Messenger has been described immediately after in verses 69 and 70 which follow with detailed explanations of the promised ranks.

Verses 69 - 70

وَمَنْ يُّطِعِ اللّٰهَ وَالرَّسُوْلَ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِيْنَ اَنْعَمَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنَ النَّبِيّٖنَ وَالصِّدِّيْقِيْنَ وَالشُّهَدَآءِ وَالصّٰلِحِيْنَ ۚ وَحَسُنَ اُولٰٓئِكَ رَفِيْقًا ﴿٦٩﴾ ذٰلِكَ الْفَضْلُ مِنَ اللّٰهِ ۭ وَكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ عَلِيْمًا ﴿٧٠﴾

And those who obey Allah and the Messenger are with those whom Allah has blessed, namely, the prophets, the *Siddiqīn* [1], the *Shuhadā'* [2], and the righteous - and

1. *Ṣiddīq*, lexically means 'very truthful'. In the Islamic terminology, it normally refers to those Companions of a prophet who excel all others in their submission to Allah and His Messenger. They enjoy the highest status of piety after the Prophets, like Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه.

2. *Shuhadā'* (pl. of *Shahīd*) means the persons who sacrificed their lives in the way of Allah. The word has not been translated here by the word 'martyr' which sometimes is taken as an equivalent of *Shahīd*, because the word 'martyr' is also applied for the persons killed in ethnic or racial wars while they may not be termed as '*Shuhadā'*' in the Islamic terminology.

what a good company they are. [69] **That grace is from Allah and Allah is sufficient being the One who knows.** [70]

In the verses appearing immediately earlier, the promise of a great reward was made to special addressees. What appears in the present verses is a universal promise that those who obey Allah and His Messenger shall be rewarded as a standing rule.

Commentary:

Deeds will be the criterion in ranks of Paradise

Those who do everything Allah and His Messenger have asked them to do and stay away from everything Allah and His Messenger have prohibited, shall receive different ranks in terms of their deeds. The foremost among them will be blessed with the highest stations of Paradise alongwith the noble prophets, may peace be upon them all. Next to them will come those who will be blessed with the rank of those who are only next to prophets. They are known as the *Ṣiddiqin*, that is, the great Companions of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم who came forward to believe in the very initial stage without any hesitation or hostility, like Sayyidnā Abū Bakr. Then, there will be a third rank of people who will be with the noble *Shuhadā'*. The *Shuhadā'* are people who sacrificed their lives and wealth in the way of Allah. Then, those in the fourth rank will be with the revered Righteous. The Ṣāliḥīn or the Righteous are people who restrict themselves, outwardly and inwardly, to doing only what is good and right.

In short, all those who are totally obedient to Allah and His Messenger shall be in the company of those who are the most exalted and the most favoured in the sight of Allah Almighty and who have been identified here under four ranks: Prophets, *Ṣiddiqīn*, *Shuhadā'* and *Ṣāliḥīn* (righteous).

The Background of Revelation

This verse was revealed in the background of a special event which has been reported by the great commentator, Ibn Kathīr as based on several sound authorities.

It so happened, narrates Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها , that a Companion came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم one day and said to

him: '*Yā Rasūlallāh*, I hold you dear, dearer than my own life, even more than my wife and more than my children. There are times when I do not seem to be at peace with myself even in my house until I come to you and have the pleasure of looking at you. That finally gives me the peace I missed. Now, I am worried about the time when you will leave this mortal world and I too will be taken away by death. In that case, what I know for sure is that you will be in Paradise with the blessed prophets housed in its most exalted stations. As for myself, first of all, I just do not know whether or not I shall be able to reach Paradise. Even if I do reach there, the level where I shall be will be way below from where you are. If I am unable to visit you and have the pleasure of seeing you there, how am I going to put this impatient heart of mine at rest?'

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم quietly heard what he said, but made no response, until came the revelation of this particular verse (69):

وَمَنْ يُطِعِ اللّٰهَ وَالرَّسُوْلَ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِيْنَ اَنْعَمَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنَ النَّبِيّٖنَ وَالصِّدِّيْقِيْنَ وَالشُّهَدَآءِ وَالصّٰلِحِيْنَ (٦٩)

It was only then that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم gave him the glad tidings that the obedient ones shall have occasions to meet with the prophets, the *Ṣiddiqīn*, the *Shuhadā'* and the righteous. In other words, despite the relative precedence of ranks in Paradise, there will be occasions of meeting and sitting together.

Some forms of 'meeting' in Paradise

One such form will be that people will see each other from where they are, as it has been reported in Mu'aṭṭā of Imām Mālik on the authority of a narration from Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī رضى الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'The inmates of Paradise will see those in the strata above them like you see stars in the physical world.'

Also there will be yet another form when visits will be made to the strata where they are, as Ibn Jarīr has reported on the authority of a narration from Sayyidnā Rabī' that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, while explaining this verse, said: 'Those of the strata above will come down to those of the strata below to meet and sit with them.'

It it also possible that those of the strata below have the permission to visit and meet those of the higher strata, as the Holy Prophet ﷺ has, on the basis of this verse, given many people the glad tidings of being with him in the Paradise.

It appears in Sahīh Muslim that Sayyidnā Ka'b ibn Aslamī رضی اللہ عنہ used to spend nights in the company of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم At the time of *Tahajjud* on one of such nights, Sayyidnā Ka'b Aslamī brought water for *wuḍū*, the *miswāk* and other things he might need at that time. The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم , quite pleased with him, said: 'Is there anything I can do for you? Go ahead, ask.' Sayyidnā Ka'b Aslamī said: 'I wish to have your company in Paradise.' He said: 'Anything else?' Sayyidnā Ka'b said: 'Nothing else.' Thereupon, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said: 'If you want to be with me in Paradise, then "أعنى على نفسك بكثرة السجود " (literally - 'help me by taking upon yourself the doing of plenty of prostrations'). The elegant prophetic expression means that 'your wish shall be granted, but you can also help me in this by offering plenty of prostrations (*sujūd*, *sajdah*) that is, plenty of voluntary prayers (*nawāfil*).

According to the Musnad of Aḥmad, a man came to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم and said: '*Yā Rasūlallāh*, I have testified that there is none worthy of worship other than Allah, and that you are the true Messenger of Allah, and I dutifully perform the five prescribed prayers every day, pay the Zakāh due on me and fast during the month of Ramaḍān.' Hearing this, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said: 'Anyone who dies in this state will be with the prophets, the *Ṣiddiqīn* and the *Shuhadā'* - only if he does not disobey his parents.'

Similarly, there is another ḥadīth from Tirmidhī in which the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم is reported to have said: التاجر الصدوق الامين مع النبيين وَالصِّدِّيقِينَ وَالشُّهَدَاءِ (The businessman who is truthful and trusty will be with the prophets and the Ṣiddiqīn and the Shuhadā').

Love is the *sine qua non* of Nearness

The blessed company of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم can be acquired by loving him. This is conclusively proved by what has been reported in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī on the authority of many uninterrupted chains of narrations from a large body of the noble Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that he, on being asked as to what will be the status

of a person who does belong to a group emotionally but fails to achieve the standards of deeds set by it, said: اَلْمَرْءُ مَعَ مَنْ اَحَبَّ , that is, (on the Day of Resurrection) everyone will be with the ones whom he loves.

Sayyidnā Anas رضى الله عنه says that the Noble Companions were never so pleased with anything else in this mortal world as they were when they heard this hadīth, because it gave them the most wonderful news, a delightful prophecy indeed, that those who love the Holy Prophet ﷺ will be with their noble master on the plains of Resurrection and in the gardens of Paradise.

The company of the Holy Prophet ﷺ is not restricted to any colour or race

In al-Mu'jim al-Kabīr al-Ṭabarānī has reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنه that an Ethiopian came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and said: '*Yā Rasūlallāh*, may His blessings be upon you, not only that you are distinct from us in the beauty of your physique and the colour of your skin but you also have the distinction of being a prophet and messenger of Allah. Now, if I were to believe in what you believe and do what you do, can I too have the honour of being with you in the Paradise?'

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'Definitely yes (forget about your being black). I swear by the Power whose hands hold my life that all members of the black race will become fair and beautiful in Paradise radiating in their presence from a distance which might take a thousand years to cover. Then, Allah takes upon Himself the success and salvation of a person who says and believes in لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا اللّٰه (There is no god but Allah) and a person who recites سُبْحَانَ اللّٰهِ وَبِحَمْدِهٖ (*Subḥānallāhi wa biḥamdihī*: 'Pure is Allah and praised is He') has one hundred and twenty four thousand virtues written in his Book of Deeds.'

Hearing this, someone present there said: '*Yā Rasūlallāh*, when Allah is generous in giving such enormous awards on such minor good deeds, how can we ever perish or be punished?' He said: '(That is not the point), the truth is that some people will come up on the Day of Doom with so many virtues and good deeds, so many that, should all these be placed on a mountain, even the mountain would find their weight too heavy to hold. But, when they are compared to the blessings from Allah (bestowed on them in the worldly life), man's deeds

and virtues remain no match to them - unless Allah Almighty Himself elects to be generous and merciful to him.

It was this question and answer with the Ethiopian brother which caused the revelation of the following verse of Sūrah Ad-Dahr: هَلْ اَتٰى عَلَى الْاِنْسَانِ حِيْنٌ مِّنَ الدَّهْرِ لَمْ يَكُنْ شَيْئًا مَّذْكُوْرًا (that is, man has indeed been through a period of time being nothing - 76:1). Surprised, the Ethiopian gentleman asked: '*Yā Rasūlallāh*, will my eyes be seeing the same blessing which your blessed eyes will be witnessing?'

He said: 'Definitely yes.' Hearing this, the newly converted Muslim from Ethiopia started weeping and so much so that he died in that very state - weeping his heart out. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم performed his last rites, bathing and shrouding and offering *ṣalātul-janāzah* and burial, all with his own blessed hands.

Ranks of Paradise: Some details

Now that we have gone through an explanation of the verse, including the background of its revelation and related clarifications, the only thing that remains to be determined is the nature of the four ranks of people blessed by Allah. We have to find out as to what is the basis on which these ranks have been established, how they are inter-connected and how are they different from each other, and whether or not can these converge into one person.

Commentators have written in great details about this subject. Some say that all these four ranks can be found in one person. According to them, all these attributes are overlapping because the one identified as 'prophet' in the Holy Qur'ān has also been called by the title of '*ṣiddīq*'. For example, it has been said about Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام : اِنَّهٗ كَانَ صِدِّيْقًا نَّبِيًّا (Surely, he was a man of truth, a prophet - 19:41); and about Sayyidnā Yaḥyā عليه الصلوة والسلام : وَنَبِيًّا مِّنَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ (and a prophet from among the righteous - 3:39); and similarly, about Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه الصلوة والسلام : وَكَهْلًا وَّ مِنَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ (and he shall speak to the people in the cradle) 'as well as in middle age, and shall be one of the righteous' - 3:46.

The outcome is that, though these four attributes and ranks are distinct in terms of meaning and sense, yet it is possible to find all these combined in one person. Let us take an example to illustrate the

proposition. Religious scholars, the 'ulamā' are identified by their attributions, such as a Mufassịr (commentator of the Holy Qur'ān), a Muḥaddith (scholar of ḥadīth), a Faqīh (Muslim jurist), a Muwarrikh (historian). But, there could be some scholars who may combine in their person the excellence of all these fields. In our own time, when the trend is towards inter-disciplinary education and training, it is not so difficult to conceive the convergence of the attributes of a doctor, an engineer and a pilot, all in one person.

However, in accordance with commonly recognized practice, a person gets to be identified with an attribute which comes to take a dominating position in his life-work because of which such a person is usually associated with that particular field. It is for this reason that commentators generally take 'Ṣiddiqīn' to mean the most illustrious Companions of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and Shuhadā' to mean the martyrs of the battle of Uḥud and Ṣālihīn as signifying the general run of righteous Muslims.

Imām Rāghib al-Isfahānī has determined that all these four ranks are different. The same things find mention in Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī and Maẓharī. The sense of this approach is that Allah Almighty has, in this verse classified true Muslims in four categories or ranks and for each He has appointed stations of precedence, and common Muslims have been induced to see that they do not lag far behind in their efforts to achieve the rankings of any of these ideal ones. Waging the best of their intellectual and practical struggle, they must do the best they can to reach such stations of excellence. However, the station of prophethood is something which can never be acquired by effort and struggle, but there is something one still gets to have and that is the company of the prophets. Imām Rāghib says that the highest among these ranks is that of the prophets, may peace be upon them. They enjoy the support of the Divine power. They are like someone who is seeing something from a close range. Therefore, Allah Almighty has said about such people: أَفَتُمٰرُونَهُ عَلٰى مَا يَرٰى (Do you argue with him over what he sees? - 53:12).

The definition of the Ṣiddiqīn

The second rank is that of the Ṣiddiqīn. These are people close to the blessed prophets in the quality of spiritual excellence. They are

like someone seeing something from a distance. Somebody asked Sayyidnā 'Alī رضی الله عنه : 'Have you seen Allah Almighty?' He said: 'I cannot worship something I have not seen.' Then, he further said: 'Though people have not seen Allah Almighty with their eyes, but their hearts have seen Him through the realities of faith.' By his act of 'seeing', Sayyidnā 'Alī meant the kind of sighting he has referred to later, for such intellectual or intuitive perception is like seeing.

The definition of the Shuhadā'

The third rank is that of the Shuhadā'. These are people who recognize their ultimate objective through the chain of reasons and proofs. They have no access to direct vision, that is, *mushāhada* is what they miss. They are like someone seeing something in a mirror from a close range - very similar to what Ṣayyidnā Ḥārithah رضی الله عنه said: 'I feel I am seeing the Throne of my most sublime Lord.'

The expression أَنْ تَعْبُدَ اللّٰهَ كَأَنَّكَ تَرَاهُ (That you worship Allah as if you are seeing Him) in the famous ḥadīth may also be interpreted to mean this very kind of 'seeing'.

The definition of the Ṣāliḥīn

The third rank is that of the Ṣāliḥīn. These are people who recognize their ultimate objective through following the precepts of Sharī'ah. It is like someone sees something in a mirror from a distance. In the other part of the famous ḥadīth quoted above: فَإِنْ لَّمْ تَكُنْ تَرَاهُ فَإِنَّهُ يَرَاكَ (And if you cannot see Him, then, He sees you anyway) the reference may be to this very level of 'seeing'. In short, this investigative approach taken by Imām Rāghib al-Isfahānī shows that all these ranks are ranks that reflect the quantum of knowledge one has of His Lord, and that the different gradations that are there are based on the respective rankings of this knowledge. As for the subject of the verse, it is clear enough. Here, all Muslims have been given the glad tidings that those who are totally obedient to Allah and His Messenger shall be with those who hold higher ranks in Paradise. May Allah Almighty bless us all with this love. *Āmīn*.

Verses 71 - 74

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا خُذُوْا حِذْرَكُمْ فَانْفِرُوْا ثُبَاتٍ اَوِ انْفِرُوْا

جَمِيْعًا ﴿٧١﴾ وَاِنَّ مِنْكُمْ لَمَنْ لَّيُبَطِّئَنَّ ۚ فَاِنْ اَصَابَتْكُمْ مُّصِيْبَةٌ قَالَ قَدْ اَنْعَمَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيَّ اِذْ لَمْ اَكُنْ مَّعَهُمْ شَهِيْدًا ﴿٧٢﴾ وَلَئِنْ اَصَابَكُمْ فَضْلٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ لَيَقُوْلَنَّ كَاَنْ لَّمْ تَكُنْۢ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهٗ مَوَدَّةٌ يّٰلَيْتَنِيْ كُنْتُ مَعَهُمْ فَاَفُوْزَ فَوْزًا عَظِيْمًا ﴿٧٣﴾ فَلْيُقَاتِلْ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ الَّذِيْنَ يَشْرُوْنَ الْحَيٰوةَ الدُّنْيَا بِالْاٰخِرَةِ ۭ وَمَنْ يُّقَاتِلْ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ فَيُقْتَلْ اَوْ يَغْلِبْ فَسَوْفَ نُؤْتِيْهِ اَجْرًا عَظِيْمًا ﴿٧٤﴾

O those who believe, take your precautions and march in groups or march off all together. [71] **And among you there is one who shall invariably fall back; then, if some calamity befalls you, he would say, "Allah has been so generous to me since I was not present with them."** [72] **And if there comes to you some bounty from Allah, he shall be saying - as if there was no friendship between you and him - "O that I would have been with them, then, I would have achieved a great success."** [73] **So, those who sell the worldly life for the Hereafter should fight in the way of Allah. And whoever fights in the way of Allah then gets killed or prevails, to him We shall give a great reward.** [74]

Before this, there was the command to obey Allah and His Messenger. Now, in the present verses, Jihād has been prescribed for the obedient and faithful so that they can vitalize their Faith and raise the word of Allah high and supreme. (Qurṭubī)

Commentary

Important Notes

In the first part of the verse: يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا خُذُوْا حِذْرَكُمْ الخ (O those who believe, take your precautions ...), appears the command to ensure the supply of weapons, while the later part refers to the launching of Jihād action. This tells us two things right away. Firstly, as already clarified at several places, the act of getting together functional means to achieve a good purpose is not contrary to *tawakkul* or trust in God. Secondly, we see that the text limits itself to the command to ensure

the supply of weapons, but it does not promise that, because of this support, Muslims will have any guaranteed security against their enemies. By doing so, it has been indicated that the choice of using means is for nothing but a certain peace of mind, otherwise, the use of means as such does not carry any operational gain or loss. The Qur'ān has said: قُل لَّن يُصِيبَنَا إِلَّا مَا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَنَا (O Prophet) say: "Nothing will befall us except what Allah has prescribed for us." (9:51)

2. Let us look at the first verse again. It opens up with the command to get ready for Jihād followed by a description of the marching plan; the later has been expressed in two sentences, that is, فَانفِرُوا ثُبَاتٍ أَوِ انفِرُوا جَمِيعًا (... and march in groups, or march off all together.) Here, the word, '*thubātin*' is the plural form of '*thubātun*' which means a small group and is used to denote a military company and was called a Sariyyah in the military campaigns of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . In that sense, it is being said here that Muslims, when they go out for Jihād, should not start off all alone. They should, rather, set out in the formation of small groups. The other alternative is to march as a large army: '*jamī'an*' because, in fighting, going alone is very likely to hurt --- the enemy is not going to let this opportunity slip out of their hands.

No doubt, this instruction has been given to Muslims for the particular occasion of Jihād, but, even in normal circumstances, this is what the Sharī'ah teaches - do not travel alone. In a ḥadīth, therefore, a lone traveller is called one satan and two of them two satans and three of them become a group or party. Similarly, there is another ḥadīth which says:

خير الصحابة اربعة، وخيرالسرايا أربع مائة، وخيرالجيوش اربعة آلاف

'The best companions are four and the best military company is that of four hundred and the best army is that of four thousand.' (From Mishkāt as reported by Al-Tabarānī)

3. Seen outwardly, the words of the verse 72 (وَإِنَّ مِنكُمْ ...) seem to suggest that this too is addressed to the believers, although the characteristics described later on cannot be taken to be those of the believers. Therefore, al-Qurṭubī says that they signify hypocrites. Since, they were the ones who used to claim being Muslims, at least outwardly. This is why they have been identified as a group from among the believers.

Verses 75 - 76

وَمَا لَكُمْ لَا تُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللّٰهِ وَالْمُسْتَضْعَفِينَ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ
وَالنِّسَآءِ وَالْوِلْدَانِ الَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَآ اَخْرِجْنَا مِنْ هٰذِهِ الْقَرْيَةِ
الظَّالِمِ اَهْلُهَا ۚ وَاجْعَلْ لَّنَا مِنْ لَّدُنْكَ وَلِيًّا ۚ وَّاجْعَلْ لَّنَا مِنْ
لَّدُنْكَ نَصِيرًا ﴿٧٥﴾ اَلَّذِينَ اٰمَنُوا يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللّٰهِ
وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ الطَّاغُوتِ فَقَاتِلُوٓا اَوْلِيَآءَ
الشَّيْطٰنِ ۚ اِنَّ كَيْدَ الشَّيْطٰنِ كَانَ ضَعِيفًا ﴿٧٦﴾

What has happened to you that you do not fight in the way of Allah and for the oppressed among men, women and children who say, "Our Lord, take us out from this town whose people are cruel. And make for us from Your own a supporter, and make for us from Your own a helper." [75] **Those who believe fight in the way of Allah and those who disbelieve fight in the way of Ṭaghūt.**[1] **So, fight the friends of Satan. No doubt, the guile of Satan is feeble.** [76)

Commentary

Answering the call of the oppressed

Left behind in Makkah were Muslims who were unable to migrate because of physical weakness and insufficiency of resources. Later on, the disbelievers themselves stopped them from going and started hurting and harassing them in all sorts of ways so that they turn away from their faith in Islam. The names of some of these are preserved in exegetic works, for example, Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās and his mother, Sulyma ibn Hishām, Walīd ibn Walīd and Abū Jandal ibn Sahl, may Allah be pleased with them all (Qurṭubī). These blessed people kept facing tyranny and torture because of their unflinching faith showing no signs that they would ever surrender their firm stand on Islam. However, they did continue praying to Allah Almighty for deliverance from this hard life which was finally accepted by Him when He commanded Muslims to wage Jihād against the disbelievers and rescue the oppressed from their coercion and persecution.

1. cf. Verse 55

According to this verse, Muslims had requested Allah Almighty the favour of two things - that they be rescued from that town (meaning Makkah) and that they be blessed with some supporter and helper. The fact is that Allah Almighty granted both these prayers when He provided some of them with the opportunity to move out from there which was the fulfillment of their first wish. However, some of them remained staying right there until the Conquest of Makkah. At that time, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم appointed Sayyidnā 'Attāb ibn Asīd as their caretaker and who had the oppressed Muslims delivered from their oppressors. Thus, granted was their second wish as well. It will be noted that the Holy Qur'ān, rather than give a straightforward command to fight in this verse, has elected to use the words: مَالَكُمْ لَا تُقَاتِلُوْنَ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ (What has happened to you that you do not fight in the way of Allah?). Here the hint given is that fighting and Jihād is a natural duty under such conditions, not doing which is certainly far from a reasonable man.

Praying to Allah is the panacea for all hardships

The words of prayer in verse 75: يَقُوْلُوْنَ رَبَّنَا اَخْرِجْنَا tell us that one of the reasons why the command to fight came was the prayer made by these weak Muslim men and women. Allah Almighty responded to their prayer and commanded Muslims to wage Jihād against their oppressors and which put an end to their hardships immediately.

The objectives of war

Verse 76 says that اَلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا يُقَاتِلُوْنَ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ :'those who believe fight in the way of Allah and those who disbelieve fight in the way of Ṭāghūt.' This clearly shows that the purpose for which a believer strives is to see that the Divine Law becomes operative in this world and that the authority of Allah Almighty reigns supreme, because He is the master of all. He has created the universe in His infinite wisdom, and His Law is based on pure justice, and when the rule of justice is established, there will be peace which sustains. In order that there be peace in the world, it is necessary that it is run under a law which is the Law of the Lord. So, when a true and perfect Muslim fights in a war, this is the purpose before him.

But, in sharp contrast to him, disbelievers seek to spread the message of *kufr*, give it the widest possible currency, and work to bring

about the ascendency of disbelief. They are all too eager to see that satanic powers rule the world so that everything that constitutes *kufr* and *shirk* can be enforced in the universal order giving it the sheen and glamour of something seemingly positive. Since *kufr* and *shirk* are the ways of the Satan, therefore, the disbelievers help the Satan in doing his job.

The guile of Satan is feeble

The last sentence of verse 76: إِنَّ كَيْدَ الشَّيْطٰنِ كَانَ ضَعِيْفًا assures that the deceptive plans made by Satan are weak and insubstantial because of which he cannot harm or hurt true Muslims in any way whatsoever. So, Muslims should really not demur when it comes to fighting against the friends of Satan, that is, against the disbelievers. This is because their helper is none other but Allah Himself and, with Allah on their side, the game plan of the Satan is not going to work for them.

And this is what happened at the battle of Badr. There was the Satan by the side of the disbelievers, dishing out his tall claims before them, telling them; لَا غَالِبَ لَكُمُ الْيَوْمَ - 'this day, nobody is going to overpower you' - because: إِنِّي جَارٌ لَّكُمْ (I am your helper by your side. I shall be there with my armies to support you.) When the actual fighting began, he did advance with his army, but no sooner did he notice that angels have arrived to help Muslims, all plans he had made were frustrated and he took to his heels, saying to his disbelieving accomplices: إِنِّي بَرِيٓءٌ مِّنْكُمْ إِنِّيٓ أَرٰى مَا لَا تَرَوْنَ إِنِّيٓ أَخَافُ اللّٰهَ، وَاللّٰهُ شَدِيْدُ الْعِقَابِ (I bear no responsibility for you. I see what you do not see. I fear Allah for Allah is severe when punishing.) (Maẓharī)

That the guile of Satan has been called 'feeble' in this verse (76) is not an isolated statement. There emerge two conditions right from this verse which provide us with an exception. The first one is that the person against whom the Satan is trying his guile must be a Muslim. Then, the second one is that the effort being made by that Muslim must be for the pleasure of Allah alone. In other words, he may not have any selfish motive behind his effort. The first condition emerges from the words: اَلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا (those who believe)and the second from: يُقَاتِلُوْنَ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ (fight in the way of Allah). If either of the two conditions stop existing, then, it is not necessary that the guile of the Satan remains 'feeble' against him.

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ has said: 'When you see Satan, do not think twice. Attack him.' After that, he recited this very verse: إِنَّ كَيْدَ الشَّيْطٰنِ كَانَ ضَعِيفًا (No doubt, the guile of Satan is feeble.) (al-Qurṭubī)

Verses 77 - 79

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ قِيلَ لَهُمْ كُفُّوٓا أَيْدِيَكُمْ وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ
وَءَاتُوا الزَّكٰوةَ ۚ فَلَمَّا كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقِتَالُ إِذَا فَرِيقٌ مِّنْهُمْ
يَخْشَوْنَ النَّاسَ كَخَشْيَةِ اللّٰهِ أَوْ أَشَدَّ خَشْيَةً ۚ وَقَالُوا رَبَّنَا لِمَ
كَتَبْتَ عَلَيْنَا الْقِتَالَ ۚ لَوْلَآ أَخَّرْتَنَآ إِلٰىٓ أَجَلٍ قَرِيبٍ ۗ قُلْ مَتَاعُ
الدُّنْيَا قَلِيلٌ ۚ وَالْأٰخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ لِّمَنِ اتَّقٰى ۚ وَلَا تُظْلَمُونَ
فَتِيلًا ﴿٧٧﴾ أَيْنَ مَا تَكُونُوا يُدْرِككُّمُ الْمَوْتُ وَلَوْ كُنتُمْ فِي بُرُوجٍ
مُّشَيَّدَةٍ ۗ وَإِن تُصِبْهُمْ حَسَنَةٌ يَقُولُوا هٰذِهِۦ مِنْ عِندِ اللّٰهِ ۚ وَإِن
تُصِبْهُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ يَقُولُوا هٰذِهِۦ مِنْ عِندِكَ ۗ قُلْ كُلٌّ مِّنْ عِندِ اللّٰهِ ۗ
فَمَالِ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ الْقَوْمِ لَا يَكَادُونَ يَفْقَهُونَ حَدِيثًا ﴿٧٨﴾ مَا
أَصَابَكَ مِنْ حَسَنَةٍ فَمِنَ اللّٰهِ ۖ وَمَآ أَصَابَكَ مِن سَيِّئَةٍ فَمِن
نَّفْسِكَ ۗ وَأَرْسَلْنٰكَ لِلنَّاسِ رَسُولًا ۗ وَكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ شَهِيدًا ﴿٧٩﴾

Have you not seen those to whom it was said, "Hold your hands (from fighting) and be steadfast in Ṣalāh and pay Zakāh." However, when fighting is enjoined upon them, surprisingly, a group from them starts fearing people as one would fear Allah, or fearing even more. And they say, "Our Lord, why have you enjoined fighting upon us? Would you have not spared us for a little more time?" Say, "The enjoyment of the world is but a little, and the Hereafter is far better for the one who fears Allah. And you shall not be wronged even to the measure of a fibre. [77] **Wherever you will be, Death will overtake you, even though you are in fortified castles." And if some good comes to them, they say, "This is from Allah." And if some evil visits them, they say, "This is from you." Say, "All is from Allah." So, what is wrong with these people, they do not seem to under-**

stand a word? [78] **Whatever good comes to you, it is from Allah and whatever evil visits you it comes from your own selves. And We have sent you to be a Messenger for the people. And Allah is enough to be a witness.** [79]

Commentary

The Background of Revelation

Verse 77 beginning with the words: أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ قِيلَ لَهُمْ كُفُّوا أَيْدِيَكُمْ (Have you not seen those to whom it was said, "Hold your hands {from fighting}...) was revealed in a particular background. Before their migration from Makkah, Muslims were regularly persecuted by disbelievers. Harassed Muslims used to visit the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم complaining to him about the high-handed treatment meted out to them and asking for his permission to fight back in self-defence and put an end to the Kāfir reign of terror. He advised patience holding them back from direct confrontation on the plea that he has not been commanded to fight, in fact, he told them, he has been commanded to stay patient, forgo and forgive. He also told them to continue observing the instructions of *ṣalāh* and *zakāh*, already given to them, consistently and devotedly. He impressed upon them the virtues of the present pattern of their behaviour, even though the odds were against them, for the simple reason that , unless man is conditioned to fight against his own evil desires in obedience to the command of Allah and is also used to bearing physical pain and financial sacrifice, he finds joining Jihād and sacrificing his life very difficult a proposition. This was an advice Muslims had accepted. But when they migrated from Makkah to Madīnah, and Jihād was enjoined upon them, they should have been pleased with it, as it was something that had answered their own prayers. But, there were some infirm Muslims around who started fearing the prospects of a fight against the disbelievers as one would fear the punishment of Allah, rather more than this. Caught in that peevish state of mind, they started pining for a little more respite, a possible postponement of the command to fight to some later day which may have given them more time to live and to enjoy. Thereupon, these verses were revealed. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

Why did the Muslims wish for the postponement of Jihād

The wish for respite expressed by Muslims following the command

to fight was not an objection to the command of Jihād. It was, rather, a benign and subtle complaint. The reason may lie in the usual pattern of human psyche in such situations. When hurt and harassed to the extreme, one is very likely to flare up and go for a revenge. But, once man is used to a life of physical comfort and peace, he does not feel like going out to fight. This is no more than a simple human reaction. So, these Muslims, while they were in Makkah, all fed up with pains inflicted on them by the disbelievers at that time, were naturally looking forward most eagerly for the command of Jihād to come. But, when they reached Madīnah, they found peace and comfort which they had missed for long. Now the command to fight, when it came in that state of theirs, found them no more moved by their old fire, therefore, they simply wished that it would have been better if the call for Jihād was just not there at that point of time. Now, to take this 'wish' as an 'objection' and to attribute an act of sin to those Muslims is not correct. However, this explanation is limited to the assumption that they had pronounced this complaint verbally. But, if they said nothing verbally, and it was simply a thought which crossed their mind, then, thoughts in the mind and doubts in the heart are happenings which the Sharī'ah of Islam simply does not count as sins. Here, both probabilities exist. Then, the word, "*Qālū*" (They say) in the verse should not lead one to presume that they had said this verbally, for it may be taken to mean that they may have said it within their hearts. (abridged from Bayān al-Qur'ān by Maulānā Thānavī). According to some commentators, in which case, no explanation is called for. (Tafsīr Kabīr).

Self-correction should precede collective reform

In اَقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتُوا الزَّكٰوةَ (verse 77), Allah Almighty has first mentioned the command to establish the prescribed prayers and pay the fixed zakāh which are the medium of self-correction. The command of Jihād comes after that, which is the medium of political and collective correction, that is, through it the forces of coercion and injustice are eliminated as a result of which peace prevails in the country. From here we learn that, well before worrying about correcting others, one should start correcting himself. So, seen from the angle of a relative degree of importance, the first command is an absolute individual obligation (*farḍ al-'ayn*) while the second is an obligation which, if performed by some, will absolve others (*farḍ al-kifāyah*). This highlights the impor-

tance of self-correction and makes its precedence obvious enough (Maẓharī).

The difference between the blessings of the present world and those of the Hereafter

In this verse, the blessings of the Hereafter have been declared to be more bountiful and certainly better as compared with the blessings of the present world of our experience. Some reasons why this is so are given below:

1. The blessings of the present world are few, while the blessings of the Hereafter are many.
2. The blessings of *dunyā* (the present world) are perishable, while the blessings of *Ākhirah* (Hereafter) are eternal.
3. The blessings of *dunyā* are laced with all sorts of botherations, while the blessings of *Ākhirah* are free of such impurities.
4. The acquisition of the blessings of *dunyā* is not certain, while the blessings of *Ākhirah* will most certainly reach everyone who is God-fearing (*Muttaqī*: the observer of *Taqwā*). (al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr)

وَلَاخَيْرَ فِي الدُّنْيَا لِمَنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ لَّهٗ   مِنَ اللّٰهِ فِيْ دَارِ الْمُقَامِ نَصِيْبُ

فَإِنْ تُعْجِبِ الدُّنْيَا رِجَالًا فَإِنَّهَا   مَتَاعٌ قَلِيْلٌ وَالزَّوَالُ قَرِيْبُ

There is no gain in *dunyā* for the one who has no share in the eternal abode from Allah. Still, if *dunyā* does attract some people, then (beware) it is a short-lived enjoyment and its decline is near (that is, once eyes close in death, the *Ākhirah* is there to see).

There is no escape from death:

In أَيْنَ مَا تَكُوْنُوْا يُدْرِكْكُّمُ الْمَوْتُ (verse 78) (Wherever you will be death will overtake you), Allah Almighty removes any doubts the deserters from Jihād may entertain. They think that, perhaps by dodging Jihād, they can also dodge death. Therefore, it was said that there will be a day of death, a day when it must come, no matter where you are; it will come exactly where you are. When this is settled, there is no sense in backing out from Jihād.

Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Kathīr, the famous commentator, while discussing this verse, has reported a lesson-filled event on the authority of Mujāhid as narrated by Ibn Jarīr and Ibn Abī Ḥātim. He recounts the event

concerning a woman from an earlier community. Soon after her pregnancy matured, she gave birth to a child and sent her servant out to fetch some fire. As soon as the servant stepped out of the door of the house, he saw a man appear suddenly before him. He asked: 'What baby this woman has given birth to?' The servant told him that it was a baby girl. Thereupon, the man said: 'You must remember that this girl will sleep with a hundred men and will finally die through a spider.' Hearing this, the servant returned immediate with a knife and slit the abdomen of that girl open. Taking her to be dead, he ran away from the house. But, a little later, the mother of the girl stitched up the skin of the abdomen slit by the servant. Then came the day when this girl grew to be young and beautiful, so beautiful that she was considered to be the jewel of the city.

As for the servant, he escaped overseas where he stayed for a long time and, in the meantime, assembled a fortune for himself. When he planned to get married, he returned to his old city. There he met an old woman. He told her that he was looking for a bride, but that he was eager to marry the most beautiful woman in town. The old woman told him about a certain girl whose beauty was unmatched in the whole city and insisted that he should marry her. The servant, now a rich man, made efforts and finally got married to that girl. While getting to know each other, the girl asked him as to who he was and where did he live. He told her: 'Actually, I belong to this very city, but I had to run away because I had slit the abdomen of a girl open.' Then he narrated the whole event. Hearing this, she said: 'I am that girl.' She showed him her abdomen. The cut mark was still there. Seeing this, the man said: 'If you are the same woman, I disclose two things about you. The first one is that you will sleep with a hundred men.' Thereupon, the woman confessed that she has done that, but she could not remember the number. The man said: 'The number is hundred. And the second one is that you will die through a spider.'

The man who was now rich had a grand palace built for her which was absolutely free of any spider webs. On a certain day, while they were resting in their room in the palace, they noticed a spider on the wall. The woman said: 'Is this the spider you scare me of?' The man said: 'Yes.' Thereupon, she sprang up from the bed saying: 'Then, this

one I am going to kill right now.' Having said that, she downed the spider on the floor and trampled her dead under her feet.

The spider died all right but the poison from her infected her feet and nails and the message of death became all too clear for her. (Ibn Kathīr)

Here was a woman living in a palace, new and very clean, but she died through a spider all of a sudden. Compare her case with many others who spent a life-time in fighting battles yet death did not come to them there. Think of Sayyidnā Khālid ibn Walīd رضی اللہ عنہ, the famous soldier and general of Islam known by his oft-repeated title, *Saifullāh* - the Sword of Allah. He had a burning desire to die as martyr in the way of Allah. So, he kept fighting all his life, engaging in one Jihād after another and longing to become a Shahīd. He killed thousands of disbelievers on the battlefields, living dangerously and daringly against many a trial, always praying and pleading that he be saved from the fate of dying in bed like women and praying and pleding that Allah favour him with the death of a fearless soldier in the heat of some Jihād. But, as decreed by Allah, he finally died nowhere else but on his own bed in the house.

The lesson is that the arrangement of life and death stays in the hands of our creator whose decisions are final. There is nothing we can do about it. It is He who can, if He wills, give us death on a luxury bed at the hands of a spider; or, if He elects to save us, he can keep us alive amid swinging swords or zooming fires.

Building secure houses is not against *Tawakkul*

Let us now consider: وَلَوْ كُنْتُمْ فِي بُرُوْجٍ مُّشَيَّدَةٍ in verse 78. It says: 'Wherever you will be Death will overtake you, even though you are in fortified castles.' This tells us that building a good and strong house to live with ensured security of person and things is not contrary to the dictates of *tawakkul* or trust in Allah and that it is not against the rules of Sharī'ah either. (Qurṭubī)

A Blessing comes only by the grace of Allah

In مَآ أَصَابَكَ مِنْ حَسَنَةٍ فَمِنَ اللّٰهِ (verse 79), translated as: 'whatever good comes to you is from Allah,' the word, '*hasanatin*' means 'blessing' (Mazharī). The verse points out to the fact that any blessing which

reaches man, any good that comes to him, does not get to him as a matter of his right. This is, on the contrary, nothing but the grace of Allah Almighty, His '*faḍl*', in common Islamic terminology. No matter how much, he devotes to the many acts of worship he is obligated with, man cannot claim to deserve that blessing on the basis of his deeds alone. The reason is simple, because the very ability to engage in acts of worship comes from none but Allah Himself, which is known as the *Taufīq* of Allah. Then the blessings of Allah are countless, how could they be 'procured' by limited acts of worship and other expressions of obedience to His commands? Specially so, when whatever we do in the name of the worship of Allah is hardly worthy of the supreme mastery and power of our Lord, the Lord of the universe of our experience and the Lord of universes beyond? This point has been made more succinctly in a *ḥadīth*, where the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said:

ما احديدخل الجنة الا برحمة الله، قيل: ولا أنت؟ قال: ولا أنا

'No one shall enter Paradise unless it be with the mercy of Allah.' The narrator asked: 'Not you either?' He said, 'Yes. Not me either.'

Calamities are the result of misdeeds

In وَمَآ اَصَابَكَ مِنۡ سَيِّئَةٍ فَمِنۡ نَّفۡسِكَ (verse 79), translated as: 'and whatever evil visits you, it comes from your own selves,' the word, '*sayyi'atun*' means '*muṣībah*', evil, hardship, (misfortune, calamity, disaster) according to Maẓharī.

Although, calamities are created by Allah, yet their cause lies nowhere else but in the very misdeeds of man himself. Now if this man is a disbeliever, a *kāfir*, the evil that hits him in this mortal world is only an ordinary sample of the ultimate punishment, the punishment of the world-to-come, which is much much more than the worldly punishment. And if this man is a believer, a *mu'min*, all his misfortunes become an expiation (*kaffārah*) of his sins in that case, and thereby become the very cause of his salvation in the Hereafter. Thus, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said in a ḥadīth:

ما من مصيبة تصيب المسلم الا كفر الله بها عنه حتى الشوكة يشاكها

"No evil ever touches a Muslim, but it becomes a source of

forgiveness for him - even the pinch of a thorn in his feet." (Mazharī from Tirmidhī)

In another ḥadīth, reported by Abū Mūsā رضی اللہ عنہ, he said:

عن ابی موسی ان رسول اللہ صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم قال لا تصیب عبدا نکبة فما فوقھا وما دونھا الا بذنب وما یعفو اکثر

"No hardship befalls a servant of Allah, be it light or tough, but it is always due to his sin - and the sins Allah forgives (without afflicting with a calamity) are much more." (Mazharī, from Tirmidhī)

The Prophet of Islam: His Prophethood is Universal

The words: وَاَرْسَلْنٰكَ لِلنَّاسِ رَسُوْلًا (And We have sent you to be a Messenger for the people) appearing at the end of verse 79 prove that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has been sent as a Messenger of Allah (*Rasūl*) for all peoples of the world. He was not simply a Messenger for Arabs alone.

In fact, his prophethood is universal, open to all human beings of this entire universe, whether they are present at this point of time, or may come to be there right through the *Qiyāmah*, the fateful Last Day of this universe of ours. (Mazharī)

Verse 80

مَنْ يُّطِعِ الرَّسُوْلَ فَقَدْ اَطَاعَ اللّٰهَ ۚ وَمَنْ تَوَلّٰى فَمَآ اَرْسَلْنٰكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِيْظًا ﴿٨٠﴾

Whoever obeys the Messenger obeys Allah and whoever turns away, then, We did not send you to stand guard over them. [80]

Previous to this, there was the affirmation of prophethood. Now comes the statement which establishes the right of prophethood - it calls for compulsory obedience. In case hostile people refuse to obey, there are words of comfort for the noble Prophet of Islam who has been absolved of any responsibility for their lack of obedience.

The opening statement in the verse presents a very important principle bearing on the authority of the blessed *Rasūl* of Allah. Here, the obedience to the Prophet has been equated with obedience to

Allah. From this it follows that whoever disobeys the Prophet, invariably disobeys the command of Allah. Since, obedience to Allah is obligatory, even rationally - so, obedience to the Prophet also turns out to be equally obligatory. As for the person who, inspite of the truth being all too manifest, elects to turn his back and reject the message given by the Prophet, then, the Prophet has been asked not to worry about the callous behaviour of such people because Allah has not sent His Prophet to stand guard over their behaviour for which he is not responsible. It means that the Prophet of Allah is not duty-bound to see that they do not indulge in disbelief. He is simply not charged with the mission of stopping them from disbelieving. His mission is to deliver the Message. Once this is done, his duty as a Prophet stands fulfilled. After that, if they still go about disbelieving, it is their business for which he is in no way accountable. (Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī, Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Verses 81 - 82

وَيَقُولُونَ طَاعَةٌ فَإِذَا بَرَزُوا مِنْ عِندِكَ بَيَّتَ طَائِفَةٌ مِّنْهُمْ غَيْرَ الَّذِي تَقُولُ وَاللَّهُ يَكْتُبُ مَا يُبَيِّتُونَ فَأَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ وَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ وَكِيلًا ﴿٨١﴾ أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ وَلَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِندِ غَيْرِ اللَّهِ لَوَجَدُوا فِيهِ اخْتِلَافًا كَثِيرًا ﴿٨٢﴾

And they say, "Obedience (we observe)." But when they go away from you, a group of them conspires at night contrary to what they say. And Allah records what they conspire. So ignore them and put your trust in Allah. And Allah is enough to trust in. [81]

Do they not, then, ponder in the Qur'ān? Had it been from someone other than Allah, they would have found in it a great deal of contradiction. [82]

That obedience to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is obligatory was the subject of verse 80. Here, the Prophet was comforted in case the disbelievers rejected his message. Now comes a mention of some hypocrites who used to wriggle out of this obligation.

Commentary

The first verse (81) which begins with the words: وَيَقُولُونَ طَاعَةٌ فَإِذَا بَرَزُوا مِنْ

عِندِكَ بَيَّتَ طَآئِفَةٌ مِّنْهُمْ غَيْرَ الَّذِي تَقُولُ (And they say, "Obedience (we observe)..." condemns those who practice a policy of double-dealing. They will say something verbally and have something else hidden in their hearts. Once this is established, what should be the attitude of the Messenger of Allah towards such a set of people? The latter part of the verse carries a special instruction about it.

An important instruction for a leader

The verse: فَأَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ وَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ وَكِيلًا refers to the hypocrites who, when they came face to face with the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, said that they were quite obedient to him and had accepted what he had commanded them with. But, when they left his company, they got together and conspired as to how they could disobey him. This duplicity of theirs caused great pain to him. Thereupon, Allah Almighty instructed him to ignore them and continue with his mission placing his trust in Allah because Allah is all-sufficient for him.

From here we know that one who leads people has to go through all sorts of hardships. People tend to level absurd allegations against him. Then, there are enemies in the garb of friendship and trust around him. Despite the presence of all such obstacles, this leader must display determination and steadfastness and devote to his mission with full trust in Allah. If his objective and orientation is right, he will, *Inshallah*, succeed.

Deliberation in the Qur'ān

Verse 82 begins with: أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ (Do they not, then, ponder in the Qur'ān?) Through this verse, Allah Almighty invites people to deliberate in the Qur'ān. Noteworthy here are a few points. First of all, the words used are: أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ (Do they not, then, ponder ...) and not أَفَلَا يَقْرَؤُنَ (Do they not, then, recite.) Obviously, there is a delicate hint being given through this verse which is suggesting that if they were to look at the Qur'ān deeply, they would find no discrepancy in its words and meanings. This sense can come only through the use of the word, '*tadabbur*' which means to ponder or deliberate. A plain recitation which is devoid of deliberation and deep thinking may lead one to start seeing contradictions which really do not exist there.

The second point which emerges from this verse is that the Qur'ān

itself demands that every human being should ponder over its meanings. Therefore, to suppose that pondering in the Qur'ān is the exclusive domain of its highest and the ablest exponents (the Imāms and Mujtahids) is not correct. However, it is also true that the levels of deliberation will be different in terms of the different levels of knowledge and understanding. The deliberation of the great exponents will deduce the solution of thousands of problems from every single verse, while the deliberation of a common scholar will reach only as far as the very comprehension of such problems and their solutions. When common people recite the Qur'ān and deliberate in its meanings through the medium of its translation and explanation in their own language, this will impress upon their hearts the greatness of Allah Almighty, develop love for Him and implant there a concern for the life-to-come, the *Ākhirah*. This is the master key to success. However, in order that common people stay safe from falling into doubts and misunderstandings, it is better that they should study the Qur'ān, lesson by lesson, under the guidance of an *'ālim*. If this cannot be done, take to the study of some authentic and reliable *tafsīr* (commentary, exegesis). Should some doubt arise during the course of such study, the wiser course is not to go for a solution on the basis of personal opinion, instead of which, one should consult expert scholars.

No group or individual holds monopoly on the exegesis and explication of Qur'ān and Sunnah, but there are conditions for it

The verse under reference tells us that everyone has the right to ponder in the Qur'ān. But, as we have said earlier, the levels of '*tadabbur*' (deliberation) are different. Each one is governed by a separate rule. Let us take the serious deliberation of a great exponent, the '*tadabbur*' of a master *mujtahid*. Through this methodology, solutions to problems are deduced from the Holy Qur'ān at the highest level. For this purpose, it is necessary that one who is pondering in the Qur'ān, should first acquaint himself with the basic rules employed in such deduction in order that the results he achieves are correct and sound. In case, he fails to arm himself with the basic postulates to begin with, or in case, his education and training in this discipline remain faulty; and in case, he does not ultimately possess the qualifications and conditions that must be found in a *mujtahid* exponent,

then, it is obvious that he would come up with the wrong set of results. Now, this is a situation in which better-equipped scholars may challenge and contradict them, something they would be doing rightfully.

Think of a person who has never even walked the corridors of a medical college, yet he starts objecting as to why only trained doctors have been allowed to hold a monopoly of all medical treatment in the country, and why is it that he as a human being has not been allowed to exercise the right of treating patients?

Or, there may be a person who gags his reason and starts challenging as to why all contracts to build canals, bridges and dams are given to expert engineers only? Since, he is a citizen of the country, therefore, he too is fully deserving of discharging this service!

Or, there may be that person, devoid of reason who stands up raising an objection as to why legal experts alone have been allowed to hold monopoly over the interpretation and application of the law of the land, while he too, being sane and adult, can do the same job? Obviously, to that person, it would be said that, no doubt he has a right to do all such things as a citizen of the country, but it is also true that one has to undergo the difficult stages of education, training and experience for years and years together in order to imbibe the ability to accomplish such tasks. This is not what one can do all by himself. One has to assimilate an enormous body of arts and sciences under expert teachers on his way to established degrees and subsequent recognition in the field. If this person is ready to first go through this grind, and come out successful therefrom, then, he too could certainly become an arm of law in these fields.

But, when this analogy is applied to the interpretation and application of Qur'ān and Sunnah, a highly intricate and very delicate job indeed, we come across a barrage of taunts and accusations that the '*ulama* (religious scholars) hold a monopoly over the job! Is it that the interpretation and application of Qur'ān and Sunnah requires no ability, no qualification? Are we saying that, in this wide world of ours, the knowledge of the Qur'ān and Sunnah alone has come to be so orphaned, so heirless that everyone can start getting away with his own interpretation and application as a matter of right, even though the claimant has not spent even a few months devoted to learning the

great discipline of Qur'ān and Sunnah? This is terrible.

The proof of Qiyās

It is from this verse that we also come to know an important rule, that is, when we do not find an explicit statement in the Qur'ān and Sunnah about a certain problem, we should make the best of efforts to find a solution by a serious deliberation within these. This method is technically known as Qiyās or analogical deduction (Qurtubī).

"A great deal of contradiction"

The last sentence of verse 82: وَلَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ غَيْرِ اللّٰهِ لَوَجَدُوْا فِيْهِ اخْتِلَافًا كَثِيْرًا translated as 'Had it been from someone other than Allah, they would have found in it a great deal of contradiction' needs some explanation. Here, 'a great deal of contradiction' means: Had there been a contradiction in one subject, the contradiction in many subjects would obviously have become a great deal of contradiction (Bayān al-Qur'ān). But, the truth of the matter is that there is just no contradiction anywhere in the Qur'ān. So, this is the word of Allah Almighty. This perfect uniformity cannot be found in the word of man. Then there is its unmatched eloquence which never tapers. It talks about the Oneness of Allah and the disbelief of men and lays down rules for the lawful and the unlawful, yet there is no inconsistency, no discrepancy in the process. It offers information about the unseen but there is not one bit of information which does not match with reality. Then there is the very order of the Qur'ān which retains the quality of its diction all along, never ever touching a pitch which is low. The speech or writing of man is affected by circumstances. It varies with peace and distraction and happiness and sorrow. But, Qur'ān is free of all sorts of incongruities and contradictions - actually, it is beyond any such thing. And this is a clear proof of its being the word of God.

Verse 83

وَإِذَا جَآءَهُمْ أَمْرٌ مِّنَ الْأَمْنِ أَوِ الْخَوْفِ أَذَاعُوا بِهٖ ۖ وَلَوْ رَدُّوهُ إِلَى الرَّسُولِ وَإِلَىٰٓ أُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْهُمْ لَعَلِمَهُ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَنْبِطُونَهُ مِنْهُمْ ۗ وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ لَاتَّبَعْتُمُ الشَّيْطٰنَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴿٨٣﴾

And when there comes to them a matter about peace or fear, they spread it. Had they referred it to the Messenger and to those in authority among them, those of them who were to investigate it would have certainly known it (the truth of the matter). But for Allah's grace upon you, and mercy, you would have followed the Satan, save a few. [83]

Commentary

The Background of Revelation

According to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās, Ḍaḥḥāk and Abū Mu'ādh رضی الله عنهم , the verse: وَإِذَا جَآءَهُمْ أَمْرٌ مِّنَ الْأَمْنِ أَوِ الْخَوْفِ أَذَاعُوا بِهِ (And when there comes to them a matter about peace or fear, they spread it) was revealed about the hypocrites; and, according to Sayyidnā Ḥasan and many others, this verse was revealed about weak Muslims (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī).

After having reported events relating to this verse, the famous commentator, Ibn Kathīr has stressed on the importance of referring to the ḥadīth of Sayyidnā 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb رضی الله عنه while considering the background in which this verse was revealed. According to this, when Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی الله عنه heard that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has divorced his wives, he left his house heading for the Masjid. While still at its door steps, he heard that people inside there were also talking about the matter. Seeing this, he said that this was something which must first be investigated. So, he went to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and asked him if he had divorced his wives. He said, "No." Sayyidnā 'Umar says, "After having found out the truth of the matter, I returned to the Masjid and, standing on the door, I made an announcement that the Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم has not divorced his wives. Whatever you are saying is wrong." Thereupon, the verse: وَإِذَا جَآءَهُمْ أَمْرٌ was revealed (Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr).

To spread rumours, without verification

This verse tells us that hearsay should not be repeated without prior investigation into its credibility. Thus, in a ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: كفى بالمرء كذبا أن يحدث بكل ماسمع . It means that 'for a man to be a liar, it is enough that he repeats everything he hears without first verifying its truth'. In another ḥadīth, he said: من حدث بحديث وهو يرى انه كذب فهو احد الكاذبين . It means: 'Whoever relates something he thinks is a lie, then, he too is one of the two liars (Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr).

Who are "those in authority"?

Let us now determine the meaning of two expressions appearing in the sentence: وَلَوْ رَدُّوهُ إِلَى الرَّسُولِ وَإِلَىٰ أُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْهُمْ لَعَلِمَهُ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَنْبِطُونَهُ مِنْهُمْ which has been translated as: 'and had they referred it to the Messenger and to those in authority among them, those of them who were to investigate it would have certainly known it (the truth of the matter).' Literally, the later word, "*istinbāt*" here refers to the act of drawing out water from the depth of a well. When a well is dug, the water that oozes out first is called *mustambat* water. But, the usage in this context means to get to the bottom of something and find out the truth of the matter. (Qurtubī)

As for the correct signification of the expression: اولو الامر (those in authority), positions taken by scholars vary. Sayyidnā Ḥasan, Qatādah and Ibn Abī Lailā, may Allah have mercy on them, say that this refers to Muslim scholars and jurists (علماء و فقہاء). Al-Suddī says that it means rulers and officials (امراء و حکام). After reporting both these statements, Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ takes a general view and maintains that the expression means both, which is the correct approach, because أُولِي الْأَمْرِ applies to all of them. However, some scholars doubt the possibility that أُولِي الْأَمْرِ could refer to Muslim jurists (فقہاء) because أُولِي الْأَمْرِ, in its literal sense, means people whose orders are carried out administratively. Obviously, this is not what the Muslim jurists (فقہاء) do. Let us look at the reality of the thing. The implementation of authority takes two forms. Firstly, it can be done by using force, coercion and oppression. This is something which can only be done by those in authority. The second from of obedience to authority comes from reliance and trust, and that stands reposed in revered Muslim jurists (فقہاء) only, a demonstration of which has been all too visible in the lives of Muslims in general in all ages where the general body of Muslims have been, by their own free will and choice, taking the decision and authority of religious scholars (علماء) as the mandatory mode of action in all matters of religion. Then, according to the percepts of the Sharī'ah, obedience to rules set by them is obligatory (*wājib*) on them as such. So, given this reason, the application of the term أُولِي الْأَمْرِ (those in authority) to them as well is correct. (al-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān by al-Jaṣṣāṣ)

Details on this subject have already appeared under the commen-

tary on verse: أَطِيعُوا اللهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ (Say, "Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you - 4:59).

Qiyās and Ijtihād in modern problems

From this verse, we find out that rulings on problems not specifically mentioned in the authoritative texts (technically, *naṣṣ*) of the Holy Qur'ān or Sunnah will be deduced in the light of the Qur'ān using the principle of Ijtihād and Qiyās because this verse carries the command to turn to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم for the resolution of any new problems - if he is present at that time. And if he is not present, the command is to turn to religious scholars and jurists of the Muslim community (علماء و فقہاء), because they have the required ability to extract and formulate religious injunctions from the authoritative texts of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth.

Points of guidance which emerge from the statement made above are:

1. In the absence of *naṣṣ*, explicit textual authority from the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth, the course of action is to turn to Fuqahā, and 'Ulamā' (Muslim jurists and scholars).

2. The injunctions given by Allah are of two kinds. Some of them are there in the form of explicit textual imperatives (*manṣūṣ* and *ṣarīḥ*). Then, there are some others which are not explicit and carry meanings which are hidden in the depths of the verses as willed by Allah in his infinite wisdom.

3. It is the duty of the 'Ulamā' (religious scholars) to extract and formulate such meanings through the established methodology of Ijtihād and Qiyās.

4. For the great masses of Muslims, it is necessary that they should follow the guidance given by the 'Ulamā' in such problems. (Aḥkām al-Qur'ān by al-Jaṣṣāṣ)

The Prophetic function of deducing injunctions

The statement: لَعَلِمَهُ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَنْبِطُونَهُ مِنْهُمْ : 'those of them who were to investigate it would have certainly known it (the truth of the matter),' shows that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم too was obligated to the percept of extracting, formulating and reasoning out with proofs all injunctions that needed to be so handled. This is so because earlier in

the verse the command was to turn towards two sources. Firstly, it was to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and secondly, to those in authority (أُولِي الْأَمْرِ). After that it was said: لَعَلِمَهُ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَنْبِطُونَهُ (those of them who were to investigate it would have certainly known it.) And this injunction is general which covers both of the two parties cited above. So, it proves that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was also obligated with the function of deducing injunctions. (Aḥkām al-Qur'ān by al-Jaṣṣāṣ)

An important note

If this verse makes someone suspect or assume that it has no relation with deducing injunctions of Sharī'ah, it does not say anymore than give an instruction to people that they should not indulge in rumour-mongering in situations of peace and fear when faced with an enemy, instead of which, one should turn to the knowledgeable and trustworthy and act in accordance with the advice they give after due deliberation and that it has no connection with juristic or new legal problems.

In order to answer this doubt, it can be said that the sentence: وَإِذَا جَاءَهُمْ أَمْرٌ مِّنَ الْأَمْنِ أَوِ الْخَوْفِ (And when there comes to them a matter about peace or fear) in this verse makes no mention of an enemy. So, the state of peace and fear is universal. The way it relates to an enemy, so it does with day to day problems as well. This is so because the appearance of a problem before a commoner, a problem about which no textual authority relating to its being lawful or unlawful exists, throws him into a fix and he cannot decide which side to take as both sides hold the probability of gain and loss. The smartest way out devised by the Sharī'ah of Islam in this impasse is that one should turn to those capable of extracting and formulating injunctions and act in accordance with the via media laid out by them. (Abridged from Aḥkām al-Qur'ān by al-Jaṣṣāṣ)

The outcome of Ijtihād

The legal ruling extracted by Muslim jurists (فقہاء) from the texts through Istinbāt (and Ijtihād) cannot categorically be declared as being the absolute truth in the sight of Allah. Instead of that, the probability always exists that this ruling might as well turn out to be not true. But, of course, what one gains out of it is positive, overwhelming and weightier opinion about its being true and correct, something which is

good enough to act upon. (al-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān by al-Jaṣṣāṣ and Tafsīr Kabīr)

Verse 84

فَقَاتِلْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ۚ لَا تُكَلَّفُ إِلَّا نَفْسَكَ ۚ وَحَرِّضِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ۖ عَسَى اللَّهُ أَنْ يَكُفَّ بَأْسَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ۚ وَاللَّهُ أَشَدُّ بَأْسًا وَأَشَدُّ تَنْكِيلًا ﴿٨٤﴾

So, fight in the way of Allah. You are not responsible but for yourself. And persuade the believers. It is likely that Allah will prevent the mischief of those who disbelieve. And Allah is the strongest in war and the mightiest in punishing. [84]

Commentary

The Background of Revelation

When the battle of Uḥud came to pass in the month of Shawwāl, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , in keeping with the promised date set by the disbelievers, started preparations to confront them at Badr in the month of Dhi-Qa'dah (historians identify which as the minor Badr). At that time, some people betrayed a little hesitation in going along because of having been recently wounded, while some others did so because of rumours. Thereupon, Allah Almighty revealed this verse where guidance has been given to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that he should ignore the infirm and the scared among Muslims and show no hesitation in marching on to Jihād even if it has to be all alone, for Allah is his helper. With this guidance on hand, he went ahead to Badr Minor with seventy Companions as promised to Abū Sufyān after the battle of Uḥud. There it so happened that Allah Almighty put awe and fear in the hearts of Abū Sufyān and his disbelieving accomplices from the tribe of Quraysh. Not one of them showed up for the fight as a result of which they turned out to be false in their solemn promise. Thus, as the text says, Allah Almighty prevented the mischief of the disbelievers and the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم returned back with his companions safely (Qurṭubī & Maẓharī).

The Eloquent style of Qur'ānic Injunctions

The verse begins with the command to the Holy Prophet ﷺ : 'So, fight in the way of Allah'. This direction is addressed to the Holy

Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم which implies that he should fight alone - irrespective of whether anyone is ready to go with him. But, in the second sentence following immediately, it was also said that he should not shelve or surrender the mission of inducing other Muslims to join in the Jihād. However, if they remain unresponsive even after the effort of persuasion, the mission of the prophet has been accomplished who, from that point onwards, will not be responsible for what they do.

In addition to this, the possible danger in having to fight alone has been removed by saying: 'It is likely that Allah will prevent the mischief of those who disbelieve': May be He puts awe in their hearts and they stand subdued and he succeeds all alone. How could such success become possible? The proof follows immediately when it is declared that he is being helped and supported by Allah Almighty whose strength and might at war far exceeds those of such disbelievers, therefore, it is certain that success has got to be his. After that, coupled with this statement about the Divine strength in war, the text relates how Allah is the mightiest in punishing. This punishment may be on the Day of Judgement as obvious, or may come right here in this mortal world as stated by some commentators. Whichever the case, 'Allah is the strongest in war and the mightiest in punishing.'

Verses 85 - 87

مَنْ يَّشْفَعْ شَفَاعَةً حَسَنَةً يَّكُنْ لَّهٗ نَصِيْبٌ مِّنْهَا ۚ وَمَنْ يَّشْفَعْ
شَفَاعَةً سَيِّئَةً يَّكُنْ لَّهٗ كِفْلٌ مِّنْهَا ۗ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ
مُّقِيْتًا ﴿٨٥﴾ وَاِذَا حُيِّيْتُمْ بِتَحِيَّةٍ فَحَيُّوْا بِاَحْسَنَ مِنْهَآ
اَوْ رُدُّوْهَا ۗ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ حَسِيْبًا ﴿٨٦﴾ اَللّٰهُ لَآ اِلٰهَ
اِلَّا هُوَ ۗ لَيَجْمَعَنَّكُمْ اِلٰى يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيْهِ ۗ وَمَنْ اَصْدَقُ
مِنَ اللّٰهِ حَدِيْثًا ﴿٨٧﴾

And whoever makes a good recommendation, there shall be for him a share from it (in the Hereafter). And whoever makes a bad recommendation, there shall be for him a share from it. And Allah is powerful over everything. [85]

And when you are greeted with a salutation, greet with

one better than it, or return the same. Surely, Allah is the reckoner over everything. [86]

Allah: There is no god but He. He shall, certainly, gather you towards the Day of Doom. There is no doubt about it. And who is more true, than Allah, in his word? [87]

Commentary

The Reality of Recommendation and its rules and kinds

Verse 85 beginning with مَنْ يَّشْفَعْ شَفَاعَةً حَسَنَةً points out to the act of شَفَاعَة: '*shafā'ah*' (recommendation) under two heads, the good and the bad, a division which helps clarify its nature. The added message here is that no recommendation is universally good or bad. What has to be realized is that one who makes a good recommendation shall have a share in the reward it brings and whoever makes a bad recommendation shall have a share in the punishment it brings. It will be noted that the word نَصِيْبٌ : '*nasībun*' (share) has been used with شَفَاعَةً حَسَنَةً: '*shafā'atan hasanatan*' (good recommendation) while the word كِفْلٌ: '*kiflun*' (share) has been used with شَفَاعَةً سَيِّئَةً: '*shafā'atan sayyiatan*' (bad recommendation). Lexically, both words carry the some meaning, that is, a share of something. But, in common usage, '*nasīb*' refers to a good share while the word '*kifl*' is, more than often, used to identify a bad share, although there are occasions when '*kifl*' is also used for a good share as well, like "كِفْلَيْنِ مِنْ رَّحْمَتِه" (two shares from His mercy) in the Holy Qur'ān.

The literal meaning of '*shafā'ah*' is to meet, to join; or, cause to meet or join. This is why the word '*shaf'*' means an even number, a pair or couple in Arabic, the antonym of which is referred to as '*witr*' or odd. So, speaking literally, '*shafā'ah*' means the coupling of one's strength with that of a weak seeker of justice and thus making it stronger in appeal. Or, in other words, joining in with some helpless solitary person and thus giving him the strength of a pair.

From here we find out that for recommendation to be fair and permissible the condition is that the claim of the person being recommended be true and permissible. Then, in the second place, it may be that a person cannot carry his claim all by himself to those in authority because of his weakness or lack of resource, something which you may do for him. Thus, we can clearly see that making a

recommendation for what is not true and rightful, or forcibly influencing others to accept it, is included under bad recommendation. Consequently, we also know that pressure or authority exerted through the channels of one's connections and influence is also not permissible because it is an act of injustice. Therefore, this too will be counted as 'bad recommendation'.

To sum up the meaning of the verse, it can be said that one who makes a recommendation following the permissible way for someone's permissible claim or job, will have a share in its reward. Similarly, one who makes a recommendation for something impermissible or uses an impermissible method to do so, will have a share in its punishment.

Having a share means that, should the person to whom the recommendation has been made do the needful for the one oppressed or deprived, the person making the recommendation will be rewarded very much like the official who has listened to the recommendation and removed the injustice or deprivation cited therein. Similarly, one who makes a recommendation for something impermissible will obviously become a sinner - we already know that the reward or punishment of the maker of a recommendation does not depend on his recommendation becoming effective and fruitful; he will get his share in any case.

The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has said: اَلدَّالُّ عَلَى الْخَيْرِ كَفَاعِلِهٖ that is, a person who brings someone around to do a good deed gets a reward similar to that received by the doer of the good deed. In another ḥadīth from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضی اللہ عنہ appearing in Ibn Mājah, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has been reported to have said:

من اعان علی قتل مؤمن بشطر كلمة لقی الله مكتوب بين عينيه "ائس من رحمة الله".

> Whoever helps in the killing of a Muslim even by part of a word will face Allah with a sign written (on his forehead) in between his eyes: (This man is) "deprived from the mercy of Allah)".

From here we find out that prompting someone to do a good deed is a good deed in its own right and carries an identical reward for having done it and, by the same token, prompting someone to do an evil deed

or to indulge in an act of sin is also a sin of equal gravity.

Towards the end of verse 85, it was said: وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مُّقِيْتًا which has been translated as: 'And Allah is powerful over everything'. Lexically, the word, مقيت: '*muqīt*' means powerful as well as the observer and the dispenser of sustenance. All these three meanings can be deduced from this statement. In the first sense, the meaning would be that Allah is powerful over everything. For Him the rewarding and punishing of the one who makes a recommendation and the one who executes it is not difficult. Taken in the second sense, the meaning would be that Allah is ever-present observing everything. He knows best who is making a recommendation with what intention, such as, is it being done sincerely to help out some brother-in-faith just for the sake of Allah and His pleasure, or the purpose is to make him a target of self-interest and get some advantage out of him as a bribe. Taken in the third sense, the meaning would be that Allah Almighty is Himself responsible for the dispensation of sustenance; whatever He has written for someone has got to reach him. A recommendation by someone is not going to leave Him choiceless. In fact, He will bestow on whomsoever He wills as much of sustenance as He wills. However, the maker of a good recommendation gets a reward for free because he has extended a helping hand to the helpless.

The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has said:

كان الله فى عون عبده ما دام فى عون اخيه

Allah keeps helping His servant as long as he keeps helping his brother.

It is on this basis that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has said as reported in a ḥadīth of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī:

اشفعوا فلتوجروا ويقضى الله على لسان نبيّه ماشاءَ

Recommend and be rewarded and then be pleased with whatever Allah decides through His prophet.

While this ḥadīth declares recommendation as a source of Divine reward, it also defines the limit of such recommendation. If a weak person cannot carry his problem onward to a higher authority, or is incapable of explaining correctly what he needs, then, you do it for him. Further from that what happens is none of your business. The

recommendation may be accepted or it may be rejected. What a person needs to be done may be done, or it may remain undone. These are possibilities and you should not interfere in the process of decision-making in any manner whatsoever. Should the final outcome turn out to be against the recommendation made, you should never end up being displeased or disgusted. The last sentence of the hadīth quoted above: يقضى الله على لسان نبيّه ماشاء means just this. Also, due to this reason, the words of the Holy Qur'ān carry a hint in this direction, that is, the reward or punishment on the making of a recommendation does not depend on a successful recommendation. Such reward or punishment relates to the initial act of making a recommendation in the absolute sense. If you make a good recommendation, you become deserving of a reward and if you make a bad recommendation, you become liable to punishment - the approval or rejection of your recommendation does not matter.

The commentators of Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ and Bayān al-Qur'ān and several others take the word مِنْهَا: 'minhā' in verse 85 as indicative of cause and see a hint in this direction. Al-Tafsīr al-Maẓharī reports from the great exegete Mujāhid that one who makes a recommendation will get a reward for having made it, even though the recommendation may not have been accepted. Then, this approach is not specially related to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in person. Any recommendation made to any other human being should be bound by this principle - make the recommendation and be done with it. Moving any further to compel the addressee of the recommendation to accept it is not right and fair. This is illustrated by an incident in the blessed life of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. He made a recommendation to Sayyidah Barīrah, a bondwoman freed by Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها that her husband Mughīth from whom she had dissolved her marriage was really disturbed emotionally because he loved her, so she may think of remarrying him. Sayyidah Barīrah رضى الله عنها said: '*Yā Rasūlallah*, if this is your command, I am all for it; but, if this is a recommendation, then, I just do not feel like accepting it at all.' The Holy Prophet ﷺ said: 'Yes, this is a recommendation and not a command.' Sayyidah Barīrah رضى الله عنها, may Allah be pleased with her, knew that the Holy Prophet ﷺ will not feel bad about what is against the set rule. Therefore, in all frankness, she said: 'Then I do not accept

this recommendation.' He took it very gracefully and let her stay the way she was.

This was the whole reality behind the act of recommendation, something which brought merit and reward under the legal code of Islam. But, in our day, people have so mutilated the whole thing that no '*shafā'ah*' or recommendation remains what it was intended to be. What we witness now is a pushy exercise of cashing on the basis of connections, acquaintance and VIP influence for which relentless pressure is exerted. This is why people become angry when their recommendation is not accepted. Some would even stoop down to open hostility, although pressurizing a person to a limit where he is compelled to do something against his conscience and good discretion is included under compulsion and coercion and is a grave sin. This is just like someone forcibly usurping the claim, right or property belonging to the other person. Wasn't that person free and independent as established by the law of Islam? Here comes someone who deprives him of his freedom of action by pressing him to do something against his free will and conscience. This would be like stealing from someone and giving it to a destitute in order to fulfil his need.

Receiving Payment against a Recommendation is Bribe and is Absolutely Forbidden

A recommendation against which anything is taken in return becomes a bribe. The ḥadith declares it to be an ill-gotten property which is *ḥarām* (forbidden). This includes all kinds of bribe whether money-oriented or job-related, for instance, harnessing someone to do a personal chore in return for having done something for him.

According to Tafsīr al-Kashshāf, a good recommendation is that which aims at fulfilling the right of a Muslim, or to bring some permissible benefit to him, or to shield him from harm or loss. Furthermore, this act of recommendation should not be for any worldly expediency. It should be aimed at helping a weak person exclusively for seeking the pleasure of Allah. Then no bribe, financial or physical, should be taken against this recommendation and that this recommendation should also not be about things not permissible. In addition to all that, the purpose of this recommendation should not be to seek pardon for a proven crime the punishment for which stands fixed in the Holy

Qur'ān.

It appears in Tafsīr Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ and al-Maẓharī that praying to Allah that the need of some Muslim be fulfilled is also included under 'good recommendation', the reward for which reaches the maker of the prayer as well. According to a ḥadith, when someone prays for the good of his brother-in-faith, the angel says: ولك بمثل, which means - 'may Allah fulfill your need as well.'

Salām and Islām : The Bliss of Muslim Greeting

In verse 86 which begins with the words: وَإِذَا حُيِّيْتُمْ بِتَحِيَّةٍ فَحَيُّوا بِأَحْسَنَ مِنْهَا, Allah Almighty tells us the etiquette of offering and returning greetings known as Salām among Muslims.

Lexically, تحية: '*Taḥiyyah*' means saying حَيَّاكَ اللّٰه :'*Ḥayyākallāh*', that is, 'may Allah keep you alive'. In pre-Islam Arabia, when people met, they used to greet each other by saying '*Ḥayyākallāh*' or '*An'amallāhu bika 'aynan*' or '*An'im sabāhan*' or other expression of this nature. When Islam came, it changed this style of greeting and replaced it with a standard form of greeting which is السلام عليكم: '*As-Salāmu 'Alaikum*' Commonly, though incompletely, translated in English as 'peace be on you', the greeting means: 'May you remain safe from every pain, sorrow and distress.'

In Aḥkām al-Qur'ān, Ibn 'Arabī says: The word Salām is one of the good names of Allah Almighty and '*As-Salāmu Alaikum*' means اللّٰهُ رَقِيبٌ عَلَيْكَ that is, Allah Almighty is your guardian and caretaker.

The Islamic greeting is unique

All civilized people around the world have the custom of saying something to express mutual familiarity or affection when they meet each other. If compared with these broadmindedly, the Islamic form of greeting will stand out significantly for its comprehensiveness because it does not simply restrict itself to an expression of affection alone. It rather combines it with the fulfillment of the demands of love and affection. It means that we pray to Allah that He keep you safe against all calamities and sorrows. Then, this is no bland prayer for long life alone as was the way with pre-Islam Arabs. Instead of that, here we have a prayer for good life, that is, a life which is secure against all calamities and sorrows. Along with it, the Islamic *salām* is an expres-

sion of the reality of our relation with Allah Almighty - that we, the greeter and the greeted, are all dependent on Allah Almighty needing Him all the time and no one can bring any benefit to someone else without His will and leave. Taken in this sense, this form of greeting is an act of worship in its own right and, quite functionally indeed, a medium of reminding a brother-in-faith of Allah Almighty, the object of his obedience and love.

Staying with this line of presentation, let us imagine a person praying to Allah that his acquaintance remain safe against all calamities and sorrows. When doing so, is it not that he is sort of making a promise as well that the person being greeted is safe against his own hands and tongue. In other words, he is saying that he, in his place, is the guardian and protector of the person's life, property and honour.

In Aḥkām al-Qur'ān, Ibn al-'Arabī has reported the following saying of Imām Ibn 'Uyaynah:

أَتَدْرِىْ مَا السَّلَامُ؟ يَقُوْلُ أَنْتَ آمِنٌ مِّنِّىْ

> Do you know what *salām* is? The greeter by *salām* says: 'You are safe from me.'

To sum up, it can be said that this Islamic form of greeting has a universal comprehensiveness as it is a medium of the remembrance of Allah while reminding the person greeted of Him. It is a vehicle of expressing love and affection for a brother-in-faith and, in fact, a wonderful prayer for him. Then, it also carries a commitment that the greeted will in no way face harm or discomfort from the greeter as it appears is a sound ḥadīth where the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

اَلْمُسْلِمُ مَنْ سَلِمَ الْمُسْلِمُوْنَ مِنْ لِّسَانِهٖ وَيَدِهٖ

> A Muslim is the one from whom all Muslims remain safe - (safe) from his tongue and (safe) from his hands. (Tirmidhī, Kitabul-'Īmān)

At this point one may fondly wish that Muslims would not utter the words of this greeting as some sort of habitual custom which commonly prevails among other people of the world. How beneficial it would be if this greeting is offered out of a full understanding of its reality which, perhaps, may turn out to be enough for the reform of

whole community. This is the reason why the Holy Prophet ﷺ laid great emphasis on popularizing the practice of Muslims in greeting each other with salām, and he identified it as the best of deeds and took time to explain its merits, graces, blessings and rewards. In a ḥadīth of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim narrated by Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضی اللہ عنہ, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has been reported to have said:

"You cannot enter Paradise until you are a believer and your belief cannot be complete until you love each other. I tell you something which, if you put it in practice, will establish bonds of love among you all, and that is: Make salām a common practice among you which should include every Muslim, whether an acquaintance or a stranger."

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ says that someone asked the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم : 'Out of the practices of Islam which is the worthiest?' He said: 'Feed people and spread the practice of salām, whether you know or do not know a person.' (Bukhārī and Muslim)

The Musnad of Aḥmad, Tirmidhī and Abū Dāwūd report from Sayyidnā Abū Umāmah رضی اللہ عنہ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: 'Nearest to Allah is the person who is the first one to offer salām.'

A ḥadīth from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضی اللہ عنہ appearing in Musnad al-Bazzar and al-Mu'jim al-Kabīr of al-Ṭabaranī reports that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said: 'Salām is one of the names of Allah Almighty with which He has blessed the people of the earth. So, make salām a common practice among you because, when a Muslim goes to a gathering of people and offers his salām to them, he is blessed with a station of distinction in the sight of Allah Almighty as he reminded everyone of Salām, that is, reminded everyone of Allah Almighty. If people in the gathering do not return his greeting, others will respond who are better than the people of this gathering, that is, the angels of Allah Almighty.'

In another ḥadīth from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضی اللہ عنہ the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم is reported to have said: 'A big miser is the man who acts miserly in offering salām. (Ṭabaranī, al-Mu'jim al-Kabīr)

The effect that those teachings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ had on his noble Companions can be gauged from a narration about Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ who would frequently go to the bazar

just for the single purpose of having a chance to meet any Muslim there in the hope of offering salām to him and thus become deserving of the reward of an act of worship. Incidentally, he never intended to buy or sell anything while there. This narration from Sayyidnā Ṭufayl ibn Ubayy ibn Ka'b رضی اللہ عنہ appears in Mu'aṭṭa' of Imām Mālik.

Verse 4:86 of the Holy Qur'ān which says: 'And when you are greeted with a salutation, greet with one better than it, or return the same', was explained by the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم through his own action in the following manner. Once someone came to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم and said: *'As-Salamu 'Alaikum Yā Rasūlallāh'* (peace be on you, O Messenger of Allah). While returning the greeting, he added a word and said: *'Wa 'Alaikumus-Salām wa Raḥmatullāh* (And peace be on you, and the mercy of Allah). Then someone else came and offered his salām using the following words: *'As-Salāmu 'Alaika Yā Rasūlallāh wa Raḥmatullāh.'* In response, he added yet another word and said: *'Wa 'Alaikumus-Salām wa Raḥmatullāhi wa Barakātuh* (And peace be on you too, and the mercy of Allah, and His blessings). Then came a third person. He combined all three salutations in his initial salām and greeted him by saying the whole thing, that is: *'As-Salāmu 'Alaik Yā Rasūlallāh wa Raḥmatullāhi wa Barakātuh.'* In response, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said only one word *'Wa 'Alaik'* (and on you). Disappointed in his heart, he said: 'Yā Rasūlallāh, ransomed be my parents for you, you said many words of prayer while returning the greeting of those who came before me. But, when I greeted you with all those words, you limited your response to *'wa 'alaik'* (and on you).' He said: 'You left nothing for me to add in the response! Since you used up all those words in your initial salām, I found it sufficient to return your greeting on the principle of like for like in accordance with the teaching of the Qur'ān.' This narration has been reported by Ibn Jarīr and Ibn Abī Ḥātim with different chains of authorities.

There are three things we find out from this ḥadīth: Words appearing in the verse under comment mean that a salām offered should be returned by adding more words to it. If someone says *As-salāmu 'Alaikum* (peace be on you), you respond by saying *Wa 'Alaikumus-Salām wa Raḥmatullāh* (And peace be on you, and the

mercy of Allah). If he says *As-Salāmu 'Alaikum wa Raḥmatullāh* (peace be on you, and the mercy of Allah), then, in response, you say *Wa 'Alaikumus-Salām wa Raḥmatullahī wa Barakātuh* (And peace be on you, and the mercy of Allah, and His blessings).

2. This addition of words is restricted to three words only as a *masnūn* act, that is, conforming to the blessed practice of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم . Going beyond that is not *masnūn*. The logic behind it is obvious. The occasion for salām requires that the verbal exchange be brief. Any excess in this connection which interferes with ongoing business or which becomes heavy on the listener is not appropriate. Therefore, when the person visiting the Holy Prophet ﷺ combined all three words in his very initial salām, he elected to abstain from any further addition of words. This was further explained by Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ by saying that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم stopped the man who went beyond the limit of the three words with the following statement : إِنَّ السَّلَامَ قَدِ انْتَهٰى إِلَى الْبَرَكَةِ (Maẓharī from al-Baghawī). It means that salām ends at the word, *barakah*. Saying anything beyond that was not the practice of the blessed Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم . (Ibn Kathīr)

3. If someone makes his salām with three words spoken at the same time, returning it with only one word will be correct. That too comes under the principle of like for like and is sufficient in obedience to the Qur'ānic command أَوْ رُدُّوهَا (or return the same) as the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has, in this ḥadīth, considered a one-word response as sufficient. (Tafsīr Maẓharī)

In summation, we can say that it is obligatory on a Muslim to return the salām offered to him. If he fails to do so without any valid excuse admitted by the Sharī'ah of Islam, he will become a sinner. However, he has the option to choose the mode. He can either respond with words better than those used in offering the salām; or, the response could be in identical words.

It will be noticed that this verse very clearly states that returning a salām is obligatory but it is not explicit on the nature of offering a salām initially. However, in the Qur'ānic expression إِذَا حُيِّيتُم (And when you are greeted ..) there does lie a hint pointing towards this rule of conduct. That this statement is in the passive voice without identi-

fying the subject precisely could be suggestive of salām being something all Muslims already do habitually and commonly.

The Musnad of Aḥmad, al-Tirmidhī and Abū Dāwūd report that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: 'Nearest to Allah is the person who is the first to offer salām.' So, from the emphasis on salām and its many merits you have learnt from the teachings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ cited earlier, we get to understand that offering the initial salām has also been emphasized as part of the practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. According to Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, the initial salām is actually a *sunnah mu'akkadah* (emphasized practice of the Prophet of Islam) as held by the majority of 'Ulama. And Ḥasan al-Baṣrī رحمه الله said: 'السلام تطوع والرد فريضة', that is, 'the initial salām is voluntary while returning it is an obligation.'

Some more detailed explanations of this Qur'ānic injunctions about salām and its answer have been given by the Holy Prophet ﷺ which the reader may wish to know briefly. According to a ḥadīth in al-Bukhārī and Muslim, the person riding should himself offer salām to the person walking; and the person walking should offer salām to the person sitting; and a small group of persons walking near a larger group should be the first to offer salām.

According to a ḥadīth in Tirmidhī, when a person enters his house, he should offer salām to the members of his family as this act of grace will bring blessings for him as well as for his family.

According to a ḥadīth in Abū Dāwūd, when one meets a Muslim more than once, he should offer salām every time; and the way offering salām is *masnūn* (a requirement of *sunnah*) at the time of the initial meeting, so it is at the time of seeking leave when offering salām is in line with the practice of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, and a source of reward as well. This rule of guidance appears in Tirmidhī and Abū Dāwūd as narrated by Sayyidnā Qatādah and Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه.

Now a note of caution about the rule: It is obligatory to answer salām - however, there are certain exceptions to it. For instance, if someone says salām to a person who is offering ṣalāh, an answer is not obligatory. Indeed, it is a spoiler of ṣalāh. Similarly, a person may be delivering a religious sermon, or is busy in reciting the Holy Qur'ān, or is calling the *adhān* or *iqāmah*, or is teaching religious texts, or is busy

with his human compulsions - in all such conditions, even offering the initial salam is not permissible, and he is not responsible for answering it as a matter of obligation either.

Towards the end of verse 86, it was said: اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ حَسِيْبًا (Surely, Allah is the Reckoner over everything). It means that with Allah rests the reckoning of everything which includes all human and Islamic rights such as salam and its answer. These too will have to be accounted for before Allah Almighty.

After that comes verse 87 اَللّٰهُ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ لَيَجْمَعَنَّكُمْ اِلٰى يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيْهِ which means that there is no object worthy of worship other than Allah. So, it exhorts: Believe in Him as the only object of your worship and whatever you do let that be with the intention of an act of worship or *'ibadah* before Him. He will gather everyone on the Day of Qiyamah, the fateful Day of Doom, in which there is no doubt. That will be the Day when He will give everyone the return for whatever deeds he will come up with the promise that Qiyamah will come and the news that there will be reward and punishment at that time is all true. This is true because this 'news' of what will happen is given by Allah, وَمَنْ اَصْدَقُ مِنَ اللّٰهِ حَدِيْثًا - and whose word can be more true than that of Allah?

Verses 88 - 91

فَمَا لَكُمْ فِي الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ فِئَتَيْنِ وَاللّٰهُ اَرْكَسَهُمْ بِمَا كَسَبُوْا ۭ
اَتُرِيْدُوْنَ اَنْ تَهْدُوْا مَنْ اَضَلَّ اللّٰهُ ۭ وَمَنْ يُّضْلِلِ اللّٰهُ فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهٗ
سَبِيْلًا ﴿٨٨﴾ وَدُّوْا لَوْ تَكْفُرُوْنَ كَمَا كَفَرُوْا فَتَكُوْنُوْنَ سَوَاۗءً فَلَا
تَتَّخِذُوْا مِنْهُمْ اَوْلِيَاۗءَ حَتّٰى يُهَاجِرُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ۭ فَاِنْ
تَوَلَّوْا فَخُذُوْهُمْ وَاقْتُلُوْهُمْ حَيْثُ وَجَدْتُّمُوْهُمْ ۠ وَلَا تَتَّخِذُوْا مِنْهُمْ
وَلِيًّا وَّلَا نَصِيْرًا ﴿٨٩﴾ اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ يَصِلُوْنَ اِلٰى قَوْمٍۢ بَيْنَكُمْ
وَبَيْنَهُمْ مِّيْثَاقٌ اَوْ جَاۗءُوْكُمْ حَصِرَتْ صُدُوْرُهُمْ اَنْ يُّقَاتِلُوْكُمْ اَوْ
يُقَاتِلُوْا قَوْمَهُمْ ۭ وَلَوْ شَاۗءَ اللّٰهُ لَسَلَّطَهُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ فَلَقٰتَلُوْكُمْ ۚ فَاِنِ
اعْتَزَلُوْكُمْ فَلَمْ يُقَاتِلُوْكُمْ وَاَلْقَوْا اِلَيْكُمُ السَّلَمَ ۙ فَمَا جَعَلَ اللّٰهُ

لَكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ سَبِيلًا ﴿٩٠﴾ سَتَجِدُونَ ءَاخَرِينَ يُرِيدُونَ أَن يَأْمَنُوكُمْ
وَيَأْمَنُوا قَوْمَهُمْ كُلَّمَا رُدُّوٓا إِلَى الْفِتْنَةِ أُرْكِسُوا فِيهَا فَإِن لَّمْ
يَعْتَزِلُوكُمْ وَيُلْقُوٓا إِلَيْكُمُ السَّلَمَ وَيَكُفُّوٓا أَيْدِيَهُمْ فَخُذُوهُمْ
وَاقْتُلُوهُمْ حَيْثُ ثَقِفْتُمُوهُمْ وَأُولَٰٓئِكُمْ جَعَلْنَا لَكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ
سُلْطَٰنًا مُّبِينًا ﴿٩١﴾

So, what is the matter with you that you have become two groups about the hypocrites, while Allah has upturned them because of what they did. Do you want to guide the one whom Allah has let go astray? And the one whom Allah lets go astray, for him you shall never find a way. [88]

They wish that you should disbelieve, as they have disbelieved, and thus you become all alike. So, do not take friends from among them unless they migrate in the way of Allah. Then, if they turn away, sieze them, and kill them wherever you find them, and do not take from among them a friend or a helper. [89] **Except those who join a group between whom and you there is a treaty, or who come to you their hearts declining to fight you or to fight their people -- And if Allah had so willed, He would have given them power over you, then they would have fought you -- so, if they stay away from you and do not fight you and offer you peace, then Allah has not given you a way against them.** [90]

You will find others who want to be secure from you, and secure from their own people. Whenever they are called back to the mischief, they are thrown into it. So, if they do not stay away from you and do not offer peace to you, and do not restrain their hands, then seize them, and kill them wherever you find them, and against these we have given you an open authority. [91]

Commentary

The verses quoted above describe three groups of people about whom two injunctions have been given. The following narrations clarify events surrounding these groups:

1. 'Abdullāh ibn Ḥāmid has narrated from Mujāhid that some

disbelievers of Makkah came to Madīnah. They pretended to have become Muslims and claimed to have come there as emigrants. Later, they turned into apostates. They went to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, told him about their plan to go to Makkah to buy merchandise from there. Having made their false excuse, they departed for Makkah and never returned. There arose a difference of opinion about their behaviour among the Muslims of Madīnah. Some said that they were believers. It was in verse 88: فَمَا لَكُمْ فِى الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ فِئَتَيْنِ (So what is the matter with you that you have become two groups about the hypocrites) where Allah Almighty declared that they were disbelievers and should be killed.

Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī has explained the Qur'ānic word, '*munāfiq*' (hypocrite) by saying that they were hypocrites when they claimed to have become Muslims - they had never believed in their hearts. The fact was that hypocrites were not killed because they concealed their inner disbelief. But, the case of these people was different as their apostacy had come out in the open. As for those who took them to be Muslims, they may have, perhaps, taken a benign view of their action under some interpretation. However, this interpretation was based on sheer opinion not supported by any proof from the Sharī'ah. That is why no reliance was placed on it.

2. Ibn Abī Shaybah has narrated from Ḥasan that Surāqah ibn Mālik al-Mudlajī visited the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم after the events of Badr and Uḥud and requested him to make peace with his tribe, Banī Mudlaj. Thereupon, he sent Sayyidnā Khālid رضى الله عنه to them to conclude a peace treaty. The terms of the treaty were as follows:

> "We will not support anyone against the Holy Prophet ﷺ. If the Quraysh become Muslims, We too shall become Muslims. All tribes who enter into alliance with us, they too shall become a party with us in this treaty."

Thereupon, this verse: وَدُّوْا لَوْ تَكْفُرُوْنَ (الى قوله) اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ يَصِلُوْنَ الخ -- (They wish that you disbelieve like they have disbelieved) was revealed.

3. It has been narrated from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه that the people mentioned in the verse: سَتَجِدُوْنَ اٰخَرِيْنَ (You will find others who want to be secure from you) are those belonging to the tribes of Asad and Ghitfān who, when they came to Madīnah, professed Islam outwardly, but to their own people they would confide that they had

really believed in monkeys and scorpions while before Muslims they would piously declare that they were followers of their faith.

However, Ḍaḥḥāk ascribes this conduct to the tribe of 'Abd al-Dār according to a report from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās. The first and the second narration appears in Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī, while the third narration can be seen in Ma'ālim.

Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī likens the state of those mentioned in the third narration as that of the first one since it proves that they were no Muslims to begin with, therefore, they fall under the injunction governing disbelievers in general, that is, 'do not fight them in the presence of a peace treaty - otherwise, do.' Thus, regarding those mentioned in the first narration, the second verse (89): فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَخُذُوهُمْ وَاقْتُلُوهُمْ (then if they turn away, sieze them and kill them) carries the injunction that they be arrested and killed, while the statement in the third verse (90): إِلَّا الَّذِينَ يَصِلُونَ (except those who join a group with whom you have a treaty) gives them a clear exemption in the event of peace, a situation which finds mention in the second narration. This exemption has been emphasised once again in فَإِنِ اعْتَزَلُوكُمْ (if they stay away from you) later in the same verse (90).

Regarding those mentioned in the third narration, it has been said in the fourth verse (91): سَتَجِدُونَ اٰخَرِينَ (you will find others ....) which means that should these people refuse to leave you alone and insist on fighting, then do fight against them. From this, it can be deduced that in the event they make peace, there should be no fighting against them. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

In short, the three groups mentioned here are:

1. Those who do not emigrate despite their ability to do so in a period of time when emigration was a pre-requisite of faith in Islam. Or, after having emigrated, they go out of the new abode of Islam (Dār al-Islām) and return to the abode of disbelief (Dār al-Kufr).

2. Those who themselves enter a no-war pact with Muslims or those who join hands with those entering into such a pact.

3. Those who make peace to buy time and once there comes an occasion to fight a war against Muslims, they would readily join the enemy camp throwing all treaty obligations to winds.

The injunction governing the first group is similar to that which governs the disbelievers in general. The second groups is exempted from being arrested and killed. The third group deserves the same punishment as fixed for the first. These verses yield a total of two injunctions, that is, fighting in the absence of peace; and not fighting in the event of peace.

Different forms of Emigration and their Rules

Hijrah (Emigration) mentioned in verse 89 has been taken up in detail under the commentary on verse 100 of Sūrah al-Nisā' which appears a little later. At this point, it is sufficient to know that Emigration from the homeland of Disbelief (Dārul-kufr) was enjoined on all Muslims during the early period of Islam. It is for this reason that Allah Almighty has prohibited treating those who fail to carry out this obligation as Muslims. Consequently, when Makkah was conquered, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم declared: لَا هِجْرَةَ بَعْدَ الْفَتْحِ (There is no Hijrah after the Victory). It means: 'Now that the Conquest of Makkah has made it the Abode of Islam, emigration from there was no more obligatory.' This rule related to the period of time when Emigration was considered to be a pre-condition of anyone's faith. During those days, anyone who did not emigrate despite having the ability to do so was not taken to be a Muslim. But, later on, this injunction was abrogated [1] and now this mode of Emigration has ceased to exist.

There remains, however, another form of Hijrah which has been identified in a ḥadīth of Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī where it was said: لَا تَنْقَطِعُ الْهِجْرَةُ حَتّٰى تَنْقَطِعَ التَّوْبَةُ . It means that Hijrah (not in the sense of abandoning one's homeland, but in the sense of abandoning one's sins) will continue to exist until there remains the time to repent.

'Allamāh 'Aynī, the commentator of al-Bukhārī has said about this Hijrah: اَنَّ الْمُرَادَ بِالْهِجْرَةِ الْبَاقِيَةِ هِيَ هَجْرُ السَّيِّئَاتِ (This later Hijrah means the abandonment of sins). This subject also finds elucidation in a ḥadīth of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم where he is reported to have said: اَلْمُهَاجِرُ مَنْ هَجَرَ مَا نَهَى اللّٰهُ عَنْهُ It means that a Muhājir (Emigrant) is one who emigrates ('*hajara*': abandon, leave) from everything prohibited by Allah

1. It means that emigration no longer remained a pre-requisite for his being Muslim. However, if a Muslim lives in a non-Muslim country where he cannot fulfill his religious obligations, it is incumbent on him to emigrate if he has the means to do so. (Muḥammad Taqi Usmani)

Almighty (al-Mirqāt, v.1)

The discussion appearing above tells us that, technically, the word, Hijrah is applied in a dual sense:

1. To leave one's homeland in order to save one's faith as was done by the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all - they left their homeland of Makkah and emigrated to Madīnah and Ethiopia.

2. To leave one's sins.

The words of the verse 89: وَلَا تَتَّخِذُوا مِنْهُمْ وَلِيًّا وَّلَا نَصِيرًا (and do not take from them a friend or a helper) tell us that seeking help from disbelievers is forbidden (Ḥarām). Pursuant to this, it appears in a narration that the Anṣārs of Madīnah sought the permission of the Holy Prophet ﷺ to seek help from the Jews to offset disbelievers whereupon he said: اَلْخَبِيْثُ لَا حَاجَةَ لَنَا بِهِمْ (The bad ones! We do not need them). (Maẓharī, v.2)

Verses 92 - 93

وَمَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ اَنْ يَّقْتُلَ مُؤْمِنًا اِلَّا خَطَـًٔا ۚ وَمَنْ قَتَلَ مُؤْمِنًا خَطَـًٔا فَتَحْرِيْرُ رَقَبَةٍ مُّؤْمِنَةٍ وَّدِيَةٌ مُّسَلَّمَةٌ اِلٰٓى اَهْلِهٖٓ اِلَّآ اَنْ يَّصَّدَّقُوْا ۭ فَاِنْ كَانَ مِنْ قَوْمٍ عَدُوٍّ لَّكُمْ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَتَحْرِيْرُ رَقَبَةٍ مُّؤْمِنَةٍ ۭ وَاِنْ كَانَ مِنْ قَوْمٍۢ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُمْ مِّيْثَاقٌ فَدِيَةٌ مُّسَلَّمَةٌ اِلٰٓى اَهْلِهٖ وَتَحْرِيْرُ رَقَبَةٍ مُّؤْمِنَةٍ ۚ فَمَنْ لَّمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامُ شَهْرَيْنِ مُتَتَابِعَيْنِ ۡ تَوْبَةً مِّنَ اللّٰهِ ۭ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلِيْمًا حَكِيْمًا ﴿٩٢﴾ وَمَنْ يَّقْتُلْ مُؤْمِنًا مُّتَعَمِّدًا فَجَزَاۗؤُهٗ جَهَنَّمُ خٰلِدًا فِيْهَا وَغَضِبَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَلَعَنَهٗ وَاَعَدَّ لَهٗ عَذَابًا عَظِيْمًا ﴿٩٣﴾

It is not for a believer to kill any believer, except by mistake. And whoever kills a believer by mistake, then, a believing slave has to be freed and the blood money paid to his family, unless they forgo it.

And if he (the victim) belongs to a people hostile to you and is a believer, then, a believing slave has to be freed.

And if he (the victim) belongs to a people between whom and you there is treaty, then, blood money is to

be paid to his family, and a believing slave to be freed. And whoever does not find one has to fast for two consecutive months. This is a relenting from Allah. And Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise. [92]

And whoever kills a believer deliberately, his reward is *Jahannam* where he shall remain for ever and Allah shall be angry with him and shall cast curse upon him and he has prepared for him a mighty punishment. [93]

Commentary

Sequence of Verses

Linked with earlier verses dealing with fighting and killing, all forms of killing, in the first instance, are eight in number because the person killed is covered by one of the four conditions which follow. Either, he is a Muslim; or, he is a Dhimmī (a free, protected, non-Muslim resident of a Muslim state); or, he is beneficiary of a peace pact and has been assured of the protection of his life, property, honour and religion; or, he is a belligerent disbeliever. Then, killing is of two types: intentional, or accidental. Thus, we see that there are only eight possible forms of killing:

1. The intentional killing of a Muslim.
2. The accidental killing of a Muslim.
3. The intentional killing of a Dhimmī.
4. The accidental killing of a Dhimmī.
5. The intentional killing of a person with whom there was a pact of peace.
6. The accidental killing of a peace pact beneficiary.
7. The intentional killing of a belligerent disbeliever.
8. The accidental killing of a belligerent disbeliever.

Injunctions covering some of these situations have appeared earlier; some find mention later, and some others are contained in Ḥadīth. Thus, the injunction relating to the first situation enforceable in this life, that is, the obligatory duty of taking 'even retaliation' (*qiṣāṣ*) from him finds mention in Sūrh al-Baqarah and the injunction applicable to the Hereafter follows a little later in verse 93 beginning

with: وَمَنْ يَّقْتُلْ (And whoever kills....). The second situation appears in Verse 92 from وَمَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ (It is not for a believer to kill any believer) to وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَتَحْرِيْرُ رَقَبَةٍ (and if he i.e., victim was a believer...). The injunction covering the third situation appears in a hadīth from Dārqutnī where the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been reported to have subjected a Muslim to 'even retaliation' (*qiṣāṣ*) to compensate a *Dhimmī* (non-Muslim resident of a Muslim state) (اخرجه الزيلعى فى تخريج الهداية) The injunction for the fourth situation appears also in verse 92: وَاِنْ كَانَ مِنْ قَوْمٍ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُمْ مِّيْثَاقٌ (and if he is from the people with whom you have a peace treaty). The fifth situation has already been taken up in verse 90 of the previous section under: فَمَا جَعَلَ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ سَبِيْلًا (then Allah has not made it permissible for you). The injunction governing the sixth situation has been mentioned alongwith the one relating to the fourth situation because the peace covenant is general and covers the permanent and the temporary both. Thus, it includes *Dhimmī* and *Musta'min* both,[1] irrespective of their permanent or time-bound guarantee of peace and protection. (Al-durr-al-Mukhtār Kitāb al-diyāt)

The injunction relating to situations 7 and 8 is already evident from the very legalization of Jihād itself which has appeared earlier (86) because belligerent disbelievers are killed intentionally. If killed accidentally, its justification will stand proved in a higher degree. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Three kinds of homicide and their respective injunctions

1. *Qatl al-'Amad* (Intentional Killing) which is done with obvious intention by a weapon made from iron or is like a steel weapon in its ability to cut off parts, such as, a sharp-edged bamboo or a sharp-edged piece of rock and things like that.

2. *Qatl Shibh al-'Amad* (Quasi-Intentional Killing) which is, no doubt, done intentionally - but, not with a weapon which could cut off parts.

3. *Qatl al-Khaṭā'* (Accidental Killing). It can happen under intention and conjecture when someone aims at a man taking him to be

1. Dhimmi is a non-Muslim person permanently and legally living in an Islamic state while *Musta'min* is a non-Muslim who lawfully enters an Islamic state for temporary stay (Muhammad Taqi Usmani)

land game or belligerent disbeliever. Or, it can happen actually when one did aim at land game but ended up striking a man down. Here, *Khaṭā'* or accident means intentional. So, this covers the second and the third kind both. Both entail the obligation to pay *diyah* (blood money), and sin as well. But, the two kinds do differ in the later two consequences. The *diyah* in the second kind of killing is 100 camels of four types, that is, 25 of each type. The *diyah* of the third kind of killing is also 100 camels, but it has to be of five types, that is, 20 of each type. However, if *diyah* is paid in cash, the amount to be realized is ten thousand *dirham* or one thousand *dinār*. This holds good for both kinds. However, the second kind is more sinful because of the intention of killing while it is lesser in the third kind because it is the result of simple heedlessness (as in Hidāyah). As such, the obligatory nature of تَحْرِيْرُ رَقَبَةٍ (to free a slave) and the word, *taubah* (repentance) in the verse 92 support this position. The fact is that the ground reality of these three kinds is conditioned by Islamic laws as promulgated in the mortal world. As for their being intentional or non-intentional in terms of their being sinful, it depends on the volition of the heart and the intention to commit the act. The punishment due against such sin is known to Allah alone. According to His knowledge these terms, the first kind may become non-intentional; and the second, intentional.

Rulings

1. The amount of *diyah* (blood money) mentioned above applies to a male homicide victim. In case of a woman, it is half of it. (as in Hidāyah).

2. The *diyah* of a Muslim and Dhimmī is equal. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said: دية كل ذى عهد فى عهده الف دينار (Marāsīl of Abū Dāwūd, as quoted by Hidāyah).

3. *Kaffārah* (expiation) in the form of freeing a slave or fasting has to come from the killer himself. As for *diyah* (blood money), it is the responsibility of those who are his caretakers. In the terminology of the Sharī'ah, they are known as العاقلة : al-'Āqilah, those responsible for paying blood money.

Let there be no doubt at this point as to why the burden of a crime committed by the killer should be transferred to his guardians and supporters while they are innocent. The reason is that the guardians

of the killer are not totally faultless in this case. Their shortcoming is that they did not take necessary steps to stop him from venturing into such gross heedlessness against human life. Moreover, the fear of having to pay blood money, it is likely, will make them take all necessary precautions in the future so that such recklessness does not repeat itself.

4. In the act of freeing a slave (*Kaffārah*: Expiation), a bondman and a bondwoman are equal. The Qur'ānic word *Raqabah*, denoting a slave, is general. However, their physique should be sound and they should not be deformed in any way.

5. The *diyah* of the person killed shall be distributed as part of the inheritance determined by the Sharī'ah. A legal heir who forgives his share will cause the *diyah* to be forgiven upto the limit of his share. If all legal heirs forgive it, the whole *diyah* will stand forgiven.

6. The *diyah* of a person killed who has no legal heir as recognized by the Sharī'ah will be retired to the Bayt al-Māl (State Treasury) because *diyah* is inheritance and inheritance is governed by this very ruling. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

7. As for people bound by a mutual covenant, be they Dhimmīs, free non-Muslim citizens of a Muslim country; or, the Musta'min, (those given guarantee of peace for a temporary period of time) the *diyah* obligatory in their case is valid only when people belonging to that Dhimmī or Musta'min are present. If they have no such people, or such people be Muslims, then, given the fact that a Muslim cannot inherit from a disbeliever, this *diyah*, therefore, shall be deemed as non-existant. Thus, should he be a Dhimmī, his *diyah* shall be reitred into the Bayt al-Māl because the inheritance of a heirless Dhimmī - which includes *diyah* - goes to the Bayt al-Māl (as in al-Durr al-Mukhtār); otherwise, it will not be obligatory (Bayān al-Qur'ān).

8. If continuity is broken in fasting due to sickness or some other reason, then, one will have to fast afresh. But, for a woman, this continuity will not be deemed as broken because of her menstruation.

9. If, for some valid excuse, one does not have the strength to fast, then, he should keep repenting until his strength returns.

10. In intentional killing, there is no provision for this Kaffārah

(expiation); one should repent. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Verse 94 - 96

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓا إِذَا ضَرَبْتُمْ فِى سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَتَبَيَّنُوا وَلَا
تَقُولُوا لِمَنْ أَلْقَىٰٓ إِلَيْكُمُ السَّلَٰمَ لَسْتَ مُؤْمِنًا تَبْتَغُونَ عَرَضَ
الْحَيَوٰةِ الدُّنْيَا فَعِندَ اللَّهِ مَغَانِمُ كَثِيرَةٌ كَذَٰلِكَ كُنتُم مِّن قَبْلُ
فَمَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمْ فَتَبَيَّنُوٓا إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ
خَبِيرًا ﴿٩٤﴾ لَّا يَسْتَوِى الْقَٰعِدُونَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ غَيْرُ أُولِى
الضَّرَرِ وَالْمُجَٰهِدُونَ فِى سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ بِأَمْوَٰلِهِمْ وَأَنفُسِهِمْ فَضَّلَ
اللَّهُ الْمُجَٰهِدِينَ بِأَمْوَٰلِهِمْ وَأَنفُسِهِمْ عَلَى الْقَٰعِدِينَ دَرَجَةً
وَكُلًّا وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الْحُسْنَىٰ وَفَضَّلَ اللَّهُ الْمُجَٰهِدِينَ عَلَى
الْقَٰعِدِينَ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٩٥﴾ دَرَجَٰتٍ مِّنْهُ وَمَغْفِرَةً وَرَحْمَةً وَكَانَ
اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَّحِيمًا ﴿٩٦﴾

O those who believe, when you go out in the way of Allah, be careful, and do not say, to the one who offers you the *salām*[1] "You are not a believer" seeking goods of the worldly life. So, with Allah there are spoils in abundance. In the same state you were before; then Allah favoured you. So, be careful. Surely, Allah is all-aware of what you do. [94]

Those among the believers who sit back, except the handicapped, are not equal to those who fight in the way of Allah with their riches and their lives. Allah has raised the rank of those, who fight with their riches and their lives over those who sit; and to each Allah has promised good. And Allah has given precedence to those who fight over those who sit in giving them a great reward [95] **-- high ranks from Him and forgiveness and mercy. And Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful.** [96]

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1. Salām: the word prescribed by Islam for greeting, i.e. *Assalamu 'alaiykum...*

Commentary

Sequence of Verses

Stern warning has been given against the killing of a Muslim in previous verses. Now it is being said that the apparent profession of Islam is all that is needed for a Muslim to be regarded as a Muslim obligated to observe the laws of the Sharī'ah. So, it is necessary to abstain from the killing of a person who professes Islam. Furthermore, it is also not permissible to dig deep into his inward state of belief just because of some suspicion and to keep waiting for a definite proof of his certitude in faith in order that Islamic laws can be applied in his case. This is what happened during some battles with disbelievers when some Companions were unable to observe the fine line of distinction in this rule. On those occasions, there were some people who presented themselves as Muslims but some Companions took their profession of Islam as a lie and killed them, taking their belongings as war spoils. Allah Almighty condemned this indiscretionary practice. However, an admonition was considered sufficient and no severe warning was revealed for them against this act because the Companions did not know the rule clearly till that time. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Signs of Islam are sufficient to identify a Muslim:

In the first of the three verses cited above, the guidance given is that in the case of one who professes to be a Muslim, no Muslim is allowed to interpret his declaration of Islam as hypocrisy, without certain knowledge and proof. This verse (94) was revealed in the background of certain episodes relating to some Companions where they had not taken the correct line of action.

So, it has been reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās in Tirmidhī and the Musnad of Aḥmad that a man from the tribe of Banū Sulaym met a group of the noble Companions who were going on a Jihād mission. This man was grazing his goats. He offered salām greetings to the group which was a practical demonstration of his being a Muslim. The Companions thought that this man was just pretending in view of the situation before him. Thus, taking his profession of Islam as a ruse to save his life and property whereby he could get away from them by tricking them with greeting in the Muslim style, they killed him and appropriated the herd of his goats as war

spoils which they took to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم . Thereupon, this verse was revealed. It laid down the rule: Do not take anyone who greets you by offering salām in the Islamic manner as a pretender and never assume, without valid proof, that his profession of Islam was a trick and never take possession of his property as spoils. (Ibn Kathīr)

There is another narration from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās which has been reported by al-Bukhārī briefly and by al-Bazzār, in details. According to this narration, the Holy Prophet ﷺ sent out a group of mujāhidīn which included Sayyidnā Miqdād ibn al-Aswad. When they reached the designated spot, everyone present there ran away. The only man left there had a lot of valuable things with him. Facing the Companions, the man recited the *kalimah*: اَشْهَدُ اَنْ لَّآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ (I testify that there is no god but Allah). But, Sayyidnā Miqdād رضى الله عنه , assuming that the man's heart was not behind his verbal declaration of faith and that he was doing it simply to save his life and property, killed him. One Companion from among the group present admonished him for what he had done: He had killed a person who had testified that there is no god but Allah. He declared that he will make it a point to relate this incident before the Holy Prophet ﷺ when and if he would have the honour of returning to him. Finally, the group returned to Madīnah and reported the incident to the Holy Prophet ﷺ who called for Sayyidnā Miqdād and gave him a stern warning. He said: 'What would you say on the Day of Doom when the *kalimah* of لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ will stand as a plaintiff against you?' The verse لَا تَقُوْلُوْا لِمَنْ اَلْقٰىٓ اِلَيْكُمُ السَّلٰمَ لَسْتَ مُؤْمِنًا (do not say to the one who offers you salām, "You are not a believer") was revealed on this occasion.

Other incidents, apart from the two mentioned here, have been reported with reference to this verse, but respected scholars of Tafsīr do not admit of any contradiction in these narrations, for these events as a whole could have been the cause of the revelation.

The words of the verse are: اَلْقٰىٓ اِلَيْكُمُ السَّلٰمَ (offer you salām). If the word, salām in the text is taken to mean 'salām' in the technical sense (Muslim greeting or salutation), it applies to the first event more suitably. However, if 'salām' is taken to mean submission or surrender to the will of Allah in the literal sense, then, this meaning applies to both events equally. Therefore, salām in the present textual setting has also

been translated in the sense of submission and obedience to Allah.

It is impermissible to take a decision without investigating into related facts of an event

The first sentence of the verse (94) carries a general rule which must be followed by all Muslims: Let no Muslim do anything summarily as based on guess alone. The words of the verse are: إِذَا ضَرَبْتُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللّٰهِ فَتَبَيَّنُوا (when you go out in the way of Allah, be careful). Acting on conjecture is likely to land one in trouble. The restriction of travel in the verse is there because these events came to pass during the state of travel. Or, it may be because doubts crop up during travel to previously unvisited places as compared with the city of residence where things and people are generally familiar. Otherwise, the basic rule, in travel or while resident, is general, that is reacting to any situation without proper investigation is not permissible. In a hadīth, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said: "To act sensibly is from Allah and to rush through is from Shaytān" (al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ)

The second sentence: تَبْتَغُونَ عَرَضَ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا (seeking goods of the worldly life) in verse 94 is a prescription for weakness which caused this false step. The weakness was their desire to acquire worldly wealth through collecting spoils. But, immediately after, it was pointed out that Almighty Allah has set aside many more spoils destined for them. Why, then, should they bother about material gains? By way of further admonition, they were asked to recollect that there were so many among them who would not have dared to come out openly with their faith in Islam. It was only when Allah favoured them that they were delivered from the encirclement of disbelievers and were able to profess Islam openly. Keeping this situation in mind, would it not be possible that the person who is saying لَا إِلٰهَ إِلَّا اللّٰهُ at the sight of the Muslim army, might really be an adherent of Islam from the early days but was unable to profess it freely fearing reprisals from the disbelievers. When he saw the Muslim army, he lost no time in doing so. If they looked into their own situation, they would realize that there was the time when they had recited the *Kalimah* and had called them Muslims, the Sharī'ah of Islam had never asked them to first prove their being Muslims. There was no such condition. They were never asked to let their hearts be examined. They were not ordered to

produce a proof of their Islam before they could be declared as confirmed Muslims. Quite contrary to all this, the simple recital of the *Kalimah* of Islam: لَا إِلٰهَ إِلَّا اللّٰهُ مُحَمَّدٌ رَّسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ was considered good enough to recognize them as Muslims. Keeping this in mind, it was their duty that they should now take anyone who recites the *Kalimah* before them as a Muslim.

The meaning of not taking a Muslim to be a Kāfir

From this verse comes the important ruling that anyone who professes Islam and declares that he is a Muslim - by reciting the *Kalimah* or by associating himself with some marked feature of Islam such as the Adhān and the Ṣalāh - should be treated as a Muslim. All Muslims must deal with him as they would do with any other Muslim. They are not supposed to wait and worry about finding out whether such a person has embraced Islam with all his heart or it has been done out of expediency.

In addition to that, this is a case in which even his doings will not serve as the criterion. Suppose, someone skips Ṣalāh, does not fast and is involved with all sorts of sins - still, no one has the right to say that he has gone outside the pale of Islam or to treat him as one would treat a disbeliever. Therefore, the great Imām Abū Ḥanīfah said: لا نكفر اهل القبلة بذنب (We do not call 'the people of the Qiblah' Kāfirs because of some sin). Similar statements appear in hadīth narrations also, such as, 'Do not say that 'the people of Qiblah' are Kāfirs, no matter how sinful and evil-doing they may be.'

At this point, there is something everyone should understand and remember, clearly and particularly. This relates to the authority of the Qur'ān and Sunnah from which it is proved that calling or taking someone who calls himself a Muslim to be a Kāfir is not permissible. It clearly means that until such time he says or does something which provides the positive proof of *Kufr* (disbelief), his profession of faith in Islam shall be deemed as sound and he will continue to be taken as a Muslim and, for all practical purposes, he will be dealt with as one would deal with Muslims. No one will have the right to debate what goes on in his heart or how sincere or hypocritical he may or may not be.

But, there may be a person who professes Islam, attests to faith,

yet disgraces himself by uttering words of disbelief or prostrates before an idol or denies an injunction of Islam which is absolute and obvious, or takes to a religious way or mark of disbelievers - such a person will certainly be declared a Kāfir because of his deeds which prove his infidelity. It will be noticed that, the word تَبَيَّنُوا (be careful or investigate) in the present verse provides a hint to this effect, otherwise, the Jews and the Christians all claimed to be believers. Then, there was Musaylimah, the Liar. He was declared to be a Kāfir with the consensus of Companions, and killed. As for him, he was not only a professor of the Islamic creed but a practicing adherent of Adhān and Ṣalāh as well. In his Adhān, he had the Muezzin say: اَشْهَدُ اَنْ لَّآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ (I testify that there is no god but Allah) which was duly followed by اَشْهَدُ اَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَّسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ (I testify that Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allah). But, while he did this, he also claimed to be a prophet and a messenger who received revelations. This was an open denial of the binding injunctions of the Qur'ān and Sunnah. It was on this basis that he was declared to be an apostate and a Jihād force was sent against him with the consensus of the Companions.

In short, the correct course of action when faced with this problem is: Take everyone who recites the *Kalimah* and adheres to Islam (*ahl al-Qiblah*: the people of Qiblah) to be a Muslim. Peeking into his heart is not our business. Let Allah be the judge. But, when you see one professing faith yet doing things to the contrary, take him to have become an apostate subject to the condition that such deeds be, absolutely and certainly, contrary to the dictates of Faith and that it admits of no other probability or interpretation.

Finally, we can now see that 'the reciter of the *Kalimah*' (*Kalimah-go*) or *Ahl al-Qiblah* (the people of Qiblah, meaning Muslims who universally turn to the direction of Holy Ka'bah when praying) are technical terms applied solely to one who, after his professing Islam, does nothing by his word and deed which can be classed as infidelity.

Some Injunctions about Jihād

The second verse (95) takes up some injunction related to Jihād. It says that people who do not participate in Jihād without some valid excuse cannot be equal to those who fight in the way of Allah staking everything they have, even their lives. In fact, Almighty Allah has

raised the ranks of those who fight in the way of Allah over those who do not. However, along with this declaration of the precedence of Mujāhidīn, it was also said that Almighty Allah has promised good returns for both groups. Both shall be blessed with Paradise and Allah's forgiveness - the only difference between them will be that of ranking.

According to leading exegetes, this verse tell us that Jihād is *Farḍ 'ala al-Kifāyah* under normal conditions. *Farḍ Kifāyah,* as opposed to *Farḍ 'ala al'Ayn* (an obligation for every individual), is an obligation of sufficiency. It means that should some people fulfill it, the rest of Muslims stand relieved subject to the condition that those engaged in Jihād must be sufficient for that Jihād. If the situation is otherwise, Jihād will become an obligation (*Farḍ 'Ayn*) on all Muslims living in the neighbouring areas who will have to come forward to help the Mujāhidīn.

The Definition of *Farḍ Kifāyah*

In the terminology of the Sharī'ah, *Farḍ 'ala al-Kifāyah* refers to obligations the fulfillment of which is not mandatory on every individual Muslim. Instead, if some fulfill it, that will be good enough. Most activities of a collective nature fall under this category. Teaching of religious sciences and their wider dissemination is also an obligation of this nature - if some people are devoted to the fulfillment of this obligation and their number is fairly sufficient, then, other Muslims are absolved of this duty. But, should it be that just about nobody is discharging this obligation wherever there be the need to do so, then, everyone becomes a sinner.

The Ṣalāh for the deceased, the bathing and shrouding of the body is also a collective obligation, for a brother fulfills the rights of a Muslim brother and this is how it is supposed to be, a requirement of the Islamic law. The making of Masājid and Madāris (mosques and religious schools) and running programmes of public welfare are included under this very injunction, that is, if some Muslims do that, the rest stand absolved of the obligation.

Generally, injunctions related to collective needs have been, of necessity, classed as *Farḍ Kifāyah* by the Sharī'ah of Islam so that all duties can be discharged under the principle of distribution of work. Thus, some people would be engaged in Jihād, others in education and

da'wah activities and still others in attending to various other Islamic or human needs.

The statement وَكُلًّا وَّعَدَ اللّٰهُ الْحُسْنٰى (and to each, Allah has promised good) in this verse gives peace of mind to those who are engaged in religious duties other than Jihād. But, this injunction is operative in normal conditions when the Jihād waged by some people is sufficient for defence against the enemy attack. Should it be that their Jihād needs additional support, Jihād becomes an absolute obligation on neighbouring Muslims in the first instance. If this support too turns out to be still deficient, Jihād becomes an absolute obligation on Muslims living nearby in their proximity. Finally, just in case, they too are unable to meet the challenge from the enemy, the mantle of Jihād duty falls on the shoulders of other Muslims to the limit that there may come a time when every Muslim from the East and the West may have to participate in the Jihād as solemn religious obligation.

The third verse (96) too recounts the same degrees of precedence that the Mujāhidīn have over others.

Ruling

Jihād is not obligatory on the lame, the crippled, the blind, the sick and on others who are excusable under the Islamic law.

Verses 97 - 100

إِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ تَوَفّٰهُمُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ ظَالِمِيْٓ أَنْفُسِهِمْ قَالُوْا فِيْمَ كُنْتُمْ ۖ قَالُوْا كُنَّا مُسْتَضْعَفِيْنَ فِي الْأَرْضِ ۚ قَالُوْٓا أَلَمْ تَكُنْ أَرْضُ اللّٰهِ وَاسِعَةً فَتُهَاجِرُوْا فِيْهَا ۚ فَأُولٰٓئِكَ مَأْوٰىهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ ۖ وَسَآءَتْ مَصِيْرًا ﴿٩٧﴾ إِلَّا الْمُسْتَضْعَفِيْنَ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ وَالنِّسَآءِ وَالْوِلْدَانِ لَا يَسْتَطِيْعُوْنَ حِيْلَةً وَّلَا يَهْتَدُوْنَ سَبِيْلًا ﴿٩٨﴾ فَأُولٰٓئِكَ عَسَى اللّٰهُ أَنْ يَّعْفُوَ عَنْهُمْ ۚ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَفُوًّا غَفُوْرًا ﴿٩٩﴾ وَمَنْ يُّهَاجِرْ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ يَجِدْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مُرٰغَمًا كَثِيْرًا وَّسَعَةً ۚ وَمَنْ يَّخْرُجْ مِنْۢ بَيْتِهٖ مُهَاجِرًا إِلَى اللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ ثُمَّ يُدْرِكْهُ الْمَوْتُ فَقَدْ وَقَعَ أَجْرُهٗ عَلَى اللّٰهِ ۗ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا ﴿١٠٠﴾

Those whom the angels take while they had wronged themselves, (to them) the angels said, "What were you (involved) in?" They said, "We were oppressed in the earth." They said, "Was not the earth of Allah wide enough that you might have sought refuge in it?" As for such, their shelter is Jahannam. And it is an evil place to return [97] **- except the oppressed, men and women and children, who cannot manage a device nor can find a way. As for such, it is likely that Allah would pardon them. And Allah is Most-Pardoning, Most-Forgiving.** [99]

And whoever migrates in the way of Allah shall find in the earth many a place to settle and a wide dimension (of resources). And whoever leaves his home migrating for the sake of Allah and His Messenger and death overtakes him, then, his reward is established with Allah. And Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [100]

Commentary

The Definition of Hijrah

In the four verses cited above, the merits, blessings and injunctions of Hijrah have been described. Lexically, Hijrah, Hijrān and Hajr mean 'being displeased with something and leaving it'. In common parlance, the leaving of one's home country is known as Hijrah. In the terminology of the Sharī'ah, leaving *Dār al-Kufr* (Homeland of disbelievers) and going to *Dār al-Islam* (Abode of Islam) is called *Hijrah* (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī).

In Sharḥ al-Mishkāh, Mullā 'Alī al-Qārī has said: Leaving a home country for religious reasons is also included under *Hijrah* (Mirqāt, p. 39, v.1).

From the verse الَّذِيْنَ اُخْرِجُوْا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ وَاَمْوَالِهِمْ (59:8): 'Those who have been driven away from their homes ...' revealed about emigrating Companions, we know if disbelievers of a country forcibly expel Muslims because they are Muslims, this too will be included under *Hijrah*.

From this definition, we learn that Muslims migrating from India to Pakistan who came here out of disgust for *Dār al-Kufr* at their own choice or were driven away by non-Muslims simply because they were Muslims, are all *'Muhājirs'* in the Islamic legal sense. But, those who have moved to benefit from business or employment opportunities are

not entitled to be called '*Muhājir*' in that Islamic legal sense.

Then, there is the ḥadīth from al-Bukhārī and Muslim in which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been reported to have said:

اَلْمُهَاجِرُ مَنْ هَجَرَ مَانَهَى اللّٰهُ عَنْهُ وَرَسُوْلُهُ

Muhājir is one who leaves everything Allah and His Messenger have prohibited.

The full sense of the saying becomes clear from the first sentence of this very ḥadīth which is as follows:

اَلْمُسْلِمُ مَنْ سَلِمَ الْمُسْلِمُوْنَ مِنْ لِّسَانِهٖ وَيَدِهٖ

A Muslim is the one from whom all Muslims remain safe - (safe) from his tongue and (safe) from his hands. (Tirmidhī, Kitab al-'Īmān)

As obvious, it means that a true and staunch Muslim has to be the one who hurts none. Similarly, a true and successful *Muhājir* is the one who does not consider migration from his home country as the ultimate obligation. He should, rather, leave everything else the Sharī'ah has declared to be unlawful or impermissible. Said poetically, it would be saying something like: اپنے دل کو بھی بدل جامہ احرام کے ساتھ (When you change into the *Iḥrām* garment, better change your heart too!)

The Merits of *Hijrah*

Just as the verses about *Jihād* are spread out all over in the Holy Qur'ān, *Hijrah* too has been mentioned many times in most of the Sūrahs. A cumulative view of these verses shows that there are three kinds of themes in verses relating to *Hijrah*. Firstly, there are the merits of *Hijrah*; secondly, its worldly and other-worldly blessings; and thirdly, warnings against not migrating from *Dār al-Kufr* despite having the ability to do so.

As for the merits of *Hijrah*, there is a verse in Sūrah al-Baqarah:

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَالَّذِيْنَ هَاجَرُوْا وَجَاهَدُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ اُولٰٓئِكَ يَرْجُوْنَ رَحْمَةَ اللّٰهِ وَاللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ .

As for those who believed and those who migrated and carried out *Jihād* in the way of Allah, they do hope for Allah's mercy and Allah is Forgiving, Very-Merciful - (2:218).

The second verse appears in Sūrah al-Taubah:

الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَهَاجَرُوْا وَجَاهَدُوْا فِىْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ بِاَمْوَالِهِمْ وَاَنْفُسِهِمْ اَعْظَمُ دَرَجَةً عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ وَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْفَآئِزُوْنَ

And those who believed and emigrated and took up Jihād in the way of Allah with their wealth and lives are greater in rank in the sight of Allah - and they are the successful ones - (9:20).

The third verse belongs to Sūrah al-Nisā' and appears right here as part of the set of verses under study:

وَمَنْ يَّخْرُجْ مِنْۢ بَيْتِهٖ مُهَاجِرًا اِلَى اللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ ثُمَّ يُدْرِكْهُ الْمَوْتُ فَقَدْ وَقَعَ اَجْرُهٗ عَلَى اللّٰهِ

And whoever migrates in the way of Allah shall find in the earth many a place to settle and a wide dimension (of resources). And whoever leaves his home migrating for the sake of Allah and His Messenger and death overtakes him, then, his reward is established with Allah. And Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful - (4:100).

According to some narrations, this last verse was revealed about Sayyidnā Khālid ibn Ḥizam at the time of the migration to Ethiopia. He had left Makkah on his way to Ethiopia with the intention of Hijrah. Enroute, a snake bit him which caused his death. In short, the three verses cited above have clearly emphasized Hijrah from *Dār al-Kufr* (migration from the Abode of Disbelief) and the many merits it has.

In a ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has said: اَلْهِجْرَةُ تَهْدِمُ مَاكَانَ قَبْلَهَا meaning: Hijrah will undo all sins which may have been committed before it.

The Blessings of Hijrah

As for blessings, a verse from Sūrah al-Naḥl says:

وَالَّذِيْنَ هَاجَرُوْا فِى اللّٰهِ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا ظُلِمُوْا لَنُبَوِّئَنَّهُمْ فِى الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَّلَاَجْرُ الْاٰخِرَةِ اَكْبَرُ لَوْ كَانُوْا يَعْلَمُوْنَ .

And those who migrated for the sake of Allah after they were subjected to injustice, to them We shall give a good place to be in the world while the reward of the Hereafter is certainly

great - only if they had realized! (16:41)

The fourth verse of the set of four verses (97-100) appearing at the head of this part of the Commentary deals with approximately the same subject. There it has been said:

وَمَنْ يُّهَاجِرْ فِىْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ يَجِدْ فِى الْاَرْضِ مُرٰغَمًا كَثِيْرًا وَّسَعَةً

And whoever migrates in the way of Allah shall find in the earth many a place to settle and a wide dimension (of resources).

The word '*murāgham*' in the verse is a verbal noun which means 'to move from one land to the other' and the place to which one moves and settles is also called '*murāgham*'.

Both these verses quoted above tell us about the open and the hidden blessings of Hijrah where Almighty Allah has promised to everyone who migrates for the sake of Allah and His Messenger that He shall open new opportunities in the world for them and give them a good home to settle. As for the rewards and ranks of the Hereafter, they are beyond any reach of expectation or imagination.

The words لَنُبَوِّئَنَّهُمْ فِى الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً which promise 'a good place to be' in the world have been interpreted variously. Mujāhid explains it as 'lawful sustenance', Ḥasan al-Baṣrī as 'good home' while some other commentators have interpreted it as 'superiority in excellence, honour and power over antagonists.' The truth of the matter is that all these elements are included within the sense of the verse. World history bears witness that whoever has left his homeland for the sake of Allah, to him Almighty Allah has given a home far better than what he had earlier, far more honour and far more comfort. Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام migrated to Syria from his homeland in Iraq - Allah gave him all those things. Sayyidnā Mūsā and the Banī Isrā'īl migrated from Egypt, their homeland for the sake of Allah, then He gave them the land of Syria, a better homeland. Then, they got Egypt too. When our master and the last of the prophets, Sayyidnā Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم and his Companions left Makkah for the sake of Allah and His Messenger, these blessed emigrants found the best of shelter in Madīnah, far better than Makkah. There they had honour and power and peace and prosperity. Of course, this does not include the transitory hardship

faced during the early period of Hijrah. But, soon after that, the blessings, which were showered on these people and which continued through several generations, shall be the proper yardstick in this matter.

Events related to the poverty and hunger of Noble Companions so well-known belong generally to the early period of Hijrah; or, go as what can be called volitional acceptance of poverty, a dignified attitude of readiness to live with less (*Faqr*). In other words, they just did not like worldly wealth and property as a result of which they lost no time in spending what they received, in the way of Allah. This was very much the state in which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم lived. His lack of means and patience in hunger were simply voluntary. He just did not choose to be rich. Nonetheless, during the sixth year of Hijrah, after the conquest of Khyber, things had changed and sufficient means of sustenance were available for the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his family. The same was the case with all righteous caliphs. When they reached Madīnah, Allah had given them everything they needed. But, when Islam needed their support, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr came forward and donated everything he had in his house. The Mother of the Faithful, Sayyidah Zaynab would give away all her stipend money to the poor and the needy and remain satisfied living indigently. For this reason, she was called 'The Mother of the Needy'. On the other side, no less in number were the rich ones among the Companions who left wealth and property behind. There were many among the Companions who were poor in their home-city of Makkah but Allah Almighty made them rich and happy after Hijrah. Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله تعالى عنه can be cited as a good example. When he was appointed the governor of a province, he used to enjoy talking about his past with unusual relish. He would formally address himself and say: 'O Abū Hurairah, you are the same man, the servant of a tribe. Your salary was what you could eat. Your duty was to walk with those who rode on a journey and your duty was to collect firewood for them when they broke their journey at a certain stage. Today, because of Islam, you are here, so high from so low, and they call you the Commander of the Faithful!

In summation, it can be said that the world has openly witnessed

the fulfillment of the promise Allah has made in the Qur'an. However, the verse has put a condition that they must be 'true emigrants for the sake of Allah', a substantiation of *Hajaru fi-llah*. This kind of emigrant should have not migrated for the sake of wordly wealth, office, power, recognition, honour or influence. Otherwise, in a ḥadith of al-Bukhari, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has also been reported to have said: 'Those who migrate for the sake of Allah and His Messenger, their migration is precisely for Allah and His Messenger.' It means that this is the correct mode of Hijrah the merits and blessings of which appear in the Qur'an. As for those who migrate to make money or marry a woman, their compensation against Hijrah is exactly what they migrated for.

In our time, some groups of *muhajirin* (emigrants) who are living in distress are either in that transitory stage of the early period of Hijrah which is usually marked with hardships, or they are not *Muhajirs* in the real sense. They should correct their intention and take charge of the circumstances under which they live. After their intention and their corresponding deeds have been corrected, they shall witness the truth of Allah's promise with their own eyes.

Verses 101 104

وَإِذَا ضَرَبْتُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَلَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ تَقْصُرُوا
مِنَ الصَّلٰوةِ إِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَنْ يَفْتِنَكُمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ۚ إِنَّ الْكٰفِرِينَ
كَانُوا لَكُمْ عَدُوًّا مُبِينًا ﴿١٠١﴾ وَإِذَا كُنْتَ فِيهِمْ فَأَقَمْتَ لَهُمُ
الصَّلٰوةَ فَلْتَقُمْ طَائِفَةٌ مِنْهُمْ مَعَكَ وَلْيَأْخُذُوا أَسْلِحَتَهُمْ فَإِذَا
سَجَدُوا فَلْيَكُونُوا مِنْ وَرَائِكُمْ وَلْتَأْتِ طَائِفَةٌ أُخْرٰى لَمْ
يُصَلُّوا فَلْيُصَلُّوا مَعَكَ وَلْيَأْخُذُوا حِذْرَهُمْ وَأَسْلِحَتَهُمْ ۗ وَدَّ
الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوْ تَغْفُلُونَ عَنْ أَسْلِحَتِكُمْ وَأَمْتِعَتِكُمْ فَيَمِيلُونَ
عَلَيْكُمْ مَيْلَةً وَاحِدَةً ۚ وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِنْ كَانَ بِكُمْ أَذًى مِنْ
مَطَرٍ أَوْ كُنْتُمْ مَرْضٰى أَنْ تَضَعُوا أَسْلِحَتَكُمْ ۖ وَخُذُوا حِذْرَكُمْ ۗ إِنَّ

اللّٰهَ اَعَدَّ لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ عَذَابًا مُّهِيْنًا ﴿١٠٢﴾ فَاِذَا قَضَيْتُمُ الصَّلٰوةَ
فَاذْكُرُوا اللّٰهَ قِيٰمًا وَّقُعُوْدًا وَّعَلٰى جُنُوْبِكُمْ ۚ فَاِذَا اطْمَاْنَنْتُمْ
فَاَقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ ۚ اِنَّ الصَّلٰوةَ كَانَتْ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ كِتٰبًا
مَّوْقُوْتًا ﴿١٠٣﴾ وَلَا تَهِنُوْا فِي ابْتِغَآءِ الْقَوْمِ ؕ اِنْ تَكُوْنُوْا تَاْلَمُوْنَ
فَاِنَّهُمْ يَاْلَمُوْنَ كَمَا تَاْلَمُوْنَ ۚ وَتَرْجُوْنَ مِنَ اللّٰهِ مَا لَا يَرْجُوْنَ ؕ وَكَانَ
اللّٰهُ عَلِيْمًا حَكِيْمًا ﴿١٠٤﴾

And when you travel in the earth, there is no sin on you in shortening your *Ṣalāh* if you fear that the disbelievers would put you in trouble. Surely, the disbelievers are an open enemy for you. [101]

And when you (O prophet) are in their midst, and arrange for them the *Ṣalāh*, then, a party from them should stand with you and should take their arms along. Then, once they performed *Sajdah*,[1] they should move away from you and the other party, which has not yet performed *Ṣalāh*, should come and perform *Ṣalāh* with you, and should take their precautionary measures and their arms. Those who disbelieve would want you to become heedless to your arms and your belongings so they come down upon you in a single move. And there is no sin on you, if you have some inconvenience due to rain or you are sick, in putting your arms aside. And do take your precautionary measures. Surely, Allah has prepared for the disbelievers a humiliating punishment. [102]

And once you have finished your *Ṣalāh*, then, remember Allah while standing, sitting and reclining. And as soon as you are secure, perform the *Ṣalāh* as due. Surely, *Ṣalāh* is an obligation on the believers which is tied up with time. [103]

And do not show weakness in pursuing these people. If you suffer, then, they suffer as you suffer, while you hope from Allah what they do not hope. And Allah is

1. *Sajdah* or *Sujud*, a way of prostration specified by the Sharī'ah of Islam as a part of *Ṣalah*.

All-Knowing, All-Wise. [104]

Commentary

The subject of Jihād and Hijrah were taken up in previous verses. Since travel is involved in Jihād and Hijrah under most conditions, the likelihood of confrontation with the enemy is strong and frequent while making such a trip. Therefore, special mention has been made in the verses cited above of some particular leaves and concessions in the performance of Ṣalāh in due consideration of travel and its dangers.

The concessions given in travel

(In Islamic legal terminology, *Safar* means journey or travel; *Qaṣr* refers to the making of one's Ṣalāh short while in that status. Thus, four obligatory *Raka'āt* of Ẓuhr, 'Aṣr and 'Ishā are reduced in number and confined to two *Raka'āt* only.)

Rulings:

1. Full Ṣalāh is made in a journey which is less than 48 miles.

2. If, after reaching the destination at the end of the journey, one intends to stay there for less than fifteen days, rules relating to 'journey' will continue to apply to him, that is, the obligatory four *Raka'āt* of Ṣalāh will be reduced to half. This is *Qaṣr*. Now, if one intends to stay at one place for fifteen days, or more, it will become his place or country of residence. Here too, *Qaṣr* will not be observed as it was not observed in his original home country, that is, full Ṣalāh will be performed.

3. *Qaṣr* is done in the *Farḍ* (obligatory) Ṣalāh of Ẓuhr, 'Aṣr and 'Ishā' only. There is no *Qaṣr* in Maghrib and Fajr, nor in Sunnah and *Witr* prayers.

5. If, there be no fear of possible danger during a journey, *Qaṣr* will still be observed in making Ṣalāh.

6. Some people are troubled by apprehensions of sin when making their Ṣalāh short (*Qaṣr*) in place of the regular full Ṣalāh. This is not correct because *Qaṣr* is also a rule of the Sharī'ah following which brings no sin. On the contrary, it brings reward.

7. Verse 102 mentions a special way of offering Ṣalāh in a state where, due to the fear of enemy, all the Muslims cannot pray in a

single congregation. This special way is called '*Ṣalātul-Khawf*', the details of which are found in the books of Islamic *Fiqh*. Verse 102 says: وَإِذَا كُنْتَ فِيْهِمْ فَأَقَمْتَ لَهُمُ الصَّلٰوةَ (And when you {O prophet} are among them and arrange for them the Ṣalāh). Let this not be construed to mean that the injunction of the Ṣalāh of Fear (*Ṣalātul-Khawf*) is no more imperative because the blessed person of the noble Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is no more present among us. The reason is that this restriction has been mentioned here in terms of the situation at that particular time, for there can be no *sans*-excuse Imām of Ṣalāh in the presence of the Prophet. After him, whoever is the Imām shall be deemed to be standing in his place and he will be the one to lead the *Ṣalātul-Khawf*. All leading religious authorities agree that the injunction of *Ṣalātul-Khawf* is operative even after him and has not been abrogated.

8. Just as making *Ṣalatul-Khawf* is permissible when in fear of hostility from human beings, so it is when one is gripped with the fear of hurt from some beast like a lion or python and there is very little time left to make the Ṣalāh.

9. In this verse (102), mention has been made of both groups making one *Raka'ah* each, but the method of performing the second *Raka'ah* has appeared in Ḥadīth which says: 'When the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم turned for *Salām* after the completion of his two *Raka'āt*, the two groups went on to complete their one *Raka'ah* each on their own'. More details can be seen there.

Verses 105 - 113

إِنَّآ أَنْزَلْنَآ إِلَيْكَ الْكِتٰبَ بِالْحَقِّ لِتَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِمَآ أَرٰىكَ
اللّٰهُ ۚ وَلَا تَكُنْ لِّلْخَآئِنِيْنَ خَصِيْمًا ﴿١٠٥﴾ وَّاسْتَغْفِرِ اللّٰهَ ۚ إِنَّ
اللّٰهَ كَانَ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا ﴿١٠٦﴾ وَلَا تُجَادِلْ عَنِ الَّذِيْنَ يَخْتَانُوْنَ
أَنْفُسَهُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُحِبُّ مَنْ كَانَ خَوَّانًا أَثِيْمًا ﴿١٠٧﴾
يَّسْتَخْفُوْنَ مِنَ النَّاسِ وَلَا يَسْتَخْفُوْنَ مِنَ اللّٰهِ وَهُوَ مَعَهُمْ إِذْ
يُبَيِّتُوْنَ مَا لَا يَرْضٰى مِنَ الْقَوْلِ ۚ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ بِمَا يَعْمَلُوْنَ
مُحِيْطًا ﴿١٠٨﴾ هٰٓأَنْتُمْ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ جٰدَلْتُمْ عَنْهُمْ فِي الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ۟

فَمَنْ يُّجَادِلُ اللّٰهَ عَنْهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ اَمْ مَّنْ يَّكُوْنُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَكِيْلًا ﴿۱۰۹﴾ وَمَنْ يَّعْمَلْ سُوْٓءًا اَوْ يَظْلِمْ نَفْسَهٗ ثُمَّ يَسْتَغْفِرِ اللّٰهَ يَجِدِ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا ﴿۱۱۰﴾ وَمَنْ يَّكْسِبْ اِثْمًا فَاِنَّمَا يَكْسِبُهٗ عَلٰى نَفْسِهٖ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلِيْمًا حَكِيْمًا ﴿۱۱۱﴾ وَمَنْ يَّكْسِبْ خَطِيْٓئَةً اَوْ اِثْمًا ثُمَّ يَرْمِ بِهٖ بَرِيْٓئًا فَقَدِ احْتَمَلَ بُهْتَانًا وَّاِثْمًا مُّبِيْنًا ﴿۱۱۲﴾ وَلَوْ لَا فَضْلُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكَ وَرَحْمَتُهٗ لَهَمَّتْ طَّآئِفَةٌ مِّنْهُمْ اَنْ يُّضِلُّوْكَ ؕ وَمَا يُضِلُّوْنَ اِلَّآ اَنْفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَضُرُّوْنَكَ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ؕ وَاَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتٰبَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَعَلَّمَكَ مَا لَمْ تَكُنْ تَعْلَمُ ؕ وَكَانَ فَضْلُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكَ عَظِيْمًا ﴿۱۱۳﴾

Surely, We have revealed to you the Book with the truth so that you may judge between people with the insight Allah has given to you. And do not be an advocate for those who breach trust. [105] **And seek forgiveness from Allah. Surely, Allah is All-Forgiving, Very-Merciful.** [106]

And do not argue on behalf of those who betray themselves. Surely, Allah does not like anyone who is a sinful betrayer. [107] **They hide from people but do not hide from Allah. And He is with them when they make plans to say what He does not approve. And Allah encompasses whatever they do.** [108] **Look, this is what you are -- you have argued for them in the worldly life but who shall argue for them with Allah on Doomsday, or who shall be their defender?** [109]

And whoever acts evil or wrongs himself, then seeks forgiveness from Allah, shall find Allah Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [110]

And whoever commits a sin, commits it only against himself. And Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise. [111]

And whoever commits a vice or a sin, then shifts its blame to an innocent person, he indeed takes the

burden of a false imputation and a glaring sin. [112]

And if the grace of Allah and His mercy were not with you, a group from them had resolved to mislead you. And they mislead none but themselves. And they can do you no harm. And Allah has revealed to you the Book and the wisdom and has taught you what you did not know. And the grace of Allah on you has always been great. [113]

Sequence

While discussing the matters relating to the open disbelievers, the Holy Qur'ān has, in some places in the previous verses, referred to the hypocrites and has pointed out that *Kufr* or disbelief was the common denominator between them. Further on, a particular episode relating to some hypocrites finds mention in the present verses, details of which are being given below.

The background of these verses

The nine verses (105-113) cited above refer to a particular episode. But, very much in accordance with the characteristic style of the Qur'ān, the instructions given in this conection are not peculiar to this episode. They are, rather, a set of basic principles and rules commonly beneficial for all Muslims whether of a given time or of future generations.

Let us go to the event first, then consider the wisdom of related instructions which provide solutions to corresponding problems. The episode centres around the clan of Banū Ubayriq in Madīnah. A man from this clan - his name being Bashir as in the narration of Tirmidhī and Ḥākim, or Tu'mah as in the narration of al-Baghawī and Ibn Jarīr - broke into the house of Sayyidnā Rifā'ah, the uncle of Sayyidnā Qatādah ibn al-Nu'mān, and committed a theft.

In the narration of Tirmidhī, it is also mentioned that this man was, in reality, a hypocrite. He used to live in Madīnah yet was audacious enough to compose poetic satires insulting the noble Companions رضی اللہ عنہم and used to publicise these in the name of others while keeping his identity concealed.

As for the actual theft it was committed during the early period of Hijrah when Muslims generally lived under straightened circum-

stances facing all sorts of need, hunger and deprivation. The common food they ate was bread from barley flour or dates, or wheat flour which was scarce and just not available in Madīnah. Once in a while, when it did come from Syria some people would buy it for guests or for some other special need. Thus, Sayyidnā Rifā'ah bought some wheat flour for himself, put it in a bag, added some arms on top of it and stashed the bag in a small roomette of the house in all possible safety. But, this man - Ibn Ubayriq, Bashīr or Tu'mah - somehow came to know, broke into the house and decamped with the bag. When Sayyidnā Rifā'ah discovered the theft in the morning, he went to his nephew, Qatādah and told him about it. Together they went out investigating in the locality. Some people said that they had seen the light of fire coming from the Banū Ubayriq house last night and that probably they were cooking what was stolen. When Banū Ubayriq learnt about their secret being out, they themselves came there and charged that the theft was committed by Labīd ibn Sahl. Labid was well-known as a sincere and pious Muslim. When Labid himself came to know about this allegation, he came out of his house, sword in hand, saying: You are blaming me for this theft, now I am not going to put my sword back into the sheath, until the truth of this theft becomes clear.

Quietly, Banū Ubayriq confided to him: Do not worry. Nobody is blaming you. Moreover, this is not the sort of thing you would do. At this point, the narration in al-Baghawī and Ibn Jarīr says that Banū Ubayriq charged a Jew with the theft and, very cleverly, made a track of seemingly falling flour from a slit in the bag, which was their own work, all the way from Rifā'ah's house to the house of the Jew. When the traces of the flour were discovered and word went around, they carried the stolen arms and armours as well to the same Jew and left these with him for safe keeping. Following investigations, they were recovered from his house. The Jew declared on oath that these were given to him by Ibn Ubayriq.

In order to bring the two narrations of Tirmidhī and al-Baghawī into harmony, it can be said that may be Banū Ubayriq had first charged Labīd ibn Sahl with the theft, but once they realized that their ruse was not working, they targeted the Jew with the blame. Ultimately then, the case now rested between the Jew and Banū Ubayriq.

On the other side, Sayyidnā Qatādah and Rifā'ah were overwhelmingly convinced on the basis of circumstancial evidence that this was the work of Banū Ubayriq. Sayyidnā Qatādah went to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and told him about the theft and also told him that he strongly suspected Banū Ubayriq. When Banū Ubayriq heard the news, they came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and complained against Sayyidnā Qatādah and Rifā'ah that they were putting the blame for the theft on them without having any valid legal proof and despite the fact that the stolen property was recovered from the house of the Jew. They appealed to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to restrain Sayyidnā Qatādah and Rifā'ah from blaming them for the theft and if they had to sue anyone, they should sue the Jew.

Things as they appeared on the outside made even the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم incline towards the probability that the theft was committed by the Jew and that the accusation against Banū Ubayriq was not correct. So much so that, according to the narration of al-Baghawī, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had the intention of inflicting the punishment for theft on the Jew and sever his hand.

Matters went worse when Sayyidnā Qatādah appeared before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم who admonished him by saying that he was accusing a Muslim family of theft without any proof. Sayyidnā Qatādah was grieved about the whole thing and wished that he had not spoken to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم about this matter even if he had to bear by the loss of his property. Similarly, when Sayyidnā Rifā'ah learnt about what the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had said, he too exercised patience and said: والله المستعان (And Allah is the one from whom all help is sought).

Not much time had passed when a whole section of the Qur'ān was revealed about this episode through which the reality behind it was shown to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and general instructions covering such cases were given. As the Holy Qur'ān exposed the theft committed by Banū Ubayriq and acquitted the Jew. Banū Ubayriq were left with no choice but to return the stolen property to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم who had it returned to the owner, Sayyidnā Rifā'ah, who finally endowed all those arms for use in Jihād. When Banū Ubayriq found their theft exposed, Bashīr, the son of Ubayriq

ran away from Madīnah landing in Makkah where he joined the disbelievers. Consequently, if he had been a hypocrite earlier, he became an acknowledged disbeliever; and, if he was a Muslim earlier, he was an apostate now.

It appears in Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ that the curse of his antagonism to Allah and His Messenger did not allow Bashīr ibn Ubayriq to live peacefully even in Makkah. When the woman at whose house he had taken up residence found out about this episode, she threw him out of her house. Thus, loitering on the streets came the day when he broke into somebody else's house. The wall through which he went in collapsed on him and killed him right there.

These are the details of the episode. Let us now give some thought to what has been said in the Qur'ān:

After telling the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم the reality behind the case of theft, in the first verse (105), it was said: Allah has given you the Qur'ān through revelations so that you can use the knowledge and insight gifted to you to decide matters accordingly, abstaining from taking sides with traitors, that is, Banū Ubayriq. No doubt, the obvious circumstances and evidences were such that a tilt towards the probability of the Jew having committed the theft was not a sin, yet contrary to the actual fact it was. Therefore, in the second verse (106), the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was asked to seek forgiveness from Allah because the station of prophets عليهم السلام is very high and Allah does not favour the issuance of even something so insignificant from them.

In the third verse (107), it has been emphatically asserted once again that the Messenger of Allah should not defend those who are disloyal and treacherous, for Allah does not like them.

The fourth verse (108) describes the condition of people who betray trust and act treacherously. It is strange that these people feel shy before other people like them and conceal their theft from them while they do not feel shy before Allah who is with them all the time and watches over everything they do, specially the occasion when they mutually conspired to put the blame on the Jew, went to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , complained against Rifā'ah and Qatādah,

charged them of false accusation and appealed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ for support against the Jew.

The fifth verse (109) gives a strict warning to the supporters of Banū Ubayriq telling them that their support given to betrayers of trust in the mortal world does not end at that. There will be the Day of Doom when their case will come before Almighty Allah. Who will lend support to them at that time? The verse serves two purposes. It admonishes them, then reminds them of the hazards of the Hereafter persuading them thereby to repent and turn to Allah.

In the sixth verse (110), we can once again see the wise way of the Qur'ān at work when, in order to save sinners from total disappointment, it was said that a sin was a sin, big or small. When a sinner repents and seeks Allah's forgiveness, he finds Him forgiving, merciful. As obvious, there is an element of persuasion for those who have committed sin suggesting that they still had the time and the hope to just desist and repent sincerely; nothing is lost, Allah will forgive everything.

In the event that these people choose not to repent despite the option given to them, the seventh verse (111) carries the assurance that this action of theirs brings no harm to Almighty Allah or His Messenger or to Muslims. The sad nemesis of a person's evil deed shall be faced by the person himself.

In the eight verse (112), a general rule of conduct has been set forth. It stipulates that anyone who himself commits a crime, then goes on to put the blame on some innocent person (as in the episode cited above where the theft was committed by Banū Ubayriq themselves and they went on to put the blame on Sayyidnā Labid or the Jew) has done something grave by levelling a false accusation of great magnitude against an innocent person plus an open sin weighing heavy on one's shoulders.

Addressing the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in the ninth verse (113), it has been said: It was Allah's grace and mercy that He revealed to you the reality behind the event of theft, otherwise these people would have misled you into error. But, since you are not alone, Allah's grace and mercy is with you, these people can never mislead you into error.

On the contrary, they themselves fall into error. Be sure that these people cannot harm you in any way whatsoever because Allah has revealed the Book and wisdom to you and taught you what you did not know.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and *Ijtihād*

From verse 105 which begins with the words: إِنَّآ أَنزَلْنَآ إِلَيْكَ ٱلْكِتَٰبَ بِٱلْحَقِّ (Surely we have revealed to you the book with the truth) helps establish five rulings:

1. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had the right to arrive at his judgement in situations not covered by an explicit authority given in the Holy Qur'ān. In situations of major importance, there were many decisions he took by his *Ijtihād*.

2. The second rule that emerges from here is inseparably linked with the authenticity of *Ijtihād*. It means that, in the sight of Allah, an *Ijtihād* can be considered trustworthy only when it is based on and is deduced from Qur'ānic principles and the clear authority of its text. Simple opinions or views are not trustworthy, nor can they be termed as *Ijtihād* in the sense recognized in Sharī'ah.

3. The third rule of guidance we get to know is that the *Ijtihād* done by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was not like that done by *Mujtahid* Imāms where the probability of an error of judgement always remains. As for the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, when he took a decision on the basis of his *Ijtihād* any possible error in the judgment would always stand corrected by Allah Almighty. Therefore, when he took a decision based on his *Ijtihād* and nothing against it came from Almighty Allah, then, this was an indicator that the decision taken finds favour with Allah and is correct in His sight.

4. The fourth rule of guidance we come to know is: What the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم understood from the Qur'ān was nothing but what Almighty Allah had Himself made him understand. A possibility of misunderstanding just did not exist there. This is contrary to the case of other 'Ulama and *Mujtahidīn* whose understanding of the Qur'ān cannot be attributed to Almighty Allah in the sense that it was what Allah had told them. You will realize the difference when you carefully look at بِمَآ أَرَىٰكَ ٱللَّهُ (with the insight Allah has given to you)

which refers to the noble Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in this very verse. This is why - when someone said to Sayyidnā 'Umar: فَاحْكُمْ بِمَآ أَرٰىكَ اللّٰهُ (Decide as Allah shows you to) - he scolded him by saying: 'This is special to the Prophet of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم '.

5. The fifth ruling we deduce from here is that pursuing or advocating a false case or a false claim or to second or support them is totally *ḥarām* (forbidden).

The Reality of Repentance

Verse 110 which begins with the words: وَمَنْ يَّعْمَلْ سُوْٓءًا اَوْ يَظْلِمْ نَفْسَهٗ tells us that all sins, whether they affect others or affect one's own self, that is, whether they violate the rights of human beings (*Ḥuququl-'Ibād*) or rights of Allah (*Ḥuqūqullāh*), can be forgiven by one's repenting and praying for forgiveness. But, it is necessary to know the reality of showing repentance and seeking forgiveness. Mere verbal declarations of 'I seek Allah's forgiveness' (*Astaghfirullāh*) and 'I turn to Him in repentance' (*Wa atubu ilaihi*) are not acts of genuine repentance as such. Therefore, according to a consensus of 'Ulama, the person who is involved in some sin, is not ashamed of it and does not leave it or, at least, does not resolve to leave it in the future, then, his verbal declaration of *Astaghfirullāh* is an open mockery of repentance.

In short, for repentance (*Taubah*) to be genuine, three things are necessary:

1. Being ashamed of past sins.

2. Immediately leaving the sin one is in.

3. Resolving to stay away from sin in future.

However, forgiveness for sins related to the rights of the servants of Allah has to be sought from the wronged party itself; or, one should, to begin with, pay what was due or fulfill what was denied. These are binding conditions of genuine repentance.

Attributing one's sins to others brings added punishment

From verse 112 - وَمَنْ يَّكْسِبْ خَطِيْٓئَةً اَوْ اِثْمًا ثُمَّ يَرْمِ بِهٖ الخ - we know that a person who himself commits a sin, then goes on to ascribe it to an innocent man, does something terrible - he doubles and hardens his sin. He has made himself deserving of severe punishment, the punishment of his

own sin, then the added punishment for lying and accusing falsely.

The Reality of Qur'ān and Sunnah

In verse 113: وَاَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتٰبَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَعَلَّمَكَ مَالَمْ تَكُنْ تَعْلَمُ (And Allah has revealed to you the Book and the wisdom and has taught you what you did not know), by pairing *al-Kitāb* (the Book) and *al-Ḥikmah* (the Wisdom) it has been pointed out that *Ḥikmah* which is the name of the Sunnah and teachings of the noble Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was also sent down by none but Allah Almighty. The difference is that its words are not from Allah and that is why they are not part of the Qur'ān. But, its meanings and that of the Qur'ān are certainly from Allah, therefore, it is obligatory to act in accordance with both.

This explains what some jurists say about *Waḥy* (Revelation) being of two kinds: *Matluww* - that which is recited, and *Ghayr-Matluww* - that which is not recited. *Waḥy Matluww* or the revelation which is recited is the name of the Qur'ān - the words and meanings of which are both from Allah. And *Ghayr-Matluww* or that which is not recited is the name of the *Ḥadīth* of the *Rasūl* the words of which are from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the meanings of which are from Allah.

Another problem which gets resolved from the words: وَعَلَّمَكَ مَالَمْ تَكُنْ تَعْلَمُ (and taught you what you did not know) (113) is that the noble Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم did not have the all-comprehending knowledge of the entire universe equal to Almighty Allah, as some ignorant people do insist. The truth is that the measure of his knowledge was corresponding to what Allah bestowed upon him. However, there is no doubt that the knowledge bestowed upon the Holy Prophet ﷺ exceeds the combined knowledge of all created beings.

Verses 114-115

لَاخَيْرَ فِيْ كَثِيْرٍ مِّنْ نَّجْوٰىهُمْ اِلَّا مَنْ اَمَرَ بِصَدَقَةٍ اَوْ مَعْرُوْفٍ اَوْ اِصْلَاحٍ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّفْعَلْ ذٰلِكَ ابْتِغَآءَ مَرْضَاتِ اللّٰهِ فَسَوْفَ نُؤْتِيْهِ اَجْرًا عَظِيْمًا ﴿۱۱۴﴾ وَمَنْ يُّشَاقِقِ الرَّسُوْلَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ الْهُدٰى وَيَتَّبِعْ غَيْرَ سَبِيْلِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ نُوَلِّهٖ مَا تَوَلّٰى وَنُصْلِهٖ جَهَنَّمَ ؕ وَسَآءَتْ مَصِيْرًا ﴿۱۱۵﴾

There is no good in most of their whisperings unless one bids charity or a fair action or a reconciliation between people. And to one who does this to seek the pleasure of Allah, We shall give a great reward. [114] **And whoever breaks away with the Messenger after the right path has become clear to him and follows what is not the way of the believers, We shall let him have what he chose, and We shall admit him to Jahannam. And it is an evil place to return.** [115]

Sequence

Moving from the episode of theft and the conspiracies made to cover up the crime by false accusations against others, the text now highlights positive things that can be done through mutual consultation and which could help one to remain obedient to the Messenger's teachings and the command of Allah without ever trying to go against the ideal path taken by those who believe in Allah and His Messenger.

Commentary

In the first part of the verse (114): لَاخَيْرَ فِيْ كَثِيْرٍ مِّنْ نَّجْوٰهُمْ translated as 'there is no good in most of their whisperings..', it has been declared that most talks people hold and plans they make to ensure transitory worldly gains, while unmindful of the concerns of their life-to-come, are devoid of good.

The second part: اِلَّا مَنْ اَمَرَ بِصَدَقَةٍ اَوْ مَعْرُوْفٍ اَوْ اِصْلَاحٍ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ means that real good can come forth from mutual consultations only when people persuade each other to take part in charitable activities or ask people to do what is good and right or tell them to make peace between one another. It is said in a ḥadīth that anything one says is harmful for him in one way or the other unless, of course, the subject of his utterance is the remembrance of Allah or that he is bidding the Fair and forbidding the Unfair.

Bidding the Fair stands for *Amr bi al-Ma'rūf* which refers to every action considered good in the Sharī'ah and is patently recognized as such by those who know it. In contrast, there is the forbidding of the Unfair which stands for *Nahy 'an al-Munkar* which refers to every action considered undesirable in the Sharī'ah and is squarely unrecognized and unfamiliar to those who know it.

Bidding the Fair includes all imperatives and motivations through

which people are led to do what is good and right. Things like helping the oppressed, assisting the needy with loans, guiding the lost, all fall under this broad category. Though, charity and reconciliation between people are also part of this definition, but they have been taken up separately because their benefit reaches from one to another and improves the collective life of a community.

In addition to that, these two fields of activity cover what is most essential about public service. They seek to bring benefit to Allah's creation and they protect people against pain and loss. Charity spreads out benefits to people and reconciliation between them stops mutual pain and loss. Therefore, according to a consensus of the scholars of *Tafsīr*, the word *Ṣadaqah* (charity) used here carries a general sense which includes the obligatory *zakāh*, voluntary charities and everything done to bring benefit to someone.

The Graces of Making Peace

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has spoken highly about the merit of removing mutual bickerings among people and of bringing them to understand, accommodate and cooperate with each other. He said:

> "Shall I not tell you about an act which is far superior in rank to fasting, prayers and charity? The Companions submitted, 'Please do.' He, then, said: "That act is the removal of discord. That is, to remove bickering between two persons, make peace between them and thus eliminate discord."

He has also said: فساد ذات البين هى الحالقة "Mutual discord among people is what really shaves." Then, he explained it by saying: "This discord does not shave the head, but it shaves off one's faith."

In the concluding part of the verse (114), there appears a significant reminder that these good deeds to bid charity and fair action or a reconciliation among people can only be worthwhile and acceptable when they are undertaken sincerely, and exclusively for the pleasure of Allah, without any traces of personal or material interest.

The Consensus of the Community is a Valid Religious Authority

Two things have been identified as a great crime and as a cause of one's consignment to Hell in verse 115: وَمَنْ يُّشَاقِقِ الرَّسُوْلَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ الْهُدٰى (And whoever breaks away with the Messenger after the right path has

become clear to him...). The first is opposing the Messenger of Allah. Obviously, doing so is *Kufr* (disbelief, infidelity) and a terrible curse. The second crime relates to a violation of universal Muslim consensus. It means the abandoning of something which has the universal agreement of all Muslims and opting for some other way against them. This explains that the consensus of the Muslim community has valid religious authority. In other words, we know that following the injunctions given in the Qur'ān and Sunnah is obligatory. Similarly, when the Muslim *Ummah* (Community) agrees about something universally, following its consensus becomes equally obligatory. Any opposition to this consensus is a grave sin as was said by the Holy Prophet ﷺ in a ḥadīth:

يَدُ اللّٰهِ عَلَى الْجَمَاعَةِ، مَنْ شَذَّ شُذَّ فِى النَّارِ

> That is, the hand of Allah is on the Muslim community. Whoever breaks away or separates himself from it will himself be separated for consignment to Hell.

Imām al-Shafi'ī was asked: 'Can the validity of the authority of the Consensus of Muslim Ummah be proved from the Holy Qur'ān?' He devoted to the recitation of the Qur'ān full three days, completing three recitals each during the day and night. Finally, the proof that he came up with was this verse. When he cited it before scholars, they all agreed: This proof is sufficient to confirm the authority of '*Ijmā*', the Consensus of Muslim Community.

Verses 116-121

إِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَغْفِرُ أَنْ يُّشْرَكَ بِهٖ وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُوْنَ ذٰلِكَ لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ ۚ
وَمَنْ يُّشْرِكْ بِاللّٰهِ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلٰلًا بَعِيْدًا ﴿١١٦﴾ إِنْ يَّدْعُوْنَ مِنْ
دُوْنِهٖٓ إِلَّآ إِنٰثًا ۚ وَإِنْ يَّدْعُوْنَ إِلَّا شَيْطٰنًا مَّرِيْدًا ﴿١١٧﴾ لَّعَنَهُ اللّٰهُ ۘ
وَقَالَ لَأَتَّخِذَنَّ مِنْ عِبَادِكَ نَصِيْبًا مَّفْرُوْضًا ﴿١١٨﴾ وَّلَأُضِلَّنَّهُمْ
وَلَأُمَنِّيَنَّهُمْ وَلَاٰمُرَنَّهُمْ فَلَيُبَتِّكُنَّ اٰذَانَ الْأَنْعَامِ وَلَاٰمُرَنَّهُمْ
فَلَيُغَيِّرُنَّ خَلْقَ اللّٰهِ ۚ وَمَنْ يَّتَّخِذِ الشَّيْطٰنَ وَلِيًّا مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ
فَقَدْ خَسِرَ خُسْرَانًا مُّبِيْنًا ﴿١١٩﴾ يَعِدُهُمْ وَيُمَنِّيْهِمْ ۚ وَمَا يَعِدُهُمُ

الشَّيْطٰنُ إِلَّا غُرُورًا ﴿١٢٠﴾ أُولٰٓئِكَ مَأْوٰىهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ وَلَا يَجِدُونَ عَنْهَا مَحِيصًا ﴿١٢١﴾

Surely, Allah does not forgive the ascribing of a partner to Him and forgives anything short of that for whomsoever He wills. And whoever ascribes a partner to Allah has indeed gone far astray. [116] **They invoke none, besides Him, but females; and they invoke none but Satan, the rebel** [117] **whom Allah has cursed. And he (the Satan) said, "For sure, I will take a set share from Your slaves,** [118] **and I will lead them astray and I will tempt them with false hopes and give them my order so they shall slit the ears of cattle and I will give them my order so they shall alter the creation of Allah. And whoever takes the Satan as friend instead of Allah has incurred an obvious loss.** [119] **He (the Satan) makes promises to them and he tempts them with hopes. And the Satan does not make a promise to them but to deceive.** [120] **As for such, their shelter is Jahannam and they shall find no escape from it.** [121]

Sequence

Though, the mention of Jihād in preceding verses includes all forces hostile to Islam, yet the actual description was limited to Jews and the hypocrites. Out of the larger group of antagonists there were the pagans who were much more in numbers. The verses that follow take up their beliefs and point out to the punishment they will face. This has a coherence of its own at this place. It will be recalled that the thief mentioned earlier became an apostate. The lasting punishment he thus earned for himself becomes evident. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Commentary

The first verse (116) إِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَغْفِرُ أَنْ يُّشْرَكَ بِهٖ وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُوْنَ ذٰلِكَ لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ (Surely, Allah does not forgive the ascribing of a partner to Him and forgives anything short of that for whomsoever He wills ...) has appeared earlier (48) in Sūrah al-Nisā' in the same words except for the words at their ends. In verse 48 appearing earlier, the words at the end are: وَمَنْ يُّشْرِكْ بِاللّٰهِ فَقَدِ افْتَرٰىٓ إِثْمًا عَظِيْمًا (And whoever ascribes a partner to Allah has designed a great sin) while the words at the end of verse 116 before us are: وَمَنْ يُّشْرِكْ بِاللّٰهِ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلٰلًا بَعِيْدًا (And whoever ascribes a partner to Allah has indeed gone far astray). As explained by master exegetes, the

reason for this difference is that the addressees of the earlier verse (48) were the Jewish people of the Book who knew all about the truth of *Tauḥīd* (Allah's oneness), the falsity of *Shirk* (ascribing of a partner to Allah) and the veracity of the mission of the noble Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم through the Torah. Despite that, they got involved in *Shirk*. Thus, through their own conduct, they pretended that it was the very teaching of the Torah which is total forgery and false accusation. That is why it was said: فَقَدِ افْتَرٰٓى اِثْمًا عَظِيْمًا (... has designed a great sin) at the end of verse 48. As for the verse before us (116), the addressees were the pagans of Makkah who did not have the background of any Book or Prophet before that time, but the rational arguments in support of the Oneness of Allah were all too clear. Taking stones crafted with their own hands as their objects of worship was something ineffectual, false and erroneous even in the sight of someone with ordinary common-sense. Therefore, here it was said: فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلٰلًا بَعِيْدًا (... has indeed gone far astray).

The eternal Punishment of *Shirk* and *Kufr*:

Some people express doubt at this point. They think that punishment should be proportionate to the deed. The crime of disbelieving and of ascribing partners to Allah committed by the *Kafir* and the *Mushrik* was committed within the limited time frame of a given life. Why would its punishment be limitless and permanent? The answer is that the doer of *Kufr* and *Shirk* simply does not regard what he does as crime. This is, on the contrary, taken as something good and proper, worth one's while. Therefore, his line of action is accompanied by his firm intention that he will always be like that. Now, if such a *Kafir* or *Mushrik* adheres to this position right through the last breath, he has committed a permanent crime to the extent of his choice and volition, therefore, the punishment for it has to be permanent.

***Ẓulm*:**

There are three kinds of *Ẓulm* (injustice):

1. That which Allah will never forgive.
2. That which could be forgiven.
3. That which meets retribution from Allah.

The first kind of injustice is *Shirk*, the ascribing of a partner to Allah; the second kind of injustice is falling short in fulfilling the

rights of Allah, known as *Ḥuqūqullāh*; and the third kind of injustice is the contravention of the rights of Allah's created beings against each other, known as *Ḥuqūqul-'Ibād*. (Ibn Kathīr vide Musnad Bazar)

What is the reality of *Shirk*?

To consider any created being other than Allah equal to Allah in worship, or in love and reverence, is what *Shirk* really is. The Holy Qur'ān has reported the words of the disbelievers they shall utter on arrival into the *Jahannam*:

تَاللّٰهِ اِنْ كُنَّا لَفِيْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ، اِذْ نُسَوِّيْكُمْ بِرَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ

By Allah, we were in obvious error when we had equated you with Allah, the Lord of all the worlds. (26:97,98)

It is evident that even the polytheists did not believe that the idols of their making were the Creator and the Master of the universe. It was, rather, under other erroneous assumptions that they had taken to regarding their idols equal to Allah in worship or in love and reverence. This was the *Shirk* which caused their being in *Jahannam* (Fatḥ al-Mulhim).

In short , taking any created being as equal to Allah in His particular attributes - such as, the Creator, the Provider, the Absolute Master, the Knower of the Seen and the Unseen - is *Shirk*.

Verses 122-126

وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ سَنُدْخِلُهُمْ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ
تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَآ اَبَدًا ؕ وَعْدَ اللّٰهِ حَقًّا ؕ وَمَنْ اَصْدَقُ
مِنَ اللّٰهِ قِيْلًا ﴿١٢٢﴾ لَيْسَ بِاَمَانِيِّكُمْ وَلَآ اَمَانِيِّ اَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ ؕ
مَنْ يَّعْمَلْ سُوْٓءًا يُّجْزَ بِهٖ ۙ وَلَا يَجِدْ لَهٗ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ وَلِيًّا وَّلَا
نَصِيْرًا ﴿١٢٣﴾ وَمَنْ يَّعْمَلْ مِنَ الصّٰلِحٰتِ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ اَوْ اُنْثٰى
وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ يَدْخُلُوْنَ الْجَنَّةَ وَلَا يُظْلَمُوْنَ نَقِيْرًا ﴿١٢٤﴾
وَمَنْ اَحْسَنُ دِيْنًا مِّمَّنْ اَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهٗ لِلّٰهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ وَّاتَّبَعَ مِلَّةَ
اِبْرٰهِيْمَ حَنِيْفًا ؕ وَاتَّخَذَ اللّٰهُ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ خَلِيْلًا ﴿١٢٥﴾ وَلِلّٰهِ مَا فِي

السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِى الْأَرْضِ ۚ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ بِكُلِّ شَىْءٍ مُّحِيطًا ﴿١٢٦﴾

And those who believe and do good deeds, them We shall admit to the gardens beneath which rivers flow. They shall live there for ever - a real promise from Allah. And who is more truthful than Allah in his word? [122]

This is not (a matter of) your fancies or the fancies of the People of the Book. And whoever does evil shall be requited for it and shall find for himself, besides Allah neither friend nor helper. [123] **And whoever, male or female, does good deeds and is a believer -- they shall enter Paradise and they shall not be wronged in the least.** [124]

And who is better in Faith than one who has surrendered his self to Allah and is good in deeds, and has followed the creed of Ibrāhīm, the upright. And Allah has made Ibrāhīm a friend. [125]

And to Allah belongs what is in the heavens and what is in the earth. And to everything Allah is encompassing. [126]

Commentary

A dialogue between Muslims and the People of the Book contending for glory against each other

Verse 123 which begins with the words: لَيْسَ بِأَمَانِيِّكُمْ وَلَآ أَمَانِيِّ أَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ : 'This is not (a matter of) your fancies or the fancies of the People of the Book...', is about a cross talk between Muslims and the People of the Book. It is followed by a wise and judicious ruling on the confronting claims aimed at bringing the contestants to the right path. Finally, given here is a standard measure of determining as to who is superior and acceptable in the sight of Allah, a standard which, if observed carefully, would not let any human being fall into error or go astray.

According to Sayyidnā Qatādah, once it so happened that some Muslims and the People of the Book started talking to each other in a vainglorious strain. The People of the Book said that they were superior to Muslims because their Prophet came before the Prophet of

Islam and that their Book appeared before the Qur'ān of Muslims did. The Muslims countered by saying that they were superior to all of them for their Prophet was the Last of the Prophets and their Book was the Last of the Books which has abrogated all previous Books. Thereupon, the verse cited above was revealed. It means that such self-glorification and self-congratulation does not behove anyone for nobody becomes superior to anybody simply on the basis of conjectures, fancies and claims. Instead, everything depends on deeds. No matter how noble and superior one's Prophet and Book may be, it is the deed of the adherent which will count. If he acts evil, he will receive the kind of punishment from which he can never hope to be rescued by anyone.

When this verse was revealed, the noble Companions were acutely disturbed. Imām Muslim, al-Tirmidhī, al-Nasā'ī and Aḥmad رحمهم الله have reported a narration from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah in which he said: When this verse was revealed مَنْ يَّعْمَلْ سُوْٓءًا يُّجْزَ بِهٖ :"And whoever does evil shall be requited for it", we were deeply grieved and concerned. We submitted to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم : 'This verse leaves nothing out - the minutest of evil found in our deeds shall be requited!' The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'Do not worry. Keep doing what you can to the best of your ability for (the punishment mentioned here does not necessarily have to be that of Hell, instead) whatever hardship or pain which afflicts you makes amends for your sins and requites your evil deeds, to the limit that even a thorn which pinches someone's foot becomes an expiation of some sin.'

There is another narration which says that any sorrow or pain or sickness or anxiety which afflicts a Muslim in the life of this world becomes an expiation of his or her sins.

According to a narration of Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه as reported in Jami' al-Tirmidhī, Tafsīr Ibn Jarīr and elsewhere, when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم recited this verse: مَنْ يَّعْمَلْ سُوْٓءًا يُّجْزَ بِهٖ (And whoever does evil shall be requited for it) to him, he felt as if his back was broken. When the noble Messenger of Allah noticed the reaction on him, he asked: 'What is the matter with you?' Thereupon, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه submitted: '*Yā Rasūlallah*, there is hardly anyone among us who can claim to have done nothing bad in one's life. Now, if

every evil deed has to be requited, who can hope to go unscathed from among us?' He said: 'O Abū Bakr, you and your believing brothers need not worry about it because worldly hardships that you face shall make amends for your sins.'

As it appears in another narration, he said: 'O Abū Bakr, do you not get sick? Are you never tested by distress and sorrow?' Sayyidnā Abū Bakr said: 'No doubt, all this does happen.' Then, he said: 'There, this is the requital of whatever evil you may have done.'

In a ḥadīth appearing in Abū Dāwūd, Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah has been reported to have said: 'A discomfort faced by a servant of Allah in fever, or a pain that afflicts him in any other way, even the pinch of a thorn, all become an expiation of his or her sins, so much so that even the insignificant effort made by someone to look for something in one of his pockets and finding it in another comes to be an expiation of his sins.'

In short, this verse is a reminder to Muslims as well that they should not indulge in tall claims and wishful thinking. On the contrary, they should be concerned with what they actually do, for their success will not come solely on the basis of their formal adherence to a given Prophet and a Book. Instead, their real prosperity lies in making certain that their belief in them is correct and that they are particular about doing good deeds as enjoined. Verse 124 says: وَمَنْ يَّعْمَلْ مِنَ الصّٰلِحٰتِ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ اَوْ اُنْثٰى وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ يَدْخُلُوْنَ الْجَنَّةَ وَلَا يُظْلَمُوْنَ نَقِيْرًا. It means a man or woman who does good deeds, subject to the condition that such deeds issue forth from true faith, shall certainly go to Paradise fully rewarded for all his or her deeds without being wronged in the least. The hint given here is that the People of the Book or other non-Muslims may also have some good deeds of their own, but, since their faith is not sound, therefore, those deeds of theirs are not acceptable. As for Muslims, since their faith is sound and their deeds too are good, therefore, they are the successful ones, and superior to others.

Acceptability in the sight of Allah: A Criterion

The fourth verse (125) lays down a criterion to help determine correctly as to who is acceptable in the sight of Allah, and who is not. This criterion has two components. Any shortfall in either of the two components makes all efforts go waste. A careful look will reveal that

all strayings into error and evil, wherever they may be in this wide world, are triggered because of a shortfall in one of these two components. Compare Muslims with non-Muslims. Or, compare the different sects, groups and parties within the Muslim community itself. You will come across the same two points of reference - any deviation from either is bound to land one in disgrace. The verse says:

وَمَنْ اَحْسَنُ دِيْنًا مِّمَّنْ اَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهٗ لِلّٰهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ وَّاتَّبَعَ مِلَّةَ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ حَنِيْفًا

And who is better in Faith than one who has surrendered his self to Allah and is good in deeds, and has followed the creed of Ibrahim, the upright...) (125)

It means that there can be no way better than the way of the person who is an embodiment of two virtues:

1. Firstly, 'surrenders his or her self to Allah.' In other words, acts for the good pleasure of Allah with all sincerity at one's command without ever contaminating one's deeds with hypocritical or materialistic motives.

2. Secondly, 'and is good in deeds.' In other words, the way in which one acts should also be correct. According to the great commentator, Ibn Kathīr, the way in which one acts, the correct way, means that it will not be some self-invented way. On the contrary, this will have to be the unalloyed way of Islam as based on the injunctions of Almighty Allah and the teachings of His noble Messenger ﷺ .

Thus, we can see that there are two conditions for any deed to be acceptable in the sight of Almighty Allah. These are sincerity of intention and soundness of action, that is, being in accordance with the Sharī'ah and Sunnah. The first of the two conditions, *Ikhlās* or sincerity, relates to the heart, the inner most human dimension. The second condition, the compatibility with Sharī'ah, relates to the human exterior. Whoever fulfills both these conditions finds his or her exterior and interior perfectly synchronized. But, the moment one of the two conditions is found missing, that which is done becomes imperfect and unsound. The loss of sincerity makes one a hypocrite in practice while the failure in following the Sharī'ah, the designated way, makes one go astray.

Nations go astray because they lack sincerity or do not act right.

The history of nations and faiths reveals that all deviant groups of peoples have either lacked sincerity or have not acted right. These very two groups have been indentified in Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah as those who have deviated from the straight path. Those referred to as مَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ (who incurred {Your} wrath) are people who lack sincerity, and those called ضَآلِّيْنَ (who have gone astray) are those who have not acted right. The first group is a victim of desires while the other, that of doubts.

Everyone generally understands the first condition, that is, the need for sincerity and the futility of acting without it. But, good conduct - that is, following the Sharī'ah - is the condition even many Muslims ignore. They think a good deed is a good deed and could be done at one's choice although the Holy Qur'ān and the Sunnah have made it perfectly clear that good conduct depends exclusively on the teachings of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and on following the Sunnah, the example set by him. Doing less than that and doing more than that are both crimes. The way offering three *raka'āt* of Ẓuhr prayers instead of the prescribed four is a crime, so, offering five is also a crime and sin of the same nature. The rule is: The condition set forth by Almighty Allah and His Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم for any act of worship is final. Any addition of conditions or restrictions from one's own side or taking to some form other than the one laid out by him are all impermissible and patently against the norms of good conduct, no matter how attractive they may appear to be on the surface. All new alterations (*Bid'āt* and *Muḥdathāt*) in the established religion which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم declared to be straying into error, and against which he left behind emphatic instructions for Muslims so that they can stay safe, are all of this nature. Ignorant people do this with 'sincerity' as an act of worship worthy of the reward and pleasure of Allah, but the deed of such a person goes waste or becomes even sinful in the light of the Sharī'ah bequeathed by the noble Prophet ﷺ. It is for this reason that the Holy Qur'ān has repeatedly stressed on good conduct, that is, on following the Sunnah. It appears in Sūrah al-Mulk: لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ اَيُّكُمْ اَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا (So that He tests you as to who among you is good in deed - 67:2). It will be noticed that the words used here are: اَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا

(good in deed) and not أَكْثَرُ عَمَلًا (outnumbering in deeds). It shows that the text is not talking about the numerical abundance of deeds. It is, rather, pointing out to the doing of good deeds - and a good deed is nothing but what is done in accordance with the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

This very concept of good conduct and the practical adherence to the Sunnah of the noble Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been identified in another verse of the Holy Qur'ān in the words وَمَنْ أَرَادَ الْآخِرَةَ وَسَعٰى لَهَا سَعْيَهَا (17:19) It means that Allah accepts the efforts and deeds of those who intend to have the good of the Hereafter, pure and unadulterated by any temporal considerations, and that they are making the needed effort, and that the effort they are making is proper as well, and the proper effort is exactly what has been explained to the community by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم through his word and deed. Any shift from this ideal of effort - whether increased or decreased - will not be accepted as the proper effort. Proper effort is nothing but what has been termed as good deed in the present verse.

Let us now recapitulate that the acceptance of any deed with Allah depends on the fulfillment of two conditions. These are sincerity and good deed. Good deed is another name of the act of following the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم . Therefore, everyone who intends to do a good deed with full sincerity must first find out how it was done by the noble Messenger of Allah and what instructions he has left behind for us in that connection. We must understand that any deed of ours which stands removed from the course set by our noble Prophet, known as his Sunnah, will stand unacceptable. Therefore, in all our deeds relating to *Ṣalāh, Ṣawm, Ḥajj, Ẓakāh, Ṣadaqāt, Khayrāt, Dhikr* of Allah, *Ṣalāh* (*durūd*) and *Salām*, it is necessary to keep in mind the way these were done by the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and how he told us to do them.

At the end of the verse (125), an example has been cited, the example of sincerity and good conduct set by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام the following of which has been declared as mandatory. By saying: وَاتَّخَذَ اللّٰهُ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ خَلِيْلًا (And Allah has made Ibrāhīm a friend), it has been hinted that this high station bestowed on Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام has good reason behind it for he was absolutely and superbly sincere and his

deed too was sound and correct with intimation from Allah.

Verses 127-130

وَيَسْتَفْتُونَكَ فِى النِّسَآءِ ؕ قُلِ اللّٰهُ يُفْتِيكُمْ فِيهِنَّ وَمَا يُتْلٰى عَلَيْكُمْ فِى الْكِتٰبِ فِىْ يَتٰمَى النِّسَآءِ الّٰتِىْ لَا تُؤْتُونَهُنَّ مَا كُتِبَ لَهُنَّ وَتَرْغَبُونَ اَنْ تَنْكِحُوهُنَّ وَالْمُسْتَضْعَفِينَ مِنَ الْوِلْدَانِ ۙ وَاَنْ تَقُومُوا لِلْيَتٰمٰى بِالْقِسْطِ ؕ وَمَا تَفْعَلُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ بِهٖ عَلِيمًا ﴿۱۲۷﴾ وَاِنِ امْرَاَةٌ خَافَتْ مِنْۢ بَعْلِهَا نُشُوزًا اَوْ اِعْرَاضًا فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَآ اَنْ يُّصْلِحَا بَيْنَهُمَا صُلْحًا ؕ وَالصُّلْحُ خَيْرٌ ؕ وَاُحْضِرَتِ الْاَنْفُسُ الشُّحَّ ؕ وَاِنْ تُحْسِنُوا وَتَتَّقُوا فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا ﴿۱۲۸﴾ وَلَنْ تَسْتَطِيعُوٓا اَنْ تَعْدِلُوا بَيْنَ النِّسَآءِ وَلَوْ حَرَصْتُمْ فَلَا تَمِيلُوا كُلَّ الْمَيْلِ فَتَذَرُوهَا كَالْمُعَلَّقَةِ ؕ وَاِنْ تُصْلِحُوا وَتَتَّقُوا فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ غَفُورًا رَّحِيمًا ﴿۱۲۹﴾ وَاِنْ يَّتَفَرَّقَا يُغْنِ اللّٰهُ كُلًّا مِّنْ سَعَتِهٖ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ وَاسِعًا حَكِيمًا ﴿۱۳۰﴾

And they ask you about women. Say, "Allah answers you about them, and so does what is recited to you from the Book regarding orphaned women whom you do not give what is prescribed for them and tend to marry them,[1] and regarding the weak from the children and that you should maintain justice for the orphans. And whatever good you do Allah is aware of it. [127]

And if a woman fears ill treatment or aversion from her

1. The Qur'anic words وَتَرْغَبُونَ أَن تَنكِحُوهُنَّ admit two possible translations: First, "and tend to marry them," which refers to the people who, attracted to the beauty of the orphan girls, used to marry them without giving them the due rights of a wife. The second possible translation is: "and you avoid marrying them". It refers to the people who did not marry the orphan girls because of their unattractive features, but at the same time did not let them marry others, because they wanted that their wealth should remain in their hands.

husband, then, there is no sin on them in entering into a compromise between them. And the compromise is better. And avarice is made to be present in human souls. And if you do good and fear Allah, then, Allah is all-aware of what you do. [128]

And you shall never be able to maintain real equality between wives, even though you are eager to. So, do not lean totally (towards one) and leave the other hanging. And if you mend and fear Allah, then, Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [129]

And if they separate, Allah shall, through His capacity, make each of them need-free. And Allah is All-Embracing, All-Wise. [130]

At the beginning of this Sūrah, particular injunctions relating to orphans and women were mentioned. Also stressed there was the mandatory nature of the need to fulfill their rights. The reason was that, during the days of *Jāhiliyyah*, some people would simply refuse to give any part of the inheritance to them, others would unlawfully eat up what they got in inheritance or through any other alternate source, still others would marry them but avoided paying full dower they were entitled to; these were practices prohibited as stated earlier. This caused different situations to arise. There were those who thought that women and children are not entitled to inherit as a matter of right - may be, this injunction had come as an expedient measure for some people only and it was likely that it will be abrogated later. Some of them even waited for this to happen. But, when there was no abrogation, they decided among themselves that they should go directly to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and ask him. This they did. According to Ibn Jarīr and Ibn al-Mundhir, this very question was the reason behind the revelation of this verse and the verses which followed carried additional rulings relating to women (Bayān al-Qur'ān).

Commentary

Some Qur'ānic Instructions about Married Life

Verses 128-130 which begin with the words: وَإِنِ امْرَأَةٌ خَافَتْ مِنْ بَعْلِهَا (And if a woman fears ill treatment or aversion from her husband ...) and end at وَاسِعًا حَكِيمًا (... All-Embracing, All-Wise) carry instructions about the painful and hard part of married life which is faced by every married

couple during one or the other stage of their long association. This is mutual displeasure and tension which, if allowed to prevail without being checked through proper control, does not only result in severe problems for the couple in their married lives but also, at times, carries the evil effects to families and tribes involving them in all sorts of mutual confrontation and even fighting and killing. The Glorious Qur'ān has come to introduce a system of family life for man and woman both, keeping in view the whole range of their feelings. This system when followed will definitely make a home a paradise. Love and harmony will replace whatever bitterness there may be in the family. Just in case, inevitable circumstances bring the couple to the limit of separation, it would still be desirable to see that the parting of ways is done smoothly and painlessly. After that, when the relationship breaks, it is also necessary to watch that it leaves no emotional fallouts in the form of enmity, hostility, harm or hurt.

Out of these three verses, verse 128 is about circumstances under which relationship between a husband and wife becomes strained for reasons beyond their control. Both parties seem to be helpless in the matter. However, their mutual bitterness makes it likely that they will fail in fulfilling the rights they have on each other. For example, a husband does not have amorous feelings in his heart for his wife and she has no control over the means which could change his heart. She may be ugly or aged while the husband is handsome. Thus, it is obvious that the woman cannot be blamed in any way for what she is, nor can the man be censured for whatever he is.

Eventualities of this nature as part of the background in which the worse under reference was revealed, have been reported in Maẓharī and elsewhere. Under such circumstances, as for men, the general rule given by the Holy Qur'ān is: فَإِمْسَاكٌۢ بِمَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ تَسْرِيحٌۢ بِإِحْسَانٍ (2:229) that is, 'retain in an honourable manner or part amicably'. It means that if the intention is to continue living with one's wife, then, it is necessary to live with her amicably, fulfilling all rights due to her in the recognized manner. For anyone who finds himself incapable of doing so, it is proper to release her from the bond of marriage in a decent way. Now, if the woman too is willing to be released, the situation is open and clear as the parting of ways will come about in a pleasant manner.

But, should it be that the woman, under such conditions, is not willing to secure her release - whether in the interest of her children or because she has no other supporter - then, she is left with only one alternative: Get the husband to agree to some option. For example, the woman may surrender all or some of her rights while the husband takes it to be reasonable enough as it unburdens him of many claims against him with the advantage of having a wife in bonus. May be this arrangement makes peace prevail between them.

That such a compromise could be expected has been pointed out in this verse of the Holy Qur'ān by saying: وَأُحْضِرَتِ الْأَنفُسُ الشُّحَّ (Avarice is made to be present in human souls). In such a compromise, the greed of the woman lies in her intense desire to protect the future of her children for she fears that her release from the husband will ruin it, or that her life elsewhere may come out to be more bitter. On the other side, the husband is tempted by what the woman does. He sees that she has forgiven her dower due on him fully or partly and that she has also stopped from claiming other rights as well. Why then, he may think, should it be at all difficult for him to get along with her? Thus, a mutual compromise would become easy.

Then, along with this, it was also said:

وَإِنِ امْرَأَةٌ خَافَتْ مِن بَعْلِهَا نُشُوزًا أَوْ إِعْرَاضًا فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا أَن يُصْلِحَا بَيْنَهُمَا صُلْحًا

"And if a woman fears ill treatment or aversion from her husband, then, there is no sin upon them in entering into a compromise between them."

Here, the expression فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا (... there is no sin upon them ...) has been used to cover the nature of the deal which, on the surface, appears to be a sort of bribe where the husband has been tempted with the forgiveness of dower and other claims and the bond of marital life has been kept intact. But, this (sagacious) statement of the Qur'ān has made it clear that this is not included under bribery. Instead, it is included under expediency in the sense of a wise consideration under complex circumstances when the parties involved surrender their initial claims and agree to some moderated mean. This is permissible.

The Interference of Others in a marital Dispute

According to al-Tafsīr al-Maẓhārī, the words used in the Holy Qur'ān at this place are: أَنْ يُّصْلِحَا بَيْنَهُمَا صُلْحًا . It means that the husband and wife should enter into a compromise in between them. Here, the word بَيْنَهُمَا (between the two of them) suggests that it is better if no third person interferes in husband-wife matters - let the two of them come to mutual compromise on some basis. This is because the injection of a third person may, at times, make the very compromise impossible. Even if such a compromise is reached, the weaknesses of the couple get exposed before a third person unnecessarily, staying safe against which is expedient for both parties.

Towards the end of this verse (128), it was said:

وَإِنْ تُحْسِنُوا وَتَتَّقُوا فَإِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرًا

"And if you do good and fear Allah, then, Allah is all-aware of what you do."

In the background of options given earlier, the husband did have the legal choice of releasing his wife on the basis of emotional incompatibility which made it difficult for him to fulfill her rights. Then, according to the first sentence of this verse, it is also permissible to enter into a compromise with one's wife when she offers to surrender some of her claims. Now, the last of the verse cited here brings forth a third option. The meaning of what has been said is: 'But, if you keep the fear of Allah in your heart and elect to be gracefully benign in your conduct and carry on accommodatingly with the relationship despite your emotional incompatibility and keep fulfilling her rights as due, then, this excellent conduct of yours is before Allah, the result of which is obvious. Almighty Allah will reward you for your forbearance and for the graces of your good deeds with blessings you can never imagine'. Perhaps, this is the reason why the text stops at: 'Allah is all-aware of what you do.' It does not spell out the return for the good deed. The hint thus given is that it will be far more than one can ever imagine.

A Summary of Comments made

When the husband, for some reason, feels emotionally estranged with his wife and realizes that his rights remain unfulfilled, he should

try to correct matters which fall within the range of what the wife can do. Such effort of correction can temporarily be expressed in the form of coldness, hard advice and even soft disciplining under circumstances of extreme compulsion as it has already appeared in the early verses of Sūrah al-Nisā'. If the husband loses hope in correction in spite of all his efforts, or there is something about it the correction of which is just not in the control of his wife, then comes the situation in which the law of Islam gives him the right to divorce and release his wife in a decent manner without any altercation. But, if he elects to go along with the relationship living under the same conditions while ignoring his rights and fulfilling hers in full, then, this conduct of his is highly meritorious and deserving of a great reward. In contrast, if the case is the other way around, that is, the husband does not fulfill the necessary rights of his wife for which reason the wife wishes to be released by him. Now, under this situation, if the husband is also willing to release her, the course is clear. The woman too has the right to react when the husband wishes to release her on the basis of non-fulfillment of his rights - she too has the right to opt for her freedom. In case, the husband is not ready to release her on his own, the wife has the right to reclaim her freedom through an Islamic court. But, if she braves through the cold and crooked ways of her husband with patience surrendering her claims to due rights, carries on living with him in a spirit of accommodation and keeps fulfilling his rights, then, this is highly meritorious for her and deserving of a great reward.

The Guideline in Essence

Thus, on the one hand, the Holy Qur'ān gives to both parties the legal right to remove difficulties from their relationship and to receive their due right; while, on the other, by prompting both of them to demonstrate high morals and to be patient with the loss of their rights, the instruction given was that they should abstain from severing their relationship to the farthest limit of possibility. Both parties should bypass bits of their claims and come to a compromise on some mutually agreed formula.

Compromise: The Better Option

Initially, this verse simply mentions that compromise is permissible in the event of a husband-wife difference and towards the end of

the verse, the parties have been prompted to carry on with the relationship in the best spirit of patience and forbearance in the event that such a compromise does not materialize. In between, there appears a sentence which proves the desirability of compromise as the favoured choice. It was said: وَالصُّلْحُ خَيْرٌ (The compromise is better). The nature of the sentence is fairly general as stated. It certainly includes husband-wife disputes in the present context. However, it also includes all other kinds of family differences as well as all mutual disputes, altercations and litigations that come up in worldly life. This is because the words of the Holy Qur'ān are general - 'The compromise is better'.

Thus, the parties would fare better if they avoid being stubborn about the fulfillment of their demands in toto and elect to forgo some of these from each side and agree to a compromise on some middle ground. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said:

كُلُّ صُلْحٍ جَائِزٌ بَيْنَ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ اِلَّا صُلْحًا اَحَلَّ حَرَامًا اَوْحَرَّمَ حَلَالًا، وَالْمُسْلِمُوْنَ عَلٰى شُرُوْطِهِمْ اِلَّا شَرْطًا حَرَّمَ حَلَالًا

"Every compromise is permissible between Muslims except a compromise in which something unlawful has been made lawful or something lawful has been made unlawful and Muslims must abide by accepted conditions except a condition in which something lawful has been made unlawful." (Narrated by Al-Ḥakim from Kathīr ibn 'Abdullāh, Tafsīr Maẓharī)

For example, it is not permissible to enter into a compromise with one's wife on the condition that the husband will also marry her sister because Islamic law prohibits combining two sisters in the bond of marriage. This is *ḥarām* or unlawful. Or, the husband may wish to compromise on the condition that he will not fulfill the rights of the other wife for this amounts to turning something lawful into something unlawful.

Since, in the ḥadīth narration quoted above, every compromise has been declared as permissible in a general sense, Imām Abū Ḥanīfah has deduced from this statement the ruling that all kinds of compromises are permissible. They may be with an avowal, for example, the defendant's confession that he owes $1,000 as claimed by the plaintiff following which a compromise may be arrived at either by the

surrender of a certain part of the total amount claimed by the plaintiff, or by his taking something in lieu of the claimed amount, or through a lack of avowal or disavowal by the defendant who may simply wish to reach a certain compromise no matter what the claim be in reality. Or, despite a disclaimer, the defendant may bring himself round to pay up some of the amount just to end the dispute and this very action may make the compromise possible. All these three kinds of compromise are permissible. However, in the eventuality of silence or denial, there does exist a difference among some jurists.

Finally, worth mentioning here is a problem which relates to the compromise between a married couple mentioned in this verse. If a woman makes a compromise by surrendering some of her rights, this compromise will totally eliminate the right of the woman the fulfillment of which stood incumbent on the husband at the time of the compromise. For example, the payment of the dower which was due to to be paid by the husband before the compromise. So, when she makes a compromise by forgiving the whole or part of the dower, then, this dower or its part would stand devolved after which her right to claim it would lapse. But, the rights the fulfillment of which was just not obligatory on the husband at the time of the compromise - for example, the payment of expenses in the future or the right to privacy which would be applicable in the future - will not be, for all practical purposes, his responsibility to fulfill. If a compromise is reached on the basis of a surrender of these rights, the right of the woman to claim these does not devolve for ever. Instead, she can declare any time she so chooses that she is not willing to forgo the right in future. Under this situation, the husband will have the choice to release her. (Tafsīr Maẓharī etc.)

In the last verse (130) : وَإِنْ يَّتَفَرَّقَا يُغْنِ اللّٰهُ كُلًّا مِّنْ سَعَتِهٖ (And if they separate, Allah shall, through His capacity, make each of them need-free), both parties have been comforted in case all efforts to put things right between them come to naught and they have to separate. This should be no cause for concern. Allah Almighty will make each of them free from needing the other. The woman will get another home, and a source of support, and the man will find another woman. The power of Allah is extensive. There is no reason to lose hope. Let each one of the

couple think of the life they had before getting married. They were two separate individuals who did not know each other as husband and wife. Almighty Allah made it possible for them to be united in marriage. The same thing can happen again.

By saying : وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ وَاسِعًا حَكِيْمًا (And Allah is All-Embracing, All-Wise) at the close of the verse, it has been confirmed that the dimensions of Allah's capacity are most extensive and everything that issues forth from Him is based on wisdom. It is quite possible that the very separation may be the most expedient solution of the problem. The post-separation period may bless them with mates that make their lives good to live.

No one is responsible for something beyond his control

In order to make married life pleasant and stable, the Holy Qur'ān has given important instructions to both parties in these verses. Out of these, there is the verse: وَلَنْ تَسْتَطِيْعُوْٓا اَنْ تَعْدِلُوْا بَيْنَ النِّسَآءِ (And you shall never be able to maintain real equality between wives ... -129) which carries a special instruction for both. At this point it will be recalled that the Holy Qur'ān has already established in the beginning of Sūrah al-Nisā' that a man who holds more than one wife in the bond of marriage is duty-bond to maintain justice and equality among all wives, and that if one thinks that he would be unable to fulfill this obligation, he should not take more than one wife. It was said: فَاِنْ خِفْتُمْ اَلَّا تَعْدِلُوْا فَوَاحِدَةً "But, if you fear that you will not maintain equity, then, (keep to) one woman (4:3)."

The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has, by his word and deed, declared that maintaining justice and equality among wives is a very emphatic injunction and he has given stern warnings to those who contravene it. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا has said that the Holy Prophet ﷺ took great care in making perfectly sure that he treats his wives equally and justly. While he did so, he prayed to Allah:

اَللّٰهُمَّ هٰذَا قَسْمِيْ فِيْمَا اَمْلِكُ، فَلَا تَلُمْنِيْ فِيْمَا تَمْلِكُ وَلَا اَمْلِكُ

> O Allah, this equalization of mine is in what I have in my control, therefore, do not make me answerable for what is in Your control (that is, emotional inclination) and not in mine.

Who could be in control of his self more than the Holy Prophet ﷺ ?

Yet, the matter of emotional inclination was what he too ruled as something out of his control and prayed to Almighty Allah that he be excused on that count.

The veneer of the words in verse 3 of Surah al-Nisa' gave the impression that maintaining equity between wives was an absolute obligation which, obviously, includes equity in emotional inclination while this is something not in one's control. Therefore, in this verse of the Surah al-Nisa', the matter was clarified by saying that in things which one does not control, equality is not obligatory. However, equality shall be observed in matters within one's control, for example, equality in spending nights with them, their living standards and cost of maintenance. Allah Almighty has revealed this injunction in a way which compels a God-fearing person to put it into practice. It was said: وَلَنْ تَسْتَطِيعُوٓا اَنْ تَعْدِلُوا بَيْنَ النِّسَآءِ وَلَوْ حَرَصْتُمْ، فَلَا تَمِيلُوا كُلَّ الْمَيْلِ فَتَذَرُوهَا كَالْمُعَلَّقَةِ (And you shall never be able to maintain real equality between wives, even though you are eager to. So, do not lean totally (towards one) and leave the other hanging).

This leads us to realize that the inability to maintain equality pointed out in this verse actually refers to the equality in emotional inclination which is beyond human control. Then, the words of this verse: فَلَا تَمِيلُوا كُلَّ الْمَيْلِ (So, do not lean totally ...) themselves contain the justification of this sense. This is because the words mean: 'Even though maintaining equality in emotional inclination is not within your power, yet you should not lean totally towards one of your wives so much so that you start preferring her even in matters which lie within your power and control'.

Thus, this verse of Surah al-Nisa' (129) becomes a clarification of the earlier verse (3) of the same Surah which outwarldly appeared to be suggesting that equality in emotional inclination too was obligatory. Now, this verse makes it precisely clear that this is not obligatory because it does not lie in one's power. Instead, what is obligatory is the equality in matters which do lie in one's power and discretion.

This verse cannot be used against polygamy

Incidentally, the details appearing above also serve to remove the misunderstanding of those who, by juxtaposing these two verses, wish to conclude that the verse appearing at the beginning of Surah al-Nis'a

(3) says: 'If you cannot maintain equality between wives, marry only one'; while, the other verse (129) says: 'Maintaining equality between two wives is just not possible'; therefore, the outcome is: The very keeping of two (or more) wives in the bond of marriage is impermissible as such!

Though surprising, Allah Almighty has Himself phrased these very two verses with the necessary material to remove this misunderstanding. The indication given in the present verses by the use of the words: فَلَا تَمِيلُوا كُلَّ الْمَيْلِ (So, do not lean totally) has appeared immediately before while the words used in verse 3 were: فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا فَوَاحِدَةً : "But, if you fear that you will not maintain equity, then, (keep to) one woman." Here, in the later verse, saying: 'If you fear' as a condition openly indicates that maintaining justice and equality between wives is not beyond the realm of possibility or ability. Otherwise, there was no need for this extended word arrangement, more so, not to the limit of two full verses. For example, the verse which says: حُرِّمَتْ عَلَيْكُمْ أُمَّهٰتُكُمْ وَبَنٰتُكُمْ (Forbidden for you are your mothers and your daughters - 4:23) carries details pertaining to women marriage with whom is forbidden. Then, by saying: وَأَنْ تَجْمَعُوا بَيْنَ الْأُخْتَيْنِ (and that you combine two sisters in the bond of marriage - 4:23), it has been declared that combining two sisters in marriage is unlawful. Similarly, it was quite possible to say that having more than one wife simultaneously is unlawful. If so, the restriction of بَيْنَ الْأُخْتَيْنِ (two sisters) with أَنْ تَجْمَعُوا (that you combine) would have become redundant. It was possible to say this in one single sentence, something like: وَأَنْ تَجْمَعُوا بَيْنَ امْرَأَتَيْنِ (and that you combine two women in the bond of marriage) which would have made it unlawful in the absolute sense. But, the Holy Qur'ān avoids this lexical brevity for the sake of a longer narration, the detail of which extends to as much as two full verses. This treatment also indicates that the verse: وَأَنْ تَجْمَعُوا بَيْنَ الْأُخْتَيْنِ (that you combine two sisters in the bond of marriage - 4:23) is, in a way, suggesting the justification of combining more than one woman in the bond of marriage which is quite permissible with the condition that they should not be sisters of each other.

Verses 131-134

وَلِلّٰهِ مَا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِى الْأَرْضِ ۗ وَلَقَدْ وَصَّيْنَا الَّذِيْنَ

أُوتُوا الْكِتٰبَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ وَإِيَّاكُمْ أَنِ اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ ۚ وَإِنْ تَكْفُرُوا فَإِنَّ لِلّٰهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ ۚ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ غَنِيًّا حَمِيدًا ﴿١٣١﴾ وَلِلّٰهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ ۚ وَكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ وَكِيلًا ﴿١٣٢﴾ إِنْ يَشَأْ يُذْهِبْكُمْ أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ وَيَأْتِ بِاٰخَرِينَ ۚ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى ذٰلِكَ قَدِيرًا ﴿١٣٣﴾ مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ ثَوَابَ الدُّنْيَا فَعِنْدَ اللّٰهِ ثَوَابُ الدُّنْيَا وَالْاٰخِرَةِ ۚ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا ﴿١٣٤﴾

And to Allah belongs what is in the heavens and what is in the earth. And We have ordered those who were given the Book before you, and (ordered) you yourselves to fear Allah. And if you disbelieve, then, surely to Allah belongs what is in the heaven and what is in the earth. And Allah is All-Independent, Every-Praised. [131] **And to Allah belongs what is in the heavens and what is in the earth. And Allah is enough to trust in.** [132]

If He so wills, He can make you go, O men, and bring others in. And Allah has the power to do that. [133]

Whoever seeks the return of this world, then, with Allah is the return of this world and of the Hereafter. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Seeing. [134]

Sequence

After having stated the rules of behaviour as related to women and orphans, the text now reminds the promise of rewards for those abiding by these rules, and the warning for those contravening them, which is the usual style of the Holy Qur'ān.

Significant Inferences

Readily noticeable here is the repetition of لِلّٰهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ which means that everything created in the heavens and the earth belongs to Allah. Repeated thrice, these words signify three shades of meaning. In the first place, the aim is to point out to the limitless scope of Allah's power of creation which lacks nothing. In the second instance, the objective is to focus on Allah's attribute of self-

sufficiency, self-adequacy and His being need-free. It means: Should one disbelieve, deny or reject the good counsel given, He is in no need of anyone's obedience for He stands ever-praised in His pristine glory. The third mention of these words embodies a statement of Allah's mercy which makes things work for people. It means: Should one fear Allah and be obedient to Him, Allah will fulfill all his needs, because He is the owner of every thing in this universe.

The third verse (133) gives a clear and conclusive statement that Almighty Allah is fully capable of eliminating such people by withdrawing them from the scene of life and replacing them with others, submitting and obedient. This too goes on to prove that Allah is above and beyond any need and that the disobedient ones must themselves shudder at their obduracy and correct their untenable stand.

Verse 135

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّٰمِينَ بِٱلْقِسْطِ شُهَدَآءَ لِلَّهِ وَلَوْ
عَلَىٰٓ أَنفُسِكُمْ أَوِ ٱلْوَٰلِدَيْنِ وَٱلْأَقْرَبِينَ ۚ إِن يَكُنْ غَنِيًّا أَوْ فَقِيرًا
فَٱللَّهُ أَوْلَىٰ بِهِمَا ۖ فَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا ٱلْهَوَىٰٓ أَن تَعْدِلُوا ۚ وَإِن تَلْوُۥٓا
أَوْ تُعْرِضُوا فَإِنَّ ٱللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا ﴿١٣٥﴾

O those who believe, be unpholders of justice - witnesses for Allah, even though against (the interest of) yourselves or the parents, and the kinsmen. One may be rich or poor, Allah is better caretaker of both. So do not follow desires, lest you should swerve. And if you twist or avoid (the evidence), then, Allah is all-aware of what you do. [135]

The real purpose of sending prophets and scriptures

In this verse of Sūrah Al-Nisā', all Muslims have been instructed to uphold justice and be true when appearing as witnesses. Besides, things which can become impediments to the establishment of justice or the availability of true evidence have been removed in a highly eloquent manner. A verse of Sūrah al-Mā'idah (Volume 3) which will follow immediately after the completion of Sūrah al-Nisā' carries the same subject. In fact, their words are nearly common. Then, there is a verse in Sūrah al-Ḥadīd which tells us that the important purpose of

sending Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام as the viceregent of Allah in this world followed by other blessed prophets one after the other with the same status alongwith Scriptures and Missions was to see that justice prevails in the world with peace coming in its wake. The objective was to have every human being as a distinct individual adopt justice as his or her hallmark within his or her circle of influence or control. As for the chronically contumacious who would not take to the path of justice and fairness through good counsel, education and communication and continue being dogged in their contumacy, then, they will be the ones who have to be compelled to observe justice through legal process and due penalization and punishment.

The words of this verse from Sūrah Al-Ḥadīd (57:25) are as follows:

وَلَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ وَاَنْزَلْنَا مَعَهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ وَالْمِيْزَانَ لِيَقُوْمَ النَّاسُ بِالْقِسْطِ وَاَنْزَلْنَا الْحَدِيْدَ فِيْهِ بَاْسٌ شَدِيْدٌ وَّمَنَافِعُ لِلنَّاسِ

We have sent Our messengers with clear signs and We have sent with them the Book and the Balance so that people stand firm with justice and we sent the iron in which there is great awe, and benefits for people.

Thus we know that the system under which Prophets and Books were sent was basically aimed at establishing justice. The reference to sending down iron at the end of the verse hints towards the eventuality when the good counsel alone would not be enough to make people abide by justice. Instead, there would still be some compulsive miscreants who must be disciplined with the deterrent of iron, chains and bars and other weapons, in the best interest of establishing justice.

Abiding by justice is not for the government alone.

Now, we have before us the present verse Sūrah al-Nisā' (4:135), and verse 8 of Sūrah al-Mā'idah (5) -

كُوْنُوْا قَوّٰمِيْنَ لِلّٰهِ شُهَدَآءَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَاٰنُ قَوْمٍ عَلٰٓى اَلَّا تَعْدِلُوْا اِعْدِلُوْا هُوَ اَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوٰى وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ خَبِيْرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ

Be steadfast for Allah as witnesses for justice. And malice against a people should not bid you to not doing justice. Do justice. That is nearer to Taqwā. And fear Allah. Surely, Allah is all-aware of what you do. (5:8)

as well as the verse from Sūrah al-Ḥadīd (57:25) cited immediately above. In these verses, it has been clearly stated that establishing and maintaining justice and being steadfast on it is not simply the duty of governments and courts. The instruction has been given to every human being obligating him or her to fulfill the demands of justice by being personally firm about it and, at the same time, by making efforts that others too stay equally firm about seeing justice done. However, a certain level of justice does fall in the jurisdiction of government and its officials when the wicked, the rebellious and the contumacious challenge and confront the processes of justice by flouting it personally as well as by stopping others to carry out its dictates. On such occasions, penalization and punishment do become necessary. This enforcement of justice, obviously, can be done only by government which holds the reins of power in its hands.

In the world today, leave alone the illiterate millions, even fairly educated people think that the dispensing of justice is the sole duty of governments and courts and the masses of people are not responsible for it. This attitude is one of the major reasons which has made the government and the people act as two confronting parties in every country and every state. As a result, a gulf of conflict divides the rulers and the ruled. Masses of people from every country demand and expect justice and fairness from their government but, strangely enough, are not themselves ready and eager to uphold justice. The outcome is all too visible everywhere in the world. Law stands on hold. Crime wave rides high. No doubt, we have law-making bodies in every country costing millions. When elections come, the furore created to elect representatives really shakes God's earth. Then, these elected few, being supposedly the cream of the whole country, go on to make laws with great concern and caution keeping in view the needs and sentiments of their electorate. Then, the law is put forth for public opinion. When favourable, the law is considered enforceable. Then, the whole machinery of the government with its countless departments and experienced personal goes about enforcing the law so made. Now, this is a window to the custom-ridden world we live in. We have to look afresh and aim higher. In order to do something like this, we have to shake off from the torpor of blind following, the following of self-promoting custodians of civilization, and we shall, then, realize that

things are not as bright as we are being made to see.

Compare the state of affairs for a hundred years from now, say 1857-1957. The data will confirm that with every increase in law-making, there increased the exhibition of popular will in law and a corresponding increase in the machinery of law enforcement. One kind of police sprouted out in many more kinds resulting in a more than matching increase in ever-escalating crimes causing people to remain far more deprived of justice. With this graph of conditions rising up, more disorder in the world started showing up.

Belief in the Hereafter and the fear of God: The only guarantee of universal peace

The world is waiting for someone sensitive and discerning who would cross over the barriers of customised routines and seriously consider the message brought by the Arabian messenger ﷺ and deliberate in the reality of things as they are. Peace in the world has never been achieved through penal codes, nor will it ever be. The guarantee of universal peace can be delivered by nothing but the belief in the Hereafter and the fear of God. This twosome is the channel through which all obligations of the ruler and the ruled, masses and the government merge together on a common platform. Everyone starts pulsating with the crucial sense of individual responsibility. When it comes to respecting and defending law, the masses of people cannot get away by saying that this was the job of the officials. It will be noticed that the verses of the Holy Qur'ān dealing with the establishment of justice as cited above end with an exhortation to this very revolutionary article of faith.

The present verse of Sūrah al-Nisā' ends with the reminder: إِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرًا (Allah is all-aware of what you do). At the end of the verse from Sūrah al-Mā'idah, first came the instruction to observe *Taqwā*, the fear of Allah, after which it was said: إِنَّ اللّٰهَ خَبِيْرٌۢ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ (Allah is aware of what you do). Then, at the end of Sūrah al-Ḥadīd, it was said: إِنَّ اللّٰهَ قَوِيٌّ عَزِيْزٌ (Allah is powerful, mighty).

Seen together, these three verses do not rest at giving instructions to both officials and masses that they should not only uphold and establish justice personally but should also see that others too do that. These verses go further ahead through their concluding statements

whereby they focus all attention to a decisive reality which has the potential to generate a great revolution in human life and its aspirations. This, in a few words, is the realization of the power and domain of Almighty Allah, the thought of having to be present before Him, and of reckoning, and of retribution. This was, again in a nutshell, the secret behind the peace which prevailed in the less-educated world a hundred years ago as compared with what we have in our day; and, infact, it is the abandoning of such a valuable teaching that has deprived the modern progress-claiming, high-flying and satellite-borne world from the blessings of genuine peace on earth.

It is in the best interest of the liberal people of the world to realize that science and its progress can take them to all sorts of frontiers - they can climb the skies, camp on stars and visit the depths of seas - but, the real end-product of all these high-tech equipments and efforts is something which they would fail to find on far away stars or in ever new inventions. This is still there for seekers to find. It is there, clear and true as ever, in the message brought by the Prophet ﷺ who appeared in Arabia, may our lives be ransomed for him and may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, within the message and teaching of his, that of believing in Allah and believing in the life-to-come and its reckoning:

أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللّٰهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوْبُ

"Listen! Hearts rest at peace through the *Dhikr* (remembrance) of Allah." (13:28)

Day by day, the astonishing discoveries of science do no more than confirm the most perfect power of Almighty Allah and go on to clearly demonstrate the state-of-the-art mastery of His creation which has no match. Before the skill and range of such creativity, every human claim to progress stands humbled - as the famous Persian line: چه سود چوں دل دانا و چشم بینا نیشت seems to ask: If you have no wisdom and no vision, what is the use of doing what you do?

Recapitulating, we can say that the Holy Qur'an has, on the one hand, declared the establishment of justice and fairness as the very purpose of a universal order in the world while, on the other hand, it has proposed a unique system which - if adopted and put into practice

- would metamorphose this very blood-thirsty and iniquitous world into a society of virtuous people which, in turn, would become Paradise now, instant and cash, much earlier than the promised Paradise of the Hereafter. In fact, one of the explanations given regarding the verse of the Qur'an: وَلِمَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهٖ جَنَّتٰنِ : 'And for one who fears the high station of his or her *Rabb* (Lord), there will be two Paradises' is exactly what has been stated above. That is, the God-fearing will have two Paradises, one in the Hereafter and the other right here in this world. There is nothing Utopian about the idea. That it is feasible has been already demonstrated by the great harbinger of this message, the Holy Prophet of Islam, upon him the blessings of Allah, and peace. He has bequeathed this message to posterity, not as some unproven theory, but as a practical and functioning system. Then, after him, came al-Khulafa' al-Rashidun, the rightly-guided Caliphs and many more from among the rulers who followed the Sunnah of the noble Prophet of Islam strictly. As and when they acted in accordance with the principles set for them, the lion and the lamb were seen drinking at the same water trough, an imaginary saying for the ideal climate of justice for all, the strong and the weak, the poor and the rich, the labourer and the capitalist. Totally eliminated was whatever difference there could be between human beings. Law was respected by every individual in bolted homes and in the darkness of nights. This is no fairy tale. These are facts of authentic history widely corroborated and confessed, even by open-minded non-Muslims.

After understanding the essence of the Qur'anic system, detailed explanation of the verse is given below.

Explanation

The verse under reference opens with the words: كُوْنُوْا قَوّٰمِيْنَ بِالْقِسْطِ (... be upholders of justice). The word, *Qist*, when it begins with *Kasrah* on *Qaf*, (the vowel point for i), it means justice and fairness. The true sense of justice and fairness is that every holder of a right should be given his or her due in full. Taken generally, it includes the rights of Allah (*Huququllah*) and all kinds of human rights as well. Inclusive in the thrust of the meaning of 'upholding justice' (*qiyam bi l'qist*) is that nobody shall inflict injustice on anybody; also that the perpetrator of injustice (*zalim*) shall be stopped from inflicting injustice (*zulm*) and

the victim of injustice (*maẓlūm*) shall be supported; and also that appearing as witness shall not be avoided, if witness is needed to help the victim of injustice to have his or her usurped right back; and also that the witness shall be true and factual as it really is, whether for or against anyone; and also that those who hold the reins of authority and dispensation of justice in their hands shall treat both parties to the case before them, equally and equitably. There shall be no tilt of any sort toward any one of the two. Statements given by witnesses shall be heard carefully. Every effort possible shall be made to investigate the case. Then, finally, perfect justice shall be observed in the verdict.

Impediments to Justice

Though the two verses from Sūrah al-Nisā' and Sūrah al-Mā'idah quoted earlier come from two different chapters, yet their subject is almost the common denominator between them. The only difference is that justice is normally impeded, obstructed or compromised by two things. Firstly, by love, kinship or friendship or link with someone which pushes the witness to testify in his favour so that he remains shielded against loss or that he profits by it. As for the judge or Qāḍī who is to give the verdict is affected by any such linkage, he would naturally have the urge to decide the case in favour of the party of his linkage. Secondly, justice is impeded by hostility towards someone which may take the witness to testify against him, while it could also become the cause of an unfavourable judgement given by the judge or Qāḍī. So, love and hate are passions which can cause one to move away from the path of justice and become involved with all sorts of injustice and oppression. These very two impediments have been removed in both the verses of Sūrah al-Nisā' and Sūrah al-Mā'idah. The instruction given in the verse of Sūrah al-Nisā' is about removing the impediment of kinship or nearness. It has been said there: اَوِ الْوَالِدَيْنِ وَالْاَقْرَبِيْنَ (4:135) which means: even if your testimony goes against your parents or near relatives, say what is true and ignore the factor of such relationship when testifying the truth. And removed through the verse of Sūrah al-Mā'idah is the impediment of grudge, malice or enmity. So, there it was said: وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَاٰنُ قَوْمٍ عَلٰٓى اَلَّا تَعْدِلُوْا اِعْدِلُوْا هُوَ اَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوٰى (And malice against a people should not bid you to not doing justice. Do justice. That is nearer to *Taqwā* - 5:2). As clear from the translation, it means

that malice should not make one desert the path of justice and go about testifying or ruling against them.

In addition to that, there is a slight difference between the form of address and the mode of expression appearing in these two verses. In Sūrah al-Nisā', it was said: قَوّٰمِيْنَ بِالْقِسْطِ شُهَدَآءَ لِلّٰهِ (...uphoders of justice, witnesses for Allah - 4:135) while the words from Sūrah al-Mā'idah are: قَوّٰمِيْنَ لِلّٰهِ شُهَدَآءَ بِالْقِسْطِ (... be steadfast for Allah as witnesses for justice - 5:8). To explain, we can say that the first verse contains two instructions: Uphold justice and witness for Allah. As for the second verse, the same two things have been commanded but with a changed form of address, that is, 'be steadfast for Allah and witnesses for justice.'

Most commentators say that this change in address shows that both these things are two interpretations of the same reality. At one place, it was referred to as being steadfast with justice and witnesses for Allah, while at another, the word arrangement was: Steadfast for Allah and witnesses for justice. Moreover, worth noticing is the mode of expression adopted in both these verses where multiple-worded sentences such as كُوْنُوْا قَوّٰمِيْنَ بِالْقِسْطِ or قَوّٰمِيْنَ لِلّٰهِ have been preferred, although the command to do justice could have been given through the use of one single word: اَقْسِطُوْا : *Aqsiṭū*: Do justice (as in Sūrah Al-Ḥujurāt, - 49:9). Actually, the choice of the longer sentence is there to indicate that being just and fair in a particular case accidentally does not liquidate one's responsibility wholly. The reason is that being able to do justice in one or the other case is a natural possibility which can apply even to the most evil and tyrannical ruler who may find himself having done justice in some case. So, by the use of the word, *qawwāmīn* (those who uphold and are steadfast), it has been established that upholding justice and fairness is a constant duty which must be observed at all times, under all conditions, for every friend or foe.

Qur'ānic Principles of Universal Justice

Now, concluding our discussion about the meanings of verse 135 in conjunction with verse 8 of Sūrah al-Mā'idah, it can be safely said that the principles of universal justice by one and all enunciated through these two verses form part of the many distinctions of the glorious

Qur'ān. These can be better appreciated when seen through two major aspects as given below:

1. To begin with, officials and masses of people have all been alerted to the supreme subdueing power of Almighty Allah and to the ultimate reckoning of the fateful Day of Retribution so that they could think, stop and deter or be prepared to face the consequences. In view of this, the masses themselves have to respect law, and the officials who are responsible for the enforcement of law, they too, have to keep the thought of Allah and *Ākhirah* (God and the Hereafter) before them while enforcing law and thus be the servants and not the thoughtless masters of God's multitudes of people. They should make law a source of service to people and a source of betterment of the whole world, never causing their worries to increase, never engineering ways to condemn victims of injustice to their grinding mills of red tape, never making them suffer from injustice multiplied with more injustices, and finally, never ever selling law for mean desires or paltry gains. By saying: Be steadfast for Allah - witnesses for Allah, both officials and masses have been exhorted to act for Allah and act with sincerity at its best.

2. The second element of importance here is that the responsibility of establishing justice and fairness as a way of life has been placed on the shoulders of all human beings. As for the verses from Sūrah al-Nisā' and Sūrah al-Mā'idah wherein, by saying: يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا (O those who believe), the entire Muslim community has been addressed. But, in Sūrah al-Ḥadīd, by saying: لِيَقُومَ ٱلنَّاسُ بِٱلْقِسْطِ (so that mankind stands firm with justice - 57:25), this duty has been considered binding on all human beings. Similarly, by saying: وَلَوْ عَلَىٰٓ أَنفُسِكُمْ (even though against yourselves...), instruction has been given that justice is not something to be demanded from others only, instead, it should also be exacted from one's own self. It means that one should say nothing against what is true and just, even when one has to declare something against one's own self, even if such an action is likely to bring loss upon one's person, because this loss is insignificant, tiny and transitory. On the contrary, should someone elect to placate his self by flat lies, then he has bought for himself the severe punishment of the Day of Retribution.

Verses 136-137

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡۤا اٰمِنُوۡا بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُوۡلِهٖ وَالۡكِتٰبِ الَّذِىۡ نَزَّلَ عَلٰى رَسُوۡلِهٖ وَالۡكِتٰبِ الَّذِىۡۤ اَنۡزَلَ مِنۡ قَبۡلُ‌ ؕ وَمَنۡ يَّكۡفُرۡ بِاللّٰهِ وَمَلٰٓـئِكَتِهٖ وَكُتُبِهٖ وَرُسُلِهٖ وَالۡيَوۡمِ الۡاٰخِرِ فَقَدۡ ضَلَّ ضَلٰلًاۢ بَعِيۡدًا ﴿۱۳۶﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا ثُمَّ كَفَرُوۡا ثُمَّ اٰمَنُوۡا ثُمَّ كَفَرُوۡا ثُمَّ ازۡدَادُوۡا كُفۡرًا لَّمۡ يَكُنِ اللّٰهُ لِيَـغۡفِرَ لَهُمۡ وَلَا لِيَـهۡدِيَهُمۡ سَبِيۡلًا ﴿۱۳۷﴾

O those who believe, do believe in Allah and His Messenger and in the Book He has revealed to His Messenger and in the Books He has revealed earlier. And whoever disbelieves in Allah and His angels and His Books and His Messengers and the Last Day has indeed gone far astray. [136]

Surely, those who believed and then disbelieved, believed again and then disbelieved, then went on increasing in their disbelief - Allah is not to forgive them nor lead them on the path. [137]

Sequence

Discussed upto this point were subsidiary injunctions mostly, alongwith issues relating to faith (*'Īmān*) and disbelief (*kufr*) appearing as a corollary to dealings with antagonists. Onwards from here, these issues appear in some detail continuing almost close to the end of the Sūrah. In the sequence of statements, first comes a description of *'Īmān* (faith) as credible in the sight of the Sharī'ah. After that, various groups of disbelievers have been censured for their beliefs and for some of their deeds also which issue forth from their faulty beliefs.

Important Notes

1. The first part of the verse 137 which begins with the words: اِنَّ الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا ثُمَّ كَفَرُوۡا (Surely, those who believed and then disbelieved, believed again and then disbelieved, then went on increasing in their disbelief) refers to the hypocrites. But, some commentators say that this verse is about the Jews for they were the ones who first believed, then, after having taken to the golden calf, became disbelievers. After that, they repented and believed. Then again, they rejected the prophethood of

Sayyidna 'Isa عليه الصلوٰة والسلام and fell back into disbelief. Finally, by refusing to believe in the prophethood of Sayyidna Muhammad ﷺ, they further increased in their disbelief (Ruh al-Ma'ani).

2. The second part of the verse 137 لَمْ يَكُنِ اللّٰهُ لِيَغْفِرَ لَهُمْ وَلَا لِيَهْدِيَهُمْ سَبِيْلًا (-- Allah is not to forgive them nor lead them on the path), when read as a whole with the first part, would mean that their repeated return to disbelief will cause their very ability to receive true guidance to be taken away from them and, in that event, they will have neither the future option to repent nor the opportunity to believe. Otherwise, the general rule laid out by the definitive texts of the Qur'an and Sunnah is that a disbeliever (*kafir*) or an apostate (*murtadd*), no matter how hardened, has his past sins forgiven -- if the *taubah* (repentance) made by him is sincere and true. So, if such people too change and repent, the law of amnesty and forgiveness is open.

Verses 138-141

بَشِّرِ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ بِاَنَّ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا اَلِيْمَا ﴿۱۳۸﴾ اِلَّذِيْنَ يَتَّخِذُوْنَ
الْكٰفِرِيْنَ اَوْلِيَآءَ مِنْ دُوْنِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ط اَيَبْتَغُوْنَ عِنْدَهُمُ الْعِزَّةَ
فَاِنَّ الْعِزَّةَ لِلّٰهِ جَمِيْعًا ﴿۱۳۹﴾ وَقَدْ نَزَّلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِى الْكِتٰبِ اَنْ
اِذَا سَمِعْتُمْ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ يُكْفَرُ بِهَا وَيُسْتَهْزَاُ بِهَا فَلَا تَقْعُدُوْا
مَعَهُمْ حَتّٰى يَخُوْضُوْا فِيْ حَدِيْثٍ غَيْرِهٖ ز اِنَّكُمْ اِذًا مِّثْلُهُمْ ط اِنَّ
اللّٰهَ جَامِعُ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ وَالْكٰفِرِيْنَ فِيْ جَهَنَّمَ جَمِيْعًا ﴿۱۴۰﴾ اِلَّذِيْنَ
يَتَرَبَّصُوْنَ بِكُمْ ج فَاِنْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فَتْحٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ قَالُوْٓا اَلَمْ نَكُنْ
مَّعَكُمْ ز وَاِنْ كَانَ لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ نَصِيْبٌ قَالُوْٓا اَلَمْ نَسْتَحْوِذْ عَلَيْكُمْ
وَنَمْنَعْكُمْ مِّنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ط فَاللّٰهُ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ ط وَلَنْ
يَّجْعَلَ اللّٰهُ لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ سَبِيْلًا ﴿۱۴۱﴾

Give the hypocrites the good news that for them there is a painful punishment [138] **- those who take the disbelievers for friends rather than the believers. Are they seeking honour in their company? But, indeed, all honour belongs to Allah,** [139] **and He has revealed to you in the Book that when you hear the verses of Allah**

being disbelieved and ridiculed you should not sit with them unless they enter into some other discourse. You, in that case, would be like them. Surely, Allah is to gather all hypocrites and disbelievers in *Jahannam* [140] **- those who look for (a misfortune for) you, so, if there is a victory for you, they say, "Were we not with you?" And if there is a gain for the disbelievers, they say, (to them) "Had we not overpowered you, still protected you from the believers?" So, Allah will decide between you on the Doomsday. And Allah shall never give the disbelievers a way against the believers.** [141]

Commentary

In the first verse (138), the hypocrites have been given the news of a painful punishment. By articulating a distressing news with the word, '*bashārah*' (good news), the hint given is that everyone looks forward to some good news to brighten his or her future but, for the hypocrites, there is just no other news except this.

Seek Honour from Allah alone

Close friendly relations with disbelievers and polytheists have been forbidden in the second verse (139). Warning has been served on those who do so. Right along, after giving the reason why people get involved with this disease, the practice has been declared ineffectual and absurd. The words of the text are: أَيَبْتَغُونَ عِندَهُمُ الْعِزَّةَ فَإِنَّ الْعِزَّةَ لِلَّهِ جَمِيعًا (139) (Are they seeking honour in their company? But, indeed, all honour belongs to Allah). To explain, we can say that the urge to meet and be friendly with disbelievers and polytheists is generally prompted by the assumption that their outwardly visible influence, power and collective strength may give honour and power to those who have close relations with them. Almighty Allah has exposed the reality behind this absurd notion by saying : You want to acquire honour from those who themselves have no honour. *'Izzah* (عِزَّة) which means might and mastery, belongs to none but Allah and whenever some sort of might and mastery is given to any person, it is given by Allah. With the scheme of things being such, it would certainly be a gross lack of reason to go about acquiring honour by displeasing the owner and giver of real honour and stooping down to the level of scroungers for temporal honour through His enemies?

The same subject has appeared in the Qur'ānic Sūrah al-Munāfiqūn with one addition as follows:

وَلِلّٰهِ الْعِزَّةُ وَلِرَسُوْلِهٖ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَلٰكِنَّ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ

For Allah is all honour, and for His Messenger, and for believers - but, the hypocrites do not know. 63:8.

By adding the messenger and the believers with Almighty Allah in this verse, it has been emphasized that Allah is the only owner-possessor of real honour and it is He Who bestows on whosoever He wills a certain part of that honour. Since the Messenger of Allah and those who believe in them are dear in the sight of Allah, therefore, honour and mastery are given to them. As for the disbelievers and the polytheists, they themselves do not have this kind of honour, then, what sort of honour can one get by acting in league with them? Therefore, Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ said:

مَنِ اعْتَزَّ بِالْعَبِيْدِ اَذَلَّهُ اللّٰهُ

Whoever seeks honour through human beings (His servants) is disgraced by Allah. (Jaṣṣāṣ)

As in Mustadrak al-Ḥākim, Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ said to Sayyidnā Abū 'Ubaydah, the Governor of Syria:

كُنْتُمْ اَقَلَّ النَّاسِ وَاَذَلَّ النَّاسِ فَكَثَّرَكُمْ بِالْاِسْلَامِ، وَكُنْتُمْ اَذَلَّ النَّاسِ فَاَعَزَّكُمُ اللّٰهُ بِالْاِسْلَامِ مَهْمَا تَطْلُبُوا الْعِزَّةَ بِغَيْرِ اللّٰهِ يُذِلُّكُمُ اللّٰهُ.

You were the lowest (in numbers) and the weakest (in strength) among the people (of the world), then Allah made you exceed in numbers and strength with (the grace of) Islam; and you were the meanest (in status) among the people (of the world), then Allah raised you in honour with (the grace of) Islam. So, understand this very clearly: If you seek honour from any source other than Allah, Allah will disgrace you.

Explaining the meaning of this verse, the famous commentator, Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ has said in Aḥkām al-Qur'ān that the verse forbids the seeking of honour through friendship with disbelievers and sinners. However, the seeking of honour and power through Muslims is not forbidden because this verse of Sūrah al-Munāfiqūn has made it clear that Almighty Allah has blessed His messenger and the believers

with honour. (Jaṣṣāṣ, p. 352, v.2)

If the *'Izzah* or honour mentioned here means the everlasting honour of the life-to-come, the *'Ākhirah,* then, its applicability to Allah's messenger and the believers in the life of the present world is quite obvious, for the honour of the *'Ākhirah* can never become the lot of any disbeliever or polytheist. Conversely, if it is taken to mean honour in the present life of the world, then, barring transitional periods and accidental happenings, this honour and mastery is, ultimately, the right of Islam and Muslims alone. Until such time that Muslims remained Muslims in the true sense, the whole world witnessed the spectacle. Then, there shall be the later period when Muslims will reassemble around true Islam under the leadership of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام ascendancy will again be theirs. That Muslims appear to be weak during the interim period, because of their weakness of faith and involvement with sins, does not go against it.

In the third verse (140): وَقَدْ نَزَّلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الْكِتٰبِ (... and He has revealed to you in the Book), by referring to another verse of the Holy Qur'ān which had already been revealed as a verse of the Sūrah al-An'ām before the event of Hijrah in Makkah al-Mukkarrmah, it has been re-emphasized that Allah had sent, much earlier, the command that they should not even sit in the company of disbelievers and sinners. Now, surprising as it is, these heedless people have gone much beyond that by establishing friendly relations with them assuming that they were the bearers of honour and the wielders of power in their own right.

The verse of Sūrah al-Nisā' under discussion (140) and the verse of Sūrah al-An'ām (68) which has been referred to in the Sūrah al-Nisā' both carry the same sense. That is, should some people sitting in a group be engaged in denying and deriding the verses revealed by Allah, then, as long as they stay occupied with this vain exercise, sitting in their company to participate or observe is also forbidden (*ḥarām*). However, the words of Sūrah al-An'ām have some generalization, and a little more detail for it says:

وَإِذَا رَأَيْتَ الَّذِيْنَ يَخُوْضُوْنَ فِيْٓ اٰيٰتِنَا فَأَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ حَتّٰى يَخُوْضُوْا فِيْ حَدِيْثٍ غَيْرِهٖ وَإِمَّا يُنْسِيَنَّكَ الشَّيْطٰنُ فَلَا تَقْعُدْ بَعْدَ الذِّكْرٰى مَعَ الْقَوْمِ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ

And when you see those who indulge in Our verses adversely,

> turn away from them, until such time that they may get busy with some subject other than that. And if Satan makes you forget, do not sit with the unjust people after the recollection. (6:68)

Here, in the verse cited above, the reference is to disputation in Divine verses which includes disbelief and mockery as well. Also included here is the act of distorting the meaning of a verse, that is, deducing such meanings from the verses of the Holy Qur'ān which are contrary to the *tafsīr* or explanation given by the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his blessed Companions, or are against the consensus of the Muslim Community. Therefore, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه, as reported by Ḍaḥḥāk, has said that included within the sense of this verse are those who explain the Qur'ān (*tafsīr*) erroneously or distort its meaning (*taḥrīf*) or invent what is not there (*bid'ah*). The actual words of this report are being given below:

دَخَلَ فِيْ هٰذِهِ الْاٰيَةِ كُلُّ مُحْدِثٍ فِي الدِّيْنِ، وَكُلُّ مُبْتَدِعٍ اِلٰى يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ

(Maẓhari, p.263, v.2)

The impermissibility of listening to opinion-based explanations of the Holy Qur'ān:

From here we find out that a person who, while talking, explaining or teaching the Holy Qur'ān, is not observant of the exegetical authenticity credited to the most righteous elders of the early period (i.e. the Companions of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم or their pupils) instead, indulges in giving meanings of the Qur'ān contrary to those stated by them, then, participation in the *Dars* (teaching sessions) or *Tafsīr* (Exegesis) of such a person shall be impermissible under the authority of the Qur'ān, being a sin rather than a source of reward. In Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, Abū Ḥayyān has said: These verses tell us that what is sinful to say verbally remains equally sinful when heard through the ears voluntarily. He has even put it in a poetic exhortation:

وَسَمْعَكَ صُنْ عَنْ سِمَاعِ الْقَبِيْحِ   كَصَوْنِ اللِّسَانِ عَنِ النُّطْقِ بِهٖ

Protect your ears from hearing the evil
As you protect your tongue from saying it.

After looking at the element of some generalization in the verse of Sūrah al-An'ām, we can now turn to the other element of additional

remarks about the possibility of someone having joined the company of such people unknowingly. In that case, once it is realised, the person should immediately leave that gathering. The point is that one should not sit with unjust people when alerted to the situation.

Now, in both verses of Sūrah al-Nisā' and Sūrah al-An'ām, it has been declared that as long as they remain occupied with their cross-comments, sitting in their company is forbidden. Here, we face another aspect of the problem which is: When they stop talking in that particular strain and digress to some other topic, would sitting with them and taking part in mutual discourse at that time become permissible, or not? The Qur'ān has elected not to be explicit on this situation, therefore, on this subject, there is a difference of views among scholars. Some have said that the reason for this prohibition was the disparagement and distortion of Divine verses - when that stopped, the prohibition stopped too. Therefore, once they start talking about something else, sitting in their company is no sin. Some others have said that (sitting in) the company of such disbelieving, sinning and unjust people is not correct even after that. This is the position taken by Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, may the mercy of Allah be upon him, the argument in support of his position comes from the following sentence of Sūrah al-An'ām: فَلَا تَقْعُدْ بَعْدَ الذِّكْرٰى مَعَ الْقَوْمِ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ It means: Once you remember, do not sit with the unjust people. It is obvious that an unjust person remains what he is even after having terminated the questionable conversation. Therefore, abstaining from sitting in his company is necessary. (Jaṣṣāṣ)

Qāḍī Thanāullāh Pānīpatī has, in his al-Tafsīr al-Maẓharī, found consistency in both views by saying that should comments laced with disbelief, mockery and distortion of the Qur'ān cease and be replaced by some other topic of conversation, then, even at that time, sitting unnecessarily in the company of such people shall, after all, remain forbidden. But, should such participation be prompted by some religious contingency or physical need, it would be permissible.

Seclusion is better than bad company

Imām Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ has said in Aḥkām al-Qur'ān: Should a Muslim, who is charged with the duty of forbidding the evil, witness sin being committed in a gathering, then, he should stop it by force, if

he has the strength to do that. And should he be lacking in this capability, then, he should, in the least, show his displeasure, the lowest degree of which is that he should rise and leave such company. This is the reason why Sayyidnā 'Umar ibn 'Abdul-'Azīz had some people arrested on the charge that they were drinking wine. On investigation, it was found that one of them was fasting. He did not drink the wine, but he was sitting in the company of those drunkards. Sayyidnā 'Umar ibn 'Abdul-'Azīz punished him too for his unexplained sitting in that sort of company. (al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ p.375, v.3)

It is useful to know that Ibn Kathīr has reported at this point in his *Tafsīr* the following ḥadīth from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم where he has said:

مَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْأٰخِرِ فَلَا يَجْلِسْ عَلٰى مَآئِدَةٍ يُدَارُ عَلَيْهَا الْخَمْرُ

One who believes in Allah and the Last Day should not sit to dine where liquor is being served. (Ibn Kathīr, p.567, v.1)

What has been said about leaving a gathering as part of a debated issue summarized above is hemmed by a condition. The condition is that leaving such a gathering shall not entail some sin according to Sharī'ah. For example, joining the *Jama'ah* (congregation) in a *Masjid* is necessary. Should something contrary to the Sharī'ah start happening there, one should not abandon praying with the Jama'ah because of that; instead, simple emotional displeasure against what is undesirable shall be considered sufficient. Similarly, there could be some other gathering the necessity of which stands proved in the Sharī'ah. If some people there start doing things which are contrary to the Sharī'ah, then, leaving that gathering just because of the sin being committed by others would amount to committing a sin of your own. This is neither reasonable, nor correct. Therefore, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī said: If we were to keep giving up what we must do just because of the sins of other people, we shall be paving the way for all sorts of sinners to come and destroy the Sunnah and Sharī'ah.

To Sum Up

The nature of socialization with disbelieving or falsely-believing people takes some of the following forms:

1. By condescending to their infidelistic assaults. This is infi-

delity (*kufr*).

2. By showing repugnance when confronted with open expressions of disbelief. This, if done without a valid excuse admitted by the Sharī'ah, is '*fisq*' or sinfulness, contrary to the required behaviour of unalloyed righteousness.

3. For some worldly need. This is allowed.

4. To dessiminate injunctions of Islam. This is an act of worship, '*Ībādah*.

5. Under compulsion, exigency or emergency or helplessness (*iḍṭirār*). This is excusable.

Accommodating disbelief is disbelief

Towards the later part of the verse (140), it was said: إِنَّكُمْ إِذًا مِّثْلُهُمْ (You, in that case, would be like them). It means: 'If you kept sitting in such a gathering where the Word of Allah is being rejected or ridiculed or distorted, quite unruffled, almost willingly, then, you too, by becoming an accomplice in their sin, have become like them.' The sense of 'having become like them' can be explained either as: 'God forbid, if your own thoughts and feelings are such that you show your liking for and are satisfied with their expressions of disbelief, then, in reality, you too are a disbeliever (*kāfir*), because liking *kufr* is nothing but *kufr*.' Otherwise, if that is not the case, 'being like them' would mean: 'By your participation in the activity of those who are busy hurting Islam and Muslims through their falsification of the Faith, you too, by your abetment of their conspiracy, have become, God forbid, like them.'

Verses 142 - 144

إِنَّ الْمُنٰفِقِينَ يُخٰدِعُونَ اللّٰهَ وَهُوَ خَادِعُهُمْ ۚ وَإِذَا قَامُوٓا إِلَى
الصَّلٰوةِ قَامُوا كُسَالٰى ۙ يُرَآءُونَ النَّاسَ وَلَا يَذْكُرُونَ اللّٰهَ إِلَّا
قَلِيلًا ﴿١٤٢﴾ مُّذَبْذَبِينَ بَيْنَ ذٰلِكَ ۖ لَآ إِلٰى هٰٓؤُلَآءِ وَلَآ إِلٰى
هٰٓؤُلَآءِ ؕ وَمَنْ يُّضْلِلِ اللّٰهُ فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهٗ سَبِيلًا ﴿١٤٣﴾ يٰٓأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ
اٰمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا الْكٰفِرِينَ أَوْلِيَآءَ مِنْ دُونِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ؕ أَتُرِيدُونَ

أَنْ تَجْعَلُوا لِلّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ سُلْطٰنًا مُّبِيْنًا ﴿١٤٤﴾

Surely, the hypocrites (try to) deceive Allah while He is the One who leaves them in deception. And when they stand for Ṣalāh, they stand up lazily showing off to the people, and do not remember Allah but a little, [142] **wavering between (this and) that, neither here nor there. And whom Allah lets go astray for him you shall never find a way.** [143] **O those who believe, do not take the disbelievers for friends instead of the believers. Do you want to produce before Allah a clear evidence against yourselves?** [144]

The censure on hypocrites appearing earlier continues through the present verses. Their blameworthy approach to matters of Faith has been clearly identified here and is self-explanatory through the translation given.

Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī has, in his Tafsīr Bayān al-Qur'ān, taken up the question of 'standing up lazily' in the expression: قَامُوْا كُسَالٰى which appears in verse 142 saying: 'The laziness censured here is doctrinal laziness, (that is, slothfulness towards observance of the articles of faith due to lack of true conviction). However, laziness which is there despite correct beliefs stands excluded from the purview of this censure. Then, should this laziness be there due to some excuse, such as, sickness, fatigue or sleepiness, it is not even blameworthy. But, when without excuse, it is.'

Verses 145 - 147

إِنَّ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ فِى الدَّرْكِ الْأَسْفَلِ مِنَ النَّارِ وَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهُمْ نَصِيْرًا ﴿١٤٥﴾ إِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ تَابُوْا وَأَصْلَحُوْا وَاعْتَصَمُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَأَخْلَصُوْا دِيْنَهُمْ لِلّٰهِ فَأُولٰٓئِكَ مَعَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ط وَسَوْفَ يُؤْتِ اللّٰهُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ أَجْرًا عَظِيْمًا ﴿١٤٦﴾ مَا يَفْعَلُ اللّٰهُ بِعَذَابِكُمْ إِنْ شَكَرْتُمْ وَاٰمَنْتُمْ ط وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ شَاكِرًا عَلِيْمًا ﴿١٤٧﴾

Surely, the hypocrites are in the lowest level of the Fire, and you shall never find for them a helper [145] - **except those who repent and correct themselves and**

hold on to Allah and make their Faith pure for Allah. So, those are with the believers, and Allah shall give the believers a great reward. [144]

What would Allah get by punishing you, if you are grateful and believe? And Allah is Appreciating, All-Knowing. [147]

The purpose in previous verses was to point out to some ugly traits of the hypocrites, though their punishment of being in Hell with disbelievers was also mentioned as a corollary to another subject.

From this stage onwards, the purpose is to state their punishment clearly. Since the inherent effect of such impending punishment generates a sense of fear in a good-natured person which usually becomes the reason for early repentance, therefore, exemption from punishment has been promised to those who repent alongwith the incentive of good reward for them.

The Meaning of sincerity

The statement: اَخْلَصُوْا دِيْنَهُمْ (Make their Faith pure for Allah) in verse 146 shows that a deed in order to be acceptable with Allah has to be free of hypocrisy and exclusively for His sake and pleasure, for Muslim jurists have enunciated the meaning of *Mukhliṣ* (translated with the weaker equivalent 'sincere') as follows:

اَلَّذِیْ یَعْمَلُ لِلّٰهِ لَا یُحِبُّ اَنْ یَّحْمَدَهُ النَّاسُ عَلَیْهِ

A sincere person is one who acts for Allah alone and does not like that people praise him for it. (Maẓharī)

Verses 148 - 152

لَا يُحِبُّ اللّٰهُ الْجَهْرَ بِالسُّوْٓءِ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ اِلَّا مَنْ ظُلِمَ ؕ وَ كَانَ
اللّٰهُ سَمِيْعًا عَلِيْمًا ﴿۱۴۸﴾ اِنْ تُبْدُوْا خَيْرًا اَوْ تُخْفُوْهُ اَوْ تَعْفُوْا
عَنْ سُوْٓءٍ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَفُوًّا قَدِيْرًا ﴿۱۴۹﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَكْفُرُوْنَ
بِاللّٰهِ وَرُسُلِهٖ وَيُرِيْدُوْنَ اَنْ يُّفَرِّقُوْا بَيْنَ اللّٰهِ وَ رُسُلِهٖ وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ
نُؤْمِنُ بِبَعْضٍ وَّنَكْفُرُ بِبَعْضٍ ۙ وَّيُرِيْدُوْنَ اَنْ يَّتَّخِذُوْا بَيْنَ ذٰلِكَ
سَبِيْلًا ﴿۱۵۰﴾ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْكٰفِرُوْنَ حَقًّا ۚ وَاَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ

عَذَابًا مُّهِينًا ﴿١٥١﴾ وَالَّذِينَ اٰمَنُوا بِاللّٰهِ وَرُسُلِهٖ وَلَمْ يُفَرِّقُوا
بَيْنَ اَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ اُولٰٓئِكَ سَوْفَ يُؤْتِيهِمْ اُجُورَهُمْ ۭ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ
غَفُورًا رَّحِيمًا ﴿١٥٢﴾

Allah does not like the saying of evil words openly except from anyone wronged. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. [148]

If you do good openly or keep it secret or overlook an evil deed, then, Allah is All-Forgiving, All-Powerful. [149]

Surely those who disbelieve in Allah and His Messengers, and wish to make division between Allah and His Messengers, and say, "We believe in some and disbelieve in some others" and wish to take a way in between that. [150] **Those are the disbelievers in reality, and We have prepared for the disbelievers a humiliating punishment.** [151]

And those who have believed in Allah and His Messengers, and have made no division between any of them, to them He will give their rewards. And Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [152]

Commentary

Out of these verses, the first (148) and the second (149) give a law to eradicate injustice and oppression from the world. But, this is not like the usual worldly laws which are limited to dictatory formulations. This, in turn, is the kind of law which tries a combination of persuasion and awe whereby, on the one hand, the victim of injustice has been permitted to protest against the perpetrator of injustice, or to go to a court of law to seek redress. All this is nothing but the basic demand of justice and, certainly, a source of eradication of crimes. But, along with this option, there is a restriction on it as mentioned in Sūrah al-Naḥl: وَاِنْ عَاقَبْتُمْ فَعَاقِبُوْا بِمِثْلِ مَا عُوْقِبْتُمْ بِهٖ ۭ وَلَىِٕنْ صَبَرْتُمْ لَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لِّلصّٰبِرِيْنَ It means: 'If a person inflicts injustice on you, you too can retaliate against him for that injustice. But, the condition is that your retaliation should not exceed the unjust aggressive action by him - if so, it is you who would turn into the unjust one.' (16:126) The outcome is that returning an injustice by another injustice is not allowed. Rather, the retaliation to

injustice, if any, can be made only through justice. On the other hand alongwith this course of action, comes the instruction that revenge is, though permissible, yet observing patience (*ṣabr*) and forgiving is better.

This verse also tells us that for an oppressed person who goes about complaining to people about the injustice done to him or her, this will not be included under backbiting *ghībah*, which is *ḥarām* (forbidden) - because it is the oppressor who has given the victim the opportunity to complain. Thus, the Holy Qur'ān has, on the one hand, allowed the oppressed person to use the option of 'even retaliation' against the injustice. On the other hand, by teaching the oppressed to practice high morals and to forgive and forget, and by focusing before him the the great gain of the life-to-come, the victim of injustice has been persuaded to do a little sacrifice in this matter of his legitimate right and take no revenge for the injustice inflicted. The Holy Qur'ān says:

إِنْ تُبْدُوا خَيْرًا أَوْ تُخْفُوهُ أَوْ تَعْفُوا عَنْ سُوٓءٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَفُوًّا قَدِيرًا

If you do good openly or keep it secret or overlook an evil deed, then, Allah is All-Forgiving, All-Powerful - 4:149

It means: If you do a good deed openly or do it secretly or forgive any injustice or evil done by someone, then, this is better, because Allah is All-Forgiving, All-Powerful. Primarily, this verse is concerned with the forgiving of injustice but, by also mentioning the doing of what is good, openly or secretly, the hint given is that this act of overlooking and forgiving is great and anyone who elects to do it shall become deserving of the mercy and forgiveness from Almighty Allah.

Towards the end of the verse, by saying فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَفُوًّا قَدِيرًا (Allah is All-Forgiving, All-Powerful), it has been made clear that Allah is powerful in the absolute sense. He can punish whomsoever He wills, yet He is All-Forgiving. Now, a human being, who does not have much of power or choice, were to think of taking revenge, it is quite possible that he may just not have the capability to do that. Therefore, for such a person, overlooking and forgiving is far more desirable

This is the principle which the Holy Qur'ān enunciates to eradicate injustice and reform the society. The counsel, befitting of the Sustainer of everything, does, on the one hand permit retaliation in an equal

measure, thus upholding justice. On the other hand, it exhorts the aggrieved party to forgive and forgo. The result is what has been described in Qur'ān at another place:

فَإِذَا الَّذِي بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ عَدَاوَةٌ كَأَنَّهُ وَلِيٌّ حَمِيمٌ

"You will see that he with whom you had enmity has become your closest friend" (41:34).

Court decisions and taking of revenge for injustices do play a role in checking injustice. The fact, however, is that the parties to the dispute are usually left saddled with long term grievances and feelings of abhorrence against each other which can result in further disputes in the future. The impeccable lesson in morality, given by Holy Qur'ān, results in patch up among quarrelling parties such that even old enmities change into close and lasting friendships.

Now, we move on to verses 150, 151 and 152 where the Holy Qur'ān has given the clear verdict that anyone who believes in Allah but does not believe in His messengers, or believes in some of them and does not believe in some others is not a believer in the sight of Allah. He is, rather, an open and avowed disbeliever for whom there is no road to salvation in the Hereafter. Let us examine this aspect of the verses concerned in some detail.

Salvation depends on Islam

This clear verdict of the Holy Qur'ān has exposed the rudderless and crooked ways of those who, in an effort to appear tolerant in dealings with peoples of other faiths, would like to present their religion and religious beliefs as gifts on a platter. By doing so, they wish to tell - despite and contrary to the clear injunctions of the Qur'ān and Sunnah - people of other faiths that Muslims do not think that salvation depends on Islam alone and a Jew could keep to his or her creed and a Christian to his or hers and yet, both could look forward to salvation; though, they deny all prophets or at least some of them, for which reason this verse has declared them to be the kind of disbelievers who are destined for Hell.

There is no doubt about the fact that Islam stands unmatched in its attitude to non-Muslims in matters of justice and fairness, sympathy and goodwill, favour and tolerance. But, good favours can be

made within the limits of one's rights and possessions. Religious principles and articles of faith are not our property which we could donate or present to somebody. Of course, Islam is generous and benevolent in its teachings of tolerance and good treatment with non-Muslims, but it is also equally cautious and firm in the defence of its frontiers. It maintains its essential approach of all possible sympathy and maximum tolerance with non-Muslims, but, at the same time, Islam absolves itself decisively from all forms of disbelief and customs woven around it, declaring Muslims as a people distinct from non-Muslims - and yet, it provides full protection to their national hallmarks. In short, Islam prefers to keep not only the acts of worship Muslims perform distinct from those of others, but also its way of life in a society, the examples of which abound in the Qur'ān and Sunnah.

Had Islam believed in the possibility of salvation through every religion or community, it would have had no right to lay so much stress on spreading the message (*Tablīgh*) of Islam, almost to the limit of staking property and life for it. This would have been wrong in principle and quite contrary to dictates of reason. In fact, by accepting such a premise, the very coming of the noble Prophet, may the blessings of Allah and peace be upon him, and the revelation of the glorious Qur'ān, is rendered, God forbid, redundant. And, lest we miss, the entire *Jihād* carried out by the noble Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the rightly-guided Caliphs رضى الله عنهم اجمعين becomes meaningless, rather reduced to nothing but the lust for more land.

In this case, some people have fallen victims to doubt by a misreading of verse 62 in Sūrah al-Baqarah which is cited below:

إِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَالَّذِيْنَ هَادُوْا وَالنَّصٰرٰى وَالصّٰبِئِيْنَ مَنْ اٰمَنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَهُمْ اَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُوْنَ

> Surely, those who believed in Allah, and those who happened to be Jews and Christians, and the Sabeans - whosoever believes in Allah and in the Last Day, and does good deeds - they have their reward with their Lord. And there is no fear for them nor shall they grieve.

Since, in this verse, rather than giving the full detail of what constitutes faith, only belief in Allah and in the Last Day has been considered sufficient, those who try to understand the Qur'ān through

an incomplete study have misunderstood the whole idea. They assumed that simply believing in Allah and the Last Day is enough for salvation and that believing in prophets is no condition for it. Thus, they failed to understand that the Qur'ān has its own terminology in which Belief in Allah, in order to be acceptable, has to be in conjunction with Belief in the Prophet. Otherwise, even the Satan admits that there is a God and that He is One. The Holy Qur'ān has itself clarified the real issue in the following words:

فَإِنْ آمَنُوا بِمِثْلِ مَا آمَنتُم بِهِ فَقَدِ اهْتَدَوا وَّإِن تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّمَا هُمْ فِي شِقَاقٍ فَسَيَكْفِيكَهُمُ اللَّهُ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ.

So, if they believe in the like of what you believe in, they have certainly found the right path. And if they turn away, they are nothing but in antagonism. Then Allah will suffice you against them, and He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing. (2:137)

In other words, we can say that their faith will be valid and trustworthy only when they have the same faith as common Muslims do, a faith in which Belief in the Prophet is indispensably necessary with Belief in Allah. Otherwise, if they do not do that, let it be understood that they are the ones who wish to create dissension. After that, for them, Allah will be sufficient on your behalf, and He is the One who hears everything and He is the One who knows everything.

As for the verses under discussion, it has been clearly declared that anyone who rejects even one of the prophets of Allah is an avowed disbeliever (*kāfir*) and a recipient of the punishment of Hell. So, let us remember that Belief in Allah, in order to be valid, has to be with Belief in the Prophet. If the Belief in the Prophet is not there, even referring to Belief in Allah as such will not be correct.

In the concluding verse (15:22), it has been reaffirmed that salvation in the Hereafter is the lot of those who believe in Him and in all of His prophets as well. Therefore, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

إِنَّ الْقُرْآنَ يُفَسِّرُ بَعْضُهُ بَعْضًا

One part of the Qur'an explains the other.

It is not permissible for anyone to explain the Qur'ān in any way

contrary to the *Tafsīr* of the Qur'ān itself.

Verses 153 - 154

يَسْـَٔلُكَ اَهْلُ الْكِتٰبِ اَنْ تُنَزِّلَ عَلَيْهِمْ كِتٰبًا مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ فَقَدْ سَاَلُوْا مُوْسٰٓى اَكْبَرَ مِنْ ذٰلِكَ فَقَالُوْٓا اَرِنَا اللّٰهَ جَهْرَةً فَاَخَذَتْهُمُ الصّٰعِقَةُ بِظُلْمِهِمْ ۚ ثُمَّ اتَّخَذُوا الْعِجْلَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَآءَتْهُمُ الْبَيِّنٰتُ فَعَفَوْنَا عَنْ ذٰلِكَ ۚ وَاٰتَيْنَا مُوْسٰى سُلْطٰنًا مُّبِيْنًا ﴿١٥٣﴾ وَرَفَعْنَا فَوْقَهُمُ الطُّوْرَ بِمِيْثَاقِهِمْ وَقُلْنَا لَهُمُ ادْخُلُوا الْبَابَ سُجَّدًا وَّقُلْنَا لَهُمْ لَا تَعْدُوْا فِى السَّبْتِ وَاَخَذْنَا مِنْهُمْ مِّيْثَاقًا غَلِيْظًا ﴿١٥٤﴾

The People of the Book ask you to bring down upon them a Book from the heaven. No wonder, (because) they have already asked Musa something greater than that when they said, "Make us see Allah openly." So, the thunderbolt took them for the wrong they did. Later, they took to themselves the calf even after the clear signs had come to them. Then, We forgave them, and gave Mūsā an open authority. [153] **And We raised the (Mount of) Ṭūr high over them for binding them to the pledge, and We said to them, "Do not transgress in (the matter of) the Sabbath." And We took from them a firm pledge.** [154]

Some previous verses censured Jews for their mistrustfulness in matters of faith. In the present verses too, there appears a long list of some of their other evil doings and, because of these ugly problems with them, mention has been made of their punishment. This strain continues in many more verses coming later.

Commentary

Some Jewish chiefs came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and demanded that he bring down a book from the heaven similar to that which came to Mūsā عليه السلام all written from there: If so, they would believe him. They had made this demand not because they wished to believe with all their heart on this condition. It was just a device to drag and stall. In fact, because of their chronic urge to take an oppo-

site stand, they were given to offering one or the other excuse all the time. By revealing this verse, Almighty Allah made the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم become aware of the real state of affairs. This was to give him comfort and peace of mind against the doings of a people who are used to harassing the prophets of Allah. They would go to unbelievable limits of audacity by going as far as committing outrage against Almighty Allah. Their forefathers had gone even beyond them by demanding something more grave: "Make us see Allah openly." Upon this audacity of theirs, came a thunderbolt from the heaven and destroyed them. Then, it was despite being fully cognizant of clear signs and proofs of Allah being One and free of any partners in His Divinity, they stooped lowest of the low by taking a calf as their object of worship bypassing their own genuine Creator. But, Allah still remained forbearing, otherwise the occasion demanded that they be eliminated. Then, Allah gave His prophet, Sayyidnā Mūsā, peace be upon him, authority and power. Then, there came an occasion when these people had flatly refused to acknowledge the canonical law of the Torah whereupon Allah raised the Mount of Ṭūr high suspending over them, thus threatening and forcing them to acknowledge the Law of Torah or otherwise they were to be mashed under the mountain. Allah had also told them to enter the gate of the city of Eliah humbly filled with fervour to obey Him. Allah had also asked them to catch fish on the day of Sabbath which was a command from Him and which was not to be transgressed. And Allah had taken a solemn pledge from them, but it so turned out that they contravened every single command one after the other breaking the solemn pledge with Allah. So, Allah too put disgrace on them in the mortal life of the world and they will have to undergo the worst punishment in the Hereafter as well.

Verses 155 - 159

فَبِمَا نَقْضِهِمْ مِّيْثَاقَهُمْ وَكُفْرِهِمْ بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ وَقَتْلِهِمُ الْاَنْۢبِيَآءَ
بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ وَّقَوْلِهِمْ قُلُوْبُنَا غُلْفٌ ؕ بَلْ طَبَعَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهَا بِكُفْرِهِمْ
فَلَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا ﴿١٥٥﴾ وَّبِكُفْرِهِمْ وَقَوْلِهِمْ عَلٰى مَرْيَمَ
بُهْتَانًا عَظِيْمًا ﴿١٥٦﴾ وَّقَوْلِهِمْ اِنَّا قَتَلْنَا الْمَسِيْحَ عِيْسَى ابْنَ

مَرْيَمَ رَسُوْلَ اللّٰهِ ۚ وَمَا قَتَلُوْهُ وَمَا صَلَبُوْهُ وَلٰكِنْ شُبِّهَ لَهُمْ ۭ وَاِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اخْتَلَفُوْا فِيْهِ لَفِيْ شَكٍّ مِّنْهُ ۭ مَا لَهُمْ بِهٖ مِنْ عِلْمٍ اِلَّا اتِّبَاعَ الظَّنِّ ۚ وَمَا قَتَلُوْهُ يَقِيْنًا ﴿١٥٧﴾ بَلْ رَّفَعَهُ اللّٰهُ اِلَيْهِ ۭ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَزِيْزًا حَكِيْمًا ﴿١٥٨﴾ وَاِنْ مِّنْ اَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ اِلَّا لَيُؤْمِنَنَّ بِهٖ قَبْلَ مَوْتِهٖ ۚ وَيَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ يَكُوْنُ عَلَيْهِمْ شَهِيْدًا ﴿١٥٩﴾

So, (they met their fate) for breaking their pledge, and for their disbelief in the verses of Allah, and for their slaying of the prophets unjustly, and for their saying, "Our hearts are sealed" - rather, Allah has set a seal over them for their disbelief. So, they do not believe but a little [155] **- and for their disbelief and for what they said against Maryam as a grim imputation,** [156] **and for their saying, "We have certainly killed the Masīḥ 'Īsā (Jesus) the son of Maryam, the Messenger of Allah." And they did not kill him, and they did not crucify him, but they were deluded by resemblance. And those who disputed in this matter are certainly in doubt about it. They have no knowledge of it, but they follow whims. And it is certain that they did not kill him,** [157] **but Allah lifted him towards Himself. And Allah is All-Mighty, All-Wise.** [158] **And there is not one among the People of the Book but shall certainly believe in him (Jesus) before he (Jesus) dies, and on the Day of Doom, he shall be a witness against them.** [159]

Like the earlier verses, the censure of Jews continues through the present ones. As a thematically coherent subject, their false ideas have also been refuted which have been discussed in detail in the following commentary.

Commentary

In the verse يٰعِيْسٰٓى اِنِّىْ مُتَوَفِّيْكَ وَرَافِعُكَ اِلَيَّ ("O 'Īsā, I am to take you in full and lift you towards Me... 3:55) appearing in Sūrah 'Al-'Imrān, Almighty Allah had made five promises in connection with foiling the Jewish plans against Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and protecting him from their hostile intentions. A detailed explanation of these has been given earlier on that occasion in Sūrah 'Al-'Imrān. One of the promises made

there was that the Jews will not be allowed to have their way with their intention to kill Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام . Instead of that, Allah will lift him towards Him.

In the present verses (157-158) of Sūrah al-Nisā', it has been made explicit that they did not kill nor crucify Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام , rather, what actually happened was that they were deluded by resemblance.

How were the Jews 'deluded by resemblance?'

While explaining the words of the Qur'ān: وَلٰكِنْ شُبِّهَ لَهُمْ (but they were deluded by resemblance), master exegete, Ḍaḥḥāk says: It so transpired that, following the intention of Jews to kill Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام his disciples assembled at a given place. Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام joined them there. It was Iblīs who gave the address of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام to the execution squad standing ready for the mission. Four thousand men surrounded the suspected house. Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام said to his disciples : 'Is one of you willing to go out and be killed and then be in Paradise with me?' One of them offered to do so. Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام gave him his shirt and head-cover. Then, cast on him was the resemblance of Jesus and as soon as he came out, the Jews, believing him to be Jesus, caught him and crucified him, and Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام was lifted. (Qurṭubī)

According to some reports, the Jews had sent a person known to Arabs as Teetlanoos to kill Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام . He did not find Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام in the house for he was already lifted by Allah towards Himself. So, when this person came out of the house, he had been made to resemble the looks of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام . The Jews took him to be Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام . Thus, they took away their own man and killed him. (Maẓharī)

There is room for whichever of the situations came to pass - the Holy Qur'ān has not determined any particular situation. Therefore, Allah alone knows what really happened. However, this sentence of the Holy Qur'ān seen with other exegetical reports does yield the common factor that the Jews and Christians were subjected to compelling delusion. The event as it took shape remained hidden from them, though they did advance all sorts of claims based on their conjectures which only landed them into mutual differences. This is what the Holy Qur'ān points out to in the following words:

وَاِنَّ الَّذِيۡنَ اخۡتَلَفُوۡا فِيۡهِ لَفِىۡ شَكٍّ مِّنۡهُ مَا لَهُمۡ بِهٖ مِنۡ عِلۡمٍ اِلَّا اتِّبَاعَ الظَّنِّ وَمَا قَتَلُوۡهُ يَقِيۡنًا

And those who disputed in this matter are certainly in doubt about it. They have no knowledge of it, but they follow whims.

It means that they do not have certitude based on any true knowledge. The diverse claims put forward by those who have differed in the case of Masīḥ عليه السلام are simply based on doubt and conjecture. The truth of the matter is that they certainly did not kill Masīḥ عليه السلام, rather Allah lifted him towards Himself.

According to some other reports, when some of them woke up to what had happened, they said, 'We seem to have killed our own man, for the man we have put to death resembles Masīḥ عليه السلام in face only but not in the rest of the body. Now, if this man we have killed is Masīḥ عليه السلام where, then, is our man? And if this is our man where, then, is Masīḥ عليه السلام ?'

Verse 158, part of which was referred to immediately earlier, ends at: وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَزِيۡزًا حَكِيۡمًا : (And Allah is All-Mighty, All-Wise) carrying a significant message. It means that the planning of Jews to kill Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام was insignificant as matched against the Power of Allah who has taken it upon Himself to protect Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام. Might and mastery are His domain. If materialists in their single-track isolation, remain incapable of understanding the reality of the 'lifting off' of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام, that is their own limitation. As for Allah, He is All-Wise - everything He does is based on wisdom and fitness to whatever end is desired.

Then comes the finale of the subject in verse 159 beginning with the words: وَاِنۡ مِّنۡ اَهۡلِ الۡكِتٰبِ اِلَّا لَيُؤۡمِنَنَّ بِهٖ قَبۡلَ مَوۡتِهٖ (And there is not one among the People of the Book but shall certainly believe in him {Jesus} before he {Jesus} dies, and on the Day of Doom, he shall be a witness against them). It means: Though, at this time, so blinded by malice and envy are these people that they are unable to see reality as it is, hold false ideas about Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and, in addition to that, they are denying the prophethood of Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafa ﷺ yet, a time is to come when their eyes will open up and they will realize that all their notions about Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and Sayyidnā

Muḥammad ﷺ were totally false.

One explanation of this verse (159), which appears in Bayān al-Qur'ān by Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī, is that the pronoun in the Qur'ānic word مَوْتِهٖ (*mawtihi*: his death) be attributed to the People of the Book. The verse, in that sense, would mean that those Jews, when they see a glimpse of *Barzakh* (the state between death and resurrection) moments before their death, they will readily believe in the prophethood of Sayyidnā 'Īsā علیه السلام though, their believing at that point of time will be of no use to them, very much useless like the believing of Pharaoh which he did while drowning.

The second *tafsīr* (explanation) which has been adopted by a large number of *Ṣaḥābah* and *Tābi'īn* (the Companions and their Successors) and which also has the support of authentic *Ḥadīth* maintains that the pronoun in the word '*mawtihī*' refers back to Sayyidnā Masīḥ علیه السلام and, in that light, the verse means that the People of the Book of this time, be they Jews or Christians, do not believe in Sayyidnā 'Īsā علیه السلام in the real sense. The Jews just do not accept him as a prophet, rather, they accuse him of being, God forbid, a liar and imposter! As for the Christians, some of them despite claiming to believe in him, reached a level of ignorance which, like the Jews, led them to accept that Sayyidnā 'Īsā علیه السلام was crucified and killed. Then, there were others among them who, in their excess of belief, went out of the limits when they took him to be God and Son of God - but, says the verse of the Qur'ān, though they do not believe in the prophethood of Sayyidnā 'Īsā علیه السلام at this time as they should; but the time will come, close to the Day of Doom, when he will reappear on this earth and all Peoples of the Book will believe in him genuinely and authentically. All Christians will become Muslims holding true beliefs. The hostile among the Jews will be killed, the rest will become Muslims. That will be the time when *Kufr* will be banished from the world along with whatever forms it may have. Islam will finally reign supreme on the earth.

Reproduced below is a report from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضی اللہ عنہ:

عن ابی ہریرۃ عن النبی صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم أنہ قال: لینزلن ابن مریم
حکما عدلا فلیقتلن الدجال، ولیقتلن الخنزیر، ولیکسرن الصلیب وتکون

السجدة واحدة لله رب العلمين. ثم قال ابو هريرة : واقرؤا ان شئتم "وَإِنْ مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ إِلَّا لَيُؤْمِنَنَّ بِهٖ قَبْلَ مَوْتِهٖ" قال ابو هريرة: "قبل موت عيسى" يعيدها ثلث مرات .

"The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: The son of Maryam shall definitely reappear as a just ruler. He will kill the Anti-Christ and the swine. He will break the Cross and worship shall be made for Allah alone, the one Lord of all the worlds. Then, Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah said: Read, if you wish, the verse of the Qur'an - وَإِنْ مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ إِلَّا لَيُؤْمِنَنَّ بِهٖ قَبْلَ مَوْتِهٖ (159) which mentions that not one person from out of the People of the Book will remain without having believed in Sayyidnā 'Īsā before his death. Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah, then, said with stress: '<u>Before</u> the death of 'Īsā عليه السلام' and he repeated it three times. (Qurṭubī)

This *Tafsīr* (explanation) of the verse under reference stands proved from a highly venerated Companion such as Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه on the added strength of sound chain of narrators. This report establishes that the Qur'ānic words: قَبْلَ مَوْتِهٖ (before his death) mean 'before the death of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and which explicitly determines that this verse is related to the coming of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام close to the *Qiyāmah* (Doomsday).

As based on this *tafsīr*, this verse is a conclusive evidence that the death of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام has not yet come to pass. In fact, when he is sent down from the heaven close to *Qiyāmah* and the wise considerations of Almighty Allah working behind his coming reach their ultimate fruition, it will be only then that his death will occur on this very earth.

This is also supported by the following verse of Sūrah al-Zukhruf (43:61): وَإِنَّهٗ لَعِلْمٌ لِّلسَّاعَةِ فَلَا تَمْتَرُنَّ بِهَا وَاتَّبِعُوْنِ (that is, Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام is a sign of the Doomsday. So, do not doubt it and listen to what I say.) A larger number of commentators has said that the pronoun in the Qur'ānic word إِنَّهٗ at this point refers back to Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and it means that Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام is a sign of *Qiyāmah* (Doomsday). From here we learn that this verse reports the coming of the Masīḥ عليه السلام , that is, he will appear close to the *Qiyāmah* and his appearance will be one of the signs of it.

Also worth attention is yet another reading of the Qur'ānic word لَعِلْمٌ (*la'ilmun*) in this verse (43:61) which is: لَعَلَمٌ (*la'alamun*). According to this reading the meaning becomes all the more clear because the word عَلَم (*'alam*) with the *fatha* of *lām* means 'sign or symbol.' The following *tafsir* of Sayyidnā 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ lends added support to this view: عن ابن عباس رضى الله عنه فى قوله تعالى: "وَاِنَّهٗ لَعِلْمٌ لِّلسَّاعَةِ" قال: خروج عيسى عليه السلام قَبْلَ يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ (About the verse: وَاِنَّهٗ لَعِلْمٌ لِّلسَّاعَةِ - 43:61 - Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbas reported that it refers to Sayyidnā 'Īsā علیہ السلام who will come before the *Qiyāmah* (Ibn Kathīr)

In short, if we combine the statement: '*Qabla mawtihī*' (Before his death - 4:159) with the authentic ḥadīth of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah and its explanation, the truth that Sayyidnā 'Īsā علیہ السلام is alive and that he will reappear close to the Doomsday and overcome the Jews stands proved conclusively. Similarly, this view also becomes certain through the words: وَاِنَّهٗ لَعِلْمٌ لِّلسَّاعَةِ : 'Surely, he (Sayyidnā 'Īsā) is a sign of the Doomsday,' as explained by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ .

The master commentator, Ibn Kathīr, while explaining the verse: وَاِنَّهٗ لَعِلْمٌ لِّلسَّاعَةِ cited above, has said:

وقد تواترت الاحاديث عن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم انه اخبر بنزول عيسى عليه السلام قبل يوم القيمة اماما عادلا (ابن کثیر)

"The sayings of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم in this connection have been reported through *tawātur* (in an uninterrupted succession) that he has conveyed the tidings of the coming of 'Īsā علیہ السلام in this world before the Day of Doom as a just ruler. (Ibn Kathīr)

These narrations appearing in an uninterrupted succession (*mutawātir*) were collected by my teacher and a great servant of Islam, Maulānā Muḥammad Anwar Shāh al-Kashmirī. These were more than a hundred in number. This humble writer compiled this collection in Arabic and it was published way back under the title: التصريح بما تواتر فى نزول المسيح as proposed by my respected teacher. Recently, a major Syrian scholar, Al-'Allāmah 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghuddah has published from the city of Beirut a deluxe edition of this work with additional explanations and notes.

The belief in the coming of 'Īsā عليه السلام towards the later times is absolute and unanimous as held by the Muslims and the denier of which goes out of the pale of Islam

This subject has become clear enough from the discussion of verses in this part of the commentary. A more comprehensive treatment of the subject has already appeared in the commentary on Sūrah 'Al-'Imrān which may be consulted. The discussions there also include answers to doubts raised by some so-called modernists of our time in order to hurt the credibility of this article of Muslim faith. Only Allah can guide whomsoever He wills.

Verses 160 - 161

فَبِظُلْمٍ مِّنَ الَّذِينَ هَادُوا حَرَّمْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ طَيِّبٰتٍ أُحِلَّتْ لَهُمْ
وَبِصَدِّهِمْ عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ كَثِيرًا ﴿١٦٠﴾ وَأَخْذِهِمُ الرِّبٰوا وَقَدْ
نُهُوا عَنْهُ وَأَكْلِهِمْ أَمْوَالَ النَّاسِ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَأَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكٰفِرِينَ
مِنْهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا ﴿١٦١﴾

So, for the transgression of those who became Jews, We prohibited for them good things which were made lawful for them earlier and for their preventing (people) frequently from the way of Allah, [160] **and for their taking *riba* (usury or interest) while they were forbidden from it, and for their eating up of the properties of the people by false means. And We have prepared, for the disbelievers among them, a painful punishment.** [161]

Mentioned earlier through several verses were the wrongdoings of Jews and the punishment they would get for doing so. The present verses talk about some other vices of theirs and mention yet another kind of punishment as well. This punishment will, obviously, visit them on the Day of Judgment. But, right here in this present world, the outcome will be that they will find many things already lawful for them made unlawful as a measure of punishment.

Commentary

In the Sharī'ah brought by the Holy Prophet Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā صلى الله عليه وسلم there are some things too, known as *ḥaram* or

unlawful, but these were forbidden because of one or the other physical or spiritual harm they bring. This was contrary to what happened with the Jews - the good things forbidden to them had no physical or spiritual harm in them, instead, these were forbidden to them as the punishment of their acts of transgression and disobedience.

Verse 162

لٰكِنِ الرّٰسِخُوْنَ فِى الْعِلْمِ مِنْهُمْ وَالْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِمَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكَ وَمَآ اُنْزِلَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ وَالْمُقِيْمِيْنَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَالْمُؤْتُوْنَ الزَّكٰوةَ وَالْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ سَنُؤْتِيْهِمْ اَجْرًا عَظِيْمًا ﴿١٦٢﴾

But those well-grounded in knowledge among them and the believers, believe in what has been revealed to you and what has been revealed before you, and, of course, those observing the Ṣalāh and paying the Zakāh and those believing in Allah and the Last Day. To them we shall give a great reward. [162]

The previous verses referred to Jews who adhered to their disbelief and obstinately continued practising what was blame-worthy. The present verse now cites those who were, no doubt, from among the People of the Book, but, when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم came with his mission and they found in him, fully and unmistakably, all qualities the Last among Prophets عليهم السلام was supposed to have according to the prophesies of their Scriptures, they believed in him - like Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Salām, Usayd and Tha'labah, may Allah be pleased with them all. The words of praise in this verse are for these blessed souls.

Commentary

The great reward promised to those referred to here is because of their qualities of faith and righteous deeds. As far as salvation as such is concerned that depends on the correction of essentials of doctrinal matters - of course, subject to the condition, that one's life ends with the blessing of faith (*'Īmān*).

Verses 163 - 169

إِنَّآ أَوْحَيْنَآ إِلَيْكَ كَمَآ أَوْحَيْنَآ إِلَىٰ نُوحٍ وَّالنَّبِيّٖنَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖ ۚ
وَأَوْحَيْنَآ إِلَىٰٓ إِبْرٰهِيمَ وَإِسْمٰعِيلَ وَإِسْحٰقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطِ
وَعِيسٰى وَأَيُّوبَ وَيُونُسَ وَهٰرُونَ وَسُلَيْمٰنَ ۚ وَآتَيْنَا دَاوُۥدَ
زَبُورًا ﴿١٦٣﴾ وَرُسُلًا قَدْ قَصَصْنٰهُمْ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَرُسُلًا لَّمْ
نَقْصُصْهُمْ عَلَيْكَ ۚ وَكَلَّمَ اللّٰهُ مُوسٰى تَكْلِيمًا ﴿١٦٤﴾ رُسُلًا
مُّبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنْذِرِينَ لِئَلَّا يَكُونَ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَى اللّٰهِ حُجَّةٌۢ بَعْدَ
الرُّسُلِ ۚ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَزِيزًا حَكِيمًا ﴿١٦٥﴾ لٰكِنِ اللّٰهُ يَشْهَدُ بِمَآ
أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكَ أَنْزَلَهُۥ بِعِلْمِهٖ ۖ وَالْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ يَشْهَدُونَ ۚ وَكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ
شَهِيدًا ﴿١٦٦﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَصَدُّوا عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللّٰهِ قَدْ
ضَلُّوا ضَلٰلًا بَعِيدًا ﴿١٦٧﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَظَلَمُوا لَمْ يَكُنِ
اللّٰهُ لِيَغْفِرَ لَهُمْ وَلَا لِيَهْدِيَهُمْ طَرِيقًا ﴿١٦٨﴾ إِلَّا طَرِيقَ جَهَنَّمَ
خٰلِدِينَ فِيهَآ أَبَدًا ۚ وَكَانَ ذٰلِكَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ يَسِيرًا ﴿١٦٩﴾

Surely, We have revealed to you as We have revealed to Nūḥ (Noah) and to the prophets after him; and We have revealed to Ibrāhīm, Ismā'īl, Isḥāq, Ya'qūb and their children, and to 'Īsā, Ayyūb, Yūnus, Ḥārūn and Sulaymān. And We have given Zabūr to Dāwūd. [1] [163]

And, (We have sent down) some Messengers We have already told you about, and some other Messengers We did not tell you about and Allah has spoken to Mūsā verbally [164] **- Messengers giving good tidings and warning so that people may have no plea against Allah**

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1. These are the names of the prophets Biblically spelt respectively as follows:

Abraham, Ishmael, Issac, Israel, Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron, Solomon and David.

Zabur is the name of the Book revealed to David, Biblically known as the Psalms.

after the Messengers (have come). And Allah is All-Mighty, All-Wise. [165]

But Allah bears witness (to your prophethood) through what He has revealed to you, (and) revealed it with His knowledge. And the angels too, bear witness. And Allah is sufficient as witness. [166]

Surely, those who disbelieved and prevented (people) from the way of Allah have gone far astray. [167] **Surely, those who disbelieved and transgressed, Allah is not going to forgive them nor lead them to a way** [168] **- other than the way of *Jahannam* where they are to remain for ever. And that, for Allah, is easy.** [169]

If we refer back to Verse 153: يَسْـَٔلُكَ اَهْلُ الْكِتٰبِ (The People of the Book ask you ...), it will be noticed that a silly question asked by the Jews was responded to in the mode of reproach. Here, in the present verse, the same question is being proved false in a different manner. It takes up their condition which they place before the Holy Prophet ﷺ , that is, they would believe in him if he brings before them a Book, all written up, from the heavens. They are being asked to realize that they do not make such demands before believing in the great prophets mentioned in the verse, prophets they too accept. Keeping this in view, it is necessary that they keep to the line of argument they use in favour of these great prophets, that is, they accept them on the basis of their miracles. As for miracles, Sayyidnā Muḥammad صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has his miracles as well, therefore, there is no reason why they cannot step forward and believe in him too. But, the truth of the matter is that the demand they are making is no quest for truth. On the contrary, it is rooted in prejudice and hostility.

Then comes a delineation of the wisdom behind the sending of prophets and an address to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم assuring him that Allah and His angels are witnesses to his prophethood and those who do not believe in him do nothing but ruin their own end. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Commentary

Verse 163 begins with the words: اِنَّآ اَوْحَيْنَآ اِلَيْكَ كَمَآ اَوْحَيْنَآ اِلٰى نُوْحٍ وَّالنَّبِيّٖنَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖ : 'Surely, We have revealed to you as We have revealed to Nūḥ (Noah)

and to the prophets after him ...' It tells us clearly that *Waḥy* (revelation) is a command of Allah, unique and unimitable, and His message sent to prophets; and that Almighty Allah sent His *Waḥy* to Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā صلى الله عليه وسلم just as it was sent to the past prophets; and that whoever believed in the *Waḥy* sent to past prophets must believe in this too; and that whoever rejects this becomes so to say, a rejecter of all those revelations.

The reason for striking a similarity between Sayyidnā Nūḥ and those who came after him is probably that the *Waḥy* at the time of Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام was at an initial stage which reached its perfection with the prophethood of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام. It can be said that the first state was an state of educational initiation while by the time of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام that state reached a stage of development under which people could be tested with the incentive of reward for the obedient and the warning of punishment for the disobedient. Thus, it was from Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام himself that the chain of great prophets began and it was from his time too that the first punishment descended on those who transgressed against Divine revelation.

In short, punishment would not descend upon people for their hostility against Divine commandments and prophetic teachings. They were considered rather excusable and allowed to learn in due time through good counsel. Once religious education became fully widespread and people were left with no hidden reason to avoid following the dictates of Divine will, punishment did descend upon the disobedient ones. The Great Flood came during the time of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام followed by different kinds of punishment visiting disbelievers during the times of prophets Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ, Sayyidnā Shu'ayb and many others, may peace be on them all. Thus, by likening the *Waḥy* which came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم with the *Waḥy* of Sayyidnā Nūḥ and of those who came after him, full waring has been served on the People of the Book and on the disbelievers of Makkah that anyone who will not believe in the *Waḥy* (that is, The Qur'ān) of the Last of the Prophets will deserve the greatest punishment. (Exegetical notes of Maulānā Shabbīr Aḥmad 'Usmānī)

Before we move to the next verse, it would be useful to keep in

mind that the personal presence of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام, whose name appears first in this verse, was a miracle by itself. He was blessed with an age of nine hundred and fifty years. He had lost none of his teeth and had no streaks of white hair on his head and had faced no deficiency in his physical strength - yet, he spent his whole life time braving the pain inflicted by his people on him with matching patience and fortitude. (Maẓharī)

In verse 164 which opens with the words: وَرُسُلًا قَدْ قَصَصْنٰهُمْ عَلَيْكَ 'And, (We have sent down) some Messengers We have already told you about ...', after a brief mention of prophets who appeared after Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام , a special citation has been made of the greatest prophets from among them. The purpose is to tell us that they are all prophets and Waḥy comes to prophets via different modes. It could be an angel with a message. It could also be a written Book. Sometimes Almighty Allah talks directly to His Messenger. In short, when Waḥy comes, no matter in what mode or manner it does, acting in accordance with it becomes obligatory. Therefore, the saying of Jews that they would believe only if there comes to them a written Book like the Torah, otherwise they would not, is to say the least, being short on sense and tall on disbelief.

As reported by Sayyidnā Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī رضی اللہ عنہ , the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'Almighty Allah has sent one hundred and twenty four thousand prophets out of which three hundred and thirteen were Sharī'ah-bearing Messengers of Allah.' (Qurṭubī)

Then comes verse 165: رُسُلًا مُّبَشِّرِيْنَ وَمُنْذِرِيْنَ (-- Messengers giving good tidings and warning...) which succinctly tells that Almighty Allah consistently sent messengers to convey good tidings to all believers and to warn all disbelievers so that there remains no room for the excuse that they did not know the will of God and His Messengers -- had they known about it, they would have certainly followed it! Now, that Almighty Allah has sent messengers with miracles and His messengers have shown the straight path of truth, the option of not accepting the true faith cannot be accepted from anyone under any pretext or excuse. Such is the nature of Divine Revelation. Waḥy is an absolute argument, final, conclusive and disarming. No argument stands operative against it. In fact, all arguments lie surrendered

under its weight. And this is the wisdom of Allah and His *modus operandi.*

It has been narrated by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضی الله عنه that a group of Jews came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم . He said to them: Surely, you do know that I am a true messenger of Allah? They refused to accept that whereupon came the following verse (166): لٰكِنِ اللّٰهُ يَشْهَدُ بِمَآ اَنْزَلَ اِلَيْكَ 'But Allah bears witness (to your prophethood) through what He has revealed to you ...' The verse addressed to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم declares that Allah is a witness to his prophethood through the miraculous Qur'ān, a perfect message from out of His Knowledge. The Book has been revealed to him with full realization that he is deserving of it, and the angels too join in the testimony. After the very witnessing of the All-Knowing, All-Aware Allah, there is nothing left to argue about.

The text, after having confirmed the veracity of the glorious Qur'ān and the noble Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , turns to those who still deny them, conceal his character traits and circumstantial indicators of his appearance present in the Torah and, sordidly enough, try to keep others away from the true faith by bringing out before them things which are not there or things which have been jumbled together to distort the truth. For such people, there shall be no forgiveness and no guidance either. Thus, it becomes very clear that guidance or the ability to find the straight path depends on following the Holy Prophet ﷺ and straying away, whatever be its nature, is nothing but hostility towards him. This, then, comprehensively refutes all erroneous ideas of the Jews.

Verse 170

يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَآءَكُمُ الرَّسُوْلُ بِالْحَقِّ مِنْ رَّبِّكُمْ فَاٰمِنُوْا خَيْرًا لَّكُمْ ۭ وَاِنْ تَكْفُرُوْا فَاِنَّ لِلّٰهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۭ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلِيْمًا حَكِيْمًا ﴿۱۷۰﴾

O men, the Messenger has come to you with the truth from your Lord. So, believe. That is good for you. And if you disbelieve, then, to Allah belongs what is in the heavens and the earth. And Allah is All-Knowing, All-

Wise. [170]

After answering the objections raised by the Jews and confirming the prophethood of Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā, صلى الله عليه وسلم, the Qur'ān carries the message of Allah to all human beings wherever they may be as they are its direct addressees in this verse. The essence of the message is: Your salvation lies nowhere but in your belief in the prophethood of Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم so, believe and prosper.

As for those who choose to disbelieve, they lose everything while Allah loses nothing. With His limitless domain and power, who can conceive of bringing any loss or harm to Him? This is something the disbelievers should worry about. Let them be certain that Allah knows everything about their believing and disbelieving and let not the delay or decrease in punishment in this world put them on the wrong foot for He is All-Wise too and does what His wisdom allows to prevail.

Verse 171

يَٰٓأَهۡلَ ٱلۡكِتَٰبِ لَا تَغۡلُواْ فِي دِينِكُمۡ وَلَا تَقُولُواْ عَلَى ٱللَّهِ إِلَّا
ٱلۡحَقَّۚ إِنَّمَا ٱلۡمَسِيحُ عِيسَى ٱبۡنُ مَرۡيَمَ رَسُولُ ٱللَّهِ وَكَلِمَتُهُۥٓ ع
أَلۡقَىٰهَآ إِلَىٰ مَرۡيَمَ وَرُوحٞ مِّنۡهُۖ فَـَٔامِنُواْ بِٱللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِۦۖ وَلَا تَقُولُواْ
ثَلَٰثَةٌۚ ٱنتَهُواْ خَيۡرٗا لَّكُمۡۚ إِنَّمَا ٱللَّهُ إِلَٰهٞ وَٰحِدٞۖ سُبۡحَٰنَهُۥٓ أَن يَكُونَ
لَهُۥ وَلَدٞۘ لَّهُۥ مَا فِي ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَمَا فِي ٱلۡأَرۡضِۗ وَكَفَىٰ بِٱللَّهِ
وَكِيلٗا ﴿١٧١﴾

O people of the Book, be not excessive in your Faith and do not say about Allah anything but the truth. The Masīḥ 'Īsā, the son of Maryam, is only a Messenger of Allah and His word He delivered to Maryam, and a spirit from Him. So, believe in Allah and His Messengers. And do not say "Three". Stop it. That is good for you. Allah is the only One God. He is far too pure to have a son. To Him belongs what is in the heavens and what is in the earth. And Allah is enough to trust in. [171]

Jews were the addressees in previous verses which provided details of how astray they had gone. The present verses address the

Christians and refute their doctrinal position as related to God and Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام .

Commentary

The word: كَلِمَتُهُ : *Kalimatuh* used in this verse tells us that Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام is the 'word' of Allah. Commentators have given different meanings of this expression:

1. Imām al-Ghazzālī has said that two factors operate in the birth of a child: One is the sperm, the other is the saying of the word كُنْ or 'be' by Almighty Allah after which the child comes to exist. Since the first factor is out of question in the case of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام , therefore, it was by attribution to the second factor that he was called كَلِمَةُ اللهِ (the word of Allah). It means that he came into existence solely through the word: كُنْ (be) without the mediacy of material means. In this case, the statement which follows immediately, that is, اَلْقٰهَآ اِلٰى مَرْيَمَ would mean that Almighty Allah delivered this word to Maryam عليها السلام as a result of which the birth of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام came to be.

2. Some have said that the expression: كَلِمَةُ اللهِ (the word of Allah) has been used in the sense of: بشارة الله (the glad tiding of Allah) and it refers to Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام . It will be recalled that the glad tiding of the coming of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام given to Maryam عليها السلام by Almighty Allah through the angels carries the expression: *Kalimah* or word: اِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ يٰمَرْيَمُ اِنَّ اللهَ يُبَشِّرُكِ بِكَلِمَةٍ (When the angels said, "O Maryam, Allah gives you the good news of a word ... 3:45).

3. Some have said that *kalimah* (word) has been used here in the sense of *'āyah* or sign, as it has appeared elsewhere in the same sense: وَصَدَّقَتْ بِكَلِمٰتِ رَبِّهَا 'She (Maryam) testified to the word of her Lord as true.' (66:12)

Let us now consider the statement: وَرُوْحٌ مِّنْهُ (... and a spirit from Him.) in this verse. Worth attention here are two aspects of our probe. Firstly, why has Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام been referred to as *rūḥ* or spirit? Secondly, since by saying 'from Him' the spirit has been attributed to Almighty Allah, what, then, would be the sense of such an attribution?

In this connection, several exegetical stances of commentators have been reported. Their gist is being given below:

1. Some of them explain it on the basis of lexical usage. They say

that, according to the rule of *'urf* or recognized customary practice, the word *'rūḥ'* or 'spirit' is used in the sense of 'essence' to enhance the effect of pristine purity in something. Since the birth of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام was totally unrelated to the mediation of any father and he was the outcome of nothing but the will of Allah, in His supreme majesty, and a result of the word: كُن (*kun*: be), therefore, he was blessed with the most perfect degree of purity. This is the reason why he was called 'a spirit' or 'essence' as admitted by recognized practice. As for the attribution to Allah, it is there to hold him in esteem. This is like attributing *Masajid* (mosques) to Allah in order to enhance the respect in which they are held. Hence, the expression: *Masājidullāh* or the Mosques of Allah. Or, the Ḥoly Ka'bah, by attributing it to Allah, is called: *Baytullāh* or the House of Allah. Or, by attributing someone religiously observing and worshipfully obedient to Allah, he is called: 'Abd Allah' or the servant or slave of Allah. Thus, it is in accord with this formulation that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been referred to in Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl in the wordings: أَسْرٰى بِعَبْدِهٖ (carried His servant) (17:1) where the attribution to Allah reflects honour given to him.

2. Some commentators have said that the purpose behind the coming of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام was that he should infuse spiritual life into the dead hearts of people and make them alive once again (familiar as born-again Christians in the West). Since he was the cause of spiritual life very much like the spirit is the cause of physical life, therefore, it was in this light that he was called a spirit. In fact, this word has been used for the Holy Qur'ān as well: وَكَذٰلِكَ اَوْحَيْنَآ اِلَيْكَ رُوْحًا مِّنْ اَمْرِنَا (and thus We have revealed to you a spirit of Our Command - 42:52) because the Holy Qur'ān too blesses people with spiritual life.

3. Some others have said that *rūḥ* (spirit) is also used in the sense of secret. Since Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام was, because of his unusual birth, a sign and secret of Allah, therefore, he was called: *Rūḥullāh* (the spirit of Allah).

4. Some say that the adjunct is understood here since the statement was to be read as: ذُوْ رُوْحٍ مِّنْهُ (the possessor of a spirit from Him). However, since all rational beings are equal as the possessors of a spirit, the distinction of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام was made manifest when Almighty Allah turned his attribution towards Himself.

5. According to yet another exegetical view, the word: *Rūḥ* has been used in the sense of *nafkh* or the blowing of breath. Sayyidnā Jibra'īl عليه السلام had, as commanded by Allah, blown his breath on the collar of Sayyidah Maryam عليها السلام and that became the conception. Since only a blow of breath had caused the birth of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام as a miracle, therefore, he was called: *Rūḥullāh* or the spirit of Allah. Another verse of the Holy Qur'ān: فَنَفَخْنَا فِيهَا مِن رُّوحِنَا (then, We blew Our spirit in her - 21:91) points out in this direction.

In addition to these, several other probabilities have also been suggested. However, none of these come to mean that Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام is a part of Allah or a divine person on the basis of which it could be suggested that this very spirit we are talking about has manifested itself in the human form of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام .

A telling repartee

'Allāmah Al-Ālūsī, the author of the famous *Tafsīr* Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī has reported an episode from the court of Caliph Ḥarūn al-Rashīd where a Christian physician entered into a debate against the scholar 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Wāqidī challenging him that his Book (the Qur'ān) has a particular word which indicates that Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام is a part of Allah. And as a proof, he read out the verse (171) which carries the words: رُوحٌ مِّنْهُ (a spirit from Him). 'Allāmah al-Wāqidī came up with a rejoinder and recited another verse (45:13) of the Qur'ān: وَسَخَّرَ لَكُم مَّا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا مِّنْهُ (The meaning of the verse is that everything that there is in the heavens and the earth is *from the same Allah* where the word - *minhu*: from Him - serves to attribute everything to Allah) and said: 'If رُوحٌ مِّنْهُ (*rūḥim-minhu*: a spirit from Him) means, as you think, that Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام is a part of Allah, then, the verse I have just recited would mean that every thing in the heavens and the earth is also a part of Allah?' Thus, silenced, the Christian physician chose to become a Muslim.

The Qur'ān and the doctrine of Trinity

Reflected in the statement of the Qur'ān: وَلَا تَقُولُوا ثَلٰثَةٌ (And do not say "Three") is the state of the major sects among Christians in which they were divided at the time of the revelation of the Qur'ān. The doctrine of Trinity they adhered to was based on three separate principles. One sect maintained that Masīḥ is God and it is God Himself

who has appeared in the world in the form of Masīḥ. The second sect believed that Masīḥ is the son of God while the third sect claimed unity in trinity - the father, the son and Mary. Even this group was split in two. The second group said that the Holy Spirit (*Rūḥul-Quds*) and not Sayyidah Maryam (Mary) was the third person (hypostasis). So, these people acknowledged Sayyidnā Masīḥ عليه السلام as the third of the three. Therefore, all the three sects have been addressed, separately and jointly in the Holy Qur'ān whereby the Christians have been clearly told that there is just one truth and that truth is that Masīḥ عليه السلام is a human being born to Maryam عليها السلام, and a true Messenger of God. Whatever is said beyond that is all false and ineffectual - whether it be loaded with the excess of under-estimation, as believed by the Jews, viz., God forbid, he was an imposter and fabricator: or, be a case of the excess of over-estimation as believed by the Christians, viz., God forbid, he is God or the son of God or the third of the three.

In many of its verses, the Holy Qur'ān has, on the one hand, pointed out to the strayings of the Christians and Jews while, on the other, it has focused brightly on the exalted station of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام in the sight of Almighty Allah so that the true path of moderation could emerge clearly from out of the mazes of excess and deficiency.

Those interested in detailed information about various aspects of Christian beliefs vis-a-vis the veracity of Islam may wish to study the world-famous book, Iẓhārul-Ḥaqq by Maulānā Raḥmatullāh Kīrānawī. This original work in Arabic has been translated and published by Dārul-Uloom, Karachi, Pakistan in three volumes with detailed annotations.[1]

Towards the end of the verse, it was declared: لَهٗ مَا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِى الْاَرْضِ وَكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ وَكِيْلًا (To him belongs what is in the heavens and what is in the earth. And Allah is enough to trust in.). The drive of the meaning is: When everything has been created by Him, when everything falls under the domain of His mastery and when everyone is a servant of

1. An English translation of this work has been recently completed by Maulānā Muḥammd Wali Raazi, son of Ḥaḍrat Mufti Muḥammad Shafi رحمة الله عليه and is presently under the process of publication under the auspices of the translator himself.

Allah, who and how could anyone become His partner or associate or son? The fact is that Almighty Allah is the dispenser of all our needs and the sole caretaker of everyone's wants - He is universally and perennially sufficient, all by Himself. He needs nobody. How, then, could He need to have a partner or son?

To sum up, we can say that no created being has the ability or qualification to become His partner, nor does His most sacred Being have the room or need for it. This much is enough to tell us that suggesting a partner to God or ascribing a son to Him can be accomplished by none but the one who is deprived of faith and reason both.

Excess in Faith

Let us now go back to the opening statement of the verse: لَاتَغْلُوْا فِیْ دِیْنِکُمْ . In this verse, the People of the Book have been asked not to indulge in excess in matters relating to their Faith. Lexically, the Qur'ānic word: الغلو : *al-Ghuluww* means to cross the limits or transgress. In Aḥkām al-Qur'ān, Imām al-Jaṣṣāṣ says:

الغلو فی الدین هو مجاوزة حدالحق فیه

Excess in Faith is crossing the limit set therein.

The People of the Book, that is, the Jews and the Christians were both made addressees of this injunction because excess in Faith is the common factor between them. Both groups have fallen victims to nothing but excess in matters of Faith. The Christians committed excess in believing and honouring Sayyidnā 'Īsā علیه السلام when they went on to the extreme of taking him to be God or son of God or the third God. As for Jews, they committed excess in disbelieving and rejecting him - not simply that they did not accept him even as a prophet, they were audacious enough to, God forbid, impute a false accusation to his revered mother, Sayyidah Maryam علیه السلام and to cast a slur against her parentage.

Since the disasterous deviation of Jews and Christians in matters of Faith was a common scene of the time, the Holy Prophet ﷺ specially instructed his community to be very careful about it. According to a report from Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی الله عنه appearing in the Musnad of Aḥmad, the Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم said:

لاتطرونی كما اطرت النصارى عيسى بن مريم، فانما انا عبد، فقولوا: "عبد الله ورسوله"

Do not exaggerate in my praise as was done by Christians in the case of 'Īsa son of Maryam عليه السلام . Beware, I am only a servant. So, call me a servant of Allah and His messenger. (This narration has also been reported by al-Bukhārī and Ibn al-Madīnī rating it as sound and authentically reported)

In brief, the sense of what he said is: I am one with everyone in being a servant of Allah and a human being. The highest rank I have is that I am a Messenger of Allah. Raising it higher to the limit that you go about taking me as partner in the attributes of Almighty Allah is excess and I do not want you to fall into this excess like the Christians. This excess in Faith practiced by the Jews and Christians did not remain limited to prophets only. Once used to it, they extended this attitude of theirs to the apostles, followers and deputies of the prophets. They had already assigned Godhood to their prophet, now they invested the followers of the prophet with immunity from sin. While doing so, they did not even take the trouble of investigating and making sure if such followers were genuine followers of the prophet and who correctly and firmly adhered to his teachings, or they were no more than hereditary religious scholars and guides. This resulted in the emergence of a leadership which was astray in itself and could do nothing but keep adding to the strayings of others. So, they ruined their Faith by practicing it erroneously from within. The Holy Qur'ān has described this very condition of these people in the verse: اِتَّخَذُوْٓا اَحْبَارَهُمْ وَرُهْبَانَهُمْ اَرْبَابًا مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ (that is, these people took their religious leaders as objects of worship, other than Allah). It means that they had already been excessive in making their prophet a God, then, they started worshipping later-day religious leaders in the name of following the prophet!

The lesson to be learnt is that excess in Faith is a dangerous attitude which has destroyed the Faiths of earlier religious communities all in the fair name of Faith. So serious were the implications that our noble master devised perfect defences to keep his community safe against this terrible epidemic.

It appears in *Ḥadīth* that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم asked

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی الله عنه on the occasion of Ḥajj that he should go and collect pebbles which he could use to throw at the *Jamarāt*. He returned with average-sized pebbles and presented them to the Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم who liked them very much and said twice: بِمِثْلِهِنَّ، بِمِثْلِهِنَّ (like these, like these) which means that one should do his or her *ramy* at *Jamarāt* using average-sized pebbles like these. Then, he said:

إِيَّاكُمْ وَالْغُلُوَّ فِي الدِّيْنِ، فَإِنَّمَا هَلَكَ مِنْ قَبْلَكُمْ بِالْغُلُوِّ فِيْ دِيْنِهِمْ

It is your duty to avoid excess in Faith for communities before you were destroyed because of being excessive in their Faith.

Important Rules of Guidance

Some important rules come out from this ḥadīth:

1. The *masnūn* limit placed on pebbles thrown at the *Jamarāt* during the Ḥajj is that they should be average in size, neither too small nor too big. Throwing big rocks is included under excess in Faith.

2. The legal limit of everything is what the Holy Prophet ﷺ has left determined by his word and deed. Going beyond this limit is *ghuluww*, excess in Faith.

3. Precisely defined, excess in Faith is the crossing of the *masnūn* limit set for doing something.

The Limits of Materialism

The greed for worldly wealth and luxury beyond the level of need is considered blameworthy in Islam. Instructions to observe restraint against such urges are profusely spread out in the Qur'ān. But, the Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم while prohibiting attachment to wordly life greedily, has set its proper limits by his word and deed. He declared marriage to be his way and pursuaded others to follow his example. He explained the many-faceted blessings of having children. To live nicely and wisely with the family and to fulfill the rights of everyone properly were things he prescribed as obligatory. To work for one's family and earn a good living was what he called an obligation after the obligation (فريضة بعد الفريضة). He laid stress on people to engage in business, agriculture, industry and labour. The establishment of an Islamic state and government and the promotion of a system governed

by Islam was something he declared to be part of the mandate of prophethood. Thus, by acting in accordance with it, he went on to establish a state system throughout the Arabian peninsula which was later extended to other parts of the world in the East and the West. All this shows that being engaged in these pursuits within the limits of need is not counted as gross love of the material nor as greed and avarice.

The Jews and Christians did not realize the truth of the matter and got themselves involved in monasticism. The Holy Qur'ān has refuted this uncalled for involvement of theirs by saying:

وَرَهْبَانِيَّةً ابْتَدَعُوهَا مَا كَتَبْنٰهَا عَلَيْهِمْ إِلَّا ابْتِغَآءَ رِضْوَانِ اللّٰهِ فَمَا رَعَوْهَا حَقَّ رِعَايَتِهَا

It means that they took to ways of monasticism which were not prescribed for them by Allah except that they were to seek the pleasure of Allah Then, they failed to fulfill the conditions of what they had themselves imposed. (57:27)

The Limits of *Sunnah* and *Bid'ah*

By his word and deed, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has, in everything such as religious acts of worship and social transactions and dealings, demarcated the limits of moderation. Any deviation from these limits, whether it be in falling behind or in pushing ahead of them, is forbidden for it leads a believer astray from the right path. It was for this reason that he has very emphatically blocked the incursion of *bid'āt*: بدعات (self-promoted innovations in established religion) and *muḥdathāt*: محدثات (the embracing of everything appearing recent and novel in a given time as if a part of established religion which, in our time, are introduced under the fancy garbs of recension and modernity). Let us, therefore, remember what he said:

كُلُّ بِدْعَةٍ ضَلَالَةٌ، وَكُلُّ ضَلَالَةٍ فِي النَّارِ

"Every *Bid'ah* is straying and every straying ends in *Jahannam*."

The word *Bid'ah* used in the ḥadīth refers to everything (assumed to be a part of religion) which is not there in the word and deed of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم clearly or through hint. Ḥaḍrat Shāh Waliyyullah has said that Islam condemns Bid'ah as a serious offence

because it opens the doors to alteration in religion. This is what happened with earlier religious communities. They added up things on their own to what their Book said and their prophet taught. Then came another generation, and the generations that followed, each adding its share to the original. Finally, everything got so mixed up that it became impossible to identify the true religion as distinct from the additions introduced by its adherents.

In his famous book, Ḥujjatullāh al-Bālighah, he has also given details of circumstances under which efforts have been made all over the world to inject alterations in the religion of Islam. He has also pointed out to the concern shown by the Sharī'ah of Islam which has installed defensive mechanisms on all such doors of incursion so that there remains no single outlet through which this disease could hit the Muslim community in epidemic proportions.

The Moderate Course in honouring and following religious leaders

One such cause referred to above is the practice of excess in Faith (غلو فی الدین). Two factors distinctly contribute to the emergence of this attitude: Firstly, the desire to undertake deep investigations unnecessarily or to be involved in far-fetched interpretations; and secondly, the choice of a hardened stance. It is a matter of great regret that , despite so much elaborations made by the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم and active restrictions placed by the Sharī'ah of Islam, the Muslim community is suffering fatally from this very disease of excess. Its fallout can be distinctly noticed in all departments of our Faith. Out of these, the field most affected is that of religious leaders where the question is: Whom to follow?

Stretching between two extremes, a group of Muslims has gone far out by holding that there is no such thing as a religious leader or teacher or '*Ālim* or *Shaykh*. They would say: 'The Book of Allah is sufficient for us. If they understand the Book of Allah so do we - هُمْ رِجَالٌ وَنَحْنُ رِجَالٌ - They are men, so are we.' The result was that every ambitious pseudo-intellectual - unlettered in Arabic and uninitiated into the facts of and insights into the Qur'ān and unfamiliar with the exegetical clarifications given by the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم - considered it sufficient to look at translations of the Qur'ān and be hoisted as a

scholar of the Qur'ān! How can a *tafsīr* or explanation of the Qur'ān which has been authentically reported from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, or from his direct disciples, the noble Companions, be ever ignored or bypassed? But, such is the breed of these dabblers in the discipline that they would dismiss anything in favour of their brain wave and still have the temerity to tie it with the Qur'ān. Although, had a book without a teacher been enough, Almighty Allah had the power to make written copies of the book become available for people at their homes - there was, then, no need to send a prophet to teach. A little reflection would reveal that this is not something peculiar to the Book of Allah. No one can, by simply looking at the translation of any book in the arts and sciences, become an expert in those fields. We have yet to find a physician who became a physician through a familiarity with translations of medical books. No engineer became an engineer by browsing through engineering texts. Even the study of common books on sewing and cooking has not made anyone succeed as a master tailor or chef. So, the truth lies elsewhere - the system needs the elements of teaching and learning under a teacher. This is all too established for everyone. But, it is indeed sad to see that the Qur'an and Sunnah alone, of all things around us, have been taken so casually as not to need any teacher. Thus, a fairly large group of educated people drifted down in the direction of serious deficiency when they took the lone study of the Qur'ān as all sufficient and totally dispensed of with the need to consult the exegesis and interpretation of early scholars, and to be guided by them.

On the other side of the extreme, a large group of Muslims got involved in a kind of excess which goaded them to take just about anyone as their religious guide almost blindly, and blindly it was that they started following them. They never took the trouble of finding out whether or not the person they were taking as guide came up to the standard of high intellectual achievement, corresponding personal behaviour, concern for the good of people and the genuine sense of responsibility before Allah. They did not even care to apply a much simpler test by looking at the kind of teaching such a person was imparting and making sure that it was not against the Qur'ān and Sunnah.

The Ideal Solution

The Sharī'ah of Islam has wisely shielded Muslims from falling into the trap of excess. The middle course in between the two extremes it has suggested is: Learn the Book of Allah (*Kitābullāh*) from the Men of Allah (*Rijālullāh*) and recognize the Men of Allah from the Book of Allah. In other words, one should first recognize those who are engaged in learning and communicating the true knowledge of the Qur'ān and Sunnah through the all too well-known teachings of these twin sources of Islamic Faith. Once this is settled, no intricate problem relating to Qur'ān and Sunnah will ever bother you - if you give precedence to their explanation above your own opinion, and follow them.

Verses 172 - 173

لَنْ يَّسْتَنْكِفَ الْمَسِيْحُ اَنْ يَّكُوْنَ عَبْدًا لِّلّٰهِ وَلَا الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ
الْمُقَرَّبُوْنَ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّسْتَنْكِفْ عَنْ عِبَادَتِهٖ وَيَسْتَكْبِرْ فَسَيَحْشُرُهُمْ
اِلَيْهِ جَمِيْعًا ﴿۱۷۲﴾ فَاَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ
فَيُوَفِّيْهِمْ اُجُوْرَهُمْ وَيَزِيْدُهُمْ مِّنْ فَضْلِهٖ ۚ وَاَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ اسْتَنْكَفُوْا
وَاسْتَكْبَرُوْا فَيُعَذِّبُهُمْ عَذَابًا اَلِيْمًا ۙ وَّلَا يَجِدُوْنَ لَهُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِ
اللّٰهِ وَلِيًّا وَّلَا نَصِيْرًا ﴿۱۷۳﴾

The Masīḥ (Jesus) shall never spurn being a slave of Allah, nor shall the angels, the close ones. And whoever spurns His worship and shows arrogance -- then, He shall gather all of them before Himself. [172] **As for those who believe and do good deeds, He shall give them their reward in full, and give them more out of His grace. But, to those who spurn and show arrogance, He shall give a painful punishment, and they shall find for themselves not a friend other than Allah nor a helper.** [173]

From the affirmation of Allah's absolute purity and the refutation of assumed Godhood of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام earlier, the text now moves to further strengthen the argument by showing that Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام would himself confess to being a servant of Allah and so will the angels (which includes Sayyidnā Jibra'īl عليه السلام alleged to be a person of Trinity). Then, follows the warning for those who choose to

retract in distaste and the good news for those who believe and are good in deeds for they will be rewarded for their belief and deeds with many more added graces from Allah.

Commentary

The Honour of being a servant of Allah

Maulānā Shabbīr Aḥmad 'Usmānī, in his comments on the opening statement of Verse 172: لَنْ يَّسْتَنْكِفَ الْمَسِيْحُ اَنْ يَّكُوْنَ عَبْدًا لِّلّٰهِ (The Masīḥ shall never spurn being a slave of Allah, nor shall the angels, the close ones), says that so it is because being a servant of Allah, being devoted to His worship and being obedient to His will and command, is an honour by itself and certainly a nobility of the highest class. Sayyidnā Masīḥ عليه السلام and the close angels are the best testifiers to the worth and value of this blessing. How could they spurn an honour like that? Quite contrary to this, the worst disgrace and dishonour there can be imagined lies in worshipping someone other than Allah. This is what the Christians did when they took Sayyidnā Masīḥ عليه السلام as the son of Allah and the object of their worship. Similar was the case with disbelievers who took angels as daughters of Allah and started worshipping them alongwith their idols. So, for them, there is punishment, and disgrace. (Notes in Tafsīr Usmānī)

Verses 174 - 175

يٰۤاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَآءَكُمْ بُرْهَانٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ وَاَنْزَلْنَاۤ اِلَيْكُمْ نُوْرًا مُّبِيْنًا ﴿١٧٤﴾ فَاَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَاعْتَصَمُوْا بِهٖ فَسَيُدْخِلُهُمْ فِيْ رَحْمَةٍ مِّنْهُ وَفَضْلٍ ۙ وَّيَهْدِيْهِمْ اِلَيْهِ صِرَاطًا مُّسْتَقِيْمًا ﴿١٧٥﴾

O men, a proof has come to you from your Lord and We have sent down to you a vivid light. [174] **Now those who believe in Allah and hold on to Him - He shall admit them into Mercy from Him, and Grace, and shall lead them to Himself through a straight path.** [175]

After a refutation of beliefs held by Christians, specially those which ascribe Godhood to Jesus, alongwith the promise of reward for those who acknowledge the truth and punishment for those who insist on denying, the text turns to a universal address praising the blessed status and mission of His Messenger who taught what was the truth

revealed to him, who conveyed the truth of the Qur'ān admirably, and also those who believed in and testified to the truth of the Book and the Messenger.

What is *Burhān*?

The word, *Burhān*, appearing in verse 174: قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ بُرْهَانٌ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ (a proof has come to you from your Lord) lexically means 'proof'. It refers to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه says that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was referred to as 'Burhān' in consideration of his blessed person, his noble morals, his miracles and his being the very recipient of the revelation of the Book of Allah. All these are open proofs of his prophethood beyond which there remains no need for any other proof. Thus, in summation, his person is, in itself, proof personified.

As for the word, *Nūr* in: وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكُمْ نُورًا مُبِينًا (and We have sent down to you a vivid light) (174), it refers to the Holy Qur'ān (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī) which also seems to be the case in Verse 15 of Sūrah al-Mā'idah (5): قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ نُورٌ وَكِتَابٌ مُبِينٌ (There has come to you from Allah a light and clear Book). In the explanatory translation of Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī in Bayān al-Qur'ān, the rendering of this verse appears as: 'There has come to you from Allah a light and (which is) a clear Book (that is) the Qur'ān.' In this verse, what has been first identified as '*Nūr*' (light) has later been called '*kitabum-mubīn*' (clear Book). Let there be no doubt at this point that the conjunction demands dissimilarity, therefore, *Nūr* (light) and *Kitāb* (book) cannot be one and the same thing. The answer is that dissimilarity in expression is sufficient, even though the meanings are the same. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

And if '*Nūr*' (light) is taken as referring to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and '*Kitāb*' (the Book) to the Holy Qur'ān - that will also be correct (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī). But, this does not go on to prove that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was *Nūr* or light in the literal sense, therefore, it is not against his being physically human.

Verse 176

يَسْتَفْتُونَكَ ۚ قُلِ اللَّهُ يُفْتِيكُمْ فِي الْكَلَالَةِ ۚ إِنِ امْرُؤٌ هَلَكَ لَيْسَ لَهُ وَلَدٌ وَلَهُ أُخْتٌ فَلَهَا نِصْفُ مَا تَرَكَ ۚ وَهُوَ يَرِثُهَا إِنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ لَهَا وَلَدٌ ۚ فَإِنْ كَانَتَا اثْنَتَيْنِ فَلَهُمَا الثُّلُثَانِ مِمَّا تَرَكَ ۚ وَإِنْ كَانُوا إِخْوَةً رِجَالًا وَنِسَاءً فَلِلذَّكَرِ مِثْلُ حَظِّ الْأُنْثَيَيْنِ ۗ

يُبَيِّنُ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ اَنْ تَضِلُّوْا ؕ وَاللّٰهُ بِكُلِّ شَیْءٍ عَلِیْمٌ ﴿۱۷۶﴾

They seek a ruling from you. Say, "Allah gives you the ruling concerning Kalalah.[1] If a person dies having no son, but he does have a sister, then, she gets one half of what he leaves. And he will inherit her if she has no child. And if they are two (sisters), they get two third of what he leaves. And if they are brothers and sisters, both male and female, then, the male gets a share equal to that of two females." Allah explains to you lest you should go astray. And Allah is fully aware of everything. [176]

A little after the beginning of Surah al-Nisa', there appeared some injunctions relating to inheritance. Then, after a considerable gap, the text returned to the injunction of inheritance alongwith others. Now, at the end of the Surah, the text reverts to the subject once again. Perhaps the wisdom behind this scattering of the subject at three different places could be the consideration of prevailing injustice in matters of inheritance before the advent of Islam. By taking it up in the beginning, then in the middle, and finally in the end, it was hoped that the addressees would be gradually alerted to the need of justice in this area and would thus be enabled to show their maximum concern.

Summary of the Rulings given[2]

The verse (176) was revealed in answer to the question posed by some Companions of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم regarding the inheritence of a *Kalalah*. *Kalalah* means a person who dies leaving neither children nor parents. The verse has clarified that the property left by a *Kalalah* shall be distributed in the following manner:

(1) If the *Kalalah* has left one real sister, or one half sister from father's side,[3] then, after settling the preferential rights (such as debts, wills, burial expenses) she will get one half of the property. The other

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1. *Kalalah*: A person who has no ascendent or descendent at the time of his death.

2. This summary is based on the خلاصه تفسير given in the original, without translating it word-by-word. (Muhammad Taqi Usmani)

3. As for a half sister from mother's side, her share has already been mentioned in 4:12 as being one sixth if she is alone. And if there are two or more such sisters or brothers, they will share one third of the property equally. (Muhammad Taqi Usmani)

half will be given to the heirs falling in the category of *'Aṣbāt*. If no heir from the category of *'Aṣbāt* is alive, then this half, too, will be given back to the sister of the deceased (meaning thereby that she will secure the whole property).

(2) If the sister referred to in para (1) above dies, and leaves no children, and her brother is alive, then he will get the whole property left by her.

(3) If a *Kalālah*, male or female, dies and leaves two or more sisters, either real sisters or half-sisters from father's side then they shall get two thirds of the property left by the *Kalālah*. The remaining one third will be given to *'Aṣbāt*, if any, and in the absence of *'Aṣbāt* this one third will also be given to the sisters who will distribute their share among themselves equally.

(4) If a *Kalālah* leaves behind a combination of brothers and sisters (either real or from father's side only), then the whole property, after satisfying the preferential rights, shall be distributed between them on the principle that every brother will get twice the share of every sister.

Important Notes

1. The cause of revelation and the injunction of *Kalālah* described in the verse beginning with: يَسْتَفْتُوْنَكَ قُلِ اللّٰهُ يُفْتِيْكُمْ فِى الْكَلٰلَةِ (They seek a ruling from you. Say, "Allah gives you the ruling concerning *kalālah*") provides us with information on certain important aspects. To be noted first is a comparison between two examples given earlier in the text. In verse 170: وَاِنْ تَكْفُرُوْا فَاِنَّ لِلّٰهِ مَا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِى الْاَرْضِ (And if you disbelieve, then, to Allah belongs what is in the heavens and the earth), there was the condition of disbelievers. Then came a similar statement in Verse 174: فَاَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَاعْتَصَمُوْا بِهٖ الخ (Now those who believe in Allah and hold on to Him) which presented the model of the noble Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. These two parallel but divergent states of the believers and the disbelievers were brought into focus so that people can fully understand how astray and evil were those who turned away from the revelation (*waḥy*) and how true and virtuous were those who followed it.

2. Subsequent to observations made above, it also becomes obvious

that the People of the Book did something terrible when they made the abomination of suggesting a partner and son in the purest conceivable divinity of Almighty Allah an article of their faith. They also went as far as taking a blatant position against the Divine revelation.

Quite contrary to this is the life style of the nobel Companions of the Messenger of Allah, may the blessing of Allah and peace be upon him. Not to say much about their consistent concern for the fundamentals of Faith and the most devoted performance of acts of worship, they would be equally inquisitive and eager to find out their obligations in matters subsidiary and commonplace such as those of inheritance and marriage. They would wait for *Waḥy*, the command of Allah through revelation and they would look for guidance from the Holy Prophet ﷺ in everything they did. Though, it is easier to do your own bidding under the dictate of reason or desire, yet they did not elect to be ruled by their personal desire or reason. If they did not understand something at a given time, they would return to the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to recheck until they were satisfied. Here are two sets of people, so different and so apart!

3. This also tells us that our noble Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم would not give a decision on his own without the guiding command of *Waḥy* (revelation). If there was no standing guidance revealed through *Waḥy* present in a certain case, he would put his decision on hold and wait for the coming of *Waḥy*. When it did, he gave his verdict. In addition to that, there is a subtle hint here in the direction of the wisdom behind the gradual revelation of the Qur'ān. If the whole Book was revealed all at one fixed time as demanded by the People of the Book, it would have not carried the same benefits as there are in the fact that the Qur'ān was revealed as needed and when appropriate, all functionally spaced out. This modality accommodated the requirements of addressees who could ask a question out of some necessity and be answered through the recited revelation (*al-Waḥy al-Matluww*). An example of this methodology appears right here in the present verse while others appear at several other occasions in the Qur'ān. No doubt, this form is far beneficial, but the core of its distinction lies elsewhere. That is because of the most refined sublimity of men and women of faith who turn to Allah in remembrance and are honoured by being

addressed by their most exalted Creator. This is indeed a great honour never granted to any other community. Certainly no grace is greater than the grace granted by Allah, the ultimate dispenser. Now, any verse of the Qur'ān which was revealed in the favour of or in answer to the question of a particular Companion is treasured as a testament of his virtues. And a *Waḥy* which came favouring the position taken by one of them on the occasion of some matter causing difference of opinion, is sufficient to keep the name and merit of that Companion alive right upto the Day of Doom.

Thus, by referring to the question and answer regarding *Kalālah*, hint has been given towards similar questions and answers elsewhere.

(Exegetical notes, Tafsīr 'Usmānī
by Maulanā Shabbīr Aḥmad 'Usmānī)

Praised be Allah. Sūrah al-Nisā' ends here

وَلِلّٰهِ الْحَمْدُ اَوَّلُهٗ وَاٰخِرُهٗ

MA'ĀRIFUL-QUR'ĀN

The End of Volume Two

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MA'ĀRIFUL-QUR'ĀN

By

MAULĀNĀ MUFTI MUḤAMMAD SHAFI'

Translated by

Muḥammad Shamīm

Revised by

Maulānā Muḥammad Taqi 'Usmani

Volume 3

(Sūrah Al-Mā'idah, Al-An'ām & Al-A'rāf)

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TRANSLITERATION SCHEME

Arabic Letter	Name of Letter	English Transliteration
ا	الف -- Alif	a
ب	باء -- bā	b
ت	تاء -- tā	t
ث	ثاء -- thā	th
ج	جيم -- jīm	j
ح	حاء -- ḥā	ḥ
خ	خاء -- khā	kh
د	دال -- dāl	d
ذ	ذال -- dhāl	dh
ر	راء -- rā	r
ز	زای -- zā	z
س	سين -- sīn	s
ش	شين -- shīn	sh
ص	صاد -- ṣād	ṣ
ض	ضاد -- ḍād	ḍ
ط	طاء -- ṭā	ṭ
ظ	ظاء -- ẓā	ẓ
ع	عين -- ‘ayn	‘
غ	غين -- ghayn	gh
ف	فاء -- fā	f
ق	قاف -- qāf	q
ك	كاف -- kāf	k
ل	لام -- lām	l
م	ميم -- mīm	m
ن	نون -- nūn	n
ه	هاء -- hā	h
و	واؤ -- wāw	w
ء	ہمزہ -- Hamzah	’
ى	ياء -- yā	y

Short Vowels

	: Fatḥah	a
	: Kasrah	i
	: Ḍammah	u

Long Vowels

ا	: Shortened Alif	ā
آ	: Maddah Alif	ā
یِ	: Maddah Yā	ī
وُ	: Maddah Wāw	ū

Dipthongs

اى	:Alif and Yā	ay (also ai in some cases)
او اؤ	: Alif and Wāw	aw (also au in some cases)

Sūrah Al-Mā'idah

(The Repast)

[This Sūrah is Madinite (Madanī). It has 120 Verses and 16 Sections]

Verse 1

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اَوْفُوْا بِالْعُقُوْدِ ۭ اُحِلَّتْ لَكُمْ بَهِيْمَةُ الْاَنْعَامِ اِلَّا مَا يُتْلٰى عَلَيْكُمْ غَيْرَ مُحِلِّي الصَّيْدِ وَاَنْتُمْ حُرُمٌ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَحْكُمُ مَا يُرِيْدُ ﴿١﴾

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful.

O those who believe, fulfill the contracts. The cattles have been made lawful for you, except that which shall be recited (mentioned) to you, provided that you do not treat hunting as lawful while you are in Iḥrām. Surely, Allah ordains what He wills. [1]

Background of revelation and a summary of subjects

This is the initial verse of Sūrah al-Mā'idah. As agreed upon, Sūrah al-Mā'idah is a Madanī (Madinite) Sūrah and also the last among all Madanī Chapters (Sūrah) so much so that some revered elders have identified this as the last Sūrah of the Qur'ān itself. On the authority of narrations from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar and Sayyidah Asmā' bint Yazīd, it appears in the Musnad of Aḥmad that Sūrah al-Mā'idah was revealed to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم while in travel riding the she-camel named '*Aḍbā*'. As explained in the introduction to this *Tafsīr* in Volume 1, there used to be a sense of being under some heavy weight, extraordinary and unexplained, at a time the *Waḥy* (revelation) came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. So, this is what happened as customary. When the she-camel could bear the phenome-

non of unusual weight no more, he dismounted from her back. This journey is obviously the journey he made to perform his last Ḥajj as supported by some relevant reports. The Last Ḥajj took place in the tenth year of *Hijrah*. After his return from there, his blessed life in the mortal world lasted for about eighty more days. In al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, commentator Ibn Ḥayyān has said that some portions of Sūrah al-Mā'idah were revealed during the journey of Ḥudaybiyah, some others during the journey of the Conquest of Makkah and still others during the journey of the Last Ḥajj. This tells us that Sūrah al-Mā'idah has been revealed during the final stages of the revelation of the Qur'ān - though, it may not be the very last Sūrah.

Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī on the authority of Abū 'Ubaydh, cites a narration of ibn Ḥabīb and 'Aṭiyyah ibn Qays رضی اللہ عنہم اجمعین in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said:

المائدة من اخرالقران تنزيلا فاحلوا حلالها وحرموا حرامها

> Sūrah al-Mā'idah is from what has been revealed towards the last stage of the revelation of the Qur'ān. So, take what has been made lawful there as lawful for ever and take what has been made unlawful there as unlawful for ever.

Referring to Mustadrak al-Ḥākim, Ibn Kathīr cites a similar narration from Sayyidnā Jubayr ibn Nufayr in which he has been reported to have called upon Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا soon after Ḥajj. She asked him: "Do you read Sūrah al-Mā'idah, O Jubayr?" He submitted: "I do." Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah then said: "This is the last Sūrah of the Holy Qur'ān. The injunctions about things lawful and unlawful in it are *Muḥkam* (of established meaning). The probability of any abrogation (*Naskh*) does not exist there. So, be specially particular about them."

Like Sūrah Al-Nisā', Sūrah al-Mā'idah too carries many subsidiary injunctions relating to dealings and contracts. Accordingly, Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī notices subject homogeneity in Sūrah al-Baqarah and Āl-'Imrān because both of them mostly feature injunctions relating to Principles, Doctrines, Unicity, Prophethood, Doomsday and similar other basic concerns of importance. As for subsidiary injunctions, they appear there as corollaries. Regarding Sūrah al-Nisā' and Sūrah al-Mā'idah, it can be said that they are homogeneous subject-wise because both of

them describe subsidiary injunctions. Any description of basic principles appears there by implication. In Sūrah al-Nisā', emphasis has been laid on mutual dealings, particularly on rights servants of Allah have on each other (*Ḥuqūq al-'Ibād*). Then, in it, there are details of the rights of the husband and the wife, the rights of orphans and the rights of the parents and other relatives. In the very first verse of Sūrah al-Mā'idah, there appears the instruction to stand by all dealings made and pledges given. The words of the Verse: يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْۤا اَوْفُوْا بِالْعُقُوْدِ (O those who believe, fulfill the contracts) command that all such commitments must be met. Therefore, Sūrah al-Mā'idah is also referred to as Sūrah al-'Uqūd (Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ).

This Sūrah, specially its opening verse, has a special bearing on matters relating to mutual dealings and contractual agreements. Therefore, when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم sent Sayyidnā 'Amru ibn Ḥazm as the '*Āmil* (Governor) of Yaman, he gave him a written decree of appointment at the head of which he had this verse written (Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ).

Commentary

The first sentence of the first verse of this Sūrah is so comprehensive that its proper discussion would deservedly go beyond thousands of pages. In fact, Muslim scholars and jurists have done exactly that. The verse says: يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْۤا اَوْفُوْا بِالْعُقُوْدِ (O those who believe, fulfill the contracts). Here, the very form of address: يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْۤا (O those who believe ...) helps to divert attention to the very crucial nature of the subject for the command being given here is centrally required by one's faith. Then comes the command: اَوْفُوْا بِالْعُقُوْدِ (fulfill the contracts). The word, '*al-'uqūd*', used in the Qur'ān is the plural form of *al-'aqd*, the literal meaning of which is to tie. A contract which ties two individuals or groups to each other is also known as '*aqd*. Thus, *al-'uqūd* takes the meaning of *al-'uhūd* or contracts.

Commentator Ibn Jarīr has reported the consensus of revered exegetes among the *Ṣaḥābah* and *Tābi'īn* on this approach. Imām al-Jaṣṣāṣ explains that '*aqd* (contract) or '*ahd* (pledge) or *Mu'āhadah* (pact) are all applied to a transaction in which two parties have placed the responsibility of doing or not doing something on each other and to which both of them agree and are bound by. According to our recog-

nized practice, this is what a contractual agreement is. Therefore, the essential meaning of the sentence is: Take the fulfilling of mutual contracts to be binding and necessary.

Now, we have to determine the nature of contracts meant here. The interpretations of commentators appear to be different, though outwardly only. Some say that it refers to the Covenant of Allah under which His created beings are bound to believe in and obey Him, or they refer to pledges Allah has taken from His created beings regarding His revealed injunctions of things lawful and unlawful. This is what has been reported from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ. Others say that here it means the contracts people enter into with each other, such as, the Contract of Marriage and the Contract of Buying and Selling. Commentators Ibn Zayd and Zayd ibn Aslam have taken this very line of interpretation. Still others take contracts to mean sworn alliances and pacts which the tribes of *Jāhiliyyah* entered into with each other for mutual assistance when needed. This is also the position taken by Commentators such as Mujāhid, Rabī' and Qatādah. But, the truth is that there is no contradiction or difference in what they have said. Instead, all these varied contracts come under the Qur'ānic word, "*al-'uqūd*", appearing in this verse and the instruction to fulfill all of them comes from the Qur'ān itself.

Therefore, Imām Rāghib al-Isfahānī has said that all kinds of contracts and binding agreements are included under the imperative of this word. He further divides these into three kinds as given below:

1. The Covenant which human beings have with their Creator who is Lord of all the worlds, such as, the pledge to believe in Him, to obey Him, or to observe the restrictions imposed by Him on matters and things lawful and unlawful.

2. The vow or promise or commitment one enters into with one's own self, such as, to commit to fulfill a vow (*nadhr*) for something, or to bind oneself on oath that something will be done.

3. The contract that one human being enters with another which includes all contracts which bind two persons or two groups or parties or governments.

So, in the light of this verse, strict adherence to all permissible pro-

visions and conditions which have been mutually agreed upon is mandatory and all parties must observe and fulfill these. This covers all international pacts and treaties between governments, bilateral agreements, all commitments, alliances, charters between groups and parties, also all sorts of contracts and deals between two human beings ranging from marriage, business, partnership, leasing, gift deed to many other bi-partite human dealings. Please note that the restriction of 'permissible' imposed a little earlier has a reason, for entering into a contract against the dictates of the Sharī'ah, or accepting it, is not permissible for anyone.

The Logic of the Lawful

After the initial declaration of the general rule in the first sentence of the verse, its particular details appear in the second sentence where it has been said: أُحِلَّتْ لَكُمْ بَهِيْمَةُ الْأَنْعَامِ (The cattle have been made lawful for you ...). The word, '*bahīmah*'(بهيمة) used here is applied to animals usually considered to be devoid of understanding because people usually do not understand their speech which thus remains obscure. Imām al-Sha'rānī says: The name '*bahīmah*' is not given to an animal just because it has no sense and everything sensible remains obscure for it - as people commonly think. But, the truth is that no animal or beast, not even trees and rocks, can be taken to be devoid of sense as such - of course, subject to the difference in its degrees. They do not have the same measure of sense as human beings do. This is the reason why human beings have been obligated to observe the percepts and injunctions revealed for them. Animals have not been so obligated, otherwise Allah has given to every animal sense and awareness within the limits of its needs - even to all trees and rocks, for that matter. This is why everything glorifies Allah in its own way: وَإِنْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا يُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِهٖ : That is, 'there is nothing which does not but glorify Him with His praise' (17:44). How then, without sense, would it have ever recognized its creator and master and how would it have, thus, been able to engage in the act of glorifying Allah?

The word, '*al-An'ām*', used in the text is the plural form of *na'am* (grazing livestock). Eight kinds of domestic animals or cattles such as the camel, the cow, the buffalow, the goat which have been described in Sūrah al-An'ām are called the An'ām. Since the word, '*bahīmah*'

(animal) was general, the word, 'Al-An'ām' (the cattle) has made it particular. So, the meaning of the verse comes to be that 'eight kinds of domestic animals have been made lawful for you.' Under the discussion about the word, *'al-'uqūd'*, you have already read a little earlier that it includes all kinds of contracts. One of these is the pledge Allah Almighty has taken from His created beings that they would observe the restrictions of the lawful and the unlawful. The present sentence is refering to this particular pledge when it says that Allah has made the cattle lawful for you and they can be eaten after having been slaughtered in accordance with the Islamic manner.

Thus believers have been exhorted to obey this injunction by staying within its limits. They should not take it upon themselves, as do the fire-worshippers and the idolators, to declare the very slaughter of these animals as absolutely unlawful, for this is raising an objection against the wisdom of the Creator and certainly an open ingratitude for His blessing. Nor should they become like some other meat-eating people who would, totally unfettered, go about eating all sorts of animals. Rather than do something like that, believers must eat from animals Allah Almighty has made lawful to eat under the Law given by Him. Similarly, they should abstain from animals which have been declared unlawful to eat. The reason is that Allah Almighty is <u>the</u> Creator of the Universe. He knows the nature and the properties of all animals and He is also aware of the effects they bring about when in the human body. He, in His grace, makes what is good and pure openly lawful for human consumption, things which leave no ill effects on physical health and moral strength. Similarly, He forbids unclean and impure animals which are either harmful for human health or contribute metabolically into the generation of evil morals. Therefore, there are a few things exempted from this general rule. These are as follows:

1. The first exemption is contained in: إِلَّا مَا يُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْكُمْ It means: Except animals which have been declared unlawful in the Qur'ān, that is, dead animal or the swine.

2. The other exemption appears in: غَيْرَ مُحِلِّي الصَّيْدِ وَأَنتُمْ حُرُمٌ . It means: Quadruped animals are lawful for you and wild game too. But, in the state when you have entered into the garments of *Iḥrām* with the in-

tention of doing Ḥajj or 'Umrah, hunting becomes a crime and sin. Stay away from it.

Living under the Authority and Wisdom of the Creator

Towards the end of the verse, it was said: إِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَحْكُمُ مَا يُرِيدُ which means that Allah Almighty ordains what He wills. Nobody has the right to ask questions or take exception in obeying it. This statement is perhaps indicative of an element of wisdom - that the permission given to human beings to slaughter and eat some animals is no act of injustice. The Creator and Master who has made all these life forms is also the One who has formulated, in His perfect wisdom and insight, the law that the lower form shall be the sustenance of the higher. The soil of the earth is food for trees and trees are food for animals and animals are food for human beings. There is no higher form of creation in this world, therefore, human beings cannot become food for anyone.

Verse 2

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تُحِلُّوْا شَعَآئِرَ اللّٰهِ وَلَا الشَّهْرَ الْحَرَامَ وَلَا الْهَدْيَ وَلَا الْقَلَآئِدَ وَلَآ اٰمِّيْنَ الْبَيْتَ الْحَرَامَ يَبْتَغُوْنَ فَضْلًا مِّنْ رَّبِّهِمْ وَرِضْوَانًا ؕ وَاِذَا حَلَلْتُمْ فَاصْطَادُوْا ؕ وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَاٰنُ قَوْمٍ اَنْ صَدُّوْكُمْ عَنِ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ اَنْ تَعْتَدُوْا ۘ وَتَعَاوَنُوْا عَلَى الْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوٰى ۖ وَلَا تَعَاوَنُوْا عَلَى الْاِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ ۖ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ شَدِيْدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿۲﴾

O those who believe, do not violate (the sanctity) of the Marks of Allah, nor of the sacred month, nor of the sacrificial animal, nor of the garlands, nor of those proceeding to the Sacred House, seeking the grace of their Lord, and Pleasure. When you are out of Iḥrām, you may hunt. And malice against a people for their having prevented you from al-Masjid al-Ḥarām, should not cause you to cross the limits. Help each other in righteousness and piety, and do not help each other in sin and aggression. And fear Allah. Surely, Allah is severe at punishment. [2]

Linkage of Verses

The first verse of Sūrah al-Mā'idah emphasized the fulfillment of contracts. Included among these contracts is the contract or pledge to abide by the restrictions of the lawful and the unlawful as ordained by Allah Almighty. The second verse cited here describes two important articles of this contract. The first relates to the sanctity of the signs, symbols or hallmarks of Allah with the specific instruction to stay away from desecrating them. The second article recommends an even-handed dispension of justice to everyone, your own or not your own, friend or foe, which has been combined with a corresponding prohibition of any counter injustice inflicted in return for some injustice done.

Background

There are some events which form the background of the revelation of these verses. Let us go to them first so that the subject of the verse becomes fully clear to us. One of these is the event of Hudaybiyah the details of which have been taken up by the Holy Qur'ān elsewhere. This relates to the sixth year of Hijrah when the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his noble Companions decided to perform 'Umrah.

The Holy Prophet ﷺ entered into the *Iḥrām* of 'Umrah with more than one thousand of his Companions and left for Makkah al-Mu'aẓẓamah. After having reached Ḥudaybiyah close to Makkah al-Mu'aẓẓamah, he sent a message to the Makkans that he was coming in with his group to perform 'Umrah and not for any aggressive designs. He requested that they be allowed to perform 'Umrah. The disbelievers of Makkah, not only that they refused it, they put forward many hard conditions and challenged them to agree to a treaty which stipulated that all Muslims will undo their *Iḥrām* they were in at that time and go back. When they come next year to perform their 'Umrah, they would be required to come without any arms, stay for three days only, perform 'Umrah and leave. Besides these conditions, there were many others agreeing to which was obviously very much against the self-respect of Muslims. But, obeying the orders of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, everyone returned in peace. After that, it was in the month of Dhu-al-Qa'dah of the Ḥijrah year 7 that this missed 'Umrah was performed again with full observance of the conditions imposed under the Treaty.

However, the events at Ḥudaybiyah and the insulting conditions

imposed there had planted seeds of discord in the hearts of the Companions against the disbelievers of Makkah. Then there came up the other incident when Ḥātim ibn Hind, one of the disbelievers of Makkah, came to Madīnah al-Tayyibah with his trading goods. After having sold his goods, he left his baggage and his attendant outside Madīnah and came to visit the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم and expressed his desire to enter the fold of Islam, in all hypocricy, so that Muslims are satisfied. But, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم had, well before he came to him, told his Companions on the strength of revelation that a man was coming to them who would talk in the words of the Satan. And when he went away, he said that the man came with disbelief and returned with deception and treason. Leaving the company of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, this man went straight out of Madīnah where the livestock of the people of Madīnah were grazing. He drove them away with him. The noble Companions came to know about this somewhat late. When they went out after him, he was gone out of their reach. Then it was in the seventh year of Ḥijrah, when they were going with the Holy Prophet ﷺ to perform the *Qaḍā'* of 'Umrah they had missed at Ḥudaybiyah, they heard someone reciting Talbiyyah at some distance. When they looked, they discovered that the same Ḥātim ibn Hind who had decamped with the animals belonging to the people of Madīnah was right there going for 'Umrah with the same animals going with him as sacrificial animals. At that time, the noble Companions thought of attacking him and taking their animals back by killing him off right there.

The third event came to pass in the eighth year of Ḥijrah when Makkah al-Mukarramah was conquered in Ramaḍān al-Mubārak and the entire Arabian peninsula came under Islamic rule. The disbelievers of Makkah were set free by the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم without any revenge. They went about doing everything they used to do with complete freedom to the extent that they even kept observing their pagan customs of Ḥajj and 'Umrah too. At that time some noble Companions thought of taking their revenge for what had happened at Ḥudaybiyah. These people had stopped them from doing 'Umrah to which they were entitled on all counts, as permissible and justified. Why, they thought, should they now allow their Ḥajj and 'Umrah on any count which were all impermissible and unjustified? Why not attack

them, take their animals and finish them off?

These events have been narrated by Ibn Jarīr on the authority of 'Ikrimah and al-Suddi. It was on the basis of some of these events that the present verse was revealed. Through it, Muslims were told that holding the signs of Allah in esteem was their own bounden duty. Malice and hostility against an enemy was no reason to disturb this standing rule. This was absolutely impermissible. Even fighting during the sacred months was not permissible. Also not permissible was stopping sacrificial animals from reaching the Ḥaram or taking them away forcibly. As for the disbelievers who have donned the *Ihram* garments and who, in their estimation, have embarked on their pilgrimage to seek the good pleasure of Allah Almighty (though, because of their disbelief, this is a mistaken notion, yet) the sanctity of the signs of Allah demands that they should not be confronted in any way. Then there was the case of people who had stopped Muslims from performing their 'Umrah. Any effort to avenge their past hostility against Muslims in the form of Muslims stopping them from entering into Makkah or from performing their rites of Ḥajj was not permissible. This is so because this amounts to Muslims doing an injustice in return for an injustice to them which was not permissible in Islam. We can now go to a detailed explanation of the verse.

Commentary

The first sentence of the Verse says: يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تُحِلُّوْا شَعَآئِرَ اللّٰهِ (O those who believe, do not violate [the sanctity of] the Marks of Allah). Here the word, *Sha'ā'ir* has been translated as 'Marks.' This is the plural form of *Sha'īrah* which means mark, sign or symbol. Therefore, *Sha'ā'ir* and *Sha'īrah* signify things perceptible through the senses which symbolize something. As such the Marks (*Sha'ā'ir*) of Islam would be deeds and actions recognized as symbolic of one's being Muslim in faith. These are quite common such as *Ṣalāh, Adhān,* Ḥajj, Circumcission and Beard in accordance with the *Sunnah*. The *Tafsīr* or explanation of the Qur'ānic expression شَعَآئِرَ اللّٰهِ (*Sha'ā'irullāh*: The Marks of Allah) as it appears in this verse has been reported in varying words. But, the clearest of them is what has been reported from Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and 'Aṭā' on whom both be the mercy of Allah. Imām al-Jaṣṣāṣ finds their statement as a compedium of all explanations. According

to this statement, "*Sha'a'irullah*" means all obligations the limits of which have been set forth by the Sharī'ah of Islam. In this verse, the essence of the meaning is that one should not violate the sanctity of the marks of Allah. One form of such violation could be a total dismissal of what one has been obligated with. Under the second form, one may act in accordance with these obligations by electing to obey some injunctions and leave out others ending up with a compliance which remains incomplete. A third form could be that one starts transgressing the appointed limits and keeps going farther beyond. The Qur'ānic statement: لَا تُحِلُّوا شَعَآئِرَ اللّٰهِ (do not violate [the sanctity of] the Marks of Allah) forbids all these three forms.

The Holy Qur'ān gives the same instruction elsewhere in a different mode as follows:

وَمَنْ يُّعَظِّمْ شَعَآئِرَ اللّٰهِ فَاِنَّهَا مِنْ تَقْوَى الْقُلُوْبِ

And whoever exalts the Marks of Allah, then this is from the fear of Allah in hearts. (22:32)

The part of the sentence which follows in the verse under study gives details of a particular kind of the Marks of Allah, that is, the Marks that concern the rites of Ḥajj.

The text says:

وَلَا الشَّهْرَ الْحَرَامَ وَلَا الْهَدْيَ وَلَا الْقَلَآئِدَ وَلَآ اٰمِّيْنَ الْبَيْتَ الْحَرَامَ يَبْتَغُوْنَ فَضْلًا مِّنْ رَّبِّهِمْ وَرِضْوَانًا

It means: Do not violate its sanctity by fighting and killing during the months in which it is prohibited. This refers to the four months during which mutual fighting was legally prohibited. They are Dhul-Qa'dah, Dhul-Ḥijjah, Muḥarram and Rajab. Later on, this injunction was abrogated as agreed under the overwhelming consensus of *'Ulamā'*. In addition to this, command was given that there should be no violation of the sanctity of sacrificial animals within the Ḥaram of Makkah, specially of the band round their necks placed there as a symbol of sacrifice. One form of violating the sanctity of these animals could be that they are stopped from reaching the Ḥaram or are snatched away. The second form could be that of using the animals for a purpose other than sacrifice, such as using them to ride or milk. The

verse has declared all these form as impermissible.

The text then prohibits the violation of the sanctity of those who have left their homes to embark on a journey to *al-Masjid al-Ḥarām* with the intention of performing Ḥajj - for their purpose on this journey is to seek the blessing and pleasure of their Lord. Not violating the sanctity of suck people means that they should neither be stopped during their journey nor should any pain be caused to them.

After that it was said: وَإِذَا حَلَلْتُمْ فَاصْطَادُوْا . It means: And when you get released from the *Iḥrām*, you may hunt. In other words, the limit of the prohibition of hunting during the state of *Iḥrām* appearing in the first verse has been declared by saying that your release from the *Iḥrām* neuteralizes the in-*Iḥrām* prohibition of hunting which has now become permissible.

Being deliniated in the verse under reference is a particular part of the contract which is operative between every human being and the Lord of all the worlds. Some of it has already been identified upto this point. The first out of these is the instruction to uphold the invoilable dignity of the Marks of Allah as sacrosanct and to guard against any chances of their being desecrated. Then come some details concerning the Marks of Allah which belong to Ḥajj. Here, the instruction given is that nothing should be done to stop them and that effort should be made to stay away from any action which desecrates them.

The statement which follows after that takes up the second part of the contract in the following words: وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَاٰنُ قَوْمٍ اَنْ صَدُّوْكُمْ عَنِ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ اَنْ تَعْتَدُوْا It means: There were those people who had stopped you from entering Makkah and performing your 'Umrah and after that event at Hudaybiyah, you were returning all sad and angered. Now that you have power in your hands, let things not turn in a way that you start taking revenge for what happened in the past by stopping them from entering the House of Allah and the Sacred Mosque and performing their Ḥajj - because this is injustice and Islam does not favour avenging injustice by inflicting counter injustice. Instead of that, it teaches the doing of justice in return for injustice done and upholding it under all odds. It is true that those people, under the sway of their power and position at that time, had stopped Muslims from entering the Sacred Mosque and performing 'Umrah, quite unjustly indeed. But, the

retaliation for this injustice can hardly be that Muslims now go about using their power to stop them from carrying out their Ḥajj rites.

The Qur'ān teaches that friend and foe should be treated equally on the scale of justice. It commands Muslims to do nothing but justice as a matter of obligation, no matter how deadly the enemy and no matter how serious the pain inflicted. That Islam guards the rights of enemies is certainly one of the peculiar qualities of Islam which does not answer one injustice by another, rather elects to do justice in return.

The Qur'ānic Principle of Mutual Cooperation and Assistance

وَتَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوٰى وَلَا تَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْاِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ شَدِيْدُ الْعِقَابِ .

And help each other in righteousness and piety, and do not help each other in sin and aggression. And fear Allah. Surely, Allah is severe at punishment.

This is the last sentence of the second verse of Sūrah al-Mā'idah. Here, the Holy Qur'ān has given such a wise verdict on an elemental question of human life that it can be confidently taken as the moving spirit behind any reliable world order on which depends the prosperity and survival of all human beings. As such, acting in accordance with the Qur'ānic principle of Mutual Cooperation and Assistance is the only way to the betterment of the human beings. Every sensible person already realizes that things get done in our world through the cooperative efforts of all human beings. This is how the system keeps running. A solitary person, no matter how smart, powerful or rich, cannot procure what he needs to sustain his life single-handedly. One lone person cannot go through all the stages of growing and processing his ready-to-eat food, nor can he cope up with the countless steps required in growing cotton, manufacturing cloth and having a dress prepared to fit his measurements, nor can he move his things from one place to the other. Thus, it is not difficult to see that every human being needs hundreds and thousands of others to run his life. This mutual cooperation of theirs is what keeps the whole system going. Incidentally, this cooperation is not limited to the life of the world of our experience, it is also needed in the stages from death to burial - even

beyond, when one remains depending upon those he left behind and who may pray for his forgiveness and do things the reward of which keeps reaching him after his death.

Great is the majesty of Allah who, in His perfect wisdom and power, set up such a formidable system of this world, a system where every human being needs the other. The poor man needs the rich while the richest of the rich need the poor worker to handle jobs with labour and skill. The traders need consumers and consumers need traders. The home owner needs a team of technicians having expertise in many areas in order to build a house and they, in turn, need him. If this universal element of need was not there and mutual assistance remained dependant on moral superiority of persons and parties, just imagine who would have been working for whom. The whole thing would have fallen flat for we have been seeing what has happened to common moral virtues and ethical values in this world of ours. Even if this division of labour could have been enforced as some law made by some government or international organization, the fate it would have met would have been no different than the fate of all sorts of laws proliferating the many national and international forums of the world where the law rests at peace in acts while the bazars and offices are run by shadow laws of bribery, nepotism, neglect of duty and apathy of application. We have to salute the framework of doing things given to us by the wisest of the wise, the power of the powers, who placed in the hearts of people of different inclinations to have the ability and desire to run their lives with a particular line of work as its pivot. Had it been otherwise and some international organization or a government chose to assign fields of work among people making someone a carpenter, others iron-mongers or janitors or managers of water and food supplies, who would have become so obedient to such commands from governments and institutions as to sacrifice all personal considerations and jump right into the line of work chosen for them?

So, it is Allah Almighty who has put into man's heart the inclination towards and liking for whatever work or role for which He has created him. Now he takes the service he is doing as his lifework without any legal compulsion and it is through this that he earns his living. The end product of this firmly established system is that all

human needs are easily satisfied at the cost of small cash. It may be ready-to-eat food or ready-to-wear clothes or ready-to-use furniture or a turn-key home - one can buy all this at some affordable price. Without the benefit of this system, even a billionare would have failed to acquire a single grain of wheat despite being ready to stake all his wealth. In order to visualize the outcome of this natural system, think of one of your stays in a hotel where you enjoy the benefit of so many things without blinking. Only if you were to analyse how this works, you will notice that the food you eat there is comprised of courses featuring eatables and seasonings from many countries, china and cutlery and furniture from many more, and managers, chefs and stewards from still others. The tiny morsel of food which reaches your mouth is the result of the combined contribution of millions of machines, animals and human beings - and it is only after that, that you have been able to pamper your palate. Take another example. You come out of the house to go to some place a few miles away. You may either cannot walk all that distance or you do not have the time to do so. You find a taxi cab or a bus nearby without realizing that these vehicles have been assembled with components from many parts of the world and with drivers and conductors from as many. What things and what people stand there to wait on you and serve you! Just pay the fare and be on your way! No government has forced them to provide these for you. Working behind this scheme of things is the natural law ingrained into the human heart as a creational imperative by none but the great master of all hearts Himself.

Not far is the example of what the socialist countries did when they did away with this natural arrangement by taking over the function of telling people what they will do in their lives. In order to do this, they had to, first of all, do away with human freedom through coercion and injustice resulting in the killing and imprisonment of thousands and thousands of people. Those who remained behind were coerced into working like the parts of a machine, as a result of which, it can be conceded that production did increase at some places, but it must also be granted at the same time that this increase came at the cost of a gross demolition of the free choice of human beings. Thus, the deal did not turn out to be economical. Look at the natural arrangement in contrast. Here, everyone is free and restricted at the same

time - restricted in the sense of being devoted to particular jobs and roles on the basis of natural dispension of dispositions. Since this restriction or compulsion comes from nowhere but from natural disposition, nobody feels being coerced. People who would themselves come forward to do the toughest labour or the most menial job, people who would even make efforts to get such jobs, are found everywhere during all times. The same people would, if a government started forcing them to do these jobs, just start running away from it enmasse.

In a nutshell, the universal world order revolves round mutual cooperation. But, let us not forget the other side of the picture which is very much there. For example, if this mutual cooperation were to be seriously practiced to carry out activities of crime, theft, robbery, killing and vandalization resulting in big, powerful and organized associations of thieves and robbers, then, this very mutual cooperation can destroy the whole system. This tells us that mutual cooperation is a two-edged sword which cannot only hurt you but it can also knock out the universal order of things. Since the world we live in a mix of good and bad, it was not unlikely that people would start using the power of mutual cooperation to infest human society with crimes, killings, destruction and general loss. Incidentally, this is no more a matter of likelihood, instead, it is an open fact of life for the whole world to see. Thus, it was as a reaction to this situation that theorists of the world laid the foundation of groups and nations based on different ideologies in order to have security for themselves. The idea was to use the power of mutual cooperation in favour of a particular group or people by offering an allied defence against another group or people who attacked them.

The Formation of Separate Nations

According to 'Abd al-Karīm al-Shahristānī in Al-Milal-wa-al-Nihal, in the beginning when human population was not much, four nations came into being in terms of East, West, North and South. People living in each of these directions started taking themselves as one nation while taking others as other nations. And it was on this basis that they established their mutual cooperation. Later, when the population of the world became larger, the idea of nationalism and multilaterism on the basis of geneology, family ties and tribal affiliations became a

working principle among peoples of all directions. The whole system of Arabia rested on the basis of such tribal and geneological affinities, so much so that these were sufficient grounds to go to wars against each other. Banū Hāshim was one nation, Banū Tamīm was another and Banū Khuzā'ah still another. Among the Hindus in India, this division on the basis of the high caste and the low caste still persists unchanged.

The modern period of European nations did nothing to retain their geneological distinction, nor did they give any credence to the geneological peculiarities of the rest of the world. When they gained ascendency in the world, all geneological and tribal groupings were eliminated, separate nations were raised on the basis of regions, provinces, homelands and languages - almost by placing a piece of humanity on each such altar. The fact is that this is the form that prevails in most parts of the world. The limit is that Muslims too - of all the peoples the least likely - fell a victim to this modern voodoo of community organization. As if the division as Arabs, Turks, Iraqis and Sindhis were not enough, they went on dividing and sub-dividing themselves into Egyptians, Syrians, Hijazis, Najdis, Panjabis, Bangalis, and so many others who started identifying themselves as separate nations or nationalities or peoples. Since all affairs of their governments were run on this basis, regional or provincial prejudice went deep into their response patterns and peoples of all regions or provinces began relating to each other on this basis - that became their idea of mutual cooperation.

The Teaching of the Qur'ān about Nationalism and Universalism

Then came the Holy Qur'ān reminding human beings of the lesson they had forgotten. The initial verses of Sūrah al-Nisā' clearly declared that all human beings are the children of one father and mother. The noble Prophet, Sayyidnā Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم made this all the more clear when he publicly announced during the famous address of his last Ḥajj that no Arab is superior to a non-Arab nor a white to a black. Superiority depends on nothing but *Taqwā*, on the fear of Allah and obedience to Him. It was this teaching of the Qur'ān which gave the call of "إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ" (Believers are brothers - 49:10) and it was in

one stroke that the jet blacks of Ethiopea were related to the reds of Turkey and Byzantium and the lineally less endowed non-Arabs to the Qurayshī and Hashmī Arabs as brothers to each other. The concept of nation and brotherhood was established on the basis that those who believe in Allah and His *Rasūl* are one nation and those who do not so believe are the other. It was this foundation which cut asunder the family ties of Abū Jahl and Abū Lahab from the noble Prophet ﷺ while joining it with Sayyidnā Bilāl from Ethiopea and Sayyidnā Ṣuhayb from Byzantium. Finally, came the proclamation of the Qur'ān: خَلَقَكُمْ فَمِنْكُمْ كَافِرٌ وَّ مِنْكُمْ مُّؤْمِنٌ (64:2). It means that Allah created all human beings, then, they split in two groups - some became disbelievers and some others became believers. A practical demonstration of this Qur'ānic classification was visible during the battles of Badr, Uḥud, Aḥzāb and Hunayn when a blood brother who elected to stay away from the obedience of Allah and His *Rasūl* found that his bond of mutual cooperation with his believing brother stood severed and he could no longer escape the stroke of his believing brother's sword.

Stated in the verse of the Qur'ān cited above: وَتَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوٰى وَلَا تَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْاِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ is this very principle of mutual cooperation and assistance. Being so reasonable and correct, it exhorts people to cooperate in deeds which are righteous and matters which are motivated by the fear of Allah and forbids them from extending their cooperation to anything sinful and aggressive. Just consider that the noble Qur'ān has not suggested here that one should cooperate with Muslim brothers and not with non-Muslims. Instead of that, it declares that righteousness and the fear of Allah are the bases on which cooperation is to be extended for this is the real foundation on which rests any cooperation among Muslims themselves. It clearly means that no help is to be extended even to a Muslim brother if he is acting contrary to truth or is advancing towards injustice and aggression. Rather than help him in what is false and unjust, effort should be made to hold his hands against indulging in the false and the unjust for this, in reality, is helping him at its best - so that his present life as well as his life in the Hereafter is not ruined.

According to a narration from Sayyidnā Anas appearing in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been

reported to have said: 'انصر اخاك ظالمًا اومظلومًا' (That is: Help your brother, just or unjust). His Companions who were soaked in the teaching of the Qur'ān were surprised. They asked: '*Yā Rasūl Allah* (O Messenger of Allah) as for helping the oppressed brother, that we understand. But, what does 'helping the oppressor' mean?' He said: 'Stop him from doing injustice - this is helping him.'

This teaching of the Qur'ān helped establish that righteousness (*birr*) and the fear of Allah (*Taqwā*) are the real criterions on which it raised the edifice of Muslim nationalism and to which it invited the peoples of the world as the common denominator of mutual cooperation and assistance. Contrary to this were sin and aggression (*ithm* and '*udwān*) which were declared to be serious crimes and cooperation in these was prohibited. To describe the positive criterions, two separate words of *Birr* and *Taqwā* were used. According to a consensus of commentators, the word, *Birr* at this place means the doing of deeds which are good. This has been translated here as righteousness. The word, *Taqwā* means abstinence from what is evil. The word, *Ithm* has been used here in an absolute sense meaning sin and disobedience, whether it relates to rights or acts of worship. As for '*Udwān*, it lexically means the crossing of limits, that is, injustice and aggression.

About cooperating in what is righteousness and the fear of Allah, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: الدال على الخير كفاعله which means: The reward of the person who shows someone the path of righteousness is very much the same as if it was taken personally. Ibn Kathīr has reported this ḥadīth with reference to al-Bazzār. In addition to that, it appears in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that whoever invites people to true guidance and righteous conduct shall receive a reward equal to all those who would heed to the call and act right - without the least cut from the reward of such people. As for the one who invites people to the path of error or sin, he or she will be earning the same amount of sin fully equal to the sins of all those who got involved with the filth of sin because of the inviter to sin - without any decrease in the count of such sins.

Citing Ṭabarānī, reports Ibn Kathīr: The Holy Prophet ﷺ said that anyone who joins up with an unjust person to assist him goes out of the fold of Islam. It is on the basis of this guidance that the righteous

elders of the community have strictly abstained from accepting any office or service in the courts of unjust rulers - for this amounts to assisting them in their acts of injustice. Tafsīr Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī, while explaining the noble verse: فَلَنْ اَكُوْنَ ظَهِيْرًا لِّلْمُجْرِمِيْنَ : 'I will never be a helper for the criminals - 28:17', has reported a ḥadīth in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said that a call will go forth on the Day of Judgement citing the oppressors and the unjust and their helpers, so much so that all those who have handled chores even as insignificant as setting up the pens and inkpots of the unjust and the oppressive will all be rammed into a steel coffin and thrown into the Hell.

This is the teaching of the Qur'ān and Sunnah which aimed at spreading the virtues of righteousness, justice, sympathy and good-mannerliness throughout the world by presenting every single individual of the community as a living herald and model of the truth. And conversely, in order to eradicate crimes, injustices and oppressions, the same teaching had converted every member of the community into a kind of soldier who was bound to do his duty under all circumstances, whether watched or unwatched - because of the fear of Allah in his heart. The whole world saw the outcome of this wise teaching and grooming during the blessed period of the noble Companions and their Successors. Even in our day, when war threatens a certain country, departments of civil defence are established which impart some level of training for all its citizens. But, nothing of the sort gets done when it comes to the eradication of crimes, to making people promoters of good and blockers of evil. It is obvious that an objective like this cannot be achieved by military parades or civil defence exercises. This is the ultimate art of living which can only be learnt and practiced in educational institutions which, unfortunately, seem to have become strangers to spiritual and social refinements. This is very much true about the great qualities of righteousness and the fear of Allāh which seem to be all banned in modern day educational institutions while the admittance of sin and high-handedness is all too open. What can the police do when a whole people throw away the concerns of the lawful and the unlawful and the right and the wrong on their backs and turn crime-oriented? Today we see the graph of crime rising high - theft, robbery, sexual offences, killings and destructions are taking place everywhere. That the legal machinery can do nothing to root out

these crimes is because of their failure to take advantage of the Qur'ānic solution suggested above, that is, the governments are far removed from this Qur'ānic system, and that they, particularly those who hold power into their hands, demur from adopting the principle of righteousness and the fear of Allah as the aim of their life - even though they have to face a thousand other hardships as a result of such avoidance. It may be interesting if such deviationists would swallow their pride at least for once, even if this be on a trial basis. Let them, then, witness the spectacle of the power of Allah and how it blesses them and their people with good life filled with the best of peace and comfort.

On the other side, there were the masses of people who took it for granted that the eradication of crimes is the exclusive responsibility of the government. In fact, they have become used to keeping crimes covered up. The idea of coming up with true witnesses to confirm truth and eliminate crime is no more a favoured practice among them. Such people must understand that covering up the crime of the criminal and avoiding to put their witness on record is an abetment of crime which, according to the Holy Qur'ān, is *Ḥarām* (unlawful) and a grave sin indeed. Furthermore, it is also a flagrant disobedience of the Divine command: وَلَا تَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ (And help each other in righteousness and piety, and do not help each other in sin and aggression) (5:2).

Verse 3

حُرِّمَتْ عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَيْتَةُ وَالدَّمُ وَلَحْمُ الْخِنْزِيرِ وَمَآ أُهِلَّ لِغَيْرِ اللّٰهِ
بِهٖ وَالْمُنْخَنِقَةُ وَالْمَوْقُوذَةُ وَالْمُتَرَدِّيَةُ وَالنَّطِيحَةُ وَمَآ أَكَلَ السَّبُعُ
إِلَّا مَا ذَكَّيْتُمْ وَمَا ذُبِحَ عَلَى النُّصُبِ وَأَنْ تَسْتَقْسِمُوا
بِالْأَزْلَامِ ذٰلِكُمْ فِسْقٌ اَلْيَوْمَ يَئِسَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ دِينِكُمْ
فَلَا تَخْشَوْهُمْ وَاخْشَوْنِ اَلْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتْمَمْتُ
عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا فَمَنِ اضْطُرَّ فِي
مَخْمَصَةٍ غَيْرَ مُتَجَانِفٍ لِإِثْمٍ فَإِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٣﴾

Prohibited for you are: the carrion, the blood, the flesh

of swine, and what has been invoked upon with (a name) other than that of Allah, and the animals dead by strangulation, dead by blow, dead by a fall, dead by goring, and that which a beast has eaten unless you have properly slaughtered it; and that which has been slaughtered before the idols and that you determine shares through the arrows. This is sin.

Today those who disbelieve have lost hopes of (damaging) your faith. So, do not fear them, and fear Me. Today, I have perfected your religion for you, and have completed My blessing upon you, and chosen Islam as *Dīn* for you. But whoever is compelled by severe hunger with no way out, having no inclination, then Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [3]

Commentary

This is the third verse of Sūrah al-Mā'idah where a number of fundamental and subsidiary injunctions and rulings have been described. The first problem relates to lawful and unlawful animals. As for animals whose meat is harmful for human beings - whether physically, for it may pose the danger of disease in the human body, or spiritually, for it may hold the danger of spoilage in human morals or its many emotional states - these the Qur'ān has classed as evil declaring them to be unlawful. Then there are animals which have no physical or spiritual harmfulness, these the Qur'ān has declared to be good, pure and lawful.

The first prohibition in this verse is that of dead animals. These refer to animals which die without having been slaughtered, either because of some sickness or because of their natural death. The meat of such dead animals is extremely harmful for human consumption, not simply 'medically', but spiritually as well.

However, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has exempted fish and locust as reported in *Aḥādīth* narrated in the Musnad of Aḥmad, Ibn Mājah, Dārquṭnī and al-Baihaqī and elsewhere.

The second thing declared unlawful in this verse is blood. By saying: أَوْدَمًا مَّسْفُوحًا (Or, flowing blood - 6:145) in another verse of the Holy Qur'ān, it was made clear that blood here means blood which flows. For this reason, liver and spleen, despite being blood, stand exempted

from the purview of this injunction. The *Ḥadīth* referred to a little earlier where fish and locust have been exempted from the purview of '*Maitah*' or carrion also carries the exemption of liver and spleen from the definition of blood.

The third thing declared unlawful is the flesh of swine. '*Laḥm*' or flesh means the whole body of the swine which includes fat, ligaments, everything.

The fourth prohibition is that of an animal which has been invoked upon with (a name) other than that of Allah (dedicated in this manner, or slaughtered). And, at the time of slaughtering it as well, the act of invoking any name other than that of Allah will amount to flagrant Shirk, which is the ascribing of partners, sharers or associates in the pure divinity of Allah. This animal, thus slaughtered, shall fall under the injunction of a dead animal with the consensus of Muslim jurists. This is what was done by the disbelievers of Arabia when they slaughtered animals invoking the name of their idols, or as some ignorant people would do when they would slaughter animals in the name of some saint or savant. It is also possible that someone does invoke the name of Allah at the time of slaughtering but actually offers it for one other than Allah making that sacrifice for the pleasure of whatever that non-Allah is. If so, this too, according to a consensus of Muslim jurists, is unlawful under the injunction of : مَآ أُهِلَّ لِغَيْرِ اللّٰهِ بِهٖ (what has been invoked upon with [a name] other than that of Allah).

The fifth category made unlawful is that of an animal which has been strangulated to death, or which has choked itself to death while struggling out of some trap. Though *Munkhaniqah* (dead by strangulation) and *Mawqūdhah* (dead by blow) are included under the broad Qur'ānic term of '*Maitah*'(carrion), but they have been mentioned here particularly because the people of *Jāhiliyyah* took them to be permissible.

The sixth category of animals is *Mawqūdhah* (dead by blow). It means an animal which has been killed by some hard blow, the kind of blow that comes from being hit by a staff, rod or rock. Should an arrow strike and kill its game in a manner that the arrow does not hit it with the sharp arrow head but does end up killing it just the same from the force of the blow itself, then, this too will be counted as *Maw-*

qūdhah and will, as such, be unlawful. Sayyidnā 'Adī ibn Ḥātim رضى الله عنه said to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم : 'There are times when I hunt with an arrow heavy in the middle. If the game is killed with this arrow, can I eat it?' He said: 'If the animal has been killed by a blow from the heavy side of the arrow, it is included under *Mawqūdhah* - do not eat it (and if it has been hit by the sharp-edged point and it has wounded the game, then, you can eat it). Al-Jaṣṣāṣ has reported this narration in Aḥkām al-Qur'ān citing his own chain of authorities. Here, the condition is that the arrow should have been released from the bow after having said *Bismillāh*.

The game killed by a gun bullet has also been ruled by Muslim Jurists as included under the category of '*Mawqūdhah*' and is, therefore, unlawful. Imām al-Jaṣṣāṣ reports from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar that he used to say: المقتولة بالبندقة تلك الموقوذة which means that an animal killed by gun shot is the '*Mawqūdhah*'; therefore, it is unlawful. Imāms Abū Ḥanīfah, Shāfi'ī, Mālik and others are all in agreement with this view (al-Qurṭubī).

The seventh category is called '*al-Mutaraddiyah*' (killed by a fall). It means that an animal which dies by falling from a mountain, mound or a high building, or which dies by falling into a well or some similar depth is also unlawful. Therefore, says a report from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd: If you see a game standing on top of a mountain and you shoot your arrow at it after reciting *Bismillāh* and the hit of the arrow causes the game to fall down and die, then, do not eat it.

Because, here too, the probability exists that the animal did not die with a hit from the arrow. May be, it died from the shock of the fall - if so, it will be counted under the category of '*Mutaraddiyah*' (dead by a fall). Similarly, if an arrow is shot at a bird and it falls down in water, its eating has also been prohibited for the same reason that probability exists that the hunted bird had died by drowning (al-Jaṣṣāṣ).

It should also be noted that Sayyidnā 'Adiyy ibn Ḥātim too has reported the same ruling from the Holy Prophet ﷺ - (al-Jaṣṣāṣ).

The eighth category is that of '*An-Naṭiḥah*' (dead by goring). It refers to an animal which has died in some collision such as by bumping against a train or vehicle, or it has been gored by butting against an-

other animal.

The ninth category is of an animal which died when torn apart by some beast.

After describing the unlawfulness of these nine categories, an exception has been mentioned. It was said: إِلَّا مَا ذَكَّيْتُمْ. It means: If you find any of these animals alive and you slaughter it properly, then, it becomes lawful - eating it is permissible.

This exemption cannot be applied to the first four categories, because in *Maitah* (carrion) and *Dam* (blood), the very possibility does not exist; and as for *Khinzīr* (swine) and what falls under مَا أُهِلَّ لِغَيْرِ اللَّهِ : *mā uhilla li-ghayrillāh* (what has been invoked upon with [a name] other than that of Allah), they are unlawful in themselves - slaughtering or not slaughtering them is equally irrelevant. Therefore, there is a consensus of Sayyidnā 'Alī, Ibn 'Abbās, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Qatādah and other righteous elders on the view that this exemption applies to categories after the first four, that is, to the '*Munkhaniqah*' (dead by strangulation) and what comes after it. So, it comes to mean that, should the animal be found alive under all these circumstances with commonly discernable signs of life, and slaughtered with the name of Allah while in the same condition, then, it is lawful - whether dead by strangulation, dead by blow, dead by a fall, dead by goring or that which a beast has eaten. Any of these slaughtered while sensing signs of life in it shall become lawful.

Under the tenth category, an animal which has been slaughtered at an altar is unlawful. The altar refers to slabs of rocks placed around the Ka'bah which the people of *Jāhiliyyah* took as objects of worship and they would bring animals near the altars and sacrifice them dedicated to these rock slabs. They thought it was worship.

The people of *Jāhiliyyah* used to eat all these kinds of animals, animals which are evil. The Holy Qur'ān declared all of them to be unlawful.

The eleventh practice declared unlawful in this verse is the determining of shares with arrows: *al-istiqsām bi al-azlām*. The Arabic word, '*al-azlām*' used in the Qur'ān is the plural of *zalām*. This was an arrow used to determine shares during the days of *Jāhiliyyah*. They

were seven in number. One would have 'yes' and the other would have 'no' or some similar words written on them. These arrows were kept in the custody of the keeper of the Ka'bah.

When someone wanted his fortune told or wished to find out whether doing something in the future will be beneficial or harmful, they would go to the keeper of the Ka'bah, present money gift to him in anticipation of his service, who would, then, take out these arrows from the quiver one by one. If the arrow so drawn turned out to be the one with the word 'yes' on it, they thought that doing what they wanted to do was beneficial; and if, the arrow drawn had a 'no' on it, they drew the conclusion that they should not do what they wanted to do. The reason why this has been mentioned in the context of unlawful animals is that small groups of pagan Arabs used to have a joint slaughter of a camel or some other animal but, rather than divide up shares from the meat to all participants in accordance with the number of shares originally subscribed to, they would decide it by drawing these arrows. Obviously, by doing that, someone would remain totally deprived, someone else would get too much and there would be someone getting less than what was his right. Therefore, the unlawfulness of this procedure was explained alongwith the unlawfulness of animals.

'Ulamā' say that all methods used to divine future happenings or to find out what is *'Ghayb'* (Unseen) - whether divination through numbers (*'ilm al-Jafr* or Jafar), or palm-reading, or the taking of omen - fall under the injunction of 'determining shares with arrows.'

The Arabic term for 'determining shares with arrows' is sometimes used for *Qimār* or gambling as well wherein rights are determined by the methods of lots or lottery. This too is *Ḥarām* (unlawful) on the authority of the Qur'ān which prohibits it under the name, *'Maisir'* (gambling). Therefore, righteous early elders Sa'īd ibn Jubayr, Mujāhid and Al-Sha'bī said that the way the pagan Arabs used arrows to determine shares, people of Persia and Asia Minor used chessmen and pieces of backgammon for the same purpose. They all fall under the injunction about arrows.

After explaining the unlawfulness of determining shares with arrows al-Tafsīr al-Maẓharī has particularly pointed out that the

Qur'ānic statement: ذٰلِكُمْ فِسْقٌ (This is sin) which follows immediately after this injunction means that this method of divination or determining of shares is an act of sin which leads people astray. After that, it was said:

اَلْيَوْمَ يَئِسَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْ دِيْنِكُمْ فَلَا تَخْشَوْهُمْ وَاخْشَوْنِ

> Today those who disbelieve have lost hopes of (damaging) your faith. So do not fear them, and fear Me.

This verse was revealed to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم on the day of *'Arafah* of the Last Ḥajj in the tenth year of Hijrah. This was a time when the conquest of Makkah and almost of all Arabia was complete. Islamic law prevailed all over the Peninsula. Thereupon, reference was made to the assessment of disbelievers that Muslims were much lower in number as against them and that they were weak too based on which they planned to eliminate them. Now that they do not have those ambitions any more nor do they have the power to pose a challenge, Muslims have been asked to feel secure against them and go on to spend their energy in obeying and worshipping their Lord:

اَلْيَوْمَ اَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِيْنَكُمْ وَاَتْمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِيْ وَرَضِيْتُ لَكُمُ الْاِسْلَامَ دِيْنًا

> Today, I have perfected your religion for you, and have completed My blessing upon you, and chosen Islam as *Din* for you.

The combination of circumstances in which this verse was revealed is special. Imagine. This is the day of *'Arafah,* the foremost day out of the days of the entire year and by chance this *'Arafah* fell on a *Jumu'ah* (Friday) the merits of which are well-known. The place is nothing less than the plain of *'Arafāt,* close to the Mount of Mercy (*Jabl ar-Raḥmah*) which, on the day of *'Arafah,* is the chosen spot of the incessant descent of Mercy from Allah Almighty. The time is after *'Aṣr,* which is a blessed time even during normal days, specially so on Friday wherein comes the hour when prayers are answered as confirmed by many authentic reports and this is the time for it. Then, this being the day of *'Arafah* as well, it is all the more likely that prayers shall be answered particularly at this hour and time.

This is the largest and the first great gathering of Muslims for their Ḥajj. Participating in it are some one hundred and fifty thousand noble *Ṣaḥābah*, the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them

all. And present with his Companions is the Holy Prophet ﷺ who is the very mercy of all universes sitting on his mount, the she-camel *'Aḍbā'* under the legendary Mount of Mercy busy with his Wuqūf in 'Arafāt, now a great basic rite of Ḥajj.

It is under the canopy of these blissful merits and blessings and mercies that this verse is being revealed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Spot witnesses to this spectacle, the noble Companions said: When this verse came in the mode of *Waḥy* (revelation) to the Holy Prophet ﷺ what happened was what had transpired earlier too: The weight released by the descending Revelation could be perceived as the she-camel was crouching under that weight, so much so that she was compelled to sit down.

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ says that this verse is almost the last verse of the Holy Qur'ān; no verse dealing with *Aḥkām* (Injunctions) was revealed after that. The only exception here is that of some verses of persuasive nature which have been identified as having been revealed after this verse. After the revelation of this verse, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم lived in this mortal world for only eighty one days, for this verse was revealed on the ninth day of Dhil-Ḥijjah in the Hijrah year 10 and it was on the twelfth day of the month of Rabī' al-Awwal in the eleventh year of Hijrah that the Holy Prophet ﷺ departed from this mortal world.

That this verse was revealed in such elegant setting with a very special concern has its secret in the message it conveys which is a great news, a solemn reward and an abiding hallmark of distinction for Islam and Muslims and for the *Ummah* at large. In a nutshell, the message is that the ultimate standard of True Faith and Divine Blessing which was to be bequeathed to human beings in this world has reached its perfection on that great day. This is, so to say, the climax of the divine blessings in the shape of a True Faith which began with Sayyidnā Ādam علیہ السلام and continued in later times when the children of Ādam in every period and every area kept receiving a part of this blessing in proportion to their prevailing conditions. Today, that Faith and that Blessing in its final form has been bestowed upon the Last of the Prophets, the *Rasūl* of Allah صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم and to his *Ummah*.

It goes without saying that this bestowal primarily highlights the excellence and distinction of the last and the foremost Prophet, Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā صلى الله عليه وسلم among the community of prophets, messengers and apostles. But, it also proves that the *Ummah* has a distinct status among other Traditional Communities.

This is why some Jewish scholars came to Sayyidnā 'Umar and told him: Your Qur'ān has a verse which, if it was revealed to Jews, would have given them an occasion to celebrate its revelation through a festival. Sayyidnā 'Umar asked: Which verse is that? They, in response, recited this very verse (اَلْيَوْمَ اَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِيْنَكُمْ). Sayyidnā 'Umar said: Yes, we know where and when this verse was revealed. The hint was that the particular day was a day of doubled rejoicing (*Eid*) for Muslims, one for *'Arafah* and the other for *Jumu'ah* (Friday).

The Islamic Principle of Celebrating Festive Occasions

This reply given by Sayyidnā 'Umar also carries a hint towards a cardinal Islamic principle which, of all peoples and religions of the world, is the hallmark of Islam alone. It is common knowledge that peoples from every nation and every religious group commemorate their particular historical events conditioned by their respective self-view. Such days which return each year acquire the status of a major festival with them.

Somewhere the celebration is about the birth or death anniversary of a great person. Elsewhere, it would be a day of coronation, or the day of the conquest of some country or city, or some acclaimed historical event. The net outcome of all such celebrations is no more than increasing the image of particular individuals. Islam is against the cult of personality. It has bypassed the customs of the age of ignorance by eliminating the commemoration of persons and by introducing the commemoration of principles and objectives as standard practice.

Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm, عليه السلام, the patriarch of prophets, was given the title of "Friend of Allah." The Holy Qur'ān paid tributes to him on his success against trials. The verse: وَاِذِ ابْتَلٰٓى اِبْرٰهٖمَ رَبُّهٗ بِكَلِمٰتٍ فَاَتَمَّهُنَّ (and when his Lord put Ibrāhīm to a test with certain Words! And he fulfilled them) (2:124) means exactly this. But, no anniversary of his birth or death was ever celebrated, nor that of his son, Ismā'īl عليه السلام , nor that of his mother, nor any kind of memorial was established to perpetuate their

memory.

Of course, there were things of significance in their deeds, things related to the objectives of religion and faith. This legacy was worth the best of preservation and commemoration and this legacy was not only preserved but made mandatory for all succeeding generations as an obligatory part of their religion and faith. Sacrifice. Circumcision. Running between the hills of Ṣafā and Marwah. Throwing pebbles at three places in *Minā*. All these are living, ever-reminding monuments to the deeds of the same righteous elders which they performed by sacrificing their personal desires and natural needs aiming for nothing but the pleasure of Allah Almighty. Right there, in these deeds, there is a lesson for all peoples of all times that human beings should sacrifice everything, even the dearest of the dear, for the good pleasure of Allah.

So, this was how Islam abstained from celebrating days devoted to the birth and death of prominent men, or women, no matter how great, or the days highlighting their personal lives and times. Celebrated instead, were days centered around their deeds, specially those pertaining to some particular act of worship, for example, *Laylatul-Barā'ah* (the Night of Deliverance from Sin), Ramaḍān al-Mubārak (the Blessed Month of Ramaḍān), *Laylatul-Qadr* (the Night of Power), *Yowm al-'Arafah* (the Day of *'Arafah)*, Yowm al-'Āshūrā (the Day of 'Āshūrā) etc. As for '*Īd*, the well-known Muslim Festival of Rejoicing, it was limited to only two and that too was made purely religious in nature. The first 'Īd ('Īdul-Fiṭr) was set in between at the end of the month of Ramaḍān al-Mubārak and at the begining of the Ḥajj months while the second 'Īd ('Īdul-Aḍḥā) was appointed to be celebrated after the completion of the Hajj pilgrimage.

To sum up, let us return to the reply given by Sayyidnā 'Umar which so succinctly declared that 'Īds in Islam do not follow historical events as among Jews and Christians. This was the custom of *Jāhiliyyah*, the first age of ignorance when the passing of some major historical event would be turned into a festival. Now, as witnesses to the modern Age of Ignorance, we can see how wide-spread this urge to celebrate has become. The limit is that Muslims themselves have started imitating other nations indulging in practices contrary to their way.

Christians started celebrating a Festival commemorating the birth of Sayyidnā 'Isā, عليه السلام. With their example before them, some Muslims introduced another 'Id, the Festival of the birth of the Holy Prophet, may peace be upon him, and the blessings of Allah. Devoting a day to take out processions on streets with activities neither reasonable nor valid and filling a night with displays of lamps and lights, they took this to be an act of worship. For this there is no basic justification in the words and deeds of the *Ṣaḥābah*, the noble Companions, or the *Tābi'īn*, the Successors to the Companions, or the large body of the righteous elders of the Muslim Community.

The truth of the matter is that this practice of celebrating days would pass with nations which lack individuals with superior merits and achievements. When lucky, they would find a couple or few suitable enough with a record of something special they may have done and commemorating them would become a matter of national pride for them.

If this custom of celebrating days were to be practiced in Islam, we would have to begin with more than one hundred and twenty thousand prophets each of whom has a big roster of wonderful achievements to his credit. Celebrating the birthday of and commemorating the achievements of each would be very much in order. After past prophets, peace be upon them, let us move to the Last of them ﷺ and look at his pure and pristine life. When you do that there would not remain even one day which could turn out to be devoid of one or the other achievement which deserves to be celebrated. From his childhood to his youth, he was an epitome of moral perfections (or a paradigm of virtues, as termed by some modern Muslim writers in the West) whereby he was considered the most trustworthy person in the whole country of 'Arabia. Are these embellishments not worthy enough for Muslims to celebrate? Then, there is the Revelation of the Holy Qur'ān, the event of Hijrah, the Battle of Badr, and Uḥud, and Khandaq, and Ḥunayn, and Tabūk, and the Conquest of Makkah. Add to these all other battles in which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم participated. Each deserves a celebration. Similarly, there are thousands of his miracles; each one of them needs commemoration. One needs insight to look at the life of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم which would

bring an honest person to come to the conclusion that his good life - not just a day from it, rather every hour in it - is most worthy of being commemorated, celebrated and rejoiced in.

After the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, think of some one hundred and twenty thousand of his noble Companions each one of whom is really a living miracle of their master. Would it not be unjust to ignore them and avoid celebrating their achievements? If we pursue this practice still further on, we shall be looking at those who followed after the noble Companions - righteous elders, men of Allah, scholars, masters and guides - whose number would shoot up to millions. If commemorative days have to be celebrated, how could one leave them out? Would it not be an injustice to them? Or, a failure to recognize intellectual merit or spiritual excellence? And if, left with not much choice, Muslims were to decide to celebrate memorial days for everyone, they would have a calendar of activities all full of celebrations with no day free - in fact, they would have to celebrate several commemorations, festivals and 'Ids every hour of every day!

No wonder the Prophet of Islam and all his Companions ignored this custom as outmoded pagan practice from the days of *Jāhiliyyah*! Sayyidnā 'Umar, the second *Khalifah* of Islam, may Allah be pleased with him, alludes to this very approach in his policy statement made before the Jews.

Understanding Important Meanings of the Verse

This Verse carries the good news that Allah has given to the noble Prophet and his Community three rewards: Perfection of Faith, Completion of Divine Blessing and the Sharī'ah of Islam as the Chosen Way for the Muslim Community.

1. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās, and others with him, explain that Perfection of Faith refers to the perfection of all limits, obligations, injunctions and refinements in personal and social behaviour as necessary for the True Faith. Now there is no need to add to it, nor there remains any probability of a shortfall (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī). For this reason, no new injunction from among the total corpus of injunctions was revealed after this. As already pointed out earlier, the few verses which were revealed later on carry either some subjects of persuasion or were a reiteration of injunctions already revealed.

What has been said here is not contrary to the function of the most-authentically qualified jurists of Islam (*Mujtahid* Imāms through which they could explicate and elaborate injunctions of the Sharī'ah related to new and unprecendented events and circumstances as based on their highest possible effort and judgement (*Ijtihād*). The reason is simple - because the Holy Qur'ān which has laid down the limits and obligations of religious injunctions has also, at the same time, determined the principles of *Ijtihād*. Pursuant to this authority, all rules and regulations deduced by *Ijtihād* right through the Last Day will be considered as if they are, in a way, the very injunctions of the Qur'ān itself - because they are subordinate to the principles given by the Qur'ān.

To sum up, we can say that 'Perfection of Faith', as explained by Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās, is the perfection of all injunctions of the Faith. It needs no addition, while the probability of any shortfall through abrogation just does not exist - because, soon after, the ongoing process of *Waḥy* (revelation) was to be discontinued following the passing away of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم from this mortal world; and no injunction of the Holy Qur'ān can be abrogated without a Divine revelation (*Waḥy*). As for the apparent multiplicity of sub-injunctions that generated from jurists under the principle of *Ijtihād* was, in reality, no multiplicity as such. It was, rather, the explication and elaboration of the Qur'ānic injunctions.

2. 'Completion of Blessing' means the rise of Muslims and the fall of their antagonists - which was manifested through the Conquest of Makkah, the eradication of the customs of *Jāhiliyyah* and through the absence of all disbelievers from the Ḥajj that year.

The words of the Qur'ān used here show that '*Ikmāl*' (perfection) has been coupled with '*Dīn*' (Faith) while the word '*Itmām*' (Completion) goes with '*Ni'mah*' (blessing) - though both words are obviously synonymous and are generally used interchangeably. But, in fact, there is a difference in the sense they both carry. This has been explained by Imām Rāghib al-Isfahānī in his Mufradāt al-Qur'ān by saying that the '*Ikmāl* and *Takmīl*' (Perfection) of something means that the purpose and objective behind it has been accomplished (perfection of something carries exactly the same sense in English,

specially at a time when spoken of, as '*al-yowm*' (today) in the verse already indicates). The other word, '*Itmām*' (Completion) means that nothing else is needed any more. Thus, 'Perfection of Faith' tells us that the purpose of sending Divine Law and the injunctions of Faith into this world stands fulfilled and perfected today; and 'Completion of Blessing' means that Muslims do not have to depend on anyone anymore. Allah has Himself given them supremacy, power, authority. They can use these to promulgate and implement the imperatives (*Aḥkām*, Injunctions) of this True Faith.

Also noteworthy here is the arrangement in the Verse where '*Dīn*' (Faith) has been attributed to Muslims while the attribution of '*Ni'mah*' (Blessing) is towards Almighty Allah. This is because '*Dīn*' (Faith) is demonstrated by what the members of the Community do while the consummation of '*Ni'mah*' (Blessing) is directly from Almighty Allah (Ibn al-Qayyim, Tafsīr).

The meanings as established here also clarify that the Perfection of Faith 'today' does not mean that, earlier, the Faith of the blessed prophets was imperfect. Quite contrary to that, the '*Dīn*' (Faith) of every prophet and messenger was perfect and complete in terms of the relevant period of time (Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ with reference to al-Qaffāl al-Marwazī). In other words, it means that the period in which a Law or Faith was sent by Allah to a prophet, it was in itself perfect and complete for that period and for the people who belonged to it. But, the future projection, that the Faith quite perfect for that period and its people will not remain perfect for later periods and peoples, was already there in the ultimate Knowledge of Almighty Allah - He knew that it would be abrogated and another Faith and Law will take its place. This is contrary to the case of the Sharī'ah of Islam which was sent last of all since it is perfect from all sides and angles. It is neither specified for any particular time nor is it restricted to any particular area, country or people. Instead of all that, Islam is a Sharī'ah which is perfect and complete for every period and every area and every people for all times to come right upto the Last Day.

3. The third reward which has been bestowed upon the Muslim Community through this Verse is that Allah has, by His creational prerogative, authority and wisdom, chosen the Faith of Islam for this

Ummah which is perfect and complete in all its aspects - and on which depends the ultimate Salvation.

Certainly great was the message this Verse gave to the Muslim Community which was thus blessed with the finest gift they could ever dream of: the gift of the *Dīn* of Islam - the last and the most perfect Faith, after which there is no Faith to come and in which there shall be no addition or deletion. When this Verse was revealed, Muslims had good reason to be jubilant about Allah's mercy which descended upon them in that manner. But, Sayyidnā 'Umar was found in tears. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم asked him the reason for his tears. He replied: This Verse seems to indicate that now your stay in this world is very short, because with the perfection of Islam, the need of a *Rasūl* to be present also stands fulfilled! The Holy Prophet ﷺ agreed with him (Tafsīr ibn Kathīr and al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ). Time showed that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم departed from this mortal world only after eighty one days this event took place.

Unlawfulness of Animals: Exception under Compulsion

Towards the end of the Verse, the statement: فَمَنِ اضْطُرَّ فِي مَخْمَصَةٍ (But, whoever is compelled by severe hunger with no way out) relates to animals the unlawfulness of which has been mentioned in the earlier part of the Verse. The purpose of the sentence is to exclude a particular condition from the general rule. If a person is subjected to severe hunger to a point where death becomes likely, then, under this condition, were he to eat a little from unlawful animals mentioned in the Verse, there will be no sin on him. But, the condition is that the purpose of such eating should not be to have one's fill or to enjoy it. Instead of doing that, one should eat just about what would remove the state of compulsion.

This is exactly what the words: غَيْرَ مُتَجَانِفٍ لِّإِثْمٍ (having no inclination to sin) following immediately mean, that is, this act should be free from any inclination to commit a sin. Contrary to that, the purpose should only be limited to get relief from the excruciating state of compulsion. Towards the end of the Verse, the statement: فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful) makes a pointed reference to the fact that these unlawful things are still unlawful as they already were, but only such a person has been given leave because of the state of compulsion he may be in.

Verse 4

يَسْئَلُوْنَكَ مَاذَآ اُحِلَّ لَهُمْ ۭ قُلْ اُحِلَّ لَكُمُ الطَّيِّبٰتُ ۙ وَمَا عَلَّمْتُمْ مِّنَ الْجَوَارِحِ مُكَلِّبِيْنَ تُعَلِّمُوْنَهُنَّ مِمَّا عَلَّمَكُمُ اللّٰهُ ۡ فَكُلُوْا مِمَّآ اَمْسَكْنَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَاذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْهِ ۠ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ سَرِيْعُ الْحِسَابِ ﴿٤﴾

They ask you as to what has been made lawful for them. Say, "Made lawful for you are good things, and (hunting through) birds and beasts of prey that you train teaching them out of what Allah has taught you. So, eat of what they hold for you, and recite the name of Allah upon it." And fear Allah. Surely, Allah is swift at reckoning. [4]

Lawful and unlawful animals were mentioned in preceding verses. An answer to a question on the same subject appears in the present verse. Some Companions had asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ about the rule governing hunting with the help of a trained dog and falcon. Given in this verse is an answer to that question.

Commentary

To make an animal lawful when hunted through a dog or falcon, four conditions have been mentioned in the question and its answer appearing above. These are:

1. The dog or falcon should be taught, trained and disciplined. The functional principle given here is that the dog should have been groomed in a manner that it should, when released at the prey, catch it and bring it back to you - not that it starts eating it. As for a falcon, the rule set was that it should immediately return when called by you, even if it was chasing the prey. When so trained, it will prove that these beasts of prey hunt for you and not for themselves. Now the animal hunted by these beasts of prey will be considered your own. And if they act against this training once in a while, for example, the dog itself starts eating the prey, or the falcon does not return at your call, then, this game is not yours anymore, therefore, eating it is not permissible.

2. The second condition is that you should release the dog or falcon immediately at your choice and will, not that they dash after some game and hunt it on their own. In the verse under discussion, this condition has been made to come out clearly by the use of the word, "*Mukallibīn*." Lexically, this word is a derivation from '*Taklīb*' which basically means the training of dogs. Later, it also came to be used in the sense of training beasts of prey and releasing them after the game. The author of the famous Tafsīr Jalālayn explains it in the sense of '*Irsāl*' (send after) which means releasing after the game. This view has been reported in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī as well.

3. The third condition is that the beasts of prey do not themselves start eating the game - instead, they should bring it to you. This condition has been explained through : مِمَّآ اَمْسَكْنَ عَلَيْكُمْ (what they hold for you).

4. The fourth condition is: When you release the dog or the falcon after the game, do it after saying '*Bismillah*' (With the name of Allah).

When these conditions stand fulfilled, the game - if dead before it reaches you - will still be lawful with no need to slaughter. If otherwise, it will not be lawful for you unless slaughtered.

With Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, there is a fifth condition as well: That this beast of prey should have also wounded the game. A hint towards this condition is embedded in the word, "*Al-Jawāriḥ*" (birds and beasts of prey) which also means animals which wound or injure.

Ruling: This injunction covers wild animals out of one's possession and control. In case a wild animal has been captured, it will not become lawful without having been properly slaughtered.

Finally, at the end of the verse, there comes the instruction that hunting through a beast of prey has no doubt been made lawful by Almighty Allah, but, it is not permissible to ignore *Ṣalāh* and other necessary religious obligations for the sake of having fun chasing game.

Verse 5

اَلْيَوْمَ اُحِلَّ لَكُمُ الطَّيِّبٰتُ ط وَطَعَامُ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ حِلٌّ لَّكُمْ ص وَطَعَامُكُمْ حِلٌّ لَّهُمْ ز وَالْمُحْصَنٰتُ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنٰتِ وَالْمُحْصَنٰتُ

مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ اِذَآ اٰتَيْتُمُوْهُنَّ اُجُوْرَهُنَّ
مُحْصِنِيْنَ غَيْرَ مُسٰفِحِيْنَ وَلَا مُتَّخِذِيْٓ اَخْدَانٍ ۗ وَمَنْ يَّكْفُرْ
بِالْاِيْمَانِ فَقَدْ حَبِطَ عَمَلُهٗ ۡ وَهُوَ فِى الْاٰخِرَةِ مِنَ الْخٰسِرِيْنَ ﴿٥﴾

This day, good things have been made lawful for you. And the food of the people of the Book is lawful for you, and your food is lawful for them, and good women from among believers, and good women from among those given the Book before you, provided you give them their dowers, binding yourself in marriage, not going for lust, nor having paramours. And whoever rejects Faith, his effort will go waste and, in the Hereafter, he is among the losers. [5]

Commentary

In the first verse of Sūrah al-Mā'idah, the lawfulness of domestic animals such as the goat, cow and buffalo has been described. The third verse has a detail of nine kinds of unlawful animals. From that detail to the opening sentence of the present verse, we come to know in summation the essentials of the lawfulness and unlawfulness of animals as well as its operating standard and rule.

The verse opens with the words: اَلْيَوْمَ اُحِلَّ لَكُمُ الطَّيِّبٰتُ (This day, good things have been made lawful for you). Here, 'this day' means the day on which this verse and those before it have been revealed, that is, the Day of *'Arafah* in the Last Ḥajj of Hijrah 10. The sense is that the way your Faith has been made perfect and the blessing of Allah stands completed for you on this day, very similarly, good things from Allah which were already lawful for you have been allowed to stay lawful for ever. The probability that the injunction could be withdrawn does not exist anymore because the ongoing process of revelation was to be discontinued.

This sentence mentions the lawfulness of good things. But, another verse (7:157): يُحِلُّ لَهُمُ الطَّيِّبٰتِ وَيُحَرِّمُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْخَبٰٓئِثَ (Made lawful for them are good things and made unlawful for them are evil things). Here, by placing '*Aṭ-Ṭayyibāt*' (good things) against '*Al-Khabā'ith*' (impure things), the reality of both words has been made clear. Lexically,

things good, pure, clean and delightful are called *'Aṭ-Ṭayyibāt'*; and in contrast, *'Al-Khabāith'* is used to denote things which are evil and disgusting. Therefore, this sentence of the verse stresses that everything good, pure and beneficial has been made lawful for human beings and everything disgusting and harmful has been made unlawful. The reason is that human beings are not like animals whose purpose of life is limited to eating, drinking, sleeping, waking - being no more than a sort of live-die cycle. Nature has made them the master of the universe for some special purpose and that cannot be achieved without having high and pure morals. Therefore, immoral human beings would really not deserve to be counted as human beings.

That is why the Holy Qur'ān has said about such people: بَلْ هُمْ أَضَلُّ, that is, they are like cattle, rather more astray. Now if we accept that the 'humanity' of human beings depends on the betterment of their morals, it will become necessary to concede that they must be made to totally abstain from everything which leads to the corruption of human morals. Everyone knows how environment and society affect human morals. When things outside can do that to human morals, just imagine what would be the effect of things which go inside the human body for what becomes a part of the human body must affect its ethical behaviour. Therefore, caution must necessarily be observed in all foods and drinks. And let us keep in mind that unlawful income from theft, robbery, bribery, interest, gambling and evils like that, once it becomes part of anyone's body, will inevitably remove one farther from humanity and nearer to 'satanic nature.'

Hence, says the Holy Qur'ān: يٰٓأَيُّهَا الرُّسُلُ كُلُوْا مِنَ الطَّيِّبٰتِ وَاعْمَلُوْا صَالِحًا (O' Messengers, eat from good things [made lawful as sustenance] and do righteous deeds - 23:51). Here, the command to be righteous in deeds refers itself back to the command to eat from what is *Ḥalāl* (lawful) because without eating *Ḥalāl*, righteous deeds cannot be imagined. This consideration is very important specially in the case of meat which becomes an integral part of the human body. One has to be most cautious and guard against the possibility of non-*Ḥalāl* meat entering his system through food and go on to spoil his morals. Similar is the case of meat which is physically harmful for human beings as the carrier of bacteria causing disease and death. Everyone knows that abstention

from such meat is necessary. As for things declared evil by the Sharī'ah of Islam, these are definitely agents of corruption for the human body or the soul or both. Since they are dangerous for human life and morals, they were made unlawful. As opposed to this, good things, the '*Ṭayyibāt*' contribute to the nurture and flowering of the human body, soul and morals - so, they were made lawful. In this way, this brief sentence of the Qur'ān has given to us the philosophy and ground rules of the lawful and the unlawful, so to say, in a nutshell.

Now, as to which things are pure, beneficial and desirable and which others are impure, harmful and disgusting, the real decision of the matter lies with the desire and aversion of one's inherent good taste. This is the reason why animals declared unlawful by Islam have been considered impure and disgusting by people of good taste during every period of time - for instance, carrion and blood. Nevertheless, there come occasions when custom-based ignorance overpowers good taste and when the fine line between good and bad fades out. Or, the evil in some things is concealed. In such situations, the decision of the prophets, peace be on all of them, is the guiding and binding authority for everyone. The reason is that the noble prophets are the foremost in commonsense, decency, goodness and taste among human beings. They were specially gifted by Almighty Allah with an instrinsically sound and balanced nature and He Himself took the responsibility of their nurture and grooming. One might say that they rose to be what they were under a Divine security shield manned by angels which saw to it that their minds and hearts and morals would never be affected by any evil environment. So, things they took as evil are really evil; and what they found to be good is really good.

In Ḥujjatullah al-Bālighah, Shah Walīyyullāh says that all animals declared unlawful by the Sharī'ah of Islam, when observed closely, will all fit compactly under two principles: one - an animal is evil by its nature and disposition; two - the method of slaughtering the animal is wrong, as a result of which it will be considered 'dead' ('*Maitah*' - carrion), not slaughtered.

In the third verse of Sūrah al-Mā'idah, things called unlawful are nine in number. Out of these, the 'swine' is part of the first kind; the rest of the eight are in the second. By saying: وَيُحَرِّمُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْخَبٰٓئِثَ (He allows

them as lawful what is good [and pure] and prohibits them from what is bad [and impure] - 7:157 - AYA, rev. ed., Madinah) the Holy Qur'ān declares the general rule that all evil animals are unlawful. For details, the Holy Qur'ān points out to some clearly, for instance, ' the flesh of swine' and 'flowing blood'... The enumeration of the rest was entrusted to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. One sign of an animal being evil he gave was that a people could have been punished by having been transformed (*Maskh*) into the form of an animal. This indicates that the particular animal is evil by its very nature as Divine wrath transformed it into an animal. For example, says the Holy Qur'ān: وَجَعَلَ مِنْهُمُ الْقِرَدَةَ وَالْخَنَازِيرَ which means that some peoples have been transformed into swines and monkeys as punishment. This proves that both these kinds of animals are evil by nature - they, even if slaughtered, would still not become lawful. Then there are animals whose very doings and likings are sufficient for people of natural disposition to sense the evil inside them. For instance, there are beasts who live by injuring, tearing and eating other animals - a hard-hearted lifestyle indeed.

Therefore, when someone asked about a wolf from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, he said: "Can a human being eat it?" Similarly, there are many animals among crawlers and fliers whose very nature is to hurt or snatch away things, for instance, the snake, scorpion, house-lizard, fly, or a kite and falcon and others like them. So, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم set the rule that animals among beasts which tear animals apart with teeth, such as the lion and the wolf and others of their kind, and animals among birds such as the falcon and the hawk and others of their kind which hunt with their claws, are all unlawful; or, animals which are by nature mean and low or get themselves befouled with impurities, such as the rat or animals which eat carrion, or the donkey and similar others, all fall under the category of animals the physical properties and harmfulness of which is readily sensed by any human being with a normal mind and temperament.

To recapitulate, we can say that the animals which have been made unlawful under the Sharī'ah of Islam are of two kinds: Those intrinsically evil and those which are not evil by themselves but they have not been slaughtered following the method of slaughtering animals ordained by Almighty Allah. This includes all other options such

as the animal was not slaughtered at all - but was killed by shock or blow - or the act of slaughtering did take place, but rather than pronounce the name of Allah on it, a name other than that of Allah was recited, or just no name was pronounced by knowingly omitting the name of Allah at the time of slaughter. Such *Dhibḥ* or slaughter is equally untrustworthy and invalid in view of the Sharī'ah. In fact, this is very much like having 'killed' an animal without proper slaughter.

Something worth attention here is that everything one eats and drinks comes to him as a blessing from Allah, but, excepting the animals, no restriction has been imposed on cooking or eating anything from them other than that which would make it necessary for you to say '*Allāhu-Akbar*' or '*Bismillāh*' invariably before cooking and eating, as if, that food would not be lawful without it. At the most, the saying of '*Bismillāh*' at the time of eating and drinking anything has been classified as desirable or recommended ('*Mustaḥabb*' : acts the neglect of which is not punished by Allah, but the performance of which is rewarded). Contrary to this is the matter of animals, for it has been made necessary ('*Wājib*') that the name of Allah be invoked while slaughtering them - and if, anyone were to leave out the name of Allah at the time of the slaughter, the animal was declared to be carrion, and unlawful: What is the wisdom behind it?

A little deliberation makes it clear that the lives of all living beings are equal in a way. Therefore, the act of one life form whereby another life form is slaughtered and exterminated should, obviously, be not permissible. Now, for those it has been made permissible, it is a major reward from Allah. That is why the realization of the presence of this Divine blessing and the expression of gratitude for it has been made necessary at the time of slaughtering the animal. This is contrary to the case of things like grains and fruits - their very growth is for the sole purpose that human beings use them up to fulfill their needs. Therefore, the saying of '*Bismillāh*' only whenever used has been placed at the level of being desirable ('*Mustaḥabb*') - it has not been made necessary ('*Wājib*': a duty which, if not done, brings punishment).

There is yet another reason. There was a lingering custom from the days of *Jāhiliyyah* that disbelievers used to pronounce the names

of their idols while slaughtering animals. The Sharī'ah of Islam transformed this un-Islamic custom into a wonderful act of worship by making it necessary to invoke the name of Allah instead. This was functionally the most appropriate strategy that some correct name instead of the false one be proposed, otherwise it would have been difficult to wean people away from ongoing customs and habits.

The slaughter of the people of the Book

The second sentence of the Verse is: وَطَعَامُ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ حِلٌّ لَّكُمْ وَطَعَامُكُمْ حِلٌّ لَّهُمْ (and the food of the people of the Book is lawful for you, and your food is lawful for them ...). According to the consensus of *Ṣaḥābah* and *Tabi'in* (the Companions and their Successors), the word '*Ṭa'ām*' (food) at this place means 'properly slaughtered animals' (*Dhabīḥah*). This is what has been reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās, Abū ad-Dardā', Ibrāhīm, Qatādah, al-Suddī, Ḍhaḥḥāk and Mujāhid, may Allah be pleased with them all (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī and al-Jaṣṣāṣ) - because, in foods of all other kinds, the people of the Book and the idolators and all other disbelievers are just the same as bread, flour, lintels, beans, rice, fruits and similar other eatables need no slaughtering. For Muslims, eating that kind of food, of course, when procured by any lawful means, is permissible - and conversely, when they procure it from Muslims, it is lawful for them. Thus, the essence of the sentence is that the *Dhabīḥah* (properly slaughtered animal) of the People of the Book is lawful for Muslims and the *Dhabīḥah* (properly slaughtered animal) of Muslims is lawful for the People of the Book.

At this point, there are some issues which should be considered. First of all, who are the People of the Book in the terminology of the Qur'ān and Sunnah? What does 'Book' mean? And, is it also necessary that, in order to be regarded as the People of the Book, these people believe in and act according to their Book, correctly and faithfully? Here, it is obvious that the Book cannot be taken in its literal sense, that is, any written page. It can only mean a particular Book which has come from Allah. Therefore, there is a consensus of Muslim *Ummah* that 'Book' could only mean a particular Scripture about which there exists a certitude that, confirmed by the Holy Qur'an, it is the Book of Allah, for instance, the Torah, Evangile, Zabūr (Psalms) and other scriptures of of Sayyidnā Mūsā and Ibrāhīm. Therefore, peoples

and nations which believe in some book and claim for it the status of a Divine Revelation - and which does not stand proved through the certain sources of the Qur'ān and Sunnah - shall not be included under the term of the People of the Book, for example, the disbelievers of Makkah, the Magians or the Zoroastrians, the idol-worshipping Hindus, the Buddhists, Aryans, Sikhs and many others.

This tells us that the Jews and Christians who are believers of the Torah and the Evangile are included within the Qur'ānic terminology of The People of the Book. The Sābians, a third people, cannot be identified precisely. Those who think that they believed in the Psalms of David (Zabūr) are inclined towards including them too among The People of the Book. Those who were convinced that they had nothing to do with the Psalms, take them to be star-worshippers. They group them together with the idolators and Magians. However, the Jews and Christians are the ones who are called The People of the Book by universal agreement. Now, we can return to the gist of the Qur'ānic injunction, that is, the *Dhabīḥah* (slaughter) of Jews and Christians is *Ḥalāl* for Muslims and the *Dhabīḥah* of Muslims is *Ḥalāl* for them.

As for the need to first determine the basis of calling and understanding the Jews and Christians as the People of the Book, one may ask: Is it bound with the condition that they should genuinely believe in the original Torah and Evangile and act in accordance with these? Or, even those who follow the altered Torah and Evangile and those who ascribe to Sayyidnā 'Īsā and Sayyidah Maryam, may Allah bless them both, partnership in the Divinity of God, shall be deemed as included among the People of the Book? The answer is that it is quite evident from the many clarifications of the Qur'ān that for a people to be from 'The People of the Book', it is quite enough that they accept and believe in a Scripture and claim to follow it - irrespective of how much astray they may have gone while following it.

Those to whom the Holy Qur'ān gave the title of The People of the Book were also those about whom it said at several places that these people distort their Scriptures: يُحَرِّفُونَ الْكَلِمَ عَنْ مَّوَاضِعِهِ (5:13). It also said that the Jews took Sayyidnā 'Uzayr عليه السلام as the son of God and the Christians did the same to Sayyidnā Masīḥ عليه السلام: وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ عُزَيْرُ نِ ابْنُ اللّٰهِ وَقَالَتِ النَّصٰرَى الْمَسِيْحُ ابْنُ اللّٰهِ (9:30). When, despite what they were and what they

did, the Holy Qur'ān insisted on calling them The People of the Book, it becomes evident that - unless the Jews and Christians were to abandon Judaism and Christianity totally - they shall continue to be the People of the Book, no matter how involved in false beliefs of their religion and dark doings they may be.

Imām al-Jaṣṣāṣ reports in Aḥkām al-Qur'ān that during the *Khilāfah* of Sayyidnā 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, one of his governors wrote to him for advice. He said that there were some people in his area who recited the Torah and observed the Sabbath like the Jews but they did not believe in *Qiyāmah* (the Last Day). He wanted to know how he was supposed to deal with such people. Sayyidnā 'Umar wrote back telling him that they will be taken as a sect of The People of the Book after all.

Atheist Jews and Christians are not the People of the Book:

These days a very large number of people in Europe (and elsewhere) who are listed in the Census records as Jews and Christians do not really believe in the existence of God and, for that matter, do not subscribe to any institutionalized religion. They do not accept the Torah and Evangile as Scriptures, nor do they have faith in Sayyidnā Mūsā and 'Īsā (Moses and Jesus), may peace be upon them, as prophets or messengers of Allah. It is obvious that such people cannot be counted as included under the injunction governing the People of the Book simply because their names are listed as Jews and Christians in the Census records.

When Sayyidnā 'Alī رضی اللہ عنہ said that the slaughter of some Christians of Arabia is not *Ḥalal*, he gave a reason. He said that those people believe in nothing but drinking. His words as reported by Ibn al-Jauzī are being cited below:

روی ابن الجوزی بسنده عن علی رضی اللّه عنه قال لاتاکلوا من ذبائح
نصاری بنی تغلب فانهم لم یتمسکوا من النصرانیة بشئ الاشربهم الخمر
ورواه الشافعی بسند صحیح عنه (تفسیر مظهری ص ۳٤، ج ۳ مائده)

'Do not eat from the animals slaughtered by the Christians belonging to Banī Taghlib for they have taken nothing from the Christian faith except the drinking of wine (narrated by Al-Shafi'ī with sound authority - al-Tafsīr al-Maẓharī, p. 34, v. 3, al-Mā'idah)

Sayyidnā 'Alī رضی اللہ عنہ prohibited the slaughter of the Christians of Banī Taghlib because, according to his information, they were libertines, not Christians. However, the majority of *Ṣaḥābah* and *Tabi'īn* found out that these people too were like common Christians and had never rejected their Faith. Therefore, they ruled that the slaughter of these people was also lawful. Al-Qurṭubī says in his commentary:

> The majority of the Muslim jurists are of the opinion that the Dhabīḥa of Christians is lawful, whether from Banī Taghlib or from some other tribe or group. Similarly, the Dhabīḥa of every Jew is also lawful. (Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī)

In short, Christians about whom there is confirmed and certain information that they do not believe in the very existence of God or do not accept Sayyidnā Mūsā and 'Īsā علیہما السلام as prophets, will not be included under the injunction governing the People of the Book.

What does the 'food' of the People of the Book mean?

Literally, '*Ṭa'ām*' means what is eaten which, in the Arabic lexicon, includes all kinds of eatables. But, the majority of the scholars of the Muslim *Ummah* hold that *Ṭa'ām*' at this particular place refers to the meat of the animals slaughtered by the People of the Book because there is no distinction between the People of the Book and other disbelievers in eatables other than meat. Dry eatables like wheat, chick peas, rice and fruit are open commodities and are lawful when received from a disbeliever of any shade. Nobody differs about that. As for food which goes through human handling, the cautious practice is to avoid it since the purity (*Ṭahārah*) of utensils and hands used by the disbelievers is not reliable. It is better not to use it without the urgency of need. But, this is a situation in which the probability of impurity is the same among idolators and the People of the Book.

To sum up, it can be said that the only possible legal difference in the 'food' of the People of the Book and other disbelievers is in the meat they slaughter. Therefore, in the present verse, it is a consensus of the *Ummah* that the 'food of the People of the Book' means their properly slaughtered animal. In his famous Tafsīr, al-Qurṭubī writes:

والطعام اسم لمايؤكل والذبائح منه وهو ههنا خاص بالذبائح عند كثير من
اهل العلم بالتأويل واما ماحرم من طعامهم فليس بداخل فی عموم

الخطاب . (قرطبى ٧٧، ج ٦)

The word, 'Ta'ām' is used for whatever is eaten, included within which are slaughtered animals as well - and here it has been used for slaughtered animals particularly. According to the view of the majority of exegetes of the Qur'ān, whatever is unlawful from the 'food' of the People of the Book is not included in this generality of address (Qurṭubī p. 77, v. 6).

Later, al-Qurṭubī gives a detailed comment as follows:

لا خلاف بين العلماء ان مالايحتاج الى ذبح كالطعام الذى لامحاولة فيه كالفاكهة والبر. جائزا كله اذ لايضر فيه تملك احد والطعام الذى تقع فيه المحاولة على ضربين احدهما مافيه محاولة صنعة لاتعلق لها بالدين كخبزة الدقيق وعصره الزيت ونحوه . فهذا ان تجنب من الذمى فعلى وجه التقذر . والضرب الثانى التذكية الّتى ذكرنا انها هى اللتى تحتاج الى الدين والنية. فلما كان القياس ان لاتجوز ذبائحهم كما نقول انّهم لاصلاة لهم ولا عبادة مقبولة له رخص الله تعالى فى ذبائحهم على هذه الأمة واخرجها النص عن القياس على ماذكرنا من قول ابن عباس . (قرطبى سورة مائدة ص ٧٧، ج ٦)

There is no difference of view among scholars that it is lawful to eat what requires no slaughter such as fruit and wheat for its being owned (by a non-Muslim) does not bring any damage to the eatable. However, 'food' which requires effort has two kinds: First of these is the one in which one makes or produces something which has nothing to do with religion, such as, making bread from dough or pressing oil from olives - in this case, if a Muslim were to abstain from the outcome of the effort of a disbelieving citizen of an Islamic state (*Dhimmī*), that would be an abstention simply based on temperamental distaste. The second kind needs the purifying process of slaughtering an animal properly which, in turn, requires Faith and Intention. In that case, the normal assumption would have required that the act of slaughter performed by a disbeliever should have not been acceptable very much like his acts of worship and prayer. But, Allah Almighty made their slaughtered animals specially lawful for the Muslim Community. This situation has been excepted by the express provision of

the Holy Qur'ān from the general rule, as mentioned by Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه. (Qurṭubī - Sūrah al-Mā'idah, p. 77, v. 6)

The gist is that the 'food' of the People of the Book as it appears in this verse means - with the agreement of scholars of *Tafsīr* - food the lawfulness of which depends upon religion and belief: that is, the *Dhabīḥah* (the slaughter). Therefore, special treatment was meted out to the People of the Book in the case of this form of 'food' - because they too claim to believe in Books and Prophets sent by Allah, though their textual alterations invalidated their claim with the result that they got involved in disbelief and in ascribing partners to Allah. This was contrary to the position of disbelieving idolators who did not even claim to believe in any Scripture or Prophet or Messenger and the books or persons they believe in are neither books sent by Allah nor prophets or messengers as proved by any Word of Allah.

The Wisdom behind the Lawfulness of the slaughter of the People of the Book

The third question about the present verse is why the slaughter of the Jews and the Christians, as well as marrying their women, is made lawful for the Muslims, while all other non-Muslims have no such privilege. According to most of the Ṣaḥābah, Tābi'īn and other exegetes of the Holy Qur'ān, the answer to this question is very simple. Although the Jews and Christians had distorted their original religion by making many alterations therein, yet their faith regarding these two aspects matched with the Islamic injunctions. That is, they consider it necessary to invoke the name of Allah on their slaughter as an article of faith and take an animal to be impure and unlawful as carrion without that due process.

Similar is the case in marriage - the list of the women of prohibited degree (marriage with whom is not lawful) is the same in their religion as in Islam. Also, the way it is necessary in Islam that marriage be pronounced openly, and in the presence of two witnesses, so it is with them - even in their present religion, the same injunctions continue.

The great commentator, Ibn Kathīr has reported this very position taken by most *Ṣaḥābah* and *Tabi'īn*. His words are as follows:

(وطعام اهل الكتاب) قال ابن عباس وابو امامة ومجاهد وسعيد بن جبير

وعكرمه وعطاء والحسن ومكحول وابرهيم النخعي والسدى ومقاتل بن حيان يعنى ذبائحهم حلال للمسلمين لانهم يعتقدون تحريم الذبح لغير الله ولا يذكرون على ذبائحهم الا اسم الله وان اعتقدوافيه تعالى ماهو منزه عنه تعالى وتقدس . (ابن كثير مائدة ص ١٩، ج ٣)

Ibn 'Abbās, Abū Umāmah, Mujāhid, Sa'īd ibn Jubayr, 'Ikrimah, 'Aṭā', Ḥasan, Makhḥūl, Ibrāhīm al-Nakh'ii, Suddī and Muqātil ibn Ḥayyān have explained 'the food of the People of the Book' as their 'Dhabā'iḥ' (properly slaughtered animals). These are lawful for Muslims because they consider slaughtering animals for anyone other than Allah as unlawful and do not invoke any name other than that of Allah on animals they slaughter - even if they believe in things about Almighty Allah from which the great Creator is free and far above (Ibn Kathīr, Sūrah al-Mā'idah, p. 19, v. 3).

This statement of Ibn Kathīr tells us two things: One, that all Companions and their Successors mentioned above take the 'food of the People of the Book' to mean their properly slaughtered animals (*Dhabā'iḥ*) and that there is a consensus of the *Ummah* that they are lawful. And the second point made clear here is that the reason why the *Dḥabā'ih* of the People of the Book are lawful in the view of these revered authorities is that the issue of *Dhabīḥah* with the Jews and Christians still stays valid in accordance with the Sharī'ah of Islam despite the many alterations in their religion - as they too take an animal slaughtered in the name of someone other than Allah as unlawful and that they deem it necessary to invoke the name of Allah upon the animal being slaughtered. However, it is a different matter that they fell into the polytheistic belief in Trinity whereby they started equating Allah and Masīḥ son of Maryam as one and the same. The Holy Qur'ān alludes to this in the following words:

لَقَدْ كَفَرَ الَّذِيْنَ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الْمَسِيْحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ

Certainly, gone infidel are those who say, "God is the Masīḥ son of Maryam (Jesus son of Mary).

The outcome is that all verses of the Qur'ān concerning *Dhabīḥaḥ* - which appear in Sūrah al-Baqarah and Sūrah al-An'ām, and in which the animal slaughtered in a name other than that of Allah, as well as

the animal upon which the name of Allah was not invoked - declare both being equally unlawful. All these verses have permanent legal effect and must be acted upon for all times to come. The verse of Sūrah al-Mā'idah which declares the food of the People of the Book as lawful is also no different from the injunctions appearing in these verses because the very reason of making the food of the People of the Book lawful is no other than that their present religion also maintains that an animal slaughtered by invoking the name of someone other than Allah upon it, and the animal upon which the name of Allah was not invoked, are both unlawful. Even today, the current copies of the Torah and the Evangile do have injunctions of slaughter and marriage almost similar to those of the Qur'ān and Islam, details of which will appear a little later.

However, the possibility is there that some ignorant people act in a manner which goes against this injunction of their own religion - very similar to many ignorance-based customs which have found currency among uninformed sections of Muslim masses as well: but, these cannot be called the religion of Islam. Noticing this behaviour of the ignorant masses among the Christians of that time, the revered Tabi'īn (the successors to the Companions) took the position that Allah, when He made the food of the People of the Book lawful, already knew what they did with their slaughtering of animals. Some would invoke the name of Masīḥ or 'Uzayr upon it while others would invoke no name at all. So, we see that the verse of Sūrah al-Mā'idah, which declares the 'food' of the People of the Book as lawful, acts as a particularizer or a sort of abrogator of the verses of the Sūrahs al-Baqạrah and al-An'ām on the subject of the slaughter of animals, verses in which the slaughtering of animals in a name other than that of Allah or slaughtering them without invoking the name of Allah has been declared unlawful.

According to the view of great 'Ulamā', the respected Tābi'īn, who declared that an un-named slaughter of an animal, or of one upon whom a name other than that of Allah was invoked were lawful, also knew that the original religion of the People of the Book was not different from what Islam enjoined and it was only the ignorant section of their masses which made such errors. Despite this, these revered elders did not exclude the ignorant masses of the People of the Book

from the general rule governing the People of the Book. They upheld, in matters relating to the slaughter of animals and to marriage, the same injunction which governed their forefathers and the followers of the original religion, that is, the slaughter of animals by them and the marriage with their women was permissible.

In Aḥkām al-Qur'ān, Ibn al-'Arabī says that he asked his teacher, Abū al-Fatḥ al-Maqdisī about the Christians of his time who slaughtered an animal invoking a name other than that of Allah upon it - for example, they invoked the name of Masīḥ or 'Uzayr at the time of slaughter - how could their *Dhabīḥah* become lawful, he wondered. The reply given by Al-Maqdisī was:

هم من ابائهم وقد جعلهم الله تعالى تبعالمن كان قبلهم مع علمه بحالهم

(احكام ابن العربى ص ۲۲۹، جلد اول)

> The injunction that governs them is like that of their forefathers. This condition (of the People of the Book) was already within the knowledge of Almighty Allah, but, He has made them subordinate to their forefathers. (Aḥkām, Ibn al-'Arabi, p. 229, v. 1)

In recapitulation, it can be said that in the sight of the learned elders of the Muslim Community who have permitted the consumption of animals slaughtered by the People of the Book - those upon which the name of Allah was not invoked, rather, invoked thereupon was a name other than that of Allah - it was clear that these things are an integral part of the real faith of the People of the Book and are equally unlawful there. But, these learned elders allowed the erring masses also to be governed by the injunction which applies to the original People of the Book. It was for this reason that they allowed the animals slaughtered by the People of the Book to be taken as lawful. On the other side, the majority of the Ṣaḥābah, Tabi'īn and *Mujtahid* Imāms noticed that the animals slaughtered by the misled masses among the People of the Book, whether in a name other than that of Allah or without the name of Allah, were after all against the Islamic injunction but, in addition to that, the practice was against the current faith of the Christians themselves. Therefore, what they do should not affect the standing injunctions. So, they gave the verdict that the animals slaughtered by such people are not included under 'the food of the People of the

Book' and, as such, there is no reason to support its lawfulness. Also, the act of going by the saying that their own wrong doing had caused particularization or abrogation in the verses of the Qur'ān is not correct in any manner whatsoever.

Therefore, all leading authorities in Tafsīr - Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Kathīr, Abū Ḥayyān and others - are unanimous in holding that there was no abrogation (*Naskh*) in the verses of Sūrah al-Baqarah and Sūrah al-An'ām. This is also the favoured position of the majority of Ṣaḥābah and Tabi'īn as cited earlier with reference to Ibn Kathīr and as mentioned in Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ in the following words:

وذهب الى ان الكتابى اذا لم يذكر الله على الذبيحة وذكر غير الله لم توكل وبه قال ابو الدرداء وعبادة بن الصامت وجماعة من الصحابة وبه قال ابو حنيفة وابو يوسف ومحمد وزفر و مالك وكره النخعى والثورى اكل ماذبح واهل به لغير الله (البحر المحيط ص ٤٣١، ج ٤)

And they believe: If a *Kitābī* (of the People of the Book) were to omit the name of Allah while slaughtering an animal, or were to invoke upon it a name other than that of Allah, it is not permissible to eat it. And this is the saying of Abū ad-Dardā', 'Ubādah ibn Ṣāmit and a group of the Ṣaḥābah. And this is also the belief of Abū Ḥanīfah, Abū Yūsuf, Muḥammad, Ẓafar and Mālik. However, An-Nakh'iī and Ath-Thawrī rule the eating of it as *Makrūh* (reprehensible). (Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, p. 431,v.5)

The drive of comments made this far is to establish that the Ṣaḥābah, the Tabi'īn and the pious elders of the *Ummah* had no difference of opinion among them about the understanding that during the period of the revelation of the Qur'ān the original faith of the People of the Book also ruled that an animal, upon which a name other than that of Allah was invoked, or was omitted deliberately, was unlawful. The same was the case with the lawfulness and unlawfulness of marriage - the original code of the People of the Book right upto the present times is in accord with the Sharī'ah of Islam in most elements. Whatever was found to be contrary with the People of the Book was simply a matter of errors made by their uninformed masses. This is not their faith.

Existing copies of the Torah and Evangile available world-wide in

many languages also confirm this view. Please refer to the Old Testament which is equally acceptable to contemporary Jews and Christians. Given below are injunctions about slaughtered animals:

1. "And the fat of the beast that dieth of itself, and the fat of that which is torn with beasts, may be used in any other use: but ye shall in no wise eat of it." (Leviticus 7:24)

2. "Notwithstanding thou mayest kill and eat flesh in all thy gates, whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, according to the blessing of the LORD thy God which He hath given thee: the unlcean and the clean may eat thereof, as of the roebuck, and as of the hart." (Deuteronomy 12:15)

3. "That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication." (Acts 15:29)

4. "But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils." (I Corinthians 10:20, 21)

5. "We have written and concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication." (Acts 21:25)

These statements of the Torah and Evangile are from what is widely circulated by contemporary Bible Societies in which, despite hundreds of alterations and revisions, these things have lingered on and are almost similar to the injunctions of the Holy Qur'ān. For instance, Verse 3 of Sūrah al-Mā'idah says:

حُرِّمَتْ عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَيْتَةُ وَالدَّمُ وَلَحْمُ الْخِنْزِيرِ وَمَآ أُهِلَّ لِغَيْرِ اللّٰهِ بِهِ وَالْمُنْخَنِقَةُ وَالْمَوْقُوذَةُ وَالْمُتَرَدِّيَةُ وَالنَّطِيحَةُ وَمَآ أَكَلَ السَّبُعُ إِلَّا مَاذَكَّيْتُمْ وَمَا ذُبِحَ عَلَى النُّصُبِ (المائدة ٣)

Prohibited for you are: the carrion, the blood, the flesh of swine, and what has been invoked upon with (a name) other than that of Allah, and the animals dead by strangulation, dead by blow, dead by a fall, dead by goring, and that which a beast has eaten - unless you have properly slaughtered it - and that which has been slaughtered before the idols ...

This verse has declared that the carrion, the blood, the flesh of swine, and what has been invoked upon with (a name) other than that of Allah, and animals dead by strangulation, dead by blow, dead by a fall, dead by goring, and that which has been torn by a beast are all unlawful. In the statements of the Torah and Evangile cited above, all these have also been ruled as unlawful, except the 'flesh of the swine.' Though, the details of the animals dead by blow or dead by a fall or dead by goring have not been specifically mentioned there, but they (almost all) are included under the injunction for those naturally dead (carrion) or dead by strangulation.

Similarly, the Holy Qur'an has stressed upon the invoking of the name of Allah when slaughtering an animal: فَكُلُوا مِمَّا ذُكِرَ اسْمُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْهِ (Eat out of what the name of Allah has been recited upon - 5:4) and it has prohibited an animal upon which the name of Allah has not been recited: وَلَا تَأْكُلُوا مِمَّا لَمْ يُذْكَرِ اسْمُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْهِ (Do not eat out of what the name of Allah has not been recited upon - 6:121). The quotation No. 2 from the Bible places a similar stress on slaughtering an animal by invoking the name of Allah.

So it is with most matters relating to marriage as well where the faith of the People of the Book corresponds to the Shari'ah of Islam. Please see Leviticus (6-19) which gives a long list of prohibitions most of them being what the Holy Qur'an has declared to be unlawful. So much so that it clearly states the unlawfulness of combining two sisters جمع بين الاختين in the bond of marriage at the same time and the unlawfulness of intercourse during menstruation as well. In addition to that, the Bible also says that marriage with idolators and disbelievers is not permissible. The words of the present Torah are:

> "Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give upto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son." (Deuteronomy 7:3)

The Rationale of the Lawfulness of Animals Slaughtered by Jews and Christians: A Gist

The only reason why the animals slaughtered by the People of the Book and marriage with their women has been made lawful and the animals slaughtered by other disbelievers and marriage with their women has been made unlawful by the Qur'an is that in both these

cases the true and original faith of the People of the Book is in accord with the Law of Islam even today. Anything contrary to that found among their masses is no more than an ignorant practice - it has nothing to do with their original religion. Therefore, the majority of the Ṣaḥābah, the Tābi'īn and the *Mujtahid* Imāms maintain that there is no contradiction, or abrogation, or particularization in all the verses of Sūrah al-Baqarah and Sūrah al-An'ām. No doubt, some scholars of Tābi'īn have taken this ignorant practice to be under the rules governing the People of the Book (holding that their slaughter, even against the injunctions of their original religion, is permissible), and have taken the view that verses of Sūrah Al-An'ām and Sūrah Al-Baqarah are abrogated or qualified by the present verse. But this view of theirs is based on the saying of the Christians: إِنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ (Allah is Jesus son of Mary - 5:72). It means that even if they were to say the name of Allah, they would invariably be alluding to Jesus the son of Mary. Therefore, when they slaughter an animal, the saying of the name of Allah and saying the name of Jesus upon it becomes equal. This was the ground on which the revered group of Tabi'īn had permitted the use of animals slaughtered by the People of the Book. Ibn al-'Arabī has elaborated this aspect of the subject in his Aḥkām al-Qur'ān (Ibn al-'Arabi, Aḥkām, p. 229, v. 1).

The Most Sound and Preferred View

But the stand taken on this question did not find acceptance with the learned majority of the Muslim *Ummah* as mentioned earlier with citation from Ibn Kathīr and Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ while Tafsīr Maẓharī, after reporting various positions on the subject, concludes as follows:

والصحيح المختار عندنا هوالقول الاول. يعنى ذبائح اهل الكتاب تاركا للتسميه عامداً اوعلى غير اسم الله تعالى لايوكل ان علم ذالك يقيناً او كان غالب حالهم ذلك وهو محمل النهى عن اكل ذبائح نصارى العرب ومحمل قول على رضى الله عنه لاتاكلوا من ذبائح نصارى بنى تغلب فانهم لم يتمسكوا من النصرانية بشئ الابشربهم الخمر. فلعل عليا علم من حالهم انهم لايسمون الله عند الذبح اويذبحون على غير اسم الله ، هكذا حكم نصارى العجم ان كان عادتهم الذبح على غير اسم الله تعالى غالبًا لايوكل ذبيحتهم ولاشك ان النصارى فى هذا الزمان لايذبحون بل

بالوقذ غالبًا فلا يحل طعامهم . (تفسير مظهری ص ۳۹ ج ۳)

And the most sound and preferred view with us is the very first one, that is, the animals slaughtered by the People of the Book on which the recitation of the name of Allah has been left out intentionally, or they have been slaughtered in a name other than that of Allah, are not lawful - if it becomes certain that the name of Allah was not recited upon them, or a name other than that of Allah was taken, or this becomes the common habit of the People of the Book. And elders who have prohibited the eating of animals slaughtered by the Christians of Arabia had this very objective behind their saying. Similarly, when Sayyidnā 'Alī said that eating from the animals slaughtered by the Christians of Banī Taghlib was not permissible because they took nothing from the religion of Christianity but the drinking of wine, the justification of his saying so lies in the likelihood of his having the proof that people from the tribe of Banī Taghlib do not invoke the name of Allah upon animals they slaughter, or else, they invoke a name other than that of Allah. The same injunction holds good for Christians belonging to areas outside the Arabian Peninsula, that is, *if it becomes a matter of habit with them* that they would slaughter an animal in a name other than that of Allah, then, it is not permissible to eat from what they slaughter. As for the contemporary Christians, they just do not 'slaughter' to begin with - instead, they generally kill the animal by stunning or shocking it. Therefore, their Dhabīḥah is not lawful. (Tafsīr Maẓharī, p.37, v. 3)

Muftī 'Abduh of Egypt and His Error of Judgement

Details of this debated issue have been reported here at some length because, at this point, the well-known *'Ālim* of Egypt, Muftī 'Abduh has made a grave error of judgement about which there is no doubt that it is wrong and squarely against the Qur'ān and Sunnah and the consensus of the Muslim *Ummah*. In his Tafsīr Al-Manār, the learned author has made a twofold mistake at this juncture.

First, he has inflated the sense of the People of the Book to the limit that it has come to include the disbelievers, the Magians, the Hindus, the Sikhs and others, within it, making it so general that the very differentiation between disbelievers, the People of the Book and those

other than the People of the Book which spreads out all over the Holy Qur'ān turns out, God forbid, to be without meaning and substance.

The second error, still greater, was that he expanded the sense of 'the Food of the People of the Book' to accomodate every 'food' of the People of the Book, and which he ruled as lawful without any condition - whether they slaughter the animal, or not; and whether they invoke the name of Allah upon it, or not. Taking the circumstances and methods of their eating an animal as the criterion, he made it all *Ḥalāl* (lawful) for the Muslims.

When this *Fatwā* of his was published in Egypt, the religious scholars of Egypt itself, and those all around the whole world, lost no time in rejecting it as erroneous. Articles and treatises were written. Public demands were universally made that Mufti 'Abduh should be removed from his Office of *Iftā*'. On the other side, the disciples of the learned Muftī along with some Westophiles joined in with counter debates because this *Fatwā* was a panacea of their problems. It opened a floodgate through which Westernized people could feel comfortable with eating every 'food' which came from the Jews and Christians of Europe, even from the atheists, as *Ḥalāl* for them.

It is a great miracle of Islam that the hearts of Muslims at large are never satisfied with an act against the Sharī'ah, no matter how great was the *'Ālim* or religious scholar who committed it. This happened here too. Muslims all over the world took a stand against this error. The issue, however, did subside at that time. But, the players of the issue still exist as modern deviators or secularists who would love to prepare a new edition of Islam in which every European-oriented absurdity could be accomodated. Claiming to address the material desires of the younger generation, they have revived the same debate in the name of modernity and recension with the airs of personal research. Unfortunately, they are repeating Muftī 'Abduh. It was for this reason that this debate was taken up in some details. *Alḥamdulillah*, what was necessary has been said here. Full details, if needed, may be seen in my treatise, '*Islāmī Dhabīḥah*'.

The lawfulness of the 'food' of the Muslims for the People of the Book: What does it mean?

There is another issue here which needs to be resolved. The Qur'ān

says that the 'food' of the People of the Book is lawful for Muslims. This is obvious. But, there is the other part of the injunction, that is, the 'food' of the Muslims is lawful for the People of the Book - what does that mean? The People of the Book who just do not believe in what the Qur'ān says would hardly care for what is lawful, or unlawful. What, then, is the use of saying it?

In Tafsīr Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ and elsewhere, it has been pointed out that this injunction too is intended for Muslims themselves whereby they are being told that the animals slaughtered by them are lawful for the People of the Book. Therefore, if they were to feed a non-Muslim from the People of the Book out of an animal slaughtered by them, it would be no act of sin. In other words, they can give to a *Kitābī* (one of the People of the Book) a part of the animal they have sacrificed. Had their *Dhabīḥa* been unlawful for the People of the Book, it would have not been permissible for Muslims to have them eat it. Thus, this injunction which apparently seems to relate to the People of the Book is, in reality, addressed to Muslims themselves.

Yet another basis for such intent appears in Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī on the authority of al-Suddī. It says that some animals, or some parts thereof, were made unlawful in the religion of Jews and Christians belonging to the People of the Book, as punishment. Therefore, that animal, or its parts, are obviously not included in the 'food' of the People of the Book. But, this sentence of the verse makes it quite clear that an animal lawful for Muslims - though not accepted as lawful by the People of the Book - shall remain lawful for Muslims, if it comes to them after having been slaughtered by the People of the Book. A hint towards it has been made in the words: وَطَعَامُكُمْ حِلٌّ لَّهُمْ (and your food has been made lawful for them) appearing in the verse. So, looking at the meaning from this angle as well, the connection of the sentence with Muslims becomes clear once again.

At this point, the author of Tafsīr al-Maẓharī adds that the sentence has actually spelled out the difference that exists between two matters of importance - that of animals slaughtered and marriages made. There is a difference here. Animals slaughtered are lawful both ways - the *Dhabīḥah* of the People of the Book for Muslims and the *Dhabīḥah* of Muslims for the People of the Book. But, the matter

of the marriage of women does not work in that manner for the women from the People of the Book are lawful for Muslims while Muslim women are not lawful for the People of the Book.

Dhabīḥah of Apostates

The third problem relates to a Muslim who, God forbid, becomes a Jew or Christian. He will not be included under the definition of the People of the Book - instead, he is a *Murtadd* or apostate. An animal slaughtered by him is unlawful in accordance with the consensus of the Muslim *Ummah*. Similarly, a Muslim who has become a *Murtadd* because of rejecting any of the essentials and absolute beliefs of Islam - even though, he claims to believe in the Qur'ān and the *Rasūl* of Allah ﷺ - will also be a *Murtadd*. An animal slaughtered by him will not be lawful. Simply reading the Qur'ān or claiming to be acting in accordance with it will not entitle him to be counted as one of the People of the Book. However, if someone from another religion or community were to abandon his religion or community and become a Jew or Christian, he or she would be included under the category of the People of the Book - and an animal slaughtered by him or her would be considered lawful.

Marriage : Major Points of Guidance for Muslims

The third sentence of this verse reads as follows:

وَالْمُحْصَنٰتُ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنٰتِ وَالْمُحْصَنٰتُ مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ اِذَآ اٰتَيْتُمُوْهُنَّ اُجُوْرَهُنَّ مُحْصِنِيْنَ غَيْرَ مُسٰفِحِيْنَ وَلَامُتَّخِذِيْٓ اَخْدَانٍ

... and [it is lawful for you to marry] good women from among believers, and [also] good women from among those given the Books before you, provided you give them their dowers, binding yourself in marriage, not going for lust, nor having paramours."

Here, the word "*al-Muḥṣanāt*" appears at both places (translated as 'good women') which, according to the Arabic usage, could have two meanings: One, free women as opposed to bondwomen; two, chaste women. Lexically, both meanings can be taken at this place.

Therefore, out of the exegetes, Mujāhid has taken the sense of free women while explaining "*al-Muḥṣanāt*" which would mean that free women from among the People of the Book are lawful for Muslims -

bondwomen are not. (Maẓharī)

But, in the sight of the majority of the learned Ṣaḥābah and Tābi'īn, "*al-Muḥṣanāt*" at this place means chaste women and the verse means that the way marriage with chaste Muslim women is lawful, so too is the marriage with chaste women from among the People of the Book. (Aḥkām al-Qur'ān, Jaṣṣāṣ & Maẓharī)

However, there is a consensus of the majority of authentic scholars that the restriction of 'chaste women' here does not mean that the very marriage with non-chaste women is unlawful. In fact, this restriction serves a purpose. It provides motivation to take a better and more appropriate course in marriage (Maẓharī & others). One can marry a Muslim woman or a woman from among the People of the Book, both are lawful; but one should never lose sight of the approach that marriage when entered into should be with a chaste woman. Joining up with sinning women in the bond of marriage is not what a good Muslim would elect to do. The truth is that marrying a vice-prone and unreliable woman amounts to ruining one's life in this world and in the Hereafter both. This should be avoided.[1] So, the restriction of 'the People of the Book' in this verse proves that marrying women from among non-Muslims, who are not included under the definition of 'the People of the Book,' is not lawful, and on this there is a consensus of the Muslim *Ummah*.

Marriage with other Non-Muslim Women

As said earlier, out of all groups of non-Muslims in this period of time, the Jews and the Christians are the only two religious communities which can be counted as 'The People of the Book.' None of the rest belonging to present religions are included within 'The People of the Book.' This general rule applies to fire-worshipping Magians, idol-worshipping Hindus, or Sikhs or Aryans or Buddhists and to others similar to them. This is so because the term, The People of the Book, refers only to those who profess to believe in a Book, the veracity of which as Heavenly Scripture and Divine Revelation stands proved on the basis of definite texts of the Qur'ān and Sunnah. Obviously, these

1. However, if an unchaste woman repents from her life truly, she will be included in 'good women' and marrying her is not only permissible, but also a commendable act (Editor).

are no others but the Torah and Evangile, the followers of which still exist in this world and in this time. As for the Zabūr (The Book of Psalms) and the *Ṣuḥūf* (Scriptures; plural of *Ṣaḥīfah*) of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, they are neither preserved nor have people who claim to follow them. In so far as 'sacred books' of other religions like the Vedas, the Granth, the Book of Zartusht and similar others are concerned, the proof of their being some Scripture or Revelation on valid religious grounds does not exist. The probability that the teaching of Buddha or the books mentioned above could be transformed corollaries of Zabūr or the *Ṣuḥūf* of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام are no more than abstract assumptions not based on solid proof. Thus, with the full consensus of the Muslim *Ummah*, it stands established that, out of different faiths present in this age, the women from among the Jews and Christians are the only ones Muslims can marry lawfully. Marriage with a woman from any group or faith other than the two - unless she becomes a Muslim - is unlawful.

The verse of the Holy Qur'ān: وَلَا تَنْكِحُوا الْمُشْرِكٰتِ حَتّٰى يُؤْمِنَّ (2:221) is there to confirm this implication. It means: 'And do not marry the *Mushrik* women unless they come to believe' - and all nations and peoples other than The People of The Book are included under the identity of "*al-Mushrikāt*" (disbelieving women).

So, here we have two verses of the Qur'ān which bring this subject in a clear focus. One of them, cited immediately above, says that marriage with disbelieving women is not lawful unless they become believing Muslims. The second verse is from Sūrah al-Mā'idah, the one we are talking about right now. This tells us that marriage with women from among the People of the Book is lawful.

Therefore, the learned among the Ṣaḥābah and the Tābi'īn determined the unambiguous sense of the two verses by saying that the marriage of a non-Muslim woman with a Muslim man should just not take place as a matter of principle. But, this verse of Sūrah al-Mā'idah has exempted the women of The People of the Book from this generality. As such, the marriage of a Muslim with a woman from any community other than that of the Jews and Christians will not be valid unless she becomes a Muslim.

The Problem in Marrying Jewish and Christian Women

As for marrying Jewish and Christian women, that is, women from among the People of the Book, even this is not permissible in the sight of some noble Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

This happens to be the understanding of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ. When someone asked him about it, he would say: What Allah Almighty says in the Holy Qur'ān is clear: 'Do not marry disbelieving women until they become Muslims' - and I am not aware of a greater *Shirk* (associating others in the Divinity of Allah) than that of a person who openly declares Jesus son of Mary or some other created servant of Allah as her *Rabb*, Lord or God. (Aḥkām al-Qur'ān, Jaṣṣāṣ)

There was an occasion when Maimūn ibn Mihrān asked Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ: 'We live in a country with a larger population of The People of the Book. Can we marry their women and eat from the animals they slaughter?' In his reply, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ simply recited these two verses, firstly the one which prohibits marriage with disbelieving women, and then, this very verse of Sūrah al-Mā'idah which declares the lawfulness of marriage with women from The People of the Book.

Maimūn ibn Mihrān said: ' I too read these two verses in the Qur'ān and I know them. But, my question is: In view of these two, what religious ruling do I follow? In reply to this question, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ once again recited these very two verses before him, and said nothing on his own. This has been interpreted by the 'Ulamā of the *Ummah* that Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar was not at peace with himself even in this matter of marriage being lawful with women from among the People of the Book.

Though, in the view of the majority of the Ṣaḥābah and the Tābi'īn, marriage with women from among the People of the Book is lawful in itself as in the Qur'ān, but marrying them is not free of the many consequential disorders for one's own person, his children, rather for the whole Muslim Community, which would necessarily emerge as borne by experience. This was the basis on which they too considered marriage with women from among the People of the Book as *Makrūh* (reprehensible).

Following a narration from Shaqīq ibn Salmah, al-Jaṣṣāṣ reports in Aḥkām al-Qur'ān: When Sayyidnā Ḥudhayfah ibn Yamān رضی اللہ عنہ came to Madā'in, he married a Jewish woman there. When Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ found out about it, he wrote a letter to him asking him to divorce the woman. Sayyidnā Ḥudhayfah رضی اللہ عنہ wrote back: ' Is she unlawful for me?' Then, in reply, Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ wrote: ' I am not saying that she is unlawful, but women from these people do not generally have chastity, therefore, I apprehend lest immodesty finds entry into your homes through this channel.' And Imām Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan رحمۃ اللہ علیہ has, in *Kitāb al-Āthār*, reported this event from Imām Abū Ḥanīfah. He says when Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ wrote another letter to Sayyidnā Ḥudhayfah رضی اللہ عنہ, his words were:

اعزم عليك ان لا تضع كتابى حتى تخلى سبيلها فانى اخاف ان يقتديك المسلمون فيختاروا النساء اهل الذمة لجمالهن وكفى بذلك فتنة لنساء المسلمين . (كتاب الآثار ص ١٥٦)

I hereby put you on oath that you would, before you put down this letter from your hands, divorce and release her, because I fear other Muslims start following you and begin choosing women from among the People of the Book because of their beauty, (bypassing Muslim women in the process). What greater trial could there be for Muslim women? (Kitāb al-Āthār, p. 156)

After reporting this event, Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan رحمۃ اللہ علیہ has said that this is the view the Ḥanafī jurists take when they do not actually rule such marriage as unlawful but, because of other disorders and drawbacks, do take it to be *Makrūh* (reprehensible). And 'Allamāh Ibn Humām has reported in Fatḥ al-Qadīr that an event similar to that of Sayyidnā Ḥudhayfah also came to pass with Talḥah and Ka'b ibn Mālik - they married women from The People of the Book on the basis of the verse in Sūrah al-Mā'idah. When Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ heard about it, he became very angry and ordered them to divorce these women (Maẓharī).

As for the age and time of Sayyidnā 'Umar al-Fārūq, the great *Khalīfah* of Islam, may Allah be pleased with him, it was the best of ages. At that time, any probability, that a Jewish or Christian woman would succeed in hatching some conspiracy against Islam and Muslims by

entering into the life of a Muslim as his wife, was simply unimaginable. The only danger that lurked before them during those days was to the moral insulation of their families and homes which could be adversely affected by taking in women of doubtful integrity as wives, or that people start preferring them because of their beauty as a result of which Muslim women would be thrown in deep trouble. But, here is the Fārūqian farsightedness which keeps track of dangling disharmonies in Muslim lives and compels people of such stature to divorce the women they had taken as wives. Had they been anywhere closer to the current scenario, just imagine the kind and extent of his reaction! The problem with these people is that of dubious identity. Such people would not mind if their names are registered in the census records as Jewish or Christian, but there are many among them who take Judaism or Christianity to be a nuisance in their personal view of things and ideas. They do not believe in the Torah or the Evangile, nor do they attest to the prophethood of Moses and Jesus, may peace be upon them. In matters of belief, they are totally secular, even atheistic. That they let themselves be called Jews and Christians is no more than some communal, societal or formal convenience.

It is obvious that women from people of such background are not lawful for a Muslim under any circumstances. And even if they happen to adhere to their religion, still, accomodating them in the midst of a Muslim family amounts to bringing material and spiritual ruination on it. The conspiracies mounted against Islam and Muslims through this inroad during the later period, and which are not uncommon even today, have a tragic lesson of their own. A woman succeeding as a terminator of Muslim national power is no fiction. Such eventuality is within the realm of possibility. How can any sensible person go, irrespective of the considerations of the lawful and unlawful, even close to taking such a step?

Conclusion

According to the Qur'ān and Sunnah, and the conduct of the noble *Ṣaḥābah* of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, it is incumbent upon Muslims that they should totally abstain from marrying contemporary *Kitābī* (Jewish and Christian) women. Towards the end of the verse, instructions have also been given that should anyone has to have a

woman from among the People of the Book, then, this should be done by entering into a proper marriage contract, by keeping the woman as wife and by paying dower and fulfilling other rights. Keeping them as paramours or mistresses or indulging in open fornication with them is forbidden (*Ḥarām*).

Verses 6 - 7

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ اٰمَنُوٓا إِذَا قُمْتُمْ إِلَى الصَّلٰوةِ فَاغْسِلُوا وُجُوهَكُمْ
وَأَيْدِيَكُمْ إِلَى الْمَرَافِقِ وَامْسَحُوا بِرُءُوسِكُمْ وَأَرْجُلَكُمْ إِلَى
الْكَعْبَيْنِ ط وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ جُنُبًا فَاطَّهَّرُوا ط وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ مَّرْضٰٓى أَوْ عَلٰى
سَفَرٍ أَوْ جَآءَ أَحَدٌ مِّنْكُمْ مِّنَ الْغَآئِطِ أَوْ لٰمَسْتُمُ النِّسَآءَ فَلَمْ تَجِدُوا
مَآءً فَتَيَمَّمُوا صَعِيدًا طَيِّبًا فَامْسَحُوا بِوُجُوهِكُمْ وَأَيْدِيكُمْ
مِّنْهُ ط مَا يُرِيدُ اللّٰهُ لِيَجْعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِّنْ حَرَجٍ وَّلٰكِنْ يُّرِيدُ
لِيُطَهِّرَكُمْ وَلِيُتِمَّ نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٦﴾ وَاذْكُرُوا
نِعْمَةَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَمِيثَاقَهُ الَّذِي وَاثَقَكُمْ بِهٖ لا إِذْ قُلْتُمْ سَمِعْنَا
وَأَطَعْنَا وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ ط إِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ ﴿٧﴾

O those who believe, when you rise for Ṣalāh, wash your faces and your hands upto the elbows, and make *Masḥ*[1] of your heads and (wash) your feet upto the ankles. And if you are in a state of major impurity [2], cleanse yourselves well (by taking bath). And if you are sick, or in travel or one of you has come after easing himself, or you have touched women, and you find no water, then, go for some clean dust and wipe your faces and hands with it. Allah does not like to impose a problem on you; He, rather likes to cleanse you and to complete his favour upon you, so that you may be grateful. [6] **And remember Allah's favour upon you and His covenant that He has taken from you when you said, "We have listened and obeyed." And fear Allah. Allah is all-aware of what lies in the hearts.** [7]

1. *Masḥ*: Passing wet hands over something.
2. *Janābah*: Major Impurity: See note under 4:43, Vol. II.

Some injunctions of the Sharī'ah concerning the conduct of worldly life, choices in marriage and food appeared in the previous verses. This verse mentions some injunctions relating to *'Ibādāt*, acts of worship like *Ṣalāh, Wuḍū, Masḥ, Tayammum, Ghusl* and *Ṭahārah.*

Verses 8 - 10

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا كُوْنُوْا قَوّٰمِيْنَ لِلّٰهِ شُهَدَآءَ بِالْقِسْطِ ۡ وَلَا
يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَاٰنُ قَوْمٍ عَلٰٓى اَلَّا تَعْدِلُوْا ؕ اِعْدِلُوْا ۟ هُوَ اَقْرَبُ
لِلتَّقْوٰى ۡ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ خَبِيْرٌۢ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۸﴾ وَعَدَ اللّٰهُ
الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ لَهُمْ مَّغْفِرَةٌ وَّاَجْرٌ عَظِيْمٌ ﴿۹﴾
وَالَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَكَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَآ اُولٰٓئِكَ اَصْحٰبُ الْجَحِيْمِ ﴿۱۰﴾

O those who believe, be steadfast for Allah as witnesses for justice. And malice against a people should not bid you to not doing justice. Do justice. That is nearer to Taqwā. And fear Allah. Surely, Allah is all-aware of what you do. [8] **Allah has promised those who believe and do good deeds: For them there is forgiveness and a great reward.** [9] **And those who disbelieve and deny Our signs - they are the people of the Fire.** [10]

Commentary

The subject of the first of the three verses given above has appeared earlier in Sūrah al-Nisā' in almost the same words. The only difference is that the arrangement of words there (4:135) was: كُوْنُوْا قَوّٰمِيْنَ بِالْقِسْطِ شُهَدَآءَ لِلّٰهِ while, here (5:8), it has been said: كُوْنُوْا قَوّٰمِيْنَ لِلّٰهِ شُهَدَآءَ بِالْقِسْطِ (be steadfast for Allah as witnesses for justice). A delicate reason for the alternation in words appearing earlier and later in these two verses has been given by Abū Ḥayyān in his Tafsīr Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ a gist of which is given below.

There are usually two causes which hold people back from doing justice and then make them do the unjust and the oppressive. The first one is taking the side of your own self, or that of your friends and relatives. Enmity with someone is the other cause. The verse in Sūrah al-Nisā' is addressing itself to the first subject while this verse of Sūrah al-Mā'idah is oriented to the other.

Therefore, the words which follow this sentence in Sūrah Al-Nisā' are: وَلَوْ عَلٰٓى اَنْفُسِكُمْ اَوِ الْوَالِدَيْنِ وَ الْاَقْرَبِيْنَ that is, 'even though against yourselves or the parents, and the kinsfolk ...' After the sentence of Sūrah al-Mā'idah cited above, the words which follow in this verse are: وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَاٰنُ قَوْمٍ عَلٰٓى اَلَّا تَعْدِلُوْا that is, ' And malice against a people should not bid you to not doing justice ...' So, the essential message of this verse of Sūrah al-Nisā' is: When it comes to doing justice, let nothing affect you, neither your own self, nor your parents, nor your relatives. If the demand of justice happens to be against them, stay with nothing but justice. The essence of this verse from Sūrah al-Mā'idah is that hostility against an enemy should not affect your sense of justice to the limit that you start working against the demands of justice to harm your enemy.

This is the reason why, by placing '*al-qisṭ*' (justice) first in the verse of the Sūrah al-Nisā', it was said: كُوْنُوْا قَوّٰمِيْنَ بِالْقِسْطِ شُهَدَآءَ لِلّٰهِ (... be upholders of justice, witnesses for Allah ...) and, by placing '*lillāh*' (for Allah) first in the verse of Sūrah al-Mā'idah, it was said: كُوْنُوْا قَوّٰمِيْنَ لِلّٰهِ شُهَدَآءَ بِالْقِسْطِ (... be steadfast for Allah as witnesses for justice ...) - though, both these modes serve the same purpose end-wise. It is obvious that a person who stands for justice will stand for none but Allah, and one who stands for none but Allah will do nothing but justice. But, when it comes to protecting personal interest or favouring friends and relatives, one may be tempted to justify the thought that the act of caring for relationships here is also for Allah. Therefore, by bringing in the word, '*al-qisṭ*' (justice) first at that point, the message given was that the concession which is contrary to justice cannot be for Allah. And in Sūrah al-Mā'idah, where the purpose was to enjoin justice with enemies, the word '*lillāh*' (for Allah) was brought in first, which took away the chances of sentimental attachments overpowering human nature. The point is, when you stand for Allah, the inevitable outcome should be an equal justice with enemies as well.

In short, both these verses of Sūrah Al-Nisā' and Sūrah al-Mā'idah carry two elements of guidance. The first commands full adherence to justice whether dealing with friends or foes. No weakness should be shown on account of any relationship, friendly or hostile. The second instruction given in these two verses is that no one should avoid recording true evidence and stating what is the truth in honesty with

Allah, so that the decision makers face no difficulty in arriving at the true, sound and just decision.

The Holy Qur'ān has stressed upon this subject in several verses with various angles telling people not to drag their feet and be tardy in appearing as true witnesses. Verse 2:283 from Sūrah Al-Baqarah carries a very clear command: وَلَا تَكْتُمُوا الشَّهَادَةَ وَمَنْ يَكْتُمْهَا فَإِنَّهُ آثِمٌ قَلْبُهُ (And do not conceal the testimony. And whoever conceals it, his heart is, surely, a sinner) which proves that to give a true evidence is an obligation and its concealment, a grave sin.

But, the Holy Qur'ān has also kept in sight the impediments to the fulfillment of such duty. The central obstacle is that a witness is made to appear in the courts repeatedly where he is subjected to absurd cross-examinations aimed at breaking the witness and invalidating his testimony. The result is that anyone marked to be a witness is actually marked out for trouble. Kept away from what he does for living, he becomes a target of all sorts of inconveniences just for nothing. Therefore, when the Holy Qur'ān says that the giving of true evidence is necessary (*Wājib*), it also says: وَلَا يُضَآرَّ كَاتِبٌ وَّلَا شَهِيدٌ (And neither scribe nor witness should be made to suffer - 2:282).

A carefully investigated view of the courts and cases today will reveal that spot witnesses and true witnesses are almost extinct. Any sensible person who happens to see something unusual taking place somewhere would instinctively run away from there lest he gets grabbed as a witness. The police fills out its case report with made-up witnesses the result of which could hardly be any different than what is being observed day in and day out. Not even five, or ten per cent cases can be decided on the basis of truth and justice. Courts too cannot do anything about it. The kind of witnesses they receive are the only basis on which they have to arrive at their conclusions and decide cases.

But, no one seems to notice the initial error being made in this matter. If witnesses are treated nicely and they are not harrassed time and again, good people would not hesitate to come forward to register their testimony as required under the teachings of the Qur'ān. But, what is happening here is that the first investigation of a case is handled by the police and it is, by itself, enough to drive a witness cra-

zy by his repeated appearances at the station. Once a witness, he would never be a witness again, not even on his dead body. Then the case goes to the court, if it does. And if it does, there comes the problem of dates, one after the other, they keep coming, next and next. But, the witness becomes the victim who has to undergo the punishment of a crime he never committed when he comes to record his presence on every such new date. This long-hauled rule of procedure, a sick vestige of the British colonist, has corrupted our courts and judicial departments. One naturally tends to compare it with the form of simple and speedy justice provided in modern-day *Ḥijāz* and elsewhere in which the number of pending cases cannot become so large, nor would they prolong so continuously, nor does it cause any harrassment to witnesses while fulfilling their religious duty.

To sum up, the blessings of an Islamic legal system can be seen even today by simply restructuring the law of evidence, and its attending rule of procedure, in accordance with the teachings of the Qur'ān which require the knowers of truth to testify and which also command that they should not be put to any inconvenience and that they should be free to go within the shortest possible time after recording their testimony.

Some forms of testimony

Finally, at this point, it is important to know that the sense of witness and testimony in current usage has become limited to testifying before a judge or Committee hearing suits and disputes. But, in the terminology of the Qur'ān and Sunnah, the word *'Shahādah'* (testimony) has a much broader sense. For instance, the medical certificate given to a sick person which states that he is unable to report on duty, or that he should be retired on medical grounds, is also a testimony. If the statement made in it was contrary to the actual condition of the sick person, it will turn into a false evidence and become a grave sin.

Similarly, checking student papers and marking them out during tests and examinations is also an act of testifying. If any increase or decrease in the marks alloted in them was done knowingly or carelessly, that too shall be a false evidence, which is unlawful, and a grave sin.

Certificates and testimonials awarded to successfully graduating students bear a witness that the awardee has the capability of doing what his or her documents say. But, should it be that the person concerned is, in fact, not so capable, then, everyone who has signed on that certificate or testimonial stands charged with the crime of false attestation.

Correspondingly, casting a vote in favour of a candidate seeking election to assemblies, councils and public bodies is also a testimony in which the voter bears witness that, in his or her knowledge and estimation, the particular candidate is worthy of becoming a representative or spokesperson of the country and its people, both in terms of his ability and merits and in terms of his honesty and trustworthiness as well.

Now, figure out how many of our representatives are there about whom this 'evidence' would prove to be true and correct? But, there is little that can be said about our electorate which seems to take this exercise of voting as some game where one either wins or loses. That, to them, is all there is to it. Yet, the right of vote is sold for money, or cast under pressure, or thrown away for fickle friends and shady promises. Leave others alone, even educated and observing Muslims fail to realize while voting for undeserving people that they were inviting the curse and punishment of Allah by putting their false evidence on record.

There is yet another way of looking at the casting of votes to elect representatives in accordance with the Holy Qur'ān. This is called '*Shafā'ah*' (recommendation or *Sifārish*). It means that the voter approves of the candidate of his choice and recommends that he should be elected as a representative. The injunction of the Holy Qur'ān relevant to this situation has appeared earlier in the words given below:

وَمَنْ يَّشْفَعْ شَفَاعَةً حَسَنَةً يَّكُنْ لَّهٗ نَصِيْبٌ مِّنْهَا وَمَنْ يَّشْفَعْ شَفَاعَةً سَيِّئَةً يَّكُنْ لَّهٗ كِفْلٌ مِّنْهَا

Whoever makes a good recommendation, there shall be for him a share from it (in the Hereafter). And whoever makes a bad recommendation, there shall be for him a share from it - (4:85).

It means that anyone who makes a good, true and justified recommendation, then, he too will get a share from the good deed of the person he has recommended. And a person who makes a bad recommendation, that is, favours someone undeserving and bad to succeed through his recommendation, then, he too shall get a share from the bad deeds of the person he has recommended. Thus, when a candidate like this will, during his tenure of office, go on doing what is wrong and impermissible, it is obvious that the curse of his evil doings will fall on the voter as well.

The vote has a third status in the sight of the Sharī'ah of Islam - that of advocacy (*Wakālah*). This is, as if, the voter makes the candidate his representative and agent on his or her behalf. But, had this agency been connected with one of his personal rights and the gain or loss from it would have affected his person alone, then, he would have been responsible for it personally. However, that situation does not prevail here, because this agency concerns rights which the entire nation shares with him. Therefore, should a person contribute to the success of an undeserving candidate by voting for him as his representative, then, the sin of bulldozing the rights of the entire nation rests on his shoulders.

To recapitulate, our vote has a three-pronged status: *Shahādah* (evidence), *Shafā'ah* (Recommendation) and *Wakālah* (Advocacy or representation in common rights). Under all three conditions, voting for a good and deserving person brings great reward the fruits of which are bound to reach the voter. Similarly, voting for someone undeserving and uncouth is false evidence, unjustified recommendation and impermissible advocacy all in one, so, the evil fruits of his thoughtless voting shall stand recorded in the voter's log of deeds.

Therefore, it is the duty of every Muslim, man and woman, that he or she must fully investigate into the background of the candidate being voted for well before the vote is cast. Let them make sure that the candidate is deserving, capable and honest - and not otherwise. Negligence, apathy and heedlessness are poor reasons to go about committing such grave crimes. If done for no reason, it is absurdity at its worst.

Verses 11 - 12

يَاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اذْكُرُوْا نِعْمَتَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ اِذْ هَمَّ قَوْمٌ اَنْ
يَّبْسُطُوْٓا اِلَيْكُمْ اَيْدِيَهُمْ فَكَفَّ اَيْدِيَهُمْ عَنْكُمْ ج وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ ط
وَعَلَى اللّٰهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿١١﴾ وَلَقَدْ اَخَذَ اللّٰهُ مِيْثَاقَ
بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ وَبَعَثْنَا مِنْهُمُ اثْنَيْ عَشَرَ نَقِيْبًا ط وَقَالَ اللّٰهُ اِنِّيْ
مَعَكُمْ ط لَئِنْ اَقَمْتُمُ الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتَيْتُمُ الزَّكٰوةَ وَاٰمَنْتُمْ بِرُسُلِيْ
وَعَزَّرْتُمُوْهُمْ وَاَقْرَضْتُمُ اللّٰهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا لَّاُكَفِّرَنَّ عَنْكُمْ
سَيِّاٰتِكُمْ وَلَاُدْخِلَنَّكُمْ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ ج فَمَنْ كَفَرَ
بَعْدَ ذٰلِكَ مِنْكُمْ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ سَوَآءَ السَّبِيْلِ ﴿١٢﴾

O those who believe, remember Allah's favour upon you, when some people planned to lay their hands on you, and he kept their hands away from you. And fear Allah. And in Allah the believers should place their trust. [11] **And Allah has made the Children of Israel take a pledge. And We appointed twelve chiefs from among them. And Allah said, "I am surely with you. If you establish Ṣalāh, and pay Zakāh, and believe in My Messengers, and hold them in reverence, and advance to Allah a goodly loan, I shall certainly write off your evil deeds and I shall certainly admit you into Gardens beneath which rivers flow. So, whoever from you disbelieves after that has lost the straight path."** [12]

Commentary

In the seventh verse of Sūrah al-Mā'idah which appeared earlier Allah Almighty has asked Muslims to remember the pledge taken from them to which they professed belief and obedience:

وَاذْكُرُوْا نِعْمَتَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَمِيْثَاقَهُ الَّذِيْ وَاثَقَكُمْ بِهٖٓ اِذْ قُلْتُمْ سَمِعْنَا وَاَطَعْنَا
وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ

And remember Allah's favour upon you and His Covenant that He has taken from you when you said, "We have listened and obeyed." And fear Allah ... (5:7)

This pledge is the pledge of obedience to Allah and His Messenger and the pledge of practical adherence to the Sharī'ah of Islām. This is technically known as the *Kalimah* or the statement of creed and which is:

لا اله الا الله محمد رسول الله

(Lā ilāha il-lal-lāhū Muhammadur-Rasū-lul-lāh):

"There is no god worthy of worship but Allah Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah."

Every Muslim who says this *Kalimah* is bound by this pledge. In the verse which follows (5:8), some important articles of the pledge, that is, particular religious injunctions have been described. These enjoin equity and justice for friend and foe alike and teach justice and tolerance - not revenge - for enemies once overpowered. This pledge is, in itself, a great blessing of Allah, therefore, it has been made to begin with: اذكروا نعمت الله عليكم (And remember Allah's favour upon you ...).

By beginning the present verse (5:11) with the same sentence : اذكروا نعمت الله عليكم (And remember Allah's favour upon you), the objective is to tell Muslims that as long as they remained faithful to their pledge, Almighty Allah blessed them with power and excellence in the present world and with high ranks for the Hereafter, shielding them all along against their enemies, in war and in peace.

This verse particularly mentions how enemies conspired to destroy Muslims and kill their Prophet on so many occasions, but Almighty Allah foiled all their plans and put them to disgrace - 'some people planned to lay their hands on you, and He kept their hands away from you.'

Speaking generally, there are innumerable events on the annals of the history of Islam when the plans made by disbelievers were seen rolling in dust by Divine grace. But, there are some special events as well which our learned commentators have pinpointed as the substantiation of this verse - for example, in the Musnad of 'Abd al-Razzāq, a report from Sayyidnā Jābir رضى الله عنه says:

In a *Jihād*, the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his Companions رضى الله عنهم اجمعين stopped to rest at one stage. The noble Companions scattered out to rest at various spots. The Holy Prophet ﷺ stopped by a tree, all by

himself. He hung his weapons on a branch of the tree. A villager from among the enemies pounced on this occasion, dashed in and took possession of the sword of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Then, taking it out from the sheath, he threatened him by saying: مَنْ يَّمْنَعُكَ مِنِّيْ (That is, 'now tell me who can save you from my hand?').

Undaunted, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said: 'Allah عزوجل (the Mighty, the Exalted)'. The villager repeated what he had said earlier, that is, 'now tell me who can save you from my hand?' Once again, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said with the same composure: 'Allah عزوجل After two or three exchanges in this manner, it was the awe of some unseen power which forced the challenger to put the sword back in its sheath. At that point, the Holy Prophet ﷺ called the Companions in and narrated what had transpired. The villager was still sitting by his side. He said nothing to him. (Ibn Kathīr).

As part of an explanation of this verse, reports from some Companions say that there was an occasion when Ka'b ibn Ashraf, a Jew, had invited the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم to his house with the intention of killing him. Allah Almighty told him about this evil intention which foiled his conspiracy (Ibn Kathīr). Also reported from Mujāhid, 'Ikrimah and others is that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم once went to Yahūd ibn Nuḍayr to talk about a matter of concern. He asked him to sit under a wall, engaged him in a conversation while secretly he appointed 'Amr ibn Jaḥsh to scale the wall from behind and throw down a rock from the top of the wall over him. Allah Almighty let His Messenger, may he remain blessed and protected for ever, know about their hostile intention and he immediately rose and moved away from there (Ibn Kathīr).

There is no contradiction about these events. All of them can be taken to be substantiating the present verse where, after mentioning the unseen protection provided to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم and to Muslims in general, it was said: وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَعَلَى اللّٰهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ (And fear Allah. And in Allah the believers should place their trust).

First of all, what is being said here is that this blessing from Allah is not restricted to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, rather, the real cause of this Divine support and protection is the quality of *Taqwā* (the fear of Allah) and *Tawakkul* (Trust in Him). Any nation, or indi-

vidual who lives by these two virtues, in any time and in any place, will have the support and protection from Almighty Allah in the same manner. How well this was put in two lines by poet Iqbal:

فضائے بَدر پیدا کر فرشتے تیری نُصرت کو

اُتر سکتے ہیں گردوں سے قطار اندر قطار اب بھی

Create the atmosphere of Badr, for your help the angels could
Descend from the heavens, file after file, even now!

It is also possible to refer this sentence back to the set of previous verses where Muslims have been commanded to treat their worst enemies with courtesy and justice. If so, the sentence would indicate that the teaching of courtesy and tolerance in the case of such avowed enemies may amount to making a political error which may put them back on their feet. Therefore, in this sentence, Muslims were warned that this tolerance and courtesy will bring absolutely no harm to them only if they continue being the kind of people who fear Allah and trust in Him. In fact, instead of giving the enemies the courage and opportunity to renew their hostility against them, this behaviour of theirs will become the cause of bringing them closer to Islam into the Muslim area of influence. Besides, *Taqwā* or the fear of Allah is the only factor which can compel a person to abide by a pledge both physically and spiritually. Wherever this quality of *Taqwā* remains missing, pledges get readily broken as commonly witnessed these days. So, the earlier verse (5:8) which mentions a pledge, also directed to واتقوا الله (Fear Allah) towards the end. The same assertion was repeated here. Finally, this whole verse gives a clear hint that a Muslim victory with Divine support does not simply depend upon outward logistics and hardware, instead of that, the secret of their real power lies in *Taqwā* (the fear of Allah) and *Tawakkul* (trust in Him).

After the present verse has mentioned the pledge taken from Muslims and rewards it would bring when fulfilled, the second verse brings into focus another side of the issue. It clarifies that this taking of pledges is not something special to Muslims. Similar pledges were also taken earlier, from other communities as well. But, they failed to fulfill them. Therefore, various punishments were sent upon them. It is said in the verse that Almighty Allah had taken a pledge from the

Banī Isra'īl (The Children of Israel). The pledge was taken in a particular form. The people from Banī Isra'īl were divided over twelve tribes. One chief from each such tribe was chosen to represent them. Every chief from each of the twelve tribes declared on his behalf and on behalf of his whole tribe that they would adhere to this Divine Covenant. Thus, these twelve chiefs took that responsibility on behalf of the entire people of Banī Isra'īl which entailed that they would themselves adhere to this pledge as well as make their tribe do so.

Worth noting at this point is the cardinal principle of Islam in matters of honour, merit, office and recognition which, in the words of the Persian poet, Jāmī, is:

بندہ عشق شدی ترك نسب کن جامی

کہ دریں راہ فلاں بن فلاں چیزے نیست

You have become a servant in love, forget about your lineage, O Jāmī!

For, on this highway, so and so the son of so and so means nothing.

The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم had declared this in full clarity when delivering his historic Address on the occasion of his Last Ḥajj by saying that Islam does not recognize any dividing line between Arabs and non-Arabs, black or white, high caste or low caste. Whoever enters Islam becomes a brother to all Muslims. The distinctions of status, lineage, colour, country and language were the idols and icons of the Days of Ignorance - Islam has broken them all. But, it does not mean that one should not consider family background when harnessed to establish order and effeciency in administrative matters.

It is but natural that people of a tribe or family are more likely to trust a known member of their group as compared to others. Such a person is expected to understand and accomodate the feelings of his group much better because he knows their psychological reflexes in detail. When a pledge was taken from the twelve tribes of Banī Isra'īl, it was based on this very strategy whereby one chief from each of the tribes was made responsible for its compliance.

The same consideration of administrative expediency and a peaceful resolution of possible conflict was made when the Banī Isra'il were highly agitated about a shortage of water. Sayyidnā Mūsā علیہ السلام

prayed to Allah and as commanded by Him he struck his staff against a rock. Then, Almighty Allah made twelve streams flow from this rock for each of the twelve tribes. Allah Almighty has mentioned this great favour in the Holy Qur'ān (Sūrah al-A'rāf, 7:160) in the following words: وَقَطَّعْنٰهُمُ اثْنَتَيْ عَشْرَةَ اَسْبَاطًا اُمَمًا (And We divided them into twelve tribes, as separate communities) and: فَانْبَجَسَتْ مِنْهُ اثْنَتَا عَشْرَةَ عَيْنًا (So, twelve springs gushed forth from it [one for each tribe]). As for this figure of twelve, it is rather unusual and lends to popular interpretations.

When the Anṣār of Madīnah came to invite the Holy Prophet ﷺ to their city, he took a pledge from them in the form of *Bay'at*. In this pledge also, the twelve chiefs of the tribes of Anṣār, acting on behalf of their tribes, gave their hands in the blessed hands of the Holy Prophet ﷺ giving a solemn pledge of adherence popularly known as *Bay'at* (or *Bay'ah* in its pausal form).

Three of these chiefs were from the tribe of 'Aws and nine from the tribe of Khazraj (Ibn Kathīr).

According to another narration from Sayyidnā Jābir ibn Samurah appearing in al-Bukhārī and Muslim, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is reported to have said that people and their needs shall stay covered until such time that twelve *Khulafā'* (ruling authorities) will be leading them. After having reported this narration, Ibn Kathīr has commented that no word from this ḥadīth proves that these twelve Imāms or *Khulafā'* would rule one after the other, continuously. On the contrary, they could also appear spaced out from each other with breaks in between. Thus, there were four *Khulafā'* - Sayyidnā Abū Bakr, Sayyidnā 'Umar al-Fārūq, Sayyidnā 'Uthmān al-Ghanī and Sayyidnā 'Alī al -Murtaḍā رضى الله عنهم - succeeding in that order. After the passage of some time in between, Sayyidnā 'Umar ibn 'Abdul-'Azīz was accepted by the consensus of the *Ummah* as the fifth righteous *Khalīfah'* of Islam.

Now, returning back to the pledge taken from the Banī Isrā'īl, it will be recalled that Allah had made the twelve chiefs from their twelve tribes responsible for them and to them He said: اِنِّيْ مَعَكُمْ (I am with you). It means if they fulfilled the pledge themselves and resolved to make others do the same, Divine support shall be with them. After that, the verse enumerates some articles of this pledge, then re-

fers to the breach of trust committed by the Banī Isrā'īl and the subsequent punishment that descended upon them.

Thus, the sentence: إِنِّي مَعَكُمْ (I am with you) which appears before mentioning the articles of the pledge is there to tell two things. Firstly, if they stood by the pledge, Divine support will be with them which they would witness on every step they take. Secondly, they must realize that Allah is with them everywhere, all the time. He is watching over this pledge. Nothing that they intend, think, plan and do will remain outside the reach of His knowledge. He sees and hears what they conceal and He is also aware of their intentions and plans. They cannot escape His grip by breaking the pledge. Then come the articles of the pledge, the first being 'the establishment of Salāh' followed by 'the paying of *Zakāh* properly.' This tells us that the people of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام were also obligated with the duties of Salāh and *Zakāh* much before Islam. Other Qur'ānic hints and authentic reports prove that these duties were not peculiar to Banī Isrā'īl alone. In fact, they have been enjoined by every prophet and every Sharī'ah.

The third article of the pledge is that they should believe in all prophets and messengers sent by Allah and help them achieve their objective of spreading true guidance. Since many messengers were to come to the Banī Isrā'īl, they were the ones particularly charged to do this. Though, the status of basic *'Īmān* or faith comes ahead of actual acts such as Ṣalāh and Zakāh, yet, in this pledge, what was to be actually done was what was placed first. Prophets and messengers who were to come, would be coming later. Since the matter of believing in them and helping them in their mission was to happen later, that part was placed later in the text.

The fourth article of the pledge is: أَقْرَضْتُمُ اللّٰهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا (... and advance to Allah a goodly loan ...). "*Qarḍan Ḥasana*" (a goodly loan) means that it should be with absolute sincerity without any worldly expediency behind it. When spending in the way of Allah, one should spend what one holds dear - never trying to get away by giving out of the spare, the extra and the worthless. Spending in the way of Allah has been expressed as 'the giving of loan' because the return of a loan is taken as due legally, customarily and morally. So, one should spend in the way of Allah believing that it will be returned definitely.

Since the obligatory *Zakāh* has already been mentioned at its place, the introduction of *Qarḍ Ḥasan* here indicates that it is referring to *Ṣadaqāt* and *Khayrāt* (charities) other than *Zakāh*. It also tells us that Muslims are not done with all financial responsibilities by simply paying off the *Zakāh* due on them. There are other financial rights to be fulfilled, such as, making a *Masjid* where needed. When governments do not initiate or support religious education for children and adults, the responsibility of establishing and running institutions devoted to imparting religious education rests on none but Muslims themselves. The difference between the two is that *Zakāh* is *Farḍ 'Ayn* (absolute obligation on every individual) while the kind of charities mentioned above are *Farḍ Kifāyah* (an obligation of sufficiency as explained below).

Farḍ Kifāyah means: should some individuals or a group from the Muslim community take care of such needs, other Muslims are released from the burden of responsibility; and, should no one come forward to do so, everyone becomes a sinner. How terrible are the circumstances in which schools for religious education are operating in our time is known and braved by only those who have made it a mission of their lives to keep serving their Faith through these institutions of religious learning. As for paying *Zakāh*, Muslims know that it is an obligation on them. It is strange that, despite this knowledge, there are very few who pay their *Zakāh* - and there are still fewer who take the trouble of paying the full *Zakāh* due on them after a full accounting. And even those who rarely pay out the full amount of *Zakāh* due on them, think that they have done all they were supposed to do and that there is nothing more due on them. Go to them about some urgent need of a *Masjid* and they will come up with *Zakāh* money. The same thing happens with religious institutions - they too hardly get any financial support other than *Zakāh*. Although, these are duties, other than *Zakāh*, which Muslims have to fulfill - this has been made clear in this verse of the Qur'ān and in many other verses similar to it.

Towards the end of the verse, after enumerating the articles of the pledge, it was also clarified that the fulfillment of the pledge on their part will be amply rewarded, even their past sins will be forgiven and they will have the eternal comfort and security of Paradise. But, final-

ly they were given to understand that should any of them elect to ignore such clear statements and go on to the limits of rejection and rebellion, they should know that they have left the straight path only to their self-appointed ruin.

Verses 13 - 14

فَبِمَا نَقْضِهِمْ مِّيْثَاقَهُمْ لَعَنّٰهُمْ وَجَعَلْنَا قُلُوْبَهُمْ قٰسِيَةً ۚ
يُحَرِّفُوْنَ الْكَلِمَ عَنْ مَّوَاضِعِهٖ ۙ وَنَسُوْا حَظًّا مِّمَّا ذُكِّرُوْا بِهٖ ۚ
وَلَا تَزَالُ تَطَّلِعُ عَلٰى خَآئِنَةٍ مِّنْهُمْ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا مِّنْهُمْ فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ
وَاصْفَحْ ۗ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ﴿١٣﴾ وَمِنَ الَّذِيْنَ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّا
نَصٰرٰٓى اَخَذْنَا مِيْثَاقَهُمْ فَنَسُوْا حَظًّا مِّمَّا ذُكِّرُوْا بِهٖ ۚ فَاَغْرَيْنَا
بَيْنَهُمُ الْعَدَاوَةَ وَالْبَغْضَآءَ اِلٰى يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ ۗ وَسَوْفَ يُنَبِّئُهُمُ
اللّٰهُ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَصْنَعُوْنَ ﴿١٤﴾

So, because they broke their pledge, We cursed them and made their hearts hardened. They move words away from their places, and they have overlooked a good deal of the Advice they were given. And every now and then you come accross a certain treachery from them all but a few. So, forgive them and forego. Indeed, Allah loves the good-in-deed. [13] **And from those who say, "We are Christians," We took a pledge. So, they have overlooked a good deal of the Advice they were given. So, We had them stuck with enmity and malice among them right through the Day of Doom. And Allah shall tell them what they were doing.** [14]

Commentary

The first verse is telling us that Banī Isra'īl were heedless to clear instructions given to them. Then, they broke the pledge for which they were punished. There were two kinds of punishment which visited Banī Isra'īl because of their misdeeds and contumacy:

1. Manifest and perceptible, like the hail of stones and rocks or the overturning of land mass, which find mention in several verses of the Qur'ān.

2. Intellectual and spiritual, as if their very minds and hearts were transformed in punishment for their contumacy which made them incapable of thinking and feeling and they went on sinking deeper in the curse of their sins.

The verse opens with the words: فَبِمَا نَقْضِهِمْ مِّيْثَاقَهُمْ لَعَنّٰهُمْ وَجَعَلْنَا قُلُوْبَهُمْ قٰسِيَةً . It means that it was because of their contravention of the solemn pledge that Allah made them far-removed from His mercy (that is, from its effects, which is the reality of '*La'nah*' or curse - Hadrat Thānavī) and made their hearts hardened against any penetration of truth. This removal from mercy and the hardening of hearts has been likened to " *Rān* " (stain or rust) by the Holy Qur'ān in Sūrah al-Mutaffifīn: كَلَّا بَلْ رَانَ عَلٰى قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَّا كَانُوْا يَكْسِبُوْنَ . It means that the reason why they reject open verses of the Qur'ān and all too manifest signs is that the stain of sins has settled down on their hearts. In a hadīth, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: When someone commits a sin for the first time, a black dot gets stamped on the heart. He feels the pinch of this evil presence all the time. It is like a black stain on a white cloth which is a constant sore of the eye. Now, if he gets chastened, repents and resolves not to do it again, that dot is erased; and should he become care-free and start a spree of other sins, a black dot for each subsequent sin will keep adding up, so much so, that the clean slate of his heart will turn jet black with these dots of stain. At that stage, the state of his heart will become very much like a pot placed upside down in which nothing goes in but to come out instantly. Therefore, nothing good settles down in his heart for he has fallen into a state of moral inertia - to him nothing good is good and no evil is evil. Rather, the opposite becomes his more likely approach - he starts taking defect as merit, vice as virtue and sin as reward. Thus armed with his crooked thinking, he goes on riding high in his rebellion and contumacy. This is a cash and spot punishment of his sin which he gets right here in this mortal world.

Some respected elders have said: ان من جزاء الحسنة الحسنة بعدها وان من جزاء السيئة السيئة بعدها , that is, the cash reward of a good deed is that one gets the Taufīq (the ability given by Allah) of doing another good deed. Similarly, the cash reward of a sin is that one's heart starts being attracted by other sins soon after the first. Thus, obedience and disobedience both have a pull of their own - one good invites another good and one evil attracts other evils and sins.

Referring back to the breach of trust committed by the Banī Isra'īl, it can be said that the cash punishment due against it was that they were removed from Divine mercy - which is the greatest medium of salvation. And their hearts became so hardened that they stooped to the level of 'moving words away from their places' which means that they alter the Word of God - in words or meanings or recitation - all of which have been described in the Holy Qur'ān and the books of *Aḥādīth*, some of which have been acknowledged by European Christians as well (Tafsīr Usmānī).

The result of the intellectual and spiritual punishment mentioned above was that they forgot to take advantage of the good counsel given to them: فَنَسُوْا حَظًّا مِّمَّا ذُكِّرُوْا بِهٖ . Then, this punishment stuck glued to them: وَلَا تَزَالُ تَطَّلِعُ عَلٰى خَآئِنَةٍ مِّنْهُمْ that is, the Prophet of Islam would keep knowing about one or the other breaches, deceptions and treacheries committed by them. The exception is indicated in: اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا مِّنْهُمْ (but a few) which refers to people like Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Salām and others who were followers of the faith of the People of the Book before they became true Muslims.

Upto this point, the description of the misconduct of the Banī Isra'īl was obviously demanding enough that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم should hold them in contempt and never allow them to come to him. Therefore, in the last sentence of this verse, the instruction given to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was: فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَاصْفَحْ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ (So forgive them and forego. Indeed, Allah loves the good-in-deed). It means that, despite their peculiar condition being what it is, it is better that the Prophet of Islam abstains from doing what is otherwise quite natural. In other words, he should not treat them with contempt or hatred because after knowing what they are - hardhearted and cold - the chances that any good counsel would affect them are very remote. Granted. But, toleration and civility of morals are wonder virtues which could probe out some sense and sensibility from out of such insensate people. Even if this effort to drive some sense into them fails, something worth doing still remains - keeping one's own matters and morals correct is, after all, quite necessary. Allah Almighty likes what is done with good grace - and it will definitely bring Muslims closer to Him.

From the first verse, 5:13, which dealt with the breach of trust by Jews and their punishment for it, we now move to the next verse, 5:14, which refers to Christians: وَمِنَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوٓا إِنَّا نَصٰرٰى . In this verse, the punishment described for Christians is mutual dissension. Being for their breach of trust, this will continue right upto the Last Day.

Looking at the contemporary scene, one may have doubts about Christians who seem to be united. The answer is that the present statement covers genuine Christians, observing and abiding. As for those who have moved away from their own religion turning into non-conformist, secular or atheistic individuals or groups, they are, for all practical purposes, out of the list of Christians - even though, they may count them as Christians among the nationalities of a country. If, among such people, that religious dissension and mutual hostility does not exist, it would not be contrary to this verse - because the conflict was based on religion, once the religion is not there, conflict too would not be there. As said earlier, this verse describes people who profess and practice the religion of Christianity - and their division is well-known.

Given below is a brief reference from *Taysir* in the marginal notes of commentator, al-Bayḍāwī which reports that there were three sects among Christians originally:

1. *Fisturyah* (Nestorians) who took Sayyidnā 'Īsā (Jesus) as the son of God.

2. *Ya'qubiyah* (Jacobites) who believed in Sayyidnā 'Īsā (Jesus) himself as one with God.

3. *Malka'iyah* (Malkites) who believed in Sayyidnā 'Īsā (Jesus) as one of the Trinity.

And it goes without saying that in the presence of such major divisions in matters of belief, mutual malice is inevitable.

Verses 15 - 18

يٰٓأَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ قَدْ جَآءَكُمْ رَسُولُنَا يُبَيِّنُ لَكُمْ كَثِيرًا مِّمَّا كُنتُمْ
تُخْفُونَ مِنَ الْكِتٰبِ وَيَعْفُوا عَن كَثِيرٍ ۚ قَدْ جَآءَكُم مِّنَ اللَّهِ

نُورٌ وَّكِتٰبٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿١٥﴾ يَهْدِيْ بِهِ اللّٰهُ مَنِ اتَّبَعَ رِضْوَانَهٗ سُبُلَ
السَّلٰمِ وَيُخْرِجُهُمْ مِّنَ الظُّلُمٰتِ اِلَى النُّوْرِ بِاِذْنِهٖ وَيَهْدِيْهِمْ اِلٰى
صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ ﴿١٦﴾ لَقَدْ كَفَرَ الَّذِيْنَ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ
الْمَسِيْحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ ؕ قُلْ فَمَنْ يَّمْلِكُ مِنَ اللّٰهِ شَيْئًا اِنْ اَرَادَ اَنْ
يُّهْلِكَ الْمَسِيْحَ ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ وَاُمَّهٗ وَمَنْ فِى الْاَرْضِ جَمِيْعًا ؕ وَلِلّٰهِ
مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا ؕ يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَآءُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ
عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿١٧﴾ وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُوْدُ وَالنَّصٰرٰى نَحْنُ
اَبْنٰٓؤُا اللّٰهِ وَاَحِبَّآؤُهٗ ؕ قُلْ فَلِمَ يُعَذِّبُكُمْ بِذُنُوْبِكُمْ ؕ بَلْ اَنْتُمْ
بَشَرٌ مِّمَّنْ خَلَقَ ؕ يَغْفِرُ لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَيُعَذِّبُ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ؕ وَلِلّٰهِ مُلْكُ
السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا ؗ وَاِلَيْهِ الْمَصِيْرُ ﴿١٨﴾

O people of the Book, there has come to you Our Messenger disclosing to you much of what you have been concealing of the Book, while he passes over much. [15]

There has come to you from Allah a Light and clear Book; with it Allah guides those who follow His pleasure in the pathways of peace, and brings them out, by His will, from the depths of darkness into the light, and guides them to a straight path. [16]

Certainly, gone infidel are those who say, "God is the Masīḥ son of Maryam (Jesus son of Mary)." Say, "Who then has the power to do anything against Allah if He wills to eliminate the Masīḥ son of Maryam and his mother and all those on earth?" And to Allah belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth and what lies between them. He creates what He wills. And Allah is powerful over everything. [17]

And the Jews and the Christians say, "We are the sons of Allah and His favourites." Say, "Why then would He punish you for your sins? In fact, you are just human, among those He created. He forgives whom He wills and punishes whom He wills." And to Allah belongs the

kingdom of the heavens and the earth and what lies between them, and to Him is the return. [18]

Commentary

Refuted here in this verse is only one saying of the Christians - which is the belief of a sect among them - that Sayyidnā Masīḥ عليه السلام is God. But, the argument employed in the refutation virtually covers the false beliefs of all sects against the inalienable principle of *Tauḥīd*, that is the Oneness of Allah. This may be a belief in a son of God or a belief in one of the three Gods - the argument refutes all of them.

That Sayyidnā Masīḥ and his blessed mother have been mentioned here jointly could be because of two wise considerations. Firstly, it is the humility of Sayyidnā Masīḥ before Allah *Ta'ālā* that he could never think of saving himself against the will of Allah, or his mother whose care and service a good son considers dearer than his own life. Secondly, by doing so, the view of the sect which takes Sayyidah Maryam as one of the three Gods also stands refuted.

Also noteworthy at this point is the mention of the death of Sayyidnā 'Īsā and Sayyidah Maryam, peace be upon both of them, as a supposition - although, the death of Sayyidah Maryam was no supposition at the time of the revelation of the Qur'ān; it had already occured, in fact. The reason for this may either be the superimposition (*Taghlīb*) of the desired subject, that is, since the real intent here was to describe the death of Sayyidnā 'Īsā as a supposition, the mention of his blessed mother was also made as a corollary of the same subject, even though, her death had already occured - or, it can also be said that the expression means: The way We have made death take away Sayyidah Maryam, it lies within Our power to make it overtake Sayyidnā Masīḥ and the rest of the creation as well. And the statement: يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَآءُ (He creates what He wills - 5:17), is there to refute this particular base which Christians use to deify Sayyidnā Masīḥ because they reason out that his birth came to pass, against all rules of nature operative in this world, without a father and from the mother alone - had he too been a human being, he would have been born through a mother and father both, very much in accordance with the natural law.

This one sentence answers the reasoning by saying that Allah has the most perfect and the most comprehensive power to create what He

wills and how He wills. The same doubt has been removed in the verse: إِنَّ مَثَلَ عِيسَىٰ عِندَ اللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ آدَمَ (Surely, the case of 'Isa, in the sight of Allah, is like the case of Adam - 3:59) where it has been established that the creation of Sayyidna Masih عليه السلام as separate from the habitual law of nature cannot become an argument in favour of his being taken as God.

The reason lies in pondering that Allah *Ta'ala* did create Sayyidna Adam عليه السلام without a father and mother both. He has the power, all power, over everything. He is the Creator and the Master and the most worthy of worship. No one else can be associated with His Divinity as a partner or sharer.

Verse 19

يَٰٓأَهۡلَ ٱلۡكِتَٰبِ قَدۡ جَآءَكُمۡ رَسُولُنَا يُبَيِّنُ لَكُمۡ عَلَىٰ فَتۡرَةٖ مِّنَ ٱلرُّسُلِ أَن تَقُولُواْ مَا جَآءَنَا مِنۢ بَشِيرٖ وَلَا نَذِيرٖۖ فَقَدۡ جَآءَكُم بَشِيرٞ وَنَذِيرٞۗ وَٱللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيۡءٖ قَدِيرٞ ﴿١٩﴾

O people of the Book, Our Messenger has come to you making things clear to you after a gap between Messengers, lest you were to say, "There has not come to us a bearer of good news, and a warner." So, now there has come to you a bearer of good news, and a warner. And Allah is powerful over everything. [19]

Commentary

The word, "*fatrah*" in: عَلَىٰ فَتۡرَةٖ مِّنَ ٱلرُّسُلِ (after a gap between Messengers) literally means to slacken, to become dormant or to suspend or to terminate an activity. Leading authorities in *Tafsir* have given this very meaning of *fatrah* in this verse. It signifies the suspension of the coming of prophets for a certain interval of time which is the period of time in between Sayyidna 'Isa عليه السلام and the Last of the Prophets, Sayyidna Muhammad al-Mustafa صلى الله عليه وسلم .

Verification of the Gap

According to Sayyidna 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas رضى الله عنه, there is a period of one thousand and seven hundred years between Sayyidna Musa and Sayyidna 'Isa عليهما السلام . During this whole period, prophets kept

coming with their missions without any gap. To Banī Isrā'īl alone, one thousand prophets were sent during this period - not included in which are prophets who appeared among peoples other than Banī Isrā'īl. Then comes the period of only five hundred years between the birth of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and the appearance of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم as the Last Prophet. During this period, the usual chain of prophets remained discontinued. Therefore, this period is known as *Fatrah* or Gap. Before this, a longer period has never remained unvisited by prophets. (Qurṭubī, with some explanation from the author)

There are other reports regarding the period of time between Sayyidnā Mūsā and Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليهما السلام, and that which is between Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and the Last Prophet, Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā صلى الله عليه وسلم. The period of time indicated in these reports is either more, or less, but that does not affect the real purpose.

Imām al-Bukhārī reports on the authority of Sayyidnā Salmān al-Fārisī رضى الله عنه that there was a period of six hundred years between the time of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and the Last among Prophets صلى الله عليه وسلم. During this entire period, no prophet was sent as confirmed by a *Ḥadīth* in Mishkāt, appearing there with reference to the Ṣaḥīḥs of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, which reports that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: أنا أَوْلَى النَّاسِ بِعِيْسٰى that is, 'Among people, I am the closest to 'Īsā.' He explained the meaning of his remark later in the *Ḥadīth* when he said: لَيْسَ بَيْنَنَا نَبِيٌّ that is, 'No prophet was sent between the two of us.'

As for the three messengers mentioned in Sūrah Yā Sīn (36), they were messengers sent by Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام who have been called messengers (bearers of a message) in the literal sense.

About the appearance of Khālid ibn Sinān al-'Arabī during this gap as reported by some chroniclers, Tafsīr Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī says with reference to Shihāb that his being a prophet is correct, but the period in which he came was earlier than Sayyidnā 'Īsā, عليه السلام not after him.

Rulings concerning the Gap

Obviously, the verse seems to indicate the fate of the group of people who were not visited by any messenger or prophet or their deputies, nor did they have the religious laws of past prophets preserved with them; such people will be considered excusable and will deserve

no punishment on the condition that such people should have not committed *Shirk*, the grave sin of ascribing partners in the Divinity of Allah. Therefore, Muslim jurists differ about rulings which apply to the people of *Fatrah* (gap), particularly about whether or not they will be forgiven.

The majority tilts towards the hope that they will be forgiven if they had kept adhering to the religion which had survived with them as originating from Sayyidnā Mūsā or Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليهما السلام irrespective of its authenticity - again, subject to the condition that they had not been hostile to the principle of *Tauḥīd*, the Oneness of Allah, and had nothing to do with the practice of Shirk. The reason is that the Principle of *Tauḥīd* needs no reported proof. Any human being who ponders over it could himself reason it out.

A Question and its Answer

A question may arise here that the Jews and Christians, the people of the Book, who are being addressed in this verse did have the Torah and the Evangile and their sages and scholars with them even if no messengers reached them during this gap. How then could they come up with the excuse on the Day of Judgement that they had received no guidance? The answer is that by the time of the Holy Prophet ﷺ the original Torah and the Evangile had gone extinct. There were alterations in texts and additions of false narratives. Thus, the availability of non-original scriptures were no better than its extinction. The likelihood of an original manuscript surviving at some unknown place with someone would not be contrary to the assertion made. In fact, some scholars including Ibn Taymiyyah have written that the original copies of the Torah and Evangile were present at some places.

The Unique Perfection of the Last among Prophets ﷺ

When, by addressing the people of the Book in this verse, it was said that 'Our Messenger, Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ has come after a long gap,' there emerges a subtle hint towards the need that people who have been honoured with his presence among them should consider this as a matchless blessing and a supreme asset because the line of prophets had remained suspended since a long time and it has been opened for them once again.

Yet another indication given here is towards the fact that the

world has been blessed with his presence in an age and at a place which lacked the light of knowledge and faith. The creation of God had lost its link with God only to be immersed in the worship of self-made idols. In the backdrop of a time such as this, the mission of reviving a people so lost was no easy task. This time was the notorious *Jahiliyyah*, commonly identified as the Age of Ignorance, and the people from it who were entrusted with the Prophet of Islam were spoiled, self-centered and uncompromising. Yet, such was the bliss of his company and so bracing was the light of his mission that this very set of people became, in a very short time, role models and teachers for the whole world in all departments of life - in knowledge, deed, morals, dealings, social living, to name only a few. This, then, becomes a widely witnessed and authentically verified proof that he was a Prophet and Messenger of Allah and that his prophetic teachings were the most effective and the most surpassing among those coming from all past prophets. Imagine the mission of a physician who treats a hopeless patient and does it at a place which lacks medical instruments, and medicines too, yet he succeeds in his effort to treat the patient to the limit that this patient, not simply that he rises from his death-bed to become a healthy person, but that he goes way ahead and himself turns into an expert physician and healer as well - if so, who can doubt the perfection of the master healer!

With this in view, we can see that following the long gap when disbelief in and disobedience to God reigned supreme everywhere, his teaching and training spread out the kind of universal light which remains unparalleled by any age previous to it. In short, out of all miracles, this one miracle alone could compel human beings to have faith in him.

Verses 20 - 26

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسٰى لِقَوْمِهٖ يٰقَوْمِ اذْكُرُوْا نِعْمَةَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ جَعَلَ
فِيْكُمْ أَنْبِيَآءَ وَجَعَلَكُمْ مُّلُوْكًا ۖ وَّاٰتٰـكُمْ مَّا لَمْ يُؤْتِ أَحَدًا مِّنَ
الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٢٠﴾ يٰقَوْمِ ادْخُلُوا الْأَرْضَ الْمُقَدَّسَةَ الَّتِيْ كَتَبَ اللّٰهُ
لَكُمْ وَلَا تَرْتَدُّوْا عَلٰٓى أَدْبَارِكُمْ فَتَنْقَلِبُوْا خٰسِرِيْنَ ﴿٢١﴾ قَالُوْا

يٰمُوْسٰٓى اِنَّ فِيْهَا قَوْمًا جَبَّارِيْنَ ۖ وَاِنَّا لَنْ نَّدْخُلَهَا حَتّٰى يَخْرُجُوْا
مِنْهَا ۚ فَاِنْ يَّخْرُجُوْا مِنْهَا فَاِنَّا دٰخِلُوْنَ ﴿٢٢﴾ قَالَ رَجُلٰنِ مِنَ
الَّذِيْنَ يَخَافُوْنَ اَنْعَمَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمَا ادْخُلُوْا عَلَيْهِمُ الْبَابَ ۚ فَاِذَا
دَخَلْتُمُوْهُ فَاِنَّكُمْ غٰلِبُوْنَ ۚ وَعَلَى اللّٰهِ فَتَوَكَّلُوْٓا اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ
﴿٢٣﴾ قَالُوْا يٰمُوْسٰٓى اِنَّا لَنْ نَّدْخُلَهَآ اَبَدًا مَّا دَامُوْا فِيْهَا فَاذْهَبْ
اَنْتَ وَرَبُّكَ فَقَاتِلَآ اِنَّا هٰهُنَا قٰعِدُوْنَ ﴿٢٤﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ اِنِّيْ لَآ اَمْلِكُ
اِلَّا نَفْسِيْ وَاَخِيْ فَافْرُقْ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَ الْقَوْمِ الْفٰسِقِيْنَ ﴿٢٥﴾ قَالَ
فَاِنَّهَا مُحَرَّمَةٌ عَلَيْهِمْ اَرْبَعِيْنَ سَنَةً ۚ يَتِيْهُوْنَ فِى الْاَرْضِ ۗ فَلَا
تَاْسَ عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْفٰسِقِيْنَ ﴿٢٦﴾

And when Mūsā said to his people, "O my people, remember the blessing of Allah upon you when He made prophets from among you, made you kings and gave you what He did not give to anyone in the worlds. [20]

O my people, enter the Holy Land which Allah has destined for you, and do not turn back, for then you will turn losers." [21]

They said, "O Mūsā, there is a nation of tyrants over there and we shall never go in there until they get out of it. If they do get out of it, we are ready to go in." [22]

Said two men from among the God-fearing, on whom Allah had bestowed His favour, "Enter the gate (charging) upon them. And once you have entered it, you are the ones to overcome. And in Allah you must place your trust, if you are believers." [23]

They said, "O Mūsā, we shall never enter it, in any case, so long as they are there. So go, you and your Lord, and fight. As for us, we are sitting right here." [24]

He said, "O my Lord, I have no control except over myself and my brother. So, make a separation between us and the sinning people." [25]

He (Allah) said, "This (land) is prohibited to them for

forty years. They shall be wandering around the earth. So, do not grieve for the sinning people." [26]

Commentary

Previous to the verses cited above, a pledge was mentioned in which the Banī Isrā'īl were bound to obey Allah and His Messenger. Mentioned along with it was their customary breach of trust, and its punishment. Taken up in the verses appearing above there is a particular event which shows such a breach.

That event goes back to the time when Pharaoh and his army were drowned in the sea and Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and his people, the Banī Isrā'īl, once delivered from the slavery of the Pharaoh, became the masters of Egypt. Then, to bless them with His added reward, and to let them repossess their ancestral land of Syria, Allah Ta'ālā commanded them through Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام that they should enter the Holy Land, that is, Syria, with the intention of *Jihād*. And alongwith it, they were given the good news that victory will be all theirs in this *Jihād* - as Allah had made that holy land their destiny and they were bound to have it. But, the Banī Isrā'īl had their peculiar traits of character. They saw the blessings of Allah with their own eyes, they saw the spectacle of the drowning of Pharaoh and the conquest of Egypt, yet they failed, once again, to stand by the solemn pledges they had given and elected to sit out the *Jihād* of Syria squarely against this Divine command. The punishment they received for it was in the form of a forty-year confinement to a limited area where, strangely enough, there were no walls or fences around them, nor were they in chains. Instead, they were free to move in an open area and actually travelled every day, right from the morning through the evening, with the intention of returning to Egypt, their homeland. But, when came the evening, they would find themselves exactly at the spot from where they had started in the morning. During this period, Sayyidnā Mūsā and Sayyidnā Hārūn عليهما السلام left this mortal world and these people kept wandering in the wilderness of *Tīh*. It was after that, that Allah Ta'ālā sent other prophets for their guidance.

Thus, after the passage of full forty years, those who survived from among them resolved to take up the *Jihād* of Syria and Baytul-Maqdis under the leadership of the prophet of their time and the promise of

Allah that the Holy Land had been destined for them was thus fulfilled. This is a summary of the event referred to in the verses cited above. Let us now see its details in the words of the Qur'ān.

When Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام received the instruction to call his people to *Jihād* in order to conquer Baytul-Maqdis and Syria, he acted very much in accordance with his prophetic wisdom so crucial in giving good counsel. Therefore, before announcing the Divine command to his people, he reminded them of the many blessings bestowed upon them upto that time. He said:

اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ جَعَلَ فِيكُمْ أَنْبِيَاءَ وَجَعَلَكُمْ مُلُوكًا وَآتَاكُمْ مَا لَمْ يُؤْتِ أَحَدًا مِنَ الْعَالَمِينَ

O my people, remember the blessings of Allah upon you when He made prophets from among you, made you kings and gave you what He did not give to anyone in the worlds.

Recounted here are three blessings. The first of these is a spiritual blessing, that is, many prophets were sent to them continuously, a spiritual honour which can hardly be matched. It has been reported in Tafsīr Maẓharī that no other community has had such a large number of prophets as compared to Banī Isrā'īl.

Ḥadīth authority, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, reports on the basis of a narration from A'mash that in only one single period, the last period of the people of Banī Isrā'īl which extends from Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام to Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام, one thousand prophets were sent to Banī Isrā'īl. The second blessing mentioned in the verse quoted immediately above is a material blessing, that is, they were made masters and wielders of power. The hint given here is that the people of Banī Isrā'īl who were the oppressed slaves of the Pharaoh and his people for many ages saw how Allah Ta'ālā destroyed their enemies and how they themselves were made masters and kings. Noteworthy here is the statement about prophets where it was said: جَعَلَ فِيكُمْ أَنْبِيَاءَ (He made prophets from among you) which carries the sense that the whole people were not prophets, and this is the truth as prophets are only a few while the large body of people follows them. But, when it comes to the subject of temporal power on countries and states, said there was: وَجَعَلَكُمْ مُلُوكًا (and made you kings) the outward sense of which is that they (all) were

made kings. The Arabic word, '*mulūk*' used in the text is the plural of *malik* which means a king in common usage. Obviously, when a whole people cannot be all prophets, no people of a country can be all kings. What happens is that authority in a country rests in the hands of an individual or some individuals while the rest of the people are subordinate to them. But, here the words of the Qur'ān are attributing kingship to all of them.

One reason for this is what has been stated by Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī with reference to some righteous elders in his Tafsīr Bayān al-Qur'ān, that is, the sovereignty of the 'king' of a country is customarily attributed to his entire people, for example, during the midde centuries of Islam, the government was called as that of Ummaiyyids and 'Abbāsids. Similarly, the rule of Ghaznavīs and Ghaurīs, then, that of Mughals, and after that, the rule of the British in India was attributed to all individuals of entire people of that country. Therefore, a whole people having a ruler are known (by proxy) to be rulers of that country.

It was according to this usage that the Qur'ān has attributed kingship to the whole people of Banī Isrā'īl. In this, there may be a hint that an Islamic state is really run by a government of the people. It is the people who have the right to elect their Amīr (Imam, leader or ruler) and it is once again, the right of the people who can, by their collective will, remove the holder of that office. Therefore, when seen outwardly, a ruler rules as one individual, but, in reality, that rule is that of the people.

The second reason as reported from some elders by Ibn Kathīr, Maẓharī and others is that the sense of '*malik*' is more general than that of a king. In common usage, this word is also applied to a person who is well-to-do, has a home, owns property and employs help. In the light of this sense, that was a time when every individual from the Banī Isrā'īl was like a king of his castle. That explains the attribution of kingship to the entire Banī Isrā'īl.

The third blessing mentioned in this verse is a combination of both, the spiritual and the material. It was said: وَاٰتٰىكُمْ مَّا لَمْ يُؤْتِ اَحَدًا مِّنَ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ that is, they were given the kind of blessings which were not given to anyone else in all the worlds. Included under these blessings is spiritual

distinction highlighted by the station of prophethood and, along with it, the more obvious temporal power, authority, domain and wealth too. However, a question may arise here regarding the belief that the Muslim *Ummah*, the large body of believers in the Last among Prophets صلى الله عليه وسلم, is the most distinct among all Communities as supported by the textual authority of the Holy Qur'ān, such as: كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ (You are the best *Ummah* raised for mankind - 3:110) and: كَذٰلِكَ جَعَلْنٰكُمْ أُمَّةً وَّسَطًا (And in the same way, We made you a moderate *Ummah* - 2:143) prove it, as do the many narrations from the Prophet's living Traditions. The answer is that the people of the world being mentioned in this verse are the people who were living in the particular period of Banī Isrā'īl which was marked by the presence of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام among them. That was the time when no one in all the worlds was as blessed as were the Banī Isrā'īl. That any other community in times to come could be blessed more than them should not be considered contrary to this.

The saying of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام in the first verse (20) was his introductory remark to the Divine command which appears in the following verse (21) in the words: يٰقَوْمِ ادْخُلُوا الْاَرْضَ الْمُقَدَّسَةَ الَّتِیْ كَتَبَ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ (O my people, enter the Holy Land which Allah has destined for you ...).

Which land is the Holy Land?

Apparently, commentators differ about it. Some say that it means Baytus-Maqdis (Jerusalem). Some identify the city of Quds and Eliah as fitting the description of the Holy Land. Still others point out to the city of Arīḥa which was located between the Jordan river and Baytul-Maqdis and was reported to be one of the oldest cities of the world. In fact, it is still there. Unusual statements portraying its grandeur and vastness have been reported historically. Some narrations say that the city was divided over one thousand wards or counties and every such section had some one thousand public gardens each. Then, there are other narrations which indicate that the Holy Land means Damascus and Palestine, or Jordan, according to some others. And Sayyidnā Qatādah has said that the entire land of Syria is the Holy Land. Sayyidnā Ka'b al-Aḥbār has said that he has seen in the Book of Allah (perhaps, the Torah) that the country of Syria is a special treasure of Allah on this entire earth and there are in it Allah's very special and

very dear servants. This land has been called 'holy' because it has been home to the blessed prophets of Allah. According to some narrations, on a day when Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام climbed a mountain in Lebanon, Allah Ta'ālā said: O Ibrāhīm, look from here and as far as you will see, that land We have made the Holy Land. All narrations cited here have been taken from Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr and Tafsīr Maẓharī and the truth of the matter is that there is not much of a contradiction in these sayings. According to later narrations, the whole country of Syria is the Holy Land - it is just that some narrators have described a certain part of the country of Syria while some others have identified the whole of it.

Looking at verse 22 which begins with the words: قَالُوْا يٰمُوْسٰى (They said, O Mūsā ...), it will be recalled that, in the verse previous to it (21), Allah Ta'ālā had commanded the Banī Isrā'īl through Sayyidnā Mūsā that they should wage a *Jihād* against the Amalkites and conquer Syria - given along with it was the good news that the land of Syria has been destined for them, therefore, their victory is certain.

The present verse (22) tells us that, despite the Divine command and assurance, the Banī Isrā'īl, because of their well-known contumacy and crookedness, just did not obey that command as well. Instead of doing that, they said: 'O Mūsā, there is a nation of tyrants over there, and we shall never go in there until they get out of it. If they do get out of it, then, we are ready to go in.'

The actual event as reported from the masters of Tafsīr (Exegesis), Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās, 'Ikrimah, 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭalḥah and others is that it was a time when the Amalkites ruled Syria and Baytul-Maqdis. They were an offshoot of the people of 'Ād, unusually big in height and size and very ferocious in looks and behavior. They were the people Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and his community were asked to fight against and go on to conquer Baytul-Maqdis.

To carry out the Divine command, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام marched towards Syria in the company of his people, the Banī Isrā'īl. Baytul-Maqdis was their first destination. After crossing the Jordan river, when they reached Arīḥā, the oldest city of the world, they made a stopover. We have already read about the appointment of twelve chiefs to administer the affairs of Banī Isrā'īl in the previous verses of the

Holy Qur'ān. The same chiefs were asked to go on an advance fact-finding mission into enemy territory. Their duty was to gather intelligence on local conditions, the battle front and about the people who control Baytul-Maqdis and against whom they have to wage the *Jihād*. When these chiefs reached Baytul-Maqdis, they were stopped by an Amalkite man right outside the gate of the city. He, all alone, put them under arrest and took them to his king reporting to him that these people had come to fight them. The king went into consultation with his courtiers. Their decision was that all of them should either be killed or punished in some other way. Finally, they agreed upon the proposal that they should be allowed to go free so that they could return to their people and become walking eye witnesses of the great power and grandeur of the Amalkites against which they would never dare to think of marching.

At this point in most books of Tafsīr, reported there are tall tales from Isra'ilite narrations which give the name of the person who accosted these chiefs as 'Awj ibn 'Unuq. His extra-ordinary height and size and his power and strength has been described there with such exaggeration that a sensible person would find it too thick even to just pass it onwards.

Tafsīr authority, Ibn Kathīr has said: Tales reported in such Isrā'īlite narrations can neither be accepted by reason nor do they have any justification in the Sharī'ah. In fact, all this is a bundle of lies and imputations. The truth of the matter is no more than that there are the people called the Amalkites. Since they are the remnants of the people of '*Ād* whose awesome height and size has been mentioned by the Holy Qur'ān itself, so, their huge size and unusual strength were proverbial. One of their men proved strong enough to arrest and take away twelve men from the people of Banī Isrā'īl.

However, freed by the Amalkites, the twelve chiefs of Banī Isrā'īl returned to their people at Arīḥa. They told Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام about these unusual people and how unbelievable was their power and grandeur. Whatever they said to him left his heart unmoved because Allah Ta'ālā had already given him the good news of victory over them through revelation.

So, despite having heard about the power of his enemy, he stood

like a rock making preparations for the *Jihād* initiative. But, he had realized the danger that, should the Banī Isrā'īl come to hear about this unusual strength of their adversary, they would cringe and back out. Therefore, he instructed those twelve chiefs not to talk about the Amalkites before their people, in fact, he asked them to keep this as a guarded secret. But, what actually happened was that everyone from among them passed on the information to their respective friends privately. There were only two of them, Yūsha' ibn Nūn and Kālib ibn Yu'qinā, who strictly followed the instructions of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and did not disclose the secret to anyone.

When ten out of the twelve chiefs let the secret out, it was only natural that the secret became public knowledge. Hit by the news of conditions prevailing in the enemy country, they were all upset. Wailing and protesting, they said: It would have been much better if we too had been drowned in the Nile like the people of the Pharaoh! Now those who saved us there have brought us here to be killed at the hands of those tyrants! It was under these conditions that the Banī Isrā'īl said the following words:

يٰمُوْسٰٓى اِنَّ فِيْهَا قَوْمًا جَبَّارِيْنَ وَاِنَّا لَنْ نَّدْخُلَهَا حَتّٰى يَخْرُجُوْا مِنْهَا

> They said, "O Mūsā, there is a nation of tyrants over there and we shall never go in there until they get out of it. If they do get out of it, we are ready to go in."

It appears in the next verse (23) that two persons, God-fearing and blessed by Allah, hearing the remarks made by the Banī Isrā'īl, gave them some good counsel by saying: Why are you so scared of death much before it has come? Just take a few steps. The gate of the city of Baytul-Maqdis is not far. Take heart and make your move. Only this much of your action, we believe, will become the cause of your victory. Once you enter the gate of Baytul-Maqdis, you will overcome your enemy who would run in defeat. These two persons mentioned in this verse are, according to most commentators, the same two of the twelve chiefs who had faithfully acted upon the advice given by Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and had abstained from telling the Banī Isrā'īl everything about the Amalkites - that is, Yūshā' ibn Nūn and Kālib ibn Yu'qinā.

At this place, the Holy Qur'ān has particularly mentioned two attributes of these two elders: (1) : ٱلَّذِينَ يَخَافُونَ, that is, 'those who fear.' Not said here is as to who it is that they fear. The hint thus given is that there is only one Being in this whole world who deserves to be feared, that is, Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhū* , because He is the Absolute Master of this entire universe. No one can, without His will and permission, bring the least benefit to anyone, nor cause any harm - and when only one Being is deserving of being feared, and that is already determined, then, there remains no need to redetermine it.

The second attribute of these two elders pointed to by the Holy Qur'ān is: (2): أَنْعَمَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمَا, that is, 'Allah had blessed them.' The hint given here is that whoever has any excellence in him anywhere, that is nothing but the blessing and favour of Allah Ta'ālā - otherwise, these twelve chiefs were all blessed with similar outward gifts of hands, feet, eyes and ears with reason and sense on the inside, along with the fortunate company of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام. They had all the strengths on their side, yet they all slipped except these two who stood firm on their committment. This tells us that real guidance does not depend upon one's strength of inward and outward faculties or his effort or deed. Instead, it is a reward from Allah Ta'ālā. However, to become deserving of this reward, effort and deed are, no doubt, a condition.

The standard rule of conduct we learn from here is that a person whom Allah Ta'ālā has blessed with reason, intelligence and smartness should not wax proud over these personal strengths while conducting the business of his life.The best course for him is to seek good guidance in all matters of his life from Allah alone.

In short, these two elders advised their people that they should not feel nervous about the apparent power of the Amalkites. If they would place their trust in Allah, just walk upto the gate of Baytul-Maqdis, victory shall be theirs. As for the decisive statement of these elders that once they reach the city gate, they will overcome and the enemy will run away defeated, it could have been based on a close assessment of the Amalkites, that they were, no doubt, unusually huge in built and strength, but were also weak at heart as a result of which, once they hear about the surprise attack, they would be unable to stay there. And it is also possible that their total faith in the Divine decree

which they had heard from Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام as a glad tiding was the basis on which they said so.

But the Banī Isrā'īl who had not listened to their own prophet Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام would have hardly listened to these elders. They gave them the same response, even in a manner which was more uncouth and grotesque. They said: فَاذْهَبْ أَنْتَ وَرَبُّكَ فَقَاتِلَا إِنَّا هٰهُنَا قٰعِدُوْنَ (So go, you and your Lord, and fight. As for us, we are sitting right here). Had this remark of the Banī Isrā'īl been by way of mockery, it would have been open blasphemy (*Kufr*). After that, the fact of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام living with them and praying for them in the wilderness of Tīh which finds mention in the next verse would have not been possible.

Therefore, the sense of this statement given by leading commentators is: 'You go and fight them. Your Lord will help you. As for us, we cannot help you.' Given this sense, their statement cannot be taken as blasphemy, though the response given by them remains grotesque and hurtful. This is why this statement of the Banī Isrā'īl became proverbial.

Let us recollect a related episode from the early period of Islam. This is the Battle of Badr. An army contingent of a thousand strong youngmen starts marching against Muslims, who are hungry and almost unarmed. Seeing this happen, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم started praying before his Lord. Then, a Ṣaḥābī, Sayyidnā Miqdād ibn al-Aswad رضی الله عنه stepped forward and said: '*Yā Rasūl* Allah , we swear by Allah we shall never say what was said to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام by his people, that is: فَاذْهَبْ أَنْتَ وَرَبُّكَ فَقَاتِلَا إِنَّا هٰهُنَا قٰعِدُوْنَ (So go, you and your Lord, and fight. As for us, we are sitting right here). Instead of that, we shall defend you from your right and left and from the front and rear. Please feel free of any concern and go ahead with your battle plan.'

When he heard this, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was very pleased, and his Companions too were fired with a renewed zeal for *Jihād*. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضی الله عنه always used to say: 'I really envy this feat of Miqdād ibn al-Aswad. I wish I too had this good fortune.'

In gist, the people of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, by giving him a flat

response at such a crucial time, broke all pledges they had made.

The Determination of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام against the Treachery of his People

The prayer of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام: قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي لَآ أَمْلِكُ إِلَّا نَفْسِي (He said, "O My Lord, I have no control except over myself" should be seen in the perspective of the events in the life of the people of Banī Isrā'īl, the favours of Allah bestowed upon them and the conduct of their prophet, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام in their case. An impartial observer would not fail to notice that the people of Banī Isrā'īl had been suffering from all sorts of pain and disgrace as slaves and serfs of the Pharaohs for centuries. It was the teaching of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, and his *barakah* by virtue of which Allah Ta'ālā blessed them with unprecedented stations. With their own eyes, they saw so many manifestations of the most perfect power of Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhū*. The Pharaoh and the people of Pharaoh were defeated on their own grounds, in the Court confrontation summoned by them at the hands of Sayyidnā Mūsā and Sayyidnā Hārūn, peace be upon both of them. The magicians they had trusted were the magicians who placed their trust in Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and elected to stay by his side. Then, there was the Pharaoh, the one who claimed to be God, and alongwith him, there were so many members of his family who lived in luxury in the royal palace. And then, their eyes saw how the great subduing power of Allah, the Mighty, the Exalted, made all of them vacate all palaces and mansions they lived in and leave behind all they once owned, all simultaneously, in a single sweep of time. And how He drowned the Pharaoh in the sea with Banī Isrā'īl looking on the spectacle and how did He make the miracle of Banī Isrā'īl themselves cross the river. And finally, how was the wealth, over which the Pharaoh waxed proud by saying: أَلَيْسَ لِي مُلْكُ مِصْرَ وَ هٰذِهِ الْأَنْهٰرُ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِي (Is it not that this land of Egypt is for me and these are rivers which flow from beneath me?) given out by Allah Ta'ālā, the entire country and the entire wealth, without any fighting or killing, to the Banī Isrā'īl !

These were great happenings. These people were direct witnesses to the manifestations of Allah's supreme power to subdue. No less was the good done to them by Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام who first delivered them from heedlessness and ignorance and then freed them from the

slavery of the Pharaoh facing unbearable hardships in that process. After all that, when these very people were commanded to mount a *Jihad* on Syria, of course with assurances of Divine help and promises of rewards, they betrayed their mean nature and said: اِذْهَبْ اَنْتَ وَرَبُّكَ فَقَاتِلَآ اِنَّا هٰهُنَا قٰعِدُوْنَ (So go, you and your Lord, and fight. As for us, we are sitting right here). Let the greatest possible reformer in the world stop for a while, cross his hand over his heart and think what effect such low attitudes demonstrated by the people he was working for would have produced on him. But, here we are talking about a highly determined *Rasul* of Allah who stands there as an immovable model of steadfastness, despite all odds, and pursuing his goal relentlessly.

Now that he was made helpless by repeated breaches of trust committed by his people, he turns to his Lord and to Him he says only this much: اِنِّيْ لَآ اَمْلِكُ اِلَّا نَفْسِيْ وَاَخِيْ (I have no control except over myself and my brother). And the problem was how could he now carry out the *Jihad* expedition against the Amalkites? Also worth noticing is the fact that there were at least two chiefs of the Bani Isra'il, Yusha' ibn Nun and Kalib ibn Yu'qina, who had proved themselves to have been faithful followers of Sayyidna Musa عليه السلام and had made consistent efforts with him to give good counsel to their people and bring them to the right path. Still at this time, he made no mention of them as well. He simply talked about himself and his brother, Sayyidna Harun عليه السلام. It had no other cause but the same treachery and disobedience of the people of Bani Isra'il. Sayyidna Harun عليه السلام, being a prophet was the only one Divinely protected there. That he would stand firm by the truth in word and deed was certain. As for the two chiefs, they were not so protected and infallible. So, being in pain and anger, he mentioned only those he was certain would stand firm on truth - 'I have no control except over myself and my brother.'

The prayer that Sayyidna Musa عليه السلام made after that was: فَافْرُقْ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَ الْقَوْمِ الْفٰسِقِيْنَ (So, make a separation between us and the sinning people). The substance of this prayer, according to an explanation given by Sayyidna 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas رضى الله عنه, was that 'the punishment these people deserved should be given to them; and whatever we are found to be deserving of should be awarded to us.'

The manner in which Allah Ta'ala answered this prayer was: فَاِنَّهَا

مُحَرَّمَةٌ عَلَيْهِمْ أَرْبَعِيْنَ سَنَةً، يَتِيْهُوْنَ فِى الْأَرْضِ (This [land] is prohibited to them for forty years. They shall be wandering around the earth). It means that the land of Syria was forbidden for them for forty years. They shall not go there, even if they wanted to. And not simply that they would be unable to go to the land of Syria, they would also be unable to return back to their homeland of Egypt, if they thought of going there. Instead of that, they shall be detained in this wilderness.

For punishments that come from Allah Almighty who needs the police and their handcuffs or the high and strong walls and iron-gates of prisons? When He intends to detain anyone, He needs none of these formal arrangements. He can put one under arrest even on grounds open from all sides. The reason is obvious. The whole universe is at His command. It was created by Him and from Him it takes its orders. When the universe is served with Divine orders to put someone under arrest, the air and the atmosphere and the earth and the space become the jailor for the condemned.

So, this open land area located between Egypt and Baytul-Maqdis is comparatively small. Its measurement, according to the Tafsīr of Sayyidnā Muqātil رحمه الله, is thirty *Farsakh* in length and nine *Farsakh* in width. If one *Farsakh* is taken to be equal to three miles, it comes to be a total area of ninty miles in length and twenty seven miles in width. And according to some narrations, the whole area is thirty by eighteen miles. Thus, Allah Ta'ālā detained a whole people whose total number, according to the statement of Sayyidnā Muqātil رحمه الله, was six hundred thousand, restricting them within this small open ground in a manner that they kept struggling for full forty years to somehow get out of this open land area and return back to Egypt, or go forward and reach Baytul-Maqdis. But, what actually happened was that by the time came evening after a whole day's journey, they discovered that they have been as if moving in a circle having returned to the same spot from where they had started in the morning.

Authentic scholars of Tafsīr say that the punishment Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhū* gives to a people is in proportion to their evil deed. Since these disobedient people had uttered the words: إِنَّا هٰهُنَا قٰعِدُوْنَ (we are sitting right here), Allah Ta'ālā had them detained right there for forty years in punishment. Historical accounts in this matter differ. Some

say that during these forty years, the present generation which had disobeyed was totally destroyed. Their next generation survived and it was this generation which, after having been delivered from this forty-year detention, entered Baytul-Maqdis; or, there were some people from the earlier generation who were still surviving. However, there was that promise of the Holy Qur'ān: كَتَبَ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ (that is, Allah has destined the Holy Land of Syria for the Banī Isrā'īl). That promise had to be fulfilled, that the Banī Isrā'īl should take it over and rule the land. But, the people of Banī Isrā'īl present during that time elected to ignore this Divine award for which they were duly punished: مُحَرَّمَةٌ عَلَيْهِمْ أَرْبَعِيْنَ سَنَةً that is, they were deprived of victory over the Holy Land for forty years. Then, it was at the hands of their next generation, that this country was conquered, and the promise of Allah Ta'ālā stood fulfilled.

In this wilderness of Tīh, Sayyidnā Mūsā and Hārūn عليهما السلام were with their people for whom this wilderness was nothing but detention and punishment, while, for these two blessed souls, it was the fountain head of Divine blessings. This is why this period of forty years during which the Banī Isrā'īl were condemned was still full of many silver linings. Such was the *barakah* of the presence of Sayyidnā Mūsā and Hārūn عليهما السلام among them, that Allah Ta'ālā showered on them blessings of many kinds. When they became helpless against the scorching sun over their heads in an open field, Allah Ta'ālā, answering the prayer of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, stretched out a canopy of clouds over their heads. Wherever they went, these clouds would follow them with their shade. When they complained of thirst and the shortage of water, Allah Ta'ālā gave Sayyidna Mūsā عليه السلام a special stone which went with him wherever he went, and when they needed water, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام would strike it with his staff and twelve streams would gush forth from it. When they were hit by hunger, the heavenly food of *Mann* and *Salva* was sent to them. And when they complained about the darkness during nights, Allah Ta'ālā provided for them a tower of light under the light of which they did what they had to do.

To sum up, this wilderness of Tīh was not full of condemned people only. In fact, there were two dear prophets of Allah Ta'ālā and with them two favoured elders, Yūshā' ibn Nūn and Kalīb ibn Yu'qinā, as

well. It was for their sake that, even during this period of detention and punishment, blessings kept coming to them. And since Allah Ta'ālā is the Most Merciful of all those merciful, it is possible that these once disobedient people from the Banī Isrā'īl, after having witnessed the happenings around them, may have repented from their sins and may be it was in return for their act of repentance that they were being blessed with these rewards.

According to authentic narrations, it was during this period of forty years that Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام died. Then, after a year or six month, came the death of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام. After them, Allah Ta'ālā appointed the revered elder, Yūshā' ibn Nūn as a prophet and gave him the mission of guiding the Banī Isrā'īl. When the period of forty years of detention was over, the remaining people of Banī Isrā'īl got together under the leadership of Sayyidnā Yūshā' ibn Nūn and marched towards Baytul-Maqdis on this mission of *Jihād*. True to the promise of Allah Ta'ālā, they conquered Syria and the wealth of the land they inherited was unimaginable.

That it has been said: فَلَا تَأْسَ عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْفٰسِقِيْنَ (so do not grieve for the sinning people) at the end of verse 26 has a basis, for the blessed prophets, may peace be upon them all, are endowed with a natural disposition which makes it impossible for them to bear by the pain and hardship of their people. Even if they are punished, the prophets too are affected emotionally. Therefore, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام has been comforted here that he should not grieve over the punishment given to those people.

Verses 27 - 32

وَاتْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَاَ ابْنَيْ اٰدَمَ بِالْحَقِّ ۘ اِذْ قَرَّبَا قُرْبَانًا فَتُقُبِّلَ مِنْ
اَحَدِهِمَا وَلَمْ يُتَقَبَّلْ مِنَ الْاٰخَرِ ؕ قَالَ لَاَقْتُلَنَّكَ ؕ قَالَ اِنَّمَا يَتَقَبَّلُ
اللّٰهُ مِنَ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿٢٧﴾ لَئِنْۢ بَسَطْتَّ اِلَيَّ يَدَكَ لِتَقْتُلَنِيْ مَاۤ اَنَا
بِبَاسِطٍ يَّدِيَ اِلَيْكَ لِاَقْتُلَكَ ۚ اِنِّيْۤ اَخَافُ اللّٰهَ رَبَّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ
﴿٢٨﴾ اِنِّيْۤ اُرِيْدُ اَنْ تَبُوْٓاَ بِاِثْمِيْ وَاِثْمِكَ فَتَكُوْنَ مِنْ اَصْحٰبِ

النَّارِ ۚ وَذٰلِكَ جَزٰٓؤُا الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٢٩﴾ فَطَوَّعَتْ لَهٗ نَفْسُهٗ قَتْلَ
اَخِيْهِ فَقَتَلَهٗ فَاَصْبَحَ مِنَ الْخٰسِرِيْنَ ﴿٣٠﴾ فَبَعَثَ اللّٰهُ غُرَابًا
يَّبْحَثُ فِى الْاَرْضِ لِيُرِيَهٗ كَيْفَ يُوَارِىْ سَوْءَةَ اَخِيْهِ ؕ قَالَ
يٰوَيْلَتٰٓى اَعَجَزْتُ اَنْ اَكُوْنَ مِثْلَ هٰذَا الْغُرَابِ فَاُوَارِىَ سَوْءَةَ
اَخِىْ ۚ فَاَصْبَحَ مِنَ النّٰدِمِيْنَ ﴿٣١﴾ مِنْ اَجْلِ ذٰلِكَ ۛ كَتَبْنَا عَلٰى
بَنِىْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ اَنَّهٗ مَنْ قَتَلَ نَفْسًا بِغَيْرِ نَفْسٍ اَوْ فَسَادٍ فِى
الْاَرْضِ فَكَاَنَّمَا قَتَلَ النَّاسَ جَمِيْعًا ؕ وَمَنْ اَحْيَاهَا فَكَاَنَّمَآ اَحْيَا
النَّاسَ جَمِيْعًا ؕ وَلَقَدْ جَآءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُنَا بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ ۫ ثُمَّ اِنَّ كَثِيْرًا
مِّنْهُمْ بَعْدَ ذٰلِكَ فِى الْاَرْضِ لَمُسْرِفُوْنَ ﴿٣٢﴾

And recite to them the story of the two sons of Ādam truthfully. When they both offered a sacrifice, then it was accepted from one of them and was not accepted from the other. He said, "I will kill you." He said, "Allah accepts only from the God-fearing. [27] **If you stretch your hand towards me to kill me, I am not going to stretch my hand towards you to kill you. Of course, I fear Allah, the Lord of the worlds.** [28] **I would rather have you earn my sin and your sin and then become one of the people of the Fire. And that is the punishment of the unjust."** [29]

His self, however, prompted him to kill his brother, so he killed him and became one of the losers. [30] **Then, Allah sent a crow who was scratching the earth to show him how he should hide the corpse of his brother. He said, "Alas! Was I not even able to be like this crow so that I could hide the corpse of my brother? So, he stood regretful.** [31]

For this reason, We prescribed for the children of Isrā'īl that whoever kills a person not (to retaliate) for a person killed nor (to punish) for spreading disorder in the earth, is as if he has killed the whole mankind, and whoever saves the life of a person is as if he has saved the life of the whole mankind. And certainly, Our mes-

sengers have come to them with clear signs. Then, after all that, many of them are there to commit excesses on the earth. [32]

Commentary

The Story of Hābīl (Abel) and Qābīl (Cain)

In these verses, Allah Ta'ālā has instructed the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that he should relate the story of the two sons of Ādam truthfully to the people of the Book, or to the whole *Ummah*.

People who are blessed with insight into the Holy Qur'ān know that it is no book of folklore, fiction or history where the purpose is to relate an event from the beginning to the end. But, events of the past and accounts of earlier peoples carry many lessons and wise counsels within their fold. That is the real essence of history. Then, in them, there are such conditions and circumstances as form the basis of different religious injunctions. In view of these very beneficial considerations, the Qur'ān employs a methodology of its own throughout the text. It would, when the occasion warrants, narrate an event. Most often, it would not narrate the whole event in one sequence and at one place. In fact, preference is given to narrating a particular segment from it which bears some element of purpose and is relevant at the given place.

This story of the two sons of Ādam عليه السلام is being narrated here in the same style. It has many lessons and good counsels for the present and future generations; and under them, mention has been made of many religious injunctions.

We shall proceed by explaining the words used in the text of the Qur'ān following which you will have an idea of the main story, and after that we shall be talking about injunctions and rulings contained therein.

In the previous verses, mentioned there was the command of *Jihād* given to the Banī Isrā'īl and how cowardly and evasive they turned out to be in response. Set in contrast, the present story condemns unjust killing and the destruction it brings in its wake. The purpose is to bring the people to adhere to moderation and balance in this matter, for the way it is an error to cringe and back out from fighting and kill-

ing to uphold the truth and put an end to falsehood, similarly, starting to kill and fight unjustly amounts to a stock destruction of one's material and spiritual life both in the present world and in the Hereafter.

As for the expression: ابْنَيْ اٰدَمَ (*ibnaiy Ādama* : the two sons of Ādam) appearing in the first verse (27), it can be said that, for that matter, every human being, man and woman, is from the progeny of Ādam and everyone can be identified as being from among the children of Ādam. But, according to the judgement of the majority of authentic scholars of Tafsīr, the expression: ابْنَيْ اٰدَمَ at this place means the two real sons of Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام, that is, Hābīl and Qābīl. It was to relate their story that it was said: وَاتْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَاَ ابْنَيْ اٰدَمَ بِالْحَقِّ (and recite to them the story of the two sons of Ādam truthfully).

While Reporting Historical Accounts, Caution and Truth are Mandatory

Here, by adding the word: بِالْحَقِّ (*bil-ḥaqq* : truthfully), stress has been placed on an important principle to be observed while reporting historical narratives. Great caution is mandatory in this matter. These narratives should have nothing false in them, nothing contrary to the truth, nothing dubious or deceptive, nor should there be any change, increase or decrease, of any kind, in the narration of the original event. (Ibn Kathīr)

This is not the only place where the Holy Qur'ān has identified this principle. There are other places too where similar instructions appear that it be observed. In Sūrah 'Āl 'Imrān, it was said: اِنَّ هٰذَا لَهُوَ الْقَصَصُ الْحَقُّ (This is indeed the true narration - 3:62). In Sūrah Al-Kahf, it was said: نَحْنُ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ نَبَاَهُمْ بِالْحَقِّ (We narrate to you their story with truth - 18:13). And in Sūrah Maryam, it was said: ذٰلِكَ عِيْسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ قَوْلَ الْحَقِّ (That was 'Īsā son of Maryam - a Word of Truth ... -19:34). At all these places, by including the key word of *Al-Ḥaqq* or The Truth with historical narrations, the importance of observing truth in reporting events has been made mandatory. The large number of disorders in this world generated through reporting of events usually issue forth from lack of caution in handling it as it should be handled. A little change of word or mode could distort the reality of the event. The religious codes and laws of past communities were lost through this trap door of negligence and lack of caution leaving their religious books to become collections of stories devoid of

reliable authority. So, by adding a single word: بِالْحَقِّ (truthfully) at this place in the verse, a clear signal was given towards this important objective.

In addition to what has been said above, through this very word, the addressees of the Holy Qur'an are also being chastened and guided to the fact that their noble prophet, on him be the peace and blessing of Allah, who is a total *Ummiyy* (untaught by any human being), yet he is describing the events which took place thousands of years ago, absolutely true and correct. When so, how else could it be explained but that it was Divinely revealed to a Divinely ordained prophet?

After this introduction, the event relating to these two sons of Adam عليه السلام was put in the following words by the Holy Qur'an: إِذْ قَرَّبَا قُرْبَانًا فَتُقُبِّلَ مِنْ أَحَدِهِمَا وَلَمْ يُتَقَبَّلْ مِنَ الْآخَرِ that is, both of them offered their sacrifices for Allah Ta'ala, but it was accepted from one of them and was not accepted from the other.

The word: قربان (*Qurban*), in terms of Arabic lexical usage, refers to whatever is made the medium of nearness to someone; and in Islamic legal terminology, it means the *Dhabihah* or sacrifice which is offered to seek nearness to Allah Ta'ala.

The event of offering this sacrifice which has been reported on the basis of sound and strong chains of authorities and which has been declared by Commentator Ibn Kathir as the unanimously agreed upon position of all earlier and later 'Ulama is given below.

When Sayyidna Adam and Hawwa' عليهما السلام came to live in the world and started having children, it so happened that they had twins from every pregnancy, one of the two being a boy, while the other, a girl. That was a time when, among the children of Adam عليه السلام, there was no one other than brothers and sisters - and brothers and sisters cannot be married to one another. So, Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhu*, in terms of the need of the time, had promulgated a special provision in the religious law given to Sayyidna Adam عليه السلام that, as for a boy and girl born out of one pregnancy, they shall be regarded as real brothers and sisters among themselves and marriage between them shall be considered forbidden. But, for a boy born in the second pregnancy, a girl born in the first one shall not be legally taken as a real sister and marriage between them would be permissible.

But, what happened was that the girl born with the first boy, Qābil, was beautiful while the girl born with the second boy, Hābil, was ugly. When came the time of marriage, the ugly girl born with Hābil fell to the lot of Qābil according to rules. This enraged Qābil. He turned hostile to Hābil and started insisting that the girl born with him should be the one given in marriage to him. Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام, in view of the legal rule of procedure, did not accept the demand. However, to remove the division between Hābil and Qābil, he proposed that they should both offer their respective sacrifice for Allah. Whoever has his sacrifice accepted will be the one to have that girl. The reason is that Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام was certain that the sacrifice to be accepted will be the sacrifice of the one who has the right to marry her, that is, the sacrifice of Hābil.

In those days, an open sign of a sacrifice being accepted was that a fire would come from the sky and eat up the sacrifice; and the sacrifice which was not eaten up by the fire was the sign of its remaining unacceptable.

Now, the situation was that Hābil was the owner of a flock of sheep and goats. He offered the sacrifice of a good spring lamb. Qābil was a farmer. He offered some grains as his sacrifice. As customary with them, a fire did come from the sky and ate up the sacrifice offered by Hābil - and the sacrifice offered by Qābil remained lying where it was, untouched. Thereupon, hit by failure and disgrace, Qābil was further enraged. Unable to restrain it, he told his brother openly: لَأَقْتُلَنَّكَ (I will kill you).

Hābil did not respond to his angry remark with counter anger on the spot. He rather said something which was peaceful and principled. It even had an element of sympathetic concern for him: إِنَّمَا يَتَقَبَّلُ اللّٰهُ مِنَ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ (Allah accepts only from the God-fearing) that is, if you had been God-fearing, practicing *Taqwā* and piety, your sacrifice too would have been accepted. Since you did not do so, the sacrifice was not accepted. Why blame me for it?

Also mentioned within this statement is the cure for the envy (*ḥasad*) of the envier (*ḥāsid*), that is, when the envier sees that Allah Ta'ālā has given someone a particular blessing which has not been given to him, then, he should take his deprivation as a result of his own

practical shortcomings and sins and think of repenting from them and correcting his or her behaviour - not that one starts wishing and worrying about ways through which the other person could be made to lose the blessing he has - because this would not bring him any gain, in fact, it will become the cause of some loss to him, for acceptibility with Allah depends on *Taqwā* (fear of Allah). (Maẓharī)

Acceptibility of Deeds Depends on *Ikhlāṣ* (Sincerity) and *Taqwā* (Fear of Allah)

There appears in this dialogue between Hābīl and Qābīl a sentence which has the status of an important principle: The acceptibility of one's deeds and acts of worship depends on *Taqwā*. The deed of a person who has no *Taqwā* in him is not accepted. For this reason, the learned among the righteous elders (*salaf*) have said that this verse is a shot in the arms of those who are devoted to acts of worship and do deeds in the hope of finding the pleasure of Allah. And this was the reason why Sayyidnā 'Āmir ibn 'Abdullāh was crying at the time of his death. People around him asked: 'As for you, you have been busy doing your '*Ibādāt* (acts of worship) and good deeds throughout your life, why, then, would you weep?' He said, 'You are saying this and ringing in my ears is this saying of Allah Ta'ālā: إِنَّمَا يَتَقَبَّلُ اللّٰهُ مِنَ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ (Allah accepts only from the God-fearing). I just do not know if any '*Ibādah* of mine will be accepted, or not.'

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضی اللہ عنہ said: 'If I become certain that Allah Ta'ālā has accepted some deed of mine, then, I would not surrender this blessing even if the whole world were to turn into solid gold and pass into my possession, in fact, I would take it to be nothing as compared to that blessing.'

Similarly, said Sayyidnā Abū Ad-Dardā' رضی اللہ عنہ: 'If it stands settled that one *Ṣalāh* of mine has found acceptance with Allah Ta'ālā, then, that is far more than a whole world-full of blessings for me.'

Sayyidnā 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz, may Allah be pleased with him, gave the following good counsel to a person in a letter he wrote to him.

> "I tell you to hold on to *Taqwā* without which no deed is accepted; and mercy is not shown to anyone except those who observe *Taqwā*; and without it there is no Divine reward on anything. There are many who preach it but there are very few who practice it."

And Sayyidnā 'Alī al-Murtaḍā رضی اللہ عنہ said: 'Even the smallest deed done with Taqwā is not small. And how a deed which has been accepted can be called small? (Ibn Kathīr)

Verses 33 - 34

إِنَّمَا جَزَٰٓؤُا الَّذِينَ يُحَارِبُونَ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَيَسْعَوْنَ فِي الْأَرْضِ
فَسَادًا أَنْ يُقَتَّلُوٓا أَوْ يُصَلَّبُوٓا أَوْ تُقَطَّعَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَأَرْجُلُهُمْ مِنْ
خِلَافٍ أَوْ يُنْفَوْا مِنَ الْأَرْضِ ۚ ذٰلِكَ لَهُمْ خِزْيٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَلَهُمْ
فِي الْآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٣٣﴾ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ تَابُوا مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ
تَقْدِرُوا عَلَيْهِمْ ۚ فَاعْلَمُوٓا أَنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٣٤﴾

Those who fight against Allah and His Messenger and run about trying to spread disorder in the earth, their punishment is nothing but that they shall be killed off or be crucified or their hands and legs be cut apart from different sides or they be kept away from the land (they live in). That is a humiliation for them in this world, and for them in the Hereafter there is a great punishment; [33] **except those who repent before you overpower them. Then, be sure that Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful.** [34]

Commentary

Qur'ānic Laws are Unique and Revolutionary

Mentioned in the previous verses (27-32) was the event of the killing of Hābīl (Abel) and its gravity as a crime. In the verses cited above, and in verses which follow, there is a description of the legal punishments for killing, plundering, robbery and theft. Prompted in between the description of the punishments for robbery and theft is the need to fear Allah and the desirability of seeking nearness to Him through acts of obedience. This approach of the Qur'ān, acting in a very subtle manner, prepares the human mind to accept the desired revolutionary change in thinking. The reason is that the Holy Qur'ān, unlike the penal codes of the world, does not stop at a simple codification of crime and punishment. Instead of doing that, it combines with each crime and its punishment the ultimate fear of Allah and the Hereafter making the later almost present before him whereby it would turn the human orientation towards a state of being the very thought of which

leaves a person all cleansed from every defect and sin. An impartial view of things as they are around us will prove that, without the motivating factors of the fear of Allah and the apprehension of the Hereafter, no law or police or army of this world can guarantee that crimes can be eradicated from human societies. It is this wise and affectionate approach of the Holy Qur'ān which ushered a revolution in the world when it created a society of human beings who, in their Godliness, were ahead of even angels.

The Three Kinds of Islamic Legal Punishments

Before we proceed with the details of the Islamic legal punishments for robbery and theft mentioned in the verses cited above and present our explanations of the particular verses, it seems appropriate to clarify the Islamic legal terminology concerning these punishments - a lack of familiarity with which causes even educated people to fall in doubts. Under all common laws of the world, punishments for crimes are considered penalties in an absolute sense, irrespective of the crime concerned. Law books like the Indian Penal Code, Pakistan Penal Code and some others in other countries are comprised of all sorts of crimes and their punishments. But, in the Shari'ah of Islam, things work differently. Here, the punishments of crimes have been divided into three kinds. These are: Ḥudūd (Islamic legal punishment delimited as Divine Statute; plural of Ḥadd), Qiṣāṣ (Even Retaliation) and Ta'zīrāt (Penalties; plural of Ta'zīr). Before we move on to define these three kinds and explain their sense, it will be useful to bear two things in mind.

Firstly, it is necessary to know that crimes which bring harm or loss to a human being inflict injustice not only on the created but also cause disobedience to the Creator. Therefore, in every crime of this nature, the Right of Allah (*Ḥaqqullāh*) and the Right of the Servant of Allah (*Ḥaqqul-'Abd*) are intermingled, and one becomes guilty of both crimes. But, in some crimes, the status of the Right of the Servant of Allah is more important while, in some others, the status of the Right of Allah is more prominent. As for the modus operandi in religious injunctions, it rests on this status of predominance.

Secondly, it is also necessary to know that the Sharī'ah of Islam has not determined any yardstick for crimes other than those which

are special. Instead, it has left it to the discretion of the Qāḍī (the Judge of an Islamic Court) who could award and enforce the kind and amount of punishment deemed necessary to plug out the incidence of crime keeping in view the objective conditions prevailing in whatever time, place and circumstance it may be. It is also possible that the Islamic state of any time and any place may, with due consideration of Islamic legal percepts, restrict the rights of the Qāḍīs in some manner and make them abide by a particular measure of punishment for crimes - as has been the practice in the later centuries of Islam, and as it nearly is the prevailing practice in most countries.

Let us now understand that crimes for which the Qur'ān and Sunnah have not fixed any punishment, instead, have left it to the discretion of the relevant authorities, are the kind of punishments which are called "Ta'zīrāt"(penalties) in the terminology of the Sharī'ah of Islam. As for the punishments of crimes already fixed by the Qur'ān and Sunnah, they are divided over two kinds. Firstly, those in which the Right of Allah has been declared to be predominant and the punishment for which is known as "Ḥadd," the plural of which is "Ḥudūd." Secondly, those in which the Right of the Servant of Allah has been accepted as predominant in accordance with the Sharī'ah of Islam and the punishment for which is called the "Qiṣāṣ" (Even Retaliation). As for the description of Ḥudūd and Qiṣāṣ, the Holy Qur'ān has itself explained it in full details. The details of the remaining penal offences have been left to the judgement of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and to the discretion of the relevant ruling authority of the time.

In short, we can say that the punishment of crimes which the Holy Qur'ān has promulgated after having determined it to be the Right of Allah is called the "Ḥudūd," and that which it has ordained as the Right of the Servant of Allah is known as "Qiṣāṣ," and crimes the punishment of which has not been determined by it are called, "Ta'zīr." The injunctions of these three kinds differ in many respects. Those who take the punishment of every crime as "Ta'zīr" on the basis of their own customary usage - and do not keep the difference of Islamic legal terminology in sight - make frequent errors of judgement in understanding Islamic legal injunctions.

As for the punishment of penal offences (Ta'zīr), they can be made

the lightest, the heaviest, or could even be pardoned, all depending on attending circumstances. Here, the powers and options of the relevant authorities are wide. But, when it comes to Ḥudūd, no Amir or government or ruler or head of state is permitted to make the least change, alteration, reduction or increase in it. Neither does a change in time and place affect it in any manner nor does the Amir or chief executive of the government have the right to waive or pardon it.

There are only five "Ḥudūd" in the Sharī'ah of Islam. These are the punishments for (1) Robbery, (2) Theft, (3) Adultery, (4) False Accusation of Adultery. These punishments have been mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān clearly and categorically (*Manṣūṣ*). The fifth Ḥadd is that of drinking wine which stands proved on the basis of a consensus (Ijmā') of the noble Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Thus, the punishments of a total of five crimes stand fixed here. These are called the "Ḥudūd." The way no Amīr or ruler can reduce or pardon these punishments, very similarly, even an act of repentance cannot bring about an amnesty for the criminal as far as the punishment due in this mortal world is concerned. Of course, the sin bound to bring punishment in the Hereafter does get to be forgiven through sincere repentance leaving at least that account in the clear. Out of these, there is only one punishment, that of robbery, in which there is an exception, that is, if the robber repents before being arrested and his conduct in dealings proves his repentance to be satisfactory, only then, this "Ḥadd" will stand dropped. Repentance after arrest is not valid with regard to the worldly punishment. Other than this, the remaining Ḥudūd do not get to be forgiven in this world even by repentance - whether this repentance comes before the arrest or after it. In matters relating to penal offences (Ta'zīrāt) recommendations could be heard as warranted by a relevant right. In the Ḥudūd of Allah (punishment under Divine right) even the making of a recommendation is not permissible, and equally impermissible is its hearing too. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has prohibited it strictly. The punishments under Ḥudūd are generally strict. The law of their enforcement is also strict as nobody has been permitted to make any additions or substractions in them under any circumstances, nor can they be waived or forgiven by anyone. Along with this strict stance maintained in punishment and law, when it comes to some moderation of matters, equally stringent conditions have been imposed

regarding the completion of the crime as well as the completion of the proof of the crime. Should even a single condition out of these be found missing, the Ḥadd stands dropped. In fact, even the least doubt found in the proof will cause the Ḥadd to be dropped. In this matter, the established law of Islam is: اَلْحُدُوْدُ تَنْدَرِءُ بِالشُّبُهَاتِ that is, Ḥudūd are dropped in case of doubt.

At this point, let us also understand that in cases where the Islamic legal punishment (Ḥadd) is dropped because of a doubt or absence of some condition, it is not necessary that the criminal would go scot-free only to become more daring in later crimes. Instead of that, the relevant ruler would award the penal punishment to him as due in his case. The penal punishments (Ta'zīrāt) of the Sharī'ah are generally physical which, being lesson-oriented, have a complete system of blocking and eradicating crimes. Suppose, only three witnesses were found to attest to the proof of adultery (Zinā), and the witnesses are upright and trustworthy about whom the doubt that they would lie cannot be entertained. But, according to the Islamic legal norm, the Islamic legal punishment will not be enforced against the offender because of the absence of the fourth witness. However, it does not mean that the offender will be allowed to walk out free of any obligation, lesson or penalty. The ruler of the time would, rather, award an appropriate penal punishment to him which would be in the form of lashes. Or, take the example of the punishment for theft. If there remains any shortfall or doubt in conditions fixed as the required proof of theft, the Islamic legal Ḥadd punishment of cutting hands cannot be enforced on the accused. This does not mean that the accused goes all untouched and free. On the contrary, other penal punishments will be given to him as warranted in his case.

The Punishment of Qiṣāṣ (Even Retaliation)

Like Ḥudūd, the punishment of Qiṣāṣ has also been fixed in the Qur'ān, that is, life be taken for life and wounds be retaliated by even wounds. But, the difference is that Ḥudūd have been enforced as the Right of Allah (*Ḥuqūqullāh*). It means that should the holder of the right elect to forgive the offence, it will not be forgiven, and the Ḥadd will not be dropped. For example, should the person whose property has been stolen were to forgive the thief, the Islamic prescribed pun-

ishment for theft will not stand forgiven on that count. This is contrary to the case of Qiṣāṣ where the Qur'ān and Sunnah have declared the status of the Right of the Servant of Allah (*Ḥaqqul-'Abd*) as predominant. This is why the accused killer, after the crime of killing has been proved legally, is handed over to the guardian (*Walī*) of the person killed who can, at his discretion, take Qiṣāṣ and have him killed, or forgive him, if he so wishes. Similar to this is the case of Qiṣāṣ in cases of wounds.

You already know that Ḥudūd and Qiṣāṣ when dropped do not let the criminal go unscathed, the ruler of the time having the power and discretion to award the amount and kind of penal punishment (Ta'zīr) considered appropriate. Therefore, it should not be doubted that, in the event the criminal charged with homicide were to be set free after having been forgiven by the guardian of the person killed, killers would be encouraged and cases of homicide would become common. This doubt is unfounded because taking the life of the person who had killed was the right of the guardian of the person who was killed - and he surrendered it by forgiving. But, providing the security of life for other people is the right of the government. It can, to protect this right, sentence the killer for life or give him some other punishments in order to offset the danger posed by such a person to the lives of other people.

The Explanation of Āyāt and Details of Ḥudūd

Upto this point, we have dealt with necessary information about the terminology of Islamic Legal Punishments of Ḥudūd, Qiṣāṣ and Ta'zīrāt. We can now move to the explanation of verses which carry injunctions about them and which would also include a detailed discussion of Ḥudūd. The first verse (33) begins by stating the punishment of those who fight against Allah and His Messenger and go about spreading disorder in the earth. For the sake of clarity, let us consider two things at this stage.

1. What does 'fighting' (*Muḥārabah*) against Allah and His Messenger and spreading disorder in the earth mean, and to whom does this apply? The word, *Muḥārabah* is derived from *Ḥarb* and intrinsically means to wrest or snatch away. In Arabic usage, it is used against *Salm* which means peace and security. Thus, we can see that the

sense of Ḥarb (fight) is the spreading of disorder. It is obvious that rare incidents of theft or killing and plundering do not cause public peace to be disturbed. In fact, this happens only when a powerful and organized group stands up to carry out acts of robbery, killing and plundering. Therefore, according to Muslim jurists, the punishment contemplated in this verse is meant for a group or an individual who robs people and breaks the law of the land by the force of arms. This will not include those who indulge in common individual crimes such as thieves and pick-pockets. (Tafsīr Maẓharī)

2. The second point worth noticing in this verse is that 'Muharabah' (fighting) of the criminals is said to be against Allah and His Messenger, though the confrontation or fighting waged by robbers and rebels is apparently against human beings. The reason is that a powerful group when it elects to break the Law given by Allah and His blessed Messenger with force, it is really at war with the government, even though they are obviously carrying out their aggression against common human beings. But, when the government itself is Islamic, a government which subscribes to and enforces the Law of Allah and His Messenger, this act of 'fighting' (Muḥārabah) will invariably be regarded as being 'against' Allah and His Messenger.

In short, the punishment mentioned in the first verse (33) applies to robbers and rebels who ruin public peace by attacking with armed group force and break the law of the land openly. As obvious, this could appear in many forms. So, everything from aggression against property and honour to killing and bloodshed is included within its sense. It is from here that we find out the difference between *Muqātalah* and *Muḥārabah*. *Muqātalah* refers to a bloody fight, though with actual killing or without, and though property is also looted as an adjunct. The word, *Muhārabah* is used in the sense of spreading disorder by employing force and causing the destruction of public peace and safety. Therefore, this word is particularly used to denote high-handed and group-led intrusion into anything relating to the life, property and honour of people which is called highway looting, robbery and rebellion.

The punishment for this crime has been fixed by the Holy Qur'ān itself when it enforced it as the Right of Allah which, in a manner of

saying, was a crime against the ultimate authority. In the terminology of the Sharī'ah, it is called the Ḥadd. Let us now find out the Islamic prescribed punishment for dacoity and highway robbery. In the present verse (33), four punishments for highway robbery have been mentioned: أَنْ يُقَتَّلُوْا أَوْ يُصَلَّبُوْا أَوْ تُقَطَّعَ أَيْدِيْهِمْ وَأَرْجُلُهُمْ مِّنْ خِلَافٍ أَوْ يُنْفَوْا مِنَ الْأَرْضِ : That they shall be killed off or be crucified or their hands and legs be cut apart from different sides or they be kept away from the land (they live in).

In the first three punishments, the words used belong to a particular from of verb called "Bāb a'-Taf'īl" which are emphatic and denote repetition and intensity of the respective acts. The added use of the plural form gives the hint that their being killed or crucified or amputated is not like common punishments where punishment is given only to one individual who has provenly committed a crime. The situation here is rather different when the whole group of robbers will be awarded the punishment by being killed or crucified or amputated, even though the actual crime was committed only by one single individual of the group. Another hint given here indicates that this killing, crucification and amputation is not in the form of Qiṣāṣ which could stand pardoned after having been forgiven by the guardians of the person killed. Instead, this Islamic Legal Punishment (Ḥadd) has been enforced as the Right of Allah (Ḥaqqullāh) and the punishment will not be pardoned legally even if the people who have suffered were to forego and forgive. These two rulings were arrived at by the text's choice of the particular grammatical form (*Bābut-Taf'īl*) of the first three words of the verse. (Tafsīr Mazharī and others)

These four punishments for highway robbery have been introduced by using the word: أو : '*Aw*,' which is also employed to give choice in a few things and for a division in allotment of jobs too. Therefore, a group of Ṣaḥābah, Tābi'īn and jurists of the Muslim Ummah, by taking the word, '*Aw*,' in the sense of choice, has taken the position that the Imām or Amīr or the ruler has been legally given the choice to award all four punishments, or any one of them as suitable in their cases, of course, after an assessment of the power and terror of the robbers and the gravity or negligibility of their crimes. This is the view held by Sayyidnā Sa'īd ibn al-Musaiyyib, Sayyidnā 'Aṭā', Dāwūd, Ḥasan al-Basrī, Ḍaḥḥāk, Nakh'ii and Mujāhid as well as that of Imām Mālik

from among the Four Imāms. On the other hand, Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, Imām Shāfi'ī, Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal and a group of Ṣaḥābah and Tābi'īn have taken the word, '*Aw*' in the sense of division of work. Thus, according to them, the sense of the verse is that there are different punishments which can be applied to various conditions of highway robbers and highway robberies. This position is also supported by a *ḥadīth* where, based on a narration from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ, it has been reported that the Holy Prophet ﷺ had entered into a peace treaty with Abū Burdah Aslami. He broke the treaty when he robbed some people going to Madīnah to embrace Islam. Pursuant to this episode, Sayyidnā Jibra'īl came with an injunction for punishment. The injunction stipulated that whoever killed, and looted property as well, should be crucified; and whoever killed, but did not loot, should be killed; and whoever looted, but did not kill anyone, should have his hands and legs cut apart from different sides; and whoever from them embraces Islam should have his crime pardoned; and whoever did not kill or plunder but restricted himself to scaring people, which caused a breach of public peace, should be exiled. If these people have killed a Muslim or non-Muslim citizen of Dār al-Islām - but, did not loot property - their punishment is : أَنْ يُقَتَّلُوْا that is, all of them should be killed, even though the act of killing was directly carried out by some of them only. And if they killed and looted both, their punishment is : يُصَلَّبُوْا that is, they should be crucified. The form it should take is that they be hanged alive, then their stomach be slit with a spear or something else. And if they have participated in looting only and have not killed anyone, their punishment is : أَوْ تُقَطَّعَ أَيْدِيْهِمْ وَأَرْجُلُهُمْ مِّنْ خِلَافٍ that is, their right hands be cut apart from the wrists and their left legs from the ankles. Here too, though this act of looting may have been performed directly only by some of them, yet the punishment will remain just the same for all of them, because whatever the doers of the act did, they did it with their trust in the cooperation and assistance of their accomplices, therefore, all of them are partners in the crime. And if they had yet to commit the crime of killing or plundering while they were arrested beforehand, their punishment is : أَوْ يُنْفَوْا مِنَ الْأَرْضِ that is, they be kept away from the land they live in.

The sense of 'keeping away' or turning out from the land, according to a group of Muslim jurists, is that they should be turned out from

Dār al-Islām. Some others say that they should be turned out from the place where they have committed the crime of robbery. In cases like this, Sayyidnā 'Umar al-Fārūq رضى الله عنه gave the verdict that should the criminal be turned out from one place and left to roam free in other cities, he was bound to harass the people there. Therefore, let a criminal like this be locked in a prison. This will become his 'keeping away' or turning out from the land for he cannot go and walk anywhere. Imām Abū Ḥanīfah has adopted this very view.

As for the question that armed attacks of this kind these days are no more restricted to looting of property or killing and bloodshed alone for there are frequent instances of raping and kidnapping women as well. So, if the statement of the Qur'ān : وَيَسْعَوْنَ فِى الْاَرْضِ فَسَادًا (and run about trying to spread disorder in the earth) were to be taken as inclusive of such crimes, what punishment would they deserve? Here, apparently the Imām or Amīr or the ruler will have the option of enforcing whichever of the four punishments he deems fit in their case; and in the event that he does find the necessary proof of adultery as admitted by the Sharī'ah of Islam, he would enforce the Ḥadd punishment for *Zinā* (adultery) as well.

Similarly, if the position is that no one was killed, no property was looted, but, some people did receive wounds at their hands, then, they would be subjected to the law of Qiṣāṣ (Even Retaliation) against the inflicting of wounds. (Tafsīr Maẓharī)

Towards the end of the verse (33), it was said: ذٰلِكَ لَهُمْ خِزْىٌ فِى الدُّنْيَا وَلَهُمْ فِى الْاٰخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيْمٌ that is, the Islamic Legal Punishment to which they have been subjected here is humiliation for them in this world and certainly a token of punishment. As for the punishment of the *Ākhirah*, that is much harsher and more lasting. This tells us that the punishments of Ḥudūd, Qiṣāṣ or Ta'zīrāt in this mortal world do not lead on to the forgiveness of punishments due in the Ākhirah unless the person sentenced repents and makes a genuine *Taubah*, following which he could hope to have the punishment of *Ākhirah* forgiven.

In the second verse (34) : اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ تَابُوْا مِنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ تَقْدِرُوْا عَلَيْهِمْ (... except those who repent before you overpower them), an exception has been mentioned. The exception is that should the robbers and rebels were to repent - before they are surrounded and overpowered by government

forces, and are in a state when their position of strength is still operative - and decide on their own to abandon their practice of highway robbery, then, this Prescribed Punishment will stand dropped in their case. This exception is different from the general Law of Ḥudūd because in other crimes such as theft and adultery, if the criminal, after he has committed the crime and has been indicted by a Qāḍī court as guilty, were to prove that he had repented genuinely, then, though the punishment of the Hereafter (Ākhirah) would stand forgiven by virtue of this repentance, yet the Islamic Prescribed Punishment (حد شرعی) will not be forgiven in this mortal world - as it will be explained later, after some verses, under the punishment for theft.

The wisdom behind this exception is that, on the one hand, such severity has been maintained in the punishment of robbers that for the commitment of the crime - even if by one person out of a whole group - punishment is given to the whole group. Therefore, on the other hand, things have been made softer and lighter through this exception, that is, let them repent if they would, in which case, the punishment of the mortal world would also be forgiven. In addition to that, there is a strategic advantage here in this provision, that is, it is not always easy to control or overpower a powerful group, therefore, the door of pursuasion has been left open for them so that they are induced to repent.

Yet another expedient consideration in this matter is that killing a person is an extreme punishment. Here, the drift of the Islamic Law is that it should happen as rarely as possible while, in a case of robbery, the killing of a whole group becomes necessary, therefore, the effort to reform them too, through pursuasion, was continued simultaneously. The kind of effect it produced was that 'Alī Asadī who robbed passersby on the outskirts of Madīnah with the help of his group happened to hear one of those days the following verse of the Holy Qur'ān being recited by a Qārī in the caravan (under attack) : يٰعِبَادِیَ الَّذِیْنَ اَسْرَفُوْا عَلٰٓى اَنْفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوْا مِنْ رَّحْمَةِ اللّٰهِ (O My servants who have committed excesses against their own selves, do not lose hope in the mercy of Allah - Zumar, 39-53). When he looked for the Qārī and found him, he asked him to recite the verse once again. When he had heard the verse the second time, he put his sword back into the sheath, repented from robbery

and reached Madīnah. At that time, Marwān ibn al-Ḥakam was the chief executive of Madīnah. The well-known Ṣahābī, Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضی اللہ عنہ held 'Alī Asadī by the hand and took him to the Amīr of Madīnah. Before him, he recited this verse of the Qur'ān and said: You cannot give him any punishment.

The government was already helpless against their robbery and the disorder generated by it. Everyone was pleased with the outcome.

An event similar to this happened when Ḥāritha ibn Badr rebelled, left the city and took to the practice of killing and plundering. But, Almighty Allah gave him the Taufīq (ability) later on when he repented and returned to Madīnah. Then, Sayyidnā 'Alī رضی اللہ عنہ did not subject him to the ordained legal punishment (حد شرعی).

At this point, it is worth remembering that the waiver in the Islamic Legal Punishment (حد شرعی) does not make it necessary that the Rights of the Servants of Allah the criminal has trampled upon will also be forgiven. On the contrary, the fact of the matter is that anything valuable taken from anyone, which is still available, must be returned back. And if someone was killed or wounded, one is duty-bound to go through the consequences as stipulated under the Law of Qiṣāṣ (Even Retaliation). However, since Qiṣāṣ is the Right of the Servant of Allah, it could be forgiven if forgiven by the guardians of the person killed or by the person who holds that Right. Other than that, if someone has hurt someone else financially, it is necessary to vacate the liability (Ḍamān), or have it forgiven by the person concerned. This is the favoured position of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah and that of the majority of the jurists of Islam. A little reflection would show that this is a fairly obvious matter as the act of seeking deliverance from any infringement of the Rights of the Servants of Allah is a part of the act of *Taubah* (repentance) itself. *Taubah* without it remains just incomplete. Therefore, a robber or dacoit will be taken as genuinely repentant only when he pays for whatever Rights of the Servants of Allah he has infringed upon, or has it forgiven by them.

Verses 35 - 40

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا ٱتَّقُوا ٱللَّهَ وَٱبْتَغُوٓا إِلَيْهِ ٱلْوَسِيلَةَ وَ

جَاهِدُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِهٖ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لَوْ
اَنَّ لَهُمْ مَّا فِى الْاَرْضِ جَمِيْعًا وَّمِثْلَهٗ مَعَهٗ لِيَفْتَدُوْا بِهٖ مِنْ
عَذَابِ يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ مَا تُقُبِّلَ مِنْهُمْ ۚ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿٣٦﴾
يُرِيْدُوْنَ اَنْ يَّخْرُجُوْا مِنَ النَّارِ وَمَا هُمْ بِخٰرِجِيْنَ مِنْهَا ۫ وَلَهُمْ
عَذَابٌ مُّقِيْمٌ ﴿٣٧﴾ وَالسَّارِقُ وَالسَّارِقَةُ فَاقْطَعُوْٓا اَيْدِيَهُمَا
جَزَآءًۢ بِمَا كَسَبَا نَكَالًا مِّنَ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَزِيْزٌ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿٣٨﴾ فَمَنْ
تَابَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ ظُلْمِهٖ وَاَصْلَحَ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَتُوْبُ عَلَيْهِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ
غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿٣٩﴾ اَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ لَهٗ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ
وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ يُعَذِّبُ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَيَغْفِرُ لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ
شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿٤٠﴾

O those who believe, fear Allah and seek the *wasīlah* of nearness to Him, and carry out Jihād in His way so that you may succeed. [35] **Surely, those who disbelieve are such that if they have all that there is in the earth, and more as much besides it, to pay it as ransom against the punishment of the Doomsday, it shall not be accepted from them. And for them there is a painful punishment.** [36] **They will wish to come out of the Fire, but they are not to come out from there. And for them there is a lasting punishment.** [37]

As for a man or woman who commits theft, cut off the hands of both to recompense them for what they earned, a deterrent from Allah. And Allah is Mighty, Wise. [38] **And whoever repents after his transgression and corrects himself, then Allah shall relent towards him. Surely, Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful.** [39]

Do you not know that to Allah alone belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth? He punishes whomsoever He wills and forgives whomsoever He wills. And Allah is powerful over everything. [40]

Commentary

In verses previous to those cited above, the Islamic Prescribed Punishment of robbery and rebellion, as well as the details of injunctions relating to them, were mentioned while the Prescribed Punishment for theft is coming up after three verses later. The three verses which appear in between talk about Taqwā (the fear of Allah), obedience to and the worship of Allah, inducement to Jihād (fighting or struggling in the way of Allah) as well as the ruinous effects of disbelief, rejection, obstinacy and disobedience. A deeper look into this particular style of the Qur'ān would reveal that its oft-recurring approach is not simply to state the letter of the law of penalty and punishment as some cold and coercive command from the law giver and just leave it at that, instead, by taking the approach of an affectionate nourisher and nurturer, it also smooths out the edges of the human mind to prepare it for its ultimate abstention from crimes. And when it awakens the human minds to the awaiting realities of the fear of Allah and the Ākhirah (Hereafter) and when it makes the everlasting blessing and bliss of Paradise appear almost in sight, it goes on to change hearts replacing their chronic taste for crime with instant distaste. This is the reason why words similar to: اِتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ (fear Allah) are repeated after stated laws of crime and punishment. Here too, three things have been commanded:

1. The first one is : اِتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ that is, 'fear Allah', for it is the fear of Allah alone which can really stop human beings from committing crimes openly and secretly.

2. The second one is : وَابْتَغُوٓا اِلَيْهِ الْوَسِيْلَةَ that is, 'seek the nearness of Allah.' The word, "وسیلہ" : *wasīlah*, left untranslated, is a derivation from the verbal noun, '*waslun*', which means to make effort to become close to someone. This word, whether spelt with the letter, *sīn* (وسیلہ : سین, or *ṣād* (وصیلہ : صاد), is used almost in the same sense. The only difference is that *waṣlun* spelt with the letter, *Ṣād* (صاد) refers to becoming close in the absolute sense, while, *waslun* spelt with the letter, *sīn*, is used to denote seeking to gain nearness with longing and love. Related details appear in the Ṣiḥāḥ of Jauharī and in the Mufradāt of Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī. So, *wuṣlah* (وصلہ) or *waṣīlah* (وصیلہ) spelt with the letter, *Ṣād*, refer to something which brings about nearness or conjunction be-

tween two things, whether that nearness comes to be through longing and love, or in some other form. As for the word, *wasīlah* (وسيلة) spelt with the letter, *sīn*, it means that which brings someone closer to someone else through liking and love. (Lisān al-'Arab, Mufradāt al-Qur'ān)

The act of seeking to gain access to Allah - that is,'*wasīlah*' to Allah, to be precise - is anything which brings a servant of Allah nearer to his or her sole object of worship with all longing and love. Therefore, the righteous elders, the Ṣaḥābah and Tābi'īn have explained the word, 'wasīlah', to mean obedience, nearness, faith and righteous conduct. Sayyidnā Ḥudhayfah, as reported by Ḥākim, said : '*Wasīlah*' means nearness and obedience, and Ibn Jarīr has reported the same on the authority of 'Aṭā', Mujāhid and Ḥasan al-Baṣri, may the mercy of Allah be upon them all.

Also, Ibn Jarīr and others have reported from Qatādah a Tafsīr of this verse which is : تَقَرَّبُوا اِلَيْهِ بِطَاعَتِهٖ وَالْعَمَلِ بِمَا يُرْضِيْهِ . It means : Seek nearness to Him by obedience to Him and by doing deeds which please Him. Therefore, the gist of the explanation of this verse is that one should seek the nearness of Allah through '*Īmān* (faith) and '*A'māl* (good deeds).

Appearing in the Musnad of Aḥmad, there is a sound (Ṣaḥīḥ) *ḥadīth* in which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been reported to have said: '*Wasīlah*' is a high rank of Paradise, above which there is no rank. You pray to Almighty Allah that He gives me that rank.

Again, in a narration from Saḥīḥ Muslim, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said: When the Mu'adhdhin (مؤذن : Muezzin) calls the Adhān, you keep saying what he says. Then, recite Durūd on me and pray that I be blessed with '*Wasīlah*.'

These *aḥādīth* tell us that '*Wasīlah*' is a special rank of *Jannah* (Paradise) which is identified particularly with the Holy Prophet ﷺ. As for the command to seek and find '*Wasīlah*'given to every believer, it seems to be, on the surface, contrary to this particularity. But, the answer is fairly clear that the way the highest station of guidance is special to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم who always prayed for it, but, its elementary and intermediary ranks of guidance are common and open to all Muslims - similarly, the high rank of '*Wasīlah*' is particular

to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and all ranks after it are open and common to all believers through the linkage of their love for him.

In his Letters, the famous renovator of the second millennium of Islam in India, Mujaddid Alf-Thānī, and Qāḍī Thanā'ullāh of Pānīpat, in his Tafsīr Mazharī, have both warned that the sense of longing and love embedded in the word, '*Wasīlah*', clearly shows that advancement in the ranks of '*Wasīlah*' depends on the love for Almighty Allah and His Messenger - and love comes through the following of Sunnah, the words and deeds of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. This is because Almighty Allah says: فَاتَّبِعُوْنِيْ يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللّٰهُ (Say [O Prophet], "If you do love Allah, follow me; Allah shall love you ..."- 3:31). Therefore, the more particular one is in following the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in acts of worship, transactions, dealings, morals, social living, practically in all departments of life, the more beloved of Allah one shall be, and the more widening becomes the gyre of this love, the closer and nearer to Allah one shall be.

Now, after this lexical explanation of the word, '*Wasīlah*,' and the exegetical notes from the Ṣaḥābah and Tābi'īn, we do know how everything which becomes the means of achieving the pleasure and nearness of Allah is, for a human being, the '*Wasīlah*' of becoming close to Allah. As included in it are faith (*'Īmān*) and good deeds (*al-a'māl al-sālih*), so included therein are the company and the love of prophets and righteous people as well, for that too is one of the causes of the pleasure of Allah - and so, praying to Allah Almighty by making them a *Wasīlah*' should be correct, as was done by Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه when he, at the time of a famine, making Sayyidnā 'Abbās a '*Wasīlah*,' made a prayer for rains before Almighty Allah. The prayer was answered.

It is reported that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had himself taught a blind Saḥābī to pray with the words which are as follows : اَللّٰهُمَّ اِنِّيْ اَسْأَلُكَ وَاَتَوَجَّهُ اِلَيْكَ بِنَبِيِّكَ مُحَمَّدٍ نَبِيِّ الرَّحْمَةِ (O Allah, I seek from You, and I ask for Your attention with (the *Wasīlah* of) Your Prophet, Muḥammad, the Prophet of Mercy. (Manār)

3. Before taking up the third command, that of Jihād, in this verse (35), it will be useful to recollect the first command, that of Taqwā, then the command to seek nearness to Allah through faith and good

deeds, and now in the end it was said: وَجَاهِدُوْا فِىْ سَبِيْلِهٖ (and carry out Jihād in His way). Though Jihād was included under 'good deeds' yet it was to spell out the higher status of Jihād among 'good deeds' that Jihād was mentioned separately and distinctly - as confirmed by a saying of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم which is : وَذِرْوَةُ سَنَامِهِ الْجِهَادُ that is, Jihād is the highest peak of Islam. Moreover, there is yet another element of wisdom why Jihād has been mentioned distinctly at this place. It will be recalled that the unlawfulness of spreading disorder on the earth, alongwith its worldly and other-wordly punishment, was mentioned in previous verses (32, 33). Since Jihād too, given a surface view of it (or, as those allergic to it would love to believe), appears to be some form of disorder on the earth (*al-fasād fī al-arḍ*), therefore, it was possible that someone ignorant could just fail to understand the difference between Jihād (fighting in the way of Allah) and *Fasād* (spreading disorder). To offset this possibility, the spreading of disorder on the earth was forbidden first and it was after that that the command of Jihād was mentioned distinctly and the difference between the two was pointed out by the addition of the words : فِىْ سَبِيْلِهٖ (in His way). This is because the killing and plundering of the property of people in robberies and rebellions is for the sole purpose of personal aggrandizement and other nefarious objectives while, should it ever come to happen in a Jihād, it will still be for the initial purpose of upraising the Word of Allah and eliminating oppression and tyranny. There is a world of difference between the two.

Moving on to the second (36) and the third (37) verses, one notices the manner in which the grave curse of Kufr (disbelief), Shirk (the associating of partners in the Divinity of Allah) and sin has been pointed out. It is so poignant that even a little reflection on it could bring an instant revolution in the lives of men and women of such persuasion compelling them to abandon all Kufr and Shirk and sin. To explain the curse of sinful living a little further, it can be said that sins in which one gets involved usually is because of personal desires and needs or for the desires and needs of family and children. Since their fulfillment comes through an increase in wealth and property, one goes after amassing wealth and property without making any distinction between what is Ḥalāl (lawful) and what is Ḥarām (unlawful) in it. In these verses, Almighty Allah has censured the acquisition mania

of such people which will prove to be futile in the ultimate analysis because its cure lies in realizing that things of comfort collected to satisfy a short lived span of life by working hard day and night still remain unattained. More and more stays to be the order of every other day in life. What begins must end and this race of gold and greed will also end when the punishment of the Doomsday will appear in sight and, at that time, if these people were to offer all they had collected in the mortal world, wealth and property, things and things of comfort, taste and value, offer all of it in return for their release from the punishment, then, this would not be possible anymore. Even if the wager is increased higher, suppose everything of value were to be owned by one person, nay, let us say twice as much, and if he were to offer all of it to have his release from the punishment, still then, nothing would be accepted from him and he will not have his deliverance from the punishment of the Hereafter. That this punishment would be everlasting for disbelievers has been made clear through the third verse (37).

The fourth verse (38) reverts to the subject of the punishment of crimes where the Islamic Legal Punishment of theft has been described. The punishment for theft belongs to the category of Ḥudūd which is one of the three kinds of Islamic Legal Punishments discussed earlier (under the Tafsīr of verses 33 and 34). Since the Holy Qur'ān has itself fixed this punishment, it has not been left at the discretion of the relevant authorities. The Holy Qur'ān has determined it as the Right of Allah (*Ḥaqqullāh*), therefore, it is called the *Ḥadd* of *Sariqah* (The Islamic Legal Punishment of Theft). The words of the verse are:

وَالسَّارِقُ وَالسَّارِقَةُ فَاقْطَعُوٓا اَيْدِيَهُمَا جَزَآءًۢ بِمَا كَسَبَا نَكَالًا مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَاللّٰهُ عَزِيْزٌ حَكِيْمٌ

As for a man or woman who commits theft, cut off the hands of both to recompense them for what they earned, a deterrent from Allah. And Allah is Mighty, Wise.

Noteworthy here is the fact that the address in Qur'ānic injunctions is generally to men wherein women are also understood as included consequentially. In *Salāh*, *Sawm*, *Ḥajj*, *Zakāh* and in all injunctions of the Sharī'ah, this is the general operating principle of

Qur'ān and Sunnah. But, in the case of the punishment for theft and adultery, the text here does not limit itself to addressing men only, instead of which it addresses its command to both sexes mentioning them separately.

One reason for doing so is that this is a matter of Ḥudūd in which the least doubt could cause it to be dropped. Therefore, women were not left as implied under the address. They were, rather, mentioned explicitly.

Understanding the Islamic Law of *Sariqah* (Theft)

Something else we should find out at this stage is the very sense of the word, 'Sariqah' and its definition as determined in the Sharī'ah of Islam. According to Al-Qāmūs, the Arabic Lexicon, if anyone takes what belongs to someone else, from a secured place, without his or her permission, clandestinely, it is called "Sariqah." And this is its Islamic legal definition too. So, in the light of this definition, in order that Sariqah be proved, a few ingredients must exist:

1. **BEING PRIVATELY- OWNED :** The property concerned must have been owned privately by an individual or group. The stealer should own nothing in it, nor should there be any doubt of such ownership, nor should there be things in it in which the rights of common people are equal, such as, institutions of public welfare and their belongings. This tells us that should someone take something in which he or she has ownership rights, or there is a doubt of such ownership, or in which the rights of common people are equal, then, the Ḥadd of Sariqah, the Islamic Prescribed Punishment, will not be enforced against the stealer. However, the relevant authority of the time could enforce punitive punishment (Ta'zīr) at his discretion.

2. **BEING SECURED :** It means that the stolen property must be secured as in a locked house or under a security guard. Property not in a secured place, if picked up by someone, would also not render that person liable to be charged with the Ḥadd of Sariqah. However, should there be even a doubt in the property concerned being secure, even then, the Ḥadd of Sariqah will stand dropped. Considerations of sin and punitive punishment (Ta'zīr) are a separate matter.

3. **BEING WITHOUT PERMISSION :** If a person, who has been

given the permission to take or pick up and use the property concerned, chooses to take it away for good, the Ḥadd of Sariqah will not be imposed. And should there be even a doubt about the stealer having such permission, the Ḥadd will stand dropped.

4. TAKING CLANDESTINELY : This is because the looting of someone's property openly is no theft. It is robbery, the punishment for which has already been stated. The point is if it is not by stealth, the Ḥadd of Sariqah will not be imposed on the person concerned.

After having heard the details involved in all these conditions, you would have already realized that theft as known to us carries a general and wide sense. Every single person who indulges in it is not legally liable to the Ḥadd of Sariqah, that is, the punishment of cutting hands. Instead of that, this Prescribed Punishment shall be enforced against that particular form of theft in which all these ingredients have been found present.

Along with it, you also know that situations in which the Ḥadd for theft is dropped, it is not at all necessary that the criminal would go scot-free. In fact, the relevant authority of the time could award punitive punishment against him at his discretion, which could even be physical, as that of lashes.

In the same way, let it not be surmised that, in situations where the absence of some condition of Sariqah restrains the enforcement of the Ḥadd Punishment, the act itself would become legally permissible and lawful - because, as explained earlier, we are not talking about sin and the punishment of the Hereafter here. The concern here is that of the temporal punishment, and that too of a particular kind of punishment. Otherwise, the property of a person taken without his pleasure and permission, no matter how, shall remain Ḥarām (unlawful), causing punishment in the Hereafter - as clarified in the verse : لَا تَأْكُلُوْٓا اَمْوَالَكُمْ بَيْنَكُمْ بِالْبَاطِلِ (And do not eat up each other's property by false means - 2:188).

Also worth noting here is the fact that the words used by the Qur'ān in the matter of theft are the same as those used about the punishment of adultery. But, the difference is that, in the matter of theft, the mention of man appears first and that of woman follows,

while, in the case of adultery, the arrangement has been reversed where woman has been mentioned first. Thus, in the punishment of theft, it was said: وَالسَّارِقُ وَالسَّارِقَةُ (a man or a woman who commits theft - 5:38) while, in the punishment of adultery, it was said: اَلزَّانِيَةُ وَالزَّانِي (the woman and the man guilty of fornication - 24:2). Commentators have indicated many elements of wisdom in this reversal of word order, but the one that appeals most is that the crime of theft when committed by man as compared to that committed by a woman is more grave because Almighty Allah has blessed him with the kind of strength to earn his living which a woman does not have. Should a man who, despite that so many doors of earning his living are open to him, stoop so low as to commit the disgraceful crime of theft, really increases the gravity of his sin. And when it comes to the matter of adultery, Allah Almighty has blessed a woman with natural modesty and secured atmosphere which leaves no reason for her to fall into the lower levels of immodesty which would be a grave crime indeed. Therefore, in theft, the mention of man precedes while, in adultery, that of woman.

After stating the Ḥadd Punishment for theft in this verse (38), two sentences have been added. The first sentence is: جَزَآءًۢ بِمَا كَسَبَا : (to recompense them for the evil deed they committed and the second sentence is: نَكَالًا مِّنَ اللّٰهِ (a deterrent from Allah). The later is composed of the words, '*Nakāl*' (a deterrent) and '*min Allah*' (from Allah). Lexically, the Arabic word, '*Nakāl*' means a punishment which is exemplary, something which teaches a lesson to others as well so that they too abandon any intentions of committing crimes. Therefore, a translation of this word in the idiom of any other language would have to have a sense of lesson and dissuasion both. The hint given here is that the stern punishment of cutting hands is based on a consideration which is special and wise. In simple words, it amounts to punishing one and chastening the rest so that this ugly crime is eradicated totally. Then, by adding '*min Allah*' (from Allah), a pointed reference has been made to yet another subject of importance, that is, there are two ways of looking at the crime of theft. Firstly, a person may take the property belonging to someone else without any right to do so which inflicts injustice on the later. Secondly, this person acted counter to the command of Allah. Keeping the first aspect in sight, this punishment is the right of the victim of injustice which requires that the punishment,

if pardoned by the holder of the right, will stand forgiven - and this is the customary practice in all cases of Qiṣāṣ (Even Retaliation). Now looking at it from the second aspect, this punishment is for having acted contrary to the command of Allah. It requires that this punishment will not be forgiven even if it were to be forgiven by the person who has been the victim of the theft - unless, of course, forgiven by Almighty Allah Himself. This is called Ḥadd or Ḥudūd in the terminology of the Sharī'ah of Islam. So, by determining the second aspect through the addition of *'min Allah'* (from Allah), the hint given is that this punishment is Ḥadd - not Qiṣāṣ, that is, in a manner of saying, the punishment has been awarded for what constitutes a Crime against the State! Therefore, even if the person who is the victim of the theft were to forgive, the punishment would still not be dropped.

Finally, towards the end of the verse (38), by saying: وَاللّٰهُ عَزِيْزٌ حَكِيْمٌ (And Allah is Mighty, Wise), answer has been given to the doubt so widely entertained these days, that is, this punishment is very harsh. Not resting at that, there are the loudmouthed and the uninformed among them who would not even fight shy of saying that this punishment is savage. Refuge with Allah! These words are there to point out that the introduction of this severe punishment is not only that it is an outcome of Allah's being Mighty and Powerful, but that it also based on His being Wise as well. The Islamic Legal Punishments which the modern highbrows of the West label as harsh and savage shall be taken up in details with comments on the wisdom behind them, their need and benefits, soon after we have completed the explanation of the present set of verses.

The next verse (39) says:

فَمَنْ تَابَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ ظُلْمِهٖ وَاَصْلَحَ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَتُوْبُ عَلَيْهِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ

And whoever repents after his transgression and corrects himself, then Allah shall relent towards him. Surely, Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful.

It will be recalled that forgiveness was also mentioned in connection with the Prescribed Punishment for robbery appearing a few verses earlier (34) - and forgiveness has been mentioned after the punishment

for theft as well. But, the statement of forgiveness at both places has a particular difference and it is on the basis of this difference that the sense of forgiveness in both punishments has been taken differently by Muslim jurists. While ordaining the punishment for robbery, giving an exception, Almighty Allah has said: إِلَّا الَّذِينَ تَابُوا مِن قَبْلِ أَن تَقْدِرُوا عَلَيْهِمْ (except those who repent before you overpower them - 5:34) the outcome of which is that the Ḥadd Punishment for robbery mentioned in the verse provides an exemption whereby the one who repents - before robbers are overpowered and arrested by the government - shall have his Ḥadd Punishment forgiven. As for the forgiveness mentioned after the punishment for theft, it does not have the exemption from this temporal punishment. It is rather in terms of the Hereafter that this repentance shall be accepted towards which a clear indication exists in the words: فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يَتُوبُ عَلَيْهِ (then Allah shall relent towards him). In other words, the relevant ruler of the time will not abandon the Ḥadd Punishment because of this repentance, instead of that, Almighty Allah will, by forgiving their crime, grant deliverance to them from the punishment of the Hereafter. Therefore, Muslim jurists almost unanimously agree that the Ḥadd Punishment for robbery shall not be enforced on robbers who repent before they are arrested. But, should a thief were to forsake and repent from stealing after having committed a theft - whether before or after arrest - then, the Ḥadd of Sariqah, the Islamic Legal Punishment, which is a temporal punishment, will not be forgiven. That the sin is forgiven and deliverance from the punishment of the Hereafter has been achieved is not contrary to this.

The later verse (40) says:

أَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۗ يُعَذِّبُ مَن يَشَآءُ وَيَغْفِرُ لِمَن يَشَآءُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

Do you know that to Allah alone belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth? He punishes whomsoever He wills and He forgives whomsoever He wills. And Allah is powerful over everything.

This verse is linked with and homogeneous to previous verses which feature stringent injunctions of the Islamic Legal Punishments for robbery and theft. A shallow look at these injunctions could give the false

impression of their being contradictory to human dignity. It is to remove this doubt that Almighty Allah has, in this verse, initially stated that He alone is the real Master of all the universe. Then, He says that He alone is the Absolute Power. In between, comes the statement that it is not only that He punishes. He forgives as well, and that forgiveness and punishment depend on His Wisdom, for the way He is the Absolute Master and the Absolute Power, so is He Absolutely Wise too. There is no human power which can guage the extents of His mastery and domain so shall there be no human reason which can fully fathom the countless manifestations of His Wisdom - and that which it would pass on to human beings by virtue of pondering through principles is sufficient enough to put their hearts at peace.

What is Benign and What is Savage?

People in the West and those influenced by their education and culture commonly object that Islamic punishments are harsh. And as pointed out a little earlier, there are some heedless people who do not even hesitate to say that these punishments are savage and undignified.

Before we deal with this matter, it would be useful to keep what has been stated earlier in sight. We know that the Holy Qur'ān has itself determined and fixed the punishments for only four crimes which are called Ḥadd, in the terminology of the Islamic Sharī'ah. The punishment of robbery is the cutting of the right hand and the left foot; the punishment of theft is the cutting of the right hand from the wrist; the punishment of adultery is one hundred lashes in some situations, and stoning to death in some others; the punishment of making a false accusation of adultery is eighty lashes. The fifth Islamic Prescribed Punishment (Ḥadd) is that of drinking which is eighty lashes as fixed under the consensus of the Ṣaḥābah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. With the sole exception of these five crimes, the punishment of all other crimes has been left to the discretion of the ruler of the time so that the relevant judge may award the kind and amount of punishment with due consideration of the crime, the criminal and the circumstances. This is a matter in which it is also possible that some particular system designed to delimit and apportion punishments is established in consultation with those fit to guide and advise, and Qāḍīs or judges are

bound with it. This is what happens these days when penal laws are generally enacted through legislative assemblies, and Qāḍīs or judges award punishments within limits already identified. Although, in the five crimes the punishment for which has been fixed by the Qur'ān, or through a consensus (*Ijmā'*), and in which no individual or party or assembly has any right of alteration or substitution, but, in them too, if the proof of the crime is not available through the Law of Evidence prescribed by the Sharī'ah, or there be the proof of the crime but conditions under which this punishment is enforced may not be complete, and the fact of the crime stands proved in the sight of the Qāḍī or judge, still then, in that situation too, the Ḥadd Punishment (حد شرعی) will not be enforced, instead of which, the punishment given will be punitive (Ta'zīrī). Along with it, there is the standing rule of Islamic Law that the benefit of doubt goes to the person accused of a crime. A doubt about anything in the proof of the crime or the conditions of the crime causes the Ḥadd Pubnishment to be dropped. But, in the event that there be the necessary proof of crime available, the punishment given will be punitive (Ta'zīrī).

This tells us that there will be many more situations in which the Ḥadd Punishment will not be enforced and, in their place, punitive punishments will be awarded subject to the discretion of the ruler of the time. Since punitive punishments have not been predetermined by the Sharī'ah, they can be changed or tailored to suit the needs of every time and every circumstance just like the general laws of the land. Therefore, at least, in this field, nobody has room for any objection. Now the 'debate' is reduced to the punishments of five crimes only, and that too, in their particular situations. For example, let us take theft and see that the punishment of cutting the hand has not been imposed by the Sharī'ah on every theft, in an absolute sense - that is, theft as we know it in our common usage. This is no Sariqah. Sariqah, the crime which is punished by cutting the hand, has a peculiar definition of its own, details about which have appeared earlier (under the subheading: 'Understanding the Islamic Legal Punishment of Sariqah') and which can be briefly defined here as the taking out of someone's property from a secured place, by breaking the security arrangements, unlawfully and secretly. According to this definition, many forms recognized as common thefts stand eliminated from the standard defini-

tion of the Ḥadd of Sariqah. For instance, the condition of a secured place tells us that property stolen from commonly used pub'ic places such as Masjid, maṣallā of '*Īd* (area earmarked for the large congregational prayers on the occasion of 'Idul-Fiṭr and 'Idul-Aḍḥā), Park, Club, Railroad Station, Waiting Room, Train, Airplane etc., or stealing fruits hanging on trees, or stealing honey will not cause the Ḥadd of Sariqah to be imposed against the thief, instead of that, punitive punishment will be given to the culprit as generally done in most countries. Similarly, take the example of a person you have allowed to enter your house - whether he is your servant or maid or a worker on wages or a builder on contract or a friend or relative - now should he take something away from your house, then, though he is included under the definition of common theft and is deserving of the punitive punishment for it, yet, the Islamic Legal Punishment of cutting the hand will not be enforced on him - because he entered the house with your permission and the arrangement of legal security is not complete as far as he is concerned.

Similarly, incidents like someone picked someone else's pocket, or snatched away cash or jewellery from someone's hand, or extracted something by fraud, or went back on his word when asked to return what he had agreed to keep in trust are all unlawful and impermissible, and definitely included under customary thefts, but, the punishment for all these is punitive which depends upon the discretion of the ruler. Since these are not included under the definition of legally culpable 'Sariqah,' no amputation of hand will take place.

Likewise, the hand of a stealer of coffin clothes will not be cut because, first of all, it is in no secure place, then the shroud itself is not in the 'ownership' of the deceased, though this act of the stealer is gravely unlawful. For this, he will have his punitive punishment at the discretion of the ruler. In the same manner, if someone commits a theft in what was jointly owned property in which the stealer too had some share - whether it was a joint property from inheritance or from commercial partnership - it is a situation in which, since some part of the ownership of the stealer is also included therein, the doubt about such ownership will cause the Islamic Legal Punishment (Ḥadd) to be dropped and punitive punishment will be given.

As for all these conditions, they relate to the actual completion of the crime, a brief outline of which you have seen above. Now what comes next is the completion of the proof. In this matter of enforcing Ḥudūd, the Sharī'ah has also made its Law of Evidence unmistakeable by keeping it very distinct and cautious as compared to what concerns other common matters. In the punishment of adultery, imposed there is the condition of four witnesses in place of two - and that too, while they give such eye witness as would not leave any word doubtful there-in. Though, in the case of theft, only two witnesses are sufficient, yet, even for these two, some additional conditions, other than those commonly required in witnessing, have been imposed. For example, there are other matters in which, if needed, the Qāḍī or judge has the option to accept the witness of a sinning person if he is satisfied that the person, despite his being a sinner practically, does not lie. But, in the case of Ḥudūd, the Qāḍī or judge does not have the right to accept his witness. Common matters can be judicated based on the evidence given by one man and two women. But, in Ḥudūd, the evidence of two men is necessary. In common cases, the Sharī'ah does not consider Tamādī (being time-barred) as valid excuse - a witness given by someone can be accepted irrespective of the time lag since the event occured. But, in Ḥudūd, if a testimony is not given immediately, instead of that, was given after one month or was delayed more than that, then, it will not be acceptable.

This brief outline of the conditions of the enforcement of the Ḥadd of Sariqah appearing above has been taken from the highly authoritative book of the Hanafī Fiqh, Badā'i' al-Ṣanā'i'.

The outcome of all these conditions is that the Ḥadd of Sharī'ah, the Islamic Prescribed Punishment, will be enforced only in a situation when it is strictly in accordance with the rules of procedure determined by the inviolable Sharī'ah of Islam that the crime, as well as, its proof are found conclusively complete - and so complete too as would leave no aspect of it doubtful. This tells us that the Sharī'ah has done two things simultaneouly - it has, on the one hand, fixed the punishment of these crimes, as required in its wisdom, being strict as they are; but, on the other hand, it has also taken extreme precaution in the enforcement of the Ḥudūd of Islamic Law. The Law of Evidence as

applicable to Ḥudūd is also different from the Law of Evidence as applicable to common matters, and is certainly based on extreme precaution. The slightest shortfall in it renders the Ḥadd of the Sharī'ah to be changed into punitive punishment. Similarly, in the event of any shortcoming being found in determining the completion of the crime, the Ḥadd of the Sharī'ah is dropped and punitive punishment gets activated in its place. The practical outcome of this is that the far-out occasion of enforcing the Ḥudūd of the Sharī'ah would present itself only very rarely (or, as they would say in charged English, only once in a blue moon!) Under normal conditions, even in crimes which fall under Ḥudūd, the punishments given are punitive. But, in a case, where the completion of the crime and the completion of the proof conjoin, even though in one per cent cases, the punishment given is very stringent, something which would inspire awe, something mind-boggling and heart-rending, something which would cause the next aspirant cold feet before even touching a crime like that. This kind of punishment, notwithstanding objections, becomes the source of eradication of crimes and the blessing of public peace for ever. This stands in stark contrast against societies built around penal laws with which hardened criminals keep playing as some sort of sport they enjoy. They sit in jails making programs to do what they have been doing all along much better next time they are out there. There are countries where the Ḥudūd of the Sharī'ah are imposed even now. A look at conditions which prevail there would bring the reality in the open. You do not see there a lot of people with amputated hands, nor is there an event of stoning to death (*Rajm*) for years and years together. But, such is the standing awe and dread and fear of these punishments in hearts that theft, robbery and immodesty do not seem to exist there.

Muslims have the first-hand and direct knowledge about conditions in Saudi Arabia because Muslims of all classes and countries have the good fortune of being there in connection with Hajj or 'Umrah. Five times everyday, everyone sees that shops and stores are open. Merchandise worth millions is lying there and their owner leaves for the Sacred Mosque at prayer time without closing them - and comes back from there only after having made his prayers in perfect peace. He

never has any scruples about anything having disappeared from where he had left it. Then, this is not a matter of one day. This is a matter of whole life and how it goes on. Do this in any 'civilized' country of the world, you will end up with hundreds of thefts and robberies in a single day. Strange are the ways of those who claim to be the standard bearers of civilization and human rights. They are compassionate to professional criminals but they have no mercy for the whole humanity harassed by them. In cold reality, showering mercy on one criminal amounts to being tyrannical to the whole humanity. This attitude is the greatest cause of disturbing public peace and tranquility. This is the reason why He, who is the Lord of all universes and worlds, and who provides sustenance to the virtuous and the vicious, the pious and the polytheists, the saints and the sinners, and who gives to snakes, scorpions, lions and wolves their livelihood, and whose mercy extends to all, it was He who, when He revealed the religious laws of Ḥudūd in the Qur'ān, also said along with it: وَلَا تَأْخُذْكُمْ بِهِمَا رَأْفَةٌ فِي دِيْنِ اللّٰهِ that is, 'do not show mercy to these criminals in enforcing the Ḥudūd of Allah.' On the other hand, He declared Qiṣāṣ (the Law of Even Retaliation) to be the life of humanity: وَلَكُمْ فِي الْقِصَاصِ حَيٰوةٌ يّٰأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ that is, 'for you in Qiṣāṣ there is life, O people of understanding.' It appears that those who oppose and obstruct the institution of Islamic Ḥudūd, just do not wish that crimes be eradicated. Otherwise, as far as mercy is concerned, who else, if not Islam, can be the teacher? It is Islam which has recognized the right of even enemies and killers in the heat of the battlefield where it demands: Hold your hands before women, hold your hands before children, hold your hands before the aged, and do not kill the religiously observing not fighting against you on the battlefield but are busy with worship in their way.

What is most astonishing is the cold fact that objections against Islamic punishments are raised by, of all the people, those have their hands red with the blood of hundreds and thousands of innocent and blame-free human beings of Hiroshima even to this day, human beings who may have never dreamed of fighting and killing in a battlefield and included among them are women and children and old people, a

whole lot of human beings indeed! And these are the people whose fury has still not subsided even after the tragedy of Hiroshima and who are still going ahead with all sorts of goals and projects and experiments to build and stock nuclear weapons of mass destruction.

Other than this, there is not much we can say, except raise our hands in prayer - May Allah remove the curtains of selfishness from their eyes and may He guide them towards the true Islamic methods of establishing peace in the world.[1]

Verses 41 - 43

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الرَّسُوْلُ لَا يَحْزُنْكَ الَّذِيْنَ يُسَارِعُوْنَ فِى الْكُفْرِ مِنَ
الَّذِيْنَ قَالُوْٓا اٰمَنَّا بِاَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَلَمْ تُؤْمِنْ قُلُوْبُهُمْ ۛ وَمِنَ الَّذِيْنَ
هَادُوْا ۛ سَمّٰعُوْنَ لِلْكَذِبِ سَمّٰعُوْنَ لِقَوْمٍ اٰخَرِيْنَ ۙ لَمْ يَاْتُوْكَ ؕ
يُحَرِّفُوْنَ الْكَلِمَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَوَاضِعِهٖ ۚ يَقُوْلُوْنَ اِنْ اُوْتِيْتُمْ هٰذَا
فَخُذُوْهُ وَاِنْ لَّمْ تُؤْتَوْهُ فَاحْذَرُوْا ؕ وَمَنْ يُّرِدِ اللّٰهُ فِتْنَتَهٗ فَلَنْ
تَمْلِكَ لَهٗ مِنَ اللّٰهِ شَيْـًٔا ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ لَمْ يُرِدِ اللّٰهُ اَنْ يُّطَهِّرَ

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1. This is the basis of the nuclear conflict among nations. The haves want to keep what they have and stop others from having it. If others have it, that will be 'proliferation'. The power to destroy must stay with the powerful. Because, powerful is responsible. But, was it? So, being powerful, or mutually cooperating powerfuls, is no guarantee that nuclear weapons will not be used. Human beings of one country sitting on their nukes and talking about world peace is hardly believable.

Let's say Amen to the prayer.

A word about the use of the word, 'deterrent' with nuclear weapons. They are there, just in case ... They are supposed not to be used first. They are for retaliation. The having of nuclear weapons means that everybody should behave, or else! So, they are 'deterrents', telling people to be careful and not mess around. So human beings can have deterrents to check the irresponsible behaviour of others, the behaviour of 'rogue' states, for example. Now, if God were to enforce His own deterrent against criminals, robbers and thieves and fornicators, in His wisdom, how could that become 'savage' overnight? Or, is it that what a set of human beings can do in their 'self-interest', cannot be done by God, in His Wisdom? ... Mercy! (Tr.)

قُلُوْبَهُمْ ؕ لَهُمْ فِی الدُّنْیَا خِزْیٌ ۚۖ وَّلَهُمْ فِی الْاٰخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ
عَظِیْمٌ ﴿٤١﴾ سَمّٰعُوْنَ لِلْکَذِبِ اَکّٰلُوْنَ لِلسُّحْتِ ؕ فَاِنْ جَآءُوْکَ
فَاحْکُمْ بَیْنَهُمْ اَوْ اَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ ۚ وَاِنْ تُعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ فَلَنْ
یَّضُرُّوْکَ شَیْـًٔا ؕ وَاِنْ حَکَمْتَ فَاحْکُمْ بَیْنَهُمْ بِالْقِسْطِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ
یُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِیْنَ ﴿٤٢﴾ وَکَیْفَ یُحَکِّمُوْنَکَ وَعِنْدَهُمُ التَّوْرٰىةُ
فِیْهَا حُکْمُ اللّٰهِ ثُمَّ یَتَوَلَّوْنَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ ذٰلِکَ ؕ وَمَاۤ اُولٰٓئِکَ
بِالْمُؤْمِنِیْنَ ﴿٤٣﴾

O Messenger, those who race towards disbelief should not be a cause of grief for you - those who say with their mouths, "We believe," while their hearts do not believe, as well as those who happen to be Jews. They are listeners of the lie, listeners for other people who did not come to you. They displace the words after their having been properly placed. They say, "If you are given this, take it, and if you are not given this, then avoid." And the one whom Allah wills to put to trial, for him you shall never be able to do anything against Allah. They are the ones whose hearts Allah did not intend to purify. For them there is humiliation in this world. And for them there is a great punishment in the Hereafter. [41]

Listeners of the lie! Eaters of the unlawful! So, if they come to you, judge between them or turn away from them. And if you turn away from them, they can do you no harm. And if you judge, judge between them with justice. Surely, Allah loves those who do justice. [42] **And how do they ask you to judge while the Torah is there with them having the judgement of Allah? Still, they turn away, after all that. They are no believers.** [43]

Sequence of the Verses

Continued from the third Section of Sūrah al-Mā'idah was the subject around the People of the Book. In between, some other subjects, though very few, appeared where particularly appropriate. Now, the

text resumes that subject again which goes on further ahead. The People of the Book already had two groups among them. Joining them was a third group. They were really Jews who had become Muslims hypocritically. They would show their Muslim face before Muslims but when they sat with their co-religionist Jews, they mocked Islam and Muslims. The three verses appearing above concern the doings of these three groups which show that they prefer their desires and opinions over the injunctions and instructions of Almighty Allah and keep trying to interpret and mould them to their own choices. These verses tell us about the disgrace and evil end of such people in this world as well as in the Hereafter. As a corollary, there appear some guiding principles and injunctions for Muslims.

The Background of the Revelation

Two events which are the cause of the revelation of the cited verses relate to Jewish tribes who lived in the vicinity of Madīnah during the blessed period of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. One of these events was that of Qatl and Qiṣāṣ (killing and retaliation) and the other, that of Zinā (fornication) and its punishment.

It is not hidden from anyone who knows history (as it is) that tyranny prevailed all over before the advent of Islam. Mastery was for the powerful and slavery, for the weak. The powerful and the influential had their laws different from the weak and the meek. Not too far is an extension of that approach in our own time where some of our so-called civilized countries had separate laws for the black and the white. But, across this bridge of history, came the blessed benefactor of humanity, the Arab Prophet, may the blessings of Allah be upon him, and peace, who alone erased these distinctions. It was he who first declared equality of rights for the progeny of Adam and taught human beings their essential lesson in humanity.

Before the coming of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to Madīnah, there lived on the outskirts of Madinah two tribes of Jews, Banū Qurayẓah and Banū Naḍīr. Out of the two, Banū Naḍīr were more powerful and wealthy than Banū Qurayẓah who constantly suffered at their hands and could do nothing about it. Matters reached to the point when Banū Naḍīr forced Banū Qurayẓah to agree to a disgraceful pact whereby if a man from Banū Naḍīr were to kill a man from Banū

Qurayẓah, they would not have the right to take his life in Qiṣāṣ (retaliation). Instead, stipulated the pact, they will receive only seventy *Wasaq* of dates as his blood money (*Wasaq*, Arab measure of weight approximately equivalent to 195.30 kg). As for the case being the reverse of it, if a man from Banū Qurayẓah were to kill a man from Banū Naḍīr, the law will be that the killer will be killed and, on top of it, blood money will be taken, and that too, twice as much as compared to what Banū Naḍīr were entitled to, that is, one hundred and forty *Wasaq* of dates. Attached along with these were more conditions such as, if a woman from Banū Naḍīr were to be killed, a man from Banū Qurayẓah will be killed in retaliation; and if the person killed were to be a man, two men from Banū Qurayẓah will be killed in retaliation; and if a slave from Banū Naḍīr has been killed, a free man from Banū Qurayẓah will be killed in retaliation; and if one hand of a man from Banū Naḍīr has been cut by someone, two hands of a man from Banū Qurayẓah will be cut; if one ear has been cut, two ears of their man will be cut. This was 'law' before Islam as it prevailed between these two tribes and Banū Qurayẓah being weak had no choice but to go along with it.

When the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم migrated to Madīnah, it became Dār al-Islām, a homeland of Muslims. These two tribes had not embraced Islam upto that time nor were they bound to follow Islamic law under any treaty obligation. But, they were observing the justice and common good brought in by Islamic law from a distance. During this period, it so happened that a man from Banū Qurayẓah killed a certain man from Banū Naḍīr. According to the pact mentioned above, Banū Naḍīr demanded the doubled blood money (*Diyat*) from Banū Qurayẓah. As said earlier, Banū Qurayẓah were neither a part of the Muslim community nor did they have any existing pact with the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. But, they were Jews who had among them many learned people as well. They knew on the strength of the prophecies of the Torah that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is the promised Last Prophet the glad tiding of which was given by the Torah. But, they had not declared their faith in him because of religious prejudice or temporal greed. Since they were watching that the Last Prophet's religion is a standard bearer of human equality and justice, they used it as a crutch to get rid of the tyranny of Banū Naḍīr. They refused to

pay the doubled blood money on the plea that they belonged to the same family, same country, and same religion, that is, Judaism, and that they were not going to tolerate the unjust treatment meted out to them because of their weakness against tyranny right upto that day.

This reply enraged Banū Naḍīr to the point of an imminent war. But, later, on the advice of some elders, it was decided that this matter should be taken to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم for his decision. Banū Qurayẓah could not have it any better. They already knew that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was not going to allow the injustice of Banū Naḍīr to continue. As for Banū Naḍīr, though they did agree to mutual conciliation talks under a situation of duress, but they also backed it up with a conspiracy when they sent a group of people to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم before their case was to be presented in his court. These people were really their co-religionists, that is, they were Jews but kept in touch with the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم by hypcritically assuring him of their Islam. Their objective was to somehow find out the view of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم before he hears and decides the case. So, the mandate and instruction given to these people was that they should accept what he said subject to the condition that it was in favour of their demand, and in the eventuality that his judgement turned out to be contrary to this, they were told not to make any commitments about its acceptance.

This event describing the cause of the revelation of these verses has been reported in detail by al-Baghawī while the Musnad of Aḥmad and Abū Dāwūd have reported its summary from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه - (Maẓharī).

Similar to this, there is another event, that of Zinā (fornication). Reporting its details, al-Baghawī says that it took place among the Jews of Khaybar. According to the punishment prescribed by the Torah, the couple involved had to be stoned to death. But, both of them belonged to some influencial family. The Jews, acting in accordance with their old habit, looked for a softening of the punishment for them knowing that the religion of Islam gives leaves and concessions liberally. Based on this, they assumed that Islam would reduce this punishment as well. So, the people of Khaybar sent a message to their clansmen of Banū Qurayẓah asking them to have this case settled by

Muḥammad ﷺ and along with it, they sent the two accused as well. Their motivation behind this action was no different as they too instructed their clansmen to accept the verdict of the Holy Prophet ﷺ if the punishment awarded by him turned out to be light, but they were to reject it if the case was otherwise. At first, Banū Qurayẓah were reluctant about the proposal. They did not know how the case will be decided by him and once they were there, they would have to accept the verdict. But, after further consultations, they decided that some of their chiefs should take the accused couple to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and request him to decide the case.

So, a deputation of Ka'b ibn Ashraf and others accompanied by the accused couple came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. They asked: 'If a married man and a married woman are involved in adultery, what punishment do they get?' He said, 'Will you accept my verdict?' They said that they would. At that moment, Sayyidnā Jibra'īl appeared with a command from Almighty Allah which announced that their punishment was stoning to death. When these people heard this verdict, they were taken aback. They refused to accept it.

Sayyidnā Jibra'īl advised the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that he should ask these people to appoint Ibn Ṣūryā as the arbitrator before deciding whether to accept or not to accept the verdict. Then, he told him about Ibn Ṣūryā and his identity. He asked the members of the deputation if they knew the youngman who is white but blind in one eye. He lived in Fidak and His name was Ibn Ṣūryā. Everyone confirmed that they did. He asked, 'What do you think about him?' They said, 'Of the learned people among Jews, there is no scholar greater than him on this earth.' He said, 'Call him in.'

So, he came. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم asked him on oath, 'What is the injunction of the Torah in this case?' He said, 'By the Being in whose name you have put me on oath, if you had not put me on oath in that manner, and I did not have the apprehension that a false statement on my part would make the Torah burn me, then, I would have not revealed the reality. The reality is that the Torah too, like the injunction in Islam, does carry the command that both of them should be killed by stoning (*Rajm*).'

The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said, 'What has come upon you now that you act against the injunction of the Torah?' Ibn Ṣūryā replied, 'The fact of the matter is that, religiously and legally, this is the punishment of adultery with us. But, since a prince of ours got involved in this crime, we showed leniency to him and let him go. We did not stone him to death. Later, the same crime was committed by an ordinary man. People responsible decided to stone him to death. The supporters of the criminal protested demanding that the Jewish Legal Punishment decided for this man should be given to the prince first, otherwise, they threatened, they would resist and block the execution of the punishment against him. When things dragged on, they sat together and compromised on just one light punishment for all, leaving the injunction of the Torah aside. So, we came up with a punishment which required some beating and the taking out of a procession with the culprits having their faces blackened with soot (a symbol of disgrace). This, then, became the usual custom with everyone.'

Commentary

We now know the details of the background in which the present three verses (41-43), and others which will follow, were revealed. Their gist is that the Jews were habitually used to issuing religious edicts as desired by the people, either for the benefit of relatives or to satisfy their greed for money, property, influence, and recognition. This had become a common custom particularly in matters involving punishments that they would, if the crime was committed by an influential person, change the severe punishment of the Torah into an ordinary one. It is this behaviour pattern of theirs which has been described in the first verse (41) in the following words: يُحَرِّفُونَ الْكَلِمَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَوَاضِعِهِ (They displace the words after their having been placed properly).

When the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم took up residence in Madīnah, these people started noticing changes. The Islamic Rule of Law was working as a unique system. It was simple, open and full of conveniences. Then, it had a reasonable set-up to eradicate crimes through appropriate punishments. Now the people who were used to making the severe punishments of the Torah easy for their clients by changing them saw an opportunity for themselves whereby they could take such shady matters to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم and make him their

judge or arbitrator. The dual advantage they saw in it was that they would reap the benefits of all easy and light rules of Islamic Law while, at the same time, they would not have to commit the crime of altering the Torah. But, here too, they had their crookedness at work as they would hold on to their decision of taking their case to him until such time that they succeeded in finding out beforehand through some source or ruse as to the actual verdict which would be delivered in their case when presented. Then, if they found this verdict matching their wishes, they would make him their arbitrator and have him decide their case. If it happened to be contrary to their wishes, they would leave it at that. Since the events of this nature had caused pain to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, he has been comforted in the opening sentence of the verse that he should not grieve about their behaviour because it would finally turn out to be good for him.

Then, Allah Almighty let him know that these people were not making him a judge in their case sincerely. Their intentions were mischievous. Then, in the later verse (42), he was given the choice to either decide or avoid their case as he wished. He was also assured that they will not be able to harm him in any way, if he wished to avoid them. This is what the verse: فَاحْكُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ اَوْ اَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ (judge between them or turn away from them) means. Then, in the part of the verse which follows immediately, it was stated that should he elect to decide their case, the guideline given is that the decision has to be just. In other words, it meant that he was to decide the case in accordance with his Sharī'ah because, after the coming of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, all former religious codes and their laws stand abrogated, except those which have been retained in the Holy Qur'ān and the Sharī'ah of the Last Prophet. It is for this reason that the act of deciding a case on the basis of another law, custom or usage contrary to the Divine Law has been declared to be injustice, sin and disbelief in later verses.

Judicial Process for Non-Muslims in an Islamic State

At this point, it should be borne in mind that these Jews who sent their cases to the court of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم did not believe in him or his Sharī'ah nor were they Dhimmīs (non-Muslim citizens) protected by Muslims. However, they did have a no-war pact with the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. This is why he was given the option to ei-

ther turn away from them, or give a decision in their case according to his Sharī'ah because no responsibility for them falls on the Islamic state. If they were Dhimmīs (protected non-Muslim citizens of a Muslim State) and approached the Islamic government, the responsible Muslim official would have been duty-bound to give a verdict in their case. Avoiding it would have not been permissible because watching over their rights and removing injustice done to them is the duty of an Islamic government. Therefore, in a verse which will appear a little later (49), it has also been said: وَاَنِ احْكُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ بِمَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ اَهْوَآءَهُمْ (And judge between them by what Allah has sent down and do not follow their desires ...) In other words, it means: If these people bring their case to you, decide it in accordance with your Sharī'ah.

No choice has been given in this verse. Instead, the command is to decide as prescribed. In Aḥkām al-Qur'ān, Imām Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ has accomodated the sense of both these verses by suggesting that the first verse where a choice has been given relates to non-Muslims who are not citizens or Dhimmīs of the Islamic state but continue to live where they are under a pact, such as, the position of the tribes of Banū Qurayẓah and Banū Naḍīr. They had nothing to do with the Islamic state except that they were bound by a no-war pact. And the second verse concerns particular non-Muslims for whom Muslims are responsible and who are citizens of the Islamic state and owe allegiance to its legal government.

Worth pondering here is that in both these verses - the first verse which gives a choice and the second which gives a specified command - the instruction given to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is that he should decide cases of these non-Muslims, whenever he does so, in accordance with the injunctions revealed by Almighty Allah, that is, in accordance with his Sharī'ah - and not in accordance with the wishes of these non-Muslims or the religion they follow.

To explain, it can be said that this injunction is related to events which have been described under the background of the revelation of these verses. Of these, one concerned the punishment for killing and blood money while the other was that of adultery and its punishment. In such punishments of crimes, the universal practice is to have a common law for the whole country. In this common law, no discrimination

is made on the basis of classes or religions, for example, amputating the hand of the thief which would not apply to Muslims alone, but would be the punishment for every citizen of the country. Similarly, the punishments for killing and adultery will also be common to everyone. But, it does not make it necessary that personal and purely religious matters of non-Muslims should also be decided in accordance with the Islamic Sharī'ah.

Take an example from the conduct of the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself. Though he did declare liquor and swine unlawful for Muslims and prescribed a punishment for it, but he left non-Muslims free of any obligations in this matter. In addition to that, he never interfered in the personal law of non-Muslims pertaining to marriages and similar other matters. In fact, he accepted their marriages as valid.

With the rise of Islam in the Arabian Peninsula, the Magians of Ḥajar and the Jews and Christians of Najrān and Wādī al-Qurā became Dhimmīs (protected non-Muslim citizens) of the Islamic state. That the Magians believed in marriage with even a mother and sister as lawful was known to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. Similarly, marriage without 'Iddah (waiting period), or witnesses, was valid among Jews and Christians. But, he did not interfere in their personal matters and took their marriages as valid.

In short, it can be said that decisions about personal law and religious matters of non-Muslims who are citizens of a Muslim state shall be left to their own religion and thinking - and should there be the need to arrive at a judicial settlement of their cases, a judge from their own religion will be appointed to decide them.

However, in the event that they turn to a Muslim judge or ruler and show that the concerned parties would agree with the decision given, then, the Muslim judge or ruler will deliver his judgement but in accordance with his Sharī'ah - because he is now the legally appointed arbitrator as approved by the parties concerned. In the noble verse: وَأَنِ احْكُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ بِمَآ أَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ (Judge between them by what Allah has sent down and do not follow their desires - 49) appearing a little later, the command to decide in accordance with the Islamic Sharī'ah given to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is based either on the matter being that of common law from which no section can be exempted, or rests on the basis

that such people have themselves come to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, have taken him as the arbitrator and wish that he himself should decide their case. Thus, it becomes obvious that his decision should be the one he believes in and which is also the mandate of his Sharī'ah.

Now as we move on to other aspects of verse 41, we see that it begins with words of comfort for the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, after which, he has been informed of the conspiracy hatched by the Jews, the description of which goes right upto its end. It reveals that the deputation coming to him was comprised of hypocrites who were secretly in league with the Jews and it is at their behest that they were going to see him. After that, there is a description of some evil traits of character the visiting group has against which Muslims have been warned. As an adjunct, it has been pointed out that these traits of character are rejectionist in nature, therefore, effort should be made to stay safe from them. Listed below are these four evil traits of character.

1. The first trait identified is: سَمّٰعُوْنَ لِلْكَذِبِ (They are listeners of the lie). It means that they are used to listening to and going by what is false. They are the kind of blind followers of unfaithful Jews who see to it that they are called men of learning who would go on following them despite noticing that they were openly negating the injunctions of the Torah, worse still, they would continue being satisfied with their fictional interpretations of it.

Following '*Ulamā*': The Norm for People

The way those making alterations and adulterations in the injunctions of Allah and His Messengers have been warned here, indicted similarly are those too who take such people as their leaders in religion and get used to listening to false and fabricated presentations from them. Offered here is an important rule of guidance for Muslims that, though the only way of following the obligations of religion open to unlettered masses is to act in accordance with the ruling (*Fatwā*) and teaching (*Ta'līm*) of '*Ulamā*' (traditionally trained, morally groomed, professionally equipped men and women of learning and living and teaching in accordance with the inviolable truth of the Qur'ān and Sunnah - a sense not carried by stray equivalents of scholars, the learned, religious leaders, divines, priests, et al. Tr.). But, this is a re-

sponsibility from which the masses too cannot escape. It is their duty to first find out what they are doing. Before they take a Fatwā or hope to act correctly in a religious matter, they must at least investigate into the antecedents of those they are going to follow. This is like a sick person looking for a good physician. He consults people who know about the best in the field, about their education, expertise, practice, professionalism, moral quality and human dealing. After this possible assessment, if one makes a mistake and falls into the trap of a quack or charlatan, a reasonable person would not blame him. But, anyone who did not take the trouble of investigating and landed into the lair of a false practitioner and messed up his life, then, he alone will be responsible for his suicide.

The same principle applies to the dissemination of knowledge about religious matters for common people. If one of them first did what was necessary, talked to people of knowledge, expertise and experience available in his area and was able to pick up an 'Ālim to consult and follow, and acted according to his Fatwā, then, he would be considered excusable not only in the sight of people but also in the sight of Allah. In a *ḥadīth* relating to a similar matter, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is reported to have said: فَإِنَّ إِثْمَهُ عَلَى مَنْ أَفْتَى which means, if in a situation like that, should the 'Ālim or Muftī make a mistake, and a Muslim acts in accordance with this incorrect Fatwā, then, the sin for having acted in that manner does not fall on him, but it does on that 'Ālim or Muftī - and that too would apply in a situation when that 'Ālim or Muftī had made such a mistake knowingly, or had fallen short in deliberating on the problem to the best of his ability, or, may be, he was no 'Ālim or Muftī to begin with, and had taken that responsible office through fraud or favour.

But, if a person takes someone as an 'Ālim (a source of correct religious guidance which is worth following) on his own, without investigating, and does what he says - and the 'Ālim so chosen is really not deserving of being followed - then, its curse will fall not only on that Muftī or 'Ālim alone, but this person who chose him will also share its consequences equally because he gave the reins of his *'Īmān* (faith) into the hands of such a person without any investigation. These are the kind of people the Holy Qur'ān calls 'the listeners of the lie,' people who keep tagged behind their (ill-chosen) religious leaders without

taking the trouble of finding out the truth about their knowledge and integrity, conduct and deeds, trustworthiness and honesty. Unfortunately, they have got themselves into the habit of listening, accepting and being satisfied with fabricated and false narratives from them.

The Holy Qur'ān is talking about the condition of Jews here but the message behind it is actually beamed at Muslims so that they can stay safe against something like that. Unfortunately, this is one of the reasons of the downfall of Muslims in the contemporary world. They are quite smart in their mundane matters. When sick, they find the best physician. When stuck with a case, they will search out the best lawyer. When they make a house, they can dig out the top architect and engineer. But, when it comes to the matter of religion, they become so careless that they would take any man with a beard, a long shirt and a glib tongue as their religious leader, 'Ālim, Muftī or guide. They would do that without bothering to find out whether or not this person was educated and trained formally in a reliable institution of higher religious learning; whether or not he has sat at the feet of experts in the field and culled the taste and temperament of the knowledge of *Dīn*; whether or not he has made intellectual contributions during his career; whether or not he has benefited from the company of truly pious elders and Men of Allah by imbibing from them the essential virtues of Taqwā (fear of Allah) and Tahārah (physical and spiritual purity)?

The result of this carefree attitude is that a large section of people from among Muslims who do turn to religion unfortunately falls into the fishing nets of ignorant preachers and commercial *pīrs* and becomes far-removed from the correct path of religion. For people like that, their knowledge of religion stands reduced to tales which leave their desiring selves untouched and which, then, gives them the delusion that they are following religion and doing a lot of worship. But, its reality is what has been described in the Holy Qur'ān in the following words:

اَلَّذِيْنَ ضَلَّ سَعْيُهُمْ فِى الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ يَحْسَبُوْنَ اَنَّهُمْ يُحْسِنُوْنَ صُنْعًا

They are the people whose efforts and deeds have gone waste within the life of the world while they are thinking that they have done something good.

Concluding with a summary, we can say that the Holy Qur'ān identifies an important principle by describing the hypocrites from among the Jews as 'the listeners of the lie.' The principle is that following 'Ulamā is inevitable for people at large, but it is their responsibility that they should not follow anyone as their 'Ālim or guide in religion without prior investigation as a result of which they may not become habituated to listening to what is false from ignorant people.

2. Describing the other evil trait of these hypocrites, it was said: سَمّٰعُوْنَ لِقَوْمٍ اٰخَرِيْنَ لَمْ يَاْتُوْكَ (listeners for other people who did not come to you). It means that these people have obviously come to ask you about a religious matter. But, the truth of the matter is that their objective is neither religion nor some ruling about it. In fact, they are the spies of the kind of Jewish people who did not come to you by themselves because of their arrogance. The deputationists, following the wishes of their senders, simply want to find out your view of the punishment of adultery and let their senders know about it who will themselves decide whether or not they would accept the verdict. In this, there is warning for Muslims that whoever seeks a Fatwā from an 'Ālim of *Dīn* is bound by the condition that the intention of the seeker must be to find out the command of Allah and His Messenger and to follow it. Any effort to find out from one Muftī, or more than one, the objective solution of a religious problem, then, going about looking for a solution which suits one's desires is an open demonstration of following one's own desiring self - and Shayṭān. This should be avoided.

3. Describing the third evil trait of these people, it has been said that they 'displace the words (of Allah) after their having been placed properly,' which means that, by doing so, they give the Word of Allah a meaning which is not intended and thus try to alter Divine injunctions. Included here is the possibility of making some changes or alterations in the very words of the Torah, as well as the eventuality that they keep the words as they are but make interpretations and alterations which are absurd in meaning. The Jews are used to doing it both ways.

In this, the warning given to Muslims is that Allah Almighty has Himself taken the responsibility of protecting the Holy Qur'ān. As for an alteration in its words, nobody can dare to do that because it is sim-

ply not a matter of what is written in the already countless copies of the Qur'ān, but also that of what lies secured in the memory banks of millions of human beings. Anyone who makes the slightest mistake of mispronouncing even a short vowel is caught instantly. As for an alteration in meaning, it can obviously be done - and doers have done it too. But, for its security, Almighty Allah has made the arrangement that there shall remain in this Ummah right through the Last Day of Qiyāmah, a group of people who would be armed with the correct meaning and message of the Qur'ān and Sunnah, and they would be enough to unmask the alterers, corrupters and distorters of their meanings.

Bribery and its evil consequences

4. The second verse (42) mentions another evil trait of these people by calling them: أَكَّٰلُونَ لِلسُّحْتِ translated here as 'eaters of the unlawful' making 'the unlawful' to stand for the word, '*suḥt*' in the text. The literal meaning of Suḥt is to uproot or destroy something totally which is the sense in what the Qur'ān says in: فَيُسْحِتَكُمْ بِعَذَابٍ , that is, (do not forge lies against Allah) lest He destroy you with a punishment - 20:61). But, at this place in the Qur'ān, Suḥt denotes bribe. Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنه, Ibrāhīm Nakha'ii, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Mujāhid, Qatādah and Ḍaḥḥāk and other leading authorities in Tafsīr have explained it as bribe.

The reason for equating bribe with Suḥt (total destruction; also - unlawful earning, detestable enough to be shunned) is that it not only destroys its givers and takers alike but also goes on to uproot the whole country and community and destroy public peace and tranquility (by causing rise in illegal gratification and fall in avenues of honest earning). When bribery gains currency in a country or a department, law freezes and bribery stays hot. As for the law of a country, it is the only power which maintains peace and stability. When law and order stand suspended, nothing remains safe, life or property or honour, nothing. Therefore, by calling it Suḥt, the Sharī'ah has declared it to be gravely Ḥarām, forbidden and unlawful. Moreover, to block all possible doors of bribery, even the gifts given to officials or leaders or dignitaries of a country have also been classed as Suht or bribe in an authentic *Ḥadīth*, and has been declared to be Ḥarām. (Jaṣṣāṣ)

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said in a *ḥadīth*: Almighty Allah

causes His curse to fall on the giver and taker of bribe - and on him too who acts as a broker between them. (Jaṣṣāṣ).

The Islamic Legal definition of *Rishwah* (meaning bribery) is the taking of compensation for something the taking of which would not be legally correct. For example, a person doing a job, the doing of which is included within his duty, and the fulfilling of which is mandatory on him, cannot take any compensation for it from any party. If taken, that is bribe. Functionaries of governments, officials or clerks, higher or lower, are all obligated to do their duties by virtue of being paid employees of the government. If they take something from the person whose case they are handling, that will be a bribe. The father and mother of a girl are responsible for the marriage of their daughter. They cannot take any 'compensation' for doing that. If they take any 'compensation' from the person who will have the hands of their daughter in marriage, that is a bribe. *Sawm* (fasting), *Ṣalāh* (prayers), Ḥajj (pilgrimmage) and the *Tilāwah* (recitation) of the Qur'ān are 'Ibādah' (acts of worship) with which Muslims have been obligated. The taking of any 'compensation' from anyone is a bribe. However, the duty of the Teaching of Qur'ān and the duty of leading *Ṣalāh* as Imām are exempt from this (as ruled by later Muslim jurists).

Then, a person who takes bribe **and** does someone's job as it should rightfully be done, he commits the sin of taking bribe and the money or material he has 'earned' is '*suḥt*,' and unlawful for him. And should he do it as it should have not been done rightfully, then, this becomes another grave crime, that of wastage of what was right and that of changing an express command of Allah, in addition to the initial one. May Allah keep all Muslims safe from this curse.

Verses 44 - 50

إِنَّآ أَنْزَلْنَا التَّوْرٰىةَ فِيْهَا هُدًى وَّنُوْرٌ ۚ يَحْكُمُ بِهَا النَّبِيُّوْنَ الَّذِيْنَ
أَسْلَمُوْا لِلَّذِيْنَ هَادُوْا وَالرَّبّٰنِيُّوْنَ وَالْأَحْبَارُ بِمَا اسْتُحْفِظُوْا مِنْ
كِتٰبِ اللّٰهِ وَكَانُوْا عَلَيْهِ شُهَدَآءَ ۚ فَلَا تَخْشَوُا النَّاسَ وَاخْشَوْنِ
وَلَا تَشْتَرُوْا بِاٰيٰتِيْ ثَمَنًا قَلِيْلًا ۗ وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَحْكُمْ بِمَآ أَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ

فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْكٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿٤٤﴾ وَكَتَبْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ فِيْهَآ اَنَّ النَّفْسَ
بِالنَّفْسِ لا وَالْعَيْنَ بِالْعَيْنِ وَالْاَنْفَ بِالْاَنْفِ وَالْاُذُنَ بِالْاُذُنِ
وَالسِّنَّ بِالسِّنِّ لا وَالْجُرُوْحَ قِصَاصٌ ط فَمَنْ تَصَدَّقَ بِهٖ فَهُوَ كَفَّارَةٌ
لَّهٗ ط وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَحْكُمْ بِمَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ ﴿٤٥﴾
وَقَفَّيْنَا عَلٰٓى اٰثَارِهِمْ بِعِيْسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ
مِنَ التَّوْرٰىةِ ص وَاٰتَيْنٰهُ الْاِنْجِيْلَ فِيْهِ هُدًى وَّنُوْرٌ لا وَّمُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا
بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ التَّوْرٰىةِ وَهُدًى وَّمَوْعِظَةً لِّلْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿٤٦﴾
وَلْيَحْكُمْ اَهْلُ الْاِنْجِيْلِ بِمَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ فِيْهِ ط وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَحْكُمْ بِمَآ
اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْفٰسِقُوْنَ ﴿٤٧﴾ وَاَنْزَلْنَآ اِلَيْكَ الْكِتٰبَ
بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ الْكِتٰبِ وَمُهَيْمِنًا عَلَيْهِ فَاحْكُمْ
بَيْنَهُمْ بِمَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ اَهْوَآءَهُمْ عَمَّا جَآءَكَ مِنَ الْحَقِّ ط
لِكُلٍّ جَعَلْنَا مِنْكُمْ شِرْعَةً وَّمِنْهَاجًا ط وَلَوْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ لَجَعَلَكُمْ اُمَّةً
وَّاحِدَةً وَّلٰكِنْ لِّيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِيْ مَآ اٰتٰىكُمْ فَاسْتَبِقُوا الْخَيْرٰتِ ط اِلَى
اللّٰهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيْعًا فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ فِيْهِ تَخْتَلِفُوْنَ ﴿٤٨﴾
وَاَنِ احْكُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ بِمَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ اَهْوَآءَهُمْ وَاحْذَرْهُمْ اَنْ
يَّفْتِنُوْكَ عَنْۢ بَعْضِ مَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ اِلَيْكَ ط فَاِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَاعْلَمْ اَنَّمَا
يُرِيْدُ اللّٰهُ اَنْ يُّصِيْبَهُمْ بِبَعْضِ ذُنُوْبِهِمْ ط وَاِنَّ كَثِيْرًا مِّنَ النَّاسِ
لَفٰسِقُوْنَ ﴿٤٩﴾ اَفَحُكْمَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ يَبْغُوْنَ ط وَمَنْ اَحْسَنُ مِنَ اللّٰهِ
حُكْمًا لِّقَوْمٍ يُّوْقِنُوْنَ ﴿٥٠﴾

Surely We have sent down the Torah, having guidance and light therein by which the prophets, the submitting ones, judge for the Jews, and (so do) the Men of the Lord and the Men of knowledge, because they were entrusted with the protection of the Book of Allah, and

they stood guard over it. So, do not fear people. Fear Me. And do not take a paltry price for My verses. And whoever does not judge by what Allah has sent down, then, they are the disbelievers. [44]

And therein We have prescribed for them: life for life, eye for eye, nose for nose, ear for ear and tooth for tooth; and for wounds, an equal retaliation. Then, whoever forgives it, that will be expiation for him. And whoever does not judge by what Allah has sent down, then, they are the unjust. [45]

And in their wake, We sent 'Īsā son of Maryam, confirming what was before him, that is, the Torah; and We gave him the Injīl having guidance and light therein, and confirming what was before it, that is, the Torah, and a guidance and lesson for the God-fearing. [46]

And the people of Injīl must judge by what Allah has sent down therein. And whoever does not judge by what Allah has sent down, then, they are the sinners. [47]

And We have sent down to you the Book with truth, confirming the Book before it, and a safeguard for it. So, judge between them by what Allah has sent down, and do not follow their desires against the truth that has come to you. For each of you We have made a way and a method. And had Allah willed, He would have made a single community of people, but (He did not), so that He may test you in what He has given to you. Strive, then, to excel each other in good deeds. To Allah is the return of you all. Then Allah shall tell you about what you were disputing in. [48]

And (We have revealed to you) : Judge between them by what Allah has sent down and do not follow their desires, and beware of them lest they should turn you away from some of what Allah has sent down to you. So, if they turn away, be sure that Allah intends to make them suffer for some of their sins. And surely, many of the people are sinners. [49]

Is it, then, the judgement of (the days of) Ignorance that they seek? And who is better in judgement than Allah, for a people who believe? [50]

Sequence of the Verses

This is the third Section of Sūrah al-Mā'idah. Here, Allah Almighty has asked the Jews, the Christians and the Muslims to pay heed to a particular injunction of the creed they all share as being the three communities attached to the Prophetic Tradition. Appearing in different contexts through verses which have gone earlier, this is the serious matter of acting against the pledges given to Almighty Allah and that of changes, alterations and false interpretations made in injunctions sent to them - something which had become a chronic compulsion of habit with the Jews and Christians.

In the first two verses (44,45) of this Section, addressing the people of the Torah, Almighty Allah has warned them on this crookedness and about the sad end it will bring. With it, as a corollary, some congruent injunctions pertaining to Qiṣāṣ (Even Retaliation) have also been mentioned - for the Jewish conspiracy described in the previous verses was related to Qiṣāṣ which the people of the tribe of Banū Naḍīr did not like to be even and because of which they had compelled their weaker rivals, the Banū Qurayẓah, to be content with lesser blood money as compared to themselves. Thus, in these two verses, the Jews have been given a stern warning against imposing their own law contrary to the Law sent down by Almighty Allah and those who do that have been classed as *Kāfir* (disbelievers) and *Ẓālim* (unjust).

After that, the third (46) and the fourth (47) verses are addressed to Christians. They too have been warned against enforcing a law of their own contrary to the Law sent by Allah. And those who do that have been classed as contumacious and disobedient.

Finally, in the fifth (48) and sixth (49) verses, addressing the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, Muslims have been instructed that they should take precautions to stay immune from the disease which had afflicted the people of the Book lest they too, God forbid, were to start changing through misinterpretations the injunctions and laws given by Almighty Allah - goaded by greed for money and recognition, or stoop to the haughtier level of making and enforcing a self-made law of their own contrary to His Law.

Also stated here subsequently is an important matter of principle which posits that all prophets, may peace be upon them all, adhered to

the same faith and way as far as believing in and obeying Allah is concerned. But, every prophet was given, as wisdom demanded, a Sharī'ah or Way or Code, appropriate to the nature and need of his time and in which many subsidiary injunctions differ. Thus, as pointed out here, the very Sharī'ah given to a prophet was the wisest choice for that time of the prophet and during which following it was obligatory. When abrogated and replaced by another Sharī'ah, the later, then became what was wise and expedient at its time, the following of which also became equally obligatory. That there is a unique element of wisdom in the phenomena of alternation and variation in the systems of Sharī'ah is a point which has also been made here.

Commentary

In the first verse of the set of verses appearing above, by saying: إِنَّآ أَنزَلْنَا التَّوْرٰىةَ فِيهَا هُدًى وَّنُورٌ (Surely We have sent down the Torah, having guidance and light therein), the hint given is that the abrogation of the Sharī'ah of Torah at that point of time is not because of any shortcoming of the Torah itself but it has been done rather because of the need to change injunctions with the change of time. Otherwise, the Torah too is a Book revealed by the same Revealer. It has rules of guidance for the Banī Isra'īl and it also has a special light which moves their hearts spiritually.

After that it was said: يَحْكُمُ بِهَا النَّبِيُّونَ الَّذِينَ أَسْلَمُوا لِلَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالرَّبّٰنِيُّونَ وَالْأَحْبَارُ that is, 'We had revealed the Torah so that, until its Sharī'ah has not been abrogated, all incoming prophets and their deputies, the men of Allah and the 'Ulamā shall all decide and rule in accordance with this Torah making it the working law of their time.' The deputies of the prophets, may peace be upon them all, have been mentioned in two categories - '*Rabbāniyyūn*' and '*Aḥbār*.' The word, '*Rabbāniyy*' is attributed to '*Rabb*' and means 'Man of Allah.' As for '*Aḥbār*', it is the plural form of Ḥibr which, in the Jewish terminology, used to stand for 'Ālim (roughly, a scholar of religious sciences). It is obvious that for one to be a Man of Allah one has to have the knowledge of the necessary injunctions of Almighty Allah, otherwise deed *sans* knowledge is not possible - and no one can become a Man of Allah without obeying Divine injunctions and acting in accordance with them. Similarly, an 'Ālim is, in the sight of Allah, one whose deeds in life are a mirror of his knowledge, otherwise

an 'Ālim who, despite his knowledge of Divine injunctions, does not fulfill his binding religious obligations by doing what is required of him nor shows any concern for his failure to do so, is worse than an ignorant person in the sight of Allah. The outcome is that every Man of Allah is an 'Ālim and every 'Ālim is a Man of Allah (or should be, in principle). But, at this place, by mentioning both separately, a notice of caution has been given - no doubt, knowledge is necessary for a Man of Allah and deed, for an 'Ālim - but, one gets to be identified with his dominant activity or colour (of the rainbow he follows in his path of obedience to Allah) and that becomes the name he is called with. A person who mostly devotes himself to 'Ibādāt (acts of worship), A'māl (deeds) and the Dhikr of Allah (remembrance) and acquires religious knowledge sufficient for his needs, he is called a Rabbāniyy or Man of Allah. This, in our contemporary usage, is given names like Shaykh, Murshid, Pīr and a good many others. As for the person who acquires the highest practical expertise available in religious sciences, and devotes himself to the mission of teaching and training people in the rules of the Sharī'ah, and fulfills the obligations of discharging what is Farḍ, Wājib and Sunnah al-Mu'akkadah - but is unable to spend anymore time in performing Nafl 'Ibādāt (voluntary acts of worship) - he is called 'Hibr' or 'Ālim.

To sum up, it can be said that the explanation given above also makes it clear that there is no dichotomy in Sharī'ah and Tarīqah and no distance between 'Ulamā and Mashā'ikh. They all converge into the basic unity. As far as the difference in their method of work and the predominant area of occupation is concerned, it becomes equally evident that the 'Ulamā (religious scholars) and Sūfis (religious mystics) are not two sects or factions. Far from it, they are, rather, one - in the sense that they both work for the same purpose in life, that of submission and obedience to Allah and His Messenger. But, their comparative methods employed to achieve this purpose do seem to be formally divergent.

After that, it was said: بِمَا اسْتُحْفِظُوْا مِنْ كِتٰبِ اللّٰهِ وَكَانُوْا عَلَيْهِ شُهَدَآءَ (because they were entrusted with the protection of the Book of Allah and they stood guard over it). It means that these prophets and their two kinds of deputies, the 'Ulamā and the Mashā'ikh (Men of Knowledge and Men

of Allah) were responsible for enforcing the laws of the Torah because Almighty Allah had entrusted them with the protection of the Torah and they had given the pledge that they would guard it.

Upto this point, the text was referring to the Torah as Divine Scripture and guidance and light which was enforced and guarded by prophets, and their deputies among guides and scholars. Then, the focus turns on to the contemporary Jews who have been censured for not having guarded the Torah as their elders did. They acted crookedly when they started changing its injunctions, for example, the glad tidings of the coming of the Last among Prophets, Muhammad al-Muṣṭafā, may the peace and blessing of Allah be upon him, was mentioned clearly in the Torah and the Jews were asked to believe in him. But, rather than believe in him as required, they became hostile to him. Also given here is the reason as to what prompted them to do so. It was love for power and love for money. They knew that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was a true prophet of Allah but they balked at the thought of following him because they were taken as leaders among their people, common Jews who followed them. Now if they were to embrace Islam, they will turn into common Muslim individuals. Gone will be their pivotal position for power play. Other than this, they had almost made it a profession that they would bend and alter the provisions of the Torah to provide officially endorsed conveniences for influential people against payment of bribes. The contemporary Jews were warned about this practice in the following words:

فَلَا تَخْشَوُا النَّاسَ وَاخْشَوْنِ وَلَا تَشْتَرُوْا بِاٰيٰتِیْ ثَمَنًا قَلِیْلًا

(So, do not fear people, fear Me. And do not take a paltry price for My verses).

It means that they should not fear that their people will stop following them or will turn against them and that they should not alter Divine commands for the sake of insignificant worldly gains for it would ruin them both materially and spiritually because:

وَمَنْ لَّمْ یَحْکُمْ بِمَاۤ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰہُ فَاُولٰٓئِکَ ھُمُ الْکٰفِرُوْنَ

And whoever does not judge by what Allah has sent down, then, they are the disbelievers.

In the second verse after that (45), there is a description of the in-

junctions of Qiṣāṣ (Even Retaliation) with a particular reference stressing that 'We had revealed these injunctions in the Torah.' The words of the text are:

وَكَتَبْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ فِيهَآ أَنَّ النَّفْسَ بِالنَّفْسِ وَالْعَيْنَ بِالْعَيْنِ وَالْأَنْفَ بِالْأَنْفِ وَالْأُذُنَ بِالْأُذُنِ وَالسِّنَّ بِالسِّنِّ وَالْجُرُوحَ قِصَاصٌ

'We had revealed in the Torah this injunction of Qiṣāṣ for the Jews that there will be life for life, eye for eye, nose for nose, ear for ear, tooth for tooth; and for wounds an equal retaliation.'

It will be recalled that the case of Banū Qurayẓah and Banū Naḍīr was brought before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. Counting on their power, Banū Naḍīr had compelled the weaker Banū Qurayẓah to agree to their oppressive conditions which stipulated that should a man from Banū Qurayẓah kill a man from Banū Naḍīr, they will have to pay two penalties. The Qiṣāṣ of life for life will be taken as well as the blood money will have to be paid. If the case was the reverse, that is a man from Banū Naḍīr kills a man from Banū Qurayẓah, then, there will be no Qiṣāṣ; only blood money will be paid but that too will be half of what Banū Naḍīr were entitled to.

In this verse, Allah Almighty has exposed the lie of these people by pointing out that the injunctions of equality in Qiṣāṣ (retaliation) and Diyat (blood money) exist in the Torah too. What these people are doing is considered avoidance and that they bring their case to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم for a decision as alleged is no more than a ruse to find an excuse.

At the end of the verse it was said: وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَحْكُمْ بِمَآ أَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ فَأُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ (And whoever does not judge by what Allah has sent down, then, they are the unjust.) It means that people who do not take the injunctions of Allah binding and who do not decide matters in accordance with them, are dissenters to the Divine commandment, its rejectors and rebels. They are unjust. The third verse (46) begins with the mention of the coming of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام who was sent to confirm the previous Scripture, that is, the Torah. Mentioned after that is the Injīl because that too, like the Torah, is guidance and light.

In the fourth verse (47) it was said that the people of the Injīl

should enforce injunctions in accordance with the Law revealed by Almighty Allah in the Injīl, and those who enforce what is against the injunctions sent down by Almighty Allah are disobedient, sinners.

The Qur'ān: Custodian of Torah and Injīl

In the fifth (48) and the sixth (49) verse, the address is to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم saying that to him Allah has revealed the Qur'ān which confirms the Torah and Injīl, Books previous to it, and is their custodian as well. This is because, after the people of the Torah altered the Torah and the people of Injīl made changes in the Injīl, it was the Qur'ān alone which turned out tob the kind of overseer and protector which exposed the alterations made by them, lit up truth and reality in their proper perspective. Even today, the true teachings of the Torah and Injīl still survive through the Qur'ān while those who inherited them and those who claim to follow them have disfigured them to the extent that it has become impossible to distinguish truth from untruth. Towards the end of the verse, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been given the same instruction as was given to the people of the Torah and the people of the Injīl, that is, all orders and judgements given by him should be according to injunctions revealed by Allah, and that he should see through the ploy of these people who intend to have him decide matters according to their wishes and take his guard against their evil plans. There was a particular reason for saying what was said. Some Jewish religious scholars came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. They told him that they were religious leaders among the Jews. If they became Muslims, the rest of them would become Muslims too. But, there was a condition to it. They said that they had a legal dispute with his people. They would bring that case to him. If, in this case, he were to decide in their favour, they would embrace Islam. Thereupon, Almighty Allah gave him the word of caution that he should never decide against considerations of equity and justice and the Law revealed by Allah because of the offer to become Muslims made by these people - a proposition which was not for him to worry about.

The Wisdom behind Partial Difference in Sharī'ahs of Prophets

Besides other elements of guidance, this verse carries an answer to a basic question of principle. The question is: When all prophets have

been sent by Allah, and all Books and Sharī'ahs come from Him, why do they differ and why do a coming Book and Sharī'ah abrogate the outgoing Sharī'ah and Book? The answer has been given in this verse, alongwith its wisdom:

لِكُلٍّ جَعَلْنَا مِنكُمْ شِرْعَةً وَّمِنْهَاجًا وَلَوْشَآءَ اللّٰهُ لَجَعَلَكُمْ اُمَّةً وَّاحِدَةً وَّلٰكِنْ لِّيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِيْمَآ اٰتٰكُمْ فَاسْتَبِقُوا الْخَيْرٰتِ

For each of you, We have made a way and a method. And had Allah willed, He would have made a single community of people, but (He did not), so that He may test you in what He has given to you. Strive, then, to excel each other in good deeds.

To explain this in other words, it can be said that Allah has made for every section among human beings a particular Sharī'ah and particular method of doing things in which, despite common principles, there are expedient differences in subsidiary injunctions. Had Allah so willed, it would have not been at all difficult for Him to make all human beings one community with only one Book and one Sharī'ah for everyone. But, Allah Almighty did not prefer to do so for He intended to test people. He wanted to see who gets to know the reality of *'Ibādah* (worship) and stays alert to receive and respond positively to whatever command comes for them. It may be a new Book or a new Sharī'ah. They will be ready to accept and follow that, no matter how dear the previous Sharī'ah and Book may be to them and no matter how hard its abandoning may be on them because of its grip on them as their ancestral religion. But, such people with their awakened sense of belonging to their ultimate master, always stay tuned to the next Divine call, and always ready to obey. At the other end of this trial shall obviously be those who fail to see this essential reality of obedience, who take to a particular Sharī'ah and Book as closed objectives of life giving it the uncompromising status of ancestral religion as a result of which they choose not to pay any attention to any Divine command.

Great wisdom lies in this difference among Sharī'ahs. This is the channel through which every section of the human community of any time is taught the reality behind genuine *'Ibādah* (worship) and the reality behind human servitude to God. The message given is that the

reality of *'Ibādah* (acts of worship) lies in being an *'Abd*, a servant, and in obeying and following - which does not depend on Ṣalāh, Ṣawm, Ḥajj, Zakāh or Dhikr of Allah or Tilāwah of the Qur'ān - nor are these acts of worship an end by themselves. Instead of that, they all have one single purpose behind them: Obedience to the Command of Allah. This is the reason why times during which Ṣalāh is prohibited, offering Ṣalāh at those times does not bring any reward. On the contrary, it becomes a source of sin. During the days of the two 'Īds, the 'Īdul-Fiṭr and the 'Īdul-Aḍḥā, when fasting is forbidden, it becomes a sin to fast at that time. Other than the ninth of the month of Dhil-Ḥijjah, gathering in the plain of 'Arafāt on any day or month to pray and worship is no reward-worthy act while on the ninth of Dhil-Ḥijjah, this is the greatest *'Ibādah* on the plain of 'Arafāt. The same rule applies to all other acts of worship. Done when asked to do, they are *'Ibādah*. But, when they are stopped at a certain limit, they too become Ḥarām, unlawful and impermissible. Ignorant people are usually not aware of this reality. 'Ibadāt which become their habit, rather, national customs which they get used to as if they were 'Ibadāt, then, they would ignore even open commands from Allah and His Messenger. This is from where sprout the seeds of innovations and deviations (*Bid'āt* and *Muḥaddathāt*) in established religion which, with the passage of time, become attached to it as if they were a part of it while they are not. This has been the major cause of alterations in past Sharī'ahs and Books. By sending different Books and Sharī'ahs to different prophets, Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhū* has taught human beings the lesson that they should not take one mode of action or one mode of worship as their primary objective. They should, instead, become obedient servants of Allah in its most desirable sense on the strength of which they should be able to instantly leave what they were doing earlier, as and when asked to do so. And, conversely, they should immediately be ready to do whatever they are asked to do.

Other than this, yet another wisdom behind this difference in Sharī'ahs is that since tempers and tastes of human beings from every period and section of the world are different, the variation in the time frame affects human disposition considerably. If subsidiary injunctions were to be made identical for everyone, human beings would be in deep trouble. Therefore, it was the dictate of Divine wisdom that

appropriate change be made in subsidiary injunctions with due consideration of the response patterns of the people of different tastes and times. Here, the religious terminology of Abrogator (*Nāsikh*) and Abrogated (*Mansūkh*) does not mean that the Law Giver did not know conditions before and gave one law - and when new circumstances prevailed it was abrogated - or the earlier law was promulgated by mistake or lack of attention but was changed on later recollection. This is not the way it is. The *Nāsikh* and *Mansūkh* are just like the prescription of a doctor or physician where a change in medicines appears gradually since the doctor or physician knows in advance that a certain symptom will show up in the patient after he or she has used the initially prescribed medicine for three days which then will be the time to prescribe a certain other medicine. So, when he cancels his earlier prescription and replaces it with a new one, it will not be correct to say that the previous prescription was wrong and for that reason it was cancelled. Instead, the truth of the matter is that this very prescription was correct and necessary for use during the initial days of sickness - and under later conditions, the same second prescription is correct and necessary.

A Summary of Subsidiary Injunctions

1. We know from the initial verses that the case brought to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم by the Jews was decided by him. The decision was in accord with the Sharī'ah of the Torah. This proves that the religious injunctions in force in the previous Sharī'ahs remain in force until abrogated by the Holy Qur'ān or Divine Revelation as it was in the cases of the Jews where the injunction concerning equality in Qiṣāṣ (Law of Retaliation) and stoning to death (*Rajm*) in punishment of adultery (*Zinā*) was there in the Torah as well. Then, the Qur'ān too retained it as it was.

2. Similarly, in the second verse (45), the injunction of Qiṣāṣ about the Retaliation for Wounds which has been mentioned with reference to the Torah was enforced in Islam by the Holy Prophet ﷺ. On this basis, the rule of procedure with the majority of the 'Ulamā of Islam is that injunctions of previous Sharī'ahs which have not been abrogated by the Qur'ān are valid, enforcable and obedience-worthy in our Sharī'ah too. That is why, in the cited verses, the people of the Torah have

been asked to decide, judge and obey in accordance with the Torah and the people of the Injīl have been asked to decide, judge and obey in accordance with the Injīl - though both these Books and their Sharī'ahs stand abrogated after the appearance of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The outcome is that the injunctions of the Torah and Injīl which were not abrogated by the Qur'ān are obedience-worthy even today.

3. The third injunction which stands proved from these verses is that ruling contrary to the injunctions revealed by Almighty Allah is Kufr (disbelief in and rejection of Faith) under some conditions specially when it is combined with belief in its being not true. And under some conditions, it is *Zulm* (injustice) and *Fisq* (disobedience, sin) - when belief-wise, one does accept them as true, but, in practice, does what is contrary to it.

4. The fourth injunction which appears in these verses is that taking bribe is absolutely Ḥarām (unlawful) - specially, the taking of bribe in a judicial case, which is far too grave.

5. The fifth injunction which emerges clearly from these verses is that all prophets, may peace be upon them, and their Sharī'ahs agree in principle, but there is that difference in minute and subsidiary injunctions with them - a difference which is based on considerations of great wisdom.

Verses 51 - 58

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ لَا تَتَّخِذُوا۟ ٱلْيَهُودَ وَٱلنَّصَٰرَىٰٓ أَوْلِيَآءَ
بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَآءُ بَعْضٍ ۚ وَمَن يَتَوَلَّهُم مِّنكُمْ فَإِنَّهُۥ مِنْهُمْ ۗ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ
لَا يَهْدِى ٱلْقَوْمَ ٱلظَّٰلِمِينَ ﴿٥١﴾ فَتَرَى ٱلَّذِينَ فِى قُلُوبِهِم مَّرَضٌ
يُسَٰرِعُونَ فِيهِمْ يَقُولُونَ نَخْشَىٰٓ أَن تُصِيبَنَا دَآئِرَةٌ ۚ فَعَسَى
ٱللَّهُ أَن يَأْتِىَ بِٱلْفَتْحِ أَوْ أَمْرٍ مِّنْ عِندِهِۦ فَيُصْبِحُوا۟ عَلَىٰ مَآ
أَسَرُّوا۟ فِىٓ أَنفُسِهِمْ نَٰدِمِينَ ﴿٥٢﴾ وَيَقُولُ ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓا۟ أَهَٰٓؤُلَآءِ
ٱلَّذِينَ أَقْسَمُوا۟ بِٱللَّهِ جَهْدَ أَيْمَٰنِهِمْ ۙ إِنَّهُمْ لَمَعَكُمْ ۚ حَبِطَتْ
أَعْمَٰلُهُمْ فَأَصْبَحُوا۟ خَٰسِرِينَ ﴿٥٣﴾ يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ مَن

يَرْتَدَّ مِنْكُمْ عَنْ دِينِهِ فَسَوْفَ يَأْتِي اللَّهُ بِقَوْمٍ يُحِبُّهُمْ
وَيُحِبُّونَهُ أَذِلَّةٍ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَعِزَّةٍ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ يُجَاهِدُونَ
فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلَا يَخَافُونَ لَوْمَةَ لَائِمٍ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ
يُؤْتِيهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۚ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٥٤﴾ إِنَّمَا وَلِيُّكُمُ اللَّهُ
وَرَسُولُهُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ
وَهُمْ رَاكِعُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾ وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا فَإِنَّ
حِزْبَ اللَّهِ هُمُ الْغَالِبُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا
الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا دِينَكُمْ هُزُوًا وَلَعِبًا مِنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ
مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ وَالْكُفَّارَ أَوْلِيَاءَ ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ
﴿٥٧﴾ وَإِذَا نَادَيْتُمْ إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ اتَّخَذُوهَا هُزُوًا وَلَعِبًا ۚ ذَٰلِكَ
بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٥٨﴾

O those who believe, do not take the Jews and Christians for intimate friends. They are friends to each other. And whoever takes intimate friends from them, he is one of them. Surely, Allah does not take the unjust people to the right path. [51]

Now, you see those who have disease in their hearts race towards them saying, "We apprehend that some misfortune may overtake us." So, it is likely that Allah may bring victory or a command from His own side, whereupon they become regretful over what they concealed in their hearts. [52]

And those who believe will say, "Are these the ones who swore by Allah on emphatic oaths that they were with you?" Their deeds have gone waste; hence they became losers. [53]

O those who believe, whoever of you turns back from his Faith, then, Allah shall bring a people whom He loves and who love Him, soft on the believers, hard on the disbelievers, who fight in the way of Allah and are

not afraid of the reproach of any critic. That is a grace of Allah. He confers it on whom He wills. And Allah is All-Embracing, All-Knowing. [54]

Your only friend is Allah, and His Messenger, and those who believe - those who establish *Salāh* and pay *Zakāh* and bow before Allah. [55] **And whoever takes to friendship with Allah and His Messenger and those who believe, then, the people of Allah are the ones to prevail.** [56]

O those who believe, do not take as friends those who have taken your Faith in jest and fun, those who have been given the Book prior to you, and the disbelievers. And fear Allah, if you are believers. [57]

And when you call for *Ṣalāh*, they take it in jest and fun. That is because they are a people who do not understand. [58]

Explanation in Brief

The verses cited above take up three important subjects which are the basic principles of unity among Muslims as a collectively organized community.

1. Muslims can deal with non-Muslims in the spirit of tolerance, sympathy, goodwill, equity, justice, favour and kindness, almost everything within that line of conduct. In fact, they should do that for they have been taught to do that. But, what is not permitted is the kind of fast friendship and indiscriminating intimacy which may garble the distinctive hallmarks of Islam. This is the issue known as the '*Tark al-Muwālāt*' to refrain from deep (friendship) in Islamic terminology.

2. The second principle stressed upon is that should the Muslims of any time and place shift away from the first principle stated above and develop an intimacy of this nature with non-Muslims, then, let them not be under the impression that their conduct could harm Islam in any manner whatsoever - because Allah Almighty has Himself taken the responsibility of seeing that Islam remains duly protected. It cannot be eliminated by anyone. However, if a set of people still go out of their minds, break the limits of Islamic modality of doing things and, let us presume, decide to leave the very pale of Islam, then, Allah Ta'ālā will bring in another set of people who will uphold and establish

the principles and laws of Islam.

3. Once we know the positive and negative aspects in perspective, it becomes evident that the real friendship of a Muslim - deep, intense, profound and reliance-worthy - can only be with Allah, the Highest of the high, His Messenger, and with those who believe in them.

After this brief introduction of the subject, we can now move to the detailed explanation of the verses.

Commentary

In the first verse (51), Muslims have been commanded not to enter into "Muwālāt" (deep friendship) with Jews and Christians as is the customary practice of non-Muslims in general and, of Jews and Christians in particular, who reserve deep friendship for their own people only. They do not deal with Muslims at the same wave length.

After this clear instruction, should a Muslim do otherwise and enter into an intimate friendship with a Jew or Christian, then, in the sight of Islam, he is fit to be counted as one of them - and not as a Muslim.

The Background of Revelation

Reporting from 'Ikrimah, Ibn Jarīr has said that this verse was revealed in the background of a particular event. After the Holy Prophet ﷺ had settled in Madīnah, he had entered into a treaty with Jews and Christians living nearby which required that they would neither fight against Muslims nor help any other tribe at war with them, rather, they would join Muslims to fight against them. Similarly, Muslims will not fight them nor help anyone against them, rather, would defend them against the aggressors. For some time, both parties kept adhering to the treaty. But, the Jews could not observe the terms of the treaty any longer because of their conspiratorial nature and anti-Islam temperament. They made a secret deal with the pagans of Makkah against Muslims and wrote them a letter inviting them to their fortress. When the Holy Prophet ﷺ came to know about this conspiracy, he despatched a posse of Mujāhidīn to confront them. These Jews from Banū Qurayẓah were, on the one hand, conspiring with the disbelievers of Makkah, while on the other, having infiltrated among Muslims, they had succeeded in making pacts of friendship with many of

them. This was their front of spying for the disbelievers of Makkah against Muslims. Revealed thereupon was this verse which stopped Muslims from indulging in deep friendship with Jews and Christians, so that they could be deprived of having access to sensitive information about Muslims. At that time, some noble Companions, including Sayyidnā 'Ubādah ibn Ṣāmit, openly announced the cancellation of their treaty obligations as well as their support for abandonment of any close friendship in the future. As for the hypocrites who had their pragmatic relationship with Muslims, or people whose hearts had yet to taste the sweetness of genuine faith, they apprehended dangers in breaking relationships with Jews and Christians lest the conspiracy hatched by the disbelievers and the Jews succeeded and Muslims were overpowered in which case it would be necessary that they keep their relationships balanced bothways to avoid any problems for them later on. It was on this basis that 'Abdullāh ibn Ubaiyy ibn Salūl had said that he saw danger in cutting off relationship with these people and, therefore, he cannot do that. Revealed thereupon was the second verse (52):

فَتَرَى الَّذِيْنَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ يُّسَارِعُوْنَ فِيْهِمْ يَقُوْلُوْنَ نَخْشٰٓى اَنْ تُصِيْبَنَا دَآئِرَةٌ،

Now, you see those who have disease in their hearts race towards them saying, "We apprehend that some misfortune may overtake us."

It means that after hearing the religiously binding injunction of the abandonment of close friendships, people who have the disease of hypocricy in their hearts started racing towards their disbelieving friends saying that cutting off relationships with these people is dangerous for them.

Answering them, Almighty Allah said:

فَعَسَى اللّٰهُ اَنْ يَّاْتِيَ بِالْفَتْحِ اَوْ اَمْرٍ مِّنْ عِنْدِهٖ فَيُصْبِحُوْا عَلٰى مَآ اَسَرُّوْا فِيْٓ اَنْفُسِهِمْ نٰدِمِيْنَ

So, it is likely that Allah may bring victory or a command from His own side, whereupon they become regretful over what they concealed in their hearts.

It means that these people are under the impression that the disbelievers and the Jews will overcome Muslims. But, Allah has decided that it will not happen. Rather, close is the conquest of Makkah. Or, even before the conquest of Makkah, Allah may, by exposing the hypocricy of the hypocrites, put them to disgrace. Then, at that time, these people will regret thoughts they had concealed.

This has been clarified further in the third verse (53) where it was said that once the hypocricy of the hypocrites has been exposed and the reality behind their claims and oaths of friendship comes out in the open, Muslims would wonder if those were the people who used to assure them with sworn claims of their friendship and there they were all ruined as everything they did just to pretend had gone to waste. That Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhū* has mentioned the conquest of Makkah and the disgrace of the hypocrites in these verses was something which everyone saw only after a few days with their own eyes.

The fourth verse (54) tells us that the prohibition of intimate friendship and inter-mingling with non-Muslims is for the good of Muslims themselves. Otherwise, Islam is the particular religion the responsibility to protect which has been taken by Almighty Allah Himself. The crookedness or disobedience of an individual or group is self-destruct in its place. However, should some individual or group from among Muslims were to really abandon Islam itself, turn into an apostate (*Murtadd*) totally and become a part of non-Muslims, even that too could bring no harm to Islam because Allah who is Absolutely Powerful is responsible for its protection and He will immediately bring in some other nation into action which will carry out the duties of protecting and spreading the *Dīn* of Allah. Things He must do depend neither on an individual nor on the largest of the large party or institution. When He so wishes, He can make straws work for beams and logs, otherwise beams and logs sit in forests turning into compost anyway. As referred to elsewhere in this Commentary, how well this was put in an Arabic couplet:

إِنَّ الْمَقَادِيْرَ إِذَا سَاعَدَتْ
أَلْحَقَتِ الْعَاجِزَ بِالْقَادِرِ

When Divine decree helps - it can make the meak overtake the mighty.

When it was said in this verse that should Muslims become apostates, it does not matter, for Allah will make another set of people rise to take their place, then, right there, some virtues of this set of people have also been enumerated saying clearly that they can be marked out by such and such distinguishable qualities. Those engaged in the service of their religion should keep these qualities foremost in their minds because these verses tell us that people who have such quality and character are welcome and dear in the sight of Almighty Allah.

1. Their first quality identified by the Holy Qur'ān is that Allah will love them and they will love Allah. There are two parts to this quality. The first one is the love of these people for Almighty Allah. This could be taken, in one or the other degree, within one's control since one can, even if one does not love someone emotionally or naturally, at least make his intention and determination to work for him in loving intellectually. And even emotional or natural love is though not in one's control, yet its causes are, for instance, the meditation of the greatness and majesty of Almighty Allah, the conception of His most perfect power and the recapitulative survey of His authorities and blessings over human beings. This would definitely generate even natural love for Almighty Allah in the heart of a man or woman.

But, as far as the other part is concerned, that is, the love of Allah will be with these people, it obviously seems to indicate that this is a matter where human choice and action play no role. So, what is beyond our control and choice hardly warrants a description and is obviously fruitless - one may be tempted to wonder.

But, by pondering over some other verses of the Holy Qur'ān, one will discover that the causes of this part of love too are within human control. If someone uses these means, the love of Allah will necessarily be with him or her. Those means of achieving this end have been mentioned in the verse of the Qur'ān which appears in Sūrah 'Āl-'Imran: قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللَّهُ (Say [O Prophet], "If you do love Allah, follow me; Allah shall love you" ... 3:31).

This verse tells us that one who wishes to have Allah love him or her should make the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم the very pivot of life and develop a committed habit of following Sunnah in whatever one does in each and every department of one's life. If so,

the promise of Allah is there - He will love that person. And this very verse also tells us that the only group of people which can stand up and meet the challenge of Disbelief and Apostacy (Kufr and Irtidād) shall be the group of people which follows the Sunnah conscientiously and habitually - neither falling short in obedience to the injunctions of the Sharī'ah, nor initiating and introducing on their own, deeds contrary to the Sunnah.

2. The second quality of this group has been identified as: أَذِلَّةٍ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ أَعِزَّةٍ عَلَى الْكٰفِرِيْنَ (...soft on the believers, hard on the disbelievers ...). Here, the word: *'adhillah'* could be, as explained in Qāmūs, the plural of both *dhalīl* or *dhalūl*. Dhalīl means low or despicable while *dhalūl* means soft and tractable, that is, easily controlled, docile. According to the majority of commentators, this is the meaning of *'adhillah'* at this place, that is, these people will be soft with Muslims. Even in matters of dispute, they can be controlled and mollified easily. They would set the dispute aside, even if they are right in it - as said by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in an authentic *ḥadīth*: أَنَا زَعِيْمٌ بِبَيْتٍ فِيْ رَبَضِ الْجَنَّةِ لِمَنْ تَرَكَ الْمِرَاءَ وَهُوَ مُحِقٌّ that is, 'I am the guarantor of a home in the middle of Paradise for one who abandons dispute despite being in the right.' Thus, the essential meaning of this word comes to be that these people will have no dispute with Muslims in matters relating to their rights and dealings.

The second word is *'a'izzah'* in: أَعِزَّةٍ عَلَى الْكٰفِرِيْنَ (hard on the disbelievers). Here too, *'a'izzah'* is the plural of *'Azīz* which means dominant, strong and hard. So, the sense is that these people are hard and strong against the enemies of Allah and His *Dīn* who would be unable to control or manipulate them. Now, by combining both sentences we can arrive at the essence of the statement - that this will be a set of people whose love and hate, friendship and enmity will be, not for their person or their rights and dealings, but only for Allah, His Messenger and His *Dīn*. Therefore, when comes the time to fight, it will not be against the obedient servants of Allah and His Messenger, instead of that, it would be against those who are hostile and disobedient to Allah and His Messenger. The same subject appears in a verse of Sūrah Al-Fatḥ where the words are: أَشِدَّاءُ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ رُحَمَاءُ بَيْنَهُمْ (severe against disbelievers, merciful between themselves - 48:29).

3. The essence of the first quality was the most perfect fulfillment of the rights of Allah, and the essence of the second quality was moderation in the fulfillment of the rights of the servants of Allah by remaining accomodating in dealings. Now, the third quality of these people mentioned here is: يُجَاهِدُوْنَ فِىْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ that is, they shall keep carrying out Jihād to spread and establish the True Faith. In essence, it means that fighting against forces of disbelief and apostacy is no easy task. In this confrontation, traditionally known devotion to worship in seclusion or a simple softness or hardness of attitude is not enough. Also necessary here is a feeling and fervour for the mission of establishing *Dīn*.

4. To ensure that this feeling and fervor achieves its desired perfection, the fourth quality of these people has been identified as: وَلَا يَخَافُوْنَ لَوْمَةَ لَائِمٍ that is, they will not care for any blame, censure or derogatory criticism directed against them while they are engaged in their efforts to upraise the true word of Allah and establish His *Dīn*. A little reflection will show that the leader of a movement usually faces two types of impediments in his efforts which are the power of the adversary and the vilification of his own people. Experience bears out that people who lead a movement resolutely would stand firm against any adversary, even go through arrests, jail sentences, beatings and tortures, yet, when it comes to facing blames and vilifications from their own people, even the most determined leaders tend to falter. Perhaps, it is to stress the importance of this trying situation at this place, that Allah Almighty has considered it sufficient to say that these people go on with their Jihād without taking notice of any blames directed against them.

Finally, towards the end of the verse (54), it was added that these good qualities of character are nothing but rewards from Almighty Allah. It is He who gives them to whom He wills. A human being cannot acquire these by dint of his own effort and deed without Divine grace.

The *Fitnah* of Apostacy

Through the explanation of the words of this verse, it has already been clarified that the incidence of some from among Muslims turning into apostates will not harm Islam as a religion because Allah will

raise a set of people with high morals and superior deeds who would defend and support it. However, the majority of commentators have dwelt further on the *Fitnah* (trial) of Apostacy (*Irtidād*). According to them, this verse is actually a prophecy of this Trial and at the same time a good news for the group of people who will fight against it and eliminate it successfully. This coming Fitnah of Apostacy was a serious problem the germs of which had already started spreading towards the latermost period of Prophethood. But, after the departure of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم from this mortal world, this became an epidemic spreading all over the Arabian Peninsula. The group blessed with the good news was that of the noble Companions who confronted this onslaught of Apostacy under the command of the first Khalīfah of Islam, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr Al-Ṣiddīq رضى الله عنه .

Chronologically, Musaylimah al-Kadhdhāb (the Liar) was the first to claim prophethood alongwith the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and was so audacious that he returned his emissaries back with the threat that he would have killed them had it not been for the protocol which prohibited killing of envoys and emissaries. Musaylimah was a liar in his claim. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم did not get the time to wage Jihād against him and he left this mortal world.

Similarly, Aswad al-'Ansi, the chief of the tribe of Mudhḥaj in Yaman announced his prophethood. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم ordered the Governor of Yaman appointed by him to fight against him. But, the very next day after the night he was killed, the Holy Prophet ﷺ departed from this mortal world. The news about his being killed reached the noble Companions at the end of Rabī' al-Awwal. Another event like this was reported concerning the tribe of Banū Asad whose chief, Ṭulayḥah ibn Khuwaylid laid a claim to his own prophethood.

Groups from these three tribes had turned Apostates during the last sickness of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. The news of his passing away took the lid out of this storm of Apostacy. Seven tribes of Arabia from different places turned against Islam and its legal authority. They refused to pay *Zakāh* as required by Islamic law to the Khalīfah of the time, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr Al-Ṣiddīq رضى الله عنه .

After the passing away of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, the responsibility of the country and the community fell on the shoulders of

Sayyidnā Abū Bakr Al-Ṣiddīq رضی اللہ عنہ . There was the great shock on the one hand, and the flood of trials and rebellions on the other. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا says that the shock faced by her father, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr, after the passing away of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, was so great that had it fallen on high mountains they would have been reduced to powder. But, Almighty Allah had blessed him with the high station of patience and fortitude by virtue of which he fought against all odds with full determination and courage, and did succeed finally.

Rebellion, as obvious, can be quashed by use of force only. But, conditions had reached a point of danger and Sayyidnā Abū Bakr went into consultation with the noble Companions. None of them approved of a hardline against rebellions. The danger was: If the Companions were to be committed to internal warfare, foreign powers would run over their new Islamic country. But, Allah Almighty made the heart of His 'True one' strong and settled for Jihād. He gave an eloquent Khutbah before the Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ which opened up their hearts too in favour of Jihād. The power and perfection of his determination and fortitude is reflected through his words:

> "People who, after they have become Muslims, turn back and reject the injunctions given by the Holy Prophet ﷺ , and the Law of Islam, then, it is my duty that I should wage a Jihād against them. If, against me, they decide to bring along the combined force of all Jinns and human beings, and all trees and rocks of the world, all together, and I have no comrade in arms to support me, even then, I would, all by myself, put my neck on the stake and carry out this Jihād."

After having said this, he mounted his horse and started moving ahead. Then, the noble Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all, came forward and made Sayyidnā Siddīq al-Akbar sit at his place. In no time, a battle plan was drawn with fronts assigned to different people and the time of their departure set for action.

Therefore, Sayyidnā 'Alī رضی اللہ عنہ , Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Ḍaḥḥāk, Qatādah and other Imāms of Tafsīr have said that this verse has been revealed about Sayyidnā Abū Bakr Al-Ṣiddīq رضی اللہ عنہ. He was the first one of the promised people about whom it was said in this verse that they will appear to defend Islam at the command of Allah.

But, not contrary to this, is the possibility that some other group could also be included in the sense of this verse. Therefore, respected elders who have pointed out to Sayyidnā Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī ﷺ or other noble Companions as being included in the sense of this verse cannot be really taken as contrary to this suggestion. In fact, the most sound and safe position is to believe that all these blessed people, rather every single Muslim due to come right upto the Last Day of Qiyāmah, who will keep confronting disbelief and apostacy in accordance with the commands of the Qur'ān - they all shall be considered as included under the purview of this verse.

Let us now resume our description of how the moving exhortation of Sayyidnā Ṣiddīq al-Akbar made a group of Ṣaḥābah rise to the occasion and meet the challenge of this trial of Apostacy under the leadership of the first Khalīfah of Islam. Assigning an army of fighting men, he sent Sayyidnā Khālid ibn Walīd to Yamāmah to fight against Musaylimah the Liar who had become very poweful in his area. The encounters were tough, but Musaylimah the Liar was ultimaṭely killed at the hands of Sayyidnā Waḥshī, may Allah be pleased with him. His group repented and returned to the fold of Islam. Again, it was Sayyidnā Khālid who went to fight against Ṭulayḥah ibn Khuwaylid. He escaped and went out to some other area. Then, Allah gave him the ability to repent and return to Islam once again. He came back as a Muslim.

The news that Aṣwad al-'Ansi had been killed and his group had surrendered had reached Madīnah toward the end of the month of Rabī' al-Awwal, the first month of the Ṣiddīqī Caliphate. This was the very first news of victory which reached Sayyidnā Ṣiddīq al-Akbar under such trying circumstances. So, from this point onwards, the noble Companions of the Prophet were also blessed with more clear victories on every front against other tribes which had refused to pay *Zakāh*.

Thus, the practical demonstration of the truth of the word of Allah mentioned towards the end of the fifth verse (56): فَإِنَّ حِزْبَ اللّٰهِ هُمُ الْغٰلِبُوْنَ (then, the people of Allah are the ones to prevail) was seen by the whole world. Speaking historically and objectively, it is a proven fact that the problem of Apostacy did affect some tribes of the Arabian Peninsu-

la after the passing away of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Then, the group that Allah made to rise and fight against the challenge was that of Sayyidnā Ṣiddīq al-Akbar and his colleagues among the Ṣaḥābah. So, it also stands proved from this very verse that the qualities of the promised set of people given in the Qur'ān were all present in Sayyidnā Ṣiddīq al-Akbar and the Ṣaḥābah with him. To restate these, we can say:

1. Allah loves them.
2. They love Allah.
3. They are soft with Muslims and hard against disbelievers.
4. Their Jihād was in the way of Allah in which they were not afraid of any blame.

Pointing out to the reality of realities, it was clearly stressed that all these high qualities of character, their timely use and the ultimate success in the Islamic expedition through them were things which are not achieved by simple reliance on planning or power or numbers. This is nothing but the grace of Allah. It is He who bestows this blessing upon whom He wills.

Marks of True Muslims

In the previous four verses discussed so far, Muslims have been forbidden to maintain intimate friendship with disbelievers. A positive approach has been taken in the fifth verse (55) where those with whom Muslims can have intimate friendship and special camaraderie have been identified. Mentioned first is Allah and then, His blessed Prophet, for Allah is - and He alone can be - the real friend, guardian and guide of a true Muslim, all the time and under all conditions. Other than the relationship with Him, every relationship and every friendship is perishable. As for the bond of fidelity to the Holy Prophet ﷺ is concerned, that too is, in reality, connected with Allah - and not separated. In the last sentence of the verse, the sinceremost friends and fellows of Muslims have been identified as those who are true Muslims - not simply Muslims in name. They have three qualities which mark them out. These are:

اَلَّذِيْنَ يُقِيْمُوْنَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَيُؤْتُوْنَ الزَّكٰوةَ وَهُمْ رٰكِعُوْنَ

Those who establish *Ṣalāh* and pay *Zakāh* and bow before Allah.

It means that they: (1) Fulfill the obligation of Ṣalāh punctually observing all etiquettes (*'Ādāb*)and conditions (*Sharā'iṭ*) which must be observed in it; (2) Pay *Zakāh* out of their wealth; and (3) they are humble and modest and never become proud and arrogant over their good deeds.

The word, *Rukū'* in the concluding statement of this verse (55) : وَهُمْ رٰكِعُوْنَ translated as 'those who bow before Allah' could be taken in more than one sense. Therefore, some of the leading commentators have said that Rukū' refers to the functional Rukū' (bowing position) at this place - which is a basic element (*Rukn* : pillar) of Ṣalāh. And the sentence: وَهُمْ رٰكِعُوْنَ (and those who bow before Allah) has been placed after: يُقِيْمُوْنَ الصَّلٰوةَ (those who establish Ṣalāh) because the purpose is to distinguish the Ṣalāh of Muslims from the prayer offered by others. As for the essential prayer which Muslims call Ṣalāh is something the Jews and Christians also do, but it has no Rukū' in it. Ruku' is a distinctive element of the Islamic prayer known as Ṣalāh. (Maẓharī)

But, the majority of commentators says that Rukū' at this place does not mean the technical Rukū' of Ṣalāh. Rather, it means to bow, to be modest and humble in the lexical sense. Abū Ḥayyān in Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ and Al-Zamakhsharī in Tafsīr al-Kashshāf have gone by this meaning. The same view has been adopted in Tafsīr Maẓharī and Tafsīr Bayān al-Qur'ān. Thus, the meaning of this sentence comes to be that these people do not feel proud of their good deeds; their natural disposition is, rather, modesty and humility.

It appears in some narrations that this sentence has been revealed about Sayyidnā 'Alī رضی اللہ عنہ in the background of a particular event. It is said that Sayyidnā 'Alī was busy making Ṣalāh on a certain day. When he bowed in Rukū', someone needy turned up and asked for something. He, within that state of Rukū', took out a ring from one of his fingers and tossed it towards him. He could have taken care of the need of this person after having finished his Ṣalāh, but he did not wish to make even that much of a delay in removing the need of a poor faqir. This act of 'racing towards good deeds' was pleasing in the sight of Almighty Allah and it was through this sentence that it was appreciated.

The *Sanad* or authority of this narration is a debated issue among

'*Ulamā* and *Muḥaddithīn*, but, should this narration be taken as correct or sound, it would essentially mean that deserving of the close friendship of Muslims are common Muslims who fulfill the obligations of Ṣalāh and *Zakāh* particularly and regularly - and among them, Sayyidnā 'Alī is specially more deserving of this friendship - as has been said by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in another authentic *Ḥadīth*: مَنْ كُنْتُ مَوْلَاهُ فَعَلِيٌّ مَوْلَاهُ (To whomever I am a friend, then, 'Ali too is a friend of his) (narrated by Aḥmad, as in Mazharī). In yet another *ḥadīth*, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said: اَللّٰهُمَّ وَالِ مَنْ وَالَاهُ وَعَادِ مَنْ عَادَاهُ (O Allah, befriend whoever befriends him and take as enemy whoever shows enmity to him).

Perhaps, Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنه has been blessed with this honour because the Fitnah to appear in the future was unveiled before him and he knew that there will be people who will nurse enmity with him and will not hesitate in even rising in rebellion against him - as it did happen during the uprising of the Khawārij.

Anyway, the revelation of the present verse - even if it is related to this event - is worded in a general sense which includes all Companions of the Prophet, and all Muslims. This is not particular to any one individual under a specific command. Therefore, when someone asked Sayyidnā Imām Bāqar: "Do the words: اَلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا (those who believe) in this verse mean Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنه?" He said: "He too, as included under 'believers', is within the purview of this verse."

People of Allah shall prevail ultimately

The next verse (56) gives the good news that such people will overcome the world as come forward in obedience to the Qur'ānic injunctions given in this verse and stay away from forging close friendship with others by limiting themselves to taking Allah, His Messenger and those who have faith in them as their genuine friends. The words of the verse are:

وَمَنْ يَّتَوَلَّ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا فَاِنَّ حِزْبَ اللّٰهِ هُمُ الْغٰلِبُوْنَ

And whoever takes Allah and His Messenger and those who believe as friends, then, the People of Allah, are the ones to prevail.

In other words, it is said here that those who obey the commands

of Allah are the People of Allah. Given to them is the good news that they will be the ones to finally overcome. The events which unfolded later on confirmed the veracity of this statement when everyone saw that the noble Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all, overcame all powers which threatened them. When internal rebellions challenged Sayyidnā Abū Bakr, Allah Almighty helped him prevail over all of them. When the towering powers of Ceaser and Cyrus marshalled their menacing might against Sayyidnā 'Umar al-Fārūq, Allah Almighty effaced them from the face of the earth. Then, as long as these injunctions were dutifully observed by the Khulafā' and Muslims at large who came after them - by abstaining from establishing close bonds of friendship with non-Muslims - they had always remained winners in the struggle of life.

The Prohibition of Friendship with those who make fun of Islam

In the sixth verse (57), Allah Almighty has again stressed upon the injunction mentioned in verse 51 at the beginning of the Section, the sense of which is that the Muslims should not seek close friendship with people who make fun of their religion. They can be divided in two groups: The People of the Book, that is, the Jews and the Christians; and the disbelievers and non-Muslims in general. In al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, Imām Abū Ḥayyān says that the People of the Book were already included under the word, Kuffār or disbelievers, still, the People of the Book have been mentioned here particularly perhaps, because the People of the Book were, though, closer to Islam as compared with other disbelievers, yet, experience bears that very few from among them embraced Islam. This is the reason why a look into the statistics of those who embraced Islam after the age of prophethood and during the period later to it, will reveal that the majority of them were from among the common disbelievers. The number of those who became Muslims from among the People of the Book will be much lower.

Why would that be so? The reason is simple. The People of the Book take pride in being adherents to Divine Faith and Divine Scripture. This proud partisanship made them opt for not accepting the Truth. The attitude of mockery against Muslims was something that they displayed most. When mockery becomes wickedness, things

much lower can happen, as would be illustrated by an episode mentioned in the eighth (58) verse in the following words: وَإِذَا نَادَيْتُمْ إِلَى الصَّلٰوةِ اتَّخَذُوْهَا هُزُوًا وَّلَعِبًا (And when you call for Ṣalāh, they take it in jest and fun). Tafsīr Mazharī, with reference to Ibn Abī Ḥātim, reports the event itself by saying that there was a Christian in Madīnah al-ṭayyibah. When he heard the words : اَشْهَدُ اَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَّسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ (I testify that Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allah) in the *Adhān* (call for prayer), he used to say: اَحْرَقَ اللّٰهُ الْكَاذِبَ (May Allah burn the liar). At last, this very remark made by him became the cause of his entire family burn to ashes. How this happened was commonplace. When he was sleeping, his servant entered the house with a little fire for some purpose. A speck from it flew out and fell down on some piece of cloth. When everybody was fast asleep, the speck had turned into a blaze and everybody was burnt to death.

The Tragedy of People who do not Understand

At the end of the verse (58), it was said: ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَّا يَعْقِلُوْنَ (That is because they are a people who do not understand). It means that the reason for their jest and fun being directed against what is True Faith could be no other but that they do not understand.

Qāḍī Thanāullāh of Pānī Pat has said in Tafsīr Mazharī that Allah Almighty calls them devoid of understanding although their reason and intelligence in worldly matters is well known. From here we learn that it is possible that one could be very smart and quick-witted in certain kinds of jobs, but when it comes to doing some other things, he either does not use his mind or his mind does not work in that direction. Therefore, he turns out to be dumb in it, like one who does not understand. The Holy Qur'ān has referred to this subject in another verse as follows:

يَعْلَمُوْنَ ظَاهِرًا مِّنَ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ عَنِ الْاٰخِرَةِ هُمْ غٰفِلُوْنَ

These people do know outward matters of the present life while they are heedless to the Hereafter. (30:7)

Verses 59 - 61

قُلْ يٰٓاَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ هَلْ تَنْقِمُوْنَ مِنَّآ اِلَّآ اَنْ اٰمَنَّا بِاللّٰهِ وَمَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْنَا وَمَآ اُنْزِلَ مِنْ قَبْلُ ۙ وَاَنَّ اَكْثَرَكُمْ فٰسِقُوْنَ ﴿٥٩﴾ قُلْ هَلْ

أُنَبِّئُكُم بِشَرٍّ مِّن ذَٰلِكَ مَثُوبَةً عِندَ اللَّهِ ۚ مَن لَّعَنَهُ اللَّهُ وَغَضِبَ عَلَيْهِ وَجَعَلَ مِنْهُمُ الْقِرَدَةَ وَالْخَنَازِيرَ وَعَبَدَ الطَّاغُوتَ ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ شَرٌّ مَّكَانًا وَأَضَلُّ عَن سَوَاءِ السَّبِيلِ ﴿٦٠﴾ وَإِذَا جَاءُوكُمْ قَالُوا آمَنَّا وَقَد دَّخَلُوا بِالْكُفْرِ وَهُمْ قَدْ خَرَجُوا بِهِ ۚ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْتُمُونَ ﴿٦١﴾

Say, "O People of the Book, do you accuse us only because we have believed in Allah and in what has been sent down to us and what has been sent down earlier, and because most of you are sinners?" [59]

Say, "Should I (not) tell you what is worse than that in its recompense with Allah? (The way of) the one whom Allah has subjected to His curse and to His wrath, and made some of them apes and swines, and who has worshipped the *Ṭāghūt* (Satan, the Rebel). Those are worse situated and far more astray from the straight path." [60]

And when they come to you they say, "We have entered Faith" while they entered with disbelief and with it they went out. And Allah knows best what they used to conceal. [61]

Commentary

Referring to the Jews and Christians in: أَكْثَرَكُمْ فٰسِقُوْنَ (most of you are sinners) at the end of the first verse, 'most' - not 'all'- of them have been declared to be outside the fold of Faith. The reason for this is that they did have people among them who remained believers under all conditions. Before the coming of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, they followed the injunctions of the Torah and Injīl and believed in them. When the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم came and the Qur'ān was revealed, they believed in him too and started following the injunctions of the Qur'ān.

Consideration of the Addressee : A Principle of *Da'wah*

The condition of a people who were under the curse and wrath of Allah has been introduced through a similitude in the next verse (60)

which begins with : قُلْ هَلْ أُنَبِّئُكُمْ [Should I (not) tell you ...]. In fact, this condition applied to these very addressees. The occasion demanded that they should have been the ones to be directly charged with the blame. But, the Qur'ān has changed the mode of direct address into the form of a similitude (to show consideration). This shows us a distinctive method of Da'wah (Call) as used by prophets, that is, never say things in a manner which makes the addressees angry.

Verses 62 - 63

وَتَرٰى كَثِيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ يُسَارِعُوْنَ فِى الْاِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ وَ اَكْلِهِمُ السُّحْتَ ؕ لَبِئْسَ مَاكَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٦٢﴾ لَوْ لَا يَنْهٰهُمُ الرَّبّٰنِيُّوْنَ وَالْاَحْبَارُ عَنْ قَوْلِهِمُ الْاِثْمَ وَاَكْلِهِمُ السُّحْتَ ؕ لَبِئْسَ مَاكَانُوْا يَصْنَعُوْنَ ﴿٦٣﴾

And you see many of them racing towards sin, and aggression, and their eating of the unlawful. Indeed, evil is what they have been doing. [62]

Why do the Men of the Lord and the Men of Knowledge not forbid them from their saying of the sinful and eating of the unlawful? Indeed, evil is what they have been doing. [63]

Commentary

The Moral Loss of Jews

In the first verse (62) cited above, mentioned there is the moral depravation and self-destructive attitude of many Jews so that people who know that may take a lesson and stay away from such deeds, as well as from causes that lead to them.

Though, this was generally the condition of Jews, but they also had some good people among them. It is to exclude them that the Qur'ān has used the word: كَثِيْرًا '*kathīran*' (many). As for aggression and eating of the unlawful, these are though included under the sense of 'sin', yet they have been particularly mentioned, distinctly, in order to lay emphasis on the ruin these two kinds of sins bring on one and all. (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ)

According to Rūḥ al-Maʻānī, by using the expression 'racing towards sin' about these people, the Holy Qur'ān has given the hint that they are chronic subjects of these evil traits and the evil deeds they do have become fixed habits with them, so ingrained that they (automatically) move in that direction, even without intention.

This tells us that a good or bad deed when done many times repeatedly becomes a part and parcel of the inmost being of a person, almost a skill or drive or a fixed habit, after which, there remains no exertion or hesitation in doing what one does. This was the limit reached by Jews in pursuing their evil traits. To highlight it, it was said: يُسَارِعُوْنَ فِى الْاِثْمِ (They race towards sin). The same thing applies to prophets and men of Allah in the case of their good traits. About them too, the Holy Qur'ān has used the same expression when it says: يُسَارِعُوْنَ فِى الْخَيْرَاتِ (They race towards good deeds - 3:114).

The Correction of Deeds

Of those who have laid the greatest emphasis on the correction of deeds, the foremost are the respected Ṣūfīs (spiritual masters) and the men of Allah. These blessed souls have deduced from these very sayings of the Qur'ān the significant principle that all human deeds, good or bad, really come from ingrained habits and morals which ultimately become man's second nature. Therefore, when they wish to check, modify or dilute the recurrence of evil deeds, they keep these ingrained habits in sight. Thus, when they correct these, all deeds that issue forth start coming out right. Let us take the example of a person whose heart is overwhelmingly filled with greed for worldly acquisitions. As a result of this greed, he takes bribes, and devours income from interest, and if, given the opportunity, things could also reach the limits of theft and robbery. Instead of correcting these crimes separately, the spiritual masters use one masterly prescription which could cause the very foundation of these crimes razed to the ground - and that is the realization of the mortality of the world and the poisoned nature of its luxuries.

Similarly, if someone suffers from overweaning pride or arrogance or anger, and he belittles or insults others, or quarrels with friends and neighbours, these blessed souls will use the same prescription, the prescription with ingredients of the concern for the life-to-come and

the fear of ultimate accountability before Almighty Allah. Once these start remaining in sight actively, such evil behaviour patterns die out automatically.

In short, this Qur'ānic indicator tells us that man has some ingrained traits which become his second nature. If these ingrained traits tilt towards good, good deeds issue forth on their own. Similarly, if the ingrained traits are evil, man starts running towards evil deeds automatically. To achieve a total correction of behaviour, the correction of these ingrained traits is necessary.

Are religious leaders responsible for the deeds of common people?

In the second verse (63), the Shaykhs and 'Ālims among the Jews have been sternly warned as to why would they not stop such people from evil deeds. At this place in the Qur'ān, two words have been used. The first word is: رَبَّانِيُّوْنَ '*Rabbāniyyūn*', which means Men of Allah, that is, those who are intensely devoted to acts of worship and abstain from worldly temptations - commonly known as Derwish, Pīr or Shaykh. The second word used is '*Aḥbār*.' Religious scholars among Jews are called '*Aḥbār*.' This tells us that the real responsibility of the Qur'ānic injunction of *Al-Amr bil-Ma'rūf* (bidding the Fair) and *Nahy 'Anil-Munkar* (forbidding the Unfair) falls on these two groups, that is, on the Shaykhs and 'Ālims. However, some commentators have said that '*Rabbāniyyūn*' refers to 'Ulamā who have been appointed by Government and are fully authorized, while 'Aḥbār' means the 'Ulamā in general. Taken in that sense, the responsibility of stopping people from committing crimes comes to fall on government officials and 'Ulamā both. Incidentally, this has been further clarified in some other verses as well.

For 'Ulamā and Mashāyikh - a Note of Warning

Towards the end of the verse (63), it was said: لَبِئْسَ مَا كَانُوْا يَصْنَعُوْنَ : "Evil is what they have been doing" - which means that it is bad habit on the part of such religious leaders known as Mashāyikh and 'Ulamā that they have abandoned their cardinal duty of bidding the Fair and forbidding the Unfair. They see people ruining themselves and they do not stand up and stop them.

Commentators with knowledge and insight have pointed out that

at the end of the first verse (62) which mentioned the errors made by common people, what was said is: لَبِئْسَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ (Evil is what they have been doing). But, in the second verse (63), where the Mashāyikh and 'Ulamā have been admonished for their failing, the concluding sentence used is: لَبِئْسَ مَا كَانُوا يَصْنَعُونَ "Evil is what they have been doing [by design]." The reason is that, according to the Arabic usage, the word, فعل :*fi'l* (that which is done) includes everything done, whether with intention, or without. But, the word, عمل :*'Amal* (that which is acted upon) is applied to what is done particularly with intention and volition. As for the words, صنع : *Sana'a* and صنعت : *San'* at (that which is done by design) are concerned, they are applied when something is done with intention, and volition or choice, and that it is done repeatedly as a matter of habit and considered purpose both. Therefore, as a result of the evil done by common people, the word chosen was *'Amal*, that is: لَبِئْسَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ (Evil is what they have been doing). But, as a result of the wrong done by Mashāyikh and 'Ulamā particularly, the word selected was: صنع : *Sana'a*, as in: لَبِئْسَ مَا كَانُوا يَصْنَعُونَ : "Evil is what they have been doing [by design]." In this arrangement here, there may be a hint that the attitude of such religious leaders was false because they knew that if they were to stop their people, they would listen to them and, it was likely, that they would abstain from evil deeds. Yet, such is their greed for whatever offerings they may get from them, or such is their fear of losing the faith of their clients, that their hearts are not moved enough to stand up to defend and uphold the truth. This failing of theirs is far too grave than the evil doings of those evil doers.

The outcome is : If the people of a country get involved in sins and crimes, and their religious leaders know that they will listen and abstain if asked to stop, then, under such a condition, if they do not try to stop the flood of sins and crimes because of temptation, fear or apathy, their crime is more grave than the crime of real criminals and sinners. Therefore, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه had said that a stronger warning for Mashāyikh and 'Ulamā does not appear anywhere in the entire Qur'ān other than the one in this verse. The recognized authority in Tafsīr, Ḍaḥḥāk has said: In my view, this is the most frightening *Āyah* for Mashāyikh and 'Ulamā. (Ibn Jarīr & Ibn Kathīr)

The reason is that in the light of this verse, the failing of religious

leaders gets to be rated as far more serious than the actual crime committed by thiefs and robbers and sinners (Refuge with Allah). However, it should be borne in mind that this stern warning stands operative in the situation when the Mashāyikh and 'Ulamā are reasonably certain that their appeal will be heard and accepted. But, under other conditions when prevailing trends or corresponding experience create a stronger likelihood that nobody is going to listen to them, rather, they may even have to face harm or hurt in doing so, the command is that their responsibility, no doubt, stands dropped, but, the conduct which still remains better and higher is that they should - whether heard or negated - go on doing their duty without bothering about any blame thrown or pain caused. This approach was identified earlier as well in verse 54 which highlighted one of the qualities of the Mujāhidīn in the way of Allah by saying: وَلَا يَخَافُونَ لَوْمَةَ لَائِمٍ that is, they are not afraid of any blame thrown at them by those who would blame anyone who speaks the truth.

It is useful to sum up the main elements of our discussion before we part with it by saying that Mashāyikh and 'Ulama, rather, all Muslims, once they know something to be sinful or against law, are duty-bound to check, stop or prohibit sin and crime, to the best of their ability - with their own hands or word of mouth or, at the least, with distaste of the heart or dislike of the attitude - of course, subject to the condition that the occasion lends to the possibility and stronger probability that they will be heard and their call will be entertained. But, should there be an occasion where stronger probability exists that they will not be heard or they will be subjected to hostility against them, then, that will be a different condition in which it will no more be obligatory on them that they must prohibit and stop people - but, it shall still remain the better and the higher form of conduct. All these details about the well known Qur'ānic maxim of Bidding the Fair and Forbidding the Unfair have been deduced from Ṣaḥīḥ *Aḥādīth*. We can say that, by placing the responsibility - of personally doing what is right and good, avoiding what is not, and inviting others too to do good and shun evil, - on Muslims at large, and on Mashāyikh and 'Ulamā in particular, Islam has given to the world a priceless principle of peace which, if practiced, could help nations after nations become easily cleansed of all sorts of evils which afflict them.

The Method of Community Correction

As long as Muslims adhered to this principle right through the early and later centuries of Islam, they held a position of universal distinction in terms of knowledge, deed, morals and character. Once Muslims ignored this duty, started taking the prevention of crime as the sole responsibility of the government and its law-enforcing agencies and withdrew from their role in it, the result that came out was no secret. It is there for everyone to see. Here you have a father, a mother, the whole family, all religiously observing and fully adhering to the Sharī'ah. But, their children and their family circle are different, almost their reverse. They think and feel otherwise. They do things differently. It is for this reason that the mission of Bidding the Fair and Forbidding the Unfair has been particularly stressed upon in the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth as the surest method of any collective reform in the Muslim Ummah. The Holy Qur'ān has identified this mission as a unique distinction of the Ummah of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ. And it has also declared that any contravention of this rule shall be a grave sin and a certain cause of punishment. In *Ḥadīth*, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said: When sins are committed among a people and there lives someone who does not stop them, then, not far is the likelihood that Allah sends a punishment to fall on all of them. (Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ)

Warning against Not hating Sins

Mālik ibn Dīnār says: Allah asked his angels to destroy a certain town. The angels said that there lived in that town a devoted servant of His busy praying to Him. Came the command: Let him too taste the punishment because he never showed his anger against people disobeying Us and committing sins openly, not even with a sign of it on his face.

To Sayyidnā Yūsha' ibn Nūn عليه السلام, (Joshua) the Israelite prophet, Allah Almighty revealed that one hundred thousand of his people will be destroyed by a punishment. Of them, forty thousand were righteous and sixty thousand, evil. Sayyidnā Yūsha' said: O Lord, the ruin of the evil is obvious but why the good ones? It was said: The good ones had friendly relations with the bad ones. Together, they ate and drank and enjoyed life and never frowned on people sinning and disobeying their Creator. (Details of all these narrations can be seen in Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ)

Verses 64 - 67

وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ يَدُ اللّٰهِ مَغْلُولَةٌ ۚ غُلَّتْ اَيْدِيهِمْ وَلُعِنُوا بِمَا
قَالُوا ۘ بَلْ يَدٰهُ مَبْسُوطَتٰنِ يُنْفِقُ كَيْفَ يَشَآءُ ۚ وَلَيَزِيدَنَّ كَثِيرًا
مِّنْهُمْ مَّآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ طُغْيَانًا وَّكُفْرًا ۚ وَاَلْقَيْنَا بَيْنَهُمُ
الْعَدَاوَةَ وَالْبَغْضَآءَ اِلٰى يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ ۚ كُلَّمَآ اَوْقَدُوا نَارًا
لِّلْحَرْبِ اَطْفَاَهَا اللّٰهُ ۙ وَيَسْعَوْنَ فِي الْاَرْضِ فَسَادًا ۚ وَاللّٰهُ
لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُفْسِدِينَ ﴿٦٤﴾ وَلَوْ اَنَّ اَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ اٰمَنُوا وَاتَّقَوْا
لَكَفَّرْنَا عَنْهُمْ سَيِّاٰتِهِمْ وَلَاَدْخَلْنٰهُمْ جَنّٰتِ النَّعِيمِ ﴿٦٥﴾ وَلَوْ
اَنَّهُمْ اَقَامُوا التَّوْرٰىةَ وَالْاِنْجِيلَ وَمَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْهِمْ مِّنْ رَّبِّهِمْ
لَاَكَلُوا مِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ وَمِنْ تَحْتِ اَرْجُلِهِمْ ۚ مِنْهُمْ اُمَّةٌ مُّقْتَصِدَةٌ ۚ
وَكَثِيرٌ مِّنْهُمْ سَآءَ مَا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٦٦﴾ يٰاَيُّهَا الرَّسُولُ بَلِّغْ مَآ
اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ ۚ وَاِنْ لَّمْ تَفْعَلْ فَمَا بَلَّغْتَ رِسٰلَتَهُ ۚ وَاللّٰهُ
يَعْصِمُكَ مِنَ النَّاسِ ۚ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكٰفِرِينَ ﴿٦٧﴾

And the Jews said, "Allah's hand is fettered." Fettered are their own hands, and cursed are they for what they said. In fact, His hands are well-extended. He gives as He wills. And what has been sent down to you from your Lord shall certainly increase many of them in rebellion and disbelief. And We have put enmity and hatred amongst them lasting to the Day of Doom. Whenever they lit the flame of war, Allah puts it out. And they run about on the earth spreading mischief. And Allah does not like the mischief-makers. [64]

And if the People of the Book had believed and feared, We would have written off their evil deeds and would have surely admitted them to the Gardens of Bliss. [65] **And if they had upheld the Torah and the Injil and what had been sent down to them from their Lord, they would have surely had plenty to eat from above them and from beneath them. Among them are moderate**

people. As for most of them, evil is what they do. [66]

O Messenger, convey all that has been sent down to you from your Lord. And if you do not, then, you have not conveyed His message (at all). And Allah shall protect you from the people. Surely, Allah does not take the disbelieving people to the right path. [67]

Sequence

Some conditions of the Jews were mentioned in the previous verses. More particular ones appear in the verses cited above, specially the ones identified with Nabbāsh son of Qays and Fenḥās, the chief of the Jewish tribe of Qaiynuqā' who uttered words of affront with reference to Almighty Allah, the description of which follows. Thereupon, the opening verse was revealed. (As in *Al-Lubāb*, from Sayyidnā ibn 'Abbās narrated by Al-Tabarānī and Abū Al-Shaykh)

Commentary

The first verse begins with the words: وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ (And the Jews said). It mentions what was a grave offence and an utterly undignified remark for any human being to make. They were wretched enough to (God forbid) say that Allah's hand is tied up.

The background in which this was said was that Allah Almighty had given to the Jews of Madīnah extended means and money. But, when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم came to Madīnah, they heard the call of Islam, yet they remained unmoved because they were more interested in holding on to their communal hegemony and the money they received through offerings based on their self-perpetuating customs. So, they turned against what was the call of truth and took a hostile stand against the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم himself. Then, as a punishment of this behaviour of theirs, Almighty Allah turned their affluent material circumstances into what was materially straightened for them - and they faced poverty. Thereupon, all frustrated and off-guard, they started uttering words to the effect that (God forbid) the Divine treasure seems to be running short or, perhaps, Allah has chosen to become miserly. It was in answer to them that it was said in this verse that the hands to be tied up will be their own hands who are saying what they are saying and cursed they shall be when punishment visits them in the Hereafter, and in the present world as well,

when it comes to them in the form of disgrace. As for the hands of Allah, they are always open and well-extended, and His generosity has been there since ever and shall remain for ever. But, He Himself is Independent, free of need, yet the master of all means. Then, along with this, He is Wise too. He gives and gives in His Wisdom. Means are extended for whom He wills in His Wisdom and means are straightened for whom He wills in His Wisdom.

After that, it was said that the people the Prophet of Islam is dealing with are contumacious people as they refuse to benefit from the open and clear words of the Qur'ān revealed to him, instead of which, their disbelief in and denial of the truth keeps getting more hardened. So, it is to keep Muslims safe from their evil designs that Allah has caused differences to crop up within their own sects because of which they would neither dare fight an open war nor would any conspiracy by them succeed. The failure to wage an open war has been mentioned in : كُلَّمَآ اَوْقَدُوْا نَارًا لِّلْحَرْبِ اَطْفَاَهَا اللّٰهُ (Whenever they lit the flames of war, Allah puts it out) while the failure to hatch sinster conspiracies has been pointed out in: يَسْعَوْنَ فِى الْاَرْضِ فَسَادًا (And they run about on the earth spreading mischief).

Full obedience to the Divine Commands brings Blessings in This World Too

In verse 65, the Jews have been admonished that the people of the Torah and Injīl have not derived any benefit from the guidance given therein nor from the teachings of the blessed prophets. Once involved in worldly greed, they ignored what was not to be ignored. As a result, they ran into straightened circumstances right here in this world as well. But, if they were to take to the ways of faith and godliness even now, Allah could forgive them their past sins and admit them to Gardens full of bliss.

How are Divine Commands carried out in Full?

Mentioned in verse 66 which begins with the words: وَلَوْ اَنَّهُمْ اَقَامُوا التَّوْرٰىةَ (And if they had upheld the Torah ...), are some details of the same faith and godliness for which worldly blessings have been promised in the previous verse (65). The detail is that they should, uphold the Torah, the Injīl and the Holy Qur'ān revealed after them. The word used here does not refer to 'acting in accordance with these books'. Instead

of that, the word placed here is '*Iqāmah*' which means to establish, and to make something stand upright and straight. It signifies that their teachings can be carried out fully and correctly only when there is no increase or decrease or shortcoming in them. What is meant to stand straight must stand perfectly straight - established, not tilting.

The essence of the verse is that if the Jews were to believe in the guidance of the Torah, the Injīl and the Qur'ān, even today, and carry out their instructions fully, without failing to act properly, nor opting for excess and transgression by equating self-innovated things with established religion, then, they shall deserve the promised blessings of the Hereafter, and the doors of sustenance will be thrown open for them in the present world as well. It will come from above and it will come from beneath. 'Above' and 'beneath,' as obvious, mean sustenance which will be available easily and constantly. (Tafsīr Kabīr)

It will be noticed that the earlier verse (65) promised blessings only in the Hereafter. The present verse (66) extends the promise to cover worldly comforts as well. The reason for this may perhaps be that the Jews had taken to malpractices, particularly the practice of altering and distorting Scriptures because of their taste for the temporal and their insatiable greed for money. This became their main hurdle which had stopped them from obeying the Qur'ān and the Prophet of Islam despite that they had seen very clear signs of their veracity. They were scared at the idea that by becoming Muslims, their leadership role in the community will be all over. Also gone will be the offerings and gifts which they received as religious high-priests. It was to remove this kind of doubt or apprehension that Almighty Allah promised to them that if they take to believing truly and acting righteously, nothing will be decreased from their worldly wealth and comfort which would, rather, be increased.

Answer to a Doubt

Details given above also show that this particular promise was made to Jews who were present during the time of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and were his direct addressees. If they had obeyed the command given to them, they would have had all sorts of blessings in the mortal world as well. So, those who took to the message of faith and good deed, they had these blessings in full - like Najāshī (Negus)

the King of Ethiopea and Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Salām رضى الله عنه. However, it is not necessary that for one who abides by faith and good deed, sustenance will be extended as a rule and, vice versa, for one who does not, sustenance will be straightened as a rule. The reason is that, at this place, the purpose is not to describe a general rule. This is a promise made to a particular group under particular conditions.

However, as far as the standard or general rule regarding faith and good deeds is concerned, the promise of the blessing of good and pure life is universal - but, that could either take the form of extended means of sustenance, or means which are outwardly constricted, as it has been with the blessed prophets and men of Allah not all of whom had extended sustenance all the time, but they all did have the purest of the pure life.

Justice was served when in the last verse (67), it was also added that the evil doings of Jews mentioned in the text do not apply to all Jews. Among them there were moderate people, people who were on the right path. But, the majority was evil doing. 'People on the right path' denotes people who were first Jews and Christians, then believed in the Qur'ān and the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and entered the fold of Islam.

Emphasis on *Tablīgh* and Comfort for the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم

In the present verses as well as throughout the previous two sections, there has been a continued description of the crookedness, waywardness, obstinacy and anti-Islam mechanizations of Jews and Christians. One natural effect it could have on the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was that he, being human, could feel disappointed or compelled by circumstances and, as a result of which, the process of *Tablīgh* or the very mission of prophethood might slow down or left lacking somewhere. The second effect could be that in the event he elected to devote single-mindedly to his call and mission as a prophet without caring for any hostility, enmity, harm or hurt, there was every likelihood that it could result in the worst of hardships at the hands of his adversaries. Therefore, in the last verse (67), the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was, on the one hand, emphatically commanded to convey everything revealed to him by Allah, all of it, without any hesitation, to the people. That someone likes or dislikes it, takes or rejects it, should not

worry him in his mission. Then, on the other hand, by giving the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم the good news that all those disbelievers will be unable to bring any harm to him in his mission as a prophet for Allah will Himself protect him.

The sentence: وَإِن لَّمْ تَفْعَلْ فَمَا بَلَّغْتَ رِسَالَتَهُ : 'And if you do not, then, you have not conveyed His message [at all]' in this verse is worth pondering. This address to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم here means that if he failed to convey even one Divine command to the Muslim *Ummah*, he would not find himself absolved of the responsibility of prophethood. This was the reason why the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم strived with his full courage and strength all his life to fulfill this heavy obligation placed on his shoulders. Muslims are familiar with the renowned *Khuṭbah* of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم during his Last Ḥajj, the great address which was not only the Constitution of Islam but also the last will and testament of an elementally lenient and merciful prophet who was far more affectionate and caring than a father and mother could ever be.

The parting will of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم on the occasion of the Last Ḥajj

In this *Khutbah* before a huge gathering of his noble *Ṣaḥābah*, after he had given important instructions to them, he asked the audience: أَلَا هَلْ بَلَّغْتُ (Listen: Have I conveyed your religion to you?). The *Ṣaḥābah* confirmed that he certainly had. Thereupon, he said: You be a witness on this. And along with it, he also said: فَلْيُبَلِّغِ الشَّاهِدُ الْغَائِبَ (that is, those present in this gathering should convey my message to those who are not here). Included among the absent are those who were present in the world at that time but were not present in the gathering itself - and also included are those who were yet to be born. The method of conveying the message to them was the spreading of the knowledge of the *Dīn* of Allah, a duty which was fulfilled by great efforts made by the *Ṣaḥābah* and the *Tābi'īn*.

It was under the direct influence of this parting advice that the noble Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all, took the words and deeds of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم as a weighty trust of Allah and did their best to ensure that not a single sentence uttered by his blessed tongue should remain unconveyed to his *Ummah*. This holds

true under all normal conditions. However, if someone did not narrate a particular *Ḥadīth* before people for a special reason or compulsion, he made it a point to do that before his death by reciting it to at least some people around so that they could be relieved of the burden of trust they have been carrying on their shoulders. A similar event about a *Ḥadīth* from Sayyidnā Mu'ādh رضی اللہ عنہ has been reported in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī, that is, اخبر به معاذ عند موته تاثما that is, Sayyidnā Mu'ādh recited this *Ḥadīth* at the time of his death so that he would not become a sinner because of his failure to convey this trust with him to others.

The Protection of Allah

In the second sentence of the last verse: وَاللّٰهُ يَعْصِمُكَ مِنَ النَّاسِ (And Allah shall protect you from the people), good news has been given to him that his enemies would remain unable to do anything harmful against him despite their myriad demonstrations of animosity.

It appears in *Ḥadīth* that, before the revelation of this verse, some Companions generally used to stay around him in order to protect him. They guarded him wherever he was, in the city or in travel. After the revelation of this verse, he relieved them all as no security arrangements were needed anymore. Allah had Himself taken that responsibility.

In a *Ḥadīth* narrated by Sayyidnā Ḥasan, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has been reported to have said: When I was charged with the duty of conveying the message of Allah as His prophet, the charge appeared to be very frightening because people around me were bound to falsify and oppose me. Then, as this verse was revealed, I was at peace. (Tafsīr Kabīr)

Thus, after the revelation of this verse, no one dared to harm the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم during his efforts to spread the message of Islam as a prophet of Allah. Any casual injury received in *Jihād* battles is not contrary to this.

Verses 68 - 69

قُلْ يَاَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ لَسْتُمْ عَلٰى شَيْءٍ حَتّٰى تُقِيْمُوا التَّوْرٰىةَ وَ
الْاِنْجِيْلَ وَمَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكُمْ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ ۭ وَلَيَزِيْدَنَّ كَثِيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ مَّآ

أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِن رَّبِّكَ طُغْيَانًا وَكُفْرًا ۖ فَلَا تَأْسَ عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٦٨﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالصَّابِئُونَ وَالنَّصَارَىٰ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾

Say, "O people of the Book, you have nothing to stand unless you uphold the Torah and the Injīl and what has been sent down to you from your Lord." And what has been sent down to you from your Lord will certainly increase many of them in rebellion and disbelief. So, do not grieve over the disbelieving people. [68]

Surely, those who believe, and those who are Jews, and the Sabians, and the Christians - whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, and acts righteously, shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve. [69]

Sequence

Earlier, the people of the Book were persuaded to embrace Islam. Mentioned now is the futility of their current approach which they claimed to be the God's truth while it was unworkable in the sight of Allah, insufficient for salvation and dependant on Islam as the only source of salvation. Then, as an antidote to their insistence on remaining disbelievers after being warned, there are words of comfort for the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. The mention of *Tablīgh* of *Dīn* had appeared in between as based on particular need and congruity.

Commentary

Follow the Divine Sharī'ah : Instruction for the people of the Book

In the first verse (68), the people of the Book, that is, the Jews and Christians were instructed to follow the Divine Sharī'ah by making it clear that they would be reduced to nothing if they chose not to abide by the injunctions of the Sharī'ah. In other words, if they do not adhere to the Sharī'ah of Islam, all their achievements shall stand wasted. To them Allah had given the privelege of being the progeny of prophets. Then, they had the intellectual excellence of the Torah and the Injīl as well. Added to this was the presence of many men of Allah

among them who went through strenuous spiritual exertions in their search for truth. But, for all this to be valid and weighty the one binding condition was that they should follow the Divine Sharī'ah. Without it, no geneological superiority will work, nor would their intellectual excellence or their spiritual strivings become the means of their salvation.

This statement provides for Muslims too the crucial guidance that there is no way of Dervishes or path of spiritual realization (*Sulūk* & *Ṭarīqat*) or repeated strivings to achieve spiritual goals (*Mujāhadah* and *Riyāḍāt*) or extra-sensory spiritual illumination (*Kashf*) or having visitations of inspiration (*Ilhām*) which can become the source of spiritual achievement or salvation in the sight of Allah unless there is full adherence to the Sharī'ah.

To prove one's obedience to the Divine Sharī'ah, the instruction given in this verse is to follow three things. These are the Torah and Injīl which had been revealed earlier for the Jews and Christians while the third one is: وَمَآ أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ , that is, what has been revealed to you from your Lord.

According to the consensus of the majority of commentators, the Ṣaḥābah and the Tābi'īn, it means the Holy Qur'ān which was sent for the universal community of inviters to faith - including the Jews and Christians - through the (midmost) medium of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. Therefore, the verse comes to mean 'unless you act in accordance with the injunctions brought by the Torah, the Injīl and the Qur'ān - correctly, fully and totally - no lineal or intellectual excellence of yours shall be valid or acceptable with Allah.'

At this point one may wonder why, in this verse, rather than mentioning Qur'ān by its brief name, as was done with the Torah and the Injīl, a long sentence : وَمَآ أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ (and what has been revealed to you from your Lord) has been used. What is the wisdom behind it? It is possible that it may be carrying a hint to what was said by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in which he disclosed that the way he was given the Qur'ān which is a treasure of knowledge and wisdom, also given to him were other sources of knowledge and insight, which could be called, in a certain aspect, the explication of the Holy Qur'ān as well. The words of the *Ḥadīth* are:

الا انّى اوتيت القران ومثله معه الا يوشك رجل شبعان على اريكته يقول عليكم بهذا القران فما وجدتم فيه من حلال فأحلوه وما وجدتم فيه من حرام فحرموه وان ماحرم رسول الله (صلى الله عليه وسلم) كما حرم الله .

(ابوداؤد ، ابن ماجه، دارمی وغیرہا)

Remember! I have been given the Qur'ān and, with it, (many fields of knowledge) like it - lest, in times to come, some sated man reclining on his couch were to say: For you this Qur'ān is sufficient - what you find Ḥalāl in it, take that as Ḥalāl; and what you find Ḥarām in it, take that as Ḥarām - although, what the Messenger of Allah ﷺ has declared to be Ḥarām is like what Allah has declared to be Ḥarām. (Abū Dāwūd, Ibn Mājah, Dārimī & others)

Three Kinds of *Aḥkām*

The Qur'ān itself is a testimony of this subject. It says: وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوٰى إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُّوحٰى which means that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم does not say anything on his own - whatever he says is all revealed to him from Almighty Allah; and under conditions when he says something based on his *Ijtihād* (fully deliberated judgement) and *Qiyās* (analogical deduction) - following which he receives no guidance contrary to it - then, consequently, that *Qiyās* and *Ijtihād* too hold the same legal force as that of an injunction revealed through *Waḥy*.

In a nutshell, we can say that, out of the injunctions (*Aḥkām*) given to the *Ummah* by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, first come those which have been mentioned clearly in the Holy Qur'ān. Then, there are those which have not been mentioned in the Qur'ān clearly, instead of which, they were revealed to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم through a separate *Waḥy* (*Waḥy Ghayr Matlū*: Revelation not recited). Thirdly, the command which he gave as based on his *Ijtihād* and *Qiyās* - following which no command was revealed by Almighty Allah - then, that too takes the legal force of a revealed injunction. It is obligatory to follow all these three kinds of injunctions. They are included within the purview of : وَمَآ أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ (What has been revealed to you from your Lord).

It is also possible that the use of the longer sentence: وَمَآ أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ (and what has been revealed to you from your Lord) in place of the likely brief name of Qur'ān in this verse may have been preferred so as

to indicate that the following of all injunctions given in the Qur'ān or given by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is equally mandatory.

Another point worth noting in this verse is that the Jews and Christians have been asked to follow the injunctions of all three Books, that is, the Torah, the Injīl and the Qur'ān - although, some of them abrogate others. The Injīl abrogates some injunctions of the Torah and the Qur'ān abrogates many injunctions of the Torah and the Injīl. How then, could the sum of three be followed in action?

The answer is clear. Since every incoming Book changed some injunctions of the outgoing Book, it becomes obvious that following the replaced modality, in itself, amounts to acting in accordance with both Books. Following and acting in accordance with abrogated injunctions is against the requirement of both Books.

Allah consoles His Prophet

To console the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, it was said at the end that there will be many among the people of the Book who would fail to benefit by the Divine magnanimity shown to them. They may even react adversely by increasing the tempo of their disbelief and hostility. Let this be no cause of grief to him, nor should he have any sympathetic concern for them.

Salvation promised for Four Communities having faith and good deeds

In the second verse (69), Allah Almighty addresses four traditional religious communities, pursuades them to have faith and act righteously whereupon He promises salvation for them. The first of those are: اَلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا (those who believe) that is, the Muslims. Secondly : اَلَّذِيْنَ هَادُوْا (and those who are Jews); thirdly : صٰبِـُٔوْنَ (the Sabians); and fourthly : نَصٰرٰى (the Christians). Three of these Communities - Muslims, Jews and Christians - are well-known and found in most parts of the world. Any community having the name Sabian does not exist today. Therefore, scholarly opinion varies as to their exact identity. Quoting Qatādah, the Tafsīr authority, Ibn Kathīr has reported that Sabians were people who worshipped angels, offered prayers contra-oriented to the Qiblah and recited the Scripture, Zabūr (revealed to Sayyidnā Dāwūd) عليه السلام.

The context of the Qur'ān seems to support it as the four Scriptures mentioned in the Qur'ān are Torah, Zabūr, Injīl and Qur'ān. Thus, named here are the believers in these four Books.

Another verse on the same subject, almost in the same words, has appeared in the seventh Section of Sūrah al-Baqarah:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ اٰمَنُوْا وَالَّذِيْنَ هَادُوْا وَالنَّصٰرٰى وَالصّٰبِئِيْنَ مَنْ اٰمَنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَهُمْ اَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَاهُمْ يَحْزَنُوْنَ،

> Surely, those who believed, and those who are Jews, and Christians, and the Sabians - whoever believes in Allah and in the Last Day, and does good deeds - they have their reward with their Lord. And there is no fear for them nor shall they grieve. (2: 62)

Other than the place-oriented transposition of some words, there is no difference between them.

With Allah, Distinction Depends on Righteous Deeds

The gist of both these verses is that distinctions of lineage, homeland, and nationality do not matter in the sight of Allah. Anyone who takes to total obedience, faith and good deeds as a way of life - no matter what he has been before - shall find himself acceptable with Allah and his devotion will bring the best of appreciation from his Creator. And it is obvious that total obedience after the revelation of the Qur'ān depends on being a Muslim - because, there are instructions to this effect in the past Scriptures of the Torah and the Injīl as well, while the Qur'ān itself was revealed for this particular purpose. Therefore, after the revelation of the Qur'ān and the appearance of the Last among Prophets صلى الله عليه وسلم, it cannot be correct - without believing in the Qur'ān and having faith in the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم - to follow either the Torah or the Injīl or the Zabūr. Thus, these verses would mean that whoever from among these communities becomes Muslim shall become deserving of salvation and reward in the *Ākhirah* (Hereafter). Provided right here is the answer to the doubt as to what would happen to all their dark doings of sin and disobedience and disbelief and anti-Islam and anti-Muslim mechanizations once they have become Muslims? The disarming answer is: All past sins and shortcomings will stand forgiven and in the life-to-come, they shall have no

fear or grief.

A surface view of the subject may suggest to someone that this should not be the place to mention Muslims because they are - in their faith and through their obedience - at the stage desired in the verse. In other words, the occasion here calls for the mention of only those who are supposed to be pursuaded to enter the fold of Islam. But, what we have here is a special mode of eloquence employed by the Qur'ān. It is like the law promulgated by the highest imaginable authority saying that it is for everyone, in favour or in opposition, bringing reward for the law-abiding and punishment for the law-breaking. It is obvious that those in favour are already obedient. The purpose is to make those in the opposing camp hear it. The particular element of wisdom behind mentioning those already in favour is that they are being told here that they are being appreciated not because of any personal or group excellence of theirs but simply because of their quality of obedience to their Creator. If the dissenter in the opposing camp were to take to the path of obedience to his Creator, he too will deserve the same grace and reward.

There is No Salvation (*Najāt*) without Belief in Prophethood (*'Īmān bir-Risālat*)

The set of instructions given in the address to these four Traditional Religious Communities is divided in three parts: (a) *'Īmān bil-lāh* : Belief in Allah (b) *'Īmān bil-yowmil-ākhir* : Belief in the Last Day (c) and *Al-'Amalus-Sāliḥ* : Good deeds.

It is obvious that the intention in this verse is not to give the entire details of Islam's articles of faith, nor is there any occasion for it. By mentioning some basic beliefs of Islam here, the aim is to point out to all Islamic beliefs, and to invite people to them - nor is it something so necessary that whenever *'Īmān* or faith is mentioned in a verse, all details about it should also be mentioned right there. Therefore, the absence of a clearly emphasized mention of the faith in the Messenger or Prophet at this place should have not given anyone having the least commonsense and justice the room to entertain any doubt - specially, when the whole Qur'ān and hundreds of its verses are brimming with clear statements about belief in the *Risālah*. Present there are loud and clear assertions that there is no *Najat* (salvation) without believ-

ing in the *Rasūl* (Messenger of Allah) and the sayings of the *Rasūl* fully and completely, and that no belief and action is acceptable or valid without it. But, a group of deviators, which insists on thrusting its repugnant ideas in the Qur'ān somehow, has come up with a new theory based on the absence of an explicit mention of prophethood in this verse - which is absolutely contrary to so many open assertions of the Qur'ān and Sunnah. They theorize that every person, despite his religion, a Jew or Christian, even an idol-worshipping Hindu could deserve salvation in the Hereafter - if he believes only in Allah and the Last Day and does good deeds. For final salvation (as they would prefer) entry in Islam is not necessary. (*Na'ūdhu-bil-lāh* : Refuge with Allah!)

People whom Allah has blessed with the Taufīq of reciting the Qur'ān and having true faith in it would not need some major knowledge or insight to help them remove this doubt which even they could do through these very clear statements. Even readers of the Qur'ān with the help of authentic translations could understand the falsity of this kind of theorizing. Some verses are being given here as an example.

The place where the Holy Qur'ān has described the articles of faith (*'Īmān*) in details appears at the end of Sūrah al-Baqarah as follows:

كُلٌّ اٰمَنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَمَلٰٓئِكَتِهٖ وَكُتُبِهٖ وَرُسُلِهٖ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ اَحَدٍ مِّنْ رُّسُلِهٖ

... All have believed in Allah, and His angels, and His Books, and His Messengers. (in a way that) "We make no difference between any of His Messengers," and they have said ... (2:285).

Within the details of *'Īmān* (faith) described clearly in this verse, it has also been clarified that believing in any one or some Messengers is absolutely insufficient for salvation. Instead of that, believing in all Messengers is a binding condition. If anyone does not believe even in one single Messenger, his or her *'Īmān* shall not be valid and acceptable in the sight of Allah.

At another place, it is said:

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَكْفُرُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَرُسُلِهٖ وَيُرِيْدُوْنَ اَنْ يُّفَرِّقُوْا بَيْنَ اللّٰهِ وَرُسُلِهٖ وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ
نُؤْمِنُ بِبَعْضٍ وَّنَكْفُرُ بِبَعْضٍ وَّيُرِيْدُوْنَ اَنْ يَّتَّخِذُوْا بَيْنَ ذٰلِكَ سَبِيْلًا اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ

الْكٰفِرُوْنَ حَقًّا ،

Surely those who disbelieve in Allah and His Messengers, and wish to make division between Allah and His Messengers, and say, "We believe in some, and disbelieve in some" and wish to take a way in between that. Those are the disbelievers in reality ... (4:151).

The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has said:

لَوْكَانَ مُوْسٰى حَيًّا لَمَا وَسِعَهٗ اِلَّا اتِّبَاعِيْ

Had Mūsā علیہ السلام been alive, he would have had no choice but to follow me.

Now, if someone were to say: 'Let the followers of every religion keep acting according to their respective religions. Thus, they can find Paradise and achieve salvation in the Hereafter without having to believe in the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم and without having to become Muslims!' - this would, then, be a flagrant disregard of the verses cited above.

In addition to that, if every religion or community is something acting according to which in every age is sufficient for ultimate success and salvation, then, the coming of the Last among Prophets and the revelation of the Qur'ān itself becomes meaningless. The sending of one Sharī'ah after the other also becomes redundant. The first Messenger would have brought one Sharī'ah and one Book. That would have been sufficient. What need was there to send other Messengers, Sharī'ahs and Books? At the most, sufficient would have been the presence of people who would have preserved the Sharī'ah and the Book, practiced it themselves and pursuaded others to do the same - as has been the duty of the 'Ulamā of every community. This, then, would be a situation in which the words of the Qur'ān: لِكُلٍّ جَعَلْنَا مِنْكُمْ شِرْعَةً وَّمِنْهَاجًا (For each of you We have made a way and a method - 5:48) will lose their meaning.

Is it not that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم carried out the mission of *Jihād* against Jews and Christians, and others, those who did not believe in him and in the Book of Allah revealed to him, even fought against them on battlefields? What justification would remain for that? And if, for a human being to be a true believer acceptable with

Allah, having faith only in Allah and the Last Day should be taken as sufficient, why then, would Iblīs (Satan) be cursed? Did he not believe in Allah? Or, was he a denier of the Last Day? Was he not the one who, even in his fit of anger, by saying: إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ (Till the Day, the [dead] are raised - 34:79), confirmed his faith in the Last Day?

The truth of the matter is that this error is the product of the notion that religion can be given as a gift on a silver plate as done in marriages. Seen in modern and international context, religion can be used to develop bonds of relationship with other nations - although, the Holy Qur'ān has said very openly and clearly that we should have our relations with non-Muslims based on tolerance, sympathy, favour, charity, mercy and things like that, but this should be done by ensuring that the limits of religion are not crossed and that its frontiers remain fully guarded.

If, in the verse under reference, let us suppose, there was no mention of the faith in prophethood, then, other verses quoted above which command it emphatically, would have been sufficient. But, a closer look at this verse itself will show a distinct hint towards belief in prophethood because, in the terminology of the Qur'ān, only that *'Īmān bil-lāh* (belief in Allah) is valid, in which there is belief in everything told by Allah. The Qur'ān has made its terminology very clear in the following words:

فَإِنْ اٰمَنُوْا بِمِثْلِ مَآ اٰمَنْتُمْ بِهٖ فَقَدِ اهْتَدَوْا

So, if they (the Companions) believe in the like of what you (the Prophet ﷺ) believe in, they have certainly found the right path - 2:137.

It means that the kind of *'Īmān* the noble Ṣaḥābah had is the only *'Īmān* which deserves to be called *'Īmān bil-lāh*. And it is obvious that *'Īmān bir-rasūl* was a great pillar of the edifice of their *'Īmān*. Therefore, the words: مَنْ اٰمَنَ بِاللّٰهِ (whoever believes in Allah) are inclusive of the belief in the Messenger of Allah.

Verses 70 - 71

لَقَدْ اَخَذْنَا مِيْثَاقَ بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ وَاَرْسَلْنَآ اِلَيْهِمْ رُسُلًا ۭ كُلَّمَا
جَآءَهُمْ رَسُوْلٌۢ بِمَا لَا تَهْوٰٓى اَنْفُسُهُمْ ۙ فَرِيْقًا كَذَّبُوْا وَفَرِيْقًا

يَقْتُلُوْنَ ﴿٧٠﴾ وَحَسِبُوْٓا اَلَّا تَكُوْنَ فِتْنَةٌ فَعَمُوْا وَصَمُّوْا ثُمَّ
تَابَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمْ ثُمَّ عَمُوْا وَصَمُّوْا كَثِيْرٌ مِّنْهُمْ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ بَصِيْرٌۢ
بِمَا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٧١﴾

Certainly We took a pledge from the Banī Isrā'īl and sent Messengers to them. Whenever a Messenger came to them with what did not meet their desires, they falsified some and started killing others. [70] **And they thought that no harm would follow. Therefore, they turned blind and deaf. Then, Allah accepted their repentance, but again they turned blind and deaf, many of them. And Allah is watchful of what they do.** [71]

Commentary

This is an account of how the Bani Isrā'īl kept breaking the pledge taken from them. As said in verse 70, whenever their Messenger brought a command which did not suit their fancy, they would break their pledge and go about betraying Allah to the limit that they would falsify His Messengers, even kill some of them. They were commanded 'to believe in Allah and act righteously.' But, this was what they did in response. As for the other part of the command - 'Belief in the Last Day' - their behaviour was equally reckless. After having committed acts so oppressive, they became totally carefree as if they would not have to pay for what they had done and as if the consequences of their injustice and rebellion will never come out in the open. Under this false impression, they became totally blind and deaf to Divine signs and words. They went on doing what should have not been done. So much so that they killed some prophets and put some others behind bars. Finally, Almighty Allah imposed on them the mastery of Nebuchadnezzar (King of Babylonia, 605-562 B.C., who took them as slaves to Babylon - Old Testament, book of Daniel). When, after a long time, they were sent back to Jerusalem from Babylon through help from some Persian kings who secured their release from disgrace under Nebuchadnezzar, they repented and turned to making amends. Allah relented and accepted their repentance. But, with the passage of some time, they went back to their old practices which made them so blind and deaf once again that they dared killing Sayyidnā Zakariyah

(Zechariah) and Sayyidnā Yaḥyā (John) and were all set to kill Sayyidnā 'Īsā (Jesus). (Tafsīr Usmanī - Notes)

Verses 72 - 76

لَقَدْ كَفَرَ الَّذِيْنَ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الْمَسِيْحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ ؕ وَقَالَ
الْمَسِيْحُ يٰبَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ اعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ رَبِّيْ وَرَبَّكُمْ ؕ اِنَّهٗ مَنْ
يُّشْرِكْ بِاللّٰهِ فَقَدْ حَرَّمَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ الْجَنَّةَ وَمَاْوٰىهُ النَّارُ ؕ وَمَا
لِلظّٰلِمِيْنَ مِنْ اَنْصَارٍ ﴿۷۲﴾ لَقَدْ كَفَرَ الَّذِيْنَ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّ اللّٰهَ
ثَالِثُ ثَلٰثَةٍ ۘ وَمَا مِنْ اِلٰهٍ اِلَّآ اِلٰهٌ وَّاحِدٌ ؕ وَاِنْ لَّمْ يَنْتَهُوْا عَمَّا
يَقُوْلُوْنَ لَيَمَسَّنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿۷۳﴾ اَفَلَا
يَتُوْبُوْنَ اِلَى اللّٰهِ وَ يَسْتَغْفِرُوْنَهٗ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿۷۴﴾ مَا
الْمَسِيْحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ اِلَّا رَسُوْلٌ ۚ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ ؕ وَاُمُّهٗ
صِدِّيْقَةٌ ؕ كَانَا يَاْكُلٰنِ الطَّعَامَ ؕ اُنْظُرْ كَيْفَ نُبَيِّنُ لَهُمُ الْاٰيٰتِ ثُمَّ
انْظُرْ اَنّٰى يُؤْفَكُوْنَ ﴿۷۵﴾ قُلْ اَتَعْبُدُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ مَا لَا
يَمْلِكُ لَكُمْ ضَرًّا وَّلَا نَفْعًا ؕ وَاللّٰهُ هُوَ السَّمِيْعُ الْعَلِيْمُ ﴿۷۶﴾

Surely, they became disbelievers who said, "Allah is exactly the Masīḥ son of Maryam (Jesus son of Mary)" while the Masīḥ had said, "O children of Isrā'īl, worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord." The fact is, whoever ascribes any partner to Allah, to him Allah has prohibited the *Jannah* (the Paradise) and their shelter is the Fire. And for the unjust there are no supporters. [72]

Surely, they became disbelievers who said, "Allah is the third of the three" while there is no god but One God. And if they do not desist from what they say, a painful punishment shall certainly befall the disbelievers among them. [73] **Why then do they not turn to Allah in repentance and seek His forgiveness when Allah is most forgiving, very merciful?** [74]

The Masīḥ, son of Maryam, is no more than a Messenger. There have been messengers before him. And his

mother is very truthful. Look how We explain signs to them, then see how far they are turned away. [75]

Say, "Do you worship, besides Allah, what has no power to do you harm or bring you benefit?" And Allah is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing. [76]

Commentary

1. The words : إِنَّ اللّٰهَ ثَالِثُ ثَلٰثَةٍ in verse 72, translated here literally as 'Allah is the third of the three,' refers to Sayyidnā Masīḥ (Jesus Christ), *Rūḥul-Quds* (The Holy Spirit) and Allah, or to Masih, Maryam (Mary) and Allah - with all three taken as God (Refuge with Allah). Thus, Allah becomes a one-third partner with them, then all three of them become one, and that one is three. This unity in trinity, with three persons in one godhead, is the common belief of Christians. They explain this belief which is supported by neither reason nor revelation with a language that is kept circuitous and ambiguous. When not understood, they declare it to be reality beyond comprehension. (Shabbīr Aḥmad Usmanī - Notes)

2. In verse 75, by saying: قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ (There have been messengers before him), the assigning of godhood to Sayyidnā Masīḥ عليه السلام has been refuted. Prophets came to this world. They completed their mission. Then, they were gone. They were not eternal which is the mark of godhood. Similarly, Sayyidnā Masīḥ, may peace be upon him (being human like them) was not eternal. So, he cannot be what God is.

A little reflection will show that everyone who needs to eat and drink almost depends on everything in the world. We cannot say that the earth, the air, the water, the sun and the animals are what we do not need. Look into your own self. There is that grain of food outside you, then begins its journey from the entry into the stomach to the next destination of its digestion. Think of all those factors involved and things required directly and indirectly in this complex procedure. Then, there will be a chain of effects generated through eating and no one can tell precisely how far will they go. So, by pointing out that Sayyidna Masīḥ and his pious mother used to eat, the Holy Qur'ān has referred to the endless chain of needs it entails. The argument, thus runs that Masīḥ and Maryam, may peace be upon them both, were not

free of the need for eating and drinking which is proved by observation and authentic narrations (not denied by even Christians). And anyone who is not free from the need of eating and drinking cannot be free from anything in this world. How then, a human person, who like all human beings is not free of the need to depend on the chain of causation for survival, could become God? This is a strong and clear proof which can be understood by the educated and the uneducated alike - that is, eating and drinking is contrary to godhood. Though, not eating too is not a proof in favour of godhood, otherwise all angels would become gods! (Refuge with Allah) (Tafsīr Usmānī)

3. Was Sayyidah Maryam a prophet or saint? This is a debated issue. In the present verse (75), the complimentary use of the word "*Ṣiddīqah*" (truthful) obviously seems to indicate that she was a godly person, not a *Nabiyy* (prophet) - because on a complimentary occasion, what is mentioned is the higher rank. If she had the station of prophethood, the word used for her at this place would have been "*Nabiyyah*"- but, the word used here is "*Ṣiddīqah*" which is the station of sainthood or godliness (abridged from Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī).

According to the majority of Muslim scholars, the station of *Nubūwwah* (prophethood) has never appeared among women. This mission has been particular with men:

وَمَآ اَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ اِلَّا رِجَالًا نُّوْحِيْٓ اِلَيْهِمْ مِّنْ اَهْلِ الْقُرٰى

And We have not sent any (one) before you but men to whom We revealed from among the peoples of the towns - Sūrah Yusuf, 12 : 109. (Tafsīr Usmānī)

Verses 77 - 81

قُلْ يٰٓاَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ لَا تَغْلُوْا فِيْ دِيْنِكُمْ غَيْرَ الْحَقِّ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوْٓا اَهْوَآءَ قَوْمٍ قَدْ ضَلُّوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَاَضَلُّوْا كَثِيْرًا وَّضَلُّوْا عَنْ سَوَآءِ السَّبِيْلِ ﴿٧٧﴾ لُعِنَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْ بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ عَلٰى لِسَانِ دَاوٗدَ وَ عِيْسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ ؕ ذٰلِكَ بِمَا عَصَوْا وَّكَانُوْا يَعْتَدُوْنَ ﴿٧٨﴾ كَانُوْا لَا يَتَنَاهَوْنَ عَنْ مُّنْكَرٍ فَعَلُوْهُ ؕ لَبِئْسَ مَا

كَانُوْا يَفْعَلُوْنَ ﴿٧٩﴾ تَرٰى كَثِيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ يَتَوَلَّوْنَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا ۭ
لَبِئْسَ مَا قَدَّمَتْ لَهُمْ اَنْفُسُهُمْ اَنْ سَخِطَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَفِي
الْعَذَابِ هُمْ خٰلِدُوْنَ ﴿٨٠﴾ وَلَوْ كَانُوْا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالنَّبِيِّ
وَمَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْهِ مَا اتَّخَذُوْهُمْ اَوْلِيَاۗءَ وَلٰكِنَّ كَثِيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ
فٰسِقُوْنَ ﴿٨١﴾

Say, "O people of the Book, be not excessive in your faith unjustly, and do not follow the desires of a people who already went astray, misled many and lost the right path. [77]

On those who disbelieve from among the children of Isrā'īl was a curse pronounced by Dāwūd and 'Īsā son of Maryam. All this because they disobeyed and used to cross the limits. [78] **They did not forbid each other from an evil they committed. Indeed, evil is what they have been doing.** [79]

You see many of them take the disbelievers as friends. Indeed, evil is what their own selves have sent ahead for themselves as Allah is angry with them, and they are to remain under punishment for ever. [80]

And if they have been believing in Allah, in the prophet and in what had been sent down to him, they would have not taken them as friends, but many of them are sinners. [81]

Commentary

The Crookedness of Banī Isrā'īl : Yet Another Aspect

It will be recalled that, in previous verses, mentioned there was the contumacy of Bani Isrā'īl along with their tyranny and injustice with reference to what they did to their benefactors, the prophets sent by Allah who had come to show them the way to succeed in this life and in the life to come. But, they mistreated them, by falsifying some and killing others: فَرِيْقًا كَذَّبُوْا وَفَرِيْقًا يَّقْتُلُوْنَ (72)

The present verses expose another aspect of the crooked ways of Bani Isrā'īl. So astray were they that they, not content with one extreme mentioned above, reached for another when they committed ex-

cess in showing reverence for messengers of Allah by making them nothing short of God: لَقَدْ كَفَرَ الَّذِيْنَ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الْمَسِيْحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ . It means that the section of people from the Bani Isrā'īl who said that Allah is exactly Jesus the son of Mary had become disbelievers. Mentioned this far is the saying of the Christians only. Elsewhere, the Jews too have been censured for the same kind of excess and error: وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُوْدُ عُزَيْرُ ابْنُ اللّٰهِ وَقَالَتِ النَّصٰرَى الْمَسِيْحُ ابْنُ اللّٰهِ (And the Jews said, "Uzair (Ezra) is the son of Allah" and the Christians said, "Masīḥ (the Christ) is the son of Allah."

The word "*Ghuluww*" used at the begining of verse 77: قُلْ يٰٓاَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ لَاتَغْلُوْا فِيْ دِيْنِكُمْ (Say, "O people of the Book, be not excessive in your faith") means to cross limits. "*Ghuluww*" or excess in religion refers to the crossing of limits drawn by religion in matters of belief and deed. For example, there is a limit to paying homage to prophets. The farthest one can go is to take them as the best among God's creation. That is the limit. Going over and beyond this limit, calling those very prophets God or son of God is excess in matters of belief.

Banī Isrā'īl : Their Cycle of Excess and Deficiency

The behaviour of the people of the Banī Isrā'īl towards prophets and messengers of Allah had been a mixture of opposites. They could become as neglectful and irreverent as to falsify or even kill them while it would be they themselves who would stretch the limits of their exaggerated reverence for them by calling them God or son of God. This syndrome of excess and deficiency in group behaviour is a sign of ingrained brutality. There is a well-known saying among Arabs: اَلْجَاهِلُ اِمَّا مُفْرِطٌ اَوْمُفَرِّطٌ which means that an ignorant person never stays on moderation. He would either go for '*Ifrāṭ*' (excess) or for '*Tafrīṭ*' (deficiency). *Ifrāṭ* means to cross the limit while *Tafrīṭ* means to fall short in doing one's duty. These actions on two extremes may have come from two different groups of the Banī Isrā'īl, or it is also possible that one single group acted in two different ways with different prophets whereby some were subjected to their falsification, even killing, while some others were equated with God.

Addressing the people of the Book in this verse, the guidance given to them and their generations to come right through the Last Day, has the status of a basic principle to be kept in sight while following a religion for the slightest deviation from it makes one be lost for ever.

Therefore, let us first explain a few basic things about it.

The Method of Knowing and Reaching Allah

The most significant truth of our life is that Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhu* is the Creator and Master of all universes of existence and whatever they contain. He is One. To Him belongs all there is and for Him is to command. It is He alone man must obey. But man, the lump of clay come alive, is still wrapped up in layers and layers of materialism. How can he reach out to the One so pure and pristine? Or, how could he get an access to sources of His will and guidance? For this, Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhū* has, in His grace, appointed two sources of knowledge through which man can get to know what is liked and disliked by Allah Almighty and what it is that man must do and what is it that man must avoid. The first source is that of the Books of Allah which have the status of Law and Guidance for all human beings. Then, as the second source, there are those special and welcome servants of Allah whom Allah Almighty has chosen from among human beings, and He has sent them to people as the practical models of His likes and dislikes and the practical keys to His Books. In religious terminology, they are called "*Rasūl*" (messenger) or '*Nabiy*' (prophet).

This is because a book, no matter how exhaustive, can never be sufficient for the complete grooming of man. The fact is that it takes a man to be the natural groomer and nurturer of another man. Therefore, it has been the practice of Allah that He has allowed two orders to flourish in the mission of reforming and training men in the art of living. These are: (a) The Book of Allah, and (b) The Men of Allah - included wherein are the blessed prophets, then their deputies, the 'Ulamā and the *Mashāikh*. About this order of '*Rijālul-lāh*' (men of Allah), people have been victims of excess and deficiency since ancient times. Particularly, the different sects that mushroomed in religions were all products of this error of approach through which somewhere they were inflated beyond the required limit hitting the outer frontiers of the worship of such men. At other places, they were totally ignored and bypassed by saying: 'For us, the Book of Allah is enough' (حَسْبُنَا كِتَابُ اللهِ), apparently a true declaration, but by misinterpreting it to negate the importance of prophets they made it as their motto. At one extreme a Messenger of Allah, a *Rasūl* - even *Pīrs* and *Faqīrs* - were taken

to be the knowers of the unknown and seers of the unseen, as if they were (God forbid) the very possessors of God's own attributes. People started with worshipping live *Pīrs* and landed into the worship of their graves as well. Then, there was that other extreme when even a *Rasūl* of Allah was given the status of what would be a mere courier or postman. Thus, the essential message of the verses under reference is that the offenders against the honour of prophets are no less in their disbelief than are those who raise them far above the limits set for honouring them and go about saying that they were equal to Allah. Verse 77 which says, "do not be excessive in your faith," is a preface to this very subject. It makes it very clear that *Dīn* is, in reality, the name of a few limits and restrictions. The way it is a crime to remain deficient or negligent within those limits, so it is a crime to cross and exceed them. The way it is a grave sin to reject and insult the messengers of Allah and their deputies, in the same way, it is a much graver sin to take them to be the owners of Allah's own attributes or their equal sharers with Him.

Justified Intellectual Research is no Excess

In verse 77, the word: غَيْرَ الْحَقِّ (unjustly) appears alongwith the statement: لَا تَغْلُوْا فِىْ دِيْنِكُمْ (Do not be excessive in your faith). According to investigative scholars of *Tafsīr*, this word has been used here for emphasis because an excess in religion is always unjust. The probability of its being just does not simply exist. 'Allāmah al-Zamakhsharī and others have identified two kinds of *Ghuluww* or excess at this particular place: (1) The unjust and false which has been prohibited here; (2) The just and permissible, as an example of which, he has named deep intellectual research - or as it has been the way of the scholastic theologians (*Mutakallimīn*) of Islam in matters relating to articles of faith, or that of Muslim jurists in matters relating to juristic rulings. According to him, even this is, though, *Ghuluww* (excess) but, an excess which is just and permissible - while, the considered position of the majority of scholars is that it simply does not fall within the definition of *Ghuluww* (excess). Finally, we can say that deep insight and detailed investigation in questions relating to the Qur'ān and Sunnah should remain within the limits as proved from the Holy Prophet ﷺ and from the *Ṣaḥābah* and *Tābi'īn* - if so, that is not *Ghuluww* (excess). And what reaches the limits of *Ghuluww* is blameworthy here too.

Banī Isrā'īl Asked to Follow the Path of Moderation

Addressing the Banī Isrā'īl at the end of the verse (77), it was said: وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوْٓا اَهْوَآءَ قَوْمٍ قَدْ ضَلُّوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَاَضَلُّوْا كَثِيْرًا that is, they should not follow the desires and whims of a people who had themselves gone astray before them, and had made others go astray as well. The reason why they fell into that error was given immediately after by saying: وَّضَلُّوْا عَنْ سَوَآءِ السَّبِيْلِ that is, these people, by moving away from the right path, had lost it. This straight path was the path of moderation between the two extremes of excess and deficiency. Thus, two things have been accomplished in this verse: It points out to the fatal error made by crossing over the norm, or lagging far behind it, and stresses upon the need to stay firm on the straight path, the ideal path of moderation.

The Sad End of Banī Isrā'īl

Mentioned in the second verse (78) is the sad end of those from the Banī Isrā'īl who were involved in this error of excess and deficiency. On them fell the curse of Allah Almighty. Firstly, it came through the tongue of Sayyidnā Dāwūd علیہ السلام as a result of which they were transformed into swines. Then, this curse fell upon them through the tongue of Sayyidnā 'Īsā علیہ السلام the temporal effect of which was that they were transformed into monkeys. Some commentators have pointed out that the reference to the curse mentioned here as coming through only two prophets is because the context so requires. But, the fact is that the casting of curse on them began with Sayyidnā Mūsā علیہ السلام and ended at the Last among Prophets صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم. Thus, the curse which overtook those, who were hostile to prophets or were guilty of acting excessively by making prophets sharers in Divine attributes, was wished verbally by four prophets one after the other.

In the last two verses (80,81), the cultivation of deep friendship with disbelievers has been prohibited as its outcome is disasterous. It may also be indicative of the possibility that the deviation of Banī Isrā'īl was a result of their close friendly collaboration with disbelievers which may have affected their ways adversely and finally became the cause of their fall into the abyss.

Verses 82 - 86

لَتَجِدَنَّ اَشَدَّ النَّاسِ عَدَاوَةً لِّلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا الْيَهُوْدَ وَالَّذِيْنَ

أَشْرَكُوا ۚ وَلَتَجِدَنَّ أَقْرَبَهُم مَّوَدَّةً لِّلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّا
نَصَارَىٰ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّ مِنْهُمْ قِسِّيسِينَ وَرُهْبَانًا وَأَنَّهُمْ لَا
يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ ﴿٨٢﴾ وَإِذَا سَمِعُوا مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَى الرَّسُولِ تَرَىٰ
أَعْيُنَهُمْ تَفِيضُ مِنَ الدَّمْعِ مِمَّا عَرَفُوا مِنَ الْحَقِّ ۖ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا
آمَنَّا فَاكْتُبْنَا مَعَ الشَّاهِدِينَ ﴿٨٣﴾ وَمَا لَنَا لَا نُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَمَا
جَاءَنَا مِنَ الْحَقِّ وَنَطْمَعُ أَن يُدْخِلَنَا رَبُّنَا مَعَ الْقَوْمِ الصَّالِحِينَ
﴿٨٤﴾ فَأَثَابَهُمُ اللَّهُ بِمَا قَالُوا جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ
خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا ۚ وَذَٰلِكَ جَزَاءُ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٨٥﴾ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا
وَكَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَحِيمِ ﴿٨٦﴾

You will certainly find that the most hostile people against the believers are the Jews and the ones who ascribe partners to Allah. And you will certainly find that the closest of them in friendship with the believers are those who say, "We are Christians." That is because among them there are priests and monks and because they are not arrogant. [82] **And when they hear what has been sent down to the Messenger, you will see their eyes overflowing with tears on what they have recognized from the truth. They say, "Our Lord, we have come to believe. So, write us down alongwith those who bear witness.** [83] **And what excuse do we have if we do not believe in Allah and in what has come to us from the truth, while we hope that our Lord will admit us in the company of the righteous people?"** [84]

So, Allah has awarded them, because of what they said, gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein they shall live for ever. And that is the reward of the good in deeds. [85]

And those who disbelieved and denied Our signs, they are the people of the Fire. [86]

Sequence of Verses

Mentioned earlier was the friendliness of Jews with disbelievers.

Mentioned now is their hostility towards Muslims in tandem with the disbelievers - which was the real cause of that friendship (the enemy of my enemy is my friend!). And since the Qur'ān upholds justice universally, it has not counted everyone even among Jews and Christians as being in the same lot. Whoever among them had some good quality, that was acknowledged openly - for example, the presence of a particular group among the Christians which did not have the kind of prejudice the Jews were known for, and the statement about the Christians who had responded heartily to the call of truth and for which they were considered worthy of the best of praise and reward. This particular group was that of the Christians of Ethiopea who did nothing which could cause problems for Muslims who had migrated to Ethiopea from their home in Makkah, before the Hijrah to Madinah. Any Christian, other than them, who is like them, shall also be legally counted as one of them. As for those who had accepted the truth, they are the King of Ethiopea, Najāshī (Negus) and his courtiers who wept on hearing the Qur'ān in their own country and embraced Islam. After that, a deputation of thirty men from there came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم who recited the Qur'ān to them which they heard in tears and took their *Shahādah* as Muslims. This is the Cause or Background of the revelation of this verse.

Commentary

Some Votaries of the Truth among the People of the Book

Mentioned in these verses are those among the people of the Book who, had no feelings of malice or enmity for Muslims because of their godliness and tilt towards truth. But, people of such quality - like Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Salām - were very rare, rather almost non-existant among the Jews. Speaking comparatively, there were more such people among the Christians. Specially so, during the blessed period of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, there was a large number of such people in Ethiopea which included King Najāshī and his civil servants. For this reason, when the Muslims of Makkah al-Mukarramah were fed up with being continually oppressed by the Quraysh, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم advised them to migrate to Ethiopea saying that he had heard that the King of Ethiopea himself was no oppressor of people, nor did he allow anyone to oppress others, therefore, Muslims should go there for some time.

Following this advice, the first group of eleven persons started their journey towards Ethiopea. Included in the group were Sayyidnā 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān and Sayyidah Ruqaiyyah, his respected wife and the daughter of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. After that, a large caravan of Muslims comprising of eighty two men in addition to women, led by Sayyidnā Ja'far ibn Abī Ṭālib صلى الله عليه وسلم, reached Ethiopea. Received there nicely and gently by the King and his people, they started living there in peace.

But, the wrath of the Quraysh of Makkah knew no bounds. They could not bear by the idea that Muslims persecuted by them could live in peace in some other country. This they did not wish to allow. They sent a deputation of their men, with gifts as customary, to the King of Ethiopea with the request that he should expel Muslims from his country. But, the King of Ethiopea decided to first investigate into the matter. He talked to Sayyidnā Ja'far ibn Abī Ṭālib and his companions about Islam and its Prophet. When he heard about the life of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the teachings of Islam, he found these true to the prophecy of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and Injīl which contained the glad tidings of the coming of the Last of the Prophets, Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā صلى الله عليه وسلم, a brief outline of his teachings, and his physical features as well as those of his Companions (for ready identification). Impressed with and convinced by what he found out, he returned the gifts brought by the Quraysh deputation telling them plainly that he could never order such people to leave his country.

The Effect of Sayyidnā Ja'far's Presentation on Najāshī

Sayyidnā Ja'far had succeeded in presenting a brief but very comprehensive portrayal of Islam and its teachings in the court of Najāshī, the King of Ethiopea. Then, there was their very stay (as Muslim role models) in Ethiopea which had generated not only in his heart but in the hearts of his officials and common people genuine feelings for Islam and its Prophet. Consequently, when the Holy Prophet ﷺ migrated to Madīnah al-Ṭayyibah and the news that they were comfortable and at peace there reached Ethiopea, the immigrating guests of the country decided to go to Madīnah. Then, Najāshī, the King of Ethiopea sent with them a deputation of leading scholars and missionaries from among his co-religionists to present his compliments before the

Holy Prophet ﷺ. This group was comprised of seventy persons, out of which, there were sixty from Ethiopea itself, and eight from Syria.

The Visit of Ethiopean Delegation

Attired in the coarse robes of monks, this deputation presented itself before the Holy Prophet ﷺ. He recited Sūrah Yā Sīn before them. As they heard it, tears kept flowing from their eyes. They all said how similar that was to what was revealed to Sayyidnā 'Isa عليه السلام. All of them embraced Islam.

After their return to Ethiopea, King Najāshī also embraced Islam. He sent his son as the leader of another deputation to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم with a letter from him. Unfortunately, the boat carrying them was drowned in the sea. In short, the King of Ethiopea, its officials and citizens did not only treat Islam and Muslims gently, fairly and justly, but they themselves embraced Islam finally.

According to the majority of commentators, the verses cited above were revealed about these blessed souls:

وَلَتَجِدَنَّ اَقْرَبَهُمْ مَّوَدَّةً لِّلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا الَّذِيْنَ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّا نَصٰرٰى

> And you will certainly find that the closest of them in friendship with the believers are those who say, "We are Christians."

And about the verses which follow, and in which their weeping in fear of Allah and their acceptance of the truth has been described, the majority of commentators also agree that - though these verses have been revealed about Najāshī and the deputation sent by him - yet, its words are general. Therefore, its legal force covers and includes all such Christians who are devoted to truth and justice similar to the people of Ethiopea. That is, they were followers of the Injīl before Islam, and after the coming of Islam, they became followers of Islam.

Though, there were some people of this class even among Jews who adhered to the Torah since the period of Sayyidnā Mūsā, but when came Islam, they entered the fold of Islam. However, the number of such people was so small that it cannot be considered significant in the context of communities and nations. As for the rest of the Jews, they were the foremost in their hostility towards Muslims. Therefore, their attitude was identified at the very beginning of the verse by saying:

لَتَجِدَنَّ اَشَدَّ النَّاسِ عَدَاوَةً لِّلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا الْيَهُوْدَ

You will certainly find that the most hostile people against the believers are the Jews ...

Limits of Interpretation

To recapitulate, it can be said that a particular group of the Christians has been praised in this verse, a group which was God-fearing and upright in matters of truth. It includes King Najāshī, his officials and citizens - as well as other Christians who had these qualities, or would have in times to come. But, it does not mean - neither based on what the text says, nor could it possibly be - that the Christians have to be taken as friends of Muslims, no matter how astray they go and how aggressive in their anti-Islam hostility they become, and yet Muslims will have to extend their hand of friendship towards them. This interpretation, as obvious, is false and is absolutely against facts. Therefore, Imām Abū Bakr Al-Jaṣṣāṣ has said in his Aḥkām al-Qur'ān: that the thinking of some people who take the praise of Christians in this verse in an absolute sense and consider them better than the Jews, again in an absolute sense, is open ignorance - because a comparison of the religious beliefs of the two groups will show that the Christians are more pronounced in being *Mushriks* (as ascribers of partners in the divinity of Allah); and as for their dealings with Muslims are concerned, common modern-day Christians have not been any less than Jews in their anti-Islam activities. However, it is correct that there have been a good many God-fearing and truth-loving people among them. That is why they had the *Taufīq* to accept Islam and become Muslims. It must be kept in mind that these verses were revealed to show this particular difference between the two groups. The Qur'ān has itself pointed out to this fact at the end of this very verse (82) in the following words: ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّ مِنْهُمْ قِسِّيْسِيْنَ وَرُهْبَانًا وَّاَنَّهُمْ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُوْنَ : "That is because among them there are priests and monks and because they are not arrogant (which could make them unwilling to listen and think)." Comparison makes it clear that this was not the condition of Jews. They were not God-fearing and truth-loving. Their scholars and rabbis were far removed from renouncing the material pleasures of mortal life for the sake of knowledge and religion, instead of which, they had harnessed their knowledge and learning as a source of accumulating

material benefits. This lust for the mundane had gripped them to the extent that they did not care to make a distinction between the true and the false or the lawful and the unlawful.

Those who side with Truth are the moving spirit of a community

The statement given in the verse also tells us something crucial about the life of a community or nation (of true believers) - that its *'Ulamā'* and *Mashāikh* are its real movers and makers, the very spirit of the system. Until such time that there are present in the society (genuine) *'Ulamā'* and *Mashāikh*, who would not follow their worldly desires (in matters of *Dīn* and public good of Believers) motivated by nothing but the fear of Allah and answerability before Him, then, the community or nation in which they are shall never be deprived of real good and real blessing.

Verses 87 - 88

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تُحَرِّمُوْا طَيِّبٰتِ مَآ اَحَلَّ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ وَلَا
تَعْتَدُوْا ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِيْنَ ﴿٨٧﴾ وَكُلُوْا مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ
اللّٰهُ حَلٰلًا طَيِّبًا ۠ وَّاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ الَّذِيْٓ اَنْتُمْ بِهٖ مُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٨٨﴾

O those who believe, do not make unlawful good things that Allah has made lawful for you, and do not transgress. Verily, Allah does not like the transgressors. [39] **And eat any lawful, good thing from what Allah has provided for you, and fear Allah whose believers you are.** [88]

Sequence of Verses

Upto this point, the subject revolved around the people of the Book. Onwards, there is a return to subsidiary injunctions some of which were taken up early in the Sūrah, and some others also in between. Also reported is a particular link as relevant to the occasion - that monasticism has been mentioned in a complimentary sense a little earlier (82), though it is there in terms of a particular feature in it, which is the abandonment of worldly desires. But, since there was a probability that someone may take the whole concept of monasticism as praiseworthy, it was considered appropriate at this point that the

making unlawful of what Allah has made lawful be forbidden. (As abridged from Bayān al-Qur'ān by Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī)

Commentary

Leaving the worldly pleasures, when permissible

The verses appearing above tell us that the renunciation of worldly life and the abstinence from appetites and passions is favourable within a certain limit, but any transgression of the Divinely—ordained limits in this matter too shall be blameworthy and Harām (unlawful, forbidden). Details are being given below.

How Ḥalāl is turned into Ḥarām : The Three Forms

There are three forms in which something made *Ḥalāl* (lawful and good) by Allah could be declared as *Ḥarām* (unlawful and evil): (1) BELIEF-WISE, that is, something is taken to be Ḥarām by believing it to be so. (2) VERBALLY, that is, something is taken to be Harām for oneself by saying so — for instance, someone swears that he will not drink cold water, or would not eat such and such *Ḥalāl* food, or would not do something which is permissible. (3) PRACTICALLY, that is, someone who neither believes nor says anything, yet decides in practice that he or she would abandon something *Ḥalāl* for ever.

1. Under the first situation, if that thing being *Ḥalāl* stands confirmed by absolute proofs, then, the person who takes it to be Harām shall become a disbeliever (*kāfir*) because of that open contravention of the Divinely-ordained law.

2. And under the second situation, if someone has made something Ḥarām for oneself by declaring it with words of oath, the oath will become effective. There are many words of oath details of which appear in *Fiqh* books - for example, someone clearly says: ' I swear by Allah, I will never eat that' or 'by Allah, I will not do that' or one might say, 'I make taking this or doing that Ḥarām for me.' The rule which governs such actions is that taking such oaths unnecessarily is a sin. If taken, one must break the oath and make amends by paying the *Kaffārah* (expiation) of that oath, the detail about which will appear later.

3. The third will be a situation in which no Ḥalāl has been made Ḥarām either by belief or word of mouth, but practically what one does is similar to what is done with something Ḥarām, that is, takes it as

obligatory to abandon it for ever. The rule in this case is: If one takes the abandonment of the Ḥalāl to be an act of *Thawāb* (merit, reward), then, it is *Bid'ah* (innovation in established religion) and *Rahbāniyah* (monasticism) - which is a grave sin as categorically laid down (*Manṣūṣ*) in the Qur'ān and Sunnah; and acting against it is *Wājib* (necessary as an obligation); and adhering to such a restriction is an act of sin. Of course, if such a restriction is not there with the intention of *Thawāb*, instead, it is there for some other reason, such as, some physical or spiritual sickness because of which one abandons something permanently, then, there will be no sin in doing so. Reports about some noble Ṣufis and other pious elders that they had abandoned some *Ḥalāl* things are all included under this third kind as they had found them to be harmful for their desiring self, or were advised by a pious elder to abstain from it as harmful in their case which they abandoned as a treatment and remedy. If so, it does not matter.

The Correct Attitude towards *Ḥalāl* Things

At the end of the first verse (87), it was said: وَلَا تَعْتَدُوْا ، إِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِيْنَ , that is, 'and do not transgress the limits set by Allah because Allah does not like such transgressors.' Here, transgressing means that one abandons something *Ḥalāl*, without any valid excuse, as an act of *Thawāb*. This is something an ignorant person takes to be *Taqwā*, fear of Allah, while, in the sight of Allah, that is transgression, which is impermissible. Therefore, it was said in the next verse (88): وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ الَّذِيْٓ اَنْتُمْ بِهٖ مُؤْمِنُوْنَ that is, '(eat from the good and pure sustenance Allah has blessed you with) and keep fearing Allah whose believers you are.'

Stated clearly in this verse is that leaving off good and pure things as a source of *Thawāb* (reward) is no *Taqwā*. Rather, quite contrary to that, *Taqwa* lies in using them as the blessings of Allah and showing one's gratitude for them. However, if something is abandoned as a curative measure against a physical or spiritual disease, that does not count here.

Verse 89

لَا يُؤَاخِذُكُمُ اللّٰهُ بِاللَّغْوِ فِيْٓ اَيْمَانِكُمْ وَلٰكِنْ يُّؤَاخِذُكُمْ بِمَا عَقَّدْتُّمُ الْاَيْمَانَ ۚ فَكَفَّارَتُهٗٓ اِطْعَامُ عَشَرَةِ مَسٰكِيْنَ مِنْ اَوْسَطِ

مَا تُطْعِمُوْنَ اَهْلِيْكُمْ اَوْ كِسْوَتُهُمْ اَوْ تَحْرِيْرُ رَقَبَةٍ ۭ فَمَنْ لَّمْ يَجِدْ
فَصِيَامُ ثَلٰثَةِ اَيَّامٍ ۭ ذٰلِكَ كَفَّارَةُ اَيْمَانِكُمْ اِذَا حَلَفْتُمْ ۭ وَاحْفَظُوْٓا
اَيْمَانَكُمْ ۭ كَذٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ اٰيٰتِهٖ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُوْنَ ﴿٨٩﴾

Allah does not hold you accountable for what is not countable from among your oaths, but He does hold you accountable for the oath you have bound yourself with. Its expiation is to feed ten poor persons at an average of what you feed your family with, or to clothe them, or to free a slave. And whoever finds none shall fast for three days. That is expiation for your oaths when you have sworn. And take care of your oaths. That is how Allah makes His signs clear to you, so that you may be grateful. [89]

Sequence of Verses

Mentioned earlier was the taking of *Ḥalāl* things as unlawful. Since statements to this effect are sometimes sworn, therefore, the injunction about taking of oaths follows in the present verse.

Commentary

Three Forms of Oaths and their Injunctions

1. Some forms in which oaths are taken have been described in this verse. Some have appeared in Sūrah al-Baqarah as well (Ma'ariful-Qur'ān, Volume I, Verse 2:225, pages 562-563). The gist of all these is that false swearing about a past event knowingly is, in the terminology of Muslim jurists, *Yamīn Ghamūs* (disasterous oath) - for instance, if a person has done something, and he knows that he has done it, and then he knowingly swears that he has not done it. This is false swearing, a grave major sin the curse of which falls in the present life and in the life-to-come. But, there is no *Kaffārah* (expiation) necessary for it. *Taubah* (repentance) and *Istighfār* (seeking forgiveness from Allah) are, however, necessary. That is the reason why the Muslim jurists call it the disasterous oath. *Ghamūs* literally means that which drowns. This kind of oath drowns man into sin and its curse, a disaster for one's present and future life.

2. The second form is that someone declares on oath that a past event was true, as based on his knowledge, while it was actually false - for example, he learnt from someone that a certain person has come and trusting him, he declared on oath that the person has come, then, he came to know that this was contrary to what had actually happened. This is called *Yamīn Laghw* (ineffectual oath), that which is not counted. Similarly, if a word denoting oath, such as 'by' or 'I swear,' comes to be said unintentionally, that too is known to be what is 'ineffectual oath.' It brings neither *Kaffārah* (expiation) nor sin.

3. The third form of oath is that one declares on oath that he would or would not do something in the future. This is known as *al-Yamīn al-Mun'aqidah* (Binding oath). The rule which governs it is that, in the event the oath is broken, *Kaffarah* (expiation) becomes necessary - and under some situations, it brings sin as well, while in some others, it does not.

At this place in the present verse of the Qur'ān, '*Laghw*' (ineffectual, not counted) obviously means the oath which brings no *Kaffārah* (expiation) - whether a sin, or not; because it has been mentioned in contrast with : عَقَّدْتُّمُ الْاَيْمَانَ (the oaths you have bound yourselves with). This tells us that the accountability (*Mu'ākhadhah*) mentioned here is only the accountability in the present world which comes in the form of *Kaffārah* (expiation).

Then, in Sūrah al-Baqarah, it is said: لَا يُؤَاخِذُكُمُ اللّٰهُ بِاللَّغْوِ فِيْٓ اَيْمَانِكُمْ وَلٰكِنْ يُّؤَاخِذُكُمْ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ قُلُوْبُكُمْ (And Allah does not hold you accountable for what is not countable from among your oaths, but holds you accountable for what your hearts have designed - 2:225). Here, '*Laghw*' (what is not countable) means an oath which slips out from one's tongue without intention or volition, or an oath one takes about something assuming it to be true while it turns out to be false actually. Then, mentioned in contrast, is the other oath in which an intentional lie has been told. This is known as *Yamīn Ghamūs* explained earlier. Therefore, as for *Yamīn Laghw*, it brings no sin, according to this verse - instead, what brings sin is *Yamīn Ghamūs* where the lie is intentional. Thus, the sin mentioned in the verse from Sūrah al-Baqarah refers to the sin one shall incur in the Hereafter for disobeying the Divine injunction. And in the present verse of Sūrah al-Mā'idah, the injunction concerns the

present life of the world, where *Kaffārah* (expiation) is required. The outcome is that Allah does not hold you accountable for what is not countable in your oaths, that is, does not make it obligatory for you to make amends for them by paying *Kaffarah* (expiation). Instead, *Kaffārah* is made necessary against the particular oath which has been accomplished about doing or not doing something in the future - and then, it has been broken. After that, the details of how *Kaffārah* has to be given is described in the following words: فَكَفَّارَتُهٗٓ اِطْعَامُ عَشَرَةِ مَسٰكِيْنَ مِنْ اَوْسَطِ مَا تُطْعِمُوْنَ اَهْلِيْكُمْ اَوْ كِسْوَتُهُمْ اَوْ تَحْرِيْرُ رَقَبَةٍ (89). Three options have been given here which one may choose at one's discretion: (a) feed ten poor persons two average meals, or (b) clothe ten poor persons (sufficient to give them proper cover, such as, a garment for the lower body and another for the upper), or (c) free a slave (if in possession).

Said immediately after is : فَمَنْ لَّمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامُ ثَلٰثَةِ اَيَّامٍ (And whoever finds none shall fast for three days). It means if some breaker of such an oath does not have the ability to bear the cost of this financial expiation (*Kaffārah*), that is, one who does not have the means to feed ten poor persons, or clothe them, or free a slave, then, his or her *Kaffārah* is to fast for three days. In some narrations, for the fasts mentioned at this place in the text, the command is said to be that of 'three consecutive days.' Therefore, according to Imām Abū Ḥanīfah and some other Imāms, it is necessary that the three fasts against the *Kaffārah* (expiation) of Oath should be consecutive.

In this verse, the first word used in connection with the *Kaffārah* of Oath is: "*Iṭ'ām*" which, according to Arabic usage, could either mean 'feed' or 'give food' to someone. Therefore, as determined by the *Fuqahā'* (Muslim Jurists), may the mercy of Allah be upon them, the sense of the verse is that the person giving *Kaffārah* can choose either of the two options. He can invite ten poor persons and feed them; or, he can give the food in their possession (literally in *milkiyat* or ownership). But, in the first situation, it is necessary that he should feed ten poor persons two meals of the day to their fill and satisfaction from the average food he usually eats with his family at home. And in the second situation, he should give to each of the ten poor persons at the rate of one *Fitrah* per person, that is, 1 3/4 kilograms of wheat, or its cost in cash. He can go by any one of the three he likes. But, fasting can be

sufficient only when one does not have the ability to take any of the three options.

Paying *Kaffārah*, before Oath is Broken, is not Valid

Towards the end of the verse, the need to observe caution has been commanded about two things. The first one appears in: ذٰلِكَ كَفَّارَةُ اَيْمَانِكُمْ اِذَا حَلَفْتُمْ (that is expiation for your oaths when you have sworn). According to Imām Abū Ḥanīfah and other Imāms, it means: When you give a sworn statement about doing or not doing something in the future - following which occurs its violation - then, its *Kaffārah* is what has been mentioned above. The essence of the statement is that the *Kaffārah* should be given after the oath has broken. A *Kaffārah* given before the breaking of the oath will not be valid. The reason is that the cause which makes *Kaffārah* necessary lies in the breaking of the oath. As long as the oath does not break, *Kaffārah* just does not become necessary. As there is no Ṣalāh before its time, and there is no Ramaḍān fast before the month of Ramaḍān, so it is with the *Kaffārah* of Oath which cannot be given before the oath breaks.

After that comes the second note of caution: وَاحْفَظُوْٓا اَيْمَانَكُمْ (And take care of your oaths). In this sense of guarding an oath it would mean: If you have sworn to something, then do not break your oath without a legal or physical necessity. Some other respected scholars have said that it means that one should not hasten to give a sworn statement. One should guard and protect one's oath, as if kept in reserve. Unless it be under severe compulsion, one should not take oaths casually. (Maẓharī)

Verses 90 - 92

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِنَّمَا الْخَمْرُ وَالْمَيْسِرُ وَالْاَنْصَابُ وَالْاَزْلَامُ
رِجْسٌ مِّنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطٰنِ فَاجْتَنِبُوْهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿٩٠﴾ اِنَّمَا
يُرِيْدُ الشَّيْطٰنُ اَنْ يُّوْقِعَ بَيْنَكُمُ الْعَدَاوَةَ وَالْبَغْضَآءَ فِى الْخَمْرِ
وَالْمَيْسِرِ وَيَصُدَّكُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللّٰهِ وَعَنِ الصَّلٰوةِ ۚ فَهَلْ اَنْتُمْ
مُّنْتَهُوْنَ ﴿٩١﴾ وَ اَطِيْعُوا اللّٰهَ وَاَطِيْعُوا الرَّسُوْلَ وَاحْذَرُوْا ۚ
فَاِنْ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ فَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّمَا عَلٰى رَسُوْلِنَا الْبَلٰغُ الْمُبِيْنُ ﴿٩٢﴾

O those who believe, the truth is that wine, gambling, altar-stones and divining arrows are filth, a work of Satan. Therefore, refrain from it, so that you may be successful. [90]

The Satan wants nothing but to plant enmity and malice between you through wine and gambling, and to prevent you from the remembrance of Allah and from the *Ṣalāh*. Would you, then, abstain? [91]

Obey Allah and obey the Messenger, and be careful. If you still turn back, be sure that the duty of Our Messenger is only to convey the Message clearly. [92]

Linkage of Verses

Earlier, considered abandonment of *Ḥalāl* things was prohibited. Prohibited now is the use of some Ḥarām things.

Commentary

Creation of the Universe is for the Benefit of Human Beings

Through these verses, the purpose is to tell that the Master of the Universe has created it to serve human beings. Everything in it has been appointed to take care of their wishes. They are the served ones in this Universe. There is only one restriction placed on them: Do not transgress the limits set by Allah when you benefit from what He has created. Abstaining from good and lawful things made *Ḥalāl* for you is mannerlessness and ingratitude; and the contravention of what has been prohibited in a certain form is disobedience and rebellion. A servant of Allah must make use of what has been created for him or her following the instructions of the Creator and Master. This is the *'abdiyyah* (the state of being a slave of Allah, which requires total submission to as related to Allah which is the highest possible achievement human beings can look forward to).

The first verse (90) describes the prohibition of four things: (1) Drinking, (2) Gambling, (3) Idols and (4) Divining Arrows. Another verse on this subject in almost similar words has appeared in Sūrah al-Baqarah as well [Ma'ariful-Qur'ān, Volume I, Verse 2:219, Pages 539-553]. There too, as here, these four things have been called *"Rijs"* (filth). In the Arabic language, the word *"Rijs"* refers to something foul, which is

disgusting for human taste. All four things mentioned here are, for anyone with commonsense and good taste, repulsive and disgusting.

An Explanation of "*Al-Azlām*"

One of the four things is *Azlām* which is the plural of *Zalam*. *Azlām* is the name of the arrows which were used to draw lots in gambling, an Arab practice at that time. The custom was that ten people would get together as partners and slaughter a camel. Then, rather than distribute ten equal shares from the meat to each participant, they had a way of gambling with the exercise. They had ten arrows, out of which they would pick out seven and mark them out with signs indicating the number of some shares on each - some arrow would have one, others would have two or three. The three remaining arrows were kept blank. They would put all these arrows in the quiver and give it a good shake. Then, for every participant, they would draw out one arrow from the quiver. If the arrow so drawn had a certain number of shares marked on it, the recepient of the arrow became deserving of that many shares. Whoever drew a blank arrow in his name would remain deprived of a share. This is similar to many kinds of lottery-based games and enterprises common today. Drawing lots in this manner is *Qimār* or gambling which is Ḥarām according to the Qur'ān.

The Permissible Way of Drawing Lots

However, there is one way of drawing lots which is permissible, and proved from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. According to this method, when the rights everyone has are equal and the shares too have been distributed equally, then, the shares can be determined by drawing lots. Let us take an example - a house has to be divided among four sharers so we come up with four equal shares in terms of the price. Now, we have to determine as to who keeps which share. If it cannot be done by mutual compromise and consent, it is also possible that we can settle this by drawing lots whereby whoever gets a certain portion of the house as his share may have it. Or, the number of people eager to have something is one thousand, and the rights everyone has are equal, but the number of what has to be distributed is only one hundred. In this condition, the matter can be decided by drawing lots.

As for the prohibition of the pagan custom of distributing meat by

drawing of lots through divining arrows, it has already appeared in a verse of Sūrah al-Mā'idah itself, that is: وَاَنْ تَسْتَقْسِمُوْا بِالْاَزْلَامِ (and that you determine shares through the arrows - 5:3).

In short, two out of the four things declared Ḥarām in this verse, that is, '*Maisir*' (gambling) and '*Azlām*' (divining arrows), in terms of the outcome, are just the same. As for '*Anṣāb*' (altar-stones), the word *Al-Anṣāb* is the plural of *Nuṣub*. It refers to what has been made to stand as an object of worship, whether an idol, a stone or tree.

Physical and Spiritual Disorders Caused by Drinking and Gambling

The main objective in this verse, as evident from the background of its revelation and the verse which follows it, is to indicate that drinking and gambling, being agencies of corruption, have been made Ḥarām. The addition of altar-stones or idols to this list is there for listeners to understand that this matter of drinking and gambling is as serious a crime as the worship of idols.

In a *Ḥadīth* from Ibn Mājah, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is reported to have said: شَارِبُ الْخَمْرِ كَعَابِدِ الْوَثَنِ , that is, one who drinks is (a criminal) like the one who worships idols. In some narrations, the words appear as: شَارِبُ الْخَمْرِ كَعَابِدِ اللَّاتِ وَالْعُزّٰى , that is, one who drinks is like the one who worships (the idols) *Al-Laat* and *Al-'Uzza*.

In brief, by saying: رِجْسٌ مِّنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطٰنِ that these things are filth, a work of Satan, taken up first were their spiritual ills. The sense is that indulgence in these activities is disgusting. This is a trap of Satan. Whoever walks in never walks out, only to become a victim of many more vices. Then, the command given was: فَاجْتَنِبُوْهُ (Therefore, refrain from it) since the nature of these indulgences requires it. In the end it was said: لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُوْنَ (so that you may be successful). It means that one's chances of succeeding and prospering in the present world and in the Hereafter depend on doing just that - abstain.

The second verse (91) describes the physical and outwardly visible defects of drinking and gambling: اِنَّمَا يُرِيْدُ الشَّيْطٰنُ اَنْ يُّوْقِعَ بَيْنَكُمُ الْعَدَاوَةَ وَالْبَغْضَآءَ فِى الْخَمْرِ وَالْمَيْسِرِ that is, the Satan wants nothing but to plant enmity and malice between you through drinking and gambling.

In fact, these verses were revealed in the background of events

when actions taken under the influence of hard drinks became the cause of mutual anger and aggression. Things like this do not simply happen by chance. When drunk, man loses reason and would compulsively act in that manner.

So it is with gambling. No doubt, the loser takes the loss on the gambling counter, but malice and anger against the adversary continue influencing his behaviour. Explaining this verse, Sayyidnā Qatādah رحمه الله تعالى says: It was the habit of some Arabs that they would bet all their belongings, even family, and lose them, after which, they would live a sorry life.

Towards the end of the verse, yet another drawback of this addiction has been pointed out in the words: وَيَصُدَّكُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللّٰهِ وَعَنِ الصَّلٰوةِ (and to prevent you from the remembrance of Allah, and from Ṣalāh).

Obviously, this is a spiritual harm brought by drinking and gambling which has been mentioned again after mentioning their worldly bad effects. It may be a hint to the fact that the real harm is the spiritual harm, because the real life is the eternal life of the Hereafter for which one should be more careful and concerned. A wise person should take the betterment of that life as the real batterment and the suffering of that life as the real suffering. As for this worldly life, its time span is very limited. Within these limitations, neither good nor bad stand out as something to be proud of or pine about - because both conditions will vanish in a very short time.

It can also be said that negligence towards the *Dhikr* of Allah or the Ṣalāh is harmful both in this world and in the Hereafter and for the body and soul too. That it is harmful for the Hereafter and the soul of a person is all too obvious - one who skips Ṣalāh forgetting all about Allah ruins his life to come and causes his soul to become dead. A little reflection will show that the person heedless to Allah makes his own life a curse for himself. When one turns away from Allah and makes the acquisition of wealth and recognition his ultimate objective in life, they bring so many involvements with them which result in sorrows and concerns. Once in them, one becomes deprived of his chosen objective of peace and comfort through worldly possessions. Thus men of the material are never at peace with or without what they work for in their lives. In contrast to them is one whose heart is lit with the

thought of his Creator and the bliss of his Ṣalāh. Wealth and power and office come to him with all peace and comfort they can bring. But, if they go away, nothing happens to their hearts. They are not affected by the change, for things are no happiness and losses are no sorrow as they are visiting guests of the doers of the right.

In short, if we were to think about the neglect of the *Dhikr* of Allah and the Ṣalāh, we shall come to the conclusion that its effects are equally bad for our life in the present world as well as in that of the Hereafter. Therefore, it is possible that by saying: رِجْسٌ مِّنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطٰنِ (... filth, a work of Satan), the purpose could be to state the other-worldly and spiritual harmfulness exclusively; and by saying: يُوْقِعَ بَيْنَكُمُ الْعَدَاوَةَ وَالْبَغْضَاءَ (Satan wants nothing but to plant enmity and malice between you), the aim could be to point out to worldly and physical evils exclusively; and by saying: يَصُدَّكُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللّٰهِ وَعَنِ الصَّلٰوةِ (to prevent you from the remembrance of Allah, and the Ṣalāh), the objective could be to mention the total destruction of the life in this world and in the Hereafter both.

It will be noticed here that Ṣalāh has been mentioned separately - though, Ṣalāh is a part of the *Dhikr* of Allah. What is the wisdom behind mentioning Ṣalāh distinctly? The answer is that Ṣalāh has been mentioned separately because the text aims to indicate that Ṣalāh is important in its own place and certainly the superiormost among all kinds of *Dhikrullāh* (the remembrance of Allah).

After having described the physical and spiritual drawbacks of drinking and gambling, the way in which people have been asked to stay away from these indulgences is certainly disarming and heart-winning. It is said: فَهَلْ اَنْتُمْ مُّنْتَهُوْنَ (Would you, then, abstain?).

Described in the first two verses (90,91) was the unlawfulness of drinking and gambling, and its strict prohibition - an article of Divine Law, so to say. To make the word of law easy to act upon, it is in the third verse (92) that the Holy Qur'ān, in its characteristic way with words, has this to say:

وَاَطِيْعُوا اللّٰهَ وَاَطِيْعُوا الرَّسُوْلَ وَاحْذَرُوْا ۚ فَاِنْ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ فَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّمَا عَلٰى رَسُوْلِنَا الْبَلٰغُ الْمُبِيْنُ.

And obey Allah and obey the Messenger, and be careful. If you turn back, be sure that the duty of Our Messenger is only

to convey the Message clearly.

The lesson to be learnt is that the command to obey Allah and His Messenger is in one's own interest, and benefit. If one does not listen to the good counsel, their action brings no loss to *Allah Jalla Sha'nuhū* or to His Messenger. That Allah is far above any gain or loss was quite obvious, but in the case of the Messenger someone might have thought that a refusal to listen to him might affect or lessen the degree of his reward or station. To remove this doubt, it was said: فَإِنْ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ فَاعْلَمُوٓا أَنَّمَا عَلٰى رَسُولِنَا الْبَلٰغُ الْمُبِينُ It means: Even if none of you were to listen to and obey Our Messenger, it would still not make any difference to his integrity and station because he has completed the mission entrusted with him. His mission was to convey the commands of Allah Ta'ālā, openly and clearly. This he has accomplished. Now, after that, whoever chooses not to obey him will bring loss on his or her person - Our Messenger has nothing to lose in this case.

Verses 93 - 96

لَيْسَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ اٰمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ جُنَاحٌ فِيمَا طَعِمُوٓا إِذَا مَا اتَّقَوا وَّاٰمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ ثُمَّ اتَّقَوا وَّاٰمَنُوا ثُمَّ اتَّقَوا وَّأَحْسَنُوا ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٩٣﴾ يٰٓأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ اٰمَنُوا لَيَبْلُوَنَّكُمُ اللّٰهُ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الصَّيْدِ تَنَالُهٗٓ أَيْدِيكُمْ وَرِمَاحُكُمْ لِيَعْلَمَ اللّٰهُ مَنْ يَّخَافُهٗ بِالْغَيْبِ ۚ فَمَنِ اعْتَدٰى بَعْدَ ذٰلِكَ فَلَهٗ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٩٤﴾ يٰٓأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ اٰمَنُوا لَا تَقْتُلُوا الصَّيْدَ وَأَنْتُمْ حُرُمٌ ؕ وَمَنْ قَتَلَهٗ مِنْكُمْ مُّتَعَمِّدًا فَجَزَآءٌ مِّثْلُ مَا قَتَلَ مِنَ النَّعَمِ يَحْكُمُ بِهٖ ذَوَا عَدْلٍ مِّنْكُمْ هَدْيًا بٰلِغَ الْكَعْبَةِ أَوْ كَفَّارَةٌ طَعَامُ مَسٰكِينَ أَوْ عَدْلُ ذٰلِكَ صِيَامًا لِّيَذُوقَ وَبَالَ أَمْرِهٖ ؕ عَفَا اللّٰهُ عَمَّا سَلَفَ ؕ وَمَنْ عَادَ فَيَنْتَقِمُ اللّٰهُ مِنْهُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَزِيزٌ ذُو انْتِقَامٍ ﴿٩٥﴾ أُحِلَّ لَكُمْ صَيْدُ الْبَحْرِ وَطَعَامُهٗ مَتَاعًا لَّكُمْ وَلِلسَّيَّارَةِ ۚ وَحُرِّمَ عَلَيْكُمْ صَيْدُ الْبَرِّ مَا دُمْتُمْ حُرُمًا ؕ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ الَّذِيٓ إِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ ﴿٩٦﴾

There is no sin for those who believe and do good deeds, in what they might have eaten earlier, if they fear Allah and believe and do good deeds, again fear Allah and believe, and still again fear Allah and become good in deeds. And Allah loves those who are good in deeds. [93]

O those who believe, Allah shall certainly test you with some of the game coming in the range of your hands and spears, so that Allah may know those who fear Him while unseen. So whoever crosses the limit after all this, for him there is a painful punishment. [94]

O those who believe, do not kill game when, you are in Iḥrām (state of consecration for Hajj or 'Umrah). And whoever, from among you, kills it deliberately, then, a compensation from the cattle (is obligatory) equal to what he has killed according to the judgement of two just men from among you, an offering due to reach the Ka'bah, or an expiation, that is, to feed the poor, or its equal in fasts, so that he may feel the burden of what he did. Allah has forgiven what has passed. And whoever does it again, Allah shall subject him to retribution. Allah is Mighty, Lord of Retribution. [95]

The game of the sea and its eating has been made lawful for you, something of benefit to you and to the travellers. And the game of the land has been made unlawful for you as long as you are in Iḥrām. And fear Allah towards Whom you are going to be gathered. [96]

Sequence of Verses

A report from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضی اللہ عنہ appearing in the Musnad of Aḥmad, quoted in Al-Lubāb, says: When the Verse forbidding drinking and gambling had been revealed, some people asked the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم that there were many people who drank wine and lived off earnings from gambling and then died before these were forbidden. What would happen to them, now that we know about these being Ḥarām? Thereupon, the verse : لَيْسَ عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا (On those who believe and do good deeds, there is no sin ...) was revealed.

In a verse appearing earlier (87): يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تُحَرِّمُوْا طَيِّبٰتِ (O those who believe, do not make unlawful good things ...), the making of good things unlawful was prohibited. Now, in the verse (94) : يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا

لَيَبْلُوَنَّكُمُ اللّٰهُ بِشَيْءٍ (O those who believe, Allah shall certainly test you with some ...), it is said that it is Allah Who has that absolute power to declare particular things unlawful in particular circumstances. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Commentary

Scholars have said that there are several degrees of Taqwā (abstaining from what is likely to harm the purity of one's faith). Similarly, the degrees of faith and belief are also different in terms of personal strength and weakness. The touchstone of experience and the inviolable authority of the Sharī'ah both prove that the more one progresses in the remembrance of Allah (*Dhikr*), concern for life here and hereafter (*Fikr*), good deeds (*Al-'Amalus-Ṣāliḥ*) and *Jihād* in the way of Allah (*Al-Jihād fī Sabīlillāh*), the more filled his heart is with the fear of Allah and the awe of His greatness and majesty, with his faith and belief becoming firm and fortified more than ever. Thus, there are degrees of one's ascent onto the pathways of Allah (referred to as *Sayr-ilallāh* by spiritual masters). The considered repetition in verse 93 of the basis of *Taqwā* (fear of Allah) and *'Īmān* (faith) is a pointer in this direction. Finally, at the end of the verse, what stands identified is the seeker's last station - *Iḥsān* (righteousness at its best) - and the reward for it too, which is, the love of Allah. (Tafsīr Usmānī)

Rulings:

1. The game (*Ṣayd*) which is Ḥarām (unlawful) in the Ḥaram (the precincts of the Sacred Mosque) and in *Iḥrām* (the state of consecration for Ḥajj or 'Umrah) is general in sense. It may be eatable, that is, a *Ḥalāl* (lawful) animal, or one uneatable, that is, a Ḥarām (unlawful) animal (as generalized in the verse).

2. *Ṣayd*, that is, game, is the name of animals which are wild and who habitually do not live close to human beings. Thus, as for those which are naturally domesticated, such as, sheep, goats, cows and camels, slaughtering and eating them in *Iḥrām* is correct.

3. However, animals that have been exempted by a specific rule can be trapped and killed. It is *Ḥalāl*, for example, the hunting

of sea (or water) game as permitted by Allah Ta'ālā: أُحِلَّ لَكُمْ صَيْدُ الْبَحْرِ (lawful for you is the game of the sea). This applies to some land animals, crawlers and birds as well, such as, the wolf, the biting dog, the crow, the kite, the snake and the scorpion. Similarly, permissible is the killing of an attacking beast. Their exemption has been mentioned in *Ḥadīth*. This tells us that the letter *Alif-Lām* in الصَّيْدَ (Al-Ṣayd - 5:95) is that of *'Ahd.*[1]

4. It is permissible for a *Muhrim* (person in *Iḥrām*) to eat from *Halāl* game which has been hunted in a state other than that of *Iḥrām* and in a place other than that of the sacred precincts of the Ḥaram - subject to the condition that this person (in *Iḥrām*) has not been an assistant or adviser or guide in the hunting and killing of that game. This is exactly what the *Ḥadīth* says. In addition to that, there is an indication towards this rule in the words: لَا تَقْتُلُوا (*lā taqtulū*: do not kill) in this verse (95) - because what is said here is "*lā taqtulū*" (do not kill) and not '*lā ta'kulū*' (do not eat).

5. The way it is obligatory (*Wājib*) to pay compensation (*Jazā'*) against killing land game in the sacred precincts of the Ḥaram (Sacred Mosque) intentionally, similarly, it is also obligatory (*Wājib*) if done by mistake or forgetfulness. (As deduced in Ruḥ al-Ma'ānī)

6. The compensation (*Jazā'*) which becomes obligatory (*Wājib*) the first time shall remain equally obligatory (*Wājib*) in such killing a second or a third time as well.

7. The substance of the compensation (*Jazā'*) is that, after having determined the (facts of) time and place of the killing of this animal, one should get an estimate of the cost of this animal from two just person, which is better, but, it is also permissible that he can have only one just person do it. Then, there are other details: If the killed animal is inedible (that is, Ḥarām), then, this obligatory cost will not be more than the cost of a she-goat.

1. The Lām of '*Ahd* indicates that the word is used in a restricted sense and not in a general sense. Here it means that all types of games are not prohibited, but the prohibition is restricted to some of them. (Muḥammad Taqi Usmāni)

And if the animal was edible (that is, *Ḥalāl*), then, whatever the estimate (of cost), the whole of it will be obligatory (*Wājib*). Now, beyond these two situations, he has three options: (1) Whether he buys an animal at this price keeping in view the (standard) conditions which govern a sacrificial animal, and after slaughtering it properly within the sacred precincts of the Ḥarām (the Sacred Mosque and its environs), distributes it to persons poor and needy; or, (2) gives grains equivalent to the price of the animal, in accordance with the conditions of *Ṣadaqatul-Fitr*, at the rate of 1/2 *Ṣā'* per poor and needy person; or, (3) keeps as many fasts as would be the number of poor and needy persons to whom the amount of grains could reach at the rate of 1/2 *Ṣā'* per person. As for the distribution of the grains and the keeping of fasts, there is no restriction that these be done within the sacred precincts of the Ḥaram. And in case the obligatory (*Wājib*) amount is a price less than 1/2 *Ṣā'*, then, one has the choice of either giving it to a poor and needy person, or keep a fast. Similarly, if one is left with less than 1/2 *Ṣā'* even after giving at the rate of 1/2 *Ṣā'* per poor and needy person, still then, one has the choice of either giving the remainder to one poor and needy person, or keep a fast. The weight of 1/2 *Ṣā'* is the equivalent of 1.75 Seers or 1.62 kg. approximately (usually rounded as a matter of precaution).

8. If in lieu of giving the share of the number of poor and needy persons arrived at in the said estimate, one were to feed them two meals of the day, to their fill and satisfaction, that too will be permissible.

9. If an animal matching the cost arrived at in the estimate was selected for slaughter - but, some amount was left over - then, in this remainder, one has the choice of either buying another animal, or giving grain against it, or fasting in terms of the distributability of the grains. As compensation (*Jazā'*) is obligatory in killing, similarly, in the case of such an animal becoming wounded, an estimate would have to be taken to determine how low the price of the animal has become as a result of its being wounded. Once again, in this amount of the cost, the same

three options will be permissible.

10. The animal the hunting of which is Ḥarām (unlawful) for a *Muḥrim* (one in the consecrated state of *Iḥrām*), its slaughtering is Ḥarām too. If the *Muḥrim* were to slaughter it, its legal status will be that of carrion, dead animal. (In *'lā-taqtulū*,: [do not kill] there is a hint towards slaughter being like killing).
11. If the place where the animal was killed was a forest, then, the estimate will be made in terms of the habitation close to it.
12. Pointing to, guiding along or assisting in hunting is Ḥarām (unlawful) as hunting itself.

Verses 97 - 100

جَعَلَ اللّٰهُ الْكَعْبَةَ الْبَيْتَ الْحَرَامَ قِيٰمًا لِّلنَّاسِ وَالشَّهْرَ الْحَرَامَ وَالْهَدْىَ وَالْقَلَآئِدَ ؕ ذٰلِكَ لِتَعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِى الْاَرْضِ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ بِكُلِّ شَىْءٍ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿٩٧﴾ اِعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ شَدِيْدُ الْعِقَابِ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿٩٨﴾ مَا عَلَى الرَّسُوْلِ اِلَّا الْبَلٰغُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تُبْدُوْنَ وَمَا تَكْتُمُوْنَ ﴿٩٩﴾ قُلْ لَّا يَسْتَوِى الْخَبِيْثُ وَالطَّيِّبُ وَلَوْ اَعْجَبَكَ كَثْرَةُ الْخَبِيْثِ ۚ فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ يٰٓاُولِى الْاَلْبَابِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿١٠٠﴾

Allah has made Ka'bah, the Sacred House, a source of stability for the people, and the sacred month and the sacrificial animal and the garlands. All this so that you may learn that Allah knows what is in the heavens and what is in the earth, and that Allah is All-Knowing in respect of everything. [97] **Be sure that Allah is severe in punishment and that Allah is Very Forgiving, Very Merciful.** [98]

The duty of Our Messenger is only to convey the Message. And Allah knows what you disclose and what you conceal. [99]

Say, "The bad and the good are not equal, even though you are attracted by the profusion of the bad. So, fear

Allah, O men of understanding, that you may be successful." [100]

Commentary

Four Sources of Tranquility

The first verse (97) mentions four things as the cause of constancy, survival and tranquility for people.

The first is the Ka'bah. In Arabic, Ka'bah is the name of a place which is square. Another house made by the Arab tribe of *Khath'am* carried the same name, that is, *al-Ka'bah-al-Yamāniyah*, to be exact. Therefore, to distinguish the *Baytullah* (House of Allah) from this place, the words: ٱلْبَيْتَ ٱلْحَرَامَ (Al-Baytul-Ḥarām: The Sacred House) were added to the name of the Ka'bah.

The word "*Qiyām*" and *Qiwām* are verbal nouns. They refer to that on which the stability and survival of something depends. Therefore, " قِيٰمًا لِّلنَّاسِ " in the text comes to mean that the Ka'bah and its adjuncts are the cause and source of the stability and survival of people.

Lexically, the word: ٱلنَّاسِ (*annās*) is used for people in general. At this place, because of the topical context, they could mean the people of Makkah proper, or the people of Arabia and the peoples of the world as well. Obviously, it includes human beings of the whole world - however, the people of Makkah and the people of Arabia do have a unique status. Therefore, the sense of the verse would be that Allah Ta'ālā has made *Ka'batullah* (The Ka'bah of Allah) and what is mentioned later, the source of stability, survival and tranquility for people. As long as people of the world from each country, each region and each direction keep turning their orientation towards *Baytullah* to say their Ṣalāh, and the Ḥajj of *Baytullah* continues to be performed by those on whom its performance has become obligatory (*farḍ*) - until then, this whole world will keep going and stay safe. And if, there ever comes that fatal year when no one makes Ḥajj, or no one turns towards *Baytullah* to offer Ṣalāh, then, the whole world will be overtaken by mass Punishment.

Baytullah is the Mainstay of the Universe

The respected master of Tafsīr, 'Aṭā' has stated the subject in the words which follow: لوتركوه عامًا واحدا لم ينظروا ولم يؤخروا (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ). This

tells us that, significance-wise, *Baytullah* is the pillar of this whole world. As long as people keep turning towards it and Ḥajj keeps being performed, the world will stay. And if, this reverence of *Baytullah* were to terminate at some time, the world will also be terminated. However, there remains the question: What is the connection and linkage between the universal system and *Baytullah*? But then, knowing its reality is not necessary - who knows the reality behind the mutual connection of magnet and iron and lightening and straw? But, it is a reality proved through observation. It cannot be rejected. The comprehension of the reality of the mutual linkage between *Baytullah* and the universal system is also not within the reach and control of mortal man. That can be known only when the Creator of the universe tells us about it. That *Baytullah* is the cause of the survival of the whole universe is a thing of the spirit. Physical insight or formal research cannot reach it. But, its being the cause of peace and tranquility for Arabia and the people of Makkah stands proved by long experiences and observations.

Baytullah : Symbol and Substance of Peace

Peace is generally maintained in the world through government laws and its implementation. That is why robbers, thiefs, killers and plunderers do not dare. But, during the Arab *Jāhiliyyah*, there was no formal government nor was there some general law to maintain public peace. Whatever political system there was, it was based on tribal considerations. One tribe could attack the life, property and honour of another tribe anytime at its choice. Therefore, no tribe had the occasion to enjoy peace and tranquility any time. Allah Almighty, with His perfect power, made the *Baytullah* in Makkah al-Mukarramah stand as a regular government ushering peace and tranquility. As anyone in his right frame of mind would not dare breaking the law of a strong government in our day, so it was, even during those days of ignorance, that Allah Almighty had impinged the reverence of the *Baytullah* on the hearts of common people in a manner that they would throw all their personal desires and emotions behind their backs when it came to upholding its honour and station.

So, this was Arab *Jahiliyyah*, the so called Age of Ignorance, proverbial for tribal prejudices and long drawn wars. But, such was the reverence for *Baytullah* and its adjuncts which Allah had placed in their hearts that they would say just nothing to even their sworn enemy despite their anger and chagrin - if the enemy had entered the Ḥaram. A son who met the killer of his father in the Ḥaram would lower his gaze and walk away from him.

Similarly, as much respect was also given to a person who had embarked on his Ḥajj and 'Umrah or who had been carrying animals for sacrifice in the Ḥaram. The result was that even the worst person around would not hurt him in anyway - to the limit that they would say nothing to even a sworn enemy if he was in a condition when signs of his being on Ḥajj and 'Umrah, such as the garments of *Iḥram* or garlands, were all too visible.

Take an example. The year was Hijrah 6. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم accompanied by a group of his Ṣaḥabah entered into the *Iḥram* of 'Umrah and started for his journey towards *Baytullah*. He stopped at Hudaybiyah close to the Ḥaram limits and sent Sayyidna 'Uthman al-Ghani رضى الله عنه to Makkah alongwith some colleagues so that they can tell the chiefs of Makkah that Muslims have come at this time not for fighting but for performing 'Umrah, therefore, they should not be obstructed.

It was after a good deal of debate that they sent a representative of theirs to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. When he saw him, he said: This person is an upholder of the sanctities of *Baytullah*, therefore, the sacrifical animals marked for sacrifice should be brought before him. When the representative saw these sacrificial animals, he conceded that such people should never be stopped from going to *Baytullah*.

So, as said earlier, Allah Almighty had placed such awe of the venerated Ḥaram - even during the days of *Jahiliyyah* - that it became the very cause and source of peace and tranquility. As a direct result of this reverence, only those who either went in and out of Ḥaram, or those who came for their Ḥajj and 'Umrah with some sign of the intended pilgrimage on them, were the ones who remained protected - outsiders did not benefit from this peace and tranquility. But, in Arabia itself, the way they honoured the site of *Baytullah* and its environs

universally, they would also give equal respect to the months of Ḥajj. They called these, the Sacred Months. Some had included the month of Rajab along with them. During these months, fighting and killing - even outside the Ḥaram - was considered by the whole Arabia as prohibited, from which they would abstain.

1. Therefore, the Holy Qur'ān has included three more things as being قِيٰمًا لِّلنَّاسِ (stability for people) alongwith the Ka'bah. The first is: اَلشَّهْرَ الْحَرَامَ, that is, the Sacred Month. Since the word, شَهْر (*shahr:* month) has been placed here in its singular form, most commentators say that it means the month of Dhul-Ḥijjah at this place, the month during which the rites of Ḥajj are performed. Some commentators have said that, though the word used is singular, but it signifies category whereby all Sacred Months are included here.

2. Mentioned secondly is "*al-hady*" which refers to an animal sacrificed in Ḥaram. It was common Arab practice not to check and obstruct anyone carrying such sacrificial animals who could travel on in peace and be able to do what he intended to do. Thus, 'sacrificial animals' also became a cause of the establishment of peace.

3. The third thing is "*Al-Qalā'id.*" The word is the plural form of *Qilādah*. It means a garland. There was a custom in the age of Arab *Jāhiliyyah* that a person who went out for Ḥajj would put a garland round his neck as a sign so that people may know that here was someone going for Ḥajj and that he should not be molested. Similarly, they would put garlands round the necks of their sacrificial animals too. These were also known as the *Qalā'id*. So, the *Qalā'id* also became a source of peace and tranquility.

A little thought will show that 'the sacred month,' 'the sacrificial animal,' and 'the *Qalā'id*' are all adjuncts or auxiliaries of the *Baytullah*. Reverence for them is part of the reverence of *Baytullah*. Allah Ta'ālā has made the combination of these a source of stability (even constancy and resilience) in all matters relating to the worldly and otherworldly life of the people of Arabia, and that of the people of Makkah particularly - as well as, for all humanity in general.

While explaining the expression: قِيٰمًا لِّلنَّاسِ (stability for people), some commentators have said that it means that the *Baytullah* and the Sa-

cred Ḥaram around it has been made a place of peace for everyone. Others have said that it refers to the extended means of sustenance for the people of Makkah, for what is not grown or made there indigenously keeps reaching them from all over the world by the grace of Allah Ta'ālā. Still some others have said that people of Makkah known as the custodians of *Baytullah* were held in great esteem as special people serving the House of Allah, therefore, it is the particular distinction of these people which has been identified in the Qur'ānic expression translated as 'stability for people.'

Imām al-Rāzī has said that there is no contradiction in all these sayings which are included within the sense of قِيٰمًا لِّلنَّاسِ (stability for people) since Allah Ta'ālā has made *Baytullah* the source of betterment, prosperity and success (both materially and spiritually) for the stay, survival, stability, sustenance and return (to it, as well as, through it to the final destination of the Hereafter) for all peoples. And as for the people of Arabia, particularly those of Makkah, they have been blessed by Allah with its outward and inward blessings.

At the end of the verse, it was said: ذٰلِكَ لِتَعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِى الْاَرْضِ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ بِكُلِّ شَىْءٍ عَلِيْمٌ (All this so that you may learn that Allah knows what is in the heavens and what is in the earth, and that Allah is All-Knowing in respect of everything). It means that Allah has made *Baytullah* and its adjuncts the source of stability, survival, peace and tranquility for people, something the people of Arabia keep witnessing particularly. This has been said so that everyone should know that Allah Ta'ālā knows everything in the earth and the heavens and He alone is capable of managing and administering it.

In the second verse (98), it was said: وَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ شَدِيْدُ الْعِقَابِ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ (Be sure that Allah is severe in punishment and that Allah is Most Forgiving, Very Merciful). This is telling us that the prescribed injunctions of *Ḥalāl* (lawful) and *Ḥarām* (unlawful) are based on ideal wisdom and consideration. As long as they are obeyed and followed, they would bring nothing but good for the person who does just that. However, electing to do what is contrary to them is nothing but embracing the worst of curse and punishment. Along with the warning, it was also said that, should someone commit a sin forgetfully or heedlessly, then, Allah Ta'ālā does not punish instantly, instead of which, the

doors of Allah's forgiveness stay open for those who repent and feel ashamed of what they have done.

In the third verse (99), it was said: مَا عَلَى الرَّسُوْلِ إِلَّا الْبَلٰغُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تُبْدُوْنَ وَمَا تَكْتُمُوْنَ that is, the duty of Our Messenger is only to convey Our *Aḥkām* (injunctions) to people created by Us. After that, whether they accept and believe, or reject and disbelieve, its profit and loss reaches only them. That they disbelieve brings no loss to Our Messenger. And let this be understood that Allah cannot be deceived for He knows everything done by anybody, openly or secretly.

In the fourth verse (100), it was said: قُلْ لَّا يَسْتَوِى الْخَبِيْثُ وَالطَّيِّبُ (Say, "The bad and the good are not equal ...). In Arabic, the words "*Ṭayyib*" and "*Khabīth*" are antonyms. *Ṭayyib* refers to what is the best and purest in everything and *Khabīth* to what is the most condemned and evil. In this verse, as held by the majority of commentators, *Khabīth* means Ḥarām or impure, while *Ṭayyib* means Ḥalāl and pure. Thus, the verse would come to mean that with Allah Ta'ālā, rather with everyone having sound reason and good taste, pure and impure or Ḥalāl and Ḥarām cannot be equal.

In view of the general sense of *Khabīth* and *Ṭayyib* at this place, it is inclusive of wealth and property which is Ḥalāl or Ḥarām, and human beings who are good or bad, and deeds and morals which are virtuous or vicious, all of the three. The sense of the verse is clear from the truth that good and bad are not equal. According to this natural law, Ḥalāl and Ḥarām and pure and impure things are not equal in the sight of Allah Ta'ālā, similar to which, also not equal are good and bad deeds and morals, similarly again, also not equal are virtuous and vicious human beings.

Following immediately in this verse (100), it was said: وَلَوْ أَعْجَبَكَ كَثْرَةُ الْخَبِيْثِ (even though you are attracted by the profusion of the bad). It means that, though onlookers are sometimes awed by the abundance of things evil and impure, they would even go on to take these very things to be good just because they have spread out all over and because they seem to be winning the day, but, this is only a disease of human knowledge and consciousness, and certainly a shortcoming of the inherent feeling for the right.

The Background of the Revelation of the Verse

Reporting the background of the revelation of this verse, some narrations say that when liquor, and its buying and selling too, was prohibited in Islam, a dealer in liquor who had some cash savings from that business asked the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم: *Yā Rasūl* Allah, I have with me this saving from my liquor business, if I were to spend this in some good and pious cause, would that be beneficial for me? The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: If you will spend it in *Jihād* or Ḥajj or something similar, it would not even be worth the weight of the tiny feather of a mosquito, for Allah Ta'ālā does not accept anything other than what is pure and Ḥalāl (lawful).

This devaluation and depreciation of wealth is in terms of the Hereafter. If we look a little deeper and keep the ultimate end of things in sight, we shall discover that Ḥalāl and Ḥarām wealth or property are not equal even in the businesses of this mortal world. The kind of benefits, favourable consequences, real comfort and bliss which come through *Ḥalāl*, never do and never can come from Ḥarām.

Citing Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Tafsīr Al-Durr Al-Manthūr reports that when Sayyidnā 'Umar ibn 'Abd Al-'Azīz, the rightly-guided Khalīfah of the age of the *Tābi'īn*, stopped impermissible taxes imposed by the oligarchy before him, returned monies and properties taken illegally to the rightful owners, the government treasury became empty and the graph of usual income came very low. Then, the governor of a province wrote a letter to him in which he complained about the low income of the public treasury and asked him as to how would the affairs of the government run under such circumstances. Sayyidnā 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz رحمة الله عليه answered him by quoting this very verse: لَايَسْتَوِى الْخَبِيْثُ وَالطَّيِّبُ وَلَوْ اَعْجَبَكَ كَثْرَةُ الْخَبِيْثِ (The bad and the good are not equal, even though you are attracted by the profusion of the bad). He also wrote: People before you had used injustice and oppression to fill the treasury, now you match it by establishing equity and justice and let the holding of your treasury stand reduced. And do not care. The expenditures of our government shall be met within this reduced income.

Though the cause of the revelation of this verse is a particular event, the basic message of the verse is that numbers being low or high do not mean much. Matters cannot be measured by majority and

minority and a human hand-count of fifty one against forty nine cannot go on to become the touchstone of that which is right and true.

In fact, if we were to even casually look into the state of affairs prevailing around every section of society in the world, then, we shall see less of good and more of evil. Compare belief with disbelief; godliness, purity, honesty and trust with sinfulness and debauchery; justice and equity with injustice and oppression; knowledge with ignorance; reason with unreason - one is bound to find more of the later in all these comparisons. This leads us to become certain that the numerical abundance of some thing, group or party cannot be an absolute proof of its being good or true. Instead of that, the good in that thing or group or party depends on relevant particulars and states. If they are good, they are good, and if they are bad, they are bad. This is the reality the Holy Qur'ān has stated clearly by saying: وَلَوْ اَعْجَبَكَ كَثْرَةُ الْخَبِيْثِ (even though you are attracted by the profusion of the bad).

Of course, Islam too has declared numerical majority to be decisive on some occasions, and that too where there be no ruling authority competent enough to decide by the power of argument and the assessment of intrinsic qualities. On occasions like this, in order to resolve the disputes among masses of people, majority vote is resorted to. Take the example of the problem of appointing an Imām or leader in a situation when there is no Imām or Amīr or leader present to give a decision. Therefore, on some occasions, majority opinion has been preferred to ward off possible dispute and resolve matters peacefully. It never means that what has been adopted by a majority of people should become Ḥalāl and permissible and true.

At the end of the verse it was said: فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ يٰاُولِی الْاَلْبَابِ (So, fear Allah, O men of understanding). By addressing the men of understanding this verse indicates that it is not the attitude of the men of wisdom to be attracted to something because of its numerical or quantitative abundance, or to take the majority as the touchstone of what is true and correct. Intelligent people would not do something like that. Therefore, it is to caution all people of understanding against these attitudes that they have been commanded with: فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ (fear Allah).

Verses 101 - 103

يَآيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَسْـئَلُوْا عَنْ اَشْيَآءَ اِنْ تُبْدَ لَكُمْ تَسُؤْكُمْ ۚ وَاِنْ تَسْـئَلُوْا عَنْهَا حِيْنَ يُنَزَّلُ الْقُرْاٰنُ تُبْدَ لَكُمْ ؕ عَفَا اللّٰهُ عَنْهَا ؕ وَاللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ حَلِيْمٌ ﴿۱۰۱﴾ قَدْ سَاَلَهَا قَوْمٌ مِّنْ قَبْلِكُمْ ثُمَّ اَصْبَحُوْا بِهَا كٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿۱۰۲﴾ مَا جَعَلَ اللّٰهُ مِنْۢ بَحِيْرَةٍ وَّلَا سَآئِبَةٍ وَّلَا وَصِيْلَةٍ وَّلَا حَامٍ ۙ وَّلٰكِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا يَفْتَرُوْنَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ الْكَذِبَ ؕ وَاَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿۱۰۳﴾

O those who believe, do not ask about things which, if disclosed, may displease you; and if you ask about them when the Qur'ān is being revealed, they will be disclosed to you. Allah has pardoned you for it. And Allah is Most Forgiving, Forbearing. [101] **People before you have asked such questions, then became disbelievers because of it.** [102]

Allah has made no *Baḥīrah*, no *Sā'ibah*, no *Waṣīlah* and no *Ḥāmī* (names of animals dedicated to idols in *Jāhiliyyah* on different grounds) but those who disbelieve coin a lie against Allah, and most of them do not understand. [103]

Commentary

The Prohibition of Asking Unnecessary Questions

These verses warn people who keep investigating unnecessarily into Divine injunctions. So fond and bent are they in this exercise that they would go to the outer limit of asking questions even about injunctions which have not been prescribed at all and for which there is really no genuine need that they be asked. In this verse, such people have been instructed not to ask questions lest they are subjected to some trial, or they have to face disgrace as a result of the disclosure of their secrets.

The Background of the Revelation

As narrated in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, the background or the cause of the revelation of these verses is as follows. When the verse concerning the

obligation of Ḥajj was revealed, Sayyidnā Al-Aqra' ibn Ḥābis رضی اللہ عنہ asked: 'Have we been obligated with Ḥajj every year?' The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم did not answer that question. He asked again. The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم still remained silent. When he asked a third time, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم reprimanded him by saying: If, in answer to your question, I had said, 'Yes, the Ḥajj is obligatory every year' - so it would have become, and you would have been unable to do it. After that, he added: Things about which I give you no command, leave them as they are. Do not ask questions by digging and prying into them. Communities before you have been damned eternally through this very proliferation of questioning because they, questions after questions about what Allah and His Messenger did not make obligatory on them, and in consequence of their unnecessary enquiry, these optional things were made obligatory - and then, they got involved in the unfortunate practice of disobeying these. Your established routine should be: Do what I order you to do, with the best of your ability, and leave what I order you not to do (that is, do not dig and pry into things about which no injunctions are given).

There is No *Nubuwwah* (Prophethood) and *Waḥy* (Revelation) after the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم

It has also been tacitly said in this verse: وَاِنۡ تَسۡـَٔلُوۡا عَنۡهَا حِيۡنَ يُنَزَّلُ الۡقُرۡاٰنُ تُبۡدَ لَـكُمۡ : 'and if you ask about them while the Qur'ān is being revealed, they will be disclosed to you (through revelation).' Here, by restricting it with the time duration of the revelation of the Qur'ān, the indication given is that it will be after the completion of the revelation of the Qur'ān, that the process of Prophethood (*Nubuwwah*) and Revelation (*Waḥy*) will be discontinued.

Though, after the discontinuation of this process of Prophethood and Revelation, the consequences that new injunctions may come, things not obligatory may become obligatory or someone's secret may be disclosed through revelation are not likely to take effect - but, minting unnecessary questions, falling for investigations into them or asking about things for which there is no need, shall still remain prohibited, even after the discontinuation of the process of Prophethood. The reason is simple. This is a waste of time - your own and that of others. The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has said:

مِنْ حُسْنِ إِسْلَامِ الْمَرْءِ تَرْكُهُ مَالَا يَعْنِيهِ

One of the qualities making someone a good Muslim is that one leaves what is unnecessary.

This tells us that many of our brother Muslims who keep investigating into unnecessary subjects, such as, the name of the mother of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, or the precise length and breadth of the Ark of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام, indulge in what has no effect on one's conduct in life. Therefore, asking such questions is blameworthy - specially when it is already known that people who tend to ask such questions are mostly unaware of the basics of their religion. The problem is that falling for what is wasteful invariably results in making one stay deprived of doing what is necessary. As for the large body of work left by Muslim jurists in which they have answered assumed religious problems and questions, it was not something unnecessary. Later events proved that they were needed by future generations. Therefore, they do not fall under the purview of wasteful or meaningless questions. It is also a part of Islamic teachings that one should not indulge in any activity, whether intellectual or practical, a task or a conversation, and waste precious time through it, unless there is some gain to be made from it in terms of the worldly or other-wordly life.

The Definition of *Baḥīrah* and *Sā'ibah*

The names *Baḥīrah*, *Sā'ibah*, *Waṣīlah* and *Ḥāmī* are connected with customs prevailing during the days of *Jāhiliyyah*. Commentators differ in their exegesis. It is possible that all these words were applied each to a different situation. We limit ourselves to the explanation given by Sayyidnā Sa'īd ibn al-Musaiyyib رضى الله عنه as it appears in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī:

BAḤĪRAH, an animal the milk from which was dedicated in the name of idols, and was not used by anyone personally.

SĀ'IBAH, an animal which was released in the name of idols, like a bull in some rural areas of our time.

ḤĀMĪ, a male camel having copulated with a particular number, which was also released in the name of idols.

WAṢĪLAH, a she-camel giving birth to female offspring continuous-

ly, uninterrupted by the birth of a male, was also released in the name of idols.

In addition to doing what was *Shirk*, these people were challenging the right of benefiting from the meat of an animal, or its milk, or riding it, declared permissible by Almighty Allah, and placing their own restrictions on their being lawful or unlawful - as if the office of making Divine laws belonged to them! And the cruel joke was that they took these polytheistic customs of theirs to be the source of attaining the pleasure and nearness of Almighty Allah. The answer to this was: Almighty Allah had never appointed these customs. If their elders did it, they fabricated lies against Him, and the ignorant masses accepted them. In short, a two-pronged warning has been given here by saying that the way it is a crime to invite hardships in Divine injunctions by asking purposeless questions, similarly, it is much more serious a crime that one goes about proposing things as *Ḥalāl* or *Ḥarām* based on one's personal opinions and desires without the will and command of the Law-Giver. (Tafsīr Usmānī)

Verse 104 - 105

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ تَعَالَوْا إِلَىٰ مَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ وَإِلَى الرَّسُولِ قَالُوا
حَسْبُنَا مَا وَجَدْنَا عَلَيْهِ آبَاءَنَا ۚ أَوَلَوْ كَانَ آبَاؤُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ
شَيْئًا وَلَا يَهْتَدُونَ ﴿١٠٤﴾ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا عَلَيْكُمْ أَنفُسَكُمْ
لَا يَضُرُّكُم مَّن ضَلَّ إِذَا اهْتَدَيْتُمْ ۚ إِلَى اللَّهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيعًا
فَيُنَبِّئُكُم بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٠٥﴾

And when it is said to them, "Come to what Allah has sent down, and to the Messenger;" they say, "sufficient for us is what we have found our forefathers on." Is it so, even though their forefathers knew nothing, and had no guidance either? [104]

O those who believe, take care of your own selves. The one who has gone astray cannot harm you, if you are on the right path. To Allah is the return of you all. Then, He will tell you what you have been doing. [105]

Sequence of Verses

Mentioned earlier was one ignorant habit of the disbelievers who were very rigid in their customs. There were many more of such habits which made Muslims grieve. Therefore, the text now addresses Muslims asking them not to worry about others. They have been asked to correct themselves first - and then try to reform others within the limit of what they can do. Onward from there, that their efforts bear fruit is something beyond their control. Therefore, for them the best course is: Do your own job and not the job of others.

Commentary

The Background of the Revelation of the Verses

Following forefathers was one of the many customs of *Jāhiliyyah* which had involved them in all sorts of evils, and equally deprived them of all kinds of virtues too. As reported in the Tafsīr Al-Durr Al-Manthūr from Ibn Abī Ḥātim, if a lucky person listened to the truth and embraced Islam, he was put to shame on the plea that he had proved his forefathers to be no good since he took to another way at the cost of the way of his forefathers. It was this compounded error of theirs whereupon the following verse was revealed:

وَاِذَا قِيْلَ لَهُمْ تَعَالَوْا اِلٰى مَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ وَاِلَى الرَّسُوْلِ قَالُوْا حَسْبُنَا مَا وَجَدْنَا عَلَيْهِ اٰبَآءَنَا

And when it is said to them, "Come to what Allah has sent down, and to the Messenger;" they say, "sufficient for us is what we have found our forefathers on."

In other words, when they were asked to turn to the truth and to the injunctions revealed by Allah Ta'ālā, and to the Messenger who is, in all possible respects, the guarantor of good for them, then, they have no answer to give but that 'the customs on which we found our forefathers are sufficient for us.'

This is the master argument of *Shayṭān* which made millions of people fall into error despite having at least average sense, knowledge and skills. Answering it, the Qur'ān said: اَوَلَوْ كَانَ اٰبَآؤُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ شَيْئًا (Is it so, even if their forefathers knew nothing ...). For those who would care to ponder, this one sentence of the Qur'ān has provided a correct principle to uphold when following a person or group or party - a principle

which brings sight to the unsighted and reality to the ignorant and the heedless. It makes sense if those who do not know follow those who do, the uninitiated follow the experienced and the ignorant follow the learned. But, what does not make sense is that one elects to move away from the standards of knowledge, reason and guidance and ends up making the following of forefathers as preferred practice - without realizing as to where this leader of theirs is and to where would he take them yet having the compulsion to tag along behind him?

This is how some people take a mob of people as the yardstick of right and wrong. Wherever they see a lot of people going, they will start moving in that direction. This too is absurd - because the majority of people in this world is always that of those who are not the wisest or the smartest or the most virtuous in deeds. Therefore, following a mob of people cannot become the criterion of distinction between truth and untruth or good and bad.

Following an Undeserving Leader is Asking for Trouble

This sentence of the Qur'ān gives everyone a clear lesson in wisdom - that none of these criterions are at all sufficient to help in choosing someone as a leader to be followed. The correct attitude is that everyone should first determine the aim of his life and the direction of his journey in it. Then, in order to achieve that purpose, he has to look for a person who has the knowledge of that direction and is himself proceeding to it. When one finds a person like that, then, tagging along behind him can certainly take one all the way to his destination. This is the reality underlying what we know as the *Taqlīd* (following) of the *Mujtāhid Imāms*. They know *Dīn* and they follow it too. Therefore, those who do not know can, by following them, achieve the main purpose of religion, that is, the obedience to Allah and His Messenger, and the following of their commands. As for one who is already astray, who does not himself know the destination, or is knowingly going in a direction opposite to the destination, then, following him shall be, in the sight of every wise person, a waste of one's efforts and deeds, rather the signing of one's own warrant of destruction. It is a pity that in the present age of so-called knowledge and enlightenment, even the people of education and foresight are ignoring the fact that the greatest cause of world upheaval is the locked following of leaders who are

incompetent, undeserving, and false.

The Criterion of Leadership

This sentence of the Qur'ān gives two clear criterions of choosing a leader. These are having Knowledge (*'Ilm*) and Guidance (*Ihtidā'*). Knowledge means the knowing of the desired purpose or destination and the knowing of the methods to reach it, while having Guidance means moving towards the chosen objective. Combined together, it would mean constant effort based on sound knowledge.

To explain, it can be said that it is necessary to first find out - before making the choice of a leader - if he is fully conversant with the objectives and methods chosen to be followed. Then, it has to be seen whether he himself is traveling on the same path and in the same direction. And then, it has to be determined whether or not his conduct is in accordance with his knowledge. So, in order to take someone as a leader to be followed, it is necessary to test him on the anvil of sound knowledge and steady conduct. None of the other options based on ancestry and lineage, or being in the lead followed by masses of people, or being wealthy through money or property, or being in power and authority, not one of them is worthy of being considered as the criterion of leadership in the real sense.

An Effective Method of Criticism

At this place, the Qur'ān has pointed out to the error of people who are used to following their ancestral customs blindly. However, right alongwith it, it has told us about an effective method which can be used when needed to identify the error of the other person, so that the addressee is not hurt or provoked. It will be noticed that the comment made in the text is not direct. It does not say that their forefathers were ignorant or astray. Instead of that, it employs a subtle interrogative style in asking if the practice of following one's forefathers could be reasonable in a situation when they did not have either knowledge or guidance.

Comfort for the Reformers of People

In the second verse (105), Muslims who sacrificed a great deal in their concern for reforming people have been comforted by saying that they had done their best to spread the call of truth and they had done their duty of conveying to people what was good for them. Now, if

there were people who chose to stick by their error, that was not for them to worry about for their going astray will bring no loss to them. It was said:

يَاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا عَلَيْكُمْ اَنْفُسَكُمْ لَا يَضُرُّكُمْ مَّنْ ضَلَّ اِذَا اهْتَدَيْتُمْ

> O those who believe, take care of your own selves. Those who have gone astray cannot harm you, if you are on the right path.

These words of the verse, if looked at outwardly, sometimes are taken in the sense that it is enough for one to only take care of one's own conduct, and just correct it when necessary. This would leave out the others who may keep doing what they do - there was no need to think about that. Such thinking is contrary to a great many very clear statements of the Qur'ān where Bidding the Fair (*al-amr bil-ma'rūf*) and Forbidding the Unfair (*al-nahy 'anil-munkar*) has been declared to be an important duty in Islam and a singular distinction of the Muslim community. When this verse was revealed, some people faced doubts. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم clarified by saying that the verse was not contradictory to the injunctions regarding the Bidding of the Fair. If they were to leave the mission of Bidding the Fair, they will be answerable for that. Therefore, Sayyidnā Sa'īd ibn Jubayr has, in his Tafsīr of the Verse as reported in Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīt, said: Keep doing what your religion obligates you with, which includes *Jihād* and *Al-amr bil-ma'rūf* (Bidding the Fair). If, even after doing all this, those who remain astray could bring no loss on you. A little deliberation in the words: اِذَا اهْتَدَيْتُمْ (if you are on the right path) of the Qur'ān itself makes this explanation all the more clear as the converse of it shows that one who has abandoned the duty of Bidding the Fair is obviously not on the right path.

Reported in Tafsīr Al-Durr Al-Manthūr, is an event relating to Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنه. Someone mentioned before him a serious dispute between certain people he named who were calling each other *Mushriks* (polytheists). Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar said: Do you think I am going to tell you to go and fight them? Never. Go, talk to them softly. If they listen, fine. If not, stop worrying about them. Get busy taking care of your own selves. After having said that, it was

this very verse that he recited as the confirmation of his answer to their statement.

Sayyidnā Abū-Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ on Checking of Sins

Sensing the doubt generated by a surface view of the words of the verse, Sayyidnā Abū-Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ said in a *Khuṭbah* (address): You people recite this verse and use it out of context - that *Al-amr bil-Ma'rūf* (Bidding the Fair) is not required. Understand it very clearly that I have myself heard the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم say that people who see a sin being committed and do not try to stop it (to the best of their ability) then, it is likely that they too are seized by the divine punishment alongwith the actual sinners.

This narration is there in Tirmidhī and Ibn Mājah. However, the words in Abū Dāwūd appear as follows: those who see an oppressor oppressing and do not stop him from his oppression (to the best of their ability), then, Allah Ta'ālā will seize everyone in punishment.

The Meaning of *Ma'rūf* and *Munkar*

From the details given earlier, we know that it is the duty of a Muslim that he should do what he can to check what is not permissible, or, at the least, show his dislike for it. Let us now find out what is *Ma'rūf* and *Munkar*.

The word, *Ma'rūf* is from *Ma'rifah* and the word, *Munkar* is from *Inkār*. *Ma'rifah* means to know, and to understand and recognize something after deliberation. In contrast, there is *Inkār* which means not to know, and not to understand and recognize something. These words are taken to be antonyms. The Holy Qur'ān says: يَعْرِفُوْنَ نِعْمَتَ اللّٰهِ ثُمَّ يُنْكِرُوْنَهَا (16:83). It means that they recognize the blessings of Allah by seeing the manifestations of His perfect power, but thereafter they deny them as if they do not know them. This tells us that, lexically, *Ma'rūf* signifies something well-recognized while *Munkar* refers to something unrecognized. Keeping this congruity in view, Imām al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī has, in his Mufradāt al-Qur'ān, given the meaning of *Ma'rūf* and *Munkar* as used in the terminology of the Sharī'ah. According to him, *Ma'rūf* refers to what is known to be good in the light of reason (*'Aql*) and revelation (*Shar'*). And *Munkar* means what is strange and unrecognized, that is, what is taken as bad. Therefore, *Al-Amr bil Ma'rūf* comes to

mean bidding toward the Fair, while, *Nahy 'anil-Munkar* signifies forbidding from the Unfair.

There is nothing Legally Unfair in the sayings of the *Mujtahid Imāms*

But here, the use of the words, *Ma'rūf* and *Munkar*, in place of sin and reward or obedience and disobedience, may perhaps be indicating towards the possibility that there can be two opinions in matters which are deep and in problems which require *Ijtihād* due to brevity or ambiguity left in the Qur'ān and Sunnah - the basis on which sayings of Muslim jurists (*fuqahā'*) differ - therefore, they are excluded from this scope. The brilliance of *Ijtihād* done by the great *Mujtāhid Imāms* is an accepted fact among scholars and jurists of Muslim *Ummah*. If two views are different about a religious problem, none of them can be considered to be censurable in Shari'ah[1] (*al-munkar ash-Shar'ī*). In fact, both the sides are included under *Ma'rūf*. In such problems, a person who considers one opinion weightier does not have the right to reject and censure the other in the manner it is done in the case of sin. This is the reason why, despite many differences in matters of *Ijtihad* and opposing opinions, it has not been reported anywhere that the noble *Saḥābah* and *Tābi'īn* ever called each other sinners. Debates, dialogues, polemics - they had all that. They presented their point of view, explained the reasons for their preference and did not hesitate in questioning what others had to say. But, nobody took anyone to be a sinner just because of this difference of opinion.

To put it briefly, it can be said that on occasions where *Ijtihādi* difference exists, every knowledgeable person (having the optimum subject knowledge) has the choice to take a side which is weightier in his sight. This much he can do. But, no one has the right to reject and censure what someone else has done by taking it as *Munkar* (evil and sinful). From here we learn that all those writings which spread mu-

1. It must be noted here that the author is referring to the views expressed by the competent *mujtahids* who are equipped with deep knowledge of the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah and have expressed their *bona fide* view after doing their best to reach the truth. Conversely, if an incompetent person, lacking the standard of knowledge required for *ijtihad,* declares a view based on his whims and conjectures, his view cannot be taken as a view based on *ijtihad,* therefore, he cannot claim immunity from '*Nahy 'anil munkar'*. (Muhammad Taqi Usmani)

tual hatred and hostility in *Ijtihādī* problems and issues are not included under the purview of *Al-Amr bil-Ma'rūf* or *Nahy 'anil-Munkar* (Bidding the Fair and Forbidding the Unfair). Opening a war front on the basis of such religious issues can only be because of unawareness or ignorance.

Verses 106 - 108

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا شَهَادَةُ بَيْنِكُمْ اِذَا حَضَرَ اَحَدَكُمُ الْمَوْتُ
حِيْنَ الْوَصِيَّةِ اثْنٰنِ ذَوَا عَدْلٍ مِّنْكُمْ اَوْ اٰخَرٰنِ مِنْ غَيْرِكُمْ اِنْ
اَنْتُمْ ضَرَبْتُمْ فِى الْاَرْضِ فَاَصَابَتْكُمْ مُّصِيْبَةُ الْمَوْتِ ط
تَحْبِسُوْنَهُمَا مِنْۢ بَعْدِ الصَّلٰوةِ فَيُقْسِمٰنِ بِاللّٰهِ اِنِ ارْتَبْتُمْ
لَا نَشْتَرِيْ بِهٖ ثَمَنًا وَّلَوْ كَانَ ذَا قُرْبٰى لا وَلَا نَكْتُمُ شَهَادَةَ اللّٰهِ
اِنَّآ اِذًا لَّمِنَ الْاٰثِمِيْنَ ﴿١٠٦﴾ فَاِنْ عُثِرَ عَلٰٓى اَنَّهُمَا اسْتَحَقَّآ
اِثْمًا فَاٰخَرٰنِ يَقُوْمٰنِ مَقَامَهُمَا مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ اسْتَحَقَّ عَلَيْهِمُ
الْاَوْلَيٰنِ فَيُقْسِمٰنِ بِاللّٰهِ لَشَهَادَتُنَآ اَحَقُّ مِنْ شَهَادَتِهِمَا وَمَا
اعْتَدَيْنَآ ز اِنَّآ اِذًا لَّمِنَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿١٠٧﴾ ذٰلِكَ اَدْنٰٓى اَنْ يَّاْتُوْا
بِالشَّهَادَةِ عَلٰى وَجْهِهَآ اَوْ يَخَافُوْٓا اَنْ تُرَدَّ اَيْمَانٌۢ بَعْدَ اَيْمَانِهِمْ ط
وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَاسْمَعُوْا ط وَاللّٰهُ لَا يَهْدِى الْقَوْمَ الْفٰسِقِيْنَ ﴿١٠٨﴾

O those who believe, when death draws near one of you, that is, at the time of making a will, the evidence (recognized) between you shall be of two witnesses from among you, or of two others not from you if you are traveling on the earth and the trauma of death visits you. (Then) you shall detain them after the prayer, if you late some doubt, and they shall swear by Allah, "We shall not take a price for it, even if there be a relative. And we shall not conceal the evidence, (a due) of Allah, in which case we should certainly be among the sinners." [106]

Then, if it is discovered that the two had rendered themselves liable to a sin, then in their place shall

stand two others closest of those whose right has been taken away, and they shall swear by Allah, "Our evidence is more truthful than their evidence, and we have not transgressed, in which case we should be among the unjust." [107] **Thus it is more likely that they will bear witness in its proper way, or they will fear that oaths will be taken in rebuttal of their oaths. And fear Allah and listen. And Allah does not lead the sinning people to the right path.** [108]

Sequence of Verses

Prior to this, there were injunctions relevant to religious considerations. Now some injunctions relevant to worldly considerations have been mentioned. The hint given is that the way Allah Ta'ālā, in His mercy, helps His servants with better life in the Hereafter, He also takes care of better sustenance for them in the present world. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

The Background of Revelation

The event in the background of the revelation of the cited verses is that Budayl, a Muslim accompanied by Tamīm and 'Adiyy, who were Christians at that time, travelled to Syria on a business visit. After reaching Syria, Budayl became sick. He made out a list of his things in writing and put it in his baggage. He did not inform his companions of the trip about it. When his sickness became serious, he called his Christian trip companions and made a will before them that they should deliver everything to his heirs. When they returned, they delivered everything to them. But, they took out a silver bowl which was polished with gold, or had gold inlay work on it, from the belongings. When the heirs found the list of things in the baggage left for them by the deceased, they asked the caretakers of the will if the deceased had sold something from the property, or was he very sick which may have compelled him to make unusual expenses. They answered their inquiry in the negative. Finally, the case came up for hearing before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. Since the heirs had no witnesses, the two Christians were put under oath. They declared that they had neither committed any breach of trust in what belonged to the deceased, nor had they hidden any of his things. In the end, based on the oath, the verdict was given in their favour. After the passage of some time, it

was found that the two of them had sold that bowl to a goldsmith in Makkah. When asked, they said that they had bought it from the deceased. Since they had no witnesses at the time of purchase, they pleaded, they did not mention it earlier lest they be falsified.

The heirs of the deceased appealed in the court of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. Now, contrary to the earlier situation, the executers of the will were claiming to have purchased the missing item while the heirs were denying it. In view of the absence of evidence, two persons closest of the deceased gave a sworn statement that the bowl was owned by the deceased and that the two Christians were liars in their oath. So, the amount of money for which they had sold it (1,000 Dirhams) was made to be handed over to the heirs.

Commentary

These verses are meant to give general instructions to the Muslims with regard to making will before death. The advice given is that the will should be evidenced by witnesses, so that they may prove the will in case of a dispute after the death of the testator. It has also been advised that two pious Muslims are chosen for witnessing the will. However, if the Muslim witnesses are not available, non-Muslim witnesses may also serve the purpose. The words 'two witnesses from you" signify the preference of Muslim witnesses, but the following words "or of two others not from you" point out to the permissibility of non-Muslim witnesses.

Then, the words "if you have some doubt" refers to a situation where the legal heirs of the deceased have a claim against the executors of the will, as in the case of Budayl the heirs claimed that a bowl of silver was delivered by the deceased to the executors. Since, in this case the heirs are the plaintiffs, they should produce witnesses to prove their claim, but on their failure to do so, the defendants, i.e. the trustees are required to declare on oath that they did not commit any breach of trust. For that purpose, the Holy Qur'an advises the judge by saying, 'you shall detain them after the prayer, and they shall swear.

Although it is not legally compulsory to take this oath in the mosque after a prayer, yet the Holy Qur'an has advised to take oath after a prayer, so that the sanctity of time and place may further persuade the people to give a truthful statement.

In the next verse the Holy Qur'an says, "Then, if it is discovered that the two had rendered themselves liable to a sin..." It means that they had given a false evidence, as in the case of Budayl they themselves admitted that the bowl was purchased by them which implied that the property of Budayl contained a bowl and their earlier testimony was false. At this stage they claimed that they had purchased the bowl from Budayl. They should have substantiated this claim by witnesses, but they failed to do so, therefore, the oath was given to the legal heirs of Budayl that no such sale took place to the best of their knowledge. It is this oath of the heirs which has been mentioned in the verse by saying, "then, in their place shall stand two others closest of those whose right has been taken away and they shall swear by Allah..."

Some Rulings

1. The person with whom the deceased leaves his or her property in trust with the request that it be given to someone is called *Waṣiyy* (authorized guardian, executor, trustee, caretaker; plural: *Awṣiyā'*). A *Waṣiyy* can be one individual, or more.

2. That a *Waṣiyy* should be Muslim and just, is better but not necessary, no matter whether the will is being made in journey or at home.

3. In a dispute, the complainant is called the *Mudda'ī* (plaintiff) while the other party is *Mudda'ā 'alayh* (respondent).

4. Witnesses from the Plaintiff are taken first. If he presents them as recognized under the legal norms set by the Sharī'ah of Islam, the case is decided in his favour. If he cannot do that, the Respondent is put on oath and the case is decided in his favour. However, if he denies it, the Plaintiff wins the case.

5. Taking oath at a particular time or place in order to make it more emphatic, as done in the cited verse, depends on the opinion of the judge - it is not required compulsorily. Its cumpulsory nature is not proved from this verse too, while the converse is proved from other verses and *Ḥadīth* reports.

The Witness of a *Kāfir* is Acceptable in the case of another *Kāfir*

In the opening words of the verse (106): يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ شَهَٰدَةُ بَيْنِكُمْ translated as : 'when death draws near one of you, that is, at the time of making a will, the evidence (recognized) between you shall be of two just witnesses from among you, or of two others not from you,' Muslims have been commanded that at the time death draws near one of them, they should appoint two good and just men from among them as their *Wasiyy* (executor of the will), and if they do not have such people from their own, then, they can have two others (that is, from disbelievers).

It is from here that Imām Abū Ḥanīfah has deduced the ruling that the witness given by disbelievers for each other is permissible. Since the witness of the disbelievers has been declared permissible in the case of Muslims in this verse, as obvious from : أَوْ ءَاخَرَانِ مِنْ غَيْرِكُمْ (or of two others not from you), so the witness of disbelievers for each other is permissible as more suited. But, later on, the witness of the disbelievers for Muslims was abrogated under the authority of the verse: وَٱسْتَشْهِدُوا۟ شَهِيدَيْنِ مِن رِّجَالِكُمْ (And have two witnesses from among your men - 2:282). But, the evidence of disbelievers for each other remains valid as it was. (Qurṭubī & Al-Aḥkām Al-Qur'ān by Jaṣṣāṣ)

The support for the position of Imām Abū Ḥanifah also comes from what a *Ḥadīth* says about a Jew who had committed *Zinā* (adultery). His people smeared his face with black soot and produced him before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. Looking at his condition, he asked for the reason. They told him that the man had committed adultery (*Zinā*). After hearing the testimony of the witnesses, he gave orders that he be stoned to death (*Rajm*). (Jaṣṣāṣ)

Two Words, Two Rules

1. The word, تَحْبِسُونَهُمَا (You shall detain them) in the context of this verse (106) tells us that a person who (genuinely) owes something to someone (having the right of return), the later can have him detained for the retrieval of his right, if and when needed. (Qurṭubī)

2. The word, "*Ṣalāh*" in : مِنۢ بَعْدِ ٱلصَّلَوٰةِ (after the prayer) means the Ṣalāh or prayer of '*Aṣr*. That this time has been chosen is because the people of the Book held it in esteem. Telling a lie at this time was particularly prohibited among them. This tells us that the placing of the

restriction of special time or place for taking a solemn and sacred oath (*Taghlīẓ*) is permissible. (Qurṭubī)

Verses 109 - 110

يَوْمَ يَجْمَعُ اللّٰهُ الرُّسُلَ فَيَقُوْلُ مَاذَآ اُجِبْتُمْ ۖ قَالُوْا لَا عِلْمَ لَنَا ۖ
اِنَّكَ اَنْتَ عَلَّامُ الْغُيُوْبِ ﴿١٠٩﴾ اِذْ قَالَ اللّٰهُ يٰعِيْسَى ابْنَ
مَرْيَمَ اذْكُرْ نِعْمَتِيْ عَلَيْكَ وَعَلٰى وَالِدَتِكَ ۘ اِذْ اَيَّدْتُّكَ بِرُوْحِ
الْقُدُسِ ۣ تُكَلِّمُ النَّاسَ فِي الْمَهْدِ وَكَهْلًا ۚ وَاِذْ عَلَّمْتُكَ الْكِتٰبَ
وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَالتَّوْرٰىةَ وَالْاِنْجِيْلَ ۚ وَاِذْ تَخْلُقُ مِنَ الطِّيْنِ كَهَيْئَةِ
الطَّيْرِ بِاِذْنِيْ فَتَنْفُخُ فِيْهَا فَتَكُوْنُ طَيْرًا ۢ بِاِذْنِيْ ۚ وَتُبْرِئُ الْاَكْمَهَ
وَالْاَبْرَصَ بِاِذْنِيْ ۚ وَاِذْ تُخْرِجُ الْمَوْتٰى بِاِذْنِيْ ۚ وَاِذْ كَفَفْتُ بَنِيْۤ
اِسْرَآءِيْلَ عَنْكَ اِذْ جِئْتَهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ فَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْهُمْ اِنْ
هٰذَآ اِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿١١٠﴾

(Remember) the day Allah will assemble the messengers and will say to them, "How were you responded to?" They will say, "we have no knowledge. Surely You alone have the full knowledge of all that is unseen." [109]

When Allah will say, "O 'Īsā, son of Maryam, remember My blessing upon you and upon your mother, when I supported you with the Holy Spirit. You spoke to the people when in the cradle and while middle-aged. And when I taught you the Book and the Wisdom, and the Torah and the Injīl. And when you created from the clay something in the shape of a bird, then you blew in it, and it became a bird with My will; and you cured the born-blind and the leper with My will; and when you raised the dead with My will. And when I kept the children of Isrā'īl away from you when you came to them with clear signs and the disbelievers among them said, "this is nothing but a clear magic." [110]

The Linkage of Verses

Earlier, mention was made of various injunctions. In between came inducements to put these in practice alongwith warnings against opposing them. Now it is to re-emphasize the approach that people are reminded of the frightening happenings of the Day of *Qiyāmah* so that obedience is promoted and antagonism is checked. This is the prevailing style of the Holy Qur'ān. Then, towards the closing stages of the Sūrah, there is that dialogue with the people of the Book which has also appeared earlier through several verses where the purpose is to aquaint the people of the Book with facts about Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام, facts which affirm his being a servant of Allah and negate the erroneous ascribing of godhood to him (though, the actual locale of this address will be the Last Day of *Qiyāmah*).

Commentary

The First Question Asked of Prophets عليهم السلام on the Last Day

Verse 109 opens with the statement: يَوْمَ يَجْمَعُ اللّٰهُ الرُّسُلَ '(Remember) the day Allah will assemble the messengers' which is ominous. Though the day of *Qiyāmah* will be the Day of Doom when all human beings born from the beginning to the end shall be standing on open grounds. Human beings, no matter what their region, country or time, shall all be present on those grounds and there will come that hour of ultimate reckoning for a whole life-time of deeds. But, in the statement quoted above, mentioned particularly are the blessed prophets whom Allah will assemble on that day of reckoning. The sense is that, as for assembling, the whole world will be assembled, but the first question asked will be from the prophets, may peace be upon them all - so that the whole creation of Allah may see that, on that day, no one is exempted from reckoning. Then, the question asked of the prophets will be: مَاذَآ أُجِبْتُمْ (How were you responded to?). It means when you invited your communities towards Allah and His true religion, how did they react to your call. Did they act as they were commanded to? Or, did they say no to the call and opposed it?

Though the question will be addressed to the prophets, but it would really be beamed at their communities. In other words, the prophets will be the first ones to testify about the good or bad deeds done by their communities. And for them this would be a trying time,

for, on their part, they would be hoping for the intercession of their prophets to rescue them from this nerve shattering experience, while, on the other hand, there would come this question addressed to their prophets themselves requiring them to explain the conduct of their communities. Under such circumstances, it is obvious that prophets would never say anything but the truth, so the criminals and sinners will have apprehensions that the prophets themselves will become witnesses to their wrong-doings. Who, then, they would wonder, was now left to intercede on their behalf?

The answer that the prophets will give will be: قَالُوا لَا عِلْمَ لَنَا ۖ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ عَلَّامُ الْغُيُوبِ (We have no knowledge. Surely You have the full knowledge of all that is unseen).

The Removal of a Doubt

As for the people of every community who were born after passing away of their prophets from this world, this answer given by the prophets is correct and clear in that they are unaware of the actual state of their faith and deeds - because no one has the knowledge of the unseen except Allah. But, the question arises with regard to the great majority of people within the community, who professed belief at the hands of their prophet as a result of his work among them, and proved that they kept following before their eyes what they were asked to follow. Similarly, there were disbelievers who did not listen to the prophets, even treated them with hostility. How would it be correct to say about them that 'we have no knowledge of their faith and deeds.'? It appears in Tafsīr Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīt that Imām Rāzī has answered this doubt by saying: There are two separate things here. One is *'Ilm* which means perfect certitude, while the other is *Ẓann* which means conjecture or weighty likelihood. And it is obvious that if a person can, despite his being sitting next to the other person, testify about his faith and deed, then, it will be on no other basis but that of *Ẓann* or conjecture or likelihood. Otherwise, real faith (*'Īmān*) is a secret of the heart which no one can find out with any certitude without a Divine revelation. Every religious community had their groups of hypocrites who obviously did profess faith and did follow what they were commanded to follow. But, their hearts had no faith in them nor they had the real feeling and drive for carrying out those commands. All they

had was hypocricy. But, like all laws, religious laws too were applied on what was visible from the outside. Anyone who called himself a believer, followed Divinely ordained laws, and no word or deed from him or her stood proved against faith and belief, was a good believer in the sight of the prophets and their believing communities. Whether someone was a true believer at heart, or simply a hypocrite, it did not count for they had no choice in the matter. Therefore, it was said by the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم:

نَحْنُ نَحْكُمُ بِالظَّوَاهِرِ وَاللّٰهُ مُتَوَلِّي السَّرَائِرِ

> We judge on the basis of outward deeds while Allah is (Himself) the custodian of the secrets (of the hearts).

Under this rule, the noble prophets, their deputies and the learned could confirm, at least in the mortal world, that someone was a true believer as based on their favourable opinion deduced from his outward deeds. But, that mortal world where everything revolved round opinions and conjectures is all gone. This is the *Yowm al-Ḥashr*, the fateful day of Resurrection when the dead shall rise and where things will be sorted out and realities will be unfolded. Criminals will stand on trial. People will witness against them. If they do not confess, other witnesses will be brought in, very special, and very official witnesses. With mouths and tongues silenced, the wrong-doer's hands and legs and the skin will be asked to testify. They will tell everything about what they did: اَلْيَوْمَ نَخْتِمُ عَلٰٓى اَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَتُكَلِّمُنَآ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَتَشْهَدُ اَرْجُلُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَكْسِبُوْنَ (That Day We shall set a seal on their mouths while their hands will speak to Us, and their feet bear witness, to all that they did -36:65). Human beings will then surely find out that parts of their own body could also act as secret service agents when summoned to do so by the Lord of the universes. After such disarming testimony no denial will remain possible.

In short, that would be a state of being in which no judgement will be based on opinion, estimate and conjecture. Instead, certitude will be the order of the day. And as we have just seen that no one has the real knowledge about anyone's faith and belief except Allah, therefore, when the prophets will be asked on the day of Resurrection: مَاذَآ اُجِبْتُمْ (How were you responded to?), they would recognize the reality behind the question, that the question is not being asked in the world of our

experience where it could be answered by conjecture, instead, that question was being asked in the horrendous scenario of the Day of Resurrection where nothing other than certitude was going to work. Therefore, their answer: 'We have no knowledge' about it, that is, they do not have that certain knowledge needed to answer the question, is right and correct.

The Answer Shows the Affection Prophets have for People

We now know that the prophets did have some opinion about the acceptance or rejection of their call by their communities and knew facts about their obedience or disobedience. On that basis, they could have at least mentioned their apparent attitude as part of their answer to the question - and could have referred the certainty in knowledge to the sole domain of Almighty Allah. But, what we see here is that the prophets said nothing about what they knew, nor did they mention any events which had passed before them. They simply resigned these to the Divine knowledge and chose to remain silent.

This was a great demonstration of consideration. Prophets are very affectionate to their people, and to the creation of Allah in general. They would not elect to say something as an adverse comment against their community on their own, lest their people are in trouble. If they had to say so, they would. But, here they had the excuse of not having certain knowledge. Using this legitimate excuse to their advantage, they could have avoided saying anything against their communities - and so they did.

Five Questions on the Day of Resurrection

Opened through this verse is a window to *Qiyāmah*, the fateful Day of Doom. Stationed there on the grandstands of reckoning are the highest and the dearest of Allah, His noble messengers and prophets, all in awe and reverence. Think of them and think of what would be happening to others. Therefore, we should start worrying about that Day right from this day. This little time of our life is a blessing in our hands and should be devoted to getting ready for the ultimate accounting. In a *Ḥadīth* of Tirmidhī, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is reported to have said:

لَاتَزُوْلُ قَدَمَا ابْنِ اٰدَمَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ حَتّٰى يُسْئَلَ عَنْ خَمْسٍ: عَنْ عُمُرِهٖ فِيْمَا

أَفْنَاهُ وَعَنْ شَبَابِهِ فِيْمَا أَبْلَاهُ وَعَنْ مَالِهِ مِنْ أَيْنَ اكْتَسَبَهُ وَأَيْنَ أَنْفَقَهُ وَ مَاذَا عَمِلَ بِمَا عَلِمَ .

> No son of Adam will move a step on the Day of *Qiyāmah* until he is asked five questions: (1) About his age: In what did he use it up? (2) And about his youth: In what did he spend it? (3) And about his wealth: From where did he earn it? (4) And where did he spend it? (5) And what was it that he did following that which he knew?

Great is the mercy and affection of Allah Ta'ālā. He puts us to a test and He Himself tells His people about the questions asked during the test. The task was done by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم who told his *Ummah* how to appear in this test. Now, for them, there is nothing left to do but to resolve these questions, find their answers and solutions and keep that preserved (for the day of trial). So, if someone still fails, even after being told what will be in the test, fairly in advance, who else could be more deprived than him?

A Particular Question Asked from Sayyidnā 'Īsā

The first verse (109) referred to prophets in general where a question was asked and its reply was given. In the second verse (100), and after that, in all the nine verses appearing through the end of the Sūrah, the text talks about Sayyidnā 'Īsā, the last prophet of the Banī Isrā'īl, and mentions some blessings of Allah on him. A particular question asked from him on the Day of Resurrection (*Al-Maḥshar*) along with its answer has also been mentioned which follows in verses coming next.

The purpose of the question asked and the answer given is to show this disturbing sight to Banī Isrā'īl and to the entire creation. When on the plains of the *Ḥashr*, the one who is called, The Spirit of Allah (*Ruḥullāh*) and The Word of Allah (*Kalimatullāh*) is asked the question as to why did his people make him a partner of God, he would be upset despite his being a great prophet and would hasten to plead his being free from what his followers did, not in one way, but in more than one. First he said: سُبْحٰنَكَ مَا يَكُوْنُ لِيْٓ اَنْ اَقُوْلَ مَا لَيْسَ لِيْ بِحَقٍّ (Pure are You, it does not behove me to say what is not right for me - 116).

Then, he pleads his innocence from another angle when he makes

Almighty Allah his witness and says: 'Had I said it, You would have known it. You know what is in my heart and I do not know what is in Your's. You alone have the full knowledge of what is unseen - 116.' After this overture, he answers the main question.

The Answer given by Sayyidnā 'Īsā before His Lord

His answer was that he had taught his people precisely what he was commanded to teach, that is: أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ رَبِّي وَرَبَّكُمْ (Worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord - 117). Then, after this teaching, as long as he lived among those people, he was a witness to what they said and did (upto that time, none of them said things like that about him). Then, after he was raised by his Lord towards Him, these people remained under His watch, and it is He who knew their words and deeds fully and truly.

The Mention of Special Blessings on Sayyidnā 'Īsā

Before these verses where questions asked and their answers given by Sayyidnā 'Īsā have been mentioned, special blessings which were bestowed upon him as his miracles have also been described (110). Thus, by bringing the bestowal of blessings and the scenario of answerability in juxtaposition, both groups of Banī Isrā'īl have been admonished, one of which insulted, accused and harrassed him while the other took him as God or son of God. By describing the blessings, the first group has been admonished while, by mentioning the questions and answers, it is the second group which has been warned. The detailed description of blessings which appears in many verses has one sentence which is worth special consideration, the sentence where it is said: تُكَلِّمُ النَّاسَ فِي الْمَهْدِ وَكَهْلًا (You spoke to the people when in the cradle and while middle-aged). In other words, a special miracle given to Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام was that he talked to people in a state when he is a child, and he also does that in a state when he is middle-aged.

As for the first spectacle, it is obvious that it is a miracle and certainly a special blessing of Allah. In the early post-birth stage, children cannot talk (meaningfully). If a child were to start talking in the cradle or on the laps of the mother, that would be a particular distinction of the child. As for talking 'while middle-aged,' it does not seem to be worth mentioning, for everyone talks at this age. But, for a moment, think of the conditions surrounding Sayyidnā 'Īsā and you will

realize that this too was a miracle - because Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام was raised from the earth before reaching middle-age. Now that he would talk to people on the earth after reaching his middle-age can become possible only when he returns to this world - as is the collective belief of Muslims which stands proved on the basis of clear statements of the Qur'ān and Sunnah. It is from here that we find out that in the manner it was a miracle of Sayyidnā 'Īsā that he talked when a child, so in the same manner, talking while middle-aged because of his return to this world is nothing but a miracle.

Verses 111 - 115

وَاِذْ اَوْحَيْتُ اِلَى الْحَوَارِيّٖنَ اَنْ اٰمِنُوْا بِیْ وَبِرَسُوْلِیْ ۚ قَالُوْٓا اٰمَنَّا
وَاشْهَدْ بِاَنَّنَا مُسْلِمُوْنَ ﴿١١١﴾ اِذْ قَالَ الْحَوَارِيُّوْنَ يٰعِيْسَى ابْنَ
مَرْيَمَ هَلْ يَسْتَطِيْعُ رَبُّكَ اَنْ يُّنَزِّلَ عَلَيْنَا مَآئِدَةً مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ ؕ
قَالَ اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿١١٢﴾ قَالُوْا نُرِيْدُ اَنْ نَّاْكُلَ
مِنْهَا وَتَطْمَئِنَّ قُلُوْبُنَا وَنَعْلَمَ اَنْ قَدْ صَدَقْتَنَا وَنَكُوْنَ عَلَيْهَا
مِنَ الشّٰهِدِيْنَ ﴿١١٣﴾ قَالَ عِيْسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ اللّٰهُمَّ رَبَّنَآ اَنْزِلْ
عَلَيْنَا مَآئِدَةً مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ تَكُوْنُ لَنَا عِيْدًا لِّاَوَّلِنَا وَاٰخِرِنَا وَاٰيَةً
مِّنْكَ ۚ وَارْزُقْنَا وَاَنْتَ خَيْرُ الرّٰزِقِيْنَ ﴿١١٤﴾ قَالَ اللّٰهُ اِنِّیْ مُنَزِّلُهَا
عَلَيْكُمْ فَمَنْ يَّكْفُرْ بَعْدُ مِنْكُمْ فَاِنِّیْٓ اُعَذِّبُهٗ عَذَابًا لَّآ اُعَذِّبُهٗٓ
اَحَدًا مِّنَ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿١١٥﴾

And when I enjoined upon the disciples, "Believe in Me and in My Messenger," they said, "We believed. And be witness that we are the submitting ones." [111]

When the disciples said, "O 'Īsā son of Maryam, can your Lord send down to us spread stands of 'Mā'idah' (a sheet generally spread on the floor to serve food; also used to mean food so served) from the heavens?" He said, "Fear Allah if you are believers." [112] **They said, "We want that we eat from it, and our hearts be satisfied, and we may know for sure that you have told us**

the truth, and we may become witnesses to it." [113] **'Īsā son of Maryam said, "O Allah, our Lord, send down to us spread from heaven which may be a happy occasion for us for all our generations present and future, and a sign from you, and give us provisions. And You are the best Giver of provisions."** [114]

Allah said, "I am going to send it down to you; but whoever from you disbelieves after that, I shall give him a punishment I shall not give to anyone in the worlds." [115]

Commentary

A True Believer Should Not Demand Miracles

When the disciples of Sayyidnā 'Īsā asked him to make 'Mā'idah' (food-spread) come down from the heavens, he replied by saying: قَالَ اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ (Fear Allah if you are believers). This tells us that it does not behove a faith-bearing servant of Allah that he should test Him by making such requests. Rather than demand what is supernatural, he should seek things, like sustenance, through sources naturally appointed for him.

The Better the Blessing, the Worse the Curse of Ingratitude

From the words of the verse 115: فَإِنِّيْٓ أُعَذِّبُهٗ عَذَابًا لَّآ أُعَذِّبُهٗٓ أَحَدًا مِّنَ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ (I shall give him a punishment I shall not give to anyone in the worlds), we learn that in situations when the blessing of Allah is extra-ordinary and unique, the emphasis on the gratitude for it should be far above the ordinary. As for the punishment of ingratitude, that too will be extra-ordinary and unique.

Whether or not the 'Mā'idah' (food-spread) came down from the heaven is something commentators differ in. The majority of them hold that it did. Accordingly, it has been reported from Sayyidnā 'Ammār ibn Yāsir as in a *Ḥadīth* of Tirmidhī, that 'Mā'idah' did come from the heavens which included bread and meat. It also appears in this *Ḥadīth* that some of those people committed a breach of trust, and put it off for the next day as well. As a result, they were transformed into monkeys and swines. (May Allah keep us protected from His wrath). This very *Ḥadīth* also tells us that they ate from it as they wanted to do as mentioned in the word, '*na'kulū*' (we eat) - however, storing it for future use was prohibited. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Verses 116 - 118

وَإِذْ قَالَ اللّٰهُ يٰعِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ ءَأَنْتَ قُلْتَ لِلنَّاسِ اتَّخِذُونِي
وَأُمِّيَ إِلٰهَيْنِ مِنْ دُونِ اللّٰهِ ۚ قَالَ سُبْحٰنَكَ مَا يَكُونُ لِيٓ أَنْ
أَقُولَ مَا لَيْسَ لِي بِحَقٍّ ۚ إِنْ كُنْتُ قُلْتُهُ فَقَدْ عَلِمْتَهُ ۚ تَعْلَمُ
مَا فِي نَفْسِي وَلَآ أَعْلَمُ مَا فِي نَفْسِكَ ۚ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ عَلَّامُ الْغُيُوبِ
﴿١١٦﴾ مَا قُلْتُ لَهُمْ إِلَّا مَآ أَمَرْتَنِي بِهِ أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ رَبِّي
وَرَبَّكُمْ ۚ وَكُنْتُ عَلَيْهِمْ شَهِيدًا مَّا دُمْتُ فِيهِمْ ۚ فَلَمَّا تَوَفَّيْتَنِي
كُنْتَ أَنْتَ الرَّقِيبَ عَلَيْهِمْ ۚ وَأَنْتَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ ﴿١١٧﴾
إِنْ تُعَذِّبْهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ عِبَادُكَ ۚ وَإِنْ تَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ فَإِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ
الْحَكِيمُ ﴿١١٨﴾

And when Allah said, "O 'Īsā son of Maryam, did you say to the people: Take me and my mother as gods beside Allah?" He said, "Pure are You, it does not behove me to say what is not right for me. Had I said it, You would have known it. You know what is in my heart and I do not know what is in Your's. You alone have the full knowledge of all that is unseen. [116] **I have not said to them anything but what You have ordered me to, that is, 'Worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord' and I was a witness over them as long as I was with them. But when You picked me up You were the One watching over them. And You are a witness over everything.** [117] **If You punish them, they are Your slaves. And if You forgive them, You are the Mighty, the Wise."** [118]

Commentary

Important Notes

1. In the first verse (116), the question asked and the answer given by Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام establishes that Allah alone has the full knowledge of everything, therefore, He is not asking Sayyidnā 'Īsā because He does not know. In fact, the purpose is to admonish his people who call them Christians that the one they are taking to be god is him-

self confessing to his servitude quite contrary to the belief they hold - and that he is free of all their accusations. (Ibn Kathīr)

2. About the sentence: فَلَمَّا تَوَفَّيْتَنِي كُنْتَ أَنْتَ الرَّقِيْبَ عَلَيْهِمْ (And when You picked me up You were the One watching over them) in verse 117, a detailed discussion of the subject of the 'death' or 'having been raised toward Allah' has appeared in the Commentary on Sūrah Āl-'Imrān under verse 3:55: إِنِّي مُتَوَفِّيكَ وَرَافِعُكَ (I am to take you in full and lift you towards Me). It may be seen there [Ma'ariful-Qur'ān, English Translation, Volume II, pages 76-81]. As for using the verse 117 (فَلَمَّا تَوَفَّيْتَنِي : *'falamma tawaffaitanī'*) to reject his ascension to heavens and to establish his natural death is not a sound inference, because the time of this conversation shall be the day of *Qiyāmah* - and at that time, after he has descended down from the heaven, he would have had his natural and real death. Therefore, as reported by Ibn Kathīr on the authority of a narration from Sayyidnā Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: On the day of *Qiyāmah*, the prophets and their communities will be summoned. Then, Sayyidnā 'Īsā will be called. Then, Allah Ta'ālā will remind him of His blessings and drawing him closer, He will say, 'O 'Īsā son of Maryam: أُذْكُرْ نِعْمَتِي عَلَيْكَ وَعَلَى وَالِدَتِكَ : Remember My blessing upon you and upon your mother.' Then, in the end, He would say: يٰعِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ ءَأَنْتَ قُلْتَ لِلنَّاسِ اتَّخِذُونِي وَأُمِّيَ إِلٰهَيْنِ مِنْ دُونِ اللّٰهِ (O 'Īsā son of Maryam, did you say to the people: Take me and my mother as gods beside Allah?). Sayyidnā 'Īsā will deny it saying that he did not. Then, the question will be asked from the Christians. They will say, 'yes, this is what he had ordered us to do.' After that, they will be driven towards Hell.

3. As for the statement beginning with the words: إِنْ تُعَذِّبْهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ عِبَادُكَ (If You punish them, they are Your slaves ...) appearing in the last verse (118), it means that Allah does not bring undue hardship on His servants, therefore, if punishment does come to them, it will only be just, right and wise. And should He forgive them, then, this forgiveness too will not be a matter of not being able to do otherwise - because He is Mighty, fully-capable and overpowering, from whose reach and control no wrong-doer can escape. And since He is Wise too, therefore, it is also not possible that He would let a wrong-doer walk away just for no reason. Thus, the Divine verdict in the case of wrong-doers will be absolutely wise and masterly. Since this saying of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه

السلام will take place in the *Maḥshar* (the day of Resurrection) - where no intercession on behalf of the disbelievers, or appeal of mercy for them, will be entertained - therefore, Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام has not referred to the Divine attributes of *Ghafūrur-Raḥīm* (the Most-Forgiving, the Very-Merciful) in place of "*Al-'Azīz Al-Ḥakīm*" (the Mighty, the Wise) of the text. This stands in contrast with what Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام had said to his Lord during his life in this world: رَبِّ إِنَّهُنَّ أَضْلَلْنَ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ النَّاسِ فَمَن تَبِعَنِي فَإِنَّهُ مِنِّي وَمَنْ عَصَانِي فَإِنَّكَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (That is, O my Lord, these [idols] have made many of the people go astray. Henceforth, whoever has followed me is one of mine. And whoever has disobeyed me, so then, You are the Most-Forgiving, the Very-Merciful - 14:36). It means that the likelihood still exists that Allah may, in His mercy, give them the Taufīq later on to repent and return to the path of truth and thereby forgive their sins. (Shabbīr Aḥmad Usmānī - Notes)

Ibn Kathīr reports a narration from Sayyidnā Abū Dharr رضى الله عنه that once the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم spent a whole night reciting one single verse. And that verse was: إِن تُعَذِّبْهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ عِبَادُكَ (If You punish them, then, they are Your slaves - 118). When morning came, I said: Yā Rasūl Allah, you kept reciting just this verse. You made your *Rukū'* with it and you made your *Sujūd* with it, right upto this break of dawn. He said: I prayed to my *Rabb* to bless me with the station of intercession (*Shafā'ah*), which He granted. *Inshallāh*, it is going to be for one who has never associated anyone with Allah Ta'ālā.

According to another narration, after reciting the verse cited above, he raised his hands facing the heaven and said: اَللّٰهُمَّ أُمَّتِي (*Allahumma Ummatī*) that is, 'O Allah, mercy - mercy on my people.' And then he wept. Thereupon, Allah Ta'ālā sent angel Jibra'īl to ask why would he weep. He told the angel what he had said. Then, Allah Ta'ālā asked angel Jibra'īl to go back and tell Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم that He will please him soon in his concern for his people and will not let him be unhappy.

Verses 119 - 120

قَالَ اللّٰهُ هٰذَا يَوْمُ يَنْفَعُ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ صِدْقُهُمْ ۭ لَهُمْ جَنّٰتٌ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَآ اَبَدًا ۭ رَضِيَ اللّٰهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوْا

عَنْهُ ۚ ذٰلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيْمُ ﴿١١٩﴾ لِلّٰهِ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَمَا فِيْهِنَّ ۚ وَهُوَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿١٢٠﴾

Allah said, "This is a day the truth of the truthful shall bring benefit to them. For them are gardens beneath which rivers flow where they shall be living for ever. Allah is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him. That is the great achievement. [119]

To Allah belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth and of whatever lies therein. And He is powerful over everything. [120]

The Linkage of Verses

The first two sections (*Rukū'*) appearing earlier describe some of the happenings on the day of *Qiyāmah* such as the reckoning, the questions and their answers. Mentioned now is the outcome of the probe and reckoning of that fateful day.

Commentary

Notes

1. Verse 119 opens with the words: قَالَ اللّٰهُ هٰذَا يَوْمُ يَنْفَعُ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ صِدْقُهُمْ (Allah said, "This is a day the truth of the truthful shall bring benefit to them). Generally, what is according to what has happened is called truth while that which is not according to what has happened is referred to as false or a lie. But, according to the Qur'ān and Sunnah, *ṣidq* (truth) and *kidhb* (lie) are general, that is, they refer to both words and deeds. As such, given here is a *Ḥadīth* in which counter-factual deed has been called *kidhb* (lie): مَنْ تَحَلّٰى بِمَا لَمْ يُعْطَ كَانَ كَلَابِسِ ثَوْبَىْ زُوْرٍ [that is, whoever adorns himself (or herself) with what has not been given to him (or her) (that is, claims a quality or deed not in him or her) then, it is as if he has put on two garbs of a lie - Mishkāt].

There is another *Ḥadīth* in which one who makes Ṣalāh with care and concern, whether in public or in private, has been called a true servant of Allah:

اِنَّ الْعَبْدَ اِذَا صَلّٰى فِى الْعَلَانِيَةِ فَاَحْسَنَ وَصَلّٰى فِى السِّرِّ فَاَحْسَنَ قَالَ اللّٰهُ

تعالى هٰذا عبدي حقًّا

A person who performs Ṣalāh openly, then, does it well; and when performs it in private, then, does it well, then, Allah Ta'ālā says: 'This is My servant - in truth.' - Mishkāt.

2. About the statement: رضى الله عنهم ورضوا عنه (Allah is pleased with them, and they are pleased with Him - 119), it appears in *Ḥadīth* that, after having blessed true believers with *Jannah* (Paradise), Allah Ta'ālā will say: The real blessing is that I am pleased with you and now I shall never be displeased with you.

3. The words appearing after that are: ذٰلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيْمُ (That is the great achievement). Indeed, so it is. When *Allah Jalla Sha'nuhu*, the Master, the Creator is pleased with you, what else could it be?

فَلِلّٰهِ الْحَمْدُ اَوَّلَهٗ وَاٰخِرَهٗ

All praises are for Allah from the beginning to the end.

The Commentary
on
Sūrah Al-Mā'idah
ends here.

Sūrah Al-An'ām

(The Cattle)

[Sūratul-An'ām was revealed in Makkah and it has 165 Verses and 20 Sections]

Verses 1 - 5

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِيْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ وَجَعَلَ الظُّلُمٰتِ
وَالنُّوْرَ ؕ ثُمَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا بِرَبِّهِمْ يَعْدِلُوْنَ ﴿١﴾ هُوَ الَّذِيْ خَلَقَكُمْ
مِّنْ طِيْنٍ ثُمَّ قَضٰۤى اَجَلًا ؕ وَاَجَلٌ مُّسَمًّى عِنْدَهٗ ثُمَّ اَنْتُمْ تَمْتَرُوْنَ
﴿٢﴾ وَهُوَ اللّٰهُ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَفِي الْاَرْضِ ؕ يَعْلَمُ سِرَّكُمْ
وَجَهْرَكُمْ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا تَكْسِبُوْنَ ﴿٣﴾ وَمَا تَاْتِيْهِمْ مِّنْ اٰيَةٍ مِّنْ اٰيٰتِ
رَبِّهِمْ اِلَّا كَانُوْا عَنْهَا مُعْرِضِيْنَ ﴿٤﴾ فَقَدْ كَذَّبُوْا بِالْحَقِّ لَمَّا
جَآءَهُمْ ؕ فَسَوْفَ يَاْتِيْهِمْ اَنْۢبٰٓؤُا مَا كَانُوْا بِهٖ يَسْتَهْزِءُوْنَ ﴿٥﴾

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

All praise belongs to Allah who created the heavens and the earth and made darkness and light, yet those who disbelieve equate (others) with their Lord. [1] **He is the one who created you from clay, then destined a term. And the fixed term lies with Him, yet you are in doubt.** [2] **He is Allah in the heavens and the earth. He knows what you conceal and what you reveal and He knows what you earn.** [3] **And there does not come to them a sign from the signs of their Lord, but they keep turning away from it.** [4] **So, they have belied the truth when it came to them. Now, there shall come to them the full account of what they have been laughing at.** [5]

Commentary

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ has said that one of the distinctions of Sūrah Al-An'ām is that the whole of it, except some *'Āyāt*, was revealed at one time in Makkah with the complement of seventy thousand angels following it with recitation of the name of Allah. Early *Tafsīr* authorities Mujāhid, al-Kalbi, Qatādah and others have said more or less the same thing.

Abū Isḥāq Al-Asfrā'inī has said that this Sūrah consists of all principles and subsidiaries of Tauḥīd (Oneness of Allah). This Sūrah has been prefaced with: اَلْحَمْدُ (*Al-Ḥamdulillah*) whereby people have been told that all praises belong to Allah. The purpose is to educate and help people get the right perspective - that Allah needs no praise from anyone, whether or not anyone praises Him, He is, in terms of His own intrinsic perfection, by Himself, the Praised One. By bringing in the sentence which follows immediately, which mentions the creation of the heavens and the earth and the darkness and the light, given there is the very proof of His being the Praised One. Isn't it that the Being which holds such Power and Wisdom would have to be the One deserving of all praise?

In this verse, '*samāwāt*' (heavens) has been mentioned in the plural while *'arḍ* (earth), in the singular - though, in another verse (65:12), earth has been identified as being seven like the heavens. Perhaps, it is indicative of the mutual distinction the seven heavens have in terms of their form and attributes while the seven earths are like each other, therefore, they were taken as one in number. (Maẓharī)

Similarly, by mentioning '*ẓulumāt*' (darkness, or layers of darkness) in the plural, and '*nūr*' (light) in the singular, the indication given may be that *nūr* or light signifies the correct way and the straight path - and that is just one, while *ẓulumāt*, or many layers of darkness, signifies the path of error - and their number runs in thousands. (Maẓharī & al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ)

Also noticeable here is that the origination of the heavens and the earth has been expressed through the word, '*khalaqa*' (created) while that of darkness and light with the word, '*ja'ala*' (made). The hint implied is that darkness and light are not independent and self-existent like the heavens and the earth, instead, they are contingents and at-

tributes. And *ẓulumāt* (darkness) has been given precedence over *nūr* (light) perhaps because *ẓulumāt* is basic to this world while *nūr* is associated with particulars - when they are there, there is light; and when they are not there, there is darkness.

By pointing out to the reality of *Tauḥīd* (Oneness of Allah) and its open proof in this verse the purpose is to warn all those peoples who do not simply believe in *Tauḥīd*, or have forsaken the reality of *Tauḥīd* despite professing it.

The Magians (*Majūs*) believe in two creators, *Yazdān* and *Ahriman* (or *Ahraman*). *Yazdān*, according to them, is the creator of good and *Ahriman*, the creator of evil. They also identify these as (the principles of) light and darkness.

The polytheists in India take an incredibly high number of gods as partners in the divinity of God. The Aryā Samājists, despite acknowledging *Tauḥīd*, take spirit and matter to be infinitely pre-existent, and independent of the power and creation of God, whereby they have moved way away from the reality of *Tauḥīd*. Similarly, the Christians who, despite professing the creed of *Tauḥīd*, started taking Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and his blessed mother as partners in the divinity of God - and then, in order to prop their belief in one God, they had to rely on the irrational theory of Unity in Trinity. As for the disbelievers and polytheists of Arabia, they demonstrated such philanthropy in dishing out Godhood that, according to them, every piece of rock on a hill could be good enough to become an object of worship for the whole humankind! Thus, the wonderful human being whom Allah had made to be the noblest of His creation, someone whom the whole universe was to serve, went so astray from the right path that he took - not just the moon, the sun, the stars, but the fire, water, trees and rocks too - even crawling insects as objects of prostration and worship, providers of needs and resolvers of problems.

By saying in this verse of the Holy Qur'ān that Allah Ta'ālā is the Creator of the heavens and the earth and He is the Maker of darkness and light, all such false notions have been refuted - when He is the sole Creator and Maker of everything, ascribing partners to His Divinity makes no sense.

In the first verse, by saying that all those great bodies of things in this big universe created by Allah Ta'ālā on Whom they depend, an open and correct lesson has been given to all human beings. After that, in other verses which follow, human beings have been told that their very own being is a small universe. If one were to make a start from this point, right from the beginning to the end - birth, living, death among a great mesh of internal dimensions and distances - it would show that the belief in the Oneness of Allah is a reality all too clear. It is about this that the verse said: هُوَالَّذِىْ خَلَقَكُمْ مِّنْ طِيْنٍ ثُمَّ قَضٰى اَجَلًا (He is the One who created you from clay, then destined a term). The verse is saying that Allah is the One who created Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام with clay, and then, gave him life - and common human food comes from the moist substance of clay, and from food the sperm, and from the sperm comes the creation of the human being.

Sayyidnā Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī رضى الله عنه says that he has heard from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that Allah Ta'ālā created Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام from a particular blend of clay included wherein are essential ingredients of the whole earth. This is the reason why the children of Ādam are different in colour, shape, morals and habits with some black or white or red, and some hard or soft or good-natured or evil-tempered. (Mazharī, from a narration of Ibn 'Adiyy, with good authority)

This was about the human origin. After that, mentioned here are the two stages at the end. One of these is the personal end of a human being which is called death. The other stage is the combined end of the entire humankind along with that of all cosmic servants waiting on them, which is known as the *Qiyāmah* (the day of Doom). The expression - 'the personal end of a human being' - is used here because Allah Ta'ālā says: ثُمَّ قَضٰى اَجَلًا that is, after the birth of a human being, Allah Ta'ālā destined a term for his or her life (on the earth). Reaching the completion of this term is death - though human beings do not know it - but, the angels do. In fact, a human being too, in a way, knows death as incidents of the children of Ādam dying all around, everywhere, all the time, are common experience.

After that, comes the mention of the end of the whole world, that is, the *Qiyāmah*, in the following words: وَاَجَلٌ مُّسَمًّى عِنْدَهٗ , that is, there is yet another term which stands fixed and which is known to Allah

alone. The full knowledge of this 'term' has not been given to any angel, or human being.

Summing up in a sequence, we can say that, in the first verse, we have been told about the 'big universe', that is, the whole wide world, which has been created and made by Allah Ta'ālā. Then, in the second verse, very similarly, we have been told that the 'small universe', that is, the human beings, have also been created by Allah. Then, it is to shake human beings out of their negligence that they have been told that every human being has a particular age, after which death is certain. This is a constant fact of life observed by human beings all the time. The words: وَاَجَلٌ مُّسَمًّى عِنْدَهٗ ثُمَّ اَنْتُمْ تَمْتَرُوْنَ (And the fixed term lies with Him, yet you are in doubt) carry the instruction that using the personal death of a human being as the proof of the general and collective death of the whole world system, that is, the *Qiyāmah*, is something very natural and logical. Therefore, there is absolutely no doubt about the coming of the *Qiyāmah* (the much publicized but least believed 'Apocalypse' of the West). Therefore, towards the end of the verse (2), the text wonders as to why would people keep doubting the coming of *Qiyāmah* which stands proved so clearly.

The third verse contains the consequential outcome of what was said in the first two verses. It declares that Allah is the only Being who is worthy of worship and obedience in all the heavens and the earth, and He is the One who knows everything human beings conceal or reveal and, particularly, everything they say or do.

The fourth verse carries a complaint against the anti-truth doggedness and obstinacy of the chronically heedless human race by saying: وَمَا تَاْتِيْهِمْ مِّنْ اٰيَةٍ مِّنْ اٰيٰتِ رَبِّهِمْ اِلَّا كَانُوْا عَنْهَا مُعْرِضِيْنَ that is, despite the many clear proofs and open signs of the Oneness of Allah, the dissenters and rejectionists among human beings have taken to a way of their own, using which, they would turn their faces away from whatever sign is shown to them for their guidance, without ever paying the least attention to it.

In the fifth and the last verse here, further details of this heedlessness have been indicated through some events. It was said: فَقَدْ كَذَّبُوْا بِالْحَقِّ لَمَّا جَآءَهُمْ (So, they have belied the truth when it came to them). The word, '*Al-Ḥaqq*' (the truth) here, could mean the Qur'ān - and the

blessed person of the noble Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم also.

The reason is that he lived his whole life among these Arab tribes. He grew up from a child into a young man and from his youth into his later years right before their eyes. They also knew fully well that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had remained absolutely untaught by any human teacher, so much so that he could not write even his name by himself. The whole Arabia knew him by his appellation of *Ummiyy* (unlettered, unschooled). For forty years, this was him amongst them. He never demonstrated any marked interest in poetry (a traditional distinction of the age) nor he had any aptitude for formal education and learning. Then, after having completed his forty years, there came a sudden change, an instant flowering of the unimaginable. His blessed tongue became such fountainhead of insights and realities, learning and arts that went on to disarm the best minds of the world. He challenged every eloquent and learned master of words in Arabia to match the Word brought by him. But his antagonists, who would have not hesitated to sacrifice anything they had - life, wealth, honour, children, family, anything, anytime - just to defeat him, did not have the courage to accept his challenge and, at the least, produce one *'Āyah* (verse) like the *'Āyah* of the Holy Qur'ān.

Thus, the very presence of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, and the Glorious Qur'ān, was a great sign of irrefutable legitimacy. In addition to that, there were thousands of miracles and open signs which came to pass at his blessed hands and which cannot be denied by any sane person. But, those people belied all such signs totally. Therefore, it was said in the verse: فَقَدْ كَذَّبُوْا بِالْحَقِّ لَمَّا جَآءَهُمْ (So, they have belied the truth when it came to them).

Now, pointed out at the conclusion of the verse is the sad end of their effort to falsify truth: فَسَوْفَ يَأْتِيْهِمْ اَنْبٰٓؤُا مَا كَانُوْا بِهٖ يَسْتَهْزِءُوْنَ (Now, there shall come to them the full account of what they have been laughing at). It means that right now these people who are heedless to their fate mock at the miracles and commandments of Allah brought by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and at the all true message that there is a *Qiyāmah* (Doomsday) and *Ākhirah* (Hereafter), but very soon will come the time when all these realities will be before their eyes. There will be a *Qiyāmah* in fact. There will be a Reckoning (*Ḥisāb*) when everyone will

have to account for one's faith and deed - and everyone shall get the reward or punishment for what he or she has done. But, believing and confessing at that time is not going to work for them because that will be no day of deeds - rather, that day will be the day of Retribution. The time to think is now. Allah Almighty has given the respite - a God-sent piece of luck, so to say. Act now, for it is by having faith alone that you will succeed in this world and in the lasting world to come.

Verses 6 - 11

أَلَمْ يَرَوْا كَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِّنْ قَرْنٍ مَّكَّنّٰهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ
مَا لَمْ نُمَكِّنْ لَّكُمْ وَأَرْسَلْنَا السَّمَآءَ عَلَيْهِمْ مِّدْرَارًا ص وَّجَعَلْنَا
الْأَنْهٰرَ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهِمْ فَأَهْلَكْنٰهُمْ بِذُنُوْبِهِمْ وَأَنْشَأْنَا مِنْ
بَعْدِهِمْ قَرْنًا اٰخَرِيْنَ ﴿٦﴾ وَلَوْ نَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ كِتٰبًا فِيْ قِرْطَاسٍ
فَلَمَسُوْهُ بِأَيْدِيْهِمْ لَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا إِنْ هٰذَآ إِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُّبِيْنٌ
﴿٧﴾ وَقَالُوْا لَوْلَآ أُنْزِلَ عَلَيْهِ مَلَكٌ ط وَلَوْ أَنْزَلْنَا مَلَكًا لَّقُضِيَ
الْأَمْرُ ثُمَّ لَا يُنْظَرُوْنَ ﴿٨﴾ وَلَوْ جَعَلْنٰهُ مَلَكًا لَّجَعَلْنٰهُ رَجُلًا
وَّلَلَبَسْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ مَّا يَلْبِسُوْنَ ﴿٩﴾ وَلَقَدِ اسْتُهْزِئَ بِرُسُلٍ مِّنْ
قَبْلِكَ فَحَاقَ بِالَّذِيْنَ سَخِرُوْا مِنْهُمْ مَّا كَانُوْا بِهٖ يَسْتَهْزِءُوْنَ
﴿١٠﴾ قُلْ سِيْرُوْا فِي الْأَرْضِ ثُمَّ انْظُرُوْا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ
الْمُكَذِّبِيْنَ ﴿١١﴾

Have they not seen how many generations We have destroyed prior to them, whom We had given in the land a position We did not give to you, and We left the heaven pouring over them and made rivers flow beneath them? Then We destroyed them because of their sins and raised up, after them, another generation. [6]

And if We had sent down to you something written on paper, and they had even touched it with their hands, still the disbelievers would have said, "This is nothing but sheer magic." [7]

And they say, "Why is it that an angel has not been sent down to him?" And had We sent down an angel, the whole matter would have been finished, and thereafter they would have had no time. [8] **And if We had made him an angel, We would have obviously made him a man, and would have caused them the same confusion they are causing now.** [9]

Messengers have been mocked at before you. So, those who laughed at them were besieged by what they have been making a mockery of. [10]

Say, "Go about the earth, and see what was the fate of those who belied (the prophets)." [11]

Commentary

In previous verses, mention was made of grave consequences to be faced by those who avoid or oppose Divine commandments and prophetic teachings. In the present verses, the same deniers of the truth have been given an opportunity to learn and correct themselves by observing conditions around them as well as those prevailing in times before them. No doubt, events of the past are documents full of chastening lessons which, if seen to find wisdom, would prove to be more effective than a thousand sermons. So, still valid is the saying of the sage: The world is the best book and time, the best teacher. That is why wisdom-based historical anecdotes form a good part of the Holy Qur'ān. But, speaking generally, people have not given world history any serious role in conducting lives properly. They have, rather than benefiting from it, made it into an intellectual pastime which would either help to sleep or to while away spare time.

Perhaps, it is for this reason that the Holy Qur'ān has taken the essence of history as a server of warning and a dispenser of good counsel. But, this is unlike the customary historical fiction where the story or the event are an end in themselves. So, the Qur'ān has not taken up historical events as ongoing events in their own right. Instead of doing something like that, it has chosen to place part of the narrative as relevant to the given subject and setting of the message in the text. Then, there would be another occasion, another place, when it would describe another part of the story as relevant there. This may be indicative of the reality that a report or story is not an end by itself, in-

stead, the purpose is to identify the outcome of the report and the practical implication of the event, therefore, one should be concerned with what is necessary for the objective in sight, move ahead and survey his circumstances in that light - that is, learn that vital lesson from what has gone before and thereby correct oneself.

In the first verse, it was said about the people of Makkah, the direct addressees of the Holy Prophet ﷺ: أَلَمْ يَرَوْا كَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِّنْ قَرْنٍ 'Have they not seen how many generations We have destroyed prior to them?' Here, 'seen' means to ponder about, because these generations were not present before them at that time to see. It was after that, that the destruction of many generations ('*qarn*') was mentioned.

The word, قَرْنٍ : *qarn*, is used for a group of people collectively present at a given time and period. It is also used to denote a long period of time which could be, depending on different interpretations, between ten to one hundred years. But, some events and narrations do support the position that this word is used for one hundred years as it appears in a *Ḥadīth* in which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had told Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Busr al-Māzīniyy that he will live for one *Qarn*. Also when the Holy Prophet ﷺ prayed for a certain child that may he live for a whole *qarn*, he did live for a full one hundred years. The majority of '*Ulamā*' take the famous *Ḥadīth*: خَيْرُ الْقُرُوْنِ قَرْنِيْ ثُمَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَلُوْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَلُوْنَهُمْ (still recited as part of the *Khuṭbah* of *Jumu'ah* all over the world) to be meaning exactly this, that is, every *qarn* is one hundred years.

About past peoples of the world, first it was said that the kind of power and well-being given to them was not given to people later than them, but when these very people took to the ways of belying prophets and disobeying Divine injunctions, all that majesty of power and wealth was rendered futile against the punishment of Allah which annihilated them totally. So, this was a lesson for the addressees of today, the people of Makkah who did not have the power of the legendary people of 'Ād and Thamūd, nor the affluence of the people of Syria and Yaman. For them, the need of the hour was to learn a lesson from what happened to the peoples of the past and turn towards an examination of their doings and think where they are going to end up by opposing the truth.

At the end of the verse, it was said: وَاَنْشَاْنَا مِنْۢ بَعْدِهِمْ قَرْنًا اٰخَرِيْنَ (and raised up, after them, another generation). It means that the great power of Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhu* was not simply limited to seeing that nations of strength, authority and power lay destroyed in a flash, but it was right there on the ashes of their destruction that other peoples were made to rise and populate places, as if nothing had happened there and no one was missing from the scene. This spectacle of Divine power and wisdom is something observable in its own ways during every time and period when thousands die every day but there is no vacuum left anywhere. We never come to realize that people who belonged here are not here anymore.

Once, while on the plains of Arafāt with a million men and women spread around, came the thought that only a mere seventy or eighty years earlier, none among this whole assembly of people existed. Yet, on this same place of 'Arafāt, nearly that many other human beings were present, no trace of whom exists today. On this analogy, imagine about any assembly of human beings, any animated gathering of people, think about their past and future, and then figure out what you get - somebody telling you to wise up to the ultimate truth of things: فَتَبٰرَكَ اللّٰهُ اَحْسَنُ الْخٰلِقِيْنَ (Praised be Allah, the best of creators).

The second verse (7) was revealed in the background of a particular event when 'Abdullāh ibn Umaiyyah came up with a hostile demand before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم by saying: 'I cannot believe in you until such time that I see you climbing all the way to the heavens and bringing a book from there before our eyes, in which it should be written in my name that I should attest to your prophethood.' And, on top of saying all this, he went on to even declare that he would still not be impressed enough by his accomplishing all that for he does not seem to be likely to convert to Islam anyway.

Strange are the ways of fate, for this very gentleman embraced Islam later on, and embraced it with such fervor and class that he became a winning warrior in the cause of Islam and received his *Shahādah* (martyrdom) in the Battle of Ṭā'if.

Such were the uncalled-for and hostile demands made and mocking and insulting dialogues inflicted on the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, specially when he himself was more affectionate for his people, more

than their own parents could ever be to them. What effect these caustic bad manners would have made on his heart is something we cannot fathom. It can only be sensed by one who is consumed with the good of his people in the same manner as the blessed Prophet himself was.

Therefore, to comfort him, it was said that such demands from his antagonists were not being put forward for any useful purpose, nor did they want to follow it. They were a kind of people who would not stop at what they were demanding. Even if they were presented with far more clear proofs of their Prophet's veracity, they would still not believe. For example, if Allah were to send down, as they demanded, a written book from the heavens - and not only that they see it for themselves that there is no sleight of hand or sight or magic, they may even physically touch it with their hands to make sure that they were not day-dreaming and that it was a reality - still, after all that, they would say nothing but: إِنْ هَٰذَا إِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُّبِينٌ (This is nothing but sheer magic). This is because what they are saying comes from malice and hostility.

The third verse (8) was also revealed because of an event which concerns this very 'Abdullāh ibn Abī Umaiyyah who, accompanied by Nadr ibn al-Ḥārith and Nawfal ibn Khālid, came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. This time their demand was: 'We shall believe in you only when you go and bring a book from the heavens and let four angels come along with it to testify that the book was from none but Allah and that you are the Messenger of Allah.'

One answer Allah gave to them was that by making such demands, these heedless people were inviting their own destruction, because the Divine law is that, should a people ask their prophet to show a miracle of their choice, and as a result of their demand, such miracle is shown by the power and will of Allah, then, should they, even then, remain reluctant to believe and accept faith any longer, they are destroyed by a mass general punishment. These particular people of Makkah were really not making their demands as based on any good intentions, which may have at the least given some hope of their accepting the truth. Therefore, it was said: لَوْ أَنزَلْنَا مَلَكًا لَّقُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ ثُمَّ لَا يُنظَرُونَ (And had We sent down an angel, the whole matter would have been finished). In other words, it means : 'If We do send the miracle they demand, that is, send an angel, then, these people who are not the kind who would

accept truth will still act contrary and hostile even after having seen the miracle, then, the Divine command to have them destroyed would stand activated. Since they would be given no respite after that happens, therefore, they should understand that the fact of not showing the miracle demanded by them spells out real good for them, without which they would be nowhere.

The second answer to this problem with them was given in the fourth verse (9) in a different manner where it was said that people asking such questions were certainly strange people who were demanding that angels should come down to them. This is so because there are only two ways angels can come down. Firstly, an angel may come as he is, in his form and state of being. If so, no human being can stand before his real awe - in fact, he is more likely to die at the never-imagined sight. The second form in which the angel could come down is that the angel comes in human shape and form, as Sayyidnā Jibra'īl al-Amīn has come to the Holy Prophet ﷺ several times in the shape of a human being. In this situation too, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is told, this questioner will have the same objection against this 'angel' as he has against you - because he would take him to be nothing but human.

After having answered all these hostile questions, solace has been given to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in the fifth verse (10) by saying that this attitude of mockery and injury directed against him by his people is not something particular to him. Other prophets and messengers before him had to face similar heart-breaking experiences, but they did not lose hope. Finally, what happened was that those who used to mock were overtaken by the punishment which they mocked at.

In short, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been assured that his mission is to convey the commandments of Allah. Once he feels he has done that, let his heart be at rest. Whether someone is affected by the message or not, that is not for him to worry about - for it is not a part of his duty as a Messenger of Allah. So, let this concern bring no sorrow to his heart.

Verses 12 - 14

قُلْ لِمَنْ مَّا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ط قُلْ لِّلّٰهِ ط كَتَبَ عَلٰى نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةَ ط لَيَجْمَعَنَّكُمْ اِلٰى يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ لَارَيْبَ فِيْهِ ط اَلَّذِيْنَ خَسِرُوْآ اَنْفُسَهُمْ فَهُمْ لَايُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿١٢﴾ وَلَهٗ مَاسَكَنَ فِى الَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ ط وَهُوَ السَّمِيْعُ الْعَلِيْمُ ﴿١٣﴾ قُلْ اَغَيْرَ اللّٰهِ اَتَّخِذُ وَلِيًّا فَاطِرِ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَهُوَ يُطْعِمُ وَلَا يُطْعَمُ ط قُلْ اِنِّىْٓ اُمِرْتُ اَنْ اَكُوْنَ اَوَّلَ مَنْ اَسْلَمَ وَلَا تَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ ﴿١٤﴾

Say, "To whom belongs all that there is in the heavens and the earth?" Say, "To Allah." He has prescribed for Himself to be merciful. He will surely gather you towards a day of doom in which there is no doubt. Those who have brought loss to themselves are not going to believe. [12]

And to Him belongs what finds rest in the night and the day. And He is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. [13]

Say, "Would I take as guardian someone other than Allah, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, and He feeds, and is not fed?" Say, "I have been asked to be the first to submit." And never be one of those who ascribe partners to Allah. [14]

Commentary

In the opening verse (12), قُلْ لِّمَنْ مَّا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ , the disbelievers have been asked as to who is the Master of the entire universe and all that it contains. Then, Allah Himself gives the answer through the blessed words of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that Allah is the Master of all. The reason for answering the question, rather than waiting for the disbelievers to answer it, is that the answer given was an accepted fact with the disbelievers of Makkah as well, for they were, though involved with Shirk and idolatry, no deniers of the fact that Allah Almighty was the Master of the heavens and the earth and everything they contained.

The word, اِلٰى : *ilā* (towards) in the next sentence: لَيَجْمَعَنَّكُمْ اِلٰى يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ

(He will surely gather you towards a day of doom) has been used either in the sense of *tawaffā* meaning to take in full, bring to a finish, or gather, (as in the translation of the meaning given here), in which case, it would mean that Allah Ta'ālā will gather everyone, from the beginning to the end, on the day of *Qiyāmah* - or, it could mean 'to gather in the graves,' in which case, it would mean that human beings will be kept being gathered into their resting places unto the day of *Qiyamah* when they will be raised back to life. (Qurṭubī)

As for the sentence: كَتَبَ عَلٰى نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةَ (He has prescribed for Himself to be merciful) appearing a little earlier in verse 12, a narration from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim reports that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: When Allah Ta'ālā made His creation, He made a promise to Himself in writing which is with Him, written in which are the words: اِنَّ رَحْمَتِيْ تَغْلِبُ عَلٰى غَضَبِيْ that is, 'My mercy shall remain dominant over My wrath.' (Qurṭubī)

The sentence which appears at the end of the verse : اَلَّذِيْنَ خَسِرُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ (Those who have brought loss to themselves ...) indicates that the deprivation of the disbelievers from the universal mercy of Allah Almighty mentioned earlier was caused by their own deeds, for they did not take to the way which brings mercy - that is, the way of belief and faith. (Qurṭubī)

The word, '*sukūn*' appearing in verse 13: وَلَهٗ مَاسَكَنَ فِى الَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ (And to Him belongs what finds rest in the night and the day) could either mean the state of being still or at rest, in which case, the verse would mean that Allah is the Master of everything present in the night and the day. Or, it is also possible that the sense could be that of a combined state of stillness and movement (which would amount to saying - what tarries and what moves), but what was mentioned here is the state of *sukūn* or rest only - because, movement which stands in contrast to it can be understood as being obvious enough.

Verses 15- 21

قُلْ اِنِّيْٓ اَخَافُ اِنْ عَصَيْتُ رَبِّيْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيْمٍ ﴿١٥﴾ مَنْ يُّصْرَفْ عَنْهُ يَوْمَئِذٍ فَقَدْ رَحِمَهٗ ؕ وَذٰلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْمُبِيْنُ ﴿١٦﴾ وَاِنْ

يَّمْسَسْكَ اللّٰهُ بِضُرٍّ فَلَا كَاشِفَ لَهٗۤ اِلَّا هُوَ ؕ وَاِنْ يَّمْسَسْكَ
بِخَيْرٍ فَهُوَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿١٧﴾ وَهُوَ الْقَاهِرُ فَوْقَ عِبَادِهٖ ؕ
وَهُوَ الْحَكِيْمُ الْخَبِيْرُ ﴿١٨﴾ قُلْ اَيُّ شَيْءٍ اَكْبَرُ شَهَادَةً ؕ قُلِ اللّٰهُ ۙ
شَهِيْدٌۢ بَيْنِيْ وَبَيْنَكُمْ ۟ وَاُوْحِيَ اِلَيَّ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنُ لِاُنْذِرَكُمْ بِهٖ
وَمَنْۢ بَلَغَ ؕ اَئِنَّكُمْ لَتَشْهَدُوْنَ اَنَّ مَعَ اللّٰهِ اٰلِهَةً اُخْرٰى ؕ قُلْ لَّاۤ
اَشْهَدُ ۚ قُلْ اِنَّمَا هُوَ اِلٰهٌ وَّاحِدٌ وَّاِنَّنِيْ بَرِيْٓءٌ مِّمَّا تُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿١٩﴾
اَلَّذِيْنَ اٰتَيْنٰهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ يَعْرِفُوْنَهٗ كَمَا يَعْرِفُوْنَ اَبْنَآءَهُمْ ۘ اَلَّذِيْنَ
خَسِرُوْۤا اَنْفُسَهُمْ فَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٢٠﴾ وَمَنْ اَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرٰى
عَلَى اللّٰهِ كَذِبًا اَوْ كَذَّبَ بِاٰيٰتِهٖ ؕ اِنَّهٗ لَا يُفْلِحُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ ﴿٢١﴾

Say, "If I disobey my Lord, I fear the punishment of a momentous day." [15] **Whoever is spared from it (that day) is, indeed, blessed with His mercy. And that is success, open and clear.** [16]

And if Allah causes you some harm, no one is there to remove it except He Himself; and if He causes you some good, then He is powerful over everything. [17] **And He is Dominant over His slaves, and He is the All-Wise, the All-Aware.** [18]

Say, "What can be the greatest in bearing witness?" Say, "Allah. He is the witness between me and you. And this Qur'ān has been revealed to me so that I should thereby warn you, and whomsoever it may reach. Do you really bear witness that there are other gods along with Allah?" Say, "I bear no such witness." Say, "In fact, He is one God. And I have nothing to do with what you associate (with Him)." [19]

Those to whom We have given the Book recognize him (the Messenger) as they would recognize their sons. Those who have brought loss to themselves, they are not going to believe. [20] **And who is more unjust than the one who coins a lie against Allah or belies His signs? Beware, the unjust shall not prosper.** [21]

Commentary

In the previous verses, the command given was to shun Shirk and believe in the perfect power of Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhu* mentioned therein. In the first of the present verses (15), the punishment for the contravention of this command has been mentioned in a particularly endearing manner, that is, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been 'commanded' that he should tell the people that should he too (God forbid) come to contravene the command of His Lord, then, he too has the fear of the punishment of the day of *Qiyāmah*. It is obvious that the noble Messenger of Allah is (Divinely) protected from every sin - so, the likelihood of disobedience coming from him simply does not exist. But, by mentioning this hypothetical situation, the purpose is to convey the message to the community that the contravention of the Divine command is so serious a matter that even the greatest prophet cannot stand excused from it - if not him, who else?

After that, it was said: مَنْ يُّصْرَفْ عَنْهُ يَوْمَئِذٍ فَقَدْ رَحِمَهٗ (Whoever is spared from it that day is, indeed, blessed with His mercy). It means that the punishment of the day of Resurrection (*al-Maḥshar*) is extremely horrendous and harsh. Whoever finds this removed from him or her should know that it was great mercy from Allah. This has been further strengthened by saying: وَذٰلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْمُبِيْنُ (And that is success, open and clear). The word, اَلْفَوْزُ : '*al-fawz*' (success) means being admitted in *Jannah* (Paradise). This tells us that deliverance from punishment and admittance into the Paradise are inseparable from each other.

All Gain and Loss Comes from Allah: A Cardinal Muslim Belief

In the third verse (17), a basic article of faith in Islam has been described - that it is Allah, in reality, who is the Master-Dispenser of all gain and loss. No one can 'really' bring the least benefit to anyone, nor cause the least harm. As for the outward manifestation of gain or loss, benefit or harm, seen coming from one person to the other, is no more than a matter of appearances. Seen in the full flash of reality, this does not hold out any more than a ready-to-vanish curtain. So succinctly the idea was put in a Persian couplet:

کار زلفِ تست مشک افشانی امّا عاشقاں
مصلحت راتہمتے برآ ہوئے چیں بستہ اند

Spraying Musk is the work of your tresses, but those who love you
Have found it expedient to ascribe the blame to the Chinese deer!

This belief too is one of the revolutionary beliefs of Islam, a belief which made Muslims shed the dependence on the created and rely on their Creator alone. It was this belief which put together a large group of unprecedented charmers of the soul on the map of the world, who were, despite their meager means and haunting hunger, weightier and worthier than a whole world - for they would not bow their heads before anyone.

The Holy Qur'ān has taken up this subject at many places with different approaches, out of which, quoted here is a verse from Sūrah Fāṭir:

مَا يَفْتَحِ اللّٰهُ لِلنَّاسِ مِنْ رَّحْمَةٍ فَلَا مُمْسِكَ لَهَا وَمَا يُمْسِكْ فَلَا مُرْسِلَ لَهُ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖ

What Allah, out of His mercy, does make open to people, there is no one to withhold it; and what He does withhold, there is no one to release it after that - 35:2.

It appears in *Ṣaḥīḥ Aḥādīth* that the Holy Prophet ﷺ used to say this in his prayers very often:

اَللّٰهُمَّ لَا مَانِعَ لِمَا اَعْطَيْتَ وَ لَا مُعْطِيَ لِمَا مَنَعْتَ وَلَا يَنْفَعُ ذَا الْجَدِّ مِنْكَ الْجَدُّ

"O Allah, there is no withholder of what You have bestowed and there is no giver of what You have withheld and no status of a man of status can be of use to him against You.

Under his comments on this verse, Imām al-Baghawī has reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās that there was an occasion when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم mounted a ride, he asked me to sit behind him. After having covered some distance, he turned towards me and said, 'You young man.' I said: 'Here I am, *Yā Rasūl* Allah. Can I do something?' He said: 'You remember Allah. Allah will remember you. If you will remember Allah, you will find Him before you under all circumstances. You recognize Allah when you are in peace and comfort, Allah will recognize you when you are in trouble. When you have to

ask, only ask Allah. When you need help, seek help only from Allah. Whatever is going to happen in this world has already been written by the writer of destiny. If all those created were to combine and try to bring a benefit to you in which Allah has kept no share for you, they would never be able to do that. And if they all come together and try to inflict a harm on you which is not in your lot, they would never become capable of doing that. If you are sure of being able to act patiently, then, do just that, by all means. If you do not have the strength and ability to do so, observe patience - because there is great good and *barakah* in remaining patient against what does not go well with your temperament. And understand it very clearly that the help of Allah is with patience, and comfort with hardship, and prosperity with adversity.' (This *Ḥadīth* also appears in Tirmidhī and the Musnad of Aḥmad with sound chains of authority)

Alas, despite this clear declaration of the Qur'ān and the age long teachings of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, this *Ummah* has started going off course in this critical matter when they have handed out what lies in the exclusive domain of Allah to His created beings. Today, there is a very large number of Muslims who would, rather than call upon Allah and pray to Him in their hour of distress, cry for help in all sorts of names, but do not seem to remember the name of Allah. As for praying to Allah through the spiritual mediation of prophets and men of Allah, that is a different matter, and that is permissible. Evidences of which are available within the teachings of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم himself. But, calling on or praying to a created being directly for the removal of one's need or solution of problem is an open rebellion against this Qur'ānic injunction. May Allah keep all Muslims on the straight path.

At the end of verse 18, it was said: وَهُوَ الْقَاهِرُ فَوْقَ عِبَادِهٖ وَهُوَ الْحَكِيْمُ الْخَبِيْرُ (And He is dominant over His slaves, and He is the All-Wise, the All-Aware). It means that the mastery of Allah Ta'ālā prevails over His servants in the absolute sense and that everyone remains under His power and control all the time. This is the reason why no human being, no matter how great, whether a prophet close to Allah, or the most powerful ruler of the world, none of them come out successful in everything they do, nor is every wish of theirs granted.

And then, He is Wise too, for everything He does is essential Wisdom. And then, He is All-Aware too, for He is the One who knows everything. Thus, by the word, *al-Qāhir* (the Dominant) pointed to is the perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā and, by the word, *al-Ḥakīm* (the All-Wise), His all-encompassing knowledge - and the two tell us that perfection in knowledge and power are the sole attributes of Almighty Allah and it is only Him that they belong to.

A particular event which is the cause of the revelation of this verse has been generally reported by commentators. It is said that once a deputation of the people of Makkah came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. They said: 'You claim to be a Messenger of Allah. Who is your witness on this? We have yet to see a man who attests to its truth, although we have tried our best to confirm it from the Jews and Christians.'

Thereupon, the verse: قُلْ اَيُّ شَيْءٍ اَكْبَرُ شَهَادَةً which means: You tell them whose witness could be greater than that of Allah, within whose power lies the gain and loss of everyone in the world? Then, you tell them that Allah is the witness between me and you. The witness of Allah refers to those miracles and signs which Allah Ta'ālā made manifest to confirm the veracity of the prophethood of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Therefore, addressing the people of Makkah, it was said: اَئِنَّكُمْ لَتَشْهَدُوْنَ اَنَّ مَعَ اللّٰهِ اٰلِهَةً اُخْرٰى It means: Do you, even after the witness of Allah Ta'ālā Himself, stand to witness against Him by saying that there are other gods too along with Allah? If that is so, you are responsible for your fate. As for me, I bear no such witness. Then, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is asked to tell them: قُلْ اِنَّمَا هُوَ اِلٰهٌ وَّاحِدٌ that is, He is one God, the only one worthy of worship who has no partners, sharers or associates in His pristine Divinity.

And also said there was: وَاُوْحِيَ اِلَيَّ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنُ لِاُنْذِرَكُمْ بِهٖ وَمَنْۢ بَلَغَ that is, 'and the Qur'ān has been sent to me as the revealed Word of Allah so that I should warn you of His punishment and also warn all those people to whom this Qur'ān will keep reaching until the day of *Qiyāmah*.

This proves that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is the Last Prophet and the Qur'ān, the Last Book. It will continue to be recited and taught right through the day of *Qiyāmah*, and people will remain obliged to follow it.

Sayyidnā Sa'īd ibn Jubayr رضی اللہ عنہ said: To Whomever the Qur'ān has reached, he has become like one who has visited Muḥammad ﷺ. And it appears in another *Ḥadīth*: To whomever the Qur'ān has reached, I am his warner (*'nadhīr'*).

Therefore, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم had asked his Companions emphatically : بَلِّغُوا عَنِّي وَلَوْ آيَةً that is, convey my instructions and teachings to people, even if it be one *'Āyah*.

And Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضی اللہ عنہ reports that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said: May Allah keep that person hale and hearty who heard a saying of mine, committed it to his memory and then conveyed it to my *Ummah*. This is important because it generally happens that a person may not himself appreciate the sense of what is said but which would be understood much better by a person of later times to whom the first person has conveyed it.

In verse 20, there is a refutation of the saying of those who had said that they had checked with the Jews and the Christians and none of them were ready to attest to his truth as a Messenger of Allah. About that it was said: اَلَّذِيْنَ اٰتَيْنٰهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ يَعْرِفُوْنَهٗ كَمَا يَعْرِفُوْنَ اَبْنَآءَهُمْ That is, as for the Jews and Christians, they recognize Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ as they would recognize their sons.

The reason is that there is, in the Torah and Injīl, a full description of the physical features of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, of his home city and then his post-emigration place of residence, and of his habits and morals and achievements - all this in such details that it leaves no room for doubt in the recognition of his identity. In fact, this is not limited to the mention of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, the Torah and the Injīl carry even the detailed description of his noble *Ṣaḥābah* as well. Therefore, there was no possibility that anyone who recited the Torah and the Injīl and believed in them would be unable to recognize the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم.

At this point, the simile given in the text is that of children - 'as they would recognize their sons.' Not said here is: as children recognize their parents. The reason is that the recognition of children by parents is most detailed and certain. Children remain before parents day and night under all conditions. From infancy to younger years,

they are raised in the hands and laps of parents. So, the extent to which parents can recognize their children, their children cannot recognize them.

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Salām رضی اللہ عنہ belonged to the Jewish faith, then he became a Muslim. Sayyidnā Fārūq al-Ā'zam رضی اللہ عنہ asked him: Allah Ta'ālā says in the Qur'ān that you recognize our Rasūl as you would recognize your sons. What is the reason for it? Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Salām said: Yes, we know the Holy Prophet ﷺ from his qualities and features revealed by Allah Almighty through the Torah. Therefore, this knowledge of ours is certain and absolute. This is contrary to our offspring about whom one could doubt whether or not they were their children.

Sayyidnā Zayd ibn Sa'nah who first belonged to the people of the Book had recognized the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم through the description of his qualities and features stated in the Torah and the Injīl. There was only one quality which could not be confirmed from earlier information. So, this he confirmed by testing. That quality was : 'His forbearance will dominate his anger.' Then, he went to see the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, made his test and found him a true bearer of this quality. He instantly became a Muslim.

In the last verse (21), it was said that these people of the Book who, despite knowing the true identity of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, do not accept Islam were simply ruining themselves at their own hands: اَلَّذِيْنَ خَسِرُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ فَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ (Those, who have brought loss on themselves, they are not going to believe).

Verses 22 -26

وَيَوْمَ نَحْشُرُهُمْ جَمِيْعًا ثُمَّ نَقُوْلُ لِلَّذِيْنَ اَشْرَكُوْٓا اَيْنَ شُرَكَاۤؤُكُمُ الَّذِيْنَ كُنْتُمْ تَزْعُمُوْنَ ﴿٢٢﴾ ثُمَّ لَمْ تَكُنْ فِتْنَتُهُمْ اِلَّآ اَنْ قَالُوْا وَاللّٰهِ رَبِّنَا مَا كُنَّا مُشْرِكِيْنَ ﴿٢٣﴾ اُنْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَذَبُوْا عَلٰٓى اَنْفُسِهِمْ وَضَلَّ عَنْهُمْ مَّا كَانُوْا يَفْتَرُوْنَ ﴿٢٤﴾ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَّسْتَمِعُ اِلَيْكَ ۚ وَجَعَلْنَا عَلٰى قُلُوْبِهِمْ اَكِنَّةً اَنْ يَّفْقَهُوْهُ وَفِيْٓ

اٰذَانِهِمْ وَقْرًا ؕ وَاِنْ يَّرَوْا كُلَّ اٰيَةٍ لَّا يُؤْمِنُوْا بِهَا ؕ حَتّٰٓى اِذَا جَآءُوْكَ يُجَادِلُوْنَكَ يَقُوْلُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْٓا اِنْ هٰذَآ اِلَّآ اَسَاطِيْرُ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ ﴿٢٥﴾ وَهُمْ يَنْهَوْنَ عَنْهُ وَيَنْئَوْنَ عَنْهُ ۚ وَاِنْ يُّهْلِكُوْنَ اِلَّآ اَنْفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُوْنَ ﴿٢٦﴾

And (forget not) the Day We shall gather them together, then We shall say to those who associated partners with Allah, "Where are those you claimed to be partners of Allah?" [22] **Then, their fallacy will lead them to nothing but that they will say, "By Allah, our Lord, we ascribed no partners to Allah."** [23] **See how they lied about themselves - and lost to them was all that they used to coin.** [24]

And there are those among them who listen to you, but We have put coverings on their hearts, so that they do not understand, and heaviness in their ears. And if they were to see all the signs, they will still not believe in them. So much so that, when they come to quarrel with you, the disbelievers say, "It is nothing but tales of the ancients." [25]

And from it they prevent and from it they keep away, and they ruin none but themselves, and they do not realize. [26]

Commentary

Mentioned in the previous verse (21) was that the unjust and the deniers of truth will not receive salvation. Details appear in the present verses. The first (22) and the second (23) verses talk about the great trial to be held on the day of Resurrection before the Lord of all. It was said: وَيَوْمَ نَحْشُرُهُمْ جَمِيْعًا (And [forget not] the Day We shall gather them together), that is, 'gather all disbelievers and their self-made objects of worship together.' After that, it is said: ثُمَّ نَقُوْلُ لِلَّذِيْنَ اَشْرَكُوْٓا اَيْنَ شُرَكَآؤُكُمُ الَّذِيْنَ كُنْتُمْ تَزْعُمُوْنَ (then We shall say to those who associated partners with Allah, "Where are those you claimed to be partners of Allah?"), that is, 'ask them about the objects of worship they had taken to as partners of Allah, and resolvers of their problems, and why would they not come to help them in their hour of trial.'

The word, ثُمَّ :'*thumma*' (then, after that), used here denotes delay, which tells us that the trial of answering fateful questions will not start soon after having been gathered on the Day of Resurrection. Instead, they shall keep standing in that state of wonder and perplexity for a long period of time. It will be a passage of time in between when the reckoning will commence.

In a *Ḥadīth*, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been reported to have said: What would happen to you when Allah Ta'ālā will gather you on the plains of Resurrection as arrows are gathered in the quiver - and you shall be in that state for fifty thousand years. And it appears in another narration that everyone will tarry in the dark on that Day for one thousand years - not being able to even talk to each other. (This narration has been reported by Ḥākim in Al-Mustadrak, and by Al-Baihaqī)

The difference of fifty thousand and ten thousand in this narration also appears in two verses of the Holy Qur'ān as well. In Sūrah Al-Ma'ārij, it is said: كَانَ مِقْدَارُهٗ خَمْسِيْنَ اَلْفَ سَنَةٍ '[a Day] the measure whereof is [as] fifty thousand years - 70:4.' In Sūrah Al-Ḥajj, it is said: اِنَّ يَوْمًا عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ كَاَلْفِ سَنَةٍ :'A Day in the sight of thy Lord is like a thousand years of your reckoning - 22:47.' The reason for this difference is that this day will be long in terms of the severity of pain and the levels of pain will be different. Therefore, this day will seem to be that of fifty thousand years for some and that of one thousand years for others.

In short, on this venue of the great trial, a long period of time will pass for the trial to begin, so much so, that these people will wish that reckoning comes so that they can be relieved from their state of uncertainty, no matter what happens in the end. It is to indicate this length of stay that, as indicated earlier, the word, ثُمَّ (then) was prefixed to ثُمَّ نَقُوْلُ (then We shall say). Similarly, the answer given by the disbelievers mentioned in the second verse (23) also appears with the word, ثم (then), which indicates that they too will come up with their answer after having deliberated over it for a long period of time, in which they will say: وَاللّٰهِ رَبِّنَا مَا كُنَّا مُشْرِكِيْنَ (By Allah, our Lord, we ascribed no partners to Allah). In this verse, their answer has been identified as: فِتْنَة : '*fitnah*' which could mean 'trial' or 'infatuation.' Both meanings can be taken here. In the first case, the answer given by the disbelievers becomes a trial by itself; while, in the second case, it would mean that these peo-

ple were infatuated with idols and other self-made objects of worship, even made sacrifices for them, but all that infatuation was gone on this day when they had no choice but to declare their total disassociation from them.

There is something very astonishing in their answer. That was a nerve-shattering time with the day being the Day of Retribution with the awesome manifestations of the power and authority of their Lord all there, yet they had the courage to lie before their very Lord, and that too, with such shamelessness that they are swearing by His great name and saying that they were no disbelievers!

Most commentators explain this answer given by the disbelievers as something not based on foresight or hindsight. In fact, it was caused by the heat of surrounding awe and the loss of personal nerves, a condition in which one utters what is not intended. But, by giving some thought to the general happenings and conditions of the Day of Resurrection, it could be said that Allah Taʿālā had given them the freedom to say things as they used to say in their life of the mortal world so that everyone present on the Day of Resurrection could see their full profile and get to know that these people did not stop at disbelief and polytheism, but that they were also unmatched as liars, for they would not desist from lying at least on an occasion so horrifying. Another verse of the Qur'ān (Sūrah Al-Mujādalah): فَيَحْلِفُونَ لَهُ كَمَا يَحْلِفُونَ لَكُمْ (then they will swear to Him as they swear to you - 58:18) gives a hint in this direction which means that very much in the manner they swear falsely before Muslims, they would not hesitate in swearing as falsely before the Lord of all the worlds Himself.

When these people have become sworn deniers of their *Shirk* and *Kufr* (attribution of partners to Allah and disbelief) on the day of Resurrection, that will be the time when Allah, in His absolute power, will have their mouths sealed with silence. His command will then go to the limbs of their bodies - 'now, you speak as witnesses to everything they did' - then, will come the proof that their own hands and feet and eyes and ears were all some kind of secret service agents who had been with them all along. They will tell, and tell everything they did. About that, it has been said in Sūrah Yā-Sīn: اَلْيَوْمَ نَخْتِمُ عَلٰٓى اَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَتُكَلِّمُنَآ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَتَشْهَدُ اَرْجُلُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَكْسِبُوْنَ (That Day shall We set a seal on their mouths. But

their hands will speak to Us, and their feet bear witness, to all that they did - 36:65). After having witnessed this demonstration of unimaginable power, no one will, then, dare conceal anything or lie about it.

At another place in the Holy Qur'ān, it is said: وَلَا يَكْتُمُونَ اللّٰهَ حَدِيثًا (And they shall not conceal anything from Allah - 4:42). Explaining its meaning, this is what Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās had said: That is, they would first lie as much as they could, even swear falsely, but once their own hands and feet shall testify against them, they will not have the courage to say anything wrong after that.

So, we see that a wrong-doer shall be given full freedom to put his statement on record in the court of the Judge of judges. If he choses to lie, as he did in his mortal life, his right to do that will not be snatched away from him - because Allah will Himself, in His absolute power, demolish the facade of his lie through the testimony of his own body parts.

This is why telling lies after death will not work. Think of an entrance examination or an admission test. After death, man's first test will be given by angels, *Munkar* and *Nakīr*. Says the *Ḥadīth*: When *Munkar* and *Nakir* will ask a *Kāfir* (disbeliever): مَنْ رَّبُّكَ وَمَا دِيْنُكَ (Who is your Lord and what is your religion?), the *Kafir* will say: هَاهْ هَاهْ لَا أَدْرِىْ (Oh O, I do not know). In contrast a true Muslim will answer by saying: رَبِّىَ اللّٰهُ وَدِيْنِىَ الْإِسْلَامُ (Allah is my Lord and Islam is my religion). It appears no one will have the courage to lie in this test, otherwise a *Kafir* could have given the same answer as was given by a Muslim. The reason is that the test will be taken by angels who do not have the knowledge of the unseen, nor are they capable of making hands and feet give witness. If man had the choice of lying there, the angels would have simply acted in accordance with the answer given, but this would have disturbed the system. This is contrary to the test of the day of Resurrection where questions will be asked and answers given before Almighty Allah which means that no lie will work there even if resorted to.

Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ and Maẓharī report from some elders that the people denying their Shirk on oaths will be those who did not openly declare a created being to be God or His deputy, but as for their deed, they had assigned all powers of Godhood to His created beings,

and from them sought answers to their needs, in their name they would make offerings, and from them they would ask sustenance, health, children and everything they wished to have. These people did not consider themselves as *Mushriks*. Therefore, on the day of Resurrection they would swear to it that they were not *Mushriks*. Ultimately, Allah Almighty will expose their disgrace.

Another question which arises in this verse is about what has been said in some verses of the Qur'ān - that Allah Almighty will not speak to the disbelievers and sinners - while, the present verse seems to be indicating clearly that such address will come to pass.

The answer is that such address or speech will not be in the form of honouring them or accepting their prayers. As for the negation of an address based on admonition, that is not intended in this verse. It could also be said that the address mentioned in this verse may be through the angels. As for the verse where Divine speech or address has been negated, it refers to an indirect address.

In verse 24, it was said: اُنْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَذَبُوْا عَلٰى اَنْفُسِهِمْ وَضَلَّ عَنْهُمْ مَّا كَانُوْا يَفْتَرُوْنَ (See how they lied about themselves - and lost to them was all that they used to coin). The address here is to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم who has been asked to see how these people have lied against their own selves, and whatever they used to forge and fabricate against Allah (their idols and so-called partners to Allah) is lost to them. The expression translated as 'lied about themselves' means that the curse of this lie is going to fall on their own selves while the word, افترا، translated as 'used to coin' may also mean that ascribing partners to Allah was a fabrication in the mortal world the reality of which was exposed on the day of Resurrection. And it is also possible that *'iftirā'* or fabrication could be referring to the false oath taken on the day of Resurrection following which the witness of the limbs of the body exposed their lie.

Some commentators say that *'iftirā'* or fabrication refers to interpretations they used to put on their false objects of worship in the mortal world, for example: مَانَعْبُدُهُمْ اِلَّا لِيُقَرِّبُوْنَآ اِلَى اللّٰهِ زُلْفٰى which means that 'We do not worship them taking them to be God but only do it so that they would intercede on our behalf with Allah and bring us closer to Him - 39:3.' This fabrication of theirs got exposed on the day of Resurrection

when no one interceded on their behalf in their hour of trial, nor any one did anything to bring about a reduction in their punishment.

This bring us to a question, for the verse seems to indicate that at the time of trial featuring these questions and answers, all false objects of worship will not be present there, but a verse of the Qur'ān says: اُحْشُرُوا الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا وَاَزْوَاجَهُمْ وَمَا كَانُوْا يَعْبُدُوْنَ (gather up those who have been unjust, and their partners, and what they used to worship - 37:22). This seems to indicate that the false objects of worship will also be present on the day of Resurrection.

The answer is that the sense of their being absent from the plains of Resurrection, as it emerges from this verse, is limited to their being unavailable as partners, sharers or intercessors. Thus, though they would be unable to help their clients in any way but, they would be present there. So, there remains no contradiction between the two verses. Then, it is also possible that all of them could be gathered together at one time and place, then be separated and the question is asked after the separation.

In these two verses, it should be particularly borne in mind that the choice of free speech given to disbelievers on the day of Resurrection which they utilized by denying on false oath that they had anything to do with Shirk, is not without its implications. Perhaps, it carries a hint that the habit of telling lies is an evil habit which is never easy to shake off. So much so that these people, who used to swear falsely before Muslims during their life in the mortal world, were unable to stop lying even on the fateful day of Resurrection which put them to disgrace before the entire creation of Allah. Therefore, lying has been strongly condemned in the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth which give serious warning to those who tell lies. At many places in the Qur'ān liars have been cursed. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: Stay away from lying because a lie is the accomplice of sins, and a lie and a sin will both go to *Jahannam*. (Ibn Ḥibban in his Ṣaḥīḥ)

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was asked what deed could take one to Hell. He said: A lie [the Musnad of Aḥmad]. And on the night of the *Mi'rāj* (the Ascent to Heaven), the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم saw a man having the corners of his mouth being slit apart which then fall back into their place and become as they were, and again they are slit

apart ... something to keep happening to him throughout the day of *Qiyāmah*. He asked the angel, Jibra'īl al-Amīn: "Who is he?" Angel Jibra'īl said: "He is a liar."

And it appears in a narration from the Musnad of Aḥmad that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: One cannot become a complete Muslim unless he gives up lying altogether, to the extent that he would not lie even by way of joke or fun.

In addition to that, it appears in Al-Baihaqī and others, all on sound authority, that the character of a Muslim may have other bad traits - but, not breach of trust and lying. Yet another *Ḥadīth* says that lying decreases one's *Rizq* (sustenance).

The verse: وَهُمْ يَنْهَوْنَ عَنْهُ (And from it they prevent - 26), according to early commentators Ḍaḥḥāk, Qatādah and Muḥammad ibn Ḥanafīyah, was revealed about the common disbelievers of Makkah who prevented people from listening to the Qur'ān and following it - and saw to it that they themselves stayed away from it. It has also been reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās that this verse concerns the Holy Prophet's ﷺ respected uncle, Abū Ṭālib, as well as other uncles who stopped people from causing pain to him, even supported him, but would not believe in the Qur'ān nor follow it. If so, the pronoun in يَنْهَوْنَ عَنْهُ will revert to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and not to the Qur'ān. (Maẓharī with narration by Ibn Abī al-Ḥātim from Sa'īd ibn Abī Hilāl)

Verses 27 - 32

وَلَوْ تَرَىٰٓ إِذْ وُقِفُوا۟ عَلَى ٱلنَّارِ فَقَالُوا۟ يَـٰلَيْتَنَا نُرَدُّ وَلَا نُكَذِّبَ بِـَٔايَـٰتِ رَبِّنَا وَنَكُونَ مِنَ ٱلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٢٧﴾ بَلْ بَدَا لَهُم مَّا كَانُوا۟ يُخْفُونَ مِن قَبْلُ ۖ وَلَوْ رُدُّوا۟ لَعَادُوا۟ لِمَا نُهُوا۟ عَنْهُ وَإِنَّهُمْ لَكَـٰذِبُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾ وَقَالُوٓا۟ إِنْ هِىَ إِلَّا حَيَاتُنَا ٱلدُّنْيَا وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَبْعُوثِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾ وَلَوْ تَرَىٰٓ إِذْ وُقِفُوا۟ عَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ ۚ قَالَ أَلَيْسَ هَـٰذَا بِٱلْحَقِّ ۚ قَالُوا۟ بَلَىٰ وَرَبِّنَا ۚ قَالَ فَذُوقُوا۟ ٱلْعَذَابَ بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَكْفُرُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾ قَدْ خَسِرَ ٱلَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا۟ بِلِقَآءِ ٱللَّهِ ۖ حَتَّىٰٓ إِذَا جَآءَتْهُمُ

السَّاعَةُ بَغْتَةً قَالُوا يٰحَسْرَتَنَا عَلٰى مَا فَرَّطْنَا فِيهَا ۙ وَهُمْ يَحْمِلُونَ أَوْزَارَهُمْ عَلٰى ظُهُورِهِمْ ۭ أَلَا سَآءَ مَا يَزِرُونَ ﴿٣١﴾ وَمَا الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَآ إِلَّا لَعِبٌ وَّلَهْوٌ ۭ وَلَلدَّارُ الْاٰخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ لِّلَّذِينَ يَتَّقُونَ ۭ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٣٢﴾

And if you were to see when they would be made to stand at the Fire and they will say, "Would that we were sent back, then we would not belie the signs of our Lord, and would join the believers." [27] **In fact, what they were concealing before would become clear to them. And if they were sent back, they would again go for what they were forbidden from, as they are nothing but liars.** [28]

And they say, "What does exist is nothing but this worldly life of ours, and we are not going to be raised again." [29]

And if you were to see when they will be made to stay before their Lord! He will say, "Is this not true?" They will say, "Of course, by our Lord, it is." He will say, "Then, taste the punishment, for you used to disbelieve." [30]

Losers indeed are those who deny that they will ever face Allah, yet when the Hour will come upon them suddenly, they will say, "Alas! we have been negligent about it." And they shall be carrying their burdens on their backs. Beware, evil is the burden they carry! [31]

And the worldly life is nothing but a game and play. And the last abode is surely good for those who fear Allah. Would you still not understand? [32]

Commentary

There are three basic principles of Islām: *Tauḥīd* (Oneness of Allah), *Risālah* (Prophethood) and *'Ākhirah* (Belief in the Hereafter). All other articles of faith fall under these three. These are principles which tell human beings who they are and what is the purpose of their life. This understanding brings a revolution in their lives by showing them the straight path. Out of these, the Belief in the *'Ākhirah*, the be-

lief that there is a reckoning of deeds to come when good shall be rewarded and evil punished, has pragmatically the most revolutionary effects, as it channels every human deed into a particular direction. This is the reason why all subjects dealt with in the Qur'ān revolve around these three. In the verses appearing here, special emphasis has been laid on the reckoning of the *'Ākhirah*, its rewards and punishments, and the true nature of the mortal world.

In the first verse, portrayed is the condition of wrong-doers and deniers of truth who, when made to stand by the edges of the Hell, and to observe the horrifying punishment far beyond their imagination, would wish that they were sent back into the world where now they would never falsify the signs and commands of their Lord, would believe in them and would be the true believers.

In the second verse (28), Almighty Allah, who is All-Knowing and All-Aware, exposes the reality of their wish, which would be nothing but the compulsion of circumstances, by making it clear that these people have always been addicted to lying and that they were liars even in their present wish under trial. The root of the problem with them was that they did not relish the realities brought before them by the prophets of Allah. They knew that the prophets were true, yet they raised dust to keep such realities unmanifested either because of their chronic obstinacy or worldly greed. But, in the Hereafter, everything came out in the open. They saw the power of Allah with their own eyes. They realized that the prophets had told the truth. Even, the life after death, something they had denied all along was before them, really and physically. Then, they became direct witnesses to reward and punishment and Hell. After that, they were left with no argument to continue their attitude of denial and opposition. So, when they wished to be returned to the mortal world, that was mere absence of choice.

Then, their All-Knowing, All-Aware Master said that this was what they were saying for now, but if they were to be sent back into the mortal world once again, they would simply forget all about their promises and resolutions and will revert to doing what they have been doing before, and would start getting involved once again with the unlawful from which they were stopped. Therefore, what they were say-

ing now was also a lie and a ploy for deception.

That their present statement has been called a lie could also be based on their ultimate deed, that is, their promising not to lie if returned to the world was not true, for this would never happen because they would still do nothing but keep lying when they go there. This lie could also mean that whatever they were saying at that time was not prompted by true intention. They were doing so simply to buy time and avoid punishment while in the heart of their hearts, they still have no intention of doing it.

As for the statement in the third verse (29): وَقَالُوٓا إِنْ هِيَ إِلَّا حَيَاتُنَا الدُّنْيَا (And they say, "There is nothing real but this worldly life of ours"), it reverts back to the word, عَادُوا (*'ādū* : would again go for) in verse 28. Thus, it means that should they be returned to the world, then, once they reach there, they will still say that they do not accept any life other than the life of this world. Life here is the life and they were not going to be raised again.

A question arises here: When they have seen their return to life on the day of *Qiyāmah* - and reckoning and accounting and reward and punishment - how can it be possible that they would deny it once they have been sent back into the world?

The answer is that denial does not make it necessary that, in reality, they remain uncertain about these events and facts. Instead, it would be very much like our contemporary disbelievers and wrongdoers who, despite their knowledge of Islamic realities, keep sticking to their denial and falsification simply because of their hostility, that these people, once they are returned to the world, and despite having personal certainty of the realities of the day of *Qiyāmah*, of rising to life back again, and of what would happen in the Hereafter, they would still resort to their old habit of belying and falsification simply because of their wickedness or hostility. This is what the Qur'ān has said about some disbelievers within this present life:

وَجَحَدُوا بِهَا وَاسْتَيْقَنَتْهَا أَنْفُسُهُمْ ظُلْمًا وَّعُلُوًّا

> They are striving hard to deny Our signs - while in themselves being certain of their truth - (only) unjustly, and out of pride - 27:14.

This is also similar to what was said about the Jews that they recognized the Last Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم as they would recognize their sons, yet they remained all bent on opposing him.

To sum up, it can be said that the Creator knows, in His eternal knowledge, that the claim of these people that once they have been sent back to the world, they would become ideal Muslims, is a lie and a deception. If they were, as they wished, to be released into the world put together after its destruction, then, once again, they would do exactly the same things they used to do in their earlier lives.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is reported to have said: At the time of reckoning, Allah Taʻālā will ask Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام to stand near the Scale of Justice and will ask him that he should look at the deeds of his progeny and allow anyone whose good deeds outweigh his sins to go to Paradise. And then He would say: The one I shall admit to the punishment of Hell will be the one about whom I know that he, if sent to the world again, would do the same thing he had been doing earlier.

About the sentence: وَهُمْ يَحْمِلُوْنَ اَوْزَارَهُمْ (And they shall be carrying their burdens) in verse 31, it appears in *Ḥadīth* narrations that, on the day of *Qiyamah*, the deeds of good people will become their ride while the evil deeds of evil people will be placed like a burden on their heads.

Noteworthy here is that disbelievers and sinners will do everything possible to save their skins on the fateful day of Resurrection. They will be nervous and confused. Sometimes they would hide behind false swearing. At others, they would wish to be returned to the world of their earlier experience. But, none of them will say: Now, we have believed and now we shall be doing nothing but what is good - because they would have seen reality and seen it very clearly - that the phase of *Ākhirah*, the Hereafter, is not the Venue of Deeds (*Dār al-ʻAmal*), and that the soundness of *'Īmān* (faith) depends on its being *'bil-ghayb,'* that is, without having the need to see what is Unseen. Confirming what has been seen is simply acting in line with what has been personally seen. It is not what the attestation to the truth of Allah and His Messenger is. So, let us be very clear that working for the pleasure of Allah Taʻālā, earning its fruits in the form of the promised state of everlasting bliss, hoping to be blessed with Paradise in the Here-

after, and having a good life of peace and tranquility right here are things which can be achieved only (repeat, only) through the life of the present world, neither before, nor after - for it is not possible to achieve these in the universe of spirits (*arwāḥ*) before it, nor is it possible to achieve it in the domain of the Hereafter, after the world of our experience is no more there.

The Present Life is a Great Blessing: Invest Wisely, and Prosper

Now we can see that the life of this world is a great blessing, and certainly an asset of unmatched value. (To borrow the terminology of modern investors, 'with such chips in one's hands, who would not go for such a deal of deals?' - Tr.). So, this life is an opportunity which must be taken seriously. That is why suicide is forbidden as *Harām* in Islam, and equally prohibited is praying for death, even the making of a wish to die. This is so because it shows ingratitude for a great blessing of Allah Ta'ālā.

Also clarified here is the basis on which worldly life has been characterized as game and fun in the last verse (32) here, as well as in several other verses of the Qur'ān, or in many *Aḥādīth* which condemn worldly life. There, by worldly life what is censured is the time of life which is spent being heedless to the thought and concern of Allah Ta'ālā. Otherwise, no wealth of the world is equal in worth to the time one spends in remembering Allah and doing what He has commanded us to do. This is also confirmed by a *Ḥadīth* which says:

اَلدُّنْيَا مَلْعُوْنٌ وَمَلْعُوْنٌ مَّا فِيْهَا اِلاَّ ذِكْرُ اللّٰهِ اَوْعَالِمٌ اَوْمُتَعَلِّمٌ

Dunyā is cursed and cursed is what is in it, except the Dhikr of Allah, or '*Ālim* (a knowledgeable person) or a student.

If seen closely, a teacher (of religion) and a student (of religion) are included under the *Dhikr* (Remembrance) of Allah because '*Ilm*' means the knowledge which becomes the cause of the pleasure of Allah. So, the learning and teaching of such an '*Ilm* are both included under *Dhirkrullāh*. In fact, according to the clarification of Imām al-Jazrī, everything done in this world which is done in conformity with obedience to Allah, that is, in accordance with the injunctions of the Sharī'ah, is all included under the *Dhikr* of Allah. This tells us that every-

thing necessary that must be done in this life of the world, all permissible ways of earning one's livelihood, and the fulfillment of other needs which are not beyond the limits set by the Shari'ah, shall all be considered as being included under the *Dhikr* of Allah. In fact, the fulfillment of the rights of family, relatives and friends, neighbours and guests and others has been identified as an act of *Ṣadaqah* (charity) and *'Ibādah* (worship of Allah).

To recapitulate, it can be said that, there is nothing in this world more worthy of Allah's favour than *'Iṭā'ah* (obedience to Him) and *Dhikr* (remembrance of Him). Then, the dearest and the worthiest possession man has is his time of life in this world. And we know that this time is limited. And no one knows exactly how long his or her life is, seventy years or seventy hours, or no more than the span of a breath. On the other hand, we know that the pleasure of Allah which is the only guarantee of a good life, here and there, can be acquired only within the limits of our life in this world. Now, every human being, whom Allah has blessed with sense and vision, can decide it for himself how he is going to spend these limited moments and hours of his life, and in what. No doubt, common sense would demand that this precious time should mostly be spent in what would meet the pleasure of Allah. As for chores which are necessary to hold this life together, they should be taken to as needed.

In a *Ḥadīth*, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said:

اَلْكَيِّسُ مَنْ دَانَ نَفْسَهٗ وَرَضِيَ بِالْكَفَافِ وَعَمِلَ لِمَا بَعْدَ الْمَوْتِ

Wise is he who controls his self, and stays pleased with minimal resources, and devotes his deeds for what is after death.

Verses 33 - 41

قَدْ نَعْلَمُ إِنَّهٗ لَيَحْزُنُكَ الَّذِيْ يَقُوْلُوْنَ فَإِنَّهُمْ لَا يُكَذِّبُوْنَكَ وَلٰكِنَّ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ يَجْحَدُوْنَ ﴿٣٣﴾ وَلَقَدْ كُذِّبَتْ رُسُلٌ مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ فَصَبَرُوْا عَلٰى مَا كُذِّبُوْا وَأُوْذُوْا حَتّٰى أَتٰىهُمْ نَصْرُنَا ۚ وَلَا مُبَدِّلَ لِكَلِمٰتِ اللّٰهِ ۚ وَلَقَدْ جَآءَكَ مِنْ نَّبَإِى الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ ﴿٣٤﴾ وَإِنْ كَانَ كَبُرَ عَلَيْكَ إِعْرَاضُهُمْ فَإِنِ اسْتَطَعْتَ أَنْ تَبْتَغِيَ نَفَقًا

فِى الْاَرْضِ اَوْ سُلَّمًا فِى السَّمَآءِ فَتَاْتِيَهُمْ بِاٰيَةٍ ؕ وَلَوْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ
لَجَمَعَهُمْ عَلَى الْهُدٰى فَلَا تَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الْجٰهِلِيْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾ اِنَّمَا
يَسْتَجِيْبُ الَّذِيْنَ يَسْمَعُوْنَ ؕ وَالْمَوْتٰى يَبْعَثُهُمُ اللّٰهُ ثُمَّ اِلَيْهِ
يُرْجَعُوْنَ ﴿٣٦﴾ وَقَالُوْا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ اٰيَةٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّهٖ ؕ قُلْ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ
قَادِرٌ عَلٰٓى اَنْ يُّنَزِّلَ اٰيَةً وَّلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٣٧﴾ وَمَا
مِنْ دَآبَّةٍ فِى الْاَرْضِ وَلَا طٰٓئِرٍ يَّطِيْرُ بِجَنَاحَيْهِ اِلَّآ اُمَمٌ
اَمْثَالُكُمْ ؕ مَا فَرَّطْنَا فِى الْكِتٰبِ مِنْ شَىْءٍ ثُمَّ اِلٰى رَبِّهِمْ
يُحْشَرُوْنَ ﴿٣٨﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا صُمٌّ وَّبُكْمٌ فِى الظُّلُمٰتِ ؕ
مَنْ يَّشَاِ اللّٰهُ يُضْلِلْهُ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّشَاْ يَجْعَلْهُ عَلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ
﴿٣٩﴾ قُلْ اَرَءَيْتَكُمْ اِنْ اَتٰىكُمْ عَذَابُ اللّٰهِ اَوْ اَتَتْكُمُ السَّاعَةُ
اَغَيْرَ اللّٰهِ تَدْعُوْنَ ۚ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿٤٠﴾ بَلْ اِيَّاهُ تَدْعُوْنَ
فَيَكْشِفُ مَا تَدْعُوْنَ اِلَيْهِ اِنْ شَآءَ وَتَنْسَوْنَ مَا تُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿٤١﴾

We do know the fact that what they say does grieve you, because it is not you that they are belying, but the transgressors are actually denying the signs of Allah. [33]

And, indeed, messengers have been belied before you, but they stood patient against their being belied, and they were tortured until Our help came to them. And no one can change the words of Allah, and of course, there have come to you some accounts of the messengers. [34]

And if their aversion is too hard on you, then seek, if you can, a tunnel into the earth or a ladder onto the sky in order to bring them a sign. And had Allah willed, He would have brought them all to the right path. So, never be one of the ignorant. [35]

Only those respond who listen. As for the dead, Allah shall raise them after which they shall be returned to-

wards Him. [36]

And they say, "Why is it that no sign has been sent down to him from his Lord?" Say, "Allah is surely powerful enough to send down a sign, but most of them do not know." [37]

There is no creature moving on the earth, nor a bird flying on its two wings, but they all are communities like you. We have not missed anything in the Book. Then, to their Lord they shall be gathered together.[38]

And those who have belied Our signs are deaf and dumb, in layers of darkness. Whom Allah wills, He lets him go astray, and whom Allah wills, He brings him on the straight path. [39]

Say, "Tell me if the punishment of Allah comes to you or the Hour befalls you, would you call someone other than Allah, if you are truthful?" [40] **Rather, Him alone you will call and He, if He wills, shall remove what you call Him for and you will forget those you associate with Him.** [41]

Commentary

About the statement: فَإِنَّهُمْ لَا يُكَذِّبُونَكَ (it is not you they are belying, rather, it is the signs of Allah they are denying) in the first verse (33), there is a related event, reported in Tafsīr Maẓharī on the authority of a narration by As-Suddiy, according to which, once Akhnas ibn Shuraiq and Abū Jahl, two chiefs of the Quraysh tribe met together. Akhnas asked Abū Jahl: O Abul-Ḥikam, (In Arabia, Abū Jahl was called Abul-Ḥikam - 'man of wisdom' - but because of his hostility to Islam, he became known as Abū-Jahl - 'man of ignorance'), you and me are alone here. There is no third person listening to us. Tell me about Muḥammad ibn 'Abdullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم. Tell me what you really think about him. Is he telling the truth or is he not?

Swearing by Allah, Abū Jahl said: No doubt, Muḥammad ﷺ is true. He has never lied all his life. But, the problem is that the thought, that only a single branch of the tribe of Quraysh, the Banū Quṣayy, is going to become the repository of all sorts of virtues and perfections while the rest of the tribe remains totally deprived, is something that we cannot take. It is too much. They have the flag in

their hands. They have the important duty of providing water for the Hajj pilgrims in their hands. They are the custodians of the Ka'bah; its keys are in their hands. Now, if we are to accept that the station of prophethood also belongs to them, what the rest of the Quraysh will be left with?

According to another narration reported from Nājiyah ibn Ka'b, once Abū Jahl himself told the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم: We do not suspect you of lying nor do we belie you, but we do belie the Book or Religion which you have come up with. (Mazharī)

Based on these narrations of *Ḥadīth*, the verse can be taken in its real sense, that is, 'these disbelievers do not belie you, rather, they belie the signs of Allah.' And this verse could also be taken in the sense that these disbelievers, though belie you obviously but, in reality, the outcome of belying you is itself the belying of Allah and His signs - as it appears in *Ḥadīth*, that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: Whoever causes pain to me is liable to be judged as causing pain to Allah.

The sixth verse (38): وَمَا مِن دَآبَّةٍ (there is no creature moving ...) tells us that, on the day of *Qiyāmah*, animals will also be given life along with human beings. Following a narration of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah, it has been reported by Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Abī Ḥātim and Baihaqī that, on the day of *Qiyāmah*, all animals, beasts and birds will also be given life once again. Such will be the measure of Divine justice that a horned animal which had hit the hornless one shall be subjected to retaliation, as would be the case with others too. And when all injustices have been vindicated, all of them would be commanded to become dust - and then, dust they shall become. This would be the time when the disbeliever will say: يَٰلَيْتَنِي كُنتُ تُرَٰبًا [78:40] that is, 'would that I too were to become dust, and thus saved from the punishment of Hell!'

In another narration, again from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah, Imām Al-Baghawī reports that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: On the day of *Qiyāmah*, rights of all holders of rights shall be vindicated, to the limit that a hornless goat shall be vindicated against the horned one.

Maximum Regard for the Rights of Allah's Creation

Everyone knows that animals have not been obligated to observe

the percepts of any Sharī'ah or code of laws. Only human beings and Jinns have been so obligated. And it is obvious that the jurisdiction of reward and punishment does not apply to the non-obligated. Therefore, *'Ulamā'* have said that the retaliation against the behaviour of animals on the day of Resurrection will not be because of their being obligated, but it will be because of the Lord's utmost regard for equity and justice - based on which the cruelty of one living creature against the other living creature will be recompensed, with no reward or punishment to follow for the rest of their behaviour. This tells us that the matter of mutual rights, and their infringements, pertaining to the creation of Allah is so serious that even non-obligated animals have not been left as exempted from it. But, it is regrettable that there are even many religiously-observing people who would act negligently about it.

Verses 42 - 45

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَآ إِلَىٰٓ أُمَمٍ مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ فَأَخَذْنٰهُمْ بِالْبَأْسَآءِ
وَالضَّرَّآءِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَضَرَّعُوْنَ ﴿٤٢﴾ فَلَوْلَآ إِذْ جَآءَهُمْ
بَأْسُنَا تَضَرَّعُوْا وَلٰكِنْ قَسَتْ قُلُوْبُهُمْ وَزَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ
مَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٤٣﴾ فَلَمَّا نَسُوْا مَا ذُكِّرُوْا بِهٖ فَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ
أَبْوَابَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ ط حَتّٰىٓ إِذَا فَرِحُوْا بِمَآ أُوْتُوْٓا أَخَذْنٰهُمْ بَغْتَةً فَإِذَا
هُمْ مُّبْلِسُوْنَ ﴿٤٤﴾ فَقُطِعَ دَابِرُ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا ط وَالْحَمْدُ
لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٤٥﴾

And We did send messengers to communities before you and put them to hardships and sufferings, so that they may supplicate in humility. [42] **Why then, did they not supplicate in humility when Our punishment came upon them? Instead, their hearts were hardened and the Satan adorned for them what they were doing.** [43]

Thereafter, when they forgot the advice they were given, We opened for them doors of everything until when they became proud of what they were given, We seized them suddenly and they were left in despair. [44] **Thus,**

the people who did wrong were uprooted to the last man, and praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds. [45]

Commentary

The verses cited above, if seen in the context of verses appearing immediately previous to them, will show the particular mode in which *Shirk* and *Kufr* have been refuted and *Tauhīd*, affirmed. First, the disbelievers of Makkah have been asked: If you are hit by a calamity now, for example, the punishment of Allah descends on you right here in this world or comes death or the very Day of Doom breaks loose, then think and answer who it will be you would call for help to keep this calamity away from you or who it would be you will hope to deliver you from this terrible punishment? Do you think these self-sculpted idols in stone or any others from among the creation of Allah you have given His status would come out to help you in your hour of trial? And then, would you still address your cry of distress to them, or would you rather appeal to none but Allah, the One, the All-Powerful?

There can be no better answer from any sensible human being which was given by Allah Ta'ālā Himself on behalf of them - that, at a time of such mass calamity, even the greatest *Mushrik* will forget all about his idols and self-appointed objects of worship and would call none but Allah. If so, the outcome is obvious. These idols of yours, and the objects of worship whom you have given the status of Allah Ta'ālā and whom alone you regard as your problem solvers and granters of wishes, in fact, did not come to help you in your distress, nor could you muster the courage to call them up to help you out. Now then, when would it be that your devotion to them as objects of worship and their role of problems solvers assigned to them by you will start working for you?

What has been said here is a gist of immediately previous verses. Stated here as a matter of supposition is that punishment could befall them within the life of this world as an outcome of their disbelief and disobedience. And, again as a matter of supposition, if the punishment does not visit them in the present life, then, the coming of the *Qiyāmah* is certain after all when account will be taken from all human beings of their deeds and put in effect shall be the law of reward and punishment against these.

'*Qiyāmah*' here could mean the commonly acknowledged *Qiyāmah* or the Day of Doom. It is also possible that, by the particular use of the word, 'As-Sā'ah' (The Hour) -[41], the sense could be that of 'The Smaller Doom' (*al-Qiyāmatuṣ-Ṣughrā*) which stands activated for every human being immediately after his or her death - as the saying is: مَنْ مَّاتَ فَقَدْ قَامَتْ قِيَامَتُهٗ (For one who dies, his or her '*Qiyāmah*' (Doom) stands established right then) because a preliminary sampling of the ultimate reckoning of the *Qiyāmah* will come before the deceased in his or her '*Qabr*' (burial place) and in the state of *Barzakh* (the post-death ~ pre-*Qiyāmah* state) and the sampling of the ultimate reward and punishment due 'there' would start showing up right from 'here.' (Not too difficult to visualize for those familiar with 'testers' and 'samples' provided on perfume counters in alcoves of major mega stores which are meant to tell the visitor: 'WYSIWYG!' That is, 'what you see is what you get.' - Tr.)

But, despite warnings given in these verses to disobedient people against their attitude of complacency - lest there comes upon them some sudden Divine punishment as has come on past communities, or death, or ultimately the very reckoning after *Qiyāmah* about which there is no doubt - such people have a mind of their own. They tend to take the whole world on the analogy of their limited experience in the already limited time of their life which makes them compulsive excuse seekers in such matters. Present before them the warnings and intimations given by blessed prophets and they will bypass them as ambiguous thinking, specially at times, and which reappear in all ages, when there are people around who, in spite of their open disobedience to Allah and His Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, keep prospering in wealth, property, influence, recognition and power, almost everything. So, on the one hand, here is what they witness with their own eyes, while, on the other hand, is the word of the blessed messenger of Allah who tells them that punishments do come upon the disobedient as it is the customary practice of the One they disobey. Now, as they look at the two sides of the argument simultaneously, then, their own excuse seeking disposition and, of course, the Satan hoodwinks them into believing that the word of the prophet is a deception or delusion.

Now, for an answer, we can turn to the present verses where Almighty Allah has pointed out to the law which applies to what hap-

pened to past communities. It was said: وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَىٰ أُمَمٍ مِّن قَبْلِكَ فَأَخَذْنَاهُم بِالْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَضَرَّعُونَ It means that Allah did send, before the Holy Prophet ﷺ, His prophets to other communities which were tested in two ways. Firstly, they were tested with hardships and sufferings to see if these would become the cause of their turning to Allah. But, when they failed in this test and, rather than turn to Allah and abandon disobedience, became all the more engrossed in it, then, they were subjected to a different kind of test. The doors of worldly comforts were opened to them. They had everything they could wish for in the material world so that through these blessings they could recognize their Benefactor and remember Him. But they, rather than be grateful to Him, were so lost in the labyrinth of luxury that they forgot all about the messages and teachings of Allah and His Messenger. Thus, having traded their souls for the glitter of fleeting comforts, they failed in both tests, and their case before Allah became conclusively established against them. So, they were seized by the punishment of Allah suddenly which destroyed them to the last man. This punishment had come upon earlier communities too, down from the heavens and up from beneath the earth, and such mass punishments have come in other ways too which had reduced whole peoples and nations to ashes. The people of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام were deluged in the great flood which did not spare even mountain peaks. The people of ʿĀd were hit by an eight-day long wind storm which left not one survivor. The people of Thamūd were destroyed through a terrifying sound. The entire habitation of the people of Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام was overturned, the remnants of which still exist in the west of Jordan in the form of a low lying water level which is not conducive to the survival of any sea life. Therefore, it is called The Dead Sea, and also the Sea of Lūṭ.

In short, these were some forms in which Divine punishment befell past communities as a result of their disobedience destroying whole nations and peoples in one stroke. However, it has also happened that such people died away naturally leaving no one behind to remember them.

Also clarified in these verses is that Almighty Allah does not send down His punishment upon any people all of a sudden. Instead, punishments come at the level of admonitions the purpose of which is to make it possible for people to shed their heedlessness and take to the

correct path. We also know from here that the hardship or distress which is sent to people on the earth as punishment for them, though outwardly looks like punishment but, in reality, it is not. Instead of that, it serves the purpose of a wake-up call designed to shake people out of their heedlessness. As such, it is nothing but mercy. Says another verse of the Qur'ān: وَلَنُذِيقَنَّهُم مِّنَ الْعَذَابِ الْأَدْنَىٰ دُونَ الْعَذَابِ الْأَكْبَرِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ , that is, We will make them taste a lesser punishment, leaving the greatest punishment aside, so that they may return - 32:21.

Removed from these very verses is the doubt about this world which is no place for rewards (*Dārul-Jazā'*), but a place where one must do what one should (*Dārul-'Amal*). What then is the sense of being punished in this world where good and bad seem to be weighed on the same scale and where, in fact, the evil ones fare better than the good? The answer is clear. The real reward and punishment will come on that one day of *Qiyāmah*, which is known as the very Day of Judgement (*Yowmud-Dīn*) or the Day of Retribution (*Yowm al-Jazā'*).. But, some hardships are sent in this world as a sample of punishment (*'Adhāb*) and some comforts as a sample of reward (*Thawāb*) which are a token of mercy from Allah. Some spiritual masters have even said that all comforts of the world are indicators of the comforts of Paradise so that one learns to long for them. As for all those hardships and sorrows that afflict man in this world, they too are indicators of the punishment of the Hereafter so that man prepares to stay safe against them. Unless there is a sample or model in sight, no one can be pursuaded towards anything, nor can anyone be detracted from any impending danger or evil.

So, the comforts and discomforts of this mortal life are not rewards and punishments as such. They are, rather, samples or tokens of rewards and punishments. We may say that this whole world is a show room of *Ākhirah* (the Hereafter) where the trader displays the demonstration pieces of his merchandise in front of his store or shop so that they could attract the buyer. Thus, we can see that worldly prosperity or poverty, happiness or sorrow are not reward and punishment in the real sense. Actually, they are a method of bringing the creation of Allah alienated from its Creator back to His fold.

At the end of verse 42 itself, this element of wisdom finds expres-

sion through the words: لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَضَرَّعُوْنَ (so that they may supplicate in humility). It means that the hardship inflicted on them during their life in the present world was really not aimed at punishing them. Since everyone turns to Allah naturally when in distress, the purpose was to make people turn to Allah through a little hardship. This tells us that the hardship or pain which visits a person or group as punishment is, in a sense, the working of Divine mercy.

As for the statement: فَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ أَبْوَابَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ (We opened for them doors of everything) appearing in the third verse (44), it warns human beings at large that no one should be deceived by seeing the affluence of persons or groups and hasten to the conclusion that these were the people on the correct path and that their life was a model of success. One should never forget that among them there could be some of those disobedient ones who have been picked out to be seized with sudden and grave punishment.

Therefore, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: When you see blessings and wealth raining upon someone - though he is deep in sin and disobedience - then, know that he is being lured into destruction (*Istidrāj*), that is, his affluence is an indicator of his being seized in punishment. (Narrated by Aḥmad from 'Āqabah ibn 'Amir as in Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr)

Following a narration from Sayyidnā 'Ubādah ibn Al-Ṣāmit, leading commentator Ibn Jarīr has reported that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

> When Allah Ta'ālā wills to have a nation survive and grow, He creates in them two qualities: (1) moderation in everything they do, and (2) modesty and chastity, that is, abstinence from indulging in what is not right. And when Allah Ta'ālā wills to destroy a nation, He opens for them the doors of breach of faith (*Khiyānah*), that is, they appear to be successful in the world despite their breaches of faith and wrong doings.

In the last verse (45), it was said that, when the mass punishment of Allah Ta'ālā came, the people who did wrong were uprooted to the last man. Said immediately after was: وَالْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ (And praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds) where the hint given is: Whenever the wrongdoers and the unjust are visited by some punishment or calamity, that is a blessing for the whole world for which people should be grateful

Verses 46 - 49

قُلْ أَرَءَيْتُمْ إِنْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ سَمْعَكُمْ وَأَبْصَارَكُمْ وَخَتَمَ عَلَىٰ
قُلُوبِكُم مَّنْ إِلَٰهٌ غَيْرُ اللَّهِ يَأْتِيكُم بِهِ ۗ انظُرْ كَيْفَ نُصَرِّفُ
الْآيَاتِ ثُمَّ هُمْ يَصْدِفُونَ ﴿٤٦﴾ قُلْ أَرَءَيْتَكُمْ إِنْ أَتَاكُمْ عَذَابُ
اللَّهِ بَغْتَةً أَوْ جَهْرَةً هَلْ يُهْلَكُ إِلَّا الْقَوْمُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٤٧﴾ وَمَا
نُرْسِلُ الْمُرْسَلِينَ إِلَّا مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ ۖ فَمَنْ آمَنَ وَأَصْلَحَ فَلَا
خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾ وَالَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا
يَمَسُّهُمُ الْعَذَابُ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْسُقُونَ ﴿٤٩﴾

Say, "Tell me, if Allah takes away your hearing and your sights and sets a seal on your hearts, which god other than Allah can bring it back to you?" See how We bring forth a variety of Verses, still they turn away. [46]

Say, "Tell me if the punishment of Allah comes upon you abruptly or manifestly, shall any people be destroyed except the unjust?" [47]

And We do not send the messengers but as bearers of good tidings and warners. So, whoever believes and comes to correct himself, then, there is no fear for them nor shall they grieve.[48] **And those who have belied Our signs, punishment shall visit them, since they used to commit sins.** [49]

Verses 50 - 51

قُل لَّا أَقُولُ لَكُمْ عِندِي خَزَائِنُ اللَّهِ وَلَا أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ وَلَا
أَقُولُ لَكُمْ إِنِّي مَلَكٌ ۖ إِنْ أَتَّبِعُ إِلَّا مَا يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ ۚ قُلْ هَلْ
يَسْتَوِي الْأَعْمَىٰ وَالْبَصِيرُ ۚ أَفَلَا تَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾ وَأَنذِرْ بِهِ
الَّذِينَ يَخَافُونَ أَن يُحْشَرُوا إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ ۙ لَيْسَ لَهُم مِّن دُونِهِ
وَلِيٌّ وَلَا شَفِيعٌ لَّعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ ﴿٥١﴾

Say, "I do not say to you that with me are the treasures

of Allah, nor do I have the knowledge of the Unseen, nor do I say to you that I am an angel. I follow but that which is revealed to me." Say, "Is it that a blind person and a sighted one are equal? Do you, then, not reflect?" [50]

And warn, with it, those who have the fear of being gathered before their Lord, with no one, other than Him, to support or to intercede. May be they abstain. [51]

Commentary

The Demand of Miracles from the Holy Prophet ﷺ

Many miracles and signs of Allah had already appeared before the disbelievers (*Kuffār*) of Makkah. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم graced this world as an orphan. Unschooled and untutored, he lived his whole life as a total *Ummiyy* (unlettered). He was born in a land with no scholar or institution of learning, near or far. For a full forty years of his blessed age, he lived before the eyes of the entire people of Makkah in this state of chaste tutorlessness. Then, after forty long years, it was all of a sudden that there gushed forth from his blessed speech such mind-boggling stream of words the eloquence of which challenged and silenced the masters and authorities of Arab diction for ever. Besides being wisdom and meaning at their sublimest, its far reaching insight covered pragmatic human needs too right unto the day of *Qiyāmah*. Along with these, he gifted to the world a practical system for the nurture and flowering of the perfect universal man. No human ingenuity or effort can ever achieve something like this. And the system he brought was no exercise in pure theory for others to build upon, for he himself demonstrated it practically and succeeded in proving that it worked. Thus, the human multitude of his time which had taken to eating, drinking, sleeping and waking as the purpose of their lives likes bulls, goats, horses and donkeys, to them he gave their essential lesson in humanity. He changed their orientation. He made them look up to the high purpose for which they were created. Thus, every period in the blessed life of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, and the great events which took place during it, were all a miracle in their place, and very certainly, a sign of Allah. In such a background, there was no room left for anyone just and reasonable to demand any sign or

miracle.

But, the disbelievers from among the Quraysh, despite this, demanded that miracles of a different kind be shown to them according to their own wishes. Of the miracles demanded by them, there were some Allah Almighty showed to them clearly. They had demanded that they would like to see the moon parted in two. The well-known miracle of *Shaqqul-Qamar* (the parting of the moon) was witnessed, not only by the Quraysh, but by a great number of people living in the world of that time.

But, they kept sticking to their disbelief, obstinacy and hostility despite the manifestation of such a miracle at their own request and ignored the sign of Allah by saying: إِنْ هٰذَآ إِلَّا سِحْرٌ يُّؤْثَرُ (this is nothing but a continuous magic), that is, it was a magic which has been there for ever. They saw, they understood, yet they kept on asking for ever-new miracles as mentioned earlier (verse 37): لَوْ لَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ اٰيَةٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّهٖ قُلْ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ قَادِرٌ عَلٰٓى اَنْ يُّنَزِّلَ اٰيَةً وَّلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ that is, they ask if Muḥammad ﷺ is really the Messenger of Allah, why is it that no miracle has been shown through him? In answer, the Qur'ān asks the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to tell them that Allah does have everything within his power. He has Himself manifested many miracles and signs without their asking for them. Similarly, He is quite capable of manifesting miracles they demanded. But, they have to know that there is a customary practice of Allah in this matter. When a people are shown the miracle they have demanded, and then, when they do not come to believe in it, they are seized by a sudden punishment. Therefore, it was in the very interest of those people that the miracles demanded by them should not be manifested. But, there are many people who still do not understand the wisdom of this action and keep insisting that they be shown miracles of their choosing.

In the present verses, the questions asked and demands made by these people have been dealt with in a particular manner.

The disbelievers of Makkah had presented three demands before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم on different occasions: (1) If you are really a Messenger of Allah, bring to us the treasures of the whole world through the power of miracle; (2) If your are really a Messenger of Allah, tell us about everything good and bad going to happen to us

in the future, so that we can arrange to acquire what is good and abstain from what is bad beforehand; and (3) Explain to us for we cannot understand how can someone who is a human being like us, is from us, was born from a mother and father like us, and does things like eating, drinking, and walking around in streets and bazaars as we do, all of a sudden become a Messenger of Allah. Had this been an angel, whose creation and attributes would have been more distinguished than ours, we would have accepted him as a Messenger of Allah, and our leader.

In answer to these questions, it was said:

قُلْ لَّآ اَقُوْلُ لَكُمْ عِنْدِى خَزَآئِنُ اللّٰهِ وَلَآ اَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ وَلَآ اَقُوْلُ لَكُمْ اِنِّى مَلَكٌ اِنْ اَتَّبِعُ اِلَّا مَا يُوْحٰى اِلَىَّ .

Say, "I do not say to you that with me are the treasures Allah, nor do I have the knowledge of the Unseen, nor do I say to you that I am angel. But, I follow that which is revealed to me."

In other words, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is saying that he can only be asked to prove what he claims, that is, he is a Messenger of Allah. He conveys the guidance given by Him to human beings, and follows it personally and asks others as well to do so. There is no dearth of proofs in this matter for they are many.

So, to prove his prophethood, it is not necessary that the messenger of Allah should become the owner of all the treasures of Allah, nor is it necessary that he should possess the knowledge of everything, big or small, which lies in the domain of the Unseen (*al-ghayb*), nor is it necessary that he be an angel having attributes other than human. Instead of all that, the mission and office of a messenger of Allah is simply to follow the Wahy (revelation) sent from Allah Ta'ālā - which includes his own acting in accordance with it as well as inviting others to follow it.

These are precise rules of Guidance. They not only clarify the reality of the office of a Messenger of Allah (*Rasūl*) but also help erase the false notions about a Messenger entertained by the disbelieving people. And as implied here indirectly, Muslims too have been instructed that they should not take their Messenger to be God as the Christians do, nor assign proprietary rights in Godhood to him. The realization of

their greatness, and love for them, demands that Muslims should not slide into attitudes of excess or deficiency like the Jews and Christians - for the Jews did not hesitate from even killing their prophets while the Christians turned their messenger into a God.

Regarding the meaning of the word: خزائن (treasures) appearing in the statement made in the first sentence, that is, 'I do not say to you that with me are the treasures of Allah,' scholars of *Tafsir* have named many things. But, the Holy Qur'an itself, wherever it has mentioned the treasures of Allah, has said: وَإِنْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا عِنْدَنَا خَزَآئِنُهُ (there is not a thing the treasures of which are not with Us - 15:20). This tells us that the sense of 'the treasures of Allah' encompasses everything in this world and cannot be definitely applied to some particular things. As for commentators who have named particular things, they are doing so as an example. Therefore, there is no contradiction here. Finally, let us bear in mind: When this verse clearly declares that the 'treasures of Allah' are not even in the hands of the one foremost among prophets and messengers, Sayyidna Muhammad al-Mustafa صلى الله عليه وسلم, how can we assume that a *Buzurg* (pious elder) or *Wali* (man of Allah) of the Muslim Community could do what they wished and grant anything to anyone as they chose? This is sheer ignorance.

In the third sentence of the answer given in verse 50, was: وَلَآ أَقُوْلُ لَكُمْ إِنِّيْ مَلَكٌ which means 'I do not say to you that I am an angel' - because they refused to accept him as a Messenger based on his human identity. [The pattern of this sentence is the same as the first] However, the pattern of the sentence has been changed in the sentence which appears in the middle of these two where the text does not say something like - I do not say to you that I know the Unseen - and what was said actually was: وَلَآ أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ (nor do I have the knowledge of the Unseen).

In his Tafsir al-Bahr al-Muhit, Abu al-Hayyan has pointed out to a subtle justification for this change in diction. According to him, being or not being the possessor of all Divine treasures; and similarly, the likelihood of a person being or not being an angel are things which are related to observation. The addressees of the answer knew it all, they knew that the entire treasures of Allah are not in his hands nor is he an angel. Their demands were simply based on malice and hostility. In reply to them, it would have been enough to say that 'I have never

claimed that I am the owner of the treasures of Allah', or that 'I am an angel.'

But, the problem of '*Ilm al-Ghayb*' (the knowledge of the Unseen) was not something of that nature - because they already had this kind of belief about their astrologers and soothsayers: That they know the Unseen. So, having this kind of belief about the Messenger of Allah was not unlikely - specially when they had also heard many news of the Unseen through the blessed speech of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and had witnessed that they happened as told. Therefore, at this place in the text, a simple negation of the claim and saying was not considered enough. In fact, what was negated was the actual act. He said, "وَلَآ أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ" (nor do I have the knowledge of the Unseen). By saying so, also removed was their misunderstanding that a certain knowledge of things Unseen given to an angel or a Rasūl (Messenger) or a *Walī* (man of Allah) through Waḥy (revelation) or *Ilhām* (inspiration) from Allah Ta'ālā, cannot be called '*Ilm al-Ghayb* (the knowledge of the Unseen), or its knower, the '*Ālim al-Ghayb* (one who has the knowledge of the Unseen), in accordance with the terminology of the Qur'ān.

Right from here also comes the clarification that no Muslim can doubt the fact that Allah Ta'ālā had blessed the Holy Prophet ﷺ with the knowledge of many things of the Unseen, so many as would surpass the combined knowledge of angels and human beings from the first to the last. This is the belief of the entire Muslim *Ummah*. Of course, right along with it, according to countless statements of the Qur'ān and Sunnah, it is also the belief of all early and later Imāms that the All-Encompassing Knowledge (*al-'Ilm al-Muḥīṭ*) of the whole universe is the exclusive attribute of none but Allah Ta'ālā. Neither can an angel or messenger be equal to Him in being the *Khāliq* (Creator), the *Rāziq* (Provider) and *Al-Qādir Al-Muṭlaq* (Absolutely Powerful); similarly, nor can anyone be equal to Him in His All-Encompassing Knowledge. Therefore, no angel or prophet, despite having the knowledge of a great many things of the Unseen, can be called '*Ālim al-Ghayb* (the Knower of the Unseen).

But, about the many excellences of our master, Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā صلى الله عليه وسلم, we can simply say:

بعداز خدا بزرگ توئی قصّہ مختصر

Ba'd az Khudā buzurg tuee qiṣṣah mukhtaṣar!

After God, you are the reverred one that is all!

His excellence in knowledge is ahead of angels, prophets and messengers, but is not equal to the knowledge of Allah Ta'ālā. Claiming such equality is the path of excess taken in Christianity.

At the end of the verse (50), it was said that the blind and the sighted cannot be equal. It means that they should get rid of their selfish concerns, leave obstinacy and hostility, and see reality as it is so that they may no longer be counted among the blind. For them, the need was to start seeing, to wise up, for they could have their missing sights back with them with a little thought and concern (for what is right and true).

In the next and the last verse (51), the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been instructed that, after all these clear statements, if they still remain obstinate, he should draw a line, stop all debate, and get busy with his real mission, that is, the duty of *Tablīgh*, the real mission of prophethood. And onwards from there, let him turn the focus of his call to faith and warning against its rejection to people who believe in being produced before Allah Ta'ālā to give an account of their deeds on the Last Day of *Qiyāmah* - for example, the Muslims - or those who are, at least, no deniers, even if that is in a certain degree of being probable, for they would at least have the apprehension that, perhaps, they may have to be answerable for their deeds.

To sum up, there are three types of people who believe or do not believe in *Qiyāmah*: (1) Those who believe in it as being certain; (2) Those who doubt or waver; and (3) Those who reject it totally. Though, the blessed prophets have been commanded to convey their call and warning to all these three classes of people, as evident from many statements of the Holy Qur'ān. But, as the likelihood that the call will be more effective among the first two classes of people is more pronounced, instruction has been given in this verse to pay special attention to them: وَاَنْذِرْ بِهِ الَّذِيْنَ يَخَافُوْنَ اَنْ يُّحْشَرُوْٓا اِلٰى رَبِّهِمْ (And warn, with it, those who have the fear of being gathered before their Lord).

Verses 52 - 55

وَلَا تَطْرُدِ الَّذِيْنَ يَدْعُوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ بِالْغَدٰوةِ وَالْعَشِيِّ يُرِيْدُوْنَ
وَجْهَهٗ ۗ مَا عَلَيْكَ مِنْ حِسَابِهِمْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ وَّمَا مِنْ حِسَابِكَ
عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ فَتَطْرُدَهُمْ فَتَكُوْنَ مِنَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٥٢﴾ وَكَذٰلِكَ
فَتَنَّا بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ لِّيَقُوْلُوْٓا اَهٰٓؤُلَاۗءِ مَنَّ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنْۢ
بَيْنِنَا ۗ اَلَيْسَ اللّٰهُ بِاَعْلَمَ بِالشّٰكِرِيْنَ ﴿٥٣﴾ وَاِذَا جَاۗءَكَ الَّذِيْنَ
يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاٰيٰتِنَا فَقُلْ سَلٰمٌ عَلَيْكُمْ كَتَبَ رَبُّكُمْ عَلٰى نَفْسِهِ
الرَّحْمَةَ ۙ اَنَّهٗ مَنْ عَمِلَ مِنْكُمْ سُوْۗءًاۢ بِجَهَالَةٍ ثُمَّ تَابَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖ
وَاَصْلَحَ فَاَنَّهٗ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿٥٤﴾ وَكَذٰلِكَ نُفَصِّلُ الْاٰيٰتِ
وَلِتَسْتَبِيْنَ سَبِيْلُ الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ ﴿٥٥﴾

And do not expel those who call their Lord morning and evening seeking His pleasure. You are not responsible for anything in their account and they are not responsible for anything in your account that you expel them out and thus become one of the unjust. [52]

And in this way We have tested some of them through some others, that they say, "Are these the ones, from among us all, whom Allah has favoured?" Is it not that Allah knows the grateful best? [53]

And when those who believe in Our verses come to you, say, "Peace on you. Your Lord has prescribed for Himself the mercy that whoever does something bad in ignorance, then repents after that and corrects himself, then He is Most Forgiving, Very Merciful. [54] **And that is how We make the verses elaborate, so that the way of the guilty may become exposed.** [55]

Commentary

In Islam there is No Distinction between Rich and Poor, High or Low

As for people who failed to feel human despite being human, even touched the outer limit of rating human beings as one of the smartest

animals of the world, who did not hesitate in harnessing other 'animals' in their service, what would they know about the purpose of creation other than taking the fulfillment of their immediate physical compulsions and needs, and acting in accordance with animal instincts as the purpose of their lives - very much like an animal would do. When this be the only purpose of life, then, it is also obvious that the criterion of recognizing good and bad, small or big, high or low, noble or mean can hardly be any other than whoever has more and better to eat and drink, wear and use up, and things and resources to live around with and hold on to, shall be successful, honourable and noble - and whoever has less of these shall be low life and doomed!

The truth of the matter is that, given this view of life, talking about good morals and good deeds as a criterion of judging the nobility of human beings remains out of the question. In that case, only that deed will be good and that morality will be virtuous through which these animal objectives could be fully realized.

Therefore, the first and the last lesson given by the blessed prophets and the religions they brought with them was that there is a life after this life, which will be eternal and uninterrupted. Its peace will be perfect and eternal, and so will be its pain, perfect and eternal. The life of the present world is not its own purpose. Instead of that, the real purpose of this transitory life is to get together everything which is going to come out handy in the other life - (delightfully summarized with a punch by an Urdu poet who said):

رہا مرنے کی تیاری میں مصروف

مرا کام اور اس دنیا میں تھا کیا

Remained busy getting ready to die -

What else was that I had to do in this world?

This is the line of distinction between human beings and animals - that animals have no concern for the next life, contrary to human beings whose greatest concern, at least in the sight of reasonable and far-sighted people, is to correct, nurse and build the prospects of the next life. Given this belief and point of view, the standard of nobility and menialness, honour and disgrace will obviously not be eating and drinking lavishly, living plentifully or qualitatively, or making and

holding wealth and property greedily - instead, the standard will be good morals and righteous deeds on which depends the real honour of the *Ākhirah* (Hereafter).

Whenever people in this world have shifted away from the teachings of the prophets عليهم السلام and from belief in the *Ākhirah*, the natural outcome was there for everyone to see. Money and things became the cold criterion of character and status. Those successful in this race were taken as high and classy, and whoever was left behind, or remained an under-achiever, was taken to be poor, honourless, mean and low.

Therefore, in all ages (including ours with the loudest claims to democracy and justice), people caught in the maze of worldly life have been practicing class distinction of rich and poor and high and low openly or secretly under a thousand guises whereby they would assign all virtues to the rich and influential and condemn the poor as low-life. This is what the people of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام did. They criticized the believing poor following this standard, when they said that they would not sit with such lowly people. They said that if he wished them to hear his message, he should first turn those poor wretches out of his company. They even said: قَالُوٓا اَنُؤْمِنُ لَكَ وَاتَّبَعَكَ الْاَرْذَلُوْنَ [26:111]. It means: 'How can it be that we are to believe in you while those following you are lowly people?' Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام answered their heart-rending remark in his own prophetic diction when he said: وَمَا عِلْمِىْ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ اِنْ حِسَابُهُمْ اِلَّا عَلٰى رَبِّىْ لَوْ تَشْعُرُوْنَ [26:112]. It means: 'I do not know about what they do (which could help him decide whether they were high or low) so (the reality of everyone's deeds and) their accounting is the responsibility of none but my Lord (who is aware of the secrets of the hearts), if you understand.'

By saying so, Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام brought these ignorant and arrogant people oblivious of the reality of human nobility and ignobility to see the truth of the matter - as they were the ones who used these terms without knowing what they really meant and just went ahead stamping the rich as noble and the poor as wretched, while money is no criterion of virtues and vices. The criterion is deeds and morals. At this occasion, Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام could have said that those people were nobler and more respectable than them as far as the standard of

deeds and morals was concerned. But, his prophetic method of preaching and correcting did not permit him to say something like that lest his addressees are provoked adversely. Therefore, he thought it to be sufficient to say that lowliness depended on deeds and since he did not know about their deeds fully, he could not decide as to who was noble and who was not.

The same thing has been happening in every age, after the age of Sayyidnā Nūḥ, when poor people of successive times, no matter how noble and respectable in terms of their morals and deeds they may have been, were still down-graded as lowly by materialistic and arrogant people. Yet, these were the people who, guided by their far-sightedness and good morals, were the first ones to say yes to the call of prophets in one after the other age. In fact, for later scholars of religions and communities this became the proof of the veracity of a prophet that his early followers are the poor ones of the community. This was the reason why, when the letter of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم reached the Byzantine ruler, Heracles (Hiraql) inviting him to embrace Islam, he wished to investigate into the veracity of his prophethood. For this purpose, he asked from people who knew the Prophet of Islam some questions. One of these questions was: Whether most of his followers were from among the rich, or the poor? When he was told that they were poor people, he said: These are usually the first followers of messengers and prophets.

The same question rose again during the blessed time of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. Its answer appears in the present verses with particular instructions.

Reports Ibn Kathīr from Imām Ibn Jarīr: Some chiefs of disbelievers from the tribe of Quraysh - 'Utbah, Shaybah, Ibn Rabi'ah, Muṭ'im ibn 'Adiyy, Ḥārith ibn Nawfal and others - came to the Holy Prophet's uncle, Abū Ṭālib and said to him: One of the problems, which stops us from listening to and accepting what Your nephew Muḥammad ﷺ tells us, is that people who surround him all the time are either our slaves who were set free by us, or they are people who were living at our mercy only. Now, with such lowly people around him, we cannot attend his sittings. You tell him, if he would ask these people to leave when it is time for us to come in, we could listen to him and think about it.

When his uncle, Abū Ṭālib reported this to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, Sayyidnā 'Umar offered his advice by saying: What is wrong with it? Try this too for a few days. These people love us and they are not formal. When these chiefs are to come, they would move away from the sitting.

Thereupon, this verse was revealed in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been emphatically prohibited to do something like that. It was after the revelation of the verse that Sayyidnā 'Umar had to apologize by admitting that his advice was wrong.

And these poor people about whom this conversation took place were, at that time, no less a people than Sayyidnā Bilāl al-Ḥabashī, Sayyidnā Ṣuhayb ar-Rūmī, Sayyidnā 'Ammār ibn Yāsir, Sayyidnā Sālim Mawlā Abī Ḥudhayfah, Ṣabīḥ Mawlā Usayd, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd, Sayyidnā Miqdād ibn 'Amr, Sayyidnā Mas'ūd Ibn al-Qārī, Sayyidnā Dhush-Shimālyn, and other noble *Ṣaḥābah* (may Allah be pleased with all of them) the testimonial of whose nobility and honour came from the heavens. And at another place in the Holy Qur'ān, the same subject was stressed upon in these words:

وَاصْبِرْ نَفْسَكَ مَعَ الَّذِيْنَ يَدْعُوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ بِالْغَدٰوةِ وَالْعَشِيِّ يُرِيْدُوْنَ وَجْهَهٗ وَلَا تَعْدُ عَيْنٰكَ عَنْهُمْ تُرِيْدُ زِيْنَةَ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ۚ وَلَا تُطِعْ مَنْ اَغْفَلْنَا قَلْبَهٗ عَنْ ذِكْرِنَا وَاتَّبَعَ هَوٰىهُ وَكَانَ اَمْرُهٗ فُرُطًا ○

And hold your self with those who call on their Lord morning and evening, seeking His pleasure only. And do not cast your eyes (for others) beyond them, seeking the embellishment of the present life. And do not obey the one whose heart We have made neglectful of Our remembrance, and who follows his own desires, and whose case is that of excess - 18:28.

In the present verse, the quality of these poor people has been identified as: They call on their Lord morning and evening. Here, morning and evening refer to all times of the day and night according to usage. As for calling, it means '*Ibādah* or worship. Also placed here is a restriction along with this '*Ibādah*, at whichever time of the day and night it may be, that is: يُرِيْدُوْنَ وَجْهَهٗ :'seeking Him only.' This tells us that '*Ibādah* (worship of Allah) without *Ikhlāṣ* (absolute sincerity before Him) is not trustworthy.

As for the saying: 'You are not responsible for what is in their account, and they are not responsible for anything in your account,' according to the interpretation of Ibn 'Aṭiyyah and Al-Zamakhsharī and others, here the pronouns in: حِسَابِهِمْ (*Ḥisābihim* : their account) and عليهم (*'Alaihim* : they are not responsible) refers to these chiefs of disbelievers, those who insisted on removing poor Muslims from the gathering at the sitting. So, Allah Ta'ālā told the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم not to bother with them whether, or not, they enter the fold of faith - because he was not responsible for anything in their account, just as they were not responsible for anything in his account. If he were responsible for that, that is, he would have been questioned as to why these people did not become Muslims, then, in that situation, he could have removed the poor Muslims from his sitting just for the sake of the chiefs of the disbelievers. And now, when this is not so, removing them from the sitting was rank injustice. And if he were to do something like that, he would have become one of the unjust.

In the second verse (53), it was said that this is how Allah had tested some of them through some others, so that these chiefs of the disbelievers should be able to see the great subduing power of Almighty Allah when poor Muslims, whom they took to be lowly, reached stations unimaginable and won signal honour and recognition both in this world and in the *Ākhirah*, just because they chose to follow the Messenger of Allah. Then, let them go about saying: Were these poor people the only ones to deserve honours and rewards from Allah and to have been so blessed at the expense of us, the noble ones?

According to *Kashshāf* and other classic commentories, this saying of theirs is an outcome of their trial taken through poor and weak Muslims. They failed in this test. Rather than ponder over this great demonstration of Allah's absolute power and conclude therefrom that nobility does not depend on wealth or power, instead, it does on morals and deeds - they started blaming Allah for giving them the honour while they were the ones deserving of it. In answer, Allah Ta'ālā once again pointed out to the reality behind it by saying: أَلَيْسَ اللّٰهُ بِأَعْلَمَ بِالشّٰكِرِيْنَ (Is it not that Allah knows the grateful best?) It means that Allah knows best as to who has the taste for truth and aptitude for gratitude. In other words, in the real sense, a person of nobility and honour is he

who recognizes the right of his Benefactor and is grateful to Him, and it is he who is deserving of all reward and honour - and definitely not the one who, day in and day out, despite being soaked with the blessings of his Provider and Benefactor, goes on disobeying Him.

Some Injunctions and Instructions

Given below are some injunctions and instructions which emerge from these verses:

1. No one has the right to look down upon anyone in tattered clothes or broken down condition. At times, there are people carrying those outward looks who happen to be very honourable and accepted in the sight of Allah. In a *Ḥadīth*, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is reported to have said: 'Many a broken-down, dust-stained people are such as are held dear by Allah. If they were to swear by Allah about something that it would be like that, Allah Ta'ālā does honour their swearing by Him (and lets it be like that).

2. Taking material affluence as the criterion of nobility and lowliness is an insult to humanity. It really depends on good morals and deeds.

3. For a reformer and preacher of any nation, though a universal call which addresses everyone, ayes or nays, followers or dissenters, is necessary, yet, foremost is the right of those who own his teachings and follow it. Putting them as secondary, or ignoring them for the sake of others is not permissible. For example, in the case of Muslims, the education and reform of unaware Muslims should not be put off in favour of carrying the call to non-Muslims.

4. The rewards and blessings of Allah keep increasing in relation to the measure of gratitude. A person who wishes an increase in Divine rewards, must make gratitude, expressed through word and deed, his way of life, a constant of personality.

About verse 54: وَإِذَا جَآءَكَ الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ (And when to you come those who believe ...), there are two interpretations given by leading authorities in *Tafsīr*:

1. Most of them have declared it to be related to previous verses and event. In support, they refer to the narration about the event when the chiefs of Quraysh demanded through Abū Ṭālib that his

nephew should first remove the poor people around him, with whom they could not sit, then they would come and listen to him, and think about it. Thereupon, it was Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ who advised that it did not matter much, for Muslims were sincere friends and if requested they would move out of the sitting so that the chiefs of Quraysh could listen to the Word of Allah and become Muslims.

But, in the previous verses, came the command against this advice that this should never be done. Doing this would be cruel and unjust. The revelation of this verse made Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ realize the gravity of his error. He feared he had become a sinner by advising against what was the will of Allah. He came to tender his apology for it.

Thereupon, the present verses were revealed to comfort him. In gist, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has been asked here to assure them that there will be no retribution for their past mistakes. In fact, not simply that there will be no retribution for the mistake, but that they will also be blessed in many ways by the most merciful Allah. He has also been asked to tell them about His Law that if a Muslim does something evil in ignorance, then gets alerted, repents and corrects his ways for the future, Allah Almighty will forgive him his past sins - and will also not deprive him of His blessings in this world and in the world to come. According to this explanation, these verses were revealed as related to this particular event described in previous verses.

2. Some commentators have taken these verses to be carrying an independent set of rules for guidance. These relate to people who have committed a sin, then felt ashamed of what they did, and repented, and corrected their ways.

A little deliberation will show that there is no contradiction between the two sayings - because it is universally agreed that an injunction of the Holy Qur'ān which has been revealed in the background of a particular event, subject to the condition of its words and subject being general, shall not remain restricted to that event, instead of which, it shall have the status of a general injunction. Therefore, even it were to be granted that the said verses did come to be revealed about the event mentioned, still then, this injunction shall have the status of a general rule of conduct which will cover every sinner who

gets alarmed even after having committed the sin, then feels ashamed, repents, corrects and turns watchful for the future.

Now let us turn to a fuller explanation of these verses. It is said in the first verse (54): وَاِذَا جَآءَكَ الَّذِيْنَ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاٰيٰتِنَا فَقُلْ سَلٰمٌ عَلَيْكُمْ كَتَبَ رَبُّكُمْ عَلٰى نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةَ It means: When those people come to him who believe in His *Āyat* (the word, '*Āyat*', at this place, could mean the *Āyat* or Verses of the Qur'an, and the *Āyat* or general signs of the perfect power of Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhu* as well), the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been instructed to address them by saying: سَلٰمٌ عَلَيْكُمْ (Peace be upon you). Here, '*Salāmun 'Alaikum*' could have two meanings. It could either mean: Convey to them the *Salām* or greetings of Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhu* - which is the highest honour they could receive. Given this interpretation, that becomes the best antidote for the heart-break of poor Muslims, about whom the chiefs of the Quraysh had said that they should be removed from the gathering before they come. Or it could also mean: You give them the good news of their being safe and protected - that is, if they have fallen short or even made a mistake in what they have done, that will stand forgiven, and that they shall stay protected against all sorts of calamities.

In the next sentence of the verse: كَتَبَ رَبُّكُمْ عَلٰى نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةَ , the promise of additional favour and reward has been made by saying : You tell these Muslims that Allah has taken it upon Himself that mercy shall be shown to them. Therefore, let them not be frightened or nervous. First of all, by using the word, *Rabb*, the assertion in the verse has been provided with a proof - that Allah is your Nurturer, Nourisher, Sustainer. It is obvious no nurturer would let what is being nurtured go to waste. Then, the mercy which was promised by that *Rabb* has been further clarified through a weighty, yet endearing, statement that 'their *Rabb* has prescribed this mercy on Himself'. It is obvious when even an average good person would not go back on his promise, how could this be ever imagined when referred to the Lord of the Worlds Himself, specially so when this promise has been preserved as a written document.

Based on a narration of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه, it has been reported in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī and Muslim, and in the Musnad of Aḥmad, that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: When Allah Ta'ālā created the whole creation and determined the destiny of every-

one, then, in a Book with Him on the *'Arsh*, He wrote: إِنَّ رَحْمَتِي غَلَبَتْ غَضَبِي (My Mercy is dominant over My Wrath).

And Sayyidnā Salmān رضى الله عنه says: We have seen written in the Torah, when Allah created the heavens and the earth and the entire creation in them, He divided His mercy in a hundred parts. One part from this He distributed all over the creation - and wherever any effect of this mercy is found among human beings, animals and other elements of creation, that owes itself to this same part. The mutual love and concern found among parents and children, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, among relatives, neighbours and friends, are all the outcome of this share from the mercy of Allah. The rest of the ninety nine parts of mercy have been kept by Allah Ta'ālā for Himself. There are other narrations in which this has been described as a *Ḥadīth* from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. This goes to show the quality and extent of Allah's mercy for His creation.

It goes without saying that no *'Ibādah* (worship) or *'Iṭā'ah* (obedience) can be good enough so as to be considered as presentable before Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhu* - neither by an angel nor by a human being. We should not see our *'Ibādah* and *Iṭā'ah* and good deeds in isolation. If we were to look at them as related to the highest of the high, we would humbly realize that what we have been able to do was not any better than what is simply bad. Still one has to be thankful for being able to do what was possible specially when no human being is free of real evils and sins - unless protected by Allah. Under this situation, justice would have demanded that no one remains safe from a general punishment. But, what is actually happening is that every human being is being showered with the blessings of Allah all the time. This, then, is the direct outcome of that mercy which the great Lord-Nourisher of the universe has put it down in writing as His responsibility.

Every Sin is Forgiven by *Taubah* [Repentance]

This perfect mercy of Allah appears mentioned in the form of a rule in the third sentence of verse 54: أَنَّهُ مَنْ عَمِلَ مِنْكُمْ سُوْٓءًا بِجَهَالَةٍ ثُمَّ تَابَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ وَأَصْلَحَ فَأَنَّهُ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ It means: One of you who happens to have done something bad by having acted ignorantly, then repents after that and corrects his conduct, then Allah Almighty is most forgiving, He will forgive him his

sins; and He is very merciful, so forgiveness alone will not be considered enough, for he will be blessed with rewards also.

From the word, " جَهَالَة " (*Jahālah*; literally: ignorance, used in the sense of acting ignorantly) one may think that this promise of forgiveness is valid only when a sin is committed in a state of ignorance, not knowing what is being done - and the commitment of a sin knowingly would be considered excluded from the purview of this injunction. But, this is not true - because *Jahālah* (ignorance) here means acting ignorantly which refers to the act of ignorance, that is, one ends up doing something as would have been done by one who is ignorant and unaware of the outcome of his or her act. It is not necessary that the doer of the act be ignorant in reality. This is confirmed by the use of the word *Jahālah* itself - as the word, *Jahalah* has been used here instead of using the word, *Jahl*, most likely to point out to this refinement in meaning. The reason is that *Jahl* (also meaning ignorance) is an antonym of *ʻIlm* (Knowledge) while *Jahālah* stands in contrast to forbearance and dignity. In other words, the word, *Jahālah* is employed, in usage, to ignorance which is demonstrated practically, in deed. A little thought will reveal that a sin, whenever it is committed by someone, comes about to be because of this practical ignorance. Therefore, some pious elders have said that a person who acts against any command given by Allah and His Messenger is *Jāhil* (ignorant). It refers to this very practical ignorance. For this, it is not necessary to be uninformed and lacking in knowledge - because countless definitive statements of the Holy Qur'ān and Ṣaḥīḥ *Aḥādīth* (*Naṣṣ*) prove that every sin can be forgiven by making *Taubah* (repentance), whether committed by heedlessness or ignorance, or knowingly and deliberately through self-wickedness or a blinded following of (the drum-beats of) one's own desire.

At this point, it is also worth noticing that the promise of mercy and forgiveness made to sinners in this verse is conditioned with two things: (a) *Taubah* (repentance), and (b) the *Iṣlāḥ* of *ʻAmal* (the correction of misdeed). *Taubah* means being ashamed of the sin. Says the *Ḥadīth*: إِنَّمَا التَّوْبَةُ النَّدَمُ (*Taubah* or repentance is another name of *Nadāmah*, that is, being ashamed of or having remorse).

As for the second condition, that is, the correction of deed, it means

that one should see to it that what happened before will not be repeated in the future. So, this process of trying to better one's doings includes the making of a firm determination not to go near that sin ever again by fully auditing and checking one's behaviour at all times, and also included here is that all rights belonging to someone which have been violated or compromised because of that sin, should be compensated to the best of one's capability. They may be the Rights of Allah (*Ḥuqūqullāh*) or the Rights of the Servants of Allah (*Ḥuqūq al-'Ibād*). Examples of the Rights of Allah are: Falling short in the duties and obligations like *Ṣalāh*, *Ṣawm*, *Zakāh* and *Ḥajj*. And the examples of the Rights of the Servants of Allah are: Usurping someone's property unlawfully, to attack someone's honour, and to cause pain to someone by using bad language or causing such pain in some other manner.

Therefore, for *Taubah* (repentance) to be total and complete, the way it is necessary to first feel ashamed of the past sin, then seek forgiveness from Allah Ta'ālā, then resolve to keep one's conduct correct and straight in the future and never go near that sin again - similarly, it is also necessary that the prayers (*Ṣalāh*) and fasts (*Ṣawm*) which were missed due to heedlessness should be replaced by doing *Qaḍā'* for them. Then, any *Zakāh* which has not been paid earlier should be paid now. If there is a shortcoming in taking care of what was obligatory in *Qurbānī* (Sacrifice) or *Ṣadaqatul-Fiṭr* (post-Ramaḍān charity for the poor and needy), that should be paid off. If one has not done his or her Hajj, despite its being *Farḍ*, an absolute obligation, one should do it now; and if it is not possible to do so personally, one should arrange to have it done on his or her behalf (*Ḥajj Badal*). And if, one does not have the time to arrange for an authorized proxy for Hajj, and does not have the convenience to personally make up for whatever was missed and the *Qaḍā'* of which had become due - during his lifetime - then, he or she should make a *Waṣīyyah* (will) so that their inheritors or heirs could take care of paying the *Fidyah* (ransom) of the obligations due against him or her, or make arrangements for Ḥajj on his or her behalf. In short, for 'the correction of deed,' the correction of the future conduct only is not enough - it is also necessary to make amends by paying off for obligations left unperformed in the past.

Similar is the case of the Rights of the Servants of Allah (*Ḥuqūq al-*

'Ibād). If someone's property has been taken unlawfully, it should be returned to him, or have him forgive it. And if someone has been caused pain physically or verbally, forgiveness must be sought from the aggrieved person. And if, it is not possible or within one's control to have him forgive it - for example, he dies; or goes away to a place the address of which is not known - then, the way out is that one should make it a point to keep praying for his forgiveness before Allah Ta'ālā consistently. If so, it can be hoped that the holder of the right will be pleased and the person who was unable to have the forgiveness of the deceased during his lifetime will become absolved of what was due on him.

Verses 56 - 58

قُلْ إِنِّي نُهِيتُ أَنْ أَعْبُدَ الَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ ط قُلْ لَّا
أَتَّبِعُ أَهْوَآءَكُمْ لا قَدْ ضَلَلْتُ إِذًا وَّمَآ أَنَا مِنَ الْمُهْتَدِينَ ﴿٥٦﴾
قُلْ إِنِّي عَلَىٰ بَيِّنَةٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّي وَكَذَّبْتُمْ بِهِ ط مَا عِنْدِي
مَا تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ بِهِ ط إِنِ الْحُكْمُ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ ط يَقُصُّ الْحَقَّ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ
الْفٰصِلِينَ ﴿٥٧﴾ قُلْ لَّوْ أَنَّ عِنْدِي مَا تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ بِهِ لَقُضِيَ
الْأَمْرُ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكُمْ ط وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِالظّٰلِمِينَ ﴿٥٨﴾

Say, "I have been forbidden from worshiping those you call beside Allah." Say, "I do not follow your desires. In that case, I would be going astray and would no more be of those on the right path. [56]

Say, "I am on clear guidance from my Lord, and you have belied it. What you hurry about is not there with me. The Decision belongs to none but Allah. He relates the Truth and He is the best decision-maker. [57] **Say, "If what you hurry about were with me, the matter between me and you would have been over. And Allah knows the unjust best."** [58]

The Linkage of Verses

In the verses cited above, the answer to disbelievers who were demanding that the Divine punishment should come to them posthaste

was given in: وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الْفٰصِلِيْنَ (He is the best decision-maker) while the mention of the perfect power of Almighty Allah was made in: وَاللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ بِالظّٰلِمِيْنَ (Allah knows the unjust best). Next from here, there is a description of the encompassment of the Knowledge and Power of Allah Ta'ālā on all conceivable data and destiny.

Verses 59 - 62

وَعِنْدَهٗ مَفَاتِحُ الْغَيْبِ لَا يَعْلَمُهَآ اِلَّا هُوَ ؕ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِی الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ ؕ وَمَا تَسْقُطُ مِنْ وَّرَقَةٍ اِلَّا يَعْلَمُهَا وَلَا حَبَّةٍ فِیْ ظُلُمٰتِ الْاَرْضِ وَلَا رَطْبٍ وَّلَا يَابِسٍ اِلَّا فِیْ كِتٰبٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿۵۹﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِیْ يَتَوَفّٰىكُمْ بِالَّيْلِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا جَرَحْتُمْ بِالنَّهَارِ ثُمَّ يَبْعَثُكُمْ فِيْهِ لِيُقْضٰٓى اَجَلٌ مُّسَمًّى ۚ ثُمَّ اِلَيْهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۶۰﴾ وَهُوَ الْقَاهِرُ فَوْقَ عِبَادِهٖ وَيُرْسِلُ عَلَيْكُمْ حَفَظَةً ؕ حَتّٰۤى اِذَا جَآءَ اَحَدَكُمُ الْمَوْتُ تَوَفَّتْهُ رُسُلُنَا وَهُمْ لَا يُفَرِّطُوْنَ ﴿۶۱﴾ ثُمَّ رُدُّوْٓا اِلَى اللّٰهِ مَوْلٰىهُمُ الْحَقِّ ؕ اَلَا لَهُ الْحُكْمُ ۫ وَهُوَ اَسْرَعُ الْحٰسِبِيْنَ ﴿۶۲﴾

And with Him are the keys of the Unseen. No one knows them but He. And He knows what is in the land and the sea. Not a leaf ever falls but He knows it, nor a grain in the dark hollows of the earth, nor anything fresh or dry, but are in a manifest book. [59]

And He is the One who takes you away by the night and knows what you do by the day, then He makes you rise therein, so that a fixed term may be fulfilled. Thereafter, to Him you are to return; then He will tell you what you have been doing. [60]

And He is Dominant over His slaves and He sends to you those who take care of you until when death comes to one of you, Our deputies take him in full, and they neglect nothing. [61] **Then they are returned to Allah, their real Master. Behold, to Him belongs the judgement, and He is the swiftest reckoner.** [62]

Commentary

How to Stay Safe from Sins - The Master Prescription

Of all the religions of the world, belief in *Tauḥīd*, monotheism in its pure and applied form, is the distinctive feature of Islam. It is also obvious that *Tauḥīd* is not limited to taking the being of Allah Ta'ālā as one. Instead, *Tauḥīd* is believing in Him as being unique and without equal in all His attributes of perfection and in not taking any created being, other than Him, to be a sharer or partner in these attributes of perfection.

Some of these attributes of Divine perfection are: Life, Knowledge, Power, Hearing, Seeing, Will, Creation, Sustenance. Allah is so perfect in all His attributes that no created being can be equal to Him in any of the attributes. Then, out of these, two attributes are most distinct. These are Knowledge (*'Ilm*) and Power (*Qudrah*). His Knowledge encompasses and embraces all existents and non-existents, open and secret, large or small, atoms and particles. So it is with His Power which surrounds and controls everything fully and conclusively. The two verses (59 & 60) cited above describe these two attributes - and these two attributes are mysteriously unique. If anyone were to bring himself around to believe in these two attributes strongly and completely, and thereby start imagining them as being present before him, then, he just cannot ever even think of committing a crime or sin. It goes without saying that here is a person who, in all states of word and deed, rest and movement, remains conscious of the presence and knows that there is someone All-Knowing, All-Aware, All-Powerful watching over him all the time, and Who knows him outside in and inside out and Who is aware of even the intention of the heart and the passing thought of the mind, then, how would he ever be able to take even a tiny step towards any disobedience to his All-Powerful Master? This is the legendary philosopher's stone of what is known as *Istiḥḍār* in religious terminology [or, to make it more recent, it is like building a web site in your heart with this frame of reference being always online, just click and connect! – Tr.]

In the end, we can say that these two verses are sovereign prescriptions which can make one a model human being, correct and groom deeds and morals, and keep them that way all along.

It was said in the first verse (59): وَعِنْدَهٗ مَفَاتِحُ الْغَيْبِ لَا يَعْلَمُهَآ إِلَّا هُوَ (And with Him are the keys of the Unseen. No one knows them but He). The word, 'مَفَاتِح' (*Mafātīḥ* : keys) is plural. Its singular can be: مَفْتَح : *Maftah*, pronounced with a vowel point a on the letter *Mim*, which denotes treasure; and it could also be: مِفْتَاح : *Miftāḥ*, pronounced with a vowel point i on the letter *Mim*, which means key. The word, *Mafātīḥ* accommodates both meanings. Therefore, some commentators and translators have rendered it as treasures while some others take it as keys. The outcome, however, is the same because owning the keys to the treasures is taken as the owning of the treasures.

Knowledge of the Unseen and Absolute Power: Two Attributes of Allah, not shared by anyone

'Al-Ghayb' means things which have not come into existence, or in existence they have come but Allah Ta'ālā has not let anyone know them (Maẓharī). The first kind relates to conditions and events about *Qiyāmah*, or future happenings in the universe - for example, who will be born when and where? Who will do what? Who will live how long? Who will have how many breath counts? Who will take how many steps? Who will die where and buried where? Who will get what sustenance, and how much, and at what time? When will it rain, and where, and how much?

The example of the second kind is the foetus which has come to exist in the womb of a woman, but no one can be certain in the absolute sense, as universally applicable with inevitable reliability and accessibility, about the foetus being good natured or bad tempered, handsome or ugly, even a male or female (the radiological determination of which at the later trimesters of pregnancy is a different matter and does not affect the premises of the present discussion). Similar is the case of many other things which, despite having come into existence, remain unseen and unknown to the created beings.

So, the sentence: عِنْدَهٗ مَفَاتِحُ الْغَيْبِ means that with Allah are the keys (or treasures) of the Unseen. The sense of being 'with him' (عِنْدَهٗ) is that they are owned by Him and are in His possession. The outcome is that He is the One who has control of the treasures of the Unseen and it is He who has the exclusive power to bring them into existence and make them manifest as and when He has determined. This is as has been

said in another verse of the Holy Qur'ān : وَاِنْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ اِلَّا عِنْدَنَا خَزَآئِنُهٗ وَمَا نُنَزِّلُهٗۤ اِلَّا بِقَدَرٍ مَّعْلُوْمٍ which means: We have treasures of everything, but We send them down in a particular measure (15:21).

In short, from this one sentence, it stands proved that the knowledge of Allah is perfect, and so is His power, and also that this all-encompassing knowledge and absolute power is the exclusive attribute of Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhu,* and that no one can acquire or have it. By putting the word, عِنْدَهٗ (*'indahū*: with Him) before, according to the rules of the Arabic grammar, a pointed reference has been made towards this restriction and particularity. Immediately after, this hint has been changed into full clarity when, to drive the point home, it was said: لَا يَعْلَمُهَآ اِلَّا هُوَ (No one knows them but He).

So, this sentence proves two things: (1) The awareness of Allah about everything Unseen by virtue of His all-encompassing knowledge, and His being dominant over all of them by virtue of His perfect power; and (2) The inability of any created being or thing, other than Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhu*, to acquire or have such knowledge and power.

The meaning of the word, '*Al-Ghayb*' (Unseen), as in the terminology of the Qur'ān, which has been stated above (with reference to Tafsīr Maẓharī) - that it means things which have not yet come into existence, or have come into existence but have not yet been fully unveiled to any created being - was to be kept in sight, the common doubts which bother people when they take a shallow view of the question of *Ghayb*, would be automatically removed.

Usually what happens is that people take the word, *Al-Ghayb* (Unseen) in a literal sense, that is, that which is absent from our knowledge and perception - whether the sources of acquiring its knowledge be present in the sight of others - thus, they would start calling that too as the *Ghayb*. As a result, all sorts of doubts abound. Take the example of astrology, divination of fortunes mathematically (*'Ilmul-Jafr* : The knowledge of *Jafr*; vulg. '*Jafar*'), geomancy (*'Ilmur-Raml*: The knowledge of *Raml*; vulg. '*Ramal*', meaning divination by means of figures and lines in the sand), or palmistry and things like that which are harnessed to acquire the knowledge of future events. Or, there may be someone who gets to know about future events through *Kashf* (illumination) and *Ilhām* (inspiration). Or, there are our

weather forecasters who by examining things like the drift, power and velocity of the monsoons predict rains and storms a lot of which turns out to be right too. But, common people hasten to take all these to be the Knowledge of the Unseen. Therefore, they start doubting about these verses of the Holy Qur'ān thinking that the Qur'ān tells us that the *'Ilm* of the *Ghayb*, the knowledge of the Unseen, is an attribute of Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhu*, while observation shows that others too get to acquire it.

The answer is clear. If Allah Ta'ālā has made one of His servants informed on some future event, that then, in the terminology of the Qur'ān, does not remain what the *'Ilm* of *Ghayb* or the knowledge of the Unseen is. Similarly, in accordance with the Qur'ānic terminology, knowledge (*'Ilm*) which can be acquired through means and instruments (technology) is no Knowledge of the Unseen (*'Ilm al-Ghayb*). Examples of this could be the weather reports of the meteorological departments and bureaus, or the diagnosis of the hidden condition of a patient by feeling the pulse (manually or instrumentally). The reason is that the weather forecaster or the physician got the chance to announce such information only when the substance of these events comes into existence and becomes obvious. The only difference is that it does not manifest itself openly until that time; it reveals itself, through technical instruments, to experts. People at large remain unaware. And when this substance becomes stronger, its manifestation becomes common. For this reason, weather forecasters cannot come up with what would be the breaking news of rains that will come one or two months from now - because the substantial evidence of rains has not presented itself before them. Similarly, no physician can diagnose the status of medicine or food taken a year or two ago, or a year or two after, by feeling the pulse (manually or instrumentally) today - because that does not habitually leave any effect on the pulse.

In short, these are things the existence of which is foretold by examining their traces and signs. Now, when the traces, signs and substances of these have come into existence, that does not remain part of the Knowledge of the Unseen (*'Ilm al-Ghayb*); rather, it has become a matter of observation. However, because of its being refined or weak, it has not become public knowledge. When it becomes stronger, it will

become a matter of common observation too.

In addition to this, the awareness acquired from all these things, despite that so much has taken place, still remains in the class of estimation and calculation. The real *'Ilm'* or Knowledge is the name of Certitude. That does not come out of any of these. That is why events attesting to the error of such information are many and frequent.

As for astrology and other disciplines, whatever there is based on mathematical computation is knowledge, but not *Al-Ghayb* (Unseen). It is like someone computes existing data and says that the sun will rise today at the hour of five and forty one minutes; or, there will be a solar or lunar eclipse on such and such date in such and such a month. It is obvious that determining time by calculating the speed of that which is perceptible through the senses is very much like announcing the news of planes and trains reaching airports and stations. Moreover, the claim to be able to know things through astrology etc. is nothing but deception. The emergence of one truth out of a hundred lies is no knowledge.

When X-Ray equipment was invented, it was hoped that the determination of the sex of the foetus will be possible, but it did not serve the purpose satisfactorily (besides being radiologically harmful). Experts in our time (specially those associated with digital imaging who study the foetus in section view, or use water-induced method to let the foetus float in the womb which helps determine digitally if it is a boy) too are helpless as far as the first trimester of pregnancy is concerned. Nothing can be known at that stage.[1] But, during the later trimesters, predictions are made which can be called technical approximations at best and cannot be classed as certain knowledge and absolute awareness. Sometimes predictions can be correct, at others faulty or misread. This is not the Certitude of *'Ilm al-Ghayb*, nor qualifies as such.

The gist of the assertion is: That which is *Al-Ghayb* in the terminology of the Qur'ān is something no one knows but the most sacred

1. Even the test of genes to determine the gender of a child, cannot work before a certain stage of pregnancy which again is a matter of observation, and not the knowledge of the unseen. (Muhammad Taqi Usmani)

Allah. As for what people habitually get to know through causation or intrumentation is not really the *Ghayb* - though, it may be so called because of not having been manifested openly.

Similarly, when part of the knowledge of what belongs to the *Ghayb* has been given to some prophet or messenger, through Waḥy (revelation), or to a man of Allah (*Waliy*) through *Kashf* (illumination) and *Ilhām* (inspiration), that then, does not remain *Ghayb*. This is called ' أَنْبَاءُ الْغَيْبِ ' (the reports or news of the Unseen) in the Holy Qur'ān, and not *Al-Ghayb*. This appears in several verses of the Qur'ān, for example: تِلْكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوحِيهَا إِلَيْكَ (These are some reports from the Unseen [events] which We reveal to you - 11:49). Therefore, when it is said: لَا يَعْلَمُهَا إِلَّا هُوَ (No one knows them but He) in the present verse, there is no room for any doubt or exemption in it.

In this particular sentence, a special attribute of Allah has been pointed out - that He is the Knower of the Unseen (*'Ālim al-Ghayb*). The sentences that follow contain a description of the knowledge of the Seen (*'Ilmush-Shahādah*), that is, the knowledge of things present and existing, in sharp contrast to the knowledge of the Unseen (*'Ilmul-Ghayb*). They too establish that the knowledge of Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhu* is all-encompassing leaving not the minutest particle outside its reach. It was said: And He knows what is in the land and the sea. Not a leaf ever falls but He knows it, nor a grain in the dark hollows of the earth, which too is within His knowledge; and so is, in His knowledge, everything fresh or wet or dry in the whole universe - and all of which lies recorded in writing on *al-Lawḥ al-Maḥfūẓ*, the Preserved Tablet.

To sum up, it can be said that Allah Ta'ālā has two unique attributes of knowledge in which no angel or prophet or another created being shares with Him. These are: the Knowledge of the Unseen (*'Ilm al-Ghayb*) and the All-Encompassing Knowledge of existents (*al-'Ilm al-Muḥīṭ*). These attributes have been described with a system. The first sentence says: وَعِنْدَهُ مَفَاتِحُ الْغَيْبِ لَا يَعْلَمُهَا إِلَّا هُوَ (And with Him are the keys of the Unseen. No one knows them but He). This was about the first attribute. In the sentences that follow, the all-encompassing knowledge of Allah about His universe of existents was identified first by saying: وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ (And He knows what is in the land and the sea). It

means the whole universe and all existents. This is like saying morning and evening in the sense of all the time or saying the East and the West in the sense of the whole world. Thus, by saying land and sea the sense given is that of the whole universe with its existents. So, the knowledge of Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhu* covers whatever there is.

Further on, this was explained by saying that the knowledge of Allah Ta'ālā is not limited to what is big, He also knows what is the minutest and the most concealed: وَمَا تَسْقُطُ مِنْ وَّرَقَةٍ اِلَّا يَعْلَمُهَا (Not a leaf ever falls but He knows it). It means that the falling of every leaf in the whole wide world - before it falls, when it falls and after it falls - remains within His knowledge. He knows how many times each leaf on a tree will swing and sway and when and where it will fall and through what circumstances it will go through. The mention of 'fall' at this place is perhaps indicative of the life cycle of the leaf. Its fall from the tree is the end of its growth and botanical life. Its last condition has been pointed out here as a mirror to the rest of its conditions.

After that it was said: وَلَا حَبَّةٍ فِىْ ظُلُمٰتِ الْاَرْضِ (Nor a grain in the dark hollows of the earth). Mentioned first was a leaf which falls in common sight. After that, it was a grain which is sowed in fields by a farmer, or gets buried somewhere in the dark and deep belly of the earth. Then, the same all-surrounding knowledge of Allah has been pointed out through things fresh and dry. In the end it was said that with Allah all these things were present in writing. According to some commentators, 'كِتٰبٍ مُّبِيْنٍ' (a manifest book) means *al-Lawḥ al-Maḥfūẓ*, the Preserved Tablet. Some others say that it denotes Divine Knowledge. It has been identified with 'a manifest book' because what is written stays preserved leaving nothing to chance or mistake or forgetting. This is similar to the all-encompassing knowledge of Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhu*, which is not based on conjecture - it is certain.

Many verses of the Holy Qur'ān confirm that the kind of all-encompassing knowledge from which nothing, neither a particle nor its condition, remains excluded is but that of Allah *Subhānuhu wa* Ta'ālā. It was said in Sūrah Luqmān:

اِنَّهَآ اِنْ تَكُ مِثْقَالَ حَبَّةٍ مِّنْ خَرْدَلٍ فَتَكُنْ فِىْ صَخْرَةٍ اَوْ فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ اَوْ فِى الْاَرْضِ يَاْتِ بِهَا اللّٰهُ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَطِيْفٌ خَبِيْرٌ

If it be (anything) even equal to the weight of a grain of mustard-seed, and though it be in a rock, or (anywhere) in the heavens or in the earth, Allah will bring it forth: for Allah is subtle and aware - 31:16.

It appears in the Āyatul-Kursī of Sūrah al-Baqarah:

يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ اَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ وَلَا يُحِيطُوْنَ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنْ عِلْمِهِ إِلَّا بِمَا شَاءَ

He knows what is before them and what is behind them. And they encompass nothing of His knowledge except what He wills - 2:255

In Sūrah Yunus, it was said:

وَمَا يَعْزُبُ عَنْ رَّبِّكَ مِنْ مِّثْقَالِ ذَرَّةٍ فِي الْاَرْضِ وَلَا فِي السَّمَاءِ

And not hidden from your Lord is (anything even) the weight of an atom in the earth or in the heaven - 10:61

And it appears in Sūrah Aṭ-Ṭalāq:

وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ قَدْ اَحَاطَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا ،

And that Allah encompasses all things in (His) Knowledge - 65:12

This subject has been dealt with in the Holy Qur'ān at many more places where it has been made very clear that the *'Ilm* of *Al-Ghayb* (as determined in the Qur'ān and explained earlier) or the all-encompassing knowledge of everything in the universe is the exclusive attribute of Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhu.* Taking the knowledge of an angel or messenger to be as all-compassing amounts to giving a messenger of Allah the status of Allah Himself and declaring him to be equal to Him - which is Shirk according to the Holy Qur'ān. This aspect of Shirk has been pointed out in Sūrah Al-Shu'arā':

تَاللّٰهِ إِنْ كُنَّا لَفِيْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ إِذْ نُسَوِّيْكُمْ بِرَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ

That is (the *Mushriks* will say in *Qiyāmah*), By Allah, we were in an error manifest when we held you (objects of worship) as equals with the Lord of the Worlds - 26:97,98

No doubt, Allah Ta'ālā had blessed His Messengers عليهم السلام, specially the Last among them صلى الله عليه وسلم, with the knowledge of many things from the Unseen, more than the knowledge of all angels and

prophets, but it is obvious that the knowledge of anyone cannot be equal to that of Allah, nor it can ever be. Otherwise, this will become the kind of excess the Christians committed in their reverence for the prophet when they started equating the prophet with God. This is *Shirk*. May Allah keep all of us protected from it.

Covered this far was the subject of the first verse as explained above. The second verse (60) describes Allah's attribute of power which is also exclusive to Him. It is said:

وَهُوَ الَّذِىْ يَتَوَفّٰكُمْ بِالَّيْلِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا جَرَحْتُمْ بِالنَّهَارِ ثُمَّ يَبْعَثُكُمْ فِيْهِ لِيُقْضٰٓى اَجَلٌ مُّسَمًّى ج

And He is the One who takes you away by night and knows what you do by day, then He makes you rise therein, so that a fixed term may be fulfilled.

Hence, at work here is nothing but the most perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā which has opened a window to what happens to human beings in life, in death and in rising again. Everyone sees it everyday. According to *Ḥadīth*, sleep is similar to death in that it does suspend the human body as it would be in death.

By giving an example of sleeping then waking up in this verse, Allah Ta'ālā has alerted human beings that the way everyone, every night and every morning, witnesses the spectacle of personally rising up from simulated death (sleep), so it should not be difficult to visualise the certainty of collective death, and then, collective rising after it, which is called *Qiyāmah* or the Last Day. The argument is: The Supreme Being who can make this happen, could make that happen too. With His most perfect Power, this is as it shall be. Therefore, towards the end of the verse it was said: ثُمَّ اِلَيْهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ (Thereafter, to Him you are to return; then He will tell you what you have been doing) meaning thereby that there will be the reckoning of deeds, then, will come their rewards and punishments.

In the third verse, this subject has been further enlarged by saying that Allah Ta'ālā has absolute subduing power over all His servants. As long as He wills to have them living, He assigns angels to protect them as a result of which no one dares harm them. And when one has reached the appointed limit of one's age, these very guardian angels

become the agents of one's death without ever falling short in providing the relevant causes leading to one's death. Then, death is not all, for the matter is still not closed. Instead of that, there is the next phase, that of: رُدُّوْٓا اِلَى اللّٰهِ (Then they are returned to Allah - 62). It means that they will be made to rise again and be presented before Allah Ta'ālā. If, at this point, one were to think of having to appear before the greatest Judge of judges and stand before Him to account for a whole life-time of deeds, one cannot even dare to imagine to come out unscathed and hope to escape punishment. Therefore, along with it, it was said: اِلَى اللّٰهِ مَوْلٰىهُمُ الْحَقِّ (to Allah, their real Master - 62). It means that Allah Ta'ālā is not only the Sovereign and the Judge of judges, He is also the Master and Guardian of His servants who reaches out to help them at all times of their need.

After that, it was said: اَلَا لَهُ الْحُكْمُ (Beware, to Him alone belongs the judgement). This certainly leaves no doubt that He is the best in His decision and decree. However, one may be inclined to think how it will be possible for Allah who is One alone to take care of the reckoning of age-long deeds of billions and billions of human beings? Therefore, after that, it was said: وَهُوَ اَسْرَعُ الْحٰسِبِيْنَ (and He is the swiftest reckoner). It means that taking what is done by Allah on the analogy of what is done by human beings is ignorance. He shall do that in no time. (When His servants at the Mainframe factories of Cray and IBM can churn billions and billions of data in seconds, why anyone in his senses would ever doubt the power of the Maker of all makers ! –Tr.)

Verses 63 - 64

قُلْ مَنْ يُّنَجِّيْكُمْ مِّنْ ظُلُمٰتِ الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ تَدْعُوْنَهٗ تَضَرُّعًا وَّ خُفْيَةً ۚ لَئِنْ اَنْجٰىنَا مِنْ هٰذِهٖ لَنَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الشّٰكِرِيْنَ ﴿٦٣﴾ قُلِ اللّٰهُ يُنَجِّيْكُمْ مِّنْهَا وَمِنْ كُلِّ كَرْبٍ ثُمَّ اَنْتُمْ تُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿٦٤﴾

Say, "Who delivers you from the darknesses of the land and the sea when you call Him in humility and low tones (promising that) If He delivers us from this, We shall truly become grateful? [63] **Say, "Allah delivers you from it and from every pain, still, you associate partners with Him."** [64]

Commentary

Some Manifestations of Divine Knowledge and Absolute Power

In previous verses, there was a description of the perfection of Divine Knowledge and Power, and of their unique expanse. Mentioned in the present verse, there are some manifestations of this very Knowledge and Power.

The word: ظُلُمٰت (*Ẓulumāt*) in the first verse (63) is the plural of ظُلْمَة (*Ẓulmah*) which means darkness [and which does not have a plural form in English leaving the translator with no choice but to improvise in order to convey the Qur'ānic plural which is necessary as explained]. Thus, the expression: ظُلُمٰتِ الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ in this verse means the many a darkness found on land and sea. Since darkness is of many kinds, such as, the darkness of night, the darkness of rain clouds, the darkness of dust storms and the darkness under the waves of the sea, it is to include all these kinds of darkness that the word, *Ẓulumāt*, has been used here.

So, the verse means that it was to warn the disbelievers of Makkah against their wrong doings that Allah Ta'ālā ordered the Holy Prophet ﷺ to ask these people as to what they do when they find themselves in deep trouble during their land trips and sea voyages. Is it not that they would forget all about their idols and start calling on none but Allah? At times, they would confess to their modesty and helplessness openly, while at others, they would be admitting it in the heart of their hearts that no one other than Allah could really save them from such catastrophe. And along with this thought, they would promise to Allah that, should Allah save them from this catastropy, they would definitely take to the ways of following truth and being grateful. In other words, once delivered, they would be grateful to Allah, would take Him as their real rescuer and helper, never ascribing any partner to His Divinity because no one they have been worshiping came up to help them in their hour of need. With this experience of theirs in view, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم is being asked to find out from them as to who delivers them from their distress and possible destruction? Since their answer was already known as they could have not denied the open fact that no one came to help them in their distress, idol or whatever else they worshipped, except Allah. Therefore, in the second verse (64), Al-

lah Almighty has Himself taken the initiative and commanded the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to tell these people that it is Allah alone who would deliver them from their distress, rather deliver them from every other distress or anxiety they may face in their lives. But, the problem was that they, despite having seen open signs and having found comfort after distress, would go back to *Shirk* and start indulging in the worship of false gods. Strange betrayal and fatal ignorance indeed!

Not only that these two verses tell us about the perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā which delivers human beings from their hour of distress, it also emphasizes that the removal of all sorts of hardships, troubles and anxieties is also in the hands of Allah Ta'ālā alone as evident from the behaviour of diehard disbelievers too who are ultimately compelled to turn to Allah when there is nothing left to turn to.

The Moral

May be, this behaviour of the disbelievers, despite its being a major crime in view of their betrayal, has a certain lesson to teach. That they do turn to Allah in the hour of their distress, as their confession of reality under duress, has for us Muslims a lesson to learn with the rasp of a lash - here we are still not prompt enough to remember Allah in our hour of trials despite having faith in the absolute power of Allah Ta'ālā. What happens is that all our attention is rivetted only to material support which we hope would get us out of trouble. No doubt, we do not take idols, icons and images as our saviours, but the tragic fact is that the many material support systems, logistics, mechanized rescuing squads on land, sea and in the air, and the backup of spot and distant instrumentations, have become no less than idols for us. So impressed with them and so engrossed in them we are that we somehow do not seem to think of Allah and His most perfect power.

Accidents and Hardships : The Real Remedy

Take sickness as an example. When we get sick, we think of nothing but our doctors and physicians. Take the example of a storm or flood. Once in it, we look forward to being rescued with material help and material means. We think on them depends our destiny, and in doing so, we just do not seem to remember the very Master of the universe in Whose control lies our destiny. We tend to do this, despite

that the Holy Qur'ān has, time and again, stated it very clearly that hardships and accidents of the world are generally the outcome of the evil deeds of human beings themselves, and a mild sampling of the punishment of the Hereafter. If looked at from this angle, these hardships are, in a way, mercy for Muslims - for, through them, heedless people are, so to say, given a shot in the arm, so that they may use this occasion to survey their evil deeds and start thinking about how not to indulge in them anymore whereby they could remain safe from the greater and harsher punishment of the Hereafter. The same subject has been taken up elsewhere in the Holy Qur'ān in the following words:

وَلَنُذِيقَنَّهُمْ مِّنَ الْعَذَابِ الْأَدْنٰى دُوْنَ الْعَذَابِ الْأَكْبَرِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُوْنَ

> We shall make them taste a lesser punishment, prior to the greater punishment, so that they may return - 32:21.

Says another verse of the Qur'ān:

وَمَآ أَصَابَكُمْ مِّنْ مُّصِيْبَةٍ فَبِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِيْكُمْ وَ يَعْفُوْ عَنْ كَثِيْرٍ ،

> The hardship that reaches you is an outcome of your evil deeds while many of them Allah forgives - 42:30.

Talking about the verse of Sūrah Ash-Shūrā quoted above, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

> By Him in whose hands lies my life, the common scratch from a piece of wood suffered by a human being, or a faltering of step or an itching in vein are all after-effects of some sin while the sins which Allah Ta'ālā forgives are many.

As said by 'Allāma Al-Bayḍāwī, it means that the diseases and calamities faced by criminals and sinners are all vestiges of sins while the diseases and calamities of those who are infallible to or protected from sins are there to test their patience and fortitude, and to bless them with the higher ranks of Paradise.

So, the essential outcome is that the diseases, accidents, hardships, pain and anxiety faced even by human beings at large - who are not free of sins - are all the consequences and vestiges of sins.

This also tells us that the real cure and the primary way out of all such distressing happenings is that people should turn to Allah *Jalla*

Sha'nuhu, seek forgiveness from Him for all their past sins, and firmly resolve that they would abstain from them in the future, and pray to Him alone that He, in His mercy, removes their hardships.

However, it never means that the use of material means through medicine and treatment while sick, or to employ material methods of confronting accidents and calamities when struck by them, are useless efforts. Instead of that, the purpose is to emphasize that we should believe in Allah Ta'ālā as the prime mover and maker of things and happenings and, as for the use of material means, we should use them too taking them to be nothing but His blessing, because all means and intruments are invariably His creation and His blessings which serve human beings under His command and will. The fire, the air, the water, the dust, and all forces on the face of the earth are but subservient to the command of Allah Ta'ālā. Unless He so wills, neither can the fire burn, nor can water extinguish, nor a medicine bring benefit, nor some food hurt. Experience bears the truth that human beings once they become heedless to Allah Ta'ālā and start relying on their self-invented defence mechanisms what happens is that with every addition to their material logistics, there comes a relative increase in concerns and calamities.

That a medicine or clinical procedure may turn out to be personally beneficial at a given time, or a material way out to some problem may succeed, is quite possible even when one is involved with heedlessness and sin. But, when looked at collectively, in the perspective of the whole creation of Allah, all manifestations of the reliance on the material appear to be unsuccessful. Today, the number and variety of articles and instruments invented to remove pain and drudgery and to provide comfort and luxury with a gusto that knows no stopping, are things man had not even dreamt of only half a century ago. Who does not know that people at that time were totally deprived of ever-new life-saving drugs, medicine delivery systems, procedures, surgeries, experts, technicians, labs and hospitals and nursing homes? But, seen in a wider perspective, man deprived of all these facilities fifty years ago, was not as sick and harassed as the man of late nineties. Similarly, we have vaccines to fight against epidemics, mechanized units to control fire, medical and para-medical squads to cover accidents, and an

overseeing communications system which would hasten emergency information, relevant support of professionals and equipment. But, somehow the more we increase our material defences against accidents and calamities, the more we seem to be affected by them. To what reason could we ascribe this except that during the period now behind us the measure of heedlessness to and disobedience of the Creator of the universe of our existence was not as pronounced as it is in our day. Those people used their articles of comfort as blessings from Allah Ta'ālā for which they were grateful too. But, the modern man wants to use these conveniences with a sense of hightened self-achievement which is rebellion in disguise. Naturally enough, despite all instrumentations and gadgeteries, men and materials, they cannot make people immune from being hit by such hardships.

Summing up the main elements of our explanations, we can say that Muslims should specially take a lesson from this reference to disbelievers that they too remembered Allah when in distress. It is the duty of a true Muslim that he should, in order to remove his pain and anxiety in distress, first rely on and turn to Allah Ta'ālā, much more than simply relying on and turning to the material solutions of his trying situation. If he fails to do that, he will meet the same end being witnessed today. Plans will generally fall flat. A thousand efforts are made to stop floods and to minimize losses caused by them, but they keep coming. Ever-new methods of treating diseases are found and used, but diseases keep increasing. Devices and theories are employed to check rising prices of things - which seem to be effective too, though on the surface - but the result on the whole is that prices keep rising on almost a daily basis. Think of crimes like theft, robbery, kidnaping, bribery and smuggling. Governments all over the world, including the most advanced, are employing all sorts of material means to stop them. But, common people do not have to look into a crime graph to find out what is happening - they see that crimes are increasing. We can only wish that human beings of the modern era would do well by rising a little bit higher than the levels of person, identity, profit and loss, and surveying conditions prevailing, then, they would come to realize that, when seen collectively, all our material efforts have failed, in fact, they are compounding our problems. Then, if they were to look at the remedy proposed by the Qur'ān which tells us that there is only

one way of staying safe from all kinds of hardship, and that is to turn to the Creator of the universe. Whatever material solutions there are, they are fine, they too should be used as blessings from Him. Other than this, there is no way to ideal security.

Verses 65 - 67

قُلْ هُوَ الْقَادِرُ عَلَىٰٓ اَنْ يَّبْعَثَ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابًا مِّنْ فَوْقِكُمْ اَوْ
مِنْ تَحْتِ اَرْجُلِكُمْ اَوْ يَلْبِسَكُمْ شِيَعًا وَّيُذِيْقَ بَعْضَكُمْ بَاْسَ
بَعْضٍ ۗ اُنْظُرْ كَيْفَ نُصَرِّفُ الْاٰيٰتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَفْقَهُوْنَ ﴿٦٥﴾
وَكَذَّبَ بِهٖ قَوْمُكَ وَهُوَ الْحَقُّ ۗ قُلْ لَّسْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ بِوَكِيْلٍ ﴿٦٦﴾
لِكُلِّ نَبَاٍ مُّسْتَقَرٌّ وَّسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٦٧﴾

Say, "He is fully capable that He should send a punishment from above you or from beneath your feet, or to put you in confusion through divisions and make some of you taste troubles through some others." See how We bring forth a variety of Verses, so that they may understand. [65] **And your people have belied it despite its being the truth.**

Say, "I have not been entrusted with your task. [66] **For every event there is a point (of time and place) to occur, and (that) you will know."** [67]

Commentary

Mentioned in the previous verses was one manifestation of the knowledge and power of Allah Almighty that He alone can remove human distress and whoever calls on Him while in difficulty shall find His help before his eyes. The reason is that He is perfectly powerful over the whole universe and He is also perfectly merciful to His entire creation. No one else has that perfect power and universal mercy.

Mentioned in the present verses is another side of His perfect power - that He can punish any individual or group for its contumacy if He wills to do so. And doing so is easy for Him. To punish a criminal, He needs no police or army or helper like the rulers of the mortal world. This aspect was stated by saying: هُوَ الْقَادِرُ عَلَىٰٓ اَنْ يَّبْعَثَ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابًا مِّنْ فَوْقِكُمْ اَوْ مِنْ تَحْتِ

أَرْجُلِكُمْ أَوْ يَلْبِسَكُمْ شِيَعًا (He is fully capable that He should send a punishment from above you or from beneath your feet, or to put you in confusion through divisions).

Three Kinds of Divine Punishment

Identified here are three kinds of Divine Punishment: (1) That which comes from above, (2) that which comes from beneath, and (3) that which spreads out from within. Then, by bringing the word, ' عَذَابًا ' with nunnation (*tanwin*) on an indefinite noun (*nakirah*), a warning - as admitted by the rules of Arabic grammar - has been served that there could be different sub-divisions and forms within these three kind.

According to commentators of the Qur'ān, there have been many examples of punishment coming from above among past communities as the flood which came upon the people of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام, the wind storm which overtook the people of 'Ād, the raining of stones on the people of Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام, the raining of blood and frogs upon the Banī Isrā'īl and the pelting of pebbles by flights of birds on the People of the Elephant (*aṣḥāb al-fīl*) when they invaded Makkah which left all of them reduced to chaff chewed out.

Similarly, various forms of the coming of punishment from beneath have also appeared among past communities. For the people of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام there already was the punishment from above in the form of rain-storm, then they were also caught up in the punishment from beneath when the water under the ground started forcing out whereby they came into the grip of two punishments at the same time, that is, the punishment from above and the punishment from beneath. The people of the Pharaoh were drowned in the punishment from beneath their feet. Qārūn (Korah) fell a victim to this very punishment when he, along with his legendary treasures, sank down into the earth as if swallowed by it.

Early *Tafsīr* authorities, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه and Mujāhid have said that the punishment from above means that cruel rulers and merciless officials come to rule over a people while the punishment from beneath means that one's own subordinates and servants turn into traitors, idlers and thieves.

Some sayings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ also confirm the *Tafsīr* of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās given above. The saying of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم which follows has been reported in Mishkāt with reference to Shu'abul-Īmān of Al-Baihaqī: كَمَا تَكُوْنُوْنَ كَذٰلِكَ يُؤَمَّرُ عَلَيْكُمْ , that is, 'as are your deeds, good or bad, so shall be your rulers and officials set upon you.' It means : If you are good, and obedient to Allah Ta'ālā, your rulers and officials will also be merciful and just. And if your deeds are evil, you will find that merciless and unjust rulers and officials have been set upon you.' The well-known saying: اَعْمَالُكُمْ عُمَّالُكُمْ (Your deeds : your rulers) means just the same.

According to a narration from Abī Nu'aym in his Hilyah appearing in Mishkāt, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has been reported to have said:

> Allah Ta'ālā says: I am Allah. There is no god worthy of worship but Me. I am the Master of kings. And I am the Sovereign. The hearts of kings are in My hands. When My servants obey Me, I pour mercy in the hearts of their kings and officials. And when My servants disobey Me, I harden the hearts of their rulers against them. They make them taste all kinds of evil punishments. Therefore, do not waste your energy in speaking ill of the rulers and officials. Turn to Allah and correct your deeds so that I may put your affairs right.

Similarly, there is a narration from Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا in Abū Dāwūd and Nasā'ī in which the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم is reported to have said:

> When Allah Ta'ālā wishes well for a ruler, He gives them a good minister and deputy so that he may remind the ruler if he forgets something, and who helps the ruler when he acts right. And when some evil is destined for a ruler, evil people are made his ministers and deputies.

In the light of these *Ḥadīth* narrations and the explanation of related verses, the outcome is that hardships faced by people at the hands of their rulers are a punishment which comes from above - and that which is inflicted through servants and subordinates is a punishment which comes from beneath. They are no stray accidents. In fact, they are a punishment of one's deeds under a Divine law. Imām Sufyān

Ath-Thawrī said: When a sin gets to be committed by me, I see its effect on my servant, even on my horse I ride and the donkey I use to carry my things. I can feel the change in their temper because all of them start disobeying me. Maulānā Rūmi, in his famous Mathnawī, says that Allah Ta'ālā, by putting you under the apparent punishment which causes pain to you through ill-treatment at the hands of your cruel rulers or faithless subordinates in this mortal world, actually wishes to turn your attention towards Himself, so that you get alerted and start trying to make your deeds good, and as a result of which, you may save yourself from the much greater punishment of the Hereafter.

To sum up, we can say that, according to the *Tafsīr* of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās, the oppression of rulers is the punishment which comes from above, and the dishonesty, idling and treachery of subordinates is the punishment which comes from beneath, and the remedy for both is the same - that everyone should look back and examine what each one has done, leave paths of error, avoid being disobedient to Allah, then, nature will be commanded to take its desired course creating conditions which would remove the hardship. Otherwise, trying to remove them and correct the situation through material ways and means alone will be nothing but self-deception, an experience we have been having all the time.

The different explanations of the punishment from above and from beneath which you have heard just now are really no different from each other - because the word, عَذَابًا (*'adhāban*) meaning 'punishment,' which appears in this verse , in fact, embraces all these explanations. Punishments coming from the skies like the rocks, pebbles, blood, fire, flood, and the oppression of rulers, are all included under the punishment from above. As for the parting of the earth and the sinking of a people in it, or being drowned in water forcing out from the earth, or becoming a victim of problems at the hands of subordinates, all these are punishments from beneath.

There is a third kind of punishment mentioned in this verse, and that is: أَوْ يَلْبِسَكُمْ شِيَعًا (or put you in confusion through divisions ...). It means that you may be split into parties confronting each other and it becomes a punishment from within. The word, يَلْبِسَكُمْ (*yalbisakum*

translated as 'put you in confusion') used here comes from the root: لبس (*labasa*) which basically means to hide or cover up. It is in that sense it is used to refer to clothes which cover the human body. And for this reason, its derivation: التباس (*iltibās*) is used in the sense of doubt, where the meaning of what is said remains hidden, that is, it is not open and clear.

As for the word: شيع (*shiya'*), it is the plural form of: شيعة (*shi'ah*) which means to be a follower, adherent or partisan of someone. It appears in the Holy Qur'ān: وَاِنَّ مِنْ شِيْعَتِهٖ لَاِبْرٰهِيْمَ that is, 'following in the footsteps of Nūḥ عليه السلام is Ibrāhīm عليه السلام - 37:83.' Therefore, in common usage, the word: شيعة (*shi'ah*) is used to denote a group which gets together for a particular purpose, and its members help each other in achieving that purpose. In the current idiom, it would mean a faction or party.

So, the verse could be translated in the sense that one kind of '*Adhāb*' (punishment) is that a nation or community breaks up into factions and parties and starts confronting each other. Therefore, when this verse was revealed, the Holy Prophet ﷺ addressed Muslims and told them:

لَا تَرْجِعُوْا بَعْدِیْ کُفَّارًا یَّضْرِبُ بَعْضُکُمْ رِقَابَ بَعْضٍ

> Do not renege after me becoming like disbelievers striking at the necks of each other. (Deduced by Ibn Abī Ḥātim from Zayd ibn Aslam as in Maẓharī)

Sayyidnā Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ رضی اللہ عنہ says: Once we were going with the Messenger of Allah صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم. When we reached Masjid Banī Mu'āwiyah, the Messenger of Allah صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم went into the *Masjid* and offered two *raka'ah* of Ṣalāh. We too offered two *raka'ah*. After that, he became busy with *Du'ā*, and kept praying for a fairly long time. After that, he said: 'I asked my *Rabb* for three things: (1) My *Ummah* may not be destroyed by drowning: Allah Ta'ālā answered this prayer; (2) My *Ummah* may not be destroyed by famine and hunger: This too was answered; (3) My *Ummah* may not be destroyed by infighting: I was stopped from making this prayer.' (Maẓharī with reference to Baghawī)

Another *Ḥadīth* on the same subject has been reported from Sayy-

idnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ where one of the three prayers is that 'may Allah not set an enemy upon my *Ummah* who destroys all of them.' This prayer was answered. As for infighting and mutual confrontation, he was forbidden from making the prayer.

These narrations prove that, though the kind of punishments which visited earlier communities from above them and from beneath them and which destroyed all of them, will not visit the *Ummah* of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم - but, there is one '*Adhāb*' (punishment) which will keep visiting this *Ummah* too during their life in the present world. That '*Adhāb*' is their infighting and the mutual confrontation between their factions and parties. It was for this reason that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has emphatically forbidden his *Ummah* from becoming divided in sects, factions and parties and from challenging and fighting each other among themselves. Actually, he has, on every possible occasion, tried to put the fear of Allah in every heart by warning that the Divine punishment, if it has to come upon Muslims within their life in this mortal world, it will come because of nothing else but their mutual confrontation and infighting.

This subject has been further clarified in a verse of Sūrah Hūd where it is said:

وَلَا يَزَالُوْنَ مُخْتَلِفِيْنَ اِلَّا مَنْ رَّحِمَ رَبُّكَ (هود)

But they will continue in their differences, except those whom Allah has blessed with mercy - 11:118

In this light, it becomes all the more clear that those who differ with each other (without a valid Islamic legal justification) are either deprived of Divine mercy, or far-removed from it. Before we move on to analyse the subject, quoted below are two verses from Sūrah 'Āl-'Imrān which would make the problem easier to understand:

وَاعْتَصِمُوْا بِحَبْلِ اللّٰهِ جَمِيْعًا وَّلَا تَفَرَّقُوْا

And hold on to the cord of Allah, all of you, and be not divided - 3:103

وَلَا تَكُوْنُوْا كَالَّذِيْنَ تَفَرَّقُوْا وَاخْتَلَفُوْا

And do not be like those who became divided and fell into disputes ... - 3:105

The Anatomy and Rationale of Differences

The essence of all *Āyāt* and *Riwāyāt* (Verses and *Ḥadīth* Narrations) presented here is that difference is ill-fated and blameworthy. If we were to ponder over the causes of the decline and dismemberment of Muslims materially and spiritually, we will see that the root of most troubles lies in this very mutual difference and discord we are talking about. Unfortunately, as a result of our own misdeeds, this '*Adhāb*' has come to sit on our heads like an octopus. Otherwise, we were a people whose pivot of unity was one single *Kalimah* of لَآ إِلٰهَ إِلَّا اللّٰهُ مُحَمَّدٌ رَّسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ (There is no god worthy of worship but Allah, Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah). All men and women having faith in this *Kalimah*, anywhere on this earth, speaking any language, of any colour, of any race, any lineage, were brothers and sisters to each other. Mountains and rivers were no handicap in their unity. The difference of race, family, colour and language were no hurdles in their way. Their unity was tied with this *Kalimah* irrespective of their nationality. That they were Arabs or Egyptians or Syrians or Turks or Indian or Chinese did not matter. These divisions were simply for the sake of identity and introduction, and that was it, no more. The poet of neo-Islamic Renaissance, Muḥammad Iqbal summarized it by saying:

درویشِ خدامست نہ شرقی ھے نہ غربی
گھر اس کا نہ دلّی نہ صفاہان نہ سمر قند

The dervish of Allah cares not
For he is neither of the East, nor of the West
For him there is no home
Neither Delhi, nor Isfahan, nor Samarqand ...

In our day, intrigues backed by constantly concerted efforts have succeeded in dividing them once again into racial, linguistic and regional nationalities. Worse came to happen when these very entities, hit by internal disruption and chaos, ended up splitting themselves into many more additonal factions. The people whose hallmark was to forgive, forego and sacrifice even in the case of others when they would readily surrender their most just rights for the sake of avoiding confrontation now have many individuals within their fold who would not hesitate to sacrifice even the most precious relationship for the sake of the cheapest and the meanest of gains. This is the difference born out

of self-interest, wanton desires and fancies which is a bad omen for any community or nation, and certainly a cash punishment for them right here in the present world.

However, it is necessary to understand at this point the difference which has been declared in the Qur'ān as Divine punishment, and deprivation from Divine mercy, is that particular difference which either appears in Principles and Beliefs or is because of self-interest, wanton desires and fancies. Not included here is the particular difference of opinion which was based on the Principles of *Ijtihad* carried out in the light of the Qur'ān and Sunnah, and it was under these Principles that the difference of opinion in subsidiary matters and *masā'il* has continued being there among the jurists (*Fuqahā'*) of the Muslim *Ummah* from the early period of *Ṣaḥābah* (Companions) and *Tābi'īn*. (Successors to Companions). It should be borne in mind that in these subsidiary matters, the frame of reference under which such difference of opinion may show up is restricted to Qur'ān, Sunnah and *Ijmā'* (consensus). Here, the intention of everyone is to obey and act in accordance with the injunctions of Qur'ān and Sunnah. But, the difference which emerges here is that of *Ijtihad* and opinion in the duduction of solutions to subsidiary problems as interpreted from words left condensed or ambiguous in the Qur'ān and Sunnah. Such difference has been called *Raḥmah* or mercy in *Ḥadīth*.

The following narration has been reported in Al-Jāmi' Al-Saghīr [with reference to Naṣr Maqdisī, Baihaqī & Imām al-Haramayn]: اِخْتِلَافُ أُمَّتِیْ رَحْمَةٌ (The difference of my *Ummah* is mercy). It has been made particular to the community of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم because any difference which arises among the *'Ulamā'*, who uphold nothing but the truth, and Muslim jurists who are unalienably God-fearing, shall always be governed by the principles of the Qur'ān and Sunnah. Then, this would be with an intention which is absolutely true and with an approach which is inevitably for the good pleasure of Allah. This difference will never be motivated by any self-interest or desire for recognition, office or money. Therefore, that difference will never become the cause of confrontations. Instead of that, as determined by 'Allama 'Abdur-Rauf al-Munāwī, the commentator of Al-Jāmi' Al-Saghīr, the different approaches (*Maslak*) of the jurists of Muslim community will have the

same status which was given to different religious law systems of the blessed prophets in past periods of time - in that they all were, despite being different, nothing but the very injunctions of Allah. Thus, the different approaches (*Maslak*) credited to the great Mujtahid Imāms of the Muslim *Ummah* shall be called, because of their being under the principles of the Qur'ān and Sunnah, nothing but the commandments and injunctions of Allah and *Rasūl*.

An example of such difference based on *Ijtihād* can be readily seen on the main streets of our cities where the streets are demarcated into various sections or lanes for the convenience of those who move on them. A section would be used by buses while another by cars and vans. Similarly, a section of the street may be reserved for cyclists and pedestrians. Though this division of one main street into several lanes is outwardly a form of difference but, since everyone is headed in one single direction and everyone moving through each lane will ultimately reach one desired destination. Therefore, this difference of routes or approaches, rather than being harmful, is functionally useful for all movers - a lot of space and mercy indeed.

This is the reason why leading Mujtahid Imāms and the Jurists of the Muslim Community agree that the *Maslak* or approach taken by any of them is not false, and it is not permissible for anyone to call those who follow it as being sinners. The essence of the difference in *Madhab* or approaches or schools of thought represented by Mujtahid Imāms and Jurists has a limited frame of reference. The approach taken by one Mujtahid happens to be weightier in his sight, but he himself would not call the approach of another Mujtahid as false. In fact, they pay due regard and respect to each other. A look into the mutual relationships of the jurists (*Fuqahā'*) among the *Ṣaḥābah* and *Tābi'īn.* and the four leading Mujtahid Imāms and the events and happenings surrounding them are open testimony to the fact that, despite their differences in technical, intellectual and juristic approaches, they had excellent mutual working relationships, giving each other full respect and recognition. That they would be arrayed against each other in rancour, hostility and infighting was absolutely out of question in their case. The same spirit and *modus operandi* continued with those who later on came as followers of the main juristic schools - as far as

they remained adhering to sound knowledge and honest attitude, their mutual relationships remained based on cordiality and respect like their predecessors.

This is the difference we are talking about. This difference is mercy indeed, for people a source of myriad openings and conveniences and leaves, and certainly a reservoir of beneficial results. As far as subsidiary questions are concerned, the truth is that the difference of proponents in them is not harmful, if it remains within its proper bounds. In fact, it serves as an aid in enlarging and identifying different aspects of a question which makes it possible to arrive at a sound resolution of the problem. It goes without saying that in a meeting of honest minds, the absence of some difference of opinion about a question is just not conceivable. Something like this can happen among a set of people who cannot or do not understand the problem at all, or among pragmatic secular people who would not hesitate to agree to an opinion, even though against their conscience, just to accomodate some party, pressure group or interest lobby.

So, difference of opinion which is within its bounds, that is, not in the categorical imperatives of the Qur'ān and Sunnah concerning articles of faith and decisive injunctions, and which is only in subsidiary questions requiring *Ijtihād* , and that too where the definitive texts of Qur'ān and Sunnah are either silent or ambiguous, and again if the effort so made does not go to the outer limit of name calling, blame throwing and infighting, then, that difference of opinion will, instead of being harmful, be beneficial - a blessing and mercy. Think of this universe of our experience. Things differ in shape, form, colour, smell, property and functional benefits. There are countless living organisms. They differ, so do human beings, different temperaments, occupations, skills, ways of living - these differences are the charm of living which provides open avenues of countless benefits.

Many people who are not aware of this reality, would look down even upon the normal differences in the legal solution of problems (*fatāwa*) credited to great Jurists and true *'Ulamā.'* They are heard complaining: When *'Ulamā'* differ, where do we go? Frankly, this is a simple matter. Take the example of a sick person about whose condition physicians differ. Naturally everyone tries to find out a physician

who has the desired experience and technical expertise and he is the one entrusted with the charge of treating the patient. No one goes out speaking ill of other doctors in town. The same thing happens in legal cases. Lawyers may differ in their opinions. Naturally people entrust their case to a lawyer who is effecient and experienced in their estimation, and act on his advice. They do not run around maligning others in that profession. This principle should be operative here too. When the *Fatāwa* given by *'Ulamā'* about a problem turn out to be different (reasons to be investigated in the parameters of the original inquiry), then, one should make his best efforts to locate an *'Ālim* who, in their judgement, is better than others in *'Ilm* (expertise in religious knowledge) and *Taqwā* (fear of Allah, fear of being responsible before Him) and follow the advice given by him. There is no need for them to waste their time in finding fault with other *'Ulamā.'*

In I'lām Al-Muwwaqqi'īn, 'Allāmah Ḥāfiẓ ibn al-Qaiyyim has reported that the choice of an expert Mufti - and in case of a difference of opinion, the giving of preference to the *Fatwā* of an *'Ālim* who, in the opinion of the seeker, is the best of all in *'Ilm* and *Taqwā* - is the duty of every Muslim himself who has such a problem on hand. That he starts giving preference to one of the different *Fatāwa* of *'Ulamā* is certainly not his job. But, it is no one's job but his own that he should act according to the *Fatwā* of anyone from among the Muftīs and *'Ālims* whom he considers the best in knowledge and honesty. After that, he should not go about denouncing other Muftīs and 'Ālims. Once a person has done what is required of him, he is totally free of blame in the sight of Allah. In case, the giver of *Fatwā* did make a mistake in the real sense, then, he himself will be responsible for it.

In short, not every difference is absolutely blameworthy, nor every agreement absolutely praiseworthy and desirable. If thieves, robbers and rebels were to join hands and form a union of their own, who would not take this union of theirs blameworthy and fatal for the society. Contrary to this, police action or public protest against such groups is considered praiseworthy and beneficial by all reasonable people.

This tells us that the problem does not lie in difference of opinion, nor does it lie in acting according to a particular opinion, instead, all

problems show up when others are suspected and slandered - which is an outcome of lack of knowledge and honesty and plenty of self-serving desires and fancies. When a nation or country stoops to that level, this merciful difference is changed into punishing difference. Of all the people, Muslims themselves split into parties, fight among themselves, even do the impossible by killing each other. Hurling insults on others is taken to be a defence of religious position, although, religion has nothing to do with such excess and aggression. In fact, this is the confrontation and fighting which has been sternly prohibited by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. In authentic *Āḥadīth*, it has been cited as the cause of peoples and nations going astray. (Tirmidhī, Ibn Mājah)

In the second verse (66), after mentioning the anti-truth stand taken by the Quraysh of Makkah, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, also from the same tribe, has been instructed that he should tell those people asking about the precise time when the promised punishment will come that he has not been appointed to do that for them. The truth is that for everything there is a point of time as determined in Divine knowledge. It will come at its own time, and they will see for themselves what happens when it does.

Verses 68 - 73

وَإِذَا رَأَيْتَ الَّذِيْنَ يَخُوْضُوْنَ فِيْٓ اٰيٰتِنَا فَاَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ حَتّٰى
يَخُوْضُوْا فِيْ حَدِيْثٍ غَيْرِهٖ ۚ وَإِمَّا يُنْسِيَنَّكَ الشَّيْطٰنُ فَلَا تَقْعُدْ
بَعْدَ الذِّكْرٰى مَعَ الْقَوْمِ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٦٨﴾ وَمَا عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ يَتَّقُوْنَ
مِنْ حِسَابِهِمْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ وَّلٰكِنْ ذِكْرٰى لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُوْنَ ﴿٦٩﴾
وَذَرِ الَّذِيْنَ اتَّخَذُوْا دِيْنَهُمْ لَعِبًا وَّلَهْوًا وَّغَرَّتْهُمُ الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَا
وَذَكِّرْ بِهٖٓ اَنْ تُبْسَلَ نَفْسٌۢ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ ۖ لَيْسَ لَهَا مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ وَلِيٌّ
وَّلَا شَفِيْعٌ ۚ وَإِنْ تَعْدِلْ كُلَّ عَدْلٍ لَّا يُؤْخَذْ مِنْهَا ۗ اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ
اُبْسِلُوْا بِمَا كَسَبُوْا ۚ لَهُمْ شَرَابٌ مِّنْ حَمِيْمٍ وَّعَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌۢ بِمَا كَانُوْا
يَكْفُرُوْنَ ﴿٧٠﴾ قُلْ اَنَدْعُوْا مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ مَا لَا يَنْفَعُنَا وَلَا يَضُرُّنَا

وَنُرَدُّ عَلَىٰٓ أَعْقَابِنَا بَعْدَ إِذْ هَدَىٰنَا اللَّهُ كَالَّذِي اسْتَهْوَتْهُ الشَّيٰطِينُ
فِي الْأَرْضِ حَيْرَانَ لَهُۥٓ أَصْحٰبٌ يَدْعُونَهُۥٓ إِلَى الْهُدَى ائْتِنَا ۗ قُلْ
إِنَّ هُدَى اللَّهِ هُوَ الْهُدَىٰ ۖ وَأُمِرْنَا لِنُسْلِمَ لِرَبِّ الْعٰلَمِينَ ﴿٧١﴾ وَأَنْ
أَقِيمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاتَّقُوهُ ۚ وَهُوَ الَّذِيٓ إِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ ﴿٧٢﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِي
خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ ۖ وَيَوْمَ يَقُولُ كُن فَيَكُونُ ۚ قَوْلُهُ
الْحَقُّ ۚ وَلَهُ الْمُلْكُ يَوْمَ يُنفَخُ فِي الصُّورِ ۚ عٰلِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهٰدَةِ ۚ
وَهُوَ الْحَكِيمُ الْخَبِيرُ ﴿٧٣﴾

And when you see those who indulge in our verses adversely, turn away from them until they get busy with some other discourse. If Satan makes you forget, then, after the recollection, do not sit with the unjust people. [68] **And those who fear Allah bear no responsibility for anything they are accountable for, but only for advising them, so that they may fear Allah.** [69]

And avoid those who have taken their faith as game and play and the worldly life has deceived them, and preach with it (the Qur'an), lest one should be detained for what he earned, having none to help besides Allah, nor to intercede, and if he offers every ransom, it will not be accepted from him. They are those who are detained for what they earned. For them there is a drink of boiling water and a painful punishment, because they used to disbelieve. [70]

Say, "Should we call someone besides Allah, which can give neither benefit nor harm, and should we turn back on our heels after Allah has given us guidance, like the one whom the satans have taken away far into the wilderness leaving him bewildered; he has friends who call him to the right path (saying), "come to us." Say, "Allah's guidance is the guidance, and we have been ordered to submit to the Lord of the worlds, [71] **and establish Ṣalāh, and fear Him. And He is the One before whom you are to be gathered.** [72] **And He is the One who created the heavens and the earth in all rightness, and the day He says, "Be" and it comes to be. His word**

is the truth and His is the kingdom on the day the Horn shall be blown. He is the knower of the absent and the present, and He is Wise, All-Aware. [73]

Commentary

Avoid Gatherings of False People

In the present verses, Muslims have been instructed that they should, as a matter of principle, abstain from being a part of the gatherings frequented by those who prefer to follow the false - because a sin is a sin, whether you do it yourself or watch others doing it. Details follow.

The word: يَخُوضُونَ (translated here as 'indulge') in the first verse (68) is from: خَوْض (*khawḍ*) which basically means to enter into water and wade through it. Then, it also denotes entering into activities which are vain, absurd or futile. This word has been used in the Qur'ān usually in this very sense. Verses such as: وَكُنَّا نَخُوضُ مَعَ الْخَائِضِينَ 'we used to indulge (in vain discourse) with those indulging - 74:45' and: فِي خَوْضِهِمْ يَلْعَبُونَ 'playing with what they are indulged in - 6:91' are some examples.

Therefore, the Qur'ānic expression referring to: خَوْض فِي الْآيَاتِ has been translated by Maulānā Ashraf Alī Thānavī and Shaykh al-Hind, Maulanā Maḥmūd al-Ḥasan in the sense of fault-finding and disputing, which means: 'when you see those people meddling in the Āyat of Allah just for fun and ridicule, or trying to find faults in them, turn away from them.'

The address in this verse is general, to everyone - which includes the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and the members of his community as well. The truth of the matter is that the address to the Holy Prophet ﷺ is there only to let Muslims at large hear it, otherwise he never participated in any such gatherings even during his childhood days. Therefore, he needed no prohibition.

Then, 'turning away' from the gatherings of false people could take many forms. For example, leave the gathering or get busy doing something else while being there without paying any attention to them. But, at the end of the verse, it was made clear that the first form is what is desirable, that is, one should not keep sitting in their gathering; one should rise and leave from there.

Said at the end of the verse was 'if Satan makes you forget', that is, if one went into their gathering unmindfully - whether while not remembering the prohibition of participating in such gatherings, or while not recalling that these people talk against the *Āyāt* of Allah and the *Rasūl* of Allah in their gatherings - then, in either situation, once it is remembered, one should leave that gathering immediately. To keep sitting there after having remembered is a sin. The same subject appears in another verse where, at the end, it has been said: If you kept sitting there, you will be like them (إِنَّكُمْ إِذًا مِّثْلُهُمْ : 4:140).

In *Tafsīr* Kabir, Imām al-Rāzī has said that the real intent in this verse is to abstain from such sinful gatherings and their participants. The best course is to rise and depart from there. But, should leaving the gathering pose a danger to one's life, property or honour, it is permissible for common people to "turn away" in some other manner, for instance, they could make themselves busy with something else and pay no attention to them. But, the case is different with particular people who are followed in religious matters - for them, the only appropriate way is to rise and leave the gathering.

Going a little further in our understanding of the sentence: وَإِمَّا يُنسِيَنَّكَ الشَّيْطَٰنُ (And if Satan makes you forget) mentioned above, let us consider its implications. If this is addressed to Muslims at large, it is clear that to forget is human - and if the address is to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, the question arises: If forgetfulness comes to affect a prophet and messenger of Allah as well, how can their teachings be trusted?

The answer is: It is possible that prophets عليهم السلام too forget something under particular circumstances where the divine wisdom decides to make it so happen to achieve a particular purpose, but they are immediately alerted by Allah Ta'ālā through Waḥy which helps them not to let it last. Therefore, their teachings ultimately become free of any doubts of forgetfulness.

However, this sentence of the verse does tell us that should a person fall into an error inadvertently, that will stand forgiven. In a *Ḥadīth* of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, it has been said:

رُفِعَ عَنْ أُمَّتِي الْخَطَأُ وَالنِّسْيَانُ وَمَا اسْتُكْرِهُوا عَلَيْهِ

Removed from my *Ummah* is (the sin of) error and forgetting

and that which one has been compelled to do.

In Aḥkām al-Qur'ān, Imām al-Jaṣṣāṣ has said:

> This verse tells that Muslims should abstain from every such gathering where things are being said against Allah Ta'ālā, His *Rasūl* صلى الله عليه وسلم and the Sharī'ah of Islam and where it is not within one's power and control to stop or have it stopped, or, at the least, be able to say what is true and right. However, participating in such a gathering with the intention to reform and to carry the message of truth to them does not matter.

As for the statement: فَلَا تَقْعُدْ بَعْدَ الذِّكْرٰى مَعَ الْقَوْمِ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ which prohibits sitting with unjust people after the recollection, Imām al-Jassās has deduced the ruling that participating in the gathering of such unjust, irreligious and big-mouthed people is an absolute sin, whether or not, at that time, they are engaged in talking about what would be considered impermissible - because people of such nature could be expected to start their ridiculous rantings all of a sudden. This rule is deduced from this verse on the basis that sitting in the company of unjust people has been prohibited in this verse in an absolute sense. It does not have the condition that they be busy with their act of injustice at that time too.

The same subject has been taken up in another verse of the Holy Qur'ān more explicitly where it is said: وَلَا تَرْكَنُوْٓا اِلَى الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا فَتَمَسَّكُمُ النَّارُ (And do not incline towards the wrong doers, lest the Fire should catch you ... 11:113).

When the verse cited above was revealed, the noble Companions submitted: *Yā Rasūl* Allah, if this absolute prohibition of going in their gatherings remained in force, we shall be deprived of offering Ṣalāh and *Ṭawāf* in *al-Masjid al-Ḥarām* because these people keep sitting there all the time (before Hijrah and the Conquest of Makkah) doing nothing but fault-finding and ill-speaking. Thereupon, revealed was the next verse (69): وَمَا عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ يَتَّقُوْنَ مِنْ حِسَابِهِمْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ وَّلٰكِنْ ذِكْرٰى لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُوْنَ It means when people who observe restraint go to *al-Masjid al-Ḥarām* for their own rightful purpose, then, they are not responsible for the evil deeds of those wicked people present there. However, it does remain their duty that they should tell them what is right and true which may per-

haps help them take the right path.

In the third verse (70), nearly the same subject has been stressed upon in the following words: وَذَرِ الَّذِيْنَ اتَّخَذُوْا دِيْنَهُمْ لَعِبًا وَّلَهْوًا (And avoid those who have taken their faith as game and play ...). The word: ذر (*dhar*) here is a derivation from: وذر (*wadhara*) which means being displeased with something and leaving it. Thus, the verse can be taken either in the sense of leaving people who have turned the true religion, that is, Islam which has been sent for them, into a plaything and a laughing stock; or in the sense that they have left their real faith and taken to fun and play as their very own religion and purpose of life. The outcome of both meanings is nearly the same.

After that, it was said: وَغَرَّتْهُمُ الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَا that is, the transitory life of the present world has deceived them. This is a true diagnosis of their real problem. They are so disobedient and wicked because they are bewitched by the glamour of their mortal life totally forgetting that they have another state of life ahead of them. If they had believed in the *'Ākhirah* (Hereafter) and *Qiyāmah* (The Last Day), they would have never acted so recklessly.

In this verse, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and Muslims at large have been given two orders that they should not only avoid the people identified, but that they should also act positively and continue preaching through the Qur'ān and keep putting the fear of Allah's punishment in their hearts.

The detail of this punishment was pointed out at the end of the verse by saying that, should they continue doing what they were doing, they are bound to fall a victim to their own evil conduct. The word used at this place is: تُبْسَلَ which means to be detained or be entrapped.

Since man in this world is accustomed to rely on three kinds of sources to escape the punishment of his own error or injustice inflicted on someone. When convenient, he would use the power and influence of his party or group to stay safe against the consequences of his injustice. Then, should he become helpless, he would use recommendations from the influencial people. When that too does not work, he would try to secure his freedom from punishment by spending money.

Allah Ta'ālā says in this verse that His criminal cannot be saved

from punishment by any friend or relative, nor can an intercession by anyone succeed without the permission of Allah, nor can wealth of any kind be accepted - even if the criminal were to possess the wealth of the whole world and wished to give it all in exchange for his freedom from punishment, even then this *fidyah* will not be accepted from him.

Finally, at the close of the verse, it was said: أُولَٰٓئِكَ الَّذِينَ أُبْسِلُوا بِمَا كَسَبُوا لَهُمْ شَرَابٌ مِّنْ حَمِيمٍ وَعَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْفُرُونَ that is, these are the people who have been detained in the punishment of their evil deeds. They will have boiling water to drink in the *Jahannam* about which it has been said in another verse that it will shatter their entrails apart (47:15) and that there will be painful punishments other than that of the boiling water in return for their disbelief and denial.

This verse also tells us that the very company of people who are heedless to the *'Ākhirah* and are content with their life in the mortal world is fatal for everyone. Its ultimate consequence is that whoever sits in their company shall be subject to the same punishment in which they have been caught up.

The essential objective in these three verses (68-70) is to save Muslims from evil environment and bad company which can be as deadly as poison. Many clear, definite and conclusive statements (*Nuṣūṣ*) of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth as well as repeated observation and experience prove that the root of all evils and crimes in which human beings get involved is the evil society and environment in which they grow up. Once snared into it, one slides into evils against personal grain and conscience. Then, comes the stage when, once habituated, the sense of evil dies away - reaching the limit when one starts taking evil as good and good as evil. In a *Ḥadīth*, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is reported to have said: When a person gets involved in a sin for the first time, there appears a dot on his heart. This is like a black dot on a white dress which everyone dislikes and gets disturbed with. So, this person too feels the distaste in his heart. But when he, after having done the first one, goes on doing the second and the third sin - and does not repent from the past sin - black dots, one after the other, keep appearing on the heart, so much so that the radiant tablet of the heart turns jet black. The outcome is that this person is deprived of the very ability to distinguish between good and bad. The Holy Qur'ān identifies it

with the word: "*ra'n*" (rust, stain) when it says: كَلَّا بَلْ رَانَ عَلٰى قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَّا كَانُوْا يَكْسِبُوْنَ (83:14), that is, there is rust on their hearts because of their evil deeds (which has taken away their ability to receive good).

When you come to think of it, wrong environment and bad company really hurt all human beings. They push people into the abyss. May Allah keep all of us protected from them. Therefore, everyone who is responsible for raising children must do their best to keep children safe from such society and environment.

As for the next three verses (71-73), they too deal with the refutation of *Shirk* (the attribution of partners to Allah) and the affirmation of *Tauhid* (the Oneness of Allah) and *'Ākhirah* (the Hereafter, the life to come) as fairly evident from the translation itself.

Verses 74 - 81

وَاِذْ قَالَ اِبْرٰهِيْمُ لِاَبِيْهِ اٰزَرَ اَتَتَّخِذُ اَصْنَامًا اٰلِهَةً ۚ اِنِّيْٓ اَرٰىكَ وَقَوْمَكَ فِيْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿٧٤﴾ وَكَذٰلِكَ نُرِيْٓ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ مَلَكُوْتَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَلِيَكُوْنَ مِنَ الْمُوْقِنِيْنَ ﴿٧٥﴾ فَلَمَّا جَنَّ عَلَيْهِ الَّيْلُ رَاٰ كَوْكَبًا ۚ قَالَ هٰذَا رَبِّيْ ۚ فَلَمَّآ اَفَلَ قَالَ لَآ اُحِبُّ الْاٰفِلِيْنَ ﴿٧٦﴾ فَلَمَّا رَاَ الْقَمَرَ بَازِغًا قَالَ هٰذَا رَبِّيْ ۚ فَلَمَّآ اَفَلَ قَالَ لَئِنْ لَّمْ يَهْدِنِيْ رَبِّيْ لَاَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الضَّآلِّيْنَ ﴿٧٧﴾ فَلَمَّا رَاَ الشَّمْسَ بَازِغَةً قَالَ هٰذَا رَبِّيْ هٰذَآ اَكْبَرُ ۚ فَلَمَّآ اَفَلَتْ قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ اِنِّيْ بَرِيْٓءٌ مِّمَّا تُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿٧٨﴾ اِنِّيْ وَجَّهْتُ وَجْهِيَ لِلَّذِيْ فَطَرَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ حَنِيْفًا وَّمَآ اَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ ﴿٧٩﴾ وَحَآجَّهٗ قَوْمُهٗ ؕ قَالَ اَتُحَآجُّوْٓنِّيْ فِي اللّٰهِ وَقَدْ هَدٰىنِ ؕ وَلَآ اَخَافُ مَا تُشْرِكُوْنَ بِهٖٓ اِلَّآ اَنْ يَّشَآءَ رَبِّيْ شَيْئًا ؕ وَسِعَ رَبِّيْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا ؕ اَفَلَا تَتَذَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿٨٠﴾ وَكَيْفَ اَخَافُ مَآ اَشْرَكْتُمْ وَلَا تَخَافُوْنَ اَنَّكُمْ اَشْرَكْتُمْ بِاللّٰهِ مَا لَمْ يُنَزِّلْ بِهٖ عَلَيْكُمْ سُلْطٰنًا ؕ

فَاَیُّ الْفَرِیْقَیْنِ اَحَقُّ بِالْاَمْنِ اِنْ کُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۸۱﴾

And (remember) when Ibrāhīm said to his father, Āzar: "Do you (really) take idols as gods? I am afraid you and your people are in open error." [74] **And thus We showed Ibrāhīm the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, so that he may be firm in belief.** [75]

So, when the night enveloped him, he saw a star. He said, "This is my Lord." But, when it vanished, he said, "I do not like those who vanish." [76] **Later, when he saw the moon rising, he said, "This is my Lord." But, when it vanished, he said, "If my Lord does not guide me, I shall be among those gone astray."** [77] **Thereafter, when he saw the sun rising, he said, "This is my Lord. This is greater." Again, when it vanished, he said, "O my people, I am free of whatever you associate with Allah.** [78] **I have, indeed, turned my face straight towards the One who created the heavens and the earth, and I am not one of those who associate partners with Allah."** [79]

And his people argued with him. He said, "Do you argue with me about Allah while He has already led me to the right path, and I do not fear what you associate with Him unless, of course, something is willed by my Lord? My Lord encompasses everything with His knowledge. Would you, then, take no lesson? [80] **And how can I fear what you associate with Him, while you do not fear that you have associated with Allah something for which He has sent down no authority to you? Now, which of the two parties has more right to be in peace? (Tell me) if you know."** [81]

Commentary

Previous verses contained a description of the call given by the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم in which he addressed the disbelievers of Arabia and appealed to them that they should forsake the worship of idols and believe in a single object of worship: Allah.

The present verses support this call of truth in a particular way which could be naturally acceptable to the people of Arabia who have Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm علیہ السلام as their patriarch and the whole Arabia

stood united in paying homage to him almost always. These verses refer to the debate against the worship of idols and stars led by him before his people and to whom he had then given a lesson as to what a true belief in the Oneness of Allah should be.

The first verse (74) opens with Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام telling his father, 'Āzar that he had taken idols made with his own hands as his object of worship, and that he saw him and his entire people in manifest error.

It is commonly held that 'Āzar is the name of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm's father while most historians give his name as *Tarakh* and identify 'Āzar as his title. Imām al-Rāzī and a group of early scholars hold that *Tarakh* was the name of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm's father and 'Āzar was the name of his uncle. After becoming a minister of Nimrūd, his uncle, 'Āzar had become a polytheist. Since calling an uncle as father is common in Arab usage, 'Āzar has been named here as Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm's father. In Sharh al-Mawāhib, Zarqānī has reported several proofs to this effect.

Reform Begins at Home

'Āzar, whether a father or uncle of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm, was a respectable elder of the family. Thus, it was from his home that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm gave the first call to truth - as was commanded the Holy Prophet ﷺ too: وَأَنْذِرْ عَشِيرَتَكَ الْأَقْرَبِينَ (26:214) that is, warn your near relatives (of the Divine punishment). It was in obedience to this command that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had first gathered his own family to hear him when he stood at the hill of *Ṣafā* to deliver his call of truth.

According to *Tafsīr* Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, from here we also learn that inviting a respected elder of the family, who may not be on the right path of faith, to the right path is not contrary to the norms of reverence. In fact, it is a matter of wishing well for him. In addition to that, this also tells us that starting the work of *da'wah*, the mission of inviting people to the true faith and the seeking of reforms that lead to it, from one's home, family and immediate circle, is a *Sunnah* (way) of the prophets عليهم السلام .

Two-Nation Theory: Believers are One People - Disbelievers, another.

It will be noted that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام has elected not to

identify his family and his people with himself in this verse when he said to his father that 'his' people were in error. This indicates the great sacrifice Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm offered in the way of Allah by cutting off his bonds with his disbelieving brotherhood. Thus, by his deed, he demonstrated that Muslim nationality is founded through the bonds of Islam. When nationalities based on concepts of race or homeland clash against it, all these deserve to be forsaken.

By mentioning this event relating to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, the Holy Qur'ān has asked all communities to come after him that they too should follow in his footsteps. It was said: قَدْ كَانَتْ لَكُمْ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ فِيْٓ إِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَالَّذِيْنَ مَعَهٗٓ إِذْ قَالُوْا لِقَوْمِهِمْ إِنَّا بُرَءٰٓؤُا مِنْكُمْ وَمِمَّا تَعْبُدُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ It means: Definitely good and worthy of being emulated and followed by the Muslim community is the way and conduct of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام and of those with him who frankly told their lineal, racial and geographical brotherhood that they were wary of them and their false objects of worship and that the wall of discord between them shall remain standing until such time that they do become believers and submit to none but Allah.

This tells us that the two-nation theory which brought Pakistan into existence - was first proclaimed by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. The *Ummah* of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, and other communities, followed this guidance and moved ahead. Among Muslims, Islam as the identity of their nationhood became well-recognized. During his journey undertaken to perform his Last Hajj, the Holy Prophet ﷺ met a caravan on the way. He asked them: 'Which nationality do you come from?' They replied: 'نَحْنُ قَوْمٌ مُّسْلِمُوْنَ' (al-Bukhari) (We are [a] nation [of] Muslims). Here, in accordance with the early practice in Arabia, they did not name a tribe or a lineally identified family, instead, called themselves: '*muslimūn*' (Muslims) - and by doing so, they declared what was their real nationality, a nationality which will hold good in all time frames right to the end of time well through the trials of the *Ākhirah*. At this particular place when Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام addressed his father, he proclaimed his distaste for the doings of 'his' people - attributing the people he came from to his father - but, at the place where he had to proclaim his principled disassociation from the same people, he addressed them as his, as appears in the next verse: يٰقَوْمِ إِنِّيْ بَرِيْٓءٌ مِّمَّا تُشْرِكُوْنَ (O my people, I am free of what you associate with Al-

lah). The hint given here is: 'Though, you are my people in terms of race and homeland, but your deeds of disbelief and polytheism have compelled me to cut off my relations with your brotherhood.'

The brotherhood of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm and his father were involved in a two-fold *Shirk*: They worshipped idols as well as stars. So, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام debated both issues with his father and with his people.

First, it was idol worship. He said that it was error, and straying. Then, in the next verses, he pointed out to stars as unworthy of worship. And a little earlier in verse 75, it is in the form of an introduction that Allah Ta'ālā mentions a particular elegance and insight of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام by saying: وَكَذٰلِكَ نُرِيْٓ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ مَلَكُوْتَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَلِيَكُوْنَ مِنَ الْمُوْقِنِيْنَ that is, 'We made Ibrāhīm عليه السلام see what We have created in the heavens and the earth in a way which would unravel the reality of all these created objects manifestly so that he may become firm in his belief.' What came to pass after that has taken the shape of a wondrous dialogue that appears in later verses (which shows a certain quality even in the translated form of the meanings of the totally untranslatable beauty, diction and elan of the original) and it would be useful to dwell upon the manner in which it emerges stage by stage.

Using Wisdom and Strategy in *Tablīgh* and *Da'wah* is the Way of Prophets

Let us begin with verse 76 which opens with the words: فَلَمَّا جَنَّ عَلَيْهِ الَّيْلُ رَاٰ كَوْكَبًا So, when the night enveloped him, he saw a star. Then, beaming at his people, he said: This is my Lord. The sense in which he said it was: Is it not, as you think and believe, my Lord and your Lord, the *Rabb* of both of us who nurtures, nourishes and sustains us? In a little while you will find out how real that is. Then, after some time, the star vanished. This gave Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm a good occasion to drive his argument home against his disbelieving people. He said: لَآ اُحِبُّ الْاٰفِلِيْنَ (I do not like those who vanish). The word: اٰفِلِيْنَ ('āfulīn') is from: افول ('āfulīn) which means to set.

The sense is that things which set or vanish do not deserve being held dear - and when something is to be given the status of an object of worship has to be, quite obviously, most worthy of love and reverence. Maulanā Rūmī, in one of his couplets, has directly referred to this

event when he said (in Persian, with its stylized translation) :

خلیل آسادرِ ملکِ یقیں زن
نوائے لاَ اُحبُّ الْآ فِلیْنَ زن

Like Khalil [Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm Khalilullāh ...]
Enter
The Domain of Belief
By proclaiming
The Password:
I do not like the vanishing!

After that, some other night, with a glowing moon in sight, he again beamed his dialogue at his people following the earlier method, and said: (according to your view) this is my Lord but its reality you will find out after a little while. So, when the moon vanished, he said: If my Rabb had not been guiding me all along, I would have been enlisted among the stray like you, and it would have been the moon itself I might have taken as my Lord and my object of worship. But, the alternating conditions of its rising and setting brought me to the chastening conclusion that this star too is not worthy of worship.

Also hinted in this verse is that the *Rabb* or Lord of Ibrāhīm عليه السلام is a totally different entity from Whom guidance keeps coming to him.

Then, the day he saw the sun rising, he again said to his people as he had done earlier: This (according to your view) is my *Rabb*. And this is the biggest of all. But, its reality you will soon find out. So, when came the time for the sun to set, set it did. Driven home was his final argument against the ideas of his people. The reality had become all too obvious. So, he said: يٰقَوْمِ اِنِّىْ بَرِیْٓءٌ مِّمَّا تُشْرِكُوْنَ (O my people, I am free of whatever you associate with Allah).

In conclusion, he made it clear before them that his *Rabb* (the Lord of life who nurtures, cherishes and sustains it) and their *Rabb* can never be any of these created heavenly bodies which are not free of dependence on something else for their existence, and are surrounded by constant and ongoing changes of rising and setting. Instead of them, his Lord and their Lord was no other than the One who has created the heavens and the earth and everything therein. Therefore, he declared that he had changed his orientation away from their self-

sculpted idols and away from the stars of their fancy which changed and alternated under creational compulsion, and it was to the total exclusion of all these, that he had turned to Allah alone, the One God who has no partners and associates with Him - (and when that was settled, he was different) so, he made it frank and clear that he was not a *Mushrik* (disbeliever or polytheist) like them. (Indeed, a line of demarcation drawn for ever!)

In this debate, it is significant that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm has shown characteristic prophetic wisdom and elegance of approach when he does not make a frontal assault on the false notions of star-worship entertained by his people as being false or erroneous. He has, rather, chosen a very telling style of presentation which by itself would help any rational human being to absorb the point being made and be able to recognize reality at the end. Of course, when the case was that of idol-worship, his method was different - there, he had taken a hard line right from the start, and had told his father point-blank that he and his people had gone astray. The reason was that idol-worship was all too obvious an error, contrary to star-worship the error of which was not so obvious and pronounced.

Noteworthy here is the outcome of the argument against star-worship presented by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام before his people. He said that (a) things which are subject to change, (b) things which keep alternating in their conditions, and (c) things which in their movements are subservient to some other power can never become deserving of being taken as anyone's *Rabb* or Lord. In this argument, it was possible to seek help from all other conditions of the stars, such as their rising and their intermediary stage before their setting, when it could have been said that they were not independent in their movements and were moving in a pre-specified orbit under the command of someone else. But, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, from out of all these states and conditions, chose the setting of these stars as the main thrust of his argument - because their setting, in a way, spells out their decline in the sight of common people. The typical argument presented by prophets, may peace be upon them all, is what would go on to influence the minds of common people. They do not pursue philosophical truisms, instead, they address people at the level of common

comprehension. Therefore, it was to prove the helplessness and ineffectiveness of stars that the phenomenon of their setting was presented. Otherwise, the rising of the stars might have also been used to prove that they were helpless and powerless - and it would have also been possible to get hold of an argument from changes that come upon them before they finally set.

Some Instructions for Preachers of Islam

This debating style of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام provides some important points of guidance for Muslim scholars and *Da'wah* workers:

1. In matters relating to carrying the call of truth to people (*Tablīgh*) and seeking reform among them (*Iṣlāḥ*), being universally rigid or universally lenient is not appropriate. The correct approach is to understand that each of these has an occasion and a limit. For example, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm has used strong words when it comes to idol-worship, because its error is within common sight. But, he has not used such strong words in the case of star-worship where he has used a particular method to clarify its reality in the minds of his people - because the matter of stars and planets being helpless and powerless was not so readily obvious as was that of self-carved idols. This tells us that should common people be involved in an error of judgement or conduct, which they do not realize as such, then, the '*Ālim* (religious scholar) or *Muballigh* (religious preacher) would do well to avoid taking a hard line, rigid or excessive or dogmatic, and try to find a better way to remove their doubts.

2. The second guidance concerns the manner in which truth has to be presented. The example is that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام did not address his people directly asking them to do what had to be done. Rather than say something in the mode of an order, he simply told them about how he felt in this matter. He said that he could not declare things which were helplessly involved in a cycle of rising and setting as objects of worship. For this reason, he told them, he had turned to the Being that is the creator, nurturer and caretaker of all these things. Of course, the purpose was to bring them round to do the same. But, in his wise way, he abstained from a direct address lest they become totally uncompromising by opposing the suggestion just for the sake of opposition. This tells us that the job of a reformer and

preacher is not to go ahead and tell what is true in just about any way. Instead of doing something like that, he is bound to say it in a manner which would produce the desired effect on his listeners.

Verses 82 - 89

الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَلَمْ يَلْبِسُوْٓا اِيْمَانَهُمْ بِظُلْمٍ اُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمُ الْاَمْنُ وَهُمْ
مُّهْتَدُوْنَ ﴿٨٢﴾ وَتِلْكَ حُجَّتُنَآ اٰتَيْنٰهَآ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ عَلٰى قَوْمِهٖ ؕ نَرْفَعُ
دَرَجٰتٍ مَّنْ نَّشَآءُ ؕ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ حَكِيْمٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿٨٣﴾ وَ وَهَبْنَا لَهٗٓ
اِسْحٰقَ وَيَعْقُوْبَ ؕ كُلًّا هَدَيْنَا ۚ وَنُوْحًا هَدَيْنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَمِنْ
ذُرِّيَّتِهٖ دَاوٗدَ وَسُلَيْمٰنَ وَاَيُّوْبَ وَ يُوْسُفَ وَ مُوْسٰى وَ هٰرُوْنَ ؕ
وَكَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِى الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ﴿٨٤﴾ وَزَكَرِيَّا وَ يَحْيٰى وَ عِيْسٰى وَ
اِلْيَاسَ ؕ كُلٌّ مِّنَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ ﴿٨٥﴾ وَاِسْمٰعِيْلَ وَ الْيَسَعَ وَيُوْنُسَ
وَلُوْطًا ؕ وَكُلًّا فَضَّلْنَا عَلَى الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٨٦﴾ وَمِنْ اٰبَآئِهِمْ
وَذُرِّيّٰتِهِمْ وَاِخْوَانِهِمْ ۚ وَاجْتَبَيْنٰهُمْ وَهَدَيْنٰهُمْ اِلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ
﴿٨٧﴾ ذٰلِكَ هُدَى اللّٰهِ يَهْدِيْ بِهٖ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهٖ ؕ وَلَوْ
اَشْرَكُوْا لَحَبِطَ عَنْهُمْ مَّا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٨٨﴾ اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ
اٰتَيْنٰهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ وَالْحُكْمَ وَالنُّبُوَّةَ ۚ فَاِنْ يَّكْفُرْ بِهَا هٰٓؤُلَآءِ فَقَدْ
وَكَّلْنَا بِهَا قَوْمًا لَّيْسُوْا بِهَا بِكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿٨٩﴾

Those who have believed and have not mixed their faith with injustice; it is they who deserve peace and it is they who are on the right path. [82]

And that is the proof from Us We gave to Ibrahim against his people. We raise in ranks whom We will. Surely, your Lord is Wise, Knowing. [83]

And We blessed Isḥāq* and Ya'qūb. To each We gave guidance. And earlier, We gave guidance to Nūḥ and, of

*. Biblical names in the order as they appear in this paragraph containing Verses 84-86: Isaac, Jacob, Noah, David, Solomon, Job, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, Zechariah, John, Jesus, Elias, Ishmael, Elisha, Jonah and Lot.

his progeny, to Dāwūd and Sulaymān and Ayyūb and Yūsuf and Mūsā and Hārūn - and this is how We reward the good in deed [84] **- and to Zakariyya and Yaḥyā and 'Īsā and Ilyas - each one of them was of the righteous** [85] **- and to Ismā'īl and Yasa' and Yūnus and Lūṭ, and all of them We made to excel over the worlds.** [86] **And We gave guidance to many among their fathers and their children and their brothers, and We chose them and led them on to the straight path.** [87]

That is Allah's guidance. He guides with it whom He wills from His slaves. And had they associated partners with Him, all they did would have been nullified for them. [88]

They are those whom We have given the Book and wisdom and prophethood. So, if these people disbelieve it, then, We have deputed for it a people who do not disbelieve in it. [89]

Commentary

Mentioned in the previous verses was the debate Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام had held with his father, 'Āzar, and with his entire Nimrudic people. There, after having conclusively refuted their worship of idols and stars, he had addressed his people by telling them in effect: You threaten me that your idols will destroy me if I refuse to accept their authority, although these idols do not have the power to do so, nor have I done anything as a result of which I may be hit by some hardship. In fact, it is you who should be trembling in fear for you have committed a crime as terrible as equating with Him the creations of Allah, rather the objects made and prepared by His creation even giving them a share in His divinity. Then, the fact that Allah Ta'ālā is All-Knowing, All-Aware and All-Powerful is not hidden from any sensible person. This calls for some thinking on your part. So, think and say who deserves to be in peace and who it is who should be fearing?

In the first (82) of the present verses, it was said that only those who believe in Allah and then do not go on to mix up their faith with injustice shall be the people who can hope to be safe against punishment. It appears in *Ḥadīth*, when this verse was revealed, the noble *Ṣaḥābah* were frightened. They said: *Yā Rasūl* Allah, who among us has not been unjust to himself by committing one or the other sin?

Now, in this verse, the only condition of remaining safe from punishment is that one should have done no injustice to himself while in the state of *Īmān*. If so, how can we ever achieve salvation? The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said: You have not understood the correct meaning of the verse. Here, '*Zulm*' (injustice) means '*Shirk*' (ascribing of partners to Allah) as said in another verse: إِنَّ الشِّرْكَ لَظُلْمٌ عَظِيمٌ (Joining others in the worship of Allah is a great injustice - 31:13). Therefore, the sense of the verse is that one, who enters (the bliss of) *Īmān* and then does not associate anyone with the Being and the Attributes of Allah Ta'ālā, shall remain safe from punishment, and considered well-guided.

In brief, those who worship idols, rocks, trees, rivers and stars do so because they, out of bland simplicity, take them to be the holders and wielders of power. So, they are scared of the idea of forsaking their worship lest these objects were to hurt them in some way. Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm علیہ السلام gave such people a smart key to their problem when he asked them to fear Almighty Allah who knew all they do and had power over whatever good or bad reaches them - and not commit the folly of fearing things which have neither knowledge nor power. This fear is absolutely unreasonable. One must fear Allah alone - and whoever believes in it is out of all danger.

Said in this verse is: وَلَمْ يَلْبِسُوٓا إِيمَانَهُم بِظُلْمٍ (And those who have not mixed their faith with injustice). Here, '*Zulm*' as explained by the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, means *Shirk* (ascribing partners in the divinity of Allah) - not sin in an ordinary sense. But, by bringing in: بظلم (*bi zulmin*) as indefinite noun (*Nakirah*), a device supported by the rules of the Arabic grammar, the sense was made general which includes all kinds of *Shirk*. As for the word: لَمْ يَلْبِسُوٓا (*lam yalbisu*), it has been derived from: لبس (*labasa*) which means to wear, cover or mix. Thus, the verse comes to mean that a person who mixes some sort of *Shirk* in his or her *Īmān*, that is, one who, despite believing in Allah Ta'ālā along with all His attributes of perfection, takes non-Allah too as bearing some of those attributes, shall be considered excluded from the guarantee of peace and faith given here.

We also come to know from this verse that *Shirk* is not restricted to becoming a *Mushrik* or idolater. In fact, also *Mushrik* is a person who

does not worship idols in the customary sense, but recites the *Kalimah* of Islam, yet takes some angel or messenger or *waliy* or 'saint'of Allah as partners or sharers in some exclusive attributes of Allah. This verse carries a stern warning for those who take the *Auliā'* of Allah (The Men of Allah) and their *Mazārs* (resting places, tombs) as capable of answering their prayers and granting their needs, and go as far as believing practically as if the Divine powers have been delegated to them. Refuge with Allah!

In the second verse (83), Allah Ta'ālā has said that the truimph of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm in his debate against his people and in which he had silenced them was a blessing of Allah alone for He gave him a sound theory to propound and glowing arguments to employ. Let no one wax proud about his or her intelligence and understanding or art of discourse and power of oration as self-sufficient. Nothing crosses the barrier of possibility without the support and help of Allah Ta'ālā. Bland human reason is not enough to comprehend realities. This is a matter of common observation in every age. Philosophers of great standing go astray while many among the illiterate get a firm hold on correct belief and right thinking. Maulanā Rūmī was on the beam when he said:

بے عنایاتِ حق و خاصانِ حق
گر مَلك باشد سیه ہستش ورق

Without the graces of The True One and those close to Him
Dark shall be the record of deeds, even if one be an angel.

By saying: نَرْفَعُ دَرَجٰتٍ مَّنْ نَّشَآءُ (We raise in ranks whom We will) towards the end of the verse (83), the hint given is that the station of special reverence received by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm علیه السلام in this world which would last through generations to come until the Last Day, a homage universally paid by Jews, Christians, Muslims and Buddhists, was no feat of personal acquisition or recognition, instead of which, this was nothing but the grace and reward from Allah.

In the six verses (84-89) appearing after that, there is a list of seventeen blessed prophets, some of whom are the forefathers of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm علیه السلام while most are his progeny, with some being his brothers or nephews. On the one hand, described in these verses is their being Divinely guided, righteous in conduct and firm on the straight

path, along with the fact that Allah Ta'ālā has chosen and blessed them to serve His religion. On the other hand, it has been stressed that, in return for the sacrifice of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام who had disassociated himself from his father, community and country in the way of Allah, was it not that, much before the reward of eternal bliss in the Hereafter, Allah Ta'ālā bestowed on him right here in this world too a community better than his own, a country better than his own - and blessed him with the supreme distinction that all prophets and messengers sent into the world after him upto the end of time were from among his progeny? A branch that originated from Sayyidnā Isḥāq عليه السلام had prophets who appeared among the Banī Isrā'īl. The other branch which originated from Sayyidnā Ismā'īl عليه السلام saw the coming of the foremost and the Last among prophets, Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā صلى الله عليه وسلم from among them. They all were the progeny of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. This phenomena also tells us that, though honour and salvation or disgrace and punishment really depend on one's personal deeds, but having a prophet or man of Allah (*waliy*) among forefathers, or having observing *'Ālims* of *Dīn* and men and women of righteous conduct among children, is also a great blessing as this too brings its benefits.

Out of these seventeen prophets عليهم السلام identified in the cited verses, Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام is the patriarch of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. The rest have been called their progeny: وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِهٖ دَاوٗدَ وَ سُلَيْمٰنَ (and, of his progeny, to Dāwūd and Sulaymān ...). This poses two difficulties. The first could be about Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام who, because of his father-less birth, is a progeny of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام from the daughter's side, that is, not a paternal grandson, instead, is a grandson from the maternal side.

If so, how would calling him his progeny would be correct? Most learned Muslim scholars and jurists have answered it by saying that progeny is inclusive of both paternal and maternal grandsons. It is from here that they prove that Sayyidnā Hasan and Sayyidnā Husain رضى الله عنهما stand included under the progeny of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

The second difficulty posed here relates to Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام for he is not from among his children, but is a nephew. The answer is clear. In customary usage, referring to an uncle as father and to a

nephew as son is very common.

By mentioning the blessings of Allah on Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm علیه السلام in these verses, two things have been made very clear. Firstly, there is the law for anyone who sacrifices whatever he holds dear in the way of Allah, on him or her Allah bestows right here in this mortal world what is better than what he or she has surrendered in the way of Allah. Secondly, the purpose is to make the disbelievers of Makkah hear this background of things in their situation so that they may be guided right. This amounts to telling them: You do not listen to what Our prophet, Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم is telling you. If that is so, consider these you too rever as great. So, Ibrāhīm علیه السلام and his whole progeny have all been saying the same thing - that Allah is the only object worthy of worship. Associating anyone else with Him in *'Ibādah*, or suggesting that someone else is a sharer in His exclusive attributes is what disbelief and straying is. This proves that they are, even in terms of what they themselves accept as established truth, subject to censure.

The subject continues through the eighth verse (89) at the end of which it has been said to comfort the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم : فَإِنْ يَكْفُرْ بِهَا هٰٓؤُلَآءِ فَقَدْ وَكَّلْنَا بِهَا قَوْمًا لَّيْسُوْا بِهَا بِكٰفِرِيْنَ (So, if these people disbelieve it, then, We have deputed for it a people who do not disbelieve in it). In other words, it means: If some of your addressees do not listen to you and are, despite having been told about the teachings of all past prophets, bent upon nothing short of denial, then, you do not have to worry - because We have appointed a great people who would say yes to your call, follow your word and make the mission their own, and who would never stoop to the level of disbelief and denial.

Included here are all *Muhājirīn* and *Anṣār* present during the blessed age of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, and also all Muslims who keep coming upto the end of time until comes the *Qiyāmah*. And this verse is a fond asset for all such people, as Allah Ta'ālā has named them on an occasion which calls for praise by Him:

اَللّٰهُمَّ اجْعَلْنَا مِنْهُمْ وَاحْشُرْنَا فِيْ زُمْرَتِهِمْ

O Allāh, make us one of them and raise us in their company.

Verses 90 - 94

أُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ هَدَى اللّٰهُ فَبِهُدٰىهُمُ اقْتَدِهْ ؕ قُلْ لَّآ اَسْئَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ
اَجْرًا ؕ اِنْ هُوَ اِلَّا ذِكْرٰى لِلْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿۹۰﴾ وَمَا قَدَرُوا اللّٰهَ حَقَّ
قَدْرِهٖٓ اِذْ قَالُوْا مَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى بَشَرٍ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ ؕ قُلْ مَنْ اَنْزَلَ
الْكِتٰبَ الَّذِيْ جَآءَ بِهٖ مُوْسٰى نُوْرًا وَّهُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ تَجْعَلُوْنَهٗ
قَرَاطِيْسَ تُبْدُوْنَهَا وَتُخْفُوْنَ كَثِيْرًا ۚ وَعُلِّمْتُمْ مَّا لَمْ تَعْلَمُوْٓا اَنْتُمْ
وَلَآ اٰبَآؤُكُمْ ؕ قُلِ اللّٰهُ ۙ ثُمَّ ذَرْهُمْ فِيْ خَوْضِهِمْ يَلْعَبُوْنَ ﴿۹۱﴾
وَهٰذَا كِتٰبٌ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ مُبٰرَكٌ مُّصَدِّقُ الَّذِيْ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَلِتُنْذِرَ اُمَّ
الْقُرٰى وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا ؕ وَالَّذِيْنَ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِهٖ وَهُمْ
عَلٰى صَلَاتِهِمْ يُحَافِظُوْنَ ﴿۹۲﴾ وَمَنْ اَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرٰى عَلَى
اللّٰهِ كَذِبًا اَوْ قَالَ اُوْحِيَ اِلَيَّ وَلَمْ يُوْحَ اِلَيْهِ شَيْءٌ وَّمَنْ قَالَ
سَاُنْزِلُ مِثْلَ مَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ ؕ وَلَوْ تَرٰٓى اِذِ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ فِيْ غَمَرٰتِ
الْمَوْتِ وَالْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ بَاسِطُوْٓا اَيْدِيْهِمْ ۚ اَخْرِجُوْٓا اَنْفُسَكُمْ ؕ اَلْيَوْمَ
تُجْزَوْنَ عَذَابَ الْهُوْنِ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَقُوْلُوْنَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ غَيْرَ الْحَقِّ
وَكُنْتُمْ عَنْ اٰيٰتِهٖ تَسْتَكْبِرُوْنَ ﴿۹۳﴾ وَلَقَدْ جِئْتُمُوْنَا فُرَادٰى كَمَا
خَلَقْنٰكُمْ اَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَّتَرَكْتُمْ مَّا خَوَّلْنٰكُمْ وَرَآءَ ظُهُوْرِكُمْ ۚ وَمَا نَرٰى
مَعَكُمْ شُفَعَآءَكُمُ الَّذِيْنَ زَعَمْتُمْ اَنَّهُمْ فِيْكُمْ شُرَكٰٓؤُا ؕ لَقَدْ
تَّقَطَّعَ بَيْنَكُمْ وَضَلَّ عَنْكُمْ مَّا كُنْتُمْ تَزْعُمُوْنَ ﴿۹۴﴾

Those are the people Allah has guided. So, it is their guidance that you shall follow. Say, "I ask you no reward for it. It is nothing but an advice for all the worlds." [90]

And they did not hold Allah in due esteem when they said, "Allah has not sent down anything on a human being." Say, "Who has sent down the Book brought by

Mūsā as a light and a guidance for people, which you kept in sheets you displayed, and you concealed a lot? You were taught what you did not know - neither you nor your fathers?" Say, "Allah." Then leave them playing with what they are indulged in. [91]

And this is a blessed book We have sent down, confirming what has been before it, so that you may warn the town which is the mother of all towns, and those around it. And those who believe in the Hereafter believe in it, and of their prayers, they take due care. [92]

And who is more unjust than the one who fabricates a lie against Allah or says, "Revelation has been sent to me" whereas no revelation has been sent to him, and the one who says, "I would reveal just as Allah has revealed." And if you could witness when the unjust are in the throes of death, and the angels stretch their hands (and say,) "Out with your souls. Today, you shall have your punishment, a punishment of humiliation, because you have been saying about Allah what is not true, and rejecting His verses arrogantly." [93]

And you have come to Us all alone just as We had created you at first, and you have left behind what We had bestowed on you, and We do not see your intercessors with you - those whom you claimed to be (Our) partners in (managing) your matters. In fact, all ties between you are severed and all that you claimed is lost to you. [94]

Commentary

It will be recalled that mentioned in previous verses were great rewards and ranks bestowed on Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. Through these, the purpose was to show to the whole progeny of Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام generally and to the people of Makkah and Arabia particularly, in a practically demonstrated form, that a person who takes total obedience to Allah Ta'ālā as the sole purpose of his or her life and sacrifices everything held dear in the way of Allah - as was done by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm Khalīlullah, may Allah bless him - then, in order are the best of returns for that person. He left his father and mother, his people and country, all for the sake of Allah. Then, it was to offer his supreme services to found and raise the foundations of the House of

Allah, the venerated Baytullah, that he abandoned the greeneries of the country of Syria and travelled all the way to the deserts of Makkah. When ordered to leave his wife and infant son in the wilderness, he obeyed instantly. When commanded to sacrifice his first-born and very dear son, he demonstrated his readiness to obey it all the way to the ultimate limits of his choice and volition. For those obedient in that class and degree, the real reward shall come only after *Qiyāmah*, and in *Jannah* alone. But, Allah Taʻālā blesses such people right here in this world too with ranks and riches which would put all ranks and riches of the entire world to shame.

Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm Khalīlullah عليه السلام left his people for the sake of Allah - in return, he became the patriarch of prophets, most of whom were from among his progeny. He left his country of Syria and Iraq - in return, he was blessed with Baytullah (the House of Allah), al-Balad al-Amīn (the City of Trust) and Umm al-Qurā (the Mother of Cities) that is, Makkah. His own people tried to disgrace him - in return, he was made the supreme leader of generations to come right through the Last Day of *Qiyāmah* in the present world where nations and religions despite their major mutual differences have all along remained united on paying homage to the reverence of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام.

It will also be recalled that in those verses seventeen prophets were mentioned most of whom are either children or progeny of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. It was also stated there that they were persons of great status whom Allah had chosen to convey His message to all human beings and that it was He who had shown them the straight path.

Explanatory Notes on the Present Verses

Addressing the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in the first verse (90) the people of Makkah have been sounded that the forefathers of a people cannot be taken as objects of emulation or role-models deserving of being followed to the letter in all their words and deeds, as was generally believed by the people of Arabia, and by the people of Makkah particularly. Instead, before going ahead and starting to follow someone, it is necessary to find out whether or not the person, or people, being followed, is himself on the path of true guidance. Therefore, after enu-

merating a brief list of the blessed prophets, it was said: أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ هَدَى اللَّهُ (Those are the people Allah has guided). After that, it was said: فَبِهُدَاهُمُ اقْتَدِهْ (So, it is their guidance that you shall follow).

Thus, the guidance given in this verse is bi-polar. The first element is addressed to the people of Arabia, and to the whole Muslim *Ummah* by implication, that is, they should forsake the superstition of following forefathers and take to following prophets guided by Allah Ta'ālā. The second element of guidance is for the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself, that is, he too should act in the way the past prophets have acted.

Noteworthy here is the fact that partial or subsidiary differences have been there in the laws of earlier prophets, may peace be upon them. Then, revealed for the Muslim peoples themselves, there have been many injunctions different from them. What, then, would be the meaning of asking the Holy Prophet ﷺ to follow the way of the past prophets and act in accordance with it? Keeping in view other Qur'ānic verses and narrations of *Ḥadīth*, the answer is that the command here does not apply to the following of the way of past prophets in all partial and subsidiary aspects of injunctions. In fact, the purpose is to adhere to the basic principles of religion which include *Tauḥīd* (Oneness of Allah) *Risālah* (Prophethood) and *Ākhirah* (Hereafter) as has been their way. They never changed in the law of any prophet. From Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام to the Last of the Prophets ﷺ, all prophets, عليهم السلام, have been adhering to one Belief and one Way. As for subsidiary injunctions which remained unchanged, the *modus operandi* has been common. However, when a new injunction was given due to exigency of time or dictate of wisdom, it was acted upon as required.

This is the reason why it was the usual practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that he would - until such time that he received particular guidance through revelation - act in accordance with the way of past prophets عليهم السلام (Maẓharī & others).

After that, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been specially commanded to proclaim – a common practice of all past prophets – in the words which follow: قُل لَّا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرَىٰ لِلْعَالَمِينَ (Say: "I ask you no reward for it. It is nothing but an advice for all the worlds). In other words, it means: I am not asking you to pay for the good counsel I am offering to help you better your life. I need no fees or wages or re-

wards. If you accept it, I gain nothing. If you do not accept it, I lose nothing. This is only a message, a message for people all over, a message of good counsel, good will. Not accepting any return for teaching and preaching has been the common legacy of all prophets عليهم السلام. This is a powerful factor which goes on to make *Tablīgh* (conveying the message of religion to others) effective.

The second verse (91) has been revealed in answer to those who had the audacity to say that Allah Ta'ālā has just not revealed any book to any human being. According to them, this whole proposition of books and messengers was all wrong.

If, those who said that are the idolaters of Makkah, as mentioned by Ibn Kathīr, then, the matter is obvious, for they did not believe in any book and prophet. And if they were Jews, as held by other commentators - and the contextual elements of the verse obviously support this view - then, their saying so was an outcome of their anger and irritation, something contrary to the dictates of their own religion. According to a narration of Imām al-Baghawī, this was the reason why the Jews too were displeased with the person who had made this unfortunate remark, and it was because of this erroneous conduct of his that he was removed from his office of religious authority.

In this verse, Allah Ta'ālā has said to the Holy Prophet ﷺ that people who made this absurd remark did not recognize the Most True Allah as was His right to be recognized. Had they done that, this audacious remark would have never escaped their lips. Then, Allah Ta'ālā tells the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to ask the people who deny Scriptures absolutely: If that is what you think - that Allah Ta'ālā did not reveal any book to any human being - then, you better have an answer as to who revealed the Torah, in which you too believe, and because of which you sit in judgement over your people. Along with it, they were also told: You are such connoisseurs of crooked ways that you would treat your own book, the Torah, which you believe in as being Holy Scripture, in a way that you got it conveniently written on separate sheets, rather than having it in a formally bound book, so that you can take out any sheet from it as and when you want it, and by doing so you would have the option of denying what it enjoined. An example of this are the verses of the Torah which described the signs and attrib-

utes of the Messenger of Allah which you have excluded. The last sentence of the verse: تَجْعَلُوْنَهٗ قَرَاطِيْسَ (which you kept in sheets) means exactly this. The word: قراطيس (*qarāṭis*) is the plural of: قِرْطَاس (*qirṭās*) which means sheet or paper.

After that, addressing the same people, it has been said: وَعُلِّمْتُمْ مَّا لَمْ تَعْلَمُوْٓا اَنْتُمْ وَلَآ اٰبَآؤُكُمْ that is, you were taught (through the Qur'ān) what you or your forefathers did not know (earlier, either through the Torah or the Injīl).

At the end of verse (91), it was said: قُلِ اللّٰهُ ثُمَّ ذَرْهُمْ فِىْ خَوْضِهِمْ يَلْعَبُوْنَ (Say, "Allah." Then leave them playing with what they are indulged in). In other words, the sense is: As for the question - if Allah just did not send any book, who sent the Torah? - it was something they would not know how to answer, so, you go ahead and tell them that it was revealed by none but Allah. Now that the argument against them stands concluded, your mission as far as they are concerned is over. So, let them be lost in the game they are playing.

After having concluded the argument concerning Books revealed by Allah Ta'ālā against deniers, it was said in the third verse (92): وَهٰذَا كِتٰبٌ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ مُبٰرَكٌ مُّصَدِّقُ الَّذِىْ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَلِتُنْذِرَ اُمَّ الْقُرٰى وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا (And this is a blessed Book We have sent down confirming what has been before it, so that you may warn the town which is the mother of all towns, and those around it), that is, as it is that they too accept that the Torah was sent down by Allah Ta'ālā, so it is that We have sent down this Qur'ān too, and sufficient for them is the proof of its veracity that the Qur'ān confirms what has been revealed in the Torah and the Injīl. And that it was revealed after the Torah and Injīl is because these two Books were sent for the Banī Isrā'īl while for their other branch of Banī Ismā'īl, known as Arabs living in Umm al-Qurā, that is, Makkah and its environs, there has been no prophet or book of guidance until that time. Now this Qur'ān has been sent for them particularly, and for the whole world generally. Makkah al-Mu'aẓẓamah has been called Umm al-Qura by the Holy Qur'ān. It means the root and foundation of all towns and habitations. The reason is that, according to historical narratives, the land mass of the earth first began appearing from here. In addition to that, this is the Qiblah, and the central attraction of all acts of '*Ibādah* for the whole world. (Maẓharī) Said with: اُمَّ الْقُرٰى (Umm al-

Qurā) is: وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا (and those around it). It means all environs of Makkah, which includes the whole world East, West, North and South of Makkah.

Towards the end of the verse, it was said: وَالَّذِيْنَ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِهٖ وَهُمْ عَلٰى صَلَاتِهِمْ يُحَافِظُوْنَ It means: Those who believe in the *'Ākhirah* (Hereafter) also believe in the Qur'ān and are particularly careful about their prayers (Ṣalāh). This carries an admonition for the Jews and disbelievers against their common ailment whereby they would, with typical lack of concern, accept what they liked and reject what they did not, opening a front against it. This is an effect of that ailment - that they do not believe in *'Ākhirah*. Anyone who believes in *'Ākhirah* and in a Day of Judgement will definitely be moved by the fear of Allah which would help him or her reason it out, and once convinced, one would bypass constraints of ignorant customs and embrace what is the truth.

A little thought would reveal that the lack of concern for the *'Ākhirah* is the mother of all spiritual diseases. From here come *Kufr* and *Shirk* and sin and disobedience. If a believer in the *'Ākhirah* happens to have committed a mistake or sin, he does feel a pinch in his heart. Sooner or later, he repents and resolves to stay away from sin in the future. So, the fear of Allah and the concern for the *'Ākhirah* are, in all truth, channels which make human beings what they should be and which make them capable of staying away from crime and sin and disobedience by conscious choice. Therefore, no Sūrah (Chapter) of the Qur'ān, perhaps no *Rukū'* (Section) either, is left without a reminder of this concern for the *'Ākhirah*:

اَللّٰهُمَّ اجْعَلْ جُمْلَةَ هُمُوْمِنَا هَمًّا وَّاحِدًا هَمَّ الْاٰخِرَةِ

O Allah, make all our concerns a single concern - the concern for *'Ākhirah*.

Verses 95 - 98

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ فٰلِقُ الْحَبِّ وَالنَّوٰى ؕ يُخْرِجُ الْحَیَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَمُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتِ مِنَ الْحَيِّ ؕ ذٰلِكُمُ اللّٰهُ فَاَنّٰى تُؤْفَكُوْنَ ﴿۹۵﴾ فَالِقُ الْاِصْبَاحِ ۚ وَجَعَلَ الَّيْلَ سَكَنًا وَّالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ حُسْبَانًا ؕ ذٰلِكَ

تَقْدِيْرُ الْعَزِيْزِ الْعَلِيْمِ ﴿٩٦﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِىْ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ النُّجُوْمَ
لِتَهْتَدُوْا بِهَا فِىْ ظُلُمٰتِ الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ ۭ قَدْ فَصَّلْنَا الْاٰيٰتِ لِقَوْمٍ
يَّعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٩٧﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِىْٓ اَنْشَاَكُمْ مِّنْ نَّفْسٍ وَّاحِدَةٍ فَمُسْتَقَرٌّ
وَّمُسْتَوْدَعٌ ۭ قَدْ فَصَّلْنَا الْاٰيٰتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَّفْقَهُوْنَ ﴿٩٨﴾

Surely, Allah is the one who splits the seed and the pit. He brings forth the living from the dead, and He is the one who brings forth the dead from the living. That is Allah! Whereto, then, are you straying away? [95]

(He is) the One who causes the dawn to break. And He has made the night for rest and the sun and the moon for measurement. This is a measure set by (Allah) the Mighty, the Knowing. [96]

And He is the one who made for you the stars, so that you may be guided by them in darknesses of the land and the sea. We have elaborated the signs for people who know. [97]

And He is the One who created you from one person, then, you have a place to dwell and a place to sojourn. We have elaborated the signs for people who understand. [98]

Commentary

Mentioned in the previous verses was how obstinate and unmindful of consequences the disbelievers and ploytheists were. Since such evils are caused when people remain unaware of Allah and His unmatched knowledge and power, the present four verses provide the antidote. Here, Allah Ta'ālā cites some samples of His Knowledge and Power, and of blessings and favours bestowed on human beings, a little reflection in which would make every sensible person admit that feats of such magnitude cannot be accomplished by any power other than that of Almighty Allah.

In the first verse (95), it was said: اِنَّ اللّٰهَ فَالِقُ الْحَبِّ وَالنَّوٰى (Surely, Allah is the one who splits the seed and the pit). Pointed to here is a marvel of creation. Splitting a dry seed and pit and bringing out from it a living green tree is the act of that Most Sacred Being who is the Creator of

the Universe. Human input has nothing to do with it. The most a farmer can do is to remove impediments or things harmful away from the growth path of the tender bud or shoot rising from inside the seed or pit, a tribute to the great power of the Creator. Of course, there are processes of ploughing, cleaning, softening, leveling, fertilizing and watering of land - but, the maximum these efforts can achieve is to make sure that the tender newcomer has to face no hurdle on its way up. The rest of the job, the real job, that the seed and pit split, that a bud or shoot sprout out from it, that come leaves of many wonderful kinds and colour, that come flowers and fruits (of mind-boggling colours, varieties, smells and tastes), is a job taken care of by someone else. This is art and power alive which no human ingenuity can even come close to by making one leaf, one petal in that manner. Therefore, at another place in the Qur'ān, it was said: أَفَرَأَيْتُم مَّا تَحْرُثُونَ ءَأَنتُمْ تَزْرَعُونَهُۥٓ أَمْ نَحْنُ الزَّارِعُونَ that is, 'Do you see the seed that you sow? Do you make it grow, or are We the One who makes it grow [the real Creator to whom its growth has to be attributed]? - 56-63.'

Then, it was said: يُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَمُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتِ مِنَ الْحَيِّ (He brings forth the living from the dead, and He is the one who brings forth the dead from the living). The 'dead' or lifeless refers to cell or egg which serve to create human and animal life forms. Similarly, the expression: 'dead from the living' refers to the same cell or egg which issues forth from the living.

After that, it was said: ذَٰلِكُمُ اللَّهُ فَأَنَّىٰ تُؤْفَكُونَ (That is Allah. Whereto, then, are you straying away?). In other words, the sense is that all these things have been done by Allah Ta'ālā alone, yet here you are knowingly straying away to strange directions, such as, taking self-carved idols as your removers of difficulties and fulfillers of needs and thus the objects of your worship.

Said in the second verse (96) is: فَالِقُ الْإِصْبَاحِ '(He is) the One who causes the dawn to break.' The word: فَالِق (*Fāliq*) means one who splits, and the word: الْإِصْبَاح (*al-Iṣbāḥ*) here means the time of morning. Thus, the expression: فَالِقُ الْإِصْبَاحِ (*Fāliq al-Iṣbāḥ*) means one who splits the morning, that is, one who tears the dark layer of darkness apart and brings the morning out. This too is one of those functions of such magnitude that would render the combined powers of all Jinns and human beings and

all others to nothing. It does not take much to realize the truth of it. Everyone with a pair of sighted eyes is compelled to concede that the causer and creator of the morning light from the darkness of the night cannot be a human being, or angel, or any other created being, from fact or fiction. Instead of all that, the undeniable truth is that this is the work of that One Being that created the whole universe, a Being beyond human comprehension.

Night for Rest is a Blessing

After that, it was said: وَجَعَلَ الَّيْلَ سَكَنًا (And He has made the night for rest). The word: سَكَنٌ (*sakan*) is a derivation from : سُكُوْن (*sukūn*). Everything - means, time or place - by having or reaching which one feels peaceful and comfortable is called *sakan*, therefore, the home of a person has been referred to as *sakan* in the Holy Qur'ān: جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِّنْ بُيُوْتِكُمْ سَكَنًا (Allah made for you your home a place to rest - 16:80). This is so because the home of a person, even if it be a hut, is a habitual source of peace and comfort. Therefore, this sentence comes to mean that Allah Ta'ālā has made the night a time of peace and comfort for every living being. By saying: فَالِقُ الْإِصْبَاحِ (*Fāliq al-Iṣbāḥ*: the One who causes the dawn to break) mentioned there were blessings which one benefits from during the light of the day, something that would not be equally possible during the darkness of night. Then, by saying: جَعَلَ الَّيْلَ سَكَنًا (made the night for rest) after that, indication was given that, no doubt the light of the day is a great blessing for human beings transacting most of their businesses and chores with its help, but not that bad is the darkness of night, for that too is a big blessing when it helps a person, all tired after a hard day's work, get the rest needed to go back to work with recovered energy. Otherwise, human nature cannot withstand respite-less labour.

Earmarking the darkness of night for comfort is a regular blessing and, certainly, a special demonstration of the irresistably subjugating power of Allah Ta'ālā. Since this blessing comes handy every day without having to ask for it, one hardly bothers to think how great a favour and reward it is. Imagine if everyone were to fix a time of rest with one's choice, then, someone would be getting ready to sleep at eight in the morning, someone else at twelve noon and there will others sleeping at all sorts of odd hours during the day and night. The re-

sult would have been that there would have not come a single hour out of the twenty four hours of the night and day when human beings would have not been busy with their business, job or work and plants and factories would have not been working as usual. The inevitable result of such breathless activity would have been that the peace of the sleeping would have been disturbed and equally disadvantaged would have been those working on their jobs. The high decibel of discordant sounds emitting from traffic, factories and workers themselves would have interfered with the peace of the sleeping, and the absence of the sleeping would have affected those working on their jobs. In addition to that, those sleeping would have missed doing things which can be done only when it is time for them to sleep. In short, Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhū* has, in His great power to subdue, has set upon, not only human beings but on all living creatures, the weight of sleep in a manner that one is compelled to stop working and go to sleep. With the fall of dusk, birds and beasts and cattle head for their nests, lairs and homes. Man has to stop working as a compulsion and has to start looking towards his place of rest. Silence reigns. Darkness of night becomes an ally of sleep and rest, as light is usually not conducive to sleep.

Just imagine what would happen if all governments and peoples of the world joined hands in a global agreement to fix a universal time to sleep. First of all this would have posed too many problems. Then, should all human beings, abiding by a possible agreement, were to sleep at an appointed time, who would have made animals abide by that agreement? If they roamed around scot-free what would have happened to the sleeping human beings and their belongings? Most exalted is the majesty of Allah and great is His power to subdue that He has appointed sleep to descend upon every human being and every living creature at a given time compulsively, and thus, He has saved them from the very need of such international agreements: فَتَبَارَكَ اللّٰهُ أَحْسَنُ الْخٰلِقِيْنَ (So, blessed be Allah, the Best of creators) (23:14).

Solar and Lunar Calendar

In the next sentence : وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ حُسْبَانًا (and the sun and the moon for measurement), the word: حُسْبَان (*Ḥusban*) is a verbal noun and is used to mean to count, measure, calculate or compute. The sense of the verse is that Allah Ta'ālā has appointed the rising and setting and the move-

ment of the sun and the moon in a particular measure through which human beings can easily calculate years, months, days, hours, even minutes and seconds.

Again, this is the manifestation of the same Divine power to subdue and commission into desired action that such huge glowing globes of awesome proportions and their movements have been so formidably programmed to perform according to measure which just does not vary even by a second despite the passage of thousands of years. Whatever machinery has been employed to make them function so flawlessly certainly needs no workshop, nor needed there is our customary repair and replacement of time-barred parts. The spheres of light, their function, their movement, everything in the system is performing perfectly as commanded: لَا الشَّمْسُ يَنْبَغِىْ لَهَآ اَنْ تُدْرِكَ الْقَمَرَ وَلَا الَّيْلُ سَابِقُ النَّهَارِ : "It behoves not the sun to overtake the moon, neither does the night outstrip the day" - 36:40 (as translated by Arberry). Alas, it must have been because of this formidable and changeless Divine system that man was mistaken as he took these manifestation of the system as existing in their own right, even went on to the limits of worshipping them. Had this system been open to flaws, a little malfunction here and there, some time out for repairs, then, one would have discovered that this mechanism is not automatic, somebody has made it and somebody keeps it running. But, such has been the brilliance and permanence of these great heavenly bodies that human beings have been blinded to the reality behind. It was to let them know what it was that came scriptures and prophets and messengers.

This statement of the Qur'ān also indicates that the calculation of years and months can be solar and it can be lunar as well. Both are rewards from Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhū*. It is a different matter that the lunar calendar has been used in Islamic injunctions for the sake of providing convenience to the common masses of the world so that they do not have to undergo the trouble of complicated calculations. Since Islamic history and Islamic injunctions are based on lunar calendar, it is an obligation on the Muslim *Ummah* that it retains and protects this calendar. As for other methods of calculation, such as the Solar or Gregorian calendar, if they are adopted because of some necessity, there is no sin in it. But, ignoring the lunar calendar totally and let-

ting it be forgotten is a grave sin - an unfortunate conduct which may lead to a situation in which a Muslim does not know when the months of Ramaḍān, Dhil-Ḥijjah and Muḥarram will come.

At the conclusion of the verse, it was said: ذٰلِكَ تَقۡدِيۡرُ الۡعَزِيۡزِ الۡعَلِيۡمِ (This is a measure set by [Allah] the Mighty, the Knowing). It means that this wondrous system of movement, precise and perpetual, at the scale of such magnitude, something which does not admit the difference of a second, can only be the charismatic feat of the supreme power of the One who is Al-'Azīz, the Mighty, and who is the Subduer of whatever there is, and who if fully capable of articulating His Will as He deems fit and, beside that, He is Knowing, having the knowledge of everything and the mastery of doing what He elects to do.

In the third verse (97), it was said: وَهُوَالَّذِىۡ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ النُّجُوۡمَ لِتَهۡتَدُوۡا بِهَا فِىۡ ظُلُمٰتِ الۡبَرِّ وَالۡبَحۡرِ (And He is the one who made for you the stars, so that you may be guided by them in 'darknesses' of the land and the sea). In other words, it is being said here that there are other stars too, besides the sun and the moon, which are no less unique a manifestation of the perfect power of Almighty Allah. Out of many considerations of Divine wisdom, one immediate benefit they provide for human beings travelling on high seas or open lands is that they can chart their course in the darkness of nights when it is not easy to do so. Experience bears out that even in the days of highly sophisticated guiding systems, there are alternative situations when the guidance from the position of stars cannot be totally ignored.

The point made in this verse is that one should rise above heedlessness and shortsightedness and see that these stars are also there observing the command of their maker and mover. They are there neither by themselves nor to be there nor to keep doing what they do for ever. Those who have pinned their sights on them and have ignored to look at their maker are terribly short-sighted, and ominously deceived indeed.

After that, it was said: قَدۡ فَصَّلۡنَا الۡاٰيٰتِ لِقَوۡمٍ يَّعۡلَمُوۡنَ (We have elaborated the signs for people who know). The statement clearly indicates that those who do not recognize the presence and power of Allah Ta'ālā even from such open signs are unaware and unconscious.

In the fourth verse (98), it was said: وَهُوَالَّذِیٓ اَنۡشَاَکُمۡ مِّنۡ نَّفۡسٍ وَّاحِدَۃٍ فَمُسۡتَقَرٌّ وَّمُسۡتَوۡدَعٌ (And He is the One who created you from one person, then, you have a place to dwell, and a place to sojourn). The word: مُسۡتَقَرٌّ (*mustaqarr*) used in the text is from: قَرَارٌ (*qarār*). So, *mustaqarr* denotes a place of *qarār*, of rest and peace, for someone or something. As for the word: مُسۡتَوۡدَعٌ (*mustawda'*) in the text, it is a derivation from *wadī'ah* which means to keep something with someone temporarily for a few days. So, "*mustawda'*" will denote a place where something is placed temporarily for a few days.

Thus, the sense of the sentence would be: It is the sacred-most Being of Allah Ta'ālā that has created man from one person, that is, Sayyidnā Ādam علیہ السلام. Then, made for him a *mustaqarr*, that is, a place to dwell for a certain length of time - and a *mustawda'*, that is, to stay temporarily for a few days.

The words of the Qur'ān are as they have been stated. But, there are many probabilities in their interpretation. This is why the sayings of the commentators differ in this matter. Some say that *mustawda'* is the womb of the mother and *mustaqarr* is this world. Others say that *mustawda'* is the grave and *mustaqarr* is the abode of the *'Ākhirah*. Then, there are several other sayings too. However, there is room for all these within the words of the Qur'ān. Hadrat Qādī Thanā'ullah Pānipatī رحمہ اللہ علیہ has, in his *Tafsīr* Mazharī, opted for *mustaqarr* being the abode of *'Ākhirah*, that is, *Jannah* or *Jahannam*- and all human conditions and stages, from the beginning to the *'Ākhirah*, are all the *mustawda'*, that is, a place to stay temporarily, whether in the womb of the mother, or a dwelling place on the earth, or the grave, or the state of *Barzakh* (intermediary state after death and before Resurrection). Preference for this view seems to have confirmation from a verse of the Qur'ān also where it has been said: لَتَرۡكَبُنَّ طَبَقًا عَنۡ طَبَقٍ (you shall surely travel from stage to stage - 84:19). The outcome is that, before ultimately reaching the abode of the *'Ākhirah*, man remains a traveller for his whole life who, despite his obvious peace and rest, is really traversing the stages of the long journey into the night of his being:

مسافر ھوں کہاں جانا ھے ، نا واقف ھوں منزل سے
ازل سے پھرتے پھرتے گورتک پہنچا ھوں مشکل سے

A traveller I am. My destination I know not.
Winding and wandering from eternity
Only upto the grave I have reached -
How tough I know. What next I know not.

In conclusion, it can be said that this last verse (98) under study is showing a mirror to those who, having sold their souls to the veneer of glamour they see in the obvious and to the craze for things and trends they envy in their fellow beings, have forgotten that their place is elsewhere, that they have to go to their Creator and that there is a journey ahead, to the ultimate domain of the *'Ākhirah*. The message is: Open your eyes, see reality, walk away from the web of deception and walk into salvation.

Verses 99 - 102

وَهُوَ الَّذِيٓ اَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً ۚ فَاَخْرَجْنَا بِهٖ نَبَاتَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ
فَاَخْرَجْنَا مِنْهُ خَضِرًا نُّخْرِجُ مِنْهُ حَبًّا مُّتَرَاكِبًا ۚ وَمِنَ النَّخْلِ
مِنْ طَلْعِهَا قِنْوَانٌ دَانِيَةٌ وَّجَنّٰتٍ مِّنْ اَعْنَابٍ وَّالزَّيْتُوْنَ وَالرُّمَّانَ
مُشْتَبِهًا وَّغَيْرَ مُتَشَابِهٍ ۗ اُنْظُرُوْٓا اِلٰى ثَمَرِهٖٓ اِذَآ اَثْمَرَ وَيَنْعِهٖ ۗ اِنَّ
فِيْ ذٰلِكُمْ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يُّؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٩٩﴾ وَجَعَلُوْا لِلّٰهِ شُرَكَآءَ
الْجِنَّ وَخَلَقَهُمْ وَخَرَقُوْا لَهٗ بَنِيْنَ وَ بَنٰتٍ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ ۗ سُبْحٰنَهٗ
وَتَعٰلٰى عَمَّا يَصِفُوْنَ ﴿١٠٠﴾ بَدِيْعُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۗ اَنّٰى
يَكُوْنُ لَهٗ وَلَدٌ وَّلَمْ تَكُنْ لَّهٗ صَاحِبَةٌ ۗ وَخَلَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ ۚ وَهُوَ
بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿١٠١﴾ ذٰلِكُمُ اللّٰهُ رَبُّكُمْ ۚ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ۚ خَالِقُ
كُلِّ شَيْءٍ فَاعْبُدُوْهُ ۚ وَهُوَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَّكِيْلٌ ﴿١٠٢﴾

And He is the one who sent down water from the heavens, then, with it, We brought forth vegetation of all kinds. Then from it We brought grains set upon one another. And from the palm-trees, from their spathes, come forth the low-hanging bunches. And (We produce) vineyards, the olive, the pomegranate, similar or not similar to each other. Look at its fruit when it

bears fruit, and at its ripening. Surely, in all this there are signs for the people who believe. [99]

And they have invented partners with Allah, the Jinns - while He has created them - and they have forged for Him sons and daughters without any knowledge. Pure is He, and far higher than they describe. [100]

(He is) the originator of the heavens and the earth. How can He have a son when He never had a wife? And He created everything, and He knows everything. [101]

This is Allah: your Lord, there is no God but He, the creator of everything; so, worship Him. And He is Guardian over everything. [102]

Commentary

The contents of this verse present a unique concern for thematic order. It will be noticed that three kinds of universes have been mentioned here: The low, the high and the atmosphere - that is, what generates in what we know as the Biosphere. The description was initiated with the mention of that which is on the lower level because it is closer to us. Then, it was split in two parts. One part of the statement covered vegetation which grows on the land, plants and trees and gardens. The other part featured life forms as beasts, human beings and animals. The first part was given precedence because it is more obvious as compared to the other. Then comes the case of that which has been made to come after, the other part. This is different. It has *Rūḥ*, soul or spirit. It is deep, depends on progression from the sperm to its various stages and attending conditions, something allied with the comprehension, diagnosis and judgement of physicians - contrary to the case of vegetation which, in its growth, flowering and ripening etc., is observable commonly. Then, mentioned there was the atmosphere and its life support system, the morning and the evening. Then, came the mention of what is higher, the sun, the moon, and the stars. After that, since what is at the lower level is observed more frequently, the subject was repeated and made the concluding statement. But, firstly it was taken up briefly, now it was taken up in detail - yet, in the order of this detail, the order of brevity was reversed by giving precedence to life forms and succession to the mention of vegetation. Perhaps, its

basis is that the detailed statement highlights the expression of gratitude for blessings which, in that status, makes the blessed - being the intended recepients - deserving of being given precedence. As for vegetation, the previous order stays as the status of the donees, that is, of seeds and pits, remains preceded. That rain has been mentioned in between is subservient to the mention of vegetation. Incidentally, there might be another element of refinement here - in that rain has different states. In terms of its origin, it comes from the high; and in terms of its destination, it comes down to the low; and in terms of the distance covered, it is part of the atmosphere.

Verses 103 - 107

لَا تُدْرِكُهُ الْأَبْصَارُ وَهُوَ يُدْرِكُ الْأَبْصَارَ ۚ وَهُوَ اللَّطِيفُ الْخَبِيرُ
﴿١٠٣﴾ قَدْ جَاءَكُم بَصَائِرُ مِن رَّبِّكُمْ ۚ فَمَنْ أَبْصَرَ فَلِنَفْسِهِ ۚ وَمَنْ
عَمِيَ فَعَلَيْهَا ۚ وَمَا أَنَا عَلَيْكُم بِحَفِيظٍ ﴿١٠٤﴾ وَكَذَٰلِكَ
نُصَرِّفُ الْآيَاتِ وَلِيَقُولُوا دَرَسْتَ وَلِنُبَيِّنَهُ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٠٥﴾
اتَّبِعْ مَا أُوحِيَ إِلَيْكَ مِن رَّبِّكَ ۚ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ۚ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ
الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿١٠٦﴾ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا أَشْرَكُوا ۗ وَمَا جَعَلْنَاكَ
عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِيظًا ۚ وَمَا أَنتَ عَلَيْهِم بِوَكِيلٍ ﴿١٠٧﴾

No vision can comprehend Him and He comprehends all visions, and He is All-Fine, All-Aware. [103]

(Say, O Prophet:) There have come to you insights from your Lord. Now, whoever uses his sight, does so for his own self, and whoever remains blind does so against himself. And I do not stand guard over you. [104]

And this is how We bring a variety of verses so that they say, "you have been tutored" and so that We may explain it to the people who have knowledge. [105]

Follow what has been revealed to you from your Lord. There is no god but He. And turn away from those who associate partners with Allah. [106]

And if Allah willed, they would not have associated.

And We have not made you to stand guard over them, and you are not entrusted with their affairs. [107]

Commentary

Out of these five verses of Sūrah Al-An'ām, the word: أَبْصَار : *'al-abṣār'* appearing in the first verse (103), is the plural of : بَصَر (*baṣar*) which means vision, sight or ability to see, while the word: إِدْرَاك (*idrāk*) means to reach, grasp, perceive, comprehend or encompass. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ has explained the meaning of *'idrāk'* at this place as to comprehend or encompass. (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ)

Thus, the sense of the verse comes to be that even the combined ability of seeing given to the entire creation, to Jinns and humans and angels, and to the rest of the life forms, can never see Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhū* in a way that their vision would encompass His Being. But, as for Him, He watches the vision of His entire creation fully, and His 'seeing' encompasses all of them. Mentioned in this brief verse are two particular attributes of Allah Ta'ālā.

1. Allah is Imperceivable: No eye in the whole universe, not even the combined eyesights of everyone, can encompass His Being.

Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī رضی اللہ عنہ reports that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said: If all human beings, Jinn, angels and Shaytan, from the first to the last, were to stand in a row, even their combined sights cannot comprehend His Being. (Maẓharī with reference to Ibn Abī Ḥātim)

Thus, so unique an attribute can belong to none but to the most-exalted Being of Allah. Otherwise, the sight bestowed by Allah on even the most insignificant life form of His creation can see with its mini-eyes much larger bodies and comprehend what they are. The sun and the moon are spheres of great magnitude, our earth being no match to them, yet the human eye, even the eyes of the smallest of animals, would see them in a way that would encompass their presence.

The truth of the matter is that the human eye is one sense organ out of the many given to human beings which enable them to see and react to what is perceptible. But, the Sacred Being of Allah Ta'ālā is beyond the all-surrounding, all-comprehending overview of even reason and conjecture. There is no way this knowledge could be acquired

by one single sense of sight. The Being and the Attributes of Allah Ta'ālā are limitless while human senses, reason and imagination are all limited. It is obvious that the limitless cannot fit into the limited. This is why the philosophers and metaphysicians of the world who spent their lives in intellectual research and the respected Sufis who traversed through this difficult spiritual field through the medium of Illumination (*Kashf*) and Experiencing of the Presence (*Shuhud*) all agree upon the proposition that neither has anyone arrived at the total comprehension of the reality of His Being and Attributes, nor is that possible.

The Possibility of Seeing the Creator

The question is: Is it possible for human beings to see Allah Ta'ālā, or is it not? On this religious question or *mas'alah*, the belief of all *'Ulamā* of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah* (the majority of Muslims who adhere to the *Sunnah* of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his Ṣaḥābah) is that it is not possible to see the Being of Allah Ta'ālā in the state of life we have in this mortal world. This is the reason why, when Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام prayed: رَبِّ أَرِنِي (My Lord, show (Yourself) to me - 7:143), the answer given was: لَن تَرَانِي (*'lan tarānī* : 'you shall never see Me' - 7:143). It is obvious when this is the answer given to a prophet no less than Sayyidnā Mūsā the Kalīmullāh عليه السلام, no Jinn or human being can even dare think about it. However, that believing Muslims will have the honour of seeing Allah Ta'ālā in the *'Ākhirah* stands proved on the authority of sound (*Ṣaḥīḥ*) and strong *'Aḥādīth* which have been reported in uninterrupted succession (*mutawātir*). And this is what appears in the Qur'ān itself:

وُجُوهٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ نَّاضِرَةٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهَا نَاظِرَةٌ

Faces on that Day shall be glowing, towards their Lord gazing! - 75:22

However, the disbelievers and the deniers will not have the honour of seeing Allah Ta'ālā even on that Day, as punishment, as in a verse of the Qur'ān:

كَلَّا إِنَّهُمْ عَن رَّبِّهِمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ لَّمَحْجُوبُونَ،

No indeed; surely from (the sighting of) their Lord on that Day, they shall be deprived - 83:15.

The Ziarah (the honour of seeing or visiting) of Allah Ta'ālā shall take place in *'Ākhirah* at several places - and on the Day of Resurrection (*Al-Maḥshar*) as well as after reaching *Jannah* (Paradise). For the people of *Jannah*, the Ziarah of Allah Ta'ālā shall be the greatest of all blessings.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: When the people of *Jannah* have entered *Jannah*, Allah Ta'ālā will ask them if they need any more blessings besides what they have already received in *Jannah*; if so, let them ask and they shall be granted those too. They will say: O Allah, You granted us deliverance from *Jahannam* (Hell), and admitted us into the *Jannah* (Paradise). What else could we ask for? That would be the time when the Veil shall stand removed, everyone shall have the honour to see Allah Ta'ālā, and of all the blessings of *Jannah*, this will be the greatest. This *Ḥadīth* appears in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim as reported by Sayyidnā Ṣuhayb رضى الله عنه .

As reported in a *Ḥadīth* from the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was sitting under moonlight. His noble Saḥābah were with him. He looked at the moon, then said: You shall see your *Rabb* with your own eyes (in the *'Ākhirah*) in a way you are seeing this moon.

In a *Ḥadīth* of Tirmidhī and the Musnad of Aḥmad, it has been reported from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنه that people blessed with special ranks of *Jannah* by Allah Ta'ālā will have the good fortune of seeing Him every morning and evening.

In short, no one can see Allah Ta'ālā in the mortal world while, in the *'Ākhirah*, all those in *Jannah* will see Him. As for the Ziyarah made by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم on the night of *Mi'rāj* (the Ascent to the Heavens), that too was, in reality, the Ziarah of Allah Ta'ālā as it would be in the *Ākhirah*. According to Shaykh Muḥiyuddīn ibn al-'Arabī, the world is what lies circumscribed by the skies. Beyond that is the domain of *'Ākhirah*. A Ziyarah there cannot be called a Ziyarah here in the world.

Now, still unanswered remains the question: When we know from the verse of the Qur'ān: لَا تُدْرِكُهُ الْأَبْصَارُ (no vision can comprehend Him), that is, human beings just cannot see Allah Ta'ālā, how would that be-

come possible in the '*Ākhirah*? The obvious answer is that the verse of the Qur'ān does not mean that the *Ru'yah, Ziyarah* or Seeing of Allah Ta'ālā is impossible for human beings. Instead of that, the meaning of the verse is that human vision cannot comprehend or encompass His Being because His Being is unlimited while human vision is limited.

Even the Ziyarah made in the '*Ākhirah* will be in a manner that vision would still fail to comprehend Him fully; while in the mortal world, human beings and their vision do not have the strength and capacity to bear by 'seeing' even in this manner. Therefore, this *ru'yah* or seeing is absolutely impossible in the mortal world. But, in the '*Ākhirah*, given the strength and capability, this *ru'yah, ziyarah*, or seeing would become possible - but, a full, all-encompassing comprehending of the Most-True Being of Allah *Subhānuhu wa Ta'ālā* would still remain impossible even then.

2. Allah is All-Perceiving: The second attribute of Allah Ta'ālā mentioned in this verse is that His vision encompasses the whole universe. Nothing, anywhere, not even the minutest particle, is hidden from Him. This Absolute Knowledge with all-pervading, all-comprehending reach, is also a unique attribute of Allah Ta'ālā. Other than Him, no created being has ever achieved such all-inclusive knowledge of everything, nor shall it ever be possible - because this is the domain of Allah, the most-exalted in His majesty.

After that it was said: (and He is All-Fine, All-Aware). Lexically, the word: اَللَّطِيْف (*al-Laṭīf*) has two meanings: (a) kind, (b) fine or subtle in contrast with thick or course, that is, what cannot be perceived through the senses.

As for the word: اَلْخَبِيْر (*al-Khabīr*), it means All-Aware. Thus, the sentence comes to mean that Allah Ta'ālā is All-Fine (*Al-Laṭīf*), therefore, He cannot be comprehended through the senses - and He is All-Aware (*Al-Khabīr*), therefore, nothing in the entire universe is beyond His knowledge and awareness. If *Al-Laṭīf* is taken to mean kind at this place, it will be suggesting that though Allah Ta'ālā is All-Aware of everything we say or do, even what we intend, think or feel - which would have required that we should have been caught for every sin - but, He is kind and gracious too, therefore, He does not call us to account for every sin.

The word: بَصَآئِر (*baṣā'ir*) appearing in the second verse (104) is the plural of *baṣīrah* which means reason, intelligence or insight, that is, the power through which one can acquire the knowledge of things which do not fall within the range of perception through the senses. *'Baṣā'ir'*, in this verse, means the evidences and sources through which one can get to know truth and reality. The meaning of the verse is: The sources and means of seeing the truth have reached you from Allah, that is, the Qur'ān has come, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has come, manifest have been his miracles, and observed openly were his morals and dealings and teachings. All these are means of seeing the truth.

So, whoever has used these means has become the one blessed with true insight with his benefits secured, while the one who elected to remain blind to the truth by ignoring these means ends up losing what was good.

Towards the end of the verse, it was said: 'I do not stand guard over you.' It means that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has not been given the responsibility of forcing people to stop doing what was improper, as usually done by one appointed to oversee and guard (or self-appointed as vigilantes in our day). Instead, the functional responsibility of a messenger of Allah is only to convey commands, and explain. After that, following or not following the message conveyed becomes a matter of personal discretion and responsibility of the addressees.

It will be recalled that many clear arguments in favour of *Tauḥīd* (Oneness of Allah) and *Risālah* (The Veracity of Prophethood) had appeared in previous verses. It is to these that reference has been made in the third verse (105) here where it has been said: كَذٰلِكَ نُصَرِّفُ الْاٰيٰتِ (And this is how We bring forth a variety of verses [where arguments are presented from different angles]).

After that, it was said: وَلِيَقُولُوا دَرَسْتَ وَلِنُبَيِّنَهُ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ (so that they may say, "you have been tutored" and so that We may explain it to the people who have knowledge). From here it can be inferred that all aids to guidance in the form of miracles, signs, proofs, and the matchless Qur'ān itself were all solid means to help see truth. Then, there was the spectacle of a total *Ummiyy* expressing with inimitable eloquence volumes of knowledge and reality through his blessed speech which has left the wise of the world wondering. And how could one bypass

the eloquence and truth of the Word of Allah which could not be imitated even to the scale of one small Sūrah, despite the challenge to all Jinn and human beings valid upto the end of time? As we said, these were means to help people know and see the truth as it was. Such was the class and substance of this treasure trove of truth that even the most diehard denier should have fallen on the blessed feet of the Holy Prophet ﷺ ! But, people who were chronically crooked in their ways started saying: "دَرَسْتَ" (*darasta*), that is, 'you have been tutored.'

Then, said along with it was: وَلِنُبَيِّنَهُ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ (and so that We may explain it to the people who have knowledge). Its essential meaning is that the statement made proved to be beneficial for those who were understanding, sensible and wise. As for the sources of guidance, those were surely placed before everyone, but the crooked took no advantage of the opportunity offered while the wise ones owned them heartily and became the leaders of their world.

In the fourth verse (106), the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been guided to a specific course of action. He has been asked not to worry about the acceptance or non-acceptance of the call. For him, the best course was to keep following the way revealed to him through Waḥy from his *Rabb*, the major element of which is the belief that no one is worthy of worship but Allah. That he should continue preaching with his message of truth is part of what has been revealed. So, believing in Allah and remaining steadfast on the way ordained for him, he should avoid feeling concerned about disbelievers and their unfortunate non-acceptance of the call.

The reason for this has been given in the fifth verse (107). There it has been said: If Allah Ta'ālā had willed - in consideration of His own creational imperative - that the whole human race should become Muslim in faith, then, it would have become impossible for them to associate partners in the Divinity of Allah (*Shirk*). But, it was because of their misdeeds that Allah willed that they be punished. So, He created the necessary conditions for that end. Now, how could he make them Muslims under these circumstances? In fact, why should he worry about what they choose to do with their lives? Allah has not made him to stand guard over what they do, nor has he been authorized by Allah to bring punishment on them for their misdeeds. Therefore, he should

not have any anxiety on account of what they do to themselves or for themselves.

Verses 108 - 113

وَلَا تَسُبُّوا الَّذِيْنَ يَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ فَيَسُبُّوا اللّٰهَ عَدْوًا
بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ زَيَّنَّا لِكُلِّ اُمَّةٍ عَمَلَهُمْ ۪ ثُمَّ اِلٰى رَبِّهِمْ
مَّرْجِعُهُمْ فَيُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١٠٨﴾ وَاَقْسَمُوْا بِاللّٰهِ
جَهْدَ اَيْمَانِهِمْ لَئِنْ جَآءَتْهُمْ اٰيَةٌ لَّيُؤْمِنُنَّ بِهَا ؕ قُلْ اِنَّمَا الْاٰيٰتُ
عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ وَمَا يُشْعِرُكُمْ ۙ اَنَّهَاۤ اِذَا جَآءَتْ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿١٠٩﴾
وَنُقَلِّبُ اَفْئِدَتَهُمْ وَاَبْصَارَهُمْ كَمَا لَمْ يُؤْمِنُوْا بِهٖۤ اَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ
وَّنَذَرُهُمْ فِيْ طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُوْنَ ﴿١١٠﴾ وَلَوْ اَنَّنَا نَزَّلْنَاۤ اِلَيْهِمُ
الْمَلٰٓئِكَةَ وَكَلَّمَهُمُ الْمَوْتٰى وَحَشَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ قُبُلًا مَّا كَانُوْا
لِيُؤْمِنُوْۤا اِلَّاۤ اَنْ يَّشَآءَ اللّٰهُ ج وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَهُمْ يَجْهَلُوْنَ ﴿١١١﴾
وَكَذٰلِكَ جَعَلْنَا لِكُلِّ نَبِيٍّ عَدُوًّا شَيٰطِيْنَ الْاِنْسِ وَالْجِنِّ يُوْحِيْ
بَعْضُهُمْ اِلٰى بَعْضٍ زُخْرُفَ الْقَوْلِ غُرُوْرًا ؕ وَلَوْ شَآءَ رَبُّكَ
مَا فَعَلُوْهُ فَذَرْهُمْ وَمَا يَفْتَرُوْنَ ﴿١١٢﴾ وَلِتَصْغٰۤى اِلَيْهِ اَفْئِدَةُ
الَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ وَلِيَرْضَوْهُ وَلِيَقْتَرِفُوْا مَا هُمْ
مُّقْتَرِفُوْنَ ﴿١١٣﴾

And do not abuse* those whom they invoke other than Allah, lest they should abuse* Allah trangressingly without knowledge. This is how We have made the deeds of every community attractive in their sight. Then, to their Lord is their return whereafter He shall tell them what they have been doing. [108]

And they swore by Allah on eloquent oaths that if a sign comes to them, they shall surely believe in it. Say, "Signs are, definitely, with Allah." And what will make

*. Insult using foul language.

you realize that even when they (the signs) come, they will not believe - [109] **and We upset their hearts and sights - as they did not believe in them the first time. And We leave them wandering blindly in their rebellion.** [110]

And if We had sent down to them the angels and the dead had spoken to them and (even if) We had gathered everything before them, face to face, still, they were not to believe unless Allah would have so willed. But, most of them go for ignorance. [111]

And similarly, We have made enemies for every prophet, the satans of mankind and jinn. They reveal to one another ornamented words in order to deceive. And had Allah willed, they would have not done so. So, leave them with what they forge [112] **- and in order that the hearts of those who do not believe in the Hereafter may incline to it and so that they commit what they are to commit.** [113]

Commentary

The first of the present verses has been revealed concerning a particular event and provides guidance in a matter of principle, that is, what you are not permitted to do yourself, for that you cannot become the cause or channel either - both shall remain equally impermissible.

The Background of Revelation

According to the background of revelation as narrated by Ibn Jarīr, when Abū Ṭālib, the respected uncle of the Holy Prophet ﷺ was on his death bed, the disbelieving chiefs of the tribe of Quraysh who, hostile and torturous to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, always plotting to kill him, became alarmed at the eventuality of the death of Abū Ṭālib which was likely to become an impediment to their nefarious designs. Because, they thought, if they were to kill Muḥammad ﷺ after his protective uncle's death, that would go against the norms of their own self-respect and honour, for people would say that they were unable to do anything like that in the presence of Abū Ṭālib, but when he died, they killed his helpless nephew. So, they decided to get together and go to Abū Ṭālib to talk about the matter in a decisive manner.

Every educated Muslim knows that Abū Ṭālib, though he had not

formally embraced Islam, loved the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم dearly, even respected him as a great bearer of the Divine message right from his heart, and always defended him against his enemies.

So, the Quraysh chiefs formed a deputation who would go to see Abū Ṭālib. Included as members of the deputation were Abū Sufyān, Abū Jahl, 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ and some others. The name of the person chosen to arrange for an appointment to meet with Abū Ṭālib was Muṭṭalib. He got his permission and escorted the deputation to him.

To Abū Ṭālib, the deputation said: You are our elder, and a chief, and you know that your nephew, Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم has been causing great pain to the idols we worship. We wish that you would talk to him and prevail on him that he should say nothing offensive against our idols, in which case, we shall make peace on the principle that he acts as he wishes on his faith, takes whoever he chooses as the object of his worship, against which, we shall raise no objection.

Abū Ṭālib called the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to him and said: Here are the chiefs of your clan. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم turned to the deputation and asked: What is your wish? They said: We wish that you leave us and our idols alone. Do not speak ill of them. We shall leave you and your object of worship alone. This will end our mutual hostility.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: All right, you tell me, if I were to accept what you were saying, would you be ready to say a *Kalimah* (statement in words) by saying which you would become masters of the whole Arabia with even people from beyond subscribing to your authority?

Abū Jahl said: You are talking about only one *Kalimah*. We are ready to say ten of them. Tell us what are they? The Holy Prophet ﷺ said: لَآ إِلٰهَ إِلَّا اللّٰهُ [*Lā Ilāha Illallāh* : There is no god (worthy of worship) but Allah]. That infuriated all of them. Abū Ṭālib said to the Holy Prophet ﷺ: O my nephew, say something other than this *Kalimah* because it has left your clansmen all confused.

He said: As for me, I cannot say a *Kalimah* other than this. If they were to bring the sun down from the skies and put in my hands, even then I will not say a *Kalimah* other than this. His intention was to let

them become totally disappointed.

Thereupon, still in anger, they said: Either you stop speaking ill of our idols, the objects of our worship, or we too are going to start using insulting language against you, and also against that Being of which you claim to be the messenger. Revealed, thereupon, was the verse: وَلَا تَسُبُّوا الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللّٰهِ فَيَسُبُّوا اللّٰهَ عَدْوًا بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ (And do not abuse those whom they invoke other than Allah, lest they abuse Allah transgressively without knowledge).

"لَا تَسُبُّوا" (*lā tasubbū*) in this verse is a derivation from the word: سَبّ (*sabb*) which means to abuse or use insulting language against someone (not in the sense of misuse, maltreatment or corrupt practice as currently used in American English which uses other alternates for hurling invectives – Tr.). The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, given his intrinsically high moral disposition, had already been abiding by this rule of conduct. Not even during his childhood, had his blessed speech ever been contaminated with an abusive word for any human being, rather not even for an animal. Perhaps, there may have been some hard word which escaped the lips of some from among the noble Companions which was overestimated as an invective by the disbelievers of Makkah, and which was used as a pretext by the chiefs of the Quraysh when their deputation brought this case up before the Holy Prophet ﷺ and gave the ultimatum that either he stops insulting their deities or they would start insulting theirs.

Thereupon, came the Qur'ānic injunction through which Muslims were prohibited from making any insulting statement against the false objects worshipped by disbelievers. Particularly worth noticing in this verse is that, just a verse earlier (106-107), the address was to the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself. Examples are: اِتَّبِعْ مَآ اُوْحِيَ اِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ (Follow what has been revealed to you from your Lord) and: اَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ (and turn away from those who associate partners with Allah) and: مَا جَعَلْنٰكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِيْظًا (And We have not made you to stand guard over them) and: مَآ اَنْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِوَكِيْلٍ (and you are not entrusted with their affairs). In all these grammatical forms, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was the addressee who was being asked to do or not to do something. After that, the form of address was changed in the present verse. It was turned away from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and was turned to Muslims in general.

Said there was: لَا تَسُبُّوا (*lā tasubbū*). The hint given thereby is that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, who had never used abusive speech against anyone to start with, could not be directly addressed with the words of prohibition for that could make him disheartened. Therefore, the address was made general - and all Ṣaḥābah عليه السلام too started taking precaution in this matter. (As in Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ)

Related Considerations

That idols have been mentioned in strong words in several verses of the Qur'ān, and that those verses are not abrogated either for they are still recited, is a different matter.

The answer is that such words wherever they appear in the verses of the Qur'ān are there as a polemic or debating device to unfold some reality clearly. Intended at such places is no aggression, nor can a sensible person deduce from it such an intention to malign idols or to mock at disbelievers or to irritate them. This is an open difference in approach which is readily understood by those aware of the nuances of diction in any language. They know that the shortcoming or inadequacy of a person is called in question only to elucidate an issue in question. This is common practice in courts where no one challenges the statement being made before the Court as the throwing of invectives against someone. Similarly, narrated before physicians are the kind of defects and drawbacks people could have which, if described elsewhere would be taken as invectives hurled at someone. But, such statement made under medical need is not regarded as abusive talk by anyone.

Thus, when the Qur'ān describes the helplessness of idols in being devoid of sense and consciousness, knowledge and power, it uses a manner of speaking which would help the understanding to understand reality and expose the error or short-sightedness of those who do not. Hence, it was said: ضَعُفَ الطَّالِبُ وَالْمَطْلُوبُ 'Weak are the seekers and weak, the sought (idols) - 22:73.' And as it was said: إِنَّكُمْ وَمَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ حَصَبُ جَهَنَّمَ (You, and what you worship, other than Allah, are but fuel for Hell - 21:98). Here too, the purpose is not to speak ill of someone. The purpose is to state the sad end of straying and error. Muslim jurists, may the mercy of Allah be upon them, have made it all clear by explaining: If anyone were to recite this verse too as a tool aimed at

causing irritation for disbelievers, then, for him, this recitation at that time and for that purpose, shall be considered as included under this 'abusing which is prohibited,' and will, therefore, be impermissible - as is the case in the prohibition of the recitation of the Qur'ān at times and places which are *Makrūh* (reprehensible) and known to everyone. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī).

To sum up, it can be said that, no word which could be taken as abusive was ever said by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, or had appeared in the Holy Qur'ān, nor was there any apprehension that it could happen in the future. Of course, the probability that Muslims at large may fall into such impulsive action did exist, therefore, this verse stopped them from doing so. This event and the Qur'ānic instruction based on it has provided access to a large body of significant knowledge, some examples of which are given below:

Becoming the Cause or Agent of a Sin is also a Sin

1. One of the principles thus deduced is: If doing something which is permissible intrinsically - in fact, even commendable in a certain degree - but, in the actual doing of it some corruption has to be accomodated, or as a result of which, people are let into sin, then, the doing of such a thing is also prohibited. The reason is that identifying false objects of worship, that is, the idols, is, at least, permissible after all - and if said under the need to uphold one's religious feelings, it may perhaps be even worthy of praise and reward - but, since this resulted in the apprehension that people would start speaking ill of Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhū* which, in turn, would make the degraders of idols the cause of this evil, therefore, prohibited was the act which was already permissible.

2. Another example of this appears in *Ḥadīth* where, addressing his Companions, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is reported to have said: No one should abuse (use insulting language against) his or her parents. The Companions submitted: *Yā Rasūl* Allah, it is just not possible that one will abuse parents. He said: Yes, one does not usually do that. But, when such a person abuses the parents of someone else and, as a consequence of it, the other person abuses his parents, then, the cause of his parents being so abused was this very son. So, he too is like one who has himself abused his parents.

3. Yet another instance of a case of this nature came to pass during the blessed time of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. He said to Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها that the Baytullah (the Holy Ka'bah) had collapsed on its foundations in an accident during the *Jāhiliyyah*. The Quraysh of Makkah reconstructed it before the advent of prophethood. In this structure, some details turned out to be against the initial Ibrāhīmī foundation. One of them was the part now known as Ḥaṭim. This too is part of the Baytullah. It was left out because of paucity of funds. Then, there were two doors of Baytullah, the Eastern and the Western - one for entry and the other for exit. The people of *Jāhiliyyah* closed the Western door. The one door left was raised higher than the ground level so that entry into the Baytullah would depend on their will and permission and that no one could go there freely. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: I wish I could demolish the present structure of Baytullah and make it like the structure raised by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm Khalīlullah عليه السلام. But, the danger is that your people, that is, the common Arabs, who have entered the fold of Islam just now, may fall a victim to some doubts at the sight of Baytullah being demolished, therefore, I have abandoned my intention.

It goes without saying that raising the structure of Baytullah precisely on the foundations laid down by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was an act of obedience and a deed deserving of merit and reward. But, seeing the shadows of a danger lurking behind this intended action because of the ignorance of people around, he abandoned that idea. So, from this event too, there emerges the same principle that, should there be an apprehension of some evil or corruption necessarily resulting from what is permissible, even from what is otherwise an act of *thawāb* or merit, then, that permissible or *thawāb*-worthy act too becomes impermissible.

But, there exists a strong doubt about this principle which has been reported from Abū Manṣūr in Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī. The proposition posed is: Allah Ta'ālā has made *Jihād* binding on Muslims - though, the inevitable outcome of killing is that, when a Muslim will start killing some non-Muslim, they would start killing Muslims - and killing Muslims is *Ḥarām* (forbidden). Thus, given this principle, *Jihad* should also be prohibited. Then, the same will hold valid about our propaga-

tion of Islam and the recitation of the Qur'ān, and about *Adhān* and Ṣalāh as well, all of which are subjected to mockery and ridicule by many among the disbelievers. If so, shall we surrender our right to worship and promote our religion?

Answering this, Abū Mansur has himself said that this doubt has come up because of ignoring a necessary condition. That condition is that a permissible act which has been prohibited, because of the apprehension of something evil, should not be one of the basic objectives and necessary duties in Islam. Thus, speaking ill of false objects of worship does not relate to any objective of Islam. Similarly, no basic Islamic objective depends on making the structure of Baytullah conform precisely to the foundations laid out by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. Therefore, whenever there was the danger of some religious malsituation cropping up by doing what was permissible, or even rewardworthy, such acts or intentions were abandoned. As for acts which are either the very Islamic objectives in themselves, or on them depends some Islamic objective, then, even if the wrongdoings of other people seem to be bringing visible corruption or evil in its wake, then, these objectives will never be surrendered or abandoned. Instead of that, effort will be made that such permissible acts should keep continuing in their place, and steps will be taken to block the spreading of evils and corrupting agents as far as possible.

This is why two great men of Islamic history acted the way they did. Once Ḥasan al-Baṣrī رحمه الله عليه and Imām Muḥammad Ibn Sirīn رحمه الله عليه went out to participate in the Ṣalāh for a *Janāzah*. There, they noticed a gathering which had men as well as women. Seeing this Ibn *Sirīn* returned back. But, Haḍrat Ḥasan al-Baṣrī said: Why should we leave doing what is necessary because of the false practice or ways of other people? The Ṣalāh of *Janāzah* is *Farḍ* (obligatory). It cannot be abandoned because of this corrupting agent. Of course, effort will be made, as far as possible, that this evil is rooted out.

This event too has been reported in Ruḥ al-Ma'ānī.

So, the substance of this principle which emerges from this verse comes to be: An act which is permissible in itself, even if it be an act of obedience and *thawāb* - but, not be one of the religiously binding objectives, then, should doing it bring forth evil consequences, abandoning

of that permissible act becomes *Wājib* (necessary). This is contrary to the case of the objectives of the Sharī'ah which cannot be abandoned because of any impending evil or corruption.

From this principle, the jurists of the Muslim community have deduced solutions to thousands of problems. Some examples of their juristic efforts are:

1. If a person has a disobedient son and he knows that, should he ask him to do something, he would refuse to do it and even prefer to do against it, in which case, he will become liable to a grave sin, then, in such a situation, the father should not ask him to do or not to do something as an order, instead of which, he should say so in the mode of a good counsel - for example, he says to him, 'if such and such job could be done, that would be nice' - so that, in the eventuality of a refusal or reverse action, the son does not become liable to the sin of a new disobedience. (*Khulāṣatul-Fatāwā*)

2. The same rule holds good in matters where well-meaning advice is given to someone. If circumstancial indicators show that a person, rather than take advice, is more likely to take a worse course, as a result of which, he will sink deeper into sin, then, in such a situation, to give up advising is better. In his Ṣaḥīḥ, Imām al-Bukhārī has introduced a regular chapter on this subject:

باب من ترك بعض الاختيار مخافة ان يقصر فهم بعض الناس فيقعوا فى اشد منه

> There are occasions when things permissible, even those commendable, are abandoned lest they put common people in misunderstanding - subject to the condition that these acts are not from the core objectives of Islam.

3. But, acts which are included under the objectives of Islam - whether *Farḍ*, *Wājib* or *Sunnah al-Mu'akkadah* (obligatory, necessary or emphasized *Sunnah*) or other kinds of Islamic hallmarks - if by observing them some people lacking in understanding start falling in misunderstanding, then, these acts will not be abandoned, rather, other methods will be used to remove the misunderstanding and misdoing of such people. Events which came to pass in early Islam prove that the disbelievers of Makkah were provoked because of Ṣalāh, the recita-

tion of the Qur'ān and the preaching of Islam. But, the standing hallmarks of Islam were never abandoned because of such adverse conditions. In fact, the very episode relating to Abū Jahl and the rest of Quraysh chiefs recounted under the Background of Revelation of the present verse has proved the point eloquently. The essence of the episode was that the chiefs from the disbelieving Quraysh tribe wished to give a guarantee of peace if the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم would abandon preaching *Tauḥīd*, that is, stop calling Allah One. The answer given by him was: I can never do that, even if they were to bring the sun and the moon and put them in my hands.

In conclusion, the question as refined and resolved is: If, by doing what is included under Islamic objectives, some people fall a victim to misunderstanding or misdeed, such acts would never be abandoned. Of course, acts which are not included under Islamic objectives - and leaving them off does not compromise or kill any religious objective - then, such acts will be abandoned because of the apprehension that others might fall into misunderstanding or misdeed.

On Signs and Miracles

The previous verses had mentioned how obstinate people failed to benefit from clear signs of Allah and open miracles of His Messenger and kept on denying the message of truth. The present verses mention how they took a new turn, and demanded particular miracles from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم . As reported by Ibn Jarīr, the Quraysh chiefs asked that they be shown the miracle of turning the Mount of Ṣafā into solid gold; if so, they would accept that he was a prophet and messenger, and that they would embrace Islam.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: All right, make a solid agreement that, if this miracle is shown, all of you will become Muslims. They took solemn oaths. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم stood up to pray that Allah turns the Mount into gold. Sayyidnā Jibra'īl came with Waḥy which said: If you wish, We shall make this whole Mount a Mount of gold, but the consequence will be that, according to the customary Divine Law, all of them - if they still fail to believe - shall be destroyed through a mass punishment, as has been happening with past communities who demanded a miracle which was shown, yet they reverted back to denial when the wrath and punishment of Allah over-

took them. Since the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم was aware of their habitual obstinacy, and because he was in mercy the foremost, he said that he was not going to pray for that miracle anymore. Thereupon, the following verse was revealed: وَأَقْسَمُوا بِاللَّهِ جَهْدَ أَيْمَانِهِمْ (And they swore by Allah on eloquent oaths - 109). Reported here is the sworn saying of the disbelievers that they would embrace Islam if they can see the miracle demanded by them. After that, in the sentence which follows immediately, it was said: إِنَّمَا الْآيَاتُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ (Signs are, definitely, with Allah - 109). This contains an answer to their saying. It has been declared here that all signs and miracles are within the power and control of Allah Ta'ala. As for the miracles already manifested, they too were from Him - and those being demanded now, they too lie within His absolute control. But, according to the dictate of reason and justice, they had no right to make such a demand - because, the Holy Prophet ﷺ claims to be a Messenger of Allah, in support of which, he has already presented proofs and evidences in the form of miracles. Now, the other party does have the right to question these proofs and evidences by showing the proofs of their being false. But, the attitude of not cross-examining evidences presented and yet demanding some other evidences would be like the scenario in a law court where the respondent would avoid cross-examining the witness presented by the plaintiff and take the plea that he does not accept the evidence of these witnesses and that he would accept what is said particularly by such and such a person in his statement. Obviously, no court would consider this plea worth hearing.

Similar is the case of the veracity of a prophet or *Rasul* of Allah. To that end there are many clear signs and miracles before those who disbelieve. Now, unless they prove that these signs and miracles are false, they have no right to say that they would rather like to see a miracle of this or that kind before they could believe.

After that, upto the end of the cited verses, Muslims have been directly instructed that their duty is to stay firm on the true faith in their individual capacity, as well as convey it to others correctly and properly. If they, even then, show signs of rigidness and obstinacy, one should not worry about them because no one has to be forced into becoming a Muslim. If this was what could be done by force, who can

claim to have greater coercive power than Allah Ta'ālā. He Himself would have made everyone a Muslim. And in order to give Muslims their peace of heart, it was also explained in the verse that these people will not believe even if Allah were to show them the miracles of their choice openly and clearly. The reason was that their denial was not based on any misunderstanding or lack of awareness. In fact, it was due to their hostility and obstinacy - a disease which cannot be treated by miracles. In verse 111: وَلَوْ اَنَّنَا نَزَّلْنَآ اِلَيْهِمُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةَ , it has been said that these people, if they were shown all miracles demanded by them, in fact, even if they were made to meet with angels and talk to the dead, they would still not believe. In the two verses that follow (112-113), the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been comforted by saying that the hostility of such people against him is nothing surprising. Past prophets too had their enemies - so, let him not be sad about it.

Verses 114 - 117

اَفَغَيْرَ اللّٰهِ اَبْتَغِىْ حَكَمًا وَّهُوَ الَّذِىْٓ اَنْزَلَ اِلَيْكُمُ الْكِتٰبَ مُفَصَّلًا ؕ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰتَيْنٰهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ يَعْلَمُوْنَ اَنَّهٗ مُنَزَّلٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّكَ بِالْحَقِّ فَلَا تَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الْمُمْتَرِيْنَ ﴿۱۱۴﴾ وَتَمَّتْ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ صِدْقًا وَّعَدْلًا ؕ لَا مُبَدِّلَ لِكَلِمٰتِهٖ ۚ وَهُوَ السَّمِيْعُ الْعَلِيْمُ ﴿۱۱۵﴾ وَاِنْ تُطِعْ اَكْثَرَ مَنْ فِى الْاَرْضِ يُضِلُّوْكَ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنْ يَّتَّبِعُوْنَ اِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَاِنْ هُمْ اِلَّا يَخْرُصُوْنَ ﴿۱۱۶﴾ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ اَعْلَمُ مَنْ يَّضِلُّ عَنْ سَبِيْلِهٖ ۚ وَهُوَ اَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِيْنَ ﴿۱۱۷﴾

So, is it someone apart from Allah that I should seek as judge while He has sent down to you the Book with details? And those We have given the Book know that it is something revealed from your Lord with the truth. So, never be one of those who are suspicious. [114]

And the Word of your Lord is perfect in truth and justice. None is there to change His words, and He is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. [115]

And if you obey the majority of those on earth, they will make you lose the way of Allah. They follow nothing but whims, and they do nothing but make conjectures. [116]

Surely, your Lord knows best those who go astray from His way, and He is the best knower of those who are on the right path. [117]

Commentary

Mentioned in previous verses was the obstinate attitude of the disbelievers of Makkah against the veracity of the Qur'ān and the Prophet of Islam صلى الله عليه وسلم. Despite having seen signs and miracles proving their truth, they remained adamant, event went on to demand miracles of their choice before they could believe. The Qur'ān answered this illogical argumentation by saying that the manifestation of miracles they demanded was easy for Allah, but those who were demanding them were obstinate people who would see them yet continue in their wickedness. When they do so, Divine Law will take over, as a result of which, they shall be over-run with mass punishment. That is why the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, in his universal mercy, refused to oblige them. He asked them to ponder over the miracles, signs and proofs they have already seen.

The present verses carry evidences which clearly prove the veracity of the Qur'ān and that it is the Divine Word.

The substance of what has been said in the first verse (114) is: The difference between you and me is in the case of my being a prophet and messenger of Allah. I claim it and you deny it. But, this case has already been decided by the Judge of judges in my favour in a way that the miracle of the Qur'ān itself is more than sufficient a proof of the truth of my claim. This is the same Qur'ān which has challenged the nations of the world to come forward - if they doubt its being the Word of Allah - and make a small *Sūrah* or *'Āyah* to match this Word. Even the eloquent Arabs failed to meet this challenge. Then, there were those opposing Islam, Qur'ān and the Prophet of Islam enblock at the cost of their lives, properties and honour, even not one from among them rose with one single *'Āyah* which would match the words of the miraculous Qur'ān. Was this open miracle not good enough to make

one accept the truth that a total *Ummiyy* who was never taught by anyone was reciting what had left Arabia and the world at large wondering? This is a case already decided in the Court of the Judge of all judges - that Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم is a true *Rasūl* of Allah and the Qur'ān is the *Kalām* (Word) of Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhū.*

It was regarding this that it was said in the first verse (114): أَفَغَيْرَ اللَّهِ أَبْتَغِي حَكَمًا (So, is it someone apart from Allah that I should seek as judge). In other words, it means: 'Do you want that I should, after this decision (of Allah Ta'ālā to reveal the Qur'ān to me), go and look for a judge other than Him? This is impossible. Following that - given there are some particular qualities of the Holy Qur'ān which are by themselves the proof of the Qur'ān being true and the Word of Allah. For example, it was said: هُوَ الَّذِي أَنزَلَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْكِتَابَ مُفَصَّلًا (while He has sent down to you the Book with details) which describes four special perfections of the Qur'ān, that is: (1) It has been sent down from Allah Ta'ālā; (2) It is perfect, miraculous, unchallenged and inimitable; (3) All matters of principle have been given in clear details; and (4) Before the Qur'ān, the People of the Book, the Jews and the Christians knew for sure that the Qur'ān is the true Word of Allah. Then, those who had regard for truth, said so while those who were hostile would not say so despite that they were sure about it.

After the description of these four qualities of the Holy Qur'ān, the address is to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم: فَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُمْتَرِينَ (So, never be one of those who are suspicious). It means that in the presence of such clear proofs, there is no room for doubt. It is obvious that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was never one of those who were in doubt, nor he could be, as confirmed by his saying reported in *Tafsīr* Ibn Kathir: "Neither I ever doubted, nor I ever asked." This tells us that, though in terms of the words, the address is to the Holy Prophet ﷺ but, in reality, the purpose is to make others hear it. That it has been ascribed to him is a manner in which the aim is to lay emphasis on and highten the effect of the command - in the sense: 'when this has been said to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, who would have the audacity to entertain any doubt?'

Described in the second verse (115), there are two more distinctive qualities of the Holy Qur'ān sufficient to prove its being the Divine

Word. It is said: وَتَمَّتْ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ صِدْقًا وَّ عَدْلًا ؕ لَا مُبَدِّلَ لِكَلِمٰتِهٖ (And the Word of your Lord is perfect in truth and justice. None is there to change His Word).

The word: تَمَّتْ (*tammat*) denotes the state of perfection and: كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ. (*kalimatu Rabbik*) refers to the Qur'ān (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ, from Sayyidnā Qatādah). All subjects of the Qur'ān are of two kinds: (1) Those in which lesson-oriented events and conditions of world history, reward on good deeds and warning of punishment on evil deeds have been described; and (2) those in which injunctions relating to human betterment and prosperity have been laid out. It is about these two kinds that the following two qualities of the Qur'ān have been identified: صِدْقًا وَّ عَدْلًا , that is, perfect in truth and justice. Here, صِدْق (*ṣidq*:truth) belongs to the first kind. It means that all events, conditions, promises or warnings mentioned in the Qur'ān are true and correct. There is no possibility of fault or defect or error in them. And: عَدْل (*'adl*:justice) relates to the other kind, that is, the injunctions (*Aḥkām*). It means that all injunctions of Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhū* are based on *'Adl* (justice). The sense of *'Adl* covers two meanings: (1) Justice under which no injustice has been done to anyone, nor has any right been compromised or usurped; and (2) *I'tidāl* (moderation), that is, not being totally subordinated to the desires of human self, nor being what ingrained human emotions and natural traits cannot bear. This comes to mean that all Divine injunctions are based on justice and moderation, that is, in them, there is no injustice inflicted on anyone, nor do they have hardship and pain which are humanly unbearable - as said elsewhere: لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللّٰهُ نَفْسًا اِلَّا وُسْعَهَا (Allah does not obligate anyone except to his capacity - 2:286). Then, along with it, by bringing in the word: تَمَّتْ (*tammat*:is perfect), it was also pointed out that the Holy Qur'ān not only has the qualities of truth and justice, but that it is also perfect and complete in them in all respects.

And that all injunctions of the Qur'ān be - for all peoples of the world, for all generations to come and for all changed conditions - based on both justice and moderation is something which, if considered with a little deliberation, can only be possible in nothing but Divine injunctions. No legislative assembly or congress of the world can completely forsee all forthcoming conditions in the present and the future, nor can it make any law which would accomodate all such

conditions. Every country and nation makes its laws keeping in view what are usually the prevailing conditions of that country or nation. Then, even those laws are made to undergo changes when their experience proves that many of their provisions have remained contrary to justice and moderation. Now, to make a master law for other nations and peoples, or to make it with a complete consideration of all future events - that which embodies in it the qualities of justice and moderation for every nation, every country and every condition - is something beyond human thought and perception. This can only be in the Word of Allah *Subḥānuhu wa Taʻālā.* Therefore, this fifth quality of the Holy Qur'ān, the quality of truth and justice, is impeccable. It demonstrates that all past and present events, promises and warnings, narrated in it are true, wherein the least doubt of their being contrary to the actual cannot be entertained, and that all injunctions given by it are embedded with justice and moderation for the benefit of the whole world for all generations to come right through the Last Day of *Qiyāmah*, injunctions which inflict no injustice on anyone, nor is there the slightest deviation from the norms of moderation and balance. This is, in itself, the perfect proof of the Qur'ān being the Divine Word.

The sixth quality has been identified as: لَا مُبَدِّلَ لِكَلِمٰتِهٖ that is, there is no one who can change the words of Allah Taʻālā. One form in which such a change can take place is when someone proves a mistake in it because of which it has to be changed; or, that some enemy changes it forcibly. The Word of Allah is pristinely pure and far beyond any such possibilities. He has Himself promised: إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحٰفِظُوْنَ that is, 'We (only We) have revealed the *Dhikr* (the Qur'ān) and, for it, We (only We) are the Protector - 15:9). When so, who can dare break through the protection of Allah and make any changes or alterations in it? For that matter, over fourteen hundred years have passed and there have been, in every century and every age, more people who have been against it as compared in numbers, even in power, with those who have been believing it, but not one of them had the courage to introduce one tiny variance in even a vowel point of the Qur'ān. Of course, possible there was a third form of bringing in a change, that is, it be changed through abrogation (*naskh*) by Allah Taʻālā Himself. Therefore, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ said: 'This verse

indicates that the noble Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم is the Last Prophet and the Qur'ān, the Last Book. After this, there is no probability of an abrogation' - as it has been elucidated in other verses of the Qur'ān.

At the end of verse (115), it was said: وَهُوَالسَّمِيْعُ الْعَلِيْمُ (and He is All-Hearing, All-Knowing) which means that Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhū* hears all that is being said by these people and He knows what they do openly and secretly. He will give a return for every deed of theirs in accordance with it.

In the third verse (116), Allah Ta'ālā tells the Holy Prophet ﷺ that the majority of the progeny of 'Ādam living on the earth is in error. Let him not be overawed by this situation and let him ignore what they say or do. The Qur'ān has dealt with this subject at several places. In Sūrah Aṣ-Ṣaaffaat, it is said: وَلَقَدْ ضَلَّ قَبْلَهُمْ اَكْثَرُ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ (And truly before them, many of the ancients went astray (37:71) In Sūrah Yūsuf, it is said: وَمَآ اَكْثَرُ النَّاسِ وَلَوْ حَرَصْتَ بِمُؤْمِنِيْنَ (And the majority of people - even if you wish - are not to be believers (12:103). The outcome is that the awe of majority customarily overwhelms an individual and he or she ends up following it. Therefore, the address made to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم was:

> 'And if you obey the majority of those on earth, they will make you lose the way of Allah. They follow nothing but whims, and they do nothing but make conjectures.'

The gist of the advice is that he should not be impressed by their numerical majority as a model to follow because they lack principles and go off the right way. At the end of the verse (117), it was said:

> 'Surely, your Lord knows best those who go astray from His way, and He is the best knower of those who are on the right path (consequently, as the errants shall be punished, the people of the straight path shall be rewarded).

Verses 118 - 121

فَكُلُوْا مِمَّا ذُكِرَ اسْمُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْهِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ بِاٰيٰتِهٖ مُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿١١٨﴾
وَمَا لَكُمْ اَلَّا تَاْكُلُوْا مِمَّا ذُكِرَاسْمُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْهِ وَقَدْ فَصَّلَ لَكُمْ
مَّاحَرَّمَ عَلَيْكُمْ اِلَّا مَا اضْطُرِرْتُمْ اِلَيْهِ ؕ وَاِنَّ كَثِيْرًا لَّيُضِلُّوْنَ

بِاَهْوَآئِهِمْ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ ؕ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ اَعْلَمُ بِالْمُعْتَدِيْنَ ﴿١١٩﴾ وَذَرُوْا ظَاهِرَ الْاِثْمِ وَبَاطِنَهٗ ؕ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَكْسِبُوْنَ الْاِثْمَ سَيُجْزَوْنَ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَقْتَرِفُوْنَ ﴿١٢٠﴾ وَلَا تَاْكُلُوْا مِمَّا لَمْ يُذْكَرِ اسْمُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْهِ وَاِنَّهٗ لَفِسْقٌ ؕ وَاِنَّ الشَّيٰطِيْنَ لَيُوْحُوْنَ اِلٰٓى اَوْلِيٰٓئِهِمْ لِيُجَادِلُوْكُمْ ۚ وَاِنْ اَطَعْتُمُوْهُمْ اِنَّكُمْ لَمُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿١٢١﴾

So, eat of that upon which the name of Allah has been invoked, if you do believe in His verses. [118]

And what can make you not to eat of that upon which the name of Allah has been invoked, while He has spelled out to you all that He has made unlawful for you, except that to which you are compelled by an extreme necessity? And surely, there are many who misguide with their desires without knowledge. Surely, your Lord is the best knower of those who cross the limits. [119]

And leave sin, the outward and the inward. Surely, those who commit sin shall be punished for what they used to commit. [120]

And do not eat that over which the name of Allah has not been pronounced. This is surely a sin. And the satans inspire their friends to dispute with you. And if you were to obey them, you would be Mushriks.* [121]

Linkage of Verses

Earlier (116), by saying: وَاِنْ تُطِعْ (And if you obey), following people in error was prohibited absolutely. Onward from there, comes the prohibition of such following in a particular matter as necessiated by an event. That event pertains to the lawfulness of what has been slaughtered properly or improperly. The event is that disbelievers tried to put Muslims in doubt by commenting that they did not eat of the ani-

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*.*Mushrik*: one who ascribes partners to Allah.

mals killed by Allah (i.e. by natural death) while they had no problem with eating of what they killed (slaughtered) themselves (as deduced by Abū Dāwūd and al-Ḥākim from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās). Some Muslims reported this doubt before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. Thereupon, these verses ending at: لَمُشْرِكُوْنَ (121) were revealed (narrated by Abū Dāwūd and Al-Tirmidhī from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās as in Al-Lubāb).

The gist of the answer given is: You are Muslims. You observe the injunctions of Allah particularly - and Allah has told you all about the Ḥalāl and the Ḥarām. So, keep abiding by it. Do not entertain any doubts about something Ḥalāl being Ḥarām, and something Ḥarām, being Ḥalāl. As for the scruples of disbelievers, just pay no attention to them.

The substantiation of this answer is that rational proofs are required only to prove the basic principles of faith (like Oneness of Allah, the prophethood of His messengers etc.) but once these basic principles are established and admitted, rational arguments are no more required for establishing a subsidiary or consequential rule of the Shari'ah. What is required is to prove that this rule is based on a specific order given by Allah or His messenger. Once it is established that the rule is based on a specific injunction imposed by Allah Ta'ālā or His messenger, it cannot be called in question on the basis of rational arguments. (because after admitting that the rule is prescribed by Allah Who is all-Wise, all-Powerful, it will always be based on wisdom which might be unknown to us.) Rather, it is sometimes harmful to mention rational wisdom for the rules of Shari'ah, because any wisdom given by one's conjectures will always remain subject to doubts on the basis of counter arguments, and there is no way to find out a certain and absolute wisdom for a subsidiary rule of Shari'ah. However, if it is evident that a person wants to know the wisdom behind a rule of Shari'ah only to seek truth and to satisfy himself, there is no harm in mentioning some possible reasons of a rule before him as a matter of additional knowledge. But in the event that the rational wisdom is asked only for the sake of confrontation, then the proper way for a Muslim should be to ignore such questions and to act according to the prescribed rules without paying attention to the critic. It is true that if

a person wants to prove that a subsidiary rule of Shari'ah is repugnant to an absolute principle established by reason, the point raised by him may deserve answer, but the question raised by the *mushriks* in the present case was not of this nature in any way. Therefore, the Muslims are directed to ignore such absurd questions and keep believing and acting as before.

It is on the basis of the aforesaid principles that the question of Mushriks has not been answered in express terms, However, the expression used has given a subtle indication to the difference between a carrion and an animal slaughtered properly. The text gives permission to eat an animal on which Allah's name is invoked (كُلُوْا مِمَّا ذُكِرَ اسْمُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْهِ). It is obvious that Allah's name is invoked on an animal while slaughtering it, therefore, it implies the condition of slaughtering an animal which drains out impure blood from the animal. On the other hand, it is forbidden to eat of an animal on which Allah's name is not invoked (وَلَا تَأْكُلُوْا مِمَّا لَمْ يُذْكَرِ اسْمُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْهِ). Not invoking Allah's name may happen in two different situations: (1) Not slaughtering an animal at all (2) slaughtering an animal without invoking Allah's name. Both these situations render the animal Ḥarām according to this verse. Obviously, an animal which dies its natural death is covered under the first situation where its impure blood was not drained out and remaining in the body rendered it impure. That is why it has been held as Ḥarām.

Commentary

The Qur'ānic order of reciting the name of Allah implied مَا ذُكِرَ اسْمُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْهِ (that upon which the name of Allah has been invoked) includes both kinds of slaughter termed in Islamic Fiqh as "*al-dhabḥ-al-ikhtiyāriyy*" (slaughtering an animal under control) and "*al-dhabḥ-al-idṭirāriyy*" (hunting an animal out of control with an arrow or a hunting dog or falcon). The name of Allah shall be recited in the latter case when releasing the arrow or the dog or falcon.

Similarly, the words "مَا ذُكِرَ اسْمُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْهِ" include reciting actually or as implied. That is why Imam Abu Hanifah has allowed to eat an animal upon which the reciting of the name of Allah was missed inadvertantly. However if it is missed deliberately, it will render the animal Ḥarām.

Verse 122

أَوَمَنْ كَانَ مَيْتًا فَأَحْيَيْنٰهُ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُ نُوْرًا يَّمْشِىْ بِهٖ فِى
النَّاسِ كَمَنْ مَّثَلُهُ فِى الظُّلُمٰتِ لَيْسَ بِخَارِجٍ مِّنْهَا ۗ كَذٰلِكَ
زُيِّنَ لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ مَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١٢٢﴾

Could it be that the one who was dead and We gave him life and made for him a light with which he walks among men, (is held to) be like the one whose condition is such that he is in total darkness, never coming out of it? This is how their deeds appear beautified to the disbelievers. [122]

Commentary

In the previous verses, mentioned there was the demand of ever new miracles by disbelievers as proof of their sheer obstinacy as they had already witnessed the open miracle of the Qur'ān itself. After that, the Qur'ān argued that the miracles already before their eyes should have been enough to lead them to the true path, only if these people themselves would have been genuinely seeking truth. Then, came the description of these miracles.

The present verse employs a similitude to focus on two life-styles in a tight frame. On one side is the state of those who believe in the Qur'ān and in the Prophet of Islam, may he be blessed and protected by Allah Ta'ālā. Then, on the other side, there is the state of those who refuse to believe in them. Also stated through it is the good or bad end of both, as well as, the reality of what a believer or disbeliever stands for, and what belief and disbelief actually are. A believer is like one alive and the disbeliever is like one who is dead. Belief or *'Īmān* is like light - and Disbelief or *Kufr* is like darkness. These are Qur'ānic similitudes. They are no poetry. They are a statement of reality.

Believer is Alive; Disbeliever, dead.

In this similitude, a *Mu'min*, a true believer has been identified as alive while a *Kāfir*, a disbeliever, has been pointed to as dead. The reason is that kinds and forms of life in human beings, animals and vegetation differ, but this much no sensible person can deny that every life form is there for a specific purpose. And nature has endowed it with

full ability to achieve this purpose. This is what the Qur'an is saying in: أَعْطَىٰ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلْقَهُ ثُمَّ هَدَىٰ (Our Lord gave everything its creation, then guided it - 20:50), that is: Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhu* created everything in the universe and gave it full instructions to achieve the purpose for which it was created. It is under this arrangement that all created beings are pursuing the mission assigned to them. In this eco-system, land, water, air and fire, and the moon, the sun and the stars are all aware of their duties and are fulfilling it. And this act of fulfilling their duties is a proof of life in all those things. And when one of these, whatever the condition or time, stops fulfilling its duties, then, it is no more alive; it is dead. If water stops its function of quenching thirst and removing impurities, it will not remain water anymore. If fire stops igniting and burning, it will not be the fire it was anymore. Trees and vegetation, once they stop growing and bearing flowers and fruits, will not be the trees and vegetation as they are - because they have abandoned the purpose of their life, as a result of which, they became lifeless, like the dead.

After looking at the universe around him bit by bit, anyone with the least fund of reason and understanding with him is bound to ponder about questions such as: What is the purpose of human life? What is one supposed to do as duty? Now, if one is fulfilling the purpose of one's life, one is entitled to be taken as alive - and whoever is not fulfilling the purpose of one's life, he or she is no better than a dead body.

What is the purpose of human life and what are the duties human beings have to fulfill? The question needs thought and - an answer. According to the principle stated above, it has already been determined that one who is fulfilling the purpose of his or her life is alive, otherwise, is dead. Now there are sightless tyrants among human beings who would take their species as self-rising vegetation or some kind of smart animal, with whom there is no distinction between a human being and a donkey or dog. According to them, the sole purpose of life is to fulfill the desire of one's self, to eat, drink, sleep, wake up, and then die. So, reasonable people anywhere in the world would not take them as their addressees. People of reason and understanding, no matter what their religion, community or school of thought, have all along the lanes of time been in agreement that human beings are the superior-

most in creation and that the universe has been made and put into their service. It is obvious that what is most superior has to have a purpose of life which is matchingly superior. Every discerning person knows that there is no difference between human beings and animals as far as eating, drinking, sleeping and waking, finding and holding a shelter, dressing and wearing is concerned - in fact, many animals eat better and eat more than them, are even dressed better in standard natural attires. They even live in better surroundings with lots of fresh air. As for knowing their gain and loss, there too, every animal, even every tree, has awareness to limits suited to it. They have the ability to acquire the beneficial and stay away from the harmful. Similarly, when it comes to being beneficial to others, all animals and the vegetation seem to be obviously way ahead of human beings in that their flesh, skin, bone, ligaments, and of trees, including all they have in between their roots to the tiniest leaves, almost everything is harnessed into the service of man, yielding countless benefits to produce things needed in life. It is interesting that quite contrary to this, there is man whose flesh is of no use to anyone, nor is his skin, or hair, or bone or ligaments.

Now worth finding out is how does Monseigneur Humane (Mr. Man, the *homo sapiens*), under these circumstances, stand to deserve being the served one in this universe and being the cream of creation as much heralded? This brings us closer to the destination of truth. A little reflection will reveal that the reach of reason and consciousness given to all these units of creation is limited to the transitory and accidental gain or loss - and it is in this life, it appears beneficial for others. What was there before the life on this earth and what will be coming after is a field in which the reason and consciousness of nothing organic or inorganic, not even that of the smartest of animals, would work, nor can anything there serve as functional or beneficial in this particular field. So, this is the field in which human beings have to work, human beings for whom the universe has been commissioned to serve, and human beings who are the most superior of all creation. Only this will bring out the difference between the distinct status of human beings as compared with other elements of creation clearly and conclusively.

What we now know is that the purpose of human beings on this earth is to keep in sight the beginning and the end of this universe, to assess what it entails as a result, to determine what is collectively beneficial or harmful, then use the insight so gained to acquire the beneficial and abstain from the harmful, and also invite others towards the beneficial and take measures to shield them from the harmful - so that the dream of a life of lasting peace and tranquility can be fulfilled. Now that it is settled that the purpose of human life is to acquire this standard benefit issuing forth from human perfection individually and collectively, enriching one's own self and at the same time enriching others. This realization helps us see the similitude of the Holy Qur'ān we have been talking about in the form of a reality - that alive is one who puts his or her faith in Allah Ta'ālā and in His *Rasūl* صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, and in between his or her view of the beginning and end of life, recognizes his collective gain and loss in the light of Divine Revelation, because human reason alone has never truimphed over this field, nor it can. And when we know that, in terms of the fulfillment of the purpose of life, the person alive is the person who follows the Divine Revelation and is a believer, then we also come to the definite conclusion that whoever does not do that deserves to be called dead. Maulanā Rūmī has put it so delightfully:

زندگی از بہر طاعت بندگی است بے عبادت زندگی شرمندگی ست
آدمیت لحم و شحم و پوست نیست آدمیت جز رضائے دوست نیست

Life is to obey and serve
Life without devotion is a shame

Man's reality is not flesh, fat and skin
Man's reality is but the pleasure of the Friend!

This was the first similitude of the Qur'ān, that of a believer and a disbeliever, where believers have been likened to the living and the disbelievers to the dead. The second similitude is that of *'Īmān* (faith) and *Kufr* (disbelief) which have been placed in juxtaposition to light and darkness.

Faith is Light and Disbelief, Darkness

In this verse, *'Īmān* (faith) has been called *Nūr* (light) and *Kufr* (disbelief) has been equated with *Ẓulmah* (darkness). A little thought

will show that this similitude is not imaginary. It is a statement of fact. As we looked for the real purpose of things earlier, we can do the same here by finding out the justification for the existence of light and darkness. The purpose of light is to be able to see things far and near with its help, as a result of which, one has the advantage of staying away from the harmful and the opportunity of acquiring what is beneficial.

Let us now look at *'Īmān*. This is a light which surrounds everything in the heavens and the earth. It is this light alone which can show the end of the universal system as well as the correct consequences of everything done. Whoever has this light by his side, he can not only save himself from the consequences of everything harmful and injurious, but can also help others to stay safe from them. But, one who does not have access to this light remains in the dark. He has no panoramic view. He cannot see life as a whole, neither beginning, nor end. He cannot distinguish between what is beneficial and what is not. At best what he can do is to grope around and use his sense of touch to figure out what they are, at least to some extent. The life of this world as we know it is just about the environment most of us usually live in and around. The disbeliever thus does find out the life around him and the benefit and loss it has to offer within that limited framework. But, he has no idea or awareness of what lies ahead in the eternal life to come later, nor can he comprehend how beneficial or harmful it can be for him. This subject has been further explained by the Qur'ān in Sūrah Ar-Rūm:

يَعْلَمُوْنَ ظَاهِرًا مِّنَ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ عَنِ الْاٰخِرَةِ هُمْ غٰفِلُوْنَ

> They know the obvious from the present life of the world while, about the life-to-come (*'Ākhirah*), they are (totally) heedless - 30:7).

In a verse of Sūrah Al-'Ankabūt, after the description of past communities given to denial and disbelief, the Qur'ān says: وَكَانُوْا مُسْتَبْصِرِيْنَ (though they were men of sight - 29-38). It means that these people who had dismissed this matter of *'Ākhirah* demonstrating rank heedlessness and seeming lack of foresight were really not that dense when it came to their matters in worldly life. In fact, they were "*mustabṣirīn*" - keen-sighted, enlightened people. But, this enlightenment of theirs

was outwardly-oriented, of the surface, of the mundane, which could only serve them well to enrich what revolved round their transitory life in this world. However, for the eternal life of *'Ākhirah*, the life-to-come, this was not to work.

After hearing these details, please recite the present verse of the Qur'ān once again: اَوَمَنْ كَانَ مَيْتًا فَاَحْيَيْنٰهُ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهٗ نُوْرًا يَّمْشِىْ بِهٖ فِى النَّاسِ كَمَنْ مَّثَلُهٗ فِى الظُّلُمٰتِ لَيْسَ بِخَارِجٍ مِّنْهَا It means that one who was dead earlier, that is, was a disbeliever, then, Allah raised him back to life, that is, gave him the *taufīq* to become a Muslim - and then, He gave him a light, that is, *'Īmān* or faith, with which he moves about among people. Now can this person be equal to one who is surrounded by all sorts of darkness, out of which, he cannot get out, that is, is groping in the darkness of disbelief, does not himself know what is good or bad for him, and there is no way he can ward off his destruction. If so, how can he bring any benefit to others?

The Light of Faith Brings Benefits for Others Too

In this verse, by saying: نُوْرًا يَّمْشِىْ بِهٖ فِى النَّاسِ (light with which he walks among men), the instruction given was that the light of faith is not restricted to a mosque (*masjid*), spiritual seminary (*khanqāh*) or a modest roomette secluded for reflection and remembrance (*ḥujrah*). Whoever is blessed with this light by Allah Ta'ālā, he carries it with him everywhere he goes through the lives of people on the streets and in the homes. Everywhere he is, he himself benefits from the light and lets others too benefit by it. Light is light and cannot be supressed by any darkness. Even a tiny flickering lamp does not easily give up under the weight of surrounding darkness, though the light it emits does not go very far. When light is strong, it spreads over a larger area. When light is dim, it lightens a smaller area. But light is light. It subdues darkness after all - darkness does not subdue light. Light is not light if it surrenders to darkness. Similarly, an *'Īmān* which surrenders to *Kufr*, or is scared by it, is no *'Īmān*. This light of *'Īmān*, this light of faith is there with its bearer in all walks of life, under all conditions and in every age.

In this similitude, there is yet another hint that light is after all universally beneficial. Every human being and every animal benefits by it, intentionally, or without intention, more or less. Let us suppose

that a person who has the light but does not wish to let the other person benefit from it, nor the other person has come out to seek the benefit of his light, but the very fact that someone is walking with light by his side is bound to spread out its benefit to others naturally, rather compulsively. This is what happens with the *'Īmān* of a true Muslim. It does make its benefit shower on others too, in some degree, whether or not the receivers realize it. At the end of the verse, it was said: كَذٰلِكَ زُيِّنَ لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ مَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ (This is how their deeds appear beautified to the disbelievers). It means that the disbelievers and deniers of truth who do not accept proofs which are open and clear do so because everyone has a craze of his own which keeps him pleased with himself. There is the ever-present Sahyṭān, and no less is the retinue of one's desires, whims and fancies which present before the eyes of such people a mosaic of their evil deeds which they start seeing as nice and beautiful. Calling it a deception is an understatement. May Allah keep all of us protected from it.

Verses 123 - 125

وَكَذٰلِكَ جَعَلْنَا فِىْ كُلِّ قَرْيَةٍ اَكٰبِرَ مُجْرِمِيْهَا لِيَمْكُرُوْا فِيْهَا ؕ وَمَا يَمْكُرُوْنَ اِلَّا بِاَنْفُسِهِمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُوْنَ ﴿۱۲۳﴾ وَاِذَا جَآءَتْهُمْ اٰيَةٌ قَالُوْا لَنْ نُّؤْمِنَ حَتّٰى نُؤْتٰى مِثْلَ مَآ اُوْتِىَ رُسُلُ اللّٰهِ ؔؕ اَللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ حَيْثُ يَجْعَلُ رِسَالَتَهٗ ؕ سَيُصِيْبُ الَّذِيْنَ اَجْرَمُوْا صَغَارٌ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ وَعَذَابٌ شَدِيْدٌۢ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَمْكُرُوْنَ ﴿۱۲۴﴾ فَمَنْ يُّرِدِ اللّٰهُ اَنْ يَّهْدِيَهٗ يَشْرَحْ صَدْرَهٗ لِلْاِسْلَامِ ۚ وَمَنْ يُّرِدْ اَنْ يُّضِلَّهٗ يَجْعَلْ صَدْرَهٗ ضَيِّقًا حَرَجًا كَاَنَّمَا يَصَّعَّدُ فِى السَّمَآءِ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ يَجْعَلُ اللّٰهُ الرِّجْسَ عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿۱۲۵﴾

And in a similar way, We have made in every town its chief sinners so that they commit mischief in it. And they do not commit mischief but against themselves, and they do not realize. [123]

And when a sign comes to them, they say, "We shall never come to believe unless we are given the like of what was given to the messengers of Allah. Allah

knows best where to place His message. Those who committed sin shall soon suffer from disgrace before Allah and face severe punishment for the mischief they have been making. [124]

So, whom Allah wills to give guidance, He opens his heart for Islam, and whom He wills to go astray, He makes his heart narrow, much too narrow, as though he climbs up to the sky. In this way, Allah brings ignominy over those who do not believe. [125]

Commentary

Mentioned in the previous verse was that this world is a place of trial. Good deeds here are tied with some effort. This is a way laid out with hurdles. The same is true about evil deeds. They come with a web of deception laced with unending desires and their short-lived gratifications, a way of living which makes these evil deeds look good in the sight of human beings who are unaware of their reality and heedless to their ultimate end. Such is their pull that the smartest of the smart in this world would not hesitate to jump into the bandwagon.

In the first (123) of the present verses, it is said that this trial can be seen as an ongoing spectacle of life since the beginning of the universe of our existence. Usually, it is the big people of a community, the rich, the influential, the holders of clout and access who, when they get used to the taste of money, power and recognition, start committing crimes in one or the other form, never bothering to reflect on the ultimate end of what they were doing. As for the common people, they become accustomed to following the example set by these big people. They copy them with the conviction that it is good for them and that they are on the obvious road to success. In contrast, there are the blessed prophets and their deputies charged with learning, teaching and preaching. They try to stop people from their evil deeds and warn them of the consequences of what they were doing. Then, these big people open a front of hostility and conspiracy against them, which is obviously to harass or harm these pious souls, but in the ultimate analysis, the curse of what they do against them recoils back on them alone. And this can happen to them even within their life in the present world.

In this statement of guidance, Muslims have been warned against

aspiring to be like the big, the rich, the wealthy of the world. They should leave the habit of looking at them as role-models and stop following them mob-like. For them, the ideal is that they should make a habit of seeing everything in perspective making sure that they are aware of the final end of their deeds, and that they should themselves learn to figure out as to what is good or bad for them.

In addition to that, the purpose here is to comfort the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم when he has been asked not to grieve about the hostility of the chiefs of Quraysh, for it was nothing new. Prophets in the past had also faced such people. But, in the end, they were disgraced and the word of Allah reigned supreme.

In the second verse (124), mentioned there is a conversation relating to the same chiefs of the Quraysh. What they said was a combination of verbal belligerence, sarcasm and mockery. It was answered.

Imām al-Baghawī reports from Sayyidnā Qatādah that Abū Jahl, the big chief of the tribe of Quraysh once said: We have confronted Banū 'Abd Munāf (that is, the family of the Holy Prophet ﷺ) on every front and we have never been behind them. But, now they say: 'you cannot match us in nobility and spiritual greatness because we have a prophet in our family who receives revelation from Allah Ta'ālā.' Then he said: I swear by Allah that we will never follow them unless we too start receiving the kind of revelation he receives. The statement: وَإِذَا جَآءَتْهُمْ اٰيَةٌ قَالُوْا لَنْ نُّؤْمِنَ حَتّٰى نُؤْتٰى مِثْلَ مَآ اُوْتِيَ رُسُلُ اللّٰهِ (And when a sign comes to them, they say, "We shall never come to believe unless we are given the like of what was given to the messengers of Allah) at the end of the verse means extactly this.

Prophets and Messengers are appointed by Allah: This Office cannot be acquired or appropriated:

After having reported the statement quoted above, the Qur'ān answers it by saying: اَللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ حَيْثُ يَجْعَلُ رِسَالَتَهٗ (Allah knows best where to place his message). It means that the person making this remark thinks in His ignorance that the station of a prophet and messenger can be acquired on the basis of family nobility, tribal authority and wealth while prophethood is the office of the Vice Regency (*Khilāfah*) of Allah the acquisition of which is in no one's control. No matter how many excellences and perfections one has acquired for himself, still no one can

- through his discretion or control or power of achievement - succeed in acquiring the office and station of prophethood and messengership. That is purely a blessing of Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhu*. He bestows it on whomsoever He wills.

This proves that prophethood and messengership are not controlled by human beings. They are not what can be acquired by intellectual perfection or pragmatic excellence or utmost striving or consuming devotion. Even a *waliyy* or saint, no matter how high he may soar in his spiritual station, cannot acquire it. That is nothing but Divine grace as it is given only to particular servants of Allah as dictated by Divine knowledge and wisdom. However, it is necessary that whoever is chosen to occupy this station and office, in the ultimate knowledge of Allah Ta'ālā, is identified right from the beginning when he is created with appropriate inherent ability and then he is specially groomed in his morals and deeds.

Towards the end of the verse, it was said: سَيُصِيبُ الَّذِينَ أَجْرَمُوا صَغَارٌ عِندَ اللَّهِ وَعَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ بِمَا كَانُوا يَمْكُرُونَ (Those who committed sin shall soon suffer from disgrace before Allah and face severe punishment for the mischief they have been making). Here, the word: صَغَار (*ṣaghār*) is a verbal noun which means disgrace. The sentence means that these antagonists of truth who are known to be the big chiefs of their people will see their pride and prestige rolling in dust. Disgrace is coming; so is punishment - and both are grim. That can be within the life of the present world, and in the *'Ākhirah* as well - as has been the fate of the oppressors of the prophets in the past who were put to disgrace in the present world as well. The topmost antagonists of our own Prophet, may the blessing of Allah and peace be upon him, who boasted about their prestige, either entered the fold of Islam or, as was the case with those who did not, were destroyed in disgrace. What happened to the legendary chiefs of Quraysh, Abū Jahl and Abū Lahb, became a lesson when the Conquest of Makkah broke their backs.

Signs of '*Sharḥ al-Ṣadr*' in *Dīn*

Some signs of the Divinely-guided, and the firm on error, have been given in the third verse (125). Said there was: فَمَن يُرِدِ اللَّهُ أَن يَهْدِيَهُ يَشْرَحْ صَدْرَهُ لِلْإِسْلَامِ (So, whom Allah wills to give guidance, He opens his heart for Islam).

Ḥākim in al-Mustadrak and Baihaqī in Shu'ab al-'Īmān report from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضى الله عنه: When this verse was revealed, the Companions of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم requested him to explain the meaning of *Sharḥ al-Ṣadr*, the opening of the heart for Islam. He said: 'Allah Ta'ālā puts a light in the heart of a believer through which his heart opens up for the perception, understanding and acceptance of truth. The *Ṣaḥābah* submitted: 'Is there a sign which will help recognize the person who has such *Sharḥ al-Ṣadr*? He said: 'Yes. The sign is that *'Ākhirah* and its blessings become the object of all his desires. He avoids uncalled-for desires and fleeting enjoyments and starts getting ready for death before it comes.'

After that, he said: " وَمَنْ يُّرِدْ اَنْ يُّضِلَّهٗ يَجْعَلْ صَدْرَهٗ ضَيِّقًا حَرَجًا كَاَنَّمَا يَصَّعَّدُ فِى السَّمَآءِ " (and whom He wills to let go astray, He makes his heart narrow, much too narrow [wherefore, for him to accept the truth and to act in accordance with it becomes as difficult], as though he climbs up to the sky).

Kalabi has said: 'the narrowing of his heart means that no passage for the entry of truth and good remains open there.' A similar explanation has also been reported from Sayyidnā Fārūq al-Ā'ẓam رضى الله عنه and Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه has said: 'When he hears the *Dhikr* of Allah, he feels being harassed and when he listens to what is *Kufr* and *Shirk*, his heart relishes it.'

The Noble *Ṣaḥābah*: Ever-Eager Receivers of Truth

This was the reason why the noble *Ṣaḥābah*, may Allah be pleased with all of them, who were chosen by Allah Ta'ālā to be His Prophet's companions in faith, and to be the learners and carriers of his teachings as his direct disciples. They were so convinced as his adherents that their doubts about Islamic injunctions, if any, remained negligibly low. During their whole lifetime, the number of questions presented before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم by them are but a counted few. The reason was that by the grace of the company of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم their hearts were almost engraved with love and reverence for Allah Ta'ālā and because of which they were blessed with the high station of *Sharḥ al-Ṣadr*, a heart open to the acceptance of truth. In fact, their hearts had become in themselves the very standard of truth and falsehood. They would accept truth promptly and falsehood could not find entry into their hearts. After that, as the distance from

the blessed period of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم increased, doubts and scruples started finding room for infilteration and that was the beginning of dogmatic differences.

To Remove Doubts : Open Hearts, Narrow Debates

In our day, the world is a stage infested with doubts. People seek solutions through debates, arguments and counter-arguments and end up with confusion worse confounded. This is not a sound way to handle doubts as pointed out by the unique Indian poet, Akbar Ilāhābadī:

فلسفی کو بحث کے اندر خدا ملتا نہیں ڈور کو سلجھا رہا ہے پر سرا ملتا نہیں

The philosopher deep in debate cannot find God
He is untangling the string but cannot find where to begin!

There is only one way out, that which was taken by the blessed Companions and by the early righteous elders: Think of the perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā and imagine His blessings and feel the presence of His love and reverence, the doubts evaporate automatically. This is the reason why the Qur'ān has itself prompted the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم to make the following *Du'ā* (prayer):

رَبِّ اشْرَحْ لِيْ صَدْرِيْ

Rabbishraḥ lī ṣadrī

O my *Rabb*, open my heart.

At the end of the verse it was said: كَذٰلِكَ يَجْعَلُ اللّٰهُ الرِّجْسَ عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ which means that this is how Allah brings damnation and disgrace upon those who do not believe. For truth, their hearts are not open while to every evil they dash.

Verses 126 - 128

وَهٰذَا صِرَاطُ رَبِّكَ مُسْتَقِيْمًا ؕ قَدْ فَصَّلْنَا الْاٰيٰتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَّذَّكَّرُوْنَ ﴿۱۲۶﴾ لَهُمْ دَارُ السَّلٰمِ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَهُوَ وَلِيُّهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۱۲۷﴾ وَيَوْمَ يَحْشُرُهُمْ جَمِيْعًا ۚ يٰمَعْشَرَ الْجِنِّ قَدِ اسْتَكْثَرْتُمْ مِّنَ الْاِنْسِ ۚ وَقَالَ اَوْلِيٰٓؤُهُمْ مِّنَ الْاِنْسِ رَبَّنَا اسْتَمْتَعَ بَعْضُنَا بِبَعْضٍ وَّبَلَغْنَآ اَجَلَنَا الَّذِيْٓ اَجَّلْتَ لَنَا ؕ قَالَ النَّارُ

مَثْوٰىكُمْ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَآ اِلَّا مَاشَآءَاللّٰهُ ۗ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ حَكِيْمٌ عَلِيْمٌ

﴿١٢٨﴾

And this is the path of your Lord, a straight path. We have made the verses elaborate for people who accept the advice. [126] **For them there is the Abode of Peace with their Lord, and He is their Guardian by virtue of what they used to do.** [127]

And the day He gathers all of them together: "O Jinn-kind, you have done too much against mankind." And their friends from among the human beings will say, "Our Lord, some of us have benefitted from some others, and we have reached our term You had appointed for us." He will say, "The Fire is your Abode where you will remain for ever, except what Allah wills. Surely, your Lord is All-Wise, All-Knowing." [128]

Commentary

In the first (126) of the three verses appearing here, the address is to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم and it has been said: وَهٰذَا صِرَاطُ رَبِّكَ مُسْتَقِيْمًا (And this is the path of your Lord, a straight path). Here, as said by Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضی اللہ عنہ, the word: هذا (*hādhā*:this) refers to the Qur'ān, and as said by Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ, it means Islam (Ruḥ al-Ma'ānī). The sense of the sentence is: This Way is the Way of your Lord, that is, this is a Way which has been proposed by your Lord in His infinite Wisdom, and with Him it finds favour. Here, by attributing the Way to the Lord of all, it has been indicated that the working system of Qur'ān and Islam given to him was not for the benefit of Allah Ta'ālā, rather, it was for the benefit of those who would act in accordance with it. This is as required by His being the *Rabb*, the Supreme Nurturer. Through this Way, the purpose is to nurture, train and groom human beings in a manner which would guarantee their eternal well-being.

Then, by bringing in the word: رب (*Rabb*:Lord) in a state of attribution to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, that is: ربك (*Rabbik*:your Lord), the impression of a special kindness towards him has been released - that: 'your' Lord has proposed this Way. The delicacy of this attribu-

tion can be readily felt by people of taste. Think of a servant of Allah. If he ever happens to find his person placed in even the minor-most frame of reference to his *Rabb* and *Ma'būd*, his Lord and the object of his worship and devotion, that would be, for him, the highest possible achievement. And now, if the Lord of lords, the One worship-worthy entity in this whole universe, were to attribute His pristine Person to him and say, "I am yours," what remains there for him to say anything anymore about his wonderful 'kismet!'

After that, the 'existing identity' of this Qur'ānic Way has been explained through the word: مُسْتَقِيْم (*mustaqīm*), that is, this path is the straight path. Here too, rather than have '*mustaqīm*' (straight) as the adjective of '*ṣirāt*' (path), it has been placed as an adverb which indicates that the Way has been proposed by the Lord of the universe, and in this, any probability, other than its being straight, just cannot exist. (Ruḥ al-Ma'ānī and Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ)

The text then says: قَدْ فَصَّلْنَا الْاٰيٰتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَّذَّكَّرُوْنَ (We have made the verses elaborate for people who accept the advice).

The word: 'فَصَّلْنَا' (*Faṣṣalnā*: We have made elaborate) is from: تَفْصِيْل (*tafṣīl*) which basically means to describe a subject by analysing it unit by unit. This way comprehending the subject becomes easy. Therefore, the outcome of *tafṣīl* is to explain explicitly. So, the sense comes to be: 'We have stated matters of principle explicitly and in details in which there remains no brevity or ambiguity.' After that, by saying: لِقَوْمٍ يَّذَّكَّرُوْنَ (for people who accept the advice), it was pointed out that, though these statements of the Qur'ān are clear, but benefit from them has been derived only by those who ponder over the Qur'ān to seek good counsel honestly, that is, doggedness, inherent resistence, opinionatedness, a priori hostility or the barriers of blind adherence to or following of ancestral customs do not come in between as walls.

In the second verse (127), it was said: لَهُمْ دَارُ السَّلٰمِ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ (For them there is the Abode of Peace with their Lord). It means that the people who have been mentioned above, people who see and hear the Qur'ānic words of advice with an open mind and who, as an inevitable result, accept the advice and guidance, then, it is for them that there is that reward of *Dārus-Salām*, present and preserved, waiting. Here, the

word: دَارُ (*dār*) means home or abode and: سَلَام (*salām*) means peace and security from all calamities, catastrophies and hardships. Therefore, *Dārus-Salām* can be the description of a home where none of these, or sorrow or pain of any kind, can find entry. And that, as obvious, could only be Paradise.

And Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ said: *Salām* is the name of Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhu*. And the *Dār* of *As-Salām* means the '*Dār*' (home, house or abode) of Allah. It is evident that the abode of Allah is a place of peace. Therefore, the meaning essentially remains the same, that is, a home where total and all-inclusive peace reigns. By calling *Jannah* (Paradise) *Dārus-Salām*, the indication given is that *Jannah* alone is the place where one sheds off all pain, anxiety and distaste, and enjoys total bliss, something never acquired by the highest of the high in this mortal world, nor even by the greatest of the great prophets or messengers - because this state of life in the mortal world is not the proper locale of perfect and eternal peace and pleasure.

It has been stated in this verse that, for those who have the good fortune of accepting the advice, there is '*Dārus-Salām*' with their Lord. Now, the expression - 'with their Lord' - could also mean that this '*Dārus-Salām*' cannot be cashed instantly here in the mortal world, rather, they will get it when they go to their Lord on the Day of *Qiyāmah*. And it could also mean that the promise of '*Dārus-Salām*' cannot be false. The most gracious *Rabb* is its guarantor. It lies safe with Him. Then, right here, there is yet another indication towards the fact that no one can ever imagine the blessings of this '*Dārus-Salām*' within the limitations of this frame of existence. Only the *Rabb*, with whom lies this treasure, knows it.

Moreover, in the light of the second meaning given above, the actual getting of this '*Dārus-Salām*' does not seem to hinge upon the coming of *Qiyāmah* (The Last Day) and '*Ākhirah* (Hereafter). In fact, it is also possible that the most gracious *Rabb* would make anyone He wills its fortunate recepient within the life of this world - whether by making them totally immune to and protected against all calamities and hardships, as has been the case is some examples of past prophets and men of Allah, or, by making the blessings of the '*Ākhirah* appear before

their eyes with a touch of the real, their very eyes were attuned to the real thing in a manner that it helped them perceive the pains of the transitory world as something insignificant and not worthy of much notice. For such people, even stockpiles of suffering are reduced to a blade of grass.

That the forthcoming rewards to be received as against the hardships of the mortal world would make them welcome these hardships as something delectable is not a proposition too far out. Think of the eternal blessings of the *'Ākhirah*. They are certainly great as they can be. Then, think of the fleeting comforts of this mortal world. Their very thought thrills. Man slaves for them, yet takes his slavery with a smile and a sigh of relief. Man sacrifices the bliss of his freedom and exchanges it with worldly comforts through recommendations and bribes, goes for the hard labour of job or work which cuts through his sleep and rest, even does it with zest and enthusiasm, and then, is happy and grateful about it - because he sees before his eyes the passage of thirty one days of the month which will bring to him the taste and pleasure of the salary he has earned. That pleasure makes every bitterness of this slavery in work tasteful and pleasing. According to one of the possible explanations (Tafsīr) of the Qur'ānic verse: وَلِمَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهٖ جَنَّتٰنِ, those who fear Allah Ta'ālā shall have two Paradises, the one in the *'Ākhirah* and the other in the mortal world. To begin with, Paradise in the world means that one finds the help of Allah with him in everything he does. What he does seems to be becoming easy for him - and, even if he has to face a passing phase of difficulty, extra-effort, or even failure, that appears welcome to him in anticipation of the lasting blessings of the *'Ākhirah*, something which turns even this painful experience into a state of comfort.

To sum up, it can be said that the reference in this verse, of '*Dārus-Salām*' for good people being with their *Rabb*, is a promise which is certain and determined for the *Akhirah*, and it is also possible that they may be given a taste of the '*Dārus-Salām*' in this world as well.

At the conclusion of the verse (127), it was said: وَهُوَ وَلِيُّهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ (and He is their Guardian by virtue of what they used to do). It means that, because of their good deeds, Allah Ta'ālā becomes their guardian, care-taker and helper. Everything hard they face becomes easy on

them.

Mentioned in the third verse (128) is a dialogue before a gathering of Jinns and human beings on the plains of the Resurrection (*Al-Ḥashr*). Allah Ta'ālā will address the satans among Jinns telling them about their excessive role in misleading human beings. What would they say in reply has not been mentioned by the Qur'ān. As obvious, there was not much they could do but to confess the truth before the All-Knowing and the All-Aware. But, in not mentioning their confession, the hint given is that they will be so confounded with the question that they would not know how to make an answer. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

After that, the text turns to the satans among human beings, that is, those who followed the instigations of satans during their life of the world, went astray themselves, and kept becoming the cause of others going astray. It is from them that an answer submitted in the court of the Judge of all judges has been mentioned - though, the inital question was not asked of the satans of human beings, but in an implied manner, they too were the addressees, because they too had done the same job of making people go astray as was the job of the satans of the Jinn. Thus, their reply was based on their being the implied addressees. But, it seems obvious that the human-like satans too are liable to be questioned which, though, is not mentioned here explicitly. However, it does find mention in a verse of Sūrah Yā Sīn, which is: أَلَمْ أَعْهَدْ إِلَيْكُمْ يَٰبَنِيٓ ءَادَمَ أَن لَّا تَعْبُدُوا الشَّيْطَٰنَ that is, 'had I not taken a pledge from you, O children of Ādam (through messengers), that you shall not obey the Shaytan? - 36:60).

From this we know that human satans too will be subjected to the question on this occasion and they would, in reply, confess that, surely, they committed that crime and that they listened to the satans, and they would also confess that, surely, the two of them benefitted from each other through their friendship and cooperation. The human satans learned from them the ways of securing gratification from worldly enjoyments and, on occasions, called on them for help in one or the other way, as is the practice in idol-worshipping Hindus and, for that matter, even among ignorant Muslims, who would practice methods through which the help of satans and jinns can be harnessed in some tasks. As for the satans among Jinns, their gain was that they found a

pliable people to listen to them because of which they succeeded in making human beings follow their dictates, so much so that they forgot all about death and the Hereafter. That was when they confessed that they had forsaken the thought of death and the Hereafter because of the instigation of satans, and now they see it in front of them. Thereupon, Allah Ta'ālā will say: اَلنَّارُ مَثْوٰىكُمْ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَآ اِلَّا مَا شَآءَ اللّٰهُ ؕ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ حَكِيْمٌ عَلِيْمٌ ("The Fire is your abode where you shall remain for ever, except what Allah wills [that is, wills to take someone out of it]. Surely, your Lord is All-Wise, All-Knowing"). But, as in the definitive statements of the Qur'ān (*Nuṣūṣ*), it stands proved that even Allah Ta'ālā would not so will, therefore, it is for ever that they shall have to be in it.

Verses 129 - 132

وَكَذٰلِكَ نُوَلِّيْ بَعْضَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ بَعْضًاۢ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَكْسِبُوْنَ ﴿۱۲۹﴾ يٰمَعْشَرَ الْجِنِّ وَالْاِنْسِ اَلَمْ يَاْتِكُمْ رُسُلٌ مِّنْكُمْ يَقُصُّوْنَ عَلَيْكُمْ اٰيٰتِيْ وَيُنْذِرُوْنَكُمْ لِقَآءَ يَوْمِكُمْ هٰذَا ؕ قَالُوْا شَهِدْنَا عَلٰٓى اَنْفُسِنَا وَغَرَّتْهُمُ الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَا وَشَهِدُوْا عَلٰٓى اَنْفُسِهِمْ اَنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا كٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿۱۳۰﴾ ذٰلِكَ اَنْ لَّمْ يَكُنْ رَّبُّكَ مُهْلِكَ الْقُرٰى بِظُلْمٍ وَّاَهْلُهَا غٰفِلُوْنَ ﴿۱۳۱﴾ وَلِكُلٍّ دَرَجٰتٌ مِّمَّا عَمِلُوْا ؕ وَمَا رَبُّكَ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۱۳۲﴾

And thus We set some wrongdoers on some others because of what they used to commit. [129]

"O Jinnkind and mankind, have there not come to you the messengers from among you who used to narrate My verses to you, and used to warn you of your meeting this day?" They will say, "We testify against ourselves." And the worldly life had deceived them, and they testified against themselves that they were disbelievers. [130]

And this is because your Lord is not to destroy any towns for any injustice while their people are unaware. [131]

And for all there are ranks according to what they did, and your Lord is not unaware of what they do. [132]

Commentary

Lexically, the word: نُوَلِّي (*nuwallī*) appearing in the first (129) of the three verses cited above can be translated either in the sense of joining up and bringing closer, or in the sense of setting on or imposing on. Narrations reported from leading authorities in *Tafsīr* among the Ṣaḥābah and Tābi'īn also carry the explanation of this word as based on these two meanings.

The Basis of Human Groupings after Resurrection

Early authorities Sa'īd ibn Jubayr and Qatādah and others have taken the first sense and, according to them, the verse means that, on the day of *Qiyāmah* before Allah Ta'ālā, the collective formations - that is, groupings and party alignments of people - will not be on racial or national or colour and language basis, instead of which, these groupings shall be on the basis of deeds and morals. A Muslim obedient to Allah Ta'ālā, wherever he may be, shall be together with Muslims; and the disobedient disbeliever, wherever he may be, shall be together with disbelievers - whether their race, heredity, country, language, colour and social living may be way different.

Then, even among Muslims, those good in deeds shall be with the righteous while the evil doers will be grouped up with evil doers and sinners. This is the sense of what has been said in Sūrah At-Takwīr: وَإِذَا النُّفُوسُ زُوِّجَتْ that is, when people shall be grouped (like with like) the sense of which is that the people gathered before Allah Ta'ālā on the plains of Resurrection shall split in different groupings in terms of their deeds and morals.

In his *Tafsīr* of this verse, Sayyidnā Fārūq al-Ā'ẓam has said: 'The doers of one kind of deeds, good or bad, shall be grouped together. The good will go with the good to *Jannah* and the evil will be led with the evil to *Jahannam*.' To authenticate his explanation, Sayyidnā Fārūq al-Ā'ẓam cited proof from the verse: أُحْشُرُوا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا وَأَزْوَاجَهُمْ of the Holy Qur'ān (37:22) which deals with the same subject by saying that, on the day of *Qiyāmah*, the command will go forth: 'Gather those who have been unjust, and their cohorts, (and take them to *Jahannam*).

The gist of the explanation of this verse is that Allah Ta'ālā will, by merging some of the unjust with some others, will make them one group, irrespective of how far apart they may be from each other in terms of their race and homeland.

In addition to what has been stated above, it has also been clarified in another verse that, on the fateful day of Resurrection, the temporal grouping based on race, country, colour, language and other unifiers will break up root and branch: وَيَوْمَ تَقُوْمُ السَّاعَةُ يَوْمَئِذٍ يَّتَفَرَّقُوْنَ . It means: When the Hour (of *Qiyāmah*) is established, those united shall stand separated - 30:14).

Deeds and Morals affect Collective Matters even in this World

As for the severence of existing relations and affiliations, that is something which will come before everyone fully and clearly after all, but a minor sampling of this can be found everywhere in this mortal world as well. It goes without saying that a good person is temperamentally tuned to virtues and virtuous people. He is attached to them individually or collectively. This becomes his passport to ever-new avenues of good deeds which go on to make his determination firm. The same holds for doers of evil deeds. They too relate to their kind; to them they are attached and with them they keep company. And this negative company keeps contributing to their evil deeds and evil morals, as a result of which, avenues of good and prospects of better conduct keep closing on him before his own eyes. This is his cash punishment for his evil deeds which he gets right here in this world.

So, in a nutshell, we can say that there is a reward or punishment of good or bad deeds which will come in the '*Ākhirah* and there is a reward or punishment which comes within the life of this world in a way that a good person is blessed with colleagues who are equally good and honest and whose contribution to whatever is undertaken makes them rise and prosper together. In contrast, there is the person with evil deeds and evil intention who gets what he deserves. The colleagues he gets and the help and assistance he employs are no different than him. What is left of his misfortune, the evil group around him takes care of that when it pushes him into a far deeper abyss.

As mentioned earlier, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: When Allah Ta'ālā is pleased with a ruler, He gives him good ministers and

good staff who make his government well-managed and progress-prone - and when Allah Ta'ālā is displeased with someone, he gets colleagues who are bad and so are the officials he must deal with. As a result, even if he wishes to do something good, he cannot get it done.

An oppressor is punished at the hands of another oppressor

The sense of the verse given above is in terms of its translation according to the first meaning mentioned earlier. As for the second meaning mentioned alongside, reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی الله عنه, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Zubayr رضی الله عنه, Sayyidnā ibn Zayd رضی الله عنه, Mālik ibn Dinār and others is a *Tafsir* according to which, 'Allah Ta'ālā sets some unjust people (*Ẓālim*) over other unjust people and thus has one *Ẓālim* (oppressor) punished at the hands of another *Ẓālim*.'

This approach to meaning is also correct and sound in its place, and is in accord with other statements of the Qur'ān and *Ḥadīth*. The Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم is reported to have said in a *Ḥadīth*: كَمَا تَكُوْنُوْنَ كَذٰلِكَ يُؤَمَّرُ عَلَيْكُمْ that is, as you shall be, so shall be the rulers set on you. If you are unjust and evil, your rulers will also be unjust and evil. And if you are good in your deeds and characters, Allah Ta'ālā will make good, kind and just people your rulers.

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی الله عنه says: When Allah Ta'ālā wishes well for a people, He appoints the best rulers and officials for them - and when He wishes otherwise for a people, He sets the worst rulers and officials over them. (Tafsir Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ)

According to Ruḥ al-Ma'ānī, it is on the authority of this verse that Muslim jurists prove that: When people of a country, turn away from Allah Ta'ālā and become involved in deeds of injustice and oppression, Allah Ta'ālā sets oppressive rulers and officials over them and lets them be punished at their hands.

Based on a narration by Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضی الله عنه, Ibn Kathīr has reported a decisive statement of the Holy Prophet ﷺ: مَنْ أَعَانَ ظَالِمًا سَلَّطَهُ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ that is, whoever helps a *Ẓālim* (oppressor) in his *Ẓulm*, (injustice) then Allah Ta'ālā sets that very *Ẓālim* on him to torment him, and it is at his hands that he gets his punishment.

Mentioned in the second verse (130), is a question which will be asked of the Jinn and human beings on the plains of Resurrection.

They will be asked to show the reason why they chose to disbelieve and disobey Allah Ta'ālā. They were told that they could not deny that Divinely ordained messengers from among them did reach them, messengers who recited to them the verses of Allah and warned them of that day of reckoning. In the reply to this question, mentioned there is their confession that the messengers did come, they did tell them the truth, and that they were involved with disbelief and disobedience. But, no reason for this wrongdoing was given from their side. Instead, Allah Ta'ālā has Himself given its reason by saying: وَغَرَّتْهُمُ الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَا (And the worldly life had deceived them). It means that the charms of their transitory life had put them on the wrong track. They thought that it was everything, which was really nothing, and that made them heedless to their end.

There is something noteworthy here. There are other verses in the Qur'ān which say that the disbelievers will deny their *Kufr* and *Shirk* when asked to explain it on the day of Resurrection and before their Lord, they would lie by saying: وَاللّٰهِ رَبِّنَا مَا كُنَّا مُشْرِكِيْنَ that is, 'we swear by Allah, our Lord, we were no *mushriks* (of those who ascribe partners to Him).' Now, this verse tells us that they would be ashamed of their *Kufr* and *Shirk* and will confess their error. On the outside, this seems to be contradictory. But, there are further explanations in other verses of the Qur'ān that they would initially deny when asked, but, when Allah Ta'ālā - in His perfect power - would make them speechless, witnesses will come from different parts of their own body. Then, Allah will give them their speech back and they will tell everything about their misdeed openly and clearly. Then, the Jinn and human beings will find out that all parts of their body were really the private eyes of the created system which finally produced the true evidence on everything about them. Then, left with no choice to deny, they will confess.

Are there messengers of Allah among the Jinn too?

Something else to be considered here is that, in this verse, Allah Ta'ālā has addressed both Jinnkind and mankind and asked them about messengers (*rasūl*) coming to them, messengers of Allah who were from among them. This shows that messengers have been sent to the Jinnkind from among their own kind - as is the case with humankind among whom the messengers were sent from among them, that

is, they were human beings.

On this question, the *'Ulama'* of *Tafsir* and *Hadith* differ. Some say that *Rasul* (messenger) and *Nabiyy* (prophet) have always been human. There has been no *Rasul* appointed directly from among the Jinnkind. Instead, what has happened is that there have been Jinns charged with the mission of getting reports of the message of truth conveyed by human prophets and messengers and take it to their kind. They were really, in that way, couriers and message-bearers of a *Rasul*. Therefore, they too are called *rasul* or carrier of a message, within the literal sense of the word in Arabic. The proof of the position taken by these respected scholars comes from the verses of the Qur'an where sayings of the Jinn that they conveyed the Qur'an or the saying of the prophet to their kind have been mentioned, for example: وَلَّوْا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِم مُّنذِرِينَ (... and they returned to their people to warn them - 46:29), and in the verse of Surah Al-Jinn: فَقَالُوٓا إِنَّا سَمِعْنَا قُرْءَانًا عَجَبًا . يَهْدِىٓ إِلَى ٱلرُّشْدِ فَـَٔامَنَّا بِهِۦ (... they said: Indeed, we have heard a wonderful Qur'an that leads to rectitude, so in it we believe - 72:1).

But, there is a group of *'Ulama'* who, given the outward meaning of this verse, also believe that, before the appearance of the Last among Prophets صلى الله عليه وسلم, each of the two species had their messengers from among them. To human beings came messengers who were human beings, and to the different classes of the Jinn, messengers were sent from among their kind only. It is the distinction of the Last among Prophets صلى الله عليه وسلم that he was sent as the only *Rasul* for all human beings and the Jinn of the whole world - and that too was not limited for one given time - in fact, all human beings and the Jinn born right up to the Last Day of *Qiyamah* shall be his community and he alone shall be the *Rasul* and *Nabiyy* for them.

Related Notes on Hindu Autars

Leading scholars of *Tafsir*, Kalabi and Mujahid hold that the Autars of Hindus are generally from the Jinns. Qadi Thana'ullah of Panipat, in his *Tafsir* Mazhari, has followed this view. According to him, it proves that, before Sayyidna Adam عليه السلام, the messengers of the Jinn used to be from their kind only. Then, it is proved that the Jinn inhabited the earth thousands of years before human beings - and since they too are obligated to observe the percepts of the injunctions of the Sha-

rī'ah like human beings, it is necessary on the basis of reason and revelation that they too should have prophets and messengers among them in order to convey the commandments of Allah Ta'ālā.

Qaḍī Thanā'ullah Pānipatī has said that the Hindus of India claim the history of their Vedas as thousands of years old. According to them their religious deities they called Autār date back to the same early time. It is not far out to say that they may be these very prophets and messengers of the Jinnkind, and may be the instructions brought by them were put together in the form of some book. The images and idols of Autars of Hindus placed in temples have particular patterns. Some are represented with several faces, others with many hands and feet, while still others would have other features such as a trunk like that of an elephant. They are very different from common human shapes. That the Jinn could transform themselves into such shapes is not beyond the range of probability. Therefore, saying that their Autar might be the prophets, messengers or their deputies who came to serve the Jinnkind - and their book itself be the collection of their instructions - is not so far out either. Then, gradually, as there were alterations in other books, alterations were made here too and what was left of it was idolatory and *Shirk*.

However, even if that original book and the authentic instructions left by those messengers were present, they would have stood abrogated after the appearance of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, and the universal application of his prophethood. And that it would have become impossible to act in accordance with it after its having been deformed and altered is something evident by itself.

The third verse (131) tells us that sending prophets and messengers among human beings and the Jinn is based on the dictate of justice and mercy of Allah Ta'ālā for He does not send punishment over a people unless they have been awakened through His blessed messengers and provided with the light of guidance.

The sense of the fourth verse (132) is fairly clear. It says that with Allah there are ranks for classes of people among human beings and the Jinn. These ranks have been assigned in terms of their deeds. When rewarded or punished, the measure used shall be that of their deeds.

Verses 133 - 136

وَرَبُّكَ الْغَنِيُّ ذُو الرَّحْمَةِ ۚ إِن يَشَأْ يُذْهِبْكُمْ وَيَسْتَخْلِفْ مِن
بَعْدِكُم مَّا يَشَاءُ كَمَا أَنشَأَكُم مِّن ذُرِّيَّةِ قَوْمٍ آخَرِينَ ﴿١٣٣﴾ إِنَّ
مَا تُوعَدُونَ لَآتٍ ۖ وَمَا أَنتُم بِمُعْجِزِينَ ﴿١٣٤﴾ قُلْ يَا قَوْمِ اعْمَلُوا
عَلَىٰ مَكَانَتِكُمْ إِنِّي عَامِلٌ ۖ فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ مَن تَكُونُ لَهُ
عَاقِبَةُ الدَّارِ ۗ إِنَّهُ لَا يُفْلِحُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿١٣٥﴾ وَجَعَلُوا لِلَّهِ مِمَّا ذَرَأَ
مِنَ الْحَرْثِ وَالْأَنْعَامِ نَصِيبًا فَقَالُوا هَٰذَا لِلَّهِ بِزَعْمِهِمْ وَهَٰذَا
لِشُرَكَائِنَا ۖ فَمَا كَانَ لِشُرَكَائِهِمْ فَلَا يَصِلُ إِلَى اللَّهِ ۖ وَمَا كَانَ
لِلَّهِ فَهُوَ يَصِلُ إِلَىٰ شُرَكَائِهِمْ ۗ سَاءَ مَا يَحْكُمُونَ ﴿١٣٦﴾

And your Lord is the All-Independent, the Master of Mercy. If He wills, He shall take you away and shall bring after you whom He wills just as He has raised you from the progeny of other people. [133]

Surely what you are promised is bound to come, and you cannot frustrate (it). [134]

Say, "O my people, do at your place (whatever you do) I am to do (in my way). So, you will know for whom is the ultimate abode. Surely, the unjust shall not be successful. [135]

And they have assigned a portion for Allah from what He has created from the tillage and the cattle, and they said, "This is for Allah" so they claimed - "and this is for our associate-gods." Then, what was for their associate-gods never reaches Allah, and what was for Allah does reach their associate-gods. Evil is what they judge. [136]

Commentary

Stated in previous verses was that Allah Ta'ālā has always been sending His messengers and the rules of conduct required by Him to every set of people among the Jinn and the human beings and, unless they were fully warned through their messengers, punishment was never given to them for their disbelief and disobedience.

In the first (133) of the four verses cited above, it has been pointed out that the practice of sending messengers and scriptures was not there because the Lord of the universe needed our obedience and worship, or some task of His depended on our obedience. No, this was never so. He is absolutely All-Independent, and need-free. But, alongwith His perfect freedom from dependence and need, there is that attribute of mercy in Him. See how He brings the entire universe into existence, then He maintains it and keeps fulfilling all outward and inward, present and future needs of everyone and everything. The cause is this very attribute of mercy. Otherwise, human beings, being what they are, would have hardly been able to produce what they needed, not to say much about their lack of etiquette in how to ask for what they need. This is particularly true about the very blessing of existence. That it has been bestowed without asking is all too clear. No human being anywhere has prayed to be born - nor can praying before coming into existence be imagined. Similarly, there are the limbs of the human body which go in the creation of a living body - the eyes, ears, hands, feet, the heart and the brain. Were they asked for by any human being? Or, did one of them had the consciousness and etiquette to ask for them? Nothing of the sort is true. The truth is: we were not there, we did not ask - it was His mercy hearing the unsaid!

Allah is All-Independent and His Creation is only a Mirror of His Mercy

In this verse, the words: رَبُّكَ الْغَنِيُّ describe how absolutely free from and independent of need the Lord of all lords is. But, by adding the words: ذُو الرَّحْمَةِ soon after, it was pointed out that, though He needs none, depends on none, is independent of everyone and everything in the universe, and the universe itself, yet, alongwith all that, He is also the one who has mercy and dispenses it at will.

Allah, in His Wisdom, Made no Human Being Need-Free - If So, Man Turns To Tyranny

It is certainly a great blessing of Allah, otherwise human beings have their own ways of neglect. When they become free from needs and independent of circumstancial compulsions, they stop caring for the benefit or loss and the sorrow or comfort of others. In fact, what usually happens under such situations is that one becomes all the

more adamant on inflicting injustice and oppression against others. Says a verse of the Holy Qur'ān: إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَيَطْغَىٰ أَنْ رَآهُ اسْتَغْنَىٰ (96:6), that is, when human beings find themselves need-free and independent, they are ready to rebel and transgress. Therefore, Allah Almighty has made man so tied up with needs which cannot be fulfilled without the help of others. A king needs his retinue of liveries, the wealthy man needs his help, the industrialist depends on his labour. The driver of a passenger vehicle comes out on the streets to earn his living of the day while one who can afford to pay for the ride has to hail for one. Nature has chained them together. Each needs the other and no one is doing any favour. Without this arrangement, no rich man will pay a dime to anyone and no handyman or porter would care to carry someone else's burden. So, all this is a manifestation of the most perfect attribute of Allah Ta'ālā who is All-Independent, yet the Master of Mercy. The text could have used a single word form such as *Ar-Rahman* (All-Merciful) or *Ar-Raḥīm* (Very-Merciful) and that would have served the purpose of describing the mercy of Allah. But, the choice of a compound form: ذُو الرَّحْمَةِ (*Dhur-Raḥmah*:The Master of Mercy) has been preferred because it shows the correlation between the two attributes of Allah Ta'ālā described in the verse. He is All-Independent, yet He is the master-dispenser of mercy - an attribute which is the real cause of sending messengers and books for the good of human beings.

After that, it was also made clear that the way His mercy is universal and perfect, in the same way His power holds control over everything. If He wills, He could undo everyone in a moment - and even this undoing of the entire creation would not cause the slightest difference to the working of His power. Then, if He wills to undo the present system of the entire universe and replace it with another set of creation in the same manner and at the same time - He can certainly do that. An evidence of this possible happening always remains before human beings of all ages. Think of the millions of human beings who inhabit the near and far corners of the earth and run the business of their lives, then think of the time a hundred years earlier. You shall realize that the earth was inhabited as it is now, and things were going on as usual, but none of the present inhabitants of the earth, the movers and shakers of things, were there. What was there was a different set of people - and that different set of people lies buried under

the earth with no traces to be found today. The people on the earth today are the descendants of the earlier generation of people. Says the Qur'ān: إِنْ يَّشَأْ يُذْهِبْكُمْ وَيَسْتَخْلِفْ مِنْ بَعْدِكُمْ مَّا يَشَآءُ كَمَآ أَنْشَأَكُمْ مِّنْ ذُرِّيَّةِ قَوْمٍ اٰخَرِيْنَ (If He wills, He shall take you away and shall bring after you whom He wills just as He has raised you from the progeny of other people -133). The sense of " يُذْهِبْكُمْ" : *yudhhibkum*, translated as 'take you away,' is to undo or make absent with no traces left behind. This is why there is no reference to destroying, killing or exterminating. The statement in the text restricts itself to 'taking' which denotes a state of unmaking, unbeing, loss of name, identity and trace.

After having established in the first verse that Allah is All-Independent (*Ghaniyy*), Master of Mercy (*Dhur-Raḥmah*) and All-Powerful too, the text carries a warning given to disobedient people: إِنَّ مَا تُوْعَدُوْنَ لَاٰتٍ وَّمَآ أَنْتُمْ بِمُعْجِزِيْنَ : 'Surely what you are promised [that is, the Divine punishment] is bound to come, and you cannot frustrate [it].'

Another method to awaken them from their heedlessness was adopted in the third verse (135) where it was said: قُلْ يٰقَوْمِ اعْمَلُوْا عَلٰى مَكَانَتِكُمْ إِنِّيْ عَامِلٌ فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُوْنَ مَنْ تَكُوْنُ لَهٗ عَاقِبَةُ الدَّارِ إِنَّهٗ لَا يُفْلِحُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ (Say, "O my people, do at your place (whatever you do) I am to do (in my way). So, you will know for whom is the ultimate abode. Surely, the unjust shall not be successful). This is addressed to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. He is being asked to tell those people of his in Makkah that the choice of not accepting what he is saying is theirs. Let them not accept it, stay as they are and keep on doing what their belief and hostility tell them to do - and he too will keep on doing what his belief tells him to do. In that, there was no loss for him. But, very soon, they will be the ones to find out who will be blessed with the ultimate salvation and success of the Hereafter. And, in this, let them not forget that the *Ẓalim*, the unjust, the usurpers of rights, never succeed.

Commenting on this verse, *Tafsīr* authority, Ibn Kathīr pointed out that the exact words of the text here are: مَنْ تَكُوْنُ لَهٗ عَاقِبَةُ الدَّارِ (for whom is the ultimate abode) and not: عَاقِبَةُ الدَّارِ الْاٰخِرَةِ (the ultimate abode of *Akhirah*), that is, the suffix of *'Ākhirah* or Hereafter is not there. This tells us that, much earlier than the abode of *Akhirah*, the ultimate success falls to the lot of the righteous servants of Allah alone even within the present abode of the world. This stands proved from the life and times

of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his blessed Companions. Not much time passed when all wielders of power and authority found themselves disgraced before them. Their countries were conquered at their hands. Within the period of prophethood, the whole Arabia came under his authority which soon extended to Yaman, Bahrain and the borders of Syria. Then, it was at the hands of his *Khulafā'* and the *Ṣaḥābah* that a major part of the known world of the time came under their aegis. Fullfilled stood the promise of Allah Taʿālā: كَتَبَ اللّٰهُ لَاَغْلِبَنَّ اَنَا وَرُسُلِيْ (Allah has written: I shall overcome, I, and My Messengers - 58:21). And again, it was said in another verse: اِنَّا لَنَنْصُرُ رُسُلَنَا وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا فِي الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَيَوْمَ يَقُوْمُ الْاَشْهَادُ that is, 'We shall help Our Messengers, and those who have believed, in the present world, and on the Day of *Qiyāmah*, when witnesses will stand to record their testimony on the reckoning of deeds - 40:51.'

In the fourth verse (136), the disbelievers of Arabia have been admonished for a particular error in their behaviour. The custom was that they would take out from the produce of their lands and from the income of their businesses a portion for Allah and a portion for their idols. The portion taken out for Allah they would spend on the poor and the needy while the portion taken out in the name of their idols they would spend on the priests and keepers of the temple of idols.

To begin with, enough was their injustice in that everything was created by Allah Taʿālā, and the produce which came from them was bestowed by Him, yet they went ahead and made idols to share in what was given by Him. On top of this, they would add insult to injury when, should there be a drop in produce, they would apply this shortfall against the portion they meant for Allah saying that Allah was Independent and did not need their things. Thus, they would exact the portion of their idols in full, as well as that of their own. On some occasion, if it so happened that something from the portion taken out for the idols, or from that of their own, went into the portion reserved for Allah, they would pick it up and take it out of there to keep their accounting straight! And if came the occasion when things were the reverse of it, that is, if anything belonging to the portion of Allah was thrown in their own portion, or in the portion of their idols, it was left where it was saying that Allah is need-free, therefore, any

shortage in His share will not make any difference! The Holy Qur'ān, taking notice of this crooked conduct of theirs, has said: سَآءَ مَا يَحْكُمُونَ (Evil is what they judge -136). It means that their judgement is evil and crude because they are not realizing that it is Allah who created them and created everything that appears to belong to them, yet they go about equating others with Him, and to top it all, they find excuses to shift elsewhere what, according to their own intention, was supposed to belong to Allah.

The Admonition for Disbelievers - A Lesson for Muslims

This is an admonition directed against the waywardness of the disbelievers of Arabia. However, by implication, it holds a sharp lesson for Muslims as well - Muslims who devote their full potential, their life given by Allah, their body and mind, into different sections. They would reserve part of their years and time in life for Allah and His worship - though the right of Allah demanded that all time frames of their living years should have been reserved to obey and worship Him alone. May be, they could have taken out some time for themselves too to take care of human compulsions - and even then, the truth is that the right of Allah that we be grateful to Him would have still remained unfullfilled! But, here we are, in our time and in our places, doing unbelievable things. If, in the twenty four hours of a day and night of our lives, we do get around to fix some time to be devoted to remember Allah and engage ourselves in what we know as His essential *'Ibādah*, then strange things start happening. There comes an urgent need, a call or an appointment or something like that, and we become pragmatic all of a sudden. The function, the business, the need comes first. No postponement is made in what is pragmatic or personal. The urgency of work stays. The inevitability of rest time stays. The axe falls on nothing but the time which had been fixed for devotion to Allah through prayers and recitation of the Qur'ān. This happens most of the time - emergency, urgency, sickness or any other call - what is the first casualty in this rush is nothing but the time that we had earmarked for our *Dhikr* and *'Ibādah*. We just cannot say how wrong, how ungrateful and how right-compromising this attitude is. May Allah Ta'ālā keep us and all Muslims protected from it.

Verses 137 - 140

وَكَذٰلِكَ زَيَّنَ لِكَثِيْرٍ مِّنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ قَتْلَ اَوْلَادِهِمْ شُرَكَآؤُهُمْ
لِيُرْدُوْهُمْ وَلِيَلْبِسُوْا عَلَيْهِمْ دِيْنَهُمْ ۖ وَلَوْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ مَا فَعَلُوْهُ
فَذَرْهُمْ وَمَا يَفْتَرُوْنَ ﴿١٣٧﴾ وَقَالُوْا هٰذِهٖٓ اَنْعَامٌ وَّحَرْثٌ حِجْرٌ ۖ
لَّا يَطْعَمُهَآ اِلَّا مَنْ نَّشَآءُ بِزَعْمِهِمْ وَاَنْعَامٌ حُرِّمَتْ ظُهُوْرُهَا
وَاَنْعَامٌ لَّا يَذْكُرُوْنَ اسْمَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْهَا افْتِرَآءً عَلَيْهِ ۖ سَيَجْزِيْهِمْ بِمَا
كَانُوْا يَفْتَرُوْنَ ﴿١٣٨﴾ وَقَالُوْا مَا فِيْ بُطُوْنِ هٰذِهِ الْاَنْعَامِ
خَالِصَةٌ لِّذُكُوْرِنَا وَمُحَرَّمٌ عَلٰٓى اَزْوَاجِنَا ۚ وَاِنْ يَّكُنْ مَّيْتَةً فَهُمْ
فِيْهِ شُرَكَآءُ ۖ سَيَجْزِيْهِمْ وَصْفَهُمْ ۖ اِنَّهٗ حَكِيْمٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿١٣٩﴾ قَدْ
خَسِرَ الَّذِيْنَ قَتَلُوْٓا اَوْلَادَهُمْ سَفَهًاۢ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ وَّحَرَّمُوْا مَا رَزَقَهُمُ
اللّٰهُ افْتِرَآءً عَلَى اللّٰهِ ۖ قَدْ ضَلُّوْا وَمَا كَانُوْا مُهْتَدِيْنَ ﴿١٤٠﴾

And thus their associate-gods have made the killing of their children alluring to many associators (idolators), so that they may lead them to disaster and may confuse their faith for them. And had Allah willed, they would not have done it. So, leave them with what they fabricate. [137]

And they say, "These are prohibited cattle and produce; none can eat them except those whom we wish" - so they claimed - "and there are cattle whose backs are prohibited (for riding or loading)." And there are cattle over which they do not pronounce the name of Allah, a fabrication against Him. He shall recompense them for what they have been fabricating. [138]

And they say, "Whatever is in the wombs of these cattle is purely for our males, and forbidden to our wives." And if it be dead, then in it they all are sharers. Soon, He shall recompense them for what they attribute. Surely, He is All-Wise, All-Knowing. [139]

Losers are those who kill their children foolishly, without knowledge, and have taken as prohibited what Al-

lah has provided them - a fabrication against Allah. They have gone astray, and they are not on the right path. [140]

Linkage of Verses

Described in the previous verses were false beliefs of the *mushriks* of Arabia while the present verses recount their practical errors and ignorant customs. The customs of *Jāhiliyyah* mentioned in these verses are: (1) They took out a portion in the name of Allah from grains and fruits, and some in the name of idols and Jinns. Then, if by chance, some part of what belonged to the portion of Allah got mixed up with the portion reserved for idols, they would let it stay mixed as it was. When the position was the reverse of it, they would take it out and make the portion set for idols even. The excuse was that Allah is need-free. A cut in His share does not harm Him while the partners need it - so, their share should not be decreased. This evil custom was mentioned earlier in verse 136.

(2) The second custom was that they would release animals they called *Baḥīrah* and *Sā'ibah* in the name of idols and said that they were doing it for the pleasure of Allah. Here too, the portion alloted to idols was that the act of worship was intended for them - and the portion alloted to Allah was that they aimed to please Allah.

(3) The third custom was that of killing their female children.

(4) The fourth custom was that they would endow some tillage in the name of idols saying that only men could use its produce. Giving or not giving a share from it to women depended on their will. Women had no right to demand.

(5) They would do the same thing with cattle when they would restrict their use for men only.

(6) They considered the quadruped animals they released in the name of idols as unlawful for purposes of riding or carrying loads.

(7) There were quadruped animals they would specify. Using them at any time, they would not pronounce the name of Allah, neither when milking, nor when riding and nor when slaughtering.

(8) The eighth custom was that they would release animals in the name of idols, naming them as *Baḥīrah* or *Sā'ibah*. When, at the time

of slaughter, the calf came out alive, they would slaughter it as well - but, would take it as lawful for men only; for women, they took it to be unlawful - and if the calf was born still, it was supposed to be lawful for everyone.

(9) Even milk from some animals was considered lawful for men and unlawful for women.

(10) They took reverence for four kinds of animals: *Baḥīrah*, *Sā'ibah*, *Wasīlah* and *Hāmī*, as an act of worship.

[All these narrations appear in Ad-Durr Al-Manthūr and Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās, Mujāhid, Ibn Zayd and As-Suddiy with exegetic deductions of Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Ibn Abī Ash-Shaybah and Ibn Ḥumayd) [As in Bayān al-Qur'ān of Maulānā Thānavī]

Verses 141 - 142

وَهُوَ الَّذِيْٓ اَنْشَاَ جَنّٰتٍ مَّعْرُوْشٰتٍ وَّغَيْرَ مَعْرُوْشٰتٍ وَّالنَّخْلَ
وَالزَّرْعَ مُخْتَلِفًا اُكُلُهٗ وَالزَّيْتُوْنَ وَالرُّمَّانَ مُتَشَابِهًا وَّغَيْرَ
مُتَشَابِهٍ ۭ كُلُوْا مِنْ ثَمَرِهٖٓ اِذَآ اَثْمَرَ وَاٰتُوْا حَقَّهٗ يَوْمَ حَصَادِهٖ ڮ وَلَا
تُسْرِفُوْا ۭ اِنَّهٗ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِيْنَ ﴿١٤١﴾ وَمِنَ الْاَنْعَامِ حَمُوْلَةً
وَّفَرْشًا ۭ كُلُوْا مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللّٰهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوْا خُطُوٰتِ الشَّيْطٰنِ ۭ
اِنَّهٗ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿١٤٢﴾

And He is the One who has created gardens trellised and untrellised, and date-palms and crops with a variety of edibles, and the olive and the pomegranate, similar and not similar to each other. Eat of its fruit when it bears fruit, and pay its due on the day of harvest, and do not be extravagant. Surely, Allah does not like the extravagant. [141]

And among cattle (He has created) those fit for loading and those fit for laying. Eat of what Allah has provided you, and do not follow the footsteps of Satan. Surely, he is an open enemy to you. [142]

Commentary

Mentioned in the previous verses was how astray the disbelievers

of Makkah had gone when they had taken their self-carved, lifeless, insensate idols as partners in the Divinity of Allah as they made them share in animals created by Him and in many other blessings which were bestowed on them. Their transgression went to the limits when they would take out charities from these blessings as an act of worship, setting aside a portion for Allah and another for their idols. Then, they would employ different excuses to take out what belonged to the portion set aside for Allah and put it in the portion reserved for the idols. Similarly, there were many other ignorance-based arbitrary customs which they had given legal status.

In the first (141) of the two verses quoted above, Allah Ta'ālā mentions the wonders wrought by His perfect power in the form of what grows on the earth bringing forth the fruits of His creation. Similarly, in the second verse (142), pointed to was the creation of the different kinds of animals and cattle. Then, with this in view, comes the admonition - how could a people become so sightless as to undermine their Powerful, Knowing and Aware Creator in favour of things that weak, inert and unaware, and start taking the later as His associates and partners.

After that, they were guided towards the straight path, the most sound approach to life. They were told to understand that there was no partner or associate with Allah when He created and bestowed on them things which benefit them - how then, can they take them as sharers in the worship of Allah, something which has to be exclusively for Him? This was rank ingratitude for His blessings, and certainly an injustice. They should realize that it was Allah who bestowed these things on them. It was He who made them work for them so that they could use them as they wished and then, He made these things lawful for them. So, keeping these factors in view, it was their duty to remember the right of Allah, and be grateful to Him whenever they benefit from His blessings, and to stop making satanic thoughts and ignorance-based customs a part of their faith.

Some Words and Their Meanings

The word: أَنْشَأَ (*ansha'a*) in the first verse means 'created.' The second word: مَعْرُوشٰتٍ (*ma'rūshāt*) is from: عَرْش (*'arsh*) which means to raise, to make go high. '*Ma'rūshāt*' refers to vines of plants which are mounted

on supports called trellis, such as, the grape, and some vegetables. In contrast, is: غَيْرَ مَعْرُوشٰتٍ (*ghayra ma'rūshāt:* untrellised) which includes all plants the vines of which are not raised high - whether trees with trunk and without vines, or they may be with vines which spread on the ground and are not raised, such as, the melon.

The word: اَلنَّخْل (*an-nakhl*) means the date tree; اَلزَّرْع (*az-zar'*) is crops of all kinds. The word: اَلزَّيْتُوْن (*az-zaytūn*) is the name of the olive tree, and of its fruit as well; and: اَلرُّمَّان (*ar-rummān*) is pomegranate.

In these verses, two kinds of farm or garden plants have been mentioned: (1) Those the vines of which are raised high, and (2) those the vines of which are not raised. The hint given is that Allah's creation is full of wisdom and mystery. Here is the same soil, the same water, air, atmosphere, yet the plants that grow are different. Then, a variety was introduced through the processing, colouring and ripening of fruits, and by the employment of countless and complex properties embedded in them, some plants were designed to bear fruit only when their vines were raised up - and even if it does show up, it would not grow and survive, such as, the grape. Then, some plants were taught a grammar of growth so that their vines would not go up even if anyone tried to do that - and should it, by chance, climb up, the fruit will grow weak and wither away, as is the case with melons of all kinds. Certainly unusual is the phenomena when some trees were made to stand on strong trunks and taken as high as it would not be possible for human ingenuity to accomplish in common practice. This talisman of trees is not simply accidental. It has wisdom, intention and mastery of execution behind it. Trees have properties and fruits have tempers. Some fruits grow and ripen in the soil and on the ground. A touch of soil would spoil others. Some of them find it necessary to hang by high branches, encounter fresh air, soak sunrays and starlights and get their colour. To each, nature has given a suitable system to perform by.

فَتَبٰرَكَ اللّٰهُ اَحْسَنُ الْخٰلِقِيْنَ

So blessed be Allah, the best of creators -23:14

After that, dates and crops were mentioned specially. The date fruit is usually eaten for pleasure. If one is hungry, it will serve as

regular food. Crops from farms provide food grains for human beings and fodder for animals. After having mentioned these two, it was said: مُخۡتَلِفًا اُكُلُهٗ (with a variety of edibles). Here, the pronoun in: اُكُلُهٗ (*ukuluhū*) may be taken as referring back to: زَرۡع (*zar'*: crops), or to: نَخۡل (*nakhl* : date-palms) as well. However, the sense includes both. Thus, the meaning is that there are different kinds of dates, and each kind has a different taste. As for crops, the kinds go to hundreds - and each kind has its own distinct taste, property and use. Their climate and land are the same yet there is a great difference in fruits produced. Then, each kind has a different set of properties and benefits, yet they are so unique in diversity. This is a phenomenon which compels even a man of ordinary insight to realize and accept that the Power and Being that created them is a Being beyond the parameters of comprehension, the measure of whose knowledge and wisdom cannot even be imagined by human beings.

After that, two more things were mentioned: olive and pomegranate. Olive is fruit and vegetable both. The oil from olive is clean, transparent and delicate. It is better than most oils. Its properties, uses and benefits are numerous. In fact, it cures many ailments. Similarly, there are many properties and benefits of pomegranate which most people know. After mentioning these two fruits, it was said: مُتَشَابِهًا وَّغَيۡرَ مُتَشَابِهٍ (similar and not similar). It means that some trees from among them bear fruits which, in terms of colour and taste, are similar to each other. Then, there are some others which have different colour and taste. That some pomegranate fruits are similar in colour, taste and size and some others are different holds true for olives too.

Having mentioned kinds of trees and fruits, given there in this verse are two injunctions to be followed. The first one is a natural satisfier of human desires. It was said: كُلُوۡا مِنۡ ثَمَرِهٖۤ اِذَاۤ اَثۡمَرَ (eat of its fruit when it bears fruit). The hint given is that the purpose of the Creator in creating this diverse array of fruits is not to fulfill any of His need. These have been created for their benefit. Therefore, they were welcome to eat and enjoy them. By adding: اِذَاۤ اَثۡمَرَ (*idhā athmara* : when it bears fruit), it was pointed out that making the fruits come out of the branches of the tree was a job beyond them. However, when those

fruits form and grow full with the permission of Allah, they become entitled to eat them at that time, whether not ripe yet.

The *'Ushr* of Land

The second injunction given in this verse is: وَاٰتُوْا حَقَّهٗ يَوْمَ حَصَادِهٖ (and pay its due on the day of its harvest). The word: اتوا (*atu*) means 'bring' or 'pay'; and: حَصَاد (*haṣād*) refers to the 'harvesting of crops' or 'picking of fruits.' And the pronoun in: حَقَّهٗ (*haqqahū* : its due) applies to everything edible mentioned above. The sense of the verse is : Eat, drink and use these things, but remember to pay its due at the time of harvesting the crops or picking the fruit. '*Ḥaqq*' or 'due' denotes giving it as *ṣadaqah* or charity to the poor and needy - as it appears in another verse in the form of a general rule:

وَالَّذِيْنَ فِيْٓ اَمْوَالِهِمْ حَقٌّ مَّعْلُوْمٌ لِّلسَّآئِلِ وَالْمَحْرُوْمِ

And in the properties of righteous people, there is a due right of the poor and needy - the asking and the non-asking - 70:24.

Is this *ṣadaqah* referred to here means common charities known as *Ṣadaqah* and *Khayrāt*, or the particular *ṣadaqah* known as 'the *Zakāh* of the land' or '*Ushr*? There are two sayings of authorities among Ṣaḥābah and Tābi'in in this matter. Some among them have favoured the first possibility. The reason given by them is that this verse is Makkī and the obligation of *Zakāh* came into force two years after the Hijrah to Madīna al-Ṭayyibah. Therefore, '*ḥaqq*' at this place cannot apply to the '*ḥaqq*'*of* the *Zakāh* of land. Some others among them have counted this verse as one of the Madanī verses and, according to them, '*haqqahū*' refers to the *Zakāh* of the land which is '*Ushr*.

Tafsīr authority, Ibn Kathīr, in his *Tafsīr* and Ibn al-'Arabī in Aḥkām al-Qur'ān have resolved this by saying that, whether the verse is Makkī or Madanī, in both events, the verse could mean the *Zakāh* of land, that is, '*Ushr* - because, according to them, the initial injunction making *Zakāh* obligatory had already been revealed in Makkah. The verse of Sūrah Al-Muzzammil which contains the injunction of *Zakāh* is Makkī by consensus. However, the rate and threshold (*niṣāb*) of *Zakāh* was determined after the Hijrah. The present verse only tells us that Allah has made a due payable on the produce of the land. Its quantity has not been determined here. Therefore, as far as the

quantity is concerned, this verse is brief. The conditions in Makkah al-Mu'azzamah were different. The determination of this quantity was not needed there because Muslims did not have the assurance of acquiring the produce of their lands and fruit farms conveniently and in peace. So, during those days, the practice was no different that it used to be among people of charitable background who would give out part of their produce to the poor and needy who would gather around at the time of harvesting crops or picking fruits. No quantity was fixed for that purpose. That there was, even before Islam, the custom of such charitable giving from the land produce among other communities as well is mentioned in a verse of the Qur'ān: إِنَّا بَلَوْنٰهُمْ كَمَا بَلَوْنَآ أَصْحٰبَ الْجَنَّةِ (Verily We have tried them as We tried the People Of the Garden, when they resolved to gather the fruits of the [garden] in the morning - 68:17 - AYA). It was two year after the Hijrah, when the Holy Prophet ﷺ explained the details of the quantities and thresholds of wealth, property and *Zakāh* under the guidance of Divine revelation, he also explained the *Zakāh* of the land. This has been reported in all *Ḥadīth* books on the authority of narrations from Sayyidnā Mu'ādh ibn Jabal, Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar and Jābir ibn 'Abdullāh (رضى الله عنهم اجمعين): مَاسَقَتِ السَّمَآءُ فَفِيْهِ الْعُشْرُ وَمَا سُقِىَ بِالسَّانِيَةِ فَنِصْفُ الْعُشْرِ It means 'in the lands watered by rains where not much effort is needed for irregation, it is *wajib* to take out one-tenth of the produce as *Zakāh* - and against lands which are irrigated with water from wells taking out one-twentieth of the produce is *wājib* (obligatory).

In its Law of *Zakāh*, the Sharī'ah of Islam has used a basic principle in determining *Zakāh* of all kinds. According to this principle, the quantity of *Zakāh* on a produce involving less labour and expenditure increases while, with the increase in the labour and expenditure on a produce, the quantity of *Zakāh* decreases in that proportion. Let us understand it with the help of an example. If someone finds an ancient treasure, or hits on a gold or silver mine while prospecting, then, one-fifth of it will be due on him as *Zakāh* - because the labour and expenditure factor is less while the produce is more. After that comes rain-depending land which has the lowest ratio of labour and expenditure. The *Zakāh* for it was cut into half, that is, from one-fifth to one-tenth. After that there is the land irrigated with water from wells, or from irrigation canals against payment. This causes an increase in labour

and expenditure, so *Zakāh* against it was reduced by another half, that is, one-twentieth. Then, there is common cash, gold or silver, and trading goods. Procuring and multiplying these cost a good deal and need added labour. Therefore, the *Zakāh* for it was reduced by yet another half, that is, it was fixed at one-fortieth part.

In the present verse of the Qur'ān, and in the *Ḥadīth* quoted above, no *Niṣāb* (threshold) for the produce of the land has been determined. Therefore, the juristic creed (*Madhab*) of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah and Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal is: On the produce of the land, whether less or more, taking out its *Zakāh* is compulsory. There is a verse in Sūrah al-Baqarah which mentions the *Zakāh* of land. But, there too, no *Niṣāb* (threshold) has been mentioned. Quoted below is the text of that verse:

﴿ اَنْفِقُوْا مِنْ طَيِّبٰتِ مَا كَسَبْتُمْ وَمِمَّآ اَخْرَجْنَا لَكُمْ مِّنَ الْاَرْضِ ﴾

O those who believe, spend of the good things you have earned and of what We have brought forth for you from the earth - 2:267.

[Comments on 'Ushr lands also appear under the verse quoted immediately above in Ma'ariful-Qur'ān, English, Volume I, page 659]

As for trading goods and cattle, the Nisab (threshold) was given by the Holy Prophet ﷺ whereby there is no *Zakāh* under 52 1/2 tola of silver (1 tola = 0.41 ounces = 11.6363 g) or under forty goats or five camels. But, no Niṣāb has been determined concerning the produce of land in the Ḥadīth cited above, therefore, it is Wājib to take out *Zakāh* of the land whether the produce is more or less, big or small.

At the end of the verse (141) it was said: وَلَا تُسْرِفُوْا اِنَّهٗ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِيْنَ That is, do not spend beyond limits because Allah Ta'ālā does not like wasteful spenders. A question arises here. In case a person spends everything he has in the way of Allah, his wealth, even his life, this cannot be called *'Isrāf'* (extravagance). In fact, it would be difficult to say that, even by having done all that, one can be sure that he or she has done what was really the due of Allah! Then, what does this prohibition of *'Isrāf'* or extravagance at this place really mean? The answer is that extravagance in one department of life usually causes shortfall, shortcoming or deficiency in other departments. One who spends extravagantly to fulfill his desires generally ends up failing in his duty to fulfill the due rights of others. Prohibited here is this kind of

shortcoming. It means that should a person give away whatever he has in the way of Allah and return with empty hands, how is he going to fulfill the rights of his children, family and relatives, even those of his own self? Therefore, the rule of guidance given is that one should observe moderation even when spending in the way of Allah so that all due rights can be taken care of.

Verses 143 - 144

ثَمٰنِيَةَ أَزْوَاجٍ ۚ مِنَ الضَّأْنِ اثْنَيْنِ وَمِنَ الْمَعْزِ اثْنَيْنِ ۗ قُلْ ءَآلذَّكَرَيْنِ حَرَّمَ أَمِ الْأُنْثَيَيْنِ أَمَّا اشْتَمَلَتْ عَلَيْهِ أَرْحَامُ الْأُنْثَيَيْنِ ۗ نَبِّئُونِي بِعِلْمٍ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِينَ ﴿١٤٣﴾ وَمِنَ الْإِبِلِ اثْنَيْنِ وَمِنَ الْبَقَرِ اثْنَيْنِ ۗ قُلْ ءَآلذَّكَرَيْنِ حَرَّمَ أَمِ الْأُنْثَيَيْنِ أَمَّا اشْتَمَلَتْ عَلَيْهِ أَرْحَامُ الْأُنْثَيَيْنِ ۗ أَمْ كُنْتُمْ شُهَدَاءَ إِذْ وَصّٰكُمُ اللّٰهُ بِهٰذَا ۚ فَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرٰى عَلَى اللّٰهِ كَذِبًا لِّيُضِلَّ النَّاسَ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ ۗ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظّٰلِمِينَ ﴿١٤٤﴾

(He has created) eight pairs: two of sheep and two of goats. Say, "Is it the two males that He has prohibited or the two females? Or, what the wombs of the two females contain? Tell me with knowledge if you are true" [143] **and two of camels and two of cows. Say, "Is it the two males He has prohibited or the two females? Or, were you present when Allah has advised you of this?" So, who is more unjust than the one who fabricates a lie against Allah in order to misguide people without knowledge. Surely, Allah gives no guidance to an unjust people.** [144]

Verses 145 - 147

قُلْ لَّآ أَجِدُ فِي مَآ أُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ مُحَرَّمًا عَلٰى طَاعِمٍ يَّطْعَمُهٗٓ إِلَّآ أَنْ يَّكُونَ مَيْتَةً أَوْ دَمًا مَّسْفُوحًا أَوْ لَحْمَ خِنْزِيرٍ فَإِنَّهٗ رِجْسٌ أَوْ فِسْقًا أُهِلَّ لِغَيْرِ اللّٰهِ بِهٖ ۚ فَمَنِ اضْطُرَّ غَيْرَ بَاغٍ وَّلَا عَادٍ فَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ غَفُورٌ

رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿١٤٥﴾ وَعَلَى الَّذِيْنَ هَادُوْا حَرَّمْنَا كُلَّ ذِيْ ظُفُرٍ ۚ وَمِنَ
الْبَقَرِ وَالْغَنَمِ حَرَّمْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ شُحُوْمَهُمَآ اِلَّا مَا حَمَلَتْ ظُهُوْرُهُمَآ
اَوِ الْحَوَايَآ اَوْ مَا اخْتَلَطَ بِعَظْمٍ ۭ ذٰلِكَ جَزَيْنٰهُمْ بِبَغْيِهِمْ ۡ وَاِنَّا
لَصٰدِقُوْنَ ﴿١٤٦﴾ فَاِنْ كَذَّبُوْكَ فَقُلْ رَّبُّكُمْ ذُوْ رَحْمَةٍ وَّاسِعَةٍ ۚ
وَلَا يُرَدُّ بَاْسُهٗ عَنِ الْقَوْمِ الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ ﴿١٤٧﴾

Say, "I do not find, in what has been revealed to me, anything prohibited for anyone who eats it, unless it be carrion or blood that has flowed out, or flesh of swine - because it is impure - or there be a sin by invoking on it the name of someone other than Allah. However, if anyone is compelled by necessity - neither desiring nor transgressing then, your Lord is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [145]

And for those who are Jews We prohibited all that which has claws. And of cows and goats, We prohibited for them their fat, except what their backs contain, or the entrails, or what is attached to a bone. Thus We recompensed them for their transgression. And We are surely true. [146]

Then, if they belie you, say, "Your Lord is the Lord of all-embracing mercy, and His penalty cannot be averted from the sinning people." [147]

Verses 148 - 150

سَيَقُوْلُ الَّذِيْنَ اَشْرَكُوْا لَوْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ مَآ اَشْرَكْنَا وَلَآ اٰبَآؤُنَا وَلَا
حَرَّمْنَا مِنْ شَيْءٍ ۭ كَذٰلِكَ كَذَّبَ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ حَتّٰى
ذَاقُوْا بَاْسَنَا ۭ قُلْ هَلْ عِنْدَكُمْ مِّنْ عِلْمٍ فَتُخْرِجُوْهُ لَنَا ۭ اِنْ
تَتَّبِعُوْنَ اِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَاِنْ اَنْتُمْ اِلَّا تَخْرُصُوْنَ ﴿١٤٨﴾ قُلْ فَلِلّٰهِ
الْحُجَّةُ الْبَالِغَةُ ۚ فَلَوْ شَآءَ لَهَدٰىكُمْ اَجْمَعِيْنَ ﴿١٤٩﴾ قُلْ هَلُمَّ
شُهَدَآءَكُمُ الَّذِيْنَ يَشْهَدُوْنَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ حَرَّمَ هٰذَا ۚ فَاِنْ شَهِدُوْا فَلَا

تَشْهَدْ مَعَهُمْ ۚ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ اَهْوَآءَ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَالَّذِيْنَ لَا
يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ وَهُمْ بِرَبِّهِمْ يَعْدِلُوْنَ ﴿١٥٠﴾

Those who associate partners with Allah will say, "Had Allah willed, we would have not associated (partners with Him), nor our fathers, nor would we have made anything prohibited." In the same way belied those before them until they tasted Our penalty. Say, "Have you any knowledge that you may bring forth for us? You follow nothing but whims, and do nothing but make conjectures." [148]

Say, "Then, it is Allah who has the perfect proof. So, had He willed, He would have brought you all on the right path." [149]

Say, "Bring your witnesses who testify that Allah has prohibited this." Then, if they testify, do not testify with them, and do not follow the desires of those who have belied Our signs and those who do not believe in the Hereafter, and with their Lord, they equate others. [150]

Verses 151 - 153

قُلْ تَعَالَوْا اَتْلُ مَا حَرَّمَ رَبُّكُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ اَلَّا تُشْرِكُوْا بِهٖ شَيْئًا
وَّبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ اِحْسَانًا ۚ وَلَا تَقْتُلُوْٓا اَوْلَادَكُمْ مِّنْ اِمْلَاقٍ ؕ نَحْنُ
نَرْزُقُكُمْ وَاِيَّاهُمْ ۚ وَلَا تَقْرَبُوا الْفَوَاحِشَ مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَنَ ۚ
وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا النَّفْسَ الَّتِيْ حَرَّمَ اللّٰهُ اِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ ؕ ذٰلِكُمْ وَصّٰىكُمْ بِهٖ
لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿١٥١﴾ وَلَا تَقْرَبُوْا مَالَ الْيَتِيْمِ اِلَّا بِالَّتِيْ هِيَ
اَحْسَنُ حَتّٰى يَبْلُغَ اَشُدَّهٗ ۚ وَاَوْفُوا الْكَيْلَ وَالْمِيْزَانَ بِالْقِسْطِ ۚ
لَا نُكَلِّفُ نَفْسًا اِلَّا وُسْعَهَا ۚ وَاِذَا قُلْتُمْ فَاعْدِلُوْا وَلَوْ كَانَ ذَا
قُرْبٰى ۚ وَبِعَهْدِ اللّٰهِ اَوْفُوْا ؕ ذٰلِكُمْ وَصّٰىكُمْ بِهٖ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُوْنَ
﴿١٥٢﴾ وَاَنَّ هٰذَا صِرَاطِيْ مُسْتَقِيْمًا فَاتَّبِعُوْهُ ۚ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا

السُّبُلَ فَتَفَرَّقَ بِكُمْ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ ۚ ذَٰلِكُمْ وَصَّاكُمْ بِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٥٣﴾

Say, "Come, I recite what your Lord has prohibited for you: "Do not associate anything with Him (as partners); and be good to parents, and do not kill your children because of poverty - We will give provision to you, and to them as well - and do not go near shameful acts, whether they are open or secret; and do not kill a person whom Allah has given sanctity, except by right." This is what He has emphasized for you, so that you may understand. [151]

And do not approach the property of the orphan, except with the best possible conduct, until he reaches maturity. And give the measure and the weight to the full in all fairness - We do not obligate anyone beyond his capacity - and when you speak, be just, even if there be a relative; and fulfill the covenant of Allah." This is what He has emphasized for you, so that you may observe the advice. [152]

And: "This is My path, straight. So, follow it, and do not follow the (other) ways, lest it should take you away from His way." This is what He has emphasized for you, so that you may be God-fearing. [153]

Commentary

Prior to the verses appearing above, for about two to three sections, the recurring theme has been how heedless and ignorant human beings had bypassed the law revealed by the Law Giver and the Creator of whatever there is in the heavens and the earth and, in its place, had taken ancestral and innovated customs as their religion. There were things Allah had made unlawful. They took them as lawful and started using them. Then, there were things Allah had made lawful. They made these unlawful for themselves. Again, they made some things lawful for men and unlawful for women, while some others they declared to be lawful for women but unlawful for men.

There are three verses here (143, 144 and 145) which describe those particular things which have been declared unlawful by Allah Ta'ālā.

There are nine things mentioned in the detailed statement (151-152). After that, comes the tenth commandment in the words: هٰذَا صِرَاطِي مُسْتَقِيمًا فَاتَّبِعُوهُ That is, this path of Mine is straight. So, follow it - 153. This statement points out to the religion and code (*Dīn* and *Sharī'ah*) brought and taught by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and entrusts the whole field of Ḥalāl (lawful) and Ḥarām (unlawful), *Jā'iz* (permissible) and *Nā-Jā'iz* (impermissible), *Makrūh* (reprehensible) and *Mustaḥabb* (recommended) to the standard that everyone should follow the Muḥammadī Sharī'ah, take what it says is Ḥalāl as Ḥalāl, and take what it says is Ḥaram as Ḥaram, and let no one go about deciding what is Ḥalāl and what is Ḥaram on one's own.

Then, there appears a detailed statement of ten things in these verses where the real objective is to describe things which are Ḥaram - which required that all these be described in the negative case. But, the Holy Qur'ān, in the wisdom of its approach, has described some of them positively in the imperative form - which means that acting against it is Ḥaram (Kashshāf). Its wisdom will become evident a little later. However, the ten things the unlawfulness of which appears in these verses are: (1) To associate anyone with Allah Ta'ālā in belief, deed, worship or obedience; (2) not be good to parents; (3) to kill children because of poverty; (4) to indulge in shameful doings; (5) to kill someone unjustly; (6) to eat up the orphan's property by false means; (7) to weigh or measure short; (8) to be unjust in witness, judgement or speech; (9) to betray the covenant of Allah; and (10) to avoid the straight path of Allah and follow other ways right and left.

Some Virtues of the Verses

Ka'b al-Aḥbār, an accomplished scholar of the Torah, was a Jew before he became a Muslim. He says that these verses of the Holy Qur'ān which describe ten unlawful things are with what the Torah, the Book of Allah, begins after *Bismillah*. It has also been said that these are the ten commandments revealed to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام.

Commentator of the Qur'ān, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه says that these are the 'Verses of Established Meaning' (*Muḥkam Āyāt*) mentioned in Sūrah 'Āl-'Imrān (3:7). On these, all religious systems brought by prophets عليهم السلام - from Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام to the Last among Prophets صلى الله عليه وسلم - have been in agreement and none

of these was abrogated in any religion, community or Shari'ah. (Tafsīr Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ)

These Verses are the Will and Testament of the Holy Prophet ﷺ

According to a narration of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضى الله عنه reported in Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr, he said that a person who wishes to see a special will of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم with his seal on it, he should recite these verses. Therein lies the will and testament bequeathed under the command of his Lord by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to his *Ummah*.

Based on a narration of Sayyidnā 'Ubādah ibn Ṣāmit رضى الله عنه, it has been reported by Ḥākim that, addressing his *Ṣaḥābah*, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'Who will take a pledge of allegiance at my hands (بيعت : *bay'ah*) on three verses?' After that, he recited these three verses and said: 'A person who fulfills this *Bay'ah* (pledge of allegiance), his reward stands due with Allah.'

DETAILS OF TEN PROHIBITIONS AND EXPLANATION OF THE THREE VERSES

These verses (151-153) open with the words: قُلْ تَعَالَوْا اَتْلُ مَاحَرَّمَ رَبُّكُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ (Say, "Come, I recite what your Lord has prohibited for you"). The word: تَعَالَوْا (*ta'ālaw*) here (translated as 'come,' does carry the essential meaning, but misses the refinement of what it implies in the text - a difficulty technically impossible to surmount in a task of this delicate nature when exact parallels just do not exist - tr.) is an expression used at a time when the caller stands on high ground and calls those beneath to come close to him. The hint thus released is towards the prospect of their rising high and gaining prestige by accepting this invitation. The sense of the sentence where the address is to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is that he should ask these people to come along so that he may recite to them things which Allah Ta'ālā has made Ḥaram for them. What he was going to give them was a message directly from Allah Ta'ālā and, as such, there was no intrusion of someone's opinion, estimation or conjecture in it. This was in their interest so that they could get ready to stay safe against them rather than go about branding as Ḥaram what Allah has made Ḥalāl.

Though, the address in this verse directly refers to the disbelievers

of Makkah, but the subject of the address is general in its nature. It includes the entire humankind, whether believers or disbelievers, Arabs or non-Arabs, or those living now or generations to come in the future. (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ)

The First Grave Sin Forbidden is *Shirk*

After having addressed with this concern and elegance, the first thing to be identified of all that has been prohibited was: أَلَّا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا: That you shall not associate anyone or anything with Allah. This was the first task. And do not make idols into God like the polytheists of Arabia, nor call prophets God or son of God like Jews and Christians, nor take angels to be daughters of God like others, nor equate prophets and saints with Allah Ta'ālā in His attributes of knowledge and power like the ignorant masses.

Shirk : Definition and Kinds

According to Tafsīr Maẓharī, the word: شَيْئًا (*shai'an*:anything), at this place, could also mean that one should not be involved in any kind of *Shirk*, whether manifest (*jaliyy*) or concealed (*khafiyy*). Everyone knows manifest *Shirk* which is the ascribing of equals or partners to Allah either by associating someone with Allah in worship and obedience or in His exclusive attributes. And concealed *Shirk* is that one, in his or her vocation in life, in material and religious objectives and in profit and loss, though holds the belief that Allah is the Maker and Mover of things yet, in practice, takes others as such, and pins all efforts and hopes on them, or is a hypocrite in acts of worship, offering prayers correctly to show off before others, or spends in charity to earn a good name for himself, or actually, in practice, takes someone other than Allah to be the controlling authority in profit and loss. The sage, Shaykh Sa'di رحمة الله عليه has put the idea in a nutshell when he said:

دریں نوعے ازشرك پوشیده است　　که زیدم به بخشید و عمرم بخست

Concealed here too is a kind of *Shirk* -
That A made me gain and B made me lose.

The reality is no more but that, whatever the gain or loss, it is from that Absolute Master. The supposed names A and B are drapes from behind which comes the manifestation of gain or loss. Otherwise, the truth of the matter, as it appears in Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth, is: 'If all Jinns and

human beings join up to bring to you a benefit which Allah Ta'ālā has not destined for you, they can never dare do that - in the same way, if all Jinns and human beings join up to bring a loss on you which Allah Ta'ālā has not willed, this too is not possible for anyone to do.

In brief, one should abstain strictly from both kinds of Shirk, manifest and concealed. The way worshiping idols is included under Shirk, also included thereunder is equating prophets and saints with Allah Ta'ālā in His attributes of knowledge and power. If, God forbid, this happens to be the very belief of someone, then, it will be classed as manifest Shirk; and if, such a belief is not there, but this happens to be done in actual practice, then, it will be called concealed Shirk. At this place, the very first instruction given is to stay away from Shirk. The reason is that Shirk is a crime about which the Qur'ān has given the decision that, for it, there is no forgiveness. The forgiveness of sins - other than Shirk - is possible depending on different causes. Therefore, as narrated by Sayyidnā 'Ubādah ibn Ṣāmit رضی اللہ عنہ and Sayyidnā Abū Ad-Dardā' رضی اللہ عنہ, it appears in Ḥadīth that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said:

> Do not ascribe anyone as partner with Allah - even if you are dismembered, or hanged, or burnt alive.

The Second Sin : Mistreating Parents

Mentioned after that was: وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا (and be good to parents). The purpose at this place is to tell not to be disobedient to parents and not to cause pain to them. But, it is in a way of wisdom that the prohibition has been sublimated as 'be good to parents.' The aim is to point out that, in the matter of parents, it is not enough that one does not disobey parents or does not cause any pain to them, but it is one's duty to keep them pleased with decent, generous and obliging treatment. This has been made more explicit in another verse of the Qur'ān where it appears as: وَاخْفِضْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الذُّلِّ which means: For them, lower your shoulders in humility - 17:24 - (an eloquently figurative mode of describing the attitude of love, reverence, readiness and availibity to help out and care for, in all sincerity, and in tenderness at its sublimest, something the Qur'ān has itself put in one word, 'mercy', suffixed after the words of the verse quoted above).

It will be noticed that, in this verse, causing pain to parents or ex-

posing them to physical or emotion inconveniences has been placed as the second crime after Shirk. This is similar to the instruction given in another verse of the Holy Qur'ān where Allah Ta'ālā has combined the duty of being obedient to them, and being responsible to see that they are comfortable, with the obligation to worship Him alone. It was said:

وَقَضٰى رَبُّكَ اَلَّا تَعْبُدُوْٓا اِلَّآ اِيَّاهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ اِحْسَانًا

And your Lord has decreed that you shall not worship anyone other than Him and that you shall be good to parents - 17:23.

Then, in Sūrah Luqman, it was said:

اَنِ اشْكُرْلِيْ وَلِوَالِدَيْكَ ۭ اِلَيَّ الْمَصِيْرُ

Be grateful to Me, and to your parents, and to Me is the return (meaning: If you do otherwise, you will be punished) - 31:14.

It has been reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضی اللہ عنہ in the Ṣaḥīḥayn (the two collections of Ṣaḥīḥ *Aḥādīth* by Al-Bukhārī and Muslim) that he asked the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم: 'Which deed is the best?' He said: 'Offering *Ṣalāh* at its due time (*Mustaḥabb* : recommended time).' Then, he asked again: 'After that, which deed is the best?' To that, he said: 'Being good to parents.' Once again, he asked: 'Which deed comes after that?' He said: '*Jihād* in the way of Allah.'

According to a narration by Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضی اللہ عنہ reported in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, once the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said the words: رَغِمَ اَنْفُهٗ رَغِمَ اَنْفُهٗ رَغِمَ اَنْفُهٗ three times, that is, 'disgraced is he, disgraced is he, disgraced is he.' The noble Companions submitted: '*Yā Rasūl* Allah, who is disgraced?' He said: 'The person who found his father and mother, or one of them, in old age and still he did not enter the *Jannah*.'

It means that serving parents during their old age makes it certain that the server will be admitted to Paradise. And certainly deprived and disgraced is he who has allowed such an easy bargain of Paradise slip out of his hands. This bargain is easy because parents are naturally affectionate to their children on their own. A little consideration here and there would make them all too happy. So, pleasing parents does not depend on or require a major act of grace. The restriction of old age placed here is because parents, when healthy and strong, take

care of their needs by themselves - rather, would not hesitate to come to their assistance when needed, financially, physically or morally. At that time, neither do they need being served, nor would that service carry any distinct weight of its own. Serving parents can only be worthwhile and praiseworthy at a time when they need it because of their old age.

The Third Prohibition : Killing Children

The third thing made Ḥaram in these verses is the killing of children. It is relevant in the context because the right of parents due on children was taken up before it - and here, it is the right of children which is due on parents. The worst limit of evil treatment of children was what was practiced in the days of *Jāhiliyyah* when they were killed or buried alive. This verse stops them from doing that. It was said: وَلَا تَقْتُلُوْٓا اَوْلَادَكُمْ مِّنْ اِمْلَاقٍ ؕ نَحْنُ نَرْزُقُكُمْ وَاِيَّاهُمْ (and do not kill your children because of poverty - We will give provision to you, and to them as well).

During the pre-Islam days of Arab *Jāhiliyyah*, there was a cruel custom. When a girl was born in a household, they would bury her alive fearing the shame of having to take someone as a son-in-law - and there were occasions when, fearing that they would have difficulties in feeding and providing for children, these cruel people would kill them with their own hands. The Qur'ān erased this custom. Then, by saying what was said above, it gave them the treatment they needed against this mental sickness of theirs - because of which, that is, because of their worry as to how they were going to feed them, they committed such a heinous crime. Allah Ta'ālā has told them in this verse that they were not the ones really responsible for feeding and providing for them. This was the direct responsibility of Allah Ta'ālā. They too, in their food and provisions, were dependent on Him. He gives that to them. Then, they give it to children too. If He does not provide them with it, they could not even think of producing one grain of wheat or rice on their own. Miracles do not work like that. Bringing out a tiny seed by tearing its way through tons of earth on the fields in the form of a tender bud or shoot and then giving it the shape of a tree and then making them sprout with flowers and fruits is a question they should answer. Whose work is that? Can a father and mother do that? Far from it, these are all wonders wrought by the power and

wisdom of the Absolute Master. The role human beings play in this phenomena is limited. They can do no more than make the land clean and soft, water the plants when they come out and look after them. But, they have no role in making flowers and fruits come out. This tells us that the idea of parents that they provide for children is wrong. In fact, it is from the unseen treasures of Allah Ta'ālā Himself that parents too get their provision, and their children as well. Therefore, by bringing in the mention of parents earlier in the sentence, it was said: 'We will provide for you, and for them as well.' In making the reference to parents precede, the hint given may be that: The provisions are given to you so that you pass it on to children - as it appears in a *Ḥadīth* of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم where he is reported to have said:

إِنَّمَا تُنْصَرُوْنَ وَتُرْزَقُوْنَ بِضُعَفَاءِكُمْ

> It is only for the sake of the weak among you that Allah Ta'ālā helps and provides for you too.

The same subject appears in Sūrah al-Isrā' of the Holy Qur'ān where, in the matter of *Rizq*, children have been mentioned before parents by saying: نَحْنُ نَرْزُقُهُمْ وَإِيَّاكُمْ that is, 'We shall provide for them, and for you as well - 17:21.' Here too, the hint given is that 'deserving of being provided for first, in Our sight, are weak children who cannot do that on their own - it is for their sake that *rizq* is given to you.'

A Modern Form of Killing Children

It is obvious that the crime of killing children and that it is a grave sin as pointed out in this verse applies to formal killing as such. But, a little thought would prove that the failure to give proper education and training to children as a result of which they remain uninformed or heedless to Allah, His *Rasūl* and the concern for *'Ākhirah* and, God forbid, fall into immoral and shameless life patterns alien to Islam, then, this attitude too, shall be no less than killing of children. The Qur'ān calls a person who does not know Allah and does not obey Him a dead person. This is what has been explained earlier in this very Sūrah in the verse: أَوَمَنْ كَانَ مَيْتًا فَأَحْيَيْنٰهُ (Could it be that the one who was dead and We gave him life ... - 6:122). People who do not attend to the grooming of the deeds and morals of their children, leave them open and free (to be hunted by aggressive influences around them, influences which

have an 'open season' in our time), or let them go through a system of education as a result of which Islamic morals are ruined, then, they too, in a way, are liable to be charged with the crime of killing their children - for formal killing only ruins what is one's transitory life in the mortal world, but this type of killing ruins what is one's eternal life in the '*Ākhirah*, a terrible loss indeed.

The Fourth Prohibition : Shameful Acts

The fourth thing declared Ḥaram in these verses is the doing of what is shameful. About it, says the Qur'ān: وَلَا تَقْرَبُوا الْفَوَاحِشَ مَاظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَنَ (and do not go near shameful acts, whether they are open or secret-151).

The word: فَوَاحِشُ (*al-fawāḥish*) is the plural form of: فَاحِشَه (*fāḥishah*) and the words: فُحْش (*faḥsh*), فَحْشَاء (*faḥshā'*) and فَاحِشَه (*fāḥisha*) are all verbal nouns and are usually translated in English as immodest, indecent or shameful acts. In the terminology of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth, these words are used to denote every evil act the vicious and disorderly effects of which reach far and wide. This is the meaning given by Imām Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī in Mufradāt al-Qur'ān and Ibn Kathīr in An-Nihāyah. The prohibition of *Fuḥsh* and *Faḥshā'* (obscenity, indecency, adultery, fornication, whoredom or abomination or monstrosity of any description) appears time and again in the Holy Qur'ān, for example, in Sūrah An-Naḥl, it is said: يَنْهٰى عَنِ الْفَحْشَآءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ (He forbids you from the indecent and the evil -16:90) and, in Sūrah Al-A'rāf, it is said: حَرَّمَ رَبِّىَ الْفَوَاحِشَ (my Lord has forbidden indecent deeds - 7:33).

So, in this general sense of the word used by the Qur'ān, included there are all grave sins, whether related to words or deeds, whether committed openly or secretly, in fact, all doings which are counter to good and right and all acts which are counter to modesty and shame. That is why this word is generally used in the sense of shameful deeds. In this verse of the Qur'ān, it has been stressed that one should not go even near to what are shameful acts. If this is taken in a broad and general sense, it will become inclusive of all evil traits and sins, whether of speech, or those of hands and feet and the heart. And if it is taken in the commonly and widely understood sense, that is, in the sense of immodesty, then, it would be referring to shameful acts, their prelimineries and their means and motives.

Then, within this verse, there is the explanation of the word '*al-*

fawāḥish' when it is said: مَاظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَنَ (whether they are open or secret). Thus, according to the first Tafsīr, all outward indecencies would mean all sins committed through speech or through the use of hands and feet etc., and inward indecencies would be referring to sins which issue forth from the heart, such as, envy, malice, greed, ungratefulness, impatience and others of this nature.

According to the other Tafsīr, outward indecencies would mean acts of immodesty indulged in openly while those inward would be the ones done secretly. The open practice of evil includes all its preliminaries and accessories. Looking at some woman with evil intentions, touching her with hands etc., talking to her in that way are all included under it. As for inward indecency, it includes all secret plans made to actualize thoughts and intentions which are put into practice to achieve the evil and indecent end.

Some respectable commentators say that outward indecencies refer to shameful acts the evil of which is common knowledge and everyone knows what it means. As for inward indecencies, they refer to acts which are immodest in the sight of Allah, though people generally do not take them as bad, or common people are not aware that they are Ḥaram, for example, after having divorced a wife thrice, to keep living with her as a wife (which she is not anymore), or marrying a woman marriage with whom is not lawful in Sharī'ah.

In short, this verse, in terms of the real sense of '*al-fawāḥish*', encompasses all outward and inward sins - and, in terms of the commonly held view, it is inclusive of all open and secret methods of immodesty, indecency and act of shame. Then, the command given in this matter is that one should not go even near things like that. The insistence on 'not going even near them' means that one should even abstain from going to a place when there is an apprehension that such a visit would cause the visitor to be smeared with sin, and that one should also abstain from deeds which lead on to ways of sin. In a Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been reported to have said:

مَنْ حَامَ حَوْلَ حَمىً أَوْشَكَ أَنْ يَقَعَ فِيْهِ

It is not unlikely that one who keeps roaming around a prohibited place might enter it as well.

Therefore, precaution demands that one should not even go near what is prohibited.

The Fifth Prohibition : Killing Unjustly

Of the prohibitions, the fifth is killing unjustly. About it, it was said: وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا النَّفْسَ الَّتِي حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ (and do not kill a person whom Allah has given sanctity). The details of this right to kill have been given by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in a *Ḥadīth* narrated by Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضی الله عنه appearing in Al-Bukhārī and Muslim. He said: 'Killing a Muslim is not lawful except for three reasons: (1) That he commits adultery despite being married; (2) that he has killed someone unjustly, and is killed in even retaliation (*Qiṣāṣ*) for it; and (3) that, by leaving his true faith, he has become an apostate (*Murtadd*).'

When Sayyidnā 'Uthmān al-Ghanī, the third Rightly-Guided Khalīfah was besieged by rebels who wanted to kill him, he recited this *Ḥadīth* before them and said: 'With the grace of Allah, I have been free of these things all my life. Not only during my days in Islam, I never indulged in adultery even during the days of *Jāhiliyyah*, nor did I ever kill anyone, nor did the thought that I should leave my faith in Islam ever crossed my mind. Then, on what basis do you want to kill me?'

And the way killing a Muslim is unlawful without valid reason, so it is with the killing of a non-Muslim who lives in an Islamic country as its law-abiding citizen, or is one of those with whom Muslims have a bilateral pact. According to a narration of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضی الله عنه reported in Tirmidhī and Ibn Mājah, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is reported to have said: 'Whoever has killed a *Dhimmī* (protected non-Muslim citizen of a Muslim country) has broken his covenant with Allah - and a person who has broken the covenant of Allah will never smell even the scent of *Jannah*, though the scent of *Jannah* reaches as far as a travel distance of seventy years.'

In this one verse - after having described five of the ten prohibitions - it was said: ذٰلِكُمْ وَصّٰكُمْ بِهٖ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُوْنَ (This is what He has emphasized for you so that you may understand).

The Sixth Prohibition : Eating up the Property of the Orphan by False Means

About the unlawfulness of devouring the property of the orphan by false means - the sixth command given in the second verse (152) - it was said: وَلَا تَقْرَبُوْا مَالَ الْيَتِيْمِ اِلَّا بِالَّتِىْ هِىَ اَحْسَنُ حَتّٰى يَبْلُغَ اَشُدَّهٗ (And do not approach the property of the orphan except with the best possible conduct, until he reaches maturity). The address here is to the guardians of orphaned children who are minors. The guardians have been told that they should treat the property of orphans as if it was fire. They should not go near it to take from it or eat of it unlawfully. What is said here appears in another verse of the Qur'ān in the same words: (وَلَا تَقْرَبُوْا مَالَ الْيَتِيْمِ اِلَّا بِالَّتِىْ هِىَ اَحْسَنُ حَتّٰى يَبْلُغَ اَشُدَّهٗ (17:34) and also in Sūrah Al-Nisā' (4:10): 'Surely, those who eat up the property of the orphans, unjustly, they only eat fire into their bellies, and they shall soon enter a blazing hell.)

However, protecting the property of the orphan and investing it in a permissible business where the danger of loss does not customarily exist is fair enough, even necessary. Guardians of the orphaned children should do so.

After that, specified was the limit until when the property of the orphan was to be guarded: حَتّٰى يَبْلُغَ اَشُدَّهٗ (until he reaches maturity), that is, when the orphan reaches maturity, the responsibility of the guardian ends and his property should be entrusted to him.

The word: اَشُدّ (*ashudd*) really means strength. According to the majority of *'Ulamā*, it begins with puberty. When signs of puberty appear in a child, or when he reaches the age of full fifteen years, that will be the time, he will be considered legally mature.

Still, after his having attained physical maturity, it will be seen whether or not he has acquired the ability to protect his property and spend out of it correctly and satisfactorily. If this ability is found in him, his property should be entrusted to him. If he does not seem to have that ability in him at that time, it is the responsibility of the guardian to keep protecting his property until the age of twenty five years. At any time during this period, whenever he picks up the ability to protect his property and manage his living through business or vocation, his property can be handed over to him. And if - even upto the

age of twenty five years, such ability does not show up in him - then, according to Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, his property should, after all, be given to him, but this would be subject to the condition that this lack of ability on his part should have not reached the limits of insanity. And, according to some Imāms, his property should not be entrusted in his hands even then, instead of which, the Qaḍī or Judge of an Islamic Court should entrust the responsibility of protecting his property to a trustworthy and responsible person.

Once again, what has been said here is based on a statement of the Holy Qur'ān appearing in another verse where it was said: فَإِنْ اٰنَسْتُمْ مِّنْهُمْ رُشْدًا فَادْفَعُوْٓا اِلَيْهِمْ اَمْوَالَهُمْ (... if you perceive in them proper understanding, hand over to them their property - 4:6). It means: When the orphaned children become mature and you see in them the ability to protect their property by themselves and invest it gainfully, entrust the property to them. This verse has told us that becoming mature is not sufficient as justification for entrusting the property of the orphan to him, instead, it is conditioned by the ability to protect property and to invest it gainfully.

The Seventh Prohibition : Weighing and Measuring Short

The seventh command in this verse is to give full weight and full measure in all fairness. The word: بِالْقِسْطِ (*bi al-qisṭ*), translated as 'in all fairness,' applies to a transaction in which the giver does not decrease anything from what is due to be received by the other party - and the receiver does not take anything more than what is due to come to him from the giver (Ruh al-Ma'ani).

Weighing and measuring short in common give and take of things has been sternly forbidden by the Qur'ān. Severe warning to those who do that appears in Sūrah Al-Muṭaffifīn (83).

Commentator of the Qur'ān, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه reports that, addressing those who weigh and measure in business, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: Weighing and measuring is a line of duty being unfair in which has caused many communities before you to be destroyed by Divine punishment (so, be fully cautious in this matter). (Tafsīr ibn Kathīr)

Officials and Workers who fall short in Set Duties come under this Qur'anic Ruling

It should be borne in mind that weighing and measuring short called "*Taṭfīf*" in the Qur'ān is not simply restricted to weighing short and measuring less. In fact, falling short in giving the other person his right is also included under '*Taṭfīf*' as illusrated by a report from Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی الله عنه appearing in the Mu'aṭṭa' of Imām Mālik. When Sayyidnā 'Umar noticed someone making the required movements of his Ṣalāh short, he said: 'You made '*Taṭfīf*,' meaning thereby that he did not fulfill the right of Ṣalāh as it was due and obligatory. After having reported this incident, Imām Mālik says: لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَفَاءٌ وَتَطْفِيْفٌ that is, giving the full measure due, and giving short of it, applies to everything, and not in weights and measures only.

This tells us that an employee who does not discharge his duties as required, steals time or delays work; and a wage earner who falls short in delivering the service agreed to; and for that matter anyone - a minister of government or his peon, an assistant in an office, or a scholar or religious worker - shall all be included under the Qur'ānic term, "*Al-Muṭaffifīn*," if they fall short in fulfilling the right of others due against them.

After that, it was said: لَا نُكَلِّفُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا (We do not obligate anyone beyond his capacity). In some narrations of *Ḥadīth*, it has been explained as a hint of exception, that is, a person who does everything possible within his control to give full consideration to the need of giving full weight and measure as due and, in case, some insignificant increase or decrease takes place inadvertently, then, that would stand excused because that is beyond his power and control.

According to Tafsīr Maẓharī, the addition of this sentence in between indicates that it is better to give a little more while fulfilling what is due so that there remains no doubt of being short in giving - as it was when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, on a similar occasion, ordered a person weighing: زِنْ وَأَرْجِحْ (*zin wa arjiḥ*) that is, 'weigh and be liberal' (literally, weigh and tilt the balance in favour of the receiver). (Ahmad, Abū Dāwūd, and Tirmidhī following a narration of Sayyidnā Suwayd ibn Qaiys)

And this was the usual practice of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم himself. Whenever he had a right of someone due against him, and when came the time for him to pay it back, he liked to pay more than what the right of the other person was. Then, there is a Ḥadīth in Al-Bukhārī based on a narration by Sayyidnā Jābir رضى الله عنه in which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is reported to have said:

> 'May the mercy of Allah Ta'ālā be on the person who is lenient when selling by giving more than the due; and is also lenient by not taking more than the due - instead, accepts in good grace, even if it happens to be somewhat short of it.'

But, this is an ethical rule - that one gives more when giving and, accepts less when taking, avoids a quarrel. There is nothing legal involved here which would compel one to do so. It is to point out to this very aspect that it was said in the Qur'ān that "We do not obligate anyone beyond his capacity." In other words, giving the other person more than it was his due; and to be satisfied with any decrease in what was one's own due, was not a mandatory command because it is not easy for common people to do so.

The Eighth Commandment :

BE JUST - Doing Otherwise is Ḥarām

The verse says: وَإِذَا قُلْتُمْ فَاعْدِلُوا وَلَوْ كَانَ ذَا قُرْبَىٰ (and when you speak, be just, even if there be a relative). It will be noticed that nothing particular has been mentioned at this place. Therefore, the majority of commentators hold the view that the statement includes everything said - whether it is a witness given in some case, or a judgement from a judge, or an order from a ruling official, or whatever different kinds of things said to each other. About all such things, the command of the Qur'ān is that one should abide by the criterion of truth and justice when saying what one has to say - everywhere, on all occasions and under all conditions. As for the sense of abiding by truth and justice when appearing as a witness in some case, it is fairly obvious - that is, the witness should tell what he knows for certain - frankly and clearly - without adding or subtracting one word on his own, or injecting his guess or conjecture in it, or worrying about whom it would benefit and whom it would hurt. Similar is the situation of a judge who has to decide a case. He will examine witnesses according to the Islamic legal

norms, take what they offer and look at them in conjunction with what stands proved through other kinds of approaches and, then, give his decision. Be it a witness, or be it a judgement, nothing should stop one from saying what is right, true and just - not friendship and love, not enmity and hostility, nothing. For this reason, added here was the sentence: وَلَوْ كَانَ ذَا قُرْبٰى (even if there be a relative). It means: Even if the person, in whose case you are appearing as a witness, or a judge, be a relative of yours - even then, you should not let truth and justice slip out of your hands, neither in witness, nor in the judgement.

The purpose in this verse is to stop false witness and unjust judgement. About false witness, Abū Dāwūd and Ibn Mājah have reported the following saying of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم:

'False witness is equal to Shirk'. He said it three times and, then, recited this verse:

فَاجْتَنِبُوا الرِّجْسَ مِنَ الْاَوْثَانِ وَاجْتَنِبُوْا قَوْلَ الزُّوْرِ حُنَفَآءَ لِلّٰهِ غَيْرَ مُشْرِكِيْنَ بِهٖ

So, avoid the filth of idols, and avoid saying the false, being upright for Allah, without being associators (of partners) with Him - 22:30.

Similarly, about deciding against truth and justice, there is a saying of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم which has been reported by Abū Dāwūd on the authority of a narration by Sayyidnā Buraydah ibn Ḥuṣayb رضى الله عنه. It says:

'There are three kinds of Qaḍīs (judges): One of them would go to *Jannah* while the other two, to *Jahannam*. The one who arrived at the truth by investigating into the case according to the Sharī'ah, then gave his decision in the light of the truth, he belongs in *Jannah* - and he who investigated and did find out the truth, but knowingly gave his judgement against it, his place is in Hell. And similarly, a Qaḍī who did not know, or fell short on investigation and deliberation, and gave a decision in that state of ignorance, he too will go to *Jahannam*.'

The same subject has appeared in other verses of the Holy Qur'ān more explicitly and emphatically, enjoining that there should be no trace or effect of friendship, kinship or any other relation based on mutual interest - or enmity and hostility - in witness, or judgement. For

example, in Sūrah An-Nisā,' it was said:

وَلَوْ عَلٰٓى اَنْفُسِكُمْ اَوِ الْوَالِدَيْنِ وَالْاَقْرَبِيْنَ

('O those who believe, be upholder of justice - witnesses for Allah) 'even though against yourselves or the parents and the relatives.' - 4:135.

In the same vein, there is another command given in Sūrah al-Ma'idah which says:

وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَاٰنُ قَوْمٍ عَلٰٓى اَلَّا تَعْدِلُوْا

(O those who believe, be steadfast for Allah as witnesses for justice). 'And malice against a people should not bid you to not doing justice' - 5:8.

It means that enmity with a people should not make you willing to witness or to judge against the dictate of justice. Finally, as for upholding truth and justice in matters other than witness and judgement, such as, mutual conversations referred to earlier, the best policy is not to lie, not to speak ill of anyone behind his back, not to say anything which would hurt others, or cause physical or financial loss to anyone.

The Ninth Command: To Fulfill the Covenant of Allah - i.e., Breach of Pledge is Ḥarām

The ninth command given in this verse is to fulfill the covenant of Allah and avoid breaking the solemn pledge given. It was said: وَبِعَهْدِ اللّٰهِ اَوْفُوْا (and fulfill the covenant of Allah). The 'covenant of Allah' could mean the pledge that was taken from every human being at the beginning of life when all human beings were asked: اَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ ('Am I not your *Rabb*, your Lord?'). All of them said: بَلٰى ('*Bala*':yes), that is, 'there is no doubt that You are our *Rabb*, our Lord.' This pledge demands but that we do not disobey any command given by our Lord, our creator, cherisher, nurturer and caretaker. Consider everything He has asked to do at the level of the highest possible priority and take it to be the most important of all that we do. And as for things He has asked us not to do, we should not go even near them - even stay away from falling in doubts about them. Thus, the essence of this covenant is that we should obey Allah Ta'ālā totally and perfectly.

It is also possible that 'covenant' here means the particular pledges

mentioned in the Qur'ān on different occasions - out of which are these verses the Tafsīr of which is before you (and in which ten injunctions have been described emphatically).

'Ulama say that, in this pledge, included there is the fulfilling of vows (*nadhr* or *mannat*), a way through which one gives a pledge to Allah Ta'ālā that he or she would do something. In another verse of the Holy Qur'ān, this has also been mentioned more explicity by saying: يُوْفُوْنَ بِالنَّذْرِ that is, 'the righteous servants of Allah fulfill their *nadhr* (vow).'

In short, it can be said that this command is, though ninth in the series, but in terms of its reality, it encompasses all imperatives and prohibitions of Islamic legal injunctions.

It will be noticed that, at the end of this second verse (152) too, there appears a sentence of persuasion, that is: ذٰلِكُمْ وَصّٰكُمْ بِهٖ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُوْنَ (This is what He has emphasized for you, so that you may observe the advice).

Then comes the third verse (153) where the tenth injunction has been described as follows: وَاَنَّ هٰذَا صِرَاطِىْ مُسْتَقِيْمًا فَاتَّبِعُوْهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا السُّبُلَ فَتَفَرَّقَ بِكُمْ عَنْ سَبِيْلِهٖ (And: This is My path [headed] straight. So, follow it, and do not follow the [other] ways, lest it should take you away from His way).

In this verse, the word: هٰذَا (*hādha*:this) denotes the religion of Islam, or the Qur'ān. Also possible is that the reference may be to Sūrah Al-An'ām itself because, here too, the full range of the fundamentals of Islam - *Tauḥīd, Risālah* and principles governing injunctions of the Sharī'ah - find mention. As for the word: مُسْتَقِيْمًا (*mustaqīman*), it is a distinctive adjunct of this path of the religion of Islam and which has been used as an adverb in the syntactical arrangement to indicate that being '*mustaqīm*' (straight) is an integral attribute of Islam as a religion. After that, it was said: فَاتَّبِعُوْهُ (So, follow it). It means: 'When you have come to know that the religion of Islam is My path, and that alone is the straight path, you have before you the only path headed towards the desired destination, therefore, this is the path you shall follow.'

After that, it was said: وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا السُّبُلَ فَتَفَرَّقَ بِكُمْ عَنْ سَبِيْلِهٖ (and do not follow the [other] ways, lest it should take you away from His way). The

word: سُبُل (*subul*) is the plural form of *sabīl* which also means 'way.' The sense of the statement is that the real and true way of reaching Allah Ta'ālā, and achieving His pleasure (*riḍā'*) is just one. But, people in this world have carved out different ways on their own depending on what they think it is, or should be. The advice being given is: You do not follow any of these ways because these ways are really not the ways to reach Allah and therefore, whoever walks these ways shall go astray far away from the path of Allah.

It is said in Tafsīr Maẓharī that the purpose of sending the Qur'ān and the Prophet of Islam صلى الله عليه وسلم is to make people subordinate their ideas, intentions and proposals to the Qur'ān and Sunnah and cast their lives into the blessed model offered by them. But, what is happening is that people are bent on moulding the Qur'ān and Sunnah into the frame of their ideas and proposals. As a result, an *Āyah* of the Qur'ān, or a *Ḥadīth* of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم which does not meet their fancy, or is found to be contrary to what they would like it to be, would become the target of their so-called enterpretation until it fits into the mold of their desires. This is the starting point from where emerge other ways which lead people astray - ways which throw them in doubts and innovations in established religion (*shubhāt* and *bid'āt*). These are the ways from which people have been instructed to stay away in this verse.

Based on a narration from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضى الله عنه, there is a report in Musnad of Dārimī which says: 'Once the Holy Prophet ﷺ drew a vertical line and said: "This is the path of Allah." Then, he drew other lines on its right and left and said: "These are *subul*" (that is, the ways following which has been prohibited in this verse) and, then, he said: "Set upon every one of these ways there is a Shayṭān who, after enticing people away from the straight path, welcomes them to this" (the ways under the charge of Shayṭān, as shown in the drawing). After that, as proof, he recited this verse (153).'

Then, once again towards the end of the verse, it was said: ذٰلِكُمْ وَصّٰكُمْ بِهٖ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُوْنَ (That is what He has emphasized for you, so that you may be God-fearing).

This completes the Tafsīr of these three verses and the ten prohibitions delineated therein. Finally, have a look at the significant style

the Holy Qur'ān employs when described at this place were ten injunctions. They do not appear here as ten Articles of Law, something modern law books would love to do. Instead of doing something like that, first it describes five injunctions, then says: ذٰلِكُمْ وَصّٰكُمْ بِهٖ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُوْنَ (That is what He has emphasized for you, so that you may understand). Then, after having described four more injunctions, it repeats the same sentence with the difference that it says: تَذَكَّرُوْنَ (observe the advice) in place of : تَعْقِلُوْنَ (understand) at the end. And after that, described there is the last injunction in a separate *Āyah* (verse), and once again, repeated there is the same core sentence with the difference that said here is: تَتَّقُوْنَ (be God-fearing) in place of: تَذَكَّرُوْنَ (observe the advice) at the end.

There are many elements of wisdom in this subtle style of the Holy Qur'ān:

First of all, the Holy Qur'ān is not simply a coercive law like the usual laws of this world. In fact, it is a law which is genuinely generous and patronizing in the essential sense. That is why, with every law, suggestions are given which would make them come easy. Then, knowing Allah Ta'ālā and having the concern for *'Ākhirah* are the most effective enforcers of law, in public or in private, and are the only solution human beings have in their problems with law. Therefore, at the end of all the three verses, introduced there are words which would steer human orientation away from the material world and fix it towards Allah Ta'ālā and the *'Ākhirah*.

There are five injunctions described in the first verse (151), that is: (1) To avoid Shirk, (2) to avoid being disobedient to parents, (3) To avoid killing children, (4) To avoid shameful acts, and (5) to avoid killing unjustly. What is used at their end is the word: تَعْقِلُوْنَ (understand) because the people of *Jāhiliyyah* just did not think that there was anything wrong with them. Therefore, it was suggested that they would do well by forsaking their blind following of ancestral customs and their own whims, if they used a little reason.

The second verse (152) describes four injunctions, that is: (1) Not to eat up the property of the orphan by false means, (2) not to weigh or measure short, (3) to be true and just in speech, and (4) to fulfill the covenant of Allah.

These are things, even these ignorant ones knew to be necessary - some of them would even act likewise. But, mostly these were not heeded to. The only remedy of heedlessness is what is called: تَذْكِرَةٌ (*tazkirah*:remembrance) that is, the remembrance of Allah and *'Ākhirah*. Therefore, at the end of this verse, the word used was: تَذَكَّرُوْنَ (observe the advice).

The third verse (153) contains the instruction to follow the straight path and to avoid doing the contrary by following other ways. Since, there is nothing more authentic but the fear of Allah which would tear a human being away from the clutches of his misguiding thoughts and desires, therefore, at the end of it, said there was: لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُوْنَ (so that you may be God-fearing).

Finally, at all these three places, the word used was: وَصِيَّةٌ (*waṣīyyah*) which is an order to do something. Therefore, as cited earlier, some noble *Ṣaḥābah* رضی اللہ عنہم اجمعین said: Whoever wishes to see the sealed will and testament of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم let him recite these three verses.

Verses 154 - 157

ثُمَّ اٰتَيْنَا مُوْسَى الْكِتٰبَ تَمَامًا عَلَى الَّذِيْٓ اَحْسَنَ وَتَفْصِيْلًا
لِّكُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَّهُدًى وَّرَحْمَةً لَّعَلَّهُمْ بِلِقَآءِ رَبِّهِمْ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿١٥٤﴾
وَهٰذَا كِتٰبٌ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ مُبٰرَكٌ فَاتَّبِعُوْهُ وَاتَّقُوْا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُوْنَ
﴿١٥٥﴾ اَنْ تَقُوْلُوْٓا اِنَّمَآ اُنْزِلَ الْكِتٰبُ عَلٰى طَآئِفَتَيْنِ مِنْ قَبْلِنَا ۠
وَاِنْ كُنَّا عَنْ دِرَاسَتِهِمْ لَغٰفِلِيْنَ ﴿١٥٦﴾ اَوْ تَقُوْلُوْا لَوْ اَنَّآ اُنْزِلَ
عَلَيْنَا الْكِتٰبُ لَكُنَّآ اَهْدٰى مِنْهُمْ ۚ فَقَدْ جَآءَكُمْ بَيِّنَةٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ
وَهُدًى وَّرَحْمَةٌ ۚ فَمَنْ اَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ كَذَّبَ بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ وَصَدَفَ عَنْهَا ۗ
سَنَجْزِي الَّذِيْنَ يَصْدِفُوْنَ عَنْ اٰيٰتِنَا سُوْٓءَ الْعَذَابِ بِمَا كَانُوْا
يَصْدِفُوْنَ ﴿١٥٧﴾

Then We gave Musa the Book, complete for the one who does good, and explaining everything in detail, and a

guidance and a mercy, so that they may believe in meeting their Lord. [154]

And this is a blessed Book We have sent down. So follow it and fear Allah, so that you may be favoured with mercy, [155] **lest you should say, "The Book was sent down only upon two groups before us, and we were ignorant of what they studied."** [156] **Or you should say, "If the Book had been sent down to us, we would have been more adhering to the right path than they." Now there has come to you a clear sign from your Lord, and a guidance and a mercy. So, who is more unjust than the one who belies the verses of Allah and turns away from them? We will recompense those who turn away from Our verses with an evil punishment, because of their turning away.** [157]

Commentary

The reason of being 'ignorant of (or heedless to) what they studied - 156' was not that the Torah and the Injīl were non-existent in the Arabic language because it is possible to become informed of the contents through a translation, in fact, this happens. Instead, this is because the people of the Book never took steps to educate and inform the people of Arabia in the mores of monotheism. That something falls within hearing distance casually is customarily ineffective as a meaningful warning - though, this much note of warning makes search and consideration obligatory, and on this basis, the coming of Divine punishment against the abandonment of *Tauḥīd* (the belief in the Oneness of Allah) was possible. However, this raises no doubts about the universal nature of the prophetic mission of Sayyidnā Mūsā and Sayyidnā 'Isā عليهما السلام, because the particularization of this universality of message is with our master, may the blessing of Allah be upon him, and peace - and this particularization is in terms of the totality of fundamentals and subsidiaries, otherwise, in fundamentals, following all prophets is obligatory on all peoples. So, the punishment would have been proper on this basis. But, this would have been an excuse advanced initially. Now that too is no more valid. The argument of Allah is already established.

As for their second saying: لَوْ أَنَّآ أُنْزِلَ عَلَيْنَا الْكِتٰبُ لَكُنَّآ اَهْدٰى مِنْهُمْ ('If the Book had been sent down to us, we would have been more adhering to the

right path than they'), a question and its answer has already appeared under the commentary on verse 19 of Sūrah A-Mā'idah earlier in this volume. This concerns the hope of salvation during the period of *Fatrah* or gap between prophets.

Verse 158

هَلْ يَنظُرُونَ إِلَّآ أَن تَأْتِيَهُمُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ أَوْ يَأْتِيَ رَبُّكَ أَوْ يَأْتِيَ بَعْضُ ءَايٰتِ رَبِّكَ ۗ يَوْمَ يَأْتِي بَعْضُ ءَايٰتِ رَبِّكَ لَا يَنفَعُ نَفْسًا إِيمٰنُهَا لَمْ تَكُنْ ءَامَنَتْ مِن قَبْلُ أَوْ كَسَبَتْ فِيٓ إِيمٰنِهَا خَيْرًا ۗ قُلِ انتَظِرُوٓا إِنَّا مُنتَظِرُونَ ﴿١٥٨﴾

They are waiting for nothing less than that the angels come to them or comes your Lord or come some signs of your Lord. The day some signs of your Lord come, the believing of a person shall be of no use to him who had never believed before, or had not earned some good through his faith. Say, "Wait, of course, we are waiting." [158]

Commentary

The major portion of Sūrah Al-An'ām has been revealed to correct the beliefs and deeds of the people of Makkah and the disbelievers of Arabia and to remove their doubts and to answer questions raised by them.

All through the Sūrah, specially in the previous verses, the people of Makkah and the rest of Arabia were given to understand that they had seen open signs and miracles at the hands of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. They had heard about the prophesies of past books and prophets about him. Then, they had themselves listened to the recitation of the Qur'ān from one totally unlettered (*Ummiyy*) - a standing miracle on its own. Now the avenues of truth lay open before them. The argument of Allah Ta'ālā stood conclusively established against them. Believing was all they needed to do. What else could it be they were waiting for before they would do that?

This subject was eloquently put in the cited verse by saying:

هَلْ يَنْظُرُوْنَ اِلَّآ اَنْ تَاْتِيَهُمُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ اَوْ يَاْتِىَ رَبُّكَ اَوْ يَاْتِىَ بَعْضُ اٰيٰتِ رَبِّكَ

(They are waiting for nothing less than that the angels come to them or comes your Lord or come some signs of your Lord).

In other words, it means: 'Are these people waiting to believe only when the angels of death reach them, or are they waiting to be on the plains of Resurrection when Allah Ta'ālā will come to decide destinies, or are they waiting to see some last signs of the coming of the fateful Day of Doom. That the most exalted *Rabb* of all shall appear on the Judgement Day has been mentioned in several verses of the Holy Qur'ān. Speaking in the same terms, a verse from Sūrah Al-Baqarah says:

هَلْ يَنْظُرُوْنَ اِلَّآ اَنْ يَّاْتِيَهُمُ اللّٰهُ فِىْ ظُلَلٍ مِّنَ الْغَمَامِ وَ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ وَقُضِىَ الْاَمْرُ

They are looking forward to nothing but that Allah comes upon them in canopies of clouds with the angels and the matter is closed - 2:210.

The state in which Allah Ta'ālā shall appear on the Judgement Day cannot be conceived by human imagination. Therefore, in the case of such verses, the standard creed of the noble *Ṣaḥābah* and righteous elders of the Muslim *Ummah* is that one should believe in what has been mentioned in the Qur'ān, have faith in it, then resign the matter of how it shall come to pass to Divine knowledge. For instance, in the case of the verse quoted above, one should be certain that Allah Ta'ālā will be present on the Day of Judgement - without having to worry about the state and orientation in which this would happen.

Next in the verse, it was said:

يَوْمَ يَاْتِىْ بَعْضُ اٰيٰتِ رَبِّكَ لَا يَنْفَعُ نَفْسًا اِيْمَانُهَا لَمْ تَكُنْ اٰمَنَتْ مِنْ قَبْلُ اَوْ كَسَبَتْ فِىْٓ اِيْمَانِهَا خَيْرًا

(The day some signs of your Lord come, the believing of a person will be of no use to him who had never believed before, or had not earned some good through his faith).

The warning given here is that, as soon as some of these signs of Allah appear, the doors of *Taubah* (repentance) will be closed. Anyone who had not come to believe before this happens will find his or her declaration of faith after that as unacceptable. As for a person who had be-

lieved before but had done nothing by way of good deeds will find that his or her act of *Taubah* and the resolve to be good in future deeds - after these signs - are not acceptable. In short, that will be ominous time when the *Taubah* of a disbeliever from his disbelief and the *Taubah* of a sinner from his sin and disobedience, even if offered, will not be accepted.

The reason is that *'Īmān* (faith) and *Taubah* (repentance) can be accepted only upto the time it remains within the choice of a person. Once Divine punishment and the reality of the-life-to-come become open to perception, every human being stands compelled to believe and abstain from sin. A faith under duress and a repentance under threat are not acceptable.

There are many verses of the Qur'ān which mention how the people condemned to Hell will start wailing on arrival there. They will make big promises that should they be returned back to the mortal world, they would do nothing but believe and be good in deeds. But, the answer given to them will be: The time for belief and deed is over. What you are saying now is because you have no other choice. This is not valid.

Explaining this verse, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is reported to have said : When comes the last among the signs of the *Qiyāmah* and the sun will rise from the West instead of the East seeing which the disbelievers of the whole world will start saying that they now believe. All those who had been disobedient will turn into the obedient ones. But, at that time, no believing and no repenting will remain worth accepting. (Al-Baghawī on authority from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah)

However, what we do know from the Qur'ānic explanation is the fact that there will be the manifestation of some signs following which the door of *Taubah* (repentance) will be closed - no *Taubah* from a disbeliever or sinner will be accepted after that. But, the Qur'ān itself has not made it clear as to what that sign is.

In the Tafsīr of this verse, there is a *Ḥadīth* narrated by Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه appearing in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī where the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been reported to have said:

'*Qiyāmah* will not stand established until passes the event

that the sun rises from the West. When people see this sign, they will all believe. This will be the time about which the Qur'ān says - believing then will not benefit anyone.'

The following details about it have been reported in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim as based on a narration from Sayyidnā Ḥudayfah ibn Usayd رضی اللہ عنہ: Once the *Ṣaḥābah* were talking among themselves about the signs of *Qiyāmah* when the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم came in. At that time, he said: *Qiyāmah* will not come in fact until you have seen ten signs: (1) The sun rising from the West, (2) a particular kind of smoke, (3) the animal of the earth, (4) the coming out of Gog and Magog, (5) the coming of 'Īsā علیہ السلام, (6) the coming of Anti-Christ (Dajjāl), (7) the sinking of land at three places - in the East ..., (8) in the West, and ... (9) in the Arabian Peninsula, and (10) a fire which will emerge from an abyss in Eden and will move driving people ahead of it.

And in the Musnad of Aḥmad, it has been reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said: Out of these signs, the first to come will be the rising of the sun from the West, and the appearance of the animal of the earth.

Imām Al-Qurṭubī, in his *Tazkirah*, and Ḥafiẓ ibn Ḥajar, in Sharḥ al-Bukhārī, while citing a narration from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ, have also reported that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said: After this event, that is, after the rising of the sun from the West, the world will keep surviving for one hundred and twenty years. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

After these details, there is a question. According to authentic religious reports, when Sayyidnā 'Īsā علیہ السلام will return to the world, he will invite people to believe. People would believe. Islam will become the religion of the world. It is obvious that, should believing at that time remain unacceptable, this call and the entry of people in the fold of Islam would become meaningless.

In Tafsīr Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī, commentator Ālūsī answers this by saying that the event of the sun rising from the West will take place after the passage of a long time since the appearance of Sayyidnā 'Īsā علیہ السلام - and that would be the time when the door of *Taubah* will close.

'Allāmah Balqīnī and others say that it is not improbable that this

prohibition of faith and repentance being unacceptable, as tied with the rising of the sun from the West, may not remain operative through the last period. It could be that this restriction changes after the passage of some time, and faith and repentance start being acceptable again. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī) (Allah knows best)

To sum up, it can be said that: Though, the sign after the appearance of which *Taubah* will not be acceptable has not been clarified in the present verse, but, from the statement of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, it has become evident that it means the rising of the sun from the West.

Then, remains the question: Why has the Qur'ān itself left it unclarified? According to Tafsīr Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ, the very ambiguity of the Qur'ān at this place is more suited to the task of putting heedless human beings on alert so that they could draw their essential lesson from all forthcoming events of ominous nature and hasten to repent and correct their course of life.

In addition to that, in this ambiguity and brevity, there is the advantage that everyone will be alerted to the danger that the way the door of repentance shall be closed when the sun rises from the West for all human beings, the same way it happens in a miniaturized form when, for everyone personally and individually, the door of *Taubah* is shut close for one at the time of death. This phenomena has been described in another verse of the Holy Qur'ān clearly as well:

وَلَيْسَتِ التَّوْبَةُ لِلَّذِيْنَ يَعْمَلُوْنَ السَّيِّاٰتِ حَتّٰٓى اِذَا حَضَرَ اَحَدَهُمُ الْمَوْتُ قَالَ اِنِّىْ تُبْتُ الْـٰٔنَ

And *Taubah* is not accepted from those who keep committing sins until death visits one of them and they say, 'now I repent - 4-18.'

Explaining this, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

اِنَّ تَوْبَةَ الْعَبْدِ تُقْبَلُ مَا لَمْ يُغَرْغِرْ

The *Taubah* of a servant of Allah continues being accepted until comes the agony of death (when Rūḥ comes into the throat and creates a recognizable, parting, hurtling, sound).

This tells us that at the time when man is taking his last breath

and the soul is about to depart from the body - since angels of death come in sight - even then, repentance is not accepted. It is obvious enough that this state of affairs too is a significant sign from Allah. Therefore, included under this verse is this time of death as well - as it is also in the saying of some *'Ulamā'* and other pious elders reported in Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ: مَنْ مَّاتَ فَقَدْ قَامَتْ قِيَامَتُهُ that is, 'whoever dies, his Day of Doom (*Qiyāmah*) has dawned at that very instant.' This is so because the place and time of deeds is all over. What one expects in return for his deeds in his mortal life, he would start seeing a sample from it right from the time he has been lowered into his grave. The Persian poet, Ṣā'ib has put it pithily in poetry:

توبه ہارا نفس باز پسیں دست زدست   بیخبر دیر رسیدی درمحمل بستند

Your repentance after the last breath stands rejected
Unaware man, you are late, the door of the beloved is closed.

Worth noting here is the nuance of the Arabic language in that it was first said in the verse: اَوْ يَاْتِيَ بَعْضُ اٰيٰتِ رَبِّكَ (or come some signs of your Lord) and then, by repeating the same sentence, it was said: يَوْمَ يَاْتِيْ بَعْضُ اٰيٰتِ رَبِّكَ لَا يَنْفَعُ نَفْسًا اِيْمَانُهَا (The day come some signs of your Lord, the believing of a person shall be of no use to him). It will be noticed that no pronoun has been used here to make the statement brief. This seems to suggest that: 'بَعْضُ اٰيٰتِ' (*Ba'ḍu Āyāt*: some signs) mentioned first are not the same as those mentioned in: 'بَعْضُ اٰيٰتِ' (*Ba'ḍu Āyāt*: some signs) of the second sentence, that is, they are different from each other. This may be a hint towards the substance of the narration from Sayyidnā Ḥudhayfah ibn Usayd رضی اللہ عنہ you have read a little earlier in which he has enumerated ten important signs of the coming of *Qiyāmah*, the last of them being the rising of the sun from the West which is symbolic of the discontinuation of the acceptance of *Taubah*.

At the end of the verse, it was said: قُلِ انْتَظِرُوْٓا اِنَّا مُنْتَظِرُوْنَ (Say, "Wait, of course, we are waiting"). The address here is to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم. He is being asked to tell those people that they, despite the arguments of Allah conclusively established against them, still wish to wait for death or the Day of Doom (*Qiyāmah*), then, they are welcome to it. They can wait if they must. As for us, we too shall be waiting to see what their *Rabb* decides to do with them.

Verses 159 - 160

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ فَرَّقُوا دِينَهُمْ وَكَانُوا شِيَعًا لَّسْتَ مِنْهُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ ۚ إِنَّمَا أَمْرُهُمْ إِلَى اللَّهِ ثُمَّ يُنَبِّئُهُم بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْعَلُونَ ﴿١٥٩﴾ مَن جَاءَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ فَلَهُ عَشْرُ أَمْثَالِهَا ۖ وَمَن جَاءَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ فَلَا يُجْزَىٰ إِلَّا مِثْلَهَا وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ ﴿١٦٠﴾

Surely, those who have made divisions in their religion and turned into factions, you have nothing to do with them. Their case rests with Allah alone; then He will tell them what they have been doing. [159]

Whoever comes with a good deed, receives ten times as much, and whoever comes with an evil deed, he will not be recompened by anything but its equal, and they shall not be wronged. [160]

Commentary

As pointed out earlier, a major portion of Sūrah Al-An'ām is devoted to addressing the disbelievers of Makkah and answering questions asked by them. They were told that the straight path to Allah was following the Qur'ān and the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. Before him, during the time of past prophets, salvation depended on following their books and code of laws. The same thing is true today. Today, salvation lies in following nothing but the Sharī'ah brought by him. So, they were asked to become reasonable, take the straight path and avoid exchanging it with paths of error right and left. If they did that, they were warned, these ways of error will throw them far away from the way of Allah.

The first (159) of the two verses carries a general address included wherein are the disbelievers of Arabia, the Jews and Christians and Muslims, all of them. Addressing them, stated there is the sad end of those who turn away from the straight path of Allah - and the instruction given to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is that he should have nothing to do with those who take to the ways of error. Then, out of these, there are those ways of error which take one in a direction totally opposite to what the straight path is, such as the ways of the disbe-

lievers, polytheists and the people of the Book. Then, there are other ways too, which do not, though, take one all the way in the opposite direction, but misguide them any way by pulling them away from the straight path and putting them on ways to the right and left. These are ways of 'doubts' and 'innovations' in the true and settled faith (*Shubhāt* and *Bid'āt*). They too lead one astray.

So, it was said: إِنَّ الَّذِينَ فَرَّقُوا دِينَهُمْ وَكَانُوا شِيَعًا لَّسْتَ مِنْهُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ إِنَّمَا أَمْرُهُمْ إِلَى اللَّهِ ثُمَّ يُنَبِّئُهُم بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْعَلُونَ (Surely, those who have made divisions in their religion and turned into factions, you have nothing to do with them. Their case rests with Allah alone; then He will tell them what they have been doing).

In this verse, made clear first was that the Messenger of Allah was free of any responsibility concerning those who land themselves into the ways of error. The noble Prophet, may the blessings of Allah, and peace be upon him, had nothing to do with them. Then, they were given the notice of warning that their case was, sufficient to say, in the hands of Allah Ta'ālā, and it was He who would punish them on the day of *Qiyāmah*.

As for 'having made divisions in religion and turning into factions' mentioned in the verse is concerned, it refers to the practice of not following the basic principles of established religion, rather electing to follow personal whims and desires, or become willing victims of Satanic instigations and deceptions, as an outcome of which, one would add something new to it, or leave some of that which is already there.

Stern Warnings against Making Additions in Established Religion

According to Tafsīr Maẓharī, included here are the peoples of the past communities as well, those who had abandoned their basic religion and had added to it things on their own - and with them, there are the deviators and innovators (the partisans of *Bid'ah*) of this *Ummah* too, who keep adding baseless things, on their own, into the Dīn of Islam. About this, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said:

> 'My *Ummah* will face the same conditions faced by the Banī Isrā'īl. The kind of evil practices in which they got involved will also affect the people of my *Ummah*. The Banī Isrā'īl had split into seventy two sects. My *Ummah* will break up into

seventy three sects - all of them will go to Hell, except one. The *Ṣaḥābah* asked about the group which would be so blessed with salvation. He said: 'مَا أَنَا عَلَيْهِ وَأَصْحَابِي (*mā anā 'alaihi wa aṣḥābī* : That on which am I and my Companions)' - that is, the collective body of people which follows my way and the way of my *Ṣaḥābah* will be blessed with salvation. (This narration from Sayyidnā ibn 'Umar رضی الله عنه has been reported by Tirmidhī and Abū Dāwūd)

Al-Ṭabarānī has reported on sound authority from Sayyidnā Fāruq al-Ā'ẓam رضی الله عنه that he told Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی الله عنها that the sects mentioned in this verse are the people of Bid'ah (innovators in established religion) who, following their whims and desires, invent new ways in religion. The same view has been reported from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضی الله عنه with sound authority. Therefore, the Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم has emphatically prohibited the invention and introduction of new methods in religion on one's own.

Based on a narration from Sayyidnā Al-'Irbāḍ ibn Sāriyah, Imām Aḥmad, Abū Dāwūd, Tirmidhī and others have reported that the Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم said:

'Those who live after me will see many differences. Therefore, (I order you that) you should, abiding by my *Sunnah* (way) and the *Sunnah* of my rightly-guided successors (*Khulafā' ar-Rāshidīn*) strictly, keep doing what you do while adhering to nothing but these, avoid the temptation of falling for new methods because everything introduced anew into the religion is *Bid'ah*, and every *Bid'ah* is error and straying.'

In another *Ḥadīth*, he said: 'One who stood separated from the Jamā'ah, even to the measure of a span between the extended thumb and the little finger, he has taken out the band of allegiance to Islam from around his neck. (Abū Dāwūd and Aḥmad)

According to *Tafsīr* Maẓharī, 'Jamā'ah' in this *Ḥadīth* means 'the Jamā'ah of *Ṣaḥābah*,' that is, the collective body or group of the noble Companions of the Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم. The reason is that Allah Ta'ālā sent our master, Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafa صلی الله علیه وسلم as His *Rasūl*, and gave him the Qur'ān, and blessed him with another (kind of) *Waḥy* (revelation) - which is called the *Ḥadīth* or *Sunnah*. Then, there

are many difficult or brief or ambiguous verses in the Qur'ān. For their Tafsīr or explanation, Allah Ta'ālā promised that He shall have these clarified through His *Rasūl*. The statement: ثُمَّ إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا بَيَانَهُ (After that, to make it clear to you is on Us - 75:19) means exactly this.

So, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم explained the difficulties and ambiguities of the Qur'ān and groomed his direct disciples, that is, the *Ṣaḥābah* into the many modes of his *Sunnah* through his word and deed. Therefore, the conduct of the *Ṣaḥābah* as a major collective entity (placed by Divine design into a trail-blazing role as mirrors of their blessed master) is in itself the statement and the explanation of the Divinely-ordained Shari'ah of Islam.

Therefore, it is the good fortune of a Muslim that he or she should follow the *Kitāb* of Allah and the Sunnah of the *Rasūl* of Allah - and whenever one faces a doubt in the meaning of an *'Āyah* of the Qur'ān or the sense of a *Ḥadīth*, one should go by the meaning and sense preferred by the noble *Ṣaḥābah*.

Unfortunately, as a result of people ignoring this sacrosanct rule of conduct, Islam had to see the emergence of different sects which would set aside the proven conduct and explanations of the *Ṣaḥābah* and take the liberty of saying what they wished and declare it to be the very meaning of the Qur'ān and *Sunnah*. These are the ways of error the Holy Qur'ān has repeatedly warned against and the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has emphatically prohibited it throughout his blessed life, at times, even castigated those acting against this rule with *la'nah*.

Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah Aṣ-Ṣiddīqah رضى الله عنها reports that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said that on six persons he casts his *la'nah*, and may the *la'nah* of Allah be upon them: (1) The person who has added something to the Book of Allah from his side (that is, whether added some words, or carried the meaning to such excessive limits as is contrary to the *Tafsīr* of the *Ṣaḥābah*), (2) the person who has denied the Divinely-ordained destiny, (3) the person who hoists himself into a position of authority over the Muslim *Ummah* by force (or deceit) so that he would honour the person disgraced by Allah, and disgrace the person given honour by Allah, (4) the person who took as Ḥalāl what Allah had made Ḥarām, that is, indulged in killing at the sacred precincts of the Ḥarām in Makkah, or, hunted there, (5) the person who

dishonoured my family and children, and (6) the person who abandoned my *Sunnah*.

Said in the second (160) verse is: مَنْ جَآءَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ فَلَهٗ عَشْرُ اَمْثَالِهَا وَمَنْ جَآءَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ فَلَا يُجْزٰٓى اِلَّا مِثْلَهَا وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُوْنَ (Whoever comes with a good deed, receives ten times as much, and whoever comes with an evil deed, he will not be recompensed by anything but its equal, and they shall not be wronged).

Stated in the previous verse (159) was that the punishment for the evil deeds of those who turn away from the straight path rested with Allah alone.

In the present verse, the generous procedure of reward and punishment in the Hereafter has been described by saying that a person who does one good deed will get ten times more in return - and a person who commits one sin, the return for him will be equal to that of one sin.

As reported in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī and Muslim and in Nasā'ī and the Musnad of Aḥmad, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said: Most Exalted and Very Merciful is your *Rabb*. A person who intends to do a good deed has one good recorded in his Book of Deeds - even if he does not get around to do it. Following that, when he gets to do that good deed, ten good deeds are recorded in his Book of Deeds. And if a person intends to do a sin, then stays back and does not do it, still a good is recorded for him - and if he were to actually commit a sin, still what he gets registered in his name is one sin, or that too is erased. With this showering of grace and mercy in the presence of Allah, who can apprehend total destruction? Unless, of course, there be that rare person who is determined to be destroyed. (Ibn Kathīr)

In a *Ḥadīth Qudsī* narrated by Sayyidnā Abū Dharr رضی اللہ عنہ, it is said:

> 'A person who does one good deed gets the reward of ten, even more - and a person who commits one sin will get its punishment equal to one sin only, or I shall forgive even that. And a person who comes to Me with sins which would fill the whole earth, and still seeks forgiveness, I shall treat him with matching forgiveness. And a person who comes closer towards

Me to the measure of one hand finger-span, I step one hand-span towards him. And a person who steps one hand-span toward Me, I come towards him by the measure of one Bā' (the stretch of both hands). And the person who comes walking towards Me, towards him I come running.'

From these *Ḥadīth* narrations, we can see that the increase of ten times for one good deed as mentioned in this verse is actually a description of its base limit - and Allah Ta'ālā, in His mercy and generosity, may give even more than that, and shall give, as proved by other narrations which place it upto the level of seventy times or seven hundred times.

In the words of the verse, it is noteworthy that the expression used is: جَآءَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ ('comes with a good deed') and not: عَمِلَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ (does a good deed). According to Tafsīr Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ, this indicates that such reward or punishment will not be awarded just on having done something good or bad. Instead of that, the condition is that to deserve reward or punishment, a good or bad deed must survive as such until the time of death. The outcome is that a person who has done a good deed, but it gets destroyed because of the misfortune of some sin, then, he no longer remains deserving of reward against this deed. An example of it is, God forbid, that of *Shirk* and *Kufr* which, in fact, destroy all good deeds. In addition to that there are many other sins which make some good deeds turn false and ineffectual - as it appears in the Holy Qur'ān: لَا تُبْطِلُوْا صَدَقٰتِكُمْ بِالْمَنِّ وَالْاَذٰى (do not nullify your charities by boasting about favour, and teasing -2:264).

This tells us that the good deed of charity (*ṣadaqah*) gets nullified and wasted by boasting about the favour done or by causing hurt through teasing and underrating the recepient. Similarly, it appears in *Ḥadīth* that sitting in the *Masjid* and talking about worldly things eats up good deeds as fire eats up the wood. This tells us that good deeds, such as, *Nafl*, *Tasbīḥ* and *Dhikr*, go to waste by indulging in mundane conversation.

Similar is the case of evil deeds which, if repented from, become the cause of the sin being erased from the Book of Deeds - it does not keep sticking to a person until the time of death. Therefore, not said in the verse was something like: 'does any deed, good or bad, for which

there will be punishment or reward.' Instead, what was said, in effect, was: Whoever brings to Us a good deed will get a reward ten times as much and whoever brings to Us an evil deed, then, it will be only one deed he will be punished for. The point is that this act of bringing to Allah Ta'ālā can become possible only when this deed remains intact and unharmed right through the end. The crucial thing is that it survives, that nothing happens in between which will cause the good deed to be spoiled or wasted - and of course, the method is to keep repenting and seeking the forgiveness of Allah Ta'ālā from falling into any evil deed.

At the end of the verse, it was said: وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُوْنَ (and they shall not be wronged). It means that this is no human court. This is the Highest of the high. No probability of any injustice to anyone exists there, nor can there be a decrease in the return for someone's good deed, nor is there any possibility of an increase in the punishment for someone's evil deed.

Verses 161 - 165

قُلْ اِنَّنِیْ هَدٰىنِیْ رَبِّیْۤ اِلٰی صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِیْمٍ ۚ دِیْنًا قِیَمًا مِّلَّةَ اِبْرٰهِیْمَ حَنِیْفًا ۚ وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِیْنَ ﴿۱۶۱﴾ قُلْ اِنَّ صَلَاتِیْ وَنُسُكِیْ وَمَحْیَایَ وَمَمَاتِیْ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِیْنَ ﴿۱۶۲﴾ لَا شَرِیْكَ لَهٗ ۚ وَبِذٰلِكَ اُمِرْتُ وَاَنَا اَوَّلُ الْمُسْلِمِیْنَ ﴿۱۶۳﴾ قُلْ اَغَیْرَ اللّٰهِ اَبْغِیْ رَبًّا وَّهُوَ رَبُّ كُلِّ شَیْءٍ ؕ وَلَا تَكْسِبُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ اِلَّا عَلَیْهَا ۚ وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِّزْرَ اُخْرٰی ۚ ثُمَّ اِلٰی رَبِّكُمْ مَّرْجِعُكُمْ فَیُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ فِیْهِ تَخْتَلِفُوْنَ ﴿۱۶۴﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِیْ جَعَلَكُمْ خَلٰٓئِفَ الْاَرْضِ وَرَفَعَ بَعْضَكُمْ فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ دَرَجٰتٍ لِّیَبْلُوَكُمْ فِیْ مَاۤ اٰتٰىكُمْ ؕ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ سَرِیْعُ الْعِقَابِ ۖ وَاِنَّهٗ لَغَفُوْرٌ رَّحِیْمٌ ﴿۱۶۵﴾

Say, "As for me, my Lord has guided me to a straight path: the straight religion, the faith of Ibrāhīm, the upright; and he was not of those who associate partners with Allah. [161]

Say, "My prayer, my offering, my life and my death are for Allah, the Lord of all the worlds. [162] **For Him there is no partner. And this I have been commanded, and I am the first one to submit."** [163]

Say, "Should I seek a lord other than Allah when He is the Lord of everything? And nobody does anything but to his own account, and no bearer of burden shall bear the burden of another, then to your Lord is your return. Then He will tell you about what you were disputing in. [164]

And it is He who made you the viceregents of the earth and raised some of you in ranks over others, so that He may test you in what He has given you. Surely, your Lord is swift in punishing and - surely He is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [165]

Commentary

These are the last five verses of Sūrah Al-An'ām. It will be recalled from previous verses how people had altered the true religion through a process of excess and deficiency, making many more out of it, and had themselves split into factions and groups. In contrast, the first three of the present verses present an authentic profile of the true religion describing its fundamental principles, and some important subsidiaries and details. The first two verses carry the principle while the third mentions their subsidiaries - and in both, the address is to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم where he has been asked to convey the message to these people.

In the first verse it has been said: قُلْ إِنَّنِي هَدَانِي رَبِّي إِلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ (As for me, my Lord has guided me to a straight path). The hint given here is that he has not taken this path prompted like them by their own ideas or under the weight of ancestral customs. Instead of that, this is a way to which he has been directed by his Lord. Then, by using the word: رب (*Rabb*, the essential nurturer, benefactor and carer under all conditions, unfortunately not expressed through any equivalent in English), it was indicated that it is the very dictate of His beneficence that He guides to the right path. Those who look for guidance will have guidance from Him.

In the second verse (162), it was said: دِينًا قِيَمًا مِّلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا ۚ وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ

(the straight religion, the faith of Ibrāhīm, the upright; and he was not of those who associate partners with Allah). Here, the word: قِيَمًا (qiyam) is a verbal noun in the sense of: قِيَام (qiyām) meaning what stands established on strong and secure foundation. In other words, this religion is fortified. It stands on God-sent basics. This is no compedium of someone's personal ideas. Then, it is not some strange new religion either lending itself to doubting eyebrows. This has been the religion of all past prophets, may peace be upon them all. That the name of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام has been particularly mentioned here is because all religions in the world admit his greatness and religious patriarchy. Among the groups of the time, the Jews, the Christians and the disbelievers of Arabia - no matter how different from each other they may be - they were still unanimous in paying homage to the great spiritual station of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. And this spiritual station of leadership has been given to him by Allah Ta'ālā as a special reward: إِنِّي جَاعِلُكَ لِلنَّاسِ إِمَامًا (I am going to make you an Imām for the people - 2:124).

Then, every sect from them tried to prove that they were staunch adherents of the religion of Ibrāhīm عليه السلام and were part of his Community. To remove their misgiving, it was said that Ibrāhīm عليه السلام had the distinction of always abstaining from bowing before anyone other than Allah and he had a distaste for all kinds of *Shirk* which led people to associate partners in His pristine Divinity. This conduct was the greatest achievement of his life. In sharp contrast to him, here you are all soaked in *Shirk*. Everyone took someone as partners with Allah - the Jews did that with Sayyidnā 'Uzayr رضى الله عنه, the Christians with Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and the disbelievers of Arabia were so liberal that they took thousands of rocks to be partners in the Divinity of Allah. In this state of affairs, no one had the right to claim that they were adhering to the ideal of the spiritual community of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام - except Muslims. They shun *Shirk* and *Kufr*.

In the third verse (163), it was said: قُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (Say, "My prayer, my offering, my life and my death are all for Allah, the Lord of all the worlds). The word: نُسُك (nusuk) in this verse means sacrifice. Everything one does in Ḥajj is also called: *Nusuk*. So, the rites of Ḥajj are known as *Manāsik*, the plural of *Nusuk*. Then, this word is also used for *'Ibadah* or worship of Allah in the absolute sense.

Therefore, *Nāsik* is used in the sense of *'Ābid* (one who worships Allah). At this place, any of the meanings given above can be applied. *Tafsīrs* to that effect have been reported from commentators among the *Ṣaḥābah* and *Tābi'īn*. But, *'Ibādah* or offering of acts of worship devoted to Allah, taken in the absolute sense, appears to be the more appropriate meaning at this place. In that case, the meaning of the verse would be: 'My prayer, my offerings in *'Ibādah*, my life and my death are all for Allah, the Lord of all the worlds.'

Out of the subsidiaries of deeds, the first to be mentioned here was Ṣalāh because that is the moving spirit of all good deeds and is, of course, the pillar of the religion. Mentioned briefly after that were all deeds and acts of worship. Then, rising to a wider level, everything done or faced in a lifetime was pointed to. The last to be mentioned was death. After having identified all these, it was admitted that they are only for Allah who is the Lord of all the worlds and who has no associate or partner in His Divinity. And this is the outcome of perfect faith and perfect sincerity. This leads one to think, care and keep in sight, in all states of life and in everything one does, that: 'my *Rabb*, and the *Rabb* of the whole wide world is One *Rabb*. I am His servant. I am in His sight - all the time. Let not my heart, my mind, my eyes, my ears, my tongue, and hands, and feet, nor my pen or step, move in any direction against His pleasure.' This is a simple meditation (*Murāqabah*) of the highest order, something which, if one trains himself to keep present in one's heart and mind, then, there is no doubt that he or she will become a human being in the real sense. Things like sin and disobedience and crimes will be scared to come anywhere even close to a person that strong.

In Tafsīr Ad-Durr Al-Manthūr, under the commentary on this verse, it has been reported that the well-known *Ṣaḥābi*, Sayyidnā Abū Mūsā Al-Ash'arī رضی اللہ عنہ used to say: "I honestly wish that every Muslim would keep reciting this verse time and again, almost making it the constant formula of his or her life."

In this verse, the statement - that the prayers and the rest of acts of worship are for Allah - very obviously means that these should be free from any Shirk or hypocricy or any other worldly interest. As for life and death being for Allah, it could also mean : 'When my very life

and death are in His control, then, what I do in my physical and spiritual life (*a'māl and 'ibādāt*), has to be for Him alone.' And it could also mean: 'Whatever deeds are tied with life are for Allah alone - such as, *Ṣalāh*, *Ṣawm*, rights and duties involved in dealings with people etc. Then, deeds which relate to death - such as, a will (*waṣiyyah*) and the concept of an ideal life one longs for - then, they too are for Allah, the Lord of all the worlds, and subordinate to what He has commanded.'

After that it was said: وَبِذٰلِكَ اُمِرْتُ وَاَنَا اَوَّلُ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ (And this I have been commanded and I am the first one to submit). It means that 'in this *Ummah*, I am the first Muslim' - because the first Muslim (one who submits) in every *Ummah* is the *Nabiyy* (prophet) or *Rasūl* (Messenger) himself to whom the Sharī'ah (religious code of guidance) is revealed through *Waḥy* (revelation).

There could be a hint in the expression 'first Muslim,' towards the saying that the first to be created was the blessed Nūr (light) of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, after which the heavens and the earth and the rest of creation came into existence - as it appears in a *Ḥadīth* with the words: اَوَّلُ مَا خَلَقَ اللّٰهُ تَعَالٰى نُوْرِىْ (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī).

One's Burden of Sin Cannot Be Borne By Another

The disbelievers of Makkah, with Walīd ibn Mughīrah among them, used to say to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and to the Muslims in general that they should return to their faith and they will bear the burden of all their sins. This has been answered in the fourth verse (164). It was said: قُلْ اَغَيْرَ اللّٰهِ اَبْغِىْ رَبًّا وَّهُوَ رَبُّ كُلِّ شَىْءٍ Here, the address is to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. He is being asked to tell them: 'Do you want me that I too, like yourself, seek and find some other *Rabb*, other than Allah, when He is the Lord of everything?. This is error and straying which you should not expect me to accept. As for your saying that you will bear the burden of our sins, this is absurd in itself. A sin committed by a person will be written in that person's record of deeds, and it will be he or she who will deserve its punishment. How can that sin be transferred to your account just by your saying so? And if the idea is that the sins will go in our account and in our Book of Deeds, but the punishment to be given against these will be borne by you, then, that idea is not valid either.' The next sentence in the verse rejects it. It was said: وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِّزْرَ اُخْرٰى that is, (on the day of *Qiyāmah*) no

bearer of burden (of sin) shall bear the burden of another).

As for the disbelievers, this verse does answer their absurd saying in its own way. But, it also tells Muslims at large about the rule that they too should not take the matters of *Qiyāmah* on the analogy of their ways in the mortal world where one person commits a crime and succeeds in putting it on someone else - specially when the other person is willing to accept it. But, in the great Court of Allah, there is no room for it. There, the other person can never be caught for the sin committed by someone else. It is based on the authority of this verse that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said that the child born out of wedlock will not be affected by the sin of his or her parents. (This *Ḥadīth* has been reported by Ḥākim from Sayyidah 'A'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا based on sound authority)

When Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ saw someone crying at the *Janāzah* of a deceased person, he said that the crying of the living causes punishment to the deceased. Ibn Abī Mulaykah says that, when he reported this saying to Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا, she said: You are reporting the saying of a person who never lies, nor can there be any doubt in his integrity. But, there are occasions when one does not hear right. In this matter, the decisive verdict of the Qur'ān is sufficient for you: وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِّزْرَ أُخْرٰى , that is, the sin of one person cannot be applied to another. So, how can the crying of a living person cause punishment to descend on a dead person just for no reason? (Ad-Durr Al-Manthūr)

At the conclusion of the verse, it was said that, finally they have to go to their Lord after all where they will find out the ultimate verdict on all their differences - which means that they would be better off keeping their verbal confrontation in check and devoting more to the end of things.

In the fifth (164) verse, Sūrah Al-An'ām reaches its end at a comprehensive note of advice. It brings the past history of peoples and their times into focus and invites attention to a projection towards the future by saying: وَهُوَ الَّذِىْ جَعَلَكُمْ خَلٰٓئِفَ الْاَرْضِ وَرَفَعَ بَعْضَكُمْ فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ دَرَجٰتٍ (And it is He who made you viceregents of the earth and raised some of you in ranks over some others). Here, the word: خَلٰٓئِفَ (*khalā'if*) is the plural form of *khalīfah* which means viceregent or deputy. The sense of the verse is:

It is Allah Ta'ālā who has let you inhabit places occupied by peoples before you. There is no home, no land which you call your private property today, and believe to be so, which was not, only yesterday, under the ownership of other human beings like you. Allah Ta'ālā has, by removing them, made you sit in their place. Then, worth keeping in mind all the time is the fact of life that everyone among you too is not alike. One is poor, the other is rich. One is low, the other is high. And equally obvious is the fact that, had being rich or being low been within one's control, who would have chosen to remain poor and low? This distance among steps and this difference in ranks is knocking at your doors to tell you that this power, control and choice is in the hands of some other Being who can make anyone poor, if He so wills; make anyone rich, if He so wills; give honour to whom He wills and let whoever He wills be low.

Towards the end of the verse, it was said: لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِي مَا اٰتٰكُمْ (so that He may test you in what He has given you). It means: By making you take the place of others, and by making you owners of their wealth and property, and then, by keeping you at different steps in terms of honour and wealth, the very aim is to make you open your eyes to this framework of trial which seeks to determine your reaction to this phenomena that blessings which once belonged to past peoples have now been entrusted in your hands. To be seen is what it would be - that of gratitude and obedience, or that of ingratitude and disobedience?

At the conclusion of the fifth and the last (165) verse, the end of both these stances was made clear by saying: اِنَّ رَبَّكَ سَرِيْعُ الْعِقَابِ وَاِنَّهٗ لَغَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ (Surely, your Lord is swift in punishing - and surely He is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful). In other words, it means: Your Lord is going to send His punishment on the disobedient soon - and for the obedient, He is Forgiving and Merciful.

Sūrah Al-An'ām began with *Ḥamd* (the praise of Allah) and concluded on *Maghfirah* (the seeking of forgiveness from Allah). May Allah Ta'ālā bless all of us with the Taufīq (ability bestowed by Allah) of *Ḥamd*, and honour us with *Maghfirah* from Him.

It appears in *Ḥadīth* that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: Sūrah Al-An'ām, the whole of it, was revealed at one time. Such was the majesty of its revelation that seventy thousand angels followed behind it

reciting *Tasbīh* (glorifying Allah). Therefore, Sayyidna Fārūq al-Ā'ẓam said: Sūrah Al-An'ām is one of the highly merited Sūrahs of the Holy Qur'an.

In some narrations, it has been reported from Sayyidnā 'Alī رضی اللہ عنہ that Allah Ta'ālā would become the healer of the sick person over whom this Sūrah is recited.

وَاٰخِرُ دَعْوَانَا اَنِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ

The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-An'ām
ends here

Sūrah Al-A'rāf

[The Heights]

[Sūratul-A'rāf was revealed in Makkah and it has 206 Verses and 20 Sections]

Verses 1 - 7

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

الٓمّٓصٓ ﴿١﴾ كِتٰبٌ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكَ فَلَا يَكُنْ فِیْ صَدْرِكَ حَرَجٌ مِّنْهُ
لِتُنْذِرَ بِهٖ وَذِكْرٰى لِلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿٢﴾ اِتَّبِعُوْا مَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكُمْ مِّنْ
رَّبِّكُمْ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوْا مِنْ دُوْنِهٖٓ اَوْلِيَآءَ ؕ قَلِيْلًا مَّا تَذَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿٣﴾
وَكَمْ مِّنْ قَرْيَةٍ اَهْلَكْنٰهَا فَجَآءَهَا بَاْسُنَا بَيَاتًا اَوْ هُمْ قَآئِلُوْنَ
﴿٤﴾ فَمَا كَانَ دَعْوٰىهُمْ اِذْ جَآءَهُمْ بَاْسُنَآ اِلَّآ اَنْ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّا كُنَّا
ظٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٥﴾ فَلَنَسْئَلَنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اُرْسِلَ اِلَيْهِمْ وَلَنَسْئَلَنَّ الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ
﴿٦﴾ فَلَنَقُصَّنَّ عَلَيْهِمْ بِعِلْمٍ وَّمَا كُنَّا غَآئِبِيْنَ ﴿٧﴾

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Alif, Lām, Mīm, Ṣād. [1] **(This is) A Book sent down to you - so, let there be no constraint on your heart because of it - that you may warn through it, and (it is) an advice for the believers.** [2]

Follow what has been sent down to you from your Lord, and do not follow any friends other than Him. Little you are receptive to advice! [3]

How many a town We have destroyed, and Our punishment came upon them at night or while they were having midday nap. [4] **So, their cry, when Our punishment came upon them, was not but that they said, "we were wrongdoers indeed."** [5]

So, We shall ask those to whom the messengers were sent and We shall ask the messengers. [6] **Then We shall tell them the whole story, with knowledge, and We were never absent.** [7]

Commentary

An overview of the Sūrah shows that most of the subjects it deals with are related to *Ma'ād* (Return to the Hereafter) and *Risālah* (Prophethood). The former appear from the beginning of the Sūrah upto approximately the end of the sixth section. Then, from the eighth to the twenty first section, there is a detailed description of past prophets, events about their communities, their reward and punishment and the punishment which overtook them.

In the statement: فَلَا يَكُنْ فِى صَدْرِكَ حَرَجٌ appearing in the first verse, the address is to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and he has been told: This Qur'ān is the Book of Allah sent down to you. This should not cause any constraint on your heart. The word: حَرَجٌ (*ḥaraj*) translated here as 'constraint' means that 'you should have no anguish or apprehension in conveying the Qur'ān and its injunctions lest people belie it and hurt you.' (As reported from Abū Al-'Āliyah - Maẓharī)

The hint given here is that Allah who has sent down this Book on you has also made arrangements that you shall remain protected and that takes care of any anguish on your part. Some commentators have said that '*ḥaraj*' or 'constraint on the heart' refers to the constraint experienced by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم who, because of his affectionate concern for people, felt pain when they would not believe despite having heard the Qur'ān and its injunctions. To offset this constraint, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been told that the duty with which he has been obligated is simply to make the call and convey the message. Once this is done, it is not his responsibility to see who becomes a Muslim and who does not. Therefore, there was no reason for him to be anxious.

The statement: فَلَنَسْئَلَنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اُرْسِلَ اِلَيْهِمْ وَلَنَسْئَلَنَّ الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ in verse 6 refers to the day of *Qiyāmah* when people will be asked by Allah how did they receive the messengers and Books sent to them by Him - and the messengers will be asked if they did convey to their communities the message and injunctions Allah had sent them with. (Narrated by Baihaqī from

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه - Maẓharī)

It appears in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim on the authority of a narration from Sayyidnā Jābir رضى الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم asked people during the address of his Last Ḥajj: When, on the day of *Qiyāmah*, you will be asked about me - whether or not I have conveyed the message of Allah to you - what will you, then, say in reply? (فَمَا اَنْتُمْ قَائِلُوْنَ). All Ṣaḥabah present there said: We will say that you have conveyed the message of Allah to us and you have fulfilled the trust of Allah at its best and you have wished and done what was most beneficial for the community. Hearing this, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: اَللّٰهُمَّ اشْهَدْ (O Allah, You be witness).

According to a narration in the Musnad of Aḥmad, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is reported to have said: On the day of *Qiyāmah*, Allah Ta'ālā will ask me if I have conveyed His message to His servants and I shall say in response: Yes, I have. Therefore, all of you should make sure that those who are present do convey my message to those absent. (Maẓharī)

'Those absent' refers to people who were present during that time but were not present at that particular occasion - as well as generations which would come later on. To convey to them the message of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم means that people of every time should continue the chain of conveying this message to the generations coming next, so that all children of Adam to be born right through the day of *Qiyāmah* will have received this message.

Verses 8 - 10

وَالْوَزْنُ يَوْمَئِذِ ِالْحَقُّ ۚ فَمَنْ ثَقُلَتْ مَوَازِيْنُهٗ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿٨﴾ وَمَنْ خَفَّتْ مَوَازِيْنُهٗ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ خَسِرُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا يَظْلِمُوْنَ ﴿٩﴾ وَلَقَدْ مَكَّنّٰكُمْ فِى الْاَرْضِ وَجَعَلْنَا لَكُمْ فِيْهَا مَعَايِشَ ۭ قَلِيْلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُوْنَ ﴿١٠﴾

And the Weighing on that day is definite. So, those whose scales are heavy, they are the successful. [8] **And those whose scales are light, they are those who have**

brought loss to themselves, as they used to be unjust to Our verses. [9]

And We gave you a place on earth, and made for you therein the means of living. Little you are grateful. [10]

Commentary

In the first verse, it was said: وَالْوَزْنُ يَوْمَئِذٍ الْحَقُّ (And the Weighing on that day is definite). It means that the weighing of good and bad deeds on the day of Judgement is due and true. There is no room for doubt in it. Here, the hint given is that let no one be deceived by the idea that things which usually get to be weighed or measured are things having some weight or heaviness. Human deeds, good or bad, have no body or mass which could be weighed. How, then, would deeds be weighed? First of all, the reason is that the authority of Allah is absolute. He is powerful over everything. Why then, would it be necessary that something we cannot weigh could not be weighed by Allah Almighty as well? Then, other than that, we have before us, in our time, countless new instruments which claim to weigh or measure anything in the world. They no more need the traditional balance or scales or rod or tip. Modern instruments can weigh what nobody ever thought could be weighed, air, electric current, heat, cold, and so many other things. A meter is all you need. Now, if Allah Almighty, the Maker of makers, in His perfect power, could weigh or measure human deeds - with or without a device - what is there in it which would make it to be something far out to believe? Leaving this aside for a moment, the Creator of the Universe does have the power to transform our deeds at some time into a material presence, even give it some shape or form (interesting that people would believe something like this happening in a Speilberg movie, yet squirm at the religious view of things as would come to pass). There are many Āḥadīth from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم which confirm that human deeds will appear in particular shapes and forms during *Barzakh* (the post-death ~ pre-resurrection state) and *Maḥshar* (Resurrection). Good deeds of a person will, in forms beautified, become the companions of the grave - and evil deeds would crawl all over in the form of snakes and scorpions. A Ḥadīth says that a person who has not paid the Zakah due against his wealth, that wealth will reach his grave in the shape of a poisonous snake to bite him and say: I am your wealth, I am your treasure.

It is said in a Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth that Al-Baqarah and 'Āl-'Imrān, the two Sūrahs of the Holy Qur'ān will come on the plains of Resurrection in the form of two dense clouds and cast their shade over those who used to recite these Sūrahs.

Similarly, there are countless narrations from Ḥadīth, all authentic and reported reliably, which indicate that once these good and bad deeds of ours pass away from this mortal world, they will transform into particular shapes and forms and be there on the plains of Resurrection in a material presence.

There are even verses of the Qur'ān which confirm it. It is said: وَوَجَدُوْا مَا عَمِلُوْا حَاضِرًا , that is, 'what people had done in the world, they would find that present there - 18:49.' In a verse of Sūrah Az-Zalzalah, it is said: مَنْ يَّعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَّرَهٗ وَمَنْ يَّعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَّرَهٗ, that is, 'whoever does good even the weight of a particle shall see it on the day of *Qiyāmah*, and whoever does evil even the weight of a particle shall see that too in *Qiyāmah*.' Things as described here obviously lend to the possibility that human deeds will come in some nuclear form of existence. This is something which needs no further enterpretations as what is crucial is the compensation of deeds which will exist and be perceptible.

Under these circumstances, weighing deeds does not remain something difficult or far out. But, human beings are what they are. Given their limited framework of reasoning, they take everything on the analogy of their own present state of being and this is the criterion they have to judge things around them. So used to it they are that they just cannot act otherwise. It is this state of being of theirs which the Qur'ān has put in words which appear in Sūrah Ar-Rūm: يَعْلَمُوْنَ ظَاهِرًا مِّنَ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَ هُمْ عَنِ الْاٰخِرَةِ هُمْ غٰفِلُوْنَ . It means that 'these people know an obvious aspect of mortal life (and that too, not the whole of it) and about the Hereafter they are totally heedless - 30:7.' In their onslaught on the obvious and the peceptible, they will shake the earth and the space to find out the unfound, but the great field of the reality of things the unfolding of which has to take place in the 'Ākhirah is something they are totally unaware of.

Therefore, in this verse, special care has been taken while saying: وَالْوَزْنُ يَوْمَئِذِ ِالْحَقُّ (And the Weighing on that day is definite) so that man, all infatuated with the obvious, may not be able to deny the weighing of

deeds in the Hereafter - which stands proved from the Holy Qur'ān and is the collective belief of the Muslim Ummah.

That there will be the weighing of deeds on the day of *Qiyāmah* is a subject dealt with in many verses of the Holy Qur'ān from various angles, and in Ḥadīth, its details abound.

The Weighing of Deeds : A Doubt and its Answer

Out of the details on the weighing of deeds appearing in the Āḥadīth of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, the first to ponder about is the oft-narrated statement that, on the day of Resurrection, the heaviest in weight shall be the Kalimah: لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ مُحَمَّدٌ رَّسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ (There is no god but Allah, Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah). The scalepan which holds this Kalimah shall outweigh the rest.

Tirmidhi, Ibn Mājah, Ibn Ḥibbān, Baihaqī and Ḥākim have reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: A man of my Ummah will be brought before the entire creation on the plain of Resurrection. Then, ninety nine of his Books of Deeds will be brought in. Each scroll of his Book of Deeds will be as long as far he could see - and all these Books of Deeds shall be full of sins and evils. This person will be asked if everything written in these Books of Deeds was correct, or had the angels done any injustice to him, or had they written anything there which was not as it happened. He will admit: O my Lord, whatever is written there is correct. But, in his heart, he will be nervous while worrying about how would he find his deliverance from this situation. That will be the time Allah Ta'ālā will say: Today, there is no injustice for anyone. Against all your sins, We have a testimonial of your being good, with Us, written where, is your Kalimah: أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَّآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهٗ وَرَسُوْلُهٗ (I testify that there is no god but Allah and I testify that Muhammad ﷺ is His servant and His Messenger). That person will say: O my Lord, what weight this little note will carry against such a big black Book of Deeds? Then, it would be said: No injustice will be done to you. Then, all those Books of Deeds full of sins will be placed in one scalepan and in the other, this note with the Kalimah of 'Īmān on it. The scalepan with the Kalimah on it shall weigh heavier and the scalepan with all those sins on it shall turn to be lighter. After having related this event, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: Nothing can weigh more than the

name of Allah. (Mazharī)

According to a narration from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar رضی الله عنه in Musnad al-Bazzār and Mustadrak Ḥākim, the Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم said: At the time of his death, Nuḥ علیه السلام assembled his sons around him and said: I order you to abide by the Kalimah: لا اله الا الله (*Lā Ilāha Illallāh*) because, should the heavens and the earth be placed in one pan of the scale and the Kalimah: *Lā Ilāha Illallāh* in the other, the pan containing the Kalimah shall invariably remain heavier. Other narrations on the same subject have been reported from Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī, Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās and Sayyidnā Abū-ad-Dardā' رضی الله عنه supported by reliable transmitting authorities and are spread over in various Ḥadīth collections. (Mazharī)

According to these narrations, a believing Muslim who recites the Kalimah shall always find the scale heavier in his favour, no matter how many sins he carries on him. But, many other verses of the Qur'ān and narrations of Ḥadīth prove that the good and bad deeds of a Muslim shall be weighed. For some, the scalepan with good deeds will be heavier, for some others, that of sins. The one whose scalepan with good deeds is heavier will have his salvation while the one whose scalepan with sins and evils is heavier will have his punishment. For example, in Sūrah Al-Anbiyā' it is said:

وَنَضَعُ الْمَوَازِيْنَ الْقِسْطَ لِيَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ فَلَا تُظْلَمُ نَفْسٌ شَيْئًا وَّاِنْ كَانَ مِثْقَالَ حَبَّةٍ مِّنْ خَرْدَلٍ اَتَيْنَا بِهَا وَكَفٰى بِنَا حٰسِبِيْنَ ،

And We shall set up Scales of Justice on the day of Judgement. Then, not the least injustice will be done to anyone. And if there be (good or bad) the weight of a mustard seed, We shall bring it (to account on the scale for deeds) and We are sufficient to take account - 21:47.

And in Sūrah Al-Qāri'ah, it is said:

فَاَمَّا مَنْ ثَقُلَتْ مَوَازِيْنُهٗ فَهُوَ فِىْ عِيْشَةٍ رَّاضِيَةٍ وَاَمَّا مَنْ خَفَّتْ مَوَازِيْنُهٗ فَاُمُّهٗ هَاوِيَةٌ

Whoever has his scale of good deeds heavy will be in life blissful and whoever has his scale of good deeds lighter, his place will be Hell -101:6-9.

Explaining these verses, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ said: The believer whose good deeds on the scale are heavier will go to *Jannah* with his deeds - and the one whose evil deeds on the scale are heavier will be sent to Jahannam with his deeds. (Reported by Al-Baihaqī in Shu'ab al-'Īmān - Maẓharī)

Based on a narration from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضی اللہ عنہ, it has been reported in Abū Dāwūd: If a shortage is found in the *Farā'iḍ* of a servant, Allah Ta'ālā will ask if that servant has some *Nawāfil* to his credit. If they are there, the shortage of the obligatory will be compensated by the voluntary. (Maẓharī)

The outcome of all these verses and Ḥadīth narrations is that the scale will some times be heavier in favour of a believer and lighter at some others. Therefore, scholars of Tafsīr say that this shows that weighing in *Maḥshar* (Resurrection) will be twice. First to be weighed will be belief and disbelief through which distinction will be made between a believer and a disbeliever. In this weighing whoever has even just the declaration of faith (Kalimah) in the Book of Deeds, his or her scale will become heavier and he or she will be separated from the group of disbelievers. Then, there will be a second weighing of good and bad deeds. In this, the good deeds of one believer will be heavy on the scale while the other will find the scale heavy with evil deeds - and everyone will have his or her punishment or reward in accordance with that. Thus, the subject as dealt with in all these verses and narrations of Ḥadīth becomes synchronized. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

How Would Deeds Be Weighed?

According to a Ḥadīth narrated by Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضی اللہ عنہ which appears in Al-Bukhārī and Muslim, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said: On the day of *Qiyāmah*, there will come some heavy people whose weight, in the sight of Allah, will not be worth the weight of even a mosquito - and, in support, he recited the verse of the Qur'ān: فَلَا نُقِيْمُ لَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ وَزْنًا that is, on the day of *Qiyāmah*, We will not give them any weight - 18:105 (Maẓharī).

And featuring the virtues (*manāqib*) of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضی اللہ عنہ, there is a Ḥadīth in which the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم is reported to have said: His legs look so thin but, by Him in whose hands lies my life, on the balance of justice for the day of *Qiyāmah*,

their weight shall be more than the weight of the mountain of Uḥud.

Then, there is the Ḥadīth of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضی اللہ عنہ with which Imām al-Bukhārī has concluded his book, the Ṣaḥīḥ. In it, it is said that there are two words very light when said but very heavy when weighed on the Scale of Deeds, and with Allah, they are dear, and they are: سُبْحَانَ اللّٰهِ وَبِحَمْدِهٖ (*Subḥānallāhi wa bi-ḥamdihī* : Pure is Allah and Praised is He) سُبْحَانَ اللّٰهِ الْعَظِيْمِ (*Subḥanallahil-'Aẓīm* : Pure is Allah the Great).

As narrated by Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم used to say that saying: سُبْحَانَ اللّٰهِ (*Subḥān Allah*) fills half of the pan on the scale of deeds while saying: اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ (*Alḥamdulillah*) fills the other half.

Abū Dāwūd, Tirmidhī and Ibn Ḥibbān report with sound authority from Sayyidnā Abū-d-Dardā' رضی اللہ عنہ that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said: No deed will be heavier than good morals on the scale of deeds.

And to Sayyidnā Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī رضی اللہ عنہ, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said: I tell you about two things doing which is not hard for anyone - but, on the scale of deeds, they shall be the heaviest -(1) good morals, and (2) usually observing silence, that is, not talking unless necessary.

In his Kitāb al-Zuhd, Imām Aḥmad has reported from Sayyidnā Ḥāzim رضی اللہ عنہ that angel, Jibra'īl al-Amīn came to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم while someone there was weeping in fear of Allah. Angel Jibra'īl said: All human deeds will be weighed, but human tears flowing from the fear of Allah and 'Ākhirah is a deed which would not be weighed. Rather, one such tear would put off the wildest fire of Jahannam. (Maẓharī)

A Ḥadīth says about a person present on the plain of Resurrection. When he will look at his Book of Deeds, he will notice very few good deeds there. He will be nervous. All of a sudden, something will rise like a cloud and fall right into the scalepan of his good deeds. He will be told that this was in return for his teaching of the faith which multiplied onwards when people acted in acçordance with it, and there was a share kept aside for him with each single follower of his

teaching. (Maẓharī, from Sayyidnā Ibn al-Mubārak)

Tabarānī reports from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضی الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم said: A person who goes to the graveyard with the Janāzah, two karats will be placed on his scale of deeds. Other narrations say that the weight of this karat will be equal to the mountain of Uḥud.

He has also reported from Sayyidnā Jābir رضی الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم said: One's first deed to be placed on the scale of deeds will be the good deed of spending on one's family and taking care of their needs.

Imām al-Dhahabī has reported from Sayyidnā 'Imrān ibn Ḥuṣayn علیه السلام that the Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم said: On the day of *Qiyāmah*, when the ink used by the 'Ulamā to write about the religion and its rules will be weighed against the blood of *shuhadā'* (martyrs), the weight of the ink used by 'Ulama will turn out to be more than the weight of the blood of martyrs.

There are many more Aḥādīth relating to the weighing of deeds as in *Qiyāmah*. Some of them have been mentioned here as they shed light on the merit and worth of particular deeds.

The mode of weighing deeds as mentioned in these narrations of Ḥadīth seems to be different. Some indicate that the doers of deeds will be the ones weighed and it will be they who would be heavy or light according to their deeds. Some others show that their Books of Deeds will be weighed. Still others prove that deeds themselves would become personified and they will be measured. Tafsīr authority, Ibn Kathīr, after having reported all these narrations, has said that it is possible that the weighing is repeated several times in different ways and, it is obvious, the full reality of these matters is known to Allah Ta'ālā alone - and for doing what one does in real life, it is, for all practical purposes, not necessary to know this reality. Quite sufficient for us is to know that our deeds shall be weighed. If our deeds turn out to be lighter on the scale of deeds, we shall deserve punishment. Then, it is an entirely different matter that Allah Ta'ālā, in His grace, by Himself, or by the intercession of a Nabiyy or Waliyy, forgives us our sins and we stand delivered from punishment.

As for the likelihood that some people will have their salvation on the sole virtue of their having said and believed in the Kalimah of 'Īmān (*Lā Illāha Illallāh*) and all sins accruing to them will be forgiven because of that - as narrated in some of these narrations - that belongs to the exception mentioned above and which is beyond the general regulation and is a special manifestation of the grace and mercy of Allah Ta'ālā.

In the two verses the Tafsīr of which you have just read through, sinners were warned against the disgrace on the plain of Resurrection and the Divine punishment that would come in its wake. Then comes the third verse which mentions the blessings of Allah Ta'ālā and persuades people to accept truth and act accordingly by suggesting that Allah has bestowed on them full ownership and control on the earth and has opened thousands of avenues of comfort for them. It is as if the Master of the Universe has made this whole earth and what it contains a giant warehouse of human needs and comforts, a most comprehensive inventory of that inside it. Now, what is left for human beings to do is to learn to go in there, take out what they need and use it how they will. Science and technology are essentially no more than a trained method of taking out things created by the Master of the Universe and stored in this warehouse, properly and nicely, and use it soundly and beneficially. One who is short on sense and manners and does not know how to take things out from this warehouse, or does not understand how to use what he has taken out, he remains deprived of their benefits. An intelligent person benefits from both.

In short, Allah Ta'ālā has placed all that human beings need on and in this earth which demands that they should be grateful to Him all the time under all conditions. But, human beings are prone to heedlessness. They would not take much time to forget the favours of their Creator and Master - only to return to the same world of things. So, at the end of the verse, it is in a mode of complaint that it was said: قَلِيلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُونَ (Little you are receptive to advice).

Verses 11- 18

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنٰكُمْ ثُمَّ صَوَّرْنٰكُمْ ثُمَّ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ اسْجُدُوْا لِاٰدَمَ

فَسَجَدُوْٓا اِلَّآ اِبْلِيْسَ ط لَمْ يَكُنْ مِّنَ السّٰجِدِيْنَ ﴿١١﴾ قَالَ
مَا مَنَعَكَ اَلَّا تَسْجُدَ اِذْ اَمَرْتُكَ ط قَالَ اَنَا خَيْرٌ مِّنْهُ ج خَلَقْتَنِيْ مِنْ
نَّارٍ وَّخَلَقْتَهٗ مِنْ طِيْنٍ ﴿١٢﴾ قَالَ فَاهْبِطْ مِنْهَا فَمَا يَكُوْنُ لَكَ
اَنْ تَتَكَبَّرَ فِيْهَا فَاخْرُجْ اِنَّكَ مِنَ الصّٰغِرِيْنَ ﴿١٣﴾ قَالَ اَنْظِرْنِيْٓ
اِلٰى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُوْنَ ﴿١٤﴾ قَالَ اِنَّكَ مِنَ الْمُنْظَرِيْنَ ﴿١٥﴾ قَالَ فَبِمَآ
اَغْوَيْتَنِيْ لَاَقْعُدَنَّ لَهُمْ صِرَاطَكَ الْمُسْتَقِيْمَ ﴿١٦﴾ ثُمَّ لَاٰتِيَنَّهُمْ
مِّنْۢ بَيْنِ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ وَعَنْ اَيْمَانِهِمْ وَعَنْ شَمَآئِلِهِمْ ط
وَلَا تَجِدُ اَكْثَرَهُمْ شٰكِرِيْنَ ﴿١٧﴾ قَالَ اخْرُجْ مِنْهَا مَذْءُوْمًا
مَّدْحُوْرًا ط لَمَنْ تَبِعَكَ مِنْهُمْ لَاَمْلَئَنَّ جَهَنَّمَ مِنْكُمْ اَجْمَعِيْنَ ﴿١٨﴾

And We created you, then fashioned you, then We said to the angels, "Prostrate before 'Ādam." So, they all prostrated, except Iblīs. He did not join the prostrate. [11] **Allah said, "What stopped you from prostrating when I ordered you?" He said, "I am better than him. You have created me of fire, and created him of clay."** [12] **He said, "Then, go down from here, it is not for you to be arrogant here. So, go. You are of the low."** [13]

He said, "Then give me respite until a day when all will be resurrected." [14] **He (Allah) said, "Respite is given to you."** [15] **He said, "Then as You have made me go astray, I swear that I will sit for them (in ambush) on Your straight path.** [16] **Then I will come upon them from in front of them and from behind them and from their right and from their left. And you will not find most of them grateful.** [17]

He (Allah) said, "Get out of here, condemned, rejected. Indeed, those of them who follow you, I will fill Hell with you all together. [18]

Commentary

The event relating to Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام and the Shayṭān has appeared earlier in Section four of Sūrah Al-Baqarah (Ma'āriful-Qur'ān, English Translation, volume I, page 170, under verse 34). Some

aspects of the subject have been covered in comments given there. Answers to some others are being given here.

How Long was the Respite given to Iblīs?

It was exactly at the time Iblīs was under the wrath of Allah, he made a prayer, a strange prayer indeed. He asked for a lease of life until the day of Resurrection. The words in which Allah Ta'ālā answered the prayer, as they appear in this verse, are no more than: إِنَّكَ مِنَ الْمُنظَرِينَ (Respite is given to you). From these words, given the nature of the question and the answer, it can be understood that this respite was given until the Resurrection as asked by him. But, what is not stated in this verse clearly is whether the giving of respite mentioned here is until the Resurrection as asked by Iblīs, or is for some other duration. But, in another verse, the words: إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ الْوَقْتِ الْمَعْلُومِ (Till the day of the appointed time - 15:38) appear at this place which, on the surface, seem to suggest that the respite till the day of *Qiyāmah* as asked by Iblis was not given. Instead, given to him was a respite till a particular time which is preserved in Divine knowledge. The outcome is that the prayer of Iblis was answered - though not completely. He was given respite till a particular time and not till the day of Resurrection or *Qiyāmah*.

Reported in Tafsīr Ibn Jarīr is a narration from Suddiy which supports this view. The exact words of the report are:

فلم ينظره الى يوم البعث و لكن انظره الى يوم الوقت المعلوم وهو يوم ينفخ فى الصور النفخة الاولى فصعق من فى السموت ومن فى الارض فمات،

Allah Ta'ālā did not give respite to Iblis till the day of Resurrection, instead, He has given him respite till a day the time of which is appointed and that is the day when the Horn will be blown the first time and whoever there is in the heavens or the earth shall be stunned, and dead.

In summation, we can say that the Shayṭān had actually asked for a respite in his prayer till the time when the second Horn will be blown and all the dead will be resurrected. This is what is called: يوم البعث (Yowm al-Ba'th). If this prayer was answered as asked, it would have meant that Iblīs was to be alive as based on his prayer while the facts on the ground would have been different: That would be a time

when nothing will be alive except the One Being of the Eternally-Alive and the Self-Sustaining *Ḥayy* and *Qaiyyūm* and that would be the time when the great promise of: كُلُّ مَنْ عَلَيْهَا فَانٍ وَّيَبْقٰى وَجْهُ رَبِّكَ ذُو الْجَلٰلِ وَالْاِكْرَامِ (All that is on it will perish and to remain there shall be the Face of your Lord, full of majesty, bounty and honour - 55:26-27) will stand immensely manifested. On that basis, Iblīs was not to live to see that time. Therefore, his one prayer for respite till the Yowm al-Ba'th was not granted, instead of which, the time of the respite was changed to *Yowma yunfakhu fi as-ṣur*, till the day blown is the Horn, and granted at that. The effect would be that death shall be the order of the day for the whole creation. Iblīs will have his death as well. When all others are resurrected, he too shall stand resurrected.

These details remove the possible doubt that could arise from the verse: كُلُّ مَنْ عَلَيْهَا فَانٍ (All that is on it will perish -55:26) referred immediately above specially in relation with this prayer. The apparent contradiction between the two thus stands resolved.

The substance of this investigation is that Yowm al-Ba'th and Yowm al-Waqt al-Ma'lum are two separate days. Iblīs had asked for respite till the Yowm al-Ba'th. This was not granted wholly. Instead of that, a change was made and respite was given till the Yowm al-Waqt al-Ma'lum. Ḥaḍrat Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī, in Bayan al-Qur'ān, has preferred the view that these two are really two separate days. In fact, from the time of the blowing of the first Horn upto the entry into Paradise or Hell, it will be a long day with different things happening at different times in it. Based on these different happenings, that day could be attributed to every event which takes place therein. For instance, it could be called the day of the blowing of the Horn (صُوْر) and the day of perishing (فنا), as well as, the day of Resurrection (بَعْث) and the day of Recompense (جزا). This helps resolves all doubts and difficulties, فَلِلّٰهِ الْحَمْدُ .

Can the Prayer of a Disbeliever be Acceptable?

The question comes from the verse: وَمَا دُعَآءُ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ اِلَّا فِيْ ضَلٰلٍ (And the prayer of disbelievers is but in vain - 13:14), it is usually taken that the prayer made by a disbeliever is not answered. But, from this event concerning Iblīs and the statement in the verse, this difficulty becomes obvious. The answer is that, in this mortal world, even the prayer of a

disbeliever can be answered - so much so, that even the prayer of the foremost disbeliever, Iblīs, was answered. But, in the Hereafter, the prayer of a disbeliever will not be answered. The verse quoted above relates to the Hereafter ('Ākhirah). It has nothing to do with this mortal world.

The Event of 'Ādam and Iblīs : The Rationale of Different Words

This story appears in the Holy Qur'ān at several places. The words used in relevant questions and answers differ everywhere, though the event is the same. The reason is that the subject remains the same when the main event is described. That the words remain exactly the same everywhere is not necessary. A narration could be based on meaning too. If the unity of subject and sense exists, variations in words do not deserve consideration.

What made Iblīs speak the way he did before Allah?

The place where Iblīs dared to speak was in the Most August conceivable Presence of the Master of all Honour where the awe and majesty of the occasion would not allow even angels and prophets and messengers to breathe. How did he do that? 'Ulamā say that this was a sombre and highly cutting manifestation of the Divine wrath that, because of the rejection of Iblīs, his view was so obstructed (*ḥijāb*) that he became blind to the grandeur and awe of Allah Ta'ālā and irreverence came down to settle on him all over. (Abridged from Bayān al-Qur'ān)

The Assault of Shayṭān is Multi-Dimensional, not simply Four-Sided

In the present verse (17), Iblīs is said to have identified four sides from which he planned to mislead the children of 'Ādam, that is, the front, the rear and the right and the left. But, the purpose here is not to set up any limits. Instead, the sense is that this will be from all sides and directions. Therefore, the probability of his leading people astray from above and beneath the feet does not contradict it. Similarly, the saying of the Ḥadīth that - Shayṭān can enter the human body and move through the arteries and veins of blood and take command of the whole body - is also not contradictory to this.

In the cited verses (13 & 18), the Shayṭān has been commanded to leave the heavens twice. First, when it was said: فَاخْرُجْ إِنَّكَ مِنَ الصّٰغِرِيْنَ (So, go.You are of the low.) and then, when it was said: قَالَ اخْرُجْ مِنْهَا مَذْءُوْمًا (Get

out of here,.condemned ...). Here, the first saying is perhaps a proposal while the other is its implementation. (Abridged from Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Verses 19 - 25

وَيٰٓاٰدَمُ اسْكُنْ اَنْتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ فَكُلَا مِنْ حَيْثُ شِئْتُمَا وَلَا
تَقْرَبَا هٰذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ فَتَكُوْنَا مِنَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿١٩﴾ فَوَسْوَسَ
لَهُمَا الشَّيْطٰنُ لِيُبْدِيَ لَهُمَا مَاوٗرِيَ عَنْهُمَا مِنْ سَوْاٰتِهِمَا
وَقَالَ مَا نَهٰكُمَا رَبُّكُمَا عَنْ هٰذِهِ الشَّجَرَةِ اِلَّآ اَنْ تَكُوْنَا
مَلَكَيْنِ اَوْ تَكُوْنَا مِنَ الْخٰلِدِيْنَ ﴿٢٠﴾ وَ قَاسَمَهُمَآ اِنِّيْ لَكُمَا
لَمِنَ النّٰصِحِيْنَ ﴿٢١﴾ فَدَلّٰىهُمَا بِغُرُوْرٍ ۚ فَلَمَّا ذَاقَا الشَّجَرَةَ
بَدَتْ لَهُمَا سَوْاٰتُهُمَا وَطَفِقَا يَخْصِفٰنِ عَلَيْهِمَا مِنْ وَّرَقِ
الْجَنَّةِ ۭ وَنَادٰىهُمَا رَبُّهُمَآ اَلَمْ اَنْهَكُمَا عَنْ تِلْكُمَا الشَّجَرَةِ وَاَقُلْ
لَّكُمَآ اِنَّ الشَّيْطٰنَ لَكُمَا عَدُوٌّ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿٢٢﴾ قَالَا رَبَّنَا ظَلَمْنَآ
اَنْفُسَنَا ۫ وَاِنْ لَّمْ تَغْفِرْ لَنَا وَتَرْحَمْنَا لَنَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الْخٰسِرِيْنَ
﴿٢٣﴾ قَالَ اهْبِطُوْا بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ ۚ وَلَكُمْ فِي الْاَرْضِ
مُسْتَقَرٌّ وَّ مَتَاعٌ اِلٰى حِيْنٍ ﴿٢٤﴾ قَالَ فِيْهَا تَحْيَوْنَ وَ فِيْهَا
تَمُوْتُوْنَ وَمِنْهَا تُخْرَجُوْنَ ﴿٢٥﴾

And O 'Adam, dwell, you and your wife, in Paradise, and eat from wherever you like, but do not go near this tree, otherwise you shall join the transgressors." [19]

Then Satan whispered to them, so that he may uncover to them what was covered of their shame; and said, "Your Lord has not prohibited this tree for you, but to avoid your becoming angels or your becoming eternal." [20] **And he swore on oaths, "I am one of your well-wishers."** [21] **So he cast them down by deception. So, when they tasted (the fruit of) the tree, their shame became apparent to them, and they began to patch together upon themselves some leaves of Paradise, and**

their Lord called them, "Did I not forbid you from that tree, and did I not tell you that the Satan is an open enemy for you?" [22]

They said, "Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves, and if You do not forgive us and do not bless us with mercy, we shall, indeed, be among the losers." [23]

He said, "Go down, some of you enemies of some; and for you on the earth there will be a dwelling place and enjoyment for a time." [24] **(Further) He said, "There you shall live and there you shall die and from there you shall be taken out."** [25]

Commentary

The story of Sayyidna 'Adam عليه السلام and Iblis mentioned in the present verses has appeared in the fourth section of Surah Al-Baqarah. Detailed comments have been given in the Tafsir of that Surah. If needed, please see Ma'ariful-Quran, English Translation, Volume I, Pages 170-187.

Verses 26 - 27

يٰبَنِيْٓ اٰدَمَ قَدْ اَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكُمْ لِبَاسًا يُّوَارِيْ سَوْاٰتِكُمْ وَرِيْشًا ؕ وَلِبَاسُ التَّقْوٰى ۙ ذٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ ؕ ذٰلِكَ مِنْ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَذَّكَّرُوْنَ ﴿٢٦﴾ يٰبَنِيْٓ اٰدَمَ لَا يَفْتِنَنَّكُمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ كَمَآ اَخْرَجَ اَبَوَيْكُمْ مِّنَ الْجَنَّةِ يَنْزِعُ عَنْهُمَا لِبَاسَهُمَا لِيُرِيَهُمَا سَوْاٰتِهِمَا ؕ اِنَّهٗ يَرٰىكُمْ هُوَ وَقَبِيْلُهٗ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا تَرَوْنَهُمْ ؕ اِنَّا جَعَلْنَا الشَّيٰطِيْنَ اَوْلِيَآءَ لِلَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٢٧﴾

O children of 'Adam, We have sent down to you clothing that covers your shame and dress that adorns. And the dress of Taqwa! that is the best. That is one of the signs of Allah, so that they may be receptive to advice. [26]

O children of 'Adam, "Do not let Satan put you in trouble the way he had your parents expelled from Paradise, having their dress removed from them, so that he could show them their shame. Indeed, he sees you – he and his company – from where you do not see them.

Surely, We have made the satans friends for those who do not believe. [27]

Commentary

Mentioned in almost a section preceding the verses cited above was the event relating to Sayyidnā 'Ādam and Satan, the accursed. The first outcome of the satanic instigation was that the heavenly apparel of 'Ādam and Ḥawwā عليهم السلام came off leaving them coverless as a result of which they began hiding their coverable body with leaves.

In the first of the present verses (26), Allah Ta'ālā has addressed all children of 'Ādam and told them that the dress they wear is a great blessing the worth and value of which must be recognized by them. The address here is not to Muslims alone. It is to all children of Adam. This is a sharp pointer to the fact that the act of covering the coverable parts of the body and the wearing of dress is both a human need and a natural desire. Everyone abides by it without any distinction of religion or community. Then, giving its details, three kinds of clothings were mentioned.

First of all, it was said: لِبَاسًا يُّوَارِیْ سَوْاٰتِكُمْ (clothing that covers your shame). Here, the word: يُوَارِی (*yuwārī*) is a derivation from: مُوَارَات (*muwārāt*) which means to cover, hide or conceal. And the word: سَوْاٰة (sau'āt) is the plural form of: سَوْءَة (*sau'ah*). This is applied to body parts the uncovering of which is taken, by nature, as bad and shameful by all human beings. The sense of the statement is that Allah has sent down for people dress with which they could cover their body parts the exposing of which is a matter of shame.

After that, it was said: وَرِيْشًا (*wa rīshā*). The dress one uses for adornment and decency is called: رِيْش (*Rīsh*). The meaning is that just to cover up the cover-worthy body parts, even a simple set of clothing is enough. But, Allah has provided for you much more than simply clothing, He blessed you with dresses which make you look handsome, or decent, neat and civilized.

At this place, the word used by the Holy Qur'ān is: اَنْزَلْنَا (*anzalnā*: We have sent down). It means to bestow or bless with. It is not necessary that it be sent down from the heavens ready to wear. This is like another expression: اَنْزَلْنَا الْحَدِيْدَ (57:25). It means: 'We sent down the iron,'

which is dug out of the earth as everyone can see. However, at both these places, by saying: أنزلنا (*anzalnā* : We have sent down), it was indicated that the way no human planning or artifice operates as active agent in what 'descends from the heavens,' so it is with the essential mother element of dress, cotton or wool etc., where human ingenuity has no role to play. That is simply a gift from the great creative power of Allah Ta'ālā. But, human artifice does work in efforts to make out of these materials dresses to individual taste, temperament, and the need to stay safe against heat or chill. Even the way to that artifice is shown by Allah Ta'ālā. Therefore, eyes that see reality see all this as nothing but Divine gift sent from the heavens.

Two Uses of Dress

Identified here are two uses of dress: (1) To cover the cover-worthy parts of the body (*satr*), and (2) protection from hot and cold weather, and decor of the body. The first use has been placed first which indicates that the real purpose of human dress is to be able to cover the cover-worthy parts of the body (*satr al-'awrah*). This also happens to be its line of demarcation from animals. The dress given to animals has been naturally made a part of their body. The purpose it serves is either to protect from hot and cold weather, or beautify them. No elaborate arrangements have been made to cover up their *satr*. Nevertheless, formations of particular body parts in their bodies have been so placed that they do not remain totally exposed. Some would have a screen of a tail and many others would have other obstructers of view.

After having related the event concerning 'Ādam and Ḥawwā' ('Ādam and Eve) and how the Satan had instigated them, this mention of dress indicates that for human beings to be naked, or the exposure of their shame before others is a sign of abject disgrace and indecency at its worst. Moreover, it is an antecedent to all sorts of evils and disorders.

The Modern Obsession for Nudity: The Tempter of 'Ādam and Eve still Stalks

So, the first attack of Satan came from this opening against human beings when their dress dropped off from where it belonged. Even today, when Satan wishes to confuse and waylay human beings through his accomplices, it always picks up a chic front like being trendy, hip,

hot or cool and ends up pulling people out from homes into streets and alleys naked or just about. It would seem that what Satan has classified as modern advancement does not happen unless women are deprived of their sense of shame and modesty and made to parade around in the near-nude.

After 'Īmān, the First Duty is to Cover your Body Properly

When Shayṭān, sensing this weakness in human beings, made the first assault on their body cover, the Shari'ah of Islam acted smartly as it is responsible for the inculcation, protection and flowering of every good in its people that it took the issue so seriously that it enjoined the covering of human body as the first duty after *'Īmān* or faith. The Ṣalāh, the Ṣawm, and duties like those come after that.

Sayyidnā Fārūq al-A'ẓam رضی اللہ عنہ says that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said: When someone wears a new dress, he should recite the following Du'ā while wearing it:

اَلْحَمْدُلِلّٰہِ الَّذِیْ کَسَانِیْ مَا اُوَارِیْ بِہٖ عَوْرَتِیْ وَاَتَجَمَّلُ بِہٖ فِیْ حَیَاتِیْ

> Praise be to Allah who gave me clothes with which I am to cover the cover-worthy parts of my body and look handsome with it in my life.

The Great Reward of Giving the Old Dress as Ṣadaqah after Wearing the New One

He also said: If a person who wears a new dress and gives away the old one as Ṣadaqah (charity) to anyone poor and needy, he comes under the protection and patronage of Allah Ta'ālā in all states of his life and death. (Ibn Kathīr from the Musnad of Aḥmad)

In this Ḥadīth too, one is reminded of the two considerations in wearing a dress which is why Allah Ta'ālā has created the human dress.

Covering of Body is Natural and the Theory of Evolution is False

The event of Sayyidnā 'Ādam and the statement of the Qur'ān make it clear that covering the body and using a dress is a natural desire and an inborn necessity of human beings which has been with them since the very beginning. Those who profess that the first man

went around naked and it was only after having passed through stages of evolution that he invented the dress, they are patently false.

The Ultimate Dress

After having identified the dress of two kinds, that which covers the body properly and that which gives comfort and beauty, a third kind of dress was mentioned by saying: وَلِبَاسُ التَّقْوٰى ذٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ (And the dress of Taqwā [fear of Allah]! that is the best). In some readings (*Qira'āt*) of the Qur'ān, the word: لباس (*libās*: dress) has been rendered with a *fatḥah* on the letter: سِيْن (*sīn*) as: لِبَاسَ التَّقْوٰى Thus, read with: اَنْزَلْنَا (*anzalnā*), it will mean: We have sent down a third dress of Taqwā. But, in accordance with the well-known reading of it, it means that everyone knows the two dresses mentioned, however, there is a third kind of dress, that of Taqwā - and that is the best of all dresses. The dress of Taqwā, as explained by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās and 'Urwah ibn Zubayr رضی الله عنهم اجمعین, means right conduct, good deed and fear of Allah. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

The sense is that the way the visible physical dress of human beings serves the purpose of covering the cover-worthy parts of the body, protecting from hot and cold weather and giving beauty and embellishment - very similarly, there is a spiritual dress, that of right and becoming conduct, good deed and fear of Allah. This *libās* or dress of Taqwā conceals human weaknesses and moral shortcomings. It delivers one from immediate hardships and ultimate losses. Therefore, it is the best of dresses one can wear.

Present here is the hint that an evil-doing person who has no fear of Allah and does not care for acting right, must be disgraced ultimately, no matter how he covers up - as reported by Ibn Jarīr from Sayyidnā 'Uthmān al-Ghanī رضی الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم said: By Allah in whose hands rests the life of Muḥammad صلی الله علیه وسلم, whatever a person does in secret, Allah Ta'ālā wraps his deed like a sheet around him and announces it - the good of it, if the deed is good, and the evil of it, if the deed is evil. Wraping like a sheet on the body means that it is visible to everyone. No matter how secretly one may do something, Allah Ta'ālā makes its effects become evident on the face and the body. Then, to authenticate his statement, the Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم recited this verse: وَرِيْشًا، وَلِبَاسُ التَّقْوٰى، ذٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ ذٰلِكَ مِنْ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ (... and dress that adorns. And the dress of Taqwā, that is the best.

That is one of the signs of Allah).

The Real Purpose of Physical Dress Too is to Achieve Taqwā

The expression, 'Dress of Taqwā,' indicates that the purpose of physical dress which fulfills the function of covering the body properly, and helps beautify it as well, is really a way of achieving the ability to fear Allah, or Taqwā as in the Qur'ān. This ability should manifest itself in the way one dresses. The parts of the body which must be covered should be fully covered. It should be ensured that one's modesty stays concealed. Neither should it be allowed to remain naked, nor should the dress on the body be so tight-fitting through which body parts look like being naked. Then, this dress should not have the flair of pride and arrogance, instead, it should reflect modesty and humility. Then, it should not be extravagant either. The cloth material used should be tailored to need. And neither should the dress for women be masculine, nor the dress for men be feminine, which is odious and repugnant in the sight of Allah. Also, there should be no imitation in wearing a dress like others which is a sign of deviation from the established norms of one's community.

Along with it, there is the crucial need to correct one's morals and deeds which is the real purpose of dress. At the end of the verse comes the invitation to understand: ذٰلِكَ مِنْ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَذَّكَّرُوْنَ (That is one of the signs of Allah, so that they may be receptive to advice).

In the second verse (27), the address reverts to all children of Adam and the admonition given is that they should keep guarding against the deception of Shayṭān in everything they do under whatever circumstance they are - lest, Shayṭān puts them on another trial as he did with their parents, 'Ādam and Eve. He made them leave Paradise, caused them to shed their dress and render their essential cover to be uncovered. He was their eternal enemy. His enmity was something, they were never to lose sight of.

At the end of the verse, it was said:

اِنَّهٗ يَرٰىكُمْ هُوَ وَقَبِيْلُهٗ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا تَرَوْنَهُمْ اِنَّا جَعَلْنَا الشَّيٰطِيْنَ اَوْلِيَآءَ لِلَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ

Indeed, he sees you - he and his company - from where you do not see them. Surely, We have made the satans friends for

those who do not believe - (27).

Here, the word: قَبِيل (*qabīl*) means company or group. A joined family group is called: Qabīlah or tribe. Common groups are known as *qabīl*. The sense of the verse is: For you the Satan is a kind of enemy that he and his accomplices do see you but you do not see them. Therefore, the chances that you would fall a victim to their deception are fairly strong.

But, in other verses, it has also been clarified that people who keep turning to Allah Ta'ālā and maintain their guard against the deception of Shayṭān, for them, the wily web of Shayṭān is much too weak.

Then, what has been said at the end of this verse - that 'We have made the satans friends and guardians of those who do not believe' - also indicates that those who believe should not find staying away from their web of deception at all difficult.

Some righteous elders have said that the defence against the enemy who sees us but we cannot see him is simple. Let us come under the protection of Allah Ta'ālā. He sees these satans, watches how they move and act - but they cannot see Him.

And the statement, that human beings cannot see Shayṭān, is in terms of general conditions and habit. If a human being were to see them contra-habitually, that would not be considered contrary to it - as is the case of Jinns coming to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم who asked questions and embraced Islam, which appears in authentic narrations of Ḥadīth. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

Verses 28 - 31

وَإِذَا فَعَلُوا فَاحِشَةً قَالُوا وَجَدْنَا عَلَيْهَا آبَاءَنَا وَاللَّهُ أَمَرَنَا
بِهَا ط قُلْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَأْمُرُ بِالْفَحْشَاءِ ط أَتَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا
لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾ قُلْ أَمَرَ رَبِّي بِالْقِسْطِ قف وَأَقِيمُوا وُجُوهَكُمْ
عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ وَادْعُوهُ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ ط كَمَا بَدَأَكُمْ
تَعُودُونَ ﴿٢٩﴾ فَرِيقًا هَدَىٰ وَفَرِيقًا حَقَّ عَلَيْهِمُ الضَّلَالَةُ ط إِنَّهُمُ
اتَّخَذُوا الشَّيَاطِينَ أَوْلِيَاءَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَيَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّهُمْ

مُّهْتَدُوْنَ ﴿٣٠﴾ يٰبَنِيْٓ اٰدَمَ خُذُوْا زِيْنَتَكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ وَّكُلُوْا وَاشْرَبُوْا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوْا ۚ اِنَّهٗ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِيْنَ ﴿٣١﴾

And when they do something shameful, they say, "We have found our fathers doing it, and Allah has bidden us to do so." Say, "Allah never bids anything shameful. Do you say about Allah what you do not know?" [28]

Say, "My Lord has bidden me to do justice." And yourselves be aright at each occasion of prostration, and pray to Him with pure faith in Him. As He originated you, so you will return. [29] **Some He led to guidance, and others had misguidance as their destiny. Indeed, they have taken the satans as their friends, instead of Allah, and they think that they are on the right path.** [30]

O children of 'Adam, take along what looks good on you to every mosque. And eat and drink and do not be extravagant. Surely, He does not like the extravagant. [31]

Commentary

Before Islam, one of the many shameful and absurd customs Shayṭān had made the people of 'Arab Jāhiliyyah follow was that no one, other than the Quraysh, could make the Ṭawāf of Ka'bah in one's own clothes. Instead of that, the requirement was to borrow a dress from a Qurayshi, otherwise, make the Ṭawāf naked.

As obvious, the Quraysh could not provide clothes to the whole people of Arabia, therefore, the consequence was that these people would make Ṭawāf mostly naked, men and women, both, with women usually doing their Ṭawāf in the darkness of the night. Then, they would explain the satanic expediency of this act by saying: 'The clothes wearing which we have committed sins are clothes in which making the Ṭawāf of the Ka'bah is contrary to etiquette (so devoid of commonsense they were that it did not occur to them that making their Ṭawāf naked was far more contrary to etiquette, and still more so, contrary to human dignity itself) and the only exception to this rule was the tribe of Quraysh which, because they were the servants of the sacred Ḥaram, was not bound to follow this law of nudity.'

The first verse among those cited above has been revealed to identify and eliminate this absurd custom. It was said in the verse that on occasions when they did something shameful and people told them not to do so, their answer to them would be that their forefathers and elders have been doing so all along, and now for them, to forsake their practice was a matter of shame. Then, they also said that this was what Allah had told them to do. (Ibn Kathīr)

In this verse, '*al-faḥshā'*,' according to most commentators means this very naked Ṭawāf. In fact, *fuḥsh*, *faḥshā'* and *fāḥishah* refer to every evil act the evil of which reaches the farthest limits and is all too loud and clear in terms of commonsense and sound taste (Maẓharī). Then, that its good and bad becomes quite rational too, is something which stands established universally. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

Then, come the two arguments they advanced in support of the continuance of this absurd custom. One of these was the need to follow ancestral customs, that is, maintaining these was good in itself. The answer to this proposition was fairly clear as the blind following of ancestral customs was not something reasonable. Even a person of average commonsense can understand that a method cannot be justified on the basis that one's forefathers used to do so. If the methods used by forefathers were to be taken to be sufficient to justify the legitimacy of an action, then, the fact is that forefathers of different peoples of the world used to act differently, even contradictorily. This argument will, then, render all erroneous methods of the whole world to be correct and permissible. In short, this argument advanced by these ignorant people did not deserve attention. Therefore, the Qur'ān has not considered it necessary to answer this question here. Though, in some Ḥadīth narrations, it has been answered by saying that an act of ignorance which may have been committed by one's forefathers could hardly be worth following by any stretch of imagination.

The second argument in favour of their naked Ṭawāf advanced by these people was that Allah had ordered them to do so. This was a flagrant lie. They were attributing to Allah what He had never commanded. Addressing the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, the answer given was: قُلْ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَأْمُرُ بِالْفَحْشَاءِ (Allah never bids anything shameful) - because commanding people to do something like that is against His wisdom

and counter to His state of being the Purest of the pure. Then, taken to task was their false and untrue attribution to Allah. They were warned with the words: أَتَقُوْلُوْنَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ مَالَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ (Do you say about Allah what you do not know?). It means that they were attributing a falsity to Allah without having an evidence in support; and it is obvious that attributing something to someone without proper investigation and authority is an act of rank effrontery and patent injustice. Then if done in the case of Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhu*, reporting anything so will be a crime and injustice the magnitude of which cannot be imagined. At this point, let it be understood clearly that the respected Mujtahid Imāms, when they deduce, formulate and describe injunctions which appear in the verses of the Qur'ān through *Ijtihād*, that effort does not fall under the purview of this verse. The reason is that their deduction is a process which operates under the justification of the very words and meanings of the Qur'ān.

Said in the second verse was: قُلْ أَمَرَ رَبِّيْ بِالْقِسْطِ (Say, "My Lord has bidden me to do justice). Here, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been asked to tell those ignorant people, who were falsely attributing the justification of their naked Ṭawāf towards Allah, that Allah always commands justice. The word used here is: اَلْقِسْط (*al-qisṭ*) which essentially means justice, balance and moderation. At this place, 'al-qist' refers to a conduct which is free of excess or deficiency, that is, which neither falls short, nor exceeds the appointed limits - as is the case with all injunctions of the Shari'ah. Therefore, under this sense of 'al-qist' included there are all acts of worship and obedience as well as all general injunctions of the Sharī'ah. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

After having stated the command of justice and moderation, two injunctions of the Sharī'ah relevant to their erroneous conduct have been particularly mentioned. These are: اَقِيْمُوْا وُجُوْهَكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ (and yourself be aright at each occasion of prostration) and: وَادْعُوْهُ مُخْلِصِيْنَ لَهُ الدِّيْنَ (and pray to Him with pure faith in Him). The first command relates to what one does physically and outwardly. The other belongs to the heart, the spiritual dimension. In the first injunction, the word: مَسْجِد (*masjid*), according to most commentators, appears in the sense of prostration (*sajdah, sujūd* or *'Ibādah*) and it means that one should be aright at the time of every Ṣalāh or any other act of worship. It could also mean that one should make an effort and be particular to keep

one's orientation straight towards the Qiblah. And being aright or keeping the orientation straight could also mean that one should subordinate everything one says or does to what Allah has commanded, maintaining an orientation and stance that never varies, never dwindles and moves elsewhere. Given this meaning, this injunction will not remain particular for Ṣalāh only - instead, it would comprehend all acts of worship, dealings and transactions.

The second injunction means that one should worship Allah, purely and exclusively, without associating in that act anyone else in any capacity, even to the limit that such worship should also be free from, and untainted with, what is known as al-Shirk al-Khafiyy (concealed Shirk of associating others with the Divinity of Allah), that is, hypocricy and *riyā'* (show off).

By mentioning both injunctions together, the indication being given could be that one must correct, align and synchronize both dimensions of one's person, the outward and the inward, the physical and the spiritual, with the injunctions of the Shari'ah. Not enough is obvious obedience (*Iṭa'ah*) without sincerity (*Ikhlāṣ*), nor can simple sincerity of the heart become sufficient without following the Sharī'ah as visible outwardly too. Instead of that, it is binding on everyone that one should correct and align one's outward bearings in accordance with the Sharī'ah and never forget to keep his or her inward state of being too reserved for Allah Ta'ālā alone. This helps us see the error (dichotomy) of those who take Sharī'ah (the outward or physical adherence to faith) and Ṭarīqah (the inward or spiritual adherence to faith) as two different ways to approach religion. Some of them would even presume that it was sufficient to correct one's inward dimension as shown by Ṭarīqah - even if they go about doing what is contrary to the Sharī'ah! This is a gaping error.

At the end of the verse (29), it was said: كَمَا بَدَاَكُمْ تَعُوْدُوْنَ (As He originated you, so you will return). It means that it was He who created you first and it will be He who will make you rise again on the day of *Qiyāmah*. For His perfect power, this was not difficult at all. Perhaps to indicate this element of convenience what was said here is: تَعُوْدُوْنَ (*ta'ūdūn*: you will return) and not: يُعِيْدُكُمْ (We shall make you rise) since making to rise again requires not much action. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

There is an additional benefit of introducing this sentence here. It helps one in abiding by the injunctions of the Sharī'ah - because it is the realization that there is a life-to-come, and a Last Day, the Day of *Qiyāmah*, and reward or punishment for deeds, good or bad, which makes what is difficult easy, and what is painful bearable. Experience bears out that man is a tough customer. Unless one is under such gripping apprehension, no word of advice can make him do what is right, nor can the restriction of any law stop him from going into crimes.

In the third verse (30), it was said that there are people Allah has guided right while there are others who have provided the proof of their erroneous conduct, because they have, bypassing Allah, made satans their comrades, and they presume that they are on the right path.

The sense is that the guidance of Allah *Subḥānahū wa Ta'ālā* was open to all, but they turned away from it and started following satans, then, on top of it, they were led to think that their sickness was health, and their error, guidance.

This verse tells us that not knowing the injunctions of the Sharī'ah is no valid excuse. If someone takes to a way of error thinking it to be correct with full sincerity, he willl not be considered excusable in the sight of Allah. - because Allah has given everyone reason and commonsense to use it and distinguish the true from the false. Then, man was not left to rely on his reason alone. He sent prophets and books. They made the right and wrong and the true and false all too clear.

Now someone may doubt that a person who is acting in good faith, though in error, should not have any blame coming to him. He should be excused because he is not aware of his error. The answer is that Allah Ta'ālā has blessed human beings with reason and sense with the added benefit of the teachings of the noble prophets, may peace be upon them all. At least, through these, he should be able to compare his method and way with that suggested by them. There has to be some doubt or pinch or question in his mind. Now, his fault is that he did not pay any attention to what they taught and kept sticking to the way of error he had taken to.

However, a person who has striven his best in the quest of truth,

yet failed to find the right path and true teaching, may be found excusable in the sight of Allah - as Imām al-Ghazali has said in his book, Al-Tafriqah Bayn al-Islam wa Al-zandaqah. والله أعلم .

In the fourth verse (31), it was said: 'O children of 'Ādam, take along what looks good on you to every mosque. And eat and drink and do not be extravagant. Surely, He does not like the extravagant'. In the way the 'Arabs of Jāhiliyyah used to take the making of the Ṭawāf of the Ka'bah naked as the correct method of worship and an act of reverence for the House of Allah, they also had a custom that they would skip eating and drinking during the days of Ḥajj. They would eat no more than what would keep them alive. They particularly abstained from butter oil, milk and other pure eatables. (Ibn Jarīr)

The present verse was revealed against this absurd practice. It enjoined that they should abstain from it because making Ṭawāf naked was an act of immodesty and bad manners. Similarly, doing the reverse of it, that is, abstaining from good food given by Allah Ta'ālā without any valid excuse had hardly anything to do with religion. In fact, forbidding on themselves what Allah had made lawful for them was effrontery and excess in an act of worship, something disliked by Allah. Therefore, eat and drink as you wish during the days of Ḥajj, but do not be extravagant. Totally abstaining from Ḥalāl foods is also included under extravagance. Then, becoming heedless to the real objectives of Ḥajj and the Dhikr of Allah and remaining busy with nothing but eating and drinking is also included under extravagance.

Though this verse has been revealed to eradicate a particular custom of nudity in the 'Arab Jāhiliyyah which they demonstrated at the time of Ṭawāf in the name of reverence for the Ka'bah, but the Imāms of Tafsīr and the Jurists of Muslim Ummah unanimously agree that the revelation of an injunction in relation to a particular event does not mean that that injunction is restricted to the same event. Instead, what is considered here is the generality of words. The injunction, then, applies on everything that falls under the generality of these words.

Covering the Body Properly is Obligatory : There is No Ṣalāh Without it

Therefore, the majority of Ṣaḥābah and Tābi'īn, and the Mujtahid

Imāms, have deduced many injunctions from this verse. The most important of them is about Ṣalāh. As making Ṭawāf naked has been prohibited in this verse, the ruling applies identically to Ṣalāh as well which becomes Ḥarām (forbidden) and false and futile - because the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said in a Ḥadīth: اَلطَّوَافُ بِالْبَيْتِ صَلٰوةٌ (The Ṭawāf of the House [of Allah] is Ṣalāh). In addition to that, since the majority of commentators agree that the word, 'masjid' in this verse itself means Sajdah (sujūd, prostration), the prohibition of nudity in the state of Sajdah becomes explicitly inclusive in this verse. Now, if this is prohibited in Sajdah, then, it will obviously stand prohibited in all other movements of Ṣalāh such as Rukū', Qiyām and Qu'ūd. Then, the statement of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم itself has made it more evident.

It also appears in Ḥadīth that the Ṣalāh of any adult woman is not permissible without proper head and body cover (khimār, ridā, chādar, dupatta or large scarf) (Tirmidhī).

That covering the body properly is obligatory in conditions other than Ṣalāh as well stands proved from other verses of the Qur'ān and the narrations of Ḥadīth - one such verse has already appeared a little earlier: يٰبَنِيْٓ اٰدَمَ قَدْ اَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكُمْ لِبَاسًا يُّوَارِيْ سَوْاٰتِكُمْ 'We have sent down to you clothing that covers your shame - 26.'

To sum up, it can be said that covering the body properly is the first human and Islamic obligation on everyone which is mandatory under all conditions - and, in Ṣalāh and Ṭawāf, it is obligatory in the first degree.

A Good Dress For Ṣalāh

The verse brings out another rule of conduct. By calling dress: 'Zīnah,' (adornment), the hint given is that the preferred practice in Ṣalāh is that one should not limit himself to only covering his body functionally, but choose to wear what adorns, looks becoming - of course, within one's means. It was the habit of Sayyidnā Ḥasan رضى الله عنه that he would wear his best dress at the time of Ṣalāh saying: Allah Ta'ālā loves beauty, therefore, I dress myself beautifully to please my Lord for He has said: خُذُوْا زِيْنَتَكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ (take along what looks good on you to every mosque).

So, we can see that this verse proves two things, that covering the body properly is obligatory in Ṣalāh, and that it is recommended and merit-worthy to wear a neat, clean and good dress, within means.

Ṣalāh and Dress : Some Rulings

The third problem at this place is about *Satr*, that is, the parts of the body to be concealed, concealing which is, under all conditions, and specially in Ṣalāh and Ṭawāf, an obligation (Farḍ) - so, what are its limits? The Qur'ān has given a command briefly - its details have been entrusted with the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. He explained it in details. He told us that the Satr of men is from the navel to the knees, and the Satr of women is the whole body except the face and both palms and feet, which are exempt.

All these details appear in Ḥadīth narrations. For men, if the body below the navel, or if the knees are open, then, such a dress is a sin in itself, and Ṣalāh too does not get to be performed in it as due and proper. Similarly, if the head, neck or arms or shin or calf of a woman are open, then, her being dressed like that is impermissible in itself, and Ṣalāh too does not get to performed as due and proper. Says the Ḥadīth: 'A home in which there is a woman with her head uncovered, angels of good would not come there.'

That the face of a woman, her palms and feet which have been exempted from Satr (the parts of body covering and concealing which is obligatory) means that, should these be open during the Ṣalāh, it will cause no defect in Ṣalāh. It never means that a woman would be moving freely even before non-Maḥram men (marriage with whom is permissible) with her face open without a valid excuse as admitted by the Sharī'ah of Islam.

As for this injunction, it is related to the obligation of covering the body properly (Satr) which is *sine qua non* for Ṣalāh - that is, it stands as if not performed at all. And since what is required in Ṣalāh is not the functional covering of the body alone, instead, the advice given is to wear a dress which looks good on one (*Zīnah*), therefore, for men to make Ṣalāh bare-headed, or doing it with shoulders or elbows open, is Makrūh (reprehensible or disliked) - whether the shirt itself be half-sleeved, or has been rolled up, the Ṣalāh remains Makruh after all. Similarly, Ṣalāh remains Makruh in a dress one would not prefer to

wear before friends, or in public, as something unbecoming - for example, wearing an undershirt alone - without a shirt, even if it has full sleeves; or, skipping the wearing of a cap and making do with some cloth piece or a tiny handkerchief knotted or tucked round the head. When no regular person would like to appear before friends or others in that head-bare state, how would that become desirable as a mode of appearance before Allah, the Master of all the worlds? That Ṣalāh is Makruh when offered with bare head, shoulders and elbows has been inferred from the word: زِينَة (*zīnah*: what looks good) of this Qur'ānic verse, and also from the clarifications of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

To recapitulate, it can be said that the injunction in this verse was primarily revealed to eradicate the custom of nudity in pagan Arabia (the age of Jāhiliyyah), but the generality of its words yielded other injunctions and rulings as well. Similar is the case with the second sentence in the verse: كُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا (Eat and drink and do not be extravagant). Though, this too was revealed to erase the custom of Arab Jāhiliyyah that they would take eating good food during the days of Ḥajj as sin, but, here too, the generality of words helps prove many injunctions and rulings.

Eating and Drinking as Needed is Obligatory

To begin with, eating and drinking is obligatory on everyone from the point of view of the Shari'ah as well. If anyone abandons eating and drinking despite having the ability to do so, to the limit that he dies, or becomes too weak even to fulfill what is obligatory on him, then, this person shall be sinning and committing a crime in the sight of Allah.

Legality Operates until Proved Otherwise

One ruling deduced from this verse, as specified by Al-Jaṣṣāṣ in his Aḥkām al-Qur'ān, is: Basically, all edibles are permissible and Ḥalāl (lawful) unless the unlawfulness or prohibition of something particular stands proved through an evidence of the Sharī'ah. In its absence, everything will be considered permissible and lawful. This was suggested by the fact that the object of: كُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا (Eat and drink) was not mentioned in the verse, that is, it did not specify what to eat or drink. The masters of Arabic diction have clearly established that not mentioning the object on such occasions is an indicator towards its

generality, that is, one can eat and drink everything, except things which have been declared to be Ḥarām (unlawful, impermissible, prohibited, forbidden). (Aḥkām Al-Qur'ān by Al-Jaṣṣāṣ)

Extravagance in Eating and Drinking is Not Permissible

The last sentence of the verse: وَلَا تُسْرِفُوْا (do not be extravagant) proves that eating and drinking is, no doubt, permissible - in fact, it is an order - but, along with it, being extravagant while doing so is prohibited. *'Isrāf'* means to cross the limit. Then, the crossing of limits takes many forms. One of them is to cross the limits of Ḥalāl and land into the area of Ḥarām, that is, one starts eating and drinking things which are prohibited. That this is Ḥarām is all too obvious.

Another aspect is that one starts taking what Allah has made Ḥalāl and abstains from it as being Ḥarām without any valid legal excuse as admitted by the Sharī'ah of Islam. It should be understood that the way it is a crime and sin to use what is Ḥarām, similarly, taking the Ḥalāl as Ḥarām is also a rebellion against Divine Law and a very grave sin. (Ibn Kathīr, Maẓharī & Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

On the same analogy, eating and drinking beyond the limits of hunger and need is also what Isrāf or extravagance is. It is for this reason that Muslim Jurists (*fuqahā'*) have written that eating more than needed to remove hunger is not permissible (Aḥkām al-Qur'ān and others). Then, it also falls under the ruling governing Isrāf or extravagance that one eats much less than needed, despite having the ability and choice, which makes him weak and unable to fulfill what is enjoined upon him. It was to forbid both these kinds of extravagance that the Qur'ān has said:

إِنَّ الْمُبَذِّرِيْنَ كَانُوْٓا إِخْوَانَ الشَّيٰطِيْنِ

The extravagant are brothers of the satans - 17:27.

Then, in Sūrah Al-Furqān, it was said:

وَالَّذِيْنَ إِذَآ أَنْفَقُوْا لَمْ يُسْرِفُوْا وَلَمْ يَقْتُرُوْا وَكَانَ بَيْنَ ذٰلِكَ قَوَامًا

(True servants of Allah are) those who, when they spend, would not over-spend and under-spend and the moderate behavior is between that. - 25:67.

Moderation in Eating and Drinking is Always Beneficial

Sayyidnā Fārūq al-A'ẓam رضی اللہ عنہ said: 'Avoid eating and drinking too much because it spoils the body, generates diseases and slackens activity. Instead, take to moderation in eating and drinking for it is good for the health of the body, and is far removed from extravagance (*Isrāf*) in it.' He also said: 'Allah Ta'ālā does not like an obese 'Ālim' (that is, a scholar of religion who has become fat and heavy as a result of eating excessively by choice). Then, he further said: 'A person does not get destroyed until he starts preferring his personal desires over his Faith.' (Rūḥ A-Ma'ānī from Abū Nu'aym)

Righteous elders of the early period have said that to keep busy with the business of eating and drinking all the time, or to prefer it over other matters of importance giving the impression that one has no other worthy purpose left in life but eating and drinking, is included under Israf (extravagance). Also well-known is their saying that one should eat to live, not live to eat.

In a Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has included the attitude of compulsively satiating every desire as and when it emerges as included under Israf (extravagance). The words of the Ḥadīth are: إِنَّ مِنَ الْإِسْرَافِ أَنْ تَأْكُلَ كُلَّ مَا اشْتَهَيْتَ (It is also an Israf that one eats everything one desires). (Ibn Mājah from Sayyidnā Anas)

As reported by Al-Baihaqī, The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم once saw Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا eating twice on a day and he said: 'Yā 'Ā'ishah, would you like that eating becomes your only pastime?'

And this command for moderation in eating and drinking mentioned in this verse is not restricted to eating and drinking alone. The truth of the matter is that the course of moderation is very desirable in wearing what one wears and living where one lives, in almost everything. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ said: Eat and drink what you wish and wear what you like. But, take care of two things: One, that there be no Israf (excess from the measure of need) in it. Two, that there be no pride and arrogance about it.

Eight Rulings from One *Āyah*

In short, eight rulings of the Sharī'ah come out from the statement: كُلُوْا وَاشْرَبُوْا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوْا (Eat and drink and do not be extravagant): (1) Eating

and drinking is obligatory as needed, (2) unless the unlawfulness of something stands proved as based on an evidence admitted by the Sharī'ah, everything is Ḥalāl, (3) the use of things prohibited by Allah and His Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم is Isrāf and is impermissible, (4) taking as Ḥarām what Allah has made Ḥalāl is also Isrāf, and a grave sin, (5) once one has eaten his fill, eating anymore is impermissible, (6) eating so little that one becomes weak and is rendered unable to fulfill his obligations is also Isrāf, (7) to keep thinking of eating and drinking all the time is also Isrāf and (8) It is not necessary that one must have what one wishes for at a given time.

The rules recounted above which emerge from this verse have their religious benefits. If one looks at it medically, a better prescription for health and well-being will be difficult to find. The key is: Moderation in eating and drinking. That is your sanctuary from all diseases.

According to Tafsīr Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī and Maẓharī, Khalīfah Harūn Al-Rashīd had a personal physician who was a Christian. He said to 'Ali ibn Ḥusayn ibn al-Wāqidi: 'Your Book (the Qur'ān) has nothing about medicine in it, although there are only two fields of knowledge in our time, the knowledge of religion and the knowledge of bodies called Medicine.' 'Ali ibn Ḥusayn said: Allah Ta'ālā has put the whole science of medicine in half a verse of the Qur'ān. He says: كُلُوْا وَاشْرَبُوْا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوْا (Eat and drink and do not be extravagant) (Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr reports this saying also with reference to some other righteous elders of the earlier times). Then, the Court physician asked: All right, is there something in the sayings of your prophet about Medicine?' 'Alī ibn Ḥusayn replied: 'The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has reduced the whole science of medicine in a few sayings of his when he said that 'the stomach is the nursery of diseases' and 'abstinance from harmful things is the root of all medicine' and 'give every body what it can take (as a matter of habit)' (Kashshāf & Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī) . After hearing this, the Christian physician said: 'Your Book and your Prophet have left no Medicine for Galen (Jālinūs).'

Based on a narration from Sayyidnā Abi Hurairah رضى الله عنه in Shu'ab al-'Īmān, Al-Baihaqī has reported that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'The stomatch is the reservoir of the body. All arteries and nerves of the body get satiated from this reservoir. If the stomach is in

proper order, all veins will return with healthy food from here. And if it is not in proper order, all veins will spread out in the body as carriers of diseases.'

Muhaddithīn (experts in the discipline of Ḥadīth) have expressed doubts about the use of some words in these narrations of Ḥadīth. But, all of them agree to the emphasis laid on eating moderately and observing precaution present in countless Āḥadīth. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

Verses 32 - 34

قُلْ مَنْ حَرَّمَ زِينَةَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي أَخْرَجَ لِعِبَادِهِ وَالطَّيِّبَاتِ مِنَ
الرِّزْقِ ط قُلْ هِيَ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا خَالِصَةً يَوْمَ
الْقِيَامَةِ ط كَذَٰلِكَ نُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣٢﴾ قُلْ إِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ
رَبِّيَ الْفَوَاحِشَ مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَنَ وَالْإِثْمَ وَالْبَغْيَ
بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَأَنْ تُشْرِكُوا بِاللَّهِ مَا لَمْ يُنَزِّلْ بِهِ سُلْطَانًا وَأَنْ تَقُولُوا
عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣٣﴾ وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ أَجَلٌ ج فَإِذَا جَاءَ
أَجَلُهُمْ لَا يَسْتَأْخِرُونَ سَاعَةً وَلَا يَسْتَقْدِمُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾

Say, "Who has prohibited the adornment Allah has brought forth for His servants, and the wholesome things of sustenance?"

Say, "They are for the believers during this worldly life (though shared by others), while they are purely for them on the day of Resurrection. This is how We elaborate the verses for people who understand." [32]

Say, "My Lord has prohibited only the shameful things, what is apparent from them and what is hidden, and sin and unjust aggression, and that you associate with Allah something for which He has not sent any authority, and that you say about Allah what you do not know. [33]

And for every people there is an appointed time. So, when their appointed time comes, they will not be late for a moment, nor will they go before. [34]

Commentary

Warned in the first verse are those who practice excess in acts of worship and introduce self-invented restrictions into it. They would abstain from things made Ḥalāl by Allah Ta'ālā and go on to make them Ḥarām on them and call it an act of obedience to and worship of Allah - as was the case of the disbelievers of Makkah who just did not consider wearing clothes in Ṭawāf during the days of Hajj as permissible and who used to think of abstinence from good food made lawful by Allah Ta'ālā to be an act of worship.

Such people have been sternly reprimanded in a chastising mode by inquiring as to who has made good and becoming dress created by Allah for his servants and the good and pure foods bestowed by Him Ḥarām for people?

Abstinence from Good Dress and Tasty Food is No Teaching of Islam

It means that to determine and declare something to be Ḥalāl or Ḥarām is the sole right of the Most Sacred Being that has created it. No one is permitted to interfere in this matter. Therefore, those who consider good dress and good food made lawful by Allah as something Ḥarām for themselves deserve the wrath and punishment from Allah. Living in tattered rags despite having the means is no teaching of Islam, nor is it something considered worth emulation in Islam as some ignorant people think.

Many among the early righteous elders and juristic Imāms of Islam whom Allah had been blessed with good means would often times wear elegant, even expensive dresses. Our own master, may the bless ing of Allah and peace be upon him, when his means allowed it, has adorned his body with the best of dresses. According to one narration, once when he came out, there was on his blessed body a Ridā' the price of which was one thousand dirhams. As reported by Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, he had used a Ridā' worth four hundred guineas. Similarly, Imām Mālik alway used decent and elegant dress. For him, someone had taken it on himself that he would provide three hundred and sixty pairs of dresses annually for his use. And a pair which adorned his body for a day would not be used again because after having been worn for one day, he would give this dress to some poor student.

The reason is that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said: When Allah Ta'ālā blesses a servant of His with extended means, He likes to see the effect of His blessing on things around him, his dress being one of them. Therefore, to let such blessing become visible is also a form of showing gratitude. In contrast, there is the attitude of wearing worn-out or untidy clothes, despite having the means, which is ingratitude.

However, it is necessary to guard against two things, that is, from hypocricy and exhibitionism, and from pride and arrogance. It means that one should not dress well simply to show off before others or to establish that they were superior or special as compared to them. And it is obvious that the righteous elders of the early period were free from such attitudes.

As for the reported use of ordinary or patched dress by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, Sayyidnā Fārūq al-A'ẓam رضى الله عنه and some other Ṣaḥābah among the righteous elders is concerned, it had two reasons. First of all, whatever came in their hands as their income, they would spend it out over the poor and the needy, and in the pursuit of their religious objectives. For their own person, they would be left with too little to afford a nice dress. Then, they were leaders of people. They let themselves be in that simple and inexpensive bearing as it was so that others with extended means would get the message, and that common people and the poor and needy are not overwhelmed by their financial status.

The same thing holds valid in the case of the noble Ṣūfis (the group of rightly guided mystics in Islam who lay primary stress on spiritual purification). When they make new aspirants abstain from fine dresses and tasty foods, they really do not intend to say that leaving these things off for good is an act of *thawāb* or merit. Far from it. Instead of that, it is only to put the brakes on the wanton desires of the human self during the initial stage of the quest for truth that they would prescribe such regimen of striving, as treatment and medicine. When the aspirant reaches a stage where he has learnt to control the desires of his self and it can no more be attracted to and snared by what is Ḥarām and impermissible, then, at that time, all masters of the spiritual orders would use and recommend good dress and tasty foods like the general body of early righteous elders. When done at that time, these

fine blessings of human sustenance become for them the source of knowing their Creator and achieving nearness to Him - rather becoming impediments (through any lack of gratitude or truimph of desires as it is likely in the early stage).

The Sunnah of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in Food and Dress

About food and dress, the essential way of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, the Ṣaḥabah and the Tābi'īn is that one should not be unnaturally concerned about these. Dress and food within easy access are good enough and should be used gratefully. If the dress is coarse and the food dry, there is no need to go to the trouble of finding something better one way or the other - even if one has to borrow, or that one starts worrying about what one misses so much that one lands himself into some other trouble.

Similarly, when good dress and food are naturally available, one should not go to the extreme trouble of spoiling them or avoiding their use. Thus, the way the seeking of good dress and good food is a self-imposed constraint, very similarly, doing the opposite of it, that is, to spoil what is good and to leave it aside in favour of what is bad, is also a self-imposed constraint - and a blameworthy one.

Why should this be done? The next sentence of the verse explains the wisdom behind it. It says that all blessings, which include fine dresses and nice foods, have really been created for obedient believers. Others are enjoying these because of them - because this world is the venue of deeds not the venue of rewards. You cannot draw a line of distinction between the genuine and the counterfeit, the good and the bad in the matter of blessings available in this mortal world. Here, the feast is open to all. The blessings are there from the All-Merciful. He is Al-Raḥmān for this whole world. But, the arrangements in this world obey the will of Allah - and the customary practice of Allah in this world is: When the obedient believers in Allah fall short in their duties to Him, other people overcome them, grab the treasures of worldly blessings and, as a result, the believing servants of Allah become subjected to hunger and poverty.

But, this law operates within this mortal world of deeds only. Once in the Hereafter, all blessings and comforts shall be reserved for the

obedient servants of Allah. This is what the sentence: قُلْ هِيَ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا خَالِصَةً يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ in this verse means, that is, '(O prophet) you tell them that all blessings in the worldly life itself are really the right of the believers - and, on the day of *Qiyāmah*, they shall be theirs exclusively.'

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه has explained this verse by saying that all blessings and comforts of the world are - subject to the safeguard that they do not become a source of trouble for them in the Hereafter - are the rightful share of obedient believers only. Contrary is the case of disbelievers and sinners who, though they too receive these blessing in their mortal life, rather receive more of it, but these blessings of theirs are going to become their nemesis in the Hereafter bringing punishment which will last for ever. Therefore, as the outcome shows, this is not the kind of comfort and honour one would welcome.

Some other commentators have determined its meaning by saying that all blessings and comforts of the world are laced with ceaseless striving, the apprehension of decline and never-ending anxiety. Pure blessing and pure comfort simply do not exist here. However, whoever gets these blessings on the day of Judgement, they will have them in the state of absolute purity. There will be no striving for it, no apprehension of decline or loss in it, nor any worries after it. The three explanations of the sense of this sentence in this verse as given above could be accomodated therein and that is why commentators among the Ṣaḥabah and Tābi'īn have gone by them.

At the end of the verse, it was said: كَذَٰلِكَ نُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ (This is how We elaborate the verses for people who understand). This verse carries a refutation of the excessive deeds and ignorant views of people who suggested that Allah Ta'ālā is pleased with the practice of abandoning good dress and good food.

After that, the second verse takes up the description of some of the things declared unlawful by Allah Ta'ālā forsaking which really brings His pleasure. The hint given here is that these people were suffering from a twofold ignorance. On the one hand, they deprived themselves of the good things of life Allah had made lawful for them by denying to use them as if they were unlawful - and did so for no reason. Then, on

the other hand, there were things genuinely and really unlawful, things the use of which was to result in the wrath of Allah and the punishment of the Hereafter, these they embraced with both arms only to discover that they had embraced what was to be their undoing in the life-to-come. Thus, they were doubly deprived, deprived of the blessings they had in the mortal world and deprived of the blessings they had the chance of having in the Hereafter. After that, says the Qur'ān:

إِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ رَبِّيَ الْفَوَاحِشَ مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَنَ وَالْإِثْمَ وَالْبَغْيَ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَأَنْ تُشْرِكُوا بِاللَّهِ مَا لَمْ يُنَزِّلْ بِهِ سُلْطَانًا وَأَنْ تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

Say, "My Lord has prohibited only the shameful things, what is apparent from them and what is hidden, and sin and unjust aggression, and that you associate with Allah something for which He has not sent any authority, and that you say about Allah what you do not know - 33.

In the detail given above, the word: إِثْم (*ithm* : sin) covers all sins which fall on one personally - and in: بَغْى (*baghy* : injustice) included there are sins which relate to rights and dealings as concerning others. Then come Shirk, the associating of partners with Allah, and the forging of lies against Him. That they are grave sins is quite evident.

This particular detail was mentioned here also because it covers almost all kinds of prohibitions and sins - whether they pertained to belief or conduct, or were done personally, or related to rights of others which were usurped. This was done also because these people of the Jāhiliyyah were involved with all these crimes and prohibitions. Thus, exposed here was another demonstration of their ignorance which was that they would abstain from what was made lawful for them and would not even hesitate to use what was declared to be unlawful.

Unfortunately, it is a necessary outcome of excess (*ghuluww*) in religion and introduction of self-invented practices (*bid'āt*) in it that people who get involved with this type of activity become habitually heedless to the root of religion and its essential requirements. Therefore, the harm caused by excess in religion and innovation in established faith is twofold. First of all getting involved with such *Ghuluww* and *Bid'ah* is a sin in itself. Then, seen in contrast, far too grave is the very

deprivation from the true religion of Allah and the genuine way of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم. Refuge with Allah (from such a fate)!

The first and the second verse both mentioned two crimes committed by disbelievers. They took Ḥalāl as Ḥarām and made the Ḥarām become Ḥalāl for themselves by themselves. The third verse (34) describes their sad end and the punishment they would have in the Hereafter. It was said:

وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ أَجَلٌ فَإِذَا جَآءَ أَجَلُهُمْ لَا يَسْتَأْخِرُونَ سَاعَةً وَّلَا يَسْتَقْدِمُونَ

(And for every people there is an appointed time. So, when their appointed time comes, they will not be late for a moment, nor will they go before).

In other words, what is being said here is that those committing excesses who, despite their contumacy, are basking in the sunshine of the blessings of Allah Ta'ālā, and do not seem to be anywhere close to being punished, they should not lose sight of the customary practice of Allah that He, in His infinite mercy, keeps granting a long leash to sinners so that they would somehow stop doing what they do. But, the term of this leash and the time of this respite stands determined in the ultimate knowledge of Allah Ta'ālā. When that time comes, it just comes - neither too late nor too soon. Thus, criminals are caught in punishment. At times, the punishment descends right here in this world - and if, the punishment does not visit them here, it waits to receive them soon after their death.

As for the appointed time not being late or early as stated in this verse, it is a manner of saying, something like saying to a salesperson in a store: What is your last price, more or less? It is obvious that the inquiry is for the lower price, not the higher. But, it is put there as a subordinate suffix. Similarly, the real objective here is to state that there will be no delay after the appointed time. The mention of 'before' along with 'late' makes it closer to common comprehension.

Verses 35 - 39

يَٰبَنِيٓ ءَادَمَ إِمَّا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ رُسُلٌ مِّنكُمْ يَقُصُّونَ عَلَيْكُمْ ءَايَٰتِي فَمَنِ اتَّقَىٰ وَأَصْلَحَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾ وَالَّذِينَ

كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَاسْتَكْبَرُوْا عَنْهَآ اُولٰٓئِكَ اَصْحٰبُ النَّارِ ۚ هُمْ فِيْهَا
خٰلِدُوْنَ ﴿۳۶﴾ فَمَنْ اَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرٰى عَلَى اللّٰهِ كَذِبًا اَوْ كَذَّبَ
بِاٰيٰتِهٖ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ يَنَالُهُمْ نَصِيْبُهُمْ مِّنَ الْكِتٰبِ ؕ حَتّٰٓى اِذَا جَآءَتْهُمْ
رُسُلُنَا يَتَوَفَّوْنَهُمْ ۙ قَالُوْٓا اَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ تَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ ؕ قَالُوْا
ضَلُّوْا عَنَّا وَشَهِدُوْا عَلٰٓى اَنْفُسِهِمْ اَنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا كٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿۳۷﴾ قَالَ
ادْخُلُوْا فِيْٓ اُمَمٍ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ مِّنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْاِنْسِ فِى النَّارِ ؕ
كُلَّمَا دَخَلَتْ اُمَّةٌ لَّعَنَتْ اُخْتَهَا ؕ حَتّٰٓى اِذَا ادَّارَكُوْا فِيْهَا جَمِيْعًا ۙ
قَالَتْ اُخْرٰىهُمْ لِاُوْلٰىهُمْ رَبَّنَا هٰٓؤُلَآءِ اَضَلُّوْنَا فَاٰتِهِمْ عَذَابًا ضِعْفًا
مِّنَ النَّارِ ؕ قَالَ لِكُلٍّ ضِعْفٌ وَّلٰكِنْ لَّا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۳۸﴾ وَقَالَتْ
اُوْلٰىهُمْ لِاُخْرٰىهُمْ فَمَا كَانَ لَكُمْ عَلَيْنَا مِنْ فَضْلٍ فَذُوْقُوا الْعَذَابَ
بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْسِبُوْنَ ﴿۳۹﴾

O children of ’Ādam, if messengers from among you come to you narrating My verses before you, then, whoever fears Allah and corrects (himself), for them there shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve. [35]

And those who belie Our verses and stand arrogant against them - those are the people of the Fire. There they shall live for ever. [36]

So, who is more unjust than the one who coins a lie against Allah or belies His signs? They shall receive their share from what is written until when Our messengers shall come to them to take their souls, they shall say, “Where is that which you used to call besides Allah?” They will say, “They are lost to us” and they shall testify against themselves that they were disbelievers. [37]

He (Allah) will say, “Enter the Fire with peoples who passed before you, the Jinn and the human beings.” Whenever a people enter, they will curse their fellows until when they shall gather there together, the last of them will say of the first of them, “Our Lord, they

misguided us; so, give them a double punishment of the Fire." He will say, "For each there is a double, but you do not know." [38] **And the first of them will say to the last of them, "So you have no superiority over us. Now, taste the punishment for what you have been earning."** [39]

Verses 40 - 43

إِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَاسْتَكْبَرُوْا عَنْهَا لَا تُفَتَّحُ لَهُمْ اَبْوَابُ
السَّمَآءِ وَلَا يَدْخُلُوْنَ الْجَنَّةَ حَتّٰى يَلِجَ الْجَمَلُ فِىْ سَمِّ الْخِيَاطِ ؕ
وَكَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِى الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ ﴿٤٠﴾ لَهُمْ مِّنْ جَهَنَّمَ مِهَادٌ وَّ مِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ
غَوَاشٍ ؕ وَكَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِى الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٤١﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا
الصّٰلِحٰتِ لَا نُكَلِّفُ نَفْسًا اِلَّا وُسْعَهَآ ز اُولٰٓئِكَ اَصْحٰبُ الْجَنَّةِ ج هُمْ
فِيْهَا خٰلِدُوْنَ ﴿٤٢﴾ وَنَزَعْنَا مَا فِىْ صُدُوْرِهِمْ مِّنْ غِلٍّ تَجْرِىْ مِنْ
تَحْتِهِمُ الْاَنْهٰرُ ج وَقَالُوا الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِىْ هَدٰىنَا لِهٰذَا قف وَمَا كُنَّا
لِنَهْتَدِىَ لَوْلَآ اَنْ هَدٰىنَا اللّٰهُ ج لَقَدْ جَآءَتْ رُسُلُ رَبِّنَا بِالْحَقِّ ؕ
وَنُوْدُوْٓا اَنْ تِلْكُمُ الْجَنَّةُ اُوْرِثْتُمُوْهَا بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٤٣﴾

Surely, those who have belied Our signs and stood arrogant against them, the gates of the heavens shall not be opened for them, and they shall not enter the Paradise unless a camel enters into the eye of a needle. And this is how We recompense the sinners. [40] **For them there is a bed from the Jahannam, and over them there are coverings. And this is how We recompense the transgressors.** [41]

And those who believe and do good deeds - Allah does not obligate anyone beyond his capacity - they are the people of Paradise; they shall remain there for ever. [42] **And We will remove whatever of malice they had in their hearts. Rivers will flow beneath them. And they will say, "All praise to Allah who has led us unto this. And we were not to find the way, had Allah not guided us, surely, the messengers of our Lord came with**

truth." And they will be given a call, "Here is the Paradise. This you have been made to inherit for the deeds you have been doing." [43]

Commentary

Mentioned first in the set of verses cited above (35-37) is a pledge taken from every human being in the world of spirits, before being born into the material world. The pledge envisaged that they would, when the prophets of Allah come to them with Divine guidance and injunctions, listen to them in earnest and act accordingly. They were also told that those who abide by the pledge and fulfill what it entails, will have their salvation from sorrows and deserve eternal peace and comfort. And conversely, those who belie prophets or rebel against injunctions they bring shall have the eternal punishment of Jahannam waiting for them. The later set of verses presents what actually happened when different groups of human beings came into the world and started acting differently. Some of them threw the pledge behind their backs and settled to oppose it. Others held to it and acted righteously. The ultimate end of the two groups and the reward and punishment for them has been described in the later four verses (40-43).

Mentioned in verses 40 and 41 are deniers and criminals, and in verses 42 and 43, the believers and God-fearing who fulfilled the pledge.

In the first verse (40), it was said that those who belied the prophets of Allah and acted arrogantly against Divine guidance and 'Āyāt, for them, the gates of heaven will not be opened.

Reported in Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ is a Tafsīr of this verse from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه which says that the gates of heaven will be opened neither for them, nor for their prayers. It means that their prayer will not be answered and their deeds will be stopped from reaching the place where the deeds of the righteous servants of Allah are kept preserved, the name of which, according to the Qur'ān, is: عِلِّيِّيْنَ (*'Illiyyīn*) (Sūrah Al-Mutaffifīn - 83:18-21). This subject has been referred to in yet another verse of the Qur'ān where it is said: اِلَيْهِ يَصْعَدُ الْكَلِمُ الطَّيِّبُ وَالْعَمَلُ الصَّالِحُ يَرْفَعُهٗ, that is, 'one's good words are taken to Allah Ta'ālā and one's good deed carries them' meaning that man's good deeds become the cause of Ṭayyib Kalimāt (good words) reaching Allah Ta'ālā.

In a narration from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās and other Ṣaḥābah رضی اللہ عنہم اجمعین , the Tafsīr of the verse also says that the gates of heaven will not be opened for the spirits of deniers and disbelievers - and these spirits will be thrown down. This subject is supported by a Ḥadīth of Sayyidnā Barā' ibn 'Āzib رضی اللہ عنہ which has been reported in detail by Abū Dāwūd, Nasa'ī, Ibn Mājah and Imām Aḥmad, a summary of which is given below.

The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم went to a Janāzah of some Anṣarī Companion. The grave was not ready yet, so he sat down on an open spot. The Companions sat around him, silent. He raised his head and said: When the time of death comes for a believing servant of Allah, angels with white, radiant faces come from the heaven with the shroud and fragrance of the heaven and sit down in front of the person to die. Then, comes the angel of death, 'Izrā'īl علیہ السلام and he addresses his Rūḥ (spirit, soul): O soul at peace, come out to receive the forgiveness and pleasure of your *Rabb*. Then, his Rūḥ comes out of the body, nice and easy, just like water coming out of a leather water-bag when opened. The angel of death receives his Rūḥ in his hands and entrusts it with the angels sitting there. These angels start moving out with the Rūḥ of the deceased. Wherever they meet a group of angels on their way, they are asked: Whose sacred Rūḥ is it? These angels introduce the Rūḥ of the deceased by his name and title with which he was known as a mark of respect in his life of the world. They tell him who he is, so and so, son of so and so. Then, comes the time when these angels reach the first heaven with the Rūḥ. They ask for the gate to be opened. The gate is opened. More angels join them from here until they reach as far as the seventh heaven. At that time, Allah Ta'ālā says: Write down the record of the deeds of this servant of Mine in the *'Illiyyīn* and then send him back. The Rūḥ returns to the grave again. In the grave come angels who keep the account of deeds. They make him sit up, and ask him: 'Who is your Rabb?' and 'what is your religion?' He says: Allah Ta'ālā is my Rabb and Islam is my religion. Then, comes the question: This pious person who has been sent for you - who is he? He says: He is the Rasūl of Allah Ta'ālā. Then comes a heavenly call: My servant is true. Roll out for him the carpet of Jannah. Dress him up in the apparel of Paradise. Open for him the door towards the Jannah. Through the door come the fragrance and breeze of Jannah

and his good deed transformed into a handsome presence comes near him to help him become familiar and rested in company.

In contrast, when the time of death comes for disbelievers and deniers, angels with dark and terrifying profile come from the heaven carrying a coarse piece of ragged rug and sit down in front of him. Then, the angel of death draws his Rūḥ out as if it were a thorny branch with wet wool wrapped round it and through it the thorny branch was to be pulled out. When this Rūḥ comes out, its stench is deadlier than the stench of a spoiled dead animal. The angels start moving out with the Rūḥ of the deceased. When other angels meet en-route, they ask: Whose evil Rūḥ is this? The angels tell them the worst of his name and title with which he was known in the world. They tell them that he is so and so, the son of so and so. Until they reach the first heaven and ask for the gate to be opened. The gate is not opened for him. The command comes to keep his record of deeds in Sijjīn where the record of the disobedient ones is maintained. His Rūḥ is thrown away. The Rūḥ returns to the grave. The angels responsible for account-taking make him sit up. They ask him the same questions they had asked the believer. His answer to every question is nothing but: هَاهْ هَاهْ لَا أَدْرِىْ (O O, I do not know). He is given the bed of Jahannam and the dress of Jahannam. In his grave, a door is opened toward the Jahannam through which he keeps receiving the heat and flames of Jahannam. His grave is made to become straightened on him. We seek the refuge of Allah from it.

To sum up, it can be said that the spirits of deniers and disbelievers are taken upto the gate of the heaven. When the door does not open, they are thrown back from there. The verse: لَا تُفَتَّحُ لَهُمْ اَبْوَابُ السَّمَآءِ (the gates of the heavens will not be opened for them - 41) may also mean that it is at the time of death that the gates of the heavens are not opened for them.

Towards the end of the verse, it was said: وَلَا يَدْخُلُوْنَ الْجَنَّةَ حَتّٰى يَلِجَ الْجَمَلُ فِىْ سَمِّ الْخِيَاطِ (and they shall not enter the Paradise unless a camel enters into the eye of a needle). Here, the word: يَلِجَ (*yalij*) is from: وُلُوْج (*wulūj*) which means to enter a narrow opening. *Jamal* is camel and *Samm*, the eye of a needle. The translation covers the meaning literally. The sense of the verse is that the camel is a big animal and its entry into the eye of

a needle is functionally impossible. So, equally impossible is their entry into Paradise. The purpose is to state that the punishment of Hell for them is everlasting. Then, follow the words which describe the added severity of the punishment in Hell: لَهُم مِّن جَهَنَّمَ مِهَادٌ وَّ مِن فَوْقِهِمْ غَوَاشٍ (For them there is a bed from the Jahannam, and over them there are coverings). The word: مِهاد (*mihād*) means a place of rest, bed or floor and: غَوَاشٍ (*ghawāsh*) is the plural form of: غاشِيَة (*ghāshiyah*) which means something which covers. The sense is that for these people to rest, the bed and the top sheet will all come from Hell (an eloquent manner of putting the extreme severity of the punishment in everyday idiom). It will be noticed that at the end of the first verse, which mentions the deprivation from Paradise, it was said: وَكَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِى الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ (And this is how We recompense the sinners). Then, in the second verse, which describes the punishment of Hell, it was said: وَكَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِى الظّٰلِمِيْنَ (And this is how We recompense the transgressors) because it is more severe than the former.

The third verse (42) mentions those who dutifully follow Divine injunctions as they are the people of Paradise and there they shall live for ever.

Injunctions of the Sharī'ah : Consideration of Convenience

But, along with the condition set forth for such people - that they believe and do good deeds - said there, in all mercy, was: لَا نُكَلِّفُ نَفْسًا اِلَّا وُسْعَهَا (Allah does not obligate anyone beyond his capacity). The purpose is to emphasize that good deeds - which is a condition for entry into Paradise - is really not something so difficult as would be beyond the ability of a man or woman. In fact, Allah Ta'ālā has made the injunctions of the Shari'ah flexible and easy in every department of life. Leaves and concessions have been granted in every injunction keeping sickness, weakness, travel and other human needs under consideration.

According to Tafsīr Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ, when human beings were commanded to do good deeds, the likelihood existed that they might find this a little heavy on them since doing what is good and required, everywhere and under all conditions, was beyond one's capacity. Therefore, this doubt of theirs was removed through these words which ensure that the injunctions of Allah are given keeping in view

the various stages of human lives and that they are appropriate to prevailing conditions in all circumstances, for all time and all places. With such comprehensive consideration working behind these injunctions acting according to them should not be difficult at all.

For its People, a Paradise minus Malice

In the fourth verse (43), two particular states of the people of Jannah have been identified. The first one finds mention in: وَنَزَعْنَا مَا فِىْ صُدُوْرِهِمْ مِّنْ غِلٍّ تَجْرِىْ مِنْ تَحْتِهِمُ الْاَنْهٰرُ (And We remove whatever of malice they had in their hearts. Rivers will flow beneath them).

According to Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, when believers would have crossed the Bridge of Ṣirāṭ and their deliverance from Jahannam would have become certain, they would be stopped over a bridge between Jannah and Jahannam - to remove their malice first. If someone had some grudge against someone, or ill-will or a heart-burn on the loss of a right, all that will be mutually settled and washed off for good right there. So, when they go to Jannah, they will be free of malice, hatred, animosity and other personality disorders of the kind.

It appears in Tafsīr Maẓharī that this bridge will obviously be the last part of the Bridge of Ṣirāṭ which is close to Jannah. 'Allāma Al-Suyuṭī has also opted for this approach.

Then comes the issue of settling rights. It goes without saying that any loss of rights cannot be compensated by money for nobody would have it there. Instead of that, in accordance with a Ḥadīth in al-Bukhārī and Muslim, this payment will be made in the currency of deeds. Lost rights will be compensated by giving the deeds of the usurper to the owner of the right. And should it be that no more deeds are left with this person and there remain other rights which still have to be settled, then, the sins of the owner of the unsettled right will be transferred to the account of the usurper of the right.

In a Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has called the person, who did good deeds in his worldly life but remained negligent of the rights of people, the greatest pauper - for as a result of this neglect he lost all good deeds and stood there empty-handed.

In this Ḥadīth narration, what has been described is but a general rule governing the fulfillment of rights and avenging an injustice in-

flicted. But, it is not necessary that everyone has to face this situation. In fact, according to the report of Ibn Kathīr and Tafsīr Maẓharī, possible there would be the situation that no one settles scores and takes revenge, yet mutual malices get to be removed without anything like that.

This is what appears in some narrations. When people would have crossed the Bridge of Ṣirāṭ, they would reach a stream of water and drink from it. The property of this water will be such as would remove all mutual malice from the hearts of all of them. While commenting on the noble verse: وَسَقٰهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ شَرَابًا طَهُوْرًا (And their Lord will give to them to drink a pure drink - 76:21 - AYA), the Tafsīr of this verse given by Imām al-Qurṭubī is not any different when he says that washed away from this water of Jannah shall be all grudges in hearts.

After reciting this verse, Sayyidnā 'Alī al-Murtaḍā رضى الله عنه once said: I hope that we - 'Uthmān and Ṭalḥah and Zubayr and me - shall be among those whose hearts will be cleansed of malice before the entry into Paradise. (Ibn Kathīr) These noble souls named here had their mutual disagreements during their life time in the world which had reached the limits of war.

The second state of the people of Jannah described in this verse is that on their arrival in Jannah, they will express their gratitude to Allah Ta'ālā that He guided them towards Jannah and made it easy for them to reach there. They will say that, had the grace of Allah not been with them, they would have never dared reach there.

This tells us that no one can go to Jannah by personal effort alone - unless the grace of Allah Ta'ālā makes it possible for the aspirant. The reason is that even this 'effort' itself is not within one's control. That too comes through the grace and mercy of Allah Ta'ālā alone.

Guidance has Degrees, the Last being the Entry into Paradise

Imām Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, who has explained *Hidāyah* or guidance in a comprehensive manner as it appears in the Holy Qur'ān, has said that guidance is a popular term but it has different degrees. The truth of the matter is that guidance is another name of finding the way to reach Allah Ta'ālā. Therefore, the degrees of achieving nearness to Allah are many and different and unending. Similarly, the degrees of

guidance too are extremely varied and different from each other. The lowest degree of guidance is deliverance from Kufr and Shirk, and having *'Īmān*. One on this degree of guidance has his or her orientation changed, away from the path of error - towards Allah. Then, there is the distance between Allah Ta'ālā and His servants. This distance takes a journey to cover - and every stage so covered has degrees, which is called *Hidāyah* or guidance. Therefore, guidance is a need. At no time, can anyone claim not to need it, not even prophets and messengers of Allah. For this reason, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, not only taught his people the lesson of: اِهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيْمَ (Guide us in the straight path), but he himself kept making this prayer - because there is no end to the stages and ranks of nearness to Allah, so much so, that entry into the Paradise mentioned in this verse has been identified as *Hidāyah* or guidance, for this is the last station of *Hidāyah*.*

Verses 44 - 49

وَنَادٰٓى اَصْحٰبُ الْجَنَّةِ اَصْحٰبَ النَّارِ اَنْ قَدْ وَجَدْنَا مَا وَعَدَنَا
رَبُّنَا حَقًّا فَهَلْ وَجَدْتُّمْ مَّا وَعَدَ رَبُّكُمْ حَقًّا ؕ قَالُوْا نَعَمْ ۚ فَاَذَّنَ
مُؤَذِّنٌۢ بَيْنَهُمْ اَنْ لَّعْنَةُ اللّٰهِ عَلَى الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٤٤﴾ الَّذِيْنَ يَصُدُّوْنَ
عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ وَيَبْغُوْنَهَا عِوَجًا ۚ وَهُمْ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ كٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿٤٥﴾ وَ
بَيْنَهُمَا حِجَابٌ ۚ وَعَلَى الْاَعْرَافِ رِجَالٌ يَّعْرِفُوْنَ كُلًّاۢ بِسِيْمٰىهُمْ ۚ
وَنَادَوْا اَصْحٰبَ الْجَنَّةِ اَنْ سَلٰمٌ عَلَيْكُمْ ۚ لَمْ يَدْخُلُوْهَا وَهُمْ
يَطْمَعُوْنَ ﴿٤٦﴾ وَاِذَا صُرِفَتْ اَبْصَارُهُمْ تِلْقَآءَ اَصْحٰبِ النَّارِ ۙ
قَالُوْا رَبَّنَا لَا تَجْعَلْنَا مَعَ الْقَوْمِ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٤٧﴾ وَنَادٰٓى اَصْحٰبُ
الْاَعْرَافِ رِجَالًا يَّعْرِفُوْنَهُمْ بِسِيْمٰىهُمْ قَالُوْا مَآ اَغْنٰى عَنْكُمْ
جَمْعُكُمْ وَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَسْتَكْبِرُوْنَ ﴿٤٨﴾ اَهٰٓؤُلَآءِ الَّذِيْنَ اَقْسَمْتُمْ
لَا يَنَالُهُمُ اللّٰهُ بِرَحْمَةٍ ؕ اُدْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَآ اَنْتُمْ

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* Those interested in reading more about the implications, meaning and degrees of guidance may see Ma'ariful-Qur'an, English Translation, Vol.I, pages 72-77.

تَحْزَنُوْنَ ﴿٤٩﴾

And the people of Paradise will call out to the people of the Fire saying, "We have found true what our Lord had promised to us. Have you, then, found true what your Lord had promised?" They will say, "Yes." Then, an announcer between them will call out, "The curse of Allah is on the wrongdoers [44] **who turn away from the way of Allah seeking crookedness in it, and they are the deniers of the Hereafter."** [45]

And between the two groups there will be a partition. And on A'raf (the Heights), there shall be people who will recognize both through their signs, and they will call out to the people of Paradise, "Peace on you." They have not entered it, yet they hope to. [46] **And when their eyes will be turned to the people of the Fire, they will say, "Our Lord, do *not* put us in the company of the unjust people."** [47]

And the people of A'raf will call out to the people whom they would recognize through their signs saying, "Your masses did not help you, nor the arrogance you were used to. [48] **Is it these for whom you swore that Allah will not reach them with mercy?" - "Enter the Paradise; there is no fear on you, nor shall you grieve."** [49]

Commentary

When the people of Paradise will reach Paradise, where they belong, and the people of Hell, will reach Hell, where they belong, it is evident that the two places will be far apart from each other in all respects. But, despite this being so, many verses of the Holy Qur'ān confirm that in between the two places, there will be points from where one could see the other, and engage in an exchange of conversation.

In Sūrah Al-Ṣāffāt, mentioned there are two persons who had known each other in their mortal life. But, one of them was a believer while the other, a disbeliever. In the Hereafter, when the believer will go to Paradise and the disbeliever, to Hell - they will notice each other and talk. Says the verse: فَاطَّلَعَ فَرَآهُ فِيْ سَوَآءِ الْجَحِيْمِ قَالَ تَاللّٰهِ إِنْ كِدْتَّ لَتُرْدِيْنِ ٥ وَلَوْلَا نِعْمَةُ رَبِّيْ لَكُنْتُ مِنَ الْمُحْضَرِيْنَ ٥ أَفَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَيِّتِيْنَ إِلَّا مَوْتَتَنَا الْأُوْلٰى وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمُعَذَّبِيْنَ (37:55): In brief, it means when the friend in Paradise will look for the friend in Hell, he will find

him lying in the middle of it. He will curse him commenting that he wanted him to be ruined like him and had it not been for the grace of Allah, he too would have been found lying in Hell like him. Then he would remind him of his saying to him in the mortal world that there was to be no life, no accounting, no reward, and no punishment after death. He could now see for himself what was happening in reality.

Such dialogues, questions and answers exchanged between the people of Paradise and the people of Hell appear not only in the verses cited above, but continue after that as well, through almost one section.

As for these access points in between Paradise and Hell from where inmates could be seen and addressed, these would really be a different kind of punishment for the people of Hell who would find themselves being reproached from all sides. Then, as they see the blessings being enjoyed by the people of Paradise, they will find themselves burning in rage for having missed those - and burning in Hell they already will be. As for the people of Paradise, they will have another kind of comfort when, after seeing the plight of those in Hell, they will be more grateful for the blessings they had the good fortune of having. Then, they would remember people who mocked at them for believing and they could nothing against them, and when they see them disgraced and punished ultimately, they would have the last laugh at their undoing. The same thing has been said in Sūrah Al-Muṭaffifīn:

فَالْيَوْمَ الَّذِينَ اٰمَنُوا مِنَ الْكُفَّارِ يَضْحَكُونَ ۝ عَلَى الْاَرَآئِكِ يَنْظُرُونَ ۝ هَلْ ثُوِّبَ الْكُفَّارُ مَا كَانُوا يَفْعَلُونَ .

But, on this Day, those who believed will be laughing at the disbelievers. They will be on raised couches watching (the denouement). Would have the disbelievers not been repaid for what they used to do? - 83:34-36.

Against the erring record of the people of Hell, admonition will also come from the angels. Addressing them, they will say:

هٰذِهِ النَّارُ الَّتِي كُنْتُمْ بِهَا تُكَذِّبُونَ ۝ اَفَسِحْرٌ هٰذَآ اَمْ اَنْتُمْ لَا تُبْصِرُونَ

This is the Fire that you used to belie. Then (look), is this a magic, or is it that you do not see? - 52:14-15

Similarly, it is in the first of the cited verses that the people of Paradise will tell the people of Hell that they found the promise of blessings and comforts made by their Lord absolutely true and then they will ask them if the punishment against which they were warned actually came to them, or not. They will admit that they did see it.

In support of this question and answer between them, some angel shall, with the will of Allah, proclaim that cursed be the unjust who used to prevent people from the path of Allah and wished that their way too became crooked like their own and denied the Hereafter.

Who are the People of A'rāf?

As a corrollary of the dialogue between those in Paradise and Hell, there is something else pointed to in this verse - that there will be some people who had their deliverance from Hell but had not yet found entry into Paradise, though they did hope that they would. These people are called the people of A'rāf.

What is A'rāf? This is explained by the verses of Sūrah Al-Ḥadīd (58). They tell us that there will be three groups of people on the day of Resurrection. (1) Declared disbelievers and polytheists who will never make it to the Bridge of Ṣirāṭ, to begin with, because they will be thrown into the Hell through its doors before that stage comes; (2) believers who will have the light of Faith with them; and (3) hypocrites - since they have been tailing Muslims in the physical world, they will start behind them on the same trail. When they begin walking on the Bridge of Ṣirāṭ, a dense darkness will overtake all of them. The believers will still keep moving ahead with the help of their light of Faith while the hypocrites will call and ask them to stop and wait for them so that they could make use of the light they have. Thereupon, a caller for the sake of Allah will call: Turn back. Find your light there. The message given would be that the light they were seeking was the light of Faith and Righteous Deeds which could only be acquired at a place which they have left behind. Those who failed to acquire this light there through Faith and Deed shall not enjoy the benefit of that light here. In this state, a wall would be made to stand in between the hypocrites and the believers. The wall would have a gate. Beyond this gate, there will be nothing but punishment all over. Inside the gate there will be believers and the atmosphere will be filled with the mercy of

Allah and the view of Paradise. This is the subject of the following verse from Sūrah Al-Ḥadīd:

يَوْمَ يَقُولُ الْمُنٰفِقُوْنَ وَالْمُنٰفِقٰتُ لِلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا انْظُرُوْنَا نَقْتَبِسْ مِنْ نُّوْرِكُمْ ۚ قِيْلَ ارْجِعُوْا وَرَآءَكُمْ فَالْتَمِسُوْا نُوْرًا ۭ فَضُرِبَ بَيْنَهُمْ بِسُوْرٍ لَّهٗ بَابٌ ۭ بَاطِنُهٗ فِيْهِ الرَّحْمَةُ وَظَاهِرُهٗ مِنْ قِبَلِهِ الْعَذَابُ .

The Day the hypocrites, the men and the women, will say to those who had believed: "Wait for us. Let us have a share from your light," it will be said, "Return behind you, then seek light." So, put between them will be a wall with a gate in it. Inside it, there will be mercy all over; and outside it, the Punishment face to face - 57:13.

In the verse quoted above, the wall which will be placed to separate the people of Paradise from the people of Hell has been called: سُوْر (*sūr*). This word is primarily used for a security wall built around a major city, usually made wide and fortified and posted where are army guards who stay in bunkers and remain vigilant against any enemies.

Verse 46 of Sūrah Al-A'rāf says: وَبَيْنَهُمَا حِجَابٌ ۚ وَعَلَى الْاَعْرَافِ رِجَالٌ يَّعْرِفُوْنَ كُلًّا ۢ بِسِيْمٰهُمْ (And between the two groups there will be a partition). According to Ibn Jarīr and other Tafsīr authorities, in this verse, the word: حِجَاب (*ḥijāb*) means the same wall which has been called: سُوْر (*sūr*) in Sūrah Al-Ḥadīd. The top portion of the wall is known as Al-A'rāf because it is the plural form of 'Urf and 'Urf refers to the top portion of everything as it is distinct and recognizable from a distance. From this explanation we know that the top portion of the partition wall between Paradise and Hell is the A'rāf. Then, the verse of the Sūrah tells us that on the day of Resurrection there will be some people at this place who would be seeing the happenings in Paradise and Hell both and will be talking to people on both sides.

As for who these people shall be and why would they be made to stop here, it is something in which commentators differ and the narrations of Ḥadīth vary. But, what is sound, weighty and acceptable with the majority of commentators is that these people will be the ones whose good and bad deeds will come out equal in weight on the Scale of Deeds. So, because of their good deeds, they will have their deliverance from Hell, but - because of their sins - they would have not been

admitted into the Paradise yet. Finally, they too will find entry into Paradise because of the grace and mercy of Allah Ta'ālā.

This is what Sayyidnā Hudhayfah, Ibn Mas'ūd and Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه, from among the Ṣaḥabah, as well as other Ṣaḥabah and Tabi'īn say. Then, in it converge narrations of Ḥadīth reported variously. Ibn Jarir reports from Sayyidnā Ḥudhayfah رضى الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was asked about the people of A'rāf. He said: These are people whose good and bad deeds will be equal. Therefore, from Jahannam they stand delivered. But, in Jannah they have not entered yet. They were stopped at this place of the A'rāf until the process of accounting of deeds and the judgement is over. Their fate would be decided after that and ultimately they will be forgiven and admitted into Jannah. (Ibn Kathīr)

There is a narration from Sayyidnā Jābir ibn 'Abdullāh reported by Ibn Marduwayh in which it is said that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was asked as to who were the people of A'rāf? He said: They are people who took part in Jihād without the pleasure and permission of their parents and laid down their lives in the way of Allah. So, the disobedience to parents stopped them from entering into the Paradise and their *shahādah* in the way of Allah stopped them from entering into the Hell.

The two Āḥadīth quoted above have no element of contradiction. Instead of that, this Ḥadīth is an example of those whose virtues and vices are equal in the same degree as here - martyrdom in the way of Allah on one side and disobedience to parents on the other. The scale is equal. (Ibn Kathīr)

Salam Greetings : Blessed Legacy of the Holy Prophet ﷺ

After having gone through the description and definition of the people of A'rāf, we can now take up the subject of the verse itself which says that the people of A'rāf will call out the people of Paradise and say: "سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ" (*Salāmun 'Alaiykum*). This word of greeting is also used in our present world when we meet each other. This is offered as a gift, a mark of respect and grace felt for the person so greeted. This is *Masnūn*, a way of Sunnah as practiced and recommended to his community by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. This is also said to the dead while visiting their graves. Then, it will also be the form of greeting on the

plain of Resurrection, and in Paradise as well. But, a closer look at the verses of the Qur'an and the narrations of Hadith tells us that saying: "اَلسَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ" (As-Salamu 'Alaiykum) is Masnun as long as we live in this world. Then, after having passed away from this mortal world, what is Masnun is saying: "سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ" (Salamun 'Alaiykum) - without the letters Alif and Lam at the beginning of Salam. The words to be said at the time of visiting graves as mentioned in the Qur'an also appear in this form, that is: سَلٰمٌ عَلَيْكُمْ بِمَا صَبَرْتُمْ فَنِعْمَ عُقْبَى الدَّارِ : Peace on you [*Salamun 'Alaiykum*] for that you observed patience. Then, fair is the ultimate abode - 13:24). And when the angels will receive the people of Paradise, this word appears in the same form there too: سَلٰمٌ عَلَيْكُمْ طِبْتُمْ فَادْخُلُوْهَا خٰلِدِيْنَ : (*Salamun 'Alaiykum* [Peace on you], you have done well. So, enter in it to live forever - 39:73). And here too, the people of A'raf will greet the people of Paradise with the same words: سَلٰمٌ عَلَيْكُمْ (*Salamun 'Alaiykum*).

Stated next is the status of the people of A'raf that they have yet to enter Paradise, though they hope to. After that it is said: وَإِذَا صُرِفَتْ أَبْصَارُهُمْ تِلْقَآءَ أَصْحٰبِ النَّارِ قَالُوْا رَبَّنَا لَا تَجْعَلْنَا مَعَ الْقَوْمِ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ (And when their eyes will be turned towards the people of the Fire, they will say, "Our Lord, do not put us in the company of the unjust people - 47).

The fifth verse (48) also mentions that the people of A'raf will address the people of Hell and admonish them by saying that the wealth and power that they depended on, and because of which they had become proud and arrogant, went the way of waste for all those strengths did not work for them at their hour of need.

Said in the sixth verse (49) is: أَهٰٓؤُلَآءِ الَّذِيْنَ أَقْسَمْتُمْ لَا يَنَالُهُمُ اللّٰهُ بِرَحْمَةٍ اُدْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَآ أَنْتُمْ تَحْزَنُوْنَ (Is it these for whom you swore that Allah would not reach them with mercy?" - "Enter the Paradise; there is no fear on you, nor shall you grieve).

Explaining this, Sayyidna 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas رضى الله عنه says: When the questions and anwers between the people of A'raf and the people of Paradise and Hell both will be over, that will be the time when the Lord of all the worlds will address the people of Hell and tell them about the people of A'raf that they swore that the people of A'raf will not be forgiven their sins and mercy will not be shown to them. Then, there comes an immediate declaration of His mercy when the people of A'raf will be told: Go and enter the Paradise. You should have

no fear of what had happened in the past nor should you have any anxiety about the future. (Ibn Kathīr)

Verses 50 - 53

وَنَادٰٓى اَصْحٰبُ النَّارِ اَصْحٰبَ الْجَنَّةِ اَنْ اَفِيْضُوْا عَلَيْنَا مِنَ
الْمَآءِ اَوْ مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللّٰهُ ؕ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّ اللّٰهَ حَرَّمَهُمَا عَلَى
الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿٥٠﴾ الَّذِيْنَ اتَّخَذُوْا دِيْنَهُمْ لَهْوًا وَّلَعِبًا وَّغَرَّتْهُمُ
الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَا ۚ فَالْيَوْمَ نَنْسٰىهُمْ كَمَا نَسُوْا لِقَآءَ يَوْمِهِمْ هٰذَا ۙ
وَمَا كَانُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا يَجْحَدُوْنَ ﴿٥١﴾ وَلَقَدْ جِئْنٰهُمْ بِكِتٰبٍ فَصَّلْنٰهُ
عَلٰى عِلْمٍ هُدًى وَّرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُّؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٥٢﴾ هَلْ يَنْظُرُوْنَ اِلَّا
تَاْوِيْلَهٗ ؕ يَوْمَ يَاْتِيْ تَاْوِيْلُهٗ يَقُوْلُ الَّذِيْنَ نَسُوْهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ قَدْ
جَآءَتْ رُسُلُ رَبِّنَا بِالْحَقِّ ۚ فَهَلْ لَّنَا مِنْ شُفَعَآءَ فَيَشْفَعُوْا لَنَآ
اَوْ نُرَدُّ فَنَعْمَلَ غَيْرَ الَّذِيْ كُنَّا نَعْمَلُ ؕ قَدْ خَسِرُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ
وَضَلَّ عَنْهُمْ مَّا كَانُوْا يَفْتَرُوْنَ ﴿٥٣﴾

And the people of Fire will call out to the people of Paradise, "Pour on us some water or some of what Allah has provided you." They will say, "Allah has prohibited these for disbelievers, [50] **who had taken their faith as play and game, and the worldly life has deceived them." So, today We shall forget them, as they forgot to face this day of theirs, and as they used to deny Our signs.** [51]

And surely We have brought them the Book We have elaborated, with knowledge, a guidance and mercy for people who believe. [52]

They are waiting for nothing but its final result. The day when its final result comes, those who had ignored it earlier will say, "Surely, the messengers of our Lord had come with truth. So, are there any intercessors for us who could intercede in our favour? Or, could we be sent back, so that we might do contrary to what we used to do?" They have put their selves to loss, and lost

from them are those whom they used to coin. [53]

Verse 54

إِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوٰى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ يُغْشِي الَّيْلَ النَّهَارَ يَطْلُبُهُ حَثِيثًا وَّ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ وَالنُّجُوْمَ مُسَخَّرٰتٍ بِأَمْرِهِ أَلَا لَهُ الْخَلْقُ وَ الْأَمْرُ تَبٰرَكَ اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٥٤﴾

Surely, your Lord is Allah who created the heavens and the earth in six days, then He positioned himself on the Throne. He covers the day with night which pursues it swiftly. And (He created) the sun and the moon and the stars, subjected to His command. Beware, for Him is the creation and the command. Glorious is Allah, the Lord of all the worlds. [54]

Commentary

Verse 54 begins with the statement that Allah has created the heavens and the earth and the planets and the stars and that they perform their functions under a firmly established system. The statement releases an inevitable suggestion that the maker of this system has the most perfect power conceivable. This, in turn, invites every reasonable human being to think. Here is the most sacred Being who is capable of bringing this great universe from non-being to the state of being and who can keep it functioning through the wisest of systems. Why would it be difficult for him to undo everything and recreate it once again on the day of *Qiyāmah*? For human beings, the best course is to stop denying the *Qiyāmah* and turn to the same Being as their Rabb who is their Master and Nurturer. From Him they should seek what they need and Him alone they should worship. Let them come out of the quagmire of worshiping their own kind and recognize the truth. Said herein was: 'Surely, your Lord is Allah - Who created the heavens and the earth in six days.'

The Creation of the Heavens and the Earth: Why in Six Days?

A question arises here. We know that Allah Ta'ālā has great power. He is capable of creating the whole universe in a single moment. The Holy Qur'ān itself says so time and again. For instance, in Sūrah Al-

Qamar, it is said: وَمَآ اَمْرُنَآ اِلَّا وَاحِدَةٌ كَلَمْحٍ بِالْبَصَرِ (And Our Command is but a single Word, - like the twinkling of an eye - 54:50). Again, in Sūrah Yā Sīn, it is said: اِذَآ اَرَادَ شَيْئًا اَنْ يَّقُوْلَ لَهٗ كُنْ فَيَكُوْنُ (when [Allah] intends [to create] a thing - for it He says: "Be" and it comes to be - 36:82). Why, then, would six days be spent in creating the universe?

Commentator of the Qur'ān, Sayyidnā Sa'īd ibn Jubayr رضی الله عنه has given an answer by saying that Allah is certainly capable of creating everything there is in a single moment, but Divine wisdom so demanded that the creation of our universe take six days so that human beings could be taught the lesson of graduation and perfection in running the universal system. This is supported by a Ḥadīth in which the Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم said: Working with deliberation, dignity and graduation is from Allah Ta'ālā and hastening, from Shayṭān. (Maẓharī, with reference to Shu'ab al-'Īmān by Al-Baihaqī)

The implication is that the attitude of rushing into doing things is not good for human beings. One cannot give due thought to and take into consideration all aspects of an issue at hand if driven by haste. An action taken in haste spoils what is done and brings remorse in the end. So, whatever is done with proper advance thinking and functional ease brings Barakah (blessing from Allah which enhances the effeciency and outcome of the endeavour).

How were Days and Nights identified before the Creation of Earth, Heavens and Planets?

The second question is: The presence of the day and night is recognized through the movement of the sun. But, before the birth of the earth and the heavens, when there was no sun and moon, on what basis comes the count of six days?

For this reason, some commentators have said that six days means a time duration equal to six days and nights as in the existing world. But, a much clearer approach is that the terminology of day and night, that is, what occurs from sunrise to sunset is day and what appears from sunset to the next sunrise is night, is a terminology used in this world. May be, before the birth of the universe, Allah Ta'ālā had other signs determined for the day and night - as it would be in Paradise where the day and night will not depend on the movement of the sun.

This also tells us that it is not necessary that the six days during which the earth and the heavens were created, be equal to our six days. Instead, it is possible that they may be longer than these - as the Qur'ān says about the day of 'Ākhirah which will be equal to one thousand years.

Abū 'Abdullāh Rāzi has said that the movement of the far firmament is so fast as compared to the movements of our earth that the raised step of a man running here has still to come down to touch the ground when the far firmament moves a distance of three thousand miles. (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ)

Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal and Mujāhid say that six days here mean the six days of 'Ākhirah. The same view appears in a narration of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی الله عنه as reported by Ḍaḥḥāk.

And these six days during which the creation of the universe took place began, according to authentic narrations, from Friday and ended on Friday. On Yowm al-Sabt (the day of Sabbath), that is, Saturday, there was no work done on the creation of the universe. Some 'Ulama say that 'sabt' means to discontinue. The day was named as Yowm al-Sabt because the work of creation was over by that day. (Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr)

Mentioned in this verse is the creation of the universe in six days. Its details appear in verses 9 and 10 of Sūrah Ḥā Mīm As-Sajdah (Fuṣṣilāt - 41:9,10) saying that the earth was created in two days, then, created on the earth were, mountains, rivers, tributeries, trees, vegetation and things, human beings and animals could eat, in another two days. This comes to a total of four days. So, it was first said: خَلَقَ الْاَرْضَ فِىْ يَوْمَيْنِ (created the earth in two days) and then it was said: قَدَّرَ فِيْهَآ اَقْوَاتَهَا فِىْٓ اَرْبَعَةِ اَيَّامٍ (and determined in it the measure of its sustenance in four days).

The first two days during which the earth was created are Sunday and Monday; and the other two days during which the mountains, rivers and the life support systems of the earth were created are Tuesday and Wednesday. Thereafter, it was said: فَقَضٰهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمٰوٰتٍ فِىْ يَوْمَيْنِ (that is, then We completed the seven heavens in two days - 41:13). As obvious, these two days will be Thursday and Friday. Thus, by Friday, this becomes a total of six days.

In the present verse (54), after mentioning the creation of the heavens and the earth, it was said: ثُمَّ اسْتَوٰى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ (then He positioned Himself on the Throne). The word: اِسْتَوٰى (*Istawā*), as followed by *'alā* (on) here, literally means to take position on, or to settle, or be established. The word: عَرْش (*'Arsh*) means throne. Now, the question is what is this throne, the throne of the great Raḥmān, and how is it shaped or constituted, or is as it is - and what would the phenomena of 'positioning' on it mean?

Regarding this, the safest creed to hold, that which is clear and correct, and fairly doubt-free too, is no other but that of the most righteous elders, the Ṣaḥabah and the Tabi'īn - and later, that of many Sūfi thinkers as well. The creed is that human reason is incapable of comprehending the reality of the Being and Attributes of Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhu*. Pursuing the knowledge of its exact reality is an exercise in futility, even harmful. One should believe, as a matter of general principle, that the meaning intended by Allah Ta'ālā - whatever it may be - is the one correct and true. And, in this process, one should not try to determine or worry about fixing a meaning on one's own.

Someone asked the famous Imām Mālik exactly the same question: What is the meaning of : اسْتَوٰى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ (*Istawā 'ala al-'arsh* : positioned Himself on the throne)? He paused for a while, then said: 'Everyone knows the meaning of '*Istawā*,' and its particular nature and reality is such that human reason cannot comprehend it, and having faith in it is obligatory (Wājib), and asking a question about its nature and reality is Bid'ah (innovation in established religion) - because, the noble Ṣaḥabah, may Allah be pleased with them all, never asked such questions of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. Great elders (*Salaf*), Sufyān Al-Thawriy, Imām Awza'i, Layth ibn Sa'd, Sufyān ibn 'Uyaiynah and 'Abdullāh ibn Mubārak, may the mercy of Allah be upon them all, have said that the verses which have appeared in the Qur'ān as related to the Being and Attributes of Allah Ta'ālā should be believed in as they have come and exactly as they are, without any explanation, explication and interpretation. (Maẓharī)

Said after that in the verse was: يُغْشِى الَّيْلَ النَّهَارَ يَطْلُبُهٗ حَثِيْثًا (He covers the day with night which pursues it swifly). The sense is that this alternation of the night and day is a phenomenon of revolutionary proportions

in that it brings the whole world from light into the darkness, and from darkness into the light. Then, this very phenomena lends itself so swiftly and smoothly and obediently to the magnificent subduing power of Allah Ta'ālā that the least delay is not caused (in this transformation on such an unimaginable scale).

After that, it was said: وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ وَالنُّجُوْمَ مُسَخَّرٰتٍ بِاَمْرِهٖ that is, Allah created the sun and the moon and the stars in a state that all of them are moving in obedience to His will and command.

For a reasonable person, this is an invitation to think, to think about things made by the made he observes around him all the time. Experts make machines of all sorts. Some of them would have engineering problems right from the start. Others may not have such problems, but machines are machines, no matter how strong the base material and how impeccable the design. Parts have their normal wear and tear, or need for adjustment, repairs, servicing. Machines become idle until fixed. It might take weeks, or months, to put them back to work. But, look at these God-made machines. The effeciency and the perfection with which they started working from day one is still there. They are working wonderfully non-stop. Their movement is as precise as ever, not a second fast or slow. There is no wear and tear of parts and no need to go to a workshop. The reason is that they are functioning 'subject to His command' (مُسَخَّرٰتٍ بِاَمْرِهٖ). In other words, they need no source of energy to move them, no engine to make them function. They are working only under Divine Command. They are subjected to that alone. Therefore, the emergence of the slightest malfunction in them is impossible. But, of course, when the Absolute Master Himself decides to eliminate them at a time appointed by Him, this entire system would disintegrate. That day will be the day of *Qiyāmah*.

After having pointed out some examples, the description of the Absolute Subduing Power of Allah Ta'ālā was put in the form of a general rule by saying: اَلَا لَهُ الْخَلْقُ وَالْاَمْرُ (Beware, for Him alone is the creation and the command). The word: خَلْق (*khalq*) means to create and: اَمْر (*amr*), to command. The sense is that being the Creator and the Master is exclusive to Him. Other than Him, no one else can create the most insignificant of things, nor does anyone have the right to subject anyone to his command (except that Allah Ta'ālā Himself delegates a particular area

of activity to someone, in which case that too would be, in reality, nothing but the command of Allah). So, the verse means that creating all these things was the work of none but Him, and putting them into service was also not something anyone else could handle, for that too is an spectacle of the perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā.

In Sūfi thought, 'Khalq' and 'Amr' are two domains. 'Khalq' relates to matter and 'Amr' to the refined abstract. The Qur'ānic verse: قُلِ الرُّوحُ مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّي (Say, "The soul is a command from my Lord." - 17:58) points out in this direction as "Rūḥ" (soul, spirit) has been identified as a command from the Lord. The sense of the creation and the command being exclusive to Allah Ta'ālā would, in this light, mean that everything between the heavens and the earth is from matter and its creation has been called "Khalq." And what is beyond these, free from matter, its creation has been called "Amr." (Maẓharī)

At the end of the verse, it was said: تَبٰرَكَ اللّٰهُ رَبُّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ (Glorious is Allah, the Lord of the worlds). The word: تَبَارَكَ (*tabarak*) appearing here is a derivation from *barakah* which means to increase, grow, become more, remain, sustain, besides being employed in many other shades of meaning. At this place, '*tabaraka*' means to be high and supreme. It can be taken in the sense of high and sustaining, for Allah Ta'ālā is both. The sense of high finds confirmation in a sentence of the Ḥadīth which says: تَبَارَكْتَ وَتَعَالَيْتَ يَا ذَا الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ (You are blessed and high, O Master of Glory and Honour). Here, the word: '*tabārkta*' has been explained by the word: *ta'ālaita* which follows.

Verses 55 - 56

اُدْعُوْا رَبَّكُمْ تَضَرُّعًا وَّخُفْيَةً ۭ اِنَّهٗ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِيْنَ ﴿۵۵﴾ وَلَا تُفْسِدُوْا فِي الْاَرْضِ بَعْدَ اِصْلَاحِهَا وَادْعُوْهُ خَوْفًا وَّطَمَعًا ۭ اِنَّ رَحْمَتَ اللّٰهِ قَرِيْبٌ مِّنَ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ﴿۵۶﴾

Supplicate to your Lord humbly and secretly. Surely, He does not like those who cross the limits. [55]

And do no mischief on the earth after it has been set in order. And supplicate to Him in fear and hope. Surely, the mercy of Allah is close to the good in deeds. [56]

Commentary

Mentioned in previous verses were particular manifestations of the perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā, and His major blessings. The present verses lead us to consider: When He is the Master of perfect power, the sender of all blessings, and the Lord of all the worlds, it naturally follows that He should be the One to be called upon and prayed to under all circumstances, whether in distress or in need. The attitude of bypassing Him and turning towards some other direction is ignorance and failure.

Along with it, identified in these verses are some rules of etiquette to be followed when making Du'ā' (prayer, supplication). If due consideration is given to these rules, the hope that a prayer will be answered increases.

The Meaning and Etiquette of *Du'ā* and *Dhikr*

The word: دُعَاءٌ (*Du'ā'*), in the Arabic language, means to call upon someone to remove one's need. It is also used to remember in the absolute sense. Both meanings can be taken here. The verse says: اُدْعُوا رَبَّكُمْ (Supplicate to your Lord) that is, call your Rabb for your needs, or remember your Rabb and worship Him.

In the first case, it would mean: Ask Allah alone for what you need. In the second case, the sense would be: Do your Dhikr and 'Ibādah for Him alone. Both these explanations have been reported from Tafsīr authorities among the early righteous elders.

After that, it was said: تَضَرُّعًا وَّخُفْيَةً (humbly and secretly). The word: تَضَرُّعٌ (*taḍarru'*) means realization of inability, humility, and submission in a refined spirit of self-abasement (not found in the English language and its modern, secular, cultural context). And the word: خُفْيَةً (*khufyah*) means secret, secluded, or private (as opposed to open and public - as used in English too, but with no relevance to the dominant sense of secret in English bearing on the mysterious, the occult, and the whole field of espionage).

In the frame of these two words, described there are two important rules of etiquette which govern *Du'ā'* and *Dhikr*. First of all, in order that *Du'ā'* be answered, it is necessary that one appears before Allah Ta'ālā as weak, helpless and simply unable to hold on his own, modest

and humble, and submits to Him with a total negation of what is supposed to be pride, dignity, honour, ego, or self-view - and then makes *Du'ā'*. *Du'ā'* is a thing of the soul which requires that its words match the feebleness and humbleness of the maker of *Du'ā'*, that the manner of saying it remains a mirror of modesty, and that this overall humility should ooze forth from the very physical approach to this making of *Du'ā'*. Given this anatomy and profile of *Du'ā'*, the common practice of making *Du'ā'* these days cannot really be called the making of *Du'ā'*. It would, rather, be the reading of it. What happens most of the time is that we do not know what we are saying and it has become a routine as we notice in common Masajid. Imāms would usually say, rather read, some words of *Du'ā'* in the Arabic language which they have memorized and do this at the end of Ṣalāh. Most of the time, in some areas, the Imāms themselves do not know the meaning and sense of what they say - and even if they do know it, at least the less-knowing participants of the congregation are virtually unaware of what is being said. They would almost mechanically go on saying 'Āmīn, 'Āmīn' after the words read by the Imām without having any clue as to what was being said there. The outcome of all this stage demonstration is the vocalization of some words. *Du'ā'* has a reality of its own which is just not there. Then, this is an entirely different matter that Allah Ta'ālā, in His infinite mercy, may accept these very lifeless words and give them the effect of answered prayers. But, it is necessary that everyone understands that *Du'ā'* is not 'read.' It is 'asked.' Therefore, it is crucial that one asks as one should, properly, as due.

Then, there is another aspect of *Du'ā'*. If a person does know the meanings of the words of his *Du'ā'* - and even understands what he is saying - still, if it is not accompanied by proper approach, manner and physical bearing, the *Du'ā'* stands reduced to a bland claim to which no created servant of Allah is entitled.

So, given in the first word was the spirit of *Du'ā'* which requires that one shows his humility and prays to Allah for what he needs. Then, in the second word, the instruction given is that the asking in *Du'ā'* for what one needs should be done secretly and in a lowered voice which is superior in merit and more likely to be answered. The reason is that making *Du'ā'* in a raised voice is not free of three possible draw-

backs. Firstly, it is difficult to maintain modesty and humility in doing so. Secondly, there is the danger of hypocricy and desire for recognition creeping in through this mode. Thirdly, the manner in which this *Du'ā* is made only goes to show that the person making it almost does not know that Allah Ta'ālā is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. He knows what we show on the outside and also that which we conceal inside. He hears everything said quitely or loudly. Therefore, when the voice of the Companions reached a loud pitch during *Du'ā'* made on the occasion of the Battle of Khaybar, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'You are not calling someone deaf or absent that you say it in such a loud voice. Instead, your addressee is someone Hearing, Near, that is, Allah Ta'ālā (so, to raise your voice is redundant). Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhu* has Himself mentioned the *Du'ā'* of a righteous person in these words: إِذْ نَادَىٰ رَبَّهُ نِدَآءً خَفِيًّا (When he called his Rabb calling in a lowered voice - 19:3).' This tells us that the state of *Du'ā'* liked by Allah Ta'ālā is that it be asked of Him in a lowered and subdued voice.

Sayyidnā Ḥasan al-Baṣrī says: There is a difference of seventy degrees in making *Du'ā'* openly and loudly when matched by the one made in a lowered voice. It was the habit of early righteous elders that they would exert to their maximum in Dhikr and Du'a which kept them busy most of the time, but their voice was not heard by anyone. In fact, their supplications would remain between them and their Rabb. Many of them would memorize the whole Qur'ān and keep engaged in reciting it, but others would not know about it. Then, there would be others engaged in their pursuit of advanced religious knowledge, but they would never go about telling others that they were doing so. There would be many others who would return from their homes after having long sessions of Ṣalāh but no one would come to know anything about that. He also said that he had seen such blessed people who would never perform 'Ibadāt, which they could do in private, out in the open where people could see them - and their voices during *Du'ā'* would be very low. (Ibn Kathīr, Maẓharī)

Ibn Jurayj has said that raising voices in *Du'ā'* and making it noisy is Makrūh (reprehensible). In his Aḥkām al-Qur'ān, Imām Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ has said: This verse tells us that making *Du'ā'* in a lowered voice is more merit-worthy than making it in a raised voice. It has

been reported likewise from Ḥadrat Ḥasan Baṣrī and Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ. This verse also tells us that the 'Āmīn' said at the end of Sūrah al-Fātiḥah should also be said in a lowered voice, which is more merit-worthy, because 'Āmīn' (Amen : so be it) is also a *Du'ā'*.

May Allah Ta'ālā guide Imāms of Masājid in our time who seem to have forgotten this teaching of the Qur'ān and Sunnah and the instructions of early righteous elders in this matter. After every Ṣalāh, what follows as *Du'ā'* has become an artificial procedure. Some words are read out loudly which, besides being contrary to the etiquette and rules of *Du'ā'*, become the source of disturbing the Ṣalāh of those who joined the congregation after it had started and were busy completing the missed part after the Imām had finished. The overwhelming influence of custom has made them incapable of noticing its drawbacks. On a particular occasion where the purpose is to have a whole group make a particular *Du'ā'*, one person may say the words of *Du'ā'* in a reasonably audible voice and others say 'Āmīn' after it, then, it does not matter. However, the condition is that this activity does not become the source of disturbance in the Ṣalāh and 'Ibādah of others - and that this does not become a matter of habit and custom whereby common people start believing in it as the standard method of making *Du'ā'*, as happening so commonly these days.

What has been said above concerned the making of *Du'ā'* for one's needs. If *Du'ā'* is taken in the sense of Dhikr (remembrance) and 'Ibādah (worship) at his place, then, according to the established position of early 'Ulamā, low-voiced Dhikr is more merit-worthy than loud Dhikr. As for the practice of Shaykhs in the Chistiah Order who recommend loud Dhikr for beginners, they do so in view of the spiritual condition of the seeker, as a measure of treatment, so that by voicing it any lack of alertness would go away and the heart would learn to become attuned to the Dhikr of Allah - otherwise, raising the voice in Dhikr, as such, is not desirable even with them, though it is permissible, and its justification stands proved from Ḥadīth as well, of course, subject to the condition that, in it, there be no hypocricy or the desire to show off (*riyā'*).

Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, Ibn Ḥibbān, Al-Baihaqī and others have reported from a narration by Sayyidnā Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqās رضی اللہ عنہ

that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

خَيْرُ الذِّكْرِ الْخَفِيُّ وَخَيْرُ الرِّزْقِ مَا يَكْفِيْ

'The best Dhikr is hidden and the best sustenance is what becomes sufficient.'

However, under particular conditions and timings, a voiced Dhikr is actually more desirable and merit-worthy. Details of these timings and conditions have been explained by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم through his word and deed, for example, calling Adhān and Iqāmah with a raised voice, reciting the Qur'ān during the voiced prayers with a raised voice, saying the Takbīrs of Ṣalāh, the Takbīrs of Tashrīq, the Talbiyah in Ḥajj etc., with a raised voice. Therefore, Muslim jurists, may Allah have mercy on them all, have reached the decision that in particular conditions and places where the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has, by word or deed, taught us to raise the voice, voices must be raised. Under conditions and situations other than these, voiceless Dhikr is most preferable and beneficial.

At the end of the verse, it was said: إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِيْنَ (Surely, He does not like those who cross the limits). The word: المعتدين (*al-mu'tadīn*) is a derivation from *I'tidā'* which means to cross the limits. The sense is that Allah Ta'ālā does not like those who cross the limits, exactly as given in the translation. This crossing of limits, whether in *Du'ā'* or some other activity, has the same outcome - that Allah Ta'ālā does not like that. In fact, if looked at closely, the religion of Islām is the very name of observing limits and restrictions and electing to submit and obey. Take the example of Ṣalāh, Ṣawm, Ḥajj, Zakāh and all dealings and transactions, when limits set by the Sharī'ah of Islam are crossed in them, they do not remain acts of worship anymore - instead, they become sin.

Crossing the limits in *Du'ā'* may take several forms. Firstly, that literal formalities, such as rhyming and other stylistic devices, are employed in *Du'ā'* which may spoil its essential ingredients of humility and submission. Secondly, that unnecessary restrictions are introduced in *Du'ā* - as it appears in Ḥadīth that Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mughaffal رضى الله عنه saw that his son was making *Du'ā'* in the following words: 'O Allah, I seek from You the palace in Paradise which is white

in colour and located on the right hand side.' He stopped him and said: 'Making such restrictions in *Du'ā* is crossing the limit, which has been prohibited in the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth.' (Maẓharī from a narration of Ibn Mājah and others)

The third form of crossing the limits is that someone makes a *Du'ā'* wishing ill of Muslims in general, or asks from Allah something which is harmful for them. Similarly, it is also a form of crossing the limits - as mentioned here - that *Du'ā'* be made in a raised voice without the need to do so. (Tafsīr Maẓharī, Aḥkām al-Qur'ān)

In the second verse (56), it was said: وَلَا تُفْسِدُوْا فِى الْاَرْضِ بَعْدَ اِصْلَاحِهَا (And do no mischief on the earth after it has been set in order). Two antonyms have appeared here: صَلَاح (*ṣalāḥ*) and: فَسَاد (*fasād*). 'Ṣalāḥ' means the state of being good, correct, right, proper or set in order as in the translation. Then, *Fasād* refers to the state of evil, corruption, mischief, disorder. Imām Rāghib al-Iṣfahāni has said in his Mufradāt al-Qur'ān that *Fasād* refers to something going beyond the limits of moderation, whether this crossing over is insignificant or enormous, and the measure of an increase or decrease in every *Fasād* depends on this crossing of the limits of moderation. The farther the limits are crossed, *Fasād* will increase. *Fasād* means to make things bad and *Iṣlāḥ* means to correct, reform or put into order. Therefore, the verse: وَلَا تُفْسِدُوْا فِى الْاَرْضِ بَعْدَ اِصْلَاحِهَا means: 'do not make things bad on the earth after that Allah has made it good and proper.'

Imām Rāghib has also said: There are several forms in which Allah Ta'ālā makes something right, correct and proper. Firstly, He began by creating them right, correct and proper, as in: وَاَصْلَحَ بَالَهُمْ (He will improve their condition - 47:2). Secondly, removed was the corruption that had entered into something, as in: يُصْلِحْ لَكُمْ اَعْمَالَكُمْ (That He may make your deeds good and right - 33:71). Thirdly, that a command is given to put things in order. This verse carries a command of abstention from mischief on the earth after it has been set in order. Here, the ordering of the earth may be taken in two senses. Firstly, the outward propriety that it was made arable and capable of growing trees with rains made to come from clouds resulting in flowers and fruits as gifts from plants and trees - and that the earth was made the source of life support for human beings and animals.

The second sense is that Allah Ta'ālā set things right on the earth inwardly and spiritually - by sending His messengers and Books and instructions and purifying it from Kufr and Shirk and error. It is quite possible that the verse means both inward and outward order in a total way. Thus, the verse would now mean that Allah Ta'ālā has put the earth in proper order both physically and spiritually and now you should not create disorder or engineer evil in there through your acts of sin and disobedience.

What is Order or Disorder on the Earth and What have Sins of People to do with it?

The way there are two aspects of order (Iṣlāḥ), the outward and the inward, or the physical and the spiritual, in the same way, there are two aspects of disorder (Fasād) also. As for the outward or physical order of the earth is concerned, that it be right and proper, it will be realized that Allah Ta'ālā has made it to be a mass or body which is neither liquid as water making it difficult to settle down upon it, nor is it hard as rock or iron which could not be dug up. It has been created to be in a middle state so that human beings could make it soft and smooth lending itself to being farmed and become capable of growing plants and trees and flowers and fruits. Then, they could also dig it up to sink wells and make moats and canals, lay strong foundations for houses to live; and then, right in and out of the earth, He created things and circumstances which would help habitate the earth, make vegetation, trees, flowers and fruits grow in it; and then, from the outside, He created wind, light, heat and chill, and made water rain through clouds over it so that trees could grow. And brought in service were stars and planets from where warm and cold rays were cast on them which filled flowers and fruits with colour and juice. Human beings were endowed with intelligence through which they dug up raw materials from the earth, like iron, copper, wood and so many other metals and rocks which they harnessed into a new world full of industries and artifices. This is the outward ordering of the earth which was brought into effect by the perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā.

As for the inward and spiritual ordering of life is concerned, it depends on the remembrance of Allah (*Dhikr*), relationship with Allah (*Ta'alluq ma' Allah*) and on obedience to Him (*Iṭā'ah*). For this, to be-

gin with, Allah Ta'ālā has already placed in the heart of every human being a basic substance and urge to remember and to obey Him: فَأَلْهَمَهَا فُجُورَهَا وَتَقْوٰهَا (Then, He inspired it [that is, inspired the soul or heart instinctively] as to its wrong and as to its right -91:8). So, all around human beings not a particle remains in which Allah Ta'ālā has not placed wonders of His perfect power and His astounding creativity, seeing which, even a person of average understanding would be moved to say: فَتَبٰرَكَ اللّٰهُ أَحْسَنُ الْخٰلِقِيْنَ (So blessed be Allah, the Best to create! - 23:14). Other than these manifestations, He sent His messengers, revealed His Books through which the essential linkage between the Creator and the created was fully established.

Thus, the command given is that now that the earth has been placed in proper order, outwardly and inwardly, let it not go bad through human misdeeds.

As pointed out earlier, like Iṣlāḥ or order having two aspects, Fasād or disorder also has two aspects, the outward and the inward. This saying of Allah Ta'ālā forbids both.

Though the recurring insistence of the Qur'ān and the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is on spiritual order as a cardinal duty which, in effect, aims to stop any emergence of spiritual disorder as a counter possibility. But, in the world we live in, the linkage between the order and disorder of the physical and spiritual is such that any disorder in one becomes the source of disorder in the other. Therefore, when the Sharī'ah of the Qur'ān has blocked the doors of spiritual disorder, it has also prohibited physical disorder. Theft, robbery, murder and all ways of immodesty and indecency create all sorts of physical and spiritual disorder in the world. So, stern restrictions were placed and punishments proposed particularly against such evil acts while common sins and crimes were also prohibited - because, every sin becomes the source of physical disorder at some time, and that of spiritual disorder at some other. And, if looked at closely, every outward disorder becomes the cause of inward disorder, and conversely, every inward disorder becomes the source of outward disorder.

That outward or physical disorder becomes the inevitable source of inward or spiritual disorder is obvious, for it is the contravention of the command to obey Divine injunctions - in fact, disobedience to Allah

Ta'ālā is another name for spiritual disorder. As for the chemistry of spiritual disorder and how it transforms itself as the cause of physical disorder, this can be discerned only through a little serious reflection. The reason is that this whole world and everything big and small in it was created by the Master of the domain of creation to wherever it extends, and it is but subservient to His command. So far as human beings remain obedient to Allah, everything stands harnessed into their service as due and proper. But, when human beings start disobeying Allah Ta'ālā, everything in the world starts disobeying human beings from behind a curtain through which they cannot see with their mortal eyes. But, it is by deliberation into the effects, properties, results and outcomes of these things that one does find the relevant proof of their becoming hostile very conclusively.

If taken with a surface view, human beings keep using all these things normally. When water goes down the throat, it does not refuse to quench thirst; food does not stop removing hunger and dress and home do not disappoint them by refusing to provide defence against heat and chill.

But, when looked at in terms of the ultimate outcome, it would appear that none of these things is fulfilling its assigned job - because, the real function and use of all these things is that they should provide peace and comfort, that anxieties are removed and sicknesses are cured.

Now if you look at conditions prevailing in our world, you will realize that, despite the proliferation of things of comfort and the means and materials of curing diseases much beyond any expectations, the majority of human beings is victimized by extreme distresses and diseases. Never-known diseases and ever-new calamities seem to be the order of the day. No one, not even the highest among human beings, is contended and in peace in his or her station of life. In fact, the more these functional facilities and fruits of skill keep increasing in their output, the more increasing becomes the parallel manifestation of diseases, anxieties, disasters and hardships - very much like the saying in Urdu which means: 'The more they treat you, the more sick they make you.'

If modern man bewitched by the magic of energy and its material

gains were to rise a little above his infatuation with things and technology, he will realize that all our efforts to invent and construct things and to lay the foundations of a society on top of them have flatly failed to give us peace and comfort which was our real purpose. There is no reason for this but that inward disorder we have been talking about which means that we have started disobeying our Rabb, our Creator and Master, so His creation has started disobeying us on the inward front - that it refuses to provide real peace and comfort for us, despite all our efforts at break-neck speed. To this the famous Maulānā Rūmī pointed out by saying that the elements of dust, air, water and fire, though they appear inert and *sans* sense yet, in reality, they too do possess a degree of intelligence which makes them work under the command of their Master.

To sum up, it can be said that sin, heedlessness towards Allah Ta'ālā, and disobedience to Him do not only create spiritual disorder, but they also lead to the inevitable physical disorder. When the same Maulānā Rūmī says that the cloud does not come to rain when you stop paying Zakāh while from Zinā (adultery) results an epidemic affecting all directions. This is no poetic imagination. This is a reality authentically supported by the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth. But, what becomes visible in this world is just a light sample of the ultimate punishment in the form of diseases, epidemics, storms, hurricanes and floods.

Therefore, included in the sense of the verse: وَلَا تُفْسِدُوْا فِى الْاَرْضِ بَعْدَ اِصْلَاحِهَا (And do no mischief on the earth after it has been set in order) are crimes and sins which cause disorder in the world physically and outwardly - and also included there are sin, disobedience, and heedlessness towards Allah Ta'ālā. Therefore, immediately after in this verse, it was said: وَادْعُوْهُ خَوْفًا وَّطَمَعًا (And supplicate to Him in fear and hope). It means that it should be done in a way that, on the one hand, one has the fear of the *Du'ā'* remaining unanswered, while on the other hand, one has full hope tied to His mercy. These very twin attitudes of fear and hope are the two wings of the human soul on its journey with truth and fortitude. On these it flies high and through these it reaches superior ranks destined for it.

Then, as the text obviously shows, the degree of fear and hope should be equal. Some 'Ulama have said that it is appropriate to keep

fear dominate during life with health, so that there be no shortcoming in being obedient. And when comes the time to die, it is better to let hope dominate, because the strength to do what should have been done is not there anymore and there is nothing left to do except hope for the mercy of Allah Ta'ālā. (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ)

And some researchers among scholars have said that the purpose is to hold on to the straight path of religion and be constant in obedience to Allah Ta'ālā. Then, the temperaments and tastes of human beings differ. Some achieve this station of fortitude and constancy in obedience by keeping fear as the dominant factor. Others achieve these by keeping love and hope as dominating factors. So, whoever finds help to achieve this purpose through either of these two options, should try to achieve it through that option.

To summarize the comments made about *Du'ā'*, it can be said that the first verse tells us about two rules of etiquette relating to *Du'ā'*: (1) That it be with humility and submission, and (2) that it be secret and low-voiced. These two qualities belong to the outward human physique - because "*taḍarru'*" suggests that one should, while making *Du'ā'*, assume the looks and manners of someone weak, helpless and needy and should never allow it to be proud, arrogant or seemingly need-free. Then, that it be secret also relates to one's speech through the mouth and tongue.

As for the spiritual etiquette of *Du'ā'* as given in this verse, there are two rules to be followed. These relate to the human heart. They require that the person making the *Du'ā'* should feel the danger in his heart that his *Du'ā'* may, perhaps, remain unanswered while, at the same time, he should also hope that his *Du'ā'* may be answered - because becoming careless about one's errors and sins is contrary to 'Īmān (faith) and losing hope in the infinite mercy of Allah Ta'ālā is Kufr (disbelief). Both are impermissible extremes. The hope that a prayer will be answered can be entertained only when one keeps in between the two states of fear and hope.

Then, at the end of the verse, it was said: إِنَّ رَحْمَتَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ مِّنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ (Surely, the mercy of Allah is close to the good in deeds). The hint given here is that, though there should be the two states of fear and hope present while making a *Du'ā'*, but, out of the two states, the option of

hope is the weightier option - because the prayer is being made to the Lord of all the worlds the extent of Whose mercy cannot be conceived, and in whose generosity and favour there is no shortage or reluctance. He can answer the *Du'ā'* of the worst of offenders, even the *Du'ā'* of the Satan himself. Of course, should there be a danger of *Du'ā'* remaining unanswered, that could only be possible on account of one's own misdeeds or due to the hanging curse of sins - because being good in deeds is necessary to become close to the mercy of Allah Ta'ālā.

Therefore, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said that some people travel long distances, look like faqirs and raise their hands for *Du'ā'* before Allah Ta'ālā, but ḥarām is their food and ḥarām is their drink and ḥarām is their dress. So, how can a *Du'ā'* made by such a person be answered? (Muslim, Tirmidhī from Sayyidnā Abī Hurairah)

According to another Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: The prayer of a servant of Allah keeps finding acceptance until such time that he does not pray for some sin or for the severence of some relationship - and that he does not make haste. The noble Companion asked about the meaning of 'making haste.' He said: It means that one may think - here I am making a *Du'ā'* for all this time and it has not been answered yet - until he becomes disappointed and stops making *Du'ā'*. (Muslim, Tirmidhī)

According to yet another Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: Whenever you make *Du'ā'* before Allah Ta'ālā, do it in a state when you have no doubt about its being answered.

It means that one should keep his or her sight on the most extensive mercy of Allah Ta'ālā and let the heart believe that the prayer being made shall be answered. This is not contrary to the danger one may feel that his or her sins may become an impediment in the acceptance of one's *Du'ā'*. وصلى الله تعالى على نبينا وسلم

Verses 57 - 58

وَهُوَ الَّذِىْ يُرْسِلُ الرِّيٰحَ بُشْرًا بَيْنَ يَدَىْ رَحْمَتِهٖ ط حَتّٰۤى اِذَاۤ
اَقَلَّتْ سَحَابًا ثِقَالًا سُقْنٰهُ لِبَلَدٍ مَّيِّتٍ فَاَنْزَلْنَا بِهِ الْمَآءَ فَاَخْرَجْنَا
بِهٖ مِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرٰتِ ط كَذٰلِكَ نُخْرِجُ الْمَوْتٰى لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُوْنَ

﴿٥٧﴾ وَالْبَلَدُ الطَّيِّبُ يَخْرُجُ نَبَاتُهُ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِ وَالَّذِي خَبُثَ لَا يَخْرُجُ إِلَّا نَكِدًا ط كَذَٰلِكَ نُصَرِّفُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٥٨﴾

And He is the One who sends the winds carrying good news before His blessings, until when they lift up the heavy clouds, We drive them to a dead land, then there We pour down the water, then, with it We bring forth of all the fruits. This is how We bring forth all the dead, so that you may observe advice. [57]

As for the good land, its vegetation comes out with the permission of its Lord. And that which is bad does not grow except what is bad. Thus We alternate the verses for a people who pay gratitude. [58]

Commentary

In previous verses, Allah Ta'ālā has mentioned some of His major and particular blessings. By pointing out to the creation of the heavens and the earth, the day and night, and the sun, moon and stars and how they serve human beings, the lesson driven home is that there is no power other than the sacred Being of Allah Ta'ālā to take care of our needs and comforts, then, it becomes necessary that we should pray to none but Him for everything we need and take this turning to Him as the key of our success.

Also mentioned in the first of the present verses are some other important blessings of this nature on which depends the existence and survival of human beings and the entire creation of the earth, for example, the rains and the trees, and farmlands and its produce. The difference is that the previous verses mentioned blessings relating to the upper domain while the present ones belong to the lower. (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ)

Something special has been identified in the second verse where it is said that these great Divine blessings are, though common to all parts of the earth - as rains, when they come, fall on rivers and mountains and on good and bad lands alike - but, what grows from the earth grows only from the land which has the quality to make it grow. Rocky and sandy lands do not derive benefit from these rains.

The conclusion drawn from the first verse is that the sacred Being which enables dead land to live again should have no problems in making human beings who once lived, then died, come to life once again. The conclusion so drawn is very clear. Then, there is another conclusion drawn from the second verse. It tells us that the guidance coming from Allah Ta'ālā, the revealed Books, the blessed prophets, and the teachings and training undertaken by their deputies, the '*Ulamā*' and *Mashāikh* are like the rains, common to every human being. But, the way every land does not derive benefit from the mercy of rains, very similarly, the benefit of this spiritual rain is derived by those who have the ability to absorb it. As for those whose hearts are like rocky and sandy land not having the ability to absorb it and make growth possible, they would keep sticking to their ways of error despite clear guidance and signs and scriptures.

The conclusion thus drawn comes from the last sentence of the second verse which says: كَذٰلِكَ نُصَرِّفُ الْاٰيٰتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَّشْكُرُوْنَ (Thus We alternate the verses for a people who pay gratitude). The sense is that the statement made was, though for everyone, yet, in the ultimate consequence, it proved beneficial only for those who had the capacity for it and realized its worth and value. Thus, the two verses quoted here cover the subject of human origin and return. Now, we can go to a fuller explanation of these two verses. The first verse begins by saying: وَهُوَ الَّذِىْ يُرْسِلُ الرِّيٰحَ بُشْرًا بَيْنَ يَدَىْ رَحْمَتِهٖ (And He is the One who sends the winds carrying good news before His blessings). Here, the word: ريح (*ar-riyāh*) is the plural form of *rīḥ* which means the wind, and '*bushran*' means good news or glad tidings, and '*raḥmat*' refers to the rain of mercy, that is, it is Allah Ta'ālā Himself who sends the winds to announce the good news of the coming rain of mercy.

The sense of the verse is that it is the customary practice of Allah Ta'ālā that He sends cool winds before the actual coming of rains which not only please people, but also, in a way, foretell that rains are coming much before they actually do. Therefore, these winds are a combination of two blessings. They themselves are beneficial for human beings and bracing for the creation in general. Then, they announce the rains before its coming. Human beings are a highly sensitive model of creation. Rains may stop them from doing what they

need to do. If they could naturally find out about the coming rains ahead of time, they would be able to manage things for themselves. In addition to that, one's own person and belongings are not, at all times, defended against rains. By having early indications of rains, most would be able to take protective cover for themselves and their belongings.

Then, it was said: حَتّٰٓى اِذَآ اَقَلَّتْ سَحَابًا ثِقَالًا (until when they lift up the heavy clouds). The word: سَحَاب (*saḥāb*) means the cloud and: ثِقَال (*thiqāl*) is the plural of *thaqīl* which means heavy, that is, when the winds lift up the heavy clouds. Heavy clouds refer to clouds laden with water. They would, as if, travel riding on the shoulders of the wind, and thus, this water weighing thousands of tons comfortably rides high on the wings of the wind. How wonderful is the Divine design which uses no machines nor lets human beings slave for it. It is as simple as it can be - when Allah Ta'ālā wills, vapours from the waters start rising upwards, turn into clouds and what you have is a sky-filling plane carrying a cargo of hundreds and thousands of gallons of water in its holds flying on the cushion of winds towards higher altitudes!

After that, it was said: سُقْنٰهُ لِبَلَدٍ مَّيِّتٍ (We drive them to a dead land). The word: سَوْق (*sauq*) means to drive, herd or urge on towards a desired destination, and '*balad*' means a town or habitation, and '*mayyit*' means dead.

The verse, thus, means: 'When the winds lifted the heavy clouds up, We drove the clouds to a dead town.' Dead town refers to the habitation rendered desolate because of an scarcity of water. That a town or habitation has been named here in place of a common open land is appropriate in view of the real purpose of sending the rain because it is designed to feed the thirsty land and enable it to produce what human beings need. The place to do so would be a habitated area, not an inhabitated forest primarily where the growth of vegetation is less likely to serve the initial purpose.

Upto this point, the description in the quoted verses proves the following: (1) That rains come through clouds, as commonly observed. This tells us that verses in which raining from the sky has been mentioned, there too, the word: سَمَاء (*samā'*) refers to clouds. Then, not improbable is the likelihood that clouds originate directly from the skies -

as opposed to monsoons originating from the waters - and bring rains. (2) That clouds go in a particular direction and over a particular land area is something related directly to Divine command. It is He who gives the command for rains to fall when He wills, where He wills and as much as He wills. The clouds implement the Divine command.

It is something observed everywhere. There are occasions when a town or habitation would have heavy over-head clouds, and they would very much be in need of rains, but the clouds would not let them have even a drop of water. Instead, it would go to a town or habitation for which there is a quota of water as Divinely determined, and it would be only there that it would rain. No one has the ability or the daring to acquire water from these clouds at any other place, other than the town or habitation earmarked to have it.

Weather scientists have determined rules about the movement of monsoons based on which they can tell the course of a monsoon rising from the waters of the sea and identify where and how much it would rain. There are meteorological bureaus set up for this purpose in many countries. But, experience shows that news released by these departments frequently turn out to be contrary to fact. When what is contrary is the Divine command itself, their rules become ineffective. Winds and rain-laden clouds turn towards somewhere else, contrary to foretold news, and weather experts cannot do much about it.

In addition to that, any other rules and regulations proposed by meteorologists, they too are not contrary to the proposition that the movement of clouds obeys the Divine command - because it is the customary practice of Allah Ta'ālā that, in all affairs of this world, the Divine command manifests itself from behind the curtains of physical causes. Human beings pick up these very causes and formulate some rule or regulation based on them. Otherwise, reality lies elsewhere.

After that, it was said: فَاَنْزَلْنَا بِهِ الْمَآءَ فَاَخْرَجْنَا بِهٖ مِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ (We pour down water, then, with it We bring forth of all the fruits).

And then, at the end of the verse, it was said: كَذٰلِكَ نُخْرِجُ الْمَوْتٰى لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُوْنَ (This is how We bring forth all the dead [on the day of Qiyāmah], so that you may observe advice). Thus, the sense of the verse is: 'The way We have given new life to the dead land and have brought out from it

trees, flowers and fruits, similarly, on the day of Qiyāmah, We shall have the dead rise once again after their having been dead. And these examples have been set forth so that you would have the opportunity to reflect and deliberate.

According to a narration of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said:' صُوْر (*Ṣūr* : Horn) will be blown twice on the day of Qiyāmah. On the first *Ṣūr*, the whole world will perish. Nothing will remain alive. On the second *Ṣūr*, a new world will come into being. The dead will become alive.' The Ḥadīth also mentions 'an interval of forty years between the two blowings of the *Ṣūr* and rains would continue to fall throughout these forty years. During this period, the body parts of every dead human being and animal will become assembled into them giving everyone a complete skeleton. Then, at the time of the blowing of the second *Ṣūr*, *Rūḥ* (soul) will enter these corpses. They will rise alive.' A major portion of this narration can be seen in Al-Bukhārī and Muslim. Some portions have been taken from Kitāb al-Ba'th of Ibn Abī Dāwūd.

Stated in the second verse (58) is: وَالْبَلَدُ الطَّيِّبُ يَخْرُجُ نَبَاتُهُ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِ وَالَّذِى خَبُثَ لَا يَخْرُجُ إِلَّا نَكِدًا (As for the good land, its vegetation comes out with the permission of its Lord. And that which is bad does not grow except what is bad). The word: نَكِدًا (*nakid*) refers to something useless and scanty both. The sense of the verse is that the mercy of rain, when it comes, is common to every town and land, but lands are of two kinds in terms of their yield and outcome. First, there is good land which helps growth. From it come flowers and fruits and many other benefits. Then, there is the hard, barren or saline land which lacks the ability to grow plants. First of all, not much grows on such a land, and if something does grow there, its quantity remains insignificant, and even this quantity is useless and bad.

At the end of the verse, it was said: كَذٰلِكَ نُصَرِّفُ الْاٰيٰتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَّشْكُرُوْنَ (Thus We alternate the verses for a people who pay gratitude).

The hint given here is: Though the open blessing of Allah's guidance and His clear '*Āyāt* is open and common to all human beings very much like the general mercy of rain, but every land does not derive benefit from the rain and, similarly, every human being does not derive benefit from Divine guidance. Rather, the benefit is derived by

only those who are grateful for what they receive and recognize its real worth and value.

Verses 59 - 64

لَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا نُوْحًا اِلٰى قَوْمِهٖ فَقَالَ يٰقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ مَا لَكُمْ
مِّنْ اِلٰهٍ غَيْرُهٗ ؕ اِنِّىْۤ اَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيْمٍ ﴿٥٩﴾
قَالَ الْمَلَاُ مِنْ قَوْمِهٖۤ اِنَّا لَنَرٰىكَ فِىْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿٦٠﴾ قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ
لَيْسَ بِىْ ضَلٰلَةٌ وَّلٰكِنِّىْ رَسُوْلٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٦١﴾ اُبَلِّغُكُمْ
رِسٰلٰتِ رَبِّىْ وَاَنْصَحُ لَكُمْ وَاَعْلَمُ مِنَ اللّٰهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٦٢﴾
اَوَعَجِبْتُمْ اَنْ جَآءَكُمْ ذِكْرٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ عَلٰى رَجُلٍ مِّنْكُمْ
لِيُنْذِرَكُمْ وَلِتَتَّقُوْا وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُوْنَ ﴿٦٣﴾ فَكَذَّبُوْهُ فَاَنْجَيْنٰهُ
وَالَّذِيْنَ مَعَهٗ فِى الْفُلْكِ وَاَغْرَقْنَا الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا ؕ اِنَّهُمْ
كَانُوْا قَوْمًا عَمِيْنَ ﴿٦٤﴾

Surely We sent Nūḥ to his people. Then he said, "O my people, worship Allah. For you there is no god other than Him. I fear for you the punishment of a great Day." [59]

The chiefs of his people said, "Indeed we see you in an obvious error." [60] **He said, "O my people, there is no error in me, but I am a messenger from the Lord of the worlds.** [61] **I convey to you the messages of my Lord and wish you betterment, and I know from Allah what you do not know."** [62] **Do you wonder that an advice from your Lord has come to you through a man from among you, so that he may warn you and that you may fear Allah, and that you may be blessed with mercy?"** [63]

Then, they belied him, so, We saved him, and those with him in the Ark, and drowned those who belied Our signs. Certainly, they were a blind people. [64]

Commentary

Described from the beginning of Sūrah al-A'rāf upto this point were

the subjects of *Tauḥīd, Risālah* and *'Ākhirah*, the basic principles of Islam. These were proved and affirmed in different ways, people were pursuaded to follow them and warned against taking opposing stands. Then, as a corollary, the guiles of Satan which make people go astray were mentioned. Now, from the eighth Rukū' (section) to almost the end of the Sūrah, there is a description of some prophets, may peace be upon them, and of their communities. The subject dealt with here consists of the commonly pursued principles of *Tauḥīd*, *Risālah* and *'Ākhirah*. They all invited their respective communities towards these universal principles, gave them the good news of rewards for those who believed in them, and warned them of punishments for refusing to believe and the sad end they would have for doing so. This description takes about fourteen sections, where hundreds of basic and subsidiary rulings appear as a corollary. Thus, the present communities were given an opportunity to learn a lesson from the sad end of past communities - and, for the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, this became a source of comfort that this was how things have been with all other prophets.

The verses appearing above take a whole Rukū' of Sūrah al-A'rāf. It describes the mission of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام and the state of the community to which he was sent.

Though, in the chain of prophets, the first prophet is Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام, but his was not the time for confrontation against disbelief and error. In the religious code given to him, most of the injunctions were related to habitation of the land and management of human needs. Disbelief and disbelievers just did not exist. The confrontation against Kufr (disbelief) and Shirk (associating partners in the Divinity of Allah) began with Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام. He is, in terms of the mission of prophethood and a code of religious laws, the first *rasūl* of Allah. In addition to that, people who survived after the drowning of the whole world during the great flood or deluge, were Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام and those with him in the Ark. It was through him that the new world was populated. Therefore, he is also referred to as the junior Adam. This is the reason why he appears first in this story of prophets which has a description of his nine hundred and fifty year long prophetic struggle in contrast to the crooked ways of the majority in his community, as a result of which, all except a few believers were

drowned. Details follow.

The first verse begins with the words: لَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا نُوْحًا اِلٰى قَوْمِهٖ (Surely We sent Nūḥ to his people).

Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیه السلام is in the eighth generation of Sayyidnā Ādam علیه السلام. According to a narration of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضی الله عنه appearing in Mustadrak of Ḥākim, there is an interval of ten Qarn between Sayyidnā Ādam علیه السلام and Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیه السلام. The same has been reported by Ṭabarānī as based on a Ḥadīth of the Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم narrated by Sayyidnā Abū Dharr رضی الله عنه (Tafsīr Maẓharī) A Qarn generally means one hundred years. Therefore, the interval of time between these two comes to be one thousand years according to this narration. Ibn Jarīr has reported that Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیه السلام was born eight hundred and twenty six years after the death of Sayyidnā Ādam علیه السلام, and according to a clear statement of the Qur'ān, he reached an age of nine hundred and fifty years - and according to a Ḥadīth, the age of Sayyidnā Ādam علیه السلام is nine hundred and sixty years. Thus, the time from the birth of Sayyidnā Ādam علیه السلام to the death of Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیه السلام comes to be a total of two thousand eight hundred and fifty six years. (Maẓharī) In some narrations, the real name of Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیه السلام appears as Shākir while in some others it has been given as Sakan, and 'Abd al-Ghaffār, in still others.

Whether his time is before or after Sayyidnā Idrīs علیه السلام - Enoch - has been debated. The majority of the Ṣaḥābah have said that Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیه السلام has appeared before Sayyidnā Idrīs علیه السلام (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ)

Based on a narration of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضی الله عنه reports Mustadrak of Ḥākim that the Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم said: Nūḥ علیه السلام was invested with prophethood at the age of forty years and, after the Flood, he lived for sixty years.

The verse of the Qur'ān: لَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا نُوْحًا اِلٰى قَوْمِهٖ (Surely, We sent Nūḥ to his people) proves that Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیه السلام was sent as a prophet only to his people. It was not common to the whole world. His people lived in Iraq. They were outwardly civilized but were involved in Shirk. The call given by Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیه السلام to his people was: يٰقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ اِلٰهٍ غَيْرُهٗ ؕ اِنِّيْٓ اَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيْمٍ (O my people, worship Allah.

For you there is no god other than Him. I fear for you the punishment of a great Day). In the first sentence, the invitation given is to worship Allah Ta'ālā, which is the essence of the principle. In the second sentence, people have been pursuaded to shun Shirk and Kufr, something which had spread out like some epidemic among these people. In the third sentence, the purpose is to warn people against the danger of that great punishment which they would have to face in the event they were to do otherwise. This 'great punishment' could mean the punishment of the Hereafter, and the punishment of the Flood in the present world too. (Tafsīr Kabīr)

In reply, his people said: إِنَّا لَنَرٰىكَ فِىْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ("Indeed we see you in an obvious error"). The word: مَلَأ (*malā'*) is used for chiefs, headmen and empowered elders of a community or group. The sense of what his people said in response to his call was to tell him that he was actually trying to wean them away from their ancestral faith and that all these ideas of rising on some last day and being rewarded or punished were nothing but superstition.

These were harsh words. But, the reply given by Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام carries an eloquent diction fit for a prophet. Here, he is leaving a trail for all carriers of *da'wah*, preachers and reformers, as a signpost of education and guidance. Here, he is not responding on the same wave length, not anger against anger, but trying to remove their doubts in the simplest possible words: قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ لَيْسَ بِىْ ضَلٰلَةٌ وَّلٰكِنِّىْ رَسُوْلٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ أُبَلِّغُكُمْ رِسٰلٰتِ رَبِّىْ وَاَنْصَحُ لَكُمْ وَاَعْلَمُ مِنَ اللّٰهِ مَالَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ. (He said, "O my people, there is no error in me, but I am a messenger from the Lord of the worlds. I convey to you the messages of my Lord and wish your betterment, and I know from Allah what you do not know). In other words, what Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام is telling his people was that 'their accusation that he has gone astray was not true. However, the fact remained that he was not bound by their ancestral customs rooted in ignorance like them. Instead of that, he was sent as a messenger from the Lord of all the worlds. Whatever he was telling them was under the guidance of his Lord. His sole mission was to convey the message of Allah Ta'ālā to them which was in their interest and for their good. This was not for any benefit of Allah Ta'ālā nor did it serve any personal interest of his own.' The expression: 'Lord of all the worlds' in this statement strikes

decisively against believing in Shirk by associating others with the pristine Divinity of Allah Ta'ālā. Once the spirit of this assertion is understood, no god or goddess of any denomination can stand valid as objects of worship. After that, he said that the doubts they had about the punishment of the Last Day were because of their lack of awareness - and, as for him, he was blessed with certitude in this matter by Allah Ta'ālā.

After that comes the reply to the other doubt expressed by them. This has been stated clearly in Sūrah Al-Mu'minūn: مَا هٰذَآ اِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ يُرِيْدُ اَنْ يَّتَفَضَّلَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَوْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ لَاَنْزَلَ مَلٰٓئِكَةً, that is, the people of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام came up with another doubt about the call given by him. They thought that he was only human, a man like them who ate, drank, slept and woke as they did. How could they take him as their leader? Had Allah wanted to send a message for them, he should have sent angels with it whose distinction and greatness would have impressed them. Now, what they saw here was no more than that there was someone from among their own race and community who wished to establish his superiority over them - 23:24.

Here, the answer given was: اَوَعَجِبْتُمْ اَنْ جَآءَكُمْ ذِكْرٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ عَلٰى رَجُلٍ مِّنْكُمْ لِيُنْذِرَكُمْ وَلِتَتَّقُوْا وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُوْنَ (Do you wonder that an advice from your Lord has come to you through a man from among you, so that he may warn you and that you may fear Allah, and that you may be blessed with mercy?) [that is, his warning may lead you to stop opposing him as a result of which you may be blessed with mercy]

The substance of the argument is that the making of a human being a messenger of Allah is not a matter of surprise. First of all, Allah Ta'ālā is the Absolute Master. Bestowing on someone the status of a prophet or messenger is His exclusive domain. It is He who does it at His will. No one is in a position to dare have it otherwise. In addition to that, a little deliberation will make it clear that the purpose of sending a prophet or messenger to guide human beings can only be achieved through a human being. This is a mission angels cannot perform.

The reason is that the purpose of prophethood is to bring people round to believe in and obey Allah Ta'ālā and save them from harsh consequences of their opposition to His injunctions - and this can only

be possible when a person from their own kind presents before them a model of the desired conduct and shows before them that it is quite possible to worship Allah and obey His injunctions even with the fulfillment of inherent human needs and desires. If this call was brought forth by angels and they were to put their model before people, it is obvious that people would have found it fairly convenient to say that angels are free of human desires, they are never hungry or thirsty, they never sleep, or get tired. How could they ever become like them? But, when one of their own kind, despite having common human characteristics and desires, walks amongst them as a perfect model of obedience to Divine injunctions, they would be left with no excuse.

It was to point out in this direction that it was said: لِيُنذِرَكُمْ وَلِتَتَّقُوا (so that he may warn you and that you may fear Allah). In other words, it means that a person whose warning can make people have fear could only be the one who is of their kind and is an epitome of human traits like them. This is not an unusual doubt for the disbelievers of many communities who have questioned the propriety of having a human being as prophet or messenger. This is the answer given by the Qur'ān to all such doubts. It is certainly regretable that, despite so many clarifications of the Qur'ān, there are people who would dare going to the limit of denying the 'human-ness' of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. But, the problem with the ignorant among human beings is that they would not understand this reality and would simply refuse to accept the superiority of anyone from their own kind. This is why they would nurse hatred for their contemporary *Awliyā'* (men of Allah) and *'Ulamā'* (highly trained and trustworthy religious scholars who practice what they teach) and look down upon them because of their contemporaneousness. This has always been the trademark of the ignorant.

When this paternal and well-wishing approach of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام in reply to the heart-rending words said by his addressees made no effect on these unfeeling people who turned blind to truth and kept belying it, then, Allah Ta'ālā sent down upon them the punishment of Flood. It was said: فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَأَنجَيْنَاهُ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ فِي الْفُلْكِ وَأَغْرَقْنَا الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا ۚ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمًا عَمِينَ (Then, they belied him [ignoring his good counsel totally], so [as a consequence], we saved him, and those with him in the Ark, and

drowned those who had belied Our signs. Certainly, they were a blind people).

The story of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام and the full account of the drowning of his people and the deliverance of the people in the Ark appears in Sūrah Hūd and Sūrah Nūḥ. Given at this place is its gist as appropriate to the occasion. Sayyidnā Zayd ibn Aslam رحمه الله says: When the punishment of Flood overtook the people of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام, they were at the prime of their population and power. The lands and mountains of Iraq were becoming insufficient for their rising numbers. It should be kept in mind that it is a customary practice of Allah Ta'ālā since ever that He would keep granting respite to the disobedient. He would send His punishment over them at a time when they have reached the highest peak of their numbers, power and wealth, and become, so to say, drunk with this state of their life. (Ibn Kathīr)

As for the number of people in the Ark of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام, reports differ. Ibn Kathīr, through a narration of Ibn Abī Ḥātim, reports from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه that there were eighty people. One of them was called Jurhum. He spoke Arabic. (Ibn Kathīr)

Some narrations have given the detail that there were forty men and forty women in the Ark. After the Flood, the place in Mosul, Iraq where they came to stay became known as Thamānūn (eighty).

To sum up, the introduction of a brief account of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام at this place aims to tell us three things: (1) That the *da'wah* of all past prophets and their basic articles of faith were one. (2) That Allah Ta'ālā supports his appointed messengers in strikingly wonderous ways when they would not have the least danger to their security even after having been surrounded by a Flood rising as high as the peaks of mountains. (3) Then, it was made absolutely clear that belying the noble prophets of Allah, may peace be upon them, amounted to inviting Divine punishment. The warning is still valid. So, let it not be forgotten that the way past communities were overtaken by punishment because of their belying of the prophets, a similar fate could overtake their modern counterparts - on this count, they could do better by not becoming heedless and fear-free.

Verses 65 - 72

وَإِلَىٰ عَادٍ أَخَاهُمْ هُودًا ۗ قَالَ يَٰقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُم مِّنْ إِلَٰهٍ غَيْرُهُ ۚ أَفَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ﴿٦٥﴾ قَالَ الْمَلَأُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِن قَوْمِهِ إِنَّا لَنَرَاكَ فِي سَفَاهَةٍ وَإِنَّا لَنَظُنُّكَ مِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ ﴿٦٦﴾ قَالَ يَٰقَوْمِ لَيْسَ بِي سَفَاهَةٌ وَلَٰكِنِّي رَسُولٌ مِّن رَّبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٦٧﴾ أُبَلِّغُكُمْ رِسَالَاتِ رَبِّي وَأَنَا لَكُمْ نَاصِحٌ أَمِينٌ ﴿٦٨﴾ أَوَعَجِبْتُمْ أَن جَاءَكُمْ ذِكْرٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ عَلَىٰ رَجُلٍ مِّنكُمْ لِيُنذِرَكُمْ ۚ وَاذْكُرُوا إِذْ جَعَلَكُمْ خُلَفَاءَ مِن بَعْدِ قَوْمِ نُوحٍ وَزَادَكُمْ فِي الْخَلْقِ بَسْطَةً ۖ فَاذْكُرُوا آلَاءَ اللَّهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾ قَالُوا أَجِئْتَنَا لِنَعْبُدَ اللَّهَ وَحْدَهُ وَنَذَرَ مَا كَانَ يَعْبُدُ آبَاؤُنَا ۖ فَأْتِنَا بِمَا تَعِدُنَا إِن كُنتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ ﴿٧٠﴾ قَالَ قَدْ وَقَعَ عَلَيْكُم مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ رِجْسٌ وَغَضَبٌ ۖ أَتُجَادِلُونَنِي فِي أَسْمَاءٍ سَمَّيْتُمُوهَا أَنتُمْ وَآبَاؤُكُم مَّا نَزَّلَ اللَّهُ بِهَا مِن سُلْطَانٍ ۚ فَانتَظِرُوا إِنِّي مَعَكُم مِّنَ الْمُنتَظِرِينَ ﴿٧١﴾ فَأَنجَيْنَاهُ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِّنَّا وَقَطَعْنَا دَابِرَ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا ۖ وَمَا كَانُوا مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٧٢﴾

And to 'Ād (We sent) their brother, Hūd. He said, "O my people, worship Allah; you have no god other than Him. So, do you not fear Allah?" [65]

Said the chiefs of his people who disbelieved, "Indeed, we see you in foolishness, and we certainly believe you to be one of the liars." [66]

He said, "O my people, there is no foolishness in me, but I am a messenger from the Lord of the worlds. [67] **I convey to you the messages of my Lord; and for you, I am an honest adviser.** [68] **Do you wonder that an advice from your Lord has come to you through a man from among you, so that he may warn you? And remember when He made you successors after the people of**

Nūḥ and gave you increased strength in physique. So, be mindful of the bounties of Allah, so that you may be successful." [69]

They said, "Have you come to us in order that we should worship Allah alone and give up what our fathers used to worship? Now, bring us what you threaten us with, if you are one of the truthful." [70]

He said, "The punishment and the anger from your Lord have fallen upon you. Do you quarrel with me about names coined by you and your fathers, for which Allah has sent down no authority? So, wait. I am one of those waiting, with you." [71]

So, We saved him and those with him out of mercy from Us, and We eradicated those who belied Our signs. And they were not believers. [72]

Commentary

A Brief History of 'Ād and Thamūd

'Ād is the name of a person who is in the fifth generation after Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام and is among the progeny of his son Sām. Then, his progeny, and his people, came to be known by the name of 'Ād. In the Holy Qur'ān, 'Ād also appears with the words: عَادَ اُوْلٰى ('Ād al-'ūlā: 'Ād, the First) and also: اِرَمَ ذَاتِ الْعِمَادِ(that is, of the city of Iram with lofty pillars; or tall like lofty pillars - 89:7) which tells us that the people of 'Ād are also known in association with the name of Iram, and that with 'Ād I, there is some 'Ād II as well. In this investigation, commentators and historians differ. The better known proposition is that Iram is the name of the grandfather of 'Ād. This 'Ād is among the children of 'Auṣ who was his son, and is known as 'Ād I. His second son, جَثُوْ (Jathw) had a son. His name was Thamūd. He is called 'Ād II. The outcome is that 'Ād and Thamūd are both two branches of Iram. One of them is called 'Ād I and the other is known as Thamūd or 'Ād II, and the word: اِرَمْ (Iram) is common to both 'Ād and Thamūd.

Some commentators have said that at the time when the punishment overtook the people of 'Ād, a deputation of theirs was on a visit to Makkah al-Mu'ẓẓamah, which remained safe from this punishment. It is known as the other 'Ād. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Hūd عليه السلام is the name of a prophet. He is also in the fifth generation of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام, and is among the progeny of Sām. The geneological tree of the people of 'Ād and Sayyidnā Hūd عليه السلام converges on Sām in the fifth generation. Therefore, Sayyidnā Hūd عليه السلام is a lineal brother to 'Ād. That is why it was said: أَخَاهُمْ هُودًا (their brother Hūd - 65)

The people of 'Ād had thirteen families. Their habitations were spread out from Oman to Hadramaut and Yaman. Their lands were fertile. Gardens were abundant. To live they constructed mansions and palaces. They were tall and heavily built. This is what the expression: زَادَكُمْ فِى الْخَلْقِ بَصْطَةً (gave you increased strength in physique - 69) means. Allah Ta'ālā had opened the doors of His blessing upon them. But, their crooked thinking made these very blessings a curse for them. They became so intoxicated with their power and grandeur that they started boasting: مَنْ أَشَدُّ مِنَّا قُوَّةً (Who is superior to us in strength?- 41:15). How strange of them that they took no notice of their Lord and the Lord of the worlds bathed in whose blessings they all were and went on to sink themselves into the worship of idols carved out of rocks!

The Lineage of Sayyidnā Hūd عليه السلام and Some Glimpses of the Background

These were the people for whose guidance Allah Ta'ālā sent Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام as a prophet who was from their family. The famous authority on Arab geneology, Abū al-Barakāt al-Jaunī has written that the name of the son of Sayyidnā Hūd عليه السلام is Ya'rub ibn Qaḥṭān who went to live in Yaman. Yamani people are his progeny. The Arabic language originated from him and it was this correspondence with 'Ya'rub' that the language was called Arabic and its speakers, the Arabs. (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ)

But, the truth of the matter is that the Arabic language was there since the time of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام. In his Ark, he had a companion called Jurhum. He spoke Arabic (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ) The populating of Makkah al-Mu'aẓẓamah started from this very Jurhum. However, it is possible that the origination of the Arabic language took place in Yaman through Ya'rub ibn Qaḥṭān and this may be what Abū al-Barakat has meant.

Sayyidnā Hūd علیہ السلام induced the people of 'Ād to forsake idol-worship and take to pure monotheism and shun injustice and oppression and practice moderation and justice. But, these people were drunk with power and wealth. They did not listen to him. Consequently, the first punishment that visited them was that rains stopped coming for a full three years in succession. Lands became deserts. Gardens turned into dead wood. But, these people still kept sticking to *Shirk* and idol-worship. Then, came another punishment. A severe wind storm overtook them. It continued for eight days and seven nights. What remained of their gardens and mansions and palaces was levelled to the ground. Their men and animals went up into the air and zoomed back hitting the floor on their heads. Thus, the people of 'Ād were eliminated to the last man. The sense of the expression: وَقَطَعْنَا دَابِرَ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا (and we eradicated those who belied Our signs) in this verse, as determined by some commentators, is that all those people present at that time were totally destroyed. Some other commentators have said that it means that Allah Ta'ālā cut off the lineal root of the people of 'Ād for the future as well.

When the punishment for not listening to Sayyidnā Hūd علیہ السلام and insisting on Kufr and Shirk came down upon his people, he and his companions took refuge in an open area enclosed with stakes. It was strange that the stormy winds which were making palaces collapse on their columns would suddenly change pace and enter this enclosure gently. Sayyidnā Hūd علیہ السلام and his companions kept sitting peacefully where they were even during the descension of the punishment without having to face any inconvenience. It was after the destruction of the people of 'Ād that they moved to Makkah al-Mu'azzamah where they lived until death. (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ)

That the punishment for the people of 'Ād came in the form of a wind storm has been explicity and categorically mentioned in the Qur'ān. Then, there is the statement in Sūrah Al-Mu'minūn which follows the narration of the story of Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیہ السلام: ثُمَّ أَنشَأْنَا مِن بَعْدِهِمْ قَرْنًا آخَرِينَ that is, then, after them, We brought forth another generation - 23:31. It seems obvious that another generation here means the people of 'Ād. Then, after having given a view of their word and deed, it was said: فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ الصَّيْحَةُ بِالْحَقِّ (an extremely harsh and horrifying sound [Aṣ-

Ṣaiḥah] took them - 23:41). Based on this statement of the Qur'ān, some commentators have said that the punishment which was set upon the people of 'Ād was that of Aṣ-Ṣaiḥah (extremely harsh and screaming sound). But, there is no contradiction here. It is possible that they both came to pass.

This was a brief account relating to the people of 'Ād and Sayyidnā Hūd عليه السلام. Its details as given in the words of the Qur'ān follow.

(1) Said in the first verse (65) was: وَإِلَىٰ عَادٍ أَخَاهُمْ هُودًا ۚ قَالَ يَٰقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُم مِّنْ إِلَٰهٍ غَيْرُهُۥ ۚ أَفَلَا تَتَّقُونَ (And to 'Ād [We sent] their brother, Hūd. He said, "O my people, worship Allah; you have no god other than Him. So, do you not fear Allah?").

The grave punishment sent upon the people of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام much before the people of 'Ād was still alive in the minds of the people of his time. Therefore, Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام had no need to describe the severity and gravity of punishment sent upon disobedient people. He considered it quite sufficient to say: Do you not fear Allah?

(2) In the second verse (66), it was said: قَالَ الْمَلَأُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِن قَوْمِهِۦٓ إِنَّا لَنَرَىٰكَ فِى سَفَاهَةٍ وَإِنَّا لَنَظُنُّكَ مِنَ الْكَٰذِبِينَ (Said the chiefs of his people who disbelieved, "Indeed, We see you in foolishness, and we certainly believe you to be one of the liars." This stance taken in opposition here resembles the one taken by the people of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام. The only difference is that of some words. Its reply which appears in verses 67 and 68 is nearly the same as given by Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام - 61-63.

(3) Once again, the objection of the people of 'Ād mentioned in the fifth verse (69) is the same as raised by the people of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام before them - that is, 'how can we take a human being like us as our superior? Had it been an angel, may be we would have done that.' In answer to this what the Qur'ān has mentioned is the reply given by Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام to his people - where he had said that there was nothing to be surprised about the fact that a human being comes to people as the prophet or messenger of Allah to put His fear in their hearts, because it is a human being who can convince other human beings effectively.

After that they were reminded of the blessings Allah Ta'ālā had bestowed upon them. It was said: وَاذْكُرُوٓا إِذْ جَعَلَكُمْ خُلَفَآءَ مِنۢ بَعْدِ قَوْمِ نُوحٍ وَزَادَكُمْ فِى الْخَلْقِ بَصْطَةً

فَاذْكُرُوا آلَاءَ اللَّهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ (And remember when He made you successors after the people of Nūḥ and gave you increased strength in physique).

Remembering these blessings would have been for their own good, but wicked and intoxicated with power and wealth as they were, they paid no heed and gave a reply which was no different from what is generally given by people who have gone astray. They said that if Sayyidnā Hūd عليه السلام was trying to wean them away from the faith of their ancestors and hoping that they would abandon their idols and come around to believing in just one God, then, this they would never be able to do. As for the warning of punishment he was giving to them, they would say: go ahead and bring it upon us, if you are telling the truth.

(4) The sixth verse (70) contains the answer given by Sayyidnā Hūd عليه السلام. He told them that, in view of their contumacy and lack of good sense, the wrath and punishment of Allah would have not remained far and may come sooner than they expect. So, this was a matter of waiting. Let them wait for it, so shall he do. It would be noticed that the provoking reply given by his people prompted Sayyidnā Hūd to give a suitable answer which included the news that the punishment they were looking for was to come soon. But, he was a prophet. His paternal affection and the desire to do good to them forced him to say during the course of his reply that he regretted that his people had taken things without sense and life as objects of worship without having any proof from reason or revelation to support their position. Now they had become so staunch in their devotion to the false that they had started quarreling with him, a prophet of Allah.

(5) In the last verse (72) it was said that the final outcome of the entire struggle of Sayyidnā Hūd عليه السلام against the contumacy of the people of 'Ād was that Allah Ta'ālā kept Sayyidnā Hūd عليه السلام and those who had believed in him safe from the punishment and cut off the root of those who had belied him - and they were not of those who would have believed.

This story leaves a trail of good counsel. It reminds heedless human beings to keep remembering Allah and take to a life style which is marked with obedience to Him. Then, to those who elect to reject honest advice and refuse to learn a lesson, it shows what to expect in

the end. And, as for preachers and reformers, it is a mirror of the prophetic method of communication in *Tablīgh* and *Iṣlāḥ*.

Verses 73 - 76

وَإِلَىٰ ثَمُودَ أَخَاهُمْ صَالِحًا قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُم مِّنْ
إِلَٰهٍ غَيْرُهُ قَدْ جَاءَتْكُم بَيِّنَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ هَٰذِهِ نَاقَةُ اللَّهِ لَكُمْ آيَةً
فَذَرُوهَا تَأْكُلْ فِي أَرْضِ اللَّهِ وَلَا تَمَسُّوهَا بِسُوءٍ فَيَأْخُذَكُمْ
عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٧٣﴾ وَاذْكُرُوا إِذْ جَعَلَكُمْ خُلَفَاءَ مِن بَعْدِ عَادٍ
وَبَوَّأَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ تَتَّخِذُونَ مِن سُهُولِهَا قُصُورًا وَتَنْحِتُونَ
الْجِبَالَ بُيُوتًا فَاذْكُرُوا آلَاءَ اللَّهِ وَلَا تَعْثَوْا فِي الْأَرْضِ
مُفْسِدِينَ ﴿٧٤﴾ قَالَ الْمَلَأُ الَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُوا مِن قَوْمِهِ لِلَّذِينَ
اسْتُضْعِفُوا لِمَنْ آمَنَ مِنْهُمْ أَتَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّ صَالِحًا مُّرْسَلٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِ
قَالُوا إِنَّا بِمَا أُرْسِلَ بِهِ مُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٧٥﴾ قَالَ الَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُوا إِنَّا
بِالَّذِي آمَنتُم بِهِ كَافِرُونَ ﴿٧٦﴾

And to Thamūd, (We sent) their brother, Ṣāliḥ. He said, "O my people, worship Allah. You have no god other than Him. There has come to you a clear sign from your Lord. This is the she-camel of Allah, a sign for you. So, leave her to eat on the earth of Allah and do not touch her with mischief, lest a painful punishment should seize you. [73] **And remember when He made you successors after 'Ād and lodged you on earth (whereby) you make castles in its plains and hew out the mountains into houses. So be mindful of the bounties of Allah, and do not go about the earth spreading disorder."** [74]

The chiefs of his people, who were arrogant, said to the weakened, to those of them who believed, "Are you sure that Ṣāliḥ is a messenger from his Lord?" They said, "Surely, we believe in what he has been sent with." [75] **Those who were arrogant said, "Surely, we disbelieve in what you believe in."** [76]

Commentary

These verses tell us about Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام and his people, the Thamūd. The account of the people of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام and Sayyidnā Hūd عليه السلام has appeared earlier. Similar introductions of past prophets and their peoples, highlighting the call of truth given by prophets and the disbelief and denial of their peoples, and the terrible consequences that overtook them continue to be the main subject as far as the end of Sūrah al-A'rāf.

In the first of the four verses cited above (73), it was said: وَاِلٰى ثَمُوْدَ اَخَاهُمْ صٰلِحًا (And to Thamūd, [We sent] their brother, Ṣāliḥ). Earlier, in the account given about the people of 'Ād, it was stated that 'Ād and Thamūd is the name of two persons who are among the progeny of the same grandfather. The children of these two also came to be known by their name and their two groups became two separate peoples. One of them was called the people of 'Ād and the other, the people of Thamūd. They lived in the north-western part of Arabia. Their main city was called Ḥijr which is now known as Madāin Ṣāliḥ. Like the people of 'Ād, the people of Thamūd were also wealthy, powerful, brave and artistically inclined. They were skilled in sculpture and architecture. Besides making palaces on open grounds, they were known to hew out mountains and create living spaces and structures on and inside them. In his book, 'Arḍ al-Qur'ān, Maulānā Sayyid Sulaiman Nadvi has said that their architectural momentos still exist. They have Iramic and Thamūdic inscriptions carved on them.

It generally happens that worldly wealth and high living would estrange people away from the remembrance of their Creator and the ultimate encounter with Him in the Hereafter and push them on to the ways of error - as was the case with the people of Thamūd.

Not forgotten by the world of the time, though, was the punishment of Flood that came upon the people of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام. Then, for them, the destruction of their brethren, the people of 'Ād was current history. But, wealth and power have a pull of their own. No sooner does one affluent structure collapse on its foundation, there comes another person, another group who would raise a higher structure on the same foundation totally ignoring what had happened before. When the people of 'Ād were destroyed, the people of Thamūd in-

herited their mansions and lands and it was at the same places they erected their venues of luxury, places where their own brethren had faced destruction. And as if this was not enough, they started indulging in the same deeds as were done by the people of 'Ād. They too became heedless of their Creator and unmindful of the Hereafter only to stoop to the level of worshiping idols and associating others in the Divinity of Allah. Then, Allah Ta'ālā - in accordance with His constant practice - sent Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام as His messenger so that he would guide them on to the straight path. Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام, in terms of his lineage and country, was one of the people of Thamūd as he too came from the progeny of Sām. Therefore, the Qur'ān has called him a brother of the people of Thamūd - as in: أَخَاهُمْ صٰلِحًا (their brother, Ṣāliḥ - 73). The call given by Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام to his people is no different from the call messengers from Sayyidnā Adam عليه السلام to the last of them have been giving all along - as mentioned in the Qur'ān: وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِيْ كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَّسُوْلًا أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوْتَ (We have sent to every community a messenger so that he tells them to worship Allah and shun idols - 16:36). This is what Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام said to his people, just as it was done by past prophets: يٰقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ إِلٰهٍ غَيْرُهٗ (O my people, worship Allah. You have no god other than Him).

Then, along with it, he also said: قَدْ جَآءَتْكُمْ بَيِّنَةٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ that is, now there has come to you from your Lord a very clear sign. This 'sign' refers to the unusual she-camel which finds a brief mention in the present verse while details appear in different Sūrahs of the Qur'ān. The background of this event concerning the she-camel goes back to the time when Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام started preaching as a young man. He kept doing his duty until marks of old age started showing on him. He still did not seem to give up. His people became impatient with his repeated efforts to make them believe in one God. So they decided to come up with a demand which it would be impossible for him to fulfill and, as a result, they would prevail as winners of the confrontation. The demand that they made was: If you are really a messenger of Allah, make a she-camel come out from Kātibah, this hill of ours, and it has to be in its tenth month of pregnancy while being strong and healthy.

The first thing Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام did was to take a pledge

from them. He asked them if he fulfilled this demand of theirs, would they all believe in him and in his Da'wah. When all of them made a compact, Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام made two *raka'at* of Ṣalāh and made a *Du'ā'* before Allah Ta'ālā: For You nothing is difficult. Let their demand be fulfilled. Soon after the *Du'ā'*, there was a rumble in the hill, a big rock blasted out, and out came a she-camel as demanded.

Seeing this mind-boggling miracle of Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام, some from among those people became believers instantly. As for the rest of them, they too decided to enter the fold of faith they have been rejecting upto that time. But, some of their chiefs who were the real promoters of idol-worship, talked them out of it. When Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام saw that his people had broken the pledge, he was concerned for them. The danger was that they might be subjected to punishment for having done that. Thus, feeling for them, he advised them not to harm the she-camel in any way, and keep protecting it, in which case, they may stay safe against the danger of punishment, otherwise, they might be seized in punishment immediately. This is the subject matter of what has been said in the following sentences of verse 73: هٰذِهٖ نَاقَةُ اللّٰهِ لَكُمْ اٰيَةً فَذَرُوْهَا تَاْكُلْ فِيْٓ اَرْضِ اللّٰهِ وَلَا تَمَسُّوْهَا بِسُوْٓءٍ فَيَاْخُذَكُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ (This is the she-camel of Allah, a sign for you. So, leave her to eat on the earth of Allah and do not touch her with mischief, lest a painful punishment should seize you). This she-camel has been called 'the she-camel of Allah' because it was a proof of the perfect power of Allah and had appeared in an extraordinary manner as a miracle of Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام. The expression: تَاْكُلْ فِيْٓ اَرْضِ اللّٰهِ (to eat on the earth of Allah) indicates that the she-camel should be left free to eat and drink because what she would eat and drink was not owned by them. The earth belonged to Allah and He was the creator of the produce it yielded. So, she was to be left free to eat from the natural grazing grounds of the earth of Allah.

The well from which the people of Thamūd got their water was the one from which this she-camel got her share of water to drink. But, when this she-camel, an extra ordinary creation of Allah, drank her share of water, she would drink up all the water in the well. Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام had, following the Divine will, given the verdict that the she-camel would drink water from the well one day and the next day the rest of Thamūd people will have water from the well for them-

selves. It so happened that the day the she-camel drank water from the well, others would get milk from the she-camel, in lieu of water, in such quantity that they would fill out their water containers with it. This distribution of water has been referred to elsewhere in the Qur'an in the following words addressed to Sayyidna Ṣaliḥ (عليه السلام): وَنَبِّئْهُمْ أَنَّ الْمَاءَ قِسْمَةٌ بَيْنَهُمْ كُلُّ شِرْبٍ مُّحْتَضَرٌ (54:28) that is, the water of the well is to be divided between them, one day for the she-camel and the other for his people, and this distribution will be watched by angels lest anyone does against it.' In another verse (26:155), it was said: هٰذِهٖ نَاقَةٌ لَّهَا شِرْبٌ وَّلَكُمْ شِرْبُ يَوْمٍ مَّعْلُوْمٍ that is, 'this is a she- camel of Allah; water for one day is her right and water for the other day is fixed for you'.

In the second verse (74), concern has been shown for these pledge-breaking and contumacious people lest they find themselves subjected to Divine punishment. For this purpose they have been reminded of the favours and blessings of Allah Ta'ala upon them in the hope that they would alter their uncompromising stance and abandon their dog-gedness and rebellion. It was said: وَاذْكُرُوْٓا اِذْ جَعَلَكُمْ خُلَفَآءَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ عَادٍ وَّبَوَّاَكُمْ فِي الْاَرْضِ تَتَّخِذُوْنَ مِنْ سُهُوْلِهَا قُصُوْرًا وَّتَنْحِتُوْنَ الْجِبَالَ بُيُوْتًا (And remember when He made you successors after 'Ad and lodged you on earth [whereby] you make castles in its plains and hew out the mountains into houses). Here, the word: خُلَفَآءَ (*khulafa'*) is the plural of *khalifah* which means deputy or vicere-gent and: قُصُوْر (*quṣur*) is the plural of *qaṣr* which means a palace or pa-latial building. The word: تَنْحِتُوْنَ (*tanḥituna*) is a derivation from *naḥt* which means sculpture or stone-carving. '*Jibal*' is the plural of *jabal* meaning a mountain. '*Buyut*' is the plural of *bayt* which denotes a house or rooms in it. The sense of the verse is that they should remem-ber the blessing of Allah Ta'ala that He, after the destruction of the people of 'Ad, brought them to settle in their place, gave their lands and homes to them as the new owners, and bestowed on them the skill with which they could raise big palaces on open surfaces and hew out mountains to make rooms and apartments inside them. Then, at the end of the verse, it was said: فَاذْكُرُوْٓا اٰلَآءَ اللّٰهِ وَلَا تَعْثَوْا فِي الْاَرْضِ مُفْسِدِيْنَ (So be mind-ful of the bounties of Allah, and do not go about the earth spreading disorder).

Injunctions and Rulings

Some fundamental and subsidiary rulings emerge from the cited

verse. These are as follows:

(1) There is a unanimous agreement of all prophets, may peace be upon them all, on fundamental articles of faith and, similarly, united stand their religious codes or Sharī'ahs. All of them invite towards Tauḥīd or absolutely pure monotheism as the basis of worshiping Allah, and they all warn against contravention of this concept which brings punishment in this world and in the Hereafter.

(2) It has happened in past communities too that the wealthy and the traditional holders of social prestige have not said yes to the call of prophets as a result of which they were disgraced and destroyed in this world and became deserving of punishment in the Hereafter as well.

(3) According to Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī, this verse tells us that the blessings of Allah in this world are directed to and shared by disbelievers as well - as was the case with the people of 'Ād and Thamūd to whom Allah Ta'ālā had given great wealth and power.

(4) According to Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī, once again, this verse tells us that palaces and mansions are blessings of Allah Ta'ālā and their making is permissible.

However, this is an entirely different matter that the noble prophets and the men of Allah have not favoured them as they make people heedless. The sayings of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم about high-rising buildings are of this nature.

The Confrontation Between the Arrogant and the Weakened

The third (75) and the fourth (76) verses carry a dialogue between two groups of the people of Thamūd. One of these was of those who had come to believe that Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام was a prophet while the other was that of deniers and disbelievers. Says the verse: قَالَ الْمَلَاُ الَّذِيْنَ اسْتَكْبَرُوْا مِنْ قَوْمِهٖ لِلَّذِيْنَ اسْتُضْعِفُوْا لِمَنْ اٰمَنَ مِنْهُمْ (The chiefs of his people, who were arrogant said to the weakened, to those of them who believed).

In Tafsīr Kabīr, Imām Rāzi has said: At this place, the Holy Qur'ān identifies two qualities of these two groups, but the quality or trait of the disbelievers was mentioned in the active voice (اِسْتَكْبَرُوْا: who were arrogant) while the quality or state of the believers was identified

through the passive (اُسْتُضْعِفُوْا : the weakened). It indicates that the condition of the disbelievers - that they were arrogant - was what they chose to do at their own discretion which was questionable and blameworthy, and which finally became the cause of their punishment. As for the quality or state of believers which these people put as weak and low, it was something said by disbelievers. Their description had nothing to do with the actual state and quality of believers, something which could be considered blameworthy in any manner whatsoever. In fact, blameworthy are those who call them weak and low, and take them to be so, without any reason. After that comes the dialogue which has occured between these two groups where the disbelievers said to the believers: 'Are you sure that Ṣāliḥ is a messenger from his Lord?'

The reply given by the believers was: 'Surely , we believe in what he has been sent with.'

The famous Tafsīr Kashshāf says: What an eloquent answer was given by the believers from the people of Thamūd when they said: 'All this debate of yours - is he a messenger of Allah or is he not? - is just not worth debating. In fact, this is obvious, foregone and certain. And equally certain is that what he says is a message brought from Allah Ta'ālā. If there is anything worth talking about here, it is: Who believes in him and who does not? So, as for us, praise be to Allah, we do believe in every word of guidance brought by him.'

But, even this eloquent answer could not soften the disbelieving people of Thamūd. They countered back coldly and arrogantly saying that they rejected what they had accepted. The lust of worldly life is merciless. So is the toxic elation of having wealth and power. May Allah Ta'ālā keep all of us protected for they become invisible curtains before human eyes which would not let those seeing eyes see the obvious.

Verses 77 - 79

فَعَقَرُوا النَّاقَةَ وَعَتَوْا عَنْ اَمْرِ رَبِّهِمْ وَقَالُوْا يٰصٰلِحُ ائْتِنَا بِمَا
تَعِدُنَآ اِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ ﴿۷۷﴾ فَاَخَذَتْهُمُ الرَّجْفَةُ

فَأَصْبَحُوا فِي دَارِهِمْ جٰثِمِينَ ﴿٧٨﴾ فَتَوَلّٰى عَنْهُمْ وَقَالَ يٰقَوْمِ لَقَدْ أَبْلَغْتُكُمْ رِسَالَةَ رَبِّي وَنَصَحْتُ لَكُمْ وَلٰكِنْ لَّا تُحِبُّونَ النّٰصِحِينَ ﴿٧٩﴾

Then they slaughtered the she-camel and defied the command of their Lord and said, "O Ṣāliḥ, bring us what you threaten us with, if you are one of the messengers." [77] **So, the earthquake seized them, and they were (found dead) in their homes, fallen on their breasts.** [78]

So, he turned away from them and said, "O my people, I have certainly delivered to you the message of my Lord, and wished you betterment, but you do not like the sincere advisers." [79]

Commentary

It has appeared in previous verses that the *Du'ā'* of Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام had made a big rock open up in the nearby mountain through which an extra-ordinary she-camel had come out. Then, Allah Ta'ālā had made this she-camel the last trial for these people as she drank up all water from the well which was used by the people and animals of the locality for their needs. Therefore, Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام had fixed turns, a day for the she-camel and another for the people of the area.

The people of Thamūd were in trouble because of this she-camel. They wished she would somehow die. But, they did not dare do it themselves lest they are hit by some Divine punishment.

But, Satan has an unlimited array of weapons. One of his deadliest strategies of deception which makes human beings surrender whatever sense and sensibility they have is the trial through women. So, two beautiful damsels from the people of Thamūd threw a wager: Whoever kills this she-camel could take us, or anyone from among our girls to become his own.

Two youngmen from Thamūd, called Miṣda' and Qadhār, all drunk with the rosy prospect, went out to kill the she-camel. They hid themselves behind a big rock and waited for the she-camel to pass by them on its usual route. When the she-camel appeared before them, Miṣda'

hit her with an arrow and Qadhār hamstrung her by cutting her legs with his sword. Thus, they killed the she-camel.

The Holy Qur'ān calls this person the most cruel and wretched from among the people of Thamūd: إِذِ انۢبَعَثَ أَشْقٰهَا (when the one, most wicked of them, was sent [incited to kill her] - 91:12) because that was what brought mass punishment on the people of Thamūd.

Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام, after having found that the she-camel has been killed, told his people - as Divinely commanded - that they have only three days to live: تَمَتَّعُوْا فِيْ دَارِكُمْ ثَلٰثَةَ اَيَّامٍ ذٰلِكَ وَعْدٌ غَيْرُ مَكْذُوْبٍ that is, 'enjoy yourselves in your homes for three days (only) [after that the punishment is coming]. That is a promise, not going to be false - 11:65.' But, when the undoing of a people becomes due, no advice or warning works. This is what happened with these wretched people. Even the very honest counsel of Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام did not produce the desired effect. In turn, they started making fun of him by challenging him as to how and from where would this punishment come and what would be the signs of its coming.

Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام said: 'You want signs, so hear this. Tomorrow, on Thursday, your faces will turn dark yellow. Men, women, the young and the old, no one will remain exempted. Then, day after tomorrow, on Friday, all faces will turn dark red; and on Saturday, the third day to come, all faces will turn jet black. And this day will be the last day of your life.' Despite having heard what was said, these wretched people, rather than repent and seek forgiveness, decided that they better kill Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام himself. Their 'logic' was: If he is true and the punishment has to come upon them, why should they not finish him first before the punishment comes to finish them - and if he is a liar, then, let him have his punishment for lying. This intention of the people of Thamūd finds mention in details at other places in the Qur'ān. Under this unanimous verdict of the Thamudites, some of them went to the house of Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام with the intention of killing him. But, as Allah Ta'ālā would have it, they were killed by a hail of rocks while still on their way. Says the Qur'ān: وَمَكَرُوْا مَكْرًا وَّ مَكَرْنَا مَكْرًا وَّهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُوْنَ that is,'and they made a plan and We made a plan and they were not aware' - 27:50.

When came the morning of Thursday, then, as stated by Sayyidnā

Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام, the faces of all of them turned as yellow as if painted with a deep yellow colour. The first sign of the coming of punishment stood proved true. Yet, those tyrants were not to be mellowed enough to believe in Allah Ta'ālā and desist from their wrongdoings. In fact, their wrath on Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام increased all the more and everyone started running around to find and kill him. May Allah Ta'ālā protect everyone from His wrath, for that too has its signs which turn hearts and minds upside down, when people start taking their gain as their loss, and their loss as their gain, and their good as bad, and their bad as good.

At last came the second day and, true to the prophecy, everyone's face turned red; and then, came the third day when they turned jet black. Now there was nowhere to go. All disappointed, they stood waiting to see which way the punishment comes.

In this state of theirs, a severe earthquake struck from down below the earth, and from above tore in a horrendously shrill cry, an awesomely severe sound. This cry or sound caused everyone to die, instantly and simultaneously, fallen upside down, (like some dead bird landing on the ground on its breast - see '*Jāthimīn*' in Mufradāt al-Qur'ān). As for the coming of the earthquake, it does find mention in verse 78 which appears above, that is: فَاَخَذَتْهُمُ الرَّجْفَةُ (So, the earthquake seized them). The word: اَلرَّجْفَةُ (*ar-rajfah*) means earthquake.

Other verses of the Qur'ān have also mentioned: فَاَخَذَتْهُمُ الصَّيْحَةُ (that is, a Cry or Sound seized them - 15:83). The word: اَلصَّيْحَةُ (Aṣ-Ṣaiḥah) means a shrill cry or severe sound. From these two verses, we find out that two kinds of punishment had simultaneously converged on the people of Thamūd, the earthquake from below and the 'Ṣaiḥah' from above. The result was: فَاَصْبَحُوْا فِيْ دَارِهِمْ جٰثِمِيْنَ (and they were [found dead] in their homes, fallen on their knees - 77). The word: جٰثِمِيْنَ (*jāthimīn*) is a derivation from the verbal noun: *Juthūm*, which means to be rendered senseless and motionless at one spot, or remain sitting (Al-Qāmūs). The sense is that everyone lay dead as and where one was. نَعُوْذُ بِاللّٰهِ مِنْ قَهْرِهٖ وَعَذَابِهٖ (We seek refuge with Allah from His Wrath and His Punishment).

Important parts of this story of the people of Thamūd have been mentioned in the different Sūrahs of the Qur'ān itself. Some parts appear in Ḥadīth narrations. There are some others which commentators

have taken from Israelite narratives, but the proof of an event or its reality does not depend on them.

It appears in a Ḥadīth of the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī that, during a journey related to the Battle of Tabūk, the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his Ṣaḥabah passed by Ḥijr, the place where the people of Thamūd had faced their punishment. At that spot, he gave instructions to the Ṣaḥabah that no one should go into the land area of that punishment-stricken habitation, nor should anyone use water from its wells. (Maẓharī)

According to some narrations, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: When the punishment overtook the people of Thamūd, no one survived except one person, Abū Righāl. He was in the Ḥaram of Makkah at that time. Allah Ta'ālā spared him of the punishment at that time because of the sanctity of the Ḥaram of Makkah. Finally, when he came out of the Ḥarām, the same punishment which had seized his people visited him as well, and right there he met his death. The Holy Prophet ﷺ also showed people the marks of the grave of Abū Righal on the outskirts of Makkah; and he also said that a walking stick made of gold was also buried with him. When the Ṣaḥabah opened the grave, they found the gold stick there which was taken out. Mentioned in the same narration is that Banū Thaqīf, the inhabitants of Ṭā'if are the progeny of this very Abū Righāl. (Maẓharī)

Allah Ta'ālā, in His infinite wisdom, has allowed these habitations of punished peoples to stay as signposts of lesson for coming generations. The Holy Qur'ān has repeatedly warned the people of Arabia that these places which come on their travel route to Syria should bring home to them their essential lesson in the rise and fall of peoples: لَمْ تُسْكَنْ مِّنْۢ بَعْدِهِمْ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا that is, (these are the dwellings of ungrateful people We destroyed and which) have not been lived in after them, except a little - 28:58).

After the mention of the event of punishment which overtook the people of Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام, it was finally said: فَتَوَلّٰى عَنْهُمْ وَقَالَ يٰقَوْمِ لَقَدْ اَبْلَغْتُكُمْ رِسَالَةَ رَبِّيْ وَنَصَحْتُ لَكُمْ وَلٰكِنْ لَّا تُحِبُّوْنَ النّٰصِحِيْنَ (So, he turned away from them and said, "O my people, I have certainly delivered to you the message of my Lord, and wished you betterment, but you people do not like the sincere advisers - 79), that is, after the visit of punishment on his peo-

ple, Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام and those who had believed in him left that place and went somewhere else. In some narrations, it appears that there were four thousand believers with Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام. He went along with them to Hadramaut in Yaman. It was there that Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام passed away from this mortal world. However, some narrations report his going to Makkah al-Mu'aẓẓamah and where it was that he passed away.

From the outward arrangement of the text, it appears that Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام addressed his people while departing - O my people, I have certainly delivered to you the message of my Lord and have wished the best for you, but you do not seem to like honest advisers.

The question is when his people have been destroyed by the punishment, what is the use of addressing them now. The answer is that one good that may come out of it is that people in general would learn their lesson. This form of address resembles the address of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم when he had said a few words addressing dead disbelievers from the tribe of Quraysh in the Battle of Badr. And then, it is also possible that this saying of Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام came to pass before the coming of the punishment and the destruction of his people - though, in the textual arrangement, it has been mentioned later.

Verses 80 - 84

وَلُوطًا إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِۦٓ أَتَأْتُونَ الْفَاحِشَةَ مَا سَبَقَكُم بِهَا مِنْ أَحَدٍ
مِّنَ الْعٰلَمِينَ ﴿٨٠﴾ إِنَّكُمْ لَتَأْتُونَ الرِّجَالَ شَهْوَةً مِّن دُونِ
النِّسَآءِ ط بَلْ أَنتُمْ قَوْمٌ مُّسْرِفُونَ ﴿٨١﴾ وَمَا كَانَ جَوَابَ قَوْمِهِۦٓ
إِلَّآ أَن قَالُوٓا أَخْرِجُوهُم مِّن قَرْيَتِكُمْ إِنَّهُمْ أُنَاسٌ يَتَطَهَّرُونَ ﴿٨٢﴾
فَأَنجَيْنٰهُ وَأَهْلَهُۥٓ إِلَّا امْرَأَتَهُۥ كَانَتْ مِنَ الْغٰبِرِينَ ﴿٨٣﴾ وَأَمْطَرْنَا
عَلَيْهِم مَّطَرًا ط فَانظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عٰقِبَةُ الْمُجْرِمِينَ ﴿٨٤﴾

And (We sent) Lūṭ when he said to his people, "Do you commit the shameful act in which nobody has ever preceded you from all the worlds? [80] **Surely, you come to**

men lustfully instead of women. No, you are a people who cross the limits." [81]

And the answer of his people was not but that they said, "Expel them from your town. They are a people who seek to be pure." [82] **So, We saved him and his family, except his wife. She was one of the rest.** [83] **And We rained down upon them a rain. So look, how was the fate of the sinners!** [84]

Commentary

Out of the continuing series of stories relating to prophets عليهم السلام and their communities, the fourth story is that of Sayyidnā Lūṭ (Lot) عليه السلام.

Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام is a nephew of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm Khalīlullāh عليه السلام, the patriarch of prophets. The original homeland of both was known as Babel near Baṣrah in western Irāq. Idol-worship was common. Even the family of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was involved in it. Allah Ta'ālā sent Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام as a prophet for their guidance. His people opposed him which culminated in the well known Fire of Nimrūd. Even his father threatened to turn him out of his home.

Out of his entire family, only his wife, Sayyidah Sārah and nephew, Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام embraced Islam: فَاٰمَنَ لَهٗ لُوْطٌ (Then, Lūṭ believed in him - 29:26). Finally, it was with these two that he emigrated to Syria leaving his home country behind. After reaching Jordon river, he settled in Can'ān near Bayt al-Maqdis under a Divine command.

Then, Allah Ta'ālā made Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام too a prophet and sent him to Sadūm (Sodom) near Bayt al-Maqdis for the guidance of people there. This area comprised of five major cities. They were called Sadūm, 'Amūrah, Admah, Sububim and Bālī' or Sawghar. The Qur'ān has referred to their nucleus as 'Mu'tafikah' and 'Mu'tafikāt' at several places. Sadūm was considered as the center and capital of these cities. It was here that Sayyidnā Lut عليه السلام stayed. The land was fertile and verdant abounding in all kinds of grains and fruits. (These details appear in Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ, Maẓharī, Ibn Kathīr, Al-Manār etc.)

Man's habit, as Allah Ta'ālā says in the Qur'ān, is: كَلَّآ اِنَّ الْاِنْسَانَ لَيَطْغٰٓى اَنْ رَّاٰهُ اسْتَغْنٰى that is, when he acquires freedom from need, he starts trans-

gressing the limits - 96:6. On these people too, Allah Ta'ālā had opened the doors of His blessings. Goaded by this common behaviour pattern, all soaked in wealth and possessions, they reached the farthest ends of luxury and lust when they stood deprived of the most essential human sense of honour, dignity and modesty, and lost in that process, the very ability to distinguish between the good and the bad. In consequence, they got themselves involved in acts of unnatural indecencies. These are abominal acts, apart from being Ḥarām and sinful, acts which cause hatred and distaste in the heart and mind of everyone born with sound and decent taste, so much so, that even animals would not go near it.

Allah Ta'ālā appointed Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام for their guidance. He addressed his people and said: أَتَأْتُونَ الْفَاحِشَةَ مَا سَبَقَكُمْ بِهَا مِنْ أَحَدٍ مِّنَ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ (Do you commit the shameful act in which nobody has ever preceded you from all the worlds?).

When refering to Zinā (adultery), the Qur'ān has said: إِنَّهُ كَانَ فَاحِشَةً (Surely, it is a shameful act - 17:32). Here, the word: فَاحِشَة (*fāḥishah*: shameful act) has been mentioned without *'Alif Lām* while in the present verse, by saying: اَلْفَاحِشَةَ (*al-fāḥishah* : the shameful act), it has been made definite by the addition of *'Alif Lām*. Thus, the hint given is that this unnatural evil act is, as if, the combination of all indecencies, and far grave a crime as compared to Zinā.

Then, it was said that this shameful act has never been committed by anyone in all the worlds before they did it. 'Amrū ibn Dīnār has said: The act was unknown in the world before these people. (Maẓharī) Neither had the worst of human being had ever thought on those lines before the people of Sadūm. The Umayyad Khalīfah, 'Abd al-Mālik said: Had this event relating to the people of Lūṭ عليه السلام not been mentioned in the Qur'ān, I would have never suspected that a human being could do something like that. (Ibn Kathīr)

Here, their immodesty has been censured on two grounds: (1) It so happens that men would get involved in many sins because of their social conditions, or because of a blind following of their ancestors - though, that too, is not a valid legal excuse in the Sharī'ah of Islam. But, as a matter of customary practice, such a person could be taken as excusable in some or the other degree. But, when it comes to a sin

which has never been committed by anyone before, nor does it have any particular compulsions of its own, it becomes a curse of the highest degree. (2) The other ground is that this act becomes a channel of making others equally accursed. Think of a person who invents some evil act or custom. As obvious, the sin and punishment of his evil act falls on that person anyway, but, alongwith him, affected are all who sink in sin led by the act of the originator right through the Last Day, for the curse and punishment of all those so affected also sits on the shoulders of the originator of the evil.

In the second verse (81), this immodesty has been stated more explicitly - 'Surely, you come to men lustfully instead of women.' Here, the hint given is that, for the natural satisfaction of human desire, Allah Ta'ālā has appointed marrying women as a lawful method. Now, to bypass it and opt for an unnatural method is bland ugliness of the human self and certainly the proof of a dirty mind.

Therefore, the Ṣaḥabah, the Tābi'īn and Mujtahid Imāms have declared this crime and sin to be far more grave than other acts of shame. Imām Abū Ḥanīfah has said: The punishment given to the person who commits this act should match the punishment which came upon the people of Lūṭ علیه السلام by the command of Allah Ta'ālā - that rocks rained from the skies and the floor of the earth flipped upside down. Therefore, this person should be pushed down from a high mountain and rocks should be thrown from above on top of him. According to a narration of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضی الله عنه in the Musnad of Aḥmad, Abū Dāwūd, Tirmidhī, and Ibn Mājah, the Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم said about the people who commit this evil act: فاقتلوا الفاعل والمفعول به that is, the doer of this evil deed and his passive partner (*al-maf'ūlu bihī*: with whom it was done) should both be killed. (Ibn Kathīr)

At the end of the verse (81), it was said: بَلْ اَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ مُّسْرِفُوْنَ (No, you are a people who cross the limits). In other words, their real disease was that they would go beyond the limits set by Allah for everything - in their case, it would be the very limit of humanity they would be hopping over. The same thing happened about sexual desire when they crossed the limits appointed by Allah only to reach for a taste of the counter-natural.

In the third verse (82), the answer given by the people of Sayyidnā

Lūṭ عليه السلام in response to his word of advice has been put in a way that it shows that his people could not find a suitable rejoinder to what he had said. But, they were still adamant and started saying among themselves that these people seem to be self-righteous claiming a lot of purity for themselves. The treatment they deserved was that they should be thrown out of their town.

Mentioned in the fourth (83) and the fifth (84) verses is the Divine punishment given to the people of Sadūm for their crooked and immodest practice. As a consequence, the punishment of Allah Ta'ālā descended on the entire people with the exception of Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام and some of his companions who remained safe from the punishment. The words of the Qur'ān say: فَأَنْجَيْنٰهُ وَأَهْلَهٗ (We saved him and his '*ahl*'). Who were these '*ahl*?' Some commentators say that included in '*ahl*' were two women who had become Muslims. The wife was not. Mentioned in another verse of the Qur'ān is: فَمَا وَجَدْنَا فِيْهَا غَيْرَ بَيْتٍ مِّنَ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ that is, in all those habitations, there was no Muslim home except one - 51:36. This obviously shows that only people from the household of Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام were the ones who were saved from the punishment - and that did not include his wife. Some other commentators say that *ahl*' is general. It refers to his own family as well as others who had joined him by embracing Islam. To sum up, it can be said that they were a counted few Muslims to save whom Allah Ta'ālā ordered Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام to take, except his wife, with him and get out of that habitation late in the night and be sure not to look back, because when they are out of the habitation, the punishment would instantly descend on those in it.

Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام followed the Divine command. He went out of the limits of Sadūm with his family and companions late in the night. There are two reports about the wife: (1) She just did not go with them; (2) That she did start off with them and walked on for a while, but since she was eager to see the fate of the people she had left behind, quite contrary to the initial Divine command, she was seized by the punishment. This event has been mentioned in the Qur'ān at several occasions in varying details. Here, in the fourth verse (83), it has been briefly said that Allah Ta'ālā saved Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام and his family and companions from the punishment, but his wife was left

with the rest in it. The additional details of how they were saved and how they were asked to leave the habitation late in night and were not to look back appear in other verses.

In the fifth verse (84), the punishment which came on these people has been described in a few words - that an unusual rain was sent upon them. The details of this punishment appear in Sūrah Hūd where it is said:

فَلَمَّا جَآءَ اَمْرُنَا جَعَلْنَا عَالِيَهَا سَافِلَهَا وَاَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهَا حِجَارَةً مِّنْ سِجِّيْلٍ مَّنْضُوْدٍ. مُسَوَّمَةً عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ وَمَا هِىَ مِنَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ بِبَعِيْدٍ

(So, when Our command came, We turned its highest into its lowest, and We rained on it stones of hard clay, one over another marked, with your Lord. And they are not far from the transgressors - 11:82-83).

This tells us that the rain of stones came from above and from down below, angel Jibra'īl lifted up the whole crust of the earth and threw it back upside down. Then, the stones which rained down were one over the other, that is, the stone rained so ceaselessly that they kept collecting one on top the next. These stones were marked. Some commentators say that every such stone was marked with the name of the person who was destined to be destroyed with it. And in the verses of Sūrah Al-Hijr, also mentioned before the account of the punishment is: فَاَخَذَتْهُمُ الصَّيْحَةُ مُشْرِقِيْنَ that is, a Sound seized them at sunrise - 15:73).

This indicates that first to come was some harsh Sound from the skies, then came other punishments. The outward arrangement of the words shows that it was after this Sound that the earth crust was turned upside down and then, stones were rained on them to put a stamp on their disgrace. And it is also possible that the rain of stones came first and the turning over of the earth crust came later. The reason is that, given the style of the Qur'ān, it is not necessary that something mentioned earlier should have also occured earlier.

Out of the horrendous punishments sent on the people of Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام, the punishment of turning the floor of the earth upside down has a particular correspondence with their act of shame and immodesty because they were guilty of perversion.

Towards the end of the verses of Sūrah Hūd cited a little earlier, the Qur'ān has warned the people of Arabia when it says: وَمَا هِيَ مِنَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ بِبَعِيْدٍ that is, these upturned habitations were not far from the transgressors. They pass by them while traveling to Syria but it is surprising that they would learn no lesson from them.

And these sights are not restricted with the time the Holy Qur'ān was being revealed. They are still there between Bayt al-Maqdis and Jordon river, particularly the area known as the Sea of Lūṭ or the Dead Sea. It lies way deep below the sea level. On a particular section, there is water which is unusual. No sea life survives there. Hence, the name: Dead Sea. This is said to be the legendary Sodom. May Allah keep us safe from His Punishment and Wrath.

Verses 85 - 87

وَإِلٰى مَدْيَنَ أَخَاهُمْ شُعَيْبًا ۚ قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ إِلٰهٍ غَيْرُهُ ۚ قَدْ جَآءَتْكُمْ بَيِّنَةٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ فَأَوْفُوا الْكَيْلَ وَالْمِيْزَانَ وَلَا تَبْخَسُوا النَّاسَ أَشْيَآءَهُمْ وَلَا تُفْسِدُوْا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا ۚ ذٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿٨٥﴾ وَلَا تَقْعُدُوْا بِكُلِّ صِرَاطٍ تُوْعِدُوْنَ وَتَصُدُّوْنَ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ مَنْ اٰمَنَ بِهٖ وَتَبْغُوْنَهَا عِوَجًا ۚ وَاذْكُرُوْٓا إِذْ كُنْتُمْ قَلِيْلًا فَكَثَّرَكُمْ ۖ وَانْظُرُوْا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُفْسِدِيْنَ ﴿٨٦﴾ وَإِنْ كَانَ طَآئِفَةٌ مِّنْكُمْ اٰمَنُوْا بِالَّذِيْٓ أُرْسِلْتُ بِهٖ وَطَآئِفَةٌ لَّمْ يُؤْمِنُوْا فَاصْبِرُوْا حَتّٰى يَحْكُمَ اللّٰهُ بَيْنَنَا ۚ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الْحٰكِمِيْنَ ﴿٨٧﴾

And (We sent) to Madyan his brother, Shu'aib. He said, "O my people, worship Allah. You have no god other than Him. There has come to you a clear sign from your Lord. And fill the measure and weight in full, and do not make people short of their things, and do not make mischief on the earth after it has been set in order. That is good for you, if you are believers. [85] **And do not sit in every path threatening, and prevent from the**

way of Allah the people who believe in Him, and seeking a twist in it. And remember the time when you were few, then He increased you in number. And look, how was the fate of the mischief makers. [86] **And if a group from among you has believed in what I have been sent with, and another group has not believed then, keep patience until Allah decides between us. And He is the best of all judges."** [87]

Commentary

The series of stories relating to prophets عليهم السلام continues. The fifth story appears in the verses quoted above. This is the story of Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام and his people.

Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام, according to Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq, is among the progeny of Madyan, the son of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, and he is also related to Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام. The lineal descendants of Madyan, the son of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام also came to be known by the name, Madyan - and the locality where they lived is also called Madyan. Thus, Madyan is the name of a people and the name of a city as well. This city still survives near the port of Ma'ān in Eastern Jordan. When relating the story of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام elsewhere, the Qur'ān says: وَلَمَّا وَرَدَ مَاءَ مَدْيَنَ (And when he arrived at the watering [place] in Madyan - 28:23), it is referring to this very habitation. (Ibn Kathīr) Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام was known for his impressive oratory because of which he was called the Orator among Prophets. (Ibn Kathīr, Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ)

The people to whom Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام was sent have been identified by the Holy Qur'ān as the residents or people of Madyan, and also as the people of *Aikah*. The word: ايكه (*Aikah*) means a forest.

Some commentators say that these were two different people and lived in separate settlements. Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام was sent to one of them first. When they were destroyed, he was sent to the other. The punishment which came upon these two has also been stated in different words. The punishment of the *Rajfah* on the people of Madyan is mentioned as Ṣaiḥah (Sound) at some places, while as *Rajfah* (earthquake) at others. The punishment of the people of *Aikah* has been stated as being that of Ẓullah (shade, canopy). The form in which this punishment came was that the people of *Aikah* were first subject-

ed to intense heat in their locality which almost roasted them. Then, in the forest closeby there came a dense cloud which cast its shade over the entire forest. Attracted by the shade and cool breeze there, all inhabitants of the locality assembled under the shade of that cloud. As Divine arrangement would have it, here were its criminals walking on their two feet and reaching the exact spot where they were to be destroyed, without a warrant of arrest and without a police gun pointed at them. Once they were all there, the clouds rained fire and the earthquake shook the earth. That killed them all.

Then, there are other commentators who say that the people of Madyan and the people of *Aikah* are the same people and the three kinds of punishment mentioned here converged on these people. First came the Fire from the clouds, then, with it, rose the piercing Sound, and then, the earthquake shook the earth. Ibn Kathīr has favoured this view.

However, whether these two people are separate or are two names of the same people, what matters is the message of truth delivered to them by Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام - and that has been mentioned in the first (85) and second (86) verses. Before we move on to the explanation of this message, let us first understand that the essence of Islam, which is the combined call of all blessed prophets, is the fulfillment of mutual rights. Then rights are of two kinds. First come rights which are related directly to Allah Ta'ālā. No visible human gain or loss seems to depend on their fulfillment or abandonment, for example, praying and fasting (Ṣalāh and Ṣawm). Secondly, there are the rights of the servants of Allah (*Ḥuqūq al-'Ibād*: human rights - in secular terminology) which are related to human beings. These people were heedless to and unaware of both these rights, in fact, were acting counter to both.

By not believing in Allah Ta'ālā and His messengers, they were violating the rights of Allah, and on top of it, by decreasing weights and measures, they were slicing through and wasting away the rights of human beings. Then, such people would go on to sit on entry points of roads and streets and would terrorize all comers, rob them of their belongings, and warned them of worse consequences if they believed in Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام. And thus, on God's good earth, they had

made disorder the order of the day. It was to correct these misdeeds that Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام was sent to them.

In the first and second verses quoted above, Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام said three things to correct the course of his people: (1) First he said: يٰقَوۡمِ اعۡبُدُوا اللّٰهَ مَا لَكُمۡ مِّنۡ اِلٰهٍ غَيۡرُهٗ (O my people, worship Allah. You have no god other than Him). This is the same *Da'wah*, the call to *Tauḥīd*, the Oneness of Allah, which all blessed prophets have been giving all along the lanes of time, a call which is the spirit of all true beliefs and deeds. Since these people too were all sold to the worship of the created, and consequently, heedless to the sacred Being and Attributes of Allah Ta'ālā, and thus, neglectful of the fulfillment of His rights. Therefore, this was the first message given to them. (2) Then, it was said: قَدۡ جَآءَتۡكُمۡ بَيِّنَةٌ مِّنۡ رَّبِّكُمۡ (There has come to you a clear sign from your Lord). Here, 'clear signs' or proofs refers to the miracles which were manifested at the hands of Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام. The different forms in which these miracles had appeared find mention in Tafsīr Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ.

(3) The statement which follows lays down a major rule of just conduct. It was said: فَاَوۡفُوا الۡكَيۡلَ وَالۡمِيۡزَانَ وَلَا تَبۡخَسُوا النَّاسَ اَشۡيَآءَهُمۡ (And fill the measure and weight in full, and do not make people short of their things). The word: كَيۡل (*kail*) means measure, and: ميزان (*mīzān*) is used in the sense of weighing, and: بَخۡس (*bakhs*) means to bring loss on someone by giving one less than what is due. Thus, the instruction given in the verse is to give full measure and weight and to abstain from causing loss to them by holding back what is their due.

In the first part of the verse, the particular crime of under-measuring or under-weighing in buying and selling was prohibited. Later, by saying: لَا تَبۡخَسُوا النَّاسَ اَشۡيَآءَهُمۡ (and do not make people short of their things), the prohibition was generalized. Now the prohibition applies to all kinds of decreasing, slicing, under-cutting or short-changing of rights - whether related to property, or honour, or something else. (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ)

From here we know that the way it is forbidden to give less than due while weighing and measuring, similarly, forbidden is any cutting back on the human rights of other people. Acts like attacking someone's honour, not giving due respect to someone according to his legiti-

mate station, showing shortcoming in obeying those the showing of obedience to whom is necessary and failing to respect those who must compulsorily and duly be respected are included under the purview of the crime which used to be committed by the people of Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام. During his famous *Khuṭbah* of the Last *Ḥajj*, when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم declared that the honour of people is as worthy of being respected and defended as their blood is, stands as a broader confirmation of this view.

All these things are included under the words: مُطَفِّفِين (*muṭaffifīn*) and: تَطْفِيف (*taṭfīf*) wherever mentioned in the Qur'ān. Sayyidnā Fārūq al-A'ẓam رضى الله عنه saw a person making his Rukū' and Sajdah in a hurry. He said: قَدْ طَفَّفْتَ (that is, you are guilty of measuring and weighing short -Mu'aṭṭa Imām Mālik). By saying so, he meant that the person had not fulfilled the right of Ṣalāh as it was due. Thus, in this report, the shortcoming of not fulfilling the right of Ṣalāh as due has been referred to by the word: تطفيف (*taṭfīf* : measuring and weighing short).

At the end of the verse, it was said: وَلَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا (and do not make mischief on the earth after it has been set in order). This sentence has also appeared earlier in this Sūrah Al-A'rāf (for details, please see comments under verse 56) where it was said that the physical betterment of conditions on the earth depends on utilizing things properly - as and where due, respecting limits and maintaining moderation, equity and justice; and spiritual betterment depends on relationship with Allah and obedience to His commands. As for the opposite of it, that is, physical and spiritual disorder on earth, it shows up when these principles are compromised or abandoned.The people of Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام had done exactly this. They had totally abandoned these principles because of which earth had become a hotbed of physical and spiritual disorder. That is why they were advised to abstain from such deeds which would serve as corrupting influence for the whole earth.

Then, it was said: ذٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِنْ كُنتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِينَ (This is good for you, if you are believers). The sense is that should they repent and retract from their evil doings, it has nothing but good waiting for them in their present life as well as in the life to come. As for the prosperity and success in the life to come is concerned, it is obvious that it depends on

one's obedience to what Allah has commanded us to do. Then, as for success in the present world, we can say once people find out that there is someone who is honest in weights and measures and is particular about all other rights of his clients, his credit and goodwill will become established in the market and his business will increase in volume and reliability.

Determining the meaning of the statement - 'Do not sit in every path threatening and preventing people from the path of Allah' - in verse 86, some commentators have said that both sentences carry the same sense since these people stopped and threatened those who came to Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام. This they were ordered not to do.

Others have said that these crimes committed by them were two separate crimes. They sat on thoroughfares, looted and snatched things, and also prevented people from believing in Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام. Thus, the first sentence describes the first crime while the second sentence describes the other. The later view has been relied upon in Tafsīr Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ and elsewhere too. Also included under the purview of this command against looting and snatching are checkposts set up on thoroughfares to realize impermissible taxes against the provisions of the Sharī'ah.

'Allāmah Al-Qurṭubī has said that those who sit on thoroughfares and make people pay undue taxes against the provisions of the Sharī'ah, they too are criminals like the people of Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام - rather, more oppressive and tyrannical than they were.

After that it was said: وَتَبْغُوْنَهَا عِوَجًا (and seeking a twist in it), that is, these people are always on the lookout for the opportunity to find something in the way of Allah which they could twist, turn and misrepresent and come up with their roster of doubts and objections through which they could try to wean people away from the true religion.

In the last sentence of verse 86, it was said: وَاذْكُرُوْٓا اِذْ كُنْتُمْ قَلِيْلًا فَكَثَّرَكُمْ وَانْظُرُوْا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُفْسِدِيْنَ (And remember the time when you were few, then He increased you in number. And look, how was the fate of mischief makers). The twin aspects of pursuasion and intimidation were employed to warn these people. The first was pursuasion when they were re-

minded of the blessing of Allah who increased their insignificant numbers to become a large nation, or changed their economic weakness into need-free financial strength. Then, to chasten them through intimidation, it was said that they could do much better if they had a look at the sad end of peoples who had engineered disorder on the earth. The peoples of Nūḥ, 'Ād, Thamūd and Lūṭ were examples of so many different punishments, which should help them understand their own situation and make the correction needed.

In the last verse (87), an answer has been given to scruples of these people about the division in their ranks after some of them believed in the call of Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام while others kept rejecting him. But, there was no difference between them outwardly. Both groups were living comfortably. If being a disbeliever or denier would have been a crime, the criminal would have been punished. To answer that doubt, it was said: فَاصْبِرُوْا حَتّٰى يَحْكُمَ اللّٰهُ بَيْنَنَا that is, do not make haste. Allah Ta'ālā is Forbearing and Merciful. He gives respite to wrongdoers. It is only when they become absolutely wicked and high-handed that the decree of Allah comes into action. The state in which they were was similar. If they remained sticking to their denial, the time was not far when the decisive punishment will overtake the deniers.

Verses 88 - 93

قَالَ الْمَلَاُ الَّذِيْنَ اسْتَكْبَرُوْا مِنْ قَوْمِهٖ لَنُخْرِجَنَّكَ يٰشُعَيْبُ
وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مَعَكَ مِنْ قَرْيَتِنَآ اَوْ لَتَعُوْدُنَّ فِيْ مِلَّتِنَا ؕ قَالَ اَوَ
لَوْ كُنَّا كٰرِهِيْنَ ﴿۸۸﴾ قَدِ افْتَرَيْنَا عَلَى اللّٰهِ كَذِبًا اِنْ عُدْنَا فِيْ
مِلَّتِكُمْ بَعْدَ اِذْ نَجّٰىنَا اللّٰهُ مِنْهَا ؕ وَمَا يَكُوْنُ لَنَآ اَنْ نَّعُوْدَ
فِيْهَآ اِلَّآ اَنْ يَّشَآءَ اللّٰهُ رَبُّنَا ؕ وَسِعَ رَبُّنَا كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا ؕ
عَلَى اللّٰهِ تَوَكَّلْنَا ؕ رَبَّنَا افْتَحْ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَ قَوْمِنَا بِالْحَقِّ وَاَنْتَ
خَيْرُ الْفٰتِحِيْنَ ﴿۸۹﴾ وَقَالَ الْمَلَاُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْ قَوْمِهٖ لَئِنِ
اتَّبَعْتُمْ شُعَيْبًا اِنَّكُمْ اِذًا لَّخٰسِرُوْنَ ﴿۹۰﴾ فَاَخَذَتْهُمُ الرَّجْفَةُ
فَاَصْبَحُوْا فِيْ دَارِهِمْ جٰثِمِيْنَ ﴿۹۱﴾ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا شُعَيْبًا كَاَنْ

لَّمْ يَغْنَوْا فِيهَا ۚ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا شُعَيْبًا كَانُوا هُمُ الْخٰسِرِينَ ﴿٩٢﴾
فَتَوَلّٰى عَنْهُمْ وَقَالَ يٰقَوْمِ لَقَدْ أَبْلَغْتُكُمْ رِسٰلٰتِ رَبِّي وَنَصَحْتُ
لَكُمْ ۚ فَكَيْفَ ءَاسٰى عَلٰى قَوْمٍ كٰفِرِينَ ﴿٩٣﴾

The chiefs of his people, who were arrogant, said, "O Shu'aib, we will expel you and those who believe with you from our town, or you shall have to turn to our faith." He said, "Even if we hate it? [88] **We will be forging a lie against Allah, if we turn to your faith after Allah has saved us from it. And it is not for us that we turn to it unless Allah, our Lord, so wills. Our Lord encompasses everything with His knowledge. In Allah we place our trust. Our Lord, decide between us and our people, with truth, and You are the best of all judges."** [89]

And the chiefs of his people who disbelieved said, "If you are to follow Shu'aib, then you are sure losers." [90]

So, the earthquake seized them, and they were (found dead) in their homes fallen on their knees. [91] **Those who belied Shu'aib are as if they never dwelt there. Those who belied Shu'aib, they were themselves the losers.** [92]

So, he turned away from them and said, "O my people, I have surely delivered to you the message of my Lord, and wished your betterment. How, then, should I grieve over a disbelieving people?" [93]

Commentary

When the people of Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام told him: Had you been on the side of truth, believers in you would have been prospering and non-believers in you would have been under punishment. But, what is actually happening is that both parties have come out equal and living a comfortable life. With this incongruity in sight, how can we take you to be true? Thereupon, the answer that Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام gave was: Do not make haste. The time is near when Allah Ta'ālā will decide the case between the two of them. Not convinced by his answer, the arrogant chiefs of those people said what is always said by oppressive practitioners of arrogance. They said: O Shu'aib, ei-

ther you and the rest of your believers return to the fold of our faith, or else, we shall throw you out of our hometown.

As for the return of ' the rest of believers in Sayyidna Shu'aib علیہ السلام to the fold of their old faith' is concerned, it is something which can be understood, for all of them were a part of the faith and way of the disbelievers. It was only later that they had embraced Islam. But, the case of Sayyidna Shu'aib علیہ السلام was different. He had never followed their false faith and way even for a day - nor can a prophet of Allah Ta'ala ever follow a faith which is counter to pure monotheism. Why then would they be asking him to return to their faith? Perhaps, it was because Sayyidna Shu'aib علیہ السلام - before prophethood was bestowed on him - would maintain silence over their false sayings and doings and continued living among the people as one of them. Because of this, his disbelieving people took Sayyidna Shu'aib علیہ السلام too as one of the rest, a fellow-traveller and votary of their faith. It was only after he gave his call of true *'Iman* that they discovered that his faith or religion was different from their own. Then, this led them to conclude that he had turned away from their old faith. About their warning that he must return to their old faith, Sayyidna Shu'aib علیہ السلام said: أَوَلَوْ كُنَّا كٰرِهِيْنَ : It means: Are you trying to say that we should return to the fold of your faith despite that we do not like it and consider it to be false? This is a manner of saying that it can never be.

In the second verse (89), Sayyidna Shu'aib علیہ السلام said to his people: Allah Ta'ala saved us from your false faith. Now if we were to return to your faith, this would amount to a false and grim accusation by us against Allah Ta'ala.

First of all giving *Kufr* and *Shirk* the status of faith by itself means that they have been commanded by Allah Ta'ala - which is forging a lie against Him. In addition to that, after having believed in the revealed Truth ('Iman) and after having its knowledge and insight, a return to *Kufr* (disbelief) would amount to saying that the first way was false and erroneous while the true and correct way was that which has been adopted later. As obvious, this is a compounded lie and accusation - that the true (*Haqq*) was taken to be false (*Batil*) and vice versa, the *Batil* to be *Haqq*.

There was a certain flavour of claim or assertion in this saying of

Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام - that we can never return to your religion again. Making such a claim is, at least outwardly, contrary to the spirit of self-less submission a true servant of Allah is supposed to have (*'abdiyyah*). It does not behove those who are close to the presence of Allah and those who have come to know Him. Therefore, he said: مَا كَانَ لَنَآ اَنْ نَّعُوْدَ فِيْهَآ اِلَّآ اَنْ يَّشَآءَ اللّٰهُ رَبُّنَا ، وَسِعَ رَبُّنَا كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا ، عَلَى اللّٰهِ تَوَكَّلْنَا (And it is not for us that we turn to it unless Allah, our Lord, so wills. Our Lord encompasses everything with His knowledge. In Allah we place our trust).

This statement is a mirror of his humility (*'Ijz*), an assertion of trust in Allah (*Tawakkul*) and a confident attitude of resigning matters to Him (*Tafwīḍ*). These are master virtues of prophets. They amount to saying: What are we and how can we claim to do something or stay away from it? To be able to do something good and to succeed in staying away from evil is nothing but the grace of Allah Ta'ālā - as said by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم:

لَوْلَا اللّٰهُ مَا اهْتَدَيْنَا وَلَا تَصَدَّقْنَا وَلَا صَلَّيْنَا

> Had there not been the grace of Allah Ta'ālā, we would have not been guided right, nor been able to give in charity, nor to make Ṣalāh.

It was due to this quality of trusting in Allah alone that when, after having talked to the arrogant chiefs of the people, Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام realized that nothing seems to move these people in any manner whatsoever, he stopped addressing them and made the following *Du'ā'* (prayer) to Allah Ta'ālā: رَبَّنَا افْتَحْ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَ قَوْمِنَا بِالْحَقِّ وَاَنْتَ خَيْرُ الْفٰتِحِيْنَ (Our Lord, decide between us and our people, with truth, and You are the best of all judges). Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه has said that the word: فَتْح (*fatḥ*) means 'decide' at this place. That is how the word: فَاتِح (*fatiḥ*) takes the sense of Qāḍī or judge.

And in reality, through these words, Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام had prayed for the destruction of the disbelievers from among his people - which was answered by Allah Ta'ālā when they were destroyed by an earthquake.

Reported in the third verse (90) is a misleading statement of the arrogant chiefs of the people of Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام which they made while talking among themselves, or said that to their followers:

that is, 'if you are to follow Shu'aib, then you are sure losers.' (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ from 'Aṭā')

The account of the punishment of these wicked people was given in the fourth verse (91) in the following words: فَاَخَذَتۡهُمُ الرَّجۡفَةُ فَاَصۡبَحُوۡا فِىۡ دَارِهِمۡ جٰثِمِيۡنَ (So, the earthquake seized them, and they were [found dead] in their homes fallen on their knees).

The punishment of the people of Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام has been identified as earthquake (*Rajfah, Zalzalah*) while in other verses it appears as: فَاَخَذَهُمۡ عَذَابُ يَوۡمِ الظُّلَّةِ (26:189) which means that they were seized by the punishment of *Yowm aẓ-Ẓullah*. *Yowm aẓ-Ẓullah* means day of the shade. It refers to what happened to them when to come on them first was the shade of a deep and thick cloud under which they all assembled. Then, from this very cloud, stones or fire was rained down.

To accodmodate and reconcile the sense of the two verses given above, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه has said: First of all, the people of Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام were subjected to such intense heat, as if the door of Hell has been thrown open towards them. This made them suffocate. Shade or water, nothing seemed to work. Driven by heat, they went into basements. They were more hot. With no choice left, they ran from the city into the nearby forest. There, Allah Ta'ālā sent a thick cloud with cool breeze passing underneath. Out of their senses under the impact of heat, they all rushed for refuge under the shade of that cloud. At that time, the whole cloud became a cloud of fire raining on them and also came the earthquake which turned them to ashes. In this manner, the punishments of the earthquake and the shade had simultaneously converged on these people. (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ)

Some commentators have said that it is also possible that the people of Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام were split in different groups or sections where some were hit by the earthquake while others were destroyed by the punishment of the shade.

In verse 92, the fate of the people of Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام has been cited as a lesson - which is the real purpose behind the description of this event. It was said: اَلَّذِيۡنَ كَذَّبُوۡا شُعَيۡبًا كَاَنۡ لَّمۡ يَغۡنَوۡا فِيۡهَا (Those who belied Shu'aib are as if they never dwelt there). One of the meanings of the

word: غِنٰى (*ghinā*) is to live at some place in peace and comfort. At this place, this is the meaning intended. The sense of the sentence is that the homes where they lived in peace and comfort, turned so deserted after this punishment as if peace and comfort had never existed there. Then, it was said: اَلَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا شُعَيْبًا كَانُوْاهُمُ الْخٰسِرِيْنَ (Those who belied Shu'aib were themselves the losers). The hint given is that these were the people threatening to throw Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام and his believing companions out from their city, but, in the end, the loss hit none but them.

In the sixth (93) verse, it was said: فَتَوَلّٰى عَنْهُمْ (So, he turned away from them). It means that, with punishment for his people in sight, Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام and his believing companions moved away from there. The majority of commentators says that these blessed souls left this place for Makkah al-Mu'aẓẓamah where they stayed till the end.

It was his total disappointment with his people neck-deep in disobedience and contumacy which prompted him to pray that they be chastened. But, when the actual punishment came as a result of it, his heart pinched because of his prophetic concern and affection for them. Then, it was for the peace of his own heart that he said addressing his people: 'O my people, I have surely delivered to you the messages of my Lord, and wished you betterment. How, then, should I grieve over a disbelieving people?'

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MA'ĀRIFUL-QUR'ĀN

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Volume 4

(Sūrah Al-A'rāf, Al-Anfāl, Al-Taubah, Yūnus and Hūd)

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بسم اللّٰہ الرحمن الرحیم

الحمدللّٰہ رب العالمین، والصلاۃ والسلام علی رسولہ الکریم وعلی آلہ وصحبہ اجمعین

PREFACE

The 4th Volume of Ma'ariful-Qur'an is being presented before the readers by the grace of Allah. The response of the first three volumes received from the readers belonging to different walks of life was so encouraging that the publishers had to produce several editions of these volumes within a short period. The translation of the fourth volume was initially undertaken by Mr. Muhammad Wali Raazi who has been involved in the process of the translation of the text from the very beginning of the project. He accomplished the translation of Surah Al-A'raf from verse 94 to verse 199 but after that he was engaged with some other works and could not continue the translation, while Prof. Muḥammad Shameem after completing the translation of the 3rd volume was free to take up the task. Therefore, the translation from verse 200 of Surah Al-A'raf upto the end of the 4th volume was accomplished by him. This volume consists of the commentary of five Surahs of the Holy Qur'an upto the end of Surah Hud.

It is for the information of the readers that the translation of the 5th volume has also been completed by Prof. Muḥammad Shameem. Its revision is also about to conclude. The 6th volume is being translated by Mr. Muhammad Ishrat Hussain, while the translation of the 7th volume is now in the hands of Prof. Muḥammad Shameem with whose remarkable speed and zeal of work it is expected to be complete very soon, Insha Allah. May Allah bless the translators with the best of rewards both here and in the hereafter, give them strength to accomplish the task entrusted to them according to His pleasure and make it beneficial for the Ummah.

Muḥammad Taqi Usmani

TRANSLITERATION SCHEME

Arabic Letter	Name of Letter	English Transliteration
ا	الف -- Alif	a
ب	باء -- bā	b
ت	تاء -- tā	t
ث	ثاء -- thā	th
ج	جيم -- jīm	j
ح	حاء -- ḥā	ḥ
خ	خاء -- khā	kh
د	دال -- dāl	d
ذ	ذال -- dhāl	dh
ر	راء -- rā	r
ز	زاى -- zā	z
س	سين -- sīn	s
ش	شين -- shīn	sh
ص	صاد -- ṣād	ṣ
ض	ضاد -- ḍād	ḍ
ط	طاء -- ṭā	ṭ
ظ	ظاء -- ẓā	ẓ
ع	عين -- 'ayn	'
غ	غين -- ghayn	gh
ف	فاء -- fā	f
ق	قاف -- qāf	q
ك	كاف -- kāf	k
ل	لام -- lām	l
م	ميم -- mīm	m
ن	نون -- nūn	n
ه	هاء -- hā	h
و	واؤ -- wāw	w
ء	ہمزہ -- Hamzah	'
ى	ياء -- yā	y

Short Vowels

	: Fatḥah	a
	: Kasrah	i
	: Ḍammah	u

Long Vowels

ا	: Shortened Alif	ā
آ	: Maddah Alif	ā
یٖ	: Maddah Yā	ī
وٗ	: Maddah Wāw	ū

Dipthongs

اى	:Alif and Yā	ay (also ai in some cases)
او اؤ	: Alif and Wāw	aw (also au in some cases)

Sūrah Al-A'rāf

[The Heights]

Sūrah Al-A'rāf was revealed in Makkah and it has 206 Verses and 20 Sections

Verses 94 - 95

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

With the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Very Merciful

وَمَآ اَرْسَلْنَا فِیْ قَرْيَةٍ مِّنْ نَّبِيٍّ اِلَّآ اَخَذْنَآ اَهْلَهَا بِالْبَاْسَآءِ وَالضَّرَّآءِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَضَّرَّعُوْنَ ﴿٩٤﴾ ثُمَّ بَدَّلْنَا مَكَانَ السَّيِّئَةِ الْحَسَنَةَ حَتّٰى عَفَوْا وَّقَالُوْا قَدْ مَسَّ اٰبَآءَنَا الضَّرَّآءُ وَالسَّرَّآءُ فَاَخَذْنٰهُمْ بَغْتَةً وَّهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُوْنَ ﴿٩٥﴾

And We did not send any prophet in a town, but We seized it's people with hardship and suffering so that they may turn humble. [94] **Thereafter, We substituted good in place of evil until they increased, and said, "The suffering and prosperity came to our fathers (too)." Then We seized them suddenly while they were not aware.** [95]

The above verses continue to speak of the events of early people and their ominous fate. The events of five early prophets and their people have been so far discussed. The sixth event concerning the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام and his people is going to be discussed after a few next verses.

We have already noted that usual style of the Holy Qur'ān with regard to the historical events is quite different from the books of history. The Holy Qur'ān does not care to describe a historical event in it's entirety or in chronological order. Rather, it selects certain relevant portion of the event then lays emphasis on the lesson or moral contained therein.

After relating the stories of the early people, the above verses speak of the warnings and lessons for present people in order to save them from the ill-fate met by their forefathers. The verse 94 warns people that the fate of disaster and suffering described in the foregoing verses was not limited to the people of Nūḥ, 'Ād and Thamūd only. It is, rather, a usual practice of Allah that He sends His prophets to people for their guidance and eternal success. Then, those who do not listen to their advice and reject their invitation are subjected to suffering and distress so that they may turn to their Lord in repentance. It is human to turn to The Creator in distress. This suffering is, in fact, a blessing of Allah in disguise as it is meant for their good. The great spiritual leader Maulānā Rūmī has versified this fact in these words:

خلق را باتو چنیں بد خوکنند　　تاترا ناچار روا آنسو کنند

"The people are made to misbehave with you
in order that you turn to your Lord in tears."

The verse 94 has referred to this fact by saying, 'We seized it's people with hardship so that they may turn in humbleness. The Arabic word: بَأسَاء 'Ba'sa' signifies hunger or poverty while the word: ضَرَّاء 'Darra' signifies illness. The Holy Qur'ān has used these words to signify the same meanings in other situations. The respected Companion 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضی اللہ عنہ has confirmed these meanings of the two words. Some linguists have said that the word: بَأسَاء 'Ba'sa' refers to financial distress while the word: ضَرَّاء 'Ḍarra' signifies loss of health. The verse 95 said: "Thereafter, We substituted good in place of evil until they increased."

The Arabic word: سَيِّئَة 'sayyiah' in this verse refers to distress, while the word: حَسَنَة 'hasanah' signifies prosperity, and the word 'Afw': عَفَوْ signifies increase or growth. The verse implies firstly that, they were made to undergo a test of hardship and suffering in order that they may repent and turn to Allah. When they did not take lesson from this warning and were a failure in this test, they were put to another test of a different kind. Their adversity was replaced with prosperity and their distress with ease and comfort until they increased in number and strength. This prosperity, after a long period of adversity, should have made them grateful to their Lord and they should have repented to Allah, but being completely lost in material pursuits and

perverted by their mundane desires, they did nothing but to say, 'The suffering and prosperity came to our fathers (too).' that is, their suffering and prosperity had nothing to do with their deeds, it was just a natural course of changing phenomena. It was after their obstinate persistence in their evil and ignorance that they were seized by the punishment of Allah. The verse said, 'Then We seized them suddenly while they were unaware.'

Verse 96 - 99

وَلَوْ أَنَّ أَهْلَ الْقُرَىٰٓ ءَامَنُوا۟ وَٱتَّقَوْا۟ لَفَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِم بَرَكَٰتٍ مِّنَ ٱلسَّمَآءِ
وَٱلْأَرْضِ وَلَٰكِن كَذَّبُوا۟ فَأَخَذْنَٰهُم بِمَا كَانُوا۟ يَكْسِبُونَ ﴿٩٦﴾ أَفَأَمِنَ
أَهْلُ ٱلْقُرَىٰٓ أَن يَأْتِيَهُم بَأْسُنَا بَيَٰتًا وَهُمْ نَآئِمُونَ ﴿٩٧﴾ أَوَأَمِنَ أَهْلُ
ٱلْقُرَىٰٓ أَن يَأْتِيَهُم بَأْسُنَا ضُحًى وَهُمْ يَلْعَبُونَ ﴿٩٨﴾ أَفَأَمِنُوا۟ مَكْرَ ٱللَّهِ ۚ
فَلَا يَأْمَنُ مَكْرَ ٱللَّهِ إِلَّا ٱلْقَوْمُ ٱلْخَٰسِرُونَ ﴿٩٩﴾

And if the people of the towns believed and feared Allah, We would have opened for them blessings from the heavens and the earth, but they disbelieved. So, We seized them for what they used to earn for themselves. [96] **So, do the people of the towns feel secure from Our punishment coming upon them at night while they are asleep?** [97] **And do the people of the towns feel secure from Our punishment coming upon them in broad daylight while they are at play?** [98] **So, do they feel secure from the plan of Allah? So, no one feels secure from the plan of Allah but the people who are losers.** [99]

The Arabic word بَرَكَة:'*barakah*' used in this verse and translated as blessing signifies increase or growth. The expression 'blessing of the heaven and the earth' refers to all means of prosperity, like proper and timely rain from heavens (clouds), abundant and healthy produce of the earth and, above all, carefree enjoyment from their possessions with no anxiety to spoil the pleasure of things. That is, everything would have been blessed with '*barakah*'.

The *barakah* manifests itself in two different ways. Sometimes, the thing itself increases in quantity, as is reported happening with the Holy Prophet ﷺ that a large number of people drank from a small pot of water and were satiated, or the whole army was fed to their satis-

faction from a small quantity of food. Sometimes, the quantity of thing does not increase but it's usefulness or efficacy is increased manifold. It is usually observed that a certain thing in our household lasts as long or benefits as many people as would have done three or four things of the same kind. That is to say, certain things yield lasting benefit to people while certain other things do not, or hardly serve people either due to being damaged by accident or not being accessible in times of need.

For example, sometime a single morsel of food becomes a source of great strength and health, while in some other times a large amount of food produces no results. Sometimes, we are able to do a considerable amount of work in one hour's short time, while on other occasions this amount of work can hardly be done in four or five hour's time. In these instances the thing itself did not increase. That is, the morsel of food and period of time remained as they were, their effect and benefit was, however, enhanced many times.

This verse has implicitly expressed that 'Barakah' in all the heavenly and earthly things can be achieved through the faith in Allah and by acquiring: تقوٰی '*taqwā*' (abstinence) while, in the absence of these two, one is deprived of the: برکۃ '*barakah*'. When we take in view the circumstances prevailing in today's world we notice the fact that the net produce of the earth is comparably far more than ever before. The recent inventions are at our service to ease our life in a way that could not be imagined of by past generations. But in spite of this abundance of means and resources today's man is proportionally worried, depressed, dissatisfied and as much deprived of peace and comfort as was never before.

What has deprived today's man of peace and comfort? No explanation can be given to this question except that the: برکۃ *barakah* is missing from these things. Another point which demands our attention here is that prosperity, good health and worldly possessions are not necessarily a sign of favour and blessing from Allah. Sometimes, these things are given to man out of anger as has been made clear in verse 44 of Surah Al-An'am 'which has said:

فَلَمَّا نَسُوْا مَاذُكِّرُوْا بِهٖ فَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ اَبْوَابَ كُلِّ شَیْءٍ

> Then they forgot the advice they had recieved, we opened to them the doors of all good things. (6:44)

Thereafter, they were suddenly caught by the punishment of Allah. This makes us understand that prosperity and affluence of wealth are not sure signs of Allah's favour. They can sometimes, be a sign of Allah's wrath and punishment. On the contrary, the present verse leads us to conclude that: بَرَكَة *barakah* in earthly and heavenly things is a sign of Allah's favour. In order to differentiate between the two situations one must understand that prosperity and good health are sometimes, given to people against their sins and transgression. They are usually short-lived and are a sign of Allah's displeasure while on other occasions people are favoured with them with lasting benefits as a reward of 'Īmān' and '*taqwā*'. To determine as to which is a sign of favour and which a sign of displeasure is difficult as both are alike.

The men of Allah, however, have suggested some distinct signs to differentiate between the two. When prosperity and good health make man more grateful to Allah and he tends to worship His Lord more than before, it is an indication of Allah's favour. On the contrary, when one tends to be more involved in sinful deeds, it must be a sign of Allah's wrath. We seek shelter against such state of affairs.

The verses 97 to 99 have warned the people of the world saying: "So, do the people of the towns feel secure from Our punishment coming upon them at night while they are asleep?" The verse implies that the residents of these towns (the people living in the time of the holy Prophet ﷺ seem to be unmindful of the fact that they can be caught by the punishment of Allah any time when sleeping at night. They should not feel themselves secure from the punishment of Allah which may come to them suddenly any day when they are busy in their worldly pursuits. What has made them so fearless of Allah's plan? The fate of the early people referred to in the foregoing verses should be a lesson for these people. Man should be wise enough to take lesson from the events of other people and avoid things to do which had led them to death and disaster.

Verses 100 - 102

اَوَلَمْ يَهْدِ لِلَّذِيْنَ يَرِثُوْنَ الْاَرْضَ مِنْ بَعْدِ اَهْلِهَآ اَنْ لَّوْ نَشَآءُ

أَصَبْنٰهُمْ بِذُنُوْبِهِمْ وَنَطْبَعُ عَلٰى قُلُوْبِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يَسْمَعُوْنَ ﴿۱۰۰﴾ تِلْكَ الْقُرٰى نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ أَنْبَآئِهَا وَلَقَدْ جَآءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ فَمَا كَانُوْا لِيُؤْمِنُوْا بِمَا كَذَّبُوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ كَذٰلِكَ يَطْبَعُ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى قُلُوْبِ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿۱۰۱﴾ وَمَا وَجَدْنَا لِأَكْثَرِهِمْ مِّنْ عَهْدٍ وَإِنْ وَّجَدْنَآ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَفٰسِقِيْنَ ﴿۱۰۲﴾

Is it not a guidance to those who inherit the land after it's (former) inhabitants that, if We so will, We would afflict them for their sins? And We seal their hearts so that they do not listen. [100]

Those are the towns We narrate to you of their important events. And surely their messengers came to them with clear signs, but they were not to believe in what they had belied earlier. This is how Allah seals the hearts of the disbelievers. [101]

And We did not find with most of them any covenant (unbroken), and surely We have found most of them sinners. [102]

After relating events of the early people, the above verses invite the people of Arabia and the people of the world to take lesson from these events by abstaining from deeds that incurred Allah's wrath, and by following the practices that led the prophets and their believers to eternal success. The verse 100 speaks " Is it not a guidance to those who inherit the land after it's (former) inhabitants that, if We so will, We would afflict them for their sins?" The word هَدٰى،يَهْدِىْ signifies to guide or to inform. The events narrated above have been made the subject of the verb يَهْدِ (guide) . The verse implies that these events should serve as a lesson and a means of guidance for later generations who have inherited the land from their earlier owners. They too, can incur the punishment of Allah for their disbelief just as their ancestors met the fate of ruin and disaster for their disobedience.

Thereafter, the verse says:

وَنَطْبَعُ عَلٰى قُلُوْبِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يَسْمَعُوْنَ،

"And We seal their hearts so that they do not listen"

The word: طبع is used for printing or stamping. It implies that these people have taken no lesson from the past events with the result that they incurred the wrath of Allah making their hearts sealed. They are, therefore, unable to listen to the truth. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said in a Tradition: "When one commits sin for the first time a black dot is placed on his heart, if he keeps committing sins for the second and third times the second and third dots are placed. If one increases in his sins without repenting to Allah, these black spots keep increasing until the whole heart is painted black." This ultimately deprives man of his natural faculty of distinguishing right from wrong. This, consequently, leads one to receive evil as good and good as evil, harmful as useful and useful as harmful.

This perversion of human understanding has been termed in the Holy Qur'ān as '*rān*' signifying the rust of the heart. In this verse, as in many other verses of the Holy Qur'ān, this stage has been named as '*ṭaba'*'. The result of their hearts being sealed has been mentioned at the end of the verse by saying (فَهُمْ لَا يَسْمَعُوْنَ) "so that they do not listen". One may think that more appropriate expression in this context was (فَهُمْ لَا يَفْقَهُوْنَ) "they do not understand" as the adverse effect of sealing of the heart is obviously related to the faculty of understanding and not to the listening. The Holy Qur'ān has used the word 'listen' to indicate that understanding is usually the result of listening to the truth. Now, since their hearts have been sealed they are rendered unable to listening the truth. Another explanation to this may be that all human faculties and limbs are controlled by human heart, that is, the function of all human parts is adversely affected by malfunctioning of the heart. When one loves any one or anything he likes everything - good or bad - in that person or object.

The verse 101 has contained the phrase تِلْكَ الْقُرٰى نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ اَنْۢبَآئِهَا "these are stories of the towns that We narrate to you." The word: نَبَأ '*naba'*' in Arabic is used to denote some great news. With the word: مِنْ '*min*' the verse has indicated that the events described in these verses are only some of a large number of events bearing the same lesson. The verse has further said, "And surely, their messengers came to them with clear signs, but they were not to believe in what they had belied earlier." It brings out their obstinate attitude towards the prophets

who came to them with clear signs or miracles which are a definite means to decide between right and wrong but they obstinately rejected the truth, only because they had once belied them.

We know from this verse that miracles were given to all the prophets. The miracles of some prophets have been mentioned while the miracles of most of the prophets have not been referred to in the Holy Qur'ān. This does not allow one to infer that the prophets not mentioned in the Qur'ān were not given any miracles. As for the statement of the people of the prophet Hūd, appearing in Sūrah Hūd as مَا جِئْتَنَا بِبَيِّنَةٍ "you did not bring any clear sign", this verse has clearly indicated that their statement was simply out of their obstinacy or, may be they thought his miracles were of less significance.

Another point to be noted is that the present verse is speaking of the peculiarity of the disbelieving people who rigidly and obstinately followed the path of ignorance, only to prove that what they had once said was true, with no regard to all the clear signs and proofs of the truth. Most of the Muslims, even some 'Ulamā' (the religious scholars) are seen to have the same habit of supporting their wrong statements in the face of clear proofs of the truth. This condition is a usual cause of incurring Allah's wrath. ('Masail al Suluk')

Thereafter, the verse said كَذٰلِكَ يَطْبَعُ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى قُلُوبِ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ "This is how Allah stamps upon the hearts of the disbelievers" that is, Allah seals the hearts of those who disbelieve and reject the truth, making them unable to accept good as good. The verse 102 has said, "And We did not find with most of them any covenant (unbroken)." The Companion 'Abdullāh ibn Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ has said that the covenant referred to in this verse is the Covenant called عہدِ اَلَسْتُ . That is, the covenant that Allah made with the spirits of all the creatures before creating them, when Allah said to them: اَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ "Am I not your Lord?" All the human spirits entered into a covenant by answering" Yes" to the question. Most of the people forgot this covenant after they came to earth, and got involved in worshipping false gods instead of worshipping Allah. The verse, therefore, has said that Allah did not find most of the people true to this covenant. (Tafsīr Kabīr)

The respected companion 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضی اللہ عنہ has said that the covenant referred to in this verse is the covenant of 'Īmān' the

Faith as has been indicated in the Holy Qur'ān in these words إِلَّا مَنِ اتَّخَذَ عِنْدَ الرَّحْمٰنِ عَهْدًا "Except the one who entered into a covenant with Raḥmān (Allāh), the covenant in this verse signifies the covenant of Faith. The verse, therefore, implies that most of the people deviated from their covenant with Allah. We usually note that nearly every individual when he finds himself trapped in some distress, no matter how sinful he is, turns to Allah and often makes a promise in words or in his heart that he will be faithful to Allah and obey Him and avoid disobedience if he is relieved from this calamity. But when they are out of the mess, they indulge in their mundane desires having no regard for their covenant with Allah.

The Holy Qur'ān has made mention of many of such people. It may be noted that the verse has made exception by saying 'most of them' and not 'all of them'. It is because there are people who are so perverted that even in their distress they do not turn to Allah, and they do not think of making any promise with Allah, while there are others who fulfil their promise and stay obedient to Him. At the end, the verse has the phrase "We found most of them sinners." That is, most of the people deviate from their covenant of staying obedient to Allah.

The above verses have described five events of earlier people so that present people may learn lesson from them and avoid following the course of their forefathers that led them to disaster.

Of all the events of early people described in this chapter the next event is of prophet Mūsā عليه السلام which has been described in some detail in the following verses because his miracles are larger in number and more prominent in their nature. Similarly, his people, the Israelite, were more obstinate and ignorant than other people of the world. In addition, these verses, 103-110 carry some injunctions and points of discussion.

Verses 103 - 108

ثُمَّ بَعَثْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ مُّوسٰى بِاٰيٰتِنَآ اِلٰى فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَا۠ئِهٖ فَظَلَمُوْا بِهَا ۚ فَانْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُفْسِدِيْنَ ﴿١٠٣﴾ وَقَالَ

مُوْسٰى يٰفِرْعَوْنُ اِنِّيْ رَسُوْلٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿١٠٤﴾ حَقِيْقٌ عَلٰٓى اَنْ لَّآ اَقُوْلَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ اِلَّا الْحَقَّ ۭ قَدْ جِئْتُكُمْ بِبَيِّنَةٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ فَاَرْسِلْ مَعِيَ بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَاۗءِيْلَ ﴿١٠٥﴾ قَالَ اِنْ كُنْتَ جِئْتَ بِاٰيَةٍ فَاْتِ بِهَآ اِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿١٠٦﴾ فَاَلْقٰى عَصَاهُ فَاِذَا هِيَ ثُعْبَانٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿١٠٧﴾ وَّنَزَعَ يَدَهٗ فَاِذَا هِيَ بَيْضَاۗءُ لِلنّٰظِرِيْنَ ﴿١٠٨﴾

Then after them We sent Mūsā عليه السلام **with Our signs to Pharaoh and his chiefs then , they did injustice to them. So, look, how was the fate of the mischief-makers.** [103] **And Mūsā** عليه السلام **said ,"O Pharaoh, I am a messenger from the Lord of the worlds,** [104] **worthy of saying nothing about Allah except the truth. I have come to you with a clear sign from your Lord. So, let the children of Isrā'īl go with me."** [105] **He said, "If you have come with a sign, bring it out, if you are one of the truthful."** [106] **So he threw down his staff, and it was a serpent, manifest;** [107] **and drew out his hand, and it was a white light to the onlookers.** [108]

The verse 103, has said that after the prophets Nūḥ, Hud, Ṣaliḥ, Luṭ and Shu'aib, We sent Mūsā عليه السلام with Our signs towards Pharaoh and his people. The 'signs' may refer to the verses of the Torah or to the miracles of the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام . The word Pharaoh was the title of Egyptian kings. The Pharaoh of Mūsā's time is said to be Mernephtah. The phrase فَظَلَمُوْا بِهَا "they did injustice to them (signs)" here means that they showed indifference to the verses of Allah, instead of being grateful to Him and having faith in them they rejected His verses. The word ظلم rendered as wrong or injustice, in fact, signifies the use of something for a purpose opposite to what it was created for. Further it said فَانْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُفْسِدِيْنَ "So look how was the fate of mischief-makers." Again the people are invited to take lesson from these events and think of their own fate.

The verse is a clear declaration of the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام before Pharaoh that he was a messenger of Allah, the Lord of all the worlds, and that his status of prophethood does not allow him to ascribe

anything but truth to Allah because the message given to the prophets by Allah is a sacred trust and it is a great sin to tamper with it. All the prophets of Allah are free of all sins and cannot do so. The prophet Mūsā عليه السلام tried to convince them that they should believe him because his truthfulness was beyond question and that he had never uttered a word of lie. In addition to this, his miracles are a clear proof to support his claim to prophethood.

In the light of these clear signs he must believe him and let the children of Isrā'īl go with him free of his illegitimate surveillance. The Pharaoh, out of his obstinacy, did not listen to anything, but demanded saying, " If you have come with a sign, bring it out, if you are among the truthful," إِنْ كُنْتَ جِئْتَ بِآيَةٍ فَأْتِ بِهَا إِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ. The prophet Mūsā عليه السلام, in response to his demand, threw down his staff on the earth, instantly it turned into a serpent: فَإِذَا هِيَ ثُعْبَانٌ مُّبِيْنٌ The word *'thu'bān'* in Arabic signifies a huge serpent. The use of the word *'mubīn'* as an adjective which means 'clear or prominent' is quite descriptive of the fact that this miraculous event took place manifestly before the eyes of the people of the Pharaoh, and it was not performed secretly in a hidden or secluded place as is usually done by magicians. In some historical traditions it has been cited on the authority of the Companion Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه that as the serpent moved towards Pharaoh, he jumped from his throne and sought shelter near the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام and many of his courtiers died of extreme fear. (Tafsīr Kabīr)

Transformation of the staff into a real serpent is not, in fact, totally impossible as it apparently seems. It is, however, surprising due to being unusual. The miracle has to be an unusual act, beyond the power of a common individual. Allah shows the miracles through His prophets to make people understand that they possess some divine powers and are true prophets of Allah. Thereafter, the verse (7:108) said, وَنَزَعَ يَدَهُ فَإِذَا هِيَ بَيْضَآءُ لِلنّٰظِرِيْنَ 'And he drew out his hand, and it was white light to the onlookers.'

The Arabic word: نزع *naza'a* signifies extracting something from another thing with force. Here this word indicates that the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام applied some force while drawing out his hand. The verse does not speak of a place from where he drew out his hand. In

other verses, however, we find mention of two things. In a verse (27:12) we find the words أَدْخِلْ يَدَكَ فِيْ جَيْبِكَ 'enter your hand under your robe.' The other verse (20:22) contains the words (وَاضْمُمْ يَدَكَ إِلَى جَنَاحِكَ) 'put your hand under your arm.' The two phrases indicate that he used to draw out his hand either from under his arm or from under his shirt. Arabic word: بَيْضَاءَ *'bayḍā'* means white. The whiteness of hand may also be due to some disease, it is perhaps, why the Holy Qur'ān has added the words 'without an evil' in other (28:32, 27:12) verse to eliminate any possible doubt of a disease. We know from a Tradition reported by the Companion 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ that this whiteness was not of ordinary kind. It had light that illuminated the whole surrounding. (Qurṭubī) The Arabic word *'nāẓirīn'* signifying the 'onlookers or viewers' indicates that this light was so surprising for the people that they gathered to see it.

The prophet Mūsā علیہ السلام performed two miracles at this occasion on the demand of the Pharaoh. First, the transformation of his staff into a serpent, second, drawing his hand out from under his arm, emanating light from it. The first was to serve as warning for the unbelievers while the second aimed at inviting them to the truth. It also indicated that the message of the prophet Mūsā was a light and to follow it would lead people to eternal success.

Verses 109 - 110

قَالَ الْمَلَأُ مِنْ قَوْمِ فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّ هٰذَا لَسٰحِرٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿١٠٩﴾ يُرِيْدُ أَنْ يُّخْرِجَكُمْ مِّنْ أَرْضِكُمْ ۚ فَمَاذَا تَأْمُرُوْنَ ﴿١١٠﴾

The chiefs of the people of the Pharaoh said, "This man is certainly a sorcerer of great knowledge. [109] **He wants to expel you from your land. So, what do you suggest ?"** [110]

The Arabic word 'Mala" is used for influential chiefs. After seeing these miracles they said to the people he was a great sorcerer. Being ignorant of divine powers of Allah they could say nothing else as they believed Pharaoh to be their god and had seen nothing but the magical charms of the sorcerers in their life. They, however, added the word *''alīm'* signifying the one who knows, showing their impression that the

miraculous acts of Mūsā عليه السلام were of the kind that could not be performed by an ordinary magician. So, they said that he was a sorcerer of great knowledge.

The difference between miracle and sorcery

The miracles and sorcery are so distinct in their nature and effect that they do not require any explanation to any one applying common sense. The sorcerers usually live in impurity and, the more they are unclean and impure the more they are successful in their sorcery. The prophets, on the other hand, are by nature the most clean and pure people. Another obvious distinction is that a sorcerer is never successful when he makes claim to prophethood. Besides, the acts performed under the effect of sorcery do have physical causes as other things have, with the only difference that their causes remain hidden to common people. The people, therefore, take them to be happening without the help of any cause. On the contrary, the miracles are directly a manifestation of Allah's power and have nothing to do with physical causes. This is why the miracles have been ascribed directly to Allah and not to the prophets in the Holy Qur'ān. The Qur'ān said "but Allah threw the pebbles" (while these pebbles were thrown by the Holy Prophet ﷺ in the battle of Badr) In short, the miracles and sorcery are totally different from each other. The people of knowledge have no confusion about it. In order to eliminate any possible confusion of a common individual, Allah has provided with obvious distinctions between the two.

Even the people of the Pharaoh found the miracles of the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام somehow different from the normal acts of sorcerers. Therefore, even while accusing him of sorcery they admitted that he was 'of great knowledge' meaning that his act was not comparable with the acts of the normal sorcerers.

Verses 111- 122

قَالُوٓا أَرْجِهْ وَأَخَاهُ وَأَرْسِلْ فِى الْمَدَآئِنِ حٰشِرِيْنَ ﴿١١١﴾
يَأْتُوكَ بِكُلِّ سٰحِرٍ عَلِيْمٍ ﴿١١٢﴾ وَجَآءَ السَّحَرَةُ فِرْعَوْنَ قَالُوٓا
إِنَّ لَنَا لَأَجْرًا إِنْ كُنَّا نَحْنُ الْغٰلِبِيْنَ ﴿١١٣﴾ قَالَ نَعَمْ وَإِنَّكُمْ لَمِنَ

الْمُقَرَّبِيْنَ ﴿١١٤﴾ قَالُوْا يٰمُوْسٰى اِمَّآ اَنْ تُلْقِيَ وَاِمَّآ اَنْ نَّكُوْنَ
نَحْنُ الْمُلْقِيْنَ ﴿١١٥﴾ قَالَ اَلْقُوْا فَلَمَّآ اَلْقَوْا سَحَرُوْٓا اَعْيُنَ
النَّاسِ وَاسْتَرْهَبُوْهُمْ وَجَآءُوْ بِسِحْرٍ عَظِيْمٍ ﴿١١٦﴾ وَ اَوْحَيْنَآ
اِلٰى مُوْسٰٓى اَنْ اَلْقِ عَصَاكَ فَاِذَا هِيَ تَلْقَفُ مَا يَاْفِكُوْنَ
﴿١١٧﴾ فَوَقَعَ الْحَقُّ وَبَطَلَ مَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١١٨﴾ فَغُلِبُوْا
هُنَالِكَ وَانْقَلَبُوْا صٰغِرِيْنَ ﴿١١٩﴾ وَاُلْقِيَ السَّحَرَةُ سٰجِدِيْنَ
﴿١٢٠﴾ قَالُوْٓا اٰمَنَّا بِرَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿١٢١﴾ رَبِّ مُوْسٰى وَهٰرُوْنَ
﴿١٢٢﴾

They said, "leave him and his brother alone for a while, and send men to the cities to collect [111] **and bring to you every expert sorcerer."** [112]

And the sorcerers came to Pharaoh. They said, "There must be a reward for us, if we are the victors." [113] **He said, "yes, and of course, you will be among the closer ones."** [114] **They said, "O Mūsā** عليه السلام**, either you throw (first) or shall we be the ones to throw?" He said, "You throw."** [115]

So when they threw, they bewitched the eyes of the people, and made them frightened, and produced great sorcery. [116] **And We revealed to Mūsā, 'Throw your staff." Then of a sudden, it began to swallow all that they had concocted.** [117]

So, the truth prevailed, and what they were doing became a nullity. [118] **So, they were overcome there and turned humiliated.** [119] **And the sorcerers were constrained to fall in prostration.** [120] **They said, "We believe in the Lord of the worlds,** [121] **the Lord of Mūsā and Hārūn."** [122]

These verses narrate the remaining part of the story of the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام. Seeing these wonders of staves turning into serpents and making his hand emitting strong white light, the Pharaoh should have been convinced and have believed in Mūsā عليه السلام as the logic

and sense demanded. But it is the common practice of the wrong-doers that they always seek false interpretations of the truth in order to conceal it, the Pharaoh and his people belied him instead, and said to the people that he was a great sorcerer and that he wanted to expel them from their homes and take over the rule of the country. The people of the Pharaoh suggested:

أَرْجِهْ وَأَخَاهُ وَأَرْسِلْ فِى الْمَدَآئِنِ حَاشِرِيْنَ - يَأْتُوكَ بِكُلِّ سٰحِرٍ عَلِيْمٍ (١١١-١١٢)

"leave him and his brother alone for a while, and send men to the cities to collect and bring to you every expert sorcerer- 111,112."

The people of the Pharaoh said that there were many expert sorcerers in their cities who were capable of defeating Mūsā عليه السلام.

Some soldiers should be sent to collect and bring the sorcerers for this purpose. Sorcery and magic, being the custom of the day, the sorcerers enjoyed a high status among people. Allah sent Mūsā عليه السلام with the miracles of the staff and white-lit hand so that people may clearly observe the misery of the sorcerers after entering into a contest with Mūsā عليه السلام. It is the usual practice of Allah that He sends His prophets with miracles that are appropriate to the demand of the time. For instance, in the time of the prophet 'Īsā (the Jesus), Greek philosophy and medical sciences were at their zenith. He was, therefore, sent with the miraculous powers of restoring the sight of those who were born blind and cure the lepers instantly with a touch of his hand. In the time of the Holy Prophet ﷺ the Arabs were boastful of their oratory and linguistic capabilities. The Holy Qur'ān was sent as the greatest of all miracles of the Holy prophet. It's diction and style so bewildered the Arabs that they instantly acknowledged a super human element in it. The sorcerers came to Pharaoh and said:

إِنَّ لَنَا لَأَجْرًا إِنْ كُنَّا نَحْنُ الْغَالِبِيْنَ

"There must be a reward for us, if we are the victors." (113)

He said,

نَعَمْ وَإِنَّكُمْ لَمِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِيْنَ

"Yes, and of course, you will be among the closer ones." (114)

The sorcerers were invited from all over the country. When they all

came to Pharaoh they asked him of some reward if they gain victory over Mūsā عليه السلام . He promised that in addition to their reward they shall be included among those close to him. The historical reports about the number of these sorcerers give us different information. These give us a number from nine hundred to three hundred thousand. The quantity of the staves and strings used in this contest is reported to be as great as was loaded on three hundred camels. (Qurṭubī)

It may be noted that the first thing the sorcerers did, was to have an assurance about the reward they will get in return of their performance. It is because worldly people are always after worldly gains. They do nothing unless they are sure of their gains, while on the contrary, the prophets and their disciples always declare:

وَمَآ اَسْئَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ اَجْرٍ اِنْ اَجْرِيَ اِلَّا عَلٰى رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ

I do not ask you for a reward, as my reward is with the Lord of all the worlds.' (26:109)

That is, the prophets of Allah preach and convey the message of Allah only for the good and guidance of people and they seek no financial gain against it. They seek their reward from Allah alone. After this discourse with Pharaoh the sorcerers got the place and date fixed for the great encounter. An open land was chosen for the purpose and the time was fixed after the sunrise on their festival Day. It is also mentioned in a verse of the Holy Qur'ān: Mūsā عليه السلام said: قَالَ مَوْعِدُكُمْ يَوْمُ الزِّيْنَةِ وَاَنْ يُّحْشَرَ النَّاسُ ضُحًى "your appointed day is the day of '*zīnah*' so that people may be gathered after sunrise." (20:59)

Some reports say that the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام had a short conversation with the chief of the sorcerers and asked him if they would accept the faith in case he defeated them? He said that there was no question of their being defeated as they possessed such great magical powers that could not be overcome by any one. And in case 'you bring defeat to us we shall declare our faith openly in the presence of the Pharaoh'. (Maẓharī and Qurṭubī)

They said,

قَالُوْا يٰمُوْسٰٓى اِمَّآ اَنْ تُلْقِيَ وَاِمَّآ اَنْ نَّكُوْنَ نَحْنُ الْمُلْقِيْنَ

"O Mūsā either you throw (first) or shall we be the ones to throw."

The Arabic word: 'إلقاء' *'ilqā'* means to drop something down. On the day of encounter the sorcerers asked the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام if he would drop down his staff first or should they throw theirs first? This question of the sorcerers was perhaps to show their complacency about their art, though the mode of their sentence indicated that they wanted to start first, but for giving an impression of power to their opponent they put that question. Since the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام had nothing to fear about, he invited them saying 'you drop.'

Ibn Kathīr has said that the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام behaved with them politely by inviting them to have their turn first. The effect of this behaviour was that they accepted the faith after their defeat. Here we are faced with a question. The sorcery is an impermissible act, specially when it is used to oppose a prophet sent by Allah it becomes an act of infidelity. How then the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام gave permission of magic to the sorcerers by saying 'you drop'? With a little thought we can find the answer. It was certain that the sorcerers will show their magic by all means. The point of conversation was to decide who should start the contest. The prophet Mūsā عليه السلام allowed them to begin. Another advantage of this strategy was that the people could see their performance and the sorcerers had all the time to show their art and turn the staves into snakes. Then the staff of the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام should turn into a serpent and eat up all the snakes, thus the open defeat of magic should be exhibited before the people. (Bayān- al- Qur'ān)

فَلَمَّآ اَلْقَوْا سَحَرُوْٓا اَعْيُنَ النَّاسِ وَاسْتَرْهَبُوْهُمْ وَجَآءُوْا بِسِحْرٍ عَظِيْمٍ

So, when they threw, they bewitched the eyes of the people, and made them frightened, and came out with great sorcery. (116)

This verse indicates that this demonstration of their magic was just a bewitching of the eyes of the people which made them see the staffs and strings as snakes leaping on the ground, while the strings and the staffs did not change physically. It was a kind of mesmerism hypnotising the minds of the onlookers. This does not mean that sorcery is confined only in this kind and that it cannot change something into another, as we do not have any proof against it. On the contrary, many forms and kinds of magic have been taken as being

reality. The terms magic and sorcery are usually applied for all the acts that seem to be happening in unusual way. Sleight of hand, telepathic influences and mesmerism are sometimes called magic. Transformation of one thing into another through magic may be a possibility but we have no valid reason or proof for or against it.

The next verse 117 said, وَاَوْحَيْنَآ اِلٰى مُوْسٰٓى اَنْ اَلْقِ عَصَاكَ فَاِذَا هِىَ تَلْقَفُ مَا يَاْفِكُوْنَ "And We revealed to Mūsā 'Throw your staff.' Then, of a sudden it began to swallow all that they had concocted." We find it reported in history, when thousands of staffs and ropes were turned into snakes leaping all over the ground, Allah commanded Mūsā عليه السلام to drop down his staff on the ground. It turned into a great snake and instantly began to eat up the snakes of the sorcerers. The crowd stood bewildered and stunned at this sight. Within no time all the snakes were eaten up by the great snake of the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام. Next, the verse said:

فَوَقَعَ الْحَقُّ وَبَطَلَ مَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ۝ فَغُلِبُوْا هُنَالِكَ وَ انْقَلَبُوْا صٰغِرِيْنَ ۝ وَاُلْقِىَ السَّحَرَةُ سٰجِدِيْنَ ۝ قَالُوْٓا اٰمَنَّا بِرَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ۝ رَبِّ مُوْسٰى وَ هٰرُوْنَ ۝

"So, the truth prevailed and what they were doing became a nullity. So there they were overcome and turned humiliated. And the sorcerers were constrained to fall in prostration. They said, "We believe in the Lord of the worlds, the Lord of Mūsā and Hārūn."

The sorcerers were so overawed by the miracle of the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام that they fell in prostration. This may also imply that Allah blessed them with favour and put them in prostration. They added the phrase, the Lord of Mūsā عليه السلام and Harun after saying, the Lord of the worlds, to make it clear that the Lord worshipped by Mūsā عليه السلام and Hārūn is, in fact, the Lord of the Universe, and not the Pharaoh as he pretended to be.

Verses- 123 - 127

قَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ اٰمَنْتُمْ بِهٖ قَبْلَ اَنْ اٰذَنَ لَكُمْ ۚ اِنَّ هٰذَا لَمَكْرٌ مَّكَرْتُمُوْهُ فِى الْمَدِيْنَةِ لِتُخْرِجُوْا مِنْهَآ اَهْلَهَا ۚ فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿١٢٣﴾ لَاُقَطِّعَنَّ اَيْدِيَكُمْ وَاَرْجُلَكُمْ مِّنْ خِلَافٍ ثُمَّ لَاُصَلِّبَنَّكُمْ اَجْمَعِيْنَ ﴿١٢٤﴾ قَالُوْٓا

إِنَّآ إِلَىٰ رَبِّنَا مُنقَلِبُونَ ﴿١٢٥﴾ وَمَا تَنقِمُ مِنَّآ إِلَّآ أَنْ ءَامَنَّا بِـَٔايَـٰتِ رَبِّنَا لَمَّا جَآءَتْنَا ۚ رَبَّنَآ أَفْرِغْ عَلَيْنَا صَبْرًا وَتَوَفَّنَا مُسْلِمِينَ ﴿١٢٦﴾ وَقَالَ ٱلْمَلَأُ مِن قَوْمِ فِرْعَوْنَ أَتَذَرُ مُوسَىٰ وَقَوْمَهُۥ لِيُفْسِدُوا۟ فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ وَيَذَرَكَ وَءَالِهَتَكَ ۚ قَالَ سَنُقَتِّلُ أَبْنَآءَهُمْ وَنَسْتَحْىِۦ نِسَآءَهُمْ وَإِنَّا فَوْقَهُمْ قَـٰهِرُونَ ﴿١٢٧﴾

The Pharaoh said, "You have believed in him before I permitted you. No doubt, this is a device you have devised in the city, so that you may expel it's people from there. Now you shall know (it's end). [123] **I shall certainly, cut apart your hands and your legs from opposite sides. Then I shall crucify you all together."** [124] **They said, "We are surely to return to our Lord.** [125] **You punish us for no other reason but that we have believed in the signs of our Lord when they came to us. "O our Lord, pour out patience upon us and let the death take us while we are Muslims (the faithful)."** [126]

And the chiefs of the people of the Pharaoh said, "Do you leave Mūsā عليه السلام and his people that they spread disorder in the land while he leaves you and your gods?" He said, " We shall slaughter their sons and let their women live. And we have full power over them." [127]

The foregoing verses had a detailed account of the contest between the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام and the sorcerers and that after their defeat the sorcerers declared their faith in Allah. Some historical reports say that subsequent to their declaration of faith in Allah, six hundred thousand more people followed suit and declared their belief in Allah. Before this open contest there were only two individuals believing in Allah. Now a great army of people became Muslims. It was, obviously an embarrassing situation for the Pharaoh. Like a clever politician he managed to conceal his state of mind before the people, and changed the situation by putting the blame of conspiracy and rebellion on the sorcerers. He claimed that they had joined hands with Mūsā عليه السلام and Hārūn in order to create disorder in the country. Then he said to the sorcerers, "You have believed in him before I permitted you." This was a threat to the sorcerers on the one hand, and on the other, he tried to convince his people that the sorcerers made a hasty decision in

accepting their faith and fell prey to the trap of Mūsā عليه السلام and Hārūn. Otherwise, he would have also believed in him in case Mūsā عليه السلام and Hārūn proved truthful in their claim.

It was a clever design of Pharaoh. He tried to keep his people stay in their former ignorance and make people believe that the contest was pre-plotted between the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام and the sorcerers. He cleverly twisted the fact that the miracle of Mūsā عليه السلام and the open conversion of the sorcerers to the true Faith was purely to expose the ignorance and falsehood of the Pharaoh. He turned it into a political issue by saying, "So that you may expel it's people from there." He wanted to make his people believe that they planned the whole matter to gain power over the country and expel the people from there.

After making all these strategic statements he threatened the sorcerers, first, with an indefinite remark saying, "Now you shall know (your end)". Further specifying the threat, He said, لَأُقَطِّعَنَّ أَيْدِيَكُمْ وَأَرْجُلَكُمْ مِّنْ خِلَافٍ ثُمَّ لَأُصَلِّبَنَّكُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ "I shall surely, cut your hands and legs from the opposite sides. Then I shall crucify you all together." By cutting from the opposite sides he meant the right hand and the left foot so that they are made completely disabled and invalid.

The Pharaoh made all the efforts that he could to control his people. The belief in Allah, or "Īmān' as it is called by the Qur'ān, is a great power. When it finds it's way into one's heart, one finds himself as powerful as to face the whole world and all the forces gathered together against him. This was a great change. Only a few hours ago, the sorcerers were the worshippers of Pharaoh, but having faith in Allah they demonstrated such a great power and courage that in response to all the threats to their lives by the Pharaoh, they only said with perfect satisfaction that, in that case, إِنَّآ إِلَىٰ رَبِّنَا مُنقَلِبُونَ "To our Lord we are sure to return."

The sorcerers were fully aware of Pharaoh's power and authority over them. They did not say that Pharaoh will not be able to kill them because of their new faith. Their answer was to suggest that the whole life of this temporary world had no value in their eyes. Their satisfaction was due to the fact that they were sure of meeting the Lord of the worlds after passing away from this world. There they shall get an everlasting life of peace and comfort.

Another interpretation of their answer is that though the Pharaoh had all the power to finish their life, but soon he will be presented before the Lord of the worlds where he shall be taken to account for his despotism. In another verse, the following statement is also included in the answer of the sorcerers, فَاقْضِ مَآ اَنْتَ قَاضٍ اِنَّمَا تَقْضِىْ هٰذِهِ الْحَيٰوةَ الدُّنْيَا "You may pass any judgement you can against us, but your judgement will be restricted to this worldly life." (72:20) This also shows their total indifference towards the temporary life of this world. This great change in their thought and action was the result of their true faith in Allah. In addition to this, their faith opened the door of knowledge and wisdom upon them which is manifest from their invocation to Allah at this occasion. They prayed, رَبَّنَآ اَفْرِغْ عَلَيْنَا صَبْرًا وَّ تَوَفَّنَا مُسْلِمِيْنَ "O Allah! Shower upon us patience and let death take us while we are Muslims." This prayer is not only a manifestation of knowledge and wisdom, but also the best means of getting out of the difficulty they were in. It is because perseverance and patience are the only keys to success over one's enemy.

The report of the commission formed for investigating the causes and effects of the World War has remarked that the Muslims who observe faith in Allah and in the Hereafter are the most valiant and brave people in the battle field, and the most patient in the times of difficulty because they have faith in Allah and in the Hereafter. This is why the German military officials, expert in military sciences, emphatically suggested that they should create honesty and sense of accountability in the Hereafter among their soldiers, as they are the great source of strength and courage. (Tafsīr al-Manār)

It Was A Miracle

The instant perfect change of mind of the sorcerers was, in no way, a lesser miracle than the other miracles of the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام Those who led a life of infidelity and ignorance for their whole life were instantly changed into the most cognizant, knowledgeable and true Muslims, as faithful as to readily sacrifice their life for their faith. It is a pity that the Muslims and the Muslim states are trying all other ways and means to make themselves powerful and strong, but have become neglectful of the real source of power and strength. That is faith, perseverance and patience.

Pharaoh was frightened

It is to be noted that the Pharaoh was in some degree successful in keeping his ignorant people in their former ignorance through his clever and false statements, but at the same time, they strangely noted that all the fury and rage of Pharaoh was limited to the sorcerers only. He did not dare say a word against the prophets Mūsā عليه السلام and Hārūn who were his real opponents. This is obvious from the following statement of his people: أَتَذَرُ مُوسَىٰ وَقَوْمَهُ لِيُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَيَذَرَكَ وَآلِهَتَكَ "Do you leave Mūsā عليه السلام and his people alone to spread disorder in the land, even when he abandons you and your gods?"

Pharaoh had no convincing answer to this question. He only said, سَنُقَتِّلُ أَبْنَاءَهُمْ وَنَسْتَحْيِي نِسَاءَهُمْ وَإِنَّا فَوْقَهُمْ قَاهِرُونَ "We shall slaughter their sons and let their women live, and we have full power over them."

According to the commentators of the Holy Qur'ān, Pharaoh tried to satisfy his people saying that by killing their males and leaving their women alive, he shall totally eliminate them within a period of time. Their women shall be spared to serve his people as maid servants. In fact, Pharaoh was so frightened by the miracle of the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام that even at this occasion when he was threatening to kill all the men of Israelites, he could not utter a single word of threat against Mūsā and Hārūn عليهم السلام Maulānā Rūmī said :

هرکه ترسید از حق و تقوی گزید

ترسید ازوي جن و انس و هرکه دید

"Whoever adopts 'Taqwā' and fears Allah is feared by all human beings and spirits" .

The above statement of Pharaoh's people, 'Even when he abandons you and your gods' makes us understand that Pharaoh himself used to worship other gods, even though he claimed to be the god of his people. The law about killing of the males of the Israelites and leaving their women alive was now promulgated the second time. The first time it was put into force prior to the birth of the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام. He was witnessing the failure of this law up to this day which was evident from the huge crowd of the Israelites present at this occasion. When

Allah intends to bring disgrace to a people, all they contrive leads to nothing but disaster. We shall soon see that this tyranny and oppression, at last, led him and his people to an ignominious end.

Verses 128-132

قَالَ مُوْسٰی لِقَوْمِهِ اسْتَعِيْنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَاصْبِرُوْا ۚ اِنَّ الْاَرْضَ لِلّٰهِ
يُوْرِثُهَا مَنْ يَّشَآءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهٖ ؕ وَ الْعَاقِبَةُ لِلْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿۱۲۸﴾
قَالُوْۤا اُوْذِيْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ تَاْتِيَنَا وَمِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا جِئْتَنَا ؕ قَالَ
عَسٰی رَبُّكُمْ اَنْ يُّهْلِكَ عَدُوَّكُمْ وَيَسْتَخْلِفَكُمْ فِی الْاَرْضِ
فَيَنْظُرَ كَيْفَ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۱۲۹﴾ وَلَقَدْ اَخَذْنَاۤ اٰلَ فِرْعَوْنَ بِالسِّنِيْنَ
وَ نَقْصٍ مِّنَ الثَّمَرٰتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَذَّكَّرُوْنَ ﴿۱۳۰﴾ فَاِذَا جَآءَتْهُمُ
الْحَسَنَةُ قَالُوْا لَنَا هٰذِهٖ ۚ وَاِنْ تُصِبْهُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ يَّطَّيَّرُوْا بِمُوْسٰی وَمَنْ
مَّعَهٗ ؕ اَلَاۤ اِنَّمَا طٰٓئِرُهُمْ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ
﴿۱۳۱﴾ وَقَالُوْا مَهْمَا تَاْتِنَا بِهٖ مِنْ اٰيَةٍ لِّتَسْحَرَنَا بِهَا ۙ فَمَا نَحْنُ
لَكَ بِمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿۱۳۲﴾

And Mūsā said to his people," "Seek help from Allah and be patient. Surely, the land belongs to Allah. He lets whomsoever He wills, from among His slaves, inherit it. And the end-result is in favour of the God-fearing." [128] **They said, "We were persecuted before you came to us, as well as, after you have come to us." He said, "It is likely that your Lord will destroy your enemy and make you successors in the earth, then He will see how you act."** [129]

And We seized the people of the Pharaoh with years of famine and loss of fruits, so that they may take lesson. [130] **So when something good came to them they said, 'This is our right.' And if they suffered from something evil, they ascribed it as an ill omen to Mūsā and those with him. Listen, their omen lies with Allah only, but most of them do not know.** [131]

And they said, "whatever sign you bring to us to

enchant us therewith, we are not going to believe in you." [132]

After being defeated by the prophet Musa, عليه السلام Pharaoh enforced the law of killing the male children of the Israelites. They were greatly alarmed of the punishment they had experienced before the coming of the prophet Musa عليه السلام. The prophet Musa عليه السلام was also mindful of this fact. Out of his kindness, he offered two wise solutions to the Israelites. He said to them that only way of getting out of this trial was, firstly, to seek help from Allah and, secondly, to remain patient until the things change into their favour. He also promised them that they shall inherit the whole land if they faithfully observed the two instructions. This is what the verse said: اسْتَعِينُوا بِاللَّهِ وَاصْبِرُوا إِنَّ الْأَرْضَ لِلَّهِ يُورِثُهَا مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ وَالْعَاقِبَةُ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ "Seek help from Allah and be patient; surely, the land belongs to Allah, He lets whomsoever He wills inherit it, from among his servants." This implies that all the lands belong to Allah, and He lets whomsoever He wills inherit the land. And decidedly the end result is for the God-fearing. So, if they observe 'Taqwa' (keep away from disobedience) by acting upon the two instruction offered above they shall ultimately rule the whole country.

The Only Way To Success

A little reflection over the above two teachings of the prophet Musa عليه السلام will show that it is the sovereign remedy which never fails against any difficulty. The first ingredient of this recipe is seeking help from Allah which is the essence of the remedy. It is for the obvious reason that if the Creator of the universe comes to one's help who is there to stop Him? Maulana Rumi said in a couplet:

خاک و بادو آب وآتش بنده اند

بامن وتو مرده باحق زنده اند

"The earth, the air, the water and the fire, all are servants of Allah. To me and to You they are dead, but to Allah they are full of life."

It is reported in a Hadith: When Allah wills to do something everything turns in favour of that purpose. Therefore, nothing is more powerful against an enemy than seeking Allah's help with all the sincerity of one's heart. Simply uttering out some formula words for seeking help are not enough.

The second important ingredient of the recipe is being patient. The Arabic word 'Ṣabr' rendered as patience literally signifies to keep oneself under one's control against unfavourable happenings. It is common knowledge that nothing significant can be achieved without undergoing difficulties and hardships. One who readily prepares himself to face hardships is generally successful in most of his objectives. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said in a Tradition, "No greater blessing has been given to any one other than patience." (Abū Dāwūd)

The Israelites who seemed to have no conception of such matters could not understand how patience alone could free them from Pharaoh's punishment and bring them success against him. They blamed the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام saying:

قَالُوْٓا اُوْذِيْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ تَاْتِيَنَا وَمِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا جِئْتَنَا

'We have been persecuted before you came to us as well as after you came to us."

What they meant, perhaps, was that they were looking for a prophet to deliver them from the oppression of the Pharaoh, but their fate remained unchanged even after he came to them. The prophet Mūsā عليه السلام answered to them:

عَسٰى رَبُّكُمْ اَنْ يُّهْلِكَ عَدُوَّكُمْ وَيَسْتَخْلِفَكُمْ فِى الْاَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرَ كَيْفَ تَعْمَلُوْنَ

'It is likely that your Lord will destroy your enemy and make you successors in the earth that He may see how then, you act.'

Sovereignty is a test

The last phrase of the verse has provided with a wise observation that sovereignty or dominion is not in itself an aim or objective but a means to achieve the objective of making peace and justice prevail in the land. Sovereignty or dominion is a sacred trust bestowed upon by Allah for making good prevail over evil. The verse has warned them that, in case they are bestowed this trust, they should not forget the ill fate of those who were before them.

Though the direct addressee of the verse are the Israelites, but indirectly the verse has thrown a warning to all those trusted with rule or dominion. Sovereignty or power, in fact, belongs to Allah alone. Allah has made man his deputy on the earth. He is the One who desig-

nates man with power and takes it away when He so wills. This is what the following verse means:

تُؤْتِي الْمُلْكَ مَنْ تَشَآءُ وَتَنْزِعُ الْمُلْكَ مِمَّنْ تَشَآءُ

"You give power to whom You please, and You strip off power from whom You please." (3:26)

The power and rule, therefore, is a test for the rulers to see how far they have fulfilled their duty of establishing peace and justice and making good prevail over evil.

Abū Ḥayyān in his Tafsīr Al-Baḥr-al Muḥīṭ has included the following event under the comments on this verse: 'Amr ibn 'Ubaid once visited Manṣūr, the second caliph of the Abbaside dynasty, prior to his designation to caliphate and recited this verse: 'It is likely that Allah will destroy your enemy and make you successor in the earth.' This was a sort of prediction by 'Amr ibn 'Ubaid of his succession to the throne. Soon after Manṣūr succeeded to the throne and became the Caliph. 'Amr ibn 'Ubaid came to the Caliph again. Manṣūr reminded him of the prediction made by him. Amr ibn 'Ubaid instantly answered, "Well, the first part of the prediction has come true and you have become the Caliph, but the second part of it still remains unfulfilled. The verse also contains this phrase, فَيَنْظُرَ كَيْفَ تَعْمَلُوْنَ "Then, He will see how you act." Amr ibn 'Ubaid suggested that gaining power is not a matter of pride because thereafter, Allah judges the acts of those in authority and sees how they make use of this trust.

The next verses speak of the events that led Pharaoh and his people to a number of calamities sent to them as punishment and finally led them to their death. The first heavenly punishment came to them in the form of famine. According to historical reports this famine lasted for seven years.

"And We seized the people of the Pharaoh with years of famine and loss of fruits, so that they may take lesson. So when something good came to them they said, 'This is our right.' And if they suffered from something evil, they ascribed it as an ill omen to Mūsā عليه السلام and those with him. Listen, their omen lies with Allah only, but most of them do not know."

The first verse has described the famine with two phrases: 'years of

famine' and 'loss of fruits.' The respected Companion 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās and the commentator Qatādah have said that the punishment of drought was for the people of the rural areas, while people living in cities and towns were punished by the loss of fruits. When a people are stamped with the wrath of Allah they lose their faculty of distinguishing right from wrong. Pharaoh and his people too, had lost their understanding. They did not take lesson from this warning. On the contrary, they ascribed the calamity to be a bad presage from the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام and his people. The verse said, 'So when something good came to them they said, 'This is our right.' And if they suffered from something evil, they ascribed it as an ill omen to Mūsā عليه السلام and those with him. Listen, their omen lies with Allah only, but most of them do not know."

The Arabic word: طَآئِرٌ 'Ṭā'ir' used for omen signifies a bird. The Arabs had a superstition that a bird coming down to their right or left meant a good or bad fate. The verse implies that good or bad fate comes from Allah. Everything in this world happens under the will of Allah. No one is there to bring good or bad fate to any one. It is sheer ignorance to believe in such things and base their activities on such baseless assumptions. The last verse describes their rejection of the truth in these words:

And they said, مَهْمَا تَأْتِنَا بِهٖ مِنْ اٰيَةٍ لِّتَسْحَرَنَا بِهَا فَمَا نَحْنُ لَكَ بِمُؤْمِنِيْنَ 'Whatever sign you bring to us in order to enchant us therewith, we are not going to believe in you."

Verses 133 - 136

فَاَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ الطُّوْفَانَ وَالْجَرَادَ وَالْقُمَّلَ وَالضَّفَادِعَ وَالدَّمَ اٰيٰتٍ مُّفَصَّلٰتٍ فَاسْتَكْبَرُوْا وَكَانُوْا قَوْمًا مُّجْرِمِيْنَ ﴿١٣٣﴾ وَلَمَّا وَقَعَ عَلَيْهِمُ الرِّجْزُ قَالُوْا يٰمُوْسَى ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ بِمَا عَهِدَ عِنْدَكَ ۚ لَئِنْ كَشَفْتَ عَنَّا الرِّجْزَ لَنُؤْمِنَنَّ لَكَ وَلَنُرْسِلَنَّ مَعَكَ بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ ﴿١٣٤﴾ فَلَمَّا كَشَفْنَا عَنْهُمُ الرِّجْزَ اِلٰٓى اَجَلٍ هُمْ بٰلِغُوْهُ اِذَا هُمْ يَنْكُثُوْنَ ﴿١٣٥﴾ فَانْتَقَمْنَا مِنْهُمْ فَاَغْرَقْنٰهُمْ فِى

الِيمِ بِاَنَّهُمْ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَكَانُوْا عَنْهَا غٰفِلِيْنَ ﴿١٣٦﴾

So We sent upon them the storm and locusts, and pests, frogs and blood, signs distinct from each other. Yet they showed arrogance and they were a guilty people. [133] **And when the punishment fell upon them, they said, "O Mūsā, pray for us to your Lord by the covenant He has made with you. If you remove the punishment from us, we shall surely believe in you and shall send the children of Isrā'īl with you."** [134]

So when We removed the punishment from them, for a period of time that they had to reach, they suddenly started to break the promise. [135] **Then we took vengeance from them, and drowned them in the sea, for they belied Our signs and were neglectful of them.** [136]

The above verses relate the next part of the story of the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام and the people of Pharaoh. According to historical reports, the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام stayed in Egypt for 20 years. He kept preaching consistently and conveyed the message of Allah to them. He was given nine miracles during his stay in Egypt which served as warnings to the people of Pharaoh. The Holy Qur'ān has referred to the nine miracles in these words. وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا مُوْسٰى تِسْعَ اٰيٰتٍ "Surely, We gave him nine miracles."

Out of the nine miracles, two were performed before Pharaoh and his people. The third miracle was of famine reported in verse 130. The above verses speak of the remaining six miracles. The verse 133 has mentioned five punishments coming to the people of Pharaoh. All these punishments have been termed as 'signs distinct from each other.' According to the comments of the respected Companion 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās each of these punishments lasted for a fixed period of time followed by a period of relief followed by the next punishment.

Ibn-al-Mundhir has cited from the Companion 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās that each punishment lasted for seven days starting from Saturday, then they were given three weeks of relief. Imām al-Baghawī, citing the Companion 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas said that the first time when they were relieved of famine by asking the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام to pray

Allah for their relief, they did not keep the promise of believing in Allah. The prophet Mūsā عليه السلام prayed Allah that they may be inflicted with some painful punishment so that it serves as a lesson to his people and to their descendants. Allah first sent a storm upon them. According to great commentators, this was a flood. All the lands and houses of the people of Pharaoh were filled and surrounded by the water leaving for them no place for farming and living in their homes. The strange thing about it was that the lands and houses of the Israelites were not affected by the water of the flood.

In a state of great distress they came to the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام and requested him to pray Allah for their relief from this calamity. They promised that if they are relieved from the flood they would embrace faith in Allah and let the Israelites go with him from Egypt. The prayer of the prophet was acceded to and the storm subsided. It is reported that their fields were more fertile and productive than before. Again they did not keep their promise and said that the storm was not a punishment from Allah. Rather it came to their benefit and the increase in the produce was the result of the flood and that Mūsā عليه السلام had nothing to do with it.

A period of respite was given to them to reflect and realize their error. After a period of one month another punishment was sent to them in the form of locusts which ate up all the crops and fruits. Some reports say that the locusts devoured even their doors and roofs made of wood and other things of their houses. Again they were surprised to notice that the locusts did not do any harm to the houses and fields of the Israelites which were quite close to them. Once again they cried for help and implored to the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام to pray his Lord for taking away this punishment from them and that they make firm promise to believe in him and free the Israelites after their relief. The prophet Mūsā عليه السلام prayed Allah for their relief again and they got rid of this chastisement.

Seeing that they were left with enough grain to suffice them for one year, they turned against their promise and showed arrogance as before. Once again, a period of peace and relief followed. The third punishment came to them of 'Qummal' rendered here as pest. Qummal in Arabic is used for 'louse' as well as for an insect which eats up

grain. It is possible that both kinds of insects were sent to them, that is, small pests started to eat up their grain while equally large number of lice ate up even their hair and eyelashes. Exasperated as they were, they came again to prophet Mūsā عليه السلام and asked him to pray Allah for their riddance, promising again their acceptance of the true faith and release of the Israelites. He prayed Allah for their relief and Allah relieved them of this punishment too.

The fourth punishment was of the frogs. The frogs were created in such a large number in their houses that they covered them up to their necks. The frogs covered them in their beds when they came to sleep. All of their cooking pans and utensils and their household were full of frogs. Being highly disgusted with this situation they came again to prophet Mūsā عليه السلام, with all their old promises, and asked him to pray for their deliverance. This time also they were relieved of this punishment. They were given enough time to correct themselves but those who incur Allah's wrath are deprived of positive thinking. This time when they were in peace they said that they were sure that Mūsā عليه السلام was a sorcerer and not a messenger of Allah. Those mishaps to them were the effect of his sorcery.

After a month of relief the next punishment visiting them was that of blood. Everything of their use turned into blood. Their drinks, their food and their water became all blood before they could use them. As they took out water from the wells or tanks it turned into blood. History has reported it was strange that whenever the Egyptians and the Israelites sat together for meal the morsel of food taken by the Egyptian became all blood, while the one taken by an Israelite did not change. This punishment too lasted for seven days. They were relieved of this punishment through the prayer of the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام after their usual false promises.

The people of Pharaoh were subjected to the above five punishments one after another but they persisted in their arrogance and showed no sign of taking lesson from these warnings. The sixth punishment has been mentioned in the Qur'ān by the Arabic word: رجز 'Rijz' which signifies plague or pestilence. The number of Egyptians killed in this plague is reported to have been more than seventy thousand. They were relieved of this punishment by the prayer of the

prophet Mūsā عليه السلام. Again they broke their promise as before. Now, when they showed no sign of understanding they were finally caught by the last punishment - the death. Leaving behind all their lands, houses and possessions they chased the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام and his people and were drowned in the sea.

Verse 137 - 141

وَاَوْرَثْنَا الْقَوْمَ الَّذِيْنَ كَانُوْا يُسْتَضْعَفُوْنَ مَشَارِقَ الْاَرْضِ
وَمَغَارِبَهَا الَّتِيْ بٰرَكْنَا فِيْهَا ؕ وَتَمَّتْ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ الْحُسْنٰى عَلٰى
بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ ۙ۬ بِمَا صَبَرُوْا ؕ وَ دَمَّرْنَا مَا كَانَ يَصْنَعُ فِرْعَوْنُ
وَقَوْمُهٗ وَمَا كَانُوْا يَعْرِشُوْنَ ﴿١٣٧﴾ وَجٰوَزْنَا بِبَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ
الْبَحْرَ فَاَتَوْا عَلٰى قَوْمٍ يَّعْكُفُوْنَ عَلٰٓى اَصْنَامٍ لَّهُمْ ۚ قَالُوْا
يٰمُوْسَى اجْعَلْ لَّنَآ اِلٰهًا كَمَا لَهُمْ اٰلِهَةٌ ؕ قَالَ اِنَّكُمْ قَوْمٌ تَجْهَلُوْنَ
﴿١٣٨﴾ اِنَّ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ مُتَبَّرٌ مَّا هُمْ فِيْهِ وَبٰطِلٌ مَّا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ
﴿١٣٩﴾ قَالَ اَغَيْرَ اللّٰهِ اَبْغِيْكُمْ اِلٰهًا وَّهُوَ فَضَّلَكُمْ عَلَى
الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿١٤٠﴾ وَاِذْ اَنْجَيْنٰكُمْ مِّنْ اٰلِ فِرْعَوْنَ يَسُوْمُوْنَكُمْ
سُوْٓءَ الْعَذَابِ ۚ يُقَتِّلُوْنَ اَبْنَآءَكُمْ وَيَسْتَحْيُوْنَ نِسَآءَكُمْ ؕ وَفِيْ
ذٰلِكُمْ بَلَآءٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ عَظِيْمٌ ﴿١٤١﴾

And We made those people who were taken as weak, the inheritors of the easts of the land and of it's wests which We had blessed. And the sublime word of your Lord was fulfilled for the children of Isrā’īl, because they stood patient. And We destroyed what Pharaoh and his people used to build and what they used to raise high. [137]

And We made the children of Isrā’īl cross the sea, then, they came across a people sitting in devotion before their idols. They (the Israelites) said, "O Mūsā, make a god for us like they have gods." He said, "You are really an ignorant people. [138] **What these people are in, is sure to be destroyed; and false is what they**

are doing." [139] **He said, "Shall I seek any one other than Allah as God for you, while He has given you excellence over the (people of all the) worlds."** [140] **And (remember) when We delivered you from the people of Pharaoh, who inflicted you with grievous torment, slaughtered your sons and left your women alive and in all that there was great trial from your Lord.** [141]

The previous verses contained an account of the warnings from Allah to the people of Pharaoh. The present verses speak of their ignominious end, and of the success of the Israelites. The verse 137 said, "And We made the people, who were taken to be weak, the inheritors of the land, of easts and wests which We had blessed." The verse did not say, the people who were weak, rather it said, those who were taken as weak. It implies that those having Allah as their support can never be weak in the real sense of the word, though they may seem so from their apparent condition. People finally come to realise that they are not weak. It is because dignity and honour all belong to Allah. The verse has used the term inheritance for their domination in the land to indicate that like a son who deserves to be a real inheritor of his father's land and possessions, the Israelites were the real inheritors of the land and wealth of Pharaoh's people.

The words 'east' and 'west' have been used in plural perhaps to denote the different points of sunset and sunrise in winter and summer time. The word 'land', according to all experts in exegesis, refers to the land of Egypt and Syria which was brought under the domination of the Israelites after the people of Pharaoh and the Amaleks were destroyed. The phrase 'Which We had blessed' refers to the lands of Syria and Egypt. The Holy Qur'ān has referred to Syria as the land of Barakah (blessing). Similarly the land of Egypt has been referred to as the land of blessing in a number of Traditions. The Caliph 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb has referred to river Nile as the prince of all rivers. The Companion 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar said that Egypt has nine parts of blessing out of ten. The tenth part has been divided throughout the earth. (Al-Baḥr-a-Muḥīṭ)

In short, the verse has to say that the people who were considered weak and abject were made the rulers of the land possessed by those who showed arrogance. It shows how the promise made by Allah and

His Messenger came out true as it always does. The verse said, 'The sublime word of your Lord was fulfilled.' The promise in this verse either refers to the promise made by the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام with his people mentioned in verse 129 which said, 'It is very likely that our Lord will destroy your enemy and make you successor in the earth.' Or it refers to the promise made by Allah to the Israelites in a verse of Sūrah Al-Qaṣaṣ (the Stories) It said, "

وَنُرِيْدُ اَنْ نَّمُنَّ عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ اسْتُضْعِفُوْا فِى الْاَرْضِ وَنَجْعَلَهُمْ اَئِمَّةً وَّنَجْعَلَهُمُ الْوٰرِثِيْنَ ۙ وَنُمَكِّنَ لَهُمْ فِى الْاَرْضِ وَنُرِىَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَهَامٰنَ وَجُنُوْدَهُمَا مِنْهُمْ مَّا كَانُوْا يَحْذَرُوْنَ ○

"And it was Our will that We favour those considered weak in the earth and make them leaders, and make them the inheritors, and give them power in the land, and show Pharaoh, Hāmān and their armies, the very thing they dreaded." (28:5)

In fact, both the above promises are one and the same. The promise made by the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام obviously was derived by the promise of Allah. This favour of Allah upon the people of Israel was the reward of their patience, as the verse has specified saying 'Because they stood patient.' That is, they were favoured by Allah for their being patient in their distress. This has an understated indication that any people or individual following the same example, at any time and in any place, shall get the same reward. The prophet Mūsā عليه السلام when making the promise of gaining the rule over the land had emphatically said that perseverance, patience and seeking help from Allah was the only key to success.

Sheikh Ḥasan al-Baṣrī said that the verse suggested that in case one is not as powerful as to defend himself against an enemy, the best way to success is to remain patient. He said when a person who has been wronged, tries to take revenge on his own by doing wrong to his opponent Allah leaves him alone and lets him manage his own affairs, ending in success or facing a failure. On the contrary, when one seeks help from Allah against the affliction from others and remains patient, Allah opens the door of success upon him. As the above promise for the rule over the land was fulfilled by Allah, the same kind of promise

Allah made with the people of the prophet Muḥammad in a verse of Sūrah Al-Nūr:

وَعَدَاللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مِنْكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ فِى الْاَرْضِ كَمَا اسْتَخْلَفَ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ

"Allah has promised those of you who believe and do good deeds that he will make them inherit the land, as He had inherited those who were before them." (24:55)

As the Israelites witnessed the fulfillment of Allah's promise by having their rule over the land, similarly the Muslim Ummah witnessed the fulfillment of Allah's promise in the form of their sovereignty over the major part of the earth (Rūḥ al-Bayān). It is not justified to say that the Israelites did not observe patience, because when Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام asked them to be patient they said that they were persecuted before and after he came to them. Firstly, because their patience against the constant persecution at the hands of Pharaoh and his people is a proven fact. Secondly, the above statement might not be a complaint but a simple expression of their grief. Thereafter, the verse said, وَدَمَّرْنَا مَا كَانَ يَصْنَعُ فِرْعَوْنُ وَقَوْمُهٗ وَمَا كَانُوْا يَعْرِشُوْنَ "And We destroyed whatever Pharaoh and his people used to build and what they used to raise high." This refers to the buildings they raised high and their trees etc. 'What they used to build' may also refer to their ill designs against the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام. 'What they used to raise high' is a reference to their mansions and to their trees.

The events discussed up to this point were related to the destruction of Pharaoh and his people. The next verses describe the victory and success of the Israelites followed by their insolence in spite of all the blessings they received from Allah. These verses provide a kind of solace to the Holy Prophet ﷺ against his grief at the obstinacy of the unbelievers, by showing the annoyance of the early prophets at the hands of their people.

After the miraculous victory of the Israelites over Pharaoh and his people, and having a life of ease and comfort, they started to show the signs of ignorance as people of wealth show when given a life of luxury and opulence. The first impertinent request they made was to the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام to make for them a god like the gods of the

people they saw being worshipped on their way. They (the Israelites) said, يَا مُوسَى اجْعَلْ لَنَا إِلٰهًا كَمَا لَهُمْ آلِهَةٌ "O Mūsā make a god for us like their gods." He said, قال انكم قوم تجهلون "You are really an ignorant people." The prophet Mūsā was greatly annoyed by their ignorance and said that the labour of worship of those people was to go waste. How could he think of making for them a god other than Allah while he had given to them excellence over the people of all the worlds. That is, the people who believed in the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام were superior to all the people of that age.

The next verses remind them of their pitiable condition and their persecutions at the hands of Pharaoh when their sons were killed and their daughters were saved to serve them as their maid-servants. Allah relieved them of this disgraceful chastisement through His prophet. Shall they be as ungrateful to their Lord as to take the abject stones as gods and make them partners with Allah? They must repent to Allah for their transgression.

Verse142

وَ وٰعَدْنَا مُوسٰى ثَلٰثِيْنَ لَيْلَةً وَّاَتْمَمْنٰهَا بِعَشْرٍ فَتَمَّ مِيْقَاتُ رَبِّهٖۤ اَرْبَعِيْنَ لَيْلَةً ۚ وَقَالَ مُوسٰى لِاَخِيْهِ هٰرُوْنَ اخْلُفْنِيْ فِيْ قَوْمِيْ وَاَصْلِحْ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ سَبِيْلَ الْمُفْسِدِيْنَ ﴿۱۴۲﴾

And We made a promise with Mūsā for thirty nights, then We supplemented them with ten. So, the total period fixed by his Lord was forty nights. And Mūsā said to his brother Hārūn, "Take my place among my people and keep things right, and do not follow the way of mischief makers." [142]

This verse speaks of the period followed by the destruction of the Pharaoh and his people. Having a peaceful time after their deliverance from the Pharaoh and his people the Israelites requested the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام to have some religious system of law so that they may act upon it. The Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام prayed Allah for a code of guidance for them. The Arabic word: واعدنا "*wā'adanā*' is a derivative of وعد'*wa'dah*' which signifies a worded expression of offering something good to someone - a promise.

Allah made a promise to Mūsā عليه السلام to send His word to him. It was stipulated that Mūsā عليه السلام should go to the mount of Sināi and pass thirty nights there sitting in devotion for Allah. These thirty nights were later supplemented with ten more nights to make them forty.

There are some points in this verse which demand our attention: Firstly, the number of nights to be passed by the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام was fixed to be forty nights in the will of Allah. Why was he first asked to pass thirty nights, and then add ten more nights? No one, in fact, can have access to all the wisdom and insight contained in divine acts. The scholars, however, have provided with some explanations: The famous commentary 'Rūḥ al-Bayān' states that one of the wisdom behind the above commandment is of enjoining the laws gradually or by degrees to make it easier for people to practice. The commentary 'Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī' has said that this was for educating those in authority to give respite to their subordinates if they fail to complete their assignments in the prescribed time. This is what happened with Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام . When the spiritual excellence that was required could not be achieved by him in thirty nights, ten more nights were added to give him more time to acquire required perfection.

The commentators have reported that the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام kept fasting constantly for thirty days and nights without breaking his fast in between. After completing thirty days he took the break fast and presented himself at the fixed point on the mount Sināi, Allah said to him that the peculiar odor generated by fasting in one's mouth is liked by Allah. Mūsā عليه السلام had lost the odor by brushing his teeth, he was therefore, required to observe fasting for ten more days in order to create the odor again.

The above reports of the loss of odor, however, cannot be taken to mean that brushing the teeth after fasting is prohibited or is something disliked, firstly, because the above report has been cited without the chain of narrators and secondly because it could be a commandment meant specifically for the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام and not for other people, or peculiar to the followrs of the Torah. The permissibility of brushing one's teeth during fasting is a practice proved by the Holy Tradition. Al-Baihaqī has reported the following Tradition on the

authority of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: خَيْرُ خِصَائِلِ الصَّائِمِ السِّوَاكُ The best act of the one who is fasting is brushing one's teeth (with *miswāk*). Al-Jami' al-Ṣaghīr has said that the status of this *Hadīth* is that of Ḥasan (a kind of authentic Tradition).

One may wonder here how the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام could be fasting continuously for thirty days without making a breakfast even at nights, while during his travel for visiting Sayyidnā Khiẓr (Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام) he could not wait for even half of the day and said اٰتِنَا غَدَآءَنَا لَقَدْ لَقِيْنَا مِنْ سَفَرِنَا هٰذَا نَصَبًا "Give us our food, because this journey has made us tired." Tafsīr Rūḥ al-Bayān has explained that this difference was due to the different nature of journeys. This journey was of a created being for another created being while the journey on the mount of Sinai was for the Creator of a devoted created being who had separated himself from the Creation in quest of his Lord. This spiritual journey weakened the vigour of physical demands of hunger and thirst, making him capable of observing fast for continuous thirty days and nights.

Lunar or Solar Calendars

Another point inferred from this verse is that the laws of the Prophets counted the change of their dates at night. The above verse also has made a mention of thirty nights instead of thirty days. It is because the lunar calendar was the standard calendar in the laws of the Prophets. The beginning of the lunar month is based on sighting of the moon which is possible only at night. It is why the dates in lunar calendar are changed at sunset. Al-Qurṭubī has reported this statement on the authority of Ibn al-'Arabī حِسَابُ الشَّمْسِ لِلْمَنَافِعِ وَ حِسَابُ الْقَمَرِ لِلْمَنَاسِكِ "The solar Calendar is for the benefits in worldly matters while the lunar Calendar is for religious observances."

According to the commentary of the Companion 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ the thirty nights were the nights of Zul Qa'dah, the eleventh month of the lunar Calendar. The ten nights added to them were the first ten nights of Zul-Ḥijjah. This makes us understand that the Torāh was given to the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام on the day of Eid-al-Aḍḥā. (Qurṭubī)

The significance of number forty

This verse also implies that the number forty has some special

effect in spiritual rectification of one's heart. It is reported in a Tradition of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that any one who worships Allah for forty days with sincerity of his heart, his heart is made a source of wisdom. (Rūh al-Bayān)

Practising Gradualism

This verse also educates people to fix a period of time for the fulfillment of their objective and to approach their aims gradually, as it is the practice of Allah to do things gradually. Haste and hurry in doing things is not approved by Allah. By creating the universe in six days while Allah had all the powers to create it instantly without requiring a single moment, He has provided people with a wise principle that they should approach their ends by stages in a period of time so that they may give due attention to their objectives. The Torah was also not given to the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام in a moment but a period was fixed for it to emphasize the same practice. (Qurṭubī)

It was by ignoring this principle that the Israelites had lost their faith in Allah. The Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام while leaving for the mount of Sinai had said that he would be away for thirty days. When he did not return in this period due to being retained for the next ten days, the Israelites, being unduly hasty people said that the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام was lost somewhere, so they should choose another leader for their guidance. Consequently, they fell prey to the sorcerer Sāmirī and started worshipping the golden calf. Had they been a people of patience and practised gradualism, they would have not committed the fatal error of infidelity. The next sentence of the verse said, وَقَالَ مُوْسٰى لِاَخِيْهِ هٰرُوْنَ اخْلُفْنِىْ فِىْ قَوْمِىْ وَاَصْلِحْ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ سَبِيْلَ الْمُفْسِدِيْنَ "Mūsā عليه السلام said to his brother Hārūn, "Take my place among my people and keep things right, and do not follow the way of mischief makers." This sentence also contains some observations of religious importance.

Making one's deputy when needed.

The Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام made it a point to appoint Sayyidnā Hārūn as his deputy when he intended to leave for the mount of Sinai and said that he should take the responsibility of his people in his absence. This makes it imperative for those who hold some responsible office that they appoint someone to look after the work in their absence.

The Holy Prophet ﷺ used to appoint someone as his deputy whenever he used to leave Madīnah. The Companions 'Alī and 'Abdullāh ibn Umm Maktūm were appointed as his deputies on different occasions. (Qurṭubī)

The Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام gave certain instructions to the Prophet Hārūn عليه السلام before his departure to the mount of Sināī, indicating that leaving instructions or guidelines for the deputy is also a religious requirement. The first instruction given by the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام was just a word أَصْلِحْ " that is, 'set right'. The object of this imperative has not been mentioned. Possibly, he made it a general command to be observed by the Israelites and the Prophet Hārūn as well.

The second instruction was in these words: وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ سَبِيْلَ الْمُفْسِدِيْنَ "And do not follow the way of mischief-makers." It is obvious that Prophet Hārūn عليه السلام, being a Prophet of Allah could not be supposed to indulge in mischief. This instruction, therefore, meant that he should not do any such thing as could help or encourage the mischief makers. This is exactly what the Prophet Hārūn did when he saw his people following the magician Sāmirī, so much so that they started worshipping the golden calf. The Prophet Hārūn عليه السلام prevented them from this act as well as admonished Sāmirī against his mischief. Later, the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام , called him to account for this act of theirs, thinking that it was the result of inefficiency on the part of the Prophet Hārūn عليه السلام. This also serves as a lesson for those who do not care for orderly disposition of matters and take it as a sign of piousness.

Verses 143 - 145

وَلَمَّا جَآءَ مُوْسٰى لِمِيْقَاتِنَا وَكَلَّمَهٗ رَبُّهٗ ۙ قَالَ رَبِّ اَرِنِيْٓ اَنْظُرْ اِلَيْكَ
ؕ قَالَ لَنْ تَرٰىنِيْ وَلٰكِنِ انْظُرْ اِلَى الْجَبَلِ فَاِنِ اسْتَقَرَّ مَكَانَهٗ
فَسَوْفَ تَرٰىنِيْ ۚ فَلَمَّا تَجَلّٰى رَبُّهٗ لِلْجَبَلِ جَعَلَهٗ دَكًّا وَّ خَرَّ مُوْسٰى
صَعِقًا ۚ فَلَمَّآ اَفَاقَ قَالَ سُبْحٰنَكَ تُبْتُ اِلَيْكَ وَاَنَا اَوَّلُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ
﴿١٤٣﴾ قَالَ يٰمُوْسٰٓى اِنِّى اصْطَفَيْتُكَ عَلَى النَّاسِ بِرِسٰلٰتِيْ
وَبِكَلَامِيْ فَخُذْ مَآ اٰتَيْتُكَ وَكُنْ مِّنَ الشّٰكِرِيْنَ ﴿١٤٤﴾ وَكَتَبْنَا

لَهٗ فِى الْاَلْوَاحِ مِنْ كُلِّ شَىْءٍ مَّوْعِظَةً وَّتَفْصِيْلًا لِّكُلِّ شَىْءٍۚ فَخُذْهَا بِقُوَّةٍ وَّاْمُرْ قَوْمَكَ يَاْخُذُوْا بِاَحْسَنِهَاؕ سَاُورِيْكُمْ دَارَ الْفٰسِقِيْنَ ﴿١٤٥﴾

And when Mūsā came at Our appointed time and his Lord spoke to him, he said, "My Lord, show (Yourself) to me that I may look at You." He said: "You shall never see Me. But look at the mount. If it stays at its place you will see Me." So when his Lord appeared to the Mount, He made it smashed, and Mūsā fell down unconscious. Then, when he recovered, he said: "Pure are You. I repent to You, and I am the first to believe." [143] **He said, "O, Mūsā, I have chosen you above all men for my messages and for My speaking. So, take what I have given to you, and be among the grateful."** [144]

And We wrote for him on the Tablets every thing of advice, and explanation of all things. So hold it firm and ask your people to hold on to the best things in it. I shall show you the house of the sinners. [145]

The verse 143 carries the phrase لن ترانى "you shall never see me" The phrase has an indication that sighting of Allah is not impossible, but that he (Mūsā عليه السلام) cannot endure it with his present physical disposition. Had it been impossible, the phrase would have been لن ارى : "I cannot be seen" (Mazharī) This allows that sighting of Allah is a logical possibility even in this world but at the same time this verse has precluded the possibility of its occurrence in this world. This is also the unanimous view of the majority of scholars. The following *hadīth* has been included in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim:

لن يرى احد منكم ربه حتى يموت

"None among you can see his Lord unless he dies."

The second phrase, وَلٰكِنِ انْظُرْ اِلَى الْجَبَلِ "But look at the mount" is a physical demonstration of the fact that in his present state the addressee is not capable of enduring the impact of such experience.

Thereafter, Allah actually demonstrated this fact by a flash of His appearance on the Mount of Sinai which could not stand it and was smashed into pieces.

The next phrase is فَلَمَّا تَجَلّٰى رَبُّهٗ لِلْجَبَلِ "So when his Lord appeared to the Mount." The Arabic word تَجَلّٰى "*Tajallī*" signifies exposure or disclosure. According to the Spiritual masters (Ṣufīs) the word signifies seeing something indirectly through some other means, like seeing certain thing reflected in the mirror. The word, therefore, cannot signify 'seeing'. It is also inferred by this very verse because this verse has negated the possibility of seeing while it has mentioned the occurrence of 'Tajalli' or appearance on the mount of Sinai.

Imām Aḥmad, Tirmidhī and Ḥākim have reported on the authority of the Companion Anas رضی اللہ عنہ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ recited this verse and placing his thumb on the tip of his little finger said that only this much of Allah's light was exposed to the mount of Sinaī which made it burst into pieces. This does not necessarily mean that the whole of the mount was not shattered, but the part of the mountain directly exposed to light might have been affected.

The Speech of Allah:

The fact that Allah spoke directly to the Prophet Mūsā علیہ السلام is confirmed by the Qur'ān in clear terms. The first time Allah spoke with the Prophet Mūsā علیہ السلام was when he was entrusted with Prophethood. This is the second time at the occasion of giving him the Torah that He spoke to him. The wording of the present verse indicates that this later discourse of Allah had some additional charactersticks as compared to the first speech of Allah.

As to the question what was the nature and character of this discourse, cannot be ascertained by anyone but Allah. Only those logical suppositions, in this regard, can be allowed which do not go against any rule of the Sharī'ah. None of such views can be accepted as being definite unelss supported by some valid argument. The best practice, in this regard, is the one followed by the Companions, their disciples, and the elders who followed them. They left such matters to Allah and never tried to make ungrounded supposition to resolve them. (Bayān al-Qur'ān).

The last sentence is سَاُورِيْكُمْ دَارَ الْفٰسِقِيْنَ "I will show you the abode of the sinners". This is a kind of promise by Allah that the Israelites shall soon take over Egypt or perhaps Syria, referred to as the abode of the

sinners in this verse. There are two views about the reference to the abode of the sinners. The first holds that the reference has been made to Egypt while the second takes it to refer to Syria. The difference of opinion is, in fact, based on a question whether the Israelites had returned to Egypt after the destruction of Pharaoh and his people or not. If they went back to Egypt at that time and ruled the land, as has been indicated by the verse 137 saying that Allah made the Israelites inherit the land, then, this verse definitely has referred to Syria, as the abode of the sinners. It is because, in this case, the Israelites had taken over the land of Egypt before this event of Allah's light appearing to the Mount of Sinai. In case, they did not go to Egypt after the destruction of Pharaoh, the reference may be to Egypt and Syria, both.

The phrase وَكَتَبْنَا لَهٗ فِي الْاَلْوَاحِ "And we wrote for him everything on the Tablets" makes us understand that the Torah was given to the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام inscribed or written on the Tablets. [1]

Verses 146 - 151

سَاَصْرِفُ عَنْ اٰيٰتِيَ الَّذِيْنَ يَتَكَبَّرُوْنَ فِي الْاَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ ؕ
وَاِنْ يَّرَوْا كُلَّ اٰيَةٍ لَّا يُؤْمِنُوْا بِهَا ۚ وَاِنْ يَّرَوْا سَبِيْلَ الرُّشْدِ
لَا يَتَّخِذُوْهُ سَبِيْلًا ۚ وَاِنْ يَّرَوْا سَبِيْلَ الْغَيِّ يَتَّخِذُوْهُ سَبِيْلًا ؕ ذٰلِكَ
بِاَنَّهُمْ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَكَانُوْا عَنْهَا غٰفِلِيْنَ ﴿۱۴۶﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ
كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَلِقَآءِ الْاٰخِرَةِ حَبِطَتْ اَعْمَالُهُمْ ؕ هَلْ يُجْزَوْنَ اِلَّا
مَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۱۴۷﴾ وَاتَّخَذَ قَوْمُ مُوْسٰى مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖ مِنْ
حُلِيِّهِمْ عِجْلًا جَسَدًا لَّهٗ خُوَارٌ ؕ اَلَمْ يَرَوْا اَنَّهٗ لَا يُكَلِّمُهُمْ وَلَا
يَهْدِيْهِمْ سَبِيْلًا ۘ اِتَّخَذُوْهُ وَكَانُوْا ظٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿۱۴۸﴾ وَلَمَّا سُقِطَ فِيْٓ
اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَرَاَوْا اَنَّهُمْ قَدْ ضَلُّوْا ۙ قَالُوْا لَئِنْ لَّمْ يَرْحَمْنَا رَبُّنَا

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1. Another view with regard to these tablets is that these tablets were given to him prior to the revelation of the Torah and were not the part of the Torah. This has been cited by Allama Shabbir Ahmad Usmani under his comments on this verse. He has cited it from Ibn Kathir. (Translator)

وَيَغْفِرْ لَنَا لَنَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الْخٰسِرِيْنَ ﴿١٤٩﴾ وَلَمَّا رَجَعَ مُوْسٰٓى اِلٰى
قَوْمِهٖ غَضْبَانَ اَسِفًا ۙ قَالَ بِئْسَمَا خَلَفْتُمُوْنِيْ مِنْۢ بَعْدِيْ ۚ
اَعَجِلْتُمْ اَمْرَ رَبِّكُمْ ۚ وَاَلْقَى الْاَلْوَاحَ وَاَخَذَ بِرَاْسِ اَخِيْهِ يَجُرُّهٗٓ
اِلَيْهِ ؕ قَالَ ابْنَ اُمَّ اِنَّ الْقَوْمَ اسْتَضْعَفُوْنِيْ وَكَادُوْا يَقْتُلُوْنَنِيْ ۖ
فَلَا تُشْمِتْ بِيَ الْاَعْدَآءَ وَلَا تَجْعَلْنِيْ مَعَ الْقَوْمِ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ
﴿١٥٠﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِيْ وَلِاَخِيْ وَاَدْخِلْنَا فِيْ رَحْمَتِكَ ۖ وَاَنْتَ
اَرْحَمُ الرّٰحِمِيْنَ ﴿١٥١﴾ ع

I shall keep away from My verses those who show arrogance on the earth unduly without truth. And even if they see every sign they do not believe in it. And if they see the Path of guidance, they do not take it as their way, and if they see the path of misguidance they do take it as their way. That is because they have belied Our signs, and have been neglectful of them. [146] **And those who have belied Our signs and the meeting of the Hereafter, their deeds have gone waste. They will not be rewarded but for what they have been doing.** [147] **And after him the people of Mūsā made a calf from their ornaments; just a body with a moaing sound. Did they not see that it neither talked to them nor did it guide them to the path? They took to it, and were so unjust.** [148] **And when they became remorseful and saw that they had gone astray, they said, 'If Allah shows no mercy upon us, and forgives us not, we shall certainly be among the losers.'** [149] **And when Mūsā returned to his people, angry and sad, he said, "How bad is the thing you have done in my absence? How did you act in haste against the command of your Lord?" And he dropped down the Tablets and grabbed the head of his brother pulling him towards himself. He (Hārūn) said, 'O, born of my mother, the people have taken me as weak and were about to kill me, so do not let the enemies laugh at me, and do not count me with the wrong-doers.'** [150] **He said, 'My Lord forgive me and my brother, and admit us into Your mercy. And You are the most Merciful of all those who show mercy."** [151]

Commentary

The verse 146 spoke of the arrogant people as showing arrogance injustly. The word without truth or injustly indicates that assuming arrogance in response to the arrogant people is a justified act, since it is the act of arrogance in appearance, and not in reality. It is a known dictum: اَلتَّكَبُّرُ مَعَ الْمُتَكَبِّرِيْنَ تَوَاضُعٌ "Showing arrogance to the arrogant is an act of humbleness". (Masāil as-Sulūk).

The effects of Arrogance

By saying, "I shall keep away from My verses those who show arrogance," the verse implies that the people who have an offensive sense of superiority over others are deprived of knowledge and understanding. They are rendered incapable of benefitting themselves from the signs of Allah. The term 'Signs of Allah', may have a reference to the revealed verses of the Torah, Evangel and the Qur'ān, as well as to the signs inherent in all the things of the heavens and the earth. The false sense of superiority is, therefore, the worst habit which keeps man away from deliberations in the signs of Allah and getting awareness of the truth.

We find it stated in Rūḥ-al-Bayān that arrogance is such a wicked habitude as raises a wall between man and the knowledge from Allah. Since divine knowledge comes only through the mercy of Allah, and the mercy of Allah visits those who are humble. The spiritual leader Sheikh Rūmī has said:

هر کجا پستی آب آنجا رود　　　هر کجا مشکل جواب آنجارود

"Water flows down towards the slope, and solution goes where difficulty appears."

The next verses continue to narrate the remaining part of the story. When the prophet Mūsā علیہ السلام did not turn up after thirty days from the mount of Sināī where he was to be ordained by Allah after passing ten more nights on the mount, the Israelites who were a hasty and impatient people began to make fuss about it.

Among them there was a person named Sāmirī who was a prominent man, but at the same time, had beliefs in superstitions. He said to the people that the jewels and ornaments of the Egyptians possessed by them were not permissible for them. It may be noted that

the plunder or booty taken from the enemy after their defeat was also not permissible for the Israelites. The Israelites gathered all their jewels and handed these over to him. He melted the ornaments and forged a golden calf from it. A peculiar thing reported about him is that he had collected some dust from under the hoofs of the horse of the Archangel Jibrā'īl (Gabriel) at some occasion. Allah had made this dust to have the effect of some kind of life. Sāmirī mixed this dust with the molten metal while preparing the calf. This made the calf to emit a sound like the mooing of a cow.

Having designed this satanic invention he invited the people to worship the calf and said that it was god. He said that the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام had gone to speak with God to the mount of Sinai while god had come to them in the form of this calf. Sāmirī already enjoyed a place of respect among them, this unusual demonstration increased their trust in him and they started worshipping the calf, and took it as their god. The verse 148 has given a short description of this event while another verse of the Holy Qur'ān has described it in detail.

The verse 149 speaks of their remorse on this guilt and their repentance, while the verse 150 describes the events followed by the arrival of the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام from the mount of Sinai. It described that the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام was extremely angry when he saw his people in this state of ignorance. It is reported that Allah had informed him of their perversion on the mount of Sinai. Now seeing them in this state with his own eyes filled him with indignation. First, he turned to his people and said: بِئْسَمَا خَلَفْتُمُونِي مِنْ بَعْدِي "How bad is the thing you have done in my absence". أَعَجِلْتُمْ أَمْرَ رَبِّكُمْ "How did you act in haste against the command of your Lord?" That is, you must have waited until the book of Allah came to you. Some of the commentators have said that it meant that they hastily decided that the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام was dead. Then he turned to the Prophet Hārūn عليه السلام whom he has left among them as his deputy. He wanted to free his hand in order to grab him. He quickly put down the tablets of the Torah and grabbed the head of his brother. This has been termed as having dropped. The Arabic word used here is: القاء *Ilqā'* which signifies dropping or throwing. This gives rise to a doubt that the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام showed disrespect to the tablets of the Torah by throwing or

dropping them down. It is obvious that throwing the tablets of the Torah was great sin, and equally obvious is the fact that all the Prophets are innocent and free of all sins. The implication of the verse, therefore, is that he put away the Tablets as quickly in order to free his hands, as seemed like having been dropped. The Holy Qur'an has described it by using this word as a gesture of warning. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Thereafter he turned to the Prophet Hārūn عليه السلام and grasped the hair of his head. The Prophet Hārūn then gave him the true account of the events and said that it was not his fault, for he stopped them from this wicked act but they did not listen to him. They were so obstinate about it that they were about to kill him. He said that he should not count him among the ignorant people and should not let his enemies laugh at him by treating him in that way. This made the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام cool down. At this occasion, he prayed to Allah, saying, رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِي وَلِأَخِي وَأَدْخِلْنَا فِي رَحْمَتِكَ وَأَنْتَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمِينَ "My Lord, forgive me and my brother, and admit us to Your mercy, and You are the most merciful of all those who show mercy." He asked forgiveness for his brother for any of his shortcoming with regard to his duties. He asked forgiveness for himself either for his putting away the tablets of the Torah in a hurry which the Holy Qur'ān had described as having been 'dropped' to make a gesture of warning, or perhaps, for educating people that they should include themselves while asking forgiveness for others to preclude the sense of complacency on their part.

Verses 152 - 156

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا الْعِجْلَ سَيَنَالُهُمْ غَضَبٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّهِمْ وَذِلَّةٌ فِي
الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ۚ وَكَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُفْتَرِينَ ﴿١٥٢﴾ وَالَّذِينَ عَمِلُوا
السَّيِّاٰتِ ثُمَّ تَابُوا مِنْ بَعْدِهَا وَاٰمَنُوْا ۚ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ مِنْ بَعْدِهَا
لَغَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿١٥٣﴾ وَلَمَّا سَكَتَ عَنْ مُّوسَى الْغَضَبُ أَخَذَ
الْأَلْوَاحَ ۖ وَفِي نُسْخَتِهَا هُدًى وَّرَحْمَةٌ لِّلَّذِينَ هُمْ لِرَبِّهِمْ يَرْهَبُوْنَ
﴿١٥٤﴾ وَاخْتَارَ مُوْسٰى قَوْمَهُ سَبْعِيْنَ رَجُلًا لِّمِيْقَاتِنَا ۚ فَلَمَّا
أَخَذَتْهُمُ الرَّجْفَةُ قَالَ رَبِّ لَوْ شِئْتَ أَهْلَكْتَهُمْ مِّنْ قَبْلُ وَإِيَّايَ ۖ

أَتُهْلِكُنَا بِمَا فَعَلَ السُّفَهَآءُ مِنَّا إِنْ هِيَ إِلَّا فِتْنَتُكَ ۖ تُضِلُّ بِهَا
مَنْ تَشَآءُ وَتَهْدِيْ مَنْ تَشَآءُ ۖ أَنْتَ وَلِيُّنَا فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا وَارْحَمْنَا
وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الْغٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿١٥٥﴾ وَاكْتُبْ لَنَا فِيْ هٰذِهِ الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً
وَّفِي الْاٰخِرَةِ إِنَّا هُدْنَآ إِلَيْكَ ۚ قَالَ عَذَابِيْٓ أُصِيْبُ بِهٖ مَنْ أَشَآءُ ۚ
وَرَحْمَتِيْ وَسِعَتْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ ۚ فَسَأَكْتُبُهَا لِلَّذِيْنَ يَتَّقُوْنَ وَيُؤْتُوْنَ
الزَّكٰوةَ وَالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ بِاٰيٰتِنَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿١٥٦﴾

Surely, those who have taken the calf (as god) upon them shall befall the wrath of Allah, and humiliation in the worldly life. And that is, how we recompense the fabricators. [152] **And those who have done evil deeds, then have repented thereafter, and have believed - surely after that your Lord is most Forgiving, very Merciful.** [153] **And when the fury of Mūsā quieted down, he picked up the Tablets, and in its contents there was guidance, and mercy for those who are fearful before their Lord.** [154] **And Mūsā selected seventy men from his people for Our appointment. Later when the earthquake seized them, he said, "My Lord, had it been Your will, You could have destroyed them earlier, and me too. Would You destroy us for what the foolish among them have done? It is nothing but a trial from You, wherewith you let go astray whom You will, and give guidance to whom You will. You are our protector, so forgive us, and have mercy on us and You are the best among those who forgive.** [155] **And write for us good in this world and in the Hereafter. We turn to You in repentance." He said, "As for My punishment, I afflict with it whom I will. And My mercy extends to everything. So, I shall write it for those who fear, and pay Zakāh, and those who do believe in Our verses.** [156]

The first verse (152) has warned those who took to the worship of the calf and persisted in it, of their sad fate in the Hereafter, and of disgraceful life in this world.

The worldly life is also affected by the sinful deeds

A part of punishment of some sins is also given in this life. This is

what happened to Sāmirī. The Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام commanded him to live apart from the people not touching any one with his hand nor is he touched by any one of the people. Consequently for the rest of his life he lived a deserted life of seclusion, walking about with animals. No human did come near him.

Al-Qurṭubī has reported on the authority of the Companion Qatādah that his punishment from Allah was that whenever he touched someone or was touched by anyone of the people both suffered from fever. The author of Rūḥ al-Bayān has observed that the symptoms of this disease are still inherited by his generations. This verse has ended with this sentence. وَكَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِى الْمُفْتَرِيْنَ "And this is how we recompence the fabricators." The Sheikh Sufyan ibn 'Uyainah has said that those who invent new things in the Shari'ah (take to Bid'ah) also commit the sin of fabrication and deserve such punishment. (Maẓharī)

Imām Mālik has also inferred from this verse that those who invent new practices in the Sharī'ah deserve the same punishment of Allah's wrath in the Hereafter and disgrace in this life. (Qurṭubī)

The verse 153 speaks of the people who repented to Allah for their sin after the admonitions of their Prophet, and fulfilled the formidable condition of killing each other for their forgiveness. They killed each other as was stipulated in the command of Allah for their forgiveness by Allah. The Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام called them to him and informed them that Allah had accepted their repentance. The people killed in this combat were awarded martyrdom while those who survived were forgiven by Allah. This implies that those who get themselves involved in sinful acts, if repent to Allah and correct their belief, Allah forgives them in His mercy with no regard to the gravity of the act. It is, therefore wise to turn to Allah in repentance instantly after every sinful act.'

The verse 154 describes that the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام lifted up the tablets of the Torah which contained guidance and blessing for those who feared Allah. The Arabic word: نُسْخَة *'Nuskha'* rendered as contents signifies a writing copied from a book or other writings. There are certain reports that inform us that the tablets had broken at the time the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام had put them away quickly. This time Allah gave him the Torah written on some other material.

Seventy people and their Death

The verse 155 describes an unusual event. After the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام brought the Torah for his people and bade them to follow it, they, being a crooked and pretentious people, said that they were not sure of it's being the word of Allah, and that the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام might have written it himself. He prayed to Allah for making them certain about it. Allah said to Mūsā عليه السلام that he should choose seventy men out of his people and bring them to the mount of Sinai, He shall make them hear the word of Allah which was done as was promised. But they said that they were not certain of the voice heard by them as being the voice of God - 'We shall believe only when we see Allah vividly.' Since this demand was based on ignorance and obstinacy, they evoked the wrath of Allah. They were caught by the earthquake from beneath and by a thunder clap from above. Instantly they fell down on the ground as senseless as dead.

The word used in Sūrah Al-Baqarah while describing this event is (صَاعِقة) which signifies thunder, while in this verse the word (رجفة) has been used which denotes earthquake. The two words can be reconciled by assuming that they were punished by both the thunder and the earthquake. In short, they looked like dead, or perhaps they were really dead. The Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام was extremely aggrieved by this incident. Firstly, because they were all prominent personalities of the Israelites, secondly, he did not know how he would face his people on his return. They woud blame him with the murder of all these people, and would even kill him. The Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام said to Allah, 'O, my Lord, I know that it is not your will to kill them, as they could be killed at earlier occasions more suited to their destruction. They could be drowned with Pharaoh, or killed at the time of calf-worship, but you did not do so. I am sure that You do not want them dead, but You aim at giving them warning in this way. Besides, You cannot kill all of us for the bad deeds done by some foolish people.' He also said, "O my Lord, I know this is just a trial from You. You let some people go astray with Your test and give guidance to some others who percieve the wisdom and lesson inherent in them. I am also among those who know that You are The Wise and All-Knowing. You are the Most Merciful of all and the Most-forgiving. O my Lord, forgive the insolence shown by these people." As a result of his prayer, all the

seventy men were raised to life.

The verse 156 contains the last portion of the prayer. It said: وَاكْتُبْ لَنَا فِىْ هٰذِهِ الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَّفِى الْاٰخِرَةِ اِنَّا هُدْنَآ اِلَيْكَ "And write for us good in this world and in the Hereafter. We turn to you in repentance." Allah Almighty answered in response to this request:

عَذَابِىْٓ اُصِيْبُ بِهٖ مَنْ اَشَآءُ وَرَحْمَتِىْ وَسِعَتْ كُلَّ شَىْءٍ فَسَاَكْتُبُهَا لِلَّذِيْنَ يَتَّقُوْنَ وَيُؤْتُوْنَ الزَّكٰوةَ وَالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ بِاٰيٰتِنَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ .

"As for My punishment, I afflict with it whom I will. And My Mercy extends to everything. So I shall write it for those who fear, and pay Zakāh and those who do believe in Our verses".

That is, though all the disobedient deserve the punishment of Allah but out of His mercy, which encircles everything, even the wrath of Allah, He afflicts with His punishment only a few whom He wills. His mercy is as great as includes everything, even those who rebel Allah and deny Him are shown some of His mercy, though it is limited to this world alone. When His mercy is so covering that it includes even the disobedient, He will surely write it for those who deserve it by fearing Allah, paying Zakāh and by believing in His verses. Then the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام was given the good news of it's acceptance.

The Commentators have varied opinion about the above interpret ation of this prayer. This verse has no indication of the acceptance of his prayer in clear words as in other cases the approval of his prayers has been clearly mentioned. For example, the approval of his prayer has been mentioned in these words at another occasion (20:36): قَدْ اُوْتِيْتَ سُؤْلَكَ يٰمُوْسٰى "O Mūsā you are given what you asked for." It is mentioned in another verse (10:89) اُجِيْبَتْ دَّعْوَتُكُمَا (O! Mūsā and Hārūn) your prayer has been accepted." At this occasion (7:156), no mention of such approval has been made. Some commentators have, therefore, suggested that this prayer of the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام was not accepted in favour of the Israelites, rather, it was accepted in favour of the Muslim Ummah. The author of Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī has, however, said it to be a remote possibility.

The correct interpretation, therefore, is that the Prayer of the Prophet Mūsā was comprised of two requests. The first, was of mercy and forgiveness for those who were punished, and second for writing the good for him and his people both in this world and in the Hereafter. The acceptance of the first request is mentioned in this verse while the answer to the second request has been mentioned in the next verse (157). In response to his first request he was told that Allah does not punish every one who acts sinfully. He punishes only a few whom He will for their transgession. Therefore these people also shall not be punished. His Mercy is as great as covers every creation of Allah. Even those who are punished are not completely deprived of His mercy, since they could get harder punishment than they got. Allah has all the powers to do everything He wills.

The Satan claimed that according to this verse he was also the subject of His mercy because His mercy is said to be extending to everything and he was one of 'everything.'

My teacher, the Sheikh Anwar Kāshmīrī has said that this verse has indicated that His mercy *can* encircle every thing. It did not say that His mercy *shall* encircle everything. In another verse of the Holy Qur'ān it has been said in more clear words:

فَإِنْ كَذَّبُوكَ فَقُلْ رَّبُّكُمْ ذُو رَحْمَةٍ وَّاسِعَةٍ وَّلَا يُرَدُّ بَأْسُهُ عَنِ الْقَوْمِ الْمُجْرِمِينَ

"If they disbelieve in you say: 'Your Lord has all-encompassing mercy; but His punishment cannot be warded off from the evil-doers-6:147."

This has made it clear that vastness of His mercy does not preclude the sinners from being punished by Him.

In short, the first part of the invocation of the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام in favour of these people for mercy and forgiveness was instantly granted, but the second part asking for writing the perfect favour of Allah both in this world and in the Hereafter was stipulated with certain conditions. That is, as far as this world is concerned Allah can make His mercy common to all without regard to their belief or disbelief, but the Hereafter is a distinct world where His Mercy shall be limited only to those who fulfil certain conditions. Firstly, those who

fear Allah and take to piety that is, they fulfil all their religious obligations and avoid things forbidden by Allah, and pay Zakāh regularly out of their earnings, and thirdly, those who, firmly believe in His verses without offering any pretences or false interpretations to them. If these people too, fulfil the above conditions, the perfect favour shall be written for them both in this world and in the Hereafter.

The next verse, however, has indicated that people who shall perfectly fit the above description will be those coming after them in the last age, and follow the last Prophet, consequently deserving the perfect Mercy or favour of Allah. According to the report of Qatādah cited above, the Satan claimed that he also deserved the Mercy of Allah, for His Mercy extends to everything but the condition of 'Īmān (belief) etc. specified in the verse excluded him. Similarly, the Jews and the Christians claimed that they too believed in Allah and paid Zakah, therefore, they shall also get the perfect Mercy of Allah in both the worlds. The next verse, however, included the condition of belief in the last Prophet ﷺ and in the verses of the Qur'ān. This has excluded the Jews and the Christians who did not believe in the Holy Prophet ﷺ

Verse 157

اَلَّذِيْنَ يَتَّبِعُوْنَ الرَّسُوْلَ النَّبِيَّ الْاُمِّيَّ الَّذِيْ يَجِدُوْنَهٗ مَكْتُوْبًا عِنْدَهُمْ فِي التَّوْرٰىةِ وَالْاِنْجِيْلِ يَاْمُرُهُمْ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَيَنْهٰىهُمْ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُحِلُّ لَهُمُ الطَّيِّبٰتِ وَيُحَرِّمُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْخَبٰٓئِثَ وَيَضَعُ عَنْهُمْ اِصْرَهُمْ وَالْاَغْلٰلَ الَّتِيْ كَانَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ ۭ فَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا بِهٖ وَعَزَّرُوْهُ وَنَصَرُوْهُ وَاتَّبَعُوا النُّوْرَ الَّذِيْٓ اُنْزِلَ مَعَهٗٓ ۙ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿١٥٧﴾

Those who follow the Messenger, the *Ummī* (unlettered) prophet whom they find written with them in the Torah and the Injīl (The gospels), and who bids them the Fair and forbids the Unfair, and makes pure things permissible for them and makes inpure things prohib-

ited to them, and relieves them of their burden, and of the shackles that were upon them. So, those who believe in him and strengthen him, and help him and follow the light sent down with him, those are the ones who are successful." [157]

The Distinct virtues of the Muslim Ummah

This verse speaks of the people who, in actual sense, deserve the perfect Mercy and complete favour of Allah asked by the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام for his people. It said that the people fulfilling the conditions, referred to in the previous verse, in real sense are those who follow the unlettered Messenger of Allah. The verse, while speaking of these people, described certain distinctive qualities of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Then the verse enjoined not only belief in him but also following the commands and practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. This makes us understand that in conjunction with belief in Allah, practicing the Sunnah (the practices) and the Sharī'ah (The Law) of the Holy Prophet ﷺ is imperative for eternal success in the Hereafter.

The phrase الرَّسُوْلَ النَّبِيَّ الْاُمِّيَّ "The Messenger, the unlettered prophet", has mentioned three qualities of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The Arabic word: اُمِّيّ *'Ummī'* rendered as unlettered signifies a person who does not know the art of reading and writing. The Holy Qur'ān has referred to the Arabs as: اُمِّيِّيْن *'Ummiyyīn'* because the Arabs generally had very little to do with reading and writing. Being incapable of reading and writing is, obviously not a quality, rather it is an indication of imperfection. No matter how unusual it may seem, the same sign of imperfection has come to serve the Holy Prophet ﷺ as a sign of his perfection of the highest degree, taking in view the unparalled erudition and exemplary wisdom and learning preached and demonstrated by him.

A demonstration of perfect wisdom, showing wise practices and behaviour by a man of letters is considered to be a fruit of his education, but when these and many other attributes of perfections of the highest humanly imaginable degree come out of a personality, who did not even know how to read and write, makes it as bright a miracle as daylight. It is more surprising when we see him living in Makkah (Mecca) for forty years without ever having any opportunity to learn. Exactly when he is forty years of age, suddenly he starts speaking things of such great wisdom and, in such a linguistic style and diction

that none in the world could produce a match of even the smallest part of this word - the Qur'ān. [1] This is, indeed, a self-evident witness affirming that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was the true Messenger of Allah and Qur'ān, the true word of Allah. The quality of being unlettered, therefore, may be a defect for others but for the Holy Prophet ﷺ it is a commendable attribute.[2]

The fourth quality of the Holy Prophet ﷺ mentioned in this verse is that they shall find him written in the Torah and the Injīl (Evangel). It may be noted that the verse did not say that they will find his attributes or indications written in the Books. It said that they will find him written in their revelations. It is an implicit indication that the attributes and qualities of the Holy Prophet ﷺ mentioned in the Torah or the Injīl shall be so expressive and with as clear details as seeing them will be similar to seeing the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself. The mention of the Torah and the Injīl, without a reference to the Zabūr (The Book revealed to the Prophet Dāwūd [David]) is because the Christians and the Jews believed in them, otherwise Zabūr also contained the description of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

The Holy Prophet ﷺ in the early Books

The Present versions of the Torah and the Injīl, having undergone great changes and distortions have lost their essential quality of being original and trustworthy. Despite this fact, they still contain expressions bearing reference to the Holy Prophet ﷺ . Besides, it is obvious that the Holy Qur'ān had declared, in definite terms, that the Torah and Injīl contained the descriptions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . The Jews and the Christians living in the period of the Holy Prophet would have used this Qur'anic claim against the Prophet ﷺ and the Muslims, in case this claim could be proved as not corresponding to reality. We find that neither did the Jews nor the Christians ever try to refute this

1. The author here, refers to a verse of the Holy Qur'ān (2:23) throwing a challenge to the whole world to produce a sūrah (chapter) comparable to any of the Qur'ānic Sūrahs. Inability in meeting this challenge by the Arabs who were as boastful of their oratory as to call the whole mankind excepting themselves, the Ajam signifying a dumb person is certainly a clear evidence of the miraculous character of the Holy Qur'ān. (Translator)]

2. The verse under discussion has mentioned this attribute along with as great attributes as Messenger and Prophet. This Qur'anic witness is enough to show that his being unlettered was equally a great attribute of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . (Translator)]

claim, which is a witness of the truth that the Torah and the Injīl current in that period contained transparent references to the Holy Prophet ﷺ . Otherwise, the Jews and the Christians would have used it as against this Qur'anic claim.

It may be noted that some of the attributes and qualities of the Holy Prophet ﷺ mentioned in these books have been reported in the Holy Qur'ān with reference to the Torah and the Injīl, while some other attributes have been reported in the Holy Traditions (*Ḥadīth*) by those new Muslims who read them in these book themselves, and later they had converted to Islām after reading such descriptions.

Al-Baihaqī has reported the following event in Dalā'il-al-Nubuwwah. The Companion Anas رضی اللہ عنہ has reported that a boy from the Jews was in the service of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . Once he was sick, the Holy Prophet ﷺ went to his house where he saw the father of the lad reciting some parts of the Torah beside his bed. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said to the father, "I bid you to tell me by the pledge of Allah if you find descriptions in the Torah indicating my coming as a prophet and referring to my attributes?" He negated it. The son instantly said "O Prophet of Allah, my father is wrong. We find you and your attributes mentioned in the Torah. I bear witness that there is no god but Allah and that you are the Messenger of Allah." The Holy Prophet ﷺ bade his Companions that they should perform his funeral ceremonies, after his death, according to Islām because he was a Muslim, after this witness. (Maẓharī)

Sayyidnā 'Alī رضی اللہ عنہ has reported that the Holy Prophet ﷺ owed some money to a Jew. He demanded the Prophet to pay him the money back and said to him in a harsh tone that he will not let him go until he gets his money back. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said to him that the Jew had a right on him, and sat down by him saying that he will not go until he lets him go willingly. The Holy Prophet ﷺ remained there for the whole day and night. He offered the Ẓuhr, 'Aṣr, Maghrib and 'Ishā', and Fajr of the next day (from mid day to the next morning). The Companions were greatly annoyed at this behaviour from the Jew. They were secretly admonishing the Jew so that he may let the Prophet go. The Holy Prophet ﷺ having some idea asked them of what they were doing. They said that it was unbearable for them to see the

Prophet in the custody of a Jew. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said to them, "My Lord has prohibited me from doing wrong to any one under the covenant."

Next morning, the Jew who was highly impressed by this remarkable experience, came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and declared:

اَشْهَدُاَنْ لَّآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا اللّٰہُ وَاَشْهَدُ اَنَّكَ رَسُوْلُ اللّٰہِ

"I bear witness that there is no god but Allah, and I bear witness that you are the Messenger of Allah."

Subsequent to this declaration of his faith in Allah he said that by detaining the Prophet ﷺ he meant nothing but to test the truth of his attributes mentioned in the Torah. He said that he had read the following description concerning him in the Torah. He also declared to give away half of his wealth in the way of Allah. The description given by him is this:

"Muḥammad, the son of 'Abdullāh. He shall be born in Makkah. The place of his migration shall be Madīnah. His country will be Syria. He shall neither be a man of harsh temperament, nor shall he speak roughly. He shall not make noise in bazars. He shall be away from the acts of immodesty."

He said that he found out the truth of this description in him. He was a wealthy person, and half of his wealth was a considerable amount for the Muslims. (The above incident has been reported by Maẓharī with reference to Dalā'il al-Nubuwwah by Baihaqī)

Imām al-Baghawī has reported on the authority of Ka'ab Aḥbār that the Torah contained the following description with regard to the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

"Muḥammad is the Messenger and chosen servant of Allah. He is neither a man of harsh temperament nor is he a man of disagreeable speech. He does not cry in bazars, nor does he return ill when ill is done to him. He forgives or ignores the wrong-doers."

"His birth place is Makkah and his migration shall be to Ṭaybah (Madīnah). His country is Syria and his people shall be *ḥammādīn*. That is they shall praise Allah when in comfort and when in trouble. They shall say Takbīr when ascending in

their travel. They shall watch the shadows in order to ascertain proper time of their prayers."

"He shall wear a sheet of cloth round his waist and keep his hands and feet clean with ablution (Wuḍū). His man calling for prayer shall raise his voice in the air. In battle fields they shall line up as closely as in prayers. At nights their recitations shall be heard like humming of the bees."

Ibn 'Asākir and Ibn Sa'd have cited full chain of narrators saying that Sahl Maulā Khuthaimah has informed that he had read the following description concerning the Holy Prophet ﷺ in the Injīl (Evangel):

"He shall neither be short nor shall he be tall. Colour shall be fair, hair, in two locks. He shall bear a seal of prophethood on his body between shoulders. He shall not accept alms, shall ride on camel and by himself shall he milk the goat, and wear the patched clothes."

"He shall be in the line of Isma'īl. His name shall be Aḥmad:

Ibn Sa'd in his book 'Tabaqāt', Dārimī in his Musnad and Baihaqī in his book Dalā'il al-Nubuwwah have reported on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Salām, who was a great scholar of the Jews. He said that Torah had contained the following description with regard to the Holy Prophet ﷺ .

"O Prophet, We have sent you as a witness over all the nations of the world, as the bearer of good tidings to the righteous, as a warner to the wrong doers and as Protector of the Ummiyyīn' the unlettered Arabs. You are My Messenger and servant. I have named you, 'Mutawakkil' (One who trusts Allah). You are neither a man of harsh temperament, nor quarrelling, nor crying in the markets. You do not return evil in response to evil, rather forgive or ignore the wrong-doers. Allah shall not let him die until he sets the crooked right and make them believe in Allah exclusively, until he makes the blind eyes see, dumb ears hear and sealed hearts open."

Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī also contains a similar description on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ رضی اللہ عنہ . Besdes, al-Baihaqī has reported the following statement in Dalā'il-al-Nubuwwah, on the authority of Wahb ibn Munabbih, the great scholar and expert in the

early books.

"Allah revealed to the Prophet Dāwūd (David) in the Zabūr as follows: 'O, Dāwūd, there shall come a Prophet after you. His name shall be Aḥmad. I shall never be displeased with him, nor he shall ever be disobedient to me. I have forgiven all of his errors and omissions. I have enjoined upon his people, the optional as well as the obligatory prayers that I had enjoined upon the early Prophets. On the day of judgement they shall come before me having the light similar to the light of the early prophets. O Dāwūd, I have blessed Muḥammad and his people with excellence over the people of other prophets. I have favoured them with six special concessions which I did not concede to the early people. They shall not be punished for their inadvertent omissions. I shall forgive their unintentional sins if they seek My forgiveness. The money they shall spend willingly in My way, I shall give them manifold in return in this world also."

Those who shall say إِنَّا لِلّٰهِ وَإِنَّآ إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُوْنَ "We belong to Allah, and to Him we are to return," when ever they are faced with some distress, I shall turn their distress into blessing and mercy and a means of his guidance to paradise. I shall accede to their invocations, sometimes, by giving them what they asked for, and sometimes, by storing their prayers to be granted on the Day of Judgement." (Rūḥ-al-Ma'ānī)

The above are only a few out of hundreds of such Traditions which have been collected by the religious scholars in separate volumes, among them is Sheikh Raḥmat Allah Kairānvī of India who has dealt with this subject thoroughly in his book 'Iẓhār al-Ḥaqq'. He has given specific examples of such descriptions found in the current versions of the Bible, despite the fact that they have been robbed of their originality through innumerable changes and distortions by the Judo-Christian theologians. The Urdu version of this remarkable work has been published in Pakistan. [1]

Some additional attributes of the Holy Prophet ﷺ have also been

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1. By the grace of Allah, I have the honour of rendering this work into English. Three volumes of the English version have been published in London. (Translator)

included in the descriptions found in the Torah and the Injīl, among them is his attribute of bidding good to people and preventing them from evil. أَمْرٌ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَ نَهْى عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ,. The Arabic term Ma'rūf literally signifies something recognized, acknowledged or known, while the term: مُنْكَرٌ '*munkar*' signifies strange, or unrecognized. That is, Ma'rūf refers to the acts which are known and recognized in Islām while Munkar refers to the acts which are not recognized or known. This has indicated that the act which was recognized by, or known to, the people of the first century of Islām shall only be considered as good-deed otherwise it shall be termed as '*munkar*' or rejected. This, in turn, makes us understand that any act, not approved by the Companions and their disciples (صحابه و تابعين) cannot be considered as good-deed with no regard to how positive or agreeable it looks. The authentic Traditions have, therefore, termed the acts not acknowledged or approved by the Companions and their disciples as innovated acts (مُحْدَثَاتُ الْأُمُوْرِ) or '*bid'ah*' (innovation). In the next phrase of the verse the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been described as having the attribute of inviting people to good and preventing them from evil. The verse (7:157) said: يَأْمُرُهُمْ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَيَنْهٰهُمْ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ "Who bids them the Fair and forbids the Unfair."

This attribute has been, a common attribute of all the Prophets, as it had to be, because the very purpose of their being ordained by Allah is to guide people to good and prevent them from evil. There must be some reason in describing this attribute as a distinct feature of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . A little reflection on his effective way of preaching, and speaking to people according to their state of mind is enough to show the distinction. The Arab bedouins who knew nothing except grazing the camels and goats were spoken to in such a simple and candid terms that made them understand effortlessly even complex and speculative ideas. He used to receive delegates from the world-powers of the time like Rome and Persia and from other tribes. They were greatly impressed by his ingenuous approach in making his point easiy intelligible to them. His god-gifted capability of making impact on others by his speech was miraculously unusual and has been acknowledged even by his enemies. Another attribute described in the Torah was that through the Holy Prophet ﷺ , Allah shall make the blind eyes see and dumb ears hear, and the sealed hearts open. This may also have a reference to his effective method of preaching and

making things understood easily.

The verse under discussion has described second attribute that he shall permit his people to eat pure things and shall prohibited impure things. This implies that many things which, in fact were pure and good, and had been forbidden for the Israelites as a punishment shall be permitted by the Holy Prophet ﷺ for his people. For example, the fat of permissible animals were forbidden for the Israelites as a punishment against their sinful deeds.

For example, the fat of the properly slaughtered animal which was forbidden for them was made permissible by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم for the Muslims. The example of impure things includes blood, dead animals, liquor and all the prohibited animals. This also includes impermissible means of income like gambling, interest and bribes etc. (Al-Sirāj al-Munīr). Some scholars have included immorality and ill manners also in impure things.

Next the verse speaks of the third attribute of the Holy Prophet ﷺ saying وَيَضَعُ عَنْهُمْ إِصْرَهُمْ وَالْأَغْلَالَ الَّتِي كَانَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ "And relieves them of their burden and of the shackles that were upon them.

The Arabic word *'Iṣr'* اصر signifies heavy burden enough to stop movement, and the word *'Aghlāl'* is a plural of *'ghull'* (غل) signifying handcuffs or shackle which binds the hands of a criminal with his neck. Both the words refer to punishment and were not, in themselves, a religious requirement. For example, the Israelites were essentially required to cut away the piece of cloth having impurity on it. They were not allowed simply to wash it away. Similarly the spoils of war acquired during *jihād* with infidels was not permissible for them. Reportedly, a heavenly fire used to come and burn it up. They were not allowed hunting on *Sabbath* (Saturday). The human organs involved in committing sin were required to be cut off. The murderer had to be essentially killed in retaliation with no regard to the nature of murder: deliberate or homicide by mistake. They had no legal concession of paying ransom.

The arduous injunctions described above have been regarded to in this verse by the words burden and shackles. It is said that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم shall abrogate such injunctions and replace them

with easily practicable commandments. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has referred to this aspect of Islamic Sharī'ah in a Ḥadīth saying 'that he is leaving among them an easy and practicable law which is neither cumbersome nor susceptible to going astray'. In another tradition he said: اَلدِّيْنُ يُسْرٌ "*Dīn* (Islam) is easy".

Subsequent to the description of some attributes of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم the verse has said:

فَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا بِهٖ وَعَزَّرُوْهُ وَنَصَرُوْهُ وَاتَّبَعُوا النُّوْرَ الَّذِيْٓ اُنْزِلَ مَعَهٗٓ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُوْنَ

"So, those who believe in him, and hold him in reverence, and help him, and follow the light sent down with him, those are the ones who are successful."

This verse has stipulated the achievement of success with four conditions namely, belief in the Holy Prophet ﷺ, having reverence for him, readily coming to his help and following the commandments of the Holy Qur'ān.

The word used for reverence in this verse is عزّروه which is derived from 'Ta'zīr'. Lexically it means 'to stop someone, with love and affection, from doing something, and to guard him. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh bin 'Abbās رضی الله عنه has interpreted it as 'reverence. Almubarrad has commented that it denotes the highest degree of reverence. The implication of the verse is that the achievement of everlasting success is the destiny of those who, in addition to having love and respect for him, are always ready to help him against his enemies. In the life of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم helping him was directly related to his person; but after his departure helping his message or supporting the Islamic Sharī'ah is anologous to helping the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

The Holy Qur'ān has been referred to with the word 'light'. Since light does not require an external proof for its existence, similarly the Qur'ān, in itself, is a clear proof of its being divine and the word of Allah, since the highest degree of wisdom and eloquence that it contains is as evident as the sunlight which requires no proof for it's existence. Specially so when it was spoken by an unlettered man. Similar to light which is not only bright in itself, but has the characteristics of making the darks bright as well, the Holy Qur'an has

enlightened the mankind which was lost in darkness.

The significance of the Sunnah:

The verse under discussion started with the words, "Those who follow the Messenger, the unlettered Prophet," and has ended on the phrase. "and follow the light sent down with him". The first phrase enjoins the obedience of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم while the second phrase bids to the obedience to the Qur'anic injunctions. This has indicated that eternal salvation is dependent on the obedience of both, the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah*, and that the obedience of the Holy Prophet can be achieved only by following the way of his life - the *Sunnah*.

Love and respect of the Prophet is essential

The phrase عَزَّرُوْهُ وَنَصَرُوْهُ "And hold him in reverence and help him." has been placed between the above two sentences, implying that the obedience required for the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is not like the obedience one has to show to the high ranking official out of some necessity. This has to be the obedience in true sense of the word which is a product of love and respect. That is to say, one should bear as much love and reverence for him as to make this obedience dearest to him. People have varied relations with their Prophet. He is a Prophet, a master, a commander and an object of great love at the same time. Besides, the Prophet being superior to all his people in respect of knowledge, wisdom, and social and moral behaviour demands, deep respect or veneration on the part of his people.

Our Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم has perfection in each of the above aspects making it essential for the Muslims to fulfil the demands of all his positions. He should be believed as a prophet, obeyed as a commander, venerated as a man of great knowledge and wisdom and deeply loved and cherished for being very kind to them.

The obedience of the Prophet has to be a religious requirement for the Muslims because the very purpose of his being sent down remains unfulfilled without it. In the case of the Holy Prophet ﷺ Allah Almighty has enjoined additional obligations upon the Muslims. In another verse of the Holy Qur'ān we find the phrase: وَتُعَزِّرُوْهُ وَتُوَقِّرُوْهُ "So that you assist him and honour him." (48:9) Yet in another verse people have been warned that they should not raise their voices above the

voice of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم . The verse said:

يَاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَرْفَعُوْٓا اَصْوَاتَكُمْ فَوْقَ صَوْتِ النَّبِيِّ

"O Believers! do not raise your voices above the voice of the Prophet." (49:2)

In another verse the Muslims have been advised in these words.

يَاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تُقَدِّمُوْا بَيْنَ يَدَيِ اللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ

"O believers, do not go ahead in the presence of Allah and His Messenger. (49:1)

The verse has warned the Muslims that they should not start their speech before the speech of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in his presence. The Companion Sahl ibn 'Abdullāh رضى الله عنه has taken it to imply that people should not start talking before the Prophet of Allah speaks, and should remain silent when he talks. Another verse of the Holy Qur'ān has prohibited the Muslims from calling the Messenger of Allah in a manner they call each other. It said:

لَا تَجْعَلُوْا دُعَآءَ الرَّسُوْلِ بَيْنَكُمْ كَدُعَآءِ بَعْضِكُمْ بَعْضًا

"Do not make the calling of the Messenger, among yourself, like the calling of one another." (24:63)

The Holy Qur'ān warned the Muslims that all their good deeds shall go waste if they show lack of respect to him.

The companions, who availed the company of the Holy Prophet ﷺ most of their time, maintained the respect of the Holy Prophet according to Qur'ānic instructions. It has been reported that Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه , after the revelation of the above verse, used to speak with the Messenger of Allah as stealthily as saying some secret to him. Same was the case with Sayyidnā 'Umar al-Fārūq رضى الله عنه .

The companion 'Amr ibn 'Āṣ رضى الله عنه has said:

"None on earth is as dear to me as was the Messenger of Allah but at the same time I was unable to cast my looks at him. If I am ever asked to describe him, I find it difficult since I have never seen him enough as to give out his description."

Tirmidhi has reported Sayyidnā Anas رضى الله عنه saying that whenever the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم came in the assembly of the

companions, people kept their eyes down with respect. Only Sayyidnā Abū Bakr and 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہما raised their eyes and used to smile at them.

'Urwah ibn Mas'ūd was once sent to Madīnah for spying on the Muslims. On his return to Makkah he reported, "I have seen the courts of great kings like the king of Rome and Persia and I have met King Negus but the respect and veneration I saw in the hearts of the Muslims for their prophet was unique, never seen anywhere in the world. I think you shall never succeed against them."

The Companion Mughīrah ibn Shu'bah رضی اللہ عنہ has reported in a Tradition that the companions of the Prophet of Allah deemed it against his respect to call him from outside his house. They knocked at his door with their finger nails to avoid making a loud sound. Even after his departure the companions did not only avoid talking loudly in his mosque, they also avoided raising their voice while giving sermons in the mosque. A number of people could not help themselves from weeping when some one made a mention of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

This exemplary love and respect of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم let them share a considerable part of prophetic perfection and enjoy the highest religious status next to the prophets.

Verses 158 - 159

قُلْ يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اِنِّىْ رَسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ اِلَيْكُمْ جَمِيْعًا ۨالَّذِىْ لَهٗ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۚ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ يُحْىٖ وَيُمِيْتُ ۠ فَاٰمِنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهِ النَّبِىِّ الْاُمِّىِّ الَّذِىْ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللّٰهِ وَكَلِمٰتِهٖ وَاتَّبِعُوْهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُوْنَ ﴿۱۵۸﴾ وَمِنْ قَوْمِ مُوْسٰٓى اُمَّةٌ يَّهْدُوْنَ بِالْحَقِّ وَبِهٖ يَعْدِلُوْنَ ﴿۱۵۹﴾

Say, "O people, I am a messenger of Allah (sent) to you from the One to whom belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth. There is no god but He. He gives life and brings death. So, believe in Allah and His Messenger, the Ummi (unlettered) prophet, who believes in Allah and in His words and follow him so that you may get the right path." [158] **And among the**

community of Mūsā there are people who guide with truth and do justice thereby. [159]

This verse speaks of one of the basic aspects of the prophethood which is among the fundamental tenets of Islam. That is, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been sent as His Messenger to the entire mankind and to the jinn (genies) coming into being upto the day of judgment.

This verse has commanded the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to make general declaration that he has been sent to all the people of the world, and that his prophethood was not limited to a particular people and place as was the case with the early prophets who came to a particular people and place and for a limited period of time.

He is the last of all Prophets

The fact that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been sent down at the end of all prophets is an obvious reason behind the Islamic belief of Finality of prophethood. His being the last of all prophets and coming down for the guidance of all people of all future times leaves no room for any other Prophet. The same fact provides with an explanation to a characteristic quality of the Muslim Ummah. According to a Tradition of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , there shall always be a group among the Muslims who will keep defying the anti-Islamic forces and putting resistance in the way of sacrilegious thought and practice. It will also correct false interpretations of the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah.* This group shall be favoured by Allah with His special help and thereby will , ultimately, win over the opposite forces. It is because these people are considered to be the real inheritors of the prophetic mission, faithfully discharging their duty after the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

Imām al-Rāzī, under the comments of the Qur'ānic commandment كُوْنُوا مَعَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ (Be in the company of the truthful) has remarked that this phrase has provided an assurance that a group of the truthful shall always be available for people, otherwise the command of seeking their company made no sense. Imām Rāzī has inferred the principle of consensus (اجماع) from this phrase. That is, the presence of the truthful people was enough to preclude the agreement of the Muslim *Ummah* on error.

Ibn Kathīr has inferred from this verse that it has provided a proof

that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was the seal of the prophets because his message was for all the people of the world and for all the ages to come. According to some authentic Traditions, the Prophet ‘Īsā عليه السلام will also follow the Law of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم after his descent from heavens in the last age. Apart from this verse there are many other verses which speak in unmistakable terms of the Finality of Prophethood. For example the Holy Qur'ān said:

وَأُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ هَٰذَا الْقُرْآنُ لِأُنذِرَكُم بِهِ وَمَن بَلَغَ (الانعام - ١٩)

"And this Qur'ān has been revealed to me that I may warn you thereby, and whomsoever it may reach." (6:19)

This, evidently, enjoins the following of the Holy Qur'ān upon all the people coming after the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and to acquire knowledge of the Qur'ān.

Some distinctions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ

Ibn Kathīr has cited the Musnad of Imām Aḥmad reporting by authentic narrators that at the occasion of the battle of Tabūk, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was engaged in the late night prayer (Tahajjud). The companions gathered around him in a circle to save him from any possible attack by the enemy. After completing the prayer the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, "This night I have been awarded with five distinctions, not awarded to any prophet before. Firstly, my prophethood has been extended to all mankind while the message of the prophets prior to me was limited to their particular people only. Secondly, my presence creates a feeling of dread in the hearts of my enemy which overtakes him from a distance of one month's travel. Thirdly, the spoils taken from the enemy have been made permissible for my people, while it was prohibited for the early people. Fourthly, Allah has made the whole earth a place for our prayers like a mosque, and made it a purifier (in *tayammum)* for my people, while the prayers of the early people was limited to their churches or synagogues. They were not permitted to pray at home or out in the land. Besides, in the absence of water my people are allowed to make use of soil, in place of water for *tayammum* (a substitute of ablution). The early people were not given this concession." Then, he said, emphatically that the fifth

distinction was, above all, the most promising and helpful. He explained, "Every prophet was asked by Allah to make one particular supplication which was to be essentially acceded to, and every prophet made that invocation for their particular aim. Allah asked me too to make such invocation. I preferred to reserve my invocation until the Day of Judgement which will be of great use to you and to those who follow and bear witness that there is no god but Allah."

Another Tradition reported by Imām Aḥmad on the authority of the Companion Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī رضی اللہ عنہ has contained that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Any one hearing the news of my appearance, be he a Muslim, Christian or Jew must believe in me, otherwise he will be placed in Hell."

Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukharī has reported the following incident with regard to this verse: Sayyidnā Abū Bakr and Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہما once had severe disagreement on a matter. Sayyidnā 'Umar left the place to express his dissent. Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ followed him in order to bring him round. Sayyidnā 'Umar being angry with him entered his house and locked the door upon him. Sayyidnā Abū Bakr, having no choice went to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and related the whole story to him. Later, Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ had a feeling of regret for misbehaving Sayyidnā Abū Bakr, he too went to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and informed him of the incident. The Companion Abū al-Dardā' رضی اللہ عنہ has reported that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was annoyed at it. Seeing that Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ was going to be admonished for it, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ said to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, "My fault was greater". At this point the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Can you people not leave one of my companions alone and save him from the annoyance on your part? Do you people not know when I declared by the will of Allah يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اِنِّىْ رَسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ اِلَيْكُمْ جَمِيْعًا "O people, I am a messenger of Allah sent to you all," you all belied me? It was Abū Bakr alone who testified to my Prophethood."

In short, this verse is a clear evidence proving that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been sent to the whole mankind. His message is for all generations and for all times to come and for all places. No one can

achieve salvation without believing in him, even if he is faithfully and devotedly practicing some other faith or book.

The next sentence of the verse reminds people that he has been sent from the One to Whom the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth belongs and who gives life to every living creature and brings death to it. That is, He alone is the Lord of the Universe. The last sentence of the verse said:

فَاٰمِنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهِ النَّبِيِّ الْاُمِّيِّ الَّذِىْ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللّٰهِ وَكَلِمٰتِهٖ وَاتَّبِعُوْهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُوْنَ

"So, believe in Allah and His Messenger, the *Ummi* (unlettered) prophet who believes in Allah and in his words, and follow him so that you may get the right path."

After establishing the fact that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was sent for all the people of the world and for all times to come, and that there is no other choice for any one but to follow his law - the Islam, the verse enjoins the belief in Allah and in His Messenger, who is Ummi, the unlettered. He, himself believes in Allah and in His words. The people should, therefore, follow him to keep themselves on the right path.

The 'words' كلمات refer to the word of Allah revealed to his prophets like the Torah, Evangile (the book revealed to the Prophet 'Īsā (Jesus)) and the Qur'ān. It may be noted that the command of believing in him is followed by another command of following him. This has indicated that sheer belief or making the verbal utterances of belief, is not enough for guidance or salvation. Practicing Islamic Shari'ah is essentially required for one's salvation in the Hereafter.

The great saint and spiritual leader Sheikh Junaid of Baghdad has remarked that all the paths leading to Allah are closed except the path specifically defined by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم .

The Truthful among the Israelites

The verse 159 said: وَمِنْ قَوْمِ مُوْسٰٓى اُمَّةٌ يَّهْدُوْنَ بِالْحَقِّ وَبِهٖ يَعْدِلُوْنَ "Among the community of Mūsā there are people who guide to the truth, and do justice thereby." That is, there is a group among the Israelites who follows the

truth and decides their controversies according to the dictates of the Truth - Islam. Which are the people referred to in this verse as following the truth among the Israelites? This refers to the people who faithfully followed the commandments of the Torah and the Injīl at the time they were revealed, and those who readily accepted the faith of Islam after the appearance of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم according to the predictions contained in the Torah and the Injīl. The Holy Qur'ān has referred to this group in a number of verses in commendable terms. There is a verse which said: مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ أُمَّةٌ قَائِمَةٌ يَتْلُونَ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ آنَاءَ اللَّيْلِ وَهُمْ يَسْجُدُونَ "Among the people of the Book there are those who are steadfast, they recite the verses of Allah in the night hours, and they prostrate." (2:113)

الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ هُمْ بِهِ يُؤْمِنُونَ

"Those to whom We gave the book before this, they do believe in this (Qur'ān)". (28:52)

Under the comments on this verse we find a narrative in the commentaries of Ibn Jarīr and Ibn Kathīr. A group of Israelites who greatly despised the corrupt practices of the Israelites had prayed Allah for having a separate land away from the other tribes so that they might practice according to the original faith preached by the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام. Allah carried them to a land somewhere in the far East where they faithfully practised their faith.

Another favour of Allah bestowed upon them was that in the time of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم they were granted an opportunity to embrace Islam directly on the hands of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. In the night of Ascension (شَبِ مِعْرَاج) the Archangel Jibra'īl (Gabriel) took the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to these people on the way to heavens. They accepted the faith and the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم taught them some Sūrahs (chapters) of the Holy Qur'ān.

The Prophet of Allah asked them if they had some means of weighing and measuring and what other means of subsistence did they have? They answered that their usual practice was that they cultivated the land and collected the whole produce together in a heap. The people came and took from it according to their need. They said, "We do not, therefore, need any weights and measures." The Holy

Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم asked them if any one of them ever told lies. They said that no one among them ever told lies because it was a usual practice that any person speaking a lie was burnt up by a heavenly fire. He asked them as to why all their houses were of the same type? They answered, that it was to avoid the possibility of showing off one's affluence as compared to others. He asked them why they had built up their graves in front of their houses? They said that this made them remember their death all the times.

After the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم returned from heavens to Makkah, this verse was revealed to him. Al-Qurṭubī, under the comments of this verse has narrated this event along with other suggestions and has remarked that this narrative was not authentic. Ibn Kathīr, however, has termed it as an unusual event but did not reject it.

In short, this verse makes us understand that there has always been a group among the Israelites who followed the Truth. Be they the people described above or the ones who embraced Islam after the appearance of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم .

Verses 160 - 162

وَقَطَّعْنٰهُمُ اثْنَتَيْ عَشْرَةَ اَسْبَاطًا اُمَمًا ۭ وَاَوْحَيْنَآ اِلٰى مُوْسٰٓى اِذِ
اسْتَسْقٰىهُ قَوْمُهٗٓ اَنِ اضْرِبْ بِّعَصَاكَ الْحَجَرَ ۚ فَانْۢبَجَسَتْ مِنْهُ
اثْنَتَا عَشْرَةَ عَيْنًا ۭ قَدْ عَلِمَ كُلُّ اُنَاسٍ مَّشْرَبَهُمْ ۭ وَظَلَّلْنَا
عَلَيْهِمُ الْغَمَامَ وَاَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَنَّ وَالسَّلْوٰى ۭ كُلُوْا مِنْ طَيِّبٰتِ
مَا رَزَقْنٰكُمْ ۭ وَمَا ظَلَمُوْنَا وَلٰكِنْ كَانُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُوْنَ
﴿١٦٠﴾ وَاِذْ قِيْلَ لَهُمُ اسْكُنُوْا هٰذِهِ الْقَرْيَةَ وَكُلُوْا مِنْهَا حَيْثُ
شِئْتُمْ وَقُوْلُوْا حِطَّةٌ وَّادْخُلُوا الْبَابَ سُجَّدًا نَّغْفِرْ لَكُمْ
خَطِيْٓــٰٔتِكُمْ ۭ سَنَزِيْدُ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ﴿١٦١﴾ فَبَدَّلَ الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا مِنْهُمْ
قَوْلًا غَيْرَ الَّذِيْ قِيْلَ لَهُمْ فَاَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ رِجْزًا مِّنَ السَّمَاۗءِ
بِمَا كَانُوْا يَظْلِمُوْنَ ﴿١٦٢﴾

And We divided them into twelve tribes, as separate

communities. And we revealed to Mūsā when his people asked him for water, "Strike the rock with your staff." Then twelve springs gushed forth from it. Each tribe came to know their drinking place. And We shaded them with the shadow of the clouds. And we sent down to them the 'Mann' and the 'Salwā'[1] (saying), "Eat of the good things we have provided you." And they did us no harm, rather they have been harming their own selves. [160]

And when it was said to them, "Live in this town and eat therefrom any where you like, and say, 'Ḥiṭṭah' (we seek forgiveness) and enter the gate prostrating, so that We forgive your errors. We shall give much more to those good-in-deeds." [161]

But those of them who were unjust substituted another word for the one that was said to them. So, We sent down upon them a scourge from the heavens, because they have been transgressing. [162]

The above verses have enumerated various favours that Allah bestowed upon the Israelites, and spoke of their deviation from the commands of Allah resulting in a heavenly punishment for their transgression. The translation of the verses given above is self explanatory and the relevant details have already been given in Sūrah Al-Baqarah (First volume of this book, translation and commentary under verses 57-59, pages 217-221).

Verses 163 - 166

وَسْئَلْهُمْ عَنِ الْقَرْيَةِ الَّتِيْ كَانَتْ حَاضِرَةَ الْبَحْرِ ۘ اِذْ يَعْدُوْنَ فِي السَّبْتِ اِذْ تَأْتِيْهِمْ حِيْتَانُهُمْ يَوْمَ سَبْتِهِمْ شُرَّعًا وَّيَوْمَ لَا

1. Manna which is "Man-hu' in Hebrew has been described in Exodus (14:14) in these words, "a small round thing, as small as a hoar frost on the ground". According to 'Abdullāh Yūsuf 'Alī, it usually rotted if left over till next day; it melted in the hot sun. The amount necessary for each man was about an omer, a Hebrew measure of capacity equal to 2 1/2 quarts. This is the Hebrew account probably distorted by traditional exaggeration. The actual Manna found to this day in the region of Sinai is gummy saccharine found on a species of Tamarisk. As to 'Salwā' it is a quail, large flights of them are driven by winds in the Eastern Mediterranean in certain seasons of the year, as was witnessed during the Great War 1914-1918 by many Indian officers who campainged between Egypt and Palestine. (The Holy Qur'ān by Yūsuf Alī vol. 1 page 31) -- Translator.

يَسْبِتُونَ لَا تَأْتِيهِمْ كَذَٰلِكَ نَبْلُوهُم بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْسُقُونَ ﴿١٦٣﴾ وَإِذْ قَالَتْ أُمَّةٌ مِّنْهُمْ لِمَ تَعِظُونَ قَوْمًا اللَّهُ مُهْلِكُهُمْ أَوْ مُعَذِّبُهُمْ عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا قَالُوا مَعْذِرَةً إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٦٤﴾ فَلَمَّا نَسُوا مَا ذُكِّرُوا بِهِ أَنجَيْنَا الَّذِينَ يَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ السُّوءِ وَأَخَذْنَا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا بِعَذَابٍ بَئِيسٍ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْسُقُونَ ﴿١٦٥﴾ فَلَمَّا عَتَوْا عَن مَّا نُهُوا عَنْهُ قُلْنَا لَهُمْ كُونُوا قِرَدَةً خَاسِئِينَ ﴿١٦٦﴾

And ask them about the town which was situated by the sea, when they used to transgress in the matter of Sabbath, when their fish came to them openly on the Sabbath, and did not come when they did not have Sabbath. In this way, We put them to a test, because they used to act sinfully. [163]

And when a group of them said, "Why do you preach to a people whom Allah is going to destroy or punish with a severe punishment? They said, "To absolve ourselves before your Lord, and in order that they may fear Allah." [164]

So when they forgot the advice they were given, We saved those who used to forbid evil and seized those who transgressed, with a bitter punishment, because they had been disobeying. [165]

So, when they persisted in doing what they were forbidden from, We said to them, "become apes, humiliated." [166]

The detailed discussion of the events contained in the above verses have been produced in the first volume of this work in Sūrah Al-Baqarah (under verses 58-60, pages 211-223). Those interested may refer to those verses for details.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been asked to warn the Israelites present in his time by reminding them the events related in these verses. The events referred to in these verses are clear and require no explanation.

Verses 167 - 169

وَإِذْ تَأَذَّنَ رَبُّكَ لَيَبْعَثَنَّ عَلَيْهِمْ إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ مَنْ يَّسُوْمُهُمْ
سُوْٓءَ الْعَذَابِ ۗ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَسَرِيْعُ الْعِقَابِ ۖ وَإِنَّهٗ لَغَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ
﴿١٦٧﴾ وَقَطَّعْنٰهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ أُمَمًا ۚ مِنْهُمُ الصّٰلِحُوْنَ وَمِنْهُمْ
دُوْنَ ذٰلِكَ ز وَبَلَوْنٰهُمْ بِالْحَسَنٰتِ وَ السَّيِّاٰتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُوْنَ
﴿١٦٨﴾ فَخَلَفَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ خَلْفٌ وَّرِثُوا الْكِتٰبَ يَأْخُذُوْنَ
عَرَضَ هٰذَا الْأَدْنٰى وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ سَيُغْفَرُ لَنَا ۚ وَإِنْ يَّأْتِهِمْ عَرَضٌ
مِّثْلُهٗ يَأْخُذُوْهُ ۗ أَلَمْ يُؤْخَذْ عَلَيْهِمْ مِّيْثَاقُ الْكِتٰبِ أَنْ لَّا يَقُوْلُوْا
عَلَى اللّٰهِ إِلَّا الْحَقَّ وَ دَرَسُوْا مَا فِيْهِ ۗ وَالدَّارُ الْاٰخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ
لِّلَّذِيْنَ يَتَّقُوْنَ ۗ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿١٦٩﴾

And When your Lord declared that He would surely keep sending, till the Day of Doom, those who inflict on them evil punishment. Certainly, your Lord is swift in punishing, and certainly He is the Most-forgiving, Very Merciful. [167]

And we divided them on the earth as separate communities. Some of them are righteous, while some others are otherwise. And we tested them with good (happenings) and with bad happenings, so that they might return. [168]

Then after them, came a generation who inherited the Book, taking to the mundane stuff of this world and saying, "We shall be forgiven." And if there comes to them similar stuff they would take to it (again). Were they not made to enter the covenant contained in the Book that they should not say, about Allah, anything but the truth? And they learnt what it contained. And the abode is better for those who fear Allah. Have you then, no sense? [169]

The first two verses (167 and 168) have referred to the two punishments given to the Israelites. Firstly, Allah will keep sending up to the Day of Doom, some individuals or groups of people who will punish

and bring disgrace to them. In fact, this is what has been happening to them up to this day. They had been dominated and disdainfully treated by others as has been recorded by history. We may not be in doubt about their present government in a part of Palestine, as it is a common knowledge that the state of Israel is, in fact, a part of the world powers, created by them for their political objectives against the Muslim *Ummah*. They are still ruled over and dominated by the colonial powers. It is, in fact, a military base of America. The day these powers stop providing them with their aid they shall not be able to maintain their existence for long.

The second punishment has been mentioned in verse 168. That is, Jewish populace has been cut into fragments scattered in all the parts of the world they could not integrate themselves into a solid nation. The phrase وَقَطَّعْنٰهُمْ فِى الْأَرْضِ أُمَمًا "*And we divided them on the earth as separate communities*". has refered to this fact. The Arabic word قَطَّعْنَا signifies breaking into pieces. While the word أُمَم is plural of *Ummah*, which means 'a group', 'a party'. The verse means that Allah has divided them into fragments making them scattered on the earth.

This indicates that being integrated in a whole, or having an entity as a nation is a blessing of Allah while getting disorganized into parts separated from each other is a punishment from Him. The Muslims have always enjoyed the blessing of having their own entity, and being recognized as an organized people in the world. Starting right from Madinah in the time of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم up to this day they have their own independent rule in various parts of the earth. The presence of Islamic countries from the far East to the West is an obvious proof of this fact.

Their present state in Palestine should not cause any doubt as they have to come together in a place in the last age according to the prophecies made by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم . He informed us in authentic Traditions that Prophet 'Īsā عليه السلام shall come down to the earth from heavens before the end of the world, and all the Christians shall embrace Islam. He shall fight a war against the Jews and put them to death. The culprits of Allah are not summoned through police, or other agencies; they are driven to their place of death by the causes created by the will of Allah.

The Prophet 'Īsā (Jesus) عليه السلام is to descend from heavens in the land of Syria. He shall fight war with the Jews. The Prophet Īsā عليه السلام has been saved the trouble of seeking the Jews in different parts of the world by causing them to gather in Palestine. As to their present political power and sovereignty in the State of Israel, it is a delusion which beguiles only those who are not conversant with the world politics. The so called 'State of Israel' is, in fact, a common camp ground of the big powers like America, Russia, and England. It depends upon the aid of its masters for its existence. It has to serve the aims and objectives of its Masters. They are still living in real servitude, and are deprived of their free rule in true sense of the word.

The Holy Qur'ān has informed us of their disgrace and distress up to the end of time in these words:

وَإِذْ تَأَذَّنَ رَبُّكَ لَيَبْعَثَنَّ عَلَيْهِمْ إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ مَن يَسُومُهُمْ سُوءَ الْعَذَابِ

"And when your Lord declared that he would surely keep sending till the Day of Doom, those who inflict upon them an evil punishment."

History has recorded that they have been continually persecuted by one people or another right from the time of the Prophet Sulayman عليه السلام to the present age. Their imprisonment by Nebuchadnassar and persecution at the hands of subsequent kings, then their defeat and ignominious fate at the hands of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his Caliph 'Umar al-Fārūq رضى الله عنه [1] are obvious example of this fact.

The second phrase of this verse is this:

مِنْهُمُ الصَّالِحُونَ وَمِنْهُمْ دُونَ ذَٰلِكَ

"Some of them are righteous, and some of them are otherwise".

The righteous people among them are those who followed the commandments of the Torah faithfully and did not try to distort them as others did. The people termed as 'otherwise' include infidels and those who obstinately disobeyed their prophets and even killed them. The terms 'righteous' and 'otherwise' may also refer to the people who

1. The recent persecution of the Jews at the hands of Hitler in the second world war is a fresh example of this Qur'ānic declaration. (Translator)

believed in the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم and followed the Qur'ānic guidance after it's revelation. Opposed to them are those believing in the Torah as the word of Allah, disobeyed it or distorted its commandment and thus sold out their eternal salvation for petty gains of this world. The last phrase of this verse has said:

وَبَلَوْنٰهُمْ بِالْحَسَنٰتِ وَالسَّيِّاٰتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُوْنَ

"And we tested them with good happenings and bad happenings so that they might return."

The "goood happenings" refer to their state of prosperity, comfort and ease while 'bad happenings' has reference either to their various persecutions and calamities faced by them throughout their history, or it may have referred to some period of famine coming upon them as punishment. Both the methods of testing their obedience were used in their case. Prosperity and wealth were given to them to see if they show their gratefulness to their Lord. When they were a failure in this test, they were made to undergo many punishments already discussed in the foregoing verses.

Their perversion of thought and practice had gone to such extent that in the time of prosperity they said:

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ فَقِيْرٌ وَّ نَحْنُ اَغْنِيَآءُ

"Allah is poor and we are rich." (3:181)

while in times of their destitution they said: يدالله مغلولة "Allah's hand is shackled." (5:64) Another implication of the verse is that prosperity or poverty, happiness or suffering are sent as a test to mankind in order to judge the faith and love of the created for the Creator. Both, prosperity and suffering should be of no real concern to the men of understanding, as they are temporary and have to end.

It is, therefore, not wise to show arrogance for one's prosperity or being dejected for one's impoverishment. A persian poet said:

نہ شادی داد سامانے نہ غم آورد نقصانے

بہ پیش ھمت ماھرچہ آمد بود مہمانے

"Neither happiness awarded us with real benefit nor did sorrow make us weep. Both came as guests to our resolute spirit."

The verse 169 has said:

فَخَلَفَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهِمْ خَلْفٌ وَّرِثُوا الْكِتٰبَ يَاْخُذُوْنَ عَرَضَ هٰذَا الْاَدْنٰى وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ سَيُغْفَرُ لَنَا وَاِنْ يَّاْتِهِمْ عَرَضٌ مِّثْلُهٗ يَاْخُذُوْهُ

"Then, after them came a generation, who inherited the Book, taking to the mundane stuff of this world and saying: 'We shall be forgiven.' And if there comes to them similar stuff, they would take to it (again).

The Arabic word خَلَفَ is a past tense of خِلَافَة signifying a deputy or a person trusted with one's work in one's absence.

The second word used here is خَلْفٌ with the merged sound of the second letter *Lām*, generally denoting a deputy who is marked with wickedness, as opposed to the good practices of his elders. The word وَرِثُوْا is a derivative of وِرَاثَة that is, inheritance. The next word is عَرَض meaning something bought with money. Sometimes, it is used just for something possessed. The use of this word for money indicates that any thing owned in this world is temporary, because this word, as an antonym of 'Jauhar' (substance), is used for an object which requires something else to show its existence like colour which requires another thing to show itself. The word اَدْنٰى has been derived from دُنُوٌّ which denotes nearness or lack of distance. The word دُنْيَا is a faminine gender of this word. The word اَدْنٰى may also be taken to be a derivative of دَنَاءَة which signifies disgrace. In this case the word shall refer to something disgraced.

The verse implies that there were two groups of people among the early Jews, the righteous and the wrong-doers. The people coming in later generations who inherited the Torah, however, acted opposite to their elders and made the Book an object of trading or a means of their earning. They used to manipulate and distort the text of the Torah for some money offered to them for this purpose. Moreover, "they said: وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ سَيُغْفَرُ لَنَا "We shall be forgiven". In spite of committing as great a sin as distorting the text of the Book of Allah, they claimed their forgiveness by Allah. They are warned of this error in the very next sentence. saying: وَاِنْ يَّاْتِهِمْ عَرَضٌ مِّثْلُهٗ يَاْخُذُوْهُ "If there comes to them similar stuff they would take to it (again)." That is to say, they are in such a state of perversion that in case they are offered money for changing another

text, they shall readily accept it. The verse has implied that forgiveness of Allah is always there to those who are mindful of their error and turn to their Lord in repentence showing their remorse over what they have done, and making firm promise of not repeating the same mistake again. Being persistent in their sinful acts and claiming their forgiveness is sheer self deception. The next part of the verse puts a question to them, whether they were not made to enter a covenant with Allah that they shall never say anything but truth about Allah. Yes, they read this pledge in their Book. This is nothing but their impudence and obstinacy that stops them from realizing the truth of the Hereafter which is exclusively the fate of those who fear Allah.

Verses 170 - 171

وَالَّذِينَ يُمَسِّكُونَ بِالْكِتٰبِ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلٰوةَ ۖ إِنَّا لَا نُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُصْلِحِينَ ﴿١٧٠﴾ وَإِذْ نَتَقْنَا الْجَبَلَ فَوْقَهُمْ كَأَنَّهُ ظُلَّةٌ وَظَنُّوا أَنَّهُ وَاقِعٌ بِهِمْ ۚ خُذُوا مَا آتَيْنٰكُمْ بِقُوَّةٍ وَاذْكُرُوا مَا فِيهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٧١﴾

And those who hold fast the book and establish the Salāh (are righteous) - Surely, Allah does not waste the reward of the righteous. [170]

And when We raised the mountain over them as though it were a canopy, and they thought it was falling upon them. (We said,) "Hold firmly what We have given to you and remember what is therein, so that you may become God-fearing." [171]

The preceding verse (169) contained a mention of a covenant made with the religious leaders of the Israelites in particular, that they shall not make any changes in the Torah and shall not ascribe to Allah anything but the truth. It has already been mentioned that they violated this pledge and distorted the contents of the Torah for petty amounts of money. This verse is an extension of the same theme. It says that there are some among their religious leaders who are truthfully following the commands of the Torah and are firmly adhering to its guidance. They established the Ṣalāh as was required. The verse has provided with an assurance to such people that they shall not be

deprived of their reward. That is, those who have been true to their faith and fulfilled its demands are righteous people among them.

There are some points of discussion related to this verse. The term 'Book' most probably refers to the Torah. Another possibility is that it refers to all the heavenly books of Allah like Torah, Injīl and the Qur'ān. Another point to be noted is that merely keeping the book of Allah and showing respect to it without following its' commandments does not fulfil the very object of its revelation. It is why the verse has used the word يُمَسِّكُونَ "Hold fast", in place of يَأْخُذُونَ or يَقْرَءُونَ "those who take it or read it. Holding fast the Book requires to follow all it's injunctions and commands.

The next thing we note in this verse is that out of a large number of doctrines of the Torah the verse has made mention of "establishing 'Ṣalāh' only. This is because the Ṣalāh is the most significant and purposeful act among the precepts enjoined by Allah. This is, in fact, the most basic and quintessential way of expressing one's faith in, and obedience to, Allah. Offering the Ṣalāh regularly makes one capable of being regular in other worships more willingly and with more ease. The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has termed the Ṣalāh as being the pillar of Islām. The whole edifice of Islam rests on it. Whoever has erected it properly has built the whole structure of his faith on a stronghold. Any one not regular in Ṣalāh, is of no worth to Allah, even if he is seen reciting His name all the times and has unusual visions and does extraordinary acts.

The next verse (171) described another incident of the Israelites when they were forced to promise their obedience to the law of the Torah. It has also been mentioned in the Sūrah al-Baqarah. The Arabic word 'نَتَقْنَا signifies drawing or lifting up. In the Sūrah al-Baqarah the word رَفَعْنَا has been used which denotes the act of raising up. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ has therefore, taken the word نَتَقْنَا to signify raising high. The Arabic word 'Zullah' ظلة means a sunshade or a canopy.

The verse refers to the time when the Prophet Mūsā علیہ السلام came back from the mount of Sinaī with the book of Torah. They found therein many injunctions which they thought were difficult for them, to follow. They started showing their unwillingness for obeying those

commandments. Allah commanded the Archangel Jibra'īl عليه السلام to raise the mount of Sināī upon their town. The area of this town is reported to have been three square miles. When the mount of Sināī was hanged over their heads they fell down prostrating themselves out of fear and promised their obedience to the Law of Moses (the Torah). The future events, however, witnessed their deviation from the Law every now and again.

No compulsion in Faith

The above incident gives rise to a question. Why the Israelites were forced to make a promise of their obedience while the Holy Qur'ān has declared لَآ إِكْرَاهَ فِى الدِّيْنِ "There is no compulsion in Faith?" (2:256) The answer is quite simple. None of the disbelievers has ever been forced to accept faith, nor any one is allowed to use force for this purpose. However, those who have already entered the covenant of faith out of their free will and, later, deviate from the commandments of Allah just for avoiding their commitments, shall essentially be forced to abide by the rules and regulations of the Law. In case of deviation from their duty they must be held liable to punishments prescribed by the Law. This is what exactly happened in this incident. They had already believed in Allah and in His Prophet and had entered the covenant of Faith. What they did was to deny from obeying the Law of the Torah and rightly were forced to fulfil their commitment.

Verses 172 - 174

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِنْ بَنِيٓ اٰدَمَ مِنْ ظُهُوْرِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ وَأَشْهَدَهُمْ عَلٰٓى أَنْفُسِهِمْ أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ قَالُوْا بَلٰى شَهِدْنَا أَنْ تَقُوْلُوْا يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ إِنَّا كُنَّا عَنْ هٰذَا غٰفِلِيْنَ ﴿١٧٢﴾ أَوْ تَقُوْلُوْٓا إِنَّمَآ أَشْرَكَ اٰبَآؤُنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَكُنَّا ذُرِّيَّةً مِّنْ بَعْدِهِمْ أَفَتُهْلِكُنَا بِمَا فَعَلَ الْمُبْطِلُوْنَ ﴿١٧٣﴾ وَكَذٰلِكَ نُفَصِّلُ الْاٰيٰتِ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُوْنَ ﴿١٧٤﴾

And when your Lord brought forth from the children of Adam, that is, from their backs, their progeny, and made them testify about themselves, "Am I not your Lord?" They said, "Of course You are, we affirm" – lest you should say on the Day of Doom, "We were ignorant of this," [172] **or you should say, "It was our forefathers who associated**

partners with Allah, and we were (only) a progeny after them. Then, would you destroy us on account of what the false ones did?" [173] **And this is how we elaborate the verses, so that they may return.** [174]

The covenant of *Alust*: عہد الست

These two verses describe the event of the great heavenly covenant which the Creator, Allah, made with all His created being even before they took the form of their existence. This covenant is known as the covenant of Alust (اَلَسْتُ).

Allah is the creator of all the worlds, the heavens, the earth and whatever exists between them. His infinite wisdom and all-encompassing knowledge has designed and manufactured this universe with as much perfection as leaves no room for any doubt or question. He has created everything with a wise set of rules and regulations. Following these laws ensures people of eternal success and ever-lasting peace and comfort while deviation from these principles makes one liable to punishments prescribed by Allah.

We may also note that His all-encompassing knowledge and infinite wisdom was enough to decide the fate of all the created beings without assigning His angels to watch over and keep the record of the deeds of His servants, and without weighing their deeds in the Balance on the day of Judgement. It is because He is All-Aware of the deeds, even of the hidden thoughts and intentions of His servants without the remotest possibility of making wrong judgement.

His Grace and perfect Justice, however, chose that none should he punished without providing him with documentary evidences of his sinful acts, in a way, that sinner himself finds no choice but to readily acknowledge his sinful deeds.

He appointed some of His angels to record each and every act done by an individual. The Holy Qur'ān said:

مَا يَلْفِظُ مِنْ قَوْلٍ اِلَّا لَدَيْهِ رَقِيْبٌ عَتِيْدٌ

"He utters not a word but there is by him a vigilant watcher." [1] (50:18)

1. According to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه everything good or bad about a mortal is recorded by his guardian angels" (A study of al-Qur'ān al-Karīm vol. 4 p. 969, by La'l Muḥammad Chawla) (Translator)

In another verse the Holy Qur'ān said: وَكُلُّ صَغِيرٍ وَكَبِيرٍ مُّسْتَطَرٌ "And everything small and great is written down." (54:53) Then, on the Day of Judgement the Balance shall be set to weigh the good and bad deeds of all people. Those whose good deeds weigh heavy shall be rewarded with salvation while those whose bad deeds weigh heavier shall be punished.

Moreover, when Allah, the Best of All Judges shall hold His court on the Day of Judgement, He shall call for witnesses on the deeds of every individual. Certain wrongful people shall falsify certain witnesses. Allah shall ask his physical organs to bear witness to his deeds. They shall be given power to speak and bear witness against them. The places where the deeds were done shall also come to witness against them until they shall find no way to belie the witnesses and finally will make confession of their evil deeds. The Holy Qur'ān referred to it in these words:

فَاعْتَرَفُوا بِذَنْبِهِمْ فَسُحْقًا لِّأَصْحٰبِ السَّعِيرِ

"So, they will confess their sins, but far removed (from Allah's Mercy) are the companions of the blazing fire." (67:11)

We also note that Allah, who is the most kind and loving did not leave His servants at the mercy of law and regulations only. He, out of His kindness, provided His servants with complete guidance through His prophets and the Books, in order to save them from eternal punishment.

Like the kind parents who make it essential for their children to go to school every morning also make sure that their children get all their requirements ready before time to facilitate their following the law of school-going with all possible ease. Allah, who is free from all similarities is more loving and kind to His servants than are the parents to their children. He did not only formulate the laws but made them a source of real guidance. Along with the commandments He also taught how people can carry out His commandments with ease and readiness.

Apart from sending His messengers and divine books to His servants He appointed a large number of His angels to help and guide people to the right path. Besides, He created clear signs of His Power and wisdom all around so that people may use their own observation

and understanding to distinguish right from wrong, and to remember their Creator. He repeatedly invited people to make use of their observation and understanding when seeing His signs scattered all around them. He said, in the Holy Qur'ān :

وَفِى الْاَرْضِ اٰيٰتٌ لِّلْمُوْقِنِيْنَ وَفِىْٓ اَنْفُسِكُمْ اَفَلَا تُبْصِرُوْنَ

"And on the earth are signs for those who have firm faith, and also in your own selves. Do you not see then?" (15:20) [1]

Another arrangement made by Allah to make people act righteously was to make them enter into covenants with Him through His prophets. The Holy Qur'ān has references to a number of such covenants made with various people in varied circumstances. The Prophets were made to promise that they shall essentially convey Allah's message to their people without any regard to difficulties and reproach from them. This pious group of prophets did convey Allah's message as faithfully as was possible and sarificed all that they had in this way.

Similarly the people of every prophet were made to promise to obey their prophet, and in some special cases, to spend all their energy in carrying out particular commands. Some people fulfilled their promise while some others did not.

Among such covenants the most significant one is the covenant which all the prophets were made to enter regarding the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that all the prophets shall follow the last of all prophets and assist him when they find some opportunity to do so. The Holy Qur'ān has mentioned this covenant in the following verse:

وَاِذْ اَخَذَ اللّٰهُ مِيْثَاقَ النَّبِيّٖنَ لَمَآ اٰتَيْتُكُمْ مِّنْ كِتٰبٍ وَّ حِكْمَةٍ، ثم جَآءَكُمْ رَسُوْلٌ مُّصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَكُمْ لَتُؤْمِنُنَّ بِهٖ وَلَتَنْصُرُنَّهٗ۔

"And when Allah made the prophets take pledge: (saying) If I give you a book and wisdom, then comes to you a messenger

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1. This verse has referred to two kinds of signs; external and internal. The external signs are profusely available all around us; the heavens the earth, the oceans, mountains, plants and trees, fruits of different colour and taste; they provide us with unmistakable guidance to our Lord. The internal signs include the process of our reproduction, our physique, our thoughts, intentions emotions and sentiments of happiness and sorrow. A little reflection on these signs positively leads us to the Creator and makes us to express our gratefulness to Him. (Translator)

verifying what is with you, you shall have to believe in him and you shall have to support him." (3:81) [1]

The Significance of Bay'ah (بَيْعَة: Swearing Allegiance)

The traditional way of taking pledge (*bay'ah*: discipleship) from the devoted followers, is infact, in pursuance of this practice of Allah. The Prophets, their companions and spiritual leaders have been taking the pledge of allegiance from their followers. The incident of 'Bay'ah al-Rizwān' has been mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān. It said:

لَقَدْ رَضِيَ اللّٰهُ عَنِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ اِذْ يُبَايِعُوْنَكَ تَحْتَ الشَّجَرَةِ

"Allah was certainly well pleased with the believers when they swore fidelity to you (O Prophet) under the tree." (48:18)

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم took such pledge of allegiance from his companions on many occasions. '*Bay'ah al-'Aqabah*' is a famous pre-migration covenant made with the Anṣārs of Madinah. The customary way of Ṣufis to take pledge from their followers, is a covenant taken for practising the commandments of Allah regularly and strengthening their belief in Allah by frequent remembrance of their Lord. The way of swearing fealty to some one has many advantages and draws '*Barakah*' from Allah.

After swearing fealty to some Sheikh (Spiritual Master), a follower feels himself more willing and inclined to practise the religious obligations, and is more conscious in seeking the pleasure of Allah.

The above description of Bay'ah also clears away a misconception common among the men of little knowledge that by putting one's hand in the hands of some Sheikh or spiritual leader is enough for one's salvation in the Hereafter. This is absolutely an erroneous notion as swearing allegiance is a pledge taken for following practical guidance according to the instructions given by the Sheikh. Therefore, only placing one's hands into the hands of a Sheikh is simply of no use. Rather, it is a deviation from the pledge and may incur the wrath of Allah.

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1. By implication this pledge taken by all the prophets makes it binding on the followers of all the prophets to believe in the Holy Prophet ﷺ and to follow him and support him in achieving his objectives. It makes binding upon them to follow the law given by the last of all prophets. (Translator)

The verse (172) speaking of the covenant of Eternity عہدِ الست in the preceding pages has used the word ذُرِّيَّة for the children of Adam. According to Imām Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī the word ذُرِّيَّة has been derived from the Arabic root ذرء which signifies to create. The Holy Qur'ān has used this word to signify the same meanings in a number of verses. The word '*Dhurriyyah*' (ذُرِّيَّة) therefore signifies all those created. This implies that the covenant of Eternity included all the human beings as they are the progeny of Ādam علیہ السلام .

We find some more information about this covenant in the literature of *Hadīth*. Imām Mālik, Abū Dāwūd, Tirmidhī and Imām Aḥmad have reported on the authority of Muslim bin Yasār that some people asked the Caliph 'Sayyidnā 'Umar al-Fārūq رضی اللہ عنہ of the connotation of this verse. He said that the same question was put to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم and the answer of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم as he heard it was as follows:

"Allah Almighty first created Ādam علیہ السلام, then He placed His hand upon his back, and drew forth all the righteous descendants of Adam who were to come into being and said, "I have created them for the Paradise, and they shall act righteously as to deserve Paradise. Then He placed His hand on the back of Adam and all the wicked descendants that were to come into being appeared. He said, "I have created them for the Hell, and they shall act wickedly as to lead them to Hell."

Someone from among the companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ asked him, "When Allah has already decided the fate of the mankind why the people are asked to do good deeds, while they are of no effect. The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said, "Whoever is crated for Paradise, he starts doing good deeds making him worthy of paradise and he dies in this state, while the one created for the Hell involves himself in wicked acts making him liable of the fires of Hell until he dies doing such deeds as leads him to the Hell."

That is to say, when one is not aware of the category he belongs to, he must invest all his effort and energy in doing such deeds as are the characteristic of the people of Paradise and should be hopeful of his being one among them.

The Tradition reported by Imām Aḥmad on the authority of the Companion Abū al-Dardā' رضى الله عنه has added that the people who appeared the first time were of fair colour while those appearing the second time were black.

The same description reported by Tirmidhi on the authority of the Companion Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه has additionally reported that all the children of Adam who were to come in the world upto the end of time had a kind of brilliance on their foreheads.

Here we are faced with two descriptions apparently differing from one another. The descriptions given by the above traditions have described the children of Ādam coming out of the back of the Prophet Ādam عليه السلام while the Qur'ānic verse under discussion has related them as coming forth from the backs of the progeny of Ādam عليه السلام. In fact, there is no conflict between the two descriptions as the direct descendants of Adam are described as coming forth from the back of Ādam عليه السلام while the people coming after them have been described as coming forth from the backs of his descendants.

The aim of this pledge taken from the whole mankind was to make them acknowledge that Allah Almighty is the Nourisher, The Sustainer or the Lord of all the created beings. This implies that the children of Ādam عليه السلام coming forth from the back of the Prophet Ādam عليه السلام were not in the form of spirit alone but also had a certain kind of physique made of some fine elements. It is because the function of nourishing is directly related to body which is made to progress from one state to another. The spirits do not require this kind of nourishment as they remain in one state from the moment of their creation. This is also supported from the above traditions speaking of the fair and black colour or the brilliance on their forehead because both, the colour and brilliance, require some material form to show their existence. The spirits obviously have no colour.

One may wonder how all the human beings to be created up to the Last Day could have gathered in one place. This also has been explained by the Tradition narrated by the Companion Abū al-Dardā' رضى الله عنه which said that they did not appear with their usual size rather they appeared in the size of a small ant. In this age of scientific knowledge it should be of no surprise how a man of human size can be

reduced to the size of an ant. The science has established the fact that a perfect system similar to our solar system is functioning in and around the nucleus of an atom. The books of hundreds of pages can be reduced to a dot of small size through a process of micro filming. It should not, therefore, be a matter of surprise that Allah, the All-Powerful, might have reduced them to the size of an ant at this occasion.

The above discussion with regard to the covenant of eternity gives rise to a couple of questions:

1. Which was the time and place of the covenant?

2. This pledge was taken prior to the creation of all human beings, excluding Ādam عليه السلام . How did the children of Ādam have knowledge and reason to acknowledge Allah almighty as being the Nourisher or their Lord which requires the experience of their being nourished which was not possible prior to coming as human being on the earth.

The first question has been answered by the Companion 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه as reported through authentic sources by Imām Aḥmad and Nasā'ī that the covenant was taken at the time when Ādam عليه السلام was sent down from heavens to the earth. The place was the valley of Nauman known as the plain of 'Arafāt (Near Makkah).

As to the second question with regard to inability of their acknowledging Allah as their Lord prior to their creation, the answer is quite simple. Allah Almighty who has all the powers to do anything He wills, and who was able to make all the human beings appear in a size of an ant could more easily imbue knowledge and reason enough to make them capable of recognizing their Lord, the Nourisher. Allah made them appear with body and soul in a small size with all the physical functions needed by a perfect human being. Reason and understanding being the most significant functions must have been included.

Another question which remains unsettled is as to what value can be attached to a covenant occurring prior to the actual creation of human beings, and which is not remembered by them after they take their actual existence on the earth? Before proceeding to answer this

question we may add that, in some cases, there have been individuals who remembered the occasion of this covenant. For example, the great spiritual leader Dhul Nūn al-Miṣrī has said, "I remember the occurrence of this covenant as clearly as I am hearing it this very moment." Some of the elders have reported to have remembered even the people who were present near them. True, that such cases are rare and do not make an answer to the above question.

The answer to this question, therefore, is that there are many things or acts which are effective in their very nature without any regard to their being remembered or understood by others. They imprint the effect on others quite naturally.

For example, the common practice, among Muslims, of saying *Adhān* in the right ears of a new born and reciting *iqāmah* in his left ear [1] is an obvious example of such acts. The baby neither understands the meaning of this call nor does he remember it after becoming an adult. The wisdom behind this religious practice is nothing but to revive the pledge he has taken with Allah, and sow the seed of Faith in his heart by repeating the message of the cavenant in his ears. The influence of this act is so obvious that can be seen in every Muslim individual even if he is not practically a good Muslim. He takes pride in calling himself a Muslim and utterly dislikes being deprived of this categorical entity.

Similarly the commandment of reciting the Qur'ān even to those who do not know Arabic is perhaps for the same reason that their hearts are enlightened with the impact of the Qur'ānic words, and their Faith in Allah is renovated therewith.

The wisdom behind this covenant is similarly to sow the seed of Faith in the heart of every human being. This seed is taking it's nourishment in the soil of human heart , no matter weather people are conscious of it or not. The fruit of this seed manifests itself in the form of love and respect for god (Allah) which is a part of human nature. The expression of this love and respect, may take injust forms like

1. Adhān is a call for ṣalāh the ritual prayer which in fact is a bold declaration that Allah is one, has no partners, and is the greatest of all etc. while iqāmah is the same declaration with added enunciation that the salāh has been set ready to be joined by people. (Translator)

worshipping false gods - idols or created beings. The worships, just or unjust, is in itself, an expression of love and respect for the creator. The billions of people have this respect and love for Allah which is expressed by them through their worship according to their ideas of worship guided by their knowledge or ignorance. There is no need to speak of those few who, under the influence of mundane pursuits have deteriorated their natural understanding and forgot the pledge they made with Allah.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said:

كُلُّ مَوْلُوْدٍ يُوْلَدُ عَلَى الْفِطْرَةِ Every baby is born on *Fiṭrah* (nature, that is, Islam) then he is converted by his parents to their religion. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said in a Tradition that Allah Almighty has said, 'I have created my servants as Ḥanīf, that is, having faith in Allah, the one, then they were led astray by Satanic influences."

The next sentence of the verse has said:

اَنْ تَقُوْلُوْا يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ اِنَّا كُنَّا عَنْ هٰذَا غٰفِلِيْنَ

"Lest you should say on the Day of Doom, "We were ignorant of this."

That is to say, the pledge taken by Allah has lit the candle of Faith in their hearts. Now with little reflection they can easily recognize Him as their Lord. Therefore, their excuse of ignorance shall not be of any avail to them on the Day of Judgement.

Another possible excuse from them was to say:

اَوْ تَقُوْلُوْٓا اِنَّمَآ اَشْرَكَ اٰبَآؤُنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَ كُنَّا ذُرِّيَّةً مِّنْۢ بَعْدِهِمْ اَفَتُهْلِكُنَا بِمَا فَعَلَ الْمُبْطِلُوْنَ

"Or you should say, "It was our forefathers who associated partners with Allah and we were (only) a progeny after them. So, would you destroy us on account of what the false ones did?"

The verse precludes them from seeking refuge in saying that they were unaware of the Truth. Being a progeny of their forefathers they only followed their path. Therefore they should not be punished for the error of their forefathers. The verse has said that they shall not be punished for the acts of their forefather. It was their own fault and

their apathetic attitude that led them to this disaster. It is because the covenant had sown the seed of Truth in their heart and it was not difficult for them to decide that the stones,. shaped by themselves into idols, or the fire, the trees and other created beings could, in no way, be considered as being their creator or possessing powers of helping them in their need.

The next verse 174 said:

وَكَذٰلِكَ نُفَصِّلُ الْاٰيٰتِ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُوْنَ

"And this is how we elaborate the verses, so that they may return."

That is, Allah has made His signs clear through His elaborate verses to facilitate people to turn back to their pledge and acknowledge Him as their Lord. Any one applying his reason can find the Truth and save himself from ever lasting punishment.

Verses 175 - 177

وَاتْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَاَ الَّذِيْٓ اٰتَيْنٰهُ اٰيٰتِنَا فَانْسَلَخَ مِنْهَا فَاَتْبَعَهُ
الشَّيْطٰنُ فَكَانَ مِنَ الْغٰوِيْنَ ﴿١٧٥﴾ وَلَوْ شِئْنَا لَرَفَعْنٰهُ بِهَا وَلٰكِنَّهٗٓ
اَخْلَدَ اِلَى الْاَرْضِ وَاتَّبَعَ هَوٰىهُ ۚ فَمَثَلُهٗ كَمَثَلِ الْكَلْبِ ۚ اِنْ تَحْمِلْ
عَلَيْهِ يَلْهَثْ اَوْ تَتْرُكْهُ يَلْهَثْ ۗ ذٰلِكَ مَثَلُ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا
بِاٰيٰتِنَا ۚ فَاقْصُصِ الْقَصَصَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿١٧٦﴾ سَآءَ مَثَلًا ۨ
الْقَوْمُ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَاَنْفُسَهُمْ كَانُوْا يَظْلِمُوْنَ ﴿١٧٧﴾

And recite to them the story of the one whom We gave Our verses, then he wriggled out himself from them, so the Satan overtook him and he became one of the perverted. [175] **And if We so willed, We would have elevated him thereby, but he clung to the earth and followed his desire. So, his example is like the example of a dog, if you attack him, he pants, and if you leave him alone he pants. That is the example of those who belied our signs. So, relate the chronicles, so that they may ponder."** [176] **Evil is the example of those who have belied our signs and have been doing wrong to themselves.** [177]

The above verses have described the story of a religious leader of the Israelites who had a great following for his piety and knowledge but suddenly went astray and became among the rejected. This event contains a number of lessons and points of exhortation, and has a link with the preceding verses. The foregoing verses spoke of the covenant made by Allah with the children of Adam in general, and with certain people in varied circumstances. The above verses also made a mention of those people who did not fulfil their pledge with Allah. For example, the Israelites who were waiting the arrival of a prophet and used to describe his attributes to others, but after the Holy Prophet ﷺ made his appearance, they rejected him just for wordly considerations.

The story of Bal'am bin Bā'ūrā

The present verses have related the story of a saintly person among the Israelites. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been asked to relate this story to his people to show how a devoted scholar and great spiritual leader was deprived of all the knowledge, wisdom, popularity and fame only by following the mundane desires.

We do not find any personal identification or name of this person mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān. There are, however, many Traditions reported by the exegetes of the Holy Qur'ān and the Companions and their disciples, giving a variety of information about him. The most authentic and trusted by the majority of scholars is the Tradition reported by Ibn Marduwaih on the authority of the Companion 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās which is as follows:

The name of this man was Bal'am bin Ba'ura. He belonged to Syria living in Cana'an near Jerusalem. According to a report he was an Israelite by birth. He had knowledge of certain books revealed by Allah. The Qur'ānic phrase الَّذِيْٓ اٰتَيْنٰهُ اٰيٰتِنَا "The one whom We gave Our verses" refers to the same knowledge.

This event belongs to the period after the death of pharaoh and his people and the victory of the Israelites over Egypt. Allah commanded The Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام and his people to fight war against a people called Jabbārīn. The Jabbārīn who had seen the fate of Pharaoh and his people were greatly frightened when they saw the army of the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام approaching them. They came to Bal'am and said that the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام was a strong man and that he had

come with great army in order to expel them from their land. He should therefore pray Allah that He may turn them back without fighting war against them. Bal'am bin Bā'ūrā was known to be having the knowledge of "إسْمِ أعْظَم" (the most gracious name of Allah). He used to pray with the help of this name and his prayers were generally granted.

Bal'am said to them that Mūsā, being the prophet of Allah, had the support of Allah's angels and he could not pray against him. He said that he knew the rank that Mūsā عليه السلام held with Allah, and that by praying against him he will ruin himself both in this world and in the world to come. Being insisted by the people Bal'am promised that he will first seek the consent of Allah for such a prayer, and in case Allah permitted him to pray against Mūsā he shall do so accordingly.

He performed some act to seek Allah's consent and in a dream was prohibited by Allah from making such prayer. He came to the people and informed them of this prohibition. The Jabbārīn presented him a gift of considerable value which he accepted. Subsequent to this gift their insistence increased. Some reports said that his wife advised him to accept the gift, and pray for them. Being blinded by the love of wealth and wife, he started praying against the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام and his people. An unusual thing happened at this occasion. By the will of Allah the words he wanted to utter against the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام in his invocation, were uttered against the people of Jabbārīn themselves. They cried out and admonished him that he was invoking against themselves. Bal'am said that he was unable to utter a word against Mūsā عليه السلام and that he had no control over his utterances.

Consequently the Jabbārīn met the fate of disaster from the heavenly punishment, and the punishment of Bal'am was that his tongue protruded from under his mouth so much so that it dangled on his chest. Bal'am having ruined his life both in this world and in the world to come and being deprived of all spiritual powers he had, made a suggestion to the people of Jabbārīn saying, "There is only one way you can overcome the Israelites. Decorate your beautiful girls and send them to the Israelites giving them instructions that they should not put on any resistence against whatever is done by the Israelites. Being away from their homes they are likely to involve themselves in

adultery. Being the most detestable act to Allah, adultery has to incur the wrath of Allah. An adulterous people can never win over their enemy." This satanic suggestion was accepted by the people and they acted accordingly. A promient person of the Israelites fell prey to this trap. The Prophet Mūsā علیه السلام made all his effort to stop him from this act but he involved himself in this wicked act.

Consequently plague overtook them as a punishment, with a death toll of seventy thousand people in one day. The person who had committed the sin was murdered along with the girl and was hung by the Israelites at a public place. Then they turned to Allah in repentance and asked His forgiveness, which relieved them of this disgraceful punishment.

The Holy Qur'ān used the expression of 'wriggling out' for Bal'am's disregard to the knowledge and wisdom Allah had given to him through His verses. The Arabic expression فَانْسَلَخَ مِنْهَا "He wriggled out from the verses of Allah" signifies coming out of an animal from it's skin like a snake which leaves it's old skin behind having no concern with it. This indicates that Bal'am had totally disregarded the knowledge and wisdom he was granted by Allah. The text phrase: فَاَتْبَعَهُ الشَّيْطٰنُ "So, Satan overtook him" implies that as long as he possessed the knowledge of the verses of Allah, Satan was unable to possess him. As soon as Bal'am was deprived of this great gift of Allah, he overtook him and led him astray. Consequently he became one of the misguided people فَكَانَ مِنَ الْغٰوِيْنَ "And he became one of the misled.

The next verse (176) has said:

وَلَوْ شِئْنَا لَرَفَعْنٰهُ بِهَا وَلٰكِنَّهٗٓ اَخْلَدَ اِلَى الْاَرْضِ وَاتَّبَعَ هَوٰىهُ

"And if We so willed, we would have elevated him thereby, but he clung to the earth, and followed his desire."

The word اَخْلَدَ (*Akhlada*) is a derivative of اِخْلَاد which means to incline or to cling to something. The word اَرْض (*arḍ*) meaning the earth includes the globe itself and all the things present. Furniture, machines, clothes and food are in fact, the gift of this earth. By implication all the worldly possessions have been taken to include in a single word - the earth. The quintessence of this verse is that the knowledge of the verses of Allah are the real source of gaining prominence and advance-

ment. For those who show disregard to them and give preference to worldly desires and possessions, this very knowledge becomes a source of disgrace and disaster for them.

The verse under discussion has expressed this fact by way of a similitude. It said.

فَمَثَلُهُ كَمَثَلِ الْكَلْبِ إِنْ تَحْمِلْ عَلَيْهِ يَلْهَثْ أَوْ تَتْرُكْهُ يَلْهَثْ

"So his example is like the example of a dog; if you attack him, he pants, and if you leave him alone he pants."

The word لهث (*Lahath*) signifies to breath hard by ejecting one's tongue out.

The process of inhaling fresh air and exhaling unclean air is vital for every living being. Allah has made this process as automatic and easy as requires no effort on the part of living creatures - dog excepted. It is only dog that has to labour hard for the process of breathing, while other animals have to make such effort only when they are attacked or undergo some strenuous task. Bal'am b. Baura has been mentioned in this verse as being similar to dog. He had his tongue protruded and panted like a dog who pants when attacked and pants when let alone.

The next sentence of the verse said: ذٰلِكَ مَثَلُ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا "That is the example of those who belied our signs." According to the Companion 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه "this has a reference to the Israelites of Makkah who were always longing for some one sent to them as their leader inviting them to Allah and teaching them the ways of following the right path. When this long-waited prophet came to them with as transparent signs of Truth as left no room for the resistence in his way, they too, 'wriggled out' from the commandments of Torah exactly as Bal'am Bā'ūrā had done.

The last sentence of this series said: فَاقْصُصِ الْقَصَصَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُوْنَ "So relate the chronicles (to them) so that they may ponder." The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been asked to relate the story of Bal'am Ba'ura to them in order that they may take lesson from it and use their understanding.

The last verse in this series 176 said, "So evil is example of those

who belied our signs and they have been doing harm to themselves."

The General Message of the Verses

The above verses contain a number of useful points for the benefit of those who are heedful and make use of their understanding. Firstly, no one should be boastful of his knowledge and be proud for his piety. Things can change without notice just as happened with Bal'am Ba'ura. One has to be grateful to his Lord for all the knowledge and wisdom he has, and should keep praying Allah for being firm in his faith.

Secondly, one should avoid situations which seem to threat his faith and knowledge. Specially so, when money, wife and children are involved because the love of these things is the most powerful agent of misguidance.

Thirdly, one should avoid the company of the misguided people and be careful in accepting gift or invitation from them. Bal'am met the evil fate through accepting the gift of the Jabbārīn.

Fourthly, the acts of immodesty like adultery and fornication are the source of ruin and disaster for all the people living in a society. Those who want to save themselves from distress must prevent their people from committing such crimes, otherwise it will invite Allah's wrath and punishment upon them.

Fifthly, deviation from the commandments of Allah is, in itself a punishment and it opens the door to satanic influences, which work upon them quite unknowingly and lead them astray. Therefore, any one with knowledge must be conscious of this valuable treasure and seek Allah's help in protecting it from evil influences. He must carefully keep correcting himself against error.

Verses 178 - 179

مَنْ يَّهْدِ اللّٰهُ فَهُوَ الْمُهْتَدِيْ ۚ وَمَنْ يُّضْلِلْ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْخٰسِرُوْنَ
﴿۱۷۸﴾ وَلَقَدْ ذَرَاْنَا لِجَهَنَّمَ كَثِيْرًا مِّنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْاِنْسِ ۖ لَهُمْ قُلُوْبٌ
لَّا يَفْقَهُوْنَ بِهَا ۖ وَلَهُمْ اَعْيُنٌ لَّا يُبْصِرُوْنَ بِهَا ۖ وَلَهُمْ اٰذَانٌ لَّا
يَسْمَعُوْنَ بِهَا ۗ اُولٰٓئِكَ كَالْاَنْعَامِ بَلْ هُمْ اَضَلُّ ۗ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ

الْغٰفِلُوْنَ ﴿١٧٩﴾

The one whom Allah gives guidance is the one on the right path; as for those whom Allah lets go astray, those are the losers. [178] **And surely We have created for Hell a lot of people from among Jinn and mankind. They have hearts wherewith they understand not, have eyes wherewith they see not, and have ears wherewith they hear not. They are like cattle. Rather, they are much more misled. They are the heedless.** [179]

The main theme of the verse 178 is that guidance and misguidance both are from Allah. He is the creator of good and evil, guidance and misguidance. The guided are those whom Allah has given guidance and losers are those whom Allah lets go astray. This theme has been mentioned repeatedly by the Qur'ān in many other verses to make the mankind know that Allah has created good and evil and has provided with clear instructions to distinguish one from the other, and with a kind of free will to choose one of the two paths. Those who willfully choose the right path and do good deeds get their reward from Allah while those who willfully take to the other path and do evil deeds are punished and sent to Hell.

Here we note that the above verse has mentioned the people of guidance in singular person while the people who are wrong and misguided have been mentioned in plural. This indicates that the path of guidance is the one true faith which was followed by all the prophets right from Ādam عليه السلام to the last of all Prophets ﷺ. The basic message of all the prophets has been one and the same. That is to say, the fundamentals preached by all the prophets were all same in every age. Therefore, people of any age and denomination who believed in their prophets and followed the teachings preached by them are considered by Allah belonging to one and the same category - that is, the guided. On the contrary, the ways of misguidance have been thousands in number, hence mentioned in plural in this verse.

Another point to be noted in this verse is that the people following the path of misguidance have been mentioned along with their punishment of Hell, while no mention has been made of any reward of the people following the right path. The verse mentioned them saying that

they are 'the guided'. This implies that guidance, in itself, is the greatest blessing of all, which encompasses all the rewards and bounties existing in this world or in the Hereafter. The reward of guidance requires no specific mention of other rewards which are embodied therein.

For example, some great king assures some individual that he is a close friend of the king and he shall be heard and trusted by him. Certainly he enjoys the highest position among the royal officials. He does not require the achievement of a formal rank or position. Similarly, when Allah has given the title of being 'the guided' to any one, he has got all the rewards of the world. The elders, have therefore said that the remembrance and worship of Allah are themselves the reward of the worship, because they are the great favour of Allah.

Any one engaged in the worship of Allah is receiving the greatest reward of Allah at the same time. Other blessings which wait for him in this world and in Paradise are second to it, as they are the fruit of this guidance.

This also explains the meaning of another Qur'ānic verse in which the believers are promised to receive from their Lord their reward. It said جَزَآءً مِّنْ رَّبِّكَ عَطَآءً "A recompense from your Lord, a gift." Here the reward of the believers has been expressed by two different words جَزَآءً a recompense and *'Atā* which is gift. The word جَزَآءً signifies something offered in return of some service while the word: عَطَآءً *'Atā* is a gift offered without any service or performance. This leads us to the fact that things which we take to be rewards of our performance or attainments are, in fact, the gift from our Lord. For the performance which has drawn this reward was in itself a gift form Allah Almighty who let us perform that particular service.

The next verse is an extension of the same theme. It said:

وَلَقَدْ ذَرَأْنَا لِجَهَنَّمَ كَثِيْرًا مِّنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْاِنْسِ لَهُمْ قُلُوْبٌ لَّا يَفْقَهُوْنَ بِهَا وَلَهُمْ اَعْيُنٌ لَّا يُبْصِرُوْنَ بِهَا وَلَهُمْ اٰذَانٌ لَّا يَسْمَعُوْنَ بِهَا

"And surely, we have created for Hell a lot of people from among Jinn and mankind. They possess heart wherewith they understand not, have eyes wherewith they see not and they have ears wherewith they hear not."

That is, many Jinns and human beings have been created for Hell, because in spite of having all the means of guidance, the heart, the eyes and the ears, they do not use them to seek guidance. They could find the right path, had they used these faculties in proper way. They do not use their hearts to understand, their eyes to see things to be seen and their ears to hear things to be heard.

As a substance of the verse we are given to undestand that ultimate end or destiny is a divine secret, not known to any one, but there are definite signs which help us to make a surmise. The people of Hell can be identified by their charracteristic sign of not making proper use of their faculties of seeing, hearing and understanding. Allah has blessed us with these faculties for acquiring knowledge and recognition of our Lord. The people of Hell invest these abilities in worthles objectives and are evidently heedless of the real aim of man's life, that is, to earn with his capabilities eternal comfort and peace in the Hereafter through seeking guidance.

A Question and it's answer

A question may be asked about the above Qur'ānic verses. Here the Holy Qur'ān, has negated their qualities of hearing, seeing and understanding. On the other hand, we see that in real life they are not blind, deaf and insane. Like other human beings they do see, hear and understand things around them. How can this negation be reconciled with the actual fact?

The answer requires to refresh our usual knowledge with regard to things and living beings around us. Every thing created has an amount of sensibility equal to the need of it's purpose of existence. The things we call inanimate are not totally devoid of sensibility or life. The stones and the earth which are not assigned with the duty of growth or movement have so little an amount of sensitivity that can hardly be detected.[1]

1. Human reason essentially requires the presence of some kind of perception or life in things called inanimate. It is because there must be some way of communication between the Creator and the created. The one who cannot communicate with created beings for the absence of sensibility on their part, is not worthy of being called god. Allah does communicate with all His created beings, animate or inanimate, which proves some kind of sensibility in all inanimate things. (Translator)

The vegetable Kingdom comes next in this series. The purpose of their existence requires growth and nourishment. The amount of perception or life given to them is greater in degree and is equal to their requirements. Next we come to animal kingdom where we find more elaborate and complex form of life. In addition to growth and nourishment, the animals have to move on the earth from one place to another. They have to seek their food to maintain their existence. They require to protect themselves form dangers and above all, they are required to reproduce their children. The amount of life given to them is greater and more obvious than the others so far discussed. They are, however, equipped with as much powers only as were needed to assist them in feeding and protecting themselves from dangers and enemies.

The last, but not the least, is human being who, in addition to, and more prominent of all the functions discussed above, has the duty of recognizing his Creator and the Lord of the universe, and seek His pleasure by following His commandments and avoid doing things disliked by Him. He is required to contemplate and give due thought to the creations and use his faculty of reason to distinguish right from wrong, abstain from evil and do good to please his Lord. Another distinction of a human being from other creatures is that he has been provided with vast apportunity to make progress in making his life more purposeful and more elevated in position. When he comes to make progress, he can attain more elevated rank than the angels. He is accountable for his acts and is promised of eternal peace and comfort for his good acts and everlasting punishment and distress for his evil deeds. He has been, therefore, trusted with the highest and the most perfect degree of life, in order that he is engaged in doing things that are proper for the aim of his life. He is not expected to waste his special faculties of understanding, hearing and seeing in the achievement of material things only like animals.

Keeping the above points in view, the human faculties of understanding, hearing and seeing should essentially be distinct from those of the animals. If he did not make special use of these faculties like distinguishing right from wrong, doing good and keeping away from evil, he would be rightly considered among those who have eyes but do not see, have ears but do not listen, have mind and heart but do not

understand. The Hoy Qur'ān has therefore termed them as صُمٌّ بُكْمٌ عُمْيٌ "deaf, dumb and blind".

The verse therefore has not negated their physical ability of seeing, hearing and understanding. Rather, the Holy Qur'ān has affirmed their knowledge about worldly things in the following words,

يَعْلَمُوْنَ ظَاهِرًا مِّنَ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ عَنِ الْاٰخِرَةِ هُمْ غٰفِلُوْنَ

"They know the outward aspect of this worldly life, but of the Hereafter they are heedless." (30:7)

In another verse the Holy Qur'ān, speaking the destruction of the people of 'Ād and Thamūd, said: وَكَانُوْا مُسْتَبْصِرِيْنَ "While they could see clearly." (29:38)

The people of 'Ād and Thamūd being allured by satanic influences involved themselves in evil deeds which led them to their destruction. That is to say they kept the use of their capabilities limited to abject worldly gains like serving their physical needs and remained heedless to their spiritual demands. No matter what great advances they make in science and technology, they may conquer space, explore moon and other planets, make the world full of their sophisticated satellites, and tame the natural forces to serve their varied needs, but all such efforts are no more than a means of serving their physical and material life. It does not go beyond, to seek spiritual peace and comfort. This achievement science and technology of man is certainly confined to serving his physical life only, which does not make him distinct from the animal in technicality. It is why the Holy Qur'ān calls them deaf, dumb and blind because they heard, saw and understood things that belonged to this world only. They did not make proper use of these functions which could lead them to eternal success and peace. The last phrase of this verse said that they are like cattle investing all their effort in serving their bodily desires. Next the verse added بَلْ هُمْ اَضَلُّ "Rather they are much more misled." that is, they are far more unwise than are the cattle, because the animals are not bound to follow the laws of the Shari'ah. They have no reward or punishment for their acts. They are required only to serve their physical needs which they are efficiently doing, contrary to human beings who are accountable for everything they do in this world, and they are going to be punished

or rewarded according to their performance. If they confine their effort only to seek material gains of this world and do not make proper use of their faculties, they are certainly more imprudent and unwise as compared to animals.

Verse 180

وَ لِلّٰهِ الْاَسْمَآءُ الْحُسْنٰى فَادْعُوْهُ بِهَا ۖ وَذَرُوا الَّذِيْنَ يُلْحِدُوْنَ فِيْٓ اَسْمَآئِهٖ ؕ سَيُجْزَوْنَ مَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۱۸۰﴾

And for Allah there are the most beautiful names. So, call Him by them, and leave those who deviate in (the matter of) His names. They shall be recompensed for what they have been doing. [180]

This verse has a relationship with the preceding verses in the sense that the people of Hell discussed above did not use their abilities in seeking the everlasting comforts of the Hereafter, and made themselves liable to eternal punishment. The present verse has provided with remedy of their disease. That is, seeking help from Allah by calling Him with His good names and often remembering Him through them.

The good names of Allah

The good names are the ones that denote the attributes having the highest degree of perfection. It goes without saying that the perfection of the highest degree is not possessed by any one but Allah. In case of a 'perfect' human being there is always a possibility of someone being higher than him in some qualities. This is what the Qur'ānic phrase has said: وَفَوْقَ كُلِّ ذِیْ عِلْمٍ عَلِیْمٌ "And above every man of knowledge there is someone more knowledgeable." (12:76)

The style of the verse has suggested that these 'beautiful names' are peculiarly meant for Allah. فَادْعُوْهُ بِهَا "So, call Him by them", because there is none other than Allah who owns these attributes, therefore the only one worthy of being called in need is none but He. Calling is a rendering of the word دعاء which has two characteristics: Praising, purifying and remembering Allah, and calling Him for help in times of need or difficulty. It implies, that Allah alone is worthy of praise and glorification and He alone has to be called for help and relief. The verse has also suggested that the best method of calling Him is to call

Him by His Beautiful Names.

Preconditions of *Du'a* (calling Allah)

The verse has provided us with two valuable informations. firstly, there is none other than Allah worthy of praise and worthy of being called for help. Secondly, Allah has provided us with specific words for calling him, proper to His glorious being, as we are not capable of choosing appropriate words for this purpose. That is, we are required to call Him by His attributes of perfections.

Bukhari and Muslim have reported on the authority of the Companion Abū Hurairah رضی اللہ عنہ that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said:

> "There are ninety nine names of Allah. Whoever learns them by heart shall enter paradise."

Tirmidhī and Ḥākim have enumerated these names in detail. Invocations made by reciting these names are generally granted. Allah has promised in the Holy Qur'ān أُدْعُوْنِيْٓ أَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ "Call me and I will answer you" (40:60). The most definite and certain method of seeking help in one's need and getting relief from one's distress is calling Allah and praying Him for His help. This is the only way that is certain to meet success. The immediate benefit of praying to Allah is that it is, in itself, a worship. The reward of this worship is included in the sheet of one's deeds.

The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said in a Tradition: اَلدُّعَاءُ مُخُّ الْعِبَادَةِ "Invoking Allah is the quintessence of worship." The invocation is granted by Allah in many ways. Sometimes, the very thing for which the invocation has been made is granted by Allah, while some other times, when one asks for something untimely or unsuitable for him in the knowledge of Allah is exchanged with something more proper or beneficial for him.

Remembering Allah by glorifying and praising Him is the food for one's Faith in Allah (*'Imān*) which helps in magnifying the love, respect and awareness of Allah making the hardship of this world worthless in one's eyes.

Al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Tirmidhī and Nasā'ī have reported through authentic sources that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said that any one

who finds himself in some difficulty or is distressed with some grief should recite the following words:

لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ الْعَظِيْمُ الْحَلِيْمُ، لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيْمِ، لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ رَبُّ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَرَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْكَرِيْمِ

"There is no god but Allah, the Greatest, the Most forbearing, There is no god but Allah, the Lord of the great Throne. There is no god but Allah, the Lord of the Heavens, and the earth and the Lord of the Glorious Throne."

Ḥākim in his Mustadrak has reported on the authority of the Companion Anas رضی اللہ عنہ that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said to his daughter Sayyidah Faṭimah al-Zahra رضی اللہ عنہا :

"What is there to prevent you from hearing my advice of reciting the following invocation at morning and evening every day?"

يَا حَيُّ يَا قَيُّوْمُ بِرَحْمَتِكَ اَسْتَغِيْثُ اَصْلِحْ لِيْ شَاْنِيْ كُلَّهٗ وَلَا تَكِلْنِيْ اِلٰى نَفْسِيْ طَرْفَةَ عَيْنٍ

"O The Alive, The All-Sustaining, I call for help by Your Mercy. Set right every situation that I am in, and do not leave me at the mercy of my innerself for even a wink of an eye."

The above invocation is also an effective remedy of hardships and distress. In short, we have been given two instructions in this verse namely making invocation to Allah alone for seeking help or for pleasing the Creator, secondly, calling Allah by His attributes of perfection without changing them.

The next sentence said:

وَذَرُوا الَّذِيْنَ يُلْحِدُوْنَ فِيْٓ اَسْمَآئِهٖ سَيُجْزَوْنَ مَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ

"And leave those who deviate in (the matter of) His names. They shall be recompensed for what they had been doing."

The Arabic word اِلْحَاد *'Ilḥād'* signifies to decline from the centre. In Qur'ānic terminology the word *'Ilḥād'* is used for deviating from the correct interpretation of the Qur'ānic words or distorting the meanings of the Qur'ānic message.

The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has been asked to keep away from

the people who distort or decline from the prescribed names of Allah.

The Deviation from the good names

There are many forms of deviating from the prescribed names of Allah. Firstly, calling Allah by such names as are not specified in the Holy Qur'ān or in the Sunnah. The 'Ulamā' (Scholars) of the *ummah* are unanimous on the point that it is not permissible to call Allah by any names or attributes of one's own choice or to praise Him by the names which have not been specified by the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. For example, Allah may be called by the word: نور *Nūr* (light) but not by the word 'white'. Similarly Allah may be called '*Karīm*' (generous) but not by the word '*Sakhī*': سخی having the same meaning. He can be called Shāfī شافی (The one who provides cure from disease) but not '*Tabib*' (The doctor). Though the matching words carry the same meanings they are not allowed simply because they have not been reported by the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah*.

The second way of deviating from these names of Allah is to abandon certain name or names only because one thinks them to be inappropriate in certain situations. It, obviously, amounts to lack of respect to the glorious names of Allah.

Calling the people with the names of Allah

The third way of deviation from these names is to use any of the good names of Allah for other people. This however, has some exceptions as explained in the following lines:

There are certain names in the list of the glorious names of Allah which have been used by the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah* for human beings. Such names can be used for beings other than Allah. For example, Raḥīm, Rashīd, 'Alī, Karīm and 'Azīz etc., while there are other names which denote to exclusive attributes of Allah. Their use for any one other than Allah is an act of deviation from these names. For example, Raḥmān, Razzāq, Subḥān, Khāliq, Quddūs and Ghaffār etc. Using such names for any one other than Allah is prohibited in the Islamic Sharī'ah.

Now, if some one calls any one other than Allah by these names because of his false belief, that he has the attributes denoted by these names it would be an act of infidelity. However, if some one used any

of these names for any one other than Allah just heedlessly and for the lack of knowledge, it would not be an act of infidelity, but having similarities with it would be called a major sin.

It is a pity that Muslims in generral are having a number of wrong practices with regard to naming their children and calling them by improper names.

There is a group of people who have abandoned the practice of naming their children with Islamic names. Their modern names having, non Islamic character, mark it difficult to identify them as Muslims by their names. Specially so, when their general appearance and manners are already devoid of Islamic character. The Islamic female names like Khadījah, 'Ā'ishah, and Fāṭimah have been replaced with Najma, Pervīn, Nasīm, Shamīm and Shahnāz etc.

More doleful practice among Muslims is to heedlessly curtail the Islamic names like 'Abd al-Khāliq, 'Abd al-Raḥmān 'Abd al-Razzāq or 'Abd al-Quddūs etc. to Khāliq, Raḥmān, Razzāq and Quddūs when calling people of these names. The attributes Khāliq (the creator) Raḥmān (the Merciful) Razzāq (The sustainer) and Quddūs (The Pure) are all exclusive attributes of Allah and using these attributes for any one other than Allah is a major sin (گناہ کبیرہ). The number of times one calls any one by these attributes only commits a major sin every time and becomes liable of great punishment.

This sinful practice has become quite common among Muslims for no gain. They have been committing this sinful act simply for being thoughtless to the gravity of this error. The present verse has warned against it by saying سَيُجْزَوْنَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ "They shall soon be recompensed for what they have been doing".

Many evils are committed for certain worldly gains or benefits. Any one committing such evil deed may pretend to offer an excuse that being constrained by some necessity he had committed the sin, while a great number of evil deeds are simply of no avail, and produce no worldly benefit at all. It is a sad situation that people are seen committing such evil deeds just for being careless of the commandments of Allah and being indifferent to what is prohibited or permitted by Allah. May Allah save us from such ignorance.

Verses 181 - 185

وَمِمَّنْ خَلَقْنَآ اُمَّةٌ يَّهْدُوْنَ بِالْحَقِّ وَبِهٖ يَعْدِلُوْنَ ﴿١٨١﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ
كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا سَنَسْتَدْرِجُهُمْ مِّنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿١٨٢﴾
وَاُمْلِيْ لَهُمْ ۭ اِنَّ كَيْدِيْ مَتِيْنٌ ﴿١٨٣﴾ اَوَلَمْ يَتَفَكَّرُوْا ۫ مَا
بِصَاحِبِهِمْ مِّنْ جِنَّةٍ ۭ اِنْ هُوَ اِلَّا نَذِيْرٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿١٨٤﴾ اَوَلَمْ
يَنْظُرُوْا فِيْ مَلَكُوْتِ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَمَا خَلَقَ اللّٰهُ مِنْ
شَيْءٍ ۙ وَّاَنْ عَسٰٓى اَنْ يَّكُوْنَ قَدِ اقْتَرَبَ اَجَلُهُمْ ۚ فَبِاَيِّ حَدِيْثٍۢ
بَعْدَهٗ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿١٨٥﴾

And among those We have created, there are people who guide with truth and do justice thereby. [181] **As for those who belie Our signs, We let them be drawn gradually (towards their punishment) from where they do not know.** [182] **And I give them respite. Surely My plan is firm.** [183] **Have they not reflected that with their friend there is no madness? He is but an open warner.** [184] **Have they not looked into the kingdoms of the heavens and the earth, and into the things Allah has created, and into the fact that their time might have possibly drawn near? In what other word, then, shall they believe after it?** [185]

The previous verses offered a remedy of calling Allah by His good names to those who were neglectfully not making proper use of their faculties. Now the verse 181 speaks of those who followed the right path. The verse said, "And among those we have created, there are people who guide with truth and do justice thereby. That is, they are a people who guide others to the straight path and decide all their matters according to the dictates of truth (the divine law).

Ibn Jarīr has reported from his own sources that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم recited this verse and said, "The people referred to in this verse are my people who shall decide their controversies according to justice and truth and observe justice in all their dealings."

'Abd ibn Ḥumaid has reported that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم

said addressing his companions, "This verse has been revealed in your favour and prior to you there has been a group of people bearing the same attributes." Then he recited this verse:

وَمِنْ قَوْمِ مُوسٰى أُمَّةٌ يَّهْدُوْنَ بِالْحَقِّ وَبِهٖ يَعْدِلُوْنَ

"And among the community of Musa there are people who guide with truth and do justice thereby." (7:159)

That is to say, there was a group of people among the Israelites who had the attributes referred to in this verse, of guiding other people to the truth and deciding their matters according to the law of the Torah. Similarly, the Muslim *Ummah* has the same attributes as their distinct feature.

The essence of the message is firstly, to guide people to the right path in accordance with the dictates of the Sharī'ah, and secondly, to decide all their controversies according to the law of Islam. The above two features offer, in fact, the guaranteed way of success, both in this world and in the Hereafter. Any group or individuals who follow the truth and justice in all their modes of life, and do not exhibit their personal prejudices while making judgements even for their enemies, are the people of truth refered to in this verse. The same has been the main characteristic of the Muslim Ummah who strictly observed the demands of truth and justice in all their dealings and overlooked their personal priorities when making judgements between people. The history has recorded unique examples of such truthful practices from the lives of the blessed Companions and their disciples.

From the day the Muslims started to show disregard to these two distinctive features of their character, an evident regression started to show itself in every sphere of their life. Remorsefully though, we have to acknowledge that majority of the Muslim *Ummah* have fallen prey to their personal desires. All their activities, their political, social and educational set ups are motivated by downtrodden worldly gains. Their guidance to other people is mainly aimed at getting some worldly benefits. Most of their family ceremonies are not only devoid of Islamic character, but demonstrate a behaviour opposed to Shari'ah. There are some family traditions designed in the name of religious ceremonies. Any one going against or showing dislike to these innova-

tions has to face active opposition on their part. People are no more interested in organizing themselves purely for the propagation of truth and justice.

There is none to make them realize that this course of thought and action has to bring disaster to the Muslims at large. The only way to restore the dignity of the Muslim *Ummah* and to bring them back to the path of progress and prosperity is to follow the way of truth and justice suggested by this verse. Conscious efforts should be made to create an awareness of these values among the Muslims.

The next verse (182) has provided answer to a common question which bothers the minds of many Muslims. If prosperity and progress can only be achieved by following the way of truth and justice why the non-Muslim nations of the world are seen more prosperous, more advanced and more powerful while they are very far from the truth? The verse answered this question in these words:

وَالَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا سَنَسْتَدْرِجُهُمْ مِّنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ

"As for those who belie our signs, we shall let them be drawn gradually towards (their punishment) from where they do not know."

That is to say, Allah does not punish those who reject the signs or verses of Allah immediately for their sins. He, out His wisdom and Mercy, lets them enjoy their worldly life for a while and then draws them to their ignominious end as gradually as they do not know of their being led to their ill-fate. The present prosperity and progress of the non-Muslims should, therefore, not deceive people, because their prosperity, in fact, is not something propitious for them. Rather it is a kind of respite, a temporary period of relief before the execution of their punishment, which in Qur'ānic terminology is called *Istidrāj* (اِسْتِدْرَاج). *Istidrāj* is a more powerful punishment in disguise. The most essential element of *Istidrāj* is that a person is not punished for his evil deeds immediately; the more he increases in his evil deeds, the more he is increased in prosperity and worldly possessions which prevents him from having a sense of guilty and taking warning against his crimes. Consequently, he is deprived of turning in repentence to Allah and save himself from everlasting punishment. This perverted state of mind makes one take illness as health and poison as

remedy. He is let to go on with his perverted life until death overtakes him and draws him to the eternal chastisement.

The Holy Qur'ān has made mention of '*Istidrāj*' in many other verses. It said in Sūrah al-An'ām:

فَلَمَّا نَسُوا مَاذُكِّرُوا بِهٖ فَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ اَبْوَابَ كُلِّ شَیْءٍ حَتّٰی اِذَا فَرِحُوْا بِمَآ اُوْتُوْٓا اَخَذْنٰهُمْ بَغْتَةً فَاِذَاهُمْ مُّبْلِسُوْنَ

"So, when they forgot what they were required to remember, We opened to them the gates of everything, until, when they were rejoicing in what they were given, We seized them suddenly, and then they were confounded in despair." (6:44)

Dealing with *Istidrāj* is not limited to disbelievers only. The iniquitous among Muslims are also dealt with this kind of punishment. It was for this reason that our elders used to fear Allah when they were favoured by Him with prosperity and comforts. They feared lest their prosperity should be a sign of '*Istidrāj*'

The next verse (183) is also related with '*Istidrāj*'. It said:

وَاُمْلِیْ لَهُمْ اِنَّ كَيْدِیْ مَتِيْنٌ

"And I give them respite. Surely, My plan is firm."

That is, the disbelievers are left to enjoy their worldly life just for a while. Then, they shall be caught by punishment.

The verse no. 184 has refuted the false notion of the disbelievers that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was a man of unsound mind or was possessed by devil. It said:

اَوَلَمْ يَتَفَكَّرُوْا مَا بِصَاحِبِهِمْ مِّنْ جِنَّةٍ اِنْ هُوَ اِلَّا نَذِيْرٌ مُّبِيْنٌ

"Have they not reflected that with their friend there is no madness? He is but an open warner."

The verse said that a little reflection on their part shall be enough to prove that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was neither a man of unsound mind, nor was he under the influence of Jinns. His matchless wisdom and knowledge is an obvious feature of his personality. Those having claim to wisdom and knowledge are astoundingly bewildered how a man of such extraordinary insight and sagacity could be blamed of madness? Blaming him with madness, in fact, is madness itself. He

is only an elucidator of realities and a warner against the punishment from Allah.

The verse 185 has invited mankind to practice two important things. Firstly, to make thoughtful observation of the creation of Allah, the heavens, the earth and the things existing between them. Secondly, to be mindful of the period of life given to an individual. It does not require to be a genius to perceive the signs of Allah's power and wisdom in every thing around us. A little amount of serious thought is enough to make one see that every thing, rather every particle of this world, is singing the praise of it's Creator and is, in itself, a strong proof of Allah's power and wisdom. Any one applying his intellect in conscious observation of things cannot avoid natural demand of faith in Allah, the One.

Being mindful of uncertain period of one's life makes him more active in attaining his objectives, because he is not sure how much time of life he has at his disposal. It would be noticed that all crimes and evil deeds are activated by disregard to one's death. Those who are conscious of their indefinite period of life mostly avoid to involve themselves in unwanted activities. The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said:

اَكْثِرُوْا ذِكْرَهَاذِمِ اللَّذَّاتِ الْمَوْتُ

> "Frequently remember the thing which eliminates the pleasures - the death."

The verse 185, has therefore said:

"Have they not looked into the kingdoms of the heavens and the earth, and into things Allah has created, and into the fact that their time may possibly have drawn near."

The Arabic word مَلَكُوْت (*Malakūt*) signifies kingdom indicating a superlative degree, that is, the great Kingdom. The verse implies that the disbelievers have not used their common intellect in seeking the Truth which is evident in everything created by Allah, nor are they mindful of the uncertainty of life which may come to an end any moment, depriving them of all the chances of accepting the truth and repenting to Allah for their evil deeds. The last sentence of the verse warned them saying:

"In what other word, then, shall they believe after it?" That is Allah has provided them with transparent signs, both internal and external, of the right path and of the True Faith. Those who are neglectful of such clear signs, there is nothing in the world to guide them to the right path.

Verses 186 - 187

مَنْ يُّضْلِلِ اللّٰهُ فَلَا هَادِيَ لَهٗ ؕ وَيَذَرُهُمْ فِيْ طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُوْنَ
﴿١٨٦﴾ يَسْـَٔلُوْنَكَ عَنِ السَّاعَةِ اَيَّانَ مُرْسٰهَا ؕ قُلْ اِنَّمَا عِلْمُهَا
عِنْدَ رَبِّيْ ۚ لَا يُجَلِّيْهَا لِوَقْتِهَآ اِلَّا هُوَ ؕ ثَقُلَتْ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ
وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ لَا تَاْتِيْكُمْ اِلَّا بَغْتَةً ؕ يَسْـَٔلُوْنَكَ كَاَنَّكَ حَفِيٌّ عَنْهَا ؕ قُلْ
اِنَّمَا عِلْمُهَا عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿١٨٧﴾

Whomsoever Allah lets go astray, for him there is no one to give guidance. And He leaves them wandering blindly in their rebellion. [186]

They ask you about the Hour, "When is it due to happen?" Say, "It's knowledge is only with my Lord. No one can unfold it except He, at it's time. It shall weigh heavy in the heavens and the earth. It shall not come upon you but suddenly." They ask you if you were aware of it. Say, "It's knowledge is only with Allah, but most of the people do not know." [187]

The preceding verses spoke of the obstinate ignorance of the disbelievers who rejected the true Faith, despite all the clear signs given to them by Allah. This could be a source of grief to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم as he was highly considerate and the greatest well-wisher of the mankind. The verse 186 provides him with a consolation saying that whomsoever Allah leaves wandering in his ignorance and lets him go on with his evil deeds can never be guided by any one and Allah leaves him at the mercy of his abject desires. That is to say, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has done his duty by conveying the message of Allah as explicitly as was possible, and that their rejection of the true faith was not for any of his faults.

Among the themes of this Sūrah (Al-A'rāf) three topics are of great

importance: the unity of Allah (*Tauḥīd*), the Prophethood (*Risālah*) and the life in the Hereafter (آخرت). These three principles are, in fact, the mainstay of the whole edifice of Islam. Exposition of the first two principles, the *Tauḥīd* and the *Risālah* have been provided in the foregoing verses.

The verse 187 speaks of the third principle, that is, the life in the Hereafter (آخرت). The revelation of this verse is related with the following incident reported by Ibn Jarīr and 'Abd ibn Ḥumaid on the authority of Qatādah.

The Quraish of Makkah once asked the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم by way of mockery as to when the Hour of doom was to occur of which he used to warn them so often. The verse was revealed in response to this question.

The Arabic word Sā'ah سَاعَة signifies a short period without specific number of minutes or hours, while in our calendar it is a single unit out of twenty four units of the day and night. In Qur'anic terminology, however, it is used for the day when all the created beings will cease to exist, as well as for the day when all the creation shall be revived and presented before the Lord of all the creations. مُرْسٰى *Mursā* signifies to stop or to stay, لَا يُجَلِّيْهَا is a derivative of تَجْلِيَه which means to disclose or open. *Baghtatan* بغتة means suddenly while the word '*Ḥafiyyun*' حَفِيٌّ is used for a scholar or a knowledgeable person according to Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه. The word is generally used for a person who invests his effort and employs all his resources to ascertain something.

The quintessence of the verse, therefore, is that the Quraish of Makkah should be answered that the exact time of the Doom is not known, and shall never be made known to any one. It is a divine secret which shall disclose itself by it's sudden occurence, as has been decided by the Qur'ānic phrase لَاتَأْتِيْكُمْ اِلَّا بَغْتَةً "It shall not come upon you but suddenly".

Al-Bukhārī and the Muslim have reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said

with regard to sudden occurence of the '*Qiyāmah*' (The Doomsday) that it has been made a close secret. The wisdom behind it is obviously to make people live their lives peacefully which would have not been possible in case the definite time of death was known to them. Besides, those who do not believe in Doomsday would have made mockery of it by knowing the remotely long period of it's occurence. The divine wisdom chose to keep it undefined in order to keep people vaguely in fear of it's dreadful events which, in fact, is an effective measure against crime and corrupt practices.

By implication, the above verses make us alive to the fact that once we have come to believe that the day of *Qiyāmah* has inevitably to come and all the created beings shall necessarily be presented before the Lord of all the creation and be called to account for all their minor or major deeds, and shall be rewarded or punished according to their performance in this world, the knowledge of time and period of the death becomes immaterial. It will not be wise to waste precious time of one's life in futile discussions like the time of occurrence of the Doomsday. On the contrary, human reason and wisdom demands that every moment of uncertain period of life is spent carefully in preparing oneself for the great day of judgement. This answer to the Quraish of Makkah made it clear that their question regarding the time of the Doomsday was a product of their ignorance. The next phrase of this verse speaks of another misconception of the disbelievers of Makkah. It said:

يَسْـَٔلُوْنَكَ كَاَنَّكَ حَفِيٌّ عَنْهَا

"They ask you as if you were aware of it."

They thought that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had, somehow, secured the knowledge of the exact time of the occurrence of the Doomsday and that he was not disclosing it for some purpose. They insisted him to disclose it to them. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was asked to answer them in these words:

قُلْ اِنَّمَا عِلْمُهَا عِنْدَاللّٰهِ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَالنَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ

"Say, it's knowledge is only with Allah, but most of the people

do not know."

That is, it is not necessary for a prophet to know the definite time of the Doomsday or certain other matters that are kept secret by Allah. The lack of knowledge in such matters on the part of a prophet cannot, therefore, be taken as a proof against his prophethood. (The knowledge of a prophet can never be equal to the All-encompassing knowledge of Allah.)

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , however, was given knowledge of certain specific signs indicating that the Doomsday was in proximity. He has informed the Muslim *Ummah* of all these signs in explicit terms in his Traditions. In one of such Traditions he said that his appearance and the Day of *Qiyāmah* were as close to each other as two fingers of a hand. (Tirmidhī)

As for the reports giving the total age of this world as seven thousand years, they are the reports borrowed from some Israelite literature in certain Islamic books. They are neither authentic nor do they have any basis in the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. Similarly, geo-physical data of modern knowledge giving the age of this world as millions of years do not confront or contradict any of the Qur'ānic verse or any authentic Tradition of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. On the contrary, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم addressing the Muslim *Ummah* said in a Tradition:

> "When compared to the early people, you are like a white thread of hair on the body of a black ox."

This gives us an idea of the enormous age of this world as thought by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. Ḥafīz Ibn Ḥazm of Spain has, therefore, concluded that the exact age of this world cannot be assessed by any one. [1] (Marāghni)

1. By inference it seems physically impossible to have an exact assessment of the age of this universe, because it would give the exact time of the end of this universe which has been precluded by the above verse saying that the knowledge of the occurrence of the Doomsday is not known to any one but Allah. (Translator)

Verses 188 - 193

قُلْ لَّآ اَمْلِكُ لِنَفْسِىْ نَفْعًا وَّلَا ضَرًّا اِلَّا مَاشَآءَ اللّٰهُ ؕ وَلَوْ كُنْتُ اَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ لَاسْتَكْثَرْتُ مِنَ الْخَيْرِ ۚ وَمَا مَسَّنِىَ السُّوْٓءُ ۚ اِنْ اَنَا اِلَّا نَذِيْرٌ وَّبَشِيْرٌ لِّقَوْمٍ يُّؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿١٨٨﴾ هُوَالَّذِىْ خَلَقَكُمْ مِّنْ نَّفْسٍ وَّاحِدَةٍ وَّجَعَلَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا لِيَسْكُنَ اِلَيْهَا ۚ فَلَمَّا تَغَشّٰهَا حَمَلَتْ حَمْلًا خَفِيْفًا فَمَرَّتْ بِهٖ ۚ فَلَمَّآ اَثْقَلَتْ دَّعَوَا اللّٰهَ رَبَّهُمَا لَئِنْ اٰتَيْتَنَا صَالِحًا لَّنَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الشّٰكِرِيْنَ ﴿١٨٩﴾ فَلَمَّآ اٰتٰهُمَا صَالِحًا جَعَلَا لَهٗ شُرَكَآءَ فِيْمَآ اٰتٰهُمَا ۚ فَتَعٰلَى اللّٰهُ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿١٩٠﴾ اَيُشْرِكُوْنَ مَالَا يَخْلُقُ شَيْئًا وَّهُمْ يُخْلَقُوْنَ ﴿١٩١﴾ وَلَا يَسْتَطِيْعُوْنَ لَهُمْ نَصْرًا وَّلَآ اَنْفُسَهُمْ يَنْصُرُوْنَ ﴿١٩٢﴾ وَاِنْ تَدْعُوْهُمْ اِلَى الْهُدٰى لَا يَتَّبِعُوْكُمْ ؕ سَوَآءٌ عَلَيْكُمْ اَدَعَوْتُمُوْهُمْ اَمْ اَنْتُمْ صٰمِتُوْنَ ﴿١٩٣﴾

Say, "I have no power to bring a benefit or a harm to myself, except what Allah wills. And if I had the knowledge of the unseen, I would have accumulated a lot of good, and no evil would have touched me. I am but a warner and a harbinger of good for people who believe." [188] **He is the One who has created you from a single soul, and from him created his wife, so that he may find comfort in her. So when he covered her with himself, she carried a light burden and moved about with it, thereafter, when she grew heavy, they both prayed to Allah, their Lord, "If You bless us with a perfect child, we shall be among the grateful."** [189] **But when We blessed them with a perfect child, they ascribed partners to Him in what We blessed them with. So, far beyond is Allah than what they associate with Him.** [190]

Do they associate those with Allah who do not create anything, rather, they are created (themselves)? [191] **And they (the alleged partners) cannot extend to them any help, nor can they help themselves.** [192] **And if you**

call them to the right path, they shall not follow you. It is all the same for them whether you call them or remain silent. [193]

The Verse 188 clears away a common misbelief of the people regarding the prophets of Allah. They thought that the prophets must possess the knowledge of each and everything in the universe, including the knowledge of the unseen future and unknown past. Similarly, they thought that the prophets must possess the power of bringing benefit or harm to any one out of their own will. The verse made it clear that the all-encompassing knowledge is an exclusive attribute of Allah which cannot be ascribed to any created being. Ascribing these exclusive attributes to any one other than Allah is the greatest transgression and is tantamount to associating partners with Allah. The very purpose of the revelation of the Holy Qur'ān and the advent of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has been to eliminate all the traces of plurality of god and to establish the purest unity of Allah (*Tauḥīd*).

The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has been asked to declare that, not to speak of others, even he was unable to harm or benefit himself and that he did not possess the knowledge of the unseen. Had he possessed such knowledge, he would have stored all the good for himself and would have saved himself from every possible harm. There are evident instances in which the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم could not achieve his objectives inspite of all his effort, and in many other instances, he could not save himself from the damages and harm that reached him. The incident of the treaty of Ḥudaibiyah is an evident example when the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم and his companions travelled all the way to Makkah in order to perform the 'Umrah but were stopped by the unbelievers of Makkah. Despite all their desire and effort, they had to go back to Madīnah without performing 'Umrah. similarly, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم was wounded in the battle of Uḥud and the Muslims faced temporary defeat.

Perhaps, such events were allowed to happen, so that it may be demonstrated in practical terms that the Prophets, with due regards to their being closest to Allah and being the best of all the human beings, did not possess divine power and encompassing knowledge.

They were human like other human beings. The Christians fell prey to the same error. They ascribed the divine attributes of Allah to their Prophet and went astray.

The Prophets, however, are invested by Allah with as much knowledge and power as no other human being has ever acquired. They Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was certainly favoured with the degree of knowledge which surpassed the knowledge of all other prophets. He informed the Muslims of many things which were to happen in future. All his foretellings were seen to happen exactly as he had foretold.

We can say that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was given the knowledge of a number of unseen things, but in Qur'ānic terminology this is not termed as "عِلْمُ الْغَيْبِ" (the knowledge of the unseen). Therefore, on the basis of this we are not allowed to call the Holy Prophet ﷺ عَالِمُ الْغَيْبِ (the knower of the unseen), as knower of the unseen is none other than Allah.

The last sentence of the verse said, إِنْ أَنَا إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ وَبَشِيرٌ لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ "I am but a warner and a harbinger of good for people who believe." That is, he has been assigned the duty of warning the evil doers against the punishment of Allah and give the good tidings of great reward by Allah to those who are righteous.

The next verse 189 speaks of the most basic belief of Islām that is Tauḥīd and, at the same time, brings out the falsity of believing in more than one god. In the beginning of the verse Allah سبحانه و تعالى has mentioned the creation of Sayyidnā 'Ādam and Sayyidah Ḥawwā' عليهما السلام which was a manifestation of His perfect power. The verse said:

هُوَالَّذِىْ خَلَقَكُمْ مِّنْ نَّفْسٍ وَّاحِدَةٍ وَّجَعَلَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا لِيَسْكُنَ اِلَيْهَا

"He is the One who has created you from a single soul and from him created his wife, so that he may find comfort in her."

This manifestation of Allah's great Power should have made mankind more grateful to Allah and they must have abstained from associating partners with Allah, but negligent as they were, they acted differently. Their neglectful attitude has been referred to in this verse and in the next, in these words:

فَلَمَّا تَغَشّٰهَا حَمَلَتْ حَمْلًا خَفِيْفًا فَمَرَّتْ بِهٖ فَلَمَّآ اَثْقَلَتْ دَّعَوَا اللّٰهَ رَبَّهُمَا لَئِنْ

اٰتَيْتَنَا صَالِحًا لَّنَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الشّٰكِرِيْنَ۝ فَلَمَّآ اٰتٰهُمَا صَالِحًا جَعَلَا لَهٗ شُرَكَآءَ فِيْمَآ اٰتٰهُمَا فَتَعٰلَى اللّٰهُ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُوْنَ

"So when he covered her with himself, she carried a light burden and moved about with it. Thereafter, when she grew heavy, they both prayed to Allah, their Lord, "If you bless us with a perfect child, we shall be among the grateful." So, when Allah blessed them with a perfect one, they ascribed partners with Him."

That is to say, at the initial stage of pregnancy the woman feels free to move about, but later when fetus grows heavy in her womb, the parents are anxious about their unborn. They are not sure if they would get a perfect child, because there are occasions when new born is not a normal child or is deaf dumb or blind etc. Having such apprehensions, they start praying for a perfect child and make promises with Allah to be grateful to Him if He favours them with a perfect child. Now, when Allah grants their prayers by giving them a normal and healthy baby, they ascribe partners with Allah, and thus their children, themselves, become the source of their misguidance.

It happens in a variety of ways. Sometimes they are misled by their false belief that their new born is a gift of some holy or godly person. Sometimes, they devote it to some living or dead person and start making offerings in their names. Some people take their children to them and bow their forehead before them. Sometimes, they involve themselves in Shirk شرك by naming their children like 'Abdullāt عبداللات 'Abd ul 'Uzza عبدالعزى 'Abdul Shams عبدالشمس or Bandah 'Alī بنده على etc., assigning their children to false gods, indicating that these children have been created or gifted by these gods or personalities. In short, all the above acts or beliefs are different forms of 'Shirk' شرك and the worst kind of ungratefulness to Allah, their Lord. The last sentence of this verse confirms misguidance of such people by saying:

فَتَعٰلَى اللّٰهُ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُوْنَ

"So far beyond is Allah than what they associate with Him."

The above interpretation of this verse has made it clear that by referring to the Prophet 'Ādam and Ḥawwā' (Eve) عليهما السلام in the first sentence of this verse, the children of 'Ādam have been asked to follow

him and show their gratefulness to Allah, while the rest of the verse speaks of the misguidance and perversion of their descendants who, instead of being grateful to their Lord ascribed partners to Him.

This makes it clear that the Prophet 'Ādam and Ḥawwā' عليهما السلام have nothing to do with those who ascribed partners with Allah. The verse refers to the generations coming after them who were ungrateful to Allah and involved themselves in Shirk شرك . We have adopted this interpretation on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضی الله عنه reported by Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Abī Ḥātim, in Tafsīr al-Durr al-Manthūr. The story related by Tirmidhī and Ḥākim about 'Ādam and Ḥawwā' being deceived by Satan has been taken by some scholars as an unauthentic Israelite report which is liable to be rejected. Many Muḥaddithīn, the scholars in *Ḥadīth* have, on the other hand, confirmed it. The above interpretation, however, clears away any possible doubt even if the story is taken to be authentic.

The above verse has provided us with the following points of significant value.

1. The men and women have been created in the same species in order that they may have a natural affinity and perfect understanding with each other, and discharge their duties towards the construction of a good society.

Havoc caused by immodesty

2. The rights and obligations assigned to the married couple basically aim at providing a peaceful environment at home. There are many social behaviours of modern age that are directly opposed to the above objective of creating a peaceful atmosphere. For example, the so called freedom of woman has caused havoc to social peace. The alarming number of divorces and serious altercations are mostly the result of free mixing of men and women in society. By experience we know that the growth of immodest practices in society is propotional to the destruction of social values and deprives man of peace at home and in the society.

3. The third point refers to the naming of one's children. It is prohibited to give names to the children like 'Abdul Shams (The slave of the Sun) or 'Abd al 'Uzzā (The slave of 'Uzzā) which purport to

assign them to entities other than Allah. Giving such names is prohibited even if parents do not really mean it. This practice is a great sin in Islām.

4. The best way of offering our gratitude to Allah is to name our children after the good names of Allah and His Messenger. The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has, therefore, recommended the names like 'Abd ur Raḥmān, and 'Abdullāh etc.

It is a pity that, one by one, we are depriving ourselves of all the Islamic manners and values. Firstly, we give our children non Islamic names simply following the fashion of the non-Islamic cultures. In addition, we find that most of the parents abbreviate the names of their children into English initials which makes it all the more difficult to distinguish them as Muslims. specially so, when we have worn the appearance of the non-Muslims, altogether. May Allah favour us with the real understanding of Islām and Islamic values.

Verses 194 - 198

إِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ تَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ عِبَادٌ اَمْثَالُكُمْ فَادْعُوْهُمْ
فَلْيَسْتَجِيْبُوْا لَكُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿١٩٤﴾ اَلَهُمْ اَرْجُلٌ
يَّمْشُوْنَ بِهَآ اَمْ لَهُمْ اَيْدٍ يَّبْطِشُوْنَ بِهَآ اَمْ لَهُمْ اَعْيُنٌ يُّبْصِرُوْنَ
بِهَآ اَمْ لَهُمْ اٰذَانٌ يَّسْمَعُوْنَ بِهَا قُلِ ادْعُوْا شُرَكَآءَكُمْ ثُمَّ
كِيْدُوْنِ فَلَا تُنْظِرُوْنِ ﴿١٩٥﴾ اِنَّ وَلِيِّۦَ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْ نَزَّلَ الْكِتٰبَ
وَهُوَ يَتَوَلَّى الصّٰلِحِيْنَ ﴿١٩٦﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ تَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِهٖ
لَا يَسْتَطِيْعُوْنَ نَصْرَكُمْ وَلَآ اَنْفُسَهُمْ يَنْصُرُوْنَ ﴿١٩٧﴾ وَاِنْ
تَدْعُوْهُمْ اِلَى الْهُدٰى لَا يَسْمَعُوْا وَتَرٰىهُمْ يَنْظُرُوْنَ اِلَيْكَ وَهُمْ
لَا يُبْصِرُوْنَ ﴿١٩٨﴾

Surely, those whom you call beside Allah are slaves like you. So, call them and they should respond to you if you are true. [194] **Do they have legs to walk with? Or do they have hands to grip with? Or do they have eyes to see with? Say, "Call to your associate-gods, then, plot against me and allow me no respite.** [195] **Surely, my**

protector is Allah who has revealed the Book and who does protect the righteous." [196]

And those whom you call beside Him cannot help you, nor can they help themselves. [197] **And if you call them for guidance, they shall not hear. And you see them looking at you while they do not see.** [198]

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been asked to say to the unbelievers that your false gods are nothing but slaves like you, and being devoid of essential faculties of moving, seeing, hearing and speaking cannot help themselves, far from coming to your help in your need. If you are not sure, then "Call them and they should respond to you," and "Call to your associate-gods, then plot against me and allow me no respite."

The verse 196 has said:

إِنَّ وَلِيِّـۧ اللّٰهُ الَّذِیْ نَزَّلَ الْكِتٰبَ وَهُوَ يَتَوَلَّى الصّٰلِحِيْنَ

"Surely my protector is Allah who has revealed the Book and who does protect the righteous."

The Arabic word ولی rendered here as 'protector' also means helper. The word الكتاب (The Book) here refers to the Holy Qur'ān, and the word صالحين (the righteous), according to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضی الله عنه , here refers to all those who do not take any one equal to Allah, including the prophets and other faithful Muslims.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been asked to declare that he was not fearful of their opposition in the least since Allah, who had revealed the Qur'ān to Him was his protector and helper. It may be noted that out of all the divine attributes of Allah, this verse spoke specially of His revelation to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم . It is because the only reason of their hostility to the Holy Prophet ﷺ was his invitation to the message of the Holy Qur'ān. He was therefore, sure to have been helped and protected by Allah. The next sentence provides us with a general rule that Allah does not only help and protect His messengers who have special favours of Allah, but also helps and protects all the Muslims who are righteous.

The last sentence وَهُوَ يَتَوَلَّى الصّٰلِحِيْنَ "He helps and protects the righteous" has given us a general principle that in addition to helping the

prophets who hold the highest status among all the people, Allah helps and protects all the Muslims who act righteously. Therefore, the opposition or hostility of any one does not harm a true Muslim in the real sense of the word. Most often he is made to triumph over his enemies in this very world. If, for some good reason, he does not overcome and is apparently defeated, this, too, does not go to damage his real objective. His failure in this world is, in fact, his success in true sense, because the main objective of his life is to seek Allah's pleasure and to obey Him in each and every activity of his life. His failure, being from Allah draws him nearer to his objective of seeking Allah's pleasure.

Verses 199 - 202

خُذِ الْعَفْوَ وَأْمُرْ بِالْعُرْفِ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْجٰهِلِيْنَ ﴿١٩٩﴾ وَإِمَّا
يَنْزَغَنَّكَ مِنَ الشَّيْطٰنِ نَزْغٌ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللّٰهِ ۭ إِنَّهٗ سَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ
﴿٢٠٠﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اتَّقَوْا إِذَا مَسَّهُمْ طٰٓئِفٌ مِّنَ الشَّيْطٰنِ تَذَكَّرُوْا
فَإِذَا هُمْ مُّبْصِرُوْنَ ﴿٢٠١﴾ وَإِخْوَانُهُمْ يَمُدُّوْنَهُمْ فِي الْغَيِّ ثُمَّ
لَا يُقْصِرُوْنَ ﴿٢٠٢﴾

Take to forbearance, and bid the Fair and ignore the ignorant. [199] **And if you are stricken with a strike from the Satan, seek refuge with Allah. Surely, He is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.** [200] **Surely those who are God-fearing, when they are touched by a visit from Satan, they become conscious, and, at once they are watchful.** [201] **As for the brethren of Satans, the satans drag them on into the error, and they do not stop short.** [202]

The Ideal Manifesto of Qur'ānic Ethics

The above verse provides us with a perfect code and model discipline of moral excellences. It was through this discipline that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was trained and then was conferred with the title of صاحب خلق عظيم (The manifestation of all moral excellences) which is unique to him out of the whole mankind. After giving a description of obstinate ignorance, and immoral behaviour of the adversaries of Islam in the foregoing verses, the Holy Qur'ān, in contrast to the above, provides the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم with some moral teach-

ings. The first is خُذِ الْعَفْوَ (Take to forbearance). The Arabic word عفو , has many significations. Each of them can be taken to mean here. This is why the experts in the exegesis of the Qur'ān have presented varied comments on this verse. The most agreed interpretation of this word is that it is an act which can be done with ease or without any difficulty. The first sentence therefore, shall mean "Accept what people can do easily," implying that, in the matter of Islamic obligations, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم should not demand high standard of deeds from the people. Rather, he should accept the degree of perfection which can be achieved easily by the people.

To make it more clear, let us take the example of *Ṣalāh* (the prayer) which in true sense means to isolate oneself from all the worldly thoughts and actions and stand before his Lord in perfect veneration. He is supposed to present his praise to his Lord directly as though he is addressing his Lord and making his supplications to Him directly with nothing and no one between him and His Lord.

This state of mind shows itself in a worshipper by some expressive signs like خشوع و خضوع (submission and humbleness), which are achieved only by a few fortunate worshippers. This degree of veneration and love cannot be expected from all the worshippers. This verse has therefore, asked the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم not to demand the high standard of performance from the people, and to accept what degree of perfection they can achieve easily in their deeds.

The above interpretation has been reported in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Zubair رضى الله عنه. Another report cited by Ibn Kathīr, has said that the Holy Prophet ﷺ, at the time of the revelation of this verse, said, "I have been commanded (by Allah) to accept common or unexceptional obedience from the people in their worships and behaviour. I have, therefore, decided to do the same as long as I am in their company." A large number of the exegetes of the Holy Qur'ān like Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar, 'Abdullāh ibn Zubair, Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنهم اجمعين and the scholar Mujāhid have confirmed the same meaning of this Qur'ānic phrase.

Another meaning of the word عفو is to pardon or to forgive. Some of the exegetes have adopted this meaning here. According to them this Qur'ānic phrase has asked the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to pardon the

errors and shortcomings of the people.

Imām Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, the great exegete of the Holy Qur'ān has reported that at the time of revelation of this verse the Holy Prophet ﷺ asked the Archangel Jibra'īl about the implication of this verse. The Archangel after confirming the meaning from Allah answered that you have been commanded to pardon the one who does you wrong, and to be generous to the one who gives you nothing, and to continue your relation with one who breaks off his connections with you.

Under the comment on this verse Ibn Marduwaih has reported, on the authority of Sayyidnā Sa'ad ibn 'Ubādah, that this verse was revealed when, in the battle of Uḥud, Sayyidnā Ḥamzah رضی اللہ عنہ was martyred and parts of his body were savagely cut off. The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم , seeing his body in such miserable condition, said, "I shall behave to seventy of their people the way they have behaved with Ḥamzah." This verse was revealed to him implying that it does not suit his dignified position. He should pardon and forgive people.

This is supported by another Ḥadīth reported by Imām Aḥmad on the authority of 'Uqbah ibn 'Āmir رضی اللہ عنہ saying that the Holy Prophet ﷺ had instructed him of the same. That is, to pardon the one who does wrong to him, to keep relation with one who cuts off his relation with him and to give the one who deprives him. Bayhaqi also has reported from Sayyidnā 'Alī رضی اللہ عنہ that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said to him. 'I teach you the manners better than the manners of all the early and the later people, that you should give the one who deprives you, pardon the one who does wrong to you and continue your relation with one who breaks off with you.

The above two meanings of the word عفو though, are different from each other but the purest essence of both is one and the same, that is, he should not demand the high standard of worship and deeds from the people and pardon them for their errors, and should not take revenge of their wrongs, and be generous to them with no regard to recieving any return from them.

The authentic records of the life of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم have shown that he demonstrated the truest picture of the above

Qur'ānic model of deeds and morals. This model appeared in full bloom when Makkah was conquered and his sworn enemies were at his mercy. At that time, he set all of them free saying that 'far from any thoughts of seeking any revenge against them for their injustices, he would not even blame them in any way for what had happened between them in the past.'

The second sentence of this manifesto or testament reads: وَأْمُرْ بِالْعُرْفِ (and bid the Fair – 199). The word: عُرْف (*'urf*) meaning 'recognized' refers to everything done in a way which is good and praiseworthy. The sense is that he should not seek to avenge the oppressive treatment meted out to him by his enemies, rather, he should forgive them but, along with it, he should also continue to ask them to do what was good and beneficial. Thus, he would not only be repaying evil with good and injustice with justice alone, in fact, he would be repaying them for all that by a higher degree of favor and grace – that of *Iḥsān*.

In the third sentence, it was said: وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْجٰهِلِيْنَ (and ignore the ignorant). It means that he should, no doubt, forgo revenge against injustice, deal with his enemies having goodwill and concern for them, and softly explain the truth of the matter to them. But, in this process, there will be those ignorant diehards who would not still be impressed or affected by this highly gentle moral response. They would, in spite of that, display more of their ignorance and harshness. If so, he was advised not to be affected by their heart-rending comments and rustic challenges, offer no response in their terms, instead, stay away from and ignore them.

Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr has said that 'to ignore' also means that he should not repay evil with evil. It does not mean that he should stop giving good advice to them, for this would not be befitting in terms of the standing mission a prophet and messenger of Allah is charged with.

At this stage, according to an event reported in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه, it was during the period of the Khilāfah of Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه that 'Uyaiynah ibn Hiṣn came to Madīnah and stayed there as a guest of his nephew, Ḥurr ibn Qays. Sayyidnā Ḥurr was among the learned men of Madīnah who used to attend the advisory council of Sayyidnā 'Umar.

'Uyaiynah said to his nephew, Ḥurr ibn Qays, 'you are close to the Amīr al-Mu'minīn. Take an appointment for me to see him.' Sayyidnā Ḥurr ibn Qays requested Sayyidnā 'Umar that his uncle, 'Uyaiynah wanted to meet him. He gave the permission.

But, once 'Uyaiynah was in the company of Sayyidnā 'Umar al-Fārūq, he spoke to him in a manner that was uncivilized and contrary to facts while complaining that he neither gave them their full rights nor treated them with justice and equity. Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ was angry. Thereupon, Sayyidnā Ḥurr ibn Qays submitted, '*yā Amīr al-Mu'minīn*, Allah Ta'ālā has said: خُذِ الْعَفْوَ وَأْمُرْ بِالْعُرْفِ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْجٰهِلِيْنَ (Take to forbearance, and bid the Fair and ignore the ignorant – 199) and this person too is one of the ignorant ones.' Hearing this verse, his anger subsided and he said nothing to him. This habit of Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ was well known. About him it was said: كَانَ وَقَّافًا عِنْدَ كِتَابِ اللّٰهِ عَزَّوَجَلَّ (He readily mellowed before the commandments of the Book of Allah, the Mighty, the Exalted).

This verse carries a comprehensive statement of noble traits of character. Some scholars have explained these briefly by saying that there are two kinds of people: (1) Those who are good in deeds and (2) those who are evil and unjust. This verse tells us to treat both kinds nobly. As for those who do good, accept what they offer as such. Do not investigate too much and do not be unnecessarily inquisitive. Do not demand good at its highest from them and accept what they come up with as sufficient. As for the evildoing, the instruction given is: Teach them to do what is good. Show them the way of righteousness. If they do not accept it and choose to stick to their straying and error and talk haughtily and aggressively, the appropriate course is to stay away from them and avoid responding to their ignorant comments. It is hoped that this approach may bring them round at some stage when they may realize their error.

In the second verse, it was said: وَإِمَّا يَنْزَغَنَّكَ مِنَ الشَّيْطٰنِ نَزْغٌ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللّٰهِ إِنَّهٗ سَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ (And if you are stricken with a strike from the Satan, seek refuge with Allah – 200).

This verse too is really a complement of the subject taken up in the first verse which instructs that the error made by the unjust and the ignorant should be forgiven and the evil done by them should not be

answered by counter evil. This is heavy duty. In fact, doing something like this is most irksome and hard on human temperament. Particularly on occasions such as this, the Shaiṭān is there to coax someone very normal into anger and somehow gets his client all set to fight. Therefore, in the second verse, it has been suggested that in case emotions of anger seem to be flaring up on such an occasion where your patience is under test, one should promptly figure out that this instigation is coming from the Shaiṭān. It has a standard treatment – seek refuge with Allah.

It appears in Ḥadīth that two men were quarreling before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and one of them was getting out of control in his fit of anger. He looked at him and said, 'I know some words which, if this person were to say, his rage will go away.' Then, he said, 'here are the words: اَعُوْذُ بِاللهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطٰنِ الرَّجِيْمِ (I seek refuge with Allah from the Shaiṭān, the Accursed). When this person heard the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم reciting it, he immediately said it after him. Suddenly, his anger was all gone.

An Unusual Coincidence

At this stage, the great Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr has written about an unusual coincidence. He says that there are three verses in the entire Qur'ān that appear as an embodiment of high moral teaching – and all three of them conclude with the need to seek refuge from the Shaiṭān. One of these is this very verse of Sūrah al-A'rāf we are talking about. The second one is the following verse of Sūrah al-Mu'minūn:

اِدْفَعْ بِالَّتِىْ هِىَ اَحْسَنُ السَّيِّئَةَ نَحْنُ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَصِفُوْنَ وَقُلْ رَّبِّ اَعُوْذُبِكَ مِنْ هَمَزٰتِ الشَّيٰطِيْنَ وَاَعُوْذُبِكَ رَبِّ اَنْ يَّحْضُرُوْنِ

"Repel the evil with what is good. We know best what they keep saying and you say: 'O my Lord, I seek refuge with You against the urgings of the Satans, and O my Lord, I seek refuge with You from that they be with me – 23:97, 98."

The third verse appears in Sūrah Ḥā Mīm as-Sajdah (also referred to as Sūrah Fuṣṣilat):

وَلَا تَسْتَوِى الْحَسَنَةُ وَلَا السَّيِّئَةُ ؕ اِدْفَعْ بِالَّتِىْ هِىَ اَحْسَنُ فَاِذَا الَّذِىْ بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهٗ عَدَاوَةٌ كَاَنَّهٗ وَلِىٌّ حَمِيْمٌ ۔ وَمَا يُلَقّٰهَآ اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ صَبَرُوْا ، وَمَا يُلَقّٰهَآ اِلَّا

ذُوْحَظٍّ عَظِيْمٍ . وَاِمَّا يَنْزَغَنَّكَ مِنَ الشَّيْطٰنِ نَزْغٌ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللّٰهِ، اِنَّهٗ هُوَالسَّمِيْعُ الْعَلِيْمُ .

(And good and bad deeds are not equal. Repel with that which is better, whereupon he – between whom and you there was enmity – will be as if a fast friend. [34] And this quality is granted to none but those who observe patience, and this quality is granted to none but he who is endowed with a great fortune. [35] And if you are stricken with a strike from the Shaiṭān, then, seek refuge with Allah. Surely, He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing. [36] – 41:34-36)

In these three verses, instruction has been given to forgo and forgive people who incite anger, to return evil with good and, along with it, to seek refuge from the Shaiṭān. This tells us that the Shaiṭān takes special interest in human quarrels. Give them any opportunity where a quarrel is on, the Satans converge on it as their favorite hunting ground. No matter how sedate and forbearing someone happens to be, they would still incite him into anger and try to make them cross the limits.

There is a treatment for it. When a person sees his anger getting out of control, he should know that Shaiṭān is winning against his better self. He should then turn to Allah Ta'ālā and seek refuge with Him. This makes noble traits of character flourish at their best. Therefore, additional stress has been laid on the need to seek the protection of Allah against the Shaitan in the third (201) and fourth (202) verses as well.

Verses 203 - 204

وَاِذَا لَمْ تَاْتِهِمْ بِاٰيَةٍ قَالُوْا لَوْلَا اجْتَبَيْتَهَا ؕ قُلْ اِنَّمَآ اَتَّبِعُ مَا يُوْحٰٓى اِلَيَّ مِنْ رَّبِّيْ ۚ هٰذَا بَصَآئِرُ مِنْ رَّبِّكُمْ وَ هُدًى وَّرَحْمَةٌ لِّقَوْمٍ يُّؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٢٠٣﴾ وَاِذَا قُرِئَ الْقُرْاٰنُ فَاسْتَمِعُوْا لَهٗ وَاَنْصِتُوْا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُوْنَ ﴿٢٠٤﴾

And when you do not bring them a sign, they say, "Could you not make up one?" Say, "I only follow what is revealed to me from my Lord." This is (a Book of)

insights from your Lord and a guidance and mercy for a people who believe. [203]

And when the Qur'ān is recited, listen to it and be silent, so that you may be blessed. [204]

Commentary

Mentioned in the verses cited above is the proof that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is the true Messenger of Allah. Also answered there are doubts raised by his antagonists. Then, as a corollary, some religious injunctions have been taken up.

To prove that they are Messengers of Allah, all prophets, may peace be upon them all, are given miracles. It was in consonance with it that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, the foremost among prophets, was blessed with so many miracles which exceed the number of those given to past prophets and which are clear too.

The miracles of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم as proved from the Qur'ān, and authentic Ḥadīth reports, are fairly numerous. Muslim religious scholars have written separate books about them. 'Allāmah Jalālu 'd-Dīn as-Suyuṭī's book, al-Khaṣaiṣ al-Kubrā, in two volumes, is a well-known work on this subject.

But, despite the manifestation of so many miracles, his opponents stuck to their unreasonable demands asking for ever-new miracles of their choice. This has also been mentioned earlier in this very Sūrah.

The first of the two verses cited above provides an answer to their demand as a matter of principle. To put it briefly, the miracle of a prophet is a testimony and proof of his mission as a Messenger of Allah. Take the example of the claim of a plaintiff that stands proved by some trustworthy evidence. The other party has not challenged it in any way. If so, no court in the world would give this party the right to demand from the plaintiff that it would accept the claim only when he produces its evidence from a number of particularly specified people. And that the said party would, without challenging the present evidence, not accept it. Therefore, after having seen so many manifest miracles, the antagonists had no right to say that they would take him to be a Messenger of Allah only if he were to show their custom-ordered miracles. This is nothing but a hostile demand that no court of justice would accept as valid.

So, in the first verse (203), it was said when he does not show them the miracle specified by them, they use it as a pretext to deny that he was a Messenger of Allah. Had he been one, he would have shown them the miracle of their choice! The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been asked to tell them that his mission does not call for the showing of miracles on his own. Instead, his basic mission was to follow the injunctions sent to him by his Lord through the medium of *Waḥy* (revelation) and it included the task of their preaching as well. Therefore, he was busy doing what he was assigned to do. As for the verification of his status as a Messenger of Allah, the miracles already manifested before them were more than enough for that purpose. Now that they have already seen those, the demand for some particular miracle is nothing but an exercise in hostility that is not worth noticing.

Then, out of the miracles shown, the Qur'ān by itself is a great miracle. It has challenged the whole world to come up with a small Sūrah the like of it and it has failed to do so. This, then, is an open sign that the Qur'ān is no human word, instead, is the inimitable Word of Allah, the most exalted.

For this reason, it was said: هٰذَا بَصَآئِرُ مِنْ رَّبِّكُمْ (This is (a Book of) insights from your Lord). It means that this Qur'ān has come from your Lord as a compendium of many proofs and miracles. Whoever deliberates into it, even summarily, could not part with it without believing that it was nothing but the Word of Allah, the most exalted, and that nothing created has anything to do with it. After that, it was said: وَهُدًى وَّرَحْمَةٌ لِّقَوْمٍ يُّؤْمِنُوْنَ (and a guidance and mercy for a people who believe). It means that, no doubt, this Qur'ān is a proof of what is true for the whole world, but it is an escort to the purpose of life and a medium of deserving the mercy of Allah Ta'ālā only for those who believe in it.

In the second verse (204), we have been told that the Holy Qur'ān has come as mercy for the believers. But, in order to benefit from this mercy, there are some conditions and rules of conduct. These have been delineated in the form of a general address as: وَإِذَا قُرِئَ الْقُرْاٰنُ فَاسْتَمِعُوْا لَهٗ وَاَنْصِتُوْا (And when the Qur'ān is recited, listen to it and be silent).

There are different reports about the background of these verses and about whether this injunction has appeared about the recitation of

the Qur'ān in Ṣalāh, or in Khuṭbah, or relates to the recitation of the Qur'ān in an absolute sense, be it in Ṣalāh or Khuṭbah or in some other condition. But, according to the majority of commentators, the correct position is that the way the words of the verse are general, so the rule laid down therein too is generally applicable to all conditions – except some particular occasions.

Therefore, the followers of Ḥanafī School hve taken this verse to prove that the persons offering their prayer behind an Imām (i.e. the *muqtadīs*) should not recite. Even Muslim jurists who have directed the *muqtadīs* to recite *Alfātiḥah* behind the Imām, they too, having kept this verse in view have suggested that a *muqtadī* should recite only in an interval when the Imām is silent. However, this is not the appropriate occasion to take up this debate. Those interested may refer to standard works, brief or detailed, written by scholars on the issue.

The main subject of the verse is not but that the people for whom the Qur'ān has been declared to be mercy should realize the condition that they have to recognize the etiquette and respect aligned with the Qur'ān and observe it literally in practice. Then, the cardinal etiquette of the Qur'ān is that listeners should lend their ears to it when recited and remain silent.

The sense of lending ears to it not only includes listening to it but also obeying it and making the effort of acting in accordance with its injunctions. (Maẓharī and Qurṭubī) Then, by saying: لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ (so that you may be blessed) at the end of the verse, a clear hint is given that the mercy of Qur'ān depends on the observance of rules of etiquette mentioned above.

Some important rules relating to listening and remaining silent when Qur'ān is being recited

In contrast with what has been said above, it is obvious that whoever flouts these rules and shows disrespect to the Qur'ān will deserve Divine wrath, not mercy.

As for listening to the recitation of the Qur'ān in the Ṣalāh and remaining silent therein, Muslims generally know about it – though, they do fall short in practice. Some of them would not even be aware of

the Sūrah recited by the Imām. For such people, it is imperative that they should realize the greatness of the Qur'ān, and listen to it attentively. This Islamic legal norm applies to the Khuṭbah of Jumu'ah etc. In addition to this verse, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has particularly said about the Khuṭbah:

اذا خرج الامام فلا صلوة ولا كلام

When the Imām comes out (for Khuṭbah), then, there is no Ṣalāh and no conversation.

And it also appears in a Ḥadīth that no one should say anything to anyone during *Khuṭbah*, not even a verbal advice is allowed to be given to another person to keep silence (if it has to be done, making a sign by hand should be enough). The objective is to emphasize that, during the Khuṭbah, no conversation of any kind, *tasbīḥ, durūd* or *Ṣalāh* or acts of similar nature are permissible.

Muslim jurists have said that the rule which applies to the Khuṭbah of Jumu'ah applies to the Khuṭbah of the two *'Eid* prayers and that of Nikāḥ (marriage) for, at that time, listening to it and remaining silent is obligatory (*wājib*).

However, in case someone is reciting on his own under usual conditions other than Ṣalāh and Khuṭbah, the question arises: Will others be required to be silent and listen to it? Whether or not would it be obligatory (*wājib*) on them? The positions taken by Muslim jurists in this matter differ. Some consider listening and remaining silent in this condition too as *wājib* and doing against it a sin. It is for this reason that they have ruled that it is not permissible for anyone to recite the Qur'ān in a loud voice at places where people are busy doing their chores or are resting. They have also said that anyone who recites the Qur'ān in a loud voice in such surroundings shall be a sinner. This is as it appears in Khulāṣatu l-Fatāwā and other juristic works.

But, some other jurists have distinguished different situations from one another by saying that listening attentively is *wājib* only on occasions where the Qur'ān is being recited for the express purpose of being listened to – such as, in Ṣalāh and Khuṭbah etc. And should it be that someone is reciting on his own, or some people are doing their own recitation at one place, then, it is not *wājib* to listen and be silent.

The reason is that it stands proved on the authority of sound Aḥādīth that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم used to recite the Qur'ān in his nightly prayers in a raised voice. At that time, his blessed wives would be sleeping. At times, his voice could also be heard from outside his roomette.

There is a Ḥadīth in al-Bukhārī and Muslim. It says that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم made a stop on his journey and when morning came he said , 'I recognized my Ash'arite companions by the voices of their recitation of Qur'ān during the darkness of the night and was able to pinpoint the direction and location of their tents – though, I had no idea during the day as to where they stay.

This event shows that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم never asked these Asharite companions as to why they were reciting the Qur'ān in a loud voice, nor did he tell those sleeping that they all had to get up and listen to the Qur'ān when it was being recited.

As based on narratives such as these, jurists have given some leeway in the case of recitation outside Ṣalāh. But, they all consider it better and preferable to listen and be silent when the sound of the recitation of the Qur'ān comes from somewhere – even if it is outside the Ṣalāh. For this reason, in places where people are resting or working, it is not appropriate to recite the Qur'ān in a loud voice.

This exposes the error of people who turn their radios to full volume at the time some program of recitation from the Qur'an comes on the air, particularly at places and gatherings where the crowd would not listen to it attentively. Similarly, the practice of relaying the recitation of the Qur'ān from the public address systems of mosques late at night, in a manner that the sound goes out and disturbs the sleep of the sleeping or the work of the working, is not correct.

'Allāmah ibn al-Humām has written that, at the time the Imām in Ṣalāh, or the Khaṭīb in Khuṭbah, is reciting something about the Jannah or Jahannam, then, at that time, it is not permissible even to pray for Jannah or seek refuge from Jahannam. The reason is that, according to this verse, the promise of mercy from Allah Ta'ālā is for the person who remains silent when the Qur'ān is being recited – and whoever does not remain silent, to him the promise does not apply.

Yes, if one supplicates voicelessly after the recitation of such verses during his *nafl* prayers, it is an act proved by Sunnah, and is worthy of reward as well. (Mazharī)

Verses 205 – 206

وَاذْكُرْ رَّبَّكَ فِىْ نَفْسِكَ تَضَرُّعًا وَّخِيْفَةً وَّدُوْنَ الْجَهْرِ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ بِالْغُدُوِّ وَالْاٰصَالِ وَلَا تَكُنْ مِّنَ الْغٰفِلِيْنَ ﴿٢٠٥﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُوْنَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِهٖ وَ يُسَبِّحُوْنَهٗ وَلَهٗ يَسْجُدُوْنَ ﴿٢٠٦﴾ السجدة

And remember your Lord in your self with humility and fear, and without speaking loudly, in mornings and evenings, and do not be among the heedless. [205] **Surely, those who are with your Lord are not arrogant against His worship, and they proclaim His purity, and before Him they prostrate.** [206]

Commentary

That the Holy Qur'ān should be listened to and that due etiquette should be observed when doing so was the subject in previous verses. Described in the present two verses, as held by the majority of commentators, is the injunction to remember Allah, in an absolute sense, as well as its attending etiquette – which includes the recitation of the Qur'ān. However, according to Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ, the word: ذکر (*dhikr*: remembrance) as it appears in this verse means the Qur'ān, and the rules of etiquette enunciated therein are also related to its recitation. But, this does not make much of a difference because according to the consensus of all, other modes of remembrance (*adhkār*: plural of *dhikr*), in addition to the Qur'ān, are governed by the same injunction and the same rules of etiquette.

In short, in this verse, human beings have been commanded to remember Allah and told when to do it and how to do it.

Rules of Voiced and Voiceless Remembrance [*Dhikr*]

The first rule of etiquette relates to the doing of Dhikr in a lowered or loud voice. The Holy Qur'ān has given two choices about that in this verse. It can be made secretly and voicelessly and it can be made

openly and loudly. About the voiceless Dhikr, it was said: وَاذْكُرْ رَّبَّكَ فِىْ نَفْسِكَ which has been translated here literally as 'and remember your Lord in your self' (or, in your heart). This too would, take two forms: (1) That one does not move his tongue and simply thinks of Allah and His attributes in his heart that is known as *al-dhikr-al-khafiyy* (Dhikr of the heart) or *tafakkur* (pondering). (2) That one brings his tongue in alignment with what is happening in the deep recesses of his heart, lowers his voice and renders the letters carrying Divine names. The most preferred form of doing it is to first understand the sense of what is being said. Then, in synchronization with it, let him do two things simultaneously: Be fully conscious of its presence in his heart with his span of attention riveted to it and then, verbalize it too. The reason is that this is a form in which the tongue also joins in the Dhikr along with the heart. And if someone were to remain devoted to the thought within his heart alone, without uttering any word from his tongue, that too is a reward-worthy act in its own place. However, the lowest degree of it would be uttering the words of Dhikr but the heart stays denuded with it, even heedless towards it. About a Dhikr like that, the great sage, Rūmī said:

بر زباں تسبیح ودر دل گاؤخر　　ایں چنیں تسبیح کے دارد اثر

On the tongue, glory to God
Cow and donkey in the heart!
What remembrance is it?
How effective will it be?

What sage Rūmī means is that Dhikr made through a heedless heart brings no vestiges and blessings of the genuine act of Dhikr. It does not rule out the reward and benefit that may issue forth from what may be a bland verbal Dhikr because there are occasions when this very verbal Dhikr becomes the channel, source and cause of the Dhikr of the heart. The constant utterance of the tongue starts affecting the heart as well. In case that does not materialize, no less is the satisfaction that there is at least one part of the body busy with the Dhikr of Allah. If so, that too is not devoid of its benefits and rewards. Therefore, people who fail to experience peace, attention and sense of presence in their Dhikr and Tasbīḥ (act of remembrance and glorification of Allah) should not abandon it as something useless.

They should, rather, continue with it and keep trying to attain the required degree of attention.

The second method of Dhikr has been given within this verse by saying: وَدُوْنَ الْجَهْرِ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ (and without speaking loudly). It means that it has to be in a lowered voice as compared to a raised voice. In other words, the person who is engaged in the Dhikr of Allah does have the option of doing a voiced Dhikr but its etiquette demands that one should not do it too loudly reaching the outer limits of shouting and screaming. Doing it in an average voice with due regard for the reverence-worthy nature of the activity is better. The fact is that doing the Dhikr of Allah and the recitation of the Qur'ān very loudly is a sign of disrespect one has in his heart for the addressee. Is it not that one cannot naturally speak up in a loud voice before someone he revers by heart? Therefore, when the usual Dhikr of Allah or the recitation of the Qur'ān is made vocally, one has to be careful not to let the voice be raised any more than necessary.

To sum up, three methods of the Dhikr of Allah and the recitation of the Qur'ān come out of this verse. (1) Concentrate on the Dhikr of the heart only, that is, consider it sufficient to imagine and deliberate on the meanings of the Qur'ān, and Dhikr, while keeping the tongue totally unmoved. (2) Also move the tongue along with the Dhikr of the heart, without raising the voice to the level of being heard by others. Both these methods are included under the Divine command of: وَاذْكُرْ رَّبَّكَ فِيْ نَفْسِكَ (And remember your Lord in your self). (3) The third method of Dhikr is that, alongwith attention by heart, there is a movement of tongue with voice, but it should not be raised any higher than necessary, in fact, it should be limited to the average level. This method has been proposed in the Qur'ānic statement: وَدُوْنَ الْجَهْرِ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ (and without speaking loudly). Another verse of the Qur'ān has explained it further by saying: وَلَا تَجْهَرْ بِصَلَاتِكَ وَلَا تُخَافِتْ بِهَا وَابْتَغِ بَيْنَ ذٰلِكَ سَبِيْلًا It commands the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that he should not recite the Qur'ān in a voice rising too high nor in a voice lowered too much. Instead, he should maintain a middle level between the two – [17:110].

This was the instruction given by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to Sayyidnā Abū Bakr and Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنهم اجمعين about the recitation of the Qur'ān in Ṣalāh.

According to an authentic Ḥadīth, once the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم came out of the house late at night. When he reached the house of Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه, he saw him busy with Ṣalāh but he was reciting in a lowered voice. Then he reached the house of Sayyidnā 'Umar, رضى الله عنه and saw that he was reciting in a raised voice. When these two companions came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in the morning, he said to Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه, 'when I went to you last night, I noticed that you were reciting in a lowered voice.' Sayyidnā Abū Bakr submitted, '*yā rasūlallāh*, the One I was reciting for has heard it. That is sufficient.' Similarly, he said to Sayyidnā 'Umar, 'you were reciting in a raised voice.' He submitted, 'By raising my voice in the recitation, I intended to drive away sleep and Shaiṭān both.' Giving his verdict, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم instructed Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه to raise his voice a little bit and asked Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه to somewhat lower it. (Abū Dāwūd)

According to a report in Tirmidhī, some Companions asked Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها about the recitation of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم whether he did it in a raised voice or a lowered voice. She said, 'at times he would do it loudly and at others, in a lowered voice. He recited both ways.'

Some early elders have favored reciting loudly during *nafl* Ṣalāh at night and in recitations outside the Ṣalāh, while some others have preferred reciting softly in a lowered voice. Therefore, Imām Abū Ḥanīfah has said that the person reciting has the choice of reciting either way. However, it is unanimously agreed that reciting loudly has some conditions to it. Firstly, there should be no apprehension of showing off in doing so. Secondly, the voice of the person reciting should not cause any inconvenience or pain to others. For example, it should not interfere in the Ṣalāh or recitation being made by others, or in their work, or rest. Under such eventualities, reciting in a low voice is more meritorious as unanimously held by all.

Then, the rule that applies to the recitation of the Qur'ān also applies to other Adhkār and Tasbīḥāt in that these could be made in a voice loud or low. It is permissible to do it either way – subject to the condition that the voice should not be so loud as to be against the norms of humbleness of heart and the formal etiquette of spiritual

devotion. In addition to that, the voice of the person so engaged in remembering Allah and glorifying Him should cause no disruption in the activities of people working or resting.

As to what is more meritorious – loud or low – it depends on who is doing it and under what conditions. The verdict differs. For some, loud is better, for others, low. Then, there are times when loud is better and there are other times when keeping it low or voiceless is beneficial. (Tafsīr Maẓharī, Rūḥ al-Bayān etc.)

The second rule of etiquette mentioned in the verse under discussion requires that Tilāwah and Dhikr should be made humbly which is the outcome of one's realization that Allah Ta'ālā is great and most exalted and that one keeps the meaning and sense of what he or she is saying in sight.

The third rule of etiquette comes out from the word: خِيْفَه (*khīfah*: fear) in this very verse (205). Here, we have been told that one should be in a state of awe and fear while reciting or making Dhikr. As for fear, it means the fear of not being able to do justice to the great task of worshipping Allah and recognizing His greatness – perhaps, we may fall short or do something contrary to His reverence due on us. In addition to that, we have to be actively conscious of our sins and be fearful of His punishment, fearful of what would happen to us in the end for we do not know what and how it will be. So then, Dhikr and Tilāwah have to be done in the manner of a person who has been subdued by an aura of awe and fear.

These rules have also appeared in an earlier verse of this very Sūrah al-A'rāf where they relate to prayer: اُدْعُوْا رَبَّكُمْ تَضَرُّعًا وَّخُفْيَةً (Supplicate to your Lord humbly and secretly – 7:55). Here, instead of خِيْفَة (*khīfah*: fear), the word: خُفْيَةً (*khufyah*: secretly) has been used which means saying it softly in a low voice – as though, it is also a rule of etiquette that Dhikr and Tilāwah should be done softly in a lowered voice. But, this verse makes it clear at the same time that doing voiced Dhikr is not prohibited, however, it is subject to the condition that one does not raise his voice more than necessary, definitely not so high as would cause the state of fear and humbleness to disappear.

Given towards the end of the verse are the timings of Dhikr and

Tilāwah – that it should be done in the mornings and evenings. It could also mean that one should be busy with the remembrance of Allah at least twice a day in the morning and the evening. And it is also possible that by saying mornings and evenings, the reference is to all timings of the day and night on the analogy of saying East and West and thereby meaning the whole world. If so, the verse would mean that one must remain committed to Dhikr and Tilāwah always, under all conditions. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها says that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was devoted to the remembrance of Allah at all times and under all conditions.

At the end of the verse, it was said: وَلَا تَكُنْ مِّنَ الْغٰفِلِيْنَ (and do not be among the heedless) which means that abandoning the remembrance of Allah and joining the heedless is a great loss.

The last verse (206) depicts the particular state and style of those close to Allah so that others may learn their lesson from it. It is said that those who are close to Allah Ta'ālā show no arrogance against worshipping Him. Being 'with' Allah Ta'ālā means being among those approved of and accepted by Him. This includes all angels and all blessed prophets and the most righteous men and women of the Muslim community. As for the sense of arrogance in this context, it means that they do not assume airs and do not fall short in their acts of worship on the false assumption of being big and special. Instead of doing anything of that sort, they take themselves to be weak and needy before Allah and keep devoting themselves to His remembrance, worship and glorification showing their ultimate humility by prostrating before their Lord in *sajdah.*

From here, we also learn that people who are blessed with the ability to engage in perpetual worship and remembrance of Allah are blessed with the sign that they are 'with' Allah all the time and fortunate to have His company.

Sajdah: Some merits and rules

Sajdah (prostration) as a unit of the Islamic 'Ibādah of Ṣalāh has been mentioned here exclusively since it occupies a distinct place among the rest of the units of Ṣalāh.

It appears in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim that a person asked Sayyidnā Thawbān

رضی اللہ عنہ, 'tell me about something I should do that will take me to Paradise.' Sayyidnā Thawbān رضی اللہ عنہ remained silent. He repeated the question. He still remained silent. When he came up with the question the third time, he said, 'I had asked the same question from the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم and he had ordered me to make *sajdah* repeatedly because for every *sajdah* you do, Allah Ta'ālā increases a rank and forgives a sin.' This person says that following his meeting with Sayyidnā Thawbān رضی اللہ عنہ, he met Sayyidnā Abū al-Dardā' رضی اللہ عنہ. He put the same question to him and he was given the same answer.

Again in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, but on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضی اللہ عنہ, it has been reported that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said, 'a servant of Allah is closest to his Lord when in *sajdah*. Therefore, when you are in a state of *sajdah*, pray most ardently, for it is strongly hoped that it will be answered.' [1]

Let us bear in mind that Sajdah, by itself, is not a recognized act of 'Ibādah. Therefore, according to Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, prostrating in Sajdah abundantly means that one should offer *nafl* Ṣalāh abundantly. An increased number of *nafl* Ṣalāh would naturally result in an increased number of Sajdahs.

But, if a person were to go in Sajdah alone and supplicate after that, it really does not matter. As for the instruction to supplicate in Sajdah, it is particular to Nafl Salats. It is not mandatory.

Sūrah al-A'rāf ends here. Its last verse is an *Āyah* of Sajdah (requiring the person reciting and the person listening to prostrate in Sajdah). According to a report from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضی اللہ عنہ appearing in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said, 'when a son of Ādam recites a verse of Sajdah and then prostrates in Sajdah, the Shaiṭān runs crying. He says: Alas, man was asked to prostrate in

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1. It should be borne in mind that supplication in *sajdah* should be in *nafl salah* and using the Arabic prayers either mentioned in the Holy Qur'an or in the *sunnah* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. However, in a *sajdah* meant for supplication only, one can pray in whatever language he wishes (Muhammad Taqi Usmani)

Sajdah and when he obeyed, Paradise became his home, and I was asked to prostrate in Sajdah and when I disobeyed, Hell became my home.'

Alḥamdulillāh

The Commentary on Sūrah al-A'rāf

Ends here.

Sūrah Al-Anfāl

[The Spoils]

Sūrah Al-Anfāl was revealed in Madīnah and it has 75 Verses and 10 Sections

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful.

Verse 1

يَسْـَٔلُوْنَكَ عَنِ الْاَنْفَالِ ؕ قُلِ الْاَنْفَالُ لِلّٰهِ وَ الرَّسُوْلِ ۚ فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَاَصْلِحُوْا ذَاتَ بَيْنِكُمْ ۪ وَاَطِيْعُوا اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗۤ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿۱﴾

They ask you about the spoils. Say, "The spoils are for Allah and the Messenger." So, fear Allah, and set your relations right, and obey Allah and His Messenger, if you are believers. [1]

Thematic Contents of the Sūrah

Sūrah Al-Anfāl now opening here is a Madanī Sūrah. Sūrah Al-A'rāf which appeared previous to it carried a description of the ignorance and hostility from the Mushrikīn and the disbelief and mischief from the people of the Book, as well as a discussion of the subjects related to these.

In this Sūrah, most of the subjects are connected with the battle of Badr which was the occasion when these very people met their sad end in defeat and Muslims succeeded in scoring a victory against them. This was Divine favour and blessing for Muslims and a punishment and retribution for disbelievers.

Since the main reason behind this blessing and reward for Muslims is their absolute sincerity, Godliness and unity - and this sincerity and unity is a result of their total obedience to Allah and His Messenger - therefore, it is at the very beginning of the Sūrah that stress has been laid on righteous conduct rooted in the fear of Allah (*Taqwā*) and on obedience due to Him and His Messenger - and on the need to remember Allah and to trust in Him (*Dhikr* of Allah and *Tawakkul* mentioned in verse 2).

Commentary

This verse is related to an event which came to pass in the battle of Badr. If this event is kept in sight before going to the detailed explanation of the verse, it will make it easy to understand.

What happened is that Muslims, when they won in the battle of Badr - the first confrontation of Kufr and Islam - they had some war spoils on their hands. Its distribution led to a state of affairs among the noble Companions which did not befit the high standard of sincerity and unity around which the whole life of these blessed souls was moulded. Therefore, it was within the very first verse, that the standing policy on this subject was settled for ever - so that, there remains nothing in the hearts of this group of people blessed with sanctity, except truth, sincerity, unity and sacrifice.

Details of this event have been reported in the Musnad of Aḥmad, Tirmidhī, Mustadrak of Ḥākim and elsewhere in the words of Sayyidnā 'Ubādah رضى الله عنه who was a participant in the battle of Badr. According to the report, someone asked Sayyidnā 'Ubādah ibn Ṣāmit about the meaning of the word: *al-anfāl* in the verse cited above. He said, 'This verse has, of course, been revealed about us, that is, about participants in the battle of Badr. This was in the background of some difference of opinion which arose among us as to the distribution of war spoils and which affected our moral conduct adversely. Then, through this verse, Allah Ta'ālā took away the spoils from our hands and entrusted them with the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم who distributed them equally over all those who had participated in the Jihād of Badr.

The situation at the battle of Badr was that all of us marched out with the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. It was after a tough fight between

the two groups that Allah Ta'ālā had the enemy defeated. At this point, our forces were split in three sub-groups. Some pursued the enemy so that they would not come back. Some went on to collect spoils left by the disbelievers, while some others formed a cordon around the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and kept guarding him against any surprise attack by the enemy in ambush somewhere. When fighting was over, the night came and everyone returned to home base, those who had collected spoils said: We have collected this booty, therefore, no one but us has a share in it. And those who had pursued the enemy said: You do not deserve it more than us because we were the ones who forced the enemy to retreat and run and which gave you the opportunity to collect spoils in peace . And those who remained standing around the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to protect him said: If we wanted to, we too could have joined you in collecting the spoils with you, but we devoted ourself to the task of seeing that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم remains protected, so, we too are deserving of it.

This conversation among the Companions ultimately reached the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم whereupon this verse cited above was revealed. It made it very clear that the spoils belonged to Allah. There was none to own it or stake a claim over it, except the one to whom the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم would give it. As for the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, he distributed the spoils equally over all participants of the Jihād as ordained Divinely. (Ibn Kathīr) Everyone was pleased with this decree of Allah and His Messenger - and naturally ashamed of the unbecoming state of affairs which arose between them because of their mutual approach to remain ahead of the others.

Also in the Musnad of Aḥmad, reported there is another event which spells out the background in which this verse was revealed. It has been narrated by Sayyidnā Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ رضى الله عنه. He says: 'My brother, 'Umayr fell a martyr in the battle of Badr. Out of the disbelievers who were arrayed against him, I killed Sa'īd ibn al-'Āṣ. I took his sword and presented myself before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. I wished that this sword be given to me. But, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم ordered me to deposit it with the spoils. I was duty-bound to obey his order, but my heart ached with the thought that my brother laid down his life in this Jihād and I killed the enemy confronting him

and took possession of his sword, yet that too was taken away from me. However, despite this thought, I stepped forward to carry out the Commander's command and deposit the sword with the spoils. But, I had hardly gone far enough when this verse of Sūrah Al-Anfāl was revealed to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم who called me back and let me have this sword.' According to some other narrations, it is also reported that Sayyidnā Sa'd رضى الله عنه had himself requested the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that the particular sword be given to him, but he had said: 'This is not my property which I could give to someone, nor is this owned by you. Deposit it with the rest of the spoils. This matter will be decided in accordance with what Allah decrees.' (Ibn Kathīr, Maẓharī)

It is not unlikely that both these events may have come to pass and the verse may have been revealed in answer to both.

A detailed explanation of the verse:

Here, the word: انفال (*al-anfāl*) is the plural of نفل *nafl* which means grace and reward. *Nafl* Ṣalāh, Ṣawm and Ṣadaqah are called *Nafl* because they are not compulsory or obligatory on anyone. Those who do these do so out of their free will. In the terminology of Qur'ān and Sunnah, the words *nafl* and *anfāl* are also used for spoils or booty obtained from the disbelievers at the time of Jihād. But, the Qur'ān has used three words to carry this sense, that is, انفال : *anfāl*, غنيمة: *ghanīmah* and فيئ: *fai'*. The word: *anfāl* appears right here in the present verse. As for the word: *ghanīmah*, its details will appear in verse 41 of this very Sūrah. Then, details relating to the word: فيئ: *fai'* find mention in Sūrah Al-Ḥashr: وَمَا أَفَآءَ اللّٰهُ (and what Allah made His Messenger get - 59:6). The meanings of these three words differ with slight variation. Since the difference between them is slight, there are occasions when one word is used for the other to mean spoils in the absolute sense. *Ghanīmah* generally carries the sense of booty obtained from the adversary through fighting in Jihād. *Fai'*: فيئ is booty obtained from the disbelievers without active fighting and killing, whether they abandon it or agree to give it up voluntarily. Then, *nafl* and *anfāl* are also used to refer to the reward which the Supreme Commander of Jihād may bestow upon a particular Mujāhid in return for his exemplary performance. This meaning has been reported from Sayyidnā

'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه as in Tafsīr Ibn Jarīr. (Ibn Kathīr) Then, there are occasions when spoils as such are also identified through the terms of *nafl* and *anfāl*. In this verse, most commentators have gone by this very general meaning. The same general meaning has been reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī. The truth of the matter is that this word is used to carry both meanings, the general and the particular. Therefore, no difference exists here. And the best explanation in this connection has been given by Imām Abū 'Ubayd in his Kitāb al-Amwāl. He says: Lexically, *nafl* means grace, reward or gift - and it is a very special blessing of Allah Ta'ālā bestowed upon the Muslim Ummah, the most fortunate recepients of His mercy - in that the properties obtained from disbelievers through fighting in Jihād were made lawful for Muslims. Otherwise, the practice did not exist among past communities. In fact, the law which governed spoils was that such property was not lawful for anyone. All spoils were collected and deposited at one place, then, a fire or lightening would come from the heavens and burn it up. This was supposed to be a sign indicating that the God-oriented fighting was acceptable in His sight. If spoils so collected and deposited were not burnt up by the lightening from the heaven, it was supposed to be a sign that the effort was not acceptable. Therefore, the later spoils were considered rejected and ill-omened because of which it was not used by anyone.

Based on a narration from Sayyidnā Jābir رضى الله عنه appearing in Al-Bukhārī and Muslim, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been reported to have said: I have been blessed with five things which were not given to any prophet or his community before me. One of the five is: احلت لى الغنائم ولم تحل لاحد قبلى that is, 'made lawful for me are the spoils, though they were not lawful for anyone before me.'

The injunction of '*anfāl*' given in the cited verse is: "The spoils are for Allah and the Messenger." What it means is that its real ownership is that of Allah while the right of their disposal rests with the Messenger of Allah who distributes these in accordance with the command of Allah at his discretion.

Therefore, a group of leading authorities in Tafsīr, with Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه, Mujāhid, 'Ikrimah, Suddiyy and some

others among them, have said that this injunction was operative during the early period of Islam when the law of the distribution of spoils which is going to appear in the fifth section of this very verse was yet to be revealed - because there spoils as a whole have been left at the discretion of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم who was to dispose them off as he wished. The detailed injunctions which appear later enjoin that one-fifth of the entire spoils should be deposited in the Bayt al-Māl (Treasury of the Muslim State) to cover the needs of common Muslims, and the remaining four-fifth should be distributed among Jihād participants under a particular law the details of which appear in authentic Aḥādīth. This detailed statement abrogated the first verse of Sūrah Al-Anfāl - and some respected elders have stated that there is no case of abrogation at this place. Instead, the difference here is that of brevity and detail. The first verse of Sūrah Al-Anfāl is brief with its details appearing in verse 41. However, *Fai'* property the injunctions about which have been taken up in Sūrah Al-Ḥashr (59) has been placed totally at the disposal of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم who may act as he wishes at his discretion. Therefore,when describing the injunctions at that place, it has also been said: وَمَآ اٰتٰىكُمُ الرَّسُوْلُ فَخُذُوْهُ وَمَا نَهٰىكُمْ عَنْهُ فَانْتَهُوْا (that is, 'and what the Messenger gives you take it, and what he stops you from leave it - 59:7).

These details tell us that 'spoils' refers to properties which are obtained through Jihād confrontation, and *Fai'* properties are what is obtained without fighting and killing in Jihād. As for the word: *al-Anfāl*, it is used for both, whether the sense be general or particular, and it is also used for the reward which is bestowed by the Commander-in-Chief of Jihād on a *Ghāzī* (living Muslim warrior of a victorious Jihād force).

In this connection, there are four forms of giving awards to Ghāzies in Jihād which date back to the blessed times of the Holy Prophet ﷺ:

1. That it is proclaimed that whoever kills an adversary will become the owner of properties obtained from the soldier killed by him. This property will just not be deposited with the rest of the spoils.

2. That a group is taken out from the larger army and is sent on Jihād to a particularly targeted area with the orders that the spoils

obtained from that area will belong to the particular group sent there - subject to the obligation that one-fifth of the property thus obtained will be deposited in *Bayt al-Māl* (Treasury of the Muslim State) to be used to cover the needs of common Muslims.

3. That a particular Ghāzī is given something out of the one-fifth of spoils deposited in the *Bayt al-Māl* in return for his distinct achievement by the Amīr of Jihād under his discretion.

4. That a certain portion from the entire spoils is set aside to be given as reward to the serving cadre of the Jihād force, such as those who attend to the horses of Mujāhidin and help them with their chores. (Ibn Kathīr)

The substance of the verse is: Addressing the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, Allah Ta'ālā has said: People ask you about the spoils. You tell them that the spoils are for Allah and the Messenger, that is, no one holds a claim on them, or is their owner. Whatever the Messenger of Allah decides under the command of Allah Ta'ālā shall be the operative law.

Unity among People is Based on *Taqwā*

In the last sentence of the verse, it was said: فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَاَصْلِحُوْا ذَاتَ بَيْنِكُمْ وَاَطِيْعُوا اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗٓ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ (So, fear Allah, and set your relations right, and obey Allah and His Messenger, if you are believers). This is addressed to the Companions of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. The reference is to what happened at the battle of Badr when the noble Companions had differed among themselves about the distribution of spoils and which posed the danger that their mutual relations may become strained. Through this verse, Allah Ta'ālā has Himself settled the matter of the distribution of spoils. Now, they are to retrain their hearts for the better and set their relations right. The core of the method proposed is Taqwā, the fear of Allah, the sense of being responsible before Him.

Experience bears out that under the active influence of a heart filled with the fear of Allah and 'Ākhirah, major disputes get resolved in no time and deep-rooted hatreds evaporate in thin air.

Therefore, after proposing the method of Taqwā in this verse, it was said: اَصْلِحُوْا ذَاتَ بَيْنِكُمْ that is, 'set your relations right' through Taqwā.

After that, it was further explained by saying: إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ (and obey Allah and His Messenger, if you are believers) that is, the obedience to Allah and the Messenger should be total and perfect, if you are believers. In other words, *'Īmān* (faith) demands *Iṭā'ah* (obedience) and *Iṭā'ah* (obedience) is the outcome of *Taqwā* (the fear of Allah). When people become the practitioners of these virtues, their mutual disputes shall stand resolved automatically and hearts shall be filled with love rather than hostility.

Verses 2-4

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرَ اللّٰهُ وَجِلَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَإِذَا تُلِيَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ اٰيٰتُهُ زَادَتْهُمْ إِيمَانًا وَّعَلٰى رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ ﴿٢﴾ الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنٰهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ ﴿٣﴾ أُولٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ حَقًّا ۚ لَهُمْ دَرَجٰتٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ وَّرِزْقٌ كَرِيمٌ ﴿٤﴾

Certainly, the believers are those whose hearts are filled with fear when (the name of) Allah is mentioned; and when His verses are recited before them, they increase them in faith and in their Lord they place their trust. [2] **(They are) those who establish Ṣalāh, and give away from what We have given them.** [3] **Those are the believers in reality. For them there are high ranks with their Lord, and forgiveness, and dignified provision.** [4]

Commentary

Particular Attributes of the Believer

Described in the verses cited above are particular attributes which should be the hallmark of every believer. The hint given here is that every believer should keep checking on his or her physical and spiritual condition and assess if these attributes are present in his or her person. If they are, this calls for being grateful to Allah that He blessed His servant with the attributes of true believers. And should it be that none of these attributes is present there, or is weak or feeble despite being present, then, one must either start being concerned about acquiring them or making them stronger than what they are.

The First Attribute : The Fear of Allah

The first attribute described here is: اَلَّذِيْنَ اِذَا ذُكِرَ اللّٰهُ وَجِلَتْ قُلُوْبُهُمْ (those whose hearts are filled with fear when {the name of} Allah is mentioned -2). It means that their hearts are soaked in and brimming with the realization of Allah's greatness and their love for Him. This state of the heart demands that there be an attending aura of awe and fear around it. This has been mentioned in another verse of the Qur'ān as a state which deserves glad tidings for all people of love: وَبَشِّرِ الْمُخْبِتِيْنَ اَلَّذِيْنَ اِذَا ذُكِرَ اللّٰهُ وَجِلَتْ قُلُوْبُهُمْ (that is, give glad tidings to those humble and soft people whose hearts are filled with fear when (the name of) Allah is mentioned - Al-Hajj, 22:34). In both these verses, identified there is a very special pre-requisite of the mention, thought and remembrance of Allah (*Dhikr*) which is awe and fear. Then, in yet another verse, also enumerated there is a particular property of *Dhikrullah*, that is: اَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللّٰهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوْبُ (Listen! Hearts find peace through the remembrance of Allah - Al-Ra'd, 13:28).

This tells us that the fear and awe mentioned in this verse are not contrary to the peace and tranquility of the heart. For instance, the fear of a beast or enemy disturbs one's peace of heart. But, the fear which is generated in the heart as a result of the Dhikr of Allah is totally different from that. Therefore, the word used here is not the exact counterpart of 'fear.' It has been called: وجل (*wajal*) which does not mean fear (*khawf*) in the absolute sense. Instead, it is the awe, a respectful feeling of fear which emerges in the heart because of the majesty of the most exalted. Some commentators have said that, at this place, the mention and remembrance of Allah means that a person was intending to commit some sin, but when he happened to think of Allah, it made him scared of His punishment as a result of which he turned away from that sin - under this situation, such a fear would mean nothing but the fear of punishment. (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ)

The Second Attribute : Increase in '*Īmān*

The second attribute of the believer has been identified by saying: 'and when His verses are recited before him, they increase them in faith.' What is the meaning of increase in faith? A meaning upon which all scholars, commentators and Ḥadīth experts agree is that 'Īmān or faith does increase in strength, quality and light. It is also

confirmed by experiment and observation that good deeds give strength and stability to the state of one's faith. The heart is so laid open to the acceptance of truth that good deeds become one's natural habit; if he leaves them, he feels the pinch; and he develops in himself a natural distaste for sin to the limit that he does not go even near them. This is the great station of 'Īmān, of faith which has been identified in Ḥadīth by the term: The sweetness of 'Īmān:

واذاحلت الحلاوة قلبا نشطت فى العبادة الاعضاء

When the sweetness of 'Īmān settles down in someone's heart
All parts of his body start relishing its taste in acts of worship!

In short, the verse puts the second attribute of a perfect believer as: 'When the "*Āyāt* of Allah Ta'ālā are recited' - his faith should become more pronounced in polish and progress, as well as in the desire to do good deeds. This also helps us realize that the way Muslims at large recite and listen to the Qur'ān - paying no heed to the due etiquette and reverence of the Qur'ān nor having any idea of the greatness of Allah Ta'ālā - produces a recitation which is not what is desired, and certainly not what could be expected to generate the best of results, even if that too may not be devoid of *thawāb* (reward).

The Third Attribute : Trust in Allah

The third attribute of a believer identified here is that he or she should place their trust in Allah. The Arabic word: *Tawakkul* means trust. The sense is that the believer should have total trust in Allah, One and Pure, free of all conceivable associations and ascriptions, not simply theoretically, but in deeds too, and in all states and conditions of one's life as well. In a sound Hadīth, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said: This does not mean that one should abandon material causes and means when it comes to taking care of one's legitimate needs. The point is that one should not consider material means and instruments as sufficient for real success, instead of which, one should do his best, subject to his ability and courage, to assemble and utilize necessary material means. It is only after that one should entrust his matter with Allah Ta'ālā believing that He is the One who has created all means and He is certainly the One who makes means to bear fruits. What would come to be has to be what He wills. In another Ḥadīth, he said: اجملوا فى الطلب وتوكلوا عليه It means: Make a moderate effort to procure

what you need through material means, and then place your trust in Him. In other words, do not let your heart and mind get bogged down with nothing but material ways and means.

The Fourth Attribute : Establishment of Ṣalāh

The fourth attribute of the believers has been described as: '(They are) those who establish Ṣalāh.' At this point, it is worth keeping in mind that the text is not talking about making, saying, offering or performing Ṣalāh, instead, what has been mentioned here is *Iqāmah* of Ṣalāh. Literally, Iqāmah means 'to make something stand straight.' The sense of Iqāmah (translated as 'establish' in absence of a precise equivalent) is that one should carry out the obligation of Ṣalāh with the fullest consideration for its etiquette and relevant conditions, exactly as explained and demonstrated by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم through his word and deed. If there is any shortcoming in observing the etiquette, and conditions, you may call it the saying or making of Ṣalāh, but you cannot call it the Iqāmah or establishment of Ṣalāh. As for the benefits, effects and blessings of Ṣalāh mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān: إِنَّ الصَّلٰوةَ تَنْهٰى عَنِ الْفَحْشَآءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ (of course, Ṣalāh stops from immodesty and sinfulness - Al-'Ankabūt, 29:45) those too depend on nothing but the proper establishment *(Iqāmah)* of Ṣalāh as due. When the etiquette of Ṣalāh has not been observed as due, the Ṣalāh would though be counted as permissible as far as *Fatwā* or juristic ruling is concerned, but the blessings of Ṣalāh will be reduced to the measure of shortcoming in observing it - and in some situations one may be totally deprived of these blessings.

The Fifth Attribute: Spending in the Way of Allah

The fifth attribute of a believer, as stated in the verse, is that they spend in the way of Allah out of what Allah has provided them with. This 'spending in the way of Allah' is general. It is inclusive of all charitable spendings (*Ṣadaqāt* and *Khairāt*), endowments (*Waqf*) and gifts and grants to relatives. Also included under this category are Islamic legal obligations such as Zakāh and the Ṣadaqatul-Fiṭr, and voluntary charities, donations and contributions (*Nafl Ṣadaqāt* and *Tabarru'āt*) as well as any financial assistance amiably provided to guests, friends and respected elders.

After describing these five virtues of the model believer, it was

said: أُولَٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ حَقًّا (Those are the believers in reality) - that is, they are the same, outwardly and inwardly, they say what is there in their heart, otherwise, there are those who say: اَشْهَدُ اَنْ لَّآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ وَاَشْهَدُ اَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَّسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ (I testify that there is no god worthy of worship but Allah and I testify that Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allah) which is only verbal as far as it goes. Their hearts do not throb with belief in the Oneness of Allah, nor do they have the passion for obedience to His prophet. What they do contradicts what they say. There is a hint in the verse which points out that every truth has its reality and unless you get to that reality, you cannot arrive at the truth.

Someone asked the famous Ḥasan al-Baṣrī: 'O Abū Sa'īd, are you a believer?' He said: 'Brother, there are two kinds of 'Īmān (faith). If you are asking whether or not I am a believer in Allah Ta'ālā and His angels, Books and Messengers, and in Paradise and Hell, and in the accounting and retribution of the Last Day, then, my answer is: Of course, I am a believer. And if you are asking whether or not I am the perfect believer mentioned in the verses of Sūrah Al-Anfāl, then, I just do not know whether or not I am one of those. The verses of Sūrah Al-Anfāl referred to here are the same verses the discussion of which is before you right now.

After having described the attributes and marks of true believers in the verses cited above, it was said: لَهُمْ دَرَجٰتٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ وَّرِزْقٌ كَرِيْمٌ (For them there are high ranks with their Lord, and forgiveness, and dignified provision).

Promised here are three things: (1) high ranks, (2) forgiveness and (3) dignified provision.

According to Tafsīr Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ, the attributes of true Muslims mentioned in the previous verses are of three kinds: (1) Those which relate to one's heart, the inward human dimension, such as, belief in Allah, fear of Allah and trust in Allah. (2) Those which relate to physical deeds, such as, Ṣalāh etc., and (3) Those which relate to one's wealth, such as, spending in the way of Allah.

Counter-poised against these three kinds, three rewards have been mentioned. High ranks have been set against inward and spiritual attributes; forgiveness has been placed against deeds which are

related to outward human physique, like Ṣalāh and Ṣawm. Ṣalāh, as in Ḥadīth, becomes the *Kaffārah* (expiation) of sins. Finally, 'dignified provision' has been set against spending in the way of Allah, that is, one would get what is much better and much more than what one has spent in the mortal life.

Verses 5 - 6

كَمَآ اَخْرَجَكَ رَبُّكَ مِنْۢ بَيْتِكَ بِالْحَقِّ وَاِنَّ فَرِيْقًا مِّنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ
لَكٰرِهُوْنَ ﴿٥﴾ يُجَادِلُوْنَكَ فِى الْحَقِّ بَعْدَ مَا تَبَيَّنَ كَاَنَّمَا
يُسَاقُوْنَ اِلَى الْمَوْتِ وَهُمْ يَنْظُرُوْنَ ﴿٦﴾

It is like when your Lord made you leave your home for the sake of truth, while a group from the believers were averse to it; [5] **they were disputing with you about the truth after it became clear, as if they were being driven to a death being seen by them.** [6]

Commentary

It has already been stated at the beginning of the Sūrah that most of the subjects taken up in Sūrah Al-Anfāl relate to the retribution and punishment which visited the disbelievers and polytheists, and to the favour shown and reward given to Muslims. Also, described there as a corollary are injunctions which provide for both parties necessary lessons and advices. Out of what had transpired between them, the first and the most important event was that of the battle of Badr in which the polytheists were defeated, suffering heavy losses in men and materials, despite the support of military hardware, numbers and strength at their disposal - and Muslims were blessed with a great victory despite their overall lack of men and materials. Beginning from the verse cited above, there appears in this Sūrah a detailed description of the battle of Badr.

The Battle of Badr : A Detailed Description

The first verse mentions that some Muslims did not like to take the risk of initiating and advancing for Jihād on the occasion of Badr. But, when Allah Ta'ālā commanded the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to initiate the Jihād through His special decree, those who had disliked the idea came along with him. The phraseology of the Qur'ān

employed to state this situation is worth consideration from many angles.

First of all, the verse begins with: كَمَآ اَخۡرَجَكَ رَبُّكَ (It is like when your Lord made you leave ...). Here the word: كَمَا (*kamā*) is a word used for comparison. Now, the point is what is being compared here, and with what? Commentators have given various interpretations possible here. Abū Ḥayyān has reported fifteen such statements. Out of these, three are more likely as probable:

1. The simile aims to state that the way the Companions had encountered some mutual difference at the time of the distribution of spoils obtained from the battle of Badr, then, they all obeyed the command of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم under Divine decree, and its blessings and good results became manifest before them - similarly, at the beginning of this Jihād, there was an expression of dislike from some people, then, it was under Divine decree that everyone obeyed and the beneficial outcome and superb rewards it brought in its wake were witnessed by everyone openly. This interpretation is credited to Farra' and al-Mubarrad (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ). Maulānā Ashraf A'lī Thānavī has preferred the same view in Tafsīr Bayān al-Qur'ān.

2. The second probable interpretation is that a promise of 'high ranks, forgiveness and dignified provision' in the Hereafter was made for true believers in previous verses (4). In these verses, the fact of this promise being certain was described in a manner which pointed out that - though the promise due to be fulfilled in the Hereafter is not yet openly visible for eyes to see, but the promise of Divine help and victory does stand fulfilled in the case of the battle of Badr all too manifestly. So, take your lesson from here and be certain that the way this promise has been fulfilled right here in this mortal world, so it shall be with the promise of the Hereafter - that too shall come to be definitely fulfilled. (Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī with reference to Al-Naḥḥās)

3. The third probability is what Abū Ḥayyān states after having reported fifteen interpretative positions taken by commentators. He says: I was not comfortable with any of these positions. One night, pondering over this verse, I went to sleep. Then, I saw in a dream that I am going somewhere and there is a person with me. I am discussing this verse with him and I am telling him that I have never faced a

difficulty similar to what I have faced in the case of the words of this verse. It seems that there is an elision of some word here. Then, all of a sudden, right there within the dream sequence, it transpired into my heart that the elision here is that of the word: نَصَرَكَ (*naṣaraka* : He helped you). This I liked and so did the other person I was talking to in the dream. When I woke up, I thought about it. My difficulty was all gone since, in this situation, the word:'*kamā*' has not been used for comparison, instead, it has been used for the statement of cause. Thus, the verse comes to mean that the cause of the very special help and support given to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم by Almighty Allah on the occasion of the battle of Badr was that he did what he did in this Jihād, not by some wish or discretion of his own, but by remaining obedient to the Divine Command exclusively. It was under His Command that he left his home and what happened thereafter should have happened precisely as it did - and it always does - that Divine support accompanies such a person.

Nevertheless, in this sentence of the verse, all these three meanings are probable and sound. Next, let us consider why the Holy Qur'ān has elected not to mention that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم came out for this Jihād on his own. Instead of that, the text states: 'your Lord made you leave.' Embedded here is a hint towards the perfect servitude and obedience of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. It signifies that his act is, in reality, the act of God which issues forth from the parts of his body - as it appears in an Ḥadīth al-Qudsī wherein the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is reported to have said: When a servant of Allah is blessed with nearness to Allah through obedience and servitude, Allah says about him (or her): 'I become his eye. What he sees, he sees through Me. I become his ears. What he hears, he hears through Me. I become his hands and feet. Whomsoever he grips, he overpowers through Me and towards whomsoever he walks, he walks through Me.' The essential outcome is that a very special help and support from the most exalted Allah accompanies him all along. It means that the acts which obviously seem to issue forth from his eyes and ears or hands and feet are, in reality, the workings of the power of Allah.

To sum up, it is by the use of the word: أَخْرَجَكَ (*akhrajaka* : made you

leave), a clear indication has been given that the act of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in coming out for Jihād was really the act of God which made him leave, though manifested through his deed.

Also worth noticing here is that the text chooses to say: أَخْرَجَكَ رَبُّكَ (your Lord made you leave) which mentions Allah Almighty with His attribute of being the *Rabb*, the Nurturer and Sustainer of all. This points out to the fact that the act of making him leave for this Jihād was undertaken as required by the majesty of the Supreme Nurturer and Sustainer and in the interest of teaching and training His prophet and the Muslim community through him. The reason is that, through this arrangement, the oppressed and subdued Muslims were to be made victorious and the arrogant and unjust disbelievers were to be subjected to their first taste of punishment.

The next phrase: مِنْ بَيْتِكَ means 'from your home.' The sense of the sentence is: 'Your Lord made you leave your home.' According to the majority of commentators, this 'home' means the home in Madinah, or the fair city of Madinah itself where he came to live after Hijrah - for the event of Badr took place during the second year of Hijrah. Then, by adding the expression: بِالْحَقِّ (*bil-ḥaqq*) translated as: 'for the sake of truth,' it has been made very clear that the entire action has been initiated to see that truth prevails and the false stands frustrated. Thus, also established here is that this action has not been triggered because of hunger of land or anger of monarch, as customary with other states.

At the conclusion of the verse, it was said: وَإِنَّ فَرِيقًا مِّنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ لَكَرِهُونَ (while a group from the believers were averse to it). The sense is that a group from among the Muslims took the idea of this Jihād to be burdensome and unpleasant. How and why the noble Companions came accross this unpleasant situation is something which needs to be understood. In fact, not only to understand the present statement but to fully understand verses which will soon follow, it is appropriate to first find out the initial circumstances and causes of the battle of Badr. So, let us first go to what happened at the battle of Badr.

According to the report of the event as narrated by Ibn 'Uqbah and Ibn 'Amīr, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم heard the news in Madīnah that Abū Sufyān was on his way to Makkah al-Mu'aẓẓamah with a

trading caravan carrying merchandise from Syria and that all Quraysh tribes of Makkah were partners in this business venture. According to the statement of Ibn 'Uqbah, there was no Quraysh man or woman in Makkah who did not hold a share in this venture. If someone had even one *mithqal* (approximately 4.50 gr.) of gold, he or she had still taken a share in it. As for the total invested capital of this trade caravan, it was fifty thousand *dinars* - as reported by Ibn 'Uqbah. Dinar is a gold coin which weighs approximately 4.50 grams. According to current (1970) market rates for gold, it is equal to Rupees fifty two and the value of the total capital of the caravan comes to Rupees twenty six *lakhs* Let us bear in mind that these rupees are not what we know them to be now. Instead, they are twenty six *lakhs*[1] which belong to a period 1400 years behind us - which, it goes without saying, had value and strength of its own, much higher than twenty six *crores* [2] of our time. It is interesting to note that seventy strong youngmen and their chiefs accompanied this trade caravan to manage the security and business concerns of the enterprise. This tells us that this trade caravan was, in real terms, a trading corporation of the Quraysh of Makkah.

On the authority of narrations from Sayyidna Ibn 'Abbas رضی اللہ عنہ and others, Al-Baghawi reports that there were forty Quraysh chiefs among the mounted force accompanying the caravan, with 'Amr ibn al-'As and Mukhramah ibn Nawfal being noteworthy among them. Then, it is also established that the strongest base of power the Quraysh had was no other but this very trading activity and the financial support of the capital which backed it. In fact, this was their seemingly innocent weapon with which they had harassed and compelled the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم to leave Makkah. In this background, when the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم came to know about the return of this trading caravan after their visit to Syria, it occured to him that this was the time to confront the caravan and break the main source of strength the Quraysh had. He consulted his Companions. But, these were the days of Ramadan. They had made no battle plans in advance. So, some of them supported the idea readily and courageously, but some others were a little hesitant. Under this situation, he too did not make partic-

1. $ 48,148

2. $ 4,81,481

ipation in this Jihād compulsory for all. Instead, he ordered that those who have a ride should go with him. At that time, there were many people who stayed behind unable to go on Jihād. As for those who wanted to go, their rides were in the adjoining villages. They sought permission to go and bring their rides before they could go with him. But, there was not much time to wait. Therefore, the order given was that only those who have their rides with them and do wish to go on Jihād should get ready to go. There was no time left to summon rides from outside. Therefore, only a few participants who were ready to go could be assembled together. As for those who did not intend to go from the very outset, that too was caused by the absence of a general call for Jihād. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had not made participation in this Jihād obligatory on everyone. Then, people thought that they were to handle a trade caravan, not an army which could need a matching force of fighters. Therefore, a fairly large number of the Companions did not take part in this Jihād.

After reaching Bi'r Suqya, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم ordered Qays ibn Ṣa'ṣa'ah رضى الله عنه to count the number of *mujahidīn* with him. He counted and told him that they were three hundred and thirteen. Hearing that, he was delighted. He said, 'This is the number of the companions of Ṭālūt.[1] Therefore, this is a good omen, that of victory.' The noble Companions had a total of seventy camels with them. There was one camel for every three of them. They would ride turn by turn. This applied to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم as well. Besides him, there were two other riding partners in the one camel alloted to them. They were Sayyidnā Abū Lubābah رضى الله عنه and Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنه. When came his turn to walk, they would submit: 'You ride. We shall do the walking for you.' The reply he gave was - as it would be from the one created to be mercy for all creation: 'Neither are you stronger than me, nor am I needfree of the reward of the Hereafter that I let you have the chance of earning a little *thawāb* for myself!' Therefore, when it was his turn to walk, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم too used to walk.

On the other hand, someone reached as far as 'Ain al-Zarqā', a well-known place in Syria and passed on information to Abū Sufyān,

1. An Israeli King (Saul). See for details v.1, p. 627, 628

the leader of the trade caravan, that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is waiting for the caravan and will definitely come after them. Abū Sufyān made necessary precautionary arrangements to meet the threat. When this caravan entered Ḥijāz, he picked up an intelligent and effecient agent known as Ḍamḍam (ضمضم) ibn 'Umar, gave him 20 *mithqāl* of gold (about 90 grams) as his wages, and made him agree to rush to Makkah on a speedy camel, and tell them about the danger the caravan apprehended from the companions of the Prophet of Islam.

To proclaim the danger, Ḍamḍam ibn 'Umar followed the particular custom of that time, cut off the ears and the nose of his she-camel, tore off his shirt from the front and the back and placed the camel-litter or seat upside down on the back of the camel. These signs served as danger bells during those days. When he entered Makkah in that style, the entire city was electrified. Everyone from the Quraysh was ready to put up a defence. Those who could go out to fight went out personally and those who were unable to do so for some reason, they arranged for someone to go and fight in their behalf. Thus, it was within three days that they had an armed force with necessary support ready to march.

When they noticed someone hesitating from participating in this battle, they suspected them, taking them to be pro-Muslim. Therefore, they particularly forced such people to come out and fight. There were others who professed Islam openly but were unable to migrate due to their personal compulsions. Having no choice, they had just stayed out in Makkah. These people too - as well as anyone from the family of Banū Hāshim about whom it was suspected that he had his sympathies with Muslims - they were all cornered and goaded to come out for this fight. Right there among these helpless people, there was Sayyidnā 'Abbās رضى الله عنه, the uncle of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, and the two sons of Abū Ṭālib namely Ṭālib and 'Aqīl also.

Thus, this Makkan army which had one thousand armed men, two hundred horses, six hundred coats of mail, female war-song chanters and their drums marched out to Badr. On every stage of their journey, ten camels were slaughtered to feed them.

On the other side, it was on Saturday, the 12th of Ramaḍān that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم moved out of Madinah with prepara-

tions good enough to confront a trade caravan. After covering several stages, when he reached close to Badr, he sent an advance reconnaisance party of two men to gather information about the caravan of Abū Sufyān. (Maẓharī)

The informers came back with the report that Abū Sufyān's caravan being aware of the coming of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in hot pursuit after them had passed by keeping close to the sea shore, and that an army of one thousand men was coming from Makkah to give cover to the caravan and fight the Muslims off. (Ibn Kathīr)

As obvious, this information changed all plans as projected. Given the gravity of the situation, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم went into consultation with his Companions to determine whether or not they have to fight against this advancing army. Sayyidnā Abū Ayyūb al-Anṣāri رضى الله عنه and some other Companions submitted that they do not have the necessary force to fight against them, nor have they come out there for that purpose. Thereupon, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه rose and pledged his obedience to whatever the Messenger of Allah decided. Then, rose Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه pledging his obedience to him and his readiness for Jihād in the same spirit. Finally, it was Sayyidnā Miqdād رضى الله عنه who stood up and said:

> ' *Yā Rasūl Allah*! Go by the command of Allah you have been given and enforce it. We are with you. By Allah, we shall never say to you what was said to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام by the Banī Isrā'īl: فَاذْهَبْ أَنْتَ وَرَبُّكَ فَقَاتِلَآ إِنَّا هٰهُنَا قٰعِدُوْنَ (Go, you and your Lord, and fight. As for us, we are sitting right here - 5:24). By the Being that has sent you with the true faith, if you were to take us as far as Bark al-Ghamad in Ethiopia, we shall follow you to fight there.'

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was very pleased. He made prayers for them. But, an expression of support was yet to come from the Anṣār which seemed to point out to the probability that the pledge of help and support given to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم by the Anṣār of Madīnah was limited to and valid within the city of Madīnah, and that they were not bound to extend their support for areas outside Madīnah. Therefore, he addressed the gathering once again asking them to advise him whether or not he should take the initiative in this

Jihād. This address was beamed at the Anṣār. Sayyidnā Sa'd ibn Mu'ādh al-Anṣārī رضی اللہ عنہ got the point and asked him: '*Yā Rasūl* Allah! Are you asking us?' He said: 'Yes.' Sayyidnā Sa'd ibn Mu'ādh then submitted:

> '*Yā Rasūl Allah*! We have believed in you and we have testified that everything you say is all true, and we have given solemn pledges to you that we shall obey you under all conditions. Therefore, enforce whatever command you have been given by Allah Ta'ālā. By the Being that has sent you with the true faith, if you take us into the sea, we shall go with you into the sea and no one from among us shall lag behind you. It is all right for us if you were to take us as soon as tomorrow and throw us against the enemy. We strongly hope that Allah Ta'ālā will have you witness conditions generated by our deeds, conditions which would become the delight of your eyes. Take us wherever you wish in the name of Allah.'

The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم was pleased with the response and ordered the group of Mujāhidin to march forward with the name of Allah. And to them he gave the good news that Allah Ta'ālā has promised him that they shall overcome one of the two groups. The two groups mentioned here mean: One, the trade caravān of Abū Sufyān; and the other, this army coming from Makkah. Then, he said: 'By Allah, it is as if I am seeing the killing fields of disbelievers with my own eyes.' (This whole event has been taken from Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr and Maẓharī)

Explanation of Verses in the Light of the Details of the Event

After having heard the details of the event, let us go back to the verses cited above. That it has been said in the first verse (5): وَاِنَّ فَرِيْقًا مِّنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ لَكٰرِهُوْنَ (while a group from the believers was averse to this Jihād) is actually a hint towards the state of mind which some noble Companions were in while being consulted on the advisability of waging Jihād and to which they seemed to be averse or not courageous enough to undertake it.

Then, the same event has been alluded to in the second verse (6): يُجَادِلُوْنَكَ فِى الْحَقِّ بَعْدَ مَا تَبَيَّنَ كَاَنَّمَا يُسَاقُوْنَ اِلَى الْمَوْتِ وَهُمْ يَنْظُرُوْنَ (they were disputing with you about the truth after it became clear, as if they were being driven to a death being seen by them).

Though the noble Companions had not disobeyed any command given to them - in fact, what they had done was a certain expression of their weakness and lack of courage as part of their response when consulted. But, even such expression of personal opinion coming from the Companions of the Messengers of Allah when juxtaposed with the high station they were blessed with was unwelcome in the sight of Allah Ta'ālā. Therefore, it was set forth in words which spell out displeasure.

Verses 7 - 10

وَاِذْ يَعِدُكُمُ اللّٰهُ اِحْدَى الطَّآىِٕفَتَيْنِ اَنَّهَا لَكُمْ وَتَوَدُّوْنَ اَنَّ غَيْرَ
ذَاتِ الشَّوْكَةِ تَكُوْنُ لَكُمْ وَيُرِيْدُ اللّٰهُ اَنْ يُّحِقَّ الْحَقَّ بِكَلِمٰتِهٖ
وَيَقْطَعَ دَابِرَ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿٧﴾ لِيُحِقَّ الْحَقَّ وَيُبْطِلَ الْبَاطِلَ وَ
لَوْكَرِهَ الْمُجْرِمُوْنَ ﴿٨﴾ اِذْ تَسْتَغِيْثُوْنَ رَبَّكُمْ فَاسْتَجَابَ لَكُمْ
اَنِّيْ مُمِدُّكُمْ بِاَلْفٍ مِّنَ الْمَلٰٓىِٕكَةِ مُرْدِفِيْنَ ﴿٩﴾ وَمَا جَعَلَهُ اللّٰهُ اِلَّا
بُشْرٰى وَلِتَطْمَىِٕنَّ بِهٖ قُلُوْبُكُمْ ۚ وَمَا النَّصْرُ اِلَّا مِنْ عِنْدِ اللّٰهِ ۚ
اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَزِيْزٌ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿١٠﴾

And when Allah was promising you that one of the two groups was for you, and you were wishing that the unarmed one be for you. And Allah wanted to establish the truth through His words and to cut off the very root of the disbelievers, [7] **so that He proves the truth to be true and falsehood to be false, even to the dislike of the sinners.** [8]

When you were calling your Lord for help, so He responded to you (saying): "I am going to support you with one thousand of the angels, one following the other." [9]

And Allah has made it (the promise) just to give you a good news, and so that your hearts might be at rest thereby. And the help is from none but Allah. Surely, Allah is Mighty, Wise. [10]

Commentary

The verses cited above describe the event of Badr and point out to

blessings which descended upon Muslims in the form of Divine help and support during the Battle.

In the first (7) and the second (8) verses, it has been stated that at the time the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the noble Companions got the information that a virtual army of the Quraysh has already left Makkah to give a security cover to their trade caravan, Muslims found that they now have two groups to deal with. One of the two was the trade caravan which has been called: عير (*'īr*) in relevant narrations. The other one was this very armed group which had dashed out from Makkah and which has been called: نفير (*nafīr*). According to the statement given in the verse, that was the time when Allah Ta'ālā had made a promise to His Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم - and to all Muslims through him - to the effect that they will totally overcome one of the two groups so much so that they would be able to deal with it as they wished.

Now, it is obvious that overcoming a trade caravan was easy and danger-free while dealing with an armed force was fraught with all sorts of difficulties and dangers. Therefore, after hearing this seemingly ambiguous promise, it occured to many Companions, that it would be convenient if the Divine promise, made to Muslims that they would overcome one of the two groups, were to be about the group which was simply an unarmed trading caravan. But, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and many of his leading Companions intended otherwise as Divinely guided and settled for overcoming an armed force as the better choice.

In this verse, Muslims seeking to overcome an unarmed group have been warned that they, on their part, preferred to overcome an unarmed trading caravan in view of their tilt towards personal convenience and a danger-free option. But, Allah Ta'ālā intended it to be otherwise so that the real objective of Islām stands achieved, that is, truth gets to be established as the ultimate truth and the very root of disbelievers is cut off. It is obvious that this objective could be achieved only when the confrontation is against an armed force and Muslims overwhelm and overpower them.

In substance, what Muslims are being chastised for is their choice of an option which was laced with timidity, desire to relax, and was a

thing of temporal benefit. Contrary to that, the intention made by Allah Ta'ālā was based on high determination, great objectives and benefits which were perfect and eternal. Then, in the second verse (8), it was further clarified by saying that there was nothing outside the power and control of Allah Ta'ālā. If He had so willed, Muslims would have truimphed over the trading caravan, but He deemed it compatible with the station and majesty of the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم and his noble Companions رضى الله عنهم اجمعين that the confrontation should be against the armed force which should result in their conquest, so that it becomes all too clear that truth is, after all, the truth and that falsehood is, after all, nothing but falsehood.

Noteworthy at this point is the question that Allah Ta'ālā is All-Knowing, All-Aware and certainly cognizant of the beginning and the end of everything. What then was the expedient consideration behind this ambiguous promise - that Muslims will overcome any one of the two groups? It seems possible that He could have pinpointed one group precisely and said that such and such group will be overtaken.

The reason for this ambiguity - and Allah knows best - seems to be that this was designed to be a test of the noble Companions to determine whether they opt for the easy, or the difficult. Then, this was part of their moral training as well - through which they were taught a lesson in high determination, in the struggle for great objectives and in how not to be scared of impending dangers.

Described in the third (9) and fourth (10) verses is what happened after Muslims stood combat ready against their armed opponents. When the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم saw that he has only three hundred and thirteen Companions by his side - and that too being mostly unarmed - and arrayed against them there was an armed force composed of one thousand strong men, then, he raised his hands of prayer before Allah *Jalla thana'uh* seeking his help and support. As he prayed, the noble Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all, said: '*Āmīn*' (Amen : So be it). Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه has reported the words of this *du'ā* (prayer) made by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم as given below in its translation:

> "O Allah, let the promise You have made to me come true now. O Allah, if this modest group of Muslims were to perish,

then, on Your earth, there shall remain no one to worship You. (because, the earth is full of *kufr* and *shirk* and left here are these few Muslims who worship Allah as due)."

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم kept busy with his *du'ā*, beseeching earnestly and plaintively so much so that the sheet wrap around his shoulders slided down. Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه stepped forward and put the sheet back on his blessed body and said to him: '*Ya Rasūl* Allah, please worry no more. Allah Ta'ālā will surely respond to your prayer and fulfill His promise.'

This is the event referred to in the opening statement: إِذْ تَسْتَغِيثُونَ رَبَّكُمْ (when you were calling your Lord for help) of verse 9. It means that 'worth remembering is the time when you were calling your Lord and appealing for His help and support.' This appeal for help was though from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in fact but, since all Companions by his side were saying '*Āmīn*' (So be it), therefore, the statement was attributed to the whole group.

Immediately after, there appears the statement which describes how this prayer has been answered. The words are: فَاسْتَجَابَ لَكُمْ أَنِّي مُمِدُّكُم بِأَلْفٍ مِّنَ الْمَلَٰئِكَةِ مُرْدِفِينَ (so he responded to you [saying]: 'I am going to support you with one thousand of the angels, one following the other' - 9)

The unmatched power with which Allah Ta'ālā has blessed angels can be gauged from the event which transpired at the time the part of earth on which the people of Sayyidnā Lūṭ صلى الله عليه وسلم lived was overturned upside down. This was done by Angel Jibra'īl with just one flick of his feather. So, there was no need to send such a large number of angels to participate in the combat - even one would have been more than enough. But, Allah Ta'ālā knows the nature of His servants as they also get impressed with numbers. Therefore, the promise of sending angels was kept synchronized with the numbers of the adversary in the combat, so that their hearts are put at rest fully and comprehensively.

The fourth verse (10) restates this aspect explicitly by saying: وَمَا جَعَلَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بُشْرَىٰ وَلِتَطْمَئِنَّ بِهِ قُلُوبُكُمْ It means: 'Allah has done it only to give you glad tidings and so that your hearts might be at rest thereby.'

The number of angels sent to support Muslims in the battle of

Badr has been given as one thousand at this place, while in Sūrah 'Āl-'Imrān (3: 124) the number mentioned is three thousand and five thousand. The reason for this lies in three different promises made under different circumstances. The first promise was that of one thousand angels, the reason for which was the prayer of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the supporting plaint of common Muslims with him. The second promise of three thousand angels which appears first in Sūrah 'Al-'Imrān was made at a time when Muslims heard about the additional forces coming to join the Quraysh army. It has been reported in Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī as based on a narration of Al-Sha'bī from Ibn Abī Shaybah, Ibn al-Mundhir and others that on the day of the battle of Badr when Muslims heard that Kurz ibn Jābir Muḥāribī was coming with additional armed support for the disbelievers, they were disturbed and agitated. Thereupon, the verse of 'Āl-'Imrān: اَلَنْ يَّكْفِيَكُمْ اَنْ يُّمِدَّكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ بِثَلٰثَةِ اٰلٰفٍ مِّنَ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ مُنْزَلِيْنَ :"Shall it not suffice you that your Lord should help you with three thousand of the angels sent down (for you)?" - 3:124) was revealed and referred to wherein is the promise of sending a force of three thousand angels from the heavens in order to support believers.

As for the third promise of five thousand, it was made subject to the condition that should the enemy launch a sudden offensive, a supporting force of five thousand angels will be sent down. That promise appears in the verse which follows verse 124 of Sūrah 'Āl-'Imrān (3) cited immediately above. Given here are the words in which it has been mentioned:

بَلٰٓى اِنْ تَصْبِرُوْا وَتَتَّقُوْا وَيَاْتُوْكُمْ مِّنْ فَوْرِهِمْ هٰذَا يُمْدِدْكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ بِخَمْسَةِ اٰلٰفٍ مِّنَ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ مُسَوِّمِيْنَ

"Why not? If you stay patient and fear Allah and they come upon you even in this heat of theirs, your Lord will reinforce you with five thousand of the angels having distinct marks" (3:125).

Some Commentators have said that this promise had three conditions: (1) Fortitude, (2) Taqwā or fear of Allah and (3) Sudden and all-out attack by the opposing forces. Out of these, the first two conditions were already fulfilled by the noble Companions for no departure from these was witnessed in this battlefield from the beginning to the end.

But, what did not take place was the third condition of a sudden attack. Therefore, things did not reach the point where the army of five thousand angels was to be inducted.

So, this matter remained revolving between one and three thousand which also lends to the probability that the figure of three thousand may mean the one thousand sent earlier to which an additional force of two thousand was added and made to be three thousand - and it is also probable that these three thousand were in addition to the first one thousand.

At this stage, it is also interesting to note that the promise of sending three groups of angels in these three verses (8:9; 3:124; 3:125) mentions a quality particular to each group. In the present verse, verse 9 of Sūrah Al-Anfāl, where the promise is for one thousand, the word used to describe the quality of these angels is مُرْدِفِيْنَ (*murdifīn*: translated here as 'one following the other'). Perhaps, the indication already given within the text is that there are others too coming behind these angels.Then, in the first verse of Sūrah 'Āl-'Imrān (3:124) quoted above, the quality of the angels has been given as: مُنْزَلِيْنَ (*munzalīn* : translated as 'sent down [for you]'). The sense is that these angels will be made to descend from the heavens. In this, there is a hint towards the special arrangement made in this connection - that the angels already present on the earth will not be employed for this mission, instead of which, it will be by special appointment and despatch that these angels will be sent down from the heavens to fulfill the assignment they have been sent to carry out. After that, we have the second verse (3:125) of Sūrah 'Āl-'Imrān where the figure of five thousand has been mentioned. There, the quality of the angels has been stated to be: مُسَوِّمِيْنَ (*musawwimīn*: translated as 'having distinct marks') that is, they shall be appearing in a particular dress and distinctive signs and marks. This is corroborated by Ḥadīth narrations which report that the headgear of angels that descended during the battle of Badr was white and that of the angels who were sent down to help believers in the battle of Ḥunayn was red.

Finally, towards the end of the verse (10), it was said: وَمَا النَّصْرُ اِلَّا مِنْ عِنْدِ اللّٰهِ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَزِيْزٌ حَكِيْمٌ (And the help is from none but Allah. Surely, Allah is Mighty, Wise). Here, Muslims have been warned that all help, what-

ever and from wherever it may be, open or secret, is from Allah Ta'ālā alone and issues forth through His power and control only. The help and support of angels is also subject to nothing but His command. Therefore, all believers must look up to none but the most pristine Being of Allah who is One and with Whom there is no partner or associate - because, He is the possessor of Power and Wisdom at its greatest.

Verses 11 - 14

إِذْ يُغَشِّيكُمُ النُّعَاسَ أَمَنَةً مِّنْهُ وَيُنَزِّلُ عَلَيْكُم مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً
لِّيُطَهِّرَكُم بِهِ وَيُذْهِبَ عَنكُمْ رِجْزَ الشَّيْطٰنِ وَلِيَرْبِطَ عَلٰى
قُلُوبِكُمْ وَيُثَبِّتَ بِهِ الْأَقْدَامَ ﴿١١﴾ إِذْ يُوحِي رَبُّكَ إِلَى الْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ
أَنِّي مَعَكُمْ فَثَبِّتُوا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا ۚ سَأُلْقِي فِي قُلُوبِ الَّذِينَ
كَفَرُوا الرُّعْبَ فَاضْرِبُوا فَوْقَ الْأَعْنَاقِ وَاضْرِبُوا مِنْهُمْ كُلَّ
بَنَانٍ ﴿١٢﴾ ذٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ شَآقُّوا اللّٰهَ وَرَسُولَهُ ۚ وَمَن يُشَاقِقِ اللّٰهَ
وَرَسُولَهُ فَإِنَّ اللّٰهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿١٣﴾ ذٰلِكُمْ فَذُوقُوهُ وَأَنَّ
لِلْكٰفِرِينَ عَذَابَ النَّارِ ﴿١٤﴾

When He covered you with drowsiness, as tranquility (descending) from Him and sent down upon you water from the heavens, so that He might purify you with it, and remove from you the impurity of Satan, and so that He might strengthen your hearts and make (your) feet firm therewith. [11]

When your Lord revealed to the angels: "I am with you. So, make those who believe firm. I shall cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve. So, strike over the necks, and smite them (so as to even reach) every finger-joint of theirs." [12]

That is because they were hostile to Allah and His Messenger. And whoever becomes hostile to Allah and His Messenger, then, Allah is severe at punishment. [13] **That is what you have to taste and for the disbelievers there is the punishment of the Fire.** [14]

Commentary

Being enumerated from the very beginning are blessings of Allah Ta'ālā which descended upon His obedient servants. The events of the battle of Badr are parts of the same chain. Out of the many blessings bestowed by Allah Ta'ālā during the battle of Badr, the very first blessing is the bringing out of Muslims for this Jihād, which finds mention in: كَمَآ اَخْرَجَكَ رَبُّكَ (When your Lord made you leave your home - 5). The second blessing is the promise of providing the support of angels which has been made in: اِذْيَعِدُكُمُ اللّٰهُ (And when Allah was promising you - 7). The third blessing is the answer to the prayer made and the fulfillment of the promise of support given, which has been mentioned in: اِذْ تَسْتَغِيْثُوْنَ رَبَّكُمْ (When you were calling your Lord for help - 9). The fourth blessing finds its description in the first of the set of four verses cited immediately above (11). Mentioned here are two blessings for the believers: (1) The removal of anxiety and fatigue through a mass descension of drowsiness; and (2) the provision of water for them through rains which aslo made the battlefield smooth for them and muddy for the enemy.

According to the details of what happened there, when this first ever confrontation between *kufr* (disbelief, infidelity) and Islām turned into a certain battle, the army of the disbelievers of Makkah had already reached and set up camp at a place which was located on high grounds with water close to them. When the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the Companions arrived at that place, the lower part of valley fell to their lot. The Holy Qur'ān has portrayed the lay-out of this battlefield in verse 42 of this very Sūrah by saying: اِذْ اَنْتُمْ بِالْعُدْوَةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ بِالْعُدْوَةِ الْقُصْوٰى (When you were on the nearest cliff, and they were on the farthest one - 8:42) a detailed description of which shall appear later.

The spot reaching where the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had first camped was considered strategically inappropriate by Sayyidnā Ḥubāb ibn al-Mundhir رضى الله عنه who knew this territory well. Keeping this in view, he respectfully inquired: '*Yā Rasūlallah*! Does this place you have selected happen to be in compliance to a command from Allah Ta'ālā in which we have no say, or it has been taken to as simply based on opinion and expedience?' He said: 'No, this is not something Divinely ordained. This can be changed or re-located.' After that, Sayy-

idnā Ḥubāb ibn al-Mundhir submitted: 'If so, it is better to move forward from this spot, reach a water source close to the armed force of Makkan chiefs and take it over. We are sure to have an abundant supply of water there.' The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم accepted his proposal, marched ahead, took over the spot with water, had a water tank built there and saw to it that an ample supply of water has been stored in it.

After he had taken care of this strategic need, Sayyidnā Sa'd ibn Mu'ādh رضى الله عنه said: "*Yā Rasūlallāh*! We would like to put up a shaded structure for you at a secure place where you could stay and where your riding animals could be nearby you. The plan behind this arrangement is that we shall wage our Jihād against the enemy and if Allah were to bless us with victory, then, our plan is well-served for this is what we like for you. But, God forbid, should things turn out otherwise, then, you would be in a position to ride your camel and go back to join the rest of your Companions left behind in Madīnah - because, I am strongly inclined to believe that they are no less than us in terms of sacrifice for the cause and love for you. In fact, if they had any idea of the eventuality that you will have to fight against this armed force, then, none of them would have chosen to stay behind. I am sure when you are back in Madīnah, they will continue to be your companions in the mission.' On this gallant and noble offer, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم prayed for them. So, a ragtag awning of some modest sort was set up for him in which there was no one but he himself and Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه. Sayyidnā Mu'ādh رضى الله عنه, sword in hand, stood on the door, guarding.

This was the first night of confrontation. A bunch of three hundred and thirteen mostly unarmed souls stood against a thousand strong armed force, being three times more in numbers. They had already occupied the better spot of the battlefield. The lower part of the valley which was sandy and difficult to move around had fallen to the lot of Muslims. Everyone was concerned. Anxiety was natural. The Satan also started instigating some people: Here you are, claiming to be on the path of truth and at a time so crucial you are busy making Tahajjud prayers rather than go and take some rest. But, cast a look at the ground reality - you will see your enemy casting his heavy

shadows on you being far superior to you from all angles. Under these conditions, Allah Ta'ālā cast a unique kind of drowsiness on Muslims which made every Muslim, whether or not he intended to sleep, go to sleep compulsively.

Ḥafiẓ al-Ḥadīth, Abū Ya'lā reports that Sayyidnā 'Alī al-Murtaḍā رضی اللہ عنہ said: On that night of the battle of Badr, there remained no one from among us who did not go to sleep. Only the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم remained awake throughout the night and kept busy with the Ṣalāh of Tahajjud right through dawn.

Quoting the Ṣaḥīḥ, Ibn Kathīr reports that, on that night, when the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم was busy with the Ṣalāh of Tahajjud in his *'Arīsh*, the twig-roofed hutment set up for him, he too was somewhat affected by drowsiness. But, immediately coming out of it with a smile, he said: "O Abū Bakr, here comes good news for you. This is Jibra'īl علیہ السلام standing near the cliff" and saying this, he walked out of the hutment reciting the verse which follows: سَيُهْزَمُ الْجَمْعُ وَيُوَلُّونَ الدُّبُرَ (Soon the gathered group of the enemy will be defeated and they will turn [their] backs - 54:45). According to some narrations, when he came out, he pointed towards various spots and said: 'This is the spot where Abū Jahl will be killed, and this is for so and so, and this is for so and so.' Then, events turned out to be precisely as he had indicated. (Tafsīr Maẓharī)

And as it happened during the battle of Badr where Allah Ta'ālā cast a particular kind of drowsiness on all Companions of the Prophet in order to remove their fatigue and tension, so it did during the battle of 'Uḥud.

Sufyān al-Thawrī رحمۃ اللہ علیہ reports on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضی اللہ عنہ that sleep during the state of war is a sign of peace and tranquility from Allah Ta'ālā - and sleep during the state of Ṣalāh is from the Satan. (Ibn Kathīr)

The second blessing Muslims received that night was that rains came and totally overturned all battle plans. The spot occupied by the Quraysh army was hit by heavy rains which made it muddy and difficult to walk through. Then, the spot where the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم and his Companions were camped was sandy and difficult to walk

through at the very outset. When rains came, this spot received the lighter part of it which helped firm up the sandy surface making the ground nice and easy to walk on.

The first of the four verses appearing above (11) mentions these very two blessings - sleep and rain - which, by upturning the blueprint of the battlefield, washed off the Satanic scruples which were bothering some weak combatants, scruples like: 'Here we are, on the side of truth, yet appear to be all subdued and overshadowed while there stands our enemy who is, despite being on the side of falsehood, basking in the sunshine of power, majesty and confidence!'

So, Muslims are being told in this verse to remember the time when Allah was covering them up with drowsiness to make tranquility from Him descend upon them, and He was sending down rains upon them so that He purifies them with that water - and removes from them the impurity of Satanic instigations and scruples, and strengthens their hearts, and makes their feet firm.

Mentioned in the second verse (12) is the fifth blessing which was beamed at Muslims in this battlefield of Badr. That came through the command addressed to the angels sent by Allah Ta'ālā to help Muslims, in which He said: 'I am with you. So, you make believers firm. I am going to cast terror into the hearts of disbelievers. So, strike over their necks, and smite them [so as to even reach] every finger-joint of theirs.'

Here, the angels have been charged with two duties: (1) That they should encourage, exhort and empower Muslims with steadfastness which can be done either by appearing on the battlefield, increase their group strength and participate with them in fighting, or also by using their unobserved ability to dispose matters (*taṣarruf*) they would make the hearts of Muslims firm and empower them to operate more effectively. (2) The second duty entrusted with them was that the angels should themselves engage in fighting and attack disbelievers. From this verse (at least for the purpose on hand), it is apparent that the angels did both. They acted upon the hearts of Muslims, increased their courage and strength, and took part in the actual fighting as well. This is also confirmed by some Ḥadīth narrations which have been reported in details in Tafsīr Al-Durr Al-Manthūr and Maẓharī

and where eye witnesses to the participation of angels in actual fighting have been documented on the authority of the noble Ṣaḥābah.

In the third verse (13), it was said that the reason for whatever happened during this confrontation between *kufr* and Islam was that those disbelievers were hostile to Allah and His Messenger and whoever becomes hostile to Allah and His Messenger, then, for him the punishment of Allah is customarily severe. This tells us that, on the one hand, Muslims were the blessed ones in the battle of Badr for victory became theirs. On the other hand, by sending punishment on disbelievers through Muslims, they were chastised a little for their evil doings - while, the much heavier punishment awaits them in the Hereafter - both of which have been described in the fourth verse (14) by saying: ذٰلِكُمْ فَذُوْقُوْهُ وَاَنَّ لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ عَذَابَ النَّارِ (That is what you have to taste, and for the disbelievers there is the punishment of the Fire).

In other words, what is being said here is: This is a little punishment from Us. So, taste it and better realize that, after this, the punishment of the fire of Jahannam is due to come for disbelievers, a punishment which is severe, lasting and unimaginable.

Verses 15 - 19

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْۤا اِذَا لَقِيْتُمُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا زَحْفًا فَلَا تُوَلُّوْهُمُ الْاَدْبَارَ ﴿١٥﴾ وَمَنْ يُّوَلِّهِمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ دُبُرَهٗۤ اِلَّا مُتَحَرِّفًا لِّقِتَالٍ اَوْ مُتَحَيِّزًا اِلٰى فِئَةٍ فَقَدْ بَآءَ بِغَضَبٍ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَمَاْوٰىهُ جَهَنَّمُ ؕ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيْرُ ﴿١٦﴾ فَلَمْ تَقْتُلُوْهُمْ وَلٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ قَتَلَهُمْ ۪ وَمَا رَمَيْتَ اِذْ رَمَيْتَ وَلٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ رَمٰى ۚ وَلِيُبْلِيَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ مِنْهُ بَلَآءً حَسَنًا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ سَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿١٧﴾ ذٰلِكُمْ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ مُوْهِنُ كَيْدِ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿١٨﴾ اِنْ تَسْتَفْتِحُوْا فَقَدْ جَآءَكُمُ الْفَتْحُ ۚ وَاِنْ تَنْتَهُوْا فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ ۚ وَاِنْ تَعُوْدُوْا نَعُدْ ۚ وَلَنْ تُغْنِيَ عَنْكُمْ فِئَتُكُمْ شَيْـًٔا وَّلَوْ كَثُرَتْ ۙ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ مَعَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿١٩﴾

O those who believe, when you face the disbelievers marching to battle, then, do not turn your backs on

them. [15] **And whoever turns his back on them that day, unless maneuvering for battle or turning to join a company, turns with wrath from Allah, and his abode is Jahannam and it is an evil place to return.** [16]

So, you did not kill them, but Allah killed them. And you did not throw when you threw but Allah did throw, so that He may bless the believers with a good favour. Surely, Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. [17] **Apart from that, Allah is the One who frustrates the device of the disbelievers.** [18]

If you pray for victory, 'victory' has come upon you. And if you give up, it is better for you. And if you repeat, We shall repeat. And your people shall not suffice you at all, even though they are many in number; and Allah is with the believers. [19]

Commentary

Out of the verses appearing above, the first two (15-16) tell us about a military law of Islam. The word: زحف (*zahf*) translated here literally as 'marching to battle' denotes the confrontation and intermingling between the two armies. The sense is that once a war is on, turning back and deserting the battlefield is not permissible for Muslims.

The second verse (16) refers to an exception to this rule, and to a severe punishment for illegal deserters.

The exception covers two states: (1) إِلَّا مُتَحَرِّفًا لِّقِتَالٍ أَوْ مُتَحَيِّزًا إِلَىٰ فِئَةٍ (unless maneuvering for battle,) (2) أَوْ مُتَحَيِّزًا إِلَىٰ فِئَةٍ (or turning to join a company) that is, when a war is on, turning one's back is permissible only under two conditions. Firstly, this turning back from the battlefield should simply be strategic, just to hoodwink the enemy and certainly not to bolt away from the battlefield in reality. In short, the purpose in sight should be to launch a blitzkrieg or a lightning attack on the enemy by making them complacent about what may look like a real retreat. This is the meaning of the statement: إِلَّا مُتَحَرِّفًا لِّقِتَالٍ (unless maneuvering for battle) because the word: تحرف (*taharruf*) is used to refer to turning away towards a certain side obliquely. (Ruh al-Ma'ani)

The second state of exception in which it is permissible to turn one's back from the battlefield is that one realizes the weakness of one's combating force and moves back to gather additional support

from Mujāhidīn and come back into the battle with added strength. This is what the sentence: اَوۡمُتَحَيِّزًا اِلٰى فِئَةٍ (or turning to join a company) means because the word: تَحَيُّز (*taḥayyuz*) literally means to join up and فئة (*fi'ah*) signifies a group, company or force. Thus, the sense is that should one back out from the battlefield with the intention of joining up with one's group, assembling the needed fighting support and returning to attack again, then, this is permissible.

After having mentioned this exception, the text describes the punishment of those who deserted the battlefield or turned their backs illegally without being under conditions which have been granted exception. The words are: فَقَدۡ بَآءَ بِغَضَبٍ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَمَاۡوٰىهُ جَهَنَّمُ وَبِئۡسَ الۡمَصِيۡرُ that is, the deserter and dodger of a Jihād battle only 'turns back with wrath from Allah, and his abode is Jahannam (Hell) and it is an evil place to return.'

From these two verses (15-16) comes the governing rule that, no matter how large in numbers, and superior in strength and power, the adversary may be, it is Ḥarām (forbidden, unlawful) for Muslims to turn their backs from fighting them - with the exception of two conditions: (1) That this turning back is not for deserting the battlefield, instead, is a feinted move or strategic ploy, (2) and that it is with the intention to return with auxiliary forces and resume attacking afresh.

When these verses were revealed during the battle of Badr, this was the operating order of the time, that is, take on the enemy, irrespective of its numbers, strength and power, and irrespective of your own numbers and strength as compared to it, then do not turn back from the combat and run for life. This is how it was in Badr. Only three hundred and thirteen Mujāhidīn were facing one thousand, three times their number. It was later on that injunctions relaxing restrictions were revealed in verses 65 and 66 of Sūrah Al-Anfāl, now under study. In verse 65, twenty Muslims have been commanded to wage Jihād against two hundred disbelievers, and one hundred Muslims against one thousand of them. Then, in verse 66, the following law of additional relaxation was revealed:

اَلۡـٰٔنَ خَفَّفَ اللّٰهُ عَنۡكُمۡ وَعَلِمَ اَنَّ فِيۡكُمۡ ضَعۡفًا ؕ فَاِنۡ يَّكُنۡ مِّنۡكُمۡ مِّائَةٌ صَابِرَةٌ يَّغۡلِبُوۡا مِائَتَيۡنِ

> Now Allah Ta'ālā has granted relief to you in view of your weakness whereby one hundred steadfast Muslims shall be able to overcome two hundred disbelievers.'

The indication given here is that Muslims are, after all, expected to overcome an adversary twice their number, therefore, it is not permissible for them to turn their backs. However, if the numerical strength of the adversary turns out to be more than twice their number, then, under such a condition, it is permissible to disengage and leave the battlefield.

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ said: 'A person who fled against three did not 'flee' but one who fled against two is a deserter, that is, is answerable for a major sin.' (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī). Now, this is the injunction which holds good right through the Last Day. According to the consensus of the majority of the Muslim Ummah, and in the view of the Four Imams, the exact Islamic Legal position in this case is: Until such time the number of the adversary does not go beyond twice, it is Ḥarām to desert the battlefield, and is a major sin.

In the Ṣaḥīḥayn (Al-Bukhārī and Muslim), it has been reported from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضی اللہ عنہ that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم identified seven things as fatal for a person. He counted fleeing from the battlefield also as one of these. And the Holy Qur'ān rated the early retreat of the noble Companions during the battle of Ḥunayn as a Satanic slip which confirms that it is a great sin. The actual statement of the Qur'ān is: إِنَّمَا اسْتَزَلَّهُمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ (Satan has but made them slip - 3:155)

Tirmidhī and Abū Dāwūd have reported the incident of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ that once he left the battlefield, took refuge in Madīnah and presented himself before the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم where he confessed to his misconduct and expressed his utter dismay and confusion on having become a sinning deserter of the battlefield. The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, far from being displeased with him, rather comforted him by saying: بل انتم العکارون وانا فئتکم (No, you are not of those who flee from battles, instead of that, you are here to seek support after which you are to go back into the battle and attack once again, and I am, for you, the support). Here, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has made it very clear that the act of those who fled into

Madīnah for refuge is included under the exception which permits leaving the battlefield in order to assemble and bring back additional support. It was actually on the basis of the specially high degree of fear, awe and recognition of the greatness of Allah Ta'ālā which was part of his persona that Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh *ibn* 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ was disturbed even at this maneuvered retreat as well and went to the act of presenting himself before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم as if he had committed some crime.

In the third verse (17), after recounting the rest of the event which transpired at the battle of Badr, Muslims have been instructed that they should not take the defeat of many by some and of the strong by the weak in the miraculous victory of the battle of Badr to be the outcome of their own effort and deed. In fact, they should be looking towards the most sacred Being of Allah whose help and support totally re-wrote all plans in this Battle.

The details of this event mentioned in the verse have been reported by Ibn Jarīr, Al-Ṭabarī, Al-Baihaqī and others as based on narrations from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ and others.

On the day of the confrontation at Badr, says the report, when the armed force of one thousand men of Makkah entered into the valley from behind the cliff, it did not hide its contempt for Muslims being low in numbers and weak in combat fitness. And on top of it, it came waxing proud over its numbers and strength, betraying great arrogance. At that time, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم raised his hands of prayer saying: '*Yā* Allah! Here come Your beliers, the Quraysh of Makkah, all proud and arrogant. The promise of victory You have made to me, let that promise be fulfilled soon.' (Rūḥ al-Bayān) Thereupon, angel Jibra'īl came and said: 'You take a handful of dust and throw it towards the army of the enemy.' He did what he was asked to do. And according to a report of Ibn Abī Ḥātim based on a narration of Ibn Zayd, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم picked up a handful of dust and pebbles thrice; the first he threw towards the right of the army, the second towards the left, and the third towards the center. The outcome was that these one to three handfuls of dust and pebbles were Divinely spread out miraculously all over them, so much so that not one man from the force was left without having received part of this dust and

these pebbles over his eyes and face. Naturally, this caused a rampage in the army. Muslims pursued them. The angels were with them, fighting and killing. (Maẓharī, Rūḥ)

Finally, some fighting men from the opposing side were killed, some were taken prisoners, the rest ran away and the battle was won by the Muslims.

This great victory was achieved by Muslims in the background which was initially full of dismay and hopelessness. So, when they returned from the battlefield, they started talking about it. The Companions got busy relating their deeds on the battlefield. Revealed thereupon was this verse: فَلَمْ تَقْتُلُوْهُمْ وَلٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ قَتَلَهُمْ (So, you did not kill them, but Allah killed them -17) through which they were instructed not to wax proud over their effort and deed, for that which happened there was not simply the outcome of their personal effort and deed. In fact, it was purely and simply the fruit of the help and support given by Allah Ta'ālā - and the enemies killed at their hands were not really killed by them, rather, they were killed by Allah Ta'ālā.

Similarly, addressing the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, it was said: وَمَا رَمَيْتَ إِذْ رَمَيْتَ وَلٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ رَمٰى (And you did not throw when you threw, but Allah did throw). It means that the specific outcome of the act of throwing, whereby it would reach the eyes of every fighting man in the enemy force and frighten them all, was not the direct effect of 'his' throwing. It was, in fact, the perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā which generated the format of this situation. To quote Rūmī for a chic poetic explanation:

مارميت اذ رميت گفت حق　　　کارما برکارها دارد سبق

'And you did not throw when you did,' said Allah,
'Our Act precedes all other acts.'

Certainly valuable for Muslims - more valuable than their victory in Jihād - was this instruction which disengaged their minds from means and tied it up with the master-provider of all means, and through it, saved them from falling into the trap of pride and arrogance which generally intoxicates victorious nations. After that it was said that victory and defeat are subservient to the command of Allah and that His support is with those who are obedient: وَلِيُبْلِيَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ مِنْهُ بَلَآءً حَسَنًا (so that He may bless the believers with a good favour). It means

that Allah blessed the believers with this great victory in order to give them the best of return for their obedience and struggle. The literal meaning of the word: بلاء (*balā'*) is test or trial. As for the test taken by Allah Ta'ālā, it sometimes comes when someone is put to distress or hardship - and there are occasions when this is done by giving someone comfort and wealth. Here, the name of *ḥasan* (good) *bala'* (trial) has been given to a test which is taken by giving comfort, wealth, support and victory to find out if people who are so blessed take it to be a favour from Allah and are grateful for it, or take it to be the outcome of their personal excellence, become proud and arrogant and undo what they did - because, there is no room for pride from anyone before Allah Ta'ālā.

In contrast to this, yet another benefit which came out of this victory has been described in the fourth verse as: ذٰلِكُمْ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ مُوْهِنُ كَيْدِ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ (Apart from that, Allah is the One who frustrates the device of the disbelievers - 18). In other words, it can be said that Muslims were blessed with this victory for yet another reason, that is, the plans of the disbelievers should be rendered ineffective through it, something which would make them understand that Divine support is not with them - and no plan can succeed without it.

The fifth verse (19) carries an address to the defeated disbelievers from the tribe of Quraysh and refers to an event which came to pass when the Quraysh army was about to depart Makkah on their mission to confront Muslims.

According to the report of that event, when the army of Qurayshi disbelievers was ready to march against Muslims, the commander of the army, Abū Jahl and other chiefs had made earnest prayers holding the covering drapes of the Baytullah in their hands before leaving Makkah. Strange as it would seem, they did not specifically pray for their own victory. Rather, the prayer they made was in general terms and its words were:

> "O Allah, let victory come to the superior-most out of the two armies, and to the better-guided out of the two groups, and to the nobler out of the two parties, and to the religion and faith which is more sublime out of the two." (Maẓharī)

It is interesting that these dim-witted people were under the

impression that they were the ones higher and superior and better-guided as compared to Muslims, therefore, they surmised that the prayer they were making was in their own favour. They actually wanted that Allah would, through their prayer, give His verdict as to who was true and who was false. Thus, when they win, their victory would become the Divine verdict on their being on the side of truth.

But, they did not know that the prayer they were making was really a curse for their own selves, and that it was a supplication for the good of Muslims. After the end of the battle came, the Qur'ān told them: إِن تَسْتَفْتِحُوا فَقَدْ جَاءَكُمُ الْفَتْحُ (If you pray for victory, "victory" has come upon you) that is, 'if you are looking for a Divine verdict, that is before you - truth has triumphed and falsehood has been defeated. Then: وَإِن تَنتَهُوا فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ (if you give up it is better for you) that is, 'now is the time when, if you abandon your disbelief and hostility, it will turn out to be better for you.' And, if you still decide to revert back to your wickedness and the threat of armed aggression, then, Allah too will revert back and support Muslims: وَإِن تَعُودُوا نَعُدْ (And if you repeat, We shall repeat). In that case, the consequence would be: وَلَن تُغْنِيَ عَنكُمْ فِئَتُكُمْ شَيْئًا وَلَوْ كَثُرَتْ (And your people shall not suffice you at all, even though they are many in number) that is, 'your numerical superiority and group strength shall be of no avail against the help and support given by Allah.' As for the help and support of Allah: وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (Allah is with the believers) that is, 'how can any group or power work for you when Allah Ta'ālā, the very possessor of absolute power, is with the Muslims?'

Verses 20 - 24

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَلَا تَوَلَّوْا عَنْهُ وَأَنتُمْ تَسْمَعُونَ ﴿٢٠﴾ وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ قَالُوا سَمِعْنَا وَهُمْ لَا يَسْمَعُونَ ﴿٢١﴾ إِنَّ شَرَّ الدَّوَابِّ عِندَ اللَّهِ الصُّمُّ الْبُكْمُ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾ وَلَوْ عَلِمَ اللَّهُ فِيهِمْ خَيْرًا لَّأَسْمَعَهُمْ ۖ وَلَوْ أَسْمَعَهُمْ لَتَوَلَّوا وَّهُم مُّعْرِضُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اسْتَجِيبُوا لِلَّهِ وَلِلرَّسُولِ إِذَا دَعَاكُمْ لِمَا يُحْيِيكُمْ ۖ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ

اللّٰهَ يَحُوْلُ بَيْنَ الْمَرْءِ وَقَلْبِهٖ وَاَنَّهٗٓ اِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُوْنَ ﴿٢٤﴾

O those who believe, obey Allah and His Messenger, and do not turn away from Him while you are listening. [20] **And do not be like those who say, "We have heard" while they do not listen.** [21] **Surely, the worst of all animals in the sight of Allah are deaf and the dumb who do not understand.** [22] **And had Allah seen in them some good, He would have made them listen. And had He made them listen, they would have turned away paying no heed.** [23] **O those who believe, respond to Allah and the Messenger when He calls you to what gives you life, and be sure that Allah intervenes between man and his heart, and that to Him you shall be gathered.** [24]

Commentary

The event of the battle of Badr which has been described in a somewhat detailed manner in the previous verses contains many lessons in hard advice and wisdom both for those who adhere to Islam and those who stick to disbelief. These appear intermittently during the course of relevant narrations and serve as warning signals.

For example, in the previous verses, after having recounted the defeat and disgrace of the disbelievers of Makkah, it was said: ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمْ شَآقُّوا اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ (That is because they were hostile to Allah and His Messenger - 13). It means that the disbelievers of Makkah were defeated despite their numerical and logistic strength and the real reason behind it was that they had elected to act hostile to Allah and His Messenger. In this, there lies a chastening lesson for people who bypass the most perfect power of the Creator and Master of the heavens and the earth - the power that is visible and the power that is invisible - and who opt for placing their reliance on material strengths only, or just choose to cheat their own selves by hoping and praying that the help and support of Allah will be by their side despite all their acts of disobedience to Him.

In the present verse, the other side of this very problem has been taken up by addressing Muslims. Stated briefly, the truth of the matter is that Muslims were blessed with this great victory despite their low numbers and ill-equipped fighting force only through the

help and support of Allah Almighty - and this Divine help and support is the outcome of their obedience to Allah. This obedience is what Muslims have been obligated with and to this they have to adhere firmly: يَآيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اَطِيْعُوا اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ (O those who believe, obey Allah and His Messenger). In the sentence which follows, the same subject has been further emphasized by saying: وَلَا تَوَلَّوْا عَنْهُ وَاَنْتُمْ تَسْمَعُوْنَ (and do not turn away from him while you are listening). The sense is that once you have listened to the Qur'ān, the true word of Allah, do not go about doing things against the norms of genuine obedience.

Listening denotes listening to what is the truth and it has four degrees in terms of effective response. (1) The hearer with ears simply heard some voice but neither tried to understand it, nor understood it, nor believed in or relied upon it, nor did he act accordingly. (2) He heard it through his ears all right, even understood it, but did neither believe in it nor acted accordingly. (3) He heard, he understood, even believed and trusted, but did not act accordingly. (4) He heard, he understood, he believed, he trusted - and acted accordingly as well.

It is obvious that the real purpose of listening is fully realized only through the fourth degree - which is the station of perfect believers. As for the earlier three degrees, the act of listening described there is imperfect and incomplete which, in a manner of saying, could be set aside as just not listening - as readily pointed to in the verses appearing next. The third degree mentioned above has the ingredients of hearing the truth, understanding it and believing in it, but lacks corresponding deeds. Here, the real purpose of listening is though not realized as it should be, yet belief has its own importance and can not be rejected as useless. This degree pertains to sinning Muslims. Then there is the second degree where we find only listening and understanding but no belief and no corresponding deed. This degree is that of the *munāfiqīn* (hypocrites) for they do listen to the Qur'ān, understand it too, even have a feigned claim to desired belief and deed, but the reality is that they do not believe and do what is right and due. Finally, the first degree is that of polytheists and disbelievers who listened to the message of truth and the *'āyāt* of the Qur'ān with their own ears but were never motivated enough to understand and think about that.

In the verse cited above (20), the address is to Muslims who have been told that they do listen to the message of truth after all, that is, the initial requirement of listening, understanding and believing is present in their attitude as it is, but they have to do more than that. They must act, do what must be done and do it fully and faithfully. They have been asked not to do anything which would take them away from the path of obedience so that the real purpose of listening to the word of truth stands realized fully.

For added emphasis on the same subject, it was said in the second verse (21): وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ قَالُوا سَمِعْنَا وَهُمْ لَا يَسْمَعُونَ (and do not be like those who say, "we have heard" while they do not listen). Meant here are common disbelievers who claim to be listening but make no such claim about believing. Also meant here are the hypocrites who go beyond the elementary listening which they already do. In fact, they also claim to understand what that they listen to and to believe in it as well. But, the truth of the matter is that they both remain deprived of genuine deliberation and correct understanding. Therefore, their listening falls under the category of not listening. So, Muslims have been forbidden from becoming like them.

The third verse (22) strongly condemns those who do not listen to what is the truth thoughtfully and let it go unaccepted. The Qur'ān has declared such people to be worse than animals. The words used are: إِنَّ شَرَّ الدَّوَابِّ عِندَ اللَّهِ الصُّمُّ الْبُكْمُ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ (Surely, the worst of all animals in the sight of Allah are the deaf and the dumb who do not understand).

The word: دواب (*dawābb*) is the plural form of: دَابَّة (*dābbah*). Literally, everything that walks on the earth is called '*dābbah*.' But, in usage, only quadruped animals are called '*dābbah*.' So, the sense of the verse is that the worst quadrupeds in the sight of Allah are the ones deaf against listening to the truth and dumb when it comes to accepting it. Even someone deaf and dumb could, if he has the least fund of reason in him, make himself understood by simple gestures in a two-way communication. But, these people are not only deaf and dumb, they are short on reason also. It is obvious that for a person, who is deaf, dumb; and devoid of reason too, the lines of communication shall remain blocked and there will be no way they would understand or be made to understand.

In this verse, Allah Ta'ālā has made it clear that human beings have been created with the best of destiny. They have been made the superior-most among the created and the universe has been placed at their service. These are great blessings which lie embedded in and dependent on listening to truth and obeying it. Once human beings turn their backs on listening to the truth, understanding and accepting it, all these blessings are sucked away from them and they are relegated to some species worse than animals.

It appears in Tafsīr Rūḥ al-Bayān that human beings are, in terms of their original creation, superior to all animals, but are lower in rank as compared to angels. But, when human beings strive on the pathway of obedience to Allah, their creator, they rise higher in status than angels too. However, should they turn away from the pathway of obedience to Allah, they are condemned to become the lowest of the low, far too worse than animals.

In the fourth verse (23), it was said: وَلَوْ عَلِمَ اللّٰهُ فِيْهِمْ خَيْرًا لَّاَسْمَعَهُمْ وَلَوْ اَسْمَعَهُمْ لَتَوَلَّوْا وَّهُمْ مُّعْرِضُوْنَ (And had Allah seen in them some good, He would have made them listen. And had He made them listen, they would have turned away paying no heed). In other words, the sense of the verse is: Had Allah seen in them some pliability towards receiving good counsel, He would have blessed them with the ability to listen with faith - and if, in their present state of being with no desire to receive truth, He were to make them listen to what is true, they would have certainly turned away from it paying no heed.

The word: خیر (*khayr*: good) at this place means the desire to find out the truth, for it is the quest for truth which opens the doors of deliberation and understanding and it is this very quest which enables one to believe and act. Thus, whoever has no quest for truth is as if he has no good in him. If such people did have some good in them, it is obvious that it would have been within the knowledge of Allah Ta'ālā. Now, when they have no good in them as borne by the knowledge of Allah Ta'ālā, it tells us that they stand deprived of every possible good in the real sense. Therefore, if they were to be invited to ponder, deliberate and believe in the truth within this state of deprivation, they would have never accepted it - rather, they would have turned away from it and run. This aversion, that is, would not be because of any flaw in the

religion they may have noticed which made them reject it. In fact, they just did not pay heed to what was the truth.

Incidentally, the stipulation made above also helps remove the nagging logical doubt which bothers many a learned people. They surmise that this is the first form of analogical deduction where the surrender of the middle premise seems to be yielding the wrong outcome. The answer is that the middle premise has not been repeated here because the sense of the first word: لَأَسْمَعَهُمْ (*la asma'ahum*: He would have made them listen) is separate from the second: وَلَوْ أَسْمَعَهُمْ (*wa lau asma'ahum*: and had He made them listen) which carries its own sense apart from the first. Meant in the first is listening to accept and listening to benefit from, while the sense of the second is bland listening with nothing to it.

In the fifth verse (24), believers have been addressed once again. Commanded to obey Allah and His Messenger in a particular manner, they have been told that the thing to which Allah and His Messenger invite you is something which brings no benefit to Allah and His Messenger *per se*. Instead of that, all Divine injunctions have been prescribed for nothing but their own benefit. So, said in the manner pointed to above, was: اِسْتَجِيْبُوْا لِلّٰهِ وَلِلرَّسُوْلِ اِذَا دَعَاكُمْ لِمَا يُحْيِيْكُمْ (respond to Allah and the Messenger when He calls you to what gives you life).

What is the 'life' mentioned in this verse? Since several probabilities exist in its interpretation, learned commentators have taken different interpretive positions. According to Suddiyy, that life-giving thing is 'Īmān (faith) because the disbeliever is dead. Qatādah said: That is Qur'ān in which lies all life and success of both the worlds, Dunyā and 'Ākhirah. Mujāhid said: That is truth. Ibn Isḥāq said: It means Jihād through which Allah Ta'ālā conferred honour on Muslims. All these probabilities mentioned here are sound as they are. There is no contradiction in them. The larger sense is that 'Īmān, Qur'ān or the following of truth are things which put life into the heart and the life of the heart is nothing but that everything which becomes a barrier between the Creator and the created, barriers like inertia and desire, should be removed from the way of truth leaving it free from whatever obstructions there are in order that the heart is filled with the light of insight into the Creator.

Based on a narration from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه, Tirmidhī and Al-Nasā'ī have reported that on a certain day, the Holy Prophet ﷺ sent for Sayyidnā Ubayy ibn Ka'b رضى الله عنه who was busy with his Ṣalāh at that time. However, he completed his Ṣalāh sooner than he would have normally done and presented himself before the Holy Prophet ﷺ. He asked: 'Why did you come so late despite that I called you?' Sayyidnā Ubayy ibn Ka'b رضى الله عنه submitted his excuse: 'I was in the state of Ṣalāh.' He said: 'Did you not hear what Allah Ta'ālā has said in: اِسْتَجِيْبُوْا لِلّٰهِ وَلِلرَّسُوْلِ اِذَا دَعَاكُمْ (Respond to Allah and the Messenger when He calls you)?' Sayyidnā Ubayy ibn Ka'b رضى الله عنه said: 'I shall obey it from now on. If you call me, even when I am making my Ṣalāh, I shall present myself before you immediately.'

It is on the basis of this Ḥadīth that some Muslim jurists have said that anything done during Ṣalāh in obedience to the command of the Messenger of Allah would not be taken as interference in Ṣalāh. However, there are other jurists who say that Ṣalāh would though be terminated due to doings contrary to the standard rules governing Ṣalāh and it would have to be offered later as *qaḍā'* (replaced for the missed or terminated Ṣalāh). But, the proper thing to do is that should the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم call someone, even if he is in the state of Ṣalāh, then, he should terminate his Ṣalāh and obey the call.

As for this form of obedience, it is exclusive to the *Rasūl* of Allah ﷺ. But, there are other occasions when one may apprehend the danger of serious loss coming to someone, then, at that time too, Ṣalāh should be terminated and amends be made later by offering *qaḍā'*. For example, if a person in the state of Ṣalāh sees that a blind man is about to reach and fall in a well or ditch, then, he should immediately terminate his Ṣalāh and go to save the handicapped man.

At the end of the verse, it was said: وَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يَحُوْلُ بَيْنَ الْمَرْءِ وَقَلْبِهٖ (and be sure that Allah intervenes between man and his heart). This sentence can have two meanings, and both vibrate with great wisdom and good counsel, something one should always remember and live by.

One possible sense of the sentence is: When you are blessed with

the opportunity of doing something good, or staying safe from sin, then, go ahead and do it immediately - make no delay and take the lease of time so granted to be a blessing, because there are occasions when Divine decree becomes an intervening factor between man and his intention and he cannot succeed in doing what he intends to do. May be, a sickness overtakes, or death itself does, or some pre-occupation emerges out of nowhere and one just does not get the time to do that good or avoid that sin. Therefore, human beings should welcome the leave granted in terms of the years of life and access to time and refuse to put off until tomorrow what must be done today - for, who knows what is going to happen tomorrow?

من نمی گویم زیان کن یابفکر سود باش　　　　ای زفرصت بےخبر در هرچه باشی زود باش

I do not say that you run into some loss or go for your gain
Whatever be your option, O man unaware of time, be quick!

The second possible meaning emerges from the indication given by the sentence that Allah Ta'ālā is very near to His servant. In fact, in another verse of the Qur'ān (Qāf, 50:16): نَحْنُ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ حَبْلِ الْوَرِيْدِ, Allah Ta'ālā says that He is close to man, much closer than his jugular vein.

Thus, the sense is that the heart of man is, in a special way, at the discretionary disposal of Allah Ta'ālā all the time. When He wills to keep a servant of His protected from evils, He puts a barrier between his heart and sins, and when misfortune is fated for someone, the barrier is placed between his heart and any possible good deeds by him. Therefore, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم used to include the following prayer frequently when he prayed:

يَا مُقَلِّبَ الْقُلُوْبِ ثَبِّتْ قَلْبِىْ عَلٰى دِيْنِكَ

O reverser of hearts! Keep my heart firm on the Faith chosen by You.

The ultimate outcome of this too is no other but that one should not delay doing what must be done in obedience to the injunctions of Allah and His *Rasūl*, rather, one should take the lease of time given to him as a God-given opportunity and just go ahead and do it, for no one knows whether or not the surge and urge of this good deed remains active later on.

Verses 25 - 28

وَاتَّقُوا فِتْنَةً لَّا تُصِيبَنَّ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنكُمْ خَاصَّةً ۚ وَاعْلَمُوا
أَنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿٢٥﴾ وَاذْكُرُوا إِذْ أَنتُمْ قَلِيلٌ
مُّسْتَضْعَفُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ تَخَافُونَ أَن يَتَخَطَّفَكُمُ النَّاسُ
فَآوَاكُمْ وَأَيَّدَكُم بِنَصْرِهِ وَرَزَقَكُم مِّنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ
﴿٢٦﴾ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَخُونُوا اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ وَتَخُونُوا
أَمَانَاتِكُمْ وَأَنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٧﴾ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَأَوْلَادُكُمْ
فِتْنَةٌ ۙ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ عِندَهُ أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٢٨﴾

And beware of a punishment which shall not fall on the wrongdoers only, and be sure that Allah is severe at punishment. [25]

And remember when you were few in number, oppressed on the earth, fearing that the people would snatch you away. Then, He gave you shelter and fortified you with His support and provided you with good things, so that you may be grateful. [26]

O those who believe, do not betray the trust of Allah and the Messenger and do not betray your mutual trusts, while you know. [27]

And be aware that your wealth and your children are but a trial and that with Allah there is a great reward. [28]

Commentary

After having described some details of the battle of Badr and Divine blessings conferred on Muslims therein, the Holy Qur'ān has offered words of good counsel to Muslims as based on the outcome of the Battle. This presentation begins from: يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اسْتَجِيبُوا لِلَّهِ وَلِلرَّسُولِ (O those who believe, respond to Allah and His Messenger - 8:24). The verses cited immediately above appear in continuation to the same.

Out of these, the first verse (25) carries an instruction to stay safe from a sin particularly, a sin the severe punishment of which does not remain restricted to only those who commit sins in a society. In fact, people who have committed no sin also get afflicted by it.

Which sin is that? The answers given by commentators vary. Some say: This sin is the forsaking of the struggle to Bid the Fair and Forbid the Unfair (*amr bi 'l-ma'rūf* and *nahy 'ani 'l-munkar*). Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ said: Allah Ta'ālā has commanded Muslims that they should not allow any crime or sin to take roots in their social environment because, if they failed to do so, that is, did not forbid it despite seeing such crimes and sins and despite having the ability or capacity to stop it or to forbid it, then, Allah Ta'ālā will universalize His punishment for all of them which will spare neither the sinners nor the sinless.

The sinless mentioned here are people who are no accomplices of sinners in their initial sin, but they have certainly committed the sin of avoiding or abandoning the Divinely ordained duty of Bidding the Fair. Therefore, let there be no doubt here about the statement made. For example, here it is not valid to say that the passing on of the punishment of a sin committed by someone else to another person is injustice and that it is contrary to the Qur'ānic injunction: لَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِّزْرَ اُخْرٰى (No bearer of burden shall bear the burden of another person - 35:18) - because, here the sinners have been seized for the initial sin they themselves had committed while the sinless were seized for the sin of having abandoned the obligation of Bidding the Fair. Thus, no one's sin was placed on the shoulders of someone else.

According to a narration of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضی اللہ عنہ and Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا appearing in Sharḥ al-Sunnah and Ma'ālim of Imām al-Baghawī, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has been reported to have said : Allah Ta'ālā does not subject common people with the punishment of some sin committed by a particular group among them - unless, there emerges a situation in which they see sin being committed around them and have the ability to stop it as well, yet, if they did not stop it, then, at that time, the punishment from Allah surrounds all of them.

Also reported authentically in Tirmidhī, Abū Dāwūd and elsewhere is that Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ said in one of his sermons: I have heard the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم say: When people see an oppressor and do not step forward and hold his hand from inflicting injustice, then, the time is near that Allah Ta'ālā makes His punishment fall on all of them alike.

According to a narration from Sayyidnā Nu'mān ibn Bashīr reported in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: Those who commit the sin of transgressing the limits set by Allah and those who ignore them knowingly or accomodate them psychophantly, that is, they do not try to stop them from that sin, are like passengers on two decks of a ship, the upper and the lower. People on the lower deck come up to procure water from the upper deck which causes discomfort for people there. Keeping this in view, the people of the lower deck opt for making a hole in the bottom of the boat and get their supply of water from there. Now, if the people of the upper deck see this misconduct and elect not to check and stop them from doing something like that, then, it is obvious, the water will fill into the whole boat and when the people of the lower deck will drown in it, those on the upper deck will not remain safe either, for they too will drown with the others.

It is on the basis of these narrations that many commentators have declared that the word: فِتْنَة (*fitnah*) in this verse refers to this very sin, that is, the forsaking of the obligation of Bidding the Fair and Forbidding the Unfair.

It appears in Tafsīr Maẓharī that this sin means the sin of the abandonment of Jihād specially at a time when a general call for Jihād is given to common Muslims from their Amīr, a call on which depends the security and defence of Islamic hallmarks. The reason is that this is a time when the curse of forsaking Jihād does not fall only on those who forsake Jihād but it also falls on the whole body of Muslims. Because Kuffār run over Muslim areas, women and children and old people and many innocent Muslims become victims of their killing and plunder. Their lives and properties are endangered. If that be the situation, 'punishment' would mean worldly distress and hardships.

The factual evidence of this explanation is that those who forsake Jihād have been condemned in the previous verses as well. Previous verses, such as: وَإِنَّ فَرِيقًا مِّنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ لَكَارِهُونَ (while a group from the believers were averse to it - 8:5) and: يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا لَقِيتُمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا زَحْفًا فَلَا تُوَلُّوهُمُ الْأَدْبَارَ (O those who believe, when you face the disbelievers marching to battle, then do not turn your backs on them - 8:15) have appeared in support of this approach to the problem.

The same thing happened at the battle of Badr when some Mus-

lims wavered with their choice of suitable conduct. They left their security post on the hills and came down. When this happened, the ill effects of their action did not remain restricted to those who had made the error, in fact, they hit the entire Muslim army, so much so that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was himself injured in this battle.

The second verse (26) also mentions several things which could make Divine injunctions easy on them. To pursuade them towards the option of obedience to Allah, Muslims have been reminded of their past weakness and of how Allah has blessed them with power and confidence by changing surrounding conditions through His grace and mercy. The text says:

وَاذْكُرُوٓا إِذْ أَنْتُمْ قَلِيلٌ مُّسْتَضْعَفُونَ فِى الْأَرْضِ تَخَافُونَ أَنْ يَّتَخَطَّفَكُمُ النَّاسُ فَاٰوٰىكُمْ وَاَيَّدَكُمْ بِنَصْرِهٖ وَرَزَقَكُمْ مِّنَ الطَّيِّبٰتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُوْنَ .

And remember when you were few in number, oppressed on the earth, fearing that the people would snatch you away. Then, He gave you shelter and fortified you with His support and provided you with good things, so that you may be grateful - 26.

In this verse, Muslims are being asked to remember the conditions they were facing in Makkah during the pre-Hijrah period following which they were given the finest sanctuary at Madīnah. Not only that, they were also blessed with Divine support, power and victory over adversaries, as well as assets of great value. Then, towards the end of the verse, it was said: لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُوْنَ (so that you may be grateful). It means that the purpose behind this great transformation of conditions around them supported by the flow of Divine blessings was to give them an opportunity to show their gratefulness as obedient servants of Allah, for the finest demonstration of gratefulness, in the real sense, comes through nothing but obedience to what Allah commands them to do.

In the third verse (27), Muslims have been instructed not to commit any breach of trust (*khiyānah*) in the dual rights due against them, that is, in the rights of Allah (*Ḥuqūqullāh*) or in the mutual rights of the servants of Allah as enjoined on each other (*Ḥuqūqul-'Ibād*) - either by failing to fulfill them totally, or by fulfilling them in a defective manner leaving one or the other shortcoming behind. Then, by saying:

وَأَنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ (while you know) at the end of the verse, it was stressed that they already knew that breach of trust was an evil conduct lined with many a curse, therefore, going ahead to do something like that was not what an intelligent person would choose to do - and, since the cause of negligence or shortcoming in fulfilling the rights of the servants of Allah is usually one's attachment to property and children, a warning was given in verse 28 by saying: وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَأَوْلَادُكُمْ فِتْنَةٌ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ عِندَهُ أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ (And be aware that your wealth and your children are but a trial and that with Allah there is a great reward).

The word: فِتْنَة (*fitnah*) used here carries the sense of 'trial' as well as that of 'punishment.' Then, such things as become the cause of punishment are also referred to as '*fitnah*.' In different verses of the Qur'ān, '*fitnah*' has been used to carry these three meanings. At this place, there is room for all three. There are occasions when one's own property and children become a can of troubles for him and that they would push him into negligence and disobedience and become the very cause of punishment right here in this world is all too obvious. Firstly, the sense could be that Allah aims to put you to test through your property and children for these are His blessings. Now, you prove whether you become grateful and obedient after having received these, or that you choose to be ungrateful and disobedient. Also possible is the second, even the third meaning, that is, should you become all engrossed in your love for your property and children and bring upon yourself the displeasure of Allah, then, these very children and property will become your punishment. There are occasions within this mortal world when one is engulfed into all sorts of hardships because of property and children and he starts experiencing the heat of punishment right here. Even if the case be otherwise, it stands settled that the property which was acquired or spent by ways counter to the injunctions of Allah Ta'ālā will itself become, in the Hereafter, the active agent of punishment through snakes, scorpions and brandings by fire - as stated clearly in several verses of the Qur'ān and numerous narrations of the Ḥadīth. Finally, the third meaning is that these things become the cause of punishment. As pointed out a little earlier, it is quite evident that once these things become the cause of heedlessness towards and disobedience to Allah Ta'ālā and His injunctions, they automatically become the cause of punishment. At the end of the verse (28), it was said: وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ عِندَهُ أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ (and that with Allah there is a great reward). In

other words, one should understand clearly that for a person who is not all-subdued by his love for property and children while doing his duty of being obedient to the commands of Allah and His *Rasūl*, there is a great reward for him with Allah.

As for the thematic content of this verse, it applies to all Muslims, but the cause of its revelation, according to the majority of commentators, is the event relating to Sayyidnā Abū Lubābah رضی اللہ عنہ as it came to pass during the battle of Banū Qurayẓah. As reported, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم and the noble Companions kept the fort of Banū Qurayẓah under seige for twenty one days which compelled them to make the request that they be allowed to leave their homeland and go to Syria. In view of their wickedness, he did not accede to their request. Instead, he said that the only option of peace open to them was that they should now agree to whatever decision Sayyidnā Sa'd ibn Mu'ādh رضی اللہ عنہ gave in their case. Thereupon, they rquested that Sayyidnā Abū Lubābah رضی اللہ عنہ be entrusted with this duty in place of Sayyidnā Sa'd ibn Mu'ādh رضی اللہ عنہ. The reason was that the family and property of Sayyidnā Abū Lubābah رضی اللہ عنہ were located in the Banū Qurayẓah area. He, they thought, would take a lenient attitude in their case. The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم sent Sayyidnā Abū Lubābah رضی اللہ عنہ as they requested. When he reached there, men and women from Banū Qurayẓah assembled around him and started crying. They asked: If we were to surrender at the command of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم and come out of the fort, would he be lenient to us? Sayyidnā Abū Lubābah رضی اللہ عنہ knew that leniency was not the settled policy in this matter. However, it was partly because of their wailing and plaint and partly because of his own love and concern for his family and children that he passed his hand sword-like over his neck giving the signal that they shall be slaughtered. Thus, as one would say, he disclosed the secret of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم.

The consideration of property and the love of children and family made him do what he did. But, he was immediately alerted to what had happened. He realized that he had committed a breach of trust reposed in him by the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم. When he returned from there, he was so overwhelmed by his sense of shame that he, rather than return to his master, went straight to his Masjid and it was a pillar of the Masjid that he tied himself to swearing that he will stay tied

like that until his *taubah* (repentance) was accepted, even if he were to die in that condition. So, for seven full days he stood there tied like that. His wife and daughter used to attend to him. They would untie him so that he could take care of his human compulsions and make his Ṣalāh. When he had done that, they would tie him again. He would usually avoid eating and drinking, so much so that he would faint out of weakness.

When the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم got this news initially, he said: If he had come to me first, I would have sought forgiveness for him and his *taubah* would have been accepted. Now that he has gone through this act of his, there is nothing left but to wait for the revelation of the Divine acceptance of his *taubah*. So, it was after seven days when, late at night, these verses relating to the acceptance of his *taubah* were revealed. Some Ṣaḥābah gave him the good news and reached out to untie him from the pillar. But, he said: Until such time that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم would not decide to untie me, I would not prefer to be untied. Thus, when he came into the Masjid at the time of the Fajr Ṣalāh, he untied him with his own blessed hands. The real cause of the revelation of the cited verse which contains the prohibition of becoming overwhelmed by the concern and love for property and children and not fulfilling the trust of Allah is as stated above. Allah knows best.

Verses 29 - 33

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓا۟ إِن تَتَّقُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ يَجْعَل لَّكُمْ فُرْقَانًا وَيُكَفِّرْ عَنكُمْ سَيِّـَٔاتِكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ۗ وَٱللَّهُ ذُو ٱلْفَضْلِ ٱلْعَظِيمِ ﴿٢٩﴾ وَإِذْ يَمْكُرُ بِكَ ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا۟ لِيُثْبِتُوكَ أَوْ يَقْتُلُوكَ أَوْ يُخْرِجُوكَ ۚ وَيَمْكُرُونَ وَيَمْكُرُ ٱللَّهُ ۖ وَٱللَّهُ خَيْرُ ٱلْمَٰكِرِينَ ﴿٣٠﴾ وَإِذَا تُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْهِمْ ءَايَٰتُنَا قَالُوا۟ قَدْ سَمِعْنَا لَوْ نَشَآءُ لَقُلْنَا مِثْلَ هَٰذَآ ۙ إِنْ هَٰذَآ إِلَّآ أَسَٰطِيرُ ٱلْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿٣١﴾ وَإِذْ قَالُوا۟ ٱللَّهُمَّ إِن كَانَ هَٰذَا هُوَ ٱلْحَقَّ مِنْ عِندِكَ فَأَمْطِرْ عَلَيْنَا حِجَارَةً مِّنَ ٱلسَّمَآءِ أَوِ ٱئْتِنَا بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ ﴿٣٢﴾ وَمَا كَانَ ٱللَّهُ لِيُعَذِّبَهُمْ وَأَنتَ فِيهِمْ ۚ وَمَا

كَانَ اللّٰهُ مُعَذِّبَهُمْ وَهُمْ يَسْتَغْفِرُوْنَ ﴿٣٣﴾

O those who believe, if you fear Allah, He will provide you with a criterion (to distinguish between right and wrong) and will write off your evil deeds and will forgive you. And Allah is the Lord of great bounty. [29]

And (remember) when the disbelievers were plotting against you to hold you (in detention) or to kill you or to expel you. And they were plotting and Allah was plotting, and Allah is the best of those who plot. [30]

And when Our verses are recited to them, they say, "We have heard, if we wish, we can say something like this. It is nothing but the tales of the ancient." [31]

And (remember) when they said, "O Allah, if this be indeed the truth (revealed) from You, then, rain down upon us stones from the heavens, or bring upon us a painful punishment." [32]

And Allah is not to send punishment upon them while you are in their midst, nor would Allah send punishment upon them while they are seeking forgiveness. [33]

Commentary

The previous verse mentioned property and children as being a trial for mortal man because these are things the concern and love for which make one so overtaken that one would usually turn heedless towards Allah, the Creator and 'Ākhirah, the life-to-come - though, the rational demand of this great blessing was that one should have shown a far pronounced tilt towards Him because of this favour.

The first verse out of those quoted above completes this very subject. Here, it is said that the person who keeps his emotion subservient to his reason, remains steadfast in this trial and sees to it that the obedience to Allah Ta'ālā and love for Him stay ahead of everything - which is called Taqwā in the terminology of Qur'ān and Sharī'ah - then, he is blessed with three things in return. These are: (1) *Furqān* (the criterion of distinguishing between right and wrong), (2) *Kaffārah* of *Sayyi'āt* (the expiation of evils done) and (3) *Maghfirah* (forgiveness from Allah).

Furqān and *Farq* are both verbal nouns having the same meaning.

In usage, Furqān is the name of the thing which separates and makes two things clearly distinct. Therefore, a decision is called Furqān because it makes the difference between true and false very distinct. The help and support from Allah is also called Furqān because, through it, the protagonists of truth are made to win and their antagonists are made to taste defeat which makes the difference between right and wrong and true and false loud and clear. In the Holy Qur'ān, it is in this sense that the battle of Badr has been called the Yowm al-Furqān, the Day of Distinction (between right and wrong).

According to the majority of commentators, the sense of providing Furqān to those who fear Allah is that the help and support of Allah Ta'ālā is with them. No enemy can hurt them and success goes with them in all objectives they undertake:

هرکه ترسید از حق و تقوی گزید ترسد ازوے جن وانس وهرکه دید

Whoever fears Allah and takes to piety (Taqwā)
Is feared at sight by Jinns and Humans of the world.

It appears in Tafsīr Mahā'imī that an indication has been given here towards the slip made by Sayyidnā Abū Lubābah رضی اللہ عنہ because of his desire to provide protection for his family and children as mentioned a little earlier in the event relating to him. He was in the error particularly for the reason that the correct and the only method of keeping his family and children protected was no other but that total obedience to Allah Ta'ālā and His Messenger صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم should have been made his personal benchmark as a result of which whatever belonged to him including his family and children would have come under the security umbrella of Allah Ta'ālā. Other than this, there are other commentators who say that Furqān in this verse means the wisdom and insight through which it becomes easy to distinguish between true and false, the genuine and the fake. Thus, the core meaning of the statement would be that Allah Ta'ālā arms those who observe Taqwā with such insight and intelligence that it becomes easy for them to go ahead and decide between the good and the evil.

The second blessing received in return for practising Taqwā is the *Kaffārah* of *Saiyyi'āt* which means that the errors and slips which get to be committed by the practitioner of Taqwā are expiated and replaced right here in this mortal world, that is, he is blessed with the

ability or *Taufīq* of doing such good deeds as pale out all his slips of conduct. Finally, the third thing one is fortunate to receive in return for Taqwā is forgiveness in the Hereafter and the ultimate pardon of all shortcomings and sins.

At the end of the verse (29), it was said: وَاللّٰهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيْمِ (And Allah is the Lord of great bounty). By saying that Allah is limitless in His grace and favour, the hint given is that the return of a deed follows the measure of that deed. Here too, the good return mentioned as being the reward of Taqwā in three things comes as recompense or return but, Allah Ta'ālā is the master-dispenser of great grace and favour. When He gives, He is not bound by any measure, nor can anyone estimate or guess His favour and reward. Therefore, for those who take to Taqwā as their style of life, much greater hopes should be entertained from the grace and reward of Allah Ta'ala in things other than the three mentioned earlier.

The second verse (30) points out to a particular reward and favour of Allah Ta'ālā which has been conferred on the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, the noble Companions and, in fact, on the whole world. This came to be before the Hijrah when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was encircled by the disbelievers and they were planning to detain or kill him. Then, Allah Ta'ālā made their unholy intentions lick dust and made it possible for the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to reach the city of Madīnah in perfect safety.

The related incident has been reported in Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr and Tafsīr Maẓharī on the authority of narrations from Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq, Imām Aḥmad, Ibn Jarīr and others. According to details of this incident, when the news about visiting residents of Madīnah embracing Islām became known in Makkah, the Quraysh of Makkah started worrying about it. They thought that the matter of people becoming Muslims was something restricted to Makkah upto that point of time, an area where they held all power in their hands. But, as Islām had started spreading in Madīnah, many Companions of the Prophet had migrated to that city, it went to prove that Muslims had another center in Madīnah where they could assemble a fighting force against them and possibly decide to attack. Alongwith this, they also realized that this was just the beginning when only some Companions have migrated to Madīnah. There was strong likelihood that

Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم may also go and join them. Therefore, the notable chiefs of Makkah called a special meeting for mutual consultations at Dār al-Nadwah. This place called Dār al-Nadwah was the home of Quṣay ibn Kilāb and was located close to al-Masjid al-Ḥarām. These people used it as the place where they met to consult on national problems. During the Islamic period, it has been merged in al-Masjid al-Ḥarām. It is said that the present Bāb al-Ziyadāt was the place known as Dār al-Nadwah.

As customary, the Quraysh chiefs met at Dār al-Nadwah for this significant consultation. All known leaders from the Quraysh such as Abū Jahl, Nadhr ibn Ḥārith, 'Utbah, Shaybah, Umaiyyah ibn Khalaf, Abū Sufyān and others participated. The agenda considered was how to confront and block the rising power of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and Islām.

Before this consultative meeting could be called to order, there appeared Iblīs, the accursed, in the guise of an aged 'Arab Shaykh. People on the door of Dār al-Nadwah asked: Who are you and why have you come here? The answer given was: I am a resident of Najd. I have been told that you have assembled here to discuss an important national issue. So, as a well-wisher of our people, I am here in the hope that I too may be able to tender some useful advice on the matter under consideration.

His plea was heard. He was called in. Then, began the process of suggestions on the subject. According to a narration reported by Suhailī, it was suggested by Abū al-Bakhtarī ibn Hishām that 'he' (meaning the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم) should be chained and detained in a house. The door should be locked and he should be left there until he dies, God forbid, his own death. Hearing this, the Shaykh of Najd - Iblīs, the accursed - said: This proposal is not sound for if you did that, this action is not going to remain hidden. In fact, it will be publicized far too widely. Then, you already know how good his Companions are in staking their lives for his sake. It is quite possible that these people may get together, attack you and rescue their prisoner from your detention. This caused voices to rise from all sides which supported the view of the Shaykh of Najd as sound. After that, Abū al-Aswad proposed that 'he' should be expelled out from Makkah. Let him go out of here and do whatever he wishes to do. This will make

our city safe from the disorder generated by him and, when we do so, we shall be doing no fighting and killing.

Hearing this, the Shaykh of Najd once again said: This proposal too is not sound. Do you not realize how soft-spoken a person he is? When people hear him talk, they are totally charmed by him. If he was left free like that, he would soon assemble a powerful group around him and attack you and defeat you. Now, it was Abū Jahl's turn to speak. He said: None of you seems to have understood what must be really done. Here is my plan of action. I propose that we pick out one youngman from each tribe out of all tribes of Arabia and arm each one of them with a lethal sword. Then, all of them, moving jointly and suddenly, attack and kill him. This action will at least deliver us from the problems engineered by him. Now, remains the aftermath of this killing. His tribe, Banū 'Abd Munāf, may rise with their claim of retaliation against the killing, something we are legally bound to face. So, in such a situation, when the actual killing was done, not by one single person, instead, by one person from each tribe, then, the claim of Qiṣāṣ, that is, taking life for life, cannot hold good after all. What would remain valid will be only the claim for blood money or property against *diyah*. That we shall collect from all tribes, give it to them and be done with it.

When the Shaykh of Najd, Iblīs, the accursed in disguise, heard this, he said: This is it. Nothing else is going to work. The whole assembly voted in his favour and it was resolved that this sinister plan would be put into action exactly the same night.

What these ignorant people could not understand was the unseen power of the prophets, may they all be blessed. As a consequence, two things happened. On the one hand, Archangel Jibra'īl informed the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم about everything that had transpired at their meeting at Dār al-Nadwah giving him a counter-plan whereby he would not sleep in his bed that night and telling him that Allah Ta'ālā has allowed him to migrate from Makkah.

On the other hand, by the fall of the evening, the Quraysh youngmen put a cordon round the house of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم. When he saw this, he ordered Sayyidnā 'Alī al-Murtaḍā رضی اللہ عنہ that he should sleep in the Prophet's bed that night giving him the good news that the plan was though full of a danger to his life obviously, yet

the enemies would not be able to harm him in any way.

Happy to be at his service, Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنه went into his bed. But, the problem was as to how the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was to get out of this siege. This difficulty was resolved by Allah Ta'ālā through a miracle when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, acting under the command of Allah Ta'ālā, came out with a handful of dust in one of his hands, responded to what his besiegers were saying about him, but it so happened that Allah Ta'ālā turned their sights and minds away from him in a way that none of them saw him even though he passed by them throwing dust on their heads. When he was gone, some visitor asked them as to why were they standing there. They said that they were waiting for the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. Thereupon, the visitor told them: You must be dreaming. He has already gone from here and while going he had been throwing dust on the heads of everyone among you. They all felt their heads with their hands which confirmed the fact that everyone's head had a deposit of dust on it.

When they went into the house, Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنه was lying in the bed of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, but the way he was tossing and turning in the bed made it possible for the besiegers to realize that he was not Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم, therefore, they did not venture to kill him. After carrying out their operation of siege right through the morning, these people went back disappointed and disgraced. This night and the event of Sayyidnā 'Alī staking his life for the sake of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم therein is rated to be among special merits credited to Sayyidnā 'Alī al-Murtaḍā رضى الله عنه.

The three suggestions made to deal with the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم during the consultative meeting of Quraysh chiefs have been mentioned by the Holy Qur'ān in the verse: وَإِذْ يَمْكُرُ بِكَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِيُثْبِتُوكَ أَوْ يَقْتُلُوكَ أَوْ يُخْرِجُوكَ (And [remember] when the disbelievers were plotting against you to hold you [in detention] or to kill you or to expel you - 30).

But, Allah Ta'ālā made all their plans and projections go to dust. That is why it was said towards the end: وَاللَّهُ خَيْرُ الْمَاكِرِينَ (and Allah is the best of those who plot - 30). It means that Allah is the best of planners. His plan pales out all plans - as demonstrated in this case.

Lexically, the Arabic word: مكر (*makr*: translated as 'plot') means restricting one's adversary from carrying out his intention through some

strategem or plan. Then, if this action is taken for a good purpose, this type of '*makr*' is commendable and good - and should it be done for some evil purpose, it is blameworthy and bad. Therefore, this word can be used for man, and for Allah Ta'ālā as well. But, it is used for Allah only in an environment where the context and contrast of speech does not lend to any doubt of *makr* which is blameworthy (Maẓharī) as it is here.

At this place, it is also noteworthy that the words used at the end of the verse are in the indefinite tense which denotes present and future. It was said: وَيَمْكُرُوْنَ وَيَمْكُرُ اللّٰهُ (And they were plotting and Allah was plotting - 30), that is, they will keep plotting to hurt believers while Allah Ta'ālā will keep plotting to thwart and frustrate their plots. The hint given therein is that this will continue to remain a lasting mark of disbelievers that they go about engineering designs to hurt Muslims - while, in the same way, the help and support of Allah Ta'ālā shall also keep repulsing their evil designs against true believers.

Mentioned in verses 31 and 32 is the absurd remark made by Naḍr ibn Ḥārith, a participant of the same meeting at Dār al-Nadwah, with its reply appearing in verse 33. Naḍr ibn Ḥārith was a businessman who used to travel to different countries where he had repeated opportunities of seeing religious books of the Jews and Christians as well as witnessing their modes of worship. When he heard about the accounts of past communities appearing in the Holy Qur'ān, he said: قَدْ سَمِعْنَا لَوْنَشَآءُ لَقُلْنَا مِثْلَ هٰذَآ اِنْ هٰذَآ اِلَّآ اَسَاطِيْرُ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ (we have heard, if we wish, we can say something like this. It is nothing but the tales of the ancient - 31). Thereupon, some of the Companions challenged him: If you can say something like this, why would you not say it? The Qur'ān had already spoken on the subject and made it the very criterion of the true and the false. The challenge of the Qur'ān was beamed at the whole world. If its opponents were true, let them come up with the like of even a very small Sūrah. In contrast, those who claimed to stake their lives and sacrifice their wealth and children for the sake of upholding their counter-assertion could not even join up their abilities together and come out even with a small Sūrah which could stand on its own against the Qur'ān. Now, after all this, to stand up and say that we too can say something like this, if we so wished, is something no self-respecting person would venture to say. Thus, when the Companions told him

that the Qur'ān was nothing but the Divine word, he tried to counter the assertion by showing his own firm adherence to his incorrect faith by saying:

اَللّٰهُمَّ اِنْ كَانَ هٰذَا هُوَالْحَقَّ مِنْ عِنْدِكَ فَاَمْطِرْ عَلَيْنَا حِجَارَةً مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ اَوِ ائْتِنَا بِعَذَابٍ اَلِيْمٍ

O Allah, if this be indeed the truth [revealed] from You, then, rain down upon us stones from the heavens, or bring upon us a painful punishment - 32.

The answer to this was given by the Qur'ān itself. First, it was said: وَمَا كَانَ اللّٰهُ لِيُعَذِّبَهُمْ وَاَنْتَ فِيْهِمْ (And Allah is not to send punishment upon them while you are in their midst [in Makkah] - 33). The reason is that it is the customary practice of Allah Ta'ālā with all blessed prophets that He would not send His punishment over a habitation where they are present until He takes out his prophets from there. This is as it happened in the case of Sayyidnā Hūd, Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ and Sayyidnā Lūṭ, may peace be upon them all. Punishment did not come as long as they remained in their towns. Punishment came when they were taken out from there. As for the Prophet of Islām ﷺ, he was sent to this world as universal mercy. That Divine punishment would come on him while he was present in a town was an eventuality counter to his station.

In a nutshell, the answer is: Because of your hostility towards Qur'ān and Islām, you very much deserve to have stones rain at you but the presence of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in Makkah prohibits it. According to Imām Ibn Jarīr, this part of the verse was revealed at a time when he was present in Makkah. Then, came Hijrah to Madīnah where the second part was revealed as follows: وَمَا كَانَ اللّٰهُ مُعَذِّبَهُمْ وَهُمْ يَسْتَغْفِرُوْنَ (nor would Allah send punishment on them while they are seeking forgiveness - 33). It means that following his migration to Madīnah, though the preventive factor of a mass punishment stood removed as he was not present there in Makkah, yet there did remain another factor preventing the coming of mass punishment even at that time since many weaker ones among Muslims who were unable to migrate had remained behind in Makkah and they were the ones who kept praying to Allah Ta'ālā for their forgiveness. It was for their sake that punishment was not sent upon the people of Makkah.

When, even these blessed souls migrated to Madīnah, the sentence appearing in the next verse (34): وَمَا لَهُمْ اَلَّا يُعَذِّبَهُمُ اللّٰهُ وَهُمْ يَصُدُّوْنَ عَنِ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ (And what is with them that Allah should not punish them while they prevent [people] from *al-masjid al-ḥarām*) was revealed.

The sense is that there were two hinderances to the coming of punishment. They both have been removed. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was no more there in Makkah, nor there remained those forgiveness-seeking Muslims in that city. Thus, there appeared to be no hinderance to the coming of punishment. Particularly so, because the people of Makkah were already deserving of punishment for their hostility to Islām while on top of which - despite being themselves incapable of any act of worship worth the name - they had started preventing people who wished to go into *al-masjid al-ḥarām* for 'Ibādah, 'Umrah and Ṭawāf. So, at that stage, their entitlement to punishment had become mature and complete. Consequently, it was through the Conquest of Makkah that punishment was sent upon them.

The event relating to the preventing of people from entering *al-masjid al-ḥarām* took place at the expedition of Ḥudaibiyah when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had gone there with the intention of making 'Umrah with his Companions. The disbelievers of Makkah stopped him from entering the city and compelled him and all his Companions to undo their Iḥrām and return back. This happened in the Hijrah year 6. Two years later, in Hijrah 8, Makkah was conquered. Thus, it was at the hands of Muslims that punishment was sent upon them.

This explanation given by Ibn Jarīr rests on the assumption that the factor of the Holy Prophet's presence in Makkah should be considered as the hinderance to punishment while others have maintained that the presence of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in the world is itself the prohibitive factor against any mass punishment. As long as he graces the world with his presence, no punishment can come over his people. The reason for this is obvious. The state of his call to prophethood is different. It is not similar to that of other blessed prophets as they were sent to particular areas or tribes. When they left these and arrived at some new place, punishment would overtake the people they left behind. This is contrary to the case of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم whose prophethood and messengership is universal until the Last Day of this mortal life. So, the place of his blessed arrival and the

scope of his mission as a Messenger of Allah extends to the whole world. Therefore, as long as he is present in any part of the world, no punishment can visit his people.

Based on this Tafsīr, it would mean that the doings of the people of Makkah demanded nothing less than that they be struck with a rain of stones. But, two things became a hinderance to this punishment: (1) The presence of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in the world and (2) the seeking of forgiveness by the people of Makkah because they, despite being polytheists and disbelievers, used to say: غفرانك غفرانك (we seek Your forgiveness, we seek Your forgiveness) in their Ṭawāf. Though, this seeking of forgiveness by them coupled with disbelief (*shirk*) may not be beneficial in the Hereafter, but the benefit of doing that too in this world which accrued to them was that they escaped punishment in the mortal world. The standing truth is that Allah Ta'ālā does not let anyone's deed go to waste. If disbelievers and polytheists do something good, its return is given to them right here in this world. As for what is said after that - 'and what is with them that Allah should not punish them while they prevent [people] from *al-masjid al-ḥarām* - it would then mean that the absence of punishment in the world should not embolden these people to become arrogant and complacent thinking that they were no sinners or that punishment would not come upon them at all. May be, not in the mortal world, but there is just no escape or deliverance from the punishment of the Hereafter. Given this Tafsīr, the punishment mentioned in: مَالَهُمْ اَلَّا يُعَذِّبَهُمُ (and what is with them that Allah should not punish them - 34) would be referring to the punishment of the Hereafter.

To sum up, it can be said that the verses cited here leave beneficial information for us: (1) That Allah Ta'ālā does not send punishment upon a locality in which people seek His forgiveness. This is His customary practice. (2) That no punishment would come upon the community of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, believing or disbelieving, while he is present among them. This is as it came to pass in the case of the people of Sayyidnā Nūḥ, Lūṭ and Shu'ayb عليهم السلام. Their people were destroyed to the last person. Should some punishment visit individuals or a limited number of them, that would not be considered contrary to it - as was said by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that the punishment of خسف: *khasf* and مسخ: *maskh* will visit his Ummah. *Khasf* means to sink into the ground or be swallowed by it while *Maskh* means dis-

figuration and transformation into an animal such as monkey or swine. The intimation intended is that there will be those limited few individuals of the community who would be visited by such punishments as well.

As for the phenomenon of the presence of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم in this world, it will remain operative right through the Last Day of Qiyāmah because his mission of prophethood is operative till then. In addition to that, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم is alive even at this time, though the nature and form of this life is different from his previous life. Now, any effort at this stage to engage in the debate as to what is the difference between these two lives will be ineffectual and futile - because, nothing that this community of Muslims has to do in terms of its religious or worldly duties depends on it. Neither has the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم himself, nor his noble Ṣaḥābah have liked such wasteful and unnecessary debates. In fact, they have prohibited it.

The essence of the submission is that the marvel of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم being alive in his resting place and the unbroken continuity of his prophethood right through the Last Day of Qiyāmah prove that he <u>is</u> in this world right through Qiyāmah, therefore, this community of his shall remain safe against any mass punishment until that fateful Day.

Verses 34 - 38

وَمَا لَهُمْ اَلَّا يُعَذِّبَهُمُ اللّٰهُ وَهُمْ يَصُدُّوْنَ عَنِ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَمَا
كَانُوْٓا اَوْلِيَآءَهٗ ؕ اِنْ اَوْلِيَآؤُهٗٓ اِلَّا الْمُتَّقُوْنَ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ
﴿٣٤﴾ وَمَا كَانَ صَلَاتُهُمْ عِنْدَ الْبَيْتِ اِلَّا مُكَآءً وَّتَصْدِيَةً ؕ
فَذُوْقُوا الْعَذَابَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْفُرُوْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا
يُنْفِقُوْنَ اَمْوَالَهُمْ لِيَصُدُّوْا عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ؕ فَسَيُنْفِقُوْنَهَا ثُمَّ
تَكُوْنُ عَلَيْهِمْ حَسْرَةً ثُمَّ يُغْلَبُوْنَ ؕ وَالَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْٓا اِلٰى جَهَنَّمَ
يُحْشَرُوْنَ ﴿٣٦﴾ لِيَمِيْزَ اللّٰهُ الْخَبِيْثَ مِنَ الطَّيِّبِ وَيَجْعَلَ الْخَبِيْثَ
بَعْضَهٗ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ فَيَرْكُمَهٗ جَمِيْعًا فَيَجْعَلَهٗ فِيْ جَهَنَّمَ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ

هُمُ الْخٰسِرُوْنَ ﴿۳۷﴾ قُلْ لِّلَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْٓا اِنْ يَّنْتَهُوْا يُغْفَرْ لَهُمْ مَّا قَدْ سَلَفَ ۚ وَاِنْ يَّعُوْدُوْا فَقَدْ مَضَتْ سُنَّتُ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ ﴿۳۸﴾

And what is with them that Allah should not punish them while they prevent [people] from *al-masjid al-ḥarām*, even though they are not its custodians. Its custodians are none but the God-fearing, but most of them do not know. [34] **And their prayer near the House was not more than whistling and clapping. So, taste the punishment, because you used to disbelieve.** [35]

Surely, those who disbelieve spend their wealth to prevent [people] from the way of Allah. So, they shall spend it, then it will become remorse for them, then they shall be overpowered. And those who disbelieve shall be gathered into Jahannam, [36] **so that Allah separates the impure from the pure, and puts some of the impure on some others, and heaps them all together and puts them into Jahannam. Those are the losers.** [37]

Say to those who disbelieve that if they stop, they shall be forgiven for what has passed (of their sins), and if they repeat, then, the precedent of the earlier people is already established. [38]

Commentary

It was said in previous verses that the disbelievers of Makkah were though deserving, because of their disbelief and denial, of heavenly punishment coming down upon them, but the presence of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in Makkah was a prohibitive factor against the coming of a mass punishment on them. Then, after his migration to Madīnah, such punishment would still not come upon them because of the weaker ones among Muslims who, while living in Makkah, kept seeking forgiveness from Allah.

In the verses quoted above, it has been stated that though their due punishment was advanced till later either for the sake of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم or in consideration of the weaker ones among Muslims, they should not make the mistake of thinking that they are no more deserving of punishment. The fact is that their being deserving of punishment is loud and clear. Then, other than their disbelief and denial, there are many more crimes committed by them because of which punishment should be visiting them positively. The first two

verses (34, 35) list three such crimes by them.

1. Firstly, these people are themselves just not worthy of going into the Sacred Mosque and devote to acts of worship there as due - and these very people prevent Muslims who wish to go there to devote themselves to acts of worship, Ṣalāh, Ṭawāf etc. Here, the reference is to the event at Ḥudaibiyah when, in the Hijrah year 6, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had reached there with his Ṣaḥābah in order to perform 'Umrah at Makkah - and the disbelievers of Makkah had prevented him from doing so and had compelled him to go back.

2. Secondly, for no sane reason, these people assume and claim that they were the custodians of the Sacred Mosque whereby they would let anyone they permit come in and not permit anyone they did not wish to come in.

This thinking of theirs was a combination of two misunderstandings. To begin with, they took themselves to be the custodians of the Sacred Mosque although no Kāfir can become the custodian of any mosque. Then, they thought that a custodian had the right to stop anyone he wished from entering into the mosque - while, a *masjid* or mosque is a House of God and no one has the right to stop anyone from coming in it. Of course, exempted are particular situations in which there be the apprehension of someone desecrating the mosque or causing pain to other makers of Ṣalāh there. For example, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: Shield your *masājid* from small children, and insane individuals, and from mutual disputations. Small children mean children who have no sense of purity or impurity, therefore, the danger of the later is predominent. Then, the same danger of impurity as well as the danger of causing pain to those making Ṣalāh exists in the case of someone insane. As for mutual disputations, it amounts to desecration of the *masjid* and is also a source of causing pain to people making Ṣalāh there.

In the light of the Ḥadīth quoted above, the custodian (*mutawallī*) of the *masjid* does have the right not to allow such small children and insane individuals into the *masjid*, and see to it that no one indulges in mutual disputes in the *masjid* - but, in the absence of such situations, no custodian of a *masjid* has the right to stop a Muslim from coming into the *masjid*.

In the first verse cited above, it has been considered sufficient to state that there was no way these people could be taken as custodians of the Sacred Mosque when the rule was that only God-fearing Muslims could become its custodian. From here we learn that the custodian of a *masjid* should be a practicing-observing Muslim, in faith and conduct. And there are some commentators who take the pronoun in: إِنْ أَوْلِيَآؤُهُ as reverting to Allah Ta'ālā which would mean: 'only the God-fearing can be the *Awliyā* of Allah.'

According to the Tafsīr mentioned immediately above, the outcome of the verse would be that those who, despite acting contrary to Sharī'ah and Sunnah, claim to be a *Waliyy* of Allah are liars and those who take such people to be a *Waliyy* of Allah are down in deception.

3. The third crime of these people, other than the filth of Kufr and Shirk which was already their way of life, was the state of their doings which were low down, much lower than the ordinary human level. A sampling of this was pointed to when it was said that the act of prayer which these people called Ṣalāh was nothing but that they would whistle with their mouths and clap with their hands. It is obvious that no reasonable person would call these acts 'worship' and 'prayer,' in fact, not even a regular human act. Therefore, at the end of the verse (35), it was said: فَذُوقُوا الْعَذَابَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْفُرُونَ (So, taste the punishment, because you used to disbelieve), that is, the denoument of their disbelief and crimes is that they must now taste the punishment of Allah. 'Punishment' referred to here may mean the punishment of the Hereafter, as well as the punishment in the present world which came upon them in the battle of Badr at the hands of Muslims.

After that, described in verse 36, there is another event relating to the disbelievers of Makkah when they collected a huge fund to raise a powerful striking force against Muslims and then spent it to wipe out the true faith and its upholders. But, what happened finally was that lost to them was not only the wealth they had pooled together but that they, rather than achieve their objective, were themselves subjected to utter disgrace.

The event as reported by Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās صلى الله عليه وسلم is as follows. When the defeated, injured and surviving disbelievers of Makkah returned from the battle of Badr back to their city, the people whose fathers or sons were killed in

Jihād went to Abū Sufyān, the leader of the trade caravan. They told him: You know that this war was fought in defence of your trade caravan as a result of which we had to suffer from all this loss of lives and properties. Therefore, we wish that we be helped by this corporate trading venture so that we can take our revenge against Muslims in the future. The people of the trading company accepted their plea and gave them a huge amount which they spent on their bid for victory in the battle of 'Uḥud. In this bid too, which was to avenge their defeat in the battle of Badr, they met a sad end and were overpowered as before. With the shock of defeat, left for them was the added remorse for having lost all that wealth they had invested in the unsuccessful challenge.

In this verse, the Holy Qur'ān has foretold the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم about this event much before it took place. It said there: "Surely, those who disbelieve spend their wealth to prevent (people) from the way of Allah. So, they shall spend it, then it will become remorse for them, then they shall be overpowered -36." Consequently, this is how it happened at the battle of 'Uḥud. They spent everything they had collected. Then, they were overpowered as a result of which, on top of the shock of defeat, they were smitten by the remorse for having lost the wealth they had invested in their venture.

Al-Baghawī and some other commentators have attributed the subject of this verse to the expenses incurred on the battle of Badr itself. According to them, the thousand strong army of disbelievers which had gone to confront Muslims in the battle of Badr was already paid for. All expenses of their maintenance were guaranteed by twelve chiefs of Makkah, included among them being Abū Jahl, 'Utbah, Shaybah and others. It goes without saying that the cost of transporting and feeding one thousand men must have been enormous. This being the state of affairs, these people not only that they felt bad about their defeat, they were also extremely remorseful about having lost their wealth. (Maẓharī)

At the end of the verse (36), given there is the evil end of these people in terms of the Hereafter: وَالَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْٓا اِلٰى جَهَنَّمَ يُحْشَرُوْنَ (And those who disbelieve shall be gathered into Jahannam).

In the verse under study, the mention of an evil end of spending wealth to stop people from following the true faith also includes the

disbelievers of today who spend enormous wealth in the name of hospitals, educational institutions and charities only to stop people from following Islām and to attract them to their call for the false. Similarly, also included here are all those who have gone astray, those who spend their wealth to invite people to listen to doubts and superstitions they have generated into the established collective beliefs of Islam. But, Allah Ta'ālā has His ways of keeping the faith revealed by Him protected. There are many occasions when it is openly noticed that such people fail to achieve their objective despite having spent huge amount of money and materials.

Verse 37 describes some consequences of the events mentioned earlier which, in a nutshell, are that the disbelievers used their wealth against Islām, then they were bitten by remorse and were utterly disgraced. This series of happenings had its own advantages which find mention in the opening sentence of this verse: لِيَمِيزَ اللَّهُ الْخَبِيثَ مِنَ الطَّيِّبِ (so that Allah separates the impure from the pure).

The two words, الخبيث (*al-khabīth* : impure) and الطيب (*aṭ-ṭaiyyib* : pure), stand in contrast to each other. The word, *al-khabīth*, is used to refer to that which is impure, filthy and forbidden while *aṭ-ṭaiyyib* set against it denotes what is pure, clean, nice and lawful. At this place, the use of these two words may be referring to the impure possessions of the disbelievers, and the pure possessions of Muslim as well. Given this projection, it would mean that the enormous wealth spent by the disbelievers was impure and filthy. The evil end it met was that they suffered the loss of wealth, and the loss of lives as well. As compared to them, Muslims spent very little of whatever they had in the name of wealth, but that wealth was pure and lawful. Those who spent it succeeded, not to mention the additional spoils of war that fell into their hand. After that, it was said:

وَيَجْعَلَ الْخَبِيثَ بَعْضَهُ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ فَيَرْكُمَهُ جَمِيعًا فَيَجْعَلَهُ فِي جَهَنَّمَ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ ۔

'and (Allah) puts some of the impure on some others, and heaps them all together and puts them into Jahannam. Those are the losers - 37'

The sense is that the way magnet pulls iron and amber pulls grass and in the light of new scientific discoveries, the system of the world is

held together by the constant of force fields pulling things together, the case in deeds and morals is also identical. They have a pull of their own. One bad deed draws in another bad deed and a good deed draws in another good deed. Impure wealth pulls in another body of impure wealth and then this heap of impure wealth generates vestiges which are equally impure. As a result of this, Allah Ta'ālā will heap all impure wealth into Jahannam and those to whom it belonged would find themselves in a terrible loss.

And there is a large number of commentators who take *al-khābīth* and *aṭ-ṭaiyyib* in the general sense at this place, that is, pure and impure. Thus, pure would signify true believers and impure would mean the disbelievers. Given this approach, the verse would mean that through conditions mentioned above, Allah Ta'ālā likes to make the pure distinct from the impure, that is, make a true believer distinct from a disbeliever and - as a consequence of which - true believers are gathered together in Jannah and the disbelievers, all of them at one place, into Jahannam.

Appearing once again in verse 38, there is a patronizing address to disbelievers - which carries the elements of persuasion and warning both. The part of persuasion is that should they repent from their shocking deeds even then, and come forward to believe, then, all their past sins shall be forgiven. If they failed to desist even then, the warning part tells them that they better understand that Allah Ta'ālā would not have to think about making some new law for them. The law is already there. It has been in force in the case of disbelievers of earlier times. The same law would come into force against them too - that they were destroyed in the present world and became deserving of the punishment of the Hereafter.

Verses 39 - 40

وَقَاتِلُوهُمْ حَتّٰى لَا تَكُونَ فِتْنَةٌ وَّيَكُونَ الدِّينُ كُلُّهُ لِلّٰهِ ۚ فَاِنِ انْتَهَوْا فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ﴿٣٩﴾ وَاِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَاعْلَمُوٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ مَوْلٰىكُمْ ۭ نِعْمَ الْمَوْلٰى وَنِعْمَ النَّصِيرُ ﴿٤٠﴾

And fight them until there is no Fitnah (disorder or disbelief) and total obedience becomes for Allah. So, if they desist, then, Allah is indeed watchful over what

they do. [39] **And if they turn away, then, be sure that Allah is your protector. He is the excellent protector and excellent supporter.** [40]

Commentary

We are now on verse 39 of Sūrah al-Anfāl. Two words: فتنة (*Fitnah*) and دين (*Dīn*) used here need our attention since both are used in many shades of meaning lexically.

At this place, two meanings have been reported from authorities of Tafsīr from among the Ṣaḥābah and Tābi'īn: (1) That Fitnah is taken to mean *Kufr* and *Shirk*, and *Dīn* is taken to mean the *Dīn* of Islām. This very Tafsīr has been reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی الله عنه. Given this exegetic view, the verse would mean that Muslims must continue fighting disbelievers until disbelief disintegrates yielding its place to Islām and there remains no religion and faith other than Islām. Given this situation, this injunction will be specific to only the people of Makkah and the people of Arabia - because, the Arabian Peninsula is the home of Islām. The presence of any other religion, other than Islām in it, shall be dangerous for Islām. As for the rest of the world, other religions and faiths could be kept existing as confirmed by other verses of the Holy Qur'ān and reports from Ḥadīth.

(2) According to the second Tafsīr reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضی الله عنه and others, Fitnah at this place means the chain of pain, retributive suffering and endless woes which the disbelievers of Makkah had always been inflicting on Muslims. As long as they were in Makkah, they kept braving all sorts of pain caused to them all the time. They could do nothing about it being virtually held by them in their clutches. When these people migrated towards Madīnah, they pursued each single Muslim and kept killing or looting them. Even after these people had reached Madīnah, the wrath and anger of the disbelievers kept showing up in the form of attacks on the whole city of Madīnah.

Set against *Fitnah*, the term *Dīn* means the state of exercising functional reach and control and prevailing over antagonists. Seen from this angle, the Tafsīr of the verse would be that Muslims must keep fighting disbelievers until fellow Muslims are delivered and secured from the tyrannies of disbelievers - and until Islām takes over so that it can defend and protect Muslims from the injustices inflicted on

them by others. An event relating to Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ also goes on to support this very Tafsīr. The report of the event says: When Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf launched an armed attack against Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Zubayr رضی اللہ عنہ, the Amīr of Makkah, it became a strange scene. There were Muslims on both sides and their swords were swishing against each other. Seeing this, a couple of people came to Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ and said to him: Here you are watching the horror Muslims are in, although you are the son of Sayyidnā 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb رضی اللہ عنہ who was not one of those who would ever tolerate such evil generating disorder. Why is it that you would not come out to remove this *Fitnah*? Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ said: The reason is that Allah Ta'ālā has decreed that shedding the blood of any Muslim is forbidden. Both of them countered him by saying: Do you not recite the verse of the Qur'ān: قَاتِلُوْهُمْ حَتّٰى لَا تَكُوْنَ فِتْنَةٌ (Fight them until there is no Fitnah [disorder or disbelief] any more - 39)? Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ said: Of course, I do recite this verse - and act in accordance with it as well. We continued fighting disbelievers as commanded in this verse until came the time when there remained no Fitnah anymore, and Islām became the dominant *Dīn*. Now, here are people like you who wish to kill each other and plant the Fitnah all over again, as a result of which, everything other than Allah will come to reign supreme, and that which thus reigns supreme shall be counter to the true faith, our *Dīn*. What he meant to say was that the command to wage Jihād, fight and kill, was against the *Fitnah* of disbelief and the tyranny of the disbelievers - that they had done, and continued doing so until that *Fitnah* was eliminated. Now to apply this state of affairs as an analogy to fit forms of infighting among Muslims themselves was not sound logic. In fact, at a time when Muslims fight and kill each other, the instructions of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم are: 'In such a situation one who keeps sitting is better than one who stands up.'

Summarizing this Tafsīr, it can be said that Jihād, fighting and killing against the enemies of Islām was *Wājib* (necessary) on Muslims until the *Fitnah* of their tyranny unleashed on Muslims is eliminated, and Islām's ascendancy stands established over all other orders - and this outcome will come to pass only close to *Qiyāmah*, therefore, the injunction of Jihād is valid and operative right through the Last Day of *Qiyāmah*.

Two things could result from Jihād against the enemies of Islām: (1) That they stop being oppressive to Muslims, either by entering the Islāmic brotherhood and becoming brothers-in-faith, or by remaining attached to their religion, they stop harassing and hurting Muslims and enter into a treaty of allegiance.

(2) That they reject both options and stick to their policy of confrontation. Injunctions covering both options have been mentioned in the next verse (40). It was said:

فَاِنِ انْتَهَوْا فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِمَا يَعْمَلُوْنَ بَصِيْرٌ

> So, if they desist, then, Allah is indeed watchful over what they do.

It means that Allah Ta'ālā would deal with them in the light of their conduct. Put simply, if they desisted, Jihād action against them will be suspended. Under this arrangement, Muslims may have apprehended danger from the disbelievers. Their readiness to sign a peace pact or their declaration to have become Muslims soon after the encounter of mutual killing may have possibly appeared to Muslims as nothing but some strategy of deception usually employed in wars. In a situation like that, stopping the ongoing war could have been harmful for Muslims. The answer to this apprehension was given by saying that Muslims are bound by deeds they see outwardly. The one who looks into hearts and knows their hidden secrets is none but Allah Ta'ālā Himself. Therefore, when disbelievers declare their adherence to Islām or make a peace pact, Muslims have no choice but that they stop fighting and killing in Jihād. As for personal doubts about whether or not they have accepted Islām, or peace, honestly from their heart or all this is a cover for deception - these are things which fall in the domain of Allah. He knows it well that should they do something like that, they will be taken care of in some other way. Muslims should not lay the foundation of their matters and dealings on such thoughts and apprehensions.

If hands were raised against them after their declaration of Islām or pact of peace, those waging Jihād would turn into criminals - as it appears in a Ḥadīth of the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī and Muslim. There, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said that he has been commanded to fight the enemies of Islām until they accept the Kalimah: لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ مُحَمَّدٌ

رَسُوْلُ اللهِ (There is no god worthy of worship but Allah, Muḥammad is a Messenger of Allah), establish Ṣalāh and pay Zakāh. When they have done that, their life and property shall all become protected.[1] The only exception shall be that of a punishment given to them against a crime under the Islāmic Law. What remains of the accountability of their hearts - whether they are accepting the creeds and deeds of Islām heartily or that they are doing it hypocritically - shall be resting with Allah.

According to another Ḥadīth which Abū Dāwūd has reported from several noble Companions, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said: Whoever does any injustice to a peace pact beneficiary (a person who has entered into a pact of allegiance with the Islāmic government) or brings him any harm, or makes him do something which is more than what he can physically do, or takes something from him without his genuine, heart-felt consent, then, on the Day of Judgement, I shall support that peace pact beneficiary against a Muslim who has done something like that.

The present verse of the Holy Qur'ān under study along with reports from Ḥadīth have obviously exposed Muslims to a political danger. Think of an arch enemy who happens to be at their mercy. Just to save his life, the enemy recites the Kalimah of Islām. Right there, Muslims have been obligated to hold their hands instantly. One may think: With this style of combat, Muslims would be unable to overcome just about any enemy! But, Allah Ta'ālā has His own ways of doing things. Here, He has taken the hidden secrets of their hearts as His area of responsibility. In a miraculous manner, it has been demonstrated practically that Muslims never faced such an embarassing situation in any of their battlefields. However, there have been hundreds of hypocrites in a state of peace who cheated, passed on as Muslims, even went about fulfilling the obligations of Ṣalāh and Ṣawm at least outwardly. Some of the miserably graceless among them had no other objective in sight but that they would exact a few benefits from Mus-

1. It should be recalled that this principle is restricted to the Arabian Peninsula, where no disbeliever is allowed to live as a permanent citizen. In other parts of the world, the disbelievers may opt for *jizyah* and may continue to profess their own religion, the punishment of their disbelief being deferred to the Hereafter. (Muhammad Taqi Usmani).

lims and remain safe from their revenge despite nursing hostility in their hearts. Then, there were some of those too who were doing so with political motives of spying on Muslims, find their secrets and maintain conspiratorial liaison with enemies. But, such was the Divine law that it instructed Muslims to treat all of them as they would treat Muslims - unless it was proved that they had themselves betrayed their hostility to Islām or contravened the peace agreement.

This teaching of Islām applied to the condition in which the enemies of Islām promise to desist from their hostility and enter into agreement to that effect.

The second condition is that they stick to their doggedness and hostility. The injunction covering this situation appears in the later verse (40) where it was said: وَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَاعْلَمُوٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ مَوْلٰىكُمْ نِعْمَ الْمَوْلٰى وَنِعْمَ النَّصِيْرُ (And if they turn away, then, be sure that Allah is your protector. He is the an excellent protector and excellent supporter).

In brief, if they fail to desist from their tyranny and disbelief, the injunction Muslims are obligated with is the same as stated above, that is, continue fighting them. Since Jihād involves fighting and killing, it is usually associated with a big army, ample weapons and other hardware and logistic support. But, those days Muslims did not have much of this normally, therefore, it was possible that Muslims would have found this command to fight and kill somewhat heavy, or their lack of numbers or paucity of equipment may have led them to realize that they could not win a war like that. Therefore, Muslims were given the antidote they needed. They were told that it did not matter if the disbelievers had more men and equipment to fight with, but where in the world were they going to get the unseen support and help of Allah Ta'ālā which Muslims have with them and which they have been witnessing as being alongwith them on every battlefield. Then, towards the end it was said that, for all practical purposes, everyone in the world finds some help and support from someone or somewhere, but the touchstone of how effective and functionally superior it is depends on the power, strength, knowledge and experience of that helper or supporter. It goes without saying that a whole world-full of people could never exceed, even equal the power and strength and knowledge and perception of Allah Ta'ālā because He is an excellent protector and an excellent supporter with no one to match Him.

Verse 41

وَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّمَا غَنِمْتُمْ مِّنْ شَىْءٍ فَاَنَّ لِلّٰهِ خُمُسَهٗ وَلِلرَّسُوْلِ وَلِذِى الْقُرْبٰى وَالْيَتٰمٰى وَالْمَسٰكِيْنِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيْلِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ اٰمَنْتُمْ بِاللّٰهِ وَمَآ اَنْزَلْنَا عَلٰى عَبْدِنَا يَوْمَ الْفُرْقَانِ يَوْمَ الْتَقَى الْجَمْعٰنِ ط وَاللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿٤١﴾

And know that whatever spoils you receive, its one fifth is for Allah and His Messenger and for kinsmen and orphans and the needy and the wayfarer, if you do believe in Allah and in what We have sent down upon Our Servant on the decisive day, the day the two forces met. And Allah is powerful over everything. [41]

Commentary

Mentioned in this verse are injunctions of spoils and the law of their distribution. Before we take up the subject in detail, let us understand some important words first.

Lexically, the word: غنیمه (*ghanīmah*) is applied to property which is acquired from the enemy. In the terminology of the Sharī'ah, property which is acquired from non-Muslims through fighting and killing, truimph and control, is called: غنیمه (*ghanīmah*, translated here as spoils). And the property which is acquired in peace and with consent, like: جزیه، خراج *Jizyah, Khirāj* etc., is called: فیئ (*fai'*). These two words have been used to describe injunctions of these two kinds in the Holy Qur'ān. The present Sūrah al-Anfāl takes up injunctions relating to *ghanīmah* or spoils which is acquired from non-Muslims at the time of fighting and killing.

At this point, we should first keep in mind that, according to the Islāmic and Qur'ānic view of things, the real ownership of the entire universe belongs to Allah Ta'ālā, the one and only Being who has created whatever there is in it. The only way through which the ownership of something can be attributed to human beings is no other but that Allah Ta'ālā may have Himself declared it, through His Law, to be under the ownership of someone. For instance, while mentioning quadruped animals in Sūrah Yā Sīn (23:71), it was said: اَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا اَنَّا خَلَقْنَا لَهُمْ مِّمَّا عَمِلَتْ اَيْدِيْنَآ اَنْعَامًا فَهُمْ لَهَا مٰلِكُوْنَ (Do they see not that We created the quadrupeds

with Our Own hands then they became their owners?) As obvious, the sense is that this ownership of theirs is not private and personal - it was Allah who made them the owners out of His grace.

When some set of people rebels against Allah Ṭa'ālā, that is, indulges in Kufr and Shirk, then, the first action Allah Ta'ālā takes to reform them is that He sends His Messengers and Books to them. When the unfortunate ones among them are not impressed even by this act of Divine grace, Allah Ta'ālā commands His Messengers to wage Jihād against them and kill them. The outcome of this was that the lives and properties of these rebels became *Mubāḥ* (allowed). They no longer had the right to benefit from the assets of life and property given to them by Allah Ta'ālā, instead, in a manner of saying, all that belonged to them was confiscated in the name of the Authority in command. These very confiscated properties are given the name of *ghanīmah*, spoils or war booty - which went out of the ownership of disbelievers and deposited itself separately as being under the ownership of Allah Ta'ālā alone.

According to the ancient Divine Law which governed such confiscated properties, no one was allowed to benefit from them. Such properties were, rather, gathered and placed on some open spot where lightening would come from the heavens and burn these up. This was the sign that their effort by way of Jihād was accepted.

One of the few unique distinctions bestowed upon the Last of the Prophets صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم by Allah Ta'ālā was that *ghanīmah* properties (spoils) were made lawful (*ḥalāl*) for the Muslim community (as in a Ḥadīth of Muslim). And such was the quality of its lawfulness that it was classed as 'the purest of properties!' The reason for it is not far to find. Is it not that wealth and property which one acquires through hard labour comes to him under his ownership after having passed through chains after chains of transfers from the ownership of many human beings? Now, while passing through these numerous chains, there exists a strong probability of unlawful, impermissible or repugnant methods being employed somewhere in the pipeline. The case of *ghanīmah* or spoils happens to be quite contrary. Here, the ownership of disbelievers stands severed from them and passes directly into the ownership of Allah Ta'ālā, remaining there as such. Now, whoever gets it, gets it directly from what is owned by Allah Ta'ālā and that leaves

no doubt, or apprehension of unlawfulness or repugnance as could be the case in receiving from what is owned by human beings. This is like water drawn from a well, or natural grass, which reaches man directly as a blessing of Allah Ta'ālā without any human intermediacy in between.

To sum up, it can be said that *ghanīmah* or spoils which was not lawful for past communities was made lawful as a token of blessing and mercy for the Muslim Ummah. The rule of its distribution has been introduced by saying: وَاعْلَمُوٓا اَنَّمَا غَنِمْتُمْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ (And know that whatever spoils you receive - 41). To begin with, according to the rules of Arabic language, the word: مَا (*mā*) already signifies generality. Then, to put further stress on this generality, added there was the expression: مِنْ شَيْءٍ (*min sha'i*) which means whatever is collected as spoils, big or small, falls under the purview of this very law. Anyone who takes anything outside the provisions of the law of distribution, even if ordinary or small in his judgement, he will still be considered guilty of a serious crime. Therefore, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said that it is not permissible for anyone to take even a needle and its thread which is a part of the spoils (*ghanīmah* property) without his entitlement to it as his legally alloted share. In addition to that, he has given a severe warning against taking anything from spoils outside the alloted share. The name given to this act of misappropriation in spoils in Ḥadīth is *Ghulūl* where it has been declared as brazenly unlawful, far more serious than common theft.

By introducing the ground rule for distribution, all *mujāhid* Muslims were served with a notice that Allah Ta'ālā has made spoils lawful for them, but that it was lawful under a specific procedural regulation. Anyone who takes anything against it, then, that will be nothing but an ember of the fire of Jahannam.

This is what makes the law of the Qur'ān distinct from other laws of the world. Then, this is the real secret behind the perfect effectiveness and success of the law of Qur'ān when it begins by focusing on the need to fear Allah and to be concerned about the Hereafter and follows it up with warnings of consequences. After that, as part of the next article, penal punishments were also promulgated.

Otherwise, it is worth pondering how is it possible in the middle of the wild commotion of the battlefield that properties be acquired from

out of the possession of non-Muslims, properties the details of which are known neither to the commander of Muslims nor to someone else. On top of that, battles are fought on grounds which form part of desolate jungles and deserts where thousands of places exist as possible hideouts far from the arm of law. To stand guard over these properties with the sole strength of law was something just not possible for anyone. Ultimately, it was the fear of Allah and Ākhirah alone which enabled every single Muslim to desist from making even the minutest misappropriation in these properties.

Now, let us have a look at this rule of distribution. It was said: فَاَنَّ لِلّٰهِ خُمُسَهٗ وَلِلرَّسُوْلِ وَلِذِی الْقُرْبٰی وَالْیَتٰمٰی وَالْمَسٰكِیْنِ وَابْنِ السَّبِیْلِ (its one fifth is for Allah and the Messenger and for kinsmen and orphans and the needy and the wayfarer - 41).

First of all, worth pondering at this point is that the rule of the distribution of *ghanīmah* or spoils being described here covers the distribution of spoils as a whole. But, the Qur'ān has elected to simply mention the rule as it applies to its one-fifth. No mention has been made of the remaining four shares. What is the secret behind it and what is the law which governs the distribution of the rest of four shares? If we ponder over and deliberate in the Qur'ān, an answer to these two questions comes out from within the existing word arrangement of the text. To wit, addressing Muslims engaged in Jihād, the Holy Qur'ān said: مَا غَنِمْتُمْ (*mā ghanīmtum* : whatever spoils you receive). There is a hint here to the effect that this property is the right of those who receive it. And after that, it was declared that one fifth from it was the share of Allah and the Messenger and others. Thus, the outcome is all too clear - the remaining four shares belonged to the *mujāhidīn* and to those who collected spoils among them. This is similar to what the Qur'ān has said elsewhere in connection with the law of inheritance:

وَوَرِثَهٗٓ اَبَوٰهُ فَلِاُمِّهِ الثُّلُثُ

> And his parents have inherited him, then, his mother gets the one-third. (4:11)

Here too, the mention of mother has been considered sufficient which tells us that the remaining two shares are the right of the father. Similarly, after mentioning: مَا غَنِمْتُمْ (*mā ghanīmtum* : whatever spoils you receive), when only one fifth share was set aside for Allah, it became

clear that the remaining four shares were the right of the *mujāhidīn*. Later, the corresponding word and deed of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم fully clarified the rule in details that these four shares were distributed over *mujāhidīn* under a specific law.

Now, let us take up the details of that one fifth share which has been clearly determined by the Holy Qur'ān in this verse. The count of words used in the Qur'ān to say this here is six. The six words are: (1) لِلّٰهِ (*lillāh* : for Allah), (2) لِلرَّسُوْلِ (*lirrasūl* : for the Messenger), (3) لِذِى الْقُرْبٰى (*lidhilqurbā* : for kinsmen), (4) الْيَتٰمٰى (*al-yatāmā* : orphans, (5) الْمَسٰكِيْنِ (*al-masākīn* : the needy) and (6) ابْنِ السَّبِيْلِ (*ibn as-sabīl* : the wayfarer).

Out of these words, the first word: لله (*lillāh*) serves as the main heading under which this one fifth shall be disbursed. In other words, the statement made is that all these disbursements are exclusively for the sake of Allah. Then, the introduction of this word at this place carries a particular wisdom of its own which has been pointed out to in Tafsīr Maẓharī. It has been said there that wealth and property coming out of *ṣadaqāt* (charities) had been declared unlawful for the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his family since it did not suit his station as a prophet of Allah, and also because it was a portion taken out from the wealth and properties of Muslims at large for the purpose of making these purified. The name given to such give outs in Ḥadīth is: اوساخ الناس (*awsākhu 'n-nās* : dirt removed from people). This is not fit for the high status of a prophet.

Since this verse has also given a share out of the one fifth of spoils to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his family, therefore, it was particularly stressed that this share did not wind its way through what was owned by people, instead, it was directly from Allah Ta'ālā - as mentioned a little earlier that the property of *ghanīmah* or spoils goes out from the ownership of disbelievers and passes directly into the sole ownership of Allah Ta'ālā. Thereafter, it is distributed as a reward from Him. Therefore, to indicate that the share given to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his kinsmen from the one fifth of spoils had nothing to do with charities given by people, instead, was grace and reward directly from Allah Ta'ālā, it was said at the beginning of the verse: لِلّٰهِ (*lillāh*) which means that all this property belongs to Allah Ta'ālā, really and specifically, and it will be disbursed according to His command alone on heads as determined.

So, there remain five real categories of disbursement from this one fifth - the Messenger, the kinsmen, the orphan, the needy and the wayfarer. Then, there are different degrees of entitlement among them. One marvels at the eloquence of the Holy Qur'ān as to how delicately it has described the difference in their degrees of entitlement. For instance, the intensifying particle: لام (*lām*) has been affixed before the first two of these five as in: لِلرَّسُوْلِ وَلِذِى الْقُرْبٰى (for the Messenger and for the kinsmen) - and the rest of the three kinds have been conjoined together and mentioned without the particle *lām*.

The particle *lām* is used for particularization in the Arabic language. In the word: لِلّٰهِ (*lillāh*), the particle *lām* denotes exclusivity of ownership which means that Allah Ta'ālā is the real owner of everything - and in: لِلرَّسُوْلِ (*lirrasūl*), the objective is to highlight the speciality of entitlement since Allah Ta'ālā bestowed the right of disbursing and distributing the one fifth of spoils on the noble Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. The purport of this arrangement has been ably stated by Imām Ṭaḥāwī and Tafsīr Maẓharī when they said: Though, five names have been mentioned at this place with reference to the heads of disbursement of one fifth of spoils but, in reality, the entire right of disposal rests with the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم who shall expend the one fifth of spoils over these five categories at his discretion. This is similar to what was said in the first verse of Sūrah al-Anfāl where the injunction about the entire collection of spoils was that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had the right to expend it where he wished or give it to whom he wished, all at his discretion.

Though, the verse (41): وَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّمَا غَنِمْتُمْ (And know that whatever spoils you receive) by dividing the whole of spoils over five shares, declared that four of these were the right of the *mujāhidīn*, but the fifth share continued to be governed by the same injunction which had left its disbursement at the discretion of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. However, the only addition made there was that five heads of expenditure relating to this fifth share were spelt out and that it will keep revolving within these. But, according to the majority of expert scholars, it was not incumbent on him that he should make five equal shares out of this one fifth and distribute it equally over the five categories of recepients mentioned in the verse. Instead, what was necessary was no more than that he would give the one fifth of spoils within the same

five categories, to all, or to some, at his discretion.

The clearest proof of this statement lies within the words of the verse and the categories of recepients it mentions. It means that all these categories are not practically separate and detached from each other. In fact, they can be common to each other. For instance, a person who falls under the category of 'kinsmen,' could also be an 'orphan', or 'needy' and 'wayfarer' too. Similarly, the needy and the wayfarer could also be orphans, and kinsmen too. Someone needy could also have the status of a wayfarer. If the purpose was to have spoils distributed equally and separately over all these categories, then, these categories should have been such as would not admit one category of person in the other. Otherwise, it would become necessary that a person who is from kinsmen and who also happens to be an orphan, a needy one and a wayfarer too will have to be given four shares at the rate of one share for each status. Incidentally, this is the governing rule in the distribution of inheritance. Someone who has different kinds of relationship with a deceased person gets a separate share against each such relationship. Nevertheless, giving four shares to one person is something no one in the Muslim community goes by. This tells us that the verse does not aim to put a restriction of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that he necessarily gives to all these categories and gives equally too. Instead, the aim is that he may give out of the one fifth of spoils to any category from the five categories specified as he deems fit and appropriate. (Tafsīr Maẓharī)

This is illustrated by an incident relating to Sayyidah Fāṭimah ﷺ. When she requested the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that she be given a servant to help her with home chores in view of her physical weakness, he refused to accept her request on the ground that, in his sight, the need of his Companions from the people of Ṣuffah was more urgent than hers. They were extremely poor and needy and there was no way he could bypass them and give to her. (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and Muslim)

From here, it becomes very clear that there was no separate right or entitlement for each category, otherwise, who could have been more deserving than Sayyidah Fāṭimah in the category of kinsfolk? In brief, all this is a description of the heads of disbursements, and not a description of entitlements.

The Distribution of One Fifth (*Khums*) after the passing away of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم

According to the majority of Imāms, the share assigned to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in the one fifth of spoils was, in terms of his august station as a prophet and messenger. This was very similar to the special right given to him that he could pick and take anything from out of the total spoils for his personal use, because of which he had actually taken certain things from out of some spoils. Then, he took care of his expenses and the expenses of his family from the one fifth of spoils. After his passing away, this share ceased to exist automatically - because, there is no messenger or prophet after him.

The *Khums* (one fifth) of *Dhawi 'l-Qurbā* (the kinsmen)

At least, there is no difference of opinion about the precedence of the right of poor kinsmen in the one fifth of spoils as compared to that of other categories of receivers, that is, the orphans, the needy and the wayfarer. The reason is that poor kinsmen cannot be helped with Zakāh and Ṣadaqāt, while other categories of receivers could also be helped with Zakāh and Ṣadaqāt (as clarified in Al-Hidāyah where precedence is given to poor kins folk over other categories). However, the question remains whether or not the need-free kinsmen would be given from it. Imām Abū Ḥanīfah says: Whatever the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم himself used to give to kinsmen was based on two considerations: (1) Their need and poverty and (2) help and support given to him in establishing faith and defending Islām. The second cause came to an end with the passing away of the Prophet. What remained was the consideration of need and poverty. As based on this aspect, every Imām and Amīr of Muslims shall keep granting them precedence over others (Hidāyah, al-Jaṣṣāṣ). Imām Shāfi'ī has also taken the same position. (Qurṭubī)

And according to some Muslim jurists (*fuqahā'*), the share of kinsmen in their capacity as being related to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم remains valid for ever. Included there are the poor and the need-free all alike, however, the ruling Muslim authority of the time shall give them a share at his discretion. (Maẓharī)

The real factor in this matter is the conduct and practice of the rightly-guided Khulafā' of Islām in terms of what they did after the passing away of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. This author of Hidāyah

has this to say about it:

ان الخلفاء الاربعة الراشدين قسّموه على ثلثة اسهم

(After the passing away of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم) the four rightly-guided Khulafā' have distributed the one fifth of spoils over three categories only (that is, orphan, needy, and wayfarer).

However, it stands proved about Sayyidnā 'Umar صلى الله عليه وسلم that he used to give out to poor kinsmen from the one fifth of spoils (deduced by Abū Dāwūd) - and it is obvious that this is not peculiar to Sayyidnā 'Umar alone, other Khulafā' would have also been doing the same.

As for the narrations which prove that Sayyidnā Abū Bakr and Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنهم اجمعين used to take out the rightful share of kinsmen right through the later period of their Caliphate and had these distributed through Sayyidnā 'Alī as custodian on their behalf (as in a narration of Kitāb al-Kharāj by Imām Abū Yūsuf), it is not contrary to that distribution being particular to poor kinsmen. Allah knows best.

Special Note

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had himself determined the qualification of kinsmen through his deed when, apart from Banū Hāshim which was his own tribe, he had associated Banū al-Muṭṭalib too with them for the reason that they had never separated themselves from Banū Hāshim whether in Jāhiliyyah or Islām - so much so that at the time the Quraysh of Makkah had cut off food supplies to Banū Hāshim and had confined them to Shi'b Abī Ṭālib, the Banū al-Muṭṭalib were though not included under those boycotted, yet they joined Banū Hāshim in this trial. (Maẓharī)

The Day of the Battle of Badr was the Day of Distinction

In this verse, the day of Badr has been called Yowm al-Furqān (the day of distinction between the true and the false). The reason is that Muslims scored a clear victory at Badr and the disbelievers faced a disgraceful defeat. Though, this happened as a ground reality on that day, yet it was, by extension, a day of decision also, the ultimate decision between disbelief and Islām.

Verses 42 - 44

اِذْ اَنْتُمْ بِالْعُدْوَةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ بِالْعُدْوَةِ الْقُصْوٰى وَالرَّكْبُ اَسْفَلَ مِنْكُمْ ۭ وَلَوْ تَوَاعَدْتُّمْ لَاخْتَلَفْتُمْ فِى الْمِيْعٰدِ ۙ وَلٰكِنْ لِّيَقْضِىَ اللّٰهُ

أَمْرًا كَانَ مَفْعُولًا ۙ لِّيَهْلِكَ مَنْ هَلَكَ عَنْ بَيِّنَةٍ وَّيَحْيٰى مَنْ حَيَّ
عَنْ بَيِّنَةٍ ۗ وَإِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَسَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٤٢﴾ إِذْ يُرِيكَهُمُ اللّٰهُ فِي
مَنَامِكَ قَلِيلًا ۖ وَلَوْ أَرٰىكَهُمْ كَثِيرًا لَّفَشِلْتُمْ وَلَتَنٰزَعْتُمْ فِي
الْأَمْرِ وَلٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ سَلَّمَ ۗ إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ ﴿٤٣﴾ وَإِذْ
يُرِيكُمُوهُمْ إِذِ الْتَقَيْتُمْ فِي أَعْيُنِكُمْ قَلِيلًا وَّيُقَلِّلُكُمْ فِي
أَعْيُنِهِمْ لِيَقْضِيَ اللّٰهُ أَمْرًا كَانَ مَفْعُولًا ۗ وَإِلَى اللّٰهِ تُرْجَعُ
الْأُمُورُ ﴿٤٤﴾

And (remember) when you were on the nearest cliff, and they were on the farthest one, and the caravan was downwards from you. And had you re-arranged it with each other, you would have deviated from the appointment. But (it happened like this) so that Allah might accomplish what was destined to be done, so that whoever is going to die may die knowingly, and whoever is going to live may live knowingly. And Allah is indeed All-Hearing, All-Knowing. [42]

And when in your dream, Allah showed them to you few in number. And if He had shown them to you many in number, you would have been demoralized and would have disputed in the matter, but Allah saved (you). Surely, Allah is All-Aware of what lies in the hearts. [43]

And when, at the time you met each other, He showed them to you few in number in your eyes, and reduced your number in their eyes, so that Allah might accomplish what was destined to be done. And to Allah all matters are returned. [44]

Commentary

The battle of Badr was the first confrontation of Kufr and Islām which registered a practical proof of the superiority and veracity of Islām, even visibly and materially. Therefore, the Holy Qur'ān has taken special steps to describe its details which appear in the verses cited above. Besides the many considerations of wisdom behind these details, one such consideration is to assert that there was just no possibility, either visibly or technically, that Muslims will win and that the

disbelievers of Makkah will be defeated. But, the unseen power of Allah Taʻālā overturned all superiority of men and materials as well as its obvious causes. To give a clear picture of this event, the Holy Qur'ān has virtually outlined in these verses a whole map of the battlefront at Badr. Now, before we explain these verses, let us glance over the lexical explanation of some words.

The word: عُدْوَة (*ʻudwah*) refers to a side and the word: دنیا (*dunyā*) is derived from: اَدْنٰی (*adnā*) which means nearer. When compared to the Hereafter, this world of ours is also called: دنیا (*dunyā*) because, as related to the universe of the Hereafter, it is closer at hand for human beings. And the word: قُصْوٰی (*quṣwā*) is a derivation from: اقصی (*aqṣā*) which means farther.

In verse 42, death has been mentioned against life. The Arabic words used here do not carry the outward sense of death and life. Instead, meant here is spiritual death and life, or destruction and salvation. Spiritual life is Islām (belief in Allah and the Messenger) and 'Īmān (faith), and spiritual death is Shirk (polytheism) and Kufr (disbelief). The Holy Qur'ān has used these words at several places in this very sense. For instance, earlier in Sūrah al-Anfāl, it was said:

يٰاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اسْتَجِيْبُوْا لِلّٰهِ وَلِلرَّسُوْلِ اِذَا دَعَاكُمْ لِمَا يُحْيِيْكُمْ

> O those who believe, respond to Allah and the Messenger when He calls you to what gives you life. (8:24).

The life mentioned here is the real and eternal life which one is blessed with in return for 'Īmān and Islām. Now, we can move to a detailed explanation of the cited verses.

Opening with almost a cartographic view of the war front at Badr, verse 42 tells us that Muslims were on the nearest cliff (عُدْوَة دُنیا) and the disbelievers were on the farthest one (عُدْوَة قُصْوٰی). The spot occupied by Muslims was on the side of the terrain closer to Madīnah, while the disbelievers had taken the other side of the terrain which was farther from Madīnah. As for the trade caravan of Abū Sufyān, the main cause of waging this Jihād, that too was closer to the army of disbelievers which had come from Makkah but was out of the range of attack by Muslims and moving by the sea shore at a distance of three miles. The purpose of focusing on this battle plan is to say that Muslims were located at a spot totally unsuitable and wrong strategically, a spot from

where they had no chance of overpowering the enemy, in fact, no chance of even saving their own lives - because, the side of the terrain which was closer to Madīnah happened to be a big sandy patch walking through which was hard and heavy. Then, they had no access to water around the spot they were in, while the side farther from Madīnah where the disbelievers had set up their camps was smooth terrain with a supply of water close by.

Then, by pointing out to the two edges of the sides occupied by the two armies, it was made much too clear that the two forces were standing face to face, under which condition, it was not possible to conceal the strength or weakness of one party from the other. In addition to that, it was also indicated that the army of the disbelievers of Makkah was already at peace with the realization that their trade caravan had moved away from the attacking range of Muslims. Now, if they needed them at some stage, they too could come out to help them. As compared to them, Muslims were in trouble in terms of their location where they had no probability of getting support of men and materials from anywhere. Then, it is already settled, and known to every educated Muslim, that the total count of Muslim 'army' was three hundred and thirteen, while that of the disbelievers was one thousand. Muslims did not have sufficient number of mounts, nor did they have enough weapons. Against that, the army of the disbelievers was laced with everything.

Besides, Muslims simply had not embarked on this Jihād as some armed force ready to fight a war. Being an emergency measure to block the passage of a trade caravan and to lower the morale of the enemy, only three hundred and thirteen Muslims had started off ill-prepared, ill-equipped. It was only all of a sudden that there they stood having to confront a thousand-strong force of armed men.

This verse of the Qur'ān tells us that this event, though it came to pass accidentally, with no intention behind it, but the truth is that all that happens in this world, accidentally and involuntarily - though, it looks like some plain accident in terms of its level and form - is, in the sight of the Creator of the universe, nothing but the well-set chain of a formidable system. There is nothing in this system which can be called abrupt or out of place. It will take the whole system to unravel itself to man, only then, man could find out the full range of wisdom hidden be-

hind what was, supposedly, an accidental happening.

Take this event of the battle of Badr as a test case. That it came to pass in an accidental and involuntary manner had its own wise considerations as stated in: وَلَوْ تَوَاعَدْتُّمْ لَاخْتَلَفْتُمْ فِى الْمِيْعٰدِ (And had you re-arranged it with each other, you would have deviated from the appointment - 42). It means that, had this battle also been fought like common battles around the world, fought with all possible survey of available options, mutual arguments and crisis resolutions, then, given the dictates of circumstances, this battle would have never been fought. In fact, differences would have crept in one way or the other - either, Muslims themselves would have started thinking otherwise because of their being few and weak against adversaries who were many and strong; or that both parties, the disbelievers and the Muslims, might have not shown up on the battle ground as appointed mutually. As for Muslims, they would have not had the courage to initiate action in view of their being few and weak - and the disbelievers, in whose hearts Allah Ta'ālā had already put the awe of Muslims, would have been scared to come out against them despite their superiority in number and strength.

Therefore, that formidable Divine system created such conditions on both sides as would not allow them time and occasion to think and understand. The people of Makkah were so overwhelmed by the disturbing plaint from the trade caravan of Abū Sufyān that they were ready to march out without much deliberation. The Muslims were prompted by the thought that they were going to take care of an ordinary trade caravan and not a formal armed force arrayed against them. But, Allah, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise, so willed that a war starts between them so that the consequences of the victory of Islām which are to emerge from behind this war become visibly manifest. Therefore, it was said: وَلٰكِنْ لِّيَقْضِىَ اللّٰهُ اَمْرًا كَانَ مَفْعُوْلًا (But [it happened like this] so that Allah might accomplish what was destined to be done - 42). It means that, despite conditions being what they were, the war had to be fought so that Allah might accomplish what was destined to be done. And destined to be done was that arrayed against an army of armed and equipped youngmen a thousand-strong, a motely group of three hundred and thirteen ill-equipped and hunger-stricken Muslims - and that too out of place in terms of the demanding war front - rams

itself against what was a virtual mountain for them, then, the unbelievable happens. The mountain turns into smithereens. This insignificant group of men wins. This is nothing but an all too visible demonstration of the fact that some big power was operating behind them, something that thousand-strong army missed. Then, it is also evident that Muslims were supported because of Islām and the disbelievers remained deprived because of their disbelief, something which gave every sensible human a criterion to distinguish truth from evil and genuine from the fake. Therefore, at the end of the verse, it was said: لِيَهْلِكَ مَنْ هَلَكَ عَنْ بَيِّنَةٍ وَيَحْيٰى مَنْ حَيَّ عَنْ بَيِّنَةٍ (so that whoever is going to die may die knowingly, and whoever is going to live may live knowingly - 42). It means that the loud and clear veracity of Islām vis-a-vis the falsity and horror of Kufr and Shirk was exposed for ever so that anyone who opts for destruction should do so while fully realizing the consequences of his or her action, and anyone who goes on to live should also live with full realization of the choice so made. The caveat is: Let nothing be done unknowingly and mistakenly, so be on guard.

The word: هلاكت (*halākah* : death, destruction) in this verse means Kufr or disbelief while حيات (*ḥayāt* : life) denotes Islām. In other words, once the truth has come out in the open, the probability and excuse of misunderstanding stand eliminated. Now, whoever takes to disbelief as his or her life style is going towards destruction with open eyes. And whoever takes to Islām takes to eternal life knowingly, consciously and deliberately. Then, it was said: وَإِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَسَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ (And Allah is indeed All-Hearing, All-Knowing - 42) that is, He knows the secrets in everyone's heart, even the nature of everyone's belief and disbelief, as well as the due reward and punishment for it.

Mentioned in verses 43 and 44, there is particular marvel of Divine power which was designed to take place at the battle of Badr for the express purpose of making sure that none of the two armies were to put an end to the war itself by deserting the battlefield - because, it was as a result of this very war that the manifestation of the veracity of Islām was destined even as a ground reality, all earthy, material.

Such was the nature of this Divine marvel that the army of the disbelievers which was though three times larger than that of Muslims, yet Allah Ta'ālā, by His perfect power alone, made their number appear much less to Muslims so that it may not cause any difference of

opinion or sense of weakness to affect them. This event took place twice. Once, it was shown to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in a dream which he related to all of them and which renewed their courage and resolve. The second time, when the two groups stood facing each other on the battlefield itself, their number was shown to Muslims as being small. The event mentioned in verse 43 relates to the dream and that in verse 44 to a state when they were wide awake.

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضى الله عنه says: In our sight, the army facing us looked as if - as I said to the man next to me - these people would be ninety in number. That man said: No, they must be a hundred.

In the last verse, along with this, it has also been mentioned: يُقَلِّلُكُمْ فِيٓ أَعْيُنِهِمْ (and reduced your number in their eyes - 44). This could also mean that Muslims were, in reality, already few in number, thus, what was shown to disbelievers was their number as it was. And it could also mean that the number shown to them was much reduced than it really was - as it appears in many narrations that Abū Jahl on seeing the Muslim 'army' said to his compatriots: The number of these people does not seem to be any more than the number who would eat a camel as their daily ration. In Arabia of those days, the measure used to find out the number of men in an army was to first guess the number of animals slaughtered for their meals. One camel was understood to be sufficient to feed one hundred people. Right here on this battle site of Badr, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, in his effort to find out the number of men in the army of the Quraysh of Makkah, had asked some local people: How many camels are slaughtered in their army camp every day? The answer given to him was: Ten camels daily. This led him to estimate the number of men in their army as being one thousand. In short, the total number of Muslims was shown as being one hundred in the sight of Abū Jahl. Here too, the wisdom of showing them in a reduced number was that the awe of Muslims may not so adversely affect the hearts of disbelievers ahead of the actual confrontation that they bolt from the battlefield itself.

Special Note

From this verse, we also find out that there are occasions when, as a matter of miracle and supernatural happening, optical observation may prove incorrect - as it transpired here.

For this very reason, the statement: لِيَقْضِيَ اللّٰهُ أَمْرًا كَانَ مَفْعُوْلًا (so that Allah might accomplish what was destined to be done - 44) was repeated here. It means that the Divine marvel and the phenomenon of superimposition on optical observation was manifested for the reason that the will of Allah stands accomplished right upto the end, that is, by giving Muslims victory despite their lack of numbers and materials, the central objectives of this war, that is, the veracity of Islām and the expression of unseen Divine support, should be fully achieved and established for ever.

At the end of the verse, it was said: وَإِلَى اللّٰهِ تُرْجَعُ الْأُمُوْرُ (And to Allah all matters are returned - 44). It means that He does what He wills and He commands as He wills. He can make a minority overcome a majority and weakness overtake strength. He may make less become more and more become less.

Verses 45 - 47

يَاأَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا إِذَا لَقِيْتُمْ فِئَةً فَاثْبُتُوْا وَاذْكُرُوا اللّٰهَ كَثِيْرًا
لَّعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿٤٥﴾ وَأَطِيْعُوا اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ وَلَا تَنَازَعُوْا
فَتَفْشَلُوْا وَتَذْهَبَ رِيْحُكُمْ وَاصْبِرُوْا ۗ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ مَعَ الصّٰبِرِيْنَ ﴿٤٦﴾
وَلَا تَكُوْنُوْا كَالَّذِيْنَ خَرَجُوْا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ بَطَرًا وَّرِئَآءَ النَّاسِ
وَيَصُدُّوْنَ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ بِمَا يَعْمَلُوْنَ مُحِيْطٌ ﴿٤٧﴾

O those who believe, when you face a group (in battle), stand firm and remember Allah much, so that you may be successful. [45]

And obey Allah and His Messenger, and do not dispute, lest you should show weakness and should lose your predominance, and be patient. Surely, Allah is with the patient. [46]

And do not be like those who set forth from their homes waxing proud and showing off to people, preventing (people) from the way of Allah. And Allah is All-Encompassing of what they do. [47]

Commentary

Qur'ānic Instructions for Success in Jihād

Given in the first two verses cited above is a special set of instructions for Muslims when they confront enemies on the battlefield. These instructions from Allah Ta'ālā are for them the master prescrip-

tion of success and ascendancy in the present world as well as that of salvation and prosperity in the eternal life to come. In fact, the secret of unusual successes and victories achieved by Muslims in all wars fought by them during the early period lies hidden behind their adherence to these very golden guidelines - and they are:

1. Be Steadfast

The Arabic word used by the Qur'ān is *thibāt* which means to stand firm, hold the ground, be steadfast. This includes firmness of the feet and firmness of the heart both because a person whose heart is not strong and firm can hardly be expected to have the rest of his body hold the ground. This is something everyone knows and understands, believer or disbeliever. Every nation of the world gives high priority to this strength in its wars because all experienced people know it well that the first and foremost weapon in the theater of war is nothing but the firmness of heart and feet. Without these, all weapons are rendered useless.

2. Remember Allah

The second principle is the *Dhikr* of Allah which is a weapon in its own right, special and spiritual, something known to Muslims only and not known to or neglected by the rest of the world. The world as we know it today would do anything to get together state-of-the-art weapon systems for their war plans, the latest in logistics and morale boosting sessions to inculcate combat firmness among forces - but, strangely enough, it is unaware and unexposed to this spiritual weapon of Muslims. This is the reason why Muslims, wherever they had to confront some other nation while following these instructions precisely as given, they were able to demolish superior forces of the adversary laced with men, weapons and war materials. As for the inherent spiritual benediction of the Dhikr of Allah, they have a place of their own in our lives, nevertheless, it is also difficult to deny its efficacy in enabling one to continue to hold on and remain standing firm on his feet. To remember Allah and to be confident about it is like a highly charged electronic energy which makes a weak person run through mountains. No matter what the odds be against, personal discomfort or emotional anxiety, this remembrance of Allah shoos all that into thin air making the heart of man strong and his feet firm.

At this stage, let us keep in mind that the time of a raging battle is

usually a terrible time when no one remembers anyone and everyone is consumed with the thought of self-preservation. Therefore, the poets of pagan Arabia take great pride in insisting that they remember their beloved even during the heat of the battlefield. To them, this was a proof of the power of heart and the firmness of love. A pagan poet has said: ذكرتك والخطى يخطر بيننا (I remembered you even at a time when spears were swinging dangerously between us).

The Holy Qur'ān has prompted Muslims to engage in the Dhikr of Allah even in this dangerous situation, and that too with the emphasis on : كَثِيْرًا (*kathīra* : much).

Also worth pondering over at this point is the fact that no other act of worship (*'Ibādah*), except the Dhikr of Allah, has been commanded in the entire Qur'ān with the instruction that it be done abundantly and profusely. Expressions like : صَلوٰةً كَثِيْرًا (making Ṣalāh much) and: صِيَامًا كَثِيْرًا (fasting much) have not been mentioned anywhere. The reason is that the Dhikr of Allah is easy to do, a convenient act of worship indeed. You do not have to spend a lot of time and labour doing it, nor does it stop you from doing something else on hand. On top of that, this is an exclusive grace from Allah Ta'ālā who has not placed any pre-condition or restriction of Wuḍū (ablution), Ṭahārah (state of purity from major or minor impurities), dress and orientation to Qiblah (facing the direction of Ka'bah) etc. in its performance. This can be done by anyone under all states, with Wuḍū or without, standing, sitting or lying down. And if we were to add to it the higher investigative approach of Imām al-Jazrī appearing in the famous collection of authentic Islāmic prayers, Ḥiṣn Ḥaṣīn, where he states that the Dhikr of Allah is not limited to the act of remembering Allah only verbally or by heart, instead of which, any permissible act which is performed by remaining within the parameters of obedience to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم shall also be counted as the Dhikr of Allah, then, given this approach, the sense of Dhikr of Allah becomes so common and easy that we could call even a man in sleep a Dhākir (one who remembers Allah). This is supported by what is said in some narrations: نوم العالم عبادة (The sleep of the 'Ālim is included under 'Ibādah) because an 'Ālim or scholar of Islām who lives and acts in accordance with the demands of his 'Ilm or knowledge of Islām is duty-bound to see that all his states of sleeping and waking must remain within nothing but the boundries

of obedience to Allah Ta'ālā.

In the present context, the command to remember Allah abundantly while on the battlefield may give the impression of being an addition of one more duty assigned to the *mujāhidīn*, something which may usually demand concentrated hard work. But, certainly unique is the property of the Dhikr of Allah. It does not subject its performer to what would be hard labour. Instead, it brings in a kind of pleasure, energy and taste which actually goes on to help one accomplish a lot of things one does in life. For that matter, there is nothing unusual about it as we commonly notice that people who handle hard labour would habitually take to a set of words or some beat or jingle or song and are heard humming it while working. The Holy Qur'ān has blessed Muslims with an alternate for it, something which is based on countless advantages and wise considerations. Therefore, towards the end of the verse, it was said: لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُوْنَ (so that you may be successful - 45). It means if you went on to master these two tested techniques of standing firm and remembering Allah - and used it on the battlefield - then, you can be sure that prosperity and success are all yours.

One method of remembering Allah on the battlefield is what we generally recognize as the well-known battle cry of 'Allāhu-Akbar' (the *Na'rah* or cry of *Takbīr* which is a positively voiced statement of belief in the greatness of Allah in the setting of a battlefield). Thus, saying: 'Allāhu-Akbar' is also a form of Dhikr or remembrance of Allah. In addition to this, it also includes the attitude of keeping the thought of Allah always in sight, having confidence and trust in Him and remembering Him with all your heart in it. As such, the term Dhikr of Allah includes all that.

Moving to verse 46, we see that believers have been prompted to follow a third instruction and that is: أَطِيْعُوا اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ (obey Allah and His Messenger) - because, help and support from Allah Ta'ālā can be expected to come only through obedience to Him. Negligence and disobedience can only be the causes of the displeasure of Allah and a certain deprivation from whatever grace could come from Him. Thus, we have before us three articles of the Qur'anic code of conduct for the battlefield: (1) Firmness (2) Dhikr of Allah (3) Obedience. After that, it was said: وَلَا تَنَازَعُوْا فَتَفْشَلُوْا وَتَذْهَبَ رِيْحُكُمْ وَاصْبِرُوْا (and do not dispute, lest you should show weakness and should lose your predominance, and be patient - 46).

Given here is a warning against negative aspects of conduct which must be avoided. As for the negative conduct which impedes successful war effort, it is nothing but mutual difference and disputation. Therefore, it was said: وَلَا تَنَازَعُوا (and do not dispute - 46) for mutual dissension and discord would breed cowardice among them and they would soon lose their image of dominance.

The verse points out to two end-products of this mutual dissension: (1) That you would become personally weak and cowardly and (2) that you would lose your predominance and turn low in the sight of the enemy. The fact that mutual disputation would make disputants appear low in the sight of others is obvious, but how does it affect one's own strength to the limit that it turns into weakness and cowardice? The reason is that, given mutual unity and trust, everyone is backed up by the strength of a whole group. Therefore, one individual feels the relative strength of his whole group in himself and once that mutual unity and trust is gone what remains behind is no more than his own solitary strength - which, obviously, means nothing in a killing field.

After that, it was said: وَاصْبِرُوا (and be patient - 46). Looking at the context of the statement, this appears to have been suggested as a successful prescription of remaining safe from getting involved in dissension and disputes. To elucidate, it can be said that no matter how united in thinking and objectives a group may be, but physical traits of human individuals remain different after all. Then, the divergence of opinion among the informed and experienced in the process of achieving a certain purpose is also inevitable. Therefore, in order to go along with others and to keep them together, there is no alternative but that one should be used to remaining patient over counter-temperamental matters of concern and being accustomed to ignoring them when necessary. In other words, one should not be so rigid and uncompromising over his personal opinion that, in the event it was not accepted, he would explode and fight. *Ṣabr* or patience is just another name for this quality of resilience. These days everyone knows and says that mutual dispute is very bad, but the master stroke of remaining safe from it - that one trains himself to become used to remaining patient over what does not match his physical temperament and that he does not worry about making people say yes to his view and see that they go by it - is something very few people have learnt to employ successfully. As a re-

sult, all sermons of unity and harmony are rendered useless. So, it can be conceded that one does not normally have the capability to make the other person surrender to his view, but two things still remain possible: (1) That he himself accepts what the other person has to say (2) and should the dictate of his reason and justice goad him not to accept it, then, the least he could still do is to say nothing for the sake of averting a possible dispute. This much is, after all, within one's power and control. Therefore, alongwith the instruction to avoid dissension and dispute, the Holy Qur'ān has also exhorted every individual of a group to observe patience so that avoiding disputes becomes easy in practice.

Also worth pondering at this stage is the statement made in the Qur'ān when it has said: لَا تَنَازَعُوا (and do not dispute - 46). Here, it has stopped mutual disputation, not any difference of opinion or its expression. Difference of opinion which is prompted by honesty and sincerity never develops into disputation. Quarrels and disputations are generated when things go beyond ordinary difference of opinion, particularly when gripped by the emotional attitude of making the other person accept what one says and not to accept what the other person does. And this emotional attitude is what the Holy Qur'ān has eliminated by saying: وَاصْبِرُوا (and be patient - 46). Then, at the end, by pointing out to the most sublime gain to be made from the observance of patience, it removes whatever unpalatable there may be about it. It was said: إِنَّ اللّٰهَ مَعَ الصّٰبِرِيْنَ (Allah is with the patient - 46). That they have the company of Allah Ta'ālā all the time and under all conditions is so great a wealth that wealths of the world and beyond, as we do or do not know, are just nothing as compared to that honour.

It was to make these very instructions become their ever-present response, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم delivered the following sermon right there on the site of combat during many a battles of Islām:

> "O my people, do not look forward to fight the enemy in a combat. Rather, pray that Allah keeps you in a state of peace and well-being. However, when the inevitable happens and you have to confront them, then, stand firm and be patient and be assured that Paradise lies under the shade of swords." [Muslim]

Another negative and detrimental aspect of conduct against which

warning has been given in verse 47 and from which abstinence has been advised is that believers should not wax proud over their strength and numbers nor should they be guilty of nursing some personal interest of theirs rather than remaining sincere to their mission at hand, because these two approaches would usually bring down great powers of the world on their knees.

Embedded in this verse, there is an allusion to the circumstances under which the Quraysh of Makkah who had marched off from their city to give military cover to their trade caravan with the heavy backing of men and materials and waxing proud over their number and strength. And even when the trade caravan had passed far beyond the range of any possible attack by Muslims, they elected not to return even then - because, they had other axes to grind by giving a little demonstration of their valour on the site of combat.

According to authentic reports, when Abū Sufyān succeeded in getting past the range of Muslim attack with his trade caravan, he sent a courier to Abū Jahl bearing the message that there was no need for him to go any further and that he should better return. Many other Quraysh chiefs had also concurred with this advice. But, driven by his pride, arrogance and the desire for recognition, Abū Jahl declared on oath that they would not return until they reach the site of Badr and celebrate their victory there for a few days.

The outcome was that he and his well-known accomplices found themselves dumped there for ever. Muslims have been instructed to abstain from the methods adopted by them.

Verses 48 - 49

وَإِذْ زَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ أَعْمَالَهُمْ وَقَالَ لَا غَالِبَ لَكُمُ الْيَوْمَ مِنَ
النَّاسِ وَإِنِّي جَارٌ لَّكُمْ ۚ فَلَمَّا تَرَاءَتِ الْفِئَتٰنِ نَكَصَ عَلٰى عَقِبَيْهِ
وَقَالَ إِنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِّنْكُمْ إِنِّي أَرٰى مَا لَا تَرَوْنَ إِنِّي أَخَافُ اللّٰهَ ؕ
وَاللّٰهُ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿٤٨﴾ إِذْ يَقُولُ الْمُنٰفِقُونَ وَالَّذِينَ فِي
قُلُوبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ غَرَّ هٰؤُلَاءِ دِينُهُمْ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللّٰهِ فَإِنَّ
اللّٰهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٤٩﴾

And when the Satan beautified their deeds for them

and said, "None of the people is to overpower you today, and I am a protector for you." But, when the two groups saw each other, he turned back on his heels and said, "I have nothing to do with you. I am seeing what you do not see. I am scared of Allah, and Allah is severe in punishment." [48]

When the hypocrites and those who have a malady in their hearts said, "The belief of these people has deluded them." And whoever places his trust in Allah, then, Allah is Mighty, Wise. [49]

Commentary

Since its beginning, Sūrah al-Anfāl has been dealing with the actual events and attending circumstances of the battle of Badr alongwith subsequent lessons learnt and related injunctions given.

One such event from here relates to the Satan who misled the disbelievers of Makkah, exhorted them to go to battle against Muslims and then he disengaged, and left them all by themselves right there in the middle of the battlefield. This event has been mentioned at the beginning of verse 48.

Did this deception of the Satan take the form of scruples put into the hearts of the Quraysh? Or, did the Satan come to them in human form and talked to the Quraysh face to face? Both probabilities exist here. But, the words of the Qur'ān seem to support the second eventuality - that the Satan misled them by appearing in a human form before them.

According to a narration of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہما reported by Imām ibn Jarīr, when the army of the Quraysh of Makkah marched out from the city, they were terribly worried about a possible danger from their neighbouring tribe of Banū Bakr, also an enemy. They apprehended that once they went out to confront Muslims, this tribe hostile to them may find an opportunity to attack their homes and hurt their women and children there. No doubt, they had demonstrated their readiness to respond to the plaintive appeal for help made by Abū Sufyān, the leader of their trade caravan, but they were dragging their feet because of this danger. In this perplexing situation, all of a sudden, the Satan appeared in the form and guise of Surāqah ibn Mālik holding a flag in his hand and flanked by a regiment of tough fighting men. Surāqah ibn Mālik was a big chief who

controlled the tribal area from where that danger of attack was expected. He stepped forward and addressed the army of Quraysh youngmen through which he misled them in two ways. First, he said: لَا غَالِبَ لَكُمُ الْيَوْمَ مِنَ النَّاسِ (None of the people is to overpower you today - 48). By this, he meant that he had a good idea of the strength of their adversary and he could also see their own physical and numerical superiority, therefore, he assured them that they should stop worrying, march ahead and prevail, for no one is going to prevail against them.

Then, he said: إِنِّي جَارٌ لَّكُمْ (I am a protector for you - 48). By saying this, he was referring to their apprehensions against the tribe of Banū Bakr who might attack their homes and families in Makkah during their absence. Here, he was taking the responsibility that nothing of this sort was going to happen as he was their supporter and caretaker. The Quraysh of Makkah already knew about Surāqah ibn Mālik being a known and influential personality of the area. Hearing this assurance from him, they became emotionally stable. They dismissed the threat from the tribe of Banū Bakr from their hearts and became all set to go and confront Muslims.

Thus, by employing this dual deception, the Satan drove these people to their killing field and what he did for himself is described by the Holy Qur'ān in the following words: فَلَمَّا تَرَآءَتِ الْفِئَتٰنِ نَكَصَ عَلٰى عَقِبَيْهِ (So, when the two groups [the disbelievers of Makkah and Muslims] saw each other [at Badr], he turned back on his heels - 48).

Since a force of satans had also assembled in support of the disbelievers of Makkah at the battle of Badr, therefore, Allah Ta'ālā sent a force of angels under the command of Jibra'īl and Mīkā'īl to meet their challenge. According to a narration of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ reported by Imām Ibn Jarīr and others, when the Satan who was commanding his force in the human guise of Surāqah ibn Mālik at that time saw Archangel Jibra'īl and the force of angels with him, he lost his nerves. At that time, he was standing hand in hand with a Qurayshī warrior, Ḥārith ibn Hishām. All of a sudden, he tried to free his hand clasped into the hand of Ḥārith. When Ḥārith asked him as to why he was doing that, he whacked his chest with a blow and threw him down. Now unchecked, he bolted out from the battlefield. Ḥārith - under the impression that he was Surāqah - shouted at him: O Surāqah, chief of Arabia, you had said that you will support us and here

you are doing this to us in the middle of a battle! The Satan - in the guise of Surāqah - replied: إِنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِّنكُمْ إِنِّي أَرَىٰ مَا لَا تَرَوْنَ إِنِّي أَخَافُ اللَّهَ (I have nothing to do with you. I am seeing what you do not see. I am scared of Allah - 48). Thus, he disengaged himself from the earlier compact because he was seeing a force of angels and parted ways with the disbelievers on the plea that he feared Allah.

When the Satan saw the force of angels, he virtually saw trouble for him as he knew their power. As for his statement that he was scared of Allah, says Tafsīr authority Qatādah, this was a lie forged by him. Had he feared Allah, why would he disobey Him? But, other Commentators have suggested that his fear is justified in its own place because he is fully aware of the perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā and that He is severe at punishment. Therefore, there is no reason for not fearing. However, bland fear without faith and obedience is useless.

Abū Jahl, when he noticed signs of weakness showing up in his army because of the withdrawal of Surāqah and his force, he tried to avert the awkward situation by appealing that they should not feel being affected by the sudden retreat of Surāqah for he had a secret understanding with Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم to do that. In short, after the retreat of the Satan, what was due to happen to them did. It was on their return to Makkah that one of them met Surāqah ibn Mālik. This person scolded Surāqah telling him that he was responsible for their defeat in the battale of Badr and certainly for all the losses that followed in its wake because he had broken the backs of their fighting men by retreating from the action on the battlefield. Surāqah said: I never went with you, nor did I ever take part in anything you were doing there. In fact, I heard of your defeat only after you had reached Makkah.

After having reported all these narrations in his Tafsīr, Imām Ibn Kathīr said: It is the customary practice of Satan, the accursed, that he would cause man to become involved with evil and then leave him off in the middle of it. The Qur'ān has mentioned this habit of the Satan repeatedly. One such verse says:

كَمَثَلِ الشَّيْطٰنِ إِذْ قَالَ لِلْإِنسَانِ اكْفُرْ فَلَمَّا كَفَرَ قَالَ إِنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِّنكَ إِنِّي أَخَافُ اللَّهَ رَبَّ الْعٰلَمِينَ

It is like the Satan when he tells man: "Disbelieve." Then, af-

ter he becomes a disbeliever, he says: "I have nothing to do with you. I am scared of Allah, the Lord of all the worlds". (59:16)

The Anatomy of Satanic Deception and Personal Defence

There are some elements of guidance we receive from what has been mentioned in this verse:

(1) That the '*Shaiṭān*' is man's enemy who employs all sorts of tricks, guises and strategems to bring loss to him. There are occasions when he would simply inject a scruple in the heart and harass his victim and there are times when he would deceive man by appearing before him.

(2) That Allah Ta'ālā has given him the ability to appear before man in various guises. There is a well-known book of Ḥanafī jurisprudence called آکام المرجان فی أحکام الجان : *'Ākām al-Marjān fi Āḥkām al-Jānn* where it has been proved in detail. Therefore, authorities among mystic scholars who are recognized as masters in illumination (*kashf*) and eye-witness (*shuhūd*) have warned people that it is dangerous to start following a person simply by seeing him or hearing him say something without taking the trouble of finding out his antecedents and circumstancial conditions. There could be couched Satanic inputs even in what is known as illumination (*kashf*) and inspiration (*ilhām*). So, the ideal method of remaining safe against satanic deceptions is to follow Divine Revelation faithfully.

Success Comes By Actually Being on the Straight Path and Not By Simply Having Sincere Intentions

(3) That the most frequent reason why people get involved in disbelief, polytheism or other impermissible doings is no other but that the Satan, by making their evil deeds appear handsome, desirable and beneficial, turns their hearts away from truth, as it is, and its consequences, as they would be. Once so brain-washed, they would start taking their false as the epitome of truth and their loss as the ultimate gain, so much so that, very much like the votaries of truth, they would be all set to lay down even their lives for the sake of their false notions. It was for this reason that the army and the chiefs of Quraysh, when they were departing from the Baytullah, had already supplicated before it by saying: اللهم انصر اهدى الطائفتين (O Allah, help the better-guided group between the two of us) (See pages 183-184). Such was the

level of their unawareness that they simply walked into the snare of the Satan and started taking themselves to be the ones better-guided and truth-oriented and, unbelieveably enough, they would go to the outer limits of sacrificing their lives and possessions in support of their false stand - and that too with all 'sincerity' at their command!

From here we find out that bland sincerity is never sufficient unless the direction of deeds is correct.

In the verse which follows (49), mentioned there is a common saying of the hypocrites of Madīnah and the polytheists of Makkah. It was almost in a strain of combined sympathy and contempt that it was said about Muslims: غَرَّ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ دِيْنُهُمْ (The belief of these people has deluded them). It means that those handful of Muslims had come all the way to the battlefield of Badr to challenge an army so powerful and well-equipped as if those poor people have been deluded by their faith which seems to have thrown them into the jaws of death. Responding to them, Allah Ta'ālā said: وَمَنْ يَّتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللّٰهِ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَزِيْزٌ حَكِيْمٌ (And whoever places his trust in Allah, then, Allah is Mighty, Wise). The sense of the statement is that one who places his total trust in Allah never runs into disgrace because Allah is all-dominating and when it comes to wisdom, there is no plan or intelligence or insight into the future which can hold before it. In other words, those who know no more than what is material would only place their trust in nothing but the material. How would they know the secret power which lies in the treasures of the One who has created everything material. This power accompanies those who believe in Allah Ta'ālā and place their total trust in Him.

Even in our day, there are those religiously-observing and innocent-looking Muslims who would become ready targets for those who claim to have advanced rationally and intellectually and who would benignly dismiss them as old-timers who might as well be left alone. But, should such people be armed with perfect faith and trust in Allah, no harm can touch them - even if intended and tried.

Verses 50 - 53

وَلَوْ تَرٰٓى اِذْ يَتَوَفَّى الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوا الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ يَضْرِبُوْنَ وُجُوْهَهُمْ
وَاَدْبَارَهُمْ وَذُوْقُوْا عَذَابَ الْحَرِيْقِ ﴿٥٠﴾ ذٰلِكَ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ

اَيۡدِيۡكُمۡ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ لَيۡسَ بِظَلَّامٍ لِّلۡعَبِيۡدِ ﴿٥١﴾ كَدَاۡبِ اٰلِ فِرۡعَوۡنَ ۙ وَالَّذِيۡنَ مِنۡ قَبۡلِهِمۡ ؕ كَفَرُوۡا بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ فَاَخَذَهُمُ اللّٰهُ بِذُنُوۡبِهِمۡ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ قَوِىٌّ شَدِيۡدُ الۡعِقَابِ ﴿٥٢﴾ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّ اللّٰهَ لَمۡ يَكُ مُغَيِّرًا نِّعۡمَةً اَنۡعَمَهَا عَلٰى قَوۡمٍ حَتّٰى يُغَيِّرُوۡا مَا بِاَنۡفُسِهِمۡ ۙ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ سَمِيۡعٌ عَلِيۡمٌ ﴿٥٣﴾

And only if you were to see (them) when the angels take out the souls of those who disbelieve, beating their faces and their backs, and (saying) "Taste the punishment of the flaming Fire. [50] **That is due to what your hands sent ahead, and that Allah is not cruel to the slaves."** [51]

(Their way is) like the way of the people of Pharaoh and of those before them. They disbelieved the signs of Allah. So Allah seized them for their sins. Surely, Allah is strong, severe in punishment. [52]

All this because Allah is not to change a favour He has conferred on a people unless they change their own selves, and that Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. [53]

Commentary

Mentioned in the first two of the verses cited above is the punishment of disbelievers at the time of their death and the warnings given to them by the angels. Here, addressing the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, it has been said that had he seen the condition of the disbelievers at that time when the angels of Allah were beating their faces and backs as they extracted their souls and telling them to have a taste of the punishment of burning in the Fire, then, he would have seen something awesome.

Some of the leading Commentators have declared this statement to be about the particular disbelievers from among the Quraysh who had come out to confront Muslims at the site of Badr where Allah Ta'ālā had sent an army of angels to help Muslims. Thus, the meaning comes to be that the Quraysh chiefs who were killed in the battle of Badr were killed at the hands of the angels who were hitting them from the front on their faces and from the rear on their backs and were killing them in this manner while giving them the dark tidings of the punish-

ment of Hell in the Hereafter.

Then, there are other Commentators who have kept the sense of this verse general in view of the generality of the words used in it. According to them, the verse means: When a disbeliever dies, the angel of death beats his face and back while taking out his soul. In some narrations, it appears that they have lashes of fire and maces of iron in their hands which they use to strike at the disbeliever condemned to death. But, as this punishment is not related to this world of elements, rather, is related to the universe of the grave which is known as *Barzakh* (the post-death---pre-ressurrection state), therefore, this punishment is not generally seen optically.

Therefore, the modality used to address the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was: 'And only if you were to see,' you would have seen a scene full of sobering lessons. This tells us that, after death, punishment is given to disbelievers while they are in the state of Barzakh, but that phenomenon is related to the universe of the Unseen (*'ālam al-ghayb*), therefore, it is not seen usually. The punishment of the grave finds mention in several other verses of the Holy Qur'ān as well, while Ḥadīth narrations on this subject just abound.

Addressing the disbelievers in the second verse (51), it was said that the punishment of this world and that of the Hereafter was nothing but what they had earned with their own hands. Since things done usually take their shape through the work of hands, therefore, mention was made of hands. The sense is that the punishment coming to them was a direct outcome of their own deeds. And as for Allah Ta'ālā, He was not the kind of authority who would bring injustice upon His servants and go about subjecting someone to punishment just for no reason.

The third verse (52) tells us that the punishment of Allah visiting these criminals is not something totally unprecedented. In fact, it is nothing but the customary practice of Allah that He would give reason and understanding to His servants so that they could act as guided. Then, all around them, they have countless things they can think about and go on to know Allah Ta'ālā and recognize His great power, and then do not stoop to the level of taking the weak ones from among His creation as His partners, associates or equals and, after that, He sends His Books and Messengers for additional warning. When the

Messengers of Allah come, they leave no stone unturned in making people understand the message. They even go to the outer limits of demonstrating the manifestations of the inalienable subdueing power of Allah Ta'ālā in the form of miracles. Now, if a person or a people were to close their eyes to all these things, give no ear to any of these Divine warnings, then, for such people, there is the inevitable practice of Allah Ta'ālā: That they are visited by punishment in this world too, and that they are subjected to the everlasting punishment of the Hereafter as well. It was said: 'كَدَأْبِ اٰلِ فِرْعَوْنَ وَالَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ '(Their way is) like the way of the people of Pharaoh and of those before them - 52.' The Arabic word: داب (*da'b*) used in the text means habit or way. Thus, the sense is that the world already knows the customary practice of Allah Ta'ālā vis-a-vis the haughty and the contumacious like Pharaoh and his people and has seen its manifestation when Pharaoh was made to drown in the sea with all his power and people, and similar was the fate of those before him, the people of 'Ād and Thamūd, who were hit by many kinds of punishment which eliminated them totally. Then, it was said: 'كَفَرُوْا' (52) which means when these people belied the verses and signs of Allah Ta'ālā, He seized them with His punishment because of their sins. After that, the verse ends with the statement: إِنَّ اللّٰهَ (52) which gives the reason why it happened the way it did - that Allah Ta'ālā is Strong. No one claiming any kind of strength and valour can, on that basis alone, get away from His punishment. And then, certainly very severe is the punishment which comes from Allah Ta'ālā Himself.

Stated in the fourth verse (53) there is a standing rule which spells out the condition under which Allah Ta'ālā allows a people to continue enjoying blessings bestowed by Him. It was said: بِاَنَّ اللّٰهَ لَمْ يَكُ مُغَيِّرًا نِّعْمَةً اَنْعَمَهَا عَلٰى قَوْمٍ حَتّٰى يُغَيِّرُوْا مَا بِاَنْفُسِهِمْ (because Allah is not to change a favour He has conferred on a people unless they change their own selves - 53).

The first thing worth pondering about at this place is that Allah Ta'ālā has not set forth any rule as to the bestowal of blessing and favour, nor has He put any restriction and condition for it, nor has He made it to be dependent on some good deed - because, had this been so, then, the foremost favour bestowed on us is our very existence. Placed in this marvelous menagerie of the power of Allah are thousands and thousands of additional blessings which, it is all too obvious, were conferred on us at a time when we did not exist nor any of our deed did.

If blessings and favours from Allah Ta'ālā were to wait for good deeds from His servants, our being itself would have not materialized.

The blessing and the mercy of Allah Ta'ālā is there all by itself as an outcome of His being the Lord of all the worlds and the One who is All-Merciful and Very-Merciful. However, what has been described in this verse is a rule which governs the continuity of this favour and mercy. According to this rule, when Allah Ta'ālā favours a people with His blessing, He does not take it back until such time that the people themselves bring about changes in their conditions of living and ways of doing things and thus become the very agency which invites the punishment of Allah.

The change of conditions referred to here means a shift or change from good deeds to bad deeds and from good states of being to bad states of being, or that a person who, at the time of the coming of blessings, was involved in certain sins and evils, then, once he had received those blessings, he stoops lower and gets involved in deeds far more evil.

It becomes evident from the details given above that peoples mentioned in previous verses, that is, the Quraysh disbelievers and the people of Pharaoh, have their relevance to the present verse on the grounds that these people were not all that good in their states of living even at the time the blessings came. They were still the polytheists and disbelievers they were. But, after having been blessed with favours, these people became far more dauntless in their evil deeds and acts of wickedness.

The people of Pharaoh started inflicting all sorts of injustices against the Banī Isrā'il. Then they rose in hostility against Sayyidnā Mūsā علیه السلام which was a grave addition to their past crimes. Through these doings, they brought changes in their living conditions which led them to more evils and when this happened, Allah Ta'ālā too brought a change in His blessing by changing it into retribution and punishment. Similarly, the Quraysh of Makkah were though involved in polytheism and other evil practices, yet they did have a few good deeds to their credit, such as, regard for kinship, hospitality, service of Ḥajj pilgrims, respect for Baytullah etc. Allah Ta'ālā showered on them many material and spiritual blessings. On the material plane, great impetus was given to their trading activities. In a country where no trading

caravan belonging to anyone could pass through safely, their trade caravans would go to Syria in the north and Yemen in the south and return in safety and with success - something mentioned by the Qur'ān in Sūrah al-Quraysh (106) under: رِحْلَةَ الشِّتَآءِ وَالصَّيْفِ (they used to make alternate trading visits in winter and summer -106:2).

Then, on the spiritual plane in terms of their religion, they were blessed with a favour so great as was never conferred upon any of the past peoples - that the foremost among prophets, the last of the line, *ṣallallāhu 'alaihi wa sallam*, was destined to rise among them, and Qur'ān, the last, the comprehensive Book of Allah Ta'ālā was sent to them through him.

But, these people, rather than correct themselves through gratitude and appreciation for these blessings of Allah Ta'ālā, went on to make a mess of their moral condition, making it far worse than it already was. They stopped treating their near relations well and started inflicting savage injustices against their own brothers and nephews who chose to embrace Islām. Rather than keep to their tradition of hospitality, pledges were written and promulgated that a total boycott of such Muslims be made, even to the limit of holding back the supply of food and water to them. Instead of providing essential services for Ḥajj pilgrims which they once considered to be their duty, they started preventing Muslims from entering the Ḥaram. These were the standing conditions on the ground which brought about a change in the disbelievers of Quraysh - as a result of which came the counter-change from Allah Ta'ālā. He transformed His favours and blessings into retribution and punishment, thus making them have a taste of disgrace in the mortal world too, and then, it was through the noble person sent as mercy for all the worlds that they invited their own destruction.

As based on trustworthy books of history, it has been said in Tafsīr Maẓharī that Kilāb ibn Murrah, who is the grandfather of the third grandfather of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم geneologically, was a staunch adherent of the faith of Sayyidnā Ibrāhim and Ismā'īl عليهما السلام right from the beginning, and he retained the role of leadership in this faith, generations after generation. It was during the period of Quṣayy ibn Kilāb that idol-worship started as a practice among people. Before him, Ka'b ibn Lu'aiyy was their religious leader. He used to deliver a sermon before everyone on the day of Jumu'ah which was called

'Arūbah in their dialect and tell his audience that the last among prophets صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم would rise from among their progeny. Everyone will be bound to follow him. Whoever fails to have faith in him, no deed of his shall be acceptable with Allah. Well-known are his poetic compositions about the coming of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم as part of pagan poetry. Then, Quṣayy ibn Kilāb used to make arrangements of food and water for all Ḥajj pilgrims, so much so, that these things continued to be within the family of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم until his blessed period. Given this historical perspective, it could also be said that the change which affected the mass behaviour of the Quraysh may as well mean that they had forsaken the faith of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm علیہ السلام and taken to idol-worship.

However, a return to the subject of the verse tells us that there are occasions when Allah Ta'ālā would bestow His favour also on people who do not seem to be deserving of it in view of their deeds. But, should they start, after having received that favour, committing excesses and indulging in evil deeds more frequently, rather than turn the direction of their deeds towards correction and betterment, then, this favour is taken away from them and they become deserving of Divine punishment.

At the end of the verse, it was said: وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ سَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ (and that Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing - 53). It means that Allah Ta'ālā is the one who hears everything they say and knows everything they do, therefore, there is no probability of some error or misunderstanding in the decision He finally takes.

Verses 54 - 58

كَدَاْبِ اٰلِ فِرْعَوْنَ ۙ وَالَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ؕ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِ رَبِّهِمْ
فَاَهْلَكْنٰهُمْ بِذُنُوْبِهِمْ وَاَغْرَقْنَآ اٰلَ فِرْعَوْنَ ۚ وَكُلٌّ كَانُوْا ظٰلِمِيْنَ
﴿٥٤﴾ اِنَّ شَرَّ الدَّوَآبِّ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا فَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ
﴿٥٥﴾ اَلَّذِيْنَ عٰهَدْتَّ مِنْهُمْ ثُمَّ يَنْقُضُوْنَ عَهْدَهُمْ فِيْ كُلِّ مَرَّةٍ
وَّهُمْ لَا يَتَّقُوْنَ ﴿٥٦﴾ فَاِمَّا تَثْقَفَنَّهُمْ فِي الْحَرْبِ فَشَرِّدْ بِهِمْ مَّنْ
خَلْفَهُمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَذَّكَّرُوْنَ ﴿٥٧﴾ وَاِمَّا تَخَافَنَّ مِنْ قَوْمٍ خِيَانَةً

فَانۢبِذۡ اِلَيۡهِمۡ عَلٰى سَوَآءٍ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الۡخَآئِنِيۡنَ ﴿۵۸﴾

(It is) like what did the people of Pharaoh and those before them. They belied the signs of their Lord. So, We destroyed them for their sins and drowned the people of Pharaoh, and they all were unjust. [54]

Surely, the worst of all the living, in the sight of Allah, are those who reject Faith, so they do not believe [55] **- those from whom you have taken a pledge, then they break their pledge each time, and they do not fear Allah.** [56]

So, if you find them in war, make them an example (deterrent) for those behind them, so that they take a lesson. [57] **And if you apprehend a breach from a people, then, throw (the treaty) towards them being right forward. Surely, Allah does not like those who breach trust.** [58]

Commentary

The words used in the first of the verses cited above are almost the same as have appeared a verse earlier in: كَدَاْبِ اٰلِ فِرۡعَوۡنَ ۙ وَالَّذِيۡنَ مِنۡ قَبۡلِهِمۡ ؕ كَفَرُوۡا بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ فَاَخَذَهُمُ اللّٰهُ بِذُنُوۡبِهِمۡ '(Their way is) like the way of the people of Pharaoh and of those before them - 52.' But, the purpose behind these two statements differs in both. The purpose in the first verse (52) was to state that the disbelief of those people became the cause of their punishment while, in the present verse (54), the purpose is to state that, according to the common law of Allah Taʿālā - when the blessings of Allah Taʿālā descend upon a people and they fail to recognize their worth and value and refuse to bow down before Him - then, His blessings are transformed into misfortunes and punishments. When the people of Pharaoh and the peoples before them failed to appreciate the blessings of Allah Taʿālā as due, blessings were taken away from them and they were seized by punishment instead. Apart from this difference in purpose, changes have also been introduced in words used at some places which serve to release particular hints in the text. For example, in the first verse (52), the words used were: كَفَرُوۡا بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ (They disbelieved the signs of Allah) while here, the words used are: بِاٰيٰتِ رَبِّهِمۡ (... the signs of their Lord - 54). Thus, by mentioning the attribute: رَبّ (*Rabb*:Lord) instead of the name, 'Allah,' hint was given that these people were terribly unjust and insensate against truth, people who would just go

ahead and start belying the signs of the very Being who was their *Rabb* (sustainer, nourisher, cherisher) under whose blessings they all, from their dawn of existence to their present condition, have been brought up.

In addition to that, in the first verse (52), said there was: فَاَخَذَهُمُ اللّٰهُ بِذُنُوْبِهِمْ (so, Allah seized them for their sins) while what has been said here is: فَاَهْلَكْنٰهُمْ بِذُنُوْبِهِمْ (so, We destroyed them for their sins - 54). This explains the brevity in the first statement because, in the first verse, mentioned there was their being seized in punishment which could take different forms. May be, they are overtaken by misfortunes within their lifetime on this earth, or that their very existence in eliminated outright. In the present verse (54), by saying: اَهْلَكْنٰهُمْ (We destroyed them), it was made clear that the punishment all those peoples deserved was the punishment of death, therefore, they were destroyed. The destruction of every set of such people took different forms. Since the Pharaoh from among them claimed godhood and his people attested to his claim, therefore, he was mentioned particularly: وَاَغْرَقْنَآ اٰلَ فِرْعَوْنَ (and drowned the people of Pharaoh - 54). As for the forms in which destruction came upon other peoples, it has not been described here. However, details pertaining to these too have appeared in other verses where it has been said that some of them were overrun by an earthquake, some others were made to sink into the earth, or transformed into animals, or seized by wind storms - and finally, came the punishment for the disbelievers of Makkah at the hands of Muslims in the battle of Badr.

In the verse which follows immediately, it was said about the same disbelievers: اِنَّ شَرَّ الدَّوَآبِّ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا (Surely, the worst of all the living, in the sight of Allah, are those who reject Faith - 55). Here, the word: دَوَآبّ (*dawābb*) is the plural form of *dābbah* which literally means creatures who walk on the earth. Therefore, this word covers human beings and whatever of the animals walk on the earth. But, in common usage, this word is used particularly for quadruped animals. Since they were far below animals in their state of insensitiveness, they were identified with that expression in the language. Thus, the meaning of the verse is clear - that these people were the worst of animals from among all animals and human beings. At the end of the verse, it was said: فَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ (so they do not believe - 55). The sense is that these

people have allowed their God-given abilities to go waste by making the satisfaction of their physical needs the very purpose of their life, therefore, having access to the refinements of Faith was just not possible for them.

Sa'id ibn Jubayr said that this verse was revealed about six men from the Jews about whom Allah Ta'ala has declared in advance that they will never enter the fold of Faith.

In addition to that, through this word, the aim is to grant an exemption from punishment for people who were though engaged at that time, in tandem with disbelievers, in their struggle against Muslims and Islam but the likelihood was that, in future, a time will come when they will repent their past mistakes and embrace Islam. The fact is that this is how it came to be. A very large group from among them became, by embracing Islam, not only personally pious and righteous, but rose to be - in word and deed alike - leaders among men and women of the world as heralds of moral betterment and paradigms of responsible conduct of life before the Creator.

The third verse (56):

اَلَّذِيْنَ عٰهَدْتَّ مِنْهُمْ ثُمَّ يَنْقُضُوْنَ عَهْدَهُمْ فِيْ كُلِّ مَرَّةٍ وَّهُمْ لَا يَتَّقُوْنَ

(those from whom you have taken a pledge, then they break their pledge each time, and they do not fear Allah)

is about the Jews of Madinah and those of Banu Qurayzah and Banu Nadir. Mentioned in the previous verses was the descent of Divine punishment on the disbelievers of Makkah in the battle of Badr at the hands of Muslims, as well as their resemblance with disbelievers of past communities. In this verse, mention has been made of the particular group of unjust people who became like serpents in the sleeves of Muslims soon after their migration to Madinah. On the one hand, they claimed to be at peace with Muslims while, on the other, they used to conspire with the disbelievers of Makkah against Muslims. These people were Jews by religion and the way Abu Jahl was the top leader of the disbelievers of Makkah against Islam, similarly, the top anti-Islam leader of the Jews of Madinah was called Ka'b ibn Ashraf.

When the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم graced the blessed city of Madinah after Hijrah, they saw the rise of Muslim power, were impressed, even somewhat overawed by it, but the fire of their anti-

Muslim feelings kept burning in their hearts all the time.

Islamic political wisdom demanded that, as far as possible, the Jews of Madinah should be engaged to go along with Muslims under some sort of bilateral treaty, so that they would not come to the assistance of Makkan disbelievers. Because of their awe of Muslims, the Jews too wished to have this very arrangement.

Towards Islamic Nationality: The First Step

After reaching Madinah, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم laid the initial foundation of political theory in Islam. The first step he took was to eliminate prejudices of country and tribe from the Muhajirin (Emigrants: those who had migrated from Makkah) and Anṣar (Residents of Madinah who helped the Muhajirin). In its place, he established a new nationality in the name of Islam. This turned different tribes from the Muhajirin and Anṣar into brothers to each other. Then, it was through him that Allah Ta'ala helped remove mutual differences among Anṣars themselves which had been continuing for centuries. Thus, not only did the Anṣars enter a new era of brotherhood among themselves, they became brothers to the Muhajirin as well.

Treaty with Jews: The Second Step

The background in which the second political step was taken was marked by two adversaries of Muslims. The first were the disbelievers of Makkah whose tortures had compelled them to leave Makkah. The second were the Jews of Madinah who had then become the neighbours of Muslims.

Out of these two, a treaty was concluded with the Jews and was duly documented in details. The compliance of this treaty was made incumbent on all Jews living in and around Madinah as well as on all Muhajirin and Anṣar. The full text of this treaty can be seen in البداية والنهاية: Al-Bidayah wa an-Nihayah of Ibn Kathir and Sirah of Ibn Hisham and elsewhere. The most significant article of this treaty was that, in the event of a mutual difference, the decision of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم shall be binding for all. There was another article there which stipulated that the Jews of Madinah shall not provide any assistance to any enemy against Muslims, either overtly or covertly. But, at the time of the battle of Badr, these people committed a breach of trust and supported the disbelievers of Makkah by supplying weapons and other war materials to them. However, when the outcome of

the battle of Badr appeared in the form of a clear victory for Muslims and a disgraceful defeat for the disbelievers, they felt cowed down once again. They presented themselves before the Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم and apologized for the mistake they had committed at that time and sought his forgiveness for it on the promise that they would commit no breach of trust in the future.

Because Islāmic forbearance and generosity was his way, the Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم accepted to renew the treaty once again. But, these people were captives of their peculiar instinctive reflexes. When they heard about the initial defeat and loss of Muslims in the battle of Uḥud, their ambitions went high. Their chief, Ka'b ibn Ashraf, himself travelled to Makkah and exhorted the disbelievers of Makkah to mount another attack on Muslims with fresh and full preparation in which the Jews of Madīnah will be with them.

This was the second breach of trust they committed against Islām. In the present verse, by mentioning this repeated breach of trust, brought into focus is the wickedness of these people, for they were the people who themselves made a treaty with the Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم, yet they were the ones who, each time, kept breaking their pledge to abide by the treaty. At the end of the verse, it was said: وهم لایتقون (and they do not fear Allah - 56). This could also mean that, since these ill-fated people are drunk with worldly greed having no concern for the life to come, therefore, they do not fear the punishment of the Hereafter. Then, it could also mean that such characterless people who break pledges do meet their evil end in this world, yet these are the kind of people who, because of their negligence and ignorance, do not fear it.

Then, came the time when the whole world saw that these people tasted the punishment for the evil role they played. Like Abū Jahl, the chief of the disbelievers, Ka'b ibn Ashraf, the chief of the Jews, was killed and the rest of the Jews of Madīnah were expelled from the city.

In the fourth verse (57), Allah Ta'ālā has given a standing instruction to His *Rasūl* صلی الله علیه وسلم about such evil breakers of solemn pledges in the following words:

فَإِمَّا تَثْقَفَنَّهُمْ فِى الْحَرْبِ فَشَرِّدْ بِهِم مَّنْ خَلْفَهُمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَذَّكَّرُونَ

So, if you find them in war, make them an example (deterrent) for those behind them, so that they take a lesson.

Here, the word: تَثْقَفَنَّهُمْ (*tathqafannahum*) means to get the upper hand against them and the word: شرّد (*sharrada*) is a derivation from the infinitive noun: تشريد (*tashrīd*) which essentially means to drive out or scatter away. So, the verse means: 'If you overpower such people in a war, give them a drastic punishment which becomes an instant lesson for others - so that those who are busy bashing Islām behind the cover of such people serving as their agent provacateurs should understand clearly that there remains no alternative for them but to run for their lives. The drive of the instruction is that these people should be punished in a manner which makes an impression on the disbelievers of Makkah and other hostile tribes and sucks away any courage they may have to come back and confront Muslims in the future.

By saying: لَعَلَّهُمْ يَذَّكَّرُوْنَ (so that they take a lesson - 57) at the end of the verse, a hint has been given towards the universal mercy of the Lord of all the worlds. This treatment makes it clear that the real purpose of this exemplary punishment was not to take revenge or release personal anger, in fact, this was being awarded in their own interest and expedient gain whereby they may, perhaps, review conditions before them, regain some of their sanity, feel ashamed of what they did and go on to correct themselves.

The Option to Cancel a Peace Treaty

In the fifth verse (58), the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been told about an important article which forms part of the law of war and peace. Here, after placing due stress on the importance of complying with the terms of a treaty, an alternative has also been laid out to cover a situation in which there may arise a danger of breach of trust from the other party to the treaty any time during its legal tenure. Given this situation, it remains no more necessary that Muslims should continue to abide by their allegiance to the treaty. But, also not permissible for Muslims is the taking of any initiative (pre-emptive action of any kind) against the other party - before the treaty has been clearly terminated. In fact, the correct approach is to pick up a peaceful and convenient occasion and let them know that their ill intentions or treaty contraventions are no secrets to them, or their dealings appear to be dubious, for which reason, Muslims shall not consider themselves bound by the treaty. Consequently, they too were free to take any action they wished to take. The words of the verse are:

وَإِمَّا تَخَافَنَّ مِن قَوْمٍ خِيَانَةً فَانْبِذْ إِلَيْهِمْ عَلَىٰ سَوَآءٍ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْخَآئِنِينَ

And if you apprehend a breach from a people, then, throw (the treaty) towards them being right forward. Surely, Allah does not like those who breach trust - 58.

The sense of the verse is that taking any military initiative against a people with whom a peace treaty has been signed is included under breach of trust and Allah Ta'ālā does not like those who are guilty of *Khiyānah*, that is, those who commit breach of trust - even if this *Khiyānah* were to cause loss to hostile disbelievers, something also impermissible. However, should there be the danger of a breach of trust from the other party, it is possible to go ahead and openly proclaim before them that Muslims shall not remain bound by the treaty in future. But, this proclamation has to be in a manner which makes Muslims and the other party like-wise, on the same footing. It means that nothing should be done to create a situation in which preparations are made to confront the other party in advance of this proclamation and warning while they are caught unawares and remain unable to make counter preparations for their defence. In short, the message given is: Make whatever preparations have to be made, but do it only after the proclamation and warning.

This, then, is the justice of Islām - that the rights of its enemies who commit breach of trust are also guarded and that restrictions are placed on Muslims - not on their adversaries - that they should not make any aggressive preparations against them before having declared that they have nothing to do with the treaty anymore. (Maẓharī and others)

Fulfillment of Trust Obligations: A Significant Episode

Based on a narration of Salīm ibn 'Āmir, it has been reported by Abū Dāwūd, Tirmidhī, Al-Nasā'ī and Imām Aḥmad ibn Hanbal that Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah رضی اللہ عنہ had a no-war pact with a group of people for a specified period of time. It occured to Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah that he should move his army and equipment close to those people so that his forces could pounce on the enemy immediately on the expiry of the period of their peace pact. But, exactly at the time when the army of Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah was getting ready to march ahead in the desired direction, it was noticed that an aged person riding on a horse was shouting a slogan very loudly. He was saying: اَللّٰهُ اَكْبَرُ اَللّٰهُ اَكْبَرُ وَفَآءٌ لَاغَدْرًا

(*Allāhu Akbar, Allāhu Akbar* - Allah is Great, Allah is Great - we should fulfill the pledge, we should not contravene it). He was saying that with the famous cry of *Allāhu Akbar* (which increased the religious gravity of the matter). The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said: When a cease-fire agreement or a peace pact with a people comes into effect, it is necessary that no knot be opened or tied against their provisions. Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah رضى الله عنه was informed about it. When he saw the herald of the saying, he recognized him. He was Sayyidnā 'Amr ibn 'Anbasah, a Ṣaḥābī. Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah lost no time and ordered his army to march back so that he does not become one of those who had committed a breach of trust by initiating war action while being within the time frame of a no-war pact. (Ibn Kathīr)

Verses 59 - 62

وَلَا يَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا سَبَقُوْا ؕ اِنَّهُمْ لَا يُعْجِزُوْنَ ﴿٥٩﴾
وَاَعِدُّوْا لَهُمْ مَّا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِّنْ قُوَّةٍ وَّمِنْ رِّبَاطِ الْخَيْلِ تُرْهِبُوْنَ
بِهٖ عَدُوَّ اللّٰهِ وَعَدُوَّكُمْ وَاٰخَرِيْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِهِمْ ۚ لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَهُمْ ۚ اَللّٰهُ
يَعْلَمُهُمْ ۚ وَمَا تُنْفِقُوْا مِنْ شَيْءٍ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ يُوَفَّ اِلَيْكُمْ
وَاَنْتُمْ لَا تُظْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٦٠﴾ وَاِنْ جَنَحُوْا لِلسَّلْمِ فَاجْنَحْ لَهَا وَتَوَكَّلْ
عَلَى اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّهٗ هُوَ السَّمِيْعُ الْعَلِيْمُ ﴿٦١﴾ وَاِنْ يُّرِيْدُوْۤا اَنْ
يَّخْدَعُوْكَ فَاِنَّ حَسْبَكَ اللّٰهُ ؕ هُوَ الَّذِيْۤ اَيَّدَكَ بِنَصْرِهٖ وَ
بِالْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿٦٢﴾

And the disbelievers should never think that they have surpassed. Surely, they will not frustrate (the Divine will). [59]

And make ready against them whatever you can of the power and of the trained horses whereby you frighten the enemy of Allah and your own enemy and others besides them whom you do not know. Allah knows them. And whatever thing you spend in the way of Allah, it will be paid to you in full, and you shall not be wronged. [60]

And if they tilt towards peace, you tilt towards it, and place your trust in Allah. Surely, He is the All-Hearing,

the All-Knowing. [61]

And if they intend to deceive you, then, Allah is all-sufficient for you. He is the One who supported you with His help and with the believers ... [62]

Commentary

Mentioned in the first of the four verses cited above are disbelievers who had not participated in the battle of Badr, therefore, they survived or there were those of them who deserted the battlefield after showing up as participants and were thus able to save their lives. It is about these people that it was said in this verse that these people should not think that they have made their escape good because the battle of Badr was Divine punishment for disbelievers and escaping from its grip was not possible for anyone. Therefore, it was said: إِنَّهُمْ لَا يُعْجِزُونَ : 'Surely, they will not frustrate [the Divine will] - 59'. It means that these people cannot outsmart the will and power of Allah by their cleverness. If He decides to seize them, they would be unable to move even one step. May be, they are seized right here in this mortal world, otherwise, their detention in the Hereafter is all too obvious.

This verse has given a clear indication that a sinner who finds himself delivered from some hardship or pain, yet he fails to repent and make amends, rather stands adamant and obstinate over his sin, then, one should never take this to be a sign of success and everlasting deliverance. In fact, such a person is in the grip of Allah Ta'ālā all the time and this respite given to him is actually adding on to his punishment and distress - though, he may not realize it as such.

Production and Supply of Military Hardware for Jihād is a Religious Obligation

Given in the second verse (60), there are injunctions relating to preparations for the defence of Islām against disbelievers. It was said: وَأَعِدُّوا لَهُمْ مَّا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ (And make ready against them whatever you can - 60). Here, by placing the restriction of: مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ (whatever you can) with the need to produce and supply war materials, the hint given is that it is not necessary for your success that you go about acquiring the same quantity and quality of military equipment as is available to your adversary. Instead of that, it is quite sufficient that you put together whatever supplies you can possibly acquire. If so, the help and support of Allah Ta'ālā shall be with you.

After that, some details about the direction of these preparations were stated tersely. It was said: مِنْ قُوَّةٍ (*min quwwah* : of power). It means: Collect and keep ready the power to fight. Included here is everything in the form of military equipment, weapons, means of transportation and other relevant support - and also learning to stay physically fit and training in fighting skills and strategy. The Qur'ān, however, does not mention the weapons commonly used during those days at this place. Instead, by using the general word, '*quwwah*' or power, it has pointed out in the direction that this power could be different in terms of every age, country or area. The weapons of those days were arrows, swords and spears. Then came the age of guns and cannons and now is the time of bombs and rockets (and what not). The word: '*Quwwah*' or power used here covers everything. Therefore, Muslims of today should acquire nuclear capability as far as they can - and tanks and fighter planes and submarines - because all these are included within the sense of this very 'Quwwah' or power. It should also be borne in mind that should we need to learn any art or science to achieve this end and if such effort be made with the intention that it will be employed to defend Islām and Muslims and to meet any aggressive challenges from the disbelievers - then, that too will fall under the procedure of Jihād and will carry reward.

After having mentioned the word: 'Quwwah' (power) in a general sense, also mentioned there was a particular form of power in clear terms by saying: مِنْ رِّبَاطِ الْخَيْلِ (and of the trained horses). The word: رباط (*Ribāṭ*) is used in its sense as a verbal noun as well as in the sense of: مربوط (*marbūṭ*). Taken in the first sense, it would mean to tie horses and in the second, tied horses. The outcome of both is the same, that is, to breed, break and train horses and hold them tied in readiness with the intention of using them in Jihād, or to assemble together a collection of such trained horses. Out of the supplies needed in a war, horses were mentioned particularly for the reason that those were times when the most effective mode of winning a war against countries and peoples of that period was no other but horses. Even today, there are inaccessible areas which cannot be overtaken without horses. Therefore, the Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم said: Allah Ta'ālā has placed *barakah* on the forehead of horses.

There are other sound Aḥādīth in which the Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه

وسلم has declared the efforts to procure and assemble war materials and the learning of the ability to use them efficiently to be a great act of *'Ibādah* deserving supreme rewards from Allah. Similarly, equally great returns have been promised for making and shooting arrows.

And since the real purpose of Jihād is to protect and defend Islām and Muslims - and defence as conceived in every period of time and by every set of people remains different - therefore, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: جَاهِدُوا الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ بِاَمْوَالِكُمْ وَاَنْفُسِكُمْ وَاَلْسِنَتِكُمْ (Carry out Jihād against the Mushriks with your belongings, and your ownselves and your eloquence (of speech or writing). (Ḥadīth reported by Abū Dāwūd and An-Nasā'ī and Ad-Dārimī from Sayyidnā Anas رضى الله عنه)

This Ḥadīth tells us that the way Jihād - defensive or initiated - is waged with weapons, it is also carried out at times with the power of speech, and the Jihād carried out with the power of pen or writing is governed by the same injunction which governs speech. When Islām and Qur'ān are defended through the medium of speech or writing against attacks from the forces of disbelief and atheism, or from agents of disinformation, distortion and interpolation, that too is included in Jihād as based on this clear and definitive textual authority of the Qur'ān (*Naṣṣ*).

After having given the command to make war materials ready for use, also described there was the wisdom of assembling these materials together - and its real purpose - in the following words: تُرْهِبُوْنَ بِهٖ عَدُوَّ اللّٰهِ وَعَدُوَّكُمْ (whereby you frighten the enemy of Allah and your own enemy - 60). It means that the real purpose of acquiring and storing military hardware, whether for initiated action or defence, is not to indulge in an exercise of killing and being killed. The purpose, in fact, is to bring down the force of Kufr and Shirk and fill the hearts of their protagonists with awe so that they stay suppressed. On occasions, that can be done by the power of the spoken or the written word only. Then, there are other occasions when fighting and killing become necessary. So, defence is obligatory (*farḍ*) as dictated by the prevailing condition.

Then it was said that Muslims do know some of those people who are to be impressed with preparations and readiness for combat - and these are people engaged in an ongoing confrontation with Muslims, that is, the disbelievers of Makkah and the Jews of Madīnah. Then, there were other people too, those whom the Muslims did not know

yet. The reference here is to the disbelievers and polytheists of the whole world who had not come up against Muslims, yet in future, they too were to clash against them. This verse of the Holy Qur'ān has told Muslims clearly that, in case they do make full preparations to fight against their present adversary, it will not only cow them down but will also cast its shadows over disbelievers living in distant lands, as it did happen in the case of Cyrus and Ceaser and others of those days. They all were deterred and suppressed during the age of the rightly-guided *Khulafā'* of Islām.

It goes without saying that the process of putting war materials together and fighting a war has to be backed financially and when it comes to actual production or procurement of military support, that too can be made available through investment of money. Therefore, at the end of the verse, the great merit and reward of spending wealth in the way of Allah has been described by saying that 'the return for whatever you spend in the way of Allah shall be given to you in full.' There are times when this return is received in the form of war spoils right here in this mortal world as well, otherwise, the return to be received in the Hereafter stands already determined - and, as obvious, that is more praiseworthy.

The third verse (61) takes up injunctions of peace and aspects related to it. It was said: وَإِنْ جَنَحُوا لِلسَّلْمِ فَاجْنَحْ لَهَا (And if they tilt towards peace, you tilt towards it). The word: سَلم (*salm*) with *fatḥa* on *sīn*, or: سِلم (*silm* with *kasrah* on *sīn* are both used in the sense of peace. The meaning of the verse - as fairly evident from the translation - is that should the disbelievers incline towards peace on some occasion, you too should incline towards it. At this point, it should be borne in mind that the imperative form has been used here to carry the sense of choice. Thus, the intended sense is that at a time when disbelievers are inclined towards peace, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم also has the choice of making peace, if he feels peace is in the best interest of Muslims.

And the restriction of: إِنْ جَنَحُوا (if they tilt) tells us that peace can be made only when the desire to have peace comes from the disbelievers - because, should Muslims themselves start proposing peace without their desire to have it, then, this would be taken as a sign of their weakness.

However, should there arise a situation in which Muslims are to-

tally encircled and find no way out except a peace for security deal, then, initiating a peace proposal is also permissible as ruled by Muslim jurists and as proved through hints given in the directives of the Holy Qur'ān and Sunnah (*nuṣūṣ*).

And since the proposal of peace initiated by the enemy does have the probability that they might use it as a strategy of deceit, make them negligent and then make a surprise attack, therefore, at the end of the verse, the instruction given to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was: وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللّٰهِ ۭ اِنَّهٗ هُوَ السَّمِيْعُ الْعَلِيْمُ (and place your trust in Allah. Surely, He is the All-Hearing, All-Knowing - 61). It means that Allah Ta'ālā hears what they say and also knows the intentions and designs concealed in their hearts. He is sufficient to help you, therefore, do not base your decisions to do things on such probabilities which cannot be proved. The safest policy was to entrust all such apprehensions and scruples with Allah.

After that, in the fourth verse (62), the same subject has been taken up with added clarity where it was said:

وَاِنْ يُّرِيْدُوْٓا اَنْ يَّخْدَعُوْكَ فَاِنَّ حَسْبَكَ اللّٰهُ ۭ هُوَ الَّذِيْٓ اَيَّدَكَ بِنَصْرِهٖ وَبِالْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ

And if they intend to deceive you, then, Allah is all-sufficient for you. He is the One who supported you with His help and with the believers.

It means that should this very probability turn out to be the reality on the ground - that their intention is bad and they stop at nothing short of a deceptive strike against you - even then, you do not have to bother about it because Allah is sufficient as your supporter. This has been true earlier too. Things have worked for the Holy Prophet ﷺ with nothing but the help and support of Allah Ta'ālā. He was always there behind him, a fact which is the very basis of his victory and success. Then, it was for everyone to witness that He made a group of Muslims rise around him who became his helping hands in the mission. All these arrangements were the outward causes of the phenomena. The thing to believe is that the real and absolute Master who fused together all causes of victory and success in a visible form shall never leave him alone to be deceived by the enemy even today. It was under this Divine promise when, after the revelation of this verse, it never happened throughout the entire span of his life that any deceit or ambush from his enemies brought any harm to him. Therefore, the scholars of

Tafsīr have said that this promise for the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is very much like the promise made in: وَاللّٰهُ يَعْصِمُكَ مِنَ النَّاسِ (and Allah shall keep you protected from the people - 5:67) when, after the revelation of this verse, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had asked his noble Companions who guarded him against any such dangers that they should now feel relieved and forget about their security concerns regarding his person. This tells us that this promise was special to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. (Bayān al-Qur'ān) As for others, they should do things in terms of formal arrangements after assessing prevailing conditions.

Verses 63 - 66

وَاَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوْبِهِمْ ؕ لَوْ اَنْفَقْتَ مَا فِى الْاَرْضِ جَمِيْعًا مَّاۤ اَلَّفْتَ بَيْنَ قُلُوْبِهِمْ وَلٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ اَلَّفَ بَيْنَهُمْ ؕ اِنَّهٗ عَزِيْزٌ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿٦٣﴾ يٰۤاَيُّهَا النَّبِىُّ حَسْبُكَ اللّٰهُ وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَكَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿٦٤﴾ يٰۤاَيُّهَا النَّبِىُّ حَرِّضِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ عَلَى الْقِتَالِ ؕ اِنْ يَّكُنْ مِّنْكُمْ عِشْرُوْنَ صٰبِرُوْنَ يَغْلِبُوْا مِائَتَيْنِ ۚ وَاِنْ يَّكُنْ مِّنْكُمْ مِّائَةٌ يَّغْلِبُوْۤا اَلْفًا مِّنَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا بِاَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَّا يَفْقَهُوْنَ ﴿٦٥﴾ اَلْـٰٔنَ خَفَّفَ اللّٰهُ عَنْكُمْ وَعَلِمَ اَنَّ فِيْكُمْ ضَعْفًا ؕ فَاِنْ يَّكُنْ مِّنْكُمْ مِّائَةٌ صَابِرَةٌ يَّغْلِبُوْا مِائَتَيْنِ ۚ وَاِنْ يَّكُنْ مِّنْكُمْ اَلْفٌ يَّغْلِبُوْۤا اَلْفَيْنِ بِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ مَعَ الصّٰبِرِيْنَ ﴿٦٦﴾

... and united their hearts. Had you spent all that is on earth, you would have not united their hearts. But Allah did unite their hearts. Surely, He is Mighty, Wise. [63]

O Prophet, Allah is sufficient for you, and the believers who followed you. [64]

O Prophet, rouse the believers to fight. If there are twenty among you, who are patient, they will overcome two hundred; and if there are one hundred among you, they will overcome one thousand of those who disbelieve, for they are a people who do not understand. [65]

And Allah has made it easy on you and He knew that there is weakness in you. So, if there are one hundred

among you, who are patient, they will overcome two hundred; and if there are one thousand among you, they will overcome two thousand by the will of Allah. And Allah is with the patient. [66]

Commentary

The first (63) of the four verses from Sūrah Al-Anfāl cited above describes the cause of Muslim victory and the method through which it was achieved. In the verse appearing previous to it (62), the address was to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم where he was told that it was but Allah who had helped him in His own special way, and through the community of Muslims with him. This verse is telling us that help from the community of Muslims can only be made available when this community is mutually in agreement with each other and united as one. Thus, the power and weight it carries emerges to the measure of cohesion and unity it has. If relationship based on mutual unity is strong, the whole community is strong and if this mesh of relationships is loose, the whole community turns incoherent and weak. In this verse, Allah Ta'ālā has mentioned his particular blessing which was bestowed on common Muslims for their help and support to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم whereby their hearts were filled with perfect unity and love. Though, before the migration of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to Madīnah, deadly wars had been fought between two of their tribes, Aws and Khazraj. As for mutual disputes, they were a regular feature of their lives. But, it was the *barakah* of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that Allah Ta'ālā made sworn enemies loving brothers to each other. So, the real cause of the establishment and survival of the new Islāmic state at Madīnah and that of its dominance over enemies was nothing but the help and support given by Allah Ta'ālā - and the apparent cause was the mutual love and unity among Muslims.

Alongwith it, also made clear in this verse is the fact that uniting the hearts of different people and infusing them with love and concern for each other is something beyond human control. This can be done only by Him who has created all. If someone were to spend the entire wealth of the world to make this happen by creating love in the hearts of people who hate each other, even then, this feat shall remain beyond his reach and control.

Real and Lasting Unity among Muslims depends on Obedience to Allah Ta'ālā

This also tells us that uniting the hearts of people and making them mutually filled with love for each other is a blessing from Allah and it is also obvious that this blessing cannot be hoped for in the presence of disobedience to Allah Ta'ālā, in fact, for any hope to have His blessing, obedience to Him and the seeking of His pleasure are binding conditions.

No sensible person from any religion or community would differ about unity among individual and social groups as being commendable and beneficial. Therefore, everyone who is concerned about reforming people puts stress on uniting them together. But, the world at large (as we have found it and fashioned it) is unaware of the reality of things - that full and lasting unity cannot be forged and received on an assembly line through pragmatic designs. This can be achieved only through obedience to Allah Ta'ālā and the seeking of His pleasure. The Holy Qur'ān has pointed out to this reality in several verses. For instance, at one such place, it was said: وَاعْتَصِمُوْا بِحَبْلِ اللّٰهِ جَمِيْعًا وَّلَا تَفَرَّقُوْا (Hold the cord of Allah firmly, all of you, and do not be divided - 3:103). Given here is the method of avoiding differences and dissensions. The method is that everyone should firmly hold on to the cord of Allah - the Qur'ān or the Sharī'ah of Islām - and, as a result, everyone shall stand united together all by themselves and all mutual differences would evaporate from the scene. As for the normal difference of opinion, that is something else. If it remains within its limits, it never becomes the cause of dissensions and disputes. Dispute and disorder erupt only when the limits of Sharī'ah are crossed. In our day, everyone loves to harp on unity. But, the meaning of unity everyone is fond of taking is: If people agree to what I say, everyone will stand united. And others too who are equally concerned about unity would very much like them to agree to what they say, and thus claim that this is the only way for all to be united. Although, when a normal difference of opinion is inevitable, even necessary, among reasonable and honest people, then, it is evident that should everyone make his or her agreement with the other person depend on the eventuality that the other person agrees to what he or she says, then, mutual unity cannot materialize until the Day of Doom. Instead of all that, there is just no sound and natural format of unity other than that which has been given by the Holy

Qur'ān - that both parties sit together and agree to what a third party has to say, and this third party has to be the one about whom it is certain that the decision of this party will be free of error. It goes without saying that Allah alone can be such a decision-maker. It is for this reason that, in the present verse, it has been advised that everyone should hold on to the cord of Allah firmly and jointly whereby mutual disputes will evaporate in thin air and perfect unity shall prevail.

In Sūrah Maryam, it was said: إِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ سَيَجْعَلُ لَهُمُ الرَّحْمٰنُ وُدًّا (Surely, among those who believe and do good deeds, the All-Merciful [Allah] generates love - 19:96). This verse makes it clear that the real method through which hearts shall be filled with genuine love and intense fellow feeling is adherence to the dictates of Faith and insistence on doing what is good and right. Without it, even if some kind of unity could be artificially arrived at, that 'unity' will be simply baseless and weak making it disintegrate at the slightest provocation or pressure - something commonly noticed in the experiences of peoples around the whole world. In short, for our instant purpose, this verse explains how the blessing which was bestowed by Allah Ta'ālā on the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم - a blessing which was to generate mutual love into the hearts of all tribes of Madīnah making them all set to help and support the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم - went on to turn his supporters into an iron wall for him.

In the second verse (64) as well, by stating the same subject briefly, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been comforted by telling him that sufficient for him is Allah Ta'ālā in the real sense, and the group of believers in the physical sense. So, he should have no fear of an enemy, no matter how big, strong, numerous or well-equipped. Commentators have said that this verse was revealed before actual fighting started in the battle of Badr so that Muslims, small in numbers and virtually unequipped, would not be overawed by the heavy numerical and technical superiority of their adversary.

Mentioned for Muslims in the fourth (65) and fifth (66) verse, there is a law of war which stipulates the limit to which it was obligatory (*farḍ*) for them to stand resolutely against their adversary - and any retreat from which was a sin. In previous verses and events, it has been mentioned in detail that the unseen help of Allah Ta'ālā is with Muslims for their matter is different, not like that of the peoples of the

world at large. They, even if small in numbers, can overcome a lot more of their challengers as stated in the Holy Qur'ān:

كَمْ مِّنْ فِئَةٍ قَلِيْلَةٍ غَلَبَتْ فِئَةً كَثِيْرَةً بِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ

There are many smaller groups which overcome larger groups with the will of Allah - 2:249).

Therefore, ten Muslims were declared to be equal to one hundred men in the first Jihād of Islām at the famous battle of Badr where the command given was:

وَاِنْ يَّكُنْ مِّنْكُمْ مِّائَةٌ يَّغْلِبُوْٓا اَلْفًا مِّنَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا بِاَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَّا يَفْقَهُوْنَ .

If there are twenty among you, who are patient, they will overcome two hundred; and if there are one hundred among you, they will overcome one thousand of those who disbelieve - 8:65

The style of expression used here is that of a welcome news flash - that one hundred Muslims shall overcome one thousand disbelievers. But, the purpose is to order that it is not permissible for one hundred Muslims to run against one thousand disbelievers. The wisdom behind using the style of news is to make the hearts of Muslims become strong with this glad tidings telling them that Allah is promising their safety and victory. Had this order been announced in the imperative mood as a law, it would have naturally weighed heavy on temperaments.

The encounter at Badr was the very first battle Muslims had ever fought. At that time, they were in a terrible condition. The total number of Muslims itself was insignificant. Then, all of them had not gone to the war front. The hard fact was that only those who could get ready on the spot were the ones who became the 'army' of this war. Therefore, in this Jihād, one hundred Muslims were commanded to confront one thousand disbelievers in a style which carried the promise of Divine help and support.

In the fourth verse (66), by abrogating this injunction for future, the second injunction given was:

اَلْـٰٔنَ خَفَّفَ اللّٰهُ عَنْكُمْ وَ عَلِمَ اَنَّ فِيْكُمْ ضَعْفًا ۚ فَاِنْ يَّكُنْ مِّنْكُمْ مِّائَةٌ صَابِرَةٌ يَّغْلِبُوْا مِائَتَيْنِ ۚ وَاِنْ يَّكُنْ مِّنْكُمْ اَلْفٌ يَّغْلِبُوْٓا اَلْفَيْنِ بِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ مَعَ الصّٰبِرِيْنَ .

Now Allah has made it easy on you and He knew that there is

weakness in you. So, if there are one hundred among you, who are patient, they will overcome two hundred - 8:66.

Here too, the purpose is to order that it is not permissible for one hundred Muslims to avoid fighting against two hundred disbelievers. It will be recalled that, in the first verse (65), the avoidance of one Muslim to fight against ten was declared to be forbidden. Here, in this verse (66), the avoidance of one against two was all that remained forbidden. And this is the last and final injunction which is operative for ever and shall continue as such.

Here too, the command does not appear in the usual style of a command. Instead, the manner used is that of glad tidings which indicates that asking one Muslim to go out and stand firm against two disbelievers was, God forbid, no injustice or coercion. To be honest, Allah Ta'ālā has Himself placed in a Muslim person - because of his 'Īmān or Faith - a special power that one of them turns out to be equal to two.

But, at both places, the glad tidings about this support and victory has been made subject to the condition that these Muslims should be observers of patience and fortitude. It is obvious that standing steadfast while endangering one's dear life in fighting and killing on a battlefield is a feat which can be performed only by a person whose 'Īmān is perfect - because, perfect 'Īmān generates enthusiasm for surrendering one's life in the way of Allah and this enthusiasm multiplies his combat strength a lot more.

Towards the end of the verse, it was in the manner of a general principle that it was stated: وَاللّٰهُ مَعَ الصّٰبِرِيْنَ (And Allah is with the patient - 66). Included here, there are those who remain steadfast in the battlefield as well as those who keep following the usual injunctions of the Sharī'ah strictly. The promise of Divine company stands good for all of them and in this state of His being with one and all of them lies the real secret of their victory - because,whoever has the good fortune of having the company of the Absolute Master simply cannot be moved away from the station of duty by anyone, not even by the whole world in unison.

Verses 67 - 69

مَا كَانَ لِنَبِيٍّ اَنْ يَّكُوْنَ لَهٗٓ اَسْرٰى حَتّٰى يُثْخِنَ فِى الْاَرْضِ ؕ

تُرِيْدُوْنَ عَرَضَ الدُّنْيَا ۖ وَاللّٰهُ يُرِيْدُ الْاٰخِرَةَ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَزِيْزٌ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿٦٧﴾ لَوْلَا كِتٰبٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ سَبَقَ لَمَسَّكُمْ فِيْمَاۤ اَخَذْتُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيْمٌ ﴿٦٨﴾ فَكُلُوْا مِمَّا غَنِمْتُمْ حَلٰلًا طَيِّبًا ۖؗ وَّاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿٦٩﴾

It is not for a prophet that there remain prisoners with him until he has had a thorough blood-shed in the land. You want things of this world while Allah wants the Hereafter (for you). And Allah is Mighty, Wise. [67] **Had there not been a writ from Allah which came earlier, there would have reached you, for what you took, a great punishment.** [68]

So, eat of the spoils you have got, lawful and pure, and fear Allah. Surely, Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [69]

Commentary

The verses cited above relate to a particular event of the battle of Badr. Therefore, prior to an explanation, it is necessary to describe this event on the authority of sound and authentic narrations appearing in Ḥadīth.

The scenario of the event is the battle of Badr. It was the first Jihād in Islām, and it had come up all of a sudden. Until then, the detail of injunctions pertaining to Jihād was not revealed. There were questions. If spoils come on hand during Jihād, what should be done with it? If enemy soldiers fall under your control, whether or not it is permissible to arrest them? And if they are arrested, what should be done with them?

The law of spoils operative in the religious codes of past prophets was that it was not lawful for Muslims to use them for their benefit. Instead, the injunction was that the entire spoils be collected and placed in some open field. According to a Divine practice, a fire would come from the skies and burn the whole thing. This was taken to be a sign that the particular Jihād was approved of. If the fire from the skies did not come to burn the spoils, it was taken to be a sign that there was some shortcoming in the Jihād effort because of which it was considered unacceptable with Allah.

According to narrations in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī and Muslim, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'I have been blessed with five things which were not bestowed on any prophet before me.' One of these was that spoils acquired from disbelievers was not lawful for anyone, but it was made lawful for the Muslim Ummah, the traditional recepient of mercy from Allah. That the property of spoils was particularly lawful for this Ummah already existed in the infinite knowledge of Allah Ta'ālā, but no revelation attesting to its being lawful had been sent to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم until the event of the battle of Badr referred to above. And what happened in the battle of Badr was that Allah Ta'ālā blessed Muslims with an extraordinary victory which was totally beyond their imagination. The enemy also left behind its belongings which fell into the hands of Muslims as spoils. Then they took seventy of their big chiefs as prisoners. But, the necessary clarification of whether or not the later two actions were permissible was yet to come through a Divine revelation.

Therefore, this hasty action taken by the noble Companions was censured. This censure and displeasure was demonstrated through a revelation in which Muslims were given a choice between two courses of action in the case of the prisoners of war. But, when giving this choice, it was also pointed out to them that, out of the two aspects of the case, one was desirable while the other was undesirable. Based on a narration from Sayyidnā 'Alī al-Murtaḍā رضى الله عنه, it has been reported in Jāmi' Tirmidhī, Sunan al-Nasā'ī and Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān that on this occasion Sayyidnā Jibrā'īl al-Amīn came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and communicated to him the command that he should give his Companions a choice between two courses of action: (1) That they either kill these prisoners and destroy the image of enemy power for ever; (2) or, that they are released against some payment of *fidyah* (ransom). However, should this second option be taken, it has to be borne in mind that it stands Divinely ordained that, in return for this next year, the number of Muslims who will fall as martyrs will match the number of prisoners who will be released today on payment of ransom. Though, the two courses of action did have the element of choice and the Companions did have the option of going by any one of the two, but, in the second option where mention was made of the eventuality of the martyrdom of seventy Muslims, there did exist a delicate indication towards the undesirability of the second option in the sight

of Allah Taʻālā - because, had it been desirable, the killing of seventy Muslims would have not been binding as a result.

When these two alternatives were presented before the Companions as a matter of choice for them, some of them thought if these people were released against payment of ransom, it was quite possible that they all, or some of them, may become Muslims at some later stage which would, then, be the real gain, and the very objective of Jihād itself. They also thought that Muslims were poor at that time and should they make some financial gain through ransom for seventy men, that would not only help remove their hardship but also contribute towards their preparations for Jihād in future. As for the martyrdom of seventy Muslims, it was a standing blessing and good fortune for Muslims themselves. Why should they worry about something so welcome, they thought. It was in view of these thoughts that Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ and most of the Companions tilted towards the option of releasing the prisoners against ransom. Only Sayyidnā ʻUmar, Sayyidnā Saʻd ibn Muʻādh and some other Companions رضی اللہ عنہم differed with this opinion and recommended the option of killing them all on the ground that it was a good chance as all Quraysh chiefs, who sponsor and supply the entire striking force arrayed against Muslims, had fallen into their hands at one given time. That they would embrace Islām in the near future was a figment of their imagination. However, what was more likely to happen was that these people, once they return, will become the cause of enhanced hostility against Muslims, much too pronounced than ever before.

As for the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, he had come to grace this mortal world as the universal messenger of mercy - and was himself mercy personified - he looked at the two opinions from the Ṣaḥābah and accepted the one which provided mercy and ease for prisoners - that they be released against ransom. Addressing Sayyidnā Abū Bakr and Sayyidnā ʻUmar رضی اللہ عنہ, he said: لو اتفقتما ما خالفتكما (Had you two agreed upon any one opinion, I would have not acted against the opinion given by you two). (Mazharī) Faced with a difference of opinion at that time, it was but the dictate of his inherent mercy and affection he had for the creation of Allah that the course of ease and convenience was taken to in their case. So, that was what was done. And the outcome was that next year, at the time of the battle of 'Uḥud,

the event of the martyrdom of seventy Muslims came to pass as Divinely indicated.

In the words: تُرِيدُونَ عَرَضَ الدُّنْيَا (You want things of this world - 67), the address is to the noble Companions who had suggested release for ransom. This verse tells them that they had given improper advice to the *Rasūl* of Allah because it did not match with the august station of any prophet that he would not, once he overpowers the enemies, go on to demolish their power and its image, instead, would opt for granting relief to a wicked and conspiratorial enemy only to commit Muslims to everlasting trouble.

The words used in this verse are: حَتّٰى يُثْخِنَ فِى الْاَرْضِ (until he has had a thorough blood-shed in the land - 67). Lexically, the word: اثخان (*ithkhān*) means to demolish someone's might and power exhaustively and conclusively. The words: فِى الْاَرْضِ (*fi 'l-arḍ* : in the land) have been made to follow in order to intensify this very sense of total termination.

As for the Ṣaḥābah who had recommended release against ransom, part of their view was, no doubt, purely religious - they hoped that, once free, these people may embrace Islām. But, alongwith it, part of it was motivated by personal interest as well - that they will have spoils to bring back - although, until that time, there was no decisive textual authority which proved spoils as permissible property for Muslims. Therefore, in view of the high standards being set for the society of men and women under the education, training and guidance of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم - standards which aimed to take them to ranks even higher than angels - the slightest turn of thought towards material acquisitions was considered a kind of disobedience. Thus, it goes without saying that the sum total of what is a potpurri of deeds which are both permissible and impermissible will, after all, be called impermissible. Therefore, such conduct from the Ṣaḥābah met with displeasure and it was said: تُرِيدُونَ عَرَضَ الدُّنْيَا وَاللّٰهُ يُرِيدُ الْاٰخِرَةَ وَاللّٰهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ : 'You want things of this world while Allah wants the Hereafter (for you) - 67,' that is, Allah wants you to seek the Hereafter. Mentioned here as reprimand was a particular act of theirs which was the cause of displeasure. The other cause, that of the hope of released prisoners becoming Muslims, was not mentioned here. This indicates that a special group like the group of righteous, sincere and noble Ṣaḥābah would accomodate such mixed up intention as would combine some faith and

some personal interest was something not acceptable even in that degree. Worth noticing here is the fact that the admonition and warning in this verse are being addressed to the noble Ṣaḥābah. Though, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم too, by accepting their opinion, had gone along with them in a certain way, but, this act of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was purely a demonstration of his being universally merciful when he, subsequent to a difference of opinion among the Ṣaḥābah, had gone by a course of action which promised grace and convenience for the prisoners.

At the end of the verse, by saying: وَاللّٰهُ عَزِيْزٌ حَكِيْمٌ (And Allah is Mighty, Wise - 67), it was pointed out that Allah Ta'ālā, being the source of all might and wisdom, would have - only if they had not acted in a hurry - provided for them wealth and properties as well in their future victories through His infinite grace.

The second verse (68) is also a supplement to this admonition where it has been said that had it not been for a Divine writ already established, the course of action which you opted for - that of releasing the prisoners against ransom - would have brought upon you some grave punishment.

What is this writ and what does it mean? According to a narration from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه reported in Tirmidhī, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: Spoils were not lawful for any community before you. When, on the occasion of Badr, Muslims went after collecting spoils - though, spoils were not made lawful for them until that time - this verse was revealed. It emphasized that this initiative taken by Muslims, before the injunction making spoils lawful for them was revealed, was a sin which deserved instant punishment. But, since the writ of Allah that spoils shall be made lawful for this community was already there in the Preserved Tablet, therefore, punishment was not sent over Muslims for this misconduct. (Maẓharī)

It appears in Ḥadīth narrations that, subsequent to the revelation of this verse, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: The Divine punishment was almost about to descend when Allah, in His grace, held it back and had this punishment come, no one except 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb and Sa'd ibn Mu'ādh رضى الله عنهما would have remained safe from it. This tells us that the cause of Divine admonition was the act of releasing prisoners against ransom - and, in the light of the narra-

tion from Tirmidhī mentioned earlier, the reason seems to be the act of collecting spoils. But, there appears to be no contradiction between the two. Taking ransom from prisoners is also nothing but a part of spoils.

Ruling 1: In the verse under discussion, admonition came upon releasing prisoners against ransom or collecting spoils, warning of Divine punishment was given, then came forgiveness. But, what remained still not clear was the future course Muslims would be required to take in such matters. Therefore, in the next verse (69), the matter relating to spoils was made all too clear by saying: فَكُلُوا مِمَّا غَنِمْتُمْ (So, eat of the spoils you have got), that is, it has been made lawful for you in the future. But, even now, there remains a doubt to the effect that the injunction making spoils lawful had come at the present stage, however, spoils which had been collected in error before the coming of this injunction may contain some element of undesirability in it. Therefore, by saying: حَلٰلًا طَيِّبًا (lawful and pure - 69) soon after it, even this doubt was removed. It means: Though, taking the initiative in collecting spoils, before the revelation of Divine guideline, was not correct - but now that the injunction making spoils lawful has been revealed, all that has been collected earlier is also lawful without any shade of repugnance or reprehensibility (*karāhah*) in it.

Ruling 2: At this point, worth notice and retention is a principle of Islāmic jurisprudence: When some impermissible initiative is regularized through a standing verse, no effect of the previous initiative remains operative therein. The property becomes lawful and pure - as it happened here. But, there is a corresponding instance relevant to what has been stated above. Take a case in which there was an injunction already revealed, but its revelation did not seem to affect the initiators of an action, based on which they went on to contravene it. It was later on that they found out that the particular deed of theirs was contrary to such and such injunction of the Qur'ān and Sunnah. Then, in such a situation, after the coming of the injunction, that property does not remain lawful - even though the previous error is forgiven. (Nūru 'l-Anwār, Mullā Jīwan) However, in the present verse, spoils have, no doubt, been declared to be lawful and pure, but the restriction imposed at the end of the verse was: وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ (and fear Allah. Surely, Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful - 69). The hint given here is that, though spoils have been made lawful, but that too has been made

lawful under a particular law. Taking against that law or taking more than due shall not still be permissible.

There were two matters in question here: (1) Spoils (2) Release of prisoners against ransom. The first problem was resolved clearly by the present verse, but the other matter was yet to be cleared. Regarding this, the following verse of Sūrah Muḥammad was revealed:

فَإِذَا لَقِيتُمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَضَرْبَ الرِّقَابِ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَثْخَنتُمُوهُمْ فَشُدُّوا الْوَثَاقَ فَإِمَّا مَنًّا بَعْدُ وَإِمَّا فِدَاءً حَتَّىٰ تَضَعَ الْحَرْبُ أَوْزَارَهَا .

So, when you confront those who disbelieve at war, then keep beheading them until when you have had a thorough bloodshed to break their power, then shackle them tight. After that, either free them as favour without any return or release them against ransom - until the war lays down its arms - 47:4)

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه says: Divine admonition came upon releasing prisoners against ransom in the battle of Badr. This was the first Jihād of Islām. That was a time when the might and power of disbelievers was yet to break apart. It was by chance that they had run into trouble. Finally, when Islām and Muslims went on to achieve total ascendency, Allah Ta'ālā abrogated the earlier injunction and revealed the verse of the Sūrah Muḥammad quoted above in which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and Muslims have been given four options about prisoners. These are:

ان شاء وا قتلوهم وان شاءوا استعبدوهم وان شاء وا افادوهم وان شاء وا اعتقوهم .

If they wish, they can kill them all; or if they wish, they can put them in bondage; or if they wish, they can release them against ransom; or if they wish, they can (just) free them (without taking any ransom). (Maẓharī)

There is a consensus of the entire Muslim Ummah on the first two of the four options mentioned above that the Amir of Muslims has the dual right of killing the prisoners and holding them in bondage, but there is a difference of opinion among Muslim jurists about setting them free without compensation or releasing them against it.

The position taken by Imām Mālik, Shāfi'ī, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, Thawrī, Isḥāq, and Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and 'Aṭā' from among the Tābi'īn, is

that both these forms are permissible for the Amir of Muslims - that he may release the prisoners against compensation, or set them free without compensation, or exchange them for Muslim prisoners.

But Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, Abū Yūsuf, Muḥammad, Awzā'ī, and Qatādah, Ḍaḥḥāk, Suddiyy and Ibn Jurayj say that setting them free is just not permissible without compenstion. Even releasing them against ransom is not permissible in the well-known creed of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah. However, it appears in a report of al-Siyar al-Kabir that, should Muslims be in need of financial support, they can release prisoners against ransom. However, releasing them in exchange for Muslim prisoners is permissible with Imām Abū Hanifah and the two Jurists, Imāms Abū Yūsuf and Muḥammad. (As evident from the two reports from them - Maẓharī).

Those who have permitted release against ransom or without ransom, they - as said by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās - regard the verse of Sūrah Muḥammad to be the abrogator (*nāsikh*) of the verse of Sūrah Al-Anfāl and take the later as abrogated (*mansūkh*). According to Ḥanafī jurists, what stands abrogated (*mansūkh*) is the verse of Sūrah Muḥammad, while the verses of Sūrah Al-Anfāl: فَشَرِّدْبِهِم مَّنْ خَلْفَهُمْ (make them an example for those behind them -57) and Sūrah Al-Taubah: اُقْتُلُوا الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ حَيْثُ وَجَدْتُّمُوْهُمْ (kill the Mushriks wherever you find them -9:5) are its abrogator (*nāsikh*). Therefore, according to them, it is not permissible to release the prisoners, whether against ransom or without it. (Maẓharī)

But, a careful deliberation into the respective words of the verses of Sūrah Al-Anfāl and Sūrah Muḥammad leaves us with the impression that none of these two can be called the abrogator or the abrogated. In fact, they are two injunctions for two different situations.

It can be seen that the pivotal injunction of breaking the power of disbelievers (اثخان فی الارض) has been taken up in the verse of Sūrah Al-Anfāl, then, the option of releasing prisoners without compensation or against it (in the form of: من وفداء) has been given in Sūrah Muḥammad too, but the main objective has already been stated in the former - that of '*ithkhān fi 'l-arḍ*'. Thus, it means that once the power facade of the disbelievers has been broken through a thorough blood-shed, Muslims have the option of releasing prisoners against ransom, or setting them free without any ransom.

The report of al-Siyar al-Kabīr from Imām Abū Ḥanīfah could also be intended to establish that both kinds of injunctions can be given keeping in view the conditions and needs Muslims are faced with. وَاللّٰهُ سُبْحَانَهٗ وَ تَعَالٰى اَعْلَمُ .[1]

Verses 70 - 71

يَاَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُلْ لِّمَنْ فِيْٓ اَيْدِيْكُمْ مِّنَ الْاَسْرٰٓى ۙ اِنْ يَّعْلَمِ اللّٰهُ فِيْ قُلُوْبِكُمْ خَيْرًا يُّؤْتِكُمْ خَيْرًا مِّمَّآ اُخِذَ مِنْكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿۷۰﴾ وَاِنْ يُّرِيْدُوْا خِيَانَتَكَ فَقَدْ خَانُوا اللّٰهَ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَاَمْكَنَ مِنْهُمْ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿۷۱﴾

O Prophet, say to the prisoners in your hands, "If Allah knows of any good in your hearts, He will give you something better than what has been taken from you, and will forgive you. And Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [70]

And if they intend to commit treachery against you, then, they have already committed treachery against Allah, so Allah has given (you) power over them. And Allah is All-Knowing, Wise. [71]

Commentary

The prisoners taken in the battle of Badr were released against ransom. These were sworn enemies of Islām and Muslims who had left nothing undone when it came to harassing, torturing, beating and killing them, anytime, anywhere. The slightest opportunity on hand would make them inflict their savagery on them. Now that they were prisoners in the hands of Muslims, granting them a lease of life was no mean feat. In fact, it was much more than adequate for them, virtually touching the outside limits of kindness under given circumstances. Then, the amount of ransom taken from them was far too ordinary.

Certainly great is the kindness of Allah Ta'ālā. Imagine the consideration shown for the discomfort caused to them in paying that paltry sum for freedom and see how it is removed. It has been said in verse 70: If Allah shall find any good in your hearts, then, He shall give you

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1. Some more detail about the war-prisoners will appear in the commentary of Sūrah Muḥammad *insha-allah.* (Editor)

what is better than what has been taken from you - and in addition to that, He shall forgive your past sins. The word: خير (*khayr*: good) used here means *'Īmān* (faith) and *Ikhlāṣ* (sincerity). The sense of the statement is that prisoners who, once they are free, were to take to *'Īmān* and Islām with sincerity, then, they shall be receiving more and better than what they have given in ransom. Thus, made free and independent, the prisoners have been invited to consider their profit and loss as free individuals. In consequence, events prove that those from among them who embraced Islām were so heavily rewarded by Allah Ta'ālā right here in this mortal world with wealth and property which was way higher than what they had paid as ransom - not to mention the forgiveness they were blessed with and the high ranks of Paradise they received in the Hereafter.

Most commentators have said that this verse was revealed about Sayyidnā 'Abbās رضى الله عنه, the uncle of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم because he too was one of the prisoners of Badr and ransom was taken from him too. His case was special in that he had left Makkah to participate in the battle of Badr with almost seven hundred guineas of gold on his person which was meant to be spent on the army of the disbelievers. However, before this could be spent, he was taken a prisoner with the gold.

When came the time to pay ransom, he said to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that the gold he had with him should be applied to cover the amount of his ransom. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: The wealth you brought to support disbelief became war spoils for Muslims. Ransom has to be in addition to that. Alongwith it, he also said: You should also pay the ransom for your two nephews, 'Aqīl ibn Abī Ṭālib and Nawfil ibn Ḥārith. Thereupon, Sayyidnā 'Abbās said: If so much financial burden was placed on me, I shall have to beg before the Quraysh like a pauper. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: Why? What about the wealth you had entrusted with your wife, Umm al-Faḍl while leaving Makkah? Sayyidnā 'Abbās asked: How did you know this when I had entrusted it with my wife in the darkness of night, personally and in private. There is no third person who knows about it. He said: My Rabb has told me everything about it. When Sayyidnā 'Abbās heard these words, his heart became certain that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was a true messenger of Allah. In fact,

Sayyidnā 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ had held the Holy Prophet in esteem even before this happened, but there were some doubts as well - which Allah Ta'ālā removed at this moment. So, in reality, he had become a Muslim right then. But, he had a lot of money he had loaned out to the Quraysh of Makkah. If he were to declare his conversion to Islām immediately at that time, all that money would have gone waste. Therefore, he did not make a public announcement of it and the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم too said nothing about it to anyone. Before the Conquest of Makkah, he requested the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم for his permission to migrate from Makkah to Madīnah. But, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم advised him not to do that yet.

Following this conversation with Sayyidnā 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم also told him about the promise appearing in the present verse which says that should he embrace Islām and become a Muslim with unalloyed sincerity of heart, then, the money he has spent in ransom shall be returned to him by Allah Ta'ālā making it much more and much better for him. Hence, it was after his adherence to Islām had become public knowledge, he used to say: As for me, I am seeing the manifestation of this promise with my own eyes - because the amount of gold taken from me in ransom at that time was seven hundred guineas (20 *Uqiyah*). Now, at present, twenty of my slaves are running businesses at several places and no business venture being run by them is worth any less than twenty thousand dirhams each. And on top of all this, I have been blessed with the opportunity to serve Ḥujjāj, the visiting pilgrims, by providing to them drinking water from the sacred well of Zamzam - a service I consider to be so valuable as would pale out the possession of the entire wealth of the people of Makkah.

About some prisoners of the battle of Badr who had become Muslims, there remained a doubt that they, once back in Makkah, may turn away from Islām and start hurting them thereafter. In the next verse (71), Allah Ta'ālā has removed this apprehension by saying: إِنْ يُّرِيْدُوْا خِيَانَتَكَ فَقَدْ خَانُوا اللّٰهَ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَأَمْكَنَ مِنْهُمْ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ حَكِيْمٌ (And if they intend to commit treachery against you, then, they have already committed treachery against Allah, so Allah has given [you] power over them. And Allah is All-Knowing, Wise). It means that should these people decide to commit a breach of trust with you, it will not bring any hurt or loss to you.

They were the same people who had already committed a breach of trust with Allah. They had admitted of Allah being the Lord of all the worlds at the time of the original Covenant, then they became hostile to it. But, this breach of trust turned out to be fatal for none but them when, finally, they were disgraced and detained. As for Allah Ta'ālā, He is the knower of secrets hidden in hearts, and He is the possessor of great wisdom. If these people start opposing you even now, there is nowhere they can go, certainly not anywhere outside the range of the power and control of Allah Ta'ālā. Inevitably, He shall seize them as before. To sum up, it can be said that, in verse 70, the *da'wah* of Islām was given to the released prisoners in the mode of persuasion - while in verse 71, it was in the mode of warning that they were told that success in their worldly life and in their life to come depends on Islām and 'Īmān.

Upto this point, the text was dealing with injunctions relating to fighting and killing disbelievers, taking them prisoners, setting them free and carrying on peace negotiations with them. In verses which follow right upto the end of the Sūrah itself, a particular related chapter has been taken up alongwith some details of its injunctions. They are the injunctions of Hijrah (Emigration) - because, situations can arise during a confrontation with disbelievers wherein neither the Muslims have the power to launch an attack against them and kill them off, nor are they willing to go for peace. In such a state of weakness, the only course through which Islām and Muslims can be salvaged is Hijrah (Emigration) which means that Muslims should leave that city or country and go to stay in some other land where acting freely in accordance with Islāmic injunctions is possible.

Verses 72 - 75

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَهَاجَرُوا وَجَاهَدُوا بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنفُسِهِمْ فِي
سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ آوَوا وَّنَصَرُوا أُولَٰئِكَ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ
بَعْضٍ ۚ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَلَمْ يُهَاجِرُوا مَا لَكُم مِّن وَلَايَتِهِم مِّن
شَيْءٍ حَتَّىٰ يُهَاجِرُوا ۚ وَإِنِ اسْتَنصَرُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ فَعَلَيْكُمُ
النَّصْرُ إِلَّا عَلَىٰ قَوْمٍ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُم مِّيثَاقٌ ۗ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

بَصِيْرٌ ﴿٧٢﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا بَعْضُهُمْ اَوْلِيَآءُ بَعْضٍ ۚ اِلَّا تَفْعَلُوْهُ
تَكُنْ فِتْنَةٌ فِى الْاَرْضِ وَفَسَادٌ كَبِيْرٌ ﴿٧٣﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا
وَهَاجَرُوْا وَجٰهَدُوْا فِىْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰوَوْا وَّنَصَرُوْٓا اُولٰٓئِكَ
هُمُ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ حَقًّا ۚ لَهُمْ مَّغْفِرَةٌ وَّ رِزْقٌ كَرِيْمٌ ﴿٧٤﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ
اٰمَنُوْا مِنْۢ بَعْدُ وَهَاجَرُوْا وَجٰهَدُوْا مَعَكُمْ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ مِنْكُمْ ۚ
وَاُولُوا الْاَرْحَامِ بَعْضُهُمْ اَوْلٰى بِبَعْضٍ فِىْ كِتٰبِ اللّٰهِ ۚ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ
بِكُلِّ شَىْءٍ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿٧٥﴾

Surely those who believed and emigrated and carried out Jihād in the way of Allah with their wealth and lives, and those who give refuge and help --- those are friends to each other. And those who believed and did not emigrate, with them you have no friendship at all unless they emigrate. And if they seek your help in the matter of faith, then, you are bound to help except against a people who have a treaty between you and them. And Allah is watchful over what you do. [72]

And those who disbelieve are friends to each other. If you do not do so, there shall be disorder on the earth, and a great corruption. [73]

And those who have believed and emigrated and carried out Jihād in the way of Allah, and those who gave refuge and help --- those are the believers in truth. For them there is forgiveness and a respectful provision. [74]

And those who believed later on and emigrated and participated with you in Jihād, then, they are one of you. As for the womb-relatives, some of them are closer to some as in the Book of Allah. Surely, Allah is aware of every thing. [75]

Commentary

These are the last four verses of Sūrah Al-Anfāl. The real objective therein is to describe the injunctions of Hijrah (Emigration) which relate to the inheritance of Muhājir (Emigrant) Muslims. In contrast, also mentioned there is the inheritance of non-Muhājir Muslims and non-Muslims.

The gist of these injunctions is that people who fall under Islamic legal authority are, in the first instance, of two kinds: (1) Muslim (2) Kāfir (disbeliever). Then, in terms of that period of time, Muslims were of two kinds: (1) Muhājir, those who after *hijrah* becoming obligatory, had left Makkah and had settled in Madīnah. (2) Non-Muhājir, those who had, for a valid reason or for some other reason, stayed behind in Makkah itself.

Mutual relationship was a common factor among individuals from all these kinds because, during the early period of Islām, it was quite common that a son would be Muslim while the father would be a Kāfir, or a father would be Muslim while his son would be a Kāfir. The same was true about other relationships, such as, brothers, nephews, maternal grandfathers and maternal uncles etc. And that there were mutual relationships among Muhājir and non-Muhājir Muslims is fairly obvious.

Allah Ta'ālā has, in His perfect mercy and profound wisdom, declared that the wealth and property left by the deceased person belongs to his or her own relatives as its deserving recepients. Although, the initial reality was that whoever received anything during this mortal life was entirely owned and possessed by Allah Ta'ālā in the real sense. It was a simple arrangement from Him that everyone was made, on His behalf, a temporary owner of what was given to man to use for a life-time and drive benefit from it. Therefore, by all cannons of logic, reason and justice the inheritance of every deceased person should have ricocheted back into His ownership - the practical implementation of which was to have it placed in the Public Treasury of the Islāmic State which serves the great masses of people created by Allah by fulfilling their multi-faceted developmental needs. But, in doing so, first of all everyone would have been naturally hurt to find out that, after death, one's wealth and property will not reach one's own children, nor to parents, nor to wife or husband. Then, its logical consequence was also somewhat equally natural - that no one would have cared to work for more and take steps to keep it preserved. In other words, no one would have been burning his feet to work for more than what was needed to collect just about enough to take care of the basic needs of his or her life. And it is obvious that this attitude to life would have meant disaster for all human beings and their cities.

Therefore, Allah *Jalla thana'uh*, made inheritance the right of relatives among human beings, specially relatives for whose benefit one has been working hard and putting financial assets together during the course of one's life.

Alongwith it, while instituting the distribution of inheritance, Islām has also kept in sight the important objective for which human beings were created, that is, the obedience to and worship of Allah Ta'ālā - and it was in terms of this objective that the entire human species was declared to be two separate peoples or nations: Believers and Disbelievers. The verse of the Qur'ān: خَلَقَكُمْ فَمِنْكُمْ كَافِرٌ وَّمِنْكُمْ مُّؤْمِنٌ (It is He who created you, then, among you there is a disbeliever and among you there is a believer - Al-Taghābun, 64:2) means exactly this.

This two-nation theory severed relationships based on lineage and kinship as far as it concerned inheritance stipulating that neither shall a Muslim receive a share from the inheritance of a related disbeliever, nor shall a Kāfir have any right in the inheritance of a Muslim relative. This is the subject stated in the first two verses (72, 73) and the injunction given therein is for ever, was never abrogated and has continued to be Islām's basic principle of inheritance since its very beginning and shall remain operative right through the day of Qiyāmah.

Allied with it, there is another injunction which concerns mutual inheritance between Muhājir and non-Muhājir Muslims about which it has been stated in the first verse that the relationship of a Muslim - until he emigrates from Makkah - shall also remain severed with Muslims who have emigrated, as far as inheritance is concerned. In this case, no Muhājir Muslim shall inherit his or her non-Muhājir relative, nor shall a non-Muhājir receive any share from the inheritance of a Muhājir Muslim. As obvious, this injunction was valid upto the time Makkah al-Mukarramah was still unconquered. After the Conquest of Makkah, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had himself declared: لاهجرة بعد الفتح (*lā hijrata ba'd al-fatḥ* : There is no *hijrah* after the Conquest). It means that after the Conquest of Makkah the obligation of Hijrah does not remain operative any more, and when the obligation of Hijrah itself ceases to be operative any more, the question of severence of relationships with those who did not migrate stands automatically terminated.

Therefore, most commentators have said that this injunction

stands abrogated by virtue of the Conquest of Makkah while, according to investigative scholars of the field, this injunction too is everlasting and unabrogated - but that it has changed under specific conditions. If conditions in which this injunction was sent at the time of the revelation of the Qur'ān were to reappear at some period of time or in some country, then, the same injunction will come into force once again.

To explain it further, it can be said that, before the Conquest of Makkah, every Muslim man and woman was obligated to migrate from Makkah as an absolute duty. In obedience to this injunction, most Muslims - with the exception of only a few - had migrated from Makkah to Madīnah. At that time, not migrating from Makkah had become a sign of not being a Muslim. Therefore, at that time, Islām as professed by a non-Muhājir was also taken to be doubtful and it was for this reason that mutual inheritance between Muhājir and non-Muhājir was severed.

Now, if the same conditions were to re-emerge in some country once again - that it becomes totally impossible to fulfill Islāmic obligations while living there - then, emigrating from that country will become obligatory once again, so much so that not emigrating under such conditions without a strong excuse, becomes a doubtless sign of disbelief, then, the same injunction shall still apply, that is, mutual inheritance between Muhājir and non-Muhājir shall not remain operative any more. This presentation, it is hoped, makes it clear that the injunction relating to the severence of mutual inheritance between Muhājir and non-Muhājir is really no separate injunction. In fact, it is the very same first injunction which describes the severence of inheritance between Muslim and non-Muslim. The only difference is that a non-muhājir in such a case was though deprived from the inheritance because of this sign of disbelief, yet he was not classed as a disbeliever just on the basis of this much sign of disbelief - unless, of course, one was to betray open, clear and decisive proof of one's Kufr or disbelief.

And perhaps, it is in view of this expedient consideration that yet another injunction relating to non-Muhājir Muslims has been mentioned at this place. This injunction specifies that, should they ask for help from Muhājir Muslims, then, it is necessary for Muhājir Muslims to help them - so that it becomes clear that they have not placed non-

Muhājir Muslims in the category of outright disbelievers, in fact, retained was their Islāmic right that they be helped when in need.

And since the background of the revelation of this verse is a particular Hijrah - that from Makkah to Madinah - while non-Muhājir Muslims were only those who had stayed back in Makkah threateningly surrounded by the disbelievers of Makkah, it is obvious that the help they sought could only be against the same disbelievers of Makkah. However, when the Holy Qur'ān ordered Muhājir Muslims to help them out, then, given a surface view of things, it could be deduced from here that helping them has been made necessary for Muslims against all peoples and under all conditions - even if, the people against whom help is sought already have a no-war pact with Muslims - although, doing justice and upholding pledges is a serious duty in Islām. Therefore, in this verse, an exempting rule was mentioned according to which, should non-Muhājir Muslims seek help from Muhājir Muslims against a people with whom Muslims already have a no-war pact, then, helping even brother Muslims against treaty-covered disbelievers is not permissible.

This was the essential meaning of the first two sentences. Now let us look at it in synchronization with the words. It is being said:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَهَاجَرُوا وَجَاهَدُوا بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنفُسِهِمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ آوَوا وَّنَصَرُوا أُولَٰئِكَ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ ، وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَلَمْ يُهَاجِرُوا مَا لَكُم مِّن وَلَايَتِهِم مِّن شَيْءٍ حَتَّىٰ يُهَاجِرُوا ،

that is: "Those who believed and those who emigrated (for the sake of Allah, leaving their homeland and relatives behind) and carried out Jihād in the way of Allah with their wealth and lives (by buying weapons and other war materials with their wealth and by staking their lives in the line of duty on the battlefield - which refers to the original Emigrants, the first among Muhājirs) and those who gave refuge and help (which refers to the Anṣār of Madīnah, the supporting residents of Madīnah, whereafter it was said about the two parties) --- those are friends to each other. (Then, it was said:) And those who did believe but did not emigrate, with them you have no friendship at all unless they emigrate.

At this place, the Holy Qur'ān has used the words: *Waliyy* and *Wilāyah* which mean friendship and close relations in the real sense. Ear-

ly Tafsīr authorities, Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās, Ḥasan, Qatadah, Mujāhid and others have said that *Wilāyah* at this place means *Wirathah* or inheritance while *Waliyy* means *Wārith* or inheritor. Nevertheless, some others have taken *Wilāyah* in the usual lexical sense, that is, friendship, help and support.

According to the first Tafsīr, the verse would mean that Muslim Muhājir and Anṣār shall be inheritors to each other. Their bond of inheritance shall not remain operative either with non-Muslims or with particular Muslims who did not emigrate. The first injunction, that is, severence of inheritance on the basis of difference in religion, was for ever and remained as such. But, as for the second injunction, the position was that after the Conquest of Makkah, when Hijrah was no more needed, the injunction of severence of inheritance between the categories of Muhājir and non-Muhājir also did not remain operative any more. From here, some Muslim jurists have deduced that the way difference in religion is a cause of severence of inheritance, similarly, the difference in homelands is also the cause of severence of inheritance. A detailed discussion on this subject appears in books of Islāmic Fiqh.

After that, it was said: وَإِنِ اسْتَنْصَرُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ فَعَلَيْكُمُ النَّصْرُ إِلَّا عَلَىٰ قَوْمٍ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُمْ مِيثَاقٌ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ (And if they seek your help in the matter of faith, then, you are bound to help except against a people who have a treaty between you and them. And Allah is watchful over what you do - 72). The sense of the statement is that people who have not migrated, relationship with them has though been terminated as far as inheritance is concerned, yet they are Muslims after all. If they seek help from Muhājir Muslims to safeguard their faith, then, to help them is obligatory on them. But, when doing so, Muhājir Muslims should not surrender rules of justice and their own fidelity to an existing treaty when a situation comes in which non-emigrating Muslims were to seek the help of Muhājir Muslims against a people with whom they already have a no-war pact. If so, even helping these Muslims against the peace pact party is not permissible.

A similar incident came to pass at the time of the Peace Treaty of Ḥudaibiyah. When the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم arrived at a peace arrangement with the disbelievers of Makkah and included in the terms of peace was the condition that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم would repatriate anyone who went to Madīnah thereafter. Just at the

time the peace treaty was being concluded, somehow there appeared Sayyidnā Abū Jandal رضی اللہ عنہ whom the disbelievers of Makkah had put in detention where he was being tortured in all sorts of ways. He presented himself in person before the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, told him how oppressed he had been and sought his help. Imagine this plaint was being made before none but him who had come to this world as the universal mercy. What this plaint from an oppressed Muslim would have done to his blessed heart is something everyone cannot realize easily. But, despite this empathy, he excused himself from helping him as bound by the injunction in the said verse, and let him go back.

His return in this manner was heart-rending for all Muslims present on the occasion. But, the blessed Prophet of Islām, guided by Divine words, was as if witnessing the welcome spectacle that the years of oppression were not going to last any longer and the reward of a few more days of patience was to be added to the destiny of Sayyidnā Abū Jandal رضی اللہ عنہ. Then Makkah will soon be conquered. Then all these problems were going to be all over. Still, at that time, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم acted in accordance with the command of the Qur'ān and preferred treaty obligations over the personal misfortune of Sayyidnā Abū Jandal رضی اللہ عنہ. This is the distinctive feature of the Sharī'ah of Islām which has made its adherents deserving recepients of victory, honour, and success which awaits them in the Hereafter. Otherwise, as observed commonly, world powers play games with treaties and pacts. They use them as weights and levers to make the weak cringe and the strong walk in trap. The game plan always stays in their hands. With the slightest expediency in sight, they would unleash a hundred interpretations and kill the treaty and begin looking for scapegoats to put the blame on.

Said in the second verse (73) was: وَالَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَآءُ بَعْضٍ (And those who disbelieve are friends to each other). The word: ولی (*waliyy*) used here, as stated earlier, carries a general sense included wherein is inheritance as well as the guardianship and patronage of affairs. Therefore, from this verse, we learn that disbelievers shall be considered inheritors to each other and the very law of the distribution of inheritance which is in force in their own religion shall be implemented as far as matters of their inheritance are concerned. In addition to

that, the guardian (*waliyy*) responsible for the upbringing of their orphaned children and for the marriage of their girls shall be from among them. In a nutshell, it means that, in family matters, the religious law of non-Muslims themselves shall stand duly protected in an Islāmic state.

At the end of the verse, it was said: إِلَّا تَفْعَلُوهُ تَكُنْ فِتْنَةٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَفَسَادٌ كَبِيرٌ (And if you will not do so, there shall be disorder on the earth, and a great corruption - 73).

This sentence is connected with all those injunctions mentioned a little earlier, for instance, (1) the Muhājir and the Anṣār should be friends to each other, which includes mutual help and support, as well as inheritance; (2) the Muhājir and non-Muhājir Muslims of that period of time should not consider themselves related to each other in terms of inheritance, but the doors of help and support should remain open subject to relevant conditions; (3) the disbelievers were caretakers (*waliyy*) of each other, therefore, Muslims should not interfere with their law of guardianship and inheritance in any way.

Thereafter the text says if things were not done according to these injunctions, there shall be disorder and corruption on the earth. Perhaps, this warning has been given in view of the importance of the injunctions described here for they were based on major principles of equity, justice and public peace. The related verses make it amply clear that the way mutual help, support and inheritance depend on lineal bond - in the same manner, religious bond has its own importance in this matter. In fact, religious bond has precedence over lineal bond. This is the reason why a Kāfir (disbeliever) cannot inherit from a Muslim and a Muslim cannot inherit from a Kāfir - even though, they be fathers or sons or brothers by lineage. Along with it, in order to block religious prejudice and pagan partisanship, instructions were given that, no doubt, the religious bond is so formidable, yet standing by the terms of a treaty comes first and is more preferable. Contravention of the terms of a treaty is not permissible under the heat of religious partisanship. Similarly, also given was the instruction that the disbelievers are responsible for each other as guardians and inheritors, therefore, no interference should be made in their personal law of guardianship and inheritance. On the surface, these look like a few subsidiary injunctions, but they are, in reality, comprehensive basic

principles of equity and justice for all which guarantee world peace. This is the reason why, at this place, following the description of these injunctions, warning has been given in words which have not been generally used in the case of other injunctions: 'If you will not do so, there shall be disorder and corruption on the earth.' Also given within these words is a hint that these injunctions have an effectiveness of their own in checking disorder and corruption.

Mentioned in the third verse (74) are words of praise for the Ṣaḥābah who emigrated from Makkah and for the Anṣār of Madīnah who helped them, as well as the attestation to their being true Muslims and the promise of forgiveness and respectable provision made to them. When it was said: أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ حَقًّا (those are the believers in truth), the hint given was in the direction that those who did not migrate were though Muslims, but their Islām was neither perfect, nor certain - because there existed the probability that they may really be hypocrites professing Islām only outwardly. After that, it was said: لَهُم مَّغْفِرَةٌ (For them there is forgiveness) - as it has been explained in sound (*Ṣaḥīḥ*) Aḥādīth: . الْإِسْلَامُ يَهْدِمُ مَا كَانَ قَبْلَهُ (Islām demolishes what was before it) and: وَالْهِجْرَةُ تَهْدِمُ مَا كَانَ قَبْلَهَا (Hijrah razes what was before it). In short, this means that the act of becoming a Muslim goes on to demolish the entire edifice of past sins. Similarly, the making of Hijrah razes all past sins.

Described in the fourth verse (75) is the injunction concerning different categories of Muhājirīn (Muhājirs, emigrants). It says: Though, some of them are the very first among Muhājirīn - those who migrated earlier than the Peace Treaty of Ḥudaibiyah. Then, there is a second category of Muhājirs - those who migrated after the Peace Treaty of Ḥudaibiyah and, because of this, there will be difference in the ranks they are to have in the Hereafter, but regarding injunctions of this mortal world, they too shall be covered by the injunction governing the first category of Muhājirīn in that they are inheritors to each other. Therefore, addressing the first among the Muhājirīn, it was said: فَأُولَٰئِكَ مِنكُمْ (then, they are one of you - 75). It means that these Muhājirīn of the second category are also a part of your group. Hence, under injunctions governing inheritance, they are governed by rules which apply to Muhājirīn in general.

This is the very last verse of Sūrah Al-Anfāl. Given at the end of it

is a comprehensive regulation of the law of inheritance through which stood abrogated what was an interim injunction promulgated during the early period of Hijrah mentioned in the preceding verses about having the Muhājirin and Anṣār become inheritors to each other through an arrangement of brotherhood between them. The words of the last verse which abrogated this temporary law of inheritance are: وَاُولُوا الْاَرْحَامِ بَعْضُهُمْ اَوْلٰى بِبَعْضٍ فِىْ كِتٰبِ اللّٰهِ (As for the womb-relatives, some of them are closer to some as in the Book of Allah -75). Let us study them in a greater detail

In Arabic, the word: اولو (*ulu*) is used to carry the sense of being the possessor, owner, person or people of certain entitlement. In absence of an exact counterpart in English, it is usually translated as 'men of' or 'people of ', as in: 'people of wisdom' for: اولو العقل (*ulu 'l-'aql*) and 'people of authority' for: اولو الامر (*ulu 'l-amr*). Therefore, the word: اولو الارحام (*ulu 'l--arḥām*) means the people of *arḥām* or wombs. *Arḥām* is the plural of *raḥim* which is basically the name of the part of the body where the creative process of the human child takes place and since the bond of relationship is established via the association of *raḥim* (رحم), therefore, اولوالارحام (*ulu 'l-arḥām* : translated literally as womb-relatives) is used in the sense of relatives.

The meaning of the verse is that, though a universal bond of brotherhood binds all Muslims to each other, because of which, if needed, helping and supporting each other becomes obligatory, and that they also inherit from each other. But, Muslims who are bound by mutual relationship have precedence over other Muslims. The phrase: فِىْ كِتٰبِ اللّٰهِ (*fī Kitābillah*: translated literally 'as in the Book of Allah - 75') at this place has been used in the sense of: فِىْ حُكْمِ اللّٰهِ (*fī ḥukmi 'l-lāh*) which means that Allah Ta'ālā has made this law through His special command.

The rule of procedure given by this verse is that the distribution of inheritance should be on the criterion of relationship and the word: اولوالارحام (*ulu 'l-arḥām*) is applied to relatives in an absolute sense. Out of these, the shares of particular relatives have already been determined by the Holy Qur'ān in Sūrah al-Nisā'. These are called *Aṣḥāb al-Furūḍ* or *Dhawi al-Furūḍ* in the terminology of the Law of Inheritance. Popularly referred to as "Qur'ānic heirs," they mean those who are entitled to a statutory share in the inheritance of a deceased person. Any prop-

erty which remains, after the determined shares have been given, should be distributed over other relatives as provided in this verse. Then, it is also evident that it is not possible for anyone to distribute any property over all relatives because some kind of a distant relationship definitely exists among human beings of the whole world - for all of them owe their fact of birth to but one father and mother, Sayyidnā Ādam and Sayyidah Ḥawwā عليهم السلام (Ādam and Eve). Therefore, the only practical way of distributing inheritance over relatives can be that, by giving close relatives precedence over those distant, the benchmark of the near should be used to exclude the distant. A detailed description of this is present in the Aḥādīth of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم which stipulate that, after having given the shares of *Dhawi al-Furūḍ* (Qur'ānic heirs), whatever remains should be given to the *'Aṣbāt* (agnates or paternal relatives) of the deceased person, degree-wise, that is, by giving precedence to the near agnate (*'aṣbah*) over the distant one, the benchmark of the near should be used to exclude the distant.

And in case, there is no one alive from among the agnates (*'aṣbāt*), then, distribution has to be made over rest of the relatives.

In addition to *'aṣbāt* or agnates, there are a host of other relatives. It is for them that the word: *Dhawi al-Arḥām* has been particularized in the technical terminology of the science of inheritance and distribution. But, this terminology has found currency in a later period. In the Holy Qur'ān, the word: أُولُو الْأَرْحَامِ (*ulu 'l-arḥām* : womb-relatives), according to its lexical connotation, covers all relatives included wherein are *Dhawi al-Furūḍ* (Qur'ānic heirs), *'Aṣbāt* (agnates) and *Dhawi al-Arḥām* (womb-relatives) in a general sense.

Then, some details about the subject have been covered in Sūrah al-Nisā' where Allah Ta'ālā has Himself determined the shares of particular relatives and which are known as *Dhawi al-Furūḍ* in the terminology of Inheritance. As for the rest, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said:

الحقوا الفرائض باهلها فما بقى فهو لاولى رجل ذكر . (البخارى)

It means: After giving shares to those identified in the Qur'ān, that which remains is to be given to males nearer to the deceased. (al-Bukhārī)

They are known as *'Aṣbāt* (agnates) in the terminology of inheritance. If there be no one from among the *'aṣbāt* (agnates) of the deceased person, then, according to the saying of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, other relatives get it. These relatives are technically known as *Dhawi 'l-Arḥām* (womb-relatives) such as, maternal uncle or maternal aunt and others.

The last sentence of this last verse of Sūrah Al-Anfāl has abrogated the law of Islāmic inheritance mentioned in verses earlier to this. According to that law, mutual inheritance used to be in force among the Muhājirīn and Anṣār, even though there be no lenial kinship between them. It was abrogated because it was an emergency-oriented injunction given during the initial period of Hijrah.

Sūrah Al-Anfāl ends here. May Allāh Ta'ālā give us all the *Taufīq* of understanding it and acting in accordance with it.

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Praised is Allah with whose help Sūrah al-'Anfāl comes to its conclusion the night of Thursday, 22nd of Jumada II, Hijrah Year 1381. I seek from Allah Ta'ālā His *Taufīq* and help in the *Tafsīr* of Sūrah al-Taubah and for Allah is all praise from its beginning to its end --- Muḥammad Shafī, may he be forgiven.

A review of it was completed on the day of Jumu'ah, 19th of Jumāda I, Hijrah Year 1390 and praised be Allah for that.

Sūrah Al-Taubah

(Repentance)

Sūrah al-Taubah is Madanī and it has one hundred and twenty nine verses and sixteen sections

Verses 1 – 5

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

بَرَآءَةٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖٓ اِلَى الَّذِيْنَ عٰهَدْتُّمْ مِّنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ ﴿١﴾ فَسِيْحُوْا فِى الْاَرْضِ اَرْبَعَةَ اَشْهُرٍ وَّاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّكُمْ غَيْرُ مُعْجِزِى اللّٰهِ ۙ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ مُخْزِى الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿٢﴾ وَاَذَانٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖٓ اِلَى النَّاسِ يَوْمَ الْحَجِّ الْاَكْبَرِ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ بَرِىْٓءٌ مِّنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ ۙ وَرَسُوْلُهٗ ط فَاِنْ تُبْتُمْ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ ج وَاِنْ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ فَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّكُمْ غَيْرُ مُعْجِزِى اللّٰهِ ط وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا بِعَذَابٍ اَلِيْمٍ ﴿٣﴾ اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ عٰهَدْتُّمْ مِّنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَنْقُصُوْكُمْ شَيْـًٔا وَّلَمْ يُظَاهِرُوْا عَلَيْكُمْ اَحَدًا فَاَتِمُّوْٓا اِلَيْهِمْ عَهْدَهُمْ اِلٰى مُدَّتِهِمْ ط اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿٤﴾ فَاِذَا انْسَلَخَ الْاَشْهُرُ الْحُرُمُ فَاقْتُلُوا الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ حَيْثُ وَجَدْتُّمُوْهُمْ وَخُذُوْهُمْ وَاحْصُرُوْهُمْ وَاقْعُدُوْا لَهُمْ كُلَّ مَرْصَدٍ ج فَاِنْ تَابُوْا وَاَقَامُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتَوُا الزَّكٰوةَ فَخَلُّوْا سَبِيْلَهُمْ ط اِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿٥﴾

Here is a withdrawal (proclaimed) by Allah and His Messenger against the Mushriks* with whom you have a treaty. [1]

So, move in the land freely for four months, and be sure

* Mushriks, anglicized plural of *mushrik*, stands for *al-mushrikīn* – those who associate partners with Allah.

that you can never defeat Allah and that Allah is about to disgrace the disbelievers. [2]

And here is an announcement, from Allah and His Messenger to the people on the day of the greater Ḥajj, that Allah is free from (any commitment to) the Mushriks, and so is His Messenger. Now, if your repent, it is good for you. And if you turn away, then be sure that you can never defeat Allah. And give those who disbelieve the 'good' news of a painful punishment. [3] **Except those of the Mushriks with whom you have a treaty, and they abated nothing of your rights and backed no one against you, so then, fulfill the treaty with them up to their term. Surely, Allah loves the God-fearing.** [4]

So, when the sacred months expire, kill the Mushriks wherever you find them. And catch them and besiege them and sit in ambush for them everywhere. Then, if they repent and establish Ṣalāh and pay Zakāh, leave their way. Surely, Allah is most Forgiving, Very Merciful. [5]

Commentary

Now begins Sūrah Al-Barā'ah which is also called Sūrah Al-Taubah (as written; also Sūrah At-Taubah as pronounced). It is called Barā'ah for the reason that it mentions *barā'ah* or disengagement with the consequences of what the *kuffār* (disbelievers) do. Then, it is also called Taubah because it announces that the repentance of Muslims has been accepted. (Maẓharī). It is a feature of this Sūrah that '*bismillāh*' (بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ: *Bismillāhir-Raḥmānir-Raḥīm*: With the name of Allah, the [All-] Merciful, the Very Merciful) is not written in the copies of the Qur'ān when the Sūrah begins. However, Bismillāh is written at the head of all Sūrahs of the Qur'ān – the sole exception being that of Sūrah Al-Taubah. Before we find out the relevant reason, let us bear in mind that the Holy Qur'ān was revealed bit by bit during the period of twenty three years. The verses of a Sūrah were revealed at different times. When Sayyidnā Jibrā'īl would come with a revelation, he would also point out to the Divinely intended arrangement of each revealed verse, explaining that it should be placed in such and such Sūrah after such and such 'Āyah (verse). It was in accordance with this Divinely intended arrangement that the Holy Prophet ﷺ would have scribes of the revelation write them up.

And when, at the end of a Sūrah, the next was to begin, '*Bismillāhir-Raḥmānir-Raḥīm*' would be revealed before the next actually did – which made it easy to understand that the previous Sūrah had concluded and another Sūrah was beginning. All Sūrahs of the Holy Qur'ān were revealed in that manner. Sūrah Al-Taubah is, in terms of the order of revelation, among one of the very last Sūrahs. When it began, neither was Bismillāh revealed as customary, nor did the Holy Prophet ﷺ instruct the scribe of the revelation to do that. So, this was how things stood when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم passed away.

When Sayyidnā 'Uthmān al-Ghanī رضى الله عنه arranged the Holy Qur'ān in the form of a book during the period of his Caliphate, Bismillāh was not there at the beginning of Sūrah Al-Taubah, an arrangement contrary to that of the rest of Sūrahs. Therefore, a doubt rose – perhaps, this is not an independent Sūrah, or may as well be a part of some other Sūrah. Now, they thought, if this happens to be a part of some other Sūrah, which Sūrah is that? In terms of its subjects, Sūrah Al-Anfāl seemed to fit the slot.

Also, as narrated by Sayyidnā 'Uthman رضى الله عنه elsewhere, 'during the blessed period of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, both these Sūrahs were called: قرينتين (*qarīnatayn*: the two connected ones)'. (Maẓharī). Therefore, it was placed after Sūrah Al-Anfāl. This precaution was taken for the reason that, should it be a part of another Sūrah, it must stay with it. But, it was also probable that it may be a separate and independent Sūrah. Therefore, when writing, a particular format was adopted whereby some space was left open at the end of Sūrah Al-Anfāl and before the beginning of Sūrah Al-Taubah – similar to the spot meant for writing Bismillāh at the head of other Sūrahs.

The precise reason why Bismillāh was not written at the beginning of Sūrah Al-Barā'ah or Al-Taubah has been reported from the great compiler of the revealed text of the Qur'ān, Saiyyidnā 'Uthmān رضى الله عنه himself. At that time, he was answering a question posed by Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās, the Saḥābī and Mufassir (exegete) of the Qur'ān, which appears in Abū Dāwūd, An-Nasā'i, the Musnād of Aḥmad and Tirmidhī. In that question, Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās had also asked Sayyidnā 'Uthmān about the order in which the Sūrahs of the Qur'ān have been arranged. Giving an example, he pointed out that placed

first were the larger Sūrahs that have more than hundred verses. Technically, they are called مئين (*mi'īn*: hundreds). After that, there are the large Sūrahs that have less than hundred verses. They are called مثاني (*mathānī*: the oft-repeated ones). Placed thereafter were smaller Sūrahs that are called مفصلات (*mufaṣṣalāt*: the Surahs starting from "Qāf" [50] to the end of the Qur'ān [114]). The order of this very arrangement necessitated that Sūrah Al-Taubah should be placed before Sūrah Al-Anfāl – because the verses carried by Sūrah Al-Taubah are more than one hundred while those of Sūrah Al-Anfāl are less than one hundred. The first seven long Sūrahs called سبع طوال (*sab' ṭiwal*: the seven long ones) also show that the placement of Sūrah Al-Taubah before Sūrah Al-Anfāl is naturally more appropriate there too. After having stated the existing position, Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضی الله عنه asked about the consideration that had led to a contrary arrangement. Sayyidnā 'Uthmān رضی الله عنه said: 'Correct. But, the Qur'ān was serious matter. Precaution demanded that we do what we did – because, in case Sūrah Al-Taubah is not taken as an independent Sūrah, instead, is taken as a part of Sūrah Al-Anfāl, it will be obvious that the verses of Sūrah Al-Anfāl have been revealed earlier and those of Sūrah Al-Taubah after that. Given this situation, it is not permissible to give precedence to the verses of the latter over the verses of Sūrah Al-Anfāl without the sanction of *Waḥy* (revelation). And since we did not find any such instruction in the *Waḥy*, therefore, Sūrah Al-Anfāl was made to precede and Sūrah Al-Taubah, to succeed.'

From these precise details we learn that the reason for not writing Bismillāh at the beginning of Sūrah Al-Taubah lies in the probability that Sūrah Al-Taubah may not be an independent Sūrah, instead, be a part of Sūrah Al-Anfāl. Given this probability, writing Bismillāh at this place shall be as incorrect as someone were to write Bismillāh in the middle of any Sūrah of the Qur'ān.

On this basis, Muslim jurists have said that a person who has already been reciting Sūrah Al-Anfāl from above and is going to begin Sūrah Al-Taubah, then, he or she should not recite *Bismillāh*. But, a person who is starting his or her *tilāwah* (recitation of the Qur'ān) from the beginning, or from somewhere in the middle, of this very Sūrah should say: بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ (*Bismillāhir-Raḥmānir-Raḥīm*) and then begin his or her recitation. Some people who do not know rules think

that the recitation of Bismillāh while reciting Sūrah Al-Taubah is not permissible under any condition. This is a mistaken notion. Then, they would make another mistake on top of that. Instead of reciting Bismillāh, they would recite: أَعُوْذُ بِاللّٰهِ مِنَ النَّارِ (I seek the protection of Allah from the Fire) when initiating or beginning from it. For this, there is no proof from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his Companions.

Then, there is the statement of Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنه reported in a narrative from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه. It says, 'the reason for not writing Bismillāh at the beginning of Sūrah Barā'ah (Al-Taubah) is that بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ (*Bismillāhir-Raḥmānir-Raḥīm*) is an assurance of protection, but in Sūrah Al-Barā'ah, this assurance of protection and the pledge of peace given to disbelievers has been terminated.' This statement should be taken as a refinement of approach that does not go against the real cause. And the real cause is nothing but that Bismillāh was not written on the basis of the probability that Sūrah Al-Anfāl and Sūrah Al-Taubah may be one. Then, there could be yet another subtle point about why it was not written. This Sūrah proclaims freedom from any responsibility for the disbelievers and announces the withdrawal of peace and protection from those people – which is not fit for Bismillāh. Therefore, in terms of the design of creation, particular causes were generated here so that Bismillāh was not to be written at this place.

To understand the present verses of Sūrah Al-Taubah fully, it is necessary to know some events that became the cause of the revelation of these verses. Therefore, given here first are consolidated details of the relevant events:

1. As a whole, Sūrah Al-Taubah carries the description of some battles, events related to them, and many injunctions and rulings emerging therefrom – for example, the termination of pacts with all tribes of Arabia, the Conquest of Makkah, the battles of Ḥunain and Tabūk. Out of these events, first came the Conquest of Makkah in Hijrah year 8, then came the battle of Ḥunain in the same year, then the battle of Tabūk in Rajab of Hijrah year 9. Finally came the announcement terminating pacts with all tribes of Arabia in the month of Dhu al-Ḥijjah, Hijrah year 9.

2. A summary of subjects concerning the repudiation of treaties mentioned in these verses shows that it was in the Hijrah year 6 that

the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم started with the intention of 'Umrah but the Quraysh blocked their entry into Makkah. Then came the peace treaty between them at Ḥudaibiyah. The time frame of this treaty, as reported in Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī, was ten years. In Makkah, there were other tribes too, other than the Quraysh. An article was included in the peace treaty to cover them. It allowed a tribe, from out of the tribes other than the Quraysh, to become allies to the Quraysh and be with them, if they chose to do so; and whoever chose to become the ally of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and be with him was allowed to do that. So, the tribe of Khuzā'ah chose to become an ally of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and went with him, while the tribe of Banū Bakr chose to go with the Quraysh. According to the treaty, it was necessary that within ten years there shall be no internecine war, nor shall any aggressor be helped from any side. And the tribe that was an ally of a party to the treaty shall be considered as governed by the same rule that governed the party. In other words, launching an attack on it or helping the aggressor was to be taken as a contravention of the treaty.

This treaty was signed in the Hijrah year 6. In Hijrah year 7, according to this treaty, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his Companions left for Makkah to perform the 'Umrah they had missed earlier (*'Umrah al-qaḍā'*). After staying there for three days, he returned as stipulated in the treaty. Until then, no party had acted against the peace treaty in any way.

After that, it was within a period of five or six months when the tribe of Banū Bakr mounted a nightly ambush against the tribe of Banū Khuzā'ah. Thinking that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was far away and things were happening during the night which would make it difficult for the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to find out details of what had actually happened, the Quraysh too came to the assistance of Banāu Bakr by providing weapons and men to them.

Events as they transpired and conditions as they prevailed made the Quraysh too accept that the treaty of peace entered into at Ḥudaibiyah – requiring a ten-year moratorium on internecine wars – was broken.

The tribe of Banū Khuzā'ah, being an ally of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, informed him about this event. When he learnt about this breach of trust committed by the Quraysh, he started making secret

preparations for war against them.

During their encounters at Badr, 'Uḥud and Aḥzāb, the Quraysh had realized that some unseen Divine power was at work in favor of Muslims. They were no more intoxicated with their muscle and might. Now that they had broken their solemn pledge, the danger of a war likely to be initiated by Muslims had become all too obvious to them. The likelihood became much stronger after the report of their breach of trust reached the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and he chose to observe a total silence about the matter. Left with no choice, they asked Abū Sufyān to go to Madīnah personally, assess the situation there and should he sense a war action being initiated by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, he should offer his apologies on what had happened in the past and have the treaty renewed for the future.

When Abū Sufyān reached Madīnah, he did notice some indicators of war preparations being made by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. This increased his concerns. He went out to see prominent Ṣaḥābah of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم one by one so that they would recommend his case and help him have the treaty renewed. But, all of them refused to do so in view of their unpleasant past and present dealings. Consequently, Abū Sufyān returned empty-handed. The Quraysh of Makkah were hit by panic.

At the other end, as reported in Bidāyah and Ibn Kathīr, it was on Ramaḍān 10, Hijrah year 8 when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم marched out from Madīnah with a large force of his noble Companions in order to attack Makkah. Ultimately, Makkah was conquered.

Conquest of Makkah: Vanquished enemies were treated nobly

At the time of the Conquest, there were many Quraysh chiefs who believed in the veracity of Islām earlier too, but they could not express themselves freely due to peer pressure in the society. Now that they had their opportunity, they embraced Islām. As for those who chose to stick to their time-worn creed of disbelief even at that hour, they too – with the exception of some individuals – were granted amnesty by the Holy Prophet ﷺ. This was an unusual demonstration of morals, prophetic and miraculous, something others could not even dream of. He ignored all their hostilities and injustices in the past and simply said: 'Today, I say to you exactly what was said by Yusuf عليه السلام to his brothers at the time when they had reached him in Egypt with their

parents: لَا تَثْرِيبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْيَوْمَ (This day, there is no blame on you).' It means that, for him, taking a revenge for the past injustices inflicted by them or seeking to punish them in some way was unimaginable, in fact, he did not consider it appropriate even to blame them for anything that happened in the past.

Rules for four kinds of Mushriks at the time of the Conquest of Makkah

So then, Makkah came under the control of Muslims. Non-Muslims living in and around Makkah were given full protection of their lives and properties. But, that was a time when the existing status of these non-Muslims was different. One kind of people among them was of those who were a party to the peace treaty of Ḥudaibiyah which they themselves broke and which by itself became the cause of the Conquest of Makkah. Then, there was another set of people with whom a peace treaty was signed for a specified period of time and they continued abiding by this treaty, such as the two tribes of Banū Kinānah called Banū Ḍamurah and Banū Mudlaj. The peace treaty with them was for a specified period of time and, at the time of the revelation of Sūrah Al-Barā'ah (Al-Taubah) as stated by Khāzin, they had another nine months left for their period of treaty to expire.

Thirdly, there were people with whom a peace treaty was concluded without any set time limit. Fourthly, there were those with whom no treaty existed.

The unsavory experience of all treaties entered into by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم with disbelievers or the People of the Book (Jews and Christians) was that they flouted these openly and secretly always conspiring with enemies to hurt him and his Muslim adherents as much as they could. Therefore, led by his own long experience and Divinely inspired indicators, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had made up his mind not to enter into any peace treaty with any of these people and that the Arabian Peninsula was to be particularized with Muslims only as a bastion of Islām. This required a proclamation soon after the takeover of Makkah and the Arabian Peninsula ordering non-Muslims to leave and go somewhere else. But, in view of Islām's principle of justice, equity and humane dealing as well as under the universal mercy of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم himself, doing something like that without allowing a suitable time limit was not considered appropriate.

Therefore, at the beginning of Sūrah Al-Barā'ah (Al-Taubah), separate injunctions were revealed that covered the four kinds of non-Muslim groups.

The first such group was that of the Quraysh of Makkah who had themselves broken the treaty of Ḥudaibiyah. Now, they deserved no extra respite. But, since this was the period of 'sacred months' during which fighting and killing was forbidden by Allah, therefore, the injunction which covers them appears in the fifth verse of Sūrah Al-Taubah, that is, فَإِذَا انْسَلَخَ الْأَشْهُرُ الْحُرُمُ فَاقْتُلُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ حَيْثُ وَجَدْتُمُوهُمْ (So, when the sacred months expire, kill the Mushriks wherever you find them. And catch them and besiege them and sit in ambush for them everywhere. Then, if they repent and establish *ṣalāh* and pay *zakāh*, leave their way. Surely, Allah is most Forgiving, Very Merciful – 9:5). It means that they had, though, forfeited all their rights by breaking the treaty obligations, but observing the sanctity of the 'sacred months' was after all necessary, therefore, they should either leave the Arabian Peninsula soon after the 'sacred months' expire, or embrace Islām, or be prepared to face war.

Then, there was the second group with whom a peace treaty was made for a specified period of time and they had abided by it. The injunction about them was given in the fourth verse of Sūrah Al-Taubah:

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ عَاهَدْتُمْ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَنْقُصُوكُمْ شَيْئًا وَلَمْ يُظَاهِرُوا عَلَيْكُمْ أَحَدًا فَأَتِمُّوا إِلَيْهِمْ عَهْدَهُمْ إِلَىٰ مُدَّتِهِمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ

Except those of the Mushriks with whom you have a treaty, and they have abated nothing of your rights and backed no one against you, so then, fulfill the treaty with them up to their term. Surely, Allah loves the God-fearing – (9:4).

This injunction pertained to Banū Ḍamurah and Banū Mudlaj as a result of which they were allowed a respite of nine months.

As for the third and the fourth group, only one injunction was revealed to cover both. It has been mentioned in the first and the second verse of Sūrah Al-Taubah as follows:

بَرَاءَةٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ إِلَى الَّذِينَ عَاهَدْتُمْ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ۝ فَسِيحُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ أَرْبَعَةَ أَشْهُرٍ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّكُمْ غَيْرُ مُعْجِزِي اللَّهِ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ مُخْزِي الْكَافِرِينَ

Here is a withdrawal [proclaimed] by Allah and His Messen-

> ger against those of the Mushriks with whom you have a treaty. So, move in the land freely for four months, and be sure that you can never defeat Allah and that Allah is about to disgrace the disbelievers – (9: 1,2).

Thus, according to the first two verses, all those who were covered by some treaty without a fixed time limit, or those with whom there was no treaty, were allowed a respite of four months.

And according to the fourth verse, those who had a treaty for a specified period of time received a respite until it expired and, according to the fifth verse, the Mushriks of Makkah got their respite until the 'sacred months' expired.

The generosity of giving respite to disbelievers even after treaties with them had expired

It was stipulated that these injunctions shall come into force and the period of respite shall start from the time the relevant information has been promulgated throughout the Arabian Peninsula. According to the arrangement made for this purpose, the public proclamation was to be made in the great gathering of the Ḥajj of the Hijrah year 9 at Minā and 'Arafāt. This finds mention in the third and fourth verses of Sūrah Al-Taubah as follows:

وَاَذَانٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖٓ اِلَى النَّاسِ يَوْمَ الْحَجِّ الْاَكْبَرِ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ بَرِيْٓءٌ مِّنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ وَرَسُوْلُهٗ فَاِنْ تُبْتُمْ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ وَاِنْ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ فَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّكُمْ غَيْرُ مُعْجِزِى اللّٰهِ، وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا بِعَذَابٍ اَلِيْمٍ .

> And here is an announcement, from Allah and His Messenger to the people on the day of the greater Ḥajj, that Allah is free from [any commitment to] the Mushriks, and so is His Messenger. Now, if you repent, it is good for you. And if you turn away, then be sure that you can never defeat Allah. And give those who disbelieve the 'good' news of a painful punishment – (9:3,4).

When abrogating a treaty with disbelievers, taking any action against them without prior public announcement is not correct

So, in order to implement this Divine injunction, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم sent Sayyidnā Abū Bakr and Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنهما to the Hajj of the Hijrah year 9 at Makkah al-Mukarramah and had

them make this proclamation before a gathering of all tribes of Arabia on the plains of 'Arafāt and Minā. It was all too obvious that this injunction would become widely known through the medium of that great gathering all over Arabia. However, as a matter of added precaution, he had this proclamation particularly made in distant Yemen through Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنه.

After this public proclamation, the situation was that the first group, that is, the disbelievers of Makkah had to leave the limits of the state by the end of the 'sacred months,' that is, the end of the month of Muḥarram of the Hijrah year 10. Similarly, the deadline for the second group was Ramaḍān of the Hijrah year 10; and that of the third and fourth groups was the tenth of Rabī' ath-Thānī of the Hijrah year 10. Any contravention of this executive order would have rendered the offender liable to face an armed confrontation. Under this arrangement, by the time of Ḥajj next year, no disbeliever was to remain within state limits. This will appear in verse 28 of Sūrah Al-Taubah where it has been said: فَلَا يَقْرَبُوا الْمَسْجِدَ الْحَرَامَ بَعْدَ عَامِهِمْ هٰذَا (so, let them not come near *Al-masjid-al-ḥarām* after this year of theirs). And the saying of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in Ḥadīth: لايحجن بعد العام مشرك (The disbelievers shall not perform Ḥajj after this year) means precisely this.

Up to this point, given here was an explanation of the first verses of Sūrah Al-Taubah in the light of corresponding events. Now, some relevant point that emerge from these verses are being discussed below.

What do these five verses teach?

1. First of all, soon after the Conquest of Makkah, the general amnesty granted by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to the Quraysh of Makkah, and to other enemy tribes, taught Muslims a practical lesson in high morals. The lesson was: if they overpower an enemy who stands helpless before them, they should not seek revenge from that enemy for his past hostilities. Rather than do something like that, they should actually demonstrate the best of Islāmic morals by being generous and forgiving to their enemies. Though, acting in this manner may require a certain trampling over their natural feelings, still such a conduct is full of great advantages.

(A) To begin with, it can be said that revenge does help one take out anger, at least temporarily – which may even give one a sense of

personal relief – yet, this sense of relief or comfort is transitory. Then, as compared with it, the pleasure of Allah Ta'ālā and the high ranks of Paradise one is going to get are far more and are for ever in all respects. Consequently, reason demands that one should prefer what is everlasting to what is temporary.

(B) Then, there is this act of suppressing one's angry emotions after having overpowered the enemy. This clearly proves that the battle fought by these people had no selfish motive behind it. The only motive they had was fighting in the way of Allah – and this great objective is what draws the decisive line between the Jihād of Islām and the wars of common kings and rulers of the world, and what also lays bare the difference in Jihād and rotten aggression. Thus, the truth is that a war waged for Allah to implement His injunctions shall be what Jihād is, otherwise it shall remain a high-handed exercise in disorder.

(C) The third benefit yielded by this conduct comes naturally. When the overpowered enemy observes the high morals of the victors, he is likely to be drawn towards Islām and Muslims, something which is bound to lead him on to the path of his own success in life – and this is the real objective of Jihād.

Forgiving disbelievers never means lack of vigilance against any impending harm from them

2. The second ruling which has been deduced from these verses is that forgiveness and generosity do not mean that one should become negligent about self-protection against the evil designs of enemies by giving them free rein to go ahead and keep causing loss and injury to their forgivers. No doubt, forgiveness and generosity are in order, but along with these, commonsense demands that one should take lesson from past experience and restructure the pattern of life ahead by blocking all holes and crevices through which one could come within the range of enemy hostility. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: لايلدغ المرء من جحر واحد مرتين (One is not bitten twice from the same hole) meaning that a person does not put his hand twice in the same hole from which a poisonous reptile had bitten him.

The Qur'ānic proclamation of the withdrawal of Hijrah year 9 and the ensuing instructions given to the Mushriks that they should vacate the environs of the Sacred Mosque peacefully within the period of respite allowed are proofs of this wise strategy.

3. The initial verses of Sūrah Al-Taubah also tell us that forcing weak people to leave a place without reasonable notice of evacuation, or attacking them without warning is cowardly, and very ignoble indeed. Whenever such an action has to be taken, it is necessary to make a public announcement first so that the affected people, who do not accept the law of the land, may get the time to go wherever they wished, freely and conveniently. This becomes clear through the general proclamation of the Hijrah year 9 as mentioned in the cited verses and as demonstrated by the legal respite granted to all affected groups.

4. The fourth ruling emerging from the cited verses tells us that, in case there is the need to annul a treaty of peace already made – which is permitted subject to some conditions – it is far better to allow the treaty to remain valid until it expires automatically. This has been commanded in the fourth verse of Sūrah Al-Taubah where Muslims were required to fulfill their treaty obligations to the tribes of Banū Ḍamurah and Banū Mudlaj for the remaining nine months.

5. The fifth ruling from the cited verses tells us about the standard Muslim attitude towards the enemies of Islām. When confronted with enemies, Muslims should always keep in mind that they are no enemy to them personally. The truth of the matter is that they are opposed to their disbelief, which is actually the cause of their own loss in the present world as well as in the Hereafter. As for the opposition of Muslims to them, that too is really based on good wishes for them. Therefore, Muslims should never abandon the opportunity to give good counsel to them, whether in war or peace. This theme appears in these verses repeatedly. It promises real prosperity for them in this world and in the world to come, only if they were to rescind their thinking. The text does not leave it at that. It also warns them of the consequences: if they refused to repent and correct, they would not only be destroyed and killed in the present world but, they would also not escape their punishment even after death. It is interesting that, along with the proclamation of withdrawal in these verses, the strain of sympathetic insistence also continues.

6. The sixth ruling comes out from the fourth verse where Muslims have been prompted to fulfill their pledge right through the end until the term of the peace treaty expired. Immediately thereafter, the verse has been concluded with the sentence: إِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ (Surely, Allah loves

the God-fearing). This gives a clear hint to the advice that Muslims should observe utmost precaution in fulfilling the pledge they have given. They should never look for lame excuses and far-fetched interpretations only to find a way to contravene treaty obligations, as done by nations at large.

7. Details as they appear in the fifth verse carry the seventh ruling. When war in defense of a correct objective breaks out against any power, all available combat resources should be used fully and conclusively. That is a time when showing mercy and appeasement would be showing cowardice.

From the same fifth verse comes the eighth ruling, that is, trust in a non-Muslim who has become a Muslim depends on three things. (A) Taubah (repentance) over disbelief in the past, (B) the establishing of Ṣalāh and (C) the paying of Zakāh as due. Until these three conditions have been implemented practically, the option of war will not be withdrawn simply on the basis that someone has recited the Kalimah of Islām. When after the passing away of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, some people refused to pay Zakāh, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه had declared a Jihād against them. On that occasion, by referring to this very verse in support of his action, he was able to convince and satisfy all Companions.

8. The ninth question in these verses concerns the meaning of the expression: يَوْمَ الْحَجِّ الْاَكْبَرِ (*yaumu 'l-ḥajju 'l-akbar*: The day of the great *ḥajj*). The sayings of early commentators differ in this matter. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās, Sayyidnā 'Umar, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar, and Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Zubayr رضى الله عنهم اجمعين say that 'the day of the greater *ḥajj*' means 'the day of 'Arafah' because the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said: الحج عرفة ('Arafah is the Ḥajj). (Abu Dāwūd, Tirmidhī)

9. Some others have said that it signifies: يوم النحر (*yaumu 'n-naḥr*: the day of sacrifice), that is, the tenth of Dhu al-ḥijjah. In order to accommodate all these sayings, Sufyān ath-Thawrī and other authorities have said that all five days of the Ḥajj are the substantiation of: يوم الحج الاكبر (*yaumu -'l-ḥajju 'l-akbar*: the day of the greater *ḥajj*) which includes 'Arafah and *Yaumu 'n-naḥr* both. As for the use of the word *yaum* or day in the singular, it is in accordance with the usage elsewhere – as the Holy Qur'ān calls a few days of the battle of Badr by

the name of يوم الفرقان :*yaumu 'l-Furqān* in the singular form. Then, there are the common wars of Arabia. They too are identified by the word *yaum* or day – even though, they may have been spread over many more days – such as, يوم البعاث :*yaumu 'l-bu'āth,* يوم الاحد :*yaumu l'Uḥūd* etc. And since 'Umrah is called 'the smaller *ḥajj,* (حج اصغر), therefore, it was to make it distinct that Ḥajj was called 'the greater *ḥajj*' (*al-ḥajju 'l-akbar*). This tells us that, in the terminology of the Qur'ān, Hajj as it takes place every year is nothing but 'the greater *ḥajj*' (*al-ḥajju 'l-akbar*). As for the popular assumption that the year in which 'Arafah falls on a Friday is specially 'the greater *ḥajj,*' it has no real basis except that the year in which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم performed his last Ḥajj (حجة الوداع : *ḥajjatu 'l-wadā'*) just happened to be the year in which 'Arafah fell on the day of Jumu'ah. No doubt, this is a matter of distinction in its own place, but it has nothing to do with the sense of this verse.

In his Aḥkām al-Qur'ān, Imām Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ has said: By calling the days of Ḥajj as 'the greater *ḥajj,*' the problem that 'Umrah cannot be performed during the days of Ḥajj has also been resolved here – because, the Holy Qur'ān has specified these days for 'the greater *ḥajj.*'

Verses 6 – 11

وَإِنْ أَحَدٌ مِّنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ اسْتَجَارَكَ فَأَجِرْهُ حَتّٰى يَسْمَعَ كَلَامَ اللّٰهِ ثُمَّ أَبْلِغْهُ مَأْمَنَهٗ ۭ ذٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَّا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٦﴾ كَيْفَ يَكُوْنُ لِلْمُشْرِكِيْنَ عَهْدٌ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ وَعِنْدَ رَسُوْلِهٖٓ إِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ عٰهَدْتُّمْ عِنْدَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ ۚ فَمَا اسْتَقَامُوْا لَكُمْ فَاسْتَقِيْمُوْا لَهُمْ ۭ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿٧﴾ كَيْفَ وَإِنْ يَّظْهَرُوْا عَلَيْكُمْ لَا يَرْقُبُوْا فِيْكُمْ إِلًّا وَّلَا ذِمَّةً ۭ يُرْضُوْنَكُمْ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَتَأْبٰى قُلُوْبُهُمْ ۚ وَأَكْثَرُهُمْ فٰسِقُوْنَ ﴿٨﴾ اِشْتَرَوْا بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيْلًا فَصَدُّوْا عَنْ سَبِيْلِهٖ ۭ إِنَّهُمْ سَآءَ مَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٩﴾ لَا يَرْقُبُوْنَ فِيْ مُؤْمِنٍ إِلًّا وَّلَا ذِمَّةً ۭ وَأُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُعْتَدُوْنَ ﴿١٠﴾

فَإِنْ تَابُوْا وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتَوُا الزَّكٰوةَ فَإِخْوَانُكُمْ فِى الدِّيْنِ ۗ وَنُفَصِّلُ الْاٰيٰتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَّعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿١١﴾

And if any one of the Mushriks seeks your protection, give him protection until he listens to the Word of Allah, then let him reach his place of safety. That is because they are a people who do not know. [6]

How can the Mushriks have a treaty with Allah and His Messenger? Except those with whom you made a treaty near *Al-masjid-al-ḥarām*. Then, as long as they remain straight with you, remain straight with them. Surely, Allah loves the God-fearing. [7]

How (can they have a treaty) while if they overcome you, they shall not observe any bond or treaty in your case. They want to please you with (words from) their mouths, but their hearts refuse. Most of them are sinners. [8]

They have taken a paltry price for the verses of Allah, so they have prevented (people) from His path. Indeed, evil is what they have been doing. [9]

They do not observe, in the case of a believer, any bond or treaty. And they are the transgressors. [10]

Then, if they repent and establish Ṣalāh and pay Zakāh, they are your brothers in faith. And We elaborate the verses for people who understand. [11]

Commentary

It was said in the first five verses of Sūrah Al-Taubah that, soon after the Conquest of Makkah, general amnesty was granted to all polytheists and disbelievers of Makkah and its environs. But, in view of their dismal record of treachery and breach of trust in the past, it was decided that no treaty would be signed with them in the future. It was despite this policy decision that injunctions to honor the treaty – made with these people earlier and which they had never contravened – were revealed whereby they were required to fulfill the terms of the treaty until it expired. As for those with whom there was just no treaty, or there was no treaty with a fixed duration, they too were granted suitable concession. Rather than they be ordered to leave Makkah immediately, they were allowed a respite of four months so that, during

this period of time, they could arrange to leave Makkah and go wherever they deemed fit, with convenience and in peace. Or, if the truth of Islām had become apparent to them in the meantime, they were welcome to become Muslims. The outcome of these injunctions was that the sacred site of Makkah was to be vacated by all treacherous disbelievers. The evacuation was being implemented without any intention to retaliate. In fact, it was enforced in self-defense because of consistent experience. Therefore, the door to a good future for them was left open even then. This has been mentioned in the sixth verse the substance of which is: If someone from among the disbelievers seeks asylum with you, then, you should grant it so that he could come close to you and listen to the Word of Allah and understand the veracity of Islām. Then, your responsibility does not end at granting him a temporary asylum. The truth of the matter is that, as soon as he has done what he had come for, it is the responsibility of Muslims that they should escort him under full protective arrangements to the place where he considers himself safe and happy. At the end of the verse, it was said that the particular injunction has been sent because these people are not sufficiently aware. By coming close, they could know things better.

Some rulings and points of guidance come out from this verse (11) as well. These have been discussed in details by Imām Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ. In brief, they are:

Proving the Veracity of Islām is the Duty of Muslim Scholars

1. First of all, this verse confirms that, in case, a disbeliever asks Muslims to explain the veracity of Islām to him with valid proofs, then, it becomes their duty to accede to his demand.

2. Secondly, it is obligatory on Muslims that they should allow and protect anyone who comes to them to learn more about Islām. Causing any hurt or harm to such a person is not permissible. This injunction, according to Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī, is operative only in a situation when the purpose of the visitor is to listen to the Word of Allah and know more about Islām. In case, the objective of the visitor is business, or some other pursuit, it would depend on the discretion of relevant Muslim officials who would decide in terms of what is best in Muslim interests. Should they deem it fit, they may permit and should they think otherwise, they can act at their discretion.

Non-Resident Non-Muslims should not be permitted to stay in Dār al-Islām any longer than necessary

3. The third ruling stipulates that a non-Muslim at war, with whom Muslims have no treaty, should not be allowed to stay any longer than necessary – because, in the cited verse, a limit of stay and protection has been set by saying: حَتّٰى يَسْمَعَ كَلَامَ اللّٰهِ (until he listens to the Word of Allah).

4. According to the fourth element of guidance embedded here, it is the duty of a Muslim ruling authority to remain aware of the progress of the mission undertaken by any non-Muslim at war once he has entered into the Muslim country with valid permission (visa) and purpose. And, as soon as he has completed his job in the country, it is also the duty of Muslim *Amīr* (ruler) that he should arrange for his safe return.

Stated in the next four verses (7-10) is the wisdom behind the proclamation of withdrawal mentioned in the initial verses of Sūrah Al-Taubah. Here, by referring to the inherent meanness of pledge-breaking disbelievers whose malice and hostility against Muslims knew no bounds, it was advised in verses 7 and 8 that entertaining any hope from such people that they would ever abide by their pledge was simply wrong to begin with. It was said in the text: Except for some people with whom Muslims had entered into a treaty near the *masjid al-ḥarām*, how could any pledge given by these disbelievers be credible before Allah and His Messenger? The fact was that they were a set of people who, if given the least opportunity, would not blink about any relationship they had with them or bother to honor the word of promise given by them. The simple reason was that these people had no intention of honoring the treaty even when they were signing it. Their sole purpose was just to placate them. With their hearts set elsewhere, most of them were sinners, compulsive breakers of pledges and practitioners of treachery.

Uphold truth and commit no excess or injustice even against disbelievers is the teaching of Qur'ān

This statement of the Qur'ān provides guidance for Muslims that they should never surrender truth and justice even when they are dealing with confronting enemies. Whenever they have to take up an

issue with them, they are required not to slip into taking exaggerated approaches and stances against them. This is as it has been demonstrated in these verses where full consideration has been given to the case of the disbelievers of Makkah. The fact was that most of them had broken their pledge. Naturally, when something like this happens in that setting, people tend to make a sweeping allegation against everyone. But, the Holy Qur'ān, by saying: إِلَّا الَّذِينَ عٰهَدْتُّمْ عِنْدَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ (except those with whom you made a treaty near *al-masjid-al-ḥarām*), has exempted those who had not broken their pledge. In fact, it has ordered that Muslims should stay firm on their commitment as long as the others remain committed and faithful to their pledge. The breach of trust committed by other people should in no case influence their stance whereby they themselves may be led to become breakers of the pledge given to them.

Earlier when it was said that disbelieving people had nursed betrayal in their hearts right from the beginning and had no intention of staying faithful to their pledge, an exception was also granted. Similarly, when the text says: أَكْثَرُهُمْ فٰسِقُونَ (Most of them are sinners – 8), it hints that all of them were not like that. There were some nice people among them too, who wanted to stand by their commitment, but they were not heard before others.

This is the same subject the Holy Qur'ān takes up elsewhere saying in very clear terms: لَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَاٰنُ قَوْمٍ عَلٰٓى أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوْا (and malice against a people should not bid you to not doing justice – 5:8)

After that comes the ninth verse with the reason why these Mushriks were so chronically treacherous and what was it that ailed them. Thus, they too were given a prescription of hope to ponder about so that they could still correct themselves if they chose to. At the same time, Muslims at large were also served with a warning that they should take their guard against the pitfall of treachery and disobedience which had sucked these people in and make a total abstention from this behavior model their distinct life style. The reason is their relentless love of the material. The desire to acquire, possess and expend the limitless range of things of this world had blinded them to the limit that they would not hesitate to sell off the very Words of Allah and their own faith in exchange for paltry gains. This character is, to make an understatement, evil.

Moving on to the tenth verse, the text describes the extreme crookedness of these people by saying: لَا يَرْقُبُوْنَ فِىْ مُؤْمِنٍ اِلًّا وَّلَا ذِمَّةً (They do not observe, in the case of a believer, any bond or treaty). The sense is that this was no isolated case of disbelieving people acting treacherously against Muslims to whom they were bound by ties of kinship and treaty obligations. In fact, disbelieving people were a lot who would never consider kinship or pledge as valid grounds when dealing with Muslims.

Given the aforesaid behavior pattern of disbelieving people, it could have been but natural for Muslims to have become disillusioned with them forever and refuse to have any brotherly relationship with them under any condition. Therefore, as the Qur'ānic justice and equity would have it, the eleventh verse gives the following instruction: فَاِنْ تَابُوْا وَاَقَامُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتَوُا الزَّكٰوةَ فَاِخْوَانُكُمْ فِى الدِّيْنِ (Then, if they repent and establish *ṣalāh* and pay *zakāh*, they are your brothers in faith).

Here we are being told that once an enemy – no matter how deadly and no matter how hurtful he has been – becomes a Muslim, things change dramatically. Allah Ta'ālā forgives his past sins, all of them. So, it becomes obligatory on Muslims too that they should forget the past, start afresh, take them as their brothers in faith and do whatever it takes to fulfill the rights enjoined under such relationship.

Three Conditions of Entry into the Islāmic Brotherhood

This verse makes it clear that there are three conditions of entry into the Islāmic brotherhood: (1) Taubah or repentance from Kufr and Shirk, (2) establishment of Ṣalāh and (3) payment of Zakāh – because, 'Īmān (faith) and Taubah (repentance) are concealed matters. Common Muslims cannot find out their reality. Therefore, two of their outward signs were mentioned, that is, Ṣalāh and Zakāh.

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه said: 'This verse has made the blood of Muslims, who qualify as 'the people of Qiblah,' unlawful (*ḥarām*).' In other words, people who establish Ṣalāh, pay Zakāh and have said or done nothing against Islām as proved against them, shall be taken as Muslims in the matter of all religious injunctions – even though, they may not have true 'Īmān (faith) in their hearts, or have hypocrisy (*nifāq*).

This is the verse Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه had quoted in sup-

port of his declaration of Jihād against those who had refused to pay Zakāh after the passing away of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. The noble Companions before whom he had made this assertion were satisfied with his approach. (Ibn Kathīr)

At the end of verse 11, the text stresses upon the need to abide by given injunctions, regarding those covered under a treaty and those who have repented, by saying: وَنُفَصِّلُ الْاٰيٰتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَّعْلَمُوْنَ (And We elaborate the verses for people who understand).

Verses 12 – 16

وَاِنْ نَّكَثُوْٓا اَيْمَانَهُمْ مِّنْۢ بَعْدِ عَهْدِهِمْ وَطَعَنُوْا فِيْ دِيْنِكُمْ
فَقَاتِلُوْٓا اَئِمَّةَ الْكُفْرِ ۙ اِنَّهُمْ لَآ اَيْمَانَ لَهُمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَنْتَهُوْنَ ﴿۱۲﴾
اَلَا تُقَاتِلُوْنَ قَوْمًا نَّكَثُوْٓا اَيْمَانَهُمْ وَهَمُّوْا بِاِخْرَاجِ الرَّسُوْلِ وَهُمْ
بَدَءُوْكُمْ اَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ ؕ اَتَخْشَوْنَهُمْ ۚ فَاللّٰهُ اَحَقُّ اَنْ تَخْشَوْهُ اِنْ
كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿۱۳﴾ قَاتِلُوْهُمْ يُعَذِّبْهُمُ اللّٰهُ بِاَيْدِيْكُمْ وَيُخْزِهِمْ
وَيَنْصُرْكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَيَشْفِ صُدُوْرَ قَوْمٍ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿۱۴﴾ وَيُذْهِبْ
غَيْظَ قُلُوْبِهِمْ ؕ وَيَتُوْبُ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ
حَكِيْمٌ ﴿۱۵﴾ اَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ اَنْ تُتْرَكُوْا وَلَمَّا يَعْلَمِ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ
جٰهَدُوْا مِنْكُمْ وَلَمْ يَتَّخِذُوْا مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ وَلَا رَسُوْلِهٖ وَلَا
الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَلِيْجَةً ؕ وَاللّٰهُ خَبِيْرٌۢ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۱۶﴾

And if they break their oaths after they have made a covenant and speak evil of your Faith, then fight the leaders of infidelity – in fact, they have no oaths – so that they may stop. [12] **Would you not fight a people who broke their oaths and conspired to expel the Messenger and it was they who started (fighting) against you for the first time? Do you fear them? Then, Allah is worthier that you fear Him, if you are believers.** [13]

Fight them, so that Allah should punish them at your hands and disgrace them, and help you win against them and bring relief to bosoms of a believing people, [14] **and remove the rage of their hearts. And Allah relents to whomsoever He wills. And Allah is (All-) Know-**

ing, (All-) Wise. [15]

Do you think that you will be left alone while Allah has not yet seen those of you who struggle in *jihād* and never take anyone, other than Allah and His Messenger and the believers, as their confidant? And Allah is (All-) Aware of what you do. [16]

Commentary

It will be recalled that a cease-fire agreement with the Quraysh of Makkah was concluded at Ḥudaibiyah in the Hijrah year 6. That the Quraysh will not stick to the agreement was foretold in verse 7 of Sūrah Al-Taubah: كَيْفَ يَكُوْنُ لِلْمُشْرِكِيْنَ عَهْدٌ (how can the Mushriks have a treaty...). Then, came verses 8, 9 and 10 with the causes of their pledge breaking. And in the 11th verse it was announced that, despite having broken their solemn covenant, if these Mushriks become Muslims and start expressing their faith in Islām through prayers and fasting, then, Muslims are duty-bound to keep their present dealings with them free of any effects from the past. In fact, they should take them to be their brothers in faith and treat them as such. In verse 12 cited above, Muslims have been told about the course of action they should take in the event these people do break their pledge, as prophesied earlier.

The actual words of the text read: وَاِنْ نَّكَثُوْٓا اَيْمَانَهُمْ مِّنْۢ بَعْدِ عَهْدِهِمْ وَطَعَنُوْا فِيْ دِيْنِكُمْ فَقَاتِلُوْٓا اَئِمَّةَ الْكُفْرِ (And if they break their oaths after they have made a covenant and speak evil of your Faith, then fight the leaders of infidelity – 12). It is worth noting that the present situation in the text demanded the use of فَقَاتِلُوْهُمْ (*faqātilūhum*: then fight them). The Holy Qur'ān has said: فَقَاتِلُوْٓا اَئِمَّةَ الْكُفْرِ (then fight the leaders of infidelity) which bypasses the use of a shorter pronoun at this place. The word: اَئِمَّة (*a'immah*: leaders) is the plural of Imām. The sense is that these people by breaking their word of honor turned into leaders of infidelity and thus became deserving of a war against them. This statement also carries the wisdom and justification of the command to fight. Some commentators say that 'leaders of infidelity' at this place refers to the chiefs of the tribe of Quraysh in Makkah who kept on instigating people against Muslims and remained busy making war preparations. Fighting against them was particularly mentioned because these people were the real source of power the Makkans were credited with. In addition to that, since they were the ones with whom Muslims had bonds of close kinship, there was the possible apprehension that some conces-

sion could be granted in their case.

Honest critical study of Islām by Protected Non-Muslim Citizens of Dār al-Islām is possible – vilification is not

Some commentators have interpreted the words: طَعَنُوْا فِىْ دِيْنِكُمْ (speak evil of your faith) to mean that speaking evil of the Faith of Muslims is included under contravention of pledge. A person who speaks evil of Islām and the Sharī'ah of Islām cannot continue to be a party to the treaty with Muslims. But, according to a consensus of Muslim jurists, it means vilification that is done to insult and belittle Islām and Muslims, openly and publicly. Honest intellectual criticism while conducting research into problems and rulings remains exempt from its purview – then, it is not supposed to be vilification in its lexical sense.

Therefore, for non-Muslim citizens of Dār al-Islām, any honest intellectual criticism can be allowed, but what cannot be allowed is vilification, contempt, insult or outrage against Islām.

In the same verse (12), it was said: إِنَّهُمْ لَآ أَيْمَانَ لَهُمْ (in fact, they have no oaths). The sense is that these are the kind of people none of whose oaths are trustworthy – because, they are addicted to breaking their oaths and committing breaches of trust. Then, the use of the plural form of oaths here could also mean: 'when they broke their oath, they also absolved Muslims of any responsibility for their oath and pledge.'

At the end of verse 12, it was said: لَعَلَّهُمْ يَنْتَهُوْنَ (so that they may stop). This last sentence tells us that the objective of Jihād carried out by Muslims should never be the conquest of countries like common kings or to hurt the enemy and to take vengeance as belligerent people around the world would love to do. Instead of doing anything like that, when it comes to fighting that they must, the driving objective should be compassion for the enemy, the empathy and the desire that they would stop doing what was not right.

After that, to persuade Muslims to fight, they were told in verse 13 that there was no reason why they would not be ready to fight against the kind of people who had conspired to expel the Messenger of Allah. This refers to the Jews of Madīnah who had hatched a plan to expel the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم from the city of Madīnah. They had said: لَيُخْرِجَنَّ الْأَعَزُّ مِنْهَا الْأَذَلَّ (the one having more honor and power will cer-

tainly expel the one being humble and weak from there – 63:8). In their self-view, they were the people of honor and power while Muslims were weak and lowly. The answer they needed was given by Allah Almighty in His way. He took their proud statement as it was and made it come true in a manner that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his Companions, by turning the Jews out of Madīnah, proved that honor belonged to Muslims and disgrace to Jews.

Giving the second reason for fighting against them, it was said: وَهُمْ بَدَءُوكُمْ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ (and it was they who started [fighting] against you for the first time). The sense is that they were the aggressors. What Muslims have to do now is simply to defend themselves, an action universally sane and normal.

Then, to remove the awe of the enemy from the hearts of Muslims, it was said: أَتَخْشَوْنَهُمْ فَاللَّهُ أَحَقُّ أَنْ تَخْشَوْهُ (Do you fear them? Then, Allah is worthier that you fear Him) for there is no power that can cause His punishment to disappear. Finally, by saying: إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ (if you are believers), it was made clear that fearing anyone or anything other than Allah in a manner that obstructs the fulfillment of the injunctions of the Sharī'ah of Islām is not what a true believing-practicing Muslim would do.

For Muslims, the same exhortation to fight in Jihād appears in verses 14 and 15 as well, though from a different angle. They were told:

1. If you get ready to fight them, the help and support from Allah will be with you. As for their enemies, they have already become deserving of Divine punishment because of their evil deeds but this punishment will not come down upon them from the heavens or up from beneath the Earth. Instead of that, says the verse: يُعَذِّبْهُمُ اللَّهُ بِأَيْدِيكُمْ that is, 'Allah shall punish them at their hands.'

2. As a result of this fighting, Allah Ta'ālā will mollify the hearts of Muslims after all those pains and sorrows continuously inflicted upon them by the disbelievers.

3. Then, the anger which filled Muslim hearts because of their treachery and pledge breaking was to be removed by Allah Ta'ālā when He punishes them at their hands.

In the previous verse (12), by saying: لَعَلَّهُمْ يَنْتَهُونَ (so that they may stop), Muslims were told that they should not fight a people just to re-

lease their anger, rather make their correction and betterment the main purpose of their action. When they cleanse their intention from all irrelevant shades, and let it be for Allah alone, and fight for none but Allah, then, Allah Ta'ālā shall cause things to unfold in a manner that automatically removes the feelings of anger and sorrow raging in their hearts.

4. Finally, it was said: وَيَتُوْبُ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى مَنْ يَّشَآءُ (And Allah relents to whomsoever He wills –15). This tells us that there will be an added gain as a result of this Jihād. There will be many from among the enemies who will have the *taufīq* of Islām. They will become Muslims. So, there were many arrogant ones at the time of the Conquest of Makkah who were put to disgrace while there were many others who embraced Islām.

History proves that the circumstances and events predicted in these verses were witnessed one by one as pointed out by the Holy Qur'ān. Therefore, these verses contain many miracles.

Verses 17 – 18

مَا كَانَ لِلْمُشْرِكِيْنَ اَنْ يَّعْمُرُوْا مَسٰجِدَ اللّٰهِ شٰهِدِيْنَ عَلٰٓى اَنْفُسِهِمْ بِالْكُفْرِ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ حَبِطَتْ اَعْمَالُهُمْ ۚۖ وَفِى النَّارِ هُمْ خٰلِدُوْنَ ﴿١٧﴾ اِنَّمَا يَعْمُرُ مَسٰجِدَ اللّٰهِ مَنْ اٰمَنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ وَاَقَامَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتَى الزَّكٰوةَ وَلَمْ يَخْشَ اِلَّا اللّٰهَ فَعَسٰٓى اُولٰٓئِكَ اَنْ يَّكُوْنُوْا مِنَ الْمُهْتَدِيْنَ ﴿١٨﴾

It is not for the Mushriks to build up the mosques of Allah while they are witnesses of their own infidelity. Those are the ones whose deeds have gone waste. And in the Fire they shall remain for ever. [17]

In fact, the mosques of Allah are built-up only by those who believe in Allah and the Last Day and those who establish *ṣalāh* and pay *zakāh* and who fear none but Allah. So, it is in all likelihood that they are to be among those on the right path. [18]

Commentary

Mentioned in the previous verses was how crooked the Mushriks of Makkah were, how they broke their pledges and what they did to de-

fend their false ways in religion. With this in view, Muslims were also brought around to stand up against them. In the last previous verse (16), Muslims have been told that Jihād is a test for them. This test is necessary because it helps in marking out a sincere Muslim from hypocrites and the weak-in-faith. Says the verse: 'Do you think that you will be left alone while Allah has not seen those of you who struggle in *jihād* and never take anyone, other than Allah and His Messenger and the believers, as their confidant?'

The address in this verse is also to those common people who were taken to be Muslims, though some of them were hypocrites while some others were weak in faith and kept wavering. Such people would pass on sensitive information about Muslims to their non-Muslim friends. Therefore, two signs of a sincere Muslim were identified in this verse.

Two signs of sincere Muslims

(1) They fight disbelievers in the way of Allah.

(2) They take no non-Muslim as their close friend to whom secrets are confided.

At the end of the verse, it was said: وَاللّٰهُ خَبِيْرٌۢ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ (And Allah is [All] Aware of what you do) that is, before Him nobody can get away with false excuses and alibis.

This wisdom of Jihād mentioned earlier has appeared in another verse of the Holy Qur'ān in the following words: اَحَسِبَ النَّاسُ اَنْ يُّتْرَكُوْٓا اَنْ يَّقُوْلُوْٓا اٰمَنَّا وَهُمْ لَا يُفْتَنُوْنَ (Do people think that they will be left to say, "We believe," and they will not be tried? – 29:2)

On taking non-Muslims as close friends and insiders

The word: وليجة (*walījah*) used in verse 16 means an insider who shares secrets. There is another verse which uses the word: بطانة (*biṭānah*) to carry this very sense. Literally, '*biṭānah*' means what is worn under normal clothing and is close to the body. It denotes a person who knows secrets as an insider. The actual words of the verse read: يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَتَّخِذُوْا بِطَانَةً مِّنْ دُوْنِكُمْ لَا يَاْلُوْنَكُمْ خَبَالًا (O those who believe, do not take anyone as insider but from your own selves for they would spare no effort to put you in trouble). (3:118)

Now we can turn to the present verses (17 and 18) where instructions have been given to cleanse *al-masjid-al-ḥarām* and other *masājid*

(mosques) of false modes of worship and replacing them with what is correct and acceptable.

A little background detail is in order at this point. When the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم got rid of all those idols the Mushriks used to worship from the Baytullah and the Sacred Mosque soon after the conquest of Makkah, it was a matter of relief, at least externally, for the Sacred Mosque was now free from the physical vestiges of Shirk. But, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had granted his old enemies pardon and protection soon after they were overpowered. They still used to do their 'Ibādah and Ṭawāf in the Sacred Mosque following their false ways.

That the Sacred Mosque was cleansed of idols was good, but it was also necessary to purify this sacred site from the fallout of idolatry and its false mores. The only way it could be done was to prohibit the entry of the Mushriks into the Sacred Mosque. But, this would have gone against the promise of protection given to them – and abiding by the terms of a treaty was far more important in Islām. Therefore, such orders were not given immediately. Instead, it was done in the year next to the conquest of Makkah. At that time, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had Sayyidnā Abū Bakr and Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنه make an announcement in the great gathering of Minā and 'Arafāt that, in the future, no 'Ibādah, Ḥajj or Ṭawāf performed in the Mushrik way will be allowed in the Sacred Mosque. Also prohibited through this announcement was the evil custom of making Ṭawāf in the nude that had lingered from the days of Jāhiliyah. It was in the gathering at Minā that Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنه proclaimed:

لَا يَحُجَّنَّ بَعْدَ الْعَامِ مُشْرِكٌ وَلَا يَطُوفَنَّ بِالْبَيْتِ عُرْيَانٌ

After this year, no Mushrik will perform Ḥajj and no naked person will make Ṭawāf of Baytullah.

And this respite of one year was given for the reason that there were many people among them with whom Muslims had a treaty and they had continued to abide by the terms of the treaty. That they should be made to obey a new law before the expiry of the existing treaty with them was contrary to Islāmic policy of tolerance. Therefore, a public announcement was made a year in advance to the effect that it has been decided to cleanse the Sacred Mosque from all Mush-

rik customs and ways of worship – because, their kind of worship would not let a mosque flourish, rather would go on to make it desolate.

These Mushriks of Makkah equated their pagan customs with 'worship' and thought that they were contributing towards the maintenance and functional thriving of the Sacred Mosque. They were proud of being the custodians of the Baytullah and the Sacred Mosque. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ says, 'when his father, before he became a Muslim, was taken prisoner at the battle of Badr, Muslims reproached him for staying on the side of Kufr and Shirk. He told them, 'you only remember what is bad about us. You do not like to talk about our good things. Do you not know that we are the custodians of the Sacred Mosque? We take care of the building. We keep it filled with people. We manage it and we run a drinking water service for the pilgrims. Revealed thereupon were the verses: مَا كَانَ لِلْمُشْرِكِيْنَ اَنْ يَّعْمُرُوْا مَسٰجِدَ اللّٰهِ (It is not for the Mushriks to build up the mosques of Allah). It means that Mushriks (those who ascribe partners to Allah) do not have the right to build and populate the mosques of Allah. The reason is that a *masjid* is a place that has been built to worship One God while Shirk and Kufr are its antithesis that cannot be combined with the structure and function of a *masjid*.

The word: عمارة (*'imārah*: building) appearing in this verse is a multifaceted word and is used to convey several meanings. It could mean the physical building of the *masjid* including all elements that go in raising and finishing it externally and internally. Then, it could also denote the maintenance of the *masjid* that would be inclusive of security arrangements, sanitation, upkeep and provision of necessary supplies. And then, it also includes the human dimension of the *masjid* – that believers present themselves in the *masjid* for 'Ibādah. (Since there is no exact equivalent in English to carry this sense, the nearest one could come would be to populate, people, fill up, make the *masjid* flourish in the number of those present and in the quality of acts of 'Ibadah they perform therein.) Incidentally, 'Umrah (عمرہ) is called by that name in view of the fact that one visits Baytullah and makes the best of his presence there in terms of 'Ibādah.

So, the sense of the Qur'ānic word *'imārah'* covers building, maintenance and presence. The Mushriks of Makkah took credit for all three.

They took special pride in considering themselves the custodians of the building of the Sacred Mosque. The present verses tell them that the Mushriks did not have any right to build the mosques of Allah while they were witnesses of their own infidelity. Because of their Kufr and Shirk, their deeds had gone waste and they were to live in the Fire of Jahannam eternally.

The expression: 'witnesses of their own infidelity' could have two meanings. It could either mean that they were virtually confessing to their Kufr and Shirk because of what they were doing as Mushriks. Or, it could refer to their implied confession and witnessing of their Kufr and Shirk when they identify themselves in social situations. Customarily, when a Christian or Jew is asked as to his religious identity, he would say that he was a Christian or Jew. The same would be the case with a fire-worshipper or idolater. They would identify themselves with what they believe in. Thus, the Mushriks will become witnesses of their infidelity against themselves. (Ibn Kathīr)

Verse 17 was describing the negative aspect as related to the Mushriks. It said that they did not deserve the honor of building and maintaining mosques. Verse 18 takes up the positive aspect relating to mosques by saying:

إِنَّمَا يَعْمُرُ مَسٰجِدَ اللّٰهِ مَنْ اٰمَنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ وَاَقَامَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتَى الزَّكٰوةَ
وَلَمْ يَخْشَ اِلَّا اللّٰهَ فَعَسٰٓى اُولٰٓئِكَ اَنْ يَّكُوْنُوْا مِنَ الْمُهْتَدِيْنَ

In fact, the mosques of Allah are built-up only by those who believe in Allah and in the Last Day and those who establish Ṣalāh and pay Zakāh and who fear none but Allah. So, it is in all likelihood that they are to be among those on the right path.

It means the building of mosques in the real sense is a serene task. It can be done only by those who are bound by the commandments of Allah in their 'Aqīdah (faith) and 'Amal (practice). They must believe in Allah and in the 'Ākhirah, establish Ṣalāh, pay Zakāh and fear none but Allah. At this place, only 'Īmān (faith) in Allah and 'Ākhirah (Last Day) have been mentioned. Faith in the Rasūl (Messenger) of Allah was not mentioned expressly because there is no way one can have faith in Allah Ta'ālā except that one puts his or her faith in His Rasūl – and wholeheartedly accepts the commandments that come from Al-

lah Ta'ālā through him. Therefore, 'faith in the Rasūl' is naturally included under 'faith in Allah.' This is why the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم once asked his noble Companions, 'Do you know what 'Īmān in Allah is?' The Companions said, 'Allah and His Rasūl know best.' He said, 'Īmān in Allah is that one bears witness to the fact that there is no one worthy of worship but Allah and that Muḥammad is the Rasūl of Allah.' This Ḥadīth clearly states that having faith in the Rasūl is included under having faith in Allah and is comprehensively united with it. (Maẓharī with reference to al-Bukhārī and Muslim)

As for the statement: 'fear none but Allah,' it means that, in matters of religion, one should not abandon the command of Allah out of some fear. Otherwise, fearing things that cause fear is quite natural. Beasts, snakes, thieves and robbers generate physical fear but that is not the kind of fear we are talking about here. When the magicians showed snakes made of ropes and staffs to Sayyidnā Mūsā, عليه السلام he had a sense of fear within himself as mentioned in the Qur'ān: فَأَوْجَسَ فِي نَفْسِهِ خِيفَةً مُّوسَىٰ. – 20:67. Therefore, the normal fear caused by what causes pain or brings loss is neither contrary to the injunction of the Qur'ān nor to the station of a prophet, *waliyy* or saint. However, one should not become so overcome by this fear as to start creating confusion about the injunctions of Allah Ta'ālā or leaving them out altogether. This is not the style of a true believer and this is precisely what is meant at this place.

Some related issues

When it is said in the present verses that Mushriks and Kāfirs cannot take up the task of 'maintaining' a *masjid* which was something only righteous Muslims could do, it refers to the trusteeship and administrative responsibility of the *masājid*. The outcome is that it is not permissible to appoint a Kāfir the trustee and administrator of any Islāmic Waqf (endowment). As for the construction of the different units of the structure such as walls and doors, it does not matter even if some non-Muslim is assigned to do the job. (Tafsīr Marāghī) Similarly, when a non-Muslim makes a *masjid* as an act of *thawāb*, or contributes funds for its building, then, it is permissible to accept it. However, the condition is that there should be no danger of a religious or worldly loss, or blame, or usurpation of the property later, or harping on the favor done. (Al-Durr al-Mukhtār, Shāmī and Marāghī)

It was hinted in verse 18 that building a *masjid* and making it throb with multitudes of Muslims making prayers, remembering Allah and reciting the Qur'an is a task that can only be accomplished by a righteous Muslim. It proves that anyone who keeps coming to the *masjid* either to supervise arrangements for the security, maintenance, upkeep and supplies for the *masjid*, or for the *Dhikr* of Allah, or to learn about his religion, or to recite or teach the Holy Qur'an is a perfect believer. These deeds are sufficient as witnesses to this honor.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'when you notice that a person is punctual with his presence in the *masjid*, bear witness to his 'Iman – because, Allah Ta'ala has said: إِنَّمَا يَعْمُرُ مَسٰجِدَ اللّٰهِ مَنْ اٰمَنَ بِاللّٰهِ (In fact, the *masajid* of Allah are built-up only by those who believe in Allah... - 18). Imam Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah have reported this Hadith on the authority of Sayyidna Abu Sa'id Al-Khudri.

It appears in Al-Bukhari and Muslim that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: 'a person who presents himself in the *masjid* morning and evening, Allah Ta'ala sets aside a rank of Paradise for him.'

And Sayyidna Salman al-Farisi narrates that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: 'a person who comes into the *masjid* is a visiting guest of Allah Ta'ala – and it is incumbent on the host that He honors the guest.' (Mazhari with reference to Tabarani, Ibn Jarir, al-Baihaqi and others)

The commentator of the Qur'an, Qadi Thana'ullah of Panipat has said, 'the expression 'maintenance of the *masajid*' also requires that the *masjid* should be cleansed of things and practices for which it was not made. It includes activities like buying and selling, worldly conversation, search of lost property, asking people for material help, recitation of idle poetry, disputation, fighting, disturbing peace by noises and things like that. (Mazhari)

Verses 19 – 23

أَجَعَلْتُمْ سِقَايَةَ الْحَاجِّ وَعِمَارَةَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ كَمَنْ اٰمَنَ بِاللّٰهِ
وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ وَجٰهَدَ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ط لَا يَسْتَوٗنَ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ ط
وَاللّٰهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿١٩﴾ اَلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَهَاجَرُوْا
وَجٰهَدُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ بِاَمْوَالِهِمْ وَاَنْفُسِهِمْ لا اَعْظَمُ دَرَجَةً عِنْدَ

اللّٰهِ ۗ وَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْفَآئِزُوْنَ ﴿۲۰﴾ يُبَشِّرُهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِّنْهُ
وَرِضْوَانٍ وَّجَنّٰتٍ لَّهُمْ فِيْهَا نَعِيْمٌ مُّقِيْمٌ ﴿۲۱﴾ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَآ
اَبَدًا ۗ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عِنْدَهٗٓ اَجْرٌ عَظِيْمٌ ﴿۲۲﴾ يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا
تَتَّخِذُوْٓا اٰبَآءَكُمْ وَاِخْوَانَكُمْ اَوْلِيَآءَ اِنِ اسْتَحَبُّوا الْكُفْرَ عَلَى
الْاِيْمَانِ ۗ وَمَنْ يَّتَوَلَّهُمْ مِّنْكُمْ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ ﴿۲۳﴾

Have you taken the serving of water to the pilgrims and the maintenance of *Al-masjid-al-ḥarām* as equal to (the acts) of one who believes in Allah and in the Last Day, and takes up Jihād in the way of Allah? They are not equal in the sight of Allah. And Allah does not lead the wrongdoing people to the right path. [19]

Those who believed and emigrated and took up Jihād in the way of Allah with their wealth and lives are greater in rank in the sight of Allah, and they are the successful ones. [20]

Their Lord gives them the happy news of Mercy from Him, and Pleasure, and of Gardens having an everlasting bliss for them, [21] **where they shall dwell forever. Surely, it is Allah with whom there is a great reward.** [22]

O those who believe, do not take your fathers and your brothers as your friends, if they prefer infidelity to Faith. And whoever from you has friendship with them, then such people are the wrongdoers. [23]

Commentary

The first four verses (19 – 22) relate to a particular event. A cursory look into its background shows that many Mushriks of Makkah felt proud that they kept the Sacred Mosque bustling with visitors and devotees and ran a drinking water service for the pilgrims. Keeping their rival Muslims in view, they claimed that no deed by anyone could match theirs. When Sayyidnā 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ came to Muslims as a prisoner from the battle of Badr, he had not embraced Islām by that time. His Muslim relatives reproached him for remaining deprived of the blessing of 'Īmān. In response, he too had said the same things, 'you think 'Īmān and Hijrah are big feathers in your cap, but we too

have our own assets. We are the custodians of the building of the Sacred Mosque and serve water to the pilgrims. No deed by anyone can match these.' Revealed thereupon were these verses. (Ibn Kathīr on the authority of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭalḥah from Ibn 'Abbās)

And according to some narratives in the Musnad of 'Abd al-Razzāq, it was after the entry of Sayyidnā 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ into the fold of Islām that Sayyidnā Ṭalḥah ibn Shaybāh, Sayyidnā 'Abbās and Sayyidnā 'Alī رضی اللہ عنہم were talking together. Ṭalḥah said: 'I enjoy an excellence which none of you do. I have the keys to the Baytullah in my hands. If I wish I could go inside it and spend the night there.' Sayyidnā 'Abbās said: 'I am the administrator of the water service for pilgrims and I have rights to the Sacred Mosque.' Sayyidnā 'Alī رضی اللہ عنہ said, 'I do not understand that which makes you so proud. As for me, I have said my prayers facing the Baytullah six months before anyone of you and I have participated in Jihād with the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم.' Thereupon, these verses were revealed. They made it clear that no deed done without 'Īmān, no matter how merit worthy, carries any value in the sight of Allah, and no doer of such deeds, while still involved in Shirk, is acceptable with Him.

And the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim reports an event on the authority of Sayyidnā Nu'mān ibn Bashīr رضی اللہ عنہ who says that he was sitting with some Companions close to the Mimbar of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم in his Mosque on a Friday. Someone from those present there said, 'In my view, after Islām and 'Īmān, there is no deed superior to serving water to the pilgrims and I do not care about any deed other than this.' Someone else retorted, 'no, Jihād in the way of Allah is the highest of all deeds.' When an argument started between those two, Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ reprimanded both of them and said, 'stop quarreling near the Mimbar of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم. The proper thing to do is to say your Jumu'ah prayer first, then you can go and ask the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم himself about it.' As suggested, they did go to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم to find out his opinion on the matter. Thereupon, these verses were revealed where Jihād has been identified as the deed superior to the 'building' of the Sacred Mosque and the serving of water to pilgrims.

There is nothing far out about the possibility that the revelation of the verses themselves may have been aimed as an answer to the pride

and arrogance of the Mushriks. Later, when unpleasant things took place among Muslims, it is quite possible that the same verses were used as the deciding argument – which might have given the listeners the feeling that these particular verses were revealed in the background of that particular event.

However, the present 'āyāt of the Qur'ān carry an answer to both these kinds of events – that an accomplishment, no matter how good and acceptable, is reduced to zero if it smacks of Shirk. Therefore, no Mushrik is superior to Muslims because of his association with the maintenance of the Mosque or the serving of water to pilgrims. And even after their rejection of disbelief and entry into Faith, the status of 'Īmān and Jihād is much higher than the maintenance of the Sacred Mosque and the serving of water to pilgrims. Muslims who took the initiative in 'Īmān and Jihād are superior to Muslims who did not take part in Jihād and remained rendering these services to the Sacred Mosque and the pilgrims.

After these introductory remarks, let us go back to the words of the verses and their translation once again. It reads:

أَجَعَلْتُمْ سِقَايَةَ الْحَاجِّ وَعِمَارَةَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ كَمَنْ آمَنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ
وَجَاهَدَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللّٰهِ ۚ لَا يَسْتَوُونَ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظّٰلِمِينَ .

Have you taken the serving of water to the pilgrims and the maintenance of *Al-masjid-al-ḥarām* as equal to (the acts) of one who believes in Allah and in the Last Day, and takes up jihād in the way of Allah? They are not equal in the sight of Allah – 19)

Seen contextually, the purpose is to urge that each one from 'Īmān and Jihād is superior to the serving of water to pilgrims and the maintenance of the Mosque, that is, 'Īmān too is superior to both, and Jihād too. Thus, the superiority of 'Īmān provides an answer to what the Mushriks said and the superiority of Jihād corrects Muslims who said that maintaining the Mosque and serving water to pilgrims were superior to Jihād.

The Dhikr of Allah is superior to Jihād

Qāḍī Thanā'ullah has said in Tafsīr Maẓharī, 'the precedence given to Jihād over the maintenance of the Mosque has been done in terms of physical and outward maintenance, that is, the building, repair,

cleaning and allied arrangements – for it goes without saying that Jihād takes precedence over these.'

But, the maintenance (*'imārah)* of the *masjid* is not restricted to this sense alone. It has another meaning also, that of being present in the *masjid* for 'Ibādah and Dhikr of Allah, which also applies here strongly. In fact, the genuine flowering of the objective of making, maintaining and manning the *masjid* with eager devotees comes out from this factor alone. Given this sense, the maintenance of the *masjid* – as very clearly stated by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم – is superior to Jihād. To substantiate, we can refer to the report of Sayyidnā Abū al-Dardā' appearing in the Musnad of Aḥmad and in Tirmidhī and Ibn Mājah. According to this report, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, 'should I not tell you about an act that is superior to all your acts and certainly more so in the sight of your Master? – This act would raise your ranks to the highest levels, would be even superior to spending gold and silver in the way of Allah, and still be way superior to that you bravely fight your enemies in Jihād where you kill them and they kill you?' The noble Companions said, 'Do tell us about that act, *Yā Rasūlallāh*.' He said, 'that act is the Dhikr of Allah.' This tells us that the merit of the Dhikr of Allah is more pronounced than that of Jihād also. And if the 'maintenance of the *masjid*' is taken in the sense of the Dhikr of Allah, then, it is superior to Jihād. But, at this place, the pride shown by the Mushriks was not based on the Dhikr of Allah and the 'Ibādah performed in the *masjid*, instead, it was based on its structural and administrative aspects. Therefore, Jihād was deemed as superior to that.

And when we deliberate into different statements of the Qur'ān and Sunnah as a whole, it appears that the phenomena of the superiority of one act over the other depends on attending conditions and circumstances. There are conditions when one act is superior to the other. With a change in conditions, things could be the other way round. When Islām and Muslims must be defended at all costs, at that time Jihād shall definitely be more merit worthy as compared to all 'Ibādāt – as evident from the event of the battle of Khandaq where the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had to miss four of his daily prayers (*qaḍā*). Conversely, when the need is not so acute, the Dhikr of Allah and 'Ibādah will be more merit worthy as compared to Jihād.

At the end of the verse (19), by saying: وَاللّٰهُ لَا يَهْدِى الْقَوْمَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ (And Allah does not lead the wrongdoing people to the right path), it was pointed out that the thing they were being told about was not difficult to understand. In fact, it was clear, as clear as it can be – that 'Īmān is the foundation of all that is done, and is superior to all of them. Then comes Jihād that is superior as compared to the maintenance of the *masjid* and serving water to pilgrims. But, Allah Ta'ālā does not bless the unjust and the wrongdoing with the gift of understanding. Therefore, they keep at their crooked hairsplitting into things that are otherwise very open and obvious.

Verse 20 enlarges upon the subject initiated with the words: لَا يَسْتَوٗنَ (*lā yastawūn*: they are not equal) in the previous verse (19) where it was said that the believing Mujāhidīn and those engaged only in maintaining the *masjid* and serving water to pilgrims are not equal. This was enlarged by saying: اَلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَهَاجَرُوْا وَجٰهَدُوْا فِىْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ بِاَمْوَالِهِمْ وَاَنْفُسِهِمْ اَعْظَمُ دَرَجَةً عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ وَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْفَآئِزُوْنَ (those who believed and emigrated and took up *jihād* in the way of Allah, with their wealth and lives, are greater in rank in the sight of Allah, and they are the successful ones). The reason is that the Mushriks against them simply had no measure of success whatsoever. As for Muslims in general, they too shared this success in essence, but the success of those identified above had more to it. Therefore, they were the ones whose success was comprehensive.

Verses 21 and 22 tell us about the great reward and ranks these successful people shall have in the life to come:

يُبَشِّرُهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِّنْهُ وَرِضْوَانٍ وَّجَنّٰتٍ لَّهُمْ فِيْهَا نَعِيْمٌ مُّقِيْمٌ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَآ اَبَدًا ، اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عِنْدَهٗٓ اَجْرٌ عَظِيْمٌ .

Their Lord gives them the happy news of Mercy from Him, and Pleasure, and of Gardens having an everlasting bliss for them, where they shall dwell for ever. Surely, it is Allah with whom there is a great reward.

These verses mention the merits of Hijrah and Jihād which require that one leaves his country, relatives, friends, companions, wealth and property, all in one stroke. As obvious, surrendering all these attachments is most difficult and painful. Therefore, in the next verse (23), the text disapproves of limitless attachment with these things and thereby prepares Muslim minds to welcome Hijrah and Jihād. It was

said:

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَتَّخِذُوْٓا اٰبَآءَكُمْ وَاِخْوَانَكُمْ اَوْلِيَآءَ اِنِ اسْتَحَبُّوا الْكُفْرَ عَلَى الْاِيْمَانِ وَمَنْ يَّتَوَلَّهُمْ مِّنْكُمْ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ .

> O those who believe, do not take your fathers and your brothers as friends, if they prefer infidelity over Faith. And whoever from you has friendship with them, then such people are the wrongdoers.

As for the need to maintain strong bonds of kinship with parents, brothers and sisters and other kinsfolk and to treat all of them generously, the Qur'ān remains full of relevant instructions. But, this verse has made it very clear that each relationship has a limit. Every relationship out of these, whether that of parents and children or that of real brother and sister, has to be bypassed when it stands in competition with one's relationship with Allah and His Messenger. Should these two relationships come on a collision course on some occasion, then, the relationship that has to be kept intact is one's relationship with Allah and His Messenger. All relationships competing against it are to be ignored.

Some special notes and rulings

Some special notes and rulings emerging from verses 19 – 23 are being given below:

1. 'Īmān (faith) is the moving spirit of *'Amal* (deed). A deed devoid of it, no matter how good, is nothing but a lifeless form, and simply unacceptable. It has no worth in terms of the salvation in the Hereafter. Of course, there is no injustice with Allah Ta'ālā. He would not let even good deeds of disbelievers that are devoid of the essential light of faith go waste in toto. Their return is given to them right here in this world of their experience. They are given possessions and wealth to procure articles and means of comfort and self-satisfaction as desired. Thus, their account stands all settled, something the Holy Qur'ān takes up in several verses of the Holy Qur'ān.

2. Sin and disobedience spoil human reason. One starts taking good as bad and bad as good. The statement: وَاللّٰهُ لَا يَهْدِى الْقَوْمَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ (And Allah does not lead the wrongdoing people to the right path -19) releases a hint in this direction. Similarly, it has been counterbalanced in another verse of the Qur'ān by saying: اِنْ تَتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ يَجْعَلْ لَّكُمْ فُرْقَانًا : "O those who

believe, if you fear Allah, He will provide you with a criterion (to distinguish between right and wrong) – 8:29." This gives a clear indication that the attitude of obeying Allah and fearing Him gives polish and luster to human reason, balance and poise to thinking and a never-failing ability to distinguish between good and bad.

3. Even good deeds have a mutual rivalry for precedence. Correspondingly, the same element of precedence operates in the ranks of those who do good deeds. All doers of deeds cannot be placed in the same rank since things depend, not on abundance, but on the quality of deeds. It was said in Sūrah al-Mulk: لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا (so that He might test you as to who among you is better in deed – 67:2).

4. For blessings to remain everlasting two things are necessary – that there is no end to them and that they are not separated from those who are blessed with them. Therefore, a guarantee was given to the favored servants of Allah on both counts. By saying: نَعِيمٌ مُّقِيمٌ (Gardens having an everlasting bliss for them -21), it was declared that the blessings were eternal. Then, by saying: خَٰلِدِينَ فِيهَآ أَبَدًا (where they shall dwell forever -22), these successful people were assured that they shall never be separated from these blessings.

The real bond is the bond of Islām and 'Īmān – all bonds of lineage and country must be sacrificed for it

5. The fifth point elaborated here is of basic importance. It settles that the relation with Allah and His Messenger should be given precedence over all relations of kinship and friendship. The relation that clashes against it deserves to be broken. This was the way of the noble Companions. This was why they rose to be the superior most people of the Muslim Ummah. It was some trail they blazed by sacrificing all that was with them, their life, wealth, property, relatives and bonds of all sorts, only for the sake of Allah and His Messenger. That the bond of Islām was supreme and universal stood proved when Bilāl from Ethiopea, Ṣuhayb from Byzantium, Salmān from Persia, the Quraysh from Makkah and the Anṣār from Madīnah became brothers to each other. And that the bonds of lineage and tribe had to be cast aside was also demonstrated when, on the battlefields of Badr and 'Uḥud, swords were crossed between father and son and between brother and brother. These are significant evidences of the creed they held dear.

اَللّٰهُمَّ ارْزُقْنَا اِتِّبَاعَهُمْ وَاجْعَلْ حُبَّكَ اَحَبَّ الْاَشْيَآءِ اِلَيْنَا وَخَشْيَتَكَ اَخْوَفَ الْاَشْيَآءِ عِنْدَنَا .

Yā Allah, bless us with the ability to follow them, and make Your love the dearest of everything in our sight and make Your fear the most fear-worthy of everything with us.

Verse 24

قُلْ اِنْ كَانَ اٰبَآؤُكُمْ وَاَبْنَآؤُكُمْ وَاِخْوَانُكُمْ وَاَزْوَاجُكُمْ وَعَشِيْرَتُكُمْ وَاَمْوَالُ نِ اقْتَرَفْتُمُوْهَا وَتِجَارَةٌ تَخْشَوْنَ كَسَادَهَا وَمَسٰكِنُ تَرْضَوْنَهَآ اَحَبَّ اِلَيْكُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ وَجِهَادٍ فِيْ سَبِيْلِهٖ فَتَرَبَّصُوْا حَتّٰى يَاْتِيَ اللّٰهُ بِاَمْرِهٖ ط وَاللّٰهُ لَا يَهْدِى الْقَوْمَ الْفٰسِقِيْنَ ﴿٢٤﴾

Say, "If your fathers and your sons and your brothers and your spouses and your clan and the wealth you have earned and the trade you apprehend will recede and the homes you like are dearer to you than Allah and His Messenger and *jihād* in His way, then, wait until Allah comes with His command. And Allah does not lead the sinning people to the right path. [24]

Commentary

This verse of Sūrah al-Taubah was revealed essentially about people who did not migrate from Makkah at the time migration was made obligatory for them. Their love for family and property had stopped them from carrying out their obligation to migrate. In their case, Allah Almighty asked the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم to tell them what appears in the verse cited above.

As for the statement: "Wait until Allah comes with His command," Tafsīr authority Mujāhid has said that 'command' referred to here means the command to carry out Jihād and conquer Makkah. The sense of the statement is that the time is near when the evil end of those who sacrifice their relationship with Allah and His Messenger for the sake of worldly bonds shall become visible to all. That is the time when Makkah shall stand conquered, those who chose to discard their appointed duty shall face disgrace and their bonds with people

and things they fancied shall be of no avail to them.

Then, there is the interpretation of the famous Ḥasan al-Baṣri who has said that 'command' at this place means the command of punishment. The sense is that those who sacrificed their spiritual bonds as related to the Hereafter just for the sake of their attachment to what was blandly material and did not migrate as instructed were people who would be seized by the Divine command of punishment fairly soon. Either this punishment would come upon them right here in this mortal world, or they shall have to face the punishment of the Hereafter – which is certain. The purpose at this place is to serve a note of warning against the abandonment of the obligation of migration – but, what has been mentioned here is 'Jihād' and not Hijrah (migration), which is the next step after Hijrah. The hint embedded here is that the real thing has not happened yet. What has come up right now is no more than the initial command to migrate. There are people who did not have the courage to do even that. Ahead of them is the forthcoming command of Jihād following which they would have to surrender all worldly attachments for the sake of love for Allah and His Messenger, even stake their lives for that noble cause. And it is also possible that this may be a place where migration itself has been made to stand for Jihād – because, in reality, that too is nothing but a department of Jihād.

Finally, by saying: وَاللّٰهُ لَا يَهْدِى الْقَوْمَ الْفٰسِقِيْنَ (And Allah does not lead the sinning people to the right path) at the end of the verse, it was made amply clear that those who, despite the standing command of migration, opted for their temporal relationships and kept clinging to their family, relatives, wealth and property, shall soon find out that this conduct of theirs was not going to serve their purpose even in this mortal world. If they were thinking that they would keep basking in the sunshine of family, wealth and property in everlasting peace and tranquility, then, they would never realize this dream. Once the command of Jihād comes, these very attractions will turn into burdens too cumbersome to go along with – because, Allah Ta'ālā does not allow the sinning and the disobedient to achieve their desired objective.

Standing Rules of *Hijrah* (migration)

1. First of all, when Hijrah from Makkah to Madīnah was made obligatory, it was not simply a matter of obligation, in fact, it was also

a hallmark and a symbol of being a Muslim. Anyone who did not migrate at that time, despite having the ability to do so, was not taken to be a Muslim. This injunction was abrogated after the Conquest of Makkah.

2. After that, the basic injunction which remained operative was: Should there be a land where it is not possible for one to comply with his or her religious obligations, such as praying and fasting in accordance with the injunctions of Allah, migrating from there shall remain a matter of duty (*fard*) for ever – on condition that one is capable of undertaking such migration. This is the first degree of compliance.

3. Compliance in the second degree is that one should leave every such place where sin and disobedience have a dominant role in life. This act remains recommended (*mustaḥabb*) for ever. (see details in Fatḥ al-Bārī)

It will be noticed that the address in the verse under study is direct. Those being addressed are people who did not migrate when they were asked to do so because they cared more about their worldly bonds. But, the generality of the words of the verse is telling all Muslims that their love for Allah and His Messenger is obligatory on them in a special degree. That degree is the highest, the foremost. This degree requires that no other bond or love for anything or anyone should ever prevail over it. So, whoever fails to come up with this level of love becomes deserving of punishment from Allah. Let him, then, wait for it.

The Touchstone of True Faith (*'Īmān*)

Therefore, it has been reported in an authentic Ḥadīth narrated by Sayyidnā Anas ibn Mālik رضی اللہ عنہ which appears in the two collections of al-Bukhārī and Muslim that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said: No one can be a true believer until I become to him dearer than his father, children and everyone else in this world.

According to a Ḥadīth from Sayyidnā Abū Umāmah رضی اللہ عنہ appearing in Abū Dāwūd and Tirmidhī, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has said: Anyone who takes a friend or makes an enemy for the sake of Allah or spends his wealth or withholds it for the sake of Allah has made his faith perfect.

These narrations from Ḥadīth prove that perfection of faith de-

pends on the dominance of the love for the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم over all other kinds of love, friendship and enmity, concession and reservation – all of which must remain subservient to the will and command of Allah and His Messenger.

Tafsīr authority, Qāḍī al-Baiḍāwī and other commentators have said that there are very few people who could be considered exempt from the warning given in this verse. The reason is that even the greatest among those who practice and teach religious percepts and virtues seem to be subdued by their love for family and belongings – of course, with the exception of those Allah wills to be otherwise. However, Qāḍī al-Baiḍāwī explains further by saying that 'love' here means love that is within one's control. It has nothing to do with love which one does not control, that which is natural – because Allah Ta'ālā does not obligate anyone beyond one's capacity and control. Therefore, a person may have his heart full of natural love for worldly bonds but he should not let it overpower him to the limit that he starts acting against the will and command of Allah and His Messenger If so, this warning will not apply to him and he will be taken as one who keeps his love for Allah and His Messenger above everything. This is very much like the case of a patient who gets nervous about an unpleasant medicine or unexpected surgery. This is natural. But, he does agree to it rationally since it is for his own good. If so, it is not blameworthy. Then, commonsense never forces him to get rid of his natural nervousness and dislike. Similarly, if someone feels naturally uncomfortable while complying with some Divine injunctions due to his love for wealth and children, yet bears by the discomfort and carries those injunctions out, then, that is not blameworthy either. In fact, it is praiseworthy for he would be regarded as one who keeps his love for Allah and His Messenger on top of everything in the light of this verse.

Nevertheless, as for the high station of love is concerned, there is no doubt about the ideal that love must come to prevail over one's nature as well and go on to turn every discomfort welcome while complying with what your beloved would like you to do. This is not so difficult to comprehend. Think of the seekers of material comfort in this world. Day in and day out, they would embrace the hardest conceivable labor with a smile to get what they want. For a salary check at the end of the month, one would sacrifice sleep, comfort and social relationships.

Honestly or dishonestly, such a seeker would let his desire dominate everything else to achieve his goal.

Moving away from the seekers of the material, let us consider the charisma of the People of Allah. When they seek Allah and His Messenger and the blessings of the-life-to-come, they too reach a station of love which pales out any thoughts of pain and discomfort. According to a Ḥadīth in al-Bukhārī and Muslim, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: There are three traits which, if found in a person, would bless him or her with the sweetness of faith. Those three traits are: (1) That Allah and His Messenger are, in his sight, dearer than anything other than them, (2) that one loves a servant of Allah for His sake only, (3) and that the very thought of Kufr and Shirk gives one the feeling of being thrown away into the fire.

The 'sweetness of faith' mentioned in the Ḥadīth quoted above means this very station of love that makes the hardest possible labor most welcome for the true seeker. Love has its own chemistry of turning the sour into the sweet. Some Muslim scholars have pointed out that a heart when enriched with the sweetness of faith starts passing it on to other parts of the body which begin to relish it during acts of worship and obedience. In some reports, the same thing has been equated with the ecstasy of faith – and in Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: The delight of my eyes is in Ṣalāh.

Qāḍī Thanā'ullāh of Pānīpat has said in Tafsīr Maẓharī: This station of love for Allah and His Messenger is a great blessing – but, it can be acquired only when one stays close to the People of Allah. It is for this reason that Muslim mystics consider it necessary that it be sought with Shaykhs. The author of Rūḥ al-Bayān has said that this station of friendship can be acquired by the one who is ready to sacrifice, like Sayyidnā Ibrahīm Khalīlullāh, عليه السلام everything for the love of Allah – wealth, children, life, everything.

Finally, says commentator al-Baiḍāwī: The preservation and protection of the Sunnah and Sharī'ah of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the rebuttal of and the defense against those who oppose or malign them is also an open sign of love for Allah and His Messenger.

رزقنا الله تعالى وجميع المسلمين حبّه وحب رسوله كما يحب ويرضاه

May Allah bless us and bless all Muslims with love for Him and

the love for His Messenger.

Verses 25 – 27

لَقَدْ نَصَرَكُمُ اللّٰهُ فِىْ مَوَاطِنَ كَثِيْرَةٍ ۙ وَّيَوْمَ حُنَيْنٍ ۙ اِذْ
اَعْجَبَتْكُمْ كَثْرَتُكُمْ فَلَمْ تُغْنِ عَنْكُمْ شَيْـًٔا وَّضَاقَتْ عَلَيْكُمُ
الْاَرْضُ بِمَا رَحُبَتْ ثُمَّ وَلَّيْتُمْ مُّدْبِرِيْنَ ﴿٢٥﴾ ثُمَّ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ
سَكِيْنَتَهٗ عَلٰى رَسُوْلِهٖ وَعَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَاَنْزَلَ جُنُوْدًا لَّمْ تَرَوْهَا
وَعَذَّبَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا ۗ وَذٰلِكَ جَزَآءُ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿٢٦﴾ ثُمَّ يَتُوْبُ
اللّٰهُ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ ذٰلِكَ عَلٰى مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿٢٧﴾

Allah has surely blessed you with His help on many battlefields, and on the day of Ḥunain* : (remember) when you were proud of your great number then it did not help you at all, and the earth was straitened for you despite all its vastness, then you turned away on your backs. [25]

Then Allah sent down His tranquility upon His Messenger and upon the believers, and sent down forces which you did not see, and punished those who disbelieved. And that is the recompense of the disbelievers. [26]

Yet Allah relents, after that, to whomsoever He wills. And Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [27]

Commentary:

Described in the verses cited about are events relating to the scenario of defeat and victory at the battle of Ḥunain. Along with it, several primary and subsidiary problems have also been resolved as a corollary. As the verse opens, Allah Ta'ālā mentions His favor and grace which has descended upon Muslims on all occasions and under all conditions. It was said: لَقَدْ نَصَرَكُمُ اللّٰهُ فِىْ مَوَاطِنَ كَثِيْرَةٍ (Allah has surely blessed you with His help on many battlefields). Particularly cited soon after this opener was: وَّيَوْمَ حُنَيْنٍ (and on the day of Ḥunain) that is, Muslims were blessed with the help of Allah on the day of the battle of Ḥunain as

*. Ḥunain : The name of a place near Makkah, the site of the battle of Ḥunain.

well.

The battle of Ḥunain was specially mentioned because many events and circumstances unfolded unexpectedly and extraordinarily during the course of this encounter. If you were to think about these happenings, you would realize that they make one stronger in faith and bolder in deed. Therefore, before we take up a literal explanation of the verses under study, it is appropriate to describe the major events of this battle. They appear in authentic books of Ḥadīth and history. We are describing them in a somewhat detailed manner so that it becomes easier to understand not only the verses mentioned above but also the lessons that these events teach. The major portion of these events has been taken from Tafsīr Maẓharī. Necessary references to books of Ḥadīth and history may be seen there.

Ḥunain is the name of a place between Makkah al-Mukarramah and Ṭā'if. It is located at a distance of about ten miles from Makkah. When Makkah was conquered in Ramaḍān of Hijrah 8, the Quraysh of Makkah laid down their arms before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. This alarmed the tribe of Banū Thaqīf from Ṭā'if who were a branch of the tribe of Hawāzin known all over Arabia as big, brave, rich and warring. They got together and considered the challenge posed by the newly gained strength of Muslims after their conquest of Makkah. Once the Muslims settled down, they concluded, they would turn to them. Therefore, they decided, the wisest course for them was to launch a pre-emptive attack on Muslims much before they came upon them. To carry out this plan, the tribe of Hawāzin brought all its branches spread out from Makkah to Ṭā'if together. Included there were all big and small units of this tribe – except a few individuals who were less than a hundred in number.

The leader of this movement was Mālik ibn 'Awf who became a Muslim later on and rose to be a major standard-bearer of Islām. However, at that particular time, his zeal to attack Muslims was the highest. Going along with him, the overwhelming majority of the tribe started preparing for war. Two small branches of this tribe, Banū Ka'b and Banū Kilāb, did not approve of this action plan. Allah Ta'ālā had blessed them with some foresight. They said: Even if the forces of the whole world from the East to the West came together against Muḥam-

mad, he would still overcome all of them. We cannot fight the power of God (with him). As for the rest of them, they all gave their pledges to fight. Mālik ibn 'Awf devised a plan to ensure that all of them abided by their commitment to the war. He proposed that all participants should take their families and valuables with them. The catch was that, in case they thought of bolting away from the battlefield, the love of wife, children and things of value with them would hold them back like shackles on their feet and they would be left with no freedom to desert the battlefield. As for their numbers, historians differ. According to the master of Ḥadīth, 'Allāmah ibn Ḥajar and some others, the weightier opinion is that they were twenty-four or twenty eight thousand in number. Some others have given a number of four thousand. It is possible that, with the inclusion of women and children, the total number could be twenty-four or twenty eight thousand while the actual number of fighting men among them remained four thousand.

Anyway, when the news of their dangerous intentions reached the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in Makkah al-Mukarramah, he decided to confront them. He appointed Sayyidnā 'Attāb ibn Asīd as the Amīr of Makkah al-Mukarramah, left Sayyidnā Mu'ādh ibn Jabal behind to teach people Islām, and asked the Quraysh of Makkah for weapons and other war supplies – of course, as a borrowing. The Quraysh chief, Ṣafwān ibn Umaiyyah spoke out: 'Do you want to take this war material forcibly against our will?' He said: 'No, we would rather like to borrow it from you, a borrowing guaranteed to be returned.' After hearing that, he gave one hundred coats of mail and Nawfil ibn Ḥārith offered three thousand spears likewise. According to a narration of Imām Zuhrī, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was now ready to launch the Jihād with an army of fourteen thousand Companions – which included twelve thousand Anṣār of Madīnah who had accompanied him for the conquest of Makkah. Then, there were two thousand Muslims who were residents of Makkah and its environs and who had embraced Islām at the time of its conquest. They are known as '*al-ṭulaqā*.' It was on Saturday, the 6th of Shawwāl that he marched out for this battle saying that the next day, *insha'Allah*, they shall be camping at the spot in Khaif banī Kinānah where the Quraysh of Makkah had assembled to write down their pledge to excommunicate Muslims.

As for the army of fourteen thousand Mujāhidīn, it did march out of

the city for Jihād. But, there was another crowd of people – many men and women of the city of Makkah – who also came out of their homes as spectators. Their hearts were excited with conflicting emotions. Speaking generally, if Muslims were to be defeated on this occasion, they thought, they would have a good chance of taking their revenge against Muslims – and if they were to win, they consoled themselves that they were not going to lose anything after all.

Shaibah ibn 'Uthmān was one of these spectators. When he embraced Islām later on, he narrated what had happened to him: 'In the battle of Badr, my father was killed by Ḥamzah and my uncle by Sayyidnā 'Alī. My heart was full of anger. I was bent on taking my revenge. I took advantage of this opportunity and started walking alongside the Muslim forces. The purpose was to find an opportunity and attack the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. I kept hanging with them always on the look out for that opportunity until came the time during the initial stage of this Jihād when some Muslims had started losing their ground. When I found them running, I seized the opportunity and reached close to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. But, I saw that 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās was guarding him on the right and Abū Sufyān ibn Ḥārith on the left. Therefore, I dashed towards the rear with the intention of attacking him with my sword all of a sudden. Right then, he happened to look at me and he called out to me: 'Shaibah, come here.' He asked me to come closer. Then, he put his blessed hand on my chest and prayed: 'O Allah, remove the Shaytān away from him.' Now, when I raise my eyes, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم becomes in my heart dearer than my own eye and ear and life. He said to me: 'Go and fight the disbelievers.' Now, there I was staking my life for him, fighting the enemy valiantly right to the end. When the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم returned from this Jihād, I presented myself before him. At that time, he told me about the thoughts I had when I started off from Makkah with a particular intention and how I was shadowing him in order to kill him. But, since Allah had intended that I must do something good, I did what I did.'

Something similar happened to Naḍr ibn Ḥārith. He too had gone to Ḥunain with the same intention. However, when he reached there, Allah Ta'ālā put in his heart the thought of the innocence of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and a feeling of love for him. This turned him

into a valiant Mujāhid who took no time in piercing through the enemy lines.

During the course of this very expedition, yet another event took place. This concerns Abū Burdah ibn Niyār When he reached the place known as Awṭās, he saw that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was sitting under a tree and there was someone else with him. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم told Abū Burdah that he was sleeping when the man sitting with him came, grabbed his sword, positioned by the side of his head and said: 'O Muḥammad, now tell me who can save you from me?' I said, 'Allah!' When he heard this, the sword fell down from his hands.' Abū Burdah said: 'O Messenger of Allah, please allow me to behead this enemy of Allah, he looks like a spy.' The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'Abū Burdah, say no more. Allah Ta'ālā is my Protector until my religion prevails over all others.' After all that, he uttered not a single word of reproach for that person, in fact, let him go free.

When Muslims camped after reaching Ḥunain, Sayyidnā Suhail ibn Ḥanẓalah came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم with the news that one of their riders had brought a report that the entire tribe of Hawāzin had arrived with an array of their war materials. Hearing this, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم smiled and said: 'Do not worry. All this material has come as war spoils for Muslims!'

Once settled at the camping grounds, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم sent Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Ḥaddād to gather intelligence from the area controlled by the enemy. He went there and stayed with them for two days watching all prevailing conditions closely. He saw the enemy leader and commander, Mālik ibn 'Awf and heard him saying to his people: 'Muḥammad has yet to face a nation of experienced warriors. That fight against the innocent Quraysh of Makkah has given him false notions. He has become proud of his power. Now, he will find out where he stands. Let all of you go in battle formation at the early hour of dawn in a manner that each warrior has his wife, children and articles of value behind him. Then, take your swords out of the sheaths, break the sheaths, and attack, all together in one go.' These people were really very experienced in warfare. They had deployed their forces not only openly but secretly too. For example, they had hidden some units of their army in different mountain passes.

This was a view of how the army of disbelievers was getting ready

to fight. On the other side, this was the first Jihād of Muslims in which fourteen thousand fighters had come out to confront the enemy. The war material they had with them was much more than they ever had. Then, they had the experience of Badr and 'Uḥud where they had seen how a negligible number of three hundred and thirteen ill-equipped men had triumphed over a strong army of one thousand well-equipped fighters. Under these circumstances, when they came to think about their numbers and preparations on that day, some unfortunate words - 'today, it is impossible that anyone can defeat us, for today, once the fighting starts, the enemy will run' - were uttered by some of them (as reported by Ḥākim and Bazzār).

This attitude – that someone relies solely on one's own power – was something disliked by the supreme Master of humans, jinns and angels. Hence, Muslims were taught a lesson for their lack of discretion. They got a taste of it when the tribe of Hawāzin, following their battle plan, launched a surprise attack and their army units lurking in mountain passes encircled Muslims from all sides. The dust kicked up by their sudden tactical advance turned the day into night, the Companions lost their foothold and started running. In contrast, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was the lone figure seen advancing on his mount, forward and not backwards. A counted few of his noble Companions – reportedly, three hundred, or even less than one hundred as said by others – did, however, stay with him, but they too wished that he would not continue advancing.

Then, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم realized that the situation was grave. He asked Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه to call his Companions. These were his Companions who had given him a pledge to fight when they had assembled under the Tree. Then, he pointed out to those who had been mentioned in the Qur'ān as well as to the Anṣār of Madīnah who had promised to stake their lives in this Jihād. He wanted all of them to come back and wanted them to know that the Messenger of Allah was present on the battlefield.

The call given by Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه ran through the battlefield like some power current. All deserters were smitten with remorse. They regrouped with fresh vigor and valor and fought against the enemy fully and decisively. First the enemy commander, Mālik ibn 'Awf ran away from the battlefield leaving his fami-

ly and belongings behind and took refuge in the fort of Ṭā'if. After him, the rest of his people deserted the battlefield. Seventy of their chiefs were killed. Incidentally, when some children received wounds at the hands of Muslim soldiers, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم took immediate notice and prohibited them sternly against any such action in future. Everything they left fell into Muslim hands. It included six thousand prisoners of war, twenty four thousand camels, forty thousand goats and four thousand 'Ūqiyah* of silver.

The same subject has been taken up in the first (25) and second (26) verses. The gist of what was said there is: 'when you waxed proud of your numbers, it did not work for you and you found yourself all cornered as if the earth was straitened for you despite its vastness. Then, you showed your backs and ran. Then, Allah Ta'ālā sent down upon you His tranquility – sending forces of angels for His Messenger and the believers with him, something you did not see. Thus, the disbelievers were punished at your hands.'

It will be useful to explain the statement: ثُمَّ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ سَكِيْنَتَهٗ عَلٰى رَسُوْلِهٖ وَعَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ (Then Allah sent down His tranquility upon His Messenger and upon the believers) appearing in verse 26 a little further. It means that Allah Ta'ālā sent down His tranquility upon the hearts of the noble Companions who had lost their foothold on the battlefield during the initial attack of the enemy at Ḥunain. This caused their feet to become firm again and those who had run away came back. As for the sending of tranquility upon the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the Companions who had stayed on the war front with firmness and determination, it means that they could see victory close at hand. And since the tranquility mentioned here was of two kinds – one for those who ran, and the other for those who stayed on with the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم with firmness and determination - it is to point out to this refinement that the expressions: عَلٰى رَسُوْلِهٖ وَعَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ (...upon His Messenger and upon the believers) have been placed separately and introduced one after the other with the repetition of the preposition على ('*alā*: upon).

After that, it was said: وَاَنْزَلَ جُنُوْدًا لَّمْ تَرَوْهَا (... and sent down forces which you did not see). This means that the people at large did not see. That some reports mention the 'seeing' of these 'forces' should not be taken

* 1 '*Uqiyah* = 122.472 grams approximately. (اوزان شرعيه / Muftī Muḥammad Shafī)

as contrary to this.

After that, in conclusion, it was said: وَعَذَّبَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَذٰلِكَ جَزَآءُ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ It means that Allah punished those who disbelieved – and those who disbelieved deserved that punishment. This punishment or recompense refers to their subjugation at the hands of Muslims which was something witnessed openly. In sum, what was their worldly punishment, they received promptly. As for their fate in the Hereafter, it has been mentioned in verse 27: ثُمَّ يَتُوْبُ اللّٰهُ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ ذٰلِكَ عَلٰى مَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَاللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ (Yet Allah relents, after that, to whomsoever He wills. And Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful).

A hint has been given here that some people out of those who have received their punishment in the form of defeat at Muslim hands in this Jihād and who still keep adhering to their disbelief will be blessed with the ability to become true believers. The manner in which this happened is given below in some details.

Victory of Ḥunain: Enemy chiefs embrace Islām, Prisoners Return

It will be recalled that some chiefs from the tribes of Hawāzin and Thaqīf were killed in the battle of Ḥunain. Some ran away. Their families became prisoners of war and their properties fell into Muslim hands as spoils that included six thousand prisoners, twenty four thousand camels, more than forty thousand goats and four thousand 'Ūqiyah of silver that equals approximately 489.888 kilograms. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم appointed Sayyidnā Abū Sufyān ibn Ḥarb as the Custodian of war spoils.

After that, the defeated forces of Hawāzin and Thaqīf tried to regroup at various places to challenge Muslims but at every such place they kept facing defeat. Such was the awe of their victors that they chose to lock themselves up into the strong fortress of Ṭā'if. The Holy Prophet ﷺ put this fortress under siege which lasted up to fifteen or twenty days. The besieged enemy kept shooting their arrows from inside the fortress. They could not muster enough courage to come out in the open. The Companions of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم requested him to pray that some evil befalls these people – but he prayed that they be guided right. Then, he went into consultation with his Companions and decided to return. When he reached Ji'irrānah he intend-

ed to go to Makkah al-Mu'azzamah and perform "Umrah and then return to Madīnah. Many of the Makkans who had come as spectators of Muslim victory or defeat seized the occasion to announce their conversion to Islām.

It was on arrival at this stage of the journey that arrangements were made to distribute spoils. While this distribution was still in process, a deputation of fourteen chiefs of the tribe of Hawāzin led by Zuhayr ibn Ṣurad came in all of a sudden. They had come to pay their respects to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. Included in the group was Abū Yarqān, a foster uncle of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, who came up to him, told him that they had embraced Islām and requested that their families and properties may be returned to them. The request was made more personal when he reminded the Messenger of Allah that they were related to him through the bond of fosterage and they were in a distress that was no secret for him. So, he pleaded for his favor. The leader of the deputation was a man of poetry. He said: 'O Messenger of Allah, had we presented some such request in a distress like this before the King of Byzantine or Iraq, then they too – we believe – would have not rejected our entreaty. And as for you, Allah has certainly made you the foremost in high morals, so we have come to you with high hopes.'

The Holy Prophet ﷺ who was himself a mercy for the whole world found his difficulty compounded. On the one hand, his inherent mercy for people demanded that all prisoners and properties be returned to them, while on the other, he realized that all Mujāhidīn have a right in spoils and depriving all of them of their due right was not proper in terms of justice. Therefore, according to a report in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī, the Holy Prophet ﷺ addressed his companions saying:

> "Here are your brothers. They have repented. I wish that their prisoners should be returned back to them. Those from you who are ready to return their share willingly, and with pleasure, should do so as an act of grace. As for those who are not ready to do so, to them we shall give a proper return for it from the first *Fai'* properties (spoils gained without fighting) that come to us in future."

Seeking of public opinion: The correct method

Voices rose from all sides that they were willing to return all pris-

oners in good cheer but, in view of his concern in matters involving justice, equity and rights, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم did not consider different voices of this nature as sufficient. He said: I do not know who are those who got ready to surrender their right gladly and who are those who remained silent under pressure. This is a matter of the rights of people. Therefore, every head of a family or chief of a group should go to their respective families and groups, talk to them individually, separately and frankly, and tell him the truth.

Following his wishes, the chiefs went back to their people, met each of them separately, secured their first-hand agreement and reported to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that all of them were ready to surrender their rights. Then, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم returned all those prisoners back to them.

These were the people whose Taubah or repentance was pointed to in verse 27 which begins with the words: ثُمَّ يَتُوبُ اللَّهُ مِنْ بَعْدِ ذٰلِكَ (Yet Allah relents, after that, to whomsoever He wills). As for the details of events that came to pass during the battle of Ḥunain, part of it has been mentioned in the Qur'ān while the rest has been taken from authentic narrations of Ḥadīth. (Maẓharī and Ibn Kathīr)

Injunctions and Rulings

Many injunctions, rulings and subsidiary elements of guidance appear here under the shadows of these events. In fact, they are the very purpose of the narration of these events.

The very first instruction given in these verses is that Muslims should never wax proud of their power or numerical superiority. They should realize that the way they look towards Allah and His help at times when they are weak and deficient, very similarly, when they are strong and powerful, their total trust should also remain on nothing but the help of Allah alone.

In the battle of Ḥunain, Muslims enjoyed numerical superiority. They had sufficient weapons and supplies. This led some Companions to utter words of pride to the effect that no one could dare defeat them on that particular day. Allah Ta'ālā did not like that a group of people so dear to him would say something like that. The result was that Muslims lost their foothold on the battlefield at the time the enemy launched the initial attack. They started running. Then, it was only

with unseen help from Allah that this battle was won.

Properties of defeated non-believers: The need for justice and caution

The second instruction given here relates to the need for observing caution and justice when handling properties owned by non-believers who have been defeated and overpowered. This is illustrated by the action taken by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم when he had taken war materials for the battle of Ḥunain from the vanquished non-Muslims of Makkah. This was an occasion when these supplies could have been taken from them by force too. But the *Rasūl* of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم took these as borrowing – and then, he returned everything so borrowed back to them.

This event taught Muslims an essential lesson – that they should maintain perfect justice and show mercy and magnanimity even when they are dealing with enemies.

The third instruction is embedded in what he said while making a stopover at Khaif banī Kinānah enroute Ḥunain. 'Tomorrow', he said, 'we shall be staying at a place where our enemies, the Quraysh of Makkah, had once sat and resolved to excommunicate Muslims!' The hint given here is clear – when Allah Ta'ālā has blessed Muslims with victory and power, they should not forget about the days of distress in the past, so that they remain grateful to Allah under all conditions. It will also be recalled that the defeated Hawāzin forces had taken refuge in the Ṭā'if fortress from where they were shooting arrows against Muslims repeatedly. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was requested to pray for a curse to fall on them. He did not respond to their arrows in that manner. He prayed that they be guided to the right path. Being mercy for all the worlds, this prayer for his enemies is teaching Muslims the lesson that Muslims, when they fight in a Jihād, do not intend to subdue the enemy, instead, their objective is to bring them to guidance. Therefore, making efforts to achieve this objective should not be neglected at any time.

The third verse (27) instructs Muslims that they should not write off disbelievers who have been defeated at war because it is likely that Allah Ta'ālā may give them the ability to embrace Islām and be blessed with the light of faith. The Hawāzin deputation's entry into the fold of Islām proves it.

The same deputation from the tribe of Hawāzin had requested the return of their prisoners and the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had asked the gathering of Companions if they agreed to do that out of their free will. The response came in the form of voiced ayes from the audience. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم did not consider it to be sufficient. Instead, he took elaborate steps to ascertain the approval of each and every individual before he would act.

This proves that the matter of rights is serious. It is not permissible to take what belongs to a person as a matter of right unless it becomes certain that this was done on the basis of his or her free will. The silence of a person either due to the awe of the crowd or the sense of shame before people is not a sufficient proof of the person's free will and heart-felt consent. From here, Muslim jurists have deduced the ruling that it is not correct to solicit contributions even for some religious purpose when it is done to impress a person by one's personal office, power, or influence. The reason is that there are many gentle people who would be affected by such conditions around and decide to get away by giving something just to avoid being embarrassed – of course, this does not have the backing of genuine free will, approval and pleasure. Incidentally, what is given in that spirit does not have any *barakah* either.

Verse 28

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓا۟ إِنَّمَا ٱلْمُشْرِكُونَ نَجَسٌ فَلَا يَقْرَبُوا۟ ٱلْمَسْجِدَ ٱلْحَرَامَ بَعْدَ عَامِهِمْ هَٰذَا ۚ وَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ عَيْلَةً فَسَوْفَ يُغْنِيكُمُ ٱللَّهُ مِن فَضْلِهِۦٓ إِن شَآءَ ۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٢٨﴾

O those who believe, the Mushriks* are impure indeed, so let them not come near *Al-masjid-al-ḥarām* after this year of theirs. And if you apprehend poverty, then, Allah shall, if He wills, make you self-sufficient with His grace. Surely, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise. [28]

Commentary

A proclamation of withdrawal was made against Mushriks and disbelievers at the beginning of Sūrah Al-Taubah. The verse appearing

*. Those who associate partners with Allah.

above describes injunctions related to this proclamation. In substance, it stipulated that treaties with disbelievers should be terminated or fulfilled within a year and after the passage of one year from this proclamation, no Mushrik should remain within the sacred precincts of the Ḥaram.

This has been stated in the present verse in a particular manner that accomplishes two objectives simultaneously. It points out to the wisdom behind this injunction and it also alleviates the apprehensions of some Muslims about its implementation. Here, the word: نجس (*najas*) has been used with *fatḥah* on the letter *jīm* which carries the sense of filth and filth denotes every impurity which one averts naturally. Imām Rāghīb al-Iṣfahānī has said: It also includes impurity that is perceived through the senses, such as the eye, the nose or the hand as well as that which one is able to know about through knowledge and reason. Therefore, the word: '*najas*' is inclusive of filth or impurity of three types. The first one is real. Everyone perceives it as such. Then, there is the second type. This is known as legal because it makes *wuḍū* (ablution) or *ghusl* (bath) legally necessary. Examples are the state of *Janābah* (intercourse, ejaculation, wet-dream etc.), as well as, the post-menstruation and post-childbed states known as *ḥaiḍ* and *nifās*. And then, there is the spiritual impurity that relates to the human heart, for example, false beliefs and evil morals. The word '*najas*' covers all of these.

The word, انما (*innamā*) introduced in this verse has been used for *ḥaṣr* or restriction. Therefore, the sentence comes to mean that Mushriks (those who ascribe partners to Allah) are impure indeed (in the sense of 'are but filth'). The truth of the matter is that all three types of impurities are found in Mushriks because they just do not take a lot of impure things as really impure. The outcome is that they do not make any effort to stay away from smearing themselves with obvious impurities – such as, liquor and things made with it. As for the modalities of purification against acquired impurities provided by religious codes – such as, the prescribed bath after having fallen into the state of Janābah – they simply do not believe in them! Similarly, spiritual impurities like false beliefs and evil morals do not make much sense to them.

Therefore, by declaring Mushriks to be impure in this verse, the in-

junction given was: فَلَا يَقْرَبُوا الْمَسْجِدَ الْحَرَامَ بَعْدَ عَامِهِمْ هٰذَا (so let them not come near *Al-masjid-al-ḥarām* after this year of theirs).

The word: *Al-masjid-al-ḥarām* is generally used to denote the place that is surrounded by a walled structure around the Baytullah. But, in the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth, this word, at times, has been used for the sacred precincts of the entire Ḥaram of Makkah as well – which is an area of several square miles and is hemmed in by limits originally appointed by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. It is in this very sense that words of the text of the Qur'ān referring to the event of Mi'rāj: مِنَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ (from *Al-masjid-al-ḥarām* – 18:1) have been taken. This interpretation has the backing of a consensus because the event of Mi'rāj did not originate from inside what is commonly known as *Al-masjid-al-ḥarām*, instead of which, it started from the home of Sayyidah Umm Hānī' رضى الله عنها. Similarly, in the noble verse: إِلَّا الَّذِينَ عٰهَدْتُّمْ عِنْدَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ (Except those with whom you made a treaty near *Al-masjid-al-ḥarām* – 9:7), *Al-masjid-al-ḥarām* means the whole of Ḥaram – because, the event of making a peace treaty mentioned there took place at Ḥudaibiyah, which is located outside the limits of the Ḥaram close by. (Al-Jaṣṣāṣ)

Therefore, the verse comes to mean that the entry of the Mushriks into the sacred precincts of the Ḥaram shall be banned after 'this' year. Which year is 'this' year? Some commentators say that it means the Hijrah year 10. But, according to the majority of commentators, the preferred year is Hijrah 9 – because, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had made the 'proclamation of withdrawal' through Sayyidnā Abū Bakr and Sayyidnā Alī رضى الله عنهما during the Ḥajj season of this very Hijrah year 9. Therefore, the period between Hijrah 9 and Hijrah 10 is the year of respite. It was only after Hijrah 10 that this law came into force.

Does the rule stop Mushriks from entering the Sacred Mosque only, or does it apply to all mosques?

About the injunction appearing in the cited verse: that no Mushrik should be allowed to come near *Al-masjid-al-ḥarām* (the Sacred Mosque) after Hijrah 10, three things need consideration. Firstly, we have to determine if this injunction is particular to the Sacred Mosque, or other mosques of the world also fall under its jurisdiction. Secondly, if this is particular to the Sacred Mosque, then, is the entry of a Mushrik in the Sacred Mosque banned in an absolute sense? Or the ban of

such entry applies only in the case of Ḥajj and 'Umrah – not otherwise. Thirdly, this injunction appearing in the verse relates to Mushriks. In that case, are the disbelievers (*kuffār*) among the People of the Book included here, or are they not?

Since the words of the Qur'ān are silent about these details, therefore, the Mujtahid Imāms have, by turning to the hints of the Qur'ān and the reports of Ḥadīth, given a description of injunctions in accordance with their respective Ijtihād. The first investigation in this connection is about the terms of reference in which the Holy Qur'ān has declared Mushriks as '*najas*' (filth). If this means physical filth or some major legal impurity (*janābah* etc.), then, as evident, allowing the entry of filth in any *masjid* is not permissible. Similarly, allowing any person in the state of major impurity or a woman in the state of menstruation or childbed in any *masjid* is not permissible. And if '*najāsah*' in this verse means the spiritual filthiness of *kufr* and *shirk*, then, it is possible that the injunction which covers it may be different from the injunction which covers outward filth.

According to Tafsīr Al-Qurṭubī, Imām Mālik and other jurists of Madīnah, may Allah have mercy on them, said: Mushriks are filthy on all counts. They generally do not abstain from obvious filth, are not very particular about taking a bath after having fallen into the state of major impurity and, as for the spiritual impurity of *kufr* and *shirk*, they already suffer from it. Therefore, this injunction is equally applicable to all Mushriks and mosques. To prove this, they have cited an executive order given by Sayyidnā 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz رضی اللہ عنہ in which he had instructed the administrators of cities that they should not allow disbelievers to enter mosques. He had quoted this very verse as part of his executive order. In addition to that, there is a Ḥadīth of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم in which he said: لَا أُحِلُّ الْمَسْجِدَ لِحَائِضٍ وَ لَاجُنُبٍ (I do not make entry into the *masjid* lawful for any woman in menstruation or for any person in the state of major impurity) – and since the Mushriks and disbelievers do not generally take a bath when in a state of *janābah*, their entry into the *masjid* has been prohibited.

Imām Shāfi'ī has said that this injunction is applicable to all Mushriks and disbelievers among the People of the Book – but, is restricted to the Sacred Mosque. Their entry into other mosques is not prohibited. (Qurṭubī) In proof, he has cited the event relating to Thumāmah ibn

Athāl, according to which Thumāmah was arrested. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had him tied to a pillar of his Mosque before he embraced Islām.

According to Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, not letting Mushriks come near the Sacred Mosque as commanded in the verse means that they will not be allowed to perform Ḥajj and 'Umrah in their peculiar polytheistic manner from the next year. Its proof lies in the proclamation of withdrawal which was made through Sayyidnā 'Alī al-Murtaḍā رضى الله عنه at the time of the Ḥajj season. This proclamation made was for nothing but: لَا يَحُجَّنَّ بَعْدَ الْعَامِ مُشْرِكٌ which made it very clear that no Mushrik will be able to perform Ḥajj after that year. Therefore, the meaning of the statement: فَلَا يَقْرَبُوا الْمَسْجِدَ الْحَرَامَ (so let them not come near *Al-masjid-al-ḥarām*) in this verse is – in accordance with this proclamation – nothing but that they have been prohibited to perform Ḥajj and 'Umrah, with the exception of entering there on the basis of a particular need which would be subject to the permission of the Muslim 'Amīr. This is proved by what happened in the case of the deputation from the tribe of Thaqīf. When, after the Conquest of Makkah, their deputation came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, he let them stay in the *masjid*, although they were *kāfirs* at that time. Thereupon, the Companions submitted: *'Yā Rasūlallāh*, these are filthy people!' He said: 'The floor of the *masjid* is not affected by their impurity.' (Jaṣṣāṣ)

This report from Ḥadīth also makes it very clear that the Holy Qur'ān, when it calls Mushriks '*najas*' (filth), it refers to the filth of their *kufr* and *shirk* – as interpreted by the great Imām Abū Ḥanīfah. Similarly, according to a narration of the Companion, Sayyidnā Jābir ibn 'Abdullāh رضى الله عنه, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said that no Mushrik should go near the Masjid except that the person be a bondman or bondwoman of a Muslim – then, he could be admitted if needed. (Qurṭubī)

This Ḥadīth too confirms that the Mushriks were not prevented from entering into the Sacred Mosque on the basis of their outward impurity as the cause – otherwise, there was nothing particular about a bondman or bondwoman. In fact, the real basis is the danger of *kufr* and *shirk* lest these come to dominate. In the case of a bondman or bondwoman, this danger does not exist. So, they were allowed. In addition to that, as far as outward impurity is concerned, even Muslims

stand included under this restriction for they too, if in a state of full impurity (*janābah* or *ḥaiḍ* or *nifās*), are not allowed to enter the Sacred Mosque.

Besides, when according to the explanation given by the majority of commentators, *Al-masjid-al-ḥarām* at this place means the entire Ḥaram, then, that too lends support to the view that this prohibition is not based on outward impurity, instead, it is based on the impurity of *kufr* and *shirk*. It is for this reason that their entry was banned not simply in the Sacred Mosque, in fact, it was banned in the entire area known as the Ḥaram. This was done because the Ḥaram is the sanctuary and fortress of Islām and having some non-Muslim inside it cannot be tolerated.

To sum up the investigative approach of the great Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, it can be said that the concern for maintaining *masājid* in a state of perfect purity, free from all sorts of outward and inward pollution, is an issue of major importance having its proof from the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth. But, this verse is not connected with this problem. It is, in fact, connected with the particular political order of Islām that was announced at the beginning of Sūrah Al-Barā'ah and wherein the purpose was to have the sacred Ḥaram vacated by all Mushriks present in Makkah. But, such was the dictate of justice and mercy that all of them were not ordered to vacate immediately and en-block soon after the Conquest of Makkah. Instead of that, the plan was to be implemented within the time-span of one year by allowing people who had a treaty for a specified period to complete that period subject to its solemn fulfillment and by giving others available periods of respite. This is what was stated in the verse under study – that the entry of Mushriks will stand prohibited within the sacred precincts of the Ḥaram after that year and they would no more be able to perform Ḥajj and 'Umrah in their polytheistic style.

After it was clearly stated in the *'āyāt* of Sūrah Al-Taubah that no Mushrik would be able to enter the sacred precincts of the Ḥaram after Hijrah 9, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had increased this injunction to cover the whole of the Arabian Peninsula. Ḥadīth reports confirm it but its implementation could not take effect during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. Then, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه remained unable to attend to it because of other emergent problems on

hand. It was Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ who, during his period, put this legal order in force.

As for the problem of the impurity of disbelievers and the problem of keeping *masājid* secured from impurities of all kinds, that has its own place. These problems and their solutions have been taken up in books of Fiqh (Islāmic Jurisprudence). Details can be seen there. In brief, no Muslim can enter any *masjid* in the state of *najāsah* or *janābah*. As for disbelievers and Mushriks or the People of the Book, they too are not generally free and duly purified from these impurities, therefore, their entry too is not permissible in any *masjid*, unless needed acutely.

When, according to this verse, the entry of Kāfirs and Mushriks into the Ḥaram was banned, Muslims had to face an economic problem. Makkah had no produce of its own. Visitors from far and near brought the needed supplies with them. Thus, during the Ḥajj season, the people of Makkah found what they needed available locally. Now that their entry was banned, the Makkans worried, how things would work for them. In response, they were told in the Qur'ān: وَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ عَيْلَةً فَسَوْفَ يُغْنِيكُمُ اللَّهُ مِن فَضْلِهِ إِن شَاءَ (And if you apprehend poverty, then, Allah shall, if He wills, make you self-sufficient with His grace). In other words, the sense is: if you foresee any economic hardships, then, you must realize that the economic support of the entire creation rests with Allah Almighty. If He wills, He shall make you self-sufficient, free from any dependence on all those *kāfirs*. Incidentally, the restriction of 'if He wills' placed here does not mean that there is any doubt or hesitation in carrying out the Divine will. On the contrary, this is to point out that those who have their sights trained on nothing but material causes find it very difficult to understand and accept a situation like this. Here, the ground reality was that these non-Muslims were the apparent source of all economic support. Putting a ban on the entry of disbelievers amounted to nothing but a termination of the means of livelihood for believers. So, this restriction was placed to remove any such doubts and apprehensions. The strong message given to them was that Allah Ta'ālā does not depend on material causes as such. When He intends to do something, all related causes start falling in line with His will. So, His will is what matters – the rest follows. Hence, إِن شَاءَ (*in shā'*) at the end of the sentence serves as a wise

indicator of this truth.

Verses 29 – 30

قَاتِلُوا الَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَلَا بِالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ وَلَا يُحَرِّمُوْنَ مَا حَرَّمَ اللّٰهُ وَرَسُوْلُهٗ وَلَا يَدِيْنُوْنَ دِيْنَ الْحَقِّ مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ حَتّٰى يُعْطُوا الْجِزْيَةَ عَنْ يَّدٍ وَّهُمْ صٰغِرُوْنَ ﴿٢٩﴾ وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُوْدُ عُزَيْرُ ِابْنُ اللّٰهِ وَقَالَتِ النَّصٰرَى الْمَسِيْحُ ابْنُ اللّٰهِ ؕ ذٰلِكَ قَوْلُهُمْ بِاَفْوَاهِهِمْ ۚ يُضَاهِـُٔوْنَ قَوْلَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ ؕ قٰتَلَهُمُ اللّٰهُ ۚ اَنّٰى يُؤْفَكُوْنَ ﴿٣٠﴾

Fight those who neither believe in Allah nor in the Last Day, nor take as prohibited what Allah and His Messenger have prohibited, nor submit to the Faith of Truth - of those who were given the Book - until they pay *jizyah* with their own hands while they are humbled. [29]

And the Jews said, "'Uzair (Ezra) is the Son of Allah" and the Christians said, "Masīh (the Christ) is the Son of Allah." That is their saying (invented) by their mouths. They resemble the earlier disbelievers in their saying. Be they killed by Allah, how far turned away they are! [30]

Commentary

Verse 28 appearing earlier referred to Jihād against the Mushirks of Makkah. The present verses talk about Jihād against the People of the Book. In a sense, this is a prelude to the battle of Tabūk that was fought against the People of the Book. In Tafsīr al-Durr al-Manthūr, it has been reported from the Qur'ān commentator, Mujāhid that these verses have been revealed about the battle of Tabūk. Then, there is the reference to 'those who were given the Book.' In Islāmic religious terminology, they are referred to as '*ahl al-Kitāb*' or People of the Book. In its literal sense, it covers every disbelieving group of people who believe in a Scripture but, in the terminology of the Holy Qur'ān, this term is used for Jews and Christians only – because, only these two groups from the People of the Book were well-known in and around Arabia. Therefore, addressing the Mushriks of Arabia, the Holy Qur'ān

has said:

اَنْ تَقُوْلُوْآ اِنَّمَآ اُنْزِلَ الْكِتٰبُ عَلٰى طَآئِفَتَيْنِ مِنْ قَبْلِنَا وَاِنْ كُنَّا عَنْ دِرَاسَتِهِمْ لَغٰفِلِيْنَ .

> lest you should say, "The Book was sent down only upon two groups before us, and we were ignorant of what they studied." – 6:156

As for the injunction of Jihād against the People of the Book given in verse 29, it is really not particular to the People of the Book. The fact is that this very injunction applies to all disbelieving groups – because, the reasons for the injunction to fight mentioned next are common to all disbelievers. If so, the injunction has to be common too. But, the People of the Book were mentioned here particularly to serve a purpose. Since, it was possible that Muslims may hesitate to fight against them on the ground that they too are believers in a certain degree, believers in Torah and Injīl, and in Sayyidnā Mūsā and 'Īsā, عليهم السلام may peace be upon them both. So, it was possible that their connection with past prophets and their Books may become a factor in dissuading them from Jihād. Therefore, fighting with them was mentioned particularly.

There is yet another element of coherence at this place. This particularization of the People of the Book in the verse is also releasing a hint that, in a certain way, these people are deserving of greater punishment. The reasons were simple. They were people with knowledge. They had the knowledge of Torah and Injīl. These Scriptures referred to the Last among prophets, Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā صلى الله عليه وسلم, giving his blessed identity in details. They knew all this, yet elected to reject the truth and went on to mount conspiracies against Islām and Muslims. When they did what they did, their crime became much more serious. That explains why fighting against them was mentioned particularly.

The injunction to fight spells out four reasons in this verse:

1. لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ : They do not believe in Allah.
2. وَلَا بِالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ : They do not believe in the Hereafter.
3. لَا يُحَرِّمُوْنَ مَا حَرَّمَ اللّٰهُ : They do not take as prohibited what Allah and His Messenger have prohibited.

4. لَا يَدِيْنُوْنَ دِيْنَ الْحَقِّ : They do not submit to the Faith of Truth.

This raises a doubt. Is it not that the People of the Book, that is, the Jews and Christians, obviously believe in Allah – and in Hereafter and a Last Day too? Why, then, their faith ('Īmān) in these things has been negated? The reason is that mere words of faith are hardly sufficient to prove one's actual belief in it. Not having the kind of faith desirable in the sight of Allah would amount to having no faith at all. Of course, the Jews and Christians did not openly reject the belief in Tauḥīd, that is, oneness of Allah or pure monotheism. But, as says the next verse, the Jews took Sayyidnā 'Uzayr عليه السلام and the Christians took Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام to be the sons of God and thereby assigned to them partnership in His divinity. Therefore, their confession of pure monotheism became ineffectual and any claim to faith, false.

Similarly, the kind of faith desirable in the Hereafter was something not to be found with the People of the Book. Many of them went by the belief that, on the Last Day (the Qiyāmah) there will be no return to life in body forms they had in the mortal world. Instead, it will be a kind of spiritual life. As for Paradise and Hell, they did not consider them to be any particular places. Spirit when happy was Paradise and spirit when gloomy was Hell. Since all this is patently contrary to what Allah says, therefore, even their faith in the Last Day too turns out to be no faith in real terms.

The third thing – that these people do not take, what Allah has declared to be unlawful, as unlawful – means that they do not believe in the unlawfulness of many things prohibited by Torah or Injīl – for example, *ribā* (interest). Similarly, there were many edibles prohibited in Torah and Injīl. They just did not consider these unlawful and indulged in them freely.

This tells us about a religious rule of conduct. According to this rule, taking anything declared unlawful by Allah Ta'ālā as lawful is not simply the commitment of a sin, in fact, it is *kufr*, a flat rejection of the faith itself. Similarly, taking something lawful to be unlawful is also *kufr*. However, should someone inadvertently fall short in practice while still taking the unlawful as unlawful, then, that would be sin, not *kufr*.

Since all wars must end, a limit and end of the action of fighting

against those people has also been set forth in this verse where it has been said: حَتّٰى يُعْطُوا الْجِزْيَةَ عَنْ يَّدٍ وَّهُمْ صٰغِرُوْنَ (until they pay *jizyah* with their own hands while they are humbled).

Literally, *jizyah* means return or recompense. In the terminology of the Sharī'ah, it refers to the amount of money taken from disbelievers in lieu of killing.

The reason is that *kufr* and *shirk* are rebellion against Allah and *Rasūl*. Killing is the real punishment for it. But, Allah Ta'ālā has, in His perfect mercy, reduced their punishment by giving them an option. The option is that, should they agree to live as subjects of the Islāmic state under the general Islāmic legal framework, they may be allowed to remain there against the payment of a nominal amount of *jizyah*. Since, they would be living there as citizens of a Muslim state, the protection of their life, property and honor will be the responsibility of the Islāmic government and no hindrance will be placed in the observance of their religious duties. The amount thus taken is called *jizyah*.

Should *jizyah* be fixed by mutual conciliation and agreement, there is no prescribed limit imposed by the Sharī'ah. It accepts the amount and thing for which a mutual peace treaty is arrived at – as was done by the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم with the people of Najrān. A peace pact was concluded between him and the whole group of these people. They agreed to give him two thousand *ḥullahs* annually. A *ḥullah* is a pair of clothes. It could be a waist wrap for the lower part of the body with a top sheet wrap, or a long, loose shirt or cloak. Even the estimated monetary worth of every *ḥullah* was pre-determined. The value of each *ḥullah* was supposed to be one *'Ūqiyah* of silver. An *'Ūqiyah* is equal to approximately 122.472* grams of silver, according to our weights.

A similar agreement was reached between Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ and the Christians of Banī Taghlib which stipulated that the *jizyah* on them be levied at the rate of Islāmic Zakāh – but, twice the Zakāh.

Furthermore, in the event Muslims conquered a certain land through war, then allowed the properties of its residents to remain under their ownership and possession, and they too agreed to continue

1. Awzān-i-Shar'iyyah, Haḍrat Maulanā Muftī Muḥammad Shafī.

living there as law-abiding citizens, a *jizyah* was levied on them. The rate of *jizyah* fixed and implemented by Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ during the period of his Khilāfah was four *dirhams* from the rich, two *dirhams* from the middle class and only one *dirham* from the active poor who earned by working on wages, or by making or vending things. This monthly payment of one *dirham* was equal to about 3.618 grams* of silver or its equivalent amount. According to rules, nothing was to be taken from the very poor, disabled or handicapped. Similarly, nothing was to be taken from women, children, aged people and religious leaders living in seclusion.

These were small amounts, yet there were instructions from the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم that no one should be made to pay more than he could afford. If anyone oppressed a non-Muslim, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم himself will support that non-Muslim against his oppressor on the day of Qiyāmah (Maẓharī)

Reports such as these have led some Muslim jurists to hold the position that there is no particular rate of *jizyah* payment as fixed by the Sharī'ah. Instead, this has been left for the ruler of the time to determine the appropriate action in terms of existing conditions.

The comments appearing above also make it clear that *jizyah* is a compensation for removing the punishment of killing from disbelievers – not a substitute for Islām. Therefore, there is no justification for doubting as to why were they given the permission to keep staying on their policy of aversion from and denial of Islām for a paltry price. The proof is that permission is given to many other people also who live in an Islāmic country with the freedom to keep observing the percepts of their religion. *Jizyah* is not taken from them – for example, women, children, the aged, religious leaders, the disabled and the handicapped. Had *jizyah* been taken in lieu of Islām, it should have been taken from these as well.

It should be noted that the paying of *jizyah* in this verse has been qualified with the words: عَنْ يَدٍ :'with their own hands.' Here, the first word: عن ('*an*: with) denotes cause, and يد (*yad*: hands) signifies power and subjugation. It means that the payment of this *jizyah* should not

1. Awzān-i-Shar'iyyah, Haḍrat Maulanā Muftī Muḥammad Shafī.

be in the spirit of some voluntary contribution or charity. Instead of that, it has to be in the spirit of recognition and acceptance of Islāmic victory and of the willingness to live under it. (As in Rūḥ al-Maʻānī) As for the later part of the sentence: وَهُمْ صٰغِرُوْنَ (while they are humbled), it means, according to the explanation given by Imām Shāfiʻī رحم الله تعالى, that they should subscribe to the common law of Islām and take the responsibility of remaining obedient to it. (Rūḥ al-Maʻānī and Maẓharī)

Regarding the instruction given in this verse that once these people have agreed to pay *jizyah*, fighting should be stopped, a little explanation may be useful. According to the majority of Muslim jurists, it includes all disbelievers – whether from the People of the Book or from those other than them. However, the Mushriks of Arabia stand excluded from it for *jizyah* was not accepted from them.

In the second verse (30), the subject taken up briefly in verse 29 (where it was said that these people do not believe in Allah) has been enlarged. In the second verse, it has been said that the Jews take Sayyidnā ʻUzayr علیه السلام to be the Son of God.[1] So do the Christians. They say that Sayyidnā ʻĪsā علیه السلام is the Son of God. Therefore, their claim that Allah is One and that they have faith turns out to be false.

After that, it was said: ذٰلِكَ قَوْلُهُمْ بِاَفْوَاهِهِمْ. (That is their saying [invented] by their mouths). This could also mean that these people profess it openly and clearly through their own tongues. There is nothing secret about it. Then, it could also mean that this blasphemy they utter remains the work of their tongues. They can give no reason or justification for it.

Finally, it was said: يُضَاهِـُٔوْنَ قَوْلَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ قٰتَلَهُمُ اللّٰهُ اَنّٰى يُؤْفَكُوْنَ (They resemble the earlier disbelievers in their saying. Be they killed by Allah, how far turned away they are!). It means that the Jews and Christians, by calling prophets sons of Allah, became the same as disbelievers and Mushriks of past ages, for they used to say that the angels, and their idols, Lāt and Manāt, were daughters of God.

1. This is not the belief of all the Jews; it was the belief of some Jews of the Arabia. Now, the Dead Sea Scrolls have also proved the fact that some Jewish sects believed Ezra to be the son of God. It is learnt from some scholars who have studied the Scrolls. والله اعلم (Muhammad Taqi Usmani)

Verses 31 – 35

اِتَّخَذُوْٓا اَحْبَارَهُمْ وَرُهْبَانَهُمْ اَرْبَابًا مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ وَالْمَسِيْحَ ابْنَ
مَرْيَمَ ۚ وَمَآ اُمِرُوْٓا اِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوْٓا اِلٰهًا وَّاحِدًا ۚ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ۗ
سُبْحٰنَهٗ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿٣١﴾ يُرِيْدُوْنَ اَنْ يُّطْفِـُٔوْا نُوْرَ اللّٰهِ
بِاَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَيَاْبَى اللّٰهُ اِلَّآ اَنْ يُّتِمَّ نُوْرَهٗ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْكٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿٣٢﴾
هُوَ الَّذِيْٓ اَرْسَلَ رَسُوْلَهٗ بِالْهُدٰى وَدِيْنِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهٗ عَلَى
الدِّيْنِ كُلِّهٖ ۙ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿٣٣﴾ يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِنَّ
كَثِيْرًا مِّنَ الْاَحْبَارِ وَالرُّهْبَانِ لَيَاْكُلُوْنَ اَمْوَالَ النَّاسِ بِالْبَاطِلِ
وَيَصُدُّوْنَ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ۗ وَالَّذِيْنَ يَكْنِزُوْنَ الذَّهَبَ وَالْفِضَّةَ
وَلَا يُنْفِقُوْنَهَا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ۙ فَبَشِّرْهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ اَلِيْمٍ ﴿٣٤﴾ يَّوْمَ
يُحْمٰى عَلَيْهَا فِيْ نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ فَتُكْوٰى بِهَا جِبَاهُهُمْ وَجُنُوْبُهُمْ
وَظُهُوْرُهُمْ ۗ هٰذَا مَا كَنَزْتُمْ لِاَنْفُسِكُمْ فَذُوْقُوْا مَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْنِزُوْنَ
﴿٣٥﴾

They have taken their rabbis and their monks as gods beside Allah, and also (they have taken) Masīḥ the son of Maryam (as god). And they were not commanded but to worship only One God. There is no god but He. Pure is He from what they associate with Him. [31]

They want to blow out the Light of Allah with their mouths, and Allah rejects everything short of making His light perfect, no matter how the disbelievers may hate it. [32]

He is the One who has sent down His Messenger with guidance and the Faith of Truth, so that He makes it prevail over every faith, no matter how the associators may hate it. [33]

O those who believe, many of the rabbis and the monks do eat up the wealth of the people by false means and prevent (them) from the way of Allah. As for those who accumulate gold and silver and do not spend it in the way of Allah, give them the 'good' news of a painful

punishment, [34] **on the day it will be heated up in the fire of Jahannam, then their foreheads and their sides and their backs shall be branded with it: "This is what you had accumulated for yourselves. So, taste what you have been accumulating."** [35]

Commentary

The four verses cited above mention how astray the learned and the devoted and the abstaining among the Jews and Christians had gone and what blasphemies of word and deed they had come up with. The word: احبار (*aḥbār*) is the plural form of حبر (*ḥibr*) and رهبان (*ruhbān*) is the plural of راهب (*rāhib*). Ḥibr refers to a religious scholar among the Jews and Christians while a *rāhib* denotes someone who devotes to worship and abstains from a worldly role in life.

In the first verse (31), it has been said that these people have taken their rabbis and monks as gods beside Allah and they have done the same with Sayyidnā 'Īsā ibn Maryam علیہ السلام whom they have given the status of their Lord. This is, of course, obvious in the case of Sayyidnā 'Īsā علیہ السلام whom they took to be the son of God and did not demur from saying so. As for the charge against them that they had taken their rabbis and monks as gods, it has its reason. They used to call them as their Lord in clear terms, but even if it is presumed that they did not believe their religious leaders to be their gods, they had virtually transferred to them the right to be obeyed which is the right of Allah *Jalla Thanā'uh*, absolutely and exclusively. They would, so to say, follow the dictates of these leaders under all circumstance – even if their dictates happen to be against Allah and His Messenger. With that attitude, one is bound to land in a valley of no return. How can one go about obeying someone even if that person says things contrary to the dictates of Allah and His Messenger? And how can one who has reached this ultimate limit still not refuse to obey that person? This is like taking someone as god – an act of flagrant blasphemy, an open *kufr*.

This tells us that the present verse is not related in any way to the popular religious issue of following a particular juristic school (*taqlīd*) which has two main aspects. Firstly, common people who are not aware of religious precepts and their details trust 'Ulamā' and follow their *fatāwā*. Secondly, Mujtahid Imāms are followed in juristic issues

requiring Ijtihād. So, this verse has no bearing on that count because such following is, in real terms, nothing but the following of the dictates of Allah and His Rasūl صلى الله عليه وسلم. Those whom Allah has blessed with knowledge and insight have a direct access to the original resources of Shari'ah whereby they know what Allah and His *Rasūl* have said. They see it and act accordingly. The unaware masses act in accordance with the same injunctions by asking those who have knowledge. Then, there are those who have knowledge but are not competent enough to occupy the station of Ijtihād, they too follow the Mujtahid Imāms in matters requiring *ijtihād*. This following is in accordance with the injunction of the Holy Qur'ān and is nothing but obedience to Allah Ta'ālā – as says the Qur'ān: فَسْئَلُوْٓا اَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ It means: 'If you yourself are not aware of the injunctions of Allah and the Messenger, act by asking the people of knowledge – 16:43.'[1]

In sum, the masses of people among the Jews and Christians had ignored Scriptures, Divine commandments and the teachings of apostles totally and, in its place, they had taken the word and deed of self-serving scholars and ignorant pseudo-devotees as the core of their religion. This is what has been condemned in the verse.

Then, it was said that these people chose to take the way of error although they were asked by Allah to worship only one God who is free and pure from what they associated with Him. This verse limits itself to saying that they followed the false and obeyed people other than Allah, something they were not permitted to do. In the verse that follows (32), mentioned there is another error they make. It is said that they do not stop at the error they have already made. They, rather, like to compound their errors when they try to subvert Divine guidance and

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1. The basic point of difference is that the one who follows an imām does not believe him to be an independent point of obedience. He simply consults him as an interpretor of the Holy Qur'ān and Sunnah. That is why he will not follow him if there is a clear clash between his view and a clear-cut ruling given by the Holy Qur'ān and Sunnah. The case of Jews and Christians is totally different. They believe their religious leaders (rabbis and popes) as law-givers. They believe them to be infallible who cannot commit mistakes and their rulings are to be obeyed in any case, even though they contradict the ruling given by the scriptures. For more details on the subject, see my book on 'Taqlīd' or on 'Uloom al-Qur'ān.' (Muḥammad Taqi Usmānī)

black out the Faith of Truth. The statement has been dressed in a similitude – 'they want to blow out the Light of Allah with their mouths' – although, this is something they cannot do. Allah Ta'ālā has already decided that He shall see to it that His Light, that is, the Religion of Islām, reaches its perfection, no matter how displeasing this may turn out to be for those who disbelieve.

After that, the same subject has been further stressed in the third verse (33) by saying that Allah Ta'ālā has sent His Messenger with guidance, that is, the Qur'ān, and with the Faith of Truth, that is, Islām, in order to have it prevail over all other faiths. Appearing in almost the same words, there are several other verses of the Holy Qur'ān promising that the religion of Islām shall be made to prevail over all other faiths of the world.

This glad tiding regarding the ascendancy of Islām is, as in Tafsīr Maẓharī, for most times and circumstances. In a Ḥadīth from Sayydinā Miqdād رضى الله عنه, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: No mud or mortar home shall remain on the face of the earth where the word of Islām has not entered with the honor of the honored and the disgrace of the disgraced. Whoever Allah blesses with honor shall embrace Islām and whoever is to face disgrace shall not, though, accept Islām but shall become a subject of the Islāmic government. This promise of Allah Ta'ālā was fulfilled. For about a thousand years, the primacy of Islām remained operative throughout the world.

How this Light of Allah reached its perfection during the blessed period of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the most righteous and worthy elders of the Muslim Community is a spectacle the world has already witnessed. Then, in future too, in terms of its legitimacy and truth for all times to come, the religion of Islām is a perfect religion no sensible person would elect to criticize. For this reason, this Faith of Truth, in terms of its arguments and proofs, has always been powerful. And, should Muslims follow this religion fully and faithfully, outward ascendancy, power and governance also turn out to be its inevitable results. As proved by the annals of the history of Islām, whenever Muslims acted whole-heartedly in accordance with the Qur'ān and Sunnah, no impediment in their way could defeat their determination and their presence was felt all over the world as a dominant force. And whenever and wherever they have reached the limits of being subju-

gated or oppressed, it was but the evil consequence of heedlessness to and contravention of the injunctions of Qur'ān and Sunnah which came before them. As for the Religion of Truth, it stood its grounds as always, august and protected.

In the fourth verse (34), the address is to Muslims but the subject taken up concerns the conduct of rabbis and monks among the Jews and Christians, a conduct which led common people astray. Perhaps, the address to Muslims indicates a purpose behind the description of the conduct of Jewish rabbis and Christian monks. The purpose is to warn them as well in order that they too remain alert against such conditions prevailing among Muslims.

The verse states that many rabbis and monks among the Jews and Christians eat up the wealth of the people by false means and prevent (them) from the way of Allah.

Most rabbis and monks among the Jews and Christians were involved in this practice – and under such conditions, people generally tend to make a sweeping statement and call everyone bad. But, at this place, the Holy Qur'ān, by adding the word: كثيرا (*kathīra*: many), has prompted Muslims to mind their words even when dealing with enemies. It was clearly demonstrated here by not attributing the practice to all of them. Instead, what was said here was that many of them do so. Then, it was said that they were not doing the right thing when they eat up the wealth of people by false means. 'False means' refers to their practice of giving *fatwā* (religious edict or ruling) counter to the injunction of Torah, for money. In doing so, on occasions, they would misinterpret Divine injunctions through concealment and falsification. Further on from here, yet another error of their conduct was pointed out by saying that they were unfortunate people who, not only that they themselves had gone astray but were also ready to prevent others from seeking the way of Allah in the hope of finding right guidance. The reason is that people, when they see their leaders doing things like that, the inherent love for truth in them dies out. In addition to that, when they start basing their conduct on such false rulings, they end up taking that error and waywardness to be as good as correct.

Since this disease among the rabbis and monks of the Jews and Christians – that they give false rulings for money – showed up because of worldly greed and love for money, the verse takes up the sub-

ject in its own way. It says that excess in love for money and property produces bad results, even punishment if not spent in the way of Allah, and suggests how to get rid of this disease. The exact words of the text are:

وَالَّذِيْنَ يَكْنِزُوْنَ الذَّهَبَ وَالْفِضَّةَ وَلَا يُنْفِقُوْنَهَا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ فَبَشِّرْهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ اَلِيْمٍ .

> As for those who accumulate gold and silver and do not spend it in the way of Allah, give them the 'good' news of a painful punishment.

The words: وَلَا يُنْفِقُوْنَهَا (and do not spend it) indicate that people who spend in the way of Allah as necessary, for them the rest of their accumulated wealth brings no harm.

In Ḥadīth too, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said: Wealth for which Zakāh has been paid is not included under: كنزتم (*kanaztum*: you have accumulated). (Abū Dāwūd, Aḥmad and others)

This tells us that keeping wealth which remains after taking out Zakāh is no sin.

The majority of Muslim jurists and Imāms have taken this approach. It should be noted that the pronoun in وَلَا يُنْفِقُوْنَهَا (and do not spend it) reverts to فضة (*fiḍḍah*) which means silver. Two things, gold and silver, were mentioned immediately earlier but the pronoun was made to revert to silver only. Tafsīr Maẓharī takes it to be a clear indicator of the rule that should a person have a little of both gold and silver, his threshold (*niṣāb*) will be determined in terms of silver. His Zakāh will be paid by calculating the price of gold in terms of the price of silver.

Explained in the fifth verse (35) is the detail of the 'painful punishment' referred to at the end of verse 34. There, it has been said: يَوْمَ يُحْمٰى عَلَيْهَا فِيْ نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ فَتُكْوٰى بِهَا جِبَاهُهُمْ وَجُنُوْبُهُمْ وَظُهُوْرُهُمْ، هٰذَا مَا كَنَزْتُمْ لِاَنْفُسِكُمْ فَذُوْقُوْا مَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْنِزُوْنَ (on the day it will be heated up in the fire of Jahannam, then their foreheads and their sides and their backs shall be branded with it: "This is what you had accumulated for yourselves. So, taste what you have been accumulating". It means that this 'painful punishment' will be for those who do not pay Zakāh. It will come on a day when the gold and silver accumulated by them will be heated up in the Fire of Jahannam.

Then, their foreheads, sides and backs shall be branded with it, and they shall be told, as a sort of verbal punishment, that it was what they had accumulated for themselves, and in consequence, they better have a taste of what they had accumulated. The return of a deed is the deed itself. That which was accumulated illegally or that which was accumulated legally but without having paid its Zakah ultimately became, by itself, the punishment of these people.

In this verse, mention has been made of branding foreheads, sides and backs. Either it means the whole body or these three parts have been particularized for the reason that a miser who does not like to spend his wealth in the way of Allah would usually greet a needy visitor looking for charity or Zakah with a forehead all wrinkled with distaste. After that, when to avoid him, he tries to turn away to the right or the left side. And if the needy person still persists, he would turn his back on him. Perhaps, the forehead, the sides and the back were thus particularized for this punishment.

Verses 36 – 37

إِنَّ عِدَّةَ الشُّهُورِ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ اثْنَا عَشَرَ شَهْرًا فِي كِتٰبِ اللّٰهِ يَوْمَ
خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضَ مِنْهَا أَرْبَعَةٌ حُرُمٌ ذٰلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ
فَلَا تَظْلِمُوا فِيهِنَّ أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَقَاتِلُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ كَافَّةً كَمَا
يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ كَافَّةً وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللّٰهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٣٦﴾ إِنَّمَا
النَّسِيءُ زِيَادَةٌ فِي الْكُفْرِ يُضَلُّ بِهِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يُحِلُّونَهُ
عَامًا وَيُحَرِّمُونَهُ عَامًا لِيُوَاطِئُوا عِدَّةَ مَا حَرَّمَ اللّٰهُ فَيُحِلُّوا
مَا حَرَّمَ اللّٰهُ زُيِّنَ لَهُمْ سُوءُ أَعْمَالِهِمْ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ
الْكٰفِرِينَ ﴿٣٧﴾

Surely, the number of months according to Allah is twelve (as written) in the Book of Allah on the day He created the heavens and the Earth, of which there are Four Sacred Months. That is the right faith. So, do not wrong yourself therein. And fight the Mushriks* all together as they fight you all together, and be sure that

*. Those who associate partners with Allah.

Allah is with the God-fearing. [36]

The postponement of the months is nothing but an increase in the infidelity whereby the disbelievers are misguided. They allow it one year and disallow it another year, so that they may conform (only) to the number of what Allah has sanctified, and allow what Allah has disallowed. Beautified for them is the evil of their deeds. And Allah does not lead the disbelieving people to the right path. [37]

Commentary

Mentioned in the previous verses were the errors and misdeeds of disbelievers and Mushriks who persisted with their disbelief and kept associating others in the pristine divinity of Allah. In the present two verses, mentioned there is another bad custom prevailing in Arabia since its age of ignorance – which Muslims have been instructed to abstain from. That bad custom relates to a chain of happenings. Details go back to the distant past since when a year was accepted as having twelve months by the religious codes of all past prophets. Out of these twelve months, four were considered sacred, therefore, worthy of great reverence. They were three consecutive months of Dhu al-Qa'dah, Dhu al-Ḥijjah, Muḥarram, and the month of Rajab.

All religious codes of past prophets agree that every act of worship during these four months is more reward-worthy – and should someone commit a sin during these months, the curse and punishment resulting from it is also more blameworthy. Under these past religious codes, fighting and killing was prohibited during these months.

Since the Arabs of Makkah al-Mukarramah are the progeny of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام through Sayyidnā Isma'īl عليه السلام, they all professed belief in Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm as a prophet and messenger of Allah and claimed to follow his Sharī'ah. However, as fighting, killing and hunting was also prohibited during these four sacred months among the followers of the Ibrāhīmī community, the people of the Arab age of ignorance found the implementation of this injunction extremely hard. The reason was that, during the pagan period, fighting and killing had become the only vocation for them. Therefore, in order to make this restriction somewhat easy on them, they spun out all sorts of excuses to satisfy their self-serving motives. Whenever they needed

to fight during one of the sacred months, or whenever a sacred month approached while they were already fighting, then, they would say: This year, this month is not sacred. The next month will be the sacred one. For example, when Muḥarram arrived, they would say that 'this year, the month of Muḥarram is not sacred, instead of that, the month of Ṣafar will be sacred'. And if they had some other exigency, they would say, 'this year, the month of Rabī' al-Awwal will be sacred;' or say, 'this year the month of Ṣafar has come earlier and Muḥarram will come later.' Thus, in one stroke, they made the month of Muḥarram the month of Ṣafar! In short, they would somehow complete the count of four month during one year, but would not bother to retain the order and signification of what was divinely determined. It was up to them to give any name to any month, call it Dhu al-Ḥijjah or call it Ramaḍān or make one come earlier and make the other come later. If another emergency came, for example, when they would remain engaged in fighting for a period as long as ten months leaving only two months to the year, then, on this occasion, they would increase the number of months in a year saying, 'this year will be of fourteen months.' In this way, they would make the remaining four months the sacred months.

In short, they did show their reverence for the Ibrāhīmī faith at least by doing it during four months of the year when they would abstain from fighting and killing. But, they did not observe the order of the months in a year according to which four of them were fixed as the sacred months. This was what they juggled with seeking interpretations to suit their needs or fancies.

The outcome was that, during those days, it had become difficult to determine as to which month was Ramaḍān or Shawwāl, or Dhu al-Qa'dah, Dhu al-Ḥijjah or Rajab. When Makkah al-Mukarramah was conquered in the 8th year of Hijrah and the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم sent Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه to make the proclamation of withdrawal from disbelievers and Mushriks at the Ḥajj season of Hijrah year 9, this month was, according to the genuine calculation, the month of Dhu al-Ḥijjah. But, according to the same old custom of the Jāhiliyyah, this month was declared to be that of Dhu al-Qa'dah – and, that year, according to them, not Dhu al-Ḥijjah, but Dhu al-Qa'dah was fixed to be the month of Ḥajj. Then came the Hijrah year 10 which

was the year the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم went for his last Ḥajj. As nature would have it, this brought about a unique arrangement when the genuine month was that of Dhu al-Ḥijjah and, according to the arbitrary reckoning of the people of Jāhiliyyah too, that turned out to be Dhu al-Ḥijjah itself. Therefore, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said in his address at Minā: إِنَّ الزَّمَانَ قَدِ اسْتَدَارَ كَهَيْئَتِهِ يَوْمَ خَلَقَ اللّٰهُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضَ (Time has come back to its position Allah had set the day He created the heavens and the Earth). It means that the month, the real month of Dhu al-Ḥijjah, turned out to be the same month of Dhu al-Ḥijjah that year, even in the sight of the people of Jāhiliyyah.

This was a window to the custom of Jāhiliyyah, a custom that changed the number, the order and the specification of months in a year, even made deletions and alterations at will. The activity of making a few changes here and there may appear to be small and innocuous. A month is a month, call it by any name, it remains a month. But, things were not that simple in the given situation. These changes disturbed the implementation of Islāmic laws connected with a particular month or a specific date in it. They also affected duties fixed for the beginning or the end of the year – such as, the injunctions of Ḥajj during the ten days of the month of Dhu al-Ḥijjah, fasting during the ten days of Muḥarram and the rules of Zakāh at the end of the year. As a direct result of this practice, hundreds of Islāmic laws were distorted making their compliance useless. In these two verses of the Holy Qur'ān, Muslims have been instructed to remain on guard against the evil in this pagan custom.

Explanation of the Verses

In the first verse (36), it is said: إِنَّ عِدَّةَ الشُّهُوْرِ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ اثْنَا عَشَرَ شَهْرًا (Surely, the number of months with Allah is twelve). Here, the word: عدة (*'iddah*) appears in the sense of number and شهور (*shuhūr*) is the plural of شهر (*shahr*) which means month. The sense of the verse is that the number of months, in the sight of Allah, is set as twelve. No one has the right to decrease or increase it.

Then, by placing the phrase: فِيْ كِتٰبِ اللّٰهِ (*fī kitābillāh*: as written in the Book of Allah), it was stressed that this numerical setting of the months stood recorded in the Preserved Tablet (*al-lawḥ al-maḥfūẓ*) since eternity. Then, by saying: يَوْمَ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضَ (on the day He created the heavens and the Earth), it was indicated that the Divine decree

was, though, promulgated in eternity, but this order and setting of the months came into being when the heavens and the Earth were created.

After that, it was said: مِنْهَآ اَرْبَعَةٌ حُرُمٌ (of which there are Four Sacred Months). It means that, out of these twelve months, four are sacred. They have been called حرم : *ḥurum* (sanctified ones) in the sense that fighting and killing is prohibited during these month, and also in the sense that these months are blessed and it is obligatory to hold them in due esteem and that acts of worship during these become more reward worthy. The first injunction out of the two was abrogated in the Sharī'ah of Islām. But, the second one, that of increased reverence, esteem and devotion to 'Ibādah during this period still remains operative in Islām.

In his address[1] of the Day of Sacrifice[2] during the Last Ḥajj[3], the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم explained these months by saying: 'Three months are consecutive – Dhu al-Qa'dah, Dhu al-Ḥijjah, Muḥarram – and one month is that of Rajab.' But, there were two sayings of the Arabs regarding the month of Rajab. Some tribes used to call the month we know as Ramaḍān the month of Rajab while, as seen by the tribe of Muḍar, Rajab was the month which comes in between Jumadā ath-Thāniah and Sha'bān. Therefore, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم – by mentioning this month as 'Rajab Muḍar' – also made it clear that it means the month of Rajab which is in between Jumadā ath-Thāniah and Sha'bān.

Thereafter appears the statement: ذٰلِكَ الدِّيْنُ الْقَيِّمُ (That is the right faith). It means that keeping the setting and serial order of months, specially the injunctions pertaining to the Four Sacred Months, according to the very original decree of Allah Almighty is the right faith to hold. Making any changes, alterations, additions or deletions therein is a sign of crookedness in comprehension and temperament.

The next sentence: فَلَا تَظْلِمُوْا فِيْهِنَّ اَنْفُسَكُمْ (So, do not wrong yourselves therein) means: 'Do not become unjust to your own selves either by acting against the compliance-worthy injunctions pertaining to these

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1. Khuṭbah.

2. Yowmu 'n-Naḥr, a term used for 'Īdu 'l-Aḍḥā, the Feast or Festival of Sacrifice.

3. Ḥujjatu 'l-Wadā'.

months, or by not observing proper respect for them, or by falling short in devoting yourselves to 'Ibādah therein.

In his Aḥkām al-Qur'ān, Imām Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ has said: The hint given here is that these blessed months have an exclusive characteristic of their own. Whoever devotes to 'Ibādah during these is awarded with the ability and encouragement to engage in it during the rest of the months. Similarly, a person who makes the necessary effort to stay safe from sins and other bad deeds during these months finds that remaining safe from these evils during the rest of the months of a year has become easier on him. Therefore, not making the best out of these months is a terrible loss.

Up to this point, the text has described and refuted a particular custom of Jāhiliyyah practiced by the Mushriks of Makkah. At the end of the verse, the text reverts to the command, given at the beginning of the verse (5), requiring that, soon after the expiry of the treaty deadline, Jihād is obligatory against all Mushriks and disbelievers.

The second verse (37) also refers to this very custom of Jāhiliyyah by saying: إِنَّمَا النَّسِيٓءُ زِيَادَةٌ فِى الْكُفْرِ (... is nothing but an increase in the infidelity). The word: نَسِيٓء (*nasī'*) is a verbal noun that means to move back or postpone. It is also used in the sense of that which is delayed (*mu'akhkhar*).

By putting these month back and forth, the Mushriks of Arabia thought, they would be achieving two things – that it will serve their material interests and that it would also give them the credit of complying with the Divine injunction. This approach was not approved by Allah Ta'ālā for their act of postponing and moving months from where they belonged was nothing but an addition to their stance of denial which was going to lead them further astray. That they go about declaring that a sacred month was not sacred in some year and then be ready to name it as sacred in some other year was simply unacceptable. The sentence: لِّيُوَاطِـُٔوا عِدَّةَ مَا حَرَّمَ اللّٰهُ (so that they may conform [only] to the number of what Allah has sanctified) following soon after means that a mere act of conforming to the given number cannot stand for the correct compliance of the injunction. The truth of the matter is that the month for which the injunction has been given should be the month in which the injunction must be carried out. This is imperative.

Injunctions and Rulings

The verses cited above prove that the order of months and the names by which they are known in Islām should not be taken as terms coined by human beings. In fact, the day the Lord of all the worlds created the heavens and the Earth, He had also settled this order and these names and, along with it, particular injunctions to be carried out during particular months. From here, we also come to know that, in all Islāmic legal injunctions, only lunar months are credible in the sight of Allah Ta'ālā. In other words, all injunctions of the Sharī'ah of Islām – such as, fasting, Ḥajj, Zakāh and many others – relate to the lunar calendar. But, when it comes to finding out the day, date and year, the way the Holy Qur'ān has declared the Moon as its indicator, it has, very similarly, identified the Sun too as the other sign: لِتَعْلَمُوْا عَدَدَ السِّنِيْنَ وَالْحِسَابَ (so that you may know the number of years and the count [of time] – 10:5). Therefore, keeping track of days and years through a lunar or solar calendar is equally permissible. But, Allah Ta'ālā has favored the lunar calendar for His injunctions and has made it the pivot round which the laws of the Sharī'ah of Islām revolve. Therefore, the preservation of the lunar calendar is Farḍ al-Kifāyah (a religious obligation which, if fulfilled by some, will absolve others). If the entire community of Muslims were to abandon the lunar calendar and forget all about it, then, everyone will be a sinner. However, if it remains viably preserved, the use of another calendar is also permissible – but, there is no doubt that it is against the way of Allah and the way of the worthy forbears of Islām – therefore, it is not good to opt for it unnecessarily.

The month intercalated to complete the count of years has also been considered by some as impermissible under this verse. But, that is not correct because the system of reckoning under which the intercalation of a month is made has nothing to do with the laws of the Sharī'ah of Islām. The people of Jāhiliyyah changed these religious laws by adding to the lunar and legal months, therefore, they were censured. As for the practice of intercalation, it does not affect Islāmic legal injunctions, therefore, it is not included under this prohibition.

Verses 38 – 42

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مَا لَكُمْ اِذَا قِيْلَ لَكُمُ انْفِرُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ

اثَّاقَلْتُمْ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ ط أَرَضِيتُم بِالْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا مِنَ الْآخِرَةِ ج
فَمَا مَتَاعُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا فِي الْآخِرَةِ إِلَّا قَلِيلٌ ﴿٣٨﴾ إِلَّا تَنفِرُوا
يُعَذِّبْكُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا وَيَسْتَبْدِلْ قَوْمًا غَيْرَكُمْ وَلَا تَضُرُّوهُ
شَيْئًا ط وَاللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٣٩﴾ إِلَّا تَنصُرُوهُ فَقَدْ
نَصَرَهُ اللَّهُ إِذْ أَخْرَجَهُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ثَانِيَ اثْنَيْنِ إِذْ هُمَا فِي
الْغَارِ إِذْ يَقُولُ لِصَاحِبِهِ لَا تَحْزَنْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَنَا ج فَأَنزَلَ اللَّهُ
سَكِينَتَهُ عَلَيْهِ وَأَيَّدَهُ بِجُنُودٍ لَّمْ تَرَوْهَا وَجَعَلَ كَلِمَةَ الَّذِينَ
كَفَرُوا السُّفْلَىٰ ط وَكَلِمَةُ اللَّهِ هِيَ الْعُلْيَا ط وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ
﴿٤٠﴾ انفِرُوا خِفَافًا وَثِقَالًا وَجَاهِدُوا بِأَمْوَالِكُمْ وَأَنفُسِكُمْ فِي
سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ط ذَٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٤١﴾ لَوْ كَانَ
عَرَضًا قَرِيبًا وَسَفَرًا قَاصِدًا لَّاتَّبَعُوكَ وَلَٰكِن بَعُدَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ
الشُّقَّةُ ط وَسَيَحْلِفُونَ بِاللَّهِ لَوِ اسْتَطَعْنَا لَخَرَجْنَا مَعَكُمْ ج
يُهْلِكُونَ أَنفُسَهُمْ ج وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ إِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾

O those who believe, what is wrong with you that when it is said to you, "Come out in the way of Allah," you turn heavy (and cling) to the ground. Have you become happy with the worldly life instead of the Hereafter? So, the enjoyment of the worldly life is but little as compared with the Hereafter. [38]

If you do not come out (in the way of Allah), He will punish you with a painful punishment and will bring in your place a nation other than you, and you can do Him no harm at all. And Allah is powerful over everything. [39]

If you do not help him, then, Allah has already helped him when the disbelievers expelled him, the second of the two, when they were in the cave, and he was saying to his companion, "Do not grieve. Allah is surely with us." So, Allah sent down His tranquility on him and strengthened him with troops you did not see, and rendered the word of the disbelievers low. And the word of

Allah is the highest. And Allah is Mighty, Wise. [40]

Come out (in the way of Allah), light or heavy, and carry out *jihād* with your wealth and lives, in the way of Allah. That is good for you, if you were to realize. [41]

If there had been some gain near at hand and an average journey, they would have certainly followed you, but the difficult destination was too far for them. And they will swear by Allah: "If we could, we would have set out with you." They are ruining themselves. And Allah knows that they are liars. [42]

Commentary

The verses quoted above describe an important battle from among those fought by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. As a corollary, also given there are many injunctions and instructions. This battle is known as the battle of Tabūk and is almost the last battle of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم.

Tabūk is the name of a place located close to the Syrian border towards the north of Madīnah. Syria was, at that time, a province of the government controlled by Byzantine Christians. When the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم reached Madīnah in the 8th year of Hijrah after the conquest of Makkah and the battle of Ḥunain, that was a time major parts of the Arabian Peninsula had come under the control of the Islāmic state. This was a period of some peace Muslims could enjoy after their eight year long battles against the Mushriks of Makkah.

But, destiny has its own workings. Is it not that Allah had already revealed about the blessed person of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم: لِيُظْهِرَهُ عَلَى الدِّيْنِ كُلِّهِ. (so that He makes it prevail over every faith – 9:33, 48:28, 61:9) which was the glad tidings of a world of victories and the ascendancy of the Faith of Truth? The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his companions in the mission would hardly have the respite to relax. Soon after they reached Madīnah, Syrian traders of olive oil informed them that the Byzantine ruler, Hiraql had assembled his forces at Tabūk on the border of Syria. They were also told that soldiers of the Byzantine army had been placated by the payment of advance salaries for one year and that they had sinister understanding with some Arab tribes and that they all had plans to mount a surprise attack on Madīnah.

When this information reached the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, he

decided that their attack plans should be pre-empted and they should be challenged where they are gathered together with their forces. (Tafsīr Maẓharī, with reference to Muḥammad ibn Yusūf Ṣāliḥī)

By chance, this was a terribly hot summer. People in Madīnah were generally devoted to agriculture. Their farms were close to being harvested. On this depended their economy, rather the sustenance of the whole year. Like people in vocations who have empty pockets by the end of the month, people who depend on agricultural produce are empty-handed close to the harvesting time. On the one hand, they have poverty while on the other, they have hopes of income in the near future. Then, there was this scorching heat of the summer for a people who had their first breather after eight years of incessant wars. No doubt, this was an exacting trial.

But, equally crucial was the time. This Jihād was different. It was not like the wars they had fought before. At that time, they were fighting common people like them. Here, they were to confront the trained armed forces of Hiraql, the ruler of Byzantine. Therefore, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم ordered all Muslims of Madīnah to come out for this Jihād. He also invited some other tribes living around Madīnah to join in.

This general call was a tough test for those who were willing to make sacrifices for Islām as well as a challenge to the hypocrites who would have to prove their claim to be Muslims by joining the Jihād or be exposed as false pretenders. Apart from this consideration, the inevitable consequence was that those who professed belief in Islām reacted to the call in terms of the conditions they were in. The Holy Qur'ān has enumerated them as separate groups of people and has pointed out to their condition as well.

The first group included those who were strong and perfect in their faith. They were ready for Jihād without any hesitation. The second group was composed of those who hesitated at the initial stage but, later on, joined up with those ready for Jihād. About these two groups of people, the Holy Qur'ān said: ٱلَّذِينَ ٱتَّبَعُوهُ فِى سَاعَةِ ٱلْعُسْرَةِ مِنۢ بَعْدِ مَا كَادَ يَزِيغُ قُلُوبُ فَرِيقٍ مِّنْهُمْ (... who followed him in the hour of hardship after the hearts of a group of them were about to turn crooked – 9:117). The third group was of those who were unable to join this Jihād on the basis of some genuine excuse. About that, by saying: لَّيْسَ عَلَى ٱلضُّعَفَآءِ وَلَا عَلَى ٱلْمَرْضَىٰ (There is no

blame on the weak, nor on the sick – 9:91), the Holy Qur'ān has announced the acceptance of their excuse. Belonging to the fourth group were people who, despite that they had no excuse to offer, simply did not participate in the Jihād out of sheer laziness. Several verses were revealed about them, for example: وَاٰخَرُوْنَ اعْتَرَفُوْا بِذُنُوْبِهِمْ (And there are others who admitted their sins – 9:102), and: وَاٰخَرُوْنَ مُرْجَوْنَ لِاَمْرِ اللّٰهِ (And there are others whose matter is deferred till the command of Allah [comes] – 9:106), and: وَعَلَى الثَّلٰثَةِ الَّذِيْنَ خُلِّفُوْا (And [He relented] towards the three whose matter was deferred – 9:118). These three verses were revealed about similar people. They carry admonition for their inertia as well as the good news that their Taubah or repentance has been accepted.

The fifth group was that of the hypocrites, the *munāfiqs*. Their hypocrisy was deep seated and saying yes to Jihād was hard. Finally, they failed to cover it up and stayed away from Jihād. Hypocrites have been mentioned in the verses of the Qur'ān on many places.

The sixth group included *munāfiqs* who had joined up with Muslims with the objective of spying and mischief making. The Holy Qur'ān mentions their conduct in the following verses:

{1} وَفِيْكُمْ سَمّٰعُوْنَ لَهُمْ (And among you there are their listeners – 9:47);

{2} وَلَئِنْ سَاَلْتَهُمْ لَيَقُوْلُنَّ (And if you ask them, they will say – 9:65);

{3} وَهَمُّوْا بِمَا لَمْ يَنَالُوْا (And had planned for what they could not achieve – 9:74).

Given above were details about those who stayed away from the Jihād. But, the fact is that their total number was negligible. The majority did belong to those Muslims who, despite many prohibitive factors, chose to sacrifice all gains and comforts and were ready to face expected hardships in the way of Allah. This is the reason why the total number of the Islāmic army which set out for this Jihād was thirty thousand – a number never seen in a Jihād before.

The outcome of this Jihād expedition was that Hiraql, the Byzantine ruler – when he heard about such a large Muslim force coming up against him – was overtaken by awe. He simply did not turn up on the battlefield. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم camped on the war front with the army of his angelic companions for a few days in the hope that the enemy may decide to come. When totally disappointed, he returned back to Madīnah.

The verses quoted above obviously relate to the fourth group of people who did not take part in the Jihād because of their inertia and without any valid excuse. In the beginning of this set of verses, they were admonished for their lethargy, then, they were told why they behaved the way they did and, finally, they were told how to correct themselves. This wise approach unfolds major lessons.

Regard for *Dunyā* and Disregard for *Ākhirah*:

The Root of all Crimes

No doubt, what has been said above is related to a particular event. But, if we were to think about it, we shall realize that the real cause of negligence towards faith - and of every crime and sin - is nothing but this love for the material and heedlessness towards the life to come. Therefore, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: حُبُّ الدُّنْيَا رَأْسُ كُلِّ خَطِيْئَةٍ (The love for Dunyā [material life of the present world] is at the top of every error and sin). That is why it was said in the verse:

> O those who believe, what is wrong with you that, when it is said to you, "Come out in the way of Allah," you turn heavy (and cling) to the ground. Have you become happy with the worldly life instead of the Hereafter? - 38.

This was the diagnosis of the disease. Its treatment appears next when it was said:

> So, the enjoyment of the worldly life is but little as compared with the Hereafter - 38.

The thrust of the argument is that one's major concern in life should be that of the eternal life in Ākhirah. It is this concern for the Ākhirah that offers the only and the most perfect treatment of all diseases. Incidentally, this also happens to be the master prescription for eradication of crimes that bother human societies all over the world.

The 'Aqā'id of Islām (articles of faith) are based on three principles: (1) Tauḥīd (Oneness of Allah); (2) Risālah (the true mission of the messenger and prophet sent by Allah) and (3) Ākhirah (Hereafter). Out of these, the belief in Ākhirah is, in all reality, the moving spirit for correction of deeds and serves as an iron wall before crimes and sins. A little thought would make it amply clear that there can be no peace in the world without subscribing to this belief. The world as we see it today has reached its zenith in terms of its material progress. Then,

there is no dearth of functional solutions and plans designed to eradicate crimes. Laws proliferate. So does the administrative machinery to interpret and implement the objective. No doubt, there is progress in those terms. But, along with it, everyone is witnessing crimes increasing day by day, everywhere, in all societies. The reason, in our humble view, is no other but that the disease has not been properly diagnosed and the line of treatment is not sound. The root of the disease is materialism, excessive indulgence in the temporal and negligence or avoidance of the thought of any life to come. The only way this frame of mind can be corrected is to remember Allah and think about the Akhirah, the life to come. Whenever and wherever in this world this master prescription was used, whole nations and their societies became models of humanity at its best earning the admiration of angels. That this happened during the blessed period of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, and during the age of his noble Companions, is sufficient as its proof.

It is interesting that the modern world would very much like to eradicate crimes but it would do so by not having to bother about God and the Hereafter. To achieve this purpose, it invents, introduces and surrounds itself with things to live with – a lifestyle which would never allow human beings to turn their attention towards God and Hereafter. The result of this negative approach is no mystery. We are watching it with our own eyes. Even in the face of ever better laws, all legal systems seem to be failing. Crimes are there as they were, in fact, they are increasing with dangerous speed. To conclude, we wish that intelligent people among countries and nations of the world would think of using this Qur'ānic prescription, at least for once, and discover for themselves how easily crimes can be controlled.

Now, as we move to the second verse (39), the text has, after serving a notice of warning to the lazy and the listless about their disease and its treatment, delivered its verdict by saying:

> 'If you do not come out for Jihād, Allah will have you go through a painful punishment and bring in your place a nation other than you, and (by your refusal to follow Islām) you can bring no loss to Allah (or His Messenger) because Allah is powerful over everything.'

In the third verse (40), by citing the event of the Hijrah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, it has been stressed that the Rasūl of Allah has no need to

depend on any human help and support. Allah can help him directly through unseen factors – as it happened at the time of Hijrah when his own people had forced him to leave his homeland. On this journey, the only companion he had was Sayyidna Abu Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ, the true one. Enemy foot soldiers and riders were looking for them in hot pursuit. The place to hide he had found was no fortified fortress. It was just a cave and the enemy search party had reached close to its edges. Inside it, the companion of the cave, Sayyidna Abu Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ was worried, not for his own safety, but about his master. He was in fear lest the enemy outside were to harm the Holy Prophet ﷺ. But, the master himself was sitting calm like a mountain at peace. Not simply that he was himself cool and collected, he was telling his companion, Sayyidna Abu Bakr: لَا تَحْزَنْ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ مَعَنَا (*'la tahzan innallaha ma'ana'*: Do not grieve. Allah is with us).

What has been said here is composed of a couple of words, easy and effortless as they sound. But, let those listening place the blueprint of conditions prevailing before their eyes, cross their hearts and ask: Can someone dependent on mere material means be that tranquil? Every honest person would say that it was just not possible. The reason for this was no other but that which the Qur'an has given in the next sentence:

> So, Allah sent down His tranquility on him and strengthened him with troops you did not see ...

These troops could be troops of angels, and of the elemental forces of the entire universe too – for they are, so to say, a virtual army of Allah. When this happened, the ultimate came to be. The word of disbelievers was rendered low and the word of Allah remained the highest.

In the fourth verse (41), the command given earlier has been repeated for emphasis. It is being said here that, once the Prophet of Allah orders people to come out for Jihad, they must come out as a matter of absolute obligation – for on the compliance of this command hinges all that is good for them.

The fifth verse (42) mentions an excuse offered by those who did not participate in the Jihad because of negligence and lethargy. It was rejected as unacceptable because they did not use the ability given by Allah to pick and choose the right thing to do in His way. Therefore, the excuse of not having that ability is not valid.

Verses 43 – 52

عَفَا اللّٰهُ عَنْكَ ۚ لِمَ اَذِنْتَ لَهُمْ حَتّٰى يَتَبَيَّنَ لَكَ الَّذِيْنَ صَدَقُوْا
وَتَعْلَمَ الْكٰذِبِيْنَ ﴿٤٣﴾ لَا يَسْتَاْذِنُكَ الَّذِيْنَ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ
وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ اَنْ يُّجَاهِدُوْا بِاَمْوَالِهِمْ وَاَنْفُسِهِمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌۢ
بِالْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿٤٤﴾ اِنَّمَا يَسْتَاْذِنُكَ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ
الْاٰخِرِ وَارْتَابَتْ قُلُوْبُهُمْ فَهُمْ فِيْ رَيْبِهِمْ يَتَرَدَّدُوْنَ ﴿٤٥﴾
وَلَوْ اَرَادُوا الْخُرُوْجَ لَاَعَدُّوْا لَهٗ عُدَّةً وَّلٰكِنْ كَرِهَ اللّٰهُ انْۢبِعَاثَهُمْ
فَثَبَّطَهُمْ وَقِيْلَ اقْعُدُوْا مَعَ الْقٰعِدِيْنَ ﴿٤٦﴾ لَوْ خَرَجُوْا فِيْكُمْ
مَّا زَادُوْكُمْ اِلَّا خَبَالًا وَّلَاۡاَوْضَعُوْا خِلٰلَكُمْ يَبْغُوْنَكُمُ الْفِتْنَةَ ۚ
وَفِيْكُمْ سَمّٰعُوْنَ لَهُمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌۢ بِالظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٤٧﴾ لَقَدِ ابْتَغَوُا
الْفِتْنَةَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَقَلَّبُوْا لَكَ الْاُمُوْرَ حَتّٰى جَآءَ الْحَقُّ وَظَهَرَ اَمْرُ
اللّٰهِ وَهُمْ كٰرِهُوْنَ ﴿٤٨﴾ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَّقُوْلُ ائْذَنْ لِّيْ وَلَا تَفْتِنِّيْ ؕ
اَلَا فِي الْفِتْنَةِ سَقَطُوْا ؕ وَاِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ لَمُحِيْطَةٌۢ بِالْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿٤٩﴾ اِنْ
تُصِبْكَ حَسَنَةٌ تَسُؤْهُمْ ۚ وَاِنْ تُصِبْكَ مُصِيْبَةٌ يَّقُوْلُوْا قَدْ اَخَذْنَاۤ
اَمْرَنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَيَتَوَلَّوْا وَّهُمْ فَرِحُوْنَ ﴿٥٠﴾ قُلْ لَّنْ يُّصِيْبَنَاۤ
اِلَّا مَا كَتَبَ اللّٰهُ لَنَا ۚ هُوَ مَوْلٰىنَا ۚ وَعَلَى اللّٰهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ
الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٥١﴾ قُلْ هَلْ تَرَبَّصُوْنَ بِنَاۤ اِلَّاۤ اِحْدَى الْحُسْنَيَيْنِ ؕ
وَنَحْنُ نَتَرَبَّصُ بِكُمْ اَنْ يُّصِيْبَكُمُ اللّٰهُ بِعَذَابٍ مِّنْ عِنْدِهٖۤ اَوْ
بِاَيْدِيْنَا ۫ۖ فَتَرَبَّصُوْۤا اِنَّا مَعَكُمْ مُّتَرَبِّصُوْنَ ﴿٥٢﴾

Allah has forgiven you; why did you permit them before the truthful ones could become distinct to you, and you could be sure of the liars. [43]

Those who believe in Allah and in the Last Day do not ask you to be excused from *jihād* with their wealth and lives. And Allah is aware of the God-fearing. [44]

Only those people ask you to be excused who do not believe in Allah and in the Last Day and whose hearts are in doubt, so they are wavering in their doubt. [45]

And had they wished to set out, they would have made some preparation for it, but Allah disliked their going forth, so He detained them, and it was said to them, "Stay back with those who are staying back." [46]

And had they set out with you, they would have added nothing for you but trouble, and would have run around in your midst seeking disorder for you. And among you there are their listeners. And Allah is aware of the wrongdoers. [47]

They sought disorder even earlier and tried to upset matters for you, until the Truth arrived and the will of Allah prevailed, though they disliked it. [48]

And among them there is one who says, "Allow me (to stay behind) and do not expose me to an ordeal." Look! They have already fallen into an ordeal, and certainly the Jahannam has the disbelievers encircled. [49]

If some good comes to you, it annoys them, and if some suffering visits you, they say, "We had already taken care of our problem" and they go their way delighted. [50]

Say, "Nothing can ever reach us except what Allah has written for us. He is our Master. And in Allah alone the believers must place their trust." [51]

Say, "Is it not that you are expecting for us but one of the two good things (martyrdom and victory)? And we are expecting for you that Allah sends to you a punishment from Himself or at our hands. So, wait. Of course, we are waiting with you. [52]

Commentary

Mentioned in most of the seventeen verses of this entire section are hypocrites who had, on false pretexts, secured permission from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that they would not go to participate in the Jihād of Tabūk. Falling under it, there are many injunctions, rulings and instructions that have been pointed out in the commentary.

The first verse (43) begins in a subtle manner. Here, a complaint has been made to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. He has been told that those hypocrites were lying when they presented themselves as deserving of being excused from active service in Jihād. But, he accepted their plea without first having made an inquiry about the real state of

affairs with them which would have made the true and false of it come out clearly. This gave them the opportunity to go about congratulating themselves on how smartly they had deceived the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Though, in verses coming next, Allah Ta'ālā has also clarified that those people were asking to be excused from Jihād just to play tricks – otherwise, even if they were not permitted, still then, they would have never gone. And in another verse, it was also pointed out that, in case these people did go to this Jihād, it would have been of no use to Muslims – in fact, their conspiracy and mischief would have been far more dangerous.

But, the drift of the argument is that, in case, permission was not given, they were still not going to go anyway – however, their hypocrisy would have definitely been exposed and they would not have had the opportunity to throw taunts at Muslims and exult that they had fooled them. And the real purpose here is not to show wrath or displeasure, instead of that, it is a way of saying that, in future, the motives and moves of such people should be watched and screened carefully. Then, it can be conceded that there does exist a certain kind of displeasure in the external framework of words but it has been coated with a delightful concern for sensitivities, particularly that of his dear prophet. We can see that the expression of displeasure which begins with the words: لِمَ أَذِنْتَ لَهُمْ (why did you permit them?) does not actually begin until said ahead of it was: عفا الله عنك (Allah has forgiven you)!

It has been said by people having insight in the nature of God-Prophet relationship that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had a special attachment to Allah *Jalla Thanā'uh*. His heart could not simply bear the shock of being in a situation where he is subjected to questioning from Allah Ta'ālā. For instance, if the words: لِمَ أَذِنْتَ لَهُمْ (why did you permit them?) – which translate as interrogation in their formal appearance – were said in the very beginning, the blessed heart of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم would have been simply unable to take it. Therefore, the words: عَفَا اللَّهُ عَنْكَ (Allah has forgiven you) have been placed earlier. This serves two purposes. Firstly, it gives him the information that something has happened, something that was not liked by Allah. Secondly, the information that he has been forgiven for whatever had happened was being given beforehand so that what is said next should not break his blessed heart.

As for the word of forgiveness, let there be no doubt about it and let no one say that forgiveness is usually given for crimes and sins – and the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was *ma'ṣūm* (protected from sin) – what, then, would be the sense of forgiveness at this place? The answer is that the way there is forgiveness for sin, similarly, there could also be forgiveness for what is contrary to the preferred way (*khilāf al-awlā*) or is simply undesirable – and that does not violate the concept of the *'iṣmah* (infallibility) of a prophet.

In the second (44) and third (45) verses given there was the difference between believers and hypocrites. Those who believe in Allah Ta'ālā truly and staunchly do not pick an occasion like that only to seek desertion from Jihād just for the sake of love for their lives and wealth and go about asking the permission of their prophet to stay back. In fact, this is the behavior of only those who do not believe in Allah and the Day of Judgement (*Ākhirah*), truly and correctly – and, as for Allah, He knows the God-fearing perfectly well.

At least, one aspect of why their excuse was false has been given in the fourth (46) where it has been said: وَلَوْ أَرَادُوا الْخُرُوجَ لَأَعَدُّوا لَهُ عُدَّةً (And had they [really] wished to set out [for Jihād], they would have [of necessity] made [at least] some preparation for it [but they made none] – 46). This shows that the plea of having an excuse was false. The truth of the matter was that they just did not have any intention to come out for Jihād.

How do we know if an excuse is reasonable or unreasonable?

An important principle comes out from this verse, a principle that can be used to distinguish between a reasonable and an unreasonable excuse. To wit, an excuse presented only by those who are ready to carry out orders – but, were rendered helpless by some accident – can be entertained and accepted. This rule applies to all matters pertaining to the excusable. As for a person who made no preparation to carry out orders, did not even make the intention to carry them out when called, thereafter, came some excuse – then, this excuse will be like the excuse of sin which is worse than the sin. This will not be taken as a genuine excuse. Take the example of a person who has made all preparations to present himself in the *masjid* for his Jumu'ah prayers and is intending to go there when, all of a sudden, came an impediment which prevented him from going there. Then, his excuse is rea-

sonable – and Allah Ta'ālā blesses such a person with the full reward of his 'Ibādah (worship). As for the person who just did not make any preparation but, later on, by chance, there came an excuse before him, then, this will be taken as nothing but a ruse and pretext.

Take an example from everyday life. One makes the necessary preparations to get up early in the morning and get ready for the Fajr Ṣalāh. An alarm was set in the family clock, or somebody was assigned to give a wake-up call. After that, by chance, whatever arrangements were made did not work – and because of this, the Ṣalāh was missed. This is similar to what happened to the Holy Prophet ﷺ when he camped on a journey late at night (*lailatu 't-ta'rīs*). In order to get up on time for Fajr Ṣalāh, he arranged with Sayyidnā Bilāl رضی اللہ عنہ that he would sit the night out and wake up everybody when morning comes. But, by chance, sleep overtook him too. Everyone got up only when the sun had risen. So, this excuse is correct and reasonable. Based on this, consoling his Companions, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: لَاتَفْرِيطَ فِى النَّوْمِ اِنَّمَا التَّفْرِيطُ فِى الْيَقْظَةِ (There is no negligence in sleep. Negligence occurs only when awake) that is, one is excusable in sleep. The reason was that, as far as it was possible to do, arrangements had already been made to get up on time.

In short, a decision about an excuse being reasonable or unreasonable can be taken only by knowing whether or not preparation was made to carry out orders. Simply using a lot of words to make a point gets nothing done.

In the fifth (47) verse, it was explained that the hypocrites had procured the permission to stay away from Jihād by deceit and now it was better that they just did not participate in it. Had they gone there, they would have done nothing but hatch conspiracies, circulate rumors and spread disorder. The Qur'ānic statement: وَفِيكُمْ سَمّٰعُونَ لَهُمْ (And among you there are their listeners) means that, among Muslims, there were some simple people too, people who could be easily taken advantage of and who may have likely been affected by their false rumors.

The opening sentence of the sixth verse (48): لَقَدِ ابْتَغَوُا الْفِتْنَةَ مِنْ قَبْلُ (They sought disorder even earlier...) refers to what had happened in the battle of 'Uḥud.

The statement: وَظَهَرَ اَمْرُاللّٰهِ وَهُمْ كٰرِهُوْنَ (... and the will of Allah prevailed,

though they disliked it) at the end of the verse indicates that victory is in the hands of Allah. This has been proved on earlier occasions when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was blessed with victory. The same will happen in this Jihād as well when all tricks played by hypocrites will fail.

In the seventh verse (49), after citing a particular excuse made by a noted hypocrite called Jadd ibn Qays, a comment has been made which shows how astray he had gone. The excuse for not going on Jihād he came up with was that he happened to be a young man. If he went out against the Roman Christians in their territory, there were chances that he might fall into the snare of their beautiful women! ('Do not expose me to an ordeal') The Qur'ān responded by saying: أَلَا فِي الْفِتْنَةِ سَقَطُوا (Look! they have already fallen into an ordeal). It means that such people were not very smart. They were trying to hide behind the excuse of an imaginary ordeal, not realizing that they had already fallen into the sin of a certain ordeal, the ordeal of acting against the command of Allah and His Messenger, and of deserting the Jihād effort, right on the spot.

The last sentence of the verse: وَإِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ لَمُحِيطَةٌ بِالْكَافِرِينَ (and certainly the Jahannam has the disbelievers encircled) could have two meanings. It could either mean that the Hell would encircle them in the Hereafter. Or, it could mean that the very chain of causes, which are operating to take them to Hell, and which have them all encircled at that time, are what has been equated with Hell. Given this interpretation, it would suggest that they happen to be, even now, within the larger circle of nothing but Hell.

In the eighth verse (50), yet another aspect of their low nature has been mentioned by saying that, though these people live among Muslims giving the outward impression that they are one of them, but they are soon exposed by their inner reactions to what happens to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. The text illustrates it by saying: إِنْ تُصِبْكَ حَسَنَةٌ تَسُؤْهُمْ (If some good comes to you, it annoys them) and: وَإِنْ تُصِبْكَ مُصِيبَةٌ يَقُولُوا قَدْ أَخَذْنَا أَمْرَنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَيَتَوَلَّوْا وَّهُمْ فَرِحُونَ (and if some suffering visits you, they say, "We had already taken care of our problem"). They would take it as expedient in their favor that they did not go along with Muslims and found the results satisfying enough to go away delighted.

In the ninth verse (51), Allah Ta'ālā has instructed the Holy Prophet

صلى الله عليه وسلم, and Muslims, that they should not allow themselves to be affected by things like that said by the hypocrites and that they must always keep reality as it is before them. The words of the Holy Qur'an are: قُلْ لَّنْ يُّصِيْبَنَآ اِلَّا مَا كَتَبَ اللّٰهُ لَنَا هُوَ مَوْلٰىنَا وَعَلَى اللّٰهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ (Say, "Nothing can ever reach us except what Allah has written for us. He is our Master. And in Allah alone the believers must place their trust"). In other words, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is being asked that he should tell those, who worship material causes such as these, that they were in a serious deception. These material causes were no more than a curtain. The power that moves inside them belongs to none but Allah. Whatever happens to us is exactly whatever Allah has written for us – and He is our Master, Guardian and Helper. And Muslims must place their real trust in Him alone. Consequently, they must see material causes as no more than effective agents and signs while never taking them to be the real dispensers of any good or evil.

Belief in Destiny includes Management of affairs: Giving Inaction or Mismanagement the name of Trust is Wrong

This verse (51) brings into sharp focus the essential reality of the religious issue of Taqdīr (destiny) and Tawakkul (trust). The outcome of believing in Taqdīr and Tawakkul should never be that one goes home, sits tight, does nothing and says what will be will be. This is no belief in destiny and this is no practice of trust. Instead, the thing to do is that one should devote full personal energy and courage to put together whatever lawful material means one can arrange for – within the range of what lies in control. After this has been done, the matter should be resigned to destiny and trust. However, the caveat is that one has to keep his or her sight trained toward Allah alone – for it is He who has the ultimate outcome of everything one does under His absolute power and control.

Speaking generally, people around the world are found in great confusion about the religious problem of Taqdīr and Tawakkul. Some of them are plain irreligious. They just do not recognize the very possibility that something like that exists. They are content with material means as the deity they are comfortable with. Then, there are other people who lack proper awareness. They have turned destiny and trust into a pretext for their sloth and inertia. The Prophet of Islām, may the blessing of Allah and peace be upon him, made full preparation for

Jihād, after which, the revelation of this verse put an end to this cycle of excess and deficiency and showed the right way – as put in the lively Persian saying: بر توکل زانوے اشتربه بند (With Tawakkul [trust], do tie the knees of the camel). To sum up, means which you have the option to utilize, are nothing but blessings given by Allah Ta'ālā. Not taking advantage of these means is ingratitude, even stupidity. Of course, do not give means the status they do not have and believe that results and outcomes are not subservient to these means – instead of all that, they obey the command of Allah Almighty.

The tenth verse (52), while mentioning the charming demeanor of the man of true faith, has given an answer to hypocrites delighted over the discomfort of Muslims. According to the man of true faith, the thing that hypocrites take as suffering for Muslims and which makes them happy is really no suffering for them. In fact, it is another form of comfort and success. The reason is that a man of true faith becomes deserving of eternal returns and rewards even after having failed in his strong resolve, something that is the real objective of all his successes. Therefore, he succeeds, even in failure and gains, even in loss.

The first sentence of the verse: هَلْ تَرَبَّصُونَ بِنَآ إِلَّآ إِحْدَى الْحُسْنَيَيْنِ (Say, "Is it not that you are expecting for us but one of the two good things [martyrdom and victory]"?) means exactly this. However, along with it, it was also said that the fate of the disbelievers was quite contrary for they will find no respite from suffering or punishment under any condition. Either, they would be punished at the hands of Muslims right here in this world, in which case, they will taste the punishment in the mortal and the eternal world both. And, in case, they somehow escaped unscathed in the mortal world, there is no possibility of deliverance from the punishment of the Hereafter.

Verses 53 – 59

قُلْ اَنْفِقُوْا طَوْعًا اَوْ كَرْهًا لَّنْ يُّتَقَبَّلَ مِنْكُمْ ؕ اِنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ قَوْمًا
فٰسِقِيْنَ ﴿٥٣﴾ وَمَا مَنَعَهُمْ اَنْ تُقْبَلَ مِنْهُمْ نَفَقٰتُهُمْ اِلَّآ اَنَّهُمْ
كَفَرُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَبِرَسُوْلِهٖ وَلَا يَاْتُوْنَ الصَّلٰوةَ اِلَّا وَهُمْ كُسَالٰى وَلَا
يُنْفِقُوْنَ اِلَّا وَهُمْ كٰرِهُوْنَ ﴿٥٤﴾ فَلَا تُعْجِبْكَ اَمْوَالُهُمْ وَلَآ

اَوۡلَادُهُمۡ ؕ اِنَّمَا يُرِيۡدُ اللّٰهُ لِيُعَذِّبَهُمۡ بِهَا فِى الۡحَيٰوةِ الدُّنۡيَا
وَتَزۡهَقَ اَنۡفُسُهُمۡ وَهُمۡ كٰفِرُوۡنَ ﴿٥٥﴾ وَ يَحۡلِفُوۡنَ بِاللّٰهِ اِنَّهُمۡ
لَمِنۡكُمۡ ؕ وَمَا هُمۡ مِّنۡكُمۡ وَلٰكِنَّهُمۡ قَوۡمٌ يَّفۡرَقُوۡنَ ﴿٥٦﴾ لَوۡ يَجِدُوۡنَ
مَلۡجَاً اَوۡ مَغٰرٰتٍ اَوۡ مُدَّخَلًا لَّوَلَّوۡا اِلَيۡهِ وَهُمۡ يَجۡمَحُوۡنَ ﴿٥٧﴾
وَمِنۡهُمۡ مَّنۡ يَّلۡمِزُكَ فِى الصَّدَقٰتِ ۚ فَاِنۡ اُعۡطُوۡا مِنۡهَا رَضُوۡا وَاِنۡ
لَّمۡ يُعۡطَوۡا مِنۡهَاۤ اِذَا هُمۡ يَسۡخَطُوۡنَ ﴿٥٨﴾ وَلَوۡ اَنَّهُمۡ رَضُوۡا مَاۤ
اٰتٰهُمُ اللّٰهُ وَرَسُوۡلُهٗ ۙ وَقَالُوۡا حَسۡبُنَا اللّٰهُ سَيُـؤۡتِيۡنَا اللّٰهُ مِنۡ
فَضۡلِهٖ وَرَسُوۡلُهٗۤ ۙ اِنَّاۤ اِلَى اللّٰهِ رٰغِبُوۡنَ ﴿٥٩﴾

Say, "Spend, willingly or unwillingly, it will never be accepted from you. You have been a sinning people." [53]

And nothing has prevented their spending(s) from being accepted from them but that they have disbelieved in Allah and in His Messenger, and they do not come to the Ṣalāh but lazily, and do not spend but unwillingly. [54]

So, their wealth and their children should not attract you. In fact, Allah wants to punish them with these in this lowly life and that their souls should depart while they are disbelievers. [55]

And they swear by Allah that they are from among you, whereas they are not from among you, but they are a people in fear. [56]

If they find a place of refuge or caves or any place to enter, they will turn towards it running unbridled. [57]

And among them there are those who find fault with you in the matter of Ṣadaqāt (alms). So, if they are given some of it, they are quite happy, and if they are given nothing from it, suddenly they become unhappy. [58]

Only if they were happy with what Allah and His Messenger had given to them, and had said, "Allah is all-sufficient for us. Allah shall give us (more) of His grace, and His Messenger as well. Indeed, we crave for Allah alone." [59]

Commentary

Mentioned in the previous verses were bad morals and bad deeds of the hypocrites. The same subject continues in the verses quoted above. As for the statement in verse 55 -- where it has been declared that the wealth and children of hypocrites should not be taken as a blessing for them as these are, in fact, a form of punishment from Allah -- it has a reason. Is it not that love for and engrossment in worldly life becomes a punishment right here in this world? One starts with desires to acquire worldly wealth, then goes through a series of hard work to establish the necessary channels, day in and day out, sacrificing sleep, comfort and family life. After that, if one succeeds, come the concerns of increasing and retaining it – a round the clock punishment indeed. A serious loss or sickness could become unwelcome cans of worries, and if one happens to get everything one wants, the vicious circle continues either through apprehensions of decreasing wealth or cravings of increasing it further. There is just no respite anytime.

Finally, these things go out of one's hands. This may happen at the time of death, or much earlier. Whenever it does, despair takes over. What is this, if not punishment? Man surrounds himself with articles of comfort and calls it comfort. Real comfort, the peace and comfort of the heart is something man has yet to find. But, in the meantime, man has to rely on material means and things for satisfaction, not realizing that these agents will keep snatching away his share of peace in this world and will also become the prelude to the punishment in the world to come.

Can Ṣadaqah be given to a disbeliever?

The last two verses show that the hypocrites used to receive a share from properties available as Ṣadaqāt (plural of Ṣadaqah, meaning a donation through which one seeks reward with Allah Ta'ālā, usually referred to as alms or charity). But, when they did not get these as they wished, they became angry and started accusing and cursing. If, at this place, Ṣadaqāt are taken in their general sense – which includes all Ṣadaqāt, necessary (*wājib*) and voluntary (*nafl*) – then, there is no problem, because non-Muslims can be given out of the voluntary Ṣadaqāt. This is permissible on the basis of the consensus of Muslim Ummah and stands proved from Sunnah. However, even if Ṣadaqāt at this place mean what is obligatory, like Zakāh and 'Ushr, then, we

should remember that the hypocrites were given a share from it on the basis that they claimed to be Muslims. Since they claimed to believe in all the necessary articles of faith and their *kufr* was hidden in their hearts, with no conclusive proof in their apparent claims they were treated as Muslims to the extent of this worldly life and Allah Ta‘ālā had, in His wisdom, given the orders that the hypocrites should be treated as Muslims. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Signs of Hypocrites and Warning for Muslims

In verse 54, two signs of hypocrites have been given: (1) they come to the Ṣalāh lazily and listlessly, and (2) that they spend in the way of Allah unwillingly.

Muslims have been warned here that sloth in Ṣalāh and being sour at heart while spending in the way of Allah, that is, Zakāh and Ṣadaqah, are signs of *nifāq* (hypocrisy). All Muslims should make conscious effort to stay safe from these signs.

Verse 60

إِنَّمَا الصَّدَقٰتُ لِلْفُقَرَآءِ وَالْمَسٰكِيْنِ وَالْعٰمِلِيْنَ عَلَيْهَا وَ الْمُؤَلَّفَةِ
قُلُوْبُهُمْ وَفِى الرِّقَابِ وَالْغٰرِمِيْنَ وَفِىْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ وَابْنِ
السَّبِيْلِ ؕ فَرِيْضَةً مِّنَ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿۶۰﴾

The Ṣadaqāt (prescribed alms) are only for the poor, the needy, those employed to collect these, those whose hearts are to be won, in (freeing) slaves, in (releasing) those in debt, in the way of Allah and for a wayfarer – this being prescribed by Allah. And Allah is Knowing, Wise. [60]

Commentary

Recipients of Ṣadaqāt

Objection raised by some hypocrites against the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and the answer to that, was given in verses previous to this. It will be recalled that the hypocrites had blamed the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that he (God forbid) does not observe justice while disbursing Ṣadaqāt and gives whatever he wishes to whomsoever he chooses.

In the present verse, by listing the recipients of Ṣadaqāt category-wise, Allah Ta‘ālā has removed their misunderstanding and told them

that He has himself determined as to who should receive Ṣadaqāt. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم only complies with the Divine decree while disbursing Ṣadaqāt – doing nothing on his own or with his personal opinion.

This is also confirmed by the Ḥadīth reported in Abū Dāwūd and Dārqutnī as based on a narration by Sayyidnā Ziyād ibn Ḥārith al-Ṣudā'ī who says: I visited the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم where I noticed that he was sending Muslim forces against my people. I said to him: '*Yā Rasūlallāh*, you do not have to send any troops. I guarantee that all of them will submit before you with pleasure.' Then I wrote a letter to my people and all of them embraced Islām. Thereupon, he said: يَا اَخَاصُدَاءِ الْمُطَاعِ فِيْ قَوْمِهِ (which was like a title saying that this person was the beloved one of his people who followed him!). I submitted: 'I deserve no credit for that. Allah, in His grace, guided them right and they embraced Islām.' I was still present in the sitting, says the narrator, when a person came in asking for something. The answer he gave to him was:

> "Allah Ta'ālā has never handed over the distribution of Ṣadaqāt to any prophet, even to anyone other than a prophet. Instead of that, He has Himself determined eight categories for it. If you are included under one of those eight, I can let you have it. (Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī, p. 168, v. 8)

This was the background in which this verse was revealed. Now, before going to its explanation in full, please understand that Allah *Jalla Thanā'uh* has promised sustenance for the entire creation. Says the Qur'ān: وَمَا مِنْ دَآبَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا عَلَى اللّٰهِ رِزْقُهَا (And there is no creature on earth but that upon Allah is its provision – 11:6). However, in His infinite wisdom, he has not done something like making all of them equal in the matter of provision or sustenance – or *rizq* as the Qur'ān says. This would have done away with the difference of rich and poor. This is a vast field of inquiry full of hundreds of wise insights into the moral grooming of human beings and into the proper ordering of the universal system they live under – something that cannot be taken up in details at this place. So, it was in His wisdom that He made someone rich and someone else poor and then fixed a share for the poor and needy in the riches of the rich. It was said: وَفِيْٓ اَمْوَالِهِمْ حَقٌّ مَّعْلُوْمٌ لِّلسَّآئِلِ وَالْمَحْرُوْمِ (And, in their wealth, there is a share fixed for the asking and the deprived – 70:24) which was theirs as a matter of right.

First of all, this tells us that the command to take out Ṣadaqah from the wealth of the wealthy is no favor from them. In fact, this is a right of the needy the fulfillment of which is their duty. Then, it also tells us that this right is fixed in the sight of Allah Ta'ālā – not that someone decreases or increases it at will, anytime. Pursuant to that, the duty of making the amount of this fixed right widely known was assigned to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. Therefore, he acted with marked diligence and elan in this matter. He could have informed his Companions about it orally. But, he did not consider it to be sufficient. Instead, he had detailed executive orders written and placed in the custody of Sayyidnā 'Umar and Sayyidnā 'Amr ibn Hazām رضی الله عنهما. This clearly proves that the *niṣāb* (threshold) of Zakāh, and the amount of Zakāh in each *niṣāb*, have been fixed by Allah Ta'ālā and promulgated through His Messenger to remain valid forever. No one, at any time and in any country, has any right to decrease, increase, change or alter what has been prescribed.

It is correct to say that the obligation of Ṣadaqah and Zakāh was already decreed by revelation during the early stage of Islām in Makkah al-Mukarramah. Tafsīr authority, Ibn Kathīr has cited the verse of Sūrah Al-Muzzammil: فَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتُوا الزَّكٰوةَ (So, establish Ṣalāh and give Zakāh – 73:20) in proof because this Sūrah is among those that belong to the initial period of revelation and, along with Ṣalāh, it carries the injunction of Zakāh. However, the narratives of Ḥadīth seem to indicate that, during the initial period of Islām, any particular *niṣāb* for Zakāh, or a particular amount, was not fixed. In its absence, whatever was left behind after having served the needs of a Muslim was spent in the way of Allah. The fixation of *niṣāb* and the declaration of the amount of Zakāh came after Hijrah in Madīnah al-Ṭaiyyibah. After that, the firmly established system of the receipts of Zakāh and Ṣadaqāt was something that came into existence only after the conquest of Makkah.

This verse – with the consensus of the Ṣaḥābah and the Tābi'īn – describes the disbursement of the same obligatory (*wājib*) Ṣadaqah which is obligatory on Muslims like Ṣalāh, because the heads of disbursement fixed in this verse are the heads of the obligatory Ṣadaqāt. As for the voluntary (*Nafl*) Ṣadaqāt, given the clear statements of Ḥadīth narratives, their range is quite vast. To be precise, they are not

restricted to these eight heads of expenditure.

Though, in the verse appearing above, the general word: صدقات (Ṣadaqāt) has been used – which apparently may include the obligatory and the voluntary both – but, there is a consensus of the Muslim Ummah, on the point that this verse refers only to the obligatory (*wājib*) Ṣadaqāt. It appears in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī that the word: صدقه (Ṣadaqah) whenever used in an absolute sense anywhere in the Qur'ān – while there is no textual evidence to prove that it is voluntary Ṣadaqah – it invariably means obligatory Ṣadaqah at that place.

This verse has been initiated with the word: انما (*innamā*) which is used for restriction (*ḥaṣr* and *inḥiṣār*). Thereby, the very first word in the beginning of the statement speaks for itself that the recipients of Ṣadaqāt being enumerated next are obligatory Ṣadaqāt and must, therefore, be spent on them. In fact, obligatory Ṣadaqāt cannot be spent on any good cause other than them, such as, the preparation for Jihād or making *masjids* and religious schools or other institutions of public welfare. Though, all these projects are necessary and there is great reward for investing in them, but obligatory Ṣadaqāt the quantum of which stands fixed cannot be applied to such projects.

The second word: صدقات (Ṣadaqāt) appearing in the verse is the plural form of Ṣadaqah. Lexically, it denotes a portion of the wealth or property that is spent for the sake of Allah (Qāmūs). In Mufradāt al-Qur'ān, Imām Rāghib al-Isfahānī has said that Ṣadaqah is called Ṣadaqah because it is derived from the root of 'Ṣidq' which means 'truth' and the one who gives something in Ṣadaqah purports that he is true in his word and deed, he has no worldly motives and is spending for the pleasure of Allah only. Therefore, a Ṣadaqah mixed up with a desire to earn a fair name or to project one's personality or any other worldly motive conceivable has been declared to be null and void by the Holy Qur'ān.

As stated earlier too, the word: صدقه (Ṣadaqah) is general in terms of its real meaning. It is used for voluntary Ṣadaqah as well as for obligatory Zakāh. Its use for *nafl* (voluntary or supererogatory charity) is already very common. However, it has also been used for *farḍ* (obligatory or prescribed alms) at several places in the Qur'ān, for example: خُذْ مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ صَدَقَةً (Take out of their wealth a Ṣadaqah [obligatory alms] – 9:103) and the verse: إِنَّمَا الصَّدَقٰتُ (The Ṣadaqāt [prescribed alms] are only for ...)

under discussion right now. In fact, according to the verification of commentator Al-Qurṭubī, when the Qur'ān mentions the word: صدقة (Ṣadaqah) in an absolute sense, it invariably means the *farḍ* (obligatory) Ṣadaqah.

In Ḥadīth narratives, the word: صدقة (Ṣadaqah) has also been used for every good deed, for instance, says the Ḥadīth: 'Meeting a Muslim with a smile is also a *Ṣadaqah.*' Or, 'helping the bearer of a burden carry it is also a *Ṣadaqah.*' Or, 'to share the water drawn from a well for personal use with someone else is also a *Ṣadaqah.*' In these Ḥadīth references, the word: صدقة (*Ṣadaqah*) has been used in its general sense with a figurative touch.

The third word after that begins with: للفقراء (*li' l-fuqarā'*). It will be noted that the letter *lām* appears in the very beginning, a letter used to carry the sense of particularization. Therefore, the sentence would mean that all Ṣadaqāt rightfully belong only to those who have been mentioned later.

Now, we can go to a detailed description of the eight recipients mentioned after that:

Out of these, the first category of recipients is that of *al-fuqarā'* (the poor) followed by the second which is that of *al-masākīn* (the needy or indigent). There is, though, difference of opinion about the real meaning of '*faqīr*' and '*miskīn*.' A '*faqīr*' is one who has nothing while a '*miskīn*' is one who has less than the *niṣāb*.[1] But, they remain the same under the injunction of Zakāh. No difference exists there. The outcome is that a person who does not own wealth or property to the value of *niṣāb* in excess of his or her basic needs shall be a person to whom Zakāh can be given and for that person too this taking of Zakāh is permissible. As for 'basic needs,' included therein is everything like the residential house, utensils in use, clothes and furniture etc. Anyone who has the *niṣāb*, that is, 7 1/2 *tolas*[2] gold, or 52 1/2 tolas[3] of silver, or its equivalent in cash – and is not in debt – then, it is not permissible for such a person to receive Zakāh nor is it permissible for

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1. The minimum quantity or amount, or threshold of wealth or property liable to payment of obligatory Zakāh (prescribed alms or poor-due)

2. =87.48 grams.

3. = 612.36 grams.

2 & 3 as determined by Hadrat Maulana Mufti Muhammad Shafi رحمة الله عليه in his اوزان شرعیه .

anyone to give it to him. Similarly, a person who has some silver or cash and some gold and the combined market price equals the price of 52 1/2 tolas (612.36 grams) of silver, then, this person too is deemed to have the *niṣāb*. It is not permissible for him to take Zakāh nor is it permissible for anyone to give it to him. But, a person who is not a man of *niṣāb*, however, is strong and healthy to earn his livelihood, and has enough for a day, then, giving Zakāh to him is, no doubt, permissible but what is not permissible is that he goes about asking people to help him out. Many such people ignore this restriction not realizing that stretching their hands before others is Ḥarām (unlawful). Whatever such a person acquires by soliciting has been equated by the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم with an ember from Hell. (Abū Dāwūd, on the authority of a report from Sayyidnā 'Alī, Qurṭubī)

So, the outcome is that there is no difference in a '*faqīr*' and a '*miskīn*' as far as Zakāh is concerned. But, it does make a difference in the injunction of Waṣiyyah (will). If a will is made for the '*masākīn*,' what kind of people will be eligible to receive the bequeathed amount? And if the will is made for '*fuqarā*' what kind of people will be its recipients? There is no need to describe its details at this place. In brief, the common thing between the two categories – the '*faqīr*' and the '*miskīn*' – is that whoever of the two receives from the property of Zakāh should be a Muslim and should not be the owner of property which is more than his basic needs, or the standard of *niṣāb*.

Common Ṣadaqāt can, however, be given to non-Muslims as well. The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has said: تَصَدَّقُوْا عَلٰی اَھْلِ الْاَدْیَانِ کُلِّھَا (Give Ṣadaqah to people of all religions). But, about the Ṣadaqah of Zakāh, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, while sending Sayyidnā Mu'ādh ibn Jabal رضی اللہ عنہ to Yaman, had instructed him that Zakāh should be taken from the rich among Muslims and be spent over their poor. Therefore, Zakāh can be spent only among Muslim *fuqarā'* (the poor) and *masākīn* (the needy). However, with the exception of Zakāh, it is permissible to give other Ṣadaqāt – even the *Ṣadaqātu 'l-Fiṭr* – to a non-Muslim '*faqīr*.' (Hidāyah)

Incidentally, the second condition that a person should not be the owner of *niṣāb* mentioned a little earlier becomes self-evident from the very meaning of a '*faqīr*' and a '*miskīn*' – because, either he would have nothing or, at the least, would have less than the fixed amount of *niṣ*-

āb holdings. Therefore, a *'faqīr'* and a *'miskīn'* are common in the sense that they both do not possess property matching the standard value of *niṣāb*. After having mentioned these two categories of recipients, the text describes six more. Out of these, the the first (which is the third in the aggregate list) is that of the collectors of Ṣadaqah which has been described in the text as: اَلْعَامِلِيْنَ عَلَيْهَا (and those employed to collect them). This refers to those who are appointed by the Islāmic government to collect the Ṣadaqāt of Zakāh and 'Ushr etc. from the people and deposit it in the Baytulmāl (the state treasury). Since these appointees spend all their time in carrying out this service, therefore, taking care of their needs is a responsibility that falls on the Islāmic government. This verse of the Qur'ān has, by allotting a share to them in the disbursement of Zakāh, has categorically determined that the payment for the services rendered by them shall be made from the head of Zakāh.

Actually, Allah Ta'ālā has entrusted the duty of taking Zakāh and Ṣadaqāt from Muslims directly with the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, as said in the verse: خُذْ مِنْ اَمْوَالِهِمْ صَدَقَةً (Take out of their wealth a Ṣadaqah [obligatory alms] – 9:103) which appears later on in this very Sūrah. Detailed comments about it will be taken up there. However, it is sufficient to mention here that, in the light of this verse, the duty of taking Zakāh and Ṣadaqāt has been placed on the shoulders of the Amīr of Muslims. It is obvious that the Amīr cannot carry out this duty all by himself throughout the country without functional executives and assistants. It is these executives and assistants who have been mentioned in the words: وَالْعَامِلِيْنَ عَلَيْهَا (and those employed to collect them).

It was to implement the command given in these verses that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم had sent many Companions as functional executives responsible for collecting Zakāh and Ṣadaqāt to many regions of the Islāmic state. The payment he had made for the services rendered by them was, as instructed in the verse, from the very amount collected as Zakāh. Included among such people were Ṣaḥābah who were rich. In Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said: *ṣadaqah* is not *ḥalāl* for anyone rich (*al-ghaniyy*: owner of *māl*, that is, wealth and property) except five persons: (1) One who has set out for Jihād where he does not have necessary financial support with him – though, he may be rich back home. (2) The 'Āmil of Ṣadaqah (the collec-

tor) employed to carry out this duty. (3) One who, though, owns wealth and property, but is in debt for more than the worth of what he has. (4) One who buys Ṣadaqah property from a '*miskīn*' (needy person) against cash. (5) One who has been given a gift of property acquired as Ṣadaqah by some poor person ('*faqīr*').

As for the problem of determining the proportion of the amount of money to be paid to those employed to collect Ṣadaqāt, the answer lies in the rule that it will be paid in accordance with the status of their working hours and performance. (Jaṣṣāṣ, Aḥkam al-Qur'ān and Qurṭubī)

Of course, it will be necessary that the salaries of the employees do not go higher than a half of the total Zakāh. If the collection of Zakāh is low, so low that, after the disbursement of salaries to employees, not even that half remains available, then, salaries would have to be reduced. More than half shall not be spent. (Tafsīr Maẓharī, Ẓahiriyyah)

What has been said above shows that the amount of money given to those employed to collect Ṣadaqah from the head of Zakāh is not given to them as Ṣadaqah, instead of which, it is a payment in return for their service. Therefore, they deserve to get this amount despite being rich – and it is permissible to give this amount to them from the Zakāh funds. Out of the eight heads of Zakāh disbursement, this is the only head in which the amount of Zakāh is given as payment in return for services rendered. Otherwise, Zakāh is the very name of the gift given to the poor without being a return for any services – and if a poor person was given something from Zakāh funds against some service rendered, Zakāh remained unpaid.

For this reason, two questions arise here – firstly, how was Zakāh property given in return for services rendered, and secondly, how could this Zakāh property become *ḥalāl* (lawful) for the rich person? Both these questions have the same answer – that we should understand the real status of those employed to collect Ṣadaqah. The status of these employees is that of the authorized representatives of *al-fuqarā*,' the poor ones, and everyone knows that the taking of possession by an authorized representative is regarded to be as good as the possession taken by the principal himself. If a person makes someone his representative authorized to recover his debt and the other person in debt hands over the amount of debt to this authorized representative, then, soon after the possession taken by the representative, the li-

ability of the debtor stands discharged. So, when the amount of Zakāh has been recovered by those employed to collect it in their capacity as the authorized representatives of the poor, i.e. the *fuqarā'*, then, the amount of Zakāh received from people stands duly paid. Now, this whole amount lies under the ownership of the *fuqarā'* on whose behalf the *'āmilīn* have received it in the capacity of their authorized representative. Hence, the amount given to them in return for their services is in fact given to them by the '*fuqarā'*' as a compensation of services they have rendered for them, because once *zakāh* is received by a *faqīr* or his agent, he may give it to anyone against his services.

Now remains the question: The *fuqarā'* never made these people their authorized representatives. How, then, did they become their agents in fact? The answer is that the head of a Muslim State (the 'Amīr) has been appointed by Allah Ta'ālā as a representative of all the poor to collect and disburse *zakāh* on their behalf. The logical consequence of this arrangement is that the persons appointed by an 'Amīr, being his deputies, are also taken to be the representatives of the poor.

To sum up, that which was given to those employed to collect Ṣadaqāt (prescribed alms) was really no Zakāh as such. Instead of that, it was given to them as compensation in return for the service rendered by them on behalf of the poor recipients of Zakāh. It is like a poor person making someone an attorney for his case and paying for his services from what he has received from Zakāh funds. In this situation, the payment of attorney's fee cannot be termed as the payment of Zakāh.

Special Note

Details given above also tell us that those who collect Ṣadaqāt and Zakāh for Islāmic religious schools and organizations (without being appointed by an Islamic state for that purpose) are not included in "*'āmilīn*' (collectors of *zakāh*) as contemplated in the Holy Qur'ān.

The reason is that neither the individual poor persons have authorized them to receive *zakāh* on their behalf, nor the head of an Islamic state has appointed them as such. Their correct position is that the *zakāh* - payers have made them their agent to disburse *zakāh* among the deserving people. Therefore, they can neither draw their salaries from *zakāh*, nor can the obligation of a *zakāh*-payer be discharged by their possession, unless they pay it to a person entitled to receive *zakāh*.

Generally, serious negligence is shown in this matter. Many institutions collect Zakāh funds and keep it for years. Zakāh payers think that their Zakāh stands paid – although, their Zakāh will stand paid only when the amount given by them has been disbursed in favor of its recipients.

Similarly, there are many others who would unknowingly take such people to be included under the Qur'ānic injunction about the collectors of Ṣadaqah and go on to pay their salaries from the funds of Zakāh itself. This is non-permissible, for the givers and the takers both.

Another Question: Payment for 'Ibādah

Another question should be clarified here. It is inferred from some Qur'ānic indicators and narrations of Ḥadīth that taking wages and compensation on 'Ibādah is *ḥarām* (unlawful, forbidden). The Musnad of Aḥmad reports a Ḥadīth from Sayyidnā 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Shibl رضی اللہ عنہ according to which the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has said: اِقْرَأُوا الْقُرْآنَ وَلَا تَأْكُلُوا بِهٖ (Recite the Qur'ān but do not eat by means of it). In some other reports, the compensation taken on the Qur'ān has been called a piece of Hell. It is on this basis that many jurists of Muslim Ummah have held that the taking of wages or compensation for any act of 'Ibādah (worship) is not permissible. Then, it is also evident that the function of collecting prescribed alms is a religious mission and an act of *'ibādah*. The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has called it a kind of Jihād. According to this principle it should not have been lawful to receive any remuneration for collecting *zakāh*. But, this verse of the Holy Qur'ān has clearly declared it to be permissible and has included it as one of the eight heads under which Zakāh can be disbursed.

Imām al-Qurṭubī has taken up this question in his Commentary. He has said that taking compensation for 'Ibādāt (acts of worship) that are obligatory (*farḍ*) or compulsory individually (*wājib al-'ain*) is absolutely *ḥarām* (unlawful). But, taking any compensation for duties called *farḍ al-kifāyah* is permissible in accordance with this very verse. Farḍ al-Kifāyah means that a duty has been imposed on the entire Muslim community or on a whole city as a collective obligation. But, it is not the duty of every individual to do it. If some of the people there fulfill the duty, the rest stand absolved. Yes – if no one does it – everyone becomes a sinner.

Imām al-Qurṭubī has also said that this very verse proves that

taking a compensation for leading congregational prayers (*Imāmah*) and delivering sermons (*Khiṭābah*) is also permissible – because, they too are *wājib al-Kifāyah* (compulsory in the degree of sufficiency) and not *wājib-al-'ain* (compulsory individually). Similarly, the areas of teaching Qur'ān, Ḥadīth and other religious sciences are no different. These are duties that must be carried out. The entire Muslim Ummah is responsible for it. This is Farḍ al-Kifāyah on the community. If some people fulfill this obligation, others stand absolved. Therefore, if some compensation or salary is taken for it, that too will be permissible.

The fourth among the eight categories of recipients of Zakāh is that of 'people whose hearts are to be won.' The Qur'ān calls them: مؤلفة القلوب These were people who were given Ṣadaqāt so that their attitude towards Islām could be mollified. The general impression about this category is that it included both Muslims and non-Muslims. The object was to persuade non-Muslims in favor of Islām and neo-Muslims to become more firm. Those who were already staunch Muslims were helped to guide their people right through such measures. Then, there were people among non-Muslims whose evil had to be avoided through a policy of appeasement. And there were people who would listen to no sermon or sword. The only language they understood was the language of favor and generosity. They too came closer to reconciliation through this policy. At that time, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم did whatever was legally possible to bring people from the darkness of disbelief into the light of faith. However, after the passing away of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, Islām had become politically strong and the initial plans to avoid the threat of disbelievers or to provide support to neo-Muslims did not remain valid anymore. What was expedient then had lost its expediency. So, that share also came to an end. Some Muslim jurists have taken the position that it has been 'abrogated.' This position is attributed to Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Abū Ḥanīfah and Mālik ibn Anas, may the mercy of Allah be upon them.

However, many others hold that the share of this category has not been abrogated. That it was allowed to lapse during the period of Sayyidnā Abū Bakr and 'Umar رضى الله عنهم means that it was allowed to lapse because there was no need for it. However, if such a need does come up at some later time, it could be given again. This is the juristic view of Imām Zuhrī, Qāḍī 'Abd al-Wahhāb, ibn al-'Arabī, Imāms Shāfi'ī

and Aḥmad. But, the most authentic position is that non-Muslims were never given a share from Ṣadaqāt at any time whatsoever, nor are they included under the category of *mu'allafah al-quloob* as contemplated in the present verse 60.

In his Tafsīr, Imām al-Qurṭubī has given a detailed list of people to whom the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had given a share from the head of Ṣadaqāt. The purpose was to win their hearts through persuasion. At the end of his list, Al-Qurṭubī has this to say: وَبِالْجُمْلَةِ فَكُلُّهُمْ مُؤْمِنٌ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ فِيْهِمْ كافر It means: 'To sum it up, it can be said that all recipients under this category were Muslims and there was no *kāfir* included therein.'

Similarly, it appears in Tafsīr Maẓharī: لَمْ يُثْبَتْ أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَعْطٰى أَحَدًا مِّنَ الْكُفَّارِ لِلْإِيْلَافِ شَيْئًا مِّنَ الزَّكٰوةِ It means: 'There is no report to prove that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has ever given a share to a *kāfir* (disbeliever) from Zakāh property in order to persuade him favorably.' This is supported by what is said in Tafsīr al-Kashshāf: 'The details of the recipients of Ṣadaqāt have been given here to refute the allegations of disbelievers and hypocrites who used to raise objections against the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that he did not give them their share from the Ṣadaqāt. The purpose of giving these details in this verse is to tell them that disbelievers had no right in Ṣadaqah properties. If the disbelievers were also included under the category of *mu'allafah al-quloob*, there was no need for this answer in refutation.

Tafsīr Maẓharī has also clarified the error into which some people have fallen because of some Ḥadīth narratives which seem to prove that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has given gifts to some non-Muslims. For example, there is a report in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim and Tirmidhī which says that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم gave some gifts to Ṣafwān ibn Umayyah when he was a *kāfir*. About it, quoting Imām al-Nawawi, the author of the Tafsīr says that these gifts were not from Zakāh. Rather, they were given from the *khums* (one- fifth) of the spoils of the battle of Ḥunain deposited in the Baitu'l-Māl – and it is obvious that spending from this head of the Baitu'l-Māl both on Muslims or non-Muslims is permissible under the consensus of Muslim jurists. Then, he says: Imām al-Baihaqī, Ibn Sayyid al-Nās, Imām Ibn Kathīr and others have concurred that this gift was not given from Zakāh, but was given from the one-fifth of spoils.

A useful supplementary note

From here we also come to know that wealth and property belonging to Ṣadaqāt were, though, deposited in the Baitu'l-Māl during the blessed period of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم himself, but they were kept under a totally separate account. Similarly, other heads of the Baitu'l-Māl, such as, the *Khums* of *Ghanīmah* (one-fifth of spoils) or the *Khums* of *Ma'ādin* (one-fifth of mines and quarries) etc., had their own separate accounts and modes of disbursement. Muslim jurists have given details in this connection. According to them there should be four heads of accounts in the Baitu'l-Māl separate from each other. The main instruction given is that keeping the accounts separate is not enough, instead of that, each head should have a separate Baitu'l-Māl so that each one of them exercises full control when spending it on approved recipients and categories. Of course, if a particular head faces shortage of funds, these can be borrowed from another head of accounts and spent as necessary. These heads of the Baitu'l-Māl are as follows:

1. Khums al-Ghanāim: The One-Fifth of Spoils: This is property acquired from disbelievers as an outcome of war. Out of its five shares, four are distributed among Mujāhidīn while the fifth share is the right of the Baitu'l-Māl. Then, there is the one-fifth of mines (Khums al-Ma'ādin). A one-fifth of whatever is mined from different kinds of quarries is the right of the Baitu'l-Māl. Then, there is the one-fifth of buried treasures. This is known as the Khums of Rikāz. It refers to any old treasure dug out of the ground. A one-fifth of this too is the right of the Baitu'l-Mal. All these three kinds of Khums (one-fifth) are included in one single head of the Baitu'l-Māl.

2. Ṣadaqāt: This includes Zakāh, Ṣadaqātu 'l-Fiṭr, and 'Ushr of their lands paid by Muslims.

3. Kharāj and Fai' Property which includes tax collected from lands owned by non-Muslims, Jizyah paid by them, taxes on commercial enterprises run by them (*al-kharāj*) and it included all properties acquired from non-Muslims with their consent and agreement (*al-fai'*).

4. Ḍawā'i' (Lost properties) which included what lost or remained unclaimed as well as property left by a person having no heir.

Though, expenditures under these four heads are separate, but the right of the poor and the needy has been set aside in all four of these heads. This shows the particular care taken to empower the weaker section of the society – a certain hallmark of the Muslim state indeed. Otherwise, elite classes keep getting the opportunities to grow among usual social systems of the world at the expense of the poor ones. The poor never see their day. What came up as a reaction of this situation in the form of socialism and communism was far from being natural. In fact, it was like running from the rain and resting under the drain pipe, not to say much about its harmful effects for human morals.

To sum up, an Islāmic government has four Baitu'l-Māls for four different heads with the right of the poor and needy secured in all four. The expenditures of the first three among these have been fixed and explained clearly by the Holy Qur'ān as follows. The description of the expenditures of the first head, that is, of the one-fifth of spoils (Khums al-Ghanāim) appears at the beginning of the tenth part in Sūrah Al-Anfāl (verse 41). The description of the expenditures of the second head, that is, of Ṣadaqāt has been taken up in verse 60 of Sūrah Al-Taubah that is under study right now. The third head, technically known as the property of *al-faï'*, finds a detailed mention in Sūrah Al-Ḥashr. Many expenditures of the Islāmic government, such as, those on the military, and on the salaries of civil servants, are disbursed from this head. The fourth head of al-Ḍawā'i' covered lost or unclaimed property or property having no inheritor. It was set aside for the disabled, the handicapped, destitute men and women and abandoned children, following the practice and teachings of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to which the rightly guided Caliphs of Islām, faithfully adhered. (Shāmī, Kitābu'z-Zakāh)

Incidentally, the saying of Muslim jurists, that the four heads of the Baitu'l-Māl should be kept separate and that the expenditures therein should be incurred as approved, has its proof in the Qur'ān, the practice of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the adherence of the rightly guided Caliphs to that practice.

After this supplementary note, we can now revert to the original issue of *mu'allafah al-quloob*. It is already established that no *zakāh* was paid to a non-Muslim under this category. Therefore, they stand excluded from the recipients of *zakāh*. Now, left there are the new Mus-

lims who can fall under this head. All the Muslim jurists are unanimous on the point that the poor new Muslims are eligible to get their share under this category. However, there is a difference of opinion about the rich ones. Imām Shāfi'ī and Imām Aḥmad are of the view that all the Muslim converts who need a sympathetic attitude to make them firm on Islamic beliefs can receive *zakāh* under the category of '*mu'allafah-al-quloob*' even though they are not poor in the sense that they own the *niṣāb*. The basic principle according to them is that poverty is not a condition for the eligibility for *zakāh* under each head from the eight categories mentioned in the verse. On the contrary, Imām Abū Ḥanīfah and Imām Mālik are of the view that Muslim '*mu'allafah-al-quloob*' can be given *zakāh* only if they are poor and do not own the *niṣāb*. If they own the *niṣāb*, they cannot receive *zakāh* even under this category. Both these Imams hold that poverty is the basic condition for all the eight categories mentioned in the verse, with the sole exception of '*āmilīn*' as explained earlier. The debtors, the wayfarers and the slaves as well can receive *zakāh* only if they are poor in their given state of affairs, even though may have wealth otherwise.

This explanation shows that despite their difference of opinion in this particular aspect, all of them agree on the point that '*mu'allafah al-qulūb*' as a category of the recepients of *zakāh* still holds good and has never been repealed or abrogated.

Up to this point, four out of the eight recipients of Ṣadaqāt have been identified. The right of these four has been introduced with the addition of the letter *lām* as in: لِلْفُقَرَآءِ وَالْمَسَاكِيْنِ (*li'l-fuqarā' wa'l-masākīn*: for the poor and for the needy). The form has been changed while mentioning the next four recipients where the initial letter *lām* has been replaced with the letter *fī* as in: وَفِى الرِّقَابِ وَالْغَارِمِيْنَ (and in [freeing] slaves and in [releasing] those in debt). Al-Zamakhsharī has given a reason for this nuance of language in his Tafsīr al-Kashshāf. According to him, this is a device employed to indicate that the last four recipients are more deserving as compared to the first four, because the letter *fī* is used to denote attending circumstances or conditions which yields the meaning that Ṣadaqāt should be placed 'in' or within these people. Then, the reason for their being more deserving is their being more in need – because, a slave owned by someone suffers more as compared to

poor people in general. Similarly, a person in debt hounded by his lenders is in deeper trouble as compared to common poor and needy for he has the additional worry as to how he is going to pay off his debt which is certainly more disturbing than the rest of his usual needs.

Out of the remaining four categories of recipients, the first one mentioned here is that of وَفِى الرِّقَابِ (*wa fi 'r-riqāb*: and in [freeing] slaves). Riqāb is the plural form of *raqabah*. Actually, it means the neck. But, in recognized usage, it is also used to allude to a person whose neck is shackled in the chains of slavery.

What is the meaning of *ar-riqāb* in this verse? Interpretations of jurists differ. The majority of jurists and Ḥadīth experts agree that it refers to slaves who enter into a deal with their masters that they would earn the amount specified by them, give it to them as they earn, and once the agreed amount is paid off, they shall be free. In the terminology of the Qur'ān and Sunnah, such a slave is known as *mukātab*. The master of such a slave allows him to earn through business or employment and give the income to the master. In the present verse, *fī 'r-riqāb* means that this person should be helped to secure his freedom from his master who should be given a share from Zakāh funds to write off the amount due against the slave.

There is a consensus of commentators and jurists that this kind of slaves is the intended sense of the expression: وَفِى الرِّقَابِ (*wa fi r'riqāb*: and in [freeing] slaves) which requires that they should be helped to become free by paying the amount due from Zakāh funds. In cases other than this, such as, buying other slaves and setting them free, or entering into a deal with their masters that they would set them free against an agreed amount of Zakāh, there is a difference of opinion among major Muslim jurists. The majority of the Imāms of Islāmic jurisprudence – Abū Ḥanīfah, Shāfi'ī, Aḥmad ibn Hanbal and others, may the mercy of Allah be on all of them – do not take this to be permissible. Imām Mālik agrees with the majority in one version (*riwayah*) only when he declares the sense of *fi r'riqāb* as restricted to *mukātab* slaves (on freedom-against-money deal with master). In another version (*riwāyah*), it has also been reported from Imām Mālik that he included common slaves under the definition of *fi 'r-riqāb* as well as gave the permission to buy slaves from Zakāh amounts and free them. (Aḥkam al-Qur'ān ibn al-'Arabī al-Mālikī)

The majority of Imāms and jurists, who do not consider it permissible, have a juristic difficulty in doing so. If a slave was bought from Zakāh funds, and freed, the problem is that the very definition of Ṣadaqah does not fit right in his case – because, Ṣadaqah is a property given to someone deserving without getting something in return. Now, should the amount of Zakāh be given to the master, then, it is obvious that he is neither deserving of Zakāh, nor the amount of money being given to him is without an expected return. As for the slave, who is deserving of Zakāh, the amount was never given to him personally. This is another matter that the benefit of the amount paid to the master somehow reached the slave in that he was bought and freed. But, freeing does not get to be included under the definition of Ṣadaqah – and why would someone surrender the real meaning without any reason and go by the figurative or general sense of Ṣadaqah unnecessarily? This has no justification. Then, it is also obvious that, in the subject verse, what is being described is nothing but the categories of the recipients of Zakāh. Therefore, anything to which the definition of Ṣadaqah does not fit simply cannot be meant by *fi 'r-riqāb*. And if, this amount was to be given to the slave himself, then, the slave does not have the right to own. The result will be that it will automatically become the property of the master. Then, the matter of releasing or not releasing the slave will also continue to be in the control of his master.

It is because of this juristic difficulty that the majority of Imāms and jurists hold the view that the Qur'ānic expression: فِى الرِّقَابِ (*fi 'r-riqāb*) refers to *mukātab* slaves only. This also tells us about the standard rule of conduct in this matter. To give Ṣadaqah properly, the condition is that its giver makes a deserving person its owner and sees to it that the amount has passed into his possession – because, until the deserving person has taken the amount in his possession, as its owner, Zakāh remains unpaid.

The sixth category of recipients: الْغٰرِمِيْنَ (*al-ghārimīn*: and in [releasing] those in debt) is the plural of *ghārim* which means a person in debt. It has been mentioned earlier that the fifth and sixth categories of recipients introduced with the letter *fī* are ahead of the first four recipients in their claim of preference. Therefore, giving out to free a slave or to release a person from debt is more merit worthy than giving to the poor and the needy in general. However, the condition is

that the person in debt does not have enough funds to pay off that debt – because, lexically, the word: *ghārim* is applied only to such a person in debt. And some Imāms also add a condition that this person should not have borrowed for something impermissible. If someone goes in debt for something sinful, such as, to pay for liquor and its likes, or spends on impermissible customs of marriages and deaths, then, such a client will not be helped from the head of Zakāh so that he is not encouraged in his sin and extravagance.

The seventh category of disbursement appears in the words: فِى سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ (*fī sabīlillāh*: in the way of Allah). It will be noted that the letter *fī* has been repeated here once again. According to Tafsīr al-Kashshāf, the purpose of this repetition is to indicate that this area of expenditure is more merit worthy as compared to those mentioned earlier. It has two benefits. The first is helping a poor person. The second is assisting in a religious cause. The reason is that *fī sabīlillāh* either denotes a *mujāhid* who does not have the means to buy necessary weapons and war supplies, or it means the person who must fulfill the obligation of Ḥajj but who does not have the necessary financial support to complete his due duty. These two duties are purely religious. They are acts of worship. Therefore, by spending Zakāh funds on them one helps a poor person and supports someone do his 'Ibādah. On the same analogy, Muslim jurists have included students of the schools of Islāmic learning under this category as they too take it to fulfill what is an act of 'Ibādah in the way of Allah. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī with reference to Ẓahīriyyah)

The author of Badā'i' has said that one who wishes to undertake an act of sincere 'Ibādah and needs financial support to do it will be taken as included in the category of *fī sabīlillāh* – subject to the condition that he does not have enough funds to carry it out. The work of teaching and transmitting religion along with the establishment of allied institutions of promotion and publication are some examples. If someone deserving Zakāh elects to take up this work, he may be helped out with Zakāh funds, but this help cannot be extended to a rich man who owns the *niṣāb*.

Details appearing above show that all explanations of *fī sabīlillāh* (in the way of Allah) under different circumstances carry the condition of poverty and need alongside. The rich man who owns the *niṣāb* does

not have a share in this head too – except that his present holdings may be insufficient for the needs of Jihād or Ḥajj he is going to undertake. Call him rich because he has property above the *niṣāb*. In fact, such a person has been called rich in Ḥadīth. But, in the final analysis, he too turns out to be a poor and needy person in terms of the amount of funds he needs for Jihād or Ḥajj – and this he does not have with him! Shaykh ibn Humām has said in Fatḥ al-Qadīr: The words used to describe recipients mentioned in the verse of Ṣadaqāt prove that they deserve what they do on the basis of poverty and need. The words for the poor and the needy are obvious by themselves. Other words used for freeing of slaves, releasing from debt, in the way of Allah and for the wayfarer also suggest that they receive shares to alleviate their needs. However, those employed to collect Ṣadaqāt receive their share in return for the services rendered by them. Therefore, in that, the rich and the poor are equal. This is similar to what has been briefly mentioned earlier under the category of 'those in debt.' A person owes a debt of Rupees ten thousand.[1] He has Rupees five thousand with him. He can be given Zakāh up to Rs. Five thousand, because the funds he has with him will be taken as not with him due to the debt.

A word of Caution

The literal meaning of *fī sabīlillāh* is very general and very common. Anything done for the good pleasure of Allah is included under *fī sabīlillāh* in the light of this popular sense. Unfortunately, there are people who wish to understand the Qur'ān through a literal translation alone. They would skip the explanations and statements of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and ignore the sayings of major commentators. As a result, they fall into error. One such error shows up when they look at *fī sabīlillāh* and find it spacious enough to accommodate everything they fancy. Under this head of Zakāh, they have included everything that is considered to be good or religious. Under this umbrella, they have included the building of mosques, religious schools, hospitals, inns, even the provision of public services like wells, bridges and roads. Then, they do not seem to forget the salaries and contingent expenses of the institutions of public service. All these, they include under *fī sabīlillāh* and declare them to be worth receiving Zakāh funds. This is absolutely wrong and very much against the consensus

1. Approximately a little less than $200.

of the Muslim Ummah. This is something already decided clearly and categorically. There are statements of the noble Ṣaḥābah, the direct disciples of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. They had learnt and understood the Qur'ān from him. Then, there are explanations of this expression passed on to us from the most learned authorities from among the Tābi'īn. All of them restrict the expression to Ḥujjāj and Mujāhidīn.

It appears in a Ḥadīth that someone had given a camel as religious endowment in the way of Allah (*fī sabīlillāh*). For it, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'Use this camel to carry Ḥujjāj (Ḥajj pilgrims) on their journey.' (Al-Mabsūṭ, Al-Sarakhsī, p. 10, v. 3)

Imāms Ibn Jarīr and Ibn Kathīr are known exegetes who limit themselves to explaining the Qur'ān through Ḥadīth reports only. They both have particularized *fī sabīlillāh* with *mujāhidīn* and *ḥujjāj* who do not have the wherewithal necessary for Jihād or Ḥajj. As for jurists who have included students in religion or servants of good causes in this category, they have done so subject to the condition that they should be poor and needy. And it is obvious that the poor and the needy are in themselves the first among the recipients of Zakāh. Even if they were not included under the sense of *fī sabīlillāh*, still they would have deserved receiving Zakāh. But, no one from among the four Imāms and jurists of Muslim Ummah ever said that expenditures on institutions of public welfare, building of mosques and religious schools and the rest of their functional needs are included under the head of Zakāh disbursements. In fact, they have made it very clear that spending Zakāh funds for this purpose is impermissible. Jurists from different schools of Islāmic jurisprudence have written about it in great details. The names of some of them are being given as follows: Ḥanafī jurist Al-Sarakhṣī in al-Mabsūṭ [p. 202,v. 2] and Sharḥ al-Siyar [p. 244, v. 4], Shāfi'ī jurist Abū 'Ubayd in Kitāb al-Amwāl, Mālikī jurist Dardīr in Sharḥ Mukhtaṣar al-Khalīl [p.161, v. 1] and Al-muwaffaq in al-Mughnī.

Other than the clarifications from authorities of Tafsīr and jurists of Islām referred to earlier, a little thought over this matter will help us understand the problem quickly. Let us think for a moment. If this field of Zakāh was so all-embracing that it could accommodate spending on every act of worship and virtue, then, the identification of these

eight recipients in the Qur'ān becomes (God forbid) totally redundant. So does the statement of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم cited earlier where he said that Allah Ta'ālā has not delegated the authority to determine the recipients of Ṣadaqāt even to a prophet, in fact, He has Himself determined the eight categories of its recipients. This tells us that the element of universal application visible to an unaware person from a literal translation of *fī sabīlillāh* (in the way of Allah) is not what Allah means. Instead, it means what stands proved from the words of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the related clarifications of the Ṣaḥābah and the Ṭābi'īn.

The eighth category of Zakāh disbursement is: ابن السبيل (*ibn al-sabīl*: wayfarer). Sabīl means way and the word: ابن (*ibn*) is used essentially for a son. But, in Arab usage, the words: ابن (*ibn*: son), اب (*ab*: father) and اخ (*akh*: brother) etc. are also used for things which are deeply related with someone. It is according to this usage that a wayfarer is referred to as '*ibn al-sabīl*' – for the simple reason that a wayfarer is deeply related to traversing distances and reaching destinations. As a technical term of Zakāh categories, it means a traveler who does not have necessary funds with him, even if he may be a rich person in his home country. Zakāh may be given to such a traveler so that he can satisfy his needs en route and return home in peace.

At this point, the discussion about the eight categories of recipients of Ṣadaqāt and Zakāh mentioned in verse 60 has reached its completion. Now, follow some other religious issues which relate to all these categories equally.

The issue of *Tamlīk* (Transfer of Ownership)

The majority of Muslim jurists agrees that, even in the fixed eight categories of recipients, the condition for a valid payment of Zakāh is that someone deserving should be given possession of Zakāh property as its owner. If money was spent for the benefit of these very people – without having made them possess it as its owner – Zakāh will remain unpaid. This is the reason why the four Imāms and the majority of Muslim jurists agree that it is not permissible to spend Zakāh funds either on the construction of mosques, religious schools, hospitals and orphanages, or on other functional needs related to them. There is no doubt that the benefit of such projects does reach the poor, and all others who qualify as Zakāh recipients, but the fact that these things

have not passed on into their possession as owners makes Zakāh invalid.

However, in orphanages where meals and clothes are given to orphans as being owned by them, then, it is possible to spend Zakāh funds to the extent of this specific expenditure. Similarly, the cost of the medicine supplied to the poor in need, by making them its owner, could be charged to the Zakāh fund. Likewise, Muslim jurists say that the coffin of an heirless dead body cannot be provided from Zakāh funds, because the deceased is not capable of becoming an owner. Yes, it is possible that the amount of Zakāh is given to someone poor and deserving – and he, out of his free will, spends this amount on the coffin of the heirless deceased. In the same manner, if this deceased person is in debt, this debt cannot be paid off from Zakāh funds directly. Yes, if the deceased person's inheritors are poor and deserve Zakāh, then the amount can be given to them with the right to possess and own it. Once they become the 'owner' of this amount, they can – out of their choice and free will – vacate the debt of the deceased from this amount. Correspondingly, as pointed out earlier, the construction of public works does bring benefits for those who deserve Zakāh, but because they have no right of ownership established into the arrangement, Zakāh remains invalid.

As we have said before, all four Mujtahid Imāms – Abū Ḥanīfah, Shāfi'ī, Mālik and Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal – as well as the majority of Muslim jurists agree with these rulings. Further clarifications appear in easily available writings of jurists from the four schools of Islāmic jurisprudence.

Also added here are a few points not mentioned during the earlier discussion.

The Shāfi'ī jurist, Imām Abū 'Ubayd has said in Kitābu 'l-Amwāl that it was not permissible to spend Zakāh funds to pay off the debt owed by a deceased person, or in paying the cost of his funeral, or to build *masājid*, or to dig canals for public use. Imām Sufyān al-Thawrī and other Imāms concur with the ruling that spending on these undertakings leaves Zakāh unpaid – because, these are not one of those eight heads of expenditure mentioned in the Qur'ān.

Similarly, the Ḥanbalī jurist, Al-muwaffaq has said in al-Mughnī

that spending Zakāh funds on any undertaking of public service – other than the areas of spending mentioned in the Qur'ān – is not permissible. Building mosques, bridges, and drinking water facilities or repairing public roads, supplying coffins for the deceased, feeding guests and other undertakings of this nature are apparent examples. No doubt, they are reward worthy deeds, but are not included under the specified expenditures of Ṣadaqāt (*zakāh*).

The well-recognized author of Badā'i', while discussing the condition of *'tamlīk'* (the act of transferring the possession and ownership to the recipient) as basic to making the payment of Zakāh proper and valid, has also provided textual proof for it. In the Qur'ān, he points out, Zakāh and obligatory Ṣadaqāt have been generally mentioned with the word: ايتاء (*'ītā'* meaning giving in the sense of granting, offering). Listed here are some examples of the use of this word: أَقَامُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتَوُا الزَّكٰوةَ (Establish Ṣalāh and give Zakāh – 2:277; 9:5,11; 22:41); أَقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتُوا الزَّكٰوةَ (Establish Ṣalāh and give Zakāh – 2:43,83,110; 4:77; 22:78; 24:56; 73:20); اِقَامِ الصَّلٰوةِ وَاِيْتَآءِ الزَّكٰوةِ (establishment of Ṣalāh and giving of Zakāh – 21:73; 24:37) and اٰتُوا حَقَّهٗ يَوْمَ حَصَادِهٖ (give its due [Zakāh] on the day of its harvest – 6:141). So, lexically this word is used in the sense of giving as gift. Imām Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī says in Mufradāt al-Qur'ān اَلْاِيْتَاءُ الْاِعْطَاءُ وَخُصَّ وَضْعُ الصَّدَقَةِ فِى الْقُرْاٰنِ بِالْاِيْتَاءِ (The word *al-'ītā'* [giving] means giving as gift; presenting and the giving of the obligatory Ṣadaqah has been particularly associated with this word in the Qur'ān). Thus, the real sense of presenting something to someone as gift could be no other but that the recipient has been made its owner.

Firstly, the use of the word *al-'ītā'* in that sense is not restricted to Zakāh and Ṣadaqāt only. It has actually been used in the Qur'ān in the very sense of making someone an owner of what is given, for instance: اٰتُوا النِّسَآءَ صَدُقٰتِهِنَّ (give women their dowers – 4:4). It is obvious that the payment of dower is recognized as valid only when the husband has passed on the amount of dower into the possession and ownership of his wife.

Secondly, Zakāh has been expressed by the alternate word: Ṣadaqah in the Holy Qur'ān: انما الصدقت للفقراء (The Ṣadaqāt [prescribed alms] are only for the poor - 60). This is a subtle explanation because Ṣadaqah, in the real sense, means to let a poor person possess, own (and spend it at will).

It should be borne in mind that feeding someone out of mercy or spending in public welfare projects is not called Ṣadaqah in the real sense. Shaykh ibn al-Humām says in Fatḥ al-Qadīr: 'Making a poor person the owner of what is being given is Ṣadaqah in the real sense.' Similarly, Imām Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ has said in Aḥkām al-Qur'ān: 'The word: صدقه (Ṣadaqah) is another name for Tamlīk (transfer of ownership).' (Jaṣṣāṣ, p. 152, v. 2)

Some Important points about the Proper Payment of Zakāh

One point arises out of a Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth where the Holy Prophet ﷺ had given instructions about the collection of Ṣadaqāt to Sayyidnā Mu'ādh ibn Jabal by saying: خُذْهَا مِنْ أَغْنِيَآئِهِمْ وَرُدَّهَا فِيْ فُقَرَائِهِمْ : 'Take it (Ṣadaqāt) from the rich among them (Muslims) and disburse it back to the poor among them.' Based on this, Muslim jurists have said that the Zakāh of a city or township should not be sent to another city or township without the need to do so. Instead of that, poor people living in the same city or township are more deserving of it. Of course, if the near relatives of a person are poor, and live in another city, then, he can send his Zakāh to them – because, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has given the glad tidings of a two-fold reward in that situation.

Likewise, if the state of poverty and hunger prevailing in another township appears to be more acute than the condition in one's own city of residence, then, it can be sent there as well – because, the purpose of giving Ṣadaqāt is to remove the need of poor people. This was the reason why Sayyidnā Mu'ādh used to accept clothes as part of the Ṣadaqāt paid in Yaman so that he could send these for the poor emigrants of Madīnah. (al-Qurṭubī with reference to Dārquṭnī)

If a person lives in a certain city while his property is located in another, then, the city where he lives in person shall be taken into consideration, because this is the person addressed for the payment of Zakāh. (Qurṭubī)

Rulings:

1. For payment of Zakāh due against a certain property, it is also permissible to take out the fortieth part of that particular property and give it to those deserving – such as, cloth, crockery, furniture and things like that stocked for commercial sales. Similarly, one can also determine the amount of Zakāh by calculating the total value of the property and distribute it over those deserving. Doing that stands

proved on the authority of Ṣaḥīḥ Āḥādīth. (Qurṭubī) And some leading jurists recommend that, in our time, giving the equivalent in cash is much better, because the needs of poor people vary in nature and number. Cash can be used for whatever is necessary.

2. If one's near relatives are poor and deserve Zakāh, giving Zakāh and Ṣadaqāt to them is much better. It brings two rewards, one for the Ṣadaqah itself and the other for taking care of a near relative (*ṣilah al-raḥim*). In this case, it is simply not necessary that the recipients be told that they were being given Ṣadaqah or Zakāh. It may as well be given as some gift or favor so that the nice person who takes it does not feel humiliated.

3. There is a religious problem that bothers people frequently. For example, there is a person who, by his word or deed gives the impression of being needy, and asks for help from Ṣadaqāt etc. Now, is it necessary for people who give Ṣadaqah to first investigate his real background and give him nothing of it when approached? According to relevant reports from Ḥadīth and the statements of Muslim jurists, this is not necessary. Instead, if there is an overwhelming likelihood, as gathered from the obvious state he is in, suggesting that the person in question is really poor and needy, then, Zakāh can be given to him. It appears in Ḥadīth that some people came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in a very broken-down condition. He asked people to collect Ṣadaqāt for them. The reasonably good collection thus made was given to them. He did not consider it necessary to investigate into their inward background. (Qurṭubī)

4. But, in Aḥkām al-Qur'ān, Al-Qurṭubī says that one in debt is also one of the recipients of Zakāh. If a person says that he owes so much in debt and that he should be given Zakāh money to pay it back, then, he should be asked to prove that debt. (Qurṭubī) If so, it is fairly evident that such investigation is not difficult to make in the cases of *fī sabīlillāh* (in the way of Allah) and *ibn al-sabīl* (wayfarer) as well. Investigations should be made as necessary when spending on these heads.

5. Giving Zakāh money to one's relatives is more reward-worthy, but husband and wife cannot give to each other, nor can parents and children do so. The reason is that giving to them amounts to keeping it in one's own pocket. Since their expenditures are generally combined,

a husband giving Zakāh money to his wife or the wife to her husband does not mean much. In reality, the whole remains in their use. The same holds good for parents and children and the same rule operates in the case of the children of children, the grandfather and the great-grandfather – in that giving Zakāh to them is not permissible.

6. If a person gave Zakāh to another person taking him to be, in his estimation, deserving and legally qualified to receive Zakāh, but found out later that he was either his own slave or a *kāfir*, then, Zakāh will remain unpaid. It should be given again because the ownership of a slave is nothing but the ownership of the master. Here, he is still owned by him, therefore, Zakāh remains unpaid. As for the *kāfir* (disbeliever), he is no recipient of Zakāh.

7. In addition to that, if it is proved later that the person who was given Zakāh was rich, or a Hāshimite Sayyid, that is, a lineal descendant of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, or a father, or son, or wife, or husband, then, it is not necessary to repay the Zakāh. The reason is that the amount of Zakāh has gone out of his ownership and has already reached its place of reward with Allah. As for the error in determining the right recipient due to some misunderstanding, it should be taken as forgiven. (al-Durr al-Mukhtār) The explanation of the verse of Ṣadaqāt and the details of necessary issues related to it end here.

Verses 61 - 66

وَمِنْهُمُ الَّذِيْنَ يُؤْذُوْنَ النَّبِيَّ وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ هُوَ اُذُنٌ ؕ قُلْ اُذُنُ خَيْرٍ
لَّكُمْ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللّٰهِ وَيُؤْمِنُ لِلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا
مِنْكُمْ ؕ وَالَّذِيْنَ يُؤْذُوْنَ رَسُوْلَ اللّٰهِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿٦١﴾
يَحْلِفُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ لَكُمْ لِيُرْضُوْكُمْ ۚ وَاللّٰهُ وَرَسُوْلُهٗٓ اَحَقُّ اَنْ يُّرْضُوْهُ
اِنْ كَانُوْا مُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿٦٢﴾ اَلَمْ يَعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّهٗ مَنْ يُّحَادِدِ اللّٰهَ
وَرَسُوْلَهٗ فَاَنَّ لَهٗ نَارَ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدًا فِيْهَا ؕ ذٰلِكَ الْخِزْيُ الْعَظِيْمُ
﴿٦٣﴾ يَحْذَرُ الْمُنٰفِقُوْنَ اَنْ تُنَزَّلَ عَلَيْهِمْ سُوْرَةٌ تُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا فِيْ
قُلُوْبِهِمْ ؕ قُلِ اسْتَهْزِءُوْا ۚ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ مُخْرِجٌ مَّا تَحْذَرُوْنَ ﴿٦٤﴾ وَلَئِنْ

سَاَلْتَهُمْ لَيَقُوْلُنَّ اِنَّمَا كُنَّا نَخُوْضُ وَنَلْعَبُ ؕ قُلْ اَبِاللّٰهِ وَاٰيٰتِهٖ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ كُنْتُمْ تَسْتَهْزِءُوْنَ ﴿٦٥﴾ لَا تَعْتَذِرُوْا قَدْ كَفَرْتُمْ بَعْدَ اِيْمَانِكُمْ ؕ اِنْ نَّعْفُ عَنْ طَآئِفَةٍ مِّنْكُمْ نُعَذِّبْ طَآئِفَةً ۢ بِاَنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا مُجْرِمِيْنَ ﴿٦٦﴾

And among them there are those who hurt the Prophet and say, "He is just an ear" (hearing and believing everything). Say, "He is a good ear for you who believes in Allah and trusts the believers and is a mercy for those of you who have (truly) believed." And those who hurt the Messenger of Allah, for them there is a painful punishment. [61]

They swear by Allah to you, (O believers) so that they may please you, whereas Allah – as well as His Messenger – has greater right that they should please Him, if they are (true) believers. [62]

Have they not come to know that whoever opposes Allah and His Messenger, definite for him is the fire of Jahannam wherein he will remain forever. That is the extreme disgrace. [63]

The hypocrites are afraid that a Sūrah (a chapter of the Holy Qur'ān) may be sent about them which tells them what is there in their hearts. Say, "Go on mocking. Allah is surely to bring out what you are afraid of." [64]

And if you ask them, they will say, "We were just chatting and having fun." Say, "Is it Allah and His verses and His Messenger that you were making fun of?" [65]

Make no excuses. You became disbelievers after you professed Faith. If We forgive some of you, We shall punish some others, because they were guilty. [66]

Commentary

The present verses, like the previous ones, chastise hypocrites for their absurd objections, hostility to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and their feigned professions of Faith on false oaths.

The first verse (61) mentions the painful comment made by the hypocrites against the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. They thought, since

he hears and believes everything, they had nothing to worry about. In the event, their conspiracy was exposed, they would simply tell him on oath that they had nothing to do with it. Allah Almighty corrected them by saying that His Messenger preferred silence against baseless hostilities because of his high morals. He did not believe in what they said. He himself knew reality as it was. He simply avoided refuting them on their faces because of his inherent gentleness of nature.

Announced in verse 64: اِنَّ اللّٰهَ مُخْرِجٌ مَّا تَحْذَرُوْنَ (Allah is surely to bring out what you are afraid of) is the news that Allah will expose their conspiracy and mischief. One such event came to pass while returning from the battle of Tabūk when some hypocrites had conspired to kill the Messenger of Allah. Allah Almighty informed him about the plan through angel Jibra'īl helping him to bypass the spot where the hypocrites were sitting in ambush. (Maẓharī with reference to al-Baghawī)

And Sayyidnā 'Ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ says that Allah Ta'ālā had informed the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم about the names of seventy hypocrites complete with their parentage and addresses. But, being the universal mercy, he did not disclose these before his people. (Maẓharī)

Verses 67 – 70

اَلْمُنٰفِقُوْنَ وَالْمُنٰفِقٰتُ بَعْضُهُمْ مِّنْۢ بَعْضٍ يَاْمُرُوْنَ بِالْمُنْكَرِ
وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمَعْرُوْفِ وَيَقْبِضُوْنَ اَيْدِيَهُمْ ؕ نَسُوا اللّٰهَ فَنَسِيَهُمْ ؕ
اِنَّ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ هُمُ الْفٰسِقُوْنَ ﴿٦٧﴾ وَعَدَ اللّٰهُ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ وَالْمُنٰفِقٰتِ
وَالْكُفَّارَ نَارَ جَهَنَّمَ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا ؕ هِيَ حَسْبُهُمْ ۚ وَلَعَنَهُمُ اللّٰهُ ۚ
وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّقِيْمٌ ﴿٦٨﴾ كَالَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ كَانُوْٓا اَشَدَّ مِنْكُمْ
قُوَّةً وَّاَكْثَرَ اَمْوَالًا وَّاَوْلَادًا ؕ فَاسْتَمْتَعُوْا بِخَلَاقِهِمْ فَاسْتَمْتَعْتُمْ
بِخَلَاقِكُمْ كَمَا اسْتَمْتَعَ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ بِخَلَاقِهِمْ وَخُضْتُمْ
كَالَّذِيْ خَاضُوْا ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ حَبِطَتْ اَعْمَالُهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْاٰخِرَةِ ۚ
وَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْخٰسِرُوْنَ ﴿٦٩﴾ اَلَمْ يَاْتِهِمْ نَبَاُ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ
قَوْمِ نُوْحٍ وَّعَادٍ وَّثَمُوْدَ ۙ وَقَوْمِ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَاَصْحٰبِ مَدْيَنَ

وَالْمُؤْتَفِكٰتِ ۭ اَتَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ ۚ فَمَا كَانَ اللّٰهُ لِيَظْلِمَهُمْ وَلٰكِنْ كَانُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُوْنَ ﴿٧٠﴾

The hypocrites, male and female, are all alike. They bid vice and forbid virtue and withhold their hands. They forgot Allah, so He forgot them. Surely, the hypocrites are the sinners. [67]

Allah has promised the fire of Jahannam to the hypocrites, men and women, and to the disbelievers who shall live there forever. It is adequate for them. And Allah has put His curse on them, and for them there is a lasting punishment. [68]

(You are) like those before you. They were stronger than you in power, and richer in wealth and children. So, they enjoyed their share, then you enjoyed your share like those before you enjoyed their share. So, you indulged as they indulged. They are the ones whose deeds have gone waste in this world and in the Hereafter, and they are the losers. [69]

Has there not reached them the news of those before them, the people of Nūḥ (Noah) and 'Ād and Thamūd and the people of Ibrāhīm and the people of Madyan, and (the news) of the towns overturned? Their messengers came to them with clear signs; so, Allah was not to wrong them, but they have been doing wrong to their own selves. [70]

Commentary

The first verse begins with a profile of the hypocrites. One of the expressions used there: يَقْبِضُوْنَ اَيْدِيَهُمْ (and they withhold their hands) has been explained in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī as abandonment of Jihād and non-compliance of obligatory rights and duties. Then, the sentence that follows: نَسُوا اللّٰهَ فَنَسِيَهُمْ literally means 'they forgot Allah, so He forgot them.' But, Allah Ta'ālā is free of forgetfulness. So, the sense at this place is: 'those people had abandoned the commandments of Allah, as if they had forgotten it, therefore, Allah too abandoned their prospects of better life in the Hereafter, to the extent that there remained just no trace of any good, or reward, in their name.'

Let us now consider the statement: كَالَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ '(You are) like those before you' in verse 69. According to one exegetical explanation, this is

addressed to hypocrites while according to the other explanation, the address is to Muslims. The addition of 'you are' in parenthesis points out in this direction. Thus, it means that 'you too are like people before you. They went for worldly enjoyments and forgot all about the life to come. The result was that they sank into all sorts of sins. So shall you be.'

Explaining this verse, Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضی اللہ عنہ narrates a Ḥadīth in which the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has been reported to have said that 'you too will take to the ways taken by communities before you. You will imitate them in toto as dittos and clones to the limit that should you see one of them entering into the hole of a lizard (iguana), you will follow him there too.' After having narrated this far, Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضی اللہ عنہ said that should anyone wish to ascertain the thematic authenticity of this Ḥadīth, let him read this verse of the Qur'ān: كَالَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ '(You are) like those before you – 69.'

On hearing this, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ said: مَا أَشْبَهَ اللَّيْلَةَ بِالْبَارِحَةِ that is, 'how similar is this night (in our time) to the last night (way back) – they are the people of Banī Isra'īl and we have been likened to them.' (Qurṭubī)

The aim of the Ḥadīth is fairly evident. It warns that Muslims too will start following the ways of the Jews and Christians by latter times. This statement appears only after a punishment has been announced for the hypocrites. It serves as an indicator that good Muslims would not do that. Only those among them, who are weak in 'Īmān may do so because they are still infected with the germs of hypocrisy. All good men and women of the Muslim community have been instructed in this verse that they should themselves abstain from such ways as well as help others do the same.

Verses 71 – 73

وَالْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ وَالْمُؤْمِنٰتُ بَعْضُهُمْ اَوْلِيَآءُ بَعْضٍ ۘ يَاْمُرُوْنَ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ
وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُقِيْمُوْنَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَيُؤْتُوْنَ الزَّكٰوةَ
وَيُطِيْعُوْنَ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ سَيَرْحَمُهُمُ اللّٰهُ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَزِيْزٌ
حَكِيْمٌ ﴿۷۱﴾ وَعَدَ اللّٰهُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَالْمُؤْمِنٰتِ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ

تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا وَمَسٰكِنَ طَيِّبَةً فِيْ جَنّٰتِ عَدْنٍ ؕ وَرِضْوَانٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ اَكْبَرُ ؕ ذٰلِكَ هُوَالْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيْمُ ﴿۷۲﴾ يٰۤاَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ جَاهِدِ الْكُفَّارَ وَ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ وَاغْلُظْ عَلَيْهِمْ ؕ وَمَاْوٰىهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ ؕ وَ بِئْسَ الْمَصِيْرُ ﴿۷۳﴾

The believers, male and female, are friends to each other. They bid virtue and forbid vice and establish Ṣalāh and pay Zakāh and obey Allah and His Messenger. Them Allah will bless with mercy. Surely, Allah is Powerful, Wise. [71]

Allah has promised to the believers, male and female, gardens beneath which rivers flow where they shall live forever and good homes in gardens of eternity. And Allah's pleasure is the greatest. That is the supreme success. [72]

O Prophet, carry out Jihād against the disbelievers and hypocrites and be strict with them. And their abode is Jahannam, and it is an evil terminus. [73]

Commentary

Previous verses mentioned hypocrites – their conspiracies, hostilities, and the punishment waiting for them. The characteristic style of the Qur'ān required that true believers should also be mentioned at this place giving a view of their life style, rewards and ranks. The verses cited above do just that.

It is interesting that the text, while making a comparison between hypocrites and true believers on this occasion, has this to say: بَعْضُهُمْ مِّنْ بَعْضٍ (they are all alike - 67). However, what it has to say about true believers is: بَعْضُهُمْ اَوْلِيَآءُ بَعْضٍ (the believers are friends to each other - 71). This releases a hint about the nature of their mutual relationships. Hypocrites base it on functional cooperation between kinsfolk or on self-interest. Such bonds do not last long, nor do they bring the kind of spiritual benefits that are the hallmarks of a heart-to-heart friendship. Juxtaposed against hypocrites there are the true believers. They are sincere friends and wish well of each other. (Qurṭubī)

Moreover, since this friendship and concern for each other is for Al-

lah alone, it is always constant. It remains the same under all conditions, open or secret, present or absent. And it is lasting. This is the mark of a true believer. It is in the very nature of 'Īmān (faith) and Al-'*Amal aṣ-Ṣāliḥ* (good deed) that they generate mutual love and friendship. The Holy Qur'ān confirms it when it says: سَيَجْعَلُ لَهُمُ الرَّحْمٰنُ وُدًّا (19:96). It means that among those who have believed and taken to consistent good conduct in life, Allah Ta'ālā creates friendship that is deeply rooted into their hearts. What has happened to us in our time? May be we are short on the faith in our hearts and the concern for good in our conduct. That is why mutual relationships among Muslims do not seem to be what the Qur'ān would like them to be. Unfortunately, these are subservient to worldly needs and interests – and are not for the sake of Allah alone, as they should be.

In the last verse (73): جَاهِدِ الْكُفَّارَ وَالْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ وَاغْلُظْ عَلَيْهِمْ (carry out Jihād against the disbelievers and hypocrites and be strict with them), the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been commanded to wage Jihād against disbelievers and hypocrites both and to be strict in their case. The need to fight against belligerent disbelievers is self-evident. But, the meaning of carrying out Jihād against the hypocrites is explained by the very conduct of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. It proves that Jihād against them signifies vocal Jihād through which they should be induced to understand the veracity of Islām, start to feel for it and thus become sincere in their adherence to Islām. (Qurṭubī and Maẓharī) Please bear in mind that the real meaning of the word: غلظ (*ghilaẓ*) used in: واغلظ (and be strict with them) is that one should not show any leniency or grant any concessions in taking a course of action which the person addressed deserves. This word is used as an antonym to رأفة (*ra'fah*) which means mercy and kindheartedness.

In his comments, Imām al-Qurṭubī has said that the use of the word: *ghilẓah* (strictness) at this place means that leniency should not be shown and concessions should not be granted when the injunctions of Sharī'ah are enforced on them. This approach has nothing to do with being vocally strict – because, that is against the favored practice of the blessed prophets. They are never harsh in speech, nor do they curse and swear. In Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is reported to have said: اِذَا زَنَتْ أَمَةُ أَحَدِكُمْ فَلْيَجْلِدْهَا الْحَدَّ وَلَا يُثَرِّبْ عَلَيْهَا (If a bondwoman of anyone among you commits fornication, just enforce the Islāmic legal pun-

ishment for it on her – but, do not denounce her verbally) (Qurṭubī)

Alluding to the persona of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم – the image he exuded in his presence before people – Allah Ta'ālā has Himself said: وَلَوْكُنْتَ فَظًّا غَلِيْظَ الْقَلْبِ لَا نْفَضُّوْا مِنْ حَوْلِكَ (and had you been rough and hard-hearted, they would have dispersed from around you – 3:159). Then, there is no evidence even from the actual dealings of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم that he ever demonstrated any harsh attitude in conversation or address before disbelievers and hypocrites.

A warning signal

It is certainly a matter of regret that the attitude of harshness in address and conversation was something Islām never took to even against Kuffār, the rigid and hostile disbelievers. But, contemporary Muslims would not bat an eye and use it against other Muslims – not to say much about many of those who would congratulate themselves for having done this as some service to their religion. *Innalillāh* ...

Verses 74 – 78

يَحْلِفُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ مَاقَالُوْاط وَلَقَدْ قَالُوْا كَلِمَةَ الْكُفْرِ وَكَفَرُوْا بَعْدَ اِسْلَامِهِمْ وَهَمُّوْا بِمَا لَمْ يَنَالُوْاج وَمَا نَقَمُوْآ اِلَّآ اَنْ اَغْنٰهُمُ اللّٰهُ وَرَسُوْلُهٗ مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ ج فَاِنْ يَّتُوْبُوْا يَكُ خَيْرًا لَّهُمْج وَاِنْ يَّتَوَلَّوْا يُعَذِّبْهُمُ اللّٰهُ عَذَابًا اَلِيْمًالا فِى الدُّنْيَا وَالْاٰخِرَةِج وَمَا لَهُمْ فِى الْاَرْضِ مِنْ وَّلِيٍّ وَّلَا نَصِيْرٍ ﴿٧٤﴾ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ عٰهَدَاللّٰهَ لَئِنْ اٰتٰنَا مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ لَنَصَّدَّقَنَّ وَلَنَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ ﴿٧٥﴾ فَلَمَّآ اٰتٰهُمْ مِّنْ فَضْلِهٖ بَخِلُوْا بِهٖ وَتَوَلَّوْا وَّهُمْ مُّعْرِضُوْنَ ﴿٧٦﴾ فَاَعْقَبَهُمْ نِفَاقًا فِىْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ اِلٰى يَوْمِ يَلْقَوْنَهٗ بِمَآ اَخْلَفُوا اللّٰهَ مَا وَعَدُوْهُ وَبِمَا كَانُوْا يَكْذِبُوْنَ ﴿٧٧﴾ اَلَمْ يَعْلَمُوْآ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يَعْلَمُ سِرَّهُمْ وَنَجْوٰىهُمْ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلَّامُ الْغُيُوْبِ ﴿٧٨﴾

They swear by Allah that they said nothing while, indeed, they had said the word of infidelity and had disbelieved after having accepted Islām, and had intended what they could not achieve. And they showed resent-

ment against nothing but that Allah and His Messenger have made them rich with His grace. So, if they repent, it will be good for them, and if they turn away, Allah shall punish them with a painful punishment in this world and the Hereafter, and for them there is neither a friend on the Earth, nor a helper. [74]

And among them there are those who made a pledge with Allah: "If He gives us (wealth) out of His grace, then, surely we shall give alms and shall be among the righteous." [75]

But when He gave them (wealth) of His grace, they became stingy about it, and went back turning their faces away. [76]

So Allah, in turn, put hypocrisy in their hearts till the day they shall meet Him, because they broke their promise with Allah and because they have been telling lies. [77] **Did they not know that Allah knows what they conceal and what they whisper and that Allah is the well-aware of all the unseen.** [78]

Commentary

In the first verse: يَحْلِفُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ (They swear by Allah –74), the text reverts to the hypocrites who keep uttering words of infidelity in their gatherings but, should Muslims come to know about that, they would promptly declare on oath that they had nothing to do with it. Giving the background in which this verse was revealed, Al-Baghawī reports that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم gave an address on the occasion of the battle of Tabūk. He talked about the sorry state of affairs the hypocrites were in and warned them of their sad end. Also present there was Jullās, a hypocrite. When he returned to his people, he said 'if whatever Muḥammad says is true, then, we are worse than donkeys.' By chance, a Ṣaḥābī whose name was 'Āmir ibn Qays heard the comment. He told him that 'there is no doubt about what the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said for it is true and you are really worse than donkeys.'

When the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم returned to Madīnah back from his trip to Tabūk, 'Āmir ibn Qays told him about this event. But, Jullās flatly disowned what he had said. On top of that, he charged 'Āmir ibn Qays of having accused him falsely. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم ordered both of them to stand close to the *Mimbar* of the *Nabiyy*

(the stepped platform used to deliver *khuṭbah* in the *masjid* originally occupied by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and traditionally regarded as a symbol of his message) and take an oath. Jullās was quick to take a false oath to the effect that he never said that and that 'Āmir was lying. When it was 'Āmir's turn, he took his oath. Then, he raised his hands of prayer before Allah saying, 'O Allah, let Your Messenger know about the reality of this matter through a revelation to him.' The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said '*Āmīn* (amen) following his prayer and so did all Muslims present there. These people had yet to move from there when came Angel Jibra'īl with the revelation which included this verse.

When Jullās heard this verse, he stood up immediately and started saying, '*yā rasūlallāh*, now I confess that I was the one in the wrong and that which was said by 'Āmir was the truth. But, this very verse has also given me the right of making Taubah (repentance). Hence, I seek forgiveness from Allah and repent for what I did earlier.' The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم accepted his Taubah after which he stayed firm in it and things turned towards the better in his life. (Maẓharī)

Some commentators have referred to similar events as the background of the revelation of this verse – especially as this verse includes the sentence: وَهَمُّوْا بِمَا لَمْ يَنَالُوْا (and had intended what they could not achieve –74). This sentence seems to suggest that the verse is connected with some event when the hypocrites had hatched some conspiracy against the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his Muslim followers in which they could not succeed. For example, there is a fairly well known incident that came to pass during the return from this very battle of Tabūk. Twelve men from among the hypocrites sat in ambush behind a mountain pass with the intention of taking the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم by surprise and kill him. Angel Jibra'īl informed him of their intention. He took a different route and their conspiracy went to dust.

For that matter, several other events of this nature are also on record. But, there is no element of contradiction or improbability in the likelihood that all those events are being referred to through this verse.

The second verse: وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ عٰهَدَ اللّٰهَ (And among them there are those who made a pledge with Allah - 75) is also connected with a particular

event which has been reported by Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Ibn Marduwayh, Al-Ṭabarānī and Al-Baihaqī on the authority of a narration from Sayyidnā Abū Umāmah Bāhilī رضی اللہ عنہ. According to this report, a person called Tha'labah ibn Ḥāṭib al-Anṣārī presented himself before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and requested him to pray that he becomes rich. He said, 'Is it that you do not like my way? By the Being that holds my life in his His hands, if I had wished, mountains of Madīnah would have turned into solid gold following behind me on my walkways. But, I do not like being that wealthy.' The man went away. But, he returned later and repeated his request for the same prayer with the pledge that, should he get the wealth prayed for, he would give every deserving person his share from it. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم made the prayer. The effect of the prayer showed up in an unprecedented increase in the number of goats he owned. When the number increased further, the space in Madīnah became too small for him. So, he moved out into the outskirts from where he used to come to Madīnah where he offered the Ṣalāh of Ẓuhr and 'Aṣr with the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. As for the rest of the prayers, he used to perform these in the wilderness where his herd of goats, his prized possession, was located.

Then, this very flock of goats became so large that even that area on the outskirts became insufficient. He moved farther away from Madīnah coming there only on Fridays for the Jumu'ah Ṣalāh. As for the five daily prayers, he did them where he was stationed. Then came further increases in his wealth and he had to leave that spot too, only to go far away from Madīnah where he sat deprived of his Jumu'ah and Jama'ah both.

After the passage of some time, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم asked people about him. They told him that his 'wealth' had increased to such proportions that he had to go far away from Madīnah and that is why he is not seen in the city. On hearing this, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: وَيْحَ ثَعْلَبَةَ (Alas for Tha'labah) three times.

By chance, it was the time when came the revelation of the verse of Ṣadaqāt (60) where the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been commanded to collect Ṣadaqāt from Muslims – (خُذْ مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ صَدَقَةً). He had the whole law of Ṣadaqāt committed to writing, appointed two persons as the collectors of Ṣadaqah and sent them to collect the Ṣadaqāt due on live-

stock owned by Muslims. They were ordered to go to Tha'labah ibn Ḥāṭib as well, and to another person from the tribe of Banī Sulaym also.

When the two collectors reached Tha'labah and presented the order of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, he said that this thing had become a sort of Jizyah which is taken from non-Muslims. Then he hedged and asked them to leave on that occasion, however, they could call on him on their way back. The two of them left.

Something different happened in the case of the other person from the tribe of Banī Sulaym. When he heard about the order of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, he himself called on the two emissaries of his master carrying with him the best from out of his livestock of camels and goats, precisely according to his Zakatable *niṣāb* of Ṣadaqah. They told him that they have orders not to pick out the best among animals, in fact, they were supposed to take the average ones, therefore, they could not take these. The man from Banī Sulaym insisted that it was his pleasure to present those very animals and requested that they be accepted as they were.

After that, when these two emissaries had completed their circuit of Ṣadaqah collection, they returned to Tha'labah. He told them that he wanted to see that Law of Ṣadaqah they were talking about. He looked at it and said no more than what he had said earlier – 'this thing has become a sort of Jizyah that should not be taken from Muslims.' 'All right,' he said, 'you can go for now. I have to think about it first. I will decide later.'

When these two gentlemen reached Madīnah, they went to see the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. At that time he, before hearing their report on the mission, repeated the words he had said earlier: يَا وَيْحَ ثَعْلَبَة يَاوَيْحَ ثَعْلَبَة يَا وَيْحَ ثَعْلَبَة (Alas for Tha'labah). He said it three times. After that, he was pleased to hear about the Sulaymī deal and prayed for him. Thereupon, came the verse: وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ عٰهَدَ اللهَ (And among them there are those who made a pledge with Allah – 75). It means: 'if Allah gave them wealth, they would give out alms and charities and fulfill the rights of all deserving people, the relatives and the poor, as done by the righteous people of the community. But, when Allah blessed them with wealth, out of His grace, they became misers overnight and turned away from their pledge of obedience to Allah and His Messenger.'

Verse 77: فَأَعْقَبَهُمْ نِفَاقًا فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ (So Allah, in turn, put hypocrisy in their hearts) points out to its cause which lies in their lying and pledge breaking. As a consequence, Allah made the hypocrisy of their hearts become deep and firm. Now, they would just not have the ability to make Taubah itself.

A serious note of warning

From here we learn that there are occasions when the curse of evil deeds assumes alarming proportions, so much so that one is deprived of the very ability (*taufīq*) of making Taubah. May Allah protect us from this misfortune!

Let us now go back to the detailed narrative of Sayyidnā Abū Umāmah رضی اللہ عنہ mentioned a little earlier. Ibn Jarīr writes at the end of it: When the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said 'Alas for Tha'labah' three times, some of his relatives were present in the gathering. When they heard it, one of them immediately traveled to see Tha'labah. When he reached there, he reproached him for his behavior while informing him that it has caused the revelation of a particular verse of the Qur'ān. This made Tha'labah nervous. He reached Madīnah and requested the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم that his Ṣadaqah may be accepted. He said that Allah Ta'ālā had told him not to accept his Ṣadaqah. Hearing this, Tha'labah went crazy with disappointment and literally started throwing dust on his head.

The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said, 'this is something you have chosen to do on your own. I ordered you and you did not obey. Now, your Ṣadaqah cannot be accepted.' Tha'labah returned disappointed. Then, some days later, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم departed from this mortal world and Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ became the Khalīfah. Tha'labah came to Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ and requested that he should accept his Ṣadaqah. Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ said, 'when the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم did not accept it, how can I do it?'

Then, after the demise of Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ, Tha'labah came to Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ. He made the same request and got the same answer from him, as was given by Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ. Again, he submitted this request to Sayyidnā Uthmān رضی اللہ عنہ during his period of Khilāfah. He too refused it. It was during the tenure of the Khilāfah of Sayyidnā Uthmān رضی اللہ عنہ that Tha'labah died. We seek the protection of Allah from all evil deeds. (Maẓharī)

A question and its answer

When Tha'labah had submitted in repentance, the question is why was his Taubah not accepted? The reason is evident. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was informed through revelation that he was not making his Taubah with absolute sincerity. He had hypocrisy concealed in his heart. He was simply trying to deceive Muslims for the time being only to put matters right between them. Therefore, it was not acceptable. And when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم himself declared him to be a hypocrite, the Khulafā' who succeeded him were left with no right to accept his Ṣadaqah – because, being a Muslim is a condition for Zakāh. Now, after the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, no one knows the hypocrisy hidden in the heart of a person, therefore, the rule to follow in future is: Anyone who makes Taubah and confesses to his Islām and 'Īmān should be treated as Muslims are treated – no matter what lies in his heart. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Verses 79 – 80

اَلَّذِيْنَ يَلْمِزُوْنَ الْمُطَّوِّعِيْنَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ فِى الصَّدَقٰتِ وَ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يَجِدُوْنَ اِلَّا جُهْدَهُمْ فَيَسْخَرُوْنَ مِنْهُمْ ؕ سَخِرَ اللّٰهُ مِنْهُمْ ۫ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿۷۹﴾ اِسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ اَوْ لَا تَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ ؕ اِنْ تَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ سَبْعِيْنَ مَرَّةً فَلَنْ يَّغْفِرَ اللّٰهُ لَهُمْ ؕ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمْ كَفَرُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يَهْدِى الْقَوْمَ الْفٰسِقِيْنَ ﴿۸۰﴾

Those who find fault with believers who voluntarily give alms and have nothing but their hard earnings – still they mock at them – mocked they are by Allah and for them there is a painful punishment. [79]

Ask pardon for them or do not ask pardon for them – even if you ask pardon for them seventy times, Allah shall never pardon them. That is because they disbelieved in Allah and His Messenger. And Allah does not lead the sinning people to the right path. [80]

Commentary

Mentioned in the first verse (79) are taunts thrown at Muslims who gave away in charity on a voluntary basis (*Naflī Ṣadaqāt*). It appears

in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim that Sayyidnā Abū Mas'ūd رضی اللہ عنہ said: 'we had orders from Allah Ta'ālā that we must give Ṣadaqah and, believe it, we used to do manual labor for that (that is, we had no money or thing with us. We used to take out that Ṣadaqah too from whatever we earned through this very manual labor). Thus, Abū 'Aqīl offered Ṣadaqah to the measure of 0.5 *Ṣā'* (approximately 1.75 kilos). Then, someone came and gave a little more than that. The hypocrites mocked at them for having brought something so insignificant in the name of Ṣadaqah. Allah never needs things like that. And whoever gave a little more in Ṣadaqah, they accused him that he had done it to show off before people. Thereupon, this verse was revealed.

Please note that, in the sentence: سَخِرَ اللّٰهُ مِنْهُمْ (mocked they are by Allah - 79), the word 'mocked' stands for 'punished for their mockery'.

In the second verse (80), there is a statement about the hypocrites. It has been addressed to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم. He has been told whether or not he seeks forgiveness for them makes no difference – and no matter how many times he seeks forgiveness for them, they shall not be forgiven. A detailed explanation of this appears under the comments on verse 84: لَا تُصَلِّ عَلٰٓى اَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ (and never offer a prayer on any one of them who dies) appearing a little later.

Verses 81 – 83

فَرِحَ الْمُخَلَّفُوْنَ بِمَقْعَدِهِمْ خِلٰفَ رَسُوْلِ اللّٰهِ وَكَرِهُوْٓا اَنْ يُّجَاهِدُوْا
بِاَمْوَالِهِمْ وَاَنْفُسِهِمْ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ وَقَالُوْا لَا تَنْفِرُوْا فِي الْحَرِّ ؕ
قُلْ نَارُ جَهَنَّمَ اَشَدُّ حَرًّا ؕ لَوْ كَانُوْا يَفْقَهُوْنَ ﴿٨١﴾ فَلْيَضْحَكُوْا
قَلِيْلًا وَّلْيَبْكُوْا كَثِيْرًا ۚ جَزَآءًۢ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَكْسِبُوْنَ ﴿٨٢﴾ فَاِنْ
رَّجَعَكَ اللّٰهُ اِلٰى طَآئِفَةٍ مِّنْهُمْ فَاسْتَاْذَنُوْكَ لِلْخُرُوْجِ فَقُلْ لَّنْ
تَخْرُجُوْا مَعِيَ اَبَدًا وَّلَنْ تُقَاتِلُوْا مَعِيَ عَدُوًّا ؕ اِنَّكُمْ رَضِيْتُمْ
بِالْقُعُوْدِ اَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ فَاقْعُدُوْا مَعَ الْخٰلِفِيْنَ ﴿٨٣﴾

Those who were left behind were happy with their sitting back to the displeasure of the Messenger of Allah, and they disliked to carry out *jihād* in the way of Allah with their wealth and lives, and they said, "Do not

> **march in this hot weather." Say, "The fire of Jahannam is more intense in heat," only if they could understand.** [81]
>
> **So, let them laugh a little, and weep a lot, being a reward of what they used to earn.** [82]
>
> **Then, if Allah brings you back to a group of them and they seek your permission to march, say to them, "You shall never march with me ever after, and shall never fight an enemy in my company. You were happy with sitting back the first time; now, sit with those remaining behind."** [83]

Commentary

Behavior patterns of hypocrites who did not take part in the battle of Tabūk, despite the general call of Jihād, continue to be the main theme since several previous verses.

The current verses give another example of their behavior. Then, it was said that they will be punished in the Hereafter, their names will be eliminated from the list of the *mujāhidīn* of Islām forever in this mortal world and that they will never be allowed to take part in any future Jihād.

The word: مُخَلَّفُوْنَ (those who were left behind – 81) is the plural of مُخَلَّفٌ (*mukhallaf*) which means 'abandoned' or left out. The subtle hint thus released is that these people are pleased with the idea that they have stayed away from endangering their lives by not participating in the Jihād. But, the truth of the matter is that Allah Ta'ālā did not consider them to be worthy of this supreme honor. Therefore, it is not they who have abandoned the Jihād, in fact, it is Jihād that has abandoned them. The reason is that Allah and His Messenger have, at their discretion, considered it fit that they should be left out.

Following immediately, there is the word: خلاف (*khilāf*) in: خِلٰفَ رَسُوْلِ اللّٰهِ translated as 'to the displeasure of the Messenger of Allah.' This word could be taken in the sense of 'behind' or 'after' as well. In fact, this is the meaning Abū 'Ubayd has gone by. If so, it would mean that these people were rejoicing in their staying (at home) after (the departure of) the Messenger of Allah – an occasion not really worth the mirth. As for the word: بِمَقْعَدِهِمْ (*bimaq'adihim*: their sitting back) in the same verse, it appears here in the sense of قعود (*qu'ūd*: sitting) as a verbal noun.

It is also possible to take the word *khilāf* in the sense of *mukhālafat* (contravention, opposition). In that case, it would mean that they sat home in contravention of the command of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Then, they did not leave it at that. They prompted others too by saying that they should not march in that hot weather: (لَا تَنۡفِرُوۡا فِى الۡحَرِّ).

We already know that the command to fight the battle of Tabūk was given at a time when the heat was intense. The rejoinder to their comment came from Allah Ta'ālā: قُلۡ نَارُ جَهَنَّمَ اَشَدُّ حَرًّا (Say: [O Prophet] the fire of Jahannam is more intense in heat) that is, these people are really unfortunate. They see the heat of a certain given time and try to beat it one way or the other. But, they do not realize that their disobedience to the command of Allah and His Messenger would bring them face to face with the fire of Jahannam. Why would they not worry about it? Is it that the heat of our seasons is more intense than the heat of Hell?

After that it was said: فَلۡيَضۡحَكُوۡا قَلِيۡلًا (So, let them laugh a little, and weep a lot, being a reward of what they used to earn – 82). Though, the word *'falyaḍḥakū'* (So, laugh) has been used in the imperative form, but commentators interpret it in the sense of the predicate of a nominal clause. The wisdom behind the use of the imperative form given by them is that this is categorical and certain. In other words, this is going to happen as a matter of certainty. Such people could laugh for the days they have in the mortal world - but, in 'Ākhirah, they must weep and weep forever.

Commentator Ibn Abī Ḥātim reports the explanation of this verse from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه as follows:

اَلدُّنۡيَا قَلِيۡلٌ فَلۡيَضۡحَكُوۡا فِيۡهَا مَاشَآءُوۡا فَإِذَا انۡقَطَعَتِ الدُّنۡيَا وَصَارُوۡآ اِلَى اللّٰهِ فَلۡيَسۡتَاۡنِفُوا الۡبُكَاءَ بُكَاءً لَا يَنۡقَطِعُ اَبَدًا

> The *dunyā* (present world) is short-lived. So, let them laugh therein as they wish but when *'dunyā'* will come to an end and they will start coming to Allah, then, they will start weeping, a weeping which will never come to an end. (Maẓharī)

The statement: لَنۡ تَخۡرُجُوۡا (*lan takhrujū* ... you shall never march) in the second verse (83) has been explained by Maulanā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī in the summary of his Tafsīr Bayān al-Qur'ān. According to him, 'even if these people intend to participate in a future Jihād, they

would get out of it when they want to, under one or the other pretext; and since they do not have faith in their heart, their intention too will not be backed by sincerity. Therefore, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was commanded that, even if they want to take part in a Jihād, he should tell them the truth that he does not trust their word and deed. So, they would neither go for Jihād nor fight an enemy of Islām in his company.'

Most of the commentators have said that this injunction has been enforced as their punishment in the present world, that is, even if they themselves were to make a request that they be allowed to take part in Jihād, even then, they should not be allowed to do that.

Verse 84

وَلَا تُصَلِّ عَلَىٰٓ أَحَدٍ مِّنْهُم مَّاتَ أَبَدًا وَلَا تَقُمْ عَلَىٰ قَبْرِهِۦٓ ۖ إِنَّهُمْ كَفَرُوا۟ بِٱللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِۦ وَمَاتُوا۟ وَهُمْ فَٰسِقُونَ ﴿٨٤﴾

And never offer a prayer on any one of them who dies, and do not stand by his grave. They disbelieved in Allah and His Messenger and died while they were sinners. [84]

Commentary

It stands established from Ṣaḥīḥ Aḥādīth, and confirmed by a consensus of the Muslim Ummah on it that this verse was revealed at the time of the death of the hypocrite, 'Abdullāh ibn Ubaiyy, and about the Ṣalāh of Janāzah for him. Then, it also stands established from the report in Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim and the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم offered Ṣalāh of Janāzah for him. After he had done it, this verse was revealed. And thereafter, he never offered the Ṣalāh of Janāzah for any *munāfiq* (hypocrite).

The background in which this verse was revealed appears in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim. According to this report from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنه, when 'Abdullāh ibn Ubaiyy ibn Salūl died, his son 'Abdullāh رضى الله عنه came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. He was a sincere Muslim, and a Ṣaḥābī. When he requested for his shirt so that he could use it as a shroud for the dead body of his father, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم let him have it. Then, he requested him to also lead the Ṣalāh of Janāzah for his father. He accepted and rose to do

that. At that point, Sayyidnā 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb رضی اللہ عنہ held the fall of his shirt cloth and said: 'you are going to lead the Janāzah Ṣalāh for this *munāfiq* although Allah Ta'ālā has prohibited you from doing that.' The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said: 'Allah Ta'ālā has given me a choice. I may pray for their forgiveness, or I may not – and as for forgiveness not to be granted even if prayed for it seventy times as in the verse, I can say that I can do that more than seventy times.' The verse referred to here is verse 80 of Sūrah Al-Taubah which you have gone through a little earlier. For your convenience, its words are: اِسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ اَوْلَا تَسْتَغْفِرْلَهُمْ اِنْ تَسْتَغْفِرْلَهُمْ سَبْعِيْنَ مَرَّةً فَلَنْ يَّغْفِرَاللّٰهُ لَهُمْ (Ask pardon for them or do not ask pardon for them; even if you ask pardon for them seventy times, Allah shall never pardon them). Then, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم offered the Ṣalāh of Janāzah for him. Soon after the Ṣalāh, this verse: لَاتُصَلِّ عَلٰٓى اَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ (And never offer a prayer on any one of them...) was revealed (so, after that, he never led the Ṣalāh of Janāzah for any *munāfiq*).

Removal of ambiguities concerning this event

A question arises here about 'Abdullāh ibn Ubaiyy, a *munāfiq* whose hypocrisy was laid bare on many different occasions and who was regarded as ring leader of all hypocrites. How was it that he received such unusual treatment from the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم when he gave his blessed shirt to be used as his funeral shroud?

In answer, two reasons can be given for it. Firstly, it was done on the request of his son who was a sincere Ṣaḥābī and the motive was simply to console him on his loss. There could be a second reason as well. This has been reported in Al-Bukhārī on the authority of Sayyidnā Jābir رضی اللہ عنہ. When some Quraysh chiefs were arrested on the occasion of the battle of Badr, one of them happened to be 'Abbās, the uncle of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم. When he saw that his uncle does not have a shirt on his body, he asked his Companions to put a shirt on him. Sayyidnā 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ was tall. No shirt other than that of 'Abdullāh ibn Ubaiyy would fit him. So, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم took the shirt from 'Abdullāh ibn Ubaiyy and had his uncle 'Abbās wear it. It was only to repay this favor that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم had given his shirt for him. (Qurṭubī)

The second question relates to what Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ had said to the Holy Prophet. It will be recalled that he had said, 'Allah Ta'ālā has prohibited you from leading the Ṣalāh of Janāzah for a hypo-

crite.' We have to look for the basis on which he said that, because no verse had ever prohibited the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم expressly from offering the Ṣalāh of Janāzah for a hypocrite. From here it becomes fairly clear that Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه must have deduced that sense of prohibition from this very verse of Sūrah Al-Taubah referred earlier, that is, اِسْتَغْفِرْلَهُمْ (Ask pardon for them...80). Now the question is, if this verse of prohibition refers to the Ṣalāh of Janāzah, why would the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم not let this be regarded as prohibited, instead of which, he said that the choice in the verse had been given to him?

The answer is that, in reality, the formal arrangement of words in the verse does carry the sense of giving a choice – and it is also obvious that the mention of seventy times at this place is not for prescribing a limit. It is, rather, to express the sense of many times. Thus, the outcome of the verse, in terms of its obvious sense, turns out to be that 'a hypocrite will not be pardoned, no matter how many times you were to seek forgiveness for him.' But, he has not been expressly prohibited from praying for their forgiveness as such. Another verse of the Holy Qur'ān from Sūrah Yā Sīn is a parallel example. There it has been said: سَوَآءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ ءَأَنْذَرْتَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تُنْذِرْهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ (And it is all the same for them whether or not you warn them – they are not going to believe – 36:10). This verse has not categorically stopped him from warning people of evils and inviting them to what is good. For that matter, some other verses of the Qur'ān also prove that the ongoing mission of calling people towards the faith never stopped. Of course, it included such people as well – for example, بَلِّغْ مَآ أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ (O Messenger, convey all that has been sent down to you from your Lord. – 5:67) and إِنَّمَآ أَنْتَ مُنْذِرٌ وَّلِكُلِّ قَوْمٍ هَادٍ (you are only a warner, and for every people, there is a guide – 13:7). The outcome is that the verse of Sūrah Yā Sīn (36:10) quoted above proved that choice was given to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, though in a limited frame of reference. Then, the later verses quoted immediately earlier provided the standing proof of the continuance of the mission of warning people against evils. From the verse under study too, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had gathered that they will not be pardoned, but the situation was that he had not been restrained from seeking forgiveness for them through some other verse either, till then.

Then, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم also knew that neither his

shirt nor the Ṣalāh of Janāzah he offered for the deceased hypocrite were to bring forgiveness for him. But, he did hope that his action would yield benefits for other aspects of Islāmic public policy. People of his family and the disbelieving people in general were bound to observe the way the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم deals with their leader. This was likely to bring them closer to Islām, even embracing it. As for some clear prohibition of offering the Ṣalāh of Janāzah, it just did not exist until that time. Therefore, he led the Ṣalāh.

Perhaps, the other answer lies in the sentence that has been reported in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه. There, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been quoted to have said: 'Had I known that he will be pardoned by praying for his forgiveness more than seventy times, I would have done that too.' (Qurṭubī)

The second evidence comes from another Ḥadīth in which the following words from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم have been reported: 'my shirt cannot save him from the punishment of Allah. But, I did it in the hope that on the basis of this action thousands of his people will embrace Islām.' So, according to what was said, after having witnessed this event, one thousand people from the tribe of Khazraj embraced Islām (as reported in the books of *maghāzi* and in some books of Tafsīr).

Summary

To sum up, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم knew from previous verses that no matter what they do, the *munāfiqs* (the hypocrites) will not be pardoned. But, there were some factors that explain the rationale of his action. The words of the verse seemed to have given him the choice. No other verse had yet prohibited him from doing so. Then, there was the opportunity to pay back the favor of a disbeliever here in this world. Last, but not the least, was the hope of other disbelievers embracing Islām as a result of this action. Therefore, he preferred to lead the Ṣalāh of Janāzah. As for the action of Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه, he thought that once it stands proved through the verse in question that a hypocrite will not be pardoned, he found no reason for offering a Ṣalāh of Janāzah for him and praying that he may be forgiven. According to him, it might be redundant, and against the station of a prophet. Therefore, he deemed it prohibited to offer the *janazah*. The posi-

tion of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was that he did not, though, consider this action as beneficial in its own right – but, he did have the likelihood of others embracing Islām in sight. Therefore, this action did not remain futile. To conclude, in this manner, no ambiguity remains either in the conduct of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم or in the words of Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Now, came the verse: لَاتُصَلِّ (and never offer a prayer) revealed in clear terms. It was realized that, no doubt, there was a religiously expedient advantage visible to the Holy Prophet ﷺ in offering the Ṣalāh but it also carried a disturbing factor in it, almost the reverse of what was expected to be expedient. This element somehow did not attract the attention of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The likelihood of this action creating dissatisfaction among sincere Muslims was strong. They may have thought that sincere Muslims and wily hypocrites have been equated officially. To offset this danger, this particular prohibition was revealed in the Qur'ān – and after that, the Holy Prophet ﷺ never offered the Ṣalāh of Janāzah for any *munāfiq*.

Rulings

1. This verse tells us that offering Ṣalāh on the Janāzah of a *kāfir* or the making of Du'ā seeking his or her forgiveness is not permissible.

2. This verse also proves that to stand before the grave of a *kāfir* as a mark of respect for him, or to go to visit it, is *ḥarām*. Should this be to learn some lesson therefrom, or because of some compulsion, then, it is not contrary to this. For example, it appears in Hidāyah that, should a *kāfir* relative of a Muslim die without leaving a guardian or heir behind, the Muslim relative can put the deceased into hollowed ground as is, without having to make it conform to the standard practice of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Verses 85 – 89

وَلَا تُعْجِبْكَ أَمْوَالُهُمْ وَأَوْلَادُهُمْ ۚ إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ أَنْ يُعَذِّبَهُمْ بِهَا
فِي الدُّنْيَا وَتَزْهَقَ أَنْفُسُهُمْ وَهُمْ كَٰفِرُونَ ﴿٨٥﴾ وَإِذَا أُنْزِلَتْ
سُورَةٌ أَنْ آمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَجَاهِدُوا مَعَ رَسُولِهِ اسْتَأْذَنَكَ أُولُوا
الطَّوْلِ مِنْهُمْ وَقَالُوا ذَرْنَا نَكُنْ مَعَ الْقَٰعِدِينَ ﴿٨٦﴾ رَضُوا بِأَنْ

يَّكُونُوا مَعَ الْخَوَالِفِ وَطُبِعَ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ ﴿٨٧﴾
لَٰكِنِ الرَّسُولُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ جَاهَدُوا بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنفُسِهِمْ ۚ
وَأُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمُ الْخَيْرَاتُ ۖ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٨٨﴾ أَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ
جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا ۚ ذَٰلِكَ الْفَوْزُ
الْعَظِيمُ ﴿٨٩﴾

And their wealth and children should not attract you. Allah only wants to punish them with these in this world and that their souls depart while they are disbelievers. [85]

And when a Sūrah is revealed (saying), "Believe in Allah and carry out *jihād* in the company of His Messenger" the capable ones from them seek your permission and say, "Let us remain with those sitting back." [86]

They are happy to be with women who sit back, and their hearts are sealed; so they do not understand. [87]

But the Messenger and the believers in his company have carried out *jihād* with their wealth and lives, and for them there are the good things, and they are the successful. [88] **Allah has prepared for them gardens beneath which rivers flow where they will live forever. That is the supreme success.** [89]

Commentary

Once again, the present verses carry the description of hypocrites who had avoided participating in the battle of Tabūk under one or the other pretext. Among such hypocrites, there were some rich people as well. Their affluent life could have made Muslims ask, 'when these people are so unacceptable with Allah, why did they have to get all those blessings in this world?'

In response, it was said that a little thinking would unfold the reality behind what they possess in the form of wealth and children. These are no mercy and blessing for them. Instead, these are their trial and punishment in this world – not to say much about the additional punishment due in the Hereafter. It is not difficult to understand the reason. They love wealth, guard it and keep worrying as to how they can go on increasing it. They are never at peace. They collect things of

comfort around them but genuine peace and comfort never knock at their doors, for they are things of the heart. And since this engrossment in the pursuit of wealth makes them heedless towards the concerns of the Hereafter, they indulge in acts of disobedience to their Creator that in turn becomes the cause of their punishment. So, whether a cause or its effect, it remains a punishment. This is the reason why the Qur'ān has used the words: لِيُعَذِّبَهُمْ بِهَا (to punish them with these) in the sense that Allah Ta'ālā wants to punish them by and through these very possessions.

The expression: أُولُوا الطَّوْلِ (*ulu 'aṭ-ṭaul*: translated as 'the capable ones') (86) is not for particularization. Instead, it serves a purpose. It tells that there were others too, the ones not so capable. And the incapable ones had, at least, some obvious excuse to stay behind.

Verse 90

وَجَآءَ الْمُعَذِّرُوْنَ مِنَ الْاَعْرَابِ لِيُؤْذَنَ لَهُمْ وَقَعَدَ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَبُوا اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ ؕ سَيُصِيْبُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿٩٠﴾

And the excuse-makers from the Bedouins came that they might be allowed (to stay behind), while those who were false to Allah and His Messengers (just) stayed behind. A painful punishment is about to fall upon those of them who disbelieve. [90]

Commentary

The details given in the verse tell us that there were two kinds of people among the Bedouins of the desert. First, there were those who visited the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and requested that they might be excused from Jihād and allowed to stay behind. Then, there were the arrogant and rebellious among them who did not even bother to take the trouble of excusing themselves out of it. They just stayed behind.

'When the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم allowed Jadd ibn Qays that he may not go on Jihād,' says Sayyidnā Jābir ibn 'Abdullāh, رضى الله عنه 'some hypocrites also came to him, offered their excuses and sought his permission to stay out of Jihād. As for the permission, he let them have it, but he did realize that they were making false excuses, therefore, he turned away from them. Thereupon, this verse was revealed.'

It made it clear that their excuse was unacceptable. Therefore, they were served with the warning of a painful punishment. However, by saying: اَلَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْهُمْ (those of them who disbelieve), a hint was given that the excuse given by some of them was not because of their disbelief or hypocrisy, rather, it was because of their natural laziness. So, they were not to be affected by the punishment to fall upon those disbelievers.

Verses 91 – 93

لَيْسَ عَلَى الضُّعَفَآءِ وَلَا عَلَى الْمَرْضٰى وَلَا عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ لَا يَجِدُوْنَ مَا يُنْفِقُوْنَ حَرَجٌ اِذَا نَصَحُوْا لِلّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ ؕ مَا عَلَى الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ مِنْ سَبِيْلٍ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿۹۱﴾ وَلَا عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ اِذَا مَآ اَتَوْكَ لِتَحْمِلَهُمْ قُلْتَ لَآ اَجِدُ مَآ اَحْمِلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ ۪ تَوَلَّوْا وَّ اَعْيُنُهُمْ تَفِيْضُ مِنَ الدَّمْعِ حَزَنًا اَلَّا يَجِدُوْا مَا يُنْفِقُوْنَ ﴿۹۲﴾ اِنَّمَا السَّبِيْلُ عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ يَسْتَاْذِنُوْنَكَ وَهُمْ اَغْنِيَآءُ ۚ رَضُوْا بِاَنْ يَّكُوْنُوْا مَعَ الْخَوَالِفِ ۙ وَطَبَعَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى قُلُوْبِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۹۳﴾

There is no blame on the weak, or on the sick, or on those who have nothing to spend, if they are sincere to Allah and His Messenger. There is no way against those good in deeds. And Allah is most Forgiving, Very Merciful. [91]

Nor (is there any blame) on those who – when they came to you so that you might provide them with a carrier and you said (to them), "I find no carrier to give to you" – went back, their eyes flowing with tears grieving that they had nothing to spend. [92]

Blame lies, in fact, on those who ask you permission despite being rich. They are happy being with women who sit back. And Allah has sealed their hearts; so they do not know. [93]

Commentary

Previous verses mentioned people who were not really excusable from participation in Jihād but sat it out because of laziness. Then, there were hypocrites who had taken permission from the Holy Proph-

et صلى الله عليه وسلم under false pretexts because of their disbelief and hypocrisy. And then there were the arrogant ones who did not bother about excuses and permissions and just sat back. They were told there that they were not excusable and that there was a painful punishment waiting for those of them who practiced disbelief and hypocrisy.

The present verses mention sincere Muslims who were deprived of participation in Jihād because they were genuinely incapable of doing so. Some of them were blind, or sick, or handicapped. Their excuse was all too evident. Then, there were some of those who were ready to take part in Jihād, in fact, were 'dying' to go into the Jihād, but they could not make the trip because they did not have an animal to ride on. The journey was long and the weather was very hot. They told the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم how eager they were to participate in the Jihād but how unfortunate that they had nothing to ride on. They requested him to see if they could have some mounts.

There are many events of this nature recorded in books of Exegesis and History. So, different things happened. To some of them who came initially, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had no choice but to say that they had no arrangements to provide mounts to warriors. But, these people returned from him weeping and when they kept weeping in despair, Allah Ta'ālā took care of them in His own way. Six camels arrived before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم right at that time. He let them have these. (Maẓharī) Then, Sayyidnā 'Uthmān رضى الله عنه arranged mounts for three of them, although he had already made similar arrangements for many more of them earlier.

Ultimately, there were some of them still left out for the simple reason that they could not find a mount. Rendered totally helpless, they could do nothing about their aspirations for Jihād. These are the kinds of people mentioned in the cited verses whose excuse was accepted by Allah Ta'ālā. However, at the end, the warning was repeated by saying that particularly cursed are those who, despite their ability, elected to stay away from Jihād like women. The sentence: إِنَّمَا السَّبِيلُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ يَسْتَأْذِنُونَكَ وَهُمْ أَغْنِيَاءُ (Blame lies, in fact, on those who ask your permission despite being rich - 93) means exactly this.

Verses 94 – 96

يَعْتَذِرُونَ إِلَيْكُمْ إِذَا رَجَعْتُمْ إِلَيْهِمْ ط قُلْ لَّا تَعْتَذِرُوا لَنْ نُّؤْمِنَ

لَكُمْ قَدْ نَبَّاَنَا اللّٰهُ مِنْ اَخْبَارِكُمْ ط وَسَيَرَى اللّٰهُ عَمَلَكُمْ وَرَسُوْلُهٗ
ثُمَّ تُرَدُّوْنَ اِلٰى عٰلِمِ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ
تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۹۴﴾ سَيَحْلِفُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ لَكُمْ اِذَا انْقَلَبْتُمْ اِلَيْهِمْ
لِتُعْرِضُوْا عَنْهُمْ ط فَاَعْرِضُوْا عَنْهُمْ ط اِنَّهُمْ رِجْسٌ ز وَّمَاْوٰىهُمْ
جَهَنَّمُ ج جَزَآءًۢ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَكْسِبُوْنَ ﴿۹۵﴾ يَحْلِفُوْنَ لَكُمْ لِتَرْضَوْا
عَنْهُمْ ج فَاِنْ تَرْضَوْا عَنْهُمْ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَرْضٰى عَنِ الْقَوْمِ
الْفٰسِقِيْنَ ﴿۹۶﴾

They will make excuses to you when you return to them. Say, "Do not make excuses. We shall never believe you. Allah has told us the facts about you. And Allah will see what you do, and His Messenger as well. Then you shall be returned to the Knower of the Seen and the Unseen, and He will tell you what you have been doing." [94]

They will swear by Allah before you, so that you may ignore their misdeed. So, you ignore them. They are filth, and their abode is Jahannam, as a recompense for what they used to do. [95]

They swear before you so that you may be pleased with them. So, even if you are pleased with them, Allah will not be pleased with the sinning people. [96]

Commentary

Mentioned in the previous verses were hypocrites who came up with false excuses at the time Jihād forces were getting ready to march out and succeeded in being allowed to stay behind. The present verses mention those who visited the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم after his return from Jihād and offered false excuses for their absence from it. These verses had been revealed before his return to Madīnah and had told him beforehand about the forthcoming event, that is, the hypocrites will come to him as soon as he reaches Madīnah and will offer their excuses. And so it happened.

Three instructions about them have been given to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in the verses cited above. These are as follows:

1. When they come to make excuses, they should be told that they

do not have to make false excuses for they were not going to be believed in their word. Allah Ta'ālā had already told the Holy Prophet ﷺ about the condition of their thinking and doing including the details of their wicked plans and secret intentions. This was enough to prove that they were liars, therefore, offering excuses makes no sense. After that, it was said: وَسَيَرَى اللّٰهُ عَمَلَكُمْ (And Allah will see what you do...). Here, respite has been given to them so that they could still make their Taubah (repentance), renounce Nifāq (hypocrisy) and become true Muslims – because, the wording of the text stipulates that Allah and His Messenger shall see what they do and how they do it. In other words, action shall be taken in consonance with their behavior pattern. If they repented sincerely and became true Muslims, their sins shall stand forgiven. Otherwise, these false excuses were not going to do them any good.

2. The second instruction to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم appears in the second verse (95) where it has been said that these people will come to him after his return to Madīnah, impress him with their feigned oaths and try to satisfy him. What they would wish to achieve from this initiative is: لِتُعْرِضُوْا عَنْهُمْ (so that you may ignore their misdeed), that is, 'ignore their absence from Jihād and spare the reproach due on it.' Thereupon, it was said that he might as well grant their wish. The text says: فَاَعْرِضُوْا عَنْهُمْ:'you ignore them.' Thus, the instruction carries the sense: 'neither reproach and admonish, nor deal with pleasantly' – because, reproach usually brings no good. When they have no faith in their heart – and they do not want to have it either – what would come out of reproach? So, why waste good time!

3. The third instruction given to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم appears in the third verse (96): "They swear before you so that you may be pleased with them." The order of Allah Ta'ālā is that their wish was not to be granted and he was not to be pleased with them. However, it was also said that, 'even if you were to be pleased with them, it was not going to work for them in any manner, because Allah is not pleased with them. And how could Allah be pleased with them when they are still adamant about their denial and hypocrisy?

Verses 97 – 99

اَلْاَعْرَابُ اَشَدُّ كُفْرًا وَّنِفَاقًا وَّاَجْدَرُ اَلَّا يَعْلَمُوْا حُدُوْدَ مَآ اَنْزَلَ

اللّٰهُ عَلٰى رَسُوْلِهٖ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿۹۷﴾ وَمِنَ الْاَعْرَابِ مَنْ يَّتَّخِذُ مَا يُنْفِقُ مَغْرَمًا وَّيَتَرَبَّصُ بِكُمُ الدَّوَآئِرَ ؕ عَلَيْهِمْ دَآئِرَةُ السَّوْءِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ سَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿۹۸﴾ وَمِنَ الْاَعْرَابِ مَنْ يُّؤْمِنُ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ وَيَتَّخِذُ مَا يُنْفِقُ قُرُبٰتٍ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ وَصَلَوٰتِ الرَّسُوْلِ ؕ اَلَآ اِنَّهَا قُرْبَةٌ لَّهُمْ ؕ سَيُدْخِلُهُمُ اللّٰهُ فِيْ رَحْمَتِهٖ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿۹۹﴾

The Bedouins are often more strict in disbelief and hypocrisy and are most likely to be ignorant of the limits of what Allah has sent down to His Messenger. And Allah is All-Knowing, Wise. [97]

And among the Bedouins there are those who take what they spend as a penalty and they look forward to the cycles of time to turn against you. Upon those is the evil cycle. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. [98]

And among the Bedouins there are others who believe in Allah and in the Last Day and take what they spend as a source of nearness to Allah and of prayers from the Messenger. It is indeed a source of nearness for them. Allah will admit them to His mercy. Surely, Allah is Most Forgiving, Very Merciful. [99]

Commentary

Described in the previous verses were the hypocrites of Madīnah. The present verses mention hypocrites who lived on the desert around the outskirts of Madīnah.

The word الاعراب (*al-a'rāb*) is not a plural form of العرب (*al-'arab*). It is اسم جمع (*ism al-jam'*: collective noun) and is used for the Bedouins of the desert. In its singular form, it becomes الاعرابی (*al-a'rābiyy*) – similar to (*al-anṣāriyy*), the singular form of الانصار (*al-anṣār*).

According to their condition described in verse 97, they outdid city dwellers in disbelief and hypocrisy. The reason given is that these people generally remained ignorant and hard-hearted as they lived far away from knowledge and the knowledgeable. Then the text says: 'the Bedouins are more likely to be ignorant of the limits of what Allah has sent down.' It means that the very surroundings in which they live are such as would keep them in the dark about the limits set by Allah

through the revelation – because the Qur'ān does not come before them, nor do they have access to its meanings, explanations and injunctions.

In the second verse (98) too, yet another aspect of the condition of these very Bedouins has been described as: 'those who take what they spend (in Zakāh etc.) as a penalty.' Why would they do so? The reason is that they hardly have any faith in their heart. When it comes to making Ṣalāh, they would, though, do that, but just to camouflage their disbelief. They would even fulfill the obligation of Zakāh, but their hearts would keep worrying as to why they had to put good money down the drain. Therefore, they always look forward to the time when Muslims are hit by some calamity or defeat that may possibly deliver them from having to pay this penalty. The word: الدوائر (*al-dawā'ir*: the cycles of time) is the plural of: دائرہ (*dā'irah*). According to the Arabic lexicon, *dā'irah* is the changed state that shifts away from the good state into a bad one. Therefore, the Holy Qur'ān says in response to them: عَلَيْهِمْ دَآئِرَةُ السَّوْءِ (upon them is the evil cycle). In other words, the evil state of affairs they wish would strike at Muslims is going to descend upon them all right – and, because their words and deeds are such, they will find themselves far more disgraced.

After having described the state of affairs prevailing among hypocrites of distant deserts, it was considered appropriate that the true and staunch Muslims from among the same stock of Bedouins should also be mentioned. This was done in verse 99 – very much in line with the typical style of the Qur'ān – so that, it stands established that Bedouins too are not all alike. Among them, there are many sincere Muslims, and people of sense and discernment as well. Their style of life is different. When they give in obligatory alms (Zakāh) or in voluntary charities (Ṣadaqāt), they regard these as a source of nearness to Allah Ta'ālā and hope that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم would be praying for them.

That Ṣadaqāt are a source of nearness to Allah Ta'ālā is obvious. However, the hope of prayers from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is on a different basis. It should be borne in mind that the Holy Qur'ān – wherever it has asked the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to collect Zakāh on the wealth and property of Muslims – has also directed him that he should also pray for those who pay Zakāh. The forthcoming verse (103):

خُذْ مِنْ اَمْوَالِهِمْ صَدَقَةً تُطَهِّرُهُمْ وَتُزَكِّيْهِمْ بِهَا وَصَلِّ عَلَيْهِمْ (Take out of their wealth a Ṣadaqah [obligatory alms] through which you may cleanse and purify them, and pray for them) is a good example? The instruction to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that he should pray for these people has been termed: وصل عليهم (and pray for them) using the word: صلوة (*ṣalāt*) for it. Therefore, in the present verse as well, the sense of the prayers of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been expressed by the use of the word: صلوة (*ṣalāt*).

Verse 100

وَالسّٰبِقُوْنَ الْاَوَّلُوْنَ مِنَ الْمُهٰجِرِيْنَ وَالْاَنْصَارِ وَالَّذِيْنَ اتَّبَعُوْهُمْ بِاِحْسَانٍ ۙ رَّضِيَ اللّٰهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوْا عَنْهُ وَاَعَدَّ لَهُمْ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ تَحْتَهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَآ اَبَدًا ۭ ذٰلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيْمُ ﴿١٠٠﴾

As for the first and foremost of the Emigrants and the Supporters and those who followed them in goodness, Allah is pleased with them and they are pleased with Allah, and He has prepared for them gardens beneath which rivers flow where they shall live for ever. That is the supreme success. [100]

Commentary

The verse before this (99) carried a description of sincere and true Muslims among the Bedouins of the desert. The present verse mentions all sincere and true Muslims along with their relative degrees of excellence.

Let us begin with the opening statement: اَلسّٰبِقُوْنَ الْاَوَّلُوْنَ مِنَ الْمُهٰجِرِيْنَ وَالْاَنْصَارِ (the first and foremost of the Emigrants and the Supporters). Most commentators have taken the preposition من (*min*) for *tab'īḍ* which denotes a part of something and may be translated as 'out of') and thus have set up two categories of the noble Ṣaḥābah from among the Emigrants (*al-muhājirīn*) and the Supporters (*al-anṣār*) – (1) 'the first and foremost,' then, (2) the rest of them.

This interpretation implies that it is only first category that is referred to in the above verse, i.e. 'the first and foremost'. Then, for identifying 'the first and foremost' the commentators have different views. Some consider 'the first and foremost' from among the noble Companions to be those who have offered their Ṣalāh by turning to.both the Qiblahs, that is, those who had embraced Islām before the change of Qi-

blah were 'the first and foremost.' This is the view of Sa'īd ibn al-musayyab and Qatādah. 'Atā' ibn Abī Rabāḥ has said that 'the first and foremost' are the Ṣaḥābah who participated in the battle of Badr. Sha'bī said that the Ṣaḥābah who were a party to the Bai'atur-Riḍwān (the pledge taken at the time of the expedition of Ḥudaibiyah) are 'the first and foremost.' And according to each view, after respective 'first and foremost,' the rest of the Ṣaḥābah – *muhājir* (emigrant) or *anṣār* (supporter) – are in the second category. (Maẓharī, Qurṭubī)

All these views were based on the intrepretation that takes the preposition من (*min*) in this verse for *tab'īḍ* as aforesaid. Tafsīr Maẓharī has however, reported another interpretation. According to this interpretation, the preposition من (*min*) is not for *tab'id* here. It is rather for *bayan* which explains the preceding words and stands for 'that is'. The translation of the verse, in this case, would be as follows: "As for the first and the foremost people, that is, all the Emigrants (the Muhājirīn) and the supporters (the Anṣār)..." The sentence thus will mean that all the *muhājirīn* and the Anṣār are the first and foremost as compared to the rest of the Muslim community.

To sum up, in accordance with the first Tafsīr, there are two categories of Ṣaḥābah, being that of 'the first and foremost' and that of those who embraced Islām after the change of Qiblah or the battle of Badr or the Bai'atur-Riḍwān. The substance of the last Tafsīr is that the noble Ṣaḥābah, all of them, are but 'the first and the foremost' – because, their 'Īmān (faith) is first and foremost as compared to that of the rest of the Muslim Ummah.

The second sentence of the verse: وَالَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُم بِإِحْسَانٍ has been translated as 'and those who followed them in goodness.' It means Muslims who followed the footsteps of 'the first and foremost' precisely and perfectly in all fields of deeds and morals. According to the first Tafsīr of the first sentence, the first category belongs to those Emigrants and Supporters among Ṣaḥābah who embraced Islām after the change of Qiblah or the battle of Badr or the Bai'at of Ḥudaibiyah. After them, all Muslims fall in the second category, Muslims who followed the model set by the noble Ṣaḥābah in all matters of faith, deeds and morals honestly and staunchly right through the Last Day of Qiyāmah.

And according to the other Tafsīr, the expression: الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوا those who followed them) includes great people who came after the noble Ṣaḥa-

bah and who are called Tābi'ī in the Islamic terminology. After these technically specified Tābi'īn or Successors of the Ṣaḥābah, included here are all Muslims who shall keep appearing right through the Last Day of Qiyāmah and who shall follow the noble Ṣaḥābah precisely and perfectly in purity of faith and goodness of deeds (*al-'Īmān and al-'amal-as-ṣāliḥ*).

All the Ṣaḥābah are the people of Jannah and are blessed with the pleasure of Allah

Someone asked Muḥammad ibn Ka'b al-Qurazī, 'what do you say about the noble Companions of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم?' He said, 'the Ṣaḥābah, all of them, are in Jannah – irrespective of whether mistakes and sins may have been committed by some of them.' The man again asked him, 'on what basis did you say that?' He said, 'Read this verse of the Holy Qur'ān: اَلسّٰبِقُوْنَ الْاَوَّلُوْنَ (...the first and foremost...). Here, what has been said about all revered Ṣaḥābah, without any condition, is clear: رضى الله عنهم ورضوا عنه (Allah is pleased with them and they are pleased with Allah). However, a condition has been placed in the case of the Tabi'īn (the successor to the Ṣaḥābah), the condition of: اتباع باحسان (following with goodness). This tells us that the revered Ṣaḥābah, all of them, without any condition or restriction or exemption, stand in honor as recipients of Divine pleasure.

After reporting this statement, the author of Tafsīr Maẓharī has said, 'in my view, the following verse carries a more solid proof of the fact that all revered Ṣaḥābah belong to Jannah : لَا يَسْتَوِىْ مِنْكُمْ مَّنْ اَنْفَقَ مِنْ قَبْلِ الْفَتْحِ وَقٰتَلَ اُولٰٓئِكَ اَعْظَمُ دَرَجَةً مِّنَ الَّذِيْنَ اَنْفَقُوْا مِنْۢ بَعْدُ وَقٰتَلُوْا وَكُلًّا وَّعَدَ اللّٰهُ الْحُسْنٰى It has been fully and clearly stated in this verse that all revered Ṣaḥābah, first or the last, have been promised *al-ḥusnā*, that is, Jannah or Paradise.'

And in Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been reported to have said, 'the fire of Jahannam (hell) cannot touch the Muslim who has seen me or has seen those who have seen me,' (Tirmidhī from Sayyidnā Jābir رضى الله عنه)

A note of warning

People who criticize some revered Ṣaḥābah on the basis of what transpired during their mutual controversies with the aim of sowing seeds of suspicion and discord in the hearts of those who hold them in esteem are really treading a dangerous course. We seek the protection of Allah against it.

Verse 101

وَمِمَّنْ حَوْلَكُمْ مِّنَ الْاَعْرَابِ مُنٰفِقُوْنَ ؕ وَمِنْ اَهْلِ الْمَدِيْنَةِ ۛ مَرَدُوْا
عَلَى النِّفَاقِ ۫ لَا تَعْلَمُهُمْ ؕ نَحْنُ نَعْلَمُهُمْ ؕ سَنُعَذِّبُهُمْ مَّرَّتَيْنِ ثُمَّ
يُرَدُّوْنَ اِلٰى عَذَابٍ عَظِيْمٍ ﴿۱۰۱﴾

And among those Bedouins who are around you there are hypocrites, and among the people of Madīnah as well. They are adamant in hypocrisy. You do not know them. We know them. We shall punish them twice, then they shall be driven to a great punishment. [101]

Commentary

Mentioned in several previous verses there are hypocrites whose hypocrisy stood exposed through their words and deeds, and the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم did realize that they were hypocrites. Mentioned in the present verse appearing above there are hypocrites whose hypocrisy was so perfect in its camouflage that it remained hidden from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم until then. In this verse, two Divine punishments to come much before 'Ākhirah upon such diehard hypocrites have been mentioned. In the first instance, right here in this world, they are consumed by the concern to hide their hypocrisy and the fear that it may be exposed. Then, no less a punishment is their being under compulsion to respect and follow Islām and Muslims, at least outwardly, despite their extreme malice and hostility for them. And then, there is the other punishment, the punishment of the grave and the punishment of Barzakh (the post-death ~ pre-resurrection state) that will reach them well before Qiyāmah (doomsday) and 'Ākhirah (Hereafter).

Verses 102 – 106

وَاٰخَرُوْنَ اعْتَرَفُوْا بِذُنُوْبِهِمْ خَلَطُوْا عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَّاٰخَرَ سَيِّئًا ؕ
عَسَى اللّٰهُ اَنْ يَّتُوْبَ عَلَيْهِمْ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿۱۰۲﴾ خُذْ
مِنْ اَمْوَالِهِمْ صَدَقَةً تُطَهِّرُهُمْ وَتُزَكِّيْهِمْ بِهَا وَ صَلِّ عَلَيْهِمْ ؕ اِنَّ
صَلٰوتَكَ سَكَنٌ لَّهُمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ سَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿۱۰۳﴾ اَلَمْ يَعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ
اللّٰهَ هُوَ يَقْبَلُ التَّوْبَةَ عَنْ عِبَادِهٖ وَيَاْخُذُ الصَّدَقٰتِ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ
هُوَالتَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيْمُ ﴿۱۰۴﴾ وَقُلِ اعْمَلُوْا فَسَيَرَى اللّٰهُ عَمَلَكُمْ

وَرَسُوْلُهٗ وَالْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ ؕ وَسَتُرَدُّوْنَ اِلٰى عٰلِمِ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ
فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١٠٥﴾ وَاٰخَرُوْنَ مُرْجَوْنَ لِاَمْرِ اللّٰهِ
اِمَّا يُعَذِّبُهُمْ وَاِمَّا يَتُوْبُ عَلَيْهِمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿١٠٦﴾

And there are others who admitted their sins while they had mixed a good deed with another that was evil. It is likely that Allah will relent towards them. Surely, Allah is Most Forgiving, Very Merciful. [102]

Take out of their wealth a *Ṣadaqah* (obligatory alms) through which you may cleanse and purify them. Surely, your prayer is peace for them. And Allah is (All-) Hearing, (All-) Knowing. [103]

Have they not come to know that Allah is He who accepts repentance from His slaves and takes the Ṣadaqāt, and that Allah is Most-Relenting, Very-Merciful. [104]

And say, "Do (what you do) Allah will see your deed, as will the Messenger and the believers." And you shall be returned to the Knower of the Seen and the Unseen, then He will tell you what you have been doing. [105]

And there are others whose matter is deferred till the command of Allah (comes): either He punishes them or relents towards them. And Allah is All-Knowing, Wise. [106]

Commentary

When Muslims were given a general call for Jihād at Tabūk, the weather was extremely hot. The journey was long and they were supposed to be up against the trained army of a big state, the first such episode in Islāmic history. These were some of the causes why people split into different groups.

The first group was that of sincere Muslims who got ready for Jihād without any hesitation at the very first call. Another group first hesitated initially, then joined in. They are the ones mentioned in: اَلَّذِيْنَ اتَّبَعُوْهُ فِيْ سَاعَةِ الْعُسْرَةِ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا كَادَ يَزِيْغُ قُلُوْبُ فَرِيْقٍ مِّنْهُمْ (who followed him in the hour of hardship after the hearts of a group of them were about to turn crooked – 9:117).

The third group was that of people who were genuinely handicapped because of which they could not go. They have been mentioned

in : لَيْسَ عَلَى الضُّعَفَاءِ (There is no blame on the weak – 9:91). The fourth group belonged to sincere Muslims who had no excuse yet they did not take part in the Jihād because of laziness. They have been mentioned in وَاٰخَرُوْنَ اعْتَرَفُوْا (And there are others who admitted – 9:102) and اٰخَرُوْنَ مُرْجَوْنَ (And there are others whose matter is deferred – 9:106) under study now. The fifth group was that of hypocrites who did not participate in the Jihād because of hypocrisy. They have been mentioned at several places in the previous verses. In short, the fifth group of hypocrites featured mostly in previous verses while the present verse (102) mentions people in the fourth group, that is, those who, despite being true Muslims, did not participate in the Jihād because of laziness.

It was said in the first verse (102) that some had admitted their sins. Their deeds were mixed. Some of their deeds were good while some others were bad. For them, there was hope that Allah Ta'ālā may accept their repentance. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ said, 'Ten persons did not go for the battle of Tabūk. They had no valid excuse for it. Later, they were sorry for what they had done. Seven of them tied themselves up to the pillars of the Mosque of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم resolving that they would continue to remain tied as they were like prisoners until the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم were to accept their repentance and untie them. All narratives of the incident agree that Sayyidnā Abū Lubābah رضی اللہ عنہ was one of them. As for other names, narratives differ.

When the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم saw them so tied up and he was told that they had resolved to remain tied until the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم unties them, he said, 'By Allah, I too shall not untie them until Allah Ta'ālā orders me to do that. The crime is serious.' Thereupon, this verse (102) was revealed and the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم ordered that they be untied. They were. (Qurṭubī)

According to a narrative of Sa'īd ibn al-Musaiyyab, when people went to untie Sayyidnā Abū Lubābah رضی اللہ عنہ, he refused and said, 'I shall remain tied until the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم does not, with his pleasure, untie me with his own blessed hands.' So, when he came for the Fajr Ṣalāh, he himself untied him.

What were these mixed deeds?

It has been said in the verse that they had mixed a good deed with another that was evil. Obvious among the good ones were 'Īmān, Ṣalāh,

and Fasting. Then, they had participated in earlier battles with the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. And then, following this battle of Tabūk in which they could not participate, they had admitted their misconduct, were ashamed of it and had repented. As for the evil ones, they had not participated in the battle of Tabūk and thus they had acted in a manner that resembled the approach of the hypocrites.

Mixed Deeds of all the Muslims are governed by the same rule

It appears in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī that this verse though revealed about a particular group, is universal in its application and the injunction it carries is valid until the day of Qiyāmah. It covers Muslims whose deeds are a mixture of the good and the bad. If they were to repent from their sins, it can be hoped that they shall be pardoned and forgiven.

Abū 'Uthmān رضى الله عنه has said, 'this verse of the Holy Qur'ān brings great hope for this *ummah*.' A detailed Ḥadīth relating to the Ascension of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم appearing in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī on the authority of Sayyidnā Samurah ibn Jundub رضى الله عنه says, 'On the seventh heaven, when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم met with Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, he saw some people with him whose faces were bright. And some of them had some spots and stains on their faces. When these people went into a stream and came out all washed up, their faces had also turned bright. The Archangel Jibra'īl told the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that these people with bright faces you saw first were those who had professed faith and then kept clean from sins: اَلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَلَمْ يَلْبِسُوْٓا اِيْمَانَهُمْ بِظُلْمٍ (those who have believed and have not mixed their faith with injustice – 6:82). The others were people who did what was a mixture of good and evil, but repented later. Allah accepted their repentance and their sins were forgiven.' (Qurṭubī)

The imperative: خُذْ مِنْ اَمْوَالِهِمْ صَدَقَةً : "Take out of their wealth a Ṣadaqah (obligatory alms)" in the second verse (103) has its background. Some people, as mentioned a little earlier, had stayed back from the battle of Tabūk without a valid excuse. Then, out of remorse, they had tied themselves to the pillars of the Mosque. Then came the acceptance of their repentance as revealed in the previous verse (102) and they were released from their self-imprisonment. When this happened, they presented their entire wealth as a token of their gratitude so that it could

be given out as *Ṣadaqah*. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم refused to accept it by saying that he did not have the authority to take it. Thereupon, this verse (103): خُذْ مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ (Take out of their wealth a *Ṣadaqah*) was revealed and he accepted to take one third of it as *Ṣadaqah*. He did not take the entire wealth, rather, took a part of it – as indicated in the verse. The preposition من (*min*: out of) proves it.

Collection and disbursement of Zakāh is the responsibility of an Islamic State

Though, according to the background of the revelation, the collection of Ṣadaqah was to be made from a particular group of people but, the words being general, they have universal application.

This is the view preferred in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī, Aḥkām al-Qur'ān by al-Jaṣṣāṣ, Tafsīr Maẓharī and others. Al-Qurṭubī and Al-Jaṣṣāṣ has gone on to further explain it. According to them, even if the same particular event is taken to be the cause of the revelation in this verse, still then, in terms of the Qur'ānic principle, this injunction shall remain general – and shall remain binding on Muslims right through the day of Qiyāmah. The reason is that most of the injunctions of the Holy Qur'ān were revealed in the background of one or the other particular event, but nobody has ever held that their application remains restricted to that particular event. In fact, unless there is a certain proof of its particularization, that injunction is invariably regarded as universally applicable to all Muslims.

On the basis of the same principle, the entire Muslim *ummah* agrees that, though the address in this verse is to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, yet this injunction is neither restricted to him, nor to his period of time. Instead of that, every such person who will succceed the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم as the Amīr of Muslims shall be the addressee of this injunction, and the assignee to carry it out. It will be one of his duties that he administers the collection of Zakāh and Ṣadaqāt paid by Muslims and ensures that these are disbursed on authorized heads.

Even in the event of Jihād declared against those who refused to pay Zakāh during the initial stage of the Caliphate of Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه, there were some non-payers of Zakāh who had openly rebelled against Islām and had turned apostates. Then, there were

some others who called themselves Muslims and did not refuse that Zakāh was a religious obligation, but the excuse they made for not paying Zakāh was that the authority given to the Holy Prophet ﷺ to collect Zakāh from them was valid during the life of the Holy Prophet ﷺ only, and they kept paying Zakāh that time. Now, after he has passed away, they questioned, what right did Abū Bakr have to demand Zakāh and Ṣadaqāt from them? In the beginning, Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ hesitated about waging Jihād against them for the reason that they were after all Muslims who wanted to avoid paying Zakāh under the cover of a verse of the Qur'ān – therefore, they should not be treated in the manner usual apostates are treated. But, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ had reached an irrevocable decision. He said, 'we shall wage Jihād against anyone who will differentiate between Ṣalāh and Zakāh.'

This gave a clear hint. Today people say that the injunction of Zakāh is particular to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and that it stands dropped after his demise. Tomorrow they may say that Ṣalāh too was particular to the Holy Prophet ﷺ – because, a verse of the Qur'ān reads: أَقِمِ الصَّلٰوةَ لِدُلُوكِ الشَّمْسِ (Establish prayer at the decline of the sun – 17:78) where the Holy Prophet ﷺ is the addressee. But, the injunction of the verse of prayer is universal. It applies to the entire Muslim *ummah*. So, this verse cannot save those who wrongly interpret it as being particular to the Holy Prophet ﷺ from becoming *kāfirs*. Similarly, this interpretation in the verse: خُذْ مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ (Take out of their wealth a Ṣadaqah) will not save them from *kufr* and apostasy. Thereupon, Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ was also satisfied and it was with the consensus of the Ṣaḥābah that Jihād was launched against them.

Zakāh is 'Ibādah, not a government tax

In the statement: خُذْ مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ (Take out of their wealth) appearing soon after: صَدَقَةً تُطَهِّرُهُمْ وَتُزَكِّيهِمْ بِهَا (a Ṣadaqah [obligatory alms] through which you may cleanse and purify them) in verse 103 of the Holy Qur'ān, there is a clear hint that Zakāh and Ṣadaqāt are not like taxes that governments collect to run the system. The truth of the matter is that their purpose is to cleanse the men of wealth themselves from sins.

At this point, it should be noted that the collection of Zakāh and Ṣadaqāt yields two benefits. The first benefit is received by the owner of the wealth himself through which he comes out clean from sins and

from the germs of moral diseases that are generated by the greed for wealth. As for the other benefit, it provides support for the weaker components of the society, people who are incapable of finding what they need to eke out an existence. Orphaned children, widows, crippled and handicapped men and women, common people who are poor and needy are obvious examples.

But, at this place, the Holy Qur'ān has told us about the first benefit only. Thus, by confining itself in that manner, it has also given the indication that the first benefit is what happens to be the real objective of Zakāh and *Ṣadaqāt*. The second benefit comes as a corollary. Therefore, in the event there is no orphan, widow, or a poor or needy person present at any place or time, still then, the injunction of Zakāh as applicable to the wealthy will not stand dropped.

What has been stated here has its support in the practice of past communities. When some part of wealth or property was set aside for Allah, its use became impermissible for everyone. Rather, according to the custom, this offering was put at some detached place where came a lightning from the heavens and burnt it up. This was a sign that Allah Ta'ālā has accepted the *Ṣadaqah*. When this heavenly fire did not come, it was supposed to be a sign of the Ṣadaqah remaining unacceptable. Nobody would then touch this ill-omened property.

This makes it clear that the legal enforcement of *Zakāh* and *Ṣadaqāt* is not exclusively designed to alleviate the suffering of needy people. In fact, it is a financial obligation and an act of *'Ibādah* – very similar to praying and fasting that are acts of physical *'Ibādah*. This is one of the distinctions of the blessed community of Muslims that their poor and needy have been allowed to use wealth set aside in the way of Allah. A Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth from Muslim reports its confirmation from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم.

A question and its answer

A question arises here – when the repentance of these gentlemen was accepted following the event mentioned above, it stands established that sins were forgiven and purification was accomplished through the very act of repentance. What then, would be the sense of declaring that a portion from their wealth was being taken to purify them?

The answer is that the sin has, no doubt, been forgiven by virtue of the repentance, but it is quite possible that it may have left behind some residual effects following the forgiveness of sin which could become the cause of falling into sin. *Ṣadaqah* removes such residual effects and makes purification perfect.

The word: صلوة (*ṣalāh*) used in the expression: وَصَلِّ عَلَيْهِمْ (and pray for them – 103) means praying for Allah's mercy. This corresponds to what has been reported from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم – that he prayed for some people by using this very word: *ṣalāh*, for example: اَللّٰهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلٰى اٰلِ اَبِى اَوْفٰى (O Allah, bless the family of Abū Awfā) as is reported in a Ḥadīth. But, later on the use of the word: *ṣalāt* became special to prophets, may peace be upon them. Therefore, Muslim jurists say that now one should not pray for anyone using the word: *ṣalāh*. Instead, the use of this word should be limited to prophets to avoid any ambiguousness or doubt.[1] (Bayān al-Qur'ān etc.)

Here we see that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been asked to pray for those who give Ṣadaqah. On this basis, some Muslim jurists rule that it is *wājib* (obligatory, necessary) for the Muslim head of the state (Imām, 'Amīr) to pray for those who give Ṣadaqah. However, there are others who take this command to be of a recommendatory nature (*mustaḥabb*: recommended). (Qurṭubī)

Let us now turn to the statement: وَاٰخَرُوْنَ مُرْجَوْنَ لِاَمْرِ اللّٰهِ (And there are others whose matter is deferred till the command of Allah – 106). We already know that seven of the ten believers, who had missed the battle of Tabūk without a valid excuse, had demonstrated their heart-felt remorse by tying themselves up to the pillars of the Prophet's Mosque. The injunction which covers them appeared in the first verse (102): وَاٰخَرُوْنَ اعْتَرَفُوْا (And there are others who admitted their sins). Verse 106 is now referring to the other three gentlemen who had not done what the group of seven had done in the *Masjid*. Thus, they had not admitted their misconduct openly. In their case, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم ordered his Companions to see that Muslims boycott them by not talking to them. When things reached those limits, they learnt their les-

1. However, it is permissible to use this word for others in conjunction with a prophet. It is therefore allowed to say, اَللّٰهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلٰى مُحَمَّدٍ وَّعَلٰى اٰلِهٖ وَاَصْحَابِهٖ (Muhammad Taqi Usmani)

son, confessed to their misconduct and repented sincerely, following which orders were given for their pardon. (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and Muslim)

Verses 107 – 110

وَالَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مَسْجِدًا ضِرَارًا وَكُفْرًا وَتَفْرِيقًا بَيْنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ
وَإِرْصَادًا لِمَنْ حَارَبَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ ط وَلَيَحْلِفُنَّ إِنْ
أَرَدْنَا إِلَّا الْحُسْنَىٰ ط وَاللَّهُ يَشْهَدُ إِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ ﴿١٠٧﴾ لَا تَقُمْ
فِيهِ أَبَدًا ط لَمَسْجِدٌ أُسِّسَ عَلَى التَّقْوَىٰ مِنْ أَوَّلِ يَوْمٍ أَحَقُّ أَنْ
تَقُومَ فِيهِ ط فِيهِ رِجَالٌ يُحِبُّونَ أَنْ يَتَطَهَّرُوا ط وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ
الْمُطَّهِّرِينَ ﴿١٠٨﴾ أَفَمَنْ أَسَّسَ بُنْيَانَهُ عَلَىٰ تَقْوَىٰ مِنَ اللَّهِ
وَرِضْوَانٍ خَيْرٌ أَمْ مَنْ أَسَّسَ بُنْيَانَهُ عَلَىٰ شَفَا جُرُفٍ هَارٍ فَانْهَارَ
بِهِ فِي نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ ط وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٠٩﴾
لَا يَزَالُ بُنْيَانُهُمُ الَّذِي بَنَوْا رِيبَةً فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ إِلَّا أَنْ تَقَطَّعَ
قُلُوبُهُمْ ط وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿١١٠﴾

And (there are) those who have built a mosque to cause mischief and infidelity and to create dissention among the believers and to make preparations for one who has been at war with Allah and His Messenger even before. And they will certainly swear (and say), "We intended nothing but good." And Allah testifies that they are liars. [107]

Do not ever stand there (in prayer). In fact, the mosque that was founded on *Taqwā* (piety) from the very first day is more-worthy that you stand there. In it there are people who like to observe purity; and Allah loves those observing purity. [108]

Is, then, a person who has founded his building on fear from Allah and His pleasure better or the one who has founded his building on the edge of an abyss about to collapse, so it did collapse with him into the fire of Jahannam? And Allah does not give guidance to the unjust people. [109]

The building they have made shall always remain a

source of doubt in their hearts unless their hearts are cut into pieces. And Allah is All-Knowing, Wise. [110]

Commentary

Anti-Islām activities of hypocrites have been described in several previous verses. The present verses mention yet another conspiracy hatched by them. It has been reported that there was a man in Madīnah. His name was Abū 'Āmir. He had become a Christian during the days of Jāhiliyyah and was known as Abū 'Āmir the Rāhib (that is, a monk). This is the same Abū 'Āmir whose son Hanẓalah رضی اللہ عنہ is a well-known Ṣaḥābī whose dead body was washed by angels and which gave him the sobriquet of 'the one who was bathed by angels.' But, the father stuck by his error and remained a Christian.

When the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم came to Madīnah, Abū 'Āmir the Rāhib visited him and criticized Islām. Even the answers given by the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم did not satisfy this unfortunate man. In fact, he said, 'may the liar between the two of us be cursed and die in travel far away from friends and relatives.' He also said, 'I shall be there to help any aggressor against you.' And so he did. He fought on the side of the enemies of Muslims in all battles right through the battle of Ḥunain. When the big and strong tribe of Hawāzin too was defeated, he lost hope. He ran away to Syria, the stronghold of Christians where he died far away from his friends and relatives. The prayer he had made was before him. When disgrace is destined for someone, this is how he acts. His own prayer brought that disgrace upon him.

But, as long as he lived, he remained busy hatching conspiracies against Islām and Muslims. He virtually tried to induce the Byzantine ruler to attack Madīnah and expel Muslims from there.

One aspect of this conspiracy materialized when he wrote a letter to the hypocrites of Madīnah with whom he had a sinister understanding. He told them that he was working on the Byzantine ruler to attack Madīnah. But, it was necessary to have group strength to lend local support to the invader. For this purpose, he suggested that they should make a building right there in Madīnah giving people the impression that they were building a mosque so that Muslims do not get to be suspicious. After that, they should get their men together in this place and collect as much of weapons and supplies as they could. He

wanted this to become an undercover center where his accomplices would be conducting their activities against Muslims by mutual consultation.

It was on his suggestion that twelve hypocrites got together in Qubā', a locality of Madīnah where the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had first stayed during his *hijrah* and where he had built a *masjid*. They chose the same place to lay the foundation of another '*masjid*.' Ibn Isḥāq and others have also reported the names of these hypocrites. Then, to keep Muslims under deception, the hypocrites made a plan that they would have the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم lead a Ṣalāh in congregation at their so-called *masjid* so that all Muslims are convinced that this new place was also a *masjid* very much like the one built there earlier.

A delegation from them came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. They pleaded that the existing Masjid of Qubā' was far away. It was difficult for old and sick people to reach there. Moreover, they argued, the Masjid of Qubā' itself was not spacious enough to accommodate all residents of the locality. Therefore, they claimed, they had founded another *masjid* for that purpose so that older Muslims may benefit by it. Finally, (releasing their punch line) they said, 'please lead a Ṣalāh in this '*masjid*' so that it stands blessed!'

That was a time when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was getting ready for the battle of Tabūk. He told them that he would be unable to do that as he was about to leave the city but he promised that he would pray there when he returned.

However, on his return from the battle of Tabūk, when he camped at a place close to Madīnah, the verses cited above were revealed to him which had exposed the conspiracy of these hypocrites. After the revelation of these verses, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم ordered some of his Companions, 'Āmir ibn Sakan, Waḥshī, the killer of Ḥamzah and others, to go, demolish and burn the structure (of the ill-intentioned '*masjid*'). So these gentlemen took off, carried out the orders and the structure was leveled flat on the ground. (This event has been abridged from narratives reported in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī and Maẓharī.)

Quoting Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf Ṣāliḥī, Tafsīr Maẓharī also reports that the site of Masjid Ḍirār was still lying vacant at the time the Holy

Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had reached and settled in Madīnah. When he allowed 'Āsim ibn 'Adiyy to build his house on that site, he submitted, '*yā rasūlallāh*, I do not like to build a house on a cursed site about which these verses of the Qur'ān have been revealed. Nevertheless, Thābit ibn Aqram is really in need of a house for he has none. Please allow him to make a house here.' So, going along with his suggestion, he gave this plot of land to Thābit ibn Aqram. But, as fate would have it, since the time Sayyidnā Thābit رضى الله عنه came to live in the house he made there, he either had no child or if he did, the child did not live.

Historians have added that this place was cursed not only for human beings but also for domestic birds and animals that could not survive with their normal way of living. Thus, after that time, this place lies desolate at some distance from the well-known Masjid Qubā'.

After having gone through the details of the event, let us now turn to the text of the cited verses. It was said in the first verse (107): وَالَّذِيْنَ اتَّخَذُوْا مَسْجِدًا (And [there are] those who have built a mosque) to bring harm upon Muslims.

This verse points out to three motives behind the making of this '*masjid*':

1. The first one is: ضِرَارًا (*dirāran*: to cause harm to Muslims). The words 'ضرار: *ḍirār*' and 'ضرر: *ḍarar*' are both used in the Arabic language to carry the sense of causing harm. As for difference between the two, it has been said that '*ḍarar*' is a harm that brings gain for the person harming but causes loss for the harmed. And '*ḍirār*' is the inflicting of a loss upon other people while it brings just no gain for the person inflicting it. Since, this was going to be the fate of this '*masjid*' – that its founders gain nothing out of it – therefore, the word '*ḍirar*' was used here.

2. The second motive reads: تَفْرِيْقًا بَيْنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ (to cause dissention among the believers). It means that, by setting up this '*masjid*', they looked forward to creating a division among the community of Muslims. They hoped to wean out a group that would be offering Ṣalāh in their *masjid* as a sort of separate entity. Then, it may have also resulted in reducing the number of Muslims going for their prayers to the old Masjid Qubā'.

3. The third motive was spelt out as: اِرْصَادًا لِّمَنْ حَارَبَ اللّٰهَ i.e. to provide a

sanctuary to enemies of Allah and His Messenger and a forum to conspire against Muslims.

This presentation as a whole proves that the '*masjid*' which was declared to be a 'harmful mosque' (Masjid Ḍirār) by the Holy Qur'ān, and which was demolished and burnt down under the orders of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, was no *masjid* in the real sense. Nor was it intended to be a place where people could pray. The three objectives behind it have been mentioned immediately above. From here we learn the rules that should be followed in our time. Today, may be some Muslims were to make a *masjid* close to and in competition of another Masjid, while their purpose is nothing but the same mutual discord, the same old effort to split up the congregation of the first *masjid*, or any other evil interest of this nature. If so, the maker of such a *masjid* will deserve no reward from Allah. Rather, he would be a sinner because of having created dissention between Muslims – but, despite all this, that place shall be called a *masjid* in terms of Islāmic law, and the etiquette and rules relating to mosques shall apply to it. Demolishing it or putting it on fire shall not be permissible. And the Ṣalāh of those who pray in it will also be valid – though, doing so shall continue to be a sin in itself.

From here we also learn about another rule relevant in contemporary setting. If a Muslim makes a *masjid* in that manner, either to show off or to take an opposing stance out of obstinacy and enmity, the maker will, though, not get the reward of making a *masjid*, instead, will incur a sin, yet it will not be what Masjid Ḍirār is in the terminology of the Holy Qur'ān, that is, it will not be called by that name. When some people notice a *masjid* like that, they would say that it was Masjid Ḍirār. This is not correct. However, one could say that it was like Masjid Dirar. Therefore, its building can also be stayed – as done by Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه through a court order where he had instructed that another *masjid* should not be made close to the one already there lest the congregation and flourish of the first *masjid* is affected adversely. (Tafsīr Kashshaf)

About this Masjid Ḍirār, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been given the order: لَا تَقُمْ فِيهِ أَبَدًا :'Do not ever stand there (in prayer) – 108.' The word '*qiyām*' in the text denotes standing for prayer. The sense is that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم should never go in to offer his

prayers in a mosque by that name.

Ruling:

What it tells us is: If, even today, a new *masjid* is made adjacent to the one already there unnecessarily, just to show off or to take an opposing stance out of obstinacy and enmity, the better choice is not to offer prayers therein – though, Ṣalāh remains valid.

In the same verse (108), the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has also been told that it is correct for him to pray in the particular *masjid* the foundation of which has been laid on *Taqwā* (the fear of Allah) from day one. And then, the people who offer their Ṣalāh in it love to observe full precaution in remaining cleansed and pure (of all physical and spiritual impurities) – for Allah too likes such meticulous observers of self-purity.

The context of the verse shows what is being referred to here is Masjid Qubā' where the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم used to say his prayers at that time. There are some Ḥadīth narratives that also support this view. (As reported by Ibn Marduwayh from Ibn 'Abbās, by 'Āmr ibn Shaibah from Sahl al-Anṣārī and by Ibn Khuzaimah in his Ṣaḥīḥ from 'Uwaimir ibn Sā'idah – with reference to Maẓharī)

As for the reports which say that it refers to the Prophet's Mosque, they do not contradict it. The reason is that the foundation of the Mosque of the Prophet was laid in accordance with a revealed command by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم with his blessed hands. It goes without saying that its foundation rests on Taqwā, that is, on purity, piety and fear of Allah. And who else could be more purified than the noble messenger of Allah? Therefore, that too is is a *masjid* founded on *taqwā*. (As reported by Tirmidhī on sound authority from Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī رضى الله عنه with the chain of narrators ascending to the Holy Prophet ﷺ – from Qurṭubī)

At the end of the verse (108), it was said: فِيْهِ رِجَالٌ يُّحِبُّوْنَ اَنْ يَّتَطَهَّرُوْا (In it there are people who like to observe purity). In this verse, the *masjid* declared worthier for the prayers of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is the one the foundation of which was laid on Taqwā from day one. Thus, both Masjid Qubā' and the Mosque of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم are included in the sense of the verse. Also pointed to in this verse there is yet another merit of this *masjid* – that those who prayed in

this *masjid* were a kind of people who did their best to remain cleansed and pure. The word for purity used in the text is *Ṭahārah*. The sense of *Ṭahārah* at this place includes purity from common filth and impurities, as well as purity from sins and bad morals. Those who offered their prayers in Masjid Qubā' and the Prophet's Mosque were generally equipped with all these virtues.

Special Note

From here we also come to know that the merit or superiority of a *masjid* really depends on the fact that it should have been made with absolute sincerity for the sake of Allah. And to put it conversely, there should not be any trace of duplicity, any motive to earn name, fame and recognition, or any other false and corrupting interest involved in its making. Then, we also learn that the quality of those who pray in a *masjid* is significant. If they are good, righteous, knowledgeable about their religion ('Ālim) and are devoted to the worship of Allah ('Ābīd), the superiority of the *masjid* increases. Offering prayers in a *masjid* frequented by such God-fearing people is more merit worthy.

In the third (109) and the fourth (110) verses, Masjid Ḍirār (the harmful mosque) made by the hypocrites has been condemned as it has to be when compared with a *masjid* that is blessed. This has been accomplished through the use of a similitude. The surface of the land on which they were laying the foundation of their '*masjid*' has been likened to a landmass that has been corroded on the inside by flowing water. The topsoil looks solid and smooth. Now, if someone starts building there, it is obvious that the whole thing would collapse instantly. Similarly, the foundation of this Masjid Ḍirār was inherently unstable. The result was that it collapsed and went right into the fire of Jahannam. The expression 'collapsed into the fire of Jahannam' could be figurative in its sense – in that it smoothed out the way of Jahannam for its makers. Some others have taken it in the real sense – in that the *masjid*, when made to collapse, went into the Jahannam. Allah knows best.

Then, in the last verse (110), it was said that this building would always keep increasing the doubt and hypocrisy in their hearts unless their hearts are shredded into pieces. The sense is that their doubt, hypocrisy, envy and chagrin would go on increasing right to the end of their life.

Verses 111 - 112

إِنَّ اللَّهَ اشْتَرَىٰ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَنفُسَهُمْ وَأَمْوَالَهُم بِأَنَّ لَهُمُ
الْجَنَّةَ ۚ يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَيَقْتُلُونَ وَيُقْتَلُونَ ۖ وَعْدًا
عَلَيْهِ حَقًّا فِي التَّوْرَاةِ وَالْإِنجِيلِ وَالْقُرْآنِ ۚ وَمَنْ أَوْفَىٰ بِعَهْدِهِ
مِنَ اللَّهِ ۚ فَاسْتَبْشِرُوا بِبَيْعِكُمُ الَّذِي بَايَعْتُم بِهِ ۚ وَذَٰلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ
الْعَظِيمُ ﴿١١١﴾ التَّائِبُونَ الْعَابِدُونَ الْحَامِدُونَ السَّائِحُونَ
الرَّاكِعُونَ السَّاجِدُونَ الْآمِرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَالنَّاهُونَ عَنِ الْمُنكَرِ
وَالْحَافِظُونَ لِحُدُودِ اللَّهِ ۗ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١١٢﴾

Surely, Allah has bought their lives and their wealth from the believers, against (a promise) that Paradise shall be for them. They fight in the way of Allah, and kill and are killed – a promise on His part which is true (as made) in the Torah and the Injīl and the Qur'ān. And who can fulfill his covenant more than Allah? So, rejoice in the deal you have made, and that is the great achievement. [111]

(They are) those who repent, those who worship, those who praise (Allah), those who journey, those who bow in *rukū'*, those who prostrate in *sajdah*, those who bid the Fair and forbid the Unfair and those who preserve the limits prescribed by Allah. And give the good news to the believers. [112]

Commentary

Sequence

Previous verses carried a condemnation of those staying behind without a valid excuse and missing the Jihād. The present verses take up the merit of *mujāhidīn*.

The background of revelation

As explained by the majority of commentators, these verses were revealed about the participants of Bai'atul-'Aqabah (the pledge of allegiance to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم at al-'Aqabah) which was taken from the Anṣār of Madīnah before Hijrah in Makkah al-Mukarramah. Therefore, despite that the entire Sūrah is Madanī,

these verses have been termed as Makkī.

'Al-'Aqabah' is part of a mountain. Here, it refers to the 'Aqabah that forms a part of the mountain along the Jamratu al-'Aqabah (the stone pillar of 'Aqabah) in Minā. (In our time, due to the increased number of Ḥujjāj [Ḥajj pilgrims], this part of the mountain has been leveled to form a smooth surface with the only exception of Jamarah [the stone pillar] which still stands there). It is on this 'Aqabah that a pledge of allegiance بيعة (*bai'ah*) was taken from the people of Madīnah thrice. The first pledge came in the eleventh year of the Prophet's advent. Six persons embraced Islām, gave the pledge and returned to Madīnah. When they arrived there, Islām and the Prophet of Islām became the talk of the town. Next year, it was during the Ḥajj season that twelve people assembled at the same place. Out of these, five had taken part in the first pledge while the other seven were new. All of them took the pledge. By that time, the number of Muslims in Madīnah had increased to more than forty. They requested that someone should be sent to teach Qur'ān to them. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم sent Sayyidnā Muṣ'ab ibn 'Umair رضى الله عنه. He taught Qur'ān to Muslims present there as well as conveyed the message of Islām around, as a result of which major groups of people in Madīnah entered the fold of Islām.

After that, in the thirteenth year of the Prophet's advent, seventy men and women assembled at the same place. This is the third Bai'atu al-'Aqabah – and the last. Generally, when reference is made to Bai'atu al-'Aqabah, it means this very Bai'ah (pledge of allegiance). This pledge made it binding on participants that they would uphold the basic beliefs (*'aqā'id*) and deeds (*a'māl*) of Islām, and would particularly be ready to take part in Jihād against the disbelievers, and protect and support the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم when he migrates and reaches Madīnah. In this connection, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Rawāḥah رضى الله عنه submitted, *'yā rasūlallāh*, a compact is being made at this time. If there are any conditions regarding your Lord or regarding yourself, let these be mentioned there clearly.' He said, 'As for Allah Ta'ālā, I lay down the condition that all of you shall worship Him – and worship none but Him. As for myself, the condition is that you shall protect me as you protect your own lives, wealth, property and children.' They asked, 'if we fulfill these two conditions, what shall we

get in return?' He said, 'you will get Jannah.' All in delight, they said, 'we are pleased with this deal, so pleased that we shall never request on our own that it be cancelled nor shall we like it to be cancelled.

At this place, since the pledge took the apparent form of a transaction of give and take, this verse (111) was revealed in the terminology of a business deal: إِنَّ اللّٰهَ اشْتَرٰى مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَأَمْوَالَهُم بِأَنَّ لَهُمُ الْجَنَّةَ (Surely, Allah has bought their lives and their wealth from the believers, against which Paradise shall be for them). After hearing this verse, Sayyidnā Barā' ibn Ma'rūr, Abū al-Haitham and As'ad رضی الله عنهم اجمعين were the first ones who placed their hands on the blessed hand of the Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم. They were promising in effect that they were readily agreeable to this deal and they would protect the Holy Prophet ﷺ as they protected their family and would stand by him to face any challenge, even if it came from the combined forces of the blacks and whites on this Earth.

This is the very first verse of Jihād

Injunctions of Jihād did not exist during the early Makkan period. This is first verse about fighting and killing which was revealed in Makkah al-Mukarramah itself, though its implementation began after Hijrah. After that, came another verse: أُذِنَ لِلَّذِيْنَ يُقٰتَلُوْنَ (Permission [to fight] has been given to those who are being fought against – al-Ḥajj 22:39). When this Bai'atu al-'Aqabah (pledge of 'Aqabah) was concluded in secret from the disbelievers of Makkah, the Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم ordered his noble Companions to migrate from Makkah to Madīnah. Groups of them started migrating gradually. The Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم remained behind waiting for the permission from Allah Ta'ālā. When Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی الله عنه decided to migrate, he held him back so that he could accompany him. (This whole event has been described in Tafsīr Maẓharī with relevant references)

We can now move to the second sentence of the verse (111): يُقَاتِلُوْنَ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ (الى) فِي التَّوْرٰىةِ وَالْإِنْجِيْلِ وَالْقُرْاٰنِ (They fight in the way of Allah, and kill and are killed ... a promise on His part which is true (as made) in the Torah and the Injīl and the Qur'ān). This verse tells us that fighting in the way of Allah was a commandment also revealed for past communities in their Scriptures. As for the popular assumption that there is no injunction of Jihād in the Injīl, it is possible that, as part of the changes made by people who came later, the injunctions of Jihād were ex-

punged. Allah knows best.

At the end of the verse (111), it was said: فَاسْتَبْشِرُوْا بِبَيْعِكُمُ (So, rejoice in the deal you have made). The agreement arrived at with the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in this event of the Bai'atu al-'Aqabah had, on the surface, turned into a sort of buying and selling deal. Therefore, it was expressed through the word: شراء (Allah has bought) at the beginning of the verse. In the present sentence, Muslims were told that they had struck a good deal which will bring blessings for them. The reason was that they had tendered their life and wealth that were mortal while that which they received in return was eternal. If we come to think about it, we would realize that wealth was the only thing they spent out. As for life, that is, the essential spirit, that will remain even after death, and remain forever. And if we were to look deeper into the reality of wealth, that too happens to be nothing but the gift of Allah Almighty. When born, human beings visit the world empty-handed. It was He who made them own everything around them and it was He who made His own gift the price of eternal blessings and gave them Paradise. Therefore, Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی الله عنه said, 'this is a strange deal where the commodity and the price have both been given to you!'

The sage, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī said, 'Behold, what a profitable business is this that Allah has thrown open to every believer!' And he also said, 'It is Allah who has blessed you with wealth and property. Spend a little out of it and buy Paradise.' (Maẓharī)

The last verse (112) which begins with the words: اَلتَّآئِبُوْنَ الْعٰبِدُوْنَ "(They are) those who repent, those who worship...) describes the attributes of the same believers about whom it was said earlier that Allah has bought their lives and their wealth from the believers, against which Paradise shall be for them. Though, the verse was revealed as relating to a particular group of participants in the Bai'atu al-'Aqabah, but the sense of the verse covers all *mujāhidīn* in the way of Allah. As for the list of their attributes which opens with: اَلتَّآئِبُوْنَ (those who repent), they are not there as a condition, because the promise of Paradise has been made for Jihād in the way of Allah, in an absolute sense. The purpose behind the delineation of these attributes is to stress that those who deserve Paradise do have such attributes – as was specially the case with the noble Companions who were a party to Bai'atu al-'Aqabah.

The word: اَلسَّآئِحُوْنَ (*as-sā'iḥūn*: translated literally as 'those who jour-

ney'), according to the majority of commentators, means those who fast (*ṣā'imūn*). Actually, this word has been derived from: سیاحه (*siyāḥah*: journey, pilgrimage). Before Islām, *siyāḥah* was taken to be an act of worship in the Christian religion that meant leaving home for the sake of worship. Islām declared it to be monasticism, and prohibited it. It was replaced with fasting as an act of worship. The reason is that *siyāḥah* taught disengagement from worldly life while fasting taught that one should abstain from worldly desires for a limited period of time living at home. It is on the same basis that Jihād too has been equated with *siyāḥah* in some reports. Ibn Mājah, Ḥākim and Baihaqī have authentically reported that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: سِيَاحَةُ اُمَّتِیْ اَلْجِهَادُ فِیْ سَبِیْلِ اللّٰہِ (The *siyāḥah* of my ummah is Jihād in the way of Allah).

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ has said that سَآئِحِیْن (*sā'iḥīn*: those who journey) in the Qur'ān means: صَآئِمِیْن (*ṣā'imīn*: those who fast). Explaining سَآئِحِیْن (*as-sā'iḥīn*: those who journey), 'Ikrimah said, 'they are students who leave their homes to seek religious knowledge.' (Maẓharī)

At this place, seven attributes of believing *mujāhidīn* have been described as those who repent, those who worship, those who praise Allah, those who journey, those who bow in *rukū'*, those who prostrate in *sajdah*, those who bid the Fair and forbid the Unfair. After having enumerated these seven attributes, the eighth attribute was put as: اَلْحٰفِظُوْنَ لِحُدُوْدِ اللّٰہِ: 'those who preserve the limits prescribed by Allah.' Actually, this expression is an embodiment of all attributes mentioned earlier. In other words, the details given in those seven attributes have been eloquently reduced to one small sentence which means that they are committed to the limits set by Allah, that is, they obey, adhere to and protect the injunctions of the Sharī'ah of Islām.

At the end of the verse (112), it was said: وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِیْنَ (And give the good news to the believers). It means that the Prophet of Islām should convey to believers who have the attributes mentioned above the good news of blessings nobody could ever imagine, nor could it be explained in words, nor has anyone heard about it from any source. The reference is to the ultimate blessings of Paradise.

Verses 113 – 114

مَا كَانَ لِلنَّبِيِّ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اَنْ يَّسْتَغْفِرُوْا لِلْمُشْرِكِيْنَ وَلَوْ

كَانُوْٓا اُولِيْ قُرْبٰى مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ اَنَّهُمْ اَصْحٰبُ الْجَحِيْمِ ﴿١١٣﴾ وَمَا كَانَ اسْتِغْفَارُ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ لِاَبِيْهِ اِلَّا عَنْ مَّوْعِدَةٍ وَّعَدَهَآ اِيَّاهُ ۚ فَلَمَّا تَبَيَّنَ لَهٗٓ اَنَّهٗ عَدُوٌّ لِّلّٰهِ تَبَرَّاَ مِنْهُ ۭ اِنَّ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ لَاَوَّاهٌ حَلِيْمٌ ﴿١١٤﴾

It is not for the Prophet and the believers to seek forgiveness for the Mushriks*, even if they are kinsmen, after it became clear to them that they are the people of hell. [113]

And the prayer of Ibrāhīm for the forgiveness of his father was not but due to a promise he had made to him. Later when it became clear to him that he was an enemy of Allah, he withdrew himself from him. Surely, Ibrāhīm is oft sighing (before Allah), forbearing. [114]

Commentary

The entire Sūrah Al-Taubah consists of injunctions of absolution and withdrawal from *kāfirs* (disbelievers) and *mushriks* (those who associate partners with Allah). The Sūrah opens with the words: بَرَآءَةٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ (Here is a withdrawal [proclaimed] by Allah) and that is why this Sūrah is also known as Sūrah al-Barā'ah. The injunctions appearing earlier relate to withdrawal and severance of relationships with *kāfirs* and *mushriks* in this worldly life. The same injunction of withdrawal and severance of relationships appears in the the present verses, but it relates to the life hereinafter. It makes it impermissible even to pray for the forgiveness of *kāfirs* and *mushriks* after their death – as it appears in a previous verse (84) where the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been prohibited from offering funeral prayers for hypocrites.

The background of revelation

The event that was the cause or background of the revelation of this *āyah* has been reported in a narrative appearing in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī and Muslim. According to this report, Abū Ṭālib, the uncle of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, had not, though, embraced Islām, yet he continued to support and protect the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم throughout his life. He did not listen to any member of his clan in this

*. Those who associate partners with Allah.

matter. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم too was concerned about him. He wished that his uncle would somehow recite the Kalimah and embrace Islām. He would thus be able to intercede on his behalf and he could have his deliverance from the punishment of Jahannam. When Abū Ṭālib was suffering from his last sickness and death became certain, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was worried. He wished if his uncle were to recite the Kalimah even now, things might work for him. He came close to him in that state of anxiety – but, Abū Jahl and 'Abdullāh ibn Umayyah (disbelieving diehards) were already there. He said, 'my uncle, recite the Kalimah: لَا إِلٰهَ إِلَّا اللّٰه (*Lā ilāha illallāh*). I shall try to seek forgiveness for you.' But, Abū Jahl interrupted, 'would you forsake the faith of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib (father of Abū Ṭālib)?' The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم repeated what he had said several times. But, every time, Abū Jahl would say the same thing he had said before – until the last words spoken by Abū Ṭālib were, 'I am on the faith of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib.' It was in this very condition that he died. Then, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم swore that he would continue seeking forgiveness for him until he was prohibited from it. Thereupon, this verse of prohibition was revealed where the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and all Muslims were prohibited from praying for the forgiveness of *kāfirs* and *mushriks* – even if they were close relatives.

This put some Muslims into doubt. Was it not, they thought, that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام too had prayed for his disbelieving father? To answer it, the second verse (114) was revealed: مَا كَانَ اسْتِغْفَارُ إِبْرٰهِيمَ In gist, it means: As for the prayer made by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام for his father, it was conditioned by circumstances. In the beginning, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام did not know that he would keep on sticking to his disbelief right through the end and would die a disbeliever. In other words, his going to Hell was not certain. That was the time when he had made the promise that he would pray for his forgiveness: سَأَسْتَغْفِرُ لَكَ رَبِّي (I shall ask my Lord to forgive you – Maryam 19:47). Later, when it became clear to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام that he was an enemy of Allah, that is, he had remained a disbeliever right through the end, he elected to become indifferent to him and stopped asking pardon for him.

With regard to the mention of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام praying for the forgiveness of his father at different places in the Qur'ān, it should

all be taken in that sense, whereby it would mean that Allah may give him the *taufīq* of 'Īmān and Islām so that he could be forgiven.

When the disbelievers inflicted a wound on the blessed face of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم during the battle of Uḥud, he was seen wiping blood from his face and praying: اَللّٰهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِقَوْمِي إِنَّهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ (O Allah, forgive my people. They do not know). The object of this prayer of forgiveness for the disbelievers is no other but that Allah may bless them with the *taufīq* of 'Īmān and Islām so that they could become deserving of being forgiven.

Imām al-Qurṭubī said, 'this proves that it is permissible to pray for the forgiveness of a living *kāfir* with the intention that this disbelieving person may have the *taufīq* of 'Īmān and become deserving of forgiveness.'

In the last sentence of the verse (114), it was said: إِنَّ إِبْرٰهِيْمَ لَأَوَّاهٌ حَلِيْمٌ (Surely, Ibrāhīm is oft sighing [before Allah], forbearing). The word: اواه (*awwāh*) is used for a host of meanings. Al-Qurṭubī has reported fifteen meanings of this word but they are all close to each other without any real difference between them. Some of these are: one who sighs a lot, or one who supplicates profusely, or one who is full of mercy for the servants of Allah. This (last) meaning is reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضى الله عنه.

Verses 115 – 116

وَمَا كَانَ اللّٰهُ لِيُضِلَّ قَوْمًا بَعْدَ إِذْ هَدٰهُمْ حَتّٰى يُبَيِّنَ لَهُمْ مَّا يَتَّقُوْنَ ۭ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿١١٥﴾ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۭ يُحْيِيْ وَيُمِيْتُ ۭ وَمَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ مِنْ وَّلِيٍّ وَّلَا نَصِيْرٍ ﴿١١٦﴾

And Allah is not to make a people go astray after He has given them guidance, unless He explains to them what they should avoid. Surely, in respect of everything Allah is (All-) Knowing. [115]

Surely, to Allah alone belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth. He gives life and brings death. And, other than Allah, you have neither a supporter, nor a helper. [116]

Verses 117 – 119

لَقَدْ تَّابَ اللّٰهُ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ وَالْمُهٰجِرِيْنَ وَالْاَنْصَارِ الَّذِيْنَ اتَّبَعُوْهُ
فِيْ سَاعَةِ الْعُسْرَةِ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا كَادَ يَزِيْغُ قُلُوْبُ فَرِيْقٍ مِّنْهُمْ
ثُمَّ تَابَ عَلَيْهِمْ ؕ اِنَّهٗ بِهِمْ رَءُوْفٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿١١٧﴾ وَّعَلَى الثَّلٰثَةِ
الَّذِيْنَ خُلِّفُوْا ؕ حَتّٰٓى اِذَا ضَاقَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الْاَرْضُ بِمَا رَحُبَتْ
وَضَاقَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ اَنْفُسُهُمْ وَظَنُّوْٓا اَنْ لَّا مَلْجَاَ مِنَ اللّٰهِ اِلَّآ اِلَيْهِ ؕ
ثُمَّ تَابَ عَلَيْهِمْ لِيَتُوْبُوْا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيْمُ ﴿١١٨﴾
يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَكُوْنُوْا مَعَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿١١٩﴾

Surely, Allah has relented towards the Prophet and the Muhājirs (Emigrants) and the Anṣār (the Supporters) who followed him in the hour of hardship after the hearts of a group of them were about to turn crooked, then He relented towards them. Surely, to them He is Very Kind, Very Merciful. [117]

And (He relented) towards the three whose matter was deferred until when the earth was straitened for them despite all its vastness, and even their own souls were straitened for them, and they realized that there is no refuge from Allah, except in Him. Then He turned towards them, so that they may repent. Surely, Allah is the Most-Relenting, the Very Merciful. [118]

O those who believe, fear Allah, and be in the company of the truthful. [119]

Commentary

In the comments on verse 102: وَاٰخَرُوْنَ اعْتَرَفُوْا (And there are those who admitted...), it was said that following the general call of Jihād at Tabūk which required all Muslims to join in, the people of Madīnah had split into five groups. Two of them were of those who elected to stay behind without any valid excuse, a detailed description of which has appeared in previous verses. Here, in the present verses, three kinds of sincere believers have been mentioned. First were those who responded to the call of Jihād instantly. They have been identified in the initial sentence: اتَّبَعُوْهُ فِيْ سَاعَةِ الْعُسْرَةِ (who followed him in the hour of

hardship) of verse 117. The second group was of those who hesitated during the early stage but recovered soon and got ready for Jihād with other participants. They have been described in the sentence: مِنۢ بَعۡدِ مَا كَادَ يَزِيغُ قُلُوبُ فَرِيقٖ مِّنۡهُمۡ (after the hearts of a group of them were about to turn crooked) of the same verse (117).

The third group was that of the believers who did not, though, participate in the Jihād because of their laziness at that time, yet, later on, they regretted and sought forgiveness – and ultimately, the Taubah made by them was accepted. However, their group was further divided in two types. Originally, they were ten in number. Seven out of these men demonstrated their genuine remorse and repentance instantly soon after the return of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The manner in which they did so was unusual. They tied themselves up with the pillars of the Prophet's Mosque with the resolve that they would stay tied as long as their Taubah was not accepted. The verse known as the 'Āyah of Taubah granting forgiveness for them was revealed immediately then. Details can be seen under comments on verse 102. The remaining three out of the ten were those who did not act in that manner. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم asked his Companions to boycott them whereby no one was to greet or talk to them. This thing was terrible. It really disturbed them. They have been mentioned in the second verse (118) through the words: وَعَلَى الثَّلٰثَةِ الَّذِيۡنَ خُلِّفُوۡا (And towards the three whose matter was deferred) where comes the acceptance of their Taubah soon after which the order to boycott them was withdrawn.

Before we move on to explain the first verse (117): لَقَدْ تَّابَ اللّٰهُ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ وَالْمُهٰجِرِيْنَ وَالْاَنْصَارِ الَّذِيْنَ اتَّبَعُوْهُ فِيْ سَاعَةِ الْعُسْرَةِ (Surely, Allah has relented towards the Prophet and the Emigrants and the Supporters who followed him in the hour of hardship) in some details, let us answer a question first.

Is it not that Taubah is done because of having committed an act of sin and disobedience? The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is protected from that (*ma'ṣūm*). What, then, would be the sense of accepting his Taubah ('relenting towards the Prophet')? In addition to that, there were the Ṣaḥābah from among the Muhājirīn and Anṣār who had opted for Jihād since the very beginning. They too had not done anything wrong. For what crime had they made their Taubah that was accepted?

The answer is that Allah Ta'ālā made all of them safe from sin. This was expressed as Taubah, or that Allah Ta'ālā made all of them

tawwāb, those who turn to Allah. This indicates that no one is free from the need to make Taubah, not even the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his closest Companions – as it appears in another verse: وَتُوبُوْٓا إِلَى اللّٰهِ جَمِيْعًا (and turn towards Allah in repentance, all of you – 24:31). The reason is that the degrees and ranks of nearness to Allah are endless. Whoever has reached a certain station should realize that there is a higher station ahead and, as compared to that high station, the present one is a shortcoming. The quest must go on. Let one seek forgiveness for any shortcoming he may have at his present station so that he could move on to the next, the higher.

Coming to words: سَاعَةِ الْعُسْرَةِ (translated as 'the hour of hardship') appearing in verse 117, the Holy Qur'ān has employed this expression to portray the condition of the Muslims on the occasion of this very Jihād because they were poor and straitened on many counts. Ḥasan al-Baṣrī says, 'they had one mount for every ten men. They had to take turns to ride. The wherewithal required for such a trip was very short and ordinary. On the other hand, the heat was intense and scorching. Water in en route was scarce and at distances.

As for the next sentence: مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا كَادَ يَزِيْغُ قُلُوْبُ فَرِيْقٍ مِّنْهُمْ (after the hearts of a group of them were about to turn crooked), the زيغ (*zaigh*: crookedness) of the hearts of some people referred to here does not mean some deviation from faith. In fact, it means to lose heart and wish to avoid action in Jihād because of the hardship of hot weather and the dearth of necessary supplies. Ḥadīth narratives prove that. It was in view of these hardships they faced that their repentance was accepted.

Verse 118 begins with the words: وَّعَلَى الثَّلٰثَةِ الَّذِيْنَ خُلِّفُوْا (And [He relented] towards the three whose matter was deferred). Here, the word: خُلِّفُوْا (*khullifū*) literally means 'those left behind.' It carries the sense of 'those the matter of whose repentance was deferred' – as opted for in the translation of the text. These three gentlemen: Sayyidnā Ka'b ibn Mālik, Murarah ibn Rabī' and Hilāl ibn Umayyah رضى الله عنهم اجمعين were from the Anṣār of Madīnah and had a distinguished record in the service of Islām. Earlier, they had participated in the Bai'atu al-'Aqabah and in many battles with the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. But, it was only by chance that they slipped in this manner. Then, there were those hypocrites who did not take part in this Jihād because of their hypocrisy, they gave them the kind of advises that dampened their

courage. But, when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم returned from this Jihād, all those hypocrites came to him, presented false excuses, took false oaths and tried to please the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم who entrusted the inward state of their hearts with Allah and simply accepted their outward declarations on oath. Thus, they went on living their normal lives. Some people gave the same suggestion to these Anṣārī gentlemen – that they should also establish their innocence by offering false excuses. But, their hearts admonished them. They knew that they had already committed a sin, that of remaining behind in Jihād. Now, how could they compound it with another sin, that of lying before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم? Therefore, they came up with a clean breast and confessed to their misconduct. In punishment, Muslims were asked not to greet or talk to them. In the end, the Holy Qur'ān laid bare the reality of the whole thing. Those who had fortified their excuses with false oaths were exposed, the details of which appear in several earlier verses from: يَعْتَذِرُوْنَ اِلَيْكُمْ اِذَا رَجَعْتُمْ اِلَيْهِمْ (They will make excuses to you – 94) to: عَلَيْهِمْ دَآئِرَةُ السَّوْءِ (upon those is the evil cycle – 98). Regarding the truth told and confession made by these three gentlemen, it is enough to say that the fact of their Taubah was revealed in this verse. They faced fifty days of avoidance by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and a boycott of greeting and conversation by the Companions, a heart-rending experience indeed. Finally came the day when, amidst ecstatic scenes of having been so honorably acquitted and of exuberant congratulations for it, they regained the confidence of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, and that of all Muslims.

Details of the event relating to these three Anṣārī elders from authentic Aḥādīth

In the two authentic collections of Al-Bukhārī and Muslim, and in most books of Ḥadīth, there appears a lengthy Ḥadīth narrated by Sayyidnā Ka'b ibn Mālik رضى الله عنه in connection with this event. Since, it consists of many elements of guidance, solutions of religious problems and facts worthy of consideration, therefore, it seemed appropriate that a full translation of this Ḥadīth should be reproduced here. Sayyidnā Ka'b ibn Mālik رضى الله عنه, one of the three gentlemen, has described the details of this event as given below:

'Every battle in which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم participated, I was with him, except the battle of Tabūk. However, the battle of Badr

came all of a sudden, and the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had also not asked everyone to participate in it, and was also not angry with those who had not participated in it. In this too, I was not present. And I was also present on the night of the Bai'atu al-'Aqabah where we had made the covenant of supporting and protecting Islām. And this presence of mine at the Bai'atu al-'Aqabah is dearer to me as compared to my (possible) presence at the battle of Badr – though, the battle of Badr is better known among people. As for the background of my absence from the battle of Tabūk, the truth is that I had never been so rich as I was at that time. By God, I never had two mounts before that which I then had.

While marching out from Madīnah for his battles, the blessed habit of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was that he would conceal his intentions by advancing in a direction just the opposite of the direction in which he was to go for Jihād. The intention was to confuse spying hypocrites lest they sound off the enemy. And he used to say, 'in war, (such strategy of) deception (*khudāh'*) is permissible.'

Then, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was ready to carry out his plan for the Jihād (of Tabūk, which was unusual for several reasons). The heat was intense. Muslim forces were short on supplies. The journey was long. Then, they were going to fight against an enemy stronger in strength and overwhelming in numbers. Therefore, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم made the call for Jihād openly and publicly so that Muslims could make all necessary preparations for it in advance.'

According to the report in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim, the numerical strength of those who participated in this Jihād was more than ten thousand. Ḥākim reports from Sayyidnā Mu'ādh رضى الله عنه who said, 'when we set out for this Jihād with the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, our number was more than thirty thousand.'

'Since no muster roll of those who set out for this Jihād was put on record in writing, therefore, those who did not wish to go out for this Jihād had an opportunity on hand. If they did not go, nobody would be able to find that out, they thought. The time when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم set out for Jihād was a time when dates were ripe and the growers were busy. Such was the condition when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and common Muslims started getting ready for the journey. It was a Thursday when he set out for the journey. He liked to travel

on a Thursday, whether it was for Jihād or for some other purpose.

As for myself, I went out every morning to prepare for Jihād, but came back without having done it. My heart said, 'I am capable of Jihād. I must go.' But, days passed and my intention kept being put off until a tomorrow – until the time the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and common Muslims departed for Jihād. Still then, my heart kept urging me to leave and join up somewhere en route – alas, only if I were to do that! But, unfortunately, this could not be done.

When, after the departure of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, wherever I went in Madīnah, the surroundings put me to grief. At that time, what one saw throughout Madīnah were sights of people who were either sunk in hypocrisy, or were sick and crippled absolutely unable to travel. On the other side, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم did not think of me anywhere on this whole journey until he reached Tabūk. It was there in a gathering that he said, 'what happened to Ka'b ibn Mālik?'

A man from (the tribe of) Banū Salimah said, '*yā rasūlallāh*, he has been detained by his nice dress and his looking towards his shoulders (in self-admiration). Then, Sayyidnā Mu'adh ibn Jabal رضى الله عنه told this man, 'what you have said is bad' – and then, turning to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, he submitted – '*yā rasūlallāh*, by God, we know nothing about him except that which is good.' Thereupon, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم became silent.

When I heard the news, says Sayyidnā Ka'b رضى الله عنه, that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was coming back, I was concerned, almost close to concocting in a hurry some excuse for my absence and presenting things through which I could have escaped facing the displeasure of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. May be I could have asked my family and friends also to help me out of this predicament. (Scruples like these kept destabilizing my heart) until I heard that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had arrived. Then, all these confusing thoughts were blotted out of my heart and I realized that I could never escape his displeasure on grounds that are contaminated with a lie. Therefore, I resolved to tell him the truth for I was convinced that truth alone would rescue me (from this situation).

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم entered Madīnah. The time was

Ḍuḥā (*Chasht* in Urdu and Persian), that is, middle of morning after sunrise. It was the blessed habit of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that he generally used to return from his journeys at this time and his practice was first to go to the Masjid, offer two *raka'āt* and then go to see Sayyidah Fāṭimah. After that, he went to meet his blessed wives.

This time too, as was his wont, he first went to the Masjid, offered two *raka'āt* and sat down in the Masjid. Some more than eighty hypocrites who had not gone to the expedition of Tabūk came to him offering false excuses on equally false oaths. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم accepted what was outwardly expressed through their statements on oath, approved of their allegiance, prayed for their forgiveness and entrusted what was in their hearts with Allah.

It was under this situation that I presented myself before him. When I offered my *salām* to him, he smiled, smiling like someone angry. Then he said, 'come.' So I walked towards him until I sat down before him.' According to some Ḥadīth reports, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم turned his face away from him. Thereupon, Sayyidnā Ka'b رضى الله عنه said: *Yā rasūlallāh*, why would you turn your face away from me? By God, I have nothing to do with hypocrisy, nor have I ever suffered from any doubt about my religion, nor am I guilty of making any alterations to it. 'Then he said, 'why then, did you not go for Jihād? Is it not that you had already bought a mount for this purpose?

I said, 'Yes, *Yā rasūlallāh*. If I would have been sitting before anyone from common worldly people, other than you, I am confident that I would have invented some excuse and avoided his displeasure – because, I have been gifted with the art of debate. But, I swear by Allah that I have understood perfectly well that, should I tell you a lie – that may even please you temporarily – still, the day would not be far when Allah Ta'ālā would tell you the whole truth and thus make you displeased with me. And if I were to tell you the truth – which may at this moment make you displeased with me – I hope, Allah Ta'ālā will forgive me. The truth of the matter is that I had no excuse for remaining absent from the Jihād for I had never been stronger, both financially and physically, as I was at that time.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, 'this man has told the truth.' Then, he said, 'all right, go – until Allah Ta'ālā gives His decree in your case.' I rose to leave when some men from the tribe of Banī

Salimah tailed me and started saying, 'As far as we know, you never committed a sin before this. Why did you act so dumb? You could have at the least come up with some excuse as was done by others who were left behind. Had you done that, the prayer made by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم would have been sufficient to bring forgiveness for your sins. By God, these people kept admonishing me repeatedly, so much so that a thought crossed my mind urging me to go back and say that I was wrong about what I had said earlier and that I had the right excuse with me.

But, it occurred to me that I should not add another sin to the one I have done before. I have already committed a sin when I remained behind in the Jihād. How could I venture into another sin, that of lying? Then, I asked those people if there was anyone like me who had confessed to his misconduct. They told me that there were two others who had done what I did and they too were given the same reply as was given to me (that they should wait for the decree of Allah). I asked them as to who those two were. They told me that one of them was Murarah ibn Rabī' al-"Umariy while the other, Hilāl ibn Umayyah al-Wāqifiy.'

According to a report carried by Ibn Abī Ḥātim, the reason why the first of the two (that is, Murarah) was left behind is that he had a date farm where the fruit was ripening. He said to himself, 'you have taken part in many battles before this. If you do not go for Jihād this year, how would that become a crime?' Later, when he was alerted to his sinful thought, he promised to Allah that he has given this date farm in the way of Allah as a *ṣadaqah* from him.

As for the other gentleman, Sayyidnā Hilāl ibn 'Umayyah رضى الله عنه, his family has been living scattered since long. At that time, they had assembled all together. He thought of not going to Jihād that year and spending some time with his family. He too, when reminded of his sin, promised that he would stay away from his family from that time onwards.

Sayyidnā Ka'b ibn Mālik رضى الله عنه says, 'these people mentioned two blessed souls who were from among the *mujāhidīn* of the battle of Badr. I said, 'that is it. What these two did is worth following for me.' Saying this, I went home.

On the other side, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم prohibited his Companions from greeting or talking to the three of us. As for us, we loved all Muslims as usual, but they were the ones who had turned away from us.'

It appears in a report of Ibn Abī Shaibah that 'now we were in a condition that we would go to people, but they would not talk to us, nor greet us, nor respond to our greetings.'

Musnad 'Abd al-Razzāq reports the statement of Sayyidnā Ka'b ibn Mālik رضى الله عنه as follows: 'what a time that was when the small world around us had changed totally. It seemed as if the people who used to be there are not there any more, nor our fruit farms, nor our homes, none of these were what they used to be. Everything looked strange. I became seriously concerned about myself. If I die in this state of mine, I thought, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم would not say the Ṣalāh of Janāzah (funeral prayer) for me. Or, if the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم were to breath his last during this period, I shall be running around just like this all my life, condemned and disgraced before everyone. For this reason, as far as I was concerned, the whole Earth started appearing indifferent and desolate. So, we lived like that for fifty nights. At that time, the two companions of mine (Murārah and Hilāl) lost heart, sat home and wept. But, I was younger. I went out, walked around and made my Ṣalāh in the Masjid with other Muslims and roamed in the bazaars but nobody would talk to me nor respond to my *salām* greetings. I used to attend the customary sitting of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم after the Ṣalāh was over. When I said my *salām* to him, I tried to figure out whether or not the blessed lips of the Holy Prophet moved to respond to my *salām*. Then I tried to offer my Ṣalāh just about close to him from where I would steal a glance towards him and discover that he looks at me when I get busy with my Ṣalāh, and when I look towards him, he turns his face away.

When this (considered) indifference of these people dragged longer, I went to my cousin Abū Qatādah who was the dearest of my friends. I jumped a wall to enter his farm and said my *salām* to him. By God, he too did not respond to my *salām*. I asked, 'O Abū Qatādah, do you not know that I love Allah Ta'ālā and His *rasūl*?' Even then, Abū Qatādah observed silence. He did not respond. When I repeated my question again and again, then – probably, the third or the fourth time – he

only said, 'Allah and His *rasūl* know best.' I broke into tears and came out of the farm jumping over the compound wall as I had done earlier. During those days, once I was walking through a bazaar of Madīnah when, all of a sudden, I noticed a farmer from Syria who had come to Madīnah to sell grains. I saw him asking people if anyone there could tell him the address of Ka'b ibn Mālik? When they saw me right there, they pointed out to me. The man came to me and gave me a letter from the king of Ghassān that was written on a silk handkerchief. It said:

> ' After salutations, I have come to know that your Prophet has betrayed you and that he has made you stay away from him. (I assure you) God has not chosen to put you in a place of disgrace and destruction. If you like to come to us, come. We shall help you.'

When I read this letter, I said to myself, 'here comes another test and trial for me when, of all the people, the partisans of disbelief (*kufr*) have now been tempted to expect such things from me (that I go and join them)!' Taking this letter in my hands, I stepped forward. There was a bread-baking shop with a heated oven. I threw the letter down into it.

Sayyidnā Ka'b رضی اللہ عنہ says, 'when forty out of the fifty nights had passed, I was given a surprise by Khuzaymah ibn Thābit رضی اللہ عنہ, a message bearer of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم who came towards me and said, 'the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has ordered that you should stay apart from your wife as well.' I said, 'should I divorce her? Or, do what?' He told me, 'no, just do not go near her.' The same order was communicated to my two companions also. I told my wife, 'go to the home of your parents and stay there till Allah Ta'ālā opens a way for us.'

After having heard this order, Khawlah bint 'Āṣim, the wife of Hilāl ibn Umayyah came to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم with the plea that Hilāl ibn Umayyah was old and weak and that he had no servant to look after him. It also appears in a report of Ibn Abī Shaybah that she also said, 'he is weak-sighted as well. Would you not like to allow me to continue serving him?' He said, 'serving him is no problem, however, he should not seek to be near you.' She said, 'as for that, He is in to a state wherein he has no such desire – and, by God, he keeps weeping day and night.'

Ka'b ibn Mālik says, 'some of my relatives and friends suggested to me too that I should also ask the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to allow me to keep my wife with me – similar to the permission he has given to Hilāl. I said, 'I will not do that. Who knows what the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم would say in reply? In addition to that, I am young (that is, living with one's wife was against precaution).' In this condition, I passed ten more nights until the count of fifty nights became complete.' The narrative of Musnad 'Abd al-Razzāq says, 'At that stage, the Divine decree about our Taubah (repentance) was revealed to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم at the hour when one third of the night had passed. The Mother of the Faithful, Sayyidah Umm Salamah who was there at that time said, 'If you wish, Ka'b ibn Mālik can be informed about it right now.' He said, 'That will bring a crowd of people here right now. It would become impossible to sleep for the rest of the night.'

Ka'b ibn Mālik says, 'when the fiftieth night passed, I made my Fajr Ṣalāh and went to the roof. While I sat there my condition was a mirror of what Allah Ta'ālā has said in the Qur'ān – that the Earth was straitened for me despite all its vastness, and my own soul was straitened for me. (118) All of a sudden came the voice of a caller calling from the heights of the hill of Sal' loudly announcing: 'O Ka'b ibn Mālik, 'Be happy with the good news'.

In a report from Muḥammad ibn 'Amr, it is said that the caller was Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ who went up the hill of Sal' to announce that Allah Ta'ālā had accepted the Taubah of Ka'b and offered congratulations for his success. And narration of 'Uqbah says that two men ran to give this good news to Sayyidnā Ka'b رضی اللہ عنہ. When one ran ahead of the other, the one who had remained behind turned, climbed the hill of Sal', and announced the good news from there. It is said that the blessed souls who ran in that manner were Sayyidnā Abū Bakr and Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہم اجمعین .

Sayyidnā Ka'b ibn Mālik رضی اللہ عنہ says, 'Hearing this voice, I fell down prostrating in Sajdah. So happy was I that I broke into tears. I had learnt that my good days have come back. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had told the Ṣaḥābah after the Ṣalāh of Fajr that our Taubah was accepted. Everyone ran out to congratulate the three of us. Some of them rode on horses to reach me. But, the voice of the person calling

from the hill was quicker than the horse.

When I came out to present myself before the Holy Prophet ﷺ, I saw that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was sitting there. There was a cordon of his Ṣaḥābah around him. When Ṭalḥah ibn 'Ubaidullāh saw me, he was the first to rise and rush towards me. Shaking my hands, he congratulated me for the acceptance of my Taubah. I cannot forget the good Ṭalḥah did to me on that day. When I said my *salām* to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, his blessed face was radiant with delight. He said, 'O Ka'b, I congratulate you for this day of bliss for you, the best day of your life since you were born.' I said, '*Yā rasūlallāh*, is this order from you or is it from Allah Ta'ālā?' 'No,' he said, 'this order is from Allah Ta'ālā. You had told the truth. Allah Ta'ālā made your truthfulness come out in the open.'

When I sat down before the Holy Prophet ﷺ, I said to him, '*Yā rasūlallāh*, I wish to walk out of all my wealth and property and give it as *ṣadaqah* in the way of Allah. This will be a part of my Taubah.' 'No,' he said, 'hold some of it for your needs. This is better.' I said, 'all right, can I give half of it as *ṣadaqah*?' He rejected that too. Then, I asked his permission to give one-third of it. This he accepted. I said, '*Yā rasūlallāh*, I have been delivered from my predicament by Allah because I told the truth, therefore, I pledge before you that, as long as I live, I shall not say anything but the truth.' Then, says Sayyidnā Ka'b رضى الله عنه, 'since the time I had given this pledge to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, *al-ḥamdulillāh*, no word of lie was uttered by me up to this day – and I hope Allah Ta'ālā shall protect me from it for the rest of my life.' Sayyidnā Ka'b رضى الله عنه also says, 'By God, after the blessing of Islām, I cannot think of having received a blessing greater than this. I mean that I told the truth before the Holy Prophet ﷺ and that I did not lie – because, had I lied, I would have been ruined like those who took false oaths. About them the Qur'ān said: سَيَحْلِفُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ لَكُمْ اِذَا انْقَلَبْتُمْ اِلَيْهِمْ (They will swear by Allah before you, so that you may ignore their misdeeds – 95) up to فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَرْضٰى عَنِ الْقَوْمِ الْفٰسِقِيْنَ (Allah will not be pleased with the sinning people – 96).

It has been said that the continuation of the boycott of these three gentlemen was, perhaps, based on the wisdom that the Holy Prophet ﷺ had spent exactly fifty days during the expedition of Tabūk. (The entire narration of this Ḥadīth and the related event has been taken from Tafsīr Maẓharī)

Points of Guidance from the Ḥadīth of Sayyidnā Ka'b ibn Mālik

The clarity and detail with which Sayyidnā Ka'b رضى الله عنه has described his story contains many elements of guidance for Muslims. Therefore, this Ḥadīth has been presented here in full. These are as follows:

1. This Ḥadīth tells us that it was the customary practice of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in his usual battle plans that he would march out of Madīnah in a (feigned) direction that was opposite to the direction he was to go actually. The objective was to keep enemies of Islām in the dark about where to and against whom he was going to carry out his Jihād. This is what he defined as: اَلْحَرْبُ خُدْعَةٌ (*al-ḥarbu khuda'ah*) that is, 'in war, deception is permissible.' Some people fall in doubt about the drift of this statement. They think that deceiving the adversary by lying in war or Jihād is permissible. This is not correct. In fact, it means the kind of deception whereby one acts in a manner that succeeds in deceiving enemies. For instance, marching out for Jihād from the opposite direction does not mean deceiving by lying blandly – something not permissible even in war. Similarly, it should also be understood that this practical deception, which has been declared permissible, has no bearing on abiding by a pledge or treaty. Breaking of a pledge or treaty, whether in peace or war, is not permissible under any situation.

2. For his journeys, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم liked a Thursday, whether it was for Jihād or for some other purpose.

3. Telling a lie to please some elder or spiritual guide or teacher or father is neither permissible nor does it end well. As for the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, he was informed of the truth through revelation, therefore, the ultimate outcome of lying was evil – as clarified through the event relating to Sayyidnā Ka'b ibn Mālik رضى الله عنه and to others who remained behind. After the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, no saint or savant or pious elder or spiritual guide can claim to be a recipient of revelation. Then, getting to know things through inspiration (*ilhām*) and illumination (*kashf*) is not necessary either. But, experience shows that lying has an aura of evil about it, something that brings bad consequences in its wake. Causes converge naturally, so much so that this respected elder ultimately becomes displeased with the liar.

4. From this event we learn that the Amīr (the executive head) of

Muslims also has the right to order them to stop greeting and talking to someone as a punishment for some sinful misconduct of his – as it happened with these three gentlemen in the event concerned.

5. This event is a mirror of the love his Companions had for the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. The depth and extent of this love compelled them to continue staying in his company even during the days when he was displeased with them and they were subjected to a social boycott by the Companions who would neither greet, nor acknowledge greetings nor talk to them. A careful reader through the narration of the event would hardly miss their affection and concern for him particularly when they would look at their master with the corners of their eyes and try to assess the warmth of his attention and the emotional level of the bond between them. They were really tuned to him under all circumstances.

6. As for the attitude of Sayyidnā Abū Qatādah رضى الله عنه, cousin and friend of Sayyidnā Ka'b رضى الله عنه, who did not respond to the later's *salām* nor talked to him, it is fairly obvious that he did not do so because of some enmity, hostility or malice. In fact, this was done for the sole reason that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had ordered him to do so and that he was duty-bound to follow it. This tells us that the law given by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was not only enforced on the physical exterior of people but was also implemented inwardly as well. The law ruled over their hearts. They would not do anything against it under any condition, present or absent – even if they had to act against the dearest of their friends and relatives.

7. The episode relating to the king of the Ghassān who wrote a letter to Sayyidnā Ka'b رضى الله عنه who threw it down into a heated oven shows how staunch as believers the Ṣaḥābah were. Here is one of them, terribly nervous about the displeasure of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the boycott by fellow Muslims, yet the tempting offer made by a King fails to move his heart in that direction.

8. That Sayyidnā Abū Bakr and Sayyidnā 'Umar and other noble Companions رضى الله عنهم اجمعين ran to congratulate Sayyidnā Ka'b ibn Mālik رضى الله عنه as soon as they heard about the acceptance of his Taubah is significant. Let us keep in mind that they had avoided the social graces of greeting and talking before this happened. This shows that the love for Sayyidnā Ka'b رضى الله عنه was very much present in their

hearts even during the days of the boycott – though, they had to surrender it in favor of carrying out the command of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. When the 'Āyah of Taubah (the verse of repentance) was revealed, their deep mutual affection became manifest.

9. From the conduct of the noble Ṣaḥābah who went to disclose the good news to and congratulate Sayyidnā Ka'b رضى الله عنه, we learn that congratulating friends on a happy occasion has its basis in Sunnah.

10. When repenting from a sin, taking out a *ṣadaqah* from one's assets helps to do away with the effects of sin, but it is not good to give away the whole of it in charity. Giving more than one third of what one owns in *ṣadaqah* was not liked by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم.

Advice to Muslims: Observe Taqwā and be with those true in word and deed

This brings us to the last verse: يَآيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَكُوْنُوْا مَعَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ (O those who believe, fear Allah, and be in the company of the truthful – 119). The event of having remained behind as related to some otherwise sincere people, and the ultimate acceptance of their repentance, was all a result of their Taqwā, the fear of Allah and the sense of being responsible before him. Therefore, in this verse, the large masses of Muslims have been instructed to observe Taqwā (as a constant feature of their personal lives). Then, by saying: كُوْنُوْا مَعَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ (be in the company of the truthful), it was hinted that the only way to achieve Taqwā was to frequent the company of those who are good in their deeds and true in their words, and to approximate one's own conduct to theirs. Perhaps, this may also be pointing out to the slip made by these people that was caused by the company they kept with hypocrites and their suggestions and advises they listened to. One should stay away from the company of those who are disobedient to Allah, and take to the company of the truthful. The Qur'ān has not said 'the learned' (*'ulamā'*) or 'the righteous' (*ṣulaḥā'*) at this place. Rather, by electing to use the word: الصدقين (*aṣ-ṣādiqīn*: the truthful), it has also told us about the real identity of the 'learned' and the 'righteous'. Such a truthful person has to be the one whose exterior and the interior are the same and who is also true in intention, and true in word, and true in deed as well.

Verses 120 – 121

مَا كَانَ لِاَهْلِ الْمَدِيْنَةِ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهُمْ مِّنَ الْاَعْرَابِ اَنْ يَّتَخَلَّفُوْا

عَنْ رَّسُوْلِ اللّٰهِ وَلَا يَرْغَبُوْا بِاَنْفُسِهِمْ عَنْ نَّفْسِهٖ ۭ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمْ
لَا يُصِيْبُهُمْ ظَمَاٌ وَّلَا نَصَبٌ وَّلَا مَخْمَصَةٌ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ وَلَا
يَطَـُٔوْنَ مَوْطِئًا يَّغِيْظُ الْكُفَّارَ وَلَا يَنَالُوْنَ مِنْ عَدُوٍّ نَّيْلًا اِلَّا
كُتِبَ لَهُمْ بِهٖ عَمَلٌ صَالِحٌ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُضِيْعُ اَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ
﴿۱۲۰﴾ وَلَا يُنْفِقُوْنَ نَفَقَةً صَغِيْرَةً وَّلَا كَبِيْرَةً وَّلَا يَقْطَعُوْنَ
وَادِيًا اِلَّا كُتِبَ لَهُمْ لِيَجْزِيَهُمُ اللّٰهُ اَحْسَنَ مَا كَانُوْا
يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۱۲۱﴾

It was not for the people of Madinah and for those around them of the Bedouins to stay behind abandoning the Messenger of Allah, nor to prefer their own lives to his life. That is because whatever thirst or fatigue or hunger strikes them in the way of Allah, and whenever they step into a place which infuriates the infidels, and whenever they make a gain from an enemy, a virtuous deed is credited to their account. Surely, Allah does not destroy the reward of the virtuous. [120] **And whatever they spend, be it less or more, and whenever they cross a valley, is all written down for them, so that Allah may give them the best reward for what they used to do.** [121]

Commentary

The two verses cited above admonish those who missed to join the expedition of Tabuk for no valid reason. They have also been told that they did what was not proper. Then the verses describe the merits of people who take part in Jihad and tell us about the great rewards they get for everything they do there. Included here is the causing of hurt or loss to the enemy and the using of a strategy that infuriates the adversary. All these are good deeds, and worthy of *thawab* (reward from Allah).

Verse 122

وَمَا كَانَ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ لِيَنْفِرُوْا كَاۗفَّةً ۭ فَلَوْلَا نَفَرَ مِنْ كُلِّ فِرْقَةٍ

مِّنْهُمْ طَآئِفَةٌ لِّيَتَفَقَّهُوا فِى الدِّيْنِ وَلِيُنْذِرُوا قَوْمَهُمْ اِذَا رَجَعُوٓا
اِلَيْهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَحْذَرُوْنَ ﴿١٢٢﴾

And it is not for the believers to go forth all together. So, why should it not be that a group from every section of them goes forth, so that they may acquire perfect understanding of the Faith, and so that they may warn their people when they return to them, that they may be cautious. [122]

Commentary

It will be realized that the expedition of Tabūk has continued appearing as an important subject in Sūrah Al-Taubah. For this battle, a general call of Jihād was given asking all Muslims to participate in it. It was not permissible to contravene the order without a valid excuse. Those who did that were mostly hypocrites who have been mentioned in several verses appearing earlier. Then, some sincere Muslims had also remained behind due to their incidental laziness. Their repentance was accepted by Allah Ta'ālā. Obviously, from all these events it can be gathered that the going forth of all Muslims in every Jihād is *farḍ* (obligatory) and staying behind is *ḥarām* (unlawful) – although, this is not the religious law. In fact, Jihād during normal conditions is Farḍ al-Kifāyah, a collective obligation. It means that, should a number of Muslims sufficient for Jihād keeps engaged in Jihād, rest of the Muslims stand absolved of the obligation. However, if the number participating in Jihād turns out to be insufficient to the limits of being overpowered, it becomes obligatory on Muslims living nearby that they should come out to strengthen them and fight with them in the Jihād. If they too are not sufficient, the obligation falls on those near the later, and if they too are not sufficient, it falls on Muslims adjoining the later. This could reach the limit when, under such emergent conditions, Jihād becomes Farḍ 'Ain (absolute individual obligation) on Muslims of the whole world, and it will be *ḥarām* (unlawful) to avoid participating in *jihād*. Similarly, it could also become equally obligatory (*farḍ*) if the Amir of Muslims, seeing the need, gives a general call and invites Muslims to join the mission of Jihād. At that time too, participation in Jihād becomes obligatory (*farḍ*) and staying behind becomes *ḥarām* (unlawful) – as it happened in the expedition of Tabūk

due to the general call of Jihād given for it. The verse cited above clarifies that this order to join the Jihād of Tabūk was a specific order due to the general call for it. Under normal conditions, Jihād is not an individual obligation (Farḍ al-'Ain) that would require all Muslims to go forth in Jihād as a matter of obligation – because, like Jihād, there are other collective concerns and important undertakings of Islām and Muslims that are Farḍ al-Kifāyah, also like Jihād. To fulfill these responsibilities too, different groups of Muslims have to follow the principle of division of work. Therefore, all Muslims should not go forth in every Jihād. The submission here may also help you understand the reality of Farḍ al-Kifāyah. The, areas of work that are not individual, but collective in nature, and the responsibility of carrying these out falls on all Muslims, are areas that the Sharī'ah of Islām has declared to be Farḍ al-Kifāyah. The purpose is that everything keeps being taken care of in its respective area and that all collective duties continue to be fulfilled. Duties such as washing, shrouding, offering Ṣalāh of Janāzah and burying deceased Muslims, the making and maintaining of mosques, Jihād and the guarding of Islāmic frontiers are all separate duties that are subject to the same rule of Farḍ al-Kifāyah. In other words, the responsibility of fulfilling these obligations though falls on the Muslims of the whole world as a matter of principle but, should some of them were to do that satisfactorily enough, other Muslims also stand absolved of the obligation. An important area of work that falls within the imperatives of this Farḍ al-Kifāyah is the religious education. That it is an obligation has been particularly mentioned in this verse by saying that this obligation should not be left out unattended even during the period of engagement in as important a duty as Jihād. The way in which it could be accomplished is that a smaller section from out of every large section sets forth for Jihād while the rest of people keep engaged in the pursuit of religious education. Then, those so educated should orient Muslims going on Jihād as well as teach and train others in their religion.

The obligation of acquiring religious knowledge, and its etiquette

Imām al-Qurṭubī has said, 'this verse is the root and foundation of religious knowledge (the *'ilm* of *dīn*) for its seeker.' If looked at carefully, also given here is a brief curriculum (*niṣāb*) of religious education, as well as the duties of the person (*'ālim*) who has qualified as one who

has this knowledge. Therefore, this subject is being taken up in some details.

The merits (*faḍā'il*) of acquiring religious knowledge

Muslim scholars have written regular books on the merits of religious knowledge, great rewards (*thawāb*) it brings and aspects related with it. Some brief reports relevant to the occasion are being cited here. Tirmidhī reports from Sayyidnā Abū al-Dardā' رضی اللہ عنہ who narrated that he heard the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم saying, 'whoever travels on a path for seeking knowledge (*'ilm* of *dīn*), Allah Ta'ālā will – in reward (*thawāb*) for his effort – turn the orientation of his path towards Paradise.'

A series of Ḥadīth narratives appearing in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī report that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said:

1. 'The angels of Allah spread out their wings for (welcoming) the seeker of knowledge;'

2. 'Allah's creatures in the heavens and the earth and fishes in the waters of the world pray for such seekers;'

3. 'The superiority of the 'Ālim over the person who devotes to voluntary acts of worship (*nafl 'ibadāt*) abundantly is like the superiority of the full moon over the rest of the stars;'

4. ''Ulamā' are the inheritors of the blessed prophets;'

5. 'The blessed prophets leave no gold and silver as inheritance, but they do leave the legacy of knowledge. So, whoever inherits this legacy of knowledge has inherited great wealth.'

Dārimī reports a Ḥadīth in his Musnad which says: 'Someone asked the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم: There were two men in Banī Isrā'īl. One was an 'Alim who would offer his prayers and then get busy teaching people their religion. The other fasted during the day and stood for prayers during the night. Of the two, who is superior? He said, "That 'Ālim (man of religious knowledge) is superior to the 'Ābid (man of religious worship) as I am superior to a very common person from among you." (Reported by Imām Ibn 'Abd al-Barr in his book, Jami'u Bayān al-'Ilm, from Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī رضی اللہ عنہ with relevant chain of narrators.) (Qurṭubī)

And the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said, 'a *faqīh* (expert Muslim

jurist), when confronting Shaytān, is stronger than a thousand worshippers.' (Tirmidhī from Ibn 'Abbās – as in Maẓharī). Then, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has also said, 'when a person dies, his deeds come to an end – except three, the *thawāb* (reward) of which keeps reaching that person even after death. One: *ṣadaqah jāriyah* (act of charity the benefits of which continue) such as *masjid*, building for religious education or institutions of public welfare. Two: Knowledge through which people continue to benefit even later on. (For example, a student of religion became an 'Ālim who set in motion a chain of learning and teaching the knowledge of religion for future generations; or someone wrote a book from which people kept benefiting even after the author was gone). Three: Children who are good (in character and up-bringing) and who keep praying for parents and do things the reward (*thawāb*) of which continues to reach them.' (Qurṭubī)

Details of Individual and Collective Obligation in the Learning of Religion

Backed by sound authority, Ibn 'Adiyy and al-Baihaqī report from Sayyidnā Anas رضى الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: طَلَبُ الْعِلْمِ فَرِيْضَةٌ عَلَى كُلِّ مُسْلِمٍ (Seeking knowledge is obligatory on every Muslim). (Maẓharī). It is all too obvious that the sense of *'ilm* (knowledge) – as in this Ḥadīth, as well as in those quoted a little earlier – is nothing but the *'ilm* of *dīn* (the knowledge of religion). Granted that worldly arts and sciences may be necessary for one as a part of the material management of life on this earth, but their merits are not the same as mentioned in the Āḥadīth appearing above. Then, the *'ilm* of *dīn* (knowledge of religion) is not some solitary area of knowledge. It is a comprehensive system composed of many sciences. Then, it is also obvious that every Muslim man and woman does not have the capacity to acquire full mastery over all these sciences. Therefore, when the Ḥadīth speaks of 'knowledge being obligatory on every Muslim,' it means the particular part of the knowledge of religion without which one can neither fulfill his or her obligations, nor stay away from the *ḥarām* (unlawful things) – being principles that are inseparably necessary for 'Īmān and Islām. As for the rest of the sciences, we should keep in mind that there are many more details of explanations, elements of wisdom and issues culled from the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth alone, not to mention the great range of injunctions and laws deduced from these sources. These are things beyond the capacity and control of every

Muslim, nor has this been made an individual obligation (Farḍ al-'Ain) for each one of them. However, this is Farḍ al-Kifāyah (collective obligation), and as such, it becomes the responsibility of the Islāmic world as a whole. The presence of one 'Ālim, a genuine expert in all these sciences and religious laws in every city makes the rest of Muslims absolved of this obligation. If a city or township has not even one 'Ālim, it becomes obligatory on the people of the city or township that they should arrange to make someone from among themselves an 'Ālim. If that is also not possible, they should invite one from outside, keep him in their city so that they can know, understand and act according to the *fatwā* of this scholar, specially when the need is acute and the problems are delicate. Therefore, given below are details of Farḍ al-'Ain and Farḍ al-Kifāyah as they relate to the *'ilm* of *dīn* (knowledge of religion):

Farḍ al-'Ain: Individual Obligation

It is obligatory on every Muslim, man and woman, to acquire the knowledge of:

1. Islām's correct and authentic 'Aqā'id (beliefs).

2. Rules of Ṭahārah (purity) and Najāsah (impurity).

3. Ṣalāh (prayers), Ṣawm (fasting) and all 'Ibadāt made *farḍ* (obligatory) or wājib (necessary) by the Sharī'ah.

4. Things declared to be *ḥarām* (unlawful) or *makrūh* (reprehensible or repugnant).

5. The rulings and injunctions of Zakāh (prescribed alms) on the part of one who owns property or wealth above the fixed *niṣāb* or threshold.

6. The rulings and injunctions of Ḥajj on the part of one who has the capability of performing Ḥajj, for it is an individual obligation on him or her.

7. The rulings and injunctions of sale and lease (*bai'* and *ijārah*) on the part of one who has to buy and sell or run a business or industry or work on wages or salary, for it is his individual obligation to do that.

8. The rulings and injunctions of *nikāh* (marriage) when getting married – and of *ṭalāq* (divorce) as well.

In brief, there are things the Sharī'ah of Islām has made obligatory

or necessary on everyone. Acquiring the knowledge of the rules relating to these is also obligatory on every Muslim, man and woman.

Knowing about Spiritual Purification is also an Individual Obligation (Farḍ al-'Ain)

Everyone knows that the knowledge of the imperatives relating to one's outward acts like Ṣalāh and Ṣawm is Farḍ al-'Ain. However, Qāḍī Thanāullah Pānīpatī, the author of Tafsīr Maẓharī has written under his commentary on this verse that it is also *farḍ al-'ain* to acquire the knowledge of the imperatives and prohibition pertaining to one's inner acts and qualities. This kind of knowledge is usually called the science of *Taṣawwuf*. Since these imperatives fall under the category of *farḍ al-'ain*, their knowledge too is *farḍ al-'ain*.

But, the field of knowledge called Taṣawwuf in our time has, become a potpourri of many fields of knowledge and insights, illuminations and sense experiences. What is meant by Farḍ al-'Ain at this place is nothing but that part of it which deals with the obligatory injunctions pertaining to one's inner acts and qualities. For instance, there is the matter of true, correct and authentic 'Aqā'id (beliefs). These relate to man's inward state. Or, take the case of spiritual virtues like *ṣabr* (patience), *shukr* (gratitude), *tawakkul* (trust), *qanā'ah* (satisfaction with the available) and similar others. These are obligatory (*farḍ*) in a particular degree. Or take the case of spiritual vices like pride and arrogance, malice and rancor, miserliness and greed for the material and similar others. These are *ḥarām* (forbidden) on the authority of the Qur'ān, and Sunnah. So, it is also obligatory (*farḍ*) on every Muslim, man and woman, that he and she must find out the reality behind these and learn the methods of acquiring virtues and avoiding what has been forbidden. (Irrespective of the claims made in the field of Taṣawwuf or in its counter-Islāmic versions of mysticism and its many derivations) the sole basis of Taṣawwuf is no more than what is Farḍ 'Ain (under Islāmic Law).

Farḍ al-Kifāyah

To comprehend why the *'Ilm* of *Dīn* (the full knowledge of religion) has been made Farḍ al-Kifāyah, it will be useful to glance through what it entails. For your convenience, the integrated whole appears in three parts as follows:

1. To understand the meanings and rulings of the entire Qur'ān,

2. To understand all Āḥadīth and to master the ability to sift and recognize the trustworthy from the untrustworthy,

3. To acquire a complete knowledge of all injunctions and rulings deduced from the Qur'ān, and Sunnah and a full awareness of the views of the Ṣaḥābah, the Tābi'īn and the Mujtahid Imāms, expressed by them orally or practically.

Knowing all this is a monumental task which is not easy even after one devotes. Therefore, the Sharī'ah of Islām has declared this field of knowledge to be Farḍ al-Kifāyah, that is, if some people acquire all this knowledge to the extent of its need in community life, rest of Muslims shall stand absolved.

The curriculum of the 'Ilm of Dīn

At this place, the Holy Qur'ān has used one single word to tell us about the essence of the knowledge or science of religion, and its curriculum as well. If the text had chosen to say something like: لِيَتَعَلَّمُوا الدِّيْنَ (that is, so that they acquire the knowledge of religion), it would have obviously suited the occasion. But, at this place, the Holy Qur'ān has bypassed the word: تعلم (*ta'allum*: learning) and elected to go by the word: تفقہ (*tafaqquh*: understanding). This gives a clear indication that a simple reading of the *'ilm* of *dīn* is not enough. This is something many disbelievers, Jews and Christians also do. Then, Shayṭān is supposed to have it all, more than anyone. The fact of the matter is that the *'ilm* of *dīn* means 'to create an understanding of religion.' This is the exact translation of the word: تفقہ (*tafaqquh*) in the verse. A derivation from: فقہ (*fiqh*), which essentially means understanding and comprehension. At this point, it is worth noticing that the Holy Qur'ān has not even said: لِيَفْقَهُوا الدِّيْنَ (*liyafqahud-dīn*: so that they understand the religion) by employing the verb from the simple (bare, denuded) form. Instead, the Qur'ān has said: لِيَتَفَقَّهُوْا فِى الدِّيْنِ (*liyatafaqqahū fī 'd-dīn*: so that they may acquire a perfect understanding of the Faith). Being from '*bāb al tafa"ul* (باب تفعل), it has the added sense of exertion and striving in its pursuit. Thus, the drive of the meaning is that they should, while trying to create a perfect understanding of religion, acquire the maximum possible expertise through continuous striving, hard work and endurance. Then, it is also evident that the kind of understanding of religion we are talking about does not materialize by finding out the problems and solutions concerning purity, impurity, prayers, fasting,

Zakāh and Ḥajj. In fact, the understanding of religion means that one understands that he or she will have to account for every word, deed, movement and rest in the Hereafter, and that how should he or she live in this world (in view of that). The perfect understanding of religion is really the name of this concern. Therefore, Imām Abū Ḥanīfah defines *fiqh* (understanding) by saying, 'that one understands everything the doing of which is necessary for him or her, and also understands everything abstaining from which is necessary for him or her.' As for the current definition of 'Ilmu 'l-Fiqh as a religious science that deals with its subsidiary problems and rulings, it is a later day terminology. The reality of Fiqh as it appears in Qur'ān and Sunnah is no more than what the great Imām has stated: 'a person who has read through all books of religion but did not acquire this understanding is not an 'Ālim in the terminology of Qur'ān and Sunnah.' So, the gist of the investigation made here tells us that, in the terminology of the Qur'ān, the sense of acquiring the knowledge of religion is to acquire its understanding, regardless of sources employed in such acquisition. These may be books or the company of teachers. They all form part of the curriculum.

The essential duty of an 'Ālim after he acquires the knowledge of Dīn

This too the Holy Qur'ān has put in one single sentence: لِيُنْذِرُوْا قَوْمَهُمْ : "so that they may warn their people (against the disobedience of Allah)." At this place as well, it is worth attention that the sentence has identified 'the warning of a people' as a duty of the 'Ālim. The Arabic word: انذار (*indhār*) is usually translated into English as warning in the sense of putting the fear of something into someone, though it still does not convey the ultimate sense in full. The truth of the matter is that such warning or putting the fear of what must be avoided can take many forms. For instance, one may warn against an enemy, thief, robber or some beast or poisonous creeper. Then, there is the kind of warning a father would give, out of his affection and concern for his children, against things that hurt, like the fire, poisonous insects and unhealthy food. This is based on love, and on the desire to protect which has a special tone and temper, totally different from the former. Indhār is the name of warning given in that manner and with that motive. Therefore, prophets and messengers of Allah have been given the title of نذیر (*nadhīr*: warner) and this duty of warning people assigned to

the 'Alim is really nothing but a part of the legacy left by prophets which, according to the binding authority of Ḥadīth, the 'Ālim inherits.

At this point, we may also wish to consider that the blessed prophets are known by two appellations: Bashīr and Nadhīr. You already know the meaning of *nadhīr* (warner) from the preceding discussion. Bashīr means one who gives *bashārah*, that is, good news or glad tidings. It is a part of the mission of blessed prophets that they give glad tidings to those who act righteously. Though, at this place too, what has been mentioned is Indhār or warning explicitly, yet, other textual imperatives show that it is also the duty of an 'Ālim that he should give good news of rewards too for those who do good deeds. Now that the mention of *indhār* (warning) has been considered sufficient at this place has its reason. Actually, it indicates that man is charged with two things. One: that he elects to do what is beneficial for him in this world and in the world to come. Two: that he avoids doing things likely to bring harm to him. People of learning and people of wisdom both agree that the later of the two has the higher priority. In the terminology of Muslim jurists, this is known as 'bringing benefit' and 'repelling harm' and the latter has been given precedence to the former. In addition to that, when harm is repelled, it serves the purpose of bringing benefit in its own way, because if someone abandons what is beneficial and necessary for him, it brings harm. Given this situation, whoever makes the effort to stay safe from the harmful effects of bad deeds will also make the effort to stay away from leaving off what one must do necessarily.

From here we also learn the main reason why religious sermons and acts of *da'wah* generally remain ineffective in our time. We have seen a glimpse of the cardinal etiquette of *indhār* or warning, as given above. Contemporary sermons and acts of *da'wah* seem to miss the manners, something that would exude care, concern, attachment, mercy and the earnest wish to give out what is really good for the listeners, not only in words but through the style of address and the empathy of tone and diction as well. It would be wonderful if the addressee comes to believe that the things the speaker is saying do not aim at disgracing him or settling scores against him, in fact, this person is telling me what he thinks is good and beneficial for me just out of love. If the *tablīgh* we do today or the *da'wah* we carry to correct people who

violate commandments of the Sharī'ah were to adopt this pattern of behavior, it is absolutely certain that it will bring forth at least one immediate response: the addressees will not be apprehensive, irritated, dogmatic or obstinate about our submission. They would not worry about confronting us. Everyone would, rather, become attuned to himself and start sorting out his own doings and thinking about what was going to happen to him. And if this effort continues, the time is to come, sooner or later, when such a person will be even willing to accept what had been presented before him. The second outcome of this attitude is that it will not, at least, generate mutual hatred and altercation, something which holds contemporary Muslims in its grips.

In the end, by saying: لَعَلَّهُمْ يَحْذَرُوْنَ (that they may be cautious), it was also indicated that the duty of an 'Ālim was not simply limited to putting the fear of Allah's punishment in the hearts of people. Instead, he also has to watch and assess the extent and measure of the effect generated by his *tablīgh* and *da'wah*. May be it did not work the first time. If so, let him do it again and again, until he sees its result: "يَحْذَرُوْنَ" with his own eyes, which means that his people have become cautious and have started staying away from sins. Allah knows best.

Verses 123 – 127

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا قَاتِلُوا الَّذِيْنَ يَلُوْنَكُمْ مِّنَ الْكُفَّارِ
وَلْيَجِدُوْا فِيْكُمْ غِلْظَةً ۭ وَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿١٢٣﴾
وَاِذَا مَآ اُنْزِلَتْ سُوْرَةٌ فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَّقُوْلُ اَيُّكُمْ زَادَتْهُ هٰذِهٖٓ
اِيْمَانًا ۚ فَاَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا فَزَادَتْهُمْ اِيْمَانًا وَّهُمْ يَسْتَبْشِرُوْنَ
﴿١٢٤﴾ وَاَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ فَزَادَتْهُمْ رِجْسًا اِلٰى
رِجْسِهِمْ وَمَاتُوْا وَهُمْ كٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿١٢٥﴾ اَوَلَا يَرَوْنَ اَنَّهُمْ يُفْتَنُوْنَ
فِيْ كُلِّ عَامٍ مَّرَّةً اَوْ مَرَّتَيْنِ ثُمَّ لَا يَتُوْبُوْنَ وَلَا هُمْ يَذَّكَّرُوْنَ
﴿١٢٦﴾ وَاِذَا مَآ اُنْزِلَتْ سُوْرَةٌ نَّظَرَ بَعْضُهُمْ اِلٰى بَعْضٍ ۭ هَلْ
يَرٰىكُمْ مِّنْ اَحَدٍ ثُمَّ انْصَرَفُوْا ۭ صَرَفَ اللّٰهُ قُلُوْبَهُمْ بِاَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ
لَّا يَفْقَهُوْنَ ﴿١٢٧﴾

O those who believe, fight those disbelievers who are near you, and let them find severity in you. And be sure that Allah is with the God-fearing. [123]

And when a Sūrah is sent down, some of them say, "Who among you has been increased in faith by it?" As for those who believe, they have been increased in faith by it, and they are quite happy. [124]

But those who have malady in their hearts are increased by it in impurity in addition to their own impurity, and they die infidels. [125]

Do they not see that they are put to trial every year once or twice, still they do not repent, nor do they take lesson? [126]

And when a Sūrah is sent down, they look at each other (as if saying): "Is there someone watching you?" Then they slip off. Allah has turned their hearts, because they are a people who do not understand. [127]

Commentary

Previous verses carried inducement to Jihād. The first verse from the present ones (123) which opens with the words: يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا قَاتِلُوا (O those who believe, fight those disbelievers who are near you) gives details, for disbelievers are spread out all over the world and any confrontation with them has to have some sort of functional sequence. The verse says that Jihād should first be waged against those of the disbelievers who were near. 'Being near' could be taken in terms of the place, that is, the disbelievers who live closer to home base should be fought against first. And it could also be understood in terms of relationship, that is, those who are near in kinship, parentage and other social bonds should be given precedence. This is because Islāmic Jihād is essentially carried out in their interest and for their well being, therefore, when it comes to care and concern, kinsfolk have precedence – similar to the command given to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم: وَاَنْذِرْ عَشِيْرَتَكَ الْاَقْرَبِيْنَ (And warn your near relatives against the punishment of Allah – 26:214). He carried out the command by assembling people from his family and conveyed to them the Word of Allah as revealed to him. The circle then became larger. Keeping the same principle of near and far, confronted first, as compared to others, were disbelievers who lived in the vicinity of Madīnah, such as Banū Qurayẓah, Banū Nadīr and the people of Khaibar. After that came the fight against the rest

within the Arabian Peninsula. And after things were settled there, came the last command to fight the disbelievers of Byzantium that resulted in the expedition of Tabūk.

In the second sentence of verse 123: وَلْيَجِدُوْا فِيْكُمْ غِلْظَةً (and let them find severity in you), the word: غلظة (*ghilẓah*) means severity or toughness. The sense is that the disbelievers must be confronted in a manner that would not allow them to take their adversary to be weak.

The sentence: فَزَادَتْهُمْ إِيْمَانًا (they have been increased in faith by it) in verse 124 tells us that the reciting the verses of the Qur'ān, pondering over them, and acting in accordance with their dictates makes one advance in faith. One feels changes for the better, the higher. When 'Īmān increases, so does its light and sweetness. Once in this blissful state, one starts seeing obedience to Allah and His Rasūl as easy. 'Ibādah becomes inviting. One can feel the very taste of it. Sins pose no problems, for one starts hating sins by his own nature. They tempt no more. In fact, they irritate and vex.

Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنه has said, 'when 'Īmān enters the heart, it is like a radiant dot. As 'Īmān increases, its radiance increases, until the whole heart becomes blissfully radiant. Similarly, disbelief and hypocrisy start appearing on the heart first as a black dot. Then, with every increase in sin and disbelief, the dot keeps increasing in size until the whole heart turns black.' (Maẓharī). For this reason, the noble Companions of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم used to tell each other, 'let us sit together for a while and remind each other of things relating to our *dīn* and *'ākhirah* so that it increases our 'Īmān.'

In verse 126: يُفْتَنُوْنَ فِيْ كُلِّ عَامٍ مَّرَّةً اَوْ مَرَّتَيْنِ (they are put to trial every year once or twice), hypocrites have been warned about their incorrigible hypocrisy and constant breach of trust which brought all sorts of troubles for them every year once or twice. They saw the defeat of their disbelieving accomplices, the *kuffār* of Makkah. Then, they had to face the disgrace brought upon them when their hypocrisy was exposed. So, there was no dearth of warning signals for them. Incidentally, the count of 'once' or 'twice' here does not signify the numbers one and two as such. In fact, the purpose is to stress that this chain of action and reaction keeps moving all the time yet they take no lesson from what happens to them.

Verses 128 - 129

لَقَدْ جَآءَكُمْ رَسُوْلٌ مِّنْ اَنْفُسِكُمْ عَزِيْزٌ عَلَيْهِ مَا عَنِتُّمْ حَرِيْصٌ عَلَيْكُمْ بِالْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ رَءُوْفٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿١٢٨﴾ فَاِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَقُلْ حَسْبِيَ اللّٰهُ ﱘ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ؕ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَهُوَ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيْمِ ﴿١٢٩﴾

Surely, there has come to you a Messenger from amongst you, hard on whom is your suffering, for the good of you he craves and for believers he is kind, merciful. [128]

So, if they turn away, say, "Enough for me is Allah. There is no god but He. In Him I have placed my trust, and He is the Lord of the Great Throne." [129]

Commentary

These are the last verses of Sūrah Al-Taubah where it has been declared that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم is very kind and merciful for the entire creation of Allah, particularly so for Muslims. Then, in the last verse, he has been told that he should observe patience and trust Allah even if there are people who do not come to believe despite all his efforts.

That this theme appears at the end of Sūrah Al-Taubah happens to be very appropriate. It will be recalled that this Sūrah has been full of references to the declaration of withdrawal from the disbelievers, the ultimate severance of relationship with them and then fighting in Jihād against them. This is, however, the last resort of the Call to Allah subject to the condition that the initial steps of Da'wah (call) and Tablīgh (communication of the Message) leave no hope of correction and betterment. But, the basic function of the prophets is to invite people to the way of Allah with love, affection, sympathy and an earnest desire for their well-being; if they have to face aversion from the people or have to suffer some hardships, they are supposed to leave it to Allah and place their trust in Him, for He is the Lord of the Great Throne. By saying the Rabb or Lord of the Great 'Arsh, the purpose is to lay stress on the fact that He encompasses the entire creation.

The last two verses, according to Sayyidnā 'Ubaiyy ibn Ka'b رضی اللہ

عنه, are the last verses of the Qur'ān. After these no other verse was revealed and the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم left the mortal world. This is also the statement of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه . (Qurṭubī)

Great merits of these two verses appear in Ḥadīth. Sayyidnā Abū-d-Dardā' رضى الله عنه says, 'One who recites these verses three times, morning and evening, shall find that Allah Ta'ālā makes things easy for him (Qurṭubī)' Allah knows best.

The Commentary

On

Sūrah Al-Taubah

Ends here.

Sūrah Yūnus

(Jonah)

Sūrah Yūnus is Makkī and it has 109 Verses and 11 Sections

Verses 1 – 4

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

With the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the All Merciful

الٓرٰ ۚ تِلْكَ اٰيٰتُ الْكِتٰبِ الْحَكِيْمِ ﴿۱﴾ اَكَانَ لِلنَّاسِ عَجَبًا اَنْ
اَوْحَيْنَآ اِلٰى رَجُلٍ مِّنْهُمْ اَنْ اَنْذِرِ النَّاسَ وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اَنَّ
لَهُمْ قَدَمَ صِدْقٍ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ ؕ قَالَ الْكٰفِرُوْنَ اِنَّ هٰذَا لَسِحْرٌ مُّبِيْنٌ
﴿۲﴾ اِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الْاَرْضَ فِيْ سِتَّةِ
اَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوٰى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ يُدَبِّرُ الْاَمْرَ ؕ مَا مِنْ شَفِيْعٍ اِلَّا مِنْۢ
بَعْدِ اِذْنِهٖ ؕ ذٰلِكُمُ اللّٰهُ رَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوْهُ ؕ اَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿۳﴾ اِلَيْهِ
مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيْعًا ؕ وَعْدَ اللّٰهِ حَقًّا ؕ اِنَّهٗ يَبْدَؤُا الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيْدُهٗ
لِيَجْزِيَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ بِالْقِسْطِ ؕ وَالَّذِيْنَ
كَفَرُوْا لَهُمْ شَرَابٌ مِّنْ حَمِيْمٍ وَّعَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌۢ بِمَا كَانُوْا
يَكْفُرُوْنَ ﴿۴﴾

Alif, Lām, Rā. **These are verses of the Wise Book.** [1] **Is it surprising for people that We have revealed to a man from among them (saying): "Warn the people and give happy news to those who believe that they will have a perfect place with their Lord."? The disbelievers said, "Surely, he is an open sorcerer."** [2]

Surely, your Lord is Allah, who created the heavens and the earth in six days, then He took a straight position on the Throne. He manages all matters. There is no intercessor except after His permission. That is Allah, your Lord. So, worship Him. Would you still pay no heed? [3]

Towards Him is the return of you all – a real promise from Allah. Surely, He originates the creation, then He will bring it again so that He may reward those who believe and do good deeds, with justice. As for those who disbelieve, for them there is a drink of boiling water and a painful punishment because they used to disbelieve. [4]

Commentary

Sūrah Yūnus is among the Makkī Sūrahs. Three of its verses revealed after the Hijrah to Madīnah have been called Madanī.

In this Sūrah too, the proof of the basic objectives of Qur'ān, and Islam, such as the Oneness of Allah, the mission of His Messenger and the inevitability of the Hereafter, has been provided. Since it has been presented in the background of the universe of our experience and observation, it becomes easy to comprehend. Along with it, some lesson-oriented historical accounts and stories have been introduced to warn people who do not pay heed to the open signs of Allah Ta'ālā. As a corollary, the text refutes *shirk* whereby heedless people start ascribing partners to the pristine divinity of Allah – and also answers some related doubts. This is a gist of the subjects taken up in the Sūrah. A careful look at these will help us understand the interconnection between the previous Sūrah, Al-Taubah, and the present one. Sūrah Al-Taubah was making a strong statement when it opted for breaking through the powerful cordon of *kufr* and *shirk* to achieve the same objectives through material means by waging Jihād against deniers and disbelievers. And since the present Sūrah was revealed in Makkah before the injunctions of Jihād came, these objectives have been explained and proved only by arguments and evidences very much in accordance with the law of the Makkan period.

The Sūrah opens with the letters: Alif, Lām, Rā (الر). Known as 'isolated letters.' Many Sūrahs of the Qur'ān begin with these. Debates on investigations made into the meaning of letter combinations like الم

(*Alif, Lām, Mīm*), حٰمٓ (*Hā, Mīm*) and عٓسٓقٓ (*'Ain, Sīn, Qāf*) by commentators are lengthy. But, we also have the authentic verdict of the Ṣaḥābah, the Tābi'īn and the righteous elders of the community (*salaf*) about these 'isolated letters.' According to them, these are secret symbols or signs. In all likelihood, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was confided with their meaning but he elected to disclose to his community only those areas of knowledge and insight which their minds could bear by and which, if remained unknown, would impede the normal living of his people. Nothing that Muslims must do is dependent upon knowing the secrets of such 'isolated letters,' nor do they have to miss anything by not knowing them. Therefore, the Holy Prophet ﷺ too did not tell his community about their meaning as being unnecessary for them. Therefore, we too should not go about digging into it – because, it is certain that had the knowing of their meaning been expedient for us, our master, who was mercy personified for the whole world ﷺ, would have never hesitated in telling us about it.

In the first verse: تِلْكَ اٰيٰتُ الْكِتٰبِ الْحَكِيْمِ (These are verses of the Wise Book), the word: تِلْكَ (*tilka*: these) points out to the '*āyāt* of this Sūrah which follow. 'The Book' refers to the Qur'ān. To describe its attribute, the Qur'ān has used the word: حَكِيْم (*ḥakīm*) at this place. It means the Book of Wisdom.

The second verse refers to a doubt expressed by the Mushriks, and provides its answer. In a nutshell, these people had, out of their ignorance, somehow decided that a Messenger or Prophet who comes from Allah Ta'ālā should not be a human being (*al-bashar*), instead, he should be an angel. The Qur'ān has refuted this absurd idea of theirs on several occasions from different angles. In one such verse, it was said: قُلْ لَّوْ كَانَ فِى الْاَرْضِ مَلٰٓئِكَةٌ يَّمْشُوْنَ مُطْمَئِنِّيْنَ لَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ مَلَكًا رَّسُوْلًا (Say, "Had there been angels walking in peace on the Earth, We would have certainly sent to them from the heavens an angel–messenger!" – 17:95). In sum, the mission of a messenger cannot be accomplished unless there is a mutual homogeneity between this messenger and those to whom he is sent. Angels are homogenous to angels and human beings to human beings. If the purpose is to send a messenger for human beings, only a human being has to be made a messenger.

The same subject has been taken up in this verse in a different manner. The text sees no reason why would people wonder that a hu-

man being was made a messenger? Why was a human being entrusted with the mission of warning the disobedient ones against the punishment of Allah? Why was the task of heralding the good news of His rewards to the obedient ones assigned again to a human being? This kind of wondering deserves a counter-wonder, for sending a human messenger to the human race is perfect commonsense.

Good news to believers has been given in this verse by saying: أَنَّ لَهُمْ قَدَمَ صِدْقٍ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ (that they will have a perfect place with their Lord). The initial meaning of the word: قدم (*qadam*) used here is 'step' as in English. Since '*qadam*' is the medium of a person's effort, and advancement in its wake, therefore, a higher rank is called a '*qadam*' in a figurative sense. Then, by attributing '*qadam*' (high rank, place of honor) to صدق '*ṣidq*' (perfect as being true, certain, abiding, everlasting), it was emphasized that the high rank they were to get was real, certain, established, abiding and everlasting. This was not something like the ranks and offices of the mortal world. To begin with, it is never certain that one would get these at all. If, as a result of some extra effort, one does get one of these, their continuity cannot be certain. In fact, what is certain is that these will vanish in time. Sometimes, this could happen within one's lifetime. But, when comes the time to die, one goes empty-handed. All ranks, offices, blessings remain behind. So, the word: صدق (*ṣidq*) includes the sense of certainty, and also that of being perfect and everlasting in it. Therefore, the sentence means: O Prophet, give believers the good news that they will have a perfect place with their Lord, an asset that is certain and lasting.

Some commentators have said: Through the introduction of the word *ṣidq* at this place, an indication has been given that these high ranks can be achieved only through truth and absolute sincerity. Mere verbal claims of having faith and a formal recital of the *Kalimah* of '*Īmān* is not enough, until one embraces the faith, truly and duly, verbally and emotionally and intellectually. It will invariably result in adherence to good deeds and avoidance of the evil ones.

In the third verse, the Oneness of Allah (*Tauḥīd*) has been proved through the undeniable reality that there is no associate or partner to Allah Ta'ālā when it comes to the creation of the heavens and the earth and then to the management and operation of this entire universal system. When this reality stands established, how could someone

else be made an associate or partner in His pristine Divinity or in worship for Him and in obedience to Him? In fact, doing so is the highest conceivable injustice.

It was said in this verse that Allah Taʻālā has created the heavens and the earth in six days. But, the day as we know it denotes the time from sunrise to sunset – and it is obvious that the sun did not exist before the creation of the heavens, earth and stars. How then could sunrise and sunset be calculated? Therefore, intended here is the measure of time utilized in between sunrise and sunset.

Making this huge world composed of the heavens, the Earth, the planets and the universe as a whole, ready and functional (a virtual turn-key job, so to say), can only be attributed to the Being who is the purest of the pure and exercises power that is absolute. When He intends to create, He needs no raw materials in advance or any staff to assist. Such is the station and degree of His perfect power that He, as and when He intends to create what He wills, creates instantly, without any raw materials or personnel or technical support. The time duration of these six days has only been chosen in consideration of His particular wisdom. Otherwise, it was also within His power that He could have created the heavens and the Earth and what it contained in a single instant.

After that it was said: ثُمَّ اسْتَوٰى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ (then He took a straight position on the Throne). That which stands proved from the Qur'ān, and Ḥadīth is that the *'Arsh* (Throne) of the *Raḥmān* (the All-Merciful Allah) is some created object which encompasses the entire heavens and the Earth and the whole universe thereof. Thus, seen conversely, all that there is fits into the room inside it. Knowing anymore about its reality is beyond any human effort. No doubt, scientific knowledge in our time is at its zenith. Man is getting ready to reach planets comparatively nearer with mixed measures of success. However, scientists still confess that the distant planets are so far away from us that information about these through available instrumentation cannot be relied upon as a mirror of reality. Then, there are stars in the firmament even light from where has not yet reached our Earth – even though, as we know, the speed of light is 1, 86, 000 miles per second. When this is the graph of human limitations in scaling planets and stars, how could human efforts to find out what we know as the heav-

ens farther and higher from stars and planets be taken as credible (or even reasonable). And finally, what is believed to be the *'Arsh* of the *Raḥmān* - encompassing all there is, even above what is termed as the seventh heaven - is a reality seeking access to which through technical ingenuity needs no comment.

So, up to this point, the third verse has told us that Allah Ta'ālā created the heavens and the earth and the whole system of the universe in six days, and 'after that He took a position on the Throne'. (The last sentence is a word arrangement in English for the words of the text: ثُمَّ اسْتَوٰى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ [*thumma 's-tawā 'ala 'l-'arsh*] which should be understood in the light of the comments appearing below).

This is certain, and evident enough that Allah, the high and the true, is above and beyond the human concepts of body and mass and of all attributes and characteristics they may have. Neither does His existence relate to any direction or form, nor is His stay in a place like the staying of the things of the world where they belong. Now then, how are we to explain the nature, mode or manner of His staying, establishing or positioning on the *'Arsh* or Throne? This can be explained only by saying that these are from what is called *'mutashābihāt'* (statements of hidden meaning) in the terminology of Qur'ān, a phenomena that cannot be comprehended by human reason. Therefore, about it, says the Qur'ān: وَمَا يَعْلَمُ تَاْوِيْلَهٗٓ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ وَالرّٰسِخُوْنَ فِى الْعِلْمِ يَقُوْلُوْنَ اٰمَنَّا بِهٖ (no one knows its interpretation except Allah. And those [who are] well-grounded in knowledge say: "We believe therein; - 3: 7) – and just do not bother to go digging out its reality. Therefore, there is a standard approach in all such matters where the attribution of Allah Ta'ālā has been made to a place or form, or where words, such as hand, face and shank, have appeared in the Qur'ān for Allah Ta'ālā. The *'Aqīdah* (belief) of the majority of the *'Ulamā* of the Muslim *Ummah* is that one believes these words to be true in their place, and believes what Allah Ta'ālā means by them is correct, and believes that the concern to know about its nature and reality should be set aside as being beyond one's ability to comprehend it.

As for the later day 'Ulamā who have suggested some meanings to these things, they have done it only in a degree of probability, even in their own sight. They simply suggest – perhaps, it may mean this. They never say that the meanings they have given are certain. As ob-

vious, probabilities disclose no reality. Therefore, the only simple and straight creed (*maslak*) is that of the *Ṣaḥābah* (Companions), the *Tābi'īn* (Successors to Companions) and the *Salaf* (the righteous and worthy forebears and elders of the Faith). They were satisfied to live with the approach of entrusting the reality of such matters with Divine Knowledge.

This brings us to the next statement: يُدَبِّرُ الْاَمْرَ (He manages all matters). It means that, positioned on the Throne, He Himself manages all universes by virtue of His power. Then, comes the succeeding sentence: مَا مِنْ شَفِيْعٍ اِلَّا مِنْۢ بَعْدِ اِذْنِهٖ translated as: 'There is no intercessor except after His permission.' It tells us that such is the majesty of Allah Ta'ālā that even a Prophet and Messenger cannot intercede on behalf of anyone, on their own, before Him – unless Allah Ta'ālā Himself grants them the permission to intercede, without which even they could not do that.

The fourth verse describes the '*Aqīdah* of '*Ākhirah* (Belief in the Hereafter): اِلَيْهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيْعًا (Towards Him is the return of you all). The announcement is asserted by saying: وَعْدَ اللّٰهِ حَقًّا (a real [and true] promise from Allah). That it must be as promised has been explained through the simple logic of: اِنَّهٗ يَبْدَؤُا الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيْدُهٗ (Surely, He originates the creation, then He will bring it again). The sentence is telling us that there is nothing surprising about it and that there is no sense in worrying about as to how this entire universe would start pulsating with life after it has been eliminated. The reason is that the Sacred Power who has the mastery to create something the first time, without any pre-existing matter and without any prototype of form and shape, should hardly find any difficulty in creating once again everything He had made then unmade.

Verses 5 – 6

هُوَالَّذِىْ جَعَلَ الشَّمْسَ ضِيَآءً وَّالْقَمَرَ نُوْرًا وَّقَدَّرَهٗ مَنَازِلَ لِتَعْلَمُوْا عَدَدَ السِّنِيْنَ وَالْحِسَابَ ۭ مَا خَلَقَ اللّٰهُ ذٰلِكَ اِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ ۚ يُفَصِّلُ الْاٰيٰتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَّعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۵﴾ اِنَّ فِى اخْتِلَافِ الَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَمَا خَلَقَ اللّٰهُ فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ

يَتَّقُونَ ﴿٦﴾

He is the One who has made the sun a glow and the moon a light, and determined for it stages, so that you may know the number of the years, and the calculation (of time). Allah has not created all this but for something right. He elaborates the signs for a people who understand. [5]

Surely, in the alternation of night and day and in what Allah has created in the heavens and the earth, there are signs for a people who are God-fearing. [6]

Commentary

These two verses mention some signs openly visible in the universe of our experience. They are evidences of the perfect power and eloquent wisdom of the most exalted Allah. They prove that the Lord Almighty is fully capable of bringing about the end of this universe, reducing it to particles, then reassembling the particles and bringing everything back to life, all anew, making everyone account for one's deeds and get punishment or reward as enforced. And when He does that, it will be nothing but reasonable and wise. Thus, these two verses are an extension of what was said briefly in verse 3. Mentioned there was the creation of the heavens and the earth in six days, the positioning on the Throne and the management of matters. The later proved that He did not, after having created the universe, abandon it to survive on its own, instead, He manages, directs and controls everything, all the time, every moment.

The opening statement of verse 5: هُوَالَّذِیْ جَعَلَ الشَّمْسَ ضِيَآءً وَّالْقَمَرَ نُوْرًا (He is the One who has made the sun a glow and the moon a light) is a part of this very system and its management. Both words: ضیاء (*ḍiyā'*) and نور (*nūr*) mean glow and light, therefore, many master lexicographers have taken these as synonyms. 'Allamah al-Zamakhshari, al-Ṭībī, beside some others, said: Though the sense of light is common to both words, but *nūr* is general. Whether strong or weak, dim or clear, every light is referred to as *nūr*, while ضوء و ضياء (*ḍaw'* and *ḍiyā'*) refer to light that is strong and clear. One needs both kinds of light. For the usual business of life, the sharp and clear light of the day is required, while the comparatively dim light of the night is preferred for ordinary chores. If the day had nothing but the pale light of the moon, business will be affect-

ed adversely, and if the sun were to keep shining also during the night, sleep and chores that must be taken care of at that time alone would be disturbed. Therefore, nature made arrangements to provide both kinds of light by giving sunlight the degree of *ḍaw'* and *ḍiyā'* and let it manifest itself at the time when people are busy in business, vocation or other avenues of livelihood. And the moonlight was made to be gentle, pale and pleasing and the night was appointed to be the time of its manifestation.

The Holy Qur'ān has differentiated the lights of the sun and the moon variously at several places. In Sūrah Nūḥ, it was said: وَجَعَلَ الْقَمَرَ فِيهِنَّ نُورًا وَّجَعَلَ الشَّمْسَ سِرَاجًا (And made the moon a light therein and made the sun, a lamp – 71:16). Again, in Sūrah al-Furqān, it was said: وَّجَعَلَ فِيهَا سِرَاجًا وَّقَمَرًا مُّنِيرًا (and placed in it [the sky] a lamp, and a shining moon – 25:61). '*Sirāj*' means lamp and since the light from a lamp is its own and not borrowed from somewhere else, therefore, some commentators have said that ضياء (*ḍiyā'*) is the intrinsic light of something while نور (*nūr*) is extrinsic light derived from something else. This semantic approach appears to be influenced by Greek thought, otherwise it has no lexical basis and the Qur'ān too has not given any categorical verdict about it.

Zajjāj takes *ḍiyā'* to be the plural of *ḍaw'*. Perhaps, this may be indicative of the Sun being a compendium of the seven colours of light which show up in the post-rain rainbow. (Al-Manār)

Another manifestation of Divine power related to the system of the sun and the moon appears in the second sentence of verse 5: وَقَدَّرَهُ مَنَازِلَ لِتَعْلَمُوا عَدَدَ السِّنِينَ وَالْحِسَابَ: 'and determined for it stages, so that you may know the number of years and the calculation (of time).' The word قدر ('*qaddara*') is a derivation from تقدير (*taqdīr*) which means to maintain something at the level of a particular quantity and measure in terms of time or place or attributes. To keep the timings of the night and the day at a particular measure, the Holy Qur'ān has said: وَاللّٰهُ يُقَدِّرُ الَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ (And Allah determines [the measure of] the night and the day – 73:20). That spatial and travel distances have been kept at a particular measure finds mention elsewhere. In Sūrah Sabā,' it was said about the habitations lying in between Syria and Sabā': وَقَدَّرْنَا فِيهَا السَّيْرَ (and We determined between them the [distance of] journey – 34:18). And about quantitative measures in general, it was said: وَخَلَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ فَقَدَّرَهُ تَقْدِيرًا (and created everything then determined a measure for it, determining pre-

cisely – Sūrah al-Furqān, 25:2).

The word: منازل (*manāzil*) in the verse under study is the plural form of منزل (*manzil*) which essentially means the place one arrives at on a journey, its stage or destination. Allah Ta'ālā has appointed specific limits for the movement of the Sun and the Moon, each of which is called *manzil* or stage. Since the Moon completes its orbit of the Earth every month, the count of its stages comes to thirty or twenty-nine. However, since the Moon is not visible at least for a day, therefore, its stages are usually known as twenty- eight. The orbit of the Sun is complete in a year and it has 360 or 365 stages. During the Arab Jāhiliyah, and by astronomers and mathematicians as well, particular names were given to these stages as borrowed from stars located in their proximity. Being above such technical nomenclatures, the Holy Qur'ān has simply referred to the distances the Sun and the Moon cover in specified number of days.

In the verse under discussion, the words: قَدَّرَهٗ مَنَازِلَ (and determined for it stages) have been used with a pronoun in the singular form – although, being referred to here are the stages of both the Sun and the Moon. Therefore, some commentators say that, no doubt, what has been mentioned here is in the singular form, but in terms of the reference to each single one, it includes both. Examples of this usage abound in the Qur'ān, and Arabic idiom.

Some other commentators have said, 'though, Allah Ta'ālā has determined stages for the Sun and the Moon both but, at this place, the purpose is to describe the stages of the Moon only. Therefore, the pronoun in قَدَّرَهٗ (*qaddarahu*: determined for it) refers back to the Moon. The reason for this specification is that one cannot find out the stages of the Sun without the help of relevant instruments and calculations. Sunrise and sunset follow the same pattern every day throughout the year. A simple observation cannot tell anybody in what stage the Sun is on a given day. This is contrary to the case of the Moon. Its states are different every day. By the end of the month, it is just not visible. By observing such changes, even uneducated people can figure out the dates. For example, let us say the date today is March 8. Now, by just looking at the Sun, nobody can tell whether it is the 8th or the 21st. The case of the Moon is different. One can find out the date even by looking at it.

In the cited verse, the purpose is to tell people that man's own interest is also tied to these great signs of Allah Taʿālā since the count of years, months and its dates can be kept through them. No doubt, this calculation can be made from the Sun and the Moon both. Years and months, both Solar and Lunar, are universally known. Then, the Qur'ān has also mentioned in Sūrah al-'Isrā' (Banī Isrā'īl):

وَجَعَلْنَا الَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ اٰيَتَيْنِ فَمَحَوْنَآ اٰيَةَ الَّيْلِ وَجَعَلْنَآ اٰيَةَ النَّهَارِ مُبْصِرَةً لِّتَبْتَغُوْا فَضْلاً مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ وَلِتَعْلَمُوْا عَدَدَ السِّنِيْنَ وَالْحِسَابَ .

> And We made the night and the day two signs. Then made the sign of the night disappear, and put the sign of the day with the light to see, so that you may seek bounty from your Lord, and that you may come to know the number of years, and the count (of time) – (17:12).

Here, 'the sign of the night' means the Moon and 'the sign of the day,' the Sun. It is only after having mentioned both that it was said that you can find out the number of years and the dates of the months from these. And in Sūrah Al-Raḥmān it was said: اَلشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ بِحُسْبَانٍ which tells us that we can calculate the date, the month and the year through the Sun and the Moon both.

But, the calculation of month and date through the Moon is based on observation and experience. On the contrary, when done through the Sun, the calculations are so complex that no one other than regular mathematicians would understand them. Therefore, after having mentioned both the Sun and the Moon in this verse, when the Qur'ān talks about having determined their stages, it elects to say: قَدَّرَهٗ (*qaddarahu*: determined for it) using the pronoun in its singular form, whereby mentioned there were the stages of the Moon only.

Since great attention is paid in the injunctions of Islam, practically in all situations, to ensure that abiding by them is easy for everyone – educated or uneducated, urbanized or rustic – therefore, reliance has usually been placed on lunar year, month and dates in its laws. Thus, it is the lunar calendar that operates in all matters of Islamic obligations and duties, such as, Ṣalāh, Ṣawm, Zakāh, ʿIddah etc.

This does not mean that using the Solar Calendar is impermissible. In fact, one can choose to use the Lunar Calendar in the case of Ṣalāh, Ṣawm, Ḥajj, Zakāh and ʿIddah in accordance with the Sharīʿah, but

use the Solar Calendar in commercial and vocational activities. However, this is subject to the condition that the Lunar Calendar must continue to be in use among Muslims on a collective basis, so that the occasions and timings of religious obligations such as Ramaḍān and Ḥajj are in common knowledge at all times. This is to avoid the terrible situation in which Muslims just know no other months but January, February etc. Muslim jurists, may the mercy of Allah be on them, have placed the responsibility of keeping the Lunar Calendar alive and functional on Muslims as *Farḍ al-Kifāyah* (collective obligation).

And there is no doubt about it that the Calendar used in the Tradition of the blessed prophets and in the Sunnah of the Last among them, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, and in the practice of his rightly-guided *Khulafā'* was no other but this very Lunar Calendar. Using it, following in their footsteps, is certainly an effective cause of blessings and rewards for modern day Muslims as well.

In short, the verse points out to the perfect power and wisdom of Allah who created two inexhaustible treasure troves of light so harmoniously synchronized with the rest of the creation. And then, He determined ideal measures of their movement which help us find the time frame we are in, the year, the month, the day and its hours right up to every second. Neither does their movement vary, nor do they go ahead or remain behind, nor do these God-made marvels of what we call machines need any workshop appointments for repairs, nor greasing, nor replacement of worn-out parts. Someone in eternity had asked them to move and be good. This they are doing even today.

For added warning, it was said at the end of the verse (5): مَا خَلَقَ اللّٰهُ ذٰلِكَ اِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ يُفَصِّلُ الْاٰيٰتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَّعْلَمُوْنَ (Allah has not created all this but for something right. He elaborates the signs for a people who understand). It means that Allah did not create all these things in vain. There is great wisdom behind it, and certainly numerous are the benefits they bring for human beings. These are elaborated signs. They are loud and clear. They are telling the truth to people who are blessed with reason and insight.

Similarly, it was said in the second verse (6) that there are signs in the coming of the night after the day and the day after the night, and in everything Allah has created in the heavens and the earth. These are open proofs (of the Oneness of Allah and the inevitability of the

Hereafter) for those who fear Allah.

That they are proofs of the Oneness of Allah (*Tauḥīd*) is not difficult to see. He has the power to make things happen. He makes things as no one can. He creates everything without the help of materials, personnel and prototype, and has the mastery to operate them under a system that never breaks or must be replaced.

And they are proofs of the 'Ākhirah (Hereafter) because Allah is a great creator. He created, in His infinite wisdom, objects of such proportion and efficiency for the benefit of human beings. Then, He made them follow a remarkably stable system. Now, it is not possible that He would have created human beings, who are the served ones in this universe, just for nothing, or just to eat and drink, or in some other nonchalant manner without assigning any duties to them. When it stands settled that some restrictions must apply to the served one of this universe, it also becomes necessary that those who observe or do not observe these restrictions should face an accounting of what they have done, sometime, somewhere. Naturally, those who do observe these shall be rewarded and those who do not shall be punished. Then, it is also obvious that things do not work like this in the present world of our experience. Here, reward and punishment do not follow that pattern. It is quite likely that a criminal here may be living better as compared to someone God-fearing, righteous and innocent. Therefore, it is necessary to have a day for the accounting of deeds, rewards and punishments. This is what Qiyāmah (The Last Day) and 'Ākhirah (Hereafter) are.

Verses 7 – 10

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يَرْجُونَ لِقَآءَنَا وَرَضُوا بِالْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَاطْمَأَنُّوا بِهَا وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنْ اٰيٰتِنَا غٰفِلُونَ ﴿٧﴾ أُولٰٓئِكَ مَأْوٰهُمُ النَّارُ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ ﴿٨﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ اٰمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ يَهْدِيهِمْ رَبُّهُمْ بِإِيمٰنِهِمْ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهِمُ الْأَنْهٰرُ فِي جَنّٰتِ النَّعِيمِ ﴿٩﴾ دَعْوٰهُمْ فِيهَا سُبْحٰنَكَ اللّٰهُمَّ وَتَحِيَّتُهُمْ فِيهَا سَلٰمٌ وَاٰخِرُ دَعْوٰهُمْ أَنِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِينَ ﴿١٠﴾

As for those who do not believe in meeting Us and are-

happy with the life of this world and are quite satisfied with it, and those who are heedless to Our signs, [7] **they are the ones whose abode is the Fire because of what they used to earn for themselves.** [8]

As for those who believed and did good deeds, their Lord will guide them by virtue of their belief, rivers flowing beneath them in the Gardens of Bliss. [9]

Their prayer therein will be, "Pure are You, O Allah" and their greeting therein will be "Salām." And the end of their call will be, "praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds." [10]

Commentary

In the previous verses, by mentioning the heavens and the earth and the Moon and the Sun, prominent manifestations of Allah's perfect power and wisdom, the belief in the Oneness of Allah and the Hereafter was proved eloquently. The first three of the present verses tell us that, despite such open signs and evidences spread out in this universe, human beings split up in two groups. One of the two groups was of those who paid just no heed to these Divine signs, failed to recognize their creator and master and failed to recognize even themselves. It never occurred to them that they were no animal like other animals. They never discovered that their Almighty Lord had blessed them with intelligence, reason and commonsense in a degree much higher than that of the animals. Their Lord had put the entire resources of Divine creation at their doorsteps. Everything was as if commissioned to serve them. This should have made them realize that there has to be something their Lord would want them to do, some duty or obligation or charge. If that had to be the case, they would have to account for whatever they had been asked to do. And for this it would be necessary that there should be a day fixed for ultimate reckoning and recompense – known as the day of Qiyāmah or al-Ḥashr (Doomsday, Resurrection) in the terminology of the Qur'ān. But, such people did nothing like that, instead, preferred to live their lives at the level of common animals. In the first two verses, after giving the signs and marks of these people, the text mentions the punishment they would receive in the Hereafter. The first thing the text tells is that such people did not think that they would meet their Lord. They have forgotten all about the inevitability of their life in the Hereafter and have be-

come pleased and content with their worldly life alone.

Then, they are sitting there, so satisfied and so content, as if they just do not have to go anywhere else from here. This, to them, was the end of the line and this was where they have to live forever. It never occurs to them that everyone has to bid farewell to this world. This is so open a truth that no one can go about doubting it. And when going away from here is certain, then, some preparation has to be made for the place one is going to.

And then, they are continuously heedless to Allah's verses and signs. Had they pondered over the marvel of the heavens and the earth and what was created in between them and, for that matter, over what was in the their own person, they would have understood the reality behind everything and they would have thus come out of their fatal negligence.

The punishment of people whose signs have been given above is the fire of Jahannam that waits for them in the Hereafter – and this punishment is nothing but the outcome of their own deeds.

How regrettable that the signs of disbelievers and deniers pinpointed by the Qur'ān are no different as far as our own present condition as Muslims is concerned. By looking at our way of life and the pattern of our activities and thoughts, no one can come to the conclusion that we have some other concern bothering us except the concerns of this world under our noses. Yet, despite all that, we sit comfortably believing that we are Muslims, as staunch and true as they come. The hard reality is that the kind of staunch and true Muslims our worthy forbears were has become unimaginable for us. They were the ones a look at whose faces would remind one of God and transmit unmistakably that they feared someone above them and their hearts throbbed with the concern of being accountable to Him. Not to say more about these wonderful people, even the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, despite being protected from sins (*ma'ṣūm*), lived his blessed life in that state. It appears in Shamā'il al-Tirmidhī that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم looked sad and concerned fairly often.

Mentioned in the third verse (9) are those fortunate people who pondered over the signs of the most exalted Allah. Thereby, they recognized Him, believed in Him and, by acting in accordance with the

dictates of their faith, became duty-bound to say and do what was good and right (*al-a'māl aṣ-ṣāliḥah*: good deeds).

The good return and reward made due by the Holy Qur'ān for these wonderful people has been mentioned in a particular manner. It was said: أُولَٰئِكَ يَهْدِيهِمْ رَبُّهُم بِإِيمَانِهِمْ (their Lord will guide them by virtue of their belief), that is, 'take them to their destination, the Jannah [Paradise], where rivers shall be flowing in the Gardens of Bliss.'

The well known meaning of the word: هداية (*hidāyah*) used here is to tell or show the way. Then, on occasions, it is also used in the sense of taking someone all the way to the desired destination. At this place, this is the meaning intended. As for the desired destination, it means Jannah that stands clarified by the words appearing later.

It will be recalled that the punishment of the first group was the outcome of their own misdeeds. Here, similar to that, it was said about the reward of the second group (of believers), that they have been blessed with this reward by virtue of their belief. And since, belief has been bracketed with good deeds earlier, therefore, *'Imān* or belief mentioned at this place will mean belief that is supported by good deeds (*al-a'māl aṣ-ṣāliḥah*). The return for belief and good deeds is Jannah, the place of unimaginable and unparalleled bliss.

Some particular states in which the people of Jannah shall find themselves after their arrival there have been spelt out in the fourth verse (10). First of all: دَعْوَاهُمْ فِيهَا سُبْحَانَكَ اللَّهُمَّ : (their prayer therein will be, "Pure are you, O Allah"). Here, the word: دَعْوَىٰ (*da'wā*) should not be taken in its well known sense of claim, something a plaintiff does against the responding party. Instead of that, *da'wā* has been used here in the sense of *du'ā'* (prayer, supplication). It means that the *du'ā'* of the people of Jannah, after they have reached Jannah, will be in the form that they will be saying: سُبْحَانَكَ اللَّهُمَّ (Pure are You, O Allah), that is, they will be glorifying the exalted majesty of Allah (known as Tasbīḥ in the religious terminology of Islām).

This raises a question for *du'ā'*, as commonly recognized, is the act of asking for something or the seeking of what one would like to have. The words: سُبْحَانَكَ اللَّهُمَّ (*subḥānaka 'l-lāhumma*: Pure are You, O Allah) have no element of asking or seeking in them. Then, what was the basis of calling it '*du'ā'*'?

The answer is that the expression used here is there to communicate something relevant to the great occasion. Is it not that the people of Jannah will have the most comprehensive bliss which will include everything they could wish for almost automatically as they would have wished? So, there will be no asking or seeking. As a replacement of the popular mode of *du'ā*, what they would be able to say would be nothing more than the *tasbīḥ* of Allah in total submission. That too would not be something like an obligatory act of worship they used to do in their mortal lives (whether or not they enjoyed doing so). In fact, they would savor the taste of saying these words of glorification and say *subḥānaka 'l-lāhumma* on their own, gratefully delighted. In addition, reports a Qudsī Ḥadīth that Allah Ta'ālā said, 'a servant of Mine who remains busy glorifying Me all the time, so much so that he finds no time even to ask what was to be asked, then, I shall give him the best of what is asked by all those who ask, that is, take care of what he needs to be done without his having to ask for it.' If so, the expression: *subḥānaka 'l-lāhumma* that has been translated as 'Pure are You, O Allah' could also be called a *du'ā'* (prayer).

It is in terms of this sense that a Ḥadīth in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī and Muslim reports that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم used to make the following *du'ā'* when in pain or anxiety:

لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّآ اللّٰهُ الْعَظِيْمُ الْحَلِيْمُ ، لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّآ اللّٰهُ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيْمِ، لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّآ اللّٰهُ رَبُّ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَرَبُّ الْاَرْضِ وَرَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْكَرِيْمِ .

There is no god but Allah, the Great, the Forbearing; there is no god but Allah, the Lord of the Great Throne; there is no god but Allah, the Lord of the Heavens and the Lord of the Earth and the Lord of the Generous Throne.

Imām al-Ṭabarī said: The worthy forbears of the Muslim Community (*al-salaf al-ṣāliḥūn*) used to call it the prayer of pain (the *du'ā* of *karb*). Whenever in intense pain, anxiety or distress, they would recite these words and pray to Allah for relief. (Tafsīr Qurṭubī)

There is yet another Ḥadīth report carried by Imām Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Mundhir and others that the people of Jannah, when they wish to have something, will say *subḥānaka 'l-lāhumma*. Hearing this, the angels will instantly present what they wished before them – as if, the words: *subḥānaka 'l-lāhumma* will serve as a password or access code

for the people of Jannah through which they will articulate their wish, and the angels, doing their duty, will fulfill it every time. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī and Qurṭubī) From that angle , we can also call the statement: *subḥāna-ka 'l-lāhumma*, a *du'ā*.

Describing the second state of the life of the people of Jannah, it was said: تَحِيَّتُهُمْ فِيهَا سَلَٰمٌ (and their greeting therein will be "*Salām*"). In customary usage, تَحِيَّة (*taḥiyyah*) is the word used to greet someone coming in or met elsewhere, for example *ahlan wa sahlan*, as the Arabs say, or good morning, good evening, nice to see you, hello, hi as used in English with varying degrees of formality or informality. This verse tells us that the people of Jannah will be greeted with the word: *salām* from Allah Ta'ālā or from the angels. It would mean, 'good news to you that you now stand protected against everything painful or unpleasant.' This '*salām*' greeting could also be from Allah Ta'ālā Himself as in Sūrah Yā Sīn: سَلَٰمٌ قَوْلًا مِّن رَّبٍّ رَّحِيمٍ ("*Salām*" [peace], a word from a merciful Lord – 36:58). And it could also be from the angels as said elsewhere: وَالْمَلَٰٓئِكَةُ يَدْخُلُونَ عَلَيْهِم مِّن كُلِّ بَابٍ سَلَٰمٌ عَلَيْكُم : "and angels will come to them from every gate [saying] '*salāmun 'alaikum*' [may you be in peace and security] – 13:23,24." By the way, there is no contradiction in the two sayings. There could be the time when *salām* greeting comes directly from Allah Ta'ālā and there could be the time when it comes from the angels. Though, the *salām* greeting is actually a *du'ā* (prayer) in the mortal world but, once in Jannah where one would have everything one needs or wishes to have, therefore, this word will not retain its sense of prayer there, instead, will become a complement of glad tidings. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

Describing the third state of the life of the people of Jannah, it was said: وَاٰخِرُ دَعْوٰىهُمْ اَنِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ (And the end of their call will be, 'praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds').

The essential aim of the statement is to indicate that the people of Jannah, once there, will start knowing Allah Ta'ālā better. The spiritual master Shahābuddīn Suhrawardī, said, 'after having reached Jannah, the people of Jannah as a whole will be blessed with a station of knowledge and wisdom which is occupied by 'Ulamā in the mortal world. The 'Ulamā would rise to the station the prophets have here. The prophets would rise to the station occupied by Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā صلى الله عليه وسلم, the foremost among them in this world.

And he, blessings and peace on him, will occupy the highest station of nearness to Allah in Jannah. It is possible that this may be the celebrated place called 'the praised station' (*al-maqām al-maḥmūd*), a place referred to in the *du'ā'* to be recited after *adhān* where Muslims pray that their prophet may be blessed with 'the praised station,' a prayer he had himself taught them to make.

In short, the initial *du'ā* of the people of Jannah will be: سُبْحٰنَكَ اللّٰهُمَّ (*subḥānaka 'l-lāhumma*: Pure are You, O Allah) and the last *du'ā* will be: اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ (*alḥamdu li 'l-lāhi rabbi 'l-'alamīn*: praise be to Allah, Lord of the worlds). Pointed to here are two kinds of attributes of Allah Ta'ālā. One: The attributes of being the most exalted which show that He is free from and beyond any shortcoming or evil. Two: The attributes of being the noblest which show honor, greatness, magnanimity and perfection. In the last verse of Sūrah ar-Raḥmān both kinds have been named by saying: تَبٰرَكَ اسْمُ رَبِّكَ ذِي الْجَلٰلِ وَالْاِكْرَامِ (Blessed is the name of your Lord, the Possessor-par-Excellence of Majesty and Honor – 55:78). If we were to ponder a little, we will see that absolute purity of Allah Ta'ālā forms part of His attribute of Majesty. And that He deserves being praised is one of His attributes of Honor. Since the attributes of Majesty and Honor follow in that order, therefore, the people of Jannah will first recount His Majesty by saying: *subḥānaka 'l-lāhumma*: Pure are You, O Allah. Then, they will mention the words: اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ (*alḥamdu li 'l-lāhi rabbi 'l-'alamīn*: Praise be to Allah, Lord of the worlds) being a tribute to His Honor, something they are engaged in all the time.

And according to the natural order of these three states, when the people of Jannah will say *subḥānaka 'l-lāhumma*, in response to which, they will receive the greeting of *salām* from Allah Ta'ālā, as a result of which, they will say: اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ (praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds). (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

Injunctions and Rulings

Al-Qurṭubī has said in Aḥkām al-Qur'ān: According to this conduct of the people of Jannah, Sunnah in eating and drinking, and in everything else we do, is that one starts with *Bismillāh* and ends at *Alḥamdulillāh*. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, 'It is liked by Allah Ta'ālā that His servant, when he eats or drinks something, starts with

Bismillah (بِسْمِ اللهِ) and, when he is finished with it, says *Al-hamdulillah'* (اَلْحَمْدُلِلّٰه).

It is recommended (*mustaḥabb*) that a person making *du'ā* also says: وَاٰخِرُدَعْوٰنَآ اَنِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ (and our prayer at the end is that praise be to Allah, Lord of the worlds) at the end of it. Al-Qurṭubī adds to that by saying: Along with it, it is better to also recite the following last verses of Sūrah Aṣ-Ṣaffāt:

سُبْحَانَ رَبِّكَ رَبِّ الْعِزَّةِ عَمَّا يَصِفُوْنَ . وَسَلٰمٌ عَلَى الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ . وَالْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ .

Pure is your Lord, Lord of all might, above from what they ascribe to Him. And *salām* (peace and security) be on the Messengers. And praise be to Allah, Lord of the worlds – 37:180-182.

Verses 11 – 17

وَلَوْ يُعَجِّلُ اللّٰهُ لِلنَّاسِ الشَّرَّ اسْتِعْجَالَهُمْ بِالْخَيْرِ لَقُضِيَ اِلَيْهِمْ اَجَلُهُمْ ؕ فَنَذَرُ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يَرْجُوْنَ لِقَآءَنَا فِيْ طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُوْنَ ﴿۱۱﴾ وَاِذَا مَسَّ الْاِنْسَانَ الضُّرُّ دَعَانَا لِجَنْۢبِهٖٓ اَوْ قَاعِدًا اَوْ قَآئِمًا ۚ فَلَمَّا كَشَفْنَا عَنْهُ ضُرَّهٗ مَرَّ كَاَنْ لَّمْ يَدْعُنَآ اِلٰى ضُرٍّ مَّسَّهٗ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ زُيِّنَ لِلْمُسْرِفِيْنَ مَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۱۲﴾ وَلَقَدْ اَهْلَكْنَا الْقُرُوْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَمَّا ظَلَمُوْا ۙ وَجَآءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ وَمَا كَانُوْا لِيُؤْمِنُوْا ؕ كَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِى الْقَوْمَ الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ ﴿۱۳﴾ ثُمَّ جَعَلْنٰكُمْ خَلٰٓئِفَ فِى الْاَرْضِ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهِمْ لِنَنْظُرَ كَيْفَ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۱٤﴾ وَاِذَا تُتْلٰى عَلَيْهِمْ اٰيَاتُنَا بَيِّنٰتٍ ۙ قَالَ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يَرْجُوْنَ لِقَآءَنَا ائْتِ بِقُرْاٰنٍ غَيْرِ هٰذَآ اَوْ بَدِّلْهُ ؕ قُلْ مَا يَكُوْنُ لِيْٓ اَنْ اُبَدِّلَهٗ مِنْ تِلْقَآئِ نَفْسِيْ ۚ اِنْ اَتَّبِعُ اِلَّا مَا يُوْحٰٓى اِلَيَّ ۚ اِنِّيْٓ اَخَافُ اِنْ عَصَيْتُ رَبِّيْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيْمٍ ﴿۱۵﴾ قُلْ لَّوْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ مَا تَلَوْتُهٗ عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَآ اَدْرٰىكُمْ بِهٖ ۖ فَقَدْ لَبِثْتُ فِيْكُمْ عُمُرًا مِّنْ قَبْلِهٖ ؕ اَفَلَا تَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿۱٦﴾ فَمَنْ اَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرٰى عَلَى اللّٰهِ

كَذِبًا اَوْ كَذَّبَ بِاٰيٰتِهٖ ؕ اِنَّهٗ لَا يُفْلِحُ الْمُجْرِمُوْنَ ﴿۱۷﴾

And if Allah were to hasten in sending evil to the people, as they hasten in seeking good, their time would have been all over. So, We leave those, who do not believe in meeting Us, wandering blindly in their rebellion. [11]

And when hardship hits a person, he prays to Us lying or sitting or standing. Later, when We remove from him the hardship, he walks away as though he had never prayed to Us in any hardship that hit him. This is how their deeds appear beautified to the transgressors. [12]

And indeed We have destroyed generations before you when they transgressed, while their Messengers came to them with clear signs. And they were not the ones to believe. This is how We punish the guilty people. [13]

Then We made you vice-regents on the earth, so that we see how you would act. [14]

And when Our verses are recited to them in all their clarity, say those who do not believe in meeting Us, "Bring a Qur'ān other than this, or make changes in it." Say, "It is not for me to make changes in it on my own. I follow nothing but what is revealed to me. I fear, if I disobey my Lord, the punishment of a terrible day." [15]

Say, "Had Allah so willed, I would have not recited it to you, nor would He have let you know it. Then, I have lived among you for years before it. Have you, then, no sense?" [16]

So, who is more unjust than the one who coins a lie against Allah or belies His signs? The fact is that the guilty do not succeed. [17]

Commentary

The first of the seven verses cited above relates to people who deny *'Ākhirah* (Hereafter, life to come). For this reason, when they are warned against the punishment of 'Ākhirah, they mockingly say, 'if you are telling the truth, bring this punishment now' or say something like, 'why would this punishment not come soon enough?' This was like what Naḍr ibn Ḥārith had said, 'O Allah, if this thing is true, let stones rain down upon us from the heavens, or send some other severe

punishment.'

It has been answered in the same verse by saying that Allah Ta'ālā is, after all, powerful over everything. He can send the promised punishment instantly, right now. But, in His infinite wisdom and mercy, He prefers not to do so. When people like these wish to have evil and hardship sent upon them, they do not realize what they were doing. Had Allah Ta'ālā been granting their curses on themselves as soon as they wished – similar to how He would answer their positive prayers fairly often – all of them would have been destroyed to the last man.

From here we learn that it is the customary practice of Allah Ta'ālā that He would answer prayers for one's good fairly often and if, on one or the other occasion, a prayer is not answered due to some wise consideration, it would not be contrary to the general rule. But, the case of a person who, because of his ignorance, or anger, or grief, falls into the error of hurling on himself or his family a curse in the fair name of prayer is different. Similar to this is the unfortunate one who invites Divine punishment, due against those who reject the truth of a Hereafter, to fall on him, as if playing a game with God. Allah Ta'ālā does not accept these prayers promptly, instead, gives them respite so that the denier gets the time to think and abstain from his denial. Or, if the curse has been invoked because of some sudden grief, anger or desperation, then one gets the lease of time to sort out his conduct, avoid what is bad about it and try to stay away from it thereafter.

Ibn Jarīr on the authority of Qatādah and al-Bukhārī and Muslim on the authority of Mujāhid report that, at this place, the invoking of curse refers to what an angry person sometimes does when he breaks into supplicating adversely to the effect that his children, wealth or property be destroyed. Even if the person were to blurt out words of curse on these, it will stand included therein. Allah Ta'ālā, in His infinite mercy, does not hasten to answer such prayers. Imām al-Qurṭubī, on the authority of a Ḥadīth narrative, reports that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, 'I have prayed to Allah *jalla thanā'uh* imploring Him not to answer the curse invoked by a friend or relative upon another friend or relative.' Shahr ibn Ḥawshab says, 'I have read that angels appointed to take care of human needs have been instructed by Allah Ta'ālā , in His mercy, that they should not write down what His servant says in grief or anger.' (Qurṭubī)

Despite what has been said here, there are occasions when comes that moment of Divine approval in which what one is saying on the spot gets to be accepted instantly. Therefore, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, 'never pray that evil may fall on your children or things you own – lest, that time be the time the prayer is to be accepted – and the curse so invoked may stand answered (and activated) all of a sudden (causing you remorse afterwards).' This Ḥadīth on the authority of Sayyidnā Jābir رضى الله عنه appears in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim under the event of the battle of Buwāṭ.

The outcome of all these Ḥadīth reports is as follows. As obvious, the main address in the verse under reference concerns the deniers of 'Ākhirah who demanded an instant punishment. But, in view of its universality, it includes Muslims as well, who may also break into invoking a curse on themselves or on their belongings and children under some fit of grief or anger. Such is the customary practice of Allah Ta'ālā, because of His grace and compassion, that he deals with both of them in the same manner. He does not allow such invocations for curses to be actualized and implemented instantly so that the erring person gets the opportunity to think it out and rescind.

An eloquent approach has been made in the second verse (12) to convince those who denied that Allah was One (*Tauḥīd*) and that there was a life to come (*'Ākhirah*). It was said: When conditions are normal, people would find time to engage in debating the nature and existence of God and the Hereafter. They would feel free to ascribe all sorts of partners and associates to His pristine divinity and look forward to them in the hope that they would respond at their hour of need. But, as soon as some major distress overtakes them, even these very people, disappointed by the entire range of their false gods they pinned their hopes on, do nothing but call Allah for help, not simply once but repeatedly, lying, sitting, standing. They have no choice. They must invoke Him for help. However, along with this attitude, certainly terrible is their ingratitude. When Allah Ta'ālā removes their distress, they forget all about Him becoming so disconnected and indifferent to Him as if they had never called Him and never sought His help in their hour of need. This tells us that those who associate anyone or anything else with Allah Ta'ālā in His exclusive domain as the Dispenser of all that is needed by His creation do themselves get to experience the

demolition of this belief of theirs. But, because of their hostility and obstinacy, they keep glued to their false notion.

The subject of verse 12 has been emphasized from a different angle in verse 13. It has been said: Let no one miscalculate that punishment cannot come in this world just because Allah Taʻālā gives respite to those who deny and disbelieve. The history of past peoples shows that different kinds of punishments have visited them because of their contumacy and disobedience right here in this world. It is a different matter that Allah Taʻālā has promised that no mass punishment will come upon the Muslim *ummah* in consideration of the honor of Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, the foremost among prophets. But, it is in the face of this very merciful indulgence of Almighty Allah that people have become audacious enough to come forward and invite, even demand, Divine punishment. On the contrary, it is necessary to remember that indifference to Divine punishment is not proper under any condition even for them (Muslims). The reason is that the promise of not sending mass punishment upon the Muslim *ummah*, or the world as a whole, certainly stands there, but the coming of such punishment on particular individuals and nations is possible even now.

In verse 14, it was said: ثُمَّ جَعَلْنٰكُمْ خَلٰٓئِفَ فِى الْاَرْضِ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهِمْ لِنَنْظُرَ كَيْفَ تَعْمَلُوْنَ (Then We made you vice-regents on the earth, in order to see how you would act), that is, 'after the destruction of past peoples, We made you successors to them giving you the vice-regency of the earth. But, let this not give you any false idea that this vice-regency of the earth has been given to you so that you could have a good time. In fact, this honor has been bestowed on you to test you and to see how you would act – would you learn your lesson from the history of past peoples or would you lose your head drunk with power and wealth?'

This tells us that worldly power is not something to be proud of or arrogant about. This is responsibility at its toughest, a charge very heavy and very fragile to handle.

In the last three verses (15-17), there is the refutation of a false notion entertained by the deniers of 'Ākhirah and also the rejection of an inappropriate request made by them. They were a people who did not know much about God or Revelation or Prophets sent by Him. They took them to be like common human beings having nothing special about them. Think of the Holy Qur'ān, which reached the world

through the Prophet of Islām. Even this, they thought, was spoken and written by him. It was under this frame of mind that they told the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, 'as for this Qur'ān, it is against our beliefs and ideas.' These idols our forefathers have been worshipping since ever as providers of their needs are, according to the Qur'ān, totally false and ineffectual. There are things we have been using and transactions we have been making all along. The Qur'ān says that they are all unlawful. And then, the Qur'ān tells us that we have to live again after we are dead and that we have to account for everything we have done. All these things make no sense to us. We are not ready to accept them. Therefore, you do one of the two things we are asking you to do. Either you replace this one with another Qur'ān which does not have these things, or at the least, amend this very Qur'ān and expunge those (undesirable) things from there.'

Rejecting their false notion first, the Qur'ān instructs the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to tell those people that the Qur'ān was not his Word, nor could he change it on his own. He only followed what was revealed to him by Allah. If he were to make the least change in it on his own and by his choice, he would be committing a grave sin, and that he feared the punishment that falls upon those who disobey Allah, therefore, he could not do that.

Then he was asked to tell them that he did everything under Divine orders. Had it been the will of Allah Ta'ālā that this Word should not be recited to them, neither would he have recited that to them, nor would He have let them know about that. Now that it was the very will of Allah Ta'ālā that they should be made to listen to precisely that Word, who can dare make any addition or deletion therein?

After that, the fact that the Qur'ān was from Allah and that it was His Word was driven home with an open argument by saying: فَقَدْ لَبِثْتُ فِيْكُمْ عُمُرًا مِّنْ قَبْلِهٖ (Then I have lived among you for years before it). In effect, he was saying, 'just think for a moment. Is it not that, much before the revelation of the Qur'ān, I have spent a long period of forty years of my life among you? During this period, you have never heard me composing and reciting poetry or writing essays in prose. Had I been proficient in saying something like this Word of Allah, I would have naturally said at least some of it during this period of forty years. In addition to that, you have a direct experience of my character and con-

duct, particularly of my truth and honesty, during these long forty years of my life among you. You know that I have never lied then. How and why would I start lying now after all those forty years?' This clearly proves that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is true and trustworthy. Whatever there is in the Qur'ān is the Word of Allah Ta'ālā and has come from Him.

Important Note

No doubt, this argument of the Qur'ān provides a perfect proof of its veracity as the Word of Allah. But, it has also given us a standing rule of conduct in matters of common interest where we must be able to separate the genuine from the counterfeit and the true from the false. When an office or rank of responsibility has to be given to a person, it becomes necessary to assess the qualification and capability of the incumbent. To do that, the best rule is to go through the record of his past life. If the person concerned is found to be true and trustworthy, the same can be expected from him in the future as well. And if, there is no evidence to prove his honesty and truth in that person's past life, trusting him for the future just because of what he says or claims is not a wise thing to do. In our time, finding the right person for an office of responsibility has become a nightmare. All sorts of errors (of intent, background research and decision making) are being committed and errors are compounded by widespread disorders (in social and governmental institutions). The real reason why all this is happening is the abandonment of this natural principle in favor of what is customary, formal (or straight dishonest).

The last verse (17) emphasizes the subject conclusively by warning that attributing any statement to Allah Ta'ālā that was not His Word, or denying what actually was, were crimes deserving severe punishment.

Verses 18 – 20

وَيَعْبُدُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ مَالَا يَضُرُّهُمْ وَلَا يَنْفَعُهُمْ وَ يَقُوْلُوْنَ
هٰٓؤُلَآءِ شُفَعَآؤُنَا عِنْدَاللّٰهِ ؕ قُلْ اَتُنَبِّئُوْنَ اللّٰهَ بِمَا لَا يَعْلَمُ فِى
السَّمٰوٰتِ وَلَا فِى الْاَرْضِ ؕ سُبْحٰنَهٗ وَتَعٰلٰى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُوْنَ
﴿۱۸﴾ وَمَا كَانَ النَّاسُ اِلَّآ اُمَّةً وَّاحِدَةً فَاخْتَلَفُوْا ؕ وَلَوْ لَا كَلِمَةٌ

سَبَقَتْ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ لَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ فِيمَا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿١٩﴾ وَيَقُولُونَ لَوْ لَآ أُنزِلَ عَلَيْهِ اٰيَةٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّهٖ فَقُلْ إِنَّمَا الْغَيْبُ لِلّٰهِ فَانْتَظِرُوْا إِنِّيْ مَعَكُمْ مِّنَ الْمُنْتَظِرِيْنَ ﴿٢٠﴾

And they worship, besides Allah, what can neither harm them, nor benefit them, and they say, "These are our intercessors with Allah." Say, "Are you informing Allah of what He does not know to exist in the heavens or on the earth?" Pure is He, and far higher than their ascribing of partners to Him. [18]

And people were but one community; later, they differed. But for a word from your Lord that had already come, there would have come a decision between them on what they used to differ. [19]

And they say, "Why is it that no sign has been sent down to him from his Lord?" Say, "The Unseen is only for Allah. So, wait. I am waiting with you." [20]

Commentary

Disbelievers and Believers are two separate nationalities: Nationality based on race and country is absurd

The statement: كَانَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَّاحِدَةً (And people were but one community) in verse 19 means that the progeny of Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام was essentially a single community of monotheists in the earlier stages of man's presence in the world. Shirk and Kufr were unknown as such. Then came up difference in the principle of pure monotheism that divided human beings in different nations and groups of people.

How long this period of a single community of believers last? Original sources of Islāmic Tradition tell us that this situation prevailed up to the time of Sayyidnā Nūḥ (Noah). It was during his time that Shirk and Kufr showed up and he was the one who had to confront it first. (Tafsīr Maẓharī)

Then, it is also obvious that there is a long period of time between Sayyidnā Ādam and Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام, may peace be on them both. Human race had multiplied and population had spread out in the world. The presence of differences in color, ethnicity and social life styles was natural. That people had spread themselves out in different regions would have certainly generated differences on the basis of

country and homeland. Then, it is also possible that spoken languages may have become somewhat different. But, the Holy Qur'ān did not allow these natural genealogical or tribal differences or those of color and country to become impediments to the grand design of one community. In fact, it did not declare the progeny of Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام to be different nations and communities because of these differences. Instead, it gave them the status of one community.

Of course, when Kufr and Shirk spread out and posed a threat to 'Īmān or true belief, Kāfirs and Mushriks were declared to be a separate community of people as indicated in: فَاخْتَلَفُوْا (later, they differed). Another verse of the Holy Qur'ān: هُوَ الَّذِیْ خَلَقَکُمْ فَمِنْکُمْ کَافِرٌ وَّمِنْکُمْ مُّؤْمِنٌ (It is He who created you; yet there is among you a disbeliever and there is among you a believer – At-taghābun, 64:2) makes it more explicit. It tells that the thing that separates the progeny of Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام created by Allah into different peoples is the deviation from 'Īmān and Islām. Bonds of lineage or country do not make people separate. Bracketing human beings into different groups on the basis of language, homeland, color or race is ignorance dished out in the garb of enlightenment. It is new. But everything new is not necessarily true and wise. In fact, it might as well be the exact opposite of what is wise. Today, there are many educated people who have also fallen into the trap of this narrow concept of nationalism based on the factors enumerated above. Unfortunately, this approach towards ordering the social life of human beings is fraught with seeds of countless unseen disasters. May Allah keep Muslims safe from its evil effects.

Verses 21 – 24

وَإِذَآ اَذَقْنَا النَّاسَ رَحْمَةً مِّنْۢ بَعْدِ ضَرَّآءَ مَسَّتْهُمْ اِذَا لَهُمْ مَّكْرٌ
فِيْٓ اٰيَاتِنَا ؕ قُلِ اللّٰهُ اَسْرَعُ مَكْرًا ؕ اِنَّ رُسُلَنَا يَكْتُبُوْنَ مَا تَمْكُرُوْنَ
﴿۲۱﴾ هُوَ الَّذِیْ يُسَيِّرُكُمْ فِی الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ ؕ حَتّٰٓی اِذَا كُنْتُمْ فِی
الْفُلْكِ ۚ وَجَرَيْنَ بِهِمْ بِرِيْحٍ طَيِّبَةٍ وَّفَرِحُوْا بِهَا جَآءَتْهَا رِيْحٌ
عَاصِفٌ وَّ جَآءَهُمُ الْمَوْجُ مِنْ كُلِّ مَكَانٍ وَّظَنُّوْٓا اَنَّهُمْ اُحِيْطَ
بِهِمْ ۙ دَعَوُا اللّٰهَ مُخْلِصِيْنَ لَهُ الدِّيْنَ ۚ لَئِنْ اَنْجَيْتَنَا مِنْ هٰذِهٖ

لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الشّٰكِرِينَ ﴿٢٢﴾ فَلَمَّآ أَنْجٰهُمْ إِذَا هُمْ يَبْغُونَ فِى
الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ ۗ يٰٓأَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّمَا بَغْيُكُمْ عَلٰٓى أَنْفُسِكُمْ ۙ
مَّتَاعَ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ۫ ثُمَّ إِلَيْنَا مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَنُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ
تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾ إِنَّمَا مَثَلُ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا كَمَآءٍ أَنْزَلْنٰهُ مِنَ
السَّمَآءِ فَاخْتَلَطَ بِهٖ نَبَاتُ الْأَرْضِ مِمَّا يَأْكُلُ النَّاسُ وَالْأَنْعٰمُ ۗ
حَتّٰٓى إِذَآ أَخَذَتِ الْأَرْضُ زُخْرُفَهَا وَازَّيَّنَتْ وَظَنَّ أَهْلُهَآ أَنَّهُمْ
قٰدِرُونَ عَلَيْهَآ ۙ أَتٰهَآ أَمْرُنَا لَيْلًا أَوْ نَهَارًا فَجَعَلْنٰهَا حَصِيدًا
كَأَنْ لَّمْ تَغْنَ بِالْأَمْسِ ۗ كَذٰلِكَ نُفَصِّلُ الْاٰيٰتِ لِقَوْمٍ
يَّتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾

He is the One who enables you to travel on land and at sea, until when you are in the boats and they sail with those on board under a good wind and they are pleased with it, there comes upon them a violent wind, and the wave comes upon them from many sides. And (when) they think that they are encircled, they pray to Allah, having faith in Him alone, (and say,) "If You deliver us from this, we shall be grateful indeed." [22]

But when He delivers them, they at once start rebelling on the earth wrongfully. O people, your rebellion is, in fact, against your own selves. (It is nothing but) an enjoyment of the worldly life. Therefore, to Us you are to return, then We shall tell you what you have been doing. [23]

The example of worldly life is just like the water We sent down from the heavens, then the vegetation of the earth, eaten by men and cattle, until when the earth took on its ornament and was fully adorned, and its people thought that they had control over it, Our command came to it at night or by day, and We turned it into a stubble, as if it had not been there a day earlier. This is how We elaborate the verses for a people who reflect. [24]

Commentary

The word: مكر (*makr*) used in verse 21: قُلِ اللّٰهُ اَسْرَعُ مَكْرًا (Say, "Allah is more swift in making plans") means secret plan or move that could be good or bad. Wherever this word has become a part of the local language, care should be taken that it is not rendered as 'deception'. For instance, in Urdu, the original language of this Commentary, it means just this. It is obvious that Allah Ta'ālā is free from it.[1]

The warning given in verse 23: اِنَّمَا بَغْيُكُمْ عَلٰٓى اَنْفُسِكُمْ (your rebellion is, in fact, against your own-selves) tells us that the curse of injustice is certain and, much before matters are settled in the Hereafter, one who is guilty of doing injustice must suffer from its evil consequences in this world as well.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said: ' Allah Ta'ālā hastens to repay mercy shown to relatives and favor done to people (whereby its blessings start becoming visible in this world, much before the Hereafter). And He also hastens to repay injustices done and relationships severed (in that its consequences have to be faced within the life of this world).' (Reported by Tirmidhī and Ibn Mājah with a ḥasan *chain* of narrators) In another Ḥadīth narrated by Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, 'there are three sins the curse whereof falls on the sinner himself: Injustice, breach of trust and deception.' (Reported by Abū ash-Shaykh and Ibn Mardūwayh in Tafsīr) (See Maẓharī)

Verses 25 – 32

وَاللّٰهُ يَدْعُوْٓا اِلٰى دَارِ السَّلٰمِ ۭ وَيَهْدِيْ مَنْ يَّشَاۗءُ اِلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ ﴿٢٥﴾ لِلَّذِيْنَ اَحْسَنُوا الْحُسْنٰى وَزِيَادَةٌ ۭ وَلَا يَرْهَقُ وُجُوْهَهُمْ قَتَرٌ وَّلَا ذِلَّةٌ ۭ اُولٰۗىِٕكَ اَصْحٰبُ الْجَنَّةِ ۚ هُمْ فِيْهَا خٰلِدُوْنَ ﴿٢٦﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ كَسَبُوا السَّيِّاٰتِ جَزَاۗءُ سَيِّئَةٍۢ بِمِثْلِهَا ۙ وَتَرْهَقُهُمْ ذِلَّةٌ ۭ مَا لَهُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ مِنْ عَاصِمٍ ۚ كَاَنَّمَآ اُغْشِيَتْ وُجُوْهُهُمْ قِطَعًا مِّنَ الَّيْلِ مُظْلِمًا ۭ اُولٰۗىِٕكَ اَصْحٰبُ النَّارِ ۚ هُمْ فِيْهَا

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1. The English language has no such problems as the open sense of *makr* can be transmitted through 'plan' or 'move' (Translator)

خٰلِدُوْنَ ﴿٢٧﴾ وَيَوْمَ نَحْشُرُهُمْ جَمِيْعًا ثُمَّ نَقُوْلُ لِلَّذِيْنَ اَشْرَكُوْا
مَكَانَكُمْ اَنْتُمْ وَشُرَكَآؤُكُمْ ۚ فَزَيَّلْنَا بَيْنَهُمْ وَقَالَ شُرَكَآؤُهُمْ
مَّا كُنْتُمْ اِيَّانَا تَعْبُدُوْنَ ﴿٢٨﴾ فَكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ شَهِيْدًا ۢ بَيْنَنَا
وَبَيْنَكُمْ اِنْ كُنَّا عَنْ عِبَادَتِكُمْ لَغٰفِلِيْنَ ﴿٢٩﴾ هُنَالِكَ تَبْلُوْا كُلُّ
نَفْسٍ مَّآ اَسْلَفَتْ وَرُدُّوْٓا اِلَى اللّٰهِ مَوْلٰىهُمُ الْحَقِّ وَضَلَّ عَنْهُمْ مَّا
كَانُوْا يَفْتَرُوْنَ ﴿٣٠﴾ قُلْ مَنْ يَّرْزُقُكُمْ مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ وَالْاَرْضِ
اَمَّنْ يَّمْلِكُ السَّمْعَ وَالْاَبْصَارَ وَمَنْ يُّخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ
وَيُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتَ مِنَ الْحَيِّ وَمَنْ يُّدَبِّرُ الْاَمْرَ ۗ فَسَيَقُوْلُوْنَ اللّٰهُ ۚ
فَقُلْ اَفَلَا تَتَّقُوْنَ ﴿٣١﴾ فَذٰلِكُمُ اللّٰهُ رَبُّكُمُ الْحَقُّ ۚ فَمَاذَا بَعْدَ
الْحَقِّ اِلَّا الضَّلٰلُ ۚ فَاَنّٰى تُصْرَفُوْنَ ﴿٣٢﴾

And Allah invites (people) to the Abode of Peace and brings whom He wills to a straight path. [25]

For those who do good there is the best, and something more, and neither darkness nor disgrace shall cover their faces. Those are the people of Paradise. Therein they shall live forever. [26]

As for those who commit evils, the recompense of each evil shall be similar to that evil, and disgrace shall cover them. For them, there is none to save from Allah. Their faces seem to be covered with layers of a dark night. Those are the people of the Fire. Therein they shall live forever. [27]

And (forget not) the Day We shall gather them together, then We shall say to those who associated partners with Allah, "Wait in your place, you and your associate-gods." Then We shall cause a split between them, and their associate-gods will say, "It was not us that you worshipped. [28] **So, Allah is enough as witness between us and between you. We were certainly unaware of your worship."** [29]

Thereupon, everyone shall assess what one sent ahead, and they will be sent back to Allah, their true Lord, and lost to them shall be what they used to coin. [30]

Say, "Who gives you sustenance from the heavens and the earth? Or, who controls the (powers of) hearing and seeing? And who brings forth the living from the dead, and brings forth the dead from the living? And who manages everything?" They will say, "Allah." Then, (you) say, "Would you not, then, fear Allah?" [31]

So, that is Allah, your Lord in truth. And what is there, after truth, but error? Where, then, are you being diverted? [32]

Commentary

In the previous verse (24), the transitory nature of worldly life was likened to a field. Water came from the heavens and it became verdant with flowers and fruits and crops. Growers were happy to presume that this will take care of everything they needed. But, because of their acts of disobedience, some unforeseen Divine punishment descended during the time of the night or day. Everything stood wiped off – as if nothing had existed there. This was the state of worldly life. After that comes a description of the life-to-come as it would be (25).

It was said: وَاللّٰهُ يَدْعُوْٓا اِلٰى دَارِ السَّلٰمِ (And Allah invites [people] to the Abode of Peace). It means a Home where absolute and eternal peace reigns, a Home that has neither pain and sorrow, nor the danger of disease, nor the concern of adverse change or sudden extinction.

'*Dāru 's-Salām*' means the Jannah or Paradise. One reason why it has been called *Dāru 's-Salām* is that everyone will have ideal peace and security there. The second reason appears in some reports from Ḥadīth. They say that Jannah has been given the name of *Dāru 's-Salām* also because its dwellers shall always be receiving *Salām* greetings from Allah Ta'ālā, and from the angels as well. In fact, the word: *Salām* would itself be a sort of technical keyword used by the people of Jannah to express their wishes which the angels would fulfill. For details, please see the commentary on verse 10.

While explaining this verse, Yaḥyā ibn Mu'ādh has given some man-to-man advice to whomsoever it may reach:

> 'O son of Ādam! Allah Almighty invited you to the Home of Peace (*Dāru 's-Salām*). When and from which country would you take that right step in response to this Divine call? Understand, and mark it well. If you have started making efforts to say yes to this invitation (from your Lord) while you are

> still here in this world, you will succeed. You will reach the Home of Peace. And if you wasted the years of your life here, then landed in your grave, and then thought of following this call, you will be stopped. You will not move from there, not even one step – because, the place where you are is no Home of Deeds (*Dāru 'l-'Amal*).'

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ said, '*Dāru 's-Salām* is one of the seven names of Jannah.' (Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī)

This tells us that it is not proper to name a house in this world as *Dāru 's-Salām*. Similarly, it is also not correct to give it names like Jannah or Firdaus (Paradise).

After that, it was said in the cited verse: وَيَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَآءُ إِلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ (and He brings whom He wills to a straight path – 25). The sense is that the invitation to the Abode of Peace (*Dāru 's-Salām*) is universal, open to all human beings and, in terms of this sense, guidance too is open to all. But, there is a kind of guidance that is special. Here, a seeker is made to stand on the straight path and given the ability to move ahead on course. This is *Taufīq* at its best. Only fortunate people are blessed with it.

Compared in the first two verses (24, 25) were the two Abodes of the present world and the world-to-come. Mention was also made of the states in which their dwellers were. The next four verses (26-29) describe the reward and punishment of both. Taken up first were the people of Paradise. About them it was said that those who opted for good, the greatest good was that of '*Īmān* (belief and faith) supplemented by staunch adherence to *al-'amalu 's-Ṣāliḥ* (good deeds). They will have the best of returns for what they do, not simply what is coming to them as due, but much more than it.

The *tafsīr* of this verse was given by the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم himself. He explained it by saying, 'at this place, الحسنى :*al-ḥusnā*: the best [of return] means Jannah (Paradise) and زيادة (*ziyādah*: something more) means the visit to the most exalted Allah with which the people of Jannah shall be honored. (Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī on the authority of Sayyidnā Anas رضی اللہ عنہ)

As for the reality of Paradise, this much every Muslim knows that it is a place of bliss beyond human imagination now. And as for the visit to Allah Ta'ālā, that is far superior to whatever blessings there

are.

According to a narration of Sayyidnā Ṣuhayb رضی اللہ عنہ appearing in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has been reported to have said, 'when the people of Jannah would have entered Jannah, Allah Ta'ālā will address them: "Do you need anything? If so, tell Us. We shall fulfill it." The people of Jannah will submit: "You made our faces radiant with delight. You let us be in Jannah. You delivered us from Jahannam. What else can we ask for?" That will be the time when the *ḥijāb* obstructing the view in between will be removed. The people of Jannah, one and all, will be blessed with seeing their true Lord. They will then discover that this was a blessing far more sublime than all other blessings of Jannah, something they had not even thought about, something the Lord of all the worlds bestowed upon them without their having to ask for it simply out of His infinite affection and mercy!'

Then, the text describes the state of the same people of Jannah by saying that their faces will remain free of any effects of distaste, pain or sorrow, nor will they have to be worried about any disgrace. These are conditions everyone faces in the mortal world one or the other time – and those who go to Jahannam will face it in the Hereafter.

In contrast, the state of the people of Jahannam has been described by saying that those who came with evil deeds in their record will have an equal return for each evil without any increase in it. They will have disgrace all over them. There will be no one to save them from the punishment of Allah. Dark will be their faces, so dark as if layers upon layers of a night have covered them up.

In the two verses (27,28) appearing next, there is a dialogue between the people of Jahannam and the idols or satans who had led them astray. The locale will be the plain of Resurrection. It was said: On that day, We shall gather everyone. Then, to the Mushriks We shall say that, 'you and your gods whom you had associated with Us in Our divinity stay in your places where you are, so that you can find out the reality of your conviction.' After that, the connection between these people and their so-called gods as it existed in the mortal world will be disconnected. The result will be that their idols will speak up: 'you never worshipped us.' Making Allah their witness, they will say, 'as for us, we were certainly unaware of your worship' – because we have no

senses, no movement and no intelligence to understand these matters.

Described in the sixth verse (30) is what would happen to both the peoples of Jannah and Jahannam by saying that, in this excruciating place called the plains of Resurrection, everyone would have assessed his or her respective deeds, individually and personally, whether they were beneficial or harmful. And they all would then be taken to their true Lord, the only One worthy of worship. At that time, all options of trust and support one usually looks up to will stand terminated. Even the idols the Mushriks used to take as their patrons and intercessors will evaporate in thin air en-block.

In the seventh and the eighth verses (31,32), the Holy Qur'ān has, in its typically wise and patronizing manner, beamed a few questions at the Mushriks to help them regain their sanity. Addressing the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, it was said that he should ask these people: Who gives you sustenance from the heavens and the earth? Who is the master-controller of your ears and eyes in that you hear and see as He wills and you do not if He wills otherwise? Who brings forth the living from the dead, such as vegetation and trees from the soil? Or, who brings forth humans and animals from the sperm, or a bird from an egg? And who brings forth the dead from the living, such as a lifeless sperm from humans and animals? And who is it that plans and manages the affairs of the whole universe?

After that, it was said when these questions will be addressed to them, all of them would say that all these things were created by One Allah! Then, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was to ask them: Why then, would you not fear Allah? When you know that it is Allah alone who creates, sustains and manages everything, why do you have to take someone else other than Him as deserving of your devotion and obedience?

In the concluding verse (32), it was said: فَذٰلِكُمُ اللّٰهُ رَبُّكُمُ الْحَقُّ، فَمَا ذَا بَعْدَ الْحَقِّ إِلَّا الضَّلٰلُ (So, that is Allah, your Lord in truth. And what is there, after truth, but error?), that is, 'this is the Sacred Being whose attributes of perfection have just been mentioned. Once you have found the Truth, there remains nothing else to find except error and straying. In other words, once it stands proved that Allah Ta'ālā is the only true and rightful object of worship, it is terribly senseless to abandon this truth and allow yourself to be diverted elsewhere.

An important note

In relation to issues of religious beliefs embedded in this verse, it must be borne in mind that the statement: مَاذَا بَعْدَ الْحَقِّ اِلَّا الضَّلٰلُ (What is there, after truth, but error?) proves that there is no intermediary link between truth and error. What is not the truth will be included in error and straying. There can be no such thing that is neither truth nor error. And it is also not possible that two opposite things could be the truth. This is an established rule in the sight of the majority of scholars in the Muslim *Ummah.* However, difference exists among 'Ulamā' regarding minor and subsidiary juristic issues. In the view of some of them, both sides would be considered as on truth in Ijtihād-based issues and, according to the majority of them, there is consensus on the view that the taking of contra-position in Ijtihād-based problems cannot be termed as error and straying.

Verses 33 – 36

كَذٰلِكَ حَقَّتْ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ فَسَقُوْٓا اَنَّهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٣٣﴾ قُلْ هَلْ مِنْ شُرَكَآئِكُمْ مَّنْ يَّبْدَؤُا الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيْدُهٗ ؕ قُلِ اللّٰهُ يَبْدَؤُا الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيْدُهٗ فَاَنّٰى تُؤْفَكُوْنَ ﴿٣٤﴾ قُلْ هَلْ مِنْ شُرَكَآئِكُمْ مَّنْ يَّهْدِيْٓ اِلَى الْحَقِّ ؕ قُلِ اللّٰهُ يَهْدِيْ لِلْحَقِّ ؕ اَفَمَنْ يَّهْدِيْٓ اِلَى الْحَقِّ اَحَقُّ اَنْ يُّتَّبَعَ اَمَّنْ لَّا يَهِدِّيْٓ اِلَّآ اَنْ يُّهْدٰى ۚ فَمَا لَكُمْ ۟ كَيْفَ تَحْكُمُوْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾ وَمَا يَتَّبِعُ اَكْثَرُهُمْ اِلَّا ظَنًّا ؕ اِنَّ الظَّنَّ لَا يُغْنِيْ مِنَ الْحَقِّ شَيْـًٔا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلِيْمٌۢ بِمَا يَفْعَلُوْنَ ﴿٣٦﴾

This is how the Word of your Lord that they will not believe is established against those who sinned. [33]

Say, "Is there any one from your associate-gods who originates the creation, then brings it again? Where then, are you being turned away?" [34] **Say, "Is there any one from your associate-gods who guides to the truth?" Say, "Allah guides to the truth. Is, then, He who guides to the truth more worthy of being obeyed, or he who has no guidance unless he is guided? So, what is the matter with you? How do you judge things?** [35]

And most of them follow nothing but conjecture. Surely, conjecture does not suffice against the truth in any way. Certainly, Allah is fully aware of what they do. [36]

Verses 37 - 40

وَمَا كَانَ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنُ اَنْ يُّفْتَرٰى مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ وَلٰكِنْ تَصْدِيْقَ
الَّذِيْ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَتَفْصِيْلَ الْكِتٰبِ لَارَيْبَ فِيْهِ مِنْ رَّبِّ
الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٣٧﴾ اَمْ يَقُوْلُوْنَ افْتَرٰىهُ ؕ قُلْ فَاْتُوْا بِسُوْرَةٍ مِّثْلِهٖ
وَادْعُوْا مَنِ اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿٣٨﴾
بَلْ كَذَّبُوْا بِمَا لَمْ يُحِيْطُوْا بِعِلْمِهٖ وَلَمَّا يَاْتِهِمْ تَاْوِيْلُهٗ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ
كَذَّبَ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ فَانْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ
﴿٣٩﴾ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يُّؤْمِنُ بِهٖ وَ مِنْهُمْ مَّنْ لَّا يُؤْمِنُ بِهٖ ؕ وَرَبُّكَ
اَعْلَمُ بِالْمُفْسِدِيْنَ ﴿٤٠﴾

And this Qur'ān is not such as could be made by someone other than Allah, but it is a confirmation of what has been before it, and an elaboration of what is written. There is no doubt in it. It is from the Lord of the worlds. [37]

Or, do they say that he has made it up? Say, "Then, bring a Sūrah like it, and call whomsoever you can besides Allah, if you are true." [38]

But they have belied something of which they had no comprehensive knowledge, while its implications have not yet come to them. Likewise belied those before them. So, look how was the fate of the unjust. [39] **And among them there are those who believe in it, and among them there are others who do not believe in it. And your Lord has the best knowledge about the mischief-makers.** [40]

Verses 41 – 44

وَاِنْ كَذَّبُوْكَ فَقُلْ لِّيْ عَمَلِيْ وَلَكُمْ عَمَلُكُمْ ۚ اَنْتُمْ بَرِيْٓـُٔوْنَ مِمَّآ
اَعْمَلُ وَاَنَا بَرِيْٓءٌ مِّمَّا تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٤١﴾ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَّسْتَمِعُوْنَ
اِلَيْكَ ؕ اَفَاَنْتَ تُسْمِعُ الصُّمَّ وَلَوْ كَانُوْا لَا يَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿٤٢﴾ وَمِنْهُمْ

مَنْ يَّنْظُرُ اِلَيْكَ ؕ اَفَاَنْتَ تَهْدِى الْعُمْىَ وَلَوْ كَانُوْا لَا يُبْصِرُوْنَ
﴿٤٣﴾ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَظْلِمُ النَّاسَ شَيْـًٔا وَّلٰـكِنَّ النَّاسَ اَنْفُسَهُمْ
يَظْلِمُوْنَ ﴿٤٤﴾

And if they belie you, say, "For me, my deed, and for you, your deed. You are not accountable for what I do and I am not accountable for what you do." [41]

And among them there are those who listen to you. Would you, then, make the deaf hear, even when they lack understanding? [42] **And among them there are those who look at you. Would you, then, guide the blind even when they have no insight?** [43]

Surely, Allah does not do wrong to people at all, but the people do wrong to their own selves. [44]

Verses 45 – 56

وَيَوْمَ يَحْشُرُهُمْ كَاَنْ لَّمْ يَلْبَثُوْۤا اِلَّا سَاعَةً مِّنَ النَّهَارِ يَتَعَارَفُوْنَ
بَيْنَهُمْ ؕ قَدْ خَسِرَ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِلِقَآءِ اللّٰهِ وَمَا كَانُوْا مُهْتَدِيْنَ
﴿٤٥﴾ وَاِمَّا نُرِيَنَّكَ بَعْضَ الَّذِىْ نَعِدُهُمْ اَوْ نَتَوَفَّيَنَّكَ فَاِلَيْنَا
مَرْجِعُهُمْ ثُمَّ اللّٰهُ شَهِيْدٌ عَلٰى مَا يَفْعَلُوْنَ ﴿٤٦﴾ وَلِكُلِّ اُمَّةٍ
رَّسُوْلٌ ۚ فَاِذَا جَآءَ رَسُوْلُهُمْ قُضِىَ بَيْنَهُمْ بِالْقِسْطِ وَهُمْ
لَا يُظْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٤٧﴾ وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ مَتٰى هٰذَا الْوَعْدُ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ
﴿٤٨﴾ قُلْ لَّاۤ اَمْلِكُ لِنَفْسِىْ ضَرًّا وَّلَا نَفْعًا اِلَّا مَا شَآءَ اللّٰهُ ؕ
لِكُلِّ اُمَّةٍ اَجَلٌ ؕ اِذَا جَآءَ اَجَلُهُمْ فَلَا يَسْتَاْخِرُوْنَ سَاعَةً وَّلَا
يَسْتَقْدِمُوْنَ ﴿٤٩﴾ قُلْ اَرَءَيْتُمْ اِنْ اَتٰىكُمْ عَذَابُهٗ بَيَاتًا اَوْ نَهَارًا
مَّاذَا يَسْتَعْجِلُ مِنْهُ الْمُجْرِمُوْنَ ﴿٥٠﴾ اَثُمَّ اِذَا مَا وَقَعَ اٰمَنْتُمْ بِهٖ ؕ
آٰلْـٰٔنَ وَقَدْ كُنْتُمْ بِهٖ تَسْتَعْجِلُوْنَ ﴿٥١﴾ ثُمَّ قِيْلَ لِلَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا
ذُوْقُوْا عَذَابَ الْخُلْدِ ۚ هَلْ تُجْزَوْنَ اِلَّا بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْسِبُوْنَ ﴿٥٢﴾
وَيَسْتَنْۢبِـُٔوْنَكَ اَحَقٌّ هُوَ ؕ قُلْ اِىْ وَرَبِّىْۤ اِنَّهٗ لَحَقٌّ ؕ وَمَاۤ اَنْتُمْ

بِمُعْجِزِينَ ﴿٥٣﴾ وَلَوْ أَنَّ لِكُلِّ نَفْسٍ ظَلَمَتْ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ
لَافْتَدَتْ بِهِ ۗ وَأَسَرُّوا النَّدَامَةَ لَمَّا رَأَوُا الْعَذَابَ ۖ وَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ
بِالْقِسْطِ ۚ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ ﴿٥٤﴾ أَلَا إِنَّ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ
وَالْأَرْضِ ۗ أَلَا إِنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ وَلَٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾
هُوَ يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾

And the Day when He will gather them, (they will feel) like they had not stayed for any longer than a fraction of a day as they will recognize each other. Losers, indeed, are those who deny that they will ever face Allah, and they are not on the right path. [45]

So, no matter whether We show you some of what We warn them of, or We take you back to Us (before it), in any case, they have to return to Us. Then, Allah is witness to what they do. [46]

And for every people there is a messenger. So, when their messenger comes, the matter will be decided between them with justice, and they shall not be wronged. [47]

And they say, "When will this promise be (fulfilled) if you are true?" [48] **Say, "I have no power to bring a harm or a benefit to myself, except what Allah wills. For every people there is an appointed time. When their time comes, they will not be late for a moment, nor will they be earlier.** [49]

Say, "Just tell me, if His punishment befalls you at night or by day, what is there in it that the sinners wish to come soon? [50]

Is it then when it befalls you that you will believe in it? Now (you believe)? And you have been asking for it to come sooner!" [51]

Then it will be said to the unjust, "Taste the punishment lasting for ever. You shall not be punished except for what you have been earning." [52]

And they want you to tell them whether it is true. Say, "Yes, by my Lord, it is true. And you cannot frustrate (His plan)." [53]

And if anyone who did wrong possesses all that there is on earth, he would ransom himself with it. And they will conceal their remorse when they will see the punishment. And the matter will be decided between them with justice and they will not be wronged. [54]

Look! To Allah belongs all that there is in the heavens and the earth. Look! Allah's promise is certainly true, but most of them do not know. [55]

He gives life and brings death, and to Him you shall be returned. [56]

Commentary

In verse 45, it was said: يَتَعَارَفُوْنَ بَيْنَهُمْ (they will recognize each other), that is, when the dead will be raised from their graves, they will recognize each other as if not much time had passed when they met last.

Imām al-Baghawī said: This recognition will be possible during the early stage. Later, when the horrendous happenings of the Qiyāmah, the Day of Doom, will unfold, this ability to recognize each other will stand disabled. According to some other narrations, the ability to recognize each other will, though, still remain, but such will be the awe of the situation that they will be unable to say anything. (Maẓharī)

It was said in verse 51: أَثُمَّ إِذَا مَا وَقَعَ اٰمَنْتُمْ بِهٖ اٰلْـٰٔنَ It means: 'Would you believe when Divine punishment actually descends down upon you – whether at the time of death, or even before it? But, at that time, the response to your believing will be: اٰلْـٰٔنَ: ('*al'ān*: now?) meaning: Is it now that you have come to believe while the time of believing has already passed? This is similar to what the Pharaoh said while drowning: اٰمَنْتُ اَنَّهٗ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا الَّذِیْٓ اٰمَنَتْ بِهٖ بَنُوْٓا اِسْرَآءِیْلَ ("I believe that there is no god except the One in whom the Children of Isrā'īl believe – 10:90). In answer, it was said: آلْـٰٔنَ ('*al'ān*: now?) and this believing by him was not accepted. In Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said, 'Allah Ta'ālā keeps accepting the repentance of His servant until he is seized by the agony of death.' It means that believing and repenting at the time of the agony of death is not credible in the sight of Allah. Similarly, in the mortal world, Taubah (repentance) could be accepted if done before the actual falling of the Divine punishment. Once the punishment strikes, Taubah is not accepted. The event related to the people of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام going to appear towards the end of the Sūrah in which their

Taubah was accepted falls under this very rule. They had seen the punishment coming from a distance. Moved earnestly, weeping and wailing, they made their Taubah in all sincerity. Therefore, the punishment was withdrawn. Had it struck them, their Taubah would have remained unaccepted.

Verses 57 – 61

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلنَّاسُ قَدْ جَآءَتْكُم مَّوْعِظَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَشِفَآءٌ لِّمَا فِى
ٱلصُّدُورِ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٥٧﴾ قُلْ بِفَضْلِ ٱللَّهِ
وَبِرَحْمَتِهِۦ فَبِذَٰلِكَ فَلْيَفْرَحُوا۟ هُوَ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّا يَجْمَعُونَ ﴿٥٨﴾ قُلْ
أَرَءَيْتُم مَّآ أَنزَلَ ٱللَّهُ لَكُم مِّن رِّزْقٍ فَجَعَلْتُم مِّنْهُ حَرَامًا
وَحَلَٰلًا قُلْ ءَآللَّهُ أَذِنَ لَكُمْ أَمْ عَلَى ٱللَّهِ تَفْتَرُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾ وَمَا ظَنُّ
ٱلَّذِينَ يَفْتَرُونَ عَلَى ٱللَّهِ ٱلْكَذِبَ يَوْمَ ٱلْقِيَٰمَةِ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ
لَذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى ٱلنَّاسِ وَلَٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٦٠﴾ وَمَا
تَكُونُ فِى شَأْنٍ وَمَا تَتْلُوا۟ مِنْهُ مِن قُرْءَانٍ وَلَا تَعْمَلُونَ مِنْ
عَمَلٍ إِلَّا كُنَّا عَلَيْكُمْ شُهُودًا إِذْ تُفِيضُونَ فِيهِ وَمَا يَعْزُبُ
عَن رَّبِّكَ مِن مِّثْقَالِ ذَرَّةٍ فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِى ٱلسَّمَآءِ وَلَآ
أَصْغَرَ مِن ذَٰلِكَ وَلَآ أَكْبَرَ إِلَّا فِى كِتَٰبٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿٦١﴾

O men, there has come to you an advice from your Lord, and a cure for what is in your hearts, and guidance and mercy for the believers. [57]

Say, "With the grace of Allah and with His mercy" – with these they should rejoice. It is far better than what they accumulate. [58]

Say, "Tell me, whatever provision Allah has sent down for you, you have made out from it lawful and unlawful." Say, "Has Allah permitted you or are you fabricating a lie on Allah?" [59]

And what is the assumption of those who fabricate a lie on Allah (about) the Day of Doom? Surely, Allah is all gracious to people, but most of them are not grateful. [60]

And in whatever condition you are, and whatever portion of the Qur'ān you recite therein, and whatever work you (all) do, We are present before you when you are involved in it. And hidden from your Lord is nothing even to the measure of a particle on the earth or in the heavens. And there is nothing smaller or greater that is not there in the clear Book. [61]

Commentary

Previous verses described how astray the disbelievers and polytheists had gone and what punishments had become due against them in the Hereafter.

Shown to them in the first two verses was the way out of their living in error and also the source through which they would find deliverance from the punishment of the Hereafter. And that source is Qur'ān, the Book of Allah, and His Messenger, Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ.

Both are great blessings for humanity, far superior to the entire blessings of the heavens and the earth. Following the injunctions of the Qur'ān and the way of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم go on to make human beings human in the real sense – and when this human person becomes the perfect man in the real sense, the whole world corrects and reorders itself like a paradise on earth.

The first (57) of the five verses cited above mentions four attributes of the Holy Qur'ān:

1. ADVICE as in مَّوْعِظَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ (an advice from your Lord).

The real meaning of the word: موعظہ (*maw'izah*) and: وعظ (*wa'z*) is to delineate such things as would make one's heart soft and receptive. As a result, it would incline towards Allah Ta'ālā. The barrier of heedlessness acquired from excessive indulgence in worldly life will stand removed. Ultimately, this advice would result in the flowering of a personal concern for what would happen in Ākhirah, the life ahead. The Holy Qur'ān, from the beginning to the end, is an eloquent preacher of this very good counsel. See anywhere, you will find promise with warning, reward with punishment, and prosperity and success in Dunyā and Ākhirah with a corresponding fate due to error and straying. Appearing recurrently in varying shades and blending, it generates a powerful appeal which has the ability to make a heart stone-hard turn soft and pliable like water all ready to absorb the message. Of course,

on top of everything, there is the miraculous diction of the Holy Qur'ān that, by itself, has a class of its own in the matter of reversal of hearts.

The complement of: مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ (from your Lord) with موعظه (advice) has elevated the status of Qur'ānic advice to a much higher level. It is telling us that this advice is not coming from a helpless human being that does not hold the keys to anyone's profit and loss or reward and punishment, nor has any credibility of his own. Instead, the advice is from the merciful Lord whose Word admits of no error, and whose promise and warning too are free of any apprehension of some weakness or excuse.

2. CURE as in: شِفَاءٌ لِّمَا فِي الصُّدُورِ (a cure for what is in your hearts).

The word: شفاء (*shifā'*) means the removal of disease and: صدور (*ṣudūr*) is the plural form of: صدر (*ṣadr*) which means the chest, and it signifies the heart.

The sense is that the Holy Qur'ān is a successful remedy of the diseases of the heart. It corrects and cures it as a prescription of legendary elixir would. The famous Ḥasan al-Basrī said, 'from this attribute of the Qur'ān, we learn that it is a cure for the diseases of the heart specifically, and not that of physical diseases. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

But, other scholars have said that the Holy Qur'ān is a cure for every disease, whether spiritual or physical. However, spiritual diseases are far more harmful for men and women than physical diseases. Then, the treatment of such diseases too is not in everyone's control. Therefore, at this place, only spiritual diseases that relate to the heart have been mentioned. From this it does not necessarily follow that it is not a cure for physical diseases.

Ḥadīth reports and countless experiments of the religious scholars of the Muslim community are witnesses to the fact that the way the Holy Qur'ān is a great elixir for diseases of the heart, very similarly, it is the best of treatments for physical diseases also.

As narrated by Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī رضی اللہ عنہ, someone came to Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم and complained that he felt he had a chest problem. He said, 'recite the Qur'ān, for Allah Ta'ālā says: شِفَاءٌ لِّمَا فِي الصُّدُورِ that is, 'the Qur'ān is a cure for all such diseases as are found insides chests.' (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī from Ibn Mardūwayh)

Similarly, according to the narration of Sayyidnā Wāthilah ibn Asqa' رضی اللہ عنہ, someone came to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم and said that he had a throat problem. He told him the same thing – 'recite the Qur'ān'.

Scholars of the Muslim community have compiled the properties and efficacies of the Qur'ānic verses in regular books by extracting these partly from narratives of Ḥadīth and the sayings of the Ṣaḥābah, and partly from their own experiments and experience. Imām al-Ghazāli's work on 'Qur'ānic Properties' is well known in this area. Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī's "A'māl-i-Qur'ānii, an abridgement of this work, has been popular among readers of Urdu for over fifty years. Then, there are so many observations and experiments in this field which prove that different verses of the Holy Qur'ān have been a total cure for physical diseases as well. Denying all of them is not possible. However, this much can be conceded that the real purpose of the revelation of the Holy Qur'ān is to remove the diseases of the heart and soul while, as a corollary, it is also the most effective treatment of even physical diseases.

This also tells us that those who recite the Holy Qur'ān only to treat physical diseases or to seek nothing but the fulfillment of worldly needs are low in sense and high in waywardness. Such people never bother to correct spiritual diseases, nor do they pay any heed to the need of doing things in accordance with the instructions given by the Qur'ān. For such people, Iqbāl said:

ترا حاصل زیس اش جزین نیست   کہ ازھم خواندنش آسان بمیری

Your gain from *Yā Sīn* is but that:

By reciting it, death becomes easy.

Though, he is suggesting, had you pondered over its meaning and message, realities and insights, you would have gained much more of its benefits and blessings.

Some research-oriented commentators who have gone deeper into the meanings of the Qur'ān have said that the first attribute of the Qur'ān, that is, موعظہ (*maw'iẓah*: advice, good counsel) relates to man's obvious, outward or physically-accomplished deeds known as the Sharī'ah. The Holy Qur'ān is the best source of the correction and betterment of such deeds. Then, the second attribute: شِفَآءٌ لِّمَا فِی الصُّدُوْرِ (a cure for

what is in your hearts) relates to man's hidden, inward or heart-oriented deeds known as *Ṭarīqah* and *Taṣawwuf*.

3. GUIDANCE as in: وهدى (and guidance).

The word: هدى (*hudā*) means guidance or the showing of or leading onto the way. The Holy Qur'ān invites human beings to the way of truth and faith. It invites them to ponder over the great signs Allah Ta'ālā has placed in the near and far ranges of the world, even inside their own person, [staggering would certainly be the interior distances of the universe within us] and recognize the creator and master of everything.

4. MERCY as in ورحمة (and mercy for the believers).

In the second verse (58), it was said: قُلْ بِفَضْلِ اللهِ وَبِرَحْمَتِهِ فَبِذٰلِكَ فَلْيَفْرَحُوْا ، هُوَ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّا يَجْمَعُوْنَ (Say, "With the grace of Allah and with His mercy" – in these they should rejoice. It is far better than what they accumulate). The sense of the verse is that people should take only the grace and mercy of Allah Ta'ālā as the real thing to be delighted about and be pleased with it. As for the short-lived worldly wealth, possession, comfort and recognition, these are things not worth being happy about in the real sense. Because, to start with, no matter how much one has, it turns out to be not as much as one would have wished. It becomes a cycle that never ends. Then, there is that ever-lurking danger that it may start declining any time. Therefore, at the end of the verse, it was said: هُوَ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّا يَجْمَعُوْنَ (It is far better than what they accumulate). Thus, the core of the meaning is that the grace and mercy of Allah is far better than the layers upon layers of wealth and property and worldly recognition and power one accumulates as the sum-total of one's entire life.

Two things have been identified as a source of delight in this verse, one being grace, and the other, mercy. What do these two mean here? Regarding this, there is a Ḥadīth from Sayyidnā Anas رضی اللہ عنہ where it has been reported that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said, 'the فضل :*faḍl* (grace) of Allah denotes the Qur'ān and: رحمۃ : *raḥmah* (mercy) means that you were blessed with the *taufīq* (ability) of reciting the Qur'ān and acting in accordance with it.' (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī from Ibn Mardūwayh)

The same thing has also been reported from Sayyidnā Barā' ibn 'Āzib and Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī رضی اللہ عنہم اجمعین while there are

many commentators who say that *faḍl* (grace) means the Qur'ān while *raḥmah* (mercy) signifies Islām. However, the sense remains the same as given in the Ḥadīth appearing earlier, that is, *raḥmah* (mercy) means that Allah Ta'ālā taught us the Qur'ān, gave us the *taufīq* to follow it practically, and that is what Islām is in reality.

And Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ narrates that *faḍl* means the Qur'ān, and *raḥmah* refers to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم. This interpretation finds support in the verse of the Holy Qur'ān where it is said: وَمَآ اَرْسَلْنٰكَ اِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعٰلَمِيْنَ (And We have not sent you [O Muḥammad] except as mercy for the worlds – 21:107). However, the outcome of this too is no different from the earlier *tafsīr* – because, acting in accordance with the Qur'ān, or Islām ultimately reverts to following the lead given by the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم through his word and deed.

In this verse, the word: فَلْيَفْرَحُوْا (they should rejoice) has appeared in the third person in accordance with its well-known rendition (*qirā'ah*), although its real addressees were those present there or were living at that time. The exigency of the situation required that the form used should have been that in the second person – as it does actually appear in some renditions. But, the wisdom behind the use of the third person, as in the well-known rendition, is that the universal mercy of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, or Islām, was not restricted only to those present there, or living at that time. Instead, it included even the generations that will be born right through the last day of Qiyāmah. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

Special Note

At this point it is worth our attention that there is another verse of the Qur'ān which, in terms of its outward literal sense, seems to indicate that this world is just no place for any highly stimulated expression of joy and merriment. It was said: لَاتَفْرَحْ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَايُحِبُّ الْفَرِحِيْنَ (Do not exult. Indeed, Allah does not like the exultant – Al-Qaṣaṣ 28:76). The word: لاتفرح (*lā tafraḥ*) translated here as 'do not exult' means rejoicing in triumph or intoxication. But, in the verse under study (58), the command to rejoice appears in the imperative mood. One answer for this seemingly apparent contradiction is that the place where rejoicing has been prohibited is a place where rejoicing relates to the fleeting enjoyments of the mortal world. And the place where rejoicing is commanded is a

place where rejoicing is related to the grace and mercy of Allah Taʿālā. Then, there is yet another difference here. Wherever rejoicing is prohibited, it does not refer to rejoicing in the absolute sense. Instead, it means getting euphoric and intoxicated in exultation and rejoicing. And wherever permitted, it means rejoicing in an absolute sense.

In the third verse (59), warning has been given to people who introduce their personal opinion in the serious matter of Ḥalāl (lawful) and Ḥarām (unlawful). They would, at will, declare something to be Ḥalāl and dub something to be Ḥarām – without any authority of the Qur'ān, and Sunnah. A severe warning of no less a punishment than that of the day of Qiyāmah has been given to those who commit this crime (60). This tells us that the fact of something being Ḥalāl or Ḥarām does not depend on human opinion. Instead of that, it is the special right and prerogative of Allah Taʿālā and His Messenger. Without their injunctions, it is not permissible to call something either Ḥalāl or Ḥarām.

In the fifth verse (61), mention has been made of the all-encompassing knowledge of the most exalted Allah and its unmatched multi-dimensional extensions. The address is to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. He is being told that nothing he does by way of his work or recital of the Qur'ān remains hidden from Allah. Similarly, whatever all human beings do remains before Him. And not even a single particle in the heavens and the earth is concealed from Him. Rather, everything is written in the clear Book, that is, the Preserved Tablet (*al-lawḥ al-maḥfūẓ*).

At this place, as it seems, the wisdom of describing the all-encompassing nature of Divine knowledge is aimed at consoling the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that his enemies cannot harm him in any way for he was under the protection of Allah Taʿālā.

Verses 62 – 64

أَلَآ إِنَّ أَوْلِيَآءَ اللّٰهِ لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٦٢﴾
الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَكَانُوْا يَتَّقُوْنَ ﴿٦٣﴾ لَهُمُ الْبُشْرٰى فِى الْحَيٰوةِ
الدُّنْيَا وَفِى الْاٰخِرَةِ ۭ لَا تَبْدِيْلَ لِكَلِمٰتِ اللّٰهِ ۭ ذٰلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ
الْعَظِيْمُ ﴿٦٤﴾

Listen, the friends of Allah shall have no fear nor shall they grieve [62] **– those who have believed and have been fearful of Allah.** [63] **For them there is the good news in the worldly life and in the Hereafter – there is no change in the words of Allah – that is the great achievement.** [64]

Commentary

In the verses cited above, particular merits, definition and identity of the Auliyā' of Allah have been mentioned. Also given there is good news for them in the present world as well as in the Hereafter. The text says that they will have no apprehensions of facing some unpleasant or unforeseen happening, nor will they grieve over the non-fulfillment of some objective. These *Auliyā'* of Allah (men of Allah) will be people who believed and remained pious, righteous and God-fearing. They are most welcome in this world and in the next world both.

We have to consider three things at this point:

1. What is the meaning of Auliyā' of Allah having no fear and grief?
2. What is the definition of Auliyā' of Allah? How does one identify them?
3. What does the good news given to them in Dunyā and Ākhirah mean?

First of all, the Auliyā' of Allah have no fear or grief. This could possibly mean when they are admitted to their allocated place in Paradise, after having gone through the accounting of deeds in the Hereafter, they will stand delivered from fear and grief forever. They will have no apprehension of any pain or anxiety nor will they have to grieve for having lost something dear to them. Instead, the blessings of Paradise will be everlasting. Given this sense, there is no difficulty in rationalizing the subject of the verse. But, it does, however, raise a question. If this be the case, it registers no peculiarity of the Auliyā' of Allah. In fact, all people of Paradise who stand delivered from Hell will be enjoying that very state of being. Yes, it can, then, be said that those who ultimately reach Paradise will all be known as the Auliyā' of Allah invariably. No matter how different their deeds had been in the mortal world but, once they have entered Paradise, all of them will be

counted among the Auliyā' of Allah.

But, many commentators say that freedom from fear and grief with which the Auliyā' of Allah are blessed is common to the present world and the Hereafter both. The thing unique about the Auliyā' of Allah is that they remain protected from fear and grief even in the present world, and that they will have no fear and grief in the Hereafter is something everyone knows. So, included therein are all people of Paradise.

Apart from that, in terms of relevant prevailing conditions, we have yet another difficulty on our hands. Observations in the world of our experience bear out that – not to mention the Auliyā' of Allah – even the Prophets of Allah, may peace be on them, are not secure from fear and grief in this mortal world. In fact, their fear of and humbleness before Allah is far more pronounced as compared to others. It was said in the Qur'ān: إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَٰٓؤُا (Among Our servants only those who have knowledge (really) fear Allah – 35:28). At another place, the emotional state of the righteous and the men of Allah has been described in the following words: وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ مِّنْ عَذَابِ رَبِّهِمْ مُّشْفِقُونَ إِنَّ عَذَابَ رَبِّهِمْ غَيْرُ مَأْمُونٍ (And those who are fearful of the punishment of their Lord – indeed, the punishment of their Lord is not to be unfearful of – 70:27) that is, no one can sit home comfortably in the knowledge that it is due to come.

This is borne by facts as well as it appears in a Ḥadīth of Shamā'il al-Tirmidhī: 'The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم would more than often look concerned and pensive'. And he himself said, 'I fear Allah more than all of you.'

There are countless events relating to Sayyidnā Abū Bakr, Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنهم اجمعين and the rest of the Ṣaḥābah, the Tābi'īn and the wide spectrum of the men of Allah which tell us how intensely they grieved and how genuinely they feared what would happen to them in the Hereafter.

Therefore, 'Allāmah 'Ālūsī has said in Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī: That the Auliyā' Allah are protected against fear and grief in the mortal world has to be seen in terms of what usually happens here. There are things worldly people generally fear or grieve about most of the time. They are chronically addicted to their mundane agenda of life. They have to

have convenience, comfort, wealth and recognition. The slightest shortfall in any of these makes them nervous as if they were going to die without that. The fear of a minor discomfort or anxiety drives them crazy and they will go about finding ways and means to get rid of such irritants. The station of the Auliyā', friends or men of Allah is way higher. In their sight, convenience, comfort, wealth and recognition one surrounds himself with in this transitory world are not worth their while that they go about acquiring these. Nor do they care much about the anxieties of the mundane and see no need to beef up their defenses against these. Their life style admits of nothing but the recognition of His greatness and love for Him. So overshadowed they are with the fear of Allah and their humbleness before Him that they just have no use for worldly sorrow and comfort or profit and loss.

Now we can go to the matter of the definition of Auliyā' Allah and the marks of their identification. The word: اولیاء (*Auliyā'*) is the plural form of: ولی (*waliyy*, commonly rendered as the simpler: *walī*, which bypasses the need to render the doubling of the *yā* sound at the end shown by the addition of a 'y', or two, as purists would prefer to do). The word: ولی (*waliyy*) is used in the Arabic language in the dual sense of 'near' as well as 'friend' or someone held 'dear.' The common degree of nearness and love as related to Allah Ta'ālā is such as would not leave any living entity, human or non-human, exempt from it. If this element of nearness were not there, nothing would have come into being in this universe. The real justification for the existence of this entire universe is that particular interrelationship which it has been allowed to have by Allah in His absolute majesty. Though, no one has understood the reality of this interrelationship, nor is it possible to do so, but that a non-definable interrelationship does exist is certain. However, this degree is not what is actually meant in the term: Auliyā' Allah. In fact, there is yet another degree of friendship, love and nearness that is specific to particular servants of Allah Ta'ālā. This is known as nearness in love. Those who are blessed with this nearness are called the *Auliyā' Allah*. This has been succinctly articulated in a *Qudsī* Ḥadīth where Allah Ta'ālā says, 'My servant keeps earning My nearness through voluntary acts of worship (*nafl 'ibādāt*) until I too turn to him in love and when I love him, I become his ear – whatever he hears, he hears through Me. I become his eye – whatever he sees, he sees through Me. I become his hands and feet – whatever he does,

he does through Me.' In short, it means that virtually nothing issues forth from such a person against the pleasure of his Lord.

The degrees of this unique *Wilāyah* (station of nearness or friendship) are endless. Its highest degree is for the blessed prophets because every prophet has to be, of necessity, a *Waliyy* of Allah. In this degree, the highest station belongs to the foremost among prophets, Sayyidnā Muhammad al-Mustafā صلى الله عليه وسلم. Then, the lowest degree of this *Wilāyah*, in the terminology of the noble Sufis, is known as the degree of Fanā' (self-elimination: I am nothing – He is everything). It makes the heart of man become so engrossed in the thought of Allah Ta'ālā that it would not allow any love rooted in this world to overcome it. When such a person loves, he loves for the sake of Allah. When he hates, he hates for the sake of Allah. His own person plays no part in this love and hate cycle, the inevitable outcome of which is that he keeps busy in his quest for the pleasure of Allah Ta'ālā both outwardly and inwardly. This style of living makes him avoid everything which is not liked in the sight of Allah Ta'ālā. The sign of this state of existence is abundance of *Dhikr* and constancy in obedience – in other words, to remember Allah Ta'ālā abundantly and profusely, and to obey His injunctions always, and under all conditions and circumstances. When these two attributes are present in a person, he is called a *Waliyy* of Allah. Whoever does not have any one of the two is not included in that category. Then, whoever has both, there is no limit to his ranks, lower and higher. It is in terms of these degrees that the ranks of Auliyā' Allah precede or succeed each other.

On the authority of a narration from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه, it has been reported in a Hadīth that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was asked as to who were the people meant by '*Auliyā' Allah*' in this verse? He said, 'those who love each other only for Allah – without having any worldly interest in between.' (Mazharī, quoted from Ibn Mardūwayh). It is obvious that this condition can apply only to those who have been mentioned above.

At this stage, we have another question before us: What is the method of acquiring this degree of *Wilāyah* (nearness to Allah)?

Respected commentator, Qādī Thanā'ullah Panīpatī has said in Tafsīr Mazharī: Individuals from the Muslim Ummah could acquire this degree of Wilayah only through the company of the Holy Prophet صلى

صلى الله عليه وسلم. It is from here that the profound relationship with Allah, which was part of the blessed persona of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, is partly passed on to the *Auliyā'* of the Ummah, of course, depending on their ambition and capacity for whatever portion from it falls to their lot. Then, we know that this benefit of companionship was available to the Ṣaḥābah without anyone being in between. Therefore, the degree of their Wilāyah was higher than that of all Auliyā' and *aqṭāb* (plural of *quṭb*, literally axis, meaning a man of Allah who stays at one place, as in Ṣūfī orders). Later people derive this benefit through one or more intermediaries. The more the intermediaries, the more pronounced becomes the difference. Only those who are colored with the color of the word, deed and message of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and follow his Sunnah, in all love and obedience, can become such an intermediary. Going to them, frequenting their company with the added practice of listening to their good counsel, remaining obedient and remembering Allah abundantly – this is the blueprint of attaining the degree of Wilāyah. It is made of three parts. One: Being in the company of a *Waliyy* of Allah. Two: Remaining obedient to his good counsel. Three: Remembering Allah abundantly (*Dhikrullāh*) – with the condition that this abundance (and nature) of *Dhikr* must be in accordance with the *masnūn* method. The reason is that *Dhikr*, when frequent and sincere, adds to the luster of the mirror of the heart and it becomes worthy of receiving reflections from the light of *Wilāyah*. It appears in Ḥadīth that everything has a method of furbishing it. Dhikrullah furbishes the heart. The same thing has been reported by al-Baihaqī as based on a narration from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar رضی الله عنه. (Maẓharī)

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضی الله عنه said that a person asked the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم: 'what would you say about a person who loves someone spiritually noble but is unable to reach up to his level in terms of his own deeds?' He said: اَلْمَرْءُ مَعَ مَنْ اَحَبَّ that is, 'everyone shall be with one he loves'. This tells us that the love and company of the Auliyā' Allah is a source of acquiring Wilāyah (nearness to Allah). Al-Baihaqī (in Shu'ab al-'Īmān) has reported that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said to Sayyidnā Razīn رضی الله عنه: 'I tell you about a principle of Faith. With it you can attain success in *Dunyā* and *Ākhirah*: Take to the company of *ahl adh-Dhikr* (people who remember Allah) as indispensable, and when you are alone, move your tongue with the *Dhikr* of Allah, as much as you can. Whoever you love, do it for Allah. Whoever

you hate, do it for Allah. (Maẓharī)

But, in order to be beneficial, this 'company' has to be of those who are, in themselves, the Waliyy of Allah and staunch followers of Sunnah. Those who do not observe and follow the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم (and do not demonstrate by their word and deed that they are operating under it) are themselves deprived of the essential degree of *Wilāyah*. It does not matter if many a contra-habitual wonders (*kashf* and *karāmāt*) issue forth from them. They will still be considered deprived. However, if someone is a Waliyy in terms of the stated attributes – even though, nothing of the sort has ever issued forth from him – he is a Waliyy of Allah. (Maẓharī)

Now we come to the last point. What are the signs of the Auliyā' Allah? How can they be identified? A Qudsī Ḥadīth referred to in Tafsīr Maẓharī points out in this direction. Allah Ta'ālā said: 'From among My servants, My Auliyā' are those who are remembered when I am remembered and when they are remembered I am remembered.' According to a narration from Sayyidah Asmā' bint Yazīd reported in Ibn Mājah, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم gave the identity of Auliyā' Allah by saying: اَلَّذِیْنَ اِذَا رُءُوْا ذُکِرَ اللّٰہُ (those who, when one sees them, remind of Allah).

In short, there is someone by sitting in whose company one gets the *taufīq* of remembering Allah (*Dhikr*), and relief from worldly concerns, then, this is a sign of his being a *Waliyy* of Allah.

It has been said in Tafsīr Maẓharī: There is a prevailing assumption among masses that things like getting to know what is hidden (*kashf*), doing some extra-ordinary things (*karāmah*) or claiming to be aware of what is *al-Ghayb* (Unseen) are signs of someone being among the Auliyā' of Allah. This is nothing but error and self-deception. There are thousands of Auliyā' who are not credited with anything like this, that could be termed as authentically proved while, in sharp contrast, reports of things otherwise hidden and unseen are accredited to those whose very basic '*Īmān* (belief) is not correct!

It was said in the last verse (64) that, for the friends of Allah, there is the good news in the worldly life and in the Hereafter. As for the good news of the Hereafter, it will come at the time of death when the

spirit of the deceased will be taken to Allah. At that time, he will hear the good news of Paradise being for him. Then, on the day of Qiyāmah, when he rises from his grave, he will receive the good news of being welcome to Paradise. This is similar to what al-Ṭabarānī has reported from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar رضی الله عنه. He narrates that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'People who recite: لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ (*lā ilāha illallāh*: There is no god but Allah) will not experience any fright at the time of death, nor inside the grave, nor at the time they rise from it. This is as if my eyes are seeing the scenario of that time when these people will, shaking the dust off, rise from their graves, saying: اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِيٓ اَذْهَبَ عَنَّا الْحَزَنَ (Praised is Allah who has removed from us [all] grief – 35:34)'

As for the good news in this world, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, '(they are) the true dreams one sees himself or are seen by someone else with him in it and, in which, there is good news for them. (Reported by al-Bukhārī from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضی الله عنه).

Another *basharah* (good news) of this world unfolds in the form that Muslims at large love someone and take him to be good without any personal motive or interest. About it, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: تِلْكَ عَاجِلُ بُشْرَى الْمُؤْمِنِ that is, 'being taken as good and praiseworthy is, for a true Muslim, good news in ready cash.' (Muslim and al-Baghawī)

Verses 65 – 66

وَلَا يَحْزُنْكَ قَوْلُهُمْ ۘ اِنَّ الْعِزَّةَ لِلّٰهِ جَمِيْعًا ؕ هُوَ السَّمِيْعُ الْعَلِيْمُ ﴿٦٥﴾ اَلَآ اِنَّ لِلّٰهِ مَنْ فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَنْ فِى الْاَرْضِ ؕ وَمَا يَتَّبِعُ الَّذِيْنَ يَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ شُرَكَآءَ ؕ اِنْ يَّتَّبِعُوْنَ اِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَاِنْ هُمْ اِلَّا يَخْرُصُوْنَ ﴿٦٦﴾

And what they say should not make you grieve. Surely, all power belongs to Allah. He is All-Hearing, All Knowing. [65]

Listen, to Allah belong all those in the heavens and all those on the earth. And what do follow those who invoke associate-gods other than Allah? They follow nothing but whims and do nothing but make conjectures. [66]

Verses 67 – 70

هُوَ الَّذِيْ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الَّيْلَ لِتَسْكُنُوْا فِيْهِ وَالنَّهَارَ مُبْصِرًا ۭ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَّسْمَعُوْنَ ﴿٦٧﴾ قَالُوا اتَّخَذَ اللّٰهُ وَلَدًا سُبْحٰنَهٗ ۭ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ ۭ لَهٗ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ ۭ اِنْ عِنْدَكُمْ مِّنْ سُلْطٰنٍۢ بِهٰذَا ۭ اَتَقُوْلُوْنَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٦٨﴾ قُلْ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَفْتَرُوْنَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ الْكَذِبَ لَا يُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿٦٩﴾ مَتَاعٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا ثُمَّ اِلَيْنَا مَرْجِعُهُمْ ثُمَّ نُذِيْقُهُمُ الْعَذَابَ الشَّدِيْدَ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَكْفُرُوْنَ ﴿٧٠﴾

He is the One who made for you the night, so that you may have rest in it, and (made) the day to see. Indeed, there are signs therein for a people who listen. [67]

They say, "Allah has got a son." Pure is He. He is Self-Sufficient. To Him belongs what is in the heavens and what is in the earth. You have no proof for it. Do you allege about Allah what you do not know? [68]

Say: Those who fabricate against Allah shall not prosper. [69] **A little enjoyment in this world then, to Us is their return, then, We shall make them taste the severe punishment, because they used to disbelieve.** [70]

Verses 71 – 73

وَاتْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَاَ نُوْحٍ ۘ اِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهٖ يٰقَوْمِ اِنْ كَانَ كَبُرَ عَلَيْكُمْ مَّقَامِيْ وَتَذْكِيْرِيْ بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ فَعَلَى اللّٰهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ فَاَجْمِعُوْٓا اَمْرَكُمْ وَشُرَكَاۗءَكُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَكُنْ اَمْرُكُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ غُمَّةً ثُمَّ اقْضُوْٓا اِلَيَّ وَلَا تُنْظِرُوْنِ ﴿٧١﴾ فَاِنْ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ فَمَا سَاَلْتُكُمْ مِّنْ اَجْرٍ ۭ اِنْ اَجْرِيَ اِلَّا عَلَى اللّٰهِ ۙ وَاُمِرْتُ اَنْ اَكُوْنَ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ ﴿٧٢﴾ فَكَذَّبُوْهُ فَنَجَّيْنٰهُ وَمَنْ مَّعَهٗ فِي الْفُلْكِ وَجَعَلْنٰهُمْ خَلٰۗىِٕفَ وَاَغْرَقْنَا الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا ۚ فَانْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُنْذَرِيْنَ ﴿٧٣﴾

And recite to them the story of Nūḥ, when he said to his people, "O my people, if it is hard on you that I stay (with you) and give (you) advice through the signs of Allah, then, in Allah I place my trust. So, decide your matter along with your partners, then, your design should not be a matter of regret to you, then carry it out against me and give me no respite. [71] **So, if you turn away, then, I have asked for no reward from you. My reward is with none except Allah, and I have been commanded to be among those who submit."** [72]

Then they belied him, and We saved him and those with him in the Ark and made them the successors and drowned those who belied Our signs. So look how was the fate of those who were warned. [73]

Verse 74

ثُمَّ بَعَثْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِ رُسُلًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِمْ فَجَاءُوهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَمَا
كَانُوا لِيُؤْمِنُوا بِمَا كَذَّبُوا بِهِ مِنْ قَبْلُ ۚ كَذَٰلِكَ نَطْبَعُ عَلَىٰ
قُلُوبِ الْمُعْتَدِينَ ﴿٧٤﴾

Then, after him, We sent messengers to their peoples, and they came to them with clear signs, but they were not to believe in what they had belied earlier. This is how We seal the hearts of the transgressors. [74]

Verses 75 – 82

ثُمَّ بَعَثْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ مُوسَىٰ وَهَارُونَ إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَئِهِ
بِآيَاتِنَا فَاسْتَكْبَرُوا وَكَانُوا قَوْمًا مُجْرِمِينَ ﴿٧٥﴾ فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمُ
الْحَقُّ مِنْ عِنْدِنَا قَالُوا إِنَّ هَٰذَا لَسِحْرٌ مُبِينٌ ﴿٧٦﴾ قَالَ مُوسَىٰ
أَتَقُولُونَ لِلْحَقِّ لَمَّا جَاءَكُمْ ۖ أَسِحْرٌ هَٰذَا ۖ وَلَا يُفْلِحُ السَّاحِرُونَ
﴿٧٧﴾ قَالُوا أَجِئْتَنَا لِتَلْفِتَنَا عَمَّا وَجَدْنَا عَلَيْهِ آبَاءَنَا وَتَكُونَ
لَكُمَا الْكِبْرِيَاءُ فِي الْأَرْضِ ۖ وَمَا نَحْنُ لَكُمَا بِمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٧٨﴾
وَقَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ ائْتُونِي بِكُلِّ سَاحِرٍ عَلِيمٍ ﴿٧٩﴾ فَلَمَّا جَاءَ
السَّحَرَةُ قَالَ لَهُمْ مُوسَىٰ أَلْقُوا مَا أَنْتُمْ مُلْقُونَ ﴿٨٠﴾ فَلَمَّا

اَلْقَوْا قَالَ مُوْسٰى مَا جِئْتُمْ بِهِ ۙ السِّحْرُ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ سَيُبْطِلُهٗ ۭ اِنَّ
اللّٰهَ لَا يُصْلِحُ عَمَلَ الْمُفْسِدِيْنَ ﴿٨١﴾ وَيُحِقُّ اللّٰهُ الْحَقَّ بِكَلِمٰتِهٖ
وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُجْرِمُوْنَ ﴿٨٢﴾

Then, after them, We sent Mūsā and Hārūn with Our signs to Pharaoh and his group, but they showed arrogance. And they surely were a guilty people. [75]

So, when Truth came to them from Us, they said, "It is certainly a clear magic." [76] **Mūsā said, "Do you say (this) about the Truth when it came to you? Is this magic, while the magicians do not succeed?"** [77]

They said, "Have you come to us that you may turn us from what we found our fathers on, and that you both have supremacy on earth? We are not going to believe in you." [78]

And the Pharaoh said, "Bring to me every knowledgeable magician." [79]

So, when the magicians came, Mūsā said to them, "Throw what you have to throw." [80]

So, when they threw, Mūsā said, "What you have come up with is magic. Allah will certainly nullify it. It is sure that Allah does not let sustain the work of the mischief-makers. [81] **And Allah establishes the truth through His words, even though the guilty may dislike it.** [82]

Verses 83 – 86

فَمَآ اٰمَنَ لِمُوْسٰٓى اِلَّا ذُرِّيَّةٌ مِّنْ قَوْمِهٖ عَلٰي خَوْفٍ مِّنْ فِرْعَوْنَ
وَمَلَا۟ىِٕهِمْ اَنْ يَّفْتِنَهُمْ ۭ وَاِنَّ فِرْعَوْنَ لَعَالٍ فِي الْاَرْضِ ۚ وَاِنَّهٗ لَمِنَ
الْمُسْرِفِيْنَ ﴿٨٣﴾ وَقَالَ مُوْسٰى يٰقَوْمِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ اٰمَنْتُمْ بِاللّٰهِ
فَعَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلُوْٓا اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّسْلِمِيْنَ ﴿٨٤﴾ فَقَالُوْا عَلَي اللّٰهِ
تَوَكَّلْنَا ۚ رَبَّنَا لَا تَجْعَلْنَا فِتْنَةً لِّلْقَوْمِ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٨٥﴾ وَنَجِّنَا
بِرَحْمَتِكَ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿٨٦﴾

Then, except an offspring of his people, no one believed in Mūsā for the fear of Pharaoh and his group, lest he

should prosecute them. And the Pharaoh was high-handed in the land and he was of those who crossed all limits. [83]

And Mūsā said, " O my people, if you have believed in Allah, then, in Him put your trust if you are obedient." [84] **So, they said, "In Allah we have put our trust: Our Lord, do not make us a victim of the unjust people,** [85] **and save us, through Your mercy, from the disbelieving people."** [86]

Verses 87 – 91

وَاَوْحَيْنَآ اِلٰى مُوْسٰى وَاَخِيْهِ اَنْ تَبَوَّاٰ لِقَوْمِكُمَا بِمِصْرَ بُيُوْتًا
وَّاجْعَلُوْا بُيُوْتَكُمْ قِبْلَةً وَّاَقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ ؕ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ
﴿۸۷﴾ وَقَالَ مُوْسٰى رَبَّنَآ اِنَّكَ اٰتَيْتَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَاَهٗ زِيْنَةً
وَّاَمْوَالًا فِى الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ۙ رَبَّنَا لِيُضِلُّوْا عَنْ سَبِيْلِكَ ۚ رَبَّنَا
اطْمِسْ عَلٰٓى اَمْوَالِهِمْ وَاشْدُدْ عَلٰى قُلُوْبِهِمْ فَلَا يُؤْمِنُوْا حَتّٰى
يَرَوُا الْعَذَابَ الْاَلِيْمَ ﴿۸۸﴾ قَالَ قَدْ اُجِيْبَتْ دَّعْوَتُكُمَا
فَاسْتَقِيْمَا وَلَا تَتَّبِعٰٓنِّ سَبِيْلَ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۸۹﴾ وَجٰوَزْنَا
بِبَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ الْبَحْرَ فَاَتْبَعَهُمْ فِرْعَوْنُ وَجُنُوْدُهٗ بَغْيًا وَّعَدْوًا ؕ
حَتّٰٓى اِذَآ اَدْرَكَهُ الْغَرَقُ قَالَ اٰمَنْتُ اَنَّهٗ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا الَّذِيْٓ اٰمَنَتْ
بِهٖ بَنُوْٓا اِسْرَآءِيْلَ وَاَنَا مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ ﴿۹۰﴾ آٰلْئٰنَ وَقَدْ عَصَيْتَ
قَبْلُ وَكُنْتَ مِنَ الْمُفْسِدِيْنَ ﴿۹۱﴾

And We revealed to Mūsā and his brother: "Have houses for your people in Egypt and make your houses worship oriented, and establish *Ṣalāh*, and give good tidings to the believers." [87]

And Mūsā said, "Our Lord, You have given Pharaoh and his group glamour and riches in the worldly life, so that, our Lord, they mislead (people) from Your path. Our Lord, obliterate their riches and harden their hearts, so that they may not come to believe until they witness the painful punishment." [88]

Allah said, "The prayer of you both has been granted, so stand firm and never follow the way of those who do not know." [89]

And We made the children of Isrā'īl cross the sea. So, Pharaoh and his troops chased them in transgression and hostility, until when he was about to drown, he said, "I believe that there is no god but the One in whom the children of Isrā'īl believe, and I am among those who submit." [90] **Is it Now (that you come to believe) while you were rebellious before and you were among the mischief-makers?** [91]

Commentary

Mentioned in the verses appearing immediately above, there are some circumstantial details along with their corresponding injunctions as they relate to Sayyidnā Mūsā and Sayyidnā Hārūn عليهما السلام and the children of Isrā'īl and the people of the Pharaoh. The first verse (87) carries an injunction pertaining to a particular event. Banī Isrā'īl (the children of Isrā'īl) who observed the religious law of Sayyidnā Mūsā used to perform their prayers only in their synagogues as customary. Then, the past communities were also bound by this injunction. Their prayers were not valid if performed in their homes. The Muslim Ummah was the special recipient of the convenience that they could, if needed, perform their prayers everywhere as they wished. In a Ḥadīth of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has, out of his six singularities, given one as, 'the whole earth has been made a *masjid* for me.' It means that Ṣalāh performed anywhere remains valid. However, it is something else that the performing of obligatory prayers in congregation only in *masjids* has been declared as an emphasized Sunnah. Then, saying *nafl* prayers inside homes is better. This was the usual practice of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. He would say only the Farḍ Ṣalāh in the Masjid then go home and say his *sunnahs* and *nafls* there. As for the Banī Isrā'īl, they were bound to offer their prayers only in their synagogues in obedience to their religious laws. Realizing this, the Pharaoh who used to oppress them in all sorts of ways had all synagogues demolished so that they could be deprived of offering their prayers in accordance with their religious laws. Thereupon, Allah Ta'ālā sent to the two prophets of Banī Isrā'īl, Sayyidnā Mūsā and Hārūn عليهما السلام, may peace be on them both, the injunction mentioned in

verse 87. It was said there that new houses should be built in Egypt for Banī Isrā'īl and that their orientation should be towards the Qiblah so that prayers could be offered in those very residential houses.

This tells us that the religious law of past communities demanded that prayers should be offered in houses of worship specifically built for this purpose. But it was because of a particular incident that the Banī Isrā'īl were temporarily allowed to offer their prayers at home and, for this purpose, they were to have houses oriented towards the Qiblah. And it can also be said that even at this time of emergency they were allowed to offer their prayers in particular houses that were oriented towards the Qiblah. Praying in common homes and public places was still not permitted even at that time. It was unlike the Muslim community that has the convenience of offering their prayers anywhere, be it a city or wilderness. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

It will be good to answer another question at this point. In this verse, the Banī Isrā'īl have been commanded to orient themselves towards the Qiblah. Which Qiblah is this? The Ka'bah or the Baytu 'l-Maqdis? Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ says, 'it means the Ka'bah and the Ka'bah alone was the Qiblah of Sayyidnā Mūsā علیہ السلام and his people.' (al-Qurṭubī and Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī) In fact, some religious scholars say that the real Qiblah of all past prophets was no other but the Ka'bah.

As for the Ḥadīth where it is said that the Jews turn their faces towards the Sakhrah (the Rock) of Baytu 'l-Maqdis during their prayers, it will be applied to the time when Sayyidnā Mūsā علیہ السلام left Egypt and headed towards Baytu 'l-Maqdis. This is not contrary to his Qiblah being the Baytullāh during the period of his stay in Egypt.

It is also proved from this verse that the condition of facing towards the Qiblah was operative also during the period of past prophets. Similarly, it also stands proved from authentic reports that purity (*ṭahārah*) and body cover (*satr al-'aurah*) were conditions of Ṣalāh even in the religious laws of all past prophets.

Since the very purpose of making houses Qiblah oriented was to pray in there, therefore, by giving the command: 'Establish Ṣalāh' (أَقِيمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ) after that, the instruction given was: If the Pharaoh stops you from making prayers in places reserved for worship, prayers do not

stand dropped. Make these in your homes.

At the end of the verse, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام has been asked to convey the good news to believers that their mission will be successful. They will overpower the enemy and they will go to Paradise in the Hereafter. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

It will be noted that, at the beginning of the verse, Sayyidnā Mūsā and Hārūn عليهما السلام may peace be upon them both, were addressed in the dual form because they both were charged with the responsibility of having houses made Qiblah oriented and allowing occupants to pray in there. After that, by using the plural form which included all Banī Isrā'īl, command was given to establish Ṣalāh – because, this law included all, the prophet and his community. At the end, the command to convey the good news was given particularly to Sayyidnā Mūsā – because, it was he, as the law-giving prophet, who had the right to give out the good news of Paradise.

Mentioned in the second verse (88), there is a curse which Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام invoked after having lost all hopes of reforming the people of the Pharaoh. At its beginning, he submitted before his Lord that He had given the Pharaoh and his group glamour and riches in their worldly life (mines of gold, silver and precious stones in Egypt and Ethiopia – al-Qurṭubī). As a result, they misled people from His way. Because, common-people, when they looked at their bulging affluence, they started doubting – had they been in error, why would they have been so blessed? Again, because common-people were unable to see through the reality that material affluence without good deeds cannot be the sign of a person being right and true. It was only after having been disappointed with his efforts to correct the people of the Pharaoh, and having realized the danger it posed for other people who were being misled by the glamour and wealth of the Pharaoh's group that he invoked the curse: رَبَّنَا اطْمِسْ عَلٰٓى اَمْوَالِهِمْ (Our Lord, obliterate their riches).

According to the statement of Sayyidnā Qatādah رحمه الله, such was the effect of this invocation that all gold, precious coins, stones, land produce belonging to Pharaoh's people were transformed into bland rocks. In a bag found during the period of the pious Khalīfah Sayyidnā 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz رحمه الله there were things dating back to the time of the Pharaoh. Seen in it, there were eggs and almonds of solid rock.

Leading commentators say that Allah Ta'ālā had turned all fruits, vegetables and grains they had into rocks. This is among the nine *āyāt* (signs or miracles) mentioned in the Qur'ān as in: وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا مُوْسٰى تِسْعَ اٰيٰتٍ بَيِّنٰتٍ (and We gave Mūsā [Moses] nine clear signs – 17:101).

The second curse invoked by Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام for them appears in the words: وَاشْدُدْ عَلٰى قُلُوْبِهِمْ فَلَا يُؤْمِنُوْا حَتّٰى يَرَوُا الْعَذَابَ الْاَلِيْمَ (and harden their hearts, so that [they are deprived of the very ability to receive any good and] they may not come to believe until they witness the painful punishment – 88).

The invocation of this curse obviously appears to be something far out as coming through the speech of an apostle or prophet, because the sole mission of a prophet's life is nothing but to invite people to believe and act right and make efforts towards that end.

But, in terms of the hard facts of the situation here, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام has already made whatever efforts he could. He was totally disappointed. Now he wanted that they better learn through the punishment for their deeds. In doing so, it was probable that these people, once they see the punishment coming, may make a confession and declare that they now believed, whereby the punishment could stand warded off. Therefore, what became the cause of this invocation from him was his hatred for *kufr* (disbelief, infidelity). This is similar to what happened to the Pharaoh. When he started to announce his belief at the time he was drowning, the angel, Jibra'īl shut his mouth lest Divine mercy turns to him and he stands delivered from the punishment.

In the third verse (89), it was said that the prayer of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام has been accepted. But, by taking Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام as associated with the act of prayer, the actual address was made in the words: قَدْ اُجِيْبَتْ دَّعْوَتُكُمَا (The prayer of you both has been granted). There was a reason for it. When Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was making this prayer, Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام kept saying Āmīn (Amen). This tells us that the saying of Āmīn (so be it) is also a part of the prayer itself. And since the *masnūn* method of *du'ā* or prayer given in the Holy Qur'ān is that of making it in a lowered voice, the saying of *Āmīn* too in a lowered mode seems to be preferable.

As for the acceptance of prayer, the information was given to the

two prophets as it appears in this verse. But, even they were somewhat tested in that the effect of the prayer, according to al-Baghawī, unfolded after forty years. For this reason, soon after the mention of the acceptance of their prayer in this verse, they both were given the instruction: فَاسْتَقِيْمَا وَلَا تَتَّبِعٰٓنِّ سَبِيْلَ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ (so stand firm, and never follow the way of those who do not know). It means that they should go on carrying the mission of calling people to the true faith and do not get embarrassed, disappointed or hasty like the ignorant when the effects of the acceptance of some prayer takes its due time.

Mentioned in the fourth verse (90) was the famous miracle of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام - the crossing of the sea and the drowning of Pharaoh. There it was said:

حَتّٰىٓ اِذَآ اَدْرَكَهُ الْغَرَقُ قَالَ اٰمَنْتُ اَنَّهٗ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا الَّذِيْٓ اٰمَنَتْ بِهٖ بَنُوْٓا اِسْرَآءِيْلَ وَاَنَا۠ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ .

Until when he was about to drown, he said, "I believe that there is no god but the One in Whom the children of Isrā'īl believe, and I am among those who submit".

The answer to this appearing in the fifth verse (91) came from Allah Almighty Himself. It says:

آٰلْئٰنَ وَقَدْ عَصَيْتَ قَبْلُ وَكُنْتَ مِنَ الْمُفْسِدِيْنَ

Is it now [that you come to believe] while you were rebellious before and you were among the mischief-makers?

This proves that the profession of faith exactly at the time of death is not legally trustworthy. It is further clarified by the Ḥadīth in which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, 'Allah Ta'ālā keeps accepting the Taubah (repentance) of a servant until comes the time of the *ghargharah* of death. (Tirmidhī)

The *ghargharah* of death means the time the soul or spirit is drawn out or extracted from the body and it is a time when angels appear face to face. At that time, life in this world, the home of deeds, is all over and the laws of the Hereafter come into force. Therefore, nothing done at that time is acceptable, neither belief, nor disbelief. Whoever believes at such a time will not be called a believer. He will not be treated as a believer while shrouding and burying him. This stands proved from the fate of Pharaoh. There is a consensus that he died a

disbeliever. This is also what the text of the Qur'ān says. In case, someone is reported to have called the belief of the Pharaoh as valid, it will either be suitably interpreted, otherwise the statement would be considered false. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

Similarly, if someone were to utter (God forbid) a word of disbelief (*kufr*) in a state when the soul is being drawn out of the body, he will not be called a *kāfir* (disbeliever). Instead, a Ṣalāh of Janāzah (Muslim funeral prayers) will be offered for him and he would be buried like Muslims, and the word of disbelief uttered by him would be interpreted (in his favor). This finds confirmation in what happened in the case of some Auliyā' of Allah, specially when that which they uttered bothered people as if what they were uttering was nothing short of *kufr* (disbelief). However, when they became conscious and explained, it gave relief to everyone and they realized that it was nothing but a declaration of true belief.

In short, when the soul is being drawn out and the certain knock of death is on, that time is not counted in the life one lives in this world. Nothing done at that time is valid in terms of the Sharī'ah. However, everything is, if done before that. But, those who see this transition from one world to the other have to be very cautious. It is possible to make a mistake in determining the correct situation. Is this the time of the drawing of the soul from the body (*naz'atu 'r-rūḥ*)? Or, is it the last rattle of death (*ghargharatu 'l-maut*)? Or, is it that which prevails earlier (usually referred to in English as being in the throes of death or the agony of death or, uncharitably enough, giving up the ghost)?

Verses 92 – 98

فَالْيَوْمَ نُنَجِّيْكَ بِبَدَنِكَ لِتَكُوْنَ لِمَنْ خَلْفَكَ اٰيَةً ۭ وَاِنَّ كَثِيْرًا مِّنَ
النَّاسِ عَنْ اٰيٰتِنَا لَغٰفِلُوْنَ ﴿۹۲﴾ وَلَقَدْ بَوَّاْنَا بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَاۗءِيْلَ مُبَوَّاَ
صِدْقٍ وَّرَزَقْنٰھُمْ مِّنَ الطَّيِّبٰتِ ۚ فَمَا اخْتَلَفُوْا حَتّٰى جَاۗءَھُمُ
الْعِلْمُ ۭ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَقْضِيْ بَيْنَھُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ فِيْمَا كَانُوْا فِيْهِ
يَخْتَلِفُوْنَ ﴿۹۳﴾ فَاِنْ كُنْتَ فِيْ شَكٍّ مِّمَّآ اَنْزَلْنَآ اِلَيْكَ فَسْـَٔـلِ
الَّذِيْنَ يَقْرَءُوْنَ الْكِتٰبَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ ۚ لَقَدْ جَاۗءَكَ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ

فَلَا تَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الْمُمْتَرِيْنَ ﴿٩٤﴾ وَلَا تَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا
بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ فَتَكُوْنَ مِنَ الْخٰسِرِيْنَ ﴿٩٥﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ حَقَّتْ عَلَيْهِمْ
كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٩٦﴾ وَلَوْ جَآءَتْهُمْ كُلُّ اٰيَةٍ حَتّٰى يَرَوُا
الْعَذَابَ الْاَلِيْمَ ﴿٩٧﴾ فَلَوْلَا كَانَتْ قَرْيَةٌ اٰمَنَتْ فَنَفَعَهَآ اِيْمَانُهَآ
اِلَّا قَوْمَ يُوْنُسَ ط لَمَّآ اٰمَنُوْا كَشَفْنَا عَنْهُمْ عَذَابَ الْخِزْيِ فِي
الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَمَتَّعْنٰهُمْ اِلٰى حِيْنٍ ﴿٩٨﴾

So, today, We shall save your body, so that you may become a sign for those after you. And many of the people are heedless of Our signs. [92]

And surely We gave the children of Isrā'īl a proper place to live, and provided them with good things. So they did not disagree until knowledge came to them. Surely, Allah will decide between them on the Doomsday, about what they used to dispute. [93]

So, if you are in doubt about what We have sent down to you, ask those who read the Book (revealed) before you. Surely, truth has come to you from your Lord, so never be among those who are suspicious. [94]

And never be among those who have belied Our signs, lest you should be among the losers. [95]

Surely, those against whom the Word of your Lord stands settled will not believe, [96] **even though every sign comes to them, unless they witness the painful punishment.** [97]

So, how is it that there never was a town which could have believed and its belief would have been of benefit to it except the people of Yūnus (Jonah)! When they came to believe, We removed from them the punishment of humiliation in the worldly life and let them enjoy themselves for some time. [98]

Commentary

Addressing Pharaoh in the first verse (92), it was said that Allah will take his body out of the waters after he is drowned so that his

body becomes a sign of Divine power, and a lesson for people after him.

It happened when, after having crossed the sea, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام told Banī Isrā'īl about the drowning of the Pharaoh, they were so overawed and subdued by him that they refused to believe the news and said that the Pharaoh was not drowned. To guide them right and to teach others a lesson, Allah Ta'ala had the dead body of Pharaoh thrown ashore by a wave of the sea. Everyone saw it and believed that he had died and then, this corpse became a sort of moral deterrent for everyone. After that, it is not known as to what happened to this corpse ultimately. The place where the dead body of the Pharaoh was found is still known as the mount of Pharaoh.

Some time back, newspaper reports indicated that the dead body of Pharaoh was found intact and was seen by the public at large and that it was deposited safely in the Cairo Museum. But, it cannot be said with certainty that this is the same Pharaoh who confronted Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, or is some other Pharaoh because names of Pharaohs differ. Every ruler of Egypt in that period of history had the title of Pharaoh.

But, no wonder, the Divine power had thrown a drowned dead body ashore. Very similarly, it may have kept it even preserved against spoilage so that it could become a lesson for future generations. And it may still be there! (However it remains essential to learn a lesson from it as compared to becoming excited about its discovery as an archeological triumph).

At the end of the verse, it was said that many people pay no heed to the verses and signs of Allah. They do not ponder over them and fail to learn their essential lesson in living a better life. Otherwise, signs abound. They are everywhere, in every particle of this universe. A look at them would help one recognize Allah and His perfect power.

The second verse (93) brings the future of a people bulldozed in disgrace by the Pharaoh into sharp focus making it stand out against the evil end of the tyrant. It was said that Allah gave the Banī Isrā'īl a good place to live. They had the whole country of Egypt for themselves.

Then, they were given the holy lands of Jordan and Palestine which Allah Ta'ālā had assigned to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, and his progeny as their inheritance. A good place to live has been termed as: مبوا صدق (translated as: 'a proper place to live') in the Qur'ān. The word: صدق (*ṣidq*) at this place means good and proper. The sense is that they were given a place to live that was suitable and proper for them in every way. Then it was said that Allah gave them their sustenance in the form of Ḥalāl and pure things so much so that they had the best of everything.

Towards the end of the verse, once again, their penchant for crookedness and evil doing has been mentioned. Among them too, there were many who, soon after having power, failed to appreciate the blessings of Allah and went about disobeying Him. They recited the Torah and they knew the signs and marks of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم mentioned there. This awareness demanded that they should have been the first to believe in him as soon as he came. But, how strange that these very people believed in the coming of the last prophet, Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā صلى الله عليه وسلم before he actually came. They would tell people about the signs he would have and the time he would come. They would even use the *wasīlah* (medium) of the last prophet in their prayers. But, when the last prophet came with a whole array of evidences of his veracity, and the signs identified in the Torah, these people started disputing among themselves. Some of them believed while the rest refused to do so. In this verse, the coming of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been expressed by saying: جَآءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ (knowledge came to them). Here, علم (*'ilm*) could also denote certitude. In that case, it would mean that once the causes of observation and certitude converged together, these people started disputing.

Some commentators have said that علم (*'ilm*: knowledge) at this place denotes معلوم (*ma'lūm*: known), that is, when the blessed person who was already known through the prophesies of the Torah came before them face to face, they started disputing the truth.

At the end of the verse, it was said that Allah Ta'ālā will give His verdict about what they used to dispute, on the day of Qiyamah. Truth will then become distinct from falsehood and the upholders of truth

will be sent to Paradise while the practitioners of falsehood, to Hell.

In the third verse (94), the address is obviously to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. But, it goes without saying that there is no probability of his doubting the revelation. Therefore, the purpose is to beam the message to the Muslim community through this address where he is not the intended recipient. Then, it is also possible that this address may be to human beings at large asking them if they had any doubts about the Divine revelation sent to them through Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā صلى الله عليه وسلم. If they had, let them ask those who recited the Torah and Injīl before them. They would tell them that all past prophets and their Books have been announcing the glad tidings of the Last among Prophets. This will remove their scruples and suspicions.

According to Tafsīr Maẓharī, this verse tells us that anyone in doubt about some religious matter is duty-bound to have his doubts removed by asking genuine 'Ulamā' (religious scholars whose learning, honesty and adherence to Qur'ān, and Sunnah is well recognized, popularly referred to as *'Ulamā' al-Ḥaqq*). To continue nursing such doubts is not a good thing to do.

In the fourth (95), fifth (96) and sixth (97) verses, the same subject finds support and emphasis while carrying a warning to those who are heedless.

In the seventh verse (98), the heedless deniers of truth have been admonished for their failure to make the optimum use of the time of life allowed to them. There was still time for them to leave denial and contumacy. Otherwise, an ominous time was due to come when they will make Taubah but their Taubah will not be accepted. They will say that they believed but their belief will not be welcome. And that time will be the time when the punishment of the Hereafter will appear right before their eyes at the time of death. It was in this connection that an event relating to Sayyidnā Yūnus علیه السلام and his people was mentioned – that has good counsels and great lessons in it.

It has been asked in this verse that the people who denied truth could have believed at a time when their believing would have been of benefit to them. It means that there was no use for it at the hour of

death, or the punishment, or after being neck deep in it, or at the time Doomsday sets in for the doors of repentance will then be closed and no repentance or belief from anyone will be acceptable. Now that they still had the time, they could put their contumacy aside and become believers very much like the people of Prophet Yūnus عليه السلام did. When they, much before the worse happened, saw the Divine punishment coming, they lost no time, repented and believed. For this reason, Allah Ta'ālā removed the painful punishment from them.

The gist of the *tafsīr* given above is that the door of Taubah does not close even when the worldly punishment comes face to face. However, Taubah is not accepted at the time the punishment of the Hereafter comes face to face. As for the coming of the punishment of the Hereafter face to face, it would either be on the day of Qiyāmah or at the time of death, whether it is natural death or death as a victim of some worldly punishment as was the case with the Pharaoh.

Therefore, the acceptance of the Taubah of the people of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام is not contrary to the Divine law. In fact, it falls under it because they, no doubt, made their Taubah when they saw the punishment coming, but they certainly did so before the punishment overtook them, and did it before death too. This is contrary to what the Pharaoh and others did. They did their Taubah only after the punishment had overtaken them, and did that at the time of the last rattle of death, saying that they believed. Therefore, their believing was not valid and trustworthy and the Taubah they made was not accepted.

A precedent of the event relating to the people of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام is the event relating to Banī Isrā'īl which finds mention in the Holy Qur'ān itself. In this event, the mount of Ṭūr was left dangling over their heads so that they were scared enough to repent. They repented and their Taubah was accepted. This appears in Sūrah al-Baqarah where it was said:

رَفَعْنَا فَوْقَكُمُ الطُّوْرَ خُذُوْا مَآ اٰتَيْنٰكُمْ بِقُوَّةٍ

And raised high above you the (Mount of) Ṭūr: "Hold fast to what We have given to you" – 2:63

The reason was that they had, much before the punishment mate-

rialized and death overtook them, repented simply by noticing the imminent danger of punishment. Similarly, when the people of Sayyidnā Yūnus علیہ السلام saw the punishment coming, they sincerely wept and wailed and repented details of which will appear a little later. So, the acceptance of this Taubah is not counter to the Divine law stated above. (Qurṭubī)

At this stage, some contemporaries have made a grave error. They attribute shortcomings to Sayyidnā Yūnus علیہ السلام in the discharge of his duties as a prophet. They declare that the cause of the removal of punishment from the people was the failing of the prophet and that this very failing was the cause of Divine displeasure which is mentioned in Sūrah al-Anbiyā' and Sūrah Aṣ-Ṣaffāṭ. Their words are as given below:

قرآن کے اشارات اور صحیفه یونس کی تفصیلات پر غور کرنے سے اتنی بات صاف معلوم هوجاتی هے که حضرت یونس علیه السلام سے فریضه رسالت ادا کرنے میں کچھ کوتاهیاں هوگئی تهیں اور غالبًا انہوں نے بے صبر هو کر قبل از وقت اپنا مستقر چھوڑ دیا تھا ، اس لئے جب آثار عذاب دیکھ کر آشوریوں نے توبه و استغفار کی تو اللّه تعالی نے انہیں معاف کردیا ، قرآن میں خدائی دستور کے جو اصول و کلیات بیان کئے گئے هیں ان میں ایك مستقل دفعه یه بهی هے که اللّه تعالی کسی قوم کو اسوقت تك عذاب نہیں دیتا جب تك اس پر اپنی حجت پوری نہیں کردیتا ، پس جب نبی ادائے رسالت میں کوتاهی کر گیا اور اللّه کے مقرر کرده وقت سے پہلے خود هی اپنی جگه سے هٹ گیا تو اللّه تعالی کے انصاف نے اس قوم کو عذاب دینا گوارا نه کیا . (تفهیم القرآن مولانا مودودی، ص ۳۲۱، ج ۲، طبع ۱۹٦٤ء)

"By considering the hints of the Qur'ān and the details of the book of Jonah, at least this much becomes clear that some shortcomings had issued forth from Hadrat Yūnus علیہ السلام, peace be on him, in the performance of his duty as a prophet. And, most probably, becoming impatient, he had abandoned his permanent station before time. Therefore, having seen the

signs of punishment, the Assyrians repented and sought forgiveness, then Allah Ta'ālā forgave them. Out of the principles and universals of Divine Law described in the Qur'ān, there is this standing article as well – that Allah Ta'ālā does not punish a people until He establishes His argument against them conclusively. So, when the prophet went about falling short in doing his duty as a prophet and, on his own, vacated his station (of duty) before the time determined by Allah, then, the justice of Allah Ta'ālā did not bear by punishing those people." (Tafhīmul-Qur'ān[1] by Maulānā Mawdūdī, p. 321, volume 2, published 1964)[2]

The first thing to look at here is that the prophets, peace be upon them all, are protected from sins (*ma'ṣūm*). This is an uncontested belief on which there is a consensus of the Muslim Ummah. In its details, some partial differences do exist, for instance, is this protection (*'iṣmah*) from all kinds of minor sins (*ṣaghīrah*), or from the major ones (*kabīrah*) only, and whether or not this protection (*'iṣmah*) includes the period of time before being inducted as a prophet? But, no difference exists among any individuals or groups in the belief that the blessed prophets, all of them, can never fall short in carrying out their duty as

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1. Ordinary changes have been made, without any prior public announcement of withdrawal from these remarks, in the later editions of Tafhīmul-Qur'ān, that is, the words: "فریضہ رسالت کی ادائیگی میں کوتاھی" : 'shortcomings in the performance of duty as a prophet,' are not there in the new text. But, the following observations are still there: "جب نبی نے .... پوری نہیں ھوئی تھیں": When the prophet did not continue the mission of giving good counsel to those people up to the last moment of the respite given to them and, before the time determined by Allah, he himself, in a self-serving way, migrated out and away, then, the justice of Allah Ta'ālā did not bear by punishing his people, because the legal conditions of a conclusive argument against them had yet to be fulfilled." Thus, despite the change in the text of the Tafhīmul-Qur'ān, the comment of Ma'āriful-Qur'ān stands as is. – Idāratul-Ma'ārif, publishers, October/ 1991.

2. Apart from the religious aspects of the observations quoted above which have been dealt with in the Commentary of this Tafsīr, the language used to convey these has contributed significantly in making the observations acidly vulnerable. For example, the use of verbs towards the end: کرگیا (*kar gayā*), ھٹ گیا (*hat gayā*) and گوارا نہ کیا (*gawārā na kiyā*) are hot action words in the present context. When used for a prophet, they are terrible. When attributed to God, like the last one, they are presumptuous. The liberty taken through language is difficult to transplant in translation. By ignoring it, the translator turns traitor. So, the translator has made the extra effort to stay within functional limits and render the text as it is. Since, the Urdu original has been reproduced here, discerning readers who read it should have no problem in making their independent judgement about the rendering – Tr.

prophets. The reason is that there could be no greater sin for prophets than that they themselves fall short in taking care of the mission for which Allah Ta'ālā had chosen them. This is an open breach of trust in assigned duty, something beyond even ordinary nice people anywhere. If a prophet does not stand protected (*ma'ṣūm*) even from this shortcoming, then, there is no use for protection from other sins.

If there were something somewhere even in the Qur'ān, and Ḥadīth, seemingly contrary to the established principles of Qur'ān, and Sunnah, and the collective Muslim belief in prophets being protected from sins, it would have been necessary to interpret it in a way that would not have left it discordant and different from the absolutely proven principles of Qur'ān, and Ḥadīth.

But, things are strange here. What the learned author has presented with reference to 'Qur'ānic hints and details of the book of Jonah' may possibly be in the book of Jonah, and so be it, being something having no validity in the sight of the people of Islām. As for a 'Qur'ānic hint, there is none, not just one. In fact, what has happened here is that this presumption has been forced out of a patched pattern of several premises. First of all, it was presumed that the removal of the punishment from the people of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام took place contrary to Divine law – which is totally contrary to the context of this very verse, and equally contrary to the explications of recognized authorities in the field of Tafsīr. Along with it, it was also assumed that Divine law was broken on this occasion because the prophet himself had failed to fulfill his duty as a prophet. Again, along with that, it was also assumed that some particular time had been fixed by Allah Ta'ālā when he was supposed to leave the place – and he, much before this supposedly fixed time, abandoned his duty of calling people to truth and ran for life!

If seen with the least deliberation and fairness, it will stand proved that no hint from the Qur'ān, or Ḥadīth points out to these assumed premises.

To consider what precedes in the verse of the Qur'ān itself, let us look at the words of the verse:

فَلَوْ لَا كَانَتْ قَرْيَةٌ اٰمَنَتْ فَنَفَعَهَآ اِيْمَانُهَآ اِلَّا قَوْمَ يُوْنُسَ

So, how is it that there never was a town which could have be-

lieved and its belief would have been of benefit to it, except the people of Yūnus عليه السلام (Jonah)!

The sense, as already clear, is that of regret over the state of inertia prevailing among common residents of habitations around the world. It is in that spirit that it was said: How would they not become such as would have believed at a time when believing is acceptable and beneficial? In other words, they could have believed before being hit by punishment or death, in which case, their believing would have been accepted. But, the people of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام were an exception to this rule, for they, by seeing the signs of punishment, and much before being hit by the punishment, believed and their believing and repentance came to be accepted.

This evident sense of the verse is itself telling us that no Divine law has been broken here, in fact, exactly in accordance with Divine practice, their faith and repentance have been accepted.

Most commentators – Abū Ḥayyān, Al-Qurṭubī, Al-Zamakhsharī, Qāḍī Thanā'ullāh, 'Allāmah Ālūsī and others – have given this very sense of the verse according to which the acceptance of repentance from the people of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام comes under the customary Divine law. The words of Al-Qurṭubī appear as given below:

وقال ابنُ جُبَيْر غشيهم العذاب كما يغشى الثوب القبر، فلما صحت توبتهم رفع الله عنهم العذاب. وقال الطبرى: خص قوم يونس عليه السلام من بين سائر الامم بان تيب عليهم بعد معاينة العذاب، وذكر ذلك عن جماعة من المفسرين. وقال الزجاج، انهم لم يقع بهم العذاب، وانما رأوا العلامة التى تدل على العذاب ولورأوا عين العذاب لما نفعهم ايمانهم. قلت قول الزجاج حسن، فان المعاينة التى لا تنفع التوبة معها هى التلبس بالعذاب كقصة فرعون ولهذا جاء بقصه قوم يونس على اثر قصة فرعون، ويعضد هذا قوله عليه السلام : "ان الله يقبل توبة العبد مالم يغرغر والغرغرة، الحشرجة، وذلك هوحال التلبس بالموت، وقد روى معنى ما قلناه عن ابن مسعود رضى الله عنه (الى) وهذا يدل على ان توبتهم قبل رؤية العذاب (الى) وعلى هذا فلا اشكال ولا تعارض ولا خصوص .

"Ibn Jubayr says that the punishment had covered them up like the sheet of cloth on the grave. Then, as their Taubah turned out to be sound (being before the punishment materialized), Allah Ta'ālā lifted the punishment from them. And At-

Ṭabarī says that the people of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام have been given a special place among all other peoples in that their Taubah was accepted after they had seen the punishment. And that has been mentioned by a large number of commentators. However, Az-Zajjāj says that the punishment had not yet fallen on those people. They had only seen the signs that proved the coming of the punishment. And if they had seen the very punishment falling upon them, their believing would have then been no good for them (and their Taubah too would have not been accepted). Al-Qurṭubī says that the statement of Az-Zajjāj is better because the seeing of a punishment after which Taubah is not accepted means that in which one is seized – as it happened in the case of Pharaoh. Therefore, in this very Sūrah, the event of the people of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام has been taken up immediately after the event relating to the Pharaoh. (So that the difference becomes clear in that the belief of the Pharaoh came after having been seized by the punishment, contrary to the people of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام, who came to believe before the punishment actually seized them). This is confirmed by a saying of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, 'Allah Ta'ālā accepts the Taubah of the servant until he is rattled by death.' And '*al-ghargharah*' (as in the Ḥadīth) is the rattling sound that comes from the throat and that is what happens on being seized by death. And the same thing is evident from the *riwāyah* of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضى الله عنه in which it has been said that the people of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام had repented before the actual falling of the punishment. And Al-Qurṭubī says, as based on this explanation, there remains no difficulty, or contradiction, or particularization (of the people of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام).

As for At-Ṭabarī and other commentators who have deemed this event to be special to the people of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام, none of them have said that the reason of this special treatment was the 'shortcomings' of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام. Instead, the honest repentance of those people and their sincere belief in Divine knowledge are the kind of reasons that they have given to that end.

And now, when we know that the removal of the punishment from the people of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام was just not against the Divine law, in fact, was exactly in accordance with it, then, the very

foundation of what has been postulated here stands demolished.

Similarly, there is no Qur'ānic hint to prove that Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام, once he had given the warning of punishment, broke away from his people without prior Divine permission. Instead, the context of verses and reports from Tafsīr tell us that things happened here as they had happened with all past communities, that is, when the decision was made to send Divine punishment on a people, Allah Ta'ālā would command his Messenger and his companions to leave that area. This has been clearly mentioned in the Qur'ān in connection with the story of Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام. Very similarly, here too, when this command of Allah was delivered to those people through Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام – that the punishment will come after three days – then, the departure of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام from that area has, obviously enough, taken place under Divine orders.

Of course, there was a slip from Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام in terms of the elegant prophetic station he was blessed with. Words of displeasure about it appear in Sūrah al-Anbiyā' (21:87,88) and Sūrah aṣ-Ṣaffāt (37:139-148) and, as a result of which, came the event of his staying in the belly of a fish. But, this slip has nothing to do with the assumed assertion that he fell short in fulfilling his duty as a prophet. In fact, what actually happened is what has been stated earlier with reference to authentic Tafsīrs. In brief, after Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام had delivered the warning to his people that the punishment will come after three days as willed by Allah, he left his place and went out. Later, it was proved that the punishment did not materialize. Now, Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام was worried as to how he would go back to his people. If he did, they would charge him to be a liar. And the law of those people required that a proven liar must be killed. Now, this added the danger of the likely loss of life in returning to his people. Under such circumstances, he had no way out but to migrate from that very country. But, the customary practice of the blessed prophets is that they do not migrate simply on the authority of their personal opinion – unless the signal to migrate comes from Allah Ta'ālā. So, the slip of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام was no more than that he boarded a boat with the intention of migration, before came the permission of Allah. This was, though no sin in itself, but different from the customary practice of prophets it was. If we were to ponder over the

words of the verse of the Qur'ān, the slip of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام will not turn out to be a shortcoming in the fulfillment of his duty as a prophet. In fact, it would prove not to be anything else but migration before permission with the aim of staying safe against the oppression of his people. The verse of Sūrah aṣ-Ṣāffāt is virtually explicit regarding this subject. It was said: إِذْ أَبَقَ إِلَى الْفُلْكِ الْمَشْحُونِ (when he ran away towards the laden boat – 37:140). Here, the act of boarding a boat with the intention of migration has been expressed through the word: ابق (*abaqā*) denoting displeasure. It means the running away or fleeing of a slave without the permission of his master. And in the verse of Sūrah al-Anbiyā', it has been said: وَذَا النُّونِ إِذْ ذَّهَبَ مُغَاضِبًا فَظَنَّ أَنْ لَّنْ نَّقْدِرَ عَلَيْهِ (and the man of the fish, when he left in anger assuming that We shall not keep him tight – 21:87). Here the tenor of speech is that of displeasure over the act of migration that was resorted to because of natural apprehension and the desire to stay protected from a hostile people. It is worth keeping in mind that all this happened after the perfect fulfillment of the duties of prophethood, only when a return to his people posed a certain danger to his life. Tafsīr Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī has taken up this subject in the following words:

اى غضبان على قومه لشدة شكيمتهم وتمادى اصرارهم مع طول دعوته اياهم، وكان ذهابه هذا سهم هجرة عنهم، لكنه لم يؤمر به

(Sayyidnā Yunus عليه السلام) left his people in anger against their bitter hostility and adamant infidelity despite that he had spent a long time as a prophet inviting them to faith. This journey of his was a kind of migration but he had not yet received the permission for it.

Here, it has been made clear that some shortcoming in carrying out the prophetic mission was not the cause of Divine displeasure, instead, it was migration before permission that did become its cause – which, by itself, was no sin. But, because of being contrary to the customary practice of blessed prophets, it was received with displeasure. When some 'Ulamā sounded the learned contemporary about this error, he chose to report the sayings of many commentators relating to the Tafsīr of Sūrah aṣ-Ṣaffāt, in support of his stand.

Among these – with the exception of some Israelite reports of Wahb ibn Munabbih and others – not a single report proves his stand,

that shortcomings were committed (God forbid) by Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام in the fulfillment of his duty as a prophet, as correct.

And it is not hidden from the people of knowledge that commentators generally include Israelite reports in their Tafsīrs about which all of them agree that these are not authentic and trustworthy. No Islāmic legal ruling can be based on them. It is only through the crutches of these Israelite reports, whether they appear in the books of Muslim commentators or in the book of Jonah, that this grave accusation can be leveled against Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام that 'he had committed shortcomings in the fulfillment of his duties as a prophet.' No commentator of Islām has ever approved of it.

وَاللّٰهُ سُبْحَانَهٗ وَتَعَالٰى اَعْلَمُ، وَبِه استغيث ان يعصمنا من الخطايا والزلات

And Allah, He is Pure and High and the Most Knowledgeable and before Him is our plaint that He protects us from all errors and lapses.

Details of the Event relating to Sayyidnā Yunus عليه السلام

Part of the details of the event relating to Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام has been mentioned in the Qur'ān while some of it has its proof in reports of Ḥadīth and history. According to these sources, the people of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام lived in the well-known place, Nineveh near Mousel, Iraq. Their number has been given as more than one hundred thousand in the Holy Qur'ān. It was for their guidance that Allah Ta'ālā sent Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام. They refused to believe. Allah Ta'ālā asked Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام to warn these people that Divine punishment was going to overtake them within three days. Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام made the announcement before his people. When they went in consultation with each other, they agreed that they had never found Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام lying, therefore, this thing from him was not to be ignored. Finally, they devised a plan to see whether or not Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام stays among them at his place during the night. If he did, they were to understand that nothing would happen. And if he went somewhere else from there, then, they should be certain that the punishment would descend upon them the next morning. Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام moved out of his dwelling place during the night as Divinely commanded. When morning came, the Divine punishment, in the form of a cloud-like black smoke started hovering over their heads tending to be descending down closer to them. They then

became certain that they all were going to be destroyed. Seeing this, they looked for Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام so that they could confess to their past denial, repent and believe with him as the witness. But, when they did not find him, they took it upon themselves to come up with repentance and prayers for forgiveness in the best spirit of sincerity at their command. To do that, they left homes, came out on open grounds, women, children and animals all huddled there. Wearing rags, weeping and wailing, repenting and begging refuge from Divine punishment, they made the whole area resound with a massive collective plaint. Allah Ta'ālā accepted their repentance and removed the punishment from them – as mentioned in this verse. Reports indicate that this was 'Āshūrā, that is, the day of the tenth of Muḥarram.

On the other side, Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام was waiting outside the township expecting that the Divine punishment will be about to hit the people there. He knew nothing about how they had repented and sought forgiveness. When the punishment stood removed, he started worrying about himself for his people would now declare him to be a liar – because he had announced that the punishment would strike within three days. According to the law of those people, if a person whose lying was known did not produce a witness in his support, he would be killed. Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام was concerned apprehending that he would be declared a liar and killed.

The noble prophets are protected from every act of sin and disobedience, but are not set apart from others in terms of human nature and temperament. At that time, Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام naturally grieved that he had made the announcement as Divinely commanded and now it was because of the announcement he made he would be declared a liar. How could he go back to his place under these circumstances and take the risk of being killed in accordance with the law of his people? Deep in this anxiety, he started off with the intention of getting out of that town until he reached the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. There he saw a boat being boarded by people. They recognized Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام and let him board *gratis*. The boat sailed. But, when it reached off shore, it stopped suddenly. It refused to move any further, neither forward, nor backward. The boat people made an announcement. They said that Allah had made their boat special. When an oppressive sinner or a slave in flight boards it, the

boat stops on its own. So, they said, let that person show himself up so that others do not suffer because of one person.

Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام spoke out that he was the sinner and the fleeing slave. As the act of leaving his town and boarding the boat was prompted by a natural apprehension and not by Divine permission, the dignified bearing of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام as a prophet had no hesitation in declaring this act, of coming towards the boat without that permission, a sin. The rule was that no movement of a prophet should have been without Divine permission. So he said, 'Throw me *into the sea and be spared of the punishment.*' The people of the boat would not do that. They drew lots so that the person thus named could be thrown into the sea. By chance, the lot drawn had the name of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام on it. They were intrigued. They drew lots again and again. But, as Divine decree would have it, the name that kept appearing repeatedly was that of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام. The Holy Qur'ān mentions this drawing of lots and the incidence of the name of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام being drawn therein (to be the one to be thrown overboard): فَسَاهَمَ فَكَانَ مِنَ الْمُدْحَضِيْنَ (and he drew lots and was among the losers – 37:141).

This dealing of Allah Ta'ālā with Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام was in view of his special status as a prophet. He had done no contravention of any Divine command that could be called sin or disobedience – for that matter, there exists no possibility of these issuing forth from any prophet because they are *ma'sūm* (Divinely protected). But, it was not appropriate to the high station of a prophet that he would transfer to another place without Divine permission simply on the basis of natural apprehension. It was this contra-dignity conduct which brought displeasure and resultant action.

On the one hand, names were being drawn in lots. The named was waiting to be thrown overboard. On the other hand, a large fish under Divine orders was lurking by the boat with her mouth agape, waiting for the incumbent to be thrown into the sea and right into her belly. Allah Ta'ālā had already commanded the fish that the body of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام that was to be deposited in her belly was no food for her, instead, was his home for a while. When Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام was lowered into the sea, the fish received him. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضی الله عنه said that Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام lived in the belly

of the fish for forty days. It would take him down to the sea bed and to nautical journeys far and wide. The period of his stay in the belly of the fish has also been reported as, five, and one day and few hours. (Maẓharī) Only Allah Ta'ālā knows the truth about it. Living in that state, Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام made the following *du'ā*:

لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّآ اَنْتَ سُبْحٰنَكَ اِنِّیْ كُنْتُ مِنَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ

There is no god but You. Pure are You. Indeed, I have been of the wrongdoers – 21: 87.

Allah Ta'ālā accepted this prayer and Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام was put on the shore alive and unharmed.

But, the heat in the belly of the fish had left no hair on his body. Allah Ta'ālā caused a gourd vine to grow near him. Even the shade provided by the leaves on it became a blessing for Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام. And signaled by Allah Ta'ālā, a wild goat would come every morning and evening, stand near him and he would have milk to drink.

Thus, Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام was alerted to that slip, and later on, his people too came to know the whole story.

In this story, as for parts that have been mentioned in the Qur'ān, or stand proved from authentic narratives of Ḥadīth, they are certain. The rest of them come from historical reports – and no ruling of Islāmic law can be based on them.

Verses 99 – 100

وَلَوْ شَآءَ رَبُّكَ لَاٰمَنَ مَنْ فِی الْاَرْضِ كُلُّهُمْ جَمِيْعًا ؕ اَفَاَنْتَ تُكْرِهُ النَّاسَ حَتّٰی يَكُوْنُوْا مُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿۹۹﴾ وَمَا كَانَ لِنَفْسٍ اَنْ تُؤْمِنَ اِلَّا بِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَيَجْعَلُ الرِّجْسَ عَلَی الَّذِيْنَ لَا يَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿۱۰۰﴾

Had your Lord willed, all those on earth would have believed altogether. Would you, then, compel people, so that they become believers? [99]

And it is not for any one that he believes except with the will of Allah. And He makes filth settle on those who do not understand. [100]

Verses 101 – 103

قُلِ انْظُرُوْا مَاذَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۗ وَمَا تُغْنِي الْاٰيٰتُ وَالنُّذُرُ عَنْ قَوْمٍ لَّا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿١٠١﴾ فَهَلْ يَنْتَظِرُوْنَ اِلَّا مِثْلَ اَيَّامِ الَّذِيْنَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ۗ قُلْ فَانْتَظِرُوْٓا اِنِّيْ مَعَكُمْ مِّنَ الْمُنْتَظِرِيْنَ ﴿١٠٢﴾ ثُمَّ نُنَجِّيْ رُسُلَنَا وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا كَذٰلِكَ ۚ حَقًّا عَلَيْنَا نُنْجِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿١٠٣﴾

Say, "Look at what is there in the heavens and the earth?" But, signs and warners do not suffice a people who do not believe. [101]

So, are they waiting for nothing short of something like the days of those who have passed before them? Say, "So wait. I am with you, among those waiting." [102]

Then We (used to) save Our messengers and those who believed. Similarly, it being on Us, We shall save the believers. [103]

Verses 104 – 107

قُلْ يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِيْ شَكٍّ مِّنْ دِيْنِيْ فَلَآ اَعْبُدُ الَّذِيْنَ تَعْبُدُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ وَلٰكِنْ اَعْبُدُ اللّٰهَ الَّذِيْ يَتَوَفّٰىكُمْ ۚ وَاُمِرْتُ اَنْ اَكُوْنَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿١٠٤﴾ وَاَنْ اَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّيْنِ حَنِيْفًا ۚ وَلَا تَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ ﴿١٠٥﴾ وَلَا تَدْعُ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ مَا لَا يَنْفَعُكَ وَلَا يَضُرُّكَ ۚ فَاِنْ فَعَلْتَ فَاِنَّكَ اِذًا مِّنَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿١٠٦﴾ وَاِنْ يَّمْسَسْكَ اللّٰهُ بِضُرٍّ فَلَا كَاشِفَ لَهٗٓ اِلَّا هُوَ ۚ وَاِنْ يُّرِدْكَ بِخَيْرٍ فَلَا رَآدَّ لِفَضْلِهٖ ۗ يُصِيْبُ بِهٖ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهٖ ۗ وَهُوَ الْغَفُوْرُ الرَّحِيْمُ ﴿١٠٧﴾

Say, "O people, if you are in doubt about my Faith, then, I do not worship those you worship beside Allah. Rather, I worship Allah who brings death to you. And I have been ordained to be among the believers, [104] **and**

that I should make myself firm on Faith, being upright, and never be among the Mushriks."* [105]

And do not invoke, other than Allah, what neither benefits you nor harms you, for, if you do so, then you will surely be one of the unjust. [106]

And if Allah brings some harm to you, then, there is none to remove it except He. And if He intends to bring some good to you, then, there is none to turn His grace back. He brings it to whomever He wills from among His servants. And He is the Most-Forgiving, the Very Merciful. [107]

Verses 108 - 109

قُلْ يَآيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَآءَكُمُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَّبِّكُمْ فَمَنِ اهْتَدٰى فَاِنَّمَا يَهْتَدِيْ لِنَفْسِهٖ وَمَنْ ضَلَّ فَاِنَّمَا يَضِلُّ عَلَيْهَا وَمَآ اَنَا عَلَيْكُمْ بِوَكِيْلٍ ﴿١٠٨﴾ وَاتَّبِعْ مَا يُوْحٰٓى اِلَيْكَ وَاصْبِرْ حَتّٰى يَحْكُمَ اللّٰهُ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الْحٰكِمِيْنَ ﴿١٠٩﴾

Say, "O people, the truth has come to you from your Lord. So, whoever accepts guidance accepts it to his own benefit, and whoever goes astray does so to his own detriment. And I am not responsible for you." [108]

And follow what is being revealed to you, and be patient until Allah gives His judgment, and He is the best of judges. [109]

Alḥamdulillāh
The commentary on
Sūrah Yūnus
Ends here.

*Mushriks: those who associate partners to the divinity of Allah.

Sūrah Hūd

Sūrah Hūd is Makkī and it has 123 Verses and 10 Sections

Verses 1 – 5

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

With the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Very Merciful

الٓرٰ قف كِتٰبٌ اُحْكِمَتْ اٰيٰتُهٗ ثُمَّ فُصِّلَتْ مِنْ لَّدُنْ حَكِيْمٍ خَبِيْرٍ ﴿١﴾
اَلَّا تَعْبُدُوْٓا اِلَّا اللّٰهَ ؕ اِنَّنِيْ لَكُمْ مِّنْهُ نَذِيْرٌ وَّبَشِيْرٌ ﴿٢﴾ وَّاَنِ
اسْتَغْفِرُوْا رَبَّكُمْ ثُمَّ تُوْبُوْٓا اِلَيْهِ يُمَتِّعْكُمْ مَّتَاعًا حَسَنًا اِلٰٓى
اَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى وَّيُؤْتِ كُلَّ ذِيْ فَضْلٍ فَضْلَهٗ ؕ وَاِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَاِنِّيْٓ
اَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ كَبِيْرٍ ﴿٣﴾ اِلَى اللّٰهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ ۚ وَهُوَ
عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿٤﴾ اَلَآ اِنَّهُمْ يَثْنُوْنَ صُدُوْرَهُمْ
لِيَسْتَخْفُوْا مِنْهُ ؕ اَلَا حِيْنَ يَسْتَغْشُوْنَ ثِيَابَهُمْ ۙ يَعْلَمُ مَا يُسِرُّوْنَ
وَمَا يُعْلِنُوْنَ ۚ اِنَّهٗ عَلِيْمٌۢ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُوْرِ ﴿٥﴾

Alif, Lām, Rā. **(This is) a book the verses of which have been made firm, then elaborated by a Being All Wise, All Aware,** [1] **(with an order) that you worship none but Allah – surely, I am for you a warner from Him, and a bearer of glad tidings** [2] **– and that you seek forgiveness from your Lord, then, turn to Him in repentance. He shall, then, provide you with good things to enjoy for a given time, and bestow His added grace on everyone of excellence. And if you turn away, then, I fear for you the punishment of a great day.** [3] **To Allah is your return and He is powerful over everything.** [4] **Beware, they bend their chests to hide from Him. Beware, when they make their clothes a cover, He knows what they hide and what they expose. Surely, He is All Aware of what lies in the hearts.** [5]

Commentary

Sūrah Hūd is among the Sūrahs that describe the coming of several kinds of mass punishments triggered by Divine displeasure as well as the horrendous happenings of the fateful day of Judgement and its outcome in the form of individual reward and punishment, all in a manner that is unique.

For this reason, when a few strands of hair in the blessed beard of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had turned visibly grey, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه expressed his concern by saying: '*Yā Rasūlallāh*, you have become old.' He said: 'Yes, Sūrah Hūd has made me old.' There are reports which also add Sūrah al-Wāqi'ah, al-Mursalāt, 'Amma Yatasā'alūn (an-Naba') and at-Takwīr with Sūrah Hūd. (Reported by al-Ḥākim and Tirmidhī)

The sense articulated through the Ḥadīth given above was to highlight that such was the awe and terror inspired by the mention of these happenings that it caused the emergence of the signs of old age.

The first verse of the Sūrah opens with the letters: الر (*alif, lām, rā*). These are isolated letters the meaning of which is a secret between Allah Ta'ālā and His Rasūl. Others have not been informed about it. Rather, they have been prohibited from even worrying about it.

After that, about the Holy Qur'ān it was said that it was a book the verses of which are made '*muḥkam*' (firm). The word: محكم (*muḥkam*) is from: احكام (*iḥkām*) which means such a correct balancing of meaningful speech as would not leave the probability of any error or disorder in word or meaning. Based on this definition, the making of these verses '*muḥkam*,' firm or established would mean that Allah Ta'ālā has made these verses such as do not admit of any likelihood and probability of any error in words, or disorder in meanings, or defect, or falsity. (Qurṭubī)

And Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه has said that '*muḥkam*' (firm) at this place stands in contrast to '*mansūkh*' (abrogated). And the sense is that Allah Ta'ālā has made the verses of the Qur'ān as a whole firm, non-abrogated – that is, the way earlier Books, Torah, Injil etc. were abrogated after the revelation of the Qur'ān. But, after the revelation of this Book, since the very chain of the coming of prophets and revelations came to an end, therefore, this

Book will not be abrogated until the last day of *Qiyāmah*. (Qurṭubī) As for the abrogation of some verses of the Qur'ān through the Qur'ān itself, it is not contrary to this.

In the same verse, given there was another standing feature of the Qur'ān: ثُمَّ فُصِّلَتْ (*thumma fuṣṣilat*) that is, 'then these verses were elaborated'. The real meaning of *tafsīl* or elaboration is to separate two things and make them distinct from each other. For this reason, different sections in ordinary (Arabic) books bear the heading of 'Faṣl'. At this place, the elaboration of verses could also mean that the verses concerning beliefs, acts of worship, dealings, social living, morals etc. have been separated from each other and described clearly.

And it could also mean that, as far as Allah Ta'ālā's will is concerned, the entire Qur'ān had already been embedded in the Preserved Tablet (*al-lawḥ al-maḥfūẓ*). But, later it was revealed bit by bit in many installments as necessitated under different conditions prevailing among peoples and countries, so that its preservation could become easy and acting in accordance with it also turns out to be functionally convenient.

After that, it was said: مِنْ لَّدُنْ حَكِيْمٍ خَبِيْرٍ that is, all these verses have come from a Sacred Being who is absolutely and simultaneously Wise and Aware. In other words, there are so many considerations of wisdom ingrained in everything that issues forth from Him. It is impossible for human beings to encompass them all. Then He is fully aware of every particle, present now or to be present in the future, of this multifaceted universe. He knows all states of their existence as it is and as it will be and releases His commands keeping all this in sight. This is not like what human beings do. No matter how intelligent, smart and experienced they may be, their reason and vision are still cordoned by a limited frame of reference. Their experience is the product of what is around them. And this, mostly, proves to be unsuccessful, even wrong, especially when it concerns what would happen in the future under different times and conditions. (Interestingly enough, the observations of the commentator apply to what we now know as the intellectual phenomena of Futurology with its pundits, fellow travelers and dabblers all over the world, including Pakistan! – tr.).

From the second verse begins the delineation of one of the most important and foremost themes, that of Tauḥīd, the Oneness of Allah

Ta'ālā. It is said: اَلَّا تَعۡبُدُوۡۤا اِلَّا اللّٰهَ (that you worship none but Allah). It means that among things stated in these verses the most important and foremost is that no one else should be worshipped except the One Allah.

After that, it was said: اِنَّنِیۡ لَکُمۡ مِّنۡہُ نَذِیۡرٌ وَّبَشِیۡرٌ (Surely, I am for you a warner from Him, and a bearer of glad tidings). It means that the noble messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم has been commanded to tell the whole world through these verses that he was for them a carrier of warning (against disobedience) and a bearer of glad tidings (of blessings in this life and in the life to come) from Allah.

The word: نذير (*nadhīr*) is usually taken to mean a person who puts the fear of something into someone's heart. But, this word is not used to denote a fear-generating enemy or beast or others that harm. Instead of that, *nadhīr* is applied to a person who, out of his love and affection to someone, warns him against and saves him from some harmful things. These could be things that harm in this world and might as well could be those that bring harm in the Hereafter.

Out of the instructions given in these verses of the Qur'ān, the second one appears in the third verse in the words: وَّاَنِ اسۡتَغۡفِرُوۡا رَبَّکُمۡ ثُمَّ تُوۡبُوۡۤا اِلَیۡہِ (and that you seek forgiveness from your Lord). It means that, in these verses of firm and established meaning, Allah Ta'ālā has also instructed His servants to ask for forgiveness and pardon from their Lord, and make their Taubah before Him. Forgiveness (*maghfirah*) relates to past sins and Taubah (repentance) relates to the resolve of not going near these anymore. And, in reality, a correct and true Taubah is no more than being ashamed of past sins, praying to Allah that they be forgiven and resolving firmly that they would not be repeated in future. Therefore, some righteous elders have said that seeking forgiveness from Allah only verbally – without having made a firm resolution, and the necessary arrangements to implement it, in order to remain safe from future sins – is the Taubah (repentance) of liars (*al-kadhdhābīn*). (Qurṭubī) Or, as it was said poetically:

معصیت راخنده می آید بر استغفار ما

'Sin laughs at my style of seeking forgiveness'

or that such repentance is itself worth being repented.

After that, glad tidings of the finest fruits of success in *Dunyā* and

'Ākhirah have been given to those who repent and seek forgiveness by saying: يُمَتِّعْكُمْ مَّتَاعًا حَسَنًا اِلٰٓى اَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى (He will, then, provide you with good things to enjoy for a given time). It means that those who genuinely seek forgiveness for their past sins and firmly resolve to abstain from these in future and do what it takes to implement their resolution, then, not only that their error will be forgiven, they would also be blessed with a good life. And it is obvious that 'life' here carries a general sense that includes life in the mortal world as well as the life in the Hereafter. It is about such people that the Qur'ān has said elsewhere: لَنُحْيِيَنَّهٗ حَيٰوةً طَيِّبَةً (We shall certainly give them good and pure life – 16:97). According to the investigations of the majority of commentators, both the lives of *Dunyā* and *'Ākhirah* are included in the sense of this verse as well. This has been further clarified in Sūrah Nūḥ. The address is to the seekers of forgiveness. It was said: يُرْسِلِ السَّمَآءَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِّدْرَارًا وَّيُمْدِدْكُمْ بِاَمْوَالٍ وَّبَنِيْنَ وَيَجْعَلْ لَّكُمْ جَنّٰتٍ وَّيَجْعَلْ لَّكُمْ اَنْهٰرًا It means: (if you were to seek forgiveness from Allah genuinely), Allah Ta'ālā shall send the sky showering over you (the rains of His mercy) and bless you with wealth and children and make for you gardens and bring for you rivers – 71:11). It is obvious that the mercy of rains and the blessings of wealth and children relate to the life of the present world.

That is why most of the commentators have taken the expression مَتَاعًا حَسَنًا (good things to enjoy) to mean the worldly enjoyments. According to them the sense is that, 'Allah Ta'ālā shall bless you with extended sustenance and easy modalities of comfort and protect you from calamities and punishments – as a result of the forgiveness you seek and the repentance you show. And since this worldly life must end some day, the enjoyment of its comforts cannot become eternal under the law of nature. Therefore, by adding the caveat: اِلٰٓى اَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى (for a given time), it has been stressed that the 'good things to enjoy' in the present world will be available up to a particular time, that is, the time of death. On the final count, death will eliminate all these things.

But, soon after this 'death,' the life of the other world will begin, and there too, eternal comforts will be available to those who repent and seek forgiveness.

And Sahl ibn 'Abdullāh رحمه الله تعالى said, 'The meaning of 'good things to enjoy' is that one's attention bypasses the created and remains fixed on the Creator.' Some other men of Allah have said, 'The

reality of 'good things to enjoy' is that one remains content with what is available and worries not for what is not.' In other words, one should be satisfied with as much as is within easy reach in this world and should not eat his heart out for what he does not have.

Of the glad tidings given to those who repent and seek forgiveness, the second appears in the following words: وَيُؤْتِ كُلَّ ذِي فَضْلٍ فَضْلَهُ (and bestow His added grace on everyone of excellence). Here, the first فضل (*faḍl*: excellence) refers to one's good deed, while the second '*faḍl*' denotes Divine grace or bounty, that is, the Paradise. Put simply, the sense is that Allah Ta'ālā shall bless every doer of good deed with His grace, that is, Paradise.

A promise was made of Good Life, both in *Dunyā* and *Ākhirah*, in the first sentence, and of everlasting blessings of Paradise, in the second. After that, it was said: فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنِّيٓ أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ كَبِيرٍ (And if you turn away, then, I fear for you the punishment of a great day). That is: 'If you turn away from the good counsel given to you, fail to seek forgiveness for your past sins, and fail to remain safe against sins in the future, then, there is a strong likelihood that you will be seized by the punishment of a great day'. It refers to the day of *Qiyāmah* for it would be a day of one thousand years and, also in terms of what ominous things would transpire in it, it will be the gravest.

In the fifth verse, the theme has been emphasized further. Let man do what he elects to. Let him live the way he fancies. But, ultimately, once dead, man has to return to Him and He is powerful over everything. It is not at all difficult for Him to have each particle man is made of reassembled after he is dead and becomes dust and see to it that there rises the man he was, all over again.

The sixth verse carries a refutation of what the hypocrites and the disbelievers do. They try to camouflage their hostility, and their antagonistic activism against the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, as deftly as they could. Their hearts blaze with malice and enmity but they maintain a cool front, find all sorts of covers to hide their true identity and intention and surmise that no one would find out who they were really and what they were doing actually. But, the truth of the matter is that Allah Ta'ālā knows it all, that which they let come out in the open and that which they conceal behind all sorts of clothes, covers and curtains: إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ because, 'He is All Aware of [even] what lies in the

hearts.'

Verses 6 – 8

وَمَا مِنْ دَآبَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا عَلَى اللَّهِ رِزْقُهَا وَيَعْلَمُ
مُسْتَقَرَّهَا وَمُسْتَوْدَعَهَا ۚ كُلٌّ فِي كِتٰبٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿٦﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِي
خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ وَّكَانَ عَرْشُهُ عَلَى الْمَآءِ
لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا ۗ وَلَئِنْ قُلْتَ إِنَّكُمْ مَّبْعُوثُونَ مِنْ
بَعْدِ الْمَوْتِ لَيَقُولَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوٓا إِنْ هٰذَآ إِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿٧﴾
وَلَئِنْ أَخَّرْنَا عَنْهُمُ الْعَذَابَ إِلَىٰٓ أُمَّةٍ مَّعْدُودَةٍ لَّيَقُولُنَّ
مَا يَحْبِسُهُ ۗ أَلَا يَوْمَ يَأْتِيهِمْ لَيْسَ مَصْرُوفًا عَنْهُمْ وَحَاقَ بِهِمْ
مَّا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِءُونَ ﴿٨﴾

And there is no creature on earth whose sustenance is not on Allah. And He knows its permanent and its temporary place. Everything is in a clear book. [6]

And He is the One who created the heavens and the earth in six days and His throne was on water so that He might test you as to who among you is better in deed. And if you say, "you shall be raised after death," the disbelievers will surely say, "This is nothing but sheer magic." [7]

And if We defer the punishment for them for a certain time, they shall say, "What is holding it back?" Beware, the day it visits them, it shall not be turned back from them and they shall be besieged by what they used to ridicule. [8]

Commentary

Mentioned in the previous verse was the all-encompassing knowledge of Allah Ta'ālā from whom nothing is hidden, nothing from the tiniest particle of the universe down to the secrets of the hearts. It is in consonance with it that the first verse (6) mentions a great favor bestowed on human beings – that Allah Ta'ālā has Himself taken the responsibility of providing their sustenance. Then, this is not restricted to human beings alone. It extends to every living form that walks over

the earth. Its sustenance reaches it where it lives or goes to. That being the state of affairs, the intentions and efforts of disbelievers and hypocrites to hide things from Allah Ta'ālā are nothing but ignorance and senselessness. Then, taken in a general sense, it would include all beasts, birds, insects and all animals of the land and the sea. To intensify this generality, the word: من (*min*) has been added and the text reads: وَمَا مِنْ دَآبَّةٍ (and there is no creature). *Dābbah* is any creature that moves on earth. Birds are also included there because their nests are also located somewhere on the land. That creatures living in water have also a connection with the surface of the earth is no secret. Allah Ta'ālā has taken the responsibility of providing sustenance for all these life forms and has put it in words which give the impression of a duty imposed on someone. It was said: عَلَى اللّٰهِ رِزْقُهَا (its sustenance is on Allah). It is obvious that there is no power that could put a liability on Allah Ta'ālā. What really happened is that Allah Ta'ālā himself has made this promise out of his grace and mercy. But, this promise comes from One who is True and Merciful. There is no probability of things happening otherwise, counter to the promise. This is a matter of certitude. It is to express this element of certitude that the word: على (*'alā*: on) has been introduced at this place – a word used to describe duties, although, Allah Ta'ālā takes no orders from anyone, nor is He responsible for something as obligated or necessary.

Lexically, رزق *rizq* (sustenance, provision or livelihood) means something from which a creature procures its food and through which the body grows and the soul survives.

According to the lexical meaning of the word '*rizq*', it is not necessary that whoever has it should also be its owner – because, *rizq* is given to all animals, but they are not its owners. They are not cut out for ownership. Similarly, infants are not the owners of their *rizq*, but it is given to them.

In terms of this general sense of *rizq*, 'Ulamā' have said that *rizq* could be *ḥalāl* (lawful) and it could also be *ḥarām* (unlawful), because for a person who eats up what belongs to the other person, that property, no doubt, becomes his food, but so it becomes only unlawfully. Had this person not used unfair means blinded by his greed, he would have received the *ḥalāl* (lawful) *rizq* reserved and appointed for him.

Removal of a doubt against the Divine Responsibility of *Rizq*

A question arises at this stage. When Allah Ta'ālā has taken the responsibility of providing food for every creature, why is it that there are many animals and human beings who die of hunger and thirst for the reason that they do not get food or water? The '*Ulamā*' have given several answers.

One possible answer is that the responsibility of *rizq* is there until comes the appointed time, that is, until comes the end of the years of life. When these years are over, one has to die, pass away from this world, the common causes of which are diseases, or accidents like burning, drowning, injury and wounds. Similarly, there could also be the reason that the *rizq* for the incumbent was stopped and which caused death.

Imām al-Qurṭubī, under his comments on this verse, has mentioned an event related to Abū Mūsā, Abū Mālik and some others from their tribe of Banū al-Ash'ar. When these people reached the blessed city of Madīnah after their Hijrah, the wherewithal of their journey was all used up. They sent one of their men to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in the hope that he would make some arrangement for their meals. When this person reached his door, he heard the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم reciting the verse: وَمَا مِنْ دَآبَّةٍ فِى الْاَرْضِ اِلَّا عَلَى اللّٰهِ رِزْقُهَا (And there is no creature on earth whose sustenance is not on Allah - 6). Hearing this verse, the person, thought that Allah has Himself taken the responsibility of providing *rizq* for all life forms, human or non-human, then, we Ash'arites too would not be any worse than the animals in the sight of Allah. He shall, most certainly, give us our *rizq*. With this thought in his mind, he turned from the door and left. He simply said nothing to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم about why he was there. After having returned to his tribe, he said, 'Rejoice, my friends. The help of Allah is coming for you.' His Ash'arī companions took his words in a different sense. They thought that their emissary sent to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was talking about the success of his visit and that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had promised to make arrangements for what they needed. Naturally, they found the news good and felt satisfied. Hardly had they sat down when they saw two men bringing a trencher, a large wooden tray, full of meat and bread. The carriers gave all this food to the Ash'arites who ate it to their fill. When food was still

left, they thought it would be nice to send the rest of the food to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم so that he could use it as he deemed fit. They had two of their men carry this food to the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

Later they all presented themselves before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and told him, '*Yā Rasūlallāh*, the food you sent was very nice and very delicious.' He said, 'As for me, I never sent any food.'

Then, they told him the whole story that they had sent one of their men to him, the reply that he gave led them to believe that the food was sent by him. Hearing this, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, 'not by me, this was sent by the Most Sacred Being who has taken the responsibility of providing *rizq* to every living creature.'

According to some Ḥadīth reports, when Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام reached the Mount of Ṭūr in search of fire, what he found there was not fire but Divine light. He was made a prophet and asked to go to Egypt so that the Pharaoh and his people could be brought on the right path. At that hour, it occurred to him that he had left his wife in a wilderness all alone – who would take care of her? To remove this scruple from his heart, Allah Ta'ālā asked Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام to strike his rod at the rock in front of him. When he did what he was asked to do, the rock split and out came yet another rock. He was asked to strike his rod at that too. He did that, the rock split and out came the third rock from it. He was asked to strike his rod at that too. It split and coming out from it he saw a creature holding a green leaf in his mouth.

No doubt, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام believed in the perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā even before, but what one sees with one's eyes has an effect of its own. So, when Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام saw this, he took off for Egypt right from that spot. He did not even stop to tell his wife that he had been commanded to leave for Egypt and that he was going there.

Rizq for All: The Divine System is Unique

After having made the promise in this verse that Allah Ta'ālā has taken the responsibility of providing the *rizq* of every living creature, things have not been left at that. Instead, to put human beings further at ease, it was said: وَيَعْلَمُ مُسْتَقَرَّهَا وَمُسْتَوْدَعَهَا (and He knows its permanent and its temporary place – 6). Different explanations of the words: مستقر

(*mustaqarr*) and مستودع (*mustawda'*) have been reported but, lexically, what Tafsīr al-Kashshāf carries is the closest. It says that *mustaqarr* is the place someone makes a permanent residence, or home; and *mustawda'* is a place where one stays temporarily to take care of something (as it appears in the translation of the text).

The sense being driven home is that the responsibility of Allah Ta'ālā should not be taken on the analogy of responsibilities as assumed by peoples and governments of the world of our experience. Here in this world, let us assume that there is a person or institution that would take the responsibility of delivering your '*rizq*' to you. In that case, if you were going somewhere, you would inform that individual or institution that you were leaving your permanent place to go somewhere else. Then, you will have to give a firm itinerary that you will be living in such and such city or village, from such and such date to such and such date, and that you wanted your provider to deliver your *rizq* there! But, when things are 'on Allah' and under His responsibility, you do not have to take even this much of trouble because He knows when you move and He knows when you do not and He knows what you are doing in this or that state. He knows where you live permanently and He knows where you live temporarily. He needs no application, or advice or address to take care of your *rizq*. It is just delivered wherever you are.

In view of the all-encompassing knowledge and perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā, only His will would have been sufficient to make everything come out right – without the need to maintain a log book or master file of work done. But, the only analogy weak man has is the analogy of the system he is used to, therefore, he could have apprehensions of possible errors and omissions. So, for his peace of mind, it was said: كُلٌّ فِىْ كِتٰبٍ مُّبِيْنٍ (Everything is in a clear book). This 'clear book' means the Preserved Tablet (*al-lawḥ al-maḥfūẓ*) which has a universal coverage with full details of the sustenance, age, deed and things like that and which are entrusted with concerned angels as and when needed.

As narrated by Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنه and reported in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, 'Allah Ta'ālā had written the destinies of all His creation fifty thousand years even before the creation of the heavens and the earth.'

A lengthy Ḥadīth narrated by Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضى الله

عنه, appearing in al-Bukhārī and Muslim, reports the saying of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم which is summarized as follows: 'Man goes through different stages before his birth. When the parts of his body are formed completely, Allah Ta'ālā commands an angel who writes down four things about him. One: Deeds he will do. Two: Years of life. Even recorded there is the month, day, minute and breath count. Three: Death: Where would he die and where would he be buried? Four: *Rizq*: How much is his sustenance and how and where does it have to reach him?' (And that it stands written in the Preserved Tablet (*al-lawḥ al-maḥfūẓ*) even before the creation of the heavens and the earth is not contrary to this).

Another manifestation of the all-encompassing knowledge and perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā has been mentioned in the second verse (7) – 'And He is the One who created the heavens and the earth in six days and (before creating these) His throne was on water.'

This tells us that water was created before the creation of the heavens and the earth. As for the elaboration of the creation of the heavens and the earth in six days, it has appeared in Sūrah Hā Mīm as-Sajdah (also called Sūrah Fuṣṣilat). There it has been said that the earth was created in two days, mountains, river streams, trees and means for the sustenance and survival of living creatures in two days, then, the seven heavens in two days – 41:9-12).

According to Tafsīr Maẓharī, heavens mean everything high and above and the earth means down and below. Day is the measure of time which, after the creation of the heavens and the earth, is from sunrise to sunset – although, at the time of the creation of the heavens and the earth, neither did the sun exist nor its rising and setting.

It was also within the perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā to create all these things in the flash of a moment but, in His infinite wisdom, He has made the system of this world gradual which is suitable for human temperament.

The purpose of the creation of the heavens and the earth has been identified at the end of the verse by saying: لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ اَيُّكُمْ اَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا (So that He might test you as to who among you is better in deed).

This tells us that the creation of the heavens and the earth was not the main purpose. The fact is that these were created for human be-

ings who act right, do better and, along with it, also make the best use of what has been placed therein to run their lives. Finally, it is expected of them that they would ponder over these and would not miss to recognize their Master and Lord (the *Mālik*, the *Rabb*).

The outcome is that human beings are the real purpose of the creation of the heavens and the earth. However, human beings are not all alike. Among them there are those who believe and have faith. Then, even among the later, there is someone, a man or a woman, who is the best in deeds. And it goes without saying that, among the progeny of Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام, the best in deeds is our Rasūl, on him the blessing of Allah, and peace. Therefore, it is correct to say that the real purpose of creating the entire universe is to bless it with the generous presence of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم (serving as a model right through the Last Day). (Maẓharī)

There is something we should also take note of. Allah Ta'ālā said: أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا (who among you is better in deed). He has said nothing about the number of deeds. From here we learn that Allah Ta'ālā favors the quality of deed more than He does the abundance or profusion or frequency of good deeds such as, Ṣalāh, Ṣawm, Tilāwah of Qur'ān and Dhikr of Allah. This beauty or excellence of deeds has been expressed through the word: احسان (*iḥsān*) in Ḥadīth. Essentially, it means the doing of a deed for the good pleasure of Allah alone with no worldly motive attached to it. Then, it is also necessary to do it in a way that is liked in the sight of Allah. This way has been demonstrated by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم through his conduct and he has made it necessary for his community to follow his Sunnah. In a nutshell, we can say that a little done with total sincerity and according to Sunnah is better than a lot more done with none, or less of the two.

Described in the seventh verse is the condition of those who denied that there was to be a Last Day and a Hereafter. Like chronic deniers of the truth, when they do not understand (or do not want to understand) something, they would dismiss it as nothing but magic.

In the eighth verse, an answer has been given to people who doubted the warnings of punishment given by prophets, peace be on them. Not willing to believe them, they used to ask them if they were true, and if they were, why the punishment they warned them of would not come?

Verses 9 – 14

وَلَئِنْ أَذَقْنَا الْإِنسَانَ مِنَّا رَحْمَةً ثُمَّ نَزَعْنَاهَا مِنْهُ ۚ إِنَّهُ لَيَئُوسٌ كَفُورٌ ﴿٩﴾ وَلَئِنْ أَذَقْنَاهُ نَعْمَاءَ بَعْدَ ضَرَّاءَ مَسَّتْهُ لَيَقُولَنَّ ذَهَبَ السَّيِّئَاتُ عَنِّي ۚ إِنَّهُ لَفَرِحٌ فَخُورٌ ﴿١٠﴾ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُم مَّغْفِرَةٌ وَأَجْرٌ كَبِيرٌ ﴿١١﴾ فَلَعَلَّكَ تَارِكٌ بَعْضَ مَا يُوحَىٰ إِلَيْكَ وَضَائِقٌ بِهِ صَدْرُكَ أَن يَقُولُوا لَوْلَا أُنزِلَ عَلَيْهِ كَنزٌ أَوْ جَاءَ مَعَهُ مَلَكٌ ۚ إِنَّمَا أَنتَ نَذِيرٌ ۚ وَاللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَكِيلٌ ﴿١٢﴾ أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ ۚ قُلْ فَأْتُوا بِعَشْرِ سُوَرٍ مِّثْلِهِ مُفْتَرَيَاتٍ وَادْعُوا مَنِ اسْتَطَعْتُم مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿١٣﴾ فَإِلَّمْ يَسْتَجِيبُوا لَكُمْ فَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا أُنزِلَ بِعِلْمِ اللَّهِ وَأَن لَّا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ۖ فَهَلْ أَنتُم مُّسْلِمُونَ ﴿١٤﴾

And if We give man a taste of mercy from Us and then take it away from him, he is then utterly desperate, ungrateful. [9]

And if We give him a taste of comfort after he has suffered from some hardship, he shall say, "Evils have gone away from me." He is, then, over-exulting, arrogant, [10] **except those who are patient and do good deeds. Those are the people for whom there is forgiveness and a great reward.** [11]

It is then expected of you that you will abandon some of what is being revealed to you and that your heart will be straitened thereby, because they say, "Why has a treasure not been sent down to him or an angel not come with him?" You are but a warner. And Allah takes care of everything. [12]

What? Do they say that he has fabricated it? Say, "Then bring ten sūrahs like it, fabricated. And call whomsoever you can, other than Allah, if you are true." [13]

So, if they do not respond to you, then be sure that it has been sent down with the knowledge of Allah and

that there is no god but He. So, do you submit? [14]

Commentary

In the verses appearing above, it has been confirmed that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is a Messenger of Allah and an answer has been given to those who engineer doubts about it. At the beginning, in the first three verses (9-11), an instinctively bad human habit has been mentioned with an instruction to Muslims that they should stay away from it.

That man is naturally fickle-minded and haste-prone, and that he tends to be consumed by his immediate condition and puts all concerns of the past and future out of his mind, has been described in the first two verses (9,10). It has been said: 'If We let man taste a blessing and then take it back, he loses courage and hope and turns ungrateful. And if We let him taste a blessing after he has suffered from some hardship, he forgets all about his suffering and starts bragging and boasting.

In other words, man is given to hurry things, takes the present as everything, does not bother to refer to the past or show concern for the future, therefore, a suffering after a blessing makes him lose hope and slide into ungratefulness. He never thinks that Allah who blessed him first could bless him again. Similarly, if one gets comfort after suffering, then he, rather than recall his past suffering, turn to Allah and be grateful to Him, starts waxing more proud and arrogant. In that state, he forgets his past and goes about thinking that Allah's blessings were his right, he has to have these, and that he remains under the impression that this was how he would continue for the rest of his life. So heedless he becomes that it just does not occur to him that the way the days of suffering did not continue any more, the same thing could happen to the days of comfort and they too could vanish.

Such is the state of human worship of the present and so tragic is the penchant for forgetting the past and the present that a power-hungry man would not even blink to raise the edifice of his power on the blood and dust of another man of power. Always looking up, he would never look down to recall that this had been the fate of the man of power before him. Sad ends and ill fates make no effect on him for power in the present tastes good.

When people start worshipping the present and elect to remain drunk with the state they are in, that is high time for Books of Allah and His Messengers to come. When they do, they bring the lesson-oriented events of the past into sharp focus for heedless man to see things in this perspective and have a little concern for what would happen to them in the future. The lesson they teach is: Ponder over the changing conditions of the universe you are in and get to know the power working behind these – great sermonizers from the Lord!

A perfect believer, in fact, a perfect human being is one who is able to perceive the hidden Power behind every change, revolution, sorrow and comfort, ignore their transitory phases, dismiss their material causes as the sole explanation. The mark of an intelligent person is that he looks at the originator or causer of causes more than he would look at causes, and it is with Him alone that he would relate to as firmly as possible.

In order to make such perfect models of humanity distinct from those having common human temperament, it was said in the third verse (11): إِلَّا الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ (except those who are patient and do good deeds). It means that people exempted from this common human frailty have two qualities: *Ṣabr* (patience) and *al-'Amal aṣ-Ṣāliḥ* (good deeds).

The word: صبر (*ṣabr*) is used to convey a much wider range of meanings in the Arabic language, much wider than conveyed by its translation as 'patience' in English. The real meaning of *ṣabr* is to tie, check, stop or hold back. In the terminology of the Qur'ān and Sunnah, to hold the desiring human self back from going for the impermissible is Ṣabr. Therefore, the sense of Ṣabr (patience) includes abstention from all sins and doings counter to the dictates of the Sharī'ah and *al-'Amal aṣ-Ṣāliḥ* (good deeds) covers all that is obligatory (*farḍ*), necessary (*wājib*), Sunnah and recommended (*mustaḥabb*). The verse now comes to mean that there are people who will not be affected by common human weaknesses. This will happen because they would have faith in Allah and they would fear the reckoning of the Last Day of *Qiyāmah*. They will abstain from everything disliked by Allah and His Rasūl and race towards every deed that brings their pleasure.

At the end of this very verse, also identified there is the recompense of these perfect human beings: أُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمْ مَّغْفِرَةٌ وَّأَجْرٌ كَبِيرٌ (Those are the

people for whom there is forgiveness and a great reward – 11)

At this place, it should be noted that the Holy Qur'an uses the word: اَذَقْنَا (*adhaqna*: We give them a taste of) for blessing and suffering both. By this device, it was indicated that real blessing and suffering is that of the Hereafter. Neither is the comfort of the mortal world the whole of it, nor is its suffering the whole of it. Instead of that, it should be taken at the level of tasting and sampling so that human beings could have some idea of the blessings and sufferings of the Hereafter. Therefore, neither are the comforts of this world something to be happy about unnecessarily, nor are its sufferings something to grieve about too much. If you were to think, this whole world is, to borrow a commercial term, only a showroom of the Hereafter with sample displays of comfort and suffering.

The fourth verse (12) has been revealed about a particular event. What happened was that the Mushriks of Makkah placed a host of demands before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. One of these was, 'our idols have been maligned in this Qur'an, therefore, we cannot believe in it. So, you should either bring some other Qur'an, or improve it by making alterations in it: اِئْتِ بِقُرْاٰنٍ غَيْرِ هٰذَآ اَوْ بَدِّلْهُ (Bring a Qur'an other than this, or change it – Yunus, 10:15)'. (Al-Baghawi, Mazhari)

Another demand they came up with was, 'we are to believe in your prophesy only when some treasure, like the treasures of the kings of the world, is sent down for you and which you dole out to everyone around. Or that some angel descends from the heavens and hangs out with you everywhere testifying that you were a Messenger of Allah in all certainty.'

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم felt the pinch of these absurd, even disrespectfully audacious demands in his heart. The reason was that he was mercy for all the worlds. It was not possible for him to leave them to their fate and take out the hope that they might someday believe from his heart. Nor was it possible for him to fulfill their absurd demands. To begin with, these demands were based on bland irrationality. If idols, idol-worship and things like that are not called what they are, what would become of right guidance and how would it be done? And then this brain wave of demanding a treasure from a prophet was a loud miss-match with his mission. They had simply taken the station of a prophet on the analogy of the status of a king. Simi-

larly, it is not the practice of Allah Ta'ālā that He would create conditions under which people were materially compelled to start professing the Faith. Otherwise, the whole world is within His power and control. Who could dare profess a belief, and act according to it, against the will of Allah Ta'ālā? But, it is in His infinite wisdom that He has made this world a place of test. No material means are used here to compel people to do something good or to abstain from something bad. Certainly, what is done here is through Scriptures and Apostles. Lines are drawn between virtue and vice. Good and bad are separated. The outcome of each is explained. That is how people are invited and exhorted to do what is right and abstain from what is evil. And if some angel were to be miraculously attached to a prophet to attest to the veracity of his word, it would have posed problems. When no one believed it, he would have faced cash punishment on the spot. In that case, this would have been a modality of compelling people to believe. This kind of belief would have not been believing without seeing which is the essence of belief and faith, nor would there be any choice left for man to make which is the essence of his deed. As for the demands of those people, they were, no doubt, absurd and audacious. But, there is another aspect to it. The very act of making such demands proved that these people were grossly unaware of the status and reality of a messenger and prophet of Allah. They saw no difference between Allah and His Messenger. They even took the messenger to be absolutely powerful like Allah, therefore, they demanded that he should do for them what could not be done by anyone other than Allah.

In brief, when the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم became very sad because of such demands, this verse was revealed to comfort him and to revitalize his thinking. Addressing him first, it was said: Would you – surrendering to the pressure of these people – leave out some part of the Qur'ān, sent by Allah, which they do not like, such as a part where it talks about the utter helplessness of idols? Would you, then, still be disturbed in the face of such demands? The introduction of the statement in verse 12 with the word: لعلك (*la'allaka*: Is it then expected of you) does not mean that something like that could be expected of him actually. Instead, the purpose is to establish that he was free from such things. He would not leave out any part of the Qur'ān in consideration of their insistence, nor does he have to be sad, concerned and straitened over their demands. The reason is that he has been sent

from Allah as *nadhīr*, as one who warns people against what is harmful for them, then, Allah takes care of the rest for He is powerful over everything. *Nadhīr* has been mentioned here particularly because those being addressed were *kāfirs*, and *kāfirs* deserve nothing but warning against the consequences of their deeds. Otherwise, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is not simply *nadhīr*, one who warns, he is *bashīr* too, one who announces glad tidings for people who do good deeds. In addition to what has been said here about the mission of a *nadhīr*, we should understand that, in reality, *nadhīr* is a person who warns out of love and affection against what is evil and harmful. Therefore, in a way, the sense of *bashīr*, a giver of glad tidings, is included in the sense of *nadhīr*, a giver of warning.

In the cited verses, the Mushriks had demanded the kind of miracles they chose. Verses that follow tell them that they already have a miracle, the miracle of the Qur'ān shown at the hands of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم before them, a miracle even they could not deny. Now if they were demanding these miracles honestly, only to determine the veracity of the messenger of Allah, then, their demand stands accepted (and the miracle is on). And if this demand is simply to gratify their hostility, the showing of miracles demanded by them would remain redundant, for who could expect from such hostile people that they would embrace Islām, even after having seen those miracles. So, the essential point is that the Holy Qur'ān is a clear miracle that cannot be denied.

A refutation of the false doubts engineered by Mushriks and Kāfirs in it has been made in the next two verses (13,14): These people say that the Prophet of Islam has himself made up the Qur'ān – it is no book of Allah.

In answer, it was said: If you really think so, that Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم can make a Qur'ān like this, all by himself, then, you too, better come up with only ten Sūrahs like that. And it is not necessary either that these ten Sūrahs have to be made by any one person. Instead, let everyone in the world join forces and come up with it. And when they fail to make even ten Sūrahs, then, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was to tell them: Now the reality stands out loud and clear, for had this Qur'ān been the word of some human being, other human beings could have also been able to make something like this. And that

they all fail to do so is a strong proof of the fact that this Qur'ān has been revealed only with the knowledge of Allah in which there is no room for the least increase or decrease and that it is beyond human power.

At this place, the Holy Qur'ān has said that they should come up with ten Sūrahs like it. And in another verse it was also said: 'Then, bring a Sūrah the like of this – al-Baqarah, 2:23.'

The reason is that they were first asked to bring ten Sūrahs. They failed to do so. Then, to make their inability look more pronounced, it was said in the verse of Sūrah al-Baqarah quoted above: If you take the Qur'ān to be a word of man, then, you too, bring no more than just one Sūrah being the like of it. But, despite this challenge of the Qur'ān, made so easy for them, they could do nothing. It stood proved that the Holy Qur'ān was a miracle, and the Word of Allah without any doubt. Therefore, at the end, it was said: فَهَلْ اَنْتُمْ مُّسْلِمُوْنَ , that is, 'would you now believe and obey, or would you prefer to remain heedless as before?'

Verses 15 – 17

مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيْدُ الْحَيٰوةَ الدُّنْيَا وَزِيْنَتَهَا نُوَفِّ اِلَيْهِمْ اَعْمَالَهُمْ
فِيْهَا وَهُمْ فِيْهَا لَا يُبْخَسُوْنَ ﴿١٥﴾ اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ لَيْسَ لَهُمْ فِى
الْاٰخِرَةِ اِلَّا النَّارُ ۖ وَحَبِطَ مَا صَنَعُوْا فِيْهَا وَبٰطِلٌ مَّا كَانُوْا
يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١٦﴾ اَفَمَنْ كَانَ عَلٰى بَيِّنَةٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّهٖ وَيَتْلُوْهُ شَاهِدٌ
مِّنْهُ وَمِنْ قَبْلِهٖ كِتٰبُ مُوْسٰٓى اِمَامًا وَّرَحْمَةً ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِهٖ ؕ
وَمَنْ يَّكْفُرْ بِهٖ مِنَ الْاَحْزَابِ فَالنَّارُ مَوْعِدُهٗ ۚ فَلَا تَكُ فِىْ مِرْيَةٍ
مِّنْهُ ۗ اِنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿١٧﴾

Those who have been intending (to achieve) the worldly life and its beauty, We shall fully recompense them herein for their acts, and herein they shall not be given less. [15] **Those are the people for whom there is nothing in the Hereafter except fire. And nullified is what they have worked herein and void is what they have been doing.** [16]

So, what about the one who is on a clear path, and there comes after it evidence from within and, before

it, the Book of Mūsā, a guide and a mercy? Such people believe in it. And whoever of the groups disbelieves it, then, Fire is his promised place. So, do not be in doubt about it. Surely, it is the truth from your Lord but most of people do not believe. [17]

Commentary

When warnings of punishment were given to opponents of Islam, they referred to the charities they contributed to and the social welfare work they did. With this testimonial of good deeds in their hands, why would they be punished? It is interesting that, in our time too, there are a lot of unaware Muslims who seem to be suffering from the same doubt. They look at disbelieving non-Muslims who impart a good image of their outward deeds and morals, are active in social work, give out in charities, and make roads, bridges, hospitals, free drinking water counters. This view leads them to hold the opinion that they were better than Muslims. This has been answered in the first (15) of the three verses cited above.

In gist, the answer is that every deed, in order to be accepted as a source of salvation in the Hereafter, must fulfill the first condition of absolute sincerity – that this deed should have been done for the sake of Allah. And the only valid way of doing it for Allah is that it is done in accordance with the way taught and shown in practice by His Messenger. A person who simply does not believe in Allah and His Messenger is a person the sum total of whose deeds and morals is a skeleton without soul. It may look handsome (even slim) but because it has no soul or spirit, it has no weight or effect in the home of the Hereafter. Yes, the contribution of such a person in the mortal world has benefited people. At least in terms of its outward form, what he had done was good, therefore, Allah, the Lord Almighty has, in consideration of His supreme equity and justice, not allowed this deed to go to waste totally. Instead, things were arranged in terms of the objectives the doers of these deeds had before them. If they had worked for recognition in society or an image as philanthropist, man of charity, goodwill or distinction, or had simply aspired for health and material wealth and comfort, Allah Ta'ālā lets them have all this right here in this world. They had no concept of the Hereafter. They had never cared to think of salvation there, nor their deeds, being without the essential spirit, could have qualified them to become deserving of it.

Therefore, no return waits for them there, against their deeds, while the added burden of disbelief and disobedience will keep them in Hell. This was a gist of what was said in the first verse. Now, we can have a look at some of the words used there.

It was said that a person who kept striving for the life of this world and its embellishments gets from Allah the full return for his or her deeds right here in this world. For them, nothing is cut short in *Dunyā*. These are the kind of men and women for whom there is nothing in *Ākhirah* (Hereafter), except the Hell.

It is noteworthy at this point that the expression opted for in the Qur'ān is: مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ (those who have been intending) which bypasses something brief like: مَنْ أَرَادَ (those who wanted). The Qur'ānic expression denotes continuity and carries the sense of 'kept striving for' as translated a little earlier. This tells us that it is the condition of people who never wanted to have anything out of what they did but the good of this world. They just never bothered to worry about what would happen in the life to come. As for the person who feels concerned about the Hereafter and does what would bring salvation there and, along with it aims and plans to have his share from the world, then, it is not included in the purview of this verse.

Is this verse related to *kāfirs* or Muslims or to both Muslims and *kāfirs*? Major authorities in Tafsīr differ about it.

The words in the last sentence of the verse – for whom there is nothing in the Hereafter except the fire of Hell – seem to suggest that it is related to *kāfirs*, because a Muslim, no matter how sinning, would ultimately go to Paradise after having undergone the punishment of sins. Therefore, Ḍaḥḥāk and other commentators have interpreted it as related to *kāfirs* only.

Some commentators have said that it refers to Muslims who, through their good deeds, aim to acquire only the comfort, wealth and recognition from this worldly life. In other words, they do their good deeds with the sole intention of having comfort and recognition in the world they live in. And the sentence we are talking about would thus mean that, until they undergo the punishment of their evil deeds, they would have nothing except the fire of Hell.

However, the weightier and clearer approach is to take this verse

as relating to people who do their good deeds only with the intention of acquiring worldly benefits, such as wealth, health and recognition. Those who do so may be *kāfirs* or disbelievers who do not believe in the Hereafter from the very outset. Or, they may be Muslims who believe in the Hereafter theoretically but do not apply their belief to what they do practically. In fact, they would keep all concerns of their life exclusively attached to worldly benefits and interests. From among the early commentators, Mujāhid, Maimūn ibn Mihrān and Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah رضی الله عنه have gone by this view.

This meaning is also supported by the well-known Ḥadīth of the Holy Prophet ﷺ : إِنَّمَا الْأَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَّاتِ (Actions are [judged] according to Intentions). What one intends to have by his action gets exactly that. Whoever intends to have *Dunyā* (worldly benefits) gets *Dunyā*. Whoever intends to have *Ākhirah* gets *Ākhirah*. Whoever intends to have both gets both. That all actions depend on intention is a principle approved of in every community and religion. (Qurṭubī)

Therefore, says a Ḥadīth, those who devoted themselves to acts of worship in the mortal world to look respectable before others will be brought forth on the day of *Qiyāmah*. It would be said to them: 'you said your prayers, gave in charity, fought in Jihād, recited the Qur'ān, but you did all that with the intention that you should be known as devotees to prayers, givers in charity, veteran warriors of Jihād and great reciters of Qur'ān. Now you have had what you wanted to have. The honors you were looking for have already come to you in the mortal world. Now, there is no return for your deeds here. And these people will be the first to be thrown into the Hell.'

While reporting this Ḥadīth, Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضی الله عنه broke into tears and said, 'the verse of the Qur'ān: مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيْدُ الْحَيٰوةَ الدُّنْيَا وَزِيْنَتَهَا (Those who have been intending (to achieve) the worldly life and its beauty – 15) confirms this Ḥadīth.

Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim reports on the authority of Sayyidnā Anas رضی الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم said, 'Allah Ta'ālā does no injustice to anyone. For the good deed a believer does, he gets some return for it in the mortal world while gets the real reward in the Hereafter. As for a *kāfir* (since he does not bother about what would happen to him in the Hereafter), his account is cleared within his life in the mortal world. The return for his good deeds, if any, is given to him in the form

of worldly wealth, recognition, health and comfort – until comes the time when he reaches the stage of the Hereafter where he is left with nothing that could bring any return there.

It appears in Tafsīr Maẓharī that, though a believer looks forward to having prosperity in the mortal world as well, but his intention to have the best of the Hereafter remains on top of everything. Therefore, he gets what he does in the mortal world only to the measure of his needs. However, he does get the larger return and reward in the Hereafter.

Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ once visited the home of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم. When he saw virtually nothing in the house but a few things here and there, he said to him: 'please pray that Allah Ta'ālā blesses your *Ummah* too with extended material means. We see Persia and Byzantine. They are very prosperous in this world although they do not worship Allah Ta'ālā.' The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم was reclining on a pillow behind his waist. When he heard these words of Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ, he sat up straight and said, 'O 'Umar, you are still lost in those thoughts. As for these people, they are the ones who have been given the return of their good deeds right here in this world.' (Maẓharī)

Jāmi' Tirmidhī and the Musnad of Aḥmad report on the authority of Sayyidnā Anas رضی اللہ عنہ that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said, 'Whoever intends to have (the best of) the Hereafter through his deeds, Allah Ta'ālā makes his heart need-free in this world. He (Himself) takes care of what he must have, and (the desire of) the world comes to him all humbled. And whoever intends to have (the best of) the present world, Allah Ta'ālā makes want and need stand before him to the effect that they can never shake them off. There is no end to his needs because he is constantly being driven by worldly greed. No sooner does one need gets fulfilled, another gaping need stands before him. Countless concerns gang upon him but what he gets is what Allah Ta'ālā has written for him.

Regarding what has been said in this verse: 'those who aimed for worldly life are fully recompensed for their deeds within this world,' someone may raise a doubt. It could be said that there are many people who, despite aiming and striving to have worldly benefits, fail to achieve their objective even in this world and, on occasions, they would

get just about nothing. The answer is that, in this verse, the Qur'ān has dealt with the subject briefly. Details appear in the following verse of Sūrah al-Isrā' (Banī Isrā'īl) where it was said: مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيْدُ الْعَاجِلَةَ عَجَّلْنَا لَهُ فِيْهَا مَانَشَاءُ لِمَنْ نُرِيْدُ (whoever keeps aspiring for the immediate, We shall give soon what We will to whom We will). It means whoever keeps aiming for nothing but worldly life, Allah gives it to him right here within the world, but this giving is restricted by two conditions. Firstly, He gives as much as He wants. It is not necessary to let them have what matches their desires. Secondly, He gives only to a person it is appropriate to give him according to His wisdom. Giving to everyone is not necessary.

The second verse (17) presents the high ground the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم and the purely sincere believers with him occupy. This is in sharp contrast to those the sum total of whose knowledge and the end of whose quest is restricted to worldly life only – so that the whole world could see that these two groups could not be equal. After having focused on this phenomena, it has been stated that the mission and message of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم as a prophet and messenger of Allah is open to mankind right through the Last Day of *Qiyāmah*. Then, it has been stressed that anyone who does not believe in him will be considered, irrespective of what one does, astray and Hell-bound.

In the first sentence, it was asked: Can a denier of the Qur'ān be equal to the one who adheres to the Qur'ān that has come from his Lord? And along with it there is a witness present within it, while a witness earlier to this is the Book of Mūsā علیہ السلام that was sent to be followed and to be mercy for people?

The word: *bayyinah* (بینه) appearing in this verse refers to the Qur'ān. As for the meaning of '*shāhid*' (شاهد: evidence), statements of Tafsīr authorities differ. The author of Bayān al-Qur'ān takes '*shāhid*' to mean the miracle of the Qur'ān that is present in the Qur'ān as such. Thus, it comes to mean that those who adhere to the Qur'ān, they already have a witness to the veracity of the Qur'ān within it, that is, its miracle. Then, the other witness has already come in the form of Torah. Sayyidnā Mūsā علیہ السلام had brought it as guidance and mercy for people. The reason is that the Torah confirms the truth of the Qur'ān clearly.

In the second sentence, in order to stress that salvation, up to the

Last Day, depends on faith in the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, it has been said that anyone from any religion or community of the world who refuses to have faith in him will have his abode in Jahannam.

The Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim reports on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, 'by the One in whose hands rests my life, any Jew or Christian who hears my call and still does not believe in the teachings I have brought, then, he or she will be of the people of Jahannam.'

This should remove the misunderstanding of those who regard the Jews and Christians or the adherents of other religions as being on *ḥaqq* (the truth) on the basis of some outward deeds and consider these to be sufficient for salvation without having faith in the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the Qur'ān. This is an open clash with the present *āyah* of the Holy Qur'ān, and the authentic *aḥādīth*. والعياذ بالله (Allah may save us from that!)

Verses 18 – 24

وَمَنْ اَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرٰى عَلَى اللّٰهِ كَذِبًا ط اُولٰٓئِكَ يُعْرَضُوْنَ عَلٰى
رَبِّهِمْ وَيَقُوْلُ الْاَشْهَادُ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَبُوْا عَلٰى رَبِّهِمْ ج اَلَا
لَعْنَةُ اللّٰهِ عَلَى الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿١٨﴾ الَّذِيْنَ يَصُدُّوْنَ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ
وَيَبْغُوْنَهَا عِوَجًا ط وَهُمْ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ هُمْ كٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿١٩﴾ اُولٰٓئِكَ لَمْ
يَكُوْنُوْا مُعْجِزِيْنَ فِى الْاَرْضِ وَمَا كَانَ لَهُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ مِنْ
اَوْلِيَآءَ م يُضٰعَفُ لَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ ط مَا كَانُوْا يَسْتَطِيْعُوْنَ السَّمْعَ
وَمَا كَانُوْا يُبْصِرُوْنَ ﴿٢٠﴾ اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ خَسِرُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ
وَضَلَّ عَنْهُمْ مَّا كَانُوْا يَفْتَرُوْنَ ﴿٢١﴾ لَا جَرَمَ اَنَّهُمْ فِى الْاٰخِرَةِ هُمُ
الْاَخْسَرُوْنَ ﴿٢٢﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ وَاَخْبَتُوْٓا
اِلٰى رَبِّهِمْ لا اُولٰٓئِكَ اَصْحٰبُ الْجَنَّةِ ج هُمْ فِيْهَا خٰلِدُوْنَ ﴿٢٣﴾ مَثَلُ
الْفَرِيْقَيْنِ كَالْاَعْمٰى وَالْاَصَمِّ وَالْبَصِيْرِ وَالسَّمِيْعِ ط هَلْ
يَسْتَوِيٰنِ مَثَلًا ط اَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿٢٤﴾

And who is more unjust than the one who forges a lie

against Allah? They shall be presented before their Lord, and the witnesses shall say, "These are the ones who lied against their Lord. Beware, the curse of Allah lies on the unjust, [18] **those who prevent (people) from the way of Allah and seek crookedness in it. They, surely they, are disbelievers of the Hereafter."** [19]

They were unable to frustrate (Allah's plan) on the earth, and there were no supporters for them besides Allah. Multiplied for them shall be the punishment. They were not able to hear, nor would they see. [20] **Those are the ones who brought loss to their own selves, and lost for them was all that they used to fabricate.** [21] **Invariably, they are the worst losers in the Hereafter.** [22]

Surely, those who believe and do good deeds and humble their selves before their Lord – those are the people of Paradise. There they shall live forever. [23]

The example of the two groups is like the one blind and deaf and the one seeing and hearing. Are the two equal when compared? Would you still pay no heed? [24]

Verses 25 – 35

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ إِنِّي لَكُمْ نَذِيرٌ مُبِينٌ ﴿٢٥﴾ أَنْ
لَا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا اللَّهَ ۖ إِنِّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ أَلِيمٍ ﴿٢٦﴾
فَقَالَ الْمَلَأُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ قَوْمِهِ مَا نَرَاكَ إِلَّا بَشَرًا مِثْلَنَا
وَمَا نَرَاكَ اتَّبَعَكَ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ هُمْ أَرَاذِلُنَا بَادِيَ الرَّأْيِ وَمَا نَرَىٰ
لَكُمْ عَلَيْنَا مِنْ فَضْلٍ بَلْ نَظُنُّكُمْ كَاذِبِينَ ﴿٢٧﴾ قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ
أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُ عَلَىٰ بَيِّنَةٍ مِنْ رَبِّي وَآتَانِي رَحْمَةً مِنْ عِنْدِهِ
فَعُمِّيَتْ عَلَيْكُمْ أَنُلْزِمُكُمُوهَا وَأَنْتُمْ لَهَا كَارِهُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾ وَيَا قَوْمِ
لَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مَالًا ۖ إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى اللَّهِ ۚ وَمَا أَنَا بِطَارِدِ
الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ۚ إِنَّهُمْ مُلَاقُو رَبِّهِمْ وَلَٰكِنِّي أَرَاكُمْ قَوْمًا تَجْهَلُونَ
﴿٢٩﴾ وَيَا قَوْمِ مَنْ يَنْصُرُنِي مِنَ اللَّهِ إِنْ طَرَدْتُهُمْ ۚ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ

﴿٣٠﴾ وَلَآ اَقُولُ لَكُمْ عِنْدِىْ خَزَآئِنُ اللّٰهِ وَلَآ اَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ وَلَآ
اَقُولُ اِنِّىْ مَلَكٌ وَّلَآ اَقُولُ لِلَّذِيْنَ تَزْدَرِىٓ اَعْيُنُكُمْ لَنْ يُّؤْتِيَهُمُ
اللّٰهُ خَيْرًا ؕ اَللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا فِىٓ اَنْفُسِهِمْ ۚ اِنِّىٓ اِذًا لَّمِنَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ
﴿٣١﴾ قَالُوْا يٰنُوْحُ قَدْ جَادَلْتَنَا فَاَكْثَرْتَ جِدَالَنَا فَاْتِنَا بِمَا
تَعِدُنَآ اِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿٣٢﴾ قَالَ اِنَّمَا يَاْتِيْكُمْ بِهِ اللّٰهُ
اِنْ شَآءَ وَمَآ اَنْتُمْ بِمُعْجِزِيْنَ ﴿٣٣﴾ وَلَا يَنْفَعُكُمْ نُصْحِىٓ اِنْ
اَرَدْتُّ اَنْ اَنْصَحَ لَكُمْ اِنْ كَانَ اللّٰهُ يُرِيْدُ اَنْ يُّغْوِيَكُمْ ؕ
هُوَ رَبُّكُمْ ۗ وَاِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُوْنَ ﴿٣٤﴾ اَمْ يَقُوْلُوْنَ افْتَرٰىهُ ؕ قُلْ اِنِ
افْتَرَيْتُهٗ فَعَلَىَّ اِجْرَامِىْ وَاَنَا بَرِىٓءٌ مِّمَّا تُجْرِمُوْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾

And We have sent Nūḥ to his people (saying to them): "I am, for you, a clear warner, [25] **that you worship none but Allah, I fear for you the punishment of a painful day."** [26]

So, the chiefs of his people, who disbelieved, said, "We see (that) you are nothing but a man like us. And we do not see you followed by anyone but by the lowest among us who are of shallow opinion, and we do not see in you any superiority over us; rather, think you are liars. [27]

He said, "O my people, tell me when I am on a clear path from my Lord, and He has bestowed mercy upon me from Himself and it has been hidden from your sight. Shall we, then, impose it upon you while you are averse to it? [28] **And, O my people, I do not demand from you any wealth for it. My reward is with none but Allah. And I am not to drive the believers away. Surely, they are to meet their Lord, but I see that you are an ignorant people.** [29] **And, O my people, who will help me against (the punishment of) Allah, if I drive them away? Would you still pay no heed?** [30] **And I do not say to you that with me are the treasures of Allah, nor do I have the knowledge of the unseen, nor do I say that I am an angel. And I do not say about those who are contemptible in your eyes that Allah will never**

award them any good; Allah is the best- knower of what is in their hearts. (If I do so) then, I shall indeed be one of the unjust." [31]

They said, "O Nūḥ, you have quarreled with us, and quarreled much. Now bring what you threaten us with, if you are one of the truthful." [32]

He said, "Only Allah will bring it to you, if He so wills, and you cannot frustrate (His will). [33] **And my good counsel will not profit you, even though I wish you the best, if Allah wills to make you go astray. He is your Lord and to Him you shall be made to return."** [34]

Do they still say that he has forged it? Say, "If I have forged it, then, upon me is my sin, and I am free of the sins you commit." [35]

Commentary

When Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام invited his people to believe, they responded with some doubts and objections against the veracity of his mission as a prophet and messenger of Allah. Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام, with the will and permission of Allah, answered their questions. Many primary and subsidiary religious rulings relating to honesty and social living emerge from here as a corollary. This dialogue forms the core of the subject taken up in these verses.

Some questions raised by the disbelievers appear in the third verse (27). Before we take these up, let us first look at the meanings of some of the words there.

The word: ملا (*malā'*) generally means a group. Some leading lexicographers say that a group of the chiefs of a people is called: ملا (*malā'*). *Bashar* (بشر) is translated as human being or man. *Arādhil* (اراذل) is the plural form of *ardhal* (ارذل). It means someone lowly, not having any status or respect among his people. The expression: بَادِیَ الرَّاْیِ (*badiyar-rā'y*) means cursory or shallow opinion.

As for their objections, the first one related to the status of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام as a prophet and messenger: مَا نَرٰىكَ اِلَّا بَشَرًا مِّثْلَنَا (We see that you are nothing but a man like us). In effect, they were saying that he ate, drank, walked, slept and woke up like them. How then, they questioned, could they accept this extra-ordinary status of his as a messenger and prophet of God?

They thought that the person who is sent to men as a messenger from Allah should not belong to the genus of man, instead, he should be an angel whose distinct status had to be recognized by everyone, willingly or unwillingly.

This was answered in the fourth verse (28) as follows:

يَٰقَوْمِ أَرَءَيْتُمْ إِن كُنتُ عَلَىٰ بَيِّنَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّى وَءَاتَىٰنِى رَحْمَةً مِّنْ عِندِهِۦ فَعُمِّيَتْ عَلَيْكُمْ أَنُلْزِمُكُمُوهَا وَأَنتُمْ لَهَا كَٰرِهُونَ

> He said, "O my people, tell me when I am on a clear path from my Lord, and He has bestowed mercy upon me from Himself and it has been hidden from your sight. Shall we, then, impose it upon you while you are averse to it?".

Here we are being told that for a *rasūl* or messenger to be a man is not contrary to his mission as a prophet or messenger. In fact, a little thought would show that this is how it should be – that the *rasūl* of men should be a man so that men find it comfortable to learn their religion from him. There is an enormous difference in the mental and emotional make up of men and angels. If an angel were to be sent as a *rasūl*, learning religion from him would have become terribly difficult. The reason is that an angel is not hungry or thirsty or sleepy or plain tired, nor does he have to deal with all those human compulsions. How would he have the feeling for such human weaknesses? And, without this feeling, how could men have followed him deed-wise? This theme has appeared in other verses of the Qur'ān, either explicitly or suggestively, at several places. Bypassing these, they were exhorted to use their reason and realize that it was not the least necessary that a prophet and messenger should not be a man. But, what is necessary is that he brings with him some proof, argument and evidence from Allah Ta'ālā that could make it easy for people to accept that he was definitely a *rasūl* sent by Allah. Those open proofs (*bayyinah*) and binding arguments for common people take the form of miracles shown at the hands of prophets. Therefore, Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام said that he had brought with him the clear path, argument and mercy from his Lord. If they had seen it carefully and thought about it, they would not have refused to accept the invitation. But, their aversion and hostility made them blind, hence they opted to deny the truth and became adamant to it.

But, this mercy of Allah Ta'ālā that comes through a prophet is not something which could be caused to fall over the heads of people – until they themselves show their inclination to have it. There is a hint here that the prophet would have passed on the wealth of *'Imān* he had come with to them, if he could, despite their denial and obstinacy. But, this was against Divine law. A blessing is aspired for. People cannot be compelled to have it. From here it also stands proved that it has never been permissible, in any period of a prophet, that people should be compelled to become believers. Even those who continue to spread the ugly propaganda that Islām was spread by the sword are not themselves unaware of the truth of the matter. But, they find it convenient to use the power of a lie to sow seeds of doubt in the hearts of the ignorant only to keep the torches of their hatred burning.

As a side benefit, it has also become easier to understand why an angel was not made a prophet. The reason is that an angel is endowed with supernatural power. He is way distinct from human beings in every facet of his existence. To see him and then to believe in him would have become an exercise in compulsion. With an angel in front of him, who could dare being obstinate – something so conveniently demonstrated before prophets? Then, according to the dictate of the Sharī'ah, if a person believes unwillingly under the threat of some coercive power, his belief and faith is not acceptable. In fact, the ideally desirable thing is to believe without seeing (*al-'Imān bi 'l-ghaib*) – that one believes without having fully observed and witnessed the ultimate subduing power of Allah Ta'ālā.

The second objection they raised was: وَمَا نَرٰىكَ اتَّبَعَكَ اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ هُمْ اَرَاذِلُنَا بَادِيَ الرَّاْيِ (and we do not see you followed by any one but by the lowest among us who are of shallow opinion – 27). This objection has two aspects: (1) That the people of higher status would have been the first to accept your call, if it was correct and true; and that only such lowly people have accepted it shows that the call itself is not worth accepting. (2) That there is something else that stops us from accepting your call to believe. Suppose we were to believe, then we understand that we too will be taken as Muslims, like them and equal to them and, in rows of prayers as well as in other meetings, we will have to sit with them as equals. This we cannot do.

These people were far from reality and very unaware indeed. Sim-

ply because poor people did not wallow in wealth and pride in office and status, they had elected to berate them as lowly and mundane – although, the thought itself is as ignorant as it can be. Honor and disgrace, reason and understanding are not subservient to wealth and property. Rather, as experience bears out, power and wealth can become intoxicating enough as would stop its possessors from understanding and accepting so many reasonable and correct things. These barriers do not stand before the meek and the poor. They go ahead and accept what is correct and true. This is the reason why the customary Divine practice through the lanes of time gone by has been no other but that the first among those who believe in prophets are none but the weak and the meek. This phenomenon has also been explained in past Scriptures. Pursuant to this, when the blessed letter from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم inviting him to believe reached the Byzantine Emperor, Hiraql, he felt the need to ascertain the truth of the matter – because, he had read the signs of the noble prophets in the Torah and the Injīl. Therefore, he assembled people of Arabia who were visiting Syria at that time and asked them some questions about those signs.

One of these questions was, 'Are those who follow him the poor and the weak among his people, or those who are considered big and notable among them?' He was told, 'They are poor and weak.' Thereupon, Hiraql confessed, 'this is sign of his being a true prophet because those who follow prophets initially are these very poor and weak people.'

In short, taking poor people to be lowly was ignorance on their part. In reality, '*radhīl*' or disgraced is he who does not recognize his creator and sustainer and disobeys what He has asked him to do. Therefore, the venerated Sufyān Ibn Sa'īd Ath-Thawrī, was asked by someone, 'who is mean and disgraced?' He said, 'people who keep flattering rulers and officials.' And Ibn al-A'rabī said, 'mean is he who earns *Dunyā* (benefits of worldly life) by selling his *dīn* (religion).' Someone asked him, 'who is the meanest?' Then, he said, 'a person who ruins his religion and streamlines the worldly life of someone else.' Imām Mālik said, 'mean is he who maligns the noble Companions of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم because they are the greatest benefactors of the entire Muslim Ummah, and the source through which the blessings of *'Imān* and *Sharī'ah* have reached us.'

Returning to the ignorant thought expressed by the objectors, we see that it has been initially refuted in the third verse (29). It has been said that a prophet does not fancy anyone's wealth or property. He takes no compensation for his service or good counsel to people. His compensation is with Allah alone. Therefore, the rich and the poor are equal in his sight. Let the rich not be scared about their wealth for no one would start asking for it once they become believers.

Then, they were told: 'As for the condition you impose that I should remove the poor from my company in order that you could believe, then, let it be very clear that I cannot do that. They may be poor but they are close to the Highest of the high, the greatest honor one can have. Turning such people out is not a right thing to do.'

And: مُلٰقُوْا رَبِّهِمْ (They are surely to meet their Lord) could also mean: If, supposedly, I were to turn them out, when they go to their Lord on the day of *Qiyāmah* and complain, what would I have to say? The subject continues in the fourth verse (30): If I were to turn them out, who would save me from Divine punishment? At the end, it was said: All this is nothing but your ignorance and heedlessness. To you being a man is counter to being a prophet, or you go to the other extreme and demand that poor people should be driven away from his company.

Reported in the fifth verse (31) there is an address that Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام gave before his people to announce some matters of principle after he had heard their objections. In this address it has been stressed that the mission of a prophet and messenger does not depend on things they think are necessary for it.

For instance, first it was said: وَلَآ اَقُوْلُ لَكُمْ عِنْدِىْ خَزَآئِنُ اللّٰهِ (And I do not say to you that with me are the treasures of Allah). This carries a refutation of their idea that someone coming from Allah as His messenger should have brought treasures with him giving it out to everyone freely. Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام put it out clearly that the mission of prophets has nothing to do with involving people into the mess of worldly enjoyments. What for would they need all those treasures?

It is also possible that the statement may be refuting the false thought nursed by some people that Allah has given all powers to prophets, even to Auliyā'. Assuming this, it is surmised that they have the treasures of Allah's power in their hands and that they decide

whom to give and whom not to give. So, this declaration of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام makes it clear that Allah Taʻālā has not entrusted the total control of the treasures of His power not even with any prophet, not to say much about the Auliyā' or men of Allah. However, when they pray or wish, Allah Taʻālā does answer their prayers and fulfills their wishes with His infinite power.

Secondly, it was said: وَلَآ اَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ (nor do I have the knowledge of the unseen). Another false idea these people harbored was that a person who is a *rasūl* of Allah Taʻālā should also be the one who knows what is unseen (*'ālim al-ghayb*). This sentence clarifies that the mission of a prophet and messenger needs no knowledge of the unseen, and why should it when the knowledge of the unseen is an exclusive attribute of Allah Taʻālā which no prophet or angel can share with Him. However, Allah Taʻālā does inform whomever He wills from out of His prophets about the secrets of the unseen as much as He wills. But, because of this, it is not correct to call them *'ālim al-ghayb* (possessor of the knowledge of the unseen) – because, it is not in their power to find out something in the domain of the unseen at their choice.

Thirdly, it was said: وَلَآ اَقُوْلُ اِنِّيْ مَلَكٌ (nor do I say that I am an angel). Here we have a refutation of their idea that a *rasūl* should be some angel.

Fourthly, it was stated: In your sight these poor people may appear lowly and disgraceful. But, I cannot say as you say that Allah Taʻālā will not bless them with what is good, because good relates to one's heart, not wealth, and only Allah knows the secrets of hearts and He knows whose heart is worthy of receiving good and whose heart is not.

Then, it was said: If I too were to start calling them lowly and disgraceful, I too would become unjust.

Verses 36 – 40

وَاُوْحِيَ اِلٰى نُوْحٍ اَنَّهٗ لَنْ يُّؤْمِنَ مِنْ قَوْمِكَ اِلَّا مَنْ قَدْ اٰمَنَ فَلَا تَبْتَئِسْ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَفْعَلُوْنَ ﴿٣٦﴾ وَاصْنَعِ الْفُلْكَ بِاَعْيُنِنَا وَ وَحْيِنَا وَلَا تُخَاطِبْنِيْ فِي الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا ۚ اِنَّهُمْ مُّغْرَقُوْنَ ﴿٣٧﴾ وَيَصْنَعُ الْفُلْكَ ۗ وَكُلَّمَا مَرَّ عَلَيْهِ مَلَاٌ مِّنْ قَوْمِهٖ سَخِرُوْا مِنْهُ ۗ

قَالَ إِنْ تَسْخَرُوْا مِنَّا فَإِنَّا نَسْخَرُ مِنْكُمْ كَمَا تَسْخَرُوْنَ ﴿٣٨﴾
فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ۙ مَنْ يَّأْتِيْهِ عَذَابٌ يُّخْزِيْهِ وَيَحِلُّ عَلَيْهِ
عَذَابٌ مُّقِيْمٌ ﴿٣٩﴾ حَتّٰٓى إِذَا جَآءَ أَمْرُنَا وَفَارَ التَّنُّوْرُ ۙ قُلْنَا
احْمِلْ فِيْهَا مِنْ كُلٍّ زَوْجَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ وَأَهْلَكَ إِلَّا مَنْ سَبَقَ عَلَيْهِ
الْقَوْلُ وَمَنْ اٰمَنَ ۗ وَمَآ اٰمَنَ مَعَهٗٓ إِلَّا قَلِيْلٌ ﴿٤٠﴾

And it was revealed to Nūḥ that none of your people would ever believe except those who have already believed: "So, be not distressed by what they have been doing. [36] **And make an ark under Our eyes and according to Our revelation. And do not speak to Me about those who crossed the limits – they are to be drowned."** [37]

And he started making the Ark. And whenever the chieftains of his people passed by him, they mocked at him. He said, "If you mock at us, we mock at you like you mock at us: [38] **So, you shall soon know to whom will come the punishment that will humiliate him and upon whom will befall a lasting punishment."** [39]

At last when Our command came and the oven overflowed. We said, "Load in it a pair of two from every kind along with your family – except those against whom the Word has already been spoken – and those who have believed." And there were only a few who had believed with him. [40]

Commentary

Allah Ta'ālā had blessed Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام with long years of life extending up to nearly one thousand years. Along with it, he was given a special status in terms of his prophetic mission to invite people to Allah and make their condition better whereby he devoted these long years to keep asking them to believe in the true Faith and in Allah as One. He had to face the harshest of pains in this mission. His people would throw stones at him until he fell down and lost consciousness. But, as soon as he would regain it, he prayed to Allah for the forgiveness of his people for they did not know what they were doing. A generation was followed by the other, and the other by yet another, in a chain and he kept giving his call in the hope that they

might, at some stage, accept the truth.

When centuries passed over this exercise in patience, he complained about their deplorable condition before his Almighty Lord which has been mentioned in Sūrah Nūḥ: رَبِّ إِنِّي دَعَوْتُ قَوْمِي لَيْلًا وَنَهَارًا ، فَلَمْ يَزِدْهُمْ دُعَاءِيْ إِلَّا فِرَارًا (My Lord, I did invite my people [to the truth] night and day. But, my invitation increased them in nothing but flight [in aversion] – 71:5,6) and, after all those long years of hardship, the prayer that this great servant of Allah made was: رَبِّ انْصُرْنِي بِمَا كَذَّبُوْنِ (My Lord, help me because they have belied me – al-Mu'minūn, 23: 26,39).

When the reign of terror let loose by the people of Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیه السلام became much too excessive, he was addressed by Allah Ta'ālā in the words appearing in the verses cited above. (al-Baghawī, Maẓharī)

Firstly, he was told that, out of his people, those who were to believe had already believed. No one was to believe after that. Their hearts were sealed with their own obstinacy and contumacy. Therefore, he should not grieve about his people any more and feel free of any concern about their failure to believe.

Secondly, he was told that Allah was to send the punishment of flood against those people. Therefore, he should make an ark that could hold his family, as many believers as there were, and what they needed, so that they could embark it when the flood comes and be safe from it. Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیه السلام made the ark as he was ordered to. When the initial signs of the flood came before them – that water started overflowing from the earth – Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیه السلام was commanded to embark the ark along with his family and the few believers who had believed in him. They were also asked to load a pair each of animals that serve human needs, such as, cow, ox, goat, horse, mule etc. Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیه السلام put everyone on the ark as ordered.

At the end it was said that the believers in Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیه السلام who boarded the ark were only a few.

This was a gist of the subject as it appears in the cited verses. Now we can turn to the explanation of each verse and deal with issues and problems that emerge therefrom.

In the first verse (36), it was said that it was revealed to Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیه السلام that those who were to believe from among his people had already believed. In future, no one else will believe. Therefore, he

should not worry about how they deal with him because one feels the pinch of sorrow only when one expects something good to come from someone. Disappointment is not that bad. It has its own relief. He might as well be disappointed with them. As for the shock felt by Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام because of all sorts of pains inflicted by his people on him, arrangements had already been made as indicated the next verse (37) – 'they are to be drowned.' Under these conditions came that invocation of curse for his people on the lips of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام which has been mentioned in Sūrah Nūḥ:

رَبِّ لَاتَذَرْ عَلَى الْاَرْضِ مِنَ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ دَيَّارًا ، اِنَّكَ اِنْ تَذَرْهُمْ يُضِلُّوْا عِبَادَكَ وَلَا يَلِدُوْٓا اِلَّا فَاجِرًا كَفَّارًا

> "My Lord, do not leave upon the earth any inhabitant from among the disbelievers. Indeed, if You were to leave them, they will mislead Your servants and will not procreate anyone but the ones wicked and disbelieving (diehards)" – 71:26,27.

In answer to this prayer, the people of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام were drowned en masse.

Boat-Making: The Education of a Prophet

When Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام was commanded to make an ark, he knew no ark, nor its making. Therefore, in the next verse (37), he got his first lesson. To orient him to the reality of boat making, it was said: وَاصْنَعِ الْفُلْكَ بِاَعْيُنِنَا وَوَحْيِنَا (And make an ark under Our eyes and according to Our revelation).

Ḥadīth reports say that Sayyidnā Jibra'īl al-Amīn عليه السلام told Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام by means of revelation all about the making of boats. He had used wood from the saul tree (*shorea robusta*) to build this ark.

Some historical narratives give its measurement. It was three hundred yards long, fifty yards in width and thirty yard high, almost a three storied ship. Its ventilators, as customary, opened to the right and the left. Thus, this industry, the first prototype of the ship building industry, began at the hands of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام for the first time through Divine revelation. After that, the progress it made is current history.

All Essential Industries Originated through Revelation

It has been reported on the authority of some elders of early centu-

ries of Islām in at-Ṭibb an-Nabawī of Ḥafiẓ Shamsud-Dīn adh-Dhahabī that all industries essential for human beings owe their origin to the process of Divine revelation through some prophet. Later, improvements kept coming as needed during different times. The first revelation that came to Sayyidnā Adam عليه السلام mostly related to rehabilitation of the land and establishment of different industries. The invention of wheel carts for loading and hauling things is part of the chain of inventions.

Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, the founder of the well-known Aligarh College, (now the Muslim University of Aligarh, India) used to say more than a hundred years ago that the world has seen inventions of all sorts in moving vehicles but its pivot continued to be the axle and the wheel. It is the common factor between a bullock-cart, a donkey-cart, rails and cars. Therefore, the greatest inventor of moving vehicles is the person who invented the wheel that is the life and soul of a lot of machines. As it was said, this invention unfolded itself at the hands of the first prophet, Sayyidnā Ādam, peace on him, through a Divine revelation.

From here we also learn that industries devoted to essential human needs are so important that the blessed prophets have been taught and trained in these through Divine revelation.

Soon after instructing Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام how he would make an ark, he was told that a flood would come and his people will be drowned and that, at the time, he was not to intercede out of compassion on their behalf.

In the third verse (38), mentioned there is the total lack of concern for their sad end shown by the people of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام during the period he was making the ark. When the chieftains of his people saw him busy with his project under a Divine command, they would ask him, 'what are you doing?' He said, 'a flood is to come, therefore, I am making an ark.' They would mock at him and say, 'we have no water to drink here and this wise man is planning to sail in a boat on this dry land.' In response, Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام told them, 'if you mock at us today, then remember the day is sure to come when we shall be laughing at you.' The sense is that conditions would change and events would unfold in a manner that they themselves would become the cause of their being mocked at. For, in reality, ridicule is contrary to

the spiritual station of prophets. It is simply not permissible for anyone, in fact, it is *ḥarām* (unlawful). Says the Holy Qur'ān: لَا يَسْخَرْ قَوْمٌ مِّنْ قَوْمٍ عَسٰٓى اَنْ يَّكُوْنُوْا خَيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ (O those who have believed, no people should mock at [other] people – may be, they are better than them – 49:11) Therefore, the mocking referred to here is a pragmatic response to their mockery. This is like saying, 'when you are seized by the punishment, we shall be telling you that this was the outcome of your mockery.' This is as it was said after that in the fourth verse (39): 'So, you shall soon know to whom will come the punishment that will humble him, and upon whom will befall the lasting punishment.' The first punishment refers to the punishment in the mortal world, and the 'lasting punishment' means the never-ending punishment of the Hereafter.

From the fifth verse (40) begins the description of the coming of the flood, related instructions and events as they unfolded. So, first it was said: حَتّٰٓى اِذَا جَآءَ اَمْرُنَا وَفَارَ التَّنُّوْرُ (At last, when Our command came and the oven overflowed).

The word: تنور (*tannūr*: oven) is used in more than one sense. The Earth's floor is called an oven. The oven that bakes bread is also a *tannūr*. A raised part of the land is also referred to as *tannūr*. Therefore, some of the Tafsīr authorities have said that, at this place, '*tannūr*' means the surface of the land in that water started overflowing from it. Some of them have said that it means the *tannūr* of Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام that was located at '*ainul- wardah*' in Syria – and water overflowed from it. Some others said that Sayyidnā Nūḥ's عليه السلام own *tannūr* was located in Kūfah and that was what it means. Most commentators – Sayyidnā Ḥasan, Mujāhid, Sha'bī, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه and others – have gone by this view.

As for Sha'bī, he used to say on oath that this *tannūr* was located in a secluded quarter of the city of Kūfah, and that Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام had built his ark in the mosque of Kūfah. This *tannūr* was right by the entrance to this mosque. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه says that Allah Ta'ālā had told Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام, 'when you see water overflowing from the oven in your home, know that the flood has come.' (Qurṭubī and Maẓharī)

Commentator al-Qurṭubī said: The sayings of commentators appear to be different as to the meaning of *tannūr*, but this, in reality, is not a difference. When water began to bulge out, it overflowed from the

bread baking oven, and from out of the surface of the land, and from the oven of 'Ainul-Wardah in Syria. The Holy Qur'ān has said explicitly: فَفَتَحْنَآ اَبْوَابَ السَّمَآءِ بِمَآءٍ مُّنْهَمِرٍ وَّفَجَّرْنَا الْاَرْضَ عُيُوْنًا (Then We opened the gates of the heaven with rain pouring down and caused the earth to burst out with springs – al-Qamar, 54:11).

In his statement, Sha'bi has also said that this grand mosque of Kūfah has its own distinct status after al-Masjid al-Ḥarām, al-Masjid an-Nabawii and al-Masjid al-Aqṣā.

Later in the verse, it was said: When the flood had started, Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیہ السلام was commanded: اِحْمِلْ فِيْهَا مِنْ كُلٍّ زَوْجَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ (Load in it a pair of two from every kind).

This tells us that all kinds of animals were not loaded in the ark of Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیہ السلام. Loaded there were animals born to a pair of male and female and which cannot survive in water. Therefore, all sea life stands excluded from here and so do land based life forms born without male-female conjunction. This leaves only domestic animals like the cow, ox, water buffalo, goat etc.

This removes the possible doubt as to how could the ark hold that many animals.

After that, Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیہ السلام was asked to have his family members – other than the disbelieving ones – board the ark, as well as those who had believed in him, though they were only a few.

The exact number of those who sailed on the ark has not been determined in the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth. It has been reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ that their total number was eighty, which included three sons of Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیہ السلام – Sām, Ḥām, Yāfith – and the three of their wives. The fourth son had stayed with the disbelievers and was drowned with them.

Verses 41 – 44

وَقَالَ ارْكَبُوْا فِيْهَا بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ مَجْرٖهَا وَمُرْسٰهَا ؕ اِنَّ رَبِّيْ لَغَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿٤١﴾ وَهِيَ تَجْرِيْ بِهِمْ فِيْ مَوْجٍ كَالْجِبَالِ ۫ وَنَادٰى نُوْحُ ۨابْنَهٗ وَكَانَ فِيْ مَعْزِلٍ يّٰبُنَيَّ ارْكَبْ مَّعَنَا وَلَا تَكُنْ مَّعَ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿٤٢﴾ قَالَ سَاٰوِيْۤ اِلٰى جَبَلٍ يَّعْصِمُنِيْ مِنَ الْمَآءِ ؕ قَالَ

لَا عَاصِمَ الْيَوْمَ مِنْ أَمْرِ اللّٰهِ إِلَّا مَنْ رَّحِمَ ۚ وَحَالَ بَيْنَهُمَا الْمَوْجُ فَكَانَ مِنَ الْمُغْرَقِينَ ﴿٤٣﴾ وَقِيلَ يَا أَرْضُ ابْلَعِي مَاءَكِ وَيَا سَمَاءُ أَقْلِعِي وَغِيضَ الْمَاءُ وَقُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ وَاسْتَوَتْ عَلَى الْجُودِيِّ وَقِيلَ بُعْدًا لِّلْقَوْمِ الظّٰلِمِينَ ﴿٤٤﴾

And he said, "Embark it. With the name of Allah it sails and anchors. Surely, my Lord is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful." [41]

And it was sailing with them amidst the waves like mountains. And Nūḥ called out to his son, who was at an isolated place, "O my child, come on board with us, and do not be in the company of the disbelievers." [42] **He said, "I shall take shelter on a mountain which will save me from the water." He said, "There is no saver today from the command of Allah, except the one to whom He shows mercy." And the waves rose high between the two, and he was among the drowned.** [43]

And it was said, "O earth, suck in your water, and O heaven, stop." And water subsided, and the matter was over. And it (the Ark) came to rest on the Jūdiyy, and it was said, "Curse be upon the wrongdoers." [44]

Commentary

Etiquette of boarding boats and other modes of conveyance

The first verse (41) teaches the etiquette of boarding boats and other modes of conveyance. One should board by saying: بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ مَجْرٖهَا وَمُرْسٰهَا (With the name of Allah it sails and anchors). The word: مجرى (*majrā* pronounced according to the reading (*qirā'ah*) of Imām Ḥafṣ as '*majrāy*' with *fatḥah* on the letter *mīm* and a major Imālah [inclination] on the letter *rā*) means to sail or to move, and مرسى (*mursā*) means to stop or anchor. The sense is that the moving of this mode of transport owes itself to the power of Allah, and is with His name alone, as well as its stopping which is also subservient to nothing but His power.

Every conveyance moves and stops only with the power of Allah Ta'ālā

Even a little thought would show that no conveyance, a boat or any other mode of transport that moves on land (or flies in the air) is really

within one's own power, neither its creating and making, nor its moving and stopping. A shallow view of things leads man to assume that he is the one who has manufactured it and made it move. The reality lies elsewhere. It does not take much to realize that man has not created iron, wood, brass, aluminum etc. which serve as raw material that go into the making of these modes of conveyance. And it is also clear that it does not lie in his control to create on his own a gram of iron or a foot of wood. Then, who gave them the intelligence to design and produce all sorts of mechanical parts and instruments? How did he do that? Did he create his own intelligence? Had it been within the power of man, no one in this wide world would have remained dumb. Everyone would have been a Plato and Aristotle in his field. So, man puts together wood and iron and mechanical support from all sides, makes the body and frame for the conveyance. Now he needs to haul tons of weight easily and quickly on the land or in the air. He needs power to do that. It may come through petrol, gas or hydro-electricity. Has man created any of these? Did he create the petrol or gas, or water, or oxygen, or hydrogen?

If we were to look at things impartially, we will realize that even in this age of great scientific advancement, the helplessness of man is still visible and it is true that the moving and stopping of every conveyance rests within the ultimate control of the creator of this universe.

The process of inventing things and making them work makes inventors self-centered. They start living in a hall of mirrors. They congratulate themselves to the limit that they lose touch with the reality of things on a canvass larger than what they invent. Allah Ta'ālā tells them through his prophets that there is more to their making that they fail to see: بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ مَجْرٖهَا وَمُرْسٰهَا (With the name of Allah it sails and anchors). This is the reality. A brief statement, but very comprehensive. In fact, it is a key to a door. Once he enters it, he lives in this mortal world but turns into a citizen of the spiritual universe – seeing the beauty of the Lord everywhere in it.

From here unfolds the difference between the world of a believer and the world of a disbeliever. Both ride. But, when a believer steps in there, the conveyance does not simply shorten his travel distances on the land, it introduces him to the one higher, more sublime.

As stated in the second (42) and third (43) verse, when the whole family of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام had boarded the ark, a son whose name has been reported as Kin'ān (Canaan) was left out. Out of his paternal compassion, Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام called out to him asking him to come on board and warning him that he should not stay in the company of disbelievers otherwise he would be drowned with them. This young man was already in league with those disbelieving enemies, in fact, was himself a disbeliever. But, in all likelihood, Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام did not know that he was a disbeliever. And even if he did know that, the good counsel he gave to his son to board the boat and leave the company of the disbelievers was in the spirit of asking him to repent from disbelief and enter the fold of faith. But, the unfortunate son still took the flood to be something that will pass away and told him not to worry about him for he would be safe from the flood by climbing a mountain. Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام warned him again that nothing was going to save anyone, not even a mountain, from the punishment of Allah on that day and that there was no way one could remain safe from it unless Allah Himself were to show mercy to him. This father-son dialogue was on from a distance when rose a wave of the flood and took him down and away. Historical reports say that the level of the Flood was fifteen yards above the highest mountain peak and according to some other reports, it was forty yards high.

In the fourth verse (44), the recession of the flood and the return of things to normal conditions has been described in a particular manner. Addressing the earth, Allah Ta'ālā commanded: يَٰٓأَرۡضُ ٱبۡلَعِي مَآءَكِ (O earth, suck in your water). The sense was that the amount of water which had bulged out from the earth was to be taken back in by the earth. The sky was commanded to stop raining. The water from rains that had already accumulated on the earth, nature channeled it into rivers and streams for human beings to benefit by it. (Tafsīr Qurṭubī, Maẓharī)

In this verse, Allah Ta'ālā has given His commands by addressing the heaven and the earth, although these are no sensate entities, at least outwardly. Therefore, some commentators have taken it in a figurative sense. But, the fact of the matter is that, in terms of our perception, things in the world which appear non-conscious, insensate, and lifeless are, in all reality, live and conscious. Yes, their consciousness and perception are not of a level as given to humankind and oth-

ers, therefore, by declaring them to be inanimate, they were not obligated with the percepts and injunctions of the Sharī'ah. Many verses of the Holy Qur'ān confirm it, such as: وَاِنْ مِّنْ شَیْءٍ اِلَّا یُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِہٖ (and there is no such thing which does not glorify Him with praises – 17:44). And it is obvious that the glorification of Allah Ta'ālā depends on knowing Him, and knowing, on reason and consciousness. This tells us that everything has reason and consciousness according to its respective capacity. From it, it recognizes its creator and whatever it has been assigned to do by Him. Everything knows it fully well and keeps doing it staunchly as due. The verse of the Qur'ān: اَعْطٰی کُلَّ شَیْءٍ خَلْقَہٗ ثُمَّ ھَدٰی (gave each thing its form then guided [it] – Ṭāhā, 20:50) means exactly this. Therefore, in this verse, if the address to the heaven and the earth is taken in the real sense, it does not matter. Sage Rūmī said:

خاك و باد و آب و آتش بنده اند بامن وتو مرده باحق زنده اند

Dust, air, water and fire are all 'servants'

For you and me, dead, but with Him, live.

At the end of the fourth verse (44), it was said that the heaven and the earth obeyed the orders and the matter of the flood was all over. The Ark of Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیہ السلام came to rest on the Mount Jūdiyy and it was declared that the unjust people have been cast far 'away from the mercy of Allah' – (which is what curse is).

Mount Jūdiyy still stands there by that name. Geographically, it is located on the border of Armenia near Ibn 'Umar Island north of Mousil in 'Iraq, the real home of Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیہ السلام. This is a mountain range, part of which is called Jūdiyy. Another part of it is known as Ararāt. In the present Torah, the place where the Ark came to rest has been identified as Mount Ararāt. As obvious, there is not much of a contradiction in these two reports. But, well-known old historical accounts also say that the ark of Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیہ السلام had come to rest on Mount Jūdiyy.

These accounts also mention that pieces of this ark are still there at many places in 'Iraq. These are kept and used as a relic.

According to Tafsīr aṭ-Ṭabarī and al-Baghawī, Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیہ السلام had embarked the Ark on the tenth of the month of Rajab. For six months, this ark sailed on the waters of the flood. When it reached the spot where Baytullah was, it made seven circuits. Allah Ta'ālā had

raised His House higher from being submerged. Then, on the tenth of Muḥarram, the day of 'Āshūrā', the flood subsided and the ark came to rest at the Mount of Jūdiyy. Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام observed a thanksgiving fast on that day and asked everyone on the ark to do the same. Some reports say that even animals that had shared the ark fasted on that day. (Maẓharī and Qurṭubī)

The importance of the day of 'Āshūrā', that is, the tenth of Muḥarram, has been recognized in all religious codes of the blessed prophets. In early Islām – before the fasts of Ramaḍān became obligatory – fasting on the day of 'Āshūrā' was *farḍ*. It is no more *farḍ* after the revelation of the obligatory status of fasting in Ramaḍān, but it continues to be a practice of prophets, and a source of reward forever.

Verses 45 – 49

وَنَادَىٰ نُوحٌ رَّبَّهُ فَقَالَ رَبِّ إِنَّ ابْنِي مِنْ أَهْلِي وَإِنَّ وَعْدَكَ الْحَقُّ وَأَنتَ أَحْكَمُ الْحَاكِمِينَ ﴿٤٥﴾ قَالَ يَا نُوحُ إِنَّهُ لَيْسَ مِنْ أَهْلِكَ ۖ إِنَّهُ عَمَلٌ غَيْرُ صَالِحٍ ۖ فَلَا تَسْأَلْنِ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ ۖ إِنِّي أَعِظُكَ أَن تَكُونَ مِنَ الْجَاهِلِينَ ﴿٤٦﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ أَنْ أَسْأَلَكَ مَا لَيْسَ لِي بِهِ عِلْمٌ ۖ وَإِلَّا تَغْفِرْ لِي وَتَرْحَمْنِي أَكُن مِّنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ ﴿٤٧﴾ قِيلَ يَا نُوحُ اهْبِطْ بِسَلَامٍ مِّنَّا وَبَرَكَاتٍ عَلَيْكَ وَعَلَىٰ أُمَمٍ مِّمَّن مَّعَكَ ۚ وَأُمَمٌ سَنُمَتِّعُهُمْ ثُمَّ يَمَسُّهُم مِّنَّا عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٤٨﴾ تِلْكَ مِنْ أَنبَاءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوحِيهَا إِلَيْكَ ۖ مَا كُنتَ تَعْلَمُهَا أَنتَ وَلَا قَوْمُكَ مِن قَبْلِ هَٰذَا ۖ فَاصْبِرْ ۖ إِنَّ الْعَاقِبَةَ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٤٩﴾

And Nūḥ called unto his Lord and said, "My Lord, my son is a part of my family, and surely, Your promise is true, and You are the greatest of all judges." [45] **He said, "O Nūḥ, surely, he is not a part of your family. Indeed, he is (a man of) bad deeds. So do not ask Me something of which you have no knowledge. I counsel you not to be among the ignorant.** [46]

He said, "My Lord, I seek refuge with You against that I

ask You something of which I have no knowledge. And if You do not forgive me and do not show mercy to me, I shall be among the losers." [47]

It was said, "O Nūḥ, disembark in peace from Us and with blessings upon you and upon the peoples (springing) from those with you. And there are peoples whom We shall give some enjoyment, then a painful punishment from Us will visit them."[48]

These are some reports from the unseen (events) which We reveal to you. You did not know them before this, neither you nor your people. So, be patient. Surely, the end is in favor of the God-fearing. [49]

Commentary

The remaining account of the flood associated with the name of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام, along with instructions related to it, appears in the five verses cited above.

When Can'aan, the son of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام, did not board the ark despite the counsel and call of his esteemed father who was still concerned emotionally as he saw his son surrounded by the waves of the flood. His filial love knocked at another door. He turned to his Lord and prayed to Him on the basis of His promise that He would save his family from the flood, and that His promise was true. But, conditions were alarming and his son who was part of his family was going to be swallowed by the flood. The only court of appeal he could now go to was the court of the most just of judges for everything was in His power and control and that He could still save him from the flood.

In the second verse (46), came a stern response from Allah Ta'ālā whereby Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام was told that this son was no more a part of his family because he was not good and right in what he did. Therefore, it was not proper for him to approach Him with some request while being unaware of the true state of affairs. Then came the mollifying remark that the good counsel was being given to him so that he too does not become one of the ignorant.

Two things come out from what was said by Allah Ta'ālā:

1. Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام did not know about the disbelief of his son clearly and fully. He thought he was a hypocrite, so he still took him to

be a believer. Therefore, identifying him as a part of his family, he went ahead and prayed that he be saved from the flood. Otherwise, had he known the true state of affairs about him, he would have not made such a prayer. The reason is that he was already instructed in clear terms that he should not, once the flood comes, speak about those who had crossed the limit as it appears in verse 37 earlier وَلَا تُخَاطِبْنِى فِى الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا، اِنَّهُمْ مُّغْرَقُوْنَ. After this clear and explicit injunction, it was impossible for a prophet of God that he would venture to do something against it. The only possible explanation for this could be that, as suggested by the author of Bayān al-Qur'ān, the desired objective of this prayer is that his son becomes a believer and not that he be saved from the flood under his present condition. But, Allah Ta'ālā has not taken Sayyidnā Nūḥ's عليه السلام lack of knowledge about the disbelief of his son and the prayer for his deliverance based on it as sound excuses. Therefore, he was questioned as to why he would make such a prayer. This is a slip at the highest level of the station of a prophet which Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام would himself refer to on the day of Resurrection when the whole creation will request him to intercede with the Lord on their behalf. He would excuse himself by saying what had happened to him, therefore, he would not dare any intercession.

Prayer for the disbelieving and the unjust is not permissible

A religious rule of conduct that we learn about here is that one should first find out whether or not the objective for which he is making a prayer is permissible and *ḥalāl* (lawful). It is prohibited to make *Du'ā* (prayer) under doubtful circumstances. Tafsīr Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī with reference to al-Bayḍāwī reports that since this verse tells us about the prohibition of *Du'ā* under doubtful circumstances, it is automatically inferred from it that it will be all the more prohibited to pray for anything known to be impermissible and unlawful.

This rule also helps us realize the absence of discretion among modern day Shaykhs (spiritual masters) who have become used to raising their hands of prayer for anyone who comes in asking for some prayer to be made for him. Most of the time, they know that this person is not on the right, or is unjust, in the case for which he is asking the Shaykh to pray. Or, the person is asking the Shaykh to pray for a purpose that is not lawful for him, may be this person is looking for a particular job or office through which he will become involved in earn-

ing unlawfully, or succeed in it by usurping someone's right.

When attending circumstances are known, such prayers are unlawful and impermissible after all. Even if the circumstances are doubtful, taking the initiative to make Du'ā, without first getting to know the circumstances as they are and the lawfulness of the matter in question, is also not appropriate.

Brotherly relations between believers and disbelievers

2. The second religious ruling that emerges from here is that a believer and a disbeliever may be blood relatives to each other, but when it comes to religious and collective matters, this kinship will have no effect. A person may be high born, he may come from the progeny of men of high spiritual status, so much so that one may even have the honor of being among the progeny of our most noble Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. But, this high lineage and this prophetic connection will also not be taken into consideration as a factor in religious matters, if the person is not a believer. In religion, everything functionally depends on faith, goodness and the fear of Allah. One who is good in deeds and fears Allah, he is ours. If not like that, he is an alien.

Had concessions based on kinship been given even in religious matters, brothers would have not crossed swords against each other in the battlefields of Badr and Uḥud. It is common knowledge among Muslims that the battles of Badr, Uḥud and al-Aḥzāb were fought among individuals coming from the same families. This clearly demonstrates that Islamic nationality or brotherhood does not hinge on lineal bond or geographical or linguistic unity. Instead, it revolves round faith and deed. All believers, residents of any country, members of any family and speakers of any language, are a single nation, a single brotherhood. The Qur'ānic verse: إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ (The believers are but brothers – 40:10) means just this. Then, those who are deprived of faith and good deeds, they are not members of the Islamic brotherhood. The Holy Qur'ān has made this reality all the more clear through the words spoken by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام: إِنَّا بُرَءٰٓؤُا مِنكُمْ وَمِمَّا تَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ (Indeed, we have nothing to do with you and with whatever you worship other than Allah – al-Mumtaḥinah, 60:4).

This humble writer has restricted the above rule to the 'religious matters' only for the reason that, in worldly matters, demonstrating

good social behavior, moral grace, favor and generosity is something different. It is quite permissible to deal even with someone not good with these graces, in fact, it is recommended, and is an act worthy of *thawāb* (reward). Countless instances where the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم and his noble Companions have treated non-Muslims with compassion, favor and good grace are sufficient to prove this.

In our time, the edifice of nationalities is raised on the foundations of homeland, language or color whereby Muslims are segregated into one or the other 'nation' under false banners. This is contrary to the Qur'ān, and Sunnah, and amounts to rising in rebellion against the principles of political and social management enunciated by the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم.

Mentioned in the third verse (47) is the apology tendered by Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیہ السلام. In gist, it is a return to Allah in submission and entreaty, a prayer for the protection of Allah, His forgiveness for past omissions, and a request for His mercy.

From here we learn that, should one commit a mistake, let him not rely on his personal resolve to stay safe from it in the future. He should, rather, seek the protection of Allah Ta'ālā and pray to Him that He is the One who can keep him safe from errors and sins.

In the fourth verse (48), described there is the end of the flood. When the flood subsided, the ark of Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیہ السلام came to rest on Mount Judiyy, the earth sucked its water back, standing water from the heaven got preserved in the form of rivers and streams making the land habitable. Then, Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیہ السلام was asked to disembark, go down the mountain, for there was nothing to worry about. Blessings of Allah will be with him keeping him secure from any calamities and hardships and that he will prosper in terms of peace, wealth and children.

According to this statement, the entire post-flood human population of the world is the progeny of Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیہ السلام. At another place, the Qur'ān has said: وَجَعَلْنَا ذُرِّيَّتَهُ هُمُ الْبٰقِيْنَ (and those remaining We made his descendants – 37:77). Therefore, historians refer to Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیہ السلام as the second Ādam.

Then, the promise of peace and blessing made to Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیہ السلام is not limited to his person, instead, it was said: وَعَلٰٓى اُمَمٍ مِّمَّنْ مَّعَكَ (and

upon the peoples [springing] from those with you). Those who boarded the ark with Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام have been identified with the word: امم (*umam*) which is the plural form of امة (*ummah*: community). It releases the sense that those on board the ark consisted of different nationalities and communities, although we already know that those who had embarked the ark were mostly people from the family of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام in addition to a few other believers as well. So, they were identified as different communities and nationalities in the sense that different communities and nationalities will spring forth from their future generations. This tells us that the whole human race to be born up to the day of Qiyāmah is included under the sense of the words: أُمَمٍ مِّمَّن مَّعَكَ (peoples [springing] from those with you).

This was the reason why it became necessary to elaborate the subject of peace and blessing as the coming generation would include believers and disbelievers both. As for peace and blessing for believers, it is correct in its general sense for they would have peace and blessing in the mortal world as well as in the Hereafter. But, the disbelievers from this generation would have been consigned to the everlasting punishment of Hell. How would it be correct to say that they would be recipients of peace and blessing? Therefore, at the end of the verse, it was said: وَأُمَمٌ سَنُمَتِّعُهُمْ ثُمَّ يَمَسُّهُم مِّنَّا عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (And there are peoples whom We shall give some enjoyment, then a painful punishment from Us will visit them). It means that the peace and blessing they will enjoy in the mortal world is like a feast thrown open to all, friends and foes alike. Also participating in it will be those who take to disbelief from among the progeny of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام, but the salvation and prosperity of the Hereafter shall be reserved for believers only. The disbeliever will be given the return for his good deeds within the mortal world and there will be nothing left for him to receive in the Hereafter where he will find nothing but punishment waiting for him.

When the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم came to know of this detailed information about Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام and the Flood through revelation, he related it to his people – this event, then became a standing witness to the veracity of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم himself as a genuine prophet. To alert him to this situation, it was said in the fifth verse (49): 'As for Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام and the flood that came during his time, these were pieces of information that lay in the domain of the

unseen. He had no knowledge of it beforehand, nor his people, the Arabs, knew about it. It was he who told them about it. What was the explanation for it? How could it happen? There was no other explanation but that Allah had Himself told him about it through revelation, because, had his people been educated and conversant with world history, it could be surmised that he had related these events after having heard them from those learned people. But, when the whole lot of his people was unaware of these events and their prophet too had never gone to another country to get his education there, then, the only inlet of this information stands determined conclusively. It was Waḥy, the divine revelation, which is a clear proof that the prophet is a true messenger of Allah.

To console the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, it was said at the end of the verse that there were so many open proofs to the fact that he was a prophet and messenger of Allah. If there were some unfortunate human beings that see the sun yet insist that they do not, even challenge him and confront him, then, he should look at the role model of his predecessor, Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیہ السلام, peace on him. He spent one thousand years of his long life suffering from pain inflicted by his people. He remained patient. Let him stay as patient as he was – because, it stands determined that success will ultimately kiss the hands of those patient and God-fearing.

Verses 50 – 68

وَإِلٰى عَادٍ اَخَاهُمْ هُوْدًا ۚ قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ اِلٰهٍ
غَيْرُهٗ ۚ اِنْ اَنْتُمْ اِلَّا مُفْتَرُوْنَ ﴿٥٠﴾ يٰقَوْمِ لَآ اَسْئَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ
اَجْرًا ۚ اِنْ اَجْرِيَ اِلَّا عَلَى الَّذِيْ فَطَرَنِيْ ۚ اَفَلَا تَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿٥١﴾
وَيٰقَوْمِ اسْتَغْفِرُوْا رَبَّكُمْ ثُمَّ تُوْبُوْٓا اِلَيْهِ يُرْسِلِ السَّمَآءَ عَلَيْكُمْ
مِّدْرَارًا وَّيَزِدْكُمْ قُوَّةً اِلٰى قُوَّتِكُمْ وَلَا تَتَوَلَّوْا مُجْرِمِيْنَ ﴿٥٢﴾
قَالُوْا يٰهُوْدُ مَا جِئْتَنَا بِبَيِّنَةٍ وَّمَا نَحْنُ بِتَارِكِيْٓ اٰلِهَتِنَا عَنْ
قَوْلِكَ وَمَا نَحْنُ لَكَ بِمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿٥٣﴾ اِنْ نَّقُوْلُ اِلَّا اعْتَرٰىكَ
بَعْضُ اٰلِهَتِنَا بِسُوْٓءٍ ۚ قَالَ اِنِّيْٓ اُشْهِدُ اللّٰهَ وَاشْهَدُوْٓا اَنِّيْ بَرِيْٓءٌ

مِّمَّا تُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿٥٤﴾ مِنْ دُوْنِهٖ فَكِيْدُوْنِيْ جَمِيْعًا ثُمَّ لَا تُنْظِرُوْنِ
﴿٥٥﴾ اِنِّيْ تَوَكَّلْتُ عَلَى اللّٰهِ رَبِّيْ وَرَبِّكُمْ ؕ مَا مِنْ دَآبَّةٍ اِلَّا هُوَ
اٰخِذٌۢ بِنَاصِيَتِهَا ؕ اِنَّ رَبِّيْ عَلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ ﴿٥٦﴾ فَاِنْ
تَوَلَّوْا فَقَدْ اَبْلَغْتُكُمْ مَّآ اُرْسِلْتُ بِهٖۤ اِلَيْكُمْ ؕ وَيَسْتَخْلِفُ رَبِّيْ
قَوْمًا غَيْرَكُمْ ۚ وَلَا تَضُرُّوْنَهٗ شَيْـًٔا ؕ اِنَّ رَبِّيْ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ
حَفِيْظٌ ﴿٥٧﴾ وَلَمَّا جَآءَ اَمْرُنَا نَجَّيْنَا هُوْدًا وَّ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مَعَهٗ
بِرَحْمَةٍ مِّنَّا ۚ وَنَجَّيْنٰهُمْ مِّنْ عَذَابٍ غَلِيْظٍ ﴿٥٨﴾ وَتِلْكَ عَادٌ ۟ۙ
جَحَدُوْا بِاٰيٰتِ رَبِّهِمْ وَعَصَوْا رُسُلَهٗ وَاتَّبَعُوْۤا اَمْرَ كُلِّ جَبَّارٍ
عَنِيْدٍ ﴿٥٩﴾ وَاُتْبِعُوْا فِيْ هٰذِهِ الدُّنْيَا لَعْنَةً وَّيَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ ؕ اَلَاۤ اِنَّ
عَادًا كَفَرُوْا رَبَّهُمْ ؕ اَلَا بُعْدًا لِّعَادٍ قَوْمِ هُوْدٍ ﴿٦٠﴾ ع وَاِلٰى ثَمُوْدَ
اَخَاهُمْ صٰلِحًا ۘ قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ اِلٰهٍ غَيْرُهٗ ؕ هُوَ
اَنْشَاَكُمْ مِّنَ الْاَرْضِ وَاسْتَعْمَرَكُمْ فِيْهَا فَاسْتَغْفِرُوْهُ ثُمَّ تُوْبُوْۤا
اِلَيْهِ ؕ اِنَّ رَبِّيْ قَرِيْبٌ مُّجِيْبٌ ﴿٦١﴾ قَالُوْا يٰصٰلِحُ قَدْ كُنْتَ فِيْنَا
مَرْجُوًّا قَبْلَ هٰذَاۤ اَتَنْهٰىنَاۤ اَنْ نَّعْبُدَ مَا يَعْبُدُ اٰبَآؤُنَا وَاِنَّنَا لَفِيْ
شَكٍّ مِّمَّا تَدْعُوْنَاۤ اِلَيْهِ مُرِيْبٍ ﴿٦٢﴾ قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ اَرَءَيْتُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُ
عَلٰى بَيِّنَةٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّيْ وَاٰتٰىنِيْ مِنْهُ رَحْمَةً فَمَنْ يَّنْصُرُنِيْ مِنَ اللّٰهِ
اِنْ عَصَيْتُهٗ ۫ فَمَا تَزِيْدُوْنَنِيْ غَيْرَ تَخْسِيْرٍ ﴿٦٣﴾ وَيٰقَوْمِ هٰذِهٖ
نَاقَةُ اللّٰهِ لَكُمْ اٰيَةً فَذَرُوْهَا تَاْكُلْ فِيْۤ اَرْضِ اللّٰهِ وَلَا تَمَسُّوْهَا
بِسُوْٓءٍ فَيَاْخُذَكُمْ عَذَابٌ قَرِيْبٌ ﴿٦٤﴾ فَعَقَرُوْهَا فَقَالَ تَمَتَّعُوْا
فِيْ دَارِكُمْ ثَلٰثَةَ اَيَّامٍ ؕ ذٰلِكَ وَعْدٌ غَيْرُ مَكْذُوْبٍ ﴿٦٥﴾ فَلَمَّا
جَآءَ اَمْرُنَا نَجَّيْنَا صٰلِحًا وَّالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مَعَهٗ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِّنَّا وَمِنْ
خِزْيِ يَوْمِئِذٍ ؕ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ الْقَوِيُّ الْعَزِيْزُ ﴿٦٦﴾ وَاَخَذَ الَّذِيْنَ

ظَلَمُوا الصَّيْحَةُ فَأَصْبَحُوا فِي دِيَارِهِمْ جٰثِمِينَ ﴿٦٧﴾ كَأَن لَّمْ
يَغْنَوْا فِيهَا ۗ أَلَا إِنَّ ثَمُودَا۟ كَفَرُوا۟ رَبَّهُمْ ۗ أَلَا بُعْدًا لِّثَمُودَ
ع
﴿٦٨﴾

And to 'Ād (We sent) their brother Hūd. He said, "O my people, worship Allah. You have no god other than Him. You are nothing but fabricators. [50] **O my people, I ask you no reward for it. My reward is only on the One who created me. Have you, then, no sense?** [51] **And O my people, seek forgiveness from your Lord, then turn to Him in repentance, so that He may release the heavens pouring upon you and may increase you in strength beside your strength, and do not turn away like sinners."** [52]

They said, "O Hūd, you did not bring to us any proof, and we are not to leave our gods on your statement, and we are not to believe in you. [53] **We do not say except that some of our gods have subjected you to some evil." He said, "I make Allah my witness, and you be witness that I have nothing to do with what you take as gods besides Him.** [54] **So, try your plans against me, all of you together, then give me no respite.** [55] **I place my trust in Allah, my Lord and your Lord. There is no creature but He takes it by the forelock. Surely, my Lord is on a straight path.** [56] **Now, if you turn away, I have already conveyed to you what I was sent to you with. And my Lord will replace you with some other people, and you cannot do Him any harm. Surely, my Lord is guardian over every thing."** [57]

And when came Our command, We saved Hūd and those who believed along with him, out of mercy from Us, and We did save them from a heavy punishment. [58]

That was the tribe of 'Ād who rejected the signs of their Lord, disobeyed their Messengers and followed the dictates of every obstinate tyrant! [59] **And a curse was made to pursue them in this world and on the Day of Doom. Lo! The people of 'Ād disbelieved their Lord. Lo! Curse be upon 'Ād, the people of Hūd.** [60]

And to (the people of) Thamūd (We sent) their brother,

Ṣāliḥ. He said, "O my people, worship Allah. You have no god other than Him. He has created you from earth and made you settle therein. So, seek His forgiveness, then turn to Him in repentance. Surely, my Lord is near, responding." [61]

They said, "O Ṣāliḥ, we had hopes in you before this. Do you ask us not to worship what our fathers worshipped? And we are certainly in confounding doubt about what you are calling us to." [62]

He said, "O my people, tell me: When I am on a clear path, and He has bestowed mercy upon me from Himself, who will then come to my help against Allah, if I disobey Him? So, you add on to me nothing but a loss. [63] **And O my people, this is the she-camel of Allah, a sign for you. So, leave her free to eat in the land of Allah and do not even touch her with evil (intention), lest a near punishment should seize you."** [64]

Then they slaughtered her. So, he said, "Enjoy yourselves in your homes for three days (only). That is a promise, not going to be false." [65]

So, when came Our command, We saved Ṣāliḥ and those who believed along with Him, out of mercy from Us, and (We saved them) from the disgrace of that day. Surely, your Lord is the Powerful, the All Mighty. [66]

And those who transgressed were caught by the Cry, and they were found dead in their homes, fallen on their knees, [67] **as though they had never lived there. Lo! The people of Thamūd disbelieved their Lord. Lo! Curse be upon the people of Thamūd.** [68]

Commentary

Mentioned in the first eleven verses (50-60) from the ones cited above are the the events of the revered prophet of Allah, Sayyidnā Hūd عليه السلام by whose name this Sūrah is identified. Appearing in this Sūrah, there are events related to seven blessed prophets and their peoples from Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام to Sayyidnā Mūsā described in the unique style of the Holy Qur'ān. They have such flashes of lesson and advice that no one with a responsive and discerning heart can remain unaffected by them. Apart from their instructive aspects, they contain many principals and subsidiaries of faith and good deed as well as

guidance one can make use of in comparable situations.

As for stories and events taken up here, they relate to seven prophets, but the Sūrah has been identified with the name of Sayyidnā Hūd عليه السلام, which shows that the story of Sayyidnā Hūd عليه السلام has a particular significance in it.

Allah Ta'ālā had sent Sayyidnā Hūd عليه السلام as a prophet to the people of 'Ād. They were known for their physical build, strength and bravery. Sayyidnā Hūd عليه السلام was also one of them – as indicated in: اخاهم هودا (their brother, Hūd – 50). How regrettable that a people so strong and brave had lost their reason to the extent that they had taken to worshipping gods they had carved out of stones with their own hands.

Three basic principles of the call of faith Sayyidnā Hūd عليه السلام presented before his people have been mentioned in the first three verses (50-52). One: Belief in Tauḥīd (Oneness of Allah) and that taking someone or something else worthy of worship other than Allah is nothing but a lie and fabrication. Two: He was a Messenger of Allah. He had come with the call of Tauḥīd for them. This was the mission of his life. He was working hard against heavy odds to convey the message to them. Why would he do that? If they thought about it, they would see that he was not asking them to pay for his services, nor did he receive any material benefits from them. If he did not honestly believe it to be the will and command of Allah, and right and true, why would he go to all that trouble of inviting them to believe and live a better life?

Payment for *Da'wah* work

The Holy Qur'ān reports almost all prophets saying that they do not ask for any payment against the duty of Da'wah they do. This shows that, in case payment is accepted (as pre-arranged or as implied by custom) against Da'wah and Tablīgh, the call remains ineffective. Experience bears it out that those who take wages for their religious sermons, addresses and good counsels leave the hearts of their audience unchanged at the end of the exercise.

Three: Forgiveness and Repentance: He exhorted them to seek forgiveness from Allah Ta'ālā for their disbelief and for sins they had committed in their past life. Then, for future, let them be ashamed of what they had done, repent and promise to themselves making a firm

resolve and commitment that they would never go even near them. If they sincerely went through this process of seeking forgiveness from Allah and showing repentance before Him, the result will be that they shall, no doubt, be blessed with everlasting prosperity in the Hereafter, but in the mortal world too, they will themselves notice its many benefits coming to them. Firstly, the act of Istighfār and Taubah will remove the distress of famine from them. Heavy rains will come when due making their provisions sumptuous. Secondly, it would increase their strength and power.

The word: قوة (*quwwah*) has been used here in a general sense which includes physical strength and power as well as the strength that comes from increases in wealth and children.

This tells that Taubah and Istighfār have a special property of their own – that their practitioner is blessed with extended means of sustenance and satisfying increase in wealth and children, even in this mortal world.

Captives of their ignorant ways, the people of Sayyidnā Hūd علیه السلام brushed his call aside by saying, in effect, 'a miracle would have been something, which you did not show to us. You are simply saying what you have to say. Now, just because what you are saying, we are not going to leave our gods we worship and, in you, we are not going to believe. In fact, we believe that you have lost your mind as a result of maligning our gods, otherwise you would not be saying all that.'

Demonstrating his prophetic courage, Sayyidnā Hūd علیه السلام said in response, 'If you would not listen to me, then, hear this – I make Allah my witness and you too bear witness that I am disgusted with all your gods other than Allah. Now, do, you and your gods, whatever you all can do against me and do not even give me the least respite.'

And he said, 'this I am telling you seriously for I have placed my trust in Allah who is my Lord and your Lord as well. He holds every creature that walks on the earth by the forelock. There is no one around who can dare cause harm or loss to anyone even to the measure of a tiny particle without His will and permission. Surely, my Lord is on the straight path, that is, one who takes the straight path finds Him and is helped by Him.'

Here was one man against a whole people making a claim so

strong and loud and putting them to shame and no one from a people so strong and brave dared budge before him! This was a standing miracle of Sayyidnā Hūd عليه السلام – which also provides an answer to their complaint that he did not show them a miracle. And it also provides yet another answer to their audacious comment that their gods had made him mentally deranged for, had their gods been exercising this kind of power, they would have never left him alive after what he had said against them.

After that, he said, 'If you continue to be so insanely opposed to truth, then, you must understand that I have already conveyed to you the message with which I have been sent. Now, its logical outcome could be no other but that the wrath and punishment of Allah falls on you and you are destroyed to the last man and my Lord brings another people to settle on this land. As for what you are doing against this matter of truth, you are simply hurting yourself, not Allah. Surely, my Lord oversees everything and He is aware of all your deeds and thoughts.'

They were the kind of people who would not listen to anything. They chose to stick to their contumacy. Then, the punishment of Allah descended upon them in the form of a stormy wind that uprooted their homes and trees. Living entities, human and animal, would be blown up high into the air and ricochet back on to the ground faces down. Human cries could be heard coming from the sky – until this whole set of people, unique in their size and strength, were annihilated to the last man.

When came the command to send Divine punishment on these people, Allah Ta'ālā, in accordance with His customary practice, saved His prophet and his companions from this severe punishment as they were ordered to leave that area before the punishment came.

After having mentioned the event relating to the people of 'Ād and the punishment that came upon them, an exhortation was necessary so that others could learn their lesson from it. So, it was said: That was the tribe of 'Ād! They rejected the signs of their Lord, disobeyed their Messengers yet kept following the dictates of those who were tyrannical and obstinate.

The outcome was that curse, that is, the state of being away from

the mercy of Allah, kept pursuing them in the mortal world and will keep pursuing them similarly on the day of Qiyāmah as well.

From this event, we learn that the people of 'Ād were overtaken by a stormy wind. But, it appears in Sūrah al-Mu'minūn (23:41) that they were destroyed by a harsh sound (*aṣ-ṣaiḥah*: The Cry, The Shriek). It is possible that both kinds of punishments had visited the people of Sayyidnā Hūd عليه السلام.

The event relating to the people of 'Ād and Sayyidnā Hūd عليه السلام ends here.

After that, the next eight verses (61-68) carry the story of Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام, peace be upon him. He was sent to the people of Thamūd, another branch of the tribe of 'Ād. He too invited his people to believe in Tauḥīd, the Oneness of Allah. As customary, his people belied him and insisted that he must first make a she-camel of a specified description come out from the rock of the mountain in front of them in order to have them believe that he was a true prophet of Allah.

Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام warned them: If Allah Ta'ālā shows you your custom-ordered miracles, and you still fail to believe, then, according to the customary practice of Allah, the punishment will come and destroy all of you. But, they remained obstinate and Allah Ta'ālā, in His perfect power, made the miracle they demanded manifest before them. The rock of the mountain in front of them split asunder. Out from it came the she-camel bearing the features specified by them. Allah Ta'ālā ordered them not to harm that she-camel in any manner, otherwise the punishment will come upon them. But, they disobeyed this order as well, and killed the she-camel. Consequently, they were seized by Allah Ta'ālā, Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام and his companions were saved from the punishment, and the rest of those people were destroyed by a Sound which was severe and terrifying.

As part of this event, the people of Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام have been reported to have said to him: قَدْ كُنْتَ فِينَا مَرْجُوًّا قَبْلَ هٰذَا (O Ṣāliḥ, we had hopes in you before this - 62). It means that, before he claimed to be a prophet and started telling them to shun idol-worship, they had great hopes in him. They thought he would rise to be a great reformer and leader of their people. The reason is that Allah Ta'ālā nurtures and grooms his prophets from their childhood in a way that they become

models of good morals and habits. Whoever looks at them, loves and respects them. This is what happened in the case of the Last Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. Before he declared that he has been sent as a prophet, the whole Arabia called him *al-amīn* (the trustworthy one) and took him to be true and righteous. It was only when he announced his prophet-hood and prohibited idol-worship that everyone turned hostile to him.

In verse 65, it was said: تَمَتَّعُوْا فِيْ دَارِكُمْ ثَلٰثَةَ اَيَّامٍ: "Enjoy yourselves in your homes for three days [only]." That is, when these people killed the she-camel associated with the miracle in flagrant contravention of the Divine command, then, something serious happened. As warned earlier, 'lest a near punishment should seize you - 64', the punishment did come upon them in a manner that they were given a respite of three days and told that they all will be destroyed on the fourth day.

According to Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī, these three days were Thursday, Friday and Saturday. On Sunday, the punishment descended upon them: وَاَخَذَ الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوا الصَّيْحَةُ (And those who transgressed were caught by the Cry – 67). This awesome Cry was that of the archangel, Sayyidnā Jibra'īl عليه السلام which was far more terrorizing that the combined thunderbolts of worldly lightening could ever be, something human senses could not take. All hearts were rent apart by the horrific sound resulting in the mass destruction of those people.

From this verse we learn that the people of Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام were destroyed by a severe Sound, but what Sūrah al-A'rāf says about them is: فَاَخَذَتْهُمُ الرَّجْفَةُ (So, the earthquake seized them – 7:78,91) which, as obvious, tells us that the punishment visiting them was that of the earthquake. Commentator al-Qurṭubī has said that there is no contradiction here. It is possible that the earthquake came first and then they all were destroyed by the severe Sound. Allah knows best.

Verses 69 – 73

وَلَقَدْ جَآءَتْ رُسُلُنَآ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ بِالْبُشْرٰى قَالُوْا سَلٰمًا ؕ قَالَ سَلٰمٌ فَمَا لَبِثَ اَنْ جَآءَ بِعِجْلٍ حَنِيْذٍ ﴿٦٩﴾ فَلَمَّا رَآٰ اَيْدِيَهُمْ لَا تَصِلُ اِلَيْهِ نَكِرَهُمْ وَاَوْجَسَ مِنْهُمْ خِيْفَةً ؕ قَالُوْا لَا تَخَفْ اِنَّآ اُرْسِلْنَآ اِلٰى قَوْمِ لُوْطٍ ﴿٧٠﴾ وَامْرَاَتُهٗ قَآئِمَةٌ فَضَحِكَتْ فَبَشَّرْنٰهَا

بِإِسْحٰقَ ۙ وَمِنْ وَّرَآءِ إِسْحٰقَ يَعْقُوبَ ﴿٧١﴾ قَالَتْ يٰوَيْلَتٰٓى ءَاَلِدُ وَاَنَا عَجُوزٌ وَّهٰذَا بَعْلِى شَيْخًا ۭ إِنَّ هٰذَا لَشَىْءٌ عَجِيبٌ ﴿٧٢﴾ قَالُوْٓا اَتَعْجَبِينَ مِنْ اَمْرِ اللّٰهِ رَحْمَتُ اللّٰهِ وَبَرَكٰتُهٗ عَلَيْكُمْ اَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ ۭ إِنَّهٗ حَمِيدٌ مَّجِيدٌ ﴿٧٣﴾

And Our messengers came to Ibrāhīm with the good news. They said, "Salām (peace)." He said, "Salām." Then he made no delay in bringing a roasted calf. [69]

So, when he noticed their hands not reaching for it, he found them strange and felt a bit of fright from them. They said, "Be not frightened. We have been sent to the people of Lūṭ." [70] **And his wife was standing (nearby). She laughed, so, We gave her the good news about Isḥāq, and about Ya'qūb after Isḥāq.** [71]

She said, "Woe is to me! Shall I give birth to a child while I am an old woman and this is my husband, an old man? This is something strange, indeed." [72] **They said, "Do you marvel at Allah's command? Allah's mercy and His blessings are upon you, the people of the house. Surely, He is praiseworthy, glorious."** [73]

Commentary

In these five verses, an event relating to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام has been mentioned. Allah Ta'ālā sent some angels to give him the good news of a birth in his family because Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام had no children from his wife, Sayyidah Sārah and he wished he had. But, they were much advanced in years. Obviously, there was no hope. Then, Allah Ta'ālā sent the good news through the angels and that too of the nature that the new born would be a male child and even proposed the name of the child as Isḥāq. Then, he was also told that he would live, have children and that the name of his son will be Ya'qūb, and both of them would be the messenger and prophet of Allah. Since these angels had come in human form, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام took them to be normal guests and lost no time in offering his hospitality. He placed a dish of roasted calf before them. But, they were really angels, free of eating and drinking. Therefore, despite the food being before them, they did not extend their hands towards it. When Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام noticed this, he was concerned. They did not look like

guests, may be they had come to create some problem for him. The angels scented his concern and disclosed their identity. They told him that they were angels of Allah Ta'ālā. There was no need for him to be frightened. They had been sent to give him the good news of a birth in his family, as well as to accomplish another mission, the mission of bringing Divine punishment on the people of Lūṭ عليه السلام. Sayyidah Sārah, the wife of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was listening to this conversation from behind a curtain. When she found out that they were angels, not human beings, there was no need for the otherwise essential *ḥijāb*. She laughed at the good news of the birth of a child in old age and said, 'shall I give birth to a child while I am an old woman and my husband, an old man?' The angels said as to why would she marvel at the command of Allah Ta'ālā who has everything within His power. Was it not that, as a member of the prophet's family, she has been witnessing that this was a family on which extraordinary Divine mercy and blessing descends all the time, which is mostly above and beyond the obvious chain of causes? So, what was there to wonder about? This was a gist of the event. Let us now go to details as they appear in the text of the verses cited above.

The first verse (69) tells us that these angels had come to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام with some good news. The good news has been mentioned later in the third verse (71): فَبَشَّرْنٰهَا بِإِسْحٰقَ (so, We gave her the good news about Isḥāq).

Sayyidnā 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbās said that the three angels were Jibra'īl, Mīkā'īl and Isrāfīl عليهم السلام. (Qurṭubī) They came in human form and greeted Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام with '*salām*.' Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام responded to their *salām* greeting and, taking them to be human, offered the usual hospitality.

Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام is the first human being who introduced the custom of honoring guests by offering hospitality to them. (Qurṭubī) It was his routine that he would never eat alone. Instead, when came the time for meals, he would be looking out for a guest so that he could eat with him.

Al-Qurṭubī has reported from Isrā'īlī narratives that, on a certain day, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام started looking for a guest at the time for meals. The man he met was a stranger. When he sat down to eat, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام said to him, 'say: I begin with the name of

Allah.' He said, 'I do not know Allah. Who and what is He?' Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام asked him to leave the dining-spread on the floor. When he went out, Sayyidnā Jibra'īl عليه السلام came in and said, 'Allah Ta'ālā says: As for him, We gave sustenance to him throughout his life despite his disbelief and as for you, you were stingy about giving him even one morsel of food.' Hearing this, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام went after him and called him back. He said, 'unless you tell me the reason why you turned me out first and why are you asking me to come in again, I will not go with you.'

When Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام told him the episode, the episode itself became the reason for his becoming a believer. He said, 'the Lord who made you do this is very noble. I believe in Him.' Then he went in with Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, behaved like a true believer and ate his food after having recited Bismillah first.

So, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, true to his habit of entertaining guests, welcomed angels who had come in human form. Naturally, to him they were human, and guests. The host did his most, lost no time and placed a roasted calf before them.

In the second verse (70), it was stated that the angels had, though, come in the human form and it was also possible that they could have been given human characteristics of eating and drinking at that particular time. But, the wiser choice for them was no other but that they should not eat so that the secret that they were angels comes out in the open. Therefore, their angelic characteristics were allowed to remain, even in their human form, because of which they did not extend their hands towards the food.

According to some reports, they had some arrows in their hands. They started poking the heads of their arrows into the roasted meat. When they acted in that manner, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام apprehended them to be his enemies, because, according to the social custom known to him, if a guest refused to eat, it was a sign of mischief to be made from his side. (Qurṭubī) His apprehension was quashed when the angels themselves disclosed their identity and said that they were angels, therefore, they do not eat. So, there was no danger for him to bother about.

Injunctions and Rules

Many injunctions and important rules of guidance regarding social living appear in the verses under study. Imām al-Qurṭubī has discussed them in detail in his Tafsīr.

The *Sunnah* of *Salām*

The words of verse 69 --'قَالُوا سَلٰمًا قَالَ سَلٰمٌ' (They said, "*Salām*." He said, "*Salām*.") – teach us that it is a Sunnah for Muslims that, when they meet each other, they should offer *Salām*. The guest coming in should say it first while others should respond.

That people say some words to greet each other when they meet is a custom found in all communities. But, the teaching of Islām is unique in this matter for the *masnūn* word of *salām* is السلام عليكم : As-*Salāmu 'Alaikum*. It carries the name of Allah with it. So it is both a Dhikr of Allah, and a prayer for peace and protection from Him – in addition to being a guarantee of the protection of life, property and honor from one's own side. (When we equate *As-Salāmu 'Alaikum* with 'peace on you' we go by the anatomy and leave the spirit that is essential to it – **tr.**)

At this place in the Qur'ān, it has been said that the angels said 'سلاما' (*salām*) and Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام responded with 'سلام' (*salām*). Obviously, here it was not considered necessary to mention *salām* in its complete form – as customary in usage when it is said that a person said *salām* to someone where it is presupposed that he said the whole greeting of *As-Salāmu 'Alaikum*. Similarly, at this place, *salām* stands for the full *masnūn* greeting which has been taught to his community by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم through his word and deed, that is, saying: السلام عليكم (*As-Salāmu 'Alaikum*) at the beginning of *salām*, and:وعليكم السلام ورحمة الله (*wa 'alaikumu-s-salām*, or *wa 'alaikumu-s-salāmu wa raḥmatu-l-lāh* to be more generous) while responding to the *salām*.

Some Rules for Guests and Hosts

It has been said in the last sentence of verse 69: فَمَا لَبِثَ اَنْ جَآءَ بِعِجْلٍ حَنِيْذٍ (Then he made no delay in bringing a roasted calf).

This tells us a few things:

1. It is a part of the etiquette of hospitality that the host should, soon after the arrival of the guest, bring out something to eat, or drink, something he has on hand and which could be offered quickly

and conveniently. Then, if the host is a man of means, he can arrange for additional hospitality later. (Qurṭubī)

2. A host should not worry about making too many formal arrangements for a guest. Anything good available easily is good enough. Let him put it before the guest. Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام had some domestic animals at home. Therefore, he slaughtered a calf, had it roasted quickly and offered it to his guests. (Qurṭubī)

3. Receiving guests and offering hospitality to them is a part of the essential etiquette of Islam, in fact, a hallmark of high morals. This is the blessed habit of prophets and the righteous. Is it necessary (*wājib*) to entertain guests? Or, is it not? 'Ulamā' have difference of opinion in this matter. According to the majority of them, it is a *sunnah*, and desirable, but not *wājib* (necessary, obligatory). Some of them say that it is *wājib* on village people that they should offer hospitality to a person who stays in their village because a stranger has no arrangement for his meals there. Since such arrangements are possible through a hotel in cities, therefore, it is not *wājib* on those who live in cities. Al-Qurṭubī has reported all these different views in his Tafsīr.

In verse 70, it was said: فَلَمَّا رَآ أَيْدِيَهُمْ لَا تَصِلُ إِلَيْهِ نَكِرَهُمْ (So, when he noticed their hands not reaching for it, he found them strange and felt a bit of fright from them).

From here we learn that there are rules of etiquette for guests as well. A guest should accept whatever is offered. Let him partake from it a little bit to please the host, even if not willing to eat because of unfavorable taste or apprehended harm.

This very sentence also tells us that the host should not consider himself absolved after having placed the food before the guest. Instead, he should be benignly watching whether or not the guest is partaking of the food, as was done by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام when he noticed that the angels were not eating.

But, this watching has to be discreet, not something like staring at the guest while he is eating. A casual look is enough, because looking at the morsels of food being eaten by the guest is contrary to the etiquette of entertainment and certainly very humiliating for the invited guest. This is illustrated by an incident relating to Khalīfah Hishām ibn 'Abd ul-Mālik. On a certain day, the Khalīfah was sharing his food-

spread with a rustic Arab. The morsel of food being eaten by the Arab had a strand of hair in it. When Khalīfah Hishām noticed it, he told the Arab about it. The Arab instantly rose in a huff saying, 'we never eat with a person who watches our morsels.'

Al-Ṭabarī reports at this place: When the angels abstained from eating the first time, they had said that they do not eat free meals. If they were to accept payment for it, they would. Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام said, 'Yes, there is a price for it that you can pay. The price is: Say 'with the name of Allah' when you begin, and praise Him when you finish.' Hearing this, the archangel Jibra'īl عليه السلام told his companions, 'That Allah Ta'ālā calls him His friend is correct. He deserves it.'

This tells us that saying: بسم الله (*bismillah*: With the name of Allah) when beginning to eat, and saying: الحمد لله (*alhamdulillāh*: Praise belongs to Allah) at the end of it is Sunnah.

Verses 74 – 83

فَلَمَّا ذَهَبَ عَنْ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ الرَّوْعُ وَجَآءَتْهُ الْبُشْرٰى يُجَادِلُنَا فِىْ
قَوْمِ لُوْطٍ ﴿٧٤﴾ اِنَّ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ لَحَلِيْمٌ اَوَّاهٌ مُّنِيْبٌ ﴿٧٥﴾ يٰۤاِبْرٰهِيْمُ
اَعْرِضْ عَنْ هٰذَا ۚ اِنَّهٗ قَدْ جَآءَ اَمْرُ رَبِّكَ ۚ وَاِنَّهُمْ اٰتِيْهِمْ عَذَابٌ
غَيْرُ مَرْدُوْدٍ ﴿٧٦﴾ وَلَمَّا جَآءَتْ رُسُلُنَا لُوْطًا سِیْٓءَ بِهِمْ وَضَاقَ
بِهِمْ ذَرْعًا وَّقَالَ هٰذَا يَوْمٌ عَصِيْبٌ ﴿٧٧﴾ وَجَآءَهٗ قَوْمُهٗ يُهْرَعُوْنَ
اِلَيْهِ ؕ وَمِنْ قَبْلُ كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ السَّيِّاٰتِ ؕ قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ هٰۤؤُلَآءِ
بَنَاتِىْ هُنَّ اَطْهَرُ لَكُمْ فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَلَا تُخْزُوْنِ فِىْ ضَيْفِىْ ؕ
اَلَيْسَ مِنْكُمْ رَجُلٌ رَّشِيْدٌ ﴿٧٨﴾ قَالُوْا لَقَدْ عَلِمْتَ مَا لَنَا فِىْ
بَنٰتِكَ مِنْ حَقٍّ ۚ وَاِنَّكَ لَتَعْلَمُ مَا نُرِيْدُ ﴿٧٩﴾ قَالَ لَوْ اَنَّ لِىْ بِكُمْ
قُوَّةً اَوْ اٰوِیْٓ اِلٰى رُكْنٍ شَدِيْدٍ ﴿٨٠﴾ قَالُوْا يٰلُوْطُ اِنَّا رُسُلُ رَبِّكَ
لَنْ يَّصِلُوْۤا اِلَيْكَ فَاَسْرِ بِاَهْلِكَ بِقِطْعٍ مِّنَ الَّيْلِ وَلَا يَلْتَفِتْ
مِنْكُمْ اَحَدٌ اِلَّا امْرَاَتَكَ ؕ اِنَّهٗ مُصِيْبُهَا مَاۤ اَصَابَهُمْ ؕ اِنَّ مَوْعِدَهُمُ
الصُّبْحُ ؕ اَلَيْسَ الصُّبْحُ بِقَرِيْبٍ ﴿٨١﴾ فَلَمَّا جَآءَ اَمْرُنَا جَعَلْنَا

عَالِيَهَا سَافِلَهَا وَأَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهَا حِجَارَةً مِّنْ سِجِّيلٍ مَّنْضُودٍ ﴿٨٢﴾ مُّسَوَّمَةً عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ وَمَا هِيَ مِنَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ بِبَعِيْدٍ ﴿٨٣﴾

So, when fear left Ibrāhīm and the happy news came to him, he started pleading before Us for the people of Lūṭ. [74] **Surely, Ibrāhīm is forbearing, very penitent, ever-turning to Allah.** [75]

O Ibrāhīm! Leave it, in fact, the command of your Lord has come, and there has to come upon them a punishment, not to be turned back. [76]

And when Our emissaries (angels) came to Lūṭ, he felt uneasy and was strained in his heart on account of them, and said, "This is a very hard day." [77]

And his people came to him, rushing upon him. And already they used to commit evil deeds. He said, "These are my daughters. They are far more clean for you. So, fear Allah and do not disgrace me in respect of my guests. Is there not a single right man among you." [78]

They said, "You know that we have no claim on your daughters, and you know well what we want." [79]

He said, "O that I had power over you or might have some strong support for refuge." [80]

They (the angels) said, "O Lūṭ, we are emissaries of your Lord. They shall never reach you. So, move with your family in a part of night, and none of you shall turn to look back; except your woman. There has to befall her whatever befalls them. Their deadline is the morning. Is it not that the morning is near?" [81]

So, when Our command came, We turned its highest into the lowest, and We rained on it stones of hard clay, one over another [82] **marked, with your Lord. And it is not far from the transgressors.** [83]

Commentary

Sūrah Hūd carries an account of different kinds of Divine punishments sent over past peoples because of their antagonism to prophets of the time. Described in the verses cited above is the moral condition of the people of Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام and the severe punishment given to them.

Besides being disbelievers, the people of Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام were involved in the practice of such abject evil and immodesty as was not found in the world before them, something even wild animals hate. That a man would pollute his honor and dignity with another man is a curse the fallout from which is far more injurious than common fornication. Therefore, the harsh punishment that descended on these people had never hit known practitioners of common acts of immodesty.

The event relating to Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام as it appears in the cited verses tells that Allah Ta'ālā sent some angels, including Sayyidnā Jibra'īl عليه السلام, to execute the punishment against these people. They first went to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام in Palestine, the account of which has appeared in previous verses. After that, they came to Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام whose abode was located at a distance of ten or twelve miles from there.

Certainly great is the majesty of Allah Ta'ālā. When He seizes a people in punishment, the punishment that he makes descend upon them is chosen to be congruous to their misdeed. On this occasion too, these angels of Allah were sent in the form of handsome young men. When they reached the home of Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام, he too took them to be visiting guests for they had come in human form. He found himself in a fix. If he backed out from entertaining guests, it would be against his dignity as a prophet. If he took them in as his guests, then, he knew how evil and dirty his people were. The danger was that they might storm his home and hurt the guests while he failed to defend them. So, in his heart, he said, 'this is a very hard day.'

Allah Ta'ālā has, in His great design, made this world of ours an open gallery of lessons full of the countless exhibits of His perfect power and eloquent wisdom. He made His friend Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام come out as a prophet from the home of Āzar, the idol-worshipper. In the home of the highly revered prophet, Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام, there was that wife of his who worked in league with disbelievers and opposed her prophet husband. When these honored guests in the form of handsome young men came to stay at the home of Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام, his wife passed on the information to perverted hoods from these people telling them about the kind of guests they had in their home on that day. (Qurṭubī, Maẓharī)

Things turned out as Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام had first apprehended.

This finds mention in the second verse (78): وَ جَآءَهٗ قَوۡمُهٗ يُهۡرَعُوۡنَ اِلَيۡهِ (And his people came to him, rushing upon him) – and they were already used to committing evil deeds.

It has been hinted here that such was the curse of their evil deed that they had lost all sense of modesty and propriety, so much so that they did not hesitate to storm even the home of Sayyidnā Lūṭ علیہ السلام for a purpose that sinister.

When Sayyidnā Lūṭ علیہ السلام realized that it was difficult to protect his guests, he tried to divert the attention of his people from their evil advances by telling them that he would give his daughters in marriage to their chiefs, if they were to stop their evil-mongering. The marriage of a believing girl with a disbelieving man was permissible at that time. The practice had continued up to the early period of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, therefore, he had given two of his daughters in marriage to 'Utbah ibn Abī Lahab and Abu al-'Āṣ ibn al-Rabī', though both of them were disbelievers. Later came the verses that prohibited the marriage of Muslim women with disbelieving men as *ḥarām*. (Qurṭubī)

According to some commentators, 'my daughters' at this place means the daughters of the whole community because every prophet is like a father to his people and the whole community is his spiritual progeny. It is supported by the noble verse: اَلنَّبِيُّ اَوۡلٰى بِالۡمُؤۡمِنِيۡنَ مِنۡ اَنۡفُسِهِمۡ وَاَزۡوَاجُهٗۤ اُمَّهٰتُهُمۡ (The Prophet comes first with the believers against their own selves and his wives are (like) their mothers – 33:6). This should be seen with the additional words: وَهُوَ اَبٌ لَّهُمۡ (and he is [like] a father for them) as they appear in the rendition (*Qirā'ah*) of Sayyidnā 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ūd رضى الله عنه where the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been identified as a father to the entire Muslim Ummah. According to this Tafsīr, the statement of Sayyidnā Lūṭ علیہ السلام would mean, 'you leave this evil habit of yours, behave like gentlemen, marry girls from your people and have them as your wives.'

After that, it was to warn them against Divine punishment that Sayyidnā Lūṭ علیہ السلام said: فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ (So, fear Allah). Then he pleaded with them: وَلَا تُخۡزُوۡنِ فِىۡ ضَيۡفِىۡ (do not disgrace me in respect of my guests) and then wondered: اَلَيۡسَ مِنۡكُمۡ رَجُلٌ رَّشِيۡدٌ (Is there not a single right man among you?), someone who would listen to his plaint.

But, there was no trace of gentility or even humanness left in any of them. So, in acid wickedness, they all responded: لَقَدْ عَلِمْتَ مَا لَنَا فِي بَنَاتِكَ مِنْ حَقٍّ وَإِنَّكَ لَتَعْلَمُ مَا نُرِيدُ (You know that we have no claim on your daughters, and you know well what we want.'

Totally exasperated, what Sayyidnā Lūṭ علیه السلام could say at that time was: لَوْ أَنَّ لِي بِكُمْ قُوَّةً أَوْ آوِي إِلَىٰ رُكْنٍ شَدِيدٍ that is, 'only if I had enough strength in me to stand against this onslaught by my people, or that I had the backing of some strong group who would have helped me get rid of these oppressors.'

Seeing this anxiety of Sayyidnā Lūṭ علیه السلام, the angels disclosed their identity and said, 'do not worry. Your group is very strong and very powerful. We are angels of Allah. They cannot touch us. We have come to execute the punishment for them.'

It appears in a Ḥadīth of the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said about it, 'may Allah Ta'ālā have mercy on Lūṭ علیه السلام. He was compelled to seek the protection of some strong group.' And the report in Tirmidhī carries another sentence with it, 'after Sayyidnā Lūṭ علیه السلام, Allah Ta'ālā sent no prophet whose clan or tribe was not his supporter.' (Qurṭubī) This was true in the case of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم. The disbelieving Quraysh did everything they could against him, but his entire clan supported him – though, they did not agree with him religion-wise. This was the reason why Banū Hāshim as a whole sided with the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم in the boycott imposed by the Quraysh disbelievers whereby they had cut off essential supplies to him.

During this episode, as reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ , when the people of Sayyidnā Lūṭ علیه السلام mobbed his home, he had closed the entrance door. The conversation with these wicked people was going on from behind it. The angels too were inside. The mob was threatening to jump the walls, barge in and break the door. Thereupon, came these words on the lips of Sayyidnā Lūṭ علیه السلام. When the angels saw this anxiety of Sayyidnā Lūṭ علیه السلام, they disclosed their real identity and asked him to open the door. It was time that they took over and gave the miscreants a foretaste of the Divine punishment. When the door was opened, archangel Jibra'īl علیه السلام pointed his 'Feather' towards their eyes. They turned blind and started running.

At that time, the angels under Divine command said to Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام: فَاَسْرِ بِاَهْلِكَ بِقِطْعٍ مِّنَ الَّيْلِ (So, move with your family in a part of night). And asked him to instruct everyone in his family not to turn and look back with the exception of his wife because she was going to be hit by the same punishment that was to fall on his people.

This could also mean that he was not to take his wife along with him. And it could also mean that, being his wife, she was to go along as part of his family, but she would not obey the instruction of not looking back he would give to his family. According to some reports, this is what happened. This wife started off with others, but when she heard the big bang of the punishment given to her people, she looked back and felt sorry at their destruction. At that moment there came a splintered rock and finished her off like others. (Qurṭubī, Maẓharī)

The angels had also told Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام that: اِنَّ مَوْعِدَهُمُ الصُّبْحُ (The deadline [of the punishment] is the morning). He said that he wished the punishment would come sooner. Thereupon, the angels said: اَلَيْسَ الصُّبْحُ بِقَرِيْبٍ (Is it not that the morning is near?)

After that, the Qur'ān portrays the occurrence of the punishment by saying: So, when Our command came, We turned whatever there was in their habitat upside down raining such stones over it as had the names of everyone there marked on it.

Reports say that these habitations were composed of four major towns where those people lived. These very habitations have been named as *'al-mu'tafikāt'* (the towns overturned) elsewhere in the Holy Qur'ān (9:70, 69:9). When the Divine command came, the archangel Jibra'īl *al-Amīn* عليه السلام dissected the base of the land mass holding all those towns on top of it with his wing, raised all of it upwards in a way that everything stayed where it was, even water in a water vessel. It was in the backdrop of human, animal and canine voices coming from the sky that he heaved all these habitations straight up towards the sky and, then, threw the whole thing back upside down – as appropriate to and as called for by the evil they indulged in.

At the end of the verse (83), after having mentioned the actual punishment that hit the people of Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام, it was to warn the contemporary peoples of the world that it was said: وَمَا هِيَ مِنَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ بِبَعِيْدٍ (And it is not far from the transgressors). It means that people who

insist upon indulging in this shameful act should not consider themselves very far from this punishment. It can come even today. The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said, 'even in my Ummah, some people will do what the people of Lūṭ علیہ السلام used to do. When this starts happening, then wait, for they too would be subjected to the same punishment that was inflicted on the people of Lūṭ علیہ السلام.'

Verses 84 – 95

وَاِلٰى مَدْيَنَ اَخَاهُمْ شُعَيْبًا ؕ قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ
اِلٰهٍ غَيْرُهٗ ؕ وَلَا تَنْقُصُوا الْمِكْيَالَ وَالْمِيْزَانَ اِنِّيْۤ اَرٰىكُمْ بِخَيْرٍ
وَّاِنِّيْۤ اَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ مُّحِيْطٍ ﴿٨٤﴾ وَيٰقَوْمِ اَوْفُوا
الْمِكْيَالَ وَ الْمِيْزَانَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا تَبْخَسُوا النَّاسَ اَشْيَآءَهُمْ وَلَا
تَعْثَوْا فِى الْاَرْضِ مُفْسِدِيْنَ ﴿٨٥﴾ بَقِيَّتُ اللّٰهِ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ اِنْ
كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ۚ وَمَاۤ اَنَا عَلَيْكُمْ بِحَفِيْظٍ ﴿٨٦﴾ قَالُوْا يٰشُعَيْبُ
اَصَلٰوتُكَ تَاْمُرُكَ اَنْ نَّتْرُكَ مَا يَعْبُدُ اٰبَآؤُنَاۤ اَوْ اَنْ نَّفْعَلَ فِيْۤ
اَمْوَالِنَا مَا نَشٰٓؤُا ؕ اِنَّكَ لَاَنْتَ الْحَلِيْمُ الرَّشِيْدُ ﴿٨٧﴾ قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ
اَرَءَيْتُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُ عَلٰى بَيِّنَةٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّيْ وَرَزَقَنِيْ مِنْهُ رِزْقًا حَسَنًا ؕ
وَمَاۤ اُرِيْدُ اَنْ اُخَالِفَكُمْ اِلٰى مَاۤ اَنْهٰىكُمْ عَنْهُ ؕ اِنْ اُرِيْدُ اِلَّا
الْاِصْلَاحَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُ ؕ وَمَا تَوْفِيْقِيْۤ اِلَّا بِاللّٰهِ ؕ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ
وَاِلَيْهِ اُنِيْبُ ﴿٨٨﴾ وَيٰقَوْمِ لَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شِقَاقِيْۤ اَنْ يُّصِيْبَكُمْ
مِّثْلُ مَاۤ اَصَابَ قَوْمَ نُوْحٍ اَوْ قَوْمَ هُوْدٍ اَوْ قَوْمَ صٰلِحٍ ؕ وَمَا قَوْمُ
لُوْطٍ مِّنْكُمْ بِبَعِيْدٍ ﴿٨٩﴾ وَاسْتَغْفِرُوْا رَبَّكُمْ ثُمَّ تُوْبُوْۤا اِلَيْهِ ؕ اِنَّ
رَبِّيْ رَحِيْمٌ وَّدُوْدٌ ﴿٩٠﴾ قَالُوْا يٰشُعَيْبُ مَا نَفْقَهُ كَثِيْرًا مِّمَّا تَقُوْلُ
وَاِنَّا لَنَرٰىكَ فِيْنَا ضَعِيْفًا ۚ وَلَوْلَا رَهْطُكَ لَرَجَمْنٰكَ ۫ وَمَاۤ اَنْتَ
عَلَيْنَا بِعَزِيْزٍ ﴿٩١﴾ قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ اَرَهْطِيْۤ اَعَزُّ عَلَيْكُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَ
اتَّخَذْتُمُوْهُ وَرَآءَكُمْ ظِهْرِيًّا ؕ اِنَّ رَبِّيْ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ مُحِيْطٌ ﴿٩٢﴾

وَ يٰقَوْمِ اعْمَلُوْا عَلٰى مَكَانَتِكُمْ اِنِّىْ عَامِلٌ ؕ سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ۙ
مَنْ يَّاْتِيْهِ عَذَابٌ يُّخْزِيْهِ وَمَنْ هُوَ كَاذِبٌ ؕ وَارْتَقِبُوْۤا اِنِّىْ
مَعَكُمْ رَقِيْبٌ ﴿۹۳﴾ وَلَمَّا جَآءَ اَمْرُنَا نَجَّيْنَا شُعَيْبًا وَّالَّذِيْنَ
اٰمَنُوْا مَعَهٗ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِّنَّا ۚ وَ اَخَذَتِ الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوا الصَّيْحَةُ
فَاَصْبَحُوْا فِىْ دِيَارِهِمْ جٰثِمِيْنَ ﴿۹۴﴾ كَاَنْ لَّمْ يَغْنَوْا فِيْهَا ؕ اَلَا
بُعْدًا لِّمَدْيَنَ كَمَا بَعِدَتْ ثَمُوْدُ ﴿۹۵﴾ ع

And to Madyan (We sent) their brother, Shu'aib. He said, "O my people, worship Allah. You have no god other than Him. And do not lessen the measure and the weight. I see you quite well off, and I fear for you the punishment of an encircling day. [84]

And O my people, perfect the measure and the balance with justice and do not make the people short of their things, and do not go about the earth spreading disorder. [85]

Whatever is left (with you) by Allah is better for you, if you are believers. And I am not a watchman over you. [86]

They said, "O Shu'aib, does your *ṣalāh* (prayer) command you that we should give up what our fathers used to worship or give up our free-will in (spending) our wealth? You are provenly the man of wisdom and guidance." [87] **He said, "O my people, tell me, if I am on a clear path from my Lord and He has provided me from Himself with a good provision, (should I still leave you unguided?) And I do not want to do in your absence what I prohibit for you. I want nothing but to set things right as far as I can. And my ability to do things comes from none but Allah. In Him alone I have placed my trust and to Him alone I turn in humbleness.** [88] **O my people, let not your hostility towards me cause you to suffer what was suffered by the people of Nūḥ, or the people of Hūd, or the people of Ṣāliḥ. And the people of Lūṭ are not far from you.** [89] **And seek forgiveness from your Lord, then turn towards Him in repentance. Surely, my Lord is very merciful, most loving."** [90]

They said, "O Shu'aib, we do not understand most of

what you say, and, in fact, we see you weak among us. But for your clan, we would have stoned you. And to us, you are not a man of respect." [91]

He said, "O my people, is my clan more respectable to you than Allah? And you have taken Him as something thrown behind your backs. Surely, my Lord encompasses all that you do. [92] **And O my people, do what you can, I am to do (what I can). Soon you will know the one whom the punishment visits humiliating him, and the one who is false. And wait. I am, with you, waiting."** [93]

And when Our command came, We saved Shu'aib and those who believed along with him, out of mercy from Us, and those who transgressed were caught by the Cry, and they were found (dead) in the homes, fallen on their knees, [94] **as though they never lived there. Lo! Curse be upon Madyan, like Thamūd were cursed.** [95]

Commentary

An account of Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام and his people appears in the verses cited above. Besides being *kāfirs* and *mushriks*, his people used to give less in weights and measures. Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام carried his call to them, told them not to give less in weights and measures, and warned them of Divine punishment if they persisted with this way of life. But, they did persist with their denial and contumacy and, as a consequence, all those people were destroyed through a severe punishment, details of which appear as follows.

In the first verse (84), it was said: وَاِلٰى مَدْيَنَ اَخَاهُمْ شُعَيْبًا (And to Madyan [We sent] their brother, Shu'aib عليه السلام).

Madyan was actually the name of a town settled by Madyan ibn Ibrāhīm. Its present location has been given as 'Ma'ān' in Jordan. The people of this town are also called Madyan. Therefore, by calling Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام a 'brother of Madyan,' it was hinted that Allah Ta'ālā sent His messenger to those people from among them so that they feel familiar and find it easier to accept his teachings.

Then, it was said:

قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ اِلٰهٍ غَيْرُهٗ، وَلَا تَنْقُصُوا الْمِكْيَالَ وَالْمِيْزَانَ

O my people, worship Allah. You have no god other than Him.

And do not lessen the measure and the weight.

Here, Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام has invited his people to believe in the Oneness of Allah (Tauḥīd) because they were Mushriks, those who associated partners in the divinity of Allah. They worshipped trees. That has been pointed to through the use of the word: الایکہ (*al-'aikah*: trees) in the Holy Qur'ān and it is in this respect that the people of Madyan have also been given the sobriquet of أَصْحٰبُ الْأَيْكَہ (*ashabu al--aikah*: the people of *aikah* – 15:78, 26:176, 38:13, 50:14). Along with this *kufr* and *shirk*, they were also involved in the grave sin of cheating in commercial transactions when they would weigh short and give less in measure and thus deprive people of what was to come to them as their right. Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام told them not to do that.

Special Note

Here, it is useful to keep in mind that *kufr* and *shirk* are the roots of all sins. People soaked in these are usually the first to be invited to believe. Faith comes before consideration could be given to matters like social transactions and individual deeds. Whether they have deliverance in the present world or would deserve punishment are things that too are decided on the basis of this faith or denial. All events related to past prophets and their peoples mentioned in the Qur'ān bear witness to this mode of action – with the exception of two communities. Punishment came upon them because of their disbelief as well as due to their evil deeds. The people of Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام were one of them upon whom, as mentioned earlier, their entire habitation was overturned. It has been stated that their evil practice was the reason for it. The people of Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام were the other one. They were punished because of their *kufr* and *shirk* as well as because of their habit of weighing less and measuring short.

This tells us that both these things are most hated and grave, more than any other sin. Obviously, the reason is that they bring serious loss upon the entire human race leaving the world populated by it in a disorder of ominous proportions.

Turning to the verses cited above, we see that Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام has used his prophetic compassion to make his people stop their evil practice of giving short measure and less weight. The words he has used to say that are eloquent: إِنِّيْٓ أَرٰىكُمْ بِخَيْرٍ وَّإِنِّيْٓ أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ مُّحِيْطٍ (I see you quite well off, and I fear for you the punishment of an encir-

cling day – 84). It means that Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام found them living comfortably. There were not poor, hungry and financially straitened which could be one of the reasons why they had to take recourse to such a cursed practice. Now that they were already blessed by Allah Ta'ālā, it required that they should not subject His creation to injustice. Not leaving it at that, they were also told that, in the event they did not listen to their prophet and did not stop this evil practice, he apprehended that Divine punishment might encircle them. This punishment could mean the punishment of the Hereafter, and the punishment of the present world too. Then, the punishments due to come in this world may be of different kinds. The lowest punishment could be that they might lose the prosperity they had, or they may fall victims to famines and price hikes, as said by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم:

> 'When a people start lessening weights and measures, Allah Ta'ālā makes them suffer from the punishment of famine and price hikes.'

Obviously, the very prohibition of weighing and measuring short makes weighing and measuring in full necessary. But, to emphasize it further, Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام said:

وَيٰقَوْمِ اَوْفُوا الْمِكْيَالَ وَالْمِيْزَانَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا تَبْخَسُوا النَّاسَ اَشْيَآءَهُمْ وَلَا تَعْثَوْا فِى الْاَرْضِ مُفْسِدِيْنَ

> And O my people, perfect the measure and the balance with justice and do not make the people short of their things, and do not go about the earth spreading disorder – 85.

Then, affectionately, he explained to them:

بَقِيَّتُ اللّٰهِ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ، وَمَآ اَنَا عَلَيْكُمْ بِحَفِيْظٍ

> Whatever is left [with you] by Allah is better for you, if you are believers. And I am not a watchman over you – 86.

It means if they were not to listen to him, let them remember that he was not responsible for the eventuality that they may be seized by some punishment.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said about Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام that he was an orator among prophets. His eloquence was exceptional. He went to its farthest limits in order to make his people understand his message and take to the right path. But, even after having listened

to him, the response of his people was different from that given by ignorant diehards to their reformers. They threw taunts at him, made fun of him, and said:

اَصَلٰوتُكَ تَاْمُرُكَ اَنْ نَّتْرُكَ مَا يَعْبُدُ اٰبَآؤُنَآ اَوْ اَنْ نَّفْعَلَ فِيْٓ اَمْوَالِنَا مَا نَشٰٓؤُا، اِنَّكَ لَاَنْتَ الْحَلِيْمُ الرَّشِيْدُ.

> O Shu'aib عليه السلام, does your ṣalāh (prayer) command you that we should give up what our fathers used to worship or that we give up doing with our wealth whatever we wish? You are provenly the man of wisdom and guidance – 87.

The *ṣalāh* (prayer) of Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام was well known among his people as he was constantly devoted to it. Therefore, they referred to it tauntingly in the sense that (God forbid) his *ṣalāh* taught him to say all those 'wild' things. From what they said we learn that they too thought that religion is restricted to acts of worship, and that it had nothing to do with material dealings. Let everyone earn and spend one's wealth at will. Placing any restriction on that is no job of religion – as many people, even in this time of ours, generally believe, in total ignorance of the real fact.

What Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام had said to his people was good counsel based on earnest fellow feeling. But, his people responded to him with a sarcasm that was biting. However, they had done that to a blessed prophet of Sayyidnā Shu'aib's class. He heard their caustic comments, yet turned to them with the same empathy and once again tried to make them see the truth. He said: يٰقَوْمِ اَرَءَيْتُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُ عَلٰى بَيِّنَةٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّيْ وَرَزَقَنِيْ مِنْهُ رِزْقًا حَسَنًا (O my people, tell me, if I am on a clear path from my Lord and He has provided me from Himself with a good provision, [should I still leave you unguided?]) Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام was telling his people that he had been blessed by his Lord in that He gave him good provision for his material life and in that He also gave him the light of revelation and spiritual insight. Now, with these wonderful assets in his hands, how could he ever think of becoming like them, willingly embracing error and injustice, and thus failing to bring the truth home to them?

After that, he said: وَمَآ اُرِيْدُ اَنْ اُخَالِفَكُمْ اِلٰى مَآ اَنْهٰىكُمْ عَنْهُ (and I do not want to do in your absence what I prohibit for you). This tells us that the way a preacher of religion conducts his life has a major role in what he

preaches. What a preacher does not himself practice produces no effect on others.

Then, he said: إِنْ أُرِيْدُ إِلَّا الْإِصْلَاحَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُ (I want to do nothing but to set things right as far as I can). And since, this effort too was not by his personal choice and volition, he further said: وَمَا تَوْفِيْقِيْٓ إِلَّا بِاللّٰهِ، عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَإِلَيْهِ أُنِيْبُ (And my ability to do things comes from none but Allah. In Him alone I have placed my trust, and to Him alone I turn in humbleness).

After having given this good counsel to them, he warned them of the punishment of Allah Ta'ālā. He said:

وَيٰقَوْمِ لَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شِقَاقِيْٓ أَنْ يُّصِيْبَكُمْ مِّثْلُ مَآ أَصَابَ قَوْمَ نُوْحٍ أَوْ قَوْمَ هُوْدٍ أَوْ قَوْمَ صٰلِحٍ، وَمَا قَوْمُ لُوْطٍ مِّنْكُمْ بِبَعِيْدٍ

> And O my people, let not your hostility towards me cause you to suffer what was suffered by the people of Nūḥ, or the people of Hūd, or the people of Ṣāliḥ (عليه السلام). And the people of Lūṭ (عليه السلام) are not far from you.

The sense of the last sentence is that the overturned habitations of the people of Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام were close to Madyan where they were. Then, in terms of time, the punishment that came upon them was very close. From this they could learn their lesson and leave their obstinacy.

Hearing this, his people were enraged. They said that had it not been for the support he had from his clan, they would have stoned him to death. Despite this threat, Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام, true to his mettle as a prophet, did not hesitate to tell them that they feared his clan all right, but would have no fear of Allah who holds everything in His power.

Finally, when his people did not listen to anything said to them, Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام told them that they could now wait for the punishment. After that, Allah Ta'ālā took out Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام and those who had believed in him, as is the Divine practice, from that habitation and the rest of them were destroyed instantly at the harsh Cry of Sayyidnā Jibra'īl عليه السلام.

Injunctions and Rulings:

Rules about Lessening of Weights and Measures

One of the reasons why punishment fell on the people of Sayyidnā

Shu'aib عليه السلام was their practice of weighing and measuring less than due – called *tatfif*. The Holy Qur'ān has described the severe punishment for those who do that in Sūrah al-Muṭaffifīn which opens with the verse: وَيْلٌ لِّلْمُطَفِّفِينَ (Woe to those who give less – 83:1). There is a consensus of the entire Muslim Ummah that doing so is strictly *ḥarām* (unlawful). Quoting a saying of Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه, Imām Mālik has said in Mu'aṭṭā' that weighing and measuring less essentially means that someone does not fulfill the right of another person due on him, fully and duly. In fact, makes it less, whether it happens to be something given by weight, or measure, or something of another kind. If an employee falls short in performing his or her assigned duty, or an office worker, or a laborer cuts his working hours short, or fails to fulfill his job assignment as due, then, they all will be counted in this category. Anyone who does not perform his or her Ṣalāh with due consideration of everything obligatory and *masnūn* in it has also committed the crime of this '*tatfif*.' May Allah keep all of us protected from it!

Ruling

It appears in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī that the people of Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام would save gold and silver by trimming the edges of gold and silver coins, like *dinār* and *dirham*, circulating in the country as official currency, and which they would channel back into circulation at par value. Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام prohibited them from doing so.

In Ḥadīth as well, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has declared the chipping of the coins of an Islamic state to be *ḥarām* (unlawful). Tafsīr authority, Zayd ibn Aslam has said exactly this while explaining the verse of the Qur'ān: تِسْعَةُ رَهْطٍ يُّفْسِدُونَ فِى الْأَرْضِ وَلَا يُصْلِحُونَ (nine family heads spreading corruption in the land and not correcting [their ways] – 27:48). He says that these people of the city mentioned in the verse used to chip off gold and silver from *dinār* and *dirham* coins and ran a profitable business of their own through this source – something the Qur'ān calls a great corruption.

During the Khilāfah of Sayyidnā 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz, someone was arrested while he was cutting a *dirham* coin. He was awarded a punishment of lashes and was paraded around head shaved. (Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī)

Verses 96 – 101

وَلَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا مُوْسٰى بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَسُلْطٰنٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿٩٦﴾ اِلٰى فِرْعَوْنَ وَ
مَلَا۟ئِهٖ فَاتَّبَعُوْٓا اَمْرَ فِرْعَوْنَ ۚ وَمَآ اَمْرُ فِرْعَوْنَ بِرَشِيْدٍ ﴿٩٧﴾
يَقْدُمُ قَوْمَهٗ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ فَاَوْرَدَهُمُ النَّارَ ؕ وَبِئْسَ الْوِرْدُ الْمَوْرُوْدُ
﴿٩٨﴾ وَاُتْبِعُوْا فِيْ هٰذِهٖ لَعْنَةً وَّيَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ ؕ بِئْسَ الرِّفْدُ الْمَرْفُوْدُ
﴿٩٩﴾ ذٰلِكَ مِنْ اَنْۢبَآءِ الْقُرٰى نَقُصُّهٗ عَلَيْكَ مِنْهَا قَآئِمٌ وَّحَصِيْدٌ
﴿١٠٠﴾ وَمَا ظَلَمْنٰهُمْ وَلٰكِنْ ظَلَمُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ فَمَآ اَغْنَتْ عَنْهُمْ
اٰلِهَتُهُمُ الَّتِيْ يَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ لَّمَّا جَآءَ اَمْرُ
رَبِّكَ ؕ وَمَا زَادُوْهُمْ غَيْرَ تَتْبِيْبٍ ﴿١٠١﴾

And We sent Mūsā with Our signs, and with clear proof, [96] **to Pharaoh and his group. So, they followed the command of Pharaoh. And the command of Pharaoh is not right.** [97] **He will lead his people on the Day of Judgement, and make them descend into the Fire. And it is the evil descending place.** [98] **And the curse was made to pursue them here and on the Day of Judgement. It is the evil reward to be offered.** [99]

That is a part of stories of the towns that We narrate to you. Some of them are standing, and (some) harvested. [100]

And We have not wronged them; rather, they have wronged themselves. So, their gods whom they used to invoke beside Allah did not come to their help in any thing, when came the command of your Lord, and they gave them nothing more than destruction. [101]

Verses 102 – 111

وَكَذٰلِكَ اَخْذُ رَبِّكَ اِذَآ اَخَذَ الْقُرٰى وَهِيَ ظَالِمَةٌ ؕ اِنَّ اَخْذَهٗٓ اَلِيْمٌ
شَدِيْدٌ ﴿١٠٢﴾ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيَةً لِّمَنْ خَافَ عَذَابَ الْاٰخِرَةِ ؕ ذٰلِكَ
يَوْمٌ مَّجْمُوْعٌ ۙ لَّهُ النَّاسُ وَذٰلِكَ يَوْمٌ مَّشْهُوْدٌ ﴿١٠٣﴾ وَمَا
نُؤَخِّرُهٗٓ اِلَّا لِاَجَلٍ مَّعْدُوْدٍ ﴿١٠٤﴾ يَوْمَ يَاْتِ لَا تَكَلَّمُ نَفْسٌ اِلَّا

بِاِذْنِهٖ ۚ فَمِنْهُمْ شَقِيٌّ وَّسَعِيْدٌ ﴿١٠٥﴾ فَاَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ شَقُوْا فَفِی
النَّارِ لَهُمْ فِيْهَا زَفِيْرٌ وَّ شَهِيْقٌ ﴿١٠٦﴾ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا مَادَامَتِ
السَّمٰوٰتُ وَالْاَرْضُ اِلَّا مَاشَآءَ رَبُّكَ ؕ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ فَعَّالٌ لِّمَا يُرِيْدُ
﴿١٠٧﴾ وَاَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ سُعِدُوْا فَفِی الْجَنَّةِ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا مَادَامَتِ
السَّمٰوٰتُ وَالْاَرْضُ اِلَّا مَاشَآءَ رَبُّكَ ؕ عَطَآءً غَيْرَ مَجْذُوْذٍ
﴿١٠٨﴾ فَلَا تَكُ فِیْ مِرْيَةٍ مِّمَّا يَعْبُدُ هٰۤؤُلَآءِ ؕ مَا يَعْبُدُوْنَ اِلَّا كَمَا
يَعْبُدُ اٰبَآؤُهُمْ مِّنْ قَبْلُ ؕ وَاِنَّا لَمُوَفُّوْهُمْ نَصِيْبَهُمْ غَيْرَ مَنْقُوْصٍ
﴿١٠٩﴾ وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا مُوْسَى الْكِتٰبَ فَاخْتُلِفَ فِيْهِ ؕ وَلَوْلَا كَلِمَةٌ
سَبَقَتْ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ لَقُضِیَ بَيْنَهُمْ ؕ وَاِنَّهُمْ لَفِیْ شَكٍّ مِّنْهُ مُرِيْبٍ
﴿١١٠﴾ وَاِنَّ كُلًّا لَّمَّا لَيُوَفِّيَنَّهُمْ رَبُّكَ اَعْمَالَهُمْ ؕ اِنَّهٗ بِمَا يَعْمَلُوْنَ
خَبِيْرٌ ﴿١١١﴾

And such is the seizing of your Lord when He seizes the (people of) towns while they are transgressing. Indeed, His seizing is painful, severe. [102]

In this there is a sign for the one who fears the punishment of the Hereafter. That is a day when all the people shall be gathered together, and that is a day having everyone present. [103] **And We do not defer it but for a limited term,** [104] **the day it comes no one shall speak except by His leave. So, some of them are wretched and (some) blessed.** [105]

As for those who are wretched, they shall be in the Fire. For them there is (nothing but) crying and howling. [106] **They shall remain there for ever, as long as the heavens and the earth remain, unless your Lord wills (otherwise). Surely, your Lord does what He intends.** [107]

As for those who are blessed, they shall be in Paradise living there forever, as long as the heavens and the earth remain, unless your Lord wills (otherwise) an award never to be cut off. [108]

So, be not in doubt about what they worship. They do not worship except in the way their fathers used to worship earlier. And surely, We are going to pay them their full share, non-curtailed. [109]

And We gave Mūsā the Book, then it was disputed about. But, for a word from your Lord that had already come, the matter would have been decided between them. And surely, they are in confounding doubt about it. [110]

And to all of them, your Lord shall pay for their deeds in full. Surely, He is aware of all that they do. [111]

Verses 112 - 113

فَاسْتَقِمْ كَمَآ اُمِرْتَ وَمَنْ تَابَ مَعَكَ وَلَا تَطْغَوْا ۭ اِنَّهٗ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ بَصِيْرٌ ﴿١١٢﴾ وَلَا تَرْكَنُوْٓا اِلَى الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا فَتَمَسَّكُمُ النَّارُ ۙ وَمَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ مِنْ اَوْلِيَاۗءَ ثُمَّ لَا تُنْصَرُوْنَ ﴿١١٣﴾

So, stand firm - as you have been commanded - you, and those who have repented with you, and do not cross the limits. Surely, He is watchful of what you do. [112]

And do not incline towards the wrongdoers, lest the Fire should catch you, and you shall have no supporters other than Allah, then you shall not be helped. [113]

Commentary

Events relating to past prophets and their peoples, from Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام to Sayyidnā Mūsā, have been mentioned in Sūrah Hūd in a fair enough order and detail with many wise counsels, injunctions and directives. At the end of the description of these events, it is by addressing the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that his entire community has been exhorted to draw their essential lessons from them. It was said: ذٰلِكَ مِنْ اَنْۢبَاۗءِ الْقُرٰى نَقُصُّهٗ عَلَيْكَ مِنْهَا قَاۗىِٕمٌ وَّحَصِيْدٌ (That is a part of the stories of the towns that We narrate to you. Some of them are standing, and (some) harvested – 100). It means that some of the habitations that were visited by Divine punishment still have their ruins standing while some others have been erased like harvested fields with no signs of what

was there in the past.

After that it was said that Allah did not wrong them, rather, they had wronged themselves (101,102) in that they abandoned their creator and sustainer and took to idols and other things as their gods. Finally, when the Divine punishment came, their self-made gods did not come to their rescue in any way. The lesson to learn was that the grip of Allah is painful and severe. When He seizes heedless wrongdoers doing what they do, this is what happens invariably.

Then, to turn them round to the concern of the Hereafter, it was said (103-105) that these events carry in them great lessons and signs for those who fear the punishment of the Hereafter, a day when all human beings will be gathered together, with everyone present there. That will be a day of such awe that no one present there shall dare utter a word without Divine permission.

Six verses later, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was addressed again by saying:

فَاسْتَقِمْ كَمَآ اُمِرْتَ وَمَنْ تَابَ مَعَكَ وَلَا تَطْغَوْا اِنَّهٗ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ بَصِيْرٌ

So, stand firm – as you have been commanded – you, and those who have repented [from *kufr* and are] with you, and do not cross the limits. Surely, He is watchful of what you do – 112.

The Sense of *Istiqāmah* (Standing Firm):

Some related problems and their solutions

Istiqāmah means to stand straight without the least tilt one way or the other (hence expressed in English as straightforwardness, straightness, directness, rectitude etc.) As obvious, it is not something easy to do. If we were dealing with a vertical object cast in iron, rock or some other material, our expert engineers could make it stand straight at the very outset in a way that it stands on perfect right angles from all sides without the least tilt on any side. But, having a moving object stand straight at all times and under all conditions in this perfect state is certainly something extremely difficult. For discerning people, this is no secret.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and all Muslims have been commanded in this verse that they should stand firm under all conditions in everything they do. *Istiqāmah* is a small word but in its sense it ex-

tends to many areas of application in a very unusual manner. The very meaning of this act of standing firm is that one has to move straightforwardly, as commanded by Allah, on the straight path identified by Him, remaining within the limits set by Him. This has to be in all matters of beliefs, acts of worship, personal and collective transactions, morals, social dealings, economic pursuits inclusive of all channels of income and expenditure. In the event, there occurs the slightest tilt, or decrease or increase, or shortcoming or excess, under any condition, and in any deed, in any of these areas of activity, Istiqāmah becomes the first casualty.

Errors in thinking and practice that show up around us are an outcome of this deviation from the command to stand firm. When people do not stand firm in beliefs (*'aqā'id*), they start with self-invented practices in religion (*bid'āt*) and end up into the extremes of *kufr* (disbelief) and *shirk* (associating others with Allah). The principles of Allah's Oneness (*Tauḥīd*) and His Being (*Dhāt*) and Attributes (*Ṣifāt*) conveyed to us by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم are moderate and sound. People who commit any act of excess and deficiency or addition and deletion in them – even if they may be doing so with good intentions on their part – shall be considered astray and in error. As for those who belittle and lessen the limits set for having regard and love for the blessed prophets, everyone knows that they are astray and audacious. Similarly, those who commit the excess of assigning a prophet proprietary rights in Divine attributes and powers also cross those limits and fall into an error of this nature. The Jews and the Christians lost themselves into this error. The methods of worshipping Allah and seeking nearness to Him determined by the Glorious Qur'ān, and the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم are great benchmarks. Any slicing, undercutting or shortcoming in these drags one down from the desired level of standing firm and, similarly, any addition to these from one's own side ruins one's chances of standing firm by his indulgence in self-innovated ways in established religion. Unfortunately, such a person honestly thinks that he is pleasing Allah while, in fact, it is precisely the very cause of His displeasure. Therefore, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has very emphatically prohibited his community from indulging in self-innovated ways in established religion (*bid'āt* and *muḥdathāt*) and has declared that to be acute error and straying. Therefore, before one does something as an act of worship (*'ibādah*) for the pleasure of

Allah and His Rasūl صلى الله عليه وسلم, he must first investigate and ensure fully as to the nature of his action. He must find out whether or not what he is going to do stands proved from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, and his noble Ṣaḥābah in the same state and form. If it does not, let him not waste his good time and energy in this pursuit.

Similarly, there are matters relating to transactions, morals and social dealings. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has followed the principles given by the Qur'ān in his practical teachings through which he has marked out a moderate and sound way of conducting ourselves in our lives. It has provided the Muslims with a moderate and straight course of action in the matters of friendship, enmity, softness and strictness, anger and forbearance, miserliness and generosity, economic activity and monasticism, trust in Allah and use of possible material means, finding what is necessary and relying on the Prime Mover of all causes. These are different things, yet they have been fused into one, a straight path of moderation, and a virtual gift to Muslims not to be found elsewhere in the whole world. So, the key is to act in accordance with these teachings and become perfect human beings. When people do not stand firm and tilt one way or the other, the society goes bad inevitably.

In short, the concept of standing firm is comprehensive. It covers all parts and pillars of religion. When acted upon correctly, it becomes its eloquent demonstration.

Sufyān ibn 'Abdullāh Thaqafī asked the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, 'please tell me something so comprehensive about Islām that I need not ask anyone anything after you.' He said, 'قُلْ اٰمَنْتُ بِاللّٰهِ ثُمَّ اسْتَقِمْ : Say: I believe in Allah. Then, stand firm on it.' (Reported by Muslim, as quoted by al-Qurṭubī)

'Uthmān ibn 'Abdullāh al-Azdī said that once he went to the famous Ṣaḥābī and the commentator, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه and requested him for some words of advice. He said, 'عَلَيْكَ بِتَقْوَى اللّٰهِ وَالْاِسْتِقَامَةِ اِتَّبِعْ وَلَا تَبْتَدِعْ' (Reported by al-Dārimī in his Musnad, as quoted by al-Qurṭubī). It means that he should make the fear of Allah essential for him, and also that he should stand firm in his faith. The method of doing so was to follow the percepts of the Sharī'ah in all religious matters and not to invent and introduce any *bid'ah* in it from his own side.

Out of the many tough jobs handled in this world, the toughest is nothing but to stand firm. Therefore, Ṣufī authorities have said that standing firm is a station much superior to the working of miracles (*karāmah*). It means that a person who is holding on firmly to the assignments of his religion is a saint in his own right – even though, no miracle has issued forth from him throughout his life.

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ said that no verse revealed to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم in the entire Qur'ān was harder and more trying than this (112). And he said that once the Companions noticing some gray strands of hair in his blessed beard sorrowfully remarked, 'old age is approaching you much earlier.' Thereupon, he said, 'Sūrah Hūd has made me old.' The events of severe punishments that came upon past communities as described in Sūrah Hūd could also be the reason for it, but Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ said that this verse alone is its reason.

Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī reports from Abū 'Alī Sirriy that he, on seeing the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم in a dream asked him, 'have you said something like "Sūrah Hūd has made me old"?' He said, 'yes.' Abū 'Alī asked again, 'had the subject of punishments that came upon the peoples of the past prophets made you old?' He said, 'no, in fact, this saying of Allah Ta'ālā did: فَاسْتَقِمْ كَمَآ أُمِرْتَ (So, stand firm – as you have been commanded – 112)'.

As for the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, it is obvious that he had graced this world as the blessed substantiation of the perfect universal man. Standing firm was his natural habit. But then, why was it that he felt its weight to be so conspicuous and telling upon him? Perhaps, it was because the verse did not ask him to stand firm in an absolute sense, instead, asked him that this act of standing firm should be as commanded by Allah. How overwhelming is the fear and awe prophets have of their creator and master is well recognized. It must have been the effect of this fear and awe that, despite having his perfect stance of firmness, he was still concerned whether or not he had been able to come up with the kind of firmness and rectitude expected by his master, the most exalted Allah.

And it is also possible that he was not that concerned about his personal stance of firmness, because he, by the grace of Allah, had it in him. But, there was something else to it. In this verse, the command

given to him was also given to the entire Muslim Ummah. So, it was his realization that his Ummah may find it difficult to stand firm as commanded that made him sad.

After the command to stand firm, it was said: وَلَا تَطْغَوْا (and do not cross the limits). This word is a derivation from the verbal noun: طغيان (*ṭughyān*) which means to cross limits, and which is the opposite of standing firm. It will be noticed that the positive statement to stand firm in the verse has not been considered sufficient, rather, its negative aspect, that of its prohibition, was clarified expressly. This establishes the sense of the verse: 'do not cross the limits set by Allah and His Rasūl – in beliefs, acts of worship, transactions, morals etc. – for it was the outlet of all disorder and corruption in material and religious life.

To keep human beings protected from this disorder and corruption, another guideline has been provided in the second verse (113): وَلَا تَرْكَنُوْٓا اِلَى الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا فَتَمَسَّكُمُ النَّارُ (And do not incline towards the wrongdoers, lest the Fire should catch you). The word: لَاتَرْكَنُوْا (*lā tarkanū*) comes from the verbal noun ركون : Rukūn which means a slight tilt towards one side having confidence in and approval of it. Therefore, the sense of the verse is: 'Whoever indulges in injustice and oppression ruins his or her life, worldly and spiritual both – this is a fact every one knows. But, the slightest of tilt or inclination towards the unjust, placing confidence in them, being pleased with them, could also push man to the edges of the same abyss.'

What is the meaning of this 'tilt' and 'inclination'? There are some statements of Ṣaḥābah (Companions) and Tābi'īn (Successors) about it in which there is no contradiction or difference. They are all correct in their respective places.

Sayyidnā Qatādah said, it means, 'do not have friendship with the unjust and do not follow what they say.' Ibn Jurayj said, 'do not nurse a leaning of any kind towards the unjust.' Abū al-'Āliyah said, 'do not like everything they do.' (Qurṭubī) Al-Suddiyy said, 'do not court the favor of the unjust through servile flattery (*mudāhanah*), that is, do not observe silence or show your approval at their evil deeds.' 'Ikrimah said, 'do not sit in the company of the unjust.' Qāḍī al-Baiḍāwī said, 'following them in personal looks, fashion, and ways of living are all included under this very prohibition.'

Qāḍī al-Baiḍāwī also said that this verse exudes the highest imaginable degree of severity in the matter of prohibition and unlawfulness of injustice and oppression. The reason is that it not only prohibits friendship, and all other cordial relationships, with the unjust but, going farther ahead, it also prohibits the least possible inclination towards them, or even sitting with them.

Imām 'Abdur-Raḥmān ibn 'Amr Al-Awzā'ī said, 'with Allah Ta'ālā no one is as detested as the 'Ālim (religious scholar) who, for the sake of his worldly interest, goes to meet someone unjust. (Maẓharī)

According to Tafsir al-Qurṭubī, this verse tells us that it is obligatory (*wājib*) to abstain from the company of those who disbelieve (*kāfirs*), those who disobey (sinners) and those who innovate in the established religion (practitioners of *bid'ah*) – unless they have to be met under some compulsion. The truth of the matter is that company and social setting play a major role in one's betterment or corruption. Therefore, the famous Ḥasan al-Baṣrī said about the two words of these two verses that Allah Ta'ālā has compressed the entire religion within the two letters: لا (*lā*: do not). The first one appears in the first verse: لَا تَطْغَوْا (*lā taṭghaw*: do not cross the limits – 112) and the second one appears in the second verse: لَا تَرْكَنُوْا (*lā tarkanū*: And do not incline towards the wrongdoers – 113). The first '*la*' or 'do not' prohibits the crossing of the limits set by the Sharī'ah of Islām while the other prohibits the company of wrongdoing people – and this is the essence of the whole religion.

Verses 114 – 123

وَأَقِمِ الصَّلٰوةَ طَرَفَيِ النَّهَارِ وَزُلَفًا مِّنَ الَّيْلِ ۚ إِنَّ الْحَسَنٰتِ
يُذْهِبْنَ السَّيِّاٰتِ ۚ ذٰلِكَ ذِكْرٰى لِلذّٰكِرِيْنَ ﴿۱۱۴﴾ وَاصْبِرْ فَإِنَّ
اللّٰهَ لَا يُضِيْعُ أَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ﴿۱۱۵﴾ فَلَوْلَا كَانَ مِنَ الْقُرُوْنِ
مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ أُولُوْا بَقِيَّةٍ يَّنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْفَسَادِ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا
قَلِيْلًا مِّمَّنْ أَنْجَيْنَا مِنْهُمْ ۚ وَاتَّبَعَ الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا مَا أُتْرِفُوْا فِيْهِ
وَكَانُوْا مُجْرِمِيْنَ ﴿۱۱۶﴾ وَمَا كَانَ رَبُّكَ لِيُهْلِكَ الْقُرٰى بِظُلْمٍ
وَّأَهْلُهَا مُصْلِحُوْنَ ﴿۱۱۷﴾ وَلَوْ شَاءَ رَبُّكَ لَجَعَلَ النَّاسَ أُمَّةً

وَّاحِدَةً وَّلَا يَزَالُوْنَ مُخْتَلِفِيْنَ ﴿١١٨﴾ اِلَّا مَنْ رَّحِمَ رَبُّكَ ط
وَلِذٰلِكَ خَلَقَهُمْ ط وَتَمَّتْ كَلِمَةُ رَبِّكَ لَاَمْلَئَنَّ جَهَنَّمَ مِنَ الْجِنَّةِ
وَالنَّاسِ اَجْمَعِيْنَ ﴿١١٩﴾ وَكُلًّا نَّقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ اَنْۢبَآءِ الرُّسُلِ
مَا نُثَبِّتُ بِهٖ فُؤَادَكَ ج وَجَآءَكَ فِيْ هٰذِهِ الْحَقُّ وَمَوْعِظَةٌ وَّذِكْرٰى
لِلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿١٢٠﴾ وَقُلْ لِّلَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ اعْمَلُوْا عَلٰى
مَكَانَتِكُمْ ط اِنَّا عٰمِلُوْنَ ﴿١٢١﴾ وَانْتَظِرُوْا ج اِنَّا مُنْتَظِرُوْنَ ﴿١٢٢﴾
وَلِلّٰهِ غَيْبُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَاِلَيْهِ يُرْجَعُ الْاَمْرُ كُلُّهٗ فَاعْبُدْهُ
وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَيْهِ ط وَمَا رَبُّكَ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١٢٣﴾

And establish *ṣalāh* at both ends of the day, and in the early hours of the night. Surely, good deeds erase bad deeds. That is a reminder for the mindful. [114]

And be patient, for Allah lets not the reward of the good-doers be lost. [115]

Then, why is it that there was none, among the generations before you, having some remnants (of wisdom) to stop people from creating disorder in the land, except a few among them whom We saved? And the wrongdoers pursued the luxuries they were involved in, and they became sinners. [116]

And your Lord is not such that He would destroy the towns unjustly while their people are good in their ways. [117]

Had your Lord willed, He would have made all the people a single community. But, they will continue in their differences, [118] **except those whom Allah has blessed with mercy. And for that He has created them. And perfect is the word of your Lord: "I will surely fill the hell with Jinns and the human beings, all together."** [119]

And We narrate to you everything from the events of the messengers with which We strengthen you heart. And herein there has come to you the truth, a good counsel and a reminder to those who believe. [120]

Say to those who do not believe, "Do whatever you can. We are doing (what we can). [121] **And wait. We are**

waiting." [122]

And to Allah belong the secrets of the heavens and the earth, and to Him the whole matter shall be returned. So worship Him and have trust in Him. And your Lord is not unaware of what you do. [123]

Commentary

The diction of the Qur'ān points out to the great station the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم occupies

It would be recalled that following the description of awe-inspiring events relating to past prophets and their peoples in Sūrah Hūd, some instructions have been given to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his community that begin from the previous verse (112): فَاسْتَقِمْ كَمَآ اُمِرْتَ (So, stand firm – as you have been commanded). In these instructions, the beauty and eloquence of the Holy Qur'ān stands out as highly educative. It will be noticed that a positive command to do something has been addressed to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم with his community included therein as a corollary. Examples are as follows: فَاسْتَقِمْ كَمَآ اُمِرْتَ وَمَنْ تَابَ مَعَكَ (So, stand firm – as you have been commanded – you and those who have repented with you – 112) and أَقِمِ الصَّلٰوةَ (And establish *ṣalāh* – 114) and then: وَاصْبِرْ (And be patient – 115). But, when something was prohibited and instruction was given to abstain from it, the address was beamed at the Muslim community directly, for instance: لَاتَطْغَوْا (and do not cross the limits – 112) and: لَاتَرْكَنُوْآ اِلَى الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا (And do not incline towards the wrongdoers – 113).

If we were to look at this in depth, it will be realized that it happens to be the general form used throughout the Qur'ān whereby a positive imperative has been addressed to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم while the negative imperative of prohibition to the Muslim community. This is an indication towards his high station. It tells us that things worth leaving off are things the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم himself abstained from. Allah Ta'ālā had made his elemental nature tuned so right that he would simply not incline towards any desire or thing that was evil. The limit was that things that were permissible and *ḥalāl* (lawful) during the early period of Islām – but, their becoming *ḥarām* (unlawful) later was already settled in the ultimate knowledge of Allah Ta'ālā – were things he never went near, even when they were *ḥalāl*, such as, liquor, interest, gambling etc.

In this verse (114), addressing the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, he and his entire Ummah has been commanded to establish *ṣalāh*. Scholars of Tafsīr among the Ṣaḥābah and Tābi'īn concur that 'صلوة: *ṣalāh*' at this place means obligatory prayers (al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, al-Qurṭubī) and the '*iqāmah* of *ṣalāh*' means establishing and implementing it fully and faithfully and being constantly regular with it. Some have said that it means performing Ṣalāh with due consideration of all its inherent rules of etiquette. Some others have said that it means performing Ṣalāh at its most preferred time. These reflect the three positions taken in the Tafsīr of the verse: أَقِمِ الصَّلٰوةَ (*aqimi 'ṣ-ṣalāh*: establish the prayer). The truth of the matter is that there is not much of a difference in there. Everything said here is included in the sense of 'establishing the prayer'.

Following the command to establish Ṣalāh, the statement about its timings appears briefly as: 'and establish Ṣalāh at both ends of the day [at the beginning and at the end], and in the early hours [parts] of the night.' Here, "زُلَفًا" (*zulafan*) is the plural of زُلْفَة (*zulfah*) which means a part or unit. As for the prayer 'at both ends of the day,' there is a consensus of revered early commentators that the prayer at the first end is the Ṣalāh of Fajr. However, the prayer at the last end has been taken by some of them as the Ṣalāh of Maghrib for it is almost at the end of the day. But, some others have taken the Ṣalāh of 'Aṣr as the prayer at the last end because that is the last prayer of the day. The time of Maghrib is not a part of the day, rather, comes after the passage of the day. Then, the text's: زُلَفًا مِّنَ الَّيْلِ that is, 'prayers during parts of the night,' have been declared as referring to the Ṣalāh of Maghrib and 'Ishā' by the majority of early commentators Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Mujāhid, Muḥammad ibn Ka'b, Qatādah, Ḍaḥḥāk and others. And a Ḥadīth which says that زُلَفًا مِّنَ اللَّيْلِ (prayers during parts of the night) are Maghrib and 'Ishā' confirms it. (Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr)

When the text's: طَرَفَيِ النَّهَارِ (at both ends of the day) means the Ṣalāh of Fajr and 'Aṣr, and زُلَفًا مِّنَ الَّيْلِ (in the early hours or parts of the night) the Ṣalāh of Maghrib and 'Ishā,' the timings of four prayers find mention in the verse. What remains to be mentioned is the Ṣalāh of Ẓuhr which appears in another verse: أَقِمِ الصَّلٰوةَ لِدُلُوْكِ الشَّمْسِ (Establish *ṣalāh* at the decline of the sun – 17:78).

After the command to establish Ṣalāh, and its timings, the text

points out to the great good these bring. It was said: إِنَّ الْحَسَنٰتِ يُذْهِبْنَ السَّيِّاٰتِ (Surely, good deeds erase bad deeds). Early commentators have said that '*al-hasanāt*' means all good deeds. These include Ṣalāh, Ṣawm, Zakāh, Ṣadaqāt, good morals, good dealings etc., but Ṣalāh takes precedence over all of them. Similarly, '*as-saiyyi'āt*' covers all bad deeds, *kabīrah* (major sins) or *ṣaghīrah* (minor sins). But, there is another verse of the Qur'ān, as well as, several sayings of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم where it has been particularized with *ṣaghīrah* sins, according to which, it would mean that good deeds – Ṣalāh being the superior most – become the *kaffārah* (expiation) of *saghīrah* sins which stand erased. This verse of the Qur'ān says: إِنْ تَجْتَنِبُوْا كَبَآئِرَ مَا تُنْهَوْنَ عَنْهُ نُكَفِّرْ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّاٰتِكُمْ (If you abstain from the major [sins] out of what you have been forbidden from, We shall write off your minor sins – Al-Nisā' 4:31) (See Ma'āriful-Qur'ān, Volume II, pages 405-410 under 4:31 for a detailed discussion of the nature of *kabīrah* and *ṣaghīrah*)

It appears in a Ḥadīth of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said that five prayers and a Jumu'ah until the next Jumu'ah, and a Ramaḍān until the next Ramaḍān, become the *kaffārah* (expiation) of all sins committed in between them. This is subject to the condition that the person concerned has remained safe from major sins (*kabā'ir*). It means that major sins are such that they are not forgiven without Taubah (repentance). But, minor sins do get to be forgiven automatically when one keeps doing other good deeds such as Ṣalāh, Ṣawm, Ṣadaqah etc. However, Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ has reported the saying of authentic scholars of the Principles of the Sharī'ah of Islām that even minor sins are forgiven by doing good deeds only when one feels ashamed of having done these and makes a solemn resolve of not doing these in the future. It is important that one does not insist on them. There are many events mentioned in Ḥadīth reports to the effects that sins were so erased. They too state clearly that this happens on condition that the sinner is ashamed of his doing, repents and resolves not to do it in future. It was on this basis that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has given the good news of forgiveness of a sin to a sinner. Allah knows best.

The following have been declared as *kabā'ir* or major sins in well known Ḥadīth reports:

(1) Ascribing anyone as partner or equal in the Being or Attributes

of Allah Ta'ālā.

(2) Intentionally skipping an obligatory (*farḍ*) Ṣalāh.

(3) Killing someone unjustly.

(4) Committing fornication or adultery.

(5) Stealing.

(6) Drinking.

(7) Disobedience to parents.

(8) Taking false oaths.

(9) Giving false witness.

(10) Practicing magic.

(11) Transacting interest.

(12) Usurping the property of the orphan by unfair means.

(13) Deserting the battlefield in Jihād.

(14) Accusing chaste women falsely.

(15) The taking of someone's property or wealth by unfair means.

(16) Breaking a pledge.

(17) Committing a breach of trust.

(18) Using foul language against anyone.

(19) Accusing someone as a criminal unjustly, etc.

Details about major and minor sins appear in standard books written by Muslim scholars. It can also be seen in 'Sin *sans* Taste' (*Gunāh-i-bay-Ladhdhat*) a treatise written by this humble writer.

In short, this verse proves that sins are also forgiven by doing good deeds. Therefore, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, 'after a bad deed gets to be committed by you, do a good one and it will erase its evil;' and he said, 'deal with people pleasantly.' (Ibn Kathīr with reference to the Musnad of Aḥmad)

Sayyidnā Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī said, 'I requested the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to order me to do something. He said, 'if you fall into some sin, do some good deed after that, so that it erases the sin.'

In fact, these Aḥādīth tell us about the preferred method of repent-

ing from a sin. This is as it has been reported in the Musnad of Aḥmad from Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said, 'if a Muslim unfortunately falls into some sin, he should make *wuḍū* and offer two *raka'āt* of *nafl* prayer – that sin will be forgiven. (All *riwāyāt* have been taken from Ibn Kathīr) This prayer is known by the very name of Ṣalātu-t-Taubah (the prayer of repentance).

In the last sentence of the verse (114): ذلك ذكرى للذ كرين (That is a reminder for the mindful), the word: ذلك (*dhālik*) could be referring to the Holy Qur'ān, and to the do's and don'ts both, which have been mentioned earlier. The sense is that this Qur'ān, or its injunctions referred to above, are guidance and good counsel for those who listen to and are used to obeying it. The hint embedded here is that a person, who is so compulsively obstinate that he would just not think about anything reasonable, remains deprived of every guidance.

In verse 115, it was said: واصبر فان الله لايضيع اجرالمحسنين (And be patient, for Allah lets not the reward of the good-doers be lost).

Literally, صبر (*ṣabr*) means to tie. Therefore, in usage, Ṣabr is also used to carry the sense of keeping one's naughty self in control. Also included within its sense is the effort made to keep one's self firm and unflinching when it comes to doing what is good and right, as well as the effort to check and hold it back from getting involved with bad deeds. At this place, asking the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم to be patient could also mean that the injunctions given to him in the cited verses – for example, 'stand firm,' 'establish *ṣalāh*,' etc. – are things he should hold fast to. And it is also possible that the purpose may be to exhort him to be patient in the face of the hostility of enemies and the pains caused by them. As for what was said after that – 'Allah lets not the reward of the good-doers be lost' – it obviously suggests that '*al-muḥsinīn*' (good-doers) are people who faithfully observe the injunctions of do's and don'ts as given in the cited verses. In other words, they are firm in their religion, adhere to the limits set by the Sharī'ah, maintain no friendly relations with the unjust unnecessarily, are punctual with their Ṣalāh, offering it as its etiquette demands, at the most preferred timings, and that they stand firm on all religious injunctions.

The essence of what has been said above is what the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has himself said while defining 'Iḥsān' – "obey and wor-

ship Allah Ta'ālā as if you are seeing Him or, at the least, that Allah Ta'ālā is seeing you." When one achieves this station of the certitude of the Being and Attributes of Allah Ta'ālā, all words and deeds that issue forth from him become automatically correct. Worth remembering are the three truisms that were so popularly recognized among the revered scholars of the early centuries of Islām (*as-salaf*). These they used to exchange in writing to each other (as if they were souvenirs worth saving). They said:

(1) Anyone who gets busy working for the 'Ākhirah (life-to-come), Allah Ta'ālā takes it upon Himself to put his worldly chores in order and sees to it that they come out right for him.

(2) Anyone who corrects his inward state of being, (so much so that he moves the orientation of his heart away from everything and turns it towards Allah Ta'ālā) He sees to it that his outward state of being stands corrected all by itself.

(3) Anyone who puts his matter with Allah Ta'ālā sound and correct, Allah Ta'ālā Himself corrects all matters pertaining to him and to those he relates with. The original wording of these three truisms is being given below:

وكان اهل الخير يكتب بعضهم الى بعض بثلاث كلمت، من عمل لاخرته
كفاه الله امر دنياه، ومن اصلح سريرته اصلح الله علانيته ومن اصلح فيما
بينه، وبين الله اصلح الله مابينه وبين الناس (تفسير روح البيان ج ٢ ص ١٣١)

(Tafsīr Rūḥ al-Bayān, p. 131, v. 2)

Given in the third and the fourth verse (116, 117) is the reason why Divine punishment came upon past peoples as well as the instruction as to how they could have stayed safe from it. It was said: How sad that among them there could have been at least some good and wise people who would have stopped their erring fellowmen from spreading disorder. The exception was that of a counted few who followed the noble prophets and they were the ones who stayed safe from the punishment. As for the rest of them, they went for the luxuries of the material world and turned into compulsive sinners.

In this verse, people of discernment, balance and foresight have been identified through the expression: اولوا بقية: 'remnants [of wisdom].' The word: بقيه (*baqīyyah*) means that which remains. It is human habit

that one lets what is most dear to him remain with him under all conditions, preserved and retrievable. When some need would arise, he would give away everything but not that. Therefore, reason and insight are called '*baqīyyah*' or remnants, because that is the dearest one has.

It was said in the fourth verse (117) that Allah does not destroy towns and habitations unjustly while people living there are good in their ways, that is, they are believing Muslims. The sense is that the probability of injustice and oppression does not exist with Allah Ta'ālā. Those destroyed deserve being destroyed. Some early commentators have said that the word: ظلم :'*ẓulm*' (injustice) in this verse means *shirk* (ascribing of partners in the pristine divinity of Allah) and مُصْلِحُوْنَ:'*muṣliḥūn*' (people good in their ways) refers to people who, despite being Mushriks and Kāfirs, are good in morals and dealings, do not hurt and cause pain to anyone, do not lie and do not cheat. Thus, the sense of the verse comes to be that the punishment of the world does not fall on a people simply because of their being Mushriks and Kāfirs – unless they were to spread disorder in the land by their very deeds and morals. The cause of all punishments that came upon the past peoples was but their particular evil deeds. The people of Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیه السلام caused him all sorts of pains. The people of Sayyidnā Shu'aib علیه السلام spread disorder by weighing and measuring short. The people of Sayyidnā Lūṭ علیه السلام took to the worst type of evil act. The people of Sayyidnā Mūsā and 'Īsā oppressed their prophets. The Holy Qur'ān says that these very misdeeds were the reason why punishment came upon them. Divine punishment does not come in this world because of bland Kufr and Shirk. The everlasting punishment of the fire of Hell is its punishment. Therefore, some 'Ulama' have said that countries and governments can survive with Kufr and Shirk, but they cannot survive with injustice and oppression.

Difference: Blameworthy and Praiseworthy

When it was said in the fifth verse (118) – 'had your Lord willed, He would have made all the people a single community' – the sense is that had it been the will of Allah, He would have made all human beings accept Islām by force. All of them would have then become nothing but Muslims without any difference remaining between them. But, such are the dictates of His wisdom that, in this world, Allah Ta'ālā does

not compel anyone to do something. Instead, He has entrusted man with a kind of choice under which he could do whatever good or bad he wishes to do. Then, human temperaments differ, ways differ and deeds differ. The outcome is that there always will be some people who would keep at loggerheads against the true faith – of course, with the exception of those whom Allah Ta'ālā has blessed with His mercy, that is, those who have been following the noble prophets.

This tells us that 'difference' at this place means hostility and opposition to the true faith and the teachings of prophets. The difference based on Ijtihād, which is inevitable among religious authorities and jurists of Islam, an ongoing process since the period of the Ṣaḥābah, is not included under this purview, nor is it contrary to Divine mercy. In fact, it is the very dictate of Allah's wisdom and mercy. Those who have declared the differences among Mujtahid Imāms to be counter to Mercy in terms of this verse, have done something which is itself counter to the context of this verse as well as counter to the consistent practice of the Ṣaḥābah and Tābi'īn.

وَاللّٰهُ سُبْحَانَهٗ وَتَعَالٰى اَعْلَمُ

And Allah is Pure and High and He knows everything best.

Alhāmdulillāh

The Commentary on

SŪRAH HŪD

Ends here

A

B

I

J

K

N

O

P

Q

R

T

U

V W

X Y

Z

❑❑❑

MA'ĀRIFUL-QUR'ĀN

By

MAULĀNĀ MUFTI MUḤAMMAD SHAFI' رحمۃ اللہ علیہ

Translated By

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Volume 5

(Sūrah Yūsuf, Al-Ra'd, Ibrāhīm, Al-Ḥijr,

Al-Naḥl, Banī Isrā'īl, Al-Kahf)

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❑❑❑

TRANSLITERATION SCHEME

Arabic Letter	Name of Letter	English Transliteration
ا	الف -- Alif	a
ب	باء -- bā	b
ت	تاء -- tā	t
ث	ثاء -- thā	th
ج	جيم -- jīm	j
ح	حاء -- ḥā	ḥ
خ	خاء -- khā	kh
د	دال -- dāl	d
ذ	ذال -- dhāl	dh
ر	راء -- rā	r
ز	زاى -- zā	z
س	سين -- sīn	s
ش	شين -- shīn	sh
ص	صاد -- ṣād	ṣ
ض	ضاد -- ḍād	ḍ
ط	طاء -- ṭā	ṭ
ظ	ظاء -- ẓā	ẓ
ع	عين -- ‘ayn	‘
غ	غين -- ghayn	gh
ف	فاء -- fā	f
ق	قاف -- qāf	q
ك	كاف -- kāf	k
ل	لام -- lām	l
م	ميم -- mīm	m
ن	نون -- nūn	n
ه	هاء -- hā	h
و	واؤ -- wāw	w
ء	همزه -- Hamzah	’
ى	ياء -- yā	y

Short Vowels

	: Fatḥah	a
	: Kasrah	i
	: Ḍammah	u

Long Vowels

ا	: Shortened Alif	ā
آ	: Maddah Alif	ā
ى	: Maddah Yā	ī
و	: Maddah Wāw	ū

Dipthongs

اى	:Alif and Yā	ay (also ai in some cases)
او اؤ	: Alif and Wāw	aw (also au in some cases)

SŪRAH YŪSUF

[Joseph]

Sūrah Yūsuf was revealed in Makkah and it has 111 Verses and 22 Sections

Verses 1 - 6

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the Most-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

الٓرٰ قف تِلۡكَ اٰيٰتُ الۡكِتٰبِ الۡمُبِيۡنِ ﴿١﴾ قف اِنَّآ اَنۡزَلۡنٰهُ قُرۡءٰنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَّعَلَّكُمۡ
تَعۡقِلُوۡنَ ﴿٢﴾ نَحۡنُ نَقُصُّ عَلَيۡكَ اَحۡسَنَ الۡقَصَصِ بِمَآ اَوۡحَيۡنَآ اِلَيۡكَ
هٰذَا الۡقُرۡاٰنَ ۖ وَاِنۡ كُنۡتَ مِنۡ قَبۡلِهٖ لَمِنَ الۡغٰفِلِيۡنَ ﴿٣﴾ اِذۡ قَالَ يُوۡسُفُ
لِاَبِيۡهِ يٰۤاَبَتِ اِنِّيۡ رَاَيۡتُ اَحَدَ عَشَرَ كَوۡكَبًا وَّالشَّمۡسَ وَالۡقَمَرَ رَاَيۡتُهُمۡ
لِيۡ سٰجِدِيۡنَ ﴿٤﴾ قَالَ يٰبُنَيَّ لَا تَقۡصُصۡ رُءۡيَاكَ عَلٰۤى اِخۡوَتِكَ فَيَكِيۡدُوۡا
لَكَ كَيۡدًا ؕ اِنَّ الشَّيۡطٰنَ لِلۡاِنۡسَانِ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِيۡنٌ ﴿٥﴾ وَكَذٰلِكَ يَجۡتَبِيۡكَ
رَبُّكَ وَيُعَلِّمُكَ مِنۡ تَاۡوِيۡلِ الۡاَحَادِيۡثِ وَيُتِمُّ نِعۡمَتَهٗ عَلَيۡكَ وَعَلٰۤى اٰلِ
يَعۡقُوۡبَ كَمَاۤ اَتَمَّهَا عَلٰۤى اَبَوَيۡكَ مِنۡ قَبۡلُ اِبۡرٰهِيۡمَ وَاِسۡحٰقَ ؕ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ
عَلِيۡمٌ حَكِيۡمٌ ﴿٦﴾ ع

Alif Lām Rā. These are verses of the enlightening Book. [1] **We have sent it down, an Arabic Qur'ān, so that you may understand.** [2]

We narrate to you the best narrative by revealing this Qur'ān to you, and surely before this, you were among the unaware. [3]

(It happened) when Yusuf said to his father, "My father, I have seen eleven stars and the Sun and the Moon; I have seen them all prostrating to me." [4]

He said, "My son, do not relate your dream to your brothers lest they should devise against you a plan. Surely, Satan is an open enemy for mankind. And in the like manner your Lord will choose you and teach you the interpretation of events, and will perfect His bounty upon you and upon the House of Ya'qūb, as He has perfected it, earlier, upon your father, Ibrāhīm and Isḥāq. Surely, your Lord is All-Wise, All-Knowing." [5-6]

Commentary

With the exception of four verses, Sūrah Yūsuf is wholly a Makkī Sūrah. In this Sūrah, the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام has been described with continuity and order. Then, the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام appears in this Sūrah alone. It has not been repeated anywhere else in the whole Qur'ān as such (with the exception of Sūrah Al-An'ām - 6:84 - and Sūrah Al-Mu'min or Ghāfir - 40:34 - where only the name of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام has been mentioned as a Messenger of Allah, in appropriate context). This is particular with the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, otherwise the stories and events concerning all blessed prophets have been introduced in the entire Qur'ān with great wisdom, part by part, and repeatedly too.

The truth of the matter is that world history and past experiences teach human beings what to do with their lives in the future. These have a natural effect of their own which acts better on minds and hearts as compared to the pull of formal education. This effect is deeper and fairly effortless. Therefore, in the Holy Qur'ān, which has been sent for all peoples of the world as their last testament, a marked portion of the entire history of the peoples of the world - a portion that serves as the master prescription for the betterment of the present and ultimate human condition - has been taken up electively and pragmatically. Furthermore, even this portion of world history has been introduced by the Holy Qur'ān, with its unique and unimitable style, in a manner that its reader simply does not get the impression that he or she was reading some book of history. In fact, whatever part of a certain story serves the need of driving home a lesson or tendering a good counsel on any given occasion, it is just that part which finds mention in that setting. And should

there be the need to allude to that particular part once again on some other occasion, it was repeated. Therefore, consideration was not given to sequential order in the narration of events in the story. At some places the earlier part of the story comes later, and the later part finds mention earlier. This special style of the Qur'ān carries a standing rule of guidance that reading or remembering world history and its past events is not an end by itself. Instead of that, the purpose of every human being should be to draw some lesson from every story and to cull and deduce some good advice from every information.

It is well-known that the human speech is classified into two forms: Descriptive (*khabar*) and imperative (*inshā'*). According to the knowledgable scholars, it is the later form (i.e. imperative) that is the essential objective. Description in itself is not an end. A wise man ought to learn an imperative from every description, and make use of it for correcting and reforming himself.

That the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام has been narrated in a sequence could be because historiography is a discipline. It has particular rules of guidance for its practitioners. For instance, the narration should not be so brief as to make its understanding impossible, nor should it be so long as would make reading and remembering it difficult - which becomes clear from the Qur'ānic treatment of this story.

According to some narrations, another reason for this could lie in what the Jews had said to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. To test him, they had asked him: If you are a true prophet, tell us why did the family of Ya'qūb move from Syria to Egypt and what had actually happened to Yūsuf عليه السلام? It was in answer to that that this whole story was revealed. It was a miracle of the Holy Prophet ﷺ , and certainly a great proof of his prophethood - for he was simply an Ummiyy, one who was not taught by anyone, who had never read a book and who had lived in Makkah practically his whole life, yet, he narrated all events mentioned in the Torah correctly. In fact, he told them of what was not mentioned in the Torah. There are many injunctions and instructions which emerge from these narrations which will appear later in this commentary.

In the first of the set of verses cited above, the words: الر 'Alif Lām Rā' are isolated letters (*al-Ḥurūf al-Muqaṭṭa'āt*) of the Holy Qur'ān. About

these, it is the universal verdict of the majority of Ṣaḥābah and Tābi'īn that they are a secret between Allah Ta'ālā, the speaker, and the Holy Prophet ﷺ, the addressee - which a third person cannot understand, nor is it appropriate for one to exert and insist on finding it out.

After that it was said: تِلْكَ اٰيٰتُ الْكِتٰبِ الْمُبِيْنِ (These are the verses of the enlightening Book). That is, these are verses of the Book which delineate the delimitations and restrictions of what is lawful and unlawful, including those of other things in all departments of human life, and thus gives people a simple, straight and moderate system of living, as promised in the Torah, and as already known to the Jews.

The statement made in verse 2 following immediately is: اِنَّآ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ قُرْاٰنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُوْنَ (Surely, We have sent it down, an Arabic Qur'ān, so that you may understand).

It is indicative of the situation that those who had asked to be informed of what had happened to Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام were the Jews of Arabia. So, Allah Ta'ālā revealed this story in their language so that they may ponder over it and attest to the veracity of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and tune their lives in the light of the injunctions and instructions which emerge from this story.

This is the reason why the word: لَعَلَّ (*la'alla*) has been brought in here in the sense of 'so that' because the mindset of these addressees was already known - that they would, despite having the benefit of very clear verses before them, still doubt and delay their acceptance of truth.

In the third verse, it was said: نَحْنُ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ اَحْسَنَ الْقَصَصِ بِمَآ اَوْحَيْنَآ اِلَيْكَ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنَ وَاِنْ كُنْتَ مِنْ قَبْلِهٖ لَمِنَ الْغٰفِلِيْنَ (We narrate to you the best narrative by revealing this Qur'ān to you, and surely before this, you were among the unaware).

This is to chasten the Jews that they had tried to test the Messenger of Allah which proved to be in vain, for its effect turned out to be just the reverse of what they had intended. It only went on to prove the excellence and authenticity of the Messenger of Allah in a far more evident manner. From this it became clear that he was already an Ummiyy and had no knowledge of world history. Now that he came to know of this needs an explanation and there can be no explanation for this except

that he was Divinely educated and blessed with revelation as a prophet of Allah Ta'ālā.

Moving on the verse 4, the text takes up the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام which opens with the following words: اِذْ قَالَ يُوسُفُ لِاَبِيهِ يٰاَبَتِ اِنِّى رَاَيْتُ اَحَدَ عَشَرَ كَوْكَبًا وَّالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ رَاَيْتُهُمْ لِى سٰجِدِيْنَ (It happened) [when Yūsuf said to his father, 'My father, I have seen eleven stars and the Sun and the Moon; I have seen them all prostrating to me.']

This was the dream seen by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام interpreting which Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه said: 'The eleven stars meant the eleven brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام; and the Sun and the Moon meant his father and mother.'

According to al-Qurṭubī, though the mother of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had passed away from this mortal world before this event, but in her place, his father was wedded to her sister. A maternal aunt already has love and concern for her sister's children as their natural mother would normally have. Now when she, after the death of her sister, comes to be the wife of the father, she would customarily be referred to as the mother.

The response given by Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام appears in verses 5 and 6 in the following words: قَالَ يٰبُنَيَّ لَاتَقْصُصْ رُءْيَاكَ عَلٰٓى اِخْوَتِكَ فَيَكِيْدُوْا لَكَ كَيْدًا اِنَّ الشَّيْطٰنَ لِلْاِنْسَانِ عَدُوٌّمُّبِيْنٌ 'He said, 'My son, do not relate your dream to your brothers lest they [by finding out your greatness to come] should devise against you a plan. Surely, Satan is an open enemy for mankind ...' [for He seduces people to take such action for the sake of worldly wealth and power].'

Worth mentioning here are some religious issues which emerge from these verses:

The Nature of Dreams: Status and Kinds

First comes the nature of dreams and the status of events and information released by them. In Tafsīr Maẓharī, Qāḍī Thanā'ullāh رحمه الله تعالى has said: 'The reality of a dream is that, when the human self - as a result of sleep or unconsciousness - is freed from the management of the active body, it comes to see some shapes through the faculty of imagination. This is what a dream is. Then, it has three kinds, two out of which

are totally false, having no substance and base - while one, in terms of its being, is correct and true. But, even in this correct kind, some other contingents may occasionally intermingle and thereby make it defective and unreliable.

To explain this in detail, it can be said that the different shapes, images, situations and events one sees in a dream come in two modes. Sometimes, what one sees while awake returns to him transformed in a dream. And sometimes, it so happens that the Satan would make his input, introducing some forms, situations and events into a person's mind which would either be pleasing or terrifying. Both these kinds are false. They have no substance or reality, nor can they be interpreted in any actual sense. Out of these two, the first kind is Self-Suggestion (Ḥadīth An-Nafs) and the other, The Seductive Input of the Shayṭān (Taswīl Ash-Shayṭān).

The third kind, correct and true, is a kind of 'Ilhām (mode of inspiring) which is activated to warn a servant of Allah or to give him glad tidings. In other words, out of His unseen treasures, Allah Ta'ālā would put things in one's mind and heart.

In a Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said: 'The dream of a believer is a dialogue in which he has the honour of talking to his Rabb.' This Ḥadīth has been reported by al-Ṭabarānī with a sound chain of authorities. (Maẓharī)

Explaining this, Ṣufis say that everything, before it comes to exist in this world, has a particular form in another universe called '*ālam-al-mithāl*',* a universe where, not only the substantial objects and physical realities, but also the attributes and noncorporal meanings, have particular shapes and forms. When the human self is freed from the concerns of body management while dreaming, it sometimes gets connected to the universe of '*ālam-al-mithāl*'. There one would see the representative forms. Then, these forms are shown from the universe of the Unseen. At times, it would so happen that temporary disturbances would cause false imaginings mix up with the real, therefore, it becomes difficult for the interpreters to interpret the dream soundly. However, when free of discordant elements, they are real. But, even among these, some dreams

*. 'The world of autonomous images' - Henry Corbin.

cannot be interpreted because the actuality of the event is not clear. In such a case too, should the interpretation be wrong, the event itself ends up being different. Therefore, only those dreams will become a true 'Ilhām (inspiration) from Allah, and a proven reality, which originate from the command of Allah with the condition that no discordant elements have intermingled with them and that it has been interpreted correctly too.

All dreams of the blessed prophets are like that. Therefore, their dreams too have the status of Waḥy (revelation). The dreams of common believing Muslims are not free of many a probability. Therefore, they are not a binding argument or proof for anyone. Sometimes, their dreams get mixed up with temperamental or self-oriented elements. On other occasions, the after effects of sins overtake a true dream in the form of dark and murky silhouttes making it unreliable. Then, there could be occasions when it becomes difficult to spell out a correct interpretation from given parameters.

The three kinds of dreams mentioned here have been reported from the Holy Prophet ﷺ. He said that there are three kinds of dreams. (1) The Satanic in which the mind sees forms and shapes released by the Shayṭān. (2) That which one keeps seeing while awake. These present themselves before one in a dream. (3) The third kind, which is correct and true, is the forty-sixth part of the ingredients of prophethood (Nubuwwah), that is, it is an 'Ilhām (inspiration) from Allah Ta'ālā.

The Meaning of Dream being a part of Nubuwwah: An Explanation

In this kind, which is true and correct and which has been declared to be a part of prophethood in authentic prophetic Traditions, the narrations of Ḥadīth differ. In some, it has been identified as the fortieth part, while in some others, the forty-sixth. There are other narrations as well in which its being the forty-ninth, fiftieth and seventieth part has been reported. All these narrations have been compiled together in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī where, following the investigative judgement of Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, it has been established that there is no contradiction among them, in fact, each narration is correct in its place. As for the numerical variation in determining the parts, it depends upon the different attending conditions of those seeing the dream. Whoever is armed with the

quality of truth, trust, honesty and is perfect of faith shall be the one whose dream will be the fortieth part of Nubuwwah. And whoever ranks somewhat lesser in these qualities, his will be the forty-sixth or fiftieth part of it, and whoever is still lesser, his dream will be the seventieth part of Nubuwwah.

Worth pondering here is what does a true dream being a part of prophethood mean? Tafsīr Maẓharī has explained it by saying that the process of revelation to Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ as a Prophet of Allah continued for twenty three years. During the first biannual, this Divine revelation kept coming to him in the form of dreams. During the remaining forty five biannuals, it was communicated to him through the angel, *Jibra'īl al-Amīn*. Accounted for in this manner, true dreams turn out to be the fortieth part of the prophetic revelation. As for narrations where numbers vary on the lower or higher side, they either carry approximative statements, or stand dropped for lack of sound authority.

Imām al-Qurṭubī explains this by saying that there are occasions when one sees things in dreams which do not lie within his control. For example, one may see that he is flying high in the skies, or he may see things from the Unseen having access to which was not within one's control. If so, this cannot become possible through any means other than Divine support and inspiration itself - which, in reality, is an intrinsic attribute of prophethood. Therefore, it was declared to be a part of prophethood.

Refuting the Deception of the Qādiyāni Dajjāl [Imposter]

What has been stated above has led some people to run into a miserable error because they have taken the survival and continuity of this 'part' of prophethood in the world as the very survival and continuity of prophethood itself! This is against definite, categorical and absolute statements of the Holy Qur'ān and against countless sound and authentic Aḥādīth, and squarely against the collective belief of the entire Muslim Ummah in the finality of prophethood (the 'Aqīdah of Khatm Nubūwwat). In this exercise in deception, they have failed to realize that the presence of a part of something does not mean the presence of that thing in full. If there is a single nail or strand of hair belonging to a person present anywhere, no sane human being can say that the person is present here. Think of the many parts of a machine. If someone has one part, or

a screw of that machine present with him and he goes about declaring that he has such and such machine with him, the whole world would dismiss him as a liar or fool.

True dreams, as expressly explained in Ḥadīth, are, without any doubt, a part of Nubuwwah - but not Nubuwwah itself. What we know as Nubuwwah or prophethood has already ended with the Last of Prophets, Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ.

It appears in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

لَمْ يَبْقَ مِنَ النُّبُوَّةِ اِلاَّ الْمُبَشِّرَاتِ

> That is, (in future) no part of the Nubuwwah will remain except Al-Mubashshirāt.

When the noble Ṣaḥābah asked for the meaning of Al-Mubashshirāt, he said: 'True dreams.' This proves that there is no Nubūwwah or prophethood of any kind or form for anyone anymore. What remains of it is only a small part which is called Al-Mubashshirāt or true dreams.

The Dream of a Sinning Disbeliever may also be True at times

It stands proved from the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth, and from experience, that sinners, even disbelievers, could see dreams which are true. In the Sūrah Yūsuf itself, mentioned there are the dreams of two prison mates of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام which were true, and similarly, the dream of the king of Egypt which was true - though, the three of them were not Muslims. This was in the Qur'ān. Mentioned in the Ḥadīth is the dream of Kisrā (Cyrus) who had dreamt about the coming of the Holy Prophet ﷺ; that dream turned out to be true, though Kisrā was not a Muslim. The paternal aunt of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, 'Ātikah, had seen a true dream about the Holy Prophet ﷺ while she was still a disbeliever. In addition to that, the dream of the disbelieving King of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, which was interpreted by Sayyidnā Dāniyāl (Daniel) عليه السلام was a true dream.

This tells us that the simple instance of someone seeing a true dream and the event taking place as seen cannot become a proof of the dreamer being pious and righteous, even Muslim. However, it is correct to say that this is how the customary practice of Allah operates - that the dreams seen by true and good people are generally true. The dreams

seen by sinners are generally from the category of self-suggestions and Satanic inputs - but, occasionally, the opposite could also happen.

In short, true dreams, as made clear in Ḥadīth, have no place in the lives of Muslims at large except that they can be either glad tidings, or warning, for them. They are no binding argument in any matter, neither for their own selves, nor for others. Some people, unaware of this truth, fall a victim to all sorts of scruples after having seen such dreams. Some of them would start taking these as a sign of having become a saint or something like that. Others would tend to give what they get out of these dreams the status of the injunctions of the Sharī'ah. All these approaches are baseless. Specially so, when we already know that there is every likelihood that both kinds of imaginings, self-suggested or Satan-induced, can get profusely intermingled with true dreams.

Relating Dreams to Everyone is not Correct :
RULINGS

1. In verse 5: ... قَالَ يٰبُنَيَّ (He said, 'O my son ...'), Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام has prohibited Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام from relating his dream to his brothers. This tells us that a dream should not be related before a person who is not a well-wisher, nor before a person who is no expert in the interpretation of dreams.

According to Jāmi' al-Tirmidhī, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: A true dream is one of the forty parts of Nubūwwah. And a dream stays in suspension until related to someone. When related, and interpreted by the listener, it actualizes as interpreted. Therefore, one should not relate the dream to anyone, except to a person who is knowing and wise, or is, at least, a friend and a well-wisher.

As also referred to earlier, it appears in Tirmidhī and Ibn Mājah that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: A dream is of three kinds: (1) Glad tidings from Allah; (2) self-suggestions; (3) Satanic inputs. Therefore, should a person see a certain dream about which he feels good, then, he can relate it to others, if he wishes to do so. And, should he see something bad in it, let him not tell anyone about it. Instead, he should rise and offer Ṣalāh. The Ḥadīth of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim also says: If one sees a bad dream, he should blow his breath three times towards his left side and seek the protection of Allah against its evil and tell no one about it. If this is done,

the dream will not cause any harm. The reason is that some dreams are composed of Satanic seductions. They will stand removed with this action. And, if the dream is true, the evil part of it - it can be hoped - will also be eliminated through this action.

2. As for the sense of the interpretation of a dream remaining hinged to it, Tafsīr Maẓharī explains it by saying that some matters of destiny are not absolutely pre-decided, instead, they remain in a state of suspension, that is, if something was done, the impending misfortune will go away - and if it was not done, it will come. This is known as contingent or conditional destiny. In a situation like that giving a bad interpretation makes things turn bad while a good interpretation makes it come out good. Therefore, in the Ḥadīth from Tirmidhī mentioned above, relating a dream to a person who is not wise, or a well-wisher, has been prohibited. And there could also be another reason for this. When someone hears a bad interpretation of the dream seen, one finds himself overwhelmed by the thought that he is going to be hit by some misfortune. And it appears in Ḥadīth that Allah Ta'ālā said: أَنَا عِندَظَنِّ عَبُدِى بِى that is, 'I am with the opinion of My servant about Me.' In other words, 'whatever a servant of Mine believes Me to be, just that I become for him.' So, when one ends up believing that misfortune is going to come from Allah Ta'ālā, then, true to the customary practice of Allah, the coming of that misfortune becomes due against him.

3. Regarding the instruction given in the verse that something suggesting pain and misfortune seen in a dream should not be related to anyone, Ḥadīth narrations seem to indicate that this is not a legal prohibition. It is only an advice based on affection and sympathy. This should not be taken as something made unlawful by the Sharī'ah. Therefore, if related to someone, this will be no sin - because it appears in authentic Aḥādīth that the Holy Prophet ﷺ - at the time of the Battle of Uḥud - said: I have seen in a dream that my sword, Zulfaqār, has broken and I saw some cows being slaughtered, the interpretation of which was the Shahadah of Sayyidnā Hamzah ؓ and many other Muslim *mujāhidīn*, a grave misfortune indeed. But, he had related this dream before the Ṣaḥābah. (Qurṭubī)

4. This verse also tells us that it is permissible to disclose the evil trait or intention of a person about to cause harm to a Muslim. Being an

effort to offset an evil design, this action is not included under Ghībah or backbiting. For example, if a person finds out that A is planning to commit theft in the house of B, or intends to kill him, then, he should forewarn B. This does not fall under the purview of Ghībah which is Ḥarām. This is what was done by Sayyidnā Ya'qūb ﷺ when he had disclosed to Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ that there was a danger to his life at the hands of his brothers.

5. If a person is blessed by Allah, and he apprehends that his addressee will be jealous against him, he should not mention the blessings of wealth, status, and things like that before that person. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said:

> To make your objectives succeed, seek help from keeping them secret - because, every holder of blessing is envied in this world.

6. From this verse and from the later in which the plan and execution of killing or throwing Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ in a well has been mentioned, it becomes evident that the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ were no prophets or messengers of Allah, otherwise, they would have not stooped to the act of conspiring to kill him, then to put him out of their way by lowering him down in a desolate well, and ultimately, to disobey their father - because, the blessed prophets علیهم السلام have to be free of all sins, and protected from them. Their reference as 'prophets' in the book of al-Ṭabari is not correct. (Qurṭubī)

Expertise in the Interpretation of Dreams is Bestowed by Allah on whom He wills

In the sixth verse, Allah Ta'ālā has promised some blessings for Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ: (1) كَذٰلِكَ يَجْتَبِيكَ رَبُّكَ (And in the like manner your Lord will choose you ...) that is, He will choose him for His blessings and favours, something which manifested itself when wealth, recognition and power came into his hands in the country of Egypt. (2) وَيُعَلِّمُكَ مِن تَأْوِيلِ الْأَحَادِيثِ (and teach you the interpretation of events ...). The word: الاحاديث : 'al-aḥādīth' here means the dreams of people. It means that Allah Ta'ālā will teach him how to interpret dreams. This also tells us that interpreting dreams is a standing area of expertise which is bestowed by Allah Ta'ālā on a chosen few - everyone is not fit to have it.

Ruling:

It appears in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī that 'Abdullāh ibn Shaddād ibn al-Had said that the interpretation of this dream of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام actualized after forty years. This tells us that an instant actualization of an interpretation is not necessary either.

(3) As for the third promise: وَيُتِمُّ نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكَ (and will perfect His bounty upon you), it refers to the bestowal of Nubūwwah (prophethood) upon him. And this is what has been alluded to in the later sentences: كَمَآ اَتَمَّهَا عَلٰٓى اَبَوَيْكَ مِنْ قَبْلُ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَاِسْحٰقَ (as He has perfected it, earlier, upon your father, Ibrāhīm and Isḥāq). That which has been said here also indicates that the skill of interpreting dreams as given to Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was also taught to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm and Isḥāq, peace be on them both.

At the end of the verse, it was said: اِنَّ رَبَّكَ عَلِيْمٌ حَكِيْمٌ (Surely, your Lord is All-Wise, All-Knowing). So He is. For Him, teaching an art to someone is not difficult, nor does He, as His wisdom would have it, teach this art to just anyone. Instead of that, He elects someone, in His wisdom, and lets him have this expertise.

Verses 7 - 20

لَقَدْ كَانَ فِىْ يُوْسُفَ وَاِخْوَتِهٖٓ اٰيٰتٌ لِّلسَّآئِلِيْنَ ﴿۷﴾ اِذْ قَالُوْا لَيُوْسُفُ وَاَخُوْهُ اَحَبُّ اِلٰٓى اَبِيْنَا مِنَّا وَنَحْنُ عُصْبَةٌ ؕ اِنَّ اَبَانَا لَفِىْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنِ ﴿۸﴾ ۨ اقْتُلُوْا يُوْسُفَ اَوِ اطْرَحُوْهُ اَرْضًا يَّخْلُ لَكُمْ وَجْهُ اَبِيْكُمْ وَتَكُوْنُوْا مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖ قَوْمًا صٰلِحِيْنَ ﴿۹﴾ قَالَ قَآئِلٌ مِّنْهُمْ لَا تَقْتُلُوْا يُوْسُفَ وَاَلْقُوْهُ فِىْ غَيٰبَتِ الْجُبِّ يَلْتَقِطْهُ بَعْضُ السَّيَّارَةِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ فٰعِلِيْنَ ﴿۱۰﴾ قَالُوْا يٰٓاَبَانَا مَا لَكَ لَا تَاْمَنَّا عَلٰى يُوْسُفَ وَاِنَّا لَهٗ لَنٰصِحُوْنَ ﴿۱۱﴾ اَرْسِلْهُ مَعَنَا غَدًا يَّرْتَعْ وَيَلْعَبْ وَاِنَّا لَهٗ لَحٰفِظُوْنَ ﴿۱۲﴾ قَالَ اِنِّىْ لَيَحْزُنُنِىْٓ اَنْ تَذْهَبُوْا بِهٖ وَاَخَافُ اَنْ يَّاْكُلَهُ الذِّئْبُ وَاَنْتُمْ عَنْهُ غٰفِلُوْنَ ﴿۱۳﴾ قَالُوْا لَئِنْ اَكَلَهُ الذِّئْبُ وَنَحْنُ عُصْبَةٌ اِنَّآ اِذًا لَّخٰسِرُوْنَ ﴿۱۴﴾ فَلَمَّا ذَهَبُوْا بِهٖ

وَاَجْمَعُوْٓا اَنْ يَّجْعَلُوْهُ فِيْ غَيٰبَتِ الْجُبِّ ۚ وَاَوْحَيْنَآ اِلَيْهِ لَتُنَبِّئَنَّهُمْ
بِاَمْرِهِمْ هٰذَا وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُوْنَ ﴿۱۵﴾ وَجَآءُوْٓ اَبَاهُمْ عِشَآءً يَّبْكُوْنَ ﴿۱۶﴾
قَالُوْا يٰٓاَبَانَآ اِنَّا ذَهَبْنَا نَسْتَبِقُ وَتَرَكْنَا يُوْسُفَ عِنْدَ مَتَاعِنَا فَاَكَلَهُ الذِّئْبُ
ۚ وَمَآ اَنْتَ بِمُؤْمِنٍ لَّنَا وَلَوْ كُنَّا صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿۱۷﴾ وَجَآءُوْ عَلٰى قَمِيْصِهٖ
بِدَمٍ كَذِبٍ ؕ قَالَ بَلْ سَوَّلَتْ لَكُمْ اَنْفُسُكُمْ اَمْرًا ؕ فَصَبْرٌ جَمِيْلٌ ؕ
وَاللّٰهُ الْمُسْتَعَانُ عَلٰى مَا تَصِفُوْنَ ﴿۱۸﴾ وَجَآءَتْ سَيَّارَةٌ فَاَرْسَلُوْا
وَارِدَهُمْ فَاَدْلٰى دَلْوَهٗ ؕ قَالَ يٰبُشْرٰى هٰذَا غُلٰمٌ ؕ وَاَسَرُّوْهُ بِضَاعَةً ؕ
وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌۢ بِمَا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۱۹﴾ وَشَرَوْهُ بِثَمَنٍۢ بَخْسٍ دَرَاهِمَ مَعْدُوْدَةٍ
ۚ وَكَانُوْا فِيْهِ مِنَ الزّٰهِدِيْنَ ﴿۲۰﴾ ع

Surely, in (the story of) Yūsuf and his brothers, there are signs for those who ask [7] **when they said, "Yūsuf and his brother are dearer to our father than we are while we are a powerful group (for him). Surely, our father is in clear error.** [8] **Kill Yūsuf or throw him in some land , so that your father's face may be your's alone, and after that you may become a righteous people."** [9]

One of them said, "Do not kill Yūsuf, rather, cast him into the bottom of a pit, so that some wayfarer picks him up, if you are going to do something at all." [10]

They said, "Our father, why is it that you do not trust us with Yūsuf while indeed, we are his well-wishers. [11] **Send him with us tomorrow, that he may eat and play, and of course, we are his guards."** [12]

He said, "It makes me sad that you should take him away and I fear lest a wolf should devour him while you are heedless of him." [13]

They said, 'If the wolf eats him while we are a strong group, we are then losers indeed." [14]

So, when they went with him and were determined to put him in the bottom of a pit (which they did). And We revealed to him, "You will (one day) tell them of this

deed of theirs while they will not recognize (you)." [15]

And they came weeping to their father at nightfall. [16] **They said, "Father, we went running races and left Yūsuf with our belongings and the wolf ate him up. And you will never believe us, even though we are telling the truth."** [17]

And they came with fake blood on his shirt. He said, "Rather, your inner desires have seduced you to something. So, patience is best. And it is Allah whose help is sought against what you describe." [18]

And there came some wayfarers and sent one of them to go for water. So, he let down his bucket. He said, "What a good news! Here is a boy." And they kept him hidden as merchandise, while Allah was aware of what they were doing. [19] **And they sold him for a paltry price, for a few silver-coins, and they were disinterested in him.** [20]

Commentary

In the first of the fourteen verses cited above (7), a notice of warning has been served to the effect that the story of Yūsuf, peace be on him, should not be taken as a common story - because, in it, there are great signs of the perfect power of Allah Taʿālā, and His instructions, both for those who have asked and for those who would seek guidance through it.

The statement made here could be explained by saying that the signs referred to here are for the Jews who had put the Holy Prophet ﷺ to test by asking him to relate this story to them. When, according to a narration, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was in Makkah al-Muʿaẓẓamah, the news about him reached Madīnah. The Jews living there sent a group of their men to Makkah to make investigations and test his claim to prophethood. Therefore, the question they asked of him was put in a somewhat vague manner, that is, 'if you are a true prophet of Allah, tell us about the prophet one of whose sons was taken from Syria to Egypt, an event which had caused his father to become blind due to constant weeping during his absence.

The Jews had chosen to ask about this event because it was not widely known, nor did anyone in Makkah was aware of it. That was a time when there was no member of the people of Book living in Makkah, one

from whom some part of this story as appearing in the Torah and Injil could be ascertained. So, it was following this very question that the entire Sūrah Yūsuf was revealed, a Sūrah which relates the whole story of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb and Yūsuf علیهما السلام - and does it in such details as do not appear even in Torah and Injīl. Therefore, when the Holy Prophet ﷺ described it, it was an open miracle shown at his blessed hands.

Alternately, this verse could also mean that this event in itself - aside from the question asked by the Jews - was full of great signs of the perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā and that, in it, there were major elements of Divine guidance, and instructions and injunctions. One could imagine the destiny of a child who was thrown in a pit when the power of Allah took over, carried him from one stage to the other guarding him all along, from his childhood to his youth. Then, Allah Ta'ālā has blessed him with a divine colour as He would do with His special servants for he stood steadfast as His servant against trials which would make obedience difficult. It is all the more difficult when one is young and challenged by opportunities. But, here is he, armed with the fear of Allah. He holds his ground, controls his self from desiring the undesirable and walks out clean from the stranglehold of temptation. Then, the story tells us how Allah rewards a person who takes to righteousness and fear of Allah as his conscious and determined way of life, how He makes him rise higher than his adversaries in power and recognition, and how they stand subdued before him finally. These are lessons and truths, all pointing to the great signs of the Divine power which can be realized by anyone who would care to look and find out. (Qurṭubī & Maẓharī)

This verse mentions the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. The reference is to the twelve sons of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, including Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. Every son from among them had their children. Their families prospered. Since the title by which Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام was known was Isrā'īl, therefore, all these twelve families were identified as Banī Isrā'īl (the children of Isrā'īl).

Out of these twelve sons, the eldest ten were from the first blessed wife of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, Sayyidah Layya, daughter of Layyān. After her death, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام married her sister, Rāḥīl * (Rachel). She became the mother of his two sons, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام and

*. See editorial note on page 156.

Benyāmin (Benjamin). Therefore, Benyāmin was the only real brother of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. The rest of the ten were his half-brothers from the father's side. Rāḥīl, the mother of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, had died during his childhood at the time of the birth of Benyāmin. (Qurṭubī)

From the second verse (8), begins the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام which tells that the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام saw that their father, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام loved Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام unusually more than them who were older than him. Therefore, this made them envy him. And it is also possible that they had somehow found out about the dream of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام which may have led them to become uncomfortable at the prospect of his coming rise in status, and which may have made them envious of him. They talked about it among themselves: We see that our father loves Yūsuf and his brother Benyāmin much more than us, although we are ten of us and older than them. We have the ability and group strength to manage the affairs of the family while they both are small children who cannot do much. Our father should have noticed this and we are the ones he should have been loving more. But, what he is doing is open injustice. Therefore, you should either kill Yūsuf, or throw him away into some far out spot of land from where he could not come back.

In this verse, these brothers have referred to themselves as: عُصْبَةٌ (*'uṣbah*). This word is used in the Arabic for a group from five to ten. As for their remark about their father: إِنَّ أَبَانَا لَفِي ضَلَٰلٍ مُّبِينٍ (Surely, our father is in clear error), the word: ضَلَال (*ḍalāl*) appearing here lexically means the error of straying. But, at this place, *ḍalāl* or error does not mean religious error. If so, such a connotation would have made all of them Kāfirs (disbelievers) - because, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام is an exalted prophet of Allah Ta'ālā and such a thought in his case is an absolute Kufr.

And about the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, it has been mentioned in the Qur'ān itself that they, later on, admitted their crime and requested their father to pray for their forgiveness which he accepted to do. This makes it obvious that their mistake was forgiven. Now, this can become possible only when all of them are believers - otherwise, the prayer for the forgiveness of a disbeliever is not permissible. This is the reason why there is no difference of opinion about their being believers, although 'Ulamā' do differ about these brothers being prophets. This tells

us that the word: ضَلَال (*ḍalāl*: error) has been uttered at this place in the sense that he does not treat brothers equally in the matter of their rights.

The third verse (9) describes how the brothers exchanged opinions among themselves. Some suggested that Yūsuf be killed. Others opted for throwing him into a desolate pit so that the thorn in their side could be removed and they could thus become the sole recepients of their father's attention. As for the sin they would be earning for themselves by killing or throwing him in a pit, that was something which could be taken care of later when they could repent for what they did and thus become righteous. This is the meaning of the sentence: وَتَكُونُوا مِنۢ بَعْدِهِۦ قَوْمًا صَٰلِحِينَ (and after that you may become a righteous people) according to some reports. And the verse could also be taken to mean that things will come out right for them after the killing of Yūsuf because that focus of the father's attention on Yūsuf will not be there anymore, or that they would, once they have apologized to their father after the killing of Yūsuf, become normal as they were.

This proves that these brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام were not prophets because, in this case, they had committed many major sins, such as, the intention to kill someone innocent, disobedience to their father and causing pain to him, contravention of pledge, conspiracy, and things like that. Such sins, according to the Muslim consensus, cannot be committed by the noble prophets, may peace be upon them all, even before they are ordained to be one.

Mentioned in the fourth verse (10) is that, hearing this whole conversation, one of these brothers advised that Yūsuf should not be killed. If something has to be done, let him be thrown into some pit of a well where he could remain alive so that when wayfarers stop at this well, they would take him out and away. Thus, it would serve their purpose while they would not have to take the trouble of traveling with him to some far out place. Some caravan passing this way would itself do this for them by taking him away to some distant destination.

The giver of this advice was their eldest brother, Yahūdā (Judah). Some narrations report that Ruebel (Rueben) was the eldest and it was he who gave this advice. And this is the same person mentioned later,

that is, he was the one who, when Benyāmin, the younger brother of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was detained in Egypt, came forward and said: How am I going to face my father when I go to him without him with me, therefore, I am not going back to Can'aan.

The expression used in this verse is: غَيَابَةِ الْجُبِّ (*ghayābatil-jubb*: bottom of a pit). Literally, *ghayābah* means everything which hides something in or makes it disappear. Therefore, a grave is also called *ghayābah*. And *jubb* refers to a well without raised sidings.

Another word: يَلْتَقِطْهُ (*yaltaqiṭhu*) appearing in the next sentence: يَلْتَقِطْهُ بَعْضُ السَّيَّارَةِ (so that some wayfarer picks him up) needs explanation. This word: اِلْتِقَاط (*iltiqāṭ*) is a derivation from: لُقطه (*luqṭah*). The word: لُقطه (*luqṭah*) refers to something left or dropped which is found by someone without having the desire to have it. If it is inert, it is called *luqṭah*, and if it is live, it is identified as *laqīṭ* (لَقِيط) in the terminology of Muslim jurists. A human being will be called a *laqīṭ* when he or she is a child, not rational and pubert. It is from this word that Al-Qurṭubī proves that, when Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was thrown in the pit of a well, he was a non-pubert child. In addition to that, the saying of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام that 'I fear lest a wolf should devour him (13)' also indicates his being a child - because, the likelihood of being eaten up by a wolf can only be imagined in the case of a child. As reported by Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Abī Shaiybah, the age of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was seven years at that time.

Some rules about the disposal of something owned by an unknown person (*luqṭah*)

At this place, Imām Al-Qurṭubī has given details of Islamic legal injunctions relating to '*luqṭah*' and '*laqīṭ*' for which this is not the appropriate occasion. However, it is necessary to understand a matter of principle operative in this connection. Islam has a system of its own in which the protection of the life and property of common people, the upkeep and cleanliness of walkways and streets, and similar other civic duties, have not been left in the sole charge of the departments of the government. Instead of that, it has made everyone obligated to the duty of keeping them safe and clean. The Ḥadīth has sternly warned those who make things difficult for passersby by crowding or lingering or depositing or throwing their belongings on public walkways and streets. It says: 'The Jihād of a

person who blocks or clogs the passageway of Muslims is not acceptable.' Similarly, there is the instance of thorns or nails or broken glass or rocks and things like that which may be lying on walkways and which pose a danger of hurting others. Islam has not made their removal from public thoroughfare the sole responsibility of a city council or municipal board. Instead of that, it has made every believing Muslim responsible for it. Of course, it does that in a mode of persuasion and great reward and *thawāb* has been promised for those who do so.

If, on this principle, the property lost by a person is found by someone, his Islamic legal responsibility does not remain simply limited to not stealing it - it goes much beyond that. In fact, it also becomes his responsibility that he must pick it up as an article of trust, keep it safe, make an announcement, look for the owner and, when he finds him and his description of the lost property before him makes him sure that the lost property does belong to him, then, he should give it to him. And when, despite his announcement and search, the owner remains untraced and, given the general valuation and status of the lost property, one becomes convinced that its owner is not going to look for it anymore, then, one has two choices. If he himself is poor, he may use it personally; if not, he should give it in charity to those poor and needy. However, in both these situations, the lost property thus used shall be taken as *ṣadaqah* (charity) from the owner. The *thawāb* for it shall reach the owner - as if, it was deposited in his name in the Treasury of the Heavens.

These are golden principles of public service and social self-help. The responsibility of putting them in regular practice has been placed on every individual of an Islamic society. Only if Muslims would understand their religion and start acting in accordance with it, they will be noticed by the whole world with surprise as to how do they accomplish things so easily and so effectively, things which big departments of governments fail to accomplish at the cost of millions and billions.

Appearing in the fifth (111) and sixth (112) verse is the request of these brothers before their father in which they wondered why he would not trust them with Yūsuf, although they wished him fully well. So, they pleaded, he should send him along with them to enjoy himself freely by eating and drinking and playing with them and that they all shall be there to take care of him.

The tone of the very request made by the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام indicates that they had already made such a request earlier too which was not accepted by their father. Therefore, in the present request, they seem to have tried to assure their father with added effort and insistence.

Permissibility of a trip for pleasure

In this verse, the permission sought from Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام is to go for an outing and have the freedom to enjoy eating and playing together. This was something Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام did not disallow at all. He only showed his reluctance in sending Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام with them, which will appear in the next verse. From here we find out that going out to enjoy and play is allowed under permissible limits. Authentic Aḥādīth too seem to indicate its justification. But, the condition is that in this activity of fun and games, there should be no transgression of the limits set by the Sharī'ah, nor should it be mixed up with any act not permissible there. (Qurṭubī & others)

When the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام requested their father that he should send Yūsuf with them on a recreational outing, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام told them that he did not favour sending him out for two reasons: (1) He remains uncomfortable without him in sight and (2) he apprehends that, in the wilderness out there, it might so happen that they become neglectful at some time and a wolf might eat him up.

The apprehension of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام may have been caused either due to the abundance of wolves in Can'aan, or because he had seen in a dream that he is standing on top of a hill and Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام is there on the slope downhill. All of a sudden ten wolves surround him and try to attack him. But, one of the wolves came forward to rescue him from the rest. Once released, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام took refuge inside the terrain.

The interpretation of that dream manifested later when it turned out that the ten wolves were these ten brothers and the wolf which defended Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام and saved him from being killed was his elder brother, Yahūdā (Judah). And the depth of the pit was the interpretation of his hiding under the land.

In a narration from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, it has been re-

ported that Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, because of this dream, felt the danger of an unfortunate situation coming at the hands of these brothers. Thus, in fact, they were the ones he had alluded to as wolves - but, in consideration of his wisdom, he did not lay the truth bare. (Qurṭubī)

After hearing what Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام said, those brothers countered it by saying that his apprehension was strange in view of the presence of a strong group of the ten of them to protect Yūsuf. If a wolf could be expected to eat up Yūsuf despite their being there to guard him, it would render their very presence around him totally senseless. If so, they could not be taken as good for anything.

Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, acting with the elegance of a great prophet he was, did not say it plainly before his children that it was they about whom he feared a foul play because, firstly it would have been a painful statement to make against all of them and, secondly, there was the danger that such a statement from the father would have increased the enmity of the brothers to higher proportions - that is, if they somehow abandoned their idea of killing him now, they might have done so at some later occasion under some other excuse. For this reason, he allowed them to go. But, he did make sure that the brothers give him a solemn pledge that they would see that no harm comes to Yūsuf. As added precaution, he entrusted him with his elder brother Ruebel (Rueben) or Yahūdā (Judah) so that they specially take care of his needs there and see that he returns soon and safe. The brothers lifted Yūsuf up on their shoulders, and kept doing so one by one. Sayyidnā Ya'qūb followed them upto a certain distance to bid them farewell.

When these people, as described by Al-Qurṭubī following historical narrations, disappeared from the sight of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, the brother on whose shoulders Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was perched threw him down on the ground. He started walking by himself. But, being too small, he could not keep pace with them and tried to seek help from another brother. He remained cold. So did every brother he went to for help. They told him that he better call for help those eleven stars, the Sun and the Moon he had seen prostrating to him - they should help him.

From here, Al-Qurṭubī concludes that the brothers had somehow

found out about the dream of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ. That dream became the cause of their extreme hostility.

Finally, Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ appealed to Yahūdā as his elder brother telling him about his plight. He was weak and small and needed protection, at least for the sake of their old father to whom they had given the pledge to help him. Yahūdā was moved and he told him that until he was alive, he would not let these brothers hurt him.

Thus, when Allah Ta'ālā put mercy in the heart of Yahūdā and the ability to do what was right, he told the other brothers of his that killing someone sinless was an extremely grave sin, therefore, they should fear Allah and take the innocent child back to his father. However, to make things easy on them, they could take a pledge from him that he would not complain to him in any way about their behaviour.

The brothers told Yahūdā: We know what you mean. You wish to rise higher than us in the sight of our father. So, you better listen to us. If you do anything to resist our intention, we shall kill you too. When Yahūdā realized that he alone could do nothing against his nine brothers, he told them: Well, if you have decided to get rid of this child, then, listen to me carefully. There is an old well nearby with a lot of wild growth in it and now a home for many lethal crawlers. Put him in that well. If a snake or scorpion bites and kills him there, you shall have what you are looking for. Thus, you shall remain free of the blame of shedding his blood by your own hands. And, in case, he still remains alive, then, may be there comes a caravan this way, lowers its bucket to draw water from it and finds him instead. It is likely that they would take him away with them to some other country in which case too you would have achieved your objective.

To this, all brothers agreed - as stated in the ninth of the present verses (15) cited above in the following words:

فَلَمَّا ذَهَبُوا بِهٖ وَاَجْمَعُوْآ اَنْ يَّجْعَلُوْهُ فِىْ غَيٰبَتِ الْجُبِّ وَاَوْحَيْنَآ اِلَيْهِ لَتُنَبِّئَنَّهُمْ بِاَمْرِهِمْ هٰذَا وَهُمْ لَايَشْعُرُوْنَ

'So, when they went with him and were determined to put him in the bottom of a pit (which they did). And We revealed to him (Yūsuf), 'You will (one day) tell them of this deed of theirs while they will not recognize (you).'

Here, the word: وَأَوْحَيْنَا (And We revealed) is the principal clause of the preceding conditional clause: فَلَمَّا ذَهَبُوْا (when they went). The letter: واؤ (and) at this place in the former is *zā'idah* i.e. has no meaning (Qurṭubī). The sense is: When the brothers did finally decide to throw Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام into the pit of the well, Allah Ta'ālā revealed to Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام words of comfort for him in which he has been given the glad tidings that some time in the future he will meet his brothers and that it will be a time when he would be free of any need of help from these brothers, rather, would have an upperhand over them. And by virtue of these changed circumstances, he would be in a position to take account of their unjust treatment meted out to their younger brother while they themselves would be unaware of the whole matter.

Imām Al-Qurṭubī says that there could be two possible situations in this connection: (1) That the revelation came to him after he was thrown in the pit of the well and that it was to give him comfort in that state and to give him the good news that he would be delivered soon from this ordeal. (2) That Allah Ta'ālā had, much before he was thrown into the pit of the well, oriented Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام with conditions and events he would face through a revelation in which he was also told that he would come out of this death-trap safely and that particular conditions will unravel when he would have the opportunity to admonish these brothers who would not even recognize him at that time as their own brother, Yūsuf.

According to Tafsīr Maẓharī, this revelation which came to him during the time of his childhood was not the commonly recognized *waḥy* or revelation sent to prophets - because, that is conferred on them at the age of forty. In fact, this was a revelation similar to that which was sent to the mother of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام. The usual channel of revelation as received by prophets started when Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had reached Egypt and attained maturity - as stated in the Qur'ān: وَلَمَّا بَلَغَ اَشُدَّهٗ اٰتَيْنٰهُ حُكْمًا وَّعِلْمًا (And when he reached at the prime of his age, We gave him wisdom and knowledge - 22). And Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Abī Ḥātim and others have taken this revelation to be nothing but prophetic, though in an exceptional way, as was the case of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام who was invested with prophethood during his childhood. (Maẓharī)

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه has said: 'After he had reached

Egypt, Allah Ta'ālā had forbidden Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام through a revelation that he should not report his circumstances back to his home. (Qurṭubī) This was the reason why a prophet of Allah like Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام did not - even after having been released from the prison and later having the reins of the government of Egypt in his hands - make an effort to find a way through which he could have provided relief to his old and afflicted father by sending to him a message that he was safe and set.

Who knows or could know the wisdom of Allah *jalla thana'uh* hidden behind this arrangement? Perhaps, of the many considerations, it may also be His will that Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام be sounded out that such boundless love for someone other than Allah was not ideally favour-worthy - and that by making those brothers come to Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام in need, the purpose may be to mildly censure him too for his conduct.

At this point, Imām Al-Qurṭubī and other commentators have described the event of the lowering of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام into the pit of the well. When his brothers started doing that, he clung to the outer edge of the well. They took his shirt out and tied his hands with it. At that time, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام pleaded for mercy from his brothers once again. But, once again, he got the same answer: Call those eleven stars who prostrate to you, let them help you. Then, they put him in a bucket and lowered him down into the well. When he was down as far as half the depth of the well, they cut off the rope releasing the bucket for a free fall. But, Allah being the protector of His prophet, saved him when he remained unhurt as he fell into the water. There was a protruding rock close to him. Safe and sound, he sat on it. According to some narrations, a command was given to Sayyidnā Jibra'īl عليه السلام who put him on the rock.

Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام remained in that well for three days. Hiding away from others, his brother, Yahūdā, brought food and water for him every day and lowered it down to him through a bucket.

As in verse 16: وَجَآءُوٓ أَبَاهُمْ عِشَآءً يَّبْكُوْنَ : They came weeping to their father at nightfall. Hearing the sound of their crying, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام came out and asked: What has happened? Was the flock of your goats attacked by someone? And where is Yūsuf? The brothers, then, said:

يَٰٓأَبَانَآ إِنَّا ذَهَبۡنَا نَسۡتَبِقُ وَتَرَكۡنَا يُوسُفَ عِندَ مَتَٰعِنَا فَأَكَلَهُ ٱلذِّئۡبُۖ وَمَآ أَنتَ بِمُؤۡمِنٖ لَّنَا وَلَوۡ كُنَّا صَٰدِقِينَ

Father, we went running races and left Yūsuf with our belongings and the wolf ate him up. And you will never believe us, even though we are telling the truth.

Some rules about racing

In Aḥkām al-Qur'ān, Ibn al-'Arabī has said: Running races against each other is legitimate in the Sharī'ah. It is a good habit which comes handy in Jihād. Therefore, the Holy Prophet ﷺ, as proved by authentic Aḥādīth, has personally participated in such running of races. Also proved is making horses run against each other (not to be confused with institutionalized horse-racing with bets, as clarified later). Out of the noble Companions, Sayyidnā Salamah ibn al-Akwa' رضي الله عنه ran a one-on-one race against a person and won it.

That the racing of horses as such is permissible stands proved from the verse under reference and from Ḥadīth reports cited above. In addition to the racing of horses, mutual competition in racing and archery and in other fields is also permissible, and equally permissible is the giving of awards from a third party to the winner in this mutual competition. But, fixing an amount of money in a bilateral agreement that the loser will pay it to the winner is gambling or Qimār which has been declared Ḥarām or unlawful by the Holy Qur'ān. Today, none of the prevailing forms of horse racing is free from gambling and Qimār. Therefore, all of them are Ḥarām, impermissible and unlawful.

Mentioned in the previous verses was that the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, after talking to each other back and forth, finally put him down in a desolate well and returned to their father telling him that he has been eaten up by a wolf. From verse 18, the story onwards has been taken up in the following words: وَجَآءُو عَلَىٰ قَمِيصِهِۦ بِدَمٖ كَذِبٖ (And they came with fake blood on his shirt) that is, the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام came back with his shirt they had smeared in fake blood so that they could make their father believe that he has been eaten up by a wolf.

But, Allah Ta'ālā had His way of exposing their lie. He made them neglect something else they should have done besides smearing the shirt with fake blood. Had they also torn the shirt, it would proved his being

eaten up by a wolf. Here they were coming with an intact shirt smeared with the blood of a kid goat and trying to deceive their father. After seeing this shirt totally unscratched, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام said: My sons, certainly wise was this wolf who ate Yūsuf in a way that his shirt was not torn from anywhere.

Thus, their deceit was exposed before Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام and he said:

بَلْ سَوَّلَتْ لَكُمْ اَنْفُسُكُمْ اَمْرًا فَصَبْرٌ جَمِيلٌ وَاللّٰهُ الْمُسْتَعَانُ عَلٰى مَاتَصِفُوْنَ

> Rather, your inner desires have seduced you to something. So, patience is best. And it is Allah whose help is sought against what you describe.

Two Rulings:

1. Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام has used the intact shirt as evidence to establish that the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام were lying. This tells us that a Qāḍī or judge should also keep an eye on circumstancial evidence alongwith the claims and arguments of the parties concerned (Qurṭubī).

Al-Māwardī has said: The legendary shirt of Yūsuf is a wonder of the world in its own way. Three great events of prophetic annals are connected with his shirt: (I) The first event relates to the smearing of the shirt with fake blood, cheating a father and the evidence of the shirt which established the lie. (II) The second event relates to Zulaikhā in which it is the shirt of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام which appears as the conclusive evidence. (III) The third event relates to the return of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb's eyesight in which it is the shirt of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام which stands out as the cause of that miracle.

2. Some 'Ulamā have said that the comment: بَلْ سَوَّلَتْ لَكُمْ اَنْفُسُكُمْ اَمْرًا (Rather, your inner desires have seduced you to something - 18) made at this time before his sons was also made at the time when Benyāmin, the real brother of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, was detained in Egypt having been charged with theft. When his brothers reported this incident to Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, he said: بَلْ سَوَّلَتْ لَكُمْ اَنْفُسُكُمْ (Rather, your inner desires have seduced you to something - 83). Worth pondering here is that Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام had made both these comments as based on his opinion. The first of them turned out to be true; the other was not - because, in this,

the brothers were not to be blamed. This tells us that a wrong personal opinion is possible even from prophets initially - though, later on, they are not left to stand by that wrong opinion by means of Divine revelation.

According to Al-Qurṭubī, it proves that an error of opinion can be committed by the highest of the high. Therefore, every man or woman of opinion should take his or her opinion as suspect, and should not become so rigid about it as not to be ready to listen or entertain what others have to say.

There is No Chance or Accident in Divine Arrangements

It is said in verse 19: 'وَجَآءَتْ سَيَّارَةٌ فَأَرْسَلُوا وَارِدَهُمْ فَأَدْلَىٰ دَلْوَهُ' (And there came some wayfarers and sent one of them to go for water. So, he let down his bucket). The word: سَيَّارَةٌ (*sayyāra*) means wayfarers or a caravan. Wārid (وارد) is a person who moves ahead of the caravan as its vanguard. Such a person is responsible for taking care of the needs of the caravan, water being one of them. Idlā' (اِدْلاء) means to lower the bucket into the well to draw water. The sense is that a caravan passed by this part of land by chance. According to Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī, this caravan was coming from Syria on its way to Egypt. Having lost its bearing, it strayed into this desolate place and sent some of his men to bring water from the well.

That the Syrian caravan lost its regular route, reached that exact spot and decided to send their water-carrier to that deserted well is a sequence of events which is referred to by people as accidental. But, the knower of the secret of the creation knows that all these events are chains of a system which is breathtakingly coordinated and formidable. It is but the Creator of Yūsuf, and his Protector, who moves the caravan away from its set route and brings it here and sends its men to this deserted well. This is a mirror of all other states and events which common people see as accidental happenings - and philosophers as contingents - all of which is based on an unawareness of how the system of the universe really works. Otherwise, in creation, there is no chance or accident (which Einstein, though no formal believer, did concede: 'God does not play dice!'). However, the most true Creator of the universe is known by the majesty of His unique state of being. He is, as the Qur'ān declares:

فَعَّالٌ لِّمَا يُرِيدُ

Doer of what He intends - 85:16

His wisdom works in unimaginable ways when He creates conditions and circumstances which do not seem to synchronize with the obvious sequence of events. When this happens, one fails to comprehend the reality, and takes what he does not understand as something accidental.

However, their man whose name has been identified as Mālik ibn Du'bar reached that well, lowered his bucket which Yūsuf saw as Divine help coming down. He took hold of the rope. Up it came with no water but with the shining face of someone whose instant mystique of beauty and signs of forthcoming spiritual excellence were no less impressive than the real greatness he was going to achieve in the future. Intrigued, surprised and flushed with delight, the man looked at this young, handsome and promising child coming suddenly face to face before him emerging from the depths of a well and making him exclaim: يٰبُشْرٰى هٰذَا غُلٰمٌ (What a good news! This is a boy). In the Ḥadīth concerning the Night of Mi'rāj (the Ascent to the Heavens) appearing in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said: 'When I met Yūsuf عليه السلام, I saw that Allah Ta'ālā has blessed him with half of the beauty of the whole world, while the other half has been spread over the rest of it.'

Following immediately after is the statement: وَاَسَرُّوْهُ بِضَاعَةً (And they kept him hidden as merchandise). It means that Mālik ibn Du'bar, when he first saw this boy, did exclaim taken by surprise. But, an afterthought over the matter made him decide not to let this be known. Instead, he thought, he would keep him hidden from others so that he could sell him for good money later. He did not want the caravan to know about it for the whole caravan would then be claiming a share in the money so acquired.

However, the expression could also mean that the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, by concealing the truth of the matter, themselves made him into merchandise. This is as it appears in some narrations where it is said that Yahūdā used to carry food to Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام every day while he was in the well. On the third day, when he did not find him there, he returned to his brothers and told them about it. Together, they

went there, made investigations, and found him with the people of the caravan. They told them: This boy is our slave. He has escaped and you have done something bad by detaining him in your possession. Mālik ibn Du'bar and his companions were scared lest they be taken as thieves. Therefore, they started talking about a deal to purchase him from the brothers.

Thus, the verse would come to mean that the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام themselves made him into merchandise and sold him out. After that it was said: وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ ۢ بِمَا يَعْمَلُوْنَ (while Allah was aware of what they were doing). The sense is that Allah Ta'ālā, in His perfect knowledge, was fully aware of what the legendary brothers of Yūsuf would do, and also that which will be done by the people of the caravan who would buy him. Allah Ta'ālā had all power to undo the designs of both, but it was under His own wise considerations that He let these designs carry on.

In this sentence, according to Ibn Kathīr, there is an element of guidance for the Holy Prophet ﷺ as well. It tells him that nothing his people are doing to him, or will do in the future, is outside the scope of Allah's knowledge and power. He could, if He so willed, change everything and everyone outright. But, wisdom demanded that they be allowed to show their power at this time. Finally, by making him overcome them, it will be truth itself seen triumphant over them - as was done in the case of Yūsuf عليه السلام.

Verse 20 begins with the words: وَشَرَوْهُ بِثَمَنٍ ۢ بَخْسٍ دَرَاهِمَ مَعْدُوْدَةٍ (And they sold him for a paltry price, for a few silver-coins, and they were disinterested in him). In Arabic, the word: شرا (*shira'*) is used for buying and selling both. The probability of both meanings exists here. If the pronoun is reverted back to the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, it will mean selling - and if applied to the people of the caravan, it would mean buying. Thus, the sense would be: 'the brothers of Yūsuf sold him - or, the people of the caravan bought him - for a paltry price, that is, for a counted few *dirhams* in return.'

Al-Qurṭubī says: The Arab traders used to transact deals involving big amounts by weight while, for amounts not more than forty, they would go by count. Therefore, the word: مَعْدُوْدَة (*ma'dūdah*: few) used with:

دَرَاهِم (*darāhim*: plural of *dirham*: silver-coins) tells us that the count of *dirhams* was less than forty. Ibn Kathīr, citing the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ, has written that the deal was closed at twenty *dirhams* which the ten brothers had divided among themselves at the rate of two *dirhams* per person. As for the exact amount of *dirhams,* reported there are other narrations as well which put them as twenty two and forty. (Ibn Kathīr)

In the last sentence of the verse: وَكَانُوا فِيهِ مِنَ الزَّاهِدِينَ (and they were disinterested in him), the word: الزاهدين (*az-zāhidīn*) is the plural of *zāhid* which is a derivation from *zuhd.* Literally, *zuhd* means indifference, disinterestedness. In usage, the lack of interest in and the avoidance of wealth and property in worldly life is referred to as *zuhd.* The meaning of the verse is that the brothers of Yūsuf were really not interested in any financial gain for themselves in this matter. Their real purpose was to separate Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ from their father. Therefore, they struck a deal for a very few *dirhams.*

Verses 21 -23

وَقَالَ الَّذِى اشْتَرٰىهُ مِنْ مِّصْرَ لِامْرَاَتِهٖٓ اَكْرِمِىْ مَثْوٰىهُ عَسٰٓى اَنْ يَّنْفَعَنَآ اَوْ نَتَّخِذَهٗ وَلَدًا ؕ وَكَذٰلِكَ مَكَّنَّا لِيُوْسُفَ فِى الْاَرْضِ ۡ وَلِنُعَلِّمَهٗ مِنْ تَاْوِيْلِ الْاَحَادِيْثِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ غَالِبٌ عَلٰٓى اَمْرِهٖ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۲۱﴾ وَلَمَّا بَلَغَ اَشُدَّهٗٓ اٰتَيْنٰهُ حُكْمًا وَّعِلْمًا ؕ وَكَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِى الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ﴿۲۲﴾ وَرَاوَدَتْهُ الَّتِىْ هُوَ فِىْ بَيْتِهَا عَنْ نَّفْسِهٖ وَغَلَّقَتِ الْاَبْوَابَ وَقَالَتْ هَيْتَ لَكَ ؕ قَالَ مَعَاذَ اللّٰهِ اِنَّهٗ رَبِّىْٓ اَحْسَنَ مَثْوَاىَ ؕ اِنَّهٗ لَا يُفْلِحُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ ﴿۲۳﴾

And the one who bought him from Egypt said to his wife, "Make his stay graceful. He may be useful for us. Or, we may adopt him as a son." And thus We established Yūsuf in the land, so that We should teach him the interpretation of events. And Allah is powerful in (enforcing) His command, but most of the people do not know. [21]

And when he reached the prime of his age, We gave him wisdom and knowledge, and this is how We reward those good in deeds. [22]

And she, in whose house he was, seduced him away from his (resisting) self and bolted the doors, and said, "come on!" He said, "May Allah save me. Surely, he is my master. He has given me a good lodging. Surely, the wrongdoers do not prosper." [23]

Commentary

Described in the previous verses was an early account of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ as to how the people from the caravan took him out of the well, and how his brothers made him out to be their escaped slave and traded him for a few *dirhams*. First of all, they did not know the value and station of their great brother. Secondly, their real purpose was not to make money by selling him - they wanted to remove him away from his father. Therefore, they did not stop at simply selling him because they felt the danger that the caravan may somehow leave him behind as a result of which he may somehow reach their father and tell him all about their conspiracy. So, according to a report from Tafsīr authority, Mujāhid, these people waited for the caravan to leave with him for Egypt. When the caravan actually departed, they went with the caravan upto a certain distance warning them on the way that he is in the habit of running away, therefore, they should not leave him free to move around, better still, they should tie him up. Thus, the caravan, unaware of the precious 'merchandise' they were carrying with them, took him in that condition as far as Egypt. (Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr)

The part of the story as taken up onwards in the present verses shows the eloquent brevity of the Qur'ān when sections of the story which can be understood independently have not been necessarily described. For instance, the trip of the caravan through various stages enroute Egypt and the actual selling of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ there. All this has been skipped. Stated from here is:

وَقَالَ الَّذِي اشْتَرٰىهُ مِنْ مِّصْرَ لِامْرَاَتِهٖٓ اَكْرِمِيْ مَثْوٰىهُ

And the one who bought him from Egypt said to his wife, 'Make his stay graceful ...'.

According to Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī, when the caravan reached Egypt and

offered him for sale, people vied with each other with increasing bids which rose to gold, to musk and to silk equal to his weight.

But, Allah Ta'ālā had destined this human treasure to go to the most powerful authority of the time in Egypt, the 'Azīz of Miṣr. He beat all the bids and bought Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام.

As we already know from the statement of the Holy Qur'ān, all these things happening were nothing accidental. Instead, they were parts of the formidable plan put into action by the most exalted Lord Himself. That Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام will be bought in Egypt by the highest of the high in that country was certainly a call of destiny. According to Ibn Kathīr, this man who bought Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام in Egypt was what we may call the Finance Minister of Egypt. His name has been cited as Qiṭfīr, or 'Iṭfīr. The King of Egypt at that time was Ruiyyān ibn Usayd, an Amalkite (who, later on, embraced Islam at the hands of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام) and died as a Muslim during the lifetime of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام (Maẓharī). The name of the wife of the 'Azīz of Egypt who had bought him has been given as Ra'eel, or Zulaikhā. So, the 'Azīz of Miṣr, called Qiṭfīr (Potiphar), instructed his wife to provide good lodging for Yūsuf, not to treat him like common slaves and see that good arrangements are made for him.

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه said: 'Three men turned out to be the best physiognomists of the world: (1) The 'Azīz of Miṣr who discovered the inner excellence of Yūsuf عليه السلام from his outer appearance and gave those instructions to his wife; (2) the daughter of Sayyidnā Shu'ayb عليه السلام who told her father about Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام: يٰٓأَبَتِ اسْتَأْجِرْهُ إِنَّ خَيْرَ مَنِ اسْتَأْجَرْتَ الْقَوِيُّ الْأَمِينُ (O my father, retain him on wages. Surely, the best one for you to employ is the one who is strong and trustworthy - 28:26); (3) The third person is Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه who chose Sayyidnā 'Umar رضي الله عنه to be the Khalīfah after the Holy Prophet ﷺ. (Ibn Kathīr)

The next sentence of the verse is: وَكَذٰلِكَ مَكَّنَّا لِيُوسُفَ فِي الْأَرْضِ (And thus We established Yūsuf in the land ...). Given here is the good news of what would happen in the future, that is, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام who has entered the House of the Azīz of Miṣr at this time as a slave shall soon be the highest ranking man in the country of Egypt when the power of governance comes into his hands.

In the statement which follows immediately after, that is: وَلِنُعَلِّمَهٗ مِنْ تَاْوِيْلِ الْاَحَادِيْثِ (so that We should teach him the interpretation of events), if the letter واو (*wāw*) appearing at the begining of the sentence is taken as: عطف (*'aṭf* : conjunctive), a sentence will be considered as understood which will mean that 'We established Yūsuf in the land so that he brings forth peace in the world through equity and justice, works towards the economic and social betterment of the people of the country, and so that We teach him to put things right where they belong. The general sense of the later is something which is inclusive of the comprehension of Divine revelation, its implementation in practice, and the acquisition of all supportive areas of knowledge, and the correct interpretation of dreams as well.

Verse 21 ends with the statement: وَاللّٰهُ غَالِبٌ عَلٰۤى اَمْرِهٖ (And Allah is powerful in (enforcing) His command ...). In other words, it means that Allah Ta'ālā is powerful and fully in control over what He wills and when He does so will, all outward chains of causes in this world start falling in line with His will - as said the Holy Prophet ﷺ in a Ḥadīth: 'When Allah Ta'ālā intends to do something, He makes all worldly causes ready to act accordingly.' But, says the last part of the sentence: وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ that is, most of the people do not understand this reality. They have their eyes on obvious causes. These they take to be everything and keep going after them all the time. That there is the Causer of all Causes and the Holder of Absolute Power over everything is a thought they would seldom pay heed to.

In the first sentence of the second verse (22), it is said: وَلَمَّا بَلَغَ اَشُدَّهٗۤ اٰتَيْنٰهُ حُكْمًا وَّعِلْمًا (And when he reached at the prime of his age, We gave him wisdom and knowledge ...).

At what age did he reach the prime of his age? In this, commentators differ. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, Mujāhid and Qatādah رحمهم الله تعالى say that his age was thirty three years. Ḍaḥḥāk رحمه الله تعالى puts it at twenty, and Ḥasan al-Baṣrī رحمه الله تعالى at forty. However, all of them agree that the bestowing of wisdom and knowledge upon him referred to at this place means the bestowal of Nubūwwah, the station of prophethood. This also tells us that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was invested with Nubūwwah much later than his arrival in Egypt - and the Waḥy (revelation) sent to him while he was in the depth of the well was not the Waḥy(reve-

lation) technically identified with Nubūwwah. Instead of that, it was a revelation in the literal sense which can also be sent to non-prophets - as it has appeared in the case of the mother of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, and about Sayyidah Maryam.

In the second sentence of the second verse (22), it was said: وَكَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِى الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ (and this is how We reward those good in deeds). The sense is that delivering Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام from elimination and making him reach the office of power and honour was an outcome of his righteousness, fear of Allah and good deeds. This was something not restricted to his person alone. In fact, whoever acts the way he did, shall receive the blessings of Allah in the same fashion.

Moving to verse 23, the words of the text are:

وَرَاوَدَتْهُ الَّتِىْ هُوَ فِىْ بَيْتِهَا عَنْ نَّفْسِهٖ وَغَلَّقَتِ الْاَبْوَابَ وَقَالَتْ هَيْتَ لَكَ

And she, in whose house he was, seduced him away from his (resisting) self and bolted the doors, and said, 'come on!'.

From the first verse, we know that this woman was the wife of the 'Azīz of Miṣr. But, at this place, the Holy Qur'ān has elected to bypass the possibility of mentioning her by a brief expression as the wife of 'Azīz. Instead, it has chosen to use the expression: الَّتِىْ هُوَ فِىْ بَيْتِهَا (in whose house he was). The hint given here is that the efforts of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام to save himself from falling into sin were further complicated by the fact that he lived in the house of this very woman, under her protection, and as such, disapproving and discarding her verbal advance was no easy task.

The Strongest Defence Against Sin is the Seeking of Protection from Allah Himself

How was he able to do that? There was an outward cause to this. When Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام found himself surrounded from all sides, he took the ultimate recourse. So, like a prophet he was, first of all, he sought the protection of Allah. He said: قَالَ مَعَاذَ اللّٰهِ (May Allah save me!). We see that he did not place his sole trust in his determination and resolve to hold out against the invitation to sin - he sought the refuge of Allah first. And it is obvious that anyone who enjoys the protection of Allah can never be moved away from the right path by anyone. It was only after having that coverage, that he started acting as a prophet

would, with wisdom and earnest good counsel. Addressing Zulaikhā directly and personally, he advised her that she too should fear Allah and give up her intention. He said:

إِنَّهُ رَبِّيٓ أَحْسَنَ مَثْوَايَ إِنَّهُ لَا يُفْلِحُ الظّٰلِمُونَ

Surely, he is my master. He has given me a good lodging. Surely, the wrongdoers do not prosper.

As obvious, it means: Your husband, the 'Azīz of Miṣr is my master who has raised and supported me and has given me a good home to live in. He is my benefactor. How can I even think of violating his honour? This is great injustice and those who commit injustice never prosper. Implied therein was a lesson for Zulaikhā too who was told: When I know his rights on me for having been my master and caretaker for a lesser time than you, then, being his wedded wife of years, you should certainly know his rights on you much more than I do.

At this place, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام has called the 'Azīz of Miṣr his Rabb - though, it is not permissible to use this word for anyone other than Allah Ta'ālā. The reason is that words like this create either a suspicion of Shirk, or a resemblance with those who commit Shirk. Therefore, the use of such words has been prohibited in the Sharī'ah of Islam. It appears in a Ḥadīth of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: 'Let no slave call his master his Rabb and let no master call his slave his *'abd* or servant.' But, this is a unique characteristic of the Islamic Sharī'ah where, alongwith the prohibition of Shirk, everything else in which there is the least doubt that they may become the conduits of Shirk has also been prohibited. In the religious codes of past prophets, though Shirk has been strictly blocked but there was no restriction placed on the sources and inlets of Shirk. This was the reason why depiction of images was not prohibited in past religious codes. But in the Sharī'ah of Islam, being valid upto the Last Day, full attention was given to protect it from being affected by Shirk. So, the sources and mediums of Shirk, such as, image and words - which arouse suspicion of Shirk were also prohibited. However, the saying of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام : إِنَّهُ رَبِّي (Surely, he is my master), was correct in its place.

And it is also possible that the pronoun in: إِنَّهُ (*innahū*) reverts to Allah Ta'ālā which would mean that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had called

Allah his Rabb and it was He who, in the real sense, gave him good lodging, and that disobedience to Him was the greatest injustice, and that the unjust never prosper.

Some commentators, Suddīyy, Ibn Isḥāq and others have reported that during the course of this privacy, Zulaikhā started praising his looks with the purpose of softening his resistance. She said: How beautiful are your hair! Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام said: After death, these hair will be the first to part away from my body. Then, she said: How beautiful are your eyes! He said: After death, they will become water and flow down my face. Once again, she said: How beautiful is your face! Thereupon, he said: All this will be eaten up by the earth below. He was looking ahead. This was his concern for the 'Ākhirah. Allah Ta'ālā had set it upon him in the prime of his youth and that made all charms of mortal life turn into dust before him. It is true that the concern for 'Ākhirah is something which can keep every human being protected from every evil wherever he or she may be. May Allah bless us all with this concern.

Verse 24

وَلَقَدْ هَمَّتْ بِهٖ ج وَهَمَّ بِهَا لَوْلَآ اَنْ رَّاٰ بُرْهَانَ رَبِّهٖ ط كَذٰلِكَ لِنَصْرِفَ عَنْهُ السُّوْٓءَ وَالْفَحْشَآءَ ط اِنَّهٗ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُخْلَصِيْنَ ﴿٢٤﴾

And she certainly desired him. And he had desired her - had he not seen the proof from his Lord (he could have indulged). This We did to turn away from him evil and lewdness. Surely, he is among Our chosen slaves. [24]

Commentary

Mentioned in the previous verse was the great trial and test of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام in that the wife of the 'Azīz of Miṣr bolted the doors and tried to invite him to sin assembling together in that effort all circumstancial temptations to attract and to make him become indulgent. But, Almighty Allah kept this righteous young person standing steadfast in such severe trial. The details of what transpired have been given in this verse. Said here is that Zulaikhā was busy persuing her obsessive thought any way, but emerging in the heart of Sayyidnā Yūsuf too, there was some non-voluntary tilt towards her as would be the natural conse-

quence in such a situation. But, it was exactly at that time that Allah Ta'ala brought before Sayyidna Yusuf عليه السلام His argument and proof, because of which, that non-voluntary tilt, rather than increase, actually died out totally - and, beating the pursuit, he ran.

In this verse, the word: هَمّ (*hamm* : thought) has been attributed to Zulaikha and Sayyidna Yusuf عليه السلام both as in: وَلَقَدْ هَمَّتْ بِهٖ وَهَمَّ بِهَا (And she desired him. And he had desired her). And we know that the *'hamm'* or thought of Zulaikha was that of sin. This could have raised a doubt that the 'thought' of Sayyidna Yusuf عليه السلام may also have been of a similar nature - and this is, based on the consensus of the entire Muslim Ummah, contrary to the great station of a Nabiyy (prophet) and Rasul. The reason is that the majority of the Muslim Ummah holds the standard belief that the noble prophets, may peace be upon them all, are protected against all sorts of sins, minor or major. As for a major sin, it can neither be committed by them intentionally, nor is it possible through inadvertance or mistake. However, the probability that a minor sin could be committed through inadvertance or mistake does exist - but, on this too, the noble prophets, may peace be upon them all, are not allowed to remain - instead, they are warned and made to move away from it. (*Musamarah*)

Besides the fact that this question of the 'Isṃah of Anbiya' (the state of being under Divine protection with which prophets are blessed) stands settled and proved under the authority of the Qur'an and Sunnah, it is also necessary, rationally too - because, should there remain the probability of a committal of sin by the Anbiya' عليهم السلام, there remains no way one could place trust in the Din (religion) and Waḥy (revelation) brought by them, and that their very coming into the world with a Divine Book revealed to them becomes totally fruitless. Therefore, Allah Ta'ala has kept every prophet of His totally *ma'ṣum* from every sin (*ma'ṣum:* technically, sinless or infallible; literally, protected by Allah).

So, speaking generally, it stands established that the 'thought' which crossed the mind of Sayyidna Yusuf عليه السلام was not a thought to be counted in the degree of sin. For details, we should understand that the word: هَمّ (*hamm*: thought) in the Arabic language is used to convey two meanings: (1) Intend and be determined to do something; (2) a simple scruple in the heart or the appearance of a thought beyond one's control. In the first situation, it is included under sin, and is accountable. Howev-

er, should someone, after having made the intention, were to leave off this sin at his own choice just because of the fear of Allah, then, according to the Ḥadīth, Allah Ta'ālā replaces the sin and enters a good deed in his or her Book of Deeds. And in the second situation - that is, in the event there comes a simple scruple and non-voluntary thought, without any intention to put the thought into practice, for instance, a normal turn of thought towards cool water during the fasts of summer which is natural and experienced by almost everyone, though there is no intention there to go about drinking water while fasting. So, a thought like that is neither within one's control, nor is there any accountability and sin in it.

In a Ḥadīth of the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said: 'Allah Ta'ālā has forgiven the scruple and thought of sin for my Ummah - if not put into practice.' (Qurṭubī) And in the Ṣaḥīḥayn (the two Ṣaḥīḥs, that is, Al-Bukhārī and Muslim), it has been reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Hurayrah ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: 'Allah Ta'ālā says to the angels: When My servant intends to do good, write a good deed in his or her Book of Deeds just because of that intention. And when he or she has completed this deed, write down ten good deeds. And if a servant intends to do a sin, then leaves it off due to the fear of Allah, write one good deed in his or her Book of Deeds in lieu of that sin. And if he or she does fall into that sin, write it as one sin only.' (Ibn Kathīr)

Al-Qurṭubī has, in his Tafsīr, proved the use of the word: هَمّ (*'hamm'*: thought) covering both these meanings through evidences from Arab usage and poetry.

This tells us that the word: *'hamm'* appearing in this verse has been attributed to both Zulaikhā and Sayyidnā Yūsuf ؑ but there is a big difference between the *'hamm'* or thought of both. The former is included under sin while the other has the status of a non-voluntary scruple which is not included under sin. The descriptive style of the Holy Qur'ān is itself a testimony to this - because, had their *'hamm'* or thought been identical, it would have been sufficient to say it in a dual form, such as: وَلَقَدْ هَمَّا that is, the two of them desired, which was brief too. But, leaving this option aside, the *'hamm'* or thought of both was described separate from each other: هَمَّتْ بِهٖ وَهَمَّ بِهَا (And she certainly desired him. And he had

desired her). Then, added to the *'hamm'* or thought of Zulaikhā was the word of emphasis: لَقَدْ (*laqad*). With the *'hamm'* or thought of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, the emphasis of the letters: لام (*lām*) and: قد (*qad*) is not there. This tells us that, through this particular expression, the purpose is to emphasize that the *'hamm'* or thought of Zulaikhā was of some other nature while that of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, of some other.

According to a Ḥadīth in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim, when this test was faced by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, the angels submitted before Allah Ta'ālā: This sincere servant of Yours is thinking of sin, though he knows its curse fully well. Allah Ta'ālā said: You wait. If he commits this sin, write what he has done in his Book of Deeds. And if he abstains from committing it, do not record it a sin, instead, enter a good deed in his Book of Deeds - because, he has surrendered his desire only out of fear for Me (which is doing good at its best) (Qurṭubī)

To sum up, it can be said that the thought or tilt generated in the heart of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was simply at the level of a non-voluntary scruple, which is not included under sin. Then, by acting against this scruple, his rank with Allah Ta'ālā rose much higher.

At this stage, some commentators have also pointed out to another construction of the verse. According to them, the statement: لَوْلَآ اَنْ رَّاٰ بُرْهَانَ رَبِّهٖ (Had he not seen the proof from his Lord) which succeeds is really supposed to precede, in which case, the verse would mean that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام would have also desired her had he not seen the proof from his Lord - but, because he had seen the proof from his Lord, he remained safe from this *'hamm'* or thought. Thematically, this too is correct. But, some other commentators have declared this construction as contrary to the rules of the Arabic grammar. Thus, considering this aspect, the first Tafsīr is weightier as it makes the Taqwā and chastity of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام rise to much higher levels since he, despite the human instinct, managed to stay safe from sin.

As for the statement: لَوْلَآ اَنْ رَّاٰ بُرْهَانَ رَبِّهٖ (Had he not seen the proof from his Lord) at the end, its principal clause is understood and it means: Had he not seen the proof from his Lord, he would have remained indulged in that thought, but after having seen the proof from his Lord, that non-voluntary thought and scruple too was eliminated from his

heart.

The Holy Qur'ān does not clarify as to what was that *'burhān'* or proof from his Lord which appeared before him. Therefore, statements of commentators differ in this matter. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Sa'id ibn Jubayr ﷺ, Mujāhid, Muḥammad ibn Sīrīn, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī رحمهم الله تعالى and others have said that Allah Ta'ālā made the face of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb ﷺ appear miraculously before him in that private quarter showing him with his finger in his mouth and warning him. Some commentators say that it was the face of the 'Azīz of Miṣr which was presented before him. Some others have said: When Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ looked towards the ceiling, he saw the following verse of the Qur'ān written there: لَاتَقْرَبُوا الزِّنٰىٓ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ فَاحِشَةً ؕ وَسَآءَ سَبِيْلًا that is, do not go (even) near adultery because it is a grave act of immodesty and a very evil way (for human society). Some other commentators have said that Zulaikhā had an idol in her house. When she threw a curtain on this idol, Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ asked the reason for it. She said: This is my object of worship. I cannot dare commit sin before it. Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ said: My Rabb, the object of my worship certainly deserves that far more modesty be shown before Him for no curtain can stop His seeing. Finally, there are commentators who have said that the station of the prophet he was on and the knowledge of the Divine he had was itself the proof from his Lord.

After reporting all these sayings, what has been said by the Imām of Tafsīr, Ibn Jarīr, has been adjudged authoritatively as most-favoured and doubt-free. And he has said: As much as the Holy Qur'ān has to tell should be what has to be considered sufficient. In other words, Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ saw something which made the scruple in his heart go away. To determine this precisely, there could be all those probabilities mentioned by the commentators - but, none of these can be held as certain absolutely. (Ibn Kathīr)

At the end of the verse it was said: كَذٰلِكَ لِنَصْرِفَ عَنْهُ السُّوْٓءَ وَالْفَحْشَآءَ ؕ اِنَّهٗ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُخْلَصِيْنَ (This We did to turn away from him evil and lewdness). Here, the word: السوء (*as-sū'* : evil) means minor sin (Saghīrah) and: الفحشاء (*al-fahshā'*: lewdness) means major sin (Kabīrah). (Maẓharī)

Noteworthy here is that the text mentions 'turning away evil and lewdness from Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ - and not 'Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ from

evil and lewdness.' The hint implied here is that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was, because of his great station of prophethood, already removed from this sin as far as he was personally concerned, but evil and immodesty had encircled him. So Allah broke that trap apart. These words of the Holy Qur'ān are also a testimony proving that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام did not succumb to even the minor-most sin and the thought which went accross his heart was not included under sin, otherwise the relevant expression would have been: 'We saved Yūsuf from sin' - and not: 'Turn away from him evil and lewdness.'

Said in the last sentence is: إِنَّهُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُخْلَصِينَ (Surely, he is among Our chosen slaves). The word: مُخْلَصِينَ (*mukhlaṣīn*) is the plural of *mukhlaṣ* which means chosen. It means that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام is among the chosen servants of Allah who has been appointed to the mission of prophethood to work for the betterment of the creation of Allah. Such people have Allah's own security shield around them so that they would not fall a victim to any evil. The Shayṭān has himself admitted that he cannot touch the chosen servants of Allah. He said: فَبِعِزَّتِكَ لَأُغْوِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ إِلَّا عِبَادَكَ مِنْهُمُ الْمُخْلَصِينَ That is, by Your honour and power, I shall put all those humans on the wrong track, except Your servants, the ones chosen by You - 15:40.

In some readings (Qira'āt), this word has appeared as: مُخْلِصِينَ (*mukhliṣīn*) as well. Mukhliṣ means a person who obeys and worships Allah with Ikhlāṣ (for which there is no word in English. The nearest is sincerity which must be genuine, unalloyed, pure and totally honest). Ikhlāṣ means that, in this obedience to Allah and in this worship of Him, there should be no intrusion of worldly or personal desires, interests, love of recognition and office and things like that. If so, the verse would mean: Whoever is *mukhliṣ* (absolutely sincere) in his 'Amal (deed) and 'Ibādah (worship), Allah Ta'ālā will help him in remaining safe from sins.

In this verse, Allah Ta'ālā has chosen to use two words: سُوْء (*sū'*) and: فَحْشَاء (*faḥshā'*). Literally, *sū'* means evil and it refers to minor (*saghīrah*) sins. And *faḥshā'* means lewdness or immodesty and refers to major (*kabīrah*) sins. This tells us that Allah Ta'ālā kept Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام protected from both kinds of sins, *saghīrah* and *kabīrah*.

Also clarified here is that the '*hamm*' or thought attributed to Sayyid-

nā Yūsuf ﷺ in the Qur'ān was simply a '*hamm*' or thought at the level of non-voluntary scruple, which is included neither under Kabīrah sin, nor under Saghīrah - in fact, is excused.

Verses 25 - 29

وَاسْتَبَقَا الْبَابَ وَقَدَّتْ قَمِيْصَهٗ مِنْ دُبُرٍ وَّاَلْفَيَا سَيِّدَهَا لَدَا الْبَابِ ط
قَالَتْ مَا جَزَآءُ مَنْ اَرَادَ بِاَهْلِكَ سُوْٓءًا اِلَّآ اَنْ يُّسْجَنَ اَوْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ
﴿٢٥﴾ قَالَ هِيَ رَاوَدَتْنِيْ عَنْ نَّفْسِيْ وَشَهِدَ شَاهِدٌ مِّنْ اَهْلِهَا ج اِنْ كَانَ
قَمِيْصُهٗ قُدَّ مِنْ قُبُلٍ فَصَدَقَتْ وَهُوَ مِنَ الْكٰذِبِيْنَ ﴿٢٦﴾ وَاِنْ كَانَ
قَمِيْصُهٗ قُدَّ مِنْ دُبُرٍ فَكَذَبَتْ وَهُوَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿٢٧﴾ فَلَمَّا رَاٰ قَمِيْصَهٗ
قُدَّ مِنْ دُبُرٍ قَالَ اِنَّهٗ مِنْ كَيْدِكُنَّ ط اِنَّ كَيْدَكُنَّ عَظِيْمٌ ﴿٢٨﴾ يُوْسُفُ
اَعْرِضْ عَنْ هٰذَا سكته وَاسْتَغْفِرِيْ لِذَنْۢبِكِ ج اِنَّكِ كُنْتِ مِنَ الْخٰطِـِٕيْنَ
ع ﴿٢٩﴾

And they raced towards the door, and she tore his shirt from behind, and they found her master by the door. She said, "What can be the punishment of the one who intended evil with your wife except that he be imprisoned or (given) a painful chastisement?" [25] **He said, "It was she who sought to seduce me." And a witness from her family observed that if his shirt was torn up from the frontside, then she is true and he is a liar;** [26] **and if his shirt was torn up from behind, then she is telling a lie and he is truthful.** [27]

So, when he saw his shirt torn up from behind, he said, "This is certainly a guile of yours, O women. Great is the guile of you women indeed. [28] **O Yūsuf, ignore this matter, and you (O woman) seek forgiveness for your sin. Surely, you were of the sinners."** [29]

Commentary

Described in the previous verses was the time when the wife of the Azīz of Miṣr was busy enticing Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ into sin, and he, on his part, was trying to stay away from it. But, there was the natural

struggle with that non-voluntary thought too. So, to help his honourable prophet, Allah Ta'ālā showed a miracle, made something appear before him which drove even that thought out from his heart - whether that 'thing' be the face of his father, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, or some verse out of the Divine revelation.

Told in the present verse (25) is that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, once he saw this 'proof from his Lord,' ran away from that private enclave and dashed for the door to get out from there. The wife of the 'Azīz of Miṣr ran after him to hold him back and, by grabbing his shirt, she tried to stop him from getting out. But, when he did not stop - being determined not to - the shirt was torn from behind him. However, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام did come out of the door, and so did Zulaikhā behind him. Historical accounts mention that the door was locked from the inside. When Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام ran and reached the door, this lock opened up by itself and dropped down.

When they both came out of the door, they saw the 'Azīz of Miṣr standing face to face. His wife was unnerved. In order to wriggle out of the awkward situation, and to put the blame on Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, she said: What can be the punishment of the one who intended evil with your wife except that he be imprisoned, or (given) a painful chastisement?

Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, because of his prophetic gentleness, may not have, perhaps, disclosed her secret. But, when she took the first step and presented a charge sheet of false accusation against him, he was compelled to tell the truth: هِىَ رَاوَدَتْنِى عَنْ نَّفْسِى (It was she who sought to seduce me).

The matter was dense and delicate. For the 'Azīz of Miṣr, it was difficult to decide as to who should be taken as being true. That was no occasion for evidence and proof. But, Allah, great is whose majesty, has His own ways of saving His honourable servants from sin and keeping them unaffected and protected from it. He would do the same for them during their worldly life when He would arrange to save them from being disgraced, even if it would take a miracle to do that. Usually, on such occasions, infant children have been chosen to unfold truth, infants who are not expected to talk customarily. But, by giving them power of speech mi-

raculously, Allah Ta'ālā would arrange for the acquittal of His favoured servants from accusations levelled against them. This happened when people started accusing Sayyidah Maryam falsely. Allah Ta'ālā gave a day old infant, Sayyidnā 'Īsā ﷺ, the ability to speak and it was through his tongue that He had the sanctity of his blessed mother manifested - a very special manifestation of His power indeed. Similarly, when another accusation of this nature was made under the umbrella of a major conspiracy against Jurayj, a pious elder among the Banī Isrā'īl, it was a new-born child who testified to his innocence. When Pharaoh got suspicious about Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ, the small daughter of the personal lady hair-styler of the wife of the Pharaoh was given the power of speech and it was she who saved Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ during his childhood from being hurt by the Pharaoh.

Similarly, in this event relating to Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ, according to a narration of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās and Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه, Allah Ta'ālā bestowed that power of speech upon a small child - and that too in one of the finest ways of wisdom. This small child was lying in a cradle in this house. There was no way it could have occured to anyone that this child would have watched their movements and understood what they were doing - and then, would be able to even go on to describe it in some manner. But, Allah is absolutely powerful. When He decides to highlight the greatness of those who strive in the mission of their obedience to Him, He is quite capable of demonstrating before the whole world that every particle of this universe works as His secret service which knows every criminal inside out and keeps a record of his or her crime and when the time comes, it speaks out the truth. Think of the Resurrection, the awesome plain of the Ḥashr when, at the time of the accounting of deeds, human beings will, goaded by their old worldly habit, refuse to admit their crimes, then, their very hands and feet and skins and surroundings will be called upon to stand as witnesses against them. Each such witness shall lay each and everything done by them bare before the unimaginably huge multitude gathered together on that fateful day of Al-Maḥshar. That would be the time when human beings will find out that their hands and feet and the walls and doors of their homes inside, and the security arrangement outside these, none of them, not even one, were their own. In fact, all of them were secret agents of Al-

lah, the Rabb of all Power.

In sum, this small child, who was lying in the cradle oblivious of everything in the world around him, was made to speak out - as a miracle of Sayyidnā Yūsuf - precisely at the time when the 'Azīz of Miṣr, being on the horns of a dilemma, did not know what to do.

Furthermore, if this child could have only said that Sayyidnā Yūsuf is free of any blame and it is Zulaikhā who is at fault, then, even that much would have been no less than a miracle, and a formidable proof of the innocence of Sayyidnā Yūsuf. But, Allah Ta'ālā had this child say something farsighted which would separate truth from falsehood decisively. What the child said was: See the shirt of Sayyidnā Yūsuf. If it is torn up from the front, then the word of Zulaikhā is true and that of Sayyidnā Yūsuf could be otherwise. And if the shirt is torn up from the back, then there remains just no other probability but that Sayyidnā Yūsuf was running away from her and Zulaikhā wanted to stop him.

Apart from being a miracle of speech manifested by a child, this was something which could be understood by everyone around on its own. So, when the direction was followed, it was observed that the shirt was torn up from the back. Thus, the innocence of Sayyidnā Yūsuf stood proved openly from physical signs as well.

The explanation of the '*shāhid*' or witness of Sayyidnā Yūsuf given here - that he was a small child blessed with the power of speech as a miracle - stands proved from a Ḥadīth of the Holy Prophet. This Ḥadīth has been reported by Imām Aḥmad in his Musnad, Ibn Ḥibbān in his Ṣaḥīḥ and Ḥākim in Mustadrak. They have rated this Ḥadīth as Ṣaḥīḥ (sound). In this Ḥadīth, it is said: 'Allah Ta'ālā has blessed four children the power of speech while still in their cradle.' These four are the same as mentioned earlier. (Maẓharī) However, in some narrations, other explanations of '*shāhid*' or witness have also been reported. But, Tafsīr authorities such as Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Kathīr and others have declared the first Tafsīr to be the weightier one.

Injunctions and Rulings

The following rules and guiding principles have been deduced from the verses cited above:

1. From verse 25 begining with the words: وَاسْتَبَقَا الْبَابَ (And they raced towards the door ...), we learn that a place where there is a danger of getting involved in sin must be abandoned outright - as was practically demonstrated by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام by running away from there.

2. In matters requiring obedience to Divine injunctions, one should not, to the best of one's ability, let his efforts in that direction taper off - even if a tangible result from them does not seem to be coming out. Results rest in the hands of Allah Ta'ālā. One's job is to channel and devote his or her effort and ability in the way of Allah - and proving one's identity as a servant of Allah is the purpose. This is what was done by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. All doors were closed, even locked, as reported in historical narrations. Yet, he spent out his maximum strength in running towards the door. In a situation like that, help and support from Allah *jalla thana'uh* is witnessed frequently when a servant of Allah has done his best, it transpires that He would also arrange the causes for His servant to succeed. However, should the situation be otherwise and one fails to achieve formal success as we know it, then, for a devoted servant of Allah, even this failure is no less than success (for this is the preference of his Lord).

It is said about a righteous elder confined to prison that he would, on every Friday take his bath, wash his clothes, get ready for Jumu'ah prayer, walk upto the door of the prison, and once there, he would say: '*Yā* Allah, this much was what was within my power. What is beyond that is in Your control.' Who knows, given the limitless mercy of Allah Ta'ālā, his spiritual yearning would have caused the prison gate to open with the command of Allah and he would have been enabled to perform the Ṣalāh of Jumu'ah. But, Allah, in His wisdom, bestowed upon this righteous devotee such high spiritual station as would pale out a thousand workings of the supernatural (*karāmah*). The gate of the prison did not open because of his continuous effort to offer his Ṣalāh of Jumu'ah. But, he did not lose heart. He kept doing the same thing every Jumu'ah. This is spiritual fortitude called by Ṣūfī masters as superior to Karamah.

3. It stands proved (from verse 26) that, should a person be accused falsely by someone, speaking out in defence is the way of the prophets (the Sunnah of the Anbiyā'). Remaining silent at that time, and letting oneself be declared to be a criminal, is no act of piety or trust in Allah

(*tawakkul*).

4. The fourth problem concerns the word: شَاهِد (*shāhid*) (in verse 26). When this word is used in common juristic matters and cases, it denotes a person who relates an event as seen by him in a disputed case. In this verse, the person who has been referred to by the word, '*shāhid*,' has not related any event, or any personal observation about it - instead of that, what has been hinted at is a sort of device to arrive at a decision. Technically, that could not be called a '*shāhid*' or witness.

But, it is obvious that all these terms have been employed by later scholars and jurists for the convenience of understanding and teaching. They are neither the terms of the Holy Qur'ān, nor is it bound by them. The Holy Qur'ān has called this person a '*shāhid*' (witness) in the sense that the way the statement of a 'witness makes it easy for a judge to arrive at a decision, and proves that one of the parties in the case is in the right, the same benefit became available through the statement of this child. Initially, his miraculous speech itself was sufficient proof to absolve Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام from the blame. Then, there were the signs given by him. In the ultimate analysis, they too are nothing but the proof of the absolvement of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام from the blame. Therefore, saying that he appeared as a witness in favour of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام will be correct - though, he did not declare Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام to be true, rather, had mentioned both probabilities. And, in addition to that, he had even supposedly taken Zulaikhā to be true in a situation in which the likelihood of her being true was not certain - in fact, there existed the other probability too, because the possibility of the shirt being torn from the front existed in both situations. And then, he had admitted the truthfulness of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام only in a situation wherein there could have been no other probability other than this. But, finally, the outcome of this strategy was but to prove the innocence of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام.

5. In arriving at judgements of disputed cases, circumstancial evidence can be taken into consideration - as was demonstrated here when this '*shāhid*' declared that the shirt torn from the backside was an evidence that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was running and Zulaikhā was trying to stop him. In this matter, there is an agreement of all jurists that signs and indicators should definitely be used to determine the truth, as was

done here. But, besides that, only signs and indicators cannot be given the status of sufficient proof. In this event relating to Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام too, that which really proves the innocence of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام is the miraculous speech of the child. As for the signs and indicators which have been mentioned there, they serve to confirm the matter.

In the last two (28 & 29) of the verses cited above, it has been stated that the 'Azīz of Miṣr had already realized by having heard the child speak in the manner he did that some special supernatural situation was there to demonstrate the innocence of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. After that, according to what the child had said, when he saw that the very shirt of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام is really torn up from the back, he became certain that it was Zulaikhā who was at fault and it was Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام who was innocent. So, first he addressed Zulaikhā and said: 'إِنَّهُ مِنْ كَيْدِكُنَّ that is, all this is a guile of yours whereby you wish to pass on your wrongdoing to someone else. Then he said that great is the guile of women for it is difficult to understand and not easy to get out from. The reason is that they outwardly give the impression of being soft, delicate, even weak. A non-discerning onlooker is likely to believe in what they say. But, given a lack of wisdom and honesty, that could be a web of deception. (Maẓharī)

According to a narration of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه appearing in the Tafsīr of Al-Qurṭubī, the Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said: The guile of women is stronger than the guile of Shayṭān - because, about the guile of the Shayṭān, Allah Ta'ālā has said that it is weak: إِنَّ كَيْدَ الشَّيْطٰنِ كَانَ ضَعِيفًا (4:76); and about the guile of women, it was said: إِنَّ كَيْدَكُنَّ عَظِيمٌ (great is the guile of you women - 12:28). And it is obvious that not all women are meant here. Instead, meant here are only those of them who are involved in practicing guiles and excuses. So, after having pointed out to Zulaikhā her error, the 'Azīz of Miṣr said to Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام: يُوسُفُ أَعْرِضْ عَنْ هٰذَا :'O Yūsuf, ignore this matter' - that is, do not speak about it before others so there be no disgrace because of this. Then he addressed Zulaikhā and said: وَاسْتَغْفِرِي لِذَنْبِكِ إِنَّكِ كُنْتِ مِنَ الْخٰطِئِينَ (and you [O woman] seek forgiveness for your sin. Surely, you were of the sinners). This obviously means that she should seek forgiveness from her husband. And it could also mean that she should seek forgiveness from Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام for it was she who made the error and put the blame on

him.

Special Note

At this point, it is very surprising that a husband, who finds out an open proof of such immodesty and breach of trust on the part of his wife, would not be agitated, rather, go on talking with perfect peace of mind - unusual indeed, given the compulsion of human nature in such circumstances. Imām Al-Qurṭubī has said that one of the reasons for this may be that the 'Azīz of Miṣr was someone lacking that kind of a sense of shame. And it is also possible that the way Allah Ta'ālā supernaturally arranged to save Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام first from sin and then from disgrace - in the same way, it was also a part of this arrangement that He did not let the 'Azīz of Miṣr become all agitated in anger. Otherwise, as customary, this would have been an occasion where one is likely to go to physical assault without bothering to investigate first, not to say much about verbal aggression, which would be rather elementary. If the 'Azīz of Miṣr, affected by common human response, were to be enraged, it is possible that he might have committed something, physically or verbally, something which would have been against the august status of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. These are the wonders of Divine Power which openly prove how those who stand steadfast in obedience to their most true Lord are protected at every step they take in His way. And the honour of creating what is there at its best goes only to Allah.

In the verses which will follow, mentioned there is another event which is connected with the story narrated earlier. There it has been said that this event, despite the effort to keep it concealed, spread around among women in the families of the courtiers. These women started blaming the wife of the 'Azīz of Miṣr. Some commentators have said that these were five women, all wives of officials close to the "Azīz of Miṣr. (Qurṭubī, Maẓharī)

These women were talking among themselves. They were saying: Look, how regretable it is that the wife of the 'Azīz of Miṣr, despite enjoying a status so high, had become enamoured with her young slave and was looking for the fulfillment of what she wanted from him. In this, we think, she is in a grave error. The word used in the verse (30) is: فَتٰهَا (*fatā-hā*: translated as 'her youthful slave'). Fatā' denotes someone youthful. In customary usage, a boy slave when small is called a *ghulām*. If in his

youth, the boy is called *fatā*, and the girl, *fatāh*. Here, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام has been referred to as the slave of Zulaikhā either because that which is owned by the husband is also customarily called as that which is owned by the wife; and/or because Zulaikhā had taken Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام from her husband as gift. (Qurṭubī)

Verses 30 - 35

وَقَالَ نِسْوَةٌ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ امْرَاَتُ الْعَزِيْزِ تُرَاوِدُ فَتٰهَا عَنْ نَّفْسِهٖ ۚ قَدْ
شَغَفَهَا حُبًّا ۭ اِنَّا لَنَرٰىهَا فِيْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿٣٠﴾ فَلَمَّا سَمِعَتْ بِمَكْرِهِنَّ
اَرْسَلَتْ اِلَيْهِنَّ وَاَعْتَدَتْ لَهُنَّ مُتَّكَاً وَّاٰتَتْ كُلَّ وَاحِدَةٍ مِّنْهُنَّ سِكِّيْنًا
وَّقَالَتِ اخْرُجْ عَلَيْهِنَّ ۚ فَلَمَّا رَاَيْنَهٗٓ اَكْبَرْنَهٗ وَقَطَّعْنَ اَيْدِيَهُنَّ ۫ وَقُلْنَ
حَاشَ لِلّٰهِ مَا هٰذَا بَشَرًا ۭ اِنْ هٰذَآ اِلَّا مَلَكٌ كَرِيْمٌ ﴿٣١﴾ قَالَتْ فَذٰلِكُنَّ
الَّذِيْ لُمْتُنَّنِيْ فِيْهِ ۭ وَلَقَدْ رَاوَدْتُّهٗ عَنْ نَّفْسِهٖ فَاسْتَعْصَمَ ۭ وَلَىِٕنْ لَّمْ
يَفْعَلْ مَآ اٰمُرُهٗ لَيُسْجَنَنَّ وَلَيَكُوْنًا مِّنَ الصّٰغِرِيْنَ ﴿٣٢﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ
السِّجْنُ اَحَبُّ اِلَيَّ مِمَّا يَدْعُوْنَنِيْٓ اِلَيْهِ ۚ وَاِلَّا تَصْرِفْ عَنِّيْ كَيْدَهُنَّ
اَصْبُ اِلَيْهِنَّ وَاَكُنْ مِّنَ الْجٰهِلِيْنَ ﴿٣٣﴾ فَاسْتَجَابَ لَهٗ رَبُّهٗ فَصَرَفَ
عَنْهُ كَيْدَهُنَّ ۭ اِنَّهٗ هُوَ السَّمِيْعُ الْعَلِيْمُ ﴿٣٤﴾ ثُمَّ بَدَا لَهُمْ مِّنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا
رَاَوُا الْاٰيٰتِ لَيَسْجُنُنَّهٗ حَتّٰى حِيْنٍ ﴿٣٥﴾

And women in the city said, "The wife of the governor is seducing her youthful slave. The love for him has arrested her. Surely, we see her in open error." [30] **So, when she heard of their crafty comments, she extended an invitation to them and arranged for them a comfortable place (to sit and dine) and gave everyone a knife and said (to Yūsuf): "come in before them." So when they saw him, they found him great and (were so bewildered that they) cut their hands and said, "Oh God! He is no human being. He is but a noble angel.'** [31] **She said, "This is he you blamed me for. Yes, I seduced him, but he abstained. And should he not follow my command, he shall be imprisoned and will be disgraced."** [32] **He said,**

"My Lord, the prison is dearer to me than what these women invite me to. And unless You do not turn their guile away from me, I shall get inclined towards them and shall be among the ignorant." [33] **So, his Lord accepted his prayer and turned their guile away from him. Surely, He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing.** [34] **Later on, even after having seen the signs, they deemed it proper to imprison him for a time.** [35]

Commentary

Having explained the linkage of verse before the beginning of the present verses, we can now turn to the explanation of individual verses.

Said in verse 32 was: فَلَمَّا سَمِعَتۡ بِمَكۡرِهِنَّ اَرۡسَلَتۡ اِلَيۡهِنَّ (So, when she heard of their crafty comments, she extended an invitation to them).

Here, Zulaikhā refers to the talking of women as their '*makr*' or craftiness - though they had obviously planned no trick against her. But, since they spoke ill about her secretly, it was identified as '*makr*.' As for the expression: وَاَعۡتَدَتۡ لَهُنَّ مُتَّكَاً which follows immediately and has been translated as 'and arranged for them a comfortable place' is inclusive of the comfort of special pillows for hand and back rest placed there for relaxation.

Then, it was said: وَّاٰتَتۡ كُلَّ وَاحِدَةٍ مِّنۡهُنَّ سِكِّيۡنًا (and gave everyone a knife). It means when these women came in and sat down, different foods and fruits were served, some of which needed a knife to peel and cut, therefore, also given to each one of them was a sharp knife. The obvious purpose of this was to cut fruits. But, concealed in her heart was what comes next - that is, these women will lose their senses at the sight of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام and would go on to cut their hands with the knife.

After having made all these arrangements, to Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, who was in some other quarter of the house, Zulaikhā said: وَّقَالَتِ اخۡرُجۡ عَلَيۡهِنَّ (come in before them). Since, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was not aware of her vain intention, he came out into this sitting.

That which happened then has been described in:

فَلَمَّا رَاَيۡنَهٗۤ اَكۡبَرۡنَهٗ وَقَطَّعۡنَ اَيۡدِيَهُنَّ وَقُلۡنَ حَاشَ لِلّٰهِ مَا هٰذَا بَشَرًا ؕ اِنۡ هٰذَاۤ اِلَّا مَلَكٌ كَرِيۡمٌ

'So, when they saw him, they found him great and [were so

bewildered that they] cut their hands [that is, when cutting their fruit, they saw this object of wonder, the knife unconsciously ran over their hand - as it occasionally happens when one's thought is diverted to something else] and said, 'Oh God! He is no human being. He is but a noble angel.' [by which they meant that one exuding such light can only be an angel].'

Then, in verse 32, it was said:

قَالَتْ فَذٰلِكُنَّ الَّذِىْ لُمْتُنَّنِىْ فِيْهِ ۖ وَلَقَدْ رَاوَدْتُّهٗ عَنْ نَّفْسِهٖ فَاسْتَعْصَمَ ۖ وَلَئِنْ لَّمْ يَفْعَلْ مَآ اٰمُرُهٗ لَيُسْجَنَنَّ وَلَيَكُوْنًا مِّنَ الصّٰغِرِيْنَ

'She [Zulaikhā] said: 'So, [see] this is the one you blamed me for. Yes, I seduced him, but he abstained. And should he [in future] not follow my command, he shall be [surely] imprisoned and shall be disgraced [too].'

When Zulaikhā realized that her secret lay disclosed before those women anyway, she started threatening Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام right before them. At that time, according to some commentators, all these women too started telling Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام that Zulaikhā was their benefactor, therefore, he should not oppose her.

And some words of the Holy Qur'ān which appear later (33) also support it, for example: يَدْعُوْنَنِىْ (*yad'ūnanī*: these women invite me) and: كَيْدَهُنَّ (*kaidahunna*: their guile) where the statement of some women has been mentioned in the plural form.

When Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام saw that these women were also supporting Zulaikhā and there remained no other visible way to stay safe against their guile, he turned to his ultimate resort, to Allah *jalla thana'uh,* and before Him, he said:

رَبِّ السِّجْنُ اَحَبُّ اِلَىَّ مِمَّا يَدْعُوْنَنِىْٓ اِلَيْهِ ۚ وَاِلَّا تَصْرِفْ عَنِّىْ كَيْدَهُنَّ اَصْبُ اِلَيْهِنَّ وَاَكُنْ مِّنَ الْجٰهِلِيْنَ

My Lord, the prison is dearer to me than what these women invite me to. And unless You turn their guile away from me, I shall get inclined towards them and shall be among the ignorant.

Here, the statement of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام that 'the prison is dearer to me' does not reflect any desire or wish to be detained in a prison, instead of that, it is an expression which shows that he would find it easier

to face this temporal hardship as compared to that of falling in sin. According to some narrations, when Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ was confined to the prison, a revelation from Allah Ta'ālā told him: You have put yourself into the prison by what you yourself had said: السِّجْنُ اَحَبُّ اِلَيَّ (the prison is dearer to me) and had you asked for well-being (*'āfiyah*), you would have been blessed with perfect well-being. From here we come to know that, to stay safe from a major hardship, saying in prayer that one better be subjected to some minor hardship in lieu of it is not appropriate. Instead of doing that, one should, when under the threat of any hardship, problem or distress, pray to Allah Ta'ālā for nothing but *'āfiyah* (well-being). Therefore, the Holy Prophet ﷺ prohibited a man from praying for *ṣabr* (patience) saying that *ṣabr* is done when one faces distress and hardship. So, rather praying to Allah for *ṣabr*, pray for *'āfiyah*. (Tirmidhī) The uncle of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, Sayyidnā 'Abbās ؓ asked him: Teach me a prayer I should make. He said: Pray for *'āfiyah* (well-being) from your Rabb. Sayyidnā 'Abbās ؓ says when he, after a period of time, once again asked him to be advised of some *du'ā'* he should be making, he said: Pray to Allah Ta'ālā for *'āfiyah* in *dunyā* and *'ākhirah*. (Maẓharī from Ṭabarānī)

As for the saying of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ: 'And unless you do not turn their guile away from me, I shall get inclined towards them,' this is not contrary to the concept of the 'Iṣmah of prophethood (a prophet's state of being Divinely protected from sin) - because the very outcome of 'Ismah is that Allah Ta'ālā would, by arranging to keep a person safe from sin as a creational imperative, protect him from falling into it. Though Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ had this desired cover by virtue of his being a prophet, yet he was compelled to make this du'ā' because of the great awe he had for Him in his heart. This also tells us that no one can, without the help and support of Allah Ta'ālā, stay safe from sin. And it also makes it clear that every act of sin is caused by ignorance (*jahālah*), the opposite of which is knowledge (*'ilm*), and 'Ilm (knowledge) demands abstention from sins. (Qurṭubī)

After that, said in verse 34 was:

فَاسْتَجَابَ لَهٗ رَبُّهٗ فَصَرَفَ عَنْهُ كَيْدَهُنَّ ط اِنَّهٗ هُوَالسَّمِيْعُ الْعَلِيْمُ

So, his Lord accepted his prayer and turned their guile away

from him. Surely, He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing.

To protect him from the guile of these women, Allah Ta'ālā made his own wise arrangements. Though the 'Azīz of Miṣr and his inner circle was already convinced of the great spiritual qualities of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, his piety, fear of Allah and chastity, but rumours of the incident had started circulating in the city. To put a check on this, they found it expedient to confine Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام into the prison for a certain period of time so that there remains no source of any doubt in the concerned family, and that the talk of the town too dies out in due course. So, said at the end of the verse (35) was:

ثُمَّ بَدَا لَهُمْ مِّنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا رَاَوُا الْاٰيٰتِ لَيَسْجُنُنَّهٗ حَتّٰى حِيْنٍ

> Later on, even after having seen the signs, they [the 'Azīz of Miṣr and his advisers] deemed it proper [or expedient] to imprison him for a time.

Thus, to the prison he was sent.

Verses 36 - 42

وَدَخَلَ مَعَهُ السِّجْنَ فَتَيٰنِ ؕ قَالَ اَحَدُهُمَاۤ اِنِّیۤ اَرٰىنِیۤ اَعْصِرُ خَمْرًا ۚ

وَقَالَ الْاٰخَرُ اِنِّیۤ اَرٰىنِیۤ اَحْمِلُ فَوْقَ رَاْسِیْ خُبْزًا تَاْكُلُ الطَّیْرُ مِنْهُ ؕ

نَبِّئْنَا بِتَاْوِیْلِهٖ ۚ اِنَّا نَرٰىكَ مِنَ الْمُحْسِنِیْنَ ﴿۳۶﴾ قَالَ لَا یَاْتِیْكُمَا طَعَامٌ

تُرْزَقٰنِهٖۤ اِلَّا نَبَّاْتُكُمَا بِتَاْوِیْلِهٖ قَبْلَ اَنْ یَّاْتِیَكُمَا ؕ ذٰلِكُمَا مِمَّا عَلَّمَنِیْ رَبِّیْ ؕ

اِنِّیْ تَرَكْتُ مِلَّةَ قَوْمٍ لَّا یُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَهُمْ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ هُمْ كٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿۳۷﴾

وَاتَّبَعْتُ مِلَّةَ اٰبَآءِیْۤ اِبْرٰهِیْمَ وَاِسْحٰقَ وَیَعْقُوْبَ ؕ مَا كَانَ لَنَاۤ اَنْ نُّشْرِكَ

بِاللّٰهِ مِنْ شَیْءٍ ؕ ذٰلِكَ مِنْ فَضْلِ اللّٰهِ عَلَیْنَا وَعَلَى النَّاسِ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ

النَّاسِ لَا یَشْكُرُوْنَ ﴿۳۸﴾ یٰصَاحِبَیِ السِّجْنِ ءَاَرْبَابٌ مُّتَفَرِّقُوْنَ خَیْرٌ اَمِ

اللّٰهُ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ ﴿۳۹﴾ مَا تَعْبُدُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِهٖۤ اِلَّاۤ اَسْمَآءً سَمَّیْتُمُوْهَاۤ

اَنْتُمْ وَاٰبَآؤُكُمْ مَّاۤ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ بِهَا مِنْ سُلْطٰنٍ ؕ اِنِ الْحُكْمُ اِلَّا لِلّٰهِ ؕ اَمَرَ

اَلاَّ تَعْبُدُوْٓا اِلاَّ اِيَّاهُ ط ذٰلِكَ الدِّيْنُ الْقَيِّمُ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ
﴿٤٠﴾ يٰصَاحِبَيِ السِّجْنِ اَمَّآ اَحَدُكُمَا فَيَسْقِيْ رَبَّهٗ خَمْرًا ج وَاَمَّا الْاٰخَرُ
فَيُصْلَبُ فَتَاْكُلُ الطَّيْرُ مِنْ رَّاْسِهٖ ط قُضِيَ الْاَمْرُ الَّذِيْ فِيْهِ تَسْتَفْتِيٰنِ
﴿٤١﴾ ط وَقَالَ لِلَّذِيْ ظَنَّ اَنَّهٗ نَاجٍ مِّنْهُمَا اذْكُرْنِيْ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ ز فَاَنْسٰهُ
الشَّيْطٰنُ ذِكْرَ رَبِّهٖ فَلَبِثَ فِي السِّجْنِ بِضْعَ سِنِيْنَ ط ع ﴿٤٢﴾

And two men entered the prison with him. One of them said, "I have seen myself (in dream) pressing wine." And the other said, "I have seen myself carrying bread on my head of which the birds are eating. Let us know its interpretation. We see you are a man of good deeds." [36]

He said, "No food provided for you shall come to you, but I can give you its description before it comes to you. This is the knowledge my Lord has given me. I have abandoned the way of those who do not believe in Allah, and who are deniers of the Hereafter, [37] **and I have followed the way of my fathers, Ibrāhīm, Isḥāq and Ya'qūb. It is not for us that we associate any partners with Allah. All this is of the favour of Allah upon us and upon the people, but most of the people are not grateful.** [38] **O my fellow prisoners, are different gods better or Allah, the One, the All-Dominant?** [39] **Whatever you worship, other than Him, are nothing but names you have coined, you and your fathers. Allah has sent down no authority for them. Sovereignty belongs to none but Allah. He has ordained that you shall not worship anyone but Him. This is the only right path. But most of the people do not know."** [40]

O my fellow prisoners, one of you will serve wine to his master, while the other will be crucified and birds will eat from his head. Destined is the matter you are asking about." [41]

And he (Yūsuf) said to the one whom he believed likely to be released out of the two, "Mention me before your master.' Then, the Satan made him forget to mention him to his master. So, he (Yūsuf) remained in prison for a few years. [42]

Commentary

Mentioned in the verses cited above is a supplementary event relating to the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. It has been repeatedly stressed that the Holy Qur'ān is no book of history, or of stories and tales. When a story or historical event is mentioned in it, the sole objective is to provide some lesson, good counsel or crucial guidance on various facets of human life. In the entire Qur'ān and throughout the events relating to many prophets, it is the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام alone which has been described by the Qur'ān continuously - otherwise, it has considered it sufficient to mention some necessary part of an historical event wherever appropriate.

If you would look at the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام from the beginning to the end, there are hundreds of lessons to learn, good advices to heed to and important elements of guidance to follow during various stages of human life. This supplementary story too has its graces of guidance in abundance.

The event as it took shape was that, despite the complete absolvement of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام from the blame, and the strong establishment of his moral integrity, it was to put an end to the disgrace of people talking about them that the 'Azīz of Miṣr and his wife decided to send Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام to the prison for some time - which, in reality, was the fulfillment of the *du'a'* and wish of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, because, for him, it had become extremely difficult to defend his chastity while living in the home of the 'Azīz of Miṣr.

When Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام arrived at the prison, two other sentenced criminals were also admitted there. One of them was the cup-bearer of the king while the other was a cook. Citing major Tafsīr authorities, Ibn Kathīr has written that these two were arrested on the charge that they had tried to poison the king through food or drink. The case was under investigation, therefore, they were kept in prison.

When Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام came into the prison, it was because of his prophetic morals, mercy and affection that he used to show concern about all of his fellow inmates and took care of them whenever needed. If anyone became sick, he would call on him and do whatever had to be done for him. For anyone he found sad or distressed, he would have ap-

propriate words of comfort. To lift his spirits, he would gently tell him to observe patience and made the hope of freedom come alive into his heart. He would think of bringing comfort to others at the cost of his own discomfort. For whole nights he would remain engaged in the 'Ibādah (worship) of Allah Ta'ālā. Seeing his endearing ways, all inmates of the prison became convinced of his high spiritual status. Even the officer-in-charge of the prison was impressed. He said: Had it been in my power, I would have let you go. Now, this much I can do that you will face no inconvenience here.

Some Notes to Wonder About

When the officer-in-charge of the prison, or some of the inmates, told Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام that they loved him very much, he said: For God's sake, do not love me - because whenever I have been loved by anyone, I have suffered one way or the other. When I was a child, my paternal aunt loved me. As a result, I was blamed for theft. Then, my father loved me. This made me do a term of detention in a well at the hands of my brothers, then came slavery and expulsion from home country. When the wife of the 'Azīz loved me, I landed into this prison. (Ibn Kathīr, Maẓharī)

These two prisoners who went to the prison alongwith Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام said to him one day that they thought he was a man of piety and good deeds, therefore, they would like to ask him to give an interpretation of their dream. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه and some other leading authorities in Tafsīr have said that they had really seen these dreams. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه has said that there was no dream. They had simply made it up to test the spiritual excellence and veracity of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام.

However, one of them, that is, the royal cup-bearer, said: 'I have seen myself (in dream) pressing wine,' and the other, that is, the cook, said: 'I have seen myself carrying bread on my head of which the birds are eating.' Then, they requested him to interpret the dreams for them.

Here, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام has been requested to interpret the dreams. But he, before answering this question, and following his intrinsic prophetic way, begins with the task of Tablīgh and invitation to believe and have faith. And by following the principle of Da'wah and by acting wisely, he first tried to create in their hearts a base of confidence in

him. To achieve this, he talked about his particular miracle through which he tells them about the food which they receive from their homes, or from somewhere else, and much before it arrives, he is able to tell them the kind, the taste, the quantity and the time of arrival of the food - and that the food turns out to be exactly as predicted: ذٰلِكُمَا مِمَّا عَلَّمَنِىْ رَبِّىْ (This is of the knowledge my Lord has given me). He is saying that this has nothing to do with the art of divination through computation of figures and lines (*'ilm al-jafr* and *'ilm al-raml* - not Jafar and Ramal, soothsaying or any other occult act of conjuring). Instead of all that, this is what my Rabb tells me - and I pass on the information. And this was an open miracle which is proof positive of prophethood and a major cause of confidence. After that, he declares his abhorence for disbelief and his disengagement from the community of disbelievers. Then, with it, he also stresses that he is a member of the House of Prophets and it is their Community that he adheres to and that he is a scion of the House of Ibrāhīm, Isḥāq and Ya'qūb عليهم السلام. We mentioned confidence a little earlier. Customarily, this kind of inherited nobility, a common family trait, is also a source of creating confidence in a person. After that he said: And it is not for us that we associate any partners with Allah. Then, he said that the Taufīq of following a true religion ('the favour of Allah upon us and upon all people') was nothing but the Faḍl or grace of Allah Ta'ālā, for it was He who, by giving proper understanding, made the acceptance of truth easy on us. But, most of the people do not appreciate this blessing and do not show their gratitude for it. After having said that, he asked the same prisoners to tell him if it was better that human beings should be worshiping many gods, or was it better that one becomes a servant of one Allah alone - whose subduing power is all-dominant. Then he referred to idol worship from a different angle. He told them that their fathers and forefathers have taken some idols as their Lord. As for them, they are no more than a lot of names which they have coined on their own. They have no personal attributes which could become deserving of assigning to them the least fund of power - because all of them are inert. This is something one can see with one's own eyes. The only other method through which they could have been taken as true objects of worship would be that Allah Ta'ālā sends down specific injunctions or commandments to worship them. So, in that case, even if observation and reason had not been willing to accept their godhood but, because of the Divine

command, we would have left our observation and reason aside and would have obeyed the command of Allah. But, this is not there either - because Allah Taʿālā did not send down any argument or proof for their worship. Instead of that, what He said was but that Law and Sovereignty belonged to Allah Taʿālā with no one having a right in it; and the command He gave was no other but that we should not worship anyone or anything other than Allah. Finally, he said: 'This is the only right path - which was bestowed on my forefathers by Allah Taʿālā, but most of the people do not know this reality.'

After having made his call to truth, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام turned to the dreams mentioned by two of his prison mates declaring that one of the two of them will get his release, return to his job and keep serving wine to his master. As for the other, the crime against him will stand proved and he will be crucified and birds will eat from his head.

An Example of Prophetic Compassion

Ibn Kathīr has said: Though the dreams of both these prisoners were separate, and fixed was the interpretation of each, and also fixed was the fate that the royal cup-bearer will be acquitted and return to his job and the cook will be crucified. But, because of his prophetic compassion and clemency, he did not specifically mention as to who among the two will be hanged so that the person concerned may be spared from becoming obsessed by the very thought of it right from that time. Instead of that, he made a general statement saying that one of them will be released and the other will be crucified.

At the end, he told them that the interpretation of their dreams given by him was not arrived at by conjecture. It was Divine decree which cannot be averted. Commentators who have called the dreams described by these people as false and made-up, they have also said: When Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام interpreted their dreams, they came up with the remark that they had just not seen any dream. They had simply made it up. Thereupon, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام said: قُضِىَ الْاَمْرُ الَّذِىْ فِيْهِ تَسْتَفْتِيٰنِ (Destined is the matter you are asking about). In other words, it would mean: Whether you saw this dream, or did not, now the event will come to be as described - the purpose of which is that this is the punishment of the sin, of making up a false dream, committed by you, a punishment which has been identified in the interpretation of the dream.

After that, to the person about whom Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ had gathered from the interpretation of his dream that he would be released, he said: When you are released from the prison, mention me before your master as the innocent person who is still languishing in the prison. But, once released, this person forgot about this message of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ, as a result of which, his freedom was further delayed and he had to stay in prison for a few more years. The word used in the Qur'ān is: بِضْعَ سِنِيْنَ (*bid'a sinīn*: a few years). This word holds good for a figure between three to nine. Some commentators have said that he had to live in the prison for a period of seven more years.

Injunctions and Rulings

Worth pondering on are many Aḥkām, Masā'il, useful lessons and elements of guidance that emerge from the verses under reference. They are as given below:

1. Consider the confinement of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ into a prison which is the notorious turf of criminals and bad characters. But, he treated them too with his characteristic good morals and social graces, as a result of which, all of them became enamoured with him. This tells us that it is the duty of reformers that they should, by dealing with sinners and criminals with compassion and concern, bring them closer, let them become familiar, connected, and reliant on them. Also necessary is that they should not betray any attitude of hatred or distaste for them at any step.

2. From the statement: إِنَّا نَرٰىكَ مِنَ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ (We see you are a man of good deeds), we find out that the interpretation of a dream should be sought particularly from persons one trusts in as righteous, good in deeds and sympathetic.

3. The third thing we learn here is about the ideal conduct of those who carry the *da'wah* of truth and serve people by working for their moral and social betterment. In this connection, their first duty is to bring round people created by Allah to put their trust in them through their good morals and conduct, and their intellectual and practical excellences - whether they have to unfold and express some of those excellences, as was done by Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ on this occasion when he not only talked about his miracle but also mentioned his being a member of

the House of Prophets. Such a statement of personal excellence - if it is based on the intention to serve people to become better and not to prove one's personal rank - will not be considered as the 'self-praise' which has been prohibited in the Holy Qur'ān: فَلَا تُزَكُّوْٓا اَنْفُسَكُمْ that is, do not talk about the purity of your own self. (Tafsīr Maẓharī)

4. Pointed to here is an important principle of communication and correction (Tablīgh and Irshād). It is the duty of the carrier of a Call (Dā'ī) and reformer (Muṣliḥ) that he should, at all times and under all circumstances, keep his constant mission of Da'wah and Tablīgh come first of all he does. In other words, if someone comes to him for something, he should not forget his real mission - as was done by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام when these prisoners came to him to ask for an interpretation of their dreams. At that time, before answering their request for the interpretation of their dreams, he gave them the gift of right guidance through his Tablīgh and Irshād. Please do not take Da'wah and Tablīgh as something which takes place in a conference, or on a pulpit or stage alone. This job is done far more effectively through personal contacts and private exchanges.

5. Another aspect of this very effort of telling people what is right and seeking their betterment through it (Irshād and Iṣlaḥ) is : Whatever is said in this connection should be said with the strategy of wisdom in a way that it goes into the heart of the addressee. This is how it was done by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. He succeeded in showing to them that the excellences he had were the direct outcome of his disengagement with disbelief and adoption of Islam as his faith. After that he described the drawbacks and shortcomings of Kufr and Shirk in a soft manner which appeals to the heart.

6. Another problem resolved here is about how bad news should be handled. If, that which has to be communicated to an addressee happens to be painful or repugnant, yet it be necessary that it be disclosed, then, it should be presented before the addressee, as far as possible, in a way that it brings the least discomfort to him. This is as it was when the death of one person was destined as interpreted on the basis of his dream, but Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام kept it ambiguous. He did not make it precise and fixed by telling him that he will be the one to be hanged. (Ibn Kathīr, Maẓharī)

7. It will be recalled that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had sought his release from the prison when he asked the acquitted prisoner: Mention me before your master. This tells us that making someone a medium of effort in order to get out of some difficulty is not against the principle of Tawakkul (Trust in Allah).

8. Another view of this problem is that Allah Ta'ālā does not like His great prophets making efforts to achieve everything permissible and go on to make a human being the medium of their release. This is so because the absence of any medium between them and Allah Ta'ālā spells out the true identity of prophets. Perhaps, that was why this prisoner forgot about the message given by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام which made him stay in the prison for many more years. In a Ḥadīth too, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has pointed out in this direction.

Verses 43 - 50

وَقَالَ الْمَلِكُ اِنِّیْٓ اَرٰی سَبْعَ بَقَرٰتٍ سِمَانٍ یَّاْکُلُهُنَّ سَبْعٌ عِجَافٌ
وَّسَبْعَ سُنْۢبُلٰتٍ خُضْرٍ وَّاُخَرَ یٰبِسٰتٍ ؕ یٰۤاَیُّهَا الْمَلَاُ اَفْتُوْنِیْ فِیْ رُءْیَایَ
اِنْ کُنْتُمْ لِلرُّءْیَا تَعْبُرُوْنَ ﴿۴۳﴾ قَالُوْۤا اَضْغَاثُ اَحْلَامٍ ۚ وَمَا نَحْنُ بِتَاْوِیْلِ
الْاَحْلَامِ بِعٰلِمِیْنَ ﴿۴۴﴾ وَقَالَ الَّذِیْ نَجَا مِنْهُمَا وَادَّکَرَ بَعْدَ اُمَّةٍ اَنَا
اُنَبِّئُکُمْ بِتَاْوِیْلِهٖ فَاَرْسِلُوْنِ ﴿۴۵﴾ یُوْسُفُ اَیُّهَا الصِّدِّیْقُ اَفْتِنَا فِیْ سَبْعِ
بَقَرٰتٍ سِمَانٍ یَّاْکُلُهُنَّ سَبْعٌ عِجَافٌ وَّسَبْعِ سُنْۢبُلٰتٍ خُضْرٍ وَّاُخَرَ
یٰبِسٰتٍ ۙ لَّعَلِّیْۤ اَرْجِعُ اِلَی النَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ یَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۴۶﴾ قَالَ تَزْرَعُوْنَ
سَبْعَ سِنِیْنَ دَاَبًا ۚ فَمَا حَصَدْتُّمْ فَذَرُوْهُ فِیْ سُنْۢبُلِهٖۤ اِلَّا قَلِیْلًا مِّمَّا
تَاْکُلُوْنَ ﴿۴۷﴾ ثُمَّ یَاْتِیْ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ ذٰلِکَ سَبْعٌ شِدَادٌ یَّاْکُلْنَ مَا قَدَّمْتُمْ
لَهُنَّ اِلَّا قَلِیْلًا مِّمَّا تُحْصِنُوْنَ ﴿۴۸﴾ ثُمَّ یَاْتِیْ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ ذٰلِکَ عَامٌ فِیْهِ
یُغَاثُ النَّاسُ وَفِیْهِ یَعْصِرُوْنَ ﴿۴۹﴾ ع وَقَالَ الْمَلِکُ ائْتُوْنِیْ بِهٖ ۚ فَلَمَّا جَآءَهُ
الرَّسُوْلُ قَالَ ارْجِعْ اِلٰی رَبِّکَ فَسْـَٔلْهُ مَا بَالُ النِّسْوَةِ الّٰتِیْ قَطَّعْنَ

أَيْدِيَهُنَّ ۚ إِنَّ رَبِّي بِكَيْدِهِنَّ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٥٠﴾

And the king said, "I have seen (in a dream) seven fat cows being eaten by seven lean ones, and seven ears of grain which are green and (seven) others which are dry. O people, tell me about my dream, if you do interpret dreams." [43] **They said, "(It seems to be) a mishmash of dreams, and we do not know the interpretation of dreams."** [44]

And said the one who was released out of the two and recalled (Yūsuf) after a long time, "I shall tell you its interpretation. Just send me (to Yūsuf)." [45]

"Yūsuf, O the truthful one, tell us about seven fat cows eaten by seven lean ones, and seven ears of grain which are green and (seven) others which are dry, so that I may go back to the people, that they may know." [46]

He said, "You will grow crops for seven years consecutively. So, what you have harvested, leave it in its ear, except a little which you eat. [47] **Then there shall come after that seven hard years which shall eat up what you have stored for them, except a little which you preserve (to sow).** [48] **Then there shall come after that a year in which people shall have rains and in which they shall extract juices."** [49]

And the king said, "Bring him to me." So, when the messenger came to him, he said, "Go back to your lord and ask him, 'What about the women who cut their hands?' Surely, my Lord knows their guile well." [50]

Commentary

After that, say the verses cited above, Allah Ta'ālā created through the workings of what is unseen (Al-Ghayb), a particular way out for the release of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. This made the king of Egypt see a dream which caused him great anxiety. He assembled the known dream interpretors and soothsayers of his state and asked them to interpret his dream. None of them could understand the dream. The answer they all gave was: أَضْغَاثُ أَحْلَامٍ ۖ وَمَا نَحْنُ بِتَأْوِيلِ الْأَحْلَامِ بِعَالِمِينَ : '(It seems to be) a mishmash of dreams, and we do not know the interpretation of dreams.' The word: أَضْغَاث (*adghāth*) is the plural form of: ضِغْث (*dighth*) which literally refers to a bundle of chaff or husk separated from grain while threshing and is a collection of different kinds of waste material. The sense of their say-

ing was that this dream was somewhat muddled, confused and an admixture of many thoughts and things, and they did not know how to interpret such dreams. Had it been a regular dream, they would have had interpreted it.

While watching the proceedings of this event, that released prisoner recollected the message given by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, though after the passage of a long time in between. He stepped forward and said that he may be able to tell him the interpretation of this dream. At that time, by mentioning the spiritual excellence of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, his expertise in dream interpretation, and his detention in the prison despite his innocence, he submitted that he be allowed to meet him in the prison. The king arranged that for him. He came to Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. To describe this entire episode, the Holy Qur'ān has used only one word: فَأَرْسِلُوْنِ (*fa arsilūnī*).

It means: Just send me (to Yūsuf). Things like the introduction of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, the official permission to see him and then the final arrival in the prison are parts of the event which can be understood contextually. Therefore, they were not described specifically, instead, the story was initiated as follows.

This begins with the address: يُوْسُفُ أَيُّهَا الصِّدِّيْقُ (Yūsuf, O the truthful one ...) in verse 46. It means that this person reached the prison and described his intent in a manner that he first confessed to the truthfulness of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام in word and deed, and then requested him to give an interpretation of a dream. The dream he related was: The king has seen that seven fat cows are being eaten by seven lean ones; and he has seen that there are seven ears of grain which are green and seven others which are dry.

After having related the dream, this person said: لَعَلِّيْٓ أَرْجِعُ إِلَى النَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَعْلَمُوْنَ (so that I may go back to the people, that they may know). It means: If you tell me the interpretation, it is possible that, when I go back to the people and report the interpretation to them, it is likely that, in this way, they get to know your excellence and expertise.

According to Tafsīr Maẓharī, the format of events present in the world of autonomous images is what one sees in dreams. In that world, these images have particular meanings. The edifice of the art of inter-

preting dreams solely depends on knowing what a particular autonomous image in that world means. Allah Ta'ālā had blessed Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام with perfection in this art. As soon as he heard the dream related, he knew that seven fat cows and seven green ears denote seven years during which crops will grow well as usual - because animal-driven ploughing to level land and grow grain has a distinct role in it. Similarly, seven lean cows and seven dry ears of grain mean that, after the first seven years, there will be seven years of severe famine. As for the seven lean cows eating the seven fat ones, it means that the grain stored during the first seven years will all be eaten up during those years of famine - remaining there will be some grain needed for sowing.

Obviously, the dream of the king had told him only about seven years of good crops followed by seven years of famine. But, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام also added to it that, following the year of drought, there will be an year of good rains and crops. Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام came to know about it either because the total number of years of famine were no more than seven whereby, as the customary practice of Allah would have it, the eighth year would be that of rains and crops. According to early commentator, Qatādah, Allah Ta'ālā had Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام know about it through a revelation so that the amount of information they receive could be over and above that which was to be interpreted through the dream - so that the spiritual excellence of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام is further enhanced to become the cause of his being released. Then, another factor was added to this. Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام did not consider it sufficient to limit himself to the technical interpretation of the dream only. The fact was that he also gave them a good counsel based on wisdom and fellow-feeling. He advised them to keep the extra produce yielded during the first seven years within the ears of the crop of wheat, so that it may not be affected by bacteria when old. It is borne by experience that grain while in ears is not affected by bacteria.

Said in verse 48 was: ثُمَّ يَأْتِي مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَٰلِكَ سَبْعٌ شِدَادٌ يَأْكُلْنَ مَا قَدَّمْتُمْ لَهُنَّ (Then there shall come, after that, seven hard years which shall eat up what you have stored for them). Since, seen in the dream was that seven lean cows ate up the seven fat ones, therefore, while giving his interpretation of the dream, he considered it appropriate to say that the years of the famine will eat up what they had stored over the past years. Though, an

year is no eatable, the sense is that the people and animals will eat up during the time of famine whatever grain was stored up during past years.

The context of the story shows that this person, after having found out the interpretation of the dream, returned to the king and told him about it. He was pleased with it and convinced of the intellectual and spiritual excellence of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. But, the Holy Qur'ān has not considered it necessary to mention all these things because they are self-explanatory. What transpired later was described by saying: وَقَالَ الْمَلِكُ ائْتُونِي بِهِ (And the king said, 'Bring him to me.'). It means that the king gave the order that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام be taken out of the prison and be produced before him in his court. So, some emissary of the king arrived at the prison with the message of the king.

Obviously, this was an occasion which should have been welcomed by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. He had been in the prison for a long time, restricted and helpless. He wished to be released. When the message of the king arrived at the prison that he was wanted by the king, he should have welcomed it and got himself ready to go. But, Allah Taʿālā bestows upon His Messengers a very high moral station which other people just cannot comprehend.

The answer he gave to the emissary of the king was:

قَالَ ارْجِعْ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ فَسْئَلْهُ مَا بَالُ النِّسْوَةِ الَّتِي قَطَّعْنَ أَيْدِيَهُنَّ إِنَّ رَبِّي بِكَيْدِهِنَّ عَلِيمٌ

'Go back to your lord and ask him, 'What about the women who cut their hands?' Surely, my Lord knows their guile well.'

Here, by asking this question, the objective is to find out if he is still held in doubt about what had happened then and if he is still taken to be at some fault in that matter.

Also noteworthy at this stage is that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام is, in the present context, talking about the women who had cut their hands - he has not mentioned the wife of the 'Azīz who was the main cause of what had happened. In this conduct of his, there was consideration for the right of his master's house where he lived and where he was brought up, something elementally respected by a person of natural gentleness in him. (Qurṭubī)

Then, not any less important was his real purpose, the need to be exonerated from blame conclusively. If proof was needed, it could have come from those women as well. And it would have not brought much of a disgrace on them. Had they confessed to what was the truth, they would have been, at the most, charged for having given false advice only. This would have been contrary to the case of the wife of the 'Azīz for, if she was made a target of the investigations, it would have proved far more disgraceful for her. And, along with this, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام said: إِنَّ رَبِّي بِكَيْدِهِنَّ عَلِيمٌ (Surely, my Lord knows their guile well). He said this so that the king too will get to know the truth of the matter - which is a delicate approach to register his innocence in it.

On this occasion, reported in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī and the Jami' of Tirmidhi, following a narration of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه, there is a Ḥadīth of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in which he said: If I had been in a prison for so long, as Yūsuf عليه السلام had been, and had I then been summoned for release, I would have accepted it immediately.

And in a report from Imām al-Ṭabarī, the words are: The patience, forbearance and many other noble traits of his character are astonishing. When he was asked to give an interpretation of the dream of the king while still being in prison, had I been in his place, I would have, before giving the interpretation, placed a condition that I should be taken out of the prison before I could give an interpretation of that dream. Again, when the emissary of the king brought in the message of his release, had I been in his place, I would have immediately started walking towards the gate of the prison. (Qurṭubī)

It should be noted that the purpose in this Ḥadīth is to praise the patience, forbearance and the many noble traits of the character of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. But, by comparing the response of Sayyidnā Yūsuf in the present situation which he supposedly attributed to himself, he seems to be saying that had he been there in his place, he would have not elected to delay his release. If this is taken to mean that the Holy Prophet ﷺ is calling the conduct of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام better and, in the case of his own august person, he is saying that had he been in his place, he would have not been able to match that preferred conduct, rather, would have settled for the less preferred, it is obviously not upto the station of the one who is called the foremost among prophets, may peace

be upon them all. To answer that, it may be said that he is, no doubt, the foremost among prophets, but the precedence of some other prophet in a certain part of his conduct would not be considered contrary to it.

In addition to that, as said in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī, it is also possible that the *modus operandi* employed by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام is an outstanding proof of his patience, forbearance and noble traits of character - and is highly commendable at its place. But, the pragmatic method of doing things which the Holy Prophet ﷺ attributed to himself was particularly appropriate to and better for educating his community and offering to its teeming masses the best course of action likely to bring nothing but good to them. The reason in the present setting is that the temperament of kings changes. Placing trust in them is not a wise thing to do. On an occasion such as this, putting conditions or delaying the process is not the appropriate thing to do for common people. The probability remains that the king may change his opinion and one is left to rot in that prison, as it had long been the practice. As for Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, he is a prophet of Allah. As such, he could have been given to understand by Allah Ta'ālā that the delay he would cause would not go against his interest in any way. But, others do not enjoy that degree of closeness to Allah. The Holy Prophet ﷺ was mercy for all the worlds. In his temperament and taste, he had an elemental rapport with the entire creation of Allah. He always preferred to make things easier and better for the great masses of people. To him this was more important. Therefore, he said: If he had the opportunity, he would have not delayed. Allah knows best.

Verses 51 - 52

قَالَ مَا خَطْبُكُنَّ اِذْ رَاوَدْتُّنَّ يُوسُفَ عَنْ نَّفْسِهٖ ؕ قُلْنَ حَاشَ لِلّٰهِ مَا عَلِمْنَا عَلَيْهِ مِنْ سُوْٓءٍ ؕ قَالَتِ امْرَاَتُ الْعَزِيْزِ الْـٰٔنَ حَصْحَصَ الْحَقُّ ز اَنَا رَاوَدْتُّهٗ عَنْ نَّفْسِهٖ وَاِنَّهٗ لَمِنَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿۵۱﴾ ذٰلِكَ لِيَعْلَمَ اَنِّىْ لَمْ اَخُنْهُ بِالْغَيْبِ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَهْدِىْ كَيْدَ الْخَآئِنِيْنَ ﴿۵۲﴾

He (the king) said, "What was your case, O women, when you seduced Yūsuf?" They said, "God forbid, we know of

no evil in him." The governor's wife said, "Now the truth has come to light. I did seduce him, and he is of the truthful." [51] **(Then Yūsuf said,) "That was because he (the governor) may know that I did not betray him in his absence and that Allah does not lead the guile of betrayers to success."** [52]

Commentary

When the royal emissary delivered to Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ the order of his release and invited him to see the king, he asked him to first have his case investigated through the women who had cut their hands. His approach was based on many wise considerations. Allah Taʿālā bestows on His prophets a perfect faith, He also gives them matching intelligence and insight into matters and conditions they have to face. From the tenor of the royal message, Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ had deduced that the king of Egypt was going to confer some honour on him after his release from the prison. At that time, wisdom demanded that the reality of the misconduct for which he was blamed and because of which he was confined into the prison must become fully clear before everyone concerned and no one remains in doubt about his innocence. If this was not done, the outcome would be that people would stop talking for a while because of the royal honour bestowed on him, but these doubts would keep ticking in their hearts making them think that he was the person who had violated the honour of his master. That such conditions could emerge in royal courts and the king becomes influenced by such popular thoughts is not a possibility too far out. Therefore, he considered it necessary that this matter should be straightened out and cleaned up before his release. In the second (52) of the two verses cited above, Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ has himself pointed out to two considerations implied in the way he acted and in the option of delaying his release.

The first consideration was: ذٰلِكَ لِيَعْلَمَ اَنِّی لَمْ اَخُنْهُ بِالْغَيْبِ It means: I delayed my release so that the ʿAzīz of Miṣr comes to know for sure that I did not betray him in any way during his absence.

He was so concerned about making the ʿAzīz of Miṣr become assured of his innocence because he thought it would be terrible if the ʿAzīz of Miṣr continues to harbour doubts in his heart against him and suffer more from them when unable to say much after the royal honour has been conferred on him. If so, he would be displeased with the honour

given to him and far more painful would be the silence he would have to maintain. Since, he had been his master when he lived with him, his pain was too much to bear for Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, intrinsically gentle as he was. Then, it was equally obvious that once the 'Azīz of Miṣr came to believe in his innocence, people will stop talking by themselves.

The second consideration he mentions is: وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَهۡدِىۡ كَيۡدَ الۡخَآئِنِيۡنَ , that is, he asked for investigations to be made in order that people may know that Allah does not lead the guile of betrayers to success.

This statement could be taken to mean that an investigation would expose the betrayal of the betrayers and people would stand warned that betrayers are finally disgraced leaving a lesson for others to stay away from doing things like that in the future. Also possible here is another meaning, that is, had Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام received the royal honours in the same climate of doubt, it may have occured to all watchers that it was not impossible to betray and be honoured at the same time. This would have distorted their faith in fidelity and would have driven away the distaste for betrayal from their hearts. However, it was because of these two considerations that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام did not favour his leaving the prison immediately after having received the message of his release. In fact, there was a touch of royal elegance in his manner when he demanded that his case be investigated first.

A gist of this appears in verse 51: قَالَ مَا خَطۡبُكُنَّ اِذۡ رَاوَدۡتُّنَّ يُوۡسُفَ عَنۡ نَّفۡسِهٖ that is, the king called for the women who had cut their hands and asked them: 'What was your case, O women, when you seduced Yūsuf?' This question of the king tells us that he, on his part, had become certain that the party at fault was not Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. He took those women to be at fault, therefore, he said: 'when you seduced Yūsuf.' After that, the answer given by the women appears as follows:

قُلۡنَ حَاشَ لِلّٰهِ مَا عَلِمۡنَا عَلَيۡهِ مِنۡ سُوۡٓءٍ ؕ قَالَتِ امۡرَاَتُ الۡعَزِيۡزِ الۡـٰٔنَ حَصۡحَصَ الۡحَقُّ اَنَا رَاوَدۡتُّهٗ عَنۡ نَّفۡسِهٖ وَاِنَّهٗ لَمِنَ الصّٰدِقِيۡنَ

They said, 'God forbid, we know of no evil in him.' The governor's wife (also present there) said, 'Now, the truth has come to light. I did seduce him, and he is of the truthful.'

Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had not named the wife of the governor, the 'Azīz of Miṣr, as part of the investigations, but that is how things happen

when Allah *jalla thana'uh* decides to honour someone - people would rise and speak up, come forward and tell the truth, without let or hinderance or demur. So it was on this occasion. The wife of the governor found the courage. She herself proclaimed the truth.

Upto this point, in what you have heard about Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, there is good guidance for our lives and solutions of many problems as well. Eight of such rulings have appeared under our comments on Verses 36-42. An additional six which come out from the present verses are being given below.

Rulings:

9. Allah Ta'ālā Himself manages things for His favoured servants by releasing unseen arrangements which help them achieve their objectives - for He does not like them to become indebted to anyone else created by Him. This was the reason why the message of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام given to the prisoner-to-be-released in which he was asked to mention him to the king was made to be forgotten. Later, in its place, a very special arrangement was made through the workings of the unseen which was designed to serve two objectives at the same time, that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام would not become indebted to anyone's favour to start with, and that the main purpose of his release from the prison would stand achieved with full honour and dignity waiting for him.

To set this unseen plan in motion, the king of Egypt was made to see a disturbing dream, the interpretation of which proved to be beyond the abilities of the experts he had at his court. So, driven by need, recourse had to be made to Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. (Ibn Kathīr)

10. Prophetic conduct is a mirror of high morals. Consider the behaviour of the prisoner who was released. Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had simply asked him to mention his name to the king. But he was unable to do even this much for him. As a result of his neglect, he had to spend seven more years in the prison. Now the same prisoner returns to him after seven years carrying a job of his own, that of finding out the interpretation of the same king's dream, the king to whom he had been asked to mention Sayyidnā Yūsuf's name and which he did not. In a situation like that, it was natural that he should have admonished him, even become angry at him for not having done something so insignificant. But, Sayyid-

nā Yūsuf ﷺ acted in accord with his prophetic morals when he, not to say much about an admonition, did not even mention the episode itself. (Ibn Kathīr & Qurṭubī)

11. Anbiyā' and 'Ulamā' have a dual duty. They should naturally be concerned about the attitude of people towards their 'Ākhirah. They have to help them out with good counsel in this crucial matter by shielding them from deeds which will become their punishment in the 'Ākhirah. Then, along with it, they should also keep a constant watch on the economic condition of Muslims so that they do not suffer - as was done by Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ. On this occasion, he did not consider it sufficient to simply give the interpretation of the dream. Instead, he gave a wise and well-meaning advice as well. He suggested to them that they should leave the entire wheat crop in the ears only taking out what was needed so that the grain so stored would not go bad in later years.

12. An 'Ālim whose guidance is relied upon by Muslims should also watch out that he is not suspected by people - even though such a suspicion be totally unfounded. Efforts should be made to stay safe from this too - because suspicion, whether from ignorance or misunderstanding, does interfere with the work of *da'wah* and teaching they carry out, and goes on to lighten the effect of what is said. (Qurṭubī) The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said: Stay away even from places and occasions of blame. It means that one should try to stay away from places and occasions where and when someone gets an opportunity to put a blame on the next person. This rule applies to Muslims generally. Those who are prominent among them, the 'Ulamā' particularly, they have to observe twice as much precaution. The example of the Holy Prophet ﷺ is before us. He was Divinely protected from all defects and sins. He too made a point to observe this precaution. Once, when one of his blessed wives was passing by a small side-street of Madīnah with him, some Companion appeared before them. While he was still some distance away from them, the Holy Prophet ﷺ told him that such and such wife of his was with him. He did this so that the onlooker does not fall into some doubt that the lady going there was a stranger. In the present situation, Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ, despite orders for his release and the invitation to see the king, tried well before his release that any doubts people may have should be removed.

13. If someone is obligated to a person, because of his rights on him and is, as such, deserving of respect, then, should there come a situation in which, under inevitable circumstances, some sort of action has to be taken against that person, in that case too, giving due consideration to the right and respect of that person, to the best of one's ability, is the duty of a thorough gentleman. This is as it was done by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام to secure his absolvement from the blame. It will be recalled that while referring his matter for investigations, he had not named either the 'Azīz of Miṣr, or his wife. He had simply mentioned the women who had cut their hands. (Qurṭubī) - because, he could still achieve his objective.

14. Taught here are the highest and noblest traits of character. We can see that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had suffered the loss of his freedom for seven or twelve years in the prison but, when he was released, the taking of revenge was a far cry, he did not even bear by the idea that someone would be put to the least inconvenience on his account - as particularly taken into consideration in the verse: لِيَعْلَمَ اَنِّىْ لَمْ اَخُنْهُ بِالْغَيْبِ (so that he may know that I did not betray him in his absence - 52).

Verses 53 - 57

وَمَآ اُبَرِّئُ نَفْسِىْ ۚ اِنَّ النَّفْسَ لَاَمَّارَةٌ ۢ بِالسُّوْٓءِ اِلَّا مَارَحِمَ رَبِّىْ ؕ اِنَّ رَبِّىْ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿٥٣﴾ وَقَالَ الْمَلِكُ ائْتُوْنِىْ بِهٖٓ اَسْتَخْلِصْهُ لِنَفْسِىْ ۚ فَلَمَّا كَلَّمَهٗ قَالَ اِنَّكَ الْيَوْمَ لَدَيْنَا مَكِيْنٌ اَمِيْنٌ ﴿٥٤﴾ قَالَ اجْعَلْنِىْ عَلٰى خَزَآئِنِ الْاَرْضِ ۚ اِنِّىْ حَفِيْظٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿٥٥﴾ وَكَذٰلِكَ مَكَّنَّا لِيُوْسُفَ فِى الْاَرْضِ ۚ يَتَبَوَّاُ مِنْهَا حَيْثُ يَشَآءُ ؕ نُصِيْبُ بِرَحْمَتِنَا مَنْ نَّشَآءُ وَلَا نُضِيْعُ اَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ﴿٥٦﴾ وَلَاَجْرُ الْاٰخِرَةِ خَيْرٌ لِّلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَكَانُوْا يَتَّقُوْنَ ﴿٥٧﴾

"And I do not absolve my inner self of blame. Surely, man's inner self often incites to evil, unless my Lord shows mercy. Certainly, my Lord is the Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful." [53]

And the king said, "Bring him to me, and I shall make him (work) for myself alone." So, when he (the king) talked to him (Yūsuf), he said, "To day you are with us firmly accomodated and trusted." [54] **He said, "Appoint me to (supervise) the treasures of the land. I am indeed a knowledgeable keeper."** [55]

And thus We gave Yūsuf power in the land. He could settle there wherever he wished. We extend Our mercy to whomsoever We will, and We do not waste the reward of those who are good in deeds. [56] **And the reward of the Hereafter is surely better for those who believe and keep fearing Allah.** [57]

Commentary

Claiming Purity for one's own Self is not proper except under special Conditions

Stated in the previous verse (52) was the statement of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام that he did not favour his release from the prison before he has been exonerated through a full investigation of the blame imputed to him so that the governor and the king of Egypt can arrive at full certainty that he was not guilty of any betrayal and that the blame was totally unfounded. In this statement, the reference to his freedom from blame and his purity of conduct was being made as based on an inevitable necessity - which outwardly gave the impression of a pronouncement of personal integrity and purity - and that was something not welcome in the sight of Allah Ta'ālā as is proved from the words of the Holy Qur'ān where it is said: أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ يُزَكُّونَ أَنفُسَهُم بَلِ اللَّهُ يُزَكِّي مَن يَشَاءُ (Have you not seen those who claim sanctity for themselves? In fact, Allah sanctifies whomsoever He wills - 4:49). Again, in Sūrah An-Najm, it was said: فَلَا تُزَكُّوا أَنفُسَكُمْ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنِ اتَّقَىٰ (Do not claim sanctity for your selves; He knows best who it is that guards against evil - 53:32).

It was for this reason that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام has, in the present verse (53), not allowed his plea of innocence in this matter to remain unqualified. As evident, he has stressed upon the reality that by saying what he is saying he has no intention to claim any piety or purity for himself. The truth of the matter is that human self, by nature, keeps pulling everyone to what is bad - except those who are blessed with mercy from the Lord who would make them immunely pure against the evil instigations of their self. They are the blessed prophets. The Qur'ān

calls such immunized selves: نفس مطمئنه (the self or soul at peace) (Al-Fajr: 89:27). Thus, the substance of what Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ said was: In a trial of such magnitude, my remaining safe from sin was no personal achiement of mine. In fact, this was a result of the mercy and help of Allah Ta'ālā alone. Had He not removed evil desires from my heart, I would have become like the rest of human beings who would be prone to surrender before their desires.

According to some narrations, Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ said this sentence because a kind of 'thought' did, after all, emerge in his heart - though, limited to a non-voluntary scruple - but, was an unwelcome slip anyway considering the elegant station of prophethood with which he was blessed. Therefore, he expressly confessed that he did not totally absolve his inner self from blame.

The Three States of Human Self

In this verse (53), a problem which needs to be considered is that it declares every human self as often inciting to evil: أَمَّارَةٌ بِالسُّوْءِ (*ammāratum-bis-sū'*). This is as it appears in a Ḥadīth in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have asked the Ṣaḥābah ﷺ: What do you think about a companion who, if you treat him nicely, feed him, clothe him, still he would throw you in all sorts of troubles - and if you insult him, and keep him hungry and naked, he would do what is good for you? The Ṣaḥābah ﷺ said: Yā Rasūl Allāh, there just cannot be a companion worse than him in this whole world! He said: By Him in whose hands rests my life, your self inside you is such a companion. (Qurṭubī) And it appears in another Ḥadīth: Your greatest enemy is your own self which not only disgraces you by getting you involved in evil deeds, but also makes you run into all sorts of troubles.

However, the cited verse and Ḥadīth narrations given above tell us that human self does usually demand the doing of what is bad from us. But, in Sūrah Al-Qiyāmah, this very human self has been given the honour of being called by the sobrequit: لوامه (*lawwāmah* : reproaching) placing it at a level that the Lord of All Honour has sworn by it: لَآ أُقْسِمُ بِيَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ وَلَآ أُقْسِمُ بِالنَّفْسِ اللَّوَّامَةِ (I do swear by the day of Judgement and I do swear by the reproaching self - 75:1,2). Then, in Sūrah Al-Fajr, by calling this very human self: نفس مطمئنه (*muṭma'innah*: at peace), glad tidings of Jannah have been given: يٰٓاَيَّتُهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ ارْجِعِيٓ اِلٰى رَبِّكِ (O self at peace, come back to

your Lord ... 89:27,28). Thus, the human self has been called as inciting to evil at one place, as reproaching at another, and as being at peace at yet another.

To explain, it can be said that the human self when on its own does incite to evil deeds and is called: Ammārah. But, when one does not follow its dictates because of the fear of Allah and 'Ākhirah, his or her self becomes Lawwāmah, that is, hates evil deeds, repents from them and seeks forgiveness - as is true in the case of the righteous people of the Muslim Ummah at large. And when someone keeps striving hard against his or her self, and brings it to a state where the very urge to turn to evil deeds does not remain there anymore, then, that self becomes what is called: Muṭma'innah (the self at peace). Righteous people can arrive at this state through spiritual strivings. Still, there is no certainty that this state will continue for ever. But, the prophets of Allah, may peace be upon them all, are Divinely blessed with such self at peace without any previous striving - and it always remains constant at that state. Thus, it is in terms of three states of human self that three kinds of acts have been attributed to it.

At the end of the verse (53), it was said: اِنَّ رَبِّى لَغَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ (Certainly, my Lord is the Most-Forgiving,Very-Merciful) which has a hint in the word: غفور : Ghafūr: Most-Forgiving. When the self that incites to evil deeds (Ammārah) is ashamed of its doings, repents, corrects and becomes the reproaching self (Lawwāmah), then, certainly great is the forgiveness of Allah - He will forgive. The word: رحيم (Raḥīm : Very-Merciful) indicates that a person who is blessed with a self at peace (Muṭma'innah), that too is nothing but a result of the mercy of Allah.

In the next verse (54) which begins with the words: وَقَالَ الْمَلِكُ ائْتُوْنِى بِه (Bring him to me ...), it has been said, when the king of Egypt investigated about the event, as requested by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, Zulaikhā and all other women concerned with it confessed to the truth. The king, then, ordered that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام be brought to him so that he can appoint him as his personal adviser. According to the royal order, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was brought with full honours from the prison to the royal court. When he got an idea of his full potential by talking to him, the king said: 'Today you are with us firmly accomodated and trusted.'

Imām al-Baghāwī reports: When the emissary of the king arrived again at the prison to convey the invitation of the king to Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, he prayed for all inmates of the prison, took a ritual bath and donned a new dress. When he arrived at the royal court, the *du'ā'* he made was:

حَسْبِیْ رَبِّیْ مِنْ دُنْیَایَ وَحَسْبِیْ رَبِّیْ مِنْ خَلْقِهٖ عَزَّ جَارُهٗ وَجَلَّ ثَنَاؤُهٗ وَلَآ اِلٰهَ غَیْرُهٗ

For me sufficient is my Lord against my world and, for me, sufficient is my Lord against the whole creation. Mighty is he who comes under His protection; and most sublime is His praise; and there is no deity worthy of worship other than Him.

When he reached inside the court, he turned to Allah again, prayed again in the same spirit and greeted the court in Arabic saying: اَلسَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَةُ اللهِ (Peace on you and the mercy of Allah). For the king, the prayer he made was in Hebrew. The king, though he knew many languages, was not aware of Arabic and Hebrew. It was Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام who told him that the Salām was in Arabic and the Du'ā', in Hebrew.

It also appears in a narration that the king talked to Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام in many different languages and Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام replied to him in the language spoken by him, adding Arabic and Hebrew as two additional languages which the king did not know. This episode greatly increased respect for Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام in the heart of the king.

After that, the king wished to hear him give the interpretation of his dream directly before him. In response, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام first described before him particular details of his dream which he himself had not told anyone about, and then told him the interpretation as he had wished.

The king was astonished. Though, it was not so much about the interpretation given. What made him really wonder was how could he find out all those details. After that, the king sought his counsel on what should he do next. The advice given by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was: During the first seven years of expected heavy rains, you should have arrangements made so that cultivation and crops yield their highest. This could be done by giving incentives to people to make sure that their maximum land areas come under cultivation and crops turn out plentiful

- and let them keep storing one fifth of their total produce with them. Thus, the people of Egypt would have stored with them enough for the seven years of famine and you would not have to worry on their account. Keep whatever supply of grains comes to the government through fixed taxes or state lands stored for those coming from outside the country - because, this famine will be wide-spread. People living in adjoining countries would need your help. At that time, you may come to the help of many a deprived people around you by giving it to them. Even if you were to put an ordinary price on it, you can be sure of collecting in the government treasury the amount of wealth that had never been there. The king was immensely pleased with this advice, but did wonder how would such a stupendous plan be managed, and who would do that. Thereupon, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام said: اجْعَلْنِي عَلَى خَزَائِنِ الْأَرْضِ إِنِّي حَفِيظٌ عَلِيمٌ that is, 'appoint me to the treasures of the land (which includes the produce of the land) for I am indeed a knowledgeable keeper (fully capable of conserving and guarding it, and aware of where to spend and how much to spend). (Qurṭubī & Maẓharī)

In the two words appearing here (*ḥafīẓ* and *'alīm*), Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام has combined together all functional virtues a genuine Finance Minister should have. To make it simple, it can be said that the chief trustee and manager of a national treasury needs to do two things: (1) He should not allow government property to be wasted, in fact, should collect, conserve and protect it fully. Then, he should see to it that it is not spent on non-deserving people, or on false heads of expenditure. (2) Then, he should not fall short in spending what has to be spent and where it has to be spent and, at the same time, he should not spend more than the quantum of the need. Thus, the word: حَفِيظٌ (*ḥafīẓ* : keeper) is the full guarantee of the first need, and the word: عَلِيمٌ (*'alīm* : knowledgeable), that of the second.

Though the king of Egypt was personally attached to Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام because of his many excellences, honesty and wisdom, but he did not actually hand over the office of the Finance Ministry to him. However, he did make him stay with him as his honoured guest for a year.

After the passage of one year, not only that he appointed him to be the Finance Minister, but also entrusted to him the management of the rest of his state affairs. Perhaps, he thought that giving such major of-

fice to him without first getting acquainted with his manners, morals and habits by keeping him close to him at his house was not appropriate.

Some commentators have written, when Qiṭfīr (Potiphar), the husband of Zulaikhā died during this period, the king of Egypt arranged her marriage with Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. Then, he said to her: Is it not better than what you had wished? Zulaikhā confessed to her being at fault, giving her excuse for having done what she did.

Allah *jalla thana'uh* granted them a life full of honour and comfort. According to historical narrations, they were also blessed with two sons, named Ifrā'īm and Manshā.

According to some narrations, after the marriage, Allah Ta'ālā had put in the heart of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام more love for Zulaikhā than she ever had for him. So much so that there came a time when Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام complained to her: Why is it that you do not love me as much as you did before? Zulaikhā told him: Through you I am now blessed with the love of Allah Ta'ālā. With this in view, other relationships and thoughts seem to have dimmed out. This episode has been described, along with some other details, in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī and Maẓharī.

Many teachings and guidelines which appear as part of the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, and are good for all human beings, have been talked about earlier. Some others are being mentioned as follows:

Rulings and Guidelines

1. In the saying of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام: وَمَآ أُبَرِّئُ نَفْسِي (And I do not absolve my inner self of blame - 53), there is good guidance for the servants of Allah who fear Him and are righteous, pious and abstaining. They should realize that they should not, when they have the Taufīq of remaining safe from some sin, wax proud about it, never taking those involved with sins as low and inferior. Instead of that, they should ponder over the saying of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, let it go into their heart and become its fixed response - that is, 'this is no personal achievement of ours; it is only Allah Ta'ālā whose grace stopped our inner self, which incites to evil, overcome us - otherwise, this self of man would often pull him towards deeds which are evil.'

Seeking a Government Office is Not Permissible - Except under Particular Conditions

2. From: اِجْعَلْنِیْ عَلٰی خَزَآئِنِ الْاَرْضِ (Appoint me to (supervise) the treasures of the land - 54), we learn that the seeking of an office or position with the government is permissible under particular conditions - as was done by Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ when he sought to be appointed to supervise and manage the treasures of the land.

But, in the light of details regarding this matter, when it is known about a particular office that no one else would be able to manage it well - and one's honest self-assessment indicates that he will be able to discharge the responsibilities of that office well enough, and that there is, in it, no danger of getting involved in some sin - then, this would be a situation in which taking the initial step of seeking the office is also permissible, subject to the condition that the reason for doing this should not be the love of recognition, power and wealth. Instead, the main purpose behind this should be to serve Allah's creation genuinely and to carry to them their rights with justice and equity - as it was with Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ whose sole purpose was no other but this. But, wherever such a situation does not prevail, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has prohibited the seeking of any government office on one's own. And he did not give an office to anyone who himself made a request for it.

It appears in a Ḥadīth of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said to Sayyidnā 'Abd-ur-Raḥmān ibn Samurah ؓ: Never seek an office (of authority or responsibility) because even if you get it by asking for it, the support of Allah Ta'ālā, through which you could stay safe from slips and errors, will not be there. And if you get an office without the asking and seeking, help and support of Allah Ta'ālā will be there, because of which, you will be able to fulfill the rights of that office as due.

Similarly, according to another Ḥadīth of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, someone requested the Holy Prophet ﷺ that he be appointed to a certain office. To him, he said:

اِنَّا لَنْ نَّسْتَعْمِلَ عَلٰی عَمَلِنَا مَنْ اَرَادَهٗ

'We would not give our office to a person who asks for it.'

The Seeking of Office by Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ was based on a Wise and Benign Consideration

But, the case of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ is different. He knew that the king of Egypt is a disbeliever. So is his staff. The country was going to be hit by a famine. At that time, selfish people would have no mercy for the creation of Allah and millions would die of hunger. There was no one around who could be relied upon to do justice with the rights of common people. Therefore, he himself made a request for that office of responsibility - though, he had to support his request by pointing out to some areas of his expertise, as a matter of necessity, of course, so that the king becomes satisfied and entrusts the office with him.

Even today, if someone feels that there is an office of government for which there is no one available, specially someone who would discharge the responsibilities of that office as due - and his honest self-assessment assures that he would be able to discharge the responsibilities of that office as due - then, it is permissible for him, in fact, it is obligatory (*wājib*) on him to seek that office. But, this will not be to satisfy his own desire for recognition, power or wealth. Instead, it has to be for the purpose of serving people, a mission which relates to the intention and plan in the heart, something which is all too open before Allah Taʻālā. (Qurṭubī)

That the rightly-guided Khulafā', may Allah be pleased with them all, assumed the responsibilities of the office of Khilāfah was because they knew that no one else would be able to discharge that responsibility at that time as due. The differences attributed to Sayyidnā 'Alī, Sayyidnā Muʻāwiyah, Sayyidnā Ḥusain, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Zubayr and others ﷺ were all based on that conviction. Everyone of them thought that he would be the one to discharge the responsibilities of Khilāfah at that time with more wisdom and strength and better than others. None of them was motivated to seek recognition, power or wealth as his principal aim.

Is It Permissible to Accept an Office of a Kāfir Government?

3. Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ accepted to serve under the king of Egypt, though he was a disbeliever. This tells us that accepting an office of government headed by a disbelieving or sinning ruler is permissible under particular conditions.

But, Imām al-Jaṣṣāṣ, while commenting on the verse: فَلَنْ اَكُوْنَ ظَهِيْرًا

لِّلْمُجْرِمِينَ (never shall I be a help to those who sin - 28:17), has written: In the light of this verse, it is not permissible to help the unjust and the disbelieving. And it is obvious that, accepting an office in their government amounts to becoming a part of their function and providing help to them. Such help has been declared as Ḥarām (forbidden) in many verses of the Holy Qur'ān.

As for the position of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام in this matter, not only that he accepted the office, in fact, asked for it. According to the respected Tafsīr authority, Mujāhid, the reason for this was that the king of Egypt had become a believer, a Muslim, at that time. Since there is no proof in the Qur'ān and Sunnah which could support this proposition, the majority of commentators have given another reason for his action. According to them, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had already found out about the king of Egypt that he would not interfere in the performance of his duties. He will not compel him to enforce laws contrary to his faith. He will give him full rights to act in accordance with his discretion and in line with the law of truth. With such rights and powers in hand when one is not compelled to obey a law counter to his Sharī'ah, it is possible that one may serve under someone unjust and disbelieving - though, the repugnance of having to help and cooperate with that unjust and disbelieving person remains where it initially was. But, there are circumstances in which it is not possible to remove such a person from the office of power held by him. Then, on the other hand, if there be a strong apprehension that by not accepting the office under that person, rights of many servants of Allah will be wasted, or that they may be oppressed, then, this would be a situation of compulsion, and there is this much room for cooperation in the matter. This stands proved from the conduct of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام which is covered by the provision that one would not have to commit something which goes against the Sharī'ah one believes in - because, this will not be helping him in his sin, though, it may do so as a remote cause. But, as for the remote causes of help, there is room in the Sharī'ah under given conditions. Details have been described by Muslim jurists. Many righteous elders among the Ṣaḥābah and Ṭābi'īn have faced such conditions and it stands proved that they, under such conditions, have accepted to work on offices given by oppressive rulers. (Qurṭubī & Maẓharī)

'Allāma Al-Māwardī, in his book about the political implications of religious law has said: Some commentators, on the basis of what Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام did in this matter, have ruled the accepting of office with rulers who do not believe and are unjust as permissible, subject to the condition that one does not have to do anything against the Sharī'ah. Other commentators have ruled that it is not permissible even with this condition attached, because this too supports and promotes people who are unjust and oppressive. They give many interpretations of what Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام did. The substance is that this conduct of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was particular to his person, or to his Sharī'ah. Now, it is not permissible for others. However, the majority of Muslim scholars and jurists have gone by the first proposition and ruled it as permissible.(Qurṭubī)

According to Tafsīr Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ, when it is known that, should the learned and the righteous refuse to accept such office, rights of people will be wasted and justice will not be done, then, accepting such office is permissible, in fact, it is an act of *thawāb* - subject to the condition that, while working on it, one is not compelled to do things which are against the Sharī'ah.

A Functional Statement of Some Personal Ability is Not Included under Self-Sanctification prohibited by the Holy Qur'ān

4. The saying of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام: إِنِّي حَفِيظٌ عَلِيمٌ (I am a knowledgeable keeper) proves that mentioning some personal qualities, expertise or ability when there is a need to do that is not included under self-sanctification which has been prohibited in the Holy Qur'ān - of course, subject to the condition that such mentioning is not prompted by pride, arrogance or boastfulness.

The Objective of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was to Establish the Dīn of Allah

Said in verse 55 was:

وَكَذٰلِكَ مَكَّنَّا لِيُوسُفَ فِي الْأَرْضِ ۚ يَتَبَوَّأُ مِنْهَا حَيْثُ يَشَاءُ ۚ نُصِيبُ بِرَحْمَتِنَا مَنْ نَشَاءُ
وَلَا نُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

And thus We gave Yūsuf power in the land. He could settle there wherever he wished. We extend Our mercy to whomsoever We will, and We do not waste the reward of those who are good in deeds.

For details, it can be said that, after an experimental period of one year, the king of Egypt arranged a special celebration in his court to which he invited all officials and dignitaries of the state. Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was brought into the gathering with a crown on his head. Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was given, not simply the charge of the state treasury, but the charge of virtually the whole state. Having done this, the king himself retired from active involvement with the affairs of the state. (Qurṭubī, Maẓharī and others)

Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام managed the affairs of the state with such ability that no one had any reason to complain. The whole country loved him. Peace and prosperity prevailed all over. Even Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام himself faced no problems or pains in executing the many responsibilities of the government.

Tafsīr authority, Mujāhid, has said: Since Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, under the surface grandeur of his rule over the country, aimed at nothing but that the command of Allah Ta'ālā be carried out there and that the faith given by Him becomes firmly established. Therefore, he never lost sight of his basic objective, that is, inviting the king of Egypt to faith and Islām. As time passed, his efforts bore fruits by the grace of Allah and the king of Egypt too became a believing Muslim.

Shun Sin, Have Faith, Keep Fearing Allah: The Reward of the Hereafter is Yours Too

At the end, verse 57 declares:

وَلَأَجْرُ الْآخِرَةِ خَيْرٌ لِّلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَكَانُوا يَتَّقُونَ

> And the reward of the Hereafter is surely better for those who keep fearing Allah.

It means that Allah had already blessed Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام with temporal power, wealth and an ideal state - waiting for him were the high ranks of the 'Ākhirah as well. Then, it has also been made clear that the rewards and ranks of the present world and the world-to-come were not restricted to Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. This was an open invitation to everyone who elects to believe, abstain from evil and keep fearing Allah.

During his tenure of rule, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had accomplished great projects designed to bring peace and comfort to the masses of his people. Their parallel would be hard to find. When, according to his interpretation of the dream, seven years of prosperity passed by and the famine set in, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام abandoned eating to his fill. People said: You have the treasures of the land of Egypt in your possession, yet you go hungry? He said: I do this so that the feeling for the hunger of my common people does not disappear from my heart. He even took an administrative step in this matter. The royal cooks were ordered to prepare only one meal a day, at lunch time, so that the residents of the royal palace too could somehow share in the mass hunger of their people!

Verses 58 - 62

وَجَآءَ إِخْوَةُ يُوسُفَ فَدَخَلُوا عَلَيْهِ فَعَرَفَهُمْ وَهُمْ لَهُ مُنكِرُونَ ﴿٥٨﴾
وَلَمَّا جَهَّزَهُم بِجَهَازِهِمْ قَالَ ائْتُونِي بِأَخٍ لَّكُم مِّنْ أَبِيكُمْ ۚ أَلَا تَرَوْنَ
أَنِّيٓ أُوفِي الْكَيْلَ وَأَنَا خَيْرُ الْمُنزِلِينَ ﴿٥٩﴾ فَإِن لَّمْ تَأْتُونِي بِهِ فَلَا كَيْلَ
لَكُمْ عِندِي وَلَا تَقْرَبُونِ ﴿٦٠﴾ قَالُوا سَنُرَاوِدُ عَنْهُ أَبَاهُ وَإِنَّا لَفَاعِلُونَ
﴿٦١﴾ وَقَالَ لِفِتْيَانِهِ اجْعَلُوا بِضَاعَتَهُمْ فِي رِحَالِهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَعْرِفُونَهَآ إِذَا
انقَلَبُوٓا إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿٦٢﴾

And came the brothers of Yūsuf and appeared before him. He recognized them, while they were not to recognize him. [58]

And when he equipped them with their provisions, he said, 'Bring to me your step brother from your father's side. Do you not see that I give full measure and I am the best of hosts? [59] **Still, if you do not bring him to me, then you deserve no measure from me, nor shall you come even close to me."** [60]

They said, "We shall persuade his father about him and we will certainly do it." [61]

And he (Yūsuf) said to his boys, "put their capital in their camel-packs. Perhaps they will recognize it when they are back in their family. Perhaps they will come

back." [62]

Commentary

Mentioned in the previous verses was how Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ was blessed by Allah Ta'ālā with full control over the country of Egypt. Described in the verses cited above is the coming of the brother of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ to procure foodgrains. As a corollary, it was also mentioned that the brothers who came to Egypt were ten in number. The younger brother, the real brother of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ was not with them on this trip.

The details of the story in between were not given by the Qur'ān since they can be understood contextually.

The details described by Ibn Kathīr with reference to Tafsīr authorities, Suddiyy, Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq and others, even if borrowed from historical and Israelite reports, may be acceptable in a certain measure since indicators in this direction are available in the sequential arrangement of the Qur'ān itself.

The authorities cited above have said that following the ministerial authority of Egypt having come into the hands of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ, the first seven years were, true to the interpretation of the dream, years of great prosperity and well-being for the entire country. Crops were abundant and matching were the efforts to produce and conserve. After that, the second part of this very dream unfolded itself. Came the famine which continued for full seven years. Since, at that time, Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ knew in advance that this famine will continue for seven years without any break, therefore, he made arrangements to have the stock of grains present in the country stored very carefully during the initial year of the famine and saw to it that it remained preserved and protected fully and satisfactorily.

As for the local people of Egypt, foodgrain sufficient for their need was stored with them well ahead of the time. When famine spread and people living in areas around Egypt started coming there, Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ set up a working system of selling grains to them according to which he would not give to one person more than one camel-load of grain. Its quantity, according to al-Qurṭubī, was one Wasaq, that is, sixty Ṣā' which, according to our weight, comes to approximately 1,953

grams.

Such was his concern for this responsibility that he himself used to oversee the sale of foodgrains. As said earlier, this famine was not limited to Egypt only. It was spread out to areas far away. The land of Can'aan, a part of Palestine - the homeland of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام with one of its cities still surviving by the name Khalīl, known for the resting places of blessed prophets Ibrāhīm, Isḥāq, Ya'qūb and Yūsuf عليهم السلام - even this could not escape the ravages of the famine. Naturally, the family of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام became anxious. That was a time when news had gone around that Egypt was the place where foodgrains could be procured on payment. Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام had also come to know that the king of Egypt was a man of mercy and would let those who needed it have it. So, he asked his sons too to go and get some grains from Egypt.

And as they had also come to know that one person is not given more than a camel-load of grains, it was decided to send all sons on the trip. But, the youngest brother, Benyamin, the real brother of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام with whom Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام had become very attached since the disappearance of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was held back by the father for his comfort and care.

Traveling from Can'aan, the ten brothers reached Egypt. Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام appeared in his royal robe as the master of the land before his brothers who had sold him as a seven year old child to the people of the caravan - an event over which, at that time, according to Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, forty years had passed. (Qurṭubī, Maẓharī)

It is obvious that the passage of such a long time would cause great changes in the looks of a person. It could have never occured to them that a child once sold as a slave could become the king or minister of some country. Therefore, the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام did not recognize him. But, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام did. Therefore, this is what the expression: فَعَرَفَهُمْ وَهُمْ لَهُ مُنْكِرُوْنَ (He recognized them, while they were not to recognize him - 58) appearing in the opening verse means - for in the Arabic language, the real meaning of the word: اِنْكَار (*inkār*) is 'to take as stranger.' Therefore, the word: مُنْكِرُوْنَ (*munkirūn*) in the text comes to mean 'unable to recognize.'

About the recognizing of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, Ibn Kathīr has said, on the authority of Suddiyy: When these ten brothers reached the court, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام interrogated them as is done with suspicious people so that they would state the truth clearly. First of all, he asked them: You are not residents of Egypt. You speak Hebrew. How did you get here? They said: There is a great famine in our country. We have heard about you, therefore, we are here to get some grain. Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام asked again: How do we know that you are telling the truth, and that you are not an enemy spy? Then, all brothers said: God forbid, we can never do that. We are the sons of the Prophet of Allah Ya'qūb عليه السلام who lives in Can'aan.

The purpose of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام in asking these questions was to make his brothers open up and relate events fully. So, then he asked: Does your father have any child other than you? They said: We were twelve brothers out of whom one of the younger brothers disappeared in the forest. Our father loved him most. After him, he became attached to his younger real brother and that is why he did not send him along with us on this trip so that he can be a source of his comfort.

After having heard what they said, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام gave orders that they be lodged as royal guests and given grains according to set rules.

Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had established a standing rule of procedure while distributing grains. He would not give more than one camel-load of grains to one person at one time. But, once this was consumed as calculated, he would allow it to be given a second time.

Having found out all those details from his brothers, it was only natural that he would think about a second visit by them. For this purpose in sight, one obvious arrangement he made was to tell his brothers:

ائْتُونِی بِأَخٍ لَّكُمْ مِّنْ أَبِيكُمْ أَلَا تَرَوْنَ أَنِّیٓ أُوفِی الْكَيْلَ وَأَنَا خَيْرُ الْمُنْزِلِينَ

Bring to me your step brother from your father's side. Do you not see that I give full measure and I am the best of hosts? - 59

And, along with it, he gave them a warning as well:

فَإِنْ لَّمْ تَأْتُونِی بِهٖ فَلَا كَيْلَ لَكُمْ عِنْدِی وَلَا تَقْرَبُونِ

Still, if you do not bring him to me, then you deserve no measure from me [because it will prove that you have lied to me, and thus], nor shall you come even close to me. - 60

Then, he made a secret arrangement as well. He ordered his young workers on the job to collect the cash, jewelry and any other articles paid by his brothers as the cost of the grains, and tie it up secretly with their supplies in the camel-packs in a way that they should remain unaware of it while there - so that, when they open their packs after having arrived home, and find their cash and jewelry back in their hands, they may have a reason to return for grains once again.

Ibn Kathīr has described several possibilities as to why Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ acted the way he did: (1) It occured to him that, perhaps they may not have anything other than the cash and jewelry they had brought. If so, they would be unable to come for the grains again. (2) Perhaps, he could not bear by the idea of taking the price of foodstuff from his father and brothers, therefore, he paid the amount due from his pocket and had it deposited in the royal treasury, and returned their cash and jewelry back to them. (3) He knew when their cash and jewelry is found in their supplies back home and his father learns about it, then he, being a prophet of Allah, would consider what has been thus found to be a trust of the Egyptian Treasury and would certainly have it returned, therefore, the return of their brothers would become more assured.

However, it can be said briefly that Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ made all these arrangements so that his brothers could keep coming to him in the future and that he could also meet his younger real brother.

A Ruling:

From this event relating to Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ, we learn that, should the economic condition of a country worsen to the limit that the failure of the government to check the decline may cause people to become deprived of the basic necessities of life, then, the government is justified in taking over the regulation and control of such supplies and it could also fix an appropriate price of foodgrains. Muslim jurists have explained this provision in details.

A Special Note:

There is something which strikes as unusual in this story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. We see that his exalted father, the prophet of Allah, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام was so affected by his separation that constant weeping made him lose his eyesight. Then, on the other hand, we have Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, a prophet and messenger of Allah like him, one who naturally loved his father and knew his rights on him fully well. But, during this long period of forty years, how was it that it did not occur to him even once that his father must be missing him miserably and that it would be nice to let him know about his well-being through some source. The sending of such information was not too far out a proposition even when he had reached Egypt as a slave. Then, once he was in the home of the 'Azīz of Miṣr, he had the freedom, comfort and time to do that. It was not so difficult to send a message to his home through some source. For that matter, this could have been done when he was in the prison as well. Who does not know that messages from inside those walls can be delivered anywhere, near or far? Then, came the time when Allah Ta'ālā took him out of the prison with all honours and the authority over the land of Egypt became his own. That was a time when he should have presented himself before his father as his primary task. And had it been against some state consideration, he could have at the least sent an emissary to comfort his father, something ordinary given the status he had.

But, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام has not been reported to have even intended to do that. Not to say much about his intention, when his brothers came to procure foodgrains, he sent them back without telling them about the real situation.

These are conditions which cannot be imagined about an ordinary human being. How was it possible for an exalted messenger of Allah to bear by this situation?

The only answer to this surprising silence which kept returning to me was that may be Allah Ta'ālā, in His infinite wisdom, had stopped Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام from exposing himself. This was found authetically clarified in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī that Allah Ta'ālā had, through a Waḥy (revelation), stopped Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام from sending any news about himself to his home.

It is Allah alone who knows the workings of His infinite wisdom. To comprehend it all is humanly impossible. But, once in a while, there may be something one could see through. Here too, as it appears, the real consideration of wisdom was to complete the trial of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb (عليه السلام). This was the reason why, at the very initial stage of the event, when Sayyidnā Ya'qūb (عليه السلام) had realized that his son, Yūsuf, was not eaten up by a wolf but that it was some trick of his brothers, the natural demand of the situation was that he should have visited the place of the reported incident and made necessary investigations. But, as Allah Ta'ālā would have it, he was unable to think on those lines. Then, after a long passage of time, he also said to his brothers: 'Go and search for Yūsuf and his brother.' When Allah Ta'ālā wills to do something, this is the way He would put all its causes together.

Verses 63 - 66

فَلَمَّا رَجَعُوٓا إِلَىٰٓ أَبِيهِمْ قَالُوا يَـٰٓأَبَانَا مُنِعَ مِنَّا الْكَيْلُ فَأَرْسِلْ مَعَنَآ أَخَانَا
نَكْتَلْ وَإِنَّا لَهُۥ لَحَـٰفِظُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾ قَالَ هَلْ ءَامَنُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ إِلَّا كَمَآ أَمِنتُكُمْ
عَلَىٰٓ أَخِيهِ مِن قَبْلُ ۖ فَاللَّهُ خَيْرٌ حَـٰفِظًا ۖ وَهُوَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّٰحِمِينَ ﴿٦٤﴾
وَلَمَّا فَتَحُوا مَتَـٰعَهُمْ وَجَدُوا بِضَـٰعَتَهُمْ رُدَّتْ إِلَيْهِمْ ۖ قَالُوا يَـٰٓأَبَانَا
مَا نَبْغِى ۖ هَـٰذِهِۦ بِضَـٰعَتُنَا رُدَّتْ إِلَيْنَا ۖ وَنَمِيرُ أَهْلَنَا وَنَحْفَظُ أَخَانَا
وَنَزْدَادُ كَيْلَ بَعِيرٍ ۖ ذَٰلِكَ كَيْلٌ يَسِيرٌ ﴿٦٥﴾ قَالَ لَنْ أُرْسِلَهُۥ مَعَكُمْ حَتَّىٰ
تُؤْتُونِ مَوْثِقًا مِّنَ اللَّهِ لَتَأْتُنَّنِى بِهِۦٓ إِلَّآ أَن يُحَاطَ بِكُمْ ۖ فَلَمَّآ ءَاتَوْهُ
مَوْثِقَهُمْ قَالَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ مَا نَقُولُ وَكِيلٌ ﴿٦٦﴾

So, when they returned to their father, they said, "O our father, the (required) measure (of grain) has been withheld from us, therefore, send our brother with us, so that we may receive our full measure. And, of course, we are his guards." [63]

He said, "Shall I trust you about him as I trusted you earlier about his brother? Well, Allah is the best guardian and He is the most-merciful of all the merciful." [64]

And when they opened their baggage, they found their capital given back to them. They said, "Our father, what else do we want? Here is our capital given back to us, and we shall bring food to our family, protect our brother and add the measure of one camel more. That is an easy measure." [65]

He said, "I shall never send him with you until you give me a pledge in the name of Allah that you will definitely bring him back to me, unless you are overpowered (by circumstances)." So, when they gave him their pledge, he said, "Allah is watchful over what we say." [66]

Commentary

The verses appearing above carry the remaining segment of the event, that is, when the brothers of Yūsuf returned home with foodgrains from Egypt, they told their father about what had happened there, specially about the condition imposed by the 'Azīz of Miṣr that they would receive foodgrains in the future only if they would bring their younger brother with them. So they requested their father to let Benyamin also accompany them in order that they may receive foodgrains in the future as well. Then, they would be there to protect this brother of theirs at its best with assurance that they would see to it that he faces no inconvenience during the trip.

Their father asked them if they wanted him to trust them with Benyamin as he had done before with their brother, Yūsuf. The drive of his remark makes it obvious that he did not trust their word. He had trusted them once, and suffered - for they had promised in the same words spoken earlier that they would guard him.

This much was an answer to what they had said. But, he had the need of the family in sight, and because he was blessed with the quality of trust in the Divine dispension of matters, he talked about the reality as he knew it saying, in effect, that man has no control over his gain or loss unless Allah Ta'ālā Himself so wills. And when He wills it, it cannot be diverted or averted by anyone. Therefore, it is incorrect to place one's trust in the created beings of Allah in this matter and equally inappropriate is the dependence on their complaints to settle it.

Therefore, he said: فَاللّٰهُ خَيْرٌ حٰفِظًا (Well, Allah is the best guardian - 64), that is, he had already seen the outcome of their guardianship earlier,

now he was placing his trust in Allah Ta'ālā alone as his guardian. Then, he added: وَهُوَ اَرْحَمُ الرّٰحِمِيْنَ (and He is the most merciful of all the merciful - 64), that is, only from Him, he could hope that He would look at his old age and the sorrows he was surrounded with and would not let more shocks shake him.

In short, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام did not rely on apparent conditions and on the pledges given by his sons, but did agree to send his youngest son with his brothers solely because he had now placed his trust in Allah Ta'ālā.

At this stage, verse 65 opens with the words:

وَلَمَّا فَتَحُوْا مَتَاعَهُمْ وَجَدُوْا بِضَاعَتَهُمْ رُدَّتْ اِلَيْهِمْ ؕ قَالُوْا يٰٓاَبَانَا مَا نَبْغِيْ ؕ هٰذِهٖ بِضَاعَتُنَا رُدَّتْ اِلَيْنَا ۚ وَنَمِيْرُ اَهْلَنَا وَنَحْفَظُ اَخَانَا وَنَزْدَادُ كَيْلَ بَعِيْرٍ ؕ ذٰلِكَ كَيْلٌ يَّسِيْرٌ

And when they opened their baggage, they found their capital given back to them. They said, "Our father, what else do we want? Here is our capital given back to us, and we shall bring food to our family, protect our brother and add the measure of one camel more. That is an easy measure."

It will be noticed that, prior to this verse, the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام were talking about what had happened to them on their journey, before they had opened their baggage. After that, when they opened the baggage and saw that their entire capital with which they had paid for the foodgrains was present inside the baggage, they realized that this was not done by mistake, in fact, their capital had been returned to them. Therefore, they said: رُدَّتْ اِلَيْنَا (given back to us). Then, to their father they said: مَا نَبْغِيْ (what else do we want?) that is, 'the grains are here and what we paid for it has also been returned to us. Now we should definitely go back there in peace with our brother because the way we have been treated shows that the 'Azīz of Miṣr is kind to us. We should have no apprehensions. It is the time that we go and bring foodgrains for the family and take care of our brother too. That we shall get an additional load of grains in the name of our brother will help - because, whatever we have brought in the present trip is much less than our needs and is likely to be consumed soon.

One sense of the sentence: مَا نَبْغِيْ (*mā nabghī*) spoken by the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام is practically the same as given immediately

above, that is, 'what else do we want?' And if, in this sentence, the letter: مَا (*mā* : not) is taken in the sense of negation, it could also mean that the sons of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام told their father: Now that we have the price of the grain with us, we do not want anything from you. You just send our brother with us.

After hearing what they said, their father answered: لَنْ أُرْسِلَهُ مَعَكُمْ حَتّٰى تُؤْتُوْنِ مَوْثِقًا مِّنَ اللّٰهِ لَتَأْتُنَّنِيْ بِهٖ (I shall never send Benyamin with you until you give me a pledge in the name of Allah that you will definitely bring him back to me - 66). But, could someone with the ability to see reality ever miss to realize that man, no matter how strong he may be, is, after all, dependent and helpless before the all-pervading power of Allah *jalla thanā'uh* - how then, and on what basis, would he give a pledge to bring back someone safe? The reason is that he does not have the absolute power and control to accomplish it. Therefore, when Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام asked his sons to give him a pledge, he added an exception to it by saying: اِلَّآ اَنْ يُّحَاطَ بِكُمْ 'unless you are overpowered (by circumstances).' Early Tafsīr authority, Mujāhid explains it as: unless all of you are killed. Another early Tafsīr authority, Qatādah says that it means: unless you become totally helpless and overpowered.

In the last sentence of verse 66, it was said: فَلَمَّآ اٰتَوْهُ مَوْثِقَهُمْ قَالَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى مَا نَقُوْلُ وَكِيْلٌ (So, when they gave him their pledge, he said, "Allah is watchful over what we say"), that is, when his sons gave the pledge as desired on solemn oaths to satisfy their father, then, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام told them that the giving and taking of solemn oaths being undertaken by them is something which ultimately rests with Allah Ta'ālā alone. It is with His *taufīq* only that one person can keep the other protected and thus become enabled to fulfill his pledge. Otherwise, man is helpless. He has nothing under his personal control.

There are many elements of guidance and injunctions for people in the verses explained above. Please take note of them and keep them in mind.

Notes of Guidance

1. If children make mistakes, relations should not be cut off with them. One should, rather, think of ways to reform their conduct. The mistakes made by the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام were serious.

They were sins, major and grave:

(1) They lied to their father and made him agree to send Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام for an outing with them.

(2) They gave a pledge to their father, then broke it.

(3) They treated their young and innocent brother cruelly.

(4) They caused extreme pain to their father and did not care much about it.

(5) They conspired to kill an innocent human being.

(6) They sold a free human being forcibly and unjustly.

These were extreme and severe crimes which demanded that Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, once he had understood that they had lied and wasted the life of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام knowingly, should have severed his relationship with these sons, or turned them out of his house. But, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام did not do that, rather, let them keep living with him, even sent them to Egypt to bring back foodgrains from there. On top of this came the situation when they had another opportunity to prevail upon their father once again in the case of their youngest brother and on this occasion too he yielded to them and allowed them to take his young son with them.

This tells us that should one's children fall into sin or make mistakes, it is the responsibility of the father to seek their correction through appropriate education and training, and as long as there is hope of betterment, let him not severe his relationship with them. This was what Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام did - and finally, all of them were ashamed of their wrongdoings, turned away from sins and lived a reformed life. However, should there remain no hope of betterment in their condition, and parents realize that maintaining relationship with them poses a danger to the religious upbringing of others, then, under that condition, severing relationship with them is more appropriate.

2. Promoted here are two great qualities of character, good dealings and good manners - of which Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام was a mirror. Despite such serious crimes committed by his sons, he kept dealing with them in a manner that they faced no qualms of conscience when they

made their second request to take their younger brother with them.

3. Another instruction inferred from here is that it is appropriate to admonish a wrongdoer in the interest of his betterment. This would amount to telling him that his behavior demanded that the plea made by him should be rejected, but then, he should be given the feeling that he is being given a fresh chance by forgoing what has gone before - so that his sense of shame returns to him later and he becomes totally repentant. This is what Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام did in the first instance. He made a caustic reference to their past record: 'Shall I trust you about Benyamin as I had trusted you earlier about Yūsuf ?' But, after having warned them pointedly, he realized their penitence from their apparent condition, placed his trust in Allah and handed over his young son into their custody.

4. Placing one's trust, in the real sense, in the promise or protection of a human being is wrong. The real trust should be in Allah Ta'ālā. He alone is the real mover and maker of things and He alone is the causer of causes. To bring forth causes and to give them effect is what lies but in His control. Therefore, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام said: فَاللّٰهُ خَيْرٌ حٰفِظًا (Well, Allah is the best guardian).

According to a saying of Ka'b al-Aḥbār, since Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, this time, did not simply trust the word of his sons, instead, entrusted the matter with Allah Ta'ālā, therefore, Allah Ta'ālā said: 'By My honour, now I shall send both of your sons back to you.'

5. If some property or thing belonging to someone else is found in our baggage, and strong indications prove that he has tied it up in our baggage with the specific intention of giving it to us, then, keeping it and using it is permissible - as was the case with this 'capital' which came out from the baggage of the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, and where strong indications proved that it did not happen as a result of some oversight or forgetfulness, in fact, it was given back intentionally. That is why, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام did not give instructions that these articles of value be returned. But, in case there is a doubt that it has come to us, perhaps by oversight or forgetfulness, then, using it without making necessary inquiries from the owner is not permissible.

6. No one should be asked to give a pledge on oath, the fulfillment of

which does not lie fully in his control - as it was, when Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام took a pledge on oath from his sons that they would bring back Benyamin safe and sound, he exempted from it the situation in which they may become totally helpless or become themselves subjected to near-death circumstances.

Therefore, when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم asked the noble Companions رضی الله عنهم اجمعین to give him a pledge of their obedience to him, then, he himself added a restriction to it, that is, the restriction of ability. Thus, the pledge stipulated: 'we shall obey you fully - as far as it is within our ability and control.'

7. That the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام have been asked to give a pledge that they would bring Benyamin back shows that : كفالة بالنفس (*Kafālah bin-nafs*) is permissible. Being a technical term of Islāmic Law, it means that it is correct to tender a personal bail or guarantee for the due appearance of a person involved in a case on its hearing date in the court.

The view of Imām Mālik رحمه الله تعالى differs in this respect. According to him, it is only financial guarantee that is allowed in Sharī'ah. He does not hold the personal bail (*Kafālah bin-nafs*) as permissible.

Verses 67 - 69

وَقَالَ يٰبَنِيَّ لَا تَدْخُلُوْا مِنْ بَابٍ وَّاحِدٍ وَّادْخُلُوْا مِنْ اَبْوَابٍ مُّتَفَرِّقَةٍ ۖ
وَمَآ اُغْنِيْ عَنْكُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ۖ اِنِ الْحُكْمُ اِلَّا لِلّٰهِ ۖ عَلَيْهِ
تَوَكَّلْتُ ۚ وَعَلَيْهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُتَوَكِّلُوْنَ ﴿٦٧﴾ وَلَمَّا دَخَلُوْا مِنْ حَيْثُ
اَمَرَهُمْ اَبُوْهُمْ ۖ مَا كَانَ يُغْنِيْ عَنْهُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ اِلَّا حَاجَةً فِيْ
نَفْسِ يَعْقُوْبَ قَضٰىهَا ۖ وَاِنَّهٗ لَذُوْ عِلْمٍ لِّمَا عَلَّمْنٰهُ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ
لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٦٨﴾ وَلَمَّا دَخَلُوْا عَلٰى يُوْسُفَ اٰوٰٓى اِلَيْهِ اَخَاهُ قَالَ اِنِّيْٓ اَنَا
اَخُوْكَ فَلَا تَبْتَئِسْ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٦٩﴾

And he said, "O my sons, do not enter (the city) all of you from the same gate, rather, enter from different gates.

And I cannot help you in any way against (the will of) Allah. Sovereignty belongs to none but Allah. In Him I place my trust, and in Him should trust those who trust." [67]

And when they entered (the city) in the manner their father had advised them, he could not help them in any way against (the will of) Allah, but it was just an urge in the heart of Ya'qūb which he satisfied. He was a man of knowledge; because We had taught him, but most of the people do not know. [68]

And when they came to Yūsuf, he lodged his brother (Benyamin) with himself. He said, "Behold, I am your brother! So do not grieve for what they have been doing." [69]

Commentary

In the present verses, the second visit of the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, this time accompanied by their younger brother, has been mentioned. On that occasion, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام had told them to keep in mind that they were eleven of them going there, so they should not enter Egypt collectively from one single gate of the city of their destination. Instead of that, once they have reached the outer wall of the city, they should disperse and enter there from different gates.

The reason for this advice was his apprehension that all of them were young and, *māsha'allāh*, healthy, tall, handsome and impressive. He was concerned about them lest people find out that they were sons of the same father, and brothers to each other. May be they are affected by someone's evil eye which may bring them some harm. Or, their coming in all together may make some people envy them, or may even cause some pain to them.

Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام did not give them this advice the first time they went to Egypt. He did so on the occasion of their second trip. The reason for this, perhaps, is that they had entered Egypt on their first visit as common travellers and in a broken down condition. No one knew them, nor was there any danger that someone would take any special notice of their general condition. But, it so happened that, during their very first trip, the master of Egypt gave them an unusual welcome which introduced them to state functionaries and city people. Now there did

exist the danger that someone may cast an evil eye on them, or that some people start envying them for being an imposing group of visitors. Apart from it, the fact that the younger son, Benyamin, was with them this time, became the cause of the father's added attention.

The Effect of the Evil Eye is True

This tells us that human beings affected by the evil eye, or its causing pain or loss to another human being, animal etc., is true. It cannot be dismissed as ignorance, superstition or fancy. Therefore, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام was concerned about it.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has also confirmed its truth. It appears in a Ḥadīth: 'The evil eye makes a human being enter the grave, and a camel enter a petty pot.' Therefore, things from which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has sought refuge, and from which he has directed his Ummah to seek refuge, include: مِن كُلِّ عين لامّة that is, 'I seek refuge from the evil eye.' (Qurṭubī)

Well-known is the event related to Sayyidnā Sahl ibn Ḥunayf, one of the noble Companions. It is said that there was an occasion when he took off his shirt to get ready to go for a bath. 'Āmir ibn Rabī'ah happened to cast a glance at the bright tint and healthy look of his body. The spontaneous remark he made was: 'Until this day, I have never seen a body as handsome as this!' No sooner did these words escape his mouth, an instant high temperature seized Sayyidnā Sahl ibn Ḥunayf رضي الله عنه. When the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was informed about it, the treatment he suggested was that 'Āmir ibn Rabī'ah should make Wuḍū', collect the water from Wuḍū' in some utensil, and let this water be poured on the body of Sahl ibn Ḥunayf. When it was done as ordered, the temperature dropped down immediately. He became fully fit, and left on the expedition he was going with the Holy Prophet ﷺ who, following this event, also gave a gentle warning to 'Āmir ibn Rabī'ah by telling him:

علام يقتل احدكم اخاه' الاّ برّكت' انّ العين حقّ

'Why would someone kill his brother? (When you saw his body) you could have made a *du'ā'* for *barakah.* It is true that the evil eye leaves its effect.'

This Ḥadīth also tells us that, should someone notice something un-

usual about the person or property of somebody else, let him make *du'ā'* for him that Allah Ta'ālā blesses him with *barakah* in it. According to some narrations, one should say: مَاشَاءَ اللّٰهُ لَاقُوَّةَ اِلَّا بِاللّٰهِ (*Māsha' Allāhu lāquwwata illā billāh* : Whatever Allah will - there is no power but with Him). This removes the effect of the evil eye. This also tells us that, should someone become affected by a person's evil eye, the pouring of water used by that person in washing his face, hands and feet (in Wuḍū') will help eliminate the effect of the evil eye.

Al-Qurṭubī has said that there is a consensus of all 'Ulamā' of the Muslim Ummah among *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah* on the truth of the evil eye as affecting and causing harm.

Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, on the one hand, because of the apprehension of the evil eye, or envy, advised his sons that they should not enter all together from one single gate of the city. On the other hand, he considered it necessary to speak out about the reality behind it - the heedlessness towards which in such matters would usually cause many from among the masses to fall easy victims to superstition or baseless scruples. The real fact is that the effect of the evil eye over one's person or property is a kind of mesmerism (or an induced state as in hypnosis, though not necessarily in sleep or pre-set clinical conditions). This would be more like a harmful medicine or food which makes one sick; or, excessive heat or cold which make some diseases show up. The effective measures demonstrated by the evil eye or mesmerism are one of the customary causes which would, through the power of the eye or mind, make its effects manifest. The truth is that they themselves have no real effectiveness of their own. Instead, all universal causes operate under the perfect power, will and intention of Allah Ta'ālā. No favourable measures taken against what has been Divinely destined can prove beneficial, nor can the harmfulness of some harmful measure become effective. Therefore, it was said:

وَمَآ اُغْنِىْ عَنْكُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ مِنْ شَىْءٍ ؕ اِنِ الْحُكْمُ اِلَّا لِلّٰهِ ؕ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ ۚ وَعَلَيْهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُتَوَكِّلُوْنَ

And I cannot help you in any way against (the will of) Allah. Sovereignty belongs to none but Allah. In Him I place my trust, and in Him should trust those who trust - 67.

It means: I know that the necessary precautions I have ordered you to take so as to help you remain protected against the evil eye cannot avert the will and intention of Allah Taʿālā. What works here is but the command of Allah. However, one has been asked to do what is physically possible. Therefore, I have given this advice. But, I place my trust, not on these physical arrangements, but in Allah alone. And it is imperative for everyone that he or she should trust in and rely on Him alone - never placing one's trust in physical and material means.

The reality which Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام was talking about became all too visible in this trip as well. By chance it so happened that all measures taken to bring Benyamin back home safely just failed and he was detained in Egypt. As a consequence of which, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام received another severe shock. That the measure taken by him failed, as categorically mentioned in the next verse, had a purpose behind it. It means that this measure failed in terms of the essential objective, that is, the safe return of Benyamin back home - though, the measure taken to keep them protected against the evil eye or envy did succeed, because no such incident showed up during this trip. But, the unforeseen incident Divine destiny had in store for them was a factor not noticed by Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, nor could he do anything to counter it. However, despite this visible failure, it was the *barakah* (blessing) of his *tawakkul* (trust) that this second shock turned out to be an antidote for the first one, and resulted in the happy reunion with both his sons, Yūsuf and Benyamin, safely and honourably.

This subject has been taken up in the succeeding verse where it is said that the sons carried out the instructions of their father and entered the city from different gates. When they did so, the desire of their father stood fulfilled - though, this measure taken by him could not avert anything already destined by Allah. But, as for the paternal love and concern of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام for his sons, this he did demonstrate to his heart's content.

Towards the end of the verse, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام has been praised in the following words: وَاِنَّهٗ لَذُوْ عِلْمٍ لِّمَا عَلَّمْنٰهُ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ (He was a man of knowledge, because We had taught him, but most of the people do not know - 68). It means that his knowledge was not acquired. It did not come from books. Instead, it was directly a Divine gift. Therefore, he did

employ physical means, something legally required, and commendable. But, he did not place his total trust in it. However, the truth is that most of the people do not know the reality behind it. Thus unaware, they would fall in doubts about Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام thinking that the employment of these means did not match the station of a prophet.

Some commentators have said that the first word: علم (*'ilm* : knowledge) means acting in accordance with the dictate of *'ilm* (knowledge). The translation in this case will be: "He was a man of action according to the knowledge We gave him". Therefore, he did not place his trust in material means, in fact, it was Allah alone he relied on and trusted in.'

Onwards from here, it was said in verse 69:

وَلَمَّا دَخَلُوْا عَلٰى يُوْسُفَ اٰوٰىٓ اِلَيْهِ اَخَاهُ قَالَ اِنِّيْٓ اَنَا اَخُوْكَ فَلَا تَبْتَئِسْ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ

> And when they came to Yūsuf, he lodged his brother [Benyamin] with himself. He said, "Behold, I am your [lost] brother! So do not grieve for what they have been doing.".

According to Tafsīr authority, Qatādah, the arrangement made by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was that two brothers were lodged in one room. This left Benyamin alone. He was asked to stay with him. When alone with him, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام disclosed his identity to his younger brother and told him that he was his real brother, Yūsuf. He comforted him and asked him not to worry about what their brothers have been doing until that time.

Rulings and Points of Guidance

Some injunctions and rulings come out from verses 67 and 68. These are given below:

1. The effect of the evil eye is true. To try to stay safe from it is permissible in Sharī'ah, and is commendable, just as one tries to stay safe from harmful foods and actions.

2. To stay safe from being envied by people, it is correct to conceal from them any special personal blessings and attributes one may have.

3. To employ physical and material means to stay safe from harmful effects is neither against *Tawakkul* (trust in Allah), nor against the stat-

us of prophets.

4. If one person apprehends likely harm or hurt coming to the other person, it is better to let him know about the danger and suggest how to stay safe from it - as done by Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام.

5. When someone finds some personal excellence or blessing enjoyed by another person appear unusual to him and there be the danger that he may be affected by the evil eye, then, it becomes obligatory (*wājib*) on the beholder that he should, after noticing it, say: بَارَكَ اللّٰه (*bārakallāh* : may Allah bless) or: مَاشَاءَ اللّٰه (*māsha'Allāh* : whatever Allah will), so that the other person remains safe from any possible harm.

6. Employing all possible means to stay safe from the evil eye is permissible. One of them is to seek its treatment through a *du'ā'* (prayer) or *ta'widh* (spoken or written words seeking the protection of Allah) - as was done by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم who, seeing the weakness of the two sons of Sayyidnā Ja'far ibn Abī Ṭālib, allowed him to have them be treated through *ta'widh* etc.

7. The ideal approach of a wise Muslim to whatever he does is that he must place his real trust in Allah Ta'ālā to begin with but, at the same time, he should not ignore physical and material means. Let him not fall short in employing whatever permissible means he can possibly assemble together to achieve his purpose - as was done by Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام. And the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم too has taught us to do so. The Sage Rūmī has expressed this prophetic teaching in the following line: برتوکّل زانوئے اشتربہ بند that is, 'Tie the leg of your camel and trust in Allah'.

This is how prophets place their trust in Allah, and this was the blessed way of our Rasūl صلى الله عليه وسلم.

8. A question arises here that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام made efforts to call his younger brother, even insisted on it. And when he came, he even disclosed his identity before him. But, he neither thought of calling his father, nor took any steps to inform him about his well-being while in Egypt. The reason for this is the same as described earlier. There is no doubt that he did have many opportunities during those forty years when he could have sent a message to his father about himself. But,

whatever happened in this matter was Divine decree communicated through the medium of *Waḥy* (revelation). Allah Taʿālā would have not given him the permission to tell his father about himself - because he was yet to be tested once again through his separation from his son, Benyamin. It was to complete this Divine arrangement that all these situations were created.

Verses 70 - 76

فَلَمَّا جَهَّزَهُمْ بِجَهَازِهِمْ جَعَلَ السِّقَايَةَ فِىْ رَحْلِ اَخِيْهِ ثُمَّ اَذَّنَ مُؤَذِّنٌ
اَيَّتُهَا الْعِيْرُ اِنَّكُمْ لَسٰرِقُوْنَ ﴿٧٠﴾ قَالُوْا وَ اَقْبَلُوْا عَلَيْهِمْ مَّاذَا تَفْقِدُوْنَ
﴿٧١﴾ قَالُوْا نَفْقِدُ صُوَاعَ الْمَلِكِ وَلِمَنْ جَآءَ بِهٖ حِمْلُ بَعِيْرٍ وَّاَنَا بِهٖ
زَعِيْمٌ ﴿٧٢﴾ قَالُوْا تَاللّٰهِ لَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمْ مَّا جِئْنَا لِنُفْسِدَ فِى الْاَرْضِ وَمَا كُنَّا
سٰرِقِيْنَ ﴿٧٣﴾ قَالُوْا فَمَا جَزَآؤُهٗۤ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ كٰذِبِيْنَ ﴿٧٤﴾ قَالُوْا جَزَآؤُهٗ
مَنْ وُّجِدَ فِىْ رَحْلِهٖ فَهُوَ جَزَآؤُهٗ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِى الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٧٥﴾ فَبَدَاَ
بِاَوْعِيَتِهِمْ قَبْلَ وِعَآءِ اَخِيْهِ ثُمَّ اسْتَخْرَجَهَا مِنْ وِّعَآءِ اَخِيْهِ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ
كِدْنَا لِيُوْسُفَ ؕ مَا كَانَ لِيَاْخُذَ اَخَاهُ فِىْ دِيْنِ الْمَلِكِ اِلَّاۤ اَنْ يَّشَآءَ اللّٰهُ
ؕ نَرْفَعُ دَرَجٰتٍ مَّنْ نَّشَآءُ ؕ وَفَوْقَ كُلِّ ذِىْ عِلْمٍ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿٧٦﴾

Later, when he equipped them with their provisions, he placed the bowl in the camel-pack of his brother. Then, an announcer shouted out, "O people of the caravan, you are thieves." [70] **Turning towards them, they said, "What are you missing?"** [71] **They said, "We are missing the measuring-bowl of the king, and whoever brings it back shall deserve a camel-load, and I stand surety for it."** [72]

They said, "We swear by Allah, you certainly know that we did not come to make mischief in the land, nor have we ever been thieves." [73]

They said, "What is the punishment, if you are liars?" [74] **They said, "It's punishment is that he, in whose baggage it is found, shall himself be the punishment. This is how we punish the wrongdoers."** [75]

So, he started with their bags before the bag of his brother, then, recovered it from the bag of his brother. This is how We planned for Yūsuf. He had no right to take his brother according to the law of the king, unless Allah so willed. We elevate in ranks whomso We will. And above every man who has knowledge, there is someone more knowledgeable. [76]

Commentary

The present verses describe how Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام arranged to have his real brother, Benyamin, stay on with him. All brothers were given grains according to rules. The grains for each brother was loaded on his camel, separately and by name.

In the supply of grain loaded on the camel for Benyamin, a bowl was concealed. This bowl has been called: سِقَايَه (*siqāyah*) at one place, and: صُوَاعَ الْمَلِكِ (*suwā' al-malik*) at another. The word: سِقَايَه (*siqāyah*) means a bowl used to drink water from, and: صُوَاع (*suwā'*) too is a utensil similar to it. That it has been attributed to *'malik'* or king shows the additional feature that this bowl had some special value or status. According to some narrations, it was made of a precious stone similar to emerald. Others say that it was made of gold, or silver. However, this bowl hidden in Benyamin's baggage was fairly precious besides having some special connection with the king of Egypt - whether he used it himself, or had it declared to be the official measure of grains.

In the second sentence of verse 70, it is said:

ثُمَّ اَذَّنَ مُؤَذِّنٌ اَيَّتُهَا الْعِيْرُ اِنَّكُمْ لَسٰرِقُوْنَ

Then, an announcer shouted out, "O people of the caravan, you are thieves."

Here, the word: ثُمَّ (*thumma* : translated as 'then') shows that this public announcement was not made instantly. Instead, a temporary delay was allowed for the caravan to leave. The announcement was made after that to offset the likelihood of anyone sensing a foul play. After all, this proclaimer identified the caravan of the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf as the thieves.

Verse 71 carries the response of the accused: قَالُوْا وَاَقْبَلُوْا عَلَيْهِمْ مَّاذَا تَفْقِدُوْنَ , that is, 'the brothers of Yūsuf turned to the announcer, as if protesting

on being made into thieves, and asked him to say what is it that you seem to have lost.' The answer given by the announcers was:

قَالُوا نَفْقِدُ صُوَاعَ الْمَلِكِ وَلِمَنْ جَآءَ بِهٖ حِمْلُ بَعِيرٍ وَّأَنَا بِهٖ زَعِيمٌ

> We are missing the measuring- bowl of the king, and whoever brings it back shall deserve a camel-load, and I stand a surety for it.

The question which emerges here is: Why did Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام opt for this excuse to detain Benyamin with him, specially when he knew that his separation was already shocking for his father. Now, how could he bear by giving him another shock by detaining his other brother?

The other question which arises here is far more important because it involves things like accusing innocent brothers of theft and concealing something in their baggage secretly to cause them disgrace later. These are impermissible acts. Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was a prophet of Allah. It is difficult to visualize how would he have gone along with them.

Some commentators, such as al-Qurṭubī and others, have stated: When Benyamin recognized Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام and was at peace, he requested his brother not to send him back along with his brothers. Instead, he pleaded, he should let him stay with him. First, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام made the excuse that his staying behind will shock their father. Then, he had no way of making him stay with him other than that blame him of theft, arrest him for it and thus keep him with him. Benyamin was so disgusted with the ways of his brothers that he was ready to go through all this.

But, even if this event were taken as correct, the heart-break caused for his father, the disgrace inflicted on all his brothers and dubbing them as thieves cannot become permissible simply because of the pleasure of Benyamin. That some commentators have interpreted the charge of theft levelled on them by the announcer as being without the knowledge and permission of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام is not valid. This is a claim without any proof and, given the anatomy of the event, incoherent too. Similar is the case of another interpretation where it has been stated that these brothers stole Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام from his father, and sold him, therefore, they were called 'thieves.' This too is a long-drawn explanation.

Therefore, the correct answer to these questions is what has been given by al-Qurṭubī and Maẓharī. They have said: Whatever has been done and said in this connection was neither the outcome of Benyamin's wish, nor that of the initiative of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ himself. Instead of all that, all these happenings were the manifestation of the infinite wisdom of Allah alone under whose command they came to be what they were and being completed through them was the process of the trial and test of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb ﷺ. A hint towards this answer appears in this verse (76) of the Qur'ān itself which says: كَذٰلِكَ كِدْنَا لِيُوْسُفَ : 'This is how We planned for Yūsuf (to detain his brother).'

In this verse, Allah Ta'ālā has very clearly attributed this excuse and plan to Himself. So, when all these things took shape as Divinely commanded, calling them impermissible becomes meaningless. They would be like the incident of the dismantling of the boat and the killing of the boy in the event relating to Sayyidnā Mūsā and Al-Khaḍir عليهم السلام. Obviously, these were sins, therefore, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام registered his disapproval of them. But, al-Khaḍir عليه السلام was doing all this with Divine assent and permission under particularly expedient considerations, therefore, he was not committing any sin.

In verse 73, it was said: قَالُوْا تَاللّٰهِ لَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمْ مَّا جِئْنَا لِنُفْسِدَ فِى الْاَرْضِ وَمَا كُنَّا سٰرِقِيْنَ , that is, when the royal announcer accused the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf of theft, they said that responsible people of the state know them and know that they had not come to create any disorder in the country, nor have they ever been thieves.

In verse 74, it was said: قَالُوْا فَمَا جَزَآؤُهٗٓ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ كٰذِبِيْنَ , that is, the royal staff said to them: If it stood proved that they were liars, what do they suggest should be the punishment for the theft? The answer given was: قَالُوْا جَزَآؤُهٗ مَنْ وُّجِدَ فِىْ رَحْلِهٖ فَهُوَ جَزَآؤُهٗ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِى الظّٰلِمِيْنَ , that is, the brothers of Yūsuf said: 'It's punishment is that he, in whose baggage it is found, shall himself be the punishment. This is how we punish the wrongdoers.'

The sense of the statement is that the punishment for theft in the Sharī'ah of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb ﷺ allowed the person whose property had been stolen to take the thief as his slave. Thus, the state functionaries made the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf to tell them the punishment of a thief as in Jacobian law and thereby had them committed to hand over

Benyamin to Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ according to their own decision following the recovery of the stolen goods from Benyamin's baggage.

Said in verse 75 was: فَبَدَأَ بِأَوْعِيَتِهِمْ قَبْلَ وِعَآءِ أَخِيهِ , that is, to cover up the real plan, the state officials first searched through the baggage of all brothers. They did not open Benyamin's baggage first lest that causes any doubts.

Then, as said in the first sentence of the next verse (76): ثُمَّ اسْتَخْرَجَهَا مِنْ وِّعَآءِ أَخِيهِ , Benyamin's baggage was opened up last of all and recovered from it was the 'bowl of the king.' At that sight, all brothers were put to shame. They started chiding Benyamin for having disgraced them.

After that, it was said: كَذٰلِكَ كِدْنَا لِيُوسُفَ ۖ مَا كَانَ لِيَأْخُذَ أَخَاهُ فِي دِينِ الْمَلِكِ إِلَّآ أَنْ يَّشَآءَ اللّٰهُ , that is, 'this is how We planned for Yūsuf.' He could have not arrested his brother under the Egyptian Imperial Law because, according to their law of theft, there was a corporal punishment for the thief after which he was to be released against the payment of twice the cost of the stolen property. But, here, he had already found out the law of theft operative in the Shari'ah of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb ﷺ. According to this law, detaining Benyamin with him became correct and valid. So, also granted through the wisdom and will of Allah Ta'ālā was this wish of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ.

Said in the last sentence of the verse is: نَرْفَعُ دَرَجٰتٍ مَّنْ نَّشَآءُ ۖ وَفَوْقَ كُلِّ ذِي عِلْمٍ عَلِيمٌ (We elevate in ranks whomso We will [as, in this event, the ranks of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ were elevated over his brothers]. And above every man who has knowledge, there is someone more knowledgeable).

It means that Allah has given precedence to some over others in terms of knowledge. Take the highest of the high in knowledge, there is someone more knowledgeable than him. And if there is someone with a knowledge which is superior to the knowledge of the best among the creation of Allah, then, we have the *'Ilm* of Allah *jalla thanā'uh* which is the highest of all for ever.

Rulings and points of guidance

Some injunctions and rulings deduced from the present verses are given below:

1. The statement: وَلِمَنْ جَآءَ بِهِ حِمْلُ بَعِيرٍ (and whoever brings it back shall

deserve a camel-load) in verse 72 proves that it is valid to make a general announcement that a particular award or remuneration will be paid to anyone who performs a particular act. This is very much like the current custom of announcing rewards for the arrest of absconding criminals or for the return of lost properties. Though, this form of transaction does not fall under the juristic definition of *Ijārah* (hiring), but, in the light of this verse, the justification for this also stands proved. (Qurṭubī)

2. The words: أَنَا بِهٖ زَعِيْمٌ (and I stand surety for it) appearing at the end of verse 72 tell us that one person can become the guarantor of financial rights on behalf of another person. The related ruling, according to the majority of Muslim jurists, provides that the creditor has the authority to recover his property from the person legally in debt, or from the guarantor, as he chooses. However, if it is recovered from the guarantor, the guarantor would have the right to recover from the person legally in debt whatever cash or property has been taken from him. (Qurṭubī)

3. The sentence: كَذٰلِكَ كِدْنَا لِيُوْسُفَ (This is how We planned for Yūsuf) in verse 76 tells us that it is permissible, for a valid reason recognized by Sharī'ah, to change the form of a transaction in a way that it brings a change in its legal status. According to the terminology of the *fuqahā'* (jurists) it is called 'Ḥīlah Shar'iyyah' (i.e. a lawful device to avoid a real hardship). However, the condition is that such an action should not cause the invalidation of the injunctions of the Sharī'ah. If so, all such devices are, by the consensus of Muslim jurists, Ḥarām and unlawful - for example, finding an excuse to avoid paying Zakāh, or to embark on an unnecessary journey before or during Ramaḍān simply to seek an excuse for not fasting. This is universally Ḥarām. The hunt for such excuses and devices has brought Divine punishment on some nations, and the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has prohibited the use of such stratagems. The entire Muslim Ummah agrees that they are Ḥarām, forbidden and unlawful. Acting upon them does not go on to make whatever is done as permissible. In fact, what falls on the doer is a two-fold sin - firstly, that of the original impermissible act; secondly, that of the impermissible device which amounts, in a way, to cheating Allah and His Rasūl. That all such *ḥiyal* or strategems are impermissible has been proved by Imām Al-Bukhārī in his Kitāb al-Ḥiyal.

Verses 77 - 82

قَالُوْٓا اِنْ يَّسْرِقْ فَقَدْ سَرَقَ اَخٌ لَّهٗ مِنْ قَبْلُ ج فَاَسَرَّهَا يُوْسُفُ فِیْ نَفْسِهٖ
وَلَمْ يُبْدِهَا لَهُمْ ج قَالَ اَنْتُمْ شَرٌّ مَّكَانًا ج وَاللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا تَصِفُوْنَ ﴿٧٧﴾
قَالُوْا يٰٓاَيُّهَا الْعَزِيْزُ اِنَّ لَهٗٓ اَبًا شَيْخًا كَبِيْرًا فَخُذْ اَحَدَنَا مَكَانَهٗ ج اِنَّا
نَرٰىكَ مِنَ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ﴿٧٨﴾ قَالَ مَعَاذَ اللّٰهِ اَنْ نَّاْخُذَ اِلَّا مَنْ وَّجَدْنَا
مَتَاعَنَا عِنْدَهٗٓ لا اِنَّآ اِذًا لَّظٰلِمُوْنَ ﴿٧٩﴾ ع فَلَمَّا اسْتَيْئَسُوْا مِنْهُ خَلَصُوْا
نَجِيًّا ط قَالَ كَبِيْرُهُمْ اَلَمْ تَعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اَبَاكُمْ قَدْ اَخَذَ عَلَيْكُمْ مَّوْثِقًا مِّنَ
اللّٰهِ وَمِنْ قَبْلُ مَا فَرَّطْتُّمْ فِیْ يُوْسُفَ ج فَلَنْ اَبْرَحَ الْاَرْضَ حَتّٰى يَاْذَنَ
لِیْٓ اَبِیْٓ اَوْ يَحْكُمَ اللّٰهُ لِیْ ج وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الْحٰكِمِيْنَ ﴿٨٠﴾ اِرْجِعُوْٓا اِلٰٓى
اَبِيْكُمْ فَقُوْلُوْا يٰٓاَبَانَآ اِنَّ ابْنَكَ سَرَقَ ج وَمَا شَهِدْنَآ اِلَّا بِمَا عَلِمْنَا وَمَا
كُنَّا لِلْغَيْبِ حٰفِظِيْنَ ﴿٨١﴾ وَسْئَلِ الْقَرْيَةَ الَّتِیْ كُنَّا فِيْهَا وَالْعِيْرَ الَّتِیْٓ
اَقْبَلْنَا فِيْهَا ط وَاِنَّا لَصٰدِقُوْنَ ﴿٨٢﴾

They said, "If he commits theft, then, a brother of his has committed theft before." So Yūsuf kept it (his reaction) to himself and did not reveal it to them. He said, "You are even worse in position. And Allah knows best of what you allege." [77] **They said, "O 'Azīz, he has a father, a very old man. So, take one of us in his place. We see you are a generous man."** [78] **He said, "God forbid that we keep anyone except the one with whom we have found our thing, otherwise we shall be unjust."** [79]

So when they lost hope in him, they went aside for consultation. The oldest of them said, "Do you not know that your father has taken pledge from you in the name of Allah, while you had defaulted earlier in the case of Yūsuf. So, I shall never leave this land unless my father permits me or Allah decides about me. And He is the best of all judges. [80] **Go back to your father and say, 'Our father, your son has committed theft, and we do not testify except what we know, and we could not guard against the unseen.** [81] **And ask (the people of) the town**

in which we have been and the caravan with which we have come, and surely we are truthful." [82]

Commentary

It was stated in the previous verses that, while in Egypt, a royal bowl was concealed in the baggage of Benyamin, the younger brother of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. Then, by recovering it as planned, a charge of theft was levelled against him.

As in the first of the verses cited above, when the stolen property was recovered from Benyamin's baggage before the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, they were so ashamed that they said in irritation: إِنْ يَّسْرِقْ فَقَدْ سَرَقَ أَخٌ لَّهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ, that is, if he has committed a theft, it is not much of a surprise, for he had a brother who, like him, had committed a theft before. The sense was that he was not their real brother. He was their step brother. And he had a real brother who had also committed a theft.

On this occasion, the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام accused him too of a theft, which refers to an event which took place during his childhood when the way a conspiracy was hatched here to blame Benyamin for theft, a similar conspiracy was staged against Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام at that time with him being totally unaware of it. As for his brothers, they were fully aware of the fact that he was totally free from this blame. But, being angry with Benyamin on this occasion, they have made out that event too as of theft and have put its blame on his brother, Yūsuf.

What was that event? Reports differ about it. Referring to Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq and Tafsīr authority, Mujāhid, Ibn Kathīr has reported that soon after the birth of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, Benyamin was born. This birth of his became the cause of his mother's death. When both Yūsuf and Benyamin were left without their mother, they were raised by their paternal aunt. Allah Ta'ālā had blessed Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام from his very childhood with such an attractive personality that whoever saw him became deeply attached to him. His paternal aunt was no exception. She would not let him disappear from her sight at any time. On the other hand, no different was the condition of his father who was very fond of him. But, being a minor child, it was necessary that he be kept under the care of a woman. Therefore, he was put under the care of his

paternal aunt. When he had learnt how to walk, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام thought of having him come to live with him. When he talked to his paternal aunt, she showed her reluctance to let him go. After that, having been under compulsion, she somehow handed Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام over to his father, but she did make a plan to take him back. She had an antique waist-band which had come to her as the legacy of Sayyidna Isḥāq عليه السلام and was highly valued. Sayyidna Yūsuf's paternal aunt tied this band on his waist underneath his dress.

After he had gone, she spread the news around that her waist-band has been stolen by someone. When searched for, it turned out to be with young Yūsuf. According to the Sharī'ah of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, the paternal aunt now had the right to keep him as her slave. When Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام saw that the paternal aunt has become the owner of Yūsuf on the authority of the religious law of the land, he handed young Yūsuf over to her. Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام kept living with her as long as she was alive.

This was the event in which the blame of theft was imputed to Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام following which the truth came to light and everybody found that he was free of even the least doubt of theft. It was the love of his paternal aunt for him that had made her conspire to keep him. The brothers knew this truth all too well. Given this reason, it did not behove them that they would attribute theft to him. But, of the series of excesses inflicted on Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام by his brothers, this too was the last.

Now in the second sentence of the first verse (77) it was said: فَأَسَرَّهَا يُوسُفُ فِي نَفْسِهِ وَلَمْ يُبْدِهَا لَهُمْ that is, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام heard what his brothers had to say and kept it in his heart for they still seemed to be after him and were now blaming him for theft. But, he kept his reaction to himself and did not let his brothers know that he had heard what they had said and was affected by it in any way.

Said in the next and last sentence of the verse was: قَالَ أَنْتُمْ شَرٌّ مَّكَانًا ج وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا تَصِفُونَ , that is, 'Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام said (in his heart): 'You are even worse in position (as you accuse your brother of theft, falsely and knowingly). And Allah knows best of what you allege (whether what you are saying is true or false).' The first sentence has been uttered in the heart. The other sentence may possibly have been said publicly as his re-

sponse to what his brothers had said.

In verse 78, it was said: قَالُوا يٰاَيُّهَا الْعَزِيْزُ اِنَّ لَهٗۤ اَبًا شَيْخًا كَبِيْرًا فَخُذْ اَحَدَنَا مَكَانَهٗ ۚ اِنَّا نَرٰىكَ مِنَ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ It means when the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ realized that nothing seems to be working here and they have no option left but to leave Benyamin behind, they started flattering the 'Azīz of Miṣr. They told him that Benyamin's father was very old and weak (his separation will be unbearable for him). Therefore, they requested him that he should detain anyone from among them, in lieu of him. They also told him that they were making that request to him in the hope that he, as they feel, appears to be a very generous person - or, he has been generous to them earlier too.

The response of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ appears in verse 79 as: قَالَ مَعَاذَ اللّٰهِ اَنْ نَّاْخُذَ اِلَّا مَنْ وَّجَدْنَا مَتَاعَنَا عِنْدَهٗۤ ۙ اِنَّاۤ اِذًا لَّظٰلِمُوْنَ that is, he gave his reply to their request according to the regulations followed in his country by telling them that they were not authorized to detain anyone they wished. In fact, if they were to arrest someone other than the person from whose possession the lost property has been recovered, then, according to their own *fatwā* and ruling, they would be accused of being unjust.

The reason he gave was that they had themselves said that 'he, in whose baggage the stolen property is found, shall himself be the punishment.'

In verse 80, it was said: فَلَمَّا اسْتَيْئَسُوْا مِنْهُ خَلَصُوْا نَجِيًّا (So when they lost hope in him, they went aside for consultation).

After that, the primary statement of the oldest brother which begins with the words: قَالَ كَبِيْرُهُمْ (The oldest of them said) is continued till the end of verse 80. The statement was: "Do you not know that your father had taken pledge from you in the name of Allah, while you had defaulted earlier in the case of Yūsuf. So, I shall never leave this land unless my father permits me (to return) or Allah decides about me. And He is the best of all judges."

This is the statement of the oldest brother. Some commentators identify him as being Yahūda (Judah) - and he was, though not the oldest in age, but was certainly the eldest in knowledge and merit. Other commentators say that he is Ruebel (Rueben) who is the oldest in age and he

was the one who had suggested that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام should not be killed. Still others have said that this oldest brother was Sham'ūn who was known to be the eldest in power and rank.

Then, in verse 81, it was said: اِرْجِعُوْٓا اِلٰٓى اَبِيْكُمْ, that is, the oldest brother said: I am going to stay here. You all go back to your father and tell him that his son has committed a theft, and that whatever we are saying is what we have seen with our own eyes, and that the stolen property was recovered from his baggage before us.

As for the last sentence of verse 81: وَمَا كُنَّا لِلْغَيْبِ حٰفِظِيْنَ (and we could not guard against the unseen), it means that 'the pledge we had given to you to bring back Benyamin definitely was given in terms of outwardly visible circumstances. We did not know what we did not see and control - thus how could we know that he would steal and be arrested for it leaving us helpless in this matter.' The sentence could also mean that 'we did our best to keep Benyamin protected seeing that he does nothing which would put him in trouble. But, this effort of ours could be within the limits of our outwardly visible circumstances. That this thing would happen to him, in absence of our vigilance and knowledge, was something we did not know about.'

Since the brothers of Yūsuf had deceived their father earlier, and knew that their father would never be satisfied with their statement mentioned above, and he would never believe in what they would tell him, therefore, for additional emphasis, they said: '(and if you do not believe us), you can check with the people of the town in which we have been (that is, the city in Egypt). And you can also check with the caravan which has come from Egypt to Can'aan with us. And we are true in what we are saying.'

At this point, the question - why would Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام bear by such a heartless treatment with his father - reappears in Tafsīr Maẓharī. This question has also been taken up earlier in our comments on this Sūrah where it has been said that it was surprising that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام did not tell his father about himself, then detained his brother too, then his brothers made repeated visits to Egypt and he never told them about himself nor sent some message to his father. Tafsīr Maẓharī answers all these doubts by saying:

إِنَّهُ عَمِلَ ذٰلِكَ بِأَمْرِ اللّٰهِ تَعَالٰى لِيَزِيْدَ فِيْ بَلَاءِ يَعْقُوْبَ

That is, Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ did that with the command of Allah Ta'ālā so that (the cycle of) the test and trial of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb ﷺ reaches its completion.

Rules and Principles

1. The statement: وَمَا شَهِدْنَآ اِلَّا بِمَا عَلِمْنَا (and we do not testify except what we know) appearing in verse 82 proves that human transactions and contracts are based on apparently known circumstances. They do not cover things which no one knows. The pledge to protect Benyamin which the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ had given to their father was related to things which were in their control. As for the incident that he was accused of theft and arrested for it, it was a different matter which does not affect the pledge as such.

2. Deduced from the same verse, there is another ruling which appears in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī. It says: This sentence proves that testimony depends on knowledge. No matter how this knowledge is acquired, testimony can be given in accordance with it. Therefore, the way an event can be testified by having seen it with one's own eyes, similarly, it can be testified by having heard it from someone reliable and worthy of trust - subject to the condition that he does not conceal the truth of the matter, instead, states plainly that he has not seen it personally but has heard it from such and such reliable person. It is on the basis of this principle that Mālikī jurists have ruled the testimony of a blind person as permissible.

3. The present verses also prove that should a person be true, right and proper, but the situation is such that others may suspect him to be otherwise, then, he must remove that shadow of doubt so that those who see him do not fall into the sin of (unwarranted) suspicion - as in this event relating to Benyamin, there came up an occasion of accusation and doubt because of a past event in the life of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ. Therefore, in order to make things clear, the testimony of the people of the city, and the caravan, was presented in support.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has, by his personal conduct, affirmed it positively. On his way back from his Masjid, when he was going through an alley with Ummul-Mu'minīn, Sayyidah Ṣafiyyah ﷺ,

he noticed two persons appearing at the head of the alley. They were still at some distance, but the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم told them that he was with Ṣafiyyah bint Ḥuyayy. They said: Yā Rasūl Allah, can anyone have any suspicion about you? Then, he said: Yes, the Shayṭān keeps seeping through the human body, may be it drops a doubt in somebody's heart. (Al-Bukhārī and Muslim) [Qurṭubī]

Verses 83 - 87

قَالَ بَلْ سَوَّلَتْ لَكُمْ اَنْفُسُكُمْ اَمْرًا ط فَصَبْرٌ جَمِيْلٌ ط عَسَى اللّٰهُ اَنْ
يَّاْتِيَنِيْ بِهِمْ جَمِيْعًا ط اِنَّهٗ هُوَالْعَلِيْمُ الْحَكِيْمُ ﴿٨٣﴾ وَتَوَلّٰى عَنْهُمْ وَ قَالَ
يٰٓاَسَفٰى عَلٰى يُوْسُفَ وَابْيَضَّتْ عَيْنٰهُ مِنَ الْحُزْنِ فَهُوَ كَظِيْمٌ ﴿٨٤﴾
قَالُوْا تَاللّٰهِ تَفْتَؤُا تَذْكُرُ يُوْسُفَ حَتّٰى تَكُوْنَ حَرَضًا اَوْتَكُوْنَ مِنَ
الْهٰلِكِيْنَ ﴿٨٥﴾ قَالَ اِنَّمَآ اَشْكُوْا بَثِّيْ وَحُزْنِيْٓ اِلَى اللّٰهِ وَ اَعْلَمُ مِنَ اللّٰهِ
مَالَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٨٦﴾ يٰبَنِيَّ اذْهَبُوْا فَتَحَسَّسُوْا مِنْ يُّوْسُفَ وَاَخِيْهِ وَلَا
تَايْئَسُوْا مِنْ رَّوْحِ اللّٰهِ ط اِنَّهٗ لَا يَايْئَسُ مِنْ رَّوْحِ اللّٰهِ اِلَّا الْقَوْمُ
الْكٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿٨٧﴾

He (Ya'qūb) said, "Rather, your inner desires have seduced you to something. So, patience is best. Hopefully, Allah may bring them all together. Surely, He is the All-Knowing, All-Wise." [83]

And he turned away from them and said, "How sad I am about Yūsuf" and his eyes turned white with sorrow and he was suppressing (his anger and grief). [84] **They said, "By God, you will not stop remembering Yūsuf until you collapse or perish."** [85] **He said, "I complain of my anguish and sorrow to none but Allah, and I know from Allah what you do not know.** [86] **O my sons, go and search for Yūsuf and his brother, and do not lose hope in the mercy of Allah. In fact, only the infidels lose hope in the mercy of Allah."** [87]

Commentary

After the detention of young Benyamin in Egypt, his brothers re-

turned home and told Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام about what had happened there. They tried to assure him that they were telling the truth which can be confirmed from the people in Egypt, as well as, from the caravan they came with from Egypt to Can'aan. From the later, he could also ascertain that Benyamin's theft was apprehended and he was arrested for it. Since Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام knew that they had lied to him earlier in the case of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, therefore, he could not believe them this time too - though, in fact, this time they had told him no lie. And therefore, on this occasion as well, he said the same thing he had said at the time of the disappearance of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام: بَلْ سَوَّلَتْ لَكُمْ اَنْفُسُكُمْ اَمْرًا ط فَصَبْرٌ جَمِيْلٌ ("Rather, your inner desires have seduced you to something. So, patience is best), that is, this statement of yours is not correct. You have made it up yourself. But, even now, it is patience I choose to observe. Only that would be the best for me.'

From this Al-Qurṭubī has deduced: In whatever a Mujtahid says with his Ijtihād, there can be an error as well, so much so that it is possible that a prophet too, when he says something on the basis of his own Ijtihād, could make an error - though, only initially. This is what happened in this case when he declared the truth of his sons to be a lie. But, prophets have a special status and a personal exclusivity on the basis of which they are alerted over the mistake by the will of Allah, and removed away from it, and finally they find truth.

Here, it is also possible that by his comment about 'manuvering something' mentioned above Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام intended to refer to what was made up in Egypt whereby Benyamin was arrested under a false charge of theft only to achieve a particular purpose, and the ultimate result of which was to unfold later in a better form. There may, as well, be a hint toward it in the next sentence of this verse where it is said: عَسَى اللّٰهُ اَنْ يَّاْتِيَنِىْ بِهِمْ جَمِيْعًا (Hopefully, Allah may bring them all together).

In short, the outcome of the refusal of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام to accept the statement of his sons this time was that there was no theft really, nor was Benyamin arrested, and the truth of the matter was to be found elsewhere. This was true in its place. But, whatever was said by his sons, as they knew it, was not wrong either.

Said in verse 84 was: وَتَوَلّٰى عَنْهُمْ وَ قَالَ يٰاَسَفٰى عَلٰى يُوْسُفَ وَابْيَضَّتْ عَيْنٰهُ مِنَ الْحُزْنِ فَهُوَ

كَظِيمٌ : 'And he turned away from them and said, "How sad I am about Yusuf" and his eyes turned white with sorrow and he was suppressing (his anger and grief).' It means that, after this second shock, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام closed this chapter of talking to his sons about this matter, and turned to his Lord with his plaint before Him as to how sad he was about Yūsuf. What happened was that this constant crying at his separation from Yusuf caused his eyes to turn white from sorrow. The sense is that he lost his eyesight, or it became very weak. Tafsīr authority, Muqātil has said that this state of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام continued for six years when his eyesight had nearly gone. In the last sentence of the verse, it was said: فَهُوَ كَظِيمٌ which can be explained by saying that he became silent, speechless, unable to share his pain with anyone else. The word: كَظِيمٌ (*kaẓīm*) has been derived from: كَظم (*kaẓm*) which means to be choked up or filled. Thus, the sense would be that his heart was all filled up with sorrow and his tongue was tied for he would not talk about his grief to anyone.

Therefore, the word: كَظم (*kaẓm*) is also taken in the sense of suppressing anger - in a way that anger, despite having one's heart filled with it, does not become the motivating factor of doing something, by word of mouth or movement of hand, as demanded by one's anger. It appears in Ḥadīth:

وَمَنْ يَّكْظِمِ الْغَيْظَ يَأْجُرْهُ اللّٰهُ

> That is, 'whoever suppresses his anger (and does not act as it demands despite having the ability to do so), Allah will reward him.'

It is said in another Ḥadīth that, on the day of Resurrection (Al-Ḥashr), Allah Ta'ālā will bring such people before the whole multitude of people and would give them the option to take whichever of the blessings of Jannah (Paradise) they liked.

At this point, Imām Ibn Jarīr has reported a Ḥadīth according to which, at a time of distress, reciting or prompting to recite: اِنَّا لِلّٰهِ وَاِنَّا اِلَيْهِ رٰجِعُوْنَ (*Innā lil-lāhi wa innā ilaihi rājiʻūn* : To Allah we belong and to Him we are to return) is one of the distinguishing characteristics of this Ummah, and this Kalīmah is highly effective in delivering one from the suffering of sorrow. We can understand why it has been called the distin-

guishing characteristic of the Ummah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ since Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, when choked with deadly sorrow and shock, did not say this Kalīmah, instead, he said: يٰاَسَفٰى عَلٰى يُوْسُفَ (How sad I am about Yūsuf). In his Shu'abul-'Īmān, Al-Baihaqī has also reported this Ḥadīth as based on a narration of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه.

Why Was Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام So Deeply Attached To Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام ?

At this stage, we notice that Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام had extraordinary love for Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. He was so affected by his disappearance that, during this whole period of his separation from him which has been reported to be forty years in some narrations while eighty in some others, he kept weeping continuously, so much so that he lost his eyesight. Apparently, this does not measure upto his spiritual majesty as a prophet that he would love his children so much and that much. On the other hand, the Holy Qur'ān says: اِنَّمَآ اَمْوَالُكُمْ وَاَوْلَادُكُمْ فِتْنَةٌ :'Your wealth and your children are a *fitnah* (trial) - 64:15.' And, as for the spiritual majesty of the noble prophets, may peace be upon them all, the Holy Qur'ān has this to say: اِنَّآ اَخْلَصْنٰهُمْ بِخَالِصَةٍ ذِكْرَى الدَّارِ : that is, 'We have made them special to specialize in the remembrance of the Home (of 'Ākhirah) - 38:46.' Mālik ibn Dīnār رحمه الله تعالى explains its meaning by saying that: We have taken out the love of *dunyā* from their hearts and, in its place, We have filled their hearts with nothing but the love of Ākhirah. Their only criterion, in taking or leaving something, is Ākhirah.

From the sum-total of what has been said here, there rises a difficulty before us as to how could Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام allow himself to be so consumed with his love for Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, and how could that be explained as correct.

In his Tafsīr (Maẓharī), Qāḍī Thanā'ullah Pānipatī رحمه الله تعالى has, with reference to this difficulty, reported a special research of Ḥaḍrat Mujaddid Alf Thānī, the gist of which is that, no doubt, the love of *dunyā* and its enjoyment is blameworthy. Categorical statements of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth prove that. But, the love of things of *dunyā* which relate to 'Ākhirah is, in reality, included under the love of 'Ākhirah. The excellences of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام were not limited to his physical beauty alone. Also to be taken into account are his prophetic chastity and high morals. So, given an over-all view, love for him was not the love of what wordly life

has to offer. In fact and in reality, this was nothing but the love for 'Ākhirah itself.

In the comment quoted above, it is worth noticing that this love, though not the love of *dunyā* really, yet it did have a certain worldly touch. For this reason, this love became the source of the trial and test of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, for which he had to undergo the unbearable shock of a forty-year separation from him. Then, the chains of this event, from the beginning to the end, show that things kept taking shape as determined by Allah Ta'ālā which made this shock stretch longer and longer. Otherwise, at the very start of the event, it would have not been possible for a father who loved his son so intensely that he would simply listen to what his other sons told him and elect to keep sitting home and not do anything about it. In fact, if he had immediately visited the site of the incident and made necessary inquiries and investigations, he would have known the truth of the matter on the spot. But, things happened in a way as Allah would have them, so it just did not occur to him. After that, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was stopped, through revelation, from sending to his father any news about himself - to the limit that he took no initiative in this direction even after his ascension to power in Egypt. Then, more trying were events which happened concerning the repeated visits of his brothers to Egypt. Even at that time, he said nothing to his brothers about himself, nor did he try to send some note of information to his father. Instead of doing all that, he detained yet another brother through a secret plan, thus inflicting yet another shock on his father. All these actions cannot possibly issue forth from a great prophet such as Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام unless and until he had not been prohibited from doing so through the medium of Waḥy (revelation). Therefore, al-Qurṭubī and other commentators have declared this entire range of actions taken by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام as directly prompted by Divine revelation. The Qur'ānic statement: كَذٰلِكَ كِدْنَا لِيُوْسُفَ (This is how We planned for Yūsuf - 76) also indicates in this directon. Allah knows best.

When the sons of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام saw the extreme suffering and patience of their father, they said: قَالُوْا تَاللّٰهِ تَفْتَؤُا تَذْكُرُ يُوْسُفَ (By God, you will not stop remembering Yūsuf ...), meaning thereby that every shock ends, after all, and so does every sorrow. The passage of days in life makes one forget them. But, he continues to be where he was, even after

the passage of such a long time with his sorrow being as fresh as when it came.

After hearing the concern of his sons, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb said: إِنَّمَآ أَشْكُوا بَثِّي وَحُزْنِيٓ إِلَى اللَّهِ , that is, 'I complain of my anguish and sorrow, not to you, or to anyone else, but to Allah *jalla thana'uh* Himself. Therefore, leave me alone as I am.' And, along with what he said, he also indicated that 'this remembrance of his will not go to waste for he knew from Allah Ta'ālā what they did not know - that he has been promised by Him that He would bring them all together with him.'

Verse 87 begins with the order given by Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام: يٰبَنِيَّ اذْهَبُوا فَتَحَسَّسُوا مِن يُّوسُفَ وَأَخِيهِ (O my sons, go and search for Yūsuf and his brother ...).

It was after the passage of such a long time that Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام asked his sons to 'go and search for Yūsuf and his brother' - and not to lose hope in finding them. Before this, he had never given an order of this nature. All these things were subservient to the Divine destiny. Meeting them earlier than that was not so destined. Therefore, no such action was taken either. And now, the time to meet had arrived. Therefore, Allah Ta'ālā put in his heart the way-out appropriate to it.

And the direction in which the search was to be made was turned towards nowhere but Egypt itself - which was known and definite in the case of Benyamin. But, there was no obvious reason, given the outward conditions, to look for Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام in Egypt. But, when Allah Ta'ālā intends to do something, He arranges to put together appropriate causes for its execution. Therefore, this time, he instructed his sons to go to Egypt once again for the purpose of this search. Some commentators have said that Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, by noticing that the 'Azīz of Miṣr had treated them unusually the first time when he had returned their capital by putting it within their baggage, had got the idea that this 'Azīz seems to be someone very noble and generous, perhaps he may be Yūsuf himself.

Points of Guidance

Patience in Pain is Obligatory on Every Muslim

Imām Al-Qurṭubī has said: The event relating to Sayyidnā Ya'qūb

عليه السلام proves that it is Wājib on every Muslim when faced with distress or pain in the case of his person, children, family or property that he or she should seek redress from it by resorting to patience (*ṣabr*) at its best and by becoming resigned to and content with the decree of Allah Ta'ālā - and follow the example of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام and other blessed prophets.

The Merit of Swallowing Anger and Pain

Imām Ḥasan Al-Baṣrī رحمه الله تعالى has said: Out of what one swallows, two are the best in the sight of Allah Ta'ālā: (1) To do Ṣabr on pain or distress, and (2) to swallow anger.

Complaining of pain before everyone

In another Ḥadīth from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said: مَنْ بَثَّ لَمْ يَصْبِرْ , that is, one who goes about narrating his distress before everyone has not observed Ṣabr.

The Reward for Ṣabr

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه has said: Allah Ta'ālā conferred upon Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام the reward of Shuhadā' (martyrs in the way of Allah) for this Ṣabr. And, in this Ummah too, whoever observes Ṣabr while in distress shall receive a similar reward.

The Reason why Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام was put to Trial

Imām Al-Qurṭubī has given a reason for this severe trial and test of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام as it appears in some narrations. It is said that one day Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام was doing his Tahajjud prayers and Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was sleeping before him. All of a sudden a sound of snoring by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام caused his attention to be diverted to him. This happened twice, and thrice. Then, Allah Ta'ālā said to His angels: Look, this is My friend, and My favoured servant, see how he, in the middle of his address and approach to Me, turns his attention to someone other than Me. By My Honour and Power, I shall take these two eyes of his out, the eyes with which he has turned his attention to someone other than Me, and the one to whom he has turned his attention, I shall separate from him for a long time.

How About Looking at Someone During Ṣalāh?

Therefore, in a Ḥadīth of Al-Bukhārī narrated by Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها, it appears that she asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ: 'How is it to look else-

where during Ṣalāh?' In reply, he said: 'Through it, the Shayṭān snatches the Ṣalāh of a servant of Allah away from him.' May Allah *subḥanahū wa Taʿālā* keep us protected.

Verses 88 - 92

فَلَمَّا دَخَلُوا عَلَيْهِ قَالُوا يٰٓاَيُّهَا الْعَزِيزُ مَسَّنَا وَاَهْلَنَا الضُّرُّ وَجِئْنَا بِبِضَاعَةٍ
مُّزْجٰىةٍ فَاَوْفِ لَنَا الْكَيْلَ وَتَصَدَّقْ عَلَيْنَا ۖ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَجْزِي الْمُتَصَدِّقِينَ
﴿٨٨﴾ قَالَ هَلْ عَلِمْتُمْ مَّا فَعَلْتُمْ بِيُوسُفَ وَاَخِيهِ اِذْ اَنْتُمْ جٰهِلُونَ ﴿٨٩﴾
قَالُوٓا ءَاِنَّكَ لَاَنْتَ يُوسُفُ ۖ قَالَ اَنَا يُوسُفُ وَهٰذَآ اَخِي ۡ قَدْ مَنَّ اللّٰهُ
عَلَيْنَا ۖ اِنَّهٗ مَنْ يَّتَّقِ وَيَصْبِرْ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُضِيعُ اَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٩٠﴾
قَالُوا تَاللّٰهِ لَقَدْ اٰثَرَكَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْنَا وَاِنْ كُنَّا لَخٰطِئِينَ ﴿٩١﴾ قَالَ لَا تَثْرِيبَ
عَلَيْكُمُ الْيَوْمَ ۖ يَغْفِرُ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ ۡ وَهُوَ اَرْحَمُ الرّٰحِمِينَ ﴿٩٢﴾

So, when they came to him (Yūsuf), they said, "O 'Azīz, distress has befallen us and our family, and we have brought a capital of very little worth. So, give us the full measure and be charitable to us. Surely, Allah rewards the charitable." [88] **He said, "Do you know what you did to Yūsuf and his brother when you acted ignorant?"** [89]

They said, "Are you really the Yūsuf?" He said, "I am Yūsuf, and this is my brother. Allah has been very kind to us. Surely, whoever fears Allah and observes patience, then Allah does not waste the reward of the good-doers." [90]

They said, "By God, Allah has given to you preference over us, and we were surely in error." [91]

He said, "No reproach upon you today. May Allah forgive you, and He is the most merciful of all the merciful. [92]

Commentary

Mentioned in the verses appearing above is the remaining part of the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام and his brothers. It tells us that Sayyidnā Yaʿqūb عليه السلام asked his sons to go and search Yūsuf and his brother. So they travelled to Egypt for a third time - because they knew that Benya-

min was there and they had to try to get him released first. As for Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, though his presence in Egypt was not known to them but, when the time comes for something to happen, human plans too start falling in place, unconsciously and without an intentional effort. This is confirmed by a Ḥadīth which says: When Allah Taʻālā intends to do something, He makes its causes get together automatically. Therefore, to search Yūsuf too, the very travel to Egypt was appropriate, though taken up unconsciously. Then, they needed foodgrains, after all. And yet another factor was that they hoped to see the 'Azīz of Miṣr on the pretext of their request for foodgrains, when they could put forward their plea for the release of Benyamin.

The first verse (88) begins with the words: فَلَمَّا دَخَلُوا عَلَيْهِ قَالُوا (And when they came to him, they said...). It means: When the brothers of Yūsuf reached Egypt as ordered by their father and met the 'Azīz of Miṣr, they talked to him in a flattering tone. Presenting their need and helplessness, they told the 'Azīz that they and their family were suffering because of the famine, so much so that they did not have even adequate funds to purchase foodgrains. Compelled by circumstance, they had brought a capital which was not good enough for that purpose. Thus, their request was that, given his generosity, he should accept whatever they had and give them the full measure of grains as is usually given against things of good value. Not being their right in any way, they pleaded that the grains should be given to them as if given in charity because 'Allah rewards the charitable.'

What was this 'capital of very little worth'? The Qur'ān and Ḥadīth have not clarified it. The sayings of the commentators differ. Some say that they were bad *dirhams* which were not acceptable in the open market. Others say that this comprised of household articles. This expression - 'capital of very little worth' - is a translation of the meaning of the word: مُزجٰة ('*muzjātin*') which really means something which does not move on its own, but has to be moved by someone else forcefully.

When Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام heard these submissive words from his brothers and saw their broken-down condition, he was naturally coming to a point where he would have no option but to disclose the truth as it was. And the drift of events was showing that the restriction placed by Allah Taʻālā on Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام that he would not disclose the truth

of the matter about himself was not going to be there anymore for the time had come close when it would be taken back. Based on a narration of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, it has been reported in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī and Maẓharī that Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام had, on this occasion, sent a letter in writing and had addressed it to the 'Azīz of Miṣr. The letter said:

"From Ya'qūb Ṣafī Allah Ibn Isḥāq Dhabīḥ Allah Ibn Ibrāhīm Khalīl Allah To the 'Azīz of Miṣr. After offering praise to Allah: Our entire family is known for hardships and trials. My grandfather, Ibrāhīm Khalīl Allah was tested through the fire of Nimrud. Then, my father, Isḥāq was put to a hard test. Then, I was tested through a son of mine whom I held very dear - to the limit that I lost my eyesight when separated from him. After that, there was his younger brother, a source of comfort for me in my grief, whom you arrested on a charge of theft. And let me tell you that we are the progeny of prophets. Never have we committed a theft, nor has there ever been a thief among our children. And peace on you!"

When Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام read this letter, he trembled and broke into tears and decided to let his secret out. To start with, he first asked his brothers if they remembered what they had done with Yūsuf and his brother at a time when they were ignorant, unable to distinguish between good and bad, and quite neglectful of acting with foresight.

When his brothers heard his question, they were dumbfounded. What has the 'Azīz of Miṣr got to do with the story of Yūsuf? Then, they recollected the dream seen by young Yūsuf the interpretation of which was that he would achieve some high rank and they would have to bow down before him. Could it be that this 'Azīz of Miṣr is none else but Yūsuf himself? Then, as they exerted and deliberated a little more, they recognized him by some signs. Still, to confirm it further, they asked him: ءَ اِنَّكَ لَاَنْتَ يُوْسُفُ (Are you really the Yūsuf?). Then, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام said: 'Yes, I am Yūsuf and this is my brother, Benyamin.' He supplemented his statement by adding the name of his brother so that they become certain about him. In addition to that, he also wanted them to become sure right then about the total success of their mission, that is, the two they had started to search for were there before them, both at the same time and place. Then, he said: قَدْ مَنَّ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْنَا ط اِنَّهٗ مَنْ يَّتَّقِ وَ يَصْبِرْ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُضِيْعُ اَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ , that is, 'Allah has been very kind to us [that he first gave both of us two qualities, those of patience (*Ṣabr*) and the fear of Allah

(*Taqwā*), qualities which are a key to success and a security shield against every hardship. Then He changed hardship into comfort, separation into union, and our paucity of wealth and recognition into its total abundance. 'Surely, whoever fears Allah [and abstains from sins] and observes patience [while in distress], then Allah does not waste the reward of the good- doers [like these].'

Now the brothers of Yūsuf had no choice left with them but to confess the wrongs they had done and admit the grace and excellence of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. So, in one voice, they all said: تَاللّٰهِ لَقَدْ اٰثَرَكَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْنَا وَإِنْ كُنَّا لَخٰطِئِيْنَ : 'By God, Allah has given to you preference over us [which you deserved], and we were surely in error [in whatever we did - and so, forgive us in the name of Allah].' To this in reply, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام said what a prophet of his stature would say: لَاتَثْرِيْبَ عَلَيْكُمُ (No reproach upon you), that is, 'not to say much about taking a revenge of your injustices against me, on this day, I would not even blame you for it.' This much was the good news of forgiveness from his side which he let them hear. Then, he prayed for them before Allah Ta'ālā: يَغْفِرُاللّٰهُ لَكُمْ ز وَهُوَاَرْحَمُ الرّٰحِمِيْنَ (May Allah forgive you, and He is the most merciful of all the merciful).

After that, he said: اِذْهَبُوْا بِقَمِيْصِيْ هٰذَا فَاَلْقُوْهُ عَلٰى وَجْهِ اَبِيْ يَاْتِ بَصِيْرًا وَاْتُوْنِيْ بِاَهْلِكُمْ اَجْمَعِيْنَ : 'Go with this shirt of mine and put it over the face of my father, and he will turn into a sighted man [which will enable him to come here]. And bring to me all your family [so that all of us can get together, be happy, enjoy the blessings given by Allah and be grateful to Him].'

Points of Guidance

We come to know of many injunctions, rulings, as well as guidelines, which are good to have in life:

1. First of all, the use of the expression: تَصَدَّقْ عَلَيْنَا ('*taṣaddaq 'alainā*': be charitable to us) in verse 88 raises a question as to how would Ṣadaqah and Khairāt (charity) become Ḥalāl (lawful) for the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام who are the progeny of prophets? Secondly, even if Ṣadaqah could be taken as Ḥalāl, how would the act of asking for it become Ḥalāl? Even if the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام were no prophets, he himself certainly was. Why did he not warn them against this error?

A clear enough answer to this is that the word Ṣadaqah used here does not mean the real Ṣadaqah. In fact, the request for a concession in

the transaction has been given the name of Ṣadaqah and Khairāt - because, they had just never asked for a free supply of grains. Instead, they had offered 'a capital of very little worth.' And the essence of their request was that this 'capital of very little worth' be accepted in the spirit of remission given in such hard circumstances. Moreover, it is also possible that the unlawfulness of Ṣadaqah and Khairāt (charity) for the progeny of prophets may be exclusive to the Ummah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ - as held by Mujāhid from among Tafsīr authorities. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

2. The last sentence of verse 88: إِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَجْزِى الْمُتَصَدِّقِيْنَ (Surely, Allah rewards the charitable) tells us that Allah Ta'ālā gives good return to those who spend in Ṣadaqah and Khairāt (charity). But, there are details to it, that is, there is a general return for Ṣadaqah and Khairāt which is received by everyone, believer or disbeliever, right here in the present world. That return comes in the form of the removal of disasters and hardships. Then, there is the return which is particularly attached to the 'Ākhirah (Hereafter), that is, the Jannah (Paradise). That is for the believers only. Since the addressee here is the 'Azīz of Miṣr - and the brothers of Yūsuf did not know at that time whether or not he was a believer - therefore, they opted for a sentence which was general, and which included the return of the present world, as well as that of the Hereafter. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Besides, this being an address to the 'Azīz of Miṣr, the occasion obviously demanded that the address in this sentence should have been direct, as: 'Allah will give you the best of return.' But, as his being a believer was not known, therefore, the form of address used was general, and any special return for him was not mentioned. (Qurṭubī)

3. The sentence: قَدْ مَنَّ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْنَا (Allah has been very kind to us) in verse 90 proves that, should one be in some distress or hardship, then, Allah Ta'ālā delivers one from these and showers him or her with his blessings, now, after that, such a person should not talk about his past hardships anymore. Instead, one should remember nothing but this blessing and favour of Allah Ta'ālā which one now has. After having been delivered from distress, and after having been blessed by Divine rewards, to continue crying over past hardships is ingratitude. Such an ungrateful person has been called: كَنُوْد (*kanūd*) in the Holy Qur'ān: إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لِرَبِّهٖ لَكَنُوْدٌ (Truly, man is to his Lord, ungrateful - 100:6). The word, *kanūd*, refers to a person who does not remember favours received, but does remember hardships faced.

Therefore, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام made no mention at this time of the hardships he had to undergo for a long time due to the actions of his brothers. Instead of that, he mentioned the blessings of Allah only.

4. The last sentence: اِنَّهٗ مَنْ يَّتَّقِ وَيَصْبِرْ (Surely, whoever fears Allah and observes patience, then Allah does not waste the reward of the good-doers) in verse 90 tells us that Taqwā, that is, abstention from sins, and Ṣabr, that is, patience and fortitude, are two qualities which deliver one from every disaster and distress. The Holy Qur'ān has said at several places that a person's prosperity and success depend on these two qualities, for example: وَاِنْ تَصْبِرُوْا وَتَتَّقُوْا لَا يَضُرُّكُمْ كَيْدُهُمْ شَيْئًا , that is, 'if you keep patience and fear Allah, their cunning shall not harm you at all - 3:120.'

A surface view of the verse here may suggest that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام is claiming to be God-fearing and patient in the sense that it was because of his Taqwā and Ṣabr that he was blessed with deliverance from difficulties and rewarded with high ranks. But, no one can claim Taqwā for himself. It is prohibited by definite statements in the Holy Qur'ān, for example: فَلَا تُزَكُّوْٓا اَنْفُسَكُمْ هُوَ اَعْلَمُ بِمَنِ اتَّقٰى (Therefore do not claim purity for yourself: He knows best who it is that guards against evil - 53:32). But, in reality, there is no claim here. Instead, this is a confession of the blessings and favours of Allah Ta'ālā, for He first gave him the Taufīq of Ṣabr and Taqwā and then, through it, came all blessings from Him.

The declaration: لَا تَثْرِيْبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْيَوْمَ (No reproach upon you today) in verse 92 has been made from the highest level of good morals whereby the oppressor was not only forgiven, but spared from reproach too.

Verses 93 - 100

اِذْهَبُوْا بِقَمِيْصِيْ هٰذَا فَاَلْقُوْهُ عَلٰى وَجْهِ اَبِيْ يَاْتِ بَصِيْرًا ۚ وَاْتُوْنِيْ
بِاَهْلِكُمْ اَجْمَعِيْنَ ﴿۹۳﴾ وَلَمَّا فَصَلَتِ الْعِيْرُ قَالَ اَبُوْهُمْ اِنِّيْ لَاَجِدُ رِيْحَ
يُوْسُفَ لَوْلَآ اَنْ تُفَنِّدُوْنِ ﴿۹۴﴾ قَالُوْا تَاللّٰهِ اِنَّكَ لَفِيْ ضَلٰلِكَ الْقَدِيْمِ
﴿۹۵﴾ فَلَمَّآ اَنْ جَآءَ الْبَشِيْرُ اَلْقٰىهُ عَلٰى وَجْهِهٖ فَارْتَدَّ بَصِيْرًا ۚ قَالَ اَلَمْ
اَقُلْ لَّكُمْ ۚ اِنِّيْٓ اَعْلَمُ مِنَ اللّٰهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۹۶﴾ قَالُوْا يٰٓاَبَانَا اسْتَغْفِرْ لَنَا

ذُنُوبَنَآ اِنَّا كُنَّا خٰطِئِيْنَ ﴿٩٧﴾ قَالَ سَوْفَ اَسْتَغْفِرُ لَكُمْ رَبِّىْ ؕ اِنَّهٗ هُوَ
الْغَفُوْرُ الرَّحِيْمُ ﴿٩٨﴾ فَلَمَّا دَخَلُوْا عَلٰى يُوْسُفَ اٰوٰىٓ اِلَيْهِ اَبَوَيْهِ وَقَالَ
ادْخُلُوْا مِصْرَ اِنْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ اٰمِنِيْنَ ﴿٩٩﴾ وَرَفَعَ اَبَوَيْهِ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ
وَخَرُّوْا لَهٗ سُجَّدًا ۚ وَقَالَ يٰٓاَبَتِ هٰذَا تَاْوِيْلُ رُءْيَاىَ مِنْ قَبْلُ ۫ قَدْ
جَعَلَهَا رَبِّىْ حَقًّا ؕ وَقَدْ اَحْسَنَ بِىْٓ اِذْ اَخْرَجَنِىْ مِنَ السِّجْنِ وَجَآءَ
بِكُمْ مِّنَ الْبَدْوِ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ اَنْ نَّزَغَ الشَّيْطٰنُ بَيْنِىْ وَبَيْنَ اِخْوَتِىْ ؕ اِنَّ رَبِّىْ
لَطِيْفٌ لِّمَا يَشَآءُ ؕ اِنَّهٗ هُوَ الْعَلِيْمُ الْحَكِيْمُ ﴿١٠٠﴾

Go with this shirt of mine and put it over the face of my father, and he will turn into a sighted man. And bring to me all your family." [93]

And when the caravan set out, their father said, "I sense the scent of Yūsuf if you do not take me to be senile." [94]

They said, "By God, you are still in your old fallacy!" [95] **So, when came the man with good news, he put it (the shirt) on his face, and he turned into a sighted man. He (Ya'qūb) said, "Did I not tell you that I know from Allah what you do not know?"** [96]

They said, 'Our father, pray to Allah to forgive us our sins. Surely, we have been wrong." [97]

He said, "I shall pray to my Lord to forgive you. Surely, He is the Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful." [98]

Later, when they came to Yūsuf, he placed his parents near himself and said, "Enter Egypt, God willing, in peace." [99]

And he raised his parents up on the throne, and they all fell before him in prostration. And he said, "My father, here is the fulfillment of my early dream. My Lord has made it come true. He favoured me when he released me from the prison and brought you from the countryside after Satan had caused a rift between me and my brothers. Surely, my Lord does what He wills, in a subtle way. Surely, He is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise." [100]

Commentary

The previous verses about the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام have told us about the time when, by the will of Allah, it was appropriate for him to disclose his secret to his brothers. This he did. His brothers sought his forgiveness. He, not only that he forgave them, did not even choose to admonish them for what they had done to him in the past. In fact, he prayed to Allah Ta'ālā for them. Meeting his father was now his next concern. Given the conditions, he found it better that his father comes to him with the family. But, having come to know that his father had lost his eyesight as a result of his separation from him, that became his first concern. So, he said to his brothers: اِذْهَبُوا بِقَمِيصِي هٰذَا فَأَلْقُوهُ عَلٰى وَجْهِ أَبِي يَأْتِ بَصِيرًا (Go with this shirt of mine and put it over the face of my father, and he will turn into a sighted man - 93). It is obvious that putting someone's shirt on the face of a person cannot become the physical cause of an eyesight to return. In fact, this was a miracle of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام for he, by the will of Allah, knew that once his shirt was put over the face of his father, Allah Ta'ālā will give him his eyesight back.

Tafsīr authorities, Ḍaḥḥāk and Mujāhid have said that this was the inherent quality of that shirt because it was not like ordinary clothes. Instead, it was brought from Paradise for Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام at the time when he was thrown into the fire naked by Nimrūd. Then, this apparel of Paradise remained preserved with Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. After his death, it passed on to Sayyidnā Isḥāq عليه السلام. After his death, it came to Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام. In view of its status as a sacred legacy, he put it inside a tube, sealed it and made Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام wear it round his neck as a Ta'wīdh (spiritual charm) so that he remains safe against the evil eye. When the brothers of Yūsuf removed the shirt of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام to deceive their father and he was thrown into the well without it, Sayyidnā Jibra'īl al-Amīn came, and opening the tube hanging round his neck, took this shirt out from it, and made Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام wear it. Since that time, it remained preserved with him. When needed again, it was Jibra'īl al-Amīn again who advised Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام that this shirt was an apparel of Paradise. It had a unique property. If put over the face of a blind person, he becomes sighted. He asked him to send it to his father and he would become a sighted man.

The view of Ḥaḍrat Mujaddid Alf Thānī رحمه الله تعالى is that the beauty,

rather the very existence of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, was itself a thing of the Paradise. Therefore, every shirt that touched his body could have this property. (Maẓharī)

Said in the last sentence of verse 93 was: وَأْتُونِي بِأَهْلِكُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ that is, 'all of you, my brothers, bring your entire family to me.' Though, the real purpose was to have his respected father come to him but, here he did not specifically mention his father, instead, talked about bringing the family - perhaps, because he considered that asking his father to be brought to him was contrary to etiquette. However, he was already certain that the sight of his father would return and there would remain no reason which could stop him from coming to him, rather, he would himself want to honour him with his visit. According to a narration reported by Al-Qurṭubī, Yahūdā (Judah) from among the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام offered to carry this shirt personally - because, it was he who had carried young Yūsuf's shirt smeared with fake blood and which brought many shocks for his father, and now, it should be him again who should carry the shirt in his own hands, so that amends could be made for past injustices.

Verse 94 opens with the words: وَلَمَّا فَصَلَتِ الْعِيرُ 'And when the caravan set out' (and had reached barely outside the limits of the city), then, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام said (to those around him): 'I sense the scent of Yūsuf if you do not take me to be senile.' According to a narration of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه there was a travel distance of eight days from the city of Egypt to Can'aan, and according to Sayyidnā Ḥasan رضي الله عنه the distance was eighty *farsakh,* that is, nearly two hundred and fifty miles. Unique is the power of Allah Ta'ālā who, from such a distance, carried all the way to Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, the scent of his son Yūsuf through the shirt of his son Yūsuf. And some thing of wonder it certainly is that this scent, when Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was sitting confined into a well of his own homeland, caused no reaction into the smell buds of his father! Right from here, we learn that no miracle is in the control of a prophet. In fact, a miracle is not even the personal act and action of the prophet. This is directly the act of Allah. When Allah Ta'ālā wills, He makes a miracle manifest itself. And when the Divine will is not there, the nearest of the near recedes into the farthest.

In verse 95, it was said: قَالُوا تَاللّٰهِ إِنَّكَ لَفِي ضَلٰلِكَ الْقَدِيمِ (They said, 'By God, you are still in your old fallacy!'). It means that those around Sayyidnā

Ya'qūb عليه السلام commented on what he had said by wondering that he still seemed to be engrossed into his old fallacy, that is: 'Yūsuf is alive and we shall meet again.'

Said in verse 96 is: فَلَمَّآ اَنْ جَآءَ الْبَشِيْرُ that is, 'when this man with the good news reached Can'aan' and put the shirt of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام over the face of his father, his eyesight returned and he became a sighted man. The man who came with the good news was Yahūda, the same brother of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام who had brought his shirt from Egypt.

The last sentence of the verse is: قَالَ اَلَمْ اَقُلْ لَّكُمْ اِنِّيْٓ اَعْلَمُ مِنَ اللّٰهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ (He [Ya'qūb] said, 'Did I not tell you that I know from Allah what you do not know?' - 96) - that Yūsuf is alive and we shall meet again.

Now, when the truth of the matter became clear, the brothers of Yūsuf asked for the forgiveness of their father in a spiritually endearing style by saying: قَالُوْا يٰٓاَبَانَا اسْتَغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوْبَنَآ اِنَّا كُنَّا خٰطِئِيْنَ : 'Our father, pray to Allah to forgive us our sins. Surely, we have been wrong - 97.' Thus, it is obvious that a person who prays to Allah Ta'ālā for the forgiveness of their sins would do that himself too.

The reply given by Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام was: قَالَ سَوْفَ اَسْتَغْفِرُ لَكُمْ رَبِّيْ (I shall pray to my Lord to forgive you ... - 98).

Here, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام has, instead of praying for them instantly, made a promise that he would pray for them soon. Commentators have generally given a reason for this. According to them, his purpose was to pray for them particularly, in peace and with concentration, towards the later part of the night - because the prayer made at that hour is answered specially. This is as it appears in a Ḥadīth in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī and Muslim that, in the last third part of every night, Allah Ta'ālā descends in all His Glory close to the firmament near the Earth, and proclaims: Is there someone who would pray to Me, and I would answer? Is there someone who would seek forgiveness from Me, and I would forgive ?

About what has been said in the next verse: فَلَمَّا دَخَلُوْا عَلَيْهِ (Later, when they came to Yūsuf ... - 99), it appears in some narrations that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had sent with his brothers this time a large supply of clothes and other articles of need all loaded on some two hundred camels, so

that the whole family could make good preparations in anticipation of their visit to Egypt. Thus, all set for the trip, when Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام and his entire family set out for Egypt, their number, according to one narration, was seventy two and, according to the other, it was comprised of ninety three men and women.

On the other side, when came the time for their arrival in Egypt, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام and the people of Egypt came out of the city to receive them. With them came four thousand soldiers to present a guard of honour. When these guests reached Egypt and entered the home of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام he lodged his parents with him.

Here, the text refers to 'parents.' - though, the mother of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had died during his childhood, but after her death, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام had married Layya, the sister of his late wife. She was, in her capacity as the maternal aunt of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, almost like his own mother, and also as the married wife of his father, was deserving of being called as nothing but his mother.*

At the end of verse 99, the statement: وَقَالَ ادْخُلُوا مِصْرَ اِنْ شَآءَ اللهُ اٰمِنِيْنَ (he said, 'Enter Egypt, God willing, in peace') means that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام asked all his family members to enter Egypt by the will of Allah and without any fear or restriction, the sense being that they were free from usual restrictions placed on travellers who enter another country.

Verse 100 opens with the words: وَرَفَعَ اَبَوَيْهِ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ (And he raised his parents up on the throne), that is, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had his parents sit with him on the royal throne.

After that it was said: وَخَرُّوْا لَهٗ سُجَّدًا (and they all fell before him in pros-

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*. This interpretation is according to the *riwāyah* where it has been said that the mother of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had died at the time of Benyāmin's birth. It is on this basis that the present text of the respected author, may the mercy of Allah be upon him, appears to be contradictory to the relevant text on page 38 of Volume V where the name of Sayyidnā Yūsuf's mother عليها السلام has been given as Rāḥīl. But, in reality, there is no authentic *riwāyah* in this connection. Isrā'īlī *riwāyāt* do exist, but they too are contradictory. The author of Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī has himself said that the Jewish chroniclers do not subscribe to the view that the mother of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had died at the time of Benyāmin's birth. If this *riwāyah* is given credence, no doubt remains. Then, in this situation, by the words: ورفع ابويه (And he raised his parents up on the throne - 100), the reference would be to the real mother of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام . Ibn Jarīr and Ibn Kathīr have opted for this as the weightier view. So, commenting on this, Ibn Kathīr has said: قال ابن جرير ولم يقم دليل على موت امه (اى ام يوسف عليه السلام) وظاهر القران يدل على حياتها - **Muḥammad Taqī Usmānī.**

tration), that is, the parents, and all brothers did *sajdah* before Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه has said that this prostration of gratitude was for Allah Ta'ālā, and not for Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. Others have said that a Sajdah or Sujūd (prostration) as part of 'Ibādah (worship) when done for anyone other than Allah has always been forbidden in the Sharī'ah of every prophet. But, the Sajdah of Ta'ẓīm (veneration) was permissible in the religious codes of past prophets - which has been prohibited in the Sharī'ah of Islām on the basis that it is a source of Shirk. This is confirmed by Ḥadīth reports from Al-Bukhārī and Muslim that Sajdah (prostration) for anyone other than Allah is not Ḥalāl.

And when both his father and mother, and eleven of his brothers, prostrated before him simultaneously, he remembered the dream he had seen in his childhood, and he said: وَقَالَ يٰٓاَبَتِ هٰذَا تَاْوِيْلُ رُءْيَايَ مِنْ قَبْلُ قَدْ جَعَلَهَا رَبِّيْ حَقًّا : 'My father, here is the fulfillment of my early dream,' that 'the sun and the moon and eleven stars are prostrating to me,' and I am grateful that 'my Lord has made it come true.'

Rules and Points of Guidance

1. When his sons requested Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام to pray to Allah for their forgiveness, he said, 'I shall (soon) pray to my Lord to forgive you.' He did not make that *du'ā'* instantly. He delayed it.

One of the reasons given by commentators for this delay is that he first wanted to check with Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام whether or not he has forgiven them - because, unless the victim of injustice forgives, there is no forgiveness from Allah either. So, this being the state of affairs, the making of a prayer for forgiveness was not appropriate.

Pointed to here is a matter of sound principle - that no violation of the rights of the servants of Allah (*Ḥuqūq al-'Ibād*) gets to be forgiven unless the holder of the right receives his right back, or forgives it - only verbal repentance for it is not enough.

2. According to a narration of Sufyān al-Thawrī رحمه الله تعالى, when Yahūdā brought in the shirt of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام and put it over the face of his father, he asked: How is Yūsuf? Yahūdā told him that he was the king of Egypt. Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام said: I am not asking if he is a

prince or a pauper. I am asking how is he in his faith and deed. Then he told him about the qualities of his character and how God-fearing and chaste in conduct he was. This is how the noble prophets love and relate to their children. They are more concerned about the state of their spiritual life than they are with the state of their physical comfort. This is the model every Muslim should follow.

3. According to Ḥaḍrat Ḥasan رحمه الله تعالى, when the carrier of the good news arrived with the shirt of his separated son, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام wished to give him something in reward. But, life was hard, therefore, he apologized that there was no bread baked in the house for seven days and he could not give a material reward. However, he prayed that Allah Ta'ālā makes the agony of death easy on him. Al-Qurṭubī has said that this prayer was the best reward for him.

4. This event also tells us that the giving of a reward to someone who brings a good news is a practice of the blessed prophets. An event relating to Sayyidnā Ka'b ibn Mālik رضي الله عنه from among the noble Ṣaḥābah is well known. He had not participated in the battle of Tabūk for which he was reproached and punished - though his repentance was later accepted. When the man with the good news of this acceptance came to him, he gave the dress he was wearing to him.

In addition to that, it also proves that inviting friends over meals on occasions of happiness is Sunnah. Sayyidnā 'Umar رضي الله عنه when he completed his reading of Sūrah al-Baqarah, shared his happiness with others by inviting them to eat with him for which he slaughtered a camel.

5. The sons of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, once the truth had come out in the open, asked for the forgiveness of their father and brother. This tells us that a person who has caused pain to someone, by word or action, or remains responsible for returning any right owed to him, then, it is obligatory on that person that he must pay back that right immediately, or have it forgiven by him.

Based on a narration of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه there is a report in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: A person who has someone's financial right due against him, or may have caused pain to him, by word or action, then, he must pay it back today, or get it off

his shoulders by seeking forgiveness - before comes the day of Qiyāmah where no one would have any property or wealth from which rights could be paid back. Therefore, his good deeds will be given to the victim of injustice and he will be left empty-handed. And if, he has no good deeds in his account, the sins of the other person will be put on his shoulders. May Allah protect us all from this.

Patience and Gratitude :
The Dignified Station of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام

To pick up the thread of the story, we see that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام starts telling his parents things which happened to him. This is a point where it would be useful to stop for a while and think. Had someone in our day been subjected to go through all those hardships which were faced by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام and had he been enabled to meet his parents after such a long trial of separation and disappointment, just imagine where would he begin his tale of woes, how would he cry and make others do the same, and how many days and nights would he spend in recounting the hardships faced by him? But, the two parties, the teller and the listener, are both no less than two messengers and prophets of Allah. Worth observing is their conduct in this matter. Here is the very dear separated son of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, when he meets his father after having gone through the long period of so many hardships, see what he says:

وَقَدْ اَحْسَنَ بِيٓ اِذْ اَخْرَجَنِيْ مِنَ السِّجْنِ وَجَآءَ بِكُمْ مِّنَ الْبَدْوِ مِنْ بَعْدِ اَنْ نَّزَغَ الشَّيْطٰنُ بَيْنِيْ وَبَيْنَ اِخْوَتِيْ

He favoured me when He released me from the prison and brought you from the countryside after the Satan had caused a rift between me and my brothers - 100.

The hardships faced by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام can be divided over three stages respectively: (1) The injustices of his brothers; (2) the separation from his parents; (3) the pain of the prison. What this great prophet of Allah has done is that, in his statement, he has changed the order of events as they had happened. He started from the prison. Then, he said nothing about how he had entered the prison and how he had suffered there. Rather, talked about how he was released from the prison and mentioned that too with words of gratitude for Allah Ta'ālā. As a corollary of his release from the prison and his gratitude to Allah for it, he

also told them that he has been in the prison for a certain time.

Worth noticing here is that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام has mentioned his release from the prison. But, he has not said anything about the prison of the well in which his brothers had thrown him. He did not mention it even functionally, as in 'He released me from the prison - 100.' The reason is that he had already forgiven the mistake made by his brothers, and had said: لَا تَثْرِيبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْيَوْمَ (No reproach upon you today - 92). Therefore, he did not consider it proper to mention the incident of the well in any form whatsoever, so that his brothers may not be put to shame. (Qurṭubī)

After that, he was supposed to dwell on the long and trying separation from his parents, and talk about how they had affected him. But, he set all these things aside. He took up the last part of it and mentioned his meeting with the parents and said so by thanking Allah for it: 'and brought you from the countryside (*al-badw*)' to this city of Egypt. There is a hint here to the blessing of Allah that He brought Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام from his home in the countryside, where conveniences of living are scarce, to a city with royal honours.

The first stage of the trials of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام has not been mentioned yet. This concerns the injustices inflicted by his brothers on him. It is interesting that he sweeps the whole thing away as a handiwork of Satan and makes things come easy even by suggesting that his brothers were not of the kind who would do something like that. It was Satan who deceived them and caused this rift between them.

This is the elegance of prophets. Not only that they would be patient against pain and hardship, but that they would invariably find the occasion to be grateful to Allah under all conditions. Therefore, with prophets, there is no state of being in which they are not grateful to Allah Ta'ālā. This is contrary to what ordinary human beings would do. In their state of being, they would have thousands of blessings of Allah Ta'ālā being showered over them, yet they would not talk about them to anyone. And when they have some hardship overtake them at some time, they would go about crying over it all their lives. The Qur'ān has complained about this human mind-set when it says: إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لِرَبِّهِ لَكَنُودٌ (that is, human beings are, to their Rabb, very ungrateful -100:6).

After having reduced the tale of his trials in three words, Sayyidnā

Yūsuf عليه السلام said: إِنَّ رَبِّي لَطِيفٌ لِّمَا يَشَآءُ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ (Surely, my Lord does what He wills, in a subtle way. Surely, He is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise - 12:100).

Verse 101

رَبِّ قَدْ اٰتَيْتَنِي مِنَ الْمُلْكِ وَعَلَّمْتَنِي مِنْ تَاْوِيلِ الْاَحَادِيثِ ۚ فَاطِرَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۚ اَنْتَ وَلِيّٖ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْاٰخِرَةِ ۚ تَوَفَّنِي مُسْلِمًا وَّاَلْحِقْنِي بِالصّٰلِحِينَ ﴿١٠١﴾

My Lord, You have given me some power to rule and a knowledge of interpreting events. O the Creator of the heavens and the Earth, You are my guardian in this world and the Hereafter. Make me die a Muslim and make me join the righteous." [101]

Commentary

The address of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام in the previous verses was to his respected father. Now, after having achieved an important objective by meeting his parents and brothers, he was at peace to devote himself directly to praising Allah Ta'ālā and to supplicating before Him. What he said appears immediately above. The '*ṣāliḥīn*' or 'the righteous' or morally the most perfect servants of Allah can be the prophets themselves for they are Divinely protected (*ma'ṣūm*) against all sins. (Maẓharī)

Worth noticing in this *du'ā'* is the prayer for a good end to life. It presents before us a profile of the typical servants of Allah who have the honour of being accepted in the sight of their Creator. Their attitude is that they may be enjoying the highest possible ranks in this world and in the Hereafter, and they may have all sorts of power and office beneath their feet, yet, they would never wax proud over these. In fact, they keep fearing lest such things around them may be taken away or cut down. So, they keep praying that the physical and spiritual blessings given to them by Allah Ta'ālā continue to be with them, even keep increasing, right through the hour of death.

At this stage, the unusual story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, and the subsequent chain of instructions and lessons, as mentioned in the Qur'ān,

has reached its completion. What happened after that has not been reported in the Holy Qur'ān, or in any Marfū' Ḥadīth (with its chain of reporting authorities ascending to the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself). Most commentators have reported that with reference to historical or Isra'īlī narrations.

Based on a narration by Ḥaḍrat Ḥasan رحمه الله تعالى, it has been reported in Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was seven years old when his brothers had thrown him into a well. Then, he remained separated from his father for eighty years, remained alive for twenty three years after having met his parents, and died at the age of one hundred and twenty years.

As in the narrations of the People of the Book, reports Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq, the period of separation between Sayyidnā Ya'qūb and Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليهما السلام was forty years. Then, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, after his arrival in Egypt, lived in the company of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام for seventeen years. After that, he died.

As in the annals of historians, reports the author of Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام died after having lived for twenty four years in Egypt. Before his death, he ordered Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام that his body should be sent to his home country and that he be buried by the side of his father, Sayyidnā Isḥāq عليه السلام.

Sayyidnā Sa'īd ibn Jubayr رضي الله عنه has said that the body of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام was placed in a coffin made of wood from saul tree and taken to Baytul-Maqdis. For this reason, it became common custom among Jews that they would take their dead from far away places to Baytul-Maqdis for a burial there. The age of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام was one hundred and forty seven years when he died.

When Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام entered Egypt with his family, says Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه, they were a total of ninety three men and women - and when this progeny of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, that is, the Banī Isrā'īl, left Egypt with Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, their number was six hundred and seventy thousand.[1] (Qurṭubī & Ibn Kathīr)

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1. As pointed out earlier, this is based on Israelite narrations. Ibn Khaldūn, the well-known Muslim historian, has criticized this narration in his Muqaddimah and has urged that the number of Banī Isrā'īl was not that big - (Muḥammad Taqī Usmānī)

It has been mentioned earlier that, after the death of the former 'Azīz of Miṣr, the king of Egypt had arranged the marriage of Zulaikhā with Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام.

It appears in the Torah and in the historical accounts of the People of the Book that they had two sons, Ifrā'īm and Manshā, and a girl, Raḥma bint Yūsuf. Raḥma was married to Sayyidnā Ayyub عليه السلام. Of the progeny of Ifrā'īm, there was Yusha' ibn Nūn عليه السلام who was a companion of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام (Maẓharī)

Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام died at the age of one hundred and twenty years and he was buried by the bank of the river Nile.

Based on a narration by Sayyidnā 'Urwah ibn Zubayr رحمه الله تعالى, Ibn Isḥāq has reported: When Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was commanded to leave Egypt with the Banī Isrā'īl, it was revealed to him that he should not leave the body of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام in Egypt and he was ordered to take it with him to Syria and bury him close to his ancestors. In obedience to this order, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام made investigations and succeeded in locating his burial place. He found his body in a marble coffin which he took with him to Can'aan in Palestine. There he buried him beside Sayyidnā Isḥāq and Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام. (Maẓharī)

After Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, the Amalkites took over Egypt as the new Pharaohs. As for the Banī Isrā'īl, they lived under them but kept adhering to the Faith of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. However, they were taken as foreigners and subjected to all sorts of painful discriminations. Finally, Allah Ta'ālā delivered them from this punishment through Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام. (Tafsīr Maẓharī)

Rules and Points of Guidance

1. From the previous verses (99-100), we learn that paying due respect to parents is obligatory (*wājib*) - as it stands proved from what Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام did.

2. We also learn from here that a prostration of reverence was permissible in the religious code of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام which is why his parents and brothers prostrated to him. But, in the Sharī'ah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, this Sajdah or Sujūd has been declared as a particular mark of 'Ibādah (worship) and it cannot be done before anyone other than Al-

lah. If done, it is Ḥarām. The Holy Qur'ān has said: لاَ تَسْجُدُوْا لِلشَّمْسِ وَلاَ لِلْقَمَرِ (prostrate not to the Sun and the Moon ... - 41:37). And in Ḥadīth, it is said that Sayyidnā Mu'ādh ﷺ, when he went to Syria, saw local Christians prostrating to their parents. After his return from there, he started making a prostration before the Holy Prophet ﷺ. He asked him not to do that. He said: If I were to take prostration before anyone as permissible, I would have told a wife to prostrate before her husband. Similarly, when Sayyidnā Salmān al-Farisī ﷺ wished to prostrate to him, he said:

لاَ تَسْجُدْ لِیْ یَا سَلْمَانُ وَاسْجُدْ لِلْحَیِّ الَّذِیْ لاَ یَمُوْتُ

Do not prostrate to me, O Salmān, instead, prostrate to the Ever-Living who would never die. (Ibn Kathīr)

This tells us that a prostration done as a token of respect for the Holy Prophet ﷺ is not permissible. With that being the truth, how can it become permissible if done before a saint, or an elder or *pīr*?

3. From: هٰذَا تَاْوِیْلُ رُءْیَایَ مِنْ قَبْلُ (here is the fulfillment of my early dream - 100), we learn that the fulfillment of the interpretation of a dream could sometimes take a long time to materialize - as it was in the present case when it manifested itself after forty, or eighty, years. (Ibn Jarīr & Ibn Kathīr)

4. The words: قَدْ اَحْسَنَ بِیْ (He favoured me - 100) said by Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ prove that if a person after having been suffering from a disease or disaster, finds him or her delivered from it, then, following the traditional way of prophets, he or she must show gratitude to Allah for this deliverance, and forget about any remembrance of that disease or disaster.

5. From the statement: اِنَّ رَبِّیْ لَطِیْفٌ لِّمَا یَشَآءُ (Surely, my Lord does what He wills, in a subtle way - 100), we learn that, when Allah Ta'ālā intends to do something, He has His subtle ways of arranging things and causes secretly in a manner that no one can get the slightest inkling about it.

6. The words of prayer: تَوَفَّنِیْ مُسْلِمًا (Make me die a Muslim - 101) refer to the prayer of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ in which he has wished to die while adhering to his Belief and Faith ('Īmān and Islām). This tells us that to make a *du'ā'* for death under particular conditions is not prohibited. And

as for the prohibition of wishing for death in sound and authentic Aḥādīth, the purpose there is to tell people that it is not correct to go about asking for death just because of depression from worldly hardships or simple lack of patience. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said: Let no one ask for death because of some hardship. If one has to say something like that, let him say: 'Yā Allāh, keep me alive as long as life is better for me, and give me death when death is better for me.'

Verses 102 - 109

ذٰلِكَ مِنْ اَنْبَآءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوْحِيْهِ اِلَيْكَ ج وَمَا كُنْتَ لَدَيْهِمْ اِذْ اَجْمَعُوْٓا اَمْرَهُمْ وَهُمْ يَمْكُرُوْنَ ﴿١٠٢﴾ وَمَآ اَكْثَرُ النَّاسِ وَلَوْ حَرَصْتَ بِمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿١٠٣﴾ وَمَا تَسْئَلُهُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ اَجْرٍ ط اِنْ هُوَ اِلَّا ذِكْرٌ لِّلْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿١٠٤﴾ وَكَاَيِّنْ مِّنْ اٰيَةٍ فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ يَمُرُّوْنَ عَلَيْهَا وَهُمْ عَنْهَا مُعْرِضُوْنَ ﴿١٠٥﴾ وَمَا يُؤْمِنُ اَكْثَرُهُمْ بِاللّٰهِ اِلَّا وَهُمْ مُّشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿١٠٦﴾ اَفَاَمِنُوْٓا اَنْ تَاْتِيَهُمْ غَاشِيَةٌ مِّنْ عَذَابِ اللّٰهِ اَوْ تَاْتِيَهُمُ السَّاعَةُ بَغْتَةً وَّهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُوْنَ ﴿١٠٧﴾ قُلْ هٰذِهٖ سَبِيْلِىْٓ اَدْعُوْٓا اِلَى اللّٰهِ قف عَلٰى بَصِيْرَةٍ اَنَا وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَنِىْ ط وَسُبْحٰنَ اللّٰهِ وَمَآ اَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ ﴿١٠٨﴾ وَمَآ اَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ اِلَّا رِجَالًا نُّوْحِىْٓ اِلَيْهِمْ مِّنْ اَهْلِ الْقُرٰى ط اَفَلَمْ يَسِيْرُوْا فِى الْاَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرُوْا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ط وَلَدَارُ الْاٰخِرَةِ خَيْرٌ لِّلَّذِيْنَ اتَّقَوْا ط اَفَلَا تَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿١٠٩﴾

That is a part of the reports of the unseen We reveal to you. And you were not there before them when they determined their object and they were planning devices. [102]

And most of the people are not going to believe, even though you long for it. [103] **And you do not ask of them a reward for it. It is nothing but a lesson for all the (people of the) worlds.** [104]

How many a sign there is in the heavens and the Earth

which they pass by and they are heedless to it. [105] **And most of them do not believe in Allah without associating partners with Him.** [106]

Do they feel secure from that there comes to them Allah's enveloping punishment or that there comes to them the Hour suddenly while they are not conscious of it? [107]

Say, "This is my way. I call (people) to Allah with full cognition - myself and my followers. And pure is Allah. And I am not among the Mushriks*." [108]

And We did not send before you (messengers) other than men from the people of the towns whom We inspired with revelation. Have they not travelled in the land where they would have seen how was the fate of those before them? And surely the abode of the Hereafter is much better for those who fear Allah. Would you, then, still not understand? [109]

Commentary

After a full description of the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, first to come in the verses cited above is an address to the Holy Prophet ﷺ: ذٰلِكَ مِنْ اَنْۢبَآءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوْحِيْهِ اِلَيْكَ (That is a part of the reports of the unseen We reveal to you), and that 'you were not there with the brothers of Yūsuf when they had decided to throw Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام into the well and were making plans for it.'

The purpose of choosing to say this is that the very act of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in describing this story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام correctly and in full details is a clear proof of his being a prophet and recepient of revelation. The reason is that this story dates back to thousands of years before his time. Neither was he present there on the scene to have described it as an eye witness, nor was he ever taught by anyone to have consulted books of history, or heard it from a teacher and described it. Therefore, there is no way he could have known it in the manner he did except that it be Divine revelation itself.

At this place, the Holy Qur'ān has considered it sufficient to say that 'you were not there.' It has not deemed it necessary to mention that this information did not come to him through another person or book because

*. Those who associate partners with Allah

the whole Arabia knew that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was an Ummiyy - that is, he did not learn to read and write from anyone. And also known to everyone was that he had lived his whole life in Makkah al-Mu'aẓẓamah. He did make one of his trips to Syria with his uncle Abū Ṭālib, a trip in which he came back home while still enroute. The second trip he made was for business. He finished his work there and returned in a few days. In this trip too, there was no chance of his meeting some scholar or going to an educational institution. Therefore, at this place, it was not considered necessary to mention it. And at another occasion in the Holy Qur'an this too was further clarified by saying: مَا كُنْتَ تَعْلَمُهَآ اَنْتَ وَلَا قَوْمُكَ مِنْ قَبْلِ هٰذَا , that is, 'you did not know them (events) before this (the revelation of the Qur'ān), neither you nor your people -11:49"

Imām Al-Baghawī has said that the Jews and the Quraysh had joined hands to test the veracity of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. For this purpose, they had asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ to tell them everything about Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام as it had happened to him, if he was true in his claim of prophethood. When he told them what he had learnt through Divine revelation, they still remained sticking to their disbelief and denial. This shocked the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Thereupon, said in the next verse was: 'And most of the people are not going to believe' - even though, the proofs of his being a prophet were clear, and even if he himself longed for it, or tried his best. The sense of the statement is: 'Your duty is to spread the call and seek the betterment of people. That you succeed in it is not in your control nor is this your responsibility nor should you grieve over it.'

After that it was said: وَمَا تَسْئَلُهُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ اَجْرٍ اِنْ هُوَ اِلَّا ذِكْرٌ لِّلْعٰلَمِيْنَ , that is, 'your mission is to tell them the truth and call them to the straight path. For this you do not ask them to give you something in return - which could have caused them to find it difficult to listen to him or follow him. In fact, what you are telling them is for their own good. It is only an advice to heed to and a lesson to learn from. And it is for everyone. The text here also carries a hint to the effect: When the purpose behind your effort is no worldly gain, in fact it is nothing but the reward of the Hereafter and the betterment of your people, then, that purpose of yours already stands achieved. Why would you then grieve over it?

Then, in verse 105, the attitude of the disbelievers is portrayed by saying:

وَكَاَيِّنْ مِّنْ اٰيَةٍ فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الْاَرْضِ يَمُرُّوْنَ عَلَيْهَا وَهُمْ عَنْهَا مُعْرِضُوْنَ

> How many a sign there is in the heavens and the Earth which they pass by and they are heedless to it.

The sense is that these people are not of the kind who would simply not listen to a well-wisher out of their obstinacy. They are worse. They would not even learn from the very open signs of the perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā visible to them all the time, yet keep passing by them without paying any attention and without wondering whose signs they were. These signs of Divine wisdom and power are widely spread out and many in number. Out of these are many signs which remind people of punishments which descended upon past peoples, and they themselves see their overturned habitations, but they would still refuse to learn their lesson.

This was a description of people who simply did not believe in the existence of Allah Ta'ālā, the great Creator, and in His wisdom and power. Mentioned next are those who do believe in Allah as the Creator, but also associate other things as partners in His Divinity. It was said:

وَمَا يُؤْمِنُ اَكْثَرُهُمْ بِاللّٰهِ اِلاَّ وَهُمْ مُّشْرِكُوْنَ

> And most of them do not believe in Allah without associating partners with Him - 106.

It means that those of them who profess a belief in Allah would do so by lacing it with Shirk. They would suggest others as partners in the attributes of knowledge and power which are exclusive for Allah Ta'ālā - which is rank injustice, and ignorance.

Ibn Kathīr has said that included under the sense of this verse are Muslims who, despite having *'Īmān*, are involved with different kinds of *Shirk*. According to the Musnad of Aḥmad, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: The most dangerous of things I apprehend for you is the small Shirk. When the Ṣaḥābah asked as to what could that be, he said: Hypocricy is the small Shirk. Similarly, swearing by someone or something other than Allah has been called Shirk in another Ḥadīth. (Ibn Kathīr from Tirmidhi) Vows and offerings (Mannat and Niyāz) in the name of anyone

other than Allah is also included under it, on which there is a consensus of Muslim jurists.

After that, in verse 107, questioned and deplored is their heedlessness and ignorance as to how could these people, despite their denial and rebellion, become so carefree of the possibility that there may come on them some punishment from Allah which overtakes them from all sides, or that the fateful Hour of the Day of Doom itself descends upon them all of a sudden while they are not ready for it?

In verse 108, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been asked to state his position before these people:

قُلْ هٰذِهٖ سَبِيْلِيْٓ اَدْعُوْٓا اِلَى اللّٰهِ ۣ عَلٰى بَصِيْرَةٍ اَنَا وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَنِيْ ۭ وَسُبْحٰنَ اللّٰهِ وَمَآ اَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ ۔

"Say, (you believe it or not) 'This is my way. I call (people) to Allah with full cognition - myself and my followers. And pure is Allah. And I am not among the associators - 108."

It means that the *da'wah* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ is not based on some summary view of things, instead, it is the outcome of insight, reason and wisdom. In this act of 'full cognition,' the Holy Prophet ﷺ has included his followers as well. According to Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه it refers to the noble Ṣaḥābah, may Allah be pleased with them all. They are the soldiers of *Allah subhānahū wa Ta'ālā*. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه said: The Ṣaḥābah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ are the best people of this whole Ummah. Their hearts are pure and their knowledge is deep. They are far removed from formality. Allah Ta'ālā has chosen them to accompany and serve their Rasūl. You should learn their morals, habits and ways because they are the ones who are on the straight path.

It is also possible to take the expression: مَنِ اتَّبَعَنِيْ (and my followers) in the general sense whereby it would mean every person who is doing the duty of conveying the *da'wah* of the Rasūl of Allah to his Ummah right through the last day of the Qiyāmah. According to Kalbi and Ibn Zayd, this verse also makes it necessary for one who claims to follow the Holy Prophet ﷺ that he should spread his *da'wah* among people and make the teaching of the Qur'ān available to all. (Maẓharī)

The last sentence of verse 108 is: سُبۡحٰنَ اللّٰهِ وَمَاۤ اَنَا مِنَ الۡمُشۡرِكِيۡنَ (And pure is Allah [that is, free from *Shirk*]. And I am not among the Mushriks [that is, not of those who practice *Shirk*]). Since, a little earlier, mention was made that there are people who, when they profess belief in Allah, would mix it up with Shirk, whether open or padded or concealed. Therefore, he has declared that he has absolutely nothing to do with Shirk. The gist of what has been said here is: My *da'wah* does not aim at inviting people to become my servants. In fact, I myself am, also a servant of Allah - and it is this kind of servitude, servitude to none but Him, that I invite people to. However, since I am the *dā'ī* (the original maker of this call), it is obligatory that faith be put in me.

To this, the disbelievers of Makkah used to object. They took the plea that a Rasūl or messenger of Allah should not be a human being. He should, rather, be an angel. A reply to this doubt has been given in the next verse where it was said: وَمَاۤ اَرۡسَلۡنَا مِنۡ قَبۡلِكَ اِلَّا رِجَالًا نُّوۡحِىۡۤ اِلَيۡهِمۡ مِّنۡ اَهۡلِ الۡقُرٰى : It means that their thinking that it is an angel who should be the messenger and prophet of Allah and that a human being cannot occupy this station is baseless and ineffectual. Quite contrary to this, the case is just the reverse - that is, for human beings, a prophet of Allah has always been a human being. Nevertheless, he is distinct from human beings in general in that the Waḥy and message of Allah Ta'ālā comes to him directly. It is never the outcome of an individual effort or act by anyone. It is always Allah Ta'ālā Himself who would choose from among his servants the one who, in His knowledge and judgement, is the fittest for this mission. And this selection is based on particular attributes of personal excellence which are not found among human beings at large.

Onwards from here, there is an admonition to those who contravene the instructions given by the maker of the call on behalf of Allah (*dā'ī*), and invite the wrath and punishment of Allah upon them. It was said:

اَفَلَمۡ يَسِيۡرُوۡا فِى الۡاَرۡضِ فَيَنۡظُرُوۡا كَيۡفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِيۡنَ مِنۡ قَبۡلِهِمۡ‌ ؕ وَلَدَارُ الۡاٰخِرَةِ خَيۡرٌ لِّلَّذِيۡنَ اتَّقَوۡا‌ ؕ اَفَلَا تَعۡقِلُوۡنَ

Have they not travelled in the land where they would have seen how was the fate of those before them? And surely the abode of the Hereafter is better for those who fear Allah. Would you, then, still not understand? - 109

and continue to prefer the short-lived comfort of the present world over the everlasting and perfect blessings and comforts of the 'Ākhirah.

Rules and Guidance

The Difference between the News of the Unseen and the Knowledge of the Unseen

1. The statement: ذٰلِكَ مِنۡ اَنۡۢبَآءِ الۡغَيۡبِ نُوۡحِيۡهِ اِلَيۡكَ (That is a part of the reports of the unseen We reveal to you - 102) has appeared in the same words in verse 44 of Sūrah Āl-'Imrān in the context of the story of Sayyidah Maryam, that is: ذٰلِكَ مِنۡ اَنۡۢبَآءِ الۡغَيۡبِ نُوۡحِيۡهِ اِلَيۡكَ (That is a part of the reports of the unseen We reveal to you - 3:44). Then, with a slight change, the same statement appears in verse 49 of Sūrah Hūd where it is related to the story of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام: تِلۡكَ مِنۡ اَنۡۢبَآءِ الۡغَيۡبِ نُوۡحِيۡهَاۤ اِلَيۡكَ (These are reports from the unseen [events] which We reveal to you - 11:49).

From these verses we learn that Allah Ta'ālā communicates to his prophets many a news of the unseen through Waḥy (revelation). He has particularly blessed our Rasūl ﷺ, known as the Head of all the messengers, with a special portion of the news from the unseen, which is more than that which has been given to all past prophets. This is the reason why the Holy Prophet ﷺ has informed the Muslim Ummah of many events due to happen right through the day of Qiyāmah, either briefly, or in details. All Aḥādīth given in the Kitāb al-Fitan of Ḥadīth books are full of them.

Since common people take the Knowledge of the Unseen (*'Ilm al-Ghayb*) only in the sense that a person somehow gets to become aware of the news of the unseen, and this quality is found at its best in the Holy Prophet ﷺ, therefore, they think that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was *'Ālim al-Ghayb* (knower of the Unseen). But, the Holy Qur'ān has declared in very clear words that: لَا يَعۡلَمُ مَنۡ فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالۡاَرۡضِ الۡغَيۡبَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ (No one in the heavens, or on the Earth, knows the unseen except Allah - 27:65) which proves that no one, other than Allah Ta'ālā, can be called the *'Ālim al-Ghayb* or the Knower of the Unseen. The *'Ilm* of *al-Ghayb* (the knowledge of the unseen) is the unique attribute of Allah Ta'ālā. Taking an apostle, messenger, prophet or angel as a sharer in this attribute amounts to equating him with Allah, and is what the Christians do, who declare a Rasūl to be the son of God, and a partner in Godhead. The

verses of the Holy Qur'ān quoted here make the truth of the matter very clear. It stands settled that the *'Ilm* of *al-Ghayb* (the knowledge of the unseen) is an exclusive attribute of Allah Ta'ālā and the only *'Ālim al-Ghayb* (the Knower of the Unseen) is *Allah jalla thanā'uh* Himself. However, there are many news of the unseen which Allah Ta'ālā does give to his messengers through the medium of Waḥy (revelation). This, in the terminology of the Holy Qur'ān, is not known as the *'Ilm of al-Ghayb* (the knowledge of the unseen). Since common people do not understand this fine difference, they tend to take the news of the unseen as the knowledge of the unseen. This is why when one adheres to the terminology of the Qur'ān and asserts that no one, other than Allah, can claim to know what is unseen, they would prefer to differ, rather than accept truth as it is.

Messengers are from Men

2. From the word: رِجَالاً (*rijālan* : men) in verse 109:

وَمَآ اَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ اِلاَّ رِجَالاً نُّوحِيٓ اِلَيْهِمْ مِّنْ اَهْلِ الْقُرٰى

> And We did not send before you [messengers] other than men from the people of the towns - 109,

we learn that messengers are always men. A woman cannot become a *nabiyy* (prophet) and *rasūl* (messenger).

Imām Ibn Kathīr has reported the consensus of 'Ulamā' that Allah Ta'ālā has not made any woman a *nabiyy* or *rasūl*. Some 'Ulamā' have identified some women as being a *nabīyy* or prophet, for example, Sayyidah Sārah, the wife of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm ﷺ, the mother of Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ and Sayyidah Maryam, the mother of Sayyidnā 'Īsā ﷺ. The reason is that there are particular words in the Holy Qur'ān about these three respected women which give the impression that angels talked to them as Divinely commanded, gave them good news, or they themselves came to know something through the medium of Divine revelation. But the majority of 'Ulamā, though they do accept that the words of such verses prove that these respected women had a high spiritual rank in the sight of Allah Ta'ālā, but, according to them, these words are not sufficient as proofs of their being prophets and messengers.

Messengers are from Towns

3. The expression: اَهْلِ الْقُرٰى (men from the people of the towns) appear-

ing in the verse quoted immediately above tells us that Allah Taʻālā sends his messengers generally from among those who live in cities and towns. Messengers are not from among those who reside in the country-side and forest lands - because the dwellers of these habitations are generally rustic, hard and less perfect in comprehension and understanding. (Ibn Kathīr, Qurṭubī & others)

Verses 110 - 111

حَتّٰىٓ اِذَا اسْتَيْـَٔسَ الرُّسُلُ وَظَنُّوْٓا اَنَّهُمْ قَدْ كُذِبُوْا جَآءَهُمْ نَصْرُنَا ۙ فَنُجِّيَ مَنْ نَّشَآءُ ۭ وَلَا يُرَدُّ بَاْسُنَا عَنِ الْقَوْمِ الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ ﴿۱۱۰﴾ لَقَدْ كَانَ فِيْ قَصَصِهِمْ عِبْرَةٌ لِّاُولِي الْاَلْبَابِ ۭ مَا كَانَ حَدِيْثًا يُّفْتَرٰى وَلٰكِنْ تَصْدِيْقَ الَّذِيْ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَتَفْصِيْلَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَّهُدًى وَّرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُّؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿۱۱۱﴾

(Punishment was often delayed) until when the messengers were in despair and thought that they were wrong in their estimation, Our help came to them, then saved were those whom We willed. And Our punishment is not averted from the guilty. [110]

Surely, in the narratives of these, there is a lesson for the people of understanding. It is not an invented story, rather, a confirmation of what has been before it, and an elaboration of everything, and guidance and mercy for a people who believe. [111]

Commentary

Mentioned in the previous verses was the sending of prophets who invited people to take the straight path, and also answered there were some doubts about them. Then, people were admonished that they do not take into consideration the sad end they would face as a result of their antagonism towards prophets of Allah. Only if they were to pay some attention and look around and read signs from ruined cities and the history of lost places they pass by, they would find out how harsh has been the sad end of those who had opposed the blessed prophets, and that too, right here in this world. The habitation of the people of

Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام was overturned upside down. The people of ʻĀd and Thamūd were destroyed through various punishments. And the punishment of the Hereafter, that is far more severe.

Then, towards the end, they were instructed that the pain and pleasure of the present life is, after all, very short-lived. One 's real concern should be about the life to come, the 'Ākhirah, the Hereafter, where one shall stay for ever, and where the pain, or pleasure, too shall be eternal. So, it was made clear that a good end of life in the 'Ākhirah depends on Taqwā, the fear of Allah and the abstention from sins, and which, in a nutshell, means that one should strictly adhere to all commandments of the Sharīʻah.

Since the purpose in the previous verses was to warn people of the time by telling them to take their lesson from what had happened to past prophets and their communities, therefore, in the next verse (110), one of their doubts was removed. The doubt they had was about the warnings of Divine punishment given by the Holy Prophet ﷺ. They were hearing about it from him for a long time, but they did not see any punishment coming upon them. This made them all the more daring. If there was some punishment to come, it would have come by now, they thought. Therefore, it was said that Allah Taʻālā, in His mercy and wisdom, would often keep giving respite to erring and sinning people - and this respite, at times, could also become fairly long. That is why contumacious people become more daring and aggressive which causes a certain anxiety to prophets. So, it was said:

حَتّٰىٓ اِذَا اسْتَيْـَٔسَ الرُّسُلُ وَظَنُّوْٓا اَنَّهُمْ قَدْ كُذِبُوْا جَآءَهُمْ نَصْرُنَا ۙ فَنُجِّيَ مَنْ نَّشَآءُ ۭ وَلَا يُرَدُّ بَاْسُنَا عَنِ الْقَوْمِ الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ

(Punishment was often delayed) until when the messengers were in despair and thought that they were wrong in their estimation, Our help came to them, then saved were those whom We willed. And Our punishment is not averted from the guilty - 110).

To explain it in detail, it can be said, that: 'The disbelieving and disobedient people of past communities were given long respites, until when, because of the punishment not coming upon them, the messengers were in despair over the possibility that the punishment of Allah will not come upon such people and truth will not manifest itself in the manner

and at the time they had hoped it to be, and thought that, while determining the time of the Divine promise, they were wrong in their estimation - that Allah Ta'ālā had not told them of a definite time, and the time was fixed by them as based on particular signs. It was in this state of despair that Our help came to them, that is, the punishment on disbelievers came as promised, then saved from the punishment were those 'whom We willed (that is, believers in prophets were saved and disbelievers were destroyed) because Our punishment is not averted from the guilty,' instead, it does come upon them, therefore, the disbelievers of Makkah should not be in any doubt about a delay in the punishment due. [Bayān al-Qur'ān: Gist of Tafsīr by Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī]

The word: كُذِبُوا (*kudhibū* : were wrong) in verse 110 has been read as in the well-known reading (*Qirā'at*) of the Qur'ān - and the Tafsīr (exegesis or explanation) which we have chosen to follow is the one which is most sound and free from doubts. The essential sense of the word: كُذِبُوا (*kudhibū*) is to find one 's estimation or thinking as being wrong, which is a kind of Ijtihādī mistake (as based on personal opinion), and some such Ijtihādī mistake can issue forth from the blessed prophets. However, there is a difference between prophets عليهم السلام and other *mujtahids,* that is, when some Ijtihādī mistake issues forth from the prophets عليهم السلام, Allah Ta'ālā would not let them stay by that mistake, rather, He would make them become aware of it and enable them to see reality clearly. Other *mujtahids* do not occupy this station. The event of the Peace Pact of Ḥudaibiyah associated with the Holy Prophet ﷺ is sufficient as proof on this subject - because it has been stated in the Holy Qur'ān that this event is based on the dream which was seen by the Holy Prophet ﷺ. He had seen that he was doing the Ṭawāf of the Baytullah with his Ṣaḥābah - and the dream of the blessed prophets is also an imperative form of revelation - therefore, the happening of this event became certain. But, in the dream itself, no particular time or duration was identified for it. The Holy Prophet ﷺ, according to his estimation, thought that it would happen the same year. So, he announced it before his Ṣaḥābah and taking a good number of them with him left for Makkah al-Mu'aẓẓamah for their 'Umra. But, the Quraysh confronted them enroute and they could not avail of their intended Ṭawāf and 'Umra. In fact, the full manifestation (of the dream) came to unfold itself two years later, in the Hijrah year 8, in the form of

the Conquest of Makkah. And from this event, it became apparent that the dream he had seen was true and certain. But, the time for it which, by signs or estimation, the Holy Prophet ﷺ had taken as the time, was not what it actually was - but that mistake was compensated right then.

Similarly, the expression: قَدْ كُذِبُوْا (*qad kudhibū* : were wrong) in the verse under reference also carries the same sense, that is, the punishment which was to come upon the disbelievers was delayed while the prophets had estimated a time for it in their minds. When this punishment did not come at that time, they thought that they had made a mistake in determining the time for it. This Tafsīr has been reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbas رضي الله عنه. 'Allāma Al-Ṭībī has said that this report is Ṣaḥīḥ (sound) because it has been mentioned in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī. (Maẓharī)

In some readings (*Qirā'aat*) of the Qur'ān, this word has appeared with a doubled sound on the letter: ذال (*dhāl*), that is: قَدْ كُذِّبُوْا (*qad kudhdhibū*) as well. This word has been derived from the verbal noun: تکذیب (*takdhīb* : falsification). Given this reading, the sense would be: The prophets had determined an estimated time when the punishment would come, but when the punishment did not come at that time, they had apprehensions about their believers themselves, lest they should not falsifying them on the basis that their statement did not turn out to be true. These were the circumstances under which Allah Ta'ālā made His promise prove true, punishment fell on the deniers, believers were saved from it, and thus, overcome they did.

In the opening statement of the last verse of the Sūrah, it was said:

لَقَدْ كَانَ فِيْ قَصَصِهِمْ عِبْرَةٌ لِّأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ

Surely, in the narratives of these, there is lesson for the people of understanding - 111.

This statement may be pointing to the stories of all prophets عليهم السلام in the Qur'ān and also to the particular story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام which has been narrated in this Sūrah - because, through this later event, it has become absolutely clear that the obedient servants of Allah are supported and helped in so many ways when they are taken out from a deep well and made to sit on a high throne and are rescued from the threat of disgrace all the way to the zenith of the finest in grace and hon-

our, not to mention the practitioners of ill-will and deception who ultimately end up in sheer shame.

Said next is:

مَا كَانَ حَدِيثًا يُفْتَرٰى وَلٰكِن تَصْدِيقَ الَّذِى بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ

It is not an invented story, rather, a confirmation of what has been before it ...,

that is, of the books revealed before it - because, this story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf (Joseph) ﷺ has been mentioned in the Torah and the Injīl as well. And Ḥaḍrat Wahb ibn Munabbih says: There is no Scripture which does not have the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ in it. (Maẓharī)

And in the last sentence of the verse, it is said: وَتَفْصِيلَ كُلِّ شَىْءٍ وَّهُدًى وَّرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُّؤْمِنُوْنَ , that is, this Qur'ān is 'an elaboration of everything' (which means that the Qur'ān has details of everything which human beings need in religion - in fields like 'Ibādāt (worship of Allah), dealings, morals, social living, government, politics and many others, including injunctions and instructions about all individual and collective concerns of human life - they are all there).

Then, it was said that this Qur'ān is 'guidance and mercy for a people who believe.' The restriction of those who have 'Īmān or Faith has been placed here because its benefit can be enjoyed by only those who believe. It goes without saying that, though the Qur'ān is nothing but mercy and guidance for disbelievers as well, but it is due to their own misconduct and disobedience that this mercy and guidance has become heavy and unwholesome for them.

Shaykh Abū al-Manṣūr has said: The purpose behind the whole Sūrah Yūsuf and the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ narrated therein is to comfort the Holy Prophet ﷺ. All this is to tell him that his sufferings at the hands of his people have been the lot of past prophets too. But, in the end, Allah Ta'ālā enabled his prophets to overcome - and in his case too, this is what was going to happen.

The Commentary
on
SŪRAH YŪSUF
ends here.

Sūrah Al-Ra‘d

(The Thunder)

Sūrah al-Ra‘d is Makkī and it has 43 verses and 6 sections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the Most-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 4

الٓمّٓرٰ قف تِلْكَ اٰيٰتُ الْكِتٰبِ ط وَالَّذِیْٓ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ الْحَقُّ وَلٰكِنَّ
اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿١﴾ اَللّٰهُ الَّذِیْ رَفَعَ السَّمٰوٰتِ بِغَيْرِ عَمَدٍ
تَرَوْنَهَا ثُمَّ اسْتَوٰی عَلَی الْعَرْشِ وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ ط كُلٌّ يَّجْرِیْ
لِاَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّی ط يُدَبِّرُ الْاَمْرَ يُفَصِّلُ الْاٰيٰتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ بِلِقَآءِ رَبِّكُمْ تُوْقِنُوْنَ
﴿٢﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِیْ مَدَّ الْاَرْضَ وَجَعَلَ فِيْهَا رَوَاسِیَ وَاَنْهٰرًا ط وَمِنْ كُلِّ
الثَّمَرٰتِ جَعَلَ فِيْهَا زَوْجَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ يُغْشِی الَّيْلَ النَّهَارَ ط اِنَّ فِیْ ذٰلِكَ
لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَّتَفَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿٣﴾ وَفِی الْاَرْضِ قِطَعٌ مُّتَجٰوِرٰتٌ وَّجَنّٰتٌ مِّنْ
اَعْنَابٍ وَّزَرْعٌ وَّنَخِيْلٌ صِنْوَانٌ وَّغَيْرُ صِنْوَانٍ يُّسْقٰی بِمَآءٍ وَّاحِدٍ قف
وَّنُفَضِّلُ بَعْضَهَا عَلٰی بَعْضٍ فِی الْاُكُلِ ط اِنَّ فِیْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ
يَّعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿٤﴾

Alif, Lām, Mīm, Rā. **These are the verses of the Book. And what has been sent down to you from your Lord is true, but most of the people do not believe.** [1]

Allah is the One who raised the heavens without pillars. You see them. Then He positioned Himself on the Throne and subjugated the sun and the moon, each one running to an appointed time. He manages all matters, making the signs plain, so that you may be sure of meeting your Lord. [2]

And He is the One who spread out the earth and made mountains and rivers therein, and of all the fruits, He created therein the pairs of two. He makes the night cover the day. Surely, in that there are signs for a people who think. [3]

And in the earth there are tracts of land neighboring each other and gardens of grapes and farms and date palms, having twin or single trunks, watered with one water. And We make some better than others in taste. Surely, in that there are signs for a people who understand. [4]

Commentary

This Sūrah is Makkī and it has a total of forty three verses. Mentioned in this Sūrah too there are subjects such as the truth and veracity of the Holy Qur'ān, Tauḥīd (Oneness of Allah), Risālah (Prophethood) and answers to doubts raised about them.

The first group of letters: الٓمّٓرٰ (*Alif, Lām, Mīm, Rā*) are Isolated Letters (*Al-Ḥurūf al-Muqaṭṭa'āt*) the meaning of which are known to Allah Ta'ālā alone. The Ummah has not been informed of its meaning. It is not appropriate for the Muslim Ummah at large to indulge in investigations about them.

The first verse says that the Holy Qur'ān is Divine Word, and that it is true. The word, الكتاب (Al-Kitāb: The Book) means the Qur'ān, and it is possible that the expression which follows it, that is, اَلَّذِیْٓ اُنْزِلَ اِلَیْكَ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ (And what has been sent down to you from your Lord) might as well mean the Qur'ān itself. But, the connective (the *wāw* of *'aṭf* translated as 'And') obviously requires that الْكِتٰب (Al-Kitāb: The Book) and اَلَّذِیْٓ اُنْزِلَ اِلَیْكَ (what has been sent down to you) should be two separate things. In that case, Al-Kitāb or The Book would signify the Qur'ān and اَلَّذِیْٓ اُنْزِلَ اِلَیْكَ (what has been sent down to you) would mean the revelation (Waḥy), other than that of the Qur'ān, which has been sent down to the Holy Prophet ﷺ - because, it goes without saying, that the revelation sent to

the Holy Prophet ﷺ is not restricted to the Qur'ān alone. The Qur'ān itself says: وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوٰى اِنْ هُوَ اِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُّوحٰى (53:3) It means: Whatever the Holy Prophet says, he does not say on his own, out of some desire of his; instead, it is a message revealed to him from Allah Ta'ala. It proves that the orders given by the Holy Prophet ﷺ, other than those appearing in the Qur'ān, are also no other but those sent from Allah. The only difference between the two is that the Qur'ān is recited (*matluww*) while the later is not (*ghayr matluww*). The rationale for this difference is that the meanings and the words of the Qur'ān are both from Allah Ta'ālā, while, in the case of the rules of conduct (Aḥkām) given by the Holy Prophet ﷺ in Ḥadīth - in addition to those in the Qur'ān - their meanings too are, no doubt, revealed from Allah Ta'ālā, but their words are not revealed from Him. Therefore, they cannot be recited in Ṣalāh.

Thus, the verse comes to mean that the Qur'ān and its injunctions sent down to the Holy Prophet ﷺ are all true and in them there is no room for doubt. But, most people, due to their lack of concern and deliberation, do not come around to believe in them.

That Allah Ta'ālā exists and that He is One has been emphasized in the second verse. The proof stands obvious. Look at what has been created and ponder over the matchless mastery with which everything was created. One can come to only one conclusion that their maker has absolute power over everything and that He controls all creations and universes as the master. It was said:

اَللّٰهُ الَّذِىْ رَفَعَ السَّمٰوٰتِ بِغَيْرِ عَمَدٍ تَرَوْنَهَا

Allah is the One who raised the heavens without pillars. You see them.

On Seeing the Sky

It is generally said that the blue colour we see up is the colour of the sky. But physicists say that we see it so because of the intermingling of light and dark. Below, there is the light from the stars, and above, it is dark. As a result, the onlooker outside sees it as blue, similar to the reflection of light on deep water which appears blue. There are verses of the Qur'ān where seeing the sky has been mentioned, as has been done in this very verse which says: تَرَوْنَهَا (You see them), and the words appearing in another verse (88:18) are: وَاِلَى السَّمَآءِ كَيْفَ رُفِعَتْ '(And do you not see)

towards the sky as to how it has been raised - 88:18.)' First of all, the scientific determination of physicists does not stand counter to it because it is possible that the colour of the sky might as well be bluish, or may have some other colour, but it is sighted as blue due to the admixture of the dark behind and the light in between. Moreover, the possibility that the colour of the sky is a component of the atmosphere cannot be rejected as supported by valid proof. Then, it is also possible that places where 'seeing the sky' has been mentioned in the Qur'ān, the expression employed there may be legal and figurative aiming to establish that the existence of the sky stands proved under decisive arguments and is as good as seen. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

After that, it was said:

ثُمَّ اسْتَوٰى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ

Then He positioned Himself on the Throne ...

This mode of taking over the Seat of Power is beyond human comprehension. Understanding it is impossible. Here, it is sufficient to believe that this state of *Istiwā'* or positioning on the *'Arsh'* or Throne is something matching with the Divine Status as due, and that is what is meant here.

In the next sentence: وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ كُلٌّ يَّجْرِىْ لِاَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى (and subjugated the sun and the moon, each one running to an appointed time), the word: سَخَّرَ translated as 'subjugated' means that they both are constantly doing what they have been assigned to do. Thousands of years have gone by but there never has been the least increase or decrease in their movement, nor do they get tired, nor do they ever start doing something else contrary to what they have been programmed to do. As for their 'running to an appointed time,' it could also mean that both of them are moving on to the same appointed time which stands determined as the final term called Qiyāmah or Doomsday for this entire world of our experience. Once they reach that stage in time, this whole system of theirs will reach its end.

And it could also mean that Allah Ta'ālā has determined a particular speed and orbit for every planet. It always keeps moving on its orbit at the speed set for it. The Moon completes its orbit in one month and

the Sun does it in a year.

Certainly mind-boggling is the very presence of these great planets. Then, no less astonishing is the phenomena of their flawless functioning. Here they are moving on a particular orbit maintaining a particular speed precisely and perfectly for thousands of years in a state that their machinery faces no wear and tear or breakage, nor does it require any kind of greasing or servicing. Think of the revolutionary advancements of science in human technology in our day. Can any human invention around match this model? The truth is that it is impossible to locate even a thousandth part of it anywhere in the world despite human ingenuity being at its highest pinnacle. This great system of nature is delivering a message, very loud and very clear. It is telling us that there certainly is some Being who has made, moved and maintained this system, a Being far beyond the reach of human perception and intelligence.

In Reality, It is Allah who Makes Things Work for Human Beings while Their Role in It is Nominal

After that comes the powerful statement: يُدَبِّرُ الْاَمْرَ (He manages all matters). If man so pleased with the ways and means which help make things work for him were to open his eyes, he would realize that his plans and measures could neither create nor make things in the real sense. The outcome of all his efforts and workings is no more than getting to learn how to make the best use of what has been created by Allah Ta'ālā.

Besides, even the system of harnessing what is universally available for use is outside the ambit of power exercised by human beings. The reason is that human beings depend on hundreds and thousands of others like him, and on animals, and on many other live and inert members of Divine creation. These they cannot put on their jobs just by dint of their plans and efforts. This is the function of the Divine power. It has linked up everything, as if in a chain, and in a way that everything gets to be drawn into the desired action. You need to build a house. You find a whole range of servers from the architect to the builder and the finisher, hundreds of human beings offering their career and craft all set to answer your call. You need building materials. They lie stacked in stores and shops ready to be delivered where you want them. Was it within your power and control to assemble all these things on your own just by

the brute force of your money or measures and, on top of it, commission all those human beings into your service? Let us part with your individual example at this point. The fact is that this system cannot be established and activated through the force of law, even by the mightiest of the mighty government anywhere in the world. There is no doubt about the fact that the logistic support of this viably running universal system is the work of Allah Taʿālā alone, the Ever-Living, the Self-Sustaining Sustainer of all (*Al-Ḥaiyy, Al-Qaiyyūm*). If human beings still hasten to claim that all this comes from their plans and workings, there is not much that can be said about their claim, for ignorance shall remain what it is.

The next sentence in the verse is: يُفَصِّلُ الْاٰيٰتِ (making the signs plain). It may mean the verses of the Qur'ān which have been revealed by Allah Taʿālā in details and then, it was through the Holy Prophet ﷺ that He elaborated and explained them.

And the word, الْاٰيٰتِ (*al-āyāt*) could also mean the 'signs' of the most perfect power of Allah Taʿālā which are spread out in the heavens and the earth, even in the very existence of human beings themselves. These are before human sight all the time and everywhere, so many and so plain.

Said in the last sentence of the verse was: لَعَلَّكُمْ بِلِقَاءِ رَبِّكُمْ تُوْقِنُوْنَ (so that you may be sure of meeting your Lord). This means that Allah Taʿālā has initiated and activated this whole universe and its astonishing system of operation so that by pondering over it you may come to believe in and become certain of the Hereafter (*'Ākhirah*) and the Doomsday (*Qiyāmah*). The reason is that once you have pondered over the creation of this universe and its wonderous system, any likelihood of doubting that it may be beyond the power of Allah Taʿālā to resurrect human beings in the Hereafter simply cannot be entertained. And once we realize that it is within His power, and possible, and that it has been reported by no less a person than the one about whom it is universally settled that he never said anything in his whole life which was not the truth - then, there remains no room for doubt that this phenomena is real, actual and proven.

In the next verse (3), it was said:

وَهُوَ الَّذِي مَدَّ الْأَرْضَ وَجَعَلَ فِيهَا رَوَاسِيَ وَأَنْهٰرًا

And He is the One who spread out the earth and made mountains and rivers therein.

The expression: 'spread out the earth' is not contradictory of its being round - because each part of something very big and round appears to be, when looked at separately, nothing but a surface spread out - and the Qur'ān addresses common people in terms of their view of things. Since a common onlooker sees it as a spread-out surface, therefore, it was identified as such. Then, to keep it balanced and make it full of other benefits, high and heavy mountains were placed on it. Besides providing weight and balance, these mountains store and supply water for the whole creation. To accomplish this, an unimaginably big storage of water is placed on their peaks in the form of a frozen sea. This snow has no reservoir and certainly needs no monolithic structures, overhead or underground, to hold this supply of water. And the water thus stored cannot go bad or made impure. Then, nature has its own pipelines under the ground through which water is distributed all over the world. Somewhere they show up in the form of rivers flowing freely alongwith their tributeries; and at other places, wells are dug to tap water from these hidden pipelines.

In the next sentence of verse 3, it was said: وَمِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرٰتِ جَعَلَ فِيهَا زَوْجَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ (and of all the fruits, He created therein the pairs of two). It means that Allah has created fruits of many kinds from this earth and made each one of two kinds: small and big, red, white, sweet and sour. It is also possible that the meaning of '*zawjayn*' (pairs) is not restricted to only two. Instead, it may be refering to several kinds the least number of which is two, therefore, it was termed as 'the pairs of two.' And it is not so unlikely that 'pairs' refers to the male and female, as we know about many trees which have males and females, for example, the date-palm and the papayah. Possibility of this being the case with other trees as well does exist, though not yet proved by relevant research about all of them.

The next sentence of the verse declares: يُغْشِي الَّيْلَ النَّهَارَ (He makes the night cover the day). It means that He brings the night after the light of the day, as if something bright has been totally screened off from sight.

The last sentence of the verse: إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ translated as 'surely, in that there are signs for a people who think,' means that there is no doubt about the fact that many signs of the most perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā are present all over for those who care to think about and deliberate in the arrangement and system of this whole universe.

In the fourth verse it was said:

وَفِي الْأَرْضِ قِطَعٌ مُتَجَاوِرَاتٌ وَجَنَّاتٌ مِنْ أَعْنَابٍ وَزَرْعٌ وَنَخِيلٌ صِنْوَانٌ وَغَيْرُ صِنْوَانٍ يُسْقَىٰ بِمَاءٍ وَاحِدٍ وَنُفَضِّلُ بَعْضَهَا عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ فِي الْأُكُلِ

> And in the earth there are tracts of land neighboring each other and gardens of grapes and farms and date-palms, having twin or single trunks, watered with one water. And We make some better than others in taste. Surely, in that there are signs for a people who understand.

Being pointed out here is that many tracts of land, despite being joined together, are different in their inherent properties. Some are good and soft, others are saline or hard. Some are good for farming while others grow gardens, of grapes and dates. Of the date-palms, some grow to have two trunks like other trees while others have only one.

Then, all these fruits, though they come out of the same land and are watered by the same water and are touched by the rays of the sun and the glow of the moon and the draft of different winds in a uniform manner, yet there remains among them the difference of colour and taste and size.

Despite their being in such proximity with each other, the varied difference among them is a strong and clear proof of the fact that this whole system of creation is operating under the command of someone who is wise and knows how to plan, manage and run His creation. This has nothing to do with the postulates of the theory of evolution, as some ignorant people would like to believe. If these were the outcome of the stages of material development, how could we explain the element of difference among them despite all matter being common? One fruit grows on a tract of land in one season while another grows in the other. On one single branch of one tree, the fruits could be different in kinds, sizes and tastes!

Said in the last sentence of the verse (4) was: إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ (Surely, in that there are signs for a people who understand). It means that there are in it, absolutely without doubt, many signs of the power and greatness of Allah Ta'ālā which go on to prove that He is One and that He alone is worthy of worship. By saying that these signs are 'for a people who understand,' the hint released is that those who do not think about these things are not the people of understanding, no matter how highly they are rated and advertized for their intellect and intelligence.

Verses 5 - 8

وَإِنْ تَعْجَبْ فَعَجَبٌ قَوْلُهُمْ أَإِذَا كُنَّا تُرَابًا أَإِنَّا لَفِي خَلْقٍ جَدِيدٍ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ وَأُولَٰئِكَ الْأَغْلَالُ فِي أَعْنَاقِهِمْ وَأُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٥﴾ وَيَسْتَعْجِلُونَكَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ قَبْلَ الْحَسَنَةِ وَقَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمُ الْمَثُلَاتُ وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَذُو مَغْفِرَةٍ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَىٰ ظُلْمِهِمْ وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَشَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿٦﴾ وَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوْلَا أُنْزِلَ عَلَيْهِ آيَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِ إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مُنْذِرٌ وَلِكُلِّ قَوْمٍ هَادٍ ﴿٧﴾ اللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَحْمِلُ كُلُّ أُنْثَىٰ وَمَا تَغِيضُ الْأَرْحَامُ وَمَا تَزْدَادُ وَكُلُّ شَيْءٍ عِنْدَهُ بِمِقْدَارٍ ﴿٨﴾

And if you wonder, then wonder is their saying, "Is it that, once we are dust, we are to be created anew?" They are those who have disbelieved in their Lord, and they are those who (shall) have shackles round their necks, and they are the people of the Fire. They shall remain there for ever. [5]

And they ask for evil to come sooner than good, while punishments have really come to pass (against people) earlier to them. And surely, your Lord is the lord of forgiveness for the people against their wrongdoing, and surely, your Lord is severe in punishing. [6]

And the disbelievers say, "Why is it that no sign has been sent down to him from his Lord?" You are but a warner.

And for every people there is a guide. [7]

Allah knows what every female carries and what the wombs decrease or increase. And everything has measure with Him: ... [8]

Commentary

Contained in the first three verses cited above (5-7) there is a refutation of the doubts expressed by the disbelievers about prophethood. Alongwith it, added there is a warning of punishment for deniers.

1. The first of the three doubts they had was about people returning to life after having been dead and according to them, the whole idea of accounting and retribution on the Day of Resurrection was improbable and irrational. On this basis, they used to belie the prophets and rejected their claim to prophethood. This doubt of theirs has been mentioned in the following verse of the Holy Qur'ān: هَلْ نَدُلُّكُمْ عَلَىٰ رَجُلٍ يُنَبِّئُكُمْ إِذَا مُزِّقْتُمْ كُلَّ مُمَزَّقٍ إِنَّكُمْ لَفِي خَلْقٍ جَدِيدٍ (34:7). Here, to ridicule the prophets, it has been said by the disbelievers: 'Come, we shall introduce you to a man who tells you that you, once dead, shall be shredded into pieces and the molecules of the earth you are made of shall also spread out all over the earth, then, at that time, you shall be created anew - Sabā, 34:7.'

The Proof of Rising Again After Death

The answer to this doubt of theirs has been given in the first of the present verses cited above (5) by saying: وَإِنْ تَعْجَبْ فَعَجَبٌ قَوْلُهُمْ ءَإِذَا كُنَّا تُرَابًا ءَإِنَّا لَفِي خَلْقٍ جَدِيدٍ Here, the address is to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. He is being told that he may be wondering about the attitude of the disbelievers who refuse to believe in him as a prophet of Allah despite having seen clear signs of his being a prophet, and strangely enough, at the same time, they go about believing in lifeless rocks which have neither sense nor consciousness, and who do not have the power to bring benefit to or loss on their own selves, therefore, they could hardly be expected to grant any benefit to anyone.

Certainly, far more surprising is their statement: 'Is it that, once we are dead, we shall be created anew?' The Holy Qur'ān has not spelled out the reason for this 'wonder' explicitly because, in the previous verses, by describing the wonderous manifestations of the most perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā, it has been proved that He is the master of absolute power.

It is He who brought the entire creation from the state of non-being into the state of being. Then, He endowed into the being of everything so many varied elements of wisdom which human beings cannot even comprehend fully. From this it is obvious that the Being who can make something come into existence for the first time from total nothingness shall hardly have any difficulty in making it come into existence once again. When human beings try to make something new, they do have to remove some difficulties the first time they do it. But, when they wish to make the same thing again, things become easy.

Thus, what is really surprising is that these disbelievers do seem to believe that the Creator has created the whole universe with limitless wisdom. How then, can they consider its recreation as improbable and irrational?

Perhaps, the big problem before the deniers is what happens after death. After death, when dust returns to dust, whatever human beings are composed of gets spread out all over the earth. Winds carry them far and wide besides other causes, agents and means helping human remains get dispersed universally. Then, there will come that promised Day of Doom, the Qiyāmah. Then, they wonder, how could all that scattered dust be put together, and how, even if gathered together, can they be made to rise again (as they were)?

But, what they fail to see is that the form in which they exist at that time holds the key to their problem with comprehension. Is it not that particles from all over the world lie gathered together in them while they exist? Particles brought by water and wind from the far and near corners of the world get mingled with human intake and become part of a person's body. Most of the time the poor soul is not even aware of the fact that the morsel of food going down his or her throat comes from God knows how many areas of the world, Africa, America, or the countries of the Asian continent. Is it not that there is only One such Being who, through His wonderous wisdom and mastery of management, has made every single human being, and animal, stand to exist by assembling together scattered particles from all over the world? Now, if He can do that today, how can this become difficult for him tomorrow? Why would he not be capable of reassembling all those scattered particles back into the form they were? Specially so, when all powers of the world, the wind and

water and the rest, are subservient to Him and obey His command. If He elects to beckon the wind, the water and the atmosphere to come forth and deposit all particles they contain, would they not but obey? Why would this be any problem and why would its impossibility bother anyone?

The truth of the matter is that the disbelievers have simply failed to recognize the power of Allah Ta'ālā. They think of His Power on the analogy of their own power - though everything in the heavens and the earth and in what lies in between them does possess a comprehension and consciousness of their relative status in the scheme of the Divine arrangement of things, and they pointedly move under Divine command.

In short, what is a matter of surprise is the refusal of the disbelievers to believe in the truth of prophethood. And what is still more surprising is their refusal to believe in rising again on the day of Judgement and in having to stand to account for their deeds on that day!

After that, mention has been made of the punishment of hostile deniers of the truth. It has been said that these people not simply that they refuse to accept a prophet of Allah as such; rather what they do in reality is that they deny the very existence of their Lord. Their punishment will be that shackles will be placed round their necks and they shall live in Hell for ever.

2. The second doubt expressed by the deniers of the Holy Prophet ﷺ was: 'If you are, in reality, the prophet and messenger of Allah, then, the warnings of punishments you announce against the opponents of prophets should materialize - why is it that this punishment would not come? The answer given appears in the next verse in the following words:

يَسْتَعْجِلُوْنَكَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ قَبْلَ الْحَسَنَةِ وَقَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمُ الْمَثُلٰتُ وَاِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَذُوْ مَغْفِرَةٍ لِّلنَّاسِ عَلٰى ظُلْمِهِمْ وَاِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَشَدِيْدُ الْعِقَابِ

'And they ask for evil to come sooner than good (by saying: If you are a prophet, let us have your promised punishment now - which shows that they take the coming of the Divine punishment as something very far-removed or virtually impossible) although punishments have really come to pass against people earlier to them, (which have been witnessed by others.)

Now, if the punishment is to come to them, why should it be taken as so-

mething far out, or impossible? Here, the word: المثلٰت (*al-mathulāt*) is the plural form of مثلة (*mathula*) and it means a punishment which puts a person in disgrace before everyone and proves to be a lesson for all others.

After that it was said that there is no doubt that your Lord is, despite the sinning and disobeying of people, the Lord of forgiveness and mercy as well. And for people who do not take advantage of this forgiveness and mercy and elect to stick to their disobedience and contumacy, then, for them He is 'severe in punishing' as well. Therefore, they should not misunderstand the attributes of Allah's forgiveness and mercy and reach the conclusion that punishment simply cannot come to them.

3. The third doubt of the disbelievers was: As for the miracles of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, they had seen many of them. But, why would he not show the specific miracles demanded by them? This has been answered in the third verse (7) by saying: وَيَقُوْلُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لَوْلَآ اُنْزِلَ عَلَيْهِ اٰيَةٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّهٖ اِنَّمَآ اَنْتَ مُنْذِرٌ وَّلِكُلِّ قَوْمٍ هَادٍ (that is, in order to raise an objection against the prophethood of Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ, they say) 'Why has the specific miracle they demand has not been shown by him?' The answer is clear. The showing of a miracle is not within the control of a prophet or messenger. Instead, that is directly an act of God. It is He who elects to show a miracle, of whatever kind, at any time, and in His wisdom - all as determined by Him alone. He is not restricted by or burdened with anyone's demand or desire. Therefore, it was said: اِنَّمَآ اَنْتَ مُنْذِرٌ (You are but a warner), that is, the Holy Prophet ﷺ is there only to warn disbelievers against Divine punishment - showing miracles is not his mission.

Said in the last sentence of the verse was: وَّلِكُلِّ قَوْمٍ هَادٍ It means that there have been guides for every people among past communities. You are not the lone prophet. The standard mission of all prophets was to guide their people, warn them of the punishment of Allah, but none of them were given the power and control to show miracles. It is Allah who shows miracles of His choice whenever He chooses to do so.

Is it Necessary that a Prophet appears among every People and in every Country?

The statement: 'And for every people there is a guide' proves that no people and no region can remain unvisited by those who call towards Allah Ta‘ālā and guide people to the straight path. It may be some proph-

et himself, or could be someone propagating the call of his deputy - as it appears in Sūrah Yā Sīn where the initial sending of two persons as deputies to the prophet of the time to a certain people has been mentioned. Sent to carry the call and give guidance, these two persons were prophets in their own right. Then, also mentioned there is the sending of a third person to help and support them in their mission.

Therefore, this verse does not make it necessary that some prophet or messenger of Allah has also appeared in India. However, it stands proved that learned people who carried the call of the prophet and told people about his teachings came to this part of the world as well. Then, it is already common knowledge that many such 'guides' have also appeared here.

Upto this point, in the first three verses cited above, there was the answer of the doubts expressed by the deniers of prophethood. In the fourth verse (8), we see a return to the principal theme of Tauḥīd (The Oneness of Allah) which started appearing since the beginning of the Sūrah. Here, it was said: اَللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَحْمِلُ كُلُّ أُنْثٰى وَمَا تَغِيضُ الْأَرْحَامُ وَمَا تَزْدَادُ وَكُلُّ شَيْءٍ عِنْدَهٗ بِمِقْدَارٍ It means that Allah Ta'ālā knows everything about what every woman carries in her womb - a boy or girl, beautiful or otherwise, good or evil - and about why wombs of women decrease or increase, that is, about the time of delivery, whether early, in due time, or late.

Stated in this verse is a particular attribute of Allah Ta'ālā: That He is the Knower of the Unseen (*'Ālim al-Ghayb*). He is aware of the minutest of this entire universe and that of everything created in it, and He is most comprehensively informed of all changing conditions of each such particle. Mentioned alongwith it is the fact of all-inclusive and most perfect knowledge of every stage, every change, and every trait in the complex process of human procreation. For instance, it is He alone who has the ultimate knowledge - the most sound, the most certain - of female pregnancy - a boy or girl? Or, both? Or, nothing but the accumulation of clusters of water or gas? Whatever opinion a physician gives in this matter as based on clinical indicators and educated guess cannot be taken to be any more than strong likelihood or estimate. There are times when things turn out to be otherwise. Even Xrays and more modern Imaging techniques fail to unravel the reality of this phenomena as due. We can only say that its real and certain knowledge can be credited only to Allah

Ta'ālā. This is what has been stated in another verse of the Qur'ān which says: وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْأَرْحَامِ (And He knows whatever there is in wombs - Luqmān, 31:34).

The word: تَغِيضُ (*taghīḍu* : decrease) is used in the sense of becoming less or dried up. In the present verse, set against the word: تَزْدَادُ (*tazdād* : increase), it becomes clear that, at this place, it means decrease. Thus, it means that the most correct and sound knowledge of 'what the wombs decrease or increase' rests with none but Allah Ta'ālā. This 'increase' and 'decrease' could be referring to the increase or decrease in the number of children to be born, that is, whether the womb contains only one child, or has more than one. It is also possible that it may be denoting the increase or decrease in the period of actual delivery of the child, that is, in how many months, days, and hours, this pregnancy will translate into the outward physical existence of a human being. This too is something the absolutely certain knowledge of which cannot be claimed by anyone other than Allah Ta'ālā.

Tafsīr authority Mujāhid has said that the blood excreted by a woman in pregnancy becomes the cause of decrease in the size and health of the fetus. The Qur'ānic expression: تَغِيضُ الْأَرْحَامُ ('the wombs decrease') means this decrease - and the truth of the matter is that the words of the verse cover decreases of all kinds, therefore, no contradiction exists here.

Said in the last sentence of verse 8 is: كُلُّ شَيْءٍ عِنْدَهُ بِمِقْدَارٍ (And everything has measure with Him). It means that there can be no decrease or increase from the norm set with Allah Ta'ālā. All states through which a child-to-be-born passes are also included under this statement, that is, everything pertaining to such a child lies determined with Allah who knows for how many days the child will stay in the womb, then, for how long it will continue to live in the world, and how much of sustenance it will receive. This matchless knowledge of Allah Ta'ālā is an open proof of His Oneness (*Tauḥīd*).

Verses 9 - 15

عٰلِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ الْكَبِيرُ الْمُتَعَالِ ﴿٩﴾ سَوَآءٌ مِّنْكُمْ مَّنْ اَسَرَّ

الْقَوْلَ وَمَنْ جَهَرَ بِهٖ وَمَنْ هُوَ مُسْتَخْفٍۭ بِالَّيْلِ وَسَارِبٌۢ بِالنَّهَارِ ﴿١٠﴾
لَهٗ مُعَقِّبٰتٌ مِّنْۢ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهٖ يَحْفَظُوْنَهٗ مِنْ اَمْرِ اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ
لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتّٰى يُغَيِّرُوْا مَا بِاَنْفُسِهِمْ ؕ وَاِذَآ اَرَادَ اللّٰهُ بِقَوْمٍ سُوْٓءً
ا فَلَا مَرَدَّ لَهٗ ۚ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِهٖ مِنْ وَّالٍ ﴿١١﴾ هُوَ الَّذِيْ يُرِيْكُمُ
الْبَرْقَ خَوْفًا وَّطَمَعًا وَّيُنْشِئُ السَّحَابَ الثِّقَالَ ﴿١٢﴾ وَيُسَبِّحُ الرَّعْدُ
بِحَمْدِهٖ وَالْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ مِنْ خِيْفَتِهٖ ۚ وَيُرْسِلُ الصَّوَاعِقَ فَيُصِيْبُ بِهَا مَنْ
يَّشَآءُ وَهُمْ يُجَادِلُوْنَ فِي اللّٰهِ ۚ وَهُوَ شَدِيْدُ الْمِحَالِ ﴿١٣﴾ لَهٗ دَعْوَةُ
الْحَقِّ ؕ وَالَّذِيْنَ يَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِهٖ لَا يَسْتَجِيْبُوْنَ لَهُمْ بِشَيْءٍ اِلَّا
كَبَاسِطِ كَفَّيْهِ اِلَى الْمَآءِ لِيَبْلُغَ فَاهُ وَمَا هُوَ بِبَالِغِهٖ ؕ وَمَا دُعَآءُ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ
اِلَّا فِيْ ضَلٰلٍ ﴿١٤﴾ وَلِلّٰهِ يَسْجُدُ مَنْ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الْاَرْضِ طَوْعًا
وَّكَرْهًا وَّظِلٰلُهُمْ بِالْغُدُوِّ وَالْاٰصَالِ ﴿١٥﴾ السجدة

- the Knower of the hidden and the manifest, the Great, the High. [9]

Alike (for Him) is he, from among you, who speaks quietly and he who speaks aloud, and he who hides in the night and he who walks out in the day. [10]

For him there are angels replacing each other, before him and behind him, who guard him under the command of Allah. Surely, Allah does not change what is in a people until they change what is in themselves. And when Allah intends evil for a people, there is no way to turn it back, and for them there is no patron other than Him. [11]

He is the One who makes you see the lightening in fear and hope and forms the heavy clouds. [12] **And the thunder proclaims His purity with His praise, and (so do) the angels, out of His awe. and He sends the thunderbolts and strikes with it whom He wills. And they are quarrelling about Allah, and He is stern in His plan.** [13]

For Him is the prayer in truth. And those who pray to

others than Him are not responded to by them at all, but they are like one who stretches his hands towards water so that it may reach his mouth (by itself), while it is not to reach it. And the prayer of the disbelievers does not but go astray. [14]

And to Allah bow in prostration all who are in the heavens and the earth, willingly or unwillingly, and their shadows as well in morns and eves. [15]

Commentary

The theme of the exclusive attributes of the perfection of Allah Ta'ālā continues. Starting earlier than the verses cited above, this theme is actually an array of proofs concerning the Oneness of Allah. Onwards from the previous verse (9), it was said in the first verse (10) here: عٰلِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ الْكَبِيْرُ الْمُتَعَالِ (- the Knower of the hidden and the manifest, the Great, the High). The word: اَلْغَيْب (*al-ghayb* : the hidden, the unseen) means that which is absent from the reach of human senses, that is, which cannot be seen with eyes, nor heard with ears, nor smelt with the nose, nor tasted with the tongue, nor sensed by touching with hands.

As for: اَلشَّهَادَة (*ash-shahādah* : manifest, present), it stands in contrast to *'al-ghayb'* or the hidden and denotes what can be found out by using human senses mentioned above. The verse means that it is the very exclusive attribute of Allah Ta'ālā that He knows everything hidden (*al-ghayb*) precisely as He knows the manifest, present and existing.

The word: اَلْكَبِيْر (*al-kabīr*) means the great and الْمُتَعَال (*al-muta'āl*) means the high, above. The sense conveyed by these two words is that He is great and far above the attributes of what He has created. Though the disbelievers and polytheists did confess to the great and exalted state of the Being of Allah Ta'ālā, in a general way, but were obviously misguided by a lack of proper perception when they took Allah Ta'ālā on the analogy of common human beings and went on to associate such attributes to him as were far too removed from His great majesty. For instance, the Jews and the Christians attributed a son for Allah, while others suggested for Allah a body and its parts just like those of human beings, and still others tried to prove direction and orientation for Him. But, the fact is that Allah is far above, absolutely pure and free of all such conditions and attributions. It should be kept in mind that, in order to emphasize His absolvement from all such human attributions, He has

repeatedly reminded us in the Qur'ān: سُبۡحَانَ اللّٰهِ عَمَّا يَصِفُوۡنَ that is, 'Allah is pure and free from what these people attribute to Him.' (21:22; 23:91; 37:159; 37:180)

The perfection of the knowledge of Allah Ta'ālā was described in عٰلِمُ الۡغَيۡبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ (the Knower of the hidden and the manifest) appearing in the first sentence (9) as well as in اَللّٰهُ يَعۡلَمُ مَا تَحۡمِلُ كُلُّ اُنۡثٰى (Allah knows what every woman carries) in the verse previous to it (8). Mentioned in the second sentence here: اَلۡكَبِيۡرُ الۡمُتَعَالِ (the great, the high) is the power and greatness of Allah for His power and reach is far beyond any human calculation. Also in the verse which follows, the same perfection in knowledge and power has been pointed to in a particular manner. There it has been said:

سَوَآءٌ مِّنۡكُمۡ مَّنۡ اَسَرَّ الۡقَوۡلَ وَمَنۡ جَهَرَبِهٖ وَمَنۡ هُوَ مُسۡتَخۡفٍۢ بِالَّيۡلِ وَسَارِبٌۢ بِالنَّهَارِ

> Alike [for Him] is he, from among you, who speaks quitely and he who speaks aloud, and he who hides in the night and he who walks out in the day - 10.

The expression: اَسَرَّالۡقَوۡلَ (speaks quietly) is a derivation from: اَسۡرَار (*as-rār*) which means secret talk and: جَهۡر (*jahr*) means open talk. When one talks to be heard by others, it is called *jahr* and what one says for his own hearing is called *sirr*. The word: مُسۡتَخۡفٍ (*mustakhfin*) refers to one who hides, and: سَارِب (*sārib*) means one who walks his way freely.

The verse means that, because of the all-encompassing knowledge of Allah Ta'ālā, the one who talks quietly or secretly and the one who talks loudly and openly are both equal in His sight. He hears and knows what they say, identically and uniformly. Similarly, there is the person hiding in the darkness of the night and there is another walking freely in open daylight. Both of them are alike in terms of His knowledge and power, since He knows all inward and outward conditions of both alike and His power surrounds them both alike and just no one is outside His power and control. An elaboration of this point appears in the next verse in the following words:

لَهٗ مُعَقِّبٰتٌ مِّنۡۢ بَيۡنِ يَدَيۡهِ وَمِنۡ خَلۡفِهٖ يَحۡفَظُوۡنَهٗ مِنۡ اَمۡرِ اللّٰهِ

> For him there are angels replacing each other, before him and behind him, who guard him under the command of Allah - 11.

The word: مُعَقِّبٰت (*mu'aqqibāt*) is the plural form of *mu'aqqibah*. A

group which comes concurrently behind another group is called *mu'aqqibah* or *muta'aqqibah* (hence, the translation: 'replacing each other'). The expression: مِنۢ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ (*min bayni yadayhi*) literally means in between the two hands. It denotes the direction in front of a person. And: وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِ (*wa min khalfihī*) means 'behind him.' The particle: مِنْ (*min*) in the statement: مِنْ أَمْرِ اللّٰهِ (*min amrillāh*) has been placed here to serve as the *bā'* (باء) of causation. It has been used here in the sense of: بِأَمْرِ اللّٰهِ (*bi amrillāh*: under the command of Allah). In some readings (*Qirā'aat*) of the Qur'ān, this word has also been reported as: بِأَمْرِ اللّٰهِ (*bi amrillāh*). (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

The verse means that for all human beings - whether one conceals what one says, or discloses it; or, similarly, one wishes to hide one's movement under the dark cover of the night, or goes about walking freely and openly in broad daylight - there are groups of angels appointed from Allah who provide a security cordon for them from in front of them and from behind them. Their hours of service and duty keep changing, so they keep replacing each other one after the other. The assignment given to them under the command of Allah is that they should protect human beings.

According to a Ḥadīth of the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī, there are two groups of angels who have been appointed to guard human beings, one for the day, and another for the night. These groups meet together during the prayers of Fajr and 'Aṣr. The night guards depart after the Ṣalāh of Fajr and the daytime guards take over. Then, they leave after the Ṣalāh of 'Aṣr and the night guards resume their duty.

As reported by Sayyidnā 'Alī al-Murtaḍā ﷺ in a Ḥadīth of Abū Dāwūd, for every human being there are guardian angels appointed to protect him or her. It is their duty to keep guarding them lest a wall or something else falls over them, or they stumble into a ditch or cave, or some animal or man causes hurt or harm to them. However, when the will of Allah itself stands enforced against a person condemned to suffer from some hardship or calamity, the guarding angels move away from the site. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

From a narration of Sayyidnā 'Uthmān al-Ghanī ﷺ as in a Ḥadīth of Ibn Jarīr, we know that the duty of these guarding angels is not limited to protecting human beings from worldly discomforts and hardships

only, instead, they also try to dissuade them from sins and do their best to keep them safe. They would go on infusing in their hearts the urge to do good and fear Allah, so that, through these, they would stay away from sinning. Now, if they still fall into sin by becoming neglectful of the angelic inspiration, they nevertheless pray for him and try that the sinner would somehow hasten to repent and become cleansed of the sin. After that, if the sinner fails to take any warning and refuses to correct himself, then, they write down a sin in his Book of Deeds.

In short, these guarding angels keep protecting human beings against the unwelcome happenings of both the present world and the world to come, all the time, awake or asleep. The well-known Tābi'ī, Ka'b Al-Aḥbār رحمه الله تعالى says: Should this protective Divine cordon be removed from around human beings, the Jinns would make their lives difficult. But, all these protective arrangements work only until such time as the Divine decree permits them to remain operative. Now, if Allah Ta'ālā Himself wills to let a servant of His suffer, this arrangement of protection stands dismissed.

This has been elaborated in the next verse in the following manner:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّى يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ وَإِذَا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ بِقَوْمٍ سُوْءًا فَلَامَرَدَّ لَهُ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِهِ مِنْ وَّالٍ

Surely, Allah does not change what is in a people until they change what is in themselves. And when Allah intends evil for a people, there is no way to turn it back, and for them there is no patron other than Him - 11.

It means that Allah Ta'ālā does not change the state of peace and security enjoyed by a people into a state of distress and instability until such time that those people themselves change their deeds and ways into evil and disorder. And when a whole people change to commit themselves and their surrounding conditions into rank contumacy and disobedience, then, Allah Ta'ālā too changes His way with them. And it is obvious that, should Allah Ta'ālā Himself intend evil and punishment for anyone, then, there is no way that could be averted and there is no one who can rise to help them out against the Divine decree.

The outcome is that human beings remain actively protected by angels under the command of Allah Ta'ālā, but should a people become un-

grateful for His blessings and forsake being obedient to him only to take to evil doings and become contumacious in the end, then, the posse of protection posted by Allah Ta'ālā is called off duty. At that time, the wrath and punishment of Allah Ta'ālā descends upon them and there remains no way they could escape from these.

This explanation tells us that the 'change' referred to in the cited verse means: When a people abandon gratitude and obedience and settle for a change to worse around them, then, Allah Ta'ālā too brings about a change in His way of mercy and protection.

According to a common explanation of this verse, no positive revolution appears among a people unless they themselves do not correct conditions around them to bring about that positive revolution. There is a very popular Urdu couplet by poet Ḥālī which carries this very sense:

خدا نے آج تک اس قوم کی حالت نہیں بدلی
نہ ہو جسکو خیال آپ اپنی حالت کے بدلنے کا

To this day, God has never changed the condition of a people
Who have no plan of changing their condition themselves.

What has been said here is, no doubt, correct to a certain extent. But, this is not the sense of the Verse cited here. And its being correct too has to be viewed in terms of a general principle, that is, for a person who has no intention of correcting himself, there is no promise of help and support from Allah Ta'ālā. Instead, this promise is valid under the condition that someone would himself think and do something about it - as we learn from the noble verse: وَالَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا (that is, 'those who strive in Us, them We do lead to Our paths - (29:69)' which tells us that the pathways of guidance from Allah Ta'ālā too open up only when the urge to have such guidance is present there. But, Divine blessings are not bound by this restriction. They would, at times, come even without it.

Take our own existence and its countless blessings. These are not the outcome of our effort, nor had we ever prayed that we be given such a presence with eyes, nose, ears and rest of the most perfect body. These are wonderful blessings - and we have them without having to ask for

them. However, the right to deserve blessings and to become worthy recepients of the fruits of the Divine promise cannot be received without making one's own effort to earn it - and should a people keep waiting for Divine rewards without putting in the due effort and deed, it would amount to nothing but self-deception.

After that, it was said in verse 12: هُوَ الَّذِىْ يُرِيْكُمُ الْبَرْقَ خَوْفًا وَّطَمَعًا وَّيُنْشِئُ السَّحَابَ الثِّقَالَ It means that it is Allah Ta'ālā Who makes you see the lightening and the thunder which can become a matter of fear for human beings lest it may destroy what it strikes. Then, it has a dimension of hope too by raising expectations that rains may follow the thunder, rains which support animal and human lives. And then, He is the One who lifts heavy and huge clouds up from the surface of the sea as the monsoons and carries these water-laden clouds post-haste through the atmosphere to places near and far off and has them deliver their rains over lands He chooses in accordance with His decree and corresponding to the measure determined by Him.

In the next verse (13), it was said: وَيُسَبِّحُ الرَّعْدُ بِحَمْدِهٖ وَالْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ مِنْ خِيْفَتِهٖ (And the thunder proclaims His purity with His praise, and [so do] the angels, out of His awe). In Arabic usage, the word: اَلرَّعْد (Ar-Ra'd) refers to the sound of the clouds generated by their collision. The sense of تَسْبِيْح (*Tasbīḥ*: the glorification of Allah) mentioned here is that of the same Tasbīḥ about which it has been said in another verse of the Qur'ān: وَاِنْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ اِلَّا يُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِهٖ وَلٰكِنْ لَّا تَفْقَهُوْنَ تَسْبِيْحَهُمْ 'And there is nothing in the heavens and the earth which does not glorify Allah, but they do not understand their glorification' - (17:44).

And it appears in some narrations of Ḥadīth that Ar-Ra'd is the name of the angel appointed to bring rains. In terms of this sense, the reciting of Tasbīḥ is obvious.

Said in the next sentence 12 is: وَيُرْسِلُ الصَّوَاعِقَ فَيُصِيْبُ بِهَا مَنْ يَّشَآءُ (And He sends the thunderbolts and strikes with it whom He wills). The word: الصَّوَاعِق (*aṣ-ṣawā'iq*) is the plural form of *aṣ-ṣā'iqah* which is the name of the thunderbolt that strikes the earth. The sense of the verse is that it is Allah who sends these thunderbolts down upon the earth and, with these, He strikes whom He wills.

The last sentence of this verse is: وَهُمْ يُجَادِلُوْنَ فِى اللّٰهِ وَهُوَ شَدِيْدُ الْمِحَالِ (And

they are quarrelling about Allah, and He is stern in His plan). The word: المِحَال (*al-miḥāl*: with Kasrah on the initial letter *Mīm*) has been used here in the triple sense of stratagem and plan, and retribution and punishment, and in the sense of power as well. The verse means that (it is in the background of what has been stated above) that these people are busy with debates and altercations about the truth of Allah's Oneness - despite the fact that Allah Ta'ālā has the ultimate power whose plan overtakes all and nothing works against it.

Verses 16 - 17

قُلْ مَنْ رَّبُّ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ قُلِ اللّٰهُ ؕ قُلْ اَفَاتَّخَذْتُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِهٖۤ
اَوْلِيَآءَ لَا يَمْلِكُوْنَ لِاَنْفُسِهِمْ نَفْعًا وَّلَا ضَرًّا ؕ قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِى الْاَعْمٰى
وَالْبَصِيْرُ ۙ اَمْ هَلْ تَسْتَوِى الظُّلُمٰتُ وَ النُّوْرُ ۚ اَمْ جَعَلُوْا لِلّٰهِ شُرَكَآءَ
خَلَقُوْا كَخَلْقِهٖ فَتَشَابَهَ الْخَلْقُ عَلَيْهِمْ ؕ قُلِ اللّٰهُ خَالِقُ كُلِّ شَىْءٍ
وَّهُوَ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ ﴿١٦﴾ اَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً فَسَالَتْ اَوْدِيَةٌۢ
بِقَدَرِهَا فَاحْتَمَلَ السَّيْلُ زَبَدًا رَّابِيًا ؕ وَمِمَّا يُوْقِدُوْنَ عَلَيْهِ فِى النَّارِ
ابْتِغَآءَ حِلْيَةٍ اَوْ مَتَاعٍ زَبَدٌ مِّثْلُهٗ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ يَضْرِبُ اللّٰهُ الْحَقَّ وَالْبَاطِلَ ۬ؕ
فَاَمَّا الزَّبَدُ فَيَذْهَبُ جُفَآءً ۚ وَاَمَّا مَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ فَيَمْكُثُ فِى الْاَرْضِ ؕ
كَذٰلِكَ يَضْرِبُ اللّٰهُ الْاَمْثَالَ ﴿١٧﴾

Say, "Who is the Lord of the heavens and the earth?" Say, "Allah." Say, "Have you, then, taken others than Him as protectors who possess no power to cause benefit or harm even to themselves?" Say, "Is it that a blind person and a sighted one are equal, or that (all sorts of) the darkness and the light are alike?" Or, have they made partners with Allah who created as He created, and thus the creation seemed to them alike? Say, "Allah is the Creator of all things, and He is the One, the All-Dominant." [16]

He sent down water from the heavens, so the *wādīs* flowed according to their measure, and the flood carried bulging foam. And a similar foam comes up from

what they melt in fire to obtain ornaments or other objects. This is how Allah depicts the truth and the untruth. As for the foam, it gets to be thrown away, while that which benefits people remains on the earth. This is how Allah brings out the parables. [17]

Commentary

The outcome of both parables is that foam does appear prominent for a while on the real thing, but it finally gets to be thrown away and the real thing remains. Similar is the case of the false. Though the false may, for a short while, appear to have overcome the true, but the false is finally subdued and eliminated and that which is true remains and stands manifestly proven. (Tafsīr Al-Jalālayn)

Verses 18 - 24

لِلَّذِينَ اسْتَجَابُوا لِرَبِّهِمُ الْحُسْنَىٰ ط وَالَّذِينَ لَمْ يَسْتَجِيبُوا لَهُ لَوْ أَنَّ
لَهُم مَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا وَمِثْلَهُ مَعَهُ لَافْتَدَوْا بِهِ ط أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ سُوءُ
الْحِسَابِ لا وَمَأْوَاهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ ط وَبِئْسَ الْمِهَادُ ﴿١٨﴾ أَفَمَن يَعْلَمُ أَنَّمَا
أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِن رَّبِّكَ الْحَقُّ كَمَنْ هُوَ أَعْمَىٰ ط إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُولُو
الْأَلْبَابِ ﴿١٩﴾ الَّذِينَ يُوفُونَ بِعَهْدِ اللَّهِ وَلَا يَنقُضُونَ الْمِيثَاقَ ﴿٢٠﴾
وَالَّذِينَ يَصِلُونَ مَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ أَن يُوصَلَ وَيَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ وَيَخَافُونَ
سُوءَ الْحِسَابِ ﴿٢١﴾ وَالَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا ابْتِغَاءَ وَجْهِ رَبِّهِمْ وَأَقَامُوا
الصَّلَاةَ وَأَنفَقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ سِرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً وَيَدْرَءُونَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ
السَّيِّئَةَ أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ عُقْبَى الدَّارِ ﴿٢٢﴾ جَنَّاتُ عَدْنٍ يَدْخُلُونَهَا وَمَن
صَلَحَ مِنْ آبَائِهِمْ وَأَزْوَاجِهِمْ وَذُرِّيَّاتِهِمْ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ يَدْخُلُونَ عَلَيْهِم مِّن
كُلِّ بَابٍ ﴿٢٣﴾ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُم بِمَا صَبَرْتُمْ فَنِعْمَ عُقْبَى الدَّارِ ﴿٢٤﴾

For those who obey their Lord there is the best of rewards. And those who do not obey Him (shall be in a plight that) even if they possess all that is on earth, rather twice as much, they would offer it in ransom. For

these there is the worst of reckoning. And their abode is the Hell, and it is an evil bed. [18]

Now, is the one who knows that whatever has been revealed to you from your Lord is the truth, equal to one who is blind? Only the people of understanding respond to the advice --- [19] **those who fulfill (their) pledge with Allah and do not break the covenant,** [20] **and those who maintain the relations Allah has commanded to be maintained and fear their Lord and are frightful of evil reckoning,** [21] **and those who observe patience in order to seek the pleasure of their Lord and establish Ṣalāh and spend from what We have given to them secretly and openly, and repel evil with good. Those are the ones for whom there is the ultimate abode,** [22] **the eternal gardens they enter, and the righteous of their fathers, spouses, and progeny as well. And the angels shall enter onto them from every gate** [23] **(saying) "Peace on you for the patience you observed. So, good is the ultimate abode."** [24]

Commentary

Truth and Falsehood were explained through parables in verses appearing previous to those cited above. Now, in the present verses, there is a description of the distinguishing marks and attributes of the people of Truth and the people of Falsehood, alongwith a description of their good and bad deeds, and their reward and punishment.

The first verse (18) carries a description of the good return reserved for those who obey Divine injunctions and act in accordance with them, and conversely, of the severe punishment for those who disobey them and act negatively.

In the second verse (19), the two groups have been identified as the sighted and the blind through a parable and, at the end, it was said: إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُولُوا الْأَلْبَابِ that is, 'only the people of understanding respond to the advice.' It means what has been exemplified here is, though, fairly clear and obvious, yet it can only be understood and appreciated by those who have their essential reason intact with them. Those who have their faculty of reason all impaired by heedlessness and disobedience cannot understand a difference so great.

From the third verse (20) begins a description of particular deeds and

marks which distinguish the two groups. Taken up first are the attributes of those who believe in and obey Divine injunctions. The initial attribute mentioned is: اَلَّذِیْنَ یُوْفُوْنَ بِعَهْدِ اللّٰهِ (those who fulfill [their] pledge with Allah). It covers all promises and pledges taken by Allah Ta'ālā from His servants, the very first of which was the Divine Covenant taken in eternity before an assembly of all spirits, that is: اَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّکُمْ (Am I not your Lord?) in answer to which, everyone had unanimously said: بَلٰی (Yes, why not? Surely, You are our Lord). Similarly, the different pledges taken by Allah Ta'ālā regarding the obedience of Divine injunctions, fulfillment of assigned duties, abstinence from things impermissible as ordered by Allah have been mentioned in different verses of the Qur'ān.

The second attribute mentioned here is: وَلَا یَنْقُضُوْنَ الْمِیْثَاقَ (and they do not break the covenant). It includes all covenants, including pledges between Allah and His servants which have been pointed out right here in the first sentence as: عَهْدُاللّٰهِ (their pledges with Allah). Also included here are the pledges given by the people of a religious community to their prophet or messenger, as well as the contracts and pacts which one human being enters into with the other.

Based on a narration by Sayyidnā 'Awf ibn Mālik ﷺ, Abū Dāwūd has reported that the Holy Prophet ﷺ took a pledge (*'Ahd and Bay'ah*) from the noble Ṣaḥābah that they would not associate anyone with Allah, and perform Ṣalāh punctually five times every day, and obey their authorities, and would never stretch their hands for anything before any human being.

People who were parties to this solemn pledge were so true to their word of honour that, should they happen to drop their whip from their hand while riding, they would never ask anyone to pick up and hand over that whip to them. Instead of that, they would get down from their mount and pick it up themselves.

That the noble Ṣaḥābah did so was the result of the great feeling of love and the passionate desire to obey their master in their hearts. Otherwise, it was fairly obvious that he had never intended to stop them from making a request of this nature. This is very much like what happened when Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ was entering the Masjid on a certain occasion. He saw that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was addressing a

gathering. It was only by chance that, at the time he was entering the Masjid, the words: 'Sit down' happened to have been uttered by the Holy Prophet ﷺ as part of his address. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd ؓ knew that this never meant that anyone, no matter where, should sit down on the street, passage way, or a spot not suitable for the purpose. But, such was his passion for obedience that it did not allow him to take even one step forward from outside the Masjid gate where he was. Just as these words of his master struck his ears, he sat down right there.

The third attribute of the obedient servants of Allah Ta'ālā stated here is: وَالَّذِينَ يَصِلُونَ مَآ اَمَرَ اللّٰهُ بِهٖٓ اَنْ يُّوْصَلَ (and those who maintain the relations Allah has commanded to be maintained). According to the well-known explanation of this verse, it means that these people maintain relationships and keep doing what needs to be done in this matter as commanded by Allah Ta'ālā. Some commentators have explained it by saying that these people conjoin righteous deeds with faith, or synchronize their initial faith in the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the Qur'ān with faith in past prophets and their books.

The fourth attribute has been identified as: وَيَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ (and fear their Lord). The use of the word: خَشْيَه (*khashyah*) rather than خَوْف (*khawf*) indicates that their 'fear' of Allah is not the kind of fear one naturally has when facing some beast or dangerous man. Instead of that, this fear is like the habitual fear children have of their parents, and students of their teacher, for that is no fear of being harmed or hurt by them. Instead, such fear is grounded in love and esteem because of which one apprehends lest something said or done may become displeasing and repugnant in the sight of Allah Ta'ālā. Therefore, whenever the fear of Allah finds mention in an occasion of praise and glorification, generally the word used there is Khashyah because Khashyah is the name of the fear which emerges out of love and esteem. Therefore, in the next sentence, where the fear of strict reckoning has been mentioned, the word used is not Khashyah, instead the word used there is fear as such. It was said: وَيَخَافُوْنَ سُوْٓءَ الْحِسَابِ (and they are frightful of evil reckoning). 'Evil reckoning' denotes reckoning which is strict and minute. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنها has said: It is Divine Mercy alone which can bring salvation for human beings when things are forgone and forgiven summarily at the time the reckoning of deeds takes place. Otherwise, anyone who is made

to account for everything said and done, cannot escape from punishment. It is virtually impossible because who is there to claim that he or she has never made a mistake or committed a sin? So, this fear of having to face strict reckoning of deeds is the fifth attribute of righteous and obedient people.

The sixth attribute has been stated as: وَالَّذِيْنَ صَبَرُوا ابْتِغَآءَ وَجْهِ رَبِّهِمْ (and those who observe patience in order to seek the pleasure of their Lord).

The meaning of: صَبْر (*Ṣabr*) in the Arabic language is fairly general as compared with the sense which has become popular in the Urdu language (in which this Commentary was orginally written). There it means to be patient under distress. (Regretfully, the common counterpart, patience, used for '*Ṣabr*' in English is also not free of its limitations, and does not carry the full and rich sense of the original Arabic). The reason is that the real meaning of Ṣabr is that one does not become upset under the stress of what is temperamentally unpalatable and, in fact, keeps doing what must be done resolutely and steadfastly. Therefore, it is divided into two kinds. One of them is Perseverance with Obedience (صَبْرٌ عَلَى الطَّاعَةِ), that is, being steadfast while observing and implementing the injunctions of Allah Ta'ālā. The other kind is Perseverance againt Disobedience and Sin (صَبْرٌ عَنِ الْمَعْصِيَةِ), that is, being steadfast in refraining from and staying safe against sins.

The restriction of: اِبْتِغَآءَ وَجْهِ رَبِّهِمْ (in order to seek the pleasure of their Lord) tells us that Ṣabr or patience, in its general sense, is no matter of merit by itself because there comes a time when even the most impatient person somehow gets to become reconciled with his or her lot after all. So, Ṣabr or patience which is not willful has no worth or merit, nor does Allah Ta'ālā ever obligate anyone with something which is beyond his control. Therefore, in Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said: اَلصَّبْرُ عِنْدَ الصَّدْمَةِ الْأُوْلَى, that is, 'the real and trustworthy Ṣabr is none but the one which is taken to immediately at the initial stage of shock. Otherwise, later on, sooner or later, one is left with no choice but to become reconciled and patient. As against this, the Ṣabr which is worthy of all praise is the Ṣabr under which one elects, by choice, to tolerate and be patient about what is contrary to his or her liking - whether it is the fulfillment of what one is obligated with, or is the abstinence from what is unlawful or reprehensible.

Therefore, if someone entered the house of somebody else with the intention of theft, but did not find the opportunity to do so, thus, having been left with no other choice but to observe patience, he returned back. Now, this Ṣabr or patience, non-voluntary as it is, is no act deserving praise or reward. It brings Thawāb or reward only when one abstains from sin because of the fear of Allah and the desire to seek His pleasure.

The seventh attribute is: اَقَامُوا الصَّلٰوةَ (establish Ṣalāh). The Qur'ānic expression for 'establish Ṣalāh' means to perform Ṣalāh with all its attending conditions and rules of etiquette and the essential humbleness of heart. It is not just the 'saying' of prayers as a matter of routine. Therefore, speaking generally, the command to perform, offer, or make prayers appearing in the Holy Qur'ān has been given with the specific word: Iqāmah, usually rendered as 'establish' in English, though still wanting.

The eighth attribute is: وَاَنْفَقُوْا مِمَّا رَزَقْنٰهُمْ سِرًّا وَّ عَلَانِيَةً (and spend from what We have given to them secretly and openly). The hint given here is that the amount of Zakāh prescribed by Allah Ta'ālā is not something He is asking of you, in fact, what He is asking for is a certain portion of what He has given to you, and that too is limited to the insignificant measure of 2½ percent. Naturally, giving this much should naturally be no cause of reluctance for you.

The adverb of: سِرًّا وَّعَلَانِيَةً (secretly and openly) with the command to spend wealth in the way of Allah tells us that concealment is not always the only Sunnah method in charities - instead, on occasions, doing it openly is also correct and sound. Therefore, religious scholars have said that the giving of obligatory Zakāh and charities openly is better and more merit-worthy. Doing it secretly is not appropriate so that other people could be pursuaded and prompted to do the same. However, the giving of voluntary charities (Ṣadaqāt) secretly is certainly better and more merit-worthy. Aḥādīth in which giving secretly has been commended are concerned with such optional and voluntary charities.

The ninth attributes stated here is: يَدْرَءُوْنَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ السَّيِّئَةَ (and repel evil with good). The sense is that these people repel evil with good, enmity with friendship and injustice with forgiveness, and do not retaliate by doing what is evil in return for evil done. Some commentators have explained the meaning by saying that these people repel sin by acting righ-

teously, that is, if some sin gets to be committed by them, they follow it up by repentance, obedience and worship so punctually and abundantly that the past sin is obliterated. According to Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet ﷺ advised Sayyidnā Mu'adh ؓ: If, after evil, you do good, it will obliterate evil. It means that should a person reflect, feel ashamed of having committed a sin, repent and make amends by following it up with a good deed, then, this good deed will wash off his or her past sin. Just going ahead and doing something good without first having felt ashamed and having repented after the committment of sin is not sufficient for the forgiveness of that sin.

After having recounted these nine attributes of the obedient servants of Allah Ta'ālā, the reward promised for them is: أُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمْ عُقْبَى الدَّارِ (Those are the ones for whom there is the ultimate abode). The word: اَلدَّار (*ad-dār*: abode, home) refers to the abode of the 'Ākhirah or Hereafter, that it, the prosperity and success of the 'Ākhirah is for them. Some commentators have said that 'abode' at this place means the abode of the mortal world the sense of which is that good people, though they have to face hardships too in this mortal world, but, finally, they are the ones who succeed in this mortal world as well.

Onwards from this point there comes the description of the same 'ultimate abode' when it is said that these shall be eternal gardens they shall enter. The word: عَدْن (*'Adn*) means to abide, settle down permanently. The sense is that no one shall ever be expelled from these gardens, instead, they shall be there eternally. Some commentators have said that 'Adn is the name of the midmost of the Paradise which is also the most superior of its many stations.

After that, mentioned there is yet another reward for these people and this reward shall not remain restricted to those people in person. In fact, even their fathers, wives and children shall get their share in it - subject to the condition that they be good in deeds, the lowest degree of which is that they be Muslims. It means that the personal conduct of their fathers and wives was, though not good enough to have enabled them to arrive at this level of success, yet it would be because of the consideration and *barakah* of the accepted servants of Allah that they too shall be admitted to that high station.

After that, the text states the additional honour they shall have in their 'ultimate abode' of the Hereafter when the angels emerge from each of its doors greeting them with Salām and telling them that their Ṣabr brings to them eternal security from all hardships and that they can themselves see how good is the ultimate abode of the 'Ākhirah.

Verses 25 - 30

وَالَّذِينَ يَنْقُضُونَ عَهْدَ اللّٰهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مِيثَاقِهٖ وَيَقْطَعُونَ مَآ اَمَرَ اللّٰهُ بِهٖٓ اَنْ
يُّوصَلَ وَيُفْسِدُونَ فِي الْاَرْضِ لا اُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمُ اللَّعْنَةُ وَلَهُمْ سُوْٓءُ الدَّارِ
﴿٢٥﴾ اَللّٰهُ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَيَقْدِرُ ط وَفَرِحُوا بِالْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ط
وَمَا الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَا فِي الْاٰخِرَةِ اِلَّا مَتَاعٌ ﴿٢٦﴾ وَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا
لَوْلَآ اُنْزِلَ عَلَيْهِ اٰيَةٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّهٖ ط قُلْ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُضِلُّ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَيَهْدِيٓ اِلَيْهِ
مَنْ اَنَابَ ﴿٢٧﴾ اَلَّذِينَ اٰمَنُوا وَتَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوبُهُمْ بِذِكْرِ اللّٰهِ ط اَلَا بِذِكْرِ
اللّٰهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ ﴿٢٨﴾ اَلَّذِينَ اٰمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ طُوبٰى لَهُمْ
وَحُسْنُ مَاٰبٍ ﴿٢٩﴾ كَذٰلِكَ اَرْسَلْنٰكَ فِيٓ اُمَّةٍ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهَآ اُمَمٌ
لِّتَتْلُوَا عَلَيْهِمُ الَّذِيٓ اَوْحَيْنَآ اِلَيْكَ وَهُمْ يَكْفُرُونَ بِالرَّحْمٰنِ ط قُلْ هُوَ
رَبِّي لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ج عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَاِلَيْهِ مَتَابِ ﴿٣٠﴾

And those who break their pledge with Allah after it has been made binding, and cut off the relations Allah has commanded to be joined, and make mischief in the earth - those are the ones for whom there is the curse, and for them there is the evil abode. [25]

Allah expands the provision for whom He wills and narrows it. And they are happy with the worldly life, and the worldly life, compared to the Hereafter, is nothing but a little enjoyment. [26]

And the disbelievers say, "Why is it that no sign has been sent down to him from his Lord?" Say, "Allah lets go astray whom He wills and gives guidance to the ones

who turn to Him, [27] **the ones who believe and their hearts are peaceful with the remembrance of Allah. Listen, the hearts find peace only with the remembrance of Allah."** [28]

Those who believe and do good deeds, for them there is the bliss and a good place to return. [29]

Thus We have sent you, amidst a community before which many communities have passed away, so that you may recite to them what We have revealed to you, and they disbelieve in Al-Raḥmān (the Most-Merciful Allah). Say, "He is my Lord. There is no god but He. In Him I place my trust, and to Him is my return." [30]

Commentary

At the beginning of the section, human beings were divided into two kinds - those who are obedient to Allah Ta'ālā and those who are disobedient to Him. Then, enumerated there were some attributes and signs of the obedient servants of Allah and mention was made of the best of rewards for them in the Hereafter.

Now, in the present verses, stated there are the attributes and signs, and punishments, of the other kind of people. One trait of character these disobedient and contumacious people have been reported to have is: ٱلَّذِينَ يَنقُضُونَ عَهْدَ ٱللَّهِ مِنۢ بَعْدِ مِيثَٰقِهِۦ (And those who break [their] pledge with Allah after it has been made binding). Included here is the pledge out of the pledges given to Allah concerning His unshared Lordship and Oneness by all spirits created by Him. The disbelievers and polytheists broke this pledge when they came into this world and consequently took to hundreds and thousands of lords and objects of worship all joined up with the pristine divinity of Allah Ta'ālā.

And also included here are all pledges faithfulness to which becomes binding on human beings as part of the great pledge of: لَا إِلٰهَ إِلَّا اللّٰهُ (There is no deity worthy of worship except Allah). The reason is that the Kalimah Ṭayyibah, that is: لَا إِلٰهَ إِلَّا اللّٰهُ مُحَمَّدٌ رَّسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ (Lā' Ilāha Illallāhu Muḥammadur Rasūlullāh ﷺ : There is no deity worthy of worship except Allah - Muhammad is the messenger of Allah) is, indeed, the symbol of a great pledge under which fall the obedience to all injunctions and rules of conduct taught by Allah Ta'ālā and His Messenger, and it also covers the

pledge to abstain from things which have been prohibited. Therefore, when a human being deviates from any injunction made binding by Allah or deviates from the command given by His Messenger, he or she commits a breach of trust by breaking this pledge to have faith.

The second trait of these disobedient people has been identified as: وَيَقْطَعُوْنَ مَآ اَمَرَ اللّٰهُ بِهٖٓ اَنْ يُّوْصَلَ (and cut off relations Allah has commanded to be joined). Included here is the relationship human beings have with Allah Ta'ālā and His Messenger, may peace be upon him, and the blessings of Allah. The cutting of this relationship simply means the contravention of their commands. And, of course, included here are connections based on relationships the maintainenance of which and the fulfillment of whose rights has been stressed upon time and again in the Holy Qur'ān.

Those who disobey Allah Ta'ālā would not hesitate in sundering even these relations and rights built around them - for instance, they would not fulfill the rights of their mother, father, brother, sister, neighbour, and others in that category while they are rights which must be fulfilled by all human beings as commanded by Allah Ta'ālā and His Messenger.

The third trait of such people has been stated as: وَيُفْسِدُوْنَ فِي الْاَرْضِ (and make mischief on the earth). This third trait is actually the outcome of the first two, that is, they disregard pledges given, whether given to Allah or to His servants, just have no consideration of anyone's rights or relationships. It is obvious that such deeds of these people will cause pain and loss to others, even become the cause of mutul fighting and killing. This is the worst 'Fasād' or disorder or mischief they inflict on this earth.

After having described these three traits of the disobedient and contumacious people, the punishment identified for them is: اُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمُ اللَّعْنَةُ وَلَهُمْ سُوْٓءُ الدَّارِ (those are the ones for whom there is the curse, and for them there is the evil abode). The word: لَعْنَة (*al-la'nah*: translated here as 'curse') means to be removed far away from the mercy of Allah, and become deprived of it. And it goes without saying that being far removed from His mercy is the most punishing of all punishments and certainly the hardest of all hardships.

Injunctions and Rules of Guidance

Special injunctions and rules of guidance concerning many depart-

ments of human life appear in the verses 20 to 24. Either explicit or implied, they are as follows:

1. From: اَلَّذِيْنَ يُوْفُوْنَ بِعَهْدِ اللّٰهِ وَلَا يَنْقُضُوْنَ الْمِيْثَاقَ (those who fulfill [their] pledge with Allah and do not break the covenant - 20) it stands established that abiding by a pledge given or contract made with someone is a binding obligation which must be fulfilled, and any contravention of which is Ḥarām (forbidden, unlawful) - whether that pledge be related to Allah and His Messenger, as the pledge of Faith and the pledge to maintain relationships with those created by Allah, or it may be a pledge related to any Muslim or Kāfir. Pledge-Breaking is Ḥarām under all conditions.

2. From: وَالَّذِيْنَ يَصِلُوْنَ مَآ اَمَرَاللّٰهُ بِهٖٓ اَنْ يُّوْصَلَ (and those who maintain the relations Allah has commanded to be maintained - 21) we learn that Islam does not teach abandonment of relationships in some monastic manner. Instead of that, maintaining necessary relations and fulfilling their due rights has been made necessary in Islam. As for the rights of parents, children, wife, sisters, brothers and the rights of other relatives and neighbours, these have been made obligatory by Allah Ta'ālā on every human being. They cannot be ignored in favour of voluntary acts of worship, not even to devote time for some religious service needed by the community. This is not permissible. How could it become permissible to forget them and get busy doing other things?

As for maintaining the bonds of family relationships, taking care of them, and fulfilling their due rights, these have been stressed upon in many verses of the Holy Qur'ān.

In a Ḥadīth of Al-Bukhārī and Muslim based on a narration of Sayyidnā Anas ﷺ, it has been reported that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: A person who hopes to have extended means of living and *barakah* in things done must maintain relations (*Ṣilatur-Raḥim*). It simply means that one should take care of those he is closely related with and help and support them within personal capability.

And Sayyidnā Abū Ayyūb al-Anṣārī ﷺ says that a rustic Arab villager called upon the Holy Prophet ﷺ at his home and asked him: 'Just tell me what should I do to come closer to Paradise and stay away from Hell.' He said: 'Worship Allah. Take no partners with Him. Establish Ṣalāh. Give Zakāh. And maintain relations.' (Al-Baghawī)

According to a narration of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar ﷺ appearing in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said: 'Ṣilatur-Raḥim' (maintaining relations) does not simply mean that you return the favour done by a relative, that is, if he has done a favour to you, you do a favour to him. Instead, real Ṣilatur-Raḥim (the ideal form of maintaining relations) is that even if your relative fails to maintain relations with you, yet you, on your part, only for the sake of Allah, maintain relations with him, and do favours to him.'

It was due to the importance of fulfilling the rights of relatives and maintaining relations with them that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: 'Preserve your family trees through which you would preserve your family ties and you would be able to fulfill their rights.' Then he said: 'This rule of maintaining relations has its advantages. It generates mutual love, puts *barakah* in wealth which increases, and puts *barakah* in years of life too.' (Tirmidhī)

It appears in a Ḥadīth of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: 'Most commendable is the act of maintaining relations when a person maintains the same relations with the friends of his dead father, as they were during his lifetime.

3. The statement: وَالَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا ابْتِغَاءَ وَجْهِ رَبِّهِمْ (in order to seek the pleasure of their Lord - 22) makes us realize that the merits of Ṣabr (patience) which have appeared in the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth and which tell us that the patient person has the good fortune of having Allah Ta'ālā with him, and of His help and support, and that countless returns and rewards wait for him or her. But, all this happens only when one observes patience for the good pleasure of Allah Ta'ālā - otherwise, everyone reaches a point in time when, sooner or later, one gets to become reconciled to his or her lot.

As explained earlier, the real meaning of Ṣabr (translated here as 'to observe patience') is to control one's self and remain steadfast which can take different forms. First of all, one should observe patience, not become upset under the stress of hardship and pain, not become disappointed, rather keep Allah Ta'ālā in sight and keep hoping. Secondly, one should observe patience in carrying out acts of obedience to Allah in a way that one remains sure of staying on that track steadfastly, even if

the adherence to Divine injunctions appears to be hard on one's self. Thirdly, one should observe patience against what is evil and sinful - even if the desiring self demands that the road to evil be taken, but one should resist and refuse to take the road to evil because of the fear of Allah.

4. From: وَاَنۡفَقُوۡا مِمَّا رَزَقۡنٰهُمۡ سِرًّا وَّ عَلَانِيَةً (and spend from what We have given to them secretly and openly - 22), we learn that spending in the way of Allah secretly and openly is correct whichever way it is done. However, it is better that obligatory charities (*wājib ṣadaqāt*) such as Zakāh and Ṣadaqātul-Fiṭr etc., be paid openly so that other Muslim are also prompted to do the same. As for voluntary charities (*nafl ṣadaqāt*) which are not obligatory should be paid secretly so that one can stay safe from scruples of hypocricy and pulls of recognition.

5. The statement: يَدۡرَءُوۡنَ بِالۡحَسَنَةِ السَّيِّئَةَ (and repel evil with good) tells us that getting rid of evil is certainly a rational and physical imperative, but evil for evil is not the method practiced in Islam. Instead, the teaching of Islam is: Repel evil with good. Whoever has inflicted injustice upon you, on your part you deal with him justly. Whoever has not fulfilled your due right, on your part you fulfill his right. Whoever releases his anger on you, on your part you respond to him with forbearance and tolerance. The inevitable result of this pattern of response would be that enemies would turn into friends and the wicked into the righteous before you.

Another sense of this sentence is that one should make amends for a sin by performing an act of obedience, that is, if you ever get to commit some sin, repent immediately and then get busy with the 'Ibādah of Allah Ta'ālā. This will cause your past sin to be forgiven.

As reported by Sayyidnā Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī, the Holy Prophet said: When a sin happens to have been committed by you, follow it up with a good deed. This will wash that sin off (narrated by Aḥmad with sound authority, Maẓharī). The condition attached to this good deed is that one must first repent from the past sin and then do the good deed.

Said in the next verse (23) is: جَنّٰتُ عَدۡنٍ يَّدۡخُلُوۡنَهَا وَمَنۡ صَلَحَ مِنۡ اٰبَآئِهِمۡ وَاَزۡوَاجِهِمۡ وَذُرِّيّٰتِهِمۡ It means that servants of Allah who are righteous and accepted will certainly have the honour of being in Jannah, and it will be in con-

sideration of them that their parents, wives and children will also share the honour with them. However, the condition is that these people should be righteous, that is, believers and Muslims - not Kāfir, though not at par with such pious elder in their good deeds. But, because of the *barakah* of this pious elder, Allah Ta'ālā shall make these people reach the same station in Paradise which is the station of this pious elder as said in another verse: أَلْحَقْنَا بِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ that is, 'We shall make the progeny of Our righteous servants be with them - 52:21'

This tells us that relationship with pious elders, whether of lineage, kinship or friendship, shall be of benefit in the Hereafter as well - of course, subject to the condition of *'Īmān* (Faith).

6. From verse 24: سَلٰمٌ عَلَيْكُمْ بِمَا صَبَرْتُمْ فَنِعْمَ عُقْبَى الدَّارِ (Peace be upon you for the patience you observed. So, good is the ultimate abode) we find out that the salvation of the Hereafter and the high ranks of the Paradise are all the outcome of man's patient handling of the trials of life in this mortal world where he keeps insisting on fulfilling all rights of Allah Ta'ālā and His servants due on him or her and keeps compelling one's desiring self to abstain from acting disobediently to Him.

Finally, if we consider the statement in verse 25, that is: أُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمُ اللَّعْنَةُ وَلَهُمْ سُوْٓءُ الدَّارِ (those are the ones for whom there is the curse, and for them there is the evil abode), we would recall that verses previous to it told us about the reward of His obedient servants - that their home will be in Paradise, angels would greet them with Salām, and tell them that the eternal blessings of Paradise are the direct result of their patience, fortitude and obedience. Similarly, in the verse cited above, announced is the end of the disobedient and the contumacious - that they are under the curse of Allah, that is, they are far removed from His mercy and that they have waiting for them an evil abode in Hell. This helps us realize that the breaking of pledges given and the severence of the bonds of kinship is the cause of Divine curse and consignment to Hell. May Allah keep all of us protected from such a fate.

Verses 31 - 33

وَلَوْ اَنَّ قُرْاٰنًا سُيِّرَتْ بِهِ الْجِبَالُ اَوْ قُطِّعَتْ بِهِ الْاَرْضُ اَوْ كُلِّمَ بِهِ

الْمَوْتَىٰ ۗ بَل لِّلَّهِ الْأَمْرُ جَمِيعًا ۗ أَفَلَمْ يَيْأَسِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَن لَّوْ يَشَاءُ
اللَّهُ لَهَدَى النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا ۗ وَلَا يَزَالُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا تُصِيبُهُم بِمَا
صَنَعُوا قَارِعَةٌ أَوْ تَحُلُّ قَرِيبًا مِّن دَارِهِمْ حَتَّىٰ يَأْتِيَ وَعْدُ اللَّهِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ
لَا يُخْلِفُ الْمِيعَادَ ﴿٣١﴾ وَلَقَدِ اسْتُهْزِئَ بِرُسُلٍ مِّن قَبْلِكَ فَأَمْلَيْتُ
لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ثُمَّ أَخَذْتُهُمْ ۖ فَكَيْفَ كَانَ عِقَابِ ﴿٣٢﴾ أَفَمَنْ هُوَ قَائِمٌ
عَلَىٰ كُلِّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ ۗ وَجَعَلُوا لِلَّهِ شُرَكَاءَ ۗ قُلْ سَمُّوهُمْ ۗ أَمْ
تُنَبِّئُونَهُ بِمَا لَا يَعْلَمُ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَم بِظَاهِرٍ مِّنَ الْقَوْلِ ۗ بَلْ زُيِّنَ لِلَّذِينَ
كَفَرُوا مَكْرُهُمْ وَصُدُّوا عَنِ السَّبِيلِ ۗ وَمَن يُضْلِلِ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ هَادٍ
﴿٣٣﴾

And even if there were a Qur'ān wherewith the mountains could be moved, or the earth could be split apart, or wherewith the dead are spoken to, (they would not believe). But all the judgements are of Allah. Are the believers not aware that, if Allah wills, He would bring all the people to the right path? And the disbelievers shall keep receiving disaster for what they did, or it will visit somewhere close to their homes, until Allah's promise comes to pass. Surely, Allah does not back out on His promise. [31]

And Messengers have been mocked at before you, so I let the disbelievers go on for a while. Then I seized them. So, how was My punishment? [32]

Is then He, who is watchful over everyone and over whatever he earns (not present?) while they have made partners with Allah. Say, "Give their names. Is it that you are informing Him of something on earth He does not know, or of just empty words?" But, their ill- designs have been made alluring for the disbelievers, and they have been barred from the Path. And the one whom Allah deprives of guidance, for him there is no one to guide. [33]

Commentary

Clear proofs of Islām being the true religion and the Holy Prophet ﷺ

being the true prophet were there before the disbelievers of Makkah. They could see the signs from every department of his life, and from his many miracles, openly and comprehensively. The chief of the disbelievers, Abū Jahl had already declared that they stood in competition with the tribe of Banū Hāshim. How could they ever accept their superiority in a matter so crucial - that the Messenger of Allah had to rise from among them? So, let them say what they have to say, and let them show whatever signs they must show. As for them, they were not going to believe in him under any condition whatsoever. Therefore, bent on confrontation, they lost no opportunity to display their obstinacy asking absurd questions and making unreasonable demands. The present verses too have been revealed in response to a question asked by Abū Jahl and his accomplices.

According to Tafsīr al-Baghawī, once the disbelievers of Makkah, Abū Jahl ibn Hishām and 'Abdullāh ibn Umaiyyah among them, came to the Baytullah and sat down on its rear side. They sent the later to the Holy Prophet ﷺ with some demands. He said to him: If you want that your people and all of us accept you as a Messenger of Allah and follow you, then we have some demands. Fulfill them through your Qur'ān and we all shall embrace Islam.

One of the demands was that the land of Makkah was too short on space. What they have is a long stretch of land surrounded by mountains on all sides in which there is no room for cultivation and farming and no place to grow fruits or provide other needs. So, they asked him: You move these mountains farther away through your miracle so that the land area of Makkah becomes more extensive. Reminding him of his own saying they said that mountains were subjugated for Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام - when he recited the praises of Allah, the mountains did the same with him. And they reminded him again that he was no less a person than Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام in the sight of Allah.

The second demand they put forward was that the way Allah Ta'ālā had subjugated the wind for Sayyidnā Sulayman عليه السلام - as he himself had told them - and had thereby reduced great distances on the earth into brief spans, so, they demanded that he too should do the same for them so that their travels to Syria and Yaman become easy on them.

Their third demand was that the way Sayyidnā 'Īsā ﷺ made the dead come alive, he too should do that for them. Since he was for them no less than him, let him bring their forefather, Quṣayy, back to life so that they could ask him whether or not this religion brought by the Arab prophet was true. (Maẓharī with reference to al-Baghawī and Ibn Abī Ḥātim and Ibn Marduwayh)

The hostile demands mentioned in the verses cited above were answered in the following words:

وَلَوْ اَنَّ قُرْاٰنًا سُيِّرَتْ بِهِ الْجِبَالُ اَوْ قُطِّعَتْ بِهِ الْاَرْضُ اَوْ كُلِّمَ بِهِ الْمَوْتٰى ط بَلْ لِّلّٰهِ الْاَمْرُ جَمِيْعًا

> And even if there were a Qur'ān wherewith mountains could be moved, or the earth could be split apart, or wherewith the dead are spoken to (they would not believe). But all the judgements are of Allah - 31.

Lexically, the expression: سُيِّرَتْ بِهِ الْجِبَالُ refers to the moving of mountains from their place, and: قُطِّعَتْ بِهِ الْاَرْضُ signifies the traversing of long distances in a short time, and: كُلِّمَ بِهِ الْمَوْتٰى denotes talking to the dead after they have been brought back to life. As for the principal clause of the conditional clause beginning with the word لَوْ (if), it stands understood under the necessity of the textual situation, that is: لَمَا آمَنُوا (they would not believe). The nature of this complement is the same as specifically mentioned at another place in the Holy Qur'ān while dealing with a similar subject. There it was said: (وَلَوْ اَنَّنَا نَزَّلْنَآ اِلَيْهِمُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةَ وَكَلَّمَهُمُ الْمَوْتٰى وَحَشَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ قُبُلًا مَّا كَانُوْا لِيُؤْمِنُوْا - 6:111).

It means that, even if these demands were to be met through the Qur'ān, as a miracle, they were still not going to believe because they have already seen such miracles before their present demands, miracles which are far more impressive than what they want now. The splitting of the moon in two at the hands of the Holy Prophet ﷺ is far more miraculous than mountains moving away from their place, or the subjugation of the wind. Similarly, the talking of inert pebbles in his blessed hands and their recitation of praises for Allah is certainly far greater a miracle than the talking of a dead person brought back to life. During the Night of the Ascent (al-Mi'rāj), the journey to al-Masjid al-Aqṣā (Jerusalem), and then onwards from there, the journey through the heavens, and

then the return back to Makkah in a very short span of time is indeed far more striking than the miraculous subjugation of the wind and the throne of Sulaymān ﷺ. But these arrogant people, despite having seen all this with their own eyes, did not believe. And when they acted in that unreasonable manner, it is obvious that their demands tell on their intention which is no more than a device to gain time. They have to accept nothing and they have to do nothing. Since the objective behind these demands made by the disbelievers was to reach a stage when their demands will not be fulfilled whereupon they will have a good occasion to say that, *Ma'ādh Allah,* these are things Allah Ta'ālā Himself has no control over. Or, may be the request made by the Holy Prophet ﷺ has no effect and that it is either not heard by Allah or is not accepted by Him - which gives the impression that he is no Messenger of Allah. After that, it was said: بَلْ لِّلّٰهِ الْاَمْرُ جَمِيْعًا (But all the judgements are of Allah). It means that power, choice and control, all of it, belongs to Allah which strongly suggests that not fulfilling the demands made is not because they are beyond the power and control of Allah Ta'ālā. Instead, the truth of the matter is that He alone is the One who knows the considerations and expediencies which go into the working of this universe. It was in His ultimate wisdom that He did not consider it appropriate to fulfill these demands - because He knows the doggedness and ill-intention of the makers of the demands. He knows that, should all demands made by them were to be fulfilled, they would still not believe.

Now said in the third sentence of verse 31 was: اَفَلَمْ يَايْئَسِ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اَنْ لَّوْيَشَآءُ اللّٰهُ لَهَدَى النَّاسَ جَمِيْعًا (Are the believers not aware that if Allah wills, He would bring all the people to the right Path?).

Commenting on this statement, Imām al-Baghawī has reported that the noble Ṣaḥābah, when they heard these demands of the disbelievers, started nursing the thought that it would be better if these demands were fulfilled for, by doing so, all Makkans will become Muslims and Islam itself would move to a position of greater strength. Thereupon, the present verse was revealed. It means: Is it that believing Muslims, despite seeing and knowing the habit of excuse-seeking and hostile argumentations practiced by the disbelievers, have not yet lost hope in their potential to enter the fold of faith? If not, why would they start indulging in such wishes and hopes while they also know that, had Allah Ta'ālā so

willed, He would have Himself given to all human beings such guidance as would have left for them no choice but to become Muslims. But, His wisdom did not stipulate that everyone should be compelled to enter the fold of Islām and 'Īmān (faith). In fact, the very wisdom was to let everyone have his or her choice, and opt for Islām or Kufr (disbelief) on the basis of that personal choice.

Said in the fourth sentence of verse 31 was: وَلَا يَزَالُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا تُصِيْبُهُمْ بِمَا صَنَعُوْا قَارِعَةٌ اَوْتَحُلُّ قَرِيْبًا مِّنْ دَارِهِمْ (And the disbelievers shall keep receiving disaster for what they did, or it will visit somewhere close to their homes). According to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ, the word: قَارِعَةٌ (*Qāri'ah*) means disaster, hardship or calamity. The sense of the verse is that the demands of these disbelievers were not acceeded to as their ill-intention and doggedness were already known, that is, even if these demands were fulfilled, they would still not believe. In the sight of Allah, these people deserve nothing less than that disasters keep coming upon them in this mortal world as well, as it happened with the people of Makkah who were either hit by famine, or had the misfortune of being killed or caught during the Islamic battles of Badr and Uḥud, or had someone struck by lightening, or yet another became a victim of some calamity. Then, the statement: اَوْتَحُلُّ قَرِيْبًا مِّنْ دَارِهِمْ (or it will visit somewhere close to their homes) means that there will be times and occasions when the disaster will not hit them directly. Rather, it would come upon habitations close to them. The purpose would be to teach them a lesson and help them see their own evil end in the backdrop of a vicinity close by.

Verse 31 concludes with the statement: حَتّٰى يَاْتِيَ وَعْدُ اللّٰهِ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُخْلِفُ الْمِيْعَادَ (until Allah's promise comes to pass. Surely, Allah does not back out on His promise). It means that this cycle of disasters will continue until such time that the promise of Allah stands fulfilled, because the promise of Allah can never go unfulfilled. The promise referred to here is the promise of the conquest of Makkah. The sense is that different kinds of disasters will keep visiting these people until comes the time when Makkah al-Mukarramah will be finally conquered and all antagonists will stand subdued.

Before we part with the subject, let us go back to the statement: اَوْتَحُلُّ قَرِيْبًا مِّنْ دَارِهِمْ (or it will visit somewhere close to their homes - 31) which tells us that a disaster or calamity or punishment which visits the envi-

rons of a people has a concealed wise consideration of Allah Ta'ālā behind it. The message it delivers is that people living nearby should stand warned, learn from what happened to others and thereby correct their own doings. If taken seriously, what came as punishment for others could become a message of mercy for them. Otherwise, a day will come when they too will end up the way others did under their eyes.

Today, in our countries and in areas close to them, we keep hearing of different kinds of calamities hitting some community or locality almost every day. There are floods, cyclones, earthquakes or some other punishing disasters. According to this statement of the Qur'ān, these are not simply punishments meted out to such localities and communities, in fact they also serve as warnings to people living in surrounding areas. In old days, though awarenes through the arts and sciences was not so spick and span, but people did have the fear of Allah in their hearts. If some disaster of this nature struck a place, the people who lived there and even those who lived in adjoining areas would get alarmed and frightened. In that state, they would turn to Allah Ta'ālā, repent from their sins, seek forgiveness from Him and take the giving of charity (*ṣadaqah*) at a time like this a source of salvation. And they could see with their own eyes that their difficulties stood removed very easily by doing so. Here we are in our day, so heedless that, even at a time so terrible, we seem to remember everything except Allah. When we do that, we become very much like the general run of non-Muslims - our eyes get fixed on material means only. Turning for help to the Causer of all Causes (the *Musabbibul-Asbāb*), even at such a crucial time, is something very few people have the *Taufīq* of doing. It is the direct result of this failing that the world always keeps experiencing unwelcome happenings of this nature.

Given below are some additional comments on the last sentence of verse 31, explained a little earlier. There it was said: حَتّٰى يَاْتِىَ وَعْدُ اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُخْلِفُ الْمِيْعَادَ (until Allah's promise comes to pass. Surely, Allah does not back out on His promise).

As explained earlier, *'wa'dah'* or 'promise' at this place means the Conquest of Makkah, a promise Allah Ta'ālā had made to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The sense of the verse thus comes to be that Makkah will be conquered ultimately, and the disbelievers will be destroyed, subdued

and overpowered. Now before that comes to be, let them taste a little punishment as well for their crimes before that happens. And it is also possible that the expression: وَعْدُ اللهِ (the promise of Allah) refers to the day of Judgement at this place, a promise which has been made to all prophets and has been made since ever. So, on that day particularly, every disbelieving criminal will receive the full punishment for his or her doings.

The hostile questions asked by the disbelievers and the obstinacy shown by them as described in the event mentioned above posed the problem that these may cause pain to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, therefore, in the next verse, it was said to comfort him: وَلَقَدِ اسْتُهْزِئَ بِرُسُلٍ مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ فَأَمْلَيْتُ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ثُمَّ أَخَذْتُهُمْ فَكَيْفَ كَانَ عِقَابِ (And Messengers have been mocked at before you, so I let the disbelievers go on for a while. Then I seized them. So, how was My punishment?) In other words, it means that conditions faced by the Holy Prophet ﷺ were not faced by him alone. There were prophets before him who had been facing similar conditions when their deniers were not seized immediately upon the committment of their crime and they continued to make fun of the prophets. When they reached the limit, they were seized by Divine punishment and what a seizure that was which left none of them active enough to go on with their confrontation.

In the verse: أَفَمَنْ هُوَ قَائِمٌ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ نَفْسٍ (Is then He, who is watchful over everyone ... 33), the ignorance and irrationality of the disbelievers has been exposed by saying that these people are certainly short on sense when they equate inert idols with His pure Being, a Being that watches everyone and is the ultimate reckoner of everyone's deeds. Then, it was said that the real reason behind their unreasonable attitude is that Shayṭān has made their very ignorance look good in their sight and, therefore, this they take to be 'achievement' and 'success.'

Verses 34 - 37

لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ فِي الْحَيَوٰةِ الدُّنْيَا وَلَعَذَابُ الْآخِرَةِ أَشَقُّ ۖ وَمَا لَهُم مِّنَ اللَّهِ مِن وَاقٍ ﴿٣٤﴾ مَّثَلُ الْجَنَّةِ الَّتِي وُعِدَ الْمُتَّقُونَ ۖ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ ۖ أُكُلُهَا دَائِمٌ وَظِلُّهَا ۚ تِلْكَ عُقْبَى الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوا ۖ وَّعُقْبَى

الْكٰفِرِيْنَ النَّارُ ﴿٣٥﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰتَيْنٰهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ يَفْرَحُوْنَ بِمَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكَ
وَمِنَ الْاَحْزَابِ مَنْ يُّنْكِرُ بَعْضَهٗ ؕ قُلْ اِنَّمَآ اُمِرْتُ اَنْ اَعْبُدَ اللّٰهَ وَلَآ
اُشْرِكَ بِهٖ ؕ اِلَيْهِ اَدْعُوْا وَاِلَيْهِ مَاٰبِ ﴿٣٦﴾ وَكَذٰلِكَ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ حُكْمًا عَرَبِيًّا ؕ
وَلَئِنِ اتَّبَعْتَ اَهْوَآءَهُمْ بَعْدَ مَا جَآءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ ۙ مَا لَكَ مِنَ اللّٰهِ مِنْ
وَّلِيٍّ وَّلَا وَاقٍ ﴿٣٧﴾ ع

For them there is punishment in the worldly life and, indeed, the punishment of the Hereafter is even harder, and for them there is none to save them from Allah. [34]

Here is the description of the Paradise promised to the God-fearing: underneath it the rivers flow; its food is everlasting and (so is) its shade. This is the ultimate abode of the God-fearing while the ultimate abode of the disbeliever is Fire. [35]

And those We have given the Book are happy with what has been sent down to you. And among the groups there are those who deny some of it. Say, "I am commanded only to worship Allah and not to ascribe partners to Him. To Him I call and to Him is my return." [36]

And thus We have sent it down, being a command in Arabic. And if you follow their desires, after the knowledge that has come to you, there shall be no friend for you against Allah, nor a saviour. [37]

Verses 38 - 43

وَلَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلًا مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُمْ اَزْوَاجًا وَّذُرِّيَّةً ؕ وَمَا كَانَ
لِرَسُوْلٍ اَنْ يَّاْتِيَ بِاٰيَةٍ اِلَّا بِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ ؕ لِكُلِّ اَجَلٍ كِتَابٌ ﴿٣٨﴾ يَمْحُوا
اللّٰهُ مَا يَشَآءُ وَيُثْبِتُ ۚۖ وَعِنْدَهٗۤ اُمُّ الْكِتٰبِ ﴿٣٩﴾ وَاِنْ مَّا نُرِيَنَّكَ بَعْضَ
الَّذِيْ نَعِدُهُمْ اَوْ نَتَوَفَّيَنَّكَ فَاِنَّمَا عَلَيْكَ الْبَلٰغُ وَعَلَيْنَا الْحِسَابُ ﴿٤٠﴾
اَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا اَنَّا نَاْتِي الْاَرْضَ نَنْقُصُهَا مِنْ اَطْرَافِهَا ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يَحْكُمُ لَا
مُعَقِّبَ لِحُكْمِهٖ ؕ وَهُوَ سَرِيْعُ الْحِسَابِ ﴿٤١﴾ وَقَدْ مَكَرَ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ

قَبْلِهِمْ فَلِلّٰهِ الْمَكْرُ جَمِيْعًا ؕ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَكْسِبُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ؕ وَسَيَعْلَمُ
الْكُفّٰرُ لِمَنْ عُقْبَى الدَّارِ ﴿٤٢﴾ وَيَقُوْلُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لَسْتَ مُرْسَلًا ؕ
قُلْ كَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ شَهِيْدًا ۢ بَيْنِيْ وَبَيْنَكُمْ ۙ وَمَنْ عِنْدَهٗ عِلْمُ الْكِتٰبِ ﴿٤٣﴾ ع

And We have sent messengers before you, and gave them wives and children. And it is not for a messenger to bring a sign without the will of Allah. For every time there is something prescribed. [38] **Allah wipes off what He wills and affirms (what He wills). And with Him is the Mother Book.** [39]

And if We show you some of what We promise them, or We take you back to Us (you are not accountable), you are only to convey the message and We are to reckon. [40]

Have they not seen that We are coming to the land narrowing it down from all its sides? And Allah judges; there is none to repel His judgement. And He is swift at reckoning. [41]

And those before them did devise plans, but Allah's are the plans altogether. He knows what every soul earns. And the disbelievers will soon know for whom is the ultimate abode. [42]

And the disbelievers say, "You are not a messenger." Say, "Allah suffices as a witness between me and you, and whoever with whom is the knowledge of the Book." [43]

Commentary

The common thinking of disbelievers and polytheists about a prophet and messenger was that he should be from a species other than human, such as a creation like angels so that their supremacy over the general run of human beings becomes clearly pronounced. The Holy Qur'ān has refuted this false idea of theirs in many verses by saying that they had simply failed to realize the reality and wisdom behind the sending of prophets and messengers, therefore, they went about pursuing such ideas. The reason is that a messenger is sent by Allah Ta'ālā as a model in order that communities of human beings follow them and learn deeds and morals similar to theirs. And it is obvious that whoever is human can only follow a fellow human being. For him to follow someone who

does not belong to his species is impossible. For example, take an angel. He has no hunger or thirst or desires, neither does he sleep or get tired. Now, if human beings were commanded to follow them as a model, they would have more trouble on their hands than they could handle in terms of their capability. The same objection of the polytheists showed up here, specially so, because of the marriages of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. An answer to this was given in initial sentences of the first verse (38) by asking them: How can you consider a person who marries once, or more than once, and has a family and children, as not being fit or being contrary to the station of prophethood or messengership? What proof do you have for such an assertion? In fact, it has always been the blessed practice of Allah Ta'ālā that He makes His prophets masters of a household. Prophets who have passed earlier - and you too believe in the prophethood of some of them - had wives, and children. The idea that this way of life is something contrary to being a prophet or messenger of Allah, or against the norms of piety or sainthood, is plain ignorance.

As it appears in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī and Muslim, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: I too keep fast and I too break it (that is, it is not that I always keep fasting). And he said: I too sleep during nights and rise up too for prayers (that is, it is not that I do nothing but keep praying all night); and I eat meat too, and I marry too. Whoever finds this practice of mine objectionable, he is not a Muslim: وَمَا كَانَ لِرَسُوْلٍ اَنْ يَّاْتِيَ بِاٰيَةٍ اِلَّا بِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ (And it is not for a messenger to bring a sign without the will of Allah - 38).

Out of the hostile questions the disbelievers and polytheists have always been asking the blessed prophets - and were asked of the Holy Prophet ﷺ too by the polytheists of his time - two are fairly common. The first question envisaged that the injunctions revealed in the Book of Allah should be in accordance with their wishes. For instance, this request of theirs appears in Sūrah Yūnus [10:15]: ائْتِ بِقُرْاٰنٍ غَيْرِ هٰذَآ اَوْ بَدِّلْهُ that is, 'bring to us a Qur'ān other than this (which does not prohibit the worship of our idols), or change it (that is, you yourself change the injunctions brought by it, replacing 'punishment' with 'mercy' and 'unlawful' with 'lawful').

Now take their second demand. Despite having seen open miracles of the blessed prophets, may peace be upon them, they still insisted that

ever new miracles be shown to them. 'If you show us this or that miracle, then', they would say, 'we may consider becoming Muslims.' The word: آية (*āyah*) used in this sentence of the Qur'ān (which lexically means 'signs') could be taken in both the two senses it has - because, in the terminology of the Qur'ān, the verses of the Qur'ān are also called Āyāt, and the same word means a miracle. Therefore, in their explanation of this 'verse', some commentators have, by taking this word in the sense of the verse of the Qur'ān, explained it by saying that no prophet has the authority or choice to introduce a verse on his own in his Book. And some others, by taking this word: آية: *'Āyah* in the sense of a miracle, have held that it means that Allah has not given any messenger or prophet the authority or choice to show a miracle, when he chooses or as he chooses it to be. It is said in Tafsīr Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī that, based on the rule of *'umūm al-majāz*, both meanings could be taken, and both explanations could be correct.

Given this analysis, the gist of the sense carried by the verse is that 'demanding Our prophet to change the verses of the Qur'ān is misplaced and wrong. We have not given such a right to any messenger.' Similar is the case with the demand that he shows to them a particular miracle as identified by them. This too is a proof of their being ignorant of the reality of prophethood, because it is not within the control of a prophet or messenger that he could go ahead on his own and show a miracle as they demand according to their whim.

In the last sentence of verse 38, it was said: لِكُلِّ أَجَلٍ كِتَابٌ (For every time there is something prescribed). The word: أجل (*'ajal*) is used in the sense of a time-frame for everything, and: كِتَاب (*kitāb*) here carries the sense of a verbal noun, that is, written or prescribed. The statement means that the time and quantum of everything stands prescribed with Allah Ta'ālā. He has prescribed in eternity that such and such person shall be born at such and such time, and shall live for so many days, what places he shall go to, what shall be his life work, and when and where he shall die.

Similarly, it is also prescribed that during such and such time what revelations and injunctions will be sent to such and such prophet, because the very process of the coming of injunctions as approriate to every time and every people is required by reason and justice. And also pre-

scribed is that such and such miracle shall manifest itself at the hands of such and such prophet at such and such time.

Therefore, asking the Holy Prophet ﷺ to insert particular kinds of injunctions into the Qur'ān as proposed by them, or asking him to show a particular miracle on request is a hostile and wrongful demand, which is based on an absence of awareness of the reality of messengership and prophethood.

Said in the next verse (39) was: يَمْحُوا اللّٰهُ مَا يَشَآءُ وَيُثْبِتُ وَعِنْدَهٗٓ اُمُّ الْكِتٰبِ : 'Allah wipes off what He wills and affirms (what He wills). And with Him is the Mother Book.' [The translation of: اُمُّ الْكِتٰبِ (*umm-ul-kitāb*) as 'Mother Book' reflects a word for word replacement possible at this place which also exhudes its applied sense in some measure, though not as clearly as given in the Tafsīr immediately after] The literal meaning of 'Umm al-Kitāb' is 'The Original Book.' The reference here is to the 'Preserved Tablet' (al-Lawḥ al-Maḥfūẓ) in which there can be no change or alteration.

The sense of the verse is that Allah Ta'ālā, in His most perfect power and wisdom, obliterates what He wills, and affirms what He wills. And after this obliteration and affirmation, whatever there is stays preserved with Allah Ta'ālā. No one has access to it, nor can there be any deletion and addition into it.

Leading authorities in Tafsīr, Sayyidnā Sa'īd ibn Jubayr رحمه الله تعالى and Qatādah ﷺ and others have declared that this verse too is related with the obliteration and affirmation of injunctions and religious codes, that is, with the problem of Naskh or abrogation. As for the sense of the verse, they say that in the Books which Allah Ta'ālā sends to different people through different messengers, and outlined in which are religious laws, obligations and duties, it is not necessary that all injunctions contained therein be eternal and last for ever. In fact, it is in fitness with conditions prevailing among peoples and the change in times that Allah, in His wisdom, abrogates or repeals whichever injunction He wills, and affirms and retains whichever He wills. Then, the original Book is preserved with Him after all. It is already written there that such and such injunction sent down for such and such people is for a particular period of time, or is based on particular conditions. When that term expires, or

those conditions change, this injunction will also change. In this original Book, that term and that appointed time stands recorded with full and authentic determination. Also entered there is the description of the injunction which will replace the one changed.

This eliminates the doubt that Divine injunctions should never be abrogated, because enforcing an injunction and then abrogating it indicates that the enforcer of the injunction did not have the correct perception of conditions, therefore, it was after having seen conditions that it had to be abrogated. And it is obvious that the majesty of Allah Ta'ālā is beyond the possibility that something be outside the realm of His knowledge. Since this stipulation tells us that the injunction which is abrogated exists in the knowledge of Allah Ta'ālā beforehand, that is, the injunction has been promulgated only for a specified period of time and will be changed later. This is similar to what a physician does in our world of experience. He examines a patient, looks at the symptoms of what he is ailing from, then prescribes a medicine relevant to the current condition he is in. And he knows the effect the medicine is going to bring forth, and after which, the particular medicine would have to be changed and the patient would have to be given another medicine of another description. To sum up, it can now be said that, according to this Tafsīr, the phenomena of obliteration and affirmation (*maḥw* and *ithbāt*) means the abrogation (*naskh*) of injunctions, and its affirmation and continuity.

As based on the view of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ﷺ, a group of leading commentators, Sufyān al-Thawrī, Wakī' and others, have reported another Tafsīr of this verse where the subject of the verse has been determined as concerning the decree of destiny. And the meaning of the verse has been explained by saying that, according to the explicit statements of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth, the destinies of the creations of Allah, including the sustenance received by every person during his entire years of life and the comfort and distress faced along the line, and their respective magnitudes are written since *'azal* even before the creation of His creatures. Then, at the time of the birth of a child, the angels too are asked to keep it committed to writing. And every year, in the Laylatul-Qadr (The Night of Power), a full roster of what is supposed to happen during the course of that year is handed over to the angels.

In short, the age of every created individual, his or her sustenance,

times of movement and periods of rest are all determined, and written. But, from this decree of destiny, Allah Ta'ālā wipes off or obliterates what He wills and affirms or retains what He wills. However, the statement: وَعِندَهُ أُمُّ الْكِتَٰبِ (And with Him is the Mother Book) means that the original Book, according to which, after the process of obliteration and affirmation, ultimate action shall be taken, is with Allah. In this, there can be no change or alteration.

This has been elaborated in many authentic Aḥādīth which tell us that there are some *a'māl* (deeds) which cause a person's age and sustenance to increase. Some make them decrease. It appears in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī that maintaining relations which must be maintained (*ṣilah ar-raḥim*) becomes the cause of increase in one's age. A narration in the Musnad of Aḥmad reports that there are occasions when one commits some such sin as leads to his being deprived of sustenance, and by serving and obeying one's parents, years of life increase, and nothing except *du'ā'* (prayer) can avert what is Divinely destined.

What we find out from all these narrations is that the age, the sustenance and things like that which Allah Ta'ālā has written into someone's destiny can become more or less because of some deeds - and also because of *du'ā'* (prayer), *taqdīr* (destiny) can be changed.

This is the subject dealt with in this verse. It says that the change or alteration in age or sustenance or hardship or ease in life as written in the Book of Destiny which takes place because of some deed (*'amal*) or prayer (*du'ā'*) means that Book of Destiny which is in the hands of the angels, or in their knowledge. There are times when, some decisions of this type of destiny are contingent on some particular condition. When that condition is not found, that decision does not take effect. Then, this condition is sometimes in writing and in the knowledge of angels, but there are times when this is not written - but exists in the knowledge of Allah Ta'ālā alone. When that decision changes, everyone is left wondering. A destiny of this nature is called 'conditional' or 'contingent' (*mu'allaq*) in which, as explicitly stated in this verse, the process of obliteration and assertion keeps operating. But, the last sentence of the verse: وَعِندَهُ أُمُّ الْكِتَٰبِ, that is, 'with Him is the original Book,' means that above this 'conditional destiny,' (*taqdīr mu'allaq*) there is the 'final and definite destiny' (*taqdīr mubram*) which is with Allah Ta'ālā written in the original Book.

And that is the exclusive domain of Divine knowledge. Written there are the decisions, injunctions and commands which issue forth as the final outcome after the conditions of deeds have been fulfilled or *du'ā'* has been answered. Therefore, that is totally free of obliteration and assertion and addition and deletion. (Ibn Kathīr)

In verse 40: وَإِنْ مَّا نُرِيَنَّكَ بَعْضَ الَّذِىْ نَعِدُهُمْ اَوْنَتَوَ فَّيَنَّكَ (And if We show you some of what We promise them, or We take you back to Us), it is to comfort and assure the Holy Prophet ﷺ that he has been given the good news that the promises Allah has made to him that Islām will have the final victory and disbelief and disbelievers will be disgraced shall come to pass definitely. But, he is told, 'you should not concern yourself as to when this victory will finally come.' May be, this happens within his life time, and it is also possible that it comes after his departure from this mortal world. 'For your peace of heart, even this much is enough that you are continuously witnessing that We are causing the lands of the disbelievers to keep being sliced off their sides,' that is, these sides pass on under Muslim control whereby the land occupied by them keeps reducing in area. This causes well-being for Muslims and a day will come when the final phase of their victory shall stand completed. The command is in the very hands of Allah Ta'ālā. There is no one who can avert this command. And He is the One swift at reckoning.

Alḥamdulillāh
The Commentary on
Sūratur-Ra'd
Ends here

Sūrah Ibrāhīm

(Abraham)

Sūrah Ibrāhīm is Makkī and it has 52 verses and 7 sections.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the Most-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 3

الٓرٰ قف كِتٰبٌ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ اِلَيْكَ لِتُخْرِجَ النَّاسَ مِنَ الظُّلُمٰتِ اِلَى النُّوْرِ ۙ بِاِذْنِ
رَبِّهِمْ اِلٰى صِرَاطِ الْعَزِيْزِ الْحَمِيْدِ ﴿۱﴾ ۙ اللّٰهِ الَّذِيْ لَهٗ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ
وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ ؕ وَوَيْلٌ لِّلْكٰفِرِيْنَ مِنْ عَذَابٍ شَدِيْدٍ ﴿۲﴾ ۙ الَّذِيْنَ
يَسْتَحِبُّوْنَ الْحَيٰوةَ الدُّنْيَا عَلَى الْاٰخِرَةِ وَيَصُدُّوْنَ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ
وَيَبْغُوْنَهَا عِوَجًا ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ فِيْ ضَلٰلٍۢ بَعِيْدٍ ﴿۳﴾

Alif, Lām, Rā. This is a book We have sent down to you, that you may take the people out of (all sorts of) darkness* into the light with the will of their Lord - to the path of the Mighty, the Praiseworthy, [1] **Allah, the One to whom belongs what is in the heavens and what is in the earth. Woe is to the disbelievers from a severe punishment,** [2] **to those who prefer the worldly life to the Hereafter and prevent (people) from the way of Allah, and seek crookedness in it. Those are far away in straying.** [3]

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*. Stands for "الظلمات" which is the plural of ظلمة (darkness). With the English equivalent "darkness" having no plural, effort has been made to convey the sense by adding "all sorts of" in brackets, because by using the plural form in the case of 'darkness' and the singular form in the case of 'light' the Holy Qur'ān has given a subtle hint to the fact that erroneous beliefs and conducts (represented in the text by 'darkness') have various forms while the truth (represented in the text by 'light') is only one.

Commentary

The Sūrah and Its Subjects

Beginning here is Sūrah Ibrāhīm, the fourteenth Sūrah of the Holy Qur'ān. This Sūrah is Makkī. It was revealed before Hijrah with the exception of some verses about which difference exists whether they are Makkī or Madanī.

In the beginning of the Sūrah, there is a description of the attributes of the mission of messengers and prophets which is followed by the theme of Tauḥīd, the Oneness of Allah, and its proofs. It was in this connection that the story of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was introduced and it was in this context that the Sūrah was named: Sūrah Ibrāhīm.

The Sūrah opens with the words: الٓرٰ قف كِتٰبٌ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ اِلَيْكَ لِتُخْرِجَ النَّاسَ مِنَ الظُّلُمٰتِ اِلَى النُّوْرِ (Alif, Lām, Rā. This is a book We have sent down to you, that you may take the people out of (all sorts of) darkness into the light with the will of their Lord). The initial letters - Alif, Lām, Rā - are from among the Isolated Letters (*al-Ḥurūf al-Muqaṭṭa'āt*) about which it has been said time and again that there is a standard policy and practice pursued by the most righteous elders in this matter. Their method is the safest and totally doubt-free. It tells us that we should firmly believe and have faith that whatever they mean or signify is true - but, stay away from launching deeper investigations into their meanings.

In the sentence which follows immediately: كِتٰبٌ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ اِلَيْكَ (This is a book sent down to you), it is appropriate and clearly justified in terms of the syntactical construction that it should be taken as the predicate of the word: هٰذَا (*hādhā* : this) understood here, and the sentence should mean that 'this is a book which We have sent down to you.' By attributing the revelation of the book to Allah Ta'ālā here, and the address to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, a hint has been released which points out to two things. First, it says that this book is great as it was revealed by Allah Ta'ālā Himself, and then it is suggestive of the personal high station of the Holy Prophet ﷺ as he has been made its first addressee.

Said in the next sentence was: لِتُخْرِجَ النَّاسَ مِنَ الظُّلُمٰتِ اِلَى النُّوْرِ بِاِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ (that you may take the people out of (all sorts of) darkness into the light with the will of their Lord). The word: النَّاسَ (*an-nās* : people) is used for human-

kind. It means all human beings who are present or will come in the future. The word: الظلمت (*aẓ-ẓulumāt*), the plural of ظلمة (*ẓulmah*) which means darkness is well-known. Here, *'ẓulumat'* refers to the darkness of Kufr (infidelity, disbelief) and Shirk (the ascribing of partners to Allah) and the darkness of evil deeds - and the word: اَلنُّوْر (*an-nur*) means light, the light of faith. Therefore, the word: الظلمت (*aẓ-ẓulumāt* : many a darkness) has been used here in its plural form, because there are many kinds and shades of Kufr and Shirk. And similarly, there are countless evil deeds too. But, the word: النُّوْر (*an-nūr*: the light of faith) has been introduced in the singular form, because faith and truth are one and the same. The sense of the verse is: We have sent this book to you so that, through it, you may deliver all peoples of the world from the multiple forms of darkness of Kufr and Shirk and evil deeds, and bring them out into the light of faith and truth, with the will of their Lord. Here, the particular use of the expression: رَبِّهِمْ (*Rabbihim* : their Lord) indicates that there is no other reason or intention behind this universal blessing of Allah Ta'ālā, but that He would let human beings of the world be delivered from every such darkness through His Book and Messenger. Indeed, it is the compassion and mercy which the Creator and Master of the entire humankind has, under the imperative of His being their Lord, always kept beaming on them. Otherwise, Allah Ta'ālā owes nothing to anyone, nor there is a right due against Him, nor is there anyone who can force Him to do anything.

Guidance is an Act of God

In this verse, taking people out from darkness into the light has been declared to be the act of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, although giving Hidāyah or guidance is, in reality, an act of Allah Ta'ālā alone - as it has been said in another verse of the Qur'ān: اِنَّكَ لَا تَهْدِىْ مَنْ اَحْبَبْتَ وَلٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَهْدِىْ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ , that is, 'you cannot, on your own, give guidance to anyone, but it is Allah alone who gives guidance to whom He wills - 28:56). Therefore, by adding: بِاِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ (with the will of their Lord), this doubt was eliminated because the sense the verse now carries is: This act of bringing people out from the darkness of Kufr and Shirk into the light of faith and good deeds is, though not in your hands originally, but it shall be with the will and permission of Allah Ta'ālā that you could do so.'

Rules of Guidance

This verse tells us that there is only one way all children of Ādam, the humankind on this earth, can be rescued from the evil layers of darkness into light, and the only alternative which can save humanity from the dual destruction in this world and in the Hereafter is no other but that of the Holy Qur'ān. The closer people come towards it, the luckier they would find themselves to be. They will find peace and security and relief and happiness in their present life as well as in the life to come with success at its best. And similarly, the farther they remain from it, the more exposed they shall be to living self-destruct lives both in this world, and in the Hereafter.

Not elaborated within the words of the verse is the manner in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ will deliver people from the many kinds of darkness and bring them into the light through the Qur'ān. But, this much is fairly evident that the usual method of correcting a people through a book is that the teachings of that book be spread out among those people and they be convinced to abide by it.

The Recitation of the Holy Qur'ān too is a Standing Objective in its own right

Apart from what has been stated above, there is yet another characteristic of the Holy Qur'ān, that is, its recitation and the reading of its words, even without understanding them, registers a positive effect on the human self. It helps its reciter to stay safe against evils. At least in the case of Kufr and Shirk, no matter how attractive their traps may be, a reciter of the Qur'ān, even though he may be reciting it without understanding it, can never fall into those traps. This has been witnessed in the current history during the Hindu movement of Shudhi Sanghtan. In this mass effort to convert Muslims, some of those who fell a victim to their trap were strangers even to the recitation of the Qur'ān. In our day, Christian missioneries maintain an inviting network fortified by many incentives and rewards in almost every region where Muslims live. But, their success, if any, is restricted only to households and families which are heedless even to the recitation of the Qur'ān - whether because of illiteracy and ignorance among them, or because of the perverted influence of what passes as new education (psuedo-westernized).

Perhaps, it is to point out to this spiritual influence that wherever

the Holy Qur'ān has described the basic functions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, Recitation (Tilāwah) has been mentioned separately and ahead of the need to teach its meanings: يَتْلُوا عَلَيْهِمْ اٰيٰتِهٖ وَيُزَكِّيْهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ (3:164; 62:2). It means that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been sent to accomplish three tasks. The first task is the recitation of the Holy Qur'ān, and it is obvious that Tilāwah or Recitation is related to words. As for meanings, they are understood, not recited. The second task is to cleanse people pure from evils. And the third task is to teach the Holy Qur'ān, and Wisdom, that is, teach the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah.

In short, the Holy Qur'ān is a Book of Guidance the basic purpose of which, no doubt, is to understand its meaning and act in accordance with it. It is also clear that its essential effect is to reform the whole human life, but alongwith it, the reciting of its words too, brings about a distinct effect in the correction and strengthening of the human self, though in an invisible manner.

As partly stated a little earlier, this verse attributes the act of bringing people out from all sorts of darkness into the light with the will of their Lord to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. In order to further refine the explanation, it can now be said that by this attribution, it has also been established that the giving of guidance is though the act of Allah Ta'ālā in reality - but, it cannot be received or acquired without the medium of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The fact is that only that sense or interpretation of the Holy Qur'ān is trustworthy which has been communicated to us by the Holy Prophet ﷺ through his word or deed. Any interpretation contrary to it is not reliable.

What has been said in the last sentence of verse 1: اِلٰى صِرَاطِ الْعَزِيْزِ الْحَمِيْدِ (to the path of the Mighty, the Praiseworthy,) which goes on to verse 2: اللّٰهِ الَّذِیْ لَهٗ مَا فِی السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِی الْاَرْضِ (Allah, the One to whom belongs what is in the heavens and what is in the earth) refers back to the statement appearing in the beginning of verse 1. It is obvious that the mention of darkness and light in the above verse is not referring to the darkness and light which could be seen with naked eyes as a physical phenomenon. Therefore, it was to make it clear that it refers to the way of Allah. Whoever adopts this way would not stray away like the one who walks in darkness, nor do his or her steps falter, nor do they fail to achieve the objective set. So, the way of Allah means the way walking on

which human beings could reach their Creator and achieve the ultimate degree of success which is His pleasure.

It will be noticed that, at this place, the word: اللّٰه (Allah) has been preceded by two of His attributes: اَلْعَزِيْزِ اَلْحَمِيْدِ (Al-'Azīz and Al-Ḥamīd). Lexically, Al-'Azīz means Mighty, Overpowering - and Al-Ḥamīd denotes the Being who is deserving of praise. By bringing these two attributes before the basic name of Allah Ta'ālā the hint given is that the Pure and Sacred Being to whom this way is going to lead is Mighty, and Overpowering too, and deserving of all praise as well. Therefore, one who takes to this way will never falter or stumble anywhere enroute, nor the effort made on it will ever go waste. In fact, one is certain to reach the destination - only if one does not abandon this way.

After having mentioned these two attributes of Allah Ta'ālā earlier, it was said: اَللّٰهِ الَّذِىْ لَهٗ مَا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِى الْاَرْضِ (Allah, the One to whom belongs what is in the heavens and what is in the earth). In other words, Allah is that particular Being who is the Creator of everything in the heavens and the earth and He is the absolute Sovereign having no partners or associates.

Said in the concluding sentence of verse 2 was: وَوَيْلٌ لِّلْكٰفِرِيْنَ مِنْ عَذَابٍ شَدِيْدٍ (Woe is to the disbelievers from a severe punishment). The word: وَيْلٌ (*waiyl* : woe to) is used in the sense of severe punishment and fatal consequence. The verse means that those who dismiss and deny this blessing of the Qur'ān, and prefer to go on living in a multiplicity of darkness, should know that there is for them the darkest of destruction, and the severe punishment which is about to visit them.

The Meaning in Summation

The gist of the verse is that the Qur'ān has been revealed so that it rescues all human beings from darkness and brings them into the light of the way of Allah. But, certainly unfortunate are those who reject the Qur'ān itself - they, by doing so, are bringing punishment on themselves with their own hands. So, those who deny from the very outset that the Qur'ān is the Divine Word, are the targets of this warning of punishment obviously. But, those who, despite their belief in the Holy Qur'ān, have abandoned it in their practical life, in the sense that they never recite it, nor try to understand it, nor act upon its teachings, they too cannot be considered totally free and safe from becoming targets of this

warning.

After that, in verse 3, it was said:

ٱلَّذِينَ يَسْتَحِبُّونَ ٱلْحَيَوٰةَ ٱلدُّنْيَا عَلَى ٱلْءَاخِرَةِ وَيَصُدُّونَ عَن سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ وَيَبْغُونَهَا عِوَجًا ۚ أُو۟لَٰٓئِكَ فِى ضَلَٰلٍۭ بَعِيدٍ

> To those who prefer the worldly life to the Hereafter and prevent (people) from the way of Allah, and seek crookedness in it. Those are far away in straying.

This verse identifies the three states in which the deniers of the Qur'ān are found among disbelievers. These are their distinct traits of character. Firstly, they prefer their life in the present world to the life they are to have in the Hereafter. Therefore, they would tolerate any loss coming to them in the Hereafter for the sake of worldly gain or comfort. Given here is a hint towards the diagnosis of their disease - their chronic denial of the truth. Why is it that these people, despite that they have seen the all too manifest miracles of the Holy Qur'ān, still remain hostile and negative towards it? The reason is that their lust for life in the present world has blinded them. They are unable to visualize what would matter most in their life in the Hereafter. Therefore, they are quite content with the darkness they are in, and towards light they do not care to come.

As for their second trait, it has been said that they certainly like to stay within the many layers of darkness they have chosen for themselves after all. But, they inflict injustice upon injustice when, in order to conceal their error, they would prevent others too from taking to the broadway of light, that is, the way of Allah.

Identifying Some Errors in the Understanding of Qur'ān

Their third trait appears in: يَبْغُونَهَا عِوَجًا (seek crookedness in it). It can have two meanings. Firstly, they are always looking out for an opportunity, mean at heart and evil in deed as they are, to seek and find, if they can, some crookedness or fault in the otherwise radiant and straight path of Allah, whereby they might have an occasion to raise an objection or throw a taunt. This is the meaning given by Ibn Kathīr.

And this sentence could also mean that these people are always trying to find out something about the way of Allah, that is, about the Qur'ān and Sunnah, which could be in line with their ideas and wishes

so that they can present it in support of the truth of their position. This meaning has been given in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī. A fairly large number of educated people these days are involved in this sort of activity. They would come up with the framework of an idea, either as an outcome of their own error, or under the influence of some other nation. Then, they would go about looking for its supporting evidences from the Qur'ān and Sunnah. And if they happen to come across some word supposedly in support of that idea of theirs, they would take it to be a Qur'ānic proof in their favour - although, this method is wrong in principle because it is the duty of a true believer that he should first unburden his or her mind from personal ideas and wishes and then consult the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Prophet. Whatever stands proved clearly therefrom should, for him or her, become the personal creed.

In the last sentence of verse 3: أُولَٰئِكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ بَعِيدٍ (Those are far away in straying), described there is the sad end of the disbelievers whose three traits have been mentioned above. The substance of the statement is that these people have strayed out too far, so much so that now it is difficult for them to return to the right path.

Points of Guidance

According to Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī, though, in this verse, these three traits have been clearly identified with disbelievers and that they are far away in straying has been mentioned as their sad end, but, in terms of the principle involved here, any Muslim who has these three traits present in him, he too shall be deserving of this warning. The gist of these three traits is given below:

1. To keep the love for worldly life on top of the concern for the Hereafter to the limit that one starts avoiding exposure to the light of faith.

2. To prevent people from the way of Allah so that they too will join hands with them.

3. To try to misread and misinterpret the Qur'ān and Sunnah in order to apply them to fit into personal ideas and wishes.

May Allah protect us from it.

Verse 4

وَمَآ اَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ رَّسُوْلٍ اِلَّا بِلِسَانِ قَوْمِهٖ لِيُبَيِّنَ لَهُمْ ۭ فَيُضِلُّ اللّٰهُ مَنْ يَّشَاۗءُ وَيَهْدِيْ مَنْ يَّشَاۗءُ ۭ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ ﴿٤﴾

And We did not send any messenger but (speaking) in the tongue of his people, so that he might clearly speak to them. So, Allah lets go astray whom He wills and lets find guidance whom He wills. And He is the Mighty, the Wise. [4]

Commentary

Mentioned in the first sentence of this verse is the particular blessing and convenience granted by Allah Ta'ālā that whenever He has sent a messenger to a people, He has sent him speaking their language, in order that he would convey Divine injunctions to them in their language and usage whereby understanding these becomes easy on them. If the language of the messenger had been different from that of his addressees, it is evident that his people would have to undergo the burden of having to translate the injunctions before they could understand them and, still, the understanding of injunctions correctly would have remained doubtful. Therefore, when a messenger was sent to the speakers of the Hebrew language, the language of the messenger was also Hebrew. The language of the messenger sent to the Persians was also Persian. The language of the messenger to the Berbers was appointed to be Berberī. It is possible that a person who was assigned to be a messenger would be an individual from among the same people to whom he was sent and his mother tongue would have been the language of those people, and it is also possible that the language into which he was born may have been other than that of the people he was sent to, but as Allah Ta'ālā would have it, He had things arranged in a manner that the messenger learnt the language of the people he was to work with - as it was in the case of Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام. Actually, he was a citizen of 'Irāq where the language spoken was Persian. But, after his migration to Syria, he married among the people there and the language of the Syrians became his own language. Then, Allah Ta'ālā made him the prophet of a region of Syria.

As for our noble Messenger ﷺ, his mission is, in terms of the area

of operation, for the whole world and, in terms of the time duration, it is universally applicable right upto the last day of Qiyāmah. No nation or group of people in this world, no matter which country they belong to and what language they speak, could be outside the circle of his mission as a messenger and prophet. And every new nation and every new language which comes into existence upto the day of Qiyāmah shall all be counted among the community to which the Da'wah (call) of the Holy Prophet ﷺ will reach. This is expressly mentioned by the Holy Qur'ān: يا يٰاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اِنِّيْ رَسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ اِلَيْكُمْ جَمِيْعًا (O people, I am the messenger of Allah [sent] to you all - 7:158). According to a narration of Sayyidnā Jābir ؓ appearing in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī and Muslim, the Holy Prophet ﷺ, while pointing out to his five distinctions among the universal community of prophets, has said: Before me, every messenger and prophet was sent to his people and community. Allah Ta'ālā sent me to all peoples who are the children of Ādam (on this earth).

Allah Ta'ālā willed that humankind on this earth should originate from Sayyidnā Ādam ؑ whom He made the first prophet of human beings. Then, in proportion to the increase in human population in terms of its social and economic status, arrangements to convey the right guidance to them through messengers and prophets kept being made by Allah Ta'ālā. Injunctions, laws and religious codes relevant to every period of time and to the needs of every people continued coming. Finally, when the development of the human scene reached the stage of maturity, Allah Ta'ālā sent the foremost among the line of prophets, Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā, *ṣallallāhu 'alaihi wa sallam*, as the Rasūl of the whole world, and the Kitāb and Sharī'ah He gave to him was given in its most complete and workable form which was valid for the whole world and for all times right upto the Last Day of Qiyāmah. It was said in the Qur'ān: اَلْيَوْمَ اَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِيْنَكُمْ وَاَتْمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِيْ (That is,'Today, I have perfected your religion and made My favour complete for you - 5:3).

The religious codes of past prophets, may peace be on all of them, were also perfect and complete in terms of their time and region. They too cannot be called imperfect or wanting. But, the perfection of the Sharī'ah brought by the Holy Prophet ﷺ is not restricted to any specified time and region. It is absolutely perfect (that is, without restrictions or exceptions in any respect, or circumstances) and seen from this

angle, the perfection of religion is exclusive to this Sharī'ah, and this is the reason why the chain of prophethood was discontinued after the appearance of the Holy Prophet ﷺ who is the Last among the blessed prophets, may peace be upon all of them.

Why Was the Qur'ān Revealed in the Arabic Language?

When messengers who spoke the language of past communities were sent among them, they did not have to work hard on translating the message brought by prophets. Now, a question arises here as to why the Holy Prophet ﷺ was sent to Arabia alone with the Arabic language? And why was it that his Book too was revealed in the Arabic language specifically? But, a little deliberation would make the answer very clear. Everyone can understand when the mission and call of the Holy Prophet ﷺ became common for all peoples of the world speaking hundreds of different languages, then, there existed only two alternatives for the guidance of all of them. The first alternative was that the Qur'ān be revealed separately into the language of every group of people, and the teachings and instructions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ also be made available separately in the language of every community of people. In view of the most perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā, managing something like that was not difficult at all. But, the great objective of sending one Rasūl, one Kitāb and one Sharī'ah for all peoples of the world, an objective which sought to forge a religious, moral and social unity and mutually shared orientation, despite the existence of thousands of differences among all these peoples, would have remained unrealized in the event that such an alternative was taken to.

Then, there was the other alternative of letting the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth for every people and every country be available in their separate languages. If this was ever done in that manner, it would have thrown the gates of interpolation in the Qur'ān wide open through which countless inroads in it could have been made. Thus, the miraculous quality of the Glorious Qur'ān, that its original words still remain perfectly protected, a quality which cannot be denied even by non-conformists and deniers of the Qur'ān, would have not survived intact. What would have happened that despite there being one religion and one book, its adherents would have been dispersed on so many different tracks that there would have remained no single rallying pivot of unity. We can have some

idea of this problem if we recall the amount of differences that arose in the interpretation and exegesis of the Holy Qur'ān despite that it was revealed in the single Arabic language - though, these differences did remain within permissible limits. As for differences engineered through false and impermissible means, they just have no limits. But, notwithstanding all this, there is a viable unity and a sense of distinct identity still present among all those people who observe and practice what the Qur'ān teaches, no matter in whatever degree it may be.

In short, the assumption that the Qur'ān could have come for every human group separately making the mission and teaching of the Holy Prophet ﷺ universal is something even a person of ordinary intelligence would not find correct. Therefore, it becomes necessary that the Qur'ān be sent in one single language and the language spoken by the prophet should also be the same language of the Qur'ān, and then its translations into other languages be made and circulated. After the Holy Prophet ﷺ, his deputies, the 'Ulamā of the community, should spread out the teachings and rules of guidance left behind by him among their peoples and in their language. Therefore, Allah Ta'ālā chose the Arabic language over all languages of the world for a number of reasons.

The Distinctions of Arabic

First of all, the Arabic language is the official language of the heavens. The language of angels is Arabic. The Preserved Tablet (al-Lawḥ al-Maḥfūẓ) is in the Arabic language as the Qur'ān tells us: بَلْ هُوَ قُرْاٰنٌ مَّجِيْدٌ فِيْ لَوْحٍ مَّحْفُوْظٍ (Rather, it is a glorious Qur'ān in the Preserved Tablet - 85:21,22). Then, there is Jannah, the Paradise which is the real home of human beings and to where they have to return - and its language is also Arabic. In the Mu'jim of al-Ṭabarānī, Mustadrak of al-Ḥākim and in Shu'ab al-'Īmān of Al-Baihaqī, there is a narration from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ﷺ which reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: اَحِبُّوا الْعَرَبَ لِثَلَاثٍ لِاَنِّيْ عَرَبِيٌّ وَالْقُرْاٰنُ عَرَبِيٌّ وَكَلَامُ اَهْلِ الْجَنَّةِ عَرَبِيٌّ (That is, 'Love Arabs for three reasons: (1) That I am an Arab; (2) and the Qur'ān is in Arabic; (3) and the language of the people of Paradise is Arabic.' [In Mustadrak, Ḥākim calls this narration 'Ṣaḥīḥ.' The same rating appears in al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaghīr. However, some Ḥadīth experts have called it weak and not authentic]. According to Ibn Taymiyyah, the subject of this Ḥadīth is proven and cannot be rated any lesser than 'Ḥasan' or good (Fayḍ al-Qadīr Sharḥ al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaghīr, p. 179, v. 1).

There is a narration reported in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī that the language of Sayyidnā Ādam ﷺ in Jannah was Arabic. When he was sent to the earth, and after his repentance was accepted, some changes in the Arabic language itself gave birth to the Syriac language.

This appears to support narrations which have been reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ؓ and others. They say that the original language of all books Allah Ta'ālā has revealed was Arabic. It was archangel, Sayyidnā Jibra'īl al-Amīn who relayed it to the prophets by translating it to them while they conveyed it to their communities in their language. These narrations have been reported by 'Allamah Al-Suyuṭī in Al-Itqān and by most commentators of the Qur'ān under their comments on this verse. The gist of these reports is that the original language of all Scriptures is Arabic. But, with the exception of the Holy Qur'ān, other books have been given as translated into the language of a country or people. Therefore, their meanings are all from Allah Ta'ālā, but there is a change in words. It happens to be the unique feature of the Qur'ān alone that, like its meanings, the words too are but from Allah Ta'ālā. And perhaps, this is the reason why the Qur'ān extended a challenge that even the combined force of the Jinns and humankind of the whole world could not produce the likeness of a small Sūrah, rather of one Āyah of the Qur'ān - because, in terms of its high status in word and meaning, it is the Word of Allah and a Divine attribute which cannot be imitated by anyone. Given their spiritual status, other Scriptures too are the Word of Allah, but none of the other Scriptures made such a claim, perhaps because they were not in their original form in Arabic but were its translation. Otherwise, in terms of being the Divine Word like the Qur'ān, the uniqueness and inimitability of every such book was certain.

One major reason for the choice of the Arabic language is the inherent treasure of capabilities of the language itself for it has countless forms and methods through which a sense could be expressed.

And there is another reason too that Allah Ta'ālā has naturally gifted Muslims with a certain affinity and congruity with the Arabic language because of which everyone goes on to learn the language easily as needed. This is the reason why, in every country the Ṣaḥābah reached, it took very little time when, without any compulsion, the Arabic language

came to be the language of the whole country. Take Egypt, Syria and Iraq. Arabic was not their language. Today, they are known as Arab countries.

There is yet another reason for this phenomena. The Arabs were, though involved in serious evil practices, yet their capabilities, qualities and feelings can be called unmatched even under such circumstances. That is why Allah Ta'ālā raised His greatest and the last messenger from among them, and chose his language to be the language of the Qur'ān, and gave instructions to His prophet that they are the ones who should be the first to be guided and educated: وَأَنْذِرْ عَشِيرَتَكَ الْأَقْرَبِينَ (and warn your close relatives - 26:214) - and the very first step taken was that He assembled around His messenger the kind of individuals from among these very people, individuals who sacrificed their life, wealth and children, almost everything for the sake of the Holy Prophet ﷺ taking his teachings to be dearer than what they had, even their lives. And it was the result of this pattern of behaviour that their personalities became so deeply coloured by his company and teaching that an ideal society rose in the world the like of which was never witnessed by humanity on this earth and under these skies. The Holy Prophet ﷺ charged this unique group with the mission of spreading the teachings of the Qur'ān and said: بَلِّغُوا عَنِّي وَلَوْ آيَةً that is, 'Convey everything you hear from me to my people, even though it is a short verse.' His Ṣaḥābah, alert and sacrificing as ever, took this order of their master so seriously that they fanned out far and wide around the world and made people become familiar with the Qur'ān and its teachings. Not even twenty five years had passed after the departure of the Holy Prophet ﷺ from this mortal world that the message of the Qur'ān started reverberating throught the East and West.

On the other hand it was a wisdom of Allah's creation and a wise arrangement of His destination that He inculcated in the entire *Ummah* of *da'wah* (i.e. all those addressed by the call of the Holy Prophet ﷺ including the *mushriks* and the Jews and the Christians), a special aptitude and zeal towards learning, teaching, writing and publishing books and promoting their respective ideas, a parallel of which is not found in the past history of the world. It was for this reason that the non-Arab nations not only acquired the disciplines of the Holy Qur'ān and Sunnah

with a great enthusiasm, but the advances made by non-Arabs in the acquirement of the Arabic language and its promotion and wider dissemination did not lag behind the Arabs.

It is certainly an astonishing fact that, in our time, the number of books on Arabic language, usage and grammar present in the world happen to have been written by non-Arabs. And their contribution to the services rendered for the collection and documentation of the Qur'ān and Sunnah, and in its exegesis and explication, has not been any lesser than Arabs.

So, it was in this manner that the language of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the Book he was given, despite being Arabic, overtook the whole world. At least, for all practical purposes of Da'wah (Call) and Tabligh (Spreading of the Message), the difference of Arab and non-Arab was eliminated. In every country and community, and among peoples speaking non-Arab languages, rose such 'Ulamā' who communicated to their own people the teachings of Qur'ān and Sunnah through their indigenous languages, easily and effectively. Thus, the wisdom of sending a messenger speaking the language of the addressed people stood realized and proved.

Toward the end of the verse it was said that it is for the convenience of people that Allah Ta'ālā has sent His messengers speaking their language, so that they can explain His injunctions to them clearly and satisfactorily. But, it is still beyond human control to bring someone onto the right path. The truth is that it lies in the power of Allah Ta'ālā alone. Whom He wills He lets go astray and whom He wills He would give guidance. He is Mighty, and Wise.

Verses 5 - 8

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا مُوسٰى بِاٰيٰتِنَآ اَنْ اَخْرِجْ قَوْمَكَ مِنَ الظُّلُمٰتِ اِلَى النُّوْرِ ۙ
وَذَكِّرْهُمْ بِاَيّٰىمِ اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّكُلِّ صَبَّارٍ شَكُوْرٍ ﴿٥﴾ وَاِذْ
قَالَ مُوْسٰى لِقَوْمِهِ اذْكُرُوْا نِعْمَةَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ اِذْ اَنْجٰىكُمْ مِّنْ اٰلِ
فِرْعَوْنَ يَسُوْمُوْنَكُمْ سُوْٓءَ الْعَذَابِ وَيُذَبِّحُوْنَ اَبْنَآءَكُمْ وَيَسْتَحْيُوْنَ

نِسَآءَكُمْ ۚ وَفِى ذٰلِكُمْ بَلَآءٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٦﴾ وَإِذْ تَأَذَّنَ رَبُّكُمْ
لَئِنْ شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ وَلَئِنْ كَفَرْتُمْ إِنَّ عَذَابِى لَشَدِيدٌ ﴿٧﴾ وَقَالَ
مُوسٰٓى إِنْ تَكْفُرُوٓا أَنْتُمْ وَمَنْ فِى الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا لا فَإِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَغَنِىٌّ
حَمِيدٌ ﴿٨﴾

And surely, We sent Mūsā with Our signs saying, "Bring your people out of (all sorts of) darkness* into the light and remind them of the days of Allah. Surely, there are signs therein for every man of patience and gratitude.** [5]

And when Mūsā said to his people, "Remember Allah's blessing upon you when He delivered you from Pharaoh's people who have been inflicting on you a grievous torment, slaughtering your sons and leaving your women alive. And in that there was a great trial from your Lord." [6]

And when your Lord declared, "If you express gratitude, I shall certainly give you more, and if you are ungrateful, then My punishment is severe." [7]

And Mūsā said, "If you are ungrateful, you and all those on earth, then, Allah is free of all needs, worthy of every praise." [8]

Commentary

The first verse cited above (5) mentions that Allah Taʿālā sent Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام with His 'Āyāt' (verses or signs) to bring his people out from the darkness of disbelief and disobedience into the light of faith and obedience.

The word: آيَات (Āyāt) could mean the verses of the Torah for its very purpose was to spread the light of truth. 'Āyāt' is at times used in the sense of miracles. At this place, this meaning could also apply for Allah Taʿālā had particularly blessed Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام with nine miracles out of which the miracle of his staff turning into a snake and his hand becoming radiant have been mentioned at several places in the Qur'ān. If 'Āyāt' is taken in the sense of miracles, it would mean that Sayyidnā

*. Please see footnote on the first verse of this Sūrah.

**. The 'Days of Allah' here refers to the events of the past when Allah had graced some people with His favours and subjected some others to His punishment.

Mūsā عليه السلام was sent with such open miracles that no sane human being, once he had seen them, could ever go on sticking to his earlier denial and disobedience.

A Subtle Point

It will be noted that the word used in this verse is: قَوْم (*qawm*) while asking Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام to bring his people from darkness into the light. But, when this very subject was taken up in the first verse of this particular Sūrah by addressing the Holy Prophet ﷺ, the word: قَوْم (*qawm*) was not used there. Instead, used there was the word: اَلنَّاس (*an-nās*) : لِتُخْرِجَ النَّاسَ مِنَ الظُّلُمٰتِ اِلَى النُّوْرِ (that you may take the people [that is, the human beings] out of [all sorts of] darkness into the light). Implied here is the sense that the Divinely ordained mission of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام as a prophet was only for his people, the Banī Isrā'īl, and for others in Egypt while the coming of the Holy Prophet ﷺ was destined for the human beings of the entire world.

Then, it was said: وَذَكِّرْهُمْ بِاَيّٰمِ اللّٰهِ (and remind them of the days of Allah).

'The Days of Allah'

The word: اَيَّام (*ayyām*) is the plural of *yowm* (day) which is well-known. The expression: اَيَّامُ اللّٰه (*Ayyāmullāh*) is used in two senses and both can be applied here. (1) Firstly, it could denote the particular days in which some war or revolution has occured, for example, the battles of Badr, Uḥud, Aḥzāb, Ḥunain and other events of this nature, or they may refer to major events when punishment overtook past communities which pulverized or destroyed nations and peoples known to be great and powerful. If so, the objective behind reminding these people of the 'Days of Allah' would be to warn them against the evil end of their disbelief.

(2) "And remind them of 'the Days of Allah'" carries another meaning also, that is, the blessings and favours of Allah Ta'ālā. In this case, reminding them of these Days would be a form of constructive admonition which, when directed at someone basically good by reminding him of the favour done by his benefactor, would result in his being ashamed of his hostility and disobedience.

The general pattern of the Qur'ānic method of reform is to tie a command given with relevant ways to act upon it which appear synchronized with it. Here, in the first sentence, Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ has been commanded to either recite the verses of Allah or show miracles to his people and bring them out from the darkness of disbelief into the light of faith. How would this be done? The sentences that follow give the method: There are two ways of bringing the disobedient ones to the right path: (1) Putting the fear of punishment in their hearts; (2) to remind them of Divine blessings and favours and to persuade them to take to being obedient to Allah. The sentence: ذَكِّرْهُمْ بِاَيّٰمِ اللّٰهِ (and remind them of the Days of Allah) could mean both. If so, the sense would be that he should tell them about the evil fate of those who disobeyed from among the past communities, how punishment came upon them and how they were either killed in the Jihād or were disgraced. May be, by being so reminded, they take a lesson and save themselves from it. Similar to this there are so many usual blessings of Allah Ta'ālā which keep coming to them day and night, and also the special ones which were turned towards them in the hour of their need, for example, the shade of clouds over their heads in the wilderness of Tīh (the desert of Sinai), the coming of Mann and Salvā as food, the gushing forth of streams from stones when they needed water. So, they could be reminded of these and many other blessings of this nature and invited to believe in the Oneness of Allah and follow the path of obedience to Allah Ta'ālā.

Said in the last sentence of the first verse (5) was: اِنَّ فِیْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّكُلِّ صَبَّارٍ شَكُوْرٍ (Surely, there are signs therein for every man of patience and gratitude). Here, '*āyāt*' means signs and proofs. The word: صَبَّار (*ṣabbār*) is a form of exaggeration derived from: صَبْر (*ṣabr*) which means very patient and much enduring, while the word: شَكُوْر (*shakūr*) is a form of exaggeration derived from: شُكْر (*shukr*) which means very grateful. The sentence means that the Days of Allah - that is, past events whether related to the punishment of the deniers of truth, or to the blessings and favours of Allah Ta'ālā - are full of the signs and proofs of the perfect power and eloquent wisdom of Allah Ta'ālā, particularly for a person who is much observing of patience and gratitude.

The sense is that these open signs and proofs, though they are for the guidance of every observer, but certainly unfortunate are the disbe-

lievers who just do not care to ponder over them and, as a result, remain deprived of the benefit they would have derived from them. People who really benefit from these signs and proofs are those who have combined in their person the best of patience and gratitude. The reference here is to true believers - as it appears in a narration of Sayyidnā Anas carried by al-Baihaqī where the Holy Prophet has been reported to have said: 'Īmān is composed of two parts, half of it is patience and the other half, gratitude.' (Maẓharī)

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd said: Ṣabr is the half of 'Īmān. Based on a narration of Sayyidnā Ṣuhayb appearing in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim and the Musnad of Aḥmad, the Holy Prophet has been reported to have said: Every state of affairs for a true believer is nothing but good. This is a quality of life no one else has been blessed with. This is because a true believer, if he finds comfort, blessing, honour or recognition, shows his gratitude before Allah Ta'ālā for these which then becomes a source of good for him both physically and spiritually (in the material world, the blessings Divinely promised increase, and abide, while in the world to come, the Hereafter, one receives the greatest of rewards for his or her gratitude). And, if a true believer is hit by pain or hardship, he observes patience against it. Because of his patience, that hardship turns into ease and comfort for him. In the present world, this happens when the observers of patience are blessed with the company of Allah Ta'ālā as said in the Holy Qur'ān: إِنَّ اللّٰهَ مَعَ الصّٰبِرِينَ ('Surely, Allah is with those who observe patience'- 8:46). And anyone who has Allah with him ultimately finds his hardship changed into comfort. As for the Hereafter, we know that there the supreme reward for having observed patience is limitless with Allah Ta'ālā, as said in the Holy Qur'ān: إِنَّمَا يُوَفَّى الصّٰبِرُونَ أَجْرَهُمْ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ (but then, paid in full to those who observe patience shall be their reward without reckoning - 39:10).

To sum up, no state in which a true believer is can be called bad. It is good all along. A fall would make him rise again and when hit by hardships he would emerge stronger and more polished.

So, 'Īmān is a priceless asset which transforms even shocks of hardship into drafts of comfort. Sayyidnā Abū Al-Dardā' said that he had heard the Holy Prophet say: 'Allah Ta'ālā told Sayyidnā 'Isa : I am going to create a community after you who are such that if they have

what they desire and things turn out the way they want them to, then, they would be grateful, and if they have to face an unpleasant situation, against their wish and pleasure, then, they would accept it as a source of reward from Allah, and would observe patience. And this wisdom and forbearance demonstrated by them would not be the outcome of their own personal wisdom and forbearance, rather, We shall be bestowing upon them a certain part of Our Own Wisdom and Forbearance. (Maẓharī)

The substance of the reality of gratitude (*shukr*) is that one should not spend out the blessings given by Allah Taʿālā in what is *Ḥarām*, in things which are not permitted, and in being disobedient to Him. One should also show gratitude by saying so as well, and by modeling and channelizing one's deeds in a manner that they would go on to become according to His good pleasure.

And the substance of the reality of patience (*ṣabr*) is that we should not worry about what comes to be against our wishes, taste or temperament, and that we avoid being ungrateful in what we say or do; and that we keep hoping for the mercy of Allah Taʿālā in this mortal life too, and be certain of the great reward of patience due in the Hereafter as well.

The second verse (6) carries details of what was said earlier, that is, when Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was commanded to remind his people, the Banī Isrāʾīl, of the particular Divine blessing which changed their lives. Before the coming of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, they were living as slaves of the Pharaoh. Even as slaves, they were not treated humanly. Boys born among them were killed at birth. Only girls were left to survive and serve. After the appearance of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, such was his *barakah* that Allah Taʿālā had them delivered from the punishing clutches of the Pharaoh.

The Outcome of Gratitude and Ingratitude

In the third verse (7), it was said: وَاِذْ تَاَذَّنَ رَبُّكُمْ لَئِنْ شَكَرْتُمْ لَاَزِيْدَنَّكُمْ وَلَئِنْ كَفَرْتُمْ اِنَّ عَذَابِيْ لَشَدِيْدٌ (And when your Lord declared, "If you express gratitude, I shall certainly give you more, and if you are ungrateful, then My punishment is severe."). The word: تَاَذَّنَ (*ta'adhdhana*) is used in the sense of making known or announcing. The sense of the verse is that Allah Taʿālā has announced it for all to hear: 'If you are thankful for My blessings and do not waste them in acts of disobedience to Me and in deeds which

have been prohibited, and try your best to mould your deeds to suit My pleasure, then, I shall increase these blessings for you.' This increase could be in the amount and volume of blessings, or it could be in their continuity and permanence as well. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said: 'A person who is blessed with the Taufiq to be grateful shall never be deprived of *barakah* and increase in blessings.' (Reported by Ibn Marduwayh from Ibn 'Abbās - Maẓharī)

And then it was said: If you are ungrateful for My blessings then severe is My punishment too. The sum total of ungratefulness is that one spends out the blessings given by Allah Ta'ālā in acts disobedient to Him and in things and ways which are impermissible; or, that one is tardy in fulfilling what has been made obligatory on him or her. As for the severe punishment against ungratefuness for blessings in the present world, it is possible that these blessings may be taken back all of a sudden; or, one may fall into some unwelcome circumstances as a result of which he remains unable to make use of that blessing, and finds punishment waiting for him in the Hereafter as well.

It is worth remembering at this point that in this verse, Allah Ta'ālā does promise good return, reward and increase in blessing, and that too in an emphatic manner: لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ (I shall certainly give you more). But, in contrast to this, for the ungrateful it was not said: لَأُعَذِّبَنَّكُمْ (I shall certainly punish you). Instead of that, given here is a limited warning which conveys the sense that 'My punishment too, to whomsoever it reaches, is very severe.' In this particular interpretation, there is a hint that it is not necessary that every ungrateful person has to undergo punishment - the likelihood of forgiveness also exists.

In the last verse here (8), it was said: قَالَ مُوسَىٰٓ إِن تَكْفُرُوٓا۟ أَنتُمْ وَمَن فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا (And Mūsā said, "If you are ungrateful, you and all those on earth, then, Allah is free of all needs, worthy of every praise.)" This was said by Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام to his people. He is telling them that should they or, for that matter, all inhabitants of the earth become ungrateful to Allah Ta'ālā, it is not going to cause any loss to Allah Ta'ālā. As for Him, He needs no praise or gratitude for Himself. He is Independent. He is beyond that. He is intrinsically Praised and deserving of praise. If you do not praise Him, the angels do, all of them, and so does every particle of this universe.

So, whatever good there is in gratitude, that is for you alone. Therefore, when you are asked to be grateful by Allah Ta'ālā, there is no gain for Him in doing so. In fact, it is His infinite mercy reaching out to you in your interest.

Verses 9 - 15

اَلَمْ يَاْتِكُمْ نَبَؤُا الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ قَوْمِ نُوْحٍ وَّعَادٍ وَّثَمُوْدَ ۛ وَالَّذِيْنَ مِنْ
بَعْدِهِمْ ۛ ؕ لَا يَعْلَمُهُمْ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ ؕ جَآءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ فَرَدُّوْٓا اَيْدِيَهُمْ
فِيْٓ اَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَقَالُوْٓا اِنَّا كَفَرْنَا بِمَآ اُرْسِلْتُمْ بِهٖ وَاِنَّا لَفِيْ شَكٍّ مِّمَّا
تَدْعُوْنَنَآ اِلَيْهِ مُرِيْبٍ ﴿۹﴾ قَالَتْ رُسُلُهُمْ اَفِي اللّٰهِ شَكٌّ فَاطِرِ السَّمٰوٰتِ
وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ يَدْعُوْكُمْ لِيَغْفِرَ لَكُمْ مِّنْ ذُنُوْبِكُمْ وَيُؤَخِّرَكُمْ اِلٰٓى اَجَلٍ
مُّسَمًّى ؕ قَالُوْٓا اِنْ اَنْتُمْ اِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُنَا ؕ تُرِيْدُوْنَ اَنْ تَصُدُّوْنَا عَمَّا كَانَ
يَعْبُدُ اٰبَآؤُنَا فَاْتُوْنَا بِسُلْطٰنٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿۱۰﴾ قَالَتْ لَهُمْ رُسُلُهُمْ اِنْ نَّحْنُ اِلَّا
بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ وَلٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَمُنُّ عَلٰى مَنْ يَّشَآءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهٖ ؕ وَمَا كَانَ لَنَآ
اَنْ نَّاْتِيَكُمْ بِسُلْطٰنٍ اِلَّا بِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَعَلَى اللّٰهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ
﴿۱۱﴾ وَمَا لَنَآ اَلَّا نَتَوَكَّلَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ وَقَدْ هَدٰىنَا سُبُلَنَا ؕ وَلَنَصْبِرَنَّ عَلٰى
مَآ اٰذَيْتُمُوْنَا ؕ وَعَلَى اللّٰهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُتَوَكِّلُوْنَ ﴿۱۲﴾ وَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ
كَفَرُوْا لِرُسُلِهِمْ لَنُخْرِجَنَّكُمْ مِّنْ اَرْضِنَآ اَوْ لَتَعُوْدُنَّ فِيْ مِلَّتِنَا ؕ فَاَوْحٰٓى
اِلَيْهِمْ رَبُّهُمْ لَنُهْلِكَنَّ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿۱۳﴾ۙ وَلَنُسْكِنَنَّكُمُ الْاَرْضَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهِمْ
ؕ ذٰلِكَ لِمَنْ خَافَ مَقَامِيْ وَخَافَ وَعِيْدِ ﴿۱۴﴾ وَاسْتَفْتَحُوْا وَخَابَ
كُلُّ جَبَّارٍ عَنِيْدٍ ﴿۱۵﴾ۙ

Has there not come to you the news of those before you, the people of Nūḥ, 'Ād and Thamūd and of those after them. No one knows them except Allah. Their prophets came to them with clear signs, but they turned their hands into their mouths and said, "We reject what you

are sent with, and we are certainly in confounding doubt about what you are calling us to." [9]

Their prophets said, "Is there any doubt about Allah, the Creator of the heavens and the earth? He calls you, so that He may forgive you some of your sins and give you time upto a specified term." They said, "You are nothing but a human being like us. You want to prevent us from what our forefathers used to worship. So, bring us some clear authority." [10]

Their prophets said to them, "We are no more than a human being like you, but Allah favours whom He wills from His servants. It is not for us to bring you an authority without Allah's permission. And in Allah the believers must place their trust. [11] **And what is wrong with us that we should not put our trust in Allah when He has guided us to our paths? And certainly we shall endure with patience whatever you afflict us with. And in Allah should trust those who trust."** [12]

And the disbelievers said to their prophets, "We shall certainly expel you from our land unless you come back to our faith." So, their Lord revealed to them, "We shall surely destroy the transgressors, [13] **and shall certainly have you dwell in the land after them. This is for the one who is fearful of standing before Me and is fearful of My warning."** [14] **And they sought help and every obstinate tyrant failed.** [15]

Verses 16 - 17

مِّنْ وَّرَآئِهٖ جَهَنَّمُ وَيُسْقٰى مِنْ مَّآءٍ صَدِيْدٍ ﴿١٦﴾ يَّتَجَرَّعُهٗ وَلَا يَكَادُ يُسِيْغُهٗ وَيَأْتِيْهِ الْمَوْتُ مِنْ كُلِّ مَكَانٍ وَّمَا هُوَ بِمَيِّتٍ ۖ وَمِنْ وَّرَآئِهٖ عَذَابٌ غَلِيْظٌ ﴿١٧﴾

The Hell is before him, and he shall be made to drink pus-fluid, [16] **which he will arduously sip, and hardly swallow. Death will come upon him from every place, yet he shall not die, and before him, there is a heavy punishment.** [17]

Verses 18 - 22

مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ كَرَمَادٍ اشْتَدَّتْ بِهِ الرِّيحُ فِي يَوْمٍ عَاصِفٍ ۖ لَا يَقْدِرُونَ مِمَّا كَسَبُوا عَلَىٰ شَيْءٍ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ هُوَ الضَّلَالُ الْبَعِيدُ ﴿١٨﴾ أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ ۚ إِنْ يَشَأْ يُذْهِبْكُمْ وَيَأْتِ بِخَلْقٍ جَدِيدٍ ﴿١٩﴾ وَمَا ذَٰلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ بِعَزِيزٍ ﴿٢٠﴾ وَبَرَزُوا لِلَّهِ جَمِيعًا فَقَالَ الضُّعَفَاءُ لِلَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُوا إِنَّا كُنَّا لَكُمْ تَبَعًا فَهَلْ أَنْتُمْ مُغْنُونَ عَنَّا مِنْ عَذَابِ اللَّهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ۚ قَالُوا لَوْ هَدَانَا اللَّهُ لَهَدَيْنَاكُمْ ۖ سَوَاءٌ عَلَيْنَا أَجَزِعْنَا أَمْ صَبَرْنَا مَا لَنَا مِنْ مَحِيصٍ ﴿٢١﴾ وَقَالَ الشَّيْطَانُ لَمَّا قُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَعَدَكُمْ وَعْدَ الْحَقِّ وَوَعَدْتُكُمْ فَأَخْلَفْتُكُمْ ۖ وَمَا كَانَ لِيَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْ سُلْطَانٍ إِلَّا أَنْ دَعَوْتُكُمْ فَاسْتَجَبْتُمْ لِي ۖ فَلَا تَلُومُونِي وَلُومُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ ۖ مَا أَنَا بِمُصْرِخِكُمْ وَمَا أَنْتُمْ بِمُصْرِخِيَّ ۖ إِنِّي كَفَرْتُ بِمَا أَشْرَكْتُمُونِ مِنْ قَبْلُ ۗ إِنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٢﴾

The deeds of those who disbelieve their Lord are like ashes blown away by the wind on a stormy day. They will not be able to gain anything out of what they did. That is the wandering away from the path. [18]

Have you not seen that Allah has created the heavens and the earth in a proper way? If He wills, He can put you away and bring a new creation; [19] **and that is not difficult for Allah.** [20]

And all of them shall appear before Allah. Then, the weak shall say to the arrogant, "We were your followers. So, can you relieve us a little from Allah's punishment?" They will say, "Had Allah guided us, we would have guided you. It is all the same for us whether we deplore or endure, we have no way out." [21]

And the Satan will say when the matter will have been decided, "Allah promised you a truthful promise while I

gave you a promise and did not fulfill it. And I had no authority over you, except that I invited you and you accepted my call. Hence, do not blame me, but blame yourselves. Neither I can come to your help, nor can you come to my help. I disown your associating me with Allah in the past. Surely, there is a painful punishment for the unjust." [22]

Verse 23

وَأُدْخِلَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّلِحٰتِ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا
الْأَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِينَ فِيهَا بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ ط تَحِيَّتُهُمْ فِيهَا سَلٰمٌ ﴿٢٣﴾

And those who believed and did good deeds shall be admitted to Gardens beneath which rivers flow, living there for ever by the will of Allah. There they shall greet each other with "Salām." [23]

Verses 24 - 25

أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ ضَرَبَ اللّٰهُ مَثَلًا كَلِمَةً طَيِّبَةً كَشَجَرَةٍ طَيِّبَةٍ أَصْلُهَا ثَابِتٌ
وَّفَرْعُهَا فِي السَّمَآءِ ﴿٢٤﴾ تُؤْتِيٓ أُكُلَهَا كُلَّ حِينٍ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهَا ط
وَيَضْرِبُ اللّٰهُ الْأَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾

Have you not seen how Allah has set forth a parable: 'A good word is like a good tree, having its root firm and its branches in the sky. [24] **It brings its fruits at all times with the will of its Lord.' And Allah sets forth the parables for the people, so that they may take lesson.** [25]

Verses 26 - 29

وَمَثَلُ كَلِمَةٍ خَبِيثَةٍ كَشَجَرَةٍ خَبِيثَةِ نِ اجْتُثَّتْ مِنْ فَوْقِ الْأَرْضِ مَا لَهَا
مِنْ قَرَارٍ ﴿٢٦﴾ يُثَبِّتُ اللّٰهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِالْقَوْلِ الثَّابِتِ فِي الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا
وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ ج وَيُضِلُّ اللّٰهُ الظّٰلِمِينَ قف وَيَفْعَلُ اللّٰهُ مَا يَشَآءُ ﴿٢٧﴾ أَلَمْ تَرَ
إِلَى الَّذِينَ بَدَّلُوا نِعْمَتَ اللّٰهِ كُفْرًا وَّأَحَلُّوا قَوْمَهُمْ دَارَ الْبَوَارِ ﴿٢٨﴾

جَهَنَّمَ ۚ يَصْلَوْنَهَا ۖ وَبِئْسَ الْقَرَارُ ﴿٢٩﴾

And the parable of a bad word is like a bad tree, removed from the top soil, having no firm root. [26] **Allah keeps the believers firm with the stable word in the worldly life and in the Hereafter. And Allah lets the unjust go astray. And Allah does what He wills.** [27]

Have you not seen those who changed the favour of Allah with disbelief and landed their people in the house of destruction, [28] **the Jahannam. They shall enter it. And it is an evil abode.** [29]

Commentary

In verse 18, Allah Ta'ālā has likened the deeds of disbelievers to ashes which, if blown away by the wind, would scatter all over leaving no traces behind and making it impossible for somone interested to retrieve them and put them back to some use. So, the verse: مَثَلُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا بِرَبِّهِمْ اَعْمَالُهُمْ كَرَمَادِ ۨ اشْتَدَّتْ بِهِ الرِّيْحُ فِيْ يَوْمٍ عَاصِفٍ (The deeds of those who disbelieve their Lord are like ashes blown away by the wind on a stormy day - 18) means that the deeds of disbelievers - though, they may obviously be good too - still, they too do not find acceptance with Allah Ta'ālā. Therefore, they are all wasted.

After that, in the verses cited immediately above, the similitude of a believer and his deeds has been given first (24) which is followed by a similitude of disbelievers and hypocrites (26). In the earlier verse, a believer and his deeds have been likened to a tree with strong trunks, and roots going deep down the ground watered by underground streams. Deep-set roots give strength and stability to this tree so that strong winds would not throw them off the ground. And being high above the ground level, its fruit too remains protected against polluting agents. Then, another attribute of this tree is that its branches should be fairly elevated skywards. And the third attribute of this tree is that its fruit could be eaten during all seasons and under all conditions.

What tree is that and where is it found? About that, the sayings of the commentators differ. In all likelihood, that is a date-palm. This view is supported by experience, observation, and by Ḥadīth narrations as well. That the trunk of the date-palm is high and strong can be noticed physically. That its roots go deep down the ground is also well-known,

and its fruit too is eaten at all times and in different ways and conditions. From the time its fruit shows up on the tree upto the time it becomes ripe, it is eaten in all possible forms and situations as is or as transformed into chutneys and jams and in a myriad other preparations. After the fruit becomes ripe, it can be stored throughout the year. It somehow comes handy morning and evening, day and night, summer and winter, almost every season, every time. Even the pith of the tree is eaten while sweet juice is extracted from it. Mats and other articles of use are made from its leaves. Date stones make fine fodder for animals. In contrast, other trees yield their fruit during particular seasons and they become available within those seasons. They are not stored naturally, nor everything in them is put to some or the other use.

Based on a narration of Sayyidnā Anas ﷺ, Tirmidhī, Al-Nasā'ī, Ibn Ḥibbān and Ḥākim have reported that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: The 'good tree' (شَجَرَةٌ طَيِّبَةٌ - mentioned in the Qur'ān) is the date-tree; and the 'bad tree' (شَجَرَةٌ خَبِيثَةٌ - also mentioned in the Qur'ān) is the tree of Ḥanẓal [colocynth, citrullus colocynthis] (Maẓharī)

According to a report from Mujāhid appearing in the Musnad of Aḥmad, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar ﷺ said: Once we were present in the company of the Holy Prophet ﷺ when someone brought the pith of a date-palm for him. At that time, he asked his Companions: 'Out of the many trees, there is the tree which is like a believer (at this point, in a narration of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, it has been mentioned that the Holy Prophet ﷺ also said: The leaves of this tree do not fall in any season). Tell me which tree is that?' Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar says that he felt like telling him that it was the date tree. But, present there in the sitting were many senior Companions like Sayyidnā Abū Bakr and Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنهم اجمعين. I observed their silence and did not have the courage to say that. After that, the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself said: 'That is the date tree.'

One of the reasons why a believer has been likened to this tree is that the faith in Kalimah Ṭayyibah is his root, which is deep-set and strong. The accidents of the world cannot shake it out. There is no dearth of examples among the most perfect of all believers, the Ṣaḥābah and the Tābi'īn, rather among the staunch believers of every period of time, that they cared more about their 'Īmān and less for their life or

wealth or anything else. The second reason is their concern for purity and taste for decency in that they are not affected by the pollutants of the world - just like a large tree which remains unaffected by the impurities of the land surface. As for these two attributes, they bear similarity to: أَصْلُهَا ثَابِتٌ (with its roots firm - 24) while the third reason is that the way the branches of the date-palm are high and skyward so are the fruits of the 'Īmān of a believer, that is, their deeds which are also raised toward the heavens. It appears in the Qur'ān: إِلَيْهِ يَصْعَدُ الْكَلِمُ الطَّيِّبُ that is, 'good words are raised towards Allah Ta'ālā.' The sense is that what a believer does in the form of Dhikr (remembrance) of Allah, Tasbīḥ (proclaiming His purity), Tahlīl (saying *lā ilāha illallāh*) and the recitation of the Qur'ān keeps reaching Allah Ta'ālā morning and evening.

The fourth reason is that the way the date fruit is eaten day and night at all times, in all seasons and under all conditions, it is in the same way that the good deeds of a believer continue day and night at all times, in all seasons and under all conditions. And the way everything about the date-palm is useful and beneficial, in the same way, every word and deed, movement and rest, and the effects generated by them, prove beneficial for the whole world - on condition that he or she be a perfect believer, and be a faithful practitioner of the teachings of Allah and His Rasūl ﷺ.

The Similitude of Disbelievers (Kuffār)

In contrast, the second image given is that of disbelievers. They have been likened to a 'bad tree' (شَجَرَةٍ خَبِيثَةٍ). It is similar to the example of the 'good tree' which refers to the statement of Muslim creed: لَآ إِلٰهَ إِلَّا اللّٰهُ (*lā ilāha illallāh* : There is no deity worthy of worship except Allah), that is, 'Īmān or faith. And, in this manner, the equation of the 'bad word' with the 'bad tree' denotes words and deeds of disbelief. As stated in the Ḥadīth quoted earlier, the 'bad tree' has been identified as: حَنظَل (*ḥanẓal*) and, according to others, it is garlic.

As for the 'bad tree,' the Qur'ān describes it by saying that its roots do not go deep into the earth, therefore, anyone can pull out the whole of it at will. This is what the expression: اُجْتُثَّتْ مِنْ فَوْقِ الْأَرْضِ (translated as: 'removed from the top soil) means - because the real meaning of the word: اُجْتُثَّتْ : (*ujtuththat*) is to remove the body of something as a whole.

That the deeds of a disbeliever have been likened to such a tree is fairly obvious. First of all, the beliefs of a disbeliever have no root or foundation. In no time, they would lose their ground. Secondly, they are affected by the filth of the world around them. Thirdly, the fruits of their tree, that is, their deeds, are worthless in the sight of Allah.

The Special Effect of 'Īmān

Described in the second verse (27) is the special effect of the 'Īmān or faith of a believer and the saying of *lā ilāha illallāh*: لَا اِلٰهَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ: "Allah keeps the believers firm with the stable word in the worldly life and in the Hereafter". It means that the Kalimah Ṭayyibah, the pivotal guiding principle of a believer, is a 'stable word,' stable like a strong and firmly established tree which is kept standing powerfully and surviving eternally by Allah Ta'ālā, in this world, and in the Hereafter as well. However, the condition is that this blessed statement is uttered with unalloyed sincerity and that the sense of: لا اله اِلَّا اللّٰه (*lā ilāha illallāh* : there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah) is understood fully and clearly following which it should be adopted as the guiding principle of life.

In other words, one who believes in Kalimah Ṭayyibah is supported and strengthened with the grace of Allah Ta'ālā because of which he or she stands firm by this conviction right upto the time of death, no matter how many challenges and unwelcome happenings have to be encountered in its defence. As for the 'Ākhirah or the Hereafter, one is helped with this Kalimah when it is made to stay on and keep emitting its beneficial effects. It has been said in a Ḥadīth of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī that "Ākhirah' (Hereafter) in this verse means Barzakh (the post-death and pre-Resurrection state of life) that is, the world of the grave.

The Reward and Punishment of the Grave Stand Proved from the Qur'ān and Sunnah

According to Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: When a believer will be questioned in the grave, he or she will remain firm on this Kalimah, even in a place so awesome and a state so punishing, of course, with Divine will and support, and bear witness to the blessed statement: *lā ilāha illallāh*. And then he said: This is what the saying of the Qur'ān: يُثَبِّتُ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا بِالْقَوْلِ الثَّابِتِ فِى الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِى الْاٰخِرَةِ (Allah keeps the believers firm with the stable word in the worldly life and in the Hereafter - 27) means. (This Ḥadīth was narrated by Sayyidnā Barā' ibn 'Āzib). Similar *aḥādīth* have

been reported from about forty Ṣaḥābah رضی الله عنهم اجمعين with reliable chains of authorities which Ibn Kathīr has put together at this stage of his Tafsīr. Ash-Shaykh Jalāluddīn As-Suyuṭī, in his versified treatise At-Tathbīt 'Ind at-Tabyīt, and by referring to seventy *aḥādīth* in Sharḥ Aṣ-Ṣudūr, has confirmed that these narrations have come to us in an uninterrupted (*mutawātir*) succession. All these noble Ṣaḥābah رضی الله عنهم اجمعين have declared that "Ākhirah' (Hereafter) in this verse refers to the grave and the verse itself relates to the reward and punishment of the grave.

That man, after his death and burial, lives again, answers the questions asked by the angels, then the coming of reward or punishment as a result of success or failure in this test has been mentioned in almost ten verses of the Holy Qur'ān, by way of hint; while, in seventy *mutawātir aḥādīth* (those passed on in uninterrupted succession), these have been mentioned very clearly and explicitly - in which there remains no room for a Muslim to doubt. As for the commonplace doubts like - 'in this world of our experience, nobody sees these rewards and punishments' - there is no room here to accomodate detailed answers to them. However, it is quite sufficient to understand that not being able to see something is no proof of its being not present. Nobody sees the Jinn and angels, but they are there. The air is not seen, but it is present there. The deep space which is being probed and examined in our time through rockets and space vehicles was something nobody could see before this, but it did exist. A dreamer dreams of being in some trouble in his dream, even writhes under the pain of punishment, but people around him remain totally unaware of what is happening to him.

As a matter of principle, it can be said that taking one world on the analogy of the conditions prevailing in the other is wrong by itself. When the Creator of the universe has told us through His Rasūl that once we pass on to another world, there is reward and punishment there, it becomes necessary for us to believe in it.

Towards the end of the verse (27), it was said: وَيُضِلُّ اللّٰهُ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ (And Allah lets the unjust go astray). It means: As for the believers, Allah Ta'ālā keeps them firm on Kalimah Ṭaiyyibah, the 'stable word' as a result of which things of comfort assemble around them right from the grave. But, the unjust, that is, the disbelievers and polytheists, remain

deprived of this Divine help and support. They cannot answer the questions asked in the grave by angles Munkar and Nakīr correctly. The outcome is that they start experiencing a sort of punishment right from that point onwards.

In the last sentence of verse 27, it was said: وَيَفْعَلُ اللّٰهُ مَا يَشَآءُ (And Allah does what He wills). It means that there is no power which can block His intention and will. Revered Ṣaḥābah, Sayyidnā Ubaiyy ibn Ka'b, 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd and Ḥudhayfah ibn Yamān رضى الله عنهم اجمعين have said: For a believer, it is mandatory to believe that everything received by him or her was received through the intention and will of Allah. Not to have received it was impossible. Similarly, what was not received, it was not possible to have received that. And they said: If you do not believe in it, and place your trust in that, your abode is Hell.

Finally, said in verses 28 and 29 was:

اَلَمْ تَرَ اِلَى الَّذِيْنَ بَدَّلُوْا نِعْمَةَ اللّٰهِ كُفْرًا وَّ اَحَلُّوْا قَوْمَهُمْ دَارَ الْبَوَارِ جَهَنَّمَ يَصْلَوْنَهَا وَبِئْسَ الْقَرَارُ

Have you not seen those who changed the favour of Allah with disbelief and landed their people in the house of destruction, the Jahannam? They shall enter it. And it is an evil abode.

Here, نِعْمَةَ اللّٰهِ (the favour of Allah) could mean the common physical blessings of Allah Ta'ālā. These are tangible and perceptible and relate to outward benefits of human beings such as food, drink, land, home and things like that. Then it could also mean spiritual blessings and favours as well which have come from Allah Ta'ālā for the guidance of human beings, for example, the prophets, the scriptures, and the signs of Divine power and wisdom which have been placed in every inch of the human existence, and in its countless creations, and in the heavens and its unfathomable and incomprehensible universe. All these serve as logistics for the guidance of human beings.

These two kinds of blessings and favours demanded that human beings should have recognized the greatness and the power of Allah Ta'ālā, been grateful to His gifts and devoted to His command. But, the disbelievers and the polytheists elected to shun gratitude and obedience and opted for ingratitude and disobedience. The result was that they led their people to their mutual abode of destruction, that is, in Hell.

The Lesson given by these verses

Described in these verses is the greatness, virtues, blissfulness and fruitfulness of the belief in the Oneness of Allah and in the Kalimah Ṭaiyyibah: لا اله الا الله (*lā ilāha illallāh*). Also identified there are the ill effect and evil outcome of refusing to believe in them. It goes without saying that Tauḥīd, the belief in the Oneness of Allah, is an everlasting treasure which is full of *barakah* in many ways. In the present world of our experience, it brings Divine support with it, and which continues after that too, in the 'Ākhirah and the grave. And the act of rejecting them amounts to changing what was the blessing and favour of Allah into what is punishment.

Verses 30 - 34

وَجَعَلُوا لِلّٰهِ اَنْدَادًا لِّيُضِلُّوا عَنْ سَبِيْلِهٖ ؕ قُلْ تَمَتَّعُوْا فَاِنَّ مَصِيْرَكُمْ اِلَى النَّارِ ﴿۳۰﴾ قُلْ لِّعِبَادِىَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا يُقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَيُنْفِقُوْا مِمَّا رَزَقْنٰهُمْ سِرًّا وَّعَلَانِيَةً مِّنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ يَّاْتِىَ يَوْمٌ لَّا بَيْعٌ فِيْهِ وَلَا خِلٰلٌ ﴿۳۱﴾ اَللّٰهُ الَّذِىْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ وَاَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً فَاَخْرَجَ بِهٖ مِنَ الثَّمَرٰتِ رِزْقًا لَّكُمْ ۚ وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الْفُلْكَ لِتَجْرِىَ فِى الْبَحْرِ بِاَمْرِهٖ ۚ وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الْاَنْهٰرَ ﴿۳۲﴾ وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ دَآئِبَيْنِ ۚ وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ ﴿۳۳﴾ وَاٰتٰىكُمْ مِّنْ كُلِّ مَا سَاَلْتُمُوْهُ ؕ وَاِنْ تَعُدُّوْا نِعْمَتَ اللّٰهِ لَا تُحْصُوْهَا ؕ اِنَّ الْاِنْسَانَ لَظَلُوْمٌ كَفَّارٌ ﴿۳۴﴾

And they have set up partners with Allah, so that they may mislead (the people) from His path. Say, "Enjoy (for a while). Then your ultimate journey is to the Fire." [30]

Say to My believing servants that they should establish Ṣalāh and spend from what We have given to them, secretly and openly, before there comes a day in which there is neither trade nor friendship. [31]

Allah is the One who created the heavens and the earth and sent down water from the sky, then brought forth therewith sustenance for you out of the produce, and

subjugated the ships for you so that they may sail in the sea with His command, and subjugated for you the rivers. [32] **And He subjugated for you the sun and the moon, moving constantly, and subjugated for you the day and the night,** [33] **and He gave you whatever you asked for. And if you count the bounties of Allah, you cannot count them all. Surely, man is very unjust, very ungrateful.** [34]

Commentary

Appearing at the beginning of Sūrah Ibrāhīm there were subjects related to the mission of messengers and prophets, and to the states of one's ultimate return, and to the Hereafter. Mentioned after that was the commendation of the belief in Tauḥīd, the Oneness of Allah and, along with it, a condemnation of the profession of disbelief and the ascription of partners in the divinity of Allah which was clarified through examples. Then, those who adopted the later attitude were censured for the reason that they, rather than being grateful for the blessings of Allah Ta'ālā, chose to take the way of ingratitude and rejection.

Out of the verses cited above, the first deplores the behaviour of disbelievers and polytheists and points out to their evil end. The second verse describes the distinction of believers and tells them to abide by some Divine injunctions in order that they can fulfill the obligation of gratitude. In the third, fourth and fifth verses (32-34), by mentioning the great blessings of Allah Ta'ālā, people have been induced that they should not channelize and consume these blessings to promote acts of disobedience to Allah.

The Explanation of Verses

The word: أَنْدَادٌ (*andād*) is the plural of نِدّ (*nidd*) which means like and equal. Idols are called *'andād'* because the disbelievers, through their deeds, used to regard them the like or equal of God. The word: تَمَتُّع (*tamattu'*) appearing in verse 30 means the driving of temporary benefit out of something. The verse censures the erratic view of disbelievers in that they had set up idols as partners with Allah, and the Holy Prophet ﷺ was asked to warn these people of their coming end. Enjoy the blessings of the mortal world for a while, they were told, but their ultimate abode is the fire of Hell.

In the second verse (31), the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been asked:

(Though, the disbelievers of Makkah have turned their backs on the favour of Allah and have chosen the way of infidelity, a strange exchange indeed, so then) 'you tell my believing servants that they should establish Ṣalāh and be particular about it, and spend in the way of Allah from the sustenance We have given to them, spending it both secretly and openly.' This verse carries significant glad tidings for all believing servants of Allah, and showers on them a great honour indeed. To begin with, Allah Ta'ālā has addressed them as 'His servants.' Then, He attributes the quality of faith to them. And then, He tells them how they can achieve eternal peace and comfort and honour, which is: Be particular and punctual in offering Ṣalāh. Avoid being sluggish when the time of Ṣalāh becomes due. Do not fall short in observing it as true to its required etiquette. And spend out of the sustenance given to you in My way as well. Here, both forms of spending have been declared to be permissible. This can be done secretly or openly. It means that Ṣadaqah and Khayrāt (charities in the way of Allah) can be given in a way that no one knows about it, or these can be done in a way that others could get to know about it. Some 'Ulamā say that the obligatory Zakāh and Ṣadaqatul-Fiṭr should be given openly so that others are prompted to do the same. As for voluntary (Nafl) Ṣadaqah and Khayrāt, it is better to give these secretly, so that there remains no danger of having done it for the sake of recognition and fair name. However, it all depends on one's intention (Niyyah) and attending conditions. If by doing it openly and publicly, there emerges the least likelihood of having done it for the sake of name and fame, the intrinsic merit of the charity (Ṣadaqah) so given is destroyed, whether obligatory (Farḍ) or voluntary (Nafl). If the intention is that others may also be induced to do the same, then, open and pronounced giving is permissible both in what is obligatory (Farḍ) and what is voluntary (*Nafl*).

Said in the last sentence of verse 31 was: مِنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ يَّاْتِیَ يَوْمٌ لَّاَبَيْعٌ فِيْهِ وَلَا خِلٰلٌ (before there comes a day in which there is neither trade nor friendship). The word: خِلَالٌ (*khilāl*) used here can be taken as the plural form of خُلَّةٌ (*khullah*) which means selfless friendship. Then, this word could also be taken as a verbal noun of the derived form of مفاعلة (*mufā'alah*), such as *qitāl*, *difā'* etc. In that case, it would mean a friendship between two persons which is mutual and sincere. This sentence relates to both the in-

junctions of Ṣalāh and Ṣadaqah described above.

The core sense of the injunction is that now is the time to act. Allah Ta'ālā has blessed you with the necessary strength and time to make your Ṣalāh. And if you have missed any of your Ṣalāh in the past due to negligence, make amends and do the *qaḍā'* (replacement of missed Ṣalāh) for it. Similarly, your wealth is in your possession today and by spending it in the way of Allah you can make it work for you particularly for the good of your eternal life. But, lest you forget, the day is coming when both these options will be taken away from you. Neither will your bodies remain active enough to make your Ṣalāh, nor will you have any wealth in your possession which you could use to pay for rights wasted. And on that day, there is going to be no buying and selling, no transactions through which you could buy something, through which you could expiate for shortcomings and sins. And on that day, mutual friendships and personal relationships will not work as well. No friend, no matter how dear, will be able to carry the burden of sins committed by another, nor will he find any way to somehow remove the punishment due against him.

The word: يوم (*yowm*: a day) obviously means the day of Resurrection (Al-Ḥashr) and the day of Doom (Al-Qiyāmah). Then, it could also be said that it may be the day of one's death because all these signs start showing up immediately from the time of death when one is left without any ability to do anything, nor does wealth stay in the possession of its owner ready to leave the world of his experience behind.

Injunctions and Instructions

As for the statement that no friendship will work for anyone on the day of Qiyāmah (31), it means what will not work there will be friendships based solely on material interests. But, those who maintain friendships and relationships for the sake of Allah and for what is done to serve the interests of His revealed religion will still work at that time as well, for the good servants of Allah who are accepted in His sight will intercede on behalf of others as it has been reported in many *aḥādīth*. And the Qur'ān itself says: 'those who were friends to each other in the life of the world will turn into enemies to one another wishing to put the blame for their sin on a friend and absolve themselves of it, except those who fear Allah - 43:67.' This is so because there too the people of Taqwā,

those who act right in fear of Allah, will be able to put in a good word for each other by way of helping them out.

In the third, fourth and fifth verses (32-34), after recounting the major blessings of Allah Ta'ālā, human beings have been invited to worship and obey Him. They are told that it is Allah alone who has created the heavens and the earth on which depends the emergence and survival of human existence. Then, He sent water down from the sky through which He created produce of many kinds so that they can serve as sustenance for them. The word: اَلثَّمَرٰتِ (*ath-thamarāt*) is the plural form of ثَمَرَة (*thamarah*) which is the end product of everything. Therefore, included under '*ath-thamarāt*' is everything which becomes for human beings their food, dress or a home to live in - because, the word: رِزْق (*rizq*) translated as 'sustenance' in this verse covers all human needs. (Maẓharī)

After that it was said that Allah Ta'ālā has subjugated boats and ships to work for you for they move over the waters with His command. The word: سَخَّرَ (*sakhkhara*) appearing in this verse means that Allah Ta'ālā has made the use of these things easy on you. Of course, there is wood and steel and the instrumentation and technology to build boats and ships, but when it comes to having the intelligence and ability to use them correctly and expertly, it must be admitted that they were all given by Him. Therefore, those who feel proud of having invented, manufactured or produced things like that should better think twice and feel shy of ascribing all credit of such innovations to themselves. The simple reason is that things used in this process are things none of which was created by them, nor they could. How can someone who works with wood, iron, copper and things like that, utilizes them to serve his end product and then goes about declaring himself as its inventor? Otherwise, if we were to look at hard reality, it will not be difficult to realize that this very existence of ours, our hands and feet, our mind and our intelligence are not what we have made or invented.

After that, it was said that 'We have subjugated the sun and the moon for you' as they both keep moving, always in the same state. The word: دَآئِبَيْن (*dā'ibayn*) is a derivation from دَأب *da'b* which means habit. The sense is that moving at all times and under all conditions has been made the habit of these two planets as it never happens contrary to that. The expression: سَخَّرَلَكُم (*sakhkhara lakum*: He subjugated for you) does

not mean that they should be moving on your command. Had the sun and the moon been subjugated for human beings in a way that they would be moving under human command, then, there would have been mutual differences among them with the result that one of them would demand that the sun should better rise today two hours later than usual because he had too much work to do in the night. And the other would want to have it rise two hours earlier than usual because he had too many daytime jobs at hand. Therefore, the great Lord did, in a way, subjugate the sun and the moon for human beings, but He did so in the sense that they have been subjugated to serve human beings all the time and under all conditions under a wise Divine arrangement - not that their rising and setting and their speed become subservient to human pleasure.

Similarly, the statement that 'We have subjugated the night and the day for you' also means that both of them have been put in the service of human beings to provide convenience and comfort.

Then, in the first sentence of verse 34, it was said: وَآتٰىكُمْ مِّنْ كُلِّ مَاسَاَلْتُمُوْهُ (And He gave you whatever you asked for) - though, what Allah Taʻālā is pleased to give does not depend on being asked by someone for, the truth of the matter is, that we had never asked for our existence itself. This is what He gave to us in His infinite grace without the asking.

Similarly, who had raised hands of prayer that the skies, the earth, the moon, the sun and so many things other than them be created for us? The Master just gave all this to us without our asking for them. Therefore, Al-Qāḍī Al-Bayḍāwī has explained the meaning of this statement by saying: 'Allah Taʻālā has given you everything which is worth asking for, even if you have not actually asked for it'. But, should it be that the meaning intended here is what the words literally suggest, still then, it poses no problem - for what man generally asks for is usually given to him anyway. However, wherever that which he asks for is not given to him in the outward form it was sought, then, in that there is some expedient consideration for the person asking or for the rest of the world, something he does not know about. But, He who is All-Knowing and All-Aware, He knows that, should that which he is asking for were to be given to him, it would become for him or for his family or for the whole world - a curse. In a situation like this, not giving what has been

asked for becomes, in itself, a great blessing. But man, because of his lack of knowledge, cannot realize that, therefore, he feels disappointed.

In the next sentence of verse 34, it was said: وَإِنْ تَعُدُّوا نِعْمَتَ اللّٰهِ لَا تُحْصُوْهَا (And if you count the bounties of Allah, you cannot count them all) that is, even if all human beings combined together were to count them, they would still remain uncountable. A human being is, as is, a little world, per se. In his or her eyes, nose, ears, hands, feet and in every joint, rather in every muscle and vein, hidden there are endless blessings through which this wonderful walking plant pulsating with hundreds of very delicate micro-machines keeps busy doing all sorts of things. Then, we have the mind-boggling range of Divine creations, up, on and down our earth, in seas and mountains which, despite the revealing research done in modern times and despite the devotion of thousands of experts who have spent their lives trying to determine such life forms, still remain undocumented or unidentified. Then, there is our own concept of Divine blessings whereby we tend to take things which are generally considered as blessings in a positive and perceptible way. In fact, blessings are not restricted by such a definition. If we remain safe from diseases, hardships, pain, loss and sorrows, that is a standing blessing in its own right. A person may suffer from so many diseases or discomforts of body and soul in this life and he or she could hardly be expected to keep a count of all that. From this we can guess that it is just impossible for anyone to count out the full array of the blessings, bounties and favours of Allah Ta'ālā.

Justice demanded that, in return for these countless blessings, equally countless acts of obedience to Allah and equally countless demonstrations of gratitude to Him should have been made mandatory. But, Allah Ta'ālā, in His infinite grace, showed leniency towards intrinsic human weakness. The option granted was: When man looks at reality and confesses that fulfilling the demands of the obligatory gratitude is not within his control, then, this very confession has been declared to be sufficient as the alternate of the ideal fulfillment of the obligation of gratitude - as was said by Allah Ta'ālā when Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام made a similar confession: الآن قد شكرت يا داؤد which means that his making this confession is sufficient to show his gratefulness.

At the end of the verse (34), it was said: إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَظَلُوْمٌ كَفَّارٌ (Surely, man

is very unjust, very ungrateful). It means that he should face hardship with patience, keep his words and feelings free from any complaint thinking that the fate he faces has come from a wise Master and that too, being in His infinite Wisdom is nothing but a blessing, and when he is blessed with what is good and comforting, let him be thankful for it from his heart both verbally and practically - as is the dictate of justice. But, common human habit works differently from this norm. A little discomfort or pain would make them lose patience and go about broadcasting their problem. And if they find some blessing or a little wealth, they would get intoxicated with it and forget all about Allah Taʻālā, their Benefactor. Therefore, in a verse appearing earlier (5), the attribute of sincere believers has been identified as Ṣabbār (very patient) and Shakūr (very grateful).

Verses 35 -41

وَاِذْ قَالَ اِبْرٰهِيْمُ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ هٰذَا الْبَلَدَ اٰمِنًا وَّاجْنُبْنِيْ وَ بَنِيَّ اَنْ نَّعْبُدَ
الْاَصْنَامَ ﴿٣٥﴾ رَبِّ اِنَّهُنَّ اَضْلَلْنَ كَثِيْرًا مِّنَ النَّاسِ ۚ فَمَنْ تَبِعَنِيْ فَاِنَّهٗ
مِنِّيْ ۚ وَمَنْ عَصَانِيْ فَاِنَّكَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿٣٦﴾ رَبَّنَآ اِنِّيْٓ اَسْكَنْتُ مِنْ
ذُرِّيَّتِيْ بِوَادٍ غَيْرِ ذِيْ زَرْعٍ عِنْدَ بَيْتِكَ الْمُحَرَّمِ ۙ رَبَّنَا لِيُقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ
فَاجْعَلْ اَفْئِدَةً مِّنَ النَّاسِ تَهْوِيْٓ اِلَيْهِمْ وَارْزُقْهُمْ مِّنَ الثَّمَرٰتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ
يَشْكُرُوْنَ ﴿٣٧﴾ رَبَّنَآ اِنَّكَ تَعْلَمُ مَا نُخْفِيْ وَمَا نُعْلِنُ ۭ وَمَا يَخْفٰى عَلَى
اللّٰهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فِي الْاَرْضِ وَلَا فِي السَّمَاۗءِ ﴿٣٨﴾ اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِيْ
وَهَبَ لِيْ عَلَى الْكِبَرِ اِسْمٰعِيْلَ وَاِسْحٰقَ ۭ اِنَّ رَبِّيْ لَسَمِيْعُ الدُّعَاۗءِ ﴿٣٩﴾
رَبِّ اجْعَلْنِيْ مُقِيْمَ الصَّلٰوةِ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِيْ ۖ رَبَّنَا وَتَقَبَّلْ دُعَاۗءِ ﴿٤٠﴾ رَبَّنَا
اغْفِرْ لِيْ وَلِوَالِدَيَّ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ يَوْمَ يَقُوْمُ الْحِسَابُ ﴿٤١﴾ ع

And when Ibrāhīm said, "My Lord, make this city peaceful, and keep me and my children away from worshiping idols. [35] My Lord, they have certainly misled many a people. So, the one who follows me is surely mine, and the one who disobeys me, then You are Most Forgiving,

Very Merciful. [36]

Our Lord, I have settled some of my children in a valley of no vegetation, close to Your sanctified House, so that, Our Lord, they may establish Ṣalāh. So make hearts of a number of people yearn toward them, and provide them with fruits, so that they may be grateful. [37] **Our Lord, surely You know what we conceal and what we reveal. And hidden from Allah is nothing whatsoever, neither in the earth nor in the heavens.** [38] **Praise be to Allah who, despite my old age, blessed me with Ismā'īl and Isḥāq. Surely, my Lord is the One who hears the prayer.** [39] **My Lord, make me steadfast in Ṣalāh, and from among my children as well. And, Our Lord, grant my prayer.** [40] **Our Lord, forgive me and my parents and all believers on the day when reckoning shall take place."** [41]

Commentary

Stated in the previous verses was the rational strength and cardinal position of Tauḥīd, the belief in the Oneness of Allah. And also mentioned there in contrast was the gross ignorance of Shirk, the ascribing of partners in the pristine divinity of Allah, and a condemnation thereof. Among the group of prophets عليهم السلام, the most successful Jihād waged to establish pure monotheism was that of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. Therefore, the religion preached by him is known particularly as the upright religion.

In view of this, reference has been made to the story of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام in the cited verses. However, there is another reason too. In a previous verse (28): الَّذِيۡنَ بَدَّلُوۡا نِعۡمَتَ اللّٰهِ كُفۡرًا (those who changed the favour of Allah with disbelief), condemned were people from among the disbelievers of Makkah who had changed faith for disbelief and Tauḥīd (Oneness of Allah) for Shirk (ascribing of partners to Allah) because that was what their forefathers have been doing. They have been told in these verses about the belief and behaviour of their patriarch, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام so that these people so eager to follow the lead of their ancestors would just look at this model and would, hopefully, abstain from their disbelief. (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ)

And as it is already clear to us that by describing the stories and conditions of blessed prophets, the Qur'ān never aims to narrate their histo-

ry only. Instead of that, in them there are guiding principles for every department of human life. It is to make them become available continuously that these events about prophets are repeated in the Qur'ān time and again.

At this place, there are in the first verse (35) two prayers made by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm ﷺ: (1) رَبِّ اجْعَلْ هٰذَا الْبَلَدَ اٰمِنًا : 'My Lord, make this city (of Makkah) peaceful.' This prayer appears in Sūrah Al-Baqarah (2:126) as well. But, there the word: بَلَد (*balad* : city) appears as: بَلَدًا (*baladan*) without the definite article *Alif Lām* which means an indefinite city. The reason is that this prayer belonged to a time when the city of Makkah was not inhabited. Therefore, the words of the prayer made were general when he said: 'My Lord, make this a city of peace.'

In the prayer which he made when Makkah was already a populated city, he made a definite reference to the city of Makkah saying: 'My Lord, make this city peaceful.'

(2) The second prayer made by him was: 'and keep me and my children away from worshiping idols.'

Though, prophets on whom be peace are protected by Allah, so Shirk, idol-worship, or a sin cannot issue forth from them. But, in this prayer, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm ﷺ has included himself as well. The reason for this is either that prophets too live under a constant fear of being in danger, or that his main purpose was to pray for the safety of his children against the danger of disbelief and idol-worship. It was to impress his children with the gravity of the matter that he included himself too within the prayer.

Allah *jalla thanā'uh* granted the prayer of His 'friend.' His children remained protected from Shirk and idol-worship. This brings up a question. The people of Makkah are generally from among the progeny of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm ﷺ. Idol-worship was very much present with them. Tafsīr Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ answers it on the authority of Sufyān ibn 'Uyaiynah that no one from among the progeny of Sayyidnā Ismā'īl ﷺ did really take to idol-worship. In fact, when people of the tribe of Jurhum took over Makkah and expelled the children of Sayyidnā Ismā'īl ﷺ from the Ḥaram, they carried away with them some stones from there out of love and respect for the sacred place. These they used to

keep as a momento of the sacred House of Allah before them when they worshipped or went round them making Ṭawāf. Initially, in doing so, they had no desire to turn back from Allah. They thought that the way making prayers turning towards Baytullah or making Ṭawāf round it was nothing but devoting to the worship of Allah, so when they turn to that stone from there and make their Ṭawāf round it, that would not be counter to the worship of Allah. After a passage of time, this very method became the cause of idol-worship.

In the second verse (36), he gives the reason for making this prayer. He said that he sought refuge from idol-worship because it has led many a people astray. He said so because he had seen his father and his people falling victims to the custom of idol-worship which had left them deprived of all possibilities of betterment in their lives.

In the closing sentence of the verse, it was said: فَمَنْ تَبِعَنِي فَإِنَّهُ مِنِّي وَمَنْ عَصَانِي فَإِنَّكَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (So, the one who follows me is surely mine, and the one who disobeys me, then You are Most Forgiving, Very Merciful). It means that one who keeps faith and abides by good deeds could obviously hope to be blessed, but should there be someone who disobeys his prophet, then, his case rests with the forgiveness and mercy of Allah. If disobedience referred to here is taken to be restricted to evils deeds, a form of disobedience to Allah in practice, then, the meaning is obvious, that is, they too could hope to be forgiven by His good grace. And if disobedience is taken to mean disbelief, denial and rejection, then, equally obvious is the fact that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام had already been told that there was no forgiveness for the Kāfir (disbeliever) and Mushrik (one who ascribes partners to Allah) and that he should not intercede on behalf of them. After that, expressing the hope of their forgiveness cannot be correct. Therefore, in Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ, it was said: At this place, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام has not used words which would suggest a recommendation or prayer. He did not say that they be forgiven. Nevertheless, he was a prophet with abounding mercy which encompasses his disbelievers too. Every prophet wishes from the deep recesses of his heart that no one should ever be subjected to Divine punishment, not even a disbeliever. So, it was this elemental wish of his that he expressed when he said: 'then You are Most Forgiving, Very Merciful.' He did not say precisely that they be forgiven and treated mercifully. This is similar to what

Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام said about the disbelievers of his community: وَإِنْ تَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ فَإِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (and if You forgive them, then, You are the Mighty, the Wise - 5:118) which, in other words, would mean: If You were to forgive them, then, You have the Might and the Wisdom. You can do everything and there is no one to stop You.

Thus, these two blessed souls did not take the initiative of recommending forgiveness for disbelievers as it was contrary to the etiquette due before Allah. But, at the same time, they also did not say that those disbelievers be punished by Him. Instead of doing that, they remained respectful yet, in a manner of their own, gave vent to their elemental wish that they too may be forgiven.

Injunctions and Instructions

As for a *du'ā'*, (prayer) everyone makes it. But, everyone does not know how to. The prayers made by the blessed prophets are lesson-oriented. They teach us how to ask. And they tell us what is worth asking for. This prayer by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام is in two parts. The first part pleads that Makkah be made the city of peace, free of all security threats, while the second part seeks that he and his children be delivered from idol-worship for ever.

If we think about it, these are the two very basic principles of human betterment - because, should human beings remain insecure where they live or remain under the apprehension that their country would be attacked by an enemy, their lives can never be pleasant, neither materially, nor spiritually. Everything done in this world, for profit or pleasure, depends on peace. There can be no two opinions at least about that. A person threatened by all sorts of dangers to his peace and security would naturally find the best of blessings he is surrounded with - dining and retiring in palaces, villas and mansions with possession and wealth abounding - all too sour to savor.

Even in terms of one's religious orientation, one can show his obedience to Divine commands only when one has the necessary peace to do so.

Therefore, in the first prayer made by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, included there are all aspects of human well-being, whether material or spiritual. Through this one sentence uttered by the Friend of Allah, Sayy-

idnā Ibrāhīm, may the blessing of Allah and peace be upon him, he has asked for his children everything that matters in this world.

We also learn from this prayer that emotional concern for one's children, and the arrangement of economic sufficiency and comfort for them is one of the obligations placed on the father, to the best of his ability and capacity. To make efforts for this purpose is not contrary to (what has been said about) *Zuhd* (having no greed for the worldly pleasures).

Then comes the second prayer. This too has great comprehensiveness because Shirk and idol-worship are sins for which there is no forgiveness, therefore, he has asked for being shielded against them. If a sin gets to be committed after that, it can also be expiated through other deeds, and such sins could also be forgiven through someone's intercession. And if we take the 'worship of idols' mentioned in the text in its broader sense as taken by the noble mystics, that is, everything which makes man heedless to Allah is his idol, and overcome by its love, when man takes the initiative and disobeys Allah, this then is, in a way, its worship. So, in this prayer, that is, to be kept away from idol-worship, there is a coverage of being kept away from all sins. It is in this sense that some noble mystics of Islam have admonished their self against heedlessness and disobedience to the Creator; or, as the great gnostic Rūmī says: 'Every (evil) desire is an idol in your way.'

Brimming with wisdom, there is another prayer of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام which appears in the third verse (37) as follows: رَبَّنَآ إِنِّيٓ أَسْكَنتُ : 'Our Lord, I have settled some of my children in a valley of no vegetation [nor any other obvious life support system] close to Your sanctified House, so that, Our Lord, they may establish Ṣalāh. So, make hearts of a number of people yearn towards them [to make them familiar with each other], and provide them with fruits, so that they may be grateful.'

The event which marks the making of this prayer by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام goes back to the time when Allah Taʿālā intended to have the edifice of Baytullah which was destroyed in the Deluge during the time of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام reconstructed. He chose His 'friend,' Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام for this mission, arranging for him to migrate from Syria with wife, Sayyidah Hājira and son, Sayyidnā Ismāʿīl عليه السلام and settle down in that barren place. This he was appointed to do.

It appears in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī that Sayyidnā Ismā'īl عليه السلام was an infant at that time. Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, as ordered, had him and his mother, Sayyidah Hājira stay near the present Baytullah and the well of Zamzam. At that time, this place was an open and barren ground surrounded by hills. There was no water and no habitation in sight. Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام had thoughtfully put some food in a provision-bag and water in a water-bag.

Thereafter, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was commanded to return to Syria. The spot where he received this command was the spot from where he started his journey as commanded. That there was the natural effect of having to leave his wife and infant son in this wilderness on him will become evident from the prayer which he made a little later, but he did not tolerate the idea of making the least delay in carrying out the Divine command, not even for a few moments which he could have used to inform Sayyidah Hājira and say a few words of comfort to her.

As a result, when Sayyidah Hājira saw him going away, she repeatedly called from behind him wondering why would he leave them in that manner and in a place which had no human being around nor was there anything which could help them survive. But, the 'friend' of Allah did not look back. Thereupon, Sayyidah Hājira realized that one who is the 'friend' of Allah cannot betray them in that manner. Perhaps, this is nothing but a command from Allah Ta'ālā. So, she called again and asked: 'Has Allah Ta'ālā commanded you to leave this place?' Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام turned his face and said: 'Yes.' Hearing this, Sayyidah Hājira said: ' إذاً لا يُضيّعنا ' that is, 'Now it does not matter. Our Master, who has commanded you to leave this place, will certainly not let us be wasted away.'

Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام kept going ahead until he reached close to a hill from where he could no more see Sayyidah Hājira and Sayyidnā Ismā'īl عليهما السلام. That was the time when he turned his attention towards Baytullah and prayed in the words mentioned in the verse (37).[1] Many religious instructions and rulings issue forth from this prayer of

1. According to this interpretation, it is only the prayer mentioned in Verse (37) that was made at this time. As for the prayer mentioned in the verse (35) it was made at a later stage, when Makkah was already a populated city. Therefore, there is no contradiction between this statement and the comment made on the verse 35. (Editor)

Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm ﷺ. These are being taken up in some details as given below.

The Wisdom of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm's Prayer

1. We see that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm ﷺ has accomplished two things very distinctly. On the one hand, he fulfills his obligation to his status as the Khalīl or Friend of Allah. When and where he was commanded to leave for the country of Syria, he took no time in leaving his wife and infant son in a desolate wilderness. When he was saying yes to the Divine command, he did not show the least hesitation. He did what he was asked to do right away. He did not tolerate the idea of postponing or delaying even to the natural limit whereby he would first go to his blessed wife, say some words of comfort to her and tell her that he is under Divine orders to leave about which she should not worry. This he did not do. What he did was: When and where came the Divine command, he obeyed it and moved ahead right on.

On the other hand, he did not neglect the rights of his family on him and paid the debt of their love in his own way. Once he could see them no more from behind a hill on his way, he prayed before Allah Ta'ālā that they be protected and blessed with peace. Thus, he had asked good life for them because he was confident, and at peace with himself. He knew that a prayer made after having carried out the Divine command first would never be rejected by the merciful Lord. And this is what happened actually. The helpless infant and his equally helpless mother found shelter. Not only that they settled there all alone and by themselves, a whole city flowered with people around them and for their sake; and furthermore, the matter did not end at the fulfillment of the needs of their lives lived in peace, but it is for their sake that the doors of all sorts of blessing are still open to the people of Makkah.

This is prophetic steadfastness, and the beauty of balance; when considering one aspect, they would never ignore the other. The prophets are not like common mystics who are overpowered by the state they are in (*maghlūb al-ḥāl*). Prophets educate. It is their education which goes on to make man perfect, universal.

Now, let us go to some significant statements made in this prayer. They are from verse 37 and are being taken up in the order they appear

there.

2. غَيْرِ ذِي زَرْعٍ (valley of no vegetation): When Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was commanded by Allah Ta'ālā that he should leave his infant son and his mother in that barren land and go to Syria, he had become certain from the command itself that Allah Ta'ālā would not let them perish, instead, they would, at least, be provided with water somehow. That is why he did not say: بِوَادٍ غَيْرِ ذِي مَاءٍ (in a valley with no water). What he said was: غَيْرِ ذِي زَرْعٍ (in a valley of no vegetation). Therefore, he requested that they be blessed with 'fruits' - even if they had to be brought in from somewhere else. This is the reason why Makkah al-Mukarramah does not have any significant areas of cultivation even to this day. But, fruits from all over the world, the produce and product of things of all sorts reach there in such numbers and variety that it would be difficult to find a similar arrangement in many cities. (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ)

3. The next sentence: عِنْدَ بَيْتِكَ الْمُحَرَّمِ (close to Your sanctified House) proves that the foundation of Baytullah had been laid out before the appearance of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام as proved by the leading commentator, Al-Qurṭubī on the authority of several narrations under his commentary on Sūrah Al-Baqarah. According to him, the structure of Baytullah was first raised by Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام at the time when he was sent to the earth and was made to reach at this place from the Mountain of Sarandip through a miracle. Angel Jibrā'īl directed him to the site of Baytullah. Accordingly, Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام raised its structure. He and his children used to do Ṭawāf round it until came the Deluge during the time of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام when the sacred Baytullah was raised up (as trust), but its foundations remained embedded under the earth. Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was commanded to build the Baytullah anew on the already existing foundations. These were identified and shown to him by Sayyidnā Jibrā'īl. After that, when this Abrahimic structure collapsed during the age of Arab Jāhiliyyah, the Quraysh of that period rebuilt it. When its construction work was in progress, Abū Ṭālib along with the Holy Prophet ﷺ participated in it, which was before he was made prophet.

Here, Baytullah has been qualified as: مُحَرَّمٌ (*muḥarram*) which means 'sanctified,' but could also mean 'protected.' The great Baytullah has both attributes. It has always been sanctified and esteemed, and always

protected from enemies as well.

4. The next statement: لِيُقِيمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ (so that they may establish Ṣalāh) is significant in that it was the first prayer he made soon after mentioning the helplessness of his infant son and his mother. His prayer was that they be made particular and punctual in their obligation of Ṣalāh as due because Ṣalāh is a cumulative recepticle of everything good and blissful in life, mortal or eternal. This tells us that there can be no greater concern, or love or desire for the betterment of children than that they be made to become particular and punctual with their Ṣalāh. Finally, there is something here we should not miss to note. Though, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm ﷺ had left behind at that time and at that place only a mother and her child, but the prayer he made was in the plural form. This tells us that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm ﷺ had come to know that this place will have a populated city of its own and the line of this child will flourish and go far in time. Therefore, he included all of them in his prayer.

5. In the next sentence: أَفْئِدَةً مِّنَ النَّاسِ (hearts of a number of people), the word: أَفْئِدَہ (*afidah*) is the plural of: فُؤَاد (*fu'ād*) which means heart. Here, the word: '*afidah*' has been introduced in its indefinite form along with the particle: مِنْ (*min*) which is used for reducing, dividing and portioning. Hence, the meaning is: 'make hearts of a number of people yearn towards them). Tafsīr authority, Mujāhid says: If this reductive particle was not there in this prayer, instead, said there would have been: أَفْئِدَةَ النَّاسِ (hearts of the people), then, Muslims, non-Muslims, Jews, Christians, virtually people of the whole world from the East to West would have converged on Makkah, which would have become a cause of inconvenience for them. It was in view of this reality that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm ﷺ, in his prayer, used the words: 'make hearts of a number of people yearn towards them.'

6. In the next sentence: وَارْزُقْهُمْ مِّنَ الثَّمَرٰتِ (and provide them with fruits), the word: اَلثَّمَرٰتُ (*ath-thamarāt*) is the plural of: ثَمَرَۃ (*thamrah*) which means fruit. Customarily, they refer to fruits which are eaten. Given that sense of 'fruit,' the prayer would mean: 'provide them with all sorts of fruits to eat.'

However, *thamrah* or fruit is also used in the sense of outcome and

produce which is more general than things edible. The outcome of everything beneficial can be called its *thamrah* or fruit. Thus, the fruits of industries would be their products. The fruit of a job or work would be the pay or wages received as a result. In a verse of Sūrah Al-Qaṣaṣ, also used there is the expression: ثَمَرٰتُ كُلِّ شَیْءٍ (fruits [or produce] of all things - 28:57). Here, instead of using the word: شَجَر (*shajar* : tree), what has been used is the word: شَیْء (*sha'ii* : thing). Perhaps, this may be indicating that for these people Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام has not simply prayed for the provision of fruits to eat. Rather, the prayer he has made is for the end product of everything which includes the products and produce and use-worthy things of all kinds, and again, with earnest pleading and humble plaint alongwith the recounting of praises for Allah Ta'ālā, then, this would be a manner in which it can be strongly hoped that the prayer will be answered.

Verses 42 - 52

وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ اللّٰهَ غَافِلًا عَمَّا يَعْمَلُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ ۭ اِنَّمَا يُؤَخِّرُهُمْ لِيَوْمٍ
تَشْخَصُ فِيْهِ الْاَبْصَارُ ﴿٤٢﴾ مُهْطِعِيْنَ مُقْنِعِيْ رُءُوْسِهِمْ لَا يَرْتَدُّ اِلَيْهِمْ
طَرْفُهُمْ ۚ وَاَفْئِدَتُهُمْ هَوَآءٌ ﴿٤٣﴾ وَاَنْذِرِ النَّاسَ يَوْمَ يَاْتِيْهِمُ الْعَذَابُ
فَيَقُوْلُ الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا رَبَّنَآ اَخِّرْنَآ اِلٰى اَجَلٍ قَرِيْبٍ ۙ نُّجِبْ دَعْوَتَكَ
وَنَتَّبِعِ الرُّسُلَ ۭ اَوَلَمْ تَكُوْنُوْٓا اَقْسَمْتُمْ مِّنْ قَبْلُ مَالَكُمْ مِّنْ زَوَالٍ ﴿٤٤﴾
وَّسَكَنْتُمْ فِيْ مَسٰكِنِ الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ وَتَبَيَّنَ لَكُمْ كَيْفَ فَعَلْنَا
بِهِمْ وَضَرَبْنَا لَكُمُ الْاَمْثَالَ ﴿٤٥﴾ وَقَدْ مَكَرُوْا مَكْرَهُمْ وَعِنْدَ اللّٰهِ
مَكْرُهُمْ ۭ وَاِنْ كَانَ مَكْرُهُمْ لِتَزُوْلَ مِنْهُ الْجِبَالُ ﴿٤٦﴾ فَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ اللّٰهَ
مُخْلِفَ وَعْدِهٖ رُسُلَهٗ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَزِيْزٌ ذُو انْتِقَامٍ ﴿٤٧﴾ يَوْمَ تُبَدَّلُ الْاَرْضُ
غَيْرَ الْاَرْضِ وَالسَّمٰوٰتُ وَبَرَزُوْا لِلّٰهِ الْوَاحِدِ الْقَهَّارِ ﴿٤٨﴾ وَتَرَى
الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ يَوْمَئِذٍ مُّقَرَّنِيْنَ فِي الْاَصْفَادِ ﴿٤٩﴾ سَرَابِيْلُهُمْ مِّنْ قَطِرَانٍ
وَّتَغْشٰى وُجُوْهَهُمُ النَّارُ ﴿٥٠﴾ لِيَجْزِيَ اللّٰهُ كُلَّ نَفْسٍ مَّا كَسَبَتْ ۭ اِنَّ

اللّٰهَ سَرِيْعُ الْحِسَابِ ﴿٥١﴾ هٰذَا بَلٰغٌ لِّلنَّاسِ وَلِيُنْذَرُوْا بِهٖ وَلِيَعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّمَا هُوَ اِلٰهٌ وَّاحِدٌ وَّلِيَذَّكَّرَ اُولُوا الْاَلْبَابِ ﴿٥٢﴾

And never think that Allah is unaware of what the wrongdoers are doing. He is but giving them respite upto a day when the eyes shall remain upraised (in terror). [42] **They shall be rushing with their heads raised upward; their eyes shall not return towards them and their hearts shall be hollow.** [43]

And warn the people of a day when punishment comes upon them, and the wrongdoers will say, "Our Lord, give us respite for a short period, and we will respond to Your call and will follow the messengers." (Allah will say), "Is it not that you had sworn earlier that you would not have to leave (the world)? [44] **And you dwelt in the dwellings of those who wronged themselves, and it became clear to you how We dealt with them, and We put forth for you the examples."** [45] **And they worked out their plot and whatever they plot is before Allah, even though their plot is such as would move the mountains.** [46]

So, do not think that Allah will do against His promise to His messengers. Surely, Allah is Mighty, the Lord of Retribution [47] **--- the day on which this earth will be turned into some other earth, and the skies as well. And they all shall appear before Allah, the One, the All-Dominant.** [48]

And on that day you will see the culprits shackled together in chains, [49] **their shirts of rosin,* and their faces covered with Fire** [50] **--- so that Allah repays everyone what he earned. Indeed, Allah is swift at reckoning.** [51]

This is a message for mankind, so that they (take lesson and) be warned, and so that they may know that He is One God, and so that the people of understanding may take to the advice. [52]

Commentary

Mentioned in Sūrah Ibrāhīm were some details of matters relating to

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* Stands for *'Qaṭirān'*, the original Qur'ānic word which means a highly inflammable oil extracted from the Pine-tree.

prophets and their peoples, the evil end of those who opposed Divine injunctions and, later on, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام himself, who constructed the Baytullah, and for whose children Allah Ta'ālā made a community rise around them in Makkah al-Mukarramah, and provided for all its inhabitants perfect peace and extraordinary economic facilities, and it is his children, the Banū Ismā'īl, who are the first addressees of the Glorious Qur'ān and the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

In this last section of Sūrah Ibrāhīm, the same people of Makkah have been exhorted to take a lesson from what had happened to past peoples; and, in a nutshell, they have been warned that, should they still not return to their senses, they better be ready to face the horrendous punishment of the day of Qiyāmah.

Initially, the first verse (42) is to comfort the Holy Prophet عليه السلام and the oppressed of the world, then, it releases the threat of a severe punishment for all oppressors - that the unjust practitioners of crime should not become carefree because Allah Ta'ālā has given them respite. Let them not be deluded by the idea that Allah is not aware of their wrongdoings for which reason they are flourishing despite their crimes and for which reason nothing unwelcome happens to them, nor does any punishment visit them. This is not true. Instead of all that they presuppose, everything they are doing is all within the sight of Allah Ta'ālā, but He, in His mercy and wisdom, is giving them respite.

In this verse: وَلَاتَحْسَبَنَّ اللّٰهَ غَافِلًا (And never think that Allah is unaware of what the wrongdoers are doing), the address is obviously to every such person whom his own negligence, and Shayṭān, have tricked to believe in something like that. And should it be that the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself is the addressee here, still then, the purpose of saying this would be to let the negligent of the community hear it and be warned - because, there exists just no possibility that the Holy Prophet ﷺ would, God forbid, ever think that Allah Ta'ālā is unaware or indifferent to what is happening.

In the second verse (43), it has been said that the postponement of sudden punishment against these unjust people is not any better for them because, ultimately, they will be seized in the great punishment of the Qiyāmah and the 'Ākhirah which will overtake them all of a sudden.

The details of this punishment in the life to come and the horrendous happenings to be experienced there keep appearing right upto the end of the verse:

لِيَوْمٍ تَشْخَصُ فِيهِ الْأَبْصَارُ

A day when the eyes shall remain upraised (in terror).

مُهْطِعِينَ مُقْنِعِي رُءُوسِهِمْ

They shall be rushing with their heads raised upward.

لَا يَرْتَدُّ إِلَيْهِمْ طَرْفُهُمْ

Their eyes shall not return towards them.

وَأَفْئِدَتُهُمْ هَوَاءٌ

And their hearts shall be hollow.

After the shape of things to come upon them has been stated, the address is to the Holy Prophet ﷺ who has been asked to warn his people of the punishment of that day, the day on which the unjust and the wrong-doing will have no choice but to call their Lord for some more time to return to the world they knew so that they could say yes to the call of prophets and follow them this time and may thereby have their deliverance from this punishment. The answer to their request will come from Allah Taʿālā wherein it will be said: This is what you are saying now. Is it not that you had been giving sworn statements to the effect that your wealth and power shall never part with you, and that you shall go on living in the world just like that, in comfort and luxury, for ever; and is it not that you had rejected the idea that you will live again and that there was a world hereafter?

In verse 45:

وَسَكَنْتُمْ فِي مَسٰكِنِ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوٓا أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَتَبَيَّنَ لَكُمْ كَيْفَ فَعَلْنَا بِهِمْ وَضَرَبْنَا لَكُمُ الْأَمْثَالَ۔

And you dwelt in the dwelling of those who wronged themselves, and it became clear to you how We dealt with them and We put forth for you the examples,

as obvious, the address is to the Mushriks of Arabia. These were the people the Holy Prophet ﷺ was asked to warn: أَنْذِرِ النَّاسَ (And warn the peo-

ple - 44). In this address, they have been asked to take their guard against what could happen to them as a result of their heedlessness. They could learn a lesson from what had happened to past peoples. The conditions they faced and the revolutions that overtook them could become their teacher. Yet, it is astonishing that they would still prefer not to learn a lesson - even though, they live in the very homes once occupied by peoples destroyed in punishment and walk around neighbourhoods once walked by them. The truth is that they know by direct observation, and by what some continuing reports have told them that terrible was the punishment which Allah Ta'ālā inflicted on them because of their acts of disobedience. The advice and the examples given here were to bring them to see truth and take the straight path, but it was certainly strange that they would still not listen and learn to act right.

Said in verse 46 was:

وَقَدْ مَكَرُوْا مَكْرَهُمْ وَعِنْدَ اللّٰهِ مَكْرُهُمْ ط وَاِنْ كَانَ مَكْرُهُمْ لِتَزُوْلَ مِنْهُ الْجِبَالُ

> And they worked out their plot and whatever they plot is before Allah, even though their plot is such as would move the mountains.

which can be explained further by saying that those people tried to demolish the true faith and put in action their deadliest plans to bring harm to Muslims who had embraced the call of truth. But, all plans made by them, open or concealed, lie exposed before Allah Ta'ālā who is fully aware of them, and comprehensively capable of foiling them - even though, their plots were so precise and lethal that they would have made mountains back out from their place, but finally, nothing worked before the perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā.

The hostile plots and plans mentioned here may possibly mean the plots and plans made by people destroyed in the past, for example, Nimrud, Pharaoh, the people of 'Ād and Thamūd and others. And it is also possible that the text is referring to the Mushriks of Arabia who hatched many deep-seated and far-reaching conspiracies against the Holy Prophet ﷺ, but they were all foiled by Allah Ta'ālā.

There are a good many commentators who have taken the word: اِنْ (*in*) appearing in: وَاِنْ كَانَ مَكْرُهُمْ (even though their plot) as a particle of negation and explain the verse to mean that 'though they made many plots

but it was not possible for their plots to make mountains move away from their place - and the mountain here means the high determination of the Holy Prophet ﷺ which remained totally unaffected by any of the moves made by the disbelievers.

After that, it was to let this be heard by the Muslim community, the Holy Prophet ﷺ - or everyone thus addressed - was given a note of caution by saying:

فَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ اللّٰهَ مُخْلِفَ وَعْدِهٖ رُسُلَهٗ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَزِيْزٌ ذُو انْتِقَامٍ

So, do not think that Allah will do against His promise [of support, victory and success] to His messengers. Surely, Allah is Mighty, the Lord of Retribution - 47

and that He would definitely retaliate against the enemies of His messengers and fulfill the promises made to them.

In the verses which appear onwards from here (48-51), the text returns to the awe-inspiring happenings of the day of Qiyāmah. It is said:

يَوْمَ تُبَدَّلُ الْاَرْضُ غَيْرَ الْاَرْضِ وَالسَّمٰوٰتُ وَ بَرَزُوْا لِلّٰهِ الْوَاحِدِ الْقَهَّارِ

The day on which this earth will be turned into some other earth, and the skies as well. And they all shall appear before Allah, the One, the All-Dominant.

The statement that the earth and the sky will be turned into some other earth and sky may also mean that their distinctive characteristics and appearances will be changed. There are other verses of the Holy Qur'ān, and narrations from Ḥadīth, which say that the whole earth will be transformed into a levelled surface having no house, tree, mountain and mound blocking the view, nor shall there remain any cave and abyss. It is this very state of change which the Qur'ān refers to elsewhere in the following words: لَا تَرٰى فِيْهَا عِوَجًا وَّلَا اَمْتًا (you will not see in it any crookedness, or curvature - 20:107). It means that things will not remain the way they are. Roads and pathways we see today wind their way past buildings and mountains negotiating all sorts of twists and turns on surfaces high and low. This will change and the whole thing would turn into flat, unobstructed ground.

And this act of changing the earth and the sky could also be taken to

mean that another set of the earth and the sky would be made in the place of the present ones. Out of the narrations of Ḥadīth reported on this subject, only some of them seem to indicate either a change in features only while others suggest a change of the thing itself.

Ḥadīth authority, Al-Baihaqī has reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ as based on authentic chains of narration that, about this verse, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: 'The ground of Al-Maḥshar (the plain of Resurrection) will be brand new, radiant white like silver. And this earth surface would be such that no sin would have been committed over it by anyone, and on which no blood belonging to someone killed unjustly would have been shed.' The same subject appears in the Ḥadīth reported in the Musnad of Aḥmad and Tafsīr Ibn Jarīr, as narrated by Sayyidnā Anas ﷺ. (Tafsīr Maẓharī)

In the Ṣaḥīḥayn (the two Ṣaḥīḥs) of Al-Bukhārī and Muslim, there is a narration from Sayyidnā Sahl Ibn Sa'd ﷺ which reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: 'On the day of Qiyāmah, people will be resurrected on an earth surface which will be clean and white like refined pita bread with no trace of anything else (such as house, garden, tree, mountain, mound etc.,). Al-Biahaqī has reported the same subject from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ﷺ as in his Tafsīr of this particular verse.

And Ḥākim, backed by a strong chain of authority, has reported from a narration of Sayyidnā Jābir ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: 'On the day of Qiyāmah, this earth will be stretched like leather so that its wrinkles and crinkles are smoothed out (because of which caves and mountains of the earth would be all levelled down turning it into a flat surface), and at that time gathered on these plains there shall be the whole progeny of Ādam. Such will be the multitude of people that one human being would have only as much land in his or her share as he or she can stand on. Then, I shall be the first to be called on the plains of Resurrection. There I shall fall down in prostration before the Almighty Lord, and when I shall be given the permission to intercede, I shall intercede for the whole creation so that they go through the reckoning of their deeds swiftly.'

This last report obviously seems to indicate that the change made in the earth will be restricted to a change in its physical features, that is, caves, mountains, buildings and trees will not remain there. But, the earth itself will remain as it is. And all other narrations mentioned earlier tell us that the earth of the day of Resurrection (Al-Maḥshar) will be an earth other than the present one. As for the change mentioned in this verse, it means the change of the earth itself.

In Bayān al-Qur'ān, Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī رحمة الله عليه has said that there is no contradiction here. It is possible that the features of the present earth will be changed at the time the first Horn is blown, then people will be transferred to some other earth for the purpose of reckoning of deeds.

A saying of Sayyidnā 'Ikrimah ﷺ appearing in the Musnad of 'Abd ibn al-Ḥumaid and reported in Tafsīr Maẓharī supports the view given above. The words used there can be translated as: 'This earth will contract and it will have another earth by its side on which people will stand for reckoning.'

As based on a narration of Sayyidnā Thawbān ﷺ, it has been reported in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim that a Jewish rabbi came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and asked him: When this earth is changed, where would people be? He said: They would be in a dark area near the Bridge of Ṣirāt.

From here we also learn that people will be transferred from the present earth over to the other through the Bridge of Ṣirāt. And Ibn Jarīr has reported from several Ṣaḥābah and Tābi'īn in his Tafsīr that the present earth and all its rivers will turn into fire at that time. In other words, all this territory which now holds the population of the world will become the territory of Hell. However, the reality of things is known to Allah Ta'ālā alone. A servant of His can do nothing but to live by his committment to Him and not go about seeking the cause of His workings.

In verses 50 and 51 towards the end, given there is the state in which the people of Jahannam will find themselves. Culprits will be shackled

together in chains, that is, each group huddled separately and then shackled together. And the dress they would be made to wear will be from *'Qaṭirān'* which is a highly inflammable tar-like oil and would catch fire instantly.

Finally, in the last verse (52), it was made clear that the description of conditions to be faced by people on the day of Qiyāmah was to warn them so that they would realize that there is no Being worthy of worship and obedience except the One Being of Allah Ta'ālā, and so that whoever from among them has some sense left in him or her would desist from Shirk while there was still the time to do so.

With the help and grace of Allah Ta'ālā
The Commentary on
Sūrah Ibrāhīm
ends here.

Sūrah Al-Ḥijr

Sūrah al-Ḥijr was revealed in Makkah and it has 99 Verses and 6 sections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the Most-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 5

الٓرٰ تِلْكَ اٰيٰتُ الْكِتٰبِ وَقُرْاٰنٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿۱﴾ رُبَمَا يَوَدُّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لَوْ كَانُوْا مُسْلِمِيْنَ ﴿۲﴾ ذَرْهُمْ يَاْكُلُوْا وَيَتَمَتَّعُوْا وَيُلْهِهِمُ الْاَمَلُ فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۳﴾ وَمَآ اَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَرْيَةٍ اِلَّا وَلَهَا كِتَابٌ مَّعْلُوْمٌ ﴿۴﴾ مَاتَسْبِقُ مِنْ اُمَّةٍ اَجَلَهَا وَمَا يَسْتَاْخِرُوْنَ ﴿۵﴾

Alif, Lām, Rā. **These are verses of the Book, the Qur'ān which makes things clear.** [1]

On occasions, the disbelievers would wish that they were Muslims. [2] **Let them eat and enjoy, and let (their) fancy make them neglectful, for they shall soon come to know.** [3]

And We did not destroy any town, but it had a pre-determined decree. [4] **No people can precede their appointed time nor can they exceed it.** [5]

Commentary

From: ذَرْهُمْ يَاْكُلُوْا...... (Let them eat ...3) we can see that the making of eating and drinking the real occupation and aim of life, and keeping glued to long-drawn material plans while surrounded by countless things of worldly comfort, and becoming totally heedless to death, is something which can be done only by the disbelievers. The reason is that they do not believe in the 'Ākhirah, the life to come, and the accounting

of deeds there, and the reward and punishment for it. As for eating and drinking, a believer does it too, and takes care of economic needs to the measure of necessity, and makes future plans for occupation and business as well. But, a believer would not make all these efforts by forgetting death and ignoring the concern for 'Ākhirah. Therefore, he is careful about everything he does and finds out whether it is Ḥalāl or Ḥarām, permissible or forbidden. Then, he does not occupy himself in the making of wasteful or unnecessary plans and projections, as hobby or compulsion. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said: Four things are signs of being unfortunate: (1) Not being able to shed tears (that is, not being in tears when ashamed of acts of negligence and sin); (2) and hard-heartedness; (3) fanciful hopes and plans for the future; (4) and the greed for worldly things. (Qurṭubī from Musnad al-Bazzār from Sayyidnā Anas ﷺ)

And the expression: يُلْهِهِمُ الْأَمَلُ 'let (their) fancy make them neglectful' means the making of long-drawn plans with engrossing love, and the greed for the material without any concern for death and 'Ākhirah. (Qurṭubī) As for plans made to achieve religious objectives, or those made to guard the future interests of a people or country, they are not included here - because, that is a form of the concern for 'Ākhirah itself.

The Holy Prophet ﷺ said: The first set of people from this Ummah will have their salvation because of their perfect faith, and avoidance of the pursuit of the material (*dunyā*); and the later people of the Ummah will be destroyed because of miserliness, and fancies projected too far.

It has been reported from Sayyidnā Abū Ad-Dardā' ﷺ that he stood up on the Mimbar of Jami' Masjid of Damascus and said:

> 'O people of Damascus, would you listen to what this well-wishing brother of yours has to say? So, listen to me. There have been big people before you who made big money, collected gold and things, built magnificent palaces and made long-hauled plans and projections for the future. Today they are dust. Their residences are their graves. And all their long winded hopes and plans have proved to be no more than a web of deception. Close to you lived the people of 'Ād who had stuffed their country with their fighting men, wealth, means, possessions, arms and horses. Is there someone around who would be ready to buy what they left behind as their legacy for two silver *dirhams* from me?'

Imām Al-Ḥasan Al-Baṣrī رحمه الله تعالى said: A person with long plans, hopes and fancies is bound to ruin his proper conduct in life. (Al-Qurṭubī)

Verses 6 - 8

وَقَالُوْا يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِىْ نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ الذِّكْرُ اِنَّكَ لَمَجْنُوْنٌ ﴿٦﴾ لَوْمَا تَاْتِيْنَا بِالْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ اِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿٧﴾ مَا نُنَزِّلُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةَ اِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَمَا كَانُوْٓا اِذًا مُّنْظَرِيْنَ ﴿٨﴾

And they said, "O you to whom the Dhikr (the Qur'ān) has been revealed, you are certainly insane. [6] **Why do you not bring the angels to us if you are among the truthful?"** [7] **We do not send down the angels except with what is true and then they shall be given no respite.** [8]

Explanatory Notes

1. The word: اَلْحَقّ (what is true) in: اِلاَّ بِالْحَقِّ (*illā bi al-ḥaqq*: translated as 'except with what is true') means the decision to send down punishment. Some commentators take them to be denoting the Qur'ān, or prophethood. In Bayān al-Qur'ān, preferance has been given to the first meaning which has been reported from al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī. Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī has explained these verses as given below.

2. And these disbelievers (of Makkah) said to the Holy Prophet ﷺ: "O you to whom the Qur'ān has been revealed, (as you claim, then,) you are certainly (God forbid) insane (and your claim to prophethood is false, otherwise) why would you not bring the angels to us (who will testify your truthfulness before us - as in Sūrah Al-Furqān: 'لَوْ لَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْهِ مَلَكٌ فَيَكُوْنَ مَعَهٗ نَذِيْرًا : 'Why is not an angel sent down unto him, to be a warner with him? [25:7] which is answered by Allah Ta'ālā:) We send down the angels (in the manner asked by them) only to enforce a decision (and had that been the case) then they would have been given no respite either (in fact, when they would have not believed even after their having come - as their ways guarantee - they would have been destroyed instantly, the reason for which has already appeared in the later verses of the first section of Sūrah Al-An'ām: 6:8,9).

Verse 9

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ ﴿٩﴾

We, Ourselves, have sent down the Dhikr (the Qur'ān), and We are there to protect it. [9]

Commentary

An Episode from the Court of Ma'mūn

Imām Al-Qurṭubī has authentically reported an event from the court of 'Abbāsī Khalīfah, Al-Ma'mūn. He was used to patronizing occasional debates on intellectual issues at his court where all scholars were welcome. It so happened that a Jew came to attend one of these debates. By his looks, dress and manners, he seemed to be an elegant person. Then, his address during the debate was eloquent and intellectually bright. When the meeting was over, Ma'mūn called for him and asked him if he was an Israelite, which he confirmed. To test him, Ma'mūn asked him to become a Muslim in which case he could hope to have the best possible treatment from him.

He said that he was not willing to leave the religion of his forefathers which was his religion too. The matter ended there. That person went away. Then, after a year, the same person returned as a Muslim and made a very distinct contribution in the court meeting on the subject of Islamic jurisprudence. After the session was over, Ma'mūn called for him and asked him if he was the same person who had come last year. He said: Yes, I am. Ma'mūn asked: At that time you had refused to accept Islam. Tell me what made you accept Islam now.

He said: When I went back from here, I decided to do some research on contemporary religions. I am a scribe. I write books and sell them. They bring good price. This time I wanted to make a test. First, I calligraphed three manuscripts of the Torah in which I made some additions and deletions on my own. I took these manuscripts to the Synagogue. The Jews found them interesting and bought them. Then, I did the same things with the Injīl. I calligraphed three manuscripts, complete with my additions and deletions, and took them to the Church where the Christians were pleased with these manuscripts and bought them from me. After that, I tried the same thing with the Qur'ān. I calligraphed three good looking manuscripts of the Qur'ān, of course with the usual addi-

tions and deletions of my own. When I went out to sell them, I faced a problem. Every buyer I went to would take the manuscript, look into it to determine if it was correct or not, and when he would notice additions or deletions made into it, he would quietly return the manuscript back to me.

From this episode, I learnt my lesson that this Book is protected, and protected by Allah Ta'ālā Himself, therefore, I embraced Islam. Qāḍī Yaḥyā ibn Aktham, the narrator of this event says that, by chance, he had the *taufīq* of performing his Ḥajj in the same year. There he met Sufyān ibn 'Uyainah to whom he related this event. He said: Surely, this is how it should be because this is confirmed by the Qur'ān. Yaḥyā ibn Aktham asked about the *āyah* he had in mind. He said: When the glorious Qur'ān mentions the Torah and the Injīl, there it says: بِمَا اسْتُحْفِظُوا مِن كِتَٰبِ اللَّهِ (that is, the Jews and Christians have been entrusted with the responsibility of protecting the Torah and Injīl, the Books of Allah - 5:44). This is the reason why, when the Jews and Christians did not fulfill their duty of protecting them, these Books were lost through distortions and alterations. This is contrary to the case of the Holy Qur'ān about which Allah Ta'ālā has said: إِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ (And We are there to protect it - 9). Thus, when Allah Ta'ālā Himself arranged to have it remain protected, then, despite thousands of efforts made by enemies, not a single change in one tiny dot or case mark could be made. Today, over fourteen hundred years have passed since even the blessed age of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and there has been a shortfall and neglect on the part of Muslims in all areas of their religious matters, yet the continuous arrangement of memorizing the Holy Qur'ān all over the world stands firmly established as it was. In every period of time, there are millions of Muslims, old and young, male and female, always present on the scene, blessed people in whose hearts and minds the Holy Qur'ān lives protected. Before them, not even the highest of the high religious scholar can dare recite a single letter of the Qur'ān wrong, for there would be around at that time many, seniors or children, who would promptly apprehend the error.

The Promise to Protect the Qur'ān Includes the Protection of Ḥadīth

As a matter of principle, all learned people agree that the Qur'ān is neither the name of the words of the Qur'ān alone, nor that of its meanings alone, instead, a combination of both is called the Qur'ān. The rea-

son is that Qur'ānic meanings and subjects appear in other books as well, and as for Islamic writings, their subjects are essentially Qur'ānic, but they are not called Qur'ān - because, they are not the words of the Qur'ān. Similarly, if a person were to borrow different words and sentences from the Holy Qur'ān and write an article or treatise, no one will call this too by the name of Qur'ān, even though there is no word from outside the Qur'ān. This tells us that the Qur'ān is the exclusive name of the particular Divinely revealed Book the words and meanings of which are simultaneously protected.

This also leads us to the ruling that the practice of people who publish the translation of the Qur'ān only in a foreign language and give it the name, for example, an English Qur'ān or an Urdu Qur'ān, is not permissible at all - because, that is not the Qur'ān. And when we know that Qur'ān is not the name of the words of the Qur'ān alone, but that its meaning too are a part of it, then, the responsibility of protecting the Qur'ān taken upon Himself in this verse by Allah Ta'ālā covers the total protection of the words of the Qur'ān as well as the meanings of the Qur'ān in that they remain protected against alteration or distortion.

And it is obvious that the meanings of the Qur'ān are the same as the Holy Prophet ﷺ was sent to teach - as pointed out in the Qur'ān: لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَانُزِّلَ اِلَيْهِمْ (16:44). It means: 'You have been sent to explain the meaning of what has been revealed for them.' And this is what the verse: يُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ : 'Teaches them the Book and the Wisdom' (3:164) also means. And that is why he said:

اِنَّمَا بُعِثْتُ مُعَلِّمًا

'As for me, I have been sent as a teacher.'

Now, when the Holy Prophet ﷺ was sent to explain the meanings of the Qur'ān and to impart education to people, then, he used a set of his sayings and doings as the medium of instruction for his community, and this very set of his words and deeds is known as the Ḥadīth.

One who says that the Aḥādīth of the Rasūl of Allah are not absolutely protected is really saying that the Qur'ān is not protected.

There are people around who would like to deceive the whole world by saying that the treasure of Aḥādīth present in authentic books is not

trustworthy because it has been documented much later than the blessed age of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. First of all, even this assumption of theirs is not correct because the process of protection and documentation of Aḥādīth had already started within the age of prophethood itself, though it was completed later. In addition to that, the Ḥadīth of the Rasūl of Allah is really the explanation of the Qur'ān and the meaning of the Qur'ān. Their protection is something which Allah Ta'ālā has taken upon Himself. Then, how can it be possible that only the words of the Qur'ān remain protected while the meanings of the Qur'ān (that is, the Aḥādīth of the Rasūl) go to waste?

Verses 10 - 15

وَلَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ فِىْ شِيَعِ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ ﴿١٠﴾ وَمَا يَاْتِيْهِمْ مِّنْ رَّسُوْلٍ اِلَّا كَانُوْا بِهٖ يَسْتَهْزِءُوْنَ ﴿١١﴾ كَذٰلِكَ نَسْلُكُهٗ فِىْ قُلُوْبِ الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ ﴿١٢﴾ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِهٖ وَقَدْ خَلَتْ سُنَّةُ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ ﴿١٣﴾ وَلَوْ فَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ بَابًا مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ فَظَلُّوْا فِيْهِ يَعْرُجُوْنَ ﴿١٤﴾ لَقَالُوْٓا اِنَّمَا سُكِّرَتْ اَبْصَارُنَا بَلْ نَحْنُ قَوْمٌ مَّسْحُوْرُوْنَ ﴿١٥﴾

And We did send the messengers before you among the groups of earlier peoples. [10] **And no messenger came to them but they used to mock at him.** [11] **This is how We make it enter into the hearts of the sinners,** [12] **(whereby) they do not believe in it (the Qur'ān). And this has been the way of earlier people.** [13] **And even if We were to open a gate in the sky and they keep ascending through it,** [14] **still they will say, "It is nothing but that our eyes have been deluded and that we are a people bewitched.** [15]

A Lexical Note of Explanation

The word: الشِّيَع in the first verse (10) is the plural form of: شيعه (*shī'ah*) which means the follower or helper of a person. Then, it is also used to denote a group which agrees upon particular beliefs and theoretical assumptions. So, the sense of the statement is that Allah Ta'ālā has sent messengers among every group or sect. Here, by using the word: فِى (*fī*) in: فِىْ شِيَعِ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ in place of الى : *ilā:* to (translated as 'among the groups of

earlier peoples'), the hint given is that the messenger for every group was sent from among that particular group so that people would find it easy to trust him, and that he too, by being aware of their taste and temperament, could make appropriate plans to work for their reform.

Verse 16

وَلَقَدْ جَعَلْنَا فِى السَّمَآءِ بُرُوجًا وَّزَيَّنّٰهَا لِلنّٰظِرِينَ ﴿١٦﴾

And We have created stellar formations in the sky and have beautified them for the onlookers. [16]

Sequence

Mentioned in the previous verses was the doggedness and hostility of deniers and disbelievers. In the present verse, and in those which follow immediately after, clear proofs of the Oneness, Knowledge and Power of Allah Ta'ālā have been given. Described alongside is what transpires before His creation between the heavens and the earth, a little deliberation in which on the part of a sensible person would make any denial impossible.

Commentary

The word: بُرُوجًا is the plural of: بُرْجٌ (*burj*) which is applied to big palaces and castles and to similar other structural entities. Tafsīr authorities Mujāhid, Qatādah, Abū Ṣāliḥ and others have explained '*burūj*' at this place in the sense of big stars. As for the statement in this verse which points to the creation of these big stars in the sky, the word: اَلسَّمَاء (*as-samā'*) or sky means atmosphere which, in common modern day terminology, is called the 'space.' The application of '*as-samā*'' in both these senses is common, and recognized. Thus, the physical presence of deep space is identified as '*as-samā*'' and the atmosphere much lower than it has also been repeatedly termed as '*as-samā*'' in the Holy Qur'ān. As for the planets and stars being in the space, and not in the skies, the relevant investigative details, as coordinated with the verses of the Qur'ān and classical and modern astronomy, will Inshallah appear under our comments on the verse: تَبٰرَكَ الَّذِىْ جَعَلَ فِى السَّمَآءِ بُرُوجًا وَّجَعَلَ فِيهَا سِرَاجًا وَّقَمَرًا مُّنِيرًا (Blessed is He Who made in the sky stellar formations and made in it the Sun and the Moon providing light) of Sūrah Al-Furqān (25 :61).

Verses 17 - 18

وَحَفِظْنٰهَا مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْطٰنٍ رَّجِيْمٍ ﴿١٧﴾ اِلَّا مَنِ اسْتَرَقَ السَّمْعَ فَاَتْبَعَهٗ شِهَابٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿١٨﴾

... and have protected them from every outcast satan, [17] **but the one who tries to eavesdrop is chased by a clearly visible flame.** [18]

Commentary

The Meteor

The first thing these verses prove is that the satans have no access to the heavens. That Shayṭān the accursed was in the heavens at the time of the creation of Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام and that he deceived 'Ādam and Ḥawwā (Eve) عليهما السلام were events which took place before they appeared on the earth. Upto that time, the entry of the Jinns and satans in the heavens was not prohibited. It was after the coming down of Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام and the expulsion of the Shayṭān that this entry was banned. From what has been said in Sūrah Al-Jinn: اِنَّا كُنَّا نَقْعُدُ مِنْهَا مَقَاعِدَ لِلسَّمْعِ فَمَنْ يَّسْتَمِعِ الْاٰنَ يَجِدْ لَهٗ شِهَابًا رَّصَدًا (And we used to sit in ambush at places from it so as to eavesdrop. Whoever then tries to hear would find for him a flame in hot pursuit - 72:9), it appears that, before the coming of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, the satans could overhear about things happening in the heaven through the mutual conversation of angels. This does not necessarily imply that that the satans used to hear about such information by entering into the heavens. The first sentence of the verse quoted above: نَقْعُدُ مِنْهَا مَقَاعِدَ gives the sense that they would enter the atmospheric zone where clouds abound like thieves, would sit there in ambush and hear. These words themselves are indicative of no other possibility but that the entry of the Jinns and the satans had continued to be banned in the heavens - but, they would reach the outer atmosphere of the skies and hear a little by stealth. It was after the advent of the Prophet of Islam, peace and blessings be on him, that an additional arrangement was activated when the satans were stopped even from this covert eavesdropping through meteors or shooting stars (*Al-Shihāb Al-Thāqib*) which zoom in upon them from the outer space with enormous speed.

Now the question, as to how could the satans hear the conversation

of angels taking place inside the heavens while they were out of it, is not something just impossible. It is quite probable that the heavenly bodies not be prohibitive of the audition of sounds, and it is also not far out that the angels sometimes come lower down the heavens and engage themselves in some conversation hearing which the satans used to run. A Ḥadīth of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا appearing in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī confirms this very probability. She said that the angels sometimes come down as far as where the clouds are and talk about the heavenly happenings among themselves. It was in this atmospheric zone of the skies that the satans used to hide themselves in to hear this news. This furtive effort of theirs was stopped through Al-Shihāb Al-Thāqib, the shooting stars. Detailed comments on this subject will, Inshallah, appear in Sūrah Al-Jinn under our exegesis of the verse: اَنَّا كُنَّا نَقْعُدُ مِنْهَا مَقَاعِدَ لِلسَّمْعِ (72:9).

Now, the second question we have here is that of Al-Shihāb Al-Thāqib, meteors or shooting stars, in these verses. According to the statements of the Holy Qur'ān, it appears that these '*shihābs*' or flames are formed to hit the satans in order that the revelation remains protected. In other words, the satans are driven away through them so that they would not overhear angels.

The difficult part of the question relates to the fact that the presence of shooting stars in outer space is nothing new. Falling stars were seen even before the coming of the Holy Prophet ﷺ - and this phenomena continues later than that as well. If so, how can it be said that the shooting stars show up to drive the satans away, which is the particular feature of the age of the Holy Prophet ﷺ? Obviously, this seems to support the view of the scientists who say that meteors become so hot from rushing through the air that they glow and often burn up which gives onlookers the impression that a star has fallen. Therefore, in usage, this is identified as a falling star. The Arabic language itself has an expression: اِنقِضَاض الکوکب (*inqiḍāḍ al-kaukab*) which is a virtual synonym, of the falling of a star.

However, the answer is that there is no contradiction here. One or more scientific explanations for this phenomena could be possible, for example, vapours rising from the earth surface may heat up at some point, or the speed of the meteors makes them glow and burn, or a flame emits

from a star - and this may have habitually continued since ever. But, before the coming of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, these flames were not employed to serve a particular purpose. However, after his coming, meteoric flames were employed to serve the purpose of shooting the satans who would come up to stealthily hear the conversation of angels.

This is how 'Allāmah Al-'Ālūsī has interpreted it in Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī. There he reports that someone asked Imām Ẓuhrī, the Ḥadīth authority, that stars used to fall even before the coming of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. He said: "Yes." Thereupon, this person confronted him by quoting the verse cited above. Then he said: "The shooting stars, no doubt, did exist before - but, after the coming of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, when the satans were dealt with sternly, these were employed to drive them away."

In a Ḥadīth of the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim, there is a narration from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه which reports the saying of the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself on this subject. According to this report, he was sitting with a group of his Ṣaḥābah when they saw a star falling. He asked them: What did you take the falling of a star to be during the days of Jāhiliyyah, that is, before Islam? They said: We took it to be a sign of some major upheaval in the world, or that a prominent man would die, or be born. He said: This is absurd. It has nothing to do with someone's death or birth. As for these flames, they are thrown to dispel the satans.

To sum up, it can be said that the view of scientists about the shooting stars is also not contrary to the Qur'ān, and it is also not too far out to state that these flames were made to fall directly from some stars. Whichever way it is taken, the purpose of the Qur'ān stands proved clearly.

Verses 19 - 25

وَالْاَرْضَ مَدَدْنٰهَا وَاَلْقَيْنَا فِيْهَا رَوَاسِيَ وَاَنْۢبَتْنَا فِيْهَا مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ
مَّوْزُوْنٍ ﴿١٩﴾ وَجَعَلْنَا لَكُمْ فِيْهَا مَعَايِشَ وَمَنْ لَّسْتُمْ لَهٗ بِرٰزِقِيْنَ ﴿٢٠﴾
وَاِنْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ اِلَّا عِنْدَنَا خَزَآئِنُهٗ ۫ وَمَا نُنَزِّلُهٗ اِلَّا بِقَدَرٍ مَّعْلُوْمٍ ﴿٢١﴾
وَاَرْسَلْنَا الرِّيٰحَ لَوَاقِحَ فَاَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً فَاَسْقَيْنٰكُمُوْهُ ۚ وَمَآ اَنْتُمْ

لَهٗ بِخٰزِنِيْنَ ﴿٢٢﴾ وَاِنَّا لَنَحْنُ نُحْيٖ وَنُمِيْتُ وَنَحْنُ الْوٰرِثُوْنَ ﴿٢٣﴾ وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْنَا الْمُسْتَقْدِمِيْنَ مِنْكُمْ وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْنَا الْمُسْتَاْخِرِيْنَ ﴿٢٤﴾ وَاِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ يَحْشُرُهُمْ ؕ اِنَّهٗ حَكِيْمٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿٢٥﴾

And We have spread out the earth and placed therein mountains, and caused to grow therein everything in balance, [19] **and created therein sustenance for you, and those for whom you are not the sustainers.** [20] **There is nothing but We have treasures of it. And We do not send it down but in a determined quantity.** [21]

And We sent forth winds, loaded then sent down water from the sky and gave it to you to drink, and you are not able to store it. [22]

And We, only We give life and bring death and We are the ultimate inheritor (of everything). [23]

And We know those of you who went ahead, and We know those who remained behind. [24] **And surely, your Lord will gather them together. Surely, He is All-Wise, All-Knowing.** [25]

Commentary

Divine Wisdom: Balanced Provision for Human Needs

One sense of the expression: مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مَّوْزُوْنٍ (everything in balance - 19) is what has been taken in the present translation of the text, that is, it was in His infinite wisdom that He caused everything that grows to grow in a determined measure, not less than that which would have made life difficult, and not too much which would have also brought difficulties of a different nature. If grains like wheat and rice and the best of fruits around were to grow in such excess that stockpiles of them remain behind even after their liberal consumption by human beings and animals, then, it is obvious that they would go bad, or their possible storage (in ideal natural state) will be difficult under varying conditions, and if they had to be dumped, then, not much space will be left for such mega dumpings.

This tells us that it was also within the power of Allah Taʿālā that He would have caused grains and fruits on which human life depends to grow in such abundance that everyone would have them free everywhere

so much so that, despite their care-free use, stores upon stores of them would have kept lying around. But, this situation could have turned into a punishment for human beings, therefore, these were provided in a particular measure and balance so that their worth and value remains actively recognized, and that they are not left over only to go to waste either.

And this expression: مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مَّوْزُوْنٍ (everything in balance) could also be taken in the sense that Allah Ta'ālā has created everything that grows in a suitable and proportionate manner which gives it beauty and attraction. Trees are different, so are their trunks, branches, leaves, flowers and fruits. Different are their sizes, shapes, colours and tastes. What one readily sees is their happy balance and delightful looks. Everyone enjoys having them around. But, a full comprehension of the wisdom which has gone into their making is not possible for any human being.

Water Supply : The Unique Divine Arrangement

In verse 22, from: وَأَرْسَلْنَا الرِّيَاحَ (And We send forth winds ...) to: 'مَا أَنْتُمْ لَهُ بِخَزِنِيْنَ (and you are not able to store it), a hint has been given to this wise arrangement through which a formidable system has been established to provide water for all human beings, animals, cattle, birds and beasts who live on this earth as and when they need it. Under this arrangement, everyone gets water everywhere, under all conditions, as needed, for drinking or bathing or washing or for irrigating farms and trees. This is water at no cost. As for those who would spend to dig a well or put water pipes to receive the supply of water, they only pay for the means and facilities. No one can pay for even a drop of water, nor has anyone been asked to pay for it.

Mentioned first in the verse was how Divine power has set in motion its unique system of delivering water from the sea all over the earth by creating vapours in the sea which generated the substance of rains (the monsoons) and on top of it fanned the winds which would transform it into clouds making them as if they were mountain-like planes laden with water. Then, comes the task of having these giant planes carrying their cargo of water reach every nook and corner of the world where it must reach. And then this mission is accomplished directly under Divine command whereby these gigantic autoplanes would rain down a specific quantity of water over a specific area of the earth, as commanded.

In this manner, water from the sea is home-delivered to all inhabitants of the earth, human beings, and animals, wherever they may be. Then, this system takes care of seeing that an equally unique change is made in the taste and properties of the water being delivered. We know that Allah Taʻālā has, in His wisdom, made sea water so salty and brackish that tons and tons of salt is extracted and used from it. The element of wisdom behind it is that this great sea sphere which is home to millions and billions of life forms, and their burial place too where they die and disintegrate. Then, foul water from all over the earth (despite much publicized ecological concerns voiced by the polluters themselves) ultimately gets delivered in it. Had this been sweet water, it would have gone bad within a day, and its stench would have been so severe that it would have become a health hazard for the dwellers on land. Therefore, nature made it so acidly brackish that it would just burn up the filth which keeps reaching it from all over the world. So, it was based on this wise consideration that the sea water was made salty, rather brackish, which cannot be drunk or used to quench thirst. Certainly great is the Divine system which not only made water planes designed as clouds to carry the priceless treasures of water, but did much more when it activated its own desalination without the help of huge mechanized plants used for this purpose in our time. It only took the period of time from the rising of the monsoons until the rains fell down on the earth that salt from sea water separated and sweet water was what we got. A reference to this appears in Sūrah Al-Mursalāt (77:27) where it is said: وَّاَسْقَيْنٰكُمْ مَّآءً فُرَاتًا It means: We gave you water to drink which quenches thirst. The word: فُرَات (*furāt*) used here signifies thirst-quenching sweet water. In other words, the sense is that Allah has made the salty water of the sea go through His own desalination plant in the clouds and has arranged for you to have sweet drinking water out of water which was brackish.

The same subject occurs in Sūrah Al-Wāqiʻah (56:68-70) where it is said:

اَفَرَءَيْتُمُ الْمَآءَ الَّذِىْ تَشْرَبُوْنَ ءَاَنْتُمْ اَنْزَلْتُمُوْهُ مِنَ الْمُزْنِ اَمْ نَحْنُ الْمُنْزِلُوْنَ ـ لَوْنَشَآءُ جَعَلْنٰهُ اُجَاجًا فَلَوْ لَاتَشْكُرُوْنَ

You see the water you drink? Is it you who bring it down from the cloud, or are We the senders? If We had willed, We would have made it bitter. Why, then, would you not be grateful?

Upto this point, we have seen the spectacular manifestation of Divine power as to how it has picked up water from the sea, changed it into sweet water, and delivered it through clouds all over the world with such effeciency of management that it reached not only the human beings of every region but was also passed on to animals and wildlife which are not within the range of human inquiry. Water was, so to say, home-delivered to them - and free of cost too, in fact, they had to have it.

But, this arrangement does not solve the problem faced by human beings and animals because they need water every day, rather every moment. Therefore, one method of fulfilling their daily demand was to have rains come every day, twelve months a year. But, under this arrangement, their elemental need for water would have been taken care of to a certain degree, however, the disturbance they would have faced in other economic activities is not difficult to foresee, at least for those who have the experience. Constant rain, every day of the year, would have affected health and caused gridlocks in transportation, hazards in movement and sluggishness in business.

Also possible was a second method that there be enough rain in particular months of the year so that the water from it becomes sufficient for the rest of the months. But, this method would have required that everyone be assigned a quota of water which may be entrusted to each such person with the ground rule that they would keep the quota and share of water thus received under their personal custody.

Now, just imagine. If this was done, how could every human being have managed to assemble enough water containers of suitable sizes and capacities in which water needed for a period of three to six months could be stored? Even if, this could somehow be done, it goes without saying that this water would have gone bad within a few days drinking which, in fact, using which for some other purpose would have been out of the question. Therefore, Divine power introduced yet another unique system to preserve it and make it become available as and when and where needed. We see that some portion of the water rained down is immediately put to use when it helps farms and trees to bloom and human beings and animals to quench their thirst. Part of it gets deposited and preserved in open ponds and lakes. Then a greater portion of it is transformed into ice - a frozen sea - which is so conveniently put atop moun-

tain peaks. Neither dust, nor filth can touch it. Had this water remained in the liquid form, there would have been the danger of its being contaminated with dust or filth brought by the winds. May be birds and animals would have fallen into it, and died, which would have spoiled this water. But, what Divine power did was to take this treasure of water, turn it into a virtual sea of ice, and put it on top of the mountains from where it keeps seeping into the pores of the mountains and then becomes what streams are and thus it reaches everywhere. Places where there are no streams either, water keeps flowing under the earth surface like human veins in every region of the world. Dig a well, it would come out.

To sum up, this Divine system of water supply holds thousands of blessings in its fold. First of all, the creation of water is in itself a great blessing. Then, making it reach all regions of the earth is the second blessing. Then, making it potable is the third blessing. Then, giving human beings the opportunity to drink it is the fourth blessing. Then, the formidable system of collecting and preserving water according to its need is the fifth blessing. And then, giving men and women of this world the ability to benefit by it is the sixth blessing - because, despite water being available, there may be unwelcome circumstances or natural and man-made calamities due to which one may not remain capable enough to drink water. In the present verse of the Holy Qur'ān: فَاَسْقَيْنٰكُمُوْهُ وَمَآ اَنْتُمْ لَهٗ بِخٰزِنِيْنَ (and gave it to you to drink, and you are not able to store it - 22), a clear hint has been given to these blessings, and also a warning (to those who refuse to see truth as it is):

فَتَبَارَكَ اللّٰهُ اَحْسَنُ الْخَالِقِيْنَ

Blessed is Allah, the best of creators.

Going Ahead and Remaining Behind in Righteous Deeds : The Difference in Degrees

Some exegetic interpretations of the words: اَلْمُسْتَقْدِمِيْنَ (*al-mustaqdimīn*) : 'those who go ahead' and: اَلْمُسْتَاْخِرِيْنَ (*al-musta'khirīn*) : 'those who remain behind' appearing in verse 24: وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْنَا الْمُسْتَقْدِمِيْنَ مِنْكُمْ وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْنَا الْمُسْتَاْخِرِيْنَ have been variously reported from Tafsīr authorities among the Ṣaḥābah and Tābi'īn. These are:

1. 'Al-Mustaqdimīn' are those born to date, and 'Al-Musta'khirīn' are those not born yet [Qatādah and 'Ikrimah].

2. 'Al-Mustaqdimīn' means the dead, and 'Al-Musta'khirīn' means those alive till now [Ibn 'Abbās and Ḍaḥḥāk]

3. 'Al-Mustaqdimīn' signifies good people who came before the appearance of the Ummah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and 'Al-Mustakhirīn' refers to his Ummah itself [Mujāhid].

4. 'Al-Mustaqdimīn' denotes people who obey Allah and do good deeds while 'Al-Musta'khirīn' refers to people who disobey Him and neglect what is good [Ḥasan and Qatādah]

5. 'Al-Mustaqdimīn' are people who remain ahead in the rows of Ṣalāh, or in the front lines of Jihād, and in other righteous deeds - and 'Al-Musta'khirīn' are those who remain behind in these deeds of merit, stay in the rear rows and are used to being late [which is the Tafsīr given by leading authorities Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Sa'id ibn al-Musaiyyab, al-Qurṭubī, al-Sha'bī and others]

It is obvious that there is no distinct conflict or contradiction in these sayings, in the real sense. They can be accomodated all in one because the all-encompassing knowledge of Allah Ta'ālā covers all kinds of people 'who go ahead' or 'remain behind.'

In his Tafsīr, Al-Qurṭubī has said that this verse indicates the merit of performing Ṣalāh in the first row, and soon after the time it becomes due. This is in accordance with the Ḥadīth where the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said: If people were to find out the enormous merit of calling the Adhān and standing in the first row of Ṣalāh, everyone would have started making the effort to necessarily stand in the first row, and when there would remain no space for everybody to stand there, lots would have to be drawn.

With this, Al-Qurṭubī has also reported the saying of Sayyidnā Ka'b رضي الله عنه : 'There are some people in this Ummah who, when they put their forehead on the ground for their Sajdah, forgiveness is granted to all those who are praying behind them.' Therefore, Sayyidnā Ka'b رضي الله عنه liked to be in the last row in the hope that 'perhaps, there may be in the front rows, some servant of Allah of the class, because of whose *barakah* (blissful presence), I may be forgiven.'

What is apparent here is that real merit does lie in praying in the

first row - as stands proved from the clear statements of the Qur'ān and Sunnah. But, a person who does not, for some reason, find a place in the first row, then, he too will have a sort of merit in that there may perhaps be some righteous servant of Allah praying in the front rows for whose sake, he too may be forgiven. And the way praying in the first row of Ṣalāh stands proved from this verse, also proved is the superiority of being in the front lines of Jihād.

Verses 26 - 44

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنسَانَ مِن صَلْصَالٍ مِّنْ حَمَإٍ مَّسْنُونٍ ﴿٢٦﴾ وَالْجَانَّ
خَلَقْنَاهُ مِن قَبْلُ مِن نَّارِ السَّمُومِ ﴿٢٧﴾ وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي
خَالِقٌ بَشَرًا مِّن صَلْصَالٍ مِّنْ حَمَإٍ مَّسْنُونٍ ﴿٢٨﴾ فَإِذَا سَوَّيْتُهُ
وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِن رُّوحِي فَقَعُوا لَهُ سَاجِدِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾ فَسَجَدَ الْمَلَائِكَةُ
كُلُّهُمْ أَجْمَعُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾ إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ أَبَىٰ أَن يَكُونَ مَعَ السَّاجِدِينَ ﴿٣١﴾
قَالَ يَا إِبْلِيسُ مَا لَكَ أَلَّا تَكُونَ مَعَ السَّاجِدِينَ ﴿٣٢﴾ قَالَ لَمْ أَكُن
لِّأَسْجُدَ لِبَشَرٍ خَلَقْتَهُ مِن صَلْصَالٍ مِّنْ حَمَإٍ مَّسْنُونٍ ﴿٣٣﴾ قَالَ
فَاخْرُجْ مِنْهَا فَإِنَّكَ رَجِيمٌ ﴿٣٤﴾ وَإِنَّ عَلَيْكَ اللَّعْنَةَ إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ
﴿٣٥﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ فَأَنظِرْنِي إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾ قَالَ فَإِنَّكَ مِنَ
الْمُنظَرِينَ ﴿٣٧﴾ إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ الْوَقْتِ الْمَعْلُومِ ﴿٣٨﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ بِمَا أَغْوَيْتَنِي
لَأُزَيِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَأُغْوِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿٣٩﴾ إِلَّا عِبَادَكَ مِنْهُمُ
الْمُخْلَصِينَ ﴿٤٠﴾ قَالَ هَٰذَا صِرَاطٌ عَلَيَّ مُسْتَقِيمٌ ﴿٤١﴾ إِنَّ عِبَادِي
لَيْسَ لَكَ عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطَانٌ إِلَّا مَنِ اتَّبَعَكَ مِنَ الْغَاوِينَ ﴿٤٢﴾ وَإِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ
لَمَوْعِدُهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿٤٣﴾ لَهَا سَبْعَةُ أَبْوَابٍ لِّكُلِّ بَابٍ مِّنْهُمْ جُزْءٌ
مَّقْسُومٌ ﴿٤٤﴾

And We created man from a sound-giving clay made of decayed mud. [26] **And "the Jānn" (the first Jinn) We had**

created earlier from the fire of the hot wind. [27] **And (remember) when your Lord said to the angels, "I am going to create a human being from a sound-giving clay made of decayed mud.** [28] **And when I form him perfect and blow in him of My spirit, you fall down before him, prostrating."** [29] **So the angels prostrated, all together,** [30] **except Iblīs. He refused to be among those who prostrated.** [31] **He (Allah) said, "O Iblīs, what is wrong with you that you did not join those who prostrated?"** [32] **He said, "I am not the one to prostrate before a human being whom You have created from a sound-giving clay made of decayed mud."** [33] **He said, "Then, get out from here for you are an outcast.** [34] **And upon you is the curse upto the day of Judgement."** [35] **He said, "O my Lord, then give me respite upto the day they (the dead) shall be raised."** [36] **He (Allah) said, "Well, you are among those given respite** [37] **till the day of the appointed time."** [38] **He said, "My Lord, since You made me go astray, I swear I shall adorn for them (evils) on the earth and shall lead all of them astray,** [39] **except those of Your servants from among them who are chosen (by You)."** [40] **He (Allah) said, "To Me, it is the straight path.** [41] **My servants are such that you have no power over them except those who follow you from the deviators.** [42] **And the Jahannam (Hell) is the promised place for them all.** [43] **It has seven gates. For each gate there is a group apportioned from them."** [44]

Commentary

Blowing of Spirit into the Human Body and Making Angels Prostrate to him : A Brief Review

Is the spirit (*Rūḥ*) a physical entity, or pure essence? On this subject, there has been a difference of opinion among the learned since a long time. According to Ash-Shaykh 'Abd Al-Raūf Al-Munāwī, there are upto a thousand positions taken by them. But, they are all based on conjectures. None of them can be called certain. Imām Al-Ghazālī, Imām Rāzī and mystic scholars and thinkers maintain that it is no physical entity. It is pure essence. Imām Rāzī has advanced twelve arguments in support of this view.

But, the majority of the 'Ulamā' of the Muslim Ummah declare Rūḥ (spirit, soul) to be a highly refined physical entity. The word: نفخ (*nafkh*) means to blow, to breathe into. If we were to go by the consensus of the

majority of 'Ulamā' and take Rūḥ to be a refined physical entity, then breathing into it becomes evident by itself. And if we were to accept it to be pure essence, then breathing into it would mean establishing its connection to the body. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Rūḥ (spirit) and *Nafs* (self) : The View of Qāḍī Thanā'ullah رحمه الله تعالى

Leaving this long-winding debate aside, we consider it sufficient to refer the reader to a special research presented by Qāḍī Thanā'ullah Panīpatī رحمه الله تعالى in his Tafsīr Maẓharī.

The respected commentator says that Rūḥ has two kinds: (1) Higher (*'Ulwī*) and (2) Lower (*Siflī*). The higher Rūḥ is bereft of matter and is a creation of Allah Ta'ālā the comprehension of whose reality is difficult. The masters of insight by illumination (*ahl al-kashf*) see its real station to be above the Throne (*'Arsh*) because it is more refined than the 'Arsh. And this higher Rūḥ, as seen through illumination, is sensed in five degrees at upper and lower levels. Their number is five and they are: (1) The heart (*Qalb*) (2) The spirit (*Rūḥ*) (3) The mystery (*Sirr*) (4) The secret (*Khafii*) (5) The most secret (*Akhfā*). These are all from the refinements of the domain of Divine command towards which the Holy Qur'ān has hinted by declaring: قُلِ الرُّوحُ مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّي (Say, "The spirit is from the command of my Lord - 17:85).

As for the lower Rūḥ, it is a refined vapour which emerges from the combination of the four elements of the human body, that is, from fire, water, dust and air, and this lower Rūḥ is called the self (*nafs*).

Allah Ta'ālā has made this lower spirit called self a mirror of the higher spirits mentioned above. An illustration would make it clear. If we were to hold a mirror against the sun, then, despite that the sun is far far away, its reflection comes into the mirror. And because of the light, that too starts glowing like the sun. It even receives the heat of the sun in it which could burn a piece of cloth. The same thing applies to the higher spirits. Though they are, because of their purity and detachment, very high and elevated in station, and far distant too, yet their reflection appears in the mirror of the lower spirit and transfers the states and effects of the higher spirits into it. When these very effects take root in human selves, they become known as subordinate parts of each individual's spirit.

Then, this lower form of spirit which is identified as Nafs or self armed with the states and effects which it has acquired from the higher forms of spirits first gets connected with the heart muscle of the human body. This connection itself is another name for life. Once the lower spirit relates to the human heart, it infuses in it life and congnitions which it has acquired from the higher spirits. This lower spirit then starts circulating through the thin veins spread throughout the body and thus reaches every part of it.

It is this infusion of the lower spirit into the human body which has been called the 'blowing or breathing of the spirit' (نفخ الروح : the *nafkh* of *rūḥ*) because it bears close resemblance to blowing or breathing into something.

And, in the present verse, Allah Ta'ālā has attributed the spirit to Himself. He has said: 'مِن رُّوحِى' (from My spirit) so that the superior status of the human spirit out of the entire creation becomes evident - because, it has come into existence, without any material substance, only under Divine command. In addition to that, it has a unique ability to accept and absorb the manifestations of Divine light, an ability which does not exist in the spirit of any other living creature other than that of the human person.

Though, dust is the dominant element in the creation of man - and that is why the creation of man has been attributed to clay - but, the reality is that man is a combination of ten elements out of which five belong to the universe of creation (عالم الخلق) while the other five to the universe of Divine command (عالم الأمر). The four elements of the universe of creation are fire, water, dust and air. The fifth is the refined vapour from these four which is called the lower spirit or *nafs*. As for the five elements of the universe of Divine command mentioned above, they are: (1) heart (*qalb*) (2) spirit (*rūḥ*) (3) mystery (*sirr*) (4) secret (*khafiyy*) (5) totally hidden (*akhfa*).

It is because of this comprehensive making of the human model that man became deserving of Divine vice-regency, and very much capable of absorbing the light which helps him know his Lord and, of course, sustaining his own burning quest on the path of love and longing for Him. The outcome, though unspecified as to its actual state, is communion

with the Divine because the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said: ' اَلْمَرْءُ مَعَ مَنْ اَحَبَّ ' (One shall be with whoever one loves).

And since human beings have the ability to absorb the manifestations of Divine light, and since they have been given the honour of being in communion with the Divine, it came to be the dictate of Divine wisdom that man be made the object of prostration by the angels. It was said: 'فَقَعُوْا لَهٗ سٰجِدِيْنَ' (you fall down before him, prostrating - 29)

The Command to Prostrate was Given to Angels - Iblīs was to Follow Suit

Addressing Iblīs in Sūrah Al-A'rāf, it was said: مَامَنَعَكَ اَلاَّ تَسْجُدَ اِذْ اَمَرْتُكَ (What stopped you from prostrating when I ordered you? - 7:12). This shows that the command to prostrate was given, alongwith the angels, to Iblīs as well. However, the verses you have gone through a little earlier apparently give the sense that the command was particular to the angels. This could mean that the command was originally given to the angels but, as Iblīs too was present among the angels, therefore, he too was covered by this command as a corollary - because, when the command went forth for the most august creation of Allah Ta'ālā, that is, the angels, that they pay their homage to Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام, it was obvious that any other creation was bound to follow suit under this command. It was for this reason that Iblīs did not respond by saying that he was never asked to prostrate to begin with, so he could not be charged with the crime of non-compliance of the order. Perhaps, the words of the Qur'ān here: ' اَبٰىٓ اَنْ يَّكُوْنَ مَعَ السّٰجِدِيْنَ ' (He refused to be among those who prostrated - 30) may contain a hint in that direction. Rather than say: اَبٰىٓ اَنْ يَّسْجُدَ that is, 'he refused to prostrate', what was actually said was: ' اَبٰىٓ اَنْ يَّكُوْنَ مَعَ السّٰجِدِيْنَ ' he refused to be among those who prostrated. This indicates that the main prostraters were after all the angels but Iblīs too, being present with them, was reason-bound to join the prostrating angels. So, the Divine wrath was against his failure to join.

The Meaning of Shayṭān Having No Power over Special Servants of Allah

From the verse: اِنَّ عِبَادِىْ لَيْسَ لَكَ عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطٰنٌ (My servants are such that you have no power over them - 42), we learn that there are special and chosen servants of Allah Ta'ālā who are not affected by Satanic deception. But, within this event relating to Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام, it has also been

said that the deception of Satan worked in the case of Sayyidnā 'Ādam and Ḥawwā'. Similarly, about the noble Companions, the Qur'ān has said: إِنَّمَا اسْتَزَلَّهُمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ بِبَعْضِ مَا كَسَبُوْا (Satan had but made them slip for some of their deeds - 3:155) which tells us that there was an occasion (during the Battle of Uḥud) when the evil plan of the Satan worked against the Companions as well.

Therefore, in the present verse, the sense of saying that the special servants of Allah are such that Satan has no power over them is that their hearts and minds never come under the power and sway of Satan to the extent that would just not become alerted to their error at all, because of which, they would remain deprived of necessary repentance for ever, or that they fall into some sin the forgiveness of which would become impossible.

As for the events mentioned above, they offer no contradiction because 'Ādam and Ḥawwā' عليهما السلام made their Taubah and this repentance was accepted. Similarly, the noble Companions referred to above had also made their Taubah. Thus, whatever sin they fell into because of the mechanization of Satan was forgiven.

The Seven Gates of Jahannam

About the statement: لَهَا سَبْعَةُ أَبْوَابٍ (It has seven gates - 44), according to a narration of Sayyidnā 'Alī ﷺ reported by Imām Aḥmad, Ibn Jarīr Al-Ṭabarī and Al-Baihaqī, the seven gates of Jahannam (Hell) are in terms of seven levels, one upon the other. Some others have taken these as common gates where every gate will be reserved for a special kind of sinners. (Qurṭubī)

Verses 45 - 50

إِنَّ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ فِيْ جَنّٰتٍ وَّعُيُوْنٍ ﴿٤٥﴾ اُدْخُلُوْهَا بِسَلٰمٍ اٰمِنِيْنَ ﴿٤٦﴾
وَنَزَعْنَا مَا فِيْ صُدُوْرِهِمْ مِّنْ غِلٍّ اِخْوَانًا عَلٰى سُرُرٍ مُّتَقٰبِلِيْنَ ﴿٤٧﴾
لَا يَمَسُّهُمْ فِيْهَا نَصَبٌ وَّمَا هُمْ مِّنْهَا بِمُخْرَجِيْنَ ﴿٤٨﴾ نَبِّئْ عِبَادِيْٓ اَنِّيْٓ
اَنَا الْغَفُوْرُ الرَّحِيْمُ ﴿٤٩﴾ وَاَنَّ عَذَابِيْ هُوَ الْعَذَابُ الْاَلِيْمُ ﴿٥٠﴾

Surely, the God-fearing are in Gardens and streams: [45]

"Enter here in peace, free of fear." [46] **And We shall have removed whatever grudge they had in their hearts (making them) brothers, sitting on couches, face to face.** [47] **No weariness shall touch them nor will they be expelled from there.** [48]

Tell My servants that I am the Most-Forgiving, the Very-Merciful [49] **and that My punishment is the painful punishment.** [50]

Commentary

According to Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ؓ, when the people of Jannah will enter Jannah, first of all two streams of water will be presented before them. They will drink water from the first stream and all mutual grudges they had from their life in the mortal world - the effect of which naturally survived right through the end - will be totally washed away. In its place, they all will feel love for each other in their hearts because mutual bickering too is virtually a pain and punishment as such, and Jannah is free of all pain.

As for the report appearing in Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth: 'Anyone who nurses the least grudge in his heart against a Muslim will not go to Jannah,' it means the grudge and malice which is rooted in material ends, and is there by one's personal intention and choice, and because of which this person keeps looking for an opportunity to inflict pain or loss on his enemy. Being ill at ease in someone's company as a matter of natural temperament, a human trait beyond one's control, is not included here. Similar is the case of what is based on some Islamic legal ground. It is this kind of grudge which has been referred to in this verse and where it has been said that such grudge and temperamental distaste will be removed from their hearts.

It is about this kind of grudge that Sayyidnā 'Alī ؓ said: "I hope that I shall be, alongwith Ṭalḥa and Zubayr, among those the dust of mutual anxiety from whose hearts will be removed while entering Jannah." The reference here is to the difference of opinion and resulting conflict which took place between Sayyidnā Ṭalḥa ؓ and Sayyidnā Zubayr ؓ and Sayyidnā 'Alī ؓ.

From verse 48: لَا يَمَسُّهُمْ فِيهَا نَصَبٌ وَّمَا هُمْ مِّنْهَا بِمُخْرَجِينَ (No weariness shall touch them therein nor will they be expelled from there), we learn about

two features of Jannah: (1) No one shall ever feel tired or weak. This is contrary to what happens in our mortal world where hard work naturally results in fatigue. In fact, even a state of total rest and fun would sometimes tire a person out, no matter how enjoyable are things one is occupied with.

(2) The other feature of Jannah we discover is that the blessings once received there shall be eternal. These blessings shall never diminish nor shall anyone be expelled from there. In Sūrah Ṣād, it was said: إِنَّ هٰذَا لَرِزْقُنَا مَا لَهٗ مِنْ نَّفَادٍ (This is sustenance provided by Us which is never to exhaust - 38:54). And in the present verse, it was said: وَمَا هُمْ مِّنْهَا بِمُخْرَجِيْنَ (nor will they be expelled from there) that is, they shall never be deprived of the state of bliss bestowed upon them. This is contrary to the affairs of the mortal world where the recepient of the best of conveniences lives under the apprehension that the giver of the facilities may become displeased with him one of those days and expel him out.

As for the third probability, that the blessings of Jannah may remain everlasting, nor one is expelled from there, but one may himself get bored by living there and wish to go out, the Qur'ān has demolished this probability in one sentence of Sūrah Al-Kahf with the following words: لَا يَبْغُوْنَ عَنْهَا حِوَلًا (That is, these people too would never seek to return from there - 18:108).

Verses 51 - 77

وَنَبِّئْهُمْ عَنْ ضَيْفِ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ ﴿٥١﴾ اِذْ دَخَلُوْا عَلَيْهِ فَقَالُوْا سَلٰمًا ؕ قَالَ اِنَّا
مِنْكُمْ وَجِلُوْنَ ﴿٥٢﴾ قَالُوْا لَا تَوْجَلْ اِنَّا نُبَشِّرُكَ بِغُلٰمٍ عَلِيْمٍ ﴿٥٣﴾ قَالَ
اَبَشَّرْتُمُوْنِيْ عَلٰٓى اَنْ مَّسَّنِيَ الْكِبَرُ فَبِمَ تُبَشِّرُوْنَ ﴿٥٤﴾ قَالُوْا بَشَّرْنٰكَ
بِالْحَقِّ فَلَا تَكُنْ مِّنَ الْقٰنِطِيْنَ ﴿٥٥﴾ قَالَ وَمَنْ يَّقْنَطُ مِنْ رَّحْمَةِ رَبِّهٖٓ اِلَّا
الضَّآلُّوْنَ ﴿٥٦﴾ قَالَ فَمَا خَطْبُكُمْ اَيُّهَا الْمُرْسَلُوْنَ ﴿٥٧﴾ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّآ
اُرْسِلْنَآ اِلٰى قَوْمٍ مُّجْرِمِيْنَ ﴿٥٨﴾ اِلَّآ اٰلَ لُوْطٍ ؕ اِنَّا لَمُنَجُّوْهُمْ اَجْمَعِيْنَ
﴿٥٩﴾ اِلَّا امْرَاَتَهٗ قَدَّرْنَآ ۙ اِنَّهَا لَمِنَ الْغٰبِرِيْنَ ﴿٦٠﴾ فَلَمَّا جَآءَ اٰلَ لُوْطِ

الْمُرْسَلُوْنَ ﴿٦١﴾ قَالَ اِنَّكُمْ قَوْمٌ مُّنْكَرُوْنَ ﴿٦٢﴾ قَالُوْا بَلْ جِئْنٰكَ بِمَا
كَانُوْا فِيْهِ يَمْتَرُوْنَ ﴿٦٣﴾ وَاَتَيْنٰكَ بِالْحَقِّ وَاِنَّا لَصٰدِقُوْنَ ﴿٦٤﴾ فَاَسْرِ
بِاَهْلِكَ بِقِطْعٍ مِّنَ الَّيْلِ وَاتَّبِعْ اَدْبَارَهُمْ وَلَا يَلْتَفِتْ مِنْكُمْ اَحَدٌ وَّامْضُوْا
حَيْثُ تُؤْمَرُوْنَ ﴿٦٥﴾ وَقَضَيْنَآ اِلَيْهِ ذٰلِكَ الْاَمْرَ اَنَّ دَابِرَ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ مَقْطُوْعٌ
مُّصْبِحِيْنَ ﴿٦٦﴾ وَجَآءَ اَهْلُ الْمَدِيْنَةِ يَسْتَبْشِرُوْنَ ﴿٦٧﴾ قَالَ اِنَّ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ
ضَيْفِيْ فَلَا تَفْضَحُوْنِ ﴿٦٨﴾ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَلَا تُخْزُوْنِ ﴿٦٩﴾ قَالُوْٓا اَوَلَمْ
نَنْهَكَ عَنِ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٧٠﴾ قَالَ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ بَنٰتِيْٓ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ فٰعِلِيْنَ ﴿٧١﴾
لَعَمْرُكَ اِنَّهُمْ لَفِيْ سَكْرَتِهِمْ يَعْمَهُوْنَ ﴿٧٢﴾ فَاَخَذَتْهُمُ الصَّيْحَةُ
مُشْرِقِيْنَ ﴿٧٣﴾ فَجَعَلْنَا عَالِيَهَا سَافِلَهَا وَاَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ حِجَارَةً مِّنْ
سِجِّيْلٍ ﴿٧٤﴾ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّلْمُتَوَسِّمِيْنَ ﴿٧٥﴾ وَاِنَّهَا لَبِسَبِيْلٍ
مُّقِيْمٍ ﴿٧٦﴾ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيَةً لِّلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿٧٧﴾

And tell them about the guests of Ibrāhīm. [51] **When they visited him, they greeted him with Salām (peace on you). He said, "We are scared of you."** [52] **They said, "Do not be scared. We give you good news of a boy who will be knowledgeable."** [53] **He said, "Do you give me the good news while old age has befallen me? So what is the good news you are giving to me?"** [54] **They said, "We have given to you the good news of a fact. So do not be among those who lose hope."** [55] **He said, "Who would lose hope in the mercy of his Lord except those who have lost the straight path?"** [56] **He said, "Then, what is your mission, O messengers?"** [57] **They said, "We have been sent to a sinful people,** [58] **except the family of Lūṭ - all of whom we shall save,** [59] **but his wife. We have ordained that she is to be among those who will remain behind."** [60]

So when the messengers came to the family of Lūṭ, [61] **he said, "you are an unusual people."** [62] **They said, "No, but we have brought to you what they have been doubting in.** [63] **And we have come to you with a definite matter and surely we are truthful.** [64] **So, carry your family**

after a part of the night (has passed) and follow them at the rear and no one from you should look back and keep going to where you are commanded." [65] **And We revealed to him the fact that they are to be annihilated to the last man when they see the morning.** [66]

And the people of the city came rejoicing. [67] **He (Lūṭ) said, "They are my guests; so do not put me to shame** [68] **and fear Allah and do not disgrace me."** [69] **They said, "Had we not forbidden you from (being the guardian of) the whole world?"** [70] **He said, "These are my daughters, (for marriage) if you are to do so."** [71]

By your life, (O prophet) they are wandering blindly in their intoxication (misguidance). [72] **So, they were seized by the Cry at sunrise.** [73] **Then, We turned it (the city) upside down and sent over them rain of stones made of clay.** [74]

Surely, in that there are signs for those who read signs. [75] **And surely, it (their city) is located on the straight road.** [76] **Surely, in it there are signs for the believers.** [77]

Commentary

A Great Honour for the Holy Prophet ﷺ

About the word of Allah: لَعَمْرُكَ (*la'amruk* : By your life), the majority of commentators, as reported in Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī, have said that the addressee of *'la'amruka'* is the Holy Prophet ﷺ. It is his life that Allah Ta'ālā has sworn by. Al-Baihaqī in Dalā'ilun-Nubūwwah, and Abū Nu'aym, Ibn Marduwayh and others have reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه that Allah Ta'ālā has not bestowed on anyone in the whole creation an honour and rank higher than that of Sayyidnā Muhammad al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ. This is the reason why Allah Ta'ālā has never sworn by the life of any prophet or angel, while in this verse, He has sworn by the age and life of the Holy Prophet ﷺ - which is the highest conceivable honour and deference accorded to him.

Swearing by Non-Allah

To swear by anyone or anything, other than the names and attributes of Allah Ta'ālā, is not permissible for any human being because one would only swear by whoever is held in the highest of esteem - and, as obvious, Allah alone can be the highest.

According to Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: Do not swear by your mothers, fathers and idols. And do not swear by anyone except Allah - and if you have to swear by Allah, do it only when you are truthful in your statement. (Reported by Abū Dāwūd and An-Nasā'ī from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ؓ)

It appears in the Ṣaḥīḥayn (the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī and the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim) that the Holy Prophet ﷺ once saw Sayyidnā 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb ؓ swearing by his father. He called out to him and said: 'Watch out! Allah Ta'ālā forbids swearing by fathers. Whoever has to take an oath, let him do it in the name of Allah, otherwise, let him be silent. (Al-Qurṭubī under the commentary on Sūrah al-Mā'idah)

But, this injunction applies to Allah's creation in general. As for Allah Ta'ālā Himelf, He swears by different things He has created. This is particular to Him. Its purpose is to state the sublimity and beneficence of something from the desired angle. Then, the cause of forbidding common people from swearing by anyone other than Allah is not present here - because, in the Word of Allah there is no probability that He would take someone from His creation to be the highest and the best. Again, the reason is that absolute greatness is particular only with Allah Ta'ālā.

Learn Your Essential Lesson From Sites Ruined by Divine Punishment

In verses 75 and 76: إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَٰتٍ لِّلْمُتَوَسِّمِينَ ﴿٧٥﴾ وَإِنَّهَا لَبِسَبِيلٍ مُّقِيمٍ ﴿٧٦﴾ (Surely, in that there are signs for those who read signs. And surely, it [their city] is located on the straight road), Allah Ta'ālā has pointed out to the geographical location of such ruined cities which fall on the main road which takes people from Arabia to Syria. Also said with it was that in them there are great signs of the perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā for those who believe and have the necessary hindsight and foresight.

About this, there is another statement in Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ where it was said: لَمْ تُسْكَنْ مِّنْ بَعْدِهِمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا (not lived in after them except a little - 28:58). In other words, after their destruction by Divine punishment, these habitations were not repopulated except some. So, by combining these indicators, we can see that Allah Ta'ālā has made these ruined habitations and homes a site from which coming generations could learn

their essential lesson.

This is the reason why the Holy Prophet ﷺ, whenever he has passed by these sites, went through a particular emotional state under which he would be overwhelmed by the awe of Almighty Allah and which caused his blessed head to lower down and he would then try to make his mount hasten through these sites. This particular mode of action taken by the Holy Prophet ﷺ has established the *sunnah* that making sites which have been hit by Divine punishment a place of picnic and amusement is hard-heartedness at its ugliest. Rather than do something like that, the only method of learning a lesson from them is to think about and feel the very presence of the most perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā on the site being visited which should cause one to tremble with the fear of His punishment.

The habitations of the time of Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام which were overturned are located, as said by the Qur'ān, on the Arabia-Syria route. This site is still present in the proximity of Jordan in the form of a wilderness below the sea level. On a major portion, flows a particular kind of water like a river. Sea life cannot survive here. Therefore, it is called the Dead Sea or the Sea of Lūṭ.

The local Department of Archaeology has set up some hotels and residential quarters at this site to attract tourists. The result is that people with an incorrigible infatuation with the material and who are equally dismissive of the concerns of the Hereafter have made this site a place of fun and frolic. People go there to enjoy the sights of the ancient. Lest such heedlessness becomes a habit, the Holy Qur'ān has served a warning towards the end by saying: إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ (Surely, in it there are signs for the believers). It means: In reality, these sites and the events associated with them are full of moral lessons for everyone having insight. But, it is the good fortune of believers only who would benefit by learning what these sites teach, while others would go through these sites as tourists and leave empty-handed.

Verses 78 - 86

وَإِنْ كَانَ أَصْحٰبُ الْأَيْكَةِ لَظٰلِمِينَ ﴿٧٨﴾ فَانْتَقَمْنَا مِنْهُمْ ۘ وَإِنَّهُمَا

لَبِاِمَامٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿٧٩﴾ وَلَقَدْ كَذَّبَ اَصْحٰبُ الْحِجْرِ الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ ﴿٨٠﴾
وَاٰتَيْنٰهُمْ اٰيٰتِنَا فَكَانُوْا عَنْهَا مُعْرِضِيْنَ ﴿٨١﴾ وَكَانُوْا يَنْحِتُوْنَ مِنَ
الْجِبَالِ بُيُوْتًا اٰمِنِيْنَ ﴿٨٢﴾ فَاَخَذَتْهُمُ الصَّيْحَةُ مُصْبِحِيْنَ ﴿٨٣﴾ فَمَآ
اَغْنٰى عَنْهُمْ مَّا كَانُوْا يَكْسِبُوْنَ ﴿٨٤﴾ وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ
وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَآ اِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ ط وَاِنَّ السَّاعَةَ لَاٰتِيَةٌ فَاصْفَحِ الصَّفْحَ الْجَمِيْلَ
﴿٨٥﴾ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ الْخَلّٰقُ الْعَلِيْمُ ﴿٨٦﴾

And, indeed, the people of Aikah were transgressors. [78] **So, We punished them in retribution and both of them are (situated) by a highway, clearly visible.** [79]

And the people of Al-Ḥijr did belie the messengers. [80] **And We provided them with Our signs yet they kept turning away from them.** [81] **They would hew out houses from the hills, in peace.** [82] **Then, the Cry seized them by the morning.** [83] **So, whatever they earned did not come to their help.** [84]

And We did not create the heavens and the earth and whatever is there in between them but with truth. And the Hour is sure to come. Therefore, overlook in a gracious manner. [85] **Surely, your Lord is the Master - Creator, the All-Knowing.** [86]

Commentary

Aikah means a dense forest. There are other views too. Some commentators say that there was a dense forest near Madyan, therefore, Aikah is actually the title of the people of Madyan. Others have said that the people of Aikah and the people of Madyan were two different people. It was after the destruction of one of them that Sayyidnā Shu'ayb عليه السلام was sent to the other.

In Tafsīr Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī, the following *marfū' ḥadīth* appears with reference to Ibn 'Asākir:

اِنَّ مَدْيَنَ وَاَصْحَابَ الْاَيْكَةِ اُمَّتَانِ بَعَثَ اللّٰهُ تَعَالٰى اِلَيْهِمَا شُعَيْبًا

Madyan and the people of Aikah are two peoples. Allah Ta'ālā sent Shu'ayb to them.

And Al-Ḥijr is a valley situated in between Ḥijāz and Syria. It was inhabited by the people of Thamūd.

A Brief Explanation

Described at the beginning of the Sūrah was the hostility of the disbelievers of Makkah against the Holy Prophet ﷺ which also carried words of comfort for him briefly. Now, at the end of the Sūrah, more words of comfort appear to mollify his concern about their grudge and hostility.

Here, he is being asked not to grieve over their hostile opposition because there is a day when all scores will be settled, and that is the day of Judgement, and it is bound to come as he has been told. Then, there is the fact that Allah did not create the heavens and the earth and whatever is there in between them but with truth and wisdom. The wise consideration behind this creation is that people should believe in the existence of the maker of the universe, attest to His Oneness and supremacy and obey His injunctions. Also present there is the consequence of not doing so, after the argument of Allah stands established, that the defaulter be punished. Since this promised punishment does not seem to come in full right here in this mortal world, it has to be somewhere else. For that, the time is fixed, the time of the Qiyāmah, the day of Judgement. And this Hour is sure to come. Everyone will be taken care of there.

This being the wise arrangement of things, let him not grieve. The better course for him is to overlook their wicked behaviour in a gracious manner, that is, neither pay attention to their behavior nor complain about it. The reason is that his Lord is great as Creator and great as the Master Knower as well. He knows his patience and fortitude and He knows the evil mechanizations of his enemies too. Therefore, He is to exact the full return from them of what they have been doing.

Verses 87 - 99

وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنٰكَ سَبْعًا مِّنَ الْمَثَانِيْ وَالْقُرْاٰنَ الْعَظِيْمَ ﴿٨٧﴾ لَا تَمُدَّنَّ عَيْنَيْكَ
اِلٰى مَا مَتَّعْنَا بِهٖٓ اَزْوَاجًا مِّنْهُمْ وَلَا تَحْزَنْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَاخْفِضْ جَنَاحَكَ
لِلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿٨٨﴾ وَقُلْ اِنِّيْٓ اَنَا النَّذِيْرُ الْمُبِيْنُ ﴿٨٩﴾ كَمَآ اَنْزَلْنَا عَلَى
الْمُقْتَسِمِيْنَ ﴿٩٠﴾ الَّذِيْنَ جَعَلُوا الْقُرْاٰنَ عِضِيْنَ ﴿٩١﴾ فَوَرَبِّكَ

لَنَسْـَٔلَنَّهُمْ اَجْمَعِيْنَ ﴿٩٢﴾ عَمَّا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٩٣﴾ فَاصْدَعْ بِمَا تُؤْمَرُ وَاَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ ﴿٩٤﴾ اِنَّا كَفَيْنٰكَ الْمُسْتَهْزِءِيْنَ ﴿٩٥﴾ الَّذِيْنَ يَجْعَلُوْنَ مَعَ اللّٰهِ اِلٰهًا اٰخَرَ ۚ فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٩٦﴾ وَلَقَدْ نَعْلَمُ اَنَّكَ يَضِيْقُ صَدْرُكَ بِمَا يَقُوْلُوْنَ ﴿٩٧﴾ فَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ وَكُنْ مِّنَ السّٰجِدِيْنَ ﴿٩٨﴾ وَاعْبُدْ رَبَّكَ حَتّٰى يَاْتِيَكَ الْيَقِيْنُ ﴿٩٩﴾

And We have given you the seven oft-repeated verses and the glorious Qur'ān. [87] **Never stretch your eyes towards what We have given to groups of them to enjoy and do not grieve for them, and be kind to believers in humbleness.** [88] **And say, "I am the one who warns clearly (against punishment)** [89] **as We sent down upon the schismatics** [90] **who split the Qur'ān into bits.** [91] **So, by your Lord, We shall question them all,** [92] **about what they have been doing.** [93]

Now, proclaim what you are commanded to and turn away from the *mushriks* (polytheists). [94] **Surely, We are sufficient for you against those who deride,** [95] **those who take to another god alongwith Allah. So, they shall soon learn.** [96] **And We know that your heart feels distressed for what they say.** [97] **So, proclaim the purity, and glory of your Lord and be among those who prostrate.** [98] **And worship your Lord until comes to you that which is certain.** [99]

Commentary

Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah is the Text and Summary of the Whole Qur'ān

That Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah (The Opening) has been called the Glorious Qur'ān in this verse (87) indicates that Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah is, in a way, the whole Qur'ān - because the basic principles of Islām have been merged in it.[1]

1. In order to understand this, one must keep in mind that the words: السبع المثانى والقرآن العظيم (the seven oft-repeated verses and the glorious Qur'ān) in verse (87) are interpreted by the commentators in different ways. Most of them are of the view that 'seven oft-repeated verses' refer to Sūrah al-Fātiḥah which consists of seven verses. Since these seven verses are repeated in every *Ṣalāh,* they have been referred to in the verse 87 as 'oft-repeated verses'. Then, the words 'and the glorious Qur'ān' occuring after it are of explanatory nature which refer to the same 'seven oft-repeated verses'. Therefore, the name of the 'glorious Qur'ān' has been given here to the Sūrah al-Fātiḥah itself. The comment of the author is based on this interpretation.

On Being Questioned in Al-Maḥshar : About what will it be?

In verse 92, swearing by His Own sacred Being, Allah Ta'ālā has declared that all such people who came earlier or later shall definitely be questioned.

The Ṣaḥābah رضى الله عنهم اجمعين asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ as to what it will be about. He said that it will be about saying: لا اله الا الله (*lā ilāha illallāh* : there is no god worthy of worship but Allah). Al-Qurṭubī, after reporting this narration in his Tafsīr, has said: It means the fulfilling of this pledge practically as signified by the Kalimah Ṭayyibah: *Lā ilāha illallāh*. A simple verbal statement is not what is desired here because, as for verbal attestation, that was done by the hypocrites (*munāfiqīn*) too. Haḍrat al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī رحمه الله تعالى said: 'Īmān (faith) does not become a living reality by taking on a particular style and form, and *Dīn* (religion) does not prosper by simply having the best of wishes for it. 'Īmān is the name of that certitude which has been poured into the heart and which has been proved true by deeds. This is well illustrated by a Ḥadīth from Sayyidnā Zayd ibn Arqam ﷺ in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said: A person who says: لا اله الا الله (*lā ilāha illallāh* : there is no god worthy of worship but Allah) with *ikhlāṣ* (totally unalloyed sincerity) will definitely go to Jannah. People asked: *Yā Rasūl Allah,* how is '*ikhlāṣ*' related to this Kalimah? He said: When this Kalimah stops a person from what has been prohibited by Allah as unlawful and impermissible, then, it is with '*ikhlāṣ*' (with sincerity in the absolute sense). (Qurṭubī)

On Spreading the Religious Message Stage by Stage As Convenient

Before the revelation of the verse (94): فَاصْدَعْ بِمَا تُؤْمَرُ (Now, proclaim what you are commanded to), the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his noble Ṣaḥābah رضى الله عنهم اجمعين used to make Ṣalāh and recite Qur'ān secretly (lest they are seen and harmed). The process of passing on the religious message to others and the mission of teaching and training was also kept secret being limited to a counted few. The reason was that doing so openly would have given the disbelievers the opportunity to bring harm to them. In this verse (95), Allah Ta'ālā has Himself taken the responsibility of seeing that they stay safe against those who deride their faith and bring harm to them. Therefore, from that time onwards, the mission was

pursued openly and publicly in all its aspects, recitation of the Qur'ān, acts of worship, the call, the propagation, everything.

The people who have been referred to in the verse: إِنَّا كَفَيْنَٰكَ ٱلْمُسْتَهْزِءِينَ (Surely, We are sufficient for you against those who deride - 95) their ring leaders were five in number: (1) Al-'Āṣ ibn Wā'il (2) Aswad ibn al-Muṭṭalib (3) Aswad ibn 'Abd Yaghūth (4) Walīd ibn Mughīrah (5) Ḥārith ibn Ṭalḥah. They were killed simultaneously and miraculously when signalled by Sayyidnā Jibra'īl.

This event provides a guideline in matters of Tablīgh and Da'wah. In places and under circumstances where a worker in the way of Allah sees no good coming out of saying what is true and right openly, rather apprehends harm coming to him in doing so, then, under such conditions, doing so secretly is also correct and permissible. However, when there is the option and ability to proclaim things openly, then, no delay should be made in taking a public stance.

The Spiritual Defence Against Enemy Hostility

From verses 97 and 98, we learn that should one face heart-rending sayings and doings of enemies the anxiety from which bothers him, then, there is a spiritual cure for that condition: Let him or her get busy with Tasbīḥ and 'Ibādah, praising Allah Ta'ālā and praying before Him. Allah Ta'ālā will Himself remove this pain and anxiety.

Alḥamdulillāh
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Ḥijr
Ends here.

Sūrah Al-Naḥl

(The Honey Bee)

Sūrah al--Naḥl is Makkī and it has 128 verses and 16 sections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the Most-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 2

أَتَى أَمْرُ اللّٰهِ فَلَا تَسْتَعْجِلُوهُ سُبْحٰنَهُ وَتَعٰلٰى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿۱﴾ يُنَزِّلُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةَ بِالرُّوحِ مِنْ أَمْرِهِ عَلٰى مَنْ يَّشَآءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ أَنْ أَنْذِرُوٓا أَنَّهُ لَآ إِلٰهَ إِلَّآ أَنَا فَاتَّقُونِ ﴿۲﴾

The command of Allah is bound to come. So, do not ask for it to come sooner. Pure is He, and much higher than what they ascribe to Him as partners. [1]

He sends down the angels at His behest with the spirit, (that is, the revelation), upon whom He wills from among His servants: 'Warn people that there is no god but Me. So, fear Me.' [2]

The Name of the Sūrah

This Sūrah has been called Al-Naḥl, that is, the honey bee because it mentions it as a unique Divine marvel. Another name for this Sūrah is Sūrah Al-Ni'am. (Qurṭubī) The word Ni'am is the plural of Ni'mah (blessing) because the great blessings of Allah Ta'ālā have been particularly mentioned in this Sūrah.

Commentary

The Sūrah begins without any particular introduction with a direct,

stern and awesome note of warning. The reason behind it was the saying of the polytheists that Muḥammad (al-Muṣṭafā صلى الله عليه وسلم) keeps warning them of the day of Qiyāmah and the punishment of Allah and telling them that Allah Ta'ālā has promised victory for him and punishment for his opponents. All this, they challenged, they do not see coming upon them. In reply, it was said: أَتَىٰ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ فَلَا تَسْتَعْجِلُوهُ (The command of Allah is bound to come. So, do not ask for it to come sooner - 1).

Here, the expression: أَمْرُ اللَّهِ (*amrullāh* : the command of Allah) means the promise Allah has made to His Rasūl - that his enemies will be made to surrender, and that Muslims will be blessed with victory and honour. In this verse, it is in a distinctly awesome tone that Allah Ta'ālā has said: أَتَىٰ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ (*atā amrullāh* : translated here as 'the command of Allah is bound to come'). Literally (the nuance of the original expression remaining untranslatable), the sense is that issued is the command of Allah, that is, it is bound to come which you will soon see.

Some commentators say that 'the command of Allah' here means the day of Qiyāmah. The sense of its being 'bound to come' is that it is going to come soon. And if we were to look at it in the frame of the life of the entire world itself, its being close, or its actual coming does not remain much distant. (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ)

As for the second sentence in the first verse where it is said that Allah Ta'ālā is free of Shirk (the ascribing of partners to Him), it means that the act of these people who are belying the promise of Allah Ta'ālā is itself an act of Kufr (infidelity) and Shirk. Allah Ta'ālā is absolutely free from it. (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ)

The essential message of the first verse is to call people to believe in the Oneness of Allah (*Tauḥīd*) through a stern warning. The second verse carries an affirmation of *Tauḥīd* through a reported proof, the substance of which is that every Rasūl or messenger of Allah, from Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام to the Last of the Prophets ﷺ, who has come in different parts of the world at different times, has but preached this belief in the Oneness of Allah - though, none of them knew anything about the life and work of each other because of obvious causes. Just imagine if at least one hundred and twenty thousand blessed wise men who are born in different ages, countries and regions, and believe in and

adhere to one single principle, then, one is naturally compelled to accept that their saying so cannot be false. In order to have faith, this single proof is sufficient.

The word: روح (*rūḥ*: spirit) as used in this verse, according to Sayyidnā ibn 'Abbās ﷺ, means Waḥy (revelation); and according to some commentators, it means Hidāyah (guidance). (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ) After having presented the reported proof of Tauḥīd in the second verse, the same belief has been proved rationally by turning the focus on the blessings of Allah Taʿālā as it follows next in verses 3-8.

Verses 3 - 8

خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ ؕ تَعٰلٰى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿۳﴾ خَلَقَ
الْاِنْسَانَ مِنْ نُّطْفَةٍ فَاِذَا هُوَ خَصِيْمٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿۴﴾ وَالْاَنْعَامَ خَلَقَهَا ۚ لَكُمْ
فِيْهَا دِفْءٌ وَّمَنَافِعُ وَمِنْهَا تَاْكُلُوْنَ ﴿۵﴾ وَلَكُمْ فِيْهَا جَمَالٌ حِيْنَ
تُرِيْحُوْنَ وَحِيْنَ تَسْرَحُوْنَ ﴿۶﴾ وَتَحْمِلُ اَثْقَالَكُمْ اِلٰى بَلَدٍ لَّمْ تَكُوْنُوْا
بٰلِغِيْهِ اِلَّا بِشِقِّ الْاَنْفُسِ ؕ اِنَّ رَبَّكُمْ لَرَءُوْفٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿۷﴾ وَّالْخَيْلَ
وَالْبِغَالَ وَالْحَمِيْرَ لِتَرْكَبُوْهَا وَزِيْنَةً ؕ وَيَخْلُقُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۸﴾

He created the heavens and the earth in the proper way. He is much higher than what they ascribe to Him as partners. [3] **He created man from a drop, and soon he turned into a quarrelsome person expressing himself openly.** [4] **As for the cattle, He created them, having warmth for you, and other benefits; and of them you eat.** [5] **And for you there is beauty in them when you drive them (home) in the evening and take them out to graze.** [6] **And they carry your loads to a city where you were not able to reach without putting yourself into hardship. Surely, your Lord is Very Kind, Very Merciful.** [7] **And (He created) horses, mules and donkeys so that you may ride on them and they may look good. And He creates what you do not know (yet).** [8]

Lexical Explanation

The word: خَصِيْم (*khaṣīm*) in verse 4 has been derived from: خُصُوْمَه (*khuṣūmah*) and means a quarrelsome person. Al-An'ām is the plural of *na'am,* which are cattles such as the camel, goat and cow. (Al-Mufradat of Raghib al-Isfahānī)

The word: دِفْءٌ (*dif'un*) in verse 5 denotes what provides warmth, that is, wool which is used to make warm clothings. The word: تُرِيْحُوْنَ (*turiḥūn*) in verse 6 is a derivation from *rawāḥ*, and: تَسْرَحُوْنَ (*tasraḥūn*) in the same verse, from *sarāḥ*. When the cattle are sent to graze, it is called *sarāḥ*, and when they return home, it is called *rawāh*. The expression: شِقِّ الْأَنْفُس (*shiqqil-anfus*) in verse 7 means personal hardship.

Commentary

The verses affirm the Oneness of Allah through the great signs of the creation of the universe. The first such creation pointed to is the creation of the heavens and the earth. Then comes the creation of human beings whom Allah Ta'ālā has made the ones who are served by the whole universe. How did man originate? The text says that he was created from an insignificant drop. What happened then was: فَإِذَا هُوَ خَصِيْمٌ مُّبِيْنٌ (and soon he turned into a quarrelsome person expressing himself openly). In other words, when the elementally weak man was endowed with strength and speech, he turned into a critic of the Creator Himself disputing His Being and Attributes publicly.

After human beings, mentioned there was the creation of things which were made specially for their benefit. Since the first addressees of the Qur'ān were Arabs and their economic life depended on domestic cattle like camels, cows and goats, therefore, these were taken up first: وَالْأَنْعَامَ خَلَقَهَا (As for the cattle, He created them - 5).

Then, out of the benefits received by human beings from the cattle, two were particularly mentioned. (1) لَكُمْ فِيْهَا دِفْءٌ (having warmth for you), that is, they use wool from them to make clothings which keep them warm during winters.

(2) The second benefit was mentioned in: وَمِنْهَا تَأْكُلُوْنَ (and of them you eat), that is, they can slaughter these animals and eat from their meat; and, when alive, they procure milk from them which is fine food indeed. Included here are butter, yogurt, butter-oil and everything else which

fall under dairy products.

For the rest of benefits derived from them, only one word: مَنَافِعُ (*manā-fi'* : other benefits) was considered sufficient. It signifies that there are countless benefits tied to the meat, skin, bone and hair of animals. It is within the framework of this brevity, even ambiguity, that a hint has been given towards all modern innovations in the processing and use of food, dress, medicine and domestic articles, innovations which have been made to date, or will be made right through the Last Day.

After that, identified there is yet another benefit of these cattle - though, in terms of the contemporary Arab taste of the time - when it was said that these cattle make things look good for them particularly when they return home from their grazing grounds in the evening, or when they are sent out to graze in the mornings. The reason is that these cattle at that time become silent spokesmen of the strength and pride of their owners.

Finally, mention has been made of another important benefit which comes from these animals. They carry heavy loads to far out places, places which could not be reached 'without putting yourselves into hardship.' Out of the animals, camels and oxen have been particularly harnessed into this service of man at a large scale. Even during our day of trains, trucks and cargo planes, human beings cannot universally claim to have become free of their need. There are places in the world where none of our modern means of transportation can work. Consequently, one is compelled to borrow their services.

Since mention was made of *'an'ām'* that is, camels and oxen, it was appropriate that mention be made of quadrupeds which have been created exclusively for purposes of draft and ride. One does not benefit by their milk or meat because, according to religious law, they are the cause of moral diseases, hence prohibited. It was said: وَالْخَيْلَ وَالْبِغَالَ وَالْحَمِيرَ لِتَرْكَبُوهَا وَزِينَةً 'And (He created) horses, mules and donkeys so that you may ride on them (which includes loading as a corollary) and (they were also created so that) they may look good - 8.' The word: زِينَةً (*zīnah*) used here means the same favourable quality of life which, as commonly recognized, is the pleasing possession of these animals by their owners.

Railroads, Automobiles and Aeroplanes in the Qur'ān!

In the last sentence of verse 8, after having mentioned three animals particularly used for riding, that is, horses, mules and donkeys, what was said about other kinds of rides appears in the future tense as follows:

وَيَخْلُقُ مَالَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ

And He creates [or, will create] what you do not know (yet).

Thus, under this very statement, included there are all newly invented transport facilities which did not exist in the past, nor was there any precise idea of what they shall be. For instance, there are railroads, automobiles and aeroplanes. Apart from these means of transport which have been invented to date, included here are all other ways and means which will be invented and used in the future. The reason is that the creation of all these things is really nothing but the act of the Absolute Creator. In it, the role of science, whether classical or modern, is no more than utilizing the God-given intelligence and understanding when handling metallic or other components also created by the same Power, go through experimentations, find appropriate combinations and construct working components. Then, it can go and generate energy from the Divinely endowed treasures of air, water, heat etc. No science, classical or modern, even both combined, can create iron and copper, or lighter metals, nor can it create wood, nor air, nor water. None of these come under its power or control. Science does no more than learn the art of using what has been created by Divine power. All inventions of the world are simply the detail of this usage. Therefore, with a little deliberation, one is left with no choice but to accept and declare that all our new inventions (for which we seem to be so fond of congratulating our own selves!) are invariably the creation of the Absolute Creator.

In view of its importance, let us keep in mind that the text has used the past tense: خَلَقَ (*khalaqa* : He created) while mentioning the creation of things earlier. However, after the mention of animals commonly used for riding, the tense used: يَخْلُقُ (*yakhluqu* : He will create, or creates) is that of future. This change clearly indicates that the word so used is for means of transport and other things which have not yet come into existence. But, Allah Ta'ālā has it in His Knowledge as to what modes of travel and other things are to be created in times to come. All this was

said in this small sentence here.

It was also possible that Allah Ta'ālā would have mentioned all new inventions to come into being in the future by name. But, the mention of words signifying railroads, automobiles and aeroplanes would have brought no benefit except that it would have left people bewildered in mental confusion - because the very conceptualization of such things at that time was not easy, nor were such words in use for such things anywhere so that people could make some sense out of them.

My respected father, Ḥaḍrat Maulānā Muḥammad Yāsīn رحمه الله تعالى said: Our teacher, Ḥaḍrat Maulānā Muḥammad Ya'qūb Nānautawī رحمه الله تعالى, the great teacher of teachers, used to say: 'The rail (railway, railroad) has been mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān.' For proof, he quoted this verse. Cars, though invented, were not common in those days, while the aeroplanes were not invented yet. Therefore, he found it sufficient to mention the 'rail.'

Rulings:

1. The Qur'ān first mentioned *al-an'ām*, that is, the camel, cow and goat. Then, out of their benefits, one such benefit was declared to be the eating of their meat. Then, as separate from it, it was said: وَالْخَيْلَ وَالْبِغَالَ وَالْحَمِيْرَ (and horses, mules and donkeys). When pointing out to their benefits, definite mention was made of their use for riding, and that they may look good by having them. But, the eating of their meat has not been mentioned here. This provides the proof that the meat from horse, mule and donkey is not Ḥalāl. As for the meat from mule and donkey is concerned, the majority of Fuqahā' (Muslim jurists) agree upon its meat being Ḥarām - and in a Ḥadīth on the subject, its unlawfulness has been clearly stated. But, in the case of horse meat, there are two conflicting narrations of Ḥadīth. One of them puts it as Ḥalāl, while the other, as Ḥarām. Therefore, sayings of the Fuqahā' of the Muslim community became divided on this religious issue. Some declared it to be Ḥalāl while others called it Ḥarām. It was because of these conflicting arguments that Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, did not call horse meat Ḥarām like the meat of a donkey or mule, but he did call it Makūrh (reprehensible). (Aḥkām al-Qur'ān by Al-Jaṣṣāṣ).

2. From verse 6 and 8, it appears that beauty and embellishment are

allowed - though, pride and arrogance are Ḥarām (prohibited). The difference is that the outcome of beauty and embellishment is that it makes one happy with himself, or that it shows the blessing of Allah openly. When this happens, neither does one nurse the idea in his heart that he is deserving of this blessing, nor does he take others to be low and contemptible. Instead, such a person keeps the fact, that all good things of life given to him are but the gift and blessing of Allah Ta'ālā, foremost in his mind. Contrary to this is pride and arrogance under which one takes himself to be deserving of this blessing while taking others to be low. That is Ḥarām (forbidden). (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Verse 9

وَعَلَى اللّٰهِ قَصْدُ السَّبِيْلِ وَمِنْهَا جَآئِرٌ ۭ وَلَوْ شَآءَ لَهَدٰىكُمْ اَجْمَعِيْنَ ﴿٩﴾

And undertaken by Allah is (to show) the right path while there are some (paths) which swerve; and had He so willed, He would have led you all to the right path. [9]

Commentary

Presented in the previous verses was a description of the great blessings of Allah Ta'ālā as rational proof of His Oneness. This description of Divine blessings continues later on as well.

In between these two, the present verse (9) has been introduced parenthetically for the purpose of warning that Allah Ta'ālā, pursuant to His standing promise, has taken it upon Himself that He makes the straight path which takes its follower to Allah Ta'ālā clear and explicit. Therefore, the objective of the presentation of Divine blessings is to demonstrate proofs of the Being and Oneness of Allah Ta'ālā.

But, counter to this, people have preferred to go by other crooked ways. It is unfortunate that, despite having clear signs and open proofs, they do not benefit by them. Instead, go on straying endlessly.

After that it was said that Allah Ta'ālā, if He had so willed, would have made all of them to (compulsively) be on the right path. Had He done so, it was within His power. But, wisdom and expedient considerations required that there be no compulsion. Let the two paths be before everyone. Whoever elects to take whichever path should be free to take

it. Everyone goes his or her way. The Straight Path (*al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm*) will take people to Allah Taʿālā and Jannah (Paradise). As for other crooked ways, they will take people to Jahannam (Hell). Human beings have been given the power to choose whichever path they wish to take.

Verses 10 - 16

هُوَ الَّذِىٓ اَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً لَّكُمْ مِّنْهُ شَرَابٌ وَّمِنْهُ شَجَرٌ فِيْهِ
تُسِيْمُوْنَ ﴿١٠﴾ يُنْۢبِتُ لَكُمْ بِهِ الزَّرْعَ وَالزَّيْتُوْنَ وَالنَّخِيْلَ وَالْاَعْنَابَ
وَمِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرٰتِ ؕ اِنَّ فِىْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَّتَفَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿١١﴾
وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ ۙ وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ ؕ وَالنُّجُوْمُ مُسَخَّرٰتٌۢ
بِاَمْرِهٖ ؕ اِنَّ فِىْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَّعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿١٢﴾ وَمَا ذَرَاَ لَكُمْ فِى
الْاَرْضِ مُخْتَلِفًا اَلْوَانُهٗ ؕ اِنَّ فِىْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَّذَّكَّرُوْنَ ﴿١٣﴾
وَهُوَ الَّذِىْ سَخَّرَ الْبَحْرَ لِتَاْكُلُوْا مِنْهُ لَحْمًا طَرِيًّا وَّتَسْتَخْرِجُوْا مِنْهُ حِلْيَةً
تَلْبَسُوْنَهَا ۚ وَتَرَى الْفُلْكَ مَوَاخِرَ فِيْهِ وَلِتَبْتَغُوْا مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ
تَشْكُرُوْنَ ﴿١٤﴾ وَاَلْقٰى فِى الْاَرْضِ رَوَاسِىَ اَنْ تَمِيْدَ بِكُمْ وَاَنْهٰرًا
وَّسُبُلًا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُوْنَ ﴿١٥﴾ وَعَلٰمٰتٍ ؕ وَبِالنَّجْمِ هُمْ يَهْتَدُوْنَ ﴿١٦﴾

He is the One who sent down water from the heavens from which you have your drink and from which (you grow) plants, on which you pasture cattle. [10] **He causes thereof to grow for you the crops, and olives, and date-palms, and grape-vines, and of all the fruits. Surely, in that, there is a sign for a people who ponder.** [11]

And He has subjugated for you the day and the night and the sun and the moon. And the stars (too) are subservient by His command. Surely, in that, there are signs for a people who understand. [12]

And (He subjugated) for you whatever He created on the earth having varied colours. Surely, in that, there is a sign for a people who accept advice. [13]

> **And He is the One who has subjugated the sea so that you may eat fresh meat therefrom, and may take out from it ornaments you wear, and you see the boats cleaving through it, and so that you may seek of His bounty and that you may be grateful.** [14]
>
> **And He placed mountains on the earth, lest it should shake with you, and rivers and tracks, so that you may find the right way.** [15] **And (He created) signs. And through stars they find the right path.** [16]

Commentary

The word: شَجَر (*shajar*) in verse 10: مِنْهُ شَجَرٌ فِيْهِ تُسِيْمُوْنَ (from which [you grow] plants, on which you pasture cattle) is mostly applied to a tree which stands on a trunk. Sometimes, it is also applied, in an absolute sense, to everything which grows on land. Included therein are grass on stems or tendrils. This is the sense meant in this verse, because the pasturing of cattle has been mentioned immediately after which is mostly related to grass.

The last word: تُسِيْمُوْنَ (*tusīmūn*) is a derivation from *isāmah* which means to leave cattle to graze freely in a pasture.

It will be noticed that all verses cited above point out to Divine blessings and mention the creation of the universe with unprecedented wisdom. In them, those who ponder find significant indicators and proofs which lead them to perceive the truth of Tauḥīd, the truth that Allah Ta'ālā is One. Therefore, while these blessings are being mentioned, they are tied up with a notice to pay attention, think, understand and accept advice. Consequently, at the end of verse 11, it was said: إِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَّتَفَكَّرُوْنَ (Indeed, in that, there is a sign for a people who ponder). The reason is that the linkage of pastures, crops, trees and their flowers and fruits with the creativity and wisdom of Allah Ta'ālā needs some reflection. If one ponders over a grain or pit, he will come to realize that simply putting it inside the land and watering it cannot automatically cause it to grow into a huge big tree with flowers of many colours opening up all over it. No tiller or farmer or land owner has made this happen. Their role in this process is nil. All this is linked with and tied to the creativity and wisdom of the Absolute Master.

After that, when came the description of the night and day, the sun,

the moon and the stars which have been made subservient by His command, it was said in the concluding sentence of verse 12: إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ (Indeed, in that, there are signs for a people who understand). Given here is the hint that these things are of course subservient to the command of Allah, an open fact which does not need a lot of thinking. Anyone having some reason in him would understand, because there was obviously some human input in the growth of vegetation and trees, but, in this case, there is none.

Before we move to the next verse, let us clarify the first sentence of verse 12: سَخَّرَ لَكُمُ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ (And He has subjugated for you the day and the night). Here, 'subjugating the day and the night' means that Allah made them subservient to His command in order that they can serve man, pursuant to which the night brings comfort to him and the day smooths out the avenues of his work. 'Subjugating them' never means that the day and the night start alternating under human command.

Then, in verse 13, after mentioning all other varied produce of the land, it was said: إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَذَّكَّرُونَ (Surely, in that, there is a sign for a people who accept advice). The sense is that no deep thinking is needed here as well - because, the proof has been furnished openly. But, the condition is that one must look at it carefully and learn his lesson. Otherwise, one who has no sense or concern and who just pays no attention could hardly hope to benefit from it.

After the description of things created in the heavens and the earth, and the benefits human beings derive from them, the text now turns to the high seas wherein Divine wisdom has placed many more benefits for them. Verse 14 which begins with the words: هُوَ الَّذِي سَخَّرَ الْبَحْرَ لِتَأْكُلُوا (And He is the One who has subjugated the sea so that you may eat) which points out to the excellent arrangement whereby they get their supply of sea food, fresh white meat from the fish.

By calling the fish, fresh meat, in the sentence which follows immediately, that is: لِتَأْكُلُوا مِنْهُ لَحْمًا طَرِيًّا (so that you may eat fresh meat therefrom - 14), a hint has also been placed within the statement that it is free of any condition of slaughtering necessary with other animals. That is, as if, meat made ready, without having to do so. This was the first benefit.

The second benefit is indentified in the sentence appearing immedi-

ately next: وَتَسْتَخْرِجُوا مِنْهُ حِلْيَةً تَلْبَسُوْنَهَا (and may take out from it ornaments you wear - 14), that is, divers would dive in it and take out what the text calls: حِلْيَه (*ḥilyah*: translated as ornaments). The literal meaning of *ḥilyah'* is *zinah*, that which beautifies, embellishes, adorns or ornaments. Thus, the reference here is to pearls and precious coral stones which are taken out of the sea. Women wear it as necklaces or earrings. Though these ornaments are worn by women, yet the Holy Qur'ān has used the word in the masculine gender: تَلْبَسُوْنَهَا (*talbasūnaha*), that is, 'you wear.' What has been hinted here is that the wearing of ornaments by women is, in reality, in the interest of men. That woman looks good is, in reality, the right of man. He can even compel his wife to wear dress and ornaments which look good on her. Other than that, men too can use precious stones on their rings.

The third benefit of the sea appears in: وَتَرَى الْفُلْكَ مَوَاخِرَ فِيْهِ وَلِتَبْتَغُوْا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ (And you see the boats cleaving through it and so that you may seek His bounty - 14). The word: فُلْك (*fulk*) means boat, and: مَوَاخِر (*mawākhir*) is the plural of مَاخِرَه : *mākhirah*. Makhr (مَخر) means to cleave or plough through the water. The reference is to boats and ships which traverse the sea cleaving through the waves of the waters.

The sense of the verse (14) is that Allah Ta'ālā has made the sea one of the means of reaching distant countries. Thus, He has made it easy for human beings to travel by sea and bring in or send out their commercial goods. The text also declares it to be an excellent means of seeking the bounty of Allah, that is, their *rizq* or sustenance - because, trading through the sea routes is most economical and beneficial.

In Verse 16, it was said: وَاَلْقٰى فِي الْاَرْضِ رَوَاسِيَ اَنْ تَمِيْدَبِكُمْ (And He placed mountains on the earth, lest it should shake with you). The word: رَوَاسِيَ (*rawāsiya*) is the plural of رَاسِيَه (*rāsiyah*) which denotes a huge mountain. The word: تَمِيْد (*tamīda*) is a derivation from the verbal noun: مَيْد (*mayd*) which means to shake or swing or sway from side to side (due to loss of balance).

The sense of the verse is that Allah Ta'ālā has not made the sphere of the Earth from components which are not solid and balanced, therefore, it is heavier on one side and lighter on some other. Its necessary outcome was that the Earth was to be taken as stationary, as commonly

held by early thinkers; or, taken to be orbitally moving, as determined by some early and most modern scientists. Under both these views, this phenomenon would have caused terristerial turbulence which is identified as shaking, swinging or swaying from side to side. To stop this turbulence and to provide a balance for the terristerial composition, Allah Ta'ālā placed on the Earth the weight of mountains so that it would not shake. As for its orbital movement like all planets which is the commonly held view from Pythagorus to modern scientists made more explicit through contemporary experiments, it is something which the Holy Qur'ān neither affirms nor rejects. In fact, this possible turbulence which has been stopped through the use of mountains should be more conducive to this orbital movement which is credited to the Earth like other planets. Allah knows best.

In the last verse (16), it was said: وَعَلٰمٰتٍ ط وَبِالنَّجْمِ هُمْ يَهْتَدُوْنَ 'And (He created) signs. And through stars they find the right path.' Since trade-oriented travel was mentioned above, it was considered appropriate that conveniences which Allah Ta'ālā has provided in the heavens and the earth designed to help travellers cover distances and reach destinations be mentioned alongside. Therefore, it was said: وَعَلٰمٰتٍ (*wa 'alāmāt*), that is, 'We have set up many signs in the form of mountains, rivers, trees, homes and things like that in order to help people find their way on the earth.' It is obvious that, had the earth been flat, there was no way man would stray around in his effort to reach his destination.

As for the last statement in the verse: وَبِالنَّجْمِ هُمْ يَهْتَدُوْنَ that is, the way travellers know their bearing through territorial signs, quite similarly, they also find out their orientation through stars as well. The modality of the address here seems to hint that the initial purpose of the creation of the stars is, for that matter, something else - however, alongwith it, their additional benefit is that they help in the charting of one's course when travelling.

Verses 17 - 23

اَفَمَنْ يَّخْلُقُ كَمَنْ لَّا يَخْلُقُ ط اَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿١٧﴾ وَاِنْ تَعُدُّوْا نِعْمَةَ اللّٰهِ لَا تُحْصُوْهَا ط اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَغَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿١٨﴾ وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تُسِرُّوْنَ وَمَا

تُعْلِنُوْنَ ﴿١٩﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ يَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ لَا يَخْلُقُوْنَ شَيْـًٔا وَّهُمْ يُخْلَقُوْنَ ﴿٢٠﴾ اَمْوَاتٌ غَيْرُ اَحْيَآءٍ ۚ وَمَا يَشْعُرُوْنَ ۙ اَيَّانَ يُبْعَثُوْنَ ﴿٢١﴾ اِلٰـهُكُمْ اِلٰهٌ وَّاحِدٌ ۚ فَالَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ قُلُوْبُهُمْ مُّنْكِرَةٌ وَّهُمْ مُّسْتَكْبِرُوْنَ ﴿٢٢﴾ لَا جَرَمَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا يُسِرُّوْنَ وَمَا يُعْلِنُوْنَ ؕ اِنَّهٗ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْتَكْبِرِيْنَ ﴿٢٣﴾

Then, is He who creates (everything) equal to one who does not? Would you still pay no heed? [17]

And if you count the bounties of Allah, you cannot count them all. Surely, Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [18] **And Allah knows what you conceal and what you reveal.** [19]

And those whom they invoke beside Allah do not create anything, rather they are themselves created [20] **- dead, having no life. And they do not know when they shall be raised again.** [21] **Your God is One God. So, those who do not believe in the Hereafter, their hearts are defiant and they are arrogant.** [22] **Invariably, Allah knows what they conceal and what they reveal. Surely, He does not like the arrogant.** [23]

Commentary

Verses appearing immediately earlier described the many blessings of Allah Ta'ālā in details, proved that He alone is their Creator and established that He is unique in this matter. Now, in the present verses, there comes an admonition against the failure of people to recognize that there is a fact behind the statement describing all these blessings - and that is Tauḥīd, the Oneness of Allah Ta'ālā, except whom there is none worthy of worship. Therefore, it was said: When it stands proved that Allah alone made the heavens and the earth, made the mountains and rivers, vegetation and animals, trees and plants with their fruits and flowers, how can that most sacred Being that is the Creator of all these things become, for no reason, like idols and icons which cannot create anything? Why would you not understand something so elementary?

Verses 24 - 29

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ مَّاذَآ أَنْزَلَ رَبُّكُمْ ۙ قَالُوْٓا أَسَاطِيْرُ الْأَوَّلِيْنَ ﴿٢٤﴾ لِيَحْمِلُوْٓا
أَوْزَارَهُمْ كَامِلَةً يَّوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ ۙ وَمِنْ أَوْزَارِ الَّذِيْنَ يُضِلُّوْنَهُمْ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ ؕ
أَلَا سَآءَ مَا يَزِرُوْنَ ﴿٢٥﴾ قَدْ مَكَرَ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ فَأَتَى اللّٰهُ بُنْيَانَهُمْ مِّنَ
الْقَوَاعِدِ فَخَرَّ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّقْفُ مِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ وَأَتٰهُمُ الْعَذَابُ مِنْ حَيْثُ
لَا يَشْعُرُوْنَ ﴿٢٦﴾ ثُمَّ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ يُخْزِيْهِمْ وَيَقُوْلُ أَيْنَ شُرَكَآءِيَ الَّذِيْنَ
كُنْتُمْ تُشَآقُّوْنَ فِيْهِمْ ؕ قَالَ الَّذِيْنَ أُوْتُوا الْعِلْمَ إِنَّ الْخِزْيَ الْيَوْمَ
وَالسُّوْٓءَ عَلَى الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿٢٧﴾ الَّذِيْنَ تَتَوَفّٰهُمُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ ظَالِمِيْٓ أَنْفُسِهِمْ
فَأَلْقَوُا السَّلَمَ مَا كُنَّا نَعْمَلُ مِنْ سُوْٓءٍ ؕ بَلٰىٓ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلِيْمٌ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ
تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٢٨﴾ فَادْخُلُوْٓا أَبْوَابَ جَهَنَّمَ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا ؕ فَلَبِئْسَ مَثْوَى
الْمُتَكَبِّرِيْنَ ﴿٢٩﴾

And when it is said to them, "What has your Lord sent down?" They say, "It is nothing but the tales of the ancient." [24] **Hence, they shall carry their burdens in full on the day of Judgment, and some of the burdens of those whom they mislead without knowledge. Remember, evil is the burden they carry.** [25]

Those before them did make plots. Then (the command of) Allah came upon their buildings (uprooting them) from the foundations. So roofs fell down upon them from above, and the punishment came to them from where they would not perceive. [26] **Then, on the Day of Judgment, He will put them to disgrace and will say, "Where are My partners for whom you used to quarrel?" Those endowed with knowledge will say, "Today, the disgrace and the ill fate are upon the disbelievers -** [27] **the ones to whom the angels brought death while they were (still) unjust to themselves." Then, they will take to submission, (yet will say), "We used to do nothing wrong." (They will be answered) Why not? Allah knows what you used to do.** [28] **Hence, enter the gates of Jahannam to live there for ever. And evil is the abode of the arrogant.** [29]

Commentary

It will be recalled that, after describing the blessings of Allah and proving that He was unique in the creation of the universe, the text made a pointed reference to how the polytheists chose to stick to their own ways of error. In the present verses, the text describes how they, not content with their own straying, tried that others should also go astray like them. The punishment they would get for doing that has also been stated here. Earlier to that (24), there is a question about the Qur'ān, and the addressees of the question, at this place, are the polytheists. It is their haughty and ignorant answer which has been mentioned here alongwith a warning of consequences for this attitude. Then, after five verses (30), the same question has been addressed to believers who fear Allah which is followed by their answer, and where a promise of reward for it has been mentioned.

The Holy Qur'ān does not explicity say as to who asked the question. Therefore, commentators have expressed different views in this matter. Some say that the question was asked by disbelievers. Others say that it was asked by Muslims. Still others take one question to have been asked by the polytheists while the other by Muslims. But, the Holy Qur'ān has kept it ambiguous. This is to indicate that there is no need to argue as to where the question came from. What has to be seen is the answer and, more importantly, its ultimate consequence - which, the Qur'ān has itself chosen to describe.

The essence of the answer given by the polytheists is that they simply refused to acknowledge that there was any word of Allah really revealed from Him. In fact, they dismissed the Qur'ān as nothing but tales of people from early ages. Thereupon, the Qur'ān admonished those unjust people for disinforming people about the Qur'ān by telling them that it was nothing but the tales of the ancient whereby they make others too go astray like them. As for the consequences, these they shall have to face. It means that the total curse of their sins has to fall on them anyway on the Day of Judgment, but part of the curse of the evil consequences of their role in misguiding others will also fall on them. Then it was said that the burden of sins which these people are piling up on their shoulders is a terribly evil burden.

Verses 30 - 34

وَقِيْلَ لِلَّذِيْنَ اتَّقَوْا مَاذَآ اَنْزَلَ رَبُّكُمْ ؕ قَالُوْا خَيْرًا ؕ لِلَّذِيْنَ اَحْسَنُوْا فِىْ
هٰذِهِ الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةٌ ؕ وَلَدَارُ الْاٰخِرَةِ خَيْرٌ ؕ وَلَنِعْمَ دَارُ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿۳۰﴾ جَنّٰتُ
عَدْنٍ يَّدْخُلُوْنَهَا تَجْرِىْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ لَهُمْ فِيْهَا مَا يَشَآءُوْنَ ؕ
كَذٰلِكَ يَجْزِى اللّٰهُ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿۳۱﴾ الَّذِيْنَ تَتَوَفّٰهُمُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ طَيِّبِيْنَ ۙ
يَقُوْلُوْنَ سَلٰمٌ عَلَيْكُمُ ۙ ادْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۳۲﴾ هَلْ
يَنْظُرُوْنَ اِلَّآ اَنْ تَاْتِيَهُمُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ اَوْ يَاْتِىَ اَمْرُ رَبِّكَ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ فَعَلَ الَّذِيْنَ
مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ؕ وَمَا ظَلَمَهُمُ اللّٰهُ وَلٰكِنْ كَانُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُوْنَ ﴿۳۳﴾
فَاَصَابَهُمْ سَيِّاٰتُ مَا عَمِلُوْا وَحَاقَ بِهِمْ مَّا كَانُوْا بِهٖ يَسْتَهْزِءُوْنَ ﴿۳۴﴾ ع

And it is said to the God-fearing, "What has your Lord revealed?" They say, "The best." Those who do good in this world, there is good for them. And, indeed, the abode of the Hereafter is much better. And excellent is the abode of the God-fearing - [30] **the eternal gardens they enter, with rivers flowing beneath them. For them there is what they desire. That is how Allah rewards the God-fearing -** [31] **the ones to whom angels bring death while they were pure (in beliefs and deeds). They (angels) say, "Peace on you! Enter Paradise for the deeds you have been doing."** [32]

They are waiting for nothing but that the angels come to them, or comes the command of your Lord. Similarly acted those who were before them. And Allah did not wrong them, rather they were doing wrong to themselves. [33] **So, the evil of what they did overtook them, and they were encircled by the very thing they used to mock at.** [34]

Verses 35 - 40

وَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ اَشْرَكُوْا لَوْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ مَا عَبَدْنَا مِنْ دُوْنِهٖ مِنْ شَىْءٍ نَّحْنُ
وَلَآ اٰبَآؤُنَا وَلَا حَرَّمْنَا مِنْ دُوْنِهٖ مِنْ شَىْءٍ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ فَعَلَ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ

قَبْلِهِمْ ج فَهَلْ عَلَى الرُّسُلِ اِلَّا الْبَلٰغُ الْمُبِيْنُ ﴿٣٥﴾ وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِيْ كُلِّ
اُمَّةٍ رَّسُوْلًا اَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوْتَ ج فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ هَدَى
اللّٰهُ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ حَقَّتْ عَلَيْهِ الضَّلٰلَةُ ط فَسِيْرُوْا فِي الْاَرْضِ فَانْظُرُوْا
كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُكَذِّبِيْنَ ﴿٣٦﴾ اِنْ تَحْرِصْ عَلٰى هُدٰىهُمْ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ
لَا يَهْدِيْ مَنْ يُّضِلُّ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِّنْ نّٰصِرِيْنَ ﴿٣٧﴾ وَاَقْسَمُوْا بِاللّٰهِ جَهْدَ
اَيْمَانِهِمْ لَا يَبْعَثُ اللّٰهُ مَنْ يَّمُوْتُ ط بَلٰى وَعْدًا عَلَيْهِ حَقًّا وَّلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ
النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٣٨﴾ لِيُبَيِّنَ لَهُمُ الَّذِيْ يَخْتَلِفُوْنَ فِيْهِ وَلِيَعْلَمَ الَّذِيْنَ
كَفَرُوْا اَنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا كٰذِبِيْنَ ﴿٣٩﴾ اِنَّمَا قَوْلُنَا لِشَيْءٍ اِذَا اَرَدْنٰهُ اَنْ نَّقُوْلَ
لَهٗ كُنْ فَيَكُوْنُ ﴿٤٠﴾ ع

And the polytheists said, "If Allah had so willed, we would have not worshipped anything other than Him - neither we nor our forefathers - nor would we have made anything unlawful without (command from) Him." Similarly acted those who were before them. Therefore, the messengers are responsible for nothing but to convey the message clearly. [35]

And We did raise a messenger among every people, with the message, "Worship Allah and stay away from the Rebel." Then, there were some among them whom Allah guided, and there were others on whom deviation (from the right path) was established. So, travel on earth and see how was the fate of those who belied (the prophets). [36]

If you are keen on their guidance, then, (remember that) Allah does not lead to the right path the ones whom He lets go astray, and for them there are no helpers. [37] **And they swore by Allah, taking great pains in their oaths: "Allah shall not resurrect those who die." Why not? It is a promise on His part which is due to come true, but most of the people do not know.** [38] **- so that He discloses for them what they have been disputing about, and so that those who disbelieve may know that they were liars.** [39] **Our only word for a thing when We intend it is that We say to it, "Be," and it comes to be.** [40]

Commentary

The first doubt expressed by these disbelievers was: If Allah does not like our Kufr and Shirk and other unlawful deeds, why would He not stop us from doing so by force?

The absurdity of this doubt was all too evident. Therefore, instead of answering it, just saying words of comfort for the Holy Prophet ﷺ was considered sufficient, so that he does not feel sad about such senseless questions. The reason why their doubt was absurd is also obvious. Allah Ta'ālā has set up the system of this world on the basic arrangement that human beings have not been kept under compulsion totally. A kind of power to choose was given to them. If they use this choice in obedience to Allah, they have their reward for it; and if they use it to disobey Him, then, there stands His promise of punishment. That there will be a day of Judgment when the dead shall be resurrected and called to account for their deeds are the consequential outcome of this early warning. If Allah Ta'ālā had decided that He would force everyone to obey Him, who then would have dared to remain outside the fold of obedience to Him? But, His wisdom so required that such compulsion was not appropriate. Therefore, choice was given to human beings. Now, if the disbelievers were to say - had Allah disliked our ways, why would He not stop us by force? - it is an absurd and hostile question.

Has a Rasūl of Allah appeared in India and Pakistan too?

From verse 36 in the present Sūrah: وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِىْ كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَّسُوْلاً (And We did raise a messenger among every people), as well as from verse 24 of Sūrah Fāṭir: وَاِنْ مِّنْ أُمَّةٍ اِلاَّ خَلاَ فِيْهَا نَذِيْرٌ (And there is no group of people among whom there has not been a warner - 35:24), it outwardly appears that messengers may have also been sent to areas now known as India and Pakistan - whether residents of the area, or located in another country whose deputies or emissaries had reached there. Then, there is the verse of Sūrah Al-Qaṣaṣ: لِتُنْذِرَقَوْمًا مَّآ اَتٰهُمْ مِّنْ نَّذِيْرٍ (so that you may warn a people unto whom came no warner - 28:46). The sense released by the verse is that no warner had come before him to the people unto whom the Holy Prophet ﷺ was sent. This can be answered by saying that this obviously refers to the people of Arabia who became the first addressees of the prophetic mission of Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ - the fact being that no prophet since Sayyidnā Ismā'īl ﵇ had appeared among them. There-

fore, the title given to these people in the Holy Qur'ān was أُمِّيِّينَ : "Ummiyyīn" (the unlettered ones). This does not necessarily imply that no prophet came before him in the rest of the world as well. Allah knows best.

Verses 41 - 42

وَالَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا فِي اللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا ظُلِمُوا لَنُبَوِّئَنَّهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً ۖ وَلَأَجْرُ الْآخِرَةِ أَكْبَرُ ۚ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٤١﴾ الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا وَعَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾

And those who have migrated for the sake of Allah after they were oppressed, We shall give them a good place in the world and, of course, the reward of the Hereafter is much greater, if they only knew! [41] **- those who kept patient and who place trust in their Lord.** [42]

Commentary

The verb: هَاجَرُوا (*hājarū*) is a derivation from *hijrat* (pausal : *hijrah*) which literally means to leave one's homeland. The leaving of one's homeland done for the sake of Allah is an act of great obedience and worship in Islam. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said: ' اَلْهِجْرَةُ تَهْدِمُ مَا كَانَ قَبْلَهَا ('Hijrah demolishes all sins that were before it').

This Hijrah is Farḍ (obligatory) and Wājib (necessary) under some situations while it is recommended as desirable and better (Mustaḥabb) under some others. Related injunctions have appeared in details under comments on verse 97 of Sūrah An-Nisā' : اَلَمْ تَكُنْ اَرْضُ اللّٰهِ وَاسِعَةً (Was not the earth of Allah wide enough that you might have sought refuge in it? - 3:97) [Ma'ariful-Qur'ān, Volume II] Mentioned here at this place are particular promises which Allah Ta'ālā has made to Muhājirīn, those who do Hijrah, that is, leave their homeland for His sake.

How does Hijrah bring Better Life in the Present World?

In the verses cited above, two great promises have been made to Muhājirīn subject to some conditions: (1) To give them a good place right here in this world, and (2) To bless them with the greater reward of the Hereafter which is limitless. The expression: 'a good place in the world'

is highly comprehensive. It includes a good residence for the Muhājir (one who does Hijrah) as well as neighbours who are good. It also includes extended means of living, supremacy over hostile enemies, recognition and fair name among people, and honour which continues through the family, and progeny. (Qurṭubī)

The background of the revelation of the verse is basically the first Hijrah which the noble Companions made to Ethiopea. Then, the probability that it may include the Hijrah to Ethiopea as well as the Hijrah to al-Madīnah al-Munawwarah which came after that. Mentioned here in this verse are the same Muhājirīn to Ethiopea, or the Muhājirīn to Madīnah. Therefore, some scholars have said that this promise was for these blessed Ṣaḥābah only, that is, those who had made their Hijrah to Ethiopea, or those who had later done it to Madīnah. As for the promise of Allah, it stood already fulfilled within the present world, something witnessed openly. Everyone saw how Madīnah was made for them the real good place to live. Instead of hostile neighbours, they lived among those who were sympathetic, sharing and sacrificing. Enemies were conquered and subdued. Within a short period of time since their Hijrah, doors of ample sustenance were thrown open for them. The poor and needy of yester years became wealthy citizens of the day. Many countries of the world came under their sway. Such were their achiements in moral greatness and beauty of conduct that they remain receiving words of praise from friends and foes alike even to this day. Allah Ta'ālā blessed them with great honour, and their generations as well. These were things that were to take place in this world, which they did. Now, the promise of the Hereafter shall also be fulfilled. But, says Abū Ḥayyān in his Tafsīr Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ:

وَالَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا عَامٌّ فِي الْمُهَاجِرِينَ كَائِنًا مَّا كَانُوا فَيَشْمَلُ أَوَّلَهُمْ وَآخِرَهُمْ

> The expression: اَلَّذِیْنَ هَاجَرُوا (And those who migrated) is general and inclusive of all those who leave their homeland whatever their country or time. Therefore, this includes all Muhājirīn, from the very first ones down to the last among them who do their Hijrah for the sake of Allah right upto the Last Day, the day of Al-Qiyāmah. (v. 5, p. 492)

This is also as required by the general exegetic rule under which a commentator relies on the general sense of the word, even though there

be a particular event or group as the prime cause of the revelation of the verse. Therefore, included in this promise are Muhājirīn of the whole world and of all times - and the fulfillment of both these promises for all Muhājirīn is certain.

A similar promise has been made for Muhājirīn in the following verse of Sūrah An-Nisā': وَمَنْ يُّهَاجِرْ فِىْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ يَجِدْ فِى الْاَرْضِ مُرٰغَمًا كَثِيْرًا وَّسَعَةً [And whoever migrates in the way of Allah he shall find many a place to settle and wide dimension (of resources) - 4:100] particularly promised wherein are spatial abundance and extensive means. But, alongwith these promises, the Holy Qur'ān has also put forth some qualifications of Muhājirīn and some conditions of Hijrah as well. Therefore, those deserving of the fulfillment of these promises can only be the Muhājirīn who possess these qualifications and who have satisfied the desired conditions.

Out of these, the very first condition is that of: فِى اللّٰهِ (*fil-lāh*: for the sake of Allah) which means that the purpose of doing Hijrah should only be to please Allah Ta'ālā and that, in it, there be no selfish motives of material gains such as business or employment. The second condition is that these Muhājirīn be victims of injustice as stated in: مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا ظُلِمُوْا (after they were oppressed). The third qualification is that they stay patient against initial disadvantages and difficulties showing steadfastness and fortitude as pointed out in: اَلَّذِيْنَ صَبَرُوْا (those who kept patient). The fourth qualification is that they, even while utilizing all available material means, make it a point to place their trust in Allah alone for every ultimate success comes from Him alone, as described in: وَعَلٰى رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُوْنَ (and who place trust in their Lord).

This tells us that there are initial difficulties in everything undertaken. However, should a Muhājir fail to find the promised good place and favourable condition, then, instead of doubting the promise of the Qur'ān, he better assess his intention, sincerity and conduct on which these promises have been made. Once this is done, he will discover that it was but his own fault, may be the intention was not pure, or there was a lack of endurance and trust.

Migration and Hijrah : Different Kinds and Their Injunctions

At this point, Imām Al-Qurṭubī has given details about migration and Hijrah highlighting their difference alongwith some related injunc-

tions. This is being reproduced here in view of its relevant usefulness.

Quoting Ibn al-'Arabī, Al-Qurṭubī says that going out of the homeland and travelling through the earth is either to run from something and find a safe haven, or to seek and get something. The first kind of trip which is to escape and be safe from something is called Hijrah which is of six kinds:

1. Going from Dār al-Kufr (Abode of Disbelief) to Dār al-Islām (Abode of Islām): This kind of journey was obligatory (Farḍ) even during the days of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and it shall remain obligatory, subject to capability and ability, right through the day of the Qiyāmah (when there is no security of life, property and honour, or that it is not possible to fulfill religious obligations, the Farā'iḍ of Dīn). If one continues to stay in Dār al-Ḥarb (technically an enemy country of disbelievers at war with Muslims), one will be considered a sinner.

2. To get out of Dār al-Bid'ah (Abode overtaken by deviation from established religion): Ibn Qāsim says that he had heard from Imām Mālik رحمه الله تعالى that it is not Ḥalāl for any Muslim to stay at a place where the early righteous elders of the Muslim community (*al-Salaf-al-Ṣaliḥūn*) are criticised and maligned. After reporting this statement, Ibn al-'Arabi writes that it is totally correct - because, should you be unable to eradicate the practice of what is forbidden, then, it becomes necessary for you that you should remove your own self from that place, and have nothing to do with it. This is as commanded by Allah Ta'ālā in the Qur'ān: وَإِذَا رَأَيْتَ الَّذِينَ يَخُوضُونَ فِيٓ اٰيَاتِنَا فَأَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ (And when you see those who indulge in Our verses adversely, turn away from them - 6:68).

3. To get out of a place overtaken by what is Ḥarām: This is because the quest for what is Ḥalāl is obligatory (Farḍ) on every Muslim.

4. To move out in order to avoid being subjected to physical pain: This kind of journey is permissible. In fact, it is a blessing from Allah that one should leave a place where danger exists that he will be physically hurt by enemies. So, this is his way out of that danger. This fourth kind of journey was first made by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. It was to seek deliverance from the pain inflicted on him by his people. When he left 'Irāq for Syria, he had said: إِنِّي مُهَاجِرٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّي (I am a *muhājir* [emigrant] unto my Lord - 29:26). After him, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام made a similar journey

from Egypt to Madyan: فَخَرَجَ مِنْهَا خَآئِفًا يَّتَرَقَّبُ (he got out from there, fearing, watching - 28:21).

5. <u>To move out due to unsuitable climate or likely diseases</u>: This is the fifth kind of journey which has also been permitted by Islam as the Holy Prophet ﷺ had advised some shepherds to settle by the grooves outside Madinah because the climate of the city did not suit them. Similarly, Sayyidnā 'Umar al-Fārūq ؓ had sent an executive order to Sayyidnā Abū 'Ubaidah ؓ that he should should shift the provincial capital from Jordan to some site located on a higher altitude where the climate is not bad.

But, this is on condition that there be no plague or other epidemic diseases affecting the area. And if, an epidemic does spread out in an area, it is governed by another rule, that is, those who are already present there do not have to get out from that area. As for those who are outside it, they should not go in there - as it happened with Sayyidnā 'Umar al-Fārūq ؓ during his journey to Syria. When he reached the borders of Syria, he was told that a plague has spread throughout that country. Hearing that, he hesitated from entering that country. He went into repeated consultations with the Ṣaḥābah to resolve this problem. The resolution came only after Sayyidnā 'Abd Al-Raḥmān ibn Al-'Awf ؓ narrated a Ḥadīth in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ had said:

إِذَا وَقَعَ بِأَرْضٍ وَّأَنْتُمْ بِهَا فَلَا تَخْرُجُوا مِنْهَا وَإِذَا وَقَعَ بِأَرْضٍ وَّلَسْتُمْ بِهَا فَلَا تَهْبِطُوا عَلَيْهَا (رواه الترمذی وقال حدیث حسن صحیح)

When plague spreads in an area where you are present, do not go out from there; and when it spreads in an area where you are not already present, do not go in there (after having heard of plague). (This Ḥadīth has been reported by Tirmidhī who calls it Ḥasan Ṣaḥīḥ)

At that time, Sayyidnā 'Umar al-Fārūq ؓ, in obedience to the command of the Ḥadīth, proclaimed that the whole caravan shall turn back and go home.

Some 'Ulamā have pointed out that this Ḥadīth has a particular element of wisdom in it, that is, the people staying in an area affected by some epidemic are most likely to be infected by its germs. If they were to run away from there, the one who is infected dangerously is not going to

survive anyway, but he would infect others wherever he goes. Hence, the wise decision.

6. To secure personal property and possessions: When someone feels the danger of being hit by thieves and robbers at a certain place, he should move away from there. The Sharī'ah of Islam has permitted doing this as well because the property and possessions of a Muslim are as sacrosanct as his or her life.

These six kinds belong to migration undertaken to run for safety against something. Then, there is the journey undertaken to seek and get something. It has nine kinds:

1. The journey for moral self-correction: It means touring and travelling through Allah's earth for the particular purpose of witnessing the creation of Allah Ta'ālā, the manifestations of His most perfect power, and having a spot observation of the sad end of past peoples in order to learn one's essential lesson in how to live sensibly and confidently. The Holy Qur'ān has exhorted people to embark on such trips, for instance in: أَوَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَيَنظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ (Have they not travelled around the earth and seen how was the end of those before them? - 35:44). 'Ulamā have identified the journey undertaken by Sayyidnā Dhul-Qarnain as a journey of this kind, while some of them suggest that his journey through the earth was to establish Divine Law on it.

2. The journey of Ḥajj: That it is an Islamic duty subject to some conditions is well known.

3. The journey of Jihād: All Muslims know that it is also either obligatory (*farḍ*), or necessary (*wājib*), or recommended (*mustaḥabb*).

4. The journey for employment: If a person cannot find economic support for his needs in his homeland, it is incumbent on him that he travels elsewhere and look for an employment opportunity there.

5. The journey for trading: It means travelling to acquire wealth in excess to the measure of need. According to Islamic legal norms, this too is permissible. Allah Ta'ālā says: لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَن تَبْتَغُوا فَضْلًا مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ : 'There is no sin on you that you seek the bounty of your Lord (by trading) - 2:198.' Here, by 'seeking of bounty' in this verse, the reference is to trading. When Allah Ta'ālā has allowed trading even during the Ḥajj trip, then,

undertaking a journey for the sole purpose of trading becomes permissible in the first degree.

6. <u>The journey for education</u>: That it is an absolute duty in terms of religious need, and that it is an obligation of sufficiency (*farḍ al-kifāyah*: an obligation which, if discharged by some, would suffice for others) in terms of what is more than needed, is widely known and amply recognized.

7. <u>The journey to a place believing it to be sacred and blessed</u>: This is not correct and proper except for the three Masājid and they are: (1) Al-Masjid Al-Ḥarām (The Sacred Mosque of Makkah al-Mukarramah) (2) Al-Masjid An-Nabawiyy (The Mosque of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, in Al-Madīnah al-Munawwarah) (3) Al-Masjid Al-Aqṣā (Baytul-Maqdis). [This is the view of Al-Qurṭubī and Ibn al-'Arabī. Other revered scholars of early Islam and their successors have also allowed the undertaking of travel to visit places generally considered blessed - Muḥammad Shafī'].

8. <u>The journey undertaken to guard Islamic frontiers</u>: This is known as *Ribāṭ*. There are many Ḥadīth reports which commend it strongly. (For details on *Ribāṭ*, please see our comments under Verse 200 of Sūrah 'Āl-'Imrān in Ma'āriful-Qur'ān, Volume II)

9. <u>The journey to visit relatives and friends</u>: This too has been classed as an act deserving of return and reward. A Ḥadīth of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim mentions the prayer of angels in favour of those who undertake a journey to visit relatives and friends (which is valid only when the purpose of meeting them is to seek the pleasure of Allah Ta'ālā and not to seek any material gains). Allah knows best. (Qurṭubī, p. 349-351, v. 5, Sūrah An-Nisā')

Verses 43 -44

وَمَآ اَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ اِلَّا رِجَالًا نُّوْحِيْٓ اِلَيْهِمْ فَسْئَلُوْٓا اَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ اِنْ
كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٤٣﴾ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ وَالزُّبُرِ ط وَاَنْزَلْنَآ اِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ
لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ اِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿٤٤﴾

And We did not send (messengers) before you other than

men whom We inspired with revelation. So, ask the people (having the knowledge) of the Message, if you do not know. [43] **(We sent them) with clear signs and scriptures. And We sent down the Message (The Qur'ān) so that you explain to the people what has been revealed for them and so that they may ponder.** [44]

Commentary

According to Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī, it was after the revelation of the first verse cited above that the Mushrikīn of Makkah sent their emissaries to the Jews of Madinah to find out if it was true that all earlier prophets had always been from the genus of men.

Though, included under the Qur'ānic expression: أَهْلُ الذِّكْرِ (Ahludh-Dhikr) were the people of the Book and believers all together, but it was obvious that the Mushrikīn (disbelievers) were to be satisfied only by the statement of non-Muslims - because they themselves were not satisfied with what the Holy Prophet ﷺ was telling them. So, how could they accept the statement of other Muslims?

The word: ذِكْر (*dhikr*) in the combination of: أَهْلُ الذِّكْرِ [*Ahludh-Dhikr* : translated here as 'the people (having the knowledge) of the Message'] is used to carry more than one meaning. One of these is *'Ilm* or knowledge. It is in this sense that the Holy Qur'ān has identified the Torah too as Dhikr: وَلَقَدْ كَتَبْنَا فِي الزَّبُورِ مِنْ بَعْدِ الذِّكْرِ : 'And verily We have written in the Zabūr (Scripture, Psalms), after the *Dhikr* (the Message, Torah)' - 21:105. Similar to this is the statement which follows next: أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ [And We sent down the Message (The Qur'ān) to you - 21:106]. Here, the word: اَلذِّكْرُ (*Adh-Dhikr*) means the Qur'ān. Therefore, *'ahludh-dhikr'* literally means 'the people of knowledge' (as refined in the cited translation). And who are those referred to as Ahlul-'Ilm or 'the people of knowledge' at this place? As apparent in this case, they refer to the scholars among the people of the Book, the Jews and Christians. This is the view of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ, Ḥasan and As-Suddiyy and others. Then, there are scholars who have taken 'Adh-Dhikr' at this place as well in the sense of Al-Qur'ān, and thus explained 'Ahludh-Dhikr' in the sense of Ahlul-Qur'ān. However, the clearest position taken in this matter is that of Rummānī, Zajjāj and Aẓharī. They say:

المراد باهل الذكر علماء اخبار الامم السالفة كائنا من كان فالذكر بمعنى الحفظ

كانّه قيل اسألوا المطلعين على اخبارا لامم يعلموكم بذلك

'Ahludh-Dhikr' means authentic historians of past peoples based on this investigative position, this definition includes therein the people of the Book, the Jews and Christians, and the people of the Qur'ān, the Muslims as well.

The word: الْبَيِّنَاتِ (*al-bayyināt*) in verse 44 means clear signs and miracles, the later being more aptly applicable here. The word: زُبُر (*zubur*) is the plural form of: زُبْرَةٌ (*zubarah*) which means large pieces of iron as in: اٰتُوْنِيْ زُبَرَالْحَدِيْدِ (give me pieces of the iron - 18:96). Because of the relevance of putting pieces together, writing is called: زَبَر (*zabar*), and a written book is known as: الزبر (*az-zibr*) with its plural as: الزَّبُوْر (*az-zabūr*). In short, at this point, it means the Book of Allah which includes Torah, Injīl, Zabūr and Qur'ān.

Non-Mujtahids must follow Mujtahid Imāms:
The Essence of Taqlīd

Though, the sentence: فَسْئَلُوْٓا اَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَاتَعْلَمُوْنَ [So, ask the people (having the knowledge) of the Message, if you do not know - 43] has appeared at this place in relation with a particular subject, but its words are general and are inclusive of all other matters of concern. Therefore, given the way Qur'ān has with words, this is really an important rule of procedure based on reason and revelation both, that is, those who do not know injunctions revealed for them ask those who do, and act accordingly. It is as simple as that. So, it is the duty of those who do not know that they should act in accordance with what they are told by those who do. This is what Taqlīd (to follow in trust) is. Not only that it is an explicit command of the Qur'ān, there is just no other way the mass practice of religion can be achieved, even if it was to be argued rationally. This rule has been in practice throughout the Muslim community right from the age of the noble Ṣaḥābah to this day without any division or difference. Even those who disavow Taqlīd do not reject the kind of Taqlīd under which those who are not 'Ālim (knowledgable in religion) should take Fatwā from the 'Ulamā' and act accordingly. And it is obvious that, even if the 'Ulamā' were to give proof of their view from the Qur'ān and Sunnah to masses of people who are unaware, they would still accept these arguments and proofs on the authority of, and trust and confidence in the same 'Ulamā'. They themselves do not have the ability to under-

stand and assess arguments and proofs presented. And Taqlīd is nothing but that one who does not know places his trust and confidence in someone who knows and accepts the injunction in question as the injunction of the Sharī'ah, and acts accordingly. This is one Taqlīd the justification of which - in fact, the necessity of which, leaves no room for any difference.

However, as for 'Ulamā' who themselves have the ability to understand Qur'ān and Ḥadīth and know the places where consensus (Ijmā') exists, they are free to act, in the case of such injunctions as have been clearly and explicitly mentioned in Qur'ān and Ḥadīth - and in which there exists no difference among the learned Ṣaḥābah and Tābi'īn as well - in these they can act directly according to Qur'ān, Ḥadīth and Ijma'. In these matters, 'Ulamā' need not follow (Taqlīd) any Mujtahid. But, there are particular injunctions and rulings which have not been explicitly spelt out in Qur'ān and Sunnah, or wherein there appears to be some contradiction in the *'āyāt* (verses) of the Qur'ān and the *riwāyāt* (narrations) of Ḥadīth, or in which there has come up some difference among the Ṣaḥābah and Tabi'in in determining the meaning of Qur'ān and Sunnah - such rulings and injunctions are the object of Ijtihād. In the terminology of Islamic Fiqh (jurisprudence), these are called issues and problems in which Ijtihād is possible. The rule which governs this is that an 'Ālim who does not possess the class and rank of Ijtihād, he too must follow one of the Mujtahid Imāms in these issues. Just relying on personal opinion, preferring one verse or narration and going by it while dismissing another verse or narration as less weightier is something not permissible for him.

Similarly, there are particular injunctions not mentioned explicitly in the Qur'ān and Sunnah. To deduce these out employing the principles provided by the Qur'ān and Sunnah, and to arrive at and determine their precise Islamic legal operative order (*al-ḥukm ash-shar'ī*), is the functional prerogative of only those Mujtahids of the Muslim Ummah who occupy the highest station of expertise in the Arabic language, its lexicography, idioms and modalities (*ṭuruq*) of usage, and who possess an additional mastery over all fields of knowledge related to Qur'ān and Sunnah, and above all, who are credited with a conduct of life marked by exemplary piety and godfearingness. Such people are no less than the

great Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, Shāfi'ī, Mālik, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, or Awzā'ī, jurist Abū Al-Laith and others like them. These were people Allah Ta'ālā had specially blessed. They lived closer to the age of prophethood, and that of the Ṣaḥābah and the Tabi'in. Under the canopy of this *barakah,* Allah Ta'ālā had bestowed upon them a very special taste of understanding the principles and objectives of the Sharī'ah and an equally special expertise of extracting textually non-prescribed (*ghayr manṣūṣ*) laws from the laws already prescribed in the sacred texts (*manṣūṣ*) by using the methodology of analogical deduction (*qiyās*). Now, in such issues and problem where Ijtihād efforts have been exhausted at the highest conceivable level, it is necessary even for the 'Ulamā' at large that they must follow one of the Mujtahid Imāms. Going by any new opinion contrary to that of the Mujtahid Imāms is error.

This is why great men of learning, 'Ulamā', Muḥaddithīn and Fuqahā' like Imām al-Ghazālī, Rāzī, Tirmidhī, Ṭaḥāwī, Ma'zini, Ibn Humām, Ibn Qudāmah and hundreds and thousands of early and later men of learning of the same standard, despite their high expertise in fields of Arabicism and Islamic Religious Law, have always remained voluntarily restricted to following Mujtahid Imāms invariably. They never considered it permissible to give a Fatwā following their own opinion, contrary to all Mujtahid Imāms.

Nonetheless, these blessed souls did have that standard ranking in learning and piety that they assessed the sayings of the Mujtahid Imāms on the anvil of proofs from the Qur'ān and Sunnah, after which they would go by the saying of the Imām which they found, out of the sayings of the Mujtahid Imāms, closest to the Qur'ān and Sunnah. But, they never thought it to be permissible either to depart from the appraoch taken by Mujtahid Imāms or to hold some opinion contrary to all of them. The essential reality of Taqlīd is no more than what has been stated here.

After that, came a gradual decline in the standards of knowledge and what was originally based on Taqwā and godliness came to be contaminated with personal interests and preferences. Under such conditions, given the kind of liberty that people could go by the saying of any one Imām in a religious problem of their choice and opt for the saying of some other Imām in some other problem they choose, the inevitable out-

come would be that people would start following their worldly desires in the name of following the Shari'ah by opting for the saying of an Imām which is more conducive to the fulfillment of their worldly desire. This is, as obvious, no following of a religion or Sharī'ah. In fact, this would be the following of one's own interests and desires - which is Ḥarām by the consensus of the entire Muslim Ummah. In Muwāfqāt, Allāmah Shaṭibī has dealt with this subject in great details. And Ibn Taymiyyah too, despite his opposition to Taqlīd at large, has rated this type of following in his Fatāwa as being Ḥarām by the consensus of the Muslim Ummah.

Therefore, later day jurists of Islam considered it necessary that all those who act according to the precepts of the Sharī'ah should be made to follow only one of the Mujtahid Imāms. From here began what was to be known as 'personal following' (*Taqlīd Shakhṣi*) which, in reality, is a functional operative order to keep the system of religion in tact so that people do not succumb to following their own desires under the cover of religion. This is precisely what Sayyidnā 'Uthmān al-Ghanī ﷺ did with the total agreement of the noble Ṣaḥābah when he restricted the seven versions (سبعة احرف) of the Qur'ān to only one version - though all seven versions were reading of the Qur'ān and were revealed through angel Jibra'īl as wished by the Holy Prophet ﷺ. But, when the Holy Qur'ān spread all over non-Arab countries, the danger that it might be altered or interpolated because of its seven readings became acute. So, it was by a total agreement of the Ṣaḥābah that Muslims were instructed to write and recite the Qur'ān in one version only. Sayyidnā 'Uthmān al-Ghanī ﷺ arranged to have all copies of the Qur'ān written according to this one version which he despatched to various parts of the world. The entire Muslim Ummah follows this Qur'ān even to this day. This never means that other versions were not true or authentic. The fact is that this one version was taken to in the interest of a better management of religious affairs and so that the Qur'ān stays protected against any possible alterations or interpolations.[1] Similarly, all Mujtahid Imāms are true. When one of them is chosen to be followed, it never means that other Imāms are not worthy of being followed. Far from it, it is only a

1. All this discussion is based on the theory of Allāmah Ibn Jarīr رحمه الله about the "Seven Versions" (سبعة أحرف). For a detailed treatment of the subject, please see my introduction at the beginning of volume I. (Muḥammad Taqi Usmānī)

functional arrangement. One decides for himself in terms of his convenience he has in following a particular Imām. But, while doing so, he also considers other Imāms as worthy of the same respect.

This is totally similar to a situation where it is considered necessary that only one of the many physicians present in town be chosen and assigned particularly for the treatment of a sick person. The reason is that it is not advisable for the patient that he goes about following his personal opinion in using the prescription of one physician at some time and that of another physician at some other time. Such a method of seeking solutions to one's medical problem is patently fatal. It should be understood that the choice of a specific physician made by the patient for his treatment never means that other physicians are no experts, or lack the capability of proper treatment.

The reality of the different juristic schools Ḥanafī, Shāfi'ī, Mālikī and Ḥanbalī that emerged in the Muslim Ummah was no more than what has been stated. As for giving it the touch of sectarianism and factionalism or increasing the heat of mutual confrontation and dissention is concerned, it is no valid mission of the revealed religion, nor have the discerning and far-sighted 'Ulamā' ever considered it good. That which happened was that scholarly debate and research by some 'Ulamā' became coloured with polemics which later reached the level of blames and satirical remarks. Then came ignorance-based confrontation which brought people to the outer limit where this state of affairs became the very indicator of being religious!

فالی اللّٰه المشتکی ولا حول ولا قوۃ الاّ باللّٰه العلی العظیم

So, before Allah is the complaint and there is no strength and there is no power except with Allah, the High, the Great.

Note of Caution

What has been written here on the religious question of Taqlīd and Ijtihād is only a very brief summary of the subject, which is sufficient for Muslims at large. As for scholarly research and details of the subject, they are present in books of Uṣūl al-Fiqh. Worth mentioning are: (1) Kitāb al-Muwāfqāt by Allāmah Shāṭibī, v. IV, Bāb Al-Ijtihād; (2) Kitāb Iḥkām al-Aḥkām by Allāmah Saifuddīn al-'Āmidī, v. III, al-Qā'idah ath-thālitha fī al-mujtahidīn; (3) Ḥujjatullahil-Bālighah and 'Iqd al-Jīd

by Ḥaḍrat Shāh Waliyyullah Ad-Dihlawī; and (4) Kitāb al-Iqtiṣād fī at-Taqlīd wa al-Ijtihād by Ḥaḍrat Maulanā Ashraf Alī Thānavī. Interested scholars may wish to refer back to them.

Ḥadīth is Necessary to Understand Qur'ān : The Rejection of Ḥadīth is Really the Rejection of the Qur'ān

The word: الذِّكْر (*adh-dhikr*) in verse 44: وَاَنْزَلْنَآ اِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاس : "And We sent down the Message (*adh-dhikr*: The Qur'ān) so that you explain to the people," means, by consensus, the Holy Qur'ān - and, in this verse, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been given the assignment of explaining the meaning of verses revealed to him before people. Herein lies an open proof that the correct understanding of the realities, insights and injunctions of the Holy Qur'ān depends on the statement of the Prophet of Islām, Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ. If everyone, by simply acquring the knowledge of Arabic language and literature, were to become capable of understanding the injunctions of the Qur'ān as Divinely intended, then, the mission of explaining assigned to the Holy Prophet ﷺ would have been rendered meaningless.

In Al-Muwāfqāt, Allāmah Shāṭibī has provided detailed proof that the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, the whole of it, is the explanation of the Book of Allah because the Qur'ān has said about the Holy Prophet ﷺ: وَاِنَّكَ لَعَلٰى خُلُقٍ عَظِيْم (And surely you are at the height of a sublime nature - 68:4) and which was explained by Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها by saying: كَانَ خُلُقُهُ الْقُرْاٰن (The Qur'ān was his sublime nature). Thus, the outcome is that every word and deed which provenly issued forth from the Holy Prophet ﷺ is nothing but what was said by the Qur'ān. Some of these are the explanation of a verse of the Holy Qur'ān in express and obvious terms, while in some cases there appears no express mention about them in the Holy Qur'ān, but they are nonetheless based on some kind of revelation, though it was not made part of the Holy Qur'ān. Thus, that too, in a certain way, comes under the operative purview of the Qur'ān itself. This is because according to the clarification of the Qur'ān nothing that he says is prompted by his personal desire, instead of which, it is a Wahy (revelation) from Allah Ta'ālā: وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوٰى اِنْ هُوَ اِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُّوْحٰى (and nor does he talk from desire. It is nothing but a revelation revealed - 53:3-4). This tells us that all acts of worship, dealings with people, personal morals and habits of the Holy Prophet ﷺ were, all of

them, through Divine revelation and have the same authority as that of the Qur'ān. Then, there are occasions when he has done something as based on his Ijtihād in which case it is ultimately - either through Divine revelation or through an absence of any restraining order - corrected and supported. Therefore, that too stands empowered with the authority of Wahy (revelation).

To sum up, it can be said that this verse has declared that the purpose for which the Holy Prophet ﷺ was sent is the explaining of the Qur'ān. This purpose of his mission in this world has also been mentioned in several verses of Sūrah Al-Jumu'ah, and elsewhere too, where it has been referred to as the Ta'līm of Al-Kitāb or Teaching of the Book. Now turn your attention to the great treasure of Ḥadīth which one of the most talented and intellectually peerless people of our community, right from the Ṣaḥābah and Tabi'īn all the way to the Muḥaddithīn of the later period, have guarded more than their lives and delivered it to the Muslim Ummah as *fait accompli*. These were people who spent their whole lives sifting through this treasure and went on to establish the categories of Ḥadīth narrations. As for narrations which they did not find matching enough in authority for the purpose of basing Islamic legal injunctions on them, these they have separated from the treasure of Ḥadīth. Instead, they have simply written standard books based exclusively on these narrations, which have proved correct and reliable after life-long criticisms and researches.

If today a person calls this treasure of Ḥadīth unreliable under one or the other pretext or artifice, it plainly means that the Holy Prophet ﷺ acted against this Qur'ānic injunction when he did not explain what the Qur'ān had said; or, that he had explained it but his explanation did not remain preserved for posterity. Under either of the two conditions, it is being suggested that the Qur'ān has not remained protected as to its meaning - the responsibility of protecting which has been undertaken by Allah Ta'ālā Himself: وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحٰفِظُونَ [We, Ourselves, have sent down the Dhikr (the Qur'ān) and We are there to protect it - 15:9]. This claim or inference of such a person is contrary to this textual authority (*nass*) of the Qur'ān. From here it stands proved that a person who refuses to accept the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ as a binding authority of Islam is, in reality, a denier of the Qur'ān itself. Na'ūdhubillāh: May Allah protect

us from it.

Verses 45 - 47

اَفَامِنَ الَّذِيْنَ مَكَرُوا السَّيِّاٰتِ اَنْ يَّخْسِفَ اللّٰهُ بِهِمُ الْاَرْضَ اَوْيَاْتِيَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَايَشْعُرُوْنَ ﴿٤٥﴾ اَوْيَاْخُذَهُمْ فِيْ تَقَلُّبِهِمْ فَمَاهُمْ بِمُعْجِزِيْنَ ﴿٤٦﴾ اَوْ يَاْخُذَهُمْ عَلٰى تَخَوُّفٍ ؕ فَاِنَّ رَبَّكُمْ لَرَءُوْفٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿٤٧﴾

Do they who contrive evil plots feel immune from that Allah makes the earth cave in with them, or from that the punishment comes to them from where they would not perceive, [45] **or that He seizes them while roaming about - while they are not to frustrate Him -** [46] **or that He seizes them while they are in apprehension? So, indeed your Lord is Very Kind, Very Merciful.** [47]

Commentary

In verses appearing previously: ثُمَّ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ يُخْزِيْهِمْ (Then, on the day of Judgment, He will put them to disgrace - 27), disbelievers were warned against the punishment of the Hereafter. In the present verses, they have been further warned that it is also possible that they are caught in the punishment from Allah right here in this world much before the punishment of the Hereafter, may be you are sunk into the earth you are sitting on, or you are seized by the punishment of Allah coming from a direction totally inconceivable for you. This is how it happened during the Battle of Badr when they received a punishment at the hands of some ragtag Muslims arrayed against their thousand strong armed youngmen, something they would have never perceived as possible. Or, it was also probable that they be seized by some Divine punishment while roaming about freely, such as, they be hit by a fatal disease, or that they run into an accident by falling down from some height, or simply die by colliding against some hard object. Also possible is yet another form of punishment when punishment may not come all of a sudden, but a general decrease sets in causing wealth, health, fitness, means of sustenance and comfort and peace go on shrinking so much so that the day comes when the people so punished disappear from the face of the earth for

good.

The word: تَخَوُّف (*takhawwuf*) appearing in verse 47 is obviously a derivation from: خَوْف (*khawf*: fear, apprehension). Some commentators have explained this verse in terms of this very sense by saying that one group of people be seized in punishment so that the second group gets apprehensive. Similarly, the second group is seized in punishment which makes the third group become apprehensive. Finally, struck with dread sequentially, comes the end for all of them.

But, the early exegete of the Qur'ān, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ﷺ and Mujāhid and other Imāms of Tafsīr have taken the word: تَخَوُّف (*takhawwuf*) in the sense of: تَنَقُّص (*tanaqquṣ*). So, it is in accordance with this Tafsīr that it has also been translated in the later sense of 'reducing or decreasing gradually.'

The noble *tābi'ī* Sa'id ibn al-Musaiyyāb says: When Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ also faced some hesitation about the sense of this word, he addressed the Ṣaḥābah from the Minbar and asked them as to what they understood to be the meaning of '*takhawwuf*'? The audience at large remained silent. But, a person from the tribe of Hudhayl submitted: O Commander of the Faithful, this is a particular idiom of our tribe. We use this word in the sense of *tanaqquṣ*, that is, to decrease gradually. Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ asked: Do the Arabs use this word in the sense of *tanaqquṣ* in their poetry? He said that they do, and cited a couplet by Abū Kabir al-Hudhali, a poet from his tribe, in which this word was used in the sense of decreasing gradually. Thereupon, Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ said: O people, learn about the poetry of Jāhiliyyah because there lies the key to the explanation of your Book and the sense of your speech.

For the Understanding of Qur'ān, a Passing Knowledge of Arabic is Not Sufficient

The first thing the report referred to above proves is that the ability to speak and write the Arabic language is not enough for the understanding of Qur'ān. Rather, necessary for this purpose is a level of effeciency and awareness which could help one understand the classical work done during the early period of the Arabs of Jāhiliyyah - because the Qur'ān has been revealed in that language and idiom. Learning Arabic literature on that level is incumbent on Muslims.

Reading Poets from Jāhiliyyah is Permissible, Even if Full of Pagan Absurdities

This also tells us that, in order to understand the Qur'ān and to understand the Arabic language and its usage during the period of Jāhiliyyah, it is permissible to read and teach the poetry of that period. Though, it is obvious that such poetry will be full of pagan themes and customs highlighting pagan sayings and doings counter to Islam. But, such was the need to understand the Qur'ān that reading and teaching it was declared to be permissible.

Even the Punishment of the World is Mercy in Disguise

In the verses cited above, after having mentioned various punishments which could seize disbelievers within this world, it was said in the end: فَاِنَّ رَبَّكُمْ لَرَءُوْفٌ رَّحِيْمٌ (So, indeed your Lord is Very Kind, Very Merciful). First of all, by using the word: رَبٌّ (*Rabb:* Lord) here, the hint given is that all these punishments which overtake human beings in this world are there to warn them as part of the dictates of Divine mercy. After that, by introducing the word: رَءُوْف (*Ra'ūf:* Kind) headed by the intensifying particle *lam* (لام) that is, the *lam* of *ta'kīd*), and thus by placing stress on the fact that Allah Ta'ālā was Very Kind and Very Merciful, the hint given was that warnings sent during the life of the world were, in reality, called for by His intrinsic Kindness and Mercy so that heedless men and women would learn from the warning and correct their deeds (before comes 'the last spasm of mass extinction' they themselves are talking about at the closing of the twentieth century, but are still not ready to learn, believe and correct).

Verses 48 - 57

اَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا اِلٰى مَا خَلَقَ اللّٰهُ مِنْ شَىْءٍ يَّتَفَيَّؤُا ظِلٰلُهٗ عَنِ الْيَمِيْنِ
وَالشَّمَآئِلِ سُجَّدًا لِّلّٰهِ وَهُمْ دٰخِرُوْنَ ﴿٤٨﴾ وَلِلّٰهِ يَسْجُدُ مَا فِى
السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِى الْاَرْضِ مِنْ دَآبَّةٍ وَّالْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ وَهُمْ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُوْنَ
﴿٤٩﴾ يَخَافُوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ مِّنْ فَوْقِهِمْ وَيَفْعَلُوْنَ مَا يُؤْمَرُوْنَ ﴿٥٠﴾ وَقَالَ اللّٰهُ
لَا تَتَّخِذُوْٓا اِلٰهَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ ۚ اِنَّمَا هُوَ اِلٰهٌ وَّاحِدٌ ۚ فَاِيَّاىَ فَارْهَبُوْنِ ﴿٥١﴾ وَلَهٗ

مَا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَلَهُ الدِّيْنُ وَاصِبًا ۭ اَفَغَيْرَ اللّٰهِ تَتَّقُوْنَ ﴿٥٢﴾
وَمَا بِكُمْ مِّنْ نِّعْمَةٍ فَمِنَ اللّٰهِ ثُمَّ اِذَا مَسَّكُمُ الضُّرُّ فَاِلَيْهِ تَجْـَٔرُوْنَ ﴿٥٣﴾
ثُمَّ اِذَا كَشَفَ الضُّرَّ عَنْكُمْ اِذَا فَرِيْقٌ مِّنْكُمْ بِرَبِّهِمْ يُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿٥٤﴾
لِيَكْفُرُوْا بِمَآ اٰتَيْنٰهُمْ ۭ فَتَمَتَّعُوْا ۣ فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٥٥﴾ وَيَجْعَلُوْنَ
لِمَا لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ نَصِيْبًا مِّمَّا رَزَقْنٰهُمْ ۭ تَاللّٰهِ لَتُسْـَٔلُنَّ عَمَّا كُنْتُمْ تَفْتَرُوْنَ
﴿٥٦﴾ وَيَجْعَلُوْنَ لِلّٰهِ الْبَنٰتِ سُبْحٰنَهٗ ۙ وَلَهُمْ مَّا يَشْتَهُوْنَ ﴿٥٧﴾

Have they not observed things Allah has created, their shadows inclining from the right and the left prostrating before Allah, while they are humble? [48] **And to Allah prostrates whatever creature there is in the heavens and in the earth, and the angels, and they show no arrogance.** [49] **They fear their Lord above them and do as they are commanded.** [50]

And Allah has said, "Do not take to yourselves two gods. He is but One God. So, Me alone you fear." [51] **And to Him belongs what is in the heavens and the earth and it is only He who deserves obedience as due. Would you, then, fear someone other than Allah?** [52] **And whatever blessing you have is from Allah. Then, once you are touched by distress, to Him alone you cry for help.** [53] **Then, as soon as He removes the distress from you, a group from among you starts ascribing partners to their Lord.** [54] **Thus, they reject what We have given to them. So, enjoy yourself and soon you will come to know.** [55]

They allocate a share from what We have given to them for those (the idols) they know nothing about. By Allah, you shall definitely be questioned about what you have been fabricating. [56] **And they ascribe daughters to Allah - Pure is He - and for themselves, what they desire!** [57]

Verses 58 - 60

وَاِذَا بُشِّرَ اَحَدُهُمْ بِالْاُنْثٰى ظَلَّ وَجْهُهٗ مُسْوَدًّا وَّهُوَ كَظِيْمٌ ﴿٥٨﴾
يَتَوَارٰى مِنَ الْقَوْمِ مِنْ سُوْۗءِ مَا بُشِّرَ بِهٖ ۭ اَيُمْسِكُهٗ عَلٰي هُوْنٍ اَمْ يَدُسُّهٗ

فِى التُّرَابِ ۗ اَلَاسَآءَ مَا يَحْكُمُوْنَ ﴿٥٩﴾ لِلَّذِيْنَ لَايُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ مَثَلُ السَّوْءِ ۚ وَلِلّٰهِ الْمَثَلُ الْاَعْلٰى ۗ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ ﴿٦٠﴾

And when one of them is given the good news of a female child, his face becomes gloomy and he is choked with grief. [58] **He hides from people because of the (self-presumed) evil of the good news given to him (wondering): Shall he keep it despite the disgrace or put it away into the dust? Beware, evil is what they decide.** [59] **Those who do not believe in the Hereafter have evil attributes, and to Allah belong the most exalted attributes. And He is the Mighty, the Wise.** [60]

Commentary

In these verses, two peculiar traits of the disbelievers of Arabia have been censured. To begin with, they would take the birth of a baby girl to be so bad that they would go about hiding from people to avoid being disgraced before them. This predicament would then throw them into a fix as to what they should do about it. Should they swallow their pride, embrace the disgrace of becoming the father of a baby girl and resign to the disaster with patience, or just ditch it alive into the dust and get rid of it? Then, on top of it, they had turned so irrational that the child they did not like to have as their own, that they would be audacious enough to attribute to Allah Almighty by declaring that the angels were His daughters!

The sense of the sentence: اَلَاسَآءَ مَا يَحْكُمُوْنَ (Beware evil is what they decide) appearing at the end of the second verse (59) actually incorporates these very two traits, as it has been pointed out in Tafsīr Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ with reference to Ibn 'Aṭiyyah. It means: (1) That their decision to take girls to be a punishment and a disgrace is by itself an evil decision; and (2) that the thing they would consider a matter of disgrace for their own selves, they would be too ready to attribute to Allah Ta'ālā.

Also at the end of the third verse (60), in: وَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ (And He is the Mighty, the Wise), there is a hint that taking the birth of a baby girl to be nuisance and disgrace, and hiding from people because of it, amount to challenging Divine wisdom - as the creation of male and female among the created is the very requisite of wisdom. (Rūḥ al-Bayān)

Ruling:

Clear indications are visible in these verses that taking the birth of a girl in the family to be a disaster or disgrace is not permissible under Islam. This is done by disbelievers. Quoting Shir'ah (شرعه) Tafsīr Rūḥ al-Bayān also says that a Muslim should be happier at the birth of a girl in the family so that it becomes a refutation of the act of the people of Jahiliyyah. Says a Ḥadīth: Blessed is the woman who gives birth to a girl in her first pregnancy. That the Arabic word: إناث (*ināth*: females) has been made to precede the word for 'males' in the verse of the Qur'ān: إِنَاثًا وَّيَهَبُ لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ الذُّكُوْرَ (He bestows on whomsoever He wills females and bestows on whomsoever He wills males - 42:49) indicates that the birth of a girl from the first pregnancy is better.

In another Ḥadīth, it is said: Whoever finds any of such girls entrusted to his care, and he treats them fairly and favourably, then, these girls will stand as a curtain between him and Hell. (Rūḥ al-Bayān)

To sum up, it can be said that taking the birth of a girl to be bad is a detestable custom of the pagan period. Muslims must abstain from it. In fact, they should be pleased and satisfied with the promise of Allah against it. Allah knows best.

Verses 61 -65

وَلَوْ يُؤَاخِذُ اللّٰهُ النَّاسَ بِظُلْمِهِمْ مَّا تَرَكَ عَلَيْهَا مِنْ دَآبَّةٍ وَّ لٰكِنْ يُّؤَخِّرُهُمْ إِلٰٓى اَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ۚ فَاِذَا جَآءَ اَجَلُهُمْ لَا يَسْتَاْخِرُوْنَ سَاعَةً وَّلَا يَسْتَقْدِمُوْنَ ﴿٦١﴾ وَيَجْعَلُوْنَ لِلّٰهِ مَا يَكْرَهُوْنَ وَ تَصِفُ اَلْسِنَتُهُمُ الْكَذِبَ اَنَّ لَهُمُ الْحُسْنٰى ؕ لَا جَرَمَ اَنَّ لَهُمُ النَّارَ وَاَنَّهُمْ مُّفْرَطُوْنَ ﴿٦٢﴾ تَاللّٰهِ لَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَآ اِلٰٓى اُمَمٍ مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ فَزَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ اَعْمَالَهُمْ فَهُوَ وَلِيُّهُمُ الْيَوْمَ وَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿٦٣﴾ وَمَآ اَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتٰبَ اِلَّا لِتُبَيِّنَ لَهُمُ الَّذِى اخْتَلَفُوْا فِيْهِ ۙ وَهُدًى وَّرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُّؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٦٤﴾ وَاللّٰهُ اَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً فَاَحْيَا بِهِ الْاَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا ؕ اِنَّ فِىْ ذٰلِكَ

لَأٰيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَّسْمَعُوْنَ ﴿٦٥﴾ ع

And if Allah were to seize the people for their transgression, He would have spared no creature on earth, but He lets them go on upto an appointed time. So, when their time will come, they will not be late for a moment, nor will they be early. [61]

And they assign to Allah what they themselves dislike and their tongues make the false statement that all good is for them. No, it is inevitable that the Fire is for them and that they will be moved fast (towards it). [62] **By Allah, We sent (messengers) to communities before you but the Satan made their deeds look good to them. So, he is their patron today and for them there is a painful punishment.** [63] **And We did not send down the Book to you but in order that you may explain to them what they differed about, and (that it be) guidance and mercy for a people who believe.** [64]

And Allah sent down water from the heavens and revived the land with it after it was dead. Surely, in that there is a sign for a people who listen. [65]

Verse 66

وَاِنَّ لَكُمْ فِى الْاَنْعَامِ لَعِبْرَةً ؕ نُسْقِيْكُمْ مِّمَّا فِىْ بُطُوْنِهٖ مِنْۢ بَيْنِ فَرْثٍ وَّدَمٍ لَّبَنًا خَالِصًا سَآئِغًا لِّلشّٰرِبِيْنَ ﴿٦٦﴾

And surely for you, there is a lesson in cattle. We provide you, out of what there is in their bellies, from between feces and blood, the drink of milk, pure and pleasant for those who drink. [66]

Commentary

The pronoun in: بُطُوْنِهٖ (*buṭūnihi*: their bellies) reverts back to: الْاَنْعَام (*al-an'ām*: cattle). Since the word *al-an'ām* is plural in the feminine gender, it required that the word used for it should have been: بُطُوْنِهَا (*buṭūniha*), as it appears in Sūrah Al-Mu'minūn: نُسْقِيْكُمْ مِّمَّا فِىْ بُطُوْنِهَا (We provide you, out of what there is in their bellies - 23:21).

Al-Qurṭubī explains this by saying that consideration has been made of the meaning of the plural in Sūrah Al-Mu'minūn where the pronoun

has been used in the feminine gender. And, in Sūrah Al-Naḥl, the pronoun has been used in the masculine gender in consideration of the plural word as such. Examples of this usage abound in Arabic where a singular pronoun is made to revert to a plural word.

As for bringing out pure milk from between feces and blood, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه said: When the fodder eaten by an animal settles in its stomach, the stomach heats it up as a result of which the waste by-product from the fodder settles down leaving milk above with blood being on top of it. Then, nature has entrusted the next job with the liver. It separates the three and directs them to where they belong. Blood goes to veins. Milk goes to the udder of the animal. Now, left in the stomach is waste which is excreted as feces or dung.

Rulings

1. From this verse we learn that eating good food is not against Zuhd (the way of life marked by not inclining towards worldly enjoyments for the sake of maintaining an ideal state of spiritual purity) specially when it has been acquired with Ḥalāl (lawful) means and provided that no extravagance has been made in it. This is as stated by Ḥaḍrat Ḥasan al-Baṣrī. (Al-Qurṭubī)

2. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said: When you eat something, say:

اَللّٰهُمَّ بَارِكْ لَنَا فِيْهِ وَاَطْعِمْنَا خَيْرًا مِّنْهُ

Yā Allah, bless it for us and have us eat better than it.

And he said: When you drink milk, say:

اَللّٰهُمَّ بَارِكْ لَنَا فِيْهِ وَزِدْنَا مِنْهُ

Yā Allah, bless it for us and give us more of it.

In the second prayer, he did not ask for something 'better than it' (as in the first prayer) for, in human cuisine, there is no nutrient better than milk. Therefore, nature has made milk the very first food given to every man and animal through breast-feeding by mothers. (Al-Qurṭubī)

Verse 67

وَمِنْ ثَمَرٰتِ النَّخِيْلِ وَالْاَعْنَابِ تَتَّخِذُوْنَ مِنْهُ سَكَرًا وَّرِزْقًا حَسَنًا ۭ اِنَّ

فِى ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَّعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿٦٧﴾

And from the fruits of date-palms and grape-vines, you obtain intoxicants, and good provision. Surely, in that there is a sign for a people who understand. [67]

Commentary

Described in the previous verses were blessings of Allah Ta'ālā which manifest the stunning marvel of Divine power and creativity. Of these, the first to be mentioned was milk which nature has gifted human beings with after having made it go through its own processing in the bellies of animals separating it from feces and blood and delivering it as a finished product, pure and pleasant, food and drink in one. No subsequent human effort or artifice is needed here. Therefore, the word used in the text is: نُسْقِيْكُمْ (*nusqīkum*: We provided you with milk to drink). The stress is self-explanatory.

After that it was said that human beings do make things from some fruits of the date-palms and grape-vines as well, which serve them as food, and other benefits. The hint ingrained here is that there is some intervening role played by human ingenuity, innovation and artifice in making the fruits from date-palms and grape-vines yield what they eat or benefit from in other ways. As a result of the factor of intervention, two kinds of things were made. The first is what intoxicates, the common form of which is liquor. The second is: Rizq Ḥasan, that is, good provision, like dates and grapes which everyone is welcome to use as fresh food, or dry it and store it for later use. The purpose is that Allah Ta'ālā, in His perfect power, has given to human beings fruits like dates and grapes, and alongwith it, He also gave human beings the choice to make things they eat and drink out of them. Now the option is theirs. Let them make what they would: Make what intoxicates and knocks their reason out, or make food out of them and get strength and energy!

According to this *tafsīr,* this verse cannot be used to prove the lawfulness of that which intoxicates, that is, liquor. This is because the purpose here is to state the nature of Divine blessings and the different forms they could take when used. It goes without saying that these remain the Divine blessings they are under all conditions. Take the example of foods, drinks and many things of benefit. People use them.

Some also use them in ways which are not permissible. But, the incidence of someone using things wrongfully would not stop a blessing from remaining the blessing it is. Therefore, this is no place to go into details as to which of the uses is lawful and which is otherwise and unlawful. Nevertheless, not to be missed here is the delicate hint given by setting up *"rizq ḥasan"* (good provision) in contrast with *"sakar"* (intoxicant) which tells us that *"sakar"* is not a good provision. According to the majority* of commentators, *"sakar"* means what intoxicates. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī, Qurṭubī, Jaṣṣāṣ)

These verses are Makkī by consensus. As for the unlawfulness of liquor, it came after that in Madīnah. Though liquor was lawful at the time of the revelation of this verse and Muslims used to drink openly, yet, even at that time, a hint was given in this verse towards the fact that drinking of liquor was not good. After that, came the specific injunctions of the Qur'ān which made liquor *ḥarām* (unlawful) clearly, emphatically and categorically. (Condensed from Al-Jaṣṣāṣ and Al-Qurṭubī)

Verses 68 -69

وَاَوْحٰى رَبُّكَ اِلَى النَّحْلِ اَنِ اتَّخِذِىْ مِنَ الْجِبَالِ بُيُوْتًا وَّمِنَ الشَّجَرِ وَمِمَّا يَعْرِشُوْنَ ﴿٦٨﴾ ثُمَّ كُلِىْ مِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرٰتِ فَاسْلُكِىْ سُبُلَ رَبِّكِ ذُلُلاً ۚ يَخْرُجُ مِنْۢ بُطُوْنِهَا شَرَابٌ مُّخْتَلِفٌ اَلْوَانُهٗ فِيْهِ شِفَآءٌ لِّلنَّاسِ ۚ اِنَّ فِىْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَّتَفَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿٦٩﴾

And your Lord revealed to the honey bee: "Make homes in the mountains, in the trees and in the structures they raise. [68] **Then, eat from all the fruits and go along the pathways of your Lord made easy for you." From their bellies comes out a drink of various colours in which there is cure for people. Surely, in that there is a sign for a people who ponder.** [69]

Commentary

The first word: اَوْحٰى (*awḥā*) in the first sentence of verse 68 has not

* Some 'Ulamā' have also taken it to mean vinegar, or non-intoxicating wine (*nabīdh*) [Jaṣṣāṣ & Qurṭubī] but it is not necessary to report details about this element of difference.

been used here in its technical sense of Waḥy or Revelation. Instead, it appears here in its literal sense which happens when the speaker communicates to the addressee something particular, secretly, in a way that the other person remains unable to understand that which has been communicated. Hence, its translation as 'revealed' is also in a literal sense.

As for the next word: النَّحل (*an-naḥl*), it is well-established that the honey bee is a distinct entity among non-human life forms particularly in terms of its intelligence and management. Therefore, the way it has been addressed by Allah Ta'ālā shows a distinct elegance of its own. For the rest of the creation, particularly for life forms in the animal and insect kingdom, it was said: اَعطٰى كُلَّ شَىْءٍ خَلْقَهٗ ثُمَّ هَدٰى (He gave everything its form, then provided it with guidance - Ṭaḥā, 20:50), something stated as a universal law for all of them. But, for this tiny creature, it was specially said: اَوحٰى رَبُّكَ (And your Lord revealed) which has been designed to indicate that it has a prominent status among other life forms by virtue of its intelligence, sense and functional insight.

The intelligence of the honey bees can be gauged fairly well by their system of governance. The system of this tiny flier's life operates on the principles of human politics and government. All management rests with one big bee which is the ruling head of all bees. It is her managerial skill and effecient distribution of work which helps run the whole system soundly and safely. Certainly so unique is her system and so established are its rules and regulations that human mind has but to marvel at the phenomena of the bee. This 'queen' itself lays six to twelve thousand eggs in a period of three weeks. By its size, physique and demeanor, it is distinguishable from other bees. This 'queen', following the principle of division of labour, appoints its subjects to handle different matters. Some of them serve on guard duty and do not allow some unknown outsider to enter into the hive. Some stand to protect eggs. Some nurture and train baby bees. Some serve as architects and engineers. The compartments of most roofs made by them range between twenty to thirty thousand. Some bees collect and deliver wax to architects which build homes. They procure this wax material from a whitish powder settled upon vegetation. This material is commonly visible on sugarcane. Some of them sit on different kinds of fruits and flowers and suck their juices which turns into honey while in their bellies. This honey is their

food and the food of their children. And the same is, for all of us too, the essence of taste and nutrition, and the prescription of medicine and remedy.

These different parties discharge their assigned duties very enthusiastically and obey the command of their 'queen' most obediently. If one of them happens to perch on filth, the guards of the hive stop the unwary worker on the outside gate and the 'queen' kills it. One can only wonder about this system and the performance of its managers and workers. (Al-Jawāhir)

The first instruction given through: أَوْحَىٰ رَبُّكَ (your Lord revealed) appears in the next sentence: أَنِ اتَّخِذِي مِنَ الْجِبَالِ بُيُوتًا (Make homes in the mountains) which mentions the making of homes. At this point, it is worth noting that every animal makes some sort of a sheltered arrangement to live anyway, then, why is it that bees have been particularly commanded to build 'homes' and that too with such considered attention? Furthermore, the word used here is that of: بُيُوت *(buyūt)* which is generally used for the places where human beings live, their homes. By doing this two hints have been given. The first hint is towards the fact: Since bees have to prepare honey, therefore, they should first make a safe home. The second hint is toward another fact: The homes they make will not be like the homes of common animals, instead, their design and construction will be extraordinary. As such, their homes are highly distinct, far different from those of other animals, virtually mind-boggling. Their homes are hexagonal in shape. Measuring them with a pair of compasses and rulers will hardly spell out a difference. Other than the hexagonal shape, they never choose any shape such as that of a square, pentagon or any others as some of their corners turn out to be functionally useless.

Allah Taʿālā did not simply order the bees to make homes, He also told them as to where they should be located, that is, it should be at some altitude because such places help provide fresh, clean and almost-filtered air flow for the production of honey. Thus, honey stays protected from polluted air as well as from incidences of breakage or damage to the hives. So, it was said: مِنَ الْجِبَالِ بُيُوتًا وَّمِنَ الشَّجَرِ وَمِمَّا يَعْرِشُوْنَ (Make homes in the mountains, in the trees and in the structures they raise) so that honey could be prepared in a hygienically safe way. This was the first instruction.

The second instruction appears in: ثُمَّ كُلِى مِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرٰتِ (Then, eat from all the fruits) where the bee is being commanded to suck juices from fruits and flowers as it desires and likes. No doubt, what is said here is: مِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرٰتِ (from all the fruits). But, obviously, the word: كُلِّ (*kull*) used here does not mean the fruits and flowers of the whole world. Instead of that, it means those within easy reach, and which serve the desired purpose. This word: كُلِّ (*kull*) has also appeared in relation to the event concerning the queen of Saba' where it was said: وَأُوتِيَتْ مِنْ كُلِّ شَىْءٍ (she has got everything - An-Naml, 27:23). It is obvious that 'all' or 'every' in this sense do not denote totality without exception to the limit that the queen of Saba' be required to have a personal aeroplane, Rolls Royce and palace train! What is meant here is what she needed to have as complement to her function as the ruler of the time. So, here too, the expression: مِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ (from all the fruits) means nothing but this. As for the bee sucking juices from fruits and flowers, it can be said that the molecular composition of juices she sucks is extremely refined and precious, the extraction of which in identical measure through mechanical means even in our advanced scientific age cannot be accomplished as efficiently.

Then comes the third instruction: فَاسْلُكِى سُبُلَ رَبِّكِ ذُلُلاً (and go along the pathways of your Lord made easy for you). When the bee goes to suck juices from fruits and flowers to places far away from home, then, obviously enough, its return to home base should have been difficult. But, Allah Ta'ālā has made flight routes easy for it. Thus, it goes miles away and returns home without straying or getting lost. Allah Ta'ālā has made for it flying routes in the air because in going by the circuitous pathways on land, there is the likelihood of going astray. So, it can be said that Allah Ta'ālā has subjugated the air space for this humble bee so that it can go home without any let or hinderance.

After that, the real outcome of this revealed command was stated in the following words: يَخْرُجُ مِنْ بُطُوْنِهَا شَرَابٌ مُّخْتَلِفٌ اَلْوَانُهٗ فِيْهِ شِفَآءٌ لِّلنَّاسِ (From their bellies comes out a drink of various colours in which there is cure for people - 69). The difference in colour is caused by the difference of climate and by what they suck from. This is the reason why a particular area with abundance of particular kinds of fruits and flowers does leave its effect and taste on the honey produced in that area. Since honey comes in the form of a liquid substance, therefore, it was called '*sharāb*' (drink). Even in this sentence, present there is a decisive proof of the Oneness

and Power of Allah Ta'ālā. Is it not that this tasty and blissful drink comes out from the belly of a tiny animal which, in itself, is armed with poison? The emergence of antidote from poison is really a unique exhibit of the most perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā. Then, such is the staggering working of nature that milk from milch animals does not turn red or yellow under the effect of different climates and foods while honey from the bee does take different colours.

As for the oft-quoted statement: فِيهِ شِفَآءٌ لِّلنَّاسِ (in which there is cure for people), it can be said that honey is, on the one hand, an energy-giving food as well as a delicacy in terms of taste and flavor, while on the other hand, it serves as a remedial prescription for diseases too. And why not? This delicate mobile machine which goes about extracting pure and powerful essences from all kinds of fruits and flowers after which it returns home to store them in its safe compartments specially designed, constructed and guarded for a purpose. Now, if natural herbs and plants contain ingredients which have medicinal and curative properties, why would everything disappear from their essences? Honey is used as medicine directly in phelegmatic diseases while in other diseases it is recommended in combination with other ingredients. Expert physicians in the Greco-Arab medical tradition include it specially as a binder in their medicinal electuaries. Another property of honey is that it does not get spoiled itself and, on top of it, it helps preserve other things as well for a long time. This is the reason why eastern physicians have been using it as an alternate of alcohol for thousands of years. Honey is laxative and proves effecient in expelling unhealthy substances from the stomach.

A Ṣaḥābī mentioned the sickness of his brother before the Holy Prophet ﷺ. He advised him to give his brother a drink of honey. He returned the next day and reported that his brother was still sick. He repeated his advice. On the third day, when he again said that there was no change in his condition, he said: صَدَقَ اللّٰهُ وَكَذَبَ بَطْنُ اَخِيْكَ (The word of Allah is true. The stomach of your brother is a liar). The sense was that there is nothing wrong with the suggested remedy. It was the particular temperamental condition which had caused delay in the actual effect of the remedy. When the treatment with honey was repeated after that, the patient got well.

At this place in the Holy Qur'ān, the word: شِفَآءٌ (*shifā'*: remedy, cure, bliss) appears as common noun (*nakirah*) in the context of an affirmative sentence. That it is *shifā'* for every disease is not apparent on this basis.

But, the nunnation (*tanwin*) of *'shifā'* which carries the sense of greatness does necessarily prove that the *shifā'* in honey is of a great and distinct nature. Then there are those spiritually valiant servants of Allah who just have no doubt about honey being a cure for any disease whatsoever. So firmly convinced they are with their staunch belief in the very outward meaning of this statement of their Rabb that they would treat an abscess or an eye with honey, not to mention other diseases of the body. According to reports about Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar ﷺ, even if an abscess showed up on his body, he would treat it by applying honey on it. When some of the people asked him as to why would he do that, he said in reply: Is it not that Allah Ta'ālā has said about it in the Holy Qur'ān: فِيهِ شِفَاءٌ لِّلنَّاسِ (In it, there is cure for people). (Al-Qurṭubī)

Allah Ta'ālā deals with His servants in harmony with the belief they have about their Rabb. It was said in Ḥadīth Qudsi*:

أَنَا عِنْدَ ظَنِّ عَبْدِى بِى

I am with the belief of My servant in Me.

In the last sentence of verse 69: إِنَّ فِى ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ (Surely, in that there is a sign for a people who ponder), Allah Ta'ālā has, after having given examples of His perfect power mentioned above, invited human beings once again to look into them and think about them. Allah Ta'ālā, by causing rains to come down, gives new life to dead lands. Winding through the impurities of feces and blood, He makes pipelines of pure and pleasant milk flow for you. On date-palms and grape-vines, He grows sweet fruits from which you make all sorts of syrups and preserves. Through a tiny little living creature with a poisonous bite, He provides for you what is an excellent combination of food, drink, taste, flavor, and cure.

Would you still keep calling gods and goddesses of your making? Would your worship and fidelity still remain detached from your real Creator and Master and attached to lifeless idols of stone and wood? Would your reason still keep looking for escape from truth by suggesting that this whole phenomena is some charismatic working of blind, deaf and inert matter? Face truth, think, realize. These countless master-

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* Al-Ḥadīth Al-Qudsi: The Sanctified Ḥadīth: A technical term for what has been communicated to the Holy Prophet ﷺ by his Rabb. Its meanings are from Allah which He reveals for His Rasūl, through inspiration or dream, while its words are from the Rasūl of Allah ﷺ.

pieces of Divine creativity, marvels of wisdom and design, and the finest of decisions based on absolute intelligence are the loudest of heralds announcing that our Creator is One, unique and wise, sole object of worship, obedience and fidelity. He alone is the remover par excellence of all difficulties and He alone deserves gratitude and glorification as due.

Special Notes

1. The verse tells us that, beside human beings, there is consciousness and intelligence in other living creatures too: وَاِنْ مِّنْ شَیْءٍ اِلاَّ یُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِہٖ (There is nothing which does not recite His praises - Al-Isrā', 17:44). However, the degrees of intelligence are different. The intelligence of human beings is more perfect than those of any other living creatures. This is the reason why they have been obligated with the precepts and injunctions of the Sharī'ah. Again, this is the reason why a man or woman who does not remain rational due to insanity, does not remain so obligated very much like other creatures.

2. Another distinction of the honey bee is that the Ḥadīth mentions its superiority. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

اَلذِّبَّانُ کُلُّھَا فِی النَّارِ یَجْعَلُھَا عَذَابًا لِّاَھْلِ النَّارِ اِلاَّ النَّحْلَ

All bees will go to Hell (like other hurting creatures). They will be made a punishment for the people of Hell, except the honey bee (which will not go to Hell) - (Nawadir al-Uṣūl with reference to Al-Qurṭubī)

According to another Ḥadīth, he has prohibited its killing - Abū Dāwūd.

3. Traditional physicians doubt that honey is the excretion or saliva of the bee. Aristotle had placed bees in a hive made of glass and had closed it. He wished to find out their working system. But, these bees first mounted a curtain made with wax and mud on the inner side of the glass cage and did not start their work until such time that they became certain of having become totally veiled from sight.

Giving an example of the lowness of worldly life, Sayyidnā 'Alī رضی اللہ عنہ said:

اَشْرَفُ لِبَاسِ بَنِیْ اٰدَمَ فِیْهِ لُعَابُ دُوْدَةٍ وَّاَشْرَفُ شَرَابِهٖ رَجِیْعُ نَحْلَةٍ

The finest dress of the progeny of Adam is saliva from a tiny insect and the finest of his drinks is the excrement of a bee.

4. From the statement: فِيهِ شِفَآءٌ لِّلنَّاسِ (in which, there is cure for people) we also find out that treating diseases with medicine is permissible because Allah Ta'ālā has mentioned it as a reward and blessing.

Elsewhere it has been said: وَنُنَزِّلُ مِنَ الْقُرْاٰنِ مَاهُوَ شِفَآءٌ وَّرَحْمَةٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ (And We send down from the Qur'ān what is cure and mercy for believers - Al-Isrā', 17:82). Ḥadīth induces people to go for treament of diseases and use medicines. Some Companions asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ: Should we use medicine? He said: Why not? Do take advantage of treatment because for every disease Allah has created, He has also created a matching medicine. But, there is no cure for one disease. They asked: Which disease is that? He said: Extreme old age. (Abū Dāwūd & Tirmidhī from Al-Qurṭubī)

There is yet another narration from Sayyidnā Khuzaymah ﷺ. He says: Once I asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ that the practice of blowing on the sick and seeking to cast off diseases which we are used to, or treat ourselves with medicines are the kind of arrangements we make to stay safe against diseases. Can these change the destiny determined by Allah Ta'ālā? He said: These too are nothing but the very forms of Divinely-appointed destiny.

To sum up, there is consensus of all 'Ulamā' on the justification of seeking treatment and using medicine. Many Aḥādīth and reports from the Ṣaḥābah are available in support. If one of the children of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar ﷺ was stung by a scorpion, he would give him an antidote and seek to help the child to get well through the benediction of supplicatory recitations. He treated a person suffering from partial paralysis by branding. (Al-Qurṭubī)

It has been reported about some Muslim mystics (Sūfiyā') that they did not like being medically treated. This is also evident from the reported behaviour of some of the Ṣaḥābah as well. For instance, according to a report, Sayyidnā Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ fell sick. Sayyidnā 'Uthmān ﷺ came to visit him and asked him: What is it that ails you? He replied: I am worried about my sins. Sayyidnā 'Uthmān ﷺ said: Then, do you wish to have something? He said: I wish to have the mercy of my Rabb. Sayyidnā 'Uthmān ﷺ said: If you like I can call a physician? The answer he gave was: Believe me, it is the 'Physician' Himself who has put

me down (on the sick bed).

But, occurances of this nature do not go to prove that these blessed souls took medical treatment to be reprehensible (*makrūh*). May be, at that time, it was not upto their personal taste and inclination. Therefore, it was because of their inability to accept it temperamentally that they did not favour to go by it. This is a transitory phase of psyche when one comes under the overwhelming logic and effect of the state one is in, and which cannot be used as an argument to prove that medical treatment is either impermissible or reprehensible. The very request made to Sayyidnā Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ by Sayyidnā 'Uthmān ﷺ that he be allowed to bring a physician for him is, in itself, a proof of the fact that treatment is permissible - rather, there are situations when doing so becomes mandatory as well.

Verse 70

وَاللّٰهُ خَلَقَكُمْ ثُمَّ يَتَوَفّٰىكُمْ ۙ وَمِنْكُمْ مَّنْ يُّرَدُّ اِلٰٓى اَرْذَلِ الْعُمُرِ لِكَىْ
لَا يَعْلَمَ بَعْدَ عِلْمٍ شَيْـًٔا ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلِيْمٌ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿٧٠﴾

And Allah created you, then He takes you back. And there are some among you who are carried back to the worst part of the age, that he knows nothing after having knowledge. Surely, wherein Allah is All-Knowing, All-Powerful. [70]

Commentary

Mentioned previously were various states of water, vegetation, cattle and honey bee through which Allah Ta'ālā had reminded human beings of His perfect power of creation and of His blessings for the created. Now, through the words of the present verse, they have been invited to ponder over the very state they are in. Human beings were nothing. Allah Ta'ālā blessed them with existence. Then, by sending death when He willed, He terminated that blessing. As for some others, they are, much before their death, carried to such an stage of extreme old age that their senses do not work, they lose the strength of their hands and feet. They understand nothing, nor can they remember what they do. This change in their world-view and self-view proves that knowledge and

power reside in the exclusive domain of the One who is the Creator and Master.

The expression مِنكُم مَن يُرَدُّ إِلَى أَرْذَلِ الْعُمُرِ (and there are some among you who are carried back to the worst part of the age) gives a hint that man has seen a time of weakness earlier too. This was the early stage of childhood marked by its lack of understanding and physical strength, and dependence on others in eating, drinking, getting up and sitting down. Then came youth, the time to prosper and move ahead. Then, gradually, man is carried to a stage of the same age of helplessness as it was in early childhood.

The expression: أَرْذَلِ الْعُمُرِ (translated as 'the worst part of the age') means the extreme old age when all physical and mental faculties become weak and confused. The Holy Prophet ﷺ always prayed:

اَللّٰهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُبِكَ مِنْ سُوْءِ الْعُمُرِ مِنْ أَنْ أُرَدَّ إِلَى أَرْذَلِ الْعُمُرِ

'O Allah, I seek refuge with You from the evil of age' -

and according to another narration:

اَللّٰهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُبِكَ مِنْ أَنْ أُرَدَّ إِلَى أَرْذَلِ الْعُمُرِ

'O Allah, I seek refuge with you from that I be carried to the worst part of the age.'

The definition of: أَرْذَلِ الْعُمُرِ (the worst part of the age) remains undetermined. However, the definition appearing above seems to be weightier, something to which the Qur'ān too has alluded by saying: لِكَيْلَا يَعْلَمَ بَعْدَ عِلْمٍ شَيْئًا (that he knows nothing after having knowledge) that is, the age in which he is in, senses do not remain active as a result of which a person forgets everything he knows.

This 'worst part of the age' (أَرْذَلِ الْعُمُرِ) has been defined variously. Some say it is the age of eighty years while some others say it is ninety. Also reported from Sayyidnā 'Ali ؓ, there is a statement which puts it at seventy five. (Ṣaḥīḥayn as quoted by Maẓharī)

After that appears the tersely-phrased sentence also mentioned above: لِكَيْلَا يَعْلَمَ بَعْدَ عِلْمٍ شَيْئًا (that he knows nothing after having knowledge). This is about the phenomena of old age (which, in our time, has given birth to the study of grontology). When one is made to reach its extreme stage, one is left with no functional strength, neither physical nor rational. What he knows now, he may not know moments later. All information he has, he may forget and become like a child born

yesterday who has no knowledge or awareness or understanding or intelligence. Ḥaḍrat 'Ikrimah رحمه الله تعالى says: 'This state will not prevail upon the reciter of the Qur'ān.'

In the last sentence of the verse, it was said: اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلِيْمٌ قَدِيْرٌ (Surely, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Powerful). It means that from knowledge He knows everyone's age, and from power He does what He wills. If He wills, He can have a strong youngman be overtaken by the signs of the worst part of old age, and should He so will, even a hundred-year old aged man could remain a strong youngman. All this lies within the power of that sole Being in whose divinity there is no partner or associate.

Verse 71

وَاللّٰهُ فَضَّلَ بَعْضَكُمْ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ فِى الرِّزْقِ ۚ فَمَا الَّذِيْنَ فُضِّلُوْا بِرَآدِّىْ رِزْقِهِمْ عَلٰى مَا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُهُمْ فَهُمْ فِيْهِ سَوَآءٌ ۗ اَفَبِنِعْمَةِ اللّٰهِ يَجْحَدُوْنَ ﴿٧١﴾

And Allah has given some of you preference over others in provision. So, those given preference are not to pass on their provision to their slaves so that they become equal in it: Do they, then, reject the blessing of Allah? [71]

Commentary

In the previous verses, by referring to major manifestations of His knowledge and power and blessings which descend on human beings, Allah Ta'ālā has the natural proof of His Oneness (Tauḥīd). By looking at it, even a person of ordinary commonsense would not accept that any created being can hold a share with Allah Ta'ālā in His attributes of knowledge and power, or in any of the others. In the present verse, this very subject of Tauḥīd has been brought into focus by citing the example of a case in mutual dealing.

It is being said here that Allah Ta'ālā has not, in His infinite wisdom, and in view of His consideration for human good, made all human beings equals in terms of *rizq* or provision. Instead, He has given some of them preference over some others establishing different degrees therein. Someone was made so rich that he owns a lot of things, keeps a staff of

all sorts of servers, spends as he wishes, and his servers too benefit through him. Then, someone was made to work for others who, far from spending on others, was cut out to receive his own expenditure from others. Then, someone was made to be somewhere in the middle, neither so rich as to spend on others, nor so poor and needy as to be dependent upon others even in the necessities of life.

Everyone is aware of the outcome of this natural distribution that he who was given preference in provision and made rich and need-free would never accept to distribute his wealth among his slaves and servants in a way that they too become his equals in wealth.

Understand the drive of this argument by applying this example on polytheists. They too accept that the idols and other created things they worship are, after all, created and owned by Allah Ta'ālā. If so, how can they suggest that the created and the owned become equals to their Creator and Master? Do such people see all these signs and hear all these words, yet go on to ascribe partners and equals to Allah, the necessary result of which is that thay reject the blessings given by Allah? Because, if they had admitted that all these blessings have been given by Allah Ta'ālā without the intervention of any self-carved idol, icon, human being and Jinn, then, how could they have equated these things with Allah Ta'ālā?

The same subject has been taken up in the following verse of Sūrah Ar-Rūm:

ضَرَبَ لَكُمْ مَّثَلًا مِّنْ اَنْفُسِكُمْ هَلْ لَّكُمْ مِّنْ مَّا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُكُمْ مِّنْ شُرَكَآءَ فِيْ مَا رَزَقْنٰكُمْ فَاَنْتُمْ فِيْهِ سَوَآءٌ

> We have given for you an example from your own people. Have those who are your subjects become sharers with you in the provision given to you by Us whereby you are equal in it? (30:28)

The outcome of this too is: When you do not like to let your servants and your slaves whom you own become equal to yourself, how can you like for Allah that He, and things created and owned by Him, become equal to Him?

The Difference in Degrees of Economic Status is Mercy for Mankind

This verse makes it clear that the presence of different degrees of eco-

nomic status among human beings - that someone is poor, another rich and yet another somewhere in the middle - is not accidental. It is as dictated by the wisdom of Allah Ta'ālā, as required by considerations for human good, and is mercy for mankind. If this state (of human society) were not to prevail and if all human beings were to become equal in wealth and possessions, it would have caused a breach of function in world order. Therefore, since the time the world became populated, all human beings have never been equal in terms of wealth and property, in any period, or age, nor can they be. Should such an equality were to be created compulsarily, it will take only a few days when disruption and disorder become openly visible throught the entire spectrum of human dealings. Allah Ta'ālā has created human beings with varying degrees of temperaments as conditioned by intelligence, strength and functional ability. They have been further classified as low, high and average, a fact which cannot be rejected by any reasonable person. Similarly, it is also inevitable that there be different degrees in wealth and property as well so that every single person is rewarded in terms of individual capability. If the capable and the incapable were made equal, it will discourage the capable. When the capable person has to stay at par with the incapable in economic pursuits, what other motivation would compel him to go on striving and achieving excellence? The necessary outcome of such an approach will be no other but the demise of excellence acquired through functional capability.

Qur'ānic Injunctions Against Concentration of Wealth

Whereas the Creator of the universe gave preference to some over others in physical and rational faculties, and established variance in provision, wealth and property, subject to it, He has also established a strong system of economic equillibrium which aims that no particular group or party or a few individuals take over the treasures of wealth and centers of economic activity. This system also guards against the consequences of such a takeover which dries up the very field where capable people could thrive by utilizing their physical, intellectual and technical capabilities and advance economically. For this purpose, it was said in the Holy Qur'ān: كَيْ لَا يَكُونَ دُولَةً ۢ بَيْنَ الْأَغْنِيَاءِ مِنكُمْ It means: (We made the law of distribution of wealth,) so that wealth does not come to be revolving among the rich from among you - Al-Hashr, 59:7.

The wide-spread turbulance being experienced in the economic systems of the modern world is directly the result of bypassing this wise law given to us by Divine wisdom. On the one hand, there is the capitalist system in which some individuals or groups virtually take over the nerve centers of wealth through the medium of interest and gambling and go on to enslave the entire creation of Allah economically. They are rendered so helpless that they have no escape route left but to serve like slaves and work like dogs in order to get what they can to eke out a living, no matter how miserable. In a situation so sordid, it is a far cry that they would ever be able to step into the field of industry or trade despite having the best of capabilities for this purpose.

As a reaction to this tyranny of capitalists, there rises a counter system in the name of socialism or communism. Their slogan is the removal of disparity between the rich and poor and the creation of equality between all. Masses of people already harassed by the injustices of the capitalist system go after the slogan. But, very soon, they discover that the slogan was nothing but deception. The dream of economic equality never came true. The poor person, despite poverty and hunger, had a certain human dignity, a certain right to do what he wished, but even that human dignity was snatched away by the system. In the communist system, the worth of a human person is no more than a part of its machines. Private ownership of property is simply out of question there. The factory worker owns nothing, not even the spouse and children. Everyone is a part of the state machine. When the machine starts, they have no choice but to start working on their jobs. Other than the so-called objectives of the state, the worker has no conscience or voice. The slightest grievance against the tyranny of the state and that unbearable labour on the job is counted as rebellion against the state the punishment for which is death. In short, hostility towards God and religion and adherence to bland materialism is the basic principle of communism.

These are facts no communist can deny. The writings and doings of their commissars are proofs of this assertion for compiling relevant references to these amounts to making a regular book out of them.

The Holy Qur'ān has provided a system in between the two extremes of tyrannical capitalism and Quixotic communism keeping it free from ex-

cess and deficiency so that no individual or group could, despite there being a naturally placed dissimilarity in provision and wealth, go on to make the creation of Allah at large their slaves only to condemn them to ever rising prices of commodities and virtual famines. By declaring interest and gambling to be unlawful, it has demolished the foundations of illegitimate capitalism. Then, by making a categorical statement that the poor and needy have a right in the wealth of every Muslim, they were admitted as sharers, which is not supposed to be some favour done to them. In fact, it is the fulfillment of a duty. The verse: فِيْٓ اَمْوَالِهِمْ حَقٌّ مَّعْلُوْمٌ لِّلسَّآئِلِ وَالْمَحْرُوْمِ (in their wealth, there is a known right for the asking and the deprived - Al-Ma'ārij, 70:24) proves it. After that, by distributing the entire property of a deceased person over individual inheritors of the family, it has eliminated the concentration of wealth. Natural streams, high seas and the self-growing produce of mountain forests were declared to be the common capital of the entire creation of Allah. No individual or group can take possession over them as something owned by them. This is not permissible. Contrary to this, in a capitalist system, these blessings are handled as something owned by capitalists only (under one or the other pretext).

Since diversity and difference in intellectual and practical capabilities is a natural phenomena, and the pursuit of economic gains through them also depends on these very capabilities, therefore, diversity or dissimilarity in the ownership of wealth and property is also a dictate of wisdom. Whoever has the least sense of how things work in this world would find it hard to deny this truth. Even the champions of the slogan of equality could not go far enough with it. They had to abandon their claim of flat equality and were left with no choice but to introduce dissimilarity and incentive-oriented policy in national economy. On May 5, 1960, speaking before the Supreme Soviet, Nikita Khurshev said:

> 'We are against the movement to eliminate difference in wages. We are openly against the efforts to establish equality in emoluments and to bring them at par. This is the teaching of Lenin. He taught that material motivations will be given full consideration in a socialist society.' (Soviet World, p.346)

That the dream of economic equality had translated itself into its absence since the very early stages, but it did not take much time to witness that this absence of equality and the disparity between the rich and

the poor in the communist state of Russia had gone much beyond the general run of capitalist countries. Lyon Sidov writes:

> 'Perhaps, there is no developed capitalist country where the disparity in the wages of workers is as high as in Soviet Russia.'

These few examples from the contemporary scene show how deniers were themselves compelled to confirm the truth of the verse: وَاللّٰهُ فَضَّلَ بَعْضَكُمْ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ فِى الرِّزْقِ (And Allah has given some of you preference over others in provision - 71) and that (Allah does what He wills). As for comments under this verse, the purpose was limited to pointing out that the dissimilarity in provision and wealth is very natural and very much in accordance with considerations for human good. That which remains is the discussion of the Islamic Principles of Distribution of Wealth and how they distinctly differ from capitalism and communism both. Inshallah, this will appear under comments on: نَحْنُ قَسَمْنَا بَيْنَهُمْ مَّعِيْشَتَهُمْ (We have distributed among them their livelihood - Al-Zukhruf, 43:32) appearing in Ma'ariful-Qur'ān, Volume VII. An independent treatise on this subject entitled: 'Islam Ka Nizam-e-Taqsim-e-Daulat' written by this humble writer should also be sufficient for this purpose. [This is also available in its Engish translation made by Professor Ḥasan Askarī under the title: DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH IN ISLAM from the publishers, Maktaba-e-Darul-Uloom, Korangi, Karachi, Pakistan]

Verses 72 - 76

وَاللّٰهُ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِّنْ اَنْفُسِكُمْ اَزْوَاجًا وَّجَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِّنْ اَزْوَاجِكُمْ
بَنِيْنَ وَحَفَدَةً وَّرَزَقَكُمْ مِّنَ الطَّيِّبٰتِ ؕ اَفَبِالْبَاطِلِ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ وَبِنِعْمَتِ اللّٰهِ
هُمْ يَكْفُرُوْنَ ﴿٧٢﴾ وَيَعْبُدُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ مَا لَا يَمْلِكُ لَهُمْ رِزْقًا مِّنَ
السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ شَيْئًا وَّلَا يَسْتَطِيْعُوْنَ ﴿٧٣﴾ فَلَا تَضْرِبُوْا لِلّٰهِ
الْاَمْثَالَ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَعْلَمُ وَاَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٧٤﴾ ضَرَبَ اللّٰهُ مَثَلًا عَبْدًا
مَّمْلُوْكًا لَّا يَقْدِرُ عَلٰى شَيْءٍ وَّمَنْ رَّزَقْنٰهُ مِنَّا رِزْقًا حَسَنًا فَهُوَ يُنْفِقُ مِنْهُ
سِرًّا وَّجَهْرًا ؕ هَلْ يَسْتَوٗنَ ؕ اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ ؕ بَلْ اَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٧٥﴾
وَضَرَبَ اللّٰهُ مَثَلًا رَّجُلَيْنِ اَحَدُهُمَآ اَبْكَمُ لَا يَقْدِرُ عَلٰى شَيْءٍ وَّهُوَ كَلٌّ

عَلٰى مَوْلٰهُ ۙ اَيْنَمَا يُوَجِّهْهُّ لَايَاْتِ بِخَيْرٍ ۭ هَلْ يَسْتَوِيْ هُوَ ۙ وَمَنْ يَّاْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ ۙ وَهُوَ عَلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ ﴿٧٦﴾

And Allah has created spouses from among you and created for you from your spouses sons and grandsons, and gave you provision from good things. Is it, then, the falsehood that they believe and the blessing of Allah that they reject? [72]

And they worship besides Allah things which have no power to give them anything from the heavens and the earth, nor can they have (such power). [73]

So, do not coin similarities for Allah. Surely, Allah knows and you do not know. [74]

Allah gives an example: There is a slave owned (by someone), who has no power over anything, and there is a person whom We have given good provision from Us. And he spends out of it secretly and openly. Are they equal? Praise be to Allah. But, most of them do not know. [75]

And Allah gives an example: There are two men. One of them is dumb who is unable to do anything, and he is a burden on his master. Wherever he directs him to, he brings no good. Does he equal the one who enjoins justice and is on the straight path? [76]

Commentary

In verse 72: جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِّنْ اَنْفُسِكُمْ اَزْوَاجًا (Allah has created spouses from among you), a special blessing has been mentioned in that Allah Ta'ālā has created spouses from the same genus so that they remain mutually familiar and their distinction and nobility inherent in the human species also remains stable through generations.

Given here, there may be another hint towards the fact that spouses belong to each other's genus and, as such, their needs and feelings are common to both, therefore, mutual consideration is but necessary for them.

The next sentence of the verse: وَجَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِّنْ اَزْوَاجِكُمْ بَنِيْنَ وَحَفَدَةً has been translated as: 'and created for you from your spouses sons and grandsons.'

Though children are born to father and mother both, yet in this verse, their birth has been identified with mothers only. The indication given here is suggestive of the fact that the role of the mother in the birth and the creational formation of the child is more pronounced that that of the father. The father contributes only a lifeless drop. The locale where this drop goes through different kinds of stages from the transformation into human form and shape to becoming alive, and where all these inimitable achievements of nature take place, is a place no other than the womb of the mother. Therefore, in the Ḥadīth, the right of the mother has been made to precede the right of the father.

There is yet another hint visible in this sentence which mentions grandsons alongwith sons, that is, the real purpose behind creating spouses is the procreation and survival of human race so that they have children, then, their children have their children. What else would this be, if not the survival of human species?

After that, by saying: وَرَزَقَكُم مِّنَ الطَّيِّبَٰتِ (and gave you provision from good things), mention was made of things which guarantee personal survival. In other words, once a human child is born, food is needed for its personal survival. That too was provided by Allah Ta'ālā. The real meaning of the word: حَفَدَة (*hafadah*) in this verse is that of one who helps and serves. That this word has been used for children suggests that children should always be at the service of their father and mother. (Qurṭubī)

The statement: فَلَا تَضْرِبُوا لِلَّهِ الْأَمْثَالَ (So, do not coin similarities for Allah -74) clarifies an important aspect of the reality of things as they relate to Allah. If ignored, it becomes the breeding ground of all sorts of rejectionist doubts and scruples. The problem is that people would generally take Allah Ta'ālā on the analogy of their own humankind and go on to declare the highest placed among them, a king and ruler, as similar to Allah Ta'ālā. Then, relying on this wrong assumption, they start seeing the Divine system on the analogy of the system of human monarchs. This leads them to take a cue from the fact that since no king can, all by himself, run the administration of the whole kingdom, the system is run by delegating powers to subordinate ministers and officials who do that on his behalf. Similarly, they believe and propose that there have to be some other objects of worship under the authority of Allah Ta'ālā who would help Him out in carrying out His tasks. This is the general theory of all

idol-worshipers and polytheists. This sentence of the Qur'ān has cut off the very root of these doubts by stating that suggesting examples of what has been created and applying them on Allah Ta'ālā, the Creator, is something unreasonable by itself. He is far above similarities and analogies and conjectures and guesses.

In the first of the two examples given in the last two verses, the description is that of a master and a slave, that is, the owner and the owned. By giving this example, it is being said: When these two, despite being from the same genus and the same kind, cannot be equal to each other, how then could you equate someone or something created by Allah with Him?

In the second example, there is a man who bids justice and teaches what is good. This is a model of his intellectual perfection. Then he himself takes the path of moderation and right guidance. This is the model of his practical perfection. Set against the power of this intellectually and practically perfect man, there is the other man who cannot do anything for himself nor can he do anything right for others. These two men of two different kinds, despite being from one genus, one species and one brotherhood, cannot be equal to each other. So, how can some created being or thing become equal to the Creator and Master of the universe who is Absolute in Wisdom, Absolute in Power, and All-Knowing and All-Aware?

Verses 77 - 83

وَلِلّٰهِ غَيْبُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ وَمَآ اَمْرُ السَّاعَةِ اِلَّا كَلَمْحِ الْبَصَرِ
اَوْ هُوَ اَقْرَبُ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَیْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿۷۷﴾ وَاللّٰهُ اَخْرَجَكُمْ مِّنْۢ
بُطُوْنِ اُمَّهٰتِكُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ شَيْئًا ۙ وَّجَعَلَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَ الْاَبْصَارَ
وَالْاَفْئِدَةَ ۙ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُوْنَ ﴿۷۸﴾ اَلَمْ يَرَوْا اِلَى الطَّيْرِ مُسَخَّرٰتٍ فِیْ
جَوِّ السَّمَآءِ ؕ مَا يُمْسِكُهُنَّ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ ؕ اِنَّ فِیْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يُّؤْمِنُوْنَ
﴿۷۹﴾ وَاللّٰهُ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِّنْۢ بُيُوْتِكُمْ سَكَنًا وَّجَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِّنْ جُلُوْدِ
الْاَنْعَامِ بُيُوْتًا تَسْتَخِفُّوْنَهَا يَوْمَ ظَعْنِكُمْ وَيَوْمَ اِقَامَتِكُمْ ۙ وَمِنْ اَصْوَافِهَا

وَاَوْبَارِهَا وَاَشْعَارِهَآ اَثَاثًا وَّمَتَاعًا اِلٰى حِيْنٍ ﴿٨٠﴾ وَاللّٰهُ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِّمَّا خَلَقَ ظِلٰلاً وَّجَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِّنَ الْجِبَالِ اَكْنَانًا وَّجَعَلَ لَكُمْ سَرَابِيْلَ تَقِيْكُمُ الْحَرَّ وَسَرَابِيْلَ تَقِيْكُمْ بَاْسَكُمْ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ يُتِمُّ نِعْمَتَهٗ عَلَيْكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُسْلِمُوْنَ ﴿٨١﴾ فَاِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَاِنَّمَا عَلَيْكَ الْبَلٰغُ الْمُبِيْنُ ﴿٨٢﴾ يَعْرِفُوْنَ نِعْمَتَ اللّٰهِ ثُمَّ يُنْكِرُوْنَهَا وَاَكْثَرُهُمُ الْكٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿٨٣﴾ ع

And to Allah belongs the Unseen of the heavens and the earth. And the Hour is nothing but like the twinkling of the eye, or even quicker. Of course, Allah is powerful over everything. [77]

And Allah has brought you forth from your mothers' wombs when you knew nothing, and He made for you ears, eyes and hearts, so that you may be grateful. [78]

Did they not look at the birds, subdued, in the atmosphere of the sky? No one holds them but Allah. Surely, in that there are signs for a people who believe. [79]

And Allah has made for you of your houses a place for comfort, and made for you houses from the hides of cattle which you find light the day you travel and the day you camp, and out of their wool and their fur and their hair (He created) household goods and things of enjoyment for a time. [80]

And Allah has made for you shades from what He has created, and made for you shelters in the mountains and made for you shirts which protect you from heat and shirts which protect you in your battles. [81] **This is how He perfects His favour upon you, so that you may submit. If they still turn away, then, your responsibility is only to convey the message clearly.** [82]

They are aware of Allah's favour, yet they deny it. And most of them are ungrateful. [83]

Commentary

The Divine statement: لَاتَعْلَمُوْنَ شَيْئًا (when you knew nothing - 78) indicates that knowledge is not an ingrained personal excellence of man. When born, man has no knowledge or skill. Then, in proportion to growing human needs, man is made to absorb some knowledge, bit by bit, di-

rectly from Allah Taʿālā in which no role is played by the parents or teachers. First of all, man was taught to cry. This one qualification alone provides all he needs at that time. Hungry or thirsty, he cries. Feels hot or cold, he cries. If some other discomfort bothers him, he would still cry. Nature has poured a special kind of love in the hearts of the father and the mother for the needs of the infant, because of which, when they hear the sounds made by the child, they become all too eager to find out what is bothering the baby, and all too willing to remove the problem. If the child was not inducted into this act of crying as part of his or her early education from a side no less than that of Allah Himself, who else could have trained the child to employ this skill and start crying like that as and when there be some need. Alongwith it, Allah Taʿālā also taught the child, inspiration-wise, that he or she should use gums and lips to suck milk, the child's energy food, from the breast of the mother. If this education and training was not natural and direct, no teacher anywhere could dare make this new-born learn to pout and move the mouth right and suck nipples on the breast. Thus, with the increase in the needs of the child, nature took care of teaching its charge directly without the intermediary link of the father and mother, in a manner almost spontaneous and self-regulating. After the passage of some time, the child starts learning a little by hearing parents and others around say what they do, or pick up a few tips by seeing a few things around. This, then, creates in the child the ability to understand sounds heard and things seen.

Therefore, after: لَاتَعْلَمُوْنَ شَيْئًا (when you knew nothing) in the verse under comment, it was said: وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَالْاَبْصَارَ وَالْاَفْئِدَةَ (and He made for you ears, eyes and hearts). It means: Though, human beings knew nothing about anything at the early stage of their birth, but nature had installed in their very frame of existence novel instruments to fulfill their need to learn. Out of these instruments, the first to be mentioned was '*sam*ʿ', that is, the faculty of hearing which precedes perhaps for the reason that the very first knowledge, and the most of it, comes through nothing but ears. In the beginning, eyes are closed, but ears hear. Furthermore, if we were to think about it, we shall not fail to realize that the amount of information one acquires in a whole life time is mostly what has been heard with ears. Information collected visually is much less than that.

After these two, comes information which one deduces by deliberating into things heard and seen. According to the statements of the Qur'ān, this is a function of the human heart. Therefore, stated at number three is: أفئدة (*af'idah*) which is the plural of: فؤاد *fu'ād* which means the heart. Scientists identify the human brain as the center of understanding and reason. But, the statement of the Qur'ān tells us that though the brain plays a role in this process of reasoning, yet the real center of knowledge and reason is the heart.

On this occasion, Allah Ta'ālā has mentioned the faculties of hearing, seeing and understanding. Speech was not mentioned because speech plays no role in the acquisition of knowledge. It is, rather, a source of the expression of knowledge. In addition to that, according to Imām Al-Qurṭubī, the word: سَمْع '*sam*'(hearing) is inclusive of نُطق *nuṭq* (speech) as a corollary, as experience bears out that a person who hears speaks as well. A person deprived of the power of speech remains deaf in the ears as well. Perhaps, the reason why a dumb person cannot speak lies in the person's very inability to hear any sounds which could make learning to speak through hearing possible. والله اعلم *Wallāhu a'lam*: 'And Allah knows best' is a standard appendage to conclusions where definite knowledge about a subject in flux is not available or accessible or reliable. For a believer, this serves as a safety device against the possibility of having made any false statements, which may be a sin.

In the statement: وَاللّٰهُ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِّنْ بُيُوْتِكُمْ سَكَنًا (And Allah has made for you of your houses a place of comfort - 80), the word: بيوت (*buyūt*) is the plural of *bayt* (بيت) which means a house where night could be spent. Imām Al-Qurṭubī says in his Tafsīr:

كُلُّ مَا عَلَاكَ فَاَظَلَّكَ فَهُوَ سَقْفٌ وَّسَمَآءٌ، وَكُلُّ مَآ اَقَلَّكَ فَهُوَ اَرْضٌ وَّكُلُّ مَا سَتَرَكَ مِنْ جِهَاتِكَ الْاَرْبَعِ فَهُوَ جِدَارٌ فَاِذَا انْتَظَمَتْ وَاتَّصَلَتْ فَهُوَ بَيْتٌ

'Whatever is above your head and provides shade for you is roof or sky, and whatever holds you atop is earth, and whatever screens you out from all four sides are walls, and when (all these components are) put together properly, that is a house.

The real purpose of making a house is to have peace for body and heart

Here, by calling the human house a place of comfort and peace Allah Ta'ālā has made the logic and wisdom of making houses fully evident,

that is, its real purpose is to have comfort of the body and peace of the heart. Customarily, the avenues of human work lie outside houses. Human work owes its existence to human movement and struggle. The real purpose of one's house is to go there, when tired after moving around and doing things, and rest and enjoy peace - even though, there are times when one keeps moving around and doing things in one's own house, but such instances are usually on the lower side.

This help us realize that peace is really the peace of mind and heart, something one finds in one's home only. This also tells us that the highest qualification of human home is that it provides peace. The world of today is at the height of its building craze. Limitless expenditure is incurred on their superficial finishing. But, there are very few homes among them which would provide peace of mind and heart. In fact, the artificially imposed additions in them become the very agents which destroy comfort and peace, and even in the absence of such material extravagance, the kind of people one confronts in the house is a misfortune which sucks that peace away. When such elegant houses are compared with a modest hut, the dweller of the hut who is blessed with comfort and peace for his body and heart is certaintly living in a better place.

The Qur'ān manifests the 'elan vital, the essence and the root of everything. Hence, peace was declared to be the real purpose of human home, and the greatest need indeed. Similarly, the real purpose of marital life was also determined to be peace as in: لِتَسْكُنُوٓا اِلَيْهَا (so that you may enjoy peace with her - 30:21). A married life which fails to achieve this purpose remains deprived of the real benefit destined for it. Life in our day is infested with so many customs and formalities reaching the limits of absurdity in showing what you have through all sorts of artificial veneers. To compound the problem further, the outpourings of Western cultural and social norms and products have provided everything one needs to embellish personl surroundings with artificial decor - but, it has certainly made human beings become all deprived of what would be real comfort for their bodies and peace for their hearts.

The statement: مِنْ جُلُوْدِ الْاَنْعَامِ (from the hides of the cattle - 80) and the statement: مِنْ اَصْوَافِهَا وَاَوْبَارِهَا (out of their wool and their fur and their hair - 80) prove that it is Ḥalāl to use everything out of the hide, wool and hair of animals. Here, even the restriction that the animal be properly

slaughtered or be a dead animal does not exist, nor is there any restriction as to their meat being Ḥalāl or Ḥarām. It is perfectly Ḥalāl to use the hides of the animals of this kind by tanning them, and as for hair and wool, the death of the animal leaves just no effect on them. That remains Ḥalāl and permissible without any specific technical treatment. This is the Madhab (creed) of the great Imām, Abū Ḥanīfah. However, the hide of swine and all parts thereof are unclean and unfit for use under all conditions.

Finally, a note about the statement: سَرَابِيلَ تَقِيكُمُ الْحَرَّ (shirts which protect you from heat - 81). Here, protection from heat has been identified as the purpose of a shirt - though, a shirt protects one from heat and cold both. This has been answered by Imām Al-Qurṭubī and other commentators by saying that the Holy Qur'ān has been revealed in the Arabic language, its first addressees are Arabs, therefore, it speaks by taking Arab habits and needs into account. Arabia is a hot country where the very thought of snow and winter chill is far-fetched, therefore, the statement was left with the mention of protection from heat as being sufficient. Yet another explanation for this has been given by Maulānā Ashraf Alī Thanavī in Bayān al-Qur'ān by saying that in the beginning of this Sūrah, the Qur'ān had already said: لَكُمْ فِيهَا دِفْءٌ (and for you, there is provision against cold in them - 16:5). Thus, it was in view of this earlier mention of beating cold and having warmth that only protection from heat has been mentioned here.

Verses 84 - 89

وَيَوْمَ نَبْعَثُ مِنْ كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ شَهِيدًا ثُمَّ لَا يُؤْذَنُ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَلَا هُمْ
يُسْتَعْتَبُونَ ﴿٨٤﴾ وَإِذَا رَأَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا الْعَذَابَ فَلَا يُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُمْ
وَلَا هُمْ يُنْظَرُونَ ﴿٨٥﴾ وَإِذَا رَأَى الَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا شُرَكَاءَهُمْ قَالُوا رَبَّنَا
هَؤُلَاءِ شُرَكَاؤُنَا الَّذِينَ كُنَّا نَدْعُوا مِنْ دُونِكَ ۖ فَأَلْقَوْا إِلَيْهِمُ الْقَوْلَ
إِنَّكُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ ﴿٨٦﴾ وَأَلْقَوْا إِلَى اللَّهِ يَوْمَئِذٍ السَّلَمَ ۖ وَضَلَّ عَنْهُمْ مَا
كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ ﴿٨٧﴾ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَصَدُّوا عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ زِدْنَاهُمْ
عَذَابًا فَوْقَ الْعَذَابِ بِمَا كَانُوا يُفْسِدُونَ ﴿٨٨﴾ وَيَوْمَ نَبْعَثُ فِي كُلِّ

أُمَّةٍ شَهِيدًا عَلَيْهِم مِّنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ وَجِئْنَا بِكَ شَهِيدًا عَلَىٰ هَٰؤُلَاءِ ۚ وَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ تِبْيَانًا لِّكُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً وَبُشْرَىٰ لِلْمُسْلِمِينَ ﴿٨٩﴾

And (remember) the Day We shall raise up a witness from every people, then the disbelievers will not be allowed (to make excuses) nor shall they be asked to repent. [84]

And when the unjust will see the punishment, it will not be lightened for them, nor will they be given respite. [85]

And when the Mushriks will see those whom they made partners with Allah, they will say: Our Lord, these are the partners we made whom we called in worship besides you. Then, they (the partners) will turn to them saying: You are indeed liars. [86]

And on that day they will tender submission to Allah and lost to them shall be all that they used to fabricate. [87]

Those who disbelieve, and put obstructions in the way of Allah, for them We shall add up punishment after punishment for the mischief they used to make. [88]

And (think of) the day We shall send to every people a witness from among them (to testify) against them, and We shall bring you (O prophet) as witness against these. And We have revealed to you the Book, an exposition of everything, and guidance, and mercy, and glad tidings for the Muslims. [89]

Commentary

In verse 89, by saying: وَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ تِبْيَانًا لِّكُلِّ شَيْءٍ , the Qur'ān has been credited as the exposition of everything. It means everything about the religion because the objective of Divine revelation and Prophetic mission concerns with these very things. Therefore, the very effort to cull out answers to problems pertaining to economic sciences from the Qur'ān is an exercise in error. However, the appearance of some implied hint somewhere there shall not be deemed contrary to this. Now remains the question that the Qur'ān does not carry answers to all problems of the religion itself, how then, would it be correct to say that it is 'an exposition of

everything'?

The answer is that the Qur'ān, does carry the basic principles concerning all problems, and it is in their light that the Aḥādīth of the Rasūl of Allah clarify these problems. Then, there are some details which are delegated to the principles of Ijmā' (consensus) and Al-Qiyās (analogical deduction following the norms set by the Sharī'ah of Islam). This tells us that the religious rulings deduced from the Aḥādīth of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and from Ijmā' and Qiyās are also, in a way, as stated by the Qur'ān itself.

Verse 90

إِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ وَإِيتَآئِ ذِى الْقُرْبٰى وَيَنْهٰى عَنِ الْفَحْشَآءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَالْبَغْيِ ۚ يَعِظُكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿٩٠﴾

Allah commands to do justice and be good, and to give relatives (their due), and forbids from shameless acts, evil deeds and transgression. He exhorts you so that you may be receptive to advice. [90]

Commentary

This is the most comprehesive verse of the Holy Qur'ān where the essence of the entire range of Islamic teachings has been condensed into a few words. Therefore, from the blessed period of the most righteous elders upto this day, the practice has continued that this verse is recited at the end of the special Khuṭbah (address) of Jumu'ah and the two 'Eids ('Eid al-Fiṭr and 'Eid al-Aḍḥā). Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ says that the most comprehensive verse of the Holy Qur'ān appears in Sūrah An-Naḥl and it is: إِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ (16:90 cited above) [Ibn Kathīr]

Then, there is the case of another Ṣaḥābi, Sayyidnā Aktham ibn al-Ṣaifi. He actually embraced Islam on the basis of this very verse. Imām Ibn Kathīr, quoting Ma'rifatuṣ-Ṣaḥābah, a book by Abū Ya'lā, who was known as a Ḥafiẓ of Ḥadīth (virtually a living data bank of Ḥadīth in contemporary terms), has reported with sound authority that Aktham ibn al-Saifi was the chief of his people. When he learnt about the Holy Prophet ﷺ, his claim to prophethood and his propagation of Islam, he decided to visit the Holy Prophet ﷺ personally. But, his people suggested

to him that he was their chief, the highest ranking person among them, therefore, his going there personally was not appropriate. Then, Aktham proposed the alternative that they should select two persons from the tribe who should go there, survey the situation and report back to him. These two people presented themselves before the Holy Prophet ﷺ and submitted that they had come from Aktham ibn al-Ṣaifi to find out two things. Aktham has two questions for you:

مَنْ اَنْتَ وَمَا اَنْتَ

'Who are you and what are you?'

He said: 'The answer to the first question is that I am Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allah, and the answer to the second question is that I am a servant of Allah and His Rasūl (messenger)'. After that, he recited this verse of Sūrah An-Naḥl which begins with: اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَاْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْاِحْسَانِ (90). The two emissaries requested him to recite those sentences to them once again. He kept reciting the verse before them until the verse was committed to their memory.

The emissaries returned to Aktham and reported that by asking the first question their intention was to find out his lineage. But, he did not give much attention to this. He simply considered it sufficient to give the name of his father. Yet, when they checked on his lineage with others, they found out that he was very high in lineage and nobility. Then, they told Aktham that the Holy Prophet ﷺ also recited some words before them which they would narrate to him.

When the emissaries recited the verse under reference to Aktham ibn al-Ṣaifi, he promptly said: 'This tells us that he bids morals which are high and forbids morals which are low. Let all of you embrace his religion as soon as possible so that you stay ahead of other people, and not lag behind as camp followers.' [Ibn Kathīr]

Similarly, Sayyidnā 'Uthmān ibn Maẓ'ūn ؓ says: 'At the initial stage, I had embraced Islam because people around said so. But, Islam had not taken roots in my heart. Then, there came a day when I was present in the blessed company of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. All of a sudden, signs associated with the descent of revelation on him became apparent, and after some strange things had transpired, he said: "The emissary of

Allah Ta'ālā came to me and this verse was revealed upon me". Sayyidnā 'Uthmān ibn Maẓ'ūn ﷺ says that once he saw this event and heard this verse, his faith became all firm and fortified in his heart and the love for Rasūlullāh ﷺ came to be settled there for good'. [After reporting this event, Ibn Kathīr has said that it is supported by strong and authentic chain of transmitting authorities]

Likewise, when the Holy Prophet ﷺ recited this verse before Walīd ibn Mughīrah, he went to report his impression before his people, the Quraish of Makkah, in the following words:

واللّٰہ انّ له' لحلاوة وانّ عليه لطلاوة وانّ اصله لمُورِق وأعلاة لمثمر وما هو بقول بشر

> By God, in it, there is a special sweetness and, above it there is a unique hallow of light, and leaves are going to sprout out from its roots and fruits are going to show up on its branches - and this can never be the speech of any human being.

The Command To Do Three Things And Not To Do Three

Allah Ta'ālā bids three things in this verse. These are: (1) To do justice, (2) to be good, (3) to give relatives (their due). Then, He forbids three things. These are: (1) Shameful acts, (2) evil deeds, (3) transgression. The Islamic legal sense of these six words, and their limits, are being explained as follows:

Al-'Adl : العَدْل : The real and literal meaning of this word is to make equal. Pertinent to this, the equitable judgement of officials in the disputed cases of people is called Al-'Adl or justice. The statement: اَنْ تَحْكُمُوا بِالْعَدْلِ (and that when you judge between people, judge with fairness - 4:58) in the Holy Qur'ān carries this very sense and, in view of this, the word Al-'Adl (justice) also refers to moderation (*al-i'tidāl*) between the two extremes of excess (*al-ifrāṭ*) and deficiency (*at-tafrīṭ*). Then, very much in congruity with this sense, some Tafsīr authorities have explained Al-'Adl at this place as the equality of the outward and the inward state of a person, that is, what one says or does through the obvious organs of his body should also be compatible with what he believes in and lives by. However, the truth of the matter is that the word Al-'Adl here has been used in its general sense which is inclusive of all these forms and shades reported from different Tafsīr authorities. There is no contradiction or di-

vergence in them.

And according to Ibn al-'Arabi, the instrinsic meaning of Al-'Adl is to make equal, then, different congruities go to make its sense different. For instance, one sense of Al-'Adl or justice is that man should do justice between his Nafs (self) and his Rabb (Lord-God). If so, it would mean that he should give preference to the right of Allah Ta'ālā over the pleasure of his self and make the seeking of His pleasure far more urgent and prior than the pursuit of his own desires and obey His commands and totally abstain from what He has forbidden.

Then, there is the second kind of justice which requires that one enter into a deal of justice with his own self, that is, protect his self from all such challenges which bring physical or spiritual destruction upon him, refuse to fulfill such desires of his self which are harmful for him in the end, be content and satisfied observing patience, and avoid putting unnecessary burden on his self without valid excuse.

The third kind of justice prevails between one's own self and the rest of Allah's creation. In this case, the essential sense is that one should deal with the whole creation in a cooperative spirit wishing well, doing good and having sympathy, never betray anyone with the slightest breach of trust in any transaction whether minor or major, demand from his self justice for everyone, and see to it that no human being is hurt by anything said or done by him whether apparent or concealed.

Similarly, there is the justice done when two parties bring one of their cases for adjudication before a person, then, it is the duty of that person that he must decide the case without any tilt towards anyone and in accordance with what is the truth. Then, it is also a form of justice when one leaves out the extreme options of excess and deficiency in all matters and takes to the path of moderation. This is the sense Abū 'Abdullāh al-Rāzī prefers when he says that the word Al-'Adl (justice) is inclusive of moderation in belief, moderation in deed, moderation in morals, everything. [Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ]

Finally, Imām Al-Qurṭubī who gives all these details to determine the sense of Al-'Adl also considers it good for the purpose. This also tells us that the one single word, Al-'Adl, in this verse encompasses in itself the adherence to all good morals and deeds and the avoidance of all bad

morals and deeds.

Al-Iḥsān : اَلْاِحْسَان : The real and literal meaning of Al-Iḥsān is to make something good. It has two kinds: (1) that one makes deeds or morals and habits become good and perfect in one's own person; (2) that one deals with the other person nicely, decently and favourably. To cover this second sense, Arabic usage takes: الى (*ilā*) as the preposition after it, as it appears in a verse of the Qur'ān: اَحْسِنْ كَمَآ اَحْسَنَ اللّٰهُ اِلَيْكَ (be good as Allah has been good to you - 28:77).

Imām Al-Qurṭubī has said that this word has been used in its general sense in the cited verse, therefore, it is inclusive of both kinds of Iḥsān. Then, the first kind of Iḥsān, that is, doing something well in its own right, is also general - for instance, to come out with acts of worship in their best possible form, to make efforts to improve upon personal deeds and morals and to seek betterment in dealings with others.

The meaning of Iḥsān given by the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself in the famous Ḥadīth of Jibra'īl relates to the quality of Iḥsān in acts of 'Ibādah or worship. The gist of his blessed statement is: Worship Allah as if you are seeing Allah. And if you cannot imagine Divine presence at this level, then, each person must have at least this much certitude that Allah Almighty is, after all, seeing what he or she is doing. The reason is that it is a cardinal part of Islamic faith that not the minutest molecule of this universe can remain outside the reach of the knowledge and perception of Allah Ta'ālā.

To sum up, it can be said that the second command given in this verse is that of Iḥsān. Included here is the Iḥsān of 'Ibadah (the betterment of acts of worship) as explained by the Ḥadīth. Also included here is the Iḥsān or betterment of all deeds, morals and habits, that is, seeing that they come out right, good and authentic in the form and spirit desired. And also included here is to be good to the whole creation of Allah, whether believer or infidel, human or animal.

Imām Al-Qurṭubī has said: The person in whose house his cat is not fed and taken care of and the birds in whose cage are not attended to as due, then, no matter how devoted to acts of worship he may be, he would still not be counted among the Muḥsinīn, those who are good to others.

In conclusion, the first command given in this verse is that of Al-'Adl or justice, then, that of Al-Iḥsān or being good. Some Tafsīr authorities have said that justice means that one should give the right of the other person in full and take what comes to him, neither less nor more; then, should someone hurt you, you hurt him only as much as he did, no more. And Iḥsān or being good means that you give the other person more than his real due and, as for your own right, ignore it to the limit that you willingly accept even if it turns out to be less than due. Similarly, when someone hurts you physically or verbally, then, rather than inflict an equal retaliation against that person, you better forgive him, in fact, return the evil done by him with what is good for him. Thus, the command to do justice comes in the form of what is Farḍ and Wājib (obligatory and necessary as duty) while the command to be good appears in the status of an act which is voluntary (Nafl) and is motivated by a well-meaning desire to contribute more in the way of what is good.

Give relatives (their due) : إِيْتَآءِ ذِى الْقُرْبٰى : The third command given in this verse is to give relatives (their due). The word: إِيْتَآء (*'ītā'*) used in the text means to give something - with the added sense of giving as gift or presentation in good grace. The word: اَلْقُرْبٰى (*al-qurbā*) means relationship or kinship; and: ذِى اَلْقُرْبٰى (*dhil-qurbā*) means relatives or kin. Thus, the command: إِيْتَآءِ ذِى الْقُرْبٰى (*'ītā' dhil-qurbā*) comes to mean to give something to relatives. That which has to be given has not been spelled out here. But, there is another verse in the Qur'ān where the object does find mention: 'فَاٰتِ ذَا الْقُرْبٰى حَقَّه (give the relative his due - 17:26). As obvious, the same object applies here too, that is, relatives be given their due. Included under this 'due' is serving them financially, as well as serving them physically, and visiting them when sick, and taking care of them when in need, and the giving of verbal comfort and the expression of concern and sympathy too. Though, giving relatives their due was included under the spectrum of the word: Al-Iḥsān, yet it has been mentioned separately in order to place stress on its added importance.

Given upto this point were three commands asserted positively. The other three asserted negatively, denoting prohibition and unlawfulness, are as follows:

"And forbids from shameless acts, evil deeds and transgression": وَيَنْهٰى عَنِ الْفَحْشَآءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَالْبَغْيِ : The first word: الْفَحْشَآء (*al-fahsha'*) translated as

'shameful acts', refers to such evil word or deed the evil of which is all too open and clear and which everyone considers bad. Then, اَلْمُنْكَر (*al-munkar*) translated as 'evil deeds', denotes the word or deed the unlawfulness or impermissibility of which is agreed upon by the well-recognized authentic exponents of the Sharī'ah of Islam. Therefore, no side can be regarded as *'munkar'* in their Ijtihād-based differences and, as for the word: '*Al-Munkar*', it includes all sins whether outward or inward, done practically or committed morally. The real meaning of the third word: اَلْبَغْی (*al-baghy*) translated as 'transgression' is to cross the limit. The sense is that of injustice and excess. At this place, though the sense of the word: *Al-Munkar* (evil deeds) is inclusive of both *Al-Faḥshā'* (shameful acts) and *Al-Baghy* (transgression), but *Al-Faḥshā'* has been picked out as a separate entry, and made to appear first as well, because of its extreme evil and abomination. And the word: *Al-Baghy* has been taken up separately because its fallout is contagious. It affects others. Sometimes this transgression reaches the outer limits of mutual hostility, even armed confrontation, or it could go still further and cause international disorder.

According to a saying of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, there is no sin, except injustice, the retaliation against which and the punishment for which comes so quickly. From this we learn that the ultimate severe punishment for injustice due in the Hereafter has to come anyway, however, much before that happens, Allah Ta'ālā punishes the perepetrator of injustice in this mortal world as well - even though, he may fail to realize that the punishment he received was for a particular injustice committed by him and that Allah Ta'ālā has promised to help the victim of injustice.

The six commands, imperative and prohibitive, given in this verse are - if pondered upon - an elixir for the perfect prosperity of man's individual and collective life. May Allah bless us all with the ability of following them.

Verses 91 - 96

وَاَوْفُوْا بِعَهْدِ اللّٰهِ اِذَا عٰهَدْتُّمْ وَلَا تَنْقُضُوا الْاَيْمَانَ بَعْدَ تَوْكِيْدِهَا وَقَدْ جَعَلْتُمُ اللّٰهَ عَلَيْكُمْ كَفِيْلًا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَفْعَلُوْنَ ﴿٩١﴾ وَلَا تَكُوْنُوْا

كَالَّتِيْ نَقَضَتْ غَزْلَهَا مِنْ بَعْدِ قُوَّةٍ اَنْكَاثًا ط تَتَّخِذُوْنَ اَيْمَانَكُمْ دَخَلًا
بَيْنَكُمْ اَنْ تَكُوْنَ اُمَّةٌ هِيَ اَرْبٰى مِنْ اُمَّةٍ ط اِنَّمَا يَبْلُوْكُمُ اللّٰهُ بِهٖ ط وَلَيُبَيِّنَنَّ
لَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ مَا كُنْتُمْ فِيْهِ تَخْتَلِفُوْنَ ﴿٩٢﴾ وَلَوْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ لَجَعَلَكُمْ
اُمَّةً وَّاحِدَةً وَّلٰكِنْ يُّضِلُّ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَيَهْدِيْ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ط وَلَتُسْئَلُنَّ عَمَّا
كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٩٣﴾ وَلَا تَتَّخِذُوْٓا اَيْمَانَكُمْ دَخَلًا بَيْنَكُمْ فَتَزِلَّ قَدَمٌ
بَعْدَ ثُبُوْتِهَا وَتَذُوْقُوا السُّوْٓءَ بِمَا صَدَدْتُّمْ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ج وَلَكُمْ
عَذَابٌ عَظِيْمٌ ﴿٩٤﴾ وَلَا تَشْتَرُوْا بِعَهْدِ اللّٰهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيْلًا ط اِنَّمَا عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ
هُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٩٥﴾ مَا عِنْدَكُمْ يَنْفَدُ وَمَا عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ
بَاقٍ ط وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّ الَّذِيْنَ صَبَرُوْٓا اَجْرَهُمْ بِاَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٩٦﴾

And fulfill the Covenant of Allah when you pledge, and do not break oaths after you swear them solemnly, while you have made Allah a witness over you. Surely, Allah knows all that you do. [91]

And do not be like the woman, who has broken her yarn into pieces after spinning it firmly, by taking your oaths as means of mischief between yourselves, merely because a group is higher (in number and wealth) than the other. In fact, Allah puts you to a test thereby and, of course, He will make clear to you on the Day of Resurrection all that you disputed about. [92]

And if Allah so willed, He would have made you all a single community, but He lets whom He wills go astray and takes whom He wills to the right path. And you will be questioned about what you used to do. [93]

And do not make your oaths a means of mischief among yourselves, lest a foot should slip after it is firmly placed, and you taste evil for your having prevented (others) from the path of Allah, and for you there be a great punishment. [94]

And do not take a paltry price against the pledge of Allah. Indeed, what is with Allah is much better for you, if but you knew. [95] **What is with you shall end and what is with Allah shall last. And certainly, We shall give**

those who observed patience their reward for the good they used to do. [96]

Commentary

Breaking Pledges is Forbidden

The word: عَهْد (*'ahd*) is inclusive of all transactions, pacts and pledges the responsibility of which has been assumed verbally, whether one does or does not swear by it, and whether it relates to doing something or not doing it.

In fact, these verses are the explanation and conclusion of previous verses. The previous verses carried the command to do justice and to be good. The sense of justice there includes the fulfillment of pledges as well. [Qurṭubī]

After having given a pledge or made a contract with someone, breaking it is a major sin. But, in the event it is broken, there is no Kaffārah (expiation) fixed for this purpose. Instead, it brings the punishment of the Hereafter on the offender. According to Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that a flag shall be planted on the back of the pledge-breaker on the Day of Resurrection which will become the cause of his or her disgrace there.

Similarly, acting contrary to what one has sworn by is also a major sin. In the Hereafter, it is full of unimagineably evil consequences while in the present world too there are its particular situations in which Kaffārah (expiation) becomes necessary. [Qurṭubī]

In verse 92: اَنْ تَكُوْنَ اُمَّةٌ هِيَ اَرْبٰى مِنْ اُمَّةٍ (merely because a group is higher [in number and wealth] than the other), Muslims have been ordered that they should not break the pact they enter into with a group simply for the sake of worldly interests and gains. For example, they may come to think that the group or party with which they have entered into a pact is weak and few in numbers, or lacks financial backing, while the other group or party abounds in numbers and strength, or is wealthy. Now, if they are tempted to join the party having power and wealth in the hope of better gains from them, this breaking of the pledge given to the first party is not permissible. Rather than do something like that, one should stay by the pledge given and let all gains and losses rest with Allah Ta'ālā. However, if the group or party with which one has entered into a

pact commits or commissions acts contrary to the dictates of Islamic religious law, then, it is necessary to break that pledge - subject to the condition that they be clearly forewarned that Muslims will not be bound by that pact anymore - as stated in the verse: فَانْبِذْ اِلَيْهِمْ عَلٰى سَوَآءٍ (then, throw [the treaty] towards them being right forward - 8:58).

At the conclusion of the verse, the given situation has been identified as a device to test Muslims whereby Allah Ta'ālā tries them to determine if they would obey the desires of their self and break the solemn pledge, or go on to sacrifice their selfish motives in obedience to the command of Allah Ta'ālā.

An oath sworn to deceive someone may cause forfeiture of Faith ('Īmān)

Verse 94 which begins with the words: وَلَاتَتَّخِذُوْٓا اَيْمَانَكُمْ دَخَلًا (do not take your oaths as a means of mischief) gives yet another instruction to stay away from getting involved in what is a great sin laden with evil consequences. It means that anyone who at the very time of taking an oath harbours other ideas and intentions, is all set to act counter to the oath taken while going through the exercise of oath-taking merely to deceive the other party, then, this would be an act far more dangerous than that of breaking a common oath. As a result, the danger is that this person may end up being all deprived of the very asset of 'Īmān (faith). The sentence which follows immediately, that is: فَتَزِلَّ قَدَمٌ ۢ بَعْدَ ثُبُوْتِهَا (lest a foot should slip after it is firmly placed - 94), means exactly this. [Qurṭubī]

Accepting Bribe is Sternly Forbidden as It Breaks the Covenant of Allah

Verse 95 which begins with the words: وَلَاتَشْتَرُوْا بِعَهْدِ اللّٰهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيْلًا (And do not take a paltry price against the pledge of Allah) that is, 'do not break the Covenant of Allah for a paltry price.' Here, 'a paltry price' refers to worldly life and its gains. No matter how major they may be yet, as compared with the gains of the Hereafter, even the entire world and its entire wealth is nothing but paltry. Whoever opts for the gains of the mortal world at the cost of the far superior returns in the Hereafter has struck a deal which will bring nothing but utter loss - because, selling off a blessing which is supreme and a wealth which is everlasting in ex-

change for something fast perishing and instrinsically low is what no sensible person would ever elect to do.

Ibn 'Aṭiyyāh said: If doing something is obligatory on a person, then, it is a Covenant of Allah due against him. He is responsible for it. And in the process of fulfilling this duty, the act of charging wages or something in return, and not doing what duty calls for without being first paid off in cash or kind, is what amounts to breaking the Covenant of Allah. Similarly, if not doing something is obligatory on a person, then, should that person do it against returns received from someone, that too will constitute the breaking of the Covenant of Allah.

This tells us that all prevailing kinds of bribery are unlawful. For example, a government servant who receives a salary for what he does has virtually given a pledge to Allah that he would perform the job assigned to him against the salary he receives. Now, if he goes about asking for some sort of return from someone in order to do that job, and keeps hedging and postponing the required action until he has that return, then, this official is breaking the Covenant of Allah. Similarly, doing something for which the department has not empowered him, even doing it by accepting bribe, is also a breach of pledge. [Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ]

A Comprehensive Definition of Bribe

The statement of Ibn 'Aṭiyyāh quoted above also accomodates a fairly inclusive definition of bribe (Rishwat) which, in the words of Tafsīr Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, is as follows:

اخذ الاموال على فعل مَا يجب على الأخذ فعله اوفعل مَا يجب عليه تركه

> Taking a return for not doing a job the doing of which is obligatory on a person, or taking a return for doing a job not doing which is obligatory on a person, is what bribe is. [Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, p. 533, v. 5]

That the combined blessings of the whole world are paltry has been stated in the next verse (96) through the words: مَا عِندَكُمْ يَنفَدُ وَمَا عِندَ اللَّهِ بَاقٍ that is, 'what is with you (meaning worldly gains) is to end; and what is with Allah Ta'ālā (meaning the reward and punishment of the Hereafter) is to last for ever'.

All Wordly Gains and States will Perish - Only their Outcome with Allah shall Remain

A casual look at the expression: مَا عِندَكُمْ (*mā 'indakum*: 'what is with you' meaning world gains) leads one to think of wealth and possessions only. My revered teacher, Maulānā Sayyid Aṣghar Ḥusain of Deoband, may the mercy of Allah be upon him, said that the word: مَا : *mā* (what) is general lexically and there is nothing prohibiting us from taking it in a general sense, therefore, included under it are wealth and possessions of the present world as well as all states and matters that one experiences therein. These could be happiness and sorrow, pain and comfort, sickness and health, gain and loss or someone's friendship or enmity. These form part of it for all these are transitory and must perish. However, the after-effects of all these states and matters which are to bring reward or punishment on the Day of Judgement are destined to remain. So, any reckless pursuit of states and matters that must perish and to stake one's life and its energies on this altar by becoming negligent of the eternal reward and punishment is something no sane person should elect to do.

Verse 97

مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ اَوْ اُنْثٰى وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَنُحْيِيَنَّهٗ حَيٰوةً طَيِّبَةً ج
وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ اَجْرَهُمْ بِاَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٩٧﴾

Whoever, male or female, has done righteous deed, while a believer, We shall certainly make him live a good life and shall give such people their reward for the good they used to do. [97]

Commentary

What is 'good life'?

According to the majority of commentators, the expression 'good life' used here means a pure and pleasing life in the present world while some Tafsīr authorities have taken it to mean life in the Hereafter. And a closer look at the explanation given by the majority would also show that it does not mean that such a person will never encounter poverty or sickness. Instead, it means that a believer - even if he ever faces poverty or pain - has two things with him which shield him from becoming dis-

turbed. First comes his habit of remaining content with the available (*qanā'ah*), the hallmark of a simple life. This thing works in straitened circumstances as well. Secondly, there is this belief of his, the belief that he is going to receive the great and eternal blessings of the Hereafter in return for whatever poverty or pain he has suffered from. Poised counter to this is the condition of a disbeliever and sinner. If such a person faces poverty and pain, he has nothing to hold him together and give him solace and comfort. In this state, he is likely to lose his sanity, even think of committing suicide. And in case he was affluent, his greed would not let him sit peacefully. When the drive for more wealth makes him a millionaire, the dreams of becoming a billionaire would keep spoiling his peace.

As for righteous believers, says Ibn 'Aṭiyyah, Allah Ta'ālā blesses them with a life full of pleasure, contentment and gracefulness right here in this world as well, something that never changes whatever the condition. That their life will be graceful while they enjoy health and extended means is all too obvious, particularly so on the ground that they just do not have the greed to keep their wealth increasing unnecessarily, an urge that keeps harassing one under all circumstances. And even if they have to face lean days or sickness of some sort, they always have a strong support to fall back on. They are perfect believers in the promises made by Allah. They have strong hopes of seeing ease after hardship and comfort after pain. These strengths never let their life become graceless. It is like the work of a farmer who has made his farm ready for crops. No matter how much pain he takes in working to see his crops grow, yet he welcomes all that for the sake of the comfort he is going to have. In a short time, he is certain, he is going to have the best of return for what he has done. A businessman or a wage earner would do the same. They would face all sorts of hardship in their job, even a little disgrace once in a while. But, they brave through everything and remain happy and hopeful. They believe that their business will bring profit and their job, a salary. The believer too believes that he is getting a return for every hardship and when comes the life of the Hereafter, his return for every hardship will come to him in the form of blessings that are great and everlasting. As for the life of the present world, it is not such a big deal as compared to that of the Hereafter. Therefore, a believer finds it easy to remain patient against worldly variations in living conditions.

Thus, these conditions never make a believer suffer from anxiety, apprehension and boredom. This is the 'good life' a believer is blessed with in cash, on the spot, right here in this world.

Verses 98 - 100

فَإِذَا قَرَأْتَ الْقُرْآنَ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللّٰهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطٰنِ الرَّجِيمِ ﴿٩٨﴾ إِنَّهُ لَيْسَ لَهُ سُلْطٰنٌ عَلَى الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَلٰى رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ ﴿٩٩﴾ إِنَّمَا سُلْطٰنُهُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ يَتَوَلَّوْنَهُ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ بِهِ مُشْرِكُونَ ﴿١٠٠﴾

So, when you recite the Qur'ān, seek the protection of Allah against Satan, the accursed. [98] **He is such that he has no power over those who believe and place trust in their Lord.** [99] **His power is only over those who befriend him and those who associate partners with Him.** [100]

Sequence of Verses

Emphasis was laid in previous verses over the fulfillment of the covenant with Allah following which stated there was the importance and desirability of acting righteously in one's life. That one neglects to follow these commandments happens because of Satanic instigations. Therefore, this verse teaches us to seek protection against Satan, the accursed - something needed in every good deed. But, it will be noticed that it has been mentioned particularly with the recitation of the Qur'ān. One reason for this particularization could also be that the recitation of the Qur'ān is an act so unique that the Satan himself runs away from it. As said poetically:

دیو بگریزد ازاں قوم کہ قرآں خوانند

Satan bolts from people who recite the Qur'ān!

Then, there are specified Verses and Chapters which have been-tested and they produce the desired result in removing the traces of Satanic inputs particularly. That they are effective and beneficial stands proved from definite textual authorities (*nuṣuṣ*) - Bayān al-Qur'ān. Despite this factor, when came the command to seek protection from the Satan in conjunction with the recitation of the Qur'ān, it becomes all the more necessary with other deeds.

In addition to that, there is always the danger of Satanic instigations intruding into the recitation of the Qur'ān itself. For instance, one may fall short in observing the etiquette due during the recitation or that it remains devoid of the essential spirit of deliberation, thinking, submission and humbleness. So, for this too, it was deemed necessary that protection from Satanic instigations should be sought (Ibn Kathīr, Maẓharī and others).

Commentary

In the preface of his Tafsīr, Ibn Kathīr has said: Human beings have two kinds of enemies. The first ones come from their own kind, like the general run of disbelievers. The other kind is that of the Jinn who are diabolic and disobedient. Islam commands defence against the first kind of enemy through Jihād involving fighting and killing. But, for the other kind, the command is limited to the seeking of protection from Allah only. The reason is that the first kind of enemy happens to be homogenous. Its attack comes openly, visibly. Therefore, fighting and killing in Jihād against such an enemy was made obligatory. As for the enemy of the Satanic kind, it is not visible. Its attack on humankind does not take place frontally. Therefore, as a measure of defence against such an enemy, the seeking of the protection of such a Being has been made obligatory that no one is able to see, neither the humankind, nor the Satan. Then, there is that subtle expediency in entrusting the defence against Satan with Allah. Is it not that one who stands subdued by the Satan is actually rejected and deserving of punishment in the sight of Allah? Quite contrary to this is the case of the humanoid enemy of human beings, that is, the disbelievers. If someone is subdued or killed while confronting them, he becomes a martyr (*shahīd*), and deserving of reward from Allah (*thawāb*)! Therefore, when one confronts an enemy of human beings with all his strength, it turns out to be nothing but beneficial, no matter what the circumstances - either he would prevail over the enemy and put an end to his power, or would himself embrace *shahādah* (martyrdom in the way of Allah) and deserve the best of returns with Him.

Related Rulings (*masā'il*)

1. The reciting of: أَعُوذُ بِاللّٰهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطٰنِ الرَّجِيْمِ (*a'ūdhu bil-lāhi minash-shaiṭānir-rajīm*: I seek protection with Allah from Shaiṭān, the accursed) before initiating the recitation of the Qur'ān stands proved from the Holy Prophet ﷺ in order that the command given in this verse is carried out.

But, not doing it occasionally also stands proved from authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*) *aḥādīth*. Therefore, the majority of Muslim scholars have not classed this injunction as obligatory (*wājib*). Instead, they have declared it to be Sunnah, a position on which Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī has reported a consensus (*ijmā'*) of the scholars of the Muslim community. As for Ḥadīth narratives carrying the word and deed of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, whether those of reciting: أعُوذُ بالله (*a'ūdhu bil-lāh*) under most conditions or those of not reciting under some, all these have been mentioned exhaustively by Ibn Kathīr at the beginning of his Tafsīr.

2. Should *ta'awwudh* (تَعَوُّذ) that is, '*a'ūdhu bil-lāh*', be recited only at the beginning of the first *raka'ah* while in Ṣalāh, or should it be done at the beginning of every *raka'ah*? Views of leading Muslim jurists differ in this matter. According to the great Imām Abū Ḥanīfah رحمه الله تعالى, it should be recited only in the first *raka'ah* while Imām Shāfi'ī رحمه الله تعالى declares its recitation at the beginning of every *raka'ah* as commendable (*mustaḥabb*). Arguments given by both have been presented in Tafsīr Maẓharī with full elaboration. (p. 49, v. 5)

3. While reciting the Qur'ān - whether in Ṣalāh or out of it - the saying of '*a'ūdhu bil-lāh*' is a Sunnah. The rule applies to both situations equally. But, after it has been said once, one may go on reciting as much as one wishes to, for the same single *ta'awwudh* (said at the beginning) is sufficient. Yes, if one abandons the recitation in the middle, gets busy with some mundane chore and then resumes it all over again, one should re-initiate the recitation by saying '*a'ūdhu bil-lāh*' and '*bismillah*' once again at that time.

4. Saying '*a'ūdhu bil-lāh*' before reading any word or book other than the Qur'ān is not a Sunnah. There, one should recite only *bismillāh*. (Al-Durr al-Mukhtār, Shāmī)

However, the Ḥadīth teaches the saying of *ta'awwudh* during other things done and situations faced. For example, when someone gets very angry - so says the Ḥadīth - the heat of the anger goes away by saying: أعُوذُ بِاللهِ مِنَ الشَّيطٰنِ الرَّجِيمِ (*a'ūdhu bil-lāhi minash-shaiṭānir rajīm*: I seek protection with Allah from Shaiṭān, the accursed). (Ibn Kathīr)

It also appears in Ḥadīth that, before going to the toilet, saying:

اَللّٰهُمَّ اِنِّیۡ اَعُوۡذُبِكَ مِنَ الۡخُبُثِ وَالۡخَبَآئِثِ

(Allāhumma innī a'ūdhu bika minal-khubuthi wal-khabā'ith)
O Allah, I seek protection with you from the foul and the impure

is commendable (*mustaḥabb*). (Shāmī)

The way of Faith and Trust in Allah is the way of freedom from the power and control of the Shaiṭān

Verses 99 and 100 make it clear that Allah Ta'ālā has not given the Shaiṭān the kind of power which would disarm any human being and compel him to become helpless and take to evil. So, should one opt for not using his capability of choice and control because of sheer carelessness or some selfish motive, then, this would be his own fault. Therefore, it was said that people who have faith in Allah and who, rather than trust their will power in their states and actions, place their ultimate trust in Allah Ta'ālā for He is the One who gives us the ability to do everything good and also the One who shields us from everything evil. The Shaiṭān cannot possess and dictate such people. Of course, those who elect to befriend none but the Shaitān because of their selfish motives, particularly like things about him and go about associating others in the pristine divinity of Allah Ta'ālā, then, the Shaiṭān is all over them, in possession, in control, and would not let them go towards anything good while, in every evil, they are right in front.

The same subject has been taken up in verse 42 of Sūrah al-Hijr where Allah Ta'ālā has Himself refuted the claim of the Shaiṭān by saying: اِنَّ عِبَادِیۡ لَیۡسَ لَكَ عَلَیۡهِمۡ سُلۡطٰنٌ اِلَّا مَنِ اتَّبَعَكَ مِنَ الۡغٰوِیۡنَ (Surely, My servants [are such that] you have no power over them - except [over] the one who follows you from among the astray - 15:42).

Verses 101- 105

وَاِذَا بَدَّلۡنَاۤ اٰيَةً مَّكَانَ اٰيَةٍ ۙ وَّاللّٰهُ اَعۡلَمُ بِمَا يُنَزِّلُ قَالُوۡۤا اِنَّمَاۤ اَنۡتَ مُفۡتَرٍ ؕ
بَلۡ اَكۡثَرُهُمۡ لَا يَعۡلَمُوۡنَ ﴿۱۰۱﴾ قُلۡ نَزَّلَهٗ رُوۡحُ الۡقُدُسِ مِنۡ رَّبِّكَ بِالۡحَقِّ
لِيُثَبِّتَ الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا وَهُدًى وَّبُشۡرٰى لِلۡمُسۡلِمِيۡنَ ﴿۱۰۲﴾ وَلَقَدۡ نَعۡلَمُ
اَنَّهُمۡ يَقُوۡلُوۡنَ اِنَّمَا يُعَلِّمُهٗ بَشَرٌ ؕ لِسَانُ الَّذِىۡ يُلۡحِدُوۡنَ اِلَيۡهِ اَعۡجَمِىٌّ

وَهٰذَا لِسَانٌ عَرَبِيٌّ مُّبِينٌ ﴿۱۰۳﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَايُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ لَا يَهْدِيْهِمُ اللّٰهُ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿۱۰۴﴾ اِنَّمَا يَفْتَرِى الْكَذِبَ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ ج وَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْكٰذِبُوْنَ ﴿۱۰۵﴾

And when We replace a verse with another verse - and Allah knows best what He reveals - they say, "You are but a forger." Instead, most of them do not know. [101]

Say, "This has been brought down by Rūḥ al-Qudus (the Holy Spirit - Jibrā'īl) from your Lord rightly (as due), so that it makes the believers firm and becomes guidance and good news for the Muslims. [102]

And We know well that they say, "It is a man who teaches him." The language of the one they refer to is non-Arabic while this is clear Arabic language. [103]

Surely, those who do not believe in Allah's verses, Allah does not lead them to the right path and for them there is a painful punishment. [104]

Those who forge lies are but the ones who do not believe in Allah's verses, and it is they who are the liars. [105]

Sequence of Verses

In the previous verse (98), there was an instruction to say *'a'ūdhu bil-lāh'* (I seek protection with Allah) while reciting the Qur'ān which indicates that the Shaiṭān puts scruples in the heart when one recites the Qur'an. In the verses cited above, there is a refutation of such Satanic instigations.

Verses 106 - 109

مَنْ كَفَرَ بِاللّٰهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ اِيْمَانِهٖٓ اِلَّا مَنْ اُكْرِهَ وَقَلْبُهٗ مُطْمَئِنٌّ بِالْاِيْمَانِ وَلٰكِنْ مَّنْ شَرَحَ بِالْكُفْرِ صَدْرًا فَعَلَيْهِمْ غَضَبٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ ج وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيْمٌ ﴿۱۰۶﴾ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمُ اسْتَحَبُّوا الْحَيٰوةَ الدُّنْيَا عَلَى الْاٰخِرَةِ لا وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَهْدِى الْقَوْمَ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿۱۰۷﴾ اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ طَبَعَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى قُلُوْبِهِمْ وَسَمْعِهِمْ وَاَبْصَارِهِمْ ج وَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْغٰفِلُوْنَ ﴿۱۰۸﴾

لَاجَرَمَ اَنَّهُمْ فِى الْاٰخِرَةِ هُمُ الْخٰسِرُوْنَ ﴿١٠٩﴾

Whoever rejects his faith in Allah after having believed in Him - not the one who is put to duress while his heart is at peace with Faith, but the one who has opened the bosom for disbelief - the wrath of Allah is upon such people and for them there is a heavy punishment. [106]

That is because they have preferred the worldly life over the Hereafter, and that Allah does not lead the disbelieving people to the right path. [107]

Those are the ones Allah has put a seal on their hearts, their ears and their eyes; and they are the neglectful. [108] **Invariably, they are the losers in the Hereafter.** [109]

Commentary

From the first verse (106) comes the religious ruling about a person who has been compelled to utter a word of infidelity (*kufr*) under the threat that he would be killed if he did not do that. If he feels that, in all likelihood, the people threatening him have full capability of doing just that, then, this is a state of duress. If he were to utter some word of disbelief verbally - but, with a heart firm on Faith, a heart that shuns saying what is false and evil - then, there is no sin on him, nor will his wife become unlawful for him. (Qurṭubī, Maẓharī).

This verse was revealed about the noble Ṣaḥābah who were arrested by the Mushriks. Their disbelieving captors had told them that they must return to infidelity failing which they would be killed.

Those so arrested were Sayyidnā 'Ammār ﷺ and his parents, Sayyidnā Yāsir and Sayyidah Sumayyah ﷺ, and Sayyidnā Ṣuhaib, Bilāl and Khabbāb ﷺ. Out of these, Sayyidnā Yāsir ﷺ and his wife, Sayyidah Sumayyah رضی اللہ عنہا totally refused to utter any word of disbelief. Sayyidnā Yāsir ﷺ was killed while Sayyidah Sumayyah رضی اللہ عنہا was tied in between two camels who were made to run which tore her apart in two separate body parts. This was how she met her *shahādah* (martyrdom in the way of Allah). And these are the same two blessed souls who were the first to meet their *shahādah* for the sake of Islām. Similarly, Sayyidnā Khabbāb ﷺ totally refused to utter any word of disbelief and it was in perfect peace that he accepted the fate of being killed by the dis-

believers. Out of the remaining, Sayyidnā 'Ammār ﷺ went by making a mere verbal declaration of his disbelief in the face of such a danger to his life, but his heart was perfectly satisfied and firmly set upon his Faith. Once he was released by the enemy, he presented himself before the Holy Prophet ﷺ and narrated this event with great pain. The Holy Prophet ﷺ asked him, "when you were making this statement, what was going on in your heart?" He submitted, "As for my heart, it was at peace and firmly set on my Faith." The Holy Prophet ﷺ put him at rest by telling him that he was not to face any punishment for that. It was in confirmation of this verdict by him that the present verse was revealed. (Qurṭubī, Maẓharī)

The Definition of *ikrāh* or Compulsion

Literally, *Ikrāh* means using threat or violence to force a person to act against his or her will. Then, it has two degrees. In the first degree of Ikrāh, one is not willing by heart to do something, but is also not that denuded of choice and volition to say no. In the terminology of Muslim jurists, this is known as اکراہ غیر ملجی (*ikrāh ghayr mulji'*: state of compulsion not forced actually). Under such duress, saying any word of disbelief (*kufr*) or doing something unlawful (*ḥarām*) does not become permissible. However, there are some supplementary injunctions which do release some adverse effects even against this situation. Relevant details appear in Books of Fiqh. In the second degree of Ikrāh, one is just sucked out of all choice so much so that should he fail to carry out the order of the perpiterators of this coercion (Ikrāh), he would be killed or some of his organ is amputated. This, in the terminology of Muslim jurists, is called Ikrāh Mulji' which means a compulsion which makes one totally choiceless and helpless. When under the state of such duress, the mere verbalization of the word of disbelief - subject to the condition that one's heart is firm and at peace with Faith - is permissible. Similarly, short of killing another human being, should one be coerced to do some other unlawful deed, it will bring no sin to commit that unlawful act.

But, the concessions given in both kinds of Ikrāh are subject to a condition that the coercer threatening to do what he says he will do should actually be capable of doing just that, and the coerced should have the overwhelming likelihood that should he fail to oblige him, he would go ahead and definitely do what he is threatening to do.

Related Ruling

There are two kinds of transactions. (1) Those in which the transaction can be effected only by mutual consent and heart felt willingness of the parties, like sale, gift, etc. There is the definitive authority of the Holy Qur'ān to this effect. The Holy Qur'ān says, لَا تَأْكُلُوْٓا اَمْوَالَكُمْ بَيْنَكُمْ بِالْبَاطِلِ اِلَّآ اَنْ تَكُوْنَ تِجَارَةً عَنْ تَرَاضٍ مِّنْكُمْ: "Do not eat up the wealth of others, unless there is a trade with mutual consent" (4:29) And then it appears in Ḥadīth:

لَايَحِلُّ مَالُ امْرِءٍ مُّسْلِمٍ اِلَّا بِطِيْبِ نَفْسٍ مِّنْهُ

The wealth and property of a Muslim does not become lawful unless it be with a whole-hearted pleasure from the person.

If such transactions were to be arranged and executed under duress (with Ikrāh), they have no validity in the sight of the Sharī'ah of Islam. In normal practice, once the person concerned comes out of the state of Ikrāh (compulsion, duress), he will have the option to reassess the sale or gift done under duress and exercise his free will to retain or cancel it.

Then there are some transactions which depend on verbal committment only. Here, the intention and the volition in the heart or pleasure and will are not the binding conditions of the transaction - such as, marriage, divorce, revocation of divorce, freedom of a slave etc. For such matters, it is said in Ḥadīth:

ثلث جدّهنّ جدٌّ وهزلهنّ جدّ النكاح والطلاق والرّجعة (رواه ابوداؤد والترمذی وحسنه)

"There are three things in which not only the serious words, but also the nonserious words are counted as serious".

It means if two individuals go through the process of Offer and Acceptance in Marriage in accordance with attending conditions, or some husband divorces his wife by pronouncing it verbally, or verbally revokes the divorce given by him earlier - whether that be in jest with no intention in the heart for marriage or divorce or revocation - still, by a mere saying of the respective words, the marriage will stand solemnized, the divorce will become effective, and the revocation will turn out right. (Maẓharī)

According to Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, al-Sha'bī, Zuhrī, Nakha'ī and Qatādah, may the mercy of Allah be upon them, this very injunction applies to 'divorce under duress' (طلاق مکرہ : *Talāq Mukrah*). It means that such a person being under duress was though not ready to divorce will-

ingly and by heart yet, rendered helpless, he uttered the words of divorce. Now, the actualization of divorce is connected with nothing but the pronouncing of the words of divorce. The intention and will of the heart is not a condition here - as proved from the Ḥadīth cited above. Therefore, this divorce will become effective.

But, according to Imām Shāfi'ī, and Sayyidnā 'Alī and Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ, the 'divorce under duress' (under the state of Ikrāh) will not take effect because it appears in Ḥadīth:

رُفِعَ عَنْ أُمَّتِى الْخَطَآءُ وَالنِّسْيَانُ وَ مَا اسْتُكْرِهُوْا عَلَيْهِ' (رواه الطبرانى عن ثوبان رض)

> Removed away from my Ummah are mistake, forgeting and what they are compelled to under coercion. (Reported by al-Ṭabarānī from Sayyidnā Thawbān ﷺ)

According to Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, this Ḥadīth is related to injunctions of the 'Ākhirah (Hereafter), that is, something said or done contrary to the Sharī'ah by mistake and forgetfulness or under duress will bring no sin. As for the rest of the injunctions pertaining to the mortal world as well as the incidences of doing things like that therein are to occur as felt and sensed. It goes without saying that the vestiges and rulings generated by this occurance shall continue to bring their relevant effects. For example, someone killed someone else by mistake, then, there is no doubt that he will neither incur the sin of killing him nor face the punishment of the Hereafter, but the way the tangible effect of killing has occured in the form of the victim's loss of life, very similarly, its subsequent Islamic legal effect will also follow: his wife will, after the period of Iddah, be able to enter a second marriage contract and the wealth and property left by him will be distributed in the form of inheritance to his legal heirs. Similary, when words to the effect of divorce, marriage or revocation were said verbally, then, their consequential Islamic legal effect will also follow. (Maẓharī, Qurṭubī) والله سبحانه اعلم.

Verses 110 - 113

ثُمَّ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ لِلَّذِيْنَ هَاجَرُوْا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا فُتِنُوْا ثُمَّ جٰهَدُوْا وَصَبَرُوْآ لا اِنَّ رَبَّكَ مِنْ بَعْدِهَا لَغَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿۱۱۰﴾ يَوْمَ تَاْتِىْ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ تُجَادِلُ عَنْ

نَفْسِهَا وَتُوَفّٰى كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا عَمِلَتْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُوْنَ ﴿١١١﴾ وَضَرَبَ اللّٰهُ مَثَلًا قَرْيَةً كَانَتْ اٰمِنَةً مُّطْمَئِنَّةً يَّأْتِيْهَا رِزْقُهَا رَغَدًا مِّنْ كُلِّ مَكَانٍ فَكَفَرَتْ بِاَنْعُمِ اللّٰهِ فَاَذَاقَهَا اللّٰهُ لِبَاسَ الْجُوْعِ وَالْخَوْفِ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَصْنَعُوْنَ ﴿١١٢﴾ وَلَقَدْ جَآءَهُمْ رَسُوْلٌ مِّنْهُمْ فَكَذَّبُوْهُ فَاَخَذَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ وَهُمْ ظٰلِمُوْنَ ﴿١١٣﴾

Then, your Lord - for those who left their homes after being persecuted, then fought in the way of Allah and stood patient - surely your Lord is, after all that, Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [110]

The day everyone will come defending himself, and everyone will be given in full what he did. And they will not be wronged. [111]

And Allah has given an example that there was a town, secure and satisfied, with its sustenance coming in plenty from every place. Then, it turned ungrateful to the bounties of Allah; so, Allah made it taste hunger and terror (cast over it) like a garment in return of what its people used to do. [112] **And surely there came to them a messenger from among themselves, but they belied him, so the punishment seized them, while they were transgressing.** [113]

Sequence of Verses

Warnings of punishment against disbelief (*kufr*) - whether original or apostacy (*irtidād*) - appeared in previous verses. After that, in the first (106) of the initial three verses cited above, it has been pointed clearly that 'Īmān or the declaration of faith is a wealth that could work wonders for a *kāfir* (disbeliever) or *murtadd* (apostate) who - if he were to come up with an honest and true 'Īmān - all his past sins would stand forgiven.

In the second verse (107), the last day of Qiyāmah was mentioned for the reason that all this phenomena of reward and punishment has to occur after that. In the third verse (108), it was said that the real punishment of disbelief and sin will, though come after the Qiyāmah, yet there are some sins the punishment of which is faced in a certain degree with-

in the present world.

Commentary

According to leading Tafsīr authorities, the similitude mentioned in verse 112 is general and universal. It does not relate to a particular habitation. However, there are others who connect it to what had happened in Makkah al-Mukarramah where people suffered from an acute famine for seven years so much so that they were compelled to eat animal carcass, dead dogs and filth. They were virtually gripped with the awe of Muslims. Then, the chiefs of Makkah came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ with the plea that those who had committed disbelief and disobedience against his call were all grown-up men. Women and children were innocent. Thereupon, the Holy Prophet ﷺ arranged to have food supplies for them sent from Madīnah al-Ṭaiyyibah. (Maẓharī)

And Abū Sufyān, while still in his state of *kufr*, requested the Holy Prophet ﷺ: You teach kindness to relatives and mercy and forgiveness. Here are your people standing on the brink of destruction. Please pray to Allah for the removal of this famine from us. Thereupon, the Holy Prophet ﷺ prayed for them and the famine was gone. (Qurṭubī)

As for the use of the word: لباس (*libās*: garment) to carry the sense of giving a taste of hunger and fear towards the later part of verse 112, it will be noted that a garment is not a thing to be tasted. But, the word 'garment' standing for '*libās*' has been used here with the force of a simile denoting something being wide-spread and all-enveloping. The suggestion being conveyed here is that fear and hunger were cast over them in a manner of a garment or dress which becomes an integral part of the body. This was how hunger and fear were released and set all over them. (Maẓharī)

Verses 114 - 119

فَكُلُوا مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللّٰهُ حَلٰلًا طَيِّبًا ۖ وَّاشْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللّٰهِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ اِيَّاهُ تَعْبُدُوْنَ ﴿۱۱۴﴾ اِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَيْتَةَ وَ الدَّمَ وَلَحْمَ الْخِنْزِيْرِ وَمَآ اُهِلَّ لِغَيْرِ اللّٰهِ بِهٖ ۚ فَمَنِ اضْطُرَّ غَيْرَ بَاغٍ وَّلَا عَادٍ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿۱۱۵﴾ وَلَا تَقُوْلُوْا لِمَا تَصِفُ اَلْسِنَتُكُمُ الْكَذِبَ هٰذَا حَلٰلٌ

وَّهٰذَا حَرَامٌ لِّتَفْتَرُوْا عَلَى اللّٰهِ الْكَذِبَ ۭ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَفْتَرُوْنَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ
الْكَذِبَ لَا يُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿۱۱۶﴾ مَتَاعٌ قَلِيْلٌ ۠ وَّلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿۱۱۷﴾
وَعَلَى الَّذِيْنَ هَادُوْا حَرَّمْنَا مَا قَصَصْنَا عَلَيْكَ مِنْ قَبْلُ ۚ وَمَا ظَلَمْنٰهُمْ
وَلٰكِنْ كَانُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُوْنَ ﴿۱۱۸﴾ ثُمَّ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ لِلَّذِيْنَ عَمِلُوا
السُّوْۗءَ بِجَهَالَةٍ ثُمَّ تَابُوْا مِنْۢ بَعْدِ ذٰلِكَ وَاَصْلَحُوْٓا ۙ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ مِنْۢ
بَعْدِهَا لَغَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿۱۱۹﴾

So, eat the permissible and pure from what Allah has provided you with, and be grateful for the bounty of Allah, if you worship Him alone. [114]

He has but proibited for you the carrion, the blood, the flesh of swine and what has been invoked upon with a name other than that of Allah. However, if anyone is compelled by necessity - neither desiring, nor crossing the limit (of necessity) - then, Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [115]

And do not say about what your tongues describe falsely, "This is lawful and that is unlawful" so that you may forge the lie upon Allah. Surely, those who forge a lie upon Allah do not prosper. [116] **(Let there be) a little enjoyment, and (then) for them there is a painful punishment.** [117]

And for those who are Jews, We had prohibited that which We have already told you. And We did not wrong them but they used to wrong themselves. [118]

Then your Lord - for those who did evil through ignorance, then repented after that and corrected themselves - surely your Lord is, after all that, Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [119]

Sequence and Explanation in Gist

Mentioned in the previous verses was that disbelievers will be punished for their ungratefulness to Allah whose blessings they had been enjoying. In the cited verses, Muslims have been instructed to stay away from ungratefulness, rather be grateful for Ḥalāl things Allah has given to them. After that, they were told how the disbelievers and polytheists

had become ungrateful by declaring what Allah had made Ḥalāl for them as Ḥarām and what Allah had called Ḥarām as Ḥalāl. Muslims were warned that they should never do that. Making things Ḥalāl and Ḥarām is the exclusive right of their Creator. Doing this on your own amounts to interference in Divine prerogatives, in fact, amounts to attributing lies to Allah Taʿālā. Towards the end, it was also said that even those who have committed such evil deeds through ignorance should not lose hope in the mercy of Allah Taʿālā. Should they repent and believe honestly and truly, Allah Taʿālā will forgive all sins committed by them.

Commentary

Nature of Prohibitions: The Correct View

The restrictive particle: إِنَّمَا (*innamā*: only) appearing in verse 115 seems to give the impression that things Ḥarām are no more than the four mentioned in the verse. This impression emerges more clearly in another verse: قُلْ لَّآ أَجِدُ فِيمَآ أُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ مُحَرَّمًا (Say, I do not find, in what has been revealed to me, anything prohibited... - Sūrah al-Anʿām, 6:145). It seems to be suggestive of nothing being Ḥarām other than the things mentioned in the verse while the fact is that according to clarifications of the Qur'ān and Sunnah and by the Consensus of the Muslim Ummah, there are many more things rated as Ḥarām. The answer to this difficulty comes through deliberation into the context of these very verses which tells us that the purpose at this place is not to describe Ḥalāl and Ḥarām as they are commonly understood. Instead, the purpose is to point out to what the *mushrikīn* of the period of Jāhiliyah had done. They had made many things Ḥarām on their own although Allah Taʿālā had never ordered them about their unlawfulness. It amounts to saying: Out of the things you have (arbitrarily) made out as Ḥarām, only that which is really Ḥarām is being mentioned here. A comprehensive explanation of this verse along with a detailed description of these four prohibitions has appeared in the Commentary of Sūrah al-Baqarah, Māʿariful-Qur'ān, Volume I, pages 424-438, under Verses 173-174. Those interested may see it there.

Repentance from Sin brings Forgiveness: Is it Open or Restricted?

In the last verse (119): ثُمَّ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ لِلَّذِينَ عَمِلُوا السُّوٓءَ بِجَهَالَةٍ (Then your Lord - for

those who did evil through ignorance ...), it will be noticed that the sense of ignorance has been conveyed by the use of the word: جَهَالَة (*jahālah*), not: جَهَل (*jahl*). As for the word: جَهَل (*jahl*), it is employed as an antonym of: عِلم (*'ilm*: knowledge) and releases the sense of a lack of knowledge or understanding while the word: جَهَالَة (*jahālah*) denotes acting ignorantly - even if done knowingly. This tells us that the forgiveness of sins through Taubah (repentance) is not restricted to a situation where a sin is committed with lack of understanding or volition. (Rather, a true *taubah* or repentence may forgive all sins, even though committed deliberately).

Verses 120 - 124

إِنَّ إِبْرٰهِيمَ كَانَ أُمَّةً قَانِتًا لِّلّٰهِ حَنِيفًا ط وَلَمْ يَكُ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿١٢٠﴾
شَاكِرًا لِّأَنْعُمِهٖ ط اِجْتَبٰهُ وَهَدٰهُ إِلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿١٢١﴾ وَاٰتَيْنٰهُ فِي
الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً ط وَإِنَّهٗ فِي الْاٰخِرَةِ لَمِنَ الصّٰلِحِينَ ﴿١٢٢﴾ ثُمَّ أَوْحَيْنَا
إِلَيْكَ أَنِ اتَّبِعْ مِلَّةَ إِبْرٰهِيمَ حَنِيفًا ط وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿١٢٣﴾ إِنَّمَا
جُعِلَ السَّبْتُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ ط وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَيَحْكُمُ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ
الْقِيٰمَةِ فِيمَا كَانُوا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿١٢٤﴾

Surely, Ibrāhīm was an Ummah (a whole community in himself), devoted to Allah, a man of pure faith; and he was not among the Mushriks (those who associate partners with Allah) [120] **while he was grateful to His bounties. He chose him and led him to the straight path.** [121]

And We gave him good in this world; and in the Hereafter, he is among the righteous. [122]

Then, We revealed to you, "Follow the way of Ibrāhīm, the upright, and he was not among the Mushriks". [123]

The Sabbath was appointed only for those who differed in it. And your Lord will certainly judge between them on the Day of Resurrection in what they used to dispute. [124]

Sequence of Verses

Refuted in the previous verses was the root of Shirk and Kufr which

is rejection of the reality of Allah's Oneness and the rejection of the mandate given by Him to His prophet. Also refuted there were some offshoots of Kufr and Shirk in the form of legalizing the illegal and illigalizing the legal, a virtual reversal of Divinely ordained arrangements. Since the Mushriks of Makkah who were the first direct addressees of the Holy Qur'ān and who, despite their infidelity and idol-worship, claimed that they were adherents of the great community of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام and that what they did was all in accordance with his teachings, it was also taken up as due. The rejection of their position came on the basis of what they already believed in.

So, in the first (120) of the five verses cited above, it was said that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was the foremost universal leader of nations with the high station of a prophet and messenger of Allah. This proves that he was a great prophet and messenger. Then, by saying: وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ (and he was not among the Mushriks...120) along with it, his being a torch bearer of the most perfect belief in the Oneness of Allah was confirmed.

And in the second verse (121), by saying that he was grateful to Allah and was on the straight path, a warning signal was given to his adversaries who claimed to be his followers - how could they, being as ungrateful as they were, had the cheek to call themselves his adherents and followers?

After that it was said in the third verse (122) that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm was successful in Dunyā and 'Ākhirah and then it was said in the fourth verse (123) that the prophetic mission of Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ was true and that he was truly committed to the ideal of the authentic community of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. After having stated these two premises, the instruction given was: your claim cannot be correct without faith in and obedience to the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

In the fifth verse (124): إِنَّمَا جُعِلَ السَّبْتُ (The Sabbath was appointed only for those...) the hint given is that good things you, on your own, have made unlawful for yourself were really not unlawful in the community of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام.

Commentary

The word: امة (*ummah*) has a few other meanings, but the well-known

sense is that of community, nation, or group of people. At this place, this is what it means - as reported from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ. The sense is that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm is, in his person, a community, a nation, almost a compendium of their perfections and merits. There is another meaning of the word: امة (*ummah*), that of the leader of a community, someone imbibing in his person many perfections. Some commentators have taken exactly this meaning of the word at this place. And the word: قانت (*qānit*) in verse 120 means obedient to the command (of his Creator). Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm ؑ has distinct status in these two qualities. As for being a leader, people from all famous Faiths of the world believe in him and consider it an honour to be the followers of his community. Of course, the Jews, the Chistians and the Muslims rever him. Even the Mushriks of Arabia, despite their idol-worship, felt proud to believe in him and in (supposedly) following his way (the way of someone who was the foremost idol-breaker in human annals)! As for the signal distinction of his being '*qānit*' (obedient), it becomes crystal clear from the trials this 'friend' (*khalīl*) of Allah has gone through. Imagine the fire of Namrūd (Nimrod), the Command to go elsewhere leaving behind his family in a wilderness, and then, his being ready to sacrifice his very dear son. All these are singularities because of which Allah Ta'ālā has honoured him with such epithets.

The Holy Prophet ﷺ being on the way of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm ؑ: Understanding the Chemistry of Adherence

When Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm ؑ appeared, Allah Ta'ālā blessed him with a Sharī'ah and its Injunctions. When the Last of the Prophets ﷺ appeared, his Shari'ah too - with the exception of some particular Injunctions - was laid out in accordance with it. Though, the Holy Prophet ﷺ is preferred as more distinguished (*afḍal*) of all blessed prophets and messengers, but at this place, there are two wise considerations in asking the preferred (*afḍal*) to follow the one not so preferred (*mafḍūl*) in the present context. (1) Since that Shari'ah has come into the world earlier and is already known and recognized and as the last Sharī'ah was also to be in accord with that, therefore, this similarity of the Holy Prophet ﷺ to the way of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm ؑ was expressed through the word: اتباع (*ittibā'*: following). (2) As said by 'Allāmah al-Zamakhsharī (author of Tafsīr Al-Kashshāf), this command to follow too is a special tribute

out of the many honours and tributes attributed to the 'friend' of Allah, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. That it is so special has been hinted through the use of the word: ثم (*thumma*: Then - 123). The sense being conveyed is: Certainly great are all those merits and perfections of the person of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm as they are, but the most superior of all these is the fact that Allah Ta'ālā has asked his preferred-most and the dearest *rasūl* to follow his way.

Verses 125 - 128

ادْعُ إِلَىٰ سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحِكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ وَجَادِلْهُم بِالَّتِي
هِيَ أَحْسَنُ ۚ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَن ضَلَّ عَن سَبِيلِهِ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ
بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ ﴿١٢٥﴾ وَإِنْ عَاقَبْتُمْ فَعَاقِبُوا بِمِثْلِ مَا عُوقِبْتُم بِهِ ۖ وَلَئِن
صَبَرْتُمْ لَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لِّلصَّابِرِينَ ﴿١٢٦﴾ وَاصْبِرْ وَمَا صَبْرُكَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ
وَلَا تَحْزَنْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا تَكُ فِي ضَيْقٍ مِّمَّا يَمْكُرُونَ ﴿١٢٧﴾ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ
الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوا وَّالَّذِينَ هُم مُّحْسِنُونَ ﴿١٢٨﴾

Invite (people) to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good counsel. And argue with them in the best of manners. Surely, your Lord knows best the one who strays from His way, and He knows best the ones who are on the right path. [125]

And if you were to harm them in retaliation, harm them to the measure you were harmed. And if you opt for patience, it is definitely much better for those who are patient. [126]

And be patient. And your patience is bestowed by none but Allah. And do not grieve over them, and do not be in distress for what they devise. [127] **Surely, Allah is with those who fear Him and those who are good in deeds.** [128]

Sequence of Verses

In the previous verses, by attesting to the veracity of the Holy Prophet ﷺ as prophet and messenger of Allah, the purpose was to induce his people to follow what he commanded them with and thus do

their bounden duty towards their Divinely ordained *rasul*. In the verses cited above, the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself is being taught how to fulfill the rights of his mission as a messenger of Allah and how to observe the related etiquette as due - the generality of which includes and covers all true believers.

Commentary

Da'wah and Tablīgh: Principles and Curriculum

Embedded in this verse (125) there lies a whole curriculum of Da'wah and Tablīgh, its principles and rules of etiquette, within the frame of a few words. As in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī, when Haram ibn Ḥayyān's رحمه الله تعالى time of death came near, his relatives asked him for some *waṣīyyah* (order, parting advice, will). In reply, he said, "*Waṣīyyah*? That people make for *māl* (wealth, property, inheritance), which I do not have. But, I would still make a *waṣīyyah*, that of the *āyāt* of Allah, particularly that of the last verses of Sūrah an-Naḥl - and I order you to stand firm on them." The verses mentioned here are the same as appear above.

Literally, دَعْوَة : *da'wah*, means to call. The first duty of the blessed prophets is to call people towards Allah. After that, what they teach as prophets and messengers are explanations of this Da'wah. The Qur'ān mentioning a special attribute of the Holy Prophet has called him: اَلدَّاعِی (one who invites people towards Allah):

وَدَاعِيًا اِلَى اللّٰهِ بِاِذْنِهٖ وَسِرَاجًا مُّنِيْرًا

And one who invites towards Allah with His permission whilst being a lamp, lighted. (al-Aḥzāb, 33:460)

يٰقَوْمَنَآ اَجِيْبُوْا دَاعِیَ اللّٰهِ

O our people, respond to the Caller of Allah (Prophet Muhammad ﷺ). (al-Aḥqāf, 46:31)

Calling people towards Allah (دَعْوَة اِلَى اللّٰه : *da'wah ilal-lah*) has been made obligatory on the Muslim Ummah following in the footsteps of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. It was said in Sūrah 'Āl-'Imrān:

وَلْتَكُنْ مِّنْكُمْ اُمَّةٌ يَّدْعُوْنَ اِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَيَاْمُرُوْنَ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ

And there has to be a group of people from among you who call towards the good... (3:104)

And in another verse, it was said:

وَمَنْ اَحْسَنُ قَوْلاً مِّمَّنْ دَعَآ اِلَى اللّٰهِ

And who is better in utterance than the one who called (people) towards Allah. (Hā Mīm as-Sajdah/Fuṣṣilat, 41:33)

While expressing the general sense, this word may take several forms, such as: دَعْوَةٌ اِلَى اللّٰه (*da'wah ilal-lah*: Calling towards Allah), دَعْوَةٌ اِلَى الْخَيْر (*da'wah ilā al-khair*: Calling toward the good) and دَعْوَةٌ اِلَى سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ (*da'wah ilā sabīlillāh*: Calling towards the way of Allah). However, the outcome is the same because calling towards Allah is actually calling towards His *dīn* and the Straight Path.

The next phrase: اِلَى سَبِيْلِ رَبِّكَ (*ilā sabīli rabbik*: to the way of your Lord) carries two nuances of expression. Here, by mentioning the special attribute of the Most Exalted Allah - '*Rabb*' - and then by annexing it to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, a hint has been given that the work of Da'wah is connected with the attribute of nurture, raising, training and education. Here, it is being suggested to the Holy Prophet ﷺ that the way Allah Ta'ālā has nurtured him, he too should invite people using the mores of nurture and education. It should be a Da'wah in which due consideration is given to the nature and attending circumstances of the addressee and the ultimate approach has to be such as would not weigh heavy on the recepient, rather, should be as effective as is possible. The word: دعوة (*da'wah*) itself imparts this sense in that the mission of a prophet is not simply limited to conveying the injunctions of Allah and making people hear them. Instead, his mission is to invite people to implement these in their lives. And it is obvious that no one inviting someone to Allah would present his submission in a manner which causes distraction and aversion or in which the addressee has been maligned or mocked at.

The expression: بِالْحِكْمَةِ (*bil-ḥikmah*: with wisdom) which follows immediately has been used in the Holy Qur'ān for several meanings. At this place, some Tafsīr authorities have taken: اَلْحِكْمَة (*al-ḥikmah*) to mean the Holy Qur'ān, some others explain it as the Qur'ān and Sunnah, still others call it the binding argument while Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī has given the following Tafsīr of '*al-ḥikmah*' with reference to al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ:

انها الكلام الصواب الواقع من النفس اجمل موقع

It is sound speech which goes into one's heart. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

This Tafsīr assimilates all above views. The author of Rūḥ al-Bayān has also carried almost the same sense in the following words:

> "Al-Ḥikmah means the insight through which one finds out the dictates of circumstances and talks as appropriate relatively, chooses such time and occasion as would not put a burden on the addressee, employs lenience where lenience is called for and firmness where firmness is in order. And where he thinks the addressee would be embarassed by saying something frankly, there he should use hints to communicate, or employ a change of subject and approach in a way that neither embarasses the addressee nor feeds him with the thought of sticking by his prejudice."

The next word: اَلْمَوْعِظَه (*al-maw'iẓah*) or: وَعْظ (*wa'ẓ*) literally means to say something in the spirit of wishing well in a manner that would make the heart of the addressee softened and arable, all tuned to accept it. Once this is done, it will be useful to talk about the reward and benefit of such acceptance, as well as, about the punishment and ill-effects of not accepting it. (Al-Qāmūs and al-Mufradāt of Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī)

Later, by saying: اَلْحَسَنَه (*al-ḥasanah*: good), the sense conveyed is that the subject and treatment of this counsel should be such as would satisfy the heart of the addressee, removing doubts and apprehensions whereby the addressee comes to realize that you have no personal motive behind your approach and that you are addressing him only in the interest of the addressee and for his or her good.

We may stay with the word: اَلْمَوْعِظَه (*al-maw'iẓah*: counsel) for a while and say that it had already made it clear that this wishing well has to be in an effective manner. But, experience bears out that sometimes while wishing well for someone, the approach could become hurtful or insulting for the addressee. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī). In order that people would leave this kind of approach, the word: اَلْحَسَنَه (*al-ḥasanah*: good) was added.

The word: جَادِلْ (*jādil*: argue) in the subsequent sentence: وَجَادِلْهُمْ بِالَّتِيْ هِيَ اَحْسَنُ (And argue with them in the best of manners) has been derived from: مُجَادَلَه (*mujādala*). At this place, it means argumentation and debate and: بِالَّتِيْ هِيَ اَحْسَنُ (And argue with them in the best of manners) means that should there be, in the process of Da'wah, the need to engage in debate or exchange of arguments, then, that discussion should also be in the best of manners. It appears in Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī that good manners

require a gentle and soft approach in mutual submissions, arguments have to be such as would be easily understood by the addressee, arguments have to be supported by known premises so that they help remove the doubts of the addressee and shields him against falling into dogmatism. And there are other verses of the Qur'ān which bear witness to the fact that this approach of showing good manners in debate (*al-iḥsān fi al-mujādalah*) is not restricted to Muslims alone. About the people of the Book (Jews and Christians), the Qur'ān particularly says:

وَلَا تُجَادِلُوٓا اَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ اِلَّا بِالَّتِىْ هِىَ اَحْسَنُ

And do not argue with the People of the Book except in a manner which is the best. (al-'Ankabūt, 29:46)

And in another verse, by giving the instruction of: قُوْلَا لَهٗ قَوْلًا لَّيِّنًا (speak to him in gentle words (Ṭā-Hā, 20:44) to Sayyidnā Mūsā and Hārūn عليهما السلام, it was also stressed that this was how they have to deal even with as rebellious an infidel as the Pharaoh.

Da'wah: Principles and Etiquette

To sum up, three things have been mentioned in verse 125 as necessary for Da'wah:

1. Al-Ḥikmah (Wisdom)

2. Al-Maw'iẓah al-Ḥasanah (Good Counsel)

3. Al-Mujādalah - '*billati hiya aḥsan*' (Debate in the Best of Manners)

Some commentators have said that these things are there because of three kinds of addressees. Inviting with wisdom is for people of knowledge and understanding. Inviting with good counsel is for common people. Argument and debate are for those who nurse doubts in their hearts, or simply refuse to accept anything said to them because of hostility and obstinacy.

My mentor and master, Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī has said in his Tafsīr Bayān al-Qur'ān that it is far out to deduce from the context of the verse that the addressees of these three things are groups of three different kinds, separate from each other.

In the light of the above what seems to be obvious here is that these rules of etiquette in Da'wah are to be used for everyone. The first thing

to do in Da'wah is to wisely assess conditions surrounding the addressee and pick out the most appropriate thing to say in those terms. Then, what has to be said will certainly be said as a well-wisher, however, this empathy has to be strengthened by such evidences and proof as would satisfy the addressee. And the subject matter and the manner of presentation has to be kept soft and affectionate so that the addressee becomes certain about whatever is being said and starts feeling that this person is saying it in his interest and for his benefit, and that the speaker's purpose is not to embarass him or belittle his status.

However, the author of Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī has made a subtle point at this place. According to him, the arrangement of the verse shows that there are really no more than two things in Da'wah: (1) Al-Ḥikmah (Wisdom) and (2) Al-Maw'iẓah (Good Counsel). The third thing: Al-Mujādalah (Argument,Debate) is just not included under the Principles of Da'wah. But, it can be conceded that it does come out handy once in a while in the path of Da'wah.

The author of Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī proves his point by saying: If these three things were to be the Principles of Da'wah, the exigency of the situation required that all three should have been enumerated with the help of conjunctions as: بالحكمة والموعظة الحسنة والجدال الاحسن But, the Holy Qu'ran has elected to say al-Ḥikmah (Wisdom) and al-Maw'iẓah (Good Counsel) with conjunctive words in one single arrangement while, for al-Mujādalah, it has chosen to have a separate sentence: جَادِلْهُمْ بِالَّتِيْ هِيَ أَحْسَنُ (And argue with them in the best of manners). This tells us that argument in matters of knowledge is not a basic element or condition of the Call to Allah (*da'wah ilal-lāh*). Instead, it is an instruction concerning matters that come up in the path of Da'wah - an example of which appears in the next verse where patience has been enjoined because it is inevitable to observe patience over pains inflicted by people while in the path of Da'wah.

In short, there are two principles of Da'wah - (1) Al-Ḥikmah (Wisdom) and (2) Al-Maw'iẓah (Good Counsel). No Da'wah - whether to the learned and the classes or to the masses of people - should remain without these two factors. However, one has to face the kind of people who are neck-deep into doubts and superstitions and more than ready to start a debate with the Dā'ī (the man of Da'wah), it is to meet such situa-

tions that a go ahead signal to engage in the exercise of Al-Mujādalah (argument, debate) has been given. But, by imposing the restriction of: بِالَّتِیْ ھِیَ اَحْسَنُ (in the best of manners) along with it, it was made very clear that the Mujādalah devoid of this condition has no place and status in the Sharī'ah.

The Prophetic Etiquette of Da'wah

Inviting people towards Allah is, in fact, the mission and station of the blessed prophets, may peace be upon them all. The rightly-guided 'Ulamā' of the Muslim community carry out this mission in their capacity of being their deputies. So, it is incumbent on them that they should learn its etiquette and methodology from them alone. A *da'wah* that does not follow those methods faithfully does not remain what *da'wah* really is. Instead, it turns into *'adāwah* (enmity) and becomes the cause of subsequent confrontations and wars.

An instruction of the Holy Qur'ān given to Sayyidnā Mūsā and Hārūn علیہما السلام in Sūrah Ṭā-Hā illustrates the principle observed by prophets in their Call: فَقُوْلَا لَهٗ قَوْلًا لَّيِّنًا لَّعَلَّهٗ يَتَذَكَّرُ اَوْيَخْشٰى (Speak to him in gentle words, may be he takes to the advice or fears - 20:44). This is a principle no Caller to Truth (*dā'ī ila al-Ḥaqq*) should ever lose sight of. Let him always bear in mind that the Pharaoh was an infidel (*kāfir*) known for his rebellion, one whose death was to come, as in ultimate Divine knowledge, while he was still a *kāfir*. Now, when Allah Ta'ālā sends his man of the Call even to a disbelieving tyrant like the Pharaoh, He sends him with the instruction of talking to him gently. Today, the people we invite to Allah, to His Faith, they are not more astray than the Pharaoh. Then, none of us can claim to match Sayyidnā Mūsā and Hārūn علیہما السلام as great guides and callers to the way of Allah. So, the right that Allah did not give to the two of his prophets - that they hurl hard talk on the addressee, throw taunts at him and insult him - where in the world did we get that right from?

The Holy Qur'ān is full of the Da'wah and Tablīgh of the noble prophets علیہم السلام and the contestations of disbelievers. Nowhere in there we find that any messenger of Allah has ever responded with a single unpleasant word against those who threw taunts at them despite their being on the side of the Truth. Let us have a look at some relevant examples.

The words spoken by two prophets, Sayyidnā Nūḥ and Sayyidnā Hūd عليهما السلام in response to the confrontation and sharp accusations of their people are worth noticing. These can be seen in the seventh section of Sūrah al-A'rāf from verses 59 to 67.

Sayyidnā Nūḥ ﷺ is the great prophet known for his high determination and long blessed years in this world. For nine hundred and fifty years he devoted his life to Da'wah, Tablīgh, Reform and Enlightenment among his people. But, with the exception of a few, no one from among his people listened to him. Leave the rest, even his son and wife remained on the side of disbelievers. Had a modern day Reformer been in his place, imagine how he would have talked to such a people! Just imagine and then see what those people said in response to his Call in their interest and for their benefit. They said:

إِنَّا لَنَرٰىكَ فِيْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ

"Indeed we see you in an obvious error" - al-A'rāf, 7:60.

On the other side, there is a prophet of Allah. He skips the option of chastizing his evil and contumacious people and this is what he elects to say:

يٰقَوْمِ لَيْسَ بِيْ ضَلٰلَةٌ وَّلٰكِنِّيْ رَسُوْلٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ

"O my people, there is no error in me, but I am a messenger from the Lord of the worlds" [telling you what is good for you] - al-A'rāf, 7:61.

The other messenger of Allah who came after him was Sayyidnā Hūd ﷺ. His people, despite having seen the messenger's miracles, chose to remain hostile. They said, "you have yet to come up with a proof for your claim and we are not the kind of people who would abandon their objects of worship (idols) just because you say so. The fact is that you have been irreverant in respect of our idols and that is why you have gone crazy."

Having heard all this, Sayyidnā Hūd ﷺ responded by saying:

إِنِّيْٓ أُشْهِدُ اللّٰهَ وَاشْهَدُوْٓا أَنِّيْ بَرِيْٓءٌ مِّمَّا تُشْرِكُوْنَ

"I make Allah my witness, and you witness that I have nothing to do with what you take as gods besides Him" - Hūd, 11:54.

And as in Sūrah al-A'rāf, to him his people said:

إِنَّا لَنَرٰىكَ فِىْ سَفَاهَةٍ وَّإِنَّا لَنَظُنُّكَ مِنَ الْكٰذِبِيْنَ

"Indeed, we see you in foolishness, and we certainly believe you to be one of the liars" - 7:66.

In response to these heart-rending words used against him by his people, the messenger of Allah, Sayyidnā Hūd, blessings and peace on him, does not even think of some sharp repartee, some derogatory counter comment, or say anything which would bring into focus their waywardness and their ugly penchant for attributing lies to Allah. He does nothing of that sort. Yet, he gives the answer and what an answer! He simply said:

يٰقَوْمِ لَيْسَ بِىْ سَفَاهَةٌ وَّلٰكِنِّىْ رَسُوْلٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ

"O my people, there is no foolishness in me, but I am a messenger from the Lord of the worlds" - al-A'rāf, 7:67.

Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام invited his people to Allah in accordance with customary practice of prophets. They were addicted to the evil practice of weighing less and measuring short. When Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام asked them to refrain from it, his people made fun of him and asked him in biting contempt:

يٰشُعَيْبُ اَصَلٰوتُكَ تَاْمُرُكَ اَنْ نَّتْرُكَ مَا يَعْبُدُ اٰبَآؤُنَآ اَوْ اَنْ نَّفْعَلَ فِىْٓ اَمْوَالِنَا مَا نَشٰٓؤُا اِنَّكَ لَاَنْتَ الْحَلِيْمُ الرَّشِيْدُ

They said, "O Shu'aib, does your *ṣalāh* (prayer) command you that we should give up what our fathers used to worship or give up our free will in (spending) our wealth? You are provenly the man of wisdom and guidance" - Hūd, 11:87.

Here, they have said three things. They open with a taunt: This prayer that you make teaches you to do all those foolish things. Then they talk about their *māl* - wealth, property, commercial interests: This is ours. We buy. We sell. What do you have to do with our financial matters? And for that matter, how does your God come into this? All this belongs to us and we have the right of spending it as we wish. The last sentence they say is loaded with black humour and angry sarcasm - you are certainly wise, guided-right!

It seems as if the contemporary votaries of secular economy did not rise only in our time. They do have their forbears in the past whose theo-

retical assumptions were the same as is being dished out today by some Muslims carrying nothing but Muslim names. So, they would say that they were Muslims, they believed in Islam but when it comes to an economic order, they adopt socialism (or capitalism) for, as they would like to believe, this area is out of bounds for Islam.

Returning to what his people said to Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام, let us now see how the messenger of Allah responds to the sarcastic remarks made by his unjust people:

قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ اَرَءَيْتُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُ عَلٰى بَيِّنَةٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّىْ وَرَزَقَنِىْ مِنْهُ رِزْقًا حَسَنًا ؕ وَمَآ اُرِيْدُ اَنْ اُخَالِفَكُمْ اِلٰى مَآ اَنْهٰكُمْ عَنْهُ ؕ اِنْ اُرِيْدُ اِلَّا الْاِصْلَاحَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُ ؕ وَمَا تَوْفِيْقِىْٓ اِلَّا بِاللّٰهِ ؕ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَاِلَيْهِ اُنِيْبُ

He said, "O my people, tell me, if I am on a clear path from my Lord and He has provided me from Himself with a good provision, (should I still leave you unguided?) And I do not want to do in your absence what I prohibit for you. I want nothing but to set things right as far as I can. And what I am enabled to do is only with the help of Allah. In Him alone I have placed my trust and to Him alone I turn in humbleness" - Hūd, 11:88

Despite that Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, when sent to the Pharaoh, had fully complied with the Divine instruction of talking to him gently, the response of the Pharaoh to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام came in the following words:

قَالَ اَلَمْ نُرَبِّكَ فِيْنَا وَلِيْدًا وَّلَبِثْتَ فِيْنَا مِنْ عُمُرِكَ سِنِيْنَ وَفَعَلْتَ فَعْلَتَكَ الَّتِىْ فَعَلْتَ وَاَنْتَ مِنَ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ

He said, "(You!) Did we not raise you among us as a child, and you stayed among us for years of your life? And you did your deed which you did, and you were of the unfidels " - ash-Shu'arā', 26:18,19.

Here, the Pharaoh has reminded Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام of two favours done to him - that he raised him as a child and that he stayed with him for a number of years while older. Then he showed his displeasure over the incident in which a Copt got killed at the hands of Sayyidnā Mūsā, though he had no intention of killing him. In his anger, he also said that he had become an infidel.

At this place, the expression: اَنْتَ مِنَ الْكَافِرِيْنَ (*anta min al-kāfirīn*) could

be taken in the literal sense, that is, one who is ungrateful, which would mean: 'we did favours to you and you killed one of our men, a demonstration of ungratefulness to favours done.' Then, it could also be given a technical meaning because the Pharaoh claimed to be god. So, whoever denied his godhead turned out to be a *kāfir* (infidel).

Now, at this juncture, let us hear the answer given by Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام which is a masterpiece of prophetic manners and morals of Da'wah. Here, first of all, he goes ahead and makes a clean breast of what had happened to him. He had tried to disengage a Copt who was fighting an Israelite man. The punch he had employed to do that caused his death. So, this killing was not intentional. But, it was also not prompted by some religious exigency. In fact, even under the Law of Moses, that man was not deserving of being killed. Therefore, he began by confessing first and said:

فَعَلْتُهَآ إِذًا وَّ أَنَا مِنَ الضَّآلِّيْنَ

"I did it then, while I was of the astray (ignorant)" - ash-Shu'arā', 26:20.

The sense is that the act had escaped him before he was blessed with the mission of a prophet and at a time when he was not aware of any Divine command about it. After that, he said:

فَفَرَرْتُ مِنْكُمْ لَمَّا خِفْتُكُمْ فَوَهَبَ لِيْ رَبِّيْ حُكْمًا وَّجَعَلَنِيْ مِنَ الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ

"So I fled from you when I feared you. Then my Lord bestowed wisdom on me and made me of His messengers" - 26:21.

After that, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام took up the reality of favours the Pharaoh was harping on. He told him that he was not right in doing that because this whole matter of bringing him up was the result of his own cruelty and oppression in that it was he who had a standing order in force, the order to kill Israelite children. His mother was, therefore, compelled to put him into the river until came the time when he reached his home. He said:

وَتِلْكَ نِعْمَةٌ تَمُنُّهَا عَلَيَّ أَنْ عَبَّدْتَّ بَنِيْٓ إِسْرَآءِيْلَ

"And this is the favour you put on me - that you have enslaved the Children of Isra'il! - 26:22.

After that, when the Pharaoh asked: وَمَا رَبُّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ("And what is the Lord of the worlds?" - 26:23), he replied by saying: رَبُّ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا ("The Lord of the heavens and the earth and of whatever there is in between them" - 26:24). Thereupon, it was by way of mockery that the Pharaoh turned towards the audience and asked: ... ("Do you not hear?" - 26:25) [meaning: You hear him, don't you? Hasn't he gone out of his mind?] Thereupon, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام added:

رَبُّكُمْ وَرَبُّ اٰبَآئِكُمُ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ

"Your Lord and the Lord of your first forefathers" - 26:26

Irritated, the Pharaoh said:

اِنَّ رَسُوْلَكُمُ الَّذِيْٓ اُرْسِلَ اِلَيْكُمْ لَمَجْنُوْنٌ

"Indeed, your messenger (who claims to have been) sent to you is a mad man" - 26:27.

Even such a derogatory title given to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام did not lure him into a blow for blow response for he could have easily told the Pharaoh as to who was insane and who was sane. He just took no notice of it, in fact, went on to describe another attribute of Allah, the Lord of the worlds:

رَبُّ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَآ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْقِلُوْنَ

"Lord of the East and the West and of whatever there is in between them, if you were to comprehend" - 26:28.

This is a lengthy dialogue taking place in the court of the Pharaoh between him and Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام. It covers three sections of Sūrah ash-Shu'arā' (26). Look at this dialogue of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام from the beginning to the end. No emotions are betrayed here. No reply has been given to his bad words, nor is his hard talk matched by counter hard talk. Instead of all that, there is a continuous flow of statements to the effect of Allah Ta'ālā's attributes of perfection along with the ongoing efforts of Tablīgh.

This is a brief sample of the confrontations in which the blessed prophets have stood up against their hostile and obstinate people. We can also say that it is a practical demonstration of 'arguing with the best of manners.'

Besides argumentations, debates and intellectual confrontations when inevitable, models have been set by the blessed prophets in Da'wah and Tablīgh on a standing basis. They have established wise principles in human communications as appropriate to different addressees and different occasions with the added considerations as dictated by wisdom or beneficial expediency. In short, the way and method put in practice by the blessed prophets in order to invite people to Allah (*da'wah ilal-lāh*) and make it popular, effective and abiding as well is, in reality, the essence and spirit of Da'wah. As for its details, these are spread all over in the teachings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Let us have a look at some of these as representative samples.

The Holy Prophet ﷺ was very particular about making sure that no burden is placed on the addressee whether in Da'wah and Tablīgh or in good counsel and beneficial advice. As for the noble Ṣaḥābah, they held the Holy Prophet ﷺ very dear to their heart. About them, it could not be imagined that they would, God forbid, ever get bored with what he had to say. Yet, even for them, his customary practice was that he would not hold his teaching, counseling and advising sessions every day, rather limited it to some days of the week so that their occupation or business is not adversely affected or that it becomes some sort of burden on them.

According to a narration of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd ؓ reported in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī, "The Holy Prophet ﷺ had his '*wa'ẓ*' sessions only on some days of the week lest we get bored - and he instructed others to do the same."

Sayyidnā Anas ؓ reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

يَسِّرُوا وَلَا تُعَسِّرُوا وَبَشِّرُوا وَلَا تُنَفِّرُوا

Make (things) easy and do not make (things) difficult and give (people) the good news (of mercy from Allah) and do not disappoint or alienate (them) - Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Kitāb al-'Ilm.

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ؓ says, 'you should become *Rabbānī*, the people of your *Rabb*, people with wisdom, learning and law.' After reporting this saying in the Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, the word: رَبَّانِي (Rabbānī) has been explained as: A person who, keeping in sight the principles of Da'wah, Tablīgh, education and training, starts with simple things first. When people get used to it, then he tells them about other

imperatives which would have been difficult at the elementary stage. This person is a Divinely guided scholar (عَالِم رَبَّانِی). These days religious sermons and propagation efforts produce very little effect. The main reason is that workers in this field generally do not give due consideration to the principles and etiquette necessary in this area. Lengthy lectures, uncalled for sermonizings and insisting on people to do something without first finding out the conditions faced by the addressee have become their habit.

When engaged in the mission of Invitation and Reformation, the Holy Prophet ﷺ made an extra effort to ensure that the addressee is not insulted or disgraced in any way. Therefore, when he would see someone involved with something bad or wrong, he would not address him directly. Instead, he used to beam his remarks at a public gathering, for example, he would say:

مَابَالُ اَقْوَامٍ يَّفْعَلُوْنَ كَذَا

What has happened to people that they do so?

This used to be part of a public address. Naturally, the person who was supposed to hear it did hear it, was ashamed in his heart and went about getting rid of that drawback.

It was the universal habit of noble prophets that they shielded the addressee from being embarassed. Therefore, on occasions, they would attribute what was done by the addressee to their own selves and thus tried to set things right with their people. It appears in Sūrah Yā Sīn: وَمَا لِیَ لَآ اَعْبُدُ الَّذِیْ فَطَرَنِیْ (What is the matter with me that I would not worship Him who created me? - 36:22). As for this emissary of the messenger, he was already devoted to his *'ibādah* (worship) all the time as was his usual way. The purpose here was to make the addressee who was not so engaged hear the worth and value of turning to Allah in *'ibādah*. But, as we see, he has attributed the shortcoming to his own person.

And Da'wah means to call or bid someone to come close to the caller - definitely not to enumerate the person's shortcomings. Then, this act of calling can become effective only when there is some common ground between the caller and the called. For this reason, the Da'wah of the noble prophets ﷺ as in the Holy Qur'ān mostly begins with the words:

يٰقَوْمِ (*yā qawmī* : O my people) through which stress is placed first on the common factor of brotherly relations and then things aiming at their betternment are said. It amounts to saying - 'we are people of the same brotherhood, so let there be no hatred in between us' - and this is how they start the mission of reforming their society.

In the letter of Da'wah sent by the Holy Prophet ﷺ to Hiraql, the Byzantine emperor, he began by calling the emperor: 'The Great Man of Byzantium.' This tribute of honour given to him was permissible because it contained a confession of the emperor's being great - though, for the people of Byzantine, not for him. After that, the manner in which the invitation to believe was given is being quoted below:

يٰاَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ تَعَالَوْا اِلٰى كَلِمَةٍ سَوَآءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ اَلَّا نَعْبُدَ اِلَّا اللّٰهَ

"O people of the Book, come to a word common between us and you that we worship none but Allah" (as in Sūrah Āl-'Imrān, 3:64)

Here, a common factor of unity was mentioned first. It was said that the belief in the Oneness of Allah (*Tauḥīd*) was the common bond between the two of them. After that came the reminder about the error of Christians.

If we were to look into the teachings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ carefully, we will find similar rules of conduct in every field of Da'wah and public education. Unfortunately, in our time, we suffer from lack of concern for carrying the call to faith, working for the correction and betterment of people, bidding the Fair and forbidding the Unfair. Even those who are engaged in these pursuits have, (with valid exceptions) taken mere discussions, debates, accusations, name calling, berating and disgracing the adversary to be Da'wah and Tablīgh. The truth of the matter is that all this, being contrary to the Sunnah, never turns out to be effective and beneficial - while these gentlemen continue to congratulate themselves for having done a great service to Islam. In reality, they are becoming the cause of making people scared of it.

The Harmful Worldly and Other-Worldly Effects of Current Contestations

We know from the Tafsīr of the present verse (125) that the main objective of the Sharī'ah of Islām is the Call to Allah (*da'wah ilal-lāh*)

which has two principles: (1) Al-Ḥikmah (Wisdom) and (2) Al-Maw'iẓah Al-Ḥasanah (Good Counsel). And if the unwelcome need of Al-Mujādalah (argument, debate, confrontation) stands imposed on some stray occasion, then, that too has been allowed with the restriction of being 'in the best of manners.' But, in reality, it is not a regular department of Da'wah. Instead, it is a via media to handle its negative aspect. The Holy Qur'ān has resolved it by placing the restriction of: بِالَّتِی هِیَ اَحْسَنُ (in the best of manners). By doing so, it has told us that it should be in the best spirit of politeness, and with the attitude of a sympathizer and well-wisher. Argument should be formulated clearly as appropriate to the state of the addressee. Any approach which belittles or insults the addressee should be totally avoided. Similarly, for it to be the best, it is also necessary to be on guard lest it becomes harmful to the speaker himself. In other words, it should not affect his morals adversely for there is the danger of his falling into envy, malice, arrogance, love for name, fame and power. These are major inward sins. In short, the kind of discussions, debates, polemics and confrontations we see today are such that it would take a very rare person, some man of Allah, to remain safe against their harmful effects, otherwise, it is extremely difficult to find refuge from it under normal circumstances.

Imām al-Ghazālī has said: The way liquor is 'the mother of evils' (*umm-ul-khabā'ith*) in that it is a grave sin by itself and also becomes the conduit of other grave sins. Similarly, when overpowering the addressee and demonstrating one's intellectual superiority over people becomes the objective, that too becomes 'the mother of evils' for one's inward state. As a result, many spiritual crimes crop up, for example: envy, malice, arrogance, backbiting, spying on the faults of others, being pleased with their discomfort and being unhappy with their gain, haughty rejection of Truth, the attitude of not considering the position of others with justice and moderation, instead, worrying about a rebuttal, no matter how askance their enterpretations from the Qur'ān and Sunnah are.

These are dangers. Even serious religious scholars are affected by them. But, the problem is compounded when the thing starts affecting their followers when the intellectual exercise could turn into a physical one in progressive proportions. *Innā lillāhi wa innā ilaihi rāji'ūn*. Imām Shāfi'ī, may the mercy of Allah be upon him, said:

> "Knowledge is a brotherhood of the learned. How do those who have turned knowledge into enmity could invite others to follow their religion? When their sole objective is to dominate over others, how could they be expected to practice mutual attachment, love and consideration? And for one what evil could be greater than that which drowns him in the morals of the hypocrites and deprives him of the morals of those who truly believe and fear Allah?"

Imām al-Ghazālī said that a person who devotes himself to the *'ilm* of *dīn* and the *da'wah* of *ḥaqq* revolves between two destinies. Either he, following correct principles and avoiding fatal dangers, achieves the eternal good; or, otherwise, if he falls down from this station, he slides into eternal misfortune. That he would remain hanging in between these two states is too far out to entertain - because, knowledge which is not beneficial is nothing but punishment. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

اَشَدُّ النَّاسِ عَذَابًا يَّوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ عَالِمٌ لَّمْ يَنْفَعْهُ اللّٰهُ بِعِلْمِهٖ

> On the day of Judgement, the person most severely punished, of all human beings, shall be an *'ālim* from whose knowledge Allah has not given him any benefit.

And in another Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth, he said:

لَا تَتَعَلَّمُوا الْعِلْمَ لِتُبَاهُوْا بِهِ الْعُلَمَآءَ وَلِتُمَارُوْا بِهِ السُّفَهَآءَ وَلِتَصْرِفُوْا بِهٖ وُجُوْهَ النَّاسِ اِلَيْكُمْ فَمَنْ فَعَلَ ذٰلِكَ فَهُوَ فِى النَّارِ

> "Do not learn the *'ilm* (of *dīn*) to compete with the learned in pride and prestige nor to challenge the incompetent with it nor to make the faces of people turn towards you therewith. So whoever will do that, will be in the fire." (Ibn Mājah, from the Ḥadīth of Sayyidnā Jābir with sound chains of authority as in Takhrīj al-'Irāqī 'alā al-Iḥyā')

Therefore, the standing creed (*maslak*) of authorities among Muslim jurists and the people on Truth (*ḥaqq*) in this matter was that they never considered disputation and confrontation in intellectual issues as permissible. In the mission of inviting people to the Truth, it is enough to alert anyone considered to be in error, politely and sympathetically as a well-wisher, presenting one's submission with necessary arguments. Then, should he accept, it is better. If otherwise, let him observe silence, totally avoiding altercation and adverse criticism. Let us turn to Imām Mālik رحمة الله عليه in this matter:

كَانَ مَالِكٌ يَّقُوْلُ الْمِرَآءُ وَ الْجِدَالُ فِى الْعِلْمِ يَذْهَبُ بِنُوْرِ الْعِلْمِ عَنْ قَلْبِ الْعَبْدِ ۔ وَقِيْلَ لَه: رَجُلٌ لَّهُ عِلْمٌ بِالسُّنَّةِ فَهَلْ يُجَادِلُ عَنْهَا؟ قَالَ: لاَ ، وَلٰكِنْ يُّخْبِرُ بِالسُّنَّةِ ، فَاِنْ قُبِلَ مِنْهُ وَاِلاَّ سَكَتَ ۔ (اوجزالمسالك شرح مؤطا ص١٥ ١٥)

Imām Mālik said: "Altercation and confrontation in *al-'ilm* (the knowledge of *dīn*) drives away the light of knowledge from the heart of a servant." Someone submitted: 'There is a person. who has the knowledge of Sunnah. Can he enter into debate for the protection of Sunnah?' He said, "No. But, he should inform the addressee about the Sunnah (as it is). Then, should he accept it, good - otherwise, let him observe silence." (Awjaz al-Masālik Sharḥ al-Muwaṭṭā, v. 1, page 15)

Ineffectiveness of Contemporary Da'wah Work

There are two reasons why the work of Da'wah (invitation) and Iṣlāḥ (reform) is not fully effective. (1) Firstly, because of the increase of corruption in our time and the abundance of Ḥarām things, hearts of people have become generally hard, and heedless of the Hereafter - and the very ability to accept truth has become weak and low. And there are some who find themselves suffering from the curse the foreboding of which was given by the Holy Prophet ﷺ. He had said that, by the later times, the hearts of many people will turn upside down, all reversed. The ability to know good from bad, and the distinction of permissible and impermissible will vanish from their heart.

(2) Then, negligence towards the duties of bidding the Fair and forbidding the Unfair and inviting people to the true faith has become common. Not to say much about people at large, there is not much realization of its need even among the learned and the righteous. It is assumed that correcting one's own deed is just about enough whether their children, spouse, brother, friend remain smeared with all sorts of sins. The concern for their reform and betterment is as if no responsibility of theirs - although, the definite textual statements of the Holy Qur'ān (*nuṣūṣ*) are openly declaring that the betterment of one's children, family and relatives is his responsibility: قُوْٓا اَنْفُسَكُمْ وَاَهْلِيْكُمْ نَارًا (Protect yourselves and your families from a Fire... - at-Taḥrīm, 66/6). As for some people who do pay attention to this duty, they do not know the teachings of the Qur'ān and the principles and manners of prophetic Da'wah. They take it easy, go by their impulse and say anything to anybody anytime without ever thinking about it. By doing so, they

surmise, they have done their duty - although, this method of action, being contrary to the blessed practice of prophets, further alienates people from the Faith and from following its dictates.

Of particular mention is the habit of finding faults with others, mocking at them or making fun of them all in the name of open criticism. Imām Shāfi'ī رحمه الله تعالى said:

> "When alerting someone to some mistake (the rule is:) If you talked to him privately, explained it politely, then, this is 'advice'; and if you disgraced him publicly, this is 'vice.'"

The publicizing of mutual defects has become so popular these days that negative advertising is being done as if it was some service rendered to the Faith. May Allah Ta'ālā bless all of us the ability to serve our Faith with the best of insight into its Da'wah and its modalities.

At this point ends our submission relating to Da'wah and its principles and etiquette.

After that, we can move on to explain the last part of verse 125: اِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ اَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيْلِهٖ وَهُوَ اَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِيْنَ (Surely, your Lord knows best the one who strays from His way, and He knows best the ones who are on the right path). This statement has been made to comfort those who carry the Call of their Faith because one is naturally shocked when the addressee does not accept the truth presented despite that all rules of Da'wah have been observed. And there are occasions when this could produce another effect. When one sees no benefit coming out of Da'wah, he can become disappointed, even leave the work itself. Therefore, in this sentence, it was said:' Your duty is only to invite people to the Truth in accordance with its correct principles. Beyond that, its acceptance or rejection is something you have nothing to do with, nor is that one of your responsibilities. That falls in the domain of Allah alone. He knows who will remain astray and who will stand guided. You should not worry about it. Go on doing your duty. Do not lose hope. Do not despair.' This tells us that this sentence too is really a complement of the etiquette of Da'wah.

Causing Pain to a Man of Da'wah: Revenge is Permissible, but Patience is Better.

The next three verses (126,127,128) carry another important instruc-

tion for those who present the message of Truth before people. It tells them about what they have to do in unusual conditions. There are occasions when they have to face people who are hard-hearted and very ignorant. No matter how softly and politely one explains things to them and no matter how much goodwill one has for them in his heart, they would, even then, go in a fit of anger, use bad language and cause pain. There are times when they would go beyond that and hurt the preacher physically or would not even mind killing. So, a remedial measure was in order.

For this purpose, by saying: وَاِنْ عَاقَبْتُمْ (And if you were to harm them in retaliation, harm them to the measure you were harmed. And if you opt for patience, it is definitely much better for those who are patient - 126), these noble workers in the way of Allah were given the legal right that it was permissible for them to retaliate against injustice done to them. But, this was to be subject to the condition that retaliation should not exceed the measure of injustice done. In other words, assess the injustice inflicted on you, retaliate only to that measure and ensure that no excess occurs.

And at the end of the verse, given there is the advice: Though, you do have the right to retaliate, but be patient and do not retaliate. It is better.

The Background in which this Verse was Revealed and How it was Implemented by the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his noble Ṣaḥābah ؓ

According to the majority of commentators, this verse is Madani. It was revealed in relation to the *shahādah* of seventy *ṣaḥābah* and about the event in which Sayyidnā Ḥamzah ؓ was killed and his body was subjected to post-killing mutilations (*muthlah*). The narration in Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī is in accordance with it. Dārqutnī has reported from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ as follows:

> "In the battle of Uḥud when the Mushriks marched back, the dead bodies of seventy leading *ṣaḥābah* were found. Also included there was Sayyidnā Ḥamzah ؓ, the reverred uncle of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Since the Mushriks were particularly angry with him, therefore, once he was killed by them, they took out their anger on his dead body. His nose, ears and other

> parts of the body were cut and the abdomen was slit open. The very sight of it shocked the Holy Prophet ﷺ and he said that, to avenge Hamzah, he would have seventy men from the Mushriks subjected to a '*muthlah*' similar to what they have done to Hamzah. It was in the background of this event that these three verses were revealed (126,127,128)". (Tafsīr Qurṭubī)

It appears in some narrations that these cruel people had meted out the same treatment of '*muthlah*' (mutilation) in the case of other *ṣaḥābah* as well. (As reported by al-Tirmidhī, Aḥmad, and Ibn Khuzaimah and Ibn Ḥibbān in their Ṣaḥīḥs from Sayyidnā Ubaiyy ibn Ka'b ﷺ)

In this matter, being extremely grieved, the Holy Prophet ﷺ had declared his determination to subject seventy Mushriks in retaliation for his *ṣaḥābah* irrespective of their exact number, and this was not in accord with the principle of justice and equity Allah Ta'ālā intended to stand established in this world through him. Therefore, two things were done. (1) He was alerted and told that the right of retaliation was there but it had to match the measure of injustice done. Retaliating against seventy for a few, irrespective of their number, is not right. (2) Then, he was to be the model of morals at their best. Therefore, given to him was the good counsel: Though, you are allowed to retaliate evenly but, should you set aside this option and be patient and generous to the unjust, that would be much better.

Thereupon, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Now, patient we shall be. We shall not take any revenge from anyone" - and he paid out a *kaffārah* (expiation) for his oath. (Maẓharī from al-Baghawī) When, on the eve of the Conquest of Makkah, having all those Mushriks of Makkah under his control, it was certainly the time to do what he had declared on the battlefield of Uḥud that he would do. But, it was precisely at the time of the revelation of the cited verses that the Holy Prophet ﷺ had forsaken his earlier intention and had, instead, decided to observe patience. Therefore, at the time of the Conquest of Makkah, the course of patience was taken in accordance with the imperative of these verses. Perhaps, it is on this basis that it has been mentioned in some narration that these verses were revealed at the time of the Conquest of Makkah. And it is also not too far out to believe that the revelation of these verses was repeated, that is, initially they were revealed at the battle of 'Uḥud and

then, when came the Conquest of Makkah, they were revealed again. (as narrated by al-Maẓharī from Ibn al-Ḥaṣṣār)

RULING:

This verse has told us about the Law of Even Retaliation when avenging. Therefore, Muslim jurists say that in the event a person kills someone, the killed will be avenged by killing the killer. One who inflicts injury will have an even injury inflicted on him. Against one who cuts off someone's hand and feet, and then kills him, the guardian of the killed will be given the right that he too should first cut off the killer's hands and feet and then kill him.

Yes, if someone kills someone else by hitting him with a rock, or kills him by injuring him with arrows, then, it is not possible to determine the correct measure of the way of killing, that is, how many strikes did it take to make this killing take place, and how much pain has been inflicted on the person killed. In this matter, there is no measure of determining real equalization. Therefore, he will have to be killed invariably with a sword. (Al-Jaṣṣāṣ)

RULING:

Though the verse has been revealed in relation to physical pain and loss, but its words are general which includes the inflicting of financial loss. Therefore, Muslim jurists have said that a person who usurps *māl* (money, property etc.) belonging to another person, then, this other person has the right to forcibly take away from him his *māl* in accordance with his right, or take it by stealth on condition that the *māl* taken is from the genus of his right, for example, if cash has been taken, then, he can take, in lieu of it, the same amount of cash from him, by usurpation or theft. If things usurped are like grains, corn or cloth, then, similar grains, corn or cloth can be taken back. But, one cannot take another kind in lieu of the kind taken from him, for example, one cannot forcibly take cloth or some other article of use in lieu of cash. However, some *fuqahā'* (Muslim jurists) have permitted it unconditionally - whether it be from the entitled kind or from some other. Some details of these rules have been covered by al-Qurṭubī in his Tafsīr while more comprehensive details appear in books of Fiqh.

Mentioned in verse 126: وَإِنْ عَاقَبْتُم (And if you were to harm...) was the

general law in which avenging harm done with even harm was declared to be permissible for all Muslims, but taking the option of patience was recommended as definitely much better. And in the next verse (127), the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been addressed in a special manner and prompted to be patient because, in view of his great dignity and high station, the later response was certainly more appropriate and becoming for him as compared with others. Therefore, it was said: وَاصْبِرْ وَمَا صَبْرُكَ اِلَّا بِاللّٰهِ (And be patient. And your patience is bestowed by none but Allah). It means: 'As for you, you just do not even contemplate a revenge. Take to Ṣabr (patience) as your only option.' And then, he was also told that his Ṣabr will come with the help of Allah alone, that is, observing Ṣabr will be made easy for him.

After that, once again in the last verse (128), a universal formula of having the help of Allah Ta'ālā by one's side was announced. It is:

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ مَعَ الَّذِيْنَ اتَّقَوْا وَّالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ مُّحْسِنُوْنَ

> Surely, Allah is with those who fear Him and those who are good in deeds.

The essence of this formula is that the help of Allah Ta'ālā is with people who have two virtues: Taqwā and Iḥsān. The essence of Taqwā is acting righteously or being good in deed while the sense of Iḥsān at this place is to be good to those created by Allah Ta'ālā, that is, those who are duty-bound to do righteous deeds and are particular in dealing with others nicely - Allah Ta'ālā is with them. And it is obvious, if someone is blessed with the 'company' (help) of Allah Ta'ālā, who can touch him!

Alḥamdulillāh

The Tafsīr of Sūrah Al-Naḥl was completed today, Shabān 25, 1389 Hijrah

وَلِلّٰهِ الْحَمْدُ اَوَّلاً وَّاٰخِرًا وَّظَاهِرًا وَّبَاطِنًا

Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl

(Al-'Isrā')

Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl is Makkī. It has 111 verses and 12 sections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the Most-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verse 1

سُبْحٰنَ الَّذِیْٓ اَسْرٰی بِعَبْدِهٖ لَیْلًا مِّنَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ اِلَی الْمَسْجِدِ الْاَقْصَا الَّذِیْ بٰرَكْنَا حَوْلَهٗ لِنُرِیَهٗ مِنْ اٰیٰتِنَا ؕ اِنَّهٗ هُوَ السَّمِیْعُ الْبَصِیْرُ ﴿۱﴾

Pure is He Who made his servant travel at night from al-Masjid al-Ḥarām to al-Masjid al-Aqṣā the environs of which We have blessed, so that We let him see some of Our signs. Surely, He is the All Hearing, All Seeing. [1]

Commentary

Described in this verse is the event of Mi'raj (the Ascent to the heavens, or al-'Isrā', the midnight journey of the Holy Prophet ﷺ which is a signal honor and distinctive miracle of our Messenger of Allah ﷺ). The word: اَسْرٰی (*asrā*) is a derivation from: اِسْرٰی (*isrā'*) which literally means to make someone travel at night. After that, the introduction of the word: لَیْلًا *(lailan)* also makes this sense very clear. Then, by placing this word as a common noun, the indication released was that during this event the time spent was that of a part of the night - not even that of the whole night. The journey from al-Masjid al-Ḥarām to al-Masjid al-Aqṣā mentioned in this verse is called al-'Isrā' and the name of the journey from here to the seven heavens is al-Mi'raj. Isrā' stands proved under

the definitive textual authority of this verse and the Mi'rāj finds mention in the verses of Sūrah an-Najm and is proved by Aḥādīth appearing in an uninterrupted succession. The word: بِعَبْدِهٖ (*bi'abdihī*: His servant) used here for the Holy Prophet ﷺ is special. It shows that, in this magnificent setting of honor and welcome, when Allah Ta'ālā, on His own, elects to call someone 'His servant', a unique bond of love lies embedded therein and that this is the highest honor any man could ever have.

This is similar to what has been said in another verse: عِبَادُ الرَّحْمٰنِ الَّذِيْنَ يَمْشُوْنَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ هَوْنًا (and the servants of Ar-Raḥmān [the Most Merciful] are those who walk on the Earth gently - al-Furqān, 25:63) where the objective is to increase the prestige of those who are acceptable with Him. From here, we also learn that the highest achievement man is capable of is to become a perfect servant of Allah - for, on this eve of special honor, the quality of ideal servitude, out of his many attributes of perfection, was chosen. Then, the presence of this expression yields yet another beneficial outcome in that no one gets the wrong impression of divinity from this wonderful journey by night which, from its beginning to the end, is full of extra-habitual miracles. This is something like what happened with the Christians who fell into deception over the event of Sayyidnā 'Isā ﷺ being raised unto the heavens. For this reason, by saying عَبْد ('*abd*: servant), it was declared that, despite all those attributes, achievements and miracles, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was still a servant of Allah, not god.

The Qur'ān, Sunnah and 'Ijmā' prove that the Mi'rāj was physical.

It is proved from the text of the Holy Qur'ān, and from Aḥādīth coming in uninterrupted succession mentioned later that the entire journey of the Isrā' and Mi'rāj was not simply spiritual, instead, it was physical - like the journey of anyone else. The very first word of the Holy Qur'ān in this Sūrah: سُبْحَانَ (Subḥān: Pure is He!) carries a hint in this direction because this word is used to register wonder or introduce a great marvel. Had the Mi'rāj been merely spiritual, just a matter of dream, what was there so unusual about it? As for a dream, every Muslim, even every human being, can see it and report that he or she went to the heavens, did this and did that.

The second indication embedded in the word: عَبْد ('*abd*: servant) also

points out in the same direction because *'abd* is no spirit all by itself, instead, it is the name of the combination of body and spirit.

In addition to that, when the Holy Prophet ﷺ related the event of Mi'rāj to Sayyidah Umm Hānī رضی اللہ عنہا, she advised him not to mention it before anyone otherwise people would falsify it even more. Had this been the matter of a dream, what was there in it that needed to be falsified?

After that, when he did tell people about it, the disbelievers of Makkah called it a lie and made fun of him, so much so that some neo-Muslims became apostates (*murtadd*) after hearing the news. If this would have been the matter of a dream, the likelihood of such reactions was least warranted. And that he had experienced some spiritual Mi'rāj in the form of a dream, before this or after that, does not become contrary to it. According to the majority of Muslim scholars, the word: اَلرُّءْیَا (*ar-ru'yā*) in the verse of the Qur'ān: وَمَا جَعَلْنَا الرُّءْیَا الَّتِیْٓ اَرَیْنٰكَ (And We showed you the scene - 17:60) means: رؤيه (*rūyah*: seeing). But, it has been expressed through the word: رُؤْيَا (*ru'yā*, which is frequently used in the sense of seeing a dream). The reason for this expression could be that this thing has been called *ru'yā* in the sense of a simile. This is like someone seeing a dream. And if, *ru'yā* is taken to mean dream itself, then, it is also not too far out to say that the event of Mi'rāj, in addition to its being physical, also transpired, before or after it, in the form of a spiritual Mi'rāj as a dream as well. Therefore, the saying, that it was a dream, reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbas رضی اللہ عنہ and Umm al-Mu'minīn Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا is also correct in its place - but, it does not necessarily imply that physical Mi'rāj did not take place.

It appears in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī that the Aḥādīth relating to the event of al-Isrā' are recurrent and uninterrupted. Naqqāsh has reported related narratives from twenty Ṣaḥābah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Then, Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ has given additional details in Al-Shifā' (Qurṭubī).

Imām Ibn Kathīr has, in his Tafsīr, reported all these narratives and after applying the standard rules of scrutiny has mentioned the names of twenty-five Ṣaḥābah from whom these reports come. Their names are:

(1) Sayyidnā 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb,
(2) Sayyidnā 'Alī al-Murtaḍā,

(3) Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd,
(4) Sayyidnā Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī,
(5) Sayyidnā Mālik ibn Ṣa'ṣa'ah,
(6) Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah,
(7) Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī,
(8) Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās,
(9) Sayyidnā Shaddād ibn Aws,
(10) Sayyidnā Ubaiyy ibn Ka'b,
(11) Sayyidnā 'Abd ar-Raḥmān ibn al-Qurāẓ,
(12) Sayyidnā Abū Ḥayyah (ابوحيه),
(13) Sayyidnā Abū Lailā,
(14) Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar,
(15) Sayyidnā Jabīr ibn 'Abdullāh,
(16) Sayyidnā Hudhayfah ibn Yamān,
(17) Sayyidnā Buraidah,
(18) Sayyidnā Abū Ayyūb al-Anṣārī,
(19) Sayyidnā Abū 'Umāmah,
(20) Sayyidnā Samurah ibn Jundub,
(21) Sayyidnā Abū al-Ḥamrā',
(22) Sayyidnā Ṣuhayb al-Rūmī,
(23) Sayyidah Umm Ḥānī',
(24) Umm al-Mu'minīn Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah,
(25) Sayyidah Asmā' bint Abī Bakr, ... After that, Ibn Kathīr said:

فَحَدِيْث الاسراءِ اجمع عليه المسلمون واعرض عنه الزنا دقة والملحدون (ابن كثير)

As for the Ḥadīth of al-Isrā', there is a consensus of all Muslim on it. Only heretics and atheists have denied it. (Ibn Kathīr)

A brief account of Mi'rāj - as reported by Ibn Kathīr

After having explained the present verse in his Tafsīr along with a detailed background of relevant Aḥādīth, Imām Ibn Kathīr has said: The truth of the matter is that the journey of Isrā' came to pass when the Holy Prophet ﷺ was awake, not dreaming. From Makkah al-Mukarramah to Baitulmaqdis, the journey was covered on *burāq* (a special heavenly horse to ride). When he reached the gate of Baitulmaqdis, he tied the *burāq* close to the gate, entered the Masjid of Baitulmaqdis and offered two *rak'āt* of Taḥiyyatul-masjid (prayer in honor of the Mosque) facing its orientation. After that, a staircase was

brought which had steps to go up from below. Through this staircase, he went to the first heaven. After that, he went to the rest of the heavens. [Only Allah knows the reality of this staircase - what it was and how did it work and things like that. In our day too, many kinds of stairs are in use. There are stairs that escalate automatically and there are elevators that take one up. Therefore, falling into any doubt or suspicion about this miraculous staircase is not right.] On every heaven, the resident angels greeted him and on every heaven, he met blessed prophets who were stationed on a particular heaven, such as, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام on the sixth heaven, and Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm Khalīlullah عليه السلام on the seventh heaven. After that, he went beyond the stations of all these blessed prophets and reached a plain where he could hear the sound of the pen writing destinies. And he saw the Sidratul-muntaha, the Far Tree in Jannah, on which moths in gold and variegated colors were falling from above by the command of Allah and which was surrounded by angels of Allah. And it was at this place that the Holy Prophet ﷺ saw Sayyidnā Jibra'īl al-Amīn in his real form with six hundred wings. And right there, he saw a flag in green that had the horizon all covered up. And he also saw al-Bayt al-Ma'mūr (the well-attended House believed to be located in Jannah exactly above the Baytullah in Makkah) sitting by which was the founder of the Ka'bah, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام with his back reclining against its wall. Seventy thousand angels enter this Bayt al-Ma'mūr every day who shall be waiting for their turn to re-enter there right through the day of Qiyāmah. And the Holy Prophet عليه السلام saw the Jannah and the Jahannam with his own blessed eyes. At that time, first came the command that his people were being obligated with fifty prayers, then, these were reduced to five. This shows the importance and merit of Ṣalāh as being the foremost out of all acts of 'Ibādah.

After that, he alighted back into Baytul-maqdis and, with him, so did the blessed prophets he had met on different heavens (as if) they had come to see him off as far as Baytul-maqdis. At that time, as it was time for Ṣalāh, he offered the prayer with all prophets. It is also probable that this Ṣalāh was the Ṣalāh of Fajr the same day. Ibn Kathīr says that this event concerning the prayer with prophets led by the Holy Prophet ﷺ has come to pass, as held by some, before he went to the heavens. But, as obvious, this event took place after the return because it has been re-

ported in the incident relating to his meeting with blessed prophets at different heavens that it was Sayyidnā Jibra'īl who introduced him to all prophets. Had this event relating to his leading the prayer passed earlier, no introduction was needed there - and, for that matter, it is obvious enough that the real purpose of this journey was to visit with the heavenly hosts. Doing that first appears to be more likely. Once he was done with the real mission, all prophets came to say good bye to him up to Baytul-maqdis and by making him the Imām of the prayer through a signal from Sayyidnā Jibra'īl, his precedence over others was demonstrated practically.

After that, he departed from Baytul-maqdis riding *burāq* and reached Makkah al-Mu'aẓẓamah while it was still dark. والله سبحانه تعالى اعلم (And Allah, the Pure and the High, knows best).

The testimony of a non-Muslim about the event of Mi'rāj

It appears in Tafsīr ibn Kathīr that Ḥāfiẓ Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣbahānī, in his book, Dalā'il al-Nubuwwah, has reported a narrative from Muhammad ibn Ka'b al-Quraẓi on the authority of Muḥammad ibn 'Amr al-Wāqidi* giving details of the event as follows:

The Holy Prophet ﷺ sent Sayyidnā Diḥyah ibn Khalīfah رضي الله عنه with a blessed letter from him to the Roman Emperor, Caesar. After that, he has given a detailed account of how Sayyidnā Diḥyah reached the Emperor, delivered the letter, and how intelligent he was in his mission (an event present in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī as well as in all trustworthy books of Ḥadīth). Towards the end of it, it has been reported that Hiraql, the Roman Emperor, once he had read the blessed letter, ordered that all Arab traders who were visiting the country at that time should be assembled together. He wanted to investigate into the background of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The royal order was carried out. Abū Sufyān ibn Ḥarb and those with him visiting Syria at that time with their famous trade caravan were presented before the Emperor. Details of the questions asked by the Emperor are present in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, as well as elsewhere. Abū Sufyān was really

*. The Scholars of Ḥadīth say that Al-Wāqidi is weak in Ḥadīth narrations but a cautious Muḥaddith like Imām Ibn Kathīr has reported his narration for the reason that this matter is not connected with 'Aqā'id or Ḥalāl and Ḥarām and in such historical matters his narration is trustworthy - **Muḥammad Shafī'**

eager to use this occasion to say things about the Holy Prophet ﷺ which show his insignificance. But, says Abū Sufyān : Nothing stopped me from doing that except that I may slip and say something which turns out to be a lie and I stand disgraced in the eyes of the Emperor and my own comrades keep taunting me for being a liar. Certainly, then it occurred to me that I should relate the event of Mi'rāj before him. The Emperor would himself conclude from it that it was a lie. So, I said: I shall describe before you what he claims to have happened to him regarding which you will yourself realize that it was a lie. Hiraql asked: What event is that? Abū Sufyān said: This claimant of prophet-hood says that, one night, he left Makkah al-Mukarramah, reached this Masjid Baytul-maqdis of yours and, then, within that night, before dawn, he returned to us in Makkah al-Mukarramah!

At that time, the leading scholar of Elia' (Baytul-maqdis) was standing close to Hiraql, the Roman Emperor. He disclosed that he knew that night. The Emperor turned to him and inquired as to how did he come to know about it. He submitted that, as a matter of habit, he would not sleep at night until he had closed all gates of Baytul-maqdis. That night he habitually closed all gates but one which would not close despite his effort. He summoned his staff. They all tried but they too failed to close it. The panels of the gate remained simply unmoved from their place. It seemed as if they were trying to move some mountain. Rendered helpless, he called technicians and carpenters. They looked at the gate and decided that the weight of the building has come to rest on the panels of the gate. There was no way it could be closed before morning. When morning comes, they said, they will see how this could be fixed. Nonplussed, he returned leaving both panels of the gate ajar. As soon as it was morning, he came back to the gate where he noticed that someone had made a hole in the rock close to the gate of the Masjid which gave the impression that some animal was tied down there. At that time he had told his colleagues: Perhaps, Allah Ta'ālā has caused this gate not to close today because some prophet was to come here. And then, he also stated that this blessed prophet has also offered his prayer in this Masjid of ours. Thereafter, he has described further details. (Ibn Kathīr, p. 24, v. 3)

The date of the event of al-'Isrā' and Mi'rāj

Imām al-Qurṭubī has said in his Tafsīr that the narratives of Ḥadīth

regarding the date of Mi'rāj are quite different. According to Musa ibn 'Uqbah, this event came to pass six month before the Hijrah to Madīnah. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا says that Umm al-Mu'minīn Sayyidah Khadījah رضی اللہ عنہا had passed away before the injunction making Ṣalāh a Farḍ (obligation) was revealed. Imām Zuhrī says that the event of the sad demise of Sayyidah Khadījah رضی اللہ عنہا took place seven years after the call to the mission of prophet-hood.

According to some Ḥadīth narratives, the event of Mi'rāj happened five years after the call to prophet-hood. Ibn Isḥāq says that the event of Mi'rāj took place at a time when Islam had spread throughout the tribes of Arabia generally. The outcome of all these narratives is that the event of Mi'rāj dates back to several years before the Hijrah to Madīnah.

Al-Ḥarbi says that the event of al-'Isrā' and Mi'rāj has happened during the night of the 27th of Rabī' ath-Thānī, one year before Hijrah and Ibn al-Qāsim adh-Dhahabi says that it took place eighteen months after the call to prophet-hood. Esteemed Muḥaddithīn (Ḥadīth scholars) who have mentioned these different narratives have not followed it up with any decisive statement. And as commonly known, the 27th night of the month of Rajab is the Night of Mi'rāj. واللہ سبحانہ و تعالی اعلم (And Allah, the Pure and the High, knows best).

Al-Masjid al-Ḥarām and al-Masjid al-Aqṣā

Sayyidnā Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī ؓ says that he asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ: 'Which Masjid of this world comes first?' He said, 'Al-Masjid al-Ḥarām.' Then he inquired, 'Which one after that?' He said, 'Al-Masjid al-Aqṣā.' Then he tried to find out the intervening time difference between the two whereupon he said, 'Forty years.' After that, he added, '(as for the order of these *masājid*, this is it) but, Allah Ta'ālā has made the entire Earth a *masjid* for us. Wherever comes the time of Ṣalāh, offer it right there.' (Reported by Muslim)

Early Tafsīr authority, Mujāhid says that Allah Ta'ālā has made the site of Baytullah two thousand years before He made the entire Earth and that its foundations reach as far down as the seventh (strata of) Earth and that al-Masjid al-Aqṣā was made by Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام. (Reported by an-Nasā'ī with sound chains of authority from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar) (Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī, p. 137, v. 4)

And al-Masjid al-Ḥarām is the name of the Mosque that stands around the Baytullah ash-Sharīf while, on occasions, the entire Ḥarām is also identified as al-Masjid al-Ḥarām. In terms of this second sense, the dichotomy of those two reports - some hold that the Holy Prophet ﷺ left for the nocturnal journey, al-'Isrā', from the home of Sayyidah Umm Hānī' رضى الله عنها while others say that he departed from the section of Baytullah known as Ḥaṭīm - stands removed. If we were to take al-Masjid al-Ḥarām in its general sense, it is not far out to believe that he may have been there in the home of Sayyidah Umm Hānī' رضى الله عنها first, then he walked over to the Ḥaṭīm of Ka'bah and then began the journey of al-'Isrā' from there. Allah knows best.

Al-Masjid al-Aqṣā and blessings of the Syrian environs

The word: حَوْل (*ḥawl*: environs) in the verse: بٰرَكْنَا حَوْلَهٗ (the environs of which We have blessed) means the entire land of Syria. It appears in a Ḥadīth that Allah Ta'ālā has made the land from the 'Arsh (Divine Throne) to the river, Euphrates and, out of this, He has bestowed particular holiness on the land of Palestine. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

The blessings it has are both religious and worldly. As for religious blessings, it has been the Qiblah of all past prophets, and their home, and the last resting place. And that its land is green, lush and verdant with streams, rivers and fruit farms etc. shows its worldly blessings.

Sayyidnā Mu'ādh ibn Jabal ؓ reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: Allah Ta'ālā says: O land of Syria, thou art My region chosen from many and I shall make My chosen servants reach thee. (Qurṭubī) And it appears in a Ḥadīth of the Musnad of Aḥmad that the Imposter will traverse the whole Earth but he will not be granted access to four Mosques: (1) Masjid of Madīnah, (2) Masjid of Makkah al-Mukarramah, (3) Al-Masjid al-Aqṣā and (4) Masjid Ṭūr.

Verses 2 - 3

وَاٰتَيْنَا مُوْسَى الْكِتٰبَ وَجَعَلْنٰهُ هُدًى لِّبَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ اَلَّا تَتَّخِذُوْا مِنْ دُوْنِيْ وَكِيْلًا ﴿٢﴾ ذُرِّيَّةَ مَنْ حَمَلْنَا مَعَ نُوْحٍ ۭ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ عَبْدًا شَكُوْرًا ﴿٣﴾

And We gave Mūsā the Book and made it guidance for the children of Isrā'īl (with the command) "Do not take anyone other than Me as guardian, [2] **O descendants of those whom We put on board with Nūḥ. Surely, He was a very grateful servant."** [3]

Verses 4 - 8

وَقَضَيْنَآ اِلٰى بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ فِى الْكِتٰبِ لَتُفْسِدُنَّ فِى الْاَرْضِ مَرَّتَيْنِ
وَلَتَعْلُنَّ عُلُوًّا كَبِيْرًا ﴿٤﴾ فَاِذَا جَآءَ وَعْدُ اُوْلٰىهُمَا بَعَثْنَا عَلَيْكُمْ عِبَادًا لَّنَآ
اُولِىْ بَاْسٍ شَدِيْدٍ فَجَاسُوْا خِلٰلَ الدِّيَارِ ط وَكَانَ وَعْدًا مَّفْعُوْلًا ﴿٥﴾ ثُمَّ
رَدَدْنَا لَكُمُ الْكَرَّةَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَاَمْدَدْنٰكُمْ بِاَمْوَالٍ وَّبَنِيْنَ وَجَعَلْنٰكُمْ اَكْثَرَ
نَفِيْرًا ﴿٦﴾ اِنْ اَحْسَنْتُمْ اَحْسَنْتُمْ لِاَنْفُسِكُمْ قف وَاِنْ اَسَاْتُمْ فَلَهَا ط فَاِذَا
جَآءَ وَعْدُ الْاٰخِرَةِ لِيَسُوْٓءٗا وُجُوْهَكُمْ وَلِيَدْخُلُوا الْمَسْجِدَ كَمَا
دَخَلُوْهُ اَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَّلِيُتَبِّرُوْا مَا عَلَوْا تَتْبِيْرًا ﴿٧﴾ عَسٰى رَبُّكُمْ اَنْ
يَّرْحَمَكُمْ ج وَاِنْ عُدْتُّمْ عُدْنَا م وَجَعَلْنَا جَهَنَّمَ لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ حَصِيْرًا ﴿٨﴾

And, in the Book, We declared to the children of Isrā'īl: "You will surely spread disorder on the earth twice, and you will surely show arrogance, a great arrogance. [4]

So, when came the time appointed for the first of the two, We sent upon you some servants belonging to us having strong aggressive power, who combed through the houses. And it was a promise bound to be fulfilled. [5] **Then We gave you your turn to overpower them, and increased your strength with wealth and sons, and made you greater in number.** [6] **If you do good, you will do it for yourselves, and if you do evil, it will be for you, too. Later, when came the time appointed for the second, (We sent others) so that they spoil your faces, and so that they enter into the Mosque as the former ones had entered it the first time and destroy what they overpower, totally.** [7]

May be your Lord would bestow mercy upon you. And if you do this again, We shall do that again. And We have made Jahannam a prison for the disbelievers. [8]

Sequence of Verses

Verses 2 and 3 featuring the statement: جَعَلْنٰهُ هُدًى لِّبَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ (We made it guidance for the children of Banī Isrā'īl) exhorted the Banī Isrā'īl to follow and obey the Divine Law. The verses that follow warn and admonish them on their disobedience. These verses mention two events relating to the Banī Isrā'īl so that they serve as a lesson. Tuned to sin and disobedience, first they increased the tempo of their hostility. Allah Ta'ālā set their enemies upon them. They shook them up. The Jews got the message, cut down on their mischief and gave the impression of having been corrected. But, soon after, the same lust for mischief and misdeeds overtook them. So then, Allah Ta'ālā had them punished at the hands of their enemies. The Qur'ān mentions two events while history carries six like these:

1. The first event came to pass some time after the demise of Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام, the founder of Al-Masjid al-Aqṣā, when the ruler of Baytul-maqdis became irreligious and corrupt. The ruler of Egypt attacked him and took away the gold and silver of Baytul-maqdis. But, he did not demolish the city and the Masjid.

2. The second event relates to the period nearly four hundred years after that. Some Jews settled in Baytul-maqdis started idol-worship while the rest began disputing among themselves. This ill omen prompted another ruler of Egypt to attack them which somewhat affected the city and the Masjid both. After that, their condition took a turn for the better.

3. The third event came to pass after some years when Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylon ransacked Baytul-maqdis. He conquered the city, looted property and took back a lot of people as prisoners of war. When he left, he had a member of the family of the former king appointed a ruler of the city as his deputy.

4. When this new king, who worshipped idols and was corrupt, rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, he returned, killed people, destroyed property en masse and burned the city razing it to rubbles. This happened nearly four hundred and fifteen years after the construction of the Masjid. After that, the Jews went out as exiles to Babylon where they lived in disgrace for seventy years. After that, the King of Iran attacked

the King of Babylon and conquered it. Then the King of Iran showed mercy to the Jewish expatriates and ordered that they should be sent back to Syria along with things looted from them. Now the Jews had repented having forsaken their habitual sins and misdeeds. When they resettled there, they restored the original structure of Al-Masjid al-Aqṣā with the support of the King of Irān.

5. Then came the fifth event. When the Jews had peace and prosperity once again, the first thing they forgot was their past. They returned to the kind of evil deeds they were used to. Then, it so happened that, one hundred and seventy years before the birth of Sayyidnā 'Isā عليه السلام, the king who had founded Antakiah (Antioch) attacked, killed forty thousand Jews and took with him another forty thousand as prisoners and slaves, even desecrated the Masjid though its structure remained safe. But, later, the successors of that king rendered the city and the Masjid totally denuded. Soon after this, Baytul-maqdis came under the authority of Roman kings. They put the Masjid back into shape and it was after eight years that Sayyidnā 'Isā عليه السلام was born.

6. Forty years after the physical ascension of Sayyidnā 'Isā عليه السلام, the Jews chose to rebel against their Roman rulers. The Romans destroyed the city and the Masjid once again relegating it to what it was. The king at that time was called Titus who was neither Jewish nor Christian because long after him Constantine I was a Christian. From that time to the time of Sayyidnā 'Umar رضي الله عنه, this Masjid lay desolate until he had it reconstructed. These six events have been reported in Tafsīr Bayān al-Qur'ān with reference to Tafsīr Ḥaqqānī.

Now, it is difficult to precisely determine as to which two out of those mentioned above are the two events mentioned by the Holy Qur'ān. But, as obvious, the events that are major and serious among these, in which the Jews were far too wicked and more seriously punished too, should be taken as the likely ones. The fourth and the sixth event seem to be fit for such application. At this point, a lengthy Ḥadīth narrated by Sayyidnā Hudhayfah رضي الله عنه, with its chains of authority ascending to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, has been reported in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī. It also helps in determining that these two events mean the fourth and the sixth event. The translation of this lengthy Ḥadīth is given below:

Sayyidnā Hudhayfah ﷺ says that he asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ if Baytul-maqdis was a great Masjid in the sight of Allah. He said that it was the most distinct house of Worship in the world, the greatest of all houses, which Allah Ta'ālā made for Sulaymān, the son of Dāwūd, peace be on both, with gold, silver and precious stones like ruby and emerald. The manner in which this happened was, when Sulaymān ﷺ started its construction, Allah Ta'ālā made the Jinn subservient to him. The Jinn collected this gold, silver and precious stones and used them in the making of the Masjid. Sayyidnā Hudhayfah ﷺ says that he, then, asked as to where and how did all that gold, silver and precious stones go out of Baytul-maqdis? The Holy Prophet ﷺ said: When the Banī Isrā'īl disobeyed Allah Ta'ālā, got involved in sins and misdeeds and killed their noble prophets, Allah Ta'ālā set King Nebuchadnezzar on them. He was a fire-worshipper who ruled Baytul-maqdis for seven hundred years. And when the Qur'ān says: فَإِذَا جَآءَ وَعْدُ أُولٰهُمَا بَعَثْنَا عَلَيْكُمْ عِبَادًا لَّنَآ أُولِىْ بَأْسٍ شَدِيْدٍ (So, when came the time appointed for the first of the two, We sent upon you some servants belonging to Us having strong aggressive power - 17:5), it means this event. The army of Nebuchadnezzar entered the Masjid of al-Quds, killed men, took women and children prisoners and carried away with him all gold, silver and everything of value belonging to Baytul-maqdis loaded on one hundred and seventy thousand vehicles. He kept the treasure in his country, Babylon and kept the children of Isrā'īl as his serfs and slaves for a hundred years making them do hard labor in utter disgrace.

Then Allah Ta'ālā made a king from among the kings of Persia to stand up against him. He conquered Babylon, freed the remnants of Banī Isrā'īl from the bondage of Nebuchadnezzar and made arrangements to have all valuables he had brought from Baytul-maqdis returned back to it. Then he sternly told the Banī Isrā'īl that should they, in future, return to disobedience and sin, he too will return the punishment of killing and prison back on them. This is what the verse of the Qur'ān: عَسٰى رَبُّكُمْ اَنْ يَّرْحَمَكُمْ وَاِنْ عُدْتُّمْ عُدْنَا (May be your Lord would bestow mercy upon you. And if you do this again, We shall do that again - 17:8) means.

Later, when the Banī Isrā'īl had come back to Baytul-maqdis (with lost wealth and property in their possession), they went back to the life

of sins and misdeeds. At that time, Allah Ta'ālā set the Roman Emperor, Caesar upon them. This is what the verse: فَإِذَا جَآءَ وَعْدُ الْاٰخِرَةِ لِيَسُوْءُ وُجُوْهَكُمْ (Later, when came the time appointed for the second, [We sent others] so that they spoil your faces - 17:7) means. The Roman Emperor launched a two-pronged attack, from the land and the sea. He killed many and many were those he took prisoners. Then he had all this wealth of Baytul-maqdis loaded on one hundred and seventy thousand vehicles and took it home. There he had it deposited in the Temple of Gold. This wealth is still there, and there it will remain until comes the Mahdī who would bring these back to Baytul-maqdis on one hundred and seventy thousand boats and it will be at this place that Allah Ta'ālā will assemble everyone, former and later. (Lengthy Ḥadīth as reported by al-Qurṭubī in his Tafsīr)

It appears in Bayān al-Qur'ān, that the two events mentioned in the Qur'ān refer to the disobedience of two Divine Codes of Law, first the disobedience to the Code brought by Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and, then, after the advent of Sayyidnā 'Isā عليه السلام, the disobedience to the Code brought by him. Thus, all events described above can be considered as relevant to the first disobedience. Now that we have gone through the details of the events, we can turn to the explanation of the verses cited above.

Commentary

The outcome of the events mentioned above is that Allah Ta'ālā had decreed that the Banī Isrā'īl will be successful, having the best of both worlds, the material and the spiritual, as long as they continue to obey Allah. But, whenever they deviate from the dictates of Faith, they shall be put to disgrace, and that they would be subjected to punishment at the hands of enemies and disbelievers. Then, not only that the enemies will run over them destroying their lives and properties, but it would also happen that their Qiblah, their sacred Baytul-maqdis, will also not remain safe against the onslaught of that enemy. Their disbelieving enemies will barge into the Mosque of Baytul-maqdis and defile and damage it. This too will be a part of the punishment of Banī Isrā'īl themselves. The Holy Qur'ān has told us about two events relating to them. The first one dates back to the time of Mosaic religious law while the second pertains to the Christian. During both these periods, the Banī Isrā'īl rebelled against the divine law of the time. In the first case, a disbelieving Magian monarch was made to sit over them, and

Baytul-maqdis, who brought great destruction upon them. In the second case, a Roman emperor was set against them who killed and pillaged and made Baytul-maqdis all demolished and rendered desolate. And along with this description, it has also been mentioned that the Banī Isrā'īl - when, on both occasions, they repented from their misdeeds resolving not to go near them again - Allah Ta'ālā reinstated their country, wealth and children.

After having mentioned these two events, Allah Ta'ālā declared His Law in such matters by saying: وَاِنْ عُدْتُّمْ عُدْنَا (If you do this again, We shall do that again - 8). This law which means - 'if you return to disobedience and contumacy, We shall, once again, make a similar penalty and punishment zoom back upon you' - has been declared as valid right through the last day of Qiyamah. That its addressees were the people of Banī Isrā'īl who were present during the blessed time of the Holy Prophet ﷺ serves as a reminder to them. It is being pointed out to them that they should not forget that they were seized by divine punishment twice when they had first opposed the code of Sayyidnā Mūsā, and then the code of Sayyidnā 'Isā. Now this was the period of the Code of laws brought by the Holy Prophet ﷺ. This was a period that will continue up to the Last Day. Let them, therefore, realize that the fate of those who chose to be hostile to it will turn out to be no different. Consequently, this was actually happened. These people became hostile to Islam and the religious code of laws brought by the Holy Prophet ﷺ. When they did that, they were expelled and disgraced at the hands of Muslims, and finally Baytul-maqdis, their Qiblah, too came under Muslim control. However, the only difference was that their past conquering kings had treated them disgracefully and had desecrated their Qiblah too. Now when Muslims took over Baytul-maqdis, they reconstructed the great Mosque of al-Quds ash-Sharīf which was lying demolished and desolate for centuries and thereby reinstated the honor and reverence of the Qiblah of prophets.

The events of Banī Isrā'īl are a lesson for Muslims and what has happened to Baytul-maqdis in our time is a part of the same chain

Obviously, the purpose of narrating these events relating to the Banī Isrā'īl in the Qur'ān and making Muslims listen to them is to let Mus-

lims understand that they are no exceptions to this divine law. Be it this mortal world or the eternal universe of their Faith, their honor and ascendancy, possessions and wealth are inseparably tied with obedience to Allah. Whenever they veer away from their obedience to Allah and the Holy Prophet ﷺ, their enemies and disbelieving tyrants of all sorts shall be empowered to prevail over them. When this happens, the desecration of their places of worship will also not remain too far.

The calamity of the Jewish usurpation of Baytul-maqdis in our time and the added sacrilege of setting fire to it has thrown the world of Islam into acute anxiety. In reality, it is confirming the Qur'ān. Muslims forgot Allah and His Rasūl, ignored the life waiting for them in the Hereafter and opted to scrounge for their share in the glamour and grandeur of the mortal world. When they became aliens to the dictates of the Qur'ān, and Sunnah, the same divine law stood activated before them. A few hundred thousand Jews overcame them. They also inflicted the loss of life and property on them. Worse still is the fate of one of the three greatest mosques of the world according to the religious law of Islam, a mosque that has the distinction of being the Qiblah of all prophets. It was snatched from them and those who took it over had a track record of being the most disgraced people in this world, that is, the Jews. In addition to that, it is common observation that these people stand nowhere close to Muslims in terms of their numbers, nor do they have some significant superiority over the current collective Muslim holdings of war materials. This also tells us that this event does not really give Jews any niche of honor in the annals of world nations. However, it does provide punishment for Muslims in return for their disobedience. It clearly shows that everything that came to pass came as the punishment of our own misdeeds. And it also shows that there is no remedy for it except that we should feel ashamed of our misdeeds, make a genuine *taubah* (repentance), start obeying the commandments of Allah, become true Muslims and shun the great sins of imitating and trusting others. If we were to do just that, *insha'Allah,* true to the Divine promise, Baytul-maqdis and Palestine shall return to us. But, it is regrettable that the present-day Arab rulers and common Muslims living in Arab lands have yet to be alerted to that reality. They are still relying on foreign assistance while making plans of taking Baytul-maqdis back, something that does

not appear to be probable, at least outwardly. Where else shall we lodge our plaint but Allah!

The only weapon system and military hardware with which Baytul-maqdis and Palestine can return to Muslim hands are still there waiting to be picked up - Return to Allah, genuinely and passionately. Have certitude of Akhirah. Obey the injunctions of the Sharī'ah. Stay away from imitating and trusting others in our social and political goals. Finally, let us place our trust in Allah and wage a purely Islamic Jihād as enjoined by the Sharī'ah. May Allah Ta'ālā give our Arab rulers and other Muslims the ability to answer the challenge effectively.

A strange coincidence

Allah Ta'ālā has made two places on this Earth to serve as the Qiblah or orientation for those who worship Him, the Baytul-maqdis and the Baytullah. But, the divine law relating to each of them is different. That Baytullah shall be protected and that disbelievers shall never take it over is a security concern that Allah Ta'ālā has taken it upon Himself. The Event of the Elephant mentioned in Sūrah al-Fīl (105) of the Holy Qur'ān came as its result. When the Christian king of Yaman (Abrahah al-Ashram) invaded Baytullah, Allah Ta'ālā destroyed him and his army along with the contingent of elephants he had brought, through birds, much before he could reach Baytullah.

But, this law does not apply in the case of Baytul-maqdis. Instead, as the verses cited above tell us, when Muslims go astray and start indulging in disobedience and sin, this Qiblah will be snatched away from them and it will pass into the control of disbelievers.

Disbelievers too are the servants of Allah, but not among the accepted ones

About the first event (5), the Holy Qur'ān said: When the people of Faith start letting them be seduced to discord, sin, disobedience and disorder, Allah Ta'ālā shall set upon them such servants of His as would break into their homes killing and plundering. At this place, the Qur'ān has used the expression: عِبَادًا لَّنَا (*'ibādal-lanā:* Some servants belonging tu Us) and not: عِبَادَنَا (*'ibādanā:* Our servants) - even though it was brief. There is wisdom behind it. Is it not that the attribution of a servant to Allah is, for him, the greatest conceivable honor? This is similar to what

we have explained at the beginning of this very Sūrah under our comments on the first verse: أَسْرٰى بِعَبْدِهٖ (*asrā' bi'abdihī*: made His servant travel at night). There it was said that certainly great was the honor and nearness the Holy Prophet ﷺ was blessed with during the night of the Mi'rāj. But, when the Qur'ān describes this event, it does not mention either his blessed name or some attribute. It simply said: عَبْدِهٖ (*'abdihī*: His servant). This tells us that the ultimate perfection a human person can have, and the highest station he can occupy, is that Allah Ta'ālā chooses to cherish a servant by calling him 'His' servant. In the verse under reference, the people who meted out the punishment to the Banī Isrā'īl were *kāfirs*, or disbelievers after all. Therefore, instead of calling them: عِبَادَنَا (Our servants), Allah Ta'ālā has broken the element of attribution and connection and said: عِبَادًا لَّنَا (some servants belonging to Us). Thus, a hint has been given here that all human beings are nothing but servants of Allah as created, but because of the absence of 'Īmān or faith, they are not the kind of accepted servants who could be attributed directly to Allah Ta'ālā.

Verses 9 - 11

إِنَّ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنَ يَهْدِىْ لِلَّتِىْ هِىَ اَقْوَمُ وَيُبَشِّرُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ الَّذِيْنَ يَعْمَلُوْنَ الصّٰلِحٰتِ اَنَّ لَهُمْ اَجْرًا كَبِيْرًا ﴿٩﴾ وَّاَنَّ الَّذِيْنَ لَايُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ اَعْتَدْنَا لَهُمْ عَذَابًا اَلِيْمًا ﴿١٠﴾ وَيَدْعُ الْاِنْسَانُ بِالشَّرِّ دُعَآءَهٗ بِالْخَيْرِ ۭ وَكَانَ الْاِنْسَانُ عَجُوْلًا ﴿١١﴾

Surely, this Qur'ān guides to the way which is most upright and gives the believers who do good deeds the glad tidings that there is a great reward for them, [9] **and that for those who do not believe in the Hereafter, We have prepared a painful punishment.** [10]

Man invites evil as he would invite good, and man is prone to haste. [11]

Sequence

At the beginning of the Sūrah, the majesty of the prophet-hood of the Messenger of Allah was described through the miracle of al-Mi'rāj. The present verses cite the miracle of Qur'ān as its confirmation.

Commentary

The most upright way

The way to which the Qur'ān guides has been called *'aqwam,'* the most upright. 'Aqwam' can be explained by saying that it is a way that is closer to the destination, is easy and free of dangers at the same time. (Qurṭubī) This tells us that the rules set for human life by the Holy Qur'ān are a combination of all three features mentioned above. However, it is a different matter that man may start taking this way to be difficult or dangerous on occasions because of his own lack of comprehension. But, the Lord of all the worlds has the most comprehensive knowledge of every single particle in the entire universe. Before Him, the past and the future are the same. It is He who can have the knowledge of the reality as to the function and form most beneficial for human beings. And since man is unaware of things as they are in a comprehensive setting, he cannot identify even his own good or bad fully and decisively.

Perhaps, it is based on this congruity that it was said in verse 11 that man would, on occasions, pray for something in a haste, something that spells out destruction for him. If Allah Ta'ālā were to answer such a prayer, he would be ruined. But, Allah Ta'ālā does not answer such prayers instantly until man himself comes to realize that his prayer was made in error and that it was fatal for him. Then, in the last sentence of this very verse, a natural weakness of man has been mentioned in the form of a standing rule - that man is, by nature, haste-prone. He keeps his sight trained on passing profit and loss and falls short on foresight and hindsight. He loves to go for the immediate gain and comfort, even if it happens to be only a little. He would not bat an eye to prefer it to the greater and more lasting gain and comfort. In short, this verse points out to a natural weakness of human beings in general.

And some authorities in Tafsīr have taken this verse to be related to a particular event. The event they refer to concerns Naḍr ibn Ḥārith who had made a prayer in the heat of his hostility to Islam saying:

اَللّٰهُمَّ اِنْ كَانَ هٰذَا هُوَالْحَقَّ مِنْ عِنْدِكَ فَاَمْطِرْ عَلَيْنَا حِجَارَةً مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ اَوِائْتِنَا بِعَذَابٍ اَلِيْمٍ

O Allah, if this [Islam] is the truth from You, then, rain down on us rocks from the skies or send upon us some other painful

punishment.

In that case, *'al-insān'* of the text would be referring to those mentioned above, or those like them.

Verses 12 - 15

وَجَعَلْنَا الَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ ايَتَيْنِ فَمَحَوْنَآ ايَةَ الَّيْلِ وَجَعَلْنَآ ايَةَ النَّهَارِ مُبْصِرَةً لِّتَبْتَغُوا فَضْلاً مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ وَلِتَعْلَمُوا عَدَدَ السِّنِيْنَ وَالْحِسَابَ ط وَكُلَّ شَيْءٍ فَصَّلْنٰهُ تَفْصِيْلاً ﴿١٢﴾ وَكُلَّ اِنْسَانٍ اَلْزَمْنٰهُ طٰٓئِرَهٗ فِيْ عُنُقِهٖ ط وَنُخْرِجُ لَهٗ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ كِتٰبًا يَّلْقٰهُ مَنْشُوْرًا ﴿١٣﴾ اِقْرَاْ كِتٰبَكَ ط كَفٰى بِنَفْسِكَ الْيَوْمَ عَلَيْكَ حَسِيْبًا ﴿١٤﴾ مَنِ اهْتَدٰى فَاِنَّمَا يَهْتَدِيْ لِنَفْسِهٖ ج وَمَنْ ضَلَّ فَاِنَّمَا يَضِلُّ عَلَيْهَا ط وَلاَ تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِّزْرَ اُخْرٰى ط وَمَا كُنَّا مُعَذِّبِيْنَ حَتّٰى نَبْعَثَ رَسُوْلاً ﴿١٥﴾

And We have made the night and the day two signs having made the sign of night dark and the sign of day bright, so that you may seek grace from your Lord, and that you may know the number of the years and computation. And everything We have expounded in detail. [12]

And every human's (deeds determining his) fate We have tied up to his neck, and We shall bring forth for him, on the day of Resurrection, a book he will receive wide open. [13] **"Read your book. This day you yourself are enough to take your own account."** [14]

Whoever takes to right path does so for his own good, and whoever goes astray does so to his own detriment. And no bearer of burden shall bear the burden of another. And it is not Our way to punish (anyone) unless We send a Messenger. [15]

Commentary

In the verses cited above, first it was declared that the alternation of night and day was a sign of the most perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā. Then it was said that there was great wisdom in the making of the night dark and the day, bright. As for the wise consideration behind the making of

the night dark, it was not mentioned at this place. It has, however, been mentioned in other verses that the darkness of the night is appropriate and conducive to sleep and rest. The divine arrangement is such that humans and animals go to sleep in the darkness of that very night. In fact, the whole world sleeps simultaneously in harmony with its night. Had different people been scheduled to sleep at different timings, the noises made by those awake and those working at jobs would have turned the sleep of the sleeping into a nightmare.

As for the day being bright, it has two elements of wisdom. Firstly, one can earn his living in the light of the day and natural light is needed for jobs, businesses and industries. Secondly, the alternation of night and day helps one know the number of years, for instance, the completion of three hundred and sixty days tells us that a full year has gone by.

Similarly, other calculations are also related to the alternation of night and day. If this variation of night and day were not there, it would have been difficult to fix the wages of the wage earner, the employment of the employee and the time duration of transactions.

The sense of the book of deeds tied to the neck

It means that one's book of deed stays with the doer no matter where or in whatever condition one is. What he or she does continues to get recorded there. When death comes, the 'book' is closed and set aside safely. After that, when comes the Last Day, the Day of Judgement, this book of deeds will be placed in everyone's hand in order that he would himself read it and also decide himself whether he is deserving of reward or deserving of punishment. It has been reported from Qatādah رحمه الله تعالى that it will be a day when even an illiterate person will be able to read his book of deeds. On this occasion, al-Iṣbahānī has reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Umamah ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: On the day of Qiyāmah, when the book of deeds belonging to people will be given in their hand, someone will notice that some of his good deeds were not recorded there. He will tell his Lord about the particular deeds missing from there. His Lord will tell him that He had erased those deeds for he used to speak ill of people on their backs. (Maẓharī)

Allah does not punish unless He sends a Messenger: A clarification

On the basis of this verse, some leading Muslim jurists rule that peo-

ple to whom the call of any prophet or messenger did not reach will not be subject to any punishment, despite their disbelief. There are other leading jurists who hold that those who deny the Islamic beliefs that can be understood through reason - such as, the existence of God and His Oneness etc. - will be punished for their disbelief, even if no call from any prophet or messenger has reached them. Of course, there will be no punishment for usual acts of disobedience and sins without prior call and transmission of the divine message by prophets. And there are still others who interpret '*rasūl*' at this place (15) in a general sense, whether he is a messenger or prophet, or whether it is the human reason itself - for, that too, in a way, is a messenger of Allah after all.

There will be no punishment for the children of Mushriks

Commenting on the verse: لَاتَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ (And no bearer of burden shall bear the burden of another - 15), it has been said in Tafsīr Mazharī that this verse proves that the children of Mushriks and disbelievers who die before reaching adulthood will not be punished. The reason is that they will not deserve to be punished on account of the denial and disbelief of their parents. Sayings of leading jurists differ about this issue; its details are unnecessary here.

Verses 16 - 17

وَإِذَآ أَرَدْنَآ أَنْ نُّهْلِكَ قَرْيَةً أَمَرْنَا مُتْرَفِيهَا فَفَسَقُوا فِيهَا فَحَقَّ عَلَيْهَا الْقَوْلُ فَدَمَّرْنٰهَا تَدْمِيرًا ﴿١٦﴾ وَكَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا مِنَ الْقُرُوْنِ مِنْ بَعْدِ نُوحٍ ۗ وَكَفٰى بِرَبِّكَ بِذُنُوبِ عِبَادِهٖ خَبِيرًا بَصِيرًا ﴿١٧﴾

And when We intend to destroy a habitation, We command its affluent people (to do good), then they commit sins therein, and thus the word (of punishment) becomes due against it (habitation) and We annihilate it totally. [16]

And how many a generation We have destroyed after Nūḥ! And enough is your Lord to know, (and) watch the sins of His servants. [17]

Sequence

Previous verses said that it is the customary practice of Allah Ta'ālā that he does not send punishment upon a people until the command-

ments of Allah reach them through the blessed prophets which they still refuse to obey. Given in the verses cited above is what happens on the other side when the messages of Allah and His Messenger do reach a people and they still show contumacy, then, a mass punishment is sent over them.

Commentary

A doubt and its answer

A surface look at the expressions: إذا أردنا (*idhā aradnā*: when We intend) and, after that: أمرنا (*amarnā*: We command) in verse 12 could have triggered the doubt that destroying those people was the divine purpose from the very beginning. Therefore, they were first commanded to believe and obey through the prophets, then their indulgence in sin was made to be the cause of punishment. All this came from none but Allah Ta'ālā. Is it not? If so, would these innocent people not be just about a helpless and excusable lot? The answer is that Allah Ta'ālā has given man reason and choice and has determined the ways of reward and punishment. Now, if someone elects to do nothing but what brings punishment, then, it is the customary practice of Allah that He would activate the causes that bring the same punishment. Thus, the real cause of punishment they receive is nothing but their own resolve and determination to remain on the side of disbelief and sin. Since this is no simple intention, therefore, they cannot be helpless and excusable.

Another Tafsīr of this verse

The well known sense of the word: أمرنا (*amarnā*) is the same as appears above, that is, 'We commanded.' But, the renditions or versions (*qirā'āt*) of this word differ. In one rendition opted for by Abū 'Uthmān an-Nahdi, Abū Raja', Abū al-'Āliyah and Mujāhid, this word has appeared with a double sound on the letter *mīm*. Rendered as: أمّرنا (*ammarnā*), it means 'We made affluent people leaders and rulers, who then sank in sin, and thus became the cause of punishment for the whole people.'

There is a *qirā'ah* (rendition or version) of this word credited to Sayyidnā 'Alī and Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ where it has been recited as: آمرنا (*aamarnā*) and which has also been explained by them as having the sense of: أكثرنا (*aktharnā*: We increase the number of). Thus it comes to mean: 'When

Allah Ta'ālā sends punishment on a certain people, its initial sign is that the number of the reckless rich is increased among them and they, through their spate of sins, become the cause of making the punishment descend upon the entire people.'

The outcome of the first *qirā'ah* is that such affluent people are made the rulers of a people. The outcome of the second *qirā'ah* is that the number of such people is increased in that society. Both versions show that the government of the 'affluent' or the abundance of such people in a society is not something to be happy about, rather, is a sign of divine punishment.

Let us recapitulate. When Allah Ta'ālā is angry with a people and intends to make a punishment descend upon them, there appears an initial sign of it. People who love to wallow in wealth and power are made the ruling custodians of their affairs, or, even if they do not become their actual political rulers, the number of such people is increased among a people. In both these cases, the result is the same. Drunk with the pleasures they can buy, acquire or appropriate with their affluence and influence, they start caring less for anything else, disobey the will and command of Allah personally as well as lead the trail for others to follow in their footsteps. In consequence, comes the punishment of Allah Ta'ālā all over them.

The influence of the rich over a people is a natural phenomenon

By particularly mentioning affluent people who use their wealth to pursue a life of luxury, it has been indicated that the masses are naturally affected with the deeds and morals of those rich among them and those who rule over them. When these people get used to misdeeds, the whole nation follows suit and takes to misdeeds (as the only available norm of social survival). Therefore, those who have been blessed with wealth by Allah Ta'ālā should be more concerned with the correction of their deeds and morals - lest they fall into the trap of a luxurious life style, are heedless to self-correction, and make the entire nation go astray because of them. If so, the curse of the misdeeds that issue forth from their nation will fall on them too.

Verses 18 - 21

مَّنْ كَانَ يُرِيْدُ الْعَاجِلَةَ عَجَّلْنَا لَهٗ فِيْهَا مَا نَشَآءُ لِمَنْ نُّرِيْدُ ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَا لَهٗ جَهَنَّمَ ۚ يَصْلٰىهَا مَذْمُوْمًا مَّدْحُوْرًا ﴿١٨﴾ وَمَنْ اَرَادَ الْاٰخِرَةَ وَسَعٰى لَهَا سَعْيَهَا وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ كَانَ سَعْيُهُمْ مَّشْكُوْرًا ﴿١٩﴾ كُلًّا نُّمِدُّ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ وَهٰٓؤُلَآءِ مِنْ عَطَآءِ رَبِّكَ ۭ وَمَا كَانَ عَطَآءُ رَبِّكَ مَحْظُوْرًا ﴿٢٠﴾ اُنْظُرْ كَيْفَ فَضَّلْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ ۭ وَلَلْاٰخِرَةُ اَكْبَرُ دَرَجٰتٍ وَّاَكْبَرُ تَفْضِيْلًا ﴿٢١﴾

Whoever opts for the immediate (benefits from) life herein, We give him right here, in this life, as much as We will to whomever We intend. Then We assign Jahannam for him where he shall enter condemned, discarded. [18] **And whoever opts for the Hereafter and makes efforts for it as due, while he is a believer, then, the effort of such people is appreciated!** [19]

To all of them - both these and those - We extend the blessings of your Lord. And the blessing of your Lord is not barred (to anyone). [20]

See how We made some of them excel some others (in this world) and, of course, the Hereafter is far higher in ranks and far greater in degrees of merit. [21]

Commentary

Two behavior models of human beings appear in the cited verses side by side. As for those who elect to go for the readily available benefits out of their life in this world, and the punishment that comes in its wake, the words used were: مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيْدُ الْعَاجِلَةَ (Whoever opts for the immediate life herein - 18). These words signify continuity and permanence meaning that this punishment of Hell will materialize only when one's actions are all the time motivated by material interests only, having practically no concern for the Hereafter. And as for 'those who desire to have the Hereafter and its rewards,' the words used were: اَرَادَ الْاٰخِرَةَ The sense is that as soon as a true believer were to form an intention to have the reward of the Hereafter in whatever he proposes to do, that deed of his shall stand accepted - irrespective of any corruptive element having entered into something else he was intending to do.

The first condition can only be that of a denier of the Hereafter, therefore, none of his deeds is acceptable. Then, the second condition is that of a true believer. A particular deed by him that issues forth with sincerity of intention, and is for the Hereafter - along with the presence of other conditions - shall be acceptable. And a deed even from the same person, a deed that has no sincerity, or where other conditions are missing, will not be acceptable.

A self-opinionated deed and an act of religious innovation, no matter how appealing, is not acceptable

In this verse (19), by adding the word: سَعْيَهَا (as due), it has been made explicit that every deed and every effort is not necessarily beneficial or acceptable with Allah. Instead, the only deed or effort credible is that which is appropriate to the essential objective (of the Hereafter). And whether or not it is appropriate can only be found out from the statement of Allah Ta'ālā and His Messenger ﷺ. Therefore, even well meaning efforts made by insisting on bland personal opinion and self-invented ways - which includes common customs of Bid'ah (innovations in established religion) - no matter how good and beneficial they may appear at their face, but are not appropriate to the effort made for the Hereafter. Consequently, they are neither acceptable with Allah nor are they of any use in the Hereafter.

Explaining the word: سَعْيَهَا (as due), Tafsīr Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī says that the 'effort' should be in accordance with *'sunnah.'* Along with it, it adds that this effort or deed should also have uprightness and firmness. In other words, this deed should be beneficial in accordance with the Sunnah as well as it should be upright and constant. Doing it haphazardly or doing it in a cycle of doing and not doing is not good. It never yields the maximum benefit.

Verses 22 - 25

لَا تَجْعَلْ مَعَ اللّٰهِ اِلٰهًا اٰخَرَ فَتَقْعُدَ مَذْمُوْمًا مَّخْذُوْلًا ﴿٢٢﴾ وَقَضٰى
رَبُّكَ اَلَّا تَعْبُدُوْٓا اِلَّآ اِيَّاهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ اِحْسَانًا ۭ اِمَّا يَبْلُغَنَّ عِنْدَكَ الْكِبَرَ
اَحَدُهُمَآ اَوْ كِلٰهُمَا فَلَا تَقُلْ لَّهُمَآ اُفٍّ وَّلَا تَنْهَرْهُمَا وَقُلْ لَّهُمَا قَوْلًا

كَرِيمًا ﴿٢٣﴾ وَاخْفِضْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الذُّلِّ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ وَقُل رَّبِّ ارْحَمْهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيَانِي صَغِيرًا ﴿٢٤﴾ رَّبُّكُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا فِي نُفُوسِكُمْ إِن تَكُونُوا صَالِحِينَ فَإِنَّهُ كَانَ لِلْأَوَّابِينَ غَفُورًا ﴿٢٥﴾

Do not set up any other god along with Allah, or you will sit condemned, forsaken. [22]

And your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him and do good to parents. If either of them or both reach old age, do not say to them '*uff*' (a word of anger or contempt) and do not scold them. And address them with respectful words, [23] **and submit yourself before them in humility out of compassion and say, "My Lord, be merciful to them as they have brought me up in my childhood."** [24]

Your Lord knows best what is in your hearts. If you are righteous, then He is Most-Forgiving for those who turn to Him in repentance. [25]

Sequence

Previous verses mentioned some conditions attached to the acceptance of deeds. One of the conditions required that no deed is accepted unless it comes with 'Īmān (faith, belief) and is in accordance with Sharī'ah (Law) and Sunnah (sayings and deeds of the Prophet ﷺ). In the present verses, instructions regarding some of such deeds have been given. These are rules set by the Sharī'ah of Islam. Their compliance brings success in the Hereafter and their contravention, ruin. And since the most important of these conditions is that of 'Īmān, therefore, the very first injunction given here was that of belief in the Oneness of Allah (*tauḥīd*). After that come injunctions relating to the rights of the servants of Allah *(ḥuqūq al-'ibād)*.

Commentary

It is very important to respect and obey parents

Imām al-Qurṭubī says that, in this verse (23), Allah Ta'ālā has made it necessary (*wājib*) to respect and treat parents well by combining it with the command to worship Him. This is similar to what has been said in Sūrah Luqmān where the inevitable need to thank Him has been combined with the need to thank one's parents: أَنِ اشْكُرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيْكَ (Be grateful

to Me, and to your parents - 31:14). This proves that, after the obligation of worshipping the most exalted Allah, obeying parents is most important and being grateful to parents like being grateful to Allah Ta'ālā is *wājib* (necessary). This has its confirmation in the Ḥadīth of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī where a person reportedly asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ: "Which is the most favored deed in the sight of Allah?" He said, "Ṣalāh at its (*mustaḥabb:* preferred) time." The person asked again, "Which is the most favored deed after that?" To that he said, "Treating parents well." (Qurṭubī)

The merits of obeying and serving parents in Ḥadīth narratives

1. In the Musnad of Aḥmad, Tirmidhī, Ibn Mājah and Mustadrak Ḥākim, it has been reported on sound authority from Sayyidnā Abū 'd-Dardā' ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "A father is the main gate of Jannah. Now it is up to you to preserve or waste it." (Maẓharī)

2. According to a report from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar ؓ appearing in Jāmi' al-Tirmidhī and al-Mustadrak of al-Ḥākim (which Ḥākim rates as Ṣaḥīḥ), the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "The pleasure of Allah is in the pleasure of a father and the displeasure of Allah in the displeasure of a father."

3. Ibn Mājah reports on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Umāmah ؓ that a person asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ: "What rights do parents have on their children?" He said, "They both are your Paradise, or Hell." It means that obeying and serving parents take one to Jannah and their disobedience and displeasure, to Jahannam.

4. Al-Baihaqī (in Shu'ab al-'Īmān) and Ibn 'Asākir have reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "For one who remained obedient to his parents for the sake of Allah two gates of Paradise shall remain open. And for one who disobeyed them two gates of Hell shall remain open, and if he had just one of the two, either father or mother, then, one gate (of Paradise or Hell shall remain open)." Thereupon, someone asked, "Does it (the warning of Hell) hold good even when the parents have been unjust to this person?" Then he said thrice: وَإنْ ظَلَمَا وَإنْ ظَلَمَا وَإنْ ظَلَمَا which means, 'yes, there is that warning of Hell against disobeying and hurting parents even if they were unjust to the son.' (The outcome is that children have no right to settle scores

with parents. If they have been unjust, it does not follow that they too back out from obeying and serving them).

5. Al-Baihaqī has reported on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ﵁ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "An obedient son who looks at his parents with mercy and affection receives the reward of one accepted Ḥajj against every such look cast." People around said, "What if he were to look at them like that a hundred times during the day?" He said, "Yes, a hundred times too (he will keep receiving that reward). Allah is great (His treasures never run short)."

The punishment for depriving parents of their rights comes - much before Ākhirah - right here in this world too

6. In Shu'ab al-'Īmān, al-Baihaqī has reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Bakrah ﵁ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "As for all those other sins, Allah Ta'ālā defers whichever He wills up to the Last Day of Qiyāmah - except the sin of depriving parents of their rights and disobeying them. The punishment for that is given, much before comes the Hereafter, right here in this world as well. (All Ḥadīth reports given here have been taken from Tafsīr Maẓharī)

Obedience to parents: When necessary and when there is room for opposition

Muslim scholars and jurists unanimously hold that the obedience to parents is *wājib* (necessary) only in what is permissible - and definitely not in what is impermissible or sinful. Says the Ḥadīth:

لا طاعة لمخلوق فى معصية الخالق

There is no obedience to the created in the disobedience of the Creator.

To deserve service and good treatment it is not necessary that the parents be Muslims

To support this ruling, Imām al-Qurṭubī has quoted an event related with Sayyidah Asmā' رضى الله عنها from the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī. According to this report, Sayyidah Asmā' asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ, "My mother, a Mushrik, comes to see me. Is it permissible for me to entertain her?" He said, "صِلِي أُمَّكِ" (*ṣilī ummakī*: that is, respect the bond of relationship with your mother and entertain her). And as for disbelieving parents, there is that statement of the Qur'ān itself (Luqmān, 31:15): صَاحِبْهُمَا فِي الدُّنْيَا

مَعْرُوفًا (that is, if the parents of a person are *kāfirs* and order him too to become like them, then, it is not permissible to obey them in this matter. But, while living in this world, they should be treated in the recognized manner). It is obvious that 'recognized manner' means that they should be treated with courtesy.

Rulings

1. As long as Jihād does not become an absolute individual obligation (Farḍ al-'Ain), rather remains within the degree of a collective obligation (Farḍ al-Kifāyah), until then, it is not permissible for any son to participate in Jihād without the consent of parents. It has been reported in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar ﷺ that a person presented himself before the Holy Prophet ﷺ in order to have his permission to participate in Jihād. He asked him, "Are your parents alive?" He submitted, "Yes, they are." He said, "ففيهما فجاهد" (*fafīhimā fajāhid*: Then you carry out Jihād in [the service of] them both). The sense is that 'by serving them alone you will get the reward of being in Jihād.' Another report also adds that the person said, "I have come here leaving my parents crying behind." Thereupon, he said, "Go. Make them laugh as you made them cry." In other words, he was to go back home and tell his parents that he would not be going for Jihād without their consent. (Qurṭubī)

2. From the event reported above, we learn the ruling that anything that rates as a collective obligation - and is not an individual obligation, or necessity - then, sons and daughters cannot do that without the permission of parents. Also included here is the injunction to acquire the most perfect knowledge of religion (the *'ilm* of *dīn*) at the highest level, and to travel to communicate and promote it (the *tablīgh* of *dīn*). It means that anyone who has the knowledge of religion to the measure one is obligated with individually cannot travel in order to become an *'ālim* of *dīn* (scholar of religion), or travel for the *da'wah* and *tablīgh* of *dīn*, for it is not permissible without the permission of parents.

3. Also included under the injunction of treating parents well appearing in the Qur'ān, and Ḥadīth is good treatment with relatives and friends close to parents, specially when they are dead. In the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī, it has been reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "The noblest regard one can show to a

father after his death is to treat his friends well." And Sayyidnā Abū Usayd al-Badrī ﷺ reports that he was sitting with the Holy Prophet ﷺ when an Anṣārī came and asked, "Yā Rasūlallah, is it that some right of my parents remains due against me even after they have died?" He said, "Yes. Praying and seeking forgiveness for them, fulfilling the promises they had made to someone, being kind and respectful to their friends and showing mercy and generosity to such relatives who are linked in kinship only through them (*ṣilatu 'r-raḥim*). These are the rights of your parents still due against you, even after them."

It was the blessed habit of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that he used to send gifts to lady friends of Umm al-Mu'minīn Sayyidah Khadījah رضی اللہ عنہا after her demise which was a way of fulfilling the right of Sayyidah Khadījah on him.

Treating parents well: Special consideration in their old age

As for serving and obeying parents, as parents, it is not restricted to any given time or age. In fact, it is necessary (*wājib*) to treat parents well, under all conditions, and in every age. But, there are circumstances that usually impede the fulfillment of what is necessary and obligatory. Under these circumstances, the typical response pattern of the Holy Qur'ān comes into action to suggest ways and means through which acting according to given injunctions becomes easy. With this objective in sight, it grooms and trains minds through different angles and, at the same time, it continues to emphasize that compliance of these injunctions is imperative despite such circumstances.

The old age of parents, when they become helpless, depend on children for everything they need and their life is at the mercy of children, is a terrible condition to be in. The slightest indifference shown by children at such a time breaks their heart. Then, there are those physical infirmities and diseases associated with old age which make one naturally irritation-prone. Furthermore, during the period of extreme old age, when usual reason and comprehension do not seem to be working, some of their wishes and demands assume the kind of proportions which children find difficult to take care of. The Holy Qur'ān takes cognizance of these circumstances, but, while giving children the instruction to comfort them, it reminds them of their own childhood. It tells them that there was a time when they too were far more helpless, far too depending on

their parents than their parents were on them at that point of time. Then, was it not that their parents sacrificed their desires and comforts for them and went on bearing by the unreasonable child talk with love and affection. Now when they have become so helpless, reason and nobility demanded that the past favor done by them should be paid back. When it was said: كَمَا رَبَّيَانِي صَغِيرًا (as they have brought me up in my childhood) in the verse, this is what has been alluded to. Some other important instructions relating to the old age of parents have also been given in the verses under study. They are as follows:

1. Do not say even *'uff* to them. Briefly explained parenthetically in the accompanying translation as 'a word of anger or contempt,' *'uff'* covers every word or expression that shows one's displeasure. The limit is that breathing a long breath after having heard what they said and thereby betraying displeasure against them is also included under this very word *'uff.'* In a Ḥadīth narrated by Sayyidnā 'Ali ﷺ, it has been reported that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Had there been some other degree of hurting lesser than the saying of *'uff,'* that too would have certainly been mentioned." (The sense is that even the thing that hurts parents in the lowest of the low degree is forbidden).

2. Do not scold them: وَلَاتَنْهَرْهُمَا. This is the second instruction. The word: نهر (*nahr*) in the text: means 'scold' or 'reproach.' That it causes pain in already obvious.

3. Address them with respectable words - (وَقُلْ لَّهُمَا قَوْلاً كَرِيمًا). This is the third instruction. The first two instructions related to the negative aspects where bringing the least emotional pressure on parents has been prohibited. Given in this third instruction is a lesson in the art of conversation with parents - talk to them softly with love, grace and concern for them. Says the revered Tabi'ī, Sa'īd ibn Mussaiyyab, ' like a slave talking to his strict master!'

4. Submit yourself before them in humility out of compassion - (وَاخْفِضْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الذُّلِّ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ). This is the fourth instruction. The word: جناح (*janāh*) in the text literally means 'wings' or 'sides of arms' lending the sense that one should stand in a stance of submission and humility as a mark of respect for parents. The addition of the expression: مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ (out of compassion) at the end of the sentence is there to warn that this stance of

grace should not be a mere show-off, instead, it should be adopted on the strong foundation of genuine, heart-felt respect and compassion for them. Perhaps, this may also be suggestive of something else as well - that showing humility before parents is practically no disgrace. In fact, it is a prelude to real honor for it is based on concern, compassion and kindness.

5. And say, "My Lord, be merciful to them" - (وَقُل رَّبِّ ارْحَمْهُمَا). It means, as for the effort to provide maximum comfort for parents, it is humanly not possible. One should do whatever it is possible for him to do in order that they remain comfortable and, then, along with it, he should also keep praying before Allah Ta'ālā that He, in His infinite mercy, removes all their difficulties and makes things easy on them. This last instruction is really so extensive and universal that it still continues to be valid and beneficial even after the death of parents. Through this, one can always keep serving parents.

Ruling

If parents are Muslims, making a prayer for mercy in their favor is obvious. But, if they are not Muslims, making this prayer within their lifetime will be permissible with the intention that they be delivered from worldly distress and that they be blessed with the *taufīq* of 'Īmān. After their death, making a prayer of mercy for them is not permissible. (Abridged from al-Qurṭubī)

A remarkable event

Al-Qurṭubī has reported from Sayyidnā Jābir ibn 'Abdullāh ﷺ that a man came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and complained that his father was taking away what belonged to him. He said, "Go and ask your father to come here." Right then, came Sayyidnā Jibra'īl and told the Holy Prophet ﷺ, "When his father comes, ask him about the words he has composed in his heart and which his own ears have not heard yet." When this man returned with his father, he said to the father, "Why is it that your son complains against you? Do you wish to take away what belongs to him?" The father said, "You better ask him on whom do I spend other than his paternal or maternal aunts or myself?" The Holy Prophet ﷺ said: إِيْهِ (an expression which denoted that he had understood the reality and there was no need to say anything else). After that, he asked the father of the man, "What are those words that have not yet been heard by your own ears?" The father said, *"Yā Rasūlallah*, Allah Ta'ālā increases our faith in you through everything." Thereby he meant

that he got to know what was not heard by anyone, which was a miracle indeed. Then, he submitted, "It is true that I had composed some lines of poetry within my heart, something not heard even by my own ears." The Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Let us hear them." Then he recited the following lines of poetry he had composed:

غَذَوْتُكَ مَوْلُودًا وَمُنْتُكَ يافعا
تُعَلُّ بِمَا اَجْنِیْ عَلَیْكَ وَتُنْهَلُ

I fed you in childhood and took care of you when young. You lived on my earnings alone.

إذا ليلة ضافتك بالسقم لم ابت
لسقمك الا ساهرا اتململ

When on some night, you became sick, I spent the whole night remaining awake and restless because of your sickness

كأنّی انا المطروق دونك بالذی
طُرِقْتَ به دونی فعینی تهمل

As if your sickness was my own and not yours and because of which my eyes kept shedding tears throughout the night

تخاف الردٰی نفسی علیك وانها
لَتَعلَم ان المَوتَ وَقتٌ مؤجَّل

My heart kept trembling lest something happens to you, though I knew that the time of death is fixed, being neither early nor late

فَلَمَّا بَلَغْتَ السِنَّ والغاية الَّتِیْ
الیها مدی ماكنت فیك أؤمِّل

So, when you reached the age and maturity that I had always been looking forward to

جعلت جزائی غلظةً وفظاظة
كانك أنت المنعم المتفضِّل

Then you made hard-heartedness and harshness my return as if you were the one doing me favors and giving me rewards

فلیتكَ اذ لم ترع حقَّ أُبوّتی
فعلتَ كما الجارُ المصاقب یفعل

Alas, if it was not possible for you to fulfill my right as a father, you could have at the least done what a good neighbor would have done

فَاَوْلَیْتَنِیْ حَقَّ الْجِوارِ ولم تكن
علیَّ بمال دونَ مالك تَبْخَل

So, you could have given me the least right of a neighbor and

abstained from becoming miserly in my case in my own property.

After having heard these verses of poetry, the Holy Prophet ﷺ held the son by his shirt and said, "انت و مالك لابيك" meaning that: Go. You and your property, everything belongs to your father. (Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī, p. 246, v. 10) These verses have also been reported in Ḥamasah, the famous book of Arabic literature as attributed to the poet, Umaiyyah ibn Abī aṣ-Ṣult. Others say that 'Abd al-A'la wrote them. Still others attribute them to Abū al-'Abbās al-A'ma. (Al-Qurṭubī, marginal notes)

In the last verse quoted above: رَبُّكُمْ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا فِيْ نُفُوْسِكُمْ (Your Lord knows best what is in your hearts - 25), any possible scruple that remains in the hearts of children as to how they were going to comply satisfactorily with divine injunctions relating to consistent observance of etiquette and respect due to parents. They have to live with parents all the time. Then, living conditions of the parties vary. They do not stay the same all the time. May be, on some such occasion, they happen to utter something, something that turns out to be against the norms of due etiquette, then, they stand facing the warning of Hell. Given this probability, it would become extremely difficult for them to wriggle out from this situation. In this verse, it is to remove this doubt and heart-burning that it was said: Should any such word come to be uttered out of sheer anxiety or lack of discretion - but, without intentional disrespectfulness - then, one must repent and resolve not to do that ever again. If so, since Allah Ta'ālā knows the secrets of hearts and knows what was uttered was not to show disrespect or hurt, things will turn out for the better, for He is Most-Merciful. The word: الاَوَّابِيْنَ (*al-awwābīn*: those who turn to Him) used here carries the sense of: التَوَّابِيْنَ (*at-tawwābīn*: those who repent before Him). The Ḥadīth calls the six *raka'āt* after Maghrib and the *nawāfil* of al-Ishrāq as the Ṣalāh al-Awwābīn. Embedded here is the hint that the *taufīq* (ability) of these prayers is granted only to those who are the Awwābīn and Tawwābīn.

Verses 26 - 27

وَاٰتِ ذَا الْقُرْبٰى حَقَّهٗ وَالْمِسْكِيْنَ وَابْنَ السَّبِيْلِ وَلَا تُبَذِّرْ تَبْذِيْرًا ﴿٢٦﴾ اِنَّ الْمُبَذِّرِيْنَ كَانُوْٓا اِخْوَانَ الشَّيٰطِيْنِ ۭ وَكَانَ الشَّيْطٰنُ لِرَبِّهٖ كَفُوْرًا ﴿٢٧﴾

And give the relative his right, and the needy and the wayfarer. And do not squander recklessly. [26] **Surely, squanderers are brothers to satans, and the Satan is very ungrateful to his Lord.** [27]

Commentary

On fulfilling the rights of relatives vigilantly

Previous verses were devoted to teachings about the rights of parents and how they should be duly respected. In the present verses, the rights of common relatives have been taken up with the guideline that a relative should be given his or her right. The least degree in which this could be done is to share with them the graces of good social living and treat them well. And if they are needy, helping them financially - in accordance with one's personal capacity - is also included therein. From this verse, at least this much stands proved that everyone has also been obligated with the fulfillment of the right of one's common relatives. What is it? How much is it? Those details have not been mentioned here. But, a broad based mercy and generosity for relatives and a good social interaction with them are certainly included there. According to Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, financial help can be extended to two kinds of relatives under this very injunction: (1) A relative, in the category of near blood kinship (*Dhū raḥim*), and in the degree of sanguinity precluding marriage (*maḥram*). A woman or child who neither has the wherewithal to eke out an existence nor has the ability to earn for it. (2) Similar is the case of a relative, in the category of near blood kinship, and in the degree of sanguinity precluding marriage. If handicapped or blind, not having enough money and property in his or her possession to eke out an existence, their relatives who have the necessary means should help them both. Taking care of the essential expenses is a duty enjoined on all of them. If there are several relatives in the same degree of extended means, the expenses will be divided over all of them and the subsistence allowance of the needy will be given in this manner. This rule also has its sanction from the verse of Sūrah al-Baqarah which says: وَعَلَى الْوَارِثِ مِثْلُ ذَالِكَ (and on the heir it falls likewise - 2:233) (Tafsīr Maẓharī)

In this verse, it has been said that the necessary financial assistance provided to the needy and the wayfarer, and the mercy and generosity practiced in the case of kinsfolk, was their right. The purpose is to point out that the giver has no reason or occasion to harp on the favor done be-

fore or behind them because their right is his duty. The giver is simply doing his duty and not showering favors on anyone.

The prohibition of spending wastefully (*tabdhīr*)

The Qur'ān expresses the sense of spending wastefully through two words: (1) Tabdhīr (تَبْذِيْر), translated as 'squandering recklessly.' (2) Iṣrāf (إِسْرَاف) : extravagance. The prohibition of *tabdhīr* is already clear in verse 26 here. The prohibition of *isrāf* has its proof in the verse of Sūrah al-A'rāf: وَلَا تُسْرِفُوْا (and do not be extravagant - 7:33). Some commentators say that both words are synonymous. Any spending in sin or disobedience or a wrong occasion or place is called *tabdhīr* and *isrāf*. There are others who refine it by saying that *tabdhīr* is spending in sin or on some totally unsuitable occasion or place, while *isrāf* is spending beyond the level of need on an occasion where it is permissible to spend. Therefore, *tabdhīr* is emphatically worse than *isrāf*. Al-Mubadhdhirīn (the squanderers) were called brothers to Shaiṭān and his cohorts.

Of the early Tafsīr authorities, Mujāhid has said: If someone spends everything he has for the sake of what is *ḥaqq*, (incumbent), it is no *tabdhīr* (squandering recklessly) - and should he spend even one *mudd* (1/2 kilo) for what is false (non-incumbent), then it is *tabdhīr*. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ said: Spending out of place in what one has not been obligated with is *tabdhīr*. (Maẓharī) Imām Mālik said: Tabdhīr is that one acquires wealth and property, lawfully and cleanly, as he has been obligated to do, but spends it off in ways counter to it - and this is also given the name of *isrāf* (extravagance), which is *ḥarām* (unlawful).

Imām al-Qurṭubī said: As for things unlawful and impermissible, spending even one *dirham* for these is *tabdhīr*. And spending limitlessly to fulfill permissible and allowed desires - which exposes one to the danger of becoming a needy beggar in the future - is also included under *tabdhīr*. Yes, if someone keeps his real capital holdings in tact and goes on to spend its profit liberally to fulfill his permissible desires, then, that is not included under *tabdhīr*. (Al-Qurṭubī, v. 10, p. 248)

Verse 28

وَإِمَّا تُعْرِضَنَّ عَنْهُمُ ابْتِغَاءَ رَحْمَةٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّكَ تَرْجُوْهَا فَقُلْ لَّهُمْ قَوْلاً

مَّيْسُورًا ﴿٢٨﴾

And if you turn away from them while seeking a bounty from your Lord you are expecting, then speak to them in polite words. [28]

Commentary

What an unusual moral training is being given here in this verse through the Holy Prophet ﷺ to the entire Muslim community! It is being said to them: If people needing help come to you and you have nothing to give to them, and for that reason you are compelled to turn away from them, even then, this act of turning away or excusing yourself should not be with an air of indifference, or with an attitude that could be insulting for the addressee. In fact, this turning away or seeking of excuse should be coupled with an expression of your inability or constraint.

Regarding the background of the revelation of this verse, a report from Sayyidnā Ibn Zaid رضي الله عنه says that some people used to ask for financial help from the Holy Prophet ﷺ and he knew what would be given to them would be spent in the spreading of disorder. Therefore, he refused to give it to them, for this refusal was a device to stop them from indulging in disorder. Thereupon, this verse was revealed. (Qurṭubī)

In the Musnad of Sa'īd ibn Manṣūr, it has been mentioned on the authority of Sayyidnā Saba' ibn Ḥakam رضي الله عنه that the Holy Prophet ﷺ had received some supply of cloth. He distributed it over those deserving. After that came some others when the supply was finished and he had nothing to give. It was about the later that this verse was revealed.

Verses 29 - 30

وَلَا تَجْعَلْ يَدَكَ مَغْلُولَةً إِلَىٰ عُنُقِكَ وَلَا تَبْسُطْهَا كُلَّ الْبَسْطِ فَتَقْعُدَ مَلُومًا مَّحْسُورًا ﴿٢٩﴾ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَن يَشَاءُ وَيَقْدِرُ ۚ إِنَّهُ كَانَ بِعِبَادِهِ خَبِيرًا بَصِيرًا ﴿٣٠﴾

And do not keep your hand tied to your neck, nor extend it to the full extent, lest you should be sitting reproached, empty-handed. [29]

Indeed, your Lord expands sustenance for whomsoever He wills, and constricts (for whom He wills). Surely, He is All Aware of His servants, All-Seeing. [30]

Commentary

The instruction for moderation in spending

In this verse, the Holy Prophet ﷺ is the direct addressee while the entire Muslim *ummah* is being addressed through him. The purpose is to teach a just and moderate course in spending which does not prevent one from helping others nor does it end up in a lot of trouble for him. There is an event in the background of the revelation of this verse. Ibn Marduwayh has reported it on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd ؓ and al-Baghawī, on the authority of Sayyidnā Jābir ؓ. According to this report, a boy came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and said, "My mother asks of you a shirt." At that time, the Holy Prophet ﷺ had no shirt except the one that was on his blessed body. He told the boy, "Come some other time when we have enough means to respond to what your mother is asking for." The boy went back home, and returned and said, "My mother says that you kindly give her the very shirt you have on your blessed body." Hearing this, the Holy Prophet ﷺ took the shirt off and let him have it. His body was left bare. Came the time for Ṣalāh. Sayyidnā Bilāl ؓ called the Adhān. But, when he did not come out as usual, people were worried. When some of them went in, they saw that he was sitting bare-bodied without the shirt. Thereupon, this verse was revealed.

Spending in the way of Allah so liberally as would throw one in trouble: The pros and cons of it

The verse, given the outer view, seems to prohibit the kind of spending following which the spender himself ends up becoming poor and needy, a prey of all sorts of hardships and anxieties. Tafsīr authority, al-Qurṭubī has said that this injunction covers the general condition of Muslims who would, after such spending, find the resulting hardships distressing and the whole thing would make them contrite over past give-outs and grieve about it. The word: مَّحْسُورًا (*maḥsūrā*: empty-handed - 29) of the Holy Qur'ān provides a hint in this direction. (As in Tafsīr Maẓharī) As for the people of high determination, who would not be emotionally disturbed by hardships that may come later and would still go on fulfilling rights of those who hold such rights, this restriction does not

apply to them. This is the reason that it was the customary practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that he would not store anything for tomorrow. What came today was spent out today. And there were occasions when he would remain hungry reaching the outer limits of having to tie a piece of rock against his stomach (to simulate the weight of food). Then there were many among the noble Ṣaḥābah who had spent their entire wealth and property in the way of Allah during the blessed period of the Holy Prophet ﷺ who did not categorically prohibit it nor did he blame them for it. This tells us that the prohibition contained in this verse is for those who cannot brave the hardships of poverty and hunger and they would start to rue after spending that they would have been better off if they had not spent in the way of Allah. If so, this attitude would nullify the good they had done in the past. Hence, the prohibition.

Poorly managed spending is prohibited

And the main thing in the verse is that it prohibits spending haphazardly in the sense that one would ignore what may happen in the near future and spend on the spot. The result is that comes tomorrow, other needy people show up or one is required to take care of a major religious exigency and he would, then, be in no position to help out. (Qurṭubī) Or, he may be rendered equally incapable of fulfilling the rights of his family, something he is duty-bound to fulfill. (Maẓharī) Explaining the words: مَلُوْمًا مَّحْسُوْرًا (reproached, empty-handed - 29), Tafsīr Maẓharī says that the first word: مَلُوْم (*malūm*) relates to the first condition, that is, miserliness - meaning 'if he were to hold back on giving out of miserliness, people would reproach him.' And the word: مَحْسُوْرًا (*mahsūrā*) relates to some condition other than this - meaning that 'one should not exaggerate in spending to the extent that he himself becomes a pauper. If so, he will turn empty-handed, defeated and rueful.

Verse 31

وَلَا تَقْتُلُوْٓا اَوْلَادَكُمْ خَشْيَةَ اِمْلَاقٍ ؕ نَحْنُ نَرْزُقُهُمْ وَ اِيَّاكُمْ ؕ اِنَّ قَتْلَهُمْ كَانَ خِطْاً كَبِيْرًا ﴿۳۱﴾

And do not kill your children for fear of poverty. We provide sustenance to them and to you, too. Killing them is a great sin indeed. [31]

Commentary

Previous verses carried a series of instructions regarding human rights. The sixth injunction appearing here is to correct a cruel custom prevailing among the people of Arabs of Jāhiliyyah. During that period of time, some people used to kill their children, particularly daughters, at birth in fear of having to face the expenses on their maintenance. In the verse cited above, Allah Ta'ālā has admonished them for their ignorance in assuming the responsibility of providing sustenance - 'who are you to do that?' This is the exclusive domain of Allah Ta'ālā. He is the One who gives you your sustenance. Now, He who gives it to you shall be the One who would give it to them as well. Why then, do you have to take the onus of killing children on yourselves because of this concern? In fact, by making the children precede as recipients of sustenance at this place, Allah Ta'ālā has subtly indicated that He shall give to the children first, then give it to the parents. It really means that Allah Ta'ālā, when He sees His servant supporting his family or helping others poor and weak, He gives him liberally in proportion to enable him to meet his needs as well as help others. In a Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said, "إِنَّمَا تُنصَرُوْنَ وَتُرْزَقُوْنَ بِضُعَفَائِكُم" which means: 'It is because of the poor and weak among you that you are provided by Allah with your sustenance.' This tells us that parents who support their family get, whatever they do, for the sake of weak women and children alone.

Ruling

This statement of the Qur'ān also sheds light on an issue which holds the modern world in its grip. Its movers and shakers are so scared of what they call 'population explosion' that they are frantically promoting birth control and planned parent-hood. This is also based on the same false assumption that they are the ones responsible for sustenance. May be, this approach is not a sin equal in gravity to that of the killing of children, but there is no doubt about its being blameworthy.

Verse 32

وَلَا تَقْرَبُوا الزِّنٰىٓ إِنَّهٗ كَانَ فَاحِشَةً ۭ وَسَآءَ سَبِيلًا ﴿٣٢﴾

And do not even go near fornication. It is indeed a

shame and an evil way to follow. [32]

Commentary

The seventh injunction given here relates to the forbiddance of *zinā* (fornication, adultery). Given here are two reasons as to why it has been forbidden: (1) This is a shame, gross and immodest. Whoever is denuded of modesty is denuded of human nobility itself and is rendered incapable of distinguishing the good from the bad. This is more succinctly said in a Ḥadīth:

اذا فاتك الحياء فافعل ماشئت

When goes your sense of shame (that could become a barrier against evil), so then, you will do what you will.

Therefore, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has declared sense of shame (*ḥayā'*) as a division of faith ('Īmān): 'والحياء شعبة من الايمان' (al-Bukhārī) (2) It generates limitless social disorder the consequences of which sometimes destroy whole groups of people. In our day all sorts of crimes have increased. If investigated, the reason behind a lot of them would turn out to be some man or woman who did it. Though, this crime is not directly related to the rights of the servants of Allah but it may have been mentioned here as part of other rights taken up at this place for the reason that this crime is contagious. It brings other crimes along which disturb the rights of the servants of Allah through loss of lives and properties. Therefore, Islam has declared this crime to be more serious than any other crime. Then, it has also fixed its punishment as the harshest of all crimes because this one is a carrier of hundreds of these.

It appears in Ḥadīth that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "The heavens and the earth, the seven of them each, curse the married person who commits adultery. And the strong stench which spreads out from the private parts of such people will embarrass even the people condemned to Hell and thus there in Hell they will be suffering from the punishment of fire and disgrace both." (Reported by al-Bazzār on the authority of Sayyidnā Buraidah ﷺ - Maẓharī) In another Ḥadīth from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ, it has been reported that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "A fornicator when fornicating is not a believer. A thief when stealing is not a believer. And a drunkard while drinking is not a believer." This Ḥadīth is there in al-Bukhārī and Muslim. Its explanation, as it appears in the report of

Abū Dāwūd, says: At the time those committing such crimes are practically involved in it, 'Īmān (faith) leaves their heart and comes out, and when they turn away from it, 'Īmān returns back in. (Maẓharī)

Verse 33

وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا النَّفْسَ الَّتِي حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ ۗ وَمَنْ قُتِلَ مَظْلُومًا فَقَدْ جَعَلْنَا لِوَلِيِّهِ سُلْطَانًا فَلَا يُسْرِفْ فِي الْقَتْلِ ۖ إِنَّهُ كَانَ مَنْصُورًا ﴿٣٣﴾

And do not kill a person whom Allah has given sanctity, except for a just reason. And whoever is killed unjustly, We have given his *walīy* (legal heir) authority, but he shall not cross the limit in the matter of taking life. He is surely supported. [33]

Commentary

This eighth injunction is about the prohibition of killing unjustly. Virtually all groups, religions and sects of the world take it to be a grave crime. In Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "The destruction of the entire world is lighter in the sight of Allah than the unjust killing of a believer." In addition to this, some reports also carry the words: "Even if the inhabitants of Allah's seven heavens and seven earths were to join in the killing of a believer unjustly, He will put all of them into the Hell." (Ibn Mājah with a chain classified as Ḥasan and al-Baihaqī - from Maẓharī)

And in another Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said, "Whoever abets in the killing of a believer by assisting the killer even with one word will be brought before Allah Ta'ālā on the day of Resurrection. And written on his forehead shall be: آيس مِنْ رحمة الله (Deprived of the mercy of Allah). (Maẓharī from Ibn Mājah and Iṣbahānī)

And al-Baihaqī reports on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās and Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Hopefully, Allah Ta'ālā may forgive every sin except that of the person who died in the state of disbelief (*kufr*) or who killed a believer intentionally and unjustly."

The meaning of Unjust Killing

Imām al-Bukhārī and Muslim have reported on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "The blood

of any Muslim who bears testimony that Allah is one and I am His Messenger is not *ḥalāl* (lawful) except under three situations. (1) He has, despite being married, committed adultery (for his legal punishment is that he should be stoned to death). (2) He who has killed a person unjustly [for his punishment is that the *walīyy* (legal heir) of the person killed can get him killed under the law of *qiṣāṣ* (even retaliation)]. (3) A person who has reneged [as an apostate: *murtadd*] from the religion of Islam (for he too is killed in punishment).

Who has the right to take Qiṣāṣ?

It has been said in this verse that this is the right of the *walīyy* (legal heir) of the person killed. In the absence of a lineal *walīyy*, the head of the Islamic government will have this right - for, he too, in a way, is the *walīyy* of all Muslims. Therefore, in Islamic juristic terminology, the former is called real and the later, legal.

Injustice is not answered by injustice, but by justice: So, be just even when punishing criminals

The statement: فَلَا يُسْرِف فِّي الْقَتْلِ (*'falā yusrif fi al-qatl'*: but he shall not cross the limit in the matter of taking life) is a special provision of Islamic law the outcome of which is that it is not permissible to avenge injustice by counter injustice. Even when retaliating, it is necessary to uphold the demand of justice. Until such time that the legal heir (*walīyy*) of the person killed upholds justice and seeks an even retaliation in favor of the person killed represented by him, through the legal provisions of Qiṣāṣ, then, the law of the Sharī'ah stands in his favor. The reason is that he is surely supported, and Allah Ta'ālā is the supporter. And in case, he is all blinded by the desire of revenge and exceeds the limits of Islamic legal retaliation, then he, instead of being the one oppressed (*maẓlūm*), became the oppressor (*ẓālim*) while the oppressor (*ẓālim*) became the one oppressed by him (*maẓlūm*). Now things will stand reversed. Allah Ta'ālā and His Law will not support him. Instead, it will support the other party and shield him from injustice.

During the days of the Jāhiliyyah, it was common practice of the Arabs that, in retaliation of a person killed, they would avenge him by killing anyone they could lay their hands on from among the family or friends of the killer. There were occasions when it would turn out that the person killed was someone notable among them. In that case, they

would not take it as sufficient to kill only the killer in even retaliation for their man. In fact, to avenge one life, they would take the lives of two, three or many more men. Some of them would become so crazy in the heat of their passion for revenge that they would not be simply satisfied after having killed the killer. They went on to commit the horror of cutting off body parts such as the nose, ears etc. to serve as deterrents. All such actions are extra to the limits set by the Islamic Law of Even Retaliation (*al-qiṣāṣ*), and are patently *ḥarām* (unlawful). Therefore, such activities have been stopped by the proviso: فَلَايُسْرِفْ فِّى الْقَتْلِ (but he shall not cross the limit in the matter of taking life).

An anecdote worth remembering

Someone accused Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf before certain Mujtahid Imāms. Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf is the most notorious tyrant of Islamic history. Since, he has killed thousands of Ṣaḥābah and Tābi'īn unjustly, therefore, it generally happens that people tend to overlook the evil lurking behind calling him evil. The pious elder before whom this accusation was leveled against Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf asked the accusers, "Do you have any authority or evidence to support your accusation?" They said, "No." Then he said, "If Allah Ta'ālā will avenge the unjust killing of thousands of innocent people by Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf, remember that anyone who is unjust to Ḥajjāj will also not be allowed to escape from that revenge. Allah Ta'ālā will wreak vengeance of Ḥajjāj from him too. There is no partisanship in the justice of Allah Ta'ālā, therefore, it is not possible that He would release others to go about maligning His sinning servants by giving them a free hand to accuse and blame them at will.

Verses 34 - 35

وَلَاتَقْرَبُوْا مَالَ الْيَتِيْمِ اِلَّا بِالَّتِىْ هِىَ اَحْسَنُ حَتّٰى يَبْلُغَ اَشُدَّهٗ ۖ وَاَوْفُوْا بِالْعَهْدِ ۚ اِنَّ الْعَهْدَ كَانَ مَسْئُوْلًا ﴿۳۴﴾ وَاَوْفُوا الْكَيْلَ اِذَا كِلْتُمْ وَزِنُوْا بِالْقِسْطَاسِ الْمُسْتَقِيْمِ ۭ ذٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَّاَحْسَنُ تَاْوِيْلًا ﴿۳۵﴾

And do not go near the property of an orphan except in a manner that is good, until he comes to his maturity. And fulfill the covenant. Surely, the covenant shall be asked about. [34]

And give full measure when you measure, and weigh with a straight balance. That is good, and better in the end. [35]

Commentary

Mentioned in the two verses cited above, there are three injunctions: the ninth, the tenth and the eleventh. They relate to financial rights. It will be recalled that previous verses dealt with physical rights while the financial ones appear here.

Caution in handling the property of orphans

The ninth injunction given in the first verse (34) concerns the protection of properties owned by orphans and the observation of caution in their handling. Laying emphasis on it, it was said: 'And do not go (even) near the property of orphans.' It means that there should be no free use of their property counter to the provisions of the Sharī'ah or the interest and advantage of the children. Those who are charged with the protection and management of the properties of orphans are duty-bound to observe utmost caution therein. When spending, they must spend only in the interest and to the advantage of orphans - and definitely not as based on their whim or lack of concern. And this pattern of management is to continue until such time when the orphaned children grow up and become capable of protecting their property themselves - the lower limit is when they attain to the age of fifteen years while the higher is eighteen years.

The fact is that it is just not permissible to spend from anyone's property through false means. But, it has been mentioned here in the case of orphans particularly because they themselves are incapable of keeping or taking account and no one is expected to know about it. So, a place where no one is present to demand one's right is exactly the place where the demand of Allah Ta'ālā becomes stronger and harder. Any shortfall in disbursing such rights becomes more sinful as compared to the rights of common people.

Fulfillment of Covenants and Implementation of Contracts

The tenth injunction enjoins the fulfillment of the covenant. There are two forms of the covenant. The first form has two aspects to it: (1) Between Allah and His servant, like the covenant of the servant in eternity that Allah is their Lord. This covenant necessarily results in

obedience to His injunctions and the seeking of His pleasure. This is a covenant every human being has made in eternity irrespective of whether he or she is a believer or a disbeliever. (2) The second covenant is the covenant of a believer made through *shahādah* or professing of the *kalimah:* لا اله الا الله (*lā ilāha illallāh*: there is no god but Allah) the outcome of which is a perfect following of Divine injunctions and the seeking of His pleasure.

The second form of the covenant takes effect between human beings themselves. This includes all treaties, pacts, agreements, pledges and contracts - political, commercial, or transactional - that are made between individuals or groups or institutions all over the world.

The fulfillment of all covenants identified in the first form is obligatory on human beings. As for the other kind of covenants or contracts, it is also obligatory to fulfill them subject to the condition that they should not be against the Islamic Law. As for those that are against the Islamic Law, it is obligatory to terminate them - after having first served a notice on the other party. If one of the parties does not fulfill, the other party has the right to go to the court and make them fulfill it. Essentially, a contract is an agreement between two parties that they would do or not do something. And in case, someone unilaterally promises to someone else that he would give him a certain thing or meet him at a certain time or take care of a certain task for him, then, it is also obligatory to fulfill this promise. There are commentators who include this too under the sense of covenant, but they do so with a slight difference. We know when two parties are bound by a contract, any contravention by one of them can be challenged in the court and the other party can force its completion. But, the fulfillment of a unilateral promise cannot be enforced through the court. Of course, if someone were to go back on the promise made to someone else - without any valid legal excuse permitted by the Sharī'ah - he will be committing a sin. In Ḥadīth, this has been called hypocrisy in acts.

At the end of this verse, it was said: إِنَّ الْعَهْدَ كَانَ مَسْئُولًا (Surely, the covenant shall be asked about). It means: 'On the day of Qiyāmah, the way questions shall be asked about the fulfillment or non-fulfillment of obligatory divine injunctions, so it will be with mutual contracts - these too

will be asked about.' Here, it has been left at that only: 'it will be asked about.' What is going to happen next after the questioning? This has been left untold. Perhaps, intended as such, it may be signaling towards the danger being great!

The eleventh injunction enjoins fulfillment of weights and measures in transactions of buying and selling and forbids any short measuring. Full details appear in Sūrah al-Muṭaffifin (83).

Ruling

Respected jurists of Islam say that the outcome of the injunction against shortening weights and measures is that it is *ḥarām* (unlawful) to give less than whatever is the due of whoever it may be. Therefore, it is also included therein that an employee curtails the assigned duty entrusted with him or gives a time that is less than what should actually be given to it, or that a worker shirks work and fails to deliver what is due out of it.

The prohibition of giving weights and measures short: Ruling

Regarding the verse: أَوْفُوا الْكَيْلَ إِذَا كِلْتُمْ (And give full measure when you measure - 35), Abū Ḥayyān says in Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ that the responsibility of giving full weight and measure in this verse has been placed on the seller (بَائِع : *bā'i'*) which tells us that it is the seller who is responsible for weighing, measuring and seeing that it is full as due.

At the end of verse 35, it was said about the fulfillment of weight and measure: ذٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَّأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلًا (That is good, and better in the end). As for making the weight and measure correct and even, two things have been said here: (1) Firstly, the rule is good. It means that it is intrinsically good. No normal and decent person is going to take weighing less and measuring short as something nice, neither religiously, nor rationally, nor naturally. (2) Secondly, it is better in the end. The end includes the consequent success of the Hereafter, reward of deeds and the blessing of Paradise as well as the happy outcome of the very life in this world. This is suggestive of the fact that no business can prosper until its goodwill stands recognized in the market - and that cannot happen without this commercial honesty.

Verses 36 - 38

وَلَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ ۚ إِنَّ السَّمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ وَالْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُولَٰئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْئُولًا ﴿٣٦﴾ وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَحًا ۖ إِنَّكَ لَنْ تَخْرِقَ الْأَرْضَ وَلَنْ تَبْلُغَ الْجِبَالَ طُولًا ﴿٣٧﴾ كُلُّ ذَٰلِكَ كَانَ سَيِّئُهُ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ مَكْرُوهًا ﴿٣٨﴾

And do not pursue that which you have no knowledge of. Surely, the ear, the eye and the heart - each one of them shall be interrogated about. [36]

And do not walk on the earth haughtily. You can neither tear the earth apart, nor can you match the mountains in height. [37]

That which is evil, of all these, is detestable in the sight of your Lord. [38]

Commentary

Two injunctions in these verses, the twelfth and the thirteenth, relate to mores of common social living. The twelfth injunction forbids doing something without having become certain about it.

At this stage, we should not lose sight of the fact that certainty has different degrees. There is a degree of certainty that reaches the level of perfect certitude, a state that leaves no room of even the slightest doubt contrary to it. Then, it could descend to the degree of strong likelihood - even though, there does exist the probability of a contrary aspect. Similarly, divine injunctions are also of two kinds: (1) Absolutes and Certainties, such as, Articles and Principles of Religion. These require certainty of the first degree. Acting without it is not permissible. (2) Strong Likelihood or Overwhelming Probability, the example of which are injunctions relating to subsidiary deeds. After having given these details, we can state the objective of the cited verse by saying that the element of certainty in injunctions that are Certain and Absolute should also be of the first degree. In other words, it should have attained the degree of perfect certitude and absolute category. And until this happens, this pseudo certainty is not trustworthy in the matter of the basic Articles and Principles of Islam. Acting on its dictates is not permissible. As for the subsidi-

ary injunctions, a certainty of the second degree, that is, of Overwhelming Probability is sufficient. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Questions will be asked on the day of Qiyāmah about the ear, the eye and the heart

This is what we have been told in verse 36: إِنَّ السَّمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ وَالْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُولَٰئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْئُولًا: It means that the ear will be asked as to what did it keep hearing throughout its life. The eye will be asked as to what did it keep seeing throughout its life. The heart will be asked as to what did it keep cooking in its chambers and what was it that it believed in throughout its life. If things were heard through the ears, the hearing of which was not permissible in Sharī'ah, such as hearing ill of someone behind his back (*ghībah*) or hearing unlawful vocal and instrumental music etc., then, punishment will follow the question. If things were seen through the eyes, the seeing of which was not permissible, such as casting an evil eye on a non-Maḥram woman or a beardless, handsome youth etc. then, punishment will follow the question. Or, planted a belief in the heart contrary to the Qur'ān, and Sunnah, or nursed a baseless blame in the heart regarding someone, then, punishment will follow the question. The fact is that, on that fateful day of Qiyāmah, questions will be asked about virtually all blessings given by Allah Ta'ālā. It was said in Sūrah at-Takāthur: لَتُسْئَلُنَّ يَوْمَئِذٍ عَنِ النَّعِيمِ : "And you shall certainly be asked on that day [of Qiyāmah] about all blessings [of Allah Ta'ālā] - 102:8." Since, the ear, the eye and the heart are more important and significant out of these blessings, these were mentioned here particularly.

Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī and Maẓharī give yet another sense of the verse in terms of the close proximity of the statement in the first sentence and the next. In the first sentence, it was said: لَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ (And do not pursue that which you have no knowledge of - 36). Adjacent to it follows the statement that the ear, the eye and the heart - each one of them shall be interrogated about. The sense that emerges from this proximity is that a person who blamed someone without first ascertaining and becoming certain about it, or did something impulsively without doing that first, then, should this thing be related to what is heard through ears, the ears shall be questioned. And if this is 'seen', the eyes shall be questioned. And if comprehended through the heart, the heart shall be questioned to determine whether this person is true or false in his blame or

in the belief he has allowed to become rooted in his heart. Thereupon, these very body parts shall speak up as witnesses on the day of Resurrection. It will be a cause of disgrace for those who accuse others without being certain and those who do things the truth of which has not been ascertained first. This is as it appears in Sūrah Yā Sīn: اَلْيَوْمَ نَخْتِمُ عَلٰٓى اَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَتُكَلِّمُنَآ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَتَشْهَدُ اَرْجُلُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَكْسِبُوْنَ :"Today [on the day of Qiyāmah] We shall set a seal on their mouths and their hands shall speak and their feet shall bear witness as to what they have been earning [by making these limbs of their body do whatever of good or bad they chose] - 36:65".

Perhaps, the ears, the eyes and the heart have been particularized here on the basis that Allah Ta'ālā has blessed man with sense and consciousness through them. The purpose is to let him first ascertain, examine, and test a thought or belief that crosses his heart. If he finds it true, and sound, let him, then, put it in practice. And should it turn out to be false, let him, then, stay away from it. Anyone who does not use these faculties and goes about following things he has no knowledge of, things the truth of which he has not ascertained first, then, this person is guilty of being ungrateful to these blessings of Allah Ta'ālā.

Now, the senses through which man becomes aware of different things are five: the ears, the eyes, the nose, the faculty of speech and the sensation in the whole body that tells one about something being hot or cold. But, habitually man finds out more through the ears and eyes. Awareness about things acquired through the senses of smell, taste and touch is fairly lower in frequency as compared to things heard or seen. That it has been considered sufficient to mention only two of the five senses at this place may, perhaps, be because of this very reason. Then, even from among these two, it is the ear that has been made to precede the eye - and on other occasions of the Holy Qur'ān as well, wherever these two has been mentioned, it is the ear that has been mentioned first. In all likelihood, the reason for it is that the major part of man's information is comprised of things heard through the ears. Things seen through the eyes happen to be comparatively much less.

The thirteenth injunction appearing in the second of the two cited verses (37) is: وَلَا تَمْشِ فِى الْاَرْضِ مَرَحًا (And do not walk on the earth haughtily). It means that one should not walk in a way that shows arrogance, pride and exultation, for this is an idiotic act. It is as if one would like to

tear the earth apart just by walking on it - something not in his power to accomplish. Or, as if by walking with a challenging gait, he would like to rise much higher - but the mountains of Allah rise far higher than he could ever beat anatomically. In reality, arrogance as such is a major sin that can afflict human heart mortally. Therefore, one must guard against even signs of arrogance exhibited through the way one goes about in life, for they too are impermissible, after all. Walking haughtily, even though one may not be walking by exerting force on the earth, and assuming airs and posing high are impermissible under all conditions. Arrogance is to take yourself superior to others and rate others to be inferior to you. Severe warnings against it appear in Ḥadīth.

Imām Muslim has reported on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Iyāḍ ibn 'Ammār ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Allah Ta'ālā has sent this command to me through revelation: Take to humility. Let no man pride on another man, nor adopt an attitude of self-eminence and let no one be unjust to anyone." (Maẓharī)

And Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ narrates that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Not to enter Paradise is he who has arrogance in his heart even to the measure of a particle" (Maẓharī with reference to the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim).

And it has been reported in Ḥadīth Qudsī on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Allah Ta'ālā says that grandeur is My mantle and greatness is My breech. Whoever tries to snatch these from Me, him I shall put in Jahannam (The words *ridā'* and *izār* signify dress and Allah Ta'ālā has no mass or body that would need a dress. Therefore, at this place, it means the attribute of divine glory. So, whoever betrays the wish to become associated with Allah Ta'ālā in this attribute belongs to Hell).

And in another Ḥadīth the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said, "On the day of Qiyāmah, arrogant people will be raised as humans scaled down to the size of tiny ants under the shadow of disgrace descending from all sides. They will be driven to a prison of Hell called Bulas. It will be surrounded with blazing fire, the highest around, and they will be drinking pus and blood excreted by the inmates of Hell to quench their thirst." (Tirmidhī on the authority of 'Amr ibn Shu'aib, he from his

father, he from his grandfather - Maẓharī)

And speaking from the pulpit, Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ said, "I have heard from the Holy Prophet ﷺ that a person who takes to humility, Allah Ta'ālā elevates him to higher ranks following which he is, though, insignificant in his own sight, but he is great in the sight of everybody else. And whoever waxes proud, him Allah Ta'ālā puts to disgrace following which he is, though, great in his own sight but he is, in the sight of people, worse than a dog and pig." (Maẓharī)

After having described details of the injunctions appearing above, it was said in the last verse: كُلُّ ذٰلِكَ كَانَ سَيِّئُهٗ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ مَكْرُوْهًا (That which is evil, of all these, is detestable in the sight of your Lord - 38).

As for what has been forbidden in the said injunctions, their repugnance is obvious. But, within these there are some commandments where rights of parents and relatives have been enjoined or fulfillment of promises has been made mandatory. Here too, the purpose is to avoid doing the opposite of it, like hurting parents, breaking off from relatives and going back on solemn promises. Since all these things are *ḥarām* or reprehensible, therefore, it has been called *'makrūh'* in a general sense of 'detestable' which includes the *ḥarām* and *makrūh* both. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Note

The injunctions described in the fifteen verses cited above are, in a way, the explanation of the effort acceptable in the sight of Allah mentioned in: وَسَعٰى لَهَا سَعْيَهَا (and makes effort for it as due - 19). There it was said that not every effort is acceptable with Allah. Instead, the effort made in accordance with the Sunnah and teaching of the Holy Prophet ﷺ is the only one acceptable with Him. Main divisions of such acceptable effort have been mentioned in these injunctions which take up the rights of Allah first and then the rights of the servants of Allah.

A gist of Torah in fifteen verses

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ﷺ said that the commandments of the entire Torah have been reduced to fifteen verses of Sūrah Banī

Isrā'īl. (Maẓharī)

Verses 39 - 44

ذٰلِكَ مِمَّآ اَوْحٰى اِلَيْكَ رَبُّكَ مِنَ الْحِكْمَةِ ؕ وَلَا تَجْعَلْ مَعَ اللّٰهِ اِلٰهًا
اٰخَرَ فَتُلْقٰى فِىْ جَهَنَّمَ مَلُوْمًا مَّدْحُوْرًا ﴿٣٩﴾ اَفَاَصْفٰكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ بِالْبَنِيْنَ
وَاتَّخَذَ مِنَ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ اِنَاثًا ؕ اِنَّكُمْ لَتَقُوْلُوْنَ قَوْلًا عَظِيْمًا ﴿٤٠﴾ وَلَقَدْ
صَرَّفْنَا فِىْ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنِ لِيَذَّكَّرُوْا ؕ وَمَا يَزِيْدُهُمْ اِلَّا نُفُوْرًا ﴿٤١﴾ قُلْ
لَّوْ كَانَ مَعَهٗٓ اٰلِهَةٌ كَمَا يَقُوْلُوْنَ اِذًا لَّابْتَغَوْا اِلٰى ذِى الْعَرْشِ سَبِيْلًا
﴿٤٢﴾ سُبْحٰنَهٗ وَتَعٰلٰى عَمَّا يَقُوْلُوْنَ عُلُوًّا كَبِيْرًا ﴿٤٣﴾ تُسَبِّحُ لَهُ
السَّمٰوٰتُ السَّبْعُ وَالْاَرْضُ وَمَنْ فِيْهِنَّ ؕ وَاِنْ مِّنْ شَىْءٍ اِلَّا يُسَبِّحُ
بِحَمْدِهٖ وَلٰكِنْ لَّا تَفْقَهُوْنَ تَسْبِيْحَهُمْ ؕ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ حَلِيْمًا غَفُوْرًا ﴿٤٤﴾

This is part of the Wisdom your Lord has revealed to you. And do not set up any other god along with Allah, lest you should be thrown into Jahannam, blamed, rejected. [39]

Is it, then, that your Lord has chosen you to have sons and has Himself taken females from among the angels? Surely, you are saying something terrible. [40]

And surely, We have explained things in various ways in this Qur'ān, so that they may take advice - and it increases nothing in them but aversion. [41]

Say, 'Had there been other gods along with Him', as they say, 'then they would have found out a way to the Lord of the Throne'. [42] **Pure is He, and Exalted, immensely above what they say.** [43]

All the seven skies and the earth and all those therein extol His purity. And there is not a single thing that does not extol His purity and praise, but you do not understand their extolling. Surely He is Forbearing, Most-Forgiving. [44]

Commentary

According to the proof of Tauḥīd (the Oneness of Allah) given in the verse: إِذًا لَّابْتَغَوْا إِلَىٰ ذِي الْعَرْشِ سَبِيلًا (then they would have found out a way to the Lord of the Throne - 42), Allah alone is the creator, owner and master of the entire universe. The argument is if it was not so and He had other partners in this godhead, differences would have necessarily emerged among them. And, in the eventuality of a difference, the whole universal system would have gone to ruins - because, ever abiding peace among them is habitually impossible. Though, this argument has been enunciated here in a prohibitive manner, but there are books of Scholastic Theology ('Ilm al-Kalām) where the logical rationale behind this argument has also been described in great details. The learned may consult these at their discretion.

The meaning of Tasbīḥ (glorification of Allah) said by the heavens and the earth and everything present therein

Among these, the Tasbīḥ of Allah said by all angels and believing *jinn* and human beings is self-evident. Everyone knows that. As for disbelieving human beings and the *jinn,* they obviously do not say it. Similarly, there are other things in this universe about which it is said that they are insensate, devoid of reason and intelligence. How do we rationalize their act of saying Tasbīḥ? Some 'Ulamā' say that their Tasbīḥ is circumstantial, state-articulated, the testimony of their state of being - because, the collective condition of everything other than Allah Ta'ālā is telling us that it is neither permanent existence-wise nor survival-wise. This whole ongoing condition has been activated under the power and control of some supreme power - this testimony is its Tasbīḥ.

But, other investigative scholars say that volitional Tasbīḥ of Allah is particular with angels and believing *jinns* and human beings. But, in terms of the state of His orientation towards what He has created, Allah Ta'ālā has cast every particle of this universe into the mould of a chanter of His glory. As regards those who do not believe, or do not believe in institutional religion, they too generally subscribe to God and His greatness. Then, there are materialists, atheists, and modern-day communists who do not obviously subscribe to the existence of God. But, the

truth of the matter is that the very existence of theirs, inclusive of all that constitutes it, is compulsively busy glorifying Allah - just as trees, rocks and dust and a zillion other things are busy recounting the glory of the most true Allah. But, this act of glorification, this Tasbīḥ they are all engaged in, is built-in, compulsively ingrained and is responding to the call of the creational imperative. Common people do not hear it. The statement of the Qur'ān: وَلٰكِنْ لَّاتَفْقَهُوْنَ تَسْبِيْحَهُمْ (but you do not understand their extolling [the act of glorifying Allah] - 17:44) proves that this originally and elementally ingrained act of extolling Allah performed by everything en masse is something common people cannot understand. As far as circumstantially discernable act of extolling is concerned, intelligent people can identify it readily. This tells us that the act of extolling we are talking about is not simply a testimony of the incumbent's state of existence in the universe. It is real - though, beyond our comprehension. (As mentioned by al-Qurṭubī)

As for the phenomenon of pebbles saying *tasbīḥ* (glory be to Allah) in the blessed hand of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and which was clearly heard by the noble Ṣaḥābah, it is obviously a miracle. But, Shaykh Jalāluddīn as-Suyūṭī while explaining this Ḥadīth in al-Khaṣāiṣ al-Kubrā has said that pebbles saying *tasbīḥ* is not the miracle of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. As regards pebbles, they say *tasbīḥ* wherever they are. In fact, what is his miracle is that once the pebbles were in his blessed hand that *tasbīḥ* said by them became audible.

Imām al-Qurṭubī has declared this refinement as weightier and has supported it with many proofs from the Qur'ān, and Sunnah. For example, it was said about Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام in Sūrah Ṣād: اِنَّا سَخَّرْنَا الْجِبَالَ مَعَهٗ يُسَبِّحْنَ بِالْعَشِيِّ وَالْاِشْرَاقِ (We subjugated the mountains with him which used to glorify Allah, evening and morning - 48:18). And it was said about rocks in a verse of Sūrah al-Baqarah: وَاِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَهْبِطُ مِنْ خَشْيَةِ اللّٰهِ (and there are still others [rocks] which fall down in fear of Allah - 2:74). This proves that rocks have consciousness, sense and the fear of Allah. Then, refuting Christians calling Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام Son of God, it was said in a verse of Sūrah Maryam: وَتَخِرُّ الْجِبَالُ هَدًّا اَنْ دَعَوْا لِلرَّحْمٰنِ وَلَدًا (and the mountains fall down crumbling that they attribute to the Raḥmān [Most-Merciful

Allah] a son - 19:90,91). Again, it is evident that mountains crumbling in fear are indicative of their consciousness and sense. And once it is conceded that they have sense and consciousness, the saying of *tasbīḥ* by them should not be considered something improbable.

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ said, "a mountain says to the other mountain, 'say, O brother, has a man ever gone across you, someone who was good at remembering Allah?' If it says, 'yes,' this mountain is pleased with him." For his proof, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Mas'ūd recited the verse: وَقَالُوا اتَّخَذَ الرَّحْمٰنُ وَلَدًا (And they say, "the Raḥmān [Most-Merciful Allah] has taken a son" - 19:88). After that, he said, "this verse proves it that mountains are affected by listening to words of blasphemy (*kufr*) and are, thereupon, seized by fear. This being the truth, do you think that they listen to what is false and do not listen to what is true (*ḥaqq*), do not hear Allah being remembered (*dhikr*) and are not affected by it?" (Qurṭubī with reference to Raqā'iq ibn Mubārak) And the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "there is no *jinn,* man, tree, rock and common clod of earth that hears the call of the Muezzin (*mu'adhdhin*), and does not bear witness to his faith and righteousness on the day of Qiyāmah." (Mu'aṭṭā Imām Mālik and Sunan Ibn Mājah on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī ﷺ).

Imām al-Bukhārī رحمة الله عليه has reported on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ, who said, "we used to hear the sound of *tasbīḥ* (glory to Allah) said by the food when it was being eaten." And a variant appears in another report where it is said, "when we ate with the Holy Prophet ﷺ, we used to hear the sound of *tasbīḥ* said by the food." And as narrated by Sayyidnā Jābir ibn Samurah ﷺ, it appears in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "I know the rock of Makkah al-Mukarramah that used to say *'salām'* to me before the call of prophet-hood - and I know it even now." Some say, 'the reference is to al-Ḥajar al-Aswad.' Allah knows best.

Imām al-Qurṭubī رحمة الله عليه has said that Ḥadīth reports relating to such matters abound. As for the story of Usṭuwanah Hannānah (the dried tree serving as a column for support when the Holy Prophet ﷺ

gave his Khuṭbah in the Masjid), it is common knowledge among Muslims all over the world. When the Holy Prophet ﷺ bypassed it while starting to deliver his Khuṭbah from a regular *mimbar* (stepped-platform), the noble Ṣaḥābah heard the sound of wailing coming from it.

After all these reports, why should it remain so far out to realize that everything in the heavens and the earth has consciousness and sense and that everything really glorifies Allah. Ibrāhīm رحمه الله تعالى says that this *tasbīḥ* is universal. It includes the animate and the inanimate both. So much so that the least sound made by the panels of doors are not devoid of *tasbīḥ*. Imām al-Qurṭubī has said, 'If this glorification of Allah was a state-articulated *tasbīḥ*, why was it made so particular to Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام in the verse referred to a little earlier? A state-articulated *tasbīḥ* is something every discerning human being can sense out from everything. This makes it obvious that this *tasbīḥ* was spoken, verbally and audibly.

Verses 45 - 48

وَإِذَا قَرَأْتَ الْقُرْآنَ جَعَلْنَا بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ
حِجَابًا مَّسْتُورًا ﴿٤٥﴾ وَجَعَلْنَا عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ أَكِنَّةً أَن يَفْقَهُوهُ وَفِي
آذَانِهِمْ وَقْرًا ۚ وَإِذَا ذَكَرْتَ رَبَّكَ فِي الْقُرْآنِ وَحْدَهُ وَلَّوْا عَلَىٰ أَدْبَارِهِمْ
نُفُورًا ﴿٤٦﴾ نَّحْنُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَسْتَمِعُونَ بِهِ إِذْ يَسْتَمِعُونَ إِلَيْكَ وَإِذْ هُمْ
نَجْوَىٰ إِذْ يَقُولُ الظَّالِمُونَ إِن تَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا رَجُلًا مَّسْحُورًا ﴿٤٧﴾ انظُرْ
كَيْفَ ضَرَبُوا لَكَ الْأَمْثَالَ فَضَلُّوا فَلَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ سَبِيلًا ﴿٤٨﴾

And when you recite the Qur'ān, We place an invisible curtain between you and those who do not believe in the Hereafter. [45] **And We put covers on their hearts, so that they do not understand it, and deafness in their ears. And when you refer to your Lord alone in the Qur'ān, they turn their backs in aversion.** [46]

We are fully aware of what they listen for, when they lis-

ten to you, and when they are in secret consultation: when the transgressors say, "you are following none but a bewitched man." [47]

See how they have coined similes for you, so they have gone astray and cannot find a way. [48]

Commentary

Can Magic affect a Prophet?

A prophet being affected by magic is as possible as being affected by sickness. Therefore, blessed prophets are not devoid of or detached from human characteristics. For instance, they could be wounded, run temperature or feel pain. Similarly, they could also be affected by magic because, that too, is triggered by the influence of physical causes, such as those of the Jinn. And it also stands proved from Ḥadīth that there was an occasion when the Holy Prophet ﷺ was affected by magic. As for the disbelievers calling him 'bewitched' (*'masḥūr'*) in verse 47 which the Qur'ān has refuted for the reason that they really meant to call him 'insane.' (Bayān al-Qur'ān) Therefore, the Ḥadīth of magic is not contradictory.[1]

The subject taken up in the first two verses (45, 46) has a particular event as a background. According to al-Qurṭubī reporting on the authority of Sayyidnā Sa'id ibn Jubayr ﷺ, when Sūrah al-Masad/al-Lahab (111) beginning with: تَبَّتْ يَدَا أَبِي لَهَبٍ was revealed in the Qur'ān, it also condemned the wife of Abū Lahab. She went to the place where the Holy Prophet ﷺ used to sit with his Companions. At that time, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ﷺ was present there. Noticing her coming well ahead of her arrival, he said to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, "if you move away from here, it will be better. This woman has a sharp tongue. She will say things which may cause you pain." He said, "no, Allah Ta'ālā will put a curtain between me and her." So, she reached there but when she could not see the Holy Prophet ﷺ anywhere around, she turned towards Sayyidnā

1. Moreover, the magic or sorcery can affect a prophet only to cause a physical illness. It can never have an adverse effect on performing their functions as prophets. The disbelievers used to call the Holy Prophet ﷺ 'bewitched person' in this later sense which was totally impossible in his case, while the ḥadīth refers to the physical illness suffered by the Holy Prophet ﷺ which was caused by an act of magic. (Muhammad Taqi Usmani)

Abū Bakr ؓ and said, "your companion has satirized us in poetry." Sayyidnā Abū Bakr said, "By Allah, he is no composer of poetry, much less that of the kind in which people are satirized (*hajw*)." Thereupon, she left in a huff saying, "you are no more than a verifier for him." After she was gone, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ؓ submitted, "didn't she see you?" He said, "as long as she was here, an angel kept obstructing the view between me and her."

A Qur'ānic formula of remaining hidden from enemy sight

'On occasions when the Holy Prophet ﷺ wished to remain hidden from the sight of the Mushriks,' says Sayyidnā Ka'b ؓ, 'he would recite three verses of the Holy Qur'ān. Such was its effect that the disbelievers were unable to see him.' Those three verses are:

1. إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ أَكِنَّةً أَنْ يَفْقَهُوهُ وَفِي آذَانِهِمْ وَقْرًا (Surely, We have put covers on their hearts, so that they do not understand it, and deafness in their ears - Sūrah al-Kahf, 18:57).
2. أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ طَبَعَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ وَسَمْعِهِمْ وَأَبْصَارِهِمْ (Those are the ones Allah has put a seal on whose hearts and hearing and vision - Sūrah an-Naḥl, 16:108).
3. أَفَرَءَيْتَ مَنِ اتَّخَذَ إِلَٰهَهُ هَوَاهُ وَأَضَلَّهُ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ وَخَتَمَ عَلَىٰ سَمْعِهِ وَقَلْبِهِ وَجَعَلَ عَلَىٰ بَصَرِهِ غِشَٰوَةً (Have you seen the one who has taken his own desire as god while Allah has let him go astray because of knowledge [his or His] and has set a seal upon his hearing and his heart and placed over his vision a veil - Sūrah al-Jāthiyah, 45:23).

Sayyidnā Ka'b ؓ says that he related this thing about the Holy Prophet ﷺ to a Syrian who had to go to adjoining Byzantium on a certain business. He went there and stayed for a long time until the local disbelievers started harassing him. When he escaped from there, they pursued him. At that time, he remembered that narrative and recited the three verses identified there. It so happened as if a screen was placed on their eyes why they could not see this person who was walking on the same pathway the enemies were passing by.

Imām Tha'labī says that he related this narrative of Sayyidnā Ka'b ؓ to a resident of the town of R'ay. It so happened that he was put under arrest by the disbelievers of Dailam. For some time he remained under detention with them. One day he got his chance to escape. They

pursued him, but this person also recited those three verses. The effect was immediate. Allah Ta'ālā screened their eyes in a manner that they were unable to see him - though, they were walking side by side with their clothes touching his clothes.

Imām al-Qurṭubī says that the verses from Sūrah Yā Sīn which were recited by the Holy Prophet ﷺ at the time of Hijrah may also be added to the three versed cited above. This was when the Mushsriks of Makkah had besieged his house. He recited those verses and went right through them. In fact, he went by throwing dust on their heads and none of them knew anything about it. Those verses of Sūrah Yā Sīn are:

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

يٰسٓ ﴿١﴾ وَالْقُرْاٰنِ الْحَكِيْمِ ﴿٢﴾ اِنَّكَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ ﴿٣﴾ عَلٰى صِرَاطٍ
مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ ﴿٤﴾ تَنْزِيْلَ الْعَزِيْزِ الرَّحِيْمِ ﴿٥﴾ لِتُنْذِرَ قَوْمًا مَّآ اُنْذِرَ اٰبَآؤُهُمْ فَهُمْ
غٰفِلُوْنَ ﴿٦﴾ لَقَدْ حَقَّ الْقَوْلُ عَلٰٓى اَكْثَرِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٧﴾ اِنَّا جَعَلْنَا فِيْٓ
اَعْنَاقِهِمْ اَغْلٰلًا فَهِيَ اِلَى الْاَذْقَانِ فَهُمْ مُّقْمَحُوْنَ ﴿٨﴾ وَجَعَلْنَا مِنْۢ بَيْنِ
اَيْدِيْهِمْ سَدًّا وَّمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ سَدًّا فَاَغْشَيْنٰهُمْ فَهُمْ لَا يُبْصِرُوْنَ ﴿٩﴾

With the name of Allah, the Most-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Yā Sīn. By the wise Qur'ān, surely you [O Muhammad] are from among the messengers, on a straight path. [This is] a revelation of the Mighty, the Very Merciful, that you may warn a people whose forefathers were not warned, so they are unaware. The word has already taken effect against most of them, so they do not believe. Surely, We have placed shackles on their necks reaching down to their chins, so they are with heads forced high up. And We have placed before them an obstruction and behind them an obstruction and covered them, so they do not see - Sūrah Yā Sīn, 36: 1-9)

Imām al-Qurṭubī says that he himself went through an incident in the Manthūr Castle of al-Qarṭubah in his own country of al-Andalūs (Spain). I ran in front of the enemy and sat in a corner. The enemy sent two horsemen after me. I was on open grounds. There was nothing to obstruct the view between us. But, I was reciting these verses of Sūrah Yā Sīn. Both these horsemen passed by me. Then they went back towards where they had come from, saying, 'this person must be some devil,' be-

cause they could not see me. Allah Taʿālā had turned them blind as far as I was concerned. (Qurṭubī)

Verses 49 - 52

وَقَالُوٓا ءَاِذَا كُنَّا عِظَامًا وَّرُفَاتًا ءَاِنَّا لَمَبْعُوْثُوْنَ خَلْقًا جَدِيْدًا ﴿٤٩﴾ قُلْ
كُوْنُوْا حِجَارَةً اَوْ حَدِيْدًا ﴿٥٠﴾ اَوْ خَلْقًا مِّمَّا يَكْبُرُ فِيْ صُدُوْرِكُمْ ۚ
فَسَيَقُوْلُوْنَ مَنْ يُّعِيْدُنَا ۭ قُلِ الَّذِيْ فَطَرَكُمْ اَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ ۚ فَسَيُنْغِضُوْنَ
اِلَيْكَ رُءُوْسَهُمْ وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ مَتٰى هُوَ ۭ قُلْ عَسٰٓى اَنْ يَّكُوْنَ قَرِيْبًا ﴿٥١﴾
يَوْمَ يَدْعُوْكُمْ فَتَسْتَجِيْبُوْنَ بِحَمْدِهٖ وَتَظُنُّوْنَ اِنْ لَّبِثْتُمْ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا ﴿٥٢﴾

And they say, "Once we are reduced to bones and dust, is it then that we shall be raised, created anew?" [49] **Say, "Be you stones or iron** [50] **or any creation you deem harder in your hearts." Thereupon they will ask, "Who will bring us back?" Say, "The One who created you the first time." So, they will shake their heads before you and say, "When shall that be?" Say, "May be, it is near."** [51] **(It will be) on a day when He will call you, and you will respond praising Him and you will think you did not stay (on the earth) but for a short while.** [52]

Commentary

The word: يَدْعُوْكُمْ (He will call you) in: يَوْمَ يَدْعُوْكُمْ فَتَسْتَجِيْبُوْنَ بِحَمْدِهٖ (on a day when He will call you, and you will respond praising Him - 52) is a derivation from: دُعَاء (*duʿā'*) which means to call out for someone by announcing it vocally. The sense is that the day when Allah Taʿālā will call everyone to come to the plains of Resurrection, this calling will be through Angel Isrāfīl. When he sounds the second trumpet, the dead will come alive and assemble on the plains of Resurrection. It is also possible that, once alive, a call goes through to all of them to assemble there. (Qurṭubī)

In a Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "On the day of Qiyāmah, you will be called out with your name and the name of your father, therefore, give yourself good names (avoiding the absurd ones)." (Qurṭubī)

Even disbelievers will rise praising Allah on the day of Resurrection

The word: إستجابة (*istijābah*) in: فتستجيبون بحمده (and you will respond praising Him - 52) means to respond on being called by someone and be present before him. The sense is 'when you will be called to present yourselves on the plains of Resurrection, all of you will obey that call and assemble there. The word: بحمده (*biḥamdihī*: praising Him) is the state of the nominative pronoun in: تستجيبون (*tastajibūn*: you will respond) which releases the sense of *ḥāmidīn* (حامدين) that is, those praising Him. Thus, the outcome is that all of them will present themselves praising Allah while coming to those fateful plains.

As outwardly obvious, the verse does seem to indicate that this will be the state of all, believers or disbelievers - they both will rise praising Allah. But, the real addressees here are the disbelievers. It is about them that it is being said they all will rise praising Allah. From among Tafsīr authorities, Sayyidnā Sa'īd ibn Jubayr رحمه الله has said that the disbelievers too will rise from their graves saying: سبحانك وبحمدك (Pure are You and to You belong all praises), but their act of praising at that hour will be of no use to them. (Qurṭubī) The reason is not far to see. When these people see life after death, the words of praise for Allah will escape their mouth involuntarily. This will be no deed deserving recompense.

Some commentators have said that this state has been particularized with believers. They argue that, regarding the disbelievers, the Qur'ān has only this to say: (1) When they rise, they will say, 'يويلنا من بعثنا من مرقدنا' (Woe be to us! Who made us rise from our resting-place? - Sūrah Yā Sīn, 36:52). (2) And according to another verse, they will say, 'يحسرتى على ما فرطت في جنب الله' (O my remorse [is boundless] over what I have neglected on the side of [obedience to] Allah! - Sūrah az-Zumar, 39:56).

But, the truth of the matter is that there is no likelihood of a contradiction between these two sayings. May be, in the beginning, all rise praising. Later, when disbelievers are separated from believers as said in Sūrah Yā Sīn: وامتازوا اليوم أيها المجرمون (But today, O criminals, you stand out distinctly apart - 36:59), they will also say what appears in the cited

verses. Then, it stands proved from many explications of the Qur'ān, and Sunnah that stations of Resurrection will be different with a corresponding difference in the states and conditions of people in each of these. Imām al-Qurṭubī has said that rising in Resurrection will begin with the praise of Allah with everyone doing it when rising and on it will end all matters. This is as it was already said: وَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ بِالْحَقِّ وَ قِيْلَ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ (And matters between them have been settled in accordance with the truth and it was said: All praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds - az-Zumar, 39:75)

Verses 53 - 55

وَقُلْ لِّعِبَادِيْ يَقُوْلُوا الَّتِيْ هِيَ اَحْسَنُ ؕ اِنَّ الشَّيْطٰنَ يَنْزَغُ بَيْنَهُمْ ؕ اِنَّ الشَّيْطٰنَ كَانَ لِلْاِنْسَانِ عَدُوًّا مُّبِيْنًا ﴿۵۳﴾ رَبُّكُمْ اَعْلَمُ بِكُمْ ؕ اِنْ يَّشَاْ يَرْحَمْكُمْ اَوْ اِنْ يَّشَاْ يُعَذِّبْكُمْ ؕ وَمَآ اَرْسَلْنٰكَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَكِيْلًا ﴿۵۴﴾ وَرَبُّكَ اَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ وَلَقَدْ فَضَّلْنَا بَعْضَ النَّبِيّٖنَ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ وَّاٰتَيْنَا دَاوٗدَ زَبُوْرًا ﴿۵۵﴾

And tell My servants that they should speak that which is best. Surely, Satan creates discord among them. Indeed, Satan is an open enemy to mankind. [53]

Your Lord knows you best. If He so wills, He will have mercy on you and if He so wills, He will punish you. And We have not sent you to be responsible for them. [54]

And your Lord knows best about all those in the heavens and the earth. And We have certainly granted excellence to some prophets over the others. And We gave Dāwūd the Zabūr (the Psalms). [55]

Commentary

Using foul or harsh language is not correct, even against infidels

The first verse (53) prohibits Muslims from talking harshly to disbelievers. It means that a hard line should not be taken unnecessarily, and should there be the need, even killing would be in order - as succinctly

put in two lines of Persian poetry:

که بے حکم شرع آب خوردن خطاست   وگر خون بفتوٰی بریزی رواست

> Whereas, without an injunction of the Sharī'ah, to drink water is a sin,
>
> In another case, to shed blood under Fatwā is permissible!

Since it is possible to suppress the aggressive might of disbelievers and their hostility to Islām through fighting and killing (as an inevitable measure of defense), therefore, it is allowed. However, by using foul language and harsh words, neither a castle stands conquered nor anyone guided right, therefore, it has been prohibited. Imām al-Qurṭubī said that this verse was revealed in the background of an event relating to Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ. It so happened that someone used foul language against Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ who retaliated harshly and wanted to kill him. This posed the danger of a war breaking out between their two tribes. Thereupon, this verse was revealed.

And according to the interpretation of Imām al-Qurṭubī, this verse contains a guideline for Muslims as to how they should address each other. It suggests that they should not speak harshly at the time of mutual difference, for this is a trap door through which the Shaiṭān pushes them into mutual infighting and disorder.

That Zabūr (the Psalms) has been mentioned particularly in the last sentence of verse 55: وَاٰتَيْنَا دَاوٗدَ زَبُوْرًا (And We gave Dāwūd the Zabūr) has been done, perhaps, because Zabūr reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ will be a ruler along with being a messenger and prophet. This is as it appears in the Qur'ān: وَلَقَدْ كَتَبْنَا فِى الزَّبُوْرِ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ الذِّكْرِ اَنَّ الْاَرْضَ يَرِثُهَا عِبَادِىَ الصّٰلِحُوْنَ (And We have already written in the Zabūr, after the [previous] mention, that the land is inherited by My righteous servants - al-Anbiyā', 21:105).

At this stage, Imām al-Baghawī says in his Tafsīr that Zabūr is a book of Allah revealed to Sayyidnā Dāwūd ﷺ. It has one hundred and fifty *sūrahs* or chapters and all *sūrahs* are restricted to praises of Allah and prayers to Him. The areas of lawful and unlawful, obligations and limits have not been taken up there.

Verses 56 - 58

قُلِ ادْعُوا الَّذِينَ زَعَمْتُم مِّن دُونِهِ فَلَا يَمْلِكُونَ كَشْفَ الضُّرِّ عَنكُمْ وَلَا تَحْوِيلًا ﴿٥٦﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ يَبْتَغُونَ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمُ الْوَسِيلَةَ أَيُّهُمْ أَقْرَبُ وَيَرْجُونَ رَحْمَتَهُ وَيَخَافُونَ عَذَابَهُ ۚ إِنَّ عَذَابَ رَبِّكَ كَانَ مَحْذُورًا ﴿٥٧﴾ وَإِن مِّن قَرْيَةٍ إِلَّا نَحْنُ مُهْلِكُوهَا قَبْلَ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ أَوْ مُعَذِّبُوهَا عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا ۚ كَانَ ذَٰلِكَ فِي الْكِتَابِ مَسْطُورًا ﴿٥٨﴾

Say, "Call those whom you assume (to be gods), besides Him, while they have no power to remove distress from you nor to shift it." [56]

And those whom they invoke, do themselves seek the means of closeness to their Lord as to which of them is the closest, and they hope for His Mercy and fear His punishment. Indeed, the punishment of your Lord is to be feared. [57]

And there is no town but We are to destroy it before the Doomsday or punish it with severe punishment. That is what stands written in the Book. [58]

Commentary

The word *'al-wasīlah'* in: يَبْتَغُونَ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمُ الْوَسِيلَةَ (seek the means of closeness to their Lord - 57) conveys the sense of that which is used as a means of reaching someone. As for reaching Allah, the *wasīlah* or means is to always keep the pleasure of Allah in sight when learning or doing anything while adhering to the injunctions of the *Sharī'ah* strictly. Thus, the sense of the sentence is that all of them are seeking the closeness of Allah Ta'ālā through their righteous deeds.

About the sentence which follows immediately after: يَرْجُونَ رَحْمَتَهُ وَيَخَافُونَ عَذَابَهُ (hope for His Mercy and fear His punishment - 57), Sahl ibn 'Abdullāh said: Hope and Fear, that is, hoping for mercy from Allah as well as fearing Him are two different states one is in. When they stay at par, one keeps on course, correct and stable. And if any one of the two overcomes the other, one finds the equilibrium of his spiritual state subjected to disorder to the measure of that imbalance. (Qurṭubī)

Verses 59 - 60

وَمَا مَنَعَنَآ اَنْ نُّرْسِلَ بِالْاٰيٰتِ اِلَّآ اَنْ كَذَّبَ بِهَا الْاَوَّلُوْنَ ۭ وَاٰتَيْنَا ثَمُوْدَ النَّاقَةَ مُبْصِرَةً فَظَلَمُوْا بِهَا ۭ وَمَا نُرْسِلُ بِالْاٰيٰتِ اِلَّا تَخْوِيْفًا ﴿٥٩﴾ وَاِذْ قُلْنَا لَكَ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ اَحَاطَ بِالنَّاسِ ۭ وَمَا جَعَلْنَا الرُّءْيَا الَّتِيْٓ اَرَيْنٰكَ اِلَّا فِتْنَةً لِّلنَّاسِ وَالشَّجَرَةَ الْمَلْعُوْنَةَ فِي الْقُرْاٰنِ ۭ وَنُخَوِّفُهُمْ ۙ فَمَا يَزِيْدُهُمْ اِلَّا طُغْيَانًا كَبِيْرًا ﴿٦٠﴾

And nothing made us refrain from sending the signs except that the earlier people had belied them. And We gave Thamūd the she-camel, an eye-opener, then they did wrong to her. And We do not send signs but to warn. [59]

And (remember) when We said to you that your Lord encompasses all humans. And We did not make the scene but We showed to you a test for the people - and the tree cursed in the Qur'ān also. And We warn them, yet it adds to nothing but their enormous rebellion. [60]

Commentary

The word *'fitnah'* (فتنه) appearing in verse 60: وَمَا جَعَلْنَا الرُّءْيَا الَّتِيْٓ اَرَيْنٰكَ اِلَّا فِتْنَةً لِّلنَّاسِ (And We showed you the scene [in the Night of Ascent - al-Mi'rāj] only to make it a test for the people) is used in the Arabic language to convey many different meanings. It could mean falling into error and going astray, or trial or test or some disorder or upheaval as well. At this place, the probability of all these meanings exists. Early Tafsīr authorities - Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah, Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah, Ḥasan, Mujāhid and others - have taken *'fitnah'* as carrying the last sense given above. They have said that this *'fitnah'* was that of apostacy (*Irtidād*) which relates to the time when the Holy Prophet ﷺ told people about Mi'rāj, how he went on his nocturnal journey to Baitul-Maqdis, to the heavens from there and his return to Makkah al-Mukarramah before dawn. There were many neo-Muslims who had yet to become staunch in their faith fell into the error of belying his statement and turned apostates. (Qurṭubī)

It also stands proved from this event that the word 'رُءْيا' (*ru'ya*) is though also used in the Arabic language in the sense of dream but, at

this place, what is being recounted is no matter of some dream. Had that been the case, there was no reason why people would become apostates. Dreams are dreams. Everyone can see such dreams. In fact, the purpose of employing the word: رُءْيَا (*ru'ya*) at this place is to show that the marvel was witnessed while awake. While commenting on this verse, some commentators have interpreted it to be referring to other events too besides the event of Mi'rāj. But, they do not apply here as a whole. Therefore, the majority of commentators have declared the event of Mi'rāj alone as the relevant subject of this verse. (As described in detail by al-Qurṭubī)

Verses 61- 65

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ اسْجُدُوْا لِاٰدَمَ فَسَجَدُوْٓا اِلَّآ اِبْلِيْسَ ؕ قَالَ ءَاَسْجُدُ لِمَنْ خَلَقْتَ طِيْنًا ﴿٦١﴾ قَالَ اَرَءَيْتَكَ هٰذَا الَّذِىْ كَرَّمْتَ عَلَىَّ ۫ لَئِنْ اَخَّرْتَنِ اِلٰى يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ لَاَحْتَنِكَنَّ ذُرِّيَّتَهٗٓ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا ﴿٦٢﴾ قَالَ اذْهَبْ فَمَنْ تَبِعَكَ مِنْهُمْ فَاِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ جَزَآؤُكُمْ جَزَآءً مَّوْفُوْرًا ﴿٦٣﴾ وَاسْتَفْزِزْ مَنِ اسْتَطَعْتَ مِنْهُمْ بِصَوْتِكَ وَاَجْلِبْ عَلَيْهِمْ بِخَيْلِكَ وَرَجِلِكَ وَشَارِكْهُمْ فِى الْاَمْوَالِ وَالْاَوْلَادِ وَعِدْهُمْ ؕ وَمَا يَعِدُهُمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ اِلَّا غُرُوْرًا ﴿٦٤﴾ اِنَّ عِبَادِىْ لَيْسَ لَكَ عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطٰنٌ ؕ وَكَفٰى بِرَبِّكَ وَكِيْلًا ﴿٦٥﴾

And (remember) when We said to the angels, "Prostrate before 'Ādam." So, they prostrated, except Iblīs (Satan). He said, "Shall I prostrate before the one You have created from mud?" [61] **He added, "Tell me, this one whom You have honoured above me; if You give me respite till the Doomsday, I shall subdue his progeny, except a few of them."** [62] **He (Allah) said, " Go then, for whoever of them follows you, the Hell shall be the recompense of you all - a full recompense.** [63] **And entice with your voice those of them you can, and rally against them your horsemen and your footmen, and share with them in their wealth and their children, and make promises to them" - and Satan promises them nothing but delusion -**

[64] **"As for My servants, you have no control over them. And your Lord is enough to look after (everything)."** [65]

Commentary

The word: لَأَحْتَنِكَنَّ (subdue) in verse 62 is from: اِحْتِنَاك (*ihtinak*) which means to exterminate or uproot something, or to subdue and overpower it completely. (Qurtubi) The word: وَاسْتَفْزِزْ (and entice) in verse 64 is from اِسْتِفْزَاز (*istifzaz*) which basically means to cut off or to tear away from and at this place it means to tear away from the path of truth. This is followed by صَوْتِ (with your voice). Sawt (صَوْت), the Arabic word for voice is well known. What is the voice of Satan? Sayyidna 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas says: The voices of songs, musical instruments and the hullabaloo of fun and games are the voices of Satan that he employs to tear people away from the path of truth. (Qurtubi) This tells us that (singing or listening to) music and (playing or listening to) musical instruments are prohibited. (Qurtubi)

While refusing to prostrate before Sayyidna 'Adam عليه السلام, Iblis (the Satan) had said two things:

(1) That 'Adam was created from mud and he was from fire and that there was no reason why mud was given precedence over fire. This question was an effort to find out the wisdom of the order given to him before he could comply with the Divine command - something the one so commanded has no right to ask. That Allah, the Exalted, would let the commanded one have the right to demand the wisdom of His command is far out specially when we see in our everyday life that human beings themselves would not give their servant the right to say no to them. Think of a master asking his servants to do something and the servant demanding the master that he should first explain the wisdom of that assignment. Therefore, this question was considered unworthy of an answer and no answer was given. In addition to that, the answer is already obvious. Giving precedence to something over the other is the prerogative of the Being that created and nurtured everyone. Whenever and whatever He declares to be superior becomes exactly so.

(2) Secondly, he had said if he was given respite till the day of Qiyamah, he will mislead the entire progeny of 'Adam, except a few of them. That Allah Ta'ala has elected to answer in the later verses. He

said that the Satan will have no control over His sincere servants even if he were to rally his entire forces against them and as for the insincere who fall into his trap, they will meet the same fate as his, all consigned to Hell. When this verse (64) mentions the horsemen and footmen of the Satanic army, it does not necessarily mean that the Satan actually has combat support in that formation. In fact, this is a manner of referring to the full force and power of the Satan. And if the Satan does have horsemen and footmen actually, even that too cannot be denied. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ﷺ said: Those who come out in support of disbelief and sin, horsemen or footmen, they are nothing but the army of the Satan. Now remains the question as to how the Satan came to know that he would succeed in enticing and misleading the progeny of 'Ādam, the basis on which he claimed that he will subdue them. There are two possibilities. Perhaps, by looking at the ingredients that went into the making of man, he had gathered that man would be desire-prone and it would not be difficult to entice him successfully. And then, it is also not far out to believe that his very claim was nothing but a bland lie.

As for the sense of: وَشَارِكْهُمْ فِي الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَوْلَادِ (and share with them in their wealth and their children - 64), Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ﷺ said: Wealth and property acquired by false, impermissible and unlawful means or spent on what is *ḥarām* is the sharing of the Satan in it. As for the sharing of the Satan in children, it could either be through illegitimacy, or by naming them like disbelievers and polytheists , or by indulging in polytheistic customs to ensure their security, or by taking to *ḥarām* sources of income to bring them up. (Qurṭubī)

Verses 66 - 70

رَبُّكُمُ الَّذِي يُزْجِي لَكُمُ الْفُلْكَ فِي الْبَحْرِ لِتَبْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ ۚ إِنَّهُ كَانَ بِكُمْ رَحِيمًا ﴿٦٦﴾ وَإِذَا مَسَّكُمُ الضُّرُّ فِي الْبَحْرِ ضَلَّ مَنْ تَدْعُونَ إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ ۖ فَلَمَّا نَجَّاكُمْ إِلَى الْبَرِّ أَعْرَضْتُمْ ۚ وَكَانَ الْإِنْسَانُ كَفُورًا ﴿٦٧﴾ أَفَأَمِنْتُمْ أَنْ يَخْسِفَ بِكُمْ جَانِبَ الْبَرِّ أَوْ يُرْسِلَ عَلَيْكُمْ حَاصِبًا ثُمَّ

لَاتَجِدُوْا لَكُمْ وَكِيْلًا ﴿٦٨﴾ اَمْ اَمِنْتُمْ اَنْ يُّعِيْدَكُمْ فِيْهِ تَارَةً اُخْرٰى فَيُرْسِلَ عَلَيْكُمْ قَاصِفًا مِّنَ الرِّيْحِ فَيُغْرِقَكُمْ بِمَا كَفَرْتُمْ ۙ ثُمَّ لَاتَجِدُوْا لَكُمْ عَلَيْنَا بِهٖ تَبِيْعًا ﴿٦٩﴾ وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِيْٓ اٰدَمَ وَحَمَلْنٰهُمْ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَرَزَقْنٰهُمْ مِّنَ الطَّيِّبٰتِ وَفَضَّلْنٰهُمْ عَلٰى كَثِيْرٍ مِّمَّنْ خَلَقْنَا تَفْضِيْلًا ﴿٧٠﴾

Your Lord is the One who causes ships to sail for you through the sea, so that you may go in quest of His bounty; surely, He is Ever Merciful for you. [66]

And when you face a hardship at sea, forgotten are those whom you used to invoke, except Him (Allah). Then, once He brings you safe to the land, you turn away (from Him). And man is so ungrateful. [67] **Do you, then, feel secure from that He makes a part of the land sink down along with you, or that He sends down a rain of stones on you, whereupon you will find no one to protect you?** [68] **Or, do you feel secure from that He takes you back to it (the sea) once again, and sends a heavy storm of wind upon you which drowns you for your disbelief, whereupon you will find no one to pursue your case against Us?** [69]

And We bestowed dignity on the children of 'Ādam and provided them with rides on the land and in the sea, and provided them with a variety of good things and made them much superior to many of those We created. [70]

Commentary

Why are the children of 'Ādam superior?

The last of the verses cited above mentions the superiority of the children of 'Adam over most of the Divine creation. Here, we have to consider two things: (1) What are the attributes and reasons of this superiority? (2) What is the sense of the statement in the verse: 'made them much superior to many of those We created'?

(1) The first question can be answered in detail by saying that Allah Ta'ālā has blessed the children of 'Ādam with such multi-dimensional attributes as are not found in many of those He has created. The beauty of

form and features, the balance of body, the balance of temperament and the balance of height and built are good examples. These attributes bestowed on human beings are not found in other living forms in that balanced measure. In addition to that, they have been endowed with distinct reason and intelligence through which they get things done up and down in the universe of their experience. Allah Ta'ālā has given them the built-in capability to compound and manufacture, from out of what has been Divinely created, materials and things which serve them in living, moving, eating and wearing in all sorts of ways.

No less is their gift of communication, speech, comprehension, understanding and explanation. This remains unmatched by other living forms. Using signs and symbols to communicate what lies in one's heart and telling others what one thinks and feels through letters and writings are all manifestations of the signal human distinction. Some scholars have said that eating with the fingers of the hand is also a particular human attribute. Other than man, all animals eat with their mouth. The practice of compounding edibles with different things in order to make these delicious and beneficial is the way of human beings alone. Animals eat things that are single and simple. Some would eat raw meat, others would go by grass or some fruit. However, they all eat simples. It is man alone who prepares food through compounding all sorts of solids, liquids, spices and herbs (which has, in our day, assumed the status of the highly publicized art of cuisine). Then, there is the most pronounced superiority of reason and intelligence through which human beings are supposed to recognize their Creator and Master, find out what He likes and dislikes and do what He likes and avoid what He dislikes. Thus, in terms of reason and intelligence, the created have three kinds. Common animals have desires but no reason and intelligence (as we understand it). The angels have reason and intelligence, but do not have desires. Human beings have both. They have reason and intelligence as well as desires. This is the reason why, when he suppresses his desires through reason and intelligence and succeeds in saving himself from indulging in things disliked by Allah Ta'ālā, he reaches a station which is even higher than that of many angels.

(2) We can now turn to the sense of the statement that the children of 'Ādam were made much superior than many of those Allah created. As

for the superiority of the children of 'Ādam over all created forms in the world, higher and lower, and all animals, it cannot be disputed by anyone. Similarly, the Jinn are like human beings in terms of reason and intelligence. That human beings are superior to them as well is accepted by all. What remains now is the case of angels. Who is superior, man or angel? What can be authentically said about it is that common righteous believers among human beings, such as the men of Allah, are superior to angels in general. But, special angels, such as Jibra'īl and Mikā'īl and others, are superior to the common righteous believers while special believers, such as the blessed prophets عليهم السلام, are superior even to special angels. As far as disbelievers and sinners among human beings are concerned, they just cannot be compared with angels. In fact, they are not even superior to animals in terms of the real purpose of life, that of seeking success through righteousness. About them, the Holy Qur'ān has already given its verdict: أُولَٰئِكَ كَالْأَنْعَامِ بَلْ هُمْ أَضَلُّ (They are like cattle. Rather, they are much more misled - 7:179) (Tafsīr Maẓharī). Allah knows best.

Verses 71 - 72

يَوْمَ نَدْعُوا كُلَّ أُنَاسٍ بِإِمَامِهِمْ ۖ فَمَنْ أُوتِيَ كِتَابَهُ بِيَمِينِهِ فَأُولَٰئِكَ يَقْرَءُونَ كِتَابَهُمْ وَلَا يُظْلَمُونَ فَتِيلًا ﴿٧١﴾ وَمَنْ كَانَ فِي هَٰذِهِ أَعْمَىٰ فَهُوَ فِي الْآخِرَةِ أَعْمَىٰ وَأَضَلُّ سَبِيلًا ﴿٧٢﴾

(Think of) the Day We will call every people with their books of deeds. So, whoever is given his book in his right hand, then, such people will read their book and they shall not be wronged even a bit. [71]

And whoever is blind in this (world) will be blind in the Hereafter and far more astray from the path. [72]

Commentary

The word: إِمَام (Imām) in the first sentence of verse 71: يَوْمَ نَدْعُوا كُلَّ أُنَاسٍ بِإِمَامِهِمْ translated as '(Think of) the Day We will call every people with their book of deeds' appears here in the sense of 'book' as in Sūrah Yā Sīn: وَكُلَّ شَيْءٍ أَحْصَيْنَاهُ فِي إِمَامٍ مُبِينٍ (and We have enumerated everything in a clear book - 36:12). Here, إِمَامٍ مُبِينٍ means a clear book. Then, *'kitāb'* is called *'imām'* for the reason that, in the event of some error or difference, one

turns to the book very much like turning to a religious leader who is followed. (Qurṭubī)

And it also appears from a Ḥadīth of Tirmidhī as narrated by Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ (Tirmidhī calls it Ḥasan Gharīb) that, *'imām'* in this verse means *'kitāb.'* The words of the Ḥadīth are given below:

يَوْمَ نَدْعُوا كُلَّ أُنَاسٍ بِإِمَامِهِمْ قَالَ يُدْعٰى اَحَدُهُمْ فَيُعْطٰى كِتَابَهُ بِيَمِيْنِهِ

Explaining the verse يَوْمَ نَدْعُوا كُلَّ أُنَاسٍ بِإِمَامِهِمْ (71), the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself said: One of them will be called and his book of deeds will be given in his right hand. (From a lengthy Ḥadīth)

It also stands established from this Ḥadīth that *'imām'* has been used here in the sense of 'book', and that *'kitāb'* signifies the 'book of deeds.' (Maulanā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī has, therefore, translated *'imām'* as the 'book of deeds')

Also reported from some commentators, including Sayyidnā 'Alī al-Murtaḍā ﷺ and Mujāhid, is the meaning of *'imām'* as religious leader. It means that everyone is to be called as the follower of a certain leader - whether they be blessed prophets or their deputies, the Shaykhs and the 'Ulamā', or leaders who have been inviting people to error and sin. (Qurṭubī)

Given this meaning, the sense of the verse would be that everyone will be called by the name of his or her leader and all those so called will be assembled at one place. For example, there will be the followers of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm ﷺ, the followers of Sayyidnā Mūsā and Sayyidnā 'Isā عليهما السلام and the followers of Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ. Then, possibly the names of those will also be called out who are their direct instructors or leaders (such as 'Ulamā' and religious guides).

The Book of Deeds

As it appears from several verses of the Holy Qur'ān, only disbelievers will be given the book of deeds in the left hand. This is as it is said in the verse: إِنَّهُ كَانَ لَا يُؤْمِنُ بِاللّٰهِ الْعَظِيْمِ (Indeed, he was not used to believing in Allah, the Great - al-Ḥāqqah, 69:33) and also in another verse: إِنَّهُ ظَنَّ أَنْ لَّنْ يَّحُوْرَ (Indeed, he surmised that he would never return - al-Inshiqāq, 84:14). In the first verse quoted above, faith has been negated explicitly while the second carries a denial of the Hereafter - which too is disbelief after all.

This comparative look tells us that those who shall get their book of deeds in the right hand will be the people of faith, pious or sinner. The believer will read his or her book of deeds in delight. In fact, the happy believer will have others read it too. This happiness will be because of having one's 'Īmān (faith) intact and because of deliverance from eternal punishment - though, punishment may also come for some deeds.

How the book of deeds will be given in the right or the left hand is something not mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān. But, the expression: تَطَايُرُالْكُتُبِ (causing the books fly) has appeared in some Aḥādīth (reported by Aḥmad on the authority of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا ascending to the Holy Prophet ﷺ). And in some narrations of Ḥadīth, it appears that all books of deeds will be there at one place under the 'Arsh (Throne). Then a wind will blow and cause these to fly and reach the hands of people in a manner that some will get it in their right hand and some others in the left. (Reported by al-'Uqailī on the authority of Sayyidnā Anas ؓ ascending to the Holy Prophet ﷺ) (Bayān al-Qur'ān from Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

Verses 73 - 77

وَإِنْ كَادُوا لَيَفْتِنُونَكَ عَنِ الَّذِيٓ أَوْحَيْنَآ إِلَيْكَ لِتَفْتَرِيَ عَلَيْنَا غَيْرَهُ ۖ
وَإِذًا لَّاتَّخَذُوكَ خَلِيلًا ﴿٧٣﴾ وَلَوْلَآ أَنْ ثَبَّتْنٰكَ لَقَدْ كِدْتَّ تَرْكَنُ
إِلَيْهِمْ شَيْـًٔا قَلِيلًا ﴿٧٤﴾ إِذًا لَّأَذَقْنٰكَ ضِعْفَ الْحَيٰوةِ وَضِعْفَ الْمَمَاتِ
ثُمَّ لَا تَجِدُ لَكَ عَلَيْنَا نَصِيرًا ﴿٧٥﴾ وَإِنْ كَادُوا لَيَسْتَفِزُّونَكَ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ
لِيُخْرِجُوكَ مِنْهَا وَإِذًا لَّا يَلْبَثُونَ خِلٰفَكَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴿٧٦﴾ سُنَّةَ مَنْ قَدْ
أَرْسَلْنَا قَبْلَكَ مِنْ رُّسُلِنَا وَلَا تَجِدُ لِسُنَّتِنَا تَحْوِيلًا ﴿٧٧﴾

And surely, they were about to tempt you away from what We have revealed to you, so that you forge something else in Our name, and in that case they would have certainly made you a friend. [73]

And had We not made you firm, it was likely that you would have inclined towards them a little. [74]

In that case, We would have surely made you taste a double (punishment) in life and a double (punishment) after

death, then you would not have found anyone to help you against Us. [75]

And they were likely to harass you in the land, so that they could expel you from there. And in that case, they would have not lived (there) after you, but a little. [76] **Such has been Our way with the messengers We sent before you. And you will find no reversal in Our way.** [77]

Commentary

Out of the verses appearing above, the first three relate to a particular event. To determine it precisely, Tafsīr Maẓharī carries some relevant reports. The event which is closer and more supportive in terms of the indicators set in the Qur'ān is what has been reported by Ibn Abī Ḥātim as based on a narrative of Sayyidnā Jubayr ibn Nufayr ﷺ. According to this report, some chiefs of the Quraysh of Makkah came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and said: 'If you have been really sent to us, you should remove these poor and broken down people from around you, for sitting with such people is a matter of insult for us. If you do that, we too will become your companions and friends.' When they said this, the Holy Prophet ﷺ somewhat leaned towards the idea that he might do something like that as suggested by them in the hope that they may, perhaps, become Muslims. Thereupon, this verse was revealed.

Through this verse, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was sounded that their suggestion was a *fitnah* and the friendship they were talking about was also a *fitnah* (a trial or test or a ruse to tempt him into creating discord in his ranks). Therefore, he should not accept it. After that, the text says: Had your Lord not been particular about your grooming and fortitude, it was not too far out that you could have come somewhat closer to tilting towards their proposal.

From this verse, says Tafsīr Maẓharī, it is clearly understood that there was just no probability of the Holy Prophet ﷺ ever tilting towards such absurd demands from the Quraysh disbelievers. Yes, coming close to tilting, and that too within a very insignificant limit, was probable. But, by making him *ma'ṣūm* (protected, infallible), Allah Ta'ālā saved him from drifting even to that limit. If we were to think about it, this verse provides a great proof of the highest moral disposition with which all prophets عليهم السلام were blessed. So, had there been even no shield of

prophetic infallibility, still such was the natural disposition of the Prophet of Islam that tilting towards the absurd proposal of disbelievers would have never been possible for him. However, there did exist the probability of his coming somewhat closer, in an insignificant measure, towards the act of tilting - something terminated by the prophetic infallibility.

After that, it was said: إِذًا لَّأَذَقْنٰكَ ضِعْفَ الْحَيٰوةِ وَضِعْفَ الْمَمَاتِ It means: Supposing the impossible, if you would have come closer to tilting towards their wrong move, your punishment would have been double in life and double after death (in the grave or the Hereafter, because even an insignificant error made by those close to Allah is considered to be very grave). What has been said here is almost the same as was said about the blessed wives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in Sūrah al-Aḥzāb: يٰنِسَآءَ النَّبِيِّ مَنْ يَّأْتِ مِنْكُنَّ بِفَاحِشَةٍ مُّبَيِّنَةٍ يُّضٰعَفْ لَهَا الْعَذَابُ ضِعْفَيْنِ (O wives of the Prophet, whoever of you should commit a clear act of immodesty, the punishment for her will be multiplied doubly - 33:30).

Istifzāz in: وَإِنْ كَادُوْا لَيَسْتَفِزُّوْنَكَ (And they were likely to harass you - 76) literally means to cut off, or tear away from, or to provoke into moving from a place. At this place, the sense is to expel the Holy Prophet ﷺ from his station at Makkah or Madīnah. The verse means: Had they done that, their punishment would have been that they themselves would have not been able to live there much longer after you. This is the description of another event. There are two reports about it. One event relates to Madīnah al-Ṭayyibah. The Jews of the city came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. They told him: 'O Abū al-Qāsim ﷺ, if you are true in your claim to be a prophet, you should go and live in Syria because the land of Syria is the land of al-Maḥshar (the Resurrection) and the land of prophets too.' The Holy Prophet ﷺ was somewhat impressed by what they said and when he traveled to Syria at the time of the battle of Tabūk, the idea of taking up residence in Syria was still on his mind. But, the revelation of the verse: وَإِنْ كَادُوْا لَيَسْتَفِزُّوْنَكَ (And they were likely to harass you - 76) at that time stopped him from doing so. After presenting this report, Ibn Kathīr has, however, declared it to be unsatisfactory.

As an alternate, he points out to another event which transpired in Makkah al-Mukarramah and which, according to him, is the point of reference in this verse for the fact that this Sūrah was Makkī provided a strong coherence for it. As the event goes, once the Quraysh disbelievers

intended to expel the Holy Prophet ﷺ from Makkah al-Mukarramah. Thereupon, Allah Ta'ālā revealed the verse: كَادُوا لَيَسْتَفِزُّوْنَكَ where the Quraysh disbelievers were warned that in the event they expelled the Holy Prophet ﷺ from Makkah, they too would not be sitting in Makkah in peace any longer. This is the event Ibn Kathīr considers to be the weightier choice as the point of reference in the verse. Then, he goes on to explain that this warning of the Holy Qur'ān was seen come true by the disbelievers of Makkah with their own eyes. When the Holy Prophet ﷺ migrated from Makkah al-Mukarramah, they were unable to sit there in peace even for a day. It was within a period of a year and six months that Allah Ta'ālā made them assemble on the plains of Badr where seventy of their chiefs were killed and their initial aggressive power was broken. Then came the final outcome of the battle of 'Uḥud which made them more awe-stricken, and the last confrontation of the battle of al-Aḥzāb virtually broke their back. It was in the eighth year of Hijrah that the Holy Prophet ﷺ conquered the whole of Makkah al-Mukarramah.

The last verse (77): سُنَّةَ مَنْ قَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا (Such has been Our way with the messengers We sent ...) tells us that, according to the customary way and law of Allah Ta'ālā, when a people expel their prophet from his homeland, or compel him to leave by scaring and harassing, then, those people too are not left to continue living there. They are visited by the punishment of Allah Ta'ālā.

Verses 78 - 82

أَقِمِ الصَّلٰوةَ لِدُلُوْكِ الشَّمْسِ إِلٰى غَسَقِ الَّيْلِ وَقُرْاٰنَ الْفَجْرِ ط إِنَّ قُرْاٰنَ
الْفَجْرِ كَانَ مَشْهُوْدًا ﴿٧٨﴾ وَمِنَ الَّيْلِ فَتَهَجَّدْ بِهٖ نَافِلَةً لَّكَ ق عَسٰٓى أَنْ
يَّبْعَثَكَ رَبُّكَ مَقَامًا مَّحْمُوْدًا ﴿٧٩﴾ وَقُلْ رَّبِّ أَدْخِلْنِيْ مُدْخَلَ صِدْقٍ
وَّأَخْرِجْنِيْ مُخْرَجَ صِدْقٍ وَّاجْعَلْ لِّيْ مِنْ لَّدُنْكَ سُلْطٰنًا نَّصِيْرًا ﴿٨٠﴾
وَقُلْ جَآءَ الْحَقُّ وَزَهَقَ الْبَاطِلُ ط إِنَّ الْبَاطِلَ كَانَ زَهُوْقًا ﴿٨١﴾ وَنُنَزِّلُ
مِنَ الْقُرْاٰنِ مَا هُوَ شِفَآءٌ وَّرَحْمَةٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ط وَلَا يَزِيْدُ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ إِلَّا
خَسَارًا ﴿٨٢﴾

Establish *ṣalāh* between the decline of the sun and the darkness of the night, and the recital at dawn. Surely, the recital at dawn is well attended. [78] **And during the night, wake up for *ṣalāh*, an additional prayer for you. It is very likely that your Lord places you at a Praised Station.** [79]

And say, "O my Lord, make me enter a rightful entrance and make me exit a rightful exit, and grant me from Your Own a power, favoured (by You)." [80] **And say, "Truth has come and falsehood has vanished. Falsehood is surely bound to vanish."** [81]

And We reveal the Qur'ān which is cure and mercy for the believers. And it adds nothing to the unjust but loss. [82]

Commentary

Ṣalāh is the best defense against enemy hostility

Previous verses have mentioned the hostility of the enemies of Islam, the plans they made to hurt and harass the Holy Prophet ﷺ and what was to be done in response. By giving the Holy Prophet ﷺ the command to establish Ṣalāh in the verses cited above, it is being suggested that it is the best remedy against the mischief made and pain caused by enemies. This is similar to what has been said more clearly in a verse of Sūrah al-Hijr: وَلَقَدْ نَعْلَمُ اَنَّكَ يَضِيقُ صَدْرُكَ بِمَا يَقُولُونَ فَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ وَكُنْ مِّنَ السّٰجِدِيْنَ It means: "And indeed We know that your heart feels distressed for what they say. So, proclaim the purity and glory of your Lord, and be among those who prostrate." (Qurṭubī)

This verse declares devotion to the remembrance of Allah (*dhikr*) through His praises (*ḥamd*) and His glorification (*tasbīḥ*) and Ṣalāh (prayer) as the panacea of pains inflicted by enemies. Dhikr and Ṣalāh are special safety shields against their aggressive designs. Then, it is also not far out to believe that staying safe against the pain inflicted by enemies depends on the help and support of Allah Ta'ālā. So, the best medium of acquiring this help is Ṣalāh as stated in the Holy Qur'ān: وَاسْتَعِيْنُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلٰوةِ (Seek help through patience and prayer - 2:153).

The injunction of five prayers

The majority of leading Tafsīr authorities has declared this verse to be a comprehensive injunction for all five daily prayers. The reason is

that the word: دُلُوك (*dulūk*) is essentially used in the sense of 'decline' and the decline of the Sun begins at the time of meridian - though, it could also be applied to the sunset. But, at this place, the majority of Ṣaḥābah and Tabi'in have taken the word: دُلُوك (*dulūk*) to mean the post-meridian decline of the Sun. (as explained in details by al-Qurṭubī, al-Maẓharī and Ibn Kathīr).

The word: غَسَقٌ (*ghasaq*) in the next phrase: اِلٰى غَسَقِ الَّيْلِ means the darkness of the night when it is complete. Imām Mālik has reported this very Tafsīr of *'ghasaq'* from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ.

Thus, within the statement: لِدُلُوْكِ الشَّمْسِ اِلٰى غَسَقِ الَّيْلِ (between the decline of the Sun and the darkness of the night), four prayers stand covered. These are Ẓuhr, 'Aṣr, Maghrib and 'Ishā'. And also identified there is the time when two of these prayers begin, that is, the time of Zuhr begins from the decline (*zawāl*) of the Sun and the time of 'Ishā' from: غَسَقِ اللَّيْلِ (*ghasaq al-layl*) that is, at the time when the darkness of night is complete. Therefore, the great Imām, Abū Ḥanīfah has ruled that the time of 'Ishā' begins from the time when, after the red glow, the white glow of the evening also disappears. Everyone knows that, close to the sunset, a red glow appears on the western horizon and, soon after this redness, there spreads a sort of whiteness on it. Then, this whiteness too disappears. It is obvious that the darkness of the night will be complete only when the whiteness of the horizon also goes away. Therefore, these words support the view of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah. Other Imāms have ruled that the time of 'Ishā' begins after the disappearance of the red glow on the evening horizon and that this is the Tafsīr of *'ghasaq al-layl'* (the darkness of night).

In the next phrase: وَقُرْاٰنَ الْفَجْرِ (*wa Qur'ān al-fajr*: translated as 'and the recital at dawn'), the word: 'Qur'ān' denotes Ṣalāh at this place because the Qur'ān is an integral part of Ṣalāh. Most Tafsīr authorities - Ibn Kathīr, al-Qurṭubī, Maẓharī and others - have adopted this very meaning. Therefore, the sense of the verse is that the words: دُلُوْكِ الشَّمْسِ اِلٰى غَسَقِ الَّيْلِ (between the decline of the Sun and the darkness of the night) carried a description of four prayers. Identified now is the fifth prayer, that of Fajr. It has been described separately which is an indicator of the particular importance and merit of this Ṣalāh.

The word *'mashhūd'* in the expression: كَانَ مَشْهُوْدًا (*kāna mashhūdā*) has been derived from *shahādah* that means 'to be present.' This is a time when, according to clear statements in authentic Aḥādīth, both groups of angels, those of the night and those of the day, present themselves for Ṣalāh. Therefore, it has been called *'mashhūd'* (hence, translated as 'well-attended'). The injunction of five prayers has appeared in this verse briefly. It has been explained fully by the Holy Prophet ﷺ through his word and deed - and unless one acts in accordance with this explanation, no one can perform Ṣalāh. I just do not know how those who claim to understand the Qur'ān without Ḥadīth and the statements of the Rasūl of Allah go about making their Ṣalāh? Similarly, in this verse, the recital of the Qur'ān within the Ṣalāh has also been mentioned briefly. As for its details, it stands proved from the word and deed of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that the recitation in the Fajr prayer should be long - to the measure of strength and ability, less than that in Ẓuhr and Jumu'ah, average in 'Aṣr and 'Ishā' and very brief in Maghrib. As for the mention of a long recitation in Maghrib and very brief in Fajr in some reports, it stands practically abandoned. Imām al-Qurṭubī carries the *riwāyah* of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim in which the recitation of long Sūrahs like Sūrah al-A'rāf and Mursalāt in the Ṣalāh of Maghrib, or the recitation of only the Mu'awwadhatain (the last two Sūrahs) as sufficient in the Ṣalāh of Fajr have been reported. He, then, comments: فمتروك بالعمل ولانكاره على معاذ التطويل وبامره الائمة بالتخفيف It means that these incidentals of long recitation in Maghrib and brief in Fajr stand abandoned in the light of the constant practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ as well as his verbal sayings. (Qurṭubī)

The time of the Ṣalāh of Tahajjud: Injunctions and rulings

The word: تَهَجَّد (*tahajjud*) in: وَمِنَ الَّيْلِ فَتَهَجَّدْ بِهٖ (And during the night, wake up for Ṣalāh - 79) has been derived from هجود :*hujūd*. This word is used for two opposite meanings, that of sleeping and that of waking both. But, the words: وَمِنَ الَّيْلِ فَتَهَجَّدْ بِهٖ, at this place, mean 'be awake with the Qur'ān in a part of the night' because the pronoun in: بِهٖ (*bihī*: with it) reverts back to the Qur'ān. (Maẓharī). 'Being awake with the Qur'ān' means the making of Ṣalāh (with full compliance of what it requires). This very nightly prayer is called the prayer of Tahajjud in the terminology of Sharī'ah. Speaking generally, the sense in which it has been taken is that the prayer said after waking up from a short sleep is the Tahaj-

jud. But, according to Tafsīr Maẓharī, the sense of the verse is no more than sacrificing sleep to make Ṣalāh during some part of the night. This sense holds good for sleeping a little, then waking up from it and making Ṣalāh. Very similarly, it is also good if one begins by postponing sleep for Tahajjud and makes the Ṣalāh. The condition that one has to sleep before doing the prayer of Tahajjud is not found in the words used by the Qur'ān. Apart from this, there are reports from Aḥādīth which support this general sense of Tahajjud.

And the definition of the prayer of Tahajjud reported from al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī by Imām Ibn Kathīr also confirms this element of generality. The words of the report are as follows:

قال الحسن البصری هو ما کان بعد العشاء، ویحمل علی ما کان بعد النوم

> Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī says: The prayer of Tahajjud holds good for every prayer that is said after al-'Ishā' And, (because of actual practice) it will be applied to that which is said after some sleep. (Ibn Kathīr)

The outcome is that being after sleep is no condition in the real sense of the prayer of Tahajjud - and this condition is not present in the words of the Qur'ān as well. But, speaking generally, it has been the constant practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his noble Companions ﷺ that they used to do their Tahajjud prayer after waking up in the later part of the night, therefore, this would be the better way of doing it.

Is the prayer of Tahajjud Farḍ (obligatory) or Nafl (additional)?

The words: نفل : *nafl* and نَافِلَة :*nāfilah* in: نَافِلَةً لَّكَ (an additional prayer for you - 79) literally mean 'additional.' Therefore, prayer (Ṣalāh) and charity (*ṣadaqah, khairāt*) etc. that is not obligatory or necessary and, the doing of which brings *thawāb* (reward), and not doing which entails no sin or misconduct, are called *nafl*. In this verse, by looking at the words: نَافِلَةً لَّكَ (an additional prayer for you) with the prayer of Tahajjud, it is summarily understood that the prayer of Tahajjud is particularly associated with the Holy Prophet ﷺ as *nafl* for him. The fact, though, is that its effect as *nafl* is shared by all, the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his entire *ummah*. Therefore, some respected early commentators have taken '*nāfilah*' at this place as an attribute of *farīḍah* or duty. The meaning given by them is that the Muslim community at large is obligated with five

daily prayers only, but Tahajjud has also been made an additional obligation on the Holy Prophet ﷺ. So, at this place, the word: نافلة :*nāfilah* appears in the sense of an additional obligation, not in the general sense of *nafl.*

Let us look at the correct investigative position in this matter. When, during the early stage of Islam, Sūrah al-Muzzammil was revealed, that was a time when five prayers had yet to be obligated. What everyone was obligated with was the prayer of Tahajjud. This obligation has been mentioned in Sūrah al-Muzzammil (73). Then, it was in the night of the Mi'rāj (Ascent) that five prayers were made obligatory (*farḍ*). So, as for the obligatory nature of Tahajjud, it was abrogated as a duty on the Muslim community at large, by consensus. However, difference did exist about its obligatory nature. Was it also abrogated in the case of the Holy Prophet ﷺ? Or, did it remain an obligation on him as a matter of special consideration - and in this verse, the expression: نَافِلَةً لَّكَ (*nāfilatal-lak*) means exactly that 'the prayer of Tahajjud is an additional obligation on you.' But, according to Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī, this is not correct for many reasons. Firstly, there is no justification for taking *nafl* as *farḍ*. If it is supposed to be figurative speech, then, there will be no reality against it. Secondly, in authentic Aḥādīth, only five fixed prayers have been mentioned as obligatory (*farḍ*). At the end of another Ḥadīth, it has been said that the fifty prayers made obligatory initially in the nocturnal journey of the Mi'rāj were later reduced in number and set at five. Thus, the number was, though, reduced but the reward promised against these was that of no less than fifty. Then it was said: مَا يُبَدَّلُ الْقَوْلُ لَدَيَّ (The word [given to My servants] will not be changed with Me - Qāf, 50:29). It means: When the command was given for fifty, the reward shall be given for no less than fifty, though the number to be actually performed was reduced.

The outcome of these narrative reports is no other but that no Ṣalāh - other than the five prayers - is obligatory (*farḍ*) on the Muslim *ummah* at large and on the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself. Then, there is a reason for it too. Had the word: نَافِلَةً : *nāfilah* been used here in the sense of an 'additional duty,' then, rather than using the word: لَكَ (*lak:* for you) after it, the word used should have been: عَلَيْكَ (*'alaik:* on you) since the latter signifies obligation while the word: لَكَ (*lak:* for you) is used only for approv-

al and permission.

Similarly, this is the position declared to be correct and sound in Tafsīr Maẓharī which says: When the obligatory status of Tahajjud was abrogated in the case of the Muslim *ummah*, it stood abrogated in the case of the Holy Prophet ﷺ as well. What remained was *nafl* for everyone. But, this position raises a question: What is the singularity of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in it? That it is *nafl* for everyone already stands proved. What, then, would be the outcome of saying: نَافِلَةً لَّكَ (an additional prayer for you)? The answer is that, according to clear statements of Aḥādīth, all kinds of voluntary offerings and *nafl 'Ibādāt* made by the Muslim *ummah* expiate their sins and serve as complements to whatever shortcomings remain in the performance of their obligatory prayers. But, the Holy Prophet ﷺ is not only that he is infallible (*ma'sūm*) against sins, he is also above from any shortcomings in the observance of the etiquette of Ṣalāh. Therefore, as far as he is concerned, *nafl 'Ibādāt* are nothing but additional. These cannot make amends for any shortcomings. Instead, these are simply a source of increased nearness to Allah. (Qurṭubī, Maẓharī)

Is the prayer of Tahajjud Nafl or Sunnah al-Mu'akkadah?

As for Sunnah al-Mu'akkadah (the emphasized Sunnah), Muslim jurists have a standing rule. Whatever the Holy Prophet ﷺ has done constantly, never leaving it unless under compulsion, is Sunnah al-Mu'akkadah - except that it is proved on the authority of an Islamic legal argument that the particular act was special to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and was not for the Muslim community in general. This rule will obviously require that the prayer of Tahajjud should also be taken as Sunnah al-Mu'akkadah for everyone and not a mere *nafl*. The reason is that the constancy of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in the matter of this Ṣalāh stands proved as an uninterrupted Sunnah. And there is no proof of its being restricted to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Therefore, it should be Sunnah al-Mu'akkadah for the Muslim *ummah* at large as well. This is the position Tafsīr Maẓharī rates as preferable, weightier and worthier. In proof of this being 'emphasized' (*al-mu'akkadah*), it has pointed out to the Ḥadīth in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ said about a person who used to say his Tahajjud prayer earlier but left it later: 'the Satan has soiled his ear.' Such a drastic admonition and warning does not sound in order against the

abandonment of *nafl* only. This tells us that it is Sunnah al-Mu'akkadah (an emphasized Sunnah).

And as for the respected elders who take the position that Tahajjud is only a *nafl,* they declared this perseverance and constancy to be the hallmark of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Then, what he said as admonition against the abandonment of Tahajjud by the person who used to do it before was not really said against its abandonment by him as such. Instead, it was said against first getting used to it, then abandoning it. The reason is that a person who gets into the habit of doing a certain *nafl* must continue with it assiduously - and there is a consensus of the Muslim *ummah* on it. If one leaves it after being in the habit of doing it, he will be blameworthy because leaving it without excuse after the habit is the sign of certain evasion and reluctance. However, there is no blame on the person who is just not in the habit of doing it from the very beginning. Allah knows best.

The number of Raka'āt in the prayer of Tahajjud

In the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, as narrated by Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی الله عنها, 'the Holy Prophet ﷺ would never say more than eleven *raka'āt*, in Ramaḍān or during months other than it.' Out of these eleven, according to the Ḥanafiyyah, three *raka'āt* used to be that of *witr,* the remaining eight being that of Tahajjud.

And in a narration of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, the following words of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی الله عنها have been reported: 'The Holy Prophet ﷺ used to say thirteen *raka'āt* during the night which includes *witr* and two *raka'āt* of the Sunnah of Fajr as well.' (Maẓharī) The Sunnah of Fajr has been counted with the nightly prayer because they are performed in almost the same sequence. These reports tell us that the usual habit of the Holy Prophet ﷺ was to offer eight *raka'āt* in the prayer of Tahajjud.

But, from a report coming from Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی الله عنها herself, it also stands proved that, on occasions, he has done less than that number - four or six - as being sufficient. When Sayyidnā Masrūq رحمه الله asked her about the prayer of Tahajjud, she has been reported in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī to have said: 'There used to be seven, nine and eleven *raka'āt* - other than the Sunnah of Fajr' (Maẓharī from al-Bukhārī). According to the Ḥanafiyyah, if three *raka'āt* are that of *witr,* four out of

seven, six out of nine and eight out of eleven turn out to be the *rak'āt* of Tahajjud.

In what manner was the prayer of Tahajjud offered?

Narrative reports as they generally appear in Aḥādīth prove that the first two *rak'āt* in the beginning were light with a brief recitation. Then, in the rest of the *rak'āt*, the recitation was long and so were the *rukū'* and *sajdah* - and, at times, this length would become too much and, at others, somewhat less. (This is a summary of the Ḥadīth reports taken from Tafsīr Maẓharī at this place)

The Praised Station

The Holy Prophet ﷺ has been promised مقام محمود (Maqām Maḥmūd: The Praised Station) in this verse and this station is, out of all prophets, particular to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. As to its explanation, there are different sayings. But, the most sound of them is what appears in authentic Aḥādīth in the words of the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself. This Station is the station of the Grand Intercession (*al-shafā'ah al-kubrā*). This will come to pass on the plains of Resurrection (*al-Ḥashr*) when all children of 'Ādam will be there requesting every prophet and messenger of Allah to intercede with Him on their behalf. All prophets علیهم السلام will offer their excuse. Only the Holy Prophet ﷺ shall be blessed with the honorable station of interceding on behalf of the entire progeny of 'Ādam. Ḥadīth reports carry lengthy relevant details that appear in Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr and Maẓharī at this point.

The intercession made by prophets and the righteous will be accepted

Out of the Islamic sects, the Khawārij and the Mu'tazilah deny the intercession of prophets. They say that a major sin will not be forgiven through intercession by anyone. But, Aḥādīth coming in uninterrupted succession prove that the intercession for sinners will be accepted from prophets علیهم السلام, even from the righteous of the community. There will be many whose sins will be forgiven through intercession.

Based on a report from Sayyidnā 'Uthmān رضی اللہ عنہ, it appears in Ibn Mājah and al-Baihaqī that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: On the day of Qiyāmah, the blessed prophets will be the first to intercede on behalf of sinners, then the 'Ulamā' and then the Shuhadā'. According to Dailamī

reporting from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar ؓ, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that the 'Ālim will be told that he could intercede on behalf of his disciples, even if their number matches the number of stars.

And Abū Dāwūd and Ibn Hibbān carry a narration of Sayyidnā Abū al-Dardā' ؓ, with its chains ascending to the Holy Prophet ﷺ who said: The intercession made by a Shahīd (شهيد) will be accepted in favor of seventy people from his family.

The Musnad of Aḥmad, al-Ṭabarānī and al-Baihaqi authentically report Sayyidnā Abū Umāmah ؓ narrating that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: On the intercession of one person from my *ummah* many people, more than the entire number of the people of the tribes of Rabī'ah and Muḍar, will be admitted to Jannah.

A question and its answer

The question is when the Holy Prophet ﷺ will himself intercede - and no believer will remain in Hell because of it - why and how will the 'Ulamā' and the righteous intercede? The answer appears in Tafsīr Maẓharī: perhaps, the 'Ulamā' and the righteous of the community will present their intercession in favor of whomsoever they wish before the Holy Prophet ﷺ who will then intercede with Allah Ta'ālā.

An important note

In a Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: شَفَاعَتِیْ لِأَهْلِ الْكَبَائِرِ مِنْ أُمَّتِیْ (My intercession shall be for people who had committed major sins). This seems to tell us that those involved with major sins will be forgiven particularly through the intercession of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Any angel or any individual from the Muslim community will not be able to intercede in the case of those who have committed major sins. Instead of that, the intercession made by the righteous of the Muslim community will be for those who were involved with minor sins.

The Station of Intercession could be reached through the efficacy of the prayer of Tahajjud

Haḍrat Mujaddid Alf Thānī, the famous religious revivalist of the first Islamic millenium in India, said that, in this verse, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was first given the command to make the prayer of Tahajjud, then he was promised the Praised Station, that is, the Station of Grand Intercession. This tells us that the prayer of Tahajjud serves as a special

via media in acquiring the Station of Intercession.

Before we proceed to verse 80, let us recapitulate what was said in the verses previous to it. Mentioned there first were the pains inflicted on the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the conspiracies they kept hatching to hurt and harm him. Along with it, it was also said that these hostile plans made by them will never succeed. In contrast, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was being blessed with the real plan to offset their evil by prompting him to establish the five prayers, and the Tahajjud. Following that, he has been promised the Praised Station, the highest among all prophets - a promise to be fulfilled in the Hereafter. Now, in this verse 80: وَقُلْ رَّبِّ اَدْخِلْنِی (And say, "O my Lord, make me enter...), the first relief to him against the hurtful and treacherous actions of the disbelievers was given by Allah Ta'ālā within this world in the form of his migration to Madīnah. Then, he was given the good news of the conquest of Makkah in: وَقُلْ جَآءَ الْحَقُّ (And say, "Truth has come...81).

It has been reported in al-Jāmi' of Tirmidhī from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was in Makkah al-Mu'azzamah. Then, he was commanded to migrate to Madīnah. Thereupon, this verse was revealed: وَقُلْ رَّبِّ اَدْخِلْنِیْ مُدْخَلَ صِدْقٍ وَّاَخْرِجْنِیْ مُخْرَجَ صِدْقٍ (And say, "O my Lord, make me enter a rightful entrance and make me exit a rightful exit - 80). Here, the word: مُدْخَل (*mudkhal*) and مُخْرَج (*mukhraj*) meaning the place of entry and the place of exit are اسم ظرف (*ism-al-zarf*: the noun of place and time). The addition of the attribute (*na't*) of صِدْق :*ṣidq* (translated as rightful) releases the sense of such entry and exit being totally true to the will and pleasure of Allah and in the best of attending circumstances, because the word: صِدْق (*ṣidq*) is also used in the Arabic language for every such act as is correct and better both outwardly and inwardly. The words: قَدَمَ صِدْقٍ (Yūnus 10:2), لِسَانَ صِدْقٍ (ash-Shu'arā' 26:84) and مَقْعَدِ صِدْقٍ (al-Qamar 54:55) have been used in the Holy Qur'ān in that very sense.

'Entrance' means 'Madīnah' and the place of exit denotes 'Makkah.' The sense takes the form of a prayer: O Allah, may my entry into Madīnah turn out to be good and smooth, without having to face anything unpleasant and unwelcome on arrival there. And may my exit from Makkah be good and smooth, without being entangled in love of country and home.' There are other exegetic statements too which explain this verse. But, this particular explanation has been reported from Ḥasan al-Baṣrī

and Qatādah. Ibn Kathīr calls it 'the most sound statement.' Ibn Jarīr too has gone by it. As for the order, it required that the 'exit' should have been mentioned first while the 'entrance,' later. But, the precedence of 'entrance' and the succession of 'exit' is there, perhaps, to indicate that the exit from Makkah had no purpose of its own, in fact, parting from the Baytullah was extremely shocking. But, there was a purpose - to look for peace, for Islam and Muslims - something that could be hoped for through the entry in Madīnah. Therefore, the objective to be achieved was made to come first.

A prayer for important objectives

At the time of his migration to Madīnah, Allah Ta'ālā asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ to make this *du'ā'* which pleaded with Him that his exit from Makkah and then the arrival in Madīnah should both be good and smooth in all possible ways. It was the outcome of this prayer that, though he was within the striking range of the pursuing disbelievers at the time of Hijrah, yet Allah Ta'ālā shielded him at every step and finally made Madīnah al-Ṭayyibah good and promising for him and for all Muslims, both outwardly and inwardly. Therefore, some 'Ulamā' have said that every Muslim should remember to make this prayer at the beginning of all objectives they wish to pursue and that this prayer is beneficial for all objectives and purposes. The sentence which complements this very prayer appears next: وَاجْعَلْ لِّيْ مِنْ لَّدُنْكَ سُلْطَانًا نَّصِيْرًا : "and grant me from Your Own a power favoured (by You)." Qatādah, the great *tabi'ī* says: the Holy Prophet ﷺ knew that fulfilling his functional duties as a prophet and working while besieged by enemies were challenges he could not handle personally. Therefore, He prayed to Allah Ta'ālā for help and the power to subdue. The prayer was answered and everyone saw its effects.

Verse 81: وَقُلْ جَآءَ الْحَقُّ وَزَهَقَ الْبَاطِلُ (And say, "Truth has come and falsehood has vanished") was revealed after Hijrah about the conquest of Makkah. Sayyidnā Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ says that on the day Makkah was conquered, the Holy Prophet ﷺ entered Makkah. At that time, there were three hundred and sixty idols standing around the Baytullah. Some *'Ulamā'* report a reason for this particular number. They say that the Mushriks of Makkah had a separate idol for each day of the year that they used to worship on the given day. (Qurṭubī) When the Holy Prophet ﷺ

reached there, this was the verse he had on his blessed lips: جَآءَ الْحَقُّ وَزَهَقَ الْبَاطِلُ (Truth has come and falsehood has vanished) while he went round striking at each single idol on the chest with his stick. (al-Bukhārī and Muslim)

It appears in some Ḥadīth narratives that the end of this stick had a pewter or iron ferrule mounted on it. So, when the Holy Prophet ﷺ would hit an idol on the chest, it would fall back. In the end, when all idols fell down, he gave orders that they be demolished. (Qurṭubī with reference to Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ and al-Qushairī)

It is necessary to erase customs and symbols of polytheism, disbelief and falsehood

Imām al-Qurṭubī said that this verse proves that it is *wājib* (necessary, obligatory) to erase the idols of Mushriks and all other polytheistic symbols and signs - and all such false instruments that are used in the way of sin and disobedience as well. They too come under the purview of the same injunction. Ibn al-Mundhir said that pictures and sculpted figures made in wood or metal etc. also come under the injunction governing idols. The Holy Prophet ﷺ had torn the curtain having pictures made on it in lines and colors. This, incidentally, tells us about the general injunctions covering common pictures. According to Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth, when Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام will come towards the later times, he will undo the cross and eliminate the swine. These things prove that it is necessary to demolish and eliminate the instruments of *shirk, kufr* and *bāṭil*.

We can now move to the last verse (82) cited above: وَنُنَزِّلُ مِنَ الْقُرْاٰنِ مَا هُوَ شِفَآءٌ (And We reveal the Qur'ān which is a cure). That the Holy Qur'ān cures hearts and delivers people from *shirk* and *kufr,* low morals and spiritual ailments is no secret. The entire Muslim *ummah* agrees with it. And according to some 'Ulamā', the way the Qur'ān is a cure for spiritual ailments, it is also a cure for physical diseases. The sense is that reciting the verses of the Qur'ān and blowing the breath on the body of the sick person or to write its words on an amulet and putting it around the neck is also expected to be a cure for physical diseases. Ḥadīth narratives bear testimony to it. The Ḥadīth of Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī رضي الله عنه can be seen in all books of Aḥādīth. It says that a party of the noble Companions was in travel. In a village on their way, a scorpion had bitten the chief. The village people asked the Companions if they could suggest

some treatment for it. They recited the Sūrah al-Fātiḥah seven times, blew their breath on him and the ailing patient stood cured. Later, when this incident was mentioned before the Holy Prophet ﷺ, he declared this action of the Companions to be permissible.

Similarly, there are several other Ḥadīth reports which prove that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has done it himself. After having recited the last two verses of the Qur'ān, he would blow his breath on the sick person. It is also proved that the Ṣaḥābah and the Ṭābi'īn used to treat sick people with the recital of the last two verses of the Qur'ān as well as with the recital of other verses from it. That it was written and placed around the neck as an amulet also stands proved. Al-Qurṭubī has given details about it under his commentary on this verse.

The last sentence of the verse: وَلَا يَزِيدُ الظّٰلِمِينَ إِلَّا خَسَارًا (And it adds nothing to the unjust but loss - 82) tells us that the Holy Qur'ān - when recited with faith and reverence - is certainly a cure. It is open. It is proven. Conversely, any denial of the Qur'ān, or irreverence to it, could also become a source of loss and misfortunes.

Verses 83 - 84

وَإِذَآ أَنْعَمْنَا عَلَى الْإِنْسَانِ أَعْرَضَ وَنَا بِجَانِبِهٖ ۚ وَإِذَا مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ كَانَ يَئُوسًا ﴿٨٣﴾ قُلْ كُلٌّ يَّعْمَلُ عَلٰى شَاكِلَتِهٖ ۗ فَرَبُّكُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ هُوَ أَهْدٰى سَبِيلًا ﴿٨٤﴾

And when We bestow Our favor upon man, he avoids (to recognize it) and keeps himself far aside (from obedience), and when some evil touches him, he is in total despair. [83]

Say, "Everyone acts in his own style. For, your Lord knows best which one is better guided in his way." [84]

Commentary

Regarding the explanation of the word: شَاكِلَة (*shākilah*) in verse 84: كُلٌّ يَّعْمَلُ عَلٰى شَاكِلَتِهٖ (Everyone acts in his own style), several interpretations have been reported from authorities among the early righteous elders, such as, disposition, habit, instinct, intention, way or manner. In sum,

all these turn into a second nature in terms of the circumstances, habits and customs everyone lives with. Thus, what one does remains subservient to it. (Qurṭubī) In this verse, human beings have been warned that they must abstain from bad surroundings, bad company and bad habits and take to the company of good people and inculcate good habits (al-Jaṣṣāṣ). The reason, as stated earlier, is that one's response pattern built up under the influence of surrounding, company and custom makes one do what it dictates. Imām al-Jaṣṣāṣ has also given another meaning of *'shākilah'* at this place, that of 'like.' Given this meaning, the sense of the verse would be that everyone feels comfortable with a person who is compatible with one's temperament. A good man finds another good man familiar while a wicked man feels comfortable with another wicked man whose style he follows without any qualms of conscience. An example of this behavior pattern appears in what Allah says in the Qur'ān: اَلْخَبِيْثٰتُ لِلْخَبِيْثِيْنَ (Evil women are for evil men - 24:26) and وَالطَّيِّبٰتُ لِلطَّيِّبِيْنَ (Good women are for good men - 24:26). It means that everyone strikes familiarity with a man or woman according to one's own temperament. In short, this too is a warning against falling into bad company and bad habits. One should really make an effort to abstain from these.

Verses 85 - 89

وَيَسْئَلُوْنَكَ عَنِ الرُّوْحِ ؕ قُلِ الرُّوْحُ مِنْ اَمْرِ رَبِّىْ وَمَآ اُوْتِيْتُمْ مِّنَ الْعِلْمِ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا ﴿۸۵﴾ وَلَئِنْ شِئْنَا لَنَذْهَبَنَّ بِالَّذِىْٓ اَوْحَيْنَآ اِلَيْكَ ثُمَّ لَا تَجِدُ لَكَ بِهٖ عَلَيْنَا وَكِيْلًا ﴿۸۶﴾ اِلَّا رَحْمَةً مِّنْ رَّبِّكَ ؕ اِنَّ فَضْلَهٗ كَانَ عَلَيْكَ كَبِيْرًا ﴿۸۷﴾ قُلْ لَّئِنِ اجْتَمَعَتِ الْاِنْسُ وَالْجِنُّ عَلٰٓى اَنْ يَّاْتُوْا بِمِثْلِ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنِ لَا يَاْتُوْنَ بِمِثْلِهٖ وَلَوْ كَانَ بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ ظَهِيْرًا ﴿۸۸﴾ وَلَقَدْ صَرَّفْنَا لِلنَّاسِ فِىْ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنِ مِنْ كُلِّ مَثَلٍ ۫ فَاَبٰٓى اَكْثَرُ النَّاسِ اِلَّا كُفُوْرًا ﴿۸۹﴾

And they ask you about the soul. Say, "The soul is something from the command of my Lord, and you are not given but a little from the knowledge." [85]

And if We so will, We will surely take away what We have revealed to you, then you shall find no one to rely upon against Us in this matter. [86] **But it is a mercy from your Lord. Great is indeed His favor upon you.** [87]

Say, "If all the humans and *jinns* join together to produce the like of this Qur'ān, they shall not (be able to) come up with its like, even though they back up one another. [88]

And surely We have explained for the people in this Qur'ān every subject in various ways. Still most of the people refused to do anything but reject. [89]

Commentary

The first verse (85) appearing above carries a question posed by disbelievers about Rūḥ (soul, spirit) along with its answer that came from Allah Ta'ālā. The word: اَلرُّوْح (*al-rūḥ*) is used in the Arabic language and idiom, and in the Holy Qur'ān as well, to convey several meanings. The well-recognized meaning taken from this word is common knowledge, that is, the soul on which depends life. In the Holy Qur'ān, this word has also been used for the archangel, Jibra'īl al-Amīn (Gabriel, the Trustworthy): نَزَلَ بِهِ الرُّوْحُ الْاَمِيْنُ عَلٰى قَلْبِكَ (The Trustworthy Spirit has brought it down upon your heart - ash-Shu'ārā' 26:193,194). It has also been used for Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام (4:171), and Waḥy (revelation - 40:15), and the Qur'ān too: اَوْحَيْنَآ اِلَيْكَ رُوْحًا مِّنْ اَمْرِنَا (and We have revealed to you a spirit of Our command - 42:52).

What does 'Rūḥ' signify?

Therefore, the first thing to be determined here is the intent of the questioners as to which meaning they had in mind when they had asked the question about the Rūḥ. Some respected early commentators have, in view of the context, declared this question as related to revelation and Qur'ān, or to angel Jibra'īl who brought it. The apparent reason is that the Qur'ān was mentioned earlier in: وَنُنَزِّلُ مِنَ الْقُرْاٰنِ (And We reveal the Qur'ān - 82) and it is again the Qur'ān that finds mention in the verses after that. Given this congruity, they found it appropriate to take 'Rūḥ' in this question too as signifying nothing but Waḥy and Qur'ān, or Jibra'īl. In that case, the question would be about how the Waḥy or revelation came to him and who brought it. In response to the question, the Holy Qur'ān considered it sufficient to say that the revelation was from

the command of Allah. It elected to be silent about its details and modalities that the questioners were seeking.

But, the background of the revelation of this verse given in authentic Aḥādīth ascending to the Holy Prophet ﷺ is just about very clear in respect of the nature of the question. Those asking the question had asked about the living Rūḥ and the underlying purpose was to find out the reality of Rūḥ. What is it? How does it come in and go out of the human body? How does it make man and animal come alive? According to the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ narrates:

'Once I was walking with the Holy Prophet ﷺ through an unpopulated part of Madīnah. He had a stick from the branch of a date palm in his blessed hand. When he passed by some Jews, they were talking among themselves: Muhammad ﷺ is coming. Ask him about the Rūḥ. Others asked them not to do that. But, those bent on asking went ahead and asked the question. After having heard the question, the Holy Prophet ﷺ reclined on his stick and stood silent which gave me the inkling that the revelation was about to come on him. After a little while, when the revelation had come to him, he recited the verse: وَيَسْـَٔلُوْنَكَ عَنِ الرُّوْحِ (And they ask you about the Rūḥ).'

At this point, it is understandable that it was a terminology of the Qur'ān when it called the Qur'ān, or Waḥy (revelation) as Rūḥ. That the question asked by these people was based on it is too far out. Of course, the matter of the living Rūḥ, human or animal, is such as would naturally emerge in everyone's mind. Therefore, the majority of commentators - Ibn Kathīr, Ibn Jarīr, al-Qurṭubī, Abū Ḥayyān, 'Ālūsī - confirm the view that the question related to the reality of the living Rūḥ. As for the continuity of references to the Qur'ān in the context and that the question-answer interlude about Rūḥ coming in between would be incoherent, its answer is clear. Previous verses have mentioned hostile questions asked by the disbelievers and Mushriks. Their objective thereby was to test the Holy Prophet ﷺ concerning his claim to be a messenger of Allah. This question too is a link of the same chain. Therefore, it is not incoherent. There is yet another authentic Ḥadīth reported about the background of the revelation of this verse particularly. The position being explained here has been covered there

more explicitly, that is, the purpose of the questioner was to test the authority of the Holy Prophet ﷺ as a Messenger.

Accordingly, a report of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ؓ appearing in the Musnad of Aḥmad says that the Quraysh of Makkah who kept addressing all sorts of questions to the Holy Prophet ﷺ hit upon the idea that the Jews were learned and knew about past scriptures. Why not ask them about what to ask the Holy Prophet ﷺ and test him thereby? Therefore, they sent their men to the Jews seeking their guidance in this matter. They told them to ask about the Rūḥ. (Ibn Kathīr) Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ has also been reported to have said in his explanation of this verse that the Jews had also said while asking this question - 'you tell us how does punishment affect the Rūḥ.' By that time, nothing had been revealed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ about it. Therefore, he did not answer the question instantly at that time. Then, came angel Jibra'īl with the verse: قُلِ الرُّوۡحُ مِنۡ اَمۡرِ رَبِّیۡ (Say, "the Rūḥ is from the command of my Lord.") (Abridged from Ibn Kathīr)

The incident of the question: Did it happen in Makkah or Madīnah?

Before we resolve this aspect of the question, we have to consider the two Ḥadīth reports relating to the background of the revelation of this verse, that of Sayyidnā Ibn Mas'ūd and Ibn 'Abbās ؓ, referred to above. Out of the two, according to the report of Sayyidnā Ibn Mas'ūd ؓ, this incident about the question came to pass in Madīnah - and that is the reason why some commentators have declared this verse to be Madani, though a major portion of Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl (al-Isrā') is Makkī. As for the report from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ, it places the incident at Makkah. In accordance with that, this verse too remains Makki like the whole Sūrah. Therefore, Ibn Kathīr has declared this very probability to be weightier and more acceptable. And as for the report of Sayyidnā Ibn Mas'ūd ؓ, he responds by saying that it is possible that this verse was revealed in Madīnah a second time - as a repeated revelation of many verses of the Qur'ān is an accepted fact in the sight of all 'Ulamā'. And Tafsīr Maẓharī, by declaring the report of Sayyidnā Ibn Mas'ūd as weightier and more acceptable, has determined the incident to be that of Madīnah and the verse to be Madani. It gives two reasons for it. Firstly, this report appears in the two Ṣaḥīḥs of al-Bukhari and Muslim and its

authority is stronger as compared to the report of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ. Secondly, in this report, Sayyidnā Ibn Mas'ūd is a part of the incident. He is narrating an event that was his own. This makes it contrary to the report of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās where, it is obvious, he would have heard it as told by someone (because he was too young at that time to witness the occurance).

The answer to the question asked

The Holy Qur'ān said: قُلِ الرُّوحُ مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّي (Say, "the Rūḥ is from the command of my Lord."). While explaining the answer, statements and interpretations given by commentators differ. The closest and the clearest of these is what Qāḍī Thanā'ullah Pānipatī has preferred in his Tafsīr Maẓharī. He says: Only what was necessary and what common people would understand has been told - and the full reality of Rūḥ, that the question sought, was not unfolded because it was beyond the comprehension of common people and, for that matter, nothing they needed hinged on understanding it. Here, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was asked to respond by saying that 'the Rūḥ is from the command of my Lord.' In other words, it is not like the usual created that come into existence through the dispersal of matter and procreation. In fact, it is something created directly through the command (كُنْ: *kun:* be) of Allah Ta'ālā. At least, this much of the answer makes it clear that Rūḥ cannot be taken on the analogy of common matter - which removes all those doubts that emerge as a result of trying to understand Rūḥ through the prism of materialistic inquiry. The hard truth is that this much knowledge of Rūḥ is sufficient for man. No business, religious or worldly, depends on knowing more than that. Therefore, taking that part of the question as redundant and unnecessary, it was not answered - specially when understanding its reality is something not easy even for the wisest of the wise, not to say much about the common people.

Answering every question is not necessary unless religiously advisable

Imām Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ has deduced from this answer the ruling that it is not necessary for the Muftī and 'Ālim to answer every question and every aspect from it as posed by the questioner. Instead of doing that, the answer should be given with religious advisability kept in sight. Any answer that is above the comprehension of the addressee, or

should there be the danger of his or her falling into misunderstanding, then, such an answer should not be given. Similarly, not to be answered are questions that are unnecessary (لا يعني :*lā ya'nī*). Yes, should there be a person who faces a situation in which he must act one way or the other and who is no 'Ālim, then, it is necessary for the Muftī and 'Ālim to give an answer in the light of his knowledge. (Jaṣṣāṣ) Imām al-Bukhārī has devoted a chapter heading in Kitāb al-'Ilm to highlight this point. He has said that a question the answer to which is likely to cause misunderstanding should not be answered.

Whether or not it is possible for anyone to have the knowledge of the reality of Rūḥ

The Holy Qur'ān has given an answer to this question in accordance with the need and comprehension of the addressee. It has not elected to unfold the reality of Rūḥ. But, it does not necessarily imply that no human being can simply understand the reality of Rūḥ and that the Holy Prophet ﷺ also did not know its reality. The truth of the matter is that this verse neither negates nor confirms it. If a prophet or messenger were to come to know its reality through Waḥy (revelation), or a Waliyy (man of Allah) through Kashf (illumination) and Ilhām (inspiration), then, it is not contrary to this verse. In fact, even if this matter is debated and investigated in terms of reason and philosophy, it would certainly be called useless and unnecessary, but it cannot be called impermissible. Therefore, many learned scholars from the early and later period of Islam have written standard books about Rūḥ. In our period, my venerated teacher, Shaykh al-Islam, Shabbīr Aḥmad Usmānī has presented this issue admirably in a small tract. Here, he has explained its reality to the measure it is possible for a common person to understand and an educated one to find sufficient enough to avoid doubts and difficulties.

An important note

At this juncture, Imām al-Baghawī has carried a detail report from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه as follows: This verse was revealed in Makkah al-Mukarramah. It happened at a time when the Quraysh chiefs of Makkah got together and talked about the problem that Muḥammad ﷺ was born amongst us and grew up into a young man. No one ever doubted his trustworthiness, honesty and truthfulness, and he was never accused by anyone of having told a lie. Yet, despite all that,

we just do not understand the claim of being a prophet he was now making. Therefore, let us do something about it, like sending our delegation to the Jewish scholars of Madīnah and get a learned opinion about him from them. So, a delegation from the Quraysh met the Jewish scholars in Madīnah. They advised: 'we tell you three things. Ask him about these three. If he answers all three, he is no prophet. Similarly, if he does not answer any of the three, he is still no prophet. And if he answers two, not answering the third, be certain that he is the prophet.'* They proposed three questions: (1) Ask him about those in the past who had sought refuge in a cave to stay safe from *shirk* - because, their account is unique. (2) Ask him about the person who had traveled through the East and West of the Earth and what had happened to him. (3) Ask him about the Rūḥ (soul, spirit).

The delegation returned and posed those three questions before the Holy Prophet ﷺ. He said, 'I shall give you the answer to these tomorrow'- but, he did not say, *"Insha'Allah"* with it. The outcome was that the channel of Waḥy (revelation) remained discontinued for a few days. There are various reports that put the number of days from twelve, fifteen to forty during which it stood stopped. The Quraysh of Makkah had their opportunity to hurl taunts - 'we were promised an answer tomorrow, now so many days have passed and we have no answer!' This caused the Holy Prophet ﷺ too to become anxious. Then came angel Jibra'īl with the verse: وَلَا تَقُولَنَّ لِشَاىْءٍ اِنِّىْ فَاعِلٌ ذٰلِكَ غَدًا اِلَّآ اَنْ يَّشَآءَ اللّٰهُ (And never say about anything: "I will do that tomorrow," without [saying]: *"Insha'Allāh"*: [If Allah wills].' - al-Kahf, 18: 23,24) and, after that, he recited the verse about the Rūḥ mentioned above. Then came the revelation of the verses relating to the people of Kahf, and the event of Dhul-Qarnain who had traveled from the East to the West which is to appear in Sūrah al-Kahf. A detailed answer has been given there by narrating the story of the people of Kahf and Dhul-Qarnain while the question concerned with the reality of the Rūḥ was not answered (which made the sign of the veracity of prophecy given by the Jews manifest). Tirmidhī has also described this event briefly. (Maẓharī)

Investigative observations on the reality of Rūḥ (soul, spirit) and

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*. This detail is in accordance with Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl, p. 134, v. 4 - Muḥammad Taqi Usmānī.

Nafs (self) have appeared earlier in this volume under verse 29 of Sūrah al-Ḥijr: نَفَخْتُ فِيْهِ مِنْ رُّوْحِي (I have blown into him of my spirit - 15:29). Presented with reference to Tafsīr Maẓharī, it makes the kinds of Rūḥ along with the reality of each sufficiently clear.

We can now move to verse 86: وَلَئِنْ شِئْنَا لَنَذْهَبَنَّ (And if We so will, We will surely take away...). It will be recollected that, in the previous verse (85), by giving an answer to the question about Rūḥ as true to the measure of its necessity, the underlying effort to find out the reality of the Rūḥ was blocked and it was declared that man's knowledge, no matter how much, still remains relatively insignificant in terms of the great span of the ultimate reality of things. Therefore, getting entangled with unnecessary debates and investigations is a waste of precious time. The present verse: وَلَئِنْ شِئْنَا (And if We so will) indicates that the sum total of whatever knowledge human beings have been given, even that is no private property of theirs. Allah Ta'ālā can, if He so wills, take away that too. Therefore, they should be grateful to Allah for whatever of knowledge they have and stay away from wasting time in redundant and unnecessary investigations - specially when pure investigation is just not the objective, instead, testing others or belittling them is. If one did that, it is not out of the realm of possibility that this crookedness may result in all that one has in the name of knowledge taken away in toto. The address in this verse is, though, to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, but the purpose is to really make his followers listen and get the message - when even the knowledge of the Rasūl of Allah is not within his exclusive power and control, not much can be said about others!

The subject in verse 88: قُلْ لَّئِنِ اجْتَمَعَتِ الْإِنْسُ وَالْجِنُّ (If all humans and *jinns* join together...) appears in some other verses of the Holy Qur'ān as well. Challenging the humankind, it has been said there: If you do not take the Qur'ān to be the word of Allah, rather take it to be a word of man, then, you too are human, why would you not come up with its like? Along with that challenge, it was also said in this verse: Not the humankind alone, you are welcome to join up with *jinns,* but you, all combined together, will still be unable to come out with one Sūrah - even one verse - like that of the Qur'ān.

The repetition of this subject at this place may possibly be to show the futility of what the deniers of the message were trying to do. Here

they were trying to test the veracity of the mission of a prophet of Allah by asking all sorts of questions, the one about the Rūḥ being one of them. Being an exercise in futility, why would they go about digging into unnecessary issues only to determine whether or not the prophet sent to them was true? Why they would not look into the Qur'ān as it is? It leaves no room for doubt in the veracity of the Holy Prophet ﷺ as prophet and messenger of Allah. The reason is simple. When the humans and *jinns* of the whole world are incapable of producing the least like of it, what doubt could there be in that it is but the Divine Word. And once it is proved so manifestly that the Holy Qur'ān is Divine Word, hardly any doubt remains in that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was a true prophet and messenger of Allah.

The last verse: وَلَقَدْ صَرَّفْنَا (And surely We have explained - 89) tells us that the Holy Qur'ān stands out as a miracle so clear that it leaves no room for any question and doubt. Still, what is happening is that people do not thank Allah for His blessings, do not even recognize the real worth of the blessing of the Qur'ān and keep wandering around in error.

Verses 90 - 95

وَقَالُوْا لَنْ نُّؤْمِنَ لَكَ حَتّٰى تَفْجُرَ لَنَا مِنَ الْاَرْضِ يَنْۢبُوْعًا ﴿۹۰﴾ اَوْ تَكُوْنَ
لَكَ جَنَّةٌ مِّنْ نَّخِيْلٍ وَّعِنَبٍ فَتُفَجِّرَ الْاَنْهٰرَ خِلٰلَهَا تَفْجِيْرًا ﴿۹۱﴾
اَوْ تُسْقِطَ السَّمَآءَ كَمَا زَعَمْتَ عَلَيْنَا كِسَفًا اَوْ تَاْتِيَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ
قَبِيْلًا ﴿۹۲﴾ اَوْ يَكُوْنَ لَكَ بَيْتٌ مِّنْ زُخْرُفٍ اَوْ تَرْقٰى فِى السَّمَآءِ ؕ وَلَنْ
نُّؤْمِنَ لِرُقِيِّكَ حَتّٰى تُنَزِّلَ عَلَيْنَا كِتٰبًا نَّقْرَؤُهٗ ؕ قُلْ سُبْحٰنَ رَبِّىْ هَلْ
كُنْتُ اِلَّا بَشَرًا رَّسُوْلًا ﴿۹۳﴾ وَمَا مَنَعَ النَّاسَ اَنْ يُّؤْمِنُوْٓا اِذْ جَآءَهُمُ
الْهُدٰٓى اِلَّآ اَنْ قَالُوْٓا اَبَعَثَ اللّٰهُ بَشَرًا رَّسُوْلًا ﴿۹۴﴾ قُلْ لَّوْ كَانَ فِى
الْاَرْضِ مَلٰٓئِكَةٌ يَّمْشُوْنَ مُطْمَئِنِّيْنَ لَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ مَلَكًا
رَّسُوْلًا ﴿۹۵﴾

And they said, "We shall never believe in you unless you

make a spring gush forth for us from the earth. [90] **Or you have a garden of date-palms and grapes, then you bring forth rivers from their midst in abundance.** [91] **Or you cause the sky to fall upon us in pieces, as you claimed, or you bring Allah and angels before us face to face.** [92] **Or you have a house made of gold; or you ascend to the sky, and we will not believe in your ascension unless you send down to us a book we may read. Say, "I proclaim the Purity of my Lord. I am nothing but human, a messenger."** [93]

And nothing prevented people from believing, when guidance came to them, except that they said, "Has Allah sent a man as a messenger?" [94]

Say, "Were there angels (living) on the earth, walking about in peace, We would have certainly sent down an angel from the heavens as a messenger." [95]

Commentary

A prophetic answer to hostile questions sounding absurd

The questions asked and the demands made in these verses from the Holy Prophet ﷺ were virtually conditions on the fulfillment of which his antagonists were supposed to believe. These conditions are such that anyone who hears them would find them nothing but some sort of weird mockery and certainly a very absurd excuse for not believing. While having to respond to such questions, one becomes naturally angry and retorts in the same manner. But, the answer that Allah Taʿālā taught His prophet عليهم السلام to give against their impertinent questions reported in this verse is something significant for everyone. Particularly so, for the leaders and reformers of the Muslim community who would do well to always remember it making it a regular feature of their work among people. Is it not that, in answer to all that, nothing was said about their lack of sense, nor mention was made of their hostile mischief, nor there was any verbal duel fought against them? Instead, the truth of the matter was made clear to them in very simple words. In effect, they were told: Perhaps, you think that a person who comes as a messenger of Allah should also be the possessor of all Divine powers and should be able to control everything. This is a mistaken notion. The duty of a messenger of Allah is only to convey the Divine message. It is a different matter that Allah would also send many miracles to prove the veracity of the mission of His apostles, prophets and messengers. But, that takes

place exclusively with the power and under the control of Allah Ta'ālā. A *rasūl* (messenger) is not given Divine powers. He is a human being and is never outside the framework of human power - except that Allah Ta'ālā alone were to manifest His great subduing power to help him.

Only a human being can be a messenger of Allah: Angels cannot be sent as messengers to human beings

Common disbelievers and polytheists thought that *'bashar,'* that is, a man, could not be the messenger of Allah because he is someone accustomed to all human compulsions like them. When so, what edge did he have over them to make them call him the messenger of Allah and take him as their leader claiming that they follow him? This assumption of theirs has been answered in the Holy Qur'ān, at several places in various ways. The outcome of the answer given here in this verse: مَا مَنَعَ النَّاسَ (And nothing prevented people - 94) is that a messenger of Allah sent to a set of people has to be from their genus or race. If these people are human, the messenger should be human because mutual congruity does not exist between one genus and the other - and without congruity, guidance and grooming bring no benefit. Had some angel been sent to men as their messenger, he would have known no hunger, or thirst, or sexual desires, nor would he have felt the effect of chill and heat, nor fatigue after hard work. He would have, then, expected human beings to act like him without having ever realized their weaknesses and limitations. Similarly, when human beings knew that he was an angel, after all, they would have come to the conclusion that they just did not have the ability to do what he did. Who would have, then, followed him? Following is the fruit of correction, reform and right guidance. This benefit can be hoped for only when the messenger of Allah is from the genus of men. He should be an embodiment of human emotions and physical desires while, at the same time, he should also have an angelic majesty that could serve as a liaison - intermediary communicator - between human beings and angels, receiving revelation from angels bringing it and communicating it to his fellow human beings.

This submission also removes the doubt that arises by thinking: when human beings cannot derive benefit from the angel, how would a messenger - despite being human - derive the benefit of revelation from them?

As for the doubt - when the compatibility of genus is a condition between a messenger and his people, how was the Holy Prophet ﷺ made a messenger of the *jinns* for they are not from the same genus as men? - it can be answered by saying that the messenger is not simply a human being, instead, he also has an angelic majesty about him because of which *jinns* too could also be congruous to him.

In the last verse (95), it was said that they, despite being human, cannot demand that their messenger should be an angel. This demand was unreasonable. Yes, if angels had been living on the Earth and there was the need to send a messenger to them, then, indeed, an angel would have been sent as a messenger. It will be noted that the attribute of angels living on the Earth has been described here in the words: يَمْشُوْنَ مُطْمَئِنِّيْنَ (walking about in peace). This tells us that the need to send an angel deputed as a messenger to other angels would have come up only at a time when the angels of the Earth could not themselves go to the heavens rather remained living on the Earth alone. Otherwise, had they themselves possessed the power to go to the heavens, there would have remained just no need to send a messenger to the Earth.

Verses 96 - 100

قُلْ كَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ شَهِيْدًا بَيْنِيْ وَبَيْنَكُمْ ۭ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ بِعِبَادِهٖ خَبِيْرًا ۢ بَصِيْرًا
﴿٩٦﴾ وَمَنْ يَّهْدِ اللّٰهُ فَهُوَ الْمُهْتَدِ ۚ وَمَنْ يُّضْلِلْ فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهُمْ اَوْلِيَاۗءَ
مِنْ دُوْنِهٖ ۭ وَنَحْشُرُهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ عَلٰي وُجُوْهِهِمْ عُمْيًا وَّبُكْمًا
وَّصُمًّا ۭ مَاْوٰىهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ ۭ كُلَّمَا خَبَتْ زِدْنٰهُمْ سَعِيْرًا ﴿٩٧﴾ ذٰلِكَ
جَزَاۗؤُهُمْ بِاَنَّهُمْ كَفَرُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَقَالُوْٓا ءَاِذَا كُنَّا عِظَامًا وَّرُفَاتًا ءَاِنَّا
لَمَبْعُوْثُوْنَ خَلْقًا جَدِيْدًا ﴿٩٨﴾ اَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ الَّذِيْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ
وَالْاَرْضَ قَادِرٌ عَلٰٓي اَنْ يَّخْلُقَ مِثْلَهُمْ وَجَعَلَ لَهُمْ اَجَلًا لَّا رَيْبَ فِيْهِ ۭ
فَاَبَى الظّٰلِمُوْنَ اِلَّا كُفُوْرًا ﴿٩٩﴾ قُلْ لَّوْ اَنْتُمْ تَمْلِكُوْنَ خَزَاۗىِٕنَ رَحْمَةِ
رَبِّيْٓ اِذًا لَّاَمْسَكْتُمْ خَشْيَةَ الْاِنْفَاقِ ۭ وَكَانَ الْاِنْسَانُ قَتُوْرًا ﴿١٠٠﴾ ع

Say, "Allah is sufficient as witness between me and you. Surely, about His servants, He is All-Aware, All-Watchful." [96]

And the one whom Allah guides is the guided one. And whom He lets go astray, you will never find for them any helpers other than Him. And We shall gather them on the Day of Judgment their faces down - blind, dumb and deaf. Their abode is the Fire. Whenever it calms down, We increase the flames for them. [97]

That is their punishment, because they rejected Our signs and said, "What! Once we are reduced to bones and dust, is it, then, that we shall be raised, created anew?" [98]

Have they not seen that Allah who has created the heavens and the earth has the power to create them as they were? And (for this) He has appointed a time in which there is no doubt. Still, the wrongdoers refused to do anything but reject. [99]

Say, "If you were to own the treasures of my Lord's blessing, even then you would certainly hold them back, lest it should be spent. And man is so niggardly. [100]

Commentary

The truth of the matter about what has been said in the last verse (100) is that the treasures of the mercy of Allah are limit-less and end-less. They are never going to end, but man is by nature narrow-minded, short on courage. When it comes to giving, he is not motivated enough to share what he has with others.

Commentators generally take the expression 'the treasures of the Lord's blessing or mercy' to mean the treasures of wealth. This has its link with previous verses (90,91) where the disbelievers of Makkah had demanded that the Holy Prophet ﷺ should - if he was really a prophet in truth - make rivers flow in the barren desert of Makkah and transform it into lush green farms, like the land of Syria. The answer to this was given right there (93), saying in effect: This is as if you have taken me to be nothing short of God whose authority you want me to exercise. As for me, I am only a messenger of Allah, not Allah. I cannot do what I will. If we see this verse in this context, it would mean: If you are asking me to turn this desert land of Makkah into a green land to test my verac-

ity as prophet and messenger, then, the miracle of the eloquence of the Qur'ān is sufficient to prove that. There is no need for any other demands. And if this is to meet the needs of your country and people, remember that, even if you are given everything you demand for the land of Makkah, and all sorts of treasures with it, it would not result in the prosperity of the masses of your country. In fact, human nature will take its course and whoever gets hold of these treasures will sit on them like legendary serpents. Tell them to spend it on the people and you will see them all consumed by the fear that it will go out of their hands. In a situation like this, if a few rich men of Makkah get to be richer and opulent, what are the masses of people going to get out of it? Most commentators have declared this to be the sense of the verse.

My master and mentor, Ḥaḍrat Thānavī, in his Bayān al-Qur'ān, has interpreted 'my Lord's mercy' as the station of prophet-hood and messenger-ship, and 'the treasures of mercy' as the varied perfection of prophet-hood. Given this Tafsīr, this verse will be linked with previous verses by saying: The outcome of all those absurd demands you are making against my status as a prophet and messenger of Allah is that you just do not want to believe in it. Do you, then, want that the function of prophet-hood should be entrusted in your hands, so that you can make anyone a prophet at your sweet will? If such a wish were to be granted, the consequence would be that you would never give prophet-hood or messenger-ship to anyone, sitting over it like misers. After having given this explanation, he has added that this Tafsīr is something that comes as one of the many divine gifts. It fits the occasion. Interpreting prophet-hood in this setting with mercy would be similar to its interpretation in the verse of Sūrah az-Zukhruf. It was said: أَهُمْ يَقْسِمُوْنَ رَحْمَةَ رَبِّكَ (Do they distribute the mercy of your Lord? - 43:32). Here, *'raḥmah'* (mercy) means nothing but *'nubuwwah'* (prophet-hood) - and there is a consensus on it. Allah knows best.

Verses 101 - 109

وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا مُوْسٰى تِسْعَ اٰيٰتٍۭ بَيِّنٰتٍ فَسْئَلْ بَنِىٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ اِذْ جَآءَهُمْ
فَقَالَ لَهٗ فِرْعَوْنُ اِنِّىْ لَاَظُنُّكَ يٰمُوْسٰى مَسْحُوْرًا ﴿١٠١﴾ قَالَ لَقَدْ

عَلِمْتَ مَآ اَنْزَلَ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ اِلَّا رَبُّ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ بَصَآئِرَ ۚ وَ اِنِّیْ لَاَظُنُّكَ يٰفِرْعَوْنُ مَثْبُوْرًا ﴿١٠٢﴾ فَاَرَادَ اَنْ يَّسْتَفِزَّهُمْ مِّنَ الْاَرْضِ فَاَغْرَقْنٰهُ وَمَنْ مَّعَهٗ جَمِيْعًا ﴿١٠٣﴾ وَّقُلْنَا مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖ لِبَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ اسْكُنُوا الْاَرْضَ فَاِذَا جَآءَ وَعْدُ الْاٰخِرَةِ جِئْنَا بِكُمْ لَفِيْفًا ﴿١٠٤﴾ وَبِالْحَقِّ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ وَبِالْحَقِّ نَزَلَ ؕ وَمَآ اَرْسَلْنٰكَ اِلَّا مُبَشِّرًا وَّنَذِيْرًا ﴿١٠٥﴾ وَقُرْاٰنًا فَرَقْنٰهُ لِتَقْرَاَهٗ عَلَى النَّاسِ عَلٰى مُكْثٍ وَّنَزَّلْنٰهُ تَنْزِيْلًا ﴿١٠٦﴾ قُلْ اٰمِنُوْا بِهٖٓ اَوْ لَا تُؤْمِنُوْا ؕ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْعِلْمَ مِنْ قَبْلِهٖٓ اِذَا يُتْلٰى عَلَيْهِمْ يَخِرُّوْنَ لِلْاَذْقَانِ سُجَّدًا ﴿١٠٧﴾ وَّيَقُوْلُوْنَ سُبْحٰنَ رَبِّنَآ اِنْ كَانَ وَعْدُ رَبِّنَا لَمَفْعُوْلًا ﴿١٠٨﴾ وَيَخِرُّوْنَ لِلْاَذْقَانِ يَبْكُوْنَ وَيَزِيْدُهُمْ خُشُوْعًا ﴿١٠٩﴾ السجدة

And surely we gave Mūsā nine clear signs. So, ask the children of Isrā'īl, when he came to them, the Pharaoh said to him, "I am afraid, O Mūsā, you are under the spell of magic." [101] He said, "You know well that these (signs) are sent down by none but by the Lord of the heavens and the earth as eye-openers. And, I am afraid O Pharaoh, you are going to be destroyed." [102]

Then he (the Pharaoh) tried to harass him out of the land, so We drowned him and those with him altogether, [103] and thereafter We said to the children of Isrā'īl, "Live in the land. So, when the appointed time of the Hereafter will come, We shall bring you all joined together." [104]

And with truth We have sent it down and with truth it descended. And We did not send you but as a bearer of good tidings and as a warner. [105]

And We have divided the Qur'ān in portions, so that you may recite it to the people gradually, and We have revealed it little by little. [106]

Say, "Believe it or do not believe it; when it is recited to those who were given knowledge before it, they fall down on their faces in prostration [107] and say, "Pure is

our Lord. Certainly, the word of our Lord is sure to be done." [108] **And they fall down on their faces weeping and it increases them in the humbleness of heart.** [109]

Commentary

The first verse (101): وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا مُوْسٰى تِسْعَ اٰيٰتٍ mentions the bestowal of nine clear signs on Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام. The word: آية (*'āyah*) carries the meaning of miracle or sign as well as that of the آيٰت: *āyāt* or verses of the Qur'ān, that is, the divine injunctions. At this place, the probability of both meanings exists. Therefore, a number of commentators have taken the word '*āyāt*' to mean miracles - and the number nine does not make it necessary that they will not be more than nine - but, at this place, the figure 'nine' has been mentioned on the basis of some particular importance it has. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه has enumerated these miracles as follows:

1. The staff of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام which turned into a huge snake.
2. The hand that emitted light when placed under and taken out of the armpit.
3. The removal of stammering from his tongue.
4. The splitting of the water barrier in two sections to give safe passage to the Banī Isrā'īl to cross it.
5. The sending of the punishment through locusts in unusual circumstances.
6. The sending of the storm.
7. The clothes on their bodies were infested with countless lice they had no escape from.
8. The punishment of frogs was released on them when frogs would appear in everything they ate or drank.
9. The punishment of blood was sent that filled every utensil and mingled with whatever they ate or drank.

And a Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth tells us that the word '*āyāt*' used here means divine injunctions. This Ḥadīth has been reported in Abū Dāwūd, an-Nasā'ī, Tirmidhī and Ibn Mājah on the authority of Sayyidnā Safwān

ibn al-'Aththāl ﷺ. He says that a Jew asked one of his friends to take him to 'that' prophet. The friend said, 'do not call him a prophet. If he finds out that we too call him a prophet, he will have four eyes on him (that is, he will have an opportunity to wallow in his pride and glee).' Then they came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and asked him as to what were the nine clear signs given to Sayyidnā Mūsā ؑ. He said:

1. Do not ascribe any partners to Allah.

2. Do not steal.

3. Do not fornicate.

4. Do not unjustly take the life of the one whose killing has been forbidden by Allah.

5. Do not falsely impute anyone innocent with charges liable to the sentence of death or any other punishment.

6. Do not practice magic.

7. Do not devour interest.

8. Do not level a false accusation of fornication on a chaste woman.

9. Do not desert the battlefield in Jihād for fear of being killed.

And he also said, 'O Jews, it has also been specially enjoined on you that you shall not contravene the particular injunctions of the observance of the day of Sabbath (Saturday) given to you.'

Hearing what the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, they both kissed his hands and feet and declared, 'We bear witness that you are the prophet of Allah.' He said, 'What is it, then, that stops you from following me?' They said that Sayyidnā Dāwūd ؑ had prayed to his Lord for prophets to always keep appearing from among his progeny - 'and we are scared that the Jews will kill us if we started following you.'

Since this explanation of the verse stands proved on the authority of Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth, therefore, this is what many commentators have preferred to go by.

About the last sentence: يَبْكُوْنَ وَيَزِيْدُهُمْ خُشُوْعًا (And they fall down on their faces weeping and it increases them in the humbleness of heart -109), it

appears in Tafsīr Maẓharī that being in tears while reciting the Qur'ān stands as a highly recommended and reward worthy act (*mustaḥabb*). Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ narrates that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, 'a person who wept in fear of Allah shall not go to Hell until milk is returned to the udder after having been milked. (It means, as it is not possible to put milk once milked back into the udder, very similarly, it is also not possible that a person who weeps in fear of Allah were to go to Hell). And says another report, 'Allah Ta'ālā has forbidden the fire of Hell on two eyes - the eye that weeps in fear of Allah, and the eye that stays awake at nights guarding the Islamic frontiers. (Baihaqī, and Ḥākim). And Sayyidnā Naḍr ibn Sa'd ﷺ reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, 'a people, among whom there is someone who weeps in fear of Allah, will be delivered from the fire of Hell because of him.' (Rūḥ al- Ma'ānī from Tirmidhī)

The reason for the big trouble Muslims are in today is no other but that there are very few left among them who would weep fearing Allah. After reporting the Aḥādīth showing the merits of weeping in fear of Allah at this point, the author of Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī says: وَينبغى ان يكون ذٰلك حال العلماء (And that is the state the 'Ulamā' should be in) - because, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir and others have quoted the following saying of 'Abd al-A'lā Taimī:

'A person who has received the kind of knowledge that does not make him cry [because of having realized the reality of things] should be enough to make you understand that he has not been given the knowledge that brings benefits.'

Verses 110 - 111

قُلِ ادْعُوا اللّٰهَ اَوِادْعُوا الرَّحْمٰنَ ط اَيًّامَّا تَدْعُوْا فَلَهُ الْاَسْمَآءُ الْحُسْنٰى ج
وَلَا تَجْهَرْ بِصَلَاتِكَ وَلَا تُخَافِتْ بِهَا وَابْتَغِ بَيْنَ ذٰلِكَ سَبِيْلًا ﴿١١٠﴾
وَقُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِيْ لَمْ يَتَّخِذْ وَلَدًا وَّلَمْ يَكُنْ لَّهٗ شَرِيْكٌ فِي الْمُلْكِ
وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَّهٗ وَلِيٌّ مِّنَ الذُّلِّ وَكَبِّرْهُ تَكْبِيْرًا ﴿١١١﴾ ع

Say, "Call (Him by the name of) Allah or Ar-Raḥmān, in whichever way you call, His are the best names." And do

not be (too) loud in your Ṣalāh nor be (too) low in it, and seek a way in between. [110]

And say, "Praise belongs to Allah who has neither taken to Him a son, nor is there any partner to Him in His kingdom, nor is anyone (needed) to protect Him because of (any) weakness. And proclaim His greatness, an open proclamation. [111]

Commentary

These are the last verses of Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl (Al-'Isrā'). The Sūrah began with a declaration of the purity and oneness of Allah Ta'ālā, and this is how it is being concluded. The revelation of these verses was based on some events. The first one came to pass on a certain day when the Holy Prophet ﷺ, during his supplication, said *'Yā Allah'* and *'Yā Raḥmān.'* The Mushriks thought that he was calling two Gods. They said, 'he forbids us to call anyone else other than the One while he himself calls two deities.' The answer to this comment was given in the first part of the verse by saying that the most exalted Allah does not have a mere two names. He has many more names and all of them are the best of names. Call Him by any of these and it means the One and Only Allah. So, it was made clear that their apprehensions on that count were wrong.

As for the second incident, when the Holy Prophet ﷺ would recite the Qur'ān loudly during Ṣalāh, the Mushriks made fun of him and passed audacious remarks berating the Qur'ān, archangel Jibra'īl, even Allah Ta'ālā. In response to that, the last part of this very verse was revealed where he has been advised to take to a middle course between the loud and the low, as the average voice took care of the functional necessity. And as for the opportunity the Mushriks had to cause pain to them over the loud pitch of the voice, they would be relieved of that too.

The third problem was that the Jews and Christians proposed children for Allah Ta'ālā and the pagan Arabs said that idols were partners of Allah. The Sābians and the Māgians used to hold that not being particularly close to Allah amounted to a personal loss of worth and honor. In answer to these three religious groups, the last verse was revealed where their three notions have been refuted.

It will be noted that, in this world, the one from whom strength and

support is received is sometimes younger than one, like children, and sometimes an equal, like a partner, and sometimes older than one, like a supporter and helper. Here, in this verse, Allah Ta'ālā has refuted all three in the same order.

Ruling

The etiquette of recitation in Ṣalāh as given in verse 110 is that it should not be in a voice raised very high, nor should it be in a voice so lowered that those standing behind in the congregation cannot hear it. This injunction, as obvious, is particular with prayers wherein the recitation is voiced. As for the prayers of Ẓuhr and 'Aṣr, the recitation therein is totally unvoiced as proved from uninterrupted Sunnah.

In prayers with voiced recitation, included there are the Farḍ of Maghrib, 'Ishā' and Fajr, as well as the prayer of Tahajjud - as in a Ḥadīth which says: Once the Holy Prophet ﷺ passed by Sayyidnā Abū Bakr and Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ at the time of Tahajjud. Sayyidnā Abū Bakr was reciting in a lowered voice while Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ was reciting in a loud voice. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said to Sayyidnā Abū Bakr, 'why would you recite in such a lowered voice?' Sayyidnā Abū Bakr said, 'the One I wanted to talk to in secret, Him I have made to hear, because Allah Ta'ālā hears every voice, even the lowest of the low.' The Holy Prophet ﷺ said, 'recite somewhat loudly.' Then he said to Sayyidnā 'Umar, 'why do you recite in such a loud voice?' Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ said, 'I recite loudly to wake up the drowsy, and satan.' He ordered him too, 'you should recite in a voice somewhat lowered.' (Tirmidhī as quoted Maẓharī)

Problems and their solutions relating to the loud or lowered rendering of the recitation of the Qur'ān in Ṣalāh, or on occasions other than it, have been already explained in Sūrah al-A'rāf (see commentary under Verse 55, Volume III). About the last verse beginning with: قُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ (say, '*alḥamdulillāh*: praise belongs to Allah'), the Ḥadīth says that this is the '*āyah*' (verse) of '*'izzah*' (power and glory). [The reference is to the efficacy of the verse in seeking the help of Allah to overcome weaknesses and difficulties]. (Reported by Aḥmad and at-Ṭabarānī on the authority of Sayyidnā Mu'ādh al-Juhaniyy as in Maẓharī) This verse also provides an essential guidance. The drive of the meaning is that it does not matter how much one devotes to the worship of Allah, one is still obligated to take his or her deed

to be deficient as compared with His due right and confess to the likely shortfall in performing it. (Maẓharī)

And Sayyidnā Anas ﷺ has said that a child from the tribe of Banī 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, when able to say meaningful words, was taught to recite this verse by the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Then he recited the verse:

وَقُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِىْ لَمْ يَتَّخِذْ وَلَدًا وَّلَمْ يَكُنْ لَّهٗ شَرِيْكٌ فِى الْمُلْكِ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَّهٗ وَلِىٌّ مِّنَ الذُّلِّ وَكَبِّرْهُ تَكْبِيْرًا ۔(١٧:١١١)

And say, "Praise belongs to Allah who has neither taken to Him a son, nor is there any partner to Him in His kingdom, nor is anyone [needed] to protect Him because of [any] weakness. And proclaim His greatness, an open proclamation" - 111). (Maẓharī)

And Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ has said that once he went out with the Holy Prophet ﷺ, in a manner that his hand was in Holy Prophet's hands. He passed by a person who was disheveled and worried. He asked, 'what brought you to this condition?' That person said, 'sickness and poverty have done this to me.' He said, 'I am going to tell you a few words. If you recite these, your sickness and poverty will go away. The words were:

تَوَكَّلْتُ عَلَى الْحَيِّ الَّذِىْ لَا يَمُوْتُ اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِىْ لَمْ يَتَّخِذْ وَلَدًا وَّلَمْ يَكُنْ لَّهٗ شَرِيْكٌ فِى الْمُلْكِ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَّهٗ وَلِىٌّ مِّنَ الذُّلِّ وَكَبِّرْهُ تَكْبِيْرًا ۔

I place my trust in the Ever Living who is not to die. Praise belongs to Allah who has neither taken to Him a son, nor is there any partner to Him in His kingdom, nor is anyone (needed) to protect Him because of (any) weakness. And proclaim His greatness, an open proclamation. (17:111)

After the passage of some time, when he went that way, he found his condition good and showed his pleasure about it. That person told him, 'since the time you taught me these words, I recite them punctually.' (Abū Ya'lā and Ibn al-Sunnī, as quoted by Maẓharī)

The Tafsīr of Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl ends here
With the help of Allah
After al-'Ishā', Jumāda I, 1390 Hijrah
Praised be Allah, from the beginning to the end.

A personal postscript by the author

... While writing these lines, this humble servant of Allah has completed full seventy five years of his age on 21 Sha'bān, 1390 Hijrah. Year seventy-six opens amidst diseases of different kinds including the natural weakness that sets in at this age. Then there is the mass of things to do and problems to resolve. Who can look forward to the task of writing beyond this point for it would be hoping against hope. But, when it comes to the service of the Qur'ān things become different. When someone does something in the name of the Qur'ān, no matter how insignificant, it becomes for a servant of Allah a matter of good fortune and honour. This thought led me to begin the Tafsīr of Sūrah al-Kahf with the name of Allah. The idea was to take whatever it was possible to do during the years of life left as sufficient and good enough, because the purpose is not to finish the Qur'ān, the purpose is to consume one's years and energy into the Qur'ān. And Allah is the giver of ability and the helper of the effort made in His way.

(Abridged from the detailed note)

End of Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl

Sūrah Al-Kahf

(The Cave)

Sūrah al-Kahf is Makki. It has 110 verses and 12 sections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the Most-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 8

اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِىٓ اَنْزَلَ عَلٰى عَبْدِهِ الْكِتٰبَ وَلَمْ يَجْعَلْ لَّهٗ عِوَجًا ﴿١﴾
قَيِّمًا لِّيُنْذِرَ بَاْسًا شَدِيْدًا مِّنْ لَّدُنْهُ وَيُبَشِّرَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ الَّذِيْنَ يَعْمَلُوْنَ
الصّٰلِحٰتِ اَنَّ لَهُمْ اَجْرًا حَسَنًا ﴿٢﴾ مّٰكِثِيْنَ فِيْهِ اَبَدًا ﴿٣﴾ وَّيُنْذِرَ الَّذِيْنَ
قَالُوا اتَّخَذَ اللّٰهُ وَلَدًا ﴿٤﴾ مَالَهُمْ بِهٖ مِنْ عِلْمٍ وَّلَا لِاٰبَآئِهِمْ كَبُرَتْ
كَلِمَةً تَخْرُجُ مِنْ اَفْوَاهِهِمْ اِنْ يَّقُوْلُوْنَ اِلَّا كَذِبًا ﴿٥﴾ فَلَعَلَّكَ بَاخِعٌ
نَّفْسَكَ عَلٰٓى اٰثَارِهِمْ اِنْ لَّمْ يُؤْمِنُوْا بِهٰذَا الْحَدِيْثِ اَسَفًا ﴿٦﴾ اِنَّا جَعَلْنَا
مَا عَلَى الْاَرْضِ زِيْنَةً لَّهَا لِنَبْلُوَهُمْ اَيُّهُمْ اَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا ﴿٧﴾ وَاِنَّا
لَجٰعِلُوْنَ مَا عَلَيْهَا صَعِيْدًا جُرُزًا ﴿٨﴾

Praise belongs to Allah who has sent down to His servant the Book and allowed no crookedness in it, [1] a straightforward Book to warn of a severe punishment from Him, and to give glad tidings to the believers who do righteous deeds that they will have a good reward (Paradise) [2] where they will dwell for ever, [3] and to warn those who have said that Allah has taken to Himself a son, [4] while they have no knowledge of it, nor had their fathers. Grave is the word that comes out of their mouths. They say nothing but a lie. [5]

So, perhaps you are going to kill yourself after them out of grief if they do not believe in this message. [6]

Surely, We have made what is on earth an adornment for it so that We test them as to who among them is better in deed. [7] **And surely, We are going to turn what is thereon into a barren land.** [8]

The properties and merits of Sūrah al-Kahf

According to a narration of Sayyidnā Abū al-Dardā' ﷺ appearing in Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, Tirmidhī, al-Nasā'ī and the Musnad of Aḥmad, one who has memorized the first ten verses of Sūrah al-Kahf will remain protected from the ill effects of Dajjāl (imposter). In another report in the same books and from the same authority, the same thing has been said about having memorized the last ten verses of Sūrah al-Kahf.

And it has been reported in the Musnad of Aḥmad on the authority of Sayyidnā Sahl ibn Mu'ādh ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "One who recites the first and the last verses of Sūrah al-Kahf, for him there is light from his feet up to his head. And the one who were to recite the whole Sūrah, then, for him there is light from the earth up to the sky."

And it appears in some narratives that a person who recites Sūrah al-Kahf on the day of Jumu'ah will have light from his feet up to the sky. This light will serve him well on the day of Qiyāmah, and every sin committed by him between the past and the present Jumu'ah will be forgiven." (Imām Ibn Kathīr has declared this report to be *mawqūf* (a Ḥadīth the narration of which stops at a Ṣaḥābī and does not ascend to the Holy Prophet ﷺ).

And Ḥāfiẓ Zya' al-Maqdisī, in his book Al-Mukhtārah, has reported on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Alī ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "One who recites Sūrah al-Kahf on the day of Jumu'ah will remain protected from every *fitnah.* And if Dajjāl appears, he will stay safe against the trying challenges released by him as well." (All these narrative reports have been taken from Tafsīr ibn Kathīr)

According to a report from Dailamī on the authority of Sayyidnā Anas ﷺ appearing in Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "The entire Sūrah al-Kahf was revealed at one time and seventy thousand angels came with it" - which shows its majesty.

The cause of revelation

Imām ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī has reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn

'Abbās ﷺ that the Quraysh of Makkah (disturbed by the rising influence of the Holy Prophet ﷺ as a prophet) sent two of their men, Naḍr ibn Ḥārith and 'Uqbah ibn Abī Mu'ayṭ, to the Jewish scholars of Madīnah. Their mission was to find out what they said about him as they were learned in past scriptures of the Torah and Injīl. The Jewish scholars told them, "put three questions before him. If he answers these correctly,* you should know that he is a prophet and messenger of Allah, and if he fails to do that, you should know that he is a pretender and not a messenger. Firstly, ask him about the young men who had left their city in the distant past and what had happened to them, for this is a unique event. Secondly, ask him about the person who had traveled through the East and West of the Earth and what had happened to him. Thirdly, ask him about the Rūḥ (soul, spirit) as to what it was?"

The two Quraysh emissaries returned to Makkah al-Mukarramah, informed their tribesmen that they had come back with a decisive plan of action and told them all about their encounter with the Jewish scholars of Madīnah. Then, these people took these questions to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. He heard the questions and said that he will answer them tomorrow. But, he forgot to say *'insha'Allah'* at that time. These people went back and the Holy Prophet ﷺ kept waiting for the Divine revelation in the hope that he will be told about answers to these questions through *waḥy*. But, no *waḥy* came until the next day as promised. In fact, fifteen days went by and things stood as they were, neither did Sayyidnā Jibra'īl come nor did the revelation. The Quraysh of Makkah started throwing taunts which caused real pain to the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

After fifteen days, came angel Jibra'īl with Sūrah al-Kahf (wherein the delay caused has also been explained by saying that one should say *'insha'Allah'* when promising to do something in the future. Since, this was not done in the event concerned, therefore, revelation was delayed as a measure of reminder. In this Sūrah, verses relating to this matter such as: وَلَا تَقُولَنَّ لِشَایْءٍ إِنِّی فَاعِلٌ ذٰلِكَ غَدًا إِلَّآ أَنْ يَّشَآءَ اللّٰهُ (18:23,24) will be appearing later). Also related in this Sūrah there was the event about the young

* That is, he gives the answer he should give (and his correct answer to the question about 'Rūḥ' will be that Allah Ta'ālā knows its reality best). So, this report which appears in Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī, p. 191, v. 15 is not contrary to the report which has appeared on pages 544-47 of this volume under the commentary on verse 85 of Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl - **Muḥammad Taqi Usmānī.**

men known as Aṣḥāb al-Kahf or the People of the Cave, and the event concerning the travel of Dhul-Qarnain from the East to the West. Also included therein was the answer to the question asked about 'Rūḥ' (Qurṭubī and Maẓharī with reference to Ibn Jarīr). But, answering the question about Rūḥ (soul, spirit) briefly was as dictated by wisdom. This was taken up separately at the end of Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl (17:85) and this is the reason why Sūrah al-Kahf has been placed after Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl [al-Isrā'] - as mentioned by Al-Suyuṭī.

Commentary

The word: عِوَج (*'iwaj*) in: وَلَمْ يَجْعَلْ لَّهٗ عِوَجًا قَيِّمًا (and allowed no crookedness in it - 1) means crookedness of any kind, or inclination towards one side or deviation from the norms of rectitude. The Holy Qur'ān remains pure and free of all that in terms of the perfection of its words and meanings. It simply admits of no distortion anywhere, either in eloquence or in knowledge and wisdom. The sense which has been conveyed in a negative or eliminative form through: وَلَمْ يَجْعَلْ لَّهٗ عِوَجًا (and allowed no crookedness in it) has been fortified positively through the word: قَيِّمًا (*qayyimā*) which follows immediately for emphasis. The reason is that this word carries the sense of: مُسْتَقِيمًا (*mustaqīmā*) and that which is: مستقيم (*mustaqīm*: straightforward, straight, upright) will not have the least crookedness or tilt towards any side. However, قَيِّم (*qayyim*) can also have another sense, that of caretaker, custodian and protector. Given this probability, the sense of the expression would be that the Qur'ān, while perfect in itself as free from all kinds of excess, deficiency and crookedness, keeps others upright, firm and unflinching and protects the interests and advantages of all servants of Allah. Thus the gist of the two expressions would be that the Holy Qur'ān stands perfect in itself and has the ability to make men and women created by Allah become equally perfect. (Maẓharī)

It was said in verse 7: إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا مَا عَلَى الْأَرْضِ زِينَةً لَّهَا (Surely, We have made what is on earth an adornment for it) with reference to all living forms, vegetation, mountains, minerals and everything else present on the earth. They are its embellishment. That there are snakes, scorpions, beasts and many harmful and fatal things may lead someone to doubt as to how can they be called 'an adornment for it.' This doubt is unfounded because everything in this world considered harmful, fatal or plain bad

may be so in a restricted sense but, in terms of the totality of creation, nothing is bad. Everything, no matter how bad, has been invested with many benefits by Allah Ta'ālā on other counts. The medical use of poisonous and fatal life forms in the interest of human beings is an example. Therefore, things that are considered even bad are not that bad in terms of the function of this entire universe.

Verses 9 - 12

أَمْ حَسِبْتَ أَنَّ أَصْحٰبَ الْكَهْفِ وَالرَّقِيْمِ كَانُوْا مِنْ اٰيٰتِنَا عَجَبًا ﴿۹﴾ إِذْ
أَوَى الْفِتْيَةُ إِلَى الْكَهْفِ فَقَالُوْا رَبَّنَآ اٰتِنَا مِنْ لَّدُنْكَ رَحْمَةً وَّهَيِّئْ لَنَا
مِنْ أَمْرِنَا رَشَدًا ﴿۱۰﴾ فَضَرَبْنَا عَلٰٓى اٰذَانِهِمْ فِى الْكَهْفِ سِنِيْنَ عَدَدًا
﴿۱۱﴾ ثُمَّ بَعَثْنٰهُمْ لِنَعْلَمَ أَىُّ الْحِزْبَيْنِ أَحْصٰى لِمَا لَبِثُوْٓا أَمَدًا ﴿۱۲﴾

Do you think that the People of Kahf (the Cave) and Raqīm (inscription*) were unusual out of Our signs? [9]

When the young men took refuge in the Cave and said, "Our Lord, bless us with mercy from Your own and provide us with guidance in our matters." [10] **So, We veiled their hearing (putting them to sleep) in the Cave for a number of years.** [11] **Thereafter We raised them up, so that We know which of the two groups had best calculated the period they remained (sleeping).** [12]

Lexical Explanation

Kahf is a large mountainous cave or cavern. If not large, it will be a *ghār*. The word: الرَّقِيْم (*al-raqīm*) literally denotes: المرقوم (*al-marqūm*) that is, something written. What does it mean at this place? The sayings of commentators differ about it. Ḍaḥḥāk, Sudiyy and Ibn Jubayr following the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ﷺ declare it to mean a written tablet on which the ruler of the time had inscribed the names of the People of Kahf and had it fixed on the entrance to the Cave. For this reason, the People of Kahf are also called the People of al-Raqīm (the inscribed ones). Qatādah, 'Aṭiyyah, 'Awfī and Mujāhid have said that Raqīm is the name of the valley adjoining the mountain in which the hol-

* The word Raqīm has been interpreted differently. Most of the commentators have preferred 'inscription' while others have taken it to be a mountain, a valley or a specific town.

low cavern of the People of Kahf was located. Some others have identified this mountain itself as the Raqīm. 'Ikrimah رحمه الله تعالى says, "I have heard Sayyidnā ibn 'Abbās ﷺ saying - I do not know whether Raqīm is the name of some inscribed tablet or some town." Ka'b al-Aḥbār and Wahb ibn Munabbih report from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās that Raqīm is the name of a town near Ailah, that is, 'Aqabah, situated in the kingdom of the Romans.

Fityah (فِتْيَة) in verse 10 is the plural of: فَتًى :*fatā*, which means a young man.

The expression: فَضَرَبْنَا عَلَىٰٓ اٰذَانِهِمْ (translated as 'so, We veiled their hearing [putting them to sleep]' - 11) literally means to plug ears to prevent someone from hearing. It is used to convey the sense of deep sleep. When sleeping, eyes close first but ears remain active. Sounds are heard. When sleep takes over completely, ears stop functioning. Later, when awake, ears resume their function first for sound startles the person sleeping who then comes out of his sleep.

Commentary

The story of the People of Kahf and Raqīm

There are a few subjects of study in this story. First of all, it needs to be determined whether People of Kahf and People of Raqīm are two names of the same group, or these are two separate groups. Though, no clarification of this appears in any Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth, but Imām al-Bukhārī, in his Ṣaḥīḥ, has given two separate chapter headings - Aṣḥāb al-Kahf and Aṣḥāb al-Raqīm. Then, under Aṣḥāb al-Raqīm, he mentions the well-known story of three persons being locked shut into a cave with no way out, which opened later through prayers, and which is there in details in all books of Ḥadīth. From this innovative device of Imām al-Bukhārī, it is gathered that, according to him, the People of Kahf are one group, and the appellation of the People of Raqīm has been used for those three persons who had taken shelter in the cave at some earlier time. Then a huge rock from the mountain fell on the entrance to the cave and blocked it totally, making it impossible for them to come out. At that moment, it was with reference to whatever righteous deeds they each had done in life that the three of them supplicated before Allah: Our Lord, if we had done this thing for Your good pleasure, please open the passage for us. Following the prayer of the first person, the rock

moved a little and light started coming in. By the prayer of the second one, it moved a little more. Then, by the prayer of the third one, the passage opened up fully.

But, Ḥāfiẓ ibn Ḥajar has made it clear in Sharḥ al-Bukhārī that, in the light of Ḥadīth reports, there is no clear-cut proof about the People of Raqīm being the name for the three persons referred to above. What has happened here is that some narrators have added to the report of Sayyidnā Nu'mān ibn Bashīr ﷺ, a reporter of the incident of the cave, by saying that Sayyidnā Nu'mān ibn Bashīr ﷺ while mentioning the story of the cave said, 'I heard the Holy Prophet ﷺ mentioning Raqīm. He was relating the story of the three who got shut into the cave.' This addition appears in the report of al-Bazzār and al-Ṭabarānī as quoted by Fatḥ-al-Bārī. But, to begin with, none of the reports from the usual narrators of this Ḥadīth which are available in details in the six Ṣaḥīḥs and other books of Ḥadīth have included this sentence of Sayyidnā Nu'mān ibn Bashīr ﷺ. Even the report of al-Bukhārī itself does not have this sentence in it. Then, even within this sentence, it has not been made clear whether or not the Holy Prophet ﷺ had called those three persons who got shut into the cave by the name of the People of Raqīm. In fact, the words are: 'he was mentioning Raqīm.' Those three were mentioned as a corollary to this statement. As for the difference in the sayings of the Ṣaḥābah, Tābi'īn and commentators in general concerning the meaning of Raqīm, it is by itself a proof that there was no Ḥadīth reported from the Holy Prophet ﷺ about the meaning of Raqīm as determined by him. Otherwise, how was it possible that once the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself determines the meaning of a word, the Ṣaḥābah, Tābi'īn and other commentators opt for some other saying contrary to it? Therefore, Ḥāfiẓ ibn Ḥajar, the commentator of al-Bukhārī, denies that the People of Kahf and the People of Raqīm are two separate groups. According to him, the correct position is that both these names apply to one single group. The mention of three persons getting shut into a cave could have been made with the mention of Raqīm. It does not necessarily follow from it that these very three persons were 'the Aṣḥāb al-Raqīm' (the People of Raqīm).

Ḥāfiẓ ibn Ḥajar has also clarified at this place that the very context of the story of the People of Kahf as described by the Qur'ān tells us that

the People of Kahf and Raqīm are but one group. This is why the majority of commentators and Ḥadīth experts agree that they both are one and the same.

The second issue to be determined here is that of the details of the story. It has two parts. Part one is the spirit of the story, and the real objective. It provides an answer to the question asked by the Jews, and guidance and good counsel for Muslims as well. The second part deals with the historical and geographical aspects of the story. As for the delineation of the objective, it plays no role there, for instance: When and where did this event come to pass, who was the infidel king these people ran from and hid in the cave? What were his beliefs, what did he actually do to them because of which they were compelled to run and hide in the cave? How many were they? Exactly how long did they remain asleep? Are they still alive or are they dead?

The Holy Qur'ān, under its wise principles and unique methodology, has not related any story in all its detail and order throughout the Qur'ān (with the sole exception of the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام) - a common method used in books of history. Instead, it has introduced only a part of each story that was appropriate to the occasion and was particularly related to guiding and teaching human beings. (The reason for excluding the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام from the parameter of this method appears in the Tafsīr of Sūrah Yūsuf included in Volume V, pages 24, 25)

The same method was used in relating the story of the People of Kahf. Here, the Qur'ān has described its particular parts that were relevant to the real objective. No mention was made of the remaining parts that were purely historical or geographical. Of course, mention was made of the number of the People of Kahf. The questions regarding the period of time they remained asleep were certainly alluded to, even an indication was released towards the answer but, along with it, an instruction was also given that it was not appropriate to investigate and debate such issues. These should be entrusted with Allah Ta'ālā. This is the reason why the Holy Prophet ﷺ who was duty-bound to explain the meanings of the Holy Qur'ān never related those parts of the story in any Ḥadīth. It is on the grounds of this Qur'ānic methodology that great men among the Ṣaḥābah and Tābi'īn have declared the essential policy guideline in such matters by saying:

أَبْهِمُوْا مَآ أَبْهَمَهُ اللّٰهُ (الاتقان للسيوطى)

What Allah has left undetermined, you too leave it undetermined. (al-Itqān li-Suyuṭī)

This approach and conduct of leading Ṣaḥābah and Tābi'īn required that, in this Tafsīr too, those parts of the story should be ignored as ignored by the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth. But, this is a time when historical and geographical breakthroughs are taken as great achievements. Therefore, later day scholars of Tafsīr have described those parts as well in varying lengths. As far as Tafsīr Ma'āriful-Qur'ān is concerned, the parts of the story that have already been mentioned in the Qur'ān will be covered under the explanation of its verses. The remaining historical and geographical parts of the story are being described here within the limits of their need. However, the truth of the matter is that, even after this description, the end result will remain the same - that is, it is impossible to arrive at a categorical decision in these matters. The reason is that writings in Islamic, and then Christian history, relating to this subject are so different, even contradictory, that one writer determines something in the light of his investigation, opinion and evidence while the other prefers something else.

Events relating to hiding in caves to protect faith have been many and widespread

One major reason for differences existing among historians lies in the great importance attached to monasticism by adherents to the faith brought by Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام. As a result, there were several instances spread around different regions and countries of the world where some people took shelter in caves to devote themselves to the worship of Allah Ta'ālā living there for the rest of their lives. Now, where so ever some such event has occurred, it was not so far out for a historian to suspect it to be that of the People of Kahf.

People of Kahf: Place and Period

Tafsīr authority al-Qurṭubī of al-Andulus (Spain) has reported some events at this juncture in his Tafsīr. Some of these events, that belong to different cities, he had heard or seen himself. First of all, he says on the basis of a report from Ḍaḥḥāk that al-Raqīm is the name of a town in Rūm (the Greco-Roman territory) where twenty-one men are lying in a

cave as if they are sleeping. Then, he reports from Tafsīr authority, Ibn 'Aṭiyyah that he had heard from many people that there was a cave in Shām (Syria) which had some dead bodies in it. Attendants said that they were the ones called the People of Kahf. And adjacent to the cave, there was the structure of a mosque and residential house called Raqīm. In addition to the dead bodies, the skeleton of a dead dog was also present there.

Then, al-Qurṭubī writes about another event relating to al-Gharnāṭah (Granada) in al-Andulus (Spain), again reporting from Ibn 'Aṭiyyah who says, 'there is a cave in Lawshah (Lojah), a village outside al-Gharnāṭah. It has some dead bodies and along with these there is the skeleton of a dead dog as well. Most of the dead bodies have no flesh left reducing them to bare skeletons. However, some do have signs of flesh and skin still being there. Centuries have passed over this. But, nothing is known about them authentically. Some people say that they were the People of Kahf. Ibn 'Aṭiyyah further says, 'when I heard this news, I personally went there in the Hijrah year 504. On arrival there, I really found those bodies in the same state. Close by there is a mosque and a structure of the Roman period called Raqīm. It seems to have been some palace from the remains of several walls still there. This thing is located in an unpopulated area with wild growth around. He also said, 'remains of an old city are found in the area characterized by higher altitudes in al-Gharnāṭah. It is Roman in style. The name of the city is said to be Raqyus. We have seen many graves and strange things in its ruins.' From what has been said here it will be realized that al-Qurṭubī who lived in Spain avoids calling anyone as the People of Kahf definitely, despite that he has described these events as reported. Then, there is the case of Ibn 'Aṭiyyah who, despite his personal observation, did not claim that they were the People of Kahf. He rather limits himself to reporting what was popular. But, Abū Ḥayyān, the seventh century commentator from al-Andulus (Spain) was born in al-Gharnāṭah itself in Hijrah year 654. There he was raised and there he lived. He too mentions the cave of al-Gharnāṭah in his Tafsīr, al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, very much like al-Qurṭubī has done. After having written about the eye witness account of Ibn 'Aṭiyyah, he says, 'when I was in al-Andulus (that is, before shifting to Cairo), many people went to see this cave. They used to say that, despite

that those bodies are still there and the visitors do count them out but, somehow, they always make a mistake in giving their correct number.' After that he said, 'as for the city of Raqyus mentioned by Ibn 'Aṭiyyah which is located on the side of al-Gharnāṭah that faces the Qiblah, I have myself passed by it so many times and I have seen unusually large rocks in it.' After that, he says: " ويترجح كون اهل الكهف بالاندلس لكثرة دين النصارٰى بها حتّٰى هى بلاد مملكتهم العظمٰى " (one reason for preferring the possibility of the People of Kahf being in al-Andulus could be that it is predominantly Christian to the extent that this particular region is their largest religious center - Tafsir al-Baḥr al-Muḥiṭ, p. 102, v. 6).

Tafsir authority Ibn Jarir and Ibn Abi Ḥatim following a report of 'Awfi from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ say that Raqim is the name of a valley which is located near Ailah ('Aqabah) south of Palestine. And the two of them along with other Ḥadith experts also report from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās that he said, 'I do not know what Raqim is. But, when I asked Ka'b al-Aḥbār, he said that Raqim is the name of the town where the People of the Kahf lived before going into the Cave.' (Rūḥ al-Ma'āni)

Ibn Abi Shaibah, Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Abi Ḥātim report Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ﷺ to have said, 'we waged a Jihād against Byzantine forces in the company of Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah ﷺ which is known as the battle of al-Maḍiq (المضيق). On this trip, we passed through the site of the Cave of the People of Kahf. The Qur'ān mentions it. Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah wanted to go into the cave and see the bodies of the People of Kahf. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās said, 'let us not do so because Allah Ta'ālā has already prohibited someone better than you from seeing them, that is, the Rasūl of Allah. Is it not that Allah says in the Qur'ān: لَوِاطَّلَعْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ لَوَلَّيْتَ مِنْهُمْ فِرَارًا وَّلَمُلِئْتَ مِنْهُمْ رُعْبًا (If you had a look at them, you would have fled away from them and would have been filled with awe of them - 18)? But, Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah did not accept this suggestion of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās perhaps for the reason that the state in which they were portrayed by the Qur'ān related to the time when they were alive and it was not necessary that they would still be found in the same state. Therefore, a few men were sent to have a look at them. They reached the cave. But, when they wanted to enter into the cave, Allah Ta'ālā sent a punishing wind upon them that turned all of them out and away from the cave. (Rūḥ

al-Ma'ānī p. 227, v. 15)

The reports and narratives appearing above establish that commentators have given three locations for the site of the Cave of the People of Kahf. Firstly, in Ailah near 'Aqabah on the shore of the Gulf of 'Aqabah. Most of the narrations from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās favor this interpretation.

From the personal observation of Ibn 'Aṭiyyah, and Abū Ḥayyān's support, it seems likely that this cave is in al-Gharnāṭah, al-Andulus (Spain). Out of these two places, the name of a city or particular building has also been given as Raqīm. Similarly, the name of the great structure in ruins close to the cave in al-Gharnāṭah has been cited as Raqīm. Then, none of the two kinds of reports decisively say that this cave was The Cave of the People of Kahf. Both rely on popular local talk and oral tradition. As for the old name of the city where the People of Kahf lived, it has been mentioned as Ifsūs (Ephesus as in the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Ephesians - Holy Bible, p. 239), with Ṭarsūs as its Islamic name, in nearly all Tafsīr reports of al-Qurṭubī, Abū Ḥayyān and Ibn Jarīr. That this city was located on the western coast of Asia Minor is a fact accepted by historians. This shows that the Cave is also within Asia Minor. Therefore, there is no proof to declare any one of these as true and the rest as false. As for probability, all three are probable. In fact, no one can deny the very probability that the events relating to these caves, despite being true, may not be relevant to the Cave of the People of Kahf that has been mentioned in the Qur'ān. May be, it is somewhere else. And it is also not necessary that Raqīm at this place may exclusively be the name of some city or building. In fact, no one can reject even the probability that Raqīm denotes the inscription engraved with the names of the People of Kahf on a tablet and placed on the entrance to the cave by some king.

Investigations of Modern Historians

Some contemporary historians have made considerable efforts to determine the place and time of the Cave of the People of Kahf with the help of Christian and European historical accounts.

Abūl-Kalām Āzād has declared the present city of Petra near Ailah ('Aqabah) - Arabicized by Arab historians as Baṭrā - as the old city of Raqīm. With reference to current historical accounts, he reports the rem-

nants of a cave in the mountain and of some mosque adjacent to it. In confirmation, he refers to the Book of Joshua in the Old Testament (18:27) where the place has been mentioned as Raqm or Raqīm. According to him, this is the place now called Petra. But, this has been considered doubtful as the reference to Raqm or Raqīm in the Book of Joshua is connected with the inheritance of Banī bin Yamin (Benyamin). Then, this territory was located west of River Jordan and the Dead Sea where the city of Petra could have not possibly been located. Therefore, contemporary archaeologists are very reluctant in accepting Petra and Raqīm as one and the same. (Encyclopaedia Britannica 1946, v. 17, p. 658)

Commentators in general have pointed out to the city of Ifsūs, a major Byzantine city on the western coast of Asia Minor the remains of which are still found twenty or twenty five miles south of the modern Turkish city of Izmīr (Samarna).

Maulanā Sayyid Sulaimān Nadwī while mentioning the city of Petra in his book, Arḍ al-Qur'ān, has put Raqīm in parenthesis. But, he has not given any evidence in support of the proposition that the old name of the city of Petra was Raqīm. Maulanā Ḥifẓur-Raḥmān Sihwārwī has also adopted this view. For evidence, he refers to Torah: The book of Numbers and the book of Isaiah and gives the name of Petra as Raqīmah. (Dā'irah al-Ma'ārif al-'Arabiyah)

When a cave was discovered in a desolate jungle area close to 'Ammān in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the Archaeological Department of the Government started digging operations on that site in the year 1963. After having removed the upper strata of topsoil and rocks, they found six coffins filled with bones and stones, and two graves. Towards the south side of the cave, they found inscriptions on rocks in Byzantian script. Local people think that this is the place called Raqīm close to which is this cave of the People of Kahf. Allah knows best.

My revered teacher and master, Maulanā Ashraf Alī Thānavī, relying on Tafsīr Ḥaqqānī, has reported the following historical account of the place and time of the People of Kahf. According to this account, when the People of Kahf had escaped the tyranny of the king of the time and taken shelter in the cave, the time was the year 250 A.D. Then they remained asleep for three hundred years. Thus, it comes to a total of 550

A.D. And the Holy Prophet ﷺ was born in 570 A.D. Therefore, this event of their wakening occurred twenty years before the birth of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Then, in Tafsīr Ḥaqqānī as well, their locale has been determined as the city of Ifsūs or Ṭarsūs that used to be in Asia Minor. Its ruins still remain. And Allah knows best the reality of it.

These historical and geographical details have been given here from the reports of classical commentators, then from contemporary historians. This humble writer had already submitted that neither does the understanding of any verse of the Qur'ān depend on these, nor does any essential part of the objective for which the Qur'ān has related this story belongs thereto. Then, relevant reports and stories and their indicators and connections are so different that, despite all investigations and efforts, it is just not possible to take any categorical decision in this matter. Having preferences and inclinations is all that is left to do here. But, in our time, educated people have acquired an increased taste in historical investigations. It is for this satisfaction that these details have been reported for they, by way of introduction and hypothesis, tell us at least this much that this event came to pass after Sayyidnā 'Isa عليه السلام close to the time of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. And that most reports seem to agree on this being near the city of Ifsūs or Ṭarsūs. Even then, Allah knows best. And the truth is that we, after all these investigations, are standing where we had started from - that there is no need to fix an exact location, nor can this be fixed with any certain modality. The Tafsīr and Ḥadīth authority, Ibn Kathīr has said exactly this about it:

قَدْ اَخبَرَنَا اللّٰهُ تَعَالٰى بِذٰلِكَ وَاَرَادَ مِنَّا فَهمَهٗ وَتَدَبُّرَهٗ وَ لَمْ يُخبِرْنَا بِمَكَانِ هٰذَا الْكَهْفِ فِىْ اَىِّ الْبِلَادِ مِنَ الْاَرْضِ اِذْلَا فَائِدَةَ لَنَا فِيهِ وَلَا قَصْدٌ شَرْعِىٌّ

Allah Ta'ālā has already told us about that. And He expects us to understand it and deliberate into it. And He did not tell us about the location of this Cave in a particular city out of this earth because there is nothing beneficial for us in it nor does any religious objective hinge upon it - Ibn Kathīr, v. 3, p. 75.

When did the event relating to the People of Kahf come to pass and why did they take shelter in the Cave?

This segment of the story is also the same upon which neither does the understanding of any verse of the Qur'ān depend, nor does it influence the objective of the story in any significant way, nor do the Qur'ān

and Sunnah make any statement about it. What we have here is no more than historical stories. Therefore, in Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, Commentator Abū Ḥayyān has said:

وَالرُّوَاةُ مُخْتَلِفُوْنَ فِيْ قِصَصِهِمْ وَكَيْفَ كَانَ اِجْتِمَاعُهُمْ وَ خُرُوْجُهُمْ وَلَمْ يَأْتِ فِي الْحَدِيْثِ الصَّحِيْحِ كَيْفِيَّةُ ذٰلِكَ وَلَا فِي الْقُرْاٰنِ ـ

> And narrators differ in stories about them, and about how they got together and moved out, and the mode and manner of that has neither been mentioned in any authentic Ḥadīth nor in the Qur'ān - al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, p. 101, v. 6.

However, when we provided some information about the site of the remnants of the People of Kahf a little earlier, it was in consideration of the curiosity of contemporary temperament. For the same reason, we are providing here brief notes of information regarding the period and causes of the passing of this event from exegetic and historical reports. As for a detailed and comprehensive description of this story, the respected scholar, Qāḍī Thanā'ullāh Pānīpatī has reported it on the authority of different narratives in his Tafsīr Maẓharī. But, given here is a brief version of the event that Ibn Kathīr has presented with reference to many early and later commentators. He says:

"The Aṣḥāb al-Kahf were the progeny of kings and chiefs among their people who were idol-worshippers. Once their people went out of the town to participate in some religious festival of theirs. This was a place where they met every year, worshipped their idols and sacrificed animals to please them. Their king was a tyrant. Called Daqyānūs, he used to force his people to worship idols. That year, when everyone had gathered together in this festival, these young men identified as the Aṣḥāb al-Kahf also reached there and saw their people taking rocks carved with their own hands as God, worshipping them and sacrificing for them. At that time, Allah Ta'ālā blessed them with the good sense to shun this absurd practice of their people. Thus, when they used their reason, they arrived at the conclusion that this worship belongs to none but that supreme Power who has created the heavens and the earth and everything therein. This thought crossed the minds of those few young men simultaneously and they started moving away from there to avoid the absurd practice of their people in the fair name of worship. The first young man who withdrew went far from the crowd and sat down under a

tree. After that, came another and he too sat there. Similarly, came the third, and the fourth, and each one of them kept taking a seat under the tree. But, none of them were familiar with each other, nor did they know as to why they had come there. The truth of the matter is that they were brought together on that spot by the Power that lit the light of faith in their hearts."

The real foundation of nationalism and collectivism

After having transmitted that, Ibn Kathīr comments that people tend to take nationalism and common race as the cause of cohesion and union in social life. But, the reality lies in what has been said in a Ḥadīth of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, that unity or disunity first germinates in souls, then it affects the bodies in this world. Souls that have experienced congruity and unity among them in *'azal* (eternity) go on to become mutually connected and get molded into the form of a confraternity. As for those that did not have the experience of this mutual congruity and unity - in fact, remained separated there - they will remain separated here too. Take this very event as an example and see how the same thought crossed everyone's mind separately and it was this thought that brought everyone unconsciously together.

In short, these people got together at one place all right, but everyone was concealing his belief from the other lest this person reports him to the king and he gets arrested. After having remained there all together in silence, one of them spoke out, 'brothers, there must be some reason why all of us have broken away from our people and reached here. It seems appropriate that we all should get to know each other's thoughts.' Thereupon, one person declared, 'the truth is that the faith and worship in which I found my people involved gave me the certitude that this whole thing is false. 'Ibādah or worship should be for One Allah who is most exalted in His majesty and who has no partner or associate in the act of the creation of this universe.' This broke the ice. Others were prompted to speak out and they all declared that this was the thought, the belief that separated them from their people and brought them there.

Now they were an ideologically unified group enjoying mutual fellowship and friendship. They set up a separate House of Worship for themselves where they would assemble and worship Allah who is One and

who has no partner in His divinity.

But, by and by they became the talk of the town. Backbiters told on them before the king who ordered that they all should be brought to him. When they came into the royal court, the king asked them about their belief and its mores. Allah gave them the courage to state their belief in the Oneness of Allah. In fact, they invited the king himself to believe as they did. This is precisely what has been mentioned in the verses appearing next: وَرَبَطْنَا عَلٰى قُلُوْبِهِمْ إِذْ قَامُوْا فَقَالُوْا رَبُّنَا رَبُّ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَنْ نَّدْعُوَا مِنْ دُوْنِهٖٓ إِلٰهًا لَّقَدْ قُلْنَآ إِذًا شَطَطًا (الٰى قوله) كَذِبًا (And We made their hearts firm. And when they rose, they said, "Our Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth; and we shall never invoke any god other than Him, for then we would be saying something far from the truth. These are people of ours. They have taken to gods other than Him. Why do they not bring a proof in their favor? So, who is more unjust than the one who fabricates a lie against Allah?" - al-Kahf, 18:14,15)

When these young men acted bold before the king and invited him to believe, he turned the call down and threatened them with drastic action. He had the princely robes they donned on their bodies taken off in reprisal so that they may think and change their behavior. In order that they actually do so, he gave them respite for a few days saying that they were young, therefore, he did not wish to kill them right away. In fact, he wanted them to have the time to think over it. Then, if they reverted to the faith of their people, they will be allowed to live as usual, otherwise they would be killed.

It must have been the mercy of Allah Ta'ālā on His believing servants that this respite given to them opened an escape door for them. They ran from there and took refuge in a cave.

Usual reports carried by commentators agree that these people were followers of the faith of Sayyidnā 'Īsā Masīḥ عليه السلام. Ibn Kathīr and most commentators have mentioned it. However, Ibn Kathīr has not accepted it. According to him, had these people been the followers of the Christian faith, the Jews of Madīnah would have not suggested that a question be asked about them just because of their mutual hostility and thus would have not given them that importance. But, this is not a sufficient basis because of which all reports should be rejected. When the Jews of Madīn-

ah proposed that such a question should be asked, they were simply looking at it as a unique event - very similar to the question about Dhul-Qarnain which was also on that basis. That there was no Jewish-Christian prejudice involved in questions of this nature is fairly obvious here.

In Tafsīr Maẓharī, based on a report from Ibn Isḥāq, these people have been identified as monotheists who, after the decline of the original Christian faith, were among the rare remnants still adhering to the true faith of the Sayyidnā 'Īsā ﷺ and to pure monotheism. In this report of Ibn Isḥāq too, the name of the oppressive king has been given as Daqyānūs while the city in which these young men lived before they went into hiding in the cave has been called Ifsūs.

Then, the event has been described in the same manner in the report of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ؓ as well and the name of the king has been given as Daqyānūs. The report of Ibn Isḥāq also adds that the name of the king of the people who were followers of the faith of Sayyidnā Masīḥ and had taken over the country at the time the Aṣḥāb al-Kahf woke up was Baidusis.

So, at least the strong likelihood of the People of Kahf being committed to the true faith brought by Sayyidnā 'Isa Masīḥ ﷺ stands proved from the reports as a whole, and that they belong to the post-Masīḥ period, and that the Mushrik king they ran from was called Daqyānūs. At the time they woke up after three hundred and nine years, the name of the righteous and believing king who ruled the country has been named as Baidūsīs in the report of Ibn Isḥāq. If this is seen in conjunction with the contemporary calendar, it is possible to determine their period, at the least as a matter of conjecture and approximation. Trying to determine it any more than that is needless, nor there exist the means to acquire this knowledge.

Are the People of Kahf still alive?

In this matter, the correct and obvious approach is that they have died. Tafsīr Maẓharī carries the detailed report of Ibn Isḥāq. According to this report, when the People of Kahf woke up, their unique event became the talk of the town. They went to meet the king. When they took leave of king Baidūsīs, they bid farewell to him and prayed for him. The

king was still there when they went back to the place only to lie down where they had been lying for such a long time. And that was exactly when Allah Ta'ālā sent death to them.

At this stage, the following report from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه has been reproduced by Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Kathīr and many more from among the commentators:

قَالَ قَتَادَةُ غَزَا ابْنُ عَبَّاسٍ مَعَ حَبِيْبِ بْنِ مَسْلَمَةَ فَمَرُّوْا بِكَهْفٍ فِي بِلَادِ الرُّوْمِ فَرَأَوْا فِيْهِ عِظَامًا فَقَالَ قَائِلٌ هٰذِهِ عِظَامُ اَهْلِ الْكَهْفِ فَقَالَ ابْنُ عَبَّاسٍ رض لَقَدْ بَلِيَتْ عِظَامُهُمْ مِّنْ اَكْثَرَ مِنْ ثَلٰثِمِائَةِ سَنَةٍ (ابن كثير)

Qatādah says that Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه participated in a Jihād in the company of Ḥabīb ibn Maslamah when they passed by a cave in the Roman territory. There they saw bones in it. Then someone said, 'These are the bones of the People of Kahf.' Thereupon, Ibn 'Abbās said, 'The bones of them have already become dust more than three hundred years ago' - Ibn Kathīr.

These were particular segments of the story that were neither described by the Qur'ān, nor by the Ḥadīth of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. In addition to that, neither does some specified purpose of this event or the understanding of any verse of the Qur'ān depend on it - nor can any categorical decision be arrived at in these matters on the basis of historical reports. As far as the remaining segments of the story already described within the text of the Qur'ān are concerned, their details appear under the commentary on relevant verses.

Up to this point, the Qur'ān had mentioned this story in brief. Details follow.

Verses 13 - 16

نَحْنُ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ نَبَاَهُمْ بِالْحَقِّ ۗ اِنَّهُمْ فِتْيَةٌ اٰمَنُوْا بِرَبِّهِمْ وَزِدْنٰهُمْ هُدًى ﴿١٣﴾ وَّرَبَطْنَا عَلٰى قُلُوْبِهِمْ اِذْ قَامُوْا فَقَالُوْا رَبُّنَا رَبُّ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ لَنْ نَّدْعُوَا مِنْ دُوْنِهٖٓ اِلٰهًا لَّقَدْ قُلْنَآ اِذًا شَطَطًا ﴿١٤﴾ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ قَوْمُنَا اتَّخَذُوْا مِنْ دُوْنِهٖٓ اٰلِهَةً ۗ لَوْلَا يَاْتُوْنَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِسُلْطٰنٍۢ بَيِّنٍ ۗ فَمَنْ

أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرٰى عَلَى اللّٰهِ كَذِبًا ﴿١٥﴾ وَإِذِ اعْتَزَلْتُمُوهُمْ وَمَا يَعْبُدُونَ إِلَّا اللّٰهَ فَأْوُا إِلَى الْكَهْفِ يَنْشُرْ لَكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ مِّنْ رَّحْمَتِهِ وَيُهَيِّئْ لَكُمْ مِّنْ أَمْرِكُمْ مِّرْفَقًا ﴿١٦﴾

We narrate to you their story with truth. They were young men who believed in their Lord and We increased, them in guidance. [13] **And We made their hearts firm and when they rose, they said, "Our Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth; and we shall never invoke any god other than Him, for then we would be saying something far from the truth.** [14] **These are people of ours. They have taken to gods other than Him. Why do they not bring a clear proof in their favor? So, who is more unjust than the one who fabricates a lie against Allah?** [15]

And when you have turned away from them, and those they worship, except Allah, then seek refuge in the cave and your Lord will unfold His mercy for you and provide you ease in your matters." [16]

Commentary

The word: فِتْيَة (*fityah*) in: إِنَّهُمْ فِتْيَةٌ (They were young men - 13) is the plural of: فتى (*fatā*) which means someone young. According to Tafsīr scholars, this word indicates that the time ripe for correction of deeds and morals, and the inculcation of guidance and righteousness, is invariably the time when one is young. When old, formerly acquired deeds and morals become so deeply rooted that - no matter how evident becomes the truth against these - it is very difficult to break loose from their shackles. Those among the noble Companions who responded to and believed in the call of the Holy Prophet ﷺ were, after all, mostly young people. (Ibn Kathīr, Abū Ḥayyān)

The first sentence of verse 14: وَرَبَطْنَا عَلٰى قُلُوبِهِمْ (And We made their hearts firm) refers to the event described by Ibn Kathīr a little earlier. This tells us that Allah made the hearts of these people firm when the king who was cruel and worshipped idols summoned them in his court and questioned them. This was a matter of life and death. But, despite their apprehension for the worst, Allah Taʿālā made His love, awe and grandeur prevail over their hearts which empowered them to face any

eventuality of death or distress. The outcome was that they proclaimed their belief clearly and courageously saying that they did not worship anyone or anything other than Allah and would not do that in future as well. People who firmly resolve to do something for the sake of Allah, this is how they receive help from Allah Ta'ālā.

About the verse: فَاْوٗٓا اِلَى الْكَهْفِ (then seek refuge in the Cave - 16), Ibn Kathīr says that the course adopted by the People of Kahf was that they left the city in which it was not possible to worship Allah and took refuge in the Cave. This is the Sunnah, the way of all prophets. They migrate from such places and opt for a place where 'Ibādah could be done.

Verses 17 - 18

وَتَرَى الشَّمْسَ اِذَا طَلَعَتْ تَّزٰوَرُ عَنْ كَهْفِهِمْ ذَاتَ الْيَمِيْنِ وَاِذَا
غَرَبَتْ تَّقْرِضُهُمْ ذَاتَ الشِّمَالِ وَهُمْ فِيْ فَجْوَةٍ مِّنْهُ ۗ ذٰلِكَ مِنْ اٰيٰتِ
اللّٰهِ ۗ مَنْ يَّهْدِ اللّٰهُ فَهُوَ الْمُهْتَدِ ۚ وَمَنْ يُّضْلِلْ فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهٗ وَلِيًّا مُّرْشِدًا
﴿۱۷﴾ وَتَحْسَبُهُمْ اَيْقَاظًا وَّهُمْ رُقُوْدٌ ۖ وَّنُقَلِّبُهُمْ ذَاتَ الْيَمِيْنِ وَذَاتَ
الشِّمَالِ ۖ وَكَلْبُهُمْ بَاسِطٌ ذِرَاعَيْهِ بِالْوَصِيْدِ ۗ لَوِ اطَّلَعْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ
لَوَلَّيْتَ مِنْهُمْ فِرَارًا وَّلَمُلِئْتَ مِنْهُمْ رُعْبًا ﴿۱۸﴾

And you see the sun, when it rises, it turns away from their Cave towards the right; and when it sets, it by-passes them towards the left - and they are in the hollow thereof. That is one of the signs of Allah. Whomsoever Allah guides is the one who gets the right path and whomsoever He lets go astray, you will find for him no one to help, no one to lead. [17] **And you think they are awake while they are asleep. And We turn them on their sides, right and left. And their dog has its forelegs stretched out to the doorstep. If you had a look at them, you would have fled away from them and would have been filled with awe of them.** [18]

Commentary

In these verses, Allah Ta'ālā has told us about three states of the Peo-

ple of Kahf. All three are indeed unique and it was the *karāmah*, a matter of wonder, that manifested itself in an extraordinary way around these people devoted to Allah (a thing of wonder that manifests itself at the hands of a prophet of Allah is called a *mu'jizah* or miracle, while if it appears at the hand of some other pious persons, it is called 'Karāmah').

First of all, to be overtaken by continuous sleep for a long time and to stay alive in that state without eating and drinking is by itself a matter of wonder, and certainly contra-habitual and extraordinary. Its details will appear in the verses that follow. Given here is one state of their long sleep, that is, Allah Ta'ālā had arranged for their protection in the Cave in a way that the Sun would pass by them morning and evening but would not shine over their bodies inside the Cave. The advantages of the sunshine passing by them were things like the stabilization of the traces of life, moderation and balancing of the effects of wind, chill and heat etc. And then, the Sun not hitting their bodies directly may have also been a factor in keeping their bodies and dress protected.

This arrangement of keeping them shielded from direct sunlight could also be conceived if the cave lies situated in a particular structural position and the opening of its entrance happens to face south or north in a way that sunlight does not get in there naturally. Ibn Qutaibah went to the trouble of making elaborate mathematical calculations to determine the peculiar location of this Cave precisely in terms of latitude and longitude. (Maẓharī) Contrary to this was the approach of al-Zajjaj who said that the staying of sunshine away from them was not because of any inherent situation or formation of the Cave, instead, it was an extraordinary phenomenon manifested as a *karāmah*. It seems when it was said: ذٰلِكَ مِنْ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ (That is one of the signs of Allah) at the end of the verse, it was obviously there to prove that this arrangement of protection from the Sun was not the outcome of any particular formation or location of the Cave. Instead, it was a sign of the perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā. (Qurṭubī)

To put it candidly, Allah Ta'ālā had it all arranged for them that sunlight will not reach their bodies. It may have been caused through its particular formation or location, or through the barrier of a cloud or something similar when the Sun would start shining, or the very rays of the Sun would be moved away from them in an extraordinary manner.

All these probabilities exist within the verse. There is no need to insist upon fixing any of these as the absolute reality.

The People of Kahf during their long sleep were in a state that an onlooker would have taken them to be awake

The second state of the People of Kahf pointed out is that there were no signs of sleep on their bodies in spite of having been put to sleep for such a long period of time. In fact, they were in a condition that anyone who looked at them would think that they were awake. Generally, commentators say that their eyes were open. The body is relaxed in sleep but this relaxation was not there. The change in the momentum of breathing that comes upon the sleeping was also not there. It is obvious that this state too was nothing short of being extraordinary, a kind of Thaumaturgy (*karāmah*), in which the apparent consideration of wisdom was their protection lest someone taking them to be asleep attacks them, or steals things with them. Then, the changing of sides to the right and the left could also give an onlooker the realization of their being awake. And then, there was a particular benefit as well in changing sides - in that the dust they were sleeping on does not eat into an unchanged side.

The dog of the People of Kahf

At this point, we have a question on our hands. It appears in an authentic Ḥadīth that angels do not enter a house that has a dog or picture. Then, there is a Ḥadīth of the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī. There, it has been reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Whoever keeps a dog, except the one used for hunting or guarding livestock, has two *qīrāts* deducted every day from his reward (*qīrāt* or *karat* is the name of a small weight)." And in the report narrated by Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ, there is the exception of a third kind of dog, that is, a dog kept to guard land produce.

Based on these Ḥadīth reports, one can ask as to why did these worthy men of Allah take a dog with them? One answer to this could be that the prohibition of keeping a dog is an injunction of the Sharī'ah brought by the Holy Prophet ﷺ and it is possible that it may not be so prohibited in the Sharī'ah (law) brought by Sayyidnā 'Īsā Masīḥ عليه السلام. Then, it is reasonably imaginable that these people who had property and livestock may have kept a dog for their protection from intruders and since the faithfulness of a dog is well known, the dog followed them

when they went out from the city.

Good Company is a Blessing - Even for a dog!

Ibn 'Aṭiyyah says that his father told him that he heard a sermon of Abū al-Faḍl Jawharī in the Hijrah year 469 at the Great Mosque of Egypt. Speaking on the Mimbar, he was telling everyone, 'whoever loves good people, he too gets a share from their goodness. See when the dog of the Aṣḥāb al-Kahf loved them and followed them closely as if appended with them, Allah Ta'ālā mentioned it in the Qur'ān'.

Al-Qurṭubī mentions this report of Ibn 'Aṭiyyah in his Tafsīr. In his comments, he says when a dog can reach this station by being in the company of the righteous and the saintly, imagine how high the station of true believers and pure monotheists who love righteous men of Allah would be. In fact, there is comfort and good news in this event for Muslims who are weak in deeds but do love the Holy Prophet ﷺ fully and duly.

It has been reported in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī that Sayyidnā Anas ؓ said, "One day, I and the Holy Prophet ﷺ were coming out of the Masjid. We met a person at the door. He asked, "Yā Rasūlallah, when will the Qiyāmah come?" He said, "What preparations have you already made for Qiyāmah? (In view of which you want it to come soon)." Hearing this, the man was somewhat ashamed and corrected himself by saying, "I have not collected a lot of prayers, fasts and charities for Qiyāmah, but I love Allah and His Messenger." He said, "If so, [on the day of Qiyāmah] you shall be with those whom you love." Sayyidnā Anas ؓ says, "when we heard this bliss of a sentence from the Holy Prophet ﷺ, we were so happy that we had never been that happy since we embraced Islam." After that, Sayyidnā Anas said, "[*al-ḥamdulillāh*] I love Allah, His Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم, Abū Bakr and 'Umar رضى الله عنهما, therefore, I look forward to being with them." (Qurṭubī)

Allah Ta'ālā had invested the People of Kahf with such awe as would make an onlooker run in terror

The address in verse 18: لَوِاطَّلَعْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ (If you had a look at them) is apparently to people at large. Therefore, it does not necessarily follow from it that the Holy Prophet ﷺ too could be filled up with awe generated by the state of the People of Kahf in their Cave. So, the address here is to

common people. They are being told that, were they to cast a look at them in that state, they would have fled away from them in terror and the resulting awe of them would have gripped them all over.

What was the basis of this awe and what were the reasons for it? This is something in which debate is useless - therefore, the Qur'ān, and Ḥadīth have not explained it. The truth of the matter is that Allah Ta'ālā, in His wisdom, had created such conditions for their protection that the Sun stays away from their bodies, and the onlooker takes them to be awake and is filled with awe of them and is consequently unable to see them fully. It is possible to have these conditions prevail by way of particular physical causes as well as by way of an extraordinary input or as the working of wonder (*karāmah*). Now, when the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth have not determined any particular reason for it, debating it with hollow conjectures is futile. Preferring this approach, Tafsīr Maẓharī cites Ibn Abī Shaibah, Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Abī Ḥātim in support. They have reported an event relating to Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ﷺ who says: 'we waged a Jihād against Byzantine forces in the company of Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah ﷺ which is known as the battle of al-Maḍīq (المضيق). On this trip, we passed through the site of the Cave of the People of Kahf. The Qur'ān mentions it. Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah wanted to go into the Cave and see the bodies of the People of Kahf. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās said, 'let us not do so because Allah Ta'ālā has already prohibited someone better than you from seeing them, that is, the Rasūl of Allah.' Then, he recited this very verse: لَوِاطَّلَعْتَ عَلَيْهِم (If you had a look at them, you would have fled from them and would have been filled with awe of them - 18). [This tells us that, in the sight of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās, the address in لَوِاطَّلَعْتَ (If you had a look) was to the Holy Prophet] But, Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah did not accept his opinion [perhaps, because he may have taken the address as being to common people and not to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Or, it may be that the Qur'ān has portrayed the condition of the time when the People of Kahf were alive and asleep. Now a long time had passed since they died. It was not likely that they would still have the same atmosphere of awe around them]. However, Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah, with his position unchanged, sent a few men to find out the facts. But, when they stepped into the Cave, Allah Ta'ālā sent a hot wind upon them because of which they could not see anything.

(Mazhari) (This report was also referred earlier under 'The People of Kahf: Place and Period')

Verses 19 - 20

وَكَذٰلِكَ بَعَثْنٰهُمْ لِيَتَسَآءَلُوْا بَيْنَهُمْ ؕ قَالَ قَآئِلٌ مِّنْهُمْ كَمْ لَبِثْتُمْ ؕ قَالُوْا لَبِثْنَا يَوْمًا اَوْ بَعْضَ يَوْمٍ ؕ قَالُوْا رَبُّكُمْ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا لَبِثْتُمْ ؕ فَابْعَثُوْٓا اَحَدَكُمْ بِوَرِقِكُمْ هٰذِهٖٓ اِلَى الْمَدِيْنَةِ فَلْيَنْظُرْ اَيُّهَآ اَزْكٰى طَعَامًا فَلْيَاْتِكُمْ بِرِزْقٍ مِّنْهُ وَلْيَتَلَطَّفْ وَلَا يُشْعِرَنَّ بِكُمْ اَحَدًا ﴿۱۹﴾ اِنَّهُمْ اِنْ يَّظْهَرُوْا عَلَيْكُمْ يَرْجُمُوْكُمْ اَوْ يُعِيْدُوْكُمْ فِيْ مِلَّتِهِمْ وَلَنْ تُفْلِحُوْٓا اِذًا اَبَدًا ﴿۲۰﴾

And similarly We raised them up so that they ask each other. One of them said, "How long did you stay?" They said, "A day, or part of a day." They said, "Your Lord knows best how long you stayed." So, send one of you with this silver (coin) of yours to the city and let him look around which of the eatables are the purest and let him bring you some food therefrom. And he must be polite and must not let anyone know about you. [19] **If they know about you, they will force you to revert to their faith and in that case, you will never find success.** [20]

Commentary

The word: كَذٰلِكَ (*kadhālik*) in the first sentence is for comparison. The purpose at this place is to describe the mutual likeness of two events. One of these is the event of the long sleep of the People of Kahf for an equally long period of time mentioned in the beginning of the story under the verse: فَضَرَبْنَا عَلٰٓى اٰذَانِهِمْ فِى الْكَهْفِ سِنِيْنَ عَدَدًا : "So, We veiled their hearing (putting them to sleep) in the Cave for a number of years - 11." The second event relates to the rising of these people from that long drawn sleep - intact, healthy and fit despite the absence of any energy-giving intake - and becoming wide awake. Both are alike in being signs of the power of Allah Ta'ālā. For this reason, when 'raising them up' was mentioned in this verse, the word: كَذٰلِكَ (*kadhālik*: 'And similarly') was used to indicate that the way their sleep was not like the habitual sleep of common people, very similarly, their rising too was distinct from natural habit. Then, as for the next statement after that:

لِيَتَسَاءَلُوا meaning 'so that they ask each other [as to how long the sleep was],' it is not the reason of 'raising them up.' Instead, it is a mention of a usual phenomenon. Therefore, the particle: لام (*lām*) in: لِيَتَسَاءَلُوا (*liyatasa'alū*: so that they ask) has been identified as the *lām* of *'āqibah* (consequence) or *sairūrah* (result) meaning that which naturally follows as a sequel. (Abū Ḥayyān, al-Qurṭubī)

In short, their long sleep was a Divine sign. Similarly, sitting up all awake after hundreds of years - fit and healthy without usual nourishment - was also another perfect Divine sign. And it was also Divinely intended that they too should come to know that they have been sleeping through hundreds of years, therefore, it began with questions asked between each other and ended at the incident mentioned in the next verse: وَكَذٰلِكَ اَعْثَرْنَا (And in this way We made them known - 21). It means that the people of the city knew their secret and, despite the difference in determining the period of their stay, everyone believed that they had been sleeping in the Cave for a long period of time.

Given in: قَالَ قَآئِلٌ مِّنْهُمْ (One of them said - 19) is the detail of what was said briefly at the beginning of the story (12) - that they differed about the period of their stay in the Cave and that one of them did say the right thing. According to this detail, one person from among the People of the Cave ventured to pose the question as to how long did they sleep. Then, came the response from some that said, 'a day, or part of a day' - because, these people had entered the Cave in the morning and when they woke up, it was evening. Therefore, they thought, that was the day they had entered the Cave and the duration of their sleep was just about a day. But, some from among these very people realized that, perhaps, this was not the day they had entered the Cave. If so, who knows how many days have gone by? Therefore, they decided to let this particular knowledge about the event rest with Allah. By saying: قَالُوا رَبُّكُمْ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا لَبِثْتُمْ (Your Lord knows best how long you stayed - 19), they dismissed this debate as unnecessary and turned their attention to the need of the hour, that is, to send a man to the city to bring some food from there.

The word: الْمَدِيْنَة (*al-madīnah*) in the phrase: إِلَى الْمَدِيْنَةِ (*ila al-madīnah*: to the city) proves at least this much that there used to be a big city close to the Cave where they had stayed. In his Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, Abū Ḥayyān has said that the name of the city at the time the People of Kahf

left was Ifsūs and now, the name was Ṭarsūs. Al-Qurṭubī has said in his Tafsīr that during the time idol-worship and ignorance prevailed in this city, its name was Ifsūs. But, when the believers of that time, that is, the followers of Sayyidnā Masīḥ عليه السلام, overtook it, they renamed it as Ṭarsūs.

The word: بِوَرِقِكُمْ (with this silver [coin] of yours - 19) tells us that these good men had also brought some money with them when they came to the Cave. From here we know that the procurement and management of essential expenditures in life is not contrary to the norms of Zuhd (abstention from worldly desires) and Tawakkul (trust in Allah). (Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ)

The word: أَزْكَى (*azkā*) in: أَيُّهَآ أَزْكَى طَعَامًا (which are the purest - 19) means what is clean and pure. According to the Tafsīr of Ibn Jubayr, it denotes Ḥalāl food. They were alert to the need for such precaution because at the time they had left the city, people used to slaughter animals in the name of idols and that was what they sold in the market. Therefore, they stressed upon the man going out to bring food only after making sure that it was Ḥalāl.

Ruling

This tells us that eating food in any city, bazaar or hotel, where most of the food available is Ḥarām, is not permissible without prior investigation.

The word: رَجْم (*rajm*) in: أَوْيَرْجُمُوْكُمْ means 'they will stone you to death - 19.' It will be recalled that the king had warned them - before they went to the Cave - that they will be killed if they kept adhering to their present faith. This verse tells us that a renegade in their faith used to be punished by being stoned to death in which everyone participated, expressed collective anger and lent a hand in killing him.

Perhaps, the punishment for adultery committed by a married man or woman by stoning to death, as proposed in the Sharī'ah of Islam, may be aimed at exposing the one guilty of this abominable act at the cost of all norms of modesty and propriety. The execution of the culprit was to remain public with everyone joining in so that two things were ensured - let that disgrace be at collective level, and let all Muslims express their wrath practically so that no one dares repeat this act of shame among

them.

The expression: فَابْعَثُوٓا اَحَدَكُمْ (So, send one of you - 19) tells us that the group in the Cave picked up a man from among them to go to the city and gave him the money to buy food which he would bring back. Al-Qurṭubī finds this significant. He quotes Ibn Khuwaizmandād and describes some rulings deduced from here.

Rulings

1. Partnership in capital is permissible - because, this amount was shared by all.

2. Power of attorney or delegation of management is permissible in capital, that is, one person can, as an authorized agent, disburse from shared capital with the permission of others.

3. If a group of people shares food, it is permissible - though, individual food intake usually differs with one eating less while the other, more.

Verse 21

وَكَذٰلِكَ اَعْثَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ لِيَعْلَمُوٓا اَنَّ وَعْدَ اللّٰهِ حَقٌّ وَّاَنَّ السَّاعَةَ لَارَيْبَ فِيْهَا ج اِذْ يَتَنَازَعُوْنَ بَيْنَهُمْ اَمْرَهُمْ فَقَالُوا ابْنُوْا عَلَيْهِمْ بُنْيَانًا ط رَبُّهُمْ اَعْلَمُ بِهِمْ ط قَالَ الَّذِيْنَ غَلَبُوْا عَلٰٓى اَمْرِهِمْ لَنَتَّخِذَنَّ عَلَيْهِمْ مَّسْجِدًا ﴿٢١﴾

And in this way We made them known to the people so that they realize that Allah's promise is true and that there is no doubt about the Hour. When they were disputing among themselves in their matter, they said, "Erect a building over them. Their Lord knows them best." Said those who prevailed in their matter, "We will certainly make a *masjid* (mosque) over them." [21]

Commentary

Described in this verse which opens with the words: وَكَذٰلِكَ اَعْثَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ (And in this way We made them known) is the disclosure of the secret of the People of Kahf before the residents of the city. Along with it given there is a view of His wisdom, and of the belief in the Hereafter and the

Last Day when the dead will rise again, and that they will ultimately believe in it. How this came about has been mentioned briefly in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī as follows:

The secret of the People of Kahf:
How did the people of the city learn about it?

When the People of Kahf went out, the Mushrik king Daqyānūs, the oppressive ruler of that city died. Centuries went by. Then, it was taken over by people who were pure monotheists. Their king was a righteous man (whose name has been given as Baidūsīs in Tafsīr Maẓharī with references to historical narratives). During his time, it so happened that differences became rampant on the issue of the dead rising again on the day of Qiyāmah. One sect rejected the possibility of human bodies rising again after the process of decomposition, disintegration and dispersal as scattered particles all over the world. Baidūsīs, the king of the time, started worrying about ways to dispel these doubts. When nothing worked, he got into ragged clothes, sat down on a heap of ash and prayed to Allah. Lamenting and pleading earnestly, he said, 'O Allah, now it is up to Thee to make things work out in a way that the belief of my people gets corrected and they take to the right path.' On one side was this king engaged in his plaint and prayer while, on the other side, Allah Ta'ālā arranged to have his supplication answered in His own way. The People of Kahf woke up. They sent one of their men (reportedly named Tamlikha) to the city bazaar to buy food. He went to a shop and paid for the food he bought in the form of a silver coin dating back to the time of king Daqyānūs who reigned there three hundred years ago. The shopkeeper was taken aback. Where did this coin come from? What period does it belong to? He was confused. He showed it to other shopkeepers. Everyone said that the man had struck some treasure and was there with a coin from it. This man told them that nothing of that kind had happened to him and the coin was his own.

The shopkeepers detained him and produced him before the king. As said earlier, this king was a righteous man of Allah. It is said that he was aware of the old state treasure house and in its archaeological section he had also seen the tablet inscribed on which there was a list of the names of the People of Kahf along with the description of the incident of their escape. According to some, the cruel king Daqyānūs was the one

who had ordered that such a tablet should be inscribed to declare them as proclaimed offenders, to preserve their names and addresses and to have them arrested on sight. Some other reports say that there were people in the royal court who disapproved of idol-worship by heart and took the People of Kahf as votaries of truth. But, they did not have the courage to declare it openly. What they did was to have this tablet inscribed to be kept as memorabilia. The name of this tablet was Raqīm because of which the People of Kahf were also called the People of Raqīm.

So, this king knew something about this event and at that time he was busy praying to Allah that He would somehow make his people believe that making dead bodies rise again was not beyond His most perfect power.

Therefore, when he inquired into the background of Tamlīkhā, he was convinced that the man was one of the People of Kahf. He said that he used to pray to Allah in the hope that He would somehow make him fortunate enough to meet the people who had run away from Daqyānūs for the sake of their faith. Now that Allah had perhaps heard his prayer, he was grateful. May be there is, in this event, some decisive proof that makes people believe in the rising of the dead. After saying this, he asked this man to take him to the Cave from where he had come.

The king arrived there with a retinue of people from the city. When the Cave came close, Tamlīkhā asked the king to wait there for a while so that he could go in and inform his companions about the situation. He would tell them that the king was there to meet them along with his people and that the king was a believer, a monotheist and so were his people. If he failed to do that, and the king appeared there unannounced, it was likely that they might take him to be their enemy like the previous one. When Tamlīkhā went in the Cave, he related the whole story before his companions. They were pleased. They greeted the king showing due respect for him. Then they returned to their Cave. And as most narratives have it, when Tamlīkhā related the whole story before his companions, they died and could not meet the king. At this stage, Abū Ḥayyān has reported a narrative in al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ which says that after the meeting, the People of the Cave took leave of the king and the visiting citizens and went into the Cave. It was at that time that Allah Ta'ālā sent death to them. Allah knows best the reality as it is.

However, the people of the city now had before them a marvel of Divine power manifested so decisively and clearly. They came to believe in the working of that power. They saw living human beings kept alive for three hundred years without food and things essential in life. And then, they also saw them raised intact, healthy and fit after having been kept asleep for such a long time. With all this in view, why should it be at all difficult for that power to make these bodies come alive after having met their death? Through this event, their perception that the resurrection of bodies was a far out proposition stood refuted. They now realized that taking the Power of the master of the universes on the analogy of the power of human beings was an act of ignorance by itself.

A hint was made towards this very aspect in the words: لِيَعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ وَعْدَ اللّٰهِ حَقٌّ وَّاَنَّ السَّاعَةَ لَارَيْبَ فِيْهَا (so that they realize that Allah's promise is true and that there is no doubt about the Hour). It means, 'Allah raised the People of Kahf after having kept them asleep for a long time so that others realized that His promise to raise the dead on the Last Day of Qiyāmah was true, and that there was no doubt about the coming of the Qiyāmah.'

People differed after the death of Aṣḥāb al-Kahf

As for the holiness of the People of Kahf, everyone agreed about that and thought of making a memorial for them close to the Cave. However, there was a difference of opinion on the nature of the building. Some reports tell us that idol-worshippers, still left in the city, also used to visit the site. They proposed that it should be a public welfare building. But, the king and the official in his government were believers who played a dominant role in public affairs. They proposed that they should make a mosque over there so that it serves as a memorial to them and also becomes the cause of saving people from idol-worship in the future. At this place in the Qur'ān, the reference to this difference of opinion is hemmed in by the sentence: رَبُّهُمْ اَعْلَمُ بِهِمْ (Their Lord knows them best).

Regarding the meaning of this sentence, Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ has mentioned two probabilities. (1) This was said by the same people from the city present there, because when a memorial was proposed after their death, people thought of inscribing a tablet mentioning the names and the details about the people of the Cave for the memory of whom the building was to be dedicated. And so they started talking variously

about the background details concerning the People of Kahf. In the end, when their differences remained unresolved, they said: رَبُّهُمْ اَعْلَمُ بِهِمْ (their Lord knows them best). After saying that, they turned to the main job at hand which was raising a building in their memory. Those who were dominant decided to make a mosque. (2) Then, the probability that this was said by Allah Ta'ālā also exists here as it warns people who indulged in mutual disputations around baseless issues during that time. They are being told here that they do not know the reality and they do not have the sources to arrive at that knowledge. Why, then, would they waste their precious time in futile argumentation? Then, it is also possible that the warning was beamed at Jews and others who used the crutch of this event to indulge in baseless debates during the blessed time of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Pure and High is Allah who knows best.

Ruling

This event tells us that making a *masjid* for Ṣalāh near the graves of men of Allah is no sin. As for the Ḥadīth in which words of curse have appeared against those who make the graves of prophets a *masjid,* it means making the graves as such a place of *sajdah* or prostration - which is, by consensus, *Shirk,* and *Ḥarām.* (Maẓharī)

Verse 22

سَيَقُوْلُوْنَ ثَلٰثَةٌ رَّابِعُهُمْ كَلْبُهُمْ ۚ وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ خَمْسَةٌ سَادِسُهُمْ كَلْبُهُمْ رَجْمًا ۢ بِالْغَيْبِ ۚ وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ سَبْعَةٌ وَّثَامِنُهُمْ كَلْبُهُمْ ۚ قُلْ رَّبِّىْٓ اَعْلَمُ بِعِدَّتِهِمْ مَّا يَعْلَمُهُمْ اِلَّا قَلِيْلٌ ۬ فَلَا تُمَارِ فِيْهِمْ اِلَّا مِرَآءً ظَاهِرًا ۖ وَّلَا تَسْتَفْتِ فِيْهِمْ مِّنْهُمْ اَحَدًا ﴿۲۲﴾

Some will say, "Three, the fourth of them being their dog," and some will say, "Five, the sixth of them being their dog, just making conjectures." And others will say, "Seven, the eighth of them is their dog." Say, "My Lord knows best about their number." No one knows them except a few, so do not argue about them except an apparent argumentation. And do not ask anyone of these about them. [22]

Commentary

The verse opens with the word: سَيَقُوْلُوْنَ (*sayaqūlūn*: Some will say).

Who are these people who will say? There are two probabilities therein. (1) They could be the people who had differed among themselves during the time of the People of Kahf about their name and lineage, already mentioned in the previous verse. Out of these very people, some had made the first statement, some others, the second and still others, the third. (Mentioned in al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ from al-Māwardī)

(2) The second probability is that the pronoun in *'sayaqūlūn'* could be reverting back to the Christians of Najrān who had argued with the Holy Prophet ﷺ about the number of the People of Kahf. They had three sects among them. One sect was called Malkāniyah. They made the first statement about the number, that is, gave the number as three. The second sect was Ya'qūbiyah. They went by the second statement, that is, they were five. The third sect was Nasṭūriyah. They made the third statement, saying that they were seven. However, some said that this third statement was that of Muslims. What finally happened was that the third statement turned out to be true as it appears from the hint given by the Qur'ān*, and the word of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. (Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ)

The use of the conjunction *wāw*:(and) in: وَثَامِنُهُمْ (*wā thāminuhum:* and the eighth of them) is worth noticing here. At this place, three statements have been reported about the number of the People of Kahf - three, five and seven - and after each, their dog has been counted. But, no conjunction *'wāw'* has been introduced in between their number and the count of the dog in the first two statements. The sentence: ثَلٰثَةٌ رَّابِعُهُمْ كَلْبُهُمْ (Three, the fourth of them being their dog) and the sentence: خَمْسَةٌ سَادِسُهُمْ كَلْبُهُمْ (Five, the sixth of them being their dog) appear without that conjunction *'wāw.'* But, the arrangement is different in the third statement. Here, the word: سَبْعَةٌ (Seven) is followed by a connective *'wāw'* attached to the text of: وَثَامِنُهُمْ كَلْبُهُمْ (and the eighth of them is their dog).

Giving its reason, commentators say that early Arabs used to count up to seven digits, after which the number that followed was counted as separate, similar to its present counterpart, the number 9 where units end and the tens begin. Therefore, while counting from three to seven,

*. The hint is that the former two views about their number have been termed by the Qur'ān as 'conjectures' while the third view has appeared without such a comment. **(Muḥammad Taqi Usmani)**

they would not use the connective '*wāw*.' To give a number after seven, they would state it separately with the help of a connective '*wāw*' - and for this reason, this '*wāw*' (and) was called the '*wāw*' (and) of '*thamān*' (eight). (Mazhari and others)

The names of the People of Kahf

The fact of the matter is that the names of the People of Kahf do not stand proved authentically from any Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth. Names given in exegetical and historical reports differ. The closest out of these is the report given on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ﷺ by al-Ṭabarāni in al-Mu'jim al-Ausaṭ with sound chains of narrators. The names given there are:

Muksalmina مُكسَلْمِينَا
Tamlīkhā تَمْلِيْخَا
Martunis مَرْطُوْنس
Sanunis سنونس
Sarinunis سَارينونس
Dhu Niwas ذونواس
Ka'astitiunis كَعسططيونس

Basic rule in debatable matters: Avoid long-drawn argumentation

Referring to the animated efforts to determine the number of the People of Kahf, and other matters, the text says: فَلَاتُمَارِ فِيهِمْ إِلَّا مِرَآءً ظَاهِرًا وَّلَا تَسْتَفْتِ فِيهِمْ مِّنْهُمْ أَحَدًا (So do not argue about them except [with] an apparent argumentation. And do not ask anyone of these about them). The rule of conduct, a golden legacy of the Qur'ān, taught in these two sentences to the Holy Prophet ﷺ are, in fact, significant guiding principles for the learned among the Muslim community. The thing to do when difference arises on any issue is to state what is necessary clearly. If people, even after that, elect to pursue a course of unnecessary debate, one should offer cursory comments in the light of the earlier presentation and conclude the debate. Any effort to dig deeper to affirm one's claim or to make the extra effort to refute the assertion of debaters should be avoided - for nothing good would really come out of it. Moreover, any further prolongation of the debate and altercation would result in uncalled for waste of time as well as pose the danger of mutual bickering.

The second line of guidance given in the other sentence is that the optimum information given to him through Divine revelation about the People of Kahf should be taken as perfectly sufficient and satisfactory for all practical purposes. Let him not worry about finding more and asking others. As for asking others, it could have another aspect too. May be, the question asked is to expose their ignorance or to disgrace them. This too would be contrary to the high morals prophets have. Therefore, restraint was placed on asking both kinds of questions, either for additional investigation, or to prove the addressee ignorant and disgrace him.

Verses 23 - 26

وَلَا تَقُوْلَنَّ لِشَایْءٍ اِنِّیْ فَاعِلٌ ذٰلِكَ غَدًا ﴿۲۳﴾ اِلَّاۤ اَنْ يَّشَآءَ اللّٰهُ ز
وَاذْكُرْ رَّبَّكَ اِذَا نَسِيْتَ وَقُلْ عَسٰۤى اَنْ يَّهْدِيَنِ رَبِّیْ لِاَقْرَبَ مِنْ هٰذَا
رَشَدًا ﴿۲۴﴾ وَلَبِثُوْا فِیْ كَهْفِهِمْ ثَلٰثَ مِائَةٍ سِنِيْنَ وَازْدَادُوْا تِسْعًا ﴿۲۵﴾
قُلِ اللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا لَبِثُوْا ج لَهٗ غَيْبُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ط اَبْصِرْ بِهٖ
وَاَسْمِعْ ط مَا لَهُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِهٖ مِنْ وَّلِیٍّ ز وَّلَا يُشْرِكُ فِیْ حُكْمِهٖۤ اَحَدًا ﴿۲۶﴾

And never say about anything, "I am going to do this tomorrow," [23] **unless (you say - 'if) Allah wills.' And remember your Lord if you forget, and say, "I hope my Lord will lead me to what is closer, than this, in guidance."** [24]

And they stayed in their Cave for three hundred years and added nine. [25]

Say, "Allah knows best how long they stayed. To Him belongs the unseen of the heavens and the earth - how well He sees and how well He hears! They have no supporter other than Him and He lets no one share His authority." [26]

Commentary

The story of Aṣḥāb al-Kahf is due to end on the four verses cited above. In the first two of these, the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his Ummah has been taught to say 'Insha'Allah Ta'ālā' along with the promise or affirmation of doing something in the future. Because, who knows if one does or

does not live, and even if one does, will one be able to do or not to do that? Therefore, a believer should be confident about it in his or her heart, and confess to it verbally as well that in the event of making a commitment to do something next day, what will be said will be: 'If Allah Ta'ālā wills, I shall do this thing tomorrow.' This is what the saying of Insha'Allah means.

In the third verse (25), a decision has been given on a controversy. This was a debate in which people had held different opinions during the time of the People of Kahf, and equally different were the sayings of the Jews and Christians of the contemporary period about it, that is, the period of time they kept sleeping in the Cave. It was stated in the verse that those were three hundred and nine years. This is, so to say, a clarification of the statement made briefly at the beginning of the story: فَضَرَبْنَا عَلَىٰٓ اٰذَانِهِمْ فِى الْكَهْفِ سِنِيْنَ عَدَدًا (So We veiled their hearing [putting them to sleep] in the Cave for a number of years - 11).

After that, those who still differ with it have been warned once again that they are not the ones who know the reality of things as they are. The One who knows it all is none else but Allah with whom rests the knowledge of all that is unseen in the heavens and the earth. He is All Hearing. He is All Seeing. The time duration of three hundred nine years given by Him should be enough for their satisfaction.

Saying 'Insha'Allah' on doing something in the future

The background of the revelation of the first two verses has been reported in Lubāb from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ﷺ in the following manner. When the people of Makkah acting as coached by the Jews, asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ about the story of Aṣḥāb al-Kahf etc., he promised to answer that next day without having said Insha'Allah. The least shortcoming issuing forth from the close ones brings some or the other notice of caution. Therefore, no revelation came for the next fifteen days. Naturally, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was grieved and the Mushriks of Makkah had their opportunity to laugh and ridicule. After this interval of fifteen days, when the answer to the questions asked was revealed, these two verses were revealed along with it as a measure of guidance. They told him that, should he need to say something about what he was going to do the next day, he should invariably affirm it by saying Insha'Allah, for everything depends on the intention and will of

Allah Taʻālā. These two verses, it will be noted, have been introduced at the end of the story of the People of Kahf.

Ruling

Firstly, these two verses (23,24) tell us that saying Insha'Allah in the given situation is *mustaḥabb* (recommended). Secondly, they tell us that, should this part of the statement be left unsaid inadvertently, then, one may say it at the time one remembers. This injunction relates to the particular matter for which these verses have been revealed. It means that the purpose is simply to say this word to invoke Divine blessing and to confess to one's servitude and not to make the statement contingent or conditional. Therefore, it does not follow from here that one would do the same in buying and selling transactions and contracts where conditions are imposed and on this rests the contract between parties. Is it possible to impose a condition whenever one remembers later in case one had forgotten to include the condition at the time of signing the original contract? The difference of some jurists exists in this issue details of which appear in books of Fiqh.

As for the period of sleep in the Cave given as three hundred nine years in the third verse (27), this statement concerning the time duration, as evident from the sequential arrangement of the Qur'ān, is but from Allah Taʻālā. Ibn Kathīr has declared this to be the position of the majority of commentators, earlier and later. Abū Ḥayyān and al-Qurṭubī have also adopted this view. But, they have also reported another saying from Qatādah and others. It holds that this statement of three hundred nine years is also the saying of some of those who had differed and that the saying of Allah was what was said later: اَللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا لَبِثُوْا (Allah knows best how long they stayed - 26). The reason is, had the earlier statement giving the duration as three hundred nine years been the word of Allah, there would have been no occasion for saying: اَللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا لَبِثُوْا (Allah knows best how long they stayed) after that. But, the majority of commentators have said that both these sentences are the word of Allah. The first one describes reality as it is. The second one warns those who differ with it. They have been told that once the statement giving the duration has come from Allah, accepting it is mandatory. Since He is the One who really knows, trying to differ with Him on the basis of mere conjectures and opinions is (to make an understatement) unreasonable.

The question that arises here is about the manner in which the Holy Qur'ān has described the duration of stay. First it mentions three hundred years. After that, it has said that added to those three hundred there are nine. The number three hundred nine was not given initially. According to commentators, there is a reason for it. Since the Jews and Christians followed the Solar Calendar, their count remained three hundred years. And since Islam goes by the Lunar Calendar in which three more years are added every hundred years, therefore, three hundred years of Solar Calendar become nine more years in accordance with the Lunar Calendar. It was to tell the difference between the two years that this expressive diction was employed.

Yet another question arises here about the People of Kahf. During their time and then within the blessed period of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, the Jews and Christians had their differences about two things - the number of the People of Kahf and the duration of their sleep in the Cave. The Qur'ān does describe both. However, it has done so with a difference. The number was not mentioned explicitly. Rather, only a hint has been given by not refuting the view which was correct. But, the fixed duration was declared in very clear words: وَلَبِثُوا فِي كَهْفِهِمْ ثَلٰثَ مِائَةٍ سِنِيْنَ وَازْدَادُوْا تِسْعًا (And they stayed in their Cave for three hundred years and added nine -25). The reason is that this very remarkable diction of the Qur'ān strongly suggests that this debate on the number of the people of Kahf is virtually useless. No worldly or religious issue relates to or depends on it. Yes, this unusual sleep for such a long period of time, being healthy and fit without food and drink and then sitting up in good shape after such a long time is certainly a working model of Resurrection. That there is a Day of Judgement and that there is a Hereafter can be argued on this basis. Therefore, the period of sleep was stated very clearly.

People who deny the extraordinary miracles, or people who are in the habit of explaining them away overawed by the objections of modern day Jewish and Christian orientalists, have not spared even the Qur'ān. For example, in the case of this verse (25), they have tried to use the explanation of Qatādah as a prop to reject the duration of three hundred nine years as the saying of those very people who were differing among themselves. But, they have erred. The statement: سِنِيْنَ عَدَدًا (for a number of years - 11) which appears in an earlier sentence of the Qur'ān cannot be

called the saying of anyone other than Allah Ta'ālā! To prove the miraculous nature of the event even this much is sufficient that someone remains asleep for years and years and then rises and sits up all intact, fit and alive. Allah knows best.

Verses 27 - 31

وَاتْلُ مَآ اُوْحِيَ اِلَيْكَ مِنْ كِتَابِ رَبِّكَ ج لَا مُبَدِّلَ لِكَلِمٰتِهٖ ج قف وَلَنْ تَجِدَ
مِنْ دُوْنِهٖ مُلْتَحَدًا ﴿٢٧﴾ وَاصْبِرْ نَفْسَكَ مَعَ الَّذِيْنَ يَدْعُوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ
بِالْغَدٰوةِ وَالْعَشِيِّ يُرِيْدُوْنَ وَجْهَهٗ وَلَا تَعْدُ عَيْنٰكَ عَنْهُمْ ج تُرِيْدُ زِيْنَةَ
الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ج وَلَا تُطِعْ مَنْ اَغْفَلْنَا قَلْبَهٗ عَنْ ذِكْرِنَا وَاتَّبَعَ هَوٰىهُ
وَكَانَ اَمْرُهٗ فُرُطًا ﴿٢٨﴾ وَقُلِ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَّبِّكُمْ قف فَمَنْ شَآءَ فَلْيُؤْمِنْ
وَّمَنْ شَآءَ فَلْيَكْفُرْ لا اِنَّآ اَعْتَدْنَا لِلظّٰلِمِيْنَ نَارًا لا اَحَاطَ بِهِمْ سُرَادِقُهَا ط
وَاِنْ يَّسْتَغِيْثُوْا يُغَاثُوْا بِمَآءٍ كَالْمُهْلِ يَشْوِي الْوُجُوْهَ ط بِئْسَ الشَّرَابُ ط
وَسَآءَتْ مُرْتَفَقًا ﴿٢٩﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ اِنَّا لَا نُضِيْعُ
اَجْرَ مَنْ اَحْسَنَ عَمَلًا ﴿٣٠﴾ اُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمْ جَنّٰتُ عَدْنٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ
تَحْتِهِمُ الْاَنْهٰرُ يُحَلَّوْنَ فِيْهَا مِنْ اَسَاوِرَ مِنْ ذَهَبٍ وَّيَلْبَسُوْنَ ثِيَابًا
خُضْرًا مِّنْ سُنْدُسٍ وَّاِسْتَبْرَقٍ مُّتَّكِئِيْنَ فِيْهَا عَلَى الْاَرَآئِكِ ط نِعْمَ
الثَّوَابُ ط وَحَسُنَتْ مُرْتَفَقًا ﴿٣١﴾ ع

And recite what has been revealed to you of the Book of your Lord. There is no one to change His words and you will never find a refuge beside Him. [27]

And keep yourself content with those who call their Lord morning and evening, seeking His pleasure, and let not your eyes overlook them seeking the splendor of the worldly life. And do not obey the one whose heart We have made heedless of Our remembrance, and who has followed his desire and whose behavior has exceeded the limits. [28]

And say, "The truth is from your Lord. Now, whoever so wills may believe and whoever so wills may deny." Surely, We have prepared for the unjust a fire, whose tent envelops them. And if they beg for help, they shall be helped with water like oily dregs scalding the faces. And vile is the drink and evil is the Fire as a resting-place. [29] **As for those who believe and do righteous deeds - of course, We do not waste the reward of those who are good in deeds.** [30] **Those are the ones for whom there are eternal gardens the rivers flowing beneath them. They will be adorned therein with bracelets of gold, and they will be dressed in green garments made of fine silk and thick silk, reclining therein on couches. Excellent is the reward and beautiful is the Garden as a resting- place.** [31]

Commentary

Da'wah and Tablīgh admit of no discrimination

Some events have been mentioned in the background of the revelation of the verse: وَاصْبِرْ نَفْسَكَ (And keep yourself content - 28). It is possible that all of them became the cause of this instruction. Al-Baghawī reports that 'Uyainah ibn Ḥiṣn al-Fazārī, the chief of Makkah paid a visit to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Sitting there with him was Sayyidnā Salman al-Farisi ؓ who was one of the poor Ṣaḥābah. His dress was tattered and his looks, that of a *derwish*. Then, there were some other poor and humble people like him sitting within the gathering. 'Uyainah said, 'these are the people who stop us from coming to you and listening to you. We cannot sit with such broken-down people. You should remove them from your gathering, or you should, at the least, have one separate gathering for us and another, for them.'

Ibn Marduwayh reports on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ؓ that Umaiyyah ibn Khalaf al-jumaḥī advised the Holy Prophet ﷺ that he should not have poor and broken-down Muslims as those close to him. Instead of that, he should prefer to have the chiefs of Makkah and the Quraysh tribe with him. If these people embraced the religion brought by him, it will advance the cause of religion.

Pursuant to events of this nature, came the Divine instruction that firmly stopped him from accepting their advice. Not only that he should not remove them from his company, in fact, the command given reads: وَاصْبِرْ نَفْسَكَ (*waṣbir nafsak*: translated as 'and keep yourself content'). If

translated literally, it could mean 'keep yourself tied with them,' not in the sense of not leaving them anytime, but meaning that he should attend to and relate to these very people, seeking their advice in essential matters and working in association with them alone. Why should he do that and what was the wisdom behind it? The words that follow spell the reason out. They call their Lord morning and evening, remembering Him under all conditions. And what they do is exclusively for the good pleasure of Allah. All these conditions around them are conditions that attract the help and support of Allah Ta'ālā. And such are the people to whom comes the help of Allah. So, let them not worry about the loss of worldly support for the final victory shall be theirs.

The reason why he was prevented from accepting the advice of the Quraysh chiefs has been given towards the end of the verse. It was said that their hearts were heedless of the remembrance of Allah, everything they did was subservient to their physical desires and these conditions guaranteed that they would stand alienated far from the mercy and support of Allah Ta'ālā.

At this point, someone may doubt that this advice was reasonably practicable. A separate gathering for them would have not hurt. In fact, it would have made it easier to convey the message of Islam to them and equally easier for them to accept it. But, the creation of such a division would have amounted to seating the rebellious rich on a pedestal of honor, an action that could have broken the hearts of poor Muslims or dampened their courage. Allah Ta'ālā, in His ultimate wisdom, would not put up with anything like this. Instead of that, the ground rule of Da'wah and Tablīgh given by Him was that there should be no discrimination or distinction against or for anyone in it. Allah knows best.

Ornaments for the People of Jannah

It has been mentioned in verse 31: يُحَلَّوْنَ فِيهَا (They will be adorned therein) that men inmates of Jannah will also be adorned with bracelets of gold. The question it may bring up is that wearing ornaments is neither becoming for men, nor can these be called beauty and embellishment in any relative sense. If bracelets were put on them in Jannah, may be they make them look awful.

The answer is that embellishment and beauty are subservient to

practice or custom as recognized in a society. What is considered to be embellishment and beauty in one country or region could more than often be detested in other countries and regions. And this could be the other way round as well. Similarly, something is taken to be an embellishment in a given period of time. Comes another time and it becomes a blemish. When ornaments and silk dresses will come to be established as embellishment and beauty for men of Jannah too, no one is going to feel strange with it there. That which puts restraints on us here is a law of this world which stipulates that it is not permissible for men to wear any ornament of gold, even a ring or chain for watch made of gold. Similarly, silk clothes are not permissible for men. This will not be the law of Jannah. That is a universe of existence separate from this entire universe of our experience. It cannot be imagined on the analogy of anything in and around us on this basis alone.

Verses 32 - 44

وَاضْرِبْ لَهُمْ مَّثَلًا رَّجُلَيْنِ جَعَلْنَا لِاَحَدِهِمَا جَنَّتَيْنِ مِنْ اَعْنَابٍ
وَّحَفَفْنٰهُمَا بِنَخْلٍ وَّجَعَلْنَا بَيْنَهُمَا زَرْعًا ﴿٣٢﴾ كِلْتَا الْجَنَّتَيْنِ اٰتَتْ
اُكُلَهَا وَلَمْ تَظْلِمْ مِّنْهُ شَيْئًا وَّفَجَّرْنَا خِلٰلَهُمَا نَهَرًا ﴿٣٣﴾ وَّكَانَ لَهٗ
ثَمَرٌ فَقَالَ لِصَاحِبِهٖ وَهُوَ يُحَاوِرُهٗٓ اَنَا اَكْثَرُ مِنْكَ مَالًا وَّ اَعَزُّ نَفَرًا ﴿٣٤﴾
وَدَخَلَ جَنَّتَهٗ وَهُوَ ظَالِمٌ لِّنَفْسِهٖ قَالَ مَآ اَظُنُّ اَنْ تَبِيْدَ هٰذِهٖٓ اَبَدًا ﴿٣٥﴾
وَّمَآ اَظُنُّ السَّاعَةَ قَآئِمَةً وَّلَئِنْ رُّدِدْتُّ اِلٰى رَبِّيْ لَاَجِدَنَّ خَيْرًا مِّنْهَا
مُنْقَلَبًا ﴿٣٦﴾ قَالَ لَهٗ صَاحِبُهٗ وَهُوَ يُحَاوِرُهٗٓ اَكَفَرْتَ بِالَّذِيْ خَلَقَكَ
مِنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ نُّطْفَةٍ ثُمَّ سَوّٰىكَ رَجُلًا ﴿٣٧﴾ لٰكِنَّا هُوَ اللّٰهُ رَبِّيْ وَلَآ
اُشْرِكُ بِرَبِّيْٓ اَحَدًا ﴿٣٨﴾ وَلَوْلَآ اِذْ دَخَلْتَ جَنَّتَكَ قُلْتَ مَا شَآءَ اللّٰهُ
لَاقُوَّةَ اِلَّا بِاللّٰهِ اِنْ تَرَنِ اَنَا اَقَلَّ مِنْكَ مَالًا وَّوَلَدًا ﴿٣٩﴾ فَعَسٰى رَبِّيْٓ اَنْ
يُّؤْتِيَنِ خَيْرًا مِّنْ جَنَّتِكَ وَيُرْسِلَ عَلَيْهَا حُسْبَانًا مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ فَتُصْبِحَ
صَعِيْدًا زَلَقًا ﴿٤٠﴾ اَوْيُصْبِحَ مَآؤُهَا غَوْرًا فَلَنْ تَسْتَطِيْعَ لَهٗ طَلَبًا ﴿٤١﴾

وَأُحِيطَ بِثَمَرِهِ فَأَصْبَحَ يُقَلِّبُ كَفَّيْهِ عَلَىٰ مَآ أَنفَقَ فِيهَا وَهِيَ خَاوِيَةٌ عَلَىٰ عُرُوشِهَا وَيَقُولُ يَٰلَيْتَنِى لَمْ أُشْرِكْ بِرَبِّىٓ أَحَدًا ﴿٤٢﴾ وَلَمْ تَكُن لَّهُۥ فِئَةٌ يَنصُرُونَهُۥ مِن دُونِ ٱللَّهِ وَمَا كَانَ مُنتَصِرًا ﴿٤٣﴾ هُنَالِكَ ٱلْوَلَٰيَةُ لِلَّهِ ٱلْحَقِّ هُوَ خَيْرٌ ثَوَابًا وَخَيْرٌ عُقْبًا ﴿٤٤﴾

And give them an example. There were two men; We gave one of them two gardens of grapes and We surrounded them both with date-palms and placed tillage between them. [32] **Both the gardens brought forth their fruit and suppressed nothing from it and We caused a stream to flow through them.** [33]

And he had wealth. So, he said to his companion while conversing with him, "I am greater than you in wealth and stronger in manpower." [34] **And he entered his garden while he was unjust to himself. He said, "I do not think that this will ever perish** [35] **and I do not think that the Hour is to come. And even if I am sent back to my Lord, I will surely find a better place than this to return to."** [36] **Said his companion as he was conversing with him, "Do you disbelieve in Him who created you from dust, then from a drop, then He fashioned you into a man?** [37] **As for me, I believe the fact that Allah is my Lord and I do not associate anyone with my Lord.** [38] **And why, when you entered your garden, did you not say, '(Everything is) as Allah wills. There is no power except with Allah'? If you see me less than you in wealth and children,** [39] **then, I hope my Lord will give me (what is) better than your garden and send to yours a punishment from the heavens and it becomes a barren land."** [40] **Or, its water becomes deep-sunk so that you will never be able to search it out.** [41] **And its produce was struck by destruction from all sides and he stood wringing his hands (in anguish) over what he had invested therein while it was fallen down on its trellises and he was saying, "I wish I had not ascribed any partner to my Lord!"** [42] **And there were no supporters who could come to his help, other than Allah, nor was he able to help himself.** [43] **Here is that the power of protection rests with Allah - The True One. He is the best in rewarding and best in requiting.** [44]

Commentary

The word: ثَمَرٌ (*thamar*) in: وَّكَانَ لَهٗ ثَمَرٌ (And he had wealth - 34) means the fruit of trees as well as wealth, in an absolute sense. At this place, Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ, Mujāhid and Qatādah have taken it in the later sense (Ibn Kathīr) According to the Lexicon, al-Qāmūs, this word is used to denote the fruit of the tree and wealth of all kinds. This tells us that not only did he own gardens and farms, he also had gold, silver and other luxuries. Even his words reported by the Qur'ān: اَنَا اَكْثَرُ مِنْكَ مَالًا (I am greater than you in wealth -34) also express the same sense. (Ibn Kathīr)

About the statement: مَاشَآءَ اللّٰهُ لَاقُوَّةَ اِلَّا بِاللّٰهِ : "[Everything is] as Allah wills. There is no power except with Allah," it has been reported in Shu'ab al-'Īmān on the authority of Sayyidnā Anas ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "whoever sees something, likes it - and says *'masha'Allahu la quwwata illa bil-lah'* - nothing will harm it (that is, what he likes will stay protected).' And it appears in other reports, 'whoever recites this *kalimah* when he likes something he sees, it will stay protected against the evil eye.'

The gist of the arguments of these two persons, as explained by Maulanā Ashraf Alī Thānavi in Khulāṣa-e-Tafsīr

These verses have described the event of two persons one of whom had a lot of wealth and, proud of it, he refused to accept that there is any life after death, and if there is one, he claimed, he will be given more wealth and reward therein. His argument was that if Allah was not pleased with him, he would not have this amount of wealth in this world.

The other person, though less than him in wealth, was a true believer. He refuted the argument of the former one by saying that the worldly wealth is not a sign of one's being close to Allah, because the worldly benefits are given by Allah, in one way or the other, even to the disbelievers and sinful persons, rather to the snakes, scorpions and beasts. It is a horrible mistake to presume that they are the signs of one's being approved by Allah. Therefore, neither your wealth is the proof of your behaviour being approved by Allah, nor my lesser wealth is a proof of disapproval by Him. Allah's approval or disapproval depends on one's faith and deeds alone and not on the amount of wealth one has.

The word: حُسْبَانًا (*ḥusbāna*) in verse 40 has been explained by Qatādah as 'punishment' in an absolute sense, by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ as 'fire' and by some as 'stoning.' As for what appears after that in the Qur'ān: أُحِيطَ بِثَمَرِهِ (And its produce was struck by destruction from all sides - 42), it obviously means that some major calamity hit his gardens, wealth and things of luxury reducing everything to ruins. The Qur'ān does not mention any particular calamity explicitly. It appears that, some fire came down from the skies and burnt the whole thing - as it appears in the Tafsīr of '*ḥusbān*' by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās who has explained it as 'fire.' And Allah knows best.

Verses 45 - 49

وَاضْرِبْ لَهُمْ مَّثَلَ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا كَمَآءٍ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ فَاخْتَلَطَ بِهٖ نَبَاتُ الْاَرْضِ فَاَصْبَحَ هَشِيْمًا تَذْرُوْهُ الرِّيٰحُ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مُّقْتَدِرًا ﴿٤٥﴾ اَلْمَالُ وَالْبَنُوْنَ زِيْنَةُ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ۚ وَالْبٰقِيٰتُ الصّٰلِحٰتُ خَيْرٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ ثَوَابًا وَّخَيْرٌ اَمَلًا ﴿٤٦﴾ وَيَوْمَ نُسَيِّرُ الْجِبَالَ وَتَرَى الْاَرْضَ بَارِزَةً ۙ وَّحَشَرْنٰهُمْ فَلَمْ نُغَادِرْ مِنْهُمْ اَحَدًا ﴿٤٧﴾ وَعُرِضُوْا عَلٰى رَبِّكَ صَفًّا ؕ لَقَدْ جِئْتُمُوْنَا كَمَا خَلَقْنٰكُمْ اَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ ۢ بَلْ زَعَمْتُمْ اَلَّنْ نَّجْعَلَ لَكُمْ مَّوْعِدًا ﴿٤٨﴾ وَوُضِعَ الْكِتٰبُ فَتَرَى الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ مُشْفِقِيْنَ مِمَّا فِيْهِ وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ يٰوَيْلَتَنَا مَالِ هٰذَا الْكِتٰبِ لَا يُغَادِرُ صَغِيْرَةً وَّلَا كَبِيْرَةً اِلَّآ اَحْصٰىهَا ۚ وَوَجَدُوْا مَا عَمِلُوْا حَاضِرًا ؕ وَلَا يَظْلِمُ رَبُّكَ اَحَدًا ﴿٤٩﴾

And give them the example of the worldly life; it is like water We sent down from the sky, then mingled with it was the vegetation of the earth, and then it turned into chaff that the winds blow about. And Allah has power over everything. [45] **Wealth and children are the embellishment of the worldly life and the everlasting virtues are better with your Lord in respect of reward and better to hope for.** [46]

> **And (visualize) the Day We shall make mountains move and you see the earth exposed and We shall gather them together so as not to leave a single one of them.** [47] **And they shall be presented lined-up, before your Lord. Lo! You have come to Us just as We had created you at first. Instead, you claimed that We will not have for you an appointed time.** [48] **And placed there would be the book (of record), then you will see the guilty scared of what is therein and saying, "Woe to us! What a book is this! It has missed nothing, minor or major, but has taken into account. And they will find what they did all there. And your Lord will not wrong anyone.** [49]

Commentary

The meaning of 'everlasting virtues' (*'al-bāqyāt al-ṣāliḥāt'*- 34)

The Musnad of Aḥmad, Ibn Ḥibbān and Ḥākim have reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Accumulate 'everlasting virtues' as much as you can." It was said, "What are they?" He said, "Saying: سُبْحَانَ اللهِ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلاَّ اللهُ' اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ اَللهُ اَكْبَرُ وَلَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ اِلاَّ بِاللهِ (Pure is Allah. There is no god but Allah. All praise belongs to Allah. Allah is great and there is no power and no strength except with Allah). Ḥākim has called this Ḥadīth - Ṣaḥīḥ. And al-'Uqaili reports on the authority of Sayyidnā Nu'mān ibn Bashīr ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "سُبْحَانَ اللهِ وَالْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ وَلَآ اِلٰهَ اِلاَّ اللهُ وَاللهُ اَكْبَرُ (Pure is Allah and all praise belongs to Allah and there is no god but Allah and Allah is great): These are the 'everlasting virtues.'" The same has been reported by al-Ṭabarānī from Sayyidnā Sa'd ibn 'Ubādah ؓ. And the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim and Tirmidhī have reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "I like saying: سُبْحَانَ اللهِ وَالْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ وَلَآ اِلٰهَ اِلاَّ اللهُ وَاللهُ اَكْبَرُ (Pure is Allah and all praise belongs to Allah and there is no god but Allah and Allah is great) better than everything under the Sun."

Sayyidnā Jābir ؓ said, "Recite: لَاحَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ اِلاَّ بِاللهِ (*lā haula wa lāquwwata illā bil-lāh*: There is no power and there is no strength except with Allah) a lot, because it removes ninety nine types of ailments out of which anxiety is the least painful."

Thus, according to the Tafsīr of 'everlasting virtues' in this verse by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ, 'Ikrimah and Mujāhid, it means the very recitation of these words. And Sa'īd ibn Jubayr, Masrūq and Ibrāhīm said that 'everlasting virtues' denote five daily prayers.

And there is another report from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ which says that *'al-baqyāt al-ṣāliḥāt'* or 'everlasting virtues' in this verse means righteous deeds in a general sense. Included therein are the words mentioned above, and the five prayers, and all other righteous deeds as well. This explanation has also been reported from early commentator Qatādah. (Maẓharī)

This also happens to be the drive of the meaning in terms of the words of the Qur'ān for these words literally convey the sense of the righteous deeds that are to keep surviving. And it is obvious that all deeds that qualify as righteous and sincere are abiding and everlasting in the sight of Allah. Ibn Jarīr and al-Qurṭubī have preferred this particular Tafsīr.

Sayyidnā 'Alī ﷺ said, 'Cultivation is of two kinds. Wealth and children are the cash crops of the mortal world while 'everlasting virtues' are the deferred crops of the Hereafter.' Ḥasan al-Baṣrī said, 'Everlasting virtues are one's intention as the acceptance of righteous deeds depends on it.'

'Ubaid ibn 'Umair رضی اللہ عنہ said, 'Everlasting virtues are righteous daughters for they are, for their parents, the greatest treasure-troves of reward from Allah.' This is supported by a narration of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا according to which the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said, "I saw a man from my *ummah* under orders to be taken to Hell. Thereupon, his righteous daughters clung to him and started wailing and crying and plaintively supplicating: O Allah, spare him for he was very kind to us in the mortal world and he worked very hard to raise us in our family. Allah Ta'ālā, in His mercy, forgave him. (Qurṭubī)

Visualize the Day of Resurrection

The address to everyone on that fateful Day of Qiyāmah shall be: لَقَدْ جِئْتُمُوْنَا كَمَا خَلَقْنٰكُمْ اَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ (Lo! You have come to Us [empty-handed, without any of those things you proudly possessed] just as We had created you at first - 47). Al-Bukhārī, Muslim and Tirmidhī report on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ once gave a Khuṭbah in which he said, "O people! On the Day of Qiyāmah, you will come walking bare-footed, bare-bodied, before your Lord and the one to be donned

with a dress first shall be Ibrāhīm, peace be on him." Hearing this, Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا asked, *'Yā Rasūlallāh,* is it that all men and women shall be naked, and seeing each other?' He said, "That day, everyone will be gripped by such preoccupation and anxiety that no one will have any occasion to cast a look towards any one - all eyes shall be raised upwards."

According to al-Qurṭubī, the statement appearing in a Ḥadīth that the dead will meet each other in Barzakh dressed in their shrouds is not contradictory of this Ḥadīth, because that is the case of Grave and Barzakh (post-death ~ pre-resurrection state) while the present one concerns the plains of Resurrection. And there are some Ḥadīth reports to the effect that the deceased person will rise on the Day of Resurrection in the dress he or she was buried. Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ said, 'Give good *kafn* (shroud) to the deceased among you because they will rise on the Last Day dressed in these.' Some commentators have interpreted the report as relating to Shahīds (martyrs who are buried in their dress). Then, there are others who have said that it is possible that some people rise dressed on the Day of Resurrection and some others, without it. In this way, both kinds of reports conjoin. (Maẓharī)

Recompense (*al-jazā'*) is the Deed (*al-'amal*) itself

Towards the end of verse 49, it was said: وَوَجَدُوا مَا عَمِلُوا حَاضِرًا (And they will find what they did all there). Commentators generally explain its sense by saying that they will find the recompense of their deeds present there. My respected teacher, Maulanā Sayyid Muḥammad Anwar Shāh Kashmīrī, used to say that there is no need for this interpretation here. Countless Ḥadīth narratives prove that these very deeds of the mortal world will become the recompense - reward or punishment - of the Hereafter. Their forms will transform there. Righteous deeds will transform into the blessings of Paradise and evil deeds will turn into the Hell-fire, snakes and scorpions.

It appears in Aḥādīth that the wealth of those who do not pay Zakāh will come to them in the grave in the form of a big snake. The thing will bite them saying, أنَا مَالُكَ (*anā māluk*: I am your wealth). The righteous deed, transformed into an elegant human visitor will come to mollify one's terrible loneliness in the grave. Sacrificial animals will provide the ride over the Bridge of Ṣirāṭ. Sins committed will be placed on top of

everyone's heads as their burdensome wherewithal on the Day of Resurrection.

About devouring what belongs to the orphans by unfair means, it was said in the Qur'ān: اِنَّمَا يَاْكُلُوْنَ فِىْ بُطُوْنِهِمْ نَارًا (they only eat fire into their bellies - 4:10). All such Qur'ānic verses and Ḥadīth narratives are generally interpreted as figures of speech. But, in the light of the view given above, none of these need a figure of speech to explain. Everything stays intrinsically real, as is.

The Qur'ān has equated the unlawful consumption of an orphan's property with fire. So, the reality is that it is nothing but fire even at that time. But, in order to experience its effect, the condition is that one must pass away from this mortal world. It is like someone calling a matchbox by the name of fire, which is correct. But, in order that it becomes fire, it remains subject to the condition of friction. Similarly, if someone says that petrol or gas is fire, he would be considered as right - though, it would actually materialize only when the condition of being touched by a tiny flame of fire is fulfilled.

The outcome is that one's deed - whatever good or bad one does in the moral world - will take the form of reward and punishment in the Hereafter. That will be a time when its marks of identification will become different from that of the mortal world and take a form of its own. And Allah alone knows best.

Verses 50 - 59

وَاِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ اسْجُدُوْا لِاٰدَمَ فَسَجَدُوْٓا اِلَّآ اِبْلِيْسَ ط كَانَ مِنَ الْجِنِّ فَفَسَقَ عَنْ اَمْرِ رَبِّهٖ ط اَفَتَتَّخِذُوْنَهٗ وَذُرِّيَّتَهٗٓ اَوْلِيَآءَ مِنْ دُوْنِىْ وَهُمْ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ ط بِئْسَ لِلظّٰلِمِيْنَ بَدَلًا ﴿٥٠﴾ مَآ اَشْهَدْتُّهُمْ خَلْقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَلَا خَلْقَ اَنْفُسِهِمْ ص وَمَا كُنْتُ مُتَّخِذَ الْمُضِلِّيْنَ عَضُدًا ﴿٥١﴾ وَيَوْمَ يَقُوْلُ نَادُوْا شُرَكَآءِىَ الَّذِيْنَ زَعَمْتُمْ فَدَعَوْهُمْ فَلَمْ يَسْتَجِيْبُوْا لَهُمْ وَجَعَلْنَا بَيْنَهُمْ مَّوْبِقًا ﴿٥٢﴾ وَرَاَ الْمُجْرِمُوْنَ النَّارَ فَظَنُّوْٓا

اَنَّهُمْ مُّوَاقِعُوْهَا وَلَمْ يَجِدُوْا عَنْهَا مَصْرِفًا ﴿٥٣﴾ ع وَلَقَدْ صَرَّفْنَا فِيْ هٰذَا
الْقُرْاٰنِ لِلنَّاسِ مِنْ كُلِّ مَثَلٍ ؕ وَكَانَ الْاِنْسَانُ اَكْثَرَ شَيْءٍ جَدَلًا ﴿٥٤﴾
وَمَا مَنَعَ النَّاسَ اَنْ يُّؤْمِنُوْٓا اِذْ جَآءَهُمُ الْهُدٰى وَيَسْتَغْفِرُوْا رَبَّهُمْ اِلَّآ اَنْ
تَاْتِيَهُمْ سُنَّةُ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ اَوْ يَاْتِيَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ قُبُلًا ﴿٥٥﴾ وَمَا نُرْسِلُ الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ
اِلَّا مُبَشِّرِيْنَ وَمُنْذِرِيْنَ ۚ وَيُجَادِلُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا بِالْبَاطِلِ لِيُدْحِضُوْا بِهِ
الْحَقَّ وَاتَّخَذُوْٓا اٰيٰتِيْ وَمَآ اُنْذِرُوْا هُزُوًا ﴿٥٦﴾ وَمَنْ اَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ ذُكِّرَ
بِاٰيٰتِ رَبِّهٖ فَاَعْرَضَ عَنْهَا وَنَسِيَ مَا قَدَّمَتْ يَدٰهُ ؕ اِنَّا جَعَلْنَا عَلٰى
قُلُوْبِهِمْ اَكِنَّةً اَنْ يَّفْقَهُوْهُ وَفِيْٓ اٰذَانِهِمْ وَقْرًا ؕ وَاِنْ تَدْعُهُمْ اِلَى الْهُدٰى
فَلَنْ يَّهْتَدُوْٓا اِذًا اَبَدًا ﴿٥٧﴾ وَرَبُّكَ الْغَفُوْرُ ذُو الرَّحْمَةِ ؕ لَوْ يُؤَاخِذُهُمْ بِمَا
كَسَبُوْا لَعَجَّلَ لَهُمُ الْعَذَابَ ؕ بَلْ لَّهُمْ مَّوْعِدٌ لَّنْ يَّجِدُوْا مِنْ دُوْنِهٖ
مَوْئِلًا ﴿٥٨﴾ وَتِلْكَ الْقُرٰٓى اَهْلَكْنٰهُمْ لَمَّا ظَلَمُوْا وَجَعَلْنَا لِمَهْلِكِهِمْ
مَّوْعِدًا ﴿٥٩﴾ ع

And remember when We said to the angels, "Prostrate before 'Ādam." So, they prostrated themselves, all but Iblīs. He was of the Jinn, so he transgressed from the command of your Lord. Is it then that you will take him and his progeny as friends instead of Me while they are enemy to you? Evil is he as substitute, for wrongdoers. [50]

I did not make them witness the creation of the heavens and the earth, nor their own creation. And I am not the one to take those who mislead as helpers. [51] **And the Day He will say, "Call My 'partners' whom you took as such." So, they will call them but they will not respond to them and We will put a place of disaster between them.** [52] **And the sinners will see the Fire, so they will know that they are to fall into it and they will find no way to bypass it.** [53]

And indeed We have explained in this Qur'ān every subject in various ways for the people. And man is most quarrelsome of all things. [54]

And nothing has prevented people from believing when guidance came to them, and from seeking forgiveness from their Lord but (their demand) that there should come to them what used to come to the earlier peoples or that the punishment should come to them face to face. [55]

And We do not send the messengers but as bearers of good tidings and warnings, and those who disbelieve raise disputes with the false (arguments) so that they may nullify the truth with it. And they have made My signs and the warnings given to them a mockery. [56]

And who is more unjust than the one who was reminded through the signs of his Lord but he turned away from them and forgot what his own hands sent ahead. And We have put covers on their hearts so that they do not understand it, and deafness in their ears. And should you call them to the right path, even then they will never ever take to guidance. [57]

And your Lord is the Most Forgiving, the Master of Mercy. If He seizes them for what they did, He would cause their punishment to come soon. But, for them, there is an appointed time from which they will never find a refuge. [58]

And these towns We destroyed when they transgressed and We made an appointed time for their destruction. [59]

Commentary

The progeny of Iblīs, and his descendants and followers

The word: ذُرِّيَّتَهُ (*dhurriyyatah*) in verse 50 indicates that Iblīs (Shaiṭān, Satan) has offspring, and a host of descendants and followers. Some commentators have said that 'progeny' at this place means 'accomplices.' That the Shaiṭān has offspring from his loins is not necessary. But, there is a Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth which Ḥumaidī has reported in Kitāb al-Jam' bain al-Ṣaḥīḥain on the authority of Sayyidnā Salmān al-Fārisī رضي الله عنه. According to his narration, the Holy Prophet ﷺ told him, "do not become like those who are the first to enter the bazaar (shopping centre), or those who are the last to leave it, for the bazaar is a place where the Shaiṭān has his eggs and offspring laid around." This would indicate that the progeny of Shaiṭān spreads out in that manner - through what is laid and hatched by him. After having presented this report, al-Qurṭu-

bī has said that the Shaiṭān has accomplices and armies is something established by conclusive proofs - and as for the Shaiṭān having offspring, a Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth has appeared above. Allah knows best.

The statement: وَكَانَ الْإِنسَانُ أَكْثَرَ شَيْءٍ جَدَلًا (And man is the most quarrelsome of all things - 54) has been testified through a Ḥadīth narrated by Sayyidnā 'Anas ﷺ in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said, "On the day of Qiyāmah, a man from among the disbelievers will be brought forth. He will be asked, 'what was your response to the messenger We had sent to you?' He will say, 'O my Lord, as for me, I did believe in You and in Your messenger too and that I obeyed him in everything I did.' Allah Ta'ālā will say, 'here is your book of deeds before you. All this you say is not there.' This man will say, 'I do not believe in this book of deeds.' Allah Ta'ālā will say, 'what about these angels of Ours? They used to watch you. They bear witness against you.' This man will say, 'I do not accept their testimony as well, nor do I know them, nor have I seen them while I was doing what I did.' Allah Ta'ālā will say, 'if so, this Preserved Tablet (اللوح المحفوظ) is before you. Written here too is the same thing about you.' He will say, 'my Lord, have You granted me asylum from injustice or have you not?' Allah Ta'ālā will say, 'Of course, you have your refuge against injustice with Us.' So then, he will say, 'O my Lord, how can I accept the verdict of those unseen witnesses I am not familiar with at all? As for me, I can only accept a witness that comes from my own person.' At that time, his mouth will be sealed, and his hands and feet will bear witness against his *kufr* and *shirk*. After that, he will be released and thrown into the Hell. (The subject matter of this narrative has been reported in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, also from Sayyidnā Anas ﷺ - al-Qurṭubī)

Verses 60 - 70

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِفَتَاهُ لَآ أَبْرَحُ حَتَّىٰٓ أَبْلُغَ مَجْمَعَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ أَوْ أَمْضِيَ حُقُبًا ﴿٦٠﴾ فَلَمَّا بَلَغَا مَجْمَعَ بَيْنِهِمَا نَسِيَا حُوتَهُمَا فَاتَّخَذَ سَبِيلَهُۥ فِى الْبَحْرِ سَرَبًا ﴿٦١﴾ فَلَمَّا جَاوَزَا قَالَ لِفَتَاهُ ءَاتِنَا غَدَآءَنَا لَقَدْ لَقِينَا مِن سَفَرِنَا هَٰذَا نَصَبًا ﴿٦٢﴾ قَالَ أَرَءَيْتَ إِذْ أَوَيْنَآ إِلَى الصَّخْرَةِ فَإِنِّى نَسِيتُ

الْحُوْتَ وَمَآ اَنْسٰنِيْهُ اِلَّا الشَّيْطٰنُ اَنْ اَذْكُرَهٗ وَاتَّخَذَ سَبِيْلَهٗ فِي
الْبَحْرِ عَجَبًا ﴿٦٣﴾ قَالَ ذٰلِكَ مَا كُنَّا نَبْغِ فَارْتَدَّا عَلٰٓى اٰثَارِهِمَا قَصَصًا
﴿٦٤﴾ فَوَجَدَا عَبْدًا مِّنْ عِبَادِنَآ اٰتَيْنٰهُ رَحْمَةً مِّنْ عِنْدِنَا وَعَلَّمْنٰهُ مِنْ لَّدُنَّا
عِلْمًا ﴿٦٥﴾ قَالَ لَهٗ مُوْسٰى هَلْ اَتَّبِعُكَ عَلٰٓى اَنْ تُعَلِّمَنِ مِمَّا عُلِّمْتَ
رُشْدًا ﴿٦٦﴾ قَالَ اِنَّكَ لَنْ تَسْتَطِيْعَ مَعِيَ صَبْرًا ﴿٦٧﴾ وَكَيْفَ تَصْبِرُ عَلٰى
مَالَمْ تُحِطْ بِهٖ خُبْرًا ﴿٦٨﴾ قَالَ سَتَجِدُنِيْٓ اِنْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ صَابِرًا وَّلَآ
اَعْصِيْ لَكَ اَمْرًا ﴿٦٩﴾ قَالَ فَاِنِ اتَّبَعْتَنِيْ فَلَا تَسْئَلْنِيْ عَنْ شَيْءٍ حَتّٰٓى
اُحْدِثَ لَكَ مِنْهُ ذِكْرًا ﴿٧٠﴾

And when Mūsā said to his young man, "I shall not give up until I reach the meeting point of the two seas or else I shall go on for years. [60] **So, when they reached the meeting point of the two seas, they forgot their fish and it made its way into the sea as in a tunnel.** [61] **When they went further, he said to his young man, "Bring us our morning meal; we have, indeed, had much fatigue from this journey of ours."** [62] **He said, "You see, when we stayed at the rock, I forgot the fish. It was none but Satan who made me forget it to tell you about it - and, amazingly, it made its way into the sea."** [63] **He said, "That was what we were looking for." So they returned, retracing their footsteps.** [64] **Then they found one of Our servants whom We blessed with mercy from Us and whom We gave knowledge, a knowledge from Our own.** [65] **Mūsā said to him, "May I follow you on (the undertaking) that you teach me a bit of right knowledge you have been given."** [66] **He said, "You can never afford to keep patient while with me.** [67] **And how would you keep patient over something your comprehension cannot grasp?"** [68] **He (Mūsā) said, "You will find me patient, if Allah wills, and I shall not disobey any order from you."** [69] **He said, "Well, if you follow me, do not ask me about anything unless I, on my own initiative, tell you about it."** [70]

Commentary

In the description of this event referred to in: وَاِذْ قَالَ مُوْسٰى لِفَتٰىهُ (And

when Mūsā said to his young man), the opening sentence of verse 60, 'Mūsā' means the famous prophet, Mūsā son of 'Imrān عليه السلام . The attribution of this event to some other Mūsā by Nawf al-Bakālī has been sternly refuted by Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ﷺ as reported in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī.

As for the word: فتى (*fatā*), it literally means a young man. When this word is used as attributed to a particular person, it carries the sense of his attendant or servant because it is usually a young and strong man who is taken in for this kind of service in order that he could handle all sorts of jobs. Incidentally, it also happens to be an article of good Islamic etiquette that a servant or attendant should be addressed nicely, either by his name, or an appellation such as 'young man.' The ground rule is that even servants are not to be addressed as servants. At this place, the attribution of '*fatā*' is to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, therefore, it means Sayyidnā Mūsā's attendant in service. It appears in Ḥadīth narratives that the name of this attendant was Yūsha' son of Nūn, son of Ifrā'īm, son of Yūsuf عليه السلام. Some narratives identify him as the maternal nephew of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام. But, no categorical decision can be taken in this matter. As for his name being Yūsha' ibn Nūn, that much stands proved on the authority of sound narratives. However, there is no proof for the rest of the antecedents. (Qurṭubī)

The word: مَجمَعَ البَحرَين (*majma' al-baḥrayn*) literally means every such place where two waters meet - and it is obvious that they are many all around the world. Exactly which place is meant by '*majma' al-baḥrayn*' in this context? Since the Qur'ān, and Ḥadīth have not pinpointed it precisely, therefore, sayings of commentators differ in terms of traces and contexts. According to Qatādah, it signifies the meeting point of the seas of Fāris (Persia) and Rūm. Ibn 'Aṭiyyah has identified a place near Azerbaijan. Some point out to the confluence of the Gulf of 'Aqabah in Jordan and the Red Sea (Sharm ash-Shaykh). Some others have said that this place is located in Ṭanjah (Tangiers in North Africa). Sayyidnā 'Ubayy ibn Ka'b ﷺ reports that it is in Africa. Suddiyy gives its location in Armenia. Some give its location at the meeting point of the sea of Andulus (Gibraltar) and the Great Ocean (Atlantic). Allah knows best. However, this much is clear that Allah Ta'ālā had told Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام the fixed geographical location of this place towards which he had

made his journey. (Qurṭubī)

The Story of Sayyidnā Mūsā (Moses) and Al-Khaḍir (Elias)

Details of this event appear in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī and Muslim. There, according to a narration of Sayyidnā Ubaiyy ibn Ka'b ﷺ, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said: "Once when Mūsā ﷺ rose to address his people, the Banī Isrā'īl, those present there asked him, 'of all human beings, who is the foremost in knowledge?' Since (in the knowledge of Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ there was no one more knowledgeable than himself) therefore, he said, 'I am the foremost in knowledge.' (Allah Ta'ālā has His special ways of grooming prophets close to Him, therefore, this statement was not welcome. The etiquette of the situation demanded that he should have resigned his answer to the ultimate knowledge of Allah and said that 'Allah alone knows as to who is the foremost in knowledge among His entire creation'). So, the answer given by Mūsā ﷺ brought displeasure from Allah Ta'ālā and to him it was revealed: 'Present on the meeting point of the two seas, there is a servant of Ours. He is more knowledgeable than you.' (When Mūsā ﷺ came to know this, he submitted before Allah Ta'ālā that it was incumbent on him to travel and learn from the person who is superior to him in knowledge). So, he said: 'O Allah, tell me where to find him.' Allah Ta'ālā said, 'put a fish in your basket and travel in the direction of the meeting point of the two seas. When you reach the place where this fish disappears, that shall be the place where you meet that servant of Ours.' As commanded, Mūsā ﷺ put a fish in the basket and set out. His attendant, Yūsha' ibn Nūn was also with him. During the course of travel, they reached a rock where they lied down resting their heads against it. All of a sudden, on that spot, the fish moved, left the basket and went into the sea. (With this miracle of the fish coming alive and slipping out into the sea, yet another miracle unfolded when) Allah Ta'ālā stopped the flow of water currents all along the way the fish took into the sea making the place like a tunnel into the sea. (Yūsha' ibn Nūn witnessed this extraordinary event while Mūsā ﷺ was asleep). When he woke up, Yūsha' ibn Nūn forgot to mention this strange happening before him and resumed their journey onwards from there. They traveled for a whole day and night. When came the morning of the next day, Mūsā ﷺ asked his companion of the journey, 'bring us our morning meal. We have, indeed, had

much fatigue from this journey of ours.' The Holy Prophet ﷺ said that (as Divinely arranged) Mūsā عليه السلام felt no fatigue at all before that, so much so that he had over-traversed the spot where he had to reach. It was only when Mūsā عليه السلام asked for his morning meal that Yūsha' ibn Nūn recalled the fate of the fish, tendered his excuse for having forgotten to mention it for the Satan had made him forget about the need to report this matter to him earlier. After that, he disclosed that the dead fish had come alive and gone into the sea in an amazing manner. Thereupon, Mūsā عليه السلام said: 'that was what we were looking for.' (That is, the place where the fish comes alive and disappears was the desired destination).

So they turned back that very instant and took the same route they had taken earlier in order to find the spot they were looking for. Now, when they reached the familiar rock, they saw that someone was lying there covered with a sheet from the head down to the feet. Mūsā عليه السلام (taking things as they were) offered the greeting of *salām*. Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام asked, 'where in the world does this '*salām*' come from in this (uninhabited) wilderness?' Thereupon, Mūsā عليه السلام said, 'I am Mūsā.' Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام asked, 'Mūsā Banī Isrā'īl?' He confirmed, 'Yes, I am Mūsā Banī Isrā'īl. I have come here to ask you to teach me the knowledge Allah has given to you specially.'

Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام said, 'you will be unable to remain patient with me. O Mūsā, there is a knowledge Allah has given to me and which you do not have while there is a knowledge which Allah has given to you which I do not have.' Mūsā عليه السلام said, 'if Allah wills, you will find me patient. I shall not disobey you in any of your orders.'

Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام said, 'If you are to be with me, do not ask me about anything unless I tell you about it first.'

After having said this, they started walking by the shore. Then came a boat. A ride was negotiated. The boat people recognized al-Khaḍir عليه السلام and let them come on board free of any charges. No sooner did he step into the boat, al-Khaḍir عليه السلام forced out a panel of the boat with the help of an axe. Mūsā عليه السلام could not restrain himself. He said, 'These people gave us a free ride on the boat. This is what you did to them in return. You tore their boat apart so that they would drown. You have really done something very bad.' Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام said, 'Did I not tell you before

that you will be unable to remain patient with me?' Thereupon, Mūsā عليه السلام offered his excuse that he had forgotten his promise and requested him not to take him to task on his act of inadvertent omission.

The Holy Prophet ﷺ, after relating this event, said, "The first objection raised by Mūsā عليه السلام against al-Khaḍir عليه السلام was activated by forgetfulness, the second as a condition and the third by intention. (Meanwhile) a bird came, sat down on the side of the boat and took out a beak-full of water from the sea. Thereupon, addressing Mūsā عليه السلام, al-Khaḍir عليه السلام said, "even the combined knowledge of the two of us, yours and mine, cannot claim a status against Divine knowledge that could be compared even with the water in the beak of this bird as related to this sea."

Then, having disembarked from the boat, they started walking on the shore. All of a sudden, al-Khaḍir عليه السلام saw a boy playing with other boys. Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام killed the boy with his own hands. The boy died. Mūsā عليه السلام said, 'you took an innocent life unjustly. Indeed, this was a grave sin you committed.' Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام said, 'Did I not tell you before that you will be unable to remain patient with me?' Mūsā عليه السلام noticed that this matter was far more serious than the first one. Therefore, he said, 'if I question you after this, you will be free to remove me from your company. As far as I am concerned, you have reached the limit of excuses from me.'

After that, they started walking again until they passed by a village. They requested the village people to house them as guests. They refused. In this habitation, they noticed a wall that was about to collapse. Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام made it stand straight with his own hands. Surprised, Mūsā عليه السلام said, 'we requested their hospitality. They refused. Now you did such a big job for them. If you wished, you could have charged wages from them to do it.' Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام said, ' هٰذَا فِرَاقُ بَيْنِى وَبَيْنِكَ ' (It means that the condition now stands fulfilled, therefore, time has come for you and me to part company).

Then, after telling Mūsā عليه السلام the reality behind the three events, Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام said: ذٰلِكَ تَأْوِيلُ مَالَمْ تَسْطِعْ عَّلَيْهِ صَبْرًا which means: 'That was the reality of the events over which you were unable to remain patient.'

Once he had narrated this entire event, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "I wish Mūsā عليه السلام could have remained more patient so that we would have come to know more about the two of them."

This lengthy Ḥadīth appears in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī and Muslim in a manner that it establishes three things. It clearly mentions the name of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام as Mūsā Banī Isrā'īl, the name of his young companion during the travel as Yūsha' ibn Nūn and the name of the 'servant of Allah' to whom Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was sent towards the meeting point of the two seas as Al-Khaḍir. Now, from this point onwards, we shall take up the verses of the Qur'ān, and explain their sense.

Some rules of the road and a model of high prophetic determination

The first statement made in verse 60: لَآ اَبْرَحُ حَتّٰٓى اَبْلُغَ مَجْمَعَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ اَوْ اَمْضِىَ حُقُبًا ("I shall not give up until I reach the meeting point of the two seas or else I shall go on for years") was from Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام as addressed to his traveling companion, Yūshā' ibn Nūn. The purpose was to inform him about the direction and destination of the intended journey. This too releases a refinement in manners for he was taking the necessary steps to orient his companion and attendant with the knowledge of things essential for the journey. Proud and arrogant people just do not regard servants and attendants worth addressing, nor would they pass on any information to them about a projected journey.

The word: حُقُبًا (*ḥuqubā*: years) is the plural of: حُقْبَة (*ḥuqbah*). According to lexicographers, *ḥuqbah* is a period of eighty years. Some add more years to this definition. The truth of the matter is that *ḥuqubah* refers to a long period of time. There are no set limits about it. Here, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام has told his companion on the trip that he has to reach a particular place at the meeting point of the two seas. There he must reach as commanded by Allah Ta'ālā and that he was determined to continue his journey until he reaches that destination no matter how long the journey takes. When ready to obey the command of their Lord, this is a model of high determination exhibited by prophets.

Precedence of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام over Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام, his upbringing and miracles

In the next verse, it was said:

فَلَمَّا بَلَغَا مَجْمَعَ بَيْنِهِمَا نَسِيَا حُوتَهُمَا فَاتَّخَذَ سَبِيلَهُ فِى الْبَحْرِ سَرَبًا

So, when they reached the meeting point of the two seas, they forgot their fish and it made its way into the sea as in a tunnel - 61.

Before we explain the nature of the extraordinary happening there, it is appropriate to first refer to the distinct position bestowed upon Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ in the comity of prophets. This has been mentioned explicitly in the Qur'ān, and Sunnah. The special distinction of having conversed with Allah Ta'ālā is his hallmark. With al-Khaḍir ﷺ, the matter is different. To begin with, the very fact of his being a prophet has been debated. Even if his prophet-hood (*nubuwwah*) is acknowledged, he does not hold the station of a messenger (Rasūl) of Allah. Neither is he credited with a Book, nor does he have a distinct community of followers. Therefore, considering all related aspects, Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ has marked precedence over al-Khaḍir ﷺ. But, Allah Ta'ālā has His own wise ways to help those close to Him perform better. He would not let the least want or short coming go uncorrected and not amended. This process of reform at the highest level would even bring serious displeasure from Allah and it is through an equally serious measure that they are made to repair for it. This whole story reflects the same mode of personal training. By saying: انا (*anā*: I), he had said: 'I am the foremost in knowledge.' Allah Ta'ālā did not like it. So, as a measure of warning, he was given the whereabouts of a servant who had a field of knowledge specially given to him by Allah. This Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ did not have. Though the knowledge of Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ was far higher in rank than that given to him, but the truth of the matter was that Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ just did not have it. On the other side, Allah Ta'ālā had blessed Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ with an intense desire to seek knowledge. As soon as he smelt the scent of knowledge elsewhere too, knowledge that he did not have, he was all set to go for it traveling like an ardent student and it was Allah Ta'ālā Himself that he turned to for the address of that servant of His (al-Khaḍir ﷺ). Now, there is something worth pondering at this point. Had it been the will of Allah Ta'ālā that Mūsā ﷺ should meet al-Khaḍir ﷺ at that spot, He could have arranged that easily. Or, if Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ himself was Divinely destined to travel, he could have been given a clear address to help him reach it without any botheration. But, what happened here was differ-

ent. The address given to him was far from being precise - 'when you reach the place where the dead fish stirs and disappears, that will be the place you will find Our servant.'

Just about what this Ḥadīth of the Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī proves is that the command to put a fish in their basket came from Allah Taʿālā. Beyond that, it is not known whether the order was to carry a fish for eating or that it was to be carried as separate from what was to be eaten. Both probabilities exist. Therefore, some of the commentators said that this grilled fish was put in to eat and, during the course of the journey, the two travelers kept eating out of it as well. Eaten thus was almost half of it. After that, miraculously enough, this grilled and half-eaten fish came alive and went into the sea.

Ibn 'Aṭiyyah and many others also observed that this fish kept surviving in the world as a matter of miracle and there were those who even saw that it had only one side intact while the other was eaten. Ibn 'Aṭiyyah has also put his personal sighting on record. (Qurṭubī)

And there are other commentators who have said that the command was to put a fish in a basket separate from that for food. The fish was put as commanded. Here too, at least this much is definite that the fish was dead. Its stirring up, becoming alive and going into the sea was nothing but a miracle.

We have said a little earlier that the address of al-Khaḍir عليه السلام was left imprecise in a manner that it would not remain easy to pinpoint it. Obviously, this too was nothing but a trial and test for Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام. As though this was not enough, the scenario of an additional test was activated for them when they had reached the exact spot but forgot the fish. In the verse of the Qur'ān, this act of forgetting has been attributed to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and his companion both: نَسِيَا حُوتَهُمَا (they forgot their fish - 61). But, as regards the story proved from the Ḥadīth of al-Bukhārī, it seems to indicate that Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was asleep when came the time for the fish to become alive and go into the sea. This extraordinary event was witnessed by Yūshā' ibn Nūn only and he had intended that he would relate it to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام as soon as he woke up. But, soon after that happened, Allah Taʿālā cast a state of oblivion on him and he forgot to do that. If so, the attribution of forgetfulness to both of them would be similar to the statement of the Qur'ān: يَخْرُجُ مِنْهُمَا

اللُّؤْلُؤُ وَالْمَرْجَانُ - 55:22. Here it has been said that pearl and coral are extracted from both sweet and brackish waters - although, these are collected from the later only. But, saying something like this in usage is common. Then it is also possible that since both respected elders had forgotten to take this fish along with them as far as the journey from that point onwards was concerned. Therefore, forgetfulness was attributed to both.

Nevertheless, this was yet another test. After having reached the projected destination, the fish came alive and disappeared into the sea. The reality had unfolded and the place was pinpointed. But, that was not the end. The seeker of truth had to undergo yet another test. Therefore, forgetfulness overtook both of them and it was only after having traveled one day and one night more that they realized hunger and fatigue. This was the third test, because any realization of fatigue and hunger should have naturally come earlier than that. If they had recalled the fish at that earlier time and place, they would have not suffered from such a long additional journey. But, such was the will of Allah Taʿālā that they had to face a little more of hardship. It was only after having gone through the grind of such a long journey that they felt hungry and thirsty and there it was that they remembered the fish and found out that they had come far ahead of their desired destination. Therefore, they returned back on the same footprints they had left earlier.

The first mention of the fish going into the sea was made through the word: سَرَبًا (*sarabā* - 61). Sarab means a tunnel that is dug to open up a passage through the mountains or an underground subway in cities. This tells us that the fish when it went into the sea had a tunnel-like passage forming itself in whatever direction it moved. Water currents did not obstruct its passage at all, rather left it open - as made explicit by the narrative from the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī. The second time, when Yūshaʿ ibn Nūn related this event before Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام after their long journey, it was done in the following words: وَاتَّخَذَ سَبِيلَهُ فِي الْبَحْرِ عَجَبًا (and, amazingly, it made its way into the sea - 63). There is no contradiction between the two, because the incidence of a tunnel forming itself into the sea was by itself an extraordinarily amazing event.

About al-Khaḍir عليه السلام and the issue of his prophet-hood

Though the name of the person concerned in this event has not been mentioned in the Qur'ān - in fact, he has been called: عَبْدًا مِّنْ عِبَادِنَا (a ser-

vant from among Our servants - 65) - but, in the Ḥadīth of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, his name has been given as: الخضر (al-Khaḍir). Literally, it means green, verdant. Giving the reason for his name being al-Khaḍir, commentators at large say that grass would grow at the spot where he would sit, no matter what the nature of the land. It would just turn green. The Qur'ān has also not made it clear whether al-Khaḍir عليه السلام was some prophet, or was one of the men of Allah. But, in the sight of the majority of religious scholars, the proof of his being a prophet is embedded within the events mentioned in the Qur'ān. There is a reason for it. Some of the proved events during this journey that issued forth from al-Khaḍir عليه السلام are absolutely counter to the Sharī'ah and there can be no exemption from an injunction of the Sharī'ah except under the authority of a Divine revelation, something restricted to a prophet and messenger of Allah. A *waliyy* (man of Allah) could also come to know something either through Kashf (illumination) or Ilhām (inspiration). But, that is not an authority to prove a rule of Sharī'ah. No injunction of the externally codified Sharī'ah can be changed on that basis. Therefore, it stands established that al-Khaḍir عليه السلام was a prophet and messenger of Allah. Given to him were some of those particular injunctions, injunctions that were counter to the codified Sharī'ah. Whatever he did, he did under the authority of this excepted injunction. He himself has attested to that in the sentence of the Qur'ān saying: وَمَا فَعَلْتُهُ عَنْ أَمْرِي (and I did not do it under my authority - 82) that is, did it under Divine authority.

In short, according to the majority of religious scholars of the Muslim community, al-Khaḍir عليه السلام too is a prophet and messenger. But, it was an imperative of creation that some duties were assigned to him from Allah. The knowledge given to him related to these very duties. Of this Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام had no information, therefore, he objected. This subject has been dealt with in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī, al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ of Abu Ḥayyān and in most commentaries variously.

It is not lawful for any *waliyy* or man of Allah to contravene the injunction of codified Sharī'ah

Right from here we learn that there is no shortage of ignorant and misguided Ṣufīs who give a bad name to Taṣawwuf. The likes of them would say that Sharī'ah is something else and Ṭarīqah is something else. There are many things taken as *ḥarām* in the Sharī'ah, but they

are permissible in the Ṭarīqah. Therefore, even if you see a *waliyy* (man of Allah) involved in a major sin openly and clearly, you cannot raise an objection against him! This is heresy, flagrant and false. No *waliyy*, no man of Allah anywhere in this world can be taken on the analogy of al-Khaḍir عليه السلام, nor can any act contrary to the codified Sharīʻah issuing forth from him be called permissible.

Following the teacher is incumbent on the student

In verse 66: هَلْ اَتَّبِعُكَ عَلٰٓى اَنْ تُعَلِّمَنِ مِمَّا عُلِّمْتَ رُشْدًا , Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, despite being a prophet and messenger of great resolve, has most reverentially requested al-Khaḍir عليه السلام if he could follow him to learn his knowledge from him. This tells us that the etiquette of acquiring knowledge is nothing but that the student should show respect for the teacher and follow him (as an individual who is eager to learn) - even if the student happens to be superior to his teacher. (Qurṭubī, Maẓharī)

It is not permissible for an 'Ālim' of the 'Sharīʻah' to patiently bear what is contrary to the Sharīʻah

By saying: اِنَّكَ لَنْ تَسْتَطِيْعَ مَعِىَ صَبْرًا وَكَيْفَ تَصْبِرُ عَلٰى مَالَمْ تُحِطْ بِهٖ خُبْرًا (You can never be able to keep patient while with me. And how would you keep patient over something your comprehension cannot grasp? - 67, 68), al-Khaḍir عليه السلام was telling Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام about the fact and the reason why he would be unable to keep patient with him. He knew nothing about the reality of the thing. What he meant was that the nature of knowledge given to him was different from the knowledge of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, therefore, things he did would appear to be objectionable in his sight, until he himself was to apprise him of their reality. Thus, the objections he would raise against such actions would be triggered by the dictates of his mission as a prophet.

Since Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was ordered to go to and learn from al-Khaḍir عليه السلام by none but Allah Taʻālā, therefore, he was initially at peace with himself hoping that nothing he did would really be counter to the Sharīʻah - though, he may not understand it externally. So, he promised to keep patient. Otherwise, the making of such a promise is not permissible for any ʻĀlim of Dīn. But, later on, overtaken by his strong sense of honor relating to the Sharīʻah, he forgot about this promise.

The first event was really not that serious. That the boat people

would suffer from financial loss or the boat may sink remained at the level of an impending danger only - which stood removed later on. But, in the case of the event that took place thereafter, Mūsā عليه السلام did not even make that promise of not objecting. In fact, when he saw the incident of a boy having been killed, he objected vehemently and did not offer any excuse whatsoever for his objection either. He simply said if he came up with an objection next time, al-Khaḍir عليه السلام would have the right of not keeping him in his company. The underlying logic was that no prophet and messenger of Allah can bear by seeing things being done against the norms of the Sharīʻah and yet maintaining a stance of peevish patience. However, this was a unique situation. There were prophets on both sides. Therefore, the reality unfolded. It finally turned out that these fragmentary events were exempted for al-Khaḍir عليه السلام from the purview of the general rules of the Sharīʻah. Whatever he did, he did only in accordance with the dictates of the Divine Waḥy (revelation). (Maẓharī)

Basic difference in the knowledge of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and al-Khaḍir عليه السلام: Resolution of an apparent dichotomy

Naturally, a question arises here. We see that, according to the explanation of al-Khaḍir عليه السلام, the nature of the knowledge given to him was different from that of the knowledge of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام. Now, when both these two areas of knowledge were given by Allah Taʻālā alone, why did this contradiction and difference show up in their two respective injunctions? Qāḍī Thanaullāh of Pānīpat has given a research-based answer to this question in his Tafsīr Maẓharī. It is the closest to being right and appealing. Given below is a gist of what I understand from his presentation:

'The blessed souls Allah Taʻālā honors with His revelation and prophet-hood are generally those who are entrusted with the mission of making people better. Sent to them is a Book and Sharīʻah which offer principles and rules that serve as blueprints of guidance and betterment for the creation of Allah. Blessed prophets and messengers mentioned in the noble Qur'ān as such were all assigned with the mission of Law and Reform. To this related the Revelation they received. But then, there are services essential to the realm of creation (*takwīn*) as well. Generally, appointed to take care of these are the angels of Allah. However, Allah

Ta'ālā has specifically chosen some from among the group of prophets also in order to carry out the services of *takwīn* (whereby the decisions of Allah's will relating to the managment of His creation are enforced). Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام belongs to this very group. These imperatives of *takwīn* relate to minor incidents and events, that a certain person should be saved from getting drowned, or someone should be killed, promoted or demoted or subdued. These matters do not relate to common people at all, nor are they addressed by these imperatives. In such events of minor consequences, one may confront some of those situations where killing a person is against the religious law. But, under the imperative of creation, that particular event has been exempted from the general religious law and the act has been made permissible for the person who has been appointed to carry out this imperative of *takwīn*. Under such conditions, the experts of religious law are not aware of this exempted injunction and are compelled to call it '*ḥarām*' (unlawful) and the person who has been exempted from this law under the imperative of *takwīn* remains in the right in his own place.

In short, wherever such a contradiction is perceived, it is no contradiction in the real sense. It is simply the exemption of some minor events from the general religious law. In al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, Abu Ḥayyān said:

الجمهور على ان الخضر نبی وكان علمه معرفة بواطن قد اوحيت اليه وعلم موسى الاحكام والفتيا بالظاهر

> The majority holds Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام to be a prophet and his knowledge was the gnosis of (the inner dimensions of the human) self which was revealed to him and the knowledge of Mūsā عليه السلام was of the injunctions and rulings on the apparent. (Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, p. 147, v. 6)

For the aforesaid reason, it is also necessary that this exemption should take effect through revelation to a prophet. The Kashf (illumination) and Ilhām (inspiration) of some Waliyy (man of Allah) are never sufficient to make such an exemption effective. This is the reason why the act of al-Khaḍir عليه السلام in killing a boy apparently without a just reason was *ḥarām* (unlawful) in the sight of the Sharī'ah which rules on the apparent. But, as for al-Khaḍir عليه السلام, he was appointed to do that while exempted from this law as an imperative of creation (*takwīn*). Taking the Kashf and Ilhām of some non-prophet on the analogy of al-Khaḍir

عليه السلام and thereby taking something *ḥarām* (unlawful) to be *ḥalāl* (lawful) - as popular among some ignorant Sufis - is totally anti-religion and certainly, a rebellion against Islam.

Ibn Abī Shaibah reports an event relating to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه by saying that Najdah Harūrī (a Kharijite) wrote a letter to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās and asked as to how did al-Khaḍir عليه السلام kill a minor boy when the Holy Prophet ﷺ has prohibited the killing of minors. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās answered his letter by saying, 'if you were to receive the same knowledge about some minor as was received by Sayyidnā Mūsā's 'man of knowledge' (that is, al-Khaḍir عليه السلام), the killing of a minor would become permissible for you too!' What he meant was that al-Khaḍir عليه السلام had received his knowledge about it only through revelation exclusive to a prophet. That nobody can have now because prophet-hood has ended. There is to be no prophet after the Last among Prophets, that is, Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ, who could have through revelation knowledge about some particular person to have been exempted under Divine command in the case of such events. (Maẓharī)

From this event too, the real thing becomes clear, that is, no one other than a revelation-receiving prophet has the right to declare anyone as exempted from any Islamic legal injunction.

Verses 71 - 78

فَانْطَلَقَا ٝ حَتّٰىٓ اِذَا رَكِبَا فِى السَّفِيْنَةِ خَرَقَهَا ۭ قَالَ اَخَرَقْتَهَا لِتُغْرِقَ
اَهْلَهَا ۚ لَقَدْ جِئْتَ شَيْئًا اِمْرًا ﴿۷۱﴾ قَالَ اَلَمْ اَقُلْ اِنَّكَ لَنْ تَسْتَطِيْعَ مَعِىَ
صَبْرًا ﴿۷۲﴾ قَالَ لَا تُؤَاخِذْنِىْ بِمَا نَسِيْتُ وَلَا تُرْهِقْنِىْ مِنْ اَمْرِىْ عُسْرًا
﴿۷۳﴾ فَانْطَلَقَا ٝ حَتّٰىٓ اِذَا لَقِيَا غُلٰمًا فَقَتَلَهٗ ۙ قَالَ اَقَتَلْتَ نَفْسًا زَكِيَّةًۢ
بِغَيْرِ نَفْسٍ ۭ لَقَدْ جِئْتَ شَيْئًا نُّكْرًا ﴿۷۴﴾ قَالَ اَلَمْ اَقُلْ لَّكَ اِنَّكَ لَنْ
تَسْتَطِيْعَ مَعِىَ صَبْرًا ﴿۷۵﴾ قَالَ اِنْ سَاَلْتُكَ عَنْ شَيْءٍۢ بَعْدَهَا فَلَا
تُصٰحِبْنِىْ ۚ قَدْ بَلَغْتَ مِنْ لَّدُنِّىْ عُذْرًا ﴿۷۶﴾ فَانْطَلَقَا ٝ حَتّٰىٓ اِذَآ اَتَيَآ
اَهْلَ قَرْيَةِ ۨاسْتَطْعَمَآ اَهْلَهَا فَاَبَوْا اَنْ يُّضَيِّفُوْهُمَا فَوَجَدَا فِيْهَا جِدَارًا

يُّرِيدُ اَنْ يَّنْقَضَّ فَاَقَامَهٗ ؕ قَالَ لَوْ شِئْتَ لَتَّخَذْتَ عَلَيْهِ اَجْرًا ﴿٧٧﴾ قَالَ هٰذَا فِرَاقُ بَيْنِىْ وَبَيْنِكَ ۚ سَاُنَبِّئُكَ بِتَاْوِيْلِ مَالَمْ تَسْتَطِعْ عَّلَيْهِ صَبْرًا ﴿٧٨﴾

So, they both moved ahead until when they boarded the boat, he broke it. He (Mūsā) said, "Did you break it that you drown its people? You have done something terrible indeed." [71] **He said, "Did I not tell that you can never be able to keep patient while with me?"** [72] **He (Mūsā) said, "Do not hold me accountable for what I forgot. And do not burden me with something difficult in this matter of mine."** [73]

So, they moved ahead until when they met a boy, he killed him (the boy). He (Mūsā) said, "Did you kill an innocent person in retaliation of nobody? You have done something abominable indeed." [74] **He said, "Did I not tell you that you can never be able to keep patient while with me?"** [75] **He (Mūsā) said, "If I ask you about something after this, do not allow me your company. You have now reached a point where you have a valid excuse from my own side (to do so)."** [76]

Then, they moved ahead until they came to the people of a town; they asked its people for food and they refused to host them. Then, they found there a wall tending to fall. So he set it right. He (Mūsā) said, "Had you wished, you could have charged a fee for it." [77] **He said, "Here is the point of parting ways between me and you. I shall now explain to you the reality of things about which you could not remain patient.** [78]

Commentary

It was said in verse 71: اَخَرَقْتَهَا لِتُغْرِقَ اَهْلَهَا (Did you break it that you drown its people?). About it, it appears in the Ḥadīth of the Ṣaḥīḥs of al-Bukhārī and Muslim that al-Khaḍir عليه السلام had dislodged a plank of the boat with an axe because of which there was a danger that water would fill up the boat and it would capsize. Therefore, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام had objected to it. But, according to historical reports, water did not fill into this boat. This may have happened either because al-Khaḍir عليه السلام had somehow repaired it himself soon after - as in a report carried by al-Baghawī according to which al-Khaḍir عليه السلام had replaced the plank with

glass. Or, water just did not enter the boat in the manner of a miracle. However, the context of the Qur'ān by itself is telling us that the boat did not capsize - something which supports these reports.

We now move to the sentence: حَتّٰى اِذَا لَقِيَا غُلٰمًا (until when they met a boy -74). The word: غُلاَم (*ghulām*) in the text is used for a minor boy in the Arabic usage. This boy killed by al-Khaḍir ﷺ was a minor - as corroborated by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ and most commentators. Further on, when the words: نَفْسًا زَكِيَّةً (innocent person) were used for him, that too supports the view that he was a minor. The reason is that زَكِيَّه (*zakiyyah*) means 'free of sin' and it can be either the attribute of a prophet or a minor child who faces no accounting for what is done by him and no sin is written in his Book of Deeds.

The habitation mentioned in: اَهْلَ قَرْيَةٍ (the people of a town - 77) which Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ and al-Khaḍir ﷺ passed through and whose inhabitants refused to host them was Anṭākiah, as in the report of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ, and Aikah, as in the report of Ibn Sīrīn. It has also been reported from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ that it was some habitation of al-Andulus (Spain) (Maẓharī). Allah knows best.

Verses 79 - 82

اَمَّا السَّفِيْنَةُ فَكَانَتْ لِمَسٰكِيْنَ يَعْمَلُوْنَ فِى الْبَحْرِ فَاَرَدْتُّ اَنْ اَعِيْبَهَا وَكَانَ وَرَآءَهُمْ مَّلِكٌ يَّاْخُذُ كُلَّ سَفِيْنَةٍ غَصْبًا ﴿۷۹﴾ وَاَمَّا الْغُلٰمُ فَكَانَ اَبَوٰهُ مُؤْمِنَيْنِ فَخَشِيْنَآ اَنْ يُّرْهِقَهُمَا طُغْيَانًا وَّكُفْرًا ﴿۸۰﴾ فَاَرَدْنَآ اَنْ يُّبْدِلَهُمَا رَبُّهُمَا خَيْرًا مِّنْهُ زَكٰوةً وَّاَقْرَبَ رُحْمًا ﴿۸۱﴾ وَاَمَّا الْجِدَارُ فَكَانَ لِغُلٰمَيْنِ يَتِيْمَيْنِ فِى الْمَدِيْنَةِ وَكَانَ تَحْتَهٗ كَنْزٌ لَّهُمَا وَكَانَ اَبُوْهُمَا صَالِحًا ۚ فَاَرَادَ رَبُّكَ اَنْ يَّبْلُغَآ اَشُدَّهُمَا وَيَسْتَخْرِجَا كَنْزَهُمَا ۖ رَحْمَةً مِّنْ رَّبِّكَ ۚ وَمَا فَعَلْتُهٗ عَنْ اَمْرِىْ ۗ ذٰلِكَ تَاْوِيْلُ مَا لَمْ تَسْطِعْ عَّلَيْهِ صَبْرًا ﴿۸۲﴾

As for the boat, it belonged to some poor people who worked at sea. So I wanted to make it defective as there

was a king across them who used to take every boat by force. [79] **And as for the boy, his parents were believers. We apprehended that he would impose rebellion and infidelity upon them.** [80] **We, therefore, wished that their Lord would replace him with someone better than him in piety and more akin to affection.** [81] **And as for the wall, it belonged to two orphan boys in the city and there was beneath it a treasure for them, and their father was a pious man. So your Lord willed that they reach their maturity and dig out their treasure - a mercy from your Lord. And I did not do it on my own accord. This is the reality of things about which you could not remain patient."** [82]

Commentary

In the first verse, it was said: أَمَّا السَّفِينَةُ فَكَانَتْ لِمَسٰكِيْنَ (As for the boat, it belonged to some poor people - 79). About the poor people to whom this boat belonged, it has been reported from Sayyidnā Ka'b al-Aḥbār رحمه الله that they were ten brothers. Five of them were handicapped while the other five worked hard to eke out a living for all of them by plying a boat against whatever fare they could collect.

The definition of a Miskīn

A *miskīn* has been defined as one who has nothing. But, from this verse, we learn the true definition of a *miskīn*: Anyone who does not have the amount of wealth and property that exceed his need, basic and necessary, to the limit of legal *niṣāb* (threshold of *zakāh*). One who has less than that is also included under the definition of *miskīn*. The reason is that people called '*al-masākīn*' (plural of *miskīn*: poor people) had at least one boat the price of which will not be less than the amount of *niṣāb* (threshold). But, as it was engaged in earning what those people needed, basically and necessarily, they were still called '*masākīn*' (poor people). (Maẓharī)

Regarding the last sentence of verse 79: مَلِكٌ يَّأْخُذُ كُلَّ سَفِيْنَةٍ غَصْبًا, al-Baghawī has reported from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه that the direction in which this boat was sailing, there was a cruel king who used to take boats ferrying people through by force. Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام found it expedient to pull out a plank from the boat so that the cruel king, seeing this damaged boat, would let it go and thus those poor people would remain safe from the likely mishap. Comments sage Rūmī:

گر خضر در بحر کشتی را شکست صد درستی در شکست خضر ہست

Yes, al-Khidr did break the boat while sailing at sea
But, a hundred saving graces in his breaking we see

The opening sentence of verse 80: وَاَمَّا الْغُلٰمُ (As for the boy) means the boy who was killed by al-Khaḍir عليه السلام. The reality behind it, as stated by him, was that the boy was cut out for infidelity and rebellion against parents. But, his parents were pious people. Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام said that they apprehended that, once this boy grew up, he would harass his parents and cause them pain. And when he took to infidelity as a young man, he would not only become a live trial for the parents but would also endanger the very faith of his parents because of their love for him.

In verse 81, it was said: فَاَرَدْنَآ اَنْ يُّبْدِلَهُمَا رَبُّهُمَا خَيْرًا مِّنْهُ زَكٰوةً وَّاَقْرَبَ رُحْمًا "We, therefore, wished that their Lord would replace him with someone better than him in piety [having good deeds and morals] and more akin to affection [fulfilling due rights of the parents]."

It will be noticed that the form used in this situation is plural: خَشِيْنَا (we apprehended) and: اَرَدْنَا (we wished). One reason for it could be that al-Khaḍir عليه السلام attributed this apprehension and wish to himself and to Allah Ta'ālā both. And it is also possible that he may have attributed it to himself alone - if so, the expression: اَرَدْنَا (we wished) would mean: 'we prayed to Allah' because this matter of replacing a boy with a better one is an act which falls in the exclusive domain of Allah Ta'ālā. Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام or some other human being cannot be associated with it.

If, at this point, someone were to say: If it was in the knowledge of Allah Ta'ālā that this boy will grow into an infidel and mislead his parents as well, then, this event - true to the knowledge of Allah Ta'ālā - should have necessarily transpired as it did. Then this doubt would be incorrect for the reason that nothing can come into being contrary to Divine knowledge.

It can be answered by saying that it was there in Divine knowledge with the appendage and condition: If he reached maturity, he will not only become a disbeliever himself but would pose a danger for other Muslims also. Then, as he was killed before reaching the age of maturity, the ensuing event is not contrary to Divine Knowledge. (Maẓharī)

Ibn Abī Shaibah, Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Abī Ḥātim have reported from Ibn 'Aṭiyyah that Allah Ta'ālā had blessed the parents of the slain boy with a girl in his place who became the mother of a prophet. And, as in a report from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ, she gave birth to two prophets. Some other reports say that through the prophet she gave birth to, Allah Ta'ālā gave guidance to a large community.

About the statement: وَكَانَ تَحْتَهُ كَنْزٌ لَّهُمَا (and there was beneath it a treasure for them - 82), Sayyidnā Abū al-Dardā' ﷺ has reported from the Holy Prophet ﷺ that it was a treasure chest of gold and silver. (Narrated by Tirmidhī and al-Ḥākim, from Maẓharī)

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ said that it was a tablet of gold inscribed with the following good counsel. This report was also narrated by Sayyidnā 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān ﷺ with its chain of narrators ascending to the Holy Prophet ﷺ: (Qurṭubī)

1. بسم الله الرحمٰن الرحيم (*Bismillahir-Raḥmānir-Raḥīm*: With the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Very Merciful).
2. Amazing is the person who believes in destiny, then how could he despair.
3. Amazing is the person who believes that Allah Ta'ālā is the sponsor of all in their sustenance, still, why would he consume himself in striving for more than he needs and in achieving what is redundant.
4. Amazing is the person who believes in death yet, how could he remain all happy.
5. Amazing is the person who believes in the reckoning of the Hereafter yet, how could he afford to be heedless.
6. Amazing is the person who knows the world and its vicissitudes yet, how could he sit relaxed about it.
7. لَا إِلٰهَ إِلَّا اللّٰهُ مُحَمَّدٌ رَّسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ (*lā ilaha illallāh Muḥammad rasūlullāh*: There is no god but Allah Muḥammad is a messenger of Allah).

The benefit of the righteousness of parents reaches children, and their children.

The statement: وَكَانَ أَبُوهُمَا صَالِحًا (and their father was a pious man - 82)

carries a hint that arrangements were made to have the buried treasure secured for the orphan children through al-Khaḍir عليه السلام for the reason that the father of the orphan children was some pious man dear in the sight of Allah. Therefore, it was to grant his wish and to bring benefit to his children that Allah Ta'ālā made this arrangement. Muḥammad ibn al-Munkadir says: 'It is because of the piety and righteousness of a servant of His that Allah Ta'ālā protects his children, and the children of his children, and his family, even the homes built around his own.' (Maẓharī)

As in al-Qurṭubī, sage Shiblī used to say that he was a guarantee of peace for the city and the area adjoining it. When he died, it was soon after his burial that the disbelievers of Dailam crossed Euphrates and took over Baghdād. At that time, everyone was saying that they were struck by double distress - the death of Shiblī and the sack of Dailam, (Qurṭubī, p. 29, v. 11)

According to Tafsīr Maẓharī, this verse also indicates that people too should show consideration and affection for the children of the learned and the pious - unless, of course, they were to succumb to disbelief and sin.

Later, the word: اَشُدّ (*ashudd*) in: اَنْ يَّبْلُغَا اَشُدَّ هُمَا (that they reach their maturity - 82) is a plural form of: شدّة (*shiddah*) meaning maturity, the age when one reaches full maturity and becomes able to decide what is good or bad for him. According to Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, this is the age of twenty-five years. Others put it at forty years because it appears in the Qur'ān: حَتّٰٓى اِذَا بَلَغَ اَشُدَّهٗ وَبَلَغَ اَرْبَعِيْنَ سَنَةً (until when he reaches his maturity and reaches [the age of] forty years - al-Aḥqaf, 46:15)

Prophetic Eloquence and the Nuances of Etiquette: An Example

Before we turn to this example, let us first understand that nothing can happen in this world, good or bad, without the will and intention of Allah Ta'ālā. All phenomena of good and evil is as created by Him and is subservient to His intention and will. Things understood or named as evil or bad do deserve to be called as evil or bad in terms of particular individuals and particular circumstances. But, given a total world-view, they all are necessary and nothing but good in terms of being a Divine creation as based on wisdom.

In short, whatever calamity or accident stands activated in this world simply cannot materialize without the will and intention of Allah Ta'ālā. In that respect, every good and evil can also be attributed to Allah Ta'ālā. But, the fact is that, given the creation of Allah Ta'ālā, no evil is evil. Therefore, etiquette demands that evil should not be attributed towards Allah Ta'ālā. The words of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام mentioned in the Qur'ān: وَالَّذِي هُوَ يُطْعِمُنِي وَيَسْقِينِ وَإِذَا مَرِضْتُ فَهُوَ يَشْفِينِ (It is He who gives me [things] to eat and drink, [26:79] and when I am sick, it is He who cures me - 26:80) are a good example. They teach us the same etiquette when the provision of food and drink has been attributed to Allah Ta'ālā. Then comes the provision of cure from sickness. This too has been attributed to Him. In between came the mention of sickness. He attributed it to himself in the words: وَإِذَا مَرِضْتُ فَهُوَ يَشْفِينِ (and when I am sick, it is He who cures me) - not in the manner: When He makes me fall sick, He cures me too.

Let us now consider the diction of al-Khaḍir عليه السلام. When he formed the intention of breaking the boat - which was obviously a vicious act - he attributed this intention to himself and said: أَرَدْتُ (*ara[d]tu*: I wanted to make it defective - 79). After that, he mentioned the killing of the boy and wished some one would replace him who would be better than him. Here, there was evil in the act of killing while being blessed with better progeny in his place was something good. Therefore, because of this common factor, the form used was that of the first person, plural. It was said: أَرَدْنَا (*aradnā*: we wished - 81) so that whatever obvious evil there lies in it is beamed back to his own self and whatever good lies in it stands attributed to Allah Ta'ālā. As for the third event - setting the wall right to secure the property of the orphans - it was nothing but good. This was attributed entirely to Allah Ta'ālā by saying: فَأَرَادَ رَبُّكَ (*fa arāda rabbuk*: So your Lord willed - 82).

Is al-Khaḍir عليه السلام alive, or is he dead?

The event related to al-Khaḍir عليه السلام mentioned in the Qur'ān has nothing to do with the question of his life or death after it. Therefore, no clear statement in this regard is present in the Qur'ān, and Sunnah. Some reports suggest his being alive till now while others tell us otherwise. Thus, scholarly opinion has always been at variance in this matter. Those who hold that he is alive argue on the basis of the narrative from

Sayyidnā Anas ﷺ carried by al-Ḥākim in his al-Mustadrak. It says, 'when the Holy Prophet ﷺ left this mortal world, there came a person in black and white beard. Tearing the crowd of people, he reached inside and started weeping. Then, turning to the noble Companions, he said the following words:

إِنَّ فِى اللّٰهِ عَزَآءً مِّنْ كُلِّ مُصِيبَةٍ، وَّعِوَضًا مِّنْ كُلِّ فَآئِتٍ، وَّخَلَفًا مِّنْ كُلِّ هَالِكٍ، فَإِلَى اللّٰهِ فَاَنِيبُوا وَإِلَيْهِ فَارْغَبُوا وَنَظَرُهُ، إِلَيْكُمْ فِى الْبَلَاءِ فَانْظُرُوا فَإِنَّمَا الْمُصَابُ مَنْ لَّمْ يُجْبَرْ

Indeed, in Allah there is endurance against all distress, and recompense of everything taken away, and He is the real caretaker for He alone survives after everyone is dead. So, return to Allah, turn to Him passionately and long for Him alone - because, deprived is he who has been deprived of the reward of enduring distress.

After having said these words, when the visitor departed, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr and Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنهما said, 'he was al-Khaḍir ؑ.' This narrative has also been reported by Ibn al-Jazrī in his al-Ḥiṣn al-Ḥaṣīn where the compiler is particular about including nothing but what is authentic.

And in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, it appears that Dajjāl (Imposter) will reach a point close to Madinah when a man of Madīnah will come out to confront him. He will be the best of men during that time, or among the better ones. Abū Isḥāq said, 'this person will be al-Khaḍir ؑ.' (Qurṭubī)

And Ibn Abī ad-Dunyā has reported in Kitāb al-Hawātif with necessary chains of authority that Sayyidnā 'Alī ﷺ met al-Khaḍir ؑ who told him about a Du'ā' which, if recited by anyone after every Ṣalāh, would bring for him great reward, forgiveness and mercy. That prayer is given below:

يَامَنْ لَّا يُشْغِلُهُ، سَمْعٌ عَنْ سَمْعٍ، وَّيَا مَنْ لَّا تُغْلِطُهُ الْمَسَآئِلُ، وَيَا مَنْ لَّا يَبْرَمُ مِنْ اِلْحَاحِ الْمُلِحِّيْنَ، اَذِقْنِى بَرْدَ عَفْوِكَ وَحَلَاوَةَ مَغْفِرَتِكَ

O He whose hearing of one thing does not hamper His hearing of the other,

And O He who never errs in responding to (millions of) requests simultaneously,

And O He who never becomes weary of the plaints made repeatedly by those who make them in prayers, let me, in Your mer-

cy, have a cool taste of Your forgiveness and sweetness of Your pardon. (Qurṭubī)

Then, within the same book, exactly the same event, the same prayer and the same incidence of meeting with al-Khaḍir عليه السلام has been reported from Sayyidnā 'Umar رضي الله عنه as well. (Qurṭubī)

Similar to this, there are countless events relating to al-Khaḍir عليه السلام that have been attributed to the community's men of Allah (*awliyā'*).

As for those who do not accept the likelihood of al-Khaḍir عليه السلام being alive, their major argument comes from the Ḥadīth of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضي الله عنه appearing in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim. He says, 'one night, the Holy Prophet ﷺ led the 'Ishā' prayer for us during the latter days of his blessed life. After having turned for *salām*, he rose and said these words:

اَرَءَ يْتَكُمْ لَيْلَتَكُمْ هٰذِهٖ فَاِنَّ عَلٰى رَاْسِ مِائَةِ سَنَةٍ مِّنْهَا لَايَبْقٰى مِمَّنْ هُوَ عَلٰى ظَهْرِ الْاَرْضِ اَحَدٌ

Do you see this night of yours? And after a hundred years from this night, not one of those present over the land will be alive!

After having narrated this report, Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar رضي الله عنه said, 'people say different things about it. But, what the Holy Prophet ﷺ meant to say was that this age will be over after hundred years.'

This narrative has been reported in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim also from Sayyidnā Jābir ibn 'Abdullāh, almost in the same words. But, after having quoted this report, Allāmah al-Qurṭubī said, 'it offers no conclusive argument for those who hold that the notion of al-Khaḍir عليه السلام being alive is false because, in this narrative, the words used for the entire progeny of Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام are general with a strong emphasis on the generality. Yet, it contains no decisive authority (*naṣṣ*) to prove that this generality covers the entire progeny of Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام necessarily. The reason is that Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام too is among the progeny of Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام who has not died, nor was he killed. Therefore, as obvious, the letters: الف لام (*alif-lām*) in the words: عَلَى الْأَرْضِ (*'ala al-ard*: over the land) is the *alif-lām* of '*ahd*,' (which points out to something familiar to the addressees), and means the land of Arabia. It does not include the whole land mass of the world out of which the Arabs had never heard

even the names of the land of Gog and Magog (Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj), the far East and the Islands of the West.' This was the view of 'Allāmah al-Qurṭubī.

Similarly, some people have taken the issue of the Finality of Prophet-hood as contrary to the notion of al-Khaḍir عليه السلام being alive. The answer to this is also clear. It can be said that the way the 'life' of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام is not contrary to the Finality of Prophet-hood, the 'life' of al-Khaḍir can also be quite similar.

Some people have raised a doubt about the 'life' of al-Khaḍir عليه السلام. They say, if he were present during the blessed period of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, it would have been mandatory for him to come to him and to serve the cause of Islam under him. Because, it was said in Ḥadīth: لَوْ كَانَ مُوْسٰى حَيًّا لَّمَا وَسِعَهٗ اِلاَّ اتِّبَاعِىْ "Had Mūsā been alive [today], he would have had no choice but to follow me [for my coming has resulted in the abrogation of the Faith of Mūsā عليه السلام.]" But, not far out is the possibility that the 'life' and prophet-hood of al-Khaḍir عليه السلام may be different from that of the usual Sharī'ah-bearing prophets. Since he is charged with the duty of carrying out certain affairs of creation (*takwīn*) entrusted with him by Allah Ta'ālā, He takes care of this appointed duty staying aloof from people at large. As for following the Sharī'ah of the Last Prophet, it is not a far out proposition that he may have started acting in accordance with it after the advent of the prophet-hood of Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ. (Allah knows best)

In Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, Abū Ḥayyān has reported events of several pious elders having met al-Khaḍir عليه السلام but, along with it, he has also said:

وَالْجُمْهُوْرُ عَلٰى اَنَّهٗ مَاتَ

As for the majority of religious scholars, they hold the position that al-Khaḍir عليه السلام has died. (al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, p. 147, vol.6)

In Tafsīr Maẓharī, Qāḍī Thana'ullāh of Pānīpat has said, 'the resolution of all these difficulties lies in what Sayyid Aḥmad al-Sarhandi, known as the reviver of the second Islamic millennium, said on the basis of his *mukāshafah* (discovery through induced illumination). His words are: 'I personally asked al-Khaḍir عليه السلام about this matter in a state of *kashf*. He said', "I and Ilyās عليه السلام are both not alive. But, Allah Ta'ālā

has granted us the ability to appear in the guise of living men and help people in different ways." (Allah, the Pure, the Exalted, knows best)

Conclusion

I have said earlier that none of our articles of faith or problems of religious practice is connected with the death or life of al-Khaḍir ﷺ. Therefore, no clarification or explanation was given in the Qur'ān, and Sunnah about it. So, there is just no need to enter into unnecessary discussion or debate in it, nor have we been obligated to believe in any one of the sides of the issue. But, as this problem has found currency on a wider level, details have been provided.

Verses 83 - 88

وَيَسْـَٔلُونَكَ عَن ذِى ٱلْقَرْنَيْنِ ۖ قُلْ سَأَتْلُوا۟ عَلَيْكُم مِّنْهُ ذِكْرًا ﴿٨٣﴾ إِنَّا مَكَّنَّا لَهُۥ فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ وَءَاتَيْنَٰهُ مِن كُلِّ شَىْءٍ سَبَبًا ﴿٨٤﴾ فَأَتْبَعَ سَبَبًا ﴿٨٥﴾ حَتَّىٰٓ إِذَا بَلَغَ مَغْرِبَ ٱلشَّمْسِ وَجَدَهَا تَغْرُبُ فِى عَيْنٍ حَمِئَةٍ وَوَجَدَ عِندَهَا قَوْمًا ۗ قُلْنَا يَٰذَا ٱلْقَرْنَيْنِ إِمَّآ أَن تُعَذِّبَ وَإِمَّآ أَن تَتَّخِذَ فِيهِمْ حُسْنًا ﴿٨٦﴾ قَالَ أَمَّا مَن ظَلَمَ فَسَوْفَ نُعَذِّبُهُۥ ثُمَّ يُرَدُّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِۦ فَيُعَذِّبُهُۥ عَذَابًا نُّكْرًا ﴿٨٧﴾ وَأَمَّا مَنْ ءَامَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَٰلِحًا فَلَهُۥ جَزَآءً ٱلْحُسْنَىٰ ۖ وَسَنَقُولُ لَهُۥ مِنْ أَمْرِنَا يُسْرًا ﴿٨٨﴾

And they ask you about Dhul-Qarnain. Say, "I shall now recite to you some narration about him." [83]

Surely, We gave him power on Earth and provided for him a way to everything. [84] **So he followed a way,** [85] **until when he reached where the sun sets, he found it setting into a miry spring and found near it a people. We said, "O Dhul-Qarnain, either you punish or take to something good for them."** [86] **He said, "As for the one who transgresses, we shall punish him, thereafter he will be returned to his Lord, and He will punish him - an evil punishment.** [87] **As for the one who believes and acts righteously, he will have the best in reward, and we shall deliver to him of our command that which is easy."** [88]

Commentary

Verse 84 opens with the statement: يَسْـَٔلُوْنَكَ (They ask you). Who is asking? Related narratives show that they were the Quraysh of Makkah, those who were coached to ask three questions from the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The purpose was to test his prophet-hood and veracity. The questions were about Rūḥ (spirit), Aṣḥāb al-Kahf (People of Kahf) and Dhul-Qarnain. Two of these have already been answered. The story of the People of Kahf has appeared earlier in this Sūrah, 9-26. The question about 'Rūḥ' has appeared towards the later part of the previous Sūrah (Banī Isrā'īl 17:85). Who was Dhul-Qarnain and what happened to him? This is the third question. (Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ)

Dhul-Qarnain: His identity, period and country and the reason why he was so named

Why was he named Dhul-Qarnain? (the one having two horns) Regarding its reason, there are numerous sayings, and strong differences. Some said that he had two curly locks of hair, therefore, he was called Dhul-Qarnain. Some others said that he ruled countries of the East and West, therefore, he was named Dhul-Qarnain. There was someone who also said that he had marks on his head that resembled those of horns. It appears in some narratives that he had wound marks on both sides of his head, therefore, he was identified as Dhul-Qarnain. Allah knows best. But, this much already stands determined that the Qur'ān has certainly not given him the name of Dhul-Qarnain. In fact, this name came from the Jews. He may have been known by this name with them. Whatever part of the event of Dhul-Qarnain has been mentioned by the Holy Qur'ān is no more than what is described below:

> "He was a righteous and just king who reached the East and the West and conquered countries in between and ruled there justly. All sorts of means had been provided to him by Allah Ta'ālā in order to help him achieve his objectives. On the route of his conquests, he traveled in three directions: to the far West, to the far East and then to the mountain range in the North. At the last mentioned place, he closed the pass in between two mountains by a wall cast in molten metal which made it possible for the people of the area to stay protected against the pillage of Gog and Magog."

As for the question posed by the Jews to test the veracity and prophet-hood of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, the answer given had left them satisfied.

They did not ask any more questions, such as: Why was he given the name, Dhul-Qarnain? Which country did he come from? What period of time did he belong to? This tells us that the Jews themselves took such questions to be unnecessary and redundant. And it is obvious that the Qur'ān mentions only that part of history or stories which relates to what is beneficial in the present life or in the life to come, or on which depends the understanding of something necessary. Therefore, neither did the Qur'ān take these things up nor were there any details about it described in any authentic Ḥadīth. And it was for the same reason that the most righteous forbears of Islam, the Ṣaḥābah and the Tābi'īn also paid no particular attention to it.

Now the thing that remains to be addressed is this matter of historical narratives or that of the present Torah and Injīl. Then it is also evident that perennial interpolations and alterations have not left even the present Torah and Injīl intact as revealed Scriptures. Their status can now be that of history at the most. As for ancient historical narratives, they are overwhelmingly filled with Isrā'īlī tales that come from no authentic source, nor have they been found trustworthy in the sight of the learned of any time. Whatever the commentators have said in this matter is a compendium of these very historical narratives. Therefore, there are countless differences in them. Europeans have given great importance to history in modern times. No doubt, they have carried out painstaking research in this field. Through archaeological excavations and collection of inscriptions and artifacts, they have tried to reach the reality behind past events and in this process, they have come up with achievements not matched in earlier times. But, archaeological finds, inscriptions etc., can certainly help support an event but it is not possible to read a whole event through these. For it, therefore, historical narratives alone have become the basis. As for the validity of old historical narratives in these matters, we have just now learnt that their status is no more than that of a story. In their books, scholars of Tafsīr, classical or modern, have reported these narratives in their historical status only - no Qur'ānic objective depends on the element of their authenticity. Here too, that which is necessary is being written with the same status in view. A comprehensive research relating to this event appears in 'Qaṣaṣ al-Qur'ān' by Maulānā Ḥifẓur-Raḥmān رحمہ اللہ تعالیٰ. Readers with a taste

for history may see it there.

In some narratives, it appears that there have been four kings who ruled over the whole world - two believers, and two, disbelievers. The believing kings are Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام and Dhul-Qarnain while the disbelieving ones are Nimrod (Namrūd) and Nebuchadnezzar (Bukht Naṣṣar).

About Dhul-Qarnain, it is a strange coincidence that several men have been famous in the world while bearing the same name. And it is equally strange that the title Sikandar (Alexander) is also attached with the Dhul-Qarnain of every period of time.

Approximately three hundred years before Sayyidnā Masīḥ عليه السلام, there is a king known as Sikandar (Alexander). He is identified with the appellations of the Greek, the Macedonian, the Roman etc. He was the one who had Aristotle (Arasṭū) as his minister, who fought a war against Dārā (Darius) and who conquered his country after killing him. This was the very last person to have become known in the world by the name Sikandar (Alexander). Stories relating to him are comparatively more famous around the world, so some people have also equated him with the Dhul-Qarnain mentioned in the Qur'ān. This is totally wrong because this person was a fire-worshipping polytheist. As for the Dhul-Qarnain mentioned by the Qur'ān, he may not be a prophet for 'Ulamā' have differed about his being a prophet. But, everyone unanimously agrees that he was a righteous believer - then, there is the textual authority of the Qur'ān in its own right which bears testimony to it.

Quoting Ibn 'Asākir, Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Kathīr has given his complete family tree in al-Bidāyah wa an-Nihāyah which ascends to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. He has said, 'this is the Sikandar who is recognized as the Greek, the Egyptian and the Macedonian, who founded the city of Iskandariyah (Alexandria) after his name and the Roman calendar dates back to his time. This Sikandar Dhul-Qarnain appeared after a long passage of time from the first one. This time has been identified as being more than two thousand years. He was the one who killed Dārā (Darius), overpowered the Persian monarchy and conquered their country. But, this person was a polytheist. Declaring him to be the one mentioned in the Qur'ān is totally wrong. Ibn Kathīr's own words are being quoted below:

فاما ذوالقرنين الثانى فهوا سكندر بن فيلبس بن مصريح بن برس بن مبطون بن رومى بن نعطى بن يونان بن يافث بن بونه بن شرخون بن رومه بن شرخط بن توفيل بن رومى بن الا صفر بن يقزبن العيص بن اسحٰق بن ابرٰهيم الخليل عليه الصلوٰة والسلام۔ كذا نسبه الحافظ ابن عساكر فى تاريخه المقدونى' اليونانى المصرى بانى الاسكندرية الذى يؤرخ بايامه الروم' وكان متأخرًا عن الاول بدهر طويل' وكان هٰذا قبل المسيح بنحو من ثلثمائة سنة وكان ارسطا طاليس الفيلسوف وزيره وهو الذى قتل دارا و اذل ملوك الفرس واوطأ ارضهم وانما نبهنا عليه' لان كثيرا من الناس يعتقد انهما واحد' وان المذكور فى القران هوالذى كان ارطا طاليس وزيره' فيقع بسبب ذلك خطاء كبير و فساد عريض طويل' فان الاوّل كان عبدًا مؤمنا صالحًا وملكا عادلاً' وكان وزيره الخضر' وقد كان نبيًّا على ماقررناه قبل هٰذا وامّا الثانى فكان مشركا' كان وزيره فيلسوفًا وقد كان بين زمانيهما ازيد من الفى سنة' فاين هذا من هذا؟ لايستويان ولا يشتبهان الاعلى غبى لايعرف حقائق الامور (البداية والنهاية ص ١٠٦/ ج٢)

First of all, this research of Imām ibn Kathīr, the great scholar of Ḥadīth and history, helps remove a misconception. It clarifies that this Iskandar, who lived three hundred years before Sayyidnā Masīḥ عليه السلام, who fought Dārā (Darius) and the Persian kings, and who is the founder of Alexandria, is not the Dhul-Qarnain mentioned in the Qur'ān. This misconception seems to have affected some leading commentators as well. Abū Ḥayyān in al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ and 'Allāmah 'Ālūsī in Rūḥ al-Ma'ani have said that this very Dhul-Qarnain is the one mentioned in the Qur'ān.

The second point emerges from the sentence of Ibn Kathīr: وَاِنَّه' كَانَ نَبِيًّا (he was a prophet). It shows that, in the sight of Ibn Kathīr, the weightier opinion was that he was a prophet. Although, according to the majority of scholars, the weightier opinion is what Ibn Kathīr has himself reported on the authority Abī al-Ṭufayl from Sayyidnā 'Alī رضي الله عنه that he was neither a prophet nor an angel, rather was a righteous believer. Therefore, some 'Ulamā have explained it by saying that the pronoun in: اِنَّه كَانَ (he was) reverts to Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام and not to Dhul-Qarnain - which is closer in sense.

This leaves us with a problem. The Qur'ān mentions Dhul-Qarnain. Who is he? Which period of time did he belong to? Regarding this, sayings of 'Ulamā' differ. According to Ibn Kathīr, his time was the time of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, two thousand years before the time of Alexander, the Greek, the Macedonian. Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام was his minister. Ibn Ka-

thīr has also reported from the early righteous elders in al-Bidāyah wa an-Nihāyah that Dhul-Qarnain went for Ḥajj traveling on foot. When Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام found out about his arrival, he went out of Makkah to greet him. It is said that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام also prayed for him and passed out some good counsel to him. (Al-Bidāyah, p. 108, v. 3) Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr reports from Adhrāqī that he did *ṭawāf* with Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام and offered sacrifice.

And Abū al-Raiḥān al-Bairūnī has said in his book al-'Āthār al-Bāqiyah 'an al-Qurūn al-Khāliyah that 'this Dhul-Qarnain mentioned in the Qur'ān is Abū Bakr ibn Samma ibn 'Umar ibn Ifrīqīs al-Ḥimyarī, the one who conquered the East and West of the Earth. Tubba' al-Ḥimyarī al-Yamānī has shown pride in his poetry that his grandfather, Dhul-Qarnain, was a believer. He says:

قد كان ذوالقرنين جدى مسلمًا ملكاً علافى الارض غير مبعَّد

بَلَغ الْمَشَارِقَ وَالْمَغَارِبَ يَبْتَغِىْ اَسْبَابَ مُلْكٍ مِّنْ كَرِيْمٍ سَيِّدٍ

Dhul-Qarnain, my grandfather, was a believing Muslim
A king who conquered the non-believing Earth

He reached the Easts and the Wests seeking
Means of power from the noble Master.

Abū Ḥayyān has reported this narrative in al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ. Ibn Kathīr has also mentioned it in al-Bidāyah wa an-Nihāyah. Ibn Kathīr adds that 'this Dhul-Qarnain is the first Tubba' (the title of the kings of Yaman). He was among the Tababi'ah (plural of Tubba') of Yaman and this is the same person who had ruled in favor of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام in the case of Bi'r Sab' (seven wells)' - (al-Bidāyah, p. 105, v. 2). In all these narratives, irrespective of the difference regarding the elements of his identity, his time period has been identified as that of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام.

As for the detailed discussion relating to Dhul-Qarnain provided by Maulāna Ḥifẓur-Raḥmān in his book, Qaṣaṣ al-Qur'ān, it can be stated in a nutshell. It can be said that the Dhul-Qarnain mentioned in the Qur'ān is the king of Persia who is called Khorus by the Jews, Cyrus by the Greeks, Gorush by the Persians and Kai-Khusro by the Arabs. His period is said to be the period of Dāniyāl (Daniel) from among the prophets of Banī Isrā'īl - much later than the time of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام.

This brings it closer to the time of Iskandar al-Maqduni (Alexander, the Macedonian), the killer of Dārā (Darius). But, the learned Maulāna - like Ibn Kathīr - has also strongly maintained that Alexander, the Macedonian who had Aristotle as his minister cannot be the Dhul-Qarnain. The former was a fire-worshipping polytheist while the later, a righteous believer.

According to his research about the detailed description of Banī Isrā'īl falling into wrongdoing and rebellion twice, and of the respective punishment given to them twice, as in Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl (al-'Isra'), the Qur'ān says on the occasion of the first transgression of Banī Isrā'īl: بَعَثْنَا عَلَيْكُمْ عِبَادًا لَّنَآ أُولِىْ بَأْسٍ شَدِيْدٍ فَجَاسُوْا خِلٰلَ الدِّيَارِ (We sent upon you some of Our servants having strong aggressive power, who combed through the houses - 17:5). Here, the men with 'strong aggressive power' are Nebuchadnezzar and his supporting troops who killed forty thousand - seventy thousand in some narratives - men from the Banī Isrā'īl in Baytul-Maqdis, while taking more than one hundred thousand of them driven like a flock of sheep to his city of Babel. After that, as regards the second statement of the Qur'ān: ثُمَّ رَدَدْنَا لَكُمُ الْكَرَّةَ عَلَيْهِمْ (Then We gave you your turn to overpower them - 17:6), this event transpired at the hands of the same king, Kai-Khusraw (Khorus or Cyrus). He was a righteous believer. He confronted Nebuchadnezzar, secured the release of Banī Isrā'īl held as captives by him and rehabilitated them back into Palestine. He even went on to resettle and repopulate the city of Baytul-Maqdis that was ransacked earlier to the limit that he managed to have all treasures and major effects of Baytul-Maqdis carried away by Nebuchadnezzar from there returned back into the possession of Banī Isrā'īl. Thus, this person proved to be the savior of Banī Isrā'īl (the Jews).

It is likely that of the questions the Jews of Madīnah had set for the Quraysh of Makkah which they would ask the Holy Prophet ﷺ to test his prophethood, was this question about Dhul-Qarnain and that it had an underlying reason. This question was special since the Jews took him to be their savior and respected him.

In short, Maulanā Ḥifẓur-Raḥmān has collected a sufficiently large number of evidences from the prophesies of the prophets of Banī Isrā'īl with reference to the present Old Testament as well as from historical narratives to present his research on this subject. Anyone who finds it

imperative to proceed towards additional research may consult it. My purpose in reporting all these narratives was simply to bring into focus sayings of leading Muslim scholars, historians and commentators as they relate to the life and time of Dhul-Qarnain. To decide as to whose saying is weightier and worthier out of these is not part of my objective. The reason is that things not claimed by the Qur'ān nor explained by Ḥadīth are things we have not been obligated to fix and clarify on our own for that responsibility does not rest on our shoulders. Thus, whichever saying turns out to be regarded as more weighty, worthy and sound, the aim of the Qur'ān will stand achieved after all. Allah knows best. Let us now proceed to the explanation of the verses.

Let us look at the first verse cited above: قُلْ سَاَتْلُوْا عَلَيْكُمْ مِّنْهُ ذِكْرًا (I shall now recite to you a narration about him - 83). It prompts us to find out as to why the Holy Qur'ān has elected to bypass the possible shorter expression of 'ذِكْرَهُ' *dhikrahū* (his narrations) at this place and has opted for two words: مِنْهُ ذِكْرًا (*'minhu dhikra'*) (some narration about him)? A little reflection would reveal that these two words have been used as indicators. They tell us that the Qur'ān has not promised to narrate the entire story of Dhul-Qarnain in its historical setting. Instead, it has stated that it will mention it in part. This is evident from the use of the particle: مِنْ (*min*) and the nunnation (*tanwīn*) of *'dhikra'* - a distinct feature of Arabic grammar. As for the historical debate relating to the name, lineage and time period of Dhul-Qarnain reported earlier, the Holy Qur'ān has already said in advance that it has skipped it as something unnecessary.

The word: سَبَب (*sabab*) used in: وَاٰتَيْنٰهُ مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ سَبَبًا (and provided for him a way to everything - 84) is employed in the Arabic lexicon to denote everything harnessed to achieve an objective. It includes material instruments and resources as well as knowledge, insight and experience etc. (al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ). As for the expression: مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ (to everything), it means all things needed by a ruler to run the state system. The sense of the verse is that Allah Ta'ālā had provided for the righteous king Dhul-Qarnain practically everything needed at that time in order that he could maintain his just rule, establish universal peace and extend his area of influence to other countries.

Verse 85: فَاَتْبَعَ سَبَبًا (So he followed a way) means that - though, the material means related to everything, even those that would facilitate his

access to every region of the world - however, the first thing he did was to use his means to travel in the direction of the West.

The statement in verse 86: حَتّٰىٓ اِذَا بَلَغَ مَغْرِبَ الشَّمْسِ (until when he reached where the sun sets) means that he reached the far limit towards the West beyond which there was no populated area.

The word: حَمِئَة (*ḥami'ah*) in the succeeding phrase: فِىْ عَيْنٍ حَمِئَةٍ (into a miry spring) literally means dark marsh or mud carrying the sense of water beneath which there is dark mud and which causes the water itself to appear black. As for the sense of his seeing the Sun setting into such a spring, it means that an onlooker perceived it as setting into the spring because there was no habitation or dry land in sight. This is like being in an open field while the Sun is setting where as far as one can see there appears to be no mountain, tree, or structure, naturally one who looks at the sight would feel that the Sun was sinking into the land mass.

Said in the sentence which follows immediately was: وَوَجَدَ عِنْدَهَا قَوْمًا (and found near it a people), that is, near this dark spring, Dhul-Qarnain found a people. The later part of the verse shows that these people were infidels. Therefore, as said in the next verses, Allah Ta'ālā gave Dhul-Qarnain the choice of punishing them right away for their infidelity. Or, if he so wished, he could choose to deal with them benevolently by first asking them to consider the message of faith and bring them round to embrace it through dissemination of information and good counsel. After that, he could reward those who believe and punish those who do not. In response, Dhul-Qarnain elected to go by the second option. He said that he would try to bring them to the straight path through good counsel and advice. Then, he would punish those who stood by their infidelity and reward those who believed and did what was good.

The statement: قُلْنَا يٰذَا الْقَرْنَيْنِ (We said, 'O Dhul-Qarnain...) shows that Allah Ta'ālā has Himself said this addressing Dhul-Qarnain. Now, if Dhul-Qarnain is taken to be a prophet, there is no problem here. It will mean that it was said to him through the medium of revelation. And if, his prophethood is not to be recognized, there is only one way to rationalize the statement: قُلْنَا (*qulnā*: We said) and the address: يٰذَا الْقَرْنَيْنِ (*ya*/O Dhul-Qarnain). This way could be to take this address to have been

made to Dhul-Qarnain through the medium of some prophet - as suggested by the reported presence of Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام with him. Then, it is also possible that this revelation is just not the kind of *waḥy* that is peculiar to a prophet or messenger of Allah. May be, it is a *waḥy* or revelation in the literal sense like the word: وَأَوْحَيْنَا (*awḥainā*: We revealed or put into the heart) used in the Qur'ān for the mother of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام - though, there is no probability of her being a prophet or messenger of Allah. But, Abū Ḥayyān says in al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ that the command given here to Dhul-Qarnain is a command to punish and kill those people. No such command can be given without the authority of a revelation to a prophet. This action cannot be taken on the authority of Kashf (illumination) and Ilhām (inspiration), nor can it be activated through any other source without the authority of *waḥy* (revelation) to a *nabiyy* (prophet). For this reason, no probability other than the one being mentioned here is sound: Either Dhul-Qarnain himself is taken to be a prophet, or that there may be a prophet present during his time and it is through him that Dhul-Qarnain is addressed. And Allah knows best.

Verses 89 - 91

ثُمَّ اَتْبَعَ سَبَبًا ﴿۸۹﴾ حَتّٰۤی اِذَا بَلَغَ مَطْلِعَ الشَّمْسِ وَجَدَهَا تَطْلُعُ عَلٰی قَوْمٍ لَّمْ نَجْعَلْ لَّهُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِهَا سِتْرًا ﴿۹۰﴾ كَذٰلِكَ ؕ وَ قَدْ اَحَطْنَا بِمَا لَدَیْهِ خُبْرًا ﴿۹۱﴾

Thereafter, he followed a way [89] **until he reached where the Sun rises; he found it rising over a people for whom We did not make any cover against it.** [90] **Thus it was. We encompassed in knowledge whatever he had with him.** [91]

Commentary

The Holy Qur'ān does describe this state of the people Dhul-Qarnain found living towards the East meaning thereby that they were not accustomed to the use of ways and means like houses, tents and dresses to seek protection against the Sun. But, it does not mention anything about their faith and deeds, nor does it say what Dhul-Qarnain did to them. However, it is obvious that these people too were infidels and Dhul-Qarnain handled them the way he had handled the people he had found in

the West as mentioned earlier. But, describing it again at this place was not considered necessary since finding it out is also possible on the analogy of the previous event. (As in al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ from Ibn 'Aṭiyyah)

Verses 92 - 98

ثُمَّ أَتْبَعَ سَبَبًا ﴿٩٢﴾ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغَ بَيْنَ السَّدَّيْنِ وَجَدَ مِن دُونِهِمَا قَوْمًا
لَّا يَكَادُونَ يَفْقَهُونَ قَوْلًا ﴿٩٣﴾ قَالُوا يَا ذَا الْقَرْنَيْنِ إِنَّ يَأْجُوجَ وَمَأْجُوجَ
مُفْسِدُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَهَلْ نَجْعَلُ لَكَ خَرْجًا عَلَىٰ أَن تَجْعَلَ بَيْنَنَا
وَبَيْنَهُمْ سَدًّا ﴿٩٤﴾ قَالَ مَا مَكَّنِّي فِيهِ رَبِّي خَيْرٌ فَأَعِينُونِي بِقُوَّةٍ أَجْعَلْ
بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُمْ رَدْمًا ﴿٩٥﴾ آتُونِي زُبَرَ الْحَدِيدِ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا سَاوَىٰ بَيْنَ
الصَّدَفَيْنِ قَالَ انفُخُوا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَعَلَهُ نَارًا قَالَ آتُونِي أُفْرِغْ عَلَيْهِ
قِطْرًا ﴿٩٦﴾ فَمَا اسْطَاعُوا أَن يَظْهَرُوهُ وَمَا اسْتَطَاعُوا لَهُ نَقْبًا ﴿٩٧﴾
قَالَ هَٰذَا رَحْمَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّي فَإِذَا جَاءَ وَعْدُ رَبِّي جَعَلَهُ دَكَّاءَ وَكَانَ
وَعْدُ رَبِّي حَقًّا ﴿٩٨﴾

Thereafter he followed a way [92] **until when he reached between the two mountains, he found on their hither side a people who did not seem to understand anything said.** [93] **They said, "O Dhul-Qarnain, the Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj (Gog and Magog) are mischief-makers on the earth. So shall we set for you a revenue, provided that you make a barrier between us and them?"** [94] **He said, "That which my Lord has placed under my control is better, so help me with strength and I shall make a rampart between you and them.** [95] **Bring me ingots of iron." (They proceeded accordingly) until when he leveled up (the gap) between the two mountain-sides, he said, "Blow." (They complied) until when he made it (like) fire, he said, "Bring me molten copper and I will pour it upon this."** [96] **So they (Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj) were not able to climb it, nor were they able to make a hole in it.** [97] **He said, "This is a mercy from my Lord. Then, when the promise of my Lord will come, He will make it leveled to the ground. And the promise of my Lord is always true."** [98]

Explanation of Difficult Words

1. The word السَّدّ used in the expression: بَيْنَ السَّدَّيْن denotes what becomes a barrier against something. It may be a wall or mountain and it may be natural or artificial. At this place, the word: السَّدَّيْن (*as-saddain*) means two mountains that stood as a barrier against the intrusion of Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj. But, they still attacked through the pass in between the two mountains and which was closed by Dhul-Qarnain.

2. The word: زُبَر (*zubar*) in: زُبَرَ الْحَدِيْد (*zubar al-ḥadīd* - 96) is the plural of: زبرہ (*zubrah*) which means sheets in the sense of pieces, fragments or ingots of iron which were to be used in the wall designed to block the pass, obviously a stronger device as compared to bricks and rocks.

3. The word: الصَّدَفَيْن (*aṣ-ṣadafain* - 96) signifies the two sides of the mountain facing each other.

4. According to most commentators, the last word: قِطْرًا (*qiṭr*) in verse 96 means molten copper. There are some others who have explained '*qiṭr*' as molten iron or pewter. (al-Qurṭubī)

5. The expression: دَكَّآءَ (*dakkaa'a* - 98) used about the wall means what would crumble down to the level of the ground.

Commentary

The Identity of Ya'jūj Ma'jūj and the Location of the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain

A lot of absurd and strange things disseminated through Isrā'īlī narratives and historical stories have found currency to the extent that some commentators have also reported them in terms of their historical status, though they themselves do not find them trustworthy. The truth of the matter is that the Qur'ān has mentioned it briefly and the Holy Prophet ﷺ has informed his community also about the details as and where necessary. What has to be believed in as part of one's faith is limited to what has been covered in the Qur'ān, and Ḥadīth. Beyond that, whatever historical and geographical information has been provided by commentators, Ḥadīth experts and historians could be correct, or might as well prove incorrect. As for the variant sayings of historians from among those mentioned above, they are based on traces, analogies and conjectures. Whether they are true or false, it simply does not affect

what the Qur'ān says.

At this place, I would first quote Aḥādīth which, according to respected Ḥadīth experts, are sound or trustworthy. After that, historical narratives will be taken up to the measure of their need in the present context.

Ḥadīth Reports about Ya'jūj Ma'jūj

At least this much stands doubtlessly proved from the statements of Qur'ān, and Sunnah that Ya'jūj Ma'jūj are national entities from among human beings. They are the progeny of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام very much like them because so says the categorical statement (*naṣṣ*) of the Qur'ān: وَجَعَلْنَا ذُرِّيَّتَهٗ هُمُ الْبٰقِيْنَ which means that all human beings surviving on the Earth after the Flood during the time of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام shall all be from among his progeny. Historical narratives converge on the fact that they are of the progeny of Yafith son of Nūḥ عليه السلام - which is supported by a weak Ḥadīth as well. Regarding the rest of their antecedents, the Ḥadīth of Sayyidnā an-Nawwās ibn Sam'ān رضي الله عنه is most detailed and sound in authority. It has been reported in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim and in all books of Aḥādīth recognized for their authenticity. Ḥadīth experts declare it to be sound and authentic. This Ḥadīth carries details concerning the appearance of Dajjāl (anti-Christ), the coming of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and then, the appearance of Ya'jūj Ma'jūj. A translation of this entire Ḥadīth is being given below:

Sayyidnā an-Nawwās ibn Sam'ān رضي الله عنه says that one morning the Holy Prophet ﷺ mentioned Dajjāl (anti-Christ) and while doing that he said a few things which showed the low and negative aspect of his profile (such as his being one-eyed). Then, he also said a few things about him to the effect that his emergence was a matter of ominous trial (such as Paradise and Hell being with him and other extra-ordinary aspects of his persona). His narration (gripped us with such fear) as if Dajjāl was lurking somewhere (in the nearby) grooves of the date palms.

When we presented ourselves before him in the evening, he read our confused inner condition and asked, 'What is the matter with you?' (What did you conclude from what I had said?). We submitted, 'You talked about Dajjāl in the morning. Of things you said about him some seemed to belittle the matter of his emergence while you also said other

things which seemed to highlight his matter to proportions of a great trial to the extent that we thought he was present close to us in the grooves of the date-palms!' Then he said, 'Not just the Dajjāl, there are other trials I fear may afflict you more (that is, the trial of Dajjāl is not as great as you have taken it to be). If he appears - and I am among you - I shall confront him personally without you. And if he appears - and I am not among you - everyone will try to confront him in terms of his courage. And Allah is, in my absence, the guardian and protector of all Muslims. (You will recognize him as) a young man - hard curly hair, one eye protruding upwards (blind in the other as in other narratives). And if I can liken him (in this ugly profile) with someone, it is 'Abd al-'Uzza ibn Qaṭān (an ugly person from the tribe of Banū Khuzā'ah during the Jāhiliyyah). If a Muslim from among you runs into him, he should recite the initial verses of Sūrah al-Kahf against him (which will keep him protected from Dajjāl). Dajjāl will emerge from the empty space between Syria and 'Iraq creating havoc right and left. O servants of Allah, you then stay firm against him.' We said, 'Yā Rasūlallah, and how long will he tarry on the Earth?' He said, 'Forty days. But, the first day will be equal to one year, and the second day to one month, and the rest of the days equal to the usual.' We said, 'Yā Rasūlallah, so on that day which will be equal to one year, shall we be offering (the five-timed) Ṣalāh for one day only?' He said, 'No. You will, rather, go by estimating time and offering prayers for the whole year.' We said, 'Yā Rasūlallah, how fast will he be moving about the Earth?' He said, 'Fast like the cloud being followed by wind. Then he will pass by a people and ask them to rally round his false beliefs. They will believe in him and respond to his call. Then he will commission the clouds. They will start raining. He will order the Earth. It will turn green and verdant (and herds of cattle will graze therein) and when they return in the evening, their humps shall be much higher than before and their udders shall be full of milk and their waists shall be plumb. Then, Dajjāl will pass by another people and invite them to his disbelief. But, they will turn down his invitation. Losing hope, when he goes away from them, these believers will be stricken with famine and nothing of what once belonged to them will remain in their hands. And when Dajjāl will walk by this wasteland, he will address it, saying: 'Bring your treasures out.' So, its treasures will start following him like the honeybees follow their queen. Then Dajjāl

will call a man whose youth shall be in full bloom, strike him with a sword and cut him into two pieces and the two pieces will be placed as far apart as the distance between an archer and his target. Then he will call him. He will come (alive) to Dajjāl beaming with joy over his feat. In the meantime, Allah Ta'ālā will send down Al-Masīḥ ibn Maryam (Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام). He will alight at the white tower in the eastern part of Dimashq (Damascus) clad in two colored sheets with both hands resting on the wings of angels. When he bows his blessed head, drops of water will drip down from there (as if one has just come out of the shower). And when he raises his head up, from it drop silvery globules like genuine pearls. Any disbeliever who breathes the air from his breath will die that very instant and his breath will reach as far as reaches his glance. Then he will look for him until he will overtake him at the gate of Ludd (still there in Baytul-Maqdis by the same name) and kill him. After that, 'Īsā ibn Maryam will come to people whom Allah protected from Dajjāl. He will then touch their faces (with compassion for them) and give them the good news of having high ranks in Paradise.

While he would still be in the same state, Allah will reveal to 'Īsā: 'Verily, I am going to send forth the kind of men from among servants belonging to Me against whom no two hands will dare fight. So, you assemble and take My servants to the sanctuary of Mount Ṭūr (which Sayyidnā 'Īsā will do) and would send out Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj and they will be seen hurtling down from every side. The first wave of them will pass by Buḥairah Ṭabariyyah. They would drink out everything in it and when others of them will pass by it, (and seeing it dry) they will say: 'Surely, in this, there must have been water earlier in time.'

The prophet of Allah, 'Īsā, and his companions will take refuge on the Mount Ṭūr. Other believers will find sanctuaries in their own fortified places. Food supplies will be there, but it would run short whereupon the head of a bull will be considered better than a hundred *dīnār*. Then, the prophet of Allah, 'Īsā, and his companions will turn to Allah (and pray for the removal of their distress which will be answered) and He will send an epidemic (worm in neck) and they will be annihilated en masse to the last person. Then, the prophet of Allah, 'Īsā, and his companions will come down from the Mount of Ṭūr and see not a hand-span worth of land remaining unfilled with corpses and (because of their de-

composition) the place will be reeking with a strong stench. (Seeing this state of affairs) the prophet of Allah, 'Īsā, and his companions will turn to Allah (praying for the removal of this distress as well which Allah will answer). He will send birds with necks like the neck of a camel. They will haul these corpses and throw them at the place where Allah wills (according to some narratives, they will put them away into the sea).

After that, Allah Ta'ālā will send rains. No clay home in the villages and no Bedouin tent in the desert will remain without it. Lands will be washed clean and left like mirror. Then, Allah Ta'ālā will tell the Earth, 'Grow your fruits and unravel the abundance of your blessings.' (And so it shall be and such shall be the bliss of increase that) one pomegranate will suffice as food for a group of people. And its shell will be used to make canopies for protection against the Sun and milk will be so blessed as to suffice for a large number of people. Milk from one cow will be enough for everyone in a tribe and milk from one goat will be adequate for a whole clan. (After forty years of this period of extra-ordinary abundance, peace and protection, when the time due for Qiyāmah will draw near) Allah Ta'ālā will send a pleasant wind which will cause their armpits to be benumbed and the soul of every believer and every Muslim will be taken away. Left there will be the worst among human beings, the wicked and the disbelieving ones, who will indulge in shame and outrage on the Earth like donkeys. And it is against them that the Hour will stand activated.'

As for the story of Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj, the narration of Sayyidnā 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Yazīd ﷺ deals with it in greater detail. It says that once they pass by Buḥairah Ṭabariyyah, Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj will climb Jabal al-Khamar, a mountain from among the mountains of Baytul-Maqdis, and say, 'We have killed whoever there was on the Earth. Come, let us now kill whoever there is out in the skies." So they will shoot their arrows towards the sky and Allah will make their arrows return back to them smeared with blood (so that those dim-witted people are pleased with the prospect that they have done away with whoever there was in the skies).

About the story of Dajjāl, the narration of Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī ﷺ adds that Dajjāl will stay away from al-Madīnah al-Munawwarah. When it will not be possible for him to reach even the link roads

leading to it, he will come to a saline tract of land close to Madīnah. At that time, a man will come out to confront him and this man will be the best of men at that time (or, among the best of men). Addressing him, he will say, 'I am certain that you are the Dajjāl about whom the Holy Prophet ﷺ had told us.' (Hearing this), Dajjāl will start saying, 'Tell me, O people, if I kill this man, then make him alive, will you still doubt the thing (about my being God)?' They said, 'No.' So he will kill him and then bring him back to life whereupon he will tell Dajjāl, 'By Allah, now I have become more certain that you are the Dajjāl.' Hence, Dajjāl would want to kill him (all over again), but he will remain unable to enforce it. (Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim)

According to a narration of Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī ؓ appearing in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "On the day of Qiyāmah, Allah Ta'ālā will ask Sayyidnā Ādam ؑ, 'raise the Hell-bound from your progeny.' He will wonder, 'my Lord, who are they?' Then, the Divine command will go forth that nine hundred and ninety nine of every one thousand are Hell-bound with only one bound to go to Paradise. Scared, the noble Ṣaḥābah asked, 'Yā Rasūlallah, 'who from among us shall be the one bound to go to Paradise?' Thereupon, he said, 'do not worry because out of these nine hundred and ninety nine Hell-bound people, there will be only one from among you while, ratio-wise, there will be a thousand from among the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj.' According to a narration of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar ؓ in the Mustadrak of al-Hakim, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that Allah Ta'ālā divided all human beings into ten parts. Nine of these belong to Ya'jūj Ma'jūj while the remaining one part covers the human beings of the whole world. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

After having quoted these narrations in al-Bidāyah wa an-Nihāyah, Ibn Kathīr has written that it tells us that the number of Ya'jūj Ma'jūj is significantly higher than the entire human population.

According to a narration of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ؓ appearing in the Musnad of Aḥmad and Abū Dāwūd with sound chains of authority, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that 'Īsā ؑ will live on the Earth for forty years after his descension. As for the narration in Muslim which puts this duration of stay at seven years, it has been rated as less in strength or having some unapparent meaning (*marjūḥ* or *mu'awwal*) by Ḥāfiẓ in

Fatḥ al-Bārī who has declared the very period of forty years as correct. Then there are clarifications in Aḥādīth which report that this whole period will be marked with peace and blessings. Absolutely no malice and hostility will exist among people, none even between any two of them. (Muslim and Aḥmad)

Al-Bukhārī reports from Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that the Hajj and 'Umrah of Baytullah will continue even after the emergence of Ya'jūj Ma'jūj. (Tafsīr Maẓharī)

Al-Bukhārī and Muslim report from Umm al-Mu'minīn, Sayyidah Zainab bint Jaḥsh that one day the Holy Prophet ﷺ woke up from sleep with his blessed face red while he was saying:

لا اله اِلاّ اللّه ويل لّلعرب من شرقد اقترب فتح اليوم من ردم يأجوج و مأجوج مثل هذه وحلّق تسعين

> 'Lā ilāha illallāh. Alas for Arabia! Evil is drawing near. Today, a part of the Wall of Ya'jūj Ma'jūj has opened up like this' and he made a ring by joining the tips of his thumb and index finger (to indicate the size of the hole in the Wall).

Umm al-Mu'minīn, Sayyidah Zainab رضى اللّه عنها says that following his statement, we submitted, 'Yā Rasūlallah, is our destruction possible even when we have righteous people among us?' He said, 'Yes, it is - (particularly) when evil (*khabath*) abounds' (similar reports appear in the two Ṣaḥīḥs from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ, as in al-Bidāyah wa an-Nihāyah of Ibn Kathīr). That a hole was made into the Wall of Ya'jūj Ma'jūj to the measure shown in the Ḥadīth could be taken in the real sense and also in a figurative one which would indicate the weakening of the Wall made by Dhul-Qarnain. (Ibn Kathīr, Abū Ḥayyān)

The Musnad of Aḥmad, Tirmidhī and Ibn Mājah report from a narration of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: Ya'jūj Ma'jūj keep digging through the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain. Doing it everyday they reach the farthest part of this iron Wall so close as would make the light on the other side become visible to them. But, at that point, they say that they would dig all the way through it the next day, and return. However, Allah Ta'ālā makes it as strong as it was all over again. Then comes the next day and they start anew to dig through it. This cycle of their effort to dig and demolish and that of mending and fortify-

ing from Allah's side will continue until such time up to which Allah Ta'ālā intends to hold back Ya'jūj Ma'jūj. And when He intends to release them, they will dig, reach the farthest limit and say, 'If Allah wills, we shall go across it tomorrow.' (By making their effort dependent on the name and will of Allah, they will have the *taufīq* to succeed) So, when they return the next day as usual, they will find the remaining non-dug portion of the Wall as they had left it and this they will demolish and go across.

Tirmidhī has reported this narration on the authority of Abū 'Awānah, Qatādah, Abī Rafi', Abū Hurairah, in that order, and then he has said: 'غريب لانعرفه الا من هذا الوجه' (Unfamiliar. We do not know it except from this source). Ibn Kathīr has also reported this narration in his Tafsīr and then he has this to say:

اسناده جيّد قوى ولكن متنه فى رفعه نكارة

> Its chains of narrators are good and strong, but its text in the matter of its ascension (the effort to raise the channel of transmission up to attribute it the Holy Prophet ﷺ is not supported by stronger sources).

Ibn Kathīr comments on this Ḥadīth in al-Bidāyah wa an-Nihāyah: If it is held to be correct that this Ḥadīth is not *marfū'* (traceable in ascending order to the Holy Prophet ﷺ), instead, is a narration from Ka'b al-Aḥbār, then, it becomes clear that it is not worthy of trust. Now there is another possibility. The narration is regarded to be free from any error made by the narrator. It is given the status of the very saying of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, then, it would mean that this action of digging the Wall by Ya'jūj Ma'jūj will start at the time when the hour of their emergence draws close. And as for the statement of the Qur'ān, that is, no hole can be made in this Wall, it refers to the time when Dhul-Qarnain had made it. This leaves no contradiction here. Moreover, it could also be said that breaking a hole into the Wall means a hole which goes all the way through it - and this narration states it clearly that this hole does not go all the way through it. (Al-Bidāyah, p. 12, v. 2)

In Fatḥ al-Bārī, Ḥāfiẓ ibn Ḥajar has reported this Ḥadīth with reference to 'Abd ibn Ḥumaid and Ibn Ḥibbān as well and said that they all narrate from Qatādah and some of their narrators are the authorities of

the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī. Then, he has not entertained any doubt about the Ḥadīth being rated as *marfū'* (ascending to the Holy Prophet ﷺ). Then he says with reference to Ibn al-'Arabi that this Ḥadīth contains three Divine signs, that is, miracles: (1) That Allah Ta'ālā did not let their minds think of the alternative of continuing their digging operation round the clock including the day and night both. If so, it would have not been at all difficult for a people with so many of them to work in shifts of day and night with specified assignment of duties. (2) That their minds were turned away from taking the option of scaling over the Wall by using artifices and devices. Although, from a narration of Wahb ibn Munabbih, it becomes clear that these people tilled the land which also yielded fruits and they used instruments of many kinds in this process. It should have not been difficult for them under these circumstances to assemble together the means of scaling the Wall. (3) That for such a long time it never occurred to them that they should have said, Insha'Allah: If Allah wills, and that this statement will issue forth through their speech only when the time of their emergence will come close.

Ibn al-'Arabi has said that this Ḥadīth also tells us that there are people among the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj who believe in the existence of Allah and in His Will. Then, it is also possible that Allah Ta'ālā may cause this statement to issue forth through their speech without having any belief and they find their job all done with its *barakah* (*ashrāṭ as-sā'ah* by as-Sayyid Muḥammad, p. 154). But, what is obvious here is that they too have received the call of the blessed prophets. Otherwise, according to the textual authority of the Qur'ān (*naṣṣ*), they should not be subjected to the punishment of Jahannam: وَمَا كُنَّا مُعَذِّبِينَ حَتّٰى نَبْعَثَ رَسُولًا (And it is not Our way to punish [anyone] unless We send a messenger - al-Isrā', 17:15). This tells us that the invitation to believe has reached them too. But, they chose to stick by their denial. However, there will also be some people among them who would be subscribing to the view that Allah exists and that He has intention and will - though, having this much of a belief is not sufficient for *'Īmān* or faith, unless there is the essential faith in Prophet-hood and Hereafter. However, the saying of 'Insha'Allah': If Allah wills, despite Kufr (disbelief), is not a far out possibility.

Conclusions drawn from the narrations of Ḥadīth

That which stands proved about Ya'jūj Ma'jūj from the statements of

the Holy Prophet ﷺ as in the Aḥādīth cited above is given below:

(1) Ya'jūj Ma'jūj are the progeny of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام like the rest of human beings. The majority of Ḥadīth experts and historians identify them as the progeny of Yāfith, the son of Nūḥ عليه السلام. And it is also obvious that the progeny of Yāfith son of Nūḥ had spread itself out far and wide among different tribes, nationalities and many a populated areas between the period of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام and that of Dhul-Qarnain. Thus, it is not necessary that the races known as Ya'jūj Ma'jūj were pinned down as a whole exclusively behind the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain. There must have been some of their tribes and nationalities living on the other side of the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain. However, it can be said that the savage killers and destroyers among them were restrained through the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain. Historians refer to them generally as Turks, Mangkhol or Mongols. But, from among these, the name of Ya'jūj Ma'jūj applies only to the savage, uncivilized, blood-thirsty tyrants who remained untouched by civilization. The Turks, Mangkhols or Mongols who became civilized stand unsubstantiated by this name.

(2) The number of Ya'jūj Ma'jūj is several times higher than the number of the human beings of the whole world, at least at the ratio of one to ten. (Ḥadīth #2)

(3) The tribes and nationalities of Ya'jūj Ma'jūj stopped from crossing over to the other side of the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain will remain so restrained right through the close of the zero Hour of the Last Day of Qiyāmah. The time destined for their emergence will be preceded by the appearance of Mahdī and Masīḥ عليهما السلام and that of Dajjāl (the anti-Christ). They will be released exactly after 'Īsā عليه السلام has descended and has killed Dajjāl. (Ḥadīth #1)

(4) At the time Ya'jūj Ma'jūj are to be released, the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain will crumble down all leveled to the ground (verse 18:98). The merciless hordes of Ya'jūj Ma'jūj would present an spectacle when, coming down from the mountain slopes all simultaneously, the speed of their descent would give the impression that they are sliding down to the ground en masse. These countless savage humans will hit the whole earth and its population. No one would be able to stand up against the killing and plunder by them. The apostle of Allah, Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام will, under Di-

vine command, take refuge on Mount Ṭūr along with his believing companions. People in other habitations of the world will seek asylum in available safe places. When supplies run out, necessities of life will become highly expensive. As for the rest of human population, these savages will finish them off and lick out their rivers. (Ḥadīth #1)

(5) Then, it will be through the prayer of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and his companions that these countless locust like peoples will be destroyed simultaneously. The earth will be covered up with their dead bodies and the stench from which would make human rehabilitation on the earth difficult. (Ḥadīth #1)

(6) Then, it will be through the prayer of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and his companions once again that their dead bodies would be disposed of into the sea or made to disappear altogether and the whole earth will be washed clean through a universal rain. (Ḥadīth #1)

(7) After that, there shall come a reign of peace lasting for nearly forty years. The earth will open the gates of its blessings. No one will remain poor and needy. No one will hurt or harass anyone. Peace and comfort shall prevail universally. (Ḥadīth #3)

(8) During this period of peace, the Hajj and 'Umrah of Baytullah will continue. (Ḥadīth #4) As for the death of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and his burial in the Sacred Mausoleum, it already stands proved from the narrations of Ḥadīth. This too will transpire when he will travel to Ḥijāz for Hajj or 'Umrah. (As reported by Muslim from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه - explanatory note). After that, he will die in al-Madīnah al-Ṭaiyyibah and buried in the Sacred Mausoleum.

(9) During the later period of the life of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, he was shown a dream activated through a revelation (*waḥy*) that a hole had opened up in the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain, which he declared to be a sign of impending evil for Arabia. Some Ḥadīth experts (*al-muḥaddithīn*) have interpreted the opening of a hole in this Wall as real. Some others have taken it figuratively in the sense that this Wall of Dhul-Qarnain has become weak, the time of the emergence of Ya'jūj Ma'jūj has come close and its effects will show up in the form of Arab decline. Allah knows best.

(10) After his descent, he will stay on the earth for forty years. (Ḥadīth #3) Earlier than him, the period of Mahdī عليه السلام will also be that of forty years, part of which will feature the confluence and cooperation of both. In his book, Ashrāṭ al-Sā'ah (p.145), Sayyid Sharīf Barzanjī has said that the period of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام will follow the killing of Dajjāl and the peace prevailing thereafter and extend to forty years. This will make his total stay in the world for a period of forty-five years. And, it has been mentioned on page 112 that Mahdī عليه السلام will appear a thirty plus years before Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and the total period credited to him will be that of forty years. Thus, the presence of the two blessed souls shall coincide for a number of five, or seven years, and both their periods will be marked by a reign of justice throughout the world. The earth will open up the gates of its blessings, neither will anyone remain poor, nor will anyone bear malice and hostility against anyone else. Of course, the great trial of the appearance of Dajjāl will hit the whole world during the later period of Mahdī عليه السلام - with the exception of Makkah, Madīnah, Baytul-Maqdis and the Mount of Ṭūr. This trial will be the greatest as compared to the rest of the trials the world has faced. Dajjāl and his disorder will last for forty days only. But, out of these forty days, the first day will be that of one year, the second day that of one week and the rest of days will be like they usually are. One way this can happen is that these days are really made to be that long - because, during those later times, nearly all events will be extraordinary and miraculous in nature. Then, it is also possible that the days and nights keep alternating as they usually do. But, it stands proved from Ḥadīth that Dajjāl would be a great magician. When so, it is also possible that, under the spell of his magic, common people remain unable to notice this revolutionary change in the alternation of days and nights and continue seeing this phenomena as nothing but one usual day. As for the injunction in Ḥadīth of performing Ṣalāh during that day on the estimated analogy of usual days, it also seems to support the assumption that the days and nights would be changing really, but people would not realize it cognitively. Therefore, in this day of one year, the order given was to perform Ṣalāh for three hundred sixty days. Otherwise, had the day been really one day only, the rules of the Sharī'ah would have required only five Ṣalāhs as obligatory for one day as such. In short, the total period of Dajjāl will have forty such days.

After that, Sayyidnā 'Īsā ﷺ will descend, kill the Dajjāl and put an end to the disorder created by him. However, quite close to that the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj will emerge unleashing another spate of disorder, pillage and killing. But, the period of their presence will not go beyond a few days when they too will be destroyed all simultaneously as a result of the prayer of Sayyidnā 'Īsā ﷺ. In short, there will be two ominous trials of Dajjāl and Ya'jūj Ma'jūj during the later period of Sayyidnā Mahdī ﷺ and the early period of Sayyidnā 'Īsā ﷺ which will shake the people of the entire earth upside down. Before and after these counted few days, however, the whole world will experience justice, peace and blessings. During the period of Sayyidnā 'Īsā ﷺ, there will remain on the earth no creed and religion other than Islam. The earth will start sending forth its hidden treasures. No one will remain poor and needy. Even beasts and poisonous life forms will not hurt anyone.

An essential point of guidance:

As far as the information given above about the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj and the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain, these have been communicated to the Muslim Ummah by the Qur'ān, and the Aḥādīth of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Believing in it as such is necessary and opposition, impermissible. Now there remains the area of geographical and racial investigation as to questions like - Where is the wall of Dhul-Qarnain located? Who are these people called Ya'jūj Ma'jūj? Where do they live now? Here, it can be said that no Islamic 'Aqīdah (article of faith) depends on knowing this, nor does the understanding of any verse of the Qur'ān hinge on it. But, the religious scholars of the Muslim Ummah, only in order to answer the absurdities dished out by antagonists and to provide additional insight, have discussed this subject in details. A part of it is being reported here.

Views of Muslim scholars

In his Tafsīr, al-Qurṭubī has reported from as-Suddiyy that twenty-one of the twenty-two tribes of Ya'jūj Ma'jūj were shut off by the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain. One of their tribes was left out on the inner side of the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain. They are Turks. After that, al-Qurṭubī says that the sayings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ about the Turks resemble the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj and that the incidence of a war between them and Muslims during the later times appears in a ḥadīth of the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim. At present, he continues: A large number of Turk people are arrayed against

Muslims. Only Allah knows their exact number and only He can save Muslims from their evil. It appears as if they are the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj - or, at least, are their forerunners. (Al-Qurṭubī, p. 58, v.11) (Al-Qurṭubī belongs to the sixth century of Hijrah when the Tātār onslaught came and destroyed the Islamic Caliphate. This great upheaval is well known in Islamic history and the Tātārs are reputed to be from the Mogol or Mongkhol Turks). But, as for al-Qurṭubī, he has simply said that they resembled the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj and could be their forerunners. He has not identified the havoc caused by the Tātārs as the emergence of the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj which is one of the signs of the coming of the last day of Qiyāmah. The reason is that the Ḥadīth of the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim mentioned above makes it clear that this emergence will come to pass after the descent of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام during his period.

Therefore, 'Allamah 'Ālūsī has, in his Tafsīr Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī, strongly refuted the position of those who have taken the Tatars as the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj. According to him, the very thought is a flagrant error and certainly an opposition to the textual authority of Ḥadīth. However, this much he too said that this havoc, no doubt, did resemble the havoc to be caused by the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj. (Rūḥ, p. 44, v. 16) It proves that the view of some contemporary historians who take modern Russia or China or both as the Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj would have not been really wrong. However, the condition is that they should have meant by it the same thing said by al-Qurṭubī and al-'Ālūsī, that is, the upheaval caused by them resembled that of the Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj. But, declaring it to be the very emergence of the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj - something reported in the Qur'ān, and Ḥadīth as signs of Qiyāmah and which was due to come after the descent of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام - is absolutely wrong. The approach is erroneous and it betrays a rejection of the textual authority (*nuṣūṣ*) of Ḥadīth.

Famous historian, Ibn Khaldun has taken up this subject in the prolegomena of his history. As part of his description of the sixth kingdom, he has alluded to the geographical location of the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj and the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain as follows:

> "Inhabiting towards the west, in the ninth part of the seventh kingdom, there are tribes of Turks called قنجاق (*qinjāq*) [Qipcaq or Qypchaq as in Bertold Spuler] and جركس (Cherkess) [Circassians, the Caucasian people, as in Spuler]. The eastern side is

> populated by the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj. In between the two, Mount Caucasus draws the line of demarcation. It has been mentioned earlier that it begins from *al-baḥr al-muḥīṭ* located in the east of the fourth kingdom and goes up to the northern end of the kingdom. Then, receding away from *al-baḥr al-muḥīṭ,* it continues in a north-western direction and enters the ninth part of the fifth kingdom. From here, it reverts to its first direction until it enters the ninth part of the seventh kingdom. Once it reaches there, it goes from the south in a north-western direction. Located in between this mountain range is the 'Wall of Alexander.' It is situated in the middle of the ninth part of the seventh kingdom as we have identified earlier and the Qur'ān too informs us about it.

In his book of geography, 'Abdullāh ibn Khurdāzbih has reported the dream of the 'Abbāsī Khalīfah, Wāthiq Billah in which he had seen that the Wall had opened up. As a result, he woke up all upset and sent his emissary, Sallam on a fact-finding mission. On his return, he reported the condition and distinct features of this very Wall." (Muqaddimah ibn Khaldun, p. 79)

That Wāthiq Billah, the Abbāsi Khalifah sent an observer group to investigate the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain and that it did return after having made the investigation has been mentioned by Ibn Kathīr too in al-Bidāyah wa an-Nihāyah. Also said there is that this Wall has been made in iron with huge locked gates and is located towards the north-east. After narrating the event, Tafsīr Kabir and al-Ṭabarī add: One who comes back after having seen the Wall reaches the barren fields facing Samarkand in the company of guides. (Tafsīr Kabīr, v. 5, p. 513)

The great scholar of Islam and my revered teacher, Maulanā Anwar Shāh Kashmīrī has mentioned Ya'jūj Ma'jūj and the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain in his book, عقيدة الإسلام فى حياة عيسى عليه السلام. Though it is an adjunct of his book yet, whatever he has mentioned there measures up to the highest level of investigation and Tradition. He said: To remain protected against the plunder and devastation by mischievous and savage human beings walls have been built on the earth, not simply at one place but at several places. Different kings have built these at various places during different ages. Most famous and the largest among these is the Great Wall of China. Its length given by Abū Ḥayyān al-Andulūsī (the royal historian of the Iranian Court) is twelve hundred miles. It was founded

by Faghfur, the Emperor of China, and that the date of its inception goes back to three thousand four hundred and sixty years after the advent of Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام, and also that the Moghul people (Mongol or Mongkhol) call this Great Wall, *'atkuwah'*, and the Turks, *'burqūrqah.* Then he has acknowledged that several walls of this nature are found at other places as well.

Our leading fellow-servant of the Faith, Maulanā Ḥifẓur-Raḥmān Sihwārwī, may he rest in peace, has given a well-documented historical detail elaborating the statement of Shaykh Kashmīrī in his well-known book, Qaṣaṣ al-Qur'ān. A gist is given below:

The range of the evil savagery of Ya'jūj Ma'jūj was so extensive that, on the one hand, the people of southern Caucasia suffered from their tyrannical onslaughts while, on the other hand, the inhabitants of Tibet and China also served as sitting targets of their savagery. It was to stay safe from these very Ya'jūj Ma'jūj that protective walls were built at various place during different ages. The largest among these is the Great Wall of China mentioned earlier.

The second Wall is located near Bukhārā and Tirmidh in Central Asia. It is situated at a place called Darband (meaning 'blocked passage'). This Wall was there during the time of the famous Moghul king, Taimūr Lang (Timur, the Lame; Tamerlane). The German confidant of the Roman King, Cella Berger, has mentioned him in his book. Kilafchu, the emissary of Castille, the King of Andulusia has also referred to him in his travelogue. When he presented himself as the emissary of his King before Taimūr, he had passed by this spot. He writes that the Wall of Bāb al-Ḥadīd (Iron Gate) is situated on the route coming from Mousel and which lies in between Samarkand and India. (From Tafsīr Jawāhir al-Qur'ān by al-Ṭanṭāwī, v. 9. p. 198)

The third Wall is located in Dāghistān in Russia. This too is famous by the name of Darband (blocked passage) and Bāb al-Abwāb (The Gate of gates). Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī in Mu'jim al-Buldān, al-Idrīsī in al-Jughrāfiah and Bustānī in Dāiratul-Ma'ārif have described these in great details, a gist of which is as follows:

"In Dāghistān, 'Darband' is a Russian city. It is situated on the western shore of Baḥr Khaḍir (Caspian Sea), latitude 43.3 North and longi-

tude 48.15 east. It is also called 'Darband Nausherwān'. Another name for it, 'Bāb al-Abwāb,' is also famous."

The fourth Wall is located in the higher parts of Caucasia towards the west of this very 'Bāb al-Abwāb where, in between two mountains, there is a pass well known as the Dāryāl Pass. This fourth Wall is right here and is known as the Wall of Qafqāz or Mount Qoqā or Koh Qāf (Caucasus). About it, Bustānī writes:

"And close to it (the Wall of Bāb al-Abwāb), there is another Wall which goes on extending towards the West. In all likelihood, this may have been built by the people of Fāris (Persia) as a measure of defense against the northern Berbers. Since the identity of its founder was not authentically known, some people have attributed it to Alexander while some others have ascribed it to Cyrus and Nausherwan. And Yāqūt says that it has been constructed with molten copper." (Dā'iratul-Ma'ārif, v. 7, p. 651; Mu'jimul-Buldān, v. 8, p. 9)

Since all these Walls are in the North and have been built for a single need, therefore, difficulties have come up in determining as to which of these is the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain. And the major confusion has showed up in the case of the last two Walls because the name of both the places is Darband and there is a Wall also present at both. Out of the four Walls mentioned above, the Great Wall of China is the longest and the oldest. About it, no one says that it is the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain. Then, instead of being in the North, it is in the Far East - and that it is in the North is clear as indicated by the Qur'ān al-Karīm.

Now, the thing revolves between the remaining three Walls which happen to be but in the North. Out of these, speaking generally, historians - Mas'ūdī, Iṣṭakhrī, Ḥamawī and others - identify the Wall located in Dāghistān, or at Darband in the Caucasian territory of Bāb al-Abwāb by the Caspian Sea as the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain. Historians who have called the Wall and Darband of Bukhārā and Tirmidh as being the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain have, most likely, been confused because of the common factor of the word, Darband. At this point, its location stands nearly fixed. Now, it can be said that it is situated in Bāb al-Abwāb by the Darband of Caucasia in the territory of Dāghistān, or is located even at a higher altitude of the Mountain of Qafqāz or Qāf (Caucasus). As for a

Wall being there on both these places is a fact proved by historians.

By way of further refinement in between the two probabilities given above, my revered teacher, Maulanā Sayyid Muḥammad Anwar Shāh has, in 'Aqīdatul-Islam,' given preference to the Wall of Koh Qāf (Qafqāz: Caucasus) as being the Wall built by Dhul-Qarnain. ('Aqīdatul-Islam, p. 297)

The Wall of Dhul-Qarnain: Is it still there? Will it be there until Qiyāmah? Or, has it disintegrated?

Historians and geographers of Europe do not recognize the presence of any of these northern Walls in our time, nor do they admit that the passage of the Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj is still blocked. On that basis, some Muslim historians have also started saying and writing that the event of the emergence of the Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj mentioned in the Qur'ān, and Ḥadīth has already taken place. Some of them have declared the great onslaught of Tātārs in the sixth century Hijrah as being the emergence of Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj mentioned by the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth. Still others have found it sufficient to equate the contemporary rise of the Russian, Chinese and European peoples with the emergence of the Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj and have thereby closed the case conveniently. But, all this is - as stated earlier with reference to Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī - totally wrong. To say that the particular emergence of the Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj mentioned by the Qur'ān was a sign of Qiyāmah translates as a denial of Ṣaḥīḥ Aḥādīth. The Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth of Muslim narrated by al-Nawwās ibn Sam'ān ﷺ, and others says that Qiyāmah will come after three events have taken place. These events will be the emergence of Dajjāl (anti-Christ), the descent of Sayyidnā 'Īsā ﷺ and the killing of Dajjāl. How can it be said that it has already come to pass! The reason is obvious. The Dajjāl has not emerged. Sayyidnā 'Īsā ﷺ has yet to descend. And there is no doubt about it.

Nevertheless, it is not counter to any textual authority (*naṣṣ*) of Qur'ān, and Sunnah that the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain may have disintegrated now and some people from among the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj may have come on this side. However, this will remain subject to the condition that one admits that their last and the most massive onslaught, which will prove to be the destroyer of the entire human population, has not come yet. In fact, it will come after the great manifestation of the signs of Qiyāmah mentioned earlier, that is, the appearance of the Dajjāl and

the descent of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام etc.

The considered view of 'Allāmah Kashmīrī رحمه الله تعالى in this matter is that the European assertion that they have scanned the whole world and have found no trace of this Wall bears no weight. First of all, the reason is that they themselves have clearly admitted that, despite having reached the zenith of travel and research, there remain many forests, rivers and islands about which they had been unable to collect information. Then, not too remote is the probability that the Wall, despite being present, may now have taken the form of a mountain because of mountains crumbling and joining together. But, no absolute textual authority (*naṣṣ*) contradicts the fact of this Wall disintegrating before Qiyāmah, or of some people from the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj crossing over to this side by taking some distant and long-winding route.

The strongest argument put forward in favor of this Wall of Dhul-Qarnain surviving until the last day of Qiyāmah is based on the statement of the Qur'ān: فَإِذَا جَآءَ وَعْدُ رَبِّي جَعَلَهُ دَكَّآءَ (98). Here, Dhul-Qarnain says, 'when the promise of my Lord will materialize (that is, the time will come for the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj to appear), Allah Ta'ālā will make this Wall crumble down to ground level.' The proponents of this argument have interpreted the words: وَعْدُ رَبِّي (the promise of my Lord) in this verse in the sense of Qiyāmah, the Last Day - although, the words of the Qur'ān are not definite and categorical about it. The reason is that the Qur'ānic words: وَعْدُ رَبِّي (the promise of my Lord) carry a very clear sense of their own. So, what is meant here is that the arrangement made by Dhul-Qarnain to block the entry of the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj may not necessarily remain there, as is, forever. When Allah Ta'ālā wills to have the passage open to them, this Wall will lie demolished. Therefore, it is not necessary that it would happen precisely close to the Qiyāmah. Accordingly, all commentators have mentioned both probabilities in the sense of: وَعْدُ رَبِّي (the promise of my Lord). It appears in Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ:

والوعد يحتمل ان يراد به يوم القيمة، وان يراد به وقت خروج ياجوج و ماجوج

> And the promise has the probability that meant by it is the Day of Qiyāmah and that meant by it is the time of the emergence of the Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj.

One way of verifying this could be the eventuality that the Wall lies

demolished, the passage has opened up and the onslaught of the Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj has begun. It does not matter whether its beginning is taken to be from the havoc caused by the Tātār in the sixth century Hijrah, or from the present ascendancy of the peoples of Europe, Russia and China. But, it is evident that the aggressive emergence of these civilized peoples - something taking place in a constitutional and legal framework - cannot be classed as rank disorder which is being particularly pointed out by the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth. The anatomy of havoc given there is that it will unfold in the form of such a magnitude of merciless bloodshed and devastation that it will eliminate the entire human population. Rather, the outcome will, then, be that some nationalities of these very Ya'jūj Ma'jūj had turned civilized after having moved to this side. They certainly turned out to be the source of great disorder and trial for Islamic countries. But, till now, their savage counterparts who know nothing but bloodshed have not come to this side as destined - and the majority of them are of that kind. These will emerge very close to Qiyāmah.

The source of the second argument is the Ḥadīth of Tirmidhī and the Musnad of Aḥmad where it is said that the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj keep digging this Wall everyday. But, first of all, Ibn Kathīr has declared this Ḥadīth to be *ma'lūl* (defective despite its apparently correct chain of narrators). Secondly, in the Ḥadīth itself, there is no clarification that the day Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj will cross over the Wall by virtue of saying Insha'Allah the thing will happen necessarily close to the Qiyāmah. Then, the Ḥadīth does not provide any proof either that the whole lot of the Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj will remain restrained behind the Wall. Even if some groups, or nationalities, from among them were to come to this side by taking some distant and long-winding route, it will still not be too far out an eventuality in the presence of powerful modern ships. In fact, some historians have mentioned that the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj have found the way to reach this side via long sea travel. If so, the Ḥadīth does not contradict that either.

In short, there is no clear and definite proof in the Qur'ān and Sunnah that goes on to establish that the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain will remain standing right through the last day of Qiyāmah. Or, their elementary and insignificant attacks against the human population on this side will not be possible. However, in all certainty, the time of that horrific and

devastating onslaught which will destroy the entire human population will be but close to the Qiyāmah as has been mentioned repeatedly. To sum up, it can be said that based on the textual authority (*nuṣūṣ*) of the Qur'ān, and Sunnah, it is not possible to give an absolute verdict that the Wall against the Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj has disintegrated leaving the passage open. Nor can it be said that, according to the Qur'ān, and Sunnah, it is necessary that it survives up to the Qiyāmah. Both probabilities exist. And Pure and High is Allah who knows reality best.

Verses 99 - 101

وَتَرَكْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ يَّمُوْجُ فِىْ بَعْضٍ وَّنُفِخَ فِى الصُّوْرِ فَجَمَعْنٰهُمْ جَمْعًا ﴿۹۹﴾ وَّعَرَضْنَا جَهَنَّمَ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْكٰفِرِيْنَ عَرْضَا ﴿۱۰۰﴾ الَّذِيْنَ كَانَتْ اَعْيُنُهُمْ فِىْ غِطَآءٍ عَنْ ذِكْرِىْ وَكَانُوْا لَايَسْتَطِيْعُوْنَ سَمْعًا ﴿۱۰۱﴾

And on that day, We will leave them (Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj) surging over one another. And the Horn shall be blown then We shall gather them together. [99] **And on that day We will bring Jahannam fully exposed before the infidels** [100] **whose eyes were under a cover against My reminders, and they were not able to listen.** [101]

Commentary

As for the pronoun of the word: بَعْضَهُمْ (*ba'ḍahum*) in بَعْضَهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ يَّمُوْجُ فِىْ بَعْضٍ (And on that day, We will leave them [Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj] surging over one another - 99), it is obvious that it reverts back to Ya'jūj Ma'jūj. Then, as for their condition described therein - 'surging over one another' - it is also obvious that this will be their state when the passage lies open for them and they will be hastening their way from the hilly heights down to the ground. Commentators have suggested other probabilities as well.

The pronoun in: فَجَمَعْنٰهُمْ (*fajama'nāhum:* Then We shall gather them together - 99) is reverting back to the creation at large, human beings and the Jinn. The sense is that the entire creation of human beings and the Jinn who have been obligated with the percepts of the Sharī'ah (*mu-*

kallaf) shall be gathered together on the plains of Resurrection (al-Hashr).

Verses 102 - 108

أَفَحَسِبَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوٓا أَنْ يَّتَّخِذُوا عِبَادِى مِنْ دُونِىٓ أَوْلِيَآءَ ۚ إِنَّآ أَعْتَدْنَا جَهَنَّمَ لِلْكٰفِرِينَ نُزُلًا ﴿١٠٢﴾ قُلْ هَلْ نُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِالْأَخْسَرِينَ أَعْمَالًا ﴿١٠٣﴾ اَلَّذِينَ ضَلَّ سَعْيُهُمْ فِى الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ يَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّهُمْ يُحْسِنُونَ صُنْعًا ﴿١٠٤﴾ أُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِاٰيٰتِ رَبِّهِمْ وَلِقَآئِهٖ فَحَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ فَلَا نُقِيمُ لَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ وَزْنًا ﴿١٠٥﴾ ذٰلِكَ جَزَآؤُهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ بِمَا كَفَرُوا وَاتَّخَذُوٓا اٰيٰتِى وَرُسُلِى هُزُوًا ﴿١٠٦﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ اٰمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ كَانَتْ لَهُمْ جَنّٰتُ الْفِرْدَوْسِ نُزُلًا ﴿١٠٧﴾ خٰلِدِينَ فِيهَا لَا يَبْغُونَ عَنْهَا حِوَلًا ﴿١٠٨﴾

Do, then, the disbelievers deem (it fit) that they take My servants as patrons beside Me? Surely, We have prepared Jahannam as entertainment for the disbelievers. [102]

Say, "Shall We tell you about the greatest losers in respect of (their) deeds? [103] **Those are the ones whose effort in the worldly life has gone in vain while they think they are doing well.** [104] **Those are the ones who disbelieved in the signs of their Lord and in the meeting with Him, so their deeds have gone waste and We shall not assign to them any weight.** [105] **That is their punishment, the Jahannam, for they disbelieved and made My signs and My messengers a mockery.** [106]

Surely those who believed and did righteous deeds theirs are the Gardens of Firdaus as entertainment [107] **where they will live forever and will not wish to move from there."** [108]

Commentary

According to Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, in the first verse (102): أَفَحَسِبَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوٓا أَنْ يَّتَّخِذُوا عِبَادِى مِنْ دُونِىٓ أَوْلِيَآءَ (Do, then, the disbelievers deem [it fit]

that they take My servants as patrons beside Me?), there is an elision (حذف: *ḥadhf*) in the text at this place, that is: فيجد بهم نفعًا وينتفعون بذلك الاتخاذ . As such, it would mean: 'Do these disbelieving people who have taken My servants - instead of Me - as the objects of their worship and the dispensers of their matters and problems think that this make-shift arrangement made by them would bring them some benefit and they would enjoy it?' This is a form of interrogative meant for negation or disapproval. In short, it means that such thinking is wrong, a mark of ignorance.

The word: عِبَادِى (*'ibādī*: My servants) used here means angels, and the particular prophets whom the people of the world worshiped taking them as partners in the pristine divinity of Allah - as Sayyidnā 'Uzair and Sayyidnā Masīḥ عليهما السلام. Those who worshiped angels were some Arabs. As for those who ascribed partners to Allah, the Jews and Christians both did it. The Jews did it in respect of Sayyidnā 'Uzair ﷺ and the Christians, in respect of Sayyidnā 'Īsā ﷺ. Therefore, meant here by: اَلَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا (*al-ladhīna kafarū*: Those who disbelieved) in this verse are these very groups of disbelievers. Some commentators have taken عِبَادِى (*'ibādī*: My servants) at this place to mean satans. In that case, اَلَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا (those who disbelieved) would mean disbelievers who worship the Jinn and satans. Some other commentators have taken عِبَادِى (*'ibādī*: My servants) at this place in the general sense of something created, under mastery, which becomes inclusive of all false objects of worship, idols, fire and stars. Maulanā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī رحمه الله تعالى has referred to this aspect in the Summary of his Tafsīr Bayān al-Qur'ān while explaining servants as subjects. However, the first explanation given above has been rated as weightier in al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ and other Tafsīrs. Allah knows best.

The word: أَوْلِيَاءَ (*awliyā'*) is the plural of وَلِى (*waliyy*). This word is used in the Arabic language to carry several meanings. At this place, it means one who gets things done, resolves matters, fulfills needs - which is the particular attribute of the true object of worship. The purpose thereby is to take them as objects of worship.

Who are those referred to as: اَلْاَخْسَرِيْنَ اَعْمَالاً (The greatest losers in respect of [their] deeds - 103)? At this place, the first two verses (101, 102) are, in terms of their general sense, inclusive of every individual or

group that would put in a lot of effort in some deeds taking them to be good, but with Allah their effort is ruined and their deed, wasted. Al-Qurṭubī said that this situation is caused due to two things. One: Corruption in Belief. Two: Hypocrisy. It means that a person whose very Belief and Faith is not correct - no matter how good he is in his deeds and how painstaking in his effort - will find all this useless and wasted in the Hereafter.

Similarly, the deed of anyone who acts for the pleasure of the created by way of hypocrisy, that deed too will remain deprived of *thawāb* (reward). It is in terms of this general sense that some revered Ṣaḥābah have declared the Khārjites as the substantiation of this verse. Then, there are some commentators who take the Mu'tazilah, the Rawāfiḍ and some others as the groups who have strayed away from the straight path. But, in the next verse (105), it has been determined that meant at this place are those particular disbelievers who deny the verses of Allah Ta'ālā and the coming of Qiyāmah and Ākhirah. It was said: أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ وَلِقَائِهِ (Those are the ones who disbelieved in the signs of their Lord and in the meeting with Him). Therefore, al-Qurṭubī, Abū Ḥayyān, Maẓharī and others prefer the view that really meant at this place are particular disbelievers who deny Allah, the Last Day and the Reckoning of deeds. But, apparently too, even those people whose deeds were ruined by their corrupted beliefs and whose effort had gone waste cannot remain unaffected by its general sense. As for the related sayings reported from Sayyidnā 'Alī and Sa'd ﷺ, this is precisely what they mean. (Qurṭubī)

The last sentence in the same verse (105): فَلَا نُقِيمُ لَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَزْنًا (and We shall not assign to them any weight) means that their deeds may appear to be great outwardly, but when placed on the balance of reckoning, they will carry no weight. The reason is that these deeds will be of no use and will not carry any weight because of *kufr* (disbelief) and *shirk* (ascribing of partners to Allah).

According to a Ḥadīth of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ appearing in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: 'On the day of Qiyāmah, there will come a tall and heavy man who, in the sight of Allah, will not be worth the weight of a mosquito.' Then he said: 'If you wish to verify it, recite this verse of the Qur'ān: فَلَا نُقِيمُ لَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَزْنًا

(and We shall not assign to them any weight).'

Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī ﷺ says: '(on the day of Qiyāmah) deeds as big as the mountains of Tihāmah will be brought in. But, they will carry no weight on the balance of justice.' (Qurṭubī)

The word: الْفِرْدَوْس (al-Firdaus) in: جَنّٰتُ الْفِرْدَوْس (Gardens of Firdaus) means a verdant valley full of fruits and flowers - with reference to Paradise. However, difference exists as to the origin of this word. Is it Arabic, or is it non-'Arabic? Those who call it non-Arabic have to refine it further. Is it Persian or Greco-Roman or Syriac? There are different views about this.

It appears in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī and Muslim that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: 'when you ask of Allah, ask for Jannatul-Firdaus because it is the highest and the superior most rank of Jannah. Above it, there is the Throne of the Rahmān and from it issue forth all streams of Jannah.' (Qurṭubī)

The purpose of the last sentence: لَا يَبْغُوْنَ عَنْهَا حِوَلًا (and will not wish to move from there - 108) is to tell that this station of Jannah is a never-ending, ever-lasting blessing for them. The reason is that Allah Ta'ālā has promulgated His command to the effect that whoever has entered Jannah will never be expelled from there. But, there was the possibility of some doubt crossing someone's heart, for human beings naturally get fed up by living at one place. They wish to move out and go to other places. Now, if they were not allowed to go elsewhere out of Jannah, they might start feeling the pinch of a sort of restriction. This was answered in the verse by saying that taking Jannah on the analogy of other places is rank ignorance. Once a person goes into the Jannah, everything he saw and lived with in the mortal world would find all that trifling in the presence of the bliss and beauty of Jannah and - so blessed in that manner - no one would ever even think of going out of here.

Verses 109 - 110

قُلْ لَّوْ كَانَ الْبَحْرُ مِدَادًا لِّكَلِمٰتِ رَبِّيْ لَنَفِدَ الْبَحْرُ قَبْلَ اَنْ تَنْفَدَ
كَلِمٰتُ رَبِّيْ وَلَوْ جِئْنَا بِمِثْلِهٖ مَدَدًا ﴿١٠٩﴾ قُلْ اِنَّمَآ اَنَا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ

يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ أَنَّمَآ إِلَٰهُكُمْ إِلَٰهٌ وَّاحِدٌ ۖ فَمَن كَانَ يَرْجُوا لِقَآءَ رَبِّهِ فَلْيَعْمَلْ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَّلَا يُشْرِكْ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهِ أَحَدًا ﴿١١٠﴾

Say, "If the ocean were to be ink for the Words of my Lord, the ocean would have been consumed before the Words of my Lord are exhausted, even though we were to bring another one, like it, in addition." [109]

Say, "Surely, I am but a human being like you; it is revealed to me that your God is the One God. So the one who hopes to meet his Lord must do righteous deed and must not associate anyone in the worship of his Lord." [110]

Commentary

The cause of the revelation of the last verse of Sūrah al-Kahf: وَلَا يُشْرِكْ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهِ أَحَدًا (and must not associate anyone in the worship of his Lord - 110), as mentioned in Ḥadīth reports, shows that *shirk* at this place means hidden *shirk,* that is, hypocrisy (رِيَاء : *riyā'*).

One such narration from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ﷺ has been reported by Imām Ḥākim in al-Mustadrak as being sound on the criterion set forth by the two authorities, al-Bukhārī and Muslim. According to the narration, one of the Muslims used to carry out Jihād in the way of Allah. Side by side, he wished that his soldiering and bravery in the cause be recognized and appreciated by the people. This verse was revealed about him (which tells us that one gets no *thawāb* (reward) by having such an intention in Jihād).

In Kitābul-Ikhlāṣ, Ibn Abī Ḥātim and Ibn Abī al-Dunyā have reported from Ṭāwūs that a Ṣaḥābī stated before the Holy Prophet ﷺ: 'There are occasions when I am ready to worship, or to do some righteous deed, my aim thereby is nothing but the pleasure of Allah. But, along with it, I do have the wish that people would see me doing it.' Hearing this, he observed silence until the cited verse was revealed.

And in Abū Nu'aym and in the history of Ibn 'Asākir, it appears on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ that whenever the Ṣaḥābī, Sayyidnā Jundub ibn Zuhayr ﷺ prayed, fasted or gave in charity and then saw people admiring him for doing those deeds, he felt pleased

about it and would then increase the frequency of those deeds. Thereupon, this verse was revealed.

The gist of narrations given above is that the *shirk* prohibited in this verse is the hidden *shirk* of showing off (*riyā'*). And that a deed may though be for Allah alone but, along with it, should it become associated with some selfish motive of name, fame and recognition, then, this too will be a kind of hidden *shirk,* something that makes one's deed go waste, even harmful.

However, there are some other Ṣaḥīḥ Aḥādīth which apparently seem to indicate otherwise. For example, Tirmidhī reports from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ that he submitted before the Holy Prophet ﷺ: 'There are times when I am on my prayer mat inside my house (making Ṣalāh) and, all of a sudden, there comes someone. I like it that he saw me in that state. (Would that be *riyā'*?)' The Holy Prophet ﷺ said, 'O Abū Hurairah, may Allah have mercy on you. Then you get two rewards, one for the deed you were already doing in secret, and the other for what you did openly after the coming of that person. (This is no *riyā'*).'

And according to a narration of Sayyidnā Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī ﷺ appearing in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was asked, 'What do you say about a person who does some good deed, then hears people praising it?' The Holy Prophet ﷺ said, تِلْكَ عَاجِلُ بُشْرَى الْمُؤْمِن : "This is instant good news for the believer." (that his deed was accepted with Allah and He had his servants praise it).

The apparent difference in these two kinds of narrations has been resolved and brought in agreement in Tafsīr Maẓharī. It says that the first kind of narrations about the cause of the revelation of the verse apply to a particular situation. This is when one associates his intention to please people or to earn a good name for himself along with the intention of seeking the pleasure of Allah through his deed to the extent that he further increases the frequency of that deed on being praised by people for it. This is, no doubt, hypocrisy (*riyā'*) and hidden *shirk.*

And the latter narrations, those from Tirmidhī and Muslim, concern another situation. This is when one has acted for the pleasure of Allah alone without any inclination of receiving publicity or praise for it and

then Allah Ta'ālā, in His grace, gives him fame by making people praise him. If so, it has nothing to do with *riyā'* (showing off). In fact, this is spontaneous good news for the believer (that his deed has found acceptance with Allah).

Riyā' and its Evil Consequences: Stern Warnings of Ḥadīth

Sayyidnā Maḥmūd ibn Labīd reports that the Holy Prophet said, 'What I fear most about you is minor *shirk.'* The Ṣaḥābah asked: 'Yā Rasūlallah, what is minor *shirk*?' He said, 'Riyā'' (to do something only to show people). (Reported by Aḥmad in his Musnad)

After having reported this Ḥadīth in Shu'ab-al-'Īmān, Al-Baihaqī has also reported the remarks: 'On the day of Qiyāmah, when Allah Ta'ālā will reward His servants for their deeds, He will ask the practitioners of *riyā'* to go for their rewards to those they wanted to impress with their deeds and find out whether or not they have any for them.'

Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah reports that the Holy Prophet said, "Allah Ta'ālā says 'I am free and above from associating with those associated with Me. Whoever does a good deed and then associates in it someone else with Me, then, I leave the entire deed for the one associated.' And, according to another narration, 'I withdraw from that deed making it exclusive for the person associated with me.' (Narrated by Muslim)

And Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar reports that he heard the Holy Prophet saying, 'Whoever does a good deed to earn a fair name among people, then, Allah Ta'ālā too deals with him in a manner that he is disgraced before them.' (Narrated by Aḥmad in Shu'ab-al-'Īmān - from Tafsīr Maẓharī)

It appears in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī that Sayyidnā Ḥasan al-Baṣrī was asked about *ikhlāṣ* (unalloyed sincerity) and *riyā'* (showing off). He said: Ikhlāṣ requires that your good deeds remaining hidden should be what you like and the bad deeds remaining hidden should be what you do not like. After that, if Allah Ta'ālā discloses your deeds before the people, you should say, 'Yā Allah, all this is Your grace and favor, not the outcome of my deed and effort.'

And Tirmidhī reports from Sayyidnā Abū Bakr that the Holy

Prophet ﷺ once mentioned *shirk* by saying: هُوَفِيْكُمْ اَخفٰى مِنْ دَبِيْبِ النَّمْلِ (It is right there in you more stealthily than the soundless movement of an ant). Then, he added, 'I tell you something which, if you do, you will remain safe against all sorts of *shirk,* major or minor (*riyā'*). Make this prayer (*du'ā'*) three times every day:

اَللّٰهُمَّ اِنِّیْ اَعُوْذُبِكَ اَنْ اُشْرِكَ بِكَ وَاَنَا اَعْلَمُ وَاَسْتَغْفِرُكَ لِمَا لَاَاَعْلَمُ

> O' Allah, I seek refuge with You lest I associate a partner with You while I know and I seek forgiveness from You for what I do not know.

Some Merits and Properties of Sūrah al-Kahf

Sayyidnā Abū al-Dardā' ؓ reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Whoever remembers to recite the first ten verses of Sūrah al-Kahf will remain safe against the *fitnah* (upheaval, trial) caused by Dajjāl (anti-Christ). (Reported by Muslim, Aḥmad, Abū Dāwūd and al-Nasā'ī)

And Imām Aḥmad, Muslim and al-Nasā'ī have reported within this narration from Sayyidnā Abū al-Dardā' words to the effect that 'whoever remembers to recite the last ten verses of Sūrah al-Kahf will remain safe against the *fitnah* of Dajjāl.'

And according to a narration of Sayyidnā Anas ؓ, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Whoever recites the initial and the concluding verses of Sūrah al-Kahf will have light for him, from his feet up to his head. And whoever recites this Sūrah in full will have light for him, from the ground up to the sky." (Reported by Ibn al-Sunni, and Aḥmad in his Musnad)

And as narrated by Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd ؓ, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Whoever recites Sūrah al-Kahf in full on the day of Jumu'ah will have light for him until the next Jumu'ah. (Reported and declared as Ṣaḥīḥ by al-Ḥākim and al-Baihaqī in al-Da'awāt - from Maẓharī)

To Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ؓ someone said, 'I resolve in my heart to wake up in the later part of night and make Ṣalāh but sleep overtakes me.' Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās said to him, 'recite the last verses of Sūrah al-Kahf - from: قُلْ لَّوْكَانَ الْبَحْرُ مِدَادًا (109) to the end of the Sūrah (110) - before you sleep. Then, the time you intend to wake up will be the time when Allah Ta'ālā will wake you up.' (Reported by ath-Tha'alibī)

And according to the Musnad of al-Dārimī, Zirr ibn Ḥubaish told 'Abdah, 'Anyone who sleeps after having recited these last verses will wake up at the time he or she intends to.' And 'Abdah says, 'we have tried this repeatedly. It happens just like that.'

An important word of advice

Ibn al-'Arabī quotes his Shaikh, Ṭurtūshī: 'Let not the hours of your dear life pass away confronting contemporaries and socializing with friends. Watch out! Allah Ta'ālā has concluded His statement on the following verse:

فَمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُوا لِقَآءَ رَبِّهٖ فَلْيَعْمَلْ عَمَلاً صَالِحًا وَّ لاَ يُشْرِكْ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهٖٓ اَحَدًا

So the one who hopes to meet his Lord must do righteous deed and must not associate anyone in the worship of his Lord - 110 (Al-Qurṭubī)

Alhamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah al-Kahf
And Volume V
End here.

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MA'ĀRIFUL-QUR'ĀN

By

MAULĀNĀ MUFTI MUḤAMMAD SHAFI' رحمۃ اللہ علیہ

Translated By

Muḥammad Ishrat Husain

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Volume 6

(Sūrah Maryam, Ṭāhā, Al-Anbiyā', Al-Ḥajj, Al-Mu'minūn, An-Nūr, Al-Furqān, Ash-Shu'arā', An-Naml, Al-Qaṣaṣ, Al-Ankabūt, Ar-Rūm)

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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

Preface

الحمدلله رب العالمين، والصلاة والسلام على رسوله الكريم
وعلى آله وصحبه اجمعين

By the grace of Allah Subḥānahu Ta'ālā we are now able to present the sixth volume of Ma'ariful-Qur'ān. Keeping in view the length of work we had decided to divide it between a number of translators, and this sixth volume was entrusted to my learned brother Mr. Muḥammad Ishrat Ḥussain who has accomplished the task with ability and devotion. This volume is entirely translated by him and after my revision and editing it is now being presented to the readers .

Acknowledgements are due to Maulānā 'Abdullāh Memon and Qārī 'Abdur Rashīd who have contributed in connection with Arabic text, and Mr. Rafat Saghir Farooqui who contributed to the proof reading of the final text, and also to Mr. Yūsuf Ghanī who helped me in several respects, particularly in proof reading, preparing the index and in supervising the process of composing.

May Allah bless all these brothers with the best of rewards both here and in the hereafter, and make this work beneficial for the Ummah.

Muḥammad Taqi Usmānī

TRANSLITERATION SCHEME

Arabic Letter	Name of Letter		English Transliteration
ا	الف	-- Alif	a
ب	باء	-- bā	b
ت	تاء	-- tā	t
ث	ثاء	-- thā	th
ج	جيم	-- jīm	j
ح	حاء	-- ḥā	ḥ
خ	خاء	-- khā	kh
د	دال	-- dāl	d
ذ	ذال	-- dhāl	dh
ر	راء	-- rā	r
ز	زای	-- zā	z
س	سين	-- sīn	s
ش	شين	-- shīn	sh
ص	صاد	-- ṣād	ṣ
ض	ضاد	-- ḍād	ḍ
ط	طاء	-- ṭā	ṭ
ظ	ظاء	-- ẓā	ẓ
ع	عين	-- 'ayn	'
غ	غين	-- ghayn	gh
ف	فاء	-- fā	f
ق	قاف	-- qāf	q
ك	كاف	-- kāf	k
ل	لام	-- lām	l
م	ميم	-- mīm	m
ن	نون	-- nūn	n
ه	هاء	-- hā	h
و	واؤ	-- wāw	w
ء	همزه	-- Hamzah	'
ی	یاء	-- yā	y

Short Vowels

	: Fatḥah	a
	: Kasrah	i
	: Ḍammah	u

Long Vowels

ا	: Shortened Alif	ā
آ	: Maddah Alif	ā
ىٖ	: Maddah Yā	ī
وٗ	: Maddah Wāw	ū

Dipthongs

اَی	:Alif and Yā	ay (also ai in some cases)
او اوْ	: Alif and Wāw	aw (also au in some cases)

Sūrah Maryam

(Mary)

Sūrah Maryam was revealed in Makkah and it has 98 Verses and 6 Sections.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful the Very-Merciful

Verses 1- 15

كٓهٰيٰعٓصٓ ﴿١﴾ ذِكْرُ رَحْمَتِ رَبِّكَ عَبْدَهٗ زَكَرِيَّا ﴿٢﴾ اِذْ نَادٰى رَبَّهٗ
نِدَآءً خَفِيًّا ﴿٣﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ اِنِّىْ وَهَنَ الْعَظْمُ مِنِّىْ وَاشْتَعَلَ الرَّاْسُ شَيْبًا
وَّلَمْ اَكُنْۢ بِدُعَآئِكَ رَبِّ شَقِيًّا ﴿٤﴾ وَاِنِّىْ خِفْتُ الْمَوَالِىَ مِنْ
وَّرَآءِىْ وَكَانَتِ امْرَاَتِىْ عَاقِرًا فَهَبْ لِىْ مِنْ لَّدُنْكَ وَلِيًّا ﴿٥﴾ يَّرِثُنِىْ
وَيَرِثُ مِنْ اٰلِ يَعْقُوْبَ ۖ وَاجْعَلْهُ رَبِّ رَضِيًّا ﴿٦﴾ يٰزَكَرِيَّآ اِنَّا نُبَشِّرُكَ
بِغُلٰمِ اِۨسْمُهٗ يَحْيٰى ۙ لَمْ نَجْعَلْ لَّهٗ مِنْ قَبْلُ سَمِيًّا ﴿٧﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ اَنّٰى
يَكُوْنُ لِىْ غُلٰمٌ وَّكَانَتِ امْرَاَتِىْ عَاقِرًا وَّقَدْ بَلَغْتُ مِنَ الْكِبَرِ عِتِيًّا
﴿٨﴾ قَالَ كَذٰلِكَ ۚ قَالَ رَبُّكَ هُوَ عَلَىَّ هَيِّنٌ وَّقَدْ خَلَقْتُكَ مِنْ قَبْلُ
وَلَمْ تَكُ شَيْئًا ﴿٩﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ لِّىْٓ اٰيَةً ؕ قَالَ اٰيَتُكَ اَلَّا تُكَلِّمَ
النَّاسَ ثَلٰثَ لَيَالٍ سَوِيًّا ﴿١٠﴾ فَخَرَجَ عَلٰى قَوْمِهٖ مِنَ الْمِحْرَابِ
فَاَوْحٰٓى اِلَيْهِمْ اَنْ سَبِّحُوْا بُكْرَةً وَّعَشِيًّا ﴿١١﴾ يٰيَحْيٰى خُذِ الْكِتٰبَ
بِقُوَّةٍ ؕ وَاٰتَيْنٰهُ الْحُكْمَ صَبِيًّا ﴿١٢﴾ وَّحَنَانًا مِّنْ لَّدُنَّا وَزَكٰوةً ؕ وَكَانَ
تَقِيًّا ﴿١٣﴾ وَّبَرًّۢا بِوَالِدَيْهِ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ جَبَّارًا عَصِيًّا ﴿١٤﴾ وَسَلٰمٌ عَلَيْهِ

يَوْمَ وُلِدَ وَيَوْمَ يَمُوتُ وَيَوْمَ يُبْعَثُ حَيًّا ﴿١٥﴾

Kaf, Hā Yā, 'Ain, Sad [1] **This is a narration of your Lord's mercy to His servant Zakariyyā,** [2] **When he called his Lord in a low voice.** [3] **He said, "My Lord, here I am that bones within me have turned feeble, and the head has flared up grey with old age, and I never remained My Lord, unanswered in my prayer to You.** [4] **And I fear (my) kins after me, and my wife is barren, so bless me with an heir, from Your own side,** [5] **who inherits me and inherits the house of Ya'qūb. And make him, O my Lord, a favorite one."** [6]

(Allah said) "O Zakariyyā, We give you the good news of a boy whose name is Yaḥyā (John). We did not create any one before him of the same name." [7] **He Said, "My Lord, how shall there be a boy for me while my wife is barren and I have reached the extreme of old age?"** [8]

He said, "So it is; your Lord said 'it is easy for Me, and I did create you before, when you were nothing.'" [9] **He said, "My Lord, make for me a sign." He said, "Your sign is that you will not (be able to) speak to the people for three (consecutive) nights, though fit."** [10]

Then he came out to his people from the place of prayer and directed them by gestures to proclaim the purity of Allah at morning and evening. [11]

(When the child was born, Allah said to him,) "O Yaḥyā", hold on to the Book firmly." And We gave him wisdom, while still a child, [12] **and love from our own, and purity; and he was God-fearing,** [13] **and he was good to his parents; and he was not oppressive nor disobedient.** [14] **And peace on him the day he was born, the day he dies and the day he will be raised alive.** [15]

Commentary

In the Holy Qur'ān Sūrah Maryam has been placed immediately after Sūrah Al-Kahf, presumably because there appears some kind of similarity between the two Sūrahs. While the former deals with some unusual anecdotes, the latter also covers a number of extraordinary events.

كٓهٰيٰعٓصٓ are letters known in Arabic as حُرُوْفِ مُقَطَّعَه whose meanings, like

مُتَشَابِهَات are known only to Allah Ta'ālā and people should not even attempt to probe their meanings.

نِدَآءً خَفِيًّا (a low voice - 19:3) tells us that it is better to beseech Allah in supplication in undertone. Sayyidnā Sa'd Ibn Abī Waqqāṣ has narrated that the Holy Prophet ﷺ once said.

ان خيرالذكر الخفي، وخير الرزق ما يكفي

"Surely the best way to make supplication to Allah is in undertone and the best sustenance is that which is sufficient for one's needs (i.e. neither more nor less than required)" (Qurṭubī)

اِنِّیْ وَهَنَ الْعَظْمُ مِنِّیْ وَاشْتَعَلَ الرَّأْسُ شَيْبًا

"Here I am that bones within me have turned feeble, and the head has flared up grey with old age." - 19:4

Human body becomes weak with the aging of bones, because it is the bones which keep the body firm and upright. When bones lose their strength, the whole body turns weak.

The literal meaning of اِشْتِعَال is a sudden burst of fire. Here the word is used as a simile for grey hair covering the head like a glow of fire.

Mention of one's needs in supplication is desirable

Here Sayyidnā Zakariyya عليه السلام before making his supplication, mentioned about his weakness and old age by referring to his bones . One of the reasons for this was, as pointed out in the translation, that in his peculiar circumstances i.e. his old age and physical weakness, it was not appropriate for him to ask for a child. Another reason given by Imām Qurṭubī in his commentary is, that for possible acceptance of supplication it is better to mention one's weakness, destitution and inadequacy. For this reason religious scholars have emphasized that one should recount Allah Ta'ālā's blessings and his own exigency before making his supplication.

مَوَالِی is the plural of مولی. This word has many meanings in the Arabic language, one of them being a cousin, or other relations on the father's side. Here the word has been used in this sense.

The Legacy of Prophets cannot be inherited

يَّرِثُنِیْ وَيَرِثُ مِنْ اٰلِ يَعْقُوْبَ

"Who inherits me and inherits the house of Ya'qūb." - 19:6.

The religious scholars are all agreed that here the inheritance does not mean wealth, because in the first place, it has not been established that Sayyidnā Zakariyyā عليه السلام had much wealth. Hence, the question as to who would inherit the same, does not arise. Secondly, it is inconsistent with the exalted position of a prophet to concern himself with such matters. And thirdly, a saying of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, which has been unanimously accepted by all religious scholars, says:

إن العلماء ورثة الأنبياء، وان الانبياء لم يورثوا دينارا ولادرهما انما ورثوا العلم، فمن اخذه اخذ بحظ وافر. (رواه احمد وأبو داؤد و ابن ماجة والترمذی)

"Indeed the knowledgeable scholars are the inheritors of the prophets, because the prophets do not leave any material wealth. Their legacy is knowledge. One who has acquired knowledge has received great fortune."

The above saying of the Prophet ﷺ is also recorded in Al-Kāfi, by Al-Kulainī, the well-known book of the Shī'ite school. It is narrated in Sahīh Al-Bukhari through Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی الله عنها that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

لا نورث، ماتركنا صدقة

"No one inherits our (i.e. prophets') wealth, because whatever wealth we leave behind is Ṣadaqah (Charity) (صدقه)."

In the verse itself after يَرِثُنِىْ the addition of the words يَرِثُ مِنْ الِ يَعْقُوْبَ (19:6) confirms the view that here the material inheritance is not implied, because the son, Yaḥyā عليه السلام, could not have inherited the material wealth of the family of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, which could only be inherited by their near relations and not by Sayyidnā Yaḥyā عليه السلام. It is against the law of inheritance for distant relations to receive any part of inheritance in the presence of close relatives.

Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī quotes the following from Al-Kāfi, by Al-Kulainī, the well-known Shī'ah scholar:

عن ابی البختری عن ابی عبدالله قال: إن سليمان ورث داؤد وإن محمّدا صلی الله عليه وسلم ورث سليمان۔

"Sulaymān عليه السلام was the heir of Dāwūd عليه السلام and Muḥammad ﷺ was the heir of Sulaymān عليه السلام."

It is quite obvious that the Holy Prophet ﷺ did not inherit any material wealth from Sulaymān عليه السلام, nor did Sulaymān عليه السلام receive any

such inheritance from Dāwūd ﷺ. Clearly the reference here is to the wisdom and the knowledge which all prophets of Allah possess.

لَمْ نَجْعَل لَّهُ مِن قَبْلُ سَمِيًّا

"We did not create any one before him of the same name." - 19:7.

The word سَمِيٌّ means "person having the same name." It also means "similar." If the first meaning is adopted here then it would suggest that no one else had the name Yaḥyā before him. This fact also suggests that he possessed certain special attributes which were not granted to any one else before him. And if we take the second meaning of the word سَمِيٌّ then it will mean that some of his attributes and situations were such that they were peculiar to him and were not shared by any other prophet, and that he was unique in the possession of those special attributes, for instance his self abnegation and denial of worldly comforts (حَصُوْر). However, it does not necessarily follow that he was superior to all the prophets who preceded him, for the superiority of Sayyidnā Ibrahīm Khalīlullāh and Sayyidnā Mūsa Kalīmullāh عليهما السلام over him is established and well known. (Maẓharī)

The word عِتِيًّا is derived from عتو which actually means 'unresponsive' or 'insensitive', and in the present context it means dryness of the bones. سَوِيًّا means healthy. This word has been added here to denote that Sayyidnā Zakariyyā's ﷺ loss of speech for three days was not due to any illness, for during this entire period of three days he could utter words of prayer and supplication. This special condition was a miracle and a sign from Allah Ta'ālā about his wife's pregnancy. حَنَانًا Literal meaning of this word is softheartedness, compassion and mercy, and these qualities were specially granted to Sayyidnā Yaḥyā ﷺ.

Verses 16 - 21

وَاذْكُرْ فِي الْكِتٰبِ مَرْيَمَ ۘ اِذِ انْتَبَذَتْ مِنْ اَهْلِهَا مَكَانًا شَرْقِيًّا ﴿١٦﴾ فَاتَّخَذَتْ مِنْ دُوْنِهِمْ حِجَابًا ۚ فَاَرْسَلْنَآ اِلَيْهَا رُوْحَنَا فَتَمَثَّلَ لَهَا بَشَرًا سَوِيًّا ﴿١٧﴾ قَالَتْ اِنِّيْٓ اَعُوْذُ بِالرَّحْمٰنِ مِنْكَ اِنْ كُنْتَ تَقِيًّا ﴿١٨﴾ قَالَ اِنَّمَآ اَنَا رَسُوْلُ رَبِّكِ ۖ لِاَهَبَ لَكِ غُلٰمًا زَكِيًّا ﴿١٩﴾

قَالَتْ اَنّٰى يَكُوْنُ لِىْ غُلٰمٌ وَّلَمْ يَمْسَسْنِىْ بَشَرٌ وَّلَمْ اَكُ بَغِيًّا ﴿٢٠﴾ قَالَ كَذٰلِكِ ۚ قَالَ رَبُّكِ هُوَ عَلَىَّ هَيِّنٌ ۚ وَلِنَجْعَلَهٗٓ اٰيَةً لِّلنَّاسِ وَرَحْمَةً مِّنَّا ۚ وَكَانَ اَمْرًا مَّقْضِيًّا ﴿٢١﴾

And mention in the Book (the story of) Maryam, when she withdrew from her people to a place eastwards, [16] **then she used a barrier to hide herself from them. Then, We sent to her Our Spirit and he took before her the form of a perfect human.** [17] **She said, "I seek refuge with the Raḥmān (All-Merciful) against you if you are God-fearing.** [18] **He said, "I am but a message-bearer of your Lord (sent) to give you a boy, purified."** [19] **She said, "How shall I have a boy while no human has ever touched me nor have I ever been unchaste?"** [20] **He said, "So it is; your Lord said, 'It is easy for Me, and (We will do this) so that We make it a sign for people and a mercy from Us. And this is something already destined.' "** [21]

Commentary

The word اِنْتَبَذَتْ is derived from نَبَذ which means to throw away or to cast away. Hence, the meaning of اِنْتِبَاذ is to withdraw from the crowd. مَكَانًا شَرقِيًّا denotes that she retired to a secluded corner of the house facing east. The purpose of her shifting to a secluded corner of the house has been differently explained. Some say she had moved there to take a bath, while others say that she had moved as usual to a secluded corner on the eastern side of her place of worship for offering her prayers. Qurṭubī has given preference to the second explanation. According to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ, this is the reason why the Christians face east when offering their prayers, and revere the eastern direction.

فَاَرْسَلْنَا اِلَيْهَا رُوْحَنَا

"Then, We sent to her Our Spirit." - 19:17.

A majority of scholars hold the view that رُوْح (Spirit) refers to Sayyidnā Jibra'īl ﷺ but some say that it refers to Sayyidnā 'Īsā ﷺ himself. Allah Ta'ālā had placed before Sayyidah Maryam ﷺ the likeness of the son to be born to her. But the former version is more appropriate and is confirmed by the statement that follows.

فَتَمَثَّلَ لَهَا بَشَرًا سَوِيًّا

"He took before her the form of a perfect human." - 19:17.

It is not given to a human being to see an angel in its real form, because he will be overwhelmed by fright at such an experience. This, indeed is, that happened to The Holy Prophet ﷺ in the cave of Ḥirā' on his first encounter with Sayyidnā Jibra'īl عليه السلام, and again later on. Sayyidnā Jibra'īl عليه السلام appeared before Sayyidah Maryam عليها السلام in the form of a man, so as not to frighten her. When Sayyidah Maryam عليها السلام saw a man near her she became apprehensive of his intentions and said اِنِّیْۤ اَعُوْذُ بِالرَّحْمٰنِ مِنْکَ "I seek refuge of the Raḥmān (All-Merciful), against you." (19:18) Some reports have it that when Sayyidnā Jibra'īl عليه السلام heard these words he retreated a little in reverence of Allah's name.

اِنْ كُنْتَ تَقِيًّا

"If you are God-fearing." - 19:18.

These are the words which a helpless person would utter to a cruel oppressor begging him that if he is a believer then he should desist from tormenting him. The intention is that Sayyidah Maryam عليها السلام entreated Sayyidnā Jibra'īl عليه السلام, who stood before her in the guise of a man, that he should fear Allah and abstain from evil deeds. In short, the expression اِنْ كُنْتَ تَقِيًّا (if you are God-fearing - 19:18) is not a pre-condition for seeking the protection of Allah but a condition to make her prayer more effective and inducing. Some other commentators have said that this expression is used for emphasis, meaning that even if you fear Allah I seek His protection; and if the position is otherwise then I shall seek Allah's refuge with added vehemence. (Maẓharī)

لِاَهَبَ لَكِ غُلٰمًا (to give you a boy - 19:19) Here Sayyidnā Jibra'īl عليه السلام had attributed to himself the gift of the child because Allah Ta'ālā had sent him in order that he should breathe into her collar, and this breath would be the means of her conceiving the child, whereas in reality this gift was by the act of Allah.

Verse 22 - 26

فَحَمَلَتْهُ فَانْتَبَذَتْ بِهٖ مَكَانًا قَصِيًّا ﴿۲۲﴾ فَاَجَآءَهَا الْمَخَاضُ اِلٰى

جِذْعِ النَّخْلَةِ ۚ قَالَتْ يٰلَيْتَنِىْ مِتُّ قَبْلَ هٰذَا وَكُنْتُ نَسْيًا مَّنْسِيًّا
﴿٢٣﴾ فَنَادٰىهَا مِنْ تَحْتِهَا اَلَّا تَحْزَنِىْ قَدْ جَعَلَ رَبُّكِ تَحْتَكِ سَرِيًّا
﴿٢٤﴾ وَهُزِّىْٓ اِلَيْكِ بِجِذْعِ النَّخْلَةِ تُسٰقِطْ عَلَيْكِ رُطَبًا جَنِيًّا ﴿٢٥﴾
فَكُلِىْ وَاشْرَبِىْ وَقَرِّىْ عَيْنًا ۚ فَاِمَّا تَرَيِنَّ مِنَ الْبَشَرِ اَحَدًا ۙ فَقُوْلِىْٓ اِنِّىْ
نَذَرْتُ لِلرَّحْمٰنِ صَوْمًا فَلَنْ اُكَلِّمَ الْيَوْمَ اِنْسِيًّا ﴿٢٦﴾

So she conceived him, and went in seclusion with him to a remote place. [22] **Then the labour pains brought her to the trunk of a palm-tree. She said "O that I would have died before this and been something gone, forgotten."** [23] **Then he called her from beneath her: "Grieve not. Your Lord has placed a stream beneath you.** [24] **And shake the trunk of the palm-tree towards yourself and, it will drop upon you ripe fresh dates.** [25] **So eat, drink and cool your eyes. Then if you see any human being, say (to him), "I have vowed a fast (of silence) for The Raḥmān (All-Merciful), and therefore, I shall never speak to any human today."** [26]

Commentary

Injunction in respect of desire for death

If her desire for death was due to worldly problems then she may be excused on the ground that she was overpowered by the surrounding circumstances and had reached a state of mind usually called by the mystics as غلبة الحال "Ghalabah-tul-Ḥāl." But if the desire for death was due to religious consideration, it was justifiable in its own right, because she feared that people would talk ill of her and she would not be able to endure it with patience. This could be tantamount to committing a sin of showing impatience and only death could save her from such a predicament..

The vow of silence has been prohibited under the Islamic Law

Before the advent of Islam silence was also a form of worship, and those who observed this fast were not supposed to speak from dawn to dusk. Islam cancelled this fast and made it mandatory to refrain from idle talk, lying and back-biting. Refraining from normal conversation is not a

form of worship in Islam anymore and hence to take a vow of silence is also not permissible. Abū Dāwūd رحمة الله عليه has reported the following Ḥadīth from the Holy Prophet ﷺ:

لايتم بعد احتلام، ولا صمات يوم الى الليل

It means that a child who has lost his father may not be regarded as an orphan after attaining puberty, and the rules pertaining to an orphan cease to apply on him. And that remaining silent from dawn to dusk is not a form of worship in Islam (This Ḥadīth has been rated by As-Suyūṭī and Al-'Azizi as Ḥasan).

She has been directed to eat the dates because it has been established medically that the use of water and dates gives relief in labour pains.

Conceiving a child without copulation with a man is not totally impossible

That Sayyidah Maryam عليها السلام conceived and gave birth to a child was a miracle. And miracles, however improbable they may be in appearance, are not beyond Allah's power, rather, the more improbable they are, the more pronounced their miraculous nature. However, it cannot be taken as totally impossible, because according to some books of medical science, the lubricants found inside the female genitals are not merely a passive agent for conceiving a child; they also have a capacity of being active and a potential to make fetus by themselves without an external semen joining them. Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna), the famous medical scientist, has mentioned in his book 'Al-Qānūn' that in a special disease, named by him as 'Raja' an imperfect form of even the organs of a fetus is shaped in the uterus of a woman without the intermediation of a male semen. So long as this potential is there, it cannot be taken as totally impossible, because some abnormal factor may increase this potential.

In verse 25 Allah Ta'ālā commanded Sayyidah Maryam عليها السلام to shake the date tree, although it was within His power to drop the dates in her lap. But here the suggestion is that one should strive to earn one's living, and that the struggle for sustenance does not conflict with one's trust in Allah (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī).

سَرِيًّا The literal meaning of the word سَرِی appearing in verse 24 is a small canal. Allah Ta'ālā caused a small stream to flow at the moment

either by his direct command or through Sayyidnā Jibra'īl عليه السلام. There are reports supporting both these probabilities. It is worth noting here that while describing the means to bring consolation to Sayyidah Maryam عليها السلام water was mentioned first and then date as something to eat. But in the matter of their actual use the order was reversed i.e. eating was enjoined first and then drinking. It is perhaps because normally a person first makes arrangement for drinking water and then for food, specially such food as is more likely to produce thirst. But when it comes to their use the sequence gets reversed i.e. one eats first and then drinks water. (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī).

Verses 27 - 33

فَاَتَتْ بِهٖ قَوْمَهَا تَحْمِلُهٗ ط قَالُوْا يٰمَرْيَمُ لَقَدْ جِئْتِ شَيْـًٔا فَرِيًّا ﴿٢٧﴾
يٰۤاُخْتَ هٰرُوْنَ مَا كَانَ اَبُوْكِ امْرَاَ سَوْءٍ وَّمَا كَانَتْ اُمُّكِ بَغِيًّا ﴿٢٨﴾ ج
فَاَشَارَتْ اِلَيْهِ ط قَالُوْا كَيْفَ نُكَلِّمُ مَنْ كَانَ فِى الْمَهْدِ صَبِيًّا ﴿٢٩﴾
قَالَ اِنِّىْ عَبْدُ اللّٰهِ ط اٰتٰنِىَ الْكِتٰبَ وَجَعَلَنِىْ نَبِيًّا ﴿٣٠﴾ وَّجَعَلَنِىْ
مُبٰرَكًا اَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُ ص وَاَوْصٰنِىْ بِالصَّلٰوةِ وَالزَّكٰوةِ مَا دُمْتُ حَيًّا
﴿٣١﴾ وَّبَرًّا ۢ بِوَالِدَتِىْ ز وَلَمْ يَجْعَلْنِىْ جَبَّارًا شَقِيًّا ﴿٣٢﴾ وَالسَّلٰمُ
عَلَىَّ يَوْمَ وُلِدْتُّ وَيَوْمَ اَمُوْتُ وَيَوْمَ اُبْعَثُ حَيًّا ﴿٣٣﴾

Then she came to her people carrying him (the baby). They said, "O Maryam you have come out with something grave indeed. [27] **O sister of Hārūn, neither your father was a man of evil nor was your mother unchaste."** [28] **So she pointed towards him (the baby). They said, "How shall we speak to someone who is yet a child in the cradle?"** [29] **Spoke he (the baby), "Verily I am the servant of Allah. He has given me the Book and made me a prophet,** [30] **and He has made me a blessed one wherever I be, and has enjoined Ṣalāh and Zakāh upon me as long as I am alive,** [31] **and (He has made me) good to my mother, and he did not make me oppressive nor ill-fated.** [32] **And peace is upon me the day I was born, the day I shall die, and the day I shall be raised**

alive again." [33]

Commentary

فَأَتَتْ بِهِ قَوْمَهَا تَحْمِلُهُ

"Then she came to her people carrying him." - 19:27

These words suggest that when Sayyidah Maryam عليها السلام was comforted by the super-natural indications that Allah Ta'ālā will protect her from disgrace, she took the newborn baby with her to her house. As to the time when she returned home after giving birth to the child, Ibn 'Asa'akir has narrated through Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ that she returned home to her people forty days after the birth of the child i.e. after the completion of the period of *Nifās* (the bleeding period after the birth of a child). (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī)

شَيْـًٔا فَرِيًّا (Something grave indeed - 19:27). The word فري in Arabic language means to cut or to split, and is used to describe a task where a great deal of cutting and chopping is involved. However, Abū Ḥayyan has said that the word فري means anything having preposterous and extraordinary significance, and may be used both in good and in bad sense. In the present context it is used to describe something monstrous, hence translated in the text as 'something grave'. Generally this word is used for things which are known to be bad and corrupt in the extreme.

يَا أُخْتَ هٰرُوْنَ (O sister of Hārūn - 19:28). Sayyidnā Hārūn ﷺ, who was the brother and companion of Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ had died centuries before Sayyidah Maryam عليها السلام time. It is obvious, therefore, that in verse 28 where Sayyidah Maryam عليها السلام is addressed as the sister of Sayyidnā Hārūn cannot be in its literal sense. This is also corroborated by the incident that when The Holy Prophet ﷺ sent Sayyidnā Mughīrah Ibn Shu'bah ﷺ as his ambassador to the people of Najrān they questioned him that in the Qur'ān Sayyidah Maryam عليها السلام has been referred to as the sister of Sayyidnā Hārūn whereas he had died long before her. Sayyidnā Mughīrah ﷺ did not know the answer to this question. So, when he returned from the mission, he narrated the whole incident to The Holy Prophet ﷺ. On this The Holy Prophet ﷺ said why did you not tell them that it has been a common practice with the believers to adopt the names of the prophets in expectation of receiving their Barakah (blessings), and to claim relationship with them. (Aḥmad,

Muslim, Tirmidhī, Nasa'ī)

This saying of the Prophet ﷺ may be interpreted in two ways. One, that Sayyidah Maryam's عليها السلام relationship with Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام was mentioned because she was of his lineage, and it was customary with the Arabs to associate a person with their ancestors, for instance a man belonging to the tribe of Tamīm would be called as Akhā Tamīm or Tamīm's brother, or an Arab would be addressed as Akhā Arab. The other meaning is that the name Hārūn does not refer to Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام the companion / brother of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام but to the brother of Sayyidah Maryam عليها السلام herself who was also named after Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام out of reverence for the Prophet. In the second case the term Hārūn أُخْتَ هَارُوْنَ (Sister of Hārūn) fits in very well with the literal meaning of the word أُخت (Sister).

مَا كَانَ اَبُوْكِ امْرَاَ سَوْءٍ

"Neither your father was a man of evil." - 19:28.

These words suggest that when someone who is descended from righteous and pious ancestors commits a sin, then the sin is of greater magnitude compared to a sin committed by an ordinary person, because the sin brings bad name to the pious elders. It is for this reason that descendants of pious persons should make extra effort in the performance of righteous deeds, and fear Allah at all times.

اِنِّىْ عَبْدُ اللّٰهِ ("I am the servant of Allah" - 19:30) There is a report that when her family members started berating and censuring Sayyidah Maryam عليها السلام, Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام was sucking milk. When he heard their accusations he stopped sucking milk and moved over to his left side facing them, and raising his index finger he said: اِنِّىْ عَبْدُاللّٰهِ i.e. I am the servant of Allah. In this way in his very first words Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام made it clear that although his birth was a miracle, he himself was not God, but only a servant of God. This was to eliminate forever the possibility of people worshipping him as God due to his miraculous birth.

اٰتٰنِىَ الْكِتٰبَ وَجَعَلَنِىْ نَبِيًّا

"He has given me the Book and made me a prophet." - 19:30.

In these words, Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام even in his infancy announced his future prophethood and the revelation to him of a sacred book from Allah

Ta'ālā. Since no prophet has been granted prophethood and a sacred book before the age of forty years, therefore this pre-announcement of his prophethood by Sayyidnā 'Īsā ﷺ here means to convey in advance that he would be bestowed prophethood and the Book at the proper time. In a similar manner The Holy Prophet ﷺ said that he was bestowed prophethood even before Ādam ﷺ was yet in the process of his creation. This shows that the promise for granting prophethood to Sayyidnā Muḥammad Al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ was firm and final. Here too, because of the certainty of occurrence, the grant of prophethood is referred to in the past tense. By announcing his future prophethood he (Sayyidnā 'Īsā ﷺ) dispelled peoples' doubts and exonerated his mother from the charge of fornication, because his being a Prophet was proof enough that his birth was free from any blemish.

وَأَوْصٰنِى بِالصَّلٰوةِ وَالزَّكٰوةِ

"And has enjoined Ṣalāh and Zakāh upon me." - 19:31.

The word أَوْصَانِى is derived from the word وَصِيَّة (*Waṣiyyah*) which normally means 'to bequeath', but when used in the context of issuing an order, it implies an emphatic command, and here it is used to put emphasis on a command of Allah. For this reason it is translated in the text as 'enjoined'. Here Sayyidnā 'Īsā ﷺ has said that Allah Ta'ālā had commanded him to offer Prayers and give the obligatory charity (Zakāḥ), the intention being that he was commanded to observe both these duties with great diligence. Prayers and Zakāh are two forms of worship which have been enjoined as obligatory in the Shar'iah (Laws) of all the prophets from Ādam ﷺ to the last of the Prophets, Muḥammad ﷺ. However, their details vary in different codes. In the Shar'iah of Sayyidnā 'Īsā ﷺ prayers and Zakāh were also made compulsory. It is true that 'Īsā ﷺ was never wealthy; neither did he build a house for himself nor did he accumulate any material riches, then why was he enjoined to pay Zakāh? The answer is that this injunction is of general application in that whosoever possesses a certain level of wealth (نِصَاب) is liable to pay Zakāh. This injunction applied to 'Īsā ﷺ as well i.e. whenever he acquired wealth upto the level of Nisāb (نِصَاب) he was required to pay Zakāh, but if his wealth remains below Niṣāb throughout his life, he would never be liable to pay Zakāh. This situation, therefore, is not in conflict with the general rules governing Zakāh.

مَادُمْتُ حَيًّا

"As long as I am alive." - 19:31.

It means that the injunction of prayers and Zakāh is for ever i.e. as long as I live. It is obvious that the reference here is to the life in this world, because these duties can be performed only here in this world.

وَبَرًّام بِوَالِدَتِیْ

"and (He has made me) good to my mother." - 19:32.

Here only the mother is mentioned and not both the parents. Hence it is implied that his birth was a miracle, being without a father. Such a discourse coming from an infant was a miracle by itself to prove his miraculous birth.

Verses 34 - 40

ذٰلِكَ عِيْسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ ۚ قَوْلَ الْحَقِّ الَّذِیْ فِيْهِ يَمْتَرُوْنَ ﴿٣٤﴾ مَا كَانَ لِلّٰهِ اَنْ يَّتَّخِذَ مِنْ وَّلَدٍ ۙ سُبْحٰنَهٗ ؕ اِذَا قَضٰٓى اَمْرًا فَاِنَّمَا يَقُوْلُ لَه كُنْ فَيَكُوْنُ ﴿٣٥﴾ وَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ رَبِّیْ وَرَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوْهُ ؕ هٰذَا صِرَاطٌ مُّسْتَقِيْمٌ ﴿٣٦﴾ فَاخْتَلَفَ الْاَحْزَابُ مِنْۢ بَيْنِهِمْ ۚ فَوَيْلٌ لِّلَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْ مَّشْهَدِ يَوْمٍ عَظِيْمٍ ﴿٣٧﴾ اَسْمِعْ بِهِمْ وَ اَبْصِرْ ۙ يَوْمَ يَاْتُوْنَنَا لٰكِنِ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ الْيَوْمَ فِیْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿٣٨﴾ وَاَنْذِرْهُمْ يَوْمَ الْحَسْرَةِ اِذْ قُضِىَ الْاَمْرُ ۘ وَهُمْ فِیْ غَفْلَةٍ وَّهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٣٩﴾ اِنَّا نَحْنُ نَرِثُ الْاَرْضَ وَمَنْ عَلَيْهَا وَاِلَيْنَا يُرْجَعُوْنَ ﴿٤٠﴾

That is 'Īsā, the son of Maryam - the word of truth in which they are disputing. [34] **It is not for Allah to have a son. Pure is He. When He decides a thing He simply says to it, "Be" and it comes to be.** [35] **And Allah is surely my Lord and your Lord. So, worship Him. This is the straight path.** [36] **Then the groups among them fell in dispute. So, woe to the disbelievers, for they are to witness the Great Day.** [37] **How strong will their**

hearing be, and how strong their vision the day they will come to Us! But today the transgressors are in clear error. [38] **And warn them of The Day of Remorse when the whole thing will be settled, while they are heedless and do not believe.** [39] **Surely We, only We, shall ultimately own the earth and all those on it, and to Us they will be returned.** [40]

Commentary

ذٰلِكَ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ

"This is 'Īsā, the son of Maryam." - 19:34.

The beliefs of the Jews and the Christians about Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام were on such opposite extremes that the Christians exalted him to such a level of reverence that they regarded him as the son of Allah. The Jews on the other hand, denigrated him maliciously and called him (God forbid) the illegitimate son of Yūsuf (Joseph) the carpenter. Allah Ta'ālā has pointed out the error of both the views in these verses and clarified the correct position.

The phrase قَوْلَ الْحَقِّ (translated in the text as 'the word of truth' in the normal reading is with *fatḥah* (َ) on the letter *Lām*. In this case the sentence alongwith its understood words will run like أَقُولُ قَوْلَ الْحَقِّ that is, 'I say the word of truth'. However, in some readings the letter '*Lām*' in 'Qawl' is rendered with *Ḍammah* (ُ) i.e. قَوْلُ الْحَقِّ . In this case the sentence will mean that Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام himself was a word of truth. It is, then, analogous to the title of كَلِمَةُ اللّٰهِ (the word of Allah) which is given to him to denote that he was born directly by the word of Allah, having no connection with an apparent cause in this world. (Qurṭubī)

يَوْمَ الْحَسْرَةِ (the Day of Remorse) in verse 39 refers to the Day of Judgment and has been called the Day of Remorse because on that day persons consigned to Hell as punishment for their evil deeds will regret their disregard of the righteous way of life, and wish that if they had lived the life of true believers, they too would have been in Paradise instead of being punished in Hell. Even those who have been rewarded with Paradise will feel a different kind of remorse. Al-Ṭabarānī and Abū Ya'lā have quoted the following saying of the Prophet ﷺ on the authority of Sayyidnā Mu'adh رضي الله عنه :

"The people of Paradise will regret only one thing, namely those moments which were spent without the remembrance of Allah."

And Al-Baghawī رحمه الله تعالى, has narrated quoting Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه that The Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

"Everyone will experience remorse and regret after death."

The companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ asked him what would be that remorse and regret about? Then The Holy Prophet ﷺ explained that those who acted righteously will regret not having performed more righteous deeds which would have helped them attain a higher position in Paradise. On the other hand, the evil doers will repent their evil actions and sins. (Maẓharī)

Verses 41 - 50

وَاذْكُرْ فِي الْكِتٰبِ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ ط اِنَّه كَانَ صِدِّيْقًا نَّبِيًّا ﴿٤١﴾ اِذْ قَالَ لِاَبِيْهِ
يٰٓاَبَتِ لِمَ تَعْبُدُ مَا لَا يَسْمَعُ وَلَا يُبْصِرُ وَلَا يُغْنِيْ عَنْكَ شَيْئًا ﴿٤٢﴾
يٰٓاَبَتِ اِنِّيْ قَدْ جَآءَنِيْ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ مَالَمْ يَاْتِكَ فَاتَّبِعْنِيْٓ اَهْدِكَ صِرَاطًا
سَوِيًّا ﴿٤٣﴾ يٰٓاَبَتِ لَاتَعْبُدِ الشَّيْطٰنَ ط اِنَّ الشَّيْطٰنَ كَانَ لِلرَّحْمٰنِ
عَصِيًّا ﴿٤٤﴾ يٰٓاَبَتِ اِنِّيْٓ اَخَافُ اَنْ يَّمَسَّكَ عَذَابٌ مِّنَ الرَّحْمٰنِ
فَتَكُوْنَ لِلشَّيْطٰنِ وَلِيًّا ﴿٤٥﴾ قَالَ اَرَاغِبٌ اَنْتَ عَنْ اٰلِهَتِيْ يٰٓاِبْرٰهِيْمُ ج
لَئِنْ لَّمْ تَنْتَهِ لَاَرْجُمَنَّكَ وَاهْجُرْنِيْ مَلِيًّا ﴿٤٦﴾ قَالَ سَلٰمٌ عَلَيْكَ ج
سَاَسْتَغْفِرُلَكَ رَبِّيْ ط اِنَّه كَانَ بِيْ حَفِيًّا ﴿٤٧﴾ وَاَعْتَزِلُكُمْ وَمَا تَدْعُوْنَ
مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ وَاَدْعُوْ رَبِّيْ ز عَسٰٓى اَلَّآ اَكُوْنَ بِدُعَآءِ رَبِّيْ شَقِيًّا ﴿٤٨﴾
فَلَمَّا اعْتَزَلَهُمْ وَمَا يَعْبُدُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ لا وَهَبْنَا لَهٗٓ اِسْحٰقَ وَ يَعْقُوْبَ
ط وَكُلًّا جَعَلْنَا نَبِيًّا ﴿٤٩﴾ وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُمْ مِّنْ رَّحْمَتِنَا وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُمْ
لِسَانَ صِدْقٍ عَلِيًّا ﴿٥٠﴾ ع

And mention in the Book (the story of) Ibrāhīm. Indeed, he was *ṣiddīq* (a man of truth), a prophet, [41] **when he**

said to his father, "My dear father, why do you worship something that does neither hear nor see, nor help you in any way? [42] **My dear father, to me in fact, there has come a knowledge that has not come to you; so, follow me and I shall lead you to a straight path.** [43] **My dear father, do not worship the Satan. The Satan is surely rebellious to the Raḥmān (All-Merciful).** [44] **My dear father, I fear that a punishment from the Raḥmān (All-Merciful) touches you, and you become a companion of Satan."** [45] **He said, "Are you averse to my gods O Ibrāhīm? Should you not stop, I will definitely stone you. And leave me for good."** [46] **He said, "Peace on you. I shall seek forgiveness for you from my Lord. He has always been gracious to me.** [47] **And I go away from you and what you invoke besides Allah. And I shall invoke my Lord. Hopefully I shall not be a looser by invoking my Lord."** [48] **So, when he went away from them and what they worshipped besides Allah, We blessed him with Isḥāq and Ya'qūb and each of them We made a prophet** [49] **And We bestowed on them of our mercy and made them have a good name at its highest.** [50]

Commentary

Meaning of Ṣiddīq

صِدِّيقًا نَبِيًّا (*Ṣiddīq* (a man of truth), a prophet - 19:41) The word (Ṣiddīq) صِدِّيق is a Qur'ānic term which has been defined differently by different scholars. Some say it is applied to one who has never told a lie in his life. Others describe Ṣiddīq (صِدِّيق) as one who is truthful in his beliefs, words and deeds. In other words his utterances truly reflect his beliefs, and his actions in turn match with his beliefs and words. Rūḥ ul-Ma'ani and Maẓharī have adopted the latter meaning of the word. Then there are different degrees of صِدِّيقِيَت (Truthfulness) i.e. those who fall within this definition are placed at different pedestals. Only a prophet (نبی یا رسول) can be a true صِدِّيق. While every prophet is gifted with this attribute, not everyone who has it is a prophet. A believer who follows in the footsteps of his prophet and attains this exalted position of صِدق (truthfulness) can also be called Ṣiddīq. The Holy Qur'ān itself has given the title of صِدِّيقَه to Sayyidah Maryam علیہا السلام, despite the view of the overwhelming majority that she was not a prophet, and that a woman cannot be a prophet.

How to give counsel to elders.

يٰاَبَتِ (My dear father - 19:42) In Arabic language this word conveys deep respect and intense love for one's father. Allah Ta'ālā had combined in the person of Sayyidnā Khalilullah عليه السلام the noble qualities and attributes, and his address to his father is a perfect example of moderation and restraint on the one hand, and the balancing of the opposites on the other. He finds his father living a life of unbelief and polytheism, and also calling upon other people to follow him in a life of sin - the very things which he was sent to eradicate. At the same time there is the filial love and respect which he feels towards his father. Now, the thing to note is, how well he combines the two conflicting feelings together. In the first place he uses the word يٰاَبَتِ, which is the mark of love and respect for his father, in the beginning of each sentence of the address. Then there is not a single derogatory word in his address which could hurt the feelings of his father, and words such as infidel or sinner have been carefully avoided. Instead, guided by prophetic wisdom he merely invited his father's attention to the helplessness and insensitivity of his idols, so that he might himself realize the fallacy of his beliefs. In the second sentence he made a mention of the prophetic knowledge that was granted to him by Allah Ta'ālā. Then in the third and fourth sentences he warned him against the Divine wrath, which would surely fall on him as a punishment for infidelity and idolatry. Even to these respectful entreaties his father did not pay any heed and, instead of giving any thought to what was said to him and adopting a gentle attitude, he addressed him in a very harsh language. Whereas Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام had addressed him with the loving words of يٰاَبَتِ, which should have called for a soft and tender response, such as يَا بُنَيَّ (My dear son) he chose to call him by his name and said يَا اِبْرَاهِيمُ, and not only threatened to stone him to death but also asked him to leave his house. How Sayyidnā Khalilullah عليه السلام responded to this threat is worthy of deep reflection.

سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكَ (Peace on you) Here the word سَلَامٌ (Peace) may carry two meanings. One, that the word سَلَامٌ is used to signify severance of relations in a polite manner so as not to cause hurt to his father. This practice has been described in the Holy Qur'ān as an attribute of good and pious people. An example in point are the words.

وَاِذَا خَاطَبَهُمُ الْجَاهِلُوْنَ قَالُوْا سَلَامًا

"When ignorant people speak to them, they reply peacefully." (25:63)

It means that when the ignorant people say foolish things to them they simply say 'Salām' (peace) instead of getting involved into an argument with them. This is a way of conveying to them that though I do not agree with your views I will not harm you. The second explanation is that the word سلام has been used in the conventional sense. But here the problem is that The Holy Prophet ﷺ has forbidden the believers to be the first to greet an infidel with the word سلام on meeting him. The following saying of The Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and Muslim on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ؓ.

لا تَبْدأ واليهود والنصارىٰ بالسّلام

"Do not be the first to greet Jews and Christians with the word سَلام".

On the other hand Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and Muslim have also reported through Sayyidnā Usāmah ؓ that The Holy Prophet ﷺ had greeted first a group of people with the word سَلام in which infidels, polytheists and Muslims were all present.

This explains the differences which have developed among jurists on the question of propriety or otherwise of this practice. By their words and actions eminent companions (of the Holy Prophet ﷺ), their followers and leaders of religious thought have expressed different views on this issue. Qurṭubī has treated this subject in great detail while explaining this verse in his book Aḥkam ul-Qur'ān. Imām An-Nakha'ī has ruled that when one meets an infidel, a Jew or a Christian on a religious or a worldly need, then there is no harm in taking lead in greeting him with the word سَلام, but one should avoid greeting first when there is no need to meet him. Thus both the sayings of the Prophet ﷺ (حديث) have been reconciled.

سَاَسْتَغْفِرُلَكَ رَبِّیْ (I shall seek forgiveness for you from my Lord - 19:47). Here again the problem is that to ask for forgiveness for the sins of an infidel is prohibited and unlawful by Islamic laws, the Holy Prophet ﷺ had said to his uncle Abū Ṭalib والله لاستغفرنّ لك مالم انه عنه, that is;

"By God I shall keep on praying to Allah for your forgiveness until I am forbidden to do so by Him."

On this the following verse was revealed:

مَا كَانَ لِلنَّبِيِّ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اَنْ يَّسْتَغْفِرُوْا لِلْمُشْرِكِيْنَ

> "It is not for the Prophet and the believers to seek forgiveness for the Mushriks." (9:113)

After the revelation of this verse he ﷺ stopped seeking forgiveness for his uncle.

The answer to this confusion is that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام had promised his father to seek Divine Mercy for him before such a prayer was forbidden. The prohibition was imposed after this event. Allah Ta'ālā has mentioned this event in Sūrah Mumtaḥinna where this exception is clearly indicated.

إِلَّا قَوْلَ إِبْرٰهِيمَ لِأَبِيهِ لَأَسْتَغْفِرَنَّ لَكَ

> Except that Ibrāhīm said to his father "Certainly I shall ask pardon for you". - 60:4.

This is more clear in Sūrah Taubah in the verse following the verse.

مَا كَانَ لِلنَّبِيِّ وَالَّذِينَ اٰمَنُوٓا اَنْ يَّسْتَغْفِرُوا لِلْمُشْرِكِينَ

> "It is not for the Prophet and the believers to seek forgiveness for the Mushriks." - 9:113.

وَمَا كَانَ اسْتِغْفَارُ إِبْرٰهِيمَ لِأَبِيهِ إِلَّا عَنْ مَّوْعِدَةٍ وَّعَدَهَآ إِيَّاهُ ۚ فَلَمَّا تَبَيَّنَ لَهٗٓ أَنَّهٗ عَدُوٌّ لِّلّٰهِ تَبَرَّأَ مِنْهُ ؕ

> "And the prayer of Ibrāhīm for the forgiveness of his father was not but due to a promise he had made to him. Later, when it became clear to him that he was an enemy of Allah, he withdrew himself from him." - 9:114.

This shows that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm's عليه السلام promise to his father to invoke Allah's Mercy for him was made before the latter's firm adherence to infidelity, and his hostility to Allah became clearly evident. When the position was no longer in doubt Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام announced his dissociation from his father.

وَاَعْتَزِلُكُمْ وَمَا تَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ وَاَدْعُوْا رَبِّيْ

> And go away from you and what you invoke besides Allah. And I shall invoke my Lord." - 19:48.

On the one hand Sayyidnā Khalīlullāh عليه السلام went to the extreme to show his respect and love for his father, which has been described above, and on the other hand he did not allow the slightest doubt to be cast on

his expression of the universal truth (حق) or on his total belief in it. He accepted willingly his father's orders to leave the house and also made it known that he had totally dissociated himself from his (father's) idols and addressed his prayers only to Allah.

فَلَمَّا اعْتَزَلَهُمْ وَمَا يَعْبُدُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ وَهَبْنَا لَهٗٓ اِسْحٰقَ وَيَعْقُوْبَ

"So, when he went away from them and what they worshipped besides Allah, We blessed him with Isḥāq and Ya'qūb." - 19:49.

In the sentence preceding this sentence Hadhrat Ibrāhīm عليه السلام had expressed the hope that on account of his prayers and devotion Allah Ta'ālā would not abandon him. This hope, in fact, was a prayer to Allah to protect him from the pain of loneliness after he left his house and family. The sentence reproduced above describes the manner in which his prayer was granted. When Ibrāhīm عليه السلام left his home and family and their idols, Allah Ta'ālā rewarded him with a son, Isḥāq عليه السلام to compensate him for his loss. It was further revealed to him that this son would have long life and also beget a son by the name of Ya'qūb. Granting of a son is proof that he (Ibrāhīm) was married by then. In brief it means that he was granted a better family, which consisted of prophets and pious people after he had left his father's family.

Verses 51 - 58

وَاذْكُرْ فِي الْكِتٰبِ مُوْسٰىٓ ز اِنَّهٗ كَانَ مُخْلَصًا وَّ كَانَ رَسُوْلًا نَّبِيًّا
﴿٥١﴾ وَنَادَيْنٰهُ مِنْ جَانِبِ الطُّوْرِ الْاَيْمَنِ وَقَرَّبْنٰهُ نَجِيًّا ﴿٥٢﴾ وَوَهَبْنَا
لَهٗ مِنْ رَّحْمَتِنَآ اَخَاهُ هٰرُوْنَ نَبِيًّا ﴿٥٣﴾ وَاذْكُرْ فِي الْكِتٰبِ اِسْمٰعِيْلَ ز
اِنَّهٗ كَانَ صَادِقَ الْوَعْدِ وَكَانَ رَسُوْلًا نَّبِيًّا ﴿٥٤﴾ وَكَانَ يَاْمُرُ اَهْلَهٗ
بِالصَّلٰوةِ وَالزَّكٰوةِ ص وَكَانَ عِنْدَ رَبِّهٖ مَرْضِيًّا ﴿٥٥﴾ وَاذْكُرْ فِي
الْكِتٰبِ اِدْرِيْسَ ز اِنَّهٗ كَانَ صِدِّيْقًا نَّبِيًّا ﴿٥٦﴾ وَّرَفَعْنٰهُ مَكَانًا عَلِيًّا
﴿٥٧﴾ اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ اَنْعَمَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنَ النَّبِيّٖنَ مِنْ ذُرِّيَّةِ اٰدَمَ ق
وَمِمَّنْ حَمَلْنَا مَعَ نُوْحٍ ز وَّمِنْ ذُرِّيَّةِ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَاِسْرَآءِيْلَ ز وَمِمَّنْ

هَدَيْنَا وَاجْتَبَيْنَا ط إِذَا تُتْلَى عَلَيْهِمْ ايٰتُ الرَّحْمٰنِ خَرُّوْا سُجَّدًا وَّ بُكِيًّا

﴿٥٨﴾ (السجدة)

And mention in the Book (the story of) Mūsā. Indeed he was a chosen one and was a messenger, a prophet. [51] **And We called him from the right side of the mount Tūr (Sinai), and We drew him close to commune in secret.** [52] **And We, out of Our mercy, granted him his brother Hārūn as a prophet.** [53] **And mention in the Book (the story of) Isma'īl. He was indeed true to his promise and was a messenger, a prophet.** [54] **And he used to bid Ṣalāh and Zakāh to his family and was favorite with his Lord.** [55] **And mention in the Book (the story of) Idrīs. He was indeed a *ṣiddīq* (man of truth), a prophet.** [56] **And We raised him to a high place.** [57] **Those are the people whom Allah has blessed with bounties, the prophets from the progeny of 'Ādam and from those whom We boarded (the Ark) along with Nūḥ and from the progeny of Ibrāhīm and Isrā'īl, and from those whom We guided and selected. When the verses of The Raḥmān (All-Merciful) are recited before them they fall down in Sajdah (prostration), weeping.** [58]

Commentary

كَانَ مُخْلَصًا (Indeed he was a chosen one - 19:51) مُخلَص means a person whom Allah Ta'ālā has chosen for himself i.e. someone who will not devote himself to anyone but Allah, and whose only desire is to win Allah's benevolence. This special position is enjoyed by the prophets only as mentioned in the Qur'ān at another place.

إِنَّآ اَخْلَصْنَاهُمْ بِخَالِصَةٍ ذِكْرَى الدَّارِ

"We purified them with a quality most pure, the remembrance of the Abode." - 38:46.

Those among the followers of prophets who attain perfection are also granted a place of distinction, which makes them immune to committing sins and evil deeds through Divine dispensation. They remain in Allah's protection all the time.

مِنْ جَانِبِ الطُّوْرِالْاَيْمَنِ (The right side of the mount Tūr - 19:52). This famous mountain (Tūr or Sinai) rises in Syria between Madyan and Egypt, and is

still known by the same name. Allah Ta'ālā has given it a distinct and special position in many ways.

الأيمن The position of Tūr is given to the right side in relation to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام who had commenced his journey from Madyan and when he approached Tūr, it was on his right side. نجيا is for whisper, مناجات is for confidential talk and نجى means a confidant.

وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ مِنْ رَّحْمَتِنَآ اَخَاهُ هٰرُوْنَ

"And We, out of our mercy, granted him his brother Hārūn." - 19:53.

Literal meaning of هبه is a gift. Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام had prayed to Allah to grant prophethood to Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام also in order to provide him support. This prayer was granted and the word وَهَبْنَا has been used to describe this episode i.e. the grant of the gift of Hārūn عليه السلام to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام. That is why Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام is also known as the Gift of Allah (هبة الله). (Maẓharī)

وَاذْكُرْ فِى الْكِتٰبِ اِسْمٰعِيْلَ

"And mention in the Book (the story of) Ismā'īl." - 19:54.

The reference here is clearly to Sayyidnā Ismā'īl عليه السلام, the son of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليهما السلام , who has not been mentioned earlier along with his father Ibrāhīm and brother Isḥāq عليهما السلام but mention has been made of him after a brief interlude in which an account of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام is given. It is possible that by making a reference to Sayyidnā Ismā'īl عليه السلام apart from others, instead of treating him along with them, the intention was to give him prominent status. In this verse the prophets have not been mentioned in the order in which they were granted missions of prophethood, because Idrīs عليه السلام who has been mentioned last was, in fact, the earliest of them all.

كَانَ صَادِقَ الْوَعْدِ

"He was indeed true to his promise." - 19:54.

Fulfillment of promise is regarded as an important part of the moral code by all decent men, just as a breach of it is considered worthy of contempt. A saying of the Holy Prophet ﷺ has described the breaking of promise as a sign of hypocrisy. Thus, none of the prophets and messengers of Allah have been accused of bad faith / a breach of promise.

Here certain attributes have been assigned to some of the prophets, but this does not mean that the other prophets did not possess them. It only suggests that these special attributes distinguish them from all the other prophets, just as Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ has been described as مُخلَص. All the other prophets possessed this quality, but it has been specifically applied to Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ. Hence a special mention of him with the attribute.

Sayyidnā Ismā'il ﷺ occupies a place of honour where keeping a promise is concerned and he stood by his promise whether made to Allah or to humans. He fulfilled his promise to Allah that he would offer himself for sacrifice and will not be found wanting in courage. When the time came he stood by his promise. Once, he promised to meet a man at an appointed place and time. The man did not turn up at the appointed time, but Sayyidnā Ismā'il ﷺ waited for him at the place for three days, and according to another tradition for full one year. (Maẓharī) A similar incident is reported about The Holy Prophet ﷺ by Tirmidhī on the authority of Abdullāh Ibn Ari Al-Khamsa that he waited for three days for someone who had promised to meet him at a particular place. (Qurṭubī)

Importance of keeping one's promise.

Fulfillment of promise is a distinctive trait of the character of the prophets and the pious, and a normal code of conduct with all decent persons. Breaking of a promise, on the other hand, is a habit of the wicked, mean and liars. A saying of the The Holy Prophet ﷺ is العدة دين "A promise is like a debt." i.e. it is as obligatory to honour a promise as it is to repay a debt. There is another saying of The Holy Prophet ﷺ which says وای المؤمن واجب. It means that "promise is an obligation for a believer."

Jurists are all agreed that a promise is a debt and its fulfillment obligatory, but only in the sense that its violation without a religious (شرعی) excuse is a sin though no remedy can be sought for its breach in a court of law. In the language of the Jurists a debt is an obligation which is enforceable, while a promise is not.

A reformer must begin his mission with his own family

كَانَ يَأْمُرُ اَهْلَهٗ بِالصَّلٰوةِ وَالزَّكٰوةِ

"And he used to bid Ṣalāh and Zakāh to his family." - 19:55.

A special attribute of Sayyidnā Ismā'il عليه السلام is that he used to direct his family members to offer prayers and pay obligatory charity (زكوة). Here the question arises that all Muslims are required to advise their family members to perform good deeds as the Qur'ān addresses the believers

قُوْٓا اَنْفُسَكُمْ وَاَهْلِيْكُمْ نَارًا

"Save yourself and your family members from the Fire (of Hell)." - 66:6.

Then why has a special mention been made of Sayyidnā Ismā'il عليه السلام in this matter? The fact is, that although this injunction applies to all Muslims, Sayyidnā Ismā'il عليه السلام used to make special efforts in following this directive. Likewise, the Holy Prophet ﷺ also received special directive to warn his family members and close relations against Allah's wrath وَاَنْذِرْ عَشِيْرَتَكَ الْاَقْرَبِيْنَ (and warn the nearest people of your clan - 26:214). As a consequence he assembled them all and conveyed to them Allah's command. The other point to consider here is that prophets are sent by Allah for the guidance of entire people. They convey Allah's message to everyone and bind them to obey His command. Then what is the point in making special mention of the members of family? The thing is that there are certain principles which the prophets observe when calling upon people to follow the path of righteousness, and one of them is to give the call first to one's own family members before calling upon the general public. It is a lot easier to prevail upon one's own family members and to monitor their actions. Once the family members have accepted a certain way of life and have started acting on it routinely then it becomes much easier to spread the same message among others at large. When people see for themselves others following a righteous path it becomes much easier to convert them. The most effective means for bringing about an improvement in the character of the people is by creating a religious environment. Experience shows that virtue and vice both proliferate faster and wider in a receptive environment than through teaching and preaching.

وَاذْكُرْ فِى الْكِتٰبِ اِدْرِيْسَ

"And mention in the Book (the story of) Idrīs." - 19:56.

Sayyidnā Idrīs عليه السلام lived one thousand years before Sayyidnā Nūḥ

ﷺ, and was among his ancestors. (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī with reference to Mustadrak al-Ḥakim). He was the first Prophet after Sayyidnā Ādam ﷺ and Allah Ta'ālā bestowed upon him thirty books. (Abī zar- Zamkhashari). Sayyidnā Idrīs ﷺ was the first man who was given the knowledge of astrology and mathematics through a miracle, (Baḥr ul-Muḥīṭ). He was also the first man who learnt how to write with a pen, and also the first who invented stitching of cloth, people used to wear animal skins instead of clothes before his time. He also invented measurement tools for the first time. Making of weapons also started in his time and he used them in his wars - the Holy wars (جهاد: Jihād) against the descendents of Qabīl (بنو قابيل) (Baḥr ul-Muḥīṭ, Qurṭubī, Maẓharī, Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī)

وَرَفَعْنٰهُ مَكَانًا عَلِيًّا

"And We raised him to a high place." - 19:57.

It means that he was granted a special position among prophets and was close to Allah Ta'ālā. There are also other versions about his ascent to the sky, about which Ibn-e-Kathīr has said

هذا من اخبار كعب الاحبار الاسرائيليات وفى بعضه نكارة

"This is taken from the traditions of the Israelites as reported by Ka'ab Al-Aḥbār, some of which are disputed, and unfamiliar."

The Qur'ānic words are not specific on the subject whether he was given a sublime position or was physically lifted to the sky. Therefore, his physical ascent to the sky is not definite. In any case commentary of the Holy Qur'ān is not dependent on this issue. (Bayān ul-Qur'ān)

From Bayān ul-Qur'ān - The difference between the definition of 'Rasūl' and 'Nabī' and their inter-relationship.

"The words Rasūl and Nabī have been variously explained. Having considered all possibilities I have come to the conclusion that the relationship between the two is on being specific or general on the basis of their application.

Rasūl is one who delivers a new code to those among whom he is sent, even though the code may be new to himself as well, like Torah to Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ, or the code be new only to his people, as was the case with Sayyidnā Ismā'il ﷺ. The code that he was preaching was in

fact given to his father, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, but it was new for the tribe of Jurhum who did not know about it beforehand, and learnt its details from Sayyidnā Ismā'il عليه السلام only, who was sent to them for this purpose. It, therefore, follows that it is not necessary for a Rasūl to be Nabi just as the angels who are Rasūl but not Nabi or the messengers sent to Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام who are referred in Qur'ān as Rasūl, although they were not Nabī. إِذْ جَآءَهَا الْمُرْسَلُوْنَ (36:13).

On the other hand Nabī is the one who is the bearer of Waḥy (Allah's message) regardless of whether he preaches an old or a new religious code. Many a prophets from Banī Isra'īl fall under this category, as they preached the religious code given to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام. It, therefore, follows that the word Rasūl is more general compared to Nabī. But in certain other ways converse is the case. Where the two words are used together, as in the case of this verse where they appear as رَسُوْلاً نَبِيًّا, there is no problem in that they can be taken both in specific or in general term, and there will not be any contradiction. But in such situations where the two words appear separately one against the other, then having regard to the relative position of the two words in the verse the term Nabī will denote someone who is following the religious code brought by someone else."

أُولَٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ اَنْعَمَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنَ النَّبِيّٖنَ مِنْ ذُرِّيَّةِ اٰدَمَ

"Those are the people whom Allah has blessed with bounties, the prophets from the progeny of Ādam." - 19.58.

This relates only to Sayyidnā Idrīs عليه السلام .

وَمِمَّنْ حَمَلْنَا مَعَ نُوْحٍ

"And from those whom We boarded (the Ark) along with Nūḥ." - 19:58.

This relates to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام only,

وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّةِ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ

"and from the progeny of Ibrāhīm" - 19:58.

This relates to Ismā'il, Isḥāq and Ya'qūb عليهم السلام .

وَ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ

"and Isrā'īl" - 19:58.

This points out to Sayyidnā Mūsā, Hārūn, Zakariyyā and Yaḥyā and 'Īsā علیھما السلام.

اِذَا تُتْلٰى عَلَيْهِمْ اٰيٰتُ الرَّحْمٰنِ خَرُّوْا سُجَّدًا وَّ بُكِيًّا

"When the verses of The Raḥmān (All-Merciful) are recited before them they fall down in Sajdah (prostration), weeping." - 19:58.

Some very prominent prophets have been mentioned in the preceding verses as also their exalted status. Thus, there was a real danger that people might raise them to an exaggerated and high position as was the case with Jews who treated Sayyidnā 'Uzair ﷺ as God, or the Christians who elevated Sayyidnā 'Īsā ﷺ to a level where they called him the son of God. Therefore, after the mention of all those prophets it was made very clear in the very next verse that they were all very God-fearing and used to prostrate (سَجْدَة) themselves before Allah in extreme reverence. It is to avoid any possibility of crossing the limits of reverence for them (Bayān ul-Qur'ān).

Weeping during the recitation of Qur'ān / Divine Book was the Practice of the Prophets

Weeping while reciting Qur'ān is a commendable act and was also an attribute of the prophets. It has been reported that The Holy Prophet ﷺ, his companions, their followers and the God-fearing people followed this practice.

Qurṭubī has reported that religious scholars consider it desirable that when going into Sajdah after reciting a verse of Sajdah (آیتِ سجدہ) one should recite a prayer which is appropriate to the verse of Sajdah (آیتِ سجدہ). For instance in Sūrah Sajdah (sūrah # 32) the following prayer be recited.

اَللّٰهُمَّ اجْعَلْنِىْ مِنَ السَّاجِدِيْنَ لِوَجْهِكَ الْمُسَبِّحِيْنَ بِحَمْدِكَ وَاَعُوْذُ بِكَ اَنْ اَكُوْنَ مِنَ الْمُسْتَكْبِرِيْنَ عَنْ اَمْرِكَ

(O Allah, make me of those who prostrate to You alone, and who glorify You along with proclaiming Your praise. And I seek refuge with You from being of those who turn their faces, in arrogance, against Your command.)

While in the case of Sajdah at verse # 109 of سُبْحٰنَ الَّذِىْ (Sūrah Banī Isra'īl) one should recite.

اَللّٰهُمَّ اجْعَلْنِیْ مِنَ الْبَاکِیْنَ اِلَیْکَ الْخَاشِعِیْنَ لَکَ

(O Allah, make me of those who weep before You and who are humble in heart before You.)

And for the verse of Sajdah under reference the following should be recited.

اَللّٰهُمَّ اجْعَلْنِیْ مِنْ عِبَادِکَ الْمُنْعَمِ عَلَیْهِمُ الْمَهْدِیِّیْنَ السَّاجِدِیْنَ لَکَ الْبَاکِیْنَ عِنْدَ تِلَاوَةِ اٰیَاتِکَ

(O Allah make me of those among Your slaves upon whom You bestowed Your bounties, who prostrate before You, who weep while reciting Your verses.) (Qurṭubī)

Verses 59 - 63

فَخَلَفَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ خَلْفٌ اَضَاعُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاتَّبَعُوا الشَّهَوٰتِ فَسَوْفَ يَلْقَوْنَ غَيًّا ﴿٥٩﴾ اِلَّا مَنْ تَابَ وَاٰمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَاُولٰٓئِكَ يَدْخُلُوْنَ الْجَنَّةَ وَلَا يُظْلَمُوْنَ شَيْئًا ﴿٦٠﴾ جَنّٰتِ عَدْنِ ِالَّتِىْ وَعَدَ الرَّحْمٰنُ عِبَادَهٗ بِالْغَيْبِ ط اِنَّهٗ كَانَ وَعْدُهٗ مَاْتِيًّا ﴿٦١﴾ لَا يَسْمَعُوْنَ فِيْهَا لَغْوًا اِلَّا سَلٰمًا ط وَلَهُمْ رِزْقُهُمْ فِيْهَا بُكْرَةً وَّعَشِيًّا ﴿٦٢﴾ تِلْكَ الْجَنَّةُ الَّتِىْ نُوْرِثُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا مَنْ كَانَ تَقِيًّا ﴿٦٣﴾

Then came after them the successors who ruined Ṣalāh and pursued desires. So they will soon face (the outcome of their) perversion, [59] **except those who repent and believe and do good deeds, and therefore they will enter the Paradise and will not be wronged at all-** [60] **the Gardens of eternity, promised by the Raḥmān (All-Merciful) to His servants, in the unseen world. His promise is sure to be arrived at.** [61] **They will not hear anything absurd therein but a word of peace, and there they will have their provision at morn and eve.** [62] **That is the Paradise We will give as inheritance to those of Our servants who have been God-fearing.** [63]

Commentary

خَلْف (Khalf) means bad successors, while خَلَف (Khalaf) means good

successors. (Maẓharī) Mujahid رحمه الله تعالی, has reported that when the Day of Judgment would be near and the pious people would all be dead and gone, people will lose interest in prayers and indulge in all sort of vices and evil deeds.

Offering prayers outside fixed time or not with congregation (جماعت) is a default and of no avail, and is a great sin.

Most exegetes / commentators are of the view that offering prayers after its time has lapsed is a default of prayers (اَضَاعُوا الصَّلٰوۃَ). Among them are Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd, Nakhai, Qasim, Mujahid, Ibrāhīm and 'Umar Ibn 'Abdūl 'Azīz. While others consider that any lapse in the form and conditions of prayers is اضاعتِ صلوۃ and includes the lapse of time as well. Still others believe that offering of prayers at home and not with the congregation (جماعت) is اضاعتِ صلوۃ. (Qurṭubī, Baḥr ul-Muḥīṭ).

Sayyidnā 'Umar al-Fārūq ﷺ, had sent out a circular to all his governors saying:

إن أهم امركم عندی الصلوٰۃ، فمن ضیعها فهو لما سواها اضیع (مؤطا امام مالک)

> "In my view the most important among your tasks is prayer. So, whoever defaults in this, will default in discharging his other obligations all the more."

Once Sayyidnā Ḥudaifah ﷺ saw someone offering his prayers without observing the prescribed rules, and was going through the rituals rather hurriedly without pausing. He asked the man how long he had been offering his prayers like that. The man replied for the last forty years. Then Sayyidnā Ḥudaifah ﷺ said:

> "You have not offered a single of your prayers correctly."

He further remarked:

> "If you die offering your prayers like this then remember you will die without following the course given by The Holy Prophet ﷺ.".

Sayyidnā Abū Mas'ūd Anṣarī ﷺ has been quoted in Tirmidhī that the Holy Prophet ﷺ had said that the prayer of a person is lost who does not observe اقامت i.e. does not stand upright in his prayers. It means that if one does not pause while bowing down (رکوع) and prostrating (سجدہ) in his prayers or who does not stand straight up after bowing down (رکوع) or

does not sit up in between two prostrations (سجدوں) his prayers would be considered as not performed. Similarly, if one is not careful about ablution (وضو) and his cleanliness (طهارت) his prayers will also be lost.

Sayyidnā Ḥasan-al-Baṣrī رحمه الله تعالى has observed that leaving the mosques unattended and being over involved in business and enjoyments of life is included in the meaning of this verse.

Imām Qurṭubī رحمه الله تعالى after reproducing these sayings had said that even knowledgeable people ignore the prescribed rules of prayers and merely go through its motions. He made this observation in the 6th century Hijrah when such people were few. Presently the position is worse, and there are many more people who disregard the rules of prayers. نَعُوْذُ بِاللهِ مِنْ شُرُوْرِ اَنْفُسِنَا وَاَعْمَالِنَا .

وَاتَّبَعُوا الشَّهَوٰتِ (and pursued desires - 19:59) (شَهَوَات) refers to all such wordly pleasures which make people negligent of their duty to Allah making them lose interest in Prayers. Sayyidnā 'Alī كرم الله وجهه has said that palatial houses and luxurious carriages which attract people's eye, and wearing dresses which distinguish a person from the common man all fall within the category of worldly pleasures. (Qurṭubī)

فَسَوْفَ يَلْقَوْنَ غَيًّا (So they will soon face[the outcome of their] perversion - 19:59) The word غیّ in Arabic language is the opposite of رشاد. All virtues and good things are رشاد and all vices and evils are غیّ. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ has reported that there is a cave in Hell by the name غیّ, which houses various types of severe punishments, more numerous than all the punishments of Hell.

Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ has remarked that even Hell seeks protection from غیّ, which is the name of a cave in the Hell. Allah Ta'ālā has prepared it for habitual adulterers who persist in adultery, and for the drunkards who do not give up drinking, and for the usurers who do not stop taking interest and for those who disobey their parents, and those who give false witness and for the woman who declares someone else's child as her husband's. (Qurṭubī)

لَا يَسْمَعُونَ فِيهَا لَغْوًا إِلَّا سَلٰمًا

"They will not hear anything absurd therein but a word of peace." - 19:62.

(لَغو) means idle, absurd, frivolous and abusive talk, which will not reach the ears of good people who have been admitted to Paradise.

إِلَّا سَلَامًا means that whatever one will hear in Paradise will add to his happiness, peace and tranquility. It includes the customary greetings (سَلَام), which the dwellers of Paradise will exchange among themselves and the angels of God will offer them all. (Qurṭubī)

وَلَهُمْ رِزْقُهُمْ فِيهَا بُكْرَةً وَّعَشِيًّا

"And there they will have their provisions at morn and eve." - 19:62.

There will be no solar system in the Paradise and hence no rising or setting of the sun, but there will be a perpetual radiance. There will also be some way of telling day from night and morning from evening. Within this distinction between morning and evening the Paradise dwellers will receive their meals. It goes without saying that the wishes of the Paradise dwellers will be fulfilled forthwith (وَلَهُمْ مَا يَشْتَهُوْنَ - and for themselves, there is what they desire - 16:57). This is a general announcement. Hence, mention of morning and evening is because of people's habit to eat and drink in the morning and in the evening. According to an Arab saying, anyone who gets a full meal morning and evening is comfortable and at peace.

Sayyidnā Anas Ibn Mālik ﷺ, said after reciting this verse that it shows that the believers have their meals twice a day, one in the morning and the other in the evening.

Some scholars have explained that mention of morning and the evening is a general expression, like day and night or east and west, which does not specify any particular time or place. Therefore, it means that they (Paradise dwellers) will get their provisions according to their choice at any time they like. (Only God knows best) (Qurṭubī)

Verses 64 - 72

وَمَا نَتَنَزَّلُ إِلَّا بِأَمْرِ رَبِّكَ ۚ لَهُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِينَا وَمَا خَلْفَنَا وَمَا بَيْنَ ذَٰلِكَ ۚ وَمَا كَانَ رَبُّكَ نَسِيًّا ﴿٦٤﴾ رَبُّ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا فَاعْبُدْهُ وَاصْطَبِرْ لِعِبَادَتِهِ ۚ هَلْ تَعْلَمُ لَهُ سَمِيًّا ﴿٦٥﴾ وَيَقُولُ الْإِنسَانُ

ءَاِذَا مَامِتُّ لَسَوْفَ اُخْرَجُ حَيًّا ﴿٦٦﴾ اَوَلَا يَذْكُرُ الْاِنْسَانُ اَنَّا خَلَقْنٰهُ
مِنْ قَبْلُ وَلَمْ يَكُ شَيْئًا ﴿٦٧﴾ فَوَرَبِّكَ لَنَحْشُرَنَّهُمْ وَالشَّيٰطِيْنَ ثُمَّ
لَنُحْضِرَنَّهُمْ حَوْلَ جَهَنَّمَ جِثِيًّا ﴿٦٨﴾ ثُمَّ لَنَنْزِعَنَّ مِنْ كُلِّ شِيْعَةٍ
اَيُّهُمْ اَشَدُّ عَلَى الرَّحْمٰنِ عِتِيًّا ﴿٦٩﴾ ثُمَّ لَنَحْنُ اَعْلَمُ بِالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ
اَوْلٰى بِهَا صِلِيًّا ﴿٧٠﴾ وَاِنْ مِّنْكُمْ اِلَّا وَارِدُهَا ۚ كَانَ عَلٰى رَبِّكَ حَتْمًا
مَّقْضِيًّا ﴿٧١﴾ ثُمَّ نُنَجِّى الَّذِيْنَ اتَّقَوْا وَّنَذَرُ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ فِيْهَا جِثِيًّا
﴿٧٢﴾

(Jibra'īl said to the Holy Prophet) "And we do not descend but with the command of your Lord. To Him belongs what is in front of us and what is behind us and what is in between. And your Lord is not the one who forgets - [64] **the Lord of the heavens and the earth and whatever lies between them. So, worship Him and persevere in His worship. Do you know any one worthy of His name?"** [65] **And man says, "Is it that, once I die, I shall be brought forth alive?"** [66] **Does not the man remember that We created him before when he was nothing?** [67] **So, by your Lord, We will definitely gather them together with the devils, then We will definitely make them present around the Jahannam, fallen on their knees.** [68] **Then We will certainly draw out, from every group, those who are more rebellious against the Raḥmān (All-Merciful).** [69] **Then of course, We are most aware of those who are more deserving to enter it (the Jahannam).** [70] **And there is none among you who is not to arrive at it. This, on the part of your Lord, is a matter finally decided, bound to happen.** [71] **Then We will save those who feared Allah, and will leave the wrongdoers in it, fallen on their knees.** [72]

Commentary

وَاصْطَبِرْ لِعِبَادَتِهٖ ("and persevere in His worship." - 19:65) The word اِصْطِبَار means perseverance in the face of acute distress and hardship. The point here is that any one who wishes to be constant and steadfast in his

prayers must be prepared to undergo pain and suffering.

هَلْ تَعْلَمُ لَهُ سَمِيًّا ("Do you know any one worthy of His name?" - 19:65) In the generally accepted sense the word سَمِيٌّ applies to persons bearing the same name. The polytheists and idolaters had included many humans, angels, stones and idols along with Allah Ta'ālā in their worship and designated all of them as إِلٰه i.e. as objects of worship but it is a strange and extraordinary coincidence that none of their false gods was ever named as Allah. This matter was pre-ordained, and no idol or deity bore the name Allah. Thus, the literal meaning of the word سَمِيٌّ would adequately explain the meaning of this verse which is that there is no object in the world bearing Allah's name.

Many commentators, among them Mujāhid, Ibn Zubair, Qatadah, and Ibn 'Abbas, are of the view that in the present context the word سَمِيٌّ means "a like" or "comparable" and the sense of the verse is that in the entire pantheon of false gods none is equal or comparable to Allah Ta'ālā in so far as divine attributes are concerned.

لَنَحْشُرَنَّهُمْ وَالشَّيٰطِيْنَ ثُمَّ لَنُحْضِرَنَّهُمْ

"We will definitely gather them together with the devils, then We will definitely make them present." - 19:68.

This verse may be interpreted in two ways. First, that on the Day of Judgement every infidel will be brought before God along with his own devil, and this suggests that this is a reference to the gathering of infidels and their devils. But if it is interpreted in a general sense to include all believers and infidels then the meaning of the devils being gathered with all of them would be that while the infidels will be gathered with their devils, the believers would also be gathered at the same time and place. Thus the devils will be gathered along with the infidels as well as with the believers.

حَوْلَ جَهَنَّمَ جِثِيًّا

"Around the *Jahannam* fallen on their knees." - 19:68.

On the Day of Resurrection every one - believers, infidels, the blessed and the wretched - will be assembled around Hell. Every one will be seized with awe and terror, and they will all be on their knees, then the believers and the blessed will be taken across Hell and admitted into

Paradise, so that having viewed the extreme suffering of Hell they may all the better enjoy their own state of felicity, and at the same time rejoice at the punishment which has been inflicted upon the infidels.

ثُمَّ لَنَنْزِعَنَّ مِنْ كُلِّ شِيْعَةٍ

"Then We will certainly draw out from every group." - 19:69.

The word شِيْعَة is applied to a particular person or the followers of a particular faith, and it also means a sect. The meaning of the verse is that the most rebellious from amongst the different sects of the infidels will be picked out. Some commentators say that the sinners will be committed to Hell in the order of the intensity of their sins, i.e. those sinners will be driven in first whose sins are most intense and those with less intense sins, will follow them, and so on.

وَاِنْ مِّنْكُمْ اِلاَّ وَارِدُهَا

"And there is none among you who is not to arrive at it." - 19:71.

This means that everybody - be he a believer or an infidel - will go across Hell. However, this does not mean that they would go to stay in it; they would only go across it. But even if the word means "entry", then the pious believers on entry into Hell will feel no discomfort because its fires will cool down and will do no harm to them. Sayyidnā Abū Sumayya ﷺ has related that The Holy Prophet ﷺ once said that:

> "Everybody whether he is a pious man or a sinner will initially enter Hell, but for the pious believers the fire will cool down just as the fire of Namrūd cooled down when Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was cast into it. Thereafter, the believers will be taken to Paradise."

This view is confirmed by the next sentence ثُمَّ نُنَجِّى الَّذِيْنَ اتَّقَوْا which means then We will save those who feared Allah - 19:72. A similar view has also been expressed by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ, thus even if the word وُرُوْد occurring in the Qur'ān is taken to mean دُخُوْل (entry), then the word دُخُوْل will be interpreted as synonymous with the word عُبُوْر (going across). Thus there is no contradiction in the meaning of the word.

Verses 73 - 76

وَاِذَا تُتْلٰى عَلَيْهِمْ اٰيٰتُنَا بَيِّنٰتٍ قَالَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لِلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا ۙ اَىُّ

الْفَرِيقَيْنِ خَيْرٌ مَّقَامًا وَّاَحْسَنُ نَدِيًّا ﴿٧٣﴾ وَكَمْ اَهْلَكْنَا قَبْلَهُمْ مِّنْ
قَرْنٍ هُمْ اَحْسَنُ اَثَاثًا وَّرِئْيًا ﴿٧٤﴾ قُلْ مَنْ كَانَ فِي الضَّلٰلَةِ فَلْيَمْدُدْ
لَهُ الرَّحْمٰنُ مَدًّا ۚ حَتّٰٓى اِذَا رَاَوْا مَا يُوْعَدُوْنَ اِمَّا الْعَذَابَ وَاِمَّا
السَّاعَةَ ۗ فَسَيَعْلَمُوْنَ مَنْ هُوَ شَرٌّ مَّكَانًا وَّاَضْعَفُ جُنْدًا ﴿٧٥﴾ وَيَزِيْدُ
اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ اهْتَدَوْا هُدًى ۗ وَالْبٰقِيٰتُ الصّٰلِحٰتُ خَيْرٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ ثَوَابًا
وَّخَيْرٌ مَّرَدًّا ﴿٧٦﴾

And when Our verses are recited to them in all their clarity, those who disbelieve say to those who believe, "Which of the two groups is superior in respect of its place and better in respect of its assembly?" [73] **And how many a generation We have destroyed before them who were better in assets and outlook!** [74] **Say, "Whoever stays straying, let his term be extended by The Raḥmān (All-Merciful) still longer until when they will see what they are being warned of: either the punishment or the Hour (of doom), then they will know who was worse in respect of his place and weaker in respect of his forces.** [75] **And Allah makes those on the right path excel in guidance. And the everlasting virtues are better with your Lord in respect of reward and better in their return.** [76]

Commentary

خَيْرٌ مَّقَاماً وَّاَحْسَنُ نَدِيّاً

"Superior in respect of its place and better in respect of its assembly" - 19:73.

The infidels never relaxed their efforts to confuse and perplex the believers. They were very rich and possessed material wealth in great abundance. They had their retinues, their followers, friends and supporters. In contrast, the believers were poor and lacking in worldly assets. However, it is a common experience that material wealth turns people's heads and makes them unduly proud and arrogant, so that even the sensible and wise among them are led to believe that their prosperity and affluence is the reward of their personal merit and effort, and will

last for ever. History is replete with instances where prosperous communities and rich nations crumbled to dust and vanished without leaving a trace. But these instances of Divine wrath hold no lesson for them and fail to turn them from their erroneous ways.

On the other hand there are good people who, following the teachings of Qur'ān, do not regard wealth and worldly honors as the result of their own effort and merit, but as Allah Ta'ālā's bounty to be held as a trust from Him and to be expended according to His command. They are well aware that these gifts from Allah Ta'ālā will not last for ever, and the prospect of their abatement or even their total loss does not cause them any concern. These are the people who are safe from the mischief resulting from wealth and material abundance to which the infidels are exposed. Prophets like Sayyidnā Sulaymān and Dāwūd عليهما السلام, many a followers of The Holy Prophet ﷺ and multitude among the pious believers fall in this category.

Allah Ta'ālā has dispelled the mistaken notions of the infidels by saying that the transient material prosperity cannot be regarded as a token of His good-will nor as a symbol of their own merit, because it often happens that foolish and undeserving people are loaded with wealth while wise and learned persons spend their lives in poverty.

وَالْبٰقِيٰتُ الصّٰلِحٰتُ خَيْرٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ ثَوَابًا وَّ خَيْرٌ مَّرَدًّا

"And the everlasting virtues are better with your Lord in respect of reward and better in their return". - 19:76

These words have been interpreted differently by different scholars as has been explained at some length in the commentary of Sūrah Al-Kahf (سورہ کہف). The more plausible interpretation, however, is that the words refer to submission to the commands of Allah and to good deeds, the benefits of which are everlasting.

مَرَدًّا means consequences, and the sense of this verse is that good deeds alone are the real wealth whose reward is great and whose result is eternal peace.

Verses 77 - 82

اَفَرَءَيْتَ الَّذِىْ كَفَرَ بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَقَالَ لَاُوْتَيَنَّ مَالًا وَّ وَلَدًا ﴿۷۷﴾ اَطَّلَعَ

الْغَيْبَ أَمِ اتَّخَذَ عِنْدَ الرَّحْمٰنِ عَهْدًا ﴿٧٨﴾ كَلَّا ۚ سَنَكْتُبُ مَا يَقُولُ
وَنَمُدُّ لَهُ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ مَدًّا ﴿٧٩﴾ وَنَرِثُهُ مَا يَقُولُ وَيَأْتِينَا فَرْدًا ﴿٨٠﴾
وَاتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ آلِهَةً لِيَكُونُوا لَهُمْ عِزًّا ﴿٨١﴾ كَلَّا ۚ
سَيَكْفُرُونَ بِعِبَادَتِهِمْ وَيَكُونُونَ عَلَيْهِمْ ضِدًّا ﴿٨٢﴾

Did you, then, see him who rejected Our verses and said, "I shall certainly be given wealth and children?" [77] **Has he peeped in the unseen or taken a covenant with the Raḥmān (All-Merciful)?** [78] **Never. We will write what he says and extend for him the punishment extensively.** [79] **And We will inherit from him what he is talking about and he will come to Us all alone.** [80] **And they have taken gods other than Allah so that they might be a might for them.** [81] **Never. They will soon deny their worshipping and they will be just the opposite for them.** [82]

Commentary

لَأُوتَيَنَّ مالاً وَّوَلَدا ("I shall certainly be given wealth and children". - 19:77) Bukhārī and Muslim relate the story of Sayyidnā Khabab Ibn Al-'Aratt who had lent some money to 'Ās Ibn Wā'il. When pressed to return the loan, 'Āṣ Ibn Wail said that he would not make the payment until he (Sayyidnā Khabab) dissociated himself from the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Sayyidnā Khabab replied that he would never do that - not until 'Āṣ was dead and rose to life again. At this 'Āṣ Ibn Wail said, "What? will I be brought to life again after I am dead? If so I will repay the loan only after I am brought back to life again because even then I will have my wealth and my children." (Qurṭubī)

This verse is an answer to 'Āṣ Ibn Wail's boastful claim. How does he know that when he is brought back to life he will still have his wealth and children?

أَطَّلَعَ الْغَيْبَ (Has he peeped in the unseen - 19:78) It is obvious that nothing of this kind has happened. Then why has he considered it as a surety?

أَمِ اتَّخَذَ عِنْدَالرَّحْمٰنِ عَهْدًا

"Or taken a covenant with The Raḥmān (All-Merciful)" - 19:78.

Or has he entered into a covenant with Allah Ta'ālā and obtained a promise from Him for his wealth and his children?

وَنَرِثُهٗ مَا يَقُوْلُ

"And We will inherit from him what he is talking about" - 19:80.

It is foolish of him to talk about retaining his wealth and children in the Hereafter because he will have to leave behind even these things which he possesses in this world, and his wealth and children will all revert to Allah Ta'ālā.

وَيَاْتِيْنَا فَرْداً

"And he will come to Us all alone" - 19:80.

And on the Day of Judgment he will appear in God's presence alone without his wealth and his children.

وَيَكُوْنُوْنَ عَلَيْهِمْ ضِدّاً

"And they will be just the opposite for them" - 19:82.

The idols and the false gods whom the infidels worshipped in the hope of winning their help will turn against them on the Day of Judgment. God will grant speech to them and they will say, "O God! finish these sinners because they turned away from you and made us the objects of their worship."

Verses 83 - 87

اَلَمْ تَرَ اَنَّآ اَرْسَلْنَا الشَّيٰطِيْنَ عَلَى الْكٰفِرِيْنَ تَؤُزُّهُمْ اَزًّا ﴿٨٣﴾ فَلَا تَعْجَلْ عَلَيْهِمْ ؕ اِنَّمَا نَعُدُّ لَهُمْ عَدًّا ﴿٨٤﴾ يَوْمَ نَحْشُرُ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ اِلَى الرَّحْمٰنِ وَفْدًا ﴿٨٥﴾ وَنَسُوْقُ الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ اِلٰى جَهَنَّمَ وِرْدًا ﴿٨٦﴾ لَا يَمْلِكُوْنَ الشَّفَاعَةَ اِلَّا مَنِ اتَّخَذَ عِنْدَ الرَّحْمٰنِ عَهْدًا ﴿٨٧﴾

Did you not see that We have sent the devils onto the disbelievers inciting them with all their incitements. [83] **So do not hurry about them; We are but counting for them a count down.** [84] **The day We will assemble the God-fearing before the Raḥmān (All-Merciful) as guests** [85] **and will drive the sinners towards the**

Jahannam as herds towards water, [86] **they will have no power of intercession except the one who has taken a covenant with the Raḥmān (All-Merciful).**[87]

Commentary

تَؤُزُّهُمْ اَزًّا

"Inciting them with all their incitements" - 19:83.

In Arabic language the words حَضّ۔ فَزّ۔ اَزّ۔ هَزّ are synonymous, differing only in shade or degree, and mean to urge, incite, instigate. The word اَزّ means to apply strong pressure, to persuade somebody to do something. The sense of this verse is that the Devils instigate the unbelievers to persist in their evil ways by presenting before their eyes the benefits and hiding from them the wickedness of their evil deeds.

اِنَّمَا نَعُدُّ لَهُمْ عَدًّا

"We are but counting for them a count down." - 19:84

This verse means: "Do not be impatient about their punishment because it is going to befall upon them in any case - and very soon. We have allowed them a fixed term in this world and that term is about to end. Then will come their retribution." نَعُدُّ لَهُمْ means: "We are counting for them, i.e. they do not have control on anything. Their days are numbered and We keep a count of every moment of their life and everything they do."

Once Ma'mūn Rāshīd read Sūrah Maryam. Upon reading this particular verse, he desired that Ibn Simak, one of the Islamic scholars sitting in that meeting with him, to say something on it. Thereupon Ibn Simak submitted that when our breaths are numbered and their number cannot be enhanced, they will soon come to an end. The same notion is reflected in the following poetic verse:

حیاتک انفاس تعد فکلّما ☆ مضی نفس منک انتقصت به جزءًا

That is, the breaths of your life are counted. With every passing breath, your life gets reduced to that extent.

It is said that during one span of twenty-four hours, one breathes twenty-four thousand times. (Qurṭubī)

The following stanza explores the same context:

وكيف يفرح بالدّنيا ولذّتها ☆ فتى يُعدّ عليه اللفظ وَالنّفس

That is, how can one be so engrossed and relaxed with the worldly pleasures, while his words and breaths are being counted. (Rūḥ)

يَوْمَ نَحْشُرُ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ اِلَى الرَّحْمٰنِ وَفْداً

"The day We will assemble the God-fearing before the Raḥmān (All-Merciful) as guests." - 19:85.

The word وفد applies to those who are received by rulers and princes with respect and honour. According to some sayings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ he said, "These men will ride on their mounts which they used in their worldly life." Some say that their own virtuous deeds will take the shape of their mounts.

اِلٰى جَهَنَّمَ وِرْداً

"Towards the Jahannam as herds towards water" - 19:86.

وِرْد means to go towards water and since only a thirsty man or animal goes towards water, this word has been translated to denote a thirsty person.

مَنِ اتَّخَذَ عِنْدَالرَّحْمٰنِ عَهْدًا

"Except the one who has taken a covenant with the Raḥmān (All-Merciful)" - 19:87.

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ has said that عَهْد means a declaration of firm belief in the Unity of Allah Ta'ālā, while others say that عَهْد means committing the Qur'ān to memory. In brief only those people will have the permission to intercede with Allah who stand firm by their covenant to adhere to the true faith. (Rūḥ)

Verses 88 - 98

وَقَالُوا اتَّخَذَ الرَّحْمٰنُ وَلَدًا ﴿٨٨﴾ لَقَدْ جِئْتُمْ شَيْئًا اِدًّا ﴿٨٩﴾ تَكَادُ السَّمٰوٰتُ يَتَفَطَّرْنَ مِنْهُ وَتَنْشَقُّ الْاَرْضُ وَتَخِرُّ الْجِبَالُ هَدًّا ﴿٩٠﴾ اَنْ دَعَوْا لِلرَّحْمٰنِ وَلَدًا ﴿٩١﴾ وَمَا يَنْبَغِيْ لِلرَّحْمٰنِ اَنْ يَّتَّخِذَ وَلَدًا ﴿٩٢﴾ اِنْ كُلُّ مَنْ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ اِلَّآ اٰتِي الرَّحْمٰنِ عَبْدًا

﴿٩٣﴾ لَقَدْ اَحْصٰهُمْ وَعَدَّهُمْ عَدًّا ﴿٩٤﴾ وَكُلُّهُمْ اٰتِيْهِ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ فَرْدًا ﴿٩٥﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ سَيَجْعَلُ لَهُمُ الرَّحْمٰنُ وُدًّا ﴿٩٦﴾ فَاِنَّمَا يَسَّرْنٰهُ بِلِسَانِكَ لِتُبَشِّرَ بِهِ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ وَتُنْذِرَ بِهٖ قَوْمًا لُّدًّا ﴿٩٧﴾ وَكَمْ اَهْلَكْنَا قَبْلَهُمْ مِّنْ قَرْنٍ هَلْ تُحِسُّ مِنْهُمْ مِّنْ اَحَدٍ اَوْ تَسْمَعُ لَهُمْ رِكْزًا ﴿٩٨﴾

And they say, "The Raḥmān (All-Merciful) has taken to Himself a son." [88] **You have come up, indeed, with something so abominable** [89] **that the heavens are about to explode therewith and the earth to burst and the mountains to fall down crumbling,** [90] **for they have ascribed a son to the Raḥmān (All-Merciful),** [91] **while it is not befitting for the Raḥmān (All-Merciful) to have a son.** [92] **There is none in the heavens and the earth, but bound to come to the Raḥmān (All-Merciful) as a salve.** [93] **He has fully encompassed them and precisely calculated their numbers,** [94] **and each one of them is bound to come to Him on the Day of Judgment, all alone.** [95] **Surely, those who believe and do the righteous deeds, for them the Raḥmān (All-Merciful) will create love.** [96] **So We have made it easy through your tongue so that you give with it the good news to the God-fearing and warn with it an obstinate people.** [97] **And how many a generation We have destroyed before them. Do you sense (the presence of) any one of them or hear from them even a whisper?** [98]

Commentary

وَتَخِرُّ الْجِبَالُ هَدًّا

"And the mountains to fall down crumbling" - 19:90.

These verses suggest that the earth, the mountains and everything that grows thereon possess a certain degree of knowledge and intelligence though in their case these perceptions are not of the same extent as that bestowed on human beings. This explains the fact that everything in the world glorifies Allah Ta'ālā as will be evident from the verse.

وَاِنْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ اِلَّا يُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِهٖ

"And there is not a single thing that does not extol His purity

and praise." - 17:44.

These verses refer to this very perception of these things that to associate anything or being with Allah Ta'ālā, specially to assert that He has children is a sin which makes the earth and the mountains quake with fear. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ has said that except humans every created thing is terrified of any suggestion of association with Allah (Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī).

وَعَدَّهُمْ عَدًّا

"And precisely calculated their numbers" - 19:94.

It means that Allah Ta'ālā has full knowledge of their doings.

سَيَجْعَلُ لَهُمُ الرَّحْمٰنُ وُدًّا

"For them the Raḥmān (All-Merciful) will create love." - 19:96.

It means that for those who are steadfast in their faith in Him, Allah creates an environment of friendship and love for each other, which consequently promotes mutual amity and goodwill among the true Muslims. Furthermore, by their conduct and behavior they command the admiration and respect of all those with whom they come into contact. Bukhārī, Tirmidhī and others have related on the authority of Sayyidnā Abu Hurairah that the Holy Prophet ﷺ once said that when Allah Ta'ālā is pleased with someone He says to Jibra'īl, "I am pleased with so and so and I desire that you too should show favour to him." Jibra'īl makes an announcement to this effect in all the skies so that their residents begin to harbor a liking for that person. Then this love descends upon the earth and the people of the earth also begin to love him. The Holy Prophet ﷺ then quoted this verse. (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī).

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ اٰمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ سَيَجْعَلُ لَهُمُ الرَّحْمٰنُ وُدًّا

"Surely those who believe and do the righteous deeds, for them the Raḥmān (All-Merciful) will create love." - 19:96.

Ḥaram bin Ḥayyan has said that when a person devotes himself wholly towards Allah He fills the hearts of all believers with love for him. (Qurṭubī)

When Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm Khalilullah ﷺ, planned to go back to Syria, after leaving behind his wife Hajira and his baby son Sayyidnā

Ismā'il ﷺ in the desert enclosed by the barren hills of Makkah in accordance with the command of Allah, he also prayed for both of them with the following words

فَاجْعَلْ اَفْئِدَةً مِّنَ النَّاسِ تَهْوِىٓ اِلَيْهِمْ

"So make hearts of a number of people yearn toward them." - 14:37.

The prayer was granted so that even after the lapse of many millennia people all over the world entertain great love for Makkah and its inhabitants. They visit the place in large numbers, and not only incur heavy expenditure but also endure great hardships while making the journey.

اَوْ تَسْمَعُ لَهُمْ رِكْزًا

"Or hear from them even a whisper" - 19:98.

The word رِكز means a faint, unintelligible sound such as a death-rattle. The meaning of the verse is that there have been many kings who ruled vast empires, exercised unlimited authority and lived in great splendor, but when the wrath of Allah caught upon them for their sinful acts, they were annihilated in such a manner that not even a whisper or a feeble motion is now being heard of them.

Alḥamdulillāh
The Commentary on
Sūrah Maryam
Ends here.

Sūrah Ṭā-Hā

Sūrah Ṭā-Ḥā was revealed in Makkah and it has 135 Verses and 8 sections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

The other name of this Sūrah, according to As-Sakhawi is Sūrah Kalīm (كليم) because it contains the detailed story of Kalīmullah Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام.

It is reported in the Musnad by Dārimi on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that two thousand years before Allah Ta'ālā created the sky and the earth, He recited (i.e. to the angels) Sūrahs Ṭā-Ḥā and Yāsīn, the angels said, "Fortunate and blessed are the people to whom these Sūrahs will be revealed, and blessed are the chests which will preserve (memorize) them, and blessed are the tongues which will recite them." And it was this very Sūrah which brought about the conversion of Sayyidnā 'Umar Ibn Khaṭṭāb رضي الله عنه who had actually set out fully determined to kill the Holy Prophet ﷺ. This story has been related in all the books of *Sīrah* (Biographies of the Holy Prophet ﷺ).

The story as narrated by Ibn Isḥāq runs as follows: One day Sayyidnā 'Umar Ibn Khaṭṭāb رضي الله عنه set out, with sword in hand, fully determined to kill the Holy Prophet ﷺ. On the way Nu'aim Ibn 'Abdullāh accosted him and asked him where was he headed to. Sayyidnā 'Umar Ibn Khaṭṭāb رضي الله عنه replied that he was going to finish off the man who had sown discord among the Quraish, vilified their faith, seduced them from belief and disparaged their idols. Nu'aim then said "O 'Umar! You are deceiving yourself. If you kill Muḥammad ﷺ, do you really think that his clan Banū 'Abd Munāf will spare your life? If you have any sense, better see to your own sister and her husband because they both have become Muslims and have accepted the religion of Muhammad ﷺ." Sayyidnā

'Umar Ibn Khaṭṭāb ﷺ was shaken by what he heard and retraced his steps towards the house of his sister and her husband. At that moment Sayyidnā Khabbāb bin 'Arath, one of the Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, was teaching both of them Sūrah Ṭā-Ḥā which was written on a sheet of paper.

When they realized that Sayyidnā 'Umar Ibn Khaṭṭāb ﷺ was coming, Sayyidnā Khabbāb Ibn 'Arath ﷺ hid himself in another room or in some corner of the house and Sayyidnā 'Umar's sister hid the sheet of paper under her thigh. But Sayyidna 'Umar had heard Sayyidnā Khabbab Ibn Art ﷺ reciting something, and he asked his sister what was it. She tried to evade the question but he would not be put off. Finally he came out in the open and told them point blank that he had just learned about them becoming Muslim and followers of Muḥammad ﷺ. Having said this, he started beating his brother-in-law Sa'īd Ibn Zaid and when his sister Fāṭimah رضی اللہ عنہا came to the rescue of her husband he beat her too and left her bleeding.

Sayyidah Fāṭimah رضی اللہ عنہا and her husband had enough of it and they called out defiantly, "All right, you listen now! It is true that we have become Muslims and have adopted the Faith of Allah Ta'ālā and His Prophet ﷺ. Now you do whatever you want". Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ then saw that his sister was bleeding and he felt remorse for being too rough with her. He asked her to show him the sheet of paper from which she was reading so that he could learn something about the teachings of Muḥammad ﷺ. Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ was a literate person. That is why he wanted to read the sheet of paper himself. His sister was afraid that he might either destroy or desecrate it, but he assured her on oath that he would do neither and promised to return it to her after he had read it. When she saw the way things were moving and noticed a change in his attitude, she even began to entertain the hope that he too might become a Muslim. But she told him that he was unclean and only those who were clean could touch the sheet. So Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ bathed and his sister gave him the sheet on which Sūrah Ṭā-Ḥā was written. He read the first few lines and said, "It is written in beautiful language and appears to be worthy of respect." Khabbāb Ibn 'Arath who had remained hidden all this time, now came out and said, "O 'Umar Ibn Khattab! Allah Ta'ālā is very Merciful and it is my conviction that He had chosen you in response to the

ardent wishes of the Holy Prophet ﷺ whom I heard only yesterday making the following supplication to Allah Ta'ālā اللّٰهمّ ايّد الاسلام بابی الحکَم بن هشام او بعمر بن الخطّاب ("O Allah! Strengthen Islam through Abul Ḥikam Ibn Hishām (meaning Abu Jahl) or 'Umar Ibn Khaṭṭāb"). The intention was that the conversion of either one of these two men would lend great strength to the Muslims who were as yet very weak. Ibn Khabbāb said, "O 'Umar! This is your chance. Do not miss it". At this, Sayyidnā 'Umar Ibn Khaṭṭāb requested Khabbāb رضی الله عنه to take him to the Holy Prophet ﷺ (Qurṭubī). What followed next and how he came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and embraced Islam is too well known to need a repetition at this place.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 8

طٰهٰ ﴿١﴾ مَآ اَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْاٰنَ لِتَشْقٰٓى ﴿٢﴾ اِلَّا تَذْكِرَةً لِّمَنْ يَّخْشٰى ﴿٣﴾ تَنْزِيْلًا مِّمَّنْ خَلَقَ الْاَرْضَ وَالسَّمٰوٰتِ الْعُلٰى ﴿٤﴾ اَلرَّحْمٰنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوٰى ﴿٥﴾ لَهٗ مَا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِى الْاَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا وَمَا تَحْتَ الثَّرٰى ﴿٦﴾ وَاِنْ تَجْهَرْ بِالْقَوْلِ فَاِنَّهٗ يَعْلَمُ السِّرَّ وَاَخْفٰى ﴿٧﴾ اَللّٰهُ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ط لَهُ الْاَسْمَآءُ الْحُسْنٰى ﴿٨﴾

Ṭā-Ḥā [1] **We did not reveal the Qur'ān to you to (make you) face hardship** [2] **rather to remind him who has the fear** [3] **a revelation from the One Who created the earth, and the heavens so high.** [4] **The Raḥmān (the All-Merciful) has positioned Himself on the Throne.** [5] **To Him belongs whatever there is in the heavens, whatever there is in the earth, whatever there is between them and whatever there is beneath the soil.** [6]

And if you pronounce the word aloud, then (it makes no difference, for) He certainly knows the secret and what

is even more hidden. [7] **(Such is) Allah. There is no god but He. For Him are the Beautiful Names.** [8]

Commentary

طٰهٰ (Ṭā-Ḥā) Many Commentators have assigned different meanings to this word. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ thinks it means يا رجل (O man!) while according to Ibn 'Umar ﷺ it means يا حبيبى (O my Dear!). It is also suggested that طٰهٰ and يٰسٓ are the names of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. However the most obvious explanation is the one given by Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ﷺ and the majority of scholars, namely that like many other isolated letters حروف مقطعه appearing at the beginning of several chapters of the Qur'ān (such as الٓمّٓ), this word is also among the مُتشابهات or mysteries whose meaning is known only to Allah Ta'ālā.

مَآ اَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْاٰنَ لِتَشْقٰٓى (We did not reveal the Qur'ān to you to [make you] face hardship - 20:2) The word لِتَشْقٰى is derived from شقاء which means pain and distress. In the early days of Islam when the Qur'ān was first revealed, the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his Companions used to spend whole nights in prayers and in reciting the Qur'ān, as a result of which his feet used to get swollen due to standing for long hours in the prayers. Whereas during day time he would worry himself on how to bring light to the infidels in order that they should accept the teachings of the Qur'ān. This verse seeks to lessen the burden of long hours of prayers by informing the Holy Prophet ﷺ that the Qur'ān was not revealed to inflict toil and hardship on him and that it was not expected of him to stay awake the whole night reciting the Qur'ān. Thereafter, the Holy Prophet ﷺ adopted a routine by which he rested in the early hours of the night and would get up later to offer the *ṣalāh* of *tahajjud*.

This verse also suggests that the duty of the Holy Prophet ﷺ is merely to convey the Message of Allah Ta'ālā to the unbelievers, and thereafter he need not concern himself as to who accepted the Message and who did not.

اِلَّا تَذْكِرَةً لِّمَنْ يَّخْشٰى (Rather to remind him who has the fear - 20:3). Ibn Kathīr has narrated that in the early days following the revelation of the Qur'ān while the believers spent whole nights in prayers, the infidels mocked and taunted them that the revelation of the Qur'ān brought nothing to them but hardship, allowing them no rest and peace. In this

verse, Allah Ta'ālā says that these wretched and miserable people cannot sense that the Qur'ān and the knowledge communicated through it can bring only blessings and felicity. This fact is not appreciated by them because they are ignorant and misguided. In a Ḥadīth which has been related by Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah ﷺ the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "When Allah intends to reward a person, He gives him the correct perception of religion". (Ṣaḥīhain)

Here Imām Ibn Kathīr has recorded another authentic Ḥadīth which has been related by Ṭabarāni from Tha'labah Ibn Al-Ḥakam and which will be good news for the learned people :

قال رسول اللّٰه صلى اللّٰه عليه وسلم: يقول اللّٰه تعالىٰ للعلماء يوم القيامة اذا قعد على كرسيّه لقضاء عباده: انّى لم اجعل علمى وحكمتى فيكم الاّ وانا اريد ان اغفر لكم على ما كان منكم ولا ابالى (ابن كثير ص ١٤١ ج ٣)

The Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "On the Day of Judgment when Allah will ascend His Kursiyy (Chair) to pronounce judgment on the actions of His servants He will tell the learned people that He had placed His knowledge and wisdom in their hearts for the sole reason that He wished to forgive them in spite of their failings, and that these matters were of no concern to Him."

It is evident that in this Ḥadīth the reference to learned people applies to those only who possess the fear of Allah Ta'ālā which is a sure sign of Qur'ānic knowledge.

عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوٰى (Positioned Himself on the Throne - 20:5): About these words the truth is what the majority of the early scholars have held that the exact nature of 'Istiwa" (positioning) is not known to anybody. It is included in 'Mutashabihat' (the verses meaning of which is unknown). A Muslim has to believe that Istiwā' 'Ala-Al-'Arsh' (positioning on the Throne) is true, the nature of which must be in accordance with the high attributes of Allah, but nobody can comprehend it in this world.

وَمَا تَحْتَ الثَّرٰى (And whatever is beneath the soil - 20:6). (ثرٰى) (soil) means wet earth which comes out after digging upto a certain depth. Human knowledge does not go beyond ثرٰى and what is beneath it is known only to Allah. Some years back scientists and researchers, using the latest and the most sophisticated instruments, spent considerable time and effort to pierce across the centre of the earth. According to newspaper reports they

were able to penetrate upto a depth of six miles only after which they came across a rock casing and all their efforts to bore further down failed. Scientists were able to collect data only upto six miles, while the diameter of the earth covers thousands of miles. One has to admit, therefore, that the knowledge of what is below the soil is a special attribute of Allah.

يَعْلَمُ السِّرَّ وَ اَخْفٰى (Knows the secret and what is even more hidden - 20:7). سِرّ (Sirr: Secret) means something which a man hides in his heart and which is not known to anyone else and اخفٰى (what is more hidden) means a thought which has not even formed in his mind and will take shape later on. Allah is fully aware of what ideas a man conceals in his heart at a particular moment and what thoughts he will entertain in the future, while the person concerned himself does not know what thoughts will come to his mind in the days to come.

Verses 9 - 16

وَهَلْ اَتٰىكَ حَدِيْثُ مُوْسٰى ﴿٩﴾ اِذْ رَاٰ نَارًا فَقَالَ لِاَهْلِهِ امْكُثُوْٓا اِنِّيْٓ
اٰنَسْتُ نَارًا لَّعَلِّيْٓ اٰتِيْكُمْ مِّنْهَا بِقَبَسٍ اَوْ اَجِدُ عَلَى النَّارِ هُدًى ﴿١٠﴾
فَلَمَّآ اَتٰىهَا نُوْدِيَ يٰمُوْسٰى ﴿١١﴾ اِنِّيْٓ اَنَا رَبُّكَ فَاخْلَعْ نَعْلَيْكَ ۚ اِنَّكَ
بِالْوَادِ الْمُقَدَّسِ طُوًى ﴿١٢﴾ وَاَنَا اخْتَرْتُكَ فَاسْتَمِعْ لِمَا يُوْحٰى
﴿١٣﴾ اِنَّنِيْٓ اَنَا اللّٰهُ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّآ اَنَا فَاعْبُدْنِيْ ۙ وَاَقِمِ الصَّلٰوةَ لِذِكْرِيْ
﴿١٤﴾ اِنَّ السَّاعَةَ اٰتِيَةٌ اَكَادُ اُخْفِيْهَا لِتُجْزٰى كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ۢبِمَا تَسْعٰى
﴿١٥﴾ فَلَا يَصُدَّنَّكَ عَنْهَا مَنْ لَّا يُؤْمِنُ بِهَا وَاتَّبَعَ هَوٰىهُ فَتَرْدٰى ﴿١٦﴾

And has there come to you the story of Mūsā? [9] **When he saw a fire and said to his family, "Wait. I have noticed a fire. Perhaps I bring you an ember from it, or find some guidance by the fire."** [10]

So when he came to it, he was called, "O Mūsā, [11] **it is Me, your Lord, so remove your shoes; you are in the sacred valley of Ṭuwā.** [12] **And I have chosen you, so listen to what is revealed:** [13] **Surely, I AM ALLAH. There is no god but I, so worship Me and establish**

Ṣalāh for My remembrance. [14] **Surely, the Hour has to come. I would keep it secret so that everyone is given a return for the effort one makes.** [15] **So the one who does not believe in it and follows his desires must not make you neglectful of it, otherwise you will perish.** [16]

Commentary

هَلْ أَتٰكَ حَدِيْثُ مُوْسٰى (And has there come to you the story of Mūsā? - 20:9) In the earlier verses, reference was made to the greatness of the Qur'ān and also to the reverence due to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Thereafter, the story of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام has been related so that the Holy Prophet ﷺ should become fully aware of the trials and tribulations which afflict the prophets in the discharge of their missions, and which were rendered with courage and fortitude by the earlier prophets. This was to prepare the Holy Prophet ﷺ for the great mission which was entrusted to him. There is another verse which conveys the same sense:

وَكُلًّا نَّقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ اَنْبَآءِ الرُّسُلِ مَا نُثَبِّتُ بِهٖ فُؤَادَكَ

"And We narrate to you everything from the events of the messengers with which We strengthen your heart." (11:120)

It means that these stories are narrated to prepare you (the Holy Prophet ﷺ) and make you strong to undertake the responsibilities of the mission.

The story of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام which is related here begins like this. At Madyan he stayed with Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام with the understanding that he would serve the latter for a period of eight or ten years. According to Tafsīr Al-Baḥr ul-Muḥīṭ, after the expiry of this period he sought the permission of Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام to proceed to Egypt to see his mother and sister. He had fled earlier from Egypt fearing capture or death by the soldiers of the Pharaoh but this danger had now passed through the lapse of so many years. Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام willingly gave the permission and sent him away, with his wife (who was the latter's daughter). He also gave him some money and a few articles which they might use during their journey. Since he was apprehensive of the hostility of some of the rulers in Syria, he adopted a less frequented route. It was winter season and his pregnant wife was very close to confinement. The route which he had taken was unfamiliar to him and he lost his bearings. He came out to the west, i.e. the right side of the mount of Ṭūr.

It was a dark and cold night and to add to the misery, his wife began to experience birth pangs. He tried to strike fire with flint but did not succeed. In this state of utter confusion he saw light on the Ṭūr mountain which, infact, was the Nūr (the light symbolizing the truth). So he said to his family, "I have noticed fire. I am going there to bring for you a live coal and I may also find someone who could tell me the way to Egypt." The presence of his wife on the journey is well established. According to some traditions there was a servant with him who is also addressed. Others say that there were some other companions also who were separated when they lost their way. (Al-Baḥr ul-Muḥīṭ)

فَلَمَّآ اَتٰهَا (So when he came to it - 20:11): means that he approached the fire which he had seen from a distance. Musnad by Ahmad, on the authority of Wahb Ibn Munabbih رحمه الله تعالى reports that when Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام drew near the fire he saw a very strange scene. A fire was blazing on a green tree without scorching even a leaf or a branch. On the other hand the flame added manifold to the beauty and the freshness of the tree. He stood there quite a while watching this strange sight waiting for a chance to pick up a piece of burning wood. At last he collected some dry grass and tried to light it but as soon as he pushed the grass towards the fire, it retracted. It is also related that the fire advanced towards him and he drew back in consternation. Consequently he was unable to collect any fire. And as he stood, not knowing what to do, a mysterious voice called him. This happened in a plain called Ṭuwā which was to his right side and at the foot of this mountain.

نُوْدِىَ يٰمُوْسٰى اِنِّىْٓ اَنَا رَبُّكَ فَاخْلَعْ نَعْلَيْكَ (He was called, "O Mūsā, it is Me, your Lord, remove your shoes - 20:11,12). It is related in Al-Baḥr ul-Muḥīṭ, Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī and other books that the voice which Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام heard appeared to come from all directions and not from any particular direction. At the same time the manner in which the voice reached his perception was most extraordinary, because it was heard not only through his ears but by the entire body. This, indeed, was a miracle! What the voice said was that the light that he saw was not fire but a particular kind of divine manifestation. And the voice said, "Surely I am your Lord". The question arises: how did Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام know that it was the voice of Allah Ta'ālā? The answer is that Allah Ta'ālā had created in his heart the conviction that the voice which he heard was

really the voice of Allah Ta'ālā. Then there was the circumstance that the fire, instead of burning the tree added to its beauty and luster. Also the manner in which the voice was perceived by all the parts of his body and not only by his ears, were all factors which left no doubt in his mind that the voice he heard was really the voice of Allah Ta'ālā.

Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ learned the words of Allah directly

It is mentioned in a report of Wahb mentioned in Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī on the authority of Musnad by Aḥmad that when the mysterious voice called him "O Mūsā!", he replied, "I hear the voice O Allah! But I do not know from where it comes. Where are you, O Allah?" And Allah Ta'ālā said, "I am above you in front of you, to your right and your left. Indeed I am all around you." Then Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ said, "O Allah, do I hear these words from you directly or through an angel sent by You?" And Allah Ta'ālā said, "I myself am speaking to you." According to Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī this proves that Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ heard this كلام لفظى (spoken words) directly from Allah Ta'ālā. There is a sect among the Sunnis who believe that كلام لفظى (spoken words) can also be heard.

To take off shoes at a sacred place is an act of respect

فَاخْلَعْ نَعْلَيْكَ :(Remove your shoes - 20:12). The command to take off shoes was given because it was a sacred place and it was necessary to take off shoes to show it proper respect. Another reason for this command may be that since shoes are made from the hides of dead animals, they should be removed when entering upon sacred places. Sayyidnā 'Alī ﷺ, Ḥasan al-Baṣri and Ibn Juraij رحمهم الله تعالى have supported the first explanation and reasoned that the real purpose in commanding Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ to remove his shoes was that the soles of his feet should come into contact with the soil of this hallowed place and be blessed thereby. Others have said that by this command Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ was required to show humility and in earlier times devout and pious believers used to take off their shoes when circumambulating around the Holy Ka'bah.

There is a Ḥadīth that when the Holy Prophet ﷺ once saw Bashīr Ibn Khaṣaṣia walking through the graves with his shoes on, said:

اذا كُنتَ فى مثل هٰذا المكان فاخلع نعليك

"When you pass by a place which needs to be respected, take off your shoes."

All the jurists are unanimous that if the shoes are clean they may be worn when offering prayers and it is established by authentic reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his companions often wore clean shoes when saying prayers. But their common practice appears to be of removing the shoes when saying prayers, because it is closer to humility.

إِنَّكَ بِالْوَادِ الْمُقَدَّسِ طُوًى (You are in the sacred valley of Ṭuwā - 20:12): Allah, in his Divine Wisdom, has granted special status to some selected places such as Baitullah (the Holy Ka'bah), the Aqṣā Mosque, Masjid Nabawi etc. Wādī Ṭuwā (the valley of Ṭuwā) is also one such sacred place and is situated at the foot of the mount of Ṭūr.

How to conduct oneself when the Qur'ān is being recited

فَاسْتَمِعْ لِمَا يُوحٰى (So listen to what is revealed - 20:13). Sayyidnā Wahb Ibn Munabbih has said that the correct behavior while listening to the recitation of the Qur'ān is, that one sits still, refrains from any unnecessary movement in a way that no organ of his body is involved in any other work, keeps eyes down - concentrates the mind towards understanding its meaning. The person who listens to the Holy Qur'ān in this respectful manner is rewarded by Allah Ta'ālā with a better understanding of His word.

إِنَّنِيْٓ أَنَا اللّٰهُ لَآ إِلٰهَ إِلَّآ أَنَا فَاعْبُدْنِيْ وَأَقِمِ الصَّلٰوةَ لِذِكْرِيْ (Surely I AM ALLAH. There is no god but I, so worship Me and establish Ṣalāh for My remembrance - 20:14): with these words Allah Ta'ālā bestowed upon Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام a knowledge of all the basic principles of the true Faith, namely the Oneness of Allah Ta'ālā, the prophethood and the Hereafter. فَاسْتَمِعْ لِمَا يُوحٰى (So listen to what is revealed) refers to prophethood. فَاعْبُدْنِيْ means "worship Me alone and no one else". This points to the Oneness of Allah Ta'ālā. إِنَّ السَّاعَةَ اٰتِيَةٌ (Surely, the Hour has to come) points to the inevitability of the Hereafter. Although the word فَاعْبُدْنِيْ (worship Me) encompasses the injunction for prayers also yet it has been mentioned separately to stress its special merit relative to the other forms of worship. It is the pillar of the Faith and its neglect is the mark of the infidels.

أَقِمِ الصَّلٰوةَ لِذِكْرِيْ (Establish Ṣalāh for My remembrance - 20:14): means that the essence of prayer is the remembrance of Allah Ta'ālā and that the Ṣalāh, from beginning to end is nothing but remembering Allah - with the tongue, the heart and the other organs of the body. Therefore,

one should not neglect to remember Allah Ta'ālā while praying. This sentence also means that if a person omits to say his prayers at the appointed time due to over-sleeping or forgetfulness while engrossed in some other task, he should say his prayers as soon as he wakes up from sleep or becomes aware of his lapse. This is according to Ḥadīth.

أَكَادُ أُخْفِيهَا (I would keep it secret - 20:15): Allah Ta'ālā says that He wishes to keep the circumstances relating to the Day of Judgement hidden from all created things including prophets and angels. The word اكاد (I would) gives a subtle hint that it is only to induce people to good deeds that the coming of the Day of Judgment has been disclosed, otherwise even this fact would have been concealed.

لِتُجْزٰى كُلُّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا تَسْعٰى : (So that everyone is given a return for the effort one makes - 20:15). If this phrase is taken to be linked with the word اٰتِيَةٌ (has to come) then it would mean that this world is not a place of requital. Here a person does not receive recompense according to his merits and even if he receives some reward in this world it is just a token which does not constitute the full recompense of his deeds. It is, therefore, essential that there should be a time when everybody would receive his due reward.

Another possibility about the construction of this phrase is that it is taken to be linked with the words أَكَادُ أُخْفِيهَا (I would keep it secret - 20:15). In this case, it would mean that the philosophy in not revealing the time of death and the Day of Judgment is that people should continue in their endeavours and should not cease to strive in the belief that their own death or the Day of Judgment are still far away in the future. (Rūḥ)

فَلَا يَصُدَّنَّكَ عَنْهَا (must not make you neglectful of it - 20:16) Here Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام is cautioned by Allah Ta'ālā lest he should allow himself to be led away by the infidels and become negligent about the Day of Judgment because that would be the cause of his ruination. It is clear that a Prophet and a Messenger who is impeccable cannot commit such a lapse but the fact that such a warning has been addressed to him is meant to warn his followers as well as mankind at large to be cautious in the matter.

Verses 17 - 24

وَمَا تِلْكَ بِيَمِيْنِكَ يٰمُوْسٰى ﴿١٧﴾ قَالَ هِيَ عَصَايَ ۚ اَتَوَكَّؤُا عَلَيْهَا وَاَهُشُّ بِهَا عَلٰى غَنَمِيْ وَلِيَ فِيْهَا مَاٰرِبُ اُخْرٰى ﴿١٨﴾ قَالَ اَلْقِهَا يٰمُوْسٰى ﴿١٩﴾ فَاَلْقٰهَا فَاِذَا هِيَ حَيَّةٌ تَسْعٰى ﴿٢٠﴾ قَالَ خُذْهَا وَلَا تَخَفْ وقفه سَنُعِيْدُ هَا سِيْرَتَهَا الْاُوْلٰى ﴿٢١﴾ وَاضْمُمْ يَدَكَ اِلٰى جَنَاحِكَ تَخْرُجْ بَيْضَآءَ مِنْ غَيْرِ سُوْٓءٍ اٰيَةً اُخْرٰى ﴿٢٢﴾ لِنُرِيَكَ مِنْ اٰيٰتِنَا الْكُبْرٰى ﴿٢٣﴾ اِذْهَبْ اِلٰى فِرْعَوْنَ اِنَّهٗ طَغٰى ﴿٢٤﴾

And what is that in your right hand, O Mūsā?" [17] **He said, "It is my staff. I lean on it, and with it I beat down leaves for my sheep, and for me it has many other uses."** [18] **He said, "Throw it down O Mūsā".** [19] **So, he threw it down, and suddenly it was a snake, running.** [20] **He said, "Pick it up and be not scared. We shall restore it to its former state.** [21] **And put your hand under your arm and it will come out white, without any disease as another sign,** [22] **so that We may show you some of Our great signs.** [23] **Go to the Pharaoh. He has really transgressed."** [24]

Commentary

وَمَا تِلْكَ بِيَمِيْنِكَ يٰمُوْسٰى The question: "What is in your right hand, O Mūsā"? - 20:17 marks the beginning of the special favour which Allah Ta'ālā showed towards Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام in order to dispel the fear created by the unusual sights that he had seen and the Divine Word that he had heard. The style in which Allah Ta'ālā addressed him was friendly, inquiring from him what he held in his hand. Besides there was a subtle purpose in the question, namely to make him aware that what he held in his hand was a staff made of wood and nothing more. And when he had satisfied himself again that it was indeed a wooden staff, then the miracle of turning it into a serpent was revealed, thus precluding any doubt in his mind that in the darkness of the night he might have picked up a serpent instead of his staff.

قَالَ هِيَ عَصَايَ (He said, "It is my staff" - 20:18). The simple question which

was put to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام i.e. "What is in your hand?" called for an equally brief answer, such as, "It is a staff". But he volunteered additional information which was outside the scope of the question put to him. First, he said that the staff belonged to him; second, that it served him many purposes, namely that he often reclined on it, and also beat down leaves from trees for his goats; third, that he put it to many other uses. This long and detailed reply is a perfect combination of extreme love and adoration on the one hand and profound reverence on the other. It is a natural human instinct that when a person finds the object of his adoration to be kind and attentive, he wishes to prolong the conversation in order to get the best advantage. At the same time the dictates of extreme respect require that the conversation should remain within proper limits and not become too lengthy. For this reason he ended his reply with a brief statement وَلِيَ فِيهَا مَآرِبُ أُخْرٰى i.e. "And for me it has many other uses", but he did not give any detail of those "other uses". (Rūḥ and Maẓharī)

From this verse Qurṭubī has deduced in his Tafsīr that when needed, it is permissible, while answering a question, to include matters which are not specifically covered in the question.

Rule

This verse also shows that carrying a staff is a practice followed by the prophets. The Holy Prophet ﷺ also used to carry a staff in his hand and this practice has numerous religious as well as mundane advantages.

فَإِذَا هِيَ حَيَّةٌ تَسْعٰى (And suddenly it was a snake running - 20:20): When Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, in obedience to the command of Allah Taʿālā, cast down his staff it turned into a serpent. The Qur'ān has described this serpent at one place as كَأَنَّهَا جَآنٌّ (28:31). The word جَآنٌّ means a small and slim snake. At another place it has been referred to as فَإِذَا هِيَ ثُعْبَانٌ (26:32). The word ثُعْبَان means a long and thick snake. The word حَيَّه occurring in this verse is a generic name used for snakes of all sizes and thickness. These different words can be reconciled by the fact that this serpent was slim and small in the beginning and grew later on in size and thickness. Or that this serpent was originally long and thick and has been called جَآنٌّ by reason of its fast speed because as a general rule big and thick snakes are slow moving. The word كَأَنَّهَا used in this verse, which means "as if" also points to the fact that it has been compared to جَآنٌّ on account of its swift movements. (Maẓharī)

وَاضْمُمْ يَدَكَ اِلٰى جَنَاحِكَ (And put your hand under your arm - 20:22). The word جَنَاح means fore-limb of an animal or wing of a bird. Here Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was commanded to press his hand under his armpit so that when he brings it out it will shine as brilliantly as the sun, and this will be the second miracle granted to him. This is the meaning given to the words by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه (Maẓharī).

اِذْهَبْ اِلٰى فِرْعَوْنَ (Go to the Pharaoh - 20:24). Having suitably armed him with two great miracles, Allah Ta'ālā commanded Sayyidna Mūsā عليه السلام to proceed to Egypt and invite the Pharaoh to accept the true faith because he had exceeded all bounds in his tyranny and misdeeds.

Verses 25 - 36

قَالَ رَبِّ اشْرَحْ لِىْ صَدْرِىْ ﴿٢٥﴾ وَيَسِّرْلِىْٓ اَمْرِىْ ﴿٢٦﴾ وَاحْلُلْ عُقْدَةً مِّنْ لِّسَانِىْ ﴿٢٧﴾ يَفْقَهُوْا قَوْلِىْ ﴿٢٨﴾ وَاجْعَلْ لِّىْ وَزِيْرًا مِّنْ اَهْلِىْ ﴿٢٩﴾ هٰرُوْنَ اَخِى ﴿٣٠﴾ اشْدُدْبِهٖٓ اَزْرِىْ ﴿٣١﴾ وَاَشْرِكْهُ فِىْٓ اَمْرِىْ ﴿٣٢﴾ كَىْ نُسَبِّحَكَ كَثِيْرًا ﴿٣٣﴾ وَّ نَذْكُرَكَ كَثِيْرًا ﴿٣٤﴾ اِنَّكَ كُنْتَ بِنَا بَصِيْرًا ﴿٣٥﴾ قَالَ قَدْ اُوْتِيْتَ سُؤْلَكَ يٰمُوْسٰى ﴿٣٦﴾

He said, "My Lord, put my heart at peace for me [25] **and make my task easy for me** [26] **and remove the knot from my tongue,** [27] **that they may understand my speech.** [28] **And make for me an assistant from my own family:** [29] **Hārūn, my brother.** [30] **Enhance with him my strength,** [31] **and make him share my task,** [32] **so that we proclaim Your purity a lot** [33] **and remember You a lot.** [34] **You are certainly watchful over us."** [35]

He said, "You have been granted your request O Mūsā. [36]

Commentary

When Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام received the high honour of conversing with Allah Ta'ālā and was granted the mission of prophethood, then, instead of relying on his own self and on his own ability, he turned to Allah Ta'ālā and sought His help in the discharge of his duties without

which it would be impossible for him to endure and persevere in the face of the trials and tribulations inherent in the performance of his mission. He, therefore, prayed to Allah Ta'ālā to grant him five favours.

The first prayer was اِشْرَحْ لِىْ صَدْرِىْ (Put my heart at peace for me - 20:25). Meaning to expand the ability of his heart to enable him to receive all the knowledge and wisdom of prophethood, and at the same time to bear with equanimity the slander of those people who will oppose him in his mission.

His second prayer was وَيَسِّرْلِىْ اَمْرِىْ (make my task easy for me - 20:26). Having been granted prophethood he realized that it is not the human ability and skill or other apparent causes which make affairs easy or difficult. In reality, things become easy or difficult as Allah Ta'ālā wills. In the *ḥadīth* the believers have been advised to seek Allah Ta'ālā's help in their affairs with the following words:

اَللّٰهُمَّ الْطُفْ بِنَافِىْ تَيْسِيْرِ كُلِّ عَسِيْرٍ فَاِنَّ تَيْسِيْرَ كُلِّ عَسِيْرٍ عَلَيْكَ يَسِيْرٌ

O Allah! Be kind to us and make our difficult tasks easy because it is easy for you to make every difficult thing easy.

The third prayer وَاحْلُلْ عُقْدَةً مِّنْ لِّسَانِىْ يَفْقَهُوْا قَوْلِىْ (And remove the knot from my tongue, that they may understand my speech - 20:27, 28). The story behind this "knot" is that as an infant Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام lived with his own mother who used to suckle him and was paid for her services by the Pharaoh. When he was weaned, the Pharaoh and his wife 'Āsiya adopted him, and took him away from his mother. One day Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام caught hold of the Pharaoh's beard and slapped him on the face. Another version has it that he was playing with a stick and with it he struck the Pharaoh on his head. The Pharaoh was enraged and made up his mind to put him to death. His wife 'Āsiya tried to pacify him and said, "O King! Why do you take this matter so seriously? After all he is merely a child who does not understand things. You can test him if you like and you will find that he cannot distinguish between good things and bad things".

Thereupon, the Pharaoh ordered two trays to be brought. One was filled with live coal and the other with jewellery. It was expected that the child would be attracted by the brightness of the burning coal and reach for it because children are not normally drawn towards jewellery which is not as bright. This would have convinced the Pharaoh that what Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام did was nothing more than the act of an innocent

child. But Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was no ordinary child. Allah Ta'ālā had chosen him to be a prophet whose instincts were unusual from the very moment of his birth. He put forth his hand to reach out for the jewellery instead of the coal, but Jibra'il عليه السلام turned his hand away and placed it in the tray containing coal. He picked up a piece of burning coal and put it in his mouth and so burned his tongue. The Pharaoh was thus fully satisfied that the action of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was not due to mischief but the result of a child's inability to distinguish between good and bad for himself. This incident caused an impediment in his speech which has been called عقده (knot) in the Qur'ān, and Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام prayed to Allah Ta'ālā to make loose this knot. (Maẓharī and Qurṭubī)

The first two prayers are of a general nature and sought Allah Ta'ālā's help in all matters. The third prayer is for the removal of a disability because eloquence and fluency of expression are essential elements in the successful conduct of prophetic mission. In a subsequent verse Allah Ta'ālā informed Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام that all his prayers had been granted which would suggest that he was cured of his disability. However, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام in his prayer to make Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام his partner in the prophethood also said هُوَ أَفْصَحُ مِنِّي لِسَانًا (He is more fluent in his tongue than me - 28:34) which would indicate that his speech's impediment was not fully cured and that the stammer persisted, though in a milder form. One of the defects which the Pharaoh found in Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was that وَلَا يَكَادُ يُبِينُ (he cannot express himself clearly - 43:52). Some people have argued that in his prayer Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام had prayed to Allah Ta'ālā to loose the knot of his tongue only to the extent that others could understand his words. To that extent his stammer was cured but a trace of it still remained, which is not inconsistent with the grant of his prayer.

The fourth prayer was وَاجْعَل لِّي وَزِيرًا مِّنْ أَهْلِي (and make for me an assistant from my own family - 20:29). The first three prayers of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام concerned his own person. This fourth prayer relates to the assembling of means which would facilitate the successful completion of his mission, and the most important among these was the appointment of a deputy or a helper, who would assist him in this task. The literal meaning of the word وزير is "one who carries a burden", and since a minister of a state carries the burden of responsibilities entrusted to him

by the ruler, he is called a minister (وزير). This shows the extreme foresight and prudence of Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ because the success of any movement or enterprise depends on the selection of competent and dedicated supporters. With good and loyal workers it is easy to surmount all obstacles and hurdles, while with irresponsible and indifferent workers the best preparations and arrangements become futile. If one were to examine the causes of the decline of some of the modern states and the evils from which they suffer, they can all be attributed to the irresponsible conduct, mismanagement and incompetence of the ministers and advisers. It is related from the Holy Prophet ﷺ that when Allah Ta'ālā appoints someone to govern a country and wishes that the country should be well administered, He provides the ruler with a good Wazīr to assist him in whatever he does, and if he forgets to attend to some important task, the Wazīr is quick to remind him and to help him in what he intends to do. (Nisa'ī, from Qāsim Ibn Muḥammad).

In this prayer Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ has specified that the helper he wants should be from his own family, the reason being that the behavior and conduct of a member of the family is well-known. Besides, there is mutual affection and understanding between the members of the family which greatly helps towards the accomplishment of the mission. But it is essential that the person selected should be competent and in possession of the merit necessary for the performance of his duties so that his selection may not be attributed to nepotism and favouritism. Nowadays when there is a scarcity of people of integrity and dedication, the ruler who appoints his own close relatives to be his Wazīr and deputies renders himself liable to public criticism. When, however, the standards of probity and integrity are high, such appointments are considered normal and are, in fact, conducive to the more efficient performance of sensitive assignments. Indeed all the four Khulafā' ar-Rāshidīn (guided Caliphs) who succeeded the Holy Prophet ﷺ were in some way related to him.

In his prayer Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ first asked that the helper he required should be from his own family and then specifically asked for his brother Hārūn to be his Wazīr so that with the latter's support and assistance he could better perform the duties of his prophetic mission.

Sayyidnā Hārūn ﷺ was three or four years senior to Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ and died three years before the latter. When Sayyidnā Mūsā

عليه السلام petitioned to Allah Ta'ālā for his appointment as Wazīr he was in Egypt, and there he received, through an angel, information about his elevation to the status of a prophet and his appointment as an assistant to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام. He was also instructed to receive Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام outside Egypt when he arrived there in pursuance of his mission to persuade the Pharaoh to accept the true faith. This he did.

وَاَشْرِكْهُ فِىْٓ اَمْرِىْ (and make him share my task - 20:32): Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام had the power to appoint Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام as his Wazīr on his own, but he petitioned to Allah Ta'ālā to confer the appointment on his brother in order to seek His grace. Besides, he wanted him to share his prophethood and his mission and this power does not rest in any Prophet. Therefore he specially prayed to Allah Ta'ālā to make him a partner in his mission.

Good companions are a help in the better performance of worship and Dhikr (remembrance)

كَىْ نُسَبِّحَكَ كَثِيْرًا وَّنَذْكُرَكَ كَثِيْرًا (So that we proclaim Your purity a lot and remember You a lot - 20:33,34). The advantage of making Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام a Wazīr and a partner in prophethood would be that both of them together would be able to pray to Allah Ta'ālā and glorify His name more often. Here the question may arise that a man by himself can also pray as often as he desires, so where was the need for a companion? The answer to this is that good companions and a conducive environment definitely contribute towards the better performance of worship and Dhikr. A person whose friends are negligent about Allah cannot devote himself to His worship with the same quality and quantity as the person who is fortunate to have the company of pious men and righteous friends devoted to Allah's worship and Dhikr.

Here Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام ended his petition, and he was rewarded with the good news that Allah Ta'ālā, the Almighty, had granted all his requests قَالَ قَدْ اُوْتِيْتَ سُؤْلَكَ يٰمُوْسٰى (you have been granted your request O Mūsā - 20:36).

Verses 37 - 44

وَلَقَدْ مَنَنَّا عَلَيْكَ مَرَّةً اُخْرٰىٓ ﴿٣٧﴾ اِذْ اَوْحَيْنَآ اِلٰٓى اُمِّكَ مَا يُوْحٰىٓ

﴿٣٨﴾ أَنِ اقْذِفِيهِ فِي التَّابُوتِ فَاقْذِفِيهِ فِي الْيَمِّ فَلْيُلْقِهِ الْيَمُّ
بِالسَّاحِلِ يَأْخُذْهُ عَدُوٌّ لِّي وَعَدُوٌّ لَّهُ ۚ وَأَلْقَيْتُ عَلَيْكَ مَحَبَّةً مِّنِّي ۚ
وَلِتُصْنَعَ عَلَىٰ عَيْنِي ﴿٣٩﴾ إِذْ تَمْشِي أُخْتُكَ فَتَقُولُ هَلْ أَدُلُّكُمْ عَلَىٰ
مَن يَكْفُلُهُ ۖ فَرَجَعْنَاكَ إِلَىٰ أُمِّكَ كَيْ تَقَرَّ عَيْنُهَا وَلَا تَحْزَنَ ۚ وَقَتَلْتَ
نَفْسًا فَنَجَّيْنَاكَ مِنَ الْغَمِّ وَفَتَنَّاكَ فُتُونًا ۚ فَلَبِثْتَ سِنِينَ فِي أَهْلِ
مَدْيَنَ ثُمَّ جِئْتَ عَلَىٰ قَدَرٍ يَا مُوسَىٰ ﴿٤٠﴾ وَاصْطَنَعْتُكَ لِنَفْسِي ﴿٤١﴾
اذْهَبْ أَنتَ وَأَخُوكَ بِآيَاتِي وَلَا تَنِيَا فِي ذِكْرِي ﴿٤٢﴾ اذْهَبَا إِلَىٰ
فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّهُ طَغَىٰ ﴿٤٣﴾ فَقُولَا لَهُ قَوْلًا لَّيِّنًا لَّعَلَّهُ يَتَذَكَّرُ أَوْ يَخْشَىٰ
﴿٤٤﴾

And We have bestowed Our favour on you once more, [37] when We revealed to your mother what was to be revealed, [38] that is, "Put him (the baby) in the chest, then cast it into the river, then let the river throw it by the shore and it will be picked up by one who is enemy to Me and enemy to him". And I have cast love on you from Myself, and that you are fashioned under My eye. [39] (Remember) when your sister was going (to the family of the Pharaoh) and was saying, "Shall I point you to one who nurses him?" Thus We brought you back to your mother, so that her eyes might be cooled and she does not grieve. And you had killed a person, then We brought you out of the trouble; and We tested you with a great ordeal. Then you lived a number of years amidst the people of Madyan. After all this, you came O Mūsā, to a point, destined. [40] And I have fashioned you for Myself. [41] Go, you and your brother, with My signs, and do not be slack in My remembrance. [42] Go, both of you, to the Pharaoh; he has indeed transgressed. [43] So speak to him in soft words. May be, he takes to the advice or fears (Allah)". [44]

Commentary

وَلَقَدْ مَنَنَّا عَلَيْكَ مَرَّةً أُخْرَىٰ (And We have bestowed Our favour on you once

more - 20:37). Having bestowed His gifts and special favours on Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام such as the honour of conversation with Allah, the grant of prophethood and miracles etc. Allah Ta'ālā reminds him of the benefits and favours which He had showered on him throughout his life - from his birth uptill that time and how He had saved his life from numerous risks and hazards. In relation to time, these benefits (which will be discussed in the following pages) pertain to an earlier period.

إِذْ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ أُمِّكَ مَا يُوحَىٰ (When We revealed to your mother what was to be revealed - 20:38) It means that the information given to the mother of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was about a matter which could be learnt only through Divine revelation. This was that the Pharaoh's soldiers had orders to put to death all the male children belonging to the tribe of Banī Isrā'īl. She was told by means of a revelation that in order to save the life of her son she should put him in a box and float it down the river. She was re-assured not to entertain any apprehensions about his safety because Allah Ta'ālā would protect him and also return him to her. These are things which cannot be learnt by conjecture or guess work. The promise of Allah Ta'ālā, and the divine scheme to save his life are beyond human conception and can be made known through Divine revelation only.

Can a Revelation be sent to a person who is not a Prophet?

The truth of the matter is that the literal meaning of the word وحی (Waḥy) is a secret message which can be understood only by the person to whom it is addressed and by no one else. According to this literal sense, the word وَحِی (Waḥy) is not restricted to the prophets only and it can be used for people at large and even to animals. In the verse أَوْحَىٰ رَبُّكَ إِلَى النَّحْلِ (16:68) the word has been used in its literal and general sense, i.e. instructing the bees by means of وَحِی Waḥy. Similarly in this verse أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ أُمِّکَ (20:38) the word has been used in its general meaning and this does not necessarily mean that she was a prophet. Sayyidah Maryam عليها السلام also received Divine messages though the scholars unanimously hold the view that she was not a prophet. The Waḥy of this type is made by means of a Divine inspiration (Ilhām إلهام). Allah Ta'ālā puts an idea into someone's heart and then confirms him in the belief that it is from Allah Ta'ālā. Saints and other devout people receive such inspirations. Abū Ḥayyān and some other scholars hold that sometimes such inspirations

can be made through angels as happened to Sayyidah Maryam علیها السلام when Jibra'il ﷺ appeared before her in the form of a human being and conveyed to her the will of Allah Ta'ālā. These inspirations (Ilhām: اِلْهَام), however, are specific to the person to whom they are made and are not meant for public or to be used for the propagation of the True Faith, whereas the Waḥy which is revealed to the prophets aims at appointing someone to reform people and enjoining upon him to invite people to the True Faith. It is the duty of such a person not only to have complete faith in His Waḥy himself, but also to bind others to accept his prophethood and the Waḥy and to pronounce as infidels those who deny him.

This is the difference between وحی الهام (Waḥy in the sense of Ilhām) or literal وحی and وحی نبوّت (the *waḥy* of a prophet) or technical Waḥy. Literal Waḥy has always been there and will be there for ever, whereas the prophethood and (Waḥy of a prophet) have ceased with the Holy Prophet ﷺ, who was the last Prophet. Some respected scholars have given them the names of وحی تشریعی (legislative Waḥy) and وحی غیر تشریعی (non-legislative Waḥy). The false prophet of Qadiyan has used these definitions and certain writings of Sheikh Muhiyy-uddin Ibn 'Arabi in support of his claim to prophethood. His arguments, however, are contrary to what Ibn 'Arabi himself has written. A detailed discussion of this question will be found in my book ختم نبوت (Khatme Nabuwat).

The name of the mother of Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ

In Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī her name is given as Yuhanadh (یُوحَانذ) and in Itqān it is said that her name was Liḥyāna daughter of Yaṣmad Ibn Lawi (لحیانه بنت یصمد بن لاوی). Others say her name was Bārkha (بَارخَا) and still others that it was Bazakht (بازخت). Some people who dispense charms and amulets attribute strange properties to her name but according to Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī there is no basis for such a belief and probably it is nothing more than a hoax to entice innocent and ignorant people.

فَلْيُلْقِهِ الْيَمُّ بِالسَّاحِلِ (Then let the river throw it by the shore - 20:39.). The word يَمّ (Yamm) means river and here it refers most probably to the river Nile. In this verse the mother of Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ has been commanded by Allah Ta'ālā to place the baby in a box and set him afloat in the river Nile. Simultaneously the river has been commanded to cast the box on its bank. But the question arises as to how a river can be commanded to do something while it has no sense or understanding.

Some scholars have answered this query with the argument that although here the word has been used in the imperative mood which implies a command, it is not really a command but is meant to convey the information that the river would cast the box on its bank. However some scholars have disputed this explanation and have claimed that the word is really a command and is addressed to the river Nile because everything that Allah Ta'ālā has created possesses emotions and a sense of feeling and it is these properties, which according to the Qur'ān, enable even trees and rocks to glorify the name of Allah Ta'ālā. It is, nevertheless, a fact that except the human beings, the Jinns, and the angels no other created thing possesses feelings and emotions to a degree where the precepts of Ḥalāl (permissible) and Ḥarām (forbidden) can be made binding on them. Maulānā Rūmī رحمه الله تعالى has expressed the same idea in the following verse:-

خاک وباد وآب وآتش بندہ اند ☆ بامن وتو مردہ باحق زندہ اند

(Earth, wind, water and fire are all servants of Allah. To me and you they appear lifeless, but Allah knows that they too have life.)

يَأْخُذْهُ عَدُوٌّ لِّي وَعَدُوٌّ لَّهُ (And it will be picked up by one who is enemy to Me and enemy to him - 20:39.). It means that a person who is an enemy of Allah Ta'ālā and also the enemy of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام will rescue the child. Here the reference is to the Pharaoh who was the enemy of Allah Ta'ālā because of his infidelity, but his enmity towards Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام needs some explanation since at that time he cherished no hostility towards the latter, rather he was incurring considerable expenditure on his upbringing. Perhaps it was due to his future enmity towards Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام which was even at that time in the knowledge of Allah Ta'ālā. Or again it is possible that even at that time he was the enemy and had reluctantly agreed to bring up Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام for the sake of his wife 'Āsiya. Yet when he felt the slightest suspicion about Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام he ordered his immediate execution and was prevented from carrying out his intention through the wise role of Sayyidah 'Āsiya. (Rūḥ and Maẓharī)

وَأَلْقَيْتُ عَلَيْكَ مَحَبَّةً مِّنِّي (And I have cast love on you from Myself - 20:39). The word "love" in this verse is in the sense of 'being loved', meaning thereby that Allah Ta'ālā has bestowed upon Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام an

attribute that will make people show love towards him. This is the interpretation given to this verse by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās and 'Ikrimah ﷺ. (Maẓharī)

وَلِتُصْنَعَ عَلٰى عَيْنِىْ (And that you are fashioned under My eye - 20:39). The word صَنعتُ here means "good upbringing". The Arabs have a common phrase صَنعتُ فرسى (I trained my horse well). عَلٰى عَيْنِىْ , is used in the same sense as على حِفظِى i.e. it was Allah Ta'ālā's will that Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ should be brought up under His own eye, and for this purpose He chose the Pharaoh, the supreme authority in Egypt, to bring up Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ in his own palace, unaware all the time that the child that he was raising was his enemy. (Maẓharī)

إِذْ تَمْشِىٓ أُخْتُكَ (When your sister was going - 20:40). The story of the sister of Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ following the box along the river and the subsequent events are alluded to in this verse, which ends with the words وَفَتَنّٰكَ فُتُوْنًا (We tested you with a great ordeal - 20:40). According to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ these words mean "We tried you repeatedly", while Ḍaḥḥāk رحمه الله تعالى has translated them as "We subjected you to severe trials". Full details of this story have been given in a long Ḥadīth reported by Imām an-Nisa'ī رحمه الله تعالى in his book on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ. This story is as follows:

Detailed Story of Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ

In Kitāb-ut-Tafsīr of his Sunan, Imām Nisa'ī رحمه الله تعالى has reported a long Ḥadīth known as (حديث الفتون) (Ḥadīth-ul-Futūn) on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ. Ibn Kathīr has also reproduced the whole of it in his commentary and then has added that Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ thought that it was مرفوع (Marfū'), in other words, it was a statement of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Ibn Kathīr has confirmed this view with the words: وَصَدَق ذٰلِكَ عِندِىْ (I too believe that this Ḥadīth is مرفوع), and also gave reason in support of his opinion. However, he has admitted that the version of this story given by Ibn Jabīr and Ibn Abī Ḥātim رحمهم الله تعالى is the statement of Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ, and not of the Holy Prophet ﷺ while it contains some parts which were stated by the Holy Prophet ﷺ. It appears that Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ has learnt this story from Ka'b al-Aḥbār as has happened in many other cases. Be that as it may, the critics like Imām Nasa'ī and Ibn Kathīr رحمهم الله تعالى hold it to be *marfū'* (statement of the Holy Prophet ﷺ) and even those who do not accept it as such have never

challenged its contents, while a major part of this story is also mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān itself. Therefore, we would like to give full translation of this Ḥadīth which has many beneficial points having academic and practical value. Imām Nisa'ī رحمه الله تعالى has related this story which he learnt from Sa'id bin Jubair ﷺ that he (Sa'id Ibn Jubair ﷺ) asked Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ to explain to him the meaning of the expression وَفَتَنّٰكَ فُتُوْنًا , specially the word فُتُوْنًا which occurs in the verse relating to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام . Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ said it was a long story which he would tell him (Saīid Ibn Jubair ﷺ) if he comes to him early the next morning. This he did and Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ told him the story which runs as follows:

One day the Pharaoh and his companions were talking about Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام and the promise which Allah Ta'ālā had made to him to raise prophets and Kings from his progeny. Some of those present said that the Banī Isrā'īl were indeed expecting the birth of a prophet in their community and were in no doubt that Allah Ta'ālā's promise would be fulfilled. In the beginning they thought that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was the prophet promised by Allah Ta'ālā but when he died they said he was not the prophet promised to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام and that there must surely come another prophet whose arrival would fulfill Allah Ta'ālā's promise. This information upset the Pharaoh who feared that if ever a prophet was born in the Isrā'īli community, whom he held in bondage, he (the prophet) would try to liberate them from their servitude. He, therefore, asked his friends to advise him how such a catastrophe could be avoided. After much deliberation they came to the unanimous conclusion that the only way to meet this contingency was to put to death every male child born in an Isrā'īli family. In pursuance of this decision, armed soldiers were sent out with orders to search every Isrā'īli house and kill all male children.

This blood-shed continued for some time but then the Egyptians realized that all their work was done and arduous duties performed by the Banī Isrā'īl and if the process of killing their male children continued then a time would come when, their old men having died a natural death, no young men would be left to serve them, and they themselves would have to perform all the hard and toilsome work. In order to overcome this problem they came up with another proposal according to which all male

children born in one year should be put to death while all those born in the following year should be spared. Such a device would ensure the availability of a continuous supply of labour force of young Isrā'īlis who could replace the older men, yet at the same time their number would not be large enough to pose a threat to the Pharaoh's authority. Everybody approved of this proposal and a law was passed for its implementation. (And now the wisdom and power of Allah Ta'ālā demonstrated itself in the following way). Sayyidnā Mūsā's عليه السلام mother gave birth to Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام in the year when, according to the law of the Pharaoh, male Isrā'īli children were spared and there was no danger to his life. But when Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was conceived, his birth was expected in the year when the Pharaoh's decree required that all male Isrā'īli children be put to death. His mother was, therefore, greatly distressed at the thought of losing her son after its birth.

Here Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه paused in his story and said, "O Ibn Jubair! This was the first test (فتون) to which Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was put in that his life was at risk even before he was born."

Then Allah Ta'ālā, by means of وحی الهام (Divine inspiration) told the mother of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام to set her mind at rest.

لَا تَخَافِىْ وَلَا تَحْزَنِىْ اِنَّا رَآدُّوْهُ اِلَيْكِ وَجَاعِلُوْهُ مِنَ الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ

> Do not fear and do not grieve, surely We are going to bring him back to you and appoint him one of (Our) messengers - 28:7.

When Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was born Allah Ta'ālā commanded his mother to put him in a box and float him down the river Nile, which she did. After she had completed this task the Satan tried to perplex her with the suggestion that she had made a mistake by floating her son down the river because even if he had been put to death by the order of the Pharaoh she would at least have had the satisfaction of burying him with her own hands. Now there is no hope for him and he would probably be eaten up by the river animals. While the mother of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was greatly worried at what the Satan had told her, the waves cast the box upon a rock where the Pharaoh's slave girls used to come for bathing and washing. When they saw the box they wanted to open it, but one of them said that if the box contained some valuable articles and they opened it, then the Pharaoh's wife would suspect that they had kept back

some of these for themselves and nothing that they could say would satisfy her. Accordingly, they brought the box unopened to the Pharaoh's wife.

When the Pharaoh's wife opened the box she found a boy and she instinctively felt a sudden surge of love for him - something which she had never experienced before. This was just as Allah Ta'ala had told him (وَأَلْقَيْتُ عَلَيْكَ مَحَبَّةً مِّنِّي : And I have cast love on you from Myself). On the other hand, the mother of Sayyidna Musa ﷺ, in a state of puzzle caused by the Satan forgot the promise made to her by Allah Ta'ala and was so overwhelmed by grief that all happiness forsook her heart leaving it an empty shell. وَأَصْبَحَ فُؤَادُ أُمِّ مُوسَىٰ فَارِغًا (And the heart of the mother of Musa became restless - 28:10). At the same time the Pharaoh's soldiers learnt about the presence of an Isra'ili boy in the palace and they rushed with knives in their hands, and asked the Pharaoh's wife to surrender the boy so that they could put him to death.

Here Sayyidna Ibn 'Abbas ؓ paused again and said, "O Ibn Jubair! This was the second test (فُتُوْن) to which Sayyidna Musa ﷺ was exposed."

The Pharaoh's wife remonstrated with the soldiers. "What?" She said, "Do you think this small and frail baby, if allowed to live, can ever increase the strength of Bani Isra'il? You wait here and I will go to the Pharaoh and plead for his life. I hope the Pharaoh will spare his life. If not, then I will not stand in your way and you can take him." Saying so, she went to the Pharaoh and said to him, "This child is the joy of my heart and yours also." The Pharaoh replied, "Yes, I know that he is the joy of your heart, but as for me, I do not need him."

At this point of the story Sayyidna Ibn 'Abbas ؓ quoted the Holy Prophet ﷺ as saying, "I swear by Allah that if on that occasion the Pharaoh had also admitted to Sayyidna Musa ﷺ being the joy of his heart, as his wife did, Allah Ta'ala would have guided him along the path of the True Faith as He guided his wife."

(However, on account of his wife's urgent pleas the Pharaoh spared the life of the child). Now she needed a woman to nurse him. Many women offered their services but he would not suck from any of them

وَحَرَّمْنَا عَلَيْهِ الْمَرَاضِعَ مِن قَبْلُ (And We had already barred him (Mūsā) from (accepting) any suckling woman - 28:12). The Pharaoh's wife was in a real predicament. How will the child live if he was not nursed? She sent him with her servants to the market place to find any woman whose milk he would draw.

While these events were taking place in the Pharaoh's palace, the mother of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was concerned by anguish at the fate of her son. She asked her daughter to go out and make inquiries about the box and the child that whether he was still alive or was he eaten up by the river animals. The promise which Allah had made to her when she was pregnant that he would protect her child and return him to her after a brief separation had completely escaped her memory. And then a miracle happened. As soon as the sister of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام came to the market place she met the Pharaoh's female servants who held Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام in their arms and were looking for a woman who could nurse him. She also noticed that the child would not accept milk from any woman which caused them great anxiety and distress. So she said to them, "I can take you to a family where there is a woman whose milk, I hope, the child will accept and who will bring him up with great love and affection." Thereupon the servants held her on the suspicion that she was, perhaps, the mother or a close relation of the child and for that reason spoke with such a confidence that the proposed family is well-wisher of and sympathetic to this child.

Here Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه stopped and told Ibn Jubair رضي الله عنه that this was the third test (فُتُون) (for the sister of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was naturally frightened at being held like that but she kept her pose and told the servants that when she said that the family would love the child and serve him with devotion what she meant was that they would do so in the hope of getting access to the Pharaoh's court and thus obtaining some material benefit for themselves. This explanation satisfied the servants and they released her. She hurried back home and informed her mother of what had happened. Then both of them went to the market place where the servants stood with the baby. The mother took him in her arms and put him to her breast, and he sucked greedily until he was satiated. The Pharaoh's wife was overjoyed when she was informed that at last a woman had been found whose milk the child would take and ordered her

to be brought to her. On arrival the mother of Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ sensed that the Pharaoh's wife needed her and her services badly. At the same time she remembered Allah's promise to her that her son would be re-united to her after a brief separation. So she decided that she would offer her services on her own terms. The Pharaoh's wife told her that she was extremely fond of the child and could not bear parting from him for a moment. Therefore she should come and live in the palace and nurse the child. But Sayyidnā Mūsā's mother declined to do so. She said she had a child of her own who too had to be nursed and fed and therefore it was not possible for her to leave her home. However, if the child was entrusted to her care she would keep him with her and nurse him. She assured the Pharaoh's wife that if she agreed to her proposal no effort shall be wanting on her part to give him the best care and attention. There was no choice for the Pharaoh's wife and she accepted this arrangement. Thus the child was, re-united to his mother and Allah's promise to her was fulfilled.

After some time when Sayyidna Musa ﷺ grew comparatively stronger, the Pharaoh's wife asked the mother of Mūsā ﷺ to bring the child to her so that she may see him (as she was longing for him). She also told all the courtiers that the child was coming to their home and they must show him due respect and offer him gifts. She warned them that she would watch what they would do with the child. So when Mūsā ﷺ came out with his mother from her home, he was showered with gifts and presents right from that moment. The Pharaoh's wife was delighted to see him and gave him many expensive presents on her own and delivered all these presents to the mother of Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ. She then took him to the Pharaoh hoping that he too would give him presents. The Pharaoh took the child in his arms who suddenly clutched at his beard and pulled it causing his head to bow down. The courtiers were horrified and said to the Pharaoh: "We warned you about the promise of Allah to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm ﷺ that a prophet will be born in the tribe of Banī Isrā'īl who will inherit your Kingdom and your wealth and will defeat and overthrow you. You have seen with your own eyes the first signs of the fulfillment of Allah's promise". The Pharaoh took the warning and ordered his soldiers to put the child to death.

Here Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ stopped again in his narration and

said, "O Ibn Jubair رضي الله عنه ! This is the fourth test (فتون) for Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام where death seemed so near".

The Pharaoh's wife at once came to the child's rescue and addressed her husband thus, "You have given this child to me. He is all mine. So what is all this fuss about?" The Pharaoh said, "Can't you see that by his action this child is warning me that one day he would overthrow me and deprive me of my Kingdom?" His wife replied, "I know a sure means of ascertaining whether his action was the action of an uninformed and innocent child or he deliberately intended to defy and challenge your authority. You order a servant to bring two trays. Put two live coals in one and two shining pearls in the other and place both the trays in front of the child. If he picks up the coal, that would be proof enough that he is totally unaware of the consequences of his action because nobody with any sense would put his hand in fire." The Pharaoh agreed to this test and when the two trays were placed before Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام he picked up the coal. (However there is another tradition that he wanted to reach for the pearls but Jibra'īl عليه السلام guided his hand and placed it on the coal). When the Pharaoh saw this he snatched away the coal from the child's hand to save him from harm. Thus the Pharaoh's wife was proved right. She turned to him and said, "O King! Now you know the truth." Thus Allah once again saved his life because He had chosen him for a very special mission.

(And so Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام continued to enjoy the favours of the Pharaoh and the great love of his mother until he grew to full manhood). Knowing in what esteem the royal family held him, the people of the Pharaoh did not dare to insult and torment Banī Isrā'īl as they used to do previously. One day he was out for a stroll in the city when he came across two persons who were quarrelling over some matter. One of them was a man of the Pharaoh and the other was an Isrā'īli. The latter called out to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام to help him. Mūsā عليه السلام got very angry at the Pharaoh's man. How dare he bully an Isrā'īli in his presence knowing that he held a place of honour in the royal court, and also that he was full of sympathy for the Isrā'īlies (on account of the harsh treatment to which they were constantly subjected by the Egyptians). People in general thought that his sympathy for the Isrā'īlis was due to his being nursed and brought up by an Isrā'īli woman. It is also possible that Allah Ta'ālā

may have informed him through his mother or by some other means that he himself was an Isrā'īli and that the woman who had nursed him was in fact his own mother.

Anyway, being in extreme anger, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام hit the Egyptian with such force that he died on the spot. There were no witnesses to this incident except the Isrā'īli, and Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was certain that he (the Isrā'īli) would not inform against him.

The Egyptian's death filled Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام with remorse and he said, هٰذَا مِنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطٰنِ اِنَّهٗ عَدُوٌّ مُّضِلٌّ مُّبِيْنٌ (This is some of Satan's act, He is indeed a clear enemy who misleads - 28:15). Then he prayed to Allah.

رَبِّ اِنِّيْ ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِيْ فَاغْفِرْلِيْ فَغَفَرَلَهٗ اِنَّهٗ هُوَالْغَفُوْرُ الرَّحِيْمُ

O my Lord! I have wronged myself, so forgive me. So He forgave him. Indeed He is the Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful - 28:16.

After this incident Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام made secret inquiries about the reaction of the Egyptian about the murder and whether the matter was reported to the Pharaoh. He learned that the report that was made to the Pharaoh merely said that an Isrā'īli had killed an Egyptian for which their tribe should make full retribution, and that no mercy should be shown to them.

The Pharaoh asked them to apprehend the murderer and produce him with full proof of his guilt because although he was their own king he did not think it was right to punish someone without sufficient evidence. He assured them that if they produced the offender with sufficient proof of his guilt he would not be spared. Thereupon people went out in search of the murderer but found no clue which could lead them to him.

The next day as Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام came out of his house he saw the same Isrā'īli again fighting with an Egyptian. On seeing Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام he again called to him for help. But Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام who was full of remorse at what had happened the day before was very angry and blamed the Isrā'īlie for picking up fights. However, he wanted to stop the man of Pharaoh from attacking the Isrā'īli, and at the same time reproached the Isrā'īli for being so quarrelsome. The Isrā'īli, seeing Mūsā عليه السلام in anger was frightened and feared that he would kill him too. So he called out, "O Mūsā! Will you kill me too as you killed a man yesterday"?

And so they parted, but the Egyptian hastened to inform the people who were on the look out for the murderer that the Isrā'īli himself had accused Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام of having murdered a man the day before. The Pharaoh who was informed of this latest development at once sent his soldiers to apprehend Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and to execute him. The soldiers were confident that there was no way for Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام to escape and therefore they took the main road of the city searching for him. Somehow a follower of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام who lived in a far flung area of the city got wind of the Pharaoh's order to kill him and managed to reach Mūsā عليه السلام through smaller streets to warn him of the impending danger.

At this point in his narration, Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه paused again and said, "O Ibn Jubair! This was the fifth test (فتون) for Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام when death had overcome him but Allah Ta'ālā saved his life".

Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام at once left the city and headed for Madyan. All his life was spent in comfort and luxury and he had never undertaken a task involving physical exertion. He was also unfamiliar with the surrounding areas and the roads connecting them. But he had full faith in Allah عَسٰى رَبِّىْٓ اَنْ يَّهْدِيَنِىْ سَوَآءَ السَّبِيْلِ (I hope my Lord will guide me to the straight path - 28:22).

As he approached Madyan, he stopped at a well where people had gathered and were drawing water for their animals. There he saw two girls standing away from the crowd with their goats. He asked them why they stood apart to which they replied that being unable to contend with men for water they were waiting until they had finished watering their animals and then, if any water was left, they would give it to their goats, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was moved to pity for the girls and being physically a strong man he pushed forward and in no time he watered their goats. The girls went home with their herd and he sat under the shade of a tree and prayed: رَبِّ اِنِّىْ لِمَآ اَنْزَلْتَ اِلَىَّ مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَقِيْرٌ (O my Lord, I am in need of whatever good you may send down to me - 28:24). By this payer he sought Allah's help in providing him something to eat and a place to stay.

Now when the girls returned home with their herd earlier than usual their father was surprised, but the girls told him how a kind man had helped them and watered their goats. The father asked one of the girls to

bring the man home which she did, and when he heard the story of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, he said: ("Do not fear, you have escaped from the wrongdoing people." - 28:25).

One of the girls suggested to her father to engage Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام on wages and said يٰٓاَبَتِ اسْتَاْجِرْهُ اِنَّ خَيْرَ مَنِ اسْتَاْجَرْتَ الْقَوِيُّ الْاَمِيْنُ (Dear father, hire him; the best man you hire, is the one who is strong, trustworthy - 28:26). the father was disconcerted at her words and asked her how she knew that he was strong and trust-worthy. The girl replied that she witnessed his strength when he pushed aside all the other shepherds and drew water for her goats. And she knew him to be trustworthy because when she went to bring him home he cast his eyes down and did not raise them until she had conveyed to him his invitation. Then he told her to follow him and to guide him to this place from behind. Only a person who is totally trustworthy would conduct himself in such a manner. The father (He was Sayyidnā Shua'ib عليه السلام, a prophet of Allah), having being fully satisfied on this score, proposed to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام that if he would agree to work for him for eight years he would give the latter one of his daughters in marriage. He also said that he would like it if Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام , of his own free choice, worked for him for a further period of two years, but this would not be a condition for his marriage with his daughter. Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام accepted these terms and ultimately, by Allah's command, rendered full ten years service to Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام.

Sayyidnā Sa'id Ibn Jubair رضي الله عنه says, "Once a Christian scholar met me and asked me whether I knew how long Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام worked for Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام. This was before Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه had narrated to me this Ḥadīth. So I told him that I did not know the answer to his question. Afterwards when I met Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه and put the same question to him he informed me that Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was bound to do service for the contractual period of eight years which could not be reduced in any circumstances. Also, it was Allah's will that he should also serve the additional optional two years. Therefore, he did actually serve Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام for full ten years. Later, when I met the Christian scholar and gave him the information, he asked me whether the person from whom I learnt this was more knowledgeable than I was. I replied him in affirmative and told him that indeed he was a very learned

person and the best among us".

Having completed ten years of service with Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام departed from Madyan with his wife. He had chosen an unfrequented and unfamiliar route, and on a cold, dark night when he saw fire on the mount of Ṭūr he went there to bring some for his wife. There he saw strange sights, was granted the miracles of the staff (عصا) and the bright hand (يَدِ بَيْضَاء) and was also entrusted with the Mission of Prophethood. This story has been related by the Holy Qur'ān in the preceding pages. At the mount of Ṭūr he was also commanded by Allah to proceed to Egypt and place his message before the Pharaoh. He was anxious how he would discharge this duty when he has been declared by the royal court as an absconding offender and was under the sentence of death. Moreover, he recalled his stammer. So he prayed to Allah to remove these impediments. In response to his prayer Allah appointed his brother Hārūn عليه السلام to share his prophethood and through a revelation commanded the latter to receive him before he entered Egypt. The two brothers met and as commanded by Allah both of them went to the Pharaoh's court to invite him to accept the True Faith. After a while they were admitted to his presence after passing through several stages. They said to him: إِنَّا رَسُوْلَا رَبِّكَ "We are the messengers of your Lord". The Pharaoh asked them فَمَنْ رَّبُّكُمَا (Who then is the Lord of you two? - 20:49). Their reply to this question has been reported in the Qur'ān itself.

رَبُّنَا الَّذِىٓ اَعْطٰى كُلَّ شَىْءٍ خَلْقَهٗ ثُمَّ هَدٰى

Our Lord is He who gave everything its shape, then guidance - 20:50.

The Pharaoh then asked them what they wanted. He charged Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام with the murder of the Egyptian and at the same time reminded him how he had brought him up in his own palace and the great kindness he had shown towards him. The reply which Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام gave on both these points is mentioned in the Qur'ān. That is, the murder of the Egyptian was a mistake for which he had asked Allah's forgiveness. As for the second point, he accused the Pharaoh of having enslaved the Banī Isrā'īl and of subjecting them to oppression. These things could not be allowed to continue for ever and in consequence an inevitable destiny so decreed that he should be brought up in the

Pharaoh's palace. It was Allah's will and so it came to pass and he owed no gratitude to anyone. He then asked the Pharaoh to accept the True Faith and free the Banī Isrā'īl from the slavery. The Pharaoh refused, and asked Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام to show some sign to prove his claim of prophethood. Mūsā عليه السلام cast his staff (عصا) on the ground and it turned into a huge snake, which advanced towards the Pharaoh with a fearsome manner. In great fright the Pharaoh crawled under his throne and begged Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام to save his life. Mūsā عليه السلام picked up the snake and it became a staff again. He then showed the Pharaoh his second miracle. He pressed his hand under his armpit and when he brought it out it was shinning brilliantly. Then he repeated the action and his hand became normal.

The Pharaoh was in great terror at what he had seen. He assembled all his advisors and asked them to consider and decide how best they could meet the threat posed by Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام. Having discussed the matter among themselves, the advisors assured him that the matter was not as serious as appeared at first sight. Those two men were magicians who, by their sorcery, wanted to deprive him of his Kingdom and also to destroy their religion which regarded him as god, worthy of worship. They advised him not to accept any demand made by the two magicians and on the other hand to invite all the great magicians living in Egypt who would, by their skill, prevail upon the two visiting magicians.

The Pharaoh accepted this advice. He ordered all the famous magicians in Egypt to be brought before him, and when they came he told them what was expected of them. They asked the Pharaoh what was the special trick of the magician whom they were to confront. They were informed that he could turn his staff into a snake. At this, the magicians said in a casual manner that it was not a big deal. They too could change staffs and ropes into snakes and that nobody could beat them at that trick. They also wanted to know what their reward would be if they defeated their opponent. The Pharaoh replied, "If you are successful in this contest I will make you part of my own family and you will be given everything that you desire".

The magicians in agreement with Mūsā عليه السلام appointed the morning of the day of their festival for the contest. Ibn Jubair رضي الله عنه reports that the

day of their festival was the 10th of Muḥarram. A large number of people were gathered in a vast open space to see the contest. They were in no doubt about its outcome. They scoffed at Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and said tauntingly that in case he got the better of their own magicians, they would accept his religion لَعَلَّنَا نَتَّبِعُ السَّحَرَةَ اِنْ كَانُوْا هُمُ الْغٰلِبِيْنَ (So that we may follow the sorcerers if they are victorious - 26:40).

When everything was ready, the Egyptians asked Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام whether he would like to begin the contest or he wanted them to make the start. He invited them to show their tricks first. So they threw their staffs and ropes with the words بِعِزَّةِ فِرْعَوْنَ اِنَّا لَنَحْنُ الْغٰلِبُوْنَ (By the majesty of the Pharaoh we are going to prevail definitely - 26:44) which at once turned into creeping, coiling snakes.

This sight evoked fear in the heart of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام. فَاَوْجَسَ فِيْ نَفْسِهٖ خِيْفَةً مُّوْسٰى (So, Musa concealed some fear in his heart - 20:67). Now this fear could be a natural human reaction and not even prophets are free from it. Or it may be that he was overtaken by a momentary doubt about the success of his own mission. But Allah commanded him by means of revelation to cast his staff. As he did so, it turned into a huge snake and ate up all the snakes which the Egyptians had produced with their tricks. The magicians who knew everything about magic at once realized that the performance of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was no magic but a miracle from Allah. So they openly announced their faith in the One and Only Allah and accepted the religion brought by Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام . They said they repented their past sins and abjured the faith of their forefathers. Thus, Allah effectively belittled the Pharaoh and his companions frustrating their evil designs فَغُلِبُوْا هُنَالِكَ وَانْقَلَبُوْا صٰغِرِيْنَ (So, they were overcome there and turned humiliated - 7:119). It is also reported that while the contest was in progress 'Āsiya, the Pharaoh's wife, put on a humble garb and prayed to Allah for Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام . The people of Pharaoh were under the impression that she was anxious for the Pharaoh and was praying for him while all her worries were about Mūsā عليه السلام.

The Pharaoh was now in a dilemma. He had no intention of allowing Banī Isrā'īl to leave Egypt. In the years that followed Egypt was visited by several calamities such as floods, locusts, lice, frogs appearing in food and utensils etc. (these have been described in the Qur'ān as آيات مفصلات (Signs distinct 7:133). The Pharaoh would, at the time of each such

visitation, approach Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and promised to release Banī Isrā'īl from his bondage and let them leave Egypt if he prayed to Allah to deliver him from the disaster. But as soon as the affliction was removed through the prayers of Mūsā عليه السلام the Pharaoh reneged on his promise. This happened several times until Allah commanded Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام to take Banī Isrā'īl with him and leave Egypt. One night he and the whole tribe of Banī Isrā'īl quietly stole out of Egypt. The next morning when the Pharaoh discovered their escape, he assembled his army and went after them. Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and his men soon came to a river which had to be crossed. Allah commanded the river that when Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام would strike its water with his staff it should part to make twelve exits for the twelve tribes of Banī Isrā'īl and that when they had crossed over, it should resume its normal flow again.

When Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام reached the river, he forgot that if he struck the river with his staff it would open up twelve passages for him and his men. As they stood there not knowing what to do, the Pharaoh and his army appeared in the distance. In utter despair they cried إِنَّا لَمُدْرَكُوْنَ (Surely we are overtaken - 26:61). At that critical moment Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام remembered Allah's promise to him. He at once struck his staff on the water and the river parted showing twelve passageways. Quickly he and his men went across. The Pharaoh and his army who were hard on their heels followed them over the passageways but when they reached the midstream and the last of the Banī Isrā'īl had crossed over safely, the water of the river flowed over the passageways as commanded by Allah. And so the Pharaoh and his entire army perished under the eyes of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and his men. Some of the men feared that the Pharaoh might have escaped death and Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام prayed to Allah to reveal his death to them. Then by the command of Allah the Pharaoh's dead body was tossed out of the river and everybody witnessed his end.

As Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and Banī Isrā'īl continued their journey they came across a people who worshipped idols which they themselves had fashioned. Banī Isrā'īl were tempted and they said to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام يٰمُوْسَى اجْعَلْ لَّنَآ اِلٰهًا كَمَا لَهُمْ اٰلِهَةٌ قَالَ اِنَّكُمْ قَوْمٌ تَجْهَلُوْنَ اِنَّ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ مُتَبَّرٌ مَّا هُمْ فِيْهِ : (O Mūsā! make a god for us like they have gods". He (Mūsā) said, "You are really an ignorant people. What these people are in, is sure to be destroyed" - 7:138,

139). He also reminded them of the miracles which Allah had revealed in their behalf and the bounties which He had showered on them and asked them how they could entertain such wicked ideas. Having admonished them thus, he and his party proceeded on their travel until they came to a place where they camped. There he said to his men, "You stay here while I go to my Lord. I will return after thirty days. In my absence my brother Hārūn will act as my deputy and you should obey him in all matters".

Then Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام went to the mount of Ṭūr where he was commanded by Allah to fast for thirty continuous days in order to prepare himself for conversation with Him. After fasting for thirty days continuously he sensed a bad odor in his mouth which is usual when people fast for long periods, and he thought it would be grossly irreverent for him to appear before Allah and receive His message in that state. So he cleaned his mouth with an aromatic grass which grew on a hill close by. When he approached the August presence, Allah asked him why he had broken the fast. He replied, "O Lord! I merely wished to get rid of the offensive smell in my mouth before coming to Your presence". Allah said, "O Mūsā! Surely you know that the odor from the mouth of a person who observes fast is more pleasant to Us than the fragrance of the perfume of musk. Go back; fast for ten more days and then return to Us." Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام obeyed Allah's command.

After the departure of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام his brother Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام assembled Banī Isrā'īl and addressed them saying, "You have brought along with you many things which you either borrowed from the people of the Pharaoh (Egyptians) or which were deposited with you by them, as a trust. At the same time there are many things belonging to you which you loaned to them or left with them in trust. You seem to think that you can appropriate to yourself the Egyptian's property in lieu of what you have left behind with them. I do not consider this deal as lawful; and since we cannot return to the Egyptians what really belongs to them, I suggest that we dig a pit and bury all such property in it". Banī Isrā'īl accepted this advice and threw everything into the pit. Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام then had a big fire built over it so that everything was reduced to ashes. He said, "Now it is neither theirs nor ours".

Among the Banī Isrā'īl there was a man by the name of Sāmirī who, though not one of them, had migrated with them when they left Egypt.

He came from a tribe who worshipped cows. Being an observant person he noticed a strange phenomenon namely that wherever Sayyidnā Jibra'il put his foot, he left traces of life. He picked up a handful of earth from one such place and as he was going along he met Sayyidnā Hārūn who thought that the man had in his hand something of value belonging to the Egyptians. He told him to throw it into the pit as the others had done, but Sāmiri said that what he held in his hand was the earth from the footprints of Sayyidnā Jibra'il with whose help they all had crossed the river and that he would not throw it away unless Sayyidnā Hārūn promised to pray to Allah for the fulfillment of a wish which he cherished in his heart. On the latter's promise to do so he threw the earth in this pit and as promised, Sayyidnā Hārūn prayed to Allah to grant Sāmiri his wish. Thereupon Sāmiri prayed, "I wish that all the gold, silver, iron and brass which has been thrown in this may take the shape of a calf". Sayyidnā Hārūn had already prayed to Allah on behalf of Sāmiri, and his prayer was granted by Allah. So all the valuables and other metals which had been thrown in the pit assumed the cast of a calf which had no life but produced a sound like the bellow of a bull. According to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās it was not the sound of a living thing but more like the low-pitched sound of wind passing through a hollow passage.

This strange event greatly perplexed the Banī Isrā'īl and split them into several groups. Sāmiri told them that the calf was the true God and that Sayyidnā Mūsā had strayed from the right path. One group accepted his claim and adopted the worship of the calf. Another group reserved their judgment until Sayyidnā Mūsā would explain to them how the matter stood, while a third group rejected Sāmiri's claim outright and refused to accept the calf as their god.

When Sayyidnā Hārūn saw this mischief and discord he admonished the people and said:

يٰقَوْمِ اِنَّمَا فُتِنْتُمْ بِهٖ وَاِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ الرَّحْمٰنُ فَاتَّبِعُوْنِيْ وَاَطِيْعُوْٓا اَمْرِيْ

"O my people! You have only been led astray with it, and your Lord is the Raḥmān (All-Merciful). So follow me and obey my command." - 20:90.

But they asked about Sayyidnā Mūsā why did not he come back

while he had promised to return after thirty days and even after forty days nearing completion there was no news of him. Some foolish persons suggested that perhaps he had lost his Allah and was even at that time searching for Him.

While these events were taking place at the camp, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام having completed forty days of fasting was honoured with conversing with Allah Ta'ālā who informed him of the disorder into which Banī Isrā'īl had fallen:

فَرَجَعَ مُوْسٰى اِلٰى قَوْمِهٖ غَضْبَانَ اَسِفًا

So Mūsā went back to his people in anger and sorrow. (20:86)

He put aside the Tablets of Torah which he had brought from the mount of Ṭūr and pulled his brother Hārūn by the hairs. Later, when he had calmed down and Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام had given an account of everything that had happened, he accepted the explanation given by his brother and prayed to Allah to forgive him.

Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام then went to Sāmiri and asked him to explain his actions. He replied:

فَقَبَضْتُ قَبْضَةً مِّنْ اَثَرِ الرَّسُوْلِ فَنَبَذْتُهَا وَكَذٰلِكَ سَوَّلَتْ لِيْ نَفْسِيْ

I picked up a handful of dust from under the foot of the messenger (the angel). Then I cast it, and thus my inner self tempted me - 20:96.

Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام then replied to him with the following words:

فَاذْهَبْ فَاِنَّ لَكَ فِي الْحَيٰوةِ اَنْ تَقُوْلَ لَامِسَاسَ وَاِنَّ لَكَ مَوْعِدًا لَّنْ تُخْلَفَهٗ وَانْظُرْ اِلٰٓى اِلٰهِكَ الَّذِيْ ظَلْتَ عَلَيْهِ عَاكِفًا لَنُحَرِّقَنَّهٗ ثُمَّ لَنَنْسِفَنَّهٗ فِي الْيَمِّ نَسْفًا

He (Musa) said, "Then go away, for your fate in this life is to say: Do not touch me. And, of course, you have another promise, never to be held back from you. And look at your god to which you stayed devoted. We will certainly burn it, then we will scatter it thoroughly in the sea. (20:97)

Banī Isrā'īl now realized that they had been led astray and they admired those who agreed with Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام in negating the divinity of the calf. They begged Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام to pray to Allah to forgive them and that they were ready to expiate for their sins. Sayyidnā

Mūsā عليه السلام took pains in selecting seventy persons from amongst them who were well-known for their virtue and piety and who, according to his knowledge had abstained from the worship of the calf. He led this selected group to the mount of Ṭūr where all of them might beseech Allah's Mercy. But as they approached the mount, the earth shook in a violent earthquake. On this, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام felt greatly embarrassed in front of the group he was leading as well as before his people in general, therefore he pleaded to Allah:

رَبِّ لَوْ شِئْتَ اَهْلَكْتَهُمْ مِّنْ قَبْلُ وَاِيَّایَ اَتُهْلِكُنَا بِمَا فَعَلَ السُّفَهَآءُ مِنَّا

"My Lord, had it been Your will, You could have destroyed them earlier, and me too. Would you destroy us for what the foolish among them have done?" - 7:155.

It then transpired that the cause of the earthquake was that despite all his inquiries and precautions some of the men included in the delegation had indeed worshipped the calf and still cherished a sense of reverence for it.

Allah Ta'ālā replied to the prayer of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام as follows:

وَرَحْمَتِیْ وَسِعَتْ كُلَّ شَیْءٍ فَسَاَكْتُبُهَا لِلَّذِيْنَ يَتَّقُوْنَ وَيُؤْتُوْنَ الزَّكٰوةَ وَالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ بِاٰيٰتِنَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ. اَلَّذِيْنَ يَتَّبِعُوْنَ الرَّسُوْلَ النَّبِیَّ الْاُمِّیَّ الَّذِیْ يَجِدُوْنَهٗ مَكْتُوْبًا عِنْدَ هُمْ فِی التَّوْرٰاةِ وَالْاِنْجِيْلِ

"And My mercy extends to everything. So, I shall write it for those who fear, and pay Zakāh, and those who do believe in Our verses. Those who follow the Messenger, the *Ummī* (unlettered) prophet whom they find written with them in the Torah and the Injīl (The gospels)". (7:156, 157)

Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام said, "O Lord! I had prayed to You on behalf of my people who have repented their evil deeds but You have just informed me that Your mercy encompasses everyone but the Banī Isrā'īl. O Lord! Why was my birth not delayed and why was I not born among the favoured people of the unlettered Prophet?" On this, Allah told him that the only way through which Banī Isrā'īl's repentance could be accepted by Him was that each one of them should slay with sword anyone he finds from among his relations, be he his father or son and at the same spot where the sin of worshipping the calf was committed. Thereupon those among the seventy delegates whom Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام had

brought with him in the belief that they were pious people, but who in their hearts felt reverence for the calf, also repented and obeyed the rigorous condition for the expiation of their sins, and when this was done, Allah forgave the sins of the slayers as well as the slain.

It will be recalled that when Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام returned to his people from the Ṭūr on learning that they had fallen into mischief he had put aside in anger the Tablets which he had brought from the mount. He now picked them up and led his people towards the Holy land (Syria). On the way they passed by a city where a mighty and powerful people lived whose unusual appearance inspired fear in the hearts of all who saw them. Many tales of their valour and cruelty were related to the Banī Isrā'īl so that when Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام proposed to enter the city they refused and said, "O Mūsā! These people are tyrants and we cannot face them. We will not enter this city so long as they are there, but if somehow, they can be made to leave the city we will gladly enter it." Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام argued with them but they were adamant and refused to be moved.

The Holy Qur'ān has, at another place, mentioned that two persons tried to convince Banī Isrā'īl to enter the city. According to Yazid Ibn Hārūn, a narrator of this report, Sayyidnā Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه has interpreted the relevant verse to the effect that these two men belonged to the tyrant nation. They after coming out from the city had embraced the faith of Mūsā عليه السلام and realized that Banī Isrā'īl are terrified by their nation. Therefore, they said to Banī Isrā'īl, "We are fully aware of the nature of our own nation. You are terrified of their high stature and their large number, but in reality they have no strength of heart, nor do they have courage to face you. If you proceed to the gate of the city, you will see that they will surrender and you will prevail." Some commentators have held that these two men were from Banī Isrā'īl and convinced them to proceed to the city, but even after hearing their advice they flatly refused and addressed Sayyidna Mūsā عليه السلام in the most absurd manner as mentioned by the Holy Qur'ān in the following words:

They said:

يٰمُوسٰى إِنَّا لَنْ نَّدْخُلَهَا أَبَدًا مَّا دَامُوا فِيهَا فَاذْهَبْ أَنْتَ وَرَبُّكَ فَقَاتِلَا إِنَّا هٰهُنَا قٰعِدُونَ

"O Mūsā! we shall never enter it, in any case, so long as they are there. So go, you and your Lord, and fight. As for us, We are

sitting right here." (5:24)

Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام had seen enough of the arrogance and defiant attitude of Banī Isrā'īl in spite of the numerous favours and benefits showered upon them by Allah and had refrained so far from praying against them for their provocations. But the rude reply which they now gave him filled his heart with sorrow and he prayed against them and termed them as فَاسِقِيْنَ (Transgressors). Allah Ta'ālā accepted his prayer, and holding them as فَاسِقِيْنَ (transgressors), denied them entry into the Holy Land for forty years and confined them to an open plain where they wandered aimlessly from morning till evening. However since Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was also with them, Allah favoured them with many gifts even while they suffered punishment. Wherever they went in this waterless desert of Tīh (Sinai) a constant cloud shaded them from the burning sun. For food, Allah sent to them من و سلوى (Manna is a viscous substance from the ash tree and Salwa is a quail-like bird). As if by a miracle their clothes were never torn nor did they become dirty. They were given a square stone and Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was instructed to strike it with his staff whenever they needed water and twelve springs of sweet water - three on each side - gushed out of it to serve the twelve tribes of Banī Isrā'īl, thus avoiding all disputes. At the end of their journeys wherever they camped, they found that the square stone was there already. (Qurṭubī)

According to the present narration of this Ḥadīth-ul-Futūn, Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه had attributed it to the Holy Prophet ﷺ . That Sayyidna Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه did not tell this story on his own, or after hearing it from someone else is the correct view in my opinion which is supported by the following event:

When Sayyidnā Mu'awyia رضي الله عنه heard this Ḥadīth from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه , he denied the truth of that part of the story which said that while the men of the Pharaoh were unable to find any clue which could lead them to the murderer of the Egyptian (i.e. Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام), it was disclosed by the second Egyptian with whom the Isrā'īli of the previous day was fighting. Sayyidnā Mu'awyia's رضي الله عنه objection was that the Egyptian being ignorant of the previous day's murder could not have known and disclosed the name of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام as the murder. The only witness to the event was the Isrā'īli.

When Sayyidnā Mu'awyia ﷺ expressed his doubts about this part of the Ḥadīth Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ got angry and took the former by the hand and brought him to Sa'd Ibn Mālik Zuhri and asked him if he remembered the occasion when the Holy Prophet ﷺ related the story about the murdered Egyptian. When Sa'd Ibn Mālik ﷺ replied in the affirmative he asked him, "Now tell me whether it was the Isrā'īli or the Egyptian who brought information about the murderer to the Pharaoh"?, Sa'd Ibn Mālik ﷺ replied that it was the Egyptian because he had heard the Isrā'īli say that the murder was committed by Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ and reported the matter to the Pharaoh. Imām Nasa'ī has reproduced this long Ḥadīth in كتاب التفسير of his larger book Al-Sunan al-Kubrā.

Ṭabarī and Ibn Abī Ḥātim have both reproduced this Ḥadīth in detail in their Commentaries and have expressed the view that it is not مَرْفُوْع (*marfū'*) i.e. it is not mentioned by the Holy Prophet ﷺ but is in the words of Sayyidna Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ which he has taken from those Isrā'īli traditions of Ka'b al-Aḥbār whose reproduction and narration is permissible. It is true, however, that at places it contains sentences of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Ibn Kathīr has reproduced this Ḥadīth in his Commentary and after giving his own arguments says that, like Tabari and Ibn Abī Ḥatim, Sheikh Abul Hajjaj Mizzi also believes that this tradition is مَوْقُوْف which means that it is a saying of Sayyidna Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ and not of the Holy Prophet ﷺ .

The results, lessons and the great benefits to be obtained from the story of Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ

The importance which the Qur'ān attaches to the story of Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ is evident from the fact that it is repeated frequently in several Sūrahs, the reason being that it contains numerous lessons for mankind, instances of high wisdom and unusual manifestation of the Supreme Power of Allah. All these things confirm a true believer in his beliefs, and provide for him practical and moral guidance. A brief account of some of these is given in the following paragraphs.

The Pharaoh's foolish plan and how Allah frustrated it

On being told that a boy born to the Isrā'īlites would cause the overthrow of his Kingdom, the Pharaoh issued orders that all male children born among the Isrā'īlies should be put to death. Later on for his

personal and diplomatic reasons he modified those orders so that male children born in alternate years only were put to death. Allah had the power to bring about the birth of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام in the year in which the male children born to the Isrā'ilies were spared, but He willed that the tyrant's brutal plan should recoil on himself. Therefore it was decreed that Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام should be born in the year when the new born Isrā'īli boys were to be put to death. Then Allah in His Supreme Wisdom created a situation in which the Pharaoh took Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام under his care and brought him up in his own palace. While all the Isrā'īli male children were being put to death lest any of them pose a threat to the Pharaoh's authority, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام grew up in the luxury of the royal palace where he was loved and respected by everyone.

Divine favours for the mother of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام

If Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام had accepted the milk from any other wet-nurse he would have spent his early years in the Pharaoh's palace and his mother would have suffered great anguish at being separated from her son. Also he would have been nursed by an infidel woman. But an inscrutable decree of providence saved him from being nourished by an infidel woman and at the same time united him with his mother. The Pharaoh and his wife felt beholden to her and not only showered gifts on her but also gave her good remuneration for her services. By bringing Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام to her own house she escaped the necessity of having to live in the Pharaoh's palace like any other servant. فَتَبَارَکَ اللّٰهُ اَحْسَنُ الْخَالِقِيْنَ.

Good news for industrialists and traders

There is a Ḥadīth according to which the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that an industrialist or a businessman who, while engaged in his trade also desired to win the good-will of Allah was like the mother of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, who nursed her own child and at the same time was paid for her services (Ibn Kathīr). It means that if a mason who builds a mosque, a school or a building for public use is concerned only with his wages, he would receive it, but nothing more. But if he undertook to construct these buildings in preference to other jobs with the intention that these would be used for good purposes and would benefit pious persons then, like the mother of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, he would receive his wages as well as the religious benefit.

The chosen servants of Allah are gifted with a special attribute so that all who see them, love them

وَاَلْقَيْتُ عَلَيْكَ مَحَبَّةً مِّنِّىْ

And I have cast love on you from Myself - 20:39.

This verse suggests that Allah bestows upon his chosen servants a special grace which causes all men, friend or foe, to love them. Of course, the prophets enjoy this grace to a much greater degree, but many saints are also known to have possessed it.

Why was the murder of the Egyptian by Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام regarded as a sin?

When Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام saw an Egyptian infidel fighting an Isrā'īli Muslim, he struck the former with a blow causing his death. He described this act as an act of Satan and prayed to Allah for forgiveness and Allah accepted his prayer.

Here is a point for consideration by jurists. This Egyptian was an infidel and a citizen of a non-Muslim state who had no peace agreement between him and Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام . Also he could not be given the status of a ذِمّی (Dhimmi: A non-Muslim under Muslim rule) who is entitled to full protection from the Muslims. He was a non-Muslim citizen of دارالحرب (Enemy country) and according to Muslim law killing such a person does not constitute a sin. So why was the murder of the Egyptian described as an act of Satan and a sin?

In none of the commentaries has this issue been brought up for consideration. Some time back, at the behest of Hadrat Maulānā Ashraf 'Ali Thanavi رحمه الله تعالی I began writing my book احکام القران and when I came to this issue, I sought his guidance, and his explanation was that although there was no covenant between Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and the Egyptian nor did he enjoy the status of a Dhimmi (a non-Muslim citizen of a Muslim state) yet neither of them was the head of a state. They were both subjects of the Pharaoh and at peace with each other. This was for all practical purposes an implied covenant between the two of them. Thus the murder of the Egyptian was in the nature of violation of the implied compact and therefore a sin. And since the murder was not deliberate but accidental, it does not adversely affect the sanctity of his Prophethood. For this reason in pre-partition India when both the Muslims and the Hindus

lived under the British rule, Hadrat Maulānā Thānavi رحمه الله تعالى did not consider it lawful for the Muslims to take the life or property of a Hindu.

Helping the weak and public service have their own rewards both in this world and in the hereafter

When Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام reached the outskirts of Madyan, he noticed two girls who stood aside because they were too weak to contend against men and water their goats. These girls were complete strangers to him and he himself was a homeless wanderer. But being a decent man he was prompted to come to their help. He watered their goats and by this act of kindness he gained the pleasure of Allah. And his worldly reward was that Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام gave him his daughter in marriage.

The philosophy and benefits of a situation in which one Messenger was an employee and the other an employer

Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام came to the house of Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام as an honoured guest. After sometime when he felt sufficiently secure from pursuit by the Pharaoh's soldiers, Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام, at the suggestion of his daughter, offered him employment on wages. This offer embodies a deep philosophy from Allah and guidance for mankind.

First: Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام was a Prophet of Allah Ta'ālā and it was not beyond his means to entertain a traveler for sometime without asking for recompense. But it seems that by prophetic wisdom he had perceived that being a person of noble character Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام would not accept his hospitality much longer and would move to some other place where he might suffer hardship. He therefore made a straight offer of employment. Here is a lesson that it is not proper to become a burden on somebody's hospitality for long periods.

Second: Allah Ta'ālā had chosen Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام for the grant of prophethood, and although toil and hard labour are neither the pre-conditions for prophethood, nor can the prophethood be obtained by any amount of exertion and effort, because it is a pure gift from Allah, yet His Supreme Wisdom had decreed that the prophets should also undergo a period of strenuous physical labour as a means of character building and for reforming others. The life of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام had been spent in comfort and luxury and since he was destined to be a leader of mankind and to reform their moral life, his service with Sayyidnā Shu'aib

عليه السلام was to accustom him to hard work and to prepare him for the great mission for which Allah had chosen him.

Third: Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was given the task of tending the flocks of goats of Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام . It is rather strange that many prophets have, at one time or the other, performed similar duties. Now a goat often breaks away from the main flock to the great annoyance of the shepherd. If he lets it stray it may be lost or even fall prey to a wolf, and if he punishes it, he may cause injury to the delicate animal. Therefore he has to be very patient with his flock. The same is the case with prophets; they can neither ignore the errant humanity nor can they be too severe in disciplining them. They have to conduct themselves with great patience and forbearance.

How to choose the best man for a job

The daughter of Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام suggested to her father that he should employ Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام in his service as the latter was both strong and honest (قوی 'اَمِین). The word قوی (*qawiyy*: strong) is applied to a person who is strong and has ability to perform satisfactorily the duties which are entrusted to him, and اَمِین (*amīn*, honest) means that the record of his past life proves his honesty and integrity.

These two brief words, if considered in depth, cover all the qualities for selecting a person for different jobs and offices, public or private. In some cases even the detailed parameters laid down for the selection of employees in contemporary institutions are not so comprehensive as these two words are. Honesty, in particular, is something totally neglected today when selecting a candidate, the entire importance being given to academic degrees only. The corruption, disorder and mismanagement seen in public and private institutions at present is mainly caused by neglecting honesty and integrity in the employees. If a person is qualified and wise, but devoid of honesty, he may devise ways to protect himself from rules against his inefficiency and corruption. This is exactly what has rendered many public and private institutions inefficient and corrupt. Islam has therefore laid great emphasis on honesty and integrity, the blessings of which have been witnessed by the world through the centuries.

Difference between the approach of magicians and that of the prophets

The address which the Pharaoh delivered to his magicians in which he warned them of the threat to the country called for a patriotic response from the magicians, but they exploited the situation and negotiated their reward in case they gained victory over Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام . On the other hand the prophets declare openly that they do not expect any reward for their services.

وَلَآ اَسْئَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ اَجْرٍ

I do not claim from you any reward for it - 26:109

Among the many factors for the success of their mission is the denial of all material rewards for their services. Nowadays the non-payment of remuneration to scholars, jurists, preachers etc. from Government sources has compelled them to accept payment for their services which, though permitted by the later jurists, has reduced the effectiveness of their mission.

Truth about the magic of the Egyptian magicians

The Egyptian magicians caused their sticks and ropes to appear as if they had really turned into snakes. The question is whether they were in reality turned into snakes. The Qur'ān says:

يُخَيَّلُ اِلَيْهِ مِنْ سِحْرِهِمْ اَنَّهَا تَسْعٰى

Seemed to him, due to their magic as if they were running - 20:66.

This shows that they did not really become snakes, but it was some kind of mesmerism which cast a hypnotic spell on those present, to whom they appeared as running snakes. This, of course, does not mean that things or substances cannot be transformed by magic, but the Egyptian magicians did not possess these powers.

Division into tribes in matters of social life is not censurable

Islam has condemned the notion that regional, linguistic, ethnic and tribal divisions become the basis of nationalism. It has encouraged in all possible manners the elimination of all such differences and prejudices. The very foundation of Muslim polity rests on Islamic nationalism where

people of diverse description, race, lineage and culture constitute one single nation. The first step which the Holy Prophet ﷺ took when laying down the foundations of the Islamic state at Madīnah was to unite the Muhajirs and the Anṣār into a single bond of brotherhood. In his last sermon (حجة الوداع) he ﷺ laid down the rule, for all times to come, that prejudices and divisions based on geographical region, race and language are the idols which Islam has demolished. Nevertheless, their distinctions in the matters of social life have been duly recognized and permitted within reasonable limits. This is to avoid any hardship for the people due to the fact that the customs of living, dress, food etc. vary from one area to the other and from one tribe to another.

The Isrā'īlites whom Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام led out of Egypt were divided into twelve tribes and when crossing the river on their flight twelve passageways were cleared, one for each tribe. Similarly in the plain of Tīh (the waterless desert where Banī Isrā'īl wandered for forty years) the stone, by a miracle shot forth twelve springs of water in order that the twelve tribes of Banī Isrā'īl might not engage in strife over the use of water.

Appointment of a deputy to manage the affairs of a community

When Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام parted from his people in order to engage himself in prayers at the mount of Ṭūr for thirty days, he appointed Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام as his deputy during his absence and commanded his people to obey the latter in all matters, so that disputes and quarrels might not rise among them. This shows that when the head of a community or a family proceeds on a journey, he should, following the practice of the prophets, appoint a deputy to maintain order and discipline among them.

A disagreeable course of action may temporarily be adopted if it prevents disruption among Muslims

When Banī Isrā'īl started worshipping the calf during the absence of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام remonstrated with them but did not go to the extent of severing all relations with them and his justification was that any harsh action by him would have caused a split among the Banī Isrā'īl.

إِنِّيْ خَشِيتُ أَنْ تَقُولَ فَرَّقْتَ بَيْنَ بَنِيٓ إِسْرَآءِيلَ وَلَمْ تَرْقُبْ قَوْلِي

"I feared that you would say, 'You have caused discord among the children of Isra'il and did not observe my advice'". (20:94)

Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام accepted this explanation and prayed to Allah in favor of his brother. It leads to the principle that it is permissible to take a lenient view against an evil as a temporary expediency to prevent discord and strife among Muslims.

A vital principle of Prophetic Mission

When ordering Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام to go to Egypt and invite the Pharaoh to the path of righteousness, Allah also enjoined upon them to adopt a soft attitude toward him. 'فَقُولَا لَهُ قَوْلًا لَّيِّنًا لَّعَلَّهُ يَتَذَكَّرُ أَوْ يَخْشَىٰ' (So, speak to him in soft words. May be, he takes to the advice or fears [Allah] - 20:44). Here an important principle has been enunciated that those who wish to reform people and lead them to a life of virtue should always be gentle and amiable towards their opponents however obstinate and perverse they may be. By such methods alone can they be persuaded to give heed to the message brought to them by the prophets.

The Pharaoh, who claimed to be a god, was also absolutely guilty of the massacre of thousands of Isrā'īli children just to safeguard his life and his Kingdom. But when Allah sent the two messengers to him, He gave them a guideline, namely that they should talk to him in a gentle and persuasive manner so that he might ponder and reflect on the message which they had brought to him. This guideline was emphasized in spite of the fact that Allah knew that the Pharaoh would never give up his obduracy nor his perverse ways. Here the intention was to bind the prophets to a conduct which might induce people to reflect and ultimately instill the fear of Allah in their hearts.

An unfortunate tendency is in vogue among the scholars of criticizing each other which they regard as a service to Islam. There is a need for curbing this tendency and the true teaching of Islam should be adopted.

Verses 45 - 50

قَالَا رَبَّنَآ إِنَّنَا نَخَافُ أَنْ يَّفْرُطَ عَلَيْنَآ أَوْ أَنْ يَّطْغَىٰ ﴿٤٥﴾ قَالَ لَا تَخَافَآ إِنَّنِيْ مَعَكُمَآ أَسْمَعُ وَأَرَىٰ ﴿٤٦﴾ فَأْتِيٰهُ فَقُولَآ إِنَّا رَسُولَا رَبِّكَ فَأَرْسِلْ

مَعَنَا بَنِيٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ ۙ وَلَا تُعَذِّبْهُمْ ؕ قَدْ جِئْنٰكَ بِاٰيَةٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّكَ ؕ وَالسَّلٰمُ عَلٰى مَنِ اتَّبَعَ الْهُدٰى ﴿۴۷﴾ اِنَّا قَدْ اُوْحِيَ اِلَيْنَآ اَنَّ الْعَذَابَ عَلٰى مَنْ كَذَّبَ وَتَوَلّٰى ﴿۴۸﴾ قَالَ فَمَنْ رَّبُّكُمَا يٰمُوْسٰى ﴿۴۹﴾ قَالَ رَبُّنَا الَّذِيْٓ اَعْطٰى كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلْقَهٗ ثُمَّ هَدٰى ﴿۵۰﴾

They said, "Our Lord, we are afraid he will hasten to commit excess against us, or will cross all bounds." [45]

He said, "Do not be afraid. I am surely with you both. I hear and I see. [46] **So, come to him and say, 'We are the messengers of your Lord. So, let the children of Isrā'īl go with us, and do not torment them. We have come to you with a sign from your Lord. And peace be upon the one who follows the guidance.** [47] **Verily, it has been revealed to us that the punishment is for the one who denies and turns away.'"** [48]

He (the Pharaoh) said, "Who then is the Lord of you two, O Mūsā?" [49] **He (Mūsā) said, "Our Lord is He who gave everything its shape, then guidance."** [50]

Commentary

Why was Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام afraid?

The words اِنَّنَا نَخَافُ (We are afraid) signifies that here Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام expressed twofold fear before Allah. The first fear is pointed out by the word اَنْ يَّفْرُطَ which means to cross all boundaries. So the meaning of the sentence is 'perhaps the Pharaoh would attack even before listening to us'. The other fear is mentioned with the words اَنْ يَّطْغٰى - which means that Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was apprehensive that the Pharaoh might, after listening to his demands, become so refractory and perverse that he might speak about Allah in disrespectful terms.

It will be recalled that when prophethood was bestowed upon Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, he had prayed to Allah to depute Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام also to assist him in his mission, and Allah had accepted his prayer. At the same time Allah informed him سَنَشُدُّ عَضُدَكَ بِاَخِيْكَ وَنَجْعَلُ لَكُمَا سُلْطٰنًا فَلَا يَصِلُوْنَ اِلَيْكُمَا ("We make your arm stronger through (the help of) your

brother and will make for you the upper hand so they will not reach you (with any harm)" - 28:35) and that whatever else he asked for was granted to him (قَدْ أُوْتِيْتَ سُؤْلَكَ يٰمُوْسٰى)- "You have been granted your request O Mūsā" - 20:36. Among the things granted to him was شرح صدر (heart at peace) which means that he was made immune to fear. So, when he had received such firm assurances from Allah, how does one explain the fear expressed by him in this verse. One answer to this question is that the promise of victory and security from harm is rather vague in that victory may refer to success in debate with the Pharaoh and his men. It can also be argued that victory could come only if the Egyptians heard his arguments and reasonings, and saw his miracles but there was this possibility also that they might attack him before he had laid his arguments before them. Besides, شرح صدر does not mean elimination of natural fear.

The second point is that fear of fearsome things is a natural instinct and even prophets are not free from it in spite of their complete faith in the promises of Allah. Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام himself was afraid to pick up his staff when it turned into a snake therefore Allah re-assured him with the word لَاتَخَفْ (do not be afraid). On all such occasions Allah removed their fears by propitious tidings. Three other verses: فَخَرَجَ مِنْهَا خَآئِفًا يَّتَرَقَّبُ (So, he went out of it (the city) in a state of fear, waiting (for what comes next) - 28:21) and فَاَصْبَحَ فِى الْمَدِيْنَةِ خَآئِفًا (Then, next morning he was fearful, waiting [for what comes next] - 28:18) and فَاَوْجَسَ فِىْ نَفْسِهٖ خِيْفَةً مُّوْسٰى (So Mūsā concealed some fear in his heart - 20:67) can also be quoted expressing the same fear. It was this natural fear which persuaded the Holy Prophet ﷺ to migrate to Madīnah and some of his Companions to migrate first to Abbysinia and later to Madīnah. In the Battle of Aḥzāb the Muslims were so overawed by the strength of their enemies that they dug a trench as a protective measure even though Allah had promised them victory on numerous occasions. The truth is that while they did not have the least doubt about their ultimate victory, the fear which they felt was the result of a spontaneous human impulse in the face of danger, and the prophets being human are not immune to this impulse.

Allah said, اِنَّنِىْ مَعَكُمَآ اَسْمَعُ وَاَرٰى ("I am surely with you both. I hear and I see." - 20:46) Here the word "with you" is used in the sense of divine help and support which human senses cannot perceive.

Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ called upon the Pharaoh to embrace the True Faith and also to deliver the Banī Isrā'īl from bondage

This shows that the prophets have the duty of guiding mankind towards their salvation as well as to liberate their people from worldly and economic bondages. Therefore, in this verse Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ is reminded of both these duties.

God created everything; and everything is performing the functions assigned to it by Him

This point calls for some elucidation which is given in the following lines. The guidance which Allah gives to the prophets and which is in the nature of a duty imposed upon them is a special kind of guidance which is addressed only to human beings and Jinns who are gifted with intellect. There is also another kind of guidance known as guidance of Takwīn (creation) which every created thing possesses. Allah has given to fire, water, earth and air, and their compounds a special kind of feeling and perception which are not of the same nature as given to human beings and Jinns. This is the reason why the laws governing things which are permissible and those which are forbidden do not apply to them. Through this feeling and perception Allah has assigned duties to all created things and in obedience to this command of Takwīn and guidance, the earth, the sky and every other created thing is busy performing its allotted tasks. Air, water, fire and earth are all fulfilling the purpose for which they were created. They do not deviate from their destined course except by the command of Allah. And when He so commands the fire turns into a bed of flowers (as for Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm ﷺ), and water acts as fire as for the people of Sayyidnā Nūḥ ﷺ (أُغْرِقُوْا فَأُدْخِلُوْا نَارًا - 71:25). Who has taught a newly born baby to draw milk from its mother's breast or to cry when hungry or in pain? It is this same Divine guidance which every created thing receives without any formal training.

In brief, every created thing has been programmed, by Allah, with a guidance of Takwīn (creation) which it is genetically bound to follow and deviating from the same is beyond its power. The other kind of guidance which is given to the human beings and to Jinns is not inherent in the nature and thus, is not compulsory but optional. It is this freedom of choice which renders them liable to reward for good deeds and to punishment for their sins. The verse أَعْطٰى كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلْقَهٗ ثُمَّ هَدٰى (who gave

everything its shape then guidance - 20:50) refers to the guidance of Takwīn (تکوینی هدایت).

Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ reminded the Pharaoh, at the first place, of those acts of Allah Taʻālā which are obviously done by Him alone and about which no one else could claim that he has performed them. The Pharaoh totally unable to refute this argument, and in his confusion asked Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ a question which was designed to entangle him into giving a reply that would greatly offend the Egyptians. The question was: how did the people of bygone ages stand who all worshipped idols, and what was their fate? The Pharaoh's purpose was that if Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ replied (as the Pharaoh surmised he would) that they were all misguided and deserving of Hell, then he could instigate his people against the latter. But the reply which Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ gave was so wise and discreet that the Pharaoh's evil design was completely frustrated.

Verses 51 - 59

قَالَ فَمَا بَالُ الْقُرُوْنِ الْاُوْلٰى ﴿٥١﴾ قَالَ عِلْمُهَا عِنْدَ رَبِّىْ فِىْ كِتٰبٍ ۚ لَا يَضِلُّ رَبِّىْ وَلَا يَنْسَى ﴿٥٢﴾ الَّذِىْ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْاَرْضَ مَهْدًا وَّسَلَكَ لَكُمْ فِيْهَا سُبُلًا وَّاَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً ۭ فَاَخْرَجْنَا بِهٖۤ اَزْوَاجًا مِّنْ نَّبَاتٍ شَتّٰى ﴿٥٣﴾ كُلُوْا وَارْعَوْا اَنْعَامَكُمْ ۭ اِنَّ فِىْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّاُولِى النُّهٰى ﴿٥٤﴾ مِنْهَا خَلَقْنٰكُمْ وَفِيْهَا نُعِيْدُكُمْ وَمِنْهَا نُخْرِجُكُمْ تَارَةً اُخْرٰى ﴿٥٥﴾ وَلَقَدْ اَرَيْنٰهُ اٰيٰتِنَا كُلَّهَا فَكَذَّبَ وَاَبٰى ﴿٥٦﴾ قَالَ اَجِئْتَنَا لِتُخْرِجَنَا مِنْ اَرْضِنَا بِسِحْرِكَ يٰمُوْسٰى ﴿٥٧﴾ فَلَنَاْتِيَنَّكَ بِسِحْرٍ مِّثْلِهٖ فَاجْعَلْ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكَ مَوْعِدًا لَّا نُخْلِفُهٗ نَحْنُ وَلَاۤ اَنْتَ مَكَانًا سُوًى ﴿٥٨﴾ قَالَ مَوْعِدُكُمْ يَوْمُ الزِّيْنَةِ وَاَنْ يُّحْشَرَ النَّاسُ ضُحًى ﴿٥٩﴾

He said, "Then, what about the earlier generations?" [51]

He replied, "The knowledge about those is, in a book, with my Lord. My Lord does neither err nor forget. [52] **(He is) the One who made the earth a cradle for you and made for you therein pathways to move, and sent down water from the heavens and brought out, with it, pairs of different vegetations:** [53] **Eat, and graze your cattle. Surely, in that there are signs for the people of understanding."** [54]

From this (earth) We created you and in this we shall put you back and from this We shall raise you up once again. [55]

And We showed him (the Pharaoh) all Our signs, yet he belied and refused. [56] **Said he, "Have you come to us to drive us out of our land with your sorcery, O Mūsā?** [57] **We will, then, bring to you a similar sorcery. So, make, between you and us, an appointment not to be backed out, neither by us nor from you - at an even place."** [58]

He (Mūsā) said, "Your appointment is the festival day and that the people are assembled at forenoon." [59]

Commentary

Verse 51 tells us that the Pharaoh had asked the question regarding the end of earlier people. If Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام had given a straightforward answer that they were misled and will go to Jahannam, then the Pharaoh would have got a chance to scorn that it was not just him whom Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was blaming but all their ancestors as well. Naturally such a situation would have created doubts in the minds of people. Therefore Sayyidna Musa عليه السلام gave such an answer which was full of wisdom and did not give any chance to the Pharaoh for misleading the people. He said (as mentioned in verse 52) that only Allah knows their end. He never makes a mistake nor does He forget things. The words "My Lord does neither err" mean that it is inconceivable that Allah wills one thing and something different should happen.

The word أَزْوَاجٌ (pairs) used in verse 53 is used here in the sense of "Kinds" or "Species", and the word شَتّٰى is the plural of the word شَتِيْتٌ which means "different" or "diverse". The verse means that Allah has created so many kinds of plants that they are beyond human reckoning and each of them contains special properties which make them invaluable to man for

his well-being. It is impossible for man to comprehend completely all the properties and uses of all the plants created by Allah Ta'ālā. For centuries scientists have been working to find out all about them and researches have revealed a great deal about their properties. However it is impossible to claim that whatever we know at present is the last word.

The next verse (54) says إِنَّ فِى ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّاُولِى النُّهٰى (Surely, in that there are signs for the people of understanding. (20:54). The word النُّهٰى is the plural of نُهْيَة (*nuhyah*) which is used in the same sense as عَقَل ('*aql:* Intelligence) because it enables wise and intelligent persons to avoid harmful acts.

The composition of every human being contains, together with the seed, the earth of the place when he will be buried

The words مِنْهَا خَلَقْنٰكُمْ (From this We created you) in verse 55 means that Allah created you from the earth. This verse is addressed to all mankind although it is known that man is created from seed and not from earth, except Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام who was created directly from earth. One possible explanation for this is that since Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام is the father of all mankind and was himself created from earth, therefore all his descendants have been similarly described. Others have said that the seed itself is made of earth therefore anything created from the seed is in fact created from the earth. According to Imam al-Qurṭubī رحمه الله تعالى the text of the Qur'ān clearly indicates that man is created from the earth.

By words مَكَانًا سُوًى (at an even place) in verse 58 the Pharaoh proposed that the contest between Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and his own magicians should be held at a place which should, as far as possible, be within easy access of the Egyptians, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and the Banī Isrā'īl. The latter readily accepted this proposal and fixed the day and the time for the contest by suggesting مَوْعِدُكُمْ يَوْمُ الزِّيْنَةِ وَاَنْ يُّحْشَرَ النَّاسُ ضُحًى (Your appointment is the festival day and that the people are assembled at forenoon - 20:59). يَوْمُ الزِّيْنَةِ has been explained differently by different authorities. Some say it was a special festival when the Egyptians, attired in beautiful dresses, gathered outside the towns, while others say that it was a Saturday (يَوْمُ السَّبْتِ), and according to some others it was the tenth day of Muḥarram (عَاشُوْرَا).

The great advantage in fixing for the contest

It was a wise move on the part of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام to fix festival day as the day of contest when all Egyptians, high and low, were expected to assemble at an appointed place. There was also a point in fixing early forenoon as the time for the contest because this is the time when people, having finished their daily chores, are free to engage in other things. Also daylight and visibility are at their best in the early forenoon and people, while dispersing after witnessing a momentous event, spread the news far and wide. Thus when, with Allah's help, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام inflicted a crushing defeat on the Egyptian magicians, the story became known the same day to people living in far flung places.

Magic - its truth, forms and the rules governing it

For a detailed discussion on this subject reference may be made to the story of Hārūt and Mārūt in Sūrah Al-Baqarah at page 265 to 278 of Ma'ariful Qur'ān vol. I.

Verses 60 - 76

فَتَوَلّٰى فِرْعَوْنُ فَجَمَعَ كَيْدَهٗ ثُمَّ اَتٰى ﴿٦٠﴾ قَالَ لَهُمْ مُّوْسٰى وَيْلَكُمْ
لَاتَفْتَرُوْا عَلَى اللّٰهِ كَذِبًا فَيُسْحِتَكُمْ بِعَذَابٍ ۚ وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنِ افْتَرٰى
﴿٦١﴾ فَتَنَازَعُوْٓا اَمْرَهُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ وَاَسَرُّوا النَّجْوٰى ﴿٦٢﴾ قَالُوْٓا اِنْ هٰذٰنِ
لَسٰحِرٰنِ يُرِيْدٰنِ اَنْ يُّخْرِجٰكُمْ مِّنْ اَرْضِكُمْ بِسِحْرِهِمَا وَيَذْهَبَا
بِطَرِيْقَتِكُمُ الْمُثْلٰى ﴿٦٣﴾ فَاَجْمِعُوْا كَيْدَكُمْ ثُمَّ ائْتُوْا صَفًّا ۚ وَقَدْ
اَفْلَحَ الْيَوْمَ مَنِ اسْتَعْلٰى ﴿٦٤﴾ قَالُوْا يٰمُوْسٰى اِمَّآ اَنْ تُلْقِيَ وَاِمَّآ اَنْ
نَّكُوْنَ اَوَّلَ مَنْ اَلْقٰى ﴿٦٥﴾ قَالَ بَلْ اَلْقُوْا ۚ فَاِذَا حِبَالُهُمْ وَعِصِيُّهُمْ
يُخَيَّلُ اِلَيْهِ مِنْ سِحْرِهِمْ اَنَّهَا تَسْعٰى ﴿٦٦﴾ فَاَوْجَسَ فِيْ نَفْسِهٖ خِيْفَةً
مُّوْسٰى ﴿٦٧﴾ قُلْنَا لَاتَخَفْ اِنَّكَ اَنْتَ الْاَعْلٰى ﴿٦٨﴾ وَاَلْقِ مَا فِيْ
يَمِيْنِكَ تَلْقَفْ مَا صَنَعُوْا ۭ اِنَّمَا صَنَعُوْا كَيْدُ سٰحِرٍ ۭ وَلَا يُفْلِحُ

السِّحْرُ حَيْثُ اَتٰى ﴿٦٩﴾ فَاُلْقِىَ السَّحَرَةُ سُجَّدًا قَالُوْۤا اٰمَنَّا بِرَبِّ
هٰرُوْنَ وَ مُوْسٰى ﴿٧٠﴾ قَالَ اٰمَنْتُمْ لَهٗ قَبْلَ اَنْ اٰذَنَ لَكُمْ ؕ اِنَّهٗ
لَكَبِيْرُكُمُ الَّذِىْ عَلَّمَكُمُ السِّحْرَ ۚ فَلَاُقَطِّعَنَّ اَيْدِيَكُمْ وَاَرْجُلَكُمْ مِّنْ
خِلَافٍ وَّلَاُوصَلِّبَنَّكُمْ فِىْ جُذُوْعِ النَّخْلِ ۫ وَلَتَعْلَمُنَّ اَيُّنَاۤ اَشَدُّ عَذَابًا
وَّاَبْقٰى ﴿٧١﴾ قَالُوْا لَنْ نُّؤْثِرَكَ عَلٰى مَا جَآءَنَا مِنَ الْبَيِّنٰتِ وَالَّذِىْ
فَطَرَنَا فَاقْضِ مَاۤ اَنْتَ قَاضٍ ؕ اِنَّمَا تَقْضِىْ هٰذِهِ الْحَيٰوةَ الدُّنْيَا ؕ ﴿٧٢﴾
اِنَّاۤ اٰمَنَّا بِرَبِّنَا لِيَغْفِرَلَنَا خَطٰيٰنَا وَمَاۤ اَكْرَهْتَنَا عَلَيْهِ مِنَ السِّحْرِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ
خَيْرٌ وَّاَبْقٰى ﴿٧٣﴾ اِنَّهٗ مَنْ يَّاْتِ رَبَّهٗ مُجْرِمًا فَاِنَّ لَهٗ جَهَنَّمَ ؕ
لَا يَمُوْتُ فِيْهَا وَلَا يَحْيٰى ﴿٧٤﴾ وَمَنْ يَّاْتِهٖ مُؤْمِنًا قَدْ عَمِلَ الصّٰلِحٰتِ
فَاُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمُ الدَّرَجٰتُ الْعُلٰى ﴿٧٥﴾ جَنّٰتُ عَدْنٍ تَجْرِىْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا
الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا ؕ وَذٰلِكَ جَزٰٓؤُا مَنْ تَزَكّٰى ﴿٧٦﴾ ع

So, the Pharaoh turned back, and put his plot together, then came. [60] **Mūsā said to them, "Pity on you, do not fabricate a lie against Allah, lest He uproots you with a punishment. And loser is he who fabricates a lie."** [61]

Then, they disputed among themselves in their matter and kept their talk secret. [62] **Said they, "Certainly, these two are sorcerers who wish to drive you out from your land and do away with your excellent way of life.** [63] **So, make your plot firm and come forth in one row. And successful today is he who stands high."** [64]

They said, "O Mūsā, either you throw, or shall we be the first to throw?" [65] **He said, "Rather, you throw." Then, suddenly their ropes and sticks seemed to him, due to their magic, as if they were running.** [66] **So, Mūsā concealed some fear in his heart.** [67] **We said, "Do not be scared. Certainly, you are to be the upper most.** [68] **And throw what is in your right hand, and it will devour what they have concocted. What they have concocted is but a sleight of a magician. And the magician does not**

succeed wherever he comes from."[69]

So, the magicians were led (by the truth) to fall in prostration. They said, "We have (now) believed in the Lord of Hārūn and Mūsā." [70] **He (the Pharaoh) said, "You have believed in him before I permit you. He is, in fact your chief who has taught you the magic. So I will certainly cut apart your hands and your legs from opposite sides and will crucify you on the trunks of palm-trees, and you shall know who of us is more severe in punishment, and more lasting."** [71]

They said, "We will never prefer you over the clear signs that have come to us and over Him who has created us. So, do whatever you are to do. You will do only for this worldly life. [72] **We have believed in our Lord, so that He forgives us from our sins and from the magic you had compelled us on. And Allah is the best and everlasting."** [73]

Surely whoever comes to his Lord as a sinner, for him there is Jahannam wherein he neither dies nor lives. [74] **And whoever comes to Him as a believer having done righteous deeds, for such people there are the highest ranks,** [75] **the eternal gardens beneath which rivers flow, where they shall live for ever. And that is the reward for one who has purified himself.** [76]

Commentary

The words 'فَجَمَعَ كَيْدَهُ' (and put his plot together) in verse 60 indicate that the Pharaoh assembled his magicians and their tools. According to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ there were seventy two magicians but others have put their number at figures which vary from four hundred to nine hundred thousand. Their leader was a blind man whose name was Sham'ūn (شمعون).

Sayyidnā Mūsā's عليه السلام prophetic address to the magicians

Before the start of the contest Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام addressed some words of friendly advice to the magicians to warn them of divine punishment if they persisted in denying God's miracles and other manifestations of His power. His actual words were:

وَيْلَكُمْ لَا تَفْتَرُوا عَلَى اللّٰهِ كَذِبًا فَيُسْحِتَكُمْ بِعَذَابٍ وَّقَدْ خَابَ مَنِ افْتَرٰى

Pity on you, do not fabricate a lie against Allah, lest He uproots you with a punishment. And loser is he who fabricates a lie - 20:61.

It was hardly to be expected that the magicians who had entered the field with all the might of the Pharaoh-behind them would pay any heed to Sayyidnā Mūsā's ﵇ words of advice. However, the prophets and their followers possess a hidden power so that their plain and simple words penetrate the most unruly and perverse minds, and the address of Sayyidnā Mūsā ﵇ caused discord and dissensions among the magicians, some of whom thought that these could not be the words of a magician but of a higher being and were therefore, against the contest. But others were adamant, فَتَنَازَعُوٓا اَمْرَهُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ (then, they disputed among themselves in their matter - 20:62), وَاَسَرُّوا النَّجْوٰى (and kept their talk secret - 20:62). Ultimately their unanimous decision was to proceed with the contest because, in their opinion, Sayyidnā Mūsā ﵇ and Sayyidnā Hārūn ﵇ were both magicians who wished to drive away the Pharaoh and his men from Egypt by their magic and to eradicate their ideal way of life. This decision of theirs is mentioned in verse 63 in the following words:

اِنْ هٰذٰنِ لَسٰحِرٰنِ يُرِيْدٰنِ اَنْ يُّخْرِجٰكُمْ مِّنْ اَرْضِكُمْ بِسِحْرِهِمَا وَيَذْهَبَا بِطَرِيْقَتِكُمُ الْمُثْلٰى

Said they, "Certainly, these two are sorcerers who wish to drive you out from your land and do away with your excellent way of life. (20:63)

The word مُثْلٰى is the feminine of اَمْثَل which means "most excellent". The meaning is that the Egyptians believed that their religion which regarded the Pharaoh as god was the best and Sayyidnā Mūsā ﵇ and Sayyidnā Hārūn ﵇ wanted to destroy it and supplant their own religion in its place. The word طَرِيْقَه (translated in the text as 'way of life') is also used to describe the chiefs and leading citizens and according to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbas ﵁ and Sayyidnā 'Ali ﵁ the word has been used here in this sense namely that these two men wished to finish off all their leaders and important citizens and it was therefore, the duty of the Egyptian magicians to unite and use their best endeavours to defeat the enemy فَاَجْمِعُوْا كَيْدَكُمْ ثُمَّ ائْتُوْا صَفًّا (So, make your plot firm and forth in one row - 20:64). Formation of troops in ranks in battle has an unsettling effect on the enemy, so the Egyptian magicians arranged themselves in ranks for

the contest.

The Egyptians were confident of their success and in a mood of complacency asked Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام whether he would like to make the first move or whether they should initiate the contest. Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام invited them to start the contest (Rather, you throw - 20:66) and there were several reasons for this. In the first place the Egyptians showed courage when they invited Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام to open the battle and this offer called for an equally generous and chivalrous response. Secondly by making the offer the Egyptians showed their confidence in the outcome of the contest and implied as if they had already won it. On his side Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, by his counter-offer, sought to convey to the Egyptians that he regarded the result of the game as a foregone conclusion in his own favour. And finally he wished to see the tricks of the Egyptians before he planned his own strategy. So, with these preliminaries over, the Egyptians cast their staffs and ropes on the ground and it appeared to the onlookers as if they had turned into snakes and were running about.

يُخَيَّلُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ سِحْرِهِمْ أَنَّهَا تَسْعَىٰ (Their ropes and sticks seemed to him, due to their magic, as if they were running - 20:66). The verse shows that the Egyptian magicians had cast a hypnotic spell on the onlookers to whom it appeared that the staffs and the ropes had turned into snakes and were running about on the ground, whereas in fact no such transformation had taken place.

فَأَوْجَسَ فِي نَفْسِهِ خِيفَةً مُّوسَىٰ (So Mūsā concealed some fear in his heart - 20:67.). The sight of so many snakes crawling around evoked a sense of fear in Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام which he did not reveal to anyone. Even if this fear was for his own personal safety then it can be regarded as a natural human reaction to a dangerous situation and does not conflict with the mission of prophethood. It is clear, however, that the fear which he felt was not for his own life. His apprehension was that if the immense crowd, which had assembled to see the contest, sensed that the Egyptian magicians had the upper hand then the purpose of his mission would be frustrated. These doubts and fears were dispelled when in the next verse Allah assured him لَا تَخَفْ إِنَّكَ أَنتَ الْأَعْلَىٰ (do not be scared. Certainly , you are to be the upper most - 20:68).

وَأَلْقِ مَا فِىْ يَمِيْنِكَ (And throw what is in your right hand - 20:69). Allah commanded Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام by means of a revelation (وحی) to cast down what he held in his right hand, and when he threw down his staff it turned into a huge snake and ate up all the imaginary snakes which the Egyptian magicians had produced by their magic.

Conversion to Islam and bowing in prostration by the Pharaoh's magicians

The Egyptian magicians who were masters of their art realized at once that what they had just witnessed was not magic but a miracle brought about by a Supreme Power. Consequently they fell in prostration and declared openly their faith in Allah - the God of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام. According to some traditions these magicians did not raise their heads until they had seen a glimpse of heaven and hell. (رواه عبد بن حميد وابن ابی حاتم وابن المنذر عن عكرمه - روح)

قَالَ اٰمَنْتُمْ لَهٗ قَبْلَ اَنْ اٰذَنَ لَكُمْ (He [the Pharaoh] said, "You have believed in him before I permit you" - 20:71). The Pharaoh, thus disgraced before a vast multitude, was furious and he stormed at the magicians how they dared accept the religion brought by Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام without his prior permission. He suspected that they all were Sayyidnā Mūsā's عليه السلام pupils who taught them the magic and had accepted defeat in connivance with him.

فَلَاُقَطِّعَنَّ اَيْدِيَكُمْ وَاَرْجُلَكُمْ مِّنْ خِلَافٍ (I will certainly cut apart your hands and your legs from opposite sides - 20:71). The Pharaoh thus threatened his magicians with dire punishment. He said he would cut off their hands and feet from opposite sides i.e. first the right hand, then the left foot. This apparently was the mode of inflicting punishment under the laws of the Pharaoh. وَلَاُوصَلِّبَنَّكُمْ فِىْ جُذُوْعِ النَّخْلِ (And will crucify you on the trunks of palm-trees - 20:71) He also said that after cutting off their hands and feet he would crucify them on the trunks of palm-trees where they would remain suspended until they died of starvation.

قَالُوْا لَنْ نُّؤْثِرَكَ عَلٰى مَا جَآءَنَا مِنَ الْبَيِّنٰتِ وَالَّذِىْ فَطَرَنَا (They said, "We will never prefer you over the clear signs that have come to us, and over Him who created us." - 20:72). The magicians, however, stood firm and did not waver in the face of the Pharaoh's threats. They told him plainly that they would not give him, nor anything he said, preference over the clear proofs and the

miracles which Allah had shown to them. Sayyidnā 'Ikrimah ﷺ says that when the magicians prostrated themselves before Allah, He gave them a glimpse of the eminent places and the gifts which were to be their reward in Paradise. They confirmed their belief in the one God Who created the earth and the skies and rejected Pharaoh's claim to divinity. While neglecting the threats of the Pharaoh they further said: "So you do what you want and punish us in whatever manner you choose. And, "You can punish us as long as we live but when we die we will be out of your reach. On the other hand we are in the power of Allah both in this and after death, and His punishment is of greater concern to us".

وَمَآ أَكْرَهْتَنَا عَلَيْهِ مِنَ السِّحْرِ (And the magic you had compelled us on - 20:73). The magicians now accused the Pharaoh of having forced them to practice magic else they would not have taken it up. Here a question may arise that the magicians came to the contest of their own free choice and had even negotiated before hand their reward if they were victorious. How, then, could they justify their accusation that the Pharaoh had forced them to practice magic? A possible answer can be that whereas the magicians, to begin with, were tempted by promises of generous rewards for taking part in the contest they soon realized that they stood no chance against miracles and wanted to withdraw from the contest. It was then that the Pharaoh forced them to take up the challenge of Mūsā ﷺ. Another explanation is that under a law passed by the Pharaoh everybody was compelled to learn magic.

The propitious end of 'Āsiyah, the Pharaoh's wife

Qurṭubī has mentioned in his commentary that while the contest between vice and virtue was in progress, the Pharaoh's wife kept herself informed of the minute to minute developments and when she learned that Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ had emerged victorious, she at once declared her adherence to the True Faith. When the Pharaoh was informed of his wife's defection, he ordered that a huge rock be thrown upon her. When 'Āsiyah saw the rock coming, she raised her eyes in supplication to Allah who took away her soul so that the rock fell on her lifeless body.

Revolutionary change in the lives of the magicians

إِنَّهُ مَنْ يَأْتِ رَبَّهُ مُجْرِمًا ...... وَذَٰلِكَ جَزَآؤُا مَنْ تَزَكّٰى

Surely whoever comes to his Lord as a sinner, for him there is

> Jahannam .... And whoever comes to Him as a believer ... for such people there are the highest ranks.... (20:74-76)

These words which refer to the Islamic beliefs and the hereafter have been spoken by the magician who only recently became Muslims and who had not yet been instructed about the principles and the obligations of the new faith.

It was the result of their brief association with Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام that Allah, in an instant, revealed to them the mysteries of their new faith so that they gave scarce heed to Pharaoh's threats. Thus with the adoption of the religion of Allah they attained a state of sainthood which is given to others after long and assiduous exertions. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbas رضي الله عنه and 'Ubaid Ibn 'Umair رضي الله عنه said it was a divine marvel that the magicians who started the day as infidels became saints before it ended. (Ibn Kathīr)

Verses 77 - 82

وَلَقَدْ اَوْحَيْنَآ اِلٰى مُوْسٰٓى ۙ اَنْ اَسْرِ بِعِبَادِىْ فَاضْرِبْ لَهُمْ طَرِيْقًا فِى
الْبَحْرِ يَبَسًا ۙ لَّا تَخٰفُ دَرَكًا وَّلَا تَخْشٰى ﴿٧٧﴾ فَاَتْبَعَهُمْ فِرْعَوْنُ
بِجُنُوْدِهٖ فَغَشِيَهُمْ مِّنَ الْيَمِّ مَا غَشِيَهُمْ ﴿٧٨﴾ وَاَضَلَّ فِرْعَوْنُ قَوْمَهٗ
وَمَا هَدٰى ﴿٧٩﴾ يٰبَنِىْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ قَدْ اَنْجَيْنٰكُمْ مِّنْ عَدُوِّكُمْ
وَوٰعَدْنٰكُمْ جَانِبَ الطُّوْرِ الْاَيْمَنَ وَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَنَّ وَالسَّلْوٰى
﴿٨٠﴾ كُلُوْا مِنْ طَيِّبٰتِ مَارَزَقْنٰكُمْ وَلَا تَطْغَوْا فِيْهِ فَيَحِلَّ عَلَيْكُمْ
غَضَبِىْ ۚ وَمَنْ يَّحْلِلْ عَلَيْهِ غَضَبِىْ فَقَدْ هَوٰى ﴿٨١﴾ وَاِنِّىْ لَغَفَّارٌ
لِّمَنْ تَابَ وَاٰمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا ثُمَّ اهْتَدٰى ﴿٨٢﴾

And We revealed to Mūsā saying, "Move out with my servants at night, then make for them a dry path in the sea (with the strike of your staff), neither fearing to be caught up nor being scared (of anything else)." [77]

Then the Pharaoh chased them with his troops. So covered they were, by that which covered them from

the sea. [78] **And the Pharaoh led his people astray and did not show them the right path.** [79]

O children of Isrā'īl, We delivered you from your enemy and appointed for you the right side of the mount Ṭūr (Sinai) and sent down for you the Mann and Salwā: [80] **Eat from the good things We have provided you with, and do not transgress in respect thereof, lest My wrath befalls upon you. And the one upon whom befalls My wrath certainly falls into destruction.** [81]

And surely I am the Most-Forgiving for him who repents and believes and acts righteously, then takes to the right path. [82]

Commentary

The decisive defeat which he suffered in the contest between the right and wrong and between miracle and magic broke the power of the Pharaoh, and the Banī Isrā'īle stood united under the leadership of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام . Allah now commanded Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام to take his men out of Egypt. But this move was full of danger. First there was the risk of pursuit by the Pharaoh, and second the river, which they had no means of crossing, barred their flight. Allah dispelled both these fears from Sayyidnā Mūsā's عليه السلام mind and told him to strike his staff on the surface of the water, and dry passageways would appear in the bed of the river over which they could all escape, thus frustrating Pharaoh's pursuit. This story has been narrated earlier under Ḥadīth ul-Futūn in this very Surah.

When the time came, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام struck the surface of water with his staff and masses of water stood asunder revealing twelve dry paths, as mentioned in Surah Ash-Shu'arā' فَكَانَ كُلُّ فِرْقٍ كَالطَّوْدِ الْعَظِيْمِ (And each part became like a big mountain- 26:63). The walls of water which divided the passages were so formed that those going on one road could see and talk to those travelling on other roads, thus imparting to them all a sense of security.

The number of the Banī Isrā'īl who fled Egypt and the strength of the Pharaoh's army

According to Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام embarked on his journey towards the Red Sea with the Banī Isrā'īl soon after sunset.

Earlier they had announced that one of their festivals was approaching which they would celebrate outside the city, and on this excuse, as well as to allay the suspicions of the Egyptians, they borrowed some jewellery from the Copts promising to return it after the festival. At that time Banī Isrā'īl numbered six hundred and three thousand, while another version puts their number at six hundred and seventy thousand. These figures, which may be exaggerated, have been taken from Isrā'īlite traditions, but one thing appears certain, namely that they were divided into twelve very populous tribes. These large numbers were also a gift from Allah because the first arrivals in Egypt in the days of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام were just the twelve brothers. Now the twelve tribes of those twelve brothers which fled Egypt numbered well over six hundred thousand.

When the Pharaoh learned that the Banī Isrā'īl had taken flight, he assembled a large army of which the advance units consisted of seven hundred thousand horsemen and started off in pursuit. When the Banī Isrā'īl saw the river barring their way ahead and the Pharaoh hot on their heels, they cried out in despair. "Surely! We are caught". Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام consoled them with the words إِنَّ مَعِىَ رَبِّى سَيَهْدِينِ (With me is my Lord indeed. He will guide me - 26:62). Then by the command of Allah he struck his staff on the water and twelve dry passageways appeared on which the twelve tribes of Banī Isrā'īl crossed over to the other side in safety. The Pharaoh who saw all this was frightened but he urged his men on by declaring that the dry paths were formed because the river stopped flowing on account of the awe which it felt in his presence. Saying so, he spurred his horse into the river ordering his army to follow him. When they were all in the middle, Allah commanded the river to resume its flow and water covered them over. (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī)

وَوٰعَدْنٰكُمْ جَانِبَ الطُّوْرِ الْاَيْمَنَ (And appointed for you the right side of the mount Ṭūr. (20:80)) After their deliverance from the threat of the Pharaoh, and when they were safe across the river, Allah made a promise to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and through him to the Banī Isrā'īl that they should move to the right side of the mount of Ṭūr so that Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام might be given the Torah and so that they might witness him speak with Allah.

وَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَنَّ وَالسَّلْوٰى (And sent down for you the Mann and Salwā. - 20:80) This incident occurred when, having crossed the river, they were

commanded to enter a sacred city, but they refused and as punishment they were confined to a valley which is known as the valley of Tīh (Sinai). They stayed there for forty years and in spite of the punishment which they were undergoing they continued to receive gifts from Allah, and the Mann and Salwā (a special kind of food) was one such gifts which was given to them for their sustenance.

Verses 83 - 89

وَمَآ اَعْجَلَكَ عَنْ قَوْمِكَ يٰمُوْسٰى ﴿٨٣﴾ قَالَ هُمْ اُولَآءِ عَلٰٓى اَثَرِىْ
وَعَجِلْتُ اِلَيْكَ رَبِّ لِتَرْضٰى ﴿٨٤﴾ قَالَ فَاِنَّا قَدْ فَتَنَّا قَوْمَكَ مِنْۢ
بَعْدِكَ وَاَضَلَّهُمُ السَّامِرِىُّ ﴿٨٥﴾ فَرَجَعَ مُوْسٰٓى اِلٰى قَوْمِهٖ غَضْبَانَ
اَسِفًا ۚ قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ اَلَمْ يَعِدْكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ وَعْدًا حَسَنًا ۬ ط اَفَطَالَ عَلَيْكُمُ
الْعَهْدُ اَمْ اَرَدْتُّمْ اَنْ يَّحِلَّ عَلَيْكُمْ غَضَبٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ فَاَخْلَفْتُمْ مَّوْعِدِىْ
﴿٨٦﴾ قَالُوْا مَآ اَخْلَفْنَا مَوْعِدَكَ بِمَلْكِنَا وَلٰكِنَّا حُمِّلْنَآ اَوْزَارًا مِّنْ زِيْنَةِ
الْقَوْمِ فَقَذَفْنٰهَا فَكَذٰلِكَ اَلْقَى السَّامِرِىُّ ﴿٨٧﴾ فَاَخْرَجَ لَهُمْ عِجْلًا
جَسَدًا لَّهٗ خُوَارٌ فَقَالُوْا هٰذَآ اِلٰهُكُمْ وَاِلٰهُ مُوْسٰى ۥ فَنَسِىَ ﴿٨٨﴾ اَفَلَا
يَرَوْنَ اَلَّا يَرْجِعُ اِلَيْهِمْ قَوْلًا ۙ وَّلَا يَمْلِكُ لَهُمْ ضَرًّا وَّلَا نَفْعًا ﴿٨٩﴾

"And what has caused you to hurry before your people, O Mūsā?" [83] **He said, "Here they are just behind me, and I hurried towards You, O my Lord, so that You be pleased."** [84]

He said, "We have then put your people to test after you (left them) and Sāmirī has misguided them." [85]

So, Mūsā went back to his people in anger and sorrow. He said, "O my people, did your Lord not promise you a good promise? Did then the time become too long for you, or did you wish that wrath from your Lord befalls you, and hence you backed out from the promise made to me?" [86]

They said, "We did not back out, of our own volition, of

the promise made to you, but we were burdened with loads from the ornaments of the people; so we threw them and so did throw Sāmirī." [87] **Then he brought forth for them a calf, a body with a lowing sound. Then they said, "This is your god and the god of Mūsā, and he (Mūsā) erred."** [88]

Do they not then see that it does not respond to them with a word, nor does it have power to harm or benefit them? [89]

Commentary

Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and the Banī Isrā'īl, having escaped the Pharaoh's wrath and having crossed the river in safety, proceeded on their journey. Soon they came upon a people who worshipped idols. They said to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, "These people have adopted the idols as their gods who are visible as well as tangible. Do give us also a god whom we can see and touch." Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام replied, إِنَّكُمْ قَوْمٌ تَجْهَلُونَ إِنَّ هٰؤُلَآءِ مُتَبَّرٌ مَّاهُمْ فِيْهِ وَبٰطِلٌ مَّاكَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ("You are really an ignorant people. What these people are in, is sure to be destroyed; and false is what they are doing." - 78:139.)

It was then that Allah commanded Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام to bring his people to the mount of Ṭūr where he would receive the Book Torah which would be a code and a policy document for all of them. However, he would have to prepare himself to receive the Torah by observing a fast for thirty days and thirty nights continuously. This period was later extended by a further ten days so that the total period of fasting was forty days and forty nights. Then Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام led his people towards the mount of Ṭūr, but in his eagerness to receive the Torah he hastened ahead so that he could complete his prayers and fasts for the prescribed period of thirty days as early as possible. He appointed Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام to be his deputy during his absence. The Banī Isrā'īl continued the journey at their leisurely pace while he pushed on hoping that they would join him in due course near the mount of Ṭūr. In the meanwhile Sāmirī, by his wiles, seduced them into adopting the calf as the object of their worship and thus divided them into three factions. This unfortunate development seriously impeded their progress towards the Ṭūr.

Allah questioned Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ about his haste and the wisdom behind the question

When Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ appeared before Divine Presence, Allah questioned him as to why he had hastened ahead of his people. The obvious purpose of the question was to inform Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ of the mischief into which his people had fallen while he himself, unaware of what had happened in his absence, was expecting their arrival at the Ṭūr (Ibn Kathīr). On the other hand, according to Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī, the question contained an implied rebuke to Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ on his haste which deprived his people of his supervision and enabled Sāmirī to mislead them. His position as a prophet made it incumbent on him to stay with his people and keep a watchful eye on them and their activities. The learned commentator has further observed that this question implied an indication that a leader should remain behind his people when travelling with them, as Allah Ta'ālā had ordered Lūṭ ﷺ to bring his people out of the city and to remain at their back وَاتَّبِعْ أَدْبَارَهُمْ (follow them at the rear -15:65)

Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ, ignorant of Sāmirī's mischief, answered the question put to him by Allah that his haste was the result of his ardent desire to fulfill Allah's command without loss of time so as to deserve His greater favour, and that his people were close behind him and might arrive at any time. It was at that moment that Allah informed him of the evil that had befallen his people and the part played by Sāmirī in bringing it about.

Who was Sāmirī?

Some people have said that Sāmirī was an Egyptian Copt who lived next door to Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ and had accepted the True Faith. When Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ took the Banī Isrā'īl out of Egypt he also joined the exodus. Others have said that he was the chief of one of the clans of Banī Isrā'īl called Samira which is still well-known in Syria. According to Sayyidnā Sa'id Ibn Jubair ؓ he was a Persian from the Kirman province. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ says that he belonged to a nation of cow-worshippers who somehow reached Egypt and pretended to join the religion of Banī Isrā'īl whereas in actual fact he was an hypocrite (Qurṭubī). Another version is that he was a Hindu from India who worshipped cows, adopted the religion of Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ truly, and later returned to his infidel faith, or had accepted the true faith in

hypocrisy. Sāmirī's name, as generally believed, was Mūsā Ibn Zafar. Ibn Jarīr has related from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ that Sāmirī was born in the year when under the orders of the Pharaoh all male Isrā'īli children were to be killed. His mother, fearing the worst, put him in the hallow of a cave and covered its mouth. She would visit him from time to time and feed him as best as she could. On the other hand Allah appointed Jibra'īl عليه السلام to look after the child and provide him nourishment. Jibra'īl عليه السلام brought honey on one finger, butter on the second finger and milk on the third finger which he fed to the child. He lived in the cave until he grew to manhood and, as has already been narrated above, became an unbeliever, involved the Banī Isrā'īl in a great disaster and himself suffered a terrible fate as a punishment from Allah. A poet has made a reference to this story in the following two couplets:

اذا المرء لم يخلق سعيدا تحيّرت　　عقول مربّيه وخاب المؤمل

فموسى الذى ربّاه جبريل كافر　　وموسى الذى ربّاه فرعون مرسل

If a person is not fortunate in his birth then the minds of those who bring him up are bewildered and those who attach high hopes on him are disillusioned. Lo! The Mūsā whom Jibra'īl brought up became an infidel and the Musa who was raised by the Pharaoh became the Prophet of Allah.

اَلَمْ يَعِدْكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ وَعْدًا حَسَنًا (Did your Lord not promise you a good promise? - 20:86) Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام returned to his people full of sorrow and anger. First of all he reminded them of the promise which Allah had made to them that He would give them a Book for their guidance by adhering to which they could achieve all their worldly and religious objectives. He said that it was for the purpose of receiving the Book that he had started out with them for the mount of Ṭūr.

اَفَطَالَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْعَهْدُ (Did then the time become too long for you? - 20:86) Not much time had elapsed on Allah's promise and it is inconceivable that the Banī Isrā'īl could have forgotten it, or if they remembered it, there was no reason for them to despair of its fulfillment on account of delay, thus providing for themselves justification for the worship of the calf.

اَمْ اَرَدْتُّمْ اَنْ يَّحِلَّ عَلَيْكُمْ غَضَبٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ (Or did you wish that wrath from your Lord befalls you? - 20:86) But since neither of the two eventualities mentioned above could be contemplated, the only conclusion was that

they knowingly and of their own choice invited the wrath of Allah.

قَالُوا مَا أَخْلَفْنَا مَوْعِدَكَ بِمَلْكِنَا (They said, "We did not back out of our own volition, of the promise made to you". - 20:87) The excuse which the Banī Isrā'īl offered for adopting the worship of the calf was that they did not do so of their own choice but merely followed Sāmirī's example.

وَلَٰكِنَّا حُمِّلْنَا أَوْزَارًا مِّن زِينَةِ الْقَوْمِ (But we were burdened with loads from the ornaments of the people. - 20:87) The word أَوْزَار (*awzār*) is the plural of وِزْر (*wizr*) which means "burden". On the Day of Judgment everybody will carry his bundle of sins on his shoulders just as one carries a load; therefore the sin is also termed as '*wizr*' (load). The word زينة means ornament and قَوْم (the people) refers to the Egyptians from whom Banī Isrā'īl had borrowed the ornaments on the pretext of wearing them on their festival day, but which they did not return to their owners and carried with them on their flight from Egypt. These ornaments have been described as أَوْزَار in the sense of "sins" because these were borrowed articles and by not returning them to their lawful owners the Banī Isrā'īl had committed a sin. From the *ḥadīth ul-futun* which has been reproduced in detail in the earlier pages it would appear that Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام warned them about their guilt and directed them to throw all the ornaments in a pit. According to some other versions it was Sāmirī who told them that by holding on to something which did not belong to them they were committing a sin and advised them to throw all the ornaments in a pit, which they did.

When does the property of infidels become lawful for the Muslims?

The non-Muslims who live in a Muslim state and abide by its laws they are known as Dhimmīs ذِمِّي. Such people as well as those infidels who have entered into a treaty with the Muslims remain in full control of their properties and it is not lawful for the Muslims to deprive them of any part of it. However, the properties of those infidels who are neither Dhimmīs nor have any treaty with the Muslims, and who are described by the jurists as كَافِرٌ حَرْبِي (an infidel belonging to enemy country) are lawful for the Muslims.

That being so why did Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام describe the ornaments

borrowed by the Banī Isrā'īl from the Egyptians as a burden, meaning sin, and ordered them to throw everything in a pit? One explanation, which a majority of commentators have given is that the properties of infidels of an enemy state carried the same status as that of spoils of war. The law governing the spoils of war before the promulgation of the Islamic code was that while the Muslims could forcibly dispossess the infidels of their properties, they were forbidden to use them for their personal benefits. All the spoils of war (مال غنيمت) thus acquired were collected and placed on a mound as offering where a fire from the sky - such as lightning - consumed them and this was a sign that Allah approved their war against the unbelievers. On the other hand if the fire did not consume offering (the spoils of war) it was considered that Allah did not approve their war so that the spoils were regarded as inauspicious and nobody ever approached them. Under the Islamic Shari'ah some of the old laws were relaxed and as a result Muslims were permitted to use the spoils of war for their own benefit. A Ḥadīth on this issue appears in Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim. According to the laws, in force then, even if the ornaments borrowed by the Banī Isrā'īl from the Egyptians were considered as spoils of war, those could not have been allowed for the personal benefit of Banī Isrā'īl. That is why everything was thrown into the pit under the orders of Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام.

The research conducted by Imām Muḥammad رحمه الله تعالى on this issue from a Juristic point of view is given in his book سير and its commentary by Sarakhsi. His conclusions are very weighty and closest to the truth, namely that the property of a *ḥarbī* (infidel belonging to an enemy country) cannot be treated as spoils of war in every case. In order to be so treated, and thereby become lawful for the Muslims, it must have been acquired by sword in the course of a proper religious war (*jihād*). On the other hand the property of a *ḥarbī* (a citizen of an enemy state) which has been acquired otherwise than in a religious war cannot be treated as spoils of war. Such properties are however termed as فَيْئ (*fai'*) which can be used lawfully by the Muslims only with the consent of the owner. Taxes imposed by an Islamic state and paid by the infidels voluntarily fall in the definition of *fai'* and their use is permissible even though they have not been acquired in the course of a religious war.

The ornaments borrowed by the Banī Isrā'īl did not fall in either of

these two categories. They could not be described as *fai'* because they were borrowed from the Egyptians who did not transfer their ownership to Banī Isrā'īl, nor could they be considered as spoils of war because they were not taken in the course of a religious war. Thus according to the Islamic Shari'ah the Banī Isrā'īl could not have lawfully used the ornaments for their personal benefit.

It is well-known that when the Holy Prophet ﷺ decided to migrate to Madīnah, he had with him many valuables which the infidels of Arabia had entrusted to him for safe custody because they had full faith in his honesty and integrity and had, in recognition of these qualities, bestowed upon him the title of Amīn (أمِين - honest). He was so solicitous about these deposits that he placed them in the hands of Sayyidnā 'Ali رضي الله عنه and specifically directed him to restore them to their rightful owners before migrating to Madīnah. This clearly shows that it is not lawful for Muslims to appropriate, for their personal use, the valuables belonging to non-Muslims.

The word فَقَذَفْنٰهَا - means, "we cast away the ornaments". According to the *ḥadīth-ul-futūn* (narrated earlier in detail) this was done under the orders of Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام while some other versions say that Sāmirī cajoled the Banī Isrā'īl into throwing the ornaments in the pit. It is quite possible that both these versions are true (as appears below).

فَكَذٰلِكَ اَلْقَى السَّامِرِيُّ (So did throw Sāmirī - 20:87) It appears from the *ḥadīth-ul-futūn* related by Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه (reported in earlier pages) that after the Banī Isrā'īl had thrown away all the ornaments, Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام ordered a big fire to be lit in the pit which melted them and left them in one solid piece. The decision as to the disposal of this precious metal was deferred till the return of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام . After all this had happened Sāmirī approached Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام . He had something in his closed fists and sought permission to throw it in the pit. Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام thinking that he held some ornaments in his fists permitted him to cast them in the pit. Then Sāmirī said, "I will certainly throw it, but first I want you to pray to God that a wish which I have may be granted." Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام, unaware of the evil which he planned, prayed to Allah in his behalf, and Sāmirī opened his hands and threw what he held in the pit. It was not

ornaments but only dust from under the hoof marks of the horse of Jibra'il ﷺ which Sāmirī had collected after he observed that signs of life appeared in the dust under the hoof marks of the horse. Aided by Satan he now wished to put life into a calf by means of this dust. Nevertheless, whether it was the result of the miraculous property of the dust or whether it was a consequence of the prayer of Sayyidnā Hārūn ﷺ in behalf of Sāmirī, the molten lump of gold and silver assumed the form of a calf and started making bovine sounds. There are other traditions also which relate that it was Sāmirī himself who persuaded the Banī Isrā'īl to throw the ornaments in the pit after which he carved the molten metal in the shape of a calf which had no life. He then sprinkled on it the dust from the hoof marks of the mount of Sayyidnā Jibra'il ﷺ and it became a living calf. All these and similar stories which are based on Isrā'īlite traditions have been related by Qurṭubī in his commentary and by other writers as well. These traditions cannot be wholly relied upon, yet at the same time we do not possess sufficient ground to disprove them either.

فَاَخْرَجَ لَهُمْ عِجْلاً جَسَدًا لَّهٗ خُوَارٌ (So he brought forth for them a calf, a body with a lowing sound. - 20:88) Some Commentators maintain that it was only a body without life and that the sound was produced by a special contrivance. But the majority of commentators believe that the calf in fact possessed signs of life.

فَقَالُوْا هٰذَآ اِلٰهُكُمْ وَاِلٰهُ مُوْسٰى فَنَسِيَ (Then they said, "This is your god and the god of Mūsā, and he erred." - 20:88) Having carved a calf which could also produce a sound, Sāmirī and his friends said to the Banī Isrā'īl", "Here is your god and the god of Mūsā. It seems Musa has forgotten, that is why he has gone elsewhere in search of god".

اَفَلاَ يَرَوْنَ اَلاَّ يَرْجِعُ اِلَيْهِمْ قَوْلاً ۙ وَّلاَ يَمْلِكُ لَهُمْ ضَرًّا وَّلاَ نَفْعًا (Do they not then see that it does not respond to them with a word, nor does it have power to harm or benefit them? - 20:89) The excuses put forward by the Banī Isrā'īl before Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ for the evil deeds end with the previous verse. In this verse Allah reminds them of their folly by pointing out to them that even if the calf had life and made bovine noises would that be sufficient reason to adopt it as the object of their worship? They were well aware that it could not answer their prayers nor had it the power to harm them or to benefit them.

Verses 90 - 94

وَلَقَدْ قَالَ لَهُمْ هٰرُوْنُ مِنْ قَبْلُ يٰقَوْمِ اِنَّمَا فُتِنْتُمْ بِهٖ ۚ وَاِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ
الرَّحْمٰنُ فَاتَّبِعُوْنِىْ وَاَطِيْعُوْٓا اَمْرِىْ ﴿٩٠﴾ قَالُوْا لَنْ نَّبْرَحَ عَلَيْهِ
عٰكِفِيْنَ حَتّٰى يَرْجِعَ اِلَيْنَا مُوْسٰى ﴿٩١﴾ قَالَ يٰهٰرُوْنُ مَا مَنَعَكَ اِذْ
رَاَيْتَهُمْ ضَلُّوْٓا ﴿٩٢﴾ اَلَّا تَتَّبِعَنِ ؕ اَفَعَصَيْتَ اَمْرِىْ ﴿٩٣﴾ قَالَ يَا بْنَؤُمَّ
لَاتَاْخُذْ بِلِحْيَتِىْ وَلَا بِرَاْسِىْ ۚ اِنِّىْ خَشِيْتُ اَنْ تَقُوْلَ فَرَّقْتَ بَيْنَ بَنِىْٓ
اِسْرَآءِيْلَ وَلَمْ تَرْقُبْ قَوْلِىْ ﴿٩٤﴾

And Hārūn had already said to them, "O my people, you have only been led astray with it, and your Lord is the Raḥmān (All-Merciful). So follow me and obey my command." [90] **They said, "We will never discontinue staying with it, until Mūsā returns to us."** [91] **He (Mūsā) said, "O Hārūn what did prevent you from following me when you saw them going astray?** [92] **Did you then disobey my command?"** [93] **He said, "O son of my mother, do not hold me by my beard, nor by my head. I feared that you would say, 'You have caused discord among the children of Isrā'īl and did not observe my advice."** [94]

Commentary

When the Banī Isrā'īl were smitten with the mischief of calf-worship Sayyidnā Hārūn ﷺ as the deputy of Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ remonstrated with them but to no avail. They split into three factions. Those who remained loyal to Sayyidnā Hārūn ﷺ and refused to be misled by Sāmirī and who numbered, according to Qurṭubī, twelve thousand. The second faction adopted calf-worship with the reservation that if Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ, on his return, forbade them they would give it up. The third faction consisted of zealots who believed that Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ would approve of their action and would himself join them in calf-worship but even if he did not, they themselves would never give up their new faith. When Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ returned to his people he rebuked them for the mischief they had caused (as related in the earlier

verses). Then he turned to Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام and in a rage seized him by his beard and the hair of his head. He asked him that when the unbelief (كفر) of the Banī Isrā'īl had become obvious, why he did not follow him to the Ṭūr mountain and why he disobeyed his orders.

مَا مَنَعَكَ إِذْ رَأَيْتَهُمْ ضَلُّوٓا أَلَّا تَتَّبِعَنِ (What did prevent you from following me when you saw them going astray. - 20:92) One meaning of *ittibā'* (following) referred to in this verse is that when Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام discovered that the Banī Isrā'īl had strayed from the righteous path, and were beyond recall, he should have abandoned them and joined Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام at the Ṭūr mountain. The other meaning of the word 'follow', as adopted by some commentators is that when the Banī Isrā'īl had forsaken the True Faith, Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام should have fought them as Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام would have done had he been present there. In any case Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام blamed Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام that he should either have fought the Banī Isrā'īl or should have parted company with them and joined Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام at the Ṭūr mountain, and that his continuing to live with them was an unwise act. Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام addressed him as يَا ابْنَ أُمَّ (O my mother's son!) which implied a plea not to judge him too harshly. His excuse was that if he had fought the Banī Isrā'īl or abandoned them with his twelve thousand men, it would have caused discord and strife among them. He said that he had understood the parting advice of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام اُخْلُفْنِىْ فِىْ قَوْمِىْ وَاَصْلِحْ (Take my place among my people and keep things right - 7:142) to mean that he should maintain harmony among the people and prevent differences at all cost. Besides, he said, he had hoped that when he (Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام) would return, he would be able to handle the situation satisfactorily. A further excuse which he offered and which is reported elsewhere in the Qur'ān was اِنَّ الْقَوْمَ اسْتَضْعَفُوْنِىْ وَكَادُوْا يَقْتُلُوْنَنِىْ (7:150) which means that the Banī Isrā'īl have taken me as weak because of the small number of my supporters and were about to kill me. Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام did not press the matter any further with his brother. He then turned to Sāmirī and asked him to explain his conduct in this whole affair. Qur'ān does not indicate whether he accepted the excuses offered by Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام or whether he considered the latter's mistake as one of *ijtihād* (assessment) and dropped the matter.

Differences between two prophets when the opinions of both could be right

In this affair the considered opinion of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, by way of *ijtihād* was that in the situation as it took shape Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام should have totally dissociated himself from the Banī Isrā'īl by removing himself and his followers from their company, and that by continuing to stay with them he had compromised his position. On the other hand Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام felt, by way of *ijtihād*, that such an action would have caused a permanent split among the Banī Isrā'īl and divided them into factions, and since there was hope that they would see the error of their way when Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام returned, he thought it wise to adopt a conciliatory attitude towards them. The purpose of both the prophets was a strict adherence to the commands of Allah and to ensure that the Banī Isrā'īl remained steadfast in the observance of the True Faith and in their belief in the Oneness of Allah. Where they differed, however, was the manner in which these objectives could be achieved whether to make a complete break with the dissidents or to bear with them in the hope that things would improve ultimately. Both these views have merit and it is not possible to pass a firm and final judgment on them. The differences among the jurists based on *ijtihād* are of a similar nature and those holding different opinions cannot be charged of having broken any religious laws. As regards Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام seizing his brother by the hairs, it only shows his anger and frustration with the situation which had developed during his absence, but on hearing his explanation, he prayed to Allah to forgive them both.

Verses 95 - 98

قَالَ فَمَا خَطْبُكَ يٰسَامِرِىُّ ﴿٩٥﴾ قَالَ بَصُرْتُ بِمَا لَمْ يَبْصُرُوْا بِهٖ
فَقَبَضْتُ قَبْضَةً مِّنْ اَثَرِ الرَّسُوْلِ فَنَبَذْتُهَا وَكَذٰلِكَ سَوَّلَتْ لِىْ نَفْسِىْ
﴿٩٦﴾ قَالَ فَاذْهَبْ فَاِنَّ لَكَ فِى الْحَيٰوةِ اَنْ تَقُوْلَ لَا مِسَاسَ ص وَاِنَّ
لَكَ مَوْعِدًا لَّنْ تُخْلَفَهٗ ج وَانْظُرْ اِلٰٓى اِلٰهِكَ الَّذِىْ ظَلْتَ عَلَيْهِ عَاكِفًا ط
لَنُحَرِّقَنَّهٗ ثُمَّ لَنَنْسِفَنَّهٗ فِى الْيَمِّ نَسْفًا ﴿٩٧﴾ اِنَّمَآ اِلٰهُكُمُ اللّٰهُ الَّذِىْ لَآ

إِلٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ۗ وَسِعَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا ﴿٩٨﴾

He (Mūsā) said, "What then is your case, O Sāmirī?" [95] **He said, "I perceived something they perceived not. So I picked up a handful of dust from under the foot of the messenger (the angel). Then, I cast it. And thus my inner self tempted me."** [96]

He (Mūsā) said, "Then go away, for your fate in this life is to say: 'Do not touch me'. And, of course, you have another promise, never to be held back from you. And look at your god to which you stayed devoted. We will certainly burn it, then we will scatter it thoroughly in the sea. [97] **Your God is Allah other than whom there is no god. He encompasses everything with knowledge."** [98]

Commentary

بَصُرْتُ بِمَالَمْ يَبْصُرُوْا بِهٖ (I perceived something they perceived not - 20:96) The reference here is to Jibra'il عليه السلام. There is a tradition that he was present on his horse at the river crossing when, the Banī Isrā'īl having crossed it safely to the other side, the Pharaoh and his army entered the river in pursuit of the fugitives. There is another tradition that after Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام had crossed the river Sayyidnā Jibra'il عليه السلام came to him riding a horse to invite him to go to the Ṭūr mountain. At that time Sāmirī alone, and no one else, saw him and the reason, according to a tradition of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbas رضي الله عنه, was that he was nourished by Jibra'il when his mother had left him in the cave, and knew him well. (Bayān ul-Qur'ān)

فَقَبَضْتُ قَبْضَةً مِّنْ اَثَرِالرَّسُوْلِ (So I picked up a handful of dust from under the foot of the messenger.- 20:96) The word رَسُوْل (messenger) refers to Jibra'īl عليه السلام. The Satan planted the idea in the heart of Sāmirī that the earth under the hoofs of the mount of Jibra'īl عليه السلام must somehow contain signs of life and he should pick up some of it - which he did. According to the tradition of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه

القی فی روعہٖ انّہٗ لا یلقیھا علی شیئ فیقول کن کذا، الاّ کان

(The thought occurred to Sāmirī was that if he sprinkled this earth on something and uttered the words, "You become so and so", it will change its original form and become "so and so.")

It is also related by some exegetes that Sāmirī observed that grass sprouted unfailingly in the earth under the hoofs of the horse of Jibra'īl عليه السلام from which he deduced that it contained traces of life. (كذا فى الكمالين) The same explanation is adopted by Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī on the authority of Tabi'in and majority of commentators, and it includes comments on doubts expressed by some skeptics فجزاه الله خيرالجزاء . (Bayān ul-Qur'ān)

Later on he moulded the ornaments, which the Banī Isrā'īl had thrown in the pit, in the shape of a calf and sprinkled the earth on it. By a miracle of Allah it developed signs of life and could even make a sound. The detailed story of Sāmirī and his calf has been given in (*ḥadīth ul-futūn*) in earlier pages of this volume.

فَإِنَّ لَكَ فِي الْحَيٰوةِ أَنْ تَقُولَ لَامِسَاسَ

For your fate in this life is to say: 'Do not touch me'.- 20:97

The punishment proposed by Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام for Sāmirī in this world was that everyone should sever all contacts with him and not to come near him, and he too was commanded not to touch anyone. Thus he was condemned to spend the rest of his life away from all social contacts - like a wild animal. Whether this punishment was awarded to him by Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام by means of a law which was binding on Sāmirī as well as on the Banī Isrā'īl, or whether Sāmirī was smitten by some peculiar affliction which deterred people from making any physical contact with him, is not known. Some traditions have it that Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام had laid a curse on Sāmirī so that if anyone touched him then both the parties came down with fever (Ma'ālim). Thus he spent all his life hiding from people and whenever he saw someone approaching him, he would call out لَامِسَاسَ (Don't touch me). It is mentioned in Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī on the authority of Al-Baḥr ul-Muḥīṭ that initially Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام had intended to execute Sāmirī but Allah stopped him because Sāmirī was a very generous person and helped people who were in distress.

The word 'لَنُحَرِّقَنَّهُ' means "we will certainly burn it". Here the question arises: how could the calf which was carved from gold and silver be burnt, because these metals when subjected to extreme heat are melted but are not reduced to ashes. Several possibilities have been advanced. The first is that after signs of life appeared in it, the calf ceased to be a figure of gold

and silver and became an animal of flesh and blood in which case it could be slaughtered and burnt. The second explanation is that it could be filed with a rasp into very minute particles of dust (Ad- Dur al-Manthūr). A third explanation is that it could be burnt by means of some chemical device (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī). There is yet a fourth explanation, namely that the calf could be burnt by some miracle (Bayān ul-Qur'ān).

Verses 99 - 114

كَذٰلِكَ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ اَنْبَآءِ مَا قَدْ سَبَقَ ۚ وَقَدْ اٰتَيْنٰكَ مِنْ لَّدُنَّا
ذِكْرًا ﴿٩٩﴾ۚۖ مَنْ اَعْرَضَ عَنْهُ فَاِنَّهٗ يَحْمِلُ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ وِزْرًا ﴿١٠٠﴾ۙ
خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهِ ؕ وَسَآءَ لَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ حِمْلًا ﴿١٠١﴾ۙ يَوْمَ يُنْفَخُ فِى
الصُّوْرِ وَنَحْشُرُ الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ يَوْمَئِذٍ زُرْقًا ﴿١٠٢﴾ۚۖ يَّتَخَافَتُوْنَ بَيْنَهُمْ اِنْ
لَّبِثْتُمْ اِلَّا عَشْرًا ﴿١٠٣﴾ نَحْنُ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَقُوْلُوْنَ اِذْ يَقُوْلُ اَمْثَلُهُمْ
طَرِيْقَةً اِنْ لَّبِثْتُمْ اِلَّا يَوْمًا ﴿١٠٤﴾ع وَيَسْئَلُوْنَكَ عَنِ الْجِبَالِ فَقُلْ
يَنْسِفُهَا رَبِّىْ نَسْفًا ﴿١٠٥﴾ۙ فَيَذَرُهَا قَاعًا صَفْصَفًا ﴿١٠٦﴾ۙ لَّا تَرٰى فِيْهَا
عِوَجًا وَّلَآ اَمْتًا ﴿١٠٧﴾ؕ يَوْمَئِذٍ يَّتَّبِعُوْنَ الدَّاعِىَ لَا عِوَجَ لَهٗ ۚ وَ
خَشَعَتِ الْاَصْوَاتُ لِلرَّحْمٰنِ فَلَا تَسْمَعُ اِلَّا هَمْسًا ﴿١٠٨﴾ يَوْمَئِذٍ لَّا
تَنْفَعُ الشَّفَاعَةُ اِلَّا مَنْ اَذِنَ لَهُ الرَّحْمٰنُ وَرَضِىَ لَهٗ قَوْلًا ﴿١٠٩﴾ يَعْلَمُ
مَا بَيْنَ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ وَلَا يُحِيْطُوْنَ بِهٖ عِلْمًا ﴿١١٠﴾ وَعَنَتِ
الْوُجُوْهُ لِلْحَيِّ الْقَيُّوْمِ ؕ وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ حَمَلَ ظُلْمًا ﴿١١١﴾ وَمَنْ
يَّعْمَلْ مِنَ الصّٰلِحٰتِ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَا يَخٰفُ ظُلْمًا وَّلَا هَضْمًا
﴿١١٢﴾ وَكَذٰلِكَ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ قُرْاٰنًا عَرَبِيًّا وَّصَرَّفْنَا فِيْهِ مِنَ الْوَعِيْدِ لَعَلَّهُمْ
يَتَّقُوْنَ اَوْ يُحْدِثُ لَهُمْ ذِكْرًا ﴿١١٣﴾ فَتَعٰلَى اللّٰهُ الْمَلِكُ الْحَقُّ ۚ وَلَا
تَعْجَلْ بِالْقُرْاٰنِ مِنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ يُّقْضٰۤى اِلَيْكَ وَحْيُهٗ ۫ وَقُلْ رَّبِّ زِدْنِىْ

عِلْمًا ﴿١١٤﴾

Thus We narrate to you certain events of what has passed, and We have given to you, from Ourself, a (book of) advice. [99] **Whoever turns away from it shall certainly bear a heavy burden on the Doomsday,** [100] **all such people living under it forever. And how evil for them is that burden on the Doomsday!** [101] **The Day when the Horn (Ṣūr) will be blown and We shall gather them together that day, while turned blue,** [102] **whispering among themselves, "You did not remain (in graves) more than ten (days)".** [103] **We very well know what they say, when the best of them in his ways will say, "You did not remain more than a day."** [104]

And they ask you about the mountains. So, you say, "My Lord will blow them up totally (as dust), [105] **then will turn them into a levelled plain** [106] **in which you will see neither a curve nor a mound.** [107]

That day they will follow the caller, having no crookedness. And the voices will turn low in awe for the Raḥmān (All-Merciful). So, you will hear not but whispering. [108]

That day no intercession will be of any use to anyone, except the one whom the Raḥmān (All-Merciful) has permitted and was pleased with his word. [109] **He knows what is in front of them and what is behind them, and they do not encompass Him in (their) knowledge.** [110]

And all faces will be humbled before the Ever-Alive, the All-Sustaining. And the loser is the one who bears (the burden of his) transgression. [111] **And whoever does acts from righteous deeds, while he is a believer, shall fear neither injustice nor curtailment (of his rewards).** [112]

And in this way We have sent it down to you, an Arabic Qur'ān, and have detailed therein some warnings repeatedly, so that they may be fearful or it may produce a lesson for them. [113] **So High above all is Allah, the King, the True.**

And do not hasten with (reciting) the Qur'ān before its revelation to you is concluded, and say, "My Lord, improve me in knowledge." [114]

Commentary

وَقَدْ اٰتَيْنٰكَ مِنْ لَّدُنَّا ذِكْرًا (And We have given to you, from Ourself, a (book of) advice. - 20:99) According to a majority of commentators the word ذِكْر (advice) in the present context means the Qur'ān.

مَنْ اَعْرَضَ عَنْهُ فَاِنَّهٗ يَحْمِلُ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ وِزْرًا (Whoever turns away from it shall certainly bear a heavy burden on the Doomsday - 20:100) Turning aside from the Qur'ān can take different forms: not paying proper attention and respect when it is being recited; showing scant desire to learn to read it or to comprehend its meaning, or reading it incorrectly without regard to correct pronunciation etc.; reading it without full concentration; reading it not to win God's goodwill but to attain worldly rewards such as wealth and fame. Likewise not striving to comprehend the laws laid down by the Qur'ān or, having understood them, not complying with them or acting in their defiance are extreme forms of disregard for the Qur'ān. Any neglect of the rights and claims of the Qur'ān is a great sin and the guilty person will bear it on his head on the Day of Judgment in the shape of a heavy load. It has been related in several traditions that the evil deeds and the sins which a person has committed in his life time will be placed on his head in the shape of a heavy burden on the Day of Resurrection.

يُنْفَخُ فِي الصُّوْرِ (The Day when the Horn [Sūr] will be blown - 20:102) According to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar رضي الله عنه, a Bedouin asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ about صُوْر (the Horn) to which he replied that it is something like a horn which will be blown, meaning thereby that when the angel will blow into it all those who had lain dead for centuries will return to life. Only Allah knows the true nature of the Ṣūr (the Horn).

وَلَا تَعْجَلْ بِالْقُرْاٰنِ مِنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ يُّقْضٰٓى اِلَيْكَ وَحْيُهٗ (And do not hasten with (reciting) the Qur'an before its revelation is concluded - 20: 114.) It has been stated in Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه that in the early days of revelation when angel Jibra'īl عليه السلام brought a Qur'ānic verse and recited it to the Holy Prophet ﷺ , the latter would try to repeat it after him, lest it escapes from his memory. He had, thus, to make a double effort, i.e. to listen to and understand the meaning of the Qur'ānic verses

while they were being recited by Jibra'il عليه السلام and also to repeat them in order to commit them to memory. In this verse as well as in the verse لَاتُحَرِّكْ بِهٖ لِسَانَكَ occurring in Surah قِيَامَةُ (75:16) Allah lightened this burden from the Holy Prophet ﷺ by assuring him that he need not worry himself about memorizing the Qur'ānic verses which were revealed to him because He (Allah) would make it possible for him to remember them without any effort on his part. All that he was directed to do was that he should keep praying, رَبِّ زِدْنِيْ عِلْمًا (My Lord, improve me in knowledge). This comprehensive prayer includes a plea for memorizing that portion of the Qur'ān which had already been revealed to him and a desire for what remained of it and for the ability to understand its true meaning.

Verses 115 - 127

وَلَقَدْ عَهِدْنَآ اِلٰٓى اٰدَمَ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَنَسِىَ وَلَمْ نَجِدْ لَهٗ عَزْمًا ﴿۱۱۵﴾ وَاِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ اسْجُدُوْا لِاٰدَمَ فَسَجَدُوْٓا اِلَّآ اِبْلِيْسَ ؕ اَبٰى ﴿۱۱۶﴾ فَقُلْنَا يٰٓاٰدَمُ اِنَّ هٰذَا عَدُوٌّ لَّكَ وَلِزَوْجِكَ فَلَا يُخْرِجَنَّكُمَا مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ فَتَشْقٰى ﴿۱۱۷﴾ اِنَّ لَكَ اَلَّا تَجُوْعَ فِيْهَا وَلَا تَعْرٰى ﴿۱۱۸﴾ وَاَنَّكَ لَا تَظْمَؤُا فِيْهَا وَلَا تَضْحٰى ﴿۱۱۹﴾ فَوَسْوَسَ اِلَيْهِ الشَّيْطٰنُ قَالَ يٰٓاٰدَمُ هَلْ اَدُلُّكَ عَلٰى شَجَرَةِ الْخُلْدِ وَ مُلْكٍ لَّا يَبْلٰى ﴿۱۲۰﴾ فَاَكَلَا مِنْهَا فَبَدَتْ لَهُمَا سَوْاٰتُهُمَا وَطَفِقَا يَخْصِفٰنِ عَلَيْهِمَا مِنْ وَّرَقِ الْجَنَّةِ ز وَعَصٰٓى اٰدَمُ رَبَّهٗ فَغَوٰى ﴿۱۲۱﴾ ثُمَّ اجْتَبٰهُ رَبُّهٗ فَتَابَ عَلَيْهِ وَهَدٰى ﴿۱۲۲﴾ قَالَ اهْبِطَا مِنْهَا جَمِيْعًا ۢ بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ ۚ فَاِمَّا يَاْتِيَنَّكُمْ مِّنِّىْ هُدًى ۙ فَمَنِ اتَّبَعَ هُدَاىَ فَلَا يَضِلُّ وَلَا يَشْقٰى ﴿۱۲۳﴾ وَمَنْ اَعْرَضَ عَنْ ذِكْرِىْ فَاِنَّ لَهٗ مَعِيْشَةً ضَنْكًا وَّنَحْشُرُهٗ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ اَعْمٰى ﴿۱۲۴﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ لِمَ حَشَرْتَنِىْٓ اَعْمٰى وَقَدْ كُنْتُ بَصِيْرًا ﴿۱۲۵﴾ قَالَ كَذٰلِكَ اَتَتْكَ اٰيٰتُنَا فَنَسِيْتَهَا ۚ وَكَذٰلِكَ الْيَوْمَ تُنْسٰى ﴿۱۲۶﴾ وَكَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِىْ

مَنْ اَسْرَفَ وَلَمْ يُؤْمِنْۢ بِاٰيٰتِ رَبِّهٖ وَلَعَذَابُ الْاٰخِرَةِ اَشَدُّ وَاَبْقٰى

﴿١٢٧﴾

And earlier We had given a directive to 'Ādam, then he forgot, and We did not find in him a firm resolve. [115]

And when We said to the angels, "Prostrate before 'Ādam". So, they prostrated, all but Iblīs who refused. [116] **So, We said "O 'Ādam, this is an enemy to you and to your wife. So let him not expel you from Paradise, lest you get into trouble.** [117] **Here you are privileged that you will not be hungry nor will you be unclad,** [118] **and you will not be thirsty, nor will you be exposed to sun."** [119]

Then the Satan instigated him. He said, "O 'Ādam, shall I guide you to the tree of eternity and to an empire that does not decay?" [120]

So, both of them ('Ādam and Eve) ate from it, and their parts of shame were exposed to them, and they started stitching on themselves some of the leaves of Paradise. And 'Ādam disobeyed his Lord, and erred. [121] **Thereafter his Lord chose him. So He accepted his repentance and gave (him) guidance.** [122] **He said, "(O 'Ādam and Eve) Go down from here, all of you, some of you enemies of some. Then, should some guidance come to you from Me, the one who follows My guidance shall not go astray, nor shall he be in trouble.** [123]**And whoever turns away from My message shall have a straitened life, and We shall raise him blind on the Day of Judgment."** [124] **He will say, "My Lord, why did you raise me blind while I was sighted?"** [125] **He will say, "Like this Our signs came to you and you had ignored them. And in the same way you will be ignored today."** [126]

And thus We recompense him who exceeds the limits and does not believe in the signs of his Lord. And certainly the punishment of the Hereafter is more severe and more lasting. [127]

Commentary

And now we come to the story of Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام which has

been related earlier in Sūrah Al-Baqarah and Al-A'rāf and partly in Sūrah Ḥijr and Al-Kahf, and will also appear later in Sūrah Ṣād. The link of the story with the preceding verses has been variously explained by the commentators. The most obvious of these explanations is the one which refers to an earlier verse كَذٰلِكَ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ اَنْبَاۤءِ مَا قَدْ سَبَقَ (Thus We narrate to you certain events of what has passed- 20:99) in which Allah informed the Holy Prophet ﷺ that the stories of the past prophets were revealed to him as evidence and confirmation of his own prophethood and in order that his own followers be warned against committing the sins for which the earlier generations were punished. The first, and in some ways, the most instructive story was that of Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام in which there was a clear warning for the followers of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that Satan was an old enemy of mankind who by his flattery and show of sympathy tricked Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام into committing an error for which both he and his wife were expelled from Paradise and the clothes which they wore there were taken away from them. Later their prayer for forgiveness was accepted by Allah and Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام was elevated to the status of prophethood.

وَلَقَدْ عَهِدْنَاۤ اِلٰۤى اٰدَمَ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَنَسِىَ وَلَمْ نَجِدْ لَهٗ عَزْمًا (And earlier We had given a directive to 'Ādam, then he forgot, and We did not find in him a firm resolve. - 20:115) Here the word عَهِدْنَا has been used in the sense of اَمَرْنَا or وَصَّيْنَا (Al-Bahr ul-Muḥīṭ), and the meaning of the verse is that long before the time of the Holy Prophet ﷺ Allah had assigned a particular tree and enjoined upon Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام to shun it and not to eat any yield from it, and that barring this tree and its yields he was free to use the fruits of all the trees and all the other gifts from Allah which were abundantly available in Paradise. And, as will follow, he was also warned that the Satan was his enemy against whose wiles he must at all times remain on his guard and that any lapse on his part would land him in serious trouble. But he forgot and was found wanting in resolution. Here two words have been used, namely نِسْيَان (*nisyān*) which means to forget or to be unmindful, the other word is عَزْم (*'azm*) which means to be resolute in the performance of some task. In order to fully comprehend the meanings of these two words it is well to bear in mind that Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام was one of those prophets who were endowed by Allah with constancy and determination, and that prophets, by virtue of their status

are infallible.

The first word suggests that Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام was overtaken by نِسيَان (forgetting) and since forgetting something is beyond one's control and volition it does not constitute sin. There is a Ḥadīth which says رفع عن امّتی الخطأ والنسیان (My followers will not be held liable for mistakes and unmindfulness). Then there is the general pronouncement in the Qur'ān لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللّٰهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا (Allah does not obligate anyone beyond his capacity - 2:286). At the same time it has to be remembered that there are ways and means which if adopted will prevent people from forgetting things. And since the prophets stand high in the favour of Allah a special responsibility rests upon them to adopt such ways and means to avoid even mistakes and refrain even from forgetting something, therefore, they may well be held liable for not using the means which were available to them in order to avoid forgetfulness. The well known Ṣūfī Junaid Al-Baghdadi رحمه الله تعالى has expressed this idea in the following words حَسَنات الابرار سیّئات المقرّبین (The good deeds of ordinary virtuous men are often regarded as sinful and evil when performed by those who stand high in Allah's favour).

The episode under reference occurred before Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام was granted prophethood and according to some Sunni Scholars sins committed in the prior period do not militate against the concept of the prophet's immunity from sin. Also it was a case of forgetfulness which cannot be considered as a sin, but in view of the high position of Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام as a prophet of Allah this too was regarded as a lapse for which he was admonished and as a warning to him his lapse was described as عِصْيَان (Disobedience).

The second word is *'azm* (firm resolve) and the same verse says that Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام was found wanting in *'azm*. As a matter of fact he was fully determined to comply with the commands of Allah but the intrigues of Satan weakened his resolve and unmindfulness made him lose his grip on it.

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ (And when We said to angels - 20:116)Here is a brief mention of the command which, after the creation of Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام, Allah gave to all the angels including Iblīs (Satan) who at that time lived in the Paradise with them, to prostrate to him. All the angels obeyed

but Satan refused. In his haughtiness he claimed that he was made of fire while Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام was made of clay, and fire being superior to clay, he could not be expected to prostrate to the latter. As a punishment for his arrogance and defiance of the command of Allah he was accursed and driven from Paradise while all the gates of Paradise were opened wide for Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام and Sayyidah Ḥawwā' عليها السلام to enjoy the fruits of its gardens and all the blessings of Allah at their will. However, there was one particular tree which they were told to shun in all circumstances and never to partake of any of its produce. This story has been related in Sūrah Al-Baqarah and Al-A'rāf. Instead of repeating it here, Allah has mentioned his directives given to Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام to comply with His commands to the fullest extent. Referring to the rebellious conduct of Satan He reminds Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام that the former is his enemy and that both he himself and his wife should at all times be on their guard against his deceptions. But if they succumbed to his tricks and became heedless of the commands of Allah then they would be expelled from Paradise and face distress (فَلَا يُخْرِجَنَّكُمَا مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ فَتَشْقٰى). The word تَشْقٰى (*tashqā*) is derived from شَقَاوَة (*shaqāwah*) which has two meanings namely distress or trouble in the Hereafter and distress in this world. Here the word has obviously been used in the second meaning because it cannot be used in its first meaning even for pious Muslims, leave alone the prophets. Commentators have explained this word in the sentence هو ان ياكل من كدّ يديه (He will have to earn his living by the labour of his hands). (Qurṭubī) In the present context the second meaning of the word appears more appropriate because in the following verse reference has been made to the four basic needs of human life, namely food, water, clothes and shelter which are freely available in Paradise without any effort and toil. This verse also contains a hint to Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام that if he ever was expelled from Paradise, He would forfeit all these gifts. It is worth noting that here only those gifts have been mentioned which are basic to human life, to the exclusion of the other major rewards and comforts which are available in Paradise and the intention is to warn Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام that one wrong step would deprive him of all these benefits, which he would have to earn for himself with physical labour and by the sweat of his brow. Most commentators have adopted this very meaning of the word فَتَشْقٰى . (lest you get into trouble) Imām Qurṭubī رحمه الله تعالى has also recorded that when Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام came down to

the earth, Jibra'īl عليه السلام gave him some grains of wheat and rice and taught him how to plant the seeds, harvest the ripe crop, grind the grain and prepare bread from it. Finally when all the stages were completed and Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام sat down to eat, the bread slipped out of his hand and rolled down the hill. Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام went after it and retrieved it with great exertion. Thereupon Jibra'īl عليه السلام told Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام that on the earth he and his descendants would have to work very hard in order to earn their livelihood. (Qurṭubī)

The responsibility for providing the essential needs of a wife rests on her husband

Early in this verse when Allah spoke to Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام He included Sayyidah Ḥawwa' also in His address عَدُوٌّ لَّكَ وَلِزَوْجِكَ فَلَا يُخْرِجَنَّكُمَا مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ (Satan is your enemy and the enemy of your wife. So you both must be very careful so let him not expel you from Paradise - 20:117). But towards the end of the verse word فَتَشْقَىٰ (lest you get into trouble) is used in the singular and not in dual form. From this Imām Qurṭubī has deduced the rule that a husband is responsible for meeting the essential needs of his wife and that any physical labour which is necessary to meet that responsibility must be provided by the husband alone. The use of the word فَتَشْقَىٰ in second person singular is a pointer to Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام that if they were sent to the earth the onus of earning a livelihood for himself and Sayyidah Ḥawwā' عليها السلام will fall on him alone.

Only four things fall within the definition of obligatory maintenance.

Qurṭubī says that this verse clearly indicates that there are four things only which a husband must provide for his wife namely food, water, clothes and shelter. Anything else which he gives her will be regarded as gift, but is not binding on him. From this it has also been deduced that wherever Islamic law makes a person responsible for the maintenance of somebody else (such as sick and needy parents whose maintenance is the responsibility of the children), it is obligatory on him to provide only these four things.

إِنَّ لَكَ أَلَّا تَجُوعَ فِيهَا وَلَا تَعْرَىٰ (Here you are privileged that you will not be hungry nor will you be unclad, and you will not be thirsty, nor will you be exposed to sun - 118, 119.) Four things needed for the existence of life will

be provided in Paradise without asking or putting in any labour. One should not doubt that good taste of food will not be enjoyed because of the absence of hunger in Paradise. Similarly, it is incorrect to assume that one would not enjoy drinking cold water in Paradise because of lack of thirst. The reality is that hunger and thirst would not be felt in Paradise to the extent of feeling any difficulty. The food will be made available as and when one would desire, and the cold water will be provided immediately when one would like to drink. In fact everything will be provided the moment one would desire.

فَوَسْوَسَ اِلَيْهِ الشَّيْطٰنُ (الى قوله) وَعَصٰى اٰدَمُ رَبَّهٗ فَغَوٰى (Then the Satan instigated him... And 'Ādam disobeyed his Lord and erred - 120, 121.) Here it is pertinent to ask that when Allah had specifically told Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام and Sayyidah Ḥawwā' عليها السلام to abstain from a particular tree or to eat any part of its yield, and had also warned them to beware of Satan's machinations who was their sworn enemy who would do his best to seduce them and thus cause their expulsion from Paradise, why then, despite all the warnings and admonitions, did Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام let himself fall into the trap laid out for him by the Satan. His action clearly constituted disobedience of the commands of Allah and were, therefore, acts of sin. There is consensus among scholars that the prophets of Allah are immune from all sins - minor or major, and Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام was a prophet of Allah! So how may one explain his action of eating the fruit of the forbidden tree when Allah had warned him in such clear terms? An answer to all these questions will be found in the commentary of Sūrah Al-Baqarah which also explains the use of the words عَصٰى (to disobey) and غَوٰى (to err) in reference to Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام . According to the divine Islamic law the action of Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام did not constitute a sin but because he was a prophet of Allah and in His high favour therefore this minor lapse on his part has been described as عِصْيَان (disobedience) for which he was admonished by Allah. A further point here is that the word غَوٰى has two meanings: One is "to be deprived" and the other is "to err", or "to go astray". Al-Qushairi and Al-Qurṭubī have adopted the first meaning of the word and have explained this verse by saying that as a punishment for his lapse Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام was deprived of the comforts which were available to him in the Paradise and as a result his life became harsh and bitter.

It is incumbent on Muslims to show reverence to the prophets of Allah when referring to them

Qāḍī Abū Bakr Ibn Al-'Arabi رحمه الله تعالى when discussing the word عَصٰى (disobeyed) etc. in reference to Sayyidnā 'Ādam ﷺ in his book Aḥkām-ul-Qur'ān has made an important observation which is reproduced below in his own words:

لايجوز لاحدنا اليوم ان يخبر بذلك عن ادم الاّ اذا ذكرناه فى اثناء قوله تعالٰى عنه اوقول نبيّه' فامّا ان يبتدئ ذلك من قبل نفسه فليس بجائز لنا فى ابائنا الادنين الينا المماثلين لنا فكيف فى ابينا الاقدم الاعظم الاكرم النّبى المقدّم الذى عذره الله سبحانه و تعالٰى وتاب عليه وغفرله (تفسير قرطبى و ذكره فى البحر المحيط ايضاً)

Today it is not permissible for any of us to use the word عِصْيَان (disobedience) in relation to Sayyidnā 'Ādam ﷺ except when it has been used with reference to this verse or to a Ḥadīth of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. When indeed it is not desirable to use this word in relation to our own not-too-distant ancestors, who were like us, how can it be permissible in relation to Sayyidnā 'Ādam ﷺ who is the father of all mankind and more deserving of respect than our own ancestors? Besides he is a revered prophet of Allah whose excuse He accepted and forgave him for his lapse. For such a person the use of the word عصيان (disobedience) is totally forbidden.

The same views have been expressed by Qushairi Abū Naṣr.

The words اِهْبِطَا مِنْهَا جَمِيْعًا (123) mean "both of you go down together". This command can be in reference to Sayyidnā 'Ādam ﷺ and the Satan in which case the meaning of the phrase بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ (some of you enemies of some - 123) is obvious, namely that the two of them will remain enemies in the world also. However if it is argued that the Satan had already been expelled from Paradise long before these events occurred, then it would be correct to assume that these words have been addressed to Sayyidnā 'Ādam ﷺ and Sayyidah Ḥawwā' عليها السلام meaning thereby that their children would cherish hostile feelings towards one another and mutual hostility among the children embitters the lives of the parents.

وَمَنْ اَعْرَضَ عَنْ ذِكْرِىْ (And whoever turns away from My message - 20:124.) Here the word can refer both to the Qur'ān and the Holy Prophet ﷺ as has been mentioned in other verses ذِكْرًا رَّسُوْلاً (65:10). In both cases the

meaning would be that if anyone fails in his duty to recite the Qur'ān or to comply with its commands, or if he fails to submit to the authority of the Holy Prophet ﷺ then as punishment he would be condemned to a harsh and rigorous life in this world and would be raised blind on the Day of Resurrection.

The truth about the life of infidels and evil-doers being harsh in this world

Here one may ask that a life of penury and destitution in this world is not for the infidels and wicked people only but it afflicts good and pious people also. Indeed the prophets of Allah عليهم السلام have to endure the greatest misfortunes and calamities in their worldly life. Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī and all other books of Ḥadīth contain a tradition in which, on the authority of Sa'd رضي الله عنه and others, the Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said that the severest trials and tribulations are suffered by the prophets and in the case of the pious people those who enjoy a higher rank in the hierarchy are the ones who will get a greater share of misfortunes. On the other hand the infidels and the evildoers enjoy a life of comfort and affluence. Therefore the words of the Qur'ān that such people would be condemned to a harsh and rigorous life can refer to the life in the Hereafter (آخرت) only, because experience shows that they have, in this world, all the comforts of life.

The answer to the question posed above is that the punishment which the evil-doers will suffer in this world refers to the chastisement which awaits them in the grave where their existence will be made miserable and beyond endurance. Their graves will be their abodes and will squeeze them so tight that their graves will crack. There is a tradition in Musnād al-Bazzār on the authority of Sayyidnā Abu Hurairah رضي الله عنه that the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself stated that the words مَعِيشَةً ضَنكًا (straitened life) occurring in this verse (124) refer to the existence in the grave. (Maẓharī)

Another interpretation given to these words by Sayyidnā Sa'īd ibn Jubair رضي الله عنه is that these people will be deprived of the gift of contentment which will result in an overpowering greed for worldly goods (Maẓharī) but no amount of wealth will ever give them peace and content. The constant desire to augment their worldly possessions and the fear of any decrease in their size will always keep them anxious and uneasy. It

is generally observed that the wealthy people who have all the means of comfort at their disposal actually are unable to enjoy comfort themselves, because comfort cannot be achieved without content and peace of mind.

Verses 128 - 135

اَفَلَمْ يَهْدِ لَهُمْ كَمْ اَهْلَكْنَا قَبْلَهُمْ مِّنَ الْقُرُوْنِ يَمْشُوْنَ فِىْ مَسٰكِنِهِمْ ؕ
اِنَّ فِىْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّاُولِى النُّهٰى ﴿١٢٨﴾ وَلَوْ لَا كَلِمَةٌ سَبَقَتْ مِنْ
رَّبِّكَ لَكَانَ لِزَامًا وَّاَجَلٌ مُّسَمًّى ﴿١٢٩﴾ فَاصْبِرْ عَلٰى مَا يَقُوْلُوْنَ وَ
سَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ قَبْلَ طُلُوْعِ الشَّمْسِ وَقَبْلَ غُرُوْبِهَا ۚ وَمِنْ اٰنَآئِ
الَّيْلِ فَسَبِّحْ وَاَطْرَافَ النَّهَارِ لَعَلَّكَ تَرْضٰى ﴿١٣٠﴾ وَلَا تَمُدَّنَّ عَيْنَيْكَ
اِلٰى مَا مَتَّعْنَا بِهٖٓ اَزْوَاجًا مِّنْهُمْ زَهْرَةَ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ۙ لِنَفْتِنَهُمْ فِيْهِ ؕ
وَرِزْقُ رَبِّكَ خَيْرٌ وَّاَبْقٰى ﴿١٣١﴾ وَاْمُرْ اَهْلَكَ بِالصَّلٰوةِ وَاصْطَبِرْ
عَلَيْهَا ؕ لَا نَسْئَلُكَ رِزْقًا ؕ نَحْنُ نَرْزُقُكَ ؕ وَالْعَاقِبَةُ لِلتَّقْوٰى ﴿١٣٢﴾ وَ
قَالُوْا لَوْلَا يَاْتِيْنَا بِاٰيَةٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّهٖ ؕ اَوَلَمْ تَاْتِهِمْ بَيِّنَةُ مَا فِى الصُّحُفِ
الْاُوْلٰى ﴿١٣٣﴾ وَلَوْ اَنَّآ اَهْلَكْنٰهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ مِّنْ قَبْلِهٖ لَقَالُوْا رَبَّنَا لَوْلَآ
اَرْسَلْتَ اِلَيْنَا رَسُوْلًا فَنَتَّبِعَ اٰيٰتِكَ مِنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ نَّذِلَّ وَ نَخْزٰى ﴿١٣٤﴾
قُلْ كُلٌّ مُّتَرَبِّصٌ فَتَرَبَّصُوْا ۚ فَسَتَعْلَمُوْنَ مَنْ اَصْحٰبُ الصِّرَاطِ
السَّوِيِّ وَمَنِ اهْتَدٰى ﴿١٣٥﴾

Did it give them no guidance, as to how many generations We have destroyed before them who used to walk in their dwellings? Surely, in this there are signs for the people of understanding. [128] **And had there not been a word from your Lord that had come earlier, and an appointed time, it (the punishment) would have been inevitable.** [129]

So, (O messenger) endure what they say and proclaim the purity and praise of your Lord before the sun rises

and before it sets. And in some hours of night proclaim His purity, as well as at the edges of the day, so that you may be pleased. [130]

And never stretch your eyes towards what we have given to groups of them to enjoy, the glamor of the worldly life, so that We put them to test thereby. And the bounty of your Lord is better and lasting. [131]

And bid your family to perform Ṣalāh and adhere to it yourself. We ask no provision from you. We give provision to you. And the end is in favour of Taqwā. [132]

And they said, "Why does he not bring to us sign from his Lord?" Has there not come to them the manifestation of that which was contained in the earlier scriptures? [133] **And if We had destroyed them with a punishment before it, they would have said, "Our Lord, why did you not send a messenger to us, so that we might have followed Your signs before we were humiliated and put to disgrace?"** [134]

Say, "Everyone is waiting. So wait, then you will know who are the people of the straight path and who has guidance. [135]

Commentary

The word هُدٰى (guidance) implied in the first sentence of verse 128 can refer either to the Qur'ān or to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the meaning would be, "Did not the Qur'ān or the Holy Prophet ﷺ direct them i.e. the people of Makkah and tell them about the nations and the societies who were destroyed because they disobeyed the commands of Allah and turned away from the message brought to them by the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and whose houses and lands are now occupied by them?" It is also possible that the word هُدٰى (guidance) may refer to God in which case the meaning would be "Did God not direct."

فَاصْبِرْ عَلٰى مَايَقُوْلُوْنَ (So endure what they say - 20:130) The people of Makkah offered various excuses to justify their rejection of the religion brought to them by the Holy Prophet ﷺ and these included derogatory remarks against his person also, such as branding him as a sorcerer, a poet or even an untruthful person. The Qur'ān suggested here two

weapons to combat the torments aimed at him by the infidels of Makkah. One was to show patience and forbearance in the face of all provocation, and the other was to devote himself wholeheartedly to prayers, as the words وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ (and proclaim the purity of your Lord) suggest.

Patience and prayers are the only remedies against aggressive hostility

Everyone in this world, whether he is big or small, good or bad, has enemies and these enemies, however weak and feeble they may be, can do harm to their opponents. If they are not strong enough, they will not hesitate to stab them in the back, and failing everything else they will use abusive language which is equally hurtful. Therefore everybody has to be on his guard to protect himself from the hostile designs of his enemies. The Qur'ān has prescribed two very effective tools for use in such a situation. One is patience, forbearance and to eschew all thoughts of revenge, while the other is to occupy oneself in prayers and invocation of Allah. A person whose thoughts are full of revenge is often unable to exact it from his enemy despite his power and influence and is consumed with chagrin and frustration. On the other hand a person who devotes himself to prayers finds solace in the belief that nobody can harm him without the will of Allah and that whatever Allah wills has a hidden purpose behind it. This belief not only affords him satisfaction but also frees his mind from all thoughts of anger and revenge resulting from the hostile acts of his enemies. The words لَعَلَّكَ تَرْضٰى (So that you may be pleased) occurring at the end of the verse mean that "If you follow this advice, you will be able to lead a happy and contented life".

وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ (And proclaim the purity and praise of your Lord - 20:130) Here the direction of proclaiming Allah's purity is followed by the direction of proclaiming His praise. It implies an indication that when a person is given *taufiq* to remember Allah by performing *dhikr* or any other form of worship, it should not make him proud of it. Instead, he should praise Allah, because without His *taufiq* (facilitation) he could not perform that worship. Then, proclaiming the purity and praise of Allah may mean invocation of Allah and His praise, and they may also mean the prescribed prayers. The subsequent fixed times which have been mentioned obviously refer to prayer timings. Thus قَبْلَ طُلُوْعِ الشَّمْسِ (before the sunrise) means early morning (*fajr*) prayer قَبْلَ غُرُوْبِهَا (before it sets)

means midday prayers (*ẓuhr*) and afternoon prayers (*'aṣr*) while وَمِنْ اٰنَآئِ الَّيْلِ (and in some hours of night) means all prayers after sunset i.e. *maghrib, 'ishā'* and *tahajjud*. The words اَطْرَافَ النَّهَارِ (the edges of the day) are intended to put additional emphasis on Fajr and Maghrib prayers.

Worldly wealth is a fleeting thing and is not an evidence of God's favour, and for good Muslims it is a danger signal

وَلَا تَمُدَّنَّ عَيْنَيْكَ (And never stretch your eyes - 20:13) The words are addressed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and are intended to provide guidance to his followers. They are told not to cast covetous eyes at the splendor and glitter of those who revel in the enjoyment of worldly pleasures, because all these things are fleeting and transient while the grace and blessings bestowed upon the Holy Prophet ﷺ and through him upon his followers are everlasting and much more desirable than worldly luxuries.

People have always wondered at the wealth and prosperity of the infidels and evil doers despite their being loathsome and contemptible in the eyes of Allah, while pious and obedient Muslims spend their lives in poverty and destitution. Even the great and highly respected Sayyidnā 'Umar al-Fārūq ؓ was made aware of this glaring disparity one day when he entered the private quarter of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and saw him lying on a mat of rough reeds which left their marks on his body. Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ stood there and wept. Then he said, "O Prophet of Allah! The kings of Persia and Byzantium live in comfort and luxury whereas you who are the chosen prophet of Allah and also his beloved live such a harsh life." To this the Holy Prophet ﷺ replied, "O son of Khattab! Has it not dawned upon you yet that Allah has given to these people everything that is dear to them in this world, but they will have no share of the good things in the Hereafter, only punishment and pain?" This is the reason why the Holy Prophet ﷺ chose for himself a life which was free from the pomp and vanity of this wicked world, even though he had the means of accumulating all the comforts and luxuries of life. Whenever he received share of wealth even without physical toil or exertion, he immediately distributed it among the poor and the needy and kept nothing of it for himself. Ibn Abī Ḥātim has related, quoting Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khadri ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ once said,

ان اخوف ما اخاف عليكم ما يفتح الله لكم من زهرة الدّنيا (ابن كثير)

What I fear most about you is wealth and worldly splendor which will be arrayed before you. (Ibn Kathīr)

In this Ḥadīth the Holy Prophet ﷺ has foretold the Muslims about their conquests and the acquisition of vast territories which will bring them untold wealth and means of luxury. But there is no cause to feel satisfaction at these prospects; on the other hand there is every reason to fear such an eventuality because an excess of indulgence in luxuries may make people forget their duty to Allah.

Requiring one's relatives and associates to offer their prayers regularly and the philosophy behind it

وَأْمُرْ أَهْلَكَ بِالصَّلٰوةِ وَاصْطَبِرْ عَلَيْهَا (And bid your family to perform *ṣalāh* and adhere to it yourself - 132) Here the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been asked to direct the members of his family to say prayers and that he himself should be very particular about his prayers. These appear to be two separate commands, i.e. one for the family and the other for himself but the fact is that for a person to be steadfast in saying prayers it is essential that his family and friends should be equally mindful of their duty in this matter. The word *ahl* used for the family is quite comprehensive and includes a person's wife, children and his associates because all of them influence the environment and are an integral part of society. After this verse was revealed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ he used to go to the house of Sayyidnā 'Alī رضي الله عنه and Sayyidah Fāṭimah رضى الله عنها every morning at the time of morning prayers and call out الصَّلٰوةَ الصَّلٰوةَ (Come to *ṣalāh*, come to *ṣalāh*). (Qurṭubī)

It is reported that whenever Sayyidnā 'Urwah ibn Zubair رضي الله عنه saw a display of wealth, he would at once return home, call his family to prayer and recite to them this verse. Also when Sayyidnā 'Umar ibn Khaṭṭāb رضي الله عنه got up for his midnight (*tahajjud*) prayers, he would awake the other members of his family and recite to them this verse. (Qurṭubī)

Allah provides easy sustenance to a person who devotes himself to prayers and to His worship

لَا نَسْئَلُكَ رِزْقًا (We ask no provision from you - 20:132) Allah does not demand of the people that they should provide sustenance to their families and dependants by their own power, because the responsibility for this is in His hands alone. Man is incapable of providing for himself,

and the best that he can do is to plough the land and plant seeds in it, but he has no power to germinate it or to make a tree grow out of it. The role of man in all this is to protect the tree after it has grown to maturity and then to put its yield to his personal use. And for the person who spends all his time in prayer Allah makes even this labour bearable for him (Tirmidhī). Ibn Mājah has quoted Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said,

يقول الله تعالٰى: يا ابن ادم: تفرّغ لعبادتى املأ صدرك غنى واسد فقرك، وان لم تفعل ملأت صدرك شغلا ولم اسد فقرك (ابن كثير)

"Allah says: 'O son of 'Ādam! You dedicate yourself to My worship and I will fill your chest with sufficiency and free you from want. But if you do not obey my commands, I will fill your chest with anxities and worries and will not free you from want.'" (Ibn Kathīr)

The meaning of the words لم اسد فقرك (I will not free you from want) is that such a man will always remain poor because the more wealth he acquires the more his greed will increase. And Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ says that he heard the Holy Prophet ﷺ saying,

من جعل همومه همّا واحدا همّ المعاد، كفاه الله همّ دنياه، ومن تشعبت به الهموم فى احوال الدّنيا لم يبال الله فى أىّ اودية هلك "رواه ابن ماجه" (ابن كثير)

"A man who makes his concern for the Hereafter the focal point of all his efforts, Allah will take care of his concerns, but a person whose concerns are all about worldly affairs, Allah does not care in which valley he perishes."

أَوَلَمْ تَأْتِهِمْ بَيِّنَةُ مَا فِي الصُّحُفِ الْأُولَىٰ (Has there not come to them the manifestation of that which was contained in the earlier scriptures? - 20:133) It means that all the old Revealed Books such as the Torah, the Injīl (Evangel) and the scriptures given to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام bear a witness to the prophethood of the last Prophet Muhammad ﷺ . Is not all this sufficient evidence for those who persist in their denial of his prophethood?

فَسَتَعْلَمُونَ مَنْ أَصْحَابُ الصِّرَاطِ السَّوِيِّ وَمَنِ اهْتَدَىٰ (Then you will know who are people of the straight path and who has guidance - 20:135.) It means that though everybody is free to claim merit for his own ways and his own

actions, these claims are of no value, because the correct way is that only which finds favour with Allah, and on the Day of Resurrection everybody will be made aware as to who followed the path of error and who took the road to salvation.

اللّٰهُمَّ اهْدنا لما اختُلف فيْهِ الى الحَقّ باذنكَ وَلا حَول
ولا قوّة الاّبك ولا مَلجأ ولا منجا منُك الاّ الَيْكَ

Alḥamdulillāh

The Commentary on

Sūrah Ṭā-Ḥā

Ends here.

Sūrah Al-Anbiyā’
(The Prophets)

Sūrah Al-Anbiya was revealed in Makkah and it has 112 Verses and 7 sections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 10

اِقْتَرَبَ لِلنَّاسِ حِسَابُهُمْ وَهُمْ فِىْ غَفْلَةٍ مُّعْرِضُوْنَ ﴿١﴾ مَا يَاْتِيْهِمْ مِّنْ
ذِكْرٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّهِمْ مُّحْدَثٍ اِلَّا اسْتَمَعُوْهُ وَهُمْ يَلْعَبُوْنَ ﴿٢﴾ لَاهِيَةً قُلُوْبُهُمْ
وَاَسَرُّوا النَّجْوَى الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا هَلْ هٰذَآ اِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ اَفَتَاْتُوْنَ
السِّحْرَ وَاَنْتُمْ تُبْصِرُوْنَ ﴿٣﴾ قٰلَ رَبِّىْ يَعْلَمُ الْقَوْلَ فِى السَّمَآءِ
وَالْاَرْضِ وَهُوَ السَّمِيْعُ الْعَلِيْمُ ﴿٤﴾ بَلْ قَالُوْٓا اَضْغَاثُ اَحْلَامٍ بَلِ
افْتَرٰىهُ بَلْ هُوَ شَاعِرٌ فَلْيَاْتِنَا بِاٰيَةٍ كَمَآ اُرْسِلَ الْاَوَّلُوْنَ ﴿٥﴾ مَآ اٰمَنَتْ
قَبْلَهُمْ مِّنْ قَرْيَةٍ اَهْلَكْنٰهَا اَفَهُمْ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٦﴾ وَمَآ اَرْسَلْنَا قَبْلَكَ اِلَّا
رِجَالًا نُّوْحِىْٓ اِلَيْهِمْ فَسْئَلُوْٓا اَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٧﴾ وَمَا
جَعَلْنٰهُمْ جَسَدًا لَّا يَاْكُلُوْنَ الطَّعَامَ وَمَا كَانُوْا خٰلِدِيْنَ ﴿٨﴾ ثُمَّ
صَدَقْنٰهُمُ الْوَعْدَ فَاَنْجَيْنٰهُمْ وَمَنْ نَّشَآءُ وَاَهْلَكْنَا الْمُسْرِفِيْنَ ﴿٩﴾ لَقَدْ
اَنْزَلْنَآ اِلَيْكُمْ كِتٰبًا فِيْهِ ذِكْرُكُمْ اَفَلَا تَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿١٠﴾

The reckoning of the people has drawn near to them while they are in negligence, turning away (from its signs). [1] **No new message comes to them from their Lord, but they listen to it in a state of playing,** [2] **their**

hearts paying no heed. And the wrongdoers whisper in secret, "This one is nothing but a human like you. Would you then go along with the sorcery while you have eyes to see?" [3]

He (the prophet) said, "My Lord knows all that is spoken in the heavens and the earth, and He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing. [4]

Further they said, "(The Qur'ān is) a mixture of hotch-potch dreams. Rather, he (the prophet) has fabricated it. Rather, he is a poet. So, let him bring a sign to us, as the earlier ones were sent with." [5] **Not a single town We destroyed did believe before them. So then, will they believe?** [6]

And We did not send before you messengers except men whom We inspired with revelation. So, ask the people (having the knowledge) of the Message, if you do not know. [7] **And We did not make them as bodies that ate no food, nor were they immortal.** [8] **Then We made the promise come true for them, so We saved them and the ones We willed, and destroyed the transgressors.** [9]

Surely, We have sent down to you a book having a good name for you. So, do you not understand? [10]

Commentary

Importance of Sūrah Al-Anbiyā'

Sayyidnā Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ has said that four Sūrah viz Al-Kahf, Maryam, Ṭahā and Al-Anbiyā' are among the earlier revelations which I value a lot and keep them close to my heart. (Qurṭubī)

اِقْتَرَبَ لِلنَّاسِ حِسَابُهُمْ (The reckoning of the people has drawn near - 21:1) It means that the time is near when people will have to give an account of their deeds. Here, the reference is to the Day of Judgment, and its approach is in relation to bygone ages, as the *ummah* of Sayyidnā Muḥammad Al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ is the last of them all. And if the meaning of the word حِسَاب (reckoning) is taken in its general sense then reckoning in the grave is also included, which each individual faces immediately after death. It is for this reason that an individual's death is regarded as his Day of Reckoning. من مات فقد قامت قيامته (for a person who has died his Day of Reckoning has arrived) so the latter explanation makes the verse very

clear in that the individual reckoning for every one is not very far, no matter how long one lives, because death is certain and no one knows when it will befall. The underlying message of this verse is to warn those people, whether believers or non-believers, who are in a state of slumber due to indulgence in worldly affairs, unmindful of the certainty that all this will come to an end one day. In fact it is this disregard of the Day of Judgment which is the root cause of all ills.

مَايَأْتِيهِمْ مِّنْ ذِكْرٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّهِمْ مُّحْدَثٍ اِلاَّ اسْتَمَعُوْهُ وَهُمْ يَلْعَبُوْنَ لاَهِيَةً قُلُوْبُهُمْ (No new message comes to them from their Lord, but they listen to it in a state of playing, their hearts paying no heed. 21:2,3) This verse describes the state of those who disregard the punishment in the grave and in the Hereafter and do not prepare themselves to counter it with good deeds. The verse further describes their practice of making light of new Qur'ānic verses when they are recited before them. They are totally oblivious of the fear of God and the Hereafter. The verse can be explained in two other ways. One, that they keep themselves engaged in their own amusement and take no notice of Qur'ānic verses when they are recited before them and two, that they redicule the Qur'ānic verses themselves.

اَفَتَاْتُوْنَ السِّحْرَ وَاَنْتُمْ تُبْصِرُوْنَ (Would you then go along with sorcery while you have eyes to see? - 21:3) Those people used to discuss among themselves secretly that the claim of the Holy Prophet ﷺ about his prophethood should not be accepted, because he was an ordinary human being like all others and not an angel. On the other hand not even the most rigid among the unbelievers could deny the supreme charm and eloquence of the Book of Allah nor its power to influence people when it was recited before them. Therefore, in order to turn people away from the Holy Book they started calling it magic and black art. They thought that they could keep people away from Islam by labelling the Qur'ān as a book of magic thereby dissuading people from going to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and listening to Qur'ān. Probably they used to discuss this subject secretly among themselves lest the Muslims come to know about their foolish views and unveil their fallacy.

بَلْ قَالُوْٓا اَضْغَاثُ اَحْلاَمٍ (Further they said, [The Qur'ān is] a mixture of hotch-potch dreams. - 21:5.) Dreams having an element of personal and satanic thoughts are called اَضْغَاثُ اَحْلاَمٍ . That is why this term (اَضْغَاثُ اَحْلاَمٍ) has been translated as "hotch-potch dreams". What it means is that in the

first place the unbelievers called the Qur'ān as magic, then they described it as a collection of disturbed dreams, and then they said it was a forgery and fabrication against Allah Ta'ālā to call it His words; and finally they said that he ﷺ was a poet and the Qur'ān represented his poetic compositions.

فَلْيَأْتِنَا بِاٰيَةٍ (So let him bring to us a sign - 21:5) It means that the unbelievers demanded from the Holy Prophet ﷺ certain specific miracles to be shown as a proof of his being a real Prophet. In response to this demand, Allah Ta'ālā said in this verse that the same demand for miracles was also made by the people in the past from other prophets, and when their request was met, it was of no avail. They did not submit to Allah even after witnessing the miracles of their choice. And Allah has decreed that people who do not submit to Him even after they have seen the miracle of their choice are subjected to His wrath even in this world and are destroyed. Allah, in His Divine Mercy and in view of the honoured position of the Holy Prophet ﷺ had granted to his Ummah immunity from the terrible punishment which is the inevitable fate of those people who defy the Will of Allah. It was not, therefore, considered desirable to show them miracles of their choice because if they, like the earlier people, persisted in their unbelief even after seeing those miracles, they too would invite the wrath of Allah Ta'ālā. Then in اَفَهُمْ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ (Will they believe?) there is a hint that there was no likelihood of these people accepting the true faith even after seeing the miracles of their choice. Hence they were not shown the desired miracle.

فَسْئَلُوْٓا اَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ (So, ask the people (having the knowledge) of the message, if you do not know. - 21:7) In this verse, scholars of Injīl Evangele) and Torah are referred to as اَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ (people of the message), who had accepted the Holy Prophet's ﷺ prophethood. Therefore, what it actually means is that if you are not aware whether the prophets of the past were angels or ordinary men then you should find out from the scholars of Injīl and Torah as they know perfectly well that all prophets were human beings. It is, therefore, quite possible that here the term اَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ (people of the message) refers to all Jews and Christians (even though they have not believed in the Holy prophethood of the Holy Prophet ﷺ).

Ruling: Qurṭubī has said in his exegesis that this verse has made it

clear that ignorant persons who are not acquainted with the rules of Sharī'ah must seek knowledge from scholars and then follow them accordingly.

The Holy Qur'ān is an honour and pride for the Arabs

كِتٰبًا فِيْهِ ذِكْرُكُمْ (a book having a good name for you - 21:10): The word كتابا(Book) is meant for Qur'ān and ذِكْر (name) is used here for honour, excellence and fame. Thus what is meant here is that the revelation of Qur'ān in Arabic language is a great honour and ever lasting fame for the Arabs and they should value it as such. History has proved that by Allah's Mercy and by the blessings of Qur'ān Arabs have dominated the world and ruled over it for a long time. This is also a fact of life that Arabs gained dominance over the world not because of any tribal or linguistic supremacy but because of Qur'ān. If there was no Qur'ān, probably no one would have known about the Arabs at all.

Verses 11 - 15

وَكَمْ قَصَمْنَا مِنْ قَرْيَةٍ كَانَتْ ظَالِمَةً وَّاَنْشَاْنَا بَعْدَهَا قَوْمًا اٰخَرِيْنَ ﴿١١﴾ فَلَمَّآ اَحَسُّوْا بَاْسَنَآ اِذَاهُمْ مِّنْهَا يَرْكُضُوْنَ ﴿١٢﴾ لَا تَرْكُضُوْا وَارْجِعُوْٓا اِلٰى مَآ اُتْرِفْتُمْ فِيْهِ وَمَسٰكِنِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُسْئَلُوْنَ ﴿١٣﴾ قَالُوْا يٰوَيْلَنَآ اِنَّا كُنَّا ظٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿١٤﴾ فَمَا زَالَتْ تِّلْكَ دَعْوٰىهُمْ حَتّٰى جَعَلْنٰهُمْ حَصِيْدًا خٰمِدِيْنَ ﴿١٥﴾

And how many a town We crushed, that were wrong-doing, and We raised up another people after them. [11] **So when they sensed Our punishment, all of a sudden, they started fleeing from it.** [12] **Do not flee, and go back to the luxuries you were involved in and to your homes. May be you are asked questions.** [13] **They said, "Woe to us! We were wrongdoers indeed."** [14] **Then, this continued to be their cry till We turned them into stubble, totally extinguished.** [15]

Commentary

These verses describe the destruction of those settlements which some

exegesists have taken as *Ḥadhūrā'* (حضوراء) and *Qilābah* (قلابه) of Yemen. Allah Ta'ālā had sent there a prophet about whose name there are different versions. Some say he was Mūsā Ibn Mīshā while others say his name was Shu'aib, in which case he was a different prophet from the one who lived in Madyan. This Prophet was killed by his people, who were, as a punishment annihilated by the infidel King Nabucad Nazzar.

This King was placed in authority over them just as he was used as an instrument for the punishment of Banī Isrā'īl when they strayed from the righteous path in Palestine. In fact, Qur'ān has not identified any specific settlement. Hence it will be apt to leave the subject open, so that these settlements of Yemen may also come in its ambit. والله اعلم (Only Allah knows best).

Verses 16 - 29

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَآءَ وَالْاَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا لٰعِبِيْنَ ﴿١٦﴾ لَوْ اَرَدْنَآ اَنْ نَّتَّخِذَ لَهْوًا لَّا تَّخَذْنٰهُ مِنْ لَّدُنَّآ ۖ اِنْ كُنَّا فٰعِلِيْنَ ﴿١٧﴾ بَلْ نَقْذِفُ بِالْحَقِّ عَلَى الْبَاطِلِ فَيَدْمَغُهٗ فَاِذَا هُوَ زَاهِقٌ ۭ وَلَكُمُ الْوَيْلُ مِمَّا تَصِفُوْنَ ﴿١٨﴾ وَلَهٗ مَنْ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۭ وَمَنْ عِنْدَهٗ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُوْنَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِهٖ وَلَا يَسْتَحْسِرُوْنَ ﴿١٩﴾ يُسَبِّحُوْنَ الَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ لَا يَفْتُرُوْنَ ﴿٢٠﴾ اَمِ اتَّخَذُوْٓا اٰلِهَةً مِّنَ الْاَرْضِ هُمْ يُنْشِرُوْنَ ﴿٢١﴾ لَوْ كَانَ فِيْهِمَآ اٰلِهَةٌ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ لَفَسَدَتَا ۚ فَسُبْحٰنَ اللّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعَرْشِ عَمَّا يَصِفُوْنَ ﴿٢٢﴾ لَا يُسْئَلُ عَمَّا يَفْعَلُ وَهُمْ يُسْئَلُوْنَ ﴿٢٣﴾ اَمِ اتَّخَذُوْا مِنْ دُوْنِهٖٓ اٰلِهَةً ۭ قُلْ هَاتُوْا بُرْهَانَكُمْ ۚ هٰذَا ذِكْرُ مَنْ مَّعِيَ وَذِكْرُ مَنْ قَبْلِيْ ۭ بَلْ اَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ۙ الْحَقَّ فَهُمْ مُّعْرِضُوْنَ ﴿٢٤﴾ وَمَآ اَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْ رَّسُوْلٍ اِلَّا نُوْحِيْٓ اِلَيْهِ اَنَّهٗ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّآ اَنَا فَاعْبُدُوْنِ ﴿٢٥﴾ وَقَالُوا اتَّخَذَ الرَّحْمٰنُ وَلَدًا سُبْحٰنَهٗ ۭ بَلْ عِبَادٌ

مُّكْرَمُوْنَ ﴿٢٦﴾ لَا يَسْبِقُوْنَهٗ بِالْقَوْلِ وَهُمْ بِاَمْرِهٖ يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٢٧﴾ يَعْلَمُ مَابَيْنَ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ وَلَا يَشْفَعُوْنَ اِلَّا لِمَنِ ارْتَضٰى وَهُمْ مِّنْ خَشْيَتِهٖ مُشْفِقُوْنَ ﴿٢٨﴾ وَمَنْ يَّقُلْ مِنْهُمْ اِنِّيْٓ اِلٰهٌ مِّنْ دُوْنِهٖ فَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِيْهِ جَهَنَّمَ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِى الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٢٩﴾

And We did not create the heavens and the earth and what lies between them for play. [16] Had We intended to have a pastime, We would have had it from Our own, if We were to do so. [17] Instead, We launch the truth against the falsehood, which smashes it, and in no time it is nothing. And woe to you for what you relate. [18]

And to Him belong all those in the heavens and the earth. And those who are near Him are not arrogant against His worship, nor are they sluggish. [19] They proclaim His purity night and day, never slackening. [20]

Or have they taken to gods from the earth who raise the dead? [21] Had there been gods in them (the heavens and the earth) other than Allah, both would have fallen in disorder. So pure is Allah, the Lord of the Throne, from what they describe. [22] He is not questioned of what He does, and they are questioned. [23]

Or have they taken to gods besides Him? Say, "Bring your proof." Here is the Message for those with me and the Message for those before me. Yet most of them do not know the truth and therefore they are averse. [24] And We did not send before you any messenger but We revealed to him that there is no god but I, so worship Me." [25]

And they said, "The Raḥmān (All-Merciful) has taken to Himself a son". Pure is He. They are but servants, honoured. [26] They do not precede Him in speech and only under His command they act. [27] He knows what is in front of them and what is behind them, and they make recommendation for none but for whom He likes, and in awe of Him they are apprehensive. [28] And whoever of them says, "I am god besides Him", is the one

whom We will recompense with Jahannam. This is how We recompense the transgressors. [29]

Commentary

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَآءَ وَالْاَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا لٰعِبِيْنَ (And We did not create the heavens and the earth ... 21:16.) It means that we have not created the sky and the earth, and everything that lies in between them for mere amusement. In the preceding verses a reference has been made to the annihilation of certain settlements. In this verse there is a suggestion that just as the creation of the earth and the sky and all other created things was according to a set design, the destruction of the settlements was also the result of a definite purpose. Having witnessed the marvels and wonders of creation which are so abundantly spread all over, manifesting Allah's omnipotence and omniscience, do they still think that all these things are futile and without significance?

The word لٰعِبِيْنَ is taken from لَعِب (play), which means having no useful objective (Rāghib) while لَهْو (pastime) means an act which has no purpose at all except to provide amusement in free time. The disbelievers who argue against the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the Holy Qur'ān and reject the Oneness of Allah and deny His Power, despite its abundant manifestations, then it is apparent that they have a notion that all this creation is meant for amusement and pastime. The verse rejects this false view and says that Allah's creation is not for fun and pastime. A little reflection will show that even the minutest particle of the universe has its utility and each and everything created by Allah has a purpose which speaks by itself for His omniscience and Oneness.

لَوْ اَرَدْنَآ اَنْ نَّتَّخِذَ لَهْوًا لَّا تَّخَذْنٰهُ مِنْ لَّدُنَّآ ۖ اِنْ كُنَّا فٰعِلِيْنَ (Had We intended to have a pastime, We would have had it from Our own, if We were to do so. - 21:17) It means that if We were to create something for amusement, there was no need to create the earth and the sky, and We could have done so from the things around Us.

In Arabic language the word لَوْ is used for imaginary and non-existent things. Here also it is used in the same sense i.e. those foolish people who regard all the wonderful things of the earth and the sky objects of fun and frolic do not realize that creation on such a gigantic scale cannot be undertaken for amusement. The suggestion here is that even a person of

ordinary common sense would not indulge in a project which has no serious purpose, to say nothing of Allah Ta'ālā who is Supreme and Exalted.

The commonly accepted meaning of لَهْو is a purposeless pastime, and this meaning has been adopted in translating this verse. According to some commentators this word لَهْو is also used sometimes for wife or children in which case the meaning of the verse would be a denial of the belief of the Jews and Christians, who thought that Sayyidnā 'Uzair and Sayyidnā Masīḥ علیهما السلام were God's sons. If Allah wished to have children why should they be from humans and not from other creatures around Him. (Allah knows best).

بَلْ نَقْذِفُ بِالْحَقِّ عَلَى الْبَاطِلِ فَيَدْمَغُهُ فَإِذَا هُوَ زَاهِقٌ (Instead, We launch the truth against the falsehood, which smashes it, and in no time it is nothing. - 21:18) The literal meaning of قَذَف is to throw horizontally which has been translated above as launching) يَدْمَغُ means to hit on the head (to smash it) and زَاهِقٌ means something which is gone or vanishes without leaving a trace.

This verse explains that Allah has not created this marvelous universe with earth and the sky for amusement. This creation is the result of a carefully thought out plan which aims at distinguishing right from wrong. Observation of Nature's creations leads people along the righteous path and protects them from evil. This idea is conveyed in the verse by saying that virtue is hurled against evil and smashes its head so completely that it disappears without a trace.

وَمَنْ عِنْدَهُ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُوْنَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِهِ وَلَا يَسْتَحْسِرُوْنَ (And those who are near Him are not arrogant against His worship, nor are they sluggish. - 21:19) It means that Allah's servants who are with Him i.e. angels pray to Him all the time without ceasing. So, if the humans do not pray to Him, it will not make any difference to Him, but they themselves will be the losers. It is human nature to judge others by applying one's own situation to them. Hence there are two possibilities preventing a person from offering acts of worship ceaselessly. One, that he regards it below his dignity to bow down before any one and therefore does not pray to Allah Ta'ālā. Secondly, it is physically not possible for a man to worship without a break because he needs to rest in between. In view of these two human constraints, it is

explained towards the end of the verse that the angels are free from these compulsions. They do not regard it below their dignity to worship Allah constantly nor do they get tired or need any rest or sleep. This point has been brought to a conclusion in the next verse by saying يُسَبِّحُوْنَ الَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ لَا يَفْتُرُوْنَ (They proclaim His purity night and day, never slackening - 21:20).

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Ḥārith ﷺ said that he asked Ka'b al-Aḥbār ﷺ how it was that angels kept reciting *tasbīḥ* (proclaiming Allah's purity) all the time. Did they not have anything else to do? And if they did how could they do both things simultaneously, that is reciting *tasbīḥ* and do other things. To this Ka'b replied "O my nephew! Does performance of any of your jobs prevent you from breathing?" The truth is that *tasbīḥ* comes to angels just as breathing comes to human beings which continues without stopping whatever else he may be doing. (Qurṭubī, Al-Baḥr ul-Muḥīṭ)

اَمِ اتَّخَذُوْٓا اٰلِهَةً مِّنَ الْاَرْضِ هُمْ يُنْشِرُوْنَ (Or have they taken to gods from the earth who raise the dead? - 21:21) Here the ignorance of polytheists is described variously. Allah says how foolish and ignorant the polytheists are that they have made their gods from amongst the creatures of the earth who do not have the power of life and death. Only a Being which has these powers is worthy of being worshp لَوْ كَانَ فِيْهِمَآ اٰلِهَةٌ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ لَفَسَدَتَا (Had there been gods in them [the heavens and the earth] other than Allah, both would have fallen in disorder. - 21:22). This is an argument of common nature in favour of the Oneness of Allah which is based on common practice. It is also a logical proof of the oneness of God and a great deal of literature is available to explain it in the books on theology (عِلْمُ الْكَلَام). The argument of common nature is that if there were two Gods, each independent and sovereign, then the commands of both would prevail on the earth and in the sky which is not possible, becase it is inconceivable that both of them would have common views on all matters. And if there are differences of opinion which is inevitable where power is shared, there could be conflict, which would always lead to chaos and confusion. The suggestion that the two Gods could consult each other before passing orders has been adequately discussed, and rejected, in the books of theology. The thing to note is that if the two Gods had to take decisions jointly, then neither of them would have been sovereign, and a god with divided sovereignty is not God. The next verse viz: لَا يُسْئَلُ عَمَّا يَفْعَلُ وَهُمْ يُسْئَلُوْنَ (He is not questioned

of what He does, and they are questioned) probably reinforces the argument that anyone who is answerable for his actions to someone else cannot be God.

هٰذَا ذِكْرُ مَنْ مَّعِىَ وَذِكْرُ مَنْ قَبْلِىْ (Here is the Message for those with me and the Message for those before me. - 21: 24) One explanation of this verse on which the translation is based is that ذِكْر means Message and "Message for those with me" refers to Qur'ān, while "the Message for those before me" refers to Torah, Injīl (Evangel) and Zabūr (Psalms), the earlier divine books. According to this interpretation, the meaning of the verse is that neither the Qur'ān (which is the Book for the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his followers) nor the older books contain anything to suggest worship of anyone else but Allah. Despite the fact that the texts of Torah and Injīl (Evangel) have been altered, it is not suggested in either of them that Allah has partners with whom he shares His authority. Another explanation of the verse is given in Al-Baḥr ul-Muḥīṭ according to which the word ذِكْر (*dhikr*) means here "description", and the sense is that this Qur'ān is a description for the people who were in the days of the Holy Prophet ﷺ which describes for them the rules of Sharī'ah and invites them to the correct way of life. At the same time it is a description of those who were before the Holy Prophet ﷺ because it keeps alive the stories and the traditions of people long gone by.

لَا يَسْبِقُوْنَهٗ بِالْقَوْلِ وَهُمْ بِاَمْرِهٖ يَعْمَلُوْنَ (They do not precede Him in speech and only under His command they act. 21:27) This verse refutes the claim of pagans of Makkah that angels were daughters of Allah. How can angels be Allah's children when they stand in such awe in His presence that they neither initiate any talk nor act against His commands. They simply await His words and act accordingly. This also points towards an important etiquette of behaving in the company of elders. That is, when a matter is brought forth in front of a group of people, the people before speaking themselves first, should wait until the elder among such a group has spoken. Speaking prior to the elder is contrary to the manners governing respect of elders.

Verses 30 - 33

اَوَلَمْ يَرَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْٓا اَنَّ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ كَانَتَا رَتْقًا فَفَتَقْنٰهُمَا ؕ

وَجَعَلْنَا مِنَ الْمَآءِ كُلَّ شَیْءٍ حَیٍّ ؕ اَفَلَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٣٠﴾ وَجَعَلْنَا فِی

الْاَرْضِ رَوَاسِىَ اَنْ تَمِيْدَبِهِمْ ۖ وَجَعَلْنَا فِيْهَا فِجَاجًا سُبُلاً لَّعَلَّهُمْ يَهْتَدُوْنَ ﴿٣١﴾ وَجَعَلْنَا السَّمَآءَ سَقْفًا مَّحْفُوْظًا ۚ وَّهُمْ عَنْ اٰيٰتِهَا مُعْرِضُوْنَ ﴿٣٢﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِىْ خَلَقَ الَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ وَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ ؕ كُلٌّ فِىْ فَلَكٍ يَّسْبَحُوْنَ ﴿٣٣﴾

Have the disbelievers not seen that the heavens and the earth were closed, then We opened them? And We created from water every living thing. Would they yet not believe? [30] **And We created mountains on the earth, lest it should shake with them, and We have made therein paths and ways, so that they are guided.** [31]

And We made the sky a roof, protected; and they are averse to its signs. [32] **And He is the One who has created the night and the day, and the sun and the moon, each floating in an orbit.** [33]

Commentary

اَوَلَمْ يَرَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا (Have the disbelievers not seen. - 21:30) Here the word رُؤيَتْ (to see, to think) is used in its general sense i.e. knowledge, whether acquired by visual observation or by way of logical conclusion. The discussion which follows refers partly to actual observation and partly to logical inference.

اَنَّ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ كَانَتَا رَتْقًا فَفَتَقْنٰهُمَا (The heavens and the earth were closed, then We opened them. - 30) The word رَتَق (*ratq*) means to close and فَتَق (*fatq*) means to open. When used in combination the words mean full control in the management and execution of a job. The translation of the verse is that the earth and the sky were closed and Allah opened them up. Different exegesists have explained differently the sense of the words "closing" and "opening", but the meanings which the companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the majority of the exegesists have adopted are that closing of sky and earth means shutting off rainfall from the sky and vegetation from the earth, and opening means the opening of these two

i.e. the rainfall and vegetation.

The following story about Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar ﷺ has been related in Ibn Kathīr's commentary on the authority of Ibn Abī Ḥātim. A man went to Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar ﷺ and requested him to explain the meaning of this verse to him. He pointed out towards Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ and told him to go to him for an explanation of the verse. He also requested him to let him know the explanation that Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ gave to him. The man went to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ and asked him what do the words رَتْقًا (*ratqan*) and فَتَقْنَا (*fataqnā*) mean in the verse. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ replied that originally the sky was closed and there was no rainfall, likewise the earth was closed and there was no growth on it. When Allah Ta'ālā sent down man on earth to live here He opened up rainfall from the sky and the vegetation from the earth. After learning the explanation of the verse the man went back to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar ﷺ and repeated to him what he had learnt from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ. Then Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar ﷺ remarked that he was then left in no doubt that Allah Ta'ālā had graciously bestowed upon Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ a complete knowledge of Qur'ān. He further said that previously he used to consider Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās's ﷺ explanations of the Holy Qur'ān as bold attempts, of which he did not approve. But now he was convinced that Allah Ta'ālā had granted to him special insight into the meaning of Qur'ān, and that the explanation he gave of the words رَتْق و فَتْق was absolutely correct.

This story of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ is also reported in Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī through Ibn Mundhir and Abū Nu'aim, and a group of the scholars of *ḥadīth* including Ḥākim, the writer of Mustadark, who has accepted the tradition as correct.

After reporting this narration Ibn Ibn 'Atiyyah al-'Aufi says that this interpretation is *ḥasan* and comprehensive, and is compatible with the text of the Qur'ān. It contains a lesson and argument against the infidels and also mentions about the Omnipotence and the special bounties of Allah Ta'ala, which is the basis of His Oneness and recognition of His attributes. The following sentence وَجَعَلْنَا مِنَ الْمَاءِ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ حَيٍّ (and We created

from water every living thing) also corroborates this interpretation. Al-Baḥr ul-Muḥīṭ has also adopted the same interpretation. Qurṭubī has declared this explanation to be that of 'Ikrimah as well and said that another verse also endorses this meaning.[1] وَالسَّمَآءِ ذَاتِ الرَّجْعِ وَالْاَرْضِ ذَاتِ الصَّدْعِ Ṭabari has also adopted this very interpretation.

وَجَعَلْنَا مِنَ الْمَآءِ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ حَيٍّ (And We created from water every living thing. - 21:30) Water is an essential element in the creation of all living things. According to the latest research it is not only the humans and animals which possess both life and soul but also plants and minerals. Water plays a very important role in the creation, growth and evolution of all living things.

Ibn Kathīr has quoted Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ on the authority of Imām Aḥmad رحمہ اللہ تعالیٰ , that he requested the Holy Prophet ﷺ to tell him how things were created. The Holy Prophet ﷺ replied that everything was created from water. Then Abū Hurairah ﷺ asked about the acts that lead one to the Jannah. The Holy Prophet ﷺ replied:

افش السّلام واطعم الطعام وصل الارحَام وقم بالّليل والناس نيام ثمّ ادخل الجنّة بسلام (تفردبه احمد وهذا اسناد على شرط الشيخين الخ)

"Make greeting with Salam common between you, and feed (others) and observe the rights of kinship, and stand (in prayers) at night when people are asleep. Then enter the Jannah with peace".

وَجَعَلْنَا فِي الْاَرْضِ رَوَاسِيَ اَنْ تَمِيْدَبِهِمْ (And We created mountains on the earth, lest it should shake with them. 21:31) The word مَيْد (*mayd*) in Arabic language means to be convulsed. Therefore, the meaning of this verse is

1. The author has explained the interpretation of this verse as adopted by many authorities. But the miraculous style of the Holy Qur'ān is that the words used by it may have different possibilities for interpretation. The words *ratq* and *fatq* used here have another meaning which is 'being compact' and 'being separated'. If these words are taken in this sense, the verse may also be translated as, "The heavens and the earth were compact, then We separated them." In this case the verse will refer to an event of the early creation, meaning thereby that the heavens and the earth were originally a single body. Thereafter Allah separated the earth from the heavens. The contemporary research about the Big Bang is close to this description. But it should always be kept in mind that the Qur'ānic descriptions are independent of any scientific theory and the Qur'ān should not be made subject to ever-changing theories. **(Muhammad Taqi Usmani)**

that Allah Ta'ālā has planted mountains on the earth to hold it in place because any violent movement of the earth would be catastrophic to those who live on it.

كُلٌّ فِىْ فَلَكٍ يَّسْبَحُوْنَ (Each floating in an orbit - 21:33) The word فَلَك(*falak*) is used for circle or anything round. For this reason the word فَلَك (*falak*) is also used sometimes for sky. In this verse it means the orbits of the sun and the moon in which they revolve. The Qur'ānic words do not specify the location of the orbits in the space but space research has now established that these orbits are located in the space much below the sky. This verse apparently indicates that the Sun also moves around an orbit. The scientists previously did not believe in the rotation of the Sun, but the most modern research has now accepted it.

Verses 34 - 47

وَمَا جَعَلْنَا لِبَشَرٍ مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ الْخُلْدَ ؕ اَفَائِنْ مِّتَّ فَهُمُ الْخٰلِدُوْنَ ﴿٣٤﴾ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَآئِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ ؕ وَنَبْلُوْكُمْ بِالشَّرِّ وَالْخَيْرِ فِتْنَةً ؕ وَاِلَيْنَا تُرْجَعُوْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾ وَاِذَا رَاٰكَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْٓا اِنْ يَّتَّخِذُوْنَكَ اِلَّا هُزُوًا ؕ اَهٰذَا الَّذِىْ يَذْكُرُ اٰلِهَتَكُمْ ۚ وَهُمْ بِذِكْرِ الرَّحْمٰنِ هُمْ كٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿٣٦﴾ خُلِقَ الْاِنْسَانُ مِنْ عَجَلٍ ؕ سَاُورِيْكُمْ اٰيٰتِىْ فَلَا تَسْتَعْجِلُوْنِ ﴿٣٧﴾ وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ مَتٰى هٰذَا الْوَعْدُ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿٣٨﴾ لَوْ يَعْلَمُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا حِيْنَ لَا يَكُفُّوْنَ عَنْ وُّجُوْهِهِمُ النَّارَ وَلَا عَنْ ظُهُوْرِهِمْ وَلَاهُمْ يُنْصَرُوْنَ ﴿٣٩﴾ بَلْ تَاْتِيْهِمْ بَغْتَةً فَتَبْهَتُهُمْ فَلَا يَسْتَطِيْعُوْنَ رَدَّهَا وَلَاهُمْ يُنْظَرُوْنَ ﴿٤٠﴾ وَلَقَدِ اسْتُهْزِئَ بِرُسُلٍ مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ فَحَاقَ بِالَّذِيْنَ سَخِرُوْا مِنْهُمْ مَّا كَانُوْا بِهٖ يَسْتَهْزِءُوْنَ ﴿٤١﴾ قُلْ مَنْ يَّكْلَؤُكُمْ بِالَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ مِنَ الرَّحْمٰنِ ؕ بَلْ هُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ رَبِّهِمْ مُّعْرِضُوْنَ ﴿٤٢﴾ اَمْ لَهُمْ اٰلِهَةٌ تَمْنَعُهُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِنَا ؕ لَا يَسْتَطِيْعُوْنَ نَصْرَ اَنْفُسِهِمْ وَلَاهُمْ مِّنَّا يُصْحَبُوْنَ ﴿٤٣﴾ بَلْ مَتَّعْنَا هٰٓؤُلَآءِ وَاٰبَآءَهُمْ حَتّٰى طَالَ عَلَيْهِمُ

الْعُمُرُ ۗ أَفَلَا يَرَوْنَ أَنَّا نَأْتِي الْأَرْضَ نَنْقُصُهَا مِنْ أَطْرَافِهَا ۗ أَفَهُمُ
الْغٰلِبُونَ ﴿٤٤﴾ قُلْ إِنَّمَآ أُنْذِرُكُمْ بِالْوَحْيِ ۚ وَلَا يَسْمَعُ الصُّمُّ الدُّعَآءَ
إِذَا مَا يُنْذَرُونَ ﴿٤٥﴾ وَلَئِنْ مَّسَّتْهُمْ نَفْحَةٌ مِّنْ عَذَابِ رَبِّكَ لَيَقُولُنَّ
يٰوَيْلَنَآ إِنَّا كُنَّا ظٰلِمِينَ ﴿٤٦﴾ وَنَضَعُ الْمَوَازِينَ الْقِسْطَ لِيَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ
فَلَا تُظْلَمُ نَفْسٌ شَيْئًا ۗ وَإِنْ كَانَ مِثْقَالَ حَبَّةٍ مِّنْ خَرْدَلٍ أَتَيْنَا بِهَا ۗ
وَكَفٰى بِنَا حٰسِبِينَ ﴿٤٧﴾

And We did not assign immortality to any human (even) before you. So, if you die, will they then live for ever? [34] **Every one has to taste death. And We test you all through bad and good (situations) with a trial. And to Us you are to be returned.** [35]

And when disbelievers see you, they do nothing but make mockery of you (saying) "Is this the one who talks of your gods?" – while they themselves are the denier of even mentioning the Raḥmān (All-Merciful). [36]

Man is made of haste. I shall show you My signs, so do not seek haste from Me. [37] **And they say, "When will this promise be (fulfilled), if you are true?"** [38] **Only if the disbelievers were to know the time when they will not (be able to) keep off the fire from their faces or from their backs, nor will they be helped.** [39] **Rather, it will come upon them suddenly and will baffle them. So they will not be able to turn it back, nor will they be given respite.** [40]

And messengers have been mocked at before you. So those who laughed at them were besieged by what they have been mocking at. [41]

Say, "Who will guard you, during night and day, against the Raḥmān (All-Merciful)?" Rather, to the remembrance of their Lord they are averse. [42] **Or do they have gods who protect them besides Us? They are not able to help even themselves, nor are they allowed by Us to have company.** [43]

But We have given benefits to these and their fathers so much so that life prolonged against them. So do they not see that We are coming to the land reducing it from its sides? Then, are they the ones to prevail? [44]

Say, "I simply warn you by revelation, and the deaf do not listen to the call, when they are warned." [45] **And if they are touched by a whiff of the punishment of your Lord, they will certainly say, "Woe to us! We were wrongdoers indeed."** [46]

And We shall place scales to do justice on the Day of Judgment. So no one shall be wronged in any way. And even if it (any act, good or evil) is to the measure of a mustard seed, We will bring it forth. And We are enough to take account. [47]

Commentary

وَمَا جَعَلْنَا لِبَشَرٍ مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ الْخُلْدَ (And We did not assign immortality to any human (even) before you. - 21:34) The preceding verses give a strong and logical rebuttal of the unfounded and exaggerated beliefs of the infidels and polytheists to the effect that Sayyidnā Masīḥ and Sayyidnā 'Uzair علیهما السلام are the associates of God or that Masīḥ and the Angels are God's children. Unable to come up with a satisfactory answer to the rational and logical arguments given by the Qur'ān, the infidels of Makkah were in despair and wished for the death of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. This has been mentioned in some other verses also, like e.g. نَتَرَبَّصُ بِهٖ رَيْبَ الْمَنُوْنِ (52:30). In this verse (34) Allah Ta'ālā has given two answers to their pitiable wish. One, that even if the Holy Prophet ﷺ died early how would it help them? If they thought that they could use the death of the Holy Prophet ﷺ as an argument against his prophethood, they were very much mistaken, because all the other Prophets whose prophethood they themselves had accepted, also died when their time came. Thus, if the death of their own prophets did not alter their position as prophets, how could the death of the Holy Prophet ﷺ change his position? Secondly, if their purpose in wishing for his early death was only to appease their frustration, then they should have known that death is universal, and everybody has to die sooner or later.

اگر بمرد عدو جائے شاد مانی نیست ☆ کہ زندگانیٔ مانیز جاودانی نیست

If an enemy dies, it is not to be rejoiced, because our own life is not eternal.

What is death?

Allah has said كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَآئِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ 'Every soul has to taste death'. Here the word soul refers to the living things of the earth, who must all face death, but does not include the angels. There is a difference of opinion about whether the angels will also die or not on the Day of Judgment. Some say that every living thing will die, though momentarily, irrespective of whether they are of the earth or the skies. But others maintain that angels and *ḥūrs* and *ghilmān* of Paradise are excluded from this general rule. (Only God knows best) (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī) Majority of the scholars believe that death is the departure of soul from the mortal human frame, while soul itself is a subtle ethereal living thing which is made of light and resides in human body just as fragrance resides in the rose. Ibn al-Qayyim has convincingly proved this point in his book. (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī)

The term ذَآئِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ means that every individual will feel the pain of death - 21:35, because considering the manner in which body and soul are conjoined together their separation should obviously entail some pain. There are some saintly persons who regard death as a deliverance from the trials and tribulations of the worldly life and a means of bringing them closer to their Supreme love, that is Allah. This pleasure does not negate the agony of death, because where the reward is high, a little pain is easily tolerated.

Worldly comforts and discomforts are a test

وَنَبْلُوكُمْ بِالشَّرِّ وَالْخَيْرِ فِتْنَةً

And We test you all through bad and good (situations) with a trial. - 21:35

It means that man is tested both by good things and by bad things. شَرّ (bad) includes unpleasant things such as illness, grief, pain, poverty etc. while خَيْر (good) means desirable things, like good health, happiness, comfort and abundance. Man is subjected to these conditions in this world for test and the test is that he should show patience and endurance in the face of adversity and should offer thanks to Allah when his life is peaceful and comfortable. Wise men have said that, it is more difficult to be steadfast and consistent in offering thanks to Allah for His gifts than to persevere and show patience in difficult circumstances. Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ is reported to have said:

بُلينا بالضّراء فصبرنا وبلينا بالسّراء فلم نصبر (روح المعانی)

"We were tested by discomforts and We bore it with patience,

but when we were tested by pleasures, we could not observe patience (i.e. we could not offer gratitude to Allah as was due)". (Ruh ul-Ma'ani)

Haste is undesirable

خُلِقَ الْإِنْسَانُ مِنْ عَجَلٍ (Man is made of haste. - 21:37). عَجَل (*'ajal*) means haste or hurry. The word is used in situations when one desires things to happen before their time, and this trait is bad by its very nature. In another place also the word is used to denote human weakness. For instance وَكَانَ الْإِنْسَانُ عَجُولًا i.e. Man is prone to haste - 17:11, meaning that he is very impatient. When Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام went to the mount Ṭūr in a hurry leaving his people behind, he was censured by Allah Ta'ālā.

Prophets and the devout people who try to excel each other in the performance of righteous deeds have been commended and their zeal to do good deeds does not constitute haste and hurry because they do not try to do these deeds before their time. In fact they do the deeds on time, but try to excel each other in quantity and quality.

Here خُلِقَ الْإِنْسَانُ مِنْ عَجَلٍ (Man is made of haste - 21:37) means that haste and hurry is one of the many weaknesses which are inherent in human nature. When a man is identified by some intrinsic trait of his character, the Arabs used to say that he is 'made of' that trait. For instance a short tempered man would be called a 'man made of anger'.

سَأُورِيكُمْ ايْتِي (I shall show you my signs - 21:37) Here the word آيات (signs) refers to those miracles and events which bear evidence to the honesty of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the truth of his message. (Qurṭubī) These miracles also occurred during the battle of Badr (غزوه بدر) when the Muslims who were considered weak and worthy of contempt gained a great victory over their enemies.

Weighing of actions on the Day of Judgment and the scales to be used for this purpose

وَنَضَعُ الْمَوَازِينَ الْقِسْطَ لِيَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ (And We shall place scales to do justice on the Day of Judgment - 21:47) The word مَوَازِين is plural of مِيزَان , which means a scale. In this verse the word is used plural which some exegesists have explained by saying that for measuring deeds and actions of people many scales will be used. Different balances may be used for different individuals, or different balances may be used for different types of deeds.

But majority of scholars agree that there will be only one balance to weigh all the deeds, and that the word has been used in plural because it will serve the purpose of many balances and measure the deeds of all the children of Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام from the earliest time to the Day of Judgment, whose count only Allah knows. قسط (*Qisṭ*) means justice and fairness. Thus the meaning of the verse is that the balance will measure fairly and justly and no injustice will be done to any one. Mustadrak of Ḥākim has reported through Sayyidnā Salmān رضي الله عنه that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that the balance that will be used on the Day of Judgment for weighing deeds and actions will be so enormous in size and span that it could enclose the earth and the sky within its fold for measurement. (Maẓharī)

Ḥafiẓ Abū al-Qasim Lalkai has narrated in his Sunan (سُنَن) through Sayyidnā Anas رضي الله عنه that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that an angel will be posted on the balance and every man will be brought before it. In case his good deeds overweigh his sins the angel will announce loudly, which everyone present will hear, that so and so has passed his test and now he will never be deprived of anything. And if the sins of a person overweigh his virtues, then the angel will announce that the wretched so and so has failed his test and has been made destitute for ever. Hafiz has also reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Hudhaifah رضي الله عنه , that the angel who will be posted on the balance on the Day of Judgment is none other but Sayyidnā Jibra'īl عليه السلام.

Ḥākim, Baihaqi and 'Ājurrī have narrated through Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها that she enquired from the Holy Prophet ﷺ whether he will remember his family members on the Day of Judgment; to which he replied that on that Day there will be three occasions when no one will remember any one. Firstly, when people will be brought before the scale of justice for the weighment of their deeds. Until it is known whether one's virtues overweigh the sins or otherwise, everyone would forget every one else. Secondly, when the records of deeds will be thrown in the air, until they are either placed in the right hand (which will be a sign of salvation) or in the left hand or from behind (which will be a sign of punishment) it would indicate God's wrath. Thirdly, the occasion to cross the bridge of Ṣirāṭ (صِرَاط) i.e. until this bridge is crossed, no one will remember any one else. (Maẓharī)

وَإِنْ كَانَ مِثْقَالَ حَبَّةٍ مِّنْ خَرْدَلٍ اَتَيْنَا بِهَا (And even if it (any act, good or evil) is to the measure of a mustard seed, we will bring it forth - 21:47) It means that on the Day of Reckoning, all the deeds of every person, big or small, good or bad, will be brought forth so that they may be subjected to reckoning and weighment.

Method of the weighment of deeds

One possibility is that deeds and actions of a person recorded by angels will be weighed as indicated by the famous Ḥadīth generally known as حَدِيثُ الْبِطَاقَة (*ḥadīth al-biṭāqah*[1]). The other possibility is that deeds of a person will be converted into absolute substances which will then be weighed. By and large the traditions support the second view, and a majority of scholars have adopted this version. The verse وَوَجَدُوْا مَا عَمِلُوْا حَاضِرًا (And they will find what they did all there - 18:49) and the like in the Holy Qur'ān and many traditions also confirm the second view.

Accountability of Deeds

Tirmidhī has reported through Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی الله عنها that a man came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and narrated to him that he had two slaves who called him a liar, were dishonest in their dealings and did not obey his orders. In retaliation he scolded them and also beat them. How, then would his chastisement of his slaves be judged in relation to their misconduct. The Holy Prophet ﷺ replied that their misdeed would be weighed against the punishment which he inflicted on them and if the two were equally balanced, then the matter would rest there, but in case their crimes exceed his punishment it would be regarded as a favour bestowed on them by him. But, on the other hand, if the punishment awarded to them exceeded their misdeeds, then he would be made subject to punishment and retaliation for his excess. Then the man rose and sat down in a corner and started weeping. The Holy Prophet ﷺ asked him whether he had not read this verse وَنَضَعُ الْمَوَازِيْنَ الْقِسْطَ لِيَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ (And We shall place scales to do justice on the day of judgment - 21:47). Then the man said that he had no choice but to free his slaves so that he might escape accountability. (Qurṭubī)

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1. The author has referred here to a long hadith in which it is mentioned that while reckoning a person's deeds, a card will be placed in the balance on which the *kalimah* لا اله الا الله will be written. This card will weigh more than a heap of bad deeds. (Muhammad Taqi Usmani)

Verses 48 - 50

وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا مُوْسٰى وَهٰرُوْنَ الْفُرْقَانَ وَضِيَآءً وَّذِكْرًا لِّلْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿۴۸﴾
الَّذِيْنَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ بِالْغَيْبِ وَهُمْ مِّنَ السَّاعَةِ مُشْفِقُوْنَ ﴿۴۹﴾
وَهٰذَا ذِكْرٌ مُّبٰرَكٌ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ ؕ اَفَاَنْتُمْ لَهٗ مُنْكِرُوْنَ ﴿۵۰﴾

And We gave Mūsā and Hārūn criterion and a light and an advice for the God-fearing, [48] **those who have awe of their Lord, though unseen, and are apprehensive of the Hour.** [49] **And this is a blessed advice We have sent down. Is it then you are rejecting it?** [50]

Commentary

الْفُرْقَانَ وَضِيَآءً وَّذِكْرًا لِّلْمُتَّقِيْنَ (Criterion and light and an advice for the God-fearing - 21:48) The three attributes which belong to Torah are فُرْقَان (criterion) which differentiates between right and wrong second is ضِيَاء (light) which provides light and manifestation of truth to hearts, and the third is ذِكْر (advice) which is a source of guidance for the people. Some explain فُرْقَان as help from God which was available to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام at all times. It was manifest when he was raised in the Pharaoh's house, then at the time of his contest with the Egyptian magicians which resulted in the Pharaoh's discomfiture, and again when he was pursued by the Pharaoh and his army and Allah saved him by causing dry passageways to appear in the river and, after the Bani Isra'il had crossed over to the other side, by drowning the Pharaoh and his army. Even after this incident Allah's help was available to him at all times. Qurṭubī has pointed out that whereas ضِيَاء (light) and ذِكْر (advice) are the attributes of Torah, فُرْقَان (criterion) is something else and not an attribute of Torah, because of the use of the conjunctive letter *Wa'o* (و) after the word فُرْقَان (Allah knows best).

Verses 51 - 73

وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَآ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ رُشْدَهٗ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَكُنَّا بِهٖ عٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿۵۱﴾ اِذْ قَالَ
لِاَبِيْهِ وَقَوْمِهٖ مَاهٰذِهِ التَّمَاثِيْلُ الَّتِیْٓ اَنْتُمْ لَهَا عٰكِفُوْنَ ﴿۵۲﴾ قَالُوْا

وَجَدْنَآ اٰبَآءَنَا لَهَا عٰبِدِيْنَ ﴿٥٣﴾ قَالَ لَقَدْ كُنْتُمْ اَنْتُمْ وَاٰبَآؤُكُمْ فِيْ
ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿٥٤﴾ قَالُوْٓا اَجِئْتَنَا بِالْحَقِّ اَمْ اَنْتَ مِنَ اللّٰعِبِيْنَ ﴿٥٥﴾
قَالَ بَلْ رَّبُّكُمْ رَبُّ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ الَّذِيْ فَطَرَهُنَّ ۖ وَاَنَا عَلٰى
ذٰلِكُمْ مِّنَ الشّٰهِدِيْنَ ﴿٥٦﴾ وَتَاللّٰهِ لَاَكِيْدَنَّ اَصْنَامَكُمْ بَعْدَ اَنْ تُوَلُّوْا
مُدْبِرِيْنَ ﴿٥٧﴾ فَجَعَلَهُمْ جُذٰذًا اِلَّا كَبِيْرًا لَّهُمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ اِلَيْهِ يَرْجِعُوْنَ
﴿٥٨﴾ قَالُوْا مَنْ فَعَلَ هٰذَا بِاٰلِهَتِنَآ اِنَّهٗ لَمِنَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٥٩﴾ قَالُوْا
سَمِعْنَا فَتًى يَّذْكُرُهُمْ يُقَالُ لَهٗ اِبْرٰهِيْمُ ﴿٦٠﴾ قَالُوْا فَاْتُوْا بِهٖ عَلٰٓى اَعْيُنِ
النَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَشْهَدُوْنَ ﴿٦١﴾ قَالُوْٓا ءَاَنْتَ فَعَلْتَ هٰذَا بِاٰلِهَتِنَا
يٰٓاِبْرٰهِيْمُ ﴿٦٢﴾ قَالَ بَلْ فَعَلَهٗ ۖ كَبِيْرُهُمْ هٰذَا فَسْئَلُوْهُمْ اِنْ كَانُوْا
يَنْطِقُوْنَ ﴿٦٣﴾ فَرَجَعُوْٓا اِلٰٓى اَنْفُسِهِمْ فَقَالُوْٓا اِنَّكُمْ اَنْتُمُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ
﴿٦٤﴾ ثُمَّ نُكِسُوْا عَلٰى رُءُوْسِهِمْ ۚ لَقَدْ عَلِمْتَ مَا هٰٓؤُلَآءِ يَنْطِقُوْنَ
﴿٦٥﴾ قَالَ اَفَتَعْبُدُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ مَا لَا يَنْفَعُكُمْ شَيْئًا وَّلَا يَضُرُّكُمْ
﴿٦٦﴾ اُفٍّ لَّكُمْ وَلِمَا تَعْبُدُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ ۭ اَفَلَا تَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿٦٧﴾
قَالُوْا حَرِّقُوْهُ وَانْصُرُوْٓا اٰلِهَتَكُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ فٰعِلِيْنَ ﴿٦٨﴾ قُلْنَا يٰنَارُ كُوْنِيْ
بَرْدًا وَّسَلٰمًا عَلٰٓى اِبْرٰهِيْمَ ﴿٦٩﴾ وَاَرَادُوْا بِهٖ كَيْدًا فَجَعَلْنٰهُمُ
الْاَخْسَرِيْنَ ﴿٧٠﴾ وَنَجَّيْنٰهُ وَلُوْطًا اِلَى الْاَرْضِ الَّتِيْ بٰرَكْنَا فِيْهَا
لِلْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٧١﴾ وَوَهَبْنَا لَهٗٓ اِسْحٰقَ ۭ وَيَعْقُوْبَ نَافِلَةً ۭ وَكُلًّا جَعَلْنَا
صٰلِحِيْنَ ﴿٧٢﴾ وَجَعَلْنٰهُمْ اَئِمَّةً يَّهْدُوْنَ بِاَمْرِنَا وَاَوْحَيْنَآ اِلَيْهِمْ فِعْلَ
الْخَيْرٰتِ وَاِقَامَ الصَّلٰوةِ وَاِيْتَآءَ الزَّكٰوةِ ۚ وَكَانُوْا لَنَا عٰبِدِيْنَ ﴿٧٣﴾

And earlier We had given Ibrāhīm his guidance, and We knew him well, [51] when he said to his father and his people, "What are these statues you are devoted to?" [52] They said, "We found our fathers worshipping them,"

[53] He said, "Surely you and your fathers have been in open error." [54] They said, "Did you come to us with truth or are you of those who make fun?" [55] He said, "No, your Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth, who has created them, and I am one of those who bear witness to it. [56] And I swear by Allah that I will do something to your idols after you are gone, turning your backs." [57]

Then, he turned them into pieces, save the big one of them, so that they may come back to him. [58] They said, "Who has done this to our gods? He is one of the wrongdoers, indeed". [59] Some of them said, "We have heard a youth speaking of them. He is called Ibrāhīm." [60] They said, "Then, bring him before the eyes of the people, so that they may see". [61] They said, "Is it you O Ibrāhīm who has done this to our gods?" [62] He said, "Rather, this is done by this chief of theirs. So, ask them if they were to speak." [63] So they turned to themselves and said, "In fact, you are the wrongdoers." [64] Then, they reversed their position upside down (saying) "You already knew that they do not speak." [65]

He said, "Do you then worship, beside Allah, what does neither benefit you in the least nor harm you? [66] Fie upon you and upon what you worship other than Allah. Do you then not understand?" [67] They said, "(O people) burn him and help your gods, if you are to take action." [68]

We said, "O fire, be cold and safe for Ibrāhīm." [69] And they intended to harm him, but We made them the worst losers. [70] And We rescued him and Lūṭ towards the land we blessed for all the worlds. [71] And We blessed him with Isḥāq and Ya'qūb as gift, and each one of them We made righteous. [72] And We made them the *imāms* who guide (people) under Our command, and We inspired them to do good deeds and to establish *ṣalāh* and pay *zakāh*. And Us alone they worshipped. [73]

Commentary

وَتَاللّٰهِ لَاَكِيْدَنَّ اَصْنَامَكُم (And I swear by Allah that I will do something to your idols - 21:57) The wording of the verse indicates that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام spoke these words before his community. But this

explanation leaves a little doubt in one's mind because Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام had excused himself from going to the Eid festival by pleading illness (اِنِّی سَقِیۡمٌ - I am sick - 37:89). And when they found their idols broken, they started a search for the culprit. If they already knew what he had said about their idols and that he had stayed behind alone when they had gone to attend the Eid function, then it was fairly obvious that he had broken the idols. Then where was the need for them to go looking for the offender? There are more than one explanations to this situation. One, that since Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was the only one holding these views and enjoyed no standing in the community, people might have ignored and even forgotten what he had said as something of no consequence. (Bayan ul-Qur'ān). Two, that those who were looking for the culprit were a different lot of people and were not aware of what he (Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام)had said about their idols. While in a third version Mujāhid and Qatādah are of the view that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام did not speak these words before other people, but only pictured the situation in his mind, or had said that only at heart, or he might have spoken them before one or two old persons after the people had left for the festival. Later, when the idols were found broken and the people started looking for the one who did it, these old men revealed the secret to them. (Qurṭubī)

فَجَعَلَهُمْ جُذٰذًا (21:58) The word جُذٰذًا is the plural for جِذٌّ which means fragment or piece. Thus its meaning is that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام broke the idols into small pieces.

اِلَّا كَبِيْرًا لَّهُمْ (Save the big one of them - 21:58) That is, only the biggest idol was left intact and all the rest were broken. It is possible that the one which was left unbroken was either bigger in size or higher in esteem with the unbelievers.

لَعَلَّهُمْ اِلَيْهِ يَرْجِعُوْنَ (So that they may come back to him - 21:58) There can be three explanations to this expression. One, if the object of اِلَيْهِ (to him) is Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام then the meaning would be that he himself wanted the unbelievers to ask him why he had broken the idols which would give him a chance to sneer at them that what they worshipped could not even look after themselves. The second meaning of اِلَيْهِ يَرْجِعُوْنَ could be that he destroyed the idols in the hope that when the unbelievers saw them in pieces it might convince them of the futility of idol-worship and cause their return toward the religion of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام .

The third explanation is given by Kalbī. He says that the object of إِلَيْهِ is كَبِيْر (the big). In that case the explanation would be that when the unbelievers, on their return saw the idols in pieces except the big one, who had a hammer resting on his shoulder, they might turn towards it for an explanation and getting no response from it they would see for themselves the helplessness of the idol.

The words of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام were not untrue, but only allusions

قَالَ بَلْ فَعَلَهٗ ۖ كَبِيْرُهُمْ هٰذَا فَسْـَٔلُوْهُمْ اِنْ كَانُوْا يَنْطِقُوْنَ (He said, "Rather, this is done by this chief of theirs. So, ask them if they were to speak." - 21:63) When the community of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام got hold of him and asked him to confess his guilt, he said "The big one among them has done it. Why don't you ask him, if he can speak"?

The point to consider here is that the idols were broken by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام and its denial and attributing the deed to the big idol, was contrary to fact and constituted an untruth. The exalted position of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام renders such a conclusion untenable. The exegesists have put forward several explanations to sort out this matter. One of them is that his statement is in the nature of an assumption i.e. why not consider the possibility that the deed was done by the big idol? And a supposition which is contrary to facts is not a lie as the Qur'ān itself says اِنْ كَانَ لِلرَّحْمٰنِ وَلَدٌ فَاَنَا اَوَّلُ الْعٰبِدِيْنَ (If the Raḥmān [All-Merciful] has a son then I am the first to serve him - 43:81). But the most convincing and straight forward explanation is the one adopted by al-Baḥr ul-Muḥīṭ, Qurṭubī and Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī, which says that it is a metaphoric attribution (اسناد مجازی) , that is the act which was done by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was attributed to the big idol by way of metaphoric attribution because it was this idol which, by reason of the reverence that it commanded in the whole community, persuaded Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام to do what he did with the smaller idols. It is like amputating a thief's hand and then telling him that none but his own misdeeds are responsible for the amputation.

Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام had also attributed the breaking of the idols to the big idol by placing an axe on its shoulder or in its hands, thus pointing an accusing finger towards it. He reinforced this suspicion by his word when he suggested to the unbelievers that they should enquire from the big idol as to who had destroyed the other idols. It is a case of

metaphoric attribution (اسناد مجازی) which is very well illustrated in an Arabic saying انبت الربیع البقلة , that is the spring rains have raised crops. Although in actual fact it is God who produces and nourishes the crops, yet it has been ascribed to a visible cause, and no one can call it a lie. In the same manner Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was not telling an untruth when he attributed the act to the big idol. His adoption of this act of dissimulation in fact served many religious interests; one of them being to make the people aware of the possibility that perhaps the big idol was infuriated with the smaller idols because they too were worshipped with the same degree of reverence as itself. If they could be made to think on these lines, it could have opened the route to belief in the Oneness of Allah. If the big idol was not willing to accept the idols as objects of worship how could Allah, the Creator of all living things, agree to share His authority with anyone?

Secondly, perhaps they also wondered that if the idols whom they worshipped were really as powerful as they thought them to be, how could anyone have broken them with impunity? Thirdly, if the charge of breaking the smaller idols could be laid against the big idol, then it would be quite pertinent to ask that in that event it should also have the power of speech. That is why Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام said فَسْئَلُوْهُمْ اِنْ كَانُوْا يَنْطِقُوْنَ (So, ask them if they were to speak. - 21:63). Thus it is really not necessary to put far fetched meanings into his words which should be interpreted in a plain, straight forward manner. He attributed the deed to the big idol by way of metaphoric attribution. This was not contrary to facts nor did it constitute an untruth.

Three untruths ascribed to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام

Now the point to consider is that the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself has said according to some authentic traditions that انّ ابراهیم علیه السلام لم یکذب غیر ثلاث (Bukhārī and Muslim). That is Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام never spoke an untruth except on three occasions, and then those three occasions have been described in the same *ḥadīth* in some detail. The saying goes on to narrate that two out of the three untruths were spoken solely in the way of Allah. One of them is this verse i.e. بَلْ فَعَلَهٗ كَبِيْرُهُمْ (Rather this is done by this chief - 21:63). The second one relates to Eid day when he said to his family اِنِّیْ سَقِيْمٌ (I am sick - 37:89), and the third one was spoken to save his wife, from harm. This happened when he was travelling with his wife

Sayyidah Sārah رضی اللہ عنہا, and passed through a settlement whose ruler was cruel and depraved and who used to seize the wives of other people and subject them to sexual abuse. However, he spared those who were accompanied by their fathers or brothers. When Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام reached this city, the ruler was informed about the arrival of the couple. So he got Sayyidah Sārah رضی اللہ عنہا arrested and brought before him. When the ruler's men came to arrest her, they enquired from Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام about his relationship with her. Fearing the evil intentions of the wicked ruler Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام said that she was his sister. (It is this episode which is referred to in the *ḥadīth* as the third lie) Despite this declaration they took her away with them. Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام had already briefed her that she should also tell the ruler that she was his sister, because according to Islamic relationship they were brother and sister as they were the only two Muslims in that land and hence according to Muslim brotherhood that relationship was valid. Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام lacked the strength to defend himself and his wife against the ruler and his men, so he started praying to invoke Allah's Mercy. When Sayyidah Sārah رضی اللہ عنہا was brought before the ruler, he started making advances to her, and in punishment he was turned into a cripple. Then he begged her to pray for him to return to normal in which case he would let her go without harm. When Sayyidah Sārah رضی اللہ عنہا prayed for him and he returned to normal, he broke his promise and again tried to molest her and again became a cripple. This was repeated thrice and ultimately he gave up and sent back Sayyidah Sārah to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام . This is a summary of the *ḥadīth*. However, three lies have been ascribed to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام clearly in this *ḥadīth* which is against the position and dignity of the prophethood. But the *ḥadīth* contains in itself a refutation of this charge i.e. none of the three episodes reveal that a deliberate lie was told. They were mere dissimulations (تَوْرِيَه) which are permissible and legitimate if spoken in defense of oneself from cruelty and do not fall within the definition of a lie. The reasoning for this is given in the *ḥadīth* itself i.e. Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام had told Sayyidah Sārah that he had informed the ruler's men that she was his sister and that she should also say the same, because they were indeed brother and sister in the wider sense of universal Muslim brotherhood. This is called *tauriyah* (dissembling) where the words used may be interpreted differently, so that the listener understands them one way whereas the

speaker means something else. *Tauriyah* is permissible by consensus of Islamic jurists if used to save oneself from injustice. This is totally different from Shiite's Taqqiyah (تَقِيَّه), which is an outright lie. In Taqqaiya one does not only speak a lie but also acts on it, while in the case of *tauriyah* it is not a lie in the real sense as the speaker uses words which are capable of conveying his intentions as in the case of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام calling Sayyidah Sārah as his sister which was true in the sense that both were Muslims and Islam constitutes a universal brotherhood. Same argument can be put forward in the case of his other two utterances. It has been explained above that he said بَلْ فَعَلَهٗ كَبِيْرُهُمْ as a *tauriyah* to refer the act toward the big idol by way of metaphor (اسناد مجازی). As for his saying, اِنِّیْ سَقِيْمٌ , in common parlance the word Saqeem (سَقِيْم) means sick but it also means depressed, dejected, despondent and weak. Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام said اِنِّیْ سَقِيْمٌ in the latter sense which was absolutely true keeping in considering his feelings against the unbelievers, but the people took it in the popular sense i.e. sickness. Then the wording of the *ḥadīth* that two out of the three lies were to promote belief in the One and true Allah suggests that they were not sins, because no one can hope to please Allah by committing an act of sin.

It is sheer ignorance to deny the authenticity of the lies of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام

Some Muslims who are influenced by the writings of western orientalists and Mirza Qadyani have declared this saying as unauthentic despite the fact that its narrators are reliable persons, because it accuses Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام of lying which is against the spirit of Qur'ān, and that it is better to declare all the narrators of the saying as unreliable rather than to label Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام as a liar. From this they also made a rule that any saying, no matter how authentic its source might be, should be rejected if it is in conflict with the teachings of Qur'ān. This ruling is absolutely valid and acceptable to entire Ummah, but the point is that the religious scholars have spent all their lives in researching each and every *ḥadīth*, and none of those which they have accepted as authentic conflicts with the teachings of the Qur'ān. Such people lacking knowledge and being misguided do not hesitate to reject a *ḥadīth* and then justify the rejection by arguing that it is in conflict with the Qur'ān. In the present case the saying itself makes it clear that the words which

may be interpreted as lies is only *tauriyah*. As for the question why the words of *tauriyah* are called lies in the saying, the answer is that the slightest slip of those who are close to God is taken seriously, as can be seen in the previous Sūrah Ṭāhā when Sayyidnā 'Ādam's ﷺ slip and mistake is referred by the word عَصٰى (disobeyed - 21:121) and غَوٰى (got misled - 20:121). It can be seen that whereas small mistakes can be forgiven and set aside in the case of common people, the same slips are considered as serious offences when committed by those who are dear to Allah Ta'ālā. The Holy Qur'ān recounts at many places Allah's displeasure over prophets in such situations. The *ḥadīth* of *Shafā'ah* (intercession before Allah Ta'ālā) which is famous and well known says that on the Day of Resurrection all people will gather together and request prophets from Sayyidnā 'Ādam ﷺ upto the last prophet who came before the coming of the Holy Prophet ﷺ one by one for Shafā'ah (intercession) that they be judged quickly. Every prophet will excuse himself from Shafā'ah (intercession) recounting one or more of his slips or mistakes. At last the entire humanity will approach the last of the prophets Sayyidnā Muḥammad ﷺ and he will perform *ashshafa'ah al-kubrā*. According to this saying Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm ﷺ will excuse himself quoting these utterances which though said as *tauriyah* and were, therefore, not lies in actual fact, were, none the less, below the dignity of a prophet. This lapse has been described as a lie in the *ḥadīth*. This was well within the prerogative of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and to the extent of narration of this saying we too may repeat it. But it is not permitted to anyone, except, when quoting the Qur'ān or this *ḥadīth*, to say that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm ﷺ had told a lie. The same view has been taken by Qurṭubī and al-Baḥr ul-Muḥīṭ in the commentary of Sūrah Ṭā-Hā in connection with Sayyidnā Ādam ﷺ.

Reference to a delicate hint regarding sincerity of action arising from the saying

Out of the three lies which have been attributed to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm ﷺ in the saying two are said to be in the way of Allah Ta'ālā, but the third lie which was about Sayyidah Sārah رضى الله عنها was not said to be in the way of Allah Ta'ālā, although saving the chastity of one's wife is very much a part of religious duty. On this point, in the commentary by Qurṭubī, a very delicate suggestion by Qazi Abu Bakr Ibn Al-'Arabi has

been reproduced which is apt to shatter the peace of mind of the pious and God fearing persons: in saving the chastity of one's wife, though an act of religious duty, there was also an element of personal interest in protecting his wife's honour. Because of the mixed motives this third incident has been excluded from the category of acts which are performed for Allah Ta'ālā, because Allah Ta'ālā has said أَلَا لِلَّهِ الدِّينُ الْخَالِصُ (Look, to Allah alone belongs the pure faith - 39:3). Had some common man like us been involved in such an incident, then the act would have surely qualified as an act which are performed to win the goodwill of God. But in view of the exalted position of the prophets, the smallest degree of personal motive was regarded against the perfect quality of their devotion.

How the fire of Namrūd turned into pleasant garden for Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام

Those who do not believe in miracles and supernatural events have given strange meaning to this episode. The philosophical assumption: that attributes which are attached with and complementary to something are not separable - is by itself fallacious. The fact is that nothing in this world is essential to or inseparable from something else. God gave to fire an attribute that it should burn and to water that it should cool, but these attributes are customary and habitual but not rationally necessary. No philosopher has so for been able to advance a convincing argument about these attributes being rational.

Thus these attributes being only habitual, they can be changed whenever God so wills. If God so wills, fire can act as a coolant and water as a burning agent, and it cannot be held as rationally impossible. This is what happens when Allah Ta'ālā reveals His miracles in support of the missions of His prophets. Thus He commanded the fire of Namrūd to cool down and the fire obeyed, and if the word بَرْدًا (cool) was not followed by the word سَلَامًا (safe) the fire would have cooled like ice and would have caused him harm. The Qur'ān says about the people of Nūḥ عليه السلام when they were drowned in water that أُغْرِقُوا فَأُدْخِلُوا نَارًا (they were drowned, and admitted into a Fire - 71:25).

حَرِّقُوهُ (Burn him - 21:68) that is the entire community and Namrūd decided to burn him in fire. The historic version is that for full one month the entire population of the city were busy collecting fire wood for this

purpose. Then after lighting the fire wood they fanned it to make it burn ferociously for the next seven days, until the flames rose high up into the sky. When the fire blazed with full ferocity they decided to throw Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام into it. But the fire was burning with such intensity that no one dared to approach it. Then the Satan gave them the idea to use a catapult to throw him into the fire. While people were preparing to throw Allah's Friend (خليل) into the sea of fire all the angels and all the creatures of the earth and sky cried out in unison at the fate that lay in store for Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. At that Allah Ta'ālā permitted them all to help Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. When the angels asked Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام whether he needed their help. He replied that Allah was enough to help him and that He was watching over him. Jibra'īl al-Ameen عليه السلام enquired whether he could render him any help to which Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام replied, "of course I need help, but from Allah, not from you". (Mazharī)

قُلْنَا يٰنَارُ كُوْنِىْ بَرْدًا وَّسَلٰمًا عَلٰٓى اِبْرٰهِيْمَ (We said, "O fire, be cold and safe for Ibrāhīm." - 21:69) As stated above, one explanation of the fire becoming cool and comfortable for Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام could be that it ceased to be fire and changed into a pleasant breeze. However, the more plausible explanation is that the fire remained as fire but did not touch the body of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام , although it burnt other things around him, so much so that it even burnt down the rope which bound him.

According to some historic versions he remained in the fire for seven days and used to recall that those seven days were the most comfortable time of his entire life. (Mazharī)

وَنَجَّيْنٰهُ وَلُوْطًا اِلَى الْاَرْضِ الَّتِىْ بٰرَكْنَا فِيْهَا لِلْعٰلَمِيْنَ

And We rescued him and Lūṭ towards the land We blessed for all the worlds. - 71

That is, We delivered Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm and Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليهما السلام from the land ('Irāq) where Namrūd ruled and sent them to the peaceful land of Syria where our bounties were in abundance, not only for the locals but for the people of the world. Syrian land abounds both inwards and outwards bounties of Allah Ta'ālā. Inward bounties in the sense that many prophets were born in this land, and outward bounty in the sense that it has a moderate climate and is full of natural beauty with greenery,

springs and streams all around and sustains a large variety of vegetation, fruits and flowers.

وَوَهَبْنَا لَهٗٓ اِسْحٰقَ وَيَعْقُوْبَ نَافِلَةً (And We blessed him with Isḥāq and Ya'qūb as gift - 21:72) That is, Allah Ta'ālā had bestowed upon him the son Isḥāq ﷺ as per his supplication and in addition to that a grandson Ya'qūb ﷺ as a gift. This is why he is referred to as *nāfilah* which originally means 'extra'.

Verses 74 - 75

وَلُوْطًا اٰتَيْنٰهُ حُكْمًا وَّعِلْمًا وَّنَجَّيْنٰهُ مِنَ الْقَرْيَةِ الَّتِىْ كَانَتْ تَّعْمَلُ الْخَبٰٓئِثَ اِنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا قَوْمَ سَوْءٍ فٰسِقِيْنَ ﴿٧٤﴾ وَاَدْخَلْنٰهُ فِىْ رَحْمَتِنَا ط اِنَّهٗ مِنَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ ﴿٧٥﴾

As for Lūṭ, We gave him wisdom and knowledge and We delivered him from the town that used to do dirty deeds. Indeed, they were the people of evil, the sinners. [74] **And We admitted him to Our mercy. Indeed, He was of the righteous.** [75]

Commentary

The name of the city from which Sayyidnā Lūṭ ﷺ was saved and which has been mentioned in these verses was Sodom. There were seven other townships under this city which were thrown upside down by Jibra'īl ﷺ except one which was left intact for Lūṭ ﷺ and his followers. (Ibn 'Abbās, Qurṭubī)

(تَعْمَلُ الْخَبٰٓئِثَ 21:74) خَبَائِث (Khabā'ith) is the plural of خَبِيْثَه meaning wickedness. Too many wicked things collectively are called Khabā'ith (خبائث). Their most abominable practice in which even the animals do not indulge, was sodomy or homosexuality. It is possible that because of its extreme wicked nature this practice is referred to as خَبَائِث that is in plural instead of خَبِيْثَه in singular, as some commentators have explained. The second explanation is that the people of Sodom also indulged in other bad habits such as drinking, singing, shaving off beard, growing moustaches, wearing silk clothes, stone throwing, whistling etc. (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī).

Verses 76 - 77

وَنُوحًا إِذْ نَادٰى مِنْ قَبْلُ فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهٗ فَنَجَّيْنٰهُ وَاَهْلَهٗ مِنَ الْكَرْبِ الْعَظِيْمِ ﴿٧٦﴾ وَنَصَرْنٰهُ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا ۭ اِنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا قَوْمَ سَوْءٍ فَاَغْرَقْنٰهُمْ اَجْمَعِيْنَ ﴿٧٧﴾

And (remember) Nūḥ, when he called (for help) earlier, so We responded to him and saved him and his family from the terrible agony, [76] and helped him against the people who belied Our verses. Indeed, they were the people of evil, therefore, We drowned them all. [77]

Commentary

وَنُوحًا إِذْ نَادٰى مِنْ قَبْلُ

And (remember) Nūḥ, when he called (for help) earlier - 21:76

Here مِنْ قَبْلُ (earlier) means before the time of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm and Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليهما السلام , whose account has just preceded in previous verses. As for the prayer of Nūḥ عليه السلام, which is referred to here briefly, the version given in Sūrah Nūḥ is that Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام had cursed his people, رَبِّ لَا تَذَرْ عَلَى الْاَرْضِ مِنَ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ دَيَّارًا (My Lord, leave not upon the earth of the unbelievers even one - 71:26). It is reported at another place that when the people of Nūḥ عليه السلام did not listen to him at all, he prayed to Allah Ta'ālā اَنِّیْ مَغْلُوْبٌ فَانْتَصِرْ (I am vanquished; do Thou succour me! - 54:10) so You take revenge from them.

فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهٗ فَنَجَّيْنٰهُ وَاَهْلَهٗ مِنَ الْكَرْبِ الْعَظِيْمِ (So, We responded to him and saved him and his family from the terrible agony - 21:76) Here the expression 'terrible agony' either refers to the drowning in the deluge which annihilated the entire people or the torture which he and his followers suffered at the hands of those people.

Verses 78 - 82

وَدَاوٗدَ وَ سُلَيْمٰنَ اِذْ يَحْكُمٰنِ فِی الْحَرْثِ اِذْ نَفَشَتْ فِيْهِ غَنَمُ الْقَوْمِ ۚ وَكُنَّا لِحُكْمِهِمْ شٰهِدِيْنَ ﴿٧٨﴾ فَفَهَّمْنٰهَا سُلَيْمٰنَ ۚ وَكُلًّا اٰتَيْنَا حُكْمًا وَّ عِلْمًا ۫ وَّسَخَّرْنَا مَعَ دَاوٗدَ الْجِبَالَ يُسَبِّحْنَ وَالطَّيْرَ ۭ وَكُنَّا

فٰعِلِيْنَ ﴿٧٩﴾ وَعَلَّمْنٰهُ صَنْعَةَ لَبُوْسٍ لَّكُمْ لِتُحْصِنَكُمْ مِّنْۢ بَاْسِكُمْ ۚ فَهَلْ اَنْتُمْ شٰكِرُوْنَ ﴿٨٠﴾ وَلِسُلَيْمٰنَ الرِّيْحَ عَاصِفَةً تَجْرِيْ بِاَمْرِهٖٓ اِلَى الْاَرْضِ الَّتِيْ بٰرَكْنَا فِيْهَا ۭ وَكُنَّا بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٨١﴾ وَمِنَ الشَّيٰطِيْنِ مَنْ يَّغُوْصُوْنَ لَهٗ وَيَعْمَلُوْنَ عَمَلًا دُوْنَ ذٰلِكَ ۚ وَكُنَّا لَهُمْ حٰفِظِيْنَ ﴿٨٢﴾

And (remember) Dāwūd and Sulaymān, when they were adjudicating about the tillage, when the goats of the people wandered therein grazing, and We were witness to their judgment. [78] **So, We enabled Sulaymān to understand it. And to each one of them We gave wisdom and knowledge. And with Dāwūd We subjugated the mountains that proclaimed the purity of Allah, and the birds as well. And We were the One who did (it).** [79]

And We taught him making of armour as dress for you, to protect you from what may harm you (in combat). So are you grateful? [80] **And for Sulaymān, (We subjugated) the violent wind that blew under his command to the land in which We placed Our blessings. And We were the One who knew everything.** [81] **And from the devils, (We subjugated for him) those who dived in water for him and did jobs other than that. And We were the One who kept watch over them.** [82]

Commentary

نَفَشَتْ فِيْهِ غَنَمُ الْقَوْمِ (the goats of the people wandered therein grazing - 21:78). In Arabic language the word نَفش (translated above as 'wandering and grazing') means an animal getting into a field at night and damaging it.

فَفَهَّمْنٰهَا سُلَيْمٰنَ (So We enabled Sulaymān to understand it - 21:79). This expression means that Allah Ta'ālā had made known to Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام the judgment which was better. Although the judgment passed by Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام was not in conflict with religious jurisprudence, but the one adjudged by Sulaymān عليه السلام was inspired by Allah and was therefore, more appropriate because it benefitted both the parties without hurting either.

Imām Baghawī رحمه الله تعالى has reported this story on authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ and Qatādah and Zuhri that two persons came to Sayyidnā Dāwūd ؑ. One of them had a flock of goats and the other one owned a field on which he grew crops. The latter made a complaint against the former that his goats entered his field at night and ate up his crop (It appears that the respondent had accepted the petitioner's complaint and presumably the value of the flock of goats was equal to the value of the crop). Thus Sayyidnā Dāwūd ؑ announced his judgment that the owner of the goats should give his entire flock to the other man in compensation for his loss. (This judgment was in line with the religious jurisprudence which requires that if goods valued by a price are destroyed by someone, the amount of compensation will be determined according to that price. In this case, the value of the crop was the same as the value of the flock; hence the judgment. When these two men i.e. the complainant and the respondent, emerged from the court of Sayyidnā Dāwūd ؑ they met Sayyidnā Sulayman ؑ at the door. He enquired from them about the judgment of their case, which they related to him. After hearing the judgment he remarked that if he were the judge in this case his verdict would have been different, which would be to the benefit of both parties. Then he went to his father Sayyidnā Dāwūd ؑ and repeated the same thing. Thereupon Sayyidnā Dāwūd ؑ enquired from him as to what kind of verdict he had in mind which would be more beneficial to both the parties. He replied that it would be more just and equitable if the flock of goats is given to the owner of the field so that he could use to his own benefit their milk, wool etc. and his field is given to the goats-man who should cultivate it and grow crops in it. When the field returns to the same condition in which it was before it was eaten by the goats, then the two men should get back their respective properties. Sayyidnā Dāwūd ؑ approved this judgment, called back the two men and announced the second judgment to them. (Maẓharī, Qurṭubī, etc.)

Can the verdict of a Judge (Qāḍī) be changed or annulled after it has been announced?

It will be observed that Sayyidnā Dāwūd ؑ had pronounced a judgment which he revoked after hearing the views of Sayyidnā Sulaymān ؑ. Here a question arises whether a Qāḍī (Judge) has the authority to change his own verdict pronounced by him earlier.

Qurṭubī has discussed this and similar matters in great detail, the gist of which is that where a Qāḍī (Judge) has given a verdict which is in conflict with the religious jurisprudence or is contrary to the views held by the people at large, then, by consensus of the Ummah, such a verdict is not valid. Then it is not only permissible but mandatory on any other Qāḍī (Judge) to nullify the verdict and to issue a fresh judgment in line with religious jurisprudence, and also to remove the incompetent Qāḍī from his position of authority. But, if the judgment of a Qāḍī is based on religious jurisprudence and *Ijtihād* (اِجتِہاد) then it is not permissible for any other Qāḍīs (Judges) to revoke that judgment, because if this is allowed, the whole judicial system will collapse and Islamic Law will become a plaything in the hands of different people. However, if a Qāḍī, after passing a verdict according to the dictates of *Ijtihād* realizes that he had erred in his earlier judgment and *Ijtihād,* then it is allowed, rather preferable, that he himself should change the verdict. In a detailed letter which Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ wrote to Abū Mūsā al-Asha'ri ؓ elaborating the principles governing the administration of justice and disposal of court cases, he said that in case *Ijtihād* (اِجتِہاد) changes after announcing a judgment then the judgment should be changed to conform to the changed *Ijtihād* (اِجتِہاد) (This letter is reported by Dar Qutni).

According to great commentator (امام تفسیر) Mujāhid رحمہ اللہ تعالیٰ both the judgments are bona fide and correct in their own respective right. The verdict passed by Sayyidnā Dāwūd ؑ was strictly judicial, whereas the judgment made by Sayyidnā Sulaymān ؑ was in the nature of a compromise between the two parties. The Holy Qur'ān itself says وَالصُّلْحُ خَيْرٌ (And compromise is better - 4:129). That is why the second judgment was praised by Allah Ta'ālā. (Maẓharī)

Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ had instructed all his Qāḍīs (Judges) that when a dispute was raised before them, they should try to arrange a compromise between the parties. If a compromise was not possible, only then they should pass their judgment according to religious jurisprudence. The advantage in following this procedure, as he described it, was that in a legal judgment the loser has no option but to accept it, but at heart he develops a sense of hostility and hatred against his rival which is not healthy between the two Muslims. On the other hand, in the case of a compromise between the contesting parties, the element of hatred and ill

will is removed. (From Mu'in al-Ḥukkām)

Therefore, according to the explanation propounded by Mujāhid رحمه الله تعالى it was not a case of revoking or changing an earlier verdict, rather a compromise was willingly agreed between both the parties to the dispute, before they left the court.

If two *Mujtāhids* by their separate Ijtihād pass two conflicting verdicts, should both be regarded as valid or should one of them be rejected?

A number of commentators have discussed this subject briefly or in detail whether all *Mujtāhideen* (مُجتَهِدِيْن) be regarded as correct in their judgment (مُصِيب) and two opposing verdicts be taken as valid or, in case of conflict, one judgment be accepted and the other rejected. Qurṭubī has dealt this subject in great detail. Religious scholars have held different views on the subject from the very beginning, while projecting their reasoning. All have derived support for their views from this very verse. Those who support the argument that even conflicting verdicts are valid base their reasoning on the last sentence of the verse viz وَكُلًّا اٰتَيْنَا حُكْمًا وَّعِلْمًا (And to each one of them We gave wisdom and knowledge - 21:79). The sentence points out in clear terms that Allah Ta'ālā had bestowed wisdom and knowledge to both Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام and Sulaymān عليه السلام, and there is no admonition to the former, nor is he warned for any error on his part. Therefore it proves that both the judgments given by Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام and Sulaymān عليه السلام were correct and valid. However, the judgment given by Sulaymān عليه السلام was preferred because it was advantageous to both the parties. As for those who argue that in the event of an *Ijtihādi* (اِجتِهادِی) difference only one judgment can be correct and the other must be rejected as invalid, they too offer the first sentence of this very verse i.e. فَفَهَّمْنٰهَا سُلَيْمٰنَ (So, We enabled Sulaymān to understand it - 21:79) in support of their argument. They say that there is a specific reference to Sulaymān عليه السلام, to whom the correct decision was revealed by Allah. It, therefore, follows that the verdict announced by Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام was not right even though he might have arrived at this decision through his *Ijtihād* (اِجتِهاد) and was, therefore, free from all blame. This subject has been discussed in great detail in the books of jurisprudence. Here one should keep in mind that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said that if some one did *Ijtihād* (اِجتِهاد) and gave a decision in

accordance with the religious principles governing *Ijtihād* اِجْتِهاد , and his *Ijtihād* is correct, he will be granted two rewards one for the the labour involved in making the *Ijtihād,* and the other for arriving at the right decision. But if he erred in his *Ijtihād* he would still get one reward for just his labour. (This Ḥadīth is reported in most books of authoritative āḥadīth). This Ḥadīth also explains that the difference among the scholars on this issue is one of semantics only .

For those who believe that both the conflicting judgment are valid, the consequences are that for the erring *Mujtāhid* مُجْتَهِد as well as his followers that *Ijtihād* اِجْتِهاد is correct and acting upon it will lead to their salvation. As for the view that only one verdict is correct and the other is wrong, the consequence of that also is no more than that the reward of the erring *Mujtāhid* will be lesser because his *Ijtihād* fell short of the absolute right decision. However, he will be free from all blame and his followers will not be regarded as sinners. (Those who wish to see further details on the subject are advised to refer to Qurṭubī's commentary, where the subject is discussed in great detail).

The question of animals of a person harming another person or damaging his property

One can deduce from the verdict passed by Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام that if the animals of someone damage the property of a person at night, the owner of the animals will have to compensate the suffering party for his loss. However, it does not follow that a verdict given in accordance with the legal code of Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام must *ipso facto* be adopted in the Sharī'ah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ also. This is why there is a difference of opinion among the cardinal jurists on this issue. The ruling given by Imam Shafi'i رحمه الله تعالى says that if someone's animals damage the fields of another person at night, the owner of the animals will have to compensate for the loss, but if the animals damage the field during day time, then there shall be no compensation due on the owner of the animals. This ruling can be said to be drawn from the judgment of Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام also, but, in fact he has based his ruling on a saying of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, which has been reported in Muwaṭṭa' of Imām Mālik as Mursal (مُرْسَل). This *ḥadīth* concerns an incident in which a camel belonging to Sayyidnā Barā' Ibn 'Āzib رضي الله عنه entered someone's orchard and damaged it. The matter when reported to

the Holy Prophet ﷺ, he ruled that the responsibility for protecting these fields and orchards at night rested on the owners, but if in spite of all reasonable measures adopted by them, the animals damaged the crop, then the owner of the animals shall be required to compensate for the loss. On the other hand the Imām Azam Abū Ḥanīfah رحمه الله تعالى and other jurists of Kūfa School hold the view that if the owner or the shepherd is with the animals, and yet they damage the field or the orchard due to his negligence, then the compensation for the loss rests with the owner irrespective of whether the damage is caused during day or night. But where unattended animal wandered into somebody's field damaging the same without any negligence on the part of the owner, then the owner of the animals will not be held liable for compensation, regardless of the time of day or night when the damage is caused. Imām Abū Ḥanīfah رحمه الله تعالى has based this ruling on the Ḥadīth جرح العجماء جبَار (the wound caused by an animal is not compensated) which is reported by Bukhārī and Muslim and all other Scholars of Ḥadīth. It means that the owner of the animal is not bound to compensate the owner of the field for any loss caused by his animal (provided that the owner or the shepherd is not with the animal at the time of the damage). This saying has set the rule that irrespective of the time of day or night, if the animal has not been let loose deliberately by its owner into somebody's field and the animal has escaped, then the owner is not liable to make good the loss caused by his animal.

Glorification of Allah by birds and mountains

وَسَخَّرْنَا مَعَ دَاوٗدَ الْجِبَالَ يُسَبِّحْنَ وَالطَّيْرَ وَكُنَّا فٰعِلِيْنَ (And with Dāwūd We subjugated the mountains that proclaimed the purity of Allah, and the birds as well. And We were the One who did (it) - 21:79.) Allah Ta'ālā had granted Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام a melodious voice among the other outward absolute excellences. When he used to recite Zabūr the birds would stop in their flight and join him in recitation. In the same way the mountains and the trees used to produce sounds as if they were singing praises to glorify Allah. A melodious voice was an external attribute granted to him by Allah and the joining with him of the birds and the mountains in praising Allah with him was a miracle. Now, for a miracle to happen it is not necessary that the birds and the mountains must necessarily possess life and intelligence; rather a miracle can give intelligence and knowledge

to those objects which were without these attributes earlier. However scientific research has proved that rocks and mountains do have life and knowledge to a limited extent.

Among the companions Sayyidnā Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī ﷺ had a very sweet voice. Once the Holy Prophet ﷺ passed by him when he was reciting the Holy Qur'ān. The Holy Prophet ﷺ stopped and listened to the recitation. Then he ﷺ remarked that Allah Ta'ālā had granted him the sweet voice of Dāwūd ﷺ. When Abū Mūsā ﷺ learnt that the Holy Prophet ﷺ had been listening to his recitation, he said" Had I known that you were listening, I would have tried to recite with greater care".

The art of making armor was granted to Sayyidnā Dāwūd ﷺ by Allah Ta'ālā

وَعَلَّمْنٰهُ صَنْعَةَ لَبُوْسٍ لَّكُمْ (And We taught him making of armor as dress for you - 21:80) Lexically, the word لَبُوْس is used for anything which is worn in the neck for protection. Here it is used for armor which is used in battle for protection against enemy. In another verse Allah Ta'ālā says وَاَلَنَّا لَهُ الْحَدِيْدَ that is 'We softened for him iron'- 34:10). This means that either the iron used to become soft like wax in Sayyidnā Dāwūd's ﷺ hands or he was taught to heat it up to make it soft and then mould it, a practice which is used in the foundries today.

Skills beneficial to humanity are desirable and are like acts of prophets

The above verse also explains the benefit of the industry of the armor making i.e. لِتُحْصِنَكُمْ مِّنْ بَاْسِكُمْ (to protect you from what may harm you [in combat] - 21:80). This is a need which is felt universally both for religious and worldly purposes. That is why Allah Ta'ālā has said that He had taught this skill to Dāwūd ﷺ which was a gift to him. It therefore follows that the learning and teaching of any skill which serves the need of people is an act of virtue, provided it is meant for the good of people, and not merely for the monetary gain. Different prophets are known to have been engaged in different skills in their time. For instance Sayyidnā 'Ādam ﷺ used his skill in farming. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said that an industrialist producing his product with the intention of serving people is like the mother of Mūsā ﷺ who fed her own child and also got paid for her services. Similarly, an industrialist who sets before him the service of humanity as his ideal draws double benefit - one for serving people and

the other in the form of material gain from marketing his industrial products.

Making the air subservient to Sulaymān ﷺ and related matters

Hasan al-Basrī رحمه الله تعالى has narrated the following story. Once Sayyidnā Sulaymān ﷺ was inspecting his cavalry horses and got so engrossed in the inspection that he missed the 'Asr prayer. When he realized his lapse, he was very sorry, and removed these horses from service since they were the cause of this lapse. As this action was taken to win the goodwill of Allah and to atone for his negligence, Allah rewarded him by making the wind subservient to him, which is a superior and faster conveyance. Details of this event will appear with the commentary of the relevant verses of Sūrah Sād (سورة ص) *inshallah* .

وَلِسُلَيْمٰنَ الرِّيْحَ عَاصِفَةً (And for Sulaymān [We subjugated] the violent wind - 21:81) This sentence is a continuation of an earlier verse سَخَّرْنَا مَعَ دَاوُدَ (And with Dāwūd We subjugated - 21:79). Thus it means that just as Allah Ta'ālā had made birds and hills subservient to Dāwūd ﷺ who used to sing in praise of Allah while he recited the Zabūr, in the same way He made the wind subservient to Sulaymān ﷺ who used to fly on its wings swiftly wherever he wanted to go. It is worth noting here that while describing subservience of birds and hills for Dāwūd ﷺ the word مع (with) has been used, but the subservience of wind for Sulaymān ﷺ has been described using the letter لام (which means 'for'). In this there is a subtle hint that the subservience in both these cases was different. In the case of Dāwūd ﷺ the birds and hills used to sing praise of Allah with him simultaneously without any command from him. But in the case of Sulaymān ﷺ the wind acted according to his commands and carried him where and when he desired. (Rūh ul-Ma'ānī, with reference to Al-Baidawī).

Ibn Kathīr in his commentary has described in fair detail the platform on which Sayyidnā Sulaymān ﷺ was carried by the wind. It was made of wood and was of an enormous size which could accomodate him and all the functionaries of the government as well as the army alongwith their weapons, and the wind carried them all wherever it was commanded to go, covering two month's journey in one day.

Ibn Abī Hātim has narrated on the authority of Sayyidnā Sa'īd Ibn Jubair ﷺ that 600,000 six hundred thousand chairs were placed on this

platform on which humans who were also believers sat in front with Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام and behind them sat the believing Jinns. Then the birds were commanded to fly above the platform and protect it from the heat of the sun. Then by the command of Sulaymān عليه السلام the wind would take the platform to a specified destination. Some traditions report that throughout this aerial journey, Sulaymān عليه السلام used to sit with his head bowed down praying to and thanking Allah Ta'ālā in all humility and not turning his head to the right or to the left.

عَاصِفَةً (violent) Literal meaning of رِيْحٌ عَاصِفَةٌ is strong and violent wind. At another place in the Holy Qur'ān the attribute of this wind is given as رُخَاءً which means a mild breeze, which neither raises dust nor creates turbulence. On the face of it, these attributes are contradictory, but they can be reconciled in that whereas in itself it was so strong that it could accomplish two month's Journey in one day, yet it did not create any turbulence. It is reported that when this platform used to fly in the air, no birds were ever harmed due to velocity of the wind.

Subservience of Jinns and satans to Sulaymān عليه السلام

وَمِنَ الشَّيٰطِيْنِ مَنْ يَّغُوْصُوْنَ لَهٗ وَيَعْمَلُوْنَ عَمَلاً دُوْنَ ذٰلِكَ ۚ وَكُنَّا لَهُمْ حٰفِظِيْنَ (And from the devils, (We subjugated for him) those who dived in water for him and did jobs other than that. And We were the One who kept watch over them. - 21:82) That is, Allah made the satan jinn subservient to Sulaymān عليه السلام and they used to dive in the rivers fishing pearls for him. Apart from this, they used to perform other jobs for him, some of which are mentioned in other verses.

يَعْمَلُوْنَ لَهٗ مَا يَشَآءُ مِنْ مَّحَارِيْبَ وَتَمَاثِيْلَ وَ جِفَانٍ كَالْجَوَابِ That is ("Fashioning for him whatsoever he would - places of worship, statues, porringers like water-troughs - 34:13). Sulaymān عليه السلام also used to put them to hard labour and make them work in different projects.

Satans

These are ethereal beings made of fire, who possess intelligence and understanding and are obligated to follow the laws of Sharī'ah like humans. Those beings who fulfill these conditions are described by the word Jinn, while those among them who disobey the rules of Shari'ah and persist in their unbelief are called satans. It is obvious that all Jinns were made subservient to Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام whether they were

believers or unbelievers. However, the believers regarded it as their religious duty to obey his wishes even before they were formally placed under his command, and there was no need to make a specific mention of their being placed under subservience to Sulaymān عليه السلام. Hence in the context of the Jinns being made subservient to Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام the reference is to satans (unbelieving Jinns) only. They were made to obey him despite their unbelief and defiance. Perhaps, it is for this reason that a sentence is added at the end of the verse saying, "We alone kept watch over them". Sulaymān عليه السلام was exposed to danger from the unbelieving Jinns, but Allah was his protector and they could do him no harm.

It will be observed that while in the case of Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام Allah Ta'ālā had made subservient to him things which are extremely hard and dense, like iron and mountains, Sulaymān عليه السلام was given mastery over things which are ethereal and cannot even be perceived e.g. wind and Jinn. This shows that He is omnipotent and that His authority extends over all created things. (Commentary by Ra'zi)

Verses 83 - 84

وَأَيُّوبَ إِذْ نَادَىٰ رَبَّهُ أَنِّي مَسَّنِيَ الضُّرُّ وَأَنتَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمِينَ ﴿٨٣﴾ فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ فَكَشَفْنَا مَا بِهِ مِن ضُرٍّ وَآتَيْنَاهُ أَهْلَهُ وَمِثْلَهُم مَّعَهُمْ رَحْمَةً مِّنْ عِندِنَا وَذِكْرَىٰ لِلْعَابِدِينَ ﴿٨٤﴾

And (remember) Ayyūb, when he called his Lord saying, "Here I am, afflicted by pain and You are the most merciful of all the merciful." [83] **So, We answered his prayer and removed whatever pain he had, and gave him (back) his family and the like thereof alongwith them, as a mercy from Our own Self and as a lesson for the worshippers.** [84]

Commentary

Story of Sayyidnā Ayyūb عليه السلام

The story of Sayyidnā Ayyūb عليه السلام is based mostly on Jewish legends. Those which are considered as historically reliable by scholars of *ḥadīth* are being reproduced here. The Holy Qur'ān tells us only that he suffered

from some serious disease but he endured his suffering with fortitude. Ultimately he prayed to Allah for recovery which was granted. During his illness all his family members and friends disappeared. They either died or just abandoned him to his fate. Then Allah Ta'ālā restored him to complete health and gave him back all his children and also an equal number in addition. The remaining elements of this story have come down to us either through authentic sayings or by way of historical accounts. Ḥafiẓ Ibn Kathīr has recorded the story as follows:

Allah Ta'ālā had bestowed upon Sayyidnā Ayyūb عليه السلام, in the early days of his life, all sorts of material comforts such as wealth, property, magnificent houses, children, servants and attendants. But later he faced a trial whereby the prophets are normally tested by Allah, and was deprived of all these comforts. Moreover he suffered from a serious disease which was like leprosy and which affected his whole body except the heart and the tongue. In this miserable condition too he spent his time in prayers and in giving thanks to Allah Ta'ālā with his heart and tongue. Because of this serious illness all his relatives, friends and neighbors avoided him and placed him near a garbage-dump outside the city. Nobody went near him except his wife who used to take care of him. She was either the daughter or grand daughter of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام and her name was Layya daughter of Mīsha Ibn Yūsuf عليه السلام. (Ibn Kathīr) All his wealth having been lost, she worked and earned a living for him and for herself and also nursed him in his illness. The ordeal of Sayyidnā Ayyūb عليه السلام was nothing new, nor something to be wondered at. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said اشدّ النّاس بلاء الانبياء ثمّ الصّالحون ثمّ الامثل فالامثل that is the prophets face the most severe tests, and then come the other believers according to their degree of piety. In another tradition it is reported that every man is tested according to his adherence and devotion to religion. The stronger his beliefs, the harder is the test to which he is subjected, so that his rewards are in proportion to his sufferings. Sayyidnā Ayyūb عليه السلام occupies a distinctive position among all the prophets for firmness in his devotion and endurance in his sufferings in the same manner as Dāwūd عليه السلام enjoyed distinction for offering thanks to Allah Ta'ālā. Sayyidnā Ayyūb عليه السلام is a model of endurance and fortitude in the most trying circumstances. Yazīd Ibn Maisara reports that when Allah Ta'ālā deprived him of all his worldly possessions and subjected him to a severe ordeal, he concentrated all his mind and efforts upon the sole purpose of

remembering Allah Ta'ālā and offering prayers to Him. While thanking Allah Ta'ālā for all sorts of worldly comforts and children granted to him ealier and whose love had filled his heart completely, he also thanked Him for their total withdrawal because nothing remained to distract him from total devotion to Allah Ta'ālā.

The invocation of Sayyidnā Ayyūb عليه السلام *is not counter to patience*

The ordeal of Sayyidnā Ayyūb عليه السلام was very severe indeed. He not only lost all his worldly possessions but was also afflicted by a terrible disease because of which people avoided his company. He spent seven years and some months lying near a garbage dump outside the city, but never once did he lose his heart nor did he ever utter a word of complaint about his fate. His wife, Layya once asked him to pray to Allah for His Mercy as his sufferings had become unbearable, to which he replied that having enjoyed for seventy years the best of health surrounded by all the luxuries that money could buy, it would be unworthy of him to complain because a mere seven years has been spent in pain and poverty. His firm prophetic resolve, self-descipline and fortitude prevented him from beseeching Allah Ta'ālā's mercy on his condition, lest it should be construed as an act contrary to the unquestioning submission to the will of Allah Ta'ālā (Although to invoke Allah's Mercy for relief from sufferings does not mean absence of fortitude). Ultimately something happened which made him pray to Allah Ta'ālā for His Mercy but as mentioned earlier this was just a prayer and did not express a sense of complaint. As such Allah Ta'ālā has put His seal in acknowledgment of his extreme endurance in these words إِنَّا وَجَدْنٰهُ صَابِرًا (Surely We found him a steadfast man - 38:44). There are numerous versions of this story which have been omitted for their length.

Ibn Abī Ḥātim has reported on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنهما that when Sayyidnā Ayyūb's عليه السلام supplication was granted, he was told to rub his heels on the ground and a stream of fresh and clear water would gush forth. He should then bathe himself in the water and also drink it, and the disease would disappear. Sayyidnā Ayyūb عليه السلام did as he was told and in no time his body, which was covered with boils and was reduced to skin and bones regained its original shape and health. Allah Ta'ālā sent him garments from Paradise which he wore

and sat down in a corner away from the garbage dump. His wife came to see him as usual and when she did not find him, she started crying. She did not recognize Ayyūb عليه السلام who was sitting nearby in a corner because his appearance had changed completely. Then she turned to him and asked him if he had any information about the sick man who was lying there, and whether he had gone somewhere or had been eaten up by dogs and wolves. She spoke to him for some time without realizing that the man was none other than her husband. Then Sayyidnā Ayyūb عليه السلام revealed himself, but even then she did not recognize him and asked him why he was making fun of her. Sayyidnā Ayyūb عليه السلام then told her to look at him again and try to recognize him. He also informed her that Allah Ta'ālā had healed his body after he invoked His Mercy. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه reports that after this, Allah Ta'ālā restored to him all his wealth and children and gave him more children equal in number to the children which he had before (Ibn Kathīr).

Sayyidnā Ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه says that Sayyidnā Ayyūb عليه السلام had seven sons and seven daughters but they all died while he was undergoing the ordeal. When his days of hardship were over, his children were brought back to life by Allah Ta'ālā and his wife also gave birth to as many more children, to which the Qur'ān refers to as وَمِثْلَهُمْ مَّعَهُمْ (and the like thereof alongwith them - 21:84). According to Tha'labi this version is closer to the text of the Qur'ān. (Qurṭubī)

Some scholars say that he was granted as many new children as he had before and the word مِثْل (the like) refers to an equal number of grand children. (Only Allah knows best).

Verses 85 - 86

وَإِسْمٰعِيلَ وَإِدْرِيسَ وَذَا الْكِفْلِ ۖ كُلٌّ مِّنَ الصّٰبِرِينَ ﴿٨٥﴾ وَأَدْخَلْنٰهُمْ فِي رَحْمَتِنَا ۖ إِنَّهُمْ مِّنَ الصّٰلِحِينَ ﴿٨٦﴾

And (remember) Isma'īl and Idrīs and Dhul-Kifl. Each one of them was of those who observed patience. [85] **And We admitted them to Our mercy. Surely, they were**

of the righteous. [86]

Commentary

Whether Sayyidnā Dhul-Kifl was a prophet or a saint and his strange story

Three persons are mentioned in the above two verses. Out of these three there is no doubt about the prophethood of Sayyidnā Isma'īl عليه السلام and Sayyidnā Idrīs عليه السلام as they are mentioned in the Qur'ān as such several times. Ibn Kathīr is of the opinion that the mention of the name of Sayyidnā Dhul-Kifl alongwith the other two prophets in the above verse shows that he too was a prophet. However, some other versions do not include him in the category of prophets. They say that he was a saint or a pious person.

Imām of Tafsīr Ibn Jarīr رحمه الله تعالى has reported on the authority of Mujāhid رحمه الله تعالى that where Sayyidnā Yasa' عليه السلام (who is referred to as a prophet in the Holy Qur'ān) became old and weak, he thought of appointing some one who could perform the duties of a prophet on his behalf during his life time. He assembled all his companions for this purpose and told them of his desire to appoint someone who would act as his deputy but who must fulfill three conditions namely that he should fast all the year round, should spend the nights in prayers and does not ever lose his temper. A relatively unknown person who was held in contempt by the people, stood up and offered himself for the job. Sayyidnā Yasa' عليه السلام asked him whether he fasted all the year round, spent his nights in prayers and never lost his temper. The man replied in the affirmative and confirmed that he fulfilled all the three conditions. Perhaps Sayyidnā Yasa' عليه السلام did not believe his claim and rejected him. After a few days Sayyidnā Yasa' عليه السلام reconvened the meeting and repeated his conditions and asked his companions if any of them met the requirements. Everyone remained seated but the same man stood up again and claimed that he fulfilled the three conditions. Then Yasa' عليه السلام appointed him his deputy. When Satan realized that Sayyidnā Dhul-Kifl had been selected as a deputy to Yasa' عليه السلام he asked all his aides to go to Sayyidnā Dhul-Kifl and inveigle him into doing something which would result in his removal from the post of deputy. All his aides excused themselves and said that he was beyond their power to harm. The Satan (Iblīs) then said "Alright, leave him to me. I will take care of him."

Sayyidnā Dhul-Kifl, true to his claim, used to fast during the day and pray the whole night and had a little nap in the afternoon. Satan went to him just when he was about to take his afternoon nap and knocked at the door. He got up and enquired who was there. The Satan replied "I am an old tortured man". So he opened the door and let him in. The Satan came in and started a yarn about the cruelty and injustice which he suffered at the hands of his community and relatives. He stretched the story so long that no time was left for Sayyidnā Dhul-Kifl to take his usual nap. So, he told the old man (Satan) that he should come to him at the time when he came out, and he would cause justice to be done to him.

Later on Sayyidnā Dhul-Kifl sat in his court and waited for the old man but he did not turn up. Next morning he again waited for the old man in his court but again he did not come. Then in the afternoon when he was about to have his nap, the old man came and started beating at the door. He enquired who he was, and the Satan replied again - "an old tortured man" so, he opened the door and asked him "Didn't I tell you to come to my court yesterday but you failed to appear, nor did you come this morning?" To this the Satan answered "Sir, my enemies are very wicked people; when they learnt that you were sitting in your court and would force them to give back to me what was my due, they agreed to settle the matter out of court. But as soon as you left your court, they went back on their promise". Sayyidnā Dhul-Kifl asked him again to come to his court when he was there. All this conversation continued for such a long time that he could not have his usual nap on that day also. He then went to the court and waited for the old man, who again did not turn up. The next day again he waited for him until late in the noon but to no avail. When he returned home on that day, he was very sleepy because of lack of sleep for last two days. Therefore, he asked the family members not to allow any one to knock at the door. The old man came again and wanted to knock at the door but the family members stopped him, so he entered the house through a ventilator, and started knocking at the door of his room, Sayyidnā Dhul-Kifl got up again and saw that the old man had come inside the house while the door was still closed. So he asked him as to how he had entered the house.

Then suddenly he became aware that the man standing before him

was Satan and asked him "Are you the God's enemy Iblīs?" He admitted that he was Satan and remarked, "You have thwarted all my plans and frustrated all my efforts to entice you in my design. My intention was to make you angry somehow, so that one of your claims before Yasa' عليه السلام could be proved false." It was because of this episode that he was given the title Dhul-Kifl, which means a person who is true to his covenant and performs his duties faithfully, and this title was fully deserved by him. (Ibn Kathīr)

Another narrative is quoted in Masnād of Aḥmad but has the name of the person Alkifl instead of Dhul-Kifl. That is why Ibn Kathīr has observed after quoting this narrative that he was a different person and not Dhul-Kifl, who is mentioned in this verse. The narrative is as follows:

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar رضي الله عنه has reported that he had heard a *ḥadīth* (حديث) from the Holy Prophet ﷺ not once, but more than seven times that there was a man by the name Kifl among the Banī Isrā'īl who did not abstain from any type of sin. Once a woman came to him and he persuaded her to have sexual intercourse with him on payment of sixty guineas. When he got down to start the intercourse, the woman started crying and trembling. So he enquired from her as to what the matter was because he had not used any kind of force on her. The woman replied that the cause of her distress was that she had never in all her life committed adultery and that it was only her adverse circumstances which had forced her to agree to the act. Hearing this the man got up and told her to go away and keep the money he had given her. He also promised her that he would never again indulge in any sin. Then it so happened that he died the same night and in the morning it was seen that there was a hidden writing on his door that Kifl had been pardoned by Allah غفرالله للكفل. Ibn Kathīr observed after quoting this from Masnad of Ahmad that none of the six authentic books on ḥadīth has reported this tradition and its authority is weak. Even if the tradition is true, it mentioned the name as Kifl and not Dhul-Kifl, which means he was some other person. (Allah knows best).

The sum and substance of this story is that Dhul-Kifl was the deputy of Prophet Yasa' عليه السلام and it is possible that because of his virtuous deeds

his name has been mentioned along with prophets. It is also possible that initially he was the deputy of Sayyidnā Yasa' عليه السلام and later on he was elevated to the status of a prophet by Allah Ta'ālā.

Verses 87 - 88

وَذَا النُّوْنِ اِذْ ذَّهَبَ مُغَاضِبًا فَظَنَّ اَنْ لَّنْ نَّقْدِرَ عَلَيْهِ فَنَادٰى فِى الظُّلُمٰتِ اَنْ لَّآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّآ اَنْتَ سُبْحٰنَكَ ۖ اِنِّىْ كُنْتُ مِنَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٨٧﴾ فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهٗ ۙ وَنَجَّيْنٰهُ مِنَ الْغَمِّ ۗ وَكَذٰلِكَ نُنْجِى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿٨٨﴾

And (remember) Dhunnūn (the man of the fish, namely Yūnus), when he walked away in anger and thought that We will never put him to trouble. Then, he called (Us) in depths of darkness saying, "There is no god but You. Pure are You. Indeed I was among the wrongdoers". [87] **So We responded to him and rescued him from the distress. And this is how We rescue the believers.** [88]

Commentary

وَذَا النُّوْنِ (21:87) The story of Sayyidnā Yūnus Ibn Mattā عليه السلام appears in the Holy Qur'ān in Sūrah Yūnus, Sūrah Al-Anbiyā', Sūrah As-Ṣaffāt and Surah Nūn. At some places he is mentioned by his real name and at others by the title as *Dhunnūn* or *Sahibul Ḥūt*. The meaning of Nūn and *Ḥūt* both is fish. Thus, *Dhunnūn* and *Sahibul Ḥūt* can be translated as man of the fish. Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام remained inside the stomach of a fish for a few days in very odd circumstances by the will of Allah. It is because of this episode that he is sometimes referred to as *Dhunnūn* or *Sahib Al-Hut*.

The Story of Yūnus عليه السلام

According to the commentary by Ibn Kathīr, Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام was sent to preach Allah's message among the people of Nineveh which is a township in the region of Mousel. Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام invited them towards Islam and asked them to follow the true religion and perform good deeds, but they rejected his call and behaved in an arrogant and defiant manner. Being dejected and annoyed, Yūnus عليه السلام left the place after warning them that Allah's wrath would descend upon them within three days. After he had departed from the township, the people realized

that his warning might come true. (According to some versions they had actually seen the signs of the impending disaster). So they repented and asked pardon for their sins and the entire population retired to a forest with their cattle and animals. Then they started lamenting and bewailing and invoked Allah's forgiveness and protection. Allah Ta'ālā accepted their sincere contrition and wailing over their sins and released them from the fear of the impending disaster. While all these events were taking place, Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام waited expecting the news about the destruction of his people. But when he learnt that the storm had passed and his people were safe and sound, he worried that they would regard him as a liar. According to some versions, it was customary with his people to execute a person if he was proved a liar. (Maẓharī). Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام, therefore, feared for his life and decided to go away to some other place rather than returning to his own people. He came across a river on his way and boarded a boat to cross it. While crossing the river it so happened that the boat was caught in a whirlpool and was in danger of sinking. The boatmen decided that if one of the passengers was off loaded from the boat the chances were that the rest of them would be saved from drowning. So they cast lots to decide as to who should be off-loaded. As luck would have it they drew the name of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام . It seems that the boatmen were aware of his exalted position and they refused to throw him in the river. The lot was drawn a second and then a third time and his name was drawn on both occasions. This episode has been mentioned elsewhere in the Holy Qur'ān in the following words: فَسَاهَمَ فَكَانَ مِنَ الْمُدْحَضِينَ (and cast lots, and was of the rebutted - 37:141). Thereupon Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام got up, took off the extra clothes which he was wearing and threw himself in the river. Immediately a fish from the Caspian Sea arrived on the scene as commanded by Allah Ta'ālā and swallowed Yūnus عليه السلام . (as reported by Ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه). The fish was further commanded by Allah Ta'ālā that he was not to be taken for food, that no harm was to be done to his body (both flesh and bones) and that he was only to be held as a prisoner in its stomach for a few days. (Ibn Kathīr)

There are references in the Qur'ān that Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام earned Allah Ta'ālā's displeasure when he left his people without His specific command and his stay for a few days in the stomach of the fish was a sign of Allah's displeasure for his lapse.

It is safe to assume that the warning of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام to his people about their imminent destruction within three days was not the outcome of his own judgment but was based on Divine revelations. Similarly, his dissociation from his people was nothing new and was in line with the practice of other prophets in similar situations and must, therefore, also have been done by the command and approval from Allah Ta'ālā. So, upto this point there seems nothing to be wrong in his conduct which would deserve Allah Ta'ālā's displeasure. But later on when Allah Ta'ālā accepted the genuine remorse and repentance of the people and released them from the fear of destruction, it was to be expected that Yūnus عليه السلام would return to his people. But his decision not to return to them and go away from them was based on his own judgment (اِجْتِهَاد). He reasoned that if he returned to them, they would regard him as a liar and his teachings would be rendered ineffectual and fruitless. There was also the danger that he might have been taken and executed. For these reasons he was hopeful that his parting with his people would not be a reprehensible act before Allah Ta'ālā. Although his decision to migrate was based on his personal judgment (Ijtihad اِجْتِهَاد) without waiting for a clear direction from Allah Ta'ālā, yet it did not constitute a sin. Nevertheless for a prophet to take a decision on his own without waiting for the revelation (وَحِی) from Allah Ta'ālā was not liked by Him. This was not a crime but an act which was not desirable. The status of the prophets and His closed ones is highly exalted and it is expected of them not to indulge even in such undesirable acts. The slightest lapse on their part is subjected to Allah's displeasure and reproach from Him, and that is why he faced this hardship.

It is quoted in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī from al-Qushairi that this had happened to Yūnus عليه السلام when the tempest was removed from his people, which was against his wish and that his stay in the stomach of the fish for a few days was more of a reformatory measure than punishment, as sometimes people warn their young children and take reformatory measures against them. (Qurṭubī)

After learning the background of the episode it would be easier to understand the meanings of the verses which is as follows.

ذَهَبَ مُغَاضِبًا (he walked away in anger 21:87) It is obvious that the anger was against his own people. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه has explained it as such.

فَظَنَّ اَنْ لَّنْ نَّقْدِرَ عَلَيْهِ (and thought We will never put him to trouble - 21:87) Lexically the word نَقْدِر has three different meanings: If it is derived from قُدْرَة the meaning would be that Sayyidnā Yūnus ﷺ imagined that Allah Ta'ālā would not be able to gain mastery over him. This is obviously an unacceptable explanation as no Muslim can ever entertain such thoughts in his mind, least of all a prophet of Allah. Alternatively if it is considered that the word نَقْدِر is derived from قَدَر then the meaning would be to straighten or narrow down, as the Qur'an says:

اَللّٰهُ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَّشَاۤءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهٖ وَيَقْدِرُ لَهٗ (Allah extends provision to whom He wills and straitens it.) The Imāms of Tafsīr Ata', Sa'īd Ibn Jubair, Ḥasan Baṣrī and many other scholars have adopted this interpretation, and therefore the meaning of the verse would be that Yūnus ﷺ thought that he would not be put in a straitened condition by Allah Ta'ālā if he abandoned his people. This second explanation is adopted by most commentators (and the translation of the text as appeared above is based on it). The third possibility is that نَقْدِر is a derivative of تَقْدِيْر in which case the verse would mean that Yūnus ﷺ was sure that he would not be blamed if he dissociated himself from his people. Qatādah, Mujāhid and Farrā' have adopted this explanation.

The prayer of Yūnus ﷺ is invoked by all people at all times and for all their needs

وَكَذٰلِكَ نُنْجِي الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ (And this is how We rescue the believers - 21:87.) That is, just as We released Yūnus ﷺ from his misery and distress, so do We deliver other believers (مُؤْمِنِيْن) when they turn towards Us repenting their sins sincerely.

According to a *ḥadīth* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ if a Muslim prays to Allah Ta'ālā for the grant of a wish in the words used by Yūnus ﷺ when he was in the stomach of the fish i.e. لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّآ اَنْتَ سُبْحٰنَكَ اِنِّيْ كُنْتُ مِنَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ (21:87) He would accept his prayer and grant his wish. (Aḥmad, Tirmidhī, Maẓharī)

Verses 89 - 90

وَزَكَرِيَّآ اِذْ نَادٰى رَبَّهٗ رَبِّ لَا تَذَرْنِيْ فَرْدًا وَّاَنْتَ خَيْرُ الْوٰرِثِيْنَ ﴿٨٩﴾

فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهٗ ز وَوَهَبْنَا لَهٗ يَحْيٰى وَاَصْلَحْنَا لَهٗ زَوْجَهٗ ط اِنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا

يُسٰرِعُوْنَ فِى الْخَيْرٰتِ وَيَدْعُوْنَنَا رَغَبًا وَّرَهَبًا ۭ وَكَانُوْا لَنَا خٰشِعِيْنَ ﴿٩٠﴾

And (remember) Zakariyyā when he called his Lord, "O my Lord do not leave me alone and You are the best of inheritors." [89] **So, We responded to him and gave him Yaḥyā and made his wife good for him. They used to race towards the good deeds and call Us with hope and fear; and they were humble to Us.** [90]

Commentary

Sayyidnā Zakariyyā عليه السلام wished for a son and heir for which he prayed to Allah. But at the same time he made it clear that Allah is the best heir no matter if he had a son or not (اَنْتَ خَيْرُ الْوٰرِثِيْنَ You are the best of inheritors - 21:89). This was the manifestation of the prophetic respect in that the main concern of the prophets should always be toward Allah Ta'ālā, and even if some one else came into focus, their attention should not deviate from the main objective.

يَدْعُوْنَنَا رَغَبًا وَّ رَهَبًا (and call Us with hope and fear - 21:90). This may be interpreted to mean that they call Allah Ta'ālā both in comfort and distress. The other explanation of the verse is that during their prayers they remain suspended between hope and fear hoping that Allah would forgive their sins and fearing that their lapses may bring on them His displeasure.

Verse 91

وَالَّتِىْٓ اَحْصَنَتْ فَرْجَهَا فَنَفَخْنَا فِيْهَا مِنْ رُّوْحِنَا وَجَعَلْنٰهَا وَ ابْنَهَآ اٰيَةً لِّلْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٩١﴾

And (remember) her who protected her private part. So, We blew in her (a life) through Our Spirit, and made her and her son a sign for all the worlds. [91]

Commentary

This verse directs the Holy Prophet ﷺ to tell his people the story of the pious lady who controlled her passions and then through Jibra'āil عليه السلام Allah had breathed His Spirit into her and she gave birth to a son (Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام) who was a symbol of Allah's Divine Power that He can cause babies to be born without a father, and also without both the

parents as in the case of Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام.

Verses 92 - 105

إِنَّ هٰذِهٖٓ أُمَّتُكُمْ أُمَّةً وَّاحِدَةً ۖ وَّأَنَا رَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوْنِ ﴿۹۲﴾ وَتَقَطَّعُوْٓا
أَمْرَهُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ ۭ كُلٌّ إِلَيْنَا رٰجِعُوْنَ ﴿۹۳﴾ فَمَنْ يَّعْمَلْ مِنَ الصّٰلِحٰتِ
وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَا كُفْرَانَ لِسَعْيِهٖ ۚ وَإِنَّا لَهٗ كٰتِبُوْنَ ﴿۹۴﴾ وَحَرٰمٌ عَلٰى
قَرْيَةٍ أَهْلَكْنٰهَآ أَنَّهُمْ لَا يَرْجِعُوْنَ ﴿۹۵﴾ حَتّٰىٓ إِذَا فُتِحَتْ يَأْجُوْجُ
وَمَأْجُوْجُ وَهُمْ مِّنْ كُلِّ حَدَبٍ يَّنْسِلُوْنَ ﴿۹۶﴾ وَاقْتَرَبَ الْوَعْدُ
الْحَقُّ فَإِذَا هِيَ شَاخِصَةٌ أَبْصَارُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا ۭ يٰوَيْلَنَا قَدْ كُنَّا فِيْ
غَفْلَةٍ مِّنْ هٰذَا بَلْ كُنَّا ظٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿۹۷﴾ إِنَّكُمْ وَمَا تَعْبُدُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ
حَصَبُ جَهَنَّمَ ۭ أَنْتُمْ لَهَا وٰرِدُوْنَ ﴿۹۸﴾ لَوْ كَانَ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ اٰلِهَةً مَّا
وَرَدُوْهَا ۭ وَكُلٌّ فِيْهَا خٰلِدُوْنَ ﴿۹۹﴾ لَهُمْ فِيْهَا زَفِيْرٌ وَّهُمْ فِيْهَا لَا
يَسْمَعُوْنَ ﴿۱۰۰﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ سَبَقَتْ لَهُمْ مِّنَّا الْحُسْنٰى ۙ أُولٰٓئِكَ عَنْهَا
مُبْعَدُوْنَ ﴿۱۰۱﴾ لَا يَسْمَعُوْنَ حَسِيْسَهَا ۚ وَهُمْ فِيْ مَا اشْتَهَتْ
أَنْفُسُهُمْ خٰلِدُوْنَ ﴿۱۰۲﴾ لَا يَحْزُنُهُمُ الْفَزَعُ الْأَكْبَرُ وَتَتَلَقّٰهُمُ
الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ ۭ هٰذَا يَوْمُكُمُ الَّذِيْ كُنْتُمْ تُوْعَدُوْنَ ﴿۱۰۳﴾ يَوْمَ نَطْوِي
السَّمَآءَ كَطَيِّ السِّجِلِّ لِلْكُتُبِ ۭ كَمَا بَدَأْنَآ أَوَّلَ خَلْقٍ نُّعِيْدُهٗ ۭ
وَعْدًا عَلَيْنَا ۭ إِنَّا كُنَّا فٰعِلِيْنَ ﴿۱۰۴﴾ وَلَقَدْ كَتَبْنَا فِي الزَّبُوْرِ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ
الذِّكْرِ أَنَّ الْأَرْضَ يَرِثُهَا عِبَادِيَ الصّٰلِحُوْنَ ﴿۱۰۵﴾

Surely, this is the fraternity of your Faith, a single Faith, and I am your Lord; so worship Me. [92]

And they split up their ways from one another. All of them have to return to Us. [93] **So, the one who does righteous deeds, while he is a believer, his effort will not be rejected and We are to put it on record.** [94]

It is banned for (the people of) a town We destroyed that they come back [95] **until when the Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj (Gog and Magog) are released, while they run down from every height,** [96] **and the True Promise draws near, then suddenly the eyes of the disbelievers shall remain upraised (in terror and they will say,) "Woe to us! We were neglectful to this; rather we were transgressors indeed."** [97]

Surely, you and whatever you worship other than Allah are the fuel of Jahannam. There you will have to arrive. [98] **Had they been gods, they would not have arrived at it. And all of them will remain there forever.** [99] **There are screams for them therein and they will not hear.** [100] **Surely, those for whom the good (news) from Us has come earlier shall be kept far away from it.** [101] **They will not hear the slightest of its sound, and they will remain for ever in what their selves desire.** [102] **They shall not be grieved by the Biggest Panic, and the angels shall receive them (saying), "This is your day that you had been promised"** [103] **- the Day when We roll up the sky like a scroll rolls up the writings. As We originated the first creation, We shall bring it back again - a promise (undertaken to be binding) on Us. We are sure to do it.** [104] **And We have written in Zabūr (Psalms) after the Dhikr (the Torah) that the land will be inherited by My righteous slaves.** [105]

Commentary

So far the Sūrah deals with the stories of the prophets and several basic as well as minor principles relevant to those stories. The basic beliefs such as Oneness of God, prophethood and the day of Resurrection are common to all prophets and are the foundation of their invitation to the people to follow the True Faith.

وَحَرَامٌ عَلٰى قَرْيَةٍ اَهْلَكْنٰهَا اَنَّهُمْ لَايَرْجِعُوْنَ (It is banned for (the people of) a town We destroyed that they come back - 21:95.) Commentators have given two different meanings to this verse. One, that the town and its people which Allah Ta'ālā has destroyed cannot come back to life. The second explanation is that it is binding on the town which Allah has destroyed that it shall not return to this world. (Qurṭubī) Thus the meaning of the verse is that the door of repentance is closed after death, and it is no more

possible for someone to return to this world and atone for his sins by performing righteous deeds. The final court will take place on the Day of Judgment.

حَتّٰٓى اِذَا فُتِحَتْ يَاْجُوْجُ وَمَاْجُوْجُ وَهُمْ مِّنْ كُلِّ حَدَبٍ يَّنْسِلُوْنَ (Until when the Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj (Gog and Magog) are released, while they run down from every height - 21:96.) In the previous verse it was said that those who died in a state of unbelief will never return to this world. The phrase "until the Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj appear", really means that such people will never return, because the appearance of Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj will be a sign of near approach of the Dooms Day.

It is reported in Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim through Sayyidnā Hudhaifah ﷺ that he and some other Ṣaḥābah ﷺ, were in the midst of a discussion when the Holy Prophet ﷺ came to them and enquired as to what were they deliberating. They replied that they were discussing about the Qiyāmah (Dooms Day). Thereupon he ﷺ said that Qiyāmah will occur only after ten signs have become manifest, and the appearance of Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj will be one of them.

Here the word فُتِحَتْ (released) is used for Ya'jūj Ma'jūj which means to let loose, which suggests that until the appointed time they will remain under restraint and confined behind some barrier from which they will be released when Doomsday is near. It is evident from the Holy Qur'ān that this restraint is the wall made by Dhulqarnain which will disappear near the Qiyāmah. Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj and Dhulqarnain have been described in fair detail in Sūrah Al-Kahf, to which the reader may refer.

مِّنْ كُلِّ حَدَبٍ يَّنْسِلُوْنَ (while they run down from every height - 21:96) The word حَدَبٍ means an elevated place which may be a mountain or just a lump in the ground. We have also seen in Sūrah Al-Kahf that the place where Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj have been confined is somewhere beyond the northern mountains. So when they will come out, they will be seen rushing down the mountain sides in their hordes.

اِنَّكُمْ وَمَا تَعْبُدُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ حَصَبُ جَهَنَّمَ (Surely, you and whatever you worship other than Allah are the fuel of Jahannam - 21:98) Here a question may arise as to the application of this verse to the case of Sayyidnā Masīḥ ﷺ, Sayyidnā 'Uzair ﷺ and angels who were also worshipped by some people. According to account given by Qurṭubī in his Tafsir, this issue was

adequately resolved by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ who wondered that there is a verse in the Qur'ān about which people have reservations, yet they do not question him about it. He went on to say that this may be due to the fact that either the people have found a convincing answer to their doubts or that they are totally indifferent and do not consider the matter important enough for any kind of investigation. When people asked him which particular verse he had in mind, he recited the verse إِنَّكُمْ وَمَا تَعْبُدُوْنَ and went on to say that when this verse was revealed, it made the unbelievers of Quraish very angry because they felt that it offended their gods. So they approached Ibn al-Ziba'rā (A scholar of the scriptures) and complained to him about it. He said that if he were present there, he would have given them a reply which would have confounded all of them. Pressed further he said that he would have asked them what they thought about Sayyidnā Masīḥ ﷺ and about Sayyidnā 'Uzair ﷺ, who were worshipped by the Christians and the Jews respectively (meaning whether they too معاذ الله would be sent to Hell). The unbelievers of Quraish were delighted to hear this and were sure that Muḥammad ﷺ would have no answer to their question. At that point Allah Ta'ālā revealed the verse : إِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ سَبَقَتْ لَهُمْ مِّنَّا الْحُسْنٰى ۙ أُولٰٓئِكَ عَنْهَا مُبْعَدُوْنَ (Surely, those for whom the good (news) from Us has come earlier shall be kept far away from it. - 21:101) that is those for whom Our grace and good result is ensured will be kept away from Hell. And for the same Ibn al-Ziba'rā Allah Ta'ālā has revealed this Qur'ānic verse وَلَمَّا ضُرِبَ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ مَثَلاً إِذَا قَوْمُكَ مِنْهُ يَصِدُّوْنَ (43:57) that is when Ibn al-Ziba'rā put forward the example of Sayyidah Maryam the people of his clan, Quraish, were overtaken by joy.

لَا يَحْزُنُهُمُ الْفَزَعُ الْأَكْبَرُ (They will not be grieved by the Biggest Panic - 21:103). Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ has said that الْفَزَعُ الْأَكْبَرُ (the Biggest Panic) refers to the second call of the Horn (صُوْر), when all the dead will assemble to give an account of their actions in the world. Some others have said that الْفَزَعُ الْأَكْبَرُ (the Biggest Panic) is the first call of the Horn. Ibn Al-'Arabī has said that the Horn will be blown thrice: The first call will be نَفْخَةُ الْفَزَعِ which will put everyone into utter confusion, and is referred to here as الْفَزَعُ الْأَكْبَرُ (the Biggest Panic). The second call will be نَفْخَةُ الصَّعْقِ when every one will die. The third call will be نَفْخَةُ الْبَعْثِ when all the dead will be resurrected. This version derives support from a ḥadīth of Abū Hurairah ﷺ which has been quoted in Musnād Abū Ya'lā and

Baihaqi, 'Abd Ibn Ḥumaid, Abū al-Sheikh, Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabari etc. (Maẓhari).

يَوْمَ نَطْوِى السَّمَآءَ كَطَيِّ السِّجِلِّ لِلْكُتُبِ (The Day when We roll up the sky like a scroll rolls up the writings. - 21:104.) According to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ the word سِجِلّ means a sheet of a book. 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭalḥah, 'Aufī, Mujāhid, Qatādah, Ibn Jarīr and Ibn Kathīr have all adopted the same meaning of the word. The word كُتُب in the verse is used for اَلْمَكْتُوْب th it is something written. So the meaning of the verse is that the sky will be rolled up like a scroll with its writings. (Ibn Kathīr)

Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī contains a story on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that on the Day of Judgement Allah Ta'ālā would roll up all the seven skies and the seven worlds alongwith all the created things thereon in His hand, and all of them together would be no more than a grain of rye in His hand. (Ibn Kathīr)

وَلَقَدْ كَتَبْنَا فِى الزَّبُوْرِ مِنْ بَعْدِ الذِّكْرِ اَنَّ الْاَرْضَ يَرِثُهَا عِبَادِىَ الصّٰلِحُوْنَ (And We have written in Zabūr (Psalms) after the Dhikr (the Torah) that the land will be inherited by My righteous slaves. - 21:105) The word زَبُوْر (zabūr) is the plural of زُبُر (zuburr), which means book. It is also the name of the book which was revealed to Sayyidnā Dāwūd ﷺ. Opinions differ as to the meaning of the word in the present context. According to a version attributed to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ the word ذِكْر in the verse refers to Torah, and زبور to all other books revealed after Torah i.e. Zabūr (Psalms) , Injil (Evangel) and Qur'ān. (Ibn Jarīr) The same explanation is adopted by Ḍaḥḥāk. However, Ibn Zaid has explained that ذكر refers to لوح محفوظ (the Preserved Tablet) and زبور relates to all the books which were revealed to the prophets. Zajjāj has also adopted this explanation. (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī)

اَلْاَرْض (the word 'land' in - 21:105) All commentators agree that the word in this verse refers to the land of Paradise. Ibn Jarīr has reported this explanation from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ. The same explanation is also adopted by Mujāhid, Ibn Jubair, Ikrimah, Suddī and Ab Al-'Aaliyah. Imām Rāzi has said that another verse of the Holy Qur'ān supports this explanation. The verse is وَاَوْرَثَنَا الْاَرْضَ نَتَبَوَّاُ مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ حَيْثُ نَشَآءُ (And has bequeathed upon us the earth for us to make our dwelling wheresoever

we will in Paradise - 39:74) The words used in the verse that the pious will inherit the ارض also lend credence to the view that the word أَرْض means land of Paradise, because the land of the earth can be inherited by all, whether believers or non-believers. Also the phrase that the pious will inherit the land (أَرْض) follows the mention of Qiyāmah, and it is well known that after the Qiyāmah there will be no land of the earth but only the land of the Paradise. Another version of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ says that the word ارض means just land, and includes both the land of the earth as well as of Paradise. It is quite obvious that the land of the Paradise will be inherited by the pious people. As for the land of the world also it is stated in the Holy Qur'ān at several places that there will be a time when the entire land of the world will belong to the pious believers. One of such verse is: إِنَّ الْأَرْضَ لِلَّهِ يُورِثُهَا مَنْ يَّشَآءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ وَالْعَاقِبَةُ لِلْمُتَّقِيْنَ (Surely, the land belongs to Allah. He lets whomsoever He wills, from among His slaves, inherit it. And the end-result is in favour of the God-fearing. - 7:128).

In another verse it is said: وَعَدَ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مِنْكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ فِى الْأَرْضِ (Allah has promised those of you who believe and do good deeds that He will certainly make them (His) vicegerents in the land. - 24:55).

Yet another verse says: إِنَّا لَنَنْصُرُ رُسُلَنَا وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا فِى الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَيَوْمَ يَقُوْمُ الْأَشْهَادُ (Surely, We shall help Our Messengers and those who have believed in the present life, and upon the day when the witnesses arise. - 40:51).

The history has already witnessed the control of the pious believers over the better part of the world, and it will again come under their control during the time of Sayyidnā Mahdi ﷺ. (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī & Ibn Kathīr)

Verses 106 - 112

إِنَّ فِىْ هٰذَا لَبَلٰغًا لِّقَوْمٍ عٰبِدِيْنَ ﴿١٠٦﴾ وَمَآ اَرْسَلْنٰكَ اِلَّا رَحْمَةً
لِّلْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿١٠٧﴾ قُلْ اِنَّمَا يُوْحٰٓى اِلَىَّ اَنَّمَآ اِلٰهُكُمْ اِلٰهٌ وَّاحِدٌ فَهَلْ
اَنْتُمْ مُّسْلِمُوْنَ ﴿١٠٨﴾ فَاِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَقُلْ اٰذَنْتُكُمْ عَلٰى سَوَآءٍ وَاِنْ
اَدْرِىْٓ اَقَرِيْبٌ اَمْ بَعِيْدٌ مَّا تُوْعَدُوْنَ ﴿١٠٩﴾ اِنَّهٗ يَعْلَمُ الْجَهْرَ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ
وَيَعْلَمُ مَا تَكْتُمُوْنَ ﴿١١٠﴾ وَاِنْ اَدْرِىْ لَعَلَّهٗ فِتْنَةٌ لَّكُمْ وَمَتَاعٌ اِلٰى

حِينٍ ﴿١١١﴾ قٰلَ رَبِّ احْكُمْ بِالْحَقِّ ۗ وَرَبُّنَا الرَّحْمٰنُ الْمُسْتَعَانُ عَلٰى مَا تَصِفُوْنَ ﴿١١٢﴾

Surely, in this (the Qur'ān) there is a message conveyed to a people who worship (Allah). [106] **And We have not sent you but as mercy for all the worlds.** [107]

Say, "What is revealed to me is simply that your God is One God. So do you submit?" [108] **But, if they turn away, then say (to them), "I have warned you all alike, and I do not know whether what you have been warned of is near or far.** [109] **Surely, He knows what is spoken openly and He knows what you conceal.** [110] **And I do not know; perhaps it is a trial for you and an enjoyment for a while."** [111]

He (Our Messenger) said, "My Lord, judge with truth. And Our Lord is the Raḥmān (All-Merciful), the One whose help is sought against what you describe. [112]

Commentary

وَمَا اَرْسَلْنٰكَ اِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعٰلَمِيْنَ (And We have not sent you but as mercy for all the worlds. - 21:107) عَالَمِيْن is plural of عَالَم which means 'world' and includes all creatures including humans, animals, plants, Jinns etc. In order to properly understand the meaning of the verse one should also understand that the true essence of the entire universe is the invocation of Allah Ta'ālā and His worship. When this essence departs from this world and no one is left to worship Allah, everything in it will perish. In other words that is the day when Qiyāmah would occur. When it is understood that the invocation and worship of Allah Ta'ālā is the essence of all living things, then the reason for describing the Holy Prophet ﷺ as mercy to the Worlds becomes obvious because it is his teachings and the purity of his personal life alone which keep alive the worship of Allah Ta'ālā until Qiyāmah. That is why he declared "I am the blessing sent by Allah اَنَا رَحْمَةٌ مُّهْدَاةٌ (Ibn 'Asākir quoting Abū Hurairah). Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar ؓ has reported that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said اَنَا رَحْمَةٌ مُّهْدَاةٌ بِرَفْعِ قَوْمٍ وَّخَفْضِ آخَرِيْنَ that is "I am the blessing sent by Allah so that I lift up the people (who obey Allah) and humble the other people (who disobey Allah). (Ibn Kathīr)

It, therefore, follows that performing *jihād* against the unbelievers in order to lessen *shirk* and *kufr* (unbelief) and in the hope of reclaiming those who transgress the Divine Commands of Allah Ta'ālā is an act of mercy.

Alḥamdulillāh
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Anbiya'
Ends here.

Sūrah Al-Ḥajj

(The Pilgrimage)

Sūrah Al-Ḥajj was revealed in Madīnah. It contains 78 Verses and 10 Sections.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 2

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوْا رَبَّكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ زَلْزَلَةَ السَّاعَةِ شَىْءٌ عَظِيْمٌ ﴿١﴾ يَوْمَ تَرَوْنَهَا تَذْهَلُ كُلُّ مُرْضِعَةٍ عَمَّآ أَرْضَعَتْ وَتَضَعُ كُلُّ ذَاتِ حَمْلٍ حَمْلَهَا وَتَرَى النَّاسَ سُكٰرٰى وَمَا هُمْ بِسُكٰرٰى وَلٰكِنَّ عَذَابَ اللّٰهِ شَدِيْدٌ ﴿٢﴾

O men, fear your Lord. Surely the earthquake of the (destined) Hour is something terrible. [1] **The day you will see it, every suckling female will forget that which she suckled, and every pregnant one shall abort her foetus, and you will see people as if they are drunk, while they are not drunk, but the punishment of Allah is (so) severe.** [2]

Commentary

Special features

Commentators differ on whether this Sūrah is Makkan or Madani. Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ has expressed two views on different occasions. However, a majority of commentators believe that the Sūrah is a combination of both the Makkan and Madani verses, and Qurṭubī prefers this view. He has also mentioned the other peculiarities of this Sūrah, namely that some of

its verses were revealed at night and some during the day; some were revealed during travels and some when the Holy Prophet ﷺ was not traveling; some were revealed in Makkah and others at Madīnah; some were revealed in the middle of battle and others in peace time. Some verses of this Sūrah are *nāsikh* (verses of the Qur'ān abrogating some other verses), and some are *mansookh* (verses of the Qur'ān which have been abrogated by others); some are *muḥkam* while others are *mutashabih* (مُتشابه). Indeed this Sūrah comprises all categories of revelations.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوْا رَبَّكُمْ (O men, fear your Lord. - 22:1). This verse was revealed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ while he was traveling. He recited in a loud voice, so that all his companions gathered around him after hearing his voice. Then he addressed them "Do you know when the upheaval of the Resurrection, which is mentioned in this verse, will take place?" They replied, "Allah and His Prophet knows best." Then the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "That will be the day when Allah will command Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام to raise those people who have been marked out for hell. Sayyidnā Adam عليه السلام will ask Allah Ta'ala who those people are, and Allah will inform him that nine hundred and ninety nine out of every one thousand will go to hell." The Holy Prophet ﷺ then added, "That will be the time when small children will become old on account of terror, and pregnant women will abort their fetuses." The companions were frightened when they heard this and asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ, "O prophet of Allah! Who are those among us who will escape this terrible fate?" The Holy Prophet ﷺ replied, "Set your minds at ease. For every one thousand of the Gog and Magog (Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj) there will be only one from amongst you." This incident is reported in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim on the authority of Abū Sa'īd Al-Khudrī رضي الله عنه. There are other versions also according to which the Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said, "On the Day of Resurrection you will find yourself with two peoples who will predominate numerically all the other peoples who would be near them. One of them is the tribe of Gog and Magog (ياجوج ماجوج) and the other is the Satan and his descendants, and those of the progeny of Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام who have died earlier." Thus, among the nine hundred and ninety nine the majority will be from those peoples. Qurṭubī and others have quoted these narrations.

When will the earthquake of the Day of Resurrection take place?

Will it happen before or after the dead are raised to life? Some people have opined that the earthquake will occur in this world before the Day of Judgment and will be among the last signs of the coming of the Dooms Day, to which reference has been made in several verses of the Qur'ān, such as :

إِذَا زُلْزِلَتِ الْاَرْضُ زِلْزَالَهَا

When earth is shaken with a mighty shaking - 99:1

وَ حُمِلَتِ الْاَرْضُ وَالْجِبَالُ فَدُكَّتَا دَكَّةً وَّاحِدَةً

And the earth and the mountains are lifted up and crushed with a single blow - 69:14

إِذَا رُجَّتِ الْاَرْضُ رَجًّا

When the earth shall be rocked. 56:4

There are others who have deduced from the above-referred *ḥadīth* that the earthquake will occur after the Dooms Day and Resurrection. In fact there is no inconsistency between these two views, because verses of the Qur'ān and the *aḥādīth* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ may be quoted in support of either view. Allah knows best.

This verse also gives a picture of the earthquake of the Day of Resurrection when all the pregnant women will abort their fetuses and every breast-feeding woman nursing her child will be diverted from it. If the earthquake takes place in this world before the Dooms Day, then there is no ambiguity in all these happenings. But if the earthquake occurs after the Dooms Day, then the explanation would be that a pregnant woman would be raised on the Dooms Day in the same state, and a woman who died while breast-feeding her child will also be raised in the same condition along with her child. (Qurṭubī). Allah knows best.

Verses 3 - 10

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يُّجَادِلُ فِى اللّٰهِ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ وَّيَتَّبِعُ كُلَّ شَيْطٰنٍ مَّرِيْدٍ ﴿٣﴾ كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِ اَنَّهٗ مَنْ تَوَلَّاهُ فَاَنَّهٗ يُضِلُّهٗ وَيَهْدِيْهِ اِلٰى عَذَابِ السَّعِيْرِ ﴿٤﴾ يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِىْ رَيْبٍ مِّنَ الْبَعْثِ فَاِنَّا

خَلَقْنٰكُمْ مِّنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ نُّطْفَةٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ عَلَقَةٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ مُّضْغَةٍ مُّخَلَّقَةٍ وَّغَيْرِ مُخَلَّقَةٍ لِّنُبَيِّنَ لَكُمْ ؕ وَنُقِرُّ فِي الْاَرْحَامِ مَا نَشَآءُ اِلٰۤى اَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ثُمَّ نُخْرِجُكُمْ طِفْلًا ثُمَّ لِتَبْلُغُوْۤا اَشُدَّكُمْ ۚ وَمِنْكُمْ مَّنْ يُّتَوَفّٰى وَمِنْكُمْ مَّنْ يُّرَدُّ اِلٰۤى اَرْذَلِ الْعُمُرِ لِكَيْلَا يَعْلَمَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ عِلْمٍ شَيْئًا ؕ وَ تَرَى الْاَرْضَ هَامِدَةً فَاِذَاۤ اَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْهَا الْمَآءَ اهْتَزَّتْ وَ رَبَتْ وَاَنْۢبَتَتْ مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجٍۢ بَهِيْجٍ ﴿۵﴾ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الْحَقُّ وَاَنَّهٗ يُحْيِ الْمَوْتٰى وَاَنَّهٗ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿ۙ۶﴾ وَّ اَنَّ السَّاعَةَ اٰتِيَةٌ لَّا رَيْبَ فِيْهَا ۙ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ يَبْعَثُ مَنْ فِي الْقُبُوْرِ ﴿۷﴾ وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يُّجَادِلُ فِي اللّٰهِ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ وَّلَا هُدًى وَّلَا كِتٰبٍ مُّنِيْرٍ ﴿ۙ۸﴾ ثَانِيَ عِطْفِهٖ لِيُضِلَّ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ؕ لَهٗ فِي الدُّنْيَا خِزْيٌ وَّنُذِيْقُهٗ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ عَذَابَ الْحَرِيْقِ ﴿۹﴾ ذٰلِكَ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ يَدٰكَ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ لَيْسَ بِظَلَّامٍ لِّلْعَبِيْدِ ﴿ع۱۰﴾

And among the people there is one who debates about Allah without knowledge and follows every rebellious Satan, [3] about whom it is destined that if someone takes him as friend, he will misguide him and lead him to the punishment of the Fire. [4]

O men, if you are in doubt about the Resurrection, then (recall that) We created you from dust, then from a drop of semen, then from a clot, then from a piece of flesh - shaped or unshaped - so that We manifest (Our power) to you. And We retain in the wombs whatever We will to a specified term. Then We bring you out as babies, then (We nourish you) so that you reach your maturity. And among you there is one who dies, and among you there is one who is carried to the worst part of the age, so that he knows nothing even after having knowledge. And you see the land dry. Then when We send down water on it, it stirs and swells and puts forth every kind of good looking growth. [5]

That is because Allah is the truth and that He gives life to the dead and that He is powerful to do everything, [6] **and that the Hour (of Doom) has to come in which there is no doubt and that Allah will raise again all those in the graves.** [7]

And among men there is one who debates about Allah with no knowledge, no guidance and no book to enlighten, turning his side away to lead (people) astray from the way of Allah. For him there is disgrace in this world, and We will have him taste the punishment of fire on the Day of Judgment (and will say to him) "All this is due to what your hands sent ahead, and that Allah is not unjust to His servants." [10]

Commentary

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يُّجَادِلُ فِى اللّٰهِ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ (And among men there is one who debates about Allah with no knowledge - 22:8.) This verse was revealed with particular reference to Naḍr Ibn al-Ḥārith, who was a very quarrelsome person. He claimed that the angels were Allah's daughters, and that the Qur'ān was a storybook, which contained fables about people of bygone ages. He denied the Day of Judgment and the Resurrection of the dead. Although this verse relates to a particular person, its message applies to all who are in a similar situation, and practice such wickedness.

Different stages in the development of foetus in mother's womb

فَاِنَّا خَلَقْنٰكُمْ مِّنْ تُرَابٍ (We created you from dust - 22:5.) This verse deals with the different stages through which the foetus passes in its mother's womb before taking a human form. There is a detailed *ḥadīth* on this subject, which is reproduced in Ṣaḥīḥ of Bukhārī on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ to the effect that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Human matter retains its original form in the woman's womb for forty days after which it becomes a clot of blood. After a further period of forty days it becomes a lump of flesh. Thereafter an angel is sent by Allah Ta'ālā who breaths a soul into it and records four things about it, namely how long it will live, how much sustenance it will receive, what acts he will do, and finally whether its end will be wretched or fortunate. (Qurṭubī).

There is another narration which has been related by Ibn Abī Ḥātim and Ibn Jarīr, also on the authority of 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ, that

when the seed becomes a lump of flesh after passing through different stages, the angel responsible to watch the progressive development of each individual then seeks guidance from Allah Ta'ālā saying: يَارَبِّ مُخَلَّقَة اَوغير مخلقه. That is, whether it is His will that the lump of flesh should be allowed to grow and become a living human being. If Allah says it is: غَيْرُ مُخَلَّقَه then the womb aborts the foetus and it does not reach the higher stages leading to a live birth. On the other hand, if Allah says that it is: مُخَلَّقَه then the angel asks Him whether it is to be a boy or a girl, wretched or fortunate, how long it will live, how it will spend its life and when it will die. The angel is given information on all these matters then and there. (Ibn Kathīr) Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ has also interpreted the words (مُخَلَّقَةٍ وَ غَيْرِ مُخَلَّقَةٍ) in a similar manner. (Qurṭubī)

مُخَلَّقَةٍ وَّغَيْرِ مُخَلَّقَةٍ (shaped or unshaped - 22:5). It is evident from the *ḥadīth* referred to above that the human seed which completes its full term in the womb and is destined to be born as a normal human being is meant by مخلّقه (shaped), whereas a seed which is destined to be aborted is غيرمخلّقه (unshaped). However, there are other commentators who have explained these two words differently. According to them a foetus which completes all the stages of growth and development and whose limbs and other organs of the body are healthy, normal and proportionate is مُخَلَّقه (shaped). On the other hand, a foetus whose limbs are deformed or disproportionate is غَيرِمُخَلَّقه (unshaped). The latter interpretation is close to the translation adopted above. Allah knows best.

ثُمَّ نُخْرِجُكُمْ طِفْلاً (Then We bring you out as babies - 22:5) Then Allah brings forth the baby from its mother's womb as a totally helpless thing. Its body is weak and so are its other faculties, such as hearing, vision, senses, brain function, and overall physical movements including its grasp. All theses faculties grow strong as time passes until they reach their full capability. This is the meaning of the words ثُمَّ لِتَبْلُغُوٓا اَشُدَّكُمْ. (Then [We nourish you] so that you reach your maturity - 22:5). The word *Ashudd* اَشُد is the plural of *shiddah* شِدَّة, just as An'um اَنْعُمْ is the plural of Ni'mah نِعْمَه. The meanings of these words are that the process of gradual development continues until all the faculties reach their peak and this happens when a person is in the prime of his youth.

اَرْذَلِ الْعُمُرِ (The worst part of the age - 22:5). It means the stage of life when human faculties and senses begin to degenerate. The Holy Prophet

ﷺ had sought Allah's protection from such life. Nasa'ī has quoted Sayyidnā Sa'd رضي الله عنه as saying that the Holy Prophet ﷺ used to repeat the following prayer very frequently. (Qurṭubī)

اَللّٰهُمَّ اِنِّیْٓ اَعُوْذُبِكَ مِنَ الْبُخْلِ وَاَعُوْذُبِكَ مِنَ الْجُبْنِ وَاَعُوْذُبِكَ مِنْ اَنْ اُرَدَّ اِلٰی اَرْذَلِ الْعُمُرِ وَاَعُوْذُبِكَ مِنْ فِتْنَةِ الدُّنْيَا وَعَذَابِ الْقَبْرِ

(O Allah! I seek Your protection from miserliness, and I seek Your protection from cowardice, and I seek Your protection from that I am carried to the age of helplessness, and I seek Your protection from the seductions of this world and the chastisement of the grave.)

An account of the different stages of human life after birth

Musnād of Aḥmad and Musnād of Abū Ya'lā quote Sayyidnā 'Anas Ibn Mālik رضي الله عنه that the Holy Prophet ﷺ once said "The good deeds of a minor child are recorded in the account of his father or both his parents, but his evil deeds are not recorded, neither in his parents' account nor in his own. After he has attained majority, an account is opened in his own name and the two angels who are attached to him are commanded to afford him protection and provide him strength. When he reaches the age of forty years and is still a Muslim, then Allah Ta'ālā grants him immunity from three diseases: insanity, leprosy and leucoderma. When he reaches the age of fifty years, Allah eases and abates his record. At the age of sixty, Allah Ta'ālā creates in him an urge to turn his thoughts towards Him. At seventy, all the inhabitants of the sky begin to love him. When he is eighty, Allah Ta'ālā records his good deeds but ignores his lapses. At ninety, Allah writes off all his sins, and grants him permission to intercede on behalf of his relatives and also accepts his intercession. He is then given the titles of امین اللّٰہ (Allah's trustee) and اسیر اللّٰہ فی الارض (that is the prisoner of Allah on earth, because at that age all his strength is gone, he loses interest in his surroundings and spends his life like a prisoner). And when he reaches the worst of age, then all the good deeds which he used to perform when he was strong and healthy continue to be recorded in his account while his sinful acts remain unrecorded."

Having reproduced this tradition from Musnād Abū Ya'lā, Ḥafiz Ibn Kathīr says:

هٰذا حدیث غریب جدا وفیه نکارة شدیدة

This *ḥadīth* is *gharīb* (i.e. reported by one narrator only), and is

extremely *munkar* (i.e. reported by a weak narrator against the authentic traditions).

He then adds:

ومع هٰذا قد رواه الامام احمد بن حنبل فی مسنده موقوفًا ومرفوعًا

(And in spite of all this Imām Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal has related it in his Musnād both as a saying of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and as a saying of a Ṣaḥābī, that is traced.

ثَانِیَ عِطْفِهٖ (Turning his side away - 22:5) The word *'itf* means 'side of the body', and the expression means 'to turn on one's side' - in other words 'to oppose'.

Verses 11 - 13

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَّعْبُدُ اللّٰهَ عَلٰى حَرْفٍ ج فَاِنْ اَصَابَهٗ خَيْرُ نِاطْمَاَنَّ بِهٖ ج وَاِنْ اَصَابَتْهُ فِتْنَةُ نِانْقَلَبَ عَلٰى وَجْهِهٖ ج خَسِرَ الدُّنْيَا وَالْاٰخِرَةَ ط ذٰلِكَ هُوَ الْخُسْرَانُ الْمُبِيْنُ ﴿١١﴾ يَدْعُوْا مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ مَا لَا يَضُرُّهٗ وَمَا لَا يَنْفَعُهٗ ط ذٰلِكَ هُوَ الضَّلٰلُ الْبَعِيْدُ ﴿١٢﴾ يَدْعُوْا لَمَنْ ضَرُّهٗٓ اَقْرَبُ مِنْ نَّفْعِهٖ ط لَبِئْسَ الْمَوْلٰى وَلَبِئْسَ الْعَشِيْرُ ﴿١٣﴾

And among men there is one who worships Allah (standing) on the verge: so if some good thing happens to him, he is satisfied with it, and if a trial befalls upon him, he turns his face back. He loses both this world and the Hereafter. That is the loss which is so obvious. [11] **He prays to someone, instead of Allah, who can neither harm him nor benefit him. That is the error which takes him too far (from the right path).** [12] **He, rather, prays to someone whose harm is more likely than his benefit. Wretched is such a patron and wretched is such a companion.** [13]

Commentary

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَّعْبُدُ اللّٰهَ عَلٰى حَرْفٍ (And among men there is one who worships Allah (standing) on the verge - 22:11.) Bukhārī and Ibn Abī Ḥātim have related from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ that when the Holy Prophet ﷺ

migrated to Madīnah, people flocked to him and accepted the new religion. But there were some among them whose conversion to Islam was far from being genuine, and whose sole motive for their action was to seek self-advancement, and they lacked conviction. If, after becoming Muslims, favorable circumstances resulted in an increase in their prosperity and their children, they thought Islam was a very good religion, but they were equally ready to condemn it if things went against their personal interests. This verse was revealed to describe such people who were mere opportunists and were easily swayed either way depending on where their selfish interests lay.

Verses 14 - 16

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُدْخِلُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّلِحٰتِ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِى مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهٰرُ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَفْعَلُ مَا يُرِيْدُ ﴿١٤﴾ مَنْ كَانَ يَظُنُّ أَنْ لَّنْ يَّنْصُرَهُ اللَّهُ فِى الدُّنْيَا وَالْاٰخِرَةِ فَلْيَمْدُدْ بِسَبَبٍ إِلَى السَّمَآءِ ثُمَّ لْيَقْطَعْ فَلْيَنْظُرْ هَلْ يُذْهِبَنَّ كَيْدُهٗ مَا يَغِيْظُ ﴿١٥﴾ وَكَذٰلِكَ أَنْزَلْنٰهُ اٰيٰتٍ بَيِّنٰتٍ ۙ وَّأَنَّ اللَّهَ يَهْدِى مَنْ يُّرِيْدُ ﴿١٦﴾

Surely, Allah will admit those who believe and do good deeds into gardens beneath which rivers flow. Surely Allah does what He intends. [14]

If someone thinks that Allah will never help him (the Holy Prophet ﷺ) in this world and in the Hereafter, he should stretch a rope to the sky, then cut (Allah's communication) off (from the prophet) and see whether his effort can really remove what irritates (him). [15]

And this is how We have sent it (the Qur'ān) down as clear signs, and (the fact is) that Allah takes whom He wills to the right path. [16]

Commentary

مَنْ كَانَ يَظُنُّ (If someone thinks - 22:15). It means that the enemies of Islam who put hurdles in its path and desired that Allah should abandon the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his religion must clearly understand that this

can happen only when, God forbid, he is deprived of the office of the prophethood and ceases to receive *waḥy* (revelations) from Allah Ta'ālā. It is well understood that when Allah Ta'ālā bestows the prophethood on someone and also favours him with *waḥy* (revelations), He also promises him full support in this world and in the Hereafter. Thus the only way to stop the advancement of a prophet and his mission, if someone has the power to stop it, is that he should dispossess the Holy Prophet ﷺ of his mission or that the sequence of Divine revelation should be severed. Anyone wanting to do all this will have to go up to the sky and cut off the chain of revelation, and since such a thing is not possible, no amount of fire and fury can do any harm to Islām. This interpretation is related in al-Durr al-Manthūr from Ibn Zaid and, in my opinion, it is the most appropriate one.

Qurṭubī also thinks that this is the best interpretation of this verse. There are some others who are of the view that the word سماء (sky) occurring in this verse means the ceiling of one's house and the verse means that a person who entertains hostile feelings towards Islām and the Holy Prophet ﷺ must realize that he can do them no harm. Hence the best thing for him to do is to hang himself from the ceiling out of sheer mortification. (Maẓharī and others).

Verses 17 - 18

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالصَّابِئِينَ وَالنَّصَارَىٰ وَالْمَجُوسَ
وَالَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَفْصِلُ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ
كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ ﴿١٧﴾ أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَسْجُدُ لَهُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ
وَمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَالشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ وَالنُّجُومُ وَالْجِبَالُ وَالشَّجَرُ
وَالدَّوَابُّ وَكَثِيرٌ مِنَ النَّاسِ ۖ وَكَثِيرٌ حَقَّ عَلَيْهِ الْعَذَابُ ۗ وَمَنْ يُهِنِ
اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ مُكْرِمٍ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَفْعَلُ مَا يَشَاءُ ۩ السجدة ﴿١٨﴾

As for those who believe and the Jews and the Sabians and the Christians and the Magians and those who ascribe partners to Allah, Allah will judge between them on the Day of Judgment. Surely Allah is witness

to every thing. [17]

Have you not seen that to Allah prostrate all those in the skies and all those on the earth, and the sun, the moon, the stars, the mountains, the trees, the animals and many from mankind? And there are many on whom punishment has become due. And the one whom Allah puts to disgrace, there is none to give him respect. Surely Allah does what He wills. [18]

Commentary

In verse 17 it is stated that Allah will decide among the believers and non-believers of different faiths on the Day of Resurrection, because He knows everything. What that decision would be, has been related in the Qur'ān at several places, namely that the good Muslims will enjoy a life of everlasting peace and comfort, while the infidels would be condemned to a life of eternal perdition. In the next verse, by using the word "Sajdah" (prostration), it has been declared that all created things, be they living things, minerals or plants, are in obedience and thus submit to the Supreme authority of Allah Ta'ālā, thereby mentioning two groups of humans in this respect of 'submission'. One, which obeys Allah and therefore is included amongst the creatures who 'prostrate' to Him, and the other one which is rebellious and refuses to bow before Him, meaning, refusing to submit to His Will. The word "Sajdah" (prostration) has been used here in the broader sense of 'submission' to the will of Allah and obeying His commands, because all created things act upon this submission in their own way. Human beings perform Sajdah by touching the ground with the forehead, while in the case of other created things their Sajdah constitutes their faithful performance of the functions assigned to them by Allah.

The truth about all created things obeying Allah

Genetically, the entire universe and all created things therein are under the control and subject to the Will of their Creator by virtue of an inherently programmed guidance (guidance of Takwīn) by Allah. The 'submission' in this sense is pre-determined, involuntary and instinctive. There is no created being which can escape this universal law of creation, be it a Muslim or a non-believer, a living thing or dead, mineral or plant. The smallest particle and the highest mountain cannot make the slightest movement without His Will. There is, however, another kind of

submission to Allah, when a person offers homage to Him voluntarily and without constraint. This is what distinguishes a believer from a non-believer. A believer is obedient and sincere in his submission to Allah, whereas a non-believer repudiates His existence. As this verse deals with the difference between a Muslim and a Kāfir (infidel), it is more likely that reference to 'Sajdah' (prostration) does not refer to pre-destined and instinctive obedience alone but covers the voluntary submission as well. Let it not be supposed that only human beings and Jinns who possess intelligence can offer voluntary and unconstrained submission, and animals, plants and minerals being devoid of reason cannot exercise voluntary and intentional obedience. Indeed it can be proved from the text of the Qur'ān that every created thing has reason, intellect and intent, and the difference lies only in degree. Human beings and Jinns possess a perfect level of intelligence, which makes them liable to a strict adherence to the laws governing what is permissible and what is forbidden. As regards other creatures, Allah has given them intelligence according to their needs. Animals possess the highest degree of intelligence after humans, then come plants and last of all are the minerals. The intelligence among the animals can easily be perceived, and that possessed by plants can also be observed if one applies one's mind to the task. However, the intelligence given to the minerals is so little and concealed that it is not easily discernible, though Allah has said clearly that they not only possess intelligence but also have the capacity to decide things. The Qur'ān says about the sky and the earth قَالَتَا أَتَيْنَا طَائِعِيْنَ (They said, "We come willingly."41:11) that is, when Allah commanded the sky and the earth that they must submit to His Will either by their free choice or by force, they both replied that they accepted His authority by their own voluntary choice. At another place the Qur'ān says وَإِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَهْبِطُ مِنْ خَشْيَةِ اللّٰهِ, (and there are still others which fall down in fear of Allah. - 2:74) which means that there are rocks, which fall down in fear of Allah Ta'ālā. Similarly, there are numerous traditions which provide evidence of mountains conversing with one another, or other created things showing signs of intelligence. Therefore, the homage mentioned in this verse for which the word Sajdah (Prostration) has been used means the voluntary homage. The interpretation of this verse would, then, be that except for the human beings and Jinns all other created things voluntarily and willingly submit to the Divine Authority. It is only the human beings and

Jinns who are divided into two factions, namely those who bow in submission to the Will of Allah, and those who deny His authority and refuse to submit to Him and are, therefore, despised. Allah knows best.

Verses 19 - 24

هٰذٰنِ خَصۡمٰنِ اخۡتَصَمُوۡا فِىۡ رَبِّهِمۡ ۫ فَالَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا قُطِّعَتۡ لَهُمۡ
ثِيَابٌ مِّنۡ نَّارٍ ؕ يُصَبُّ مِنۡ فَوۡقِ رُءُوۡسِهِمُ الۡحَمِيۡمُ ﴿۱۹﴾ ۚ يُصۡهَرُ بِهٖ مَا
فِىۡ بُطُوۡنِهِمۡ وَالۡجُلُوۡدُ ﴿۲۰﴾ ؕ وَلَهُمۡ مَّقَامِعُ مِنۡ حَدِيۡدٍ ﴿۲۱﴾ كُلَّمَاۤ
اَرَادُوۡۤا اَنۡ يَّخۡرُجُوۡا مِنۡهَا مِنۡ غَمٍّ اُعِيۡدُوۡا فِيۡهَا ۗ وَذُوۡقُوۡا عَذَابَ
الۡحَرِيۡقِ ﴿۲۲﴾ ع اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُدۡخِلُ الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ جَنّٰتٍ
تَجۡرِىۡ مِنۡ تَحۡتِهَا الۡاَنۡهٰرُ يُحَلَّوۡنَ فِيۡهَا مِنۡ اَسَاوِرَ مِنۡ ذَهَبٍ وَّلُؤۡلُؤًا ؕ
وَلِبَاسُهُمۡ فِيۡهَا حَرِيۡرٌ ﴿۲۳﴾ وَهُدُوۡۤا اِلَى الطَّيِّبِ مِنَ الۡقَوۡلِ ۖۚ وَهُدُوۡۤا
اِلٰى صِرَاطِ الۡحَمِيۡدِ ﴿۲۴﴾

These are two opponents who have disputed about their Lord. Now, for those who disbelieve, garments from fire shall be tailored, and boiling water shall be poured from over their heads [19] **whereby everything in their bellies, as well as the skins, will be melted.** [20] **And for them there are hooked rods of iron.** [21] **Whenever, in their anguish, they will intend to come out of it (the fire), they will be turned back to it and (it will be said to them,) "Taste the punishment of burning".** [22]

Surely Allah will admit those who believe and do good deeds to gardens beneath which rivers flow. They will be adorned therein with bracelets of gold and with pearls. And their dress therein will be (of) silk. [23] **And guided they were to the good word (of faith) and guided they were to the path of the Praised One.** [24]

Commentary

هٰذٰنِ خَصۡمٰنِ اخۡتَصَمُوۡا (These are two opponents who have disputed about

their Lord - 22:19). This verse, with its general words, deals with two sets of people, namely the Muslims and the infidels whether they belong to the earliest times or to later ages. However, the particular event in the background of which it was revealed about two groups of men who faced each other in combat on the battleground of Badr. Sayyidnā 'Ali, Ḥamzah and 'Ubaidah ﷺ stepped out of the Muslim ranks, whereas 'Utbah bin Rabī'ah, his son Walīd and his brother Shaibah came out to challenge them. In the ensuing fight the three unbelievers were slain, Sayyidnā 'Ali and Ḥamzah ﷺ emerged unscathed, while Sayyidnā 'Ubaidah ﷺ was mortally wounded and expired at the feet of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The revelation of this verse in relation to these warriors of the field of Badr is well established on the authority of traditions contained in Bukhārī and Muslim, but it is evident that its message is not exclusive for them alone, but embraces the entire Muslim community of all times and ages.

The philosophy of adorning the dwellers of Paradise with gold bracelets

Here a point may arise that bracelets are articles of jewellery worn by women only and their use by men is looked upon with disfavor. This objection is not entirely relevant because throughout ages monarchs have embellished their persons with costly jewellery, crowns and bracelets as symbols of their might and wealth. The story is well known that Surāqah Ibn Mālik, before his conversion to Islam, started out in pursuit of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in order to apprehend him while he was on his way from Makkah to Madīnah. As he approached near the Holy Prophet ﷺ his horse sank, by Allah's Will, in a piece of treacherous sand. At that critical moment he expressed his repentance about his error and sinful way, and begged the Holy Prophet ﷺ to pray for his deliverance from his predicament. When, as a result of the Holy Prophet's ﷺ prayer, his horse was extracted from the quicksand, he ﷺ promised Surāqah Ibn Mālik ﷺ that when the bracelets of the King of Persia would fall in the hands of the Muslims as spoils of war, they would be given to him. So, when during the caliphate of Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ the Muslims conquered Persia and the bracelets worn by the King of Persia were brought to Madīnah along with other spoils of war Surāqah Ibn Mālik ﷺ laid claim to them and received them from Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ. In brief, just as wearing a crown is a royal privilege and not a common practice among men,

similarly wearing bracelets by men is a royal privilege, and thus the men admitted to heaven will wear them as a symbol of honour and Divine favour. According to this verse, and also Sūrah Fāṭir, the bracelets will be made of gold, but in Sūrah Nisā' it is said that they will be made of silver. For this reason commentators are of the view that the bracelets worn by the pious people in heaven will be of three kinds, that is made of gold, silver and pearls. This verse makes a mention of bracelets made of pearls also.

Silk clothes are forbidden for men

The verse says that those people who are admitted to Paradise will wear silk clothes which means that their dresses, carpets, curtains etc. will be made of silk, which is regarded as the best fabric in this world. However, it should be understood that the silk used in Paradise and the silk used in this world have only the name in common, otherwise from the point of view of quality there is no comparison between the two.

Imām Nasa'ī, Bazzār and Baihaqī have related on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar ﷺ that once the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that the clothes of the people living in Paradise will be made from silk, which will be extracted from a fruit growing there. There is also a statement by Sayyidnā Jābir ﷺ that there would be a tree in the Paradise which would produce silk and the people of Paradise would wear dresses made from it. (Maẓharī)

In a *ḥadīth* quoted by Imām Nasa'ī on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ the Holy Prophet ﷺ once said:

من لبس الحرير فى الدّنيا لم يلبسه فى الاٰخرة، ومن شرب الخمر فى الدّنيا لم يشربها فى الاٰخرة، ومن شرب فى انية الذّهب و الفضّة لم يشرب فيها فى الاٰخرة، ثم قال رسول اللّٰه صلى اللّٰه عليه وسلم لباس اهل الجنّة وشراب اهل الجنّة وانية اهل الجنّة

"He who wears silk in this world will not wear it in the Hereafter; he who drinks wine in this world will be deprived of the sacred nectar in the Hereafter; he who uses utensils made of precious metals for food and drink in this world will be denied their use in the Hereafter." Then the Holy Prophet ﷺ added " These three things are exclusively for the people of Paradise." (Qurṭubī quoting Nasa'ī)

The meaning is that a person who spent his life in this world in the midst of these three luxuries and did not show contrition, would be deprived of them even if he were admitted to Paradise. According to Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar ﷺ the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that a person who drank wine in this world and did not repent would be deprived of the sacred nectar of the Paradise in the Hereafter. (Qurṭubī)

According to Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī ﷺ there is another *ḥadīth* in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

من لبس الحرير فى الدّنيا لم يلبسه فى الاٰخرة وان دخل الجنّة، لبسه اهل الجنّة ولم يلبسه هو (رواه ابو داؤدُ الطيالسى فى مسنده وقال القرطبى اسناده صحيح)

"He who wore silk in the world will not wear it in the Hereafter even if he is admitted to Paradise. All other people of Paradise will wear silk, but not he."

Here a point arises that if after admittance to Paradise a person remained deprived of something, he will nourish a sense of sorrow and grief, whereas Paradise is no place for such feelings, because every one who is admitted to Paradise should at all times be easy in his mind and free from anxiety. On the other hand, if the deprivation of certain facilities causes no sorrow and grief, then the deprivation loses its purpose. Qurṭubī has given a very convincing explanation to this matter. He says that the people of Paradise will be given different grades and places at different levels, depending on how well they stood in Allah's favour on account of their good deeds and devotion to the cause of the True Faith. Everybody will be aware of these differences, but Allah will fill their hearts with tranquility and contentment, so that they will not feel grief and sorrow about these differences. واللّٰه سبحانه' وتعالٰى اعلم

وَهُدُوْٓا اِلَى الطَّيِّبِ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ (And guided they were to the good word (of faith) - 22:24) Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ has said that this refers to the Kalimah *ṭayyibah* لا اله الاّ اللّٰه . Some others say that it means Qur'ān. (Qurṭubī) As a matter of fact it includes all these things in its meaning.

Verse 25

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَيَصُدُّوْنَ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ وَالْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ الَّذِىْ جَعَلْنٰهُ لِلنَّاسِ سَوَآءَ نِ الْعَاكِفُ فِيْهِ وَالْبَادِ ؕ وَمَنْ يُّرِدْ فِيْهِ بِاِلْحَادٍ ۢ

بِظُلۡمٍ نُّذِقۡهُ مِنۡ عَذَابٍ اَلِيۡمٍ ﴿٢٥﴾

Surely (We will punish) those who disbelieve and prevent (people) from the way of Allah and from Al-Masjid Al-Ḥarām (the Sacred Mosque) which We have made for all men, where residents and visitors are all equal. And whoever intends therein to commit deviation with injustice, We will make him taste a painful punishment. [25]

Commentary

In the previous verse, mention was made of the mutual hostility between the believers and infidels. One aspect of this hostility has been described in this verse, namely that among the infidels there are those who not only persist in error themselves but also prevent others from following the path of virtue. Those were the people who prevented the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his companions when they wanted to enter the Sacred Mosque wearing the pilgrim's garb. Traditionally the Sacred Mosque and that part of Makkah which has an essential role in the rituals of the pilgrimage was not their property and they had no right to deny entry to any one. The place is open to every one, whether a local resident or a visitor. The verse goes on to say that anyone who commits an impious act in the Sacred Mosque, (meaning the whole of Ḥaram), such as preventing people from entering the Mosque, will be made to suffer severe chastisement from Allah, specially if he is also a polytheist as was the case with the infidels of Makkah. They will be liable for double punishment, one for being non-believers and second for preventing others to enter the Sacred Mosque for pilgrimage. Although all sinful acts especially *shirk* and *kufr* are forbidden and are great crimes and sins which are liable to punishment at all times and in all places, but such acts carried out in the *ḥaram* enhance the crime double-fold, and hence referred here for their special importance.

يَصُدُّوۡنَ عَنۡ سَبِيۡلِ اللّٰهِ (Prevent (people) from the way of Allah - 22:25) The words سَبِيۡلِ اللّٰهِ (the way of Allah) mean Islam and the sense of the verse is that these people not only repudiate Islam themselves but also prevent others from accepting it.

Their second offence is that they stop the Muslims from entering the Sacred Mosque (Al-Masjid Al-Ḥarām) (22:25). In reality Al-Masjid

Al-Ḥarām is the name of the mosque which is built around بيت الله (House of Allah - the Holy Ka'ba), and it is a very important part of *ḥaram* of Makkah. However, the term Al-Masjid Al-Ḥarām is usually used for the whole of *ḥaram* of Makkah, as is the case under this episode. Thus the infidels of Makkah excluded the Muslims not only from the Sacred Mosque but also from the precincts of *ḥaram* of Makkah (as is evident from numerous traditions), and the words الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرامِ used in this verse cover the entire *ḥaram*. The Holy Qur'ān has at another place used the word الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرامِ under this episode in the meaning of the whole area of *ḥaram*: وَصَدُّوْكُمْ عَنِ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ. (48:25)

The meaning of equal rights of all Muslims within Ḥaram of Makkah

According to al-Durr al-Manthūr the term Al-Masjid Al-Ḥaram in the present context means the entire *ḥaram* as reported from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ. The entire Muslim Ummah and all the jurists are unanimous on the fact that all those areas of Makkah and the *ḥaram* where the essential rituals of the pilgrimage are performed, such as the space between Ṣafā and Marwah, where the pilgrims perform *Sa'y*, and all the open areas of Minā, 'Arafāt and Muzdalifah are *waqf* for the benefit of the entire Muslim ummah and have never been, nor can ever be, owned by individuals. Some jurists apply this principle to the private houses in Makkah and the open lands in the area of *ḥaram* to infer that these too are *waqf* for all the Muslims, that a Muslim can stay anywhere he likes and that the sale or letting out these properties on rent is not permissible. However, there are other jurists who do not accept this view and believe that the ownership of these properties can vest in private individuals and the houses can be sold or let out on rent. It is well established that Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ purchased the house of Ṣafwān Ibn Umayyah in Makkah for use as prison for the criminals. As for Imām Abū Hanīfah, both views are attributed to him in different reports, but the *ḥanafī* jurists have issued their Fatwa (ruling) in favour of the latter view. (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī) This verse mentions certain areas of ḥaram where entry was denied to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his companions by the infidels of Makkah, but these areas are *waqf* by consensus of ummah and nobody can be denied access to them.

وَمَنْ يُّرِدْ فِيهِ بِإِلْحَادٍ بِظُلْمٍ (And whoever intends therein to commit deviation

with injustice - 22:25.) The word إلْحَاد literally means deviation from the right path. While Mujāhid and Qatādah have interpreted this word to mean unbelief and denial of the Oneness of Allah (*kufr* and *shirk*) other commentators have given this word its literal meaning which embraces all kinds of sins so much so that even hurling abuses to one's servant is also included in it.

Sayyidnā 'Atā' ﷺ has further enlarged the scope of the meaning of this word by declaring that *ilḥād* within the precincts of *ḥaram* means entering it without wearing the pilgrims garb (*iḥram*), or violating any of the prohibition inside the *ḥaram*, such as hunting or cutting down trees within its limits. It needs to be clarified here that all things forbidden by the religious code are forbidden everywhere and will attract punishment wherever committed; and the specific reference to *ḥaram* in this verse is to emphasize the fact that just as a good deed performed within its limits will be generously rewarded, similarly a sin committed there will attract the most severe punishment. (Mujāhid). Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ has related another interpretation of the word *ilḥād* to mean that whereas at any other place the mere intention to commit a sin does not constitute a sin unless it is actually committed, within the limits of the *ḥaram* even the resolve to commit a sin is punishable, as if it has actually been committed. Qurṭubī has adopted this interpretation from Ibn 'Umar ﷺ and lends his own support to it. Whenever Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar ﷺ went for the pilgrimage, he used to set up two tents – one within the limits of *ḥaram* and the other outside it. If ever an occasion arose when he needed to scold or rebuke any one of his households, he would do it in the tent which he had set up outside the limits of *ḥaram*. When people asked him the reason for this, his answer was that the words كلاّ والله or بلى والله which a person normally uses when angry also constitute إلحاد فى الحرم (committing an act of sin within the precincts of *ḥaram*). (Maẓharī)

Verses 26 - 29

وَإِذْ بَوَّأْنَا لِإِبْرٰهِيمَ مَكَانَ الْبَيْتِ أَنْ لَّا تُشْرِكْ بِي شَيْئًا وَّ طَهِّرْ بَيْتِيَ لِلطَّآئِفِينَ وَالْقَآئِمِينَ وَالرُّكَّعِ السُّجُودِ ﴿٢٦﴾ وَ أَذِّنْ فِي النَّاسِ بِالْحَجِّ يَأْتُوكَ رِجَالًا وَّعَلٰى كُلِّ ضَامِرٍ يَّأْتِينَ مِنْ كُلِّ فَجٍّ عَمِيقٍ

﴿٢٧﴾ لِّيَشْهَدُوا مَنَافِعَ لَهُمْ وَيَذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ فِيٓ أَيَّامٍ مَّعْلُومٰتٍ عَلٰى مَارَزَقَهُمْ مِّنْ بَهِيمَةِ الْأَنْعَامِ ۚ فَكُلُوا مِنْهَا وَأَطْعِمُوا الْبَآئِسَ الْفَقِيرَ ﴿٢٨﴾ ثُمَّ لْيَقْضُوا تَفَثَهُمْ وَلْيُوفُوا نُذُورَهُمْ وَلْيَطَّوَّفُوا بِالْبَيْتِ الْعَتِيقِ ﴿٢٩﴾

And (remember) when We pointed out for Ibrāhīm the place of the House (of Allah) saying, "Do not associate anything with Me as My partner and purify My House for those who make *ṭawāf* (circumambulation around it), and those who perform Qiyām (standing up in worship) and those who perform Rukū' (bowing down) and Sujūd (prostration), [26] **and announce among people about (the obligation of) Ḥajj, so that they should come to you on foot and on every camel turned lean, travelling through every distant hilly pathway,** [27] **so that they witness benefits for them and recite Allah's name, in specified days, over the provision He gave them from the cattle - 'So, eat thereof and feed the distressed, the poor.'** [28] **Then, they must remove their dirt and fulfill their vows and make *ṭawāf* of the Ancient House."** [29]

Commentary

The previous verse contains a warning of severe punishment to the infidels who prevented the Muslims from entering the Sacred Mosque and the precincts of *ḥaram*. This verse describes the eminence and the superior status of the Baitullah which magnifies manifold the evil of their deeds.

The start of founding the structure of the House of Allah (the Holy Ka'ba)

وَإِذْ بَوَّأْنَا لِإِبْرٰهِيمَ مَكَانَ الْبَيْتِ (And [remember] when We pointed out for Ibrāhīm the place of the House - 22:26.) The word بوّء literally means 'to assign to someone a place for his residence.' The verse calls to attention the fact that Allah assigned to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام a place where Baitullah was located. There is a hint here that he was not settled there already, since he migrated here from Syria. And a reference to مَكَانَ الْبَيْتِ (the place of the House) suggests that the House of Allah pre-existed the

arrival of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, because according to reliable traditions its first foundations were laid about the time when Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام was sent upon the earth and he, and the prophets who came after him, used to make *ṭawāf* (circumambulation) around it. At the time of Deluge in the days of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام its upper-structure was removed but the foundations remained intact. Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was brought to this place and commanded by Allah Ta'ālā أَنْ لَّا تُشْرِكْ بِيْ شَيْئًا (Do not associate with Me any one - 22:26). It is quite evident that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام could not commit *shirk,* because he had himself suffered considerable torment at the hands of polytheists after they accused him of having destroyed their idols. The intention here is to warn the people at large against the great sin of polytheism. The second command was وَطَهِّرْ بَيْتِيَ (purify My House - 22:26), even though the House of Allah did not exist at that time. But the fact of the matter is that Baitullah is not just a structure of bricks and mortar, rather the term encompasses that entire piece of sacred land where Baitullah once stood and whose structure Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was now commanded to raise once again on the original foundations. As for the command to purify the place, Qurṭubī says that in those days the tribes of Jurhum (جُرهم) and Amalakites (عمالقه) had placed idols there, which they worshipped. (Qurṭubī). Another view is that this command is for the future generations not only to keep the place free from infidelity and polytheism but also to pay special attention to its external cleanliness and purity.

The third command given to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was أَذِّنْ فِي النَّاسِ بِالْحَجِّ (Announce among people about the obligation of Ḥajj - 22:27). Ibn Abī Ḥātim has related from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه that when Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was commanded by Allah to make this proclamation, he submitted that the place where he stood was an uninhabited desolate plane with nobody to hear the proclamation whereas he lacked the means to convey it to the populated areas. Allah Ta'ālā then told him that he was required only to make the proclamation and the responsibility for conveying it to the four corners of the world rested with Himself, that is Allah Ta'ālā. Thereupon Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام stood at مقام ابراهيم (Station of Ibrāhīm) and made the proclamation and Allah Ta'ālā magnified his voice so that it was heard all round the earth. It is also related that he made the proclamation from the top of the mount Abū Qubais (جبل أبى

قبيس). He put his fingers in his ears, turned his face in four directions and called out "O people! Allah has established His House and made it obligatory upon you to make pilgrimage to it. So obey the command of your Lord."

It is also mentioned in this narration that Allah Ta'ālā so decreed that the announcement was heard miraculously all over the world, not only by the people living then , but also by all those yet to be born upto the Day of Resurrection. And all those who are destined to perform the pilgrimage responded to the call with the words لَبَّيْكَ اَللّٰهُمَّ لَبَّيْكَ . Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه says that the Talbiyah during the pilgrimage has its origin in this response to the call of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. (Qurṭubī, Maẓharī)

Further on, the verse describes the tradition which has been established for all times as a result of the proclamation of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام namely يَأْتُوكَ رِجَالًا وَّعَلٰى كُلِّ ضَامِرٍ يَّأْتِيْنَ مِنْ كُلِّ فَجٍّ عَمِيْقٍ (22:28) meaning that people will come to Baitullah from the four corners of the earth, some on foot and others on their mounts, which will become lean because of the long distances traversed by them. From that remote time until today, though thousands of years have elapsed, people come to Baitullah to perform pilgrimage, just as they did in the earliest times. All the prophets who came after Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام and their followers strictly observed this tradition. During the long period of ignorance after Sayyidnā 'Īsā' عليه السلام , the Arabs, even though they lapsed into the evils of idolatry, yet they continued to perform very faithfully all the rituals of the pilgrimage precisely as they had inherited them from the time of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام .

لِيَشْهَدُوْا مَنَافِعَ لَهُمْ (So that they witness benefits for them - 22:28) means that the arduous journey undertaken by people to perform pilgrimage is to their own advantage. The use of the word "benefits" as a common noun (without definite article) points to the universal benefits that may be derived from the pilgrimage. Apart from the spiritual rewards, many material profits may also be obtained. It is indeed remarkable that people who sedulously save pennies over long years in order to be able to defray the high expenses involved in performing the Ḥajj have never become insolvent, whereas many people are known to have become bankrupt as a result of expenses incurred on marriages or on the construction of palatial houses. It is a common knowledge that no one has become a pauper

because of spending on Ḥajj or 'Umrah, rather it has been noticed, according to some narrations, that Allah Ta'ālā has bestowed such a blessing in this worship that many have gained materially after the ritual. As for the spiritual gains, they are many, one being related by Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ in a *ḥadīth* in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that anyone who performed Ḥajj in order to gain Allah's favour and avoided sins and obscene acts will return as immaculate and innocent as a newborn baby. (Bukhārī and Muslim) (Maẓharī).

In addition to the spiritual and material benefits to be obtained from Ḥajj mentioned above, there is yet another advantage which may be gained when performing it, which is mentioned in the following sentence: وَيَذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ فِيٓ اَيَّامٍ مَّعْلُومٰتٍ عَلٰي مَا رَزَقَهُمْ مِّنْ بَهِيمَةِ الْاَنْعَامِ (so that they may recite Allah's name, in specified days, over the provision He gave them from the cattle - 22:28). Here it is important to bear in mind that the main object of sacrificing the animals on this occasion is not their meat, but the mention of Allah's name which is recited while the animal is being slaughtered, which is the essence of the worship. The fact that eating the meat of these animals has been made *ḥalāl* (lawful) for them is an additional reward from Allah. اَيَّامٍ مَّعْلُومَاتٍ (specified days) refer to the 10th, 11th, and 12th days of the month of Dhul-Ḥijjah when animals may be sacrificed. The words علٰى مَا رَزَقَهُمْ مِّنْ بَهِيمَةِ الْاَنْعَامِ (Over the provision He gave them from the cattle - 22:28) are of general application and include all kinds of sacrifices whether they are obligatory or optional.

فَكُلُوا مِنْهَا (So eat therefrom) Although the word كُلُوْا has been used in the imperative mood, it does not mean that eating the meat of these animals is obligatory. Rather, it has been used in the sense that it is permitted and lawful to eat this meat, as it is mentioned in verse وَإِذَا حَلَلْتُمْ فَاصْطَادُوْا (When you are out of *Iḥrām*, you may hunt - 5:2) for granting permission for hunting.

Ruling

Specially during the period of Ḥajj, and generally at other times too situations arise when animals must be sacrificed in Makkah . There is one kind of sacrifice which is obligatory and performed to expiate a sin such as killing animals within the precincts of *Ḥaram*. Books of jurisprudence describe in detail the kind of animals killed and the type of animals to be slaughtered to atone for each such animal killed unlawfully. Similarly, if

a person commits an act which is forbidden, as long as he is in the state of *iḥrām*, he too must slaughter an animal. Jurists call this kind of sacrifice as دم الجناية (sacrifice to atone for a sin). Here also there are specific rules governing each situation. T' ..re are certain irregularities which must be expiated by slaughtering a camel or a cow, while in other cases the sacrifice of a goat or sheep is considered sufficient. There are a third kind of irregularities where slaughter of an animal is not necessary, and one can redeem his error by offering *ṣadaqah*. This is not the place to discuss these matters in great detail, but the the necessary information on this subject can be found in my booklet Aḥkāmul-Ḥajj (احكام الحج). When an animal is slaughtered for expiating a sin or an irregular act, its meat can be eaten only by the poor and needy persons and it is not permissible for the person making the slaughter or any rich person to eat this meat, and this view is held by all the jurists. As regards other sacrifices, whether obligatory or voluntary, the person offering the sacrifice, his relatives and friends, even though they may be rich, can eat their meat; and the present verse refers to this kind of sacrifice. Here also it is recommended that one-third of the meat be distributed among the poor and needy. The second part of this verse وَأَطْعِمُوا الْبَآئِسَ الْفَقِيْرَ (and feed the distressed, the poor - 22:28) explains this point.

ثُمَّ لْيَقْضُوا تَفَثَهُمْ (Then, they must remove their dirt - 22:29) The word تَفَث means dirt, which gathers on human body. While a person is in the state of *iḥrām,* he cannot shave, trim or pluck his hair, nor can he pare his nails, nor use perfume, and it is quite natural that dirt should collect under his hair and nails and on his body. This verse requires of the pilgrims that after they have performed the sacrifice, they should remove this dirt, meaning thereby that they should now remove the *iḥrām*, (and wear their normal clothes) shave their heads and pare their nails. This verse mentions sacrifice first and then refers to the removal of the dirt, which suggests that these two acts must be performed in that order. It is forbidden to shave one's head or pare nails before the obligatory sacrifice. Anyone who does so must slaughter an animal as *dam* (to atone for his sin).

Observance of the correct sequence in the performance of various acts related to Ḥajj

The observance of various functions of Ḥajj in the same order in

which they are mentioned in the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*, and which have been codified by the jurists is, by consensus, a *sunnah*. However, opinions differ whether it is obligatory as well. Imām Abū Ḥanīfah and Imām Mālik hold the view that the observance of the sequence is obligatory and any deviation from it must be atoned for by *dam*, while according to Imām Shafi'i it is only *sunnah* and a deviation from it reduces the reward to be gained by performing Ḥajj but does not make it obligatory to sacrifice an animal. There is also a ruling of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ من قدّم شيئًا من نسكه اواخّره فليهرق دما (He who alters the sequence of the rites during Ḥajj must slaughter an animal). (Maẓharī) Ṭaḥāwī has also reported this tradition through different versions. In addition Sayyidnā Sa'īd Ibn Jubair ﷺ, Qatādah, Nakha'i and Ḥasan al-Baṣrī also support the view that any alteration in the sequence of the rites of Ḥajj makes the sacrifice of an animal obligatory. Fuller details on the subject are discussed in the Tafsīr Maẓharī.

وَلْيُوفُوا نُذُورَهُمْ (And fulfill their vows - 22:29) نُذُور is the plural of the word نَذَر, which means a 'vow'. When a person commits himself verbally to do an act, in order to win the goodwill of Allah Ta'ālā, (which is not otherwise obligatory on him) it becomes a vow (*nadhr*) and its performance becomes obligatory for him by consensus of Ummah, provided that the act itself is not sinful or forbidden. If a person makes a vow to do something which is sinful, then he is not bound to fulfill the vow, rather it is impermissible to act upon it, but he must make atonement for the unfulfilled vow. According to Abū Ḥanīfah and other religious jurists the vow must be of an act which is an act of a direct worship (*'ibādah maqṣūdah*) in some manner. So, if someone makes a *nadhr* (vow) for voluntary prayers, fasting, *ṣadaqah,* sacrifice of animals etc. all these vows must be fulfilled in all circumstances. The present verse emphasizes on this very issue.

Ruling

It must be remembered that a resolve made in one's heart to do something does not become a *nadhr* (vow) unless it is pronounced with the tongue. Tafsīr Maẓharī has elaborated the rules of *nadhr* in great detail.

A question and its answer

One may question the relevance of *nadhr* in the context of Ḥajj. Obviously the preceding sentences speak of the rules of Ḥajj, like sacrifice, removing *iḥrām* etc. Similarly, the following sentence relates to the ṭawāf of *ziyārah*. Why the injunction to fulfill vows has been inserted between the rules of Ḥajj, while the rules governing vows have an independent status which are to be fulfilled at all times and at every place and not during Ḥajj only?

A possible explanation for this is that when a person sets out with the intention of performing Ḥajj, his heart prompts him to do the maximum number of good deeds and to spend the maximum time in prayers, and so he makes many vows, specially it was a common practice to make vows for sacrificing additional animals during Ḥajj. According to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﵄ the word *nadhr* in this context means a vow to sacrifice an animal. One relevance of *nadhr* (vow) appearing with the rites of pilgrimage is that just as vow makes many things obligatory which are not so otherwise and makes many things unlawful for him which are not originally forbidden, similarly the state of *iḥrām,* during a pilgrimage makes certain things unlawful for him which are permitted at other times. Instances of these are: wearing stitched clothes, use of perfume, shaving of hair or paring nails. Therefore, Sayyidnā 'Ikrimah ﵄ has interpreted *nadhr* in this verse to mean those acts and duties which have become obligatory during the course of Ḥajj.

وَلْيَطَّوَّفُوْا بِالْبَيْتِ الْعَتِيْقِ (And they should make tawaf of the ancient House - 22:29) Here the word *ṭawāf* refers to *ṭawāf-uz-ziyārah*, which is performed on the 10th day of the month of Zil Hijj after casting stones and making the sacrifice. It is the second obligatory ritual of Ḥajj, the first being *wuqūf-ul-'Arafāt,* which is performed earlier. After this *ṭawāf* the state of *iḥrām* is fully terminated and all restrictions are removed. (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī).

The word اَلْبَيْتِ الْعَتِيْقِ lexically means 'liberated house' Baitullah is called اَلْبَيْتِ الْعَتِيْقِ, because according to the Holy Prophet ﷺ it has been liberated from the control and domination of the infidels and tyrants and it will never again be ruled by them. (رواه الترمذی وحسنه والحاکم وصححه وابن جریر والطبرانی وغيرهم -Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī). It is evident by the episode of the People of

Elephant who, with all their might, were frustrated in their attempt to establish their dominion over Makkah.[1]

Verses 30 - 33

ذٰلِكَ ۚ وَمَنْ يُّعَظِّمْ حُرُمٰتِ اللّٰهِ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّهٗ عِنْدَ رَبِّهٖ ؕ وَاُحِلَّتْ لَكُمُ الْاَنْعَامُ اِلَّا مَا يُتْلٰى عَلَيْكُمْ فَاجْتَنِبُوا الرِّجْسَ مِنَ الْاَوْثَانِ وَاجْتَنِبُوْا قَوْلَ الزُّوْرِ ﴿٣٠﴾ حُنَفَآءَ لِلّٰهِ غَيْرَ مُشْرِكِيْنَ بِهٖ ؕ وَمَنْ يُّشْرِكْ بِاللّٰهِ فَكَاَنَّمَا خَرَّ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ فَتَخْطَفُهُ الطَّيْرُ اَوْ تَهْوِيْ بِهِ الرِّيْحُ فِيْ مَكَانٍ سَحِيْقٍ ﴿٣١﴾ ذٰلِكَ ۚ وَمَنْ يُّعَظِّمْ شَعَآئِرَ اللّٰهِ فَاِنَّهَا مِنْ تَقْوَى الْقُلُوْبِ ﴿٣٢﴾ لَكُمْ فِيْهَا مَنَافِعُ اِلٰۤى اَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ثُمَّ مَحِلُّهَاۤ اِلَى الْبَيْتِ الْعَتِيْقِ ﴿٣٣﴾

That is (what one should remember), and whoever observes the reverence of things sanctified by Allah, it is good for him with his Lord. And permitted to you are the cattle, except those mentioned to you through recitation (of the verses). So refrain from the filth of the idols and refrain from a word of falsehood, [30] **being upright for (the obedience of) Allah, not ascribing any partner to Him. And whoever ascribes a partner to Allah, it is as if he falls down from the sky and the birds snatch him, or the wind drives him away to a far off place.** [31]

That is (what one should remember), and if one observes the sanctity of the symbols of Allah, then such things emanate from the piety of the hearts. [32]

And for you there are benefits in them (the cattle) upto a specified time. Then their place of sacrifice is by the Ancient House. [33]

Commentary

حُرُمٰتِ اللّٰهِ (22:30) are the things sanctified by Allah Ta'ālā, that is the

1. The other meaning of the word عتيق is 'ancient' which is adopted in the translation of the text. (Editor)

religious laws. They are a source of welfare in this world and in the Hereafter for those pious Muslims who seek to learn them and act upon them.

أُحِلَّتْ لَكُمُ الْاَنْعَامُ اِلاَّ مَا يُتْلٰى عَلَيْكُمْ (And permitted to you are the cattle, except those mentioned to you through recitation (of the verses) - 22:30) The word انعام (cattle) includes camels, cows, goats, sheep etc. which are made lawful at all times and even when one is in the state of *iḥrām*. Then the verse contains an exception in the words اِلاَّ مَا يُتْلٰى عَلَيْكُمْ (except those mentioned to you.. - 22:30) These are the animals which have been made unlawful in all circumstances, whether one is in the state of *iḥrām* or not. The detail of these animals is given in other verses, such as carrion, an animal which is beaten to death, or slaughtered without reciting the name of Allah, or in the name of someone other than Allah.

فَاجْتَنِبُوا الرِّجْسَ مِنَ الْاَوْثَانِ (So refrain from the filth of the idols - 22:30) The word رِجْس means filth or moral impurity, and اَوْثَان is the plural of وَثَن , which means idol. Idols have been described as filth, because they fill a man's heart and soul with moral impurity.

وَاجْتَنِبُوْا قَوْلَ الزُّوْرِ (And refrain from a word of falsehood - 22:30) The phrase قَوْلَ الزُّوْرِ means lies. Anything which is contrary to truth is a lie and false, whether it is corrupt beliefs and practices or whether it is false evidence. The Holy Prophet ﷺ once said 'Among the major sins are associating anyone with Allah, disobedience of one's parents, giving false evidence and telling lies in general talk'. He used the phrase وَقَوْلَ الزُّوْرِ (word of falsehood) repeatedly. (Bukhārī)

وَمَنْ يُّعَظِّمْ شَعَآئِرَاللّٰهِ (And if one observes the sanctity of the symbols of Allah - 22:32) The word شَعَائِر is the plural of شَعِيْرَه which means a 'symbol', 'a distinctive sign', and refers to those things which are considered as the specific emblems of certain groups of people or certain faiths. شَعَائِر are those special laws which are generally taken to be the identifying features of a Muslim. Most of the rules of Ḥajj fall in this category.

فَاِنَّهَا مِنْ تَقْوَى الْقُلُوْبِ (then such things emanate from the piety of the hearts - 22:32). It means that respect for the شَعَائِرُ اللّٰهِ (Symbols of Allah) is an evidence of the piety of heart, which indicates that the symbols of Allah are respected by the one who has *taqwā* (fear of Allah) in his heart and that *taqwā* is a quality which rests in one's heart. When the heart is

equipped with this quality, it is reflected in all his actions.

لَكُمْ فِيهَا مَنَافِعُ اِلَى اَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى (And for you there are benefits in them upto a specified time - 22:33) It means that it is lawful for the Muslims to use the quadruped animals for their benefit (such as using their milk, riding them or using them for transport of goods) unless the animals have been made هَدِى (Hady) by reserving them for sacrifice to be offered within the precincts of *ḥaram.* When a person takes along with him an animal for the specific purpose of sacrificing it within *ḥaram*, the animal is described as *hady,* and no benefit may be derived from it, except in extreme emergency. A person leading a camel after it has been nominated as *hady* may lawfully ride it only if he is unable to walk and no other mount is available.

ثُمَّ مَحِلُّهَآ اِلَى الْبَيْتِ الْعَتِيْقِ (Then their place of sacrifice is by the Ancient House - 22:33) Here اَلْبَيْتِ الْعَتِيْقِ includes the entire precincts of *ḥaram*, as was the case in the previous verse where the word Al-Masjid Al-Ḥarām was used for the entire area of *ḥaram*, and *maḥill* (place) means the place of slaughtering the animals of *hady*. Thus the entire *ḥaram* is declared as the slaughtering place of the animals of *hady*. The meaning of the verse is that the *hady* (animals nominated for sacrifice during Ḥajj) may be slaughtered within, and not outside the area of *ḥaram* which includes Minā and all other places of Makkah. (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī)

Verses 34 - 37

وَلِكُلِّ اُمَّةٍ جَعَلْنَا مَنْسَكًا لِّيَذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللّٰهِ عَلٰى مَا رَزَقَهُمْ مِّنْ
بَهِيْمَةِ الْاَنْعَامِ ط فَاِلٰهُكُمْ اِلٰهٌ وَّاحِدٌ فَلَهٗٓ اَسْلِمُوْا ط وَ بَشِّرِالْمُخْبِتِيْنَ
﴿٣٤﴾ الَّذِيْنَ اِذَا ذُكِرَاللّٰهُ وَجِلَتْ قُلُوْبُهُمْ وَالصّٰبِرِيْنَ عَلٰى مَآ
اَصَابَهُمْ وَالْمُقِيْمِى الصَّلٰوةِ لا وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنٰهُمْ يُنْفِقُوْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾ وَالْبُدْنَ
جَعَلْنٰهَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ شَعَآئِرِ اللّٰهِ لَكُمْ فِيْهَا خَيْرٌ صلے ق فَاذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللّٰهِ
عَلَيْهَا صَوَآفَّ ج فَاِذَا وَجَبَتْ جُنُوْبُهَا فَكُلُوْا مِنْهَا وَاَطْعِمُوا الْقَانِعَ
وَالْمُعْتَرَّ ط كَذٰلِكَ سَخَّرْنٰهَا لَكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُوْنَ ﴿٣٦﴾ لَنْ يَّنَالَ

اللّٰهَ لُحُومُهَا وَلَا دِمَآؤُهَا وَلٰكِنْ يَّنَالُهُ التَّقْوٰى مِنْكُمْ ۚ كَذٰلِكَ سَخَّرَهَا لَكُمْ لِتُكَبِّرُوا اللّٰهَ عَلٰى مَاهَدٰىكُمْ ۚ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ﴿٣٧﴾

And for every Ummah We prescribed the act of sacrifice, so that they recite Allah's name over the provision He gave them from the cattle. So, your God is One God. Therefore, to Him alone you must submit. And give good news to those who turn to Him with humbleness - [34] those whose hearts are filled with awe when Allah is remembered, and who observe patience against whatever befalls them, and who are steadfast in Ṣalāh, and who spend (in the way of Allah) out of what We have given to them. [35]

And the big animals of sacrifice (like camels) are made by Us among the symbols of Allah for you in which there is much good for your benefit. So recite the name of Allah over them as they are lined up (for sacrifice). Then, once their flanks fall down (after slaughter), eat of them and feed the one who is content and the one who wishes to receive. Thus We have made them (the animals) subjugated to you, so that you may be grateful. [36] **It is neither their flesh nor their blood that reaches Allah, but what reaches Him is the *taqwā* on your part. Thus He has made them (the animals) subjugated to you, so that you proclaim the glory of Allah for the guidance He gave you. And give good news to those who are good in deeds.** [37]

Commentary

وَلِكُلِّ اُمَّةٍ جَعَلْنَا مَنْسَكًا (And for every Ummah We prescribed the act of sacrifice - 22:34) The words مَنْسَك and نُسُك means several things in Arabic such as sacrifice of animals, the rites of pilgrimage, and also worship of Allah Ta'ālā. This word has been used in the Qur'ān at several places and conveys one of the three meanings. In the present context, the word can carry all the three meanings. Mujāhid and some other commentators think that here the word مَنْسَك refers to the sacrifice of the animals in which case the verse would mean that the obligation to offer sacrifice, which has been placed on this Ummah is nothing new, because all the

other peoples were likewise bound to do so. On the other hand, according to Qatādah the word means the rites of the pilgrimage, and thus the verse would mean that these rites which have been prescribed for the present Ummah were made obligatory on the people of earlier ages also. Ibn 'Arafah has interpreted the word مَنْسَك to mean worship of Allah, and so the meaning of the verse would be that the worship of Allah was made obligatory on all the peoples of bygone ages and though there were differences in the forms of worship, yet in essence it remained unchanged.

وَ بَشِّرِالْمُخْبِتِيْنَ (And give good news to those who turn to Him in humbleness) The word خَبت means 'a depressed tract of land' and خبيت means 'a person who deems himself humble and lowly'. According to 'Amr bin Aws مُخبِتِين are those people who do not wrong others and if somebody wrongs them, they do not seek revenge. Sufyān has observed that they are the people who are contented with Allah's will and remain agreeable in all circumstances, comfort or trouble and poverty or affluence.

وَجِلَتْ قُلُوْبُهُمْ (Whose hearts are filled with awe - 22:35) The word وَجل means a feeling of awe inspired by something majestic and sublime. These words describe the state of pious people who are overwhelmed by deep awe whenever the name of Allah is mentioned in their presence.

وَالْبُدْنَ جَعَلْنٰهَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ شَعَآئِرِ اللّٰهِ (And the big animals of sacrifice [like camels] are made by Us among the symbols of Allah for you - 22:36.) It has been explained earlier that شَعَائِر (symbols) mean those special forms of rites and worship, which are the symbols of Islam. Sacrifice of animals is one of them, which must be observed with due importance.

فَاذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْهَا صَوَآفَّ (So recite the name of Allah over them as they are lined up (for sacrifice) - 22:36) The word صَوَاف (translated above as 'lined up') is used for مَصْفُوْفَه , which means standing in a row. According to Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar ﷺ the verse means that the camel, which is to be slaughtered, should stand on three legs and one foreleg should be bent and tied up. This is a better way of slaughtering a camel and is according to *sunnah*. Other animals should be slaughtered in lying position, which is also *sunnah*.

فَإِذَا وَجَبَتْ جُنُوْبُهَا (Then, once their flanks fall down). Here the word وَجَبَتْ is used for the meaning of سَقَطَت, which means when the animal falls and dies.

الْقَانِعَ وَالْمُعْتَرَّ (the one who is content and the one who wishes to receive) In an earlier verse people who have a right on the meat of sacrificed animals have been described by the words بَائِس فَقِير , which mean destitute and without means. These two words have been clarified further by the words قَانِع and مُعْتَر . The word قَانِع applies to a needy person who does not solicit and is content with what people offer him voluntarily. While مُعْتَر is a person who goes to a place where he expects to receive something, whether he solicits verbally or not. (Maẓharī)

The real object is not the specific rites of pilgrimage but true devotion to Allah and submission to His will which are inherent in those rites

لَنْ يَّنَالَ اللّٰهَ لُحُوْمُهَا (It is neither their flesh nor their blood that reaches Allah - 22:37) It means that the sacrifice of animals is a very high form of worship, but their meat and blood do not reach Allah Ta'ālā nor are these two things the real object of sacrifice. Its real aim is to recite the name of Allah and to comply with His commands with true devotion. This rule applies to all forms of worship. For instance, the object of prayers is not just the movement of limbs, or the object of fasting is not merely a denial of food and drink. The real purpose of these rites of worship is to obey the commands of Allah Ta'ālā with all sincerity. Devoid of sincerity these rites of worship are like a body without soul. Nevertheless these forms of worship are also very important because Allah Ta'ālā has prescribed these forms for different types of worship. Allah knows best. واللّٰه اعلم

Verse 38

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُدٰفِعُ عَنِ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ خَوَّانٍ كَفُوْرٍ ﴿٣٨﴾

Surely, Allah defends those who believe. Allah does not love any treacherous, ungrateful. [38]

Commentary

The previous verses contain an account of how the infidels of Makkah prevented the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his companions from entering the *Ḥaram* and the Holy Mosque to perform 'Umrah when, having put on *iḥrām*, they had reached as far as Ḥudaibiyah, a place not far from Makkah. In this verse Allah Ta'ālā consoled the Muslims with the promise that He would deprive the infidels of their power to harm them any more.

This incident took place in the year 6 A.H. and thereafter the power and the morale of the infidels suffered continuous decline until in the year 8 A.H. the Muslims conquered Makkah. The following verses describe this event in detail.

Verses 39 - 41

أُذِنَ لِلَّذِيْنَ يُقٰتَلُوْنَ بِاَنَّهُمْ ظُلِمُوْا ؕ وَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلٰى نَصْرِهِمْ لَقَدِيْرُ
﴿۳۹﴾ ۙ الَّذِيْنَ اُخْرِجُوْا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ اِلَّآ اَنْ يَّقُوْلُوْا رَبُّنَا اللّٰهُ ؕ
وَلَوْلَا دَفْعُ اللّٰهِ النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ لَّهُدِّمَتْ صَوَامِعُ وَبِيَعٌ
وَّصَلَوٰتٌ وَّمَسٰجِدُ يُذْكَرُ فِيْهَا اسْمُ اللّٰهِ كَثِيْرًا ؕ وَلَيَنْصُرَنَّ اللّٰهُ مَنْ
يَّنْصُرُهٗ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَقَوِيٌّ عَزِيْزٌ ﴿۴۰﴾ اَلَّذِيْنَ اِنْ مَّكَّنّٰهُمْ فِى الْاَرْضِ
اَقَامُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتَوُا الزَّكٰوةَ وَاَمَرُوْا بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَنَهَوْا عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ ؕ
وَلِلّٰهِ عَاقِبَةُ الْاُمُوْرِ ﴿۴۱﴾

Permission (to fight) is given to those who are fought against, because they have been wronged, and Allah is powerful enough to give them victory. [39] **(They are) the ones who were expelled from their homes without any just reason, except that they say "Our Lord is Allah." And had Allah not repelled some people by means of some others, the monasteries, the churches, the synagogues and the mosques where the name of Allah is recited abundantly would have been demolished. And Allah will definitely help those who help Him. Surely Allah is Powerful, Mighty.** [40]

(They are) those who, when We give them power in the land, establish Ṣalāh, pay Zakāh, bid the Fair and forbid the Unfair. And with Allah lies the fate of all matters. [41]

Commentary

First command to fight the infidels

The infidels of Makkah intensified their aggression against the Muslims and every day people arrived in Madīnah bearing marks of ill-treatment which they had suffered at the hands of unbelievers. In the

days before Hijrah the number of the faithful had increased considerably and they sought permission to defend themselves against the oppression to which they were being constantly subjected, but the Holy Prophet ﷺ advised them patience because he had not received Allah's permission so far to resist the infidels with force of arms. This situation persisted for about ten years. (Qurṭubī).

At last, things became so bad that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was left with no choice but to leave Makkah. As he started on his journey accompanied by Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ؓ he said اخرجوا نبيّهم ليهلكنّ (They have expelled their Prophet and the time has come when they will perish). When he arrived at Madīnah this verse was revealed which permitted the Muslims to take up arms against the infidels. (رواه النسائی والترمذی عن ابن عباس - Qurṭubī)

Tirmidhī, Nasa'ī, Ibn Mājah, Ibn Ḥibbān, Ḥākim and others have reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ that this is the first verse which permitted the Muslims to offer armed resistance to the infidels, whereas in more than seventy earlier verses armed resistance was forbidden.

The philosophy behind Jihād and war against the infidels

وَلَوْلَا دَفْعُ اللّٰهِ النَّاسَ (And had Allah not repelled some people by means of some others... - 22:40) Had Allah not repelled some people by means of some others, the monasteries, the churches, the synagogues and the mosques where the name of Allah is recited abundantly would have been demolished. The command to take up arms against the unbelievers is nothing new, because the earlier prophets and their followers had received similar orders from Allah Ta'ālā and the philosophy behind this command was that without armed resistance no religion would have felt safe and their places of worship would have been destroyed by the infidels.

There have been many religions which were founded on the worship of one God and built up by means of *Waḥy* (Divine revelations). In course of time their basics were changed and so many alterations were introduced in them that they turned into unbelief and polytheism. But before these things happened, they were true religions and it was the duty of their followers to respect and defend their places of worship. This verse refers to such places of worship only and does not include the sacred

places of those religions which were not founded on prophethood and revelation (such as the fire-worshiping Magians, or the idol-worshiping Hindus) because they were at no time considered places deserving of respect.

In this verse صَوَامِع is the plural of صَوْمَعَه , which means a monastery which is a place of worship meant for Christian monks and hermits بِيَعٌ is the plural of بِيْعَة , which means a Christian church, and صَلَوٰت is the plural of صَلوت ,which means a Jewish synagogue. And of course مَسْجِد is the place of worship of the Muslims.

The meaning of this verse is that if at different times the believers had not been permitted to fight the infidels, no true religion would have felt secure and at different times during the periods of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام , Sayyidnā 'Īsā' عليه السلام and the Holy Prophet ﷺ the places of worship of their respective religions would have been destroyed. (Qurṭubī)

Qur'ānic prophecy about the Rightly Guided Caliphs (خلفائے راشدین) and its fulfillment

اَلَّذِيْنَ اِنْ مَّكَّنّٰهُمْ فِى الْاَرْضِ (Those who, when We give them power in the land - 22:41) In this verse the word الذين (those) refers to those people who have been mentioned in the preceding verse: اَلَّذِيْنَ اُخْرِجُوْا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ (Those are the ones who were expelled from their homes without any just reason - 22:40). Referring to such people the verse says that if they are placed in authority in this world, they will use it to promote good deeds, will set up prayers, pay the obligatory charity, enjoin people to do good and abstain from evil deeds. It has already been mentioned that these verses were revealed soon after Hijrah, at a time when the Muslims did not exercise dominion anywhere on earth, which means that Allah Ta'ālā had already made it known that when, at a future date, they would come to power and establish their government, they would serve the Faith in the manner described in this verse. Sayyidnā 'Uthman رضي الله عنه said referring to this verse, ثناء قبل بلاء that this verse praises those people before they actually perform the praise-worthy deeds. In due course Allah Ta'ālā's prophecy was fulfilled in that the four Rightly Guided Caliphs and the Muhajirīn (emigrants) from Makkah were indeed those whom the Qur'ān described by the words اَلَّذِيْنَ اُخْرِجُوْا (those who were expelled - 22:40) and when they established their government and held sway over vast

territories, they used their power and authority in setting up prayers, strengthening the system of Zakāh, enjoining good and forbidding evil deeds. Many scholars are of the view that this verse is a clear evidence of the fact that accession to power of the four Caliphs (خلفائے راشدین) is a direct fulfillment of Allah's Prophesy, and the system of caliphate which was set up by them was in accordance with His will. (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī)

Having discussed the factual aspect of the circumstances leading up to the revelation of this verse it must, at the same time, be emphasized that where the Qur'ān uses general words and phrases, their purpose is not restricted to a particular situation, but is universally applicable to all similar situations. Following this reasoning, Ḍaḥḥāk رحمه الله تعالیٰ says that this verse contains an injunction for all those whom Allah Ta'ālā grants power and authority to do all those things which the Four Caliphs did when they controlled the rule. (Qurṭubī)

Verses 42 - 51

وَاِنْ يُّكَذِّبُوْكَ فَقَدْ كَذَّبَتْ قَبْلَهُمْ قَوْمُ نُوْحٍ وَّعَادٌ وَّثَمُوْدُ ﴿٤٢﴾ وَ
قَوْمُ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَقَوْمُ لُوْطٍ ﴿٤٣﴾ وَّاَصْحٰبُ مَدْيَنَ وَكُذِّبَ مُوْسٰى
فَاَمْلَيْتُ لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ ثُمَّ اَخَذْتُهُمْ ۚ فَكَيْفَ كَانَ نَكِيْرِ ﴿٤٤﴾ فَكَاَيِّنْ مِّنْ
قَرْيَةٍ اَهْلَكْنٰهَا وَهِيَ ظَالِمَةٌ فَهِيَ خَاوِيَةٌ عَلٰى عُرُوْشِهَا وَبِئْرٍ مُّعَطَّلَةٍ
وَّقَصْرٍ مَّشِيْدٍ ﴿٤٥﴾ اَفَلَمْ يَسِيْرُوْا فِي الْاَرْضِ فَتَكُوْنَ لَهُمْ قُلُوْبٌ
يَّعْقِلُوْنَ بِهَآ اَوْ اٰذَانٌ يَّسْمَعُوْنَ بِهَا ۚ فَاِنَّهَا لَا تَعْمَى الْاَبْصَارُ وَلٰكِنْ
تَعْمَى الْقُلُوْبُ الَّتِيْ فِي الصُّدُوْرِ ﴿٤٦﴾ وَيَسْتَعْجِلُوْنَكَ بِالْعَذَابِ
وَلَنْ يُّخْلِفَ اللّٰهُ وَعْدَهٗ ۗ وَاِنَّ يَوْمًا عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ كَاَلْفِ سَنَةٍ مِّمَّا
تَعُدُّوْنَ ﴿٤٧﴾ وَكَاَيِّنْ مِّنْ قَرْيَةٍ اَمْلَيْتُ لَهَا وَهِيَ ظَالِمَةٌ ثُمَّ اَخَذْتُهَا ۚ
وَاِلَيَّ الْمَصِيْرُ ﴿٤٨﴾ قُلْ يٰۤاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اِنَّمَآ اَنَا لَكُمْ نَذِيْرٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿٤٩﴾
فَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ لَهُمْ مَّغْفِرَةٌ وَّرِزْقٌ كَرِيْمٌ ﴿٥٠﴾

وَالَّذِيْنَ سَعَوْا فِيْٓ اٰيٰتِنَا مُعٰجِزِيْنَ اُولٰٓئِكَ اَصْحٰبُ الْجَحِيْمِ ﴿٥١﴾

And if they belie you, so did belie the people of Nūḥ and 'Ād and Thamūd, [42] **and the people of Ibrāhīm and the people of Lūṭ,** [43] **and the people of Madyan as well. And Mūsā was (also) belied. So, I gave some respite to the disbelievers, then seized them. So how was My censure?** [44] **How many a town there were which We destroyed, when they were wrongdoers. So, there they are, fallen down on their roofs, and (how many a) deserted well and well-built castle!** [45]

Have they not, then, travelled on earth so that they should have had hearts to understand with or ears to listen with? The fact is that it is not the eyes that turn blind, but what turns blind is the hearts contained in the chests. [46]

And they ask you to bring the punishment sooner. And Allah will never go back on His promise. In fact, one day with your Lord is like one thousand years of what you count. [47] **And how many a town there were to whom I allowed respite, while they were wrongdoers, then I seized them. And to Me is the final return.** [48]

Say, "O people, I am no more than a plain warner for you. [49] **So those who come to believe and do good deeds, for them there is forgiveness and dignified provision.** [50] **And those who strive against Our signs trying to defeat (the prophet or the believers), they are the people of the Fire.** [51]

Commentary

Travels undertaken to acquire insight into things and to learn lessons from the past is one of the religious objectives

اَفَلَمْ يَسِيْرُوْا فِي الْاَرْضِ فَتَكُوْنَ لَهُمْ قُلُوْبٌ (Have they not, then, travelled on earth so that they should have hearts - 22:46) This verse encourages travel, provided the person travelling keeps his eyes wide open and imbibes in his mind the lessons of history. The phrase فَتَكُوْنَ لَهُمْ قُلُوْبٌ (so that they should have hearts - 22:46) suggests that a person can gain wisdom and intelligence by a careful study of the history of bygone times and an account of people who inhabited this world in different ages. Every event

of history holds a lesson for a person who has insight and who does not regard history as a mere record of episodes and occurrences. Ibn Abī Ḥātim has written in his book التفكر quoting Mālik Ibn Dīnār رحمه الله تعالى that Allah Ta'ālā commanded Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام to wear shoes made of iron and to hold in his hand a staff made of iron and travel around the earth until his shoes would be worn out and his staff broken down. (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī). If this narration is true, then naturally it means to acquire knowledge and lessons from the past.

How the Day of Resurrection will be equal to one thousand years by our reckoning

In this verse إِنَّ يَوْمًا عِندَ رَبِّكَ كَأَلْفِ سَنَةٍ (22:47) means that one day with your Lord is like one thousand years of what you count. This verse can be interpreted in two ways. The first meaning is that the verse refers to the Day of Resurrection and the events which will take place on that day will be so horrifying and of such extreme severity that the day will appear never to end, as if it was equal to one thousand years according to our reckoning. Many commentators have interpreted this verse accordingly.

The other meaning of the verse is that the Day of Resurrection will in actual fact be so long that it will stretch up to one thousand years of this world. This view is supported by a saying of the Holy Prophet ﷺ as reported in Musnād of Aḥmad and Tirmidhī on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه that the Holy Prophet ﷺ once addressed the poor people of the *muhājirīn* (i.e. those who migrated from Makkah) and said, 'I give you good news about the full refulgence on the Day of Resurrection and that you will be admitted to heaven half a day before the rich and the wealthy, and a day in the Hereafter will be of one thousand years, hence the poor will enter the heaven five hundred years before the wealthy'. Tirmidhī has classified this *ḥadīth* as '*ḥasan*'. (Maẓharī)

A doubt and its explanation

There is a verse in Sūrah Al-Ma'ārij which says that the day with your Lord will be equal to fifty thousand years كَانَ مِقْدَارُهُ خَمْسِينَ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ. (Whereof the measure is fifty thousand yours - 70:4) This can also be explained by applying either of the two explanations of the present verse and in the first case since every person will suffer different levels of severity, to some it will appear as if he has suffered pain for one thousand

years, while to others the period will appear equal to fifty thousand years. If, however, the second explanation is applied to this verse, then there would appear to be a contradiction between the verses where one verse equates the Day of Resurrection to one thousand years and the other to fifty thousand years. But this so-called contradiction has been reconciled by Sayyidi Ashraf 'Ali Thanavi رحمه الله تعالى in his commentary Bayan ul-Qur'an, by saying that this difference may be due to different horizons. Just as we see in our world that the length of day and night is different on different horizons, (on zero latitude it is of 24 hours while at the latitude of 90^{o} it is one year. Likewise it is possible that the length of the Day of Resurrection would be different on different horizons, and if its length right below the day line is one thousand years because of miraculously slow rotation of sun or earth), the areas falling 50 times far from it may have a day 50 times more in length. And Allah knows best.

Verses 52 - 57

وَمَآ اَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْ رَّسُوْلٍ وَّلَا نَبِيٍّ اِلَّآ اِذَا تَمَنّٰٓى اَلْقَى
الشَّيْطٰنُ فِيْٓ اُمْنِيَّتِهٖ ۚ فَيَنْسَخُ اللّٰهُ مَا يُلْقِى الشَّيْطٰنُ ثُمَّ يُحْكِمُ اللّٰهُ
اٰيٰتِهٖ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿٥٢﴾ لِّيَجْعَلَ مَا يُلْقِى الشَّيْطٰنُ فِتْنَةً لِّلَّذِيْنَ
فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ وَّالْقَاسِيَةِ قُلُوْبُهُمْ ۗ وَاِنَّ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ لَفِيْ شِقَاقٍ
بَعِيْدٍ ﴿٥٣﴾ وَّلِيَعْلَمَ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْعِلْمَ اَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ فَيُؤْمِنُوْا بِهٖ
فَتُخْبِتَ لَهٗ قُلُوْبُهُمْ ۗ وَ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَهَادِ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِلٰى صِرَاطٍ
مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ ﴿٥٤﴾ وَلَا يَزَالُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا فِيْ مِرْيَةٍ مِّنْهُ حَتّٰى تَاْتِيَهُمُ
السَّاعَةُ بَغْتَةً اَوْ يَاْتِيَهُمْ عَذَابُ يَوْمٍ عَقِيْمٍ ﴿٥٥﴾ اَلْمُلْكُ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِّلّٰهِ ۗ
يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَهُمْ ۗ فَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ فِيْ جَنّٰتِ النَّعِيْمِ
﴿٥٦﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَكَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا فَاُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّهِيْنٌ ﴿٥٧﴾

And We did not send any messenger before you nor a prophet, but (he faced a situation that) when he recited (the revelation), the Satan cast (doubts) about what he

recited. So, Allah nullifies what the Satan casts, then Allah makes His verses firm, and Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise [52] **- (all this is allowed to be done) so that He may make what Satan casts a trial for those in whose hearts there is a disease and whose hearts are hard; and surely the wrongdoers are in the utmost antagonism -** [53] **and so that those who have been given knowledge may know that it (i.e. the revelation recited by the prophet) is the truth from your Lord, and they may believe in it and their hearts may become humble towards it. And Allah is the One who takes the believers to the straight path.** [54]

And those who disbelieve will remain in doubt about it (the Qur'ān) forever, until the Hour (of Judgment) comes upon them suddenly, or there comes to them the punishment of a barren day. [55] **The kingdom, on that day, is for Allah. He will judge between them. So, those who believed and did good deeds shall be in gardens of bliss.** [56] **As for those who disbelieved and belied Our signs, they are the ones for whom there is a humiliating punishment.** [57]

Commentary

مِن رَّسُولٍ وَّلَا نَبِيٍّ (any messenger and any prophet - 22:52) This shows that the words Rasūl رَسُول and Nabi نَبِی carry different meanings, though there is no consensus as to the precise nature of the difference. For our purpose it is enough to understand that Nabi نَبِی is a person whom Allah Ta'ālā designates with a mission to reform his people and who receives revelations from Him. He may receive a Scripture and a code of laws or he may be commanded to convey the message of an earlier Book and code of laws. Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and 'Īsā' عليه السلام belong to the first category, whereas Sayyidnā Hārūn, who was directed to propagate the teachings of Torah and the Mosaic Laws, falls in the second category. On the other hand a Rasūl رَسُول is a person who receives from Allah Ta'ālā a Scripture and a code of laws. Thus every Rasūl is necessarily a Nabi also, but every Nabi is not a Rasūl. These distinctions are applicable to human beings only. That an angel who carries *waḥy* from Allah Ta'ālā is also named as Rasul does not contradict this position. This subject has already been discussed in detail in Sūrah Maryam in the beginning of this volume.

أَلْقَى الشَّيْطٰنُ فِيٓ أُمْنِيَّتِهٖ (The Satan cast (doubts) about what he recited - 22:52) In this verse the word تَمَنّٰى has been used as a synonym for قَرَأَ, thus أُمْنِيَّه would mean قِرَاءَت (recitation). This verse explains that the disputes raised by the disbelievers in regard to Allah's message is not something new as similar doubts were raised by earlier people as well when their prophets presented to them the message of Truth, and the Satan cast doubts about it in the hearts of disbelievers. This explanation of the verse is quite clear and straight-forward, and has been adopted by many commentators including Abū Ḥayyān in his Al-Baḥr-ul-Muḥīṭ. However, some books of traditions have reported here an incident which is not proved by authentic sources. The incident is known as حَدِيْثُ الْغَرَانِيْق (*ḥadīth-ul-gharānīq*). Some scholars have held that it is invented by some heretics and enemies of Islam. But even those who believe this tradition to be worthwhile have taken pains to remove the doubts, which the words raise about the categorical and undisputed laws of Qur'ān and Sunnah. The plain and simple meaning of the verse has been explained above and the alleged incident in no way affects this meaning. Making this incident as a part and parcel of the commentary on this verse, thereby creating unnecessary doubts, and then attempting to answer those doubts is an exercise in futility and absolutely undesirable واللّٰه سبحانه و تعالٰی اعلَم .

Verses 58 - 59

وَالَّذِيْنَ هَاجَرُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ثُمَّ قُتِلُوْٓا اَوْ مَاتُوْا لَيَرْزُقَنَّهُمُ اللّٰهُ رِزْقًا حَسَنًا ۭ وَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَهُوَ خَيْرُ الرّٰزِقِيْنَ ﴿٥٨﴾ لَيُدْخِلَنَّهُمْ مُّدْخَلًا يَّرْضَوْنَهٗ ۭ وَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَعَلِيْمٌ حَلِيْمٌ ﴿٥٩﴾

And those who left their homeland in the way of Allah, then were slain or died, Allah will certainly give them a good provision, and surely, Allah is the best of all givers. [58] **He will definitely admit them to an entrance they will be pleased with, and Allah is surely All-Knowing, Forbearing.** [59]

Commentary

Those people who had left their hearth and homes in the cause of

Allah and were killed or died of natural death, they would definitely be rewarded. If they have not benefited in this world, their reward will be there in the Hereafter.

Verse 60

ذٰلِكَ ۚ وَمَنْ عَاقَبَ بِمِثْلِ مَاعُوقِبَ بِهٖ ثُمَّ بُغِیَ عَلَيْهِ لَيَنْصُرَنَّهُ اللّٰهُ ۗ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَعَفُوٌّ غَفُوْرٌ ﴿٦٠﴾

That (is so). And whoever afflicts (someone) with a punishment equal to what he was afflicted with (by the latter), and still he (the former) is (again) subjected to injustice, Allah will certainly help him. Indeed, Allah is Most-Pardoning, Most-Forgiving. [60]

Commentary

In an earlier verse it has been mentioned that Allah Ta'ālā helps those who are wronged unjustly. وَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلٰى نَصْرِهِمْ لَقَدِيْرٌ. (Allah is powerful to give them victory - 22:39) Some people bear their sufferings patiently and do not seek vengeance from their oppressors, but there are others who retaliate and serve a full measure of retribution on their oppressors which should, therefore, place them both on even terms as being quits. But if the oppressor, incensed at the retaliation, attacks him again, then this person once again becomes the victim of oppression. This verse promises Allah's help for such a person also. On the other hand there are several verses which promise Allah's goodwill to those Muslims who bear their sufferings with patience and equanimity and do not seek vengeance from their oppressors. Some of these verses are:

فَمَنْ عَفَا وَاَصْلَحَ فَاَجْرُهٗ عَلَى اللّٰهِ

But whoso pardons and puts things right, his wage falls upon Allah - 42:40.

وَاَنْ تَعْفُوْٓا اَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوٰی

And that you forgive is closer to Taqwā - 2:237.

وَلَمَنْ صَبَرَ وَغَفَرَ اِنَّ ذٰلِكَ لَمِنْ عَزْمِ الْاُمُوْرِ

But surely he who bears patiently and forgives - surely that is true constancy - 42:43.

In all these verses it is encouraged not to retaliate for revenge and rather forgive and forget, which is a magnanimous way of dealing with fellow human beings. This is the way Qur'ānic teachings stand and call it a supreme and superior trait. Thus it may perhaps be argued that the person who retaliates against the wrongs done to him and conducts himself contrary to the course of action preferred by Allah Ta'ālā will be deprived of His support and help. But this doubt has been allayed in the final part of this verse إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَعَفُوٌّ غَفُورٌ (22:60) that is, Allah will not punish him for this lapse and will help him if he is subjected to injustice by his oppressors ever again. (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī)

Verses 61 - 66

ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّ اللّٰهَ يُوْلِجُ الَّيْلَ فِى النَّهَارِ وَيُوْلِجُ النَّهَارَ فِى الَّيْلِ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ سَمِيْعٌۢ بَصِيْرٌ ﴿٦١﴾ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الْحَقُّ وَاَنَّ مَا يَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِهٖ هُوَالْبَاطِلُ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْكَبِيْرُ ﴿٦٢﴾ اَلَمْ تَرَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ اَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً ۡ فَتُصْبِحُ الْاَرْضُ مُخْضَرَّةً ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَطِيْفٌ خَبِيْرٌ ﴿٦٣﴾ لَهٗ مَا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِى الْاَرْضِ ؕ وَ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَهُوَالْغَنِىُّ الْحَمِيْدُ ﴿٦٤﴾ اَلَمْ تَرَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ سَخَّرَلَكُمْ مَّا فِى الْاَرْضِ وَالْفُلْكَ تَجْرِىْ فِى الْبَحْرِ بِاَمْرِهٖ ؕ وَيُمْسِكُ السَّمَآءَ اَنْ تَقَعَ عَلَى الْاَرْضِ اِلَّا بِاِذْنِهٖ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِالنَّاسِ لَرَءُوْفٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿٦٥﴾ وَهُوَالَّذِىْٓ اَحْيَاكُمْ ثُمَّ يُمِيْتُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُحْيِيْكُمْ ؕ اِنَّ الْاِنْسَانَ لَكَفُوْرٌ ﴿٦٦﴾

That is because Allah makes night enter into the day and makes day enter into the night and that Allah is All-Hearing, All-Seeing. [61] **That is because Allah is the truth and that whatever they invoke beside Him is false and that Allah is the High, the Great.** [62]

Did you not see that Allah has sent down water from the sky, whereby the land becomes green? Surely, Allah is All-Kind, All-Aware. [63] **To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth, and surely**

Allah is the All-Independent, Ever-Praised. [64]

Did you not see that Allah has subjugated to you whatever there is on the earth, and the ships that sail at sea with His command? And He holds the heavens from falling on the earth, except with His permission. Surely Allah is Very-Kind to the people, Very-Merciful. [65]

And He is the One who gave life to you, then He brings death to you, then He will give you life (again). Surely, man is very ungrateful. [66]

Commentary

سَخَّرَ لَكُمْ مَّا فِى الْأَرْضِ (Allah has subjugated to you whatever there is on the earth - 22:65) It means that everything on this earth has been placed under the control of man. This raises the question that the mountains, rivers, beasts and birds and thousands of similar objects do not follow the commands of man. But placing something in the service of someone is also like putting it under his control, and in this verse the word Taskhīr (subjugation) has been used to mean 'to serve'. The verse therefore means that all the things mentioned above are all the time working in the service of man by the command of Allah. It was quite within the power of Allah Ta'ālā to have placed all these things under the control of man, but in such a situation man himself would have been the loser, because human natures, desires and needs differ. If a person ordered the river to divert towards a particular direction, and some other person ordered to the contrary, the result would have been utter chaos and confusion. Therefore, Allah Ta'ālā has retained with Him alone the command of these things, but the benefits to be derived from them accrue to human beings.

Verses 67 - 70

لِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ جَعَلْنَا مَنسَكًا هُمْ نَاسِكُوهُ فَلَا يُنَازِعُنَّكَ فِى الْأَمْرِ وَادْعُ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ ۖ إِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ هُدًى مُّسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٦٧﴾ وَإِن جَادَلُوكَ فَقُلِ اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٦٨﴾ اللَّهُ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فِيمَا كُنتُمْ

فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾ أَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمَآءِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۗ إِنَّ ذَٰلِكَ فِي كِتَٰبٍ ۚ إِنَّ ذَٰلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ ﴿٧٠﴾

And For every *ummah* (religious community) We have appointed a way of worship they are to observe. Therefore, they should never quarrel with you in the matter. And do call them to your Lord. Surely, you are on straight Guidance. [67]

And if they dispute with you, then say, "Allah knows best what you do." [68] **Allah will judge between you, on the Day of Judgment, about what you used to differ in.** [69]

Do you not know that Allah knows all that is in the sky and the earth? Surely, that is contained in a Book. Indeed it is so easy for Allah. [70]

Commentary

لِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ جَعَلْنَا مَنسَكًا (For every *ummah* (religious community) We have appointed a way of worship - 22:67). This sentence has come earlier in almost identical words in verse number 34 of this Sūrah, but the word مَنسَك (*mansak*) conveys a different meaning in each verse. In the earlier verse the words مَنسَك and نسك have been used in the context of the rites of Ḥajj and mean sacrifice of animals, while in the present verse the word مَنسَك has been used in the sense of the rules of slaughter or general rules of worship. That is why, unlike the verse 34, the present verse does not have the conjunctive letter 'و' (i.e. 'and') in the beginning.

One interpretation of this verse is that the infidels used to engage the Muslims in futile arguments regarding the slaughter of animals. They thought it odd that Islam permitted its followers to eat the meat of those animals which they slaughtered with their own hands but forbade to eat the meat of those animals whom Allah Ta'ālā killed, that is the carrion. The present verse was revealed to answer these objections of the infidels. (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī). Thus the meaning of the word مَنسَك here would refer to 'the method of slaughter', and the sum and substance of the verse is that Allah Ta'ālā gave each nation a code of laws, and the rules governing the slaughter of animals are different in each code. The rules of slaughter given to the Holy Prophet ﷺ are independent and self-sufficient and it is

not permissible to compare them with those of an earlier Sharī'ah, let alone comparing them with someone's own whims and conjectures. As regards the meat of dead animals, it is well known that its oral use was forbidden in all earlier codes. (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī) Therefore, it is sheer ignorance to argue with the Holy Prophet ﷺ on that basis.

However, majority of commentators has interpreted this verse in another way. They say that the word مَنْسَكً here means the general rules of Shari'ah. Lexically, the word مَنْسَكً means a place which is fixed for a specific purpose, whether the purpose is good or bad, and for this reason the rites of pilgrimage are known as مَنَاسِك , because different rites connected with the pilgrimage have to be performed at places fixed for each rite. (Ibn Kathīr). The dictionary meaning of نُسُك is 'piety and worship of Allah Ta'ālā', and the words أَرِنَا مَنَاسِكَنَا (And show us our ways of worship - 2:128) occurring in the Qur'ān have been used in this sense مَنَاسِك Manāsik means rules governing worship. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās has adopted this second interpretation also. Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Kathīr, Qurṭubī, Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī etc. have adopted this meaning of the word, and the context of the verse also lends support to this interpretation. Having said all this, it is evident that the meaning of this verse would be that the infidels and the polytheists who dispute the Islamic code of laws on the ground that their own ancestral religion did not include those laws must understand very clearly that any comparison between the old book or Sharī'ah and the new book or Sharī'ah is totally misplaced and irrelevant, because Allah Ta'ālā granted to each nation in its own time a special Sharī'ah and a Book which was binding upon it until another book or Sharī'ah arrived on the scene after which it becomes the duty of all people to follow the new Sharī'ah, and if any of its laws are in conflict with the laws of the old Sharī'ah, then the new rules shall prevail and the old laws will stand invalidated, and nobody has the right to raise a dispute on this matter with the Prophet, who is the recipient of the latest book and Sharī'ah. This is the meaning of the following words of this verse. فَلَا يُنَازِعُنَّكَ فِى الْاَمْرِ (They should never quarrel with you in the matter - 22:67). That is, now that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has brought a new Book and new code of laws no one has the right to dispute them and create any confusion about them.

This also shows that there is in fact no inconsistency between the two

interpretations of this verse. It is quite possible that this verse was revealed with reference to some specific dispute about the slaughter of animals but since, as a general rule, the words must be interpreted in the sense they are understood by the common people and not in reference to a particular event, the words of this verse can be so construed as to apply to all the laws of Sharī'ah. The essence of both the interpretations, therefore is, that since Allah Ta'ālā has given each nation its own particular set of rules where differences as to details do exist, the latest set of rules becomes binding on all peoples, and issues relating to these differences cannot be raised. This is the reason why it has been stated at the end of this verse وَادْعُ إِلَى رَبِّكَ إِنَّكَ لَعَلَى هُدًى مُّسْتَقِيمٍ (And do call them to your Lord. Surely, you are on straight Guidance - 22:67) in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been advised not to take any notice of the machinations and disputes raised by the infidels but to continue with his mission, because he was following the path of righteousness whereas his opponents were steeped in error.

A doubt and its answer

In verse 67 it has been averred that Allah Ta'ālā granted to the earlier nations their own Sharī'ah or set of rules, and the Mosaic Code and the Christian Code are instances in point. The Jews and the Christians may, therefore, argue that their Codes also being Divine should be allowed to exist alongside of the Islamic Code. But this is a fallacious argument because it is a well established fact that an earlier Sharī'ah is cancelled by a subsequent Sharī'ah, and this view is reinforced by the following verses in which the infidels who challenge the Islamic Sharī'ah have been warned of severe chastisement. وَإِنْ جَادَلُوكَ فَقُلِ اللّٰهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ (And if they dispute with you, then say, "Allah knows best what you do." - 22:68)

Verses 71 - 74

وَيَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللّٰهِ مَا لَمْ يُنَزِّلْ بِهِ سُلْطَٰنًا وَمَا لَيْسَ لَهُم بِهِ عِلْمٌ ۗ وَمَا لِلظَّٰلِمِينَ مِن نَّصِيرٍ ﴿٧١﴾ وَإِذَا تُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْهِمْ ءَايَٰتُنَا بَيِّنَٰتٍ تَعْرِفُ فِى وُجُوهِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا الْمُنكَرَ ۖ يَكَادُونَ يَسْطُونَ بِالَّذِينَ يَتْلُونَ عَلَيْهِمْ ءَايَٰتِنَا ۗ قُلْ أَفَأُنَبِّئُكُم بِشَرٍّ مِّن ذَٰلِكُمُ ۗ النَّارُ وَعَدَهَا اللّٰهُ الَّذِينَ

كَفَرُوْا ؕ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيْرُ ﴿٧٢﴾ يٰۤاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ ضُرِبَ مَثَلٌ فَاسْتَمِعُوْا لَهٗ ؕ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ تَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ لَنْ يَّخْلُقُوْا ذُبَابًا وَّلَوِ اجْتَمَعُوْا لَهٗ ؕ وَاِنْ يَّسْلُبْهُمُ الذُّبَابُ شَيْئًا لَّا يَسْتَنْقِذُوْهُ مِنْهُ ؕ ضَعُفَ الطَّالِبُ وَالْمَطْلُوْبُ ﴿٧٣﴾ مَا قَدَرُوا اللّٰهَ حَقَّ قَدْرِهٖ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَقَوِيٌّ عَزِيْزٌ ﴿٧٤﴾

And they worship, besides Allah, the objects for which He did never send down an authority (or proof) and for which they have no knowledge. And for the wrongdoers there is no helper. [71]

And when Our verses are recited to them in all their clarity, you (can) recognize disgust on the faces of the disbelievers. They seem to attack those who recite to them Our verses. Say, "Shall I, then, tell you about something more disgusting than that? The Fire! Allah has promised it to those who disbelieve. And it is an evil end." [72]

O people, here is a parable set forth to you, so listen to it carefully: All those whom you invoke besides Allah can never create (even) a fly, even though they all join hands together for that. And if a fly snatches something away from them, they cannot release it therefrom. (Equally) feeble are the invoker and the invoked. [73]

They did not recognize Allah in His true esteem. Indeed Allah is Powerful, Mighty. [74]

Commentary

Illustrating the futility of polytheism and idol-worship by citing a parable

Generally the words ضُرِبَ مَثَلٌ are used for quoting an incident as an example. However, it is not used here in that sense but the foolishness of idol worship has been illustrated by citing a parable. The infidels are told that the idols from which they seek the gratification of their desires are so utterly helpless that all of them together cannot create a humble thing like a fly. Indeed they cannot even protect the offerings of eatables, which their worshippers bring them daily, against the inroads of flies. Then how

can they protect you from any calamity? The stupidity and foolishness of the idol-worshippers has been described at the end of the verse by the words ضَعُفَ الطَّالِبُ وَالْمَطْلُوْبُ (Feeble are the invoker and the invoked - 22:73) meaning thereby that if the object of worship is so utterly weak and powerless, those worshipping it must be more so.

مَاقَدَرُوا اللّٰهَ حَقَّ قَدْرِهٖ (They did not recognize Allah in His true esteem - 22:74). It means that these people are so foolish and ungrateful that they did not recognize the power of Allah Ta'ālā and place their helpless idols at the same level with Him.

Verses 75 - 78

اَللّٰهُ يَصْطَفِىْ مِنَ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ رُسُلًا وَّمِنَ النَّاسِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ سَمِيْعٌ ۢ بَصِيْرٌ ﴿۷۵﴾ يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ ؕ وَ اِلَى اللّٰهِ تُرْجَعُ الْاُمُوْرُ ﴿۷۶﴾ يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا ارْكَعُوْا وَاسْجُدُوْا وَاعْبُدُوْا رَبَّكُمْ وَافْعَلُوا الْخَيْرَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿۷۷﴾ وَجَاهِدُوْا فِى اللّٰهِ حَقَّ جِهَادِهٖ ؕ هُوَاجْتَبٰىكُمْ وَمَا جَعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِى الدِّيْنِ مِنْ حَرَجٍ ؕ مِلَّةَ اَبِيْكُمْ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ ؕ هُوَسَمّٰىكُمُ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ ۙ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَفِىْ هٰذَا لِيَكُوْنَ الرَّسُوْلُ شَهِيْدًا عَلَيْكُمْ وَتَكُوْنُوْا شُهَدَآءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ ۚۖ فَاَقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتُوا الزَّكٰوةَ وَاعْتَصِمُوْا بِاللّٰهِ ؕ هُوَمَوْلٰىكُمْ ۚ فَنِعْمَ الْمَوْلٰى وَنِعْمَ النَّصِيْرُ ﴿۷۸﴾

Allah chooses messengers from angels and from men. Surely, Allah is All-Hearing, All-Seeing. [75]

He knows what is in front of them and what is behind them, and to Allah all matters are to be returned. [76]

O those who believe, bow down in *rukū'* and bow down in *sajdah* and worship your Lord and do good, so that you achieve success. [77] **And struggle for (seeking the pleasure of) Allah, a struggle that is owed to Him. He has chosen you and did not impose any hardship on you**

in the religion - the faith of your father Ibrāhīm. He (Allah) named you as Muslims both before and in this (Qur'ān), so that the Messenger becomes a witness to you and you become witnesses to (other) people.

So establish *ṣalāh* and pay *zakāh*, and hold fast to Allah. He is your patron. So, He is the excellent One to be a patron and He is the excellent One to help. [78]

Commentary

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا ارْكَعُوْا وَاسْجُدُوْا وَاعْبُدُوْا رَبَّكُمْ (O those who believe, bow down in Ruku' and bow down in Sajdah and worship your Lord - 22:77) Verse 18 of this Sūrah is a verse of *sajdah* by consensus of the jurists, which means that whoever recites verse 18 or listens to someone reciting it must offer a *sajdah*. However, there is a difference of opinion about the present verse. Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, Imām Mālik and Sufyān Thaurī رحمهم الله تعالى are among those who think that the present verse is not a verse of *sajdah* in the sense that reciting this verse or listening to it does not entail the obligation to offer a *sajdah,* because the command to 'bow down' in *sajdah* in the present verse is combined with bowing down in *ruku'* and this circumstance is a clear indication that in the present context *sajdah* means the normal *sajdah* which is performed during the course of prayers. For example all the scholars are unanimously of the opinion that in the verse وَاسْجُدِىْ وَارْكَعِىْ مَعَ الرّٰكِعِيْنَ (And prostrate and bow down (in *Ruku'*) with those who bow - 3:43) the *sajdah* is the normal *sajdah* of the prayers. However, in the context of the present verse Imām Shafi'ī and Imām Aḥmad رحمهم الله تعالى hold contrary views and quote a *ḥadīth* according to which Sūrah Ḥajj enjoys a position of greater merit as compared to other Sūrahs because of two verses of *sajdah* occurring in it. Imām Abū Ḥanīfah questions the authenticity of this *ḥadīth*.

وَجَاهِدُوْا فِى اللّٰهِ حَقَّ جِهَادِهٖ (And struggle for (seeking the pleasure of) Allah, a struggle that is due to him - 22:78) The words جِهَاد (*jihād*) and مُجَاهَدَه (*mujahadah*) mean to exert one's utmost effort to achieve an objective and to take pains for it. (That is why the word is translated above as 'struggle'). While waging war against the infidels the Muslims make supreme efforts, and for this reason it is called *jihād*, and حَقَّ جِهَادِهٖ (a struggle that is due to Him) means that all these efforts and sacrifices should aim solely at winning the favours and goodwill of Allah Ta'ālā,

and be free from all considerations of worldly reward, such as fame or spoils of war.

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ has explained the phrase 'that is due to Him' by saying that it is to strive to the utmost of one's capacity in the course of *jihād*, unmindful of all criticism. Some other commentators have explained the word *jihād* in this verse to mean that one exerts his utmost effort in carrying out the acts of worship and full obedience to rules of Sharī'ah in all sincerity. Ḍaḥḥāk and Muqātil have said that a struggle that is due to Him means to act in Allah's obedience and His worship as due to Him. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mubarak ﷺ thinks that Jihad means to strive against the temptations (*nafs*) and its baser desires. Imām Baghawī supports this view on the basis of a *ḥadīth* which he has from Jābir Ibn 'Abdullāh ﷺ to the effect that when a group of companions returned from Jihād, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said قدمتم خير مقدم من الجهاد الاصغر الى الجهاد الاكبر. قال: مجاهدة العبد لهواه (رواه البيهقى وقالَ هذا اسناد فيه ضعف (You have returned from a smaller *Jihād* to a greater *Jihād*) meaning thereby that the fight against the temptations of self and baser desires never ceases. Baihaqī has also related this *ḥadīth* but he is of the opinion that it has some weak narrators, Tafsīr Maẓharī has adopted this latter interpretation and proceeded to say that the Muslims were in fact fighting against the coarse desires of Self even when they were engaged in *jihād* against the infidels, but the *ḥadīth* places it after their return from the *jihād*. The suggestion here is that though the fight against temptations continued even on the battlefield, it could by tradition and usage be brought to fruition only under the watchful eye of a perfect spiritual guide, that is the Holy Prophet ﷺ .

The Ummah of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ is the chosen Ummah of Allah Ta'ālā

هُوَ اجْتَبٰكُمْ (He has chosen you - 22:78) Sayyidnā Wāthilah Ibn Asqa' ﷺ has reported that the Holy Prophet ﷺ once said, 'Allah chose the Kinānah from the children of Sayyidnā Isma'īl ﷺ, then He chose the Quraish from the Kinānah, then the Banī Hāshim from the Quraish and from amongst the Banī Hāshim He chose me'. (Muslim – Maẓharī).

وَمَا جَعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِى الدِّيْنِ مِنْ حَرَجٍ (And did not impose any hardship on you in the religion - 22:78) It means that Allah Ta'ālā has not imposed any hardship upon you in matters of religion. From this some scholars have

concluded that in Islam there is no sin which cannot be forgiven and save a person from the punishment of the Day of Resurrection if he repents for it truly. On the other hand, among the earlier nations there were certain sins which could not be forgiven even by offering repentance.

According to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ 'hardship' refers to those rigid and harsh laws which applied to the Banī Isrā'īl and for which the Qur'ān uses the words إصر (burden) and إغلال (shackles). Others have interpreted the word *ḥaraj* (hardship) to mean a hardship which is beyond human endurance. In Islam there are no such laws and rules which are unbearable in themselves, though there are some rules which entail strenuous effort. But such efforts have always been regarded as pre-requisites to success in all human activities. Education, commerce, industry etc. are fields where success depends on unremitting labour but that would not make these tasks impossible to achieve. Sometimes difficulties are experienced due to unfavorable environments or lack of familiarity with the task in hand, but these too cannot be described as hardships and can be overcome by sustained hard work.

Another interpretation given by Qāḍī Thanaullāh in Tafsīr Maẓharī is that Allah Ta'ālā having chosen the Muslims for His favours from amongst all other nations, they too willingly opt for the severest hardship in the service of Allah and His religion. In such a situation even hardships and difficulties do not deter their resilience and they endure them willingly and happily. There is a *ḥadīth* related by Sayyidnā Anas ﷺ in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ said جعلت قرة عينى فى الصّلوٰة (the coolness of my eyes lies in prayers). (Aḥmad and Nasa'ī).

مِلَّةَ اَبِيْكُمْ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ (The faith of your father Ibrāhīm - 22:78). It means that this is the nation of your father Ibrāhīm ﷺ. These words are addressed to the Quraish who are descended from Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm ﷺ and all other people following them become entitled to the favours which Allah Ta'ālā has granted to the Quraish. There is a *ḥadīth* which says:

الناس تبع لقريش فى هذا الشان، مسلمهم تبع لمسلمهم، وكافرهم تبع لكافرهم

(رواه البخارى و مسلم)

All people follow Quraish in this faith; the believers follow the believers among the Quraish, and the infidels follow the infidels among them. (Maẓharī).

Others say that the words أَبِيكُمْ إِبْرٰهِيمَ (your father Ibrāhīm) are addressed to all Muslims in the sense that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was the spiritual father of All Muslims and had himself descended from Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام .

هُوَ سَمّٰكُمُ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ ۙ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَفِيْ هٰذَا (He (Allah) named you as Muslims both before and in this Qur'an - 22:78) Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام had named the followers of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and all other believers as Muslims even before the Qur'ān, and later in the Qur'ān itself, as is evident from his prayer which is recorded in the Qur'ān: رَبَّنَا وَاجْعَلْنَا مُسْلِمَيْنِ لَكَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِنَآ اُمَّةً مُّسْلِمَةً لَّكَ (O our Lord, make us both submissive to you, and of our progeny a people submissive to you - 2:128)

And the name "Muslim" given by the Qur'ān to the believers, was, though, not given directly by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام , yet since he had suggested this name even before the revelation of the Qur'ān, the Holy Qur'ān has adopted this name. That is why it is attributed to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام .

لِيَكُوْنَ الرَّسُوْلُ شَهِيْدًا عَلَيْكُمْ وَتَكُوْنُوْا شُهَدَآءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ (So that the Messenger becomes a witness to you and you become witnesses to (other) people - 22:78) On the Day of Resurrection the Holy Prophet ﷺ will depose that he had conveyed the commands of Allah Ta'ālā to his Ummah and the Ummah will acknowledge this fact. But when other prophets will make similar depositions, their Ummahs will deny their claims and at that time the Ummah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ will come forward and bear witness to the fact that all the prophets had indeed conveyed the commands of Allah Ta'ālā to their respective Ummahs. This evidence will be challenged on the ground that since the Muslim Ummah did not even exist in those earlier times it carried no weight, to which the Muslims will reply that they learned about these matters from their own Prophet ﷺ, whose truthfulness and integrity was admitted by all. This is the gist of a *ḥadīth* which Bukhārī and others have related on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī رضي الله عنه.

فَاَقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتُوا الزَّكٰوةَ (So establish *ṣalāh* and pay *zakāh* - 22:78) It means that since Allah Ta'ālā has showered on you unlimited benefits, it is your duty also to show your gratitude to Him by striving hard to obey His commands. The two commands relating to prayers and *zakāh* have been

specifically mentioned because prayer is the most important among the obligations performed by human body, while *zakāh* is the most important among the commands about wealth, otherwise the idea is that all commands enjoined by Allah Ta'ālā be obeyed and followed.

وَاعْتَصِمُوْا بِاللّٰهِ (And hold fast to Allah - 22:78). It means that pious Muslims should place their trust in Allah alone in all their affairs and seek help from none but Him. According to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ the sense of these words is that pious Muslims should seek Allah's protection from all things which are loathsome in this world and in the Hereafter. Others have interpreted these words to mean that good Muslims should hold fast to the Qur'ān and Sunnah, and have quoted the following *ḥadīth*:

تركت فيكم امرين لن تضلّوا ما تمسّكتم بهما، كتاب اللّٰه وسنّة رسوله (رواه مالك في الموطاء مرسلاـ مظهرى)

"I have left behind two things with you and if you hold fast to them you will never go astray: one is the Book of Allah and the second is the Sunnah of His Rasūl." (Maẓharī)

Alḥamdulillāh
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Ḥajj
Ends here.

Sūrah Al-Mu'minūn

(The Believers)

Sūrah Al-Mu'minūn was revealed in Makkah and it has 118 Verses and 6 sections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 11

قَدْ اَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿١﴾ الَّذِيْنَ هُمْ فِىْ صَلَاتِهِمْ خَاشِعُوْنَ ﴿٢﴾
وَالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ عَنِ اللَّغْوِ مُعْرِضُوْنَ ﴿٣﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ لِلزَّكٰوةِ فٰعِلُوْنَ
﴿٤﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ لِفُرُوْجِهِمْ حٰفِظُوْنَ ﴿٥﴾ اِلَّا عَلٰٓى اَزْوَاجِهِمْ اَوْمَا
مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُهُمْ فَاِنَّهُمْ غَيْرُ مَلُوْمِيْنَ ﴿٦﴾ فَمَنِ ابْتَغٰى وَرَآءَ ذٰلِكَ
فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْعٰدُوْنَ ﴿٧﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ لِاَمٰنٰتِهِمْ وَعَهْدِهِمْ رٰعُوْنَ ﴿٨﴾
وَالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ عَلٰى صَلَوٰتِهِمْ يُحَافِظُوْنَ ﴿٩﴾ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْوٰرِثُوْنَ ﴿١٠﴾
الَّذِيْنَ يَرِثُوْنَ الْفِرْدَوْسَ ط هُمْ فِيْهَا خٰلِدُوْنَ ﴿١١﴾

Success is really attained by the believers [1] **who are concentrative in their Ṣalāh (prayers)** [2] **and who keep themselves away from vain things** [3], **and who are performers of Zakāh,*** [4] **and who guard their private parts** [5] **except from their wives or from those (slave-girls) owned by their right hands, because they**

*. Although Zakāh is normally known as the obligatory alms prescribed as a second pillar of Islam, but the literal meaning of the word is 'purification'. Both the meanings are possible here. According to the second meaning the reference would be to the purification of inward qualities i.e. morals. Some commentators have construed this verse in this sense. That is why we have used the word 'performers' as a literal translation of "فاعلون" (Fa'ilun) instead of 'payers' which admits the first meaning only.

are not liable to blame. [6] **However, those who seek (sexual pleasure) beyond that are the transgressors** [7] **– and (success is attained) by those who honestly look after their trusts and covenant,** [8] **and who consistently observe their prayers.** [9] **Those are the inheritors** [10] **who will inherit Firdaus (the Paradise). They will be there forever.** [11]

Commentary

Merits and special features of Sūrah Al-Mu'minūn

Musnād of Aḥmad quotes Sayyidnā 'Umar al-Fārūq ﷺ that whenever a *waḥy* was being revealed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ those near him used to hear a sound like the buzz of the bees. One day when they heard such a sound, they all waited hoping to learn about the revelation. When the Holy Prophet ﷺ returned to his normal state after receiving the *waḥy,* he sat down facing the Ka'bah and prayed to Allah in the following words:

اَللّٰهُمَّ زِدْنَا وَلَا تَنْقُصْنَا وَاَكْرِمْنَا وَلَا تُهِنَّا وَاَعْطِنَا وَلَا تَحْرِمْنَا وَآثِرْنَا وَلَا تُؤْثِرْ عَلَيْنَا وَارْضَ عَنَّا وَاَرْضِنَا

"O Allah, give us more (bounties) and do not decrease (them for us) and grant us respect and do not put us to humiliation, and give us and do not deprive us and give us preference (on our enemies) and do not give preference (to our enemies) against us and be pleased with us and make us pleased."

Then the Holy Prophet ﷺ said to his companions, "Just now ten verses have been revealed to me and anyone who follows them in letter and spirit will go to heaven." He then recited the first ten verses of Sūrah Al-Mu'minūn. (Ibn Kathīr)

Nasa'ī in his كتاب التفسير has quoted Yazīd Ibn Babnūs that he once questioned Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها about the habits and the behavior of the Holy Prophet ﷺ to which she replied that it was according to what has been revealed in the Qur'ān. Then she recited these ten verses of the Qur'ān and said, "these verses describe his behavior".

What is *Falāḥ*? How and from where can it be obtained?

قَدْ اَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ

Success is really attained by the believers - 23:1.

The word *falāḥ* (translated above as 'success') has been used in the Qur'ān and Sunnah on numerous occasions. The call to prayers invites every Muslim towards *falāḥ* five times a day. The word signifies the attainment of all desires as well as protection from all misfortunes. (Qāmūs). It is so comprehensive in its connotation that it may be regarded as the acme of one's desire - but the total *falāḥ,* where no desire remains unfulfilled or complete immunity from the vicissitudes of fate exists, is not granted even to great kings or to the most revered prophets of Allah. In any case there is an ever-present fear of a decline in or loss of good fortune, or the apprehension of an impending disaster, and no living person can claim to be free from it.

Thus it is evident that total *falāḥ* cannot be achieved in this world which is a place of pain and suffering, where nothing is everlasting and everything must ultimately perish. However this priceless commodity will be available in another world, namely the Paradise and it is there that people will achieve all their wishes very promptly وَلَهُم مَّا يَدَّعُونَ (They have all that they call for - 36:57). In that world there will be no sorrow, no distress, and everyone will enter there with the following words on his lips:

اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِیٓ اَذْهَبَ عَنَّا الْحَزَنَ اِنَّ رَبَّنَا لَغَفُوْرٌ شَكُوْرُ ۙ الَّذِیٓ اَحَلَّنَا دَارَ الْمُقَامَةِ مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ

> Praise belongs to Allah who has put away all sorrow from us. Surely our Lord is All-Forgiving, All-Thankful, who of His bounty has made us to dwell in the abode of everlasting life - 35:34, 35.

This verse also suggest that in this world there is nobody who at some time or the other has not been afflicted by pain and anguish. Therefore, on entering the Paradise people will say that they have been delivered from all sufferings. In Sūrah al-A'lā while the Qur'ān says that *falāḥ* may be obtained by purifying oneself against sins (قَدْ اَفْلَحَ مَنْ تَزَكّٰى), it also says that total *falāḥ* may be achieved in the Hereafter only. A Person who aims at *falāḥ* must not succumb to the temptations of this world:

بَلْ تُؤْثِرُوْنَ الْحَيٰوةَ الدُّنْيَا وَالْاٰخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ وَّاَبْقٰى

> Nay, but you prefer the present life; and the world to come is better, and more lasting. - 87: 16, 17

In brief, while total *falāḥ* may be obtained in the Paradise only, Allah grants *falāḥ* to his servants in this world also in the narrow sense of the word i.e. he grants them prosperity and relief from pain. In the present verse Allah has promised *falāḥ* to those believers who possess the seven attributes mentioned therein, and it includes the total *falāḥ* which can be achieved in the Hereafter only in addition to whatever *falāḥ* may be obtained in this world.

Here one may ask that while the promise of total *falāḥ* in the Hereafter to the believers who possess the seven attributes mentioned in this verse is understandable, the common experience is that in this world the recipients of *falāḥ* (prosperity and success) are generally the infidels and the impious persons. On the other hand the prophets and other reformers have, in all ages, suffered privations of life. The answer to this is that since total *falāḥ* is to be achieved in the Hereafter only, it is inevitable that every body in this world, whether he is a good and a pious man or whether he is a wicked person and an unbeliever, must face a certain measure of pain and hardship. Similarly every person, good or bad, has some of his wishes granted in this world. In these circumstances how is one to decide as to which of these two categories is the recipient of *falāḥ*. The answer to this question can only be provided by the fate which awaits them.

Human experience and observations provide sufficient evidence that although the pious people who possess the seven attributes mentioned above may at times face hardships and tribulations in this world, yet very soon they are released from all distress and they achieve their wishes. They command the respect of the whole world as long as they live and then after their death their memory is cherished and revered by all.

The seven attributes of a perfect Believer on the basis of which he has been promised *falāḥ* in this verse both in this world and in the Hereafter

The first and most important attribute which is fundamental and basic to everything else is that a person should be a true believer. The other seven attributes mentioned in the verse are discussed below.

The first attribute is خشوع Khushū' (translated in the text as being concentrative) during prayers. The literal meaning of this word is

"calmness", but in religious terminology it means "to bring about a state of perfect concentration in the heart" so that he does not knowingly allow any thoughts to enter his heart other than the remembrance of Allah. It also means that during prayers a person must abstain from moving his body and limbs unnecessarily (Bayān ul-Qur'ān). He must, in particular, avoid those movements of the body which have been forbidden by the Holy Prophet ﷺ and which the jurists have compiled under the general heading مَكْرُوْهَات (things which are disliked during prayers). Tafsīr Maẓharī quotes the above definition of خُشُوْع (Khushū') from Sayyidnā 'Amr Ibn Dīnār ؓ. Other scholars have given different definitions of this word, but they are in fact further details of what the serenity of the heart and the body means. For instance, according to Sayyidnā Mujāhid, casting down one's eyes and keeping the voice low is خُشُوْع whereas Sayyidnā 'Alī ؓ said that خُشُوْع is to refrain from casting sideways glances obliquely. Sayyidnā 'Aṭā' says that the word means "not toying with any part of the body". There is a *ḥadīth* from Sayyidnā Abū Dharr ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ once said, "Allah keeps an eye over His servant during prayers so long as he concentrates his attention on Allah, but when he turns his attention elsewhere and glances obliquely sideways, Allah also turns away from him." (Maẓharī) The Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have directed Sayyidnā 'Anas ؓ to keep his eyes fixed at the spot which he touched with his forehead when performing *sajdah* (prostration) and not to look right and left during prayers.

Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ؓ says that the Holy Prophet ﷺ saw a man praying who was toying with his beard and remarked لوخشع قلب هذا لخشعت جوارحه (If this man had Khushū' in his heart, his body and limbs would have remained calm).

How important is Khushū' during prayers?

Imām Ghazzali, Qurṭubī and some other scholars are of the view that Khushū' during prayers is obligatory and a prayer offered without total Khushū' will be deemed not to have been performed. However there are others who believe that while Khushū' is the essence of prayers and its absence deprives the prayers of their true purpose, yet it cannot be regarded as an indispensable condition for the prayers to be valid and its absence will not render it necessary to repeat performance of the prayers.

Hakim ul-Ummah has written in Bayān ul-Qur'ān that while

Khushū' is not a necessary condition for the validity of the prayers, yet it is an essential element for the acceptance of the prayers by Allah and from this point of view it is obligatory. Ṭabarānī in his book al-Mu'jim al-Kabīr has related a *ḥadīth* on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Dardā' ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "The first thing that will be taken away from this Ummah is Khushū' so much so that a time will come when no one will be left to practice Khushū'".

The second attribute of a good Muslim is that he abstains from frivolous and vain things. لغو (Laghw, translated in the text as 'vain things') means useless talk and action which do not bring any religious reward and in its extreme form it may include sinful acts that are positively harmful and must, therefore, be avoided. And in its mild from *laghw* is neither useful nor harmful but it is very desirable to give up this habit. There is a *ḥadīth* in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ said من حسن اسلام المرأ تركه ما لا يعنيه (It is a part of one's being a fair Muslim that he gives up all that is useless for him). For these reasons guarding oneself against useless acts has been described as an attribute of a good Muslim in this verse.

The third attribute is Zakāh which, literally means "to purify" but in religious terminology it means giving in charity a portion of one's wealth subject to certain prescribed conditions and the word has been generally used in the Qur'ān in this sense. This meaning of the word can be applied in this verse also. However this meaning of the word in the present context has been questioned by some scholars on the ground that this verse was revealed in Makkah when Zakāh was not made obligatory. (Zakāh was made obligatory after Hijrah to Madīnah). Ibn Kathīr and other commentators have answered this objection by claiming that Zakāh was in actual fact made obligatory in Makkah as will be evident from Sūrah Al-Muzzammil, which is by consensus a Makkan Sūrah, in which the words وَاٰتُوا الزَّكٰوةَ (and pay *zakāh*) occur alongside of the words اَقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ However arrangements for its collection and details regarding the determination of wealth liable to Zakāh (*niṣāb*) were settled after Hijrah to Madīnah. According to this interpretation of the verse Zakāh was made obligatory in Makkah but rules prescribing its various details were formulated in Madīnah. As regards those scholars who hold the view that Zakāh was made obligatory after Hijrah to Madīnah, they believe that

the word must be interpreted here in its common literal sense i.e. to purify one's own self. There is an indication in the verse itself which supports this meaning of the word. It will be observed that wherever obligatory Zakāh has been mentioned in the Qur'ān the words used are 'اِيْتَاءُ الزَّكٰوةِ يُؤْتُوْنَ الزَّكٰوةَ and اٰتُوا الزَّكٰوةَ (which refer to the 'payment' of *zakāh*) whereas here the words used are لِلزَّكٰوةِ فَاعِلُوْنَ (who are performers of *zakāh*) which clearly indicates that in this verse the word has not been used in its technical meaning. Besides, the word فَاعِلُوْنَ (performers) is related to فعل (performance) and technically Zakah is not an act but a portion of wealth and the use of the word فَاعِلُوْنَ for this portion of wealth needs suitable explanation. If the technical meaning of the word Zakāh is adopted, then its being obligatory and binding on all Muslims is undisputed and if the word means purification of soul then that too is obligatory and to cleanse one's soul of impurities and sins such as polytheism, hypocrisy, vanity, jealousy, hatred, greed, miserliness is called تَزْكِيَه (*tazkiyah*). All these things are forbidden and are major sins and it is obligatory to purify one's soul from them.

Forth Attribute is guarding ones private parts against unlawful liaison. وَالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ لِفُرُوْجِهِمْ حٰفِظُوْنَ اِلاَّ عَلٰى اَزْوَاجِهِمْ اَوْمَا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُهُمْ (And who guard their private parts except from their wives or from those (slave-girls) owned by their right hands - 23:5,6). They satisfy their needs with their wives and their legal bondmaids according to the prescribed laws and avoid unlawful liaison. About these people the Qur'ān says فَاِنَّهُمْ غَيْرُ مَلُوْمِيْنَ (Because they are not liable to blame - 23:6), which also means that the sexual desire must be kept under strict control and must not be allowed to become a means of gratification of one's passions.

فَمَنِ ابْتَغٰى وَرَآءَ ذٰلِكَ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْعٰدُوْنَ (However, those who seek (sexual pleasure) beyond that are the transgressors - 7). Satisfying one's desire with someone other than one's own wife or a lawfully acquired slave-girl is strictly forbidden and the ban includes adultery (marrying a woman whom one is not allowed to marry under the religious code is also adultery), having sex with one's wife or slave-girl when she is menstruating or is confined, or having unnatural sex with them, homosexuality and bestiality, while most jurists include masturbation also in the ban. (Tafsīr Bayān ul-Qur'ān, Qurṭubī, al-Baḥr ul-Muḥīṭ, etc.)

Fifth Attribute of a good Muslim is that he should discharge his

trust truly and faithfully. وَالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ لِاَمٰنٰتِهِمْ وَعَهْدِهِمْ رٰعُوْنَ (And [success is attained] by those who honestly look after their trusts and covenant, - 23:8). The word أَمَانَات (trusts) covers everything which a person has undertaken to perform or which have been placed under his care as trust. Since it may be of many kinds, the word is used in plural, so that it may include all sorts of trusts whether they may relate to the rights of Allah or to the rights of human beings. To perform scrupulously all the injunctions and duties made obligatory by religious laws and to abstain from things which have been forbidden or declared undesirable is to look after the trust that relates to the rights of Allah. As regards the discharge of trusts relating to the rights of human beings, these take numerous forms, and the most well-known is that a person must promptly return to the owner on demand any goods which have been in his custody as trust. Any information received in confidence is a trust and to reveal it to anybody else without the permission of the person who gave it is a breach of trust. Mutual settlement between an employer and an employee of the terms of employment, i.e. the work to be done and time to be spent in the performance of work, and the wages to be paid is a trust and binding on both the parties and a violation of this agreement by either party would constitute a breach of trust. Hence discharge of trust is an all-encompassing word.

Sixth Attribute of a perfect Muslim is to fulfill his covenant. The word عَهْد (covenant) has two connotations. One is a covenant between two parties specifying the duties and obligations of either party and is binding on both and a breach of this covenant by either party is a fraud and deceit and therefore forbidden in Islam. The other is where a person voluntarily promises to give something to someone or undertakes to do some job. This is known as وَعْدَه (promise) and its fulfillment is also obligatory under the dictates of Sharī'ah. There is a Ḥadīth which says العدة دين (a promise is like a debt). It means that a promise is like a debt and must be fulfilled in the same manner as a debt must be discharged, the difference being that whereas the repayment of a debt can be enforced through a court of law, a voluntary promise is not enforceable likewise. Nevertheless the person making the promise is morally bound to abide by it and failure to do so would be a sin unless there is a religious ground for his inability to fulfill his promise.

Seventh attribute

وَالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ عَلٰى صَلَوٰتِهِمْ يُحَافِظُوْنَ (And who consistently observe their prayers - 23:9). To observe one's prayers here means to offer them regularly at the appointed time, and the word صَلَوٰات (Prayers) has been used in the plural form to include all the five prayers. In an earlier verses the word صَلوٰة (Ṣalāh: prayer) was used in the singular because the emphasis was on Khushū' which is the essence of all prayers whether they are *farḍ, wājib, sunnah* or *nafl.*

A careful study of the above seven attributes would show that they encompass all the duties which man owes to Allah and to fellow men, and all the laws governing those duties. A person who possesses these attributes and adheres to them is a complete *mu'min* (believer) and deserving of *falāḥ* in this world and in the Hereafter. It will also be noted that these seven attributes begin and also end with a reference to prayers which suggests that if prayers are offered in the prescribed manner with all their requirements, the other attributes will appear automatically.

أُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْوٰرِثُوْنَ الَّذِيْنَ يَرِثُوْنَ الْفِرْدَوْسَ

Those are the inheritors who will inherit Firdaus (Paradise) - 23:10,11.

The good Muslims who possess the attributes described above have been declared in this verse to be the heirs to the garden of Paradise. There is a suggestion here that just as the assets of a deceased person must devolve on his heirs, similarly the possessors of these attributes will, without doubt, enter Paradise. It should be noted that the possessors of these seven qualities have been mentioned in the beginning as those who attain falah or success, then after describing these qualities it is mentioned in this last sentence that possessors of these qualities will inherit Paradise. This indicates that the total *falāḥ* (success) may be achieved in Paradise only.

Verses 12 - 22

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْاِنْسَانَ مِنْ سُلٰلَةٍ مِّنْ طِيْنٍ ﴿۱۲﴾ ثُمَّ جَعَلْنٰهُ نُطْفَةً فِيْ قَرَارٍ مَّكِيْنٍ ﴿۱۳﴾ ثُمَّ خَلَقْنَا النُّطْفَةَ عَلَقَةً فَخَلَقْنَا الْعَلَقَةَ مُضْغَةً فَخَلَقْنَا الْمُضْغَةَ عِظٰمًا فَكَسَوْنَا الْعِظٰمَ لَحْمًا ۚ ثُمَّ اَنْشَاْنٰهُ خَلْقًا

اٰخَرَ ۭ فَتَبٰرَكَ اللّٰهُ اَحْسَنُ الْخٰلِقِيْنَ ﴿١٤ؕ﴾ ثُمَّ اِنَّكُمْ بَعْدَ ذٰلِكَ لَمَيِّتُوْنَ
﴿١٥ؕ﴾ ثُمَّ اِنَّكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ تُبْعَثُوْنَ ﴿١٦﴾ وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا فَوْقَكُمْ سَبْعَ
طَرَآئِقَ ۖ وَمَا كُنَّا عَنِ الْخَلْقِ غٰفِلِيْنَ ﴿١٧﴾ وَاَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءًۢ
بِقَدَرٍ فَاَسْكَنّٰهُ فِي الْاَرْضِ ۖ وَاِنَّا عَلٰى ذَهَابٍۢ بِهٖ لَقٰدِرُوْنَ ﴿١٨ۚ﴾
فَاَنْشَاْنَا لَكُمْ بِهٖ جَنّٰتٍ مِّنْ نَّخِيْلٍ وَّاَعْنَابٍۢ لَكُمْ فِيْهَا فَوَاكِهُ كَثِيْرَةٌ
وَّمِنْهَا تَاْكُلُوْنَ ﴿١٩ۙ﴾ وَشَجَرَةً تَخْرُجُ مِنْ طُوْرِ سَيْنَآءَ تَنْۢبُتُ بِالدُّهْنِ
وَصِبْغٍ لِّلْاٰكِلِيْنَ ﴿٢٠﴾ وَاِنَّ لَكُمْ فِي الْاَنْعَامِ لَعِبْرَةً ۭ نُسْقِيْكُمْ مِّمَّا
فِيْ بُطُوْنِهَا وَلَكُمْ فِيْهَا مَنَافِعُ كَثِيْرَةٌ وَّمِنْهَا تَاْكُلُوْنَ ﴿٢١﴾ وَعَلَيْهَا
وَعَلَى الْفُلْكِ تُحْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٢٢ع﴾

And We have created man from an extract of clay. [12] **Then We made him a sperm-drop in a firm resting place.** [13] **Then We made the sperm-drop into a clot, then We turned the clot into a foetus-lump, then We made the foetus-lump into bones, then We clothed the bones with flesh; thereafter We developed it into another creature. So, glorious is Allah, the Best of the creators.** [14] **Then, after all this, you are to die.** [15] **Then you are to be raised again on the Day of Judgment.** [16]

And We created upon you seven paths (heavens) and We were never neglectful of the creation. [17]

And We sent down water from the sky in due measure, then We lodged it in the earth, and of course, We are able to take it away. [18] **Then We produced with it gardens of date-palms and vines for your benefit. For you there are many fruits in them, and of them you eat** [19] **– and (We produced) a tree (of olive) that comes out from the (mount) Ṭūr of Sinai, which grows having oil and a dressing for those who eat.** [20]

And indeed there is a sure lesson in the cattle for you. We give you a drink from that which lies in their bellies, and for you there are many benefits in them,

and of them you eat, [21] **and on them and on the boats you are transported.** [22]

Commentary

In the earlier verses it was explained that man can achieve *falāḥ* (success) in this world and in the Hereafter by spending his time in assiduously worshipping Allah and, in compliance with His commands, by keeping his body and soul pure at all times and by discharging the claims and duties which he owes to fellow human beings. The present verse gives an account of the universal and supreme power of Allah the Almighty and a manifestation of His power in the process leading to the creation of the human race. If a person whom Allah has given wisdom and intelligence ponders seriously the meanings of these verses, he must necessarily choose the path which would lead him to *falāḥ* in this world and in the Hereafter.

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ سُلٰلَةٍ مِّنْ طِيْنٍ

And We have created man from an extract of clay. - 23:12

The word سُلَالَة *sulālah* means "extract" and طِيْن means "wet earth" or clay and the verse means that man was created from some special elements extracted from earth. Creation of mankind began with Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام who was himself created from this essence of earth. Therefore the first creation has been related to earth after which the seed of one man becomes the means of another man's creation. In the next verse ثُمَّ جَعَلْنٰهُ نُطْفَةً (then We made him a sperm-drop) this same point has been mentioned differently. The meaning of all this is that the first life i.e. Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام was created from earth and continued further with the sperm which is a refined element of the same earth. This is how a majority of commentators have explained this verse. Another view is that سُلٰلَةٍ مِنْ طِيْنٍ (extract of clay) may also mean human seed because it is produced from the food which a man takes and the food grows out of the earth.

Seven stages of the creation of man

In the above verse seven stages in the creation of man have been described. These are:

(1) سُلَالَةٍ مِّنْ طِيْنٍ (an extract of clay).

(2) نُطْفَة (sperm-drop),

(3) عَلَقه (clot),

(4) مُضغه (foetus-lump),

(5) عِظام (bones),

(6) clothing bones with flesh, and

(7) completion of the process of creation by blowing the spirit into the child.

A very interesting story about Sayyidnā 'Abbās ﷺ

Qurṭubī in his commentary has related a very interesting story in which Sayyidnā 'Abbās ﷺ is said to have determined the exact date of the Night of Majesty (لَيلَةُ القدر) and based his reasoning on this verse: The story goes likes this. One day Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ while sitting in the company of some eminent companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, asked them on what date of the month of Ramaḍān the Night of Majesty (Lailatulqadr) would fall. None of them was able to mention a specific date so they all said that only Allah knew the answer. Sayyidnā Umar ﷺ then turned to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ who was the youngest among them and asked him if he had an answer to the question. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ then said, "O Amir ul-Mominin! Allah created seven skies and seven earths. He created man in seven stages and provided him sustenance from seven sources. Therefore in my opinion the Night of Majesty (لَيلَةُ القَدر) will surely fall on the twenty-seventh night of the month of Ramaḍān." When Sayyidnā Umar ﷺ heard this reasoning, he said to the companions, "See, this lad has given an answer which none of you could give". This story is reproduced at length in the Musnād of Ibn Abi Shaibah. When Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ mentioned the seven stages of man's creation, he was obviously alluding to this verse. As for the seven sources of human sustenance, the reference is to the verse in Sūrah 'Abas:

فَاَنۢبَتۡنَا فِيۡهَا حَبًّا وَّعِنَبًا وَّقَضۡبًا وَّزَيۡتُوۡنًا وَّنَخۡلاً وَّ حَدَآئِقَ غُلۡبًا وَّفَاكِهَةً وَّاَبًّا

> And therein made the grains to grow and vines, and reeds, and olives, and palms, and clense-tree gardens, and fruits, and pastures. 90:27 - 31

This verse mentions eight items of which the first seven are food for human beings and the eighth provides fodder for animals.

The supreme beauty and eloquence of the Qur'ānic language is evident from the fact that the seven stages of the creation of man have not all been described in the same manner. In describing the metamorphosis of the human foetus from one stage to the next, the word ثُمَّ (afterwards) has been used at some place which is a suggestion of some delay in the process, while at other places the particle فَ has been used as a prefix indicating uninterrupted succession in the process of change. Some of the changes in the human foetus in mother's womb take a long time to take place whereas other changes occur in relatively shorter periods. Thus the word ثُمَّ has been used in the context of the first two changes. First there is سُلٰلَةٍ مِّنْ طِيْنٍ (an extract of clay) which changes into the seed ثُمَّ جَعَلْنٰهُ نُطْفَةً (then We made him a sperm-drop). Now it is well known that the production of food from the earth, its absorption in the human body of that special element which changes into the seed is a long drawn out process. Similarly the third stage of the transformation from the sperm-drop نُطْفَة to clot مُضْغَة takes a long time to materialize and has been described by the Qur'ān in the words ثُمَّ خَلَقْنَا النُّطْفَةَ عَلَقَةً (then We made the sperm-drop into a clot - 23:14). The next three stages, i.e. from عَلَقَة (clot) to مُضْغَة (foetus-lump), from مُضْغَة to bones, and thirdly clothing flesh on bones occurring in short periods is not too remote a possibility, and in describing these three changes the particle فَ has been used which, as has been explained earlier, is indicative of uninterrupted succession. The final change in the condition of the unborn child comes when life and soul are breathed into it. And since, according to human reckoning, putting life and soul into a lifeless mass must necessarily take a long time, therefore, here again the word ثُمَّ has been used to describe this final stage of transformation.

The final stage in human creation, i.e. putting life and soul into it

The Qur'ān describes this change with the words ثُمَّ اَنْشَاْنٰهُ خَلْقًا آخَرَ (We developed it into another creature - 23:14). This distinction is due to the fact that whereas the first six stages in the creation of man are related to the world of elements and substances, the final stage relates to the transfer of soul from the world of spirits into his body and is, therefore, described as خَلْقًا آخَرَ, i.e. a special or distinct creation.

Biological spirit and Real Spirit

"We developed it into another creature" in this verse is interpreted by Ibn 'Abbās, Mujāhid, Sha'bi, 'Ikrimah, Ḍaḥḥāk and Abul-'Aliyah to mean

blowing spirit into the body. Tafsīr Maẓharī mentions that most probably it refers to the biological spirit. According to its explanation spirits are of two kinds. Biological spirit is a subtle substance embedded in every part of the body of a human being or an animal. This is the spirit recognized by medical scientists and the philosophers. This biological spirit is created after the organs are created. That is why its creation is mentioned in this verse with the word ثُمَّ (thereafter). The other kind of spirit is the 'Real spirit'. It belongs to the spiritual universe. This real spirit was created long before the creation of human beings, and it is these spirits which were assembled by Allah when He asked them, "Am I not your Lord?" and they answered, "Why not?" This Real Spirit having been created long before, is connected by Allah Ta'ālā with biological spirit in a manner not known to anyone. Life of man depends on this connection and when biological spirit of a person is disconnected from Real Spirit, he dies. Therefore, it is also possible that it is this connection which is referred to in this verse by the words another creation.

فَتَبٰرَكَ اللّٰهُ اَحْسَنُ الْخٰلِقِيْنَ (So, glorious is Allah, the best of the creators- 23:14). The word خَلْق and تَخْلِيْق mean "to create something from nothing", which is a very special and exclusive attribute of Allah. Thus, Allah alone is the creator and none else. Neither an angel nor man can create anything. However sometime these two words are used in the sense of manufacturing which is no more than the reshaping and assembly by man of substances created by Allah. The man who does this is also called the creator of an article. The Qur'ān says تَخْلُقُوْنَ اِفْكًا (you invent a lie- 29:17), and again it says about Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام اَنِّىْٓ اَخْلُقُ لَكُمْ مِّنَ الطِّيْنِ كَهَيْـَٔةِ الطَّيْرِ (I create for you from clay something in the shape of a bird - 3:49). In all these places the word خَلْق (creating) has been used in the metaphorical sense to mean "manufacture".

Here the word خٰلِقِيْنَ (creators) has been used in the plural and the meaning is that though ordinary human beings who manufacture things may also be called خَالِق or creators in the metaphorical sense, yet Allah is the best among all those creators.

ثُمَّ اِنَّكُمْ بَعْدَ ذٰلِكَ لَمَيِّتُوْنَ

Then, after all this, you are to die - 23:15

The preceding three verses were about the creation of man and this

verse and the one which follows is about the life to come. In this verse Allah says that after his creation man will spend a period of time in this world and then will meet his death from which there is no escape. Then He says that man will be raised on the Day of Resurrection ثُمَّ إِنَّكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ تُبْعَثُوْنَ (Then you are to be raised again on the Day of Judgment - 23:16) so that his deeds and actions in this world may be weighed and he may be sent to Paradise or Hell as he deserves. This is how a man's life would end. Further on there is a brief mention of the events which will take place in the intervening period between his life in this world and the life to come, and of the gift and blessings which Allah will bestow upon him. This is prefaced by a reference to the creation of the skies.

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا فَوْقَكُمْ سَبْعَ طَرَآئِقَ

And We created upon you seven paths (heavens) - 23:17

طَرَآئِقَ is the plural of طَرِيْقَة which may also be used as a synonym for طَبْقَه (tier) in which case the meaning would be that Allah created seven skies overhead row upon row in tiers. The other and more common meaning of the word طَرِيْقَه is "road" or "passage" in which case the verse would mean that these skies provide a path for the angels who bring commands from Allah to the earth.

وَمَا كُنَّا عَنِ الْخَلْقِ غٰفِلِيْنَ (And We were never neglectful of the creation - 23:17). The verse means that Allah did not just abandon man after creating him, but was ever mindful of his needs and provided the means for his sustenance and growth. To this end He first created the skies and from the skies He sent forth rains upon the earth which then produced food for men's nourishment.

The Divine system of providing water to meet human needs

وَاَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً ۢ بِقَدَرٍ فَاَسْكَنّٰهُ فِى الْاَرْضِ ۖ وَاِنَّا عَلٰى ذَهَابٍ ۢ بِهٖ لَقٰدِرُوْنَ

And We sent down water from the sky in due measure, then We lodged it in the earth, and of course, We are able to take it away. - 23:18

The addition of the phrase بقدر (In due measure) shows how feeble and utterly powerless man is, because if the very things without which no life can exist exceed a certain limit, they become the cause of death and destruction. Water is a case in point without which no living thing - man

or beast - can survive. Torrential rains coming down from the sky cause a deluge which becomes a source of misery for human beings. But Allah is kind and merciful and He sends rains which, while fulfilling man's needs, do not turn into flood except at those places where it is His will that they should be engulfed in water. Another point to consider is that if man was to obtain his daily requirement of water through daily rainfall, that too would cause extreme discomfort and suffering, because he is not by nature adapted to live in an environment where rain falls every day. Moreover the conduct of business would become impossible in such conditions. On the other hand, if the total quantity of water that men would need for a whole year, or for six months or even for three months were to come down in a single downpour and people are told to store their quota of water and use it according to their daily needs, that would be an impossible task because, apart from lack of adequate storage capacity, the water would become foul and unfit for consumption. Therefore Allah has regulated the supply of water in such a way that when rains come, the water saturates the earth and the plants and then it flows into lakes, ponds and natural depressions where it is used by men and animals according to their needs. But the water stored in this manner can only last for a limited time and men of different regions need a continuous supply of fresh water. To meet this eventuality Allah has designed a system by which very large quantities of water are converted into oceans of ice and snow and placed on top of mountains where the atmosphere is pure and free from pollution. Slowly and gradually the snow melts and the water seeps through the pores in the mountains and flows into the network of underground water channels which carry it to all parts as springs and flow on the surface of the earth as streams, water courses and rivers. This fresh running water provides drinking water to men and animals and irrigates fields which yield food and fodder for all living things. Another part of the water percolates deep into the ground and becomes sub-soil water and is drawn up from wells. This entire design and process is covered in the Qur'ān by a simple and short sentence فَأَسْكَنَّهُ فِى الْأَرْضِ (23:18). A point is also made at the end of the verse that the sub-soil water which is drawn from wells has been placed by merciful Allah at a depth from where it can be drawn easily because by its nature, water flows downwards and could have gone down to a depth from where it would have been impossible to draw it out. This is explained by the

sentence وَإِنَّا عَلٰى ذَهَابٍۢ بِهٖ لَقٰدِرُوْنَ and, of course, We are able to take it away(23:18).

The Qur'ān then goes on to say that it is from an assured and regular supply of water only that Allah created fruit gardens which produce dates and grapes and many other kinds of fruits. People eat these fruit for their taste and flavour and also preserve some of them for future use as articles of food as is evident from the sentence وَمِنْهَا تَأْكُلُوْنَ (And of them you eat - 23:19). Then special mention is made of olives and the oil extracted from it because it has many uses and offers many benefits. And since the Mount Sinai produces an abundant crop of olives therefore a reference has been made to it وَشَجَرَةً تَخْرُجُ مِنْ طُوْرِ سَيْنَآءَ (And [We produced] a tree [of olive] that comes out from the [mount] Ṭūr of Sinai. - 23:20). Sinai is the name of the area where the Ṭūr Mountain is located. Olive oil can be used to massage the body, in lamps to provide light and in food as a curry or dressing. This has been expressed in the verse in the words. تَنْبُتُ بِالدُّهْنِ وَ صِبْغٍ لِّلْاٰكِلِيْنَ (which grows having oil and a dressing for those who eat - 23:20). The reason why olive tree has been associated with the Ṭūr mountain is that this tree first grew on that mountain. Some people have said that it was the first tree to grow on earth after the great Deluge in the days of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام. (Maẓharī)

Then there is a mention of the blessings and the numerous gifts which Allah has provided for the benefit of mankind so that they may ponder and worship Him. The words of the verse are وَإِنَّ لَكُمْ فِي الْأَنْعَامِ لَعِبْرَةً (And indeed there is a sure lesson in the cattle for you - 23:21). The lesson to which this verse refers has been described further in the words نُسْقِيْكُمْ مِّمَّا فِيْ بُطُوْنِهَا (We give you a drink from that which lies in their bellies - 23:21). Some of the ways in which the cattle serve mankind are that they provide milk which is a very clear and nourishing food; every part of their body is put to some use, and their wool, hides, intestines etc. are all utilized, in industries which support a country's economy, the meat of the animals, which are *ḥalāl* (permissible) is a favourite food for all men. وَمِنْهَا تَأْكُلُوْنَ (and of them you eat - 23:21). And finally they are used, together with ships, as mounts and as means of transporting goods from one place to another. In the last benefit, ships and boats are also included, because they are also used in transportation وَعَلَيْهَا وَعَلَى الْفُلْكِ تُحْمَلُوْنَ (And on them and on the boats you are transported - 23:22). All types of mounts which

are run with wheels may also be added to *fulk* (boats) because they render the same service.

Verses 23 - 30

وَلَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا نُوْحًا اِلٰى قَوْمِهٖ فَقَالَ يٰقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ مَالَكُمْ مِّنْ اِلٰهٍ غَيْرُهٗ ؕ اَفَلَا تَتَّقُوْنَ ﴿۲۳﴾ فَقَالَ الْمَلَؤُا الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْ قَوْمِهٖ مَا هٰذَآ اِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ ۙ يُرِيْدُ اَنْ يَّتَفَضَّلَ عَلَيْكُمْ ؕ وَلَوْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ لَاَنْزَلَ مَلٰٓئِكَةً ۚۖ مَّا سَمِعْنَا بِهٰذَا فِيْٓ اٰبَآئِنَا الْاَوَّلِيْنَ ﴿۲۴﴾ اِنْ هُوَ اِلَّا رَجُلٌۢ بِهٖ جِنَّةٌ فَتَرَبَّصُوْا بِهٖ حَتّٰى حِيْنٍ ﴿۲۵﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ انْصُرْنِيْ بِمَا كَذَّبُوْنِ ﴿۲۶﴾ فَاَوْحَيْنَآ اِلَيْهِ اَنِ اصْنَعِ الْفُلْكَ بِاَعْيُنِنَا وَ وَحْيِنَا فَاِذَا جَآءَ اَمْرُنَا وَفَارَ التَّنُّوْرُ ۙ فَاسْلُكْ فِيْهَا مِنْ كُلٍّ زَوْجَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ وَاَهْلَكَ اِلَّا مَنْ سَبَقَ عَلَيْهِ الْقَوْلُ مِنْهُمْ ۚ وَلَا تُخَاطِبْنِيْ فِي الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا ۚ اِنَّهُمْ مُّغْرَقُوْنَ ﴿۲۷﴾ فَاِذَا اسْتَوَيْتَ اَنْتَ وَمَنْ مَّعَكَ عَلَى الْفُلْكِ فَقُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِيْ نَجّٰنَا مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿۲۸﴾ وَقُلْ رَّبِّ اَنْزِلْنِيْ مُنْزَلًا مُّبٰرَكًا وَّاَنْتَ خَيْرُ الْمُنْزِلِيْنَ ﴿۲۹﴾ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ وَّاِنْ كُنَّا لَمُبْتَلِيْنَ ﴿۳۰﴾

And surely, We sent Nūḥ to his nation. So he said, "O my people, worship Allah. You have no god whatsoever other than Him. So, do you not fear Allah?" [23] **So, said the disbelieving chiefs from among his nation, "This (man) is nothing but a human being like you. He wishes to impose his superiority over you. Had Allah willed, He would have sent down angels. We have not heard of such a thing among our forefathers.** [24] **He is none but a man possessed by madness, so wait for (what happens to) him, for some time"** [25]

He said, "My Lord, help me, for they have belied me." [26] **So, We sent Our revelation to him, saying, "Make the**

ship under Our eyes and Our revelation. So, when Our command comes and the oven gushes forth, take on its board a pair of two from each (species) along with your family, except those of them against whom the word has already passed. And do not speak to Me (in favour) of those who did wrong. They are sure to be drowned. [27] **So, when you and those with you, are well seated in the ship, say, 'Praise is for Allah who saved us from the wrongdoing people.'** [28] **And say, 'My Lord, make me land a blessed landing. And You are the best of those who bring (someone) to land".** [29]

Surely, there are signs in it and We do always test (people). [30]

وَفَارَ التَّنُّوْرُ (And the oven gushes forth - 23:27). The word تَنُّوْر means oven which is used for making flat, round bread, and is also used in the sense of the whole earth. According to some people تَنُّوْر is a specific oven in the Kūfah mosque, while others believe that it was somewhere in Syria. Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام was informed by Allah that when water began boiling forth from the تَنُّوْر (oven) that would be the sign of the coming of the Deluge (Maẓharī). The story of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام , the Deluge and his Ark has been reported in some earlier Sūrahs (See Volume 4, p. 626 to 643).

Verses 31 - 41

ثُمَّ اَنْشَاْنَا مِنْۢ بَعْدِهِمْ قَرْنًا اٰخَرِيْنَ ﴿۳۱﴾ فَاَرْسَلْنَا فِيْهِمْ رَسُوْلًا مِّنْهُمْ
اَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ مَالَكُمْ مِّنْ اِلٰهٍ غَيْرُهٗ ؕ اَفَلَا تَتَّقُوْنَ ﴿۳۲﴾ وَ قَالَ الْمَلَاُ
مِنْ قَوْمِهِ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَ كَذَّبُوْا بِلِقَآءِ الْاٰخِرَةِ وَ اَتْرَفْنٰهُمْ فِى الْحَيٰوةِ
الدُّنْيَا ۙ مَا هٰذَاۤ اِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ ۙ يَاْكُلُ مِمَّا تَاْكُلُوْنَ مِنْهُ وَيَشْرَبُ مِمَّا
تَشْرَبُوْنَ ﴿۳۳﴾ وَلَئِنْ اَطَعْتُمْ بَشَرًا مِّثْلَكُمْ ۙ اِنَّكُمْ اِذًا لَّخٰسِرُوْنَ ﴿۳۴﴾
اَيَعِدُكُمْ اَنَّكُمْ اِذَا مِتُّمْ وَكُنْتُمْ تُرَابًا وَّعِظَامًا اَنَّكُمْ مُّخْرَجُوْنَ ﴿۳۵﴾
هَيْهَاتَ هَيْهَاتَ لِمَا تُوْعَدُوْنَ ﴿۳۶﴾ اِنْ هِىَ اِلَّا حَيَاتُنَا الدُّنْيَا نَمُوْتُ

وَنَحْيَا وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَبْعُوثِينَ ﴿٣٧﴾ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا رَجُلٌ افْتَرَىٰ عَلَى
اللَّهِ كَذِبًا وَمَا نَحْنُ لَهُ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٣٨﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ انصُرْنِي بِمَا
كَذَّبُونِ ﴿٣٩﴾ قَالَ عَمَّا قَلِيلٍ لَّيُصْبِحُنَّ نَادِمِينَ ﴿٤٠﴾ فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ
الصَّيْحَةُ بِالْحَقِّ فَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ غُثَاءً ۚ فَبُعْدًا لِّلْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٤١﴾

Then after them We created another generation, [31] **and sent among them a messenger from themselves (to convey the message): "Worship Allah; you have no god whatsoever than Him. So do you not fear Allah?"** [32] **So said those chiefs of his nation who disbelieved and belied facing the Hereafter and whom We made affluent in the worldly life, "This (man) is nothing but a human being. He eats from what you eat from, and drinks from what you drink.** [33] **And if you obey a human like you, you will be absolute losers.** [34] **Does he promise you that, when you die and are turned into dust and bones, you are to be brought forth?** [35] **Far too improbable is what you are being promised.** [36] **There is nothing but our worldly life. We die and we live and we are not to be raised again.** [37] **He is nothing but a man who has forged a lie against Allah and we are not going to believe in him."** [38]

He said, "My Lord, help me, for they have belied me." [39] **He (Allah) said, "In a little while they have to become remorseful."** [40] **So the Cry seized them according to the true (promise), and We turned them in to scum. So, woe to the wrongdoing people.** [41]

In the earlier verses the story of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام was told who was sent to his people to guide them along the path of righteousness and the following verses contain a brief account of some other prophets without mentioning their names and the people for whose guidance they were sent. From certain references and allusions the commentators have concluded that the verses refer to Sayyidnā Hūd عليه السلام or Sayyidnā Ṣaliḥ عليه السلام who were sent for the guidance of the tribes of 'Ād and Thamūd respectively. In the present story both these tribes are reported to have perished as a result of صَيْحَة (Cry) from an unseen source, whereas in other verses it has been specifically mentioned that it was the tribe of

Thamūd which perished from صَيْحَة (Cry) and this had led some scholars to the view that the words قَرْناً آخَرِيْنَ (another generation) refers to Thamūd. An alternative explanation is that the word صَيْحَة (Cry) has been used in the general sense of punishment from Allah in which case it would include the tribe of 'Ād also.

إِنْ هِيَ إِلَّا حَيَاتُنَا الدُّنْيَا نَمُوتُ وَنَحْيَا وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَبْعُوثِيْنَ

There is nothing but our worldly life. We die and we live and we are not to be raised again. - 23:37

This is the argument which the unbelievers advance when denying belief in the Day of Judgment. Those who deny it publicly are confirmed infidels, but it is very unfortunate that many Muslims also act in a manner that the same denial can be felt from their deeds and actions. They seem to be totally oblivious of the coming in of the Hereafter. May Allah Ta'ala grant them faith to release themselves from the clutches of this belief of theirs.

Verses 42 - 50

ثُمَّ أَنْشَأْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ قُرُوْنًا آخَرِيْنَ ﴿٤٢﴾ مَا تَسْبِقُ مِنْ أُمَّةٍ أَجَلَهَا وَمَا يَسْتَأْخِرُوْنَ ﴿٤٣﴾ ثُمَّ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا تَتْرَا ۖ كُلَّمَا جَاءَ أُمَّةً رَّسُوْلُهَا كَذَّبُوْهُ فَأَتْبَعْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ بَعْضًا وَّجَعَلْنٰهُمْ أَحَادِيْثَ ۚ فَبُعْدًا لِّقَوْمٍ لَّا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٤٤﴾ ثُمَّ أَرْسَلْنَا مُوْسٰى وَأَخَاهُ هٰرُوْنَ ۙ بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَسُلْطٰنٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿٤٥﴾ إِلٰى فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَائِهٖ فَاسْتَكْبَرُوْا وَكَانُوْا قَوْمًا عَالِيْنَ ﴿٤٦﴾ فَقَالُوْا أَنُؤْمِنُ لِبَشَرَيْنِ مِثْلِنَا وَقَوْمُهُمَا لَنَا عٰبِدُوْنَ ﴿٤٧﴾ فَكَذَّبُوْهُمَا فَكَانُوْا مِنَ الْمُهْلَكِيْنَ ﴿٤٨﴾ وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا مُوْسَى الْكِتٰبَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَهْتَدُوْنَ ﴿٤٩﴾ وَجَعَلْنَا ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ وَأُمَّهٗ اٰيَةً وَّاٰوَيْنٰهُمَا إِلٰى رَبْوَةٍ ذَاتِ قَرَارٍ وَّمَعِيْنٍ ﴿٥٠﴾

Then, after them, We created another generation. [42] **No community can go ahead of its appointed time, nor can they stay behind.** [43] **Thereafter, We sent Our**

messengers successively. Whenever a community was approached by its messenger they belied him. Then We made some of them follow others (in destruction) and turned them into tales (of history). So, woe to a people who do not believe. [44]

Thereafter, We sent Mūsā and his brother Hārūn, with Our signs and a clear proof [45] towards Fir'aun (the Pharaoh) and his advisors. But they showed arrogance and they were haughty people. [46] So they said, "shall we believe in two humans who are like ourselves and whose people are serving us as slaves?" [47] Thus they belied both of them and were among the destroyed. [48] And, of course, We gave Mūsā the Book, so that they may take the right path. [49]

And We made the son of Maryam (Mary) and his mother a sign and gave them shelter on a height, a place of rest and running springs. [50]

Commentary

وَّاٰوَيْنٰهُمَآ اِلٰى رَبْوَةٍ ذَاتِ قَرَارٍ وَّمَعِيْنٍ (and We gave them shelter on a height, a place of rest and running springs). According to Bayān-ul-Qur'ān, this verse refers to the event that a tyrant was resolute to kill Sayyidnā 'Īsā and his mother علیهما السلام right from his childhood. They escaped from him and, with Allah's grace, found a place on a height where they enjoyed a peaceful life until Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام attained maturity and was entrusted with prophethood. (This commentary is taken from Khulasa-e-tafsīr of Ma'āriful-Qur'ān).

Verses 51 - 56

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الرُّسُلُ كُلُوْا مِنَ الطَّيِّبٰتِ وَاعْمَلُوْا صَالِحًا ؕ اِنِّیْ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿٥١﴾ وَاِنَّ هٰذِهٖٓ اُمَّتُكُمْ اُمَّةً وَّاحِدَةً وَّاَنَا رَبُّكُمْ فَاتَّقُوْنِ ﴿٥٢﴾ فَتَقَطَّعُوْٓا اَمْرَهُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ زُبُرًا ؕ كُلُّ حِزْبٍۢ بِمَا لَدَيْهِمْ فَرِحُوْنَ ﴿٥٣﴾ فَذَرْهُمْ فِیْ غَمْرَتِهِمْ حَتّٰى حِيْنٍ ﴿٥٤﴾ اَيَحْسَبُوْنَ اَنَّمَا نُمِدُّهُمْ بِهٖ مِنْ مَّالٍ وَّبَنِيْنَ ﴿٥٥﴾ نُسَارِعُ لَهُمْ فِی الْخَيْرٰتِ ؕ بَلْ لَّا يَشْعُرُوْنَ ﴿٥٦﴾

O messengers, eat from the good things, and act righteously. Of whatever you do, I am fully aware. [51]

And surely, this is your creed, a single creed, and I am your Lord. So fear Me. [52] **But they split up ways from one another (dividing themselves) into factions, each faction happy with what lies before it.** [53] **So leave them in their negligence for some time.** [54]

Do they think that by consistently providing them with wealth and children, [55] **We are accelerating the (real) good things to them? The fact, however, is that they do not understand (the reality).** [56]

Commentary

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الرُّسُلُ كُلُوْا مِنَ الطَّيِّبٰتِ وَاعْمَلُوْا صَالِحًا (O messengers, eat from the good things and act, righteously - 23:51.) The word طَيِّبَات means pure and good things. Since things which are forbidden under the Islamic laws are neither pure nor desirable for people who are gifted with common sense, it follows that the word طَيِّبَات refers only to the things which are permitted under the Islamic Shari'ah and which are not only good in appearance, but also pure in their intrinsic nature. This verse also tells us that all the prophets were enjoined by Allah to do two things - eat food which is clean and permissible under Shariah, and to do good deeds, and considering that these injunctions have been addressed to prophets who are impeccable in any case, it is necessary that their followers should strive hard to mould their lives according to these injunctions. This in fact is the real meaning of this verse.

Scholars have expressed the view that the Juxtaposition of these two commands points to the fact that the consumption of lawful food has a very important bearing on human actions and when a person takes lawful food only, a divine guidance takes his actions along the path of righteousness. But if the food is unlawful, then serious obstacles will prevent the accomplishment of good deeds in spite of his best intentions. According to a *ḥadīth*, people travel long wearing miles and are covered with dust and they pray to Allah with hands upraised calling out "O Lord, O Lord!" But since they eat forbidden things and their clothes are also made from forbidden material, there is little hope of their prayers being granted. (Qurṭubī) Thus it is evident that a person hoping that his worship will get him the pleasure of Allah or that his prayers will be granted by

Him must pay scrupulous attention to what he eats and must, at all times, avoid eating unlawful things.

وَاِنَّ هٰذِهٖٓ اُمَّتُكُمْ اُمَّةً وَّاحِدَةً (And surely this is your creed, a single creed - 23:52). The word امّه is used to describe a group or the followers of a prophet. Sometimes it is also used in the sense of "faith", "creed" or "way of life", as in the verse وَجَدْنَآ اٰبَآءَنَا عَلٰٓى اُمَّةٍ (We found our fathers upon a creed - 43:22). In the present verse the word *ummah* has been used in the latter sense.

فَتَقَطَّعُوْٓا اَمْرَهُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ زُبُرًا (But they split up ways from one another (dividing themselves) into factions - 23:53). The word زُبُر is the plural of زَبُوْر meaning a book, and the verse would mean that Allah had commanded all prophets and their followers to adhere to the one and only faith revealed by Him in all matters relating to the basic principles and beliefs. But the followers of different prophets split up into groups and sects and each one of them chose a different way of life and adopted a different book in which the beliefs of each group and sect were recorded. Sometimes زبر is used for the plural of زُبْرَه (*zubrah*) meaning "fragment" or "group". This meaning is more appropriate here and the meaning of the verse would be that these people were divided into sects even in the matter of fundamental beliefs of their religion. It should be noted that the difference of opinion among the *mujtahidīn* (competent Sharī'ah Scholars) in some minor issues is not included in this division which is condemned in this verse, because these differences do not cause a division of the religion, nor do the people maintaining these differences become separate sects. Giving these interpretative and subsidiary differences a sectarian colour is the height of ignorance and no religious scholar would support it.

Verses 57 - 62

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ هُمْ مِّنْ خَشْيَةِ رَبِّهِمْ مُّشْفِقُوْنَ ﴿۵۷﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ بِاٰيٰتِ رَبِّهِمْ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿۵۸﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ بِرَبِّهِمْ لَايُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿۵۹﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ يُؤْتُوْنَ مَآ اٰتَوْا وَّقُلُوْبُهُمْ وَجِلَةٌ اَنَّهُمْ اِلٰى رَبِّهِمْ رٰجِعُوْنَ ﴿۶۰﴾ اُولٰٓئِكَ يُسٰرِعُوْنَ فِى الْخَيْرٰتِ وَهُمْ لَهَا سٰبِقُوْنَ ﴿۶۱﴾ وَلَا نُكَلِّفُ نَفْسًا اِلَّا وُسْعَهَا وَلَدَيْنَا كِتٰبٌ يَّنْطِقُ بِالْحَقِّ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۶۲﴾

(Contrarily) those who are anxious out of awe of their Lord, [57] **and those who believe in the verses of their Lord** [58] **and those who do not associate any partner to their Lord,** [59] **And those who give whatever they give with their hearts full of fear that to their Lord they are to return** [60] **– those people are accelerating towards the (real) good things, and they are the foremost to attain them.** [61]

We do not place a burden on anyone except to his capability. And with Us is a book which speaks with truth, and they shall not be wronged. [62]

Commentary

وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْتُونَ مَا اٰتَوْا وَّقُلُوبُهُمْ وَجِلَةٌ (And those who give whatever they give with their hearts full of fear - 23:60.) The word يُؤْتُوْن is derived from ایتاء meaning "to give, to spend", and is used in commentaries in the sense of صَدَقَات(alms to the poor). Another reading of this verse reported from Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا is يَأْتُوْنَ مَا أَتَوْا (They do whatever they do - 23:60) and this covers all good deeds such as charity, prayers, fasting etc. As for the generally accepted reading of the verse, although it mentions alms to the poor only, yet it would include all good deeds also as is borne out by a *ḥadīth*. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہما asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ the meaning of this verse whether those who do these deeds are the ones who drink wine and steal things. The Holy Prophet ﷺ replied, "O daughter of Ṣiddīq ؓ ! It is not as you say. These are the people who observe fasts, say their prayers and give alms, yet they are apprehensive lest, due to some mind lapse on their part, all their good deeds may not be accepted by Allah. They hasten to do good deeds and are foremost, in accomplishing them." (Aḥmad, Tirmidhī, Ibn Mājah, Maẓharī)

Ḥasan al-Basṛī says that he knew people who did virtuous deeds, yet were more fearful than people who committed evil deeds. (Qurṭubī)

أُولٰئِكَ يُسَارِعُوْنَ فِى الْخَيْرٰتِ وَهُمْ لَهَا سٰبِقُوْنَ

Those people are accelerating towards the (real) good things, and they are the foremost to attain them. - 23:61

The meaning of مُسَارَعَتْ فِى الْخَيْرَاتِ is that just as ordinary human beings run after worldly gains and try to leave other competitors behind, these good and virtuous people strive to gain spiritual reward and try to excel

others in their efforts to fulfill their religious obligations.

Verses 63 - 77

بَلْ قُلُوْبُهُمْ فِىْ غَمْرَةٍ مِّنْ هٰذَا وَلَهُمْ اَعْمَالٌ مِّنْ دُوْنِ ذٰلِكَ هُمْ لَهَا
عٰمِلُوْنَ ﴿٦٣﴾ حَتّٰٓى اِذَآ اَخَذْنَا مُتْرَفِيْهِمْ بِالْعَذَابِ اِذَا هُمْ يَجْئَرُوْنَ
﴿٦٤﴾ لَا تَجْئَرُوا الْيَوْمَ اِنَّكُمْ مِّنَّا لَا تُنْصَرُوْنَ ﴿٦٥﴾ قَدْ كَانَتْ اٰيٰتِىْ
تُتْلٰى عَلَيْكُمْ فَكُنْتُمْ عَلٰٓى اَعْقَابِكُمْ تَنْكِصُوْنَ ﴿٦٦﴾ مُسْتَكْبِرِيْنَ ۖۚ
بِهٖ سٰمِرًا تَهْجُرُوْنَ ﴿٦٧﴾ اَفَلَمْ يَدَّبَّرُوا الْقَوْلَ اَمْ جَآءَهُمْ مَّا لَمْ يَاْتِ
اٰبَآءَهُمُ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ ﴿٦٨﴾ اَمْ لَمْ يَعْرِفُوْا رَسُوْلَهُمْ فَهُمْ لَهٗ مُنْكِرُوْنَ ﴿٦٩﴾
اَمْ يَقُوْلُوْنَ بِهٖ جِنَّةٌ ؕ بَلْ جَآءَهُمْ بِالْحَقِّ وَاَكْثَرُهُمْ لِلْحَقِّ كٰرِهُوْنَ
﴿٧٠﴾ وَلَوِ اتَّبَعَ الْحَقُّ اَهْوَآءَهُمْ لَفَسَدَتِ السَّمٰوٰتُ وَالْاَرْضُ وَمَنْ
فِيْهِنَّ ؕ بَلْ اَتَيْنٰهُمْ بِذِكْرِهِمْ فَهُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِهِمْ مُّعْرِضُوْنَ ﴿٧١﴾ اَمْ
تَسْئَلُهُمْ خَرْجًا فَخَرَاجُ رَبِّكَ خَيْرٌ ۖۚ وَّهُوَ خَيْرُ الرّٰزِقِيْنَ ﴿٧٢﴾ وَاِنَّكَ
لَتَدْعُوْهُمْ اِلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ ﴿٧٣﴾ وَاِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ
عَنِ الصِّرَاطِ لَنٰكِبُوْنَ ﴿٧٤﴾ وَلَوْ رَحِمْنٰهُمْ وَكَشَفْنَا مَا بِهِمْ مِّنْ ضُرٍّ
لَّلَجُّوْا فِىْ طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُوْنَ ﴿٧٥﴾ وَلَقَدْ اَخَذْنٰهُمْ بِالْعَذَابِ فَمَا
اسْتَكَانُوْا لِرَبِّهِمْ وَمَا يَتَضَرَّعُوْنَ ﴿٧٦﴾ حَتّٰٓى اِذَا فَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ بَابًا ذَا
عَذَابٍ شَدِيْدٍ اِذَا هُمْ فِيْهِ مُبْلِسُوْنَ ﴿٧٧﴾

But their hearts are in ignorance about this, and they have deeds, other than that, which they are continuously doing. [63] **Until when We will seize their affluent ones with punishment, they will suddenly start crying.** [64] **"Do not cry today. You will not be helped by Us.** [65] **My verses used to be recited to you, but you used to turn back on your heels** [66] **in arrogance,**

making it a subject of tales at night, talking nonsense (about it)." [67] (1)

Then, is it that they did not ponder over the Word (of Allah) or there has come to them something that did not come to their forefathers? [68] **Or did they not recognize their messenger and therefore they denied him?** [69] **Or do they say, 'He is possessed by madness?' Instead, the fact is that he has come to them with truth, but it is the truth that most of them dislike.** [70]

And had the truth followed their desires, all the heavens and the earth and all those therein would have fallen in total disorder. However, We have brought to them their advice, but it is their advice that they are averse to. [71]

Or is it that you (O Muhammad) demand a remuneration from them? But the remuneration from your Lord is best, and He is the best of all givers. [72] **And surely you are inviting them to a straight path,** [73] **and those who do not believe in the Hereafter are surely the deviators from the Path.** [74]

And if We have mercy on them and remove whatever distress they have, they would still persist obstinately in their rebellion, wandering blindly. [75] **And We have already seized them with punishment, but they did not turn humble to their Lord, nor do they supplicate in humility,** [76] **until when We will open against them the door of a severe punishment, they will be taken aback in despair.** [77]

Commentary

بَلْ قُلُوْبُهُمْ فِىْ غَمْرَةٍ (But their hearts are in ignorance) Lexically غَمْرَة means deep water where a person may drown or be overwhelmed. For this reason the word is also used to signify a covering or something that conceals an object. In this verse the word means the ignorance in which the hearts of the infidels are submerged and hidden so that no light can

1). Another possible translation of this verse may be as follows: 'but you used to turn back on your heels, being over-proud of it (the *ḥarām* being looked after by you), indulging in tales at night, talking nonsense." It is this second translation on which the forthcoming explanation is based.

reach them.

وَلَهُمْ اَعْمَالٌ مِّنْ دُوْنِ ذٰلِكَ

And they have deeds, other then that - 23:63

It means that in addition to their rejection of the Oneness of Allah, and their denial of the true faith, they engage themselves in other sinful deeds.

مُتْرَفِيْهِمْ (their affluent ones - 23:64). The word مُتْرَف is derived from تَرَف meaning comfort and prosperity. This verse mentions the Divine punishment which will descend upon the unbelievers whether rich or poor. The rich people have been specially mentioned here because they are the ones who make adequate arrangements to protect themselves against disasters and misfortunes. But when retribution comes from Allah, they find themselves totally helpless. According to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ the punishment which is mentioned in this verse is an allusion to the crushing defeat which the infidels of Makkah suffered at the hands of the Muslims in the Battle of Badr. Some others say that the reference is to the severe famine which afflicted the people of Makkah as a result of the curse laid on them by the Holy Prophet ﷺ, when they were forced to eat dead animals and cats and dogs.

Although the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his companions, when faced ill-treatment from the infidels, used to remain patient and never complained yet when their suffering and torment became unbearable, the Holy Prophet invoked divine punishment for the infidels in the following words:

اللّٰهمّ اشدد وطأتك على مضر واجعلها عليهم سنين كسنى يوسف (رواه البخارى و مسلم) (قرطبى و مظهرى)

(O Lord! Let thy punishment descend hard on the tribe of Muḍar and make their land barren like the land of Yūsuf.

مُسْتَكْبِرِيْنَ بِهٖ سٰمِرًا تَهْجُرُوْنَ (Being over-proud of it (the *ḥarām*), indulging in tales at night talking non-sense). According to many commentators the word بِهٖ (on it) in this verse has a reference to the *ḥarām* (the sanctuary of Makkah). Although there is no specific mention of the *ḥarām* in the verse, yet the very close association of the Quraish of Makkah with it and their great pride in this association renders a specific mention of the *ḥarām*

unnecessary. The purpose of the verse, therefore, is to mention the causes of their aversion against Allah's verses. The first factor was their pride in their being the neighbors and care-takers of *ḥarām*. The other two factors are mentioned in the next two words.

The word سَامِرًا is derived from سَمَر meaning "Moon lit night". It was a favourite pastime with the Arabs to assemble on moon lit nights and tell stories. Thus the word سَمَر came to be used in the sense of stories and anecdotes and سَامِر meant a raconteur. Although the word has been used in the singular yet it is often used as a plural also as in this verse. This word points out the second reason for the repudiation of divine communications by the infidels of Makkah which is their preoccupation with petty and frivolous matters such as story-telling and their lack of interest in divine messages. And finally there was a third reason for this state of affairs also namely that they used to indulge in foolish talk and pass unseemly remarks about the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

The word تَهْجُرُوْنَ (23:67) is derived from هُجر with a *ḍammah* mark (ُ) on the letter ہ and means "to speak nonsense, to use foul language).

Ban on story_telling after 'Ishā' prayers

Story telling was favourite pastime among the Arabs and the Persians since ancient times. This habit was not only time wasting but was also the cause of certain evils. With a view to discourage this practice, the Holy Prophet ﷺ enjoined upon the Muslims not to sleep before the 'Ishā' prayers. The philosophy behind this injunction was that all daily human activity ended with the 'Ishā' prayers which should arguably be a man's last action and which might even atone for his lapses during the day. On the other hand if, after the 'Ishā' prayers, he sits down to while away his time listening to silly and frivolous tales which in itself is a foolish act, he renders himself guilty of encouraging falsehood, back-biting and other sins. Another consequence of this evil habit is that such a person will go to bed late, will rise late and miss his early morning prayers. Sayyidnā 'Umar رضي الله عنه used to admonish people whom he found listening to stories after 'Ishā' prayers and advised them to go early to bed so that with Allah's grace they might be enabled to say midnight prayers. (Qurṭubī)

The verses 68, 69 and 70 mention five reasons which might possibly have prevented the unbelievers from accepting the faith brought by the

Holy Prophet ﷺ, and also give a rebuttal of each of these causes. Thus on the one hand all the arguments advanced by the infidels for not accepting the true faith have been demolished, and on the other hand there are compelling grounds and irrefutable evidence which should convince any right minded person of his error and persuade him to accept the message brought by the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Their persistence in their unbelief is, therefore, the result of their unreasoning hatred towards and blind prejudice against the Holy Prophet ﷺ to which a reference has been made in the latter part of the verse بَلْ جَآءَهُمْ بِالْحَقِّ وَاَكْثَرُهُمْ لِلْحَقِّ كٰرِهُوْنَ (Instead, the fact is that he has come to them with truth, but it is the truth that most of them dislike - 23:70). In other words, there being no valid and rational ground for repudiating the mission of the Holy Prophet ﷺ their opposition may be explained by their dislike of truth and their unwillingness to pay heed to its message. This, no doubt, is due to their love for undisputed power and their reluctance to share it with anyone else.

اَمْ لَمْ يَعْرِفُوْا رَسُوْلَهُمْ

Or did they not recognize their messenger? - 23:69.

One reason for their denial of the true faith could have been if the message was brought to them by an outsider who was a stranger to them and with whose character and antecedents they were unfamiliar. But this argument could not be invoked in the case of the Holy Prophet ﷺ who belonged to the noble family of Quraish, was born in Makkah, grew up among them, and his whole life was like an open book before them. Before prophethood was bestowed upon him, he was known among the unbelievers of Makkah as اَمِیْن (trustworthy) and صَادِق (truthful) and nobody had ever raised an accusing finger on his character and general behavior. Thus they could not take the plea that their repudiation of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and of the message brought to him was due to their ignorance about him or about his family connections.

وَلَقَدْ اَخَذْنٰهُمْ بِالْعَذَابِ فَمَا اسْتَكَانُوْا لِرَبِّهِمْ وَمَا يَتَضَرَّعُوْنَ

And We have already seized them with punishment, but they did not turn humble to their Lord, nor do they supplicate in humility. (23:76)

In the preceding verse it has been stated that when the unbelievers are subjected to chastisement for their sins, they plead to Allah and the Holy Prophet ﷺ for mercy and when Allah who is Merciful relieves their

suffering, they return to their evil practices and wicked deeds. This verse relates a similar instance when the unbelievers were punished for their misdeeds. However when they were delivered from their sufferings as a result of the intercession by the Holy Prophet ﷺ on their behalf, they did not humble themselves before Allah but persisted in idolatry and unbelief.

Visitation of famine upon Makkah and its deliverance on the prayers of the Holy Prophet ﷺ

It has been mentioned earlier that the Holy Prophet ﷺ had prayed to Allah to punish the people of Makkah with famine and as a result they were reduced to great straits and were forced to eat dead animals. At last, Abū Sufyān presented himself before the Holy Prophet ﷺ at Madīnah and said, "I appeal you in the name of Allah, did you not say that you had been sent by Him as mercy for the whole world?" The Holy Prophet ﷺ replied, "Yes I did, and what I said is true also." Then Abū Sufyān said, "You killed the leaders of your clan with sword at the battle of Badr and now you are killing those who still survive with starvation. Pray to Allah, I beseech you, to remove this curse from over our heads." The Holy Prophet ﷺ then prayed to Allah to forgive the people of Makkah and deliver them from the agony of hunger, and his prayer was granted forthwith. The verse: وَلَقَدْ اَخَذْنٰهُمْ بِالْعَذَابِ فَمَا اسْتَكَانُوْا لِرَبِّهِمْ (23:76) was revealed on this occasion and refers to this incident. (Maẓharī)

Verses 78 - 92

وَهُوَ الَّذِيْٓ اَنْشَاَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَالْاَبْصَارَ وَالْاَفْـِٕدَةَ ۭ قَلِيْلًا مَّا
تَشْكُرُوْنَ ﴿٧٨﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِيْ ذَرَاَكُمْ فِي الْاَرْضِ وَاِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُوْنَ
﴿٧٩﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِيْ يُحْيٖ وَيُمِيْتُ وَلَهُ اخْتِلَافُ الَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ ۭ اَفَلَا
تَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿٨٠﴾ بَلْ قَالُوْا مِثْلَ مَا قَالَ الْاَوَّلُوْنَ ﴿٨١﴾ قَالُوْٓا ءَاِذَا مِتْنَا
وَكُنَّا تُرَابًا وَّعِظَامًا ءَاِنَّا لَمَبْعُوْثُوْنَ ﴿٨٢﴾ لَقَدْ وُعِدْنَا نَحْنُ وَاٰبَاۗؤُنَا
هٰذَا مِنْ قَبْلُ اِنْ هٰذَآ اِلَّآ اَسَاطِيْرُ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ ﴿٨٣﴾ قُلْ لِّمَنِ الْاَرْضُ
وَمَنْ فِيْهَآ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٨٤﴾ سَيَقُوْلُوْنَ لِلّٰهِ ۭ قُلْ اَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُوْنَ
﴿٨٥﴾ قُلْ مَنْ رَّبُّ السَّمٰوٰتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيْمِ ﴿٨٦﴾

سَيَقُوْلُوْنَ لِلّٰهِ ؕ قُلْ اَفَلَا تَتَّقُوْنَ ﴿٨٧﴾ قُلْ مَنْۢ بِيَدِهٖ مَلَكُوْتُ كُلِّ
شَیْءٍ وَّهُوَ يُجِيْرُ وَلَا يُجَارُ عَلَيْهِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٨٨﴾ سَيَقُوْلُوْنَ
لِلّٰهِ ؕ قُلْ فَاَنّٰى تُسْحَرُوْنَ ﴿٨٩﴾ بَلْ اَتَيْنٰهُمْ بِالْحَقِّ وَاِنَّهُمْ لَكٰذِبُوْنَ
﴿٩٠﴾ مَا اتَّخَذَ اللّٰهُ مِنْ وَّلَدٍ وَّمَا كَانَ مَعَهٗ مِنْ اِلٰهٍ اِذًا لَّذَهَبَ كُلُّ
اِلٰهٍۢ بِمَا خَلَقَ وَلَعَلَا بَعْضُهُمْ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ ؕ سُبْحٰنَ اللّٰهِ عَمَّا يَصِفُوْنَ
﴿٩١﴾ عٰلِمِ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ فَتَعٰلٰى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿٩٢﴾

And He is the One who created for you the ears and the eyes and the hearts. Little you are grateful. [78] **And He is the One who created you on the earth and it is He unto whom you will be gathered together.** [79] **And He is the One who gives life and brings death and it is He to whom belongs the alternation of night and day. So, do you not understand?** [80]

But they said like what the earlier people had said. [81] **They said, "Is it that, when we will die and become dust and bones--is it that we will be raised again?** [82] **This is what we and our fathers had been promised with before. It is nothing but the tales of the ancients."** [83] **Say, "Whose is the earth and all those therein if you have knowledge?"** [84] **They will say, "Allah's." Would you still pay no heed?** [85]

Say, "Who is the Lord of the seven heavens and the Lord of the Great Throne?" [86] **They will say, "(All this belongs) to Allah". Say, "Would you still not fear Allah?"** [87] **Say, "Who is the One in whose hand lies the kingdom of every thing and who gives protection and no protection can be given against him, if you have knowledge?"** [88] **They will say, "(All this belongs) to Allah." Say, "Then from where are you being bewitched?"** [89]

The fact is that We have brought to them The Truth, and they are absolute liars. [90] **Allah did not take to a son, nor was there any god with Him. Had there been so, every god would have taken away what he created and each one of them would have been aggressive**

against the other. Pure is Allah from what they describe. [91] **He is the Knower of the hidden and the manifest. So, He is far higher than their ascribing of partners to Him.** [92]

Commentary

وَهُوَ يُجِيرُ وَلَا يُجَارُ عَلَيْهِ (And who gives protection and no protection can be given against him - 23:88) The meaning of the verse is that Allah alone can deliver a person from pain and suffering as He wills, but there is none who can save a person from divine punishment. This is true of this world because nobody can stop Allah from rewarding virtuous people nor can anyone protect someone whom He chooses to punish. And the same is true of the Hereafter also. (Qurṭubī)

Verses 93 - 100

قُلْ رَّبِّ إِمَّا تُرِيَنِّي مَا يُوعَدُونَ ﴿٩٣﴾ رَبِّ فَلَا تَجْعَلْنِي فِي الْقَوْمِ الظّٰلِمِينَ ﴿٩٤﴾ وَإِنَّا عَلٰٓى أَنْ نُّرِيَكَ مَا نَعِدُهُمْ لَقٰدِرُونَ ﴿٩٥﴾ اِدْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ السَّيِّئَةَ ط نَحْنُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَصِفُونَ ﴿٩٦﴾ وَقُلْ رَّبِّ أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ هَمَزٰتِ الشَّيٰطِينِ ﴿٩٧﴾ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ رَبِّ أَنْ يَّحْضُرُونِ ﴿٩٨﴾ حَتّٰٓى إِذَا جَآءَ أَحَدَهُمُ الْمَوْتُ قَالَ رَبِّ ارْجِعُونِ ﴿٩٩﴾ لَعَلِّيٓ أَعْمَلُ صَالِحًا فِيمَا تَرَكْتُ كَلَّا ط إِنَّهَا كَلِمَةٌ هُوَ قَائِلُهَا ط وَمِنْ وَّرَآئِهِمْ بَرْزَخٌ إِلٰى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ ﴿١٠٠﴾

(O prophet) say (in prayer), "O my Lord, if You are to show me (in my life) that (punishment) which they (the infidels) are threatened with, [93] **then, my Lord, do not place me among the wrongdoing people."** [94] **And of course, We do have the power to show you what We threatened them with.** [95]

Repel evil with that which is best. We are well aware of what they describe. [96] **And say, "O my Lord, I seek your refuge from the strokes of the satans,** [97] **and I seek Your refuge from that they come to me."** [98]

(The infidels go on doing their misdeeds) until when

death comes to one of them, he will say, "My Lord send me back, [99] **so that I may act righteously in that which I have left behind." Never! It is just a word he has to utter. And in front of them there is a barrier till the day when they will be resurrected.** [100]

Commentary

قُلْ رَّبِّ إِمَّا تُرِيَنِّىْ مَا يُوْعَدُوْنَ . رَبِّ فَلَا تَجْعَلْنِىْ فِى الْقَوْمِ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ

(O prophet) say (in prayer), "O my Lord, if You are to show me (in my life) that (punishment) which they (the infidels) are threatened with, then, my Lord, do not place me among the wrongdoing people." (23: 93, 94)

There are many verses of the Qur'ān which contain warnings of punishment to the unbelievers. While the award of punishment is a certainty on the Day of Judgment, it is possible that it may be awarded in this world also - and even during the life time of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. And when Allah's wrath descends upon a people, it is not confined to sinners alone, but some times it afflicts virtuous people too, who may not be punished in the Hereafter and may even be compensated by extra rewards for the undeserved punishment which they suffered in this world. The Qur'ān says اِتَّقُوْا فِتْنَةً لَّاتُصِيْبَنَّ الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا مِنْكُمْ خَاصَّةً (And beware of a punishment which shall not fall on the wrongdoers only - 8:25). In these verses, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been told by Allah to pray to Him that if His wrath were to descend upon the infidels in his life time, then He ﷺ should be removed from their company. This prayer was suggested to the Holy Prophet ﷺ in spite of the fact that he was impeccable and infallible, the intention being that He ﷺ should at all times remember Allah and beseech His mercy so as to increase his own reward in the Hereafter.

وَاِنَّا عَلٰٓى اَنْ نُّرِيَكَ مَا نَعِدُهُمْ لَقٰدِرُوْنَ

And of course, We do have the power to show you what We threatened them with. (23:95)

Some commentators say that even though Allah has promised, on account of His regard for the Holy Prophet ﷺ, that He will not punish the entire community while he lives among them وَمَا كَانَ اللّٰهُ لِيُعَذِّبَهُمْ وَاَنْتَ فِيْهِمْ (And Allah is not to send punishment upon them while you are in their midst - 8:33) yet the punishment of some selected persons in special circumstance does not negate the promise. The punishment of the infidels

of Makkah through famine and through their defeat at the hands of the Muslims at the Battle of Badr had taken place in the lifetime of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, which is emphasized in this verse that "We have the power to show you what We threatened them with".

اِدْفَعْ بِالَّتِىْ هِىَ اَحْسَنُ السَّيِّئَةَ

Repel evil with that which is best - 23:96

Allah instructs the Holy Prophet ﷺ to counter evil with good, oppression with justice and cruelty with mercy. These virtues of conduct have been taught by Allah to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and are generally observed in settling affairs among the Muslims. Later on these instructions were repealed in so far as the infidels and the unbelievers were concerned when Allah permitted Muslims to embark on جہاد (Jihād). Nevertheless even during Jihād the Muslims were told to adopt a humane approach towards the enemy. For example they were forbidden to kill women and children or the priests who did not engage in battle against the Muslims. Similarly, mutilation of the dead bodies of enemies was strictly forbidden. It is for this reason that the Holy Prophet ﷺ is instructed in the next verse to seek protection from Satan's evil suggestions even in the battle fields where he may arouse emotions to act against ethics.

وَقُلْ رَّبِّ اَعُوْذُبِكَ مِنْ هَمَزٰتِ الشَّيٰطِيْنِ ﴿۹۷﴾ وَ اَعُوْذُبِكَ رَبِّ اَنْ يَّحْضُرُوْنِ ﴿۹۸﴾

And say, 'O my Lord, I seek your refuge from the strokes of the satans, and I seek Your refuge from that they come to me.' (23:97, 98)

The word همز (the infinitive of Hamazāt translated above as 'strokes') means "to push, to press" and sometimes is also used to mean "to make a call from behind". This is a very comprehensive prayer often invoked for protection from the guile and mischief of Satan and the Holy Prophet ﷺ has urged upon the Muslims to recite it frequently in order to avoid sudden bursts of rage which are brought about by the promptings of Satan and which cause people to lose self-control. This prayer is also very effective in repelling other assaults of Satans and Jinns. Sayyidnā Khalid ؓ suffered from insomnia and the Holy Prophet ﷺ suggested that he should recite the following prayer before going to bed :

اَعُوْذُ بِكَلِمَاتِ اللّٰهِ التَّامَّةِ مِنْ غَضَبِ اللّٰهِ وَعِقَابِهٖ وَمِنْ شَرِّ عِبَادِهٖ وَمِنْ هَمَزٰتِ الشَّيٰطِيْنِ وَ اَنْ يَّحْضُرُوْنِ

I seek refuge with Allah's Perfect Words from Allah's wrath and His punishment, and from the evils of His slaves, and from the strokes of the satans and from that they come to me.

Sayyidnā Khālid did as advised and was soon cured of insomnia.

اَنْ يَّحْضُرُوْنِ (from that they come to me - 23:98) According to a *hadīth* in Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim the Holy Prophet is reported to have said that Satan meddles in all human affairs and tempts people to do evil deeds, and that this prayer is the best protection against his attempts. (Qurṭubī)

رَبِّ ارْجِعُوْنِ (My Lord, send me back - 23:99) When death approaches an infidel and he senses the punishment that awaits him on the Day of Judgment, he wishes for a return to this world, so that by performing good deeds he may escape the punishment which he has richly deserved.

Ibn Jarīr has related a story on the authority of Ibn Juraij that the Holy Prophet once said, "At the time of death when a good Muslim perceives the angels of mercy and all the luxuries of Paradise spread out before him, and the angels ask whether he wishes to be sent back to the world, his reply invariably is in the negative. He refuses to return to a place which is full of woes and suffering and misery, and only desires to be taken to Allah's presence. But when the same question is put to an infidel, his answer is رَبِّ ارْجِعُوْنِ i.e. he wishes to be sent back to the world."

كَلَّا ۭ اِنَّهَا كَلِمَةٌ هُوَ قَاۗىِٕلُهَا ۭ وَمِنْ وَّرَاۗىِٕهِمْ بَرْزَخٌ اِلٰى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُوْنَ

Never! It is just a word he has to utter. And in front of them there is a barrier till the day when they will be resurrected. (23:100)

The word بَرْزَخ (*Barzakh*) means "barrier" and implies anything which intervenes between two conditions or two objects. For this reason it also means the intervening period between death and the Day of Judgment. The meaning of this verse is that the wish of the infidel who has died to be returned to this world is fruitless, because he has reached the *Barzakh* from which no return is possible and a second life cannot be given until the Day of Resurrection, when all the dead will rise and be brought back to life.

Verses 101 -115

فَإِذَا نُفِخَ فِي الصُّورِ فَلَآ أَنسَابَ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ وَّلَا يَتَسَآءَلُونَ ﴿١٠١﴾ فَمَنْ ثَقُلَتْ مَوَازِينُهُ فَأُولَٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿١٠٢﴾ وَمَنْ خَفَّتْ مَوَازِينُهُ فَأُولَٰٓئِكَ الَّذِينَ خَسِرُوٓا أَنفُسَهُمْ فِي جَهَنَّمَ خَٰلِدُونَ ﴿١٠٣﴾ تَلْفَحُ وُجُوهَهُمُ النَّارُ وَهُمْ فِيهَا كَٰلِحُونَ ﴿١٠٤﴾ أَلَمْ تَكُنْ ءَايَٰتِي تُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْكُمْ فَكُنتُم بِهَا تُكَذِّبُونَ ﴿١٠٥﴾ قَالُوا رَبَّنَا غَلَبَتْ عَلَيْنَا شِقْوَتُنَا وَكُنَّا قَوْمًا ضَآلِّينَ ﴿١٠٦﴾ رَبَّنَآ أَخْرِجْنَا مِنْهَا فَإِنْ عُدْنَا فَإِنَّا ظَٰلِمُونَ ﴿١٠٧﴾ قَالَ اخْسَـُٔوا فِيهَا وَلَا تُكَلِّمُونِ ﴿١٠٨﴾ إِنَّهُ كَانَ فَرِيقٌ مِّنْ عِبَادِي يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَآ ءَامَنَّا فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا وَارْحَمْنَا وَأَنتَ خَيْرُ الرَّٰحِمِينَ ﴿١٠٩﴾ فَاتَّخَذْتُمُوهُمْ سِخْرِيًّا حَتَّىٰٓ أَنسَوْكُمْ ذِكْرِي وَكُنتُم مِّنْهُمْ تَضْحَكُونَ ﴿١١٠﴾ إِنِّي جَزَيْتُهُمُ الْيَوْمَ بِمَا صَبَرُوٓا أَنَّهُمْ هُمُ الْفَآئِزُونَ ﴿١١١﴾ قَٰلَ كَمْ لَبِثْتُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ عَدَدَ سِنِينَ ﴿١١٢﴾ قَالُوا لَبِثْنَا يَوْمًا أَوْ بَعْضَ يَوْمٍ فَسْـَٔلِ الْعَآدِّينَ ﴿١١٣﴾ قَٰلَ إِن لَّبِثْتُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا لَّوْ أَنَّكُمْ كُنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١١٤﴾ أَفَحَسِبْتُمْ أَنَّمَا خَلَقْنَٰكُمْ عَبَثًا وَأَنَّكُمْ إِلَيْنَا لَا تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿١١٥﴾

Thereafter, when the Ṣūr (the trumpet) is blown, there are no ties of kinship between them, nor will they question one another. [101] **So, the one whose scales (of good deeds) turn out to be heavy, then such people are the successful ones,** [102] **and the one whose scales turn out to be light, then such people are the ones who harmed their own selves; in Jahannam (Hell) they are to remain for ever.** [103] **Fire will scorch their faces and they will be disfigured therein.** [104]

(It will be said to such people), "Were My verses not used to be recited to you and you used to belie them?" [105] **They will say, "Our Lord, our wretchedness**

prevailed over us, and we were a people wandering astray. [106] **O our Lord, get us out from here; if we do this again, then of course, we will be transgressors."** [107] **He (Allah) will say, "Stay in it, humiliated, and do not speak to Me" [108] There was indeed a group of My servants who used to say, "Our Lord, we adhere to the (true) faith, so forgive us and have mercy upon us, and you are the best of all the merciful."** [109] **But you made fun of them, so much so that they caused you to forget My remembrance, and you used to laugh at them.** [110] **I have given them today, for their observing patience, the recompense that they are the only ones who are victorious.'** [111]

He (Allah) will say, "How long did you stay on the earth by number of years?" [112] **They will say, "We stayed for a day or for a part of a day." So, ask the ones who count.** [113] **He will say, "You did not stay but for a little. Would that you have understood (this at that time)!** [114] **So did you think that We created you for nothing and that you will not be brought back to Us?"** [115]

Commentary

فَإِذَا نُفِخَ فِي الصُّوْرِ فَلَآ أَنْسَابَ بَيْنَهُمْ

Thereafter, when the Ṣūr (the trumpet) is blown, there are no ties of kinship between them, - 23:101.

On the Day of Judgment the صور (trumpet) will be sounded twice. The result of the first sound will be that everything - the earth, the skies and every living thing in between will perish and when the second sound is given, every dead thing will come back to life. This is clearly mentioned in the Qur'ān in the verse ثُمَّ نُفِخَ فِيهِ أُخْرَىٰ فَإِذَا هُمْ قِيَامٌ يَنْظُرُوْنَ (Then it shall be blown again, and lo! They shall stand beholding - 39:68). There is difference of opinion whether in the present verse the reference is to the first call or to the second call. According to Ibn Jubair Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ thought that it refers to the first call. On the other hand Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ says that reference here is to second call and, according to 'Aṭā' رحمه الله as Sayyidnā 'Abbās ﷺ also supports this view and which has also been adopted in Tafsīr Maẓharī. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ says that on the Day of Judgment every man and woman will be assembled in the gathering place (مَحْشر) where a herald appointed by

Allah will identify each person by his name and his father's name and invite any one from amongst those present who has a claim against him to come forward and receive it. This proclamation will please everyone - a father having a claim against his son, a wife having a claim against her husband, a sister having a claim against her brother (and vice versa) - and they will all come forward to receive their dues. The present verse describes this situation: فَلَآ أَنسَابَ بَيْنَهُمْ (There are no ties of kinship between them - 23:101). The same situation has been described in the verse يَوْمَ يَفِرُّ الْمَرْءُ مِنْ أَخِيهِ وَأُمِّهِ وَأَبِيهِ وَصَاحِبَتِهِ وَبَنِيهِ (Upon the day when a man shall flee from his brother, his mother, his father, his consort, his sons, - 80:34).

Difference between the condition of believers and infidels in *mahshar* (gathering place on the Day of Judgement)

The condition described above will apply to the unbelievers only who in their selfishness will abandon their dear and near relatives. As for the believers, Allah has said أَلْحَقْنَا بِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ (We shall join their seed with them. - 52:21) which means that the children of good Muslims, if they themselves are believers also, will be united with their parents. According to a *hadith* the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "On the Day of Judgment when everybody will be dry with thirst, Muslim children who had died as minors will come out carrying water from Paradise, and when people will ask them for it, they will reply that water is for their parents only whom they are searching". The gist of this discussion is that whereas in the case of infidels no one will be of any help to each other nor will anyone recognize the dear ones in *mahshar,* the case of Muslim will be exactly the opposite. The believers will help each other and will also intercede for other Muslims.

There is also a *hadith* which Ibn 'Asākir has related on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "On the Day of Judgment all relationships arising out of a common ancestry or from marriage ties will be severed except in my own case." Scholars have interpreted this verse to mean that all the Muslims of the Ummah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ are part of his family, because he is the father of the Ummah and his wives are the mothers.

وَلَا يَتَسَآءَلُونَ (nor will they question one another - 23:101). However their is another verse وَأَقْبَلَ بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ يَتَسَآءَلُونَ (And advance one upon another, asking each other question - 37:27). Discussing this latter verse Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ says that in *mahshar* there will be different stations, and

the conditions in each station will be different. There will be a time when nobody will speak to anybody, but in another station when the terror which earlier overwhelmed the gathering abates, people will converse with one another. (Maẓharī)

فَمَنْ ثَقُلَتْ مَوَازِيْنُهٗ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿١٠٢﴾ وَمَنْ خَفَّتْ مَوَازِيْنُهٗ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ خَسِرُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ فِيْ جَهَنَّمَ خٰلِدُوْنَ ﴿١٠٣﴾

So, the one whose scales (of good deeds) turn out to be heavy, then such people are the successful ones, [102] and the one whose scales turn out to be light, then such people are the ones who harmed their own selves; in Jahannam (Hell) they are to remain for ever. (23: 102, 103)

In this verse there is a comparison between perfect Muslims and the infidels and their deeds and the end which awaits them. There is further evidence in the Qur'ān that in the case of perfect Muslims the pan in which evil deeds are placed for balancing will be totally empty, whereas in the case of unbelievers the pan in which the good deeds are placed will be empty. At another place the Qur'ān says فَلَا نُقِيْمُ لَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ وَزْنًا (We shall not assign to them any weight - 18:105) meaning that on the Day of Judgement, the infidels or their deeds will carry no weight. This is so far as the perfect Muslims and the infidels are concerned. As for the Muslims who have committed sins and whose good deeds and evil deeds will be placed in the two pans of the scale for weighing, there is no specific mention about them in the Qur'ān which is, in general, silent about the punishment and reward of erring Muslims. Perhaps the reason for this is that during the period when the Qur'ān was being revealed, all the Companions were upright men and generally free from major sins, but if somebody committed a sin incidentally, he repented and was forgiven by Allah. (Maẓharī)

There is a verse of the Qur'ān which deals with people who have a mixed bag of good and evil deeds (خَلَطُوْا عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَّاٰخَرَ سَيِّئًا) (They had mixed a good deed with another that was evil - 9:102). Sayyidnā 'Abbās ﷺ says about such people that if their good deeds exceed their bad deeds, even by a single deed they will go to Paradise and if their evil deeds exceed their good by a single deed, they would go to Hell. But a believer Muslim will be sent to Hell for the purpose of purification only just as gold and iron and other metals are subjected to heating process to remove their

impurities and as soon as they are purged of their sins, they will be admitted to Paradise. Also according to Sayyidnā 'Abbās ﷺ on the Day of Judgment the weighing scale will be so precise and finely tuned that it will be tipped by a grain of rye and a man whose good and bad deeds are of equal weight in the scale will join أَصْحَابُ الأَعْرَافِ (People of A'raf) and spend a while between heaven and hell waiting for a decision, but ultimately he too would go to Paradise (Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Maẓharī). The above story of Sayyidnā 'Abbās ﷺ deals only with believers who have committed sins, and makes no mention of unbelievers.

How will the deeds be weighed?

There are different versions about the method for the weighing of deeds, and all of them are derived from ḥadīth. One version is that the believers and the infidels will be weighed bodily in the scale of justice and the infidel will not be able to tilt the scale however obese and corpulent he may be (Bukhārī and Muslim, quoting Abū Hurairah). Another version says that the scrolls on which their deeds are recorded will be weighed. Tirmidhī, Ibn Mājah, Ibn Ḥayyān have taken this version from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar ﷺ. And according to a third version a man's deeds which were weightless and intangible in this world, will be made solid on the Day of Judgment and will be placed on the scales and weighed. Ṭabrānī has related this version from the Holy Prophet ﷺ on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ. The words and the text of all these ḥadīths are given in full in Tafsīr Maẓharī which may be consulted if required. Abdur Razzāq has quoted a *ḥadīth* in his book under the chapter on فَضْلُ العِلْم (the merits of knowledge) on the authority of Ibrāhīm Nakha'ī which supports the just preceded version. This version has it that on the Day of Judgment a person's deeds will be brought for weighing and when placed in the pan, they will fail to tilt it. Then something resembling clouds will be brought and put in the pan of good deeds which will then weigh down. The man will then be asked what was it that lent weight to the pan of his good deeds, but he will express his ignorance. Then he will be informed that the object in question was his learning which he used to impart to other people. Dhahabi has included a hadith in فَضْلُ العِلْم which he heard from Sayyidnā 'Imrān Ibn Ḥuṣain ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "On the Day of Judgment the blood of the martyrs will be weighed against the ink of scholars (with which they wrote books on the science of religion)

and the latter will be heavier than the former." (Mazharī) After giving the above mentioned versions about the weighing of deeds, Tafsīr Mazharī says that it is not wholly inconceivable that man himself and his deeds may be weighed physically or that he and his record of deeds may be weighed together. Thus there is no inconsistency in these three versions.

وَهُمْ فِيْهَا كٰلِحُوْنَ (And they will be disfigured therein - 23:104). The word كالح is used for a person whose lips do not meet and leave his teeth fully exposed, which looks very ugly. It is said that the upper lip of a person consigned to Hell will be drawn up and his lower lip will be drawn down so that his teeth will remain visible at all times.

وَلَا تُكَلِّمُوْنِ (Do not speak to Me - 23:108). According to Ḥasan al-Baṣrī these will be the last words of the people who are cast in hell and in reply Allah will say, "Do not speak to Me." After this they will not be able to speak like human beings, but will make animal sounds to each other. Baihaqī and others have quoted Muḥammad Ibn Ka'b as saying that the Qur'ān mentions five requests made by the people condemned to hell. Out of the five, replies were furnished to four, but in reply to the fifth Allah commanded them not to speak to Him. Thus these are the last words to be uttered by them after which they will not be able to speak. (Mazharī)

Verses 116 - 118

فَتَعٰلَى اللّٰهُ الْمَلِكُ الْحَقُّ ۚ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ۚ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْكَرِيْمِ ﴿١١٦﴾ وَمَنْ يَّدْعُ مَعَ اللّٰهِ اِلٰهًا اٰخَرَ ۙ لَا بُرْهَانَ لَهٗ بِهٖ ۙ فَاِنَّمَا حِسَابُهٗ عِنْدَ رَبِّهٖ ۚ اِنَّهٗ لَا يُفْلِحُ الْكٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿١١٧﴾ وَقُلْ رَّبِّ اغْفِرْ وَارْحَمْ وَاَنْتَ خَيْرُ الرّٰحِمِيْنَ ﴿١١٨﴾

So, High above all is Allah, the King, the True. There is no god but He, the Lord of the Noble Throne. [116] **And whoever invokes another god with Allah, while he has no proof for it, his reckoning lies with his Lord. Surely, the infidels will not achieve success.** [117] **And say (O prophet) 'My Lord, forgive and have mercy and you are the best of all the merciful.'** [118]

Commentary

The last few verses of this Sūrah Al-Mu'minūn from verse 115 to verse 118 have special merit. Baghawī and Tha'labi have related from Sayyidnā Ibn Mas'ūd ؓ that he came across a person who was very ill. He recited the above verses into the sick man's ears and he was cured immediately. The Holy Prophet ﷺ asked him what he had whispered in the sick man's ears to which Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ؓ replied that he had recited these verses (115 to 118) in his ears. Thereupon the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "I swear by Him Who has power over my life that if a person with genuine faith were to recite these verses on a mountain, the mountain itself may move from its place". (Qurṭubī and Maẓharī)

رَبِّ اغْفِرْ وَارْحَمْ (My Lord, forgive and have mercy - 23:118). Here the object of the forgiveness and having mercy has not been mentioned. What is there to be forgiven and to whom is mercy to be shown? And this seems to suggest a general prayer for forgiveness which would include deliverance from harm and suffering, and a general prayer for mercy which would include the grant of every wish. Since protection from bodily harm and acquisition of legitimate gains is the object of all human activity, this prayer covers both these aspects. (Maẓharī) And the reason why the Holy Prophet ﷺ was commanded to recite this prayer of forgiveness and mercy, even tough he is impeccable, is to impress upon his followers the special merit of this prayer. (Qurṭubī)

Sūrah Al-Mu'minūn began with the verse قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ (Success is really attained by the believers - 23:1) and ends with إِنَّهُ لَا يُفْلِحُ الْكَافِرُونَ (Surely, the infidels will not achieve success - 23:117) which shows that success will come to believers only and that the unbelievers will have no share of it.

Alḥamdulillāh
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Mu'minūn
Ends here.

Sūrah An-Nūr

(The Light)

Sūrah An-Nūr was revealed in Madīnah and it has 64 Verses and 9 sections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 2

سُوْرَةٌ اَنْزَلْنٰهَا وَفَرَضْنٰهَا وَاَنْزَلْنَا فِيْهَآ اٰيٰتٍۭ بَيِّنٰتٍ لَّعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿١﴾ اَلزَّانِيَةُ وَالزَّانِىْ فَاجْلِدُوْا كُلَّ وَاحِدٍ مِّنْهُمَا مِائَةَ جَلْدَةٍ ۖ وَّلَا تَاْخُذْكُمْ بِهِمَا رَاْفَةٌ فِىْ دِيْنِ اللّٰهِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ ۚ وَلْيَشْهَدْ عَذَابَهُمَا طَآئِفَةٌ مِّنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿٢﴾

This is a Sūrah We have sent down and prescribed and sent down in it clear signs, so that you may receive the advice. [1]

The fornicating woman and the fornicating man, flog each one of them with one hundred stripes. And no pity for them should withhold you from (complying with) Allah's religion, if you really believe in Allah and the Last Day. And a group of believers must witness their punishment. [2]

Some Characteristics of this Sūrah

This Sūrah generally deals with those rules of Sharī'ah which aim at preserving chastity and enjoin *ḥijāb* for women. These rules end up with the punishment prescribed for *zinā* (adultery or fornication). The previous Sūrah (Al-Mu'minūn) had spelt out the basic qualities necessary for attainment of success in this world and in the Hereafter. One of these qualities was to guard one's private parts against illicit sexual acts (verse

4 of that Sūrah). Now the present Sūrah describes the detailed rules meant to acquire this quality. That is why the women are especially directed to learn this Sūrah. Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ issued a directive to people of Kūfah in which he advised them to teach Sūrah An-Nūr to women.

Commentary

The first verse of this Sūrah is introductory preface to put extra emphasis to the commands given in it. The very first command after that is regarding punishment for adultery, which has a direct bearing on the intent of the Sūrah - that is to preserve chastity, even of the eyes. The subjects of control on casting eyes and not to enter houses without permission are to follow soon. Commitment of adultery is the ultimate outcome when one ignores all types of prudence against continence and is an open rebellion against Divine precepts. Therefore, the punishment for adultery in Islam is most severe as compared to all other punishments prescribed by the Qur'ān for the crimes committed by human beings. Adultery, being a big crime by itself, also brings along with it many other crimes, the result of which is destruction of the entire social order. If the causes of killings and atrocities are probed deeply, the majority of them will appear to be caused due to illegitimate relationship with women. It is for this reason that in order to eliminate completely this heinous crime, its Islamic punishment has been described in the opening verses.

Adultery is a great crime and is a combination of many crimes. That is why its punishment in Islam is very severe

The Holy Qur'ān and *mutawātir aḥadīth* on their own have fixed the punishments of four crimes. They are not left at the discretion of the judge or the ruler. These punishments are called *Ḥudūd* in the terminology of Islamic jurisprudence. Apart from these, the punishment is not fixed for other crimes, and the ruler or the judge can award the punishment in accordance with the type of crime, the circumstances of the criminal and the background in which the crime is committed, in order to control the spread of crime as he feels best. Such punishments are known as penal laws in Islamic jurisprudence. Islamic *Ḥudūds* are four in number:

(1). Stealing

(2). Leveling false accusation against chaste women.

(3). Drinking liquor

(4). Adultery

Each one of these crimes is very evil in its own right, and while disturbing the peace and tranquility of the society contribute toward other ills of the world at large. However, the ill effects and consequences of adultery are so immense in their destruction of the human values that no other crime can perhaps compete with it.

(1) Molestation of someone's wife, daughter or sister is nothing but his destruction. For a noble man it is not as bad to lose all his material wealth and belongings as to lose the chastity of his women folk. It is for this reason that often we come across such incidents that people whose women folk are molested get after the life of the molester without caring for their own lives. This passion for revenge passes on to the generations and results in the destruction of families after families.

(2) In a community where illicit sexual acts become rampant the family lineage is lost. When the sanctity of relationship with mother, daughter and sister is vanished, with whom the marriage is forbidden, then one can marry them as well, which is even a greater crime than adultery.

(3) If we analyze the causes of disorder and disturbance the world over, we will note that in most cases the root cause is woman and to a lesser degree the wealth. Only those rules can guarantee the worldly peace which safeguard the woman and wealth in a befitting manner and do not allow them to cross the appointed limits. It is not the intention to highlight here the ills and evils of adultery. The points mentioned above are enough for the human society to know the destructive ills of this act. This is why Islam has fixed the punishment of adultery as more severe than the punishments of all other crimes. The punishment has been described in the verse in the following words:

اَلزَّانِيَةُ وَالزَّانِىْ فَاجْلِدُوْا كُلَّ وَاحِدٍ مِّنْهُمَا مِائَةَ جَلْدَةٍ

The fornicating woman and the fornicating man, flog each one of them with one hundred stripes - 24:2.

First the fornicating woman is mentioned and then the fornicating man. The punishment for both is the same. The common practice about

injunctions is that mostly the command is conveyed by addressing the men-folk only and the women are included in that by implication. It is not regarded necessary that they be addressed separately. In the whole of Qur'ān masculine gender is used for passing the injunctions through the phrase يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا and women-folk are regarded as included in that. Perhaps the wisdom is that as Allah Ta'ālā has ordained the women-folk to keep themselves covered, in the same way their mention is kept covert in the context of mankind. But here there was a possibility that some might have the confusion that all these injunctions relate to men only and the women are free from them. Therefore, in some specific verses the women-folk are also mentioned alongside separately like in the verse اَقِمْنَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتِيْنَ الزَّكٰوةَ (33:33). Moreover, where both men and women are to be mentioned then the natural order is that first the men are mentioned and then women. In the case of punishment for stealing, the same order is maintained in the injunction اَلسَّارِقُ وَالسَّارِقَةُ فَاقْطَعُوْٓا اَيْدِيَهُمَا (As for a man or woman who commits theft, cut off the hands of both - 5:38) where the male thief is mentioned first and then the female thief. But in the case of punishment for adultery only an incidental mention of women was not considered enough, instead a specific reference was regarded necessary. Secondly, mention of the women is given priority over men. There are many points of wisdom in this. First, the women are regarded weaker sex and compassionable for their physique; if they were not mentioned specifically, one could have had the misgiving that perhaps the women are exempt from this punishment. The mention of woman is preceded because the act of adultery is so impudent that its commitment from her side could be carried out only by extreme fearlessness and carelessness, because the nature has bestowed in her character instinctive shyness and an urge to guard her chastity. The nature has provided many a things for the safety of women. Hence commitment of fornication from her side is more grave than from man. As against this, in the case of theft it is a bigger crime for men who are bestowed with strength by Allah Ta'ālā, so that they earn their living from the bounty He has provided. The man is required to take advantage of Allah's bounty by working for the sustenance and not stealing for the living, as this is a great shame and sin for him. Since the women do not have the same circumstances, if they commit theft their crime will be of a lesser degree as compared to that of men.

فَاجْلِدُوْا (24:2) Meaning of the word جَلَد is to hit with the whip, and it is derived from the word جِلْد (leather). As the whip is normally made of leather, some commentators have suggested that by the use of word جَلَد it is alluded that the strike of the whip should be so moderate that it should be felt only within the skin and not deeper into the flesh. The Holy Prophet ﷺ had himself urged that the punishment of whipping be exercised with moderation, so that neither it is so hard that it tears off the flesh nor so mild that it does not hurt at all. On this point some commentators have reproduced *aḥadīth* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ with their chain of narrators.

The punishment of whipping a hundred times is exclusive to unmarried man and woman. For married persons the punishment is stoning to death

This point is worth noting that the injunctions on adultery were revealed gradually and moved on from a lighter punishment to a more severe one, like the gradual prohibition of alcohol which is mentioned in the Qur'ān itself, the details of which have been described earlier. The very first injunction on adultery is the one given in verses 15 and 16 of Sūrah An-Nisā', which is:

وَالّٰتِیْ یَاْتِیْنَ الْفَاحِشَةَ مِنْ نِّسَآئِکُمْ فَاسْتَشْهِدُوْا عَلَیْهِنَّ اَرْبَعَةً مِّنْکُمْ ۚ فَاِنْ شَهِدُوْا فَاَمْسِکُوْ هُنَّ فِی الْبُیُوْتِ حَتّٰی یَتَوَفّٰهُنَّ الْمَوْتُ اَوْیَجْعَلَ اللّٰهُ لَهُنَّ سَبِیْلًا. وَالَّذٰنِ یَاْتِیٰنِهَا مِنْکُمْ فَاٰذُوْهُمَا ۚ فَاِنْ تَابَا وَاَصْلَحَا فَاَعْرِضُوْا عَنْهُمَا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ کَانَ تَوَّابًا رَّحِیْمًا.

And those of your women who commit the shameful act, then have four witnesses against them from among you. So, if they do testify, then confine those women to their homes until death overcomes them or Allah prescribes a way for them. [15] And those two of you who commit it, torture them both. But if they repent and amend, turn away from them. Surely, Allah is Most-Relenting, Very-Merciful. (4:15, 16)

Detailed commentary and explanation of the above two verses is given under Sūrah An-Nisā'. They are repeated here so that preliminary stage of the punishment of fornication is kept in mind. In these verses the proof for establishing adultery is described with a specific condition of having four male witnesses. Secondly, punishment for the woman is prescribed as to confine her within the home and for both of them inflicting of harm. At the same time it is also hinted that this was not the final injunction on

adultery and that some more directives will follow. This is the meaning of أَوْ يَجْعَلَ اللّٰهُ لَهُنَّ سَبِيلاً (or Allah prescribes a way for them - 4:15).

In the above referred punishment confinement of the women within the homes was regarded sufficient at that time, and causing harm to both as enough punishment. But the limit, the magnitude and the form of harm to be inflicted was not defined. Rather the wordings of the Qur'ān suggest that the initial punishment of adultery was only punitive, of which the quantum was not fixed by the Sharī'ah a *ta'zir* (a punishment left to the discretion of a judge), but was left at the discretion of the ruler or the judge. That is why the ambiguous phrase of inflicting harm or torture was adopted. But at the same time it was hinted that probably some other form of punishment for the culprits of the crime will be introduced later by saying أَوْ يَجْعَلَ اللّٰهُ لَهُنَّ سَبِيلاً (4:15). When the present verse of Sūrah an-Nūr was revealed, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ said that what was promised in Sūrah An-Nisā' through أَوْ يَجْعَلَ اللّٰهُ لَهُنَّ سَبِيلاً "or Allah prescribes a way for them", so now this verse of Sūrah an-Nūr has prescribed the way, that is flogging both man and woman with a hundred stripes. And then Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ made the punishment of hundred stripes exclusive to fornication, that is when the crime is committed by unmarried man and woman, and said:

الرّجم للثّيب والجلد للبكر

It is prescribed that if the married man and woman commit this crime then they be stoned to death, and the punishment for unmarried culprit is a hundred stripes. (Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī, Kitāb ut-Tafsīr p. 657)

In the verse of Sūrah an-Nūr under reference punishment for adultery is given as a hundred stripes without qualification. So, it is obvious that he must have found from some other authentic Ḥadīth that the punishment for adultery is stoning to death and for fornication a hundred stripes, and that Ḥadīth has been related by Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Musnād Aḥmad, Sunnan Nasa'ī, Abū Dāwūd, Tirmidhī and Ibn Mājah on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Ubādah Ibn Ṣāmit ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

خذوا عنّى خذوا عنّى قد جعل اللّٰه لهنّ سبيلا، البكر بالبكر جلد مائة وتغريب عام،
والثيّب بالثيّب جلد مائة والرّجم (ابن كثير)

> Have knowledge from me, have knowledge from me that Allah Ta'ālā has prescribed now the 'way for women' (that He had promised before), which is that for unmarried man and woman is a hundred stripes and exile for one year, and for married man and woman it is a hundred stripes and stoning.

Alongwith the punishment of a hundred stripes for the unmarried man and woman prescribed in the an-Nūr verse there is an additional punishment mentioned in the Ḥadīth to send the adulterer man in exile for one year. On this there is a difference of opinion among jurists, that is whether the punishment of exile to male adulterer is compulsory or it is at the discretion of the judge - that is if he deems it necessary only then send the criminal in exile also for one year. In the opinion of Imām A'ẓam Abū Ḥanīfah رحمه الله تعالى this last referred position is correct, that is, it remains at the discretion of the ruler or judge. Secondly, according to this Ḥadīth there is the punishment of a hundred stripes also for the married man and woman before the stoning. But in accordance with other *aḥādīth* and the actions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the first four Caliphs, it is established that these two punishments are not to be combined.

Married persons are to be awarded the punishment of stoning only. The main point to be noted in this Ḥadīth is that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has explained here the verse of Surah An-Nisa' أَوْيَجْعَلَ اللّٰهُ لَهُنَّ سَبِيلًا (or Allah prescribes a way for them) and while explaining he had added some more points beside flogging a hundred stripes as stated in Sūrah an-Nūr. These points are:

1. - punishment of hundred stripes is exclusive to unmarried man and woman.

2. - An addition of one year's exile.

3. - Rajm or stoning to death of married man and woman.

It is but obvious that the additions made by the Holy Prophet ﷺ in the verse of Surah an-Nūr was also on the command of Allah Ta'ālā إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُّوحٰى (This is naught but a revelation revealed - 53:4). For the Messenger, and for those who hear from him directly, both the revelations which are recited in the form of Qur'ān and those which are not recited have equal sanctity. The Holy Prophet ﷺ himself had acted upon this rule (punishment of stoning to married adulterer) in the presence of many

of his companions. He awarded the punishment of *rajm* or stoning to Mā'iz and Ghāmidiyyah which is recorded in all the books of traditions with authentic authorities. Additionally, an incident is reported in the authentic traditions books on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah and Zaid Ibn Khālid Juhanī رضى الله عنهما that an unmarried man committed adultery with a married woman whose servant he was. The father of the adulterer boy brought him before the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The incident was proved by his admission. Then the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: لا قضينّ بينكما بكتاب الله that is I will adjudge your case according to the Book of Allah. He then adjudicated that the unmarried adulterer boy be flogged with a hundred stripes and the married woman is stoned, and directed Sayyidnā Unais رضي الله عنه to execute the punishment, who took the confessional statement of the woman, and then the punishment was carried out on the orders of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. (Ibn Kathīr)

According to above tradition, the Holy Prophet ﷺ awarded the punishment of hundred stripes to one criminal and of stoning to the other and described them both as the judgment by the Book of Allah; although in Sūrah An-Nūr only the punishment of hundred stripes is indicated and there is no mention of stoning. The reason is the same that Allah Ta'ālā had revealed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ the complete explanation and details of the injunction which all fall within the purview of the Book of Allah, although some of it is not included and mentioned in the Sūrah an-Nūr expressly. Bukhārī and Muslim have recorded an address of Sayyidnā 'Umar رضي الله عنه on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, the wordings of which are:

> قال عمر بن الخطاب رضى الله عنه، وهو جالس على منبر رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: انّ الله بعث محمدا صلى الله عليه وسلم بالحق وانزل عليه الكتاب، فكان مما انزل الله عليه اية الرجم قرأناها وَ وعيناها وعقلناها، فرجم رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم ورجمنا بعده، فاخشى ان طال بالناس زمان ان يقول قائل ما نجد الرجم فى كتاب الله تعالىٰ فيضلوا بترک فريضة انزلها الله، وان الرجم فى كتاب الله حق على من زنا اذا احصن من الرّجال والنساء اذا قامت البينة او كان الحبل اوالاعتراف. (مسلم ص ٦٥، ج ٢)

> Sayyidnā 'Umar Ibn Khaṭṭāb رضي الله عنه said while he was sitting on the pulpit of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that Allah sent Muḥammad ﷺ with truth and revealed to him the Book. So, whatever is revealed to him includes the verse of stoning (رجم) as well,

which we have read, memorized and understood. Now I fear that with the passage of time one might say that we do not find the injunction of *rajm* (stoning) in the Book of Allah, and hence go astray by not following a religious obligation, which is revealed by Allah. And be clear in your mind that the injunction of stoning (*rajm*) is ordained upon the one, whether man or woman, who is married (محصن) and when the evidence of adultery is established or there is a confession or pregnancy .

The same version is narrated in Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī also with greater detail (Bukhārī 1009 vol.2) and in Nasai' it is narrated in the following words:

انا لانجد من الرجم بدًا، فانّه حد من حدود الله، الا وان رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قد رجم ورجمنا بعده، ولولا ان يقول قائلون ان عمر زاد فى كتاب الله ماليس فيه لكتبت فى ناحية المصحف، وشهد عمر بن الخطاب وعبد الرحمٰن بن عوف و فلان و فلان ان رسول الله ﷺ رجم ورجمنا بعده۔ الحديث (ابن كثير)

We have no choice to avoid the punishment of stoning (*rajm*), because it is one of the punishment (حد) from the punishments prescribed by Allah. Be very clear in your mind that the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself had awarded stoning and we too have awarded stoning after him. If there was no risk of people saying that 'Umar has added something on his own in the Book of Allah, I would have written this in a corner of the Qur'ān. And 'Umar Ibn Khaṭṭāb رضي الله عنه is witness, 'Abdurraḥmān رضي الله عنه is witness and so and so companions are witnesses that the Holy Prophet ﷺ had awarded stoning. (Ibn Kathīr)

This is apparently proved by the address of Sayyidnā 'Umar رضي الله عنه that there is a specific verse on injunction of stoning which is in addition to the verse under reference of Sūrah an-Nūr. But Sayyidnā 'Umar رضي الله عنه did not tell the wordings of that verse, nor did he tell that if there is a separate verse beside the verse of Sūrah an-Nūr why it is not included in the Qur'ān, and why it is not recited. He only said that if there was no risk involved that people would put blame on him of making addition in the Book of Allah, he would have written this verse on a corner of the Qur'ān. (al-Nasai')

What needs careful consideration in this narration is that, if it is a verse of the Qur'ān and its recitation is mandatory like other verses, then why Sayyidna 'Umar رضي الله عنه left it out just because of the fear of people's calumny; when he is well known for his vehemence about Allah's

injunctions. The other point to be noted is that he did not say that he would have included this verse in the Qur'ān, but all he said was he would have written it on the margin of the Qur'ān.

All these things support the inference that the explanation of this verse that Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ heard from the Holy Prophet ﷺ in which he specified the punishment of hundred stripes for unmarried man and woman and stoning for the married persons. He treated it as a verse of the Book of Allah because of the words of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his consistent practice. Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ understood fully well that the Holy Prophet's ﷺ explanation was in line with the command of Allah's Book and not actually the verse of the Book, otherwise no power on earth would have stopped him to write down the verse in its place if it was missed out. His comment about writing it on the margin of Qur'ān is further proof that the verse was not a part of Qur'ān but only the explanation of the verse of Sūrah an-Nūr. Some narrations have carried the actual wordings of the injunction on the subject, but they fall short of proof and authenticity to merit inclusion in the Qur'ān. The jurists (فقہاء) who have related this verse as abrogated for recitation but not abrogated as a command have done so by way of an example, and as such it does not in fact prove that it is a part of the Qur'ān.

The gist of the matter is that the punishment of hundred stripes described in Sūrah an-Nūr for adulterer man and woman is exclusive to unmarried man and woman as per detailed explanation and elucidation of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and punishment for the married persons is *rajm* (stoning). Although this elucidation is not given in the wordings of the verse but the exalted person to whom this verse was revealed has himself elaborated the subject without the slightest doubt of any confusion. It is not that the Holy Prophet ﷺ explained this only through his words, but he also executed this punishment several times in the presence of many companions, and the proof of this has reached us with unbroken authentic chain of narrators. Therefore, the punishment of stoning for married man and woman is in fact an injunction of the Book of Allah itself, in the sense that it is as certain as any other injunction of the Qur'an. This fact may be mentioned either by saying that *rajm* is a provision of the Qur'ān itself, or by saying that it is established by the unbroken chain of traditions. Sayyidnā 'Alī ﷺ has also said the same

thing that the verdict of stoning is established by the tradition of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

An important warning

Wherever words married and unmarried appear in the above explanation, they are used for ease of explanation. The actual words used in the saying are غیرمُحْصَن or ثیّب and بِکر . The real position of مُحْصَن in Islamic jurisprudence is of the one who has copulated with the spouse with an authentic Nikah, and is also sane. Whenever we have used the words 'married' in this context, it carries the same meaning. It is only for brevity and ease that the word 'married' has been used.

Three degrees of gradations in the punishment of adultery

On pondering over the verses of the Qur'ān and the *aḥadīth* referred to above, it becomes clear that initially the punishment of fornication was light in that the judge or the ruler was to afflict pain to the perpetrator (man and woman) of the crime at his own discretion, and confine the woman in the home. This punishment was enjoined in Sūrah An-Nisā'. The second period was that when the verse of Sūrah an-Nūr was revealed in which hundred stripes each to both were enjoined. The third period was the one when the Holy Prophet ﷺ instructed after the revelation of the verse under discussion that the punishment of hundred stripes will be restricted only to those who are not married, but if married man and woman commit this crime then their punishment is stoning (*rajm*).

In Islamic law if the punishment of a crime is severe, the conditions of proving it are also tough

As described above, the punishment of adultery in Islam is most severe compared to punishments of all other crimes. Alongwith that the conditions to prove this crime are equally tough in Islamic law. If there is the slightest doubt or uncertainty, then the maximum punishment, known as *ḥadd* (حد), is remitted, and only a punishment by way of *ta'zīr* may be awarded which should be commensurate with the extent of crime. In all other cases testimony of two men or one man and two women is required for the proof of a particular event. However, for the maximum punishment of fornication (حدزنا) the evidence, of four male eye-witnesses is necessary who must testify without a slightest doubt or confusion. Another severe circumstance that aggravates the severity of an evidence of fornication is that if the evidence of a witness in a case of adultery is

rejected, then the witness himself may suffer badly, because in that case, he may be charged for false accusation of adultery (قذف) and may be awarded the punishment of eighty stripes. Therefore, no one will dare testify the fornication where there's even slightest degree of doubt. However, if the adultery is not proved clearly by eye witnesses, but there is proven evidence of a man and woman found in a compromising and unlawful position, then the judge can award the punishment by way of *ta'zīr* which stripes as are suitable in that particular case. Details of the punishment for fornication and its conditionalities can be seen in the books of Fiqh.

Injunction against homosexuality and sex with animals

The issue that if a man indulges in sexual act with a man or an animal, whether his act falls within the purview of fornication or not, and whether its punishment is the same as that of fornication has already been dealt with under the commentary of Sūrah An-Nisā'. Although this act is not called fornication neither lexically nor in the terminology of Sharī'ah and hence punishment of fornication is not applied to that, but its punishment is no less in its severity compared to punishment of fornication. The noble Companions ﷺ punished such culprits by burning them alive.

لَا تَأْخُذْكُم بِهِمَا رَأْفَةٌ فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ

No pity for them should withhold you from (complying with) Allah's religion - 24:2.

Since the punishment for adultery is very severe and there is the possibility that those awarding the punishment may feel pity and be lenient, hence, it is also enjoined that in the fulfillment of this important religious duty any compassion is not permissible. Pity or mercy and forgiveness or pardon are always laudable, but any compassion shown to criminals will result in injustice to the entire humanity; hence it is prohibited and not permissible.

وَلْيَشْهَدْ عَذَابَهُمَا طَآئِفَةٌ مِّنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

And a group of believers must witness their punishment. - 24:2

At the time of execution of the punishment of fornication a group of Muslims should be present to watch. It is customary in Islam to execute

all punishments, specially the *ḥudūd,* in public, so that those who see it take a warning. But the directive for the presence of a group of Muslims at the time of execution of punishment for fornication is peculiar to this punishment.

Initially Islam requires not to publicize the crimes, but once they are established through evidence, it is the requirement of wisdom to disgrace the criminals

For the control of vulgarity and shamelessness Islamic laws have imposed far reaching restrictions. It is made obligatory for women to cover themselves. Men are asked to lower their eyes on seeing women-folk. The sound of jewelry or the singing of women are prohibited as they may lead to wanton acts. However, if someone is seen wanting in adopting Islamic teachings, he should be guided in private, but is not allowed to be disgraced. But if someone has crossed all limits and has broken all the ties with Islamic laws, and his crime is established in accordance with the Islamic jurisprudence, then keeping his crime secret might embolden others for committing this crime. Hence, the extent to which Islam has cared for avoiding publicity of the crime, to the same extent the emphasis is laid in making it public for disgracing the culprits, once the crime is established. It is for this reason that not only the punishment for adultery is enjoined to be executed publicly, but the presence of a group of Muslims at the time of execution is also made mandatory.

Verse 3

اَلزَّانِىْ لَايَنْكِحُ اِلَّا زَانِيَةً اَوْمُشْرِكَةً ز وَّالزَّانِيَةُ لَايَنْكِحُهَآ اِلَّا زَانٍ
اَوْمُشْرِكٌ ج وَحُرِّمَ ذٰلِكَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿٣﴾

A man who is fornicator does not (like to) marry but a woman who is a fornicator or a polytheist. And a woman who is a fornicator does not (like to) marry but a man who is a fornicator or a polytheist. And this (i.e. preferring to marry such spouses) has been prohibited for the believers. [3]

Commentary

The second injunction about fornication

The first injunction was regarding the punishment of fornication,

which has been described in the previous verse. The second injunction is about marrying the men or women who have committed adultery. Alongside the marriage with polytheist man and woman is also described. The commentators have given different views while explaining this verse, but the simplest and safe meaning is that fornication is an obnoxious act, and as such whoever indulges in this act loses his character and taste, and is attracted towards persons of the same character, and likes to marry them.

The objective of this verse, according to this interpretation, is not part of an injunction, but merely to describe a fact of life, normally seen in every day life. This is a reflection on the filthy act of fornication, and its far reaching detrimental and evil effects. In other words, the verse says that fornication is a poison to ethics, and its poisonous effects ruin the moral behavior of man. He stops differentiating between good and bad, and develops a liking for evil things. He does not bother about permissible (حلال) and prohibited (حرام). Any woman that he fancies for is with the purpose of fornication, and hence he tries to cajole her into the shameful act. If he fails in his advances, only then agrees for the marriage under compulsion. But he does not really like the marriage, because he finds the objects of marriage, such as being faithful to wife, produce virtuous children and take charge of all her needs and alimony for life, a burden and nuisance for him. Since such a person does not have any concern with the marriage, his inclination is not restricted towards Muslim women but is as much for polytheist women. If a polytheist woman lays the condition of marital bond for fulfilling her religious obligation, then he would agree for the marriage as well to meet his desire, without having regard that such a marriage has no sanctity and is not valid in Islamic law. It, therefore, comes true on him that if he has a fancy for a Muslim woman, she would either be an adulterer or will become an adulterer after having illicit relations with him, or he would fancy a polytheist woman, with whom the marriage is as impermissible as adultery. This is the explanation of the first sentence of the verse, that is اَلزَّانِىْ لَايَنْكِحُ اِلَّا زَانِيَةً اَوْمُشْرِكَةً (24:3).

Likewise, if a woman is a habitual adulterer and does not beg Allah's pardon, then a truly believing Muslim male, for whom marriage is a religious trust, would not really fancy such a woman, especially knowing

fully well that she would not give up her obnoxious habit of adultery even after the bond of marriage. Only a male adulterer would be attracted to her whose sole aim is to fulfill his lust rather than marriage. But if she makes marriage a condition for any mundane consideration, he accepts that too as a compromise. Alternatively, a polytheist male would agree to marry an adulterer (Muslim) woman. Since, marrying a polytheist is as prohibited for a Muslim woman as adultery, two things have been combined in this situation, that the man is both a polytheist and an adulterer. This is the explanation of the second sentence of the verse وَالزَّانِيَةُ لَا يَنكِحُهَا إِلَّا زَانٍ أَوْ مُشْرِكٌ (24:3).

This has become apparent from the above explanation that the term adulterer is used for those men and women who do not repent and beg Allah's Mercy, and stick to this evil habit. In case an adulterer man marries a chaste woman for the sake of house-keeping or for having children, then there is no ban to this marriage from this verse. Similarly, if an adulterer woman marries a virtuous man with the intent of leading a pure life, then also there is no stopping for such a marriage in the light of this verse. Such a marriage will be valid in accordance with the Islamic law. Majority of the Muslim jurists like Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, Imām Mālik and Imām Shāfi'ī etc. are of the same view, and it is also established that the companions of the Prophet ﷺ have solemnized such marriages. Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr has also reported the same *fatwa* by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ. Now, as to the last sentence of the verse وَحُرِّمَ ذٰلِكَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ (24:3) some commentators have explained the word ذٰلِكَ as alluding towards adultery. In that case the meaning of the sentence would be that, as the adultery is such an evil act, it has been forbidden for believers. There is no confusion in the meaning by adopting this explanation, but taking ذٰلِكَ for the meaning of adultery is rather far fetched in the context of this verse. Therefore, other commentators have adopted the explanation for ذٰلِكَ to allude towards the marriage of adulterer (man and woman) and polytheist (man and woman).

The marriage between a Muslim man and a polytheist woman, and between a polytheist man and a Muslim woman is even otherwise established as forbidden by other categorical Qur'ānic injunctions, and there is consensus of Ummah on the issue. However, the marriage between an adulterer man and a chaste woman, and a chaste man and

an adulterer woman is forbidden as implied by this sentence but is exclusive to the situation that a chaste man after marrying an adulterer woman does not stop her from indulging in adultery even after the marriage, as that will be nothing short of pimping, which is forbidden (حرام) by Islamic law. Similarly, if a pious and chaste lady marries a habitual adulterer man and let him indulge in adultery even after the marriage, then this is also forbidden (حرام). What is meant here is that it is a big sin, but it does not follow that their marriage will be nullified.

The word 'prohibited' (حرام) has two connotations in Islamic law. One, that this act is a sin and one who acts upon it will undergo punishment for that in the Hereafter, and the other is that it will have no legal validity in this world either. For instance if a Muslim man marries a polytheist or a woman of prohibited degree, then it is not only a sin but such a marriage is not valid under Islamic law. There is no difference between such a marriage and adultery. The second meaning of prohibition is that the act is forbidden (حرام) and is liable for punishment, but the legal consequences of the act are recognized. For example if a man elopes or abducts a woman and then marries her before two witnesses with her consent, then despite the act being unlawful, the marriage will be valid and the children legitimate. Similarly the marriage between an adulterer man and an adulterer woman is though prohibited if they marry for some worldly expediency but their real aim is adultery, yet, such a marriage is legally recognized. As such all the provisions of marriage, such as alimony, dower, lineage proof, heritage etc. will all be applicable. This way the word حرّم in this verse fits in very well for the polytheist woman as per former explanation, and for the adulterers (man and woman) according to the latter explanation.

In the light of this explanation it is not needed to declare the verse as cancelled as has been done by some commentators.

Verses 4 - 5

وَالَّذِيْنَ يَرْمُوْنَ الْمُحْصَنٰتِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَأْتُوْا بِاَرْبَعَةِ شُهَدَآءَ فَاجْلِدُوْهُمْ
ثَمٰنِيْنَ جَلْدَةً وَّلَا تَقْبَلُوْا لَهُمْ شَهَادَةً اَبَدًا ۚ وَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْفٰسِقُوْنَ

﴿٤﴾ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ تَابُوا مِنْ بَعْدِ ذٰلِكَ وَأَصْلَحُوا ۚ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿٥﴾

And those who accuse the chaste women (of fornication), but they do not produce four witnesses, flog them with eighty stripes and do not accept their any evidence any more, and they are the sinners, [4] **except those who repent afterwards and mend their ways; then, Allah is All-Forgiving, Very-Merciful.** [5]

Commentary

The third injunction relating to fornication is on false accusation and the punishment prescribed for it

As explained earlier, since adultery is the most damaging and heinous of all crimes for society, as such its punishment is also most severe under Islamic law, compared to all other crimes. Hence it was the requirement of justice and fairness that the special care be attached to prove this act. Without having prescribed evidence under Islamic law, no one should dare accuse any man or woman of adultery. Therefore, the Islamic law has made it mandatory to produce four honest equitable just men as witnesses to the crime, without which the accusation of adultery is declared a big crime by itself, for which the prescribed punishment (حد) is eighty stripes. In view of this mandatory provision one would dare making the accusation of adultery only when he is absolutely sure of watching the crime happening himself. Not only that, at the same time he should be sure that alongwith him another three honest men have also seen the crime happening, for which they will give the evidence. Because, if there are no other witnesses, or the total number is less than four, or there is doubt if the witnesses will give the evidence, then only one man would never like to venture evidence alone and be punished with eighty stripes.

A doubt and its answer

As for the issue that when there are such strong conditions for the evidence of adultery, the criminals will have a free hand. No one will ever dare to give evidence and fulfill the conditions of Islamic law, and hence, no criminal will ever get punished. But this thinking is totally wrong, because these conditions are exclusive to the punishment prescribed as

ḥadd for adultery, i.e. - hundred stripes or stoning. If two non-*mehram* man and woman are seen together in a compromising posture or indulging in shameless acts, then there is no restriction against giving evidence for it. All such matters which have nexus to adultery are also liable for punishment under Islamic penal code, for which punishment of stripes is awarded at the discretion of the judge or the ruler in accordance with the extent of the crime, but not the maximum punishment of *ḥadd*. Therefore, someone who has seen the act of adultery, but has no other witnesses need not give evidence of adultery, but can testify for having seen the accused persons in compromising position, and the judge or ruler can award the punishment after establishing the crime.

Who are *muḥṣanāt* (مُحْصَنَات)

The word *Muḥṣanāt* is derived from the word إِحْصَان. In the Islamic jurisprudence there are two types of إِحْصَان . One, that has been acknowledged for the punishment of adultery. It means that the person against whom adultery is established is sane, adult, a free Muslim, and who is validly married to a Muslim woman and has also copulated with her. In that case the punishment of stoning will be awarded to him. The second type is that which has been acknowledged for the punishment of قذف, that is punishment for accusation of adultery. It means that the person against whom the charge of adultery is levelled is sane, adult, a free Muslim and chaste, that is he has not been proved an adulterer before. The word مُحْصَنَات is used in this sense in this verse (Jaṣṣāṣ).

Ruling

In the Qur'ānic verse, either because of general practice or because of the incident for which the verse was revealed, the accusation of adultery and related punishment is described in a way that the accusers are men and the accused is a chaste lady. But the injunction applies to all situations because of the common ground applicable to all persons. If a woman levels a charge of adultery against another woman or a man, or a man accuses another man, but the required legal evidence is lacking, then in either case the accuser will be liable to the punishment of eighty stripes. (Jaṣṣāṣ & Hidāyah)

Ruling

The punishment of eighty stripes as *ḥadd* is exclusive to false

accusation of adultery and does not apply to accusation of any other crime. However, other punishments of *ta'zīr* can be awarded on false accusations of other crimes. Although it is not specifically mentioned in the Qur'ān that this punishment is exclusive to false accusation of adultery but the condition of four witnesses is the proof of its exclusiveness, because the condition of four witnesses is only in the case of adultery. (Jaṣṣāṣ and Hidāyah)

Ruling

The punishment prescribed for *qazf* (false accusation of adultery) relates to the right of the person against whom the charge of adultery is levelled. As such the punishment against this crime will be executed only when the person demands the execution of the punishment, otherwise it will be annulled. This is unlike the punishment of adultery, which is purely a right of Allah. Therefore, it has to be executed, even though no person has ever demanded for it.

وَلَا تَقْبَلُوْا لَهُمْ شَهَادَةً اَبَدًا

And do not accept his any evidence any more - 24:4.

It means that the person guilty of *qazf* is subject to two punishments. One is inflict at once, i.e. the eighty stripes, but there is another punishment which stays with the culprit for ever. This punishment is that his evidence will not be accepted in any matter, unless he begs Allah's pardon with sincere repentance, and is also forgiven by the one whom he had accused. Until this is done, his evidence will not be acceptable in any case. This much is by consensus of Ummah. But in case of Hanafiah, even after begging the pardon, his evidence is not acceptable. Only his sin is pardoned.

اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ تَابُوْا مِنْۢ بَعْدِ ذٰلِكَ وَاَصْلَحُوْا ۚ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ

Except those who repent afterwards and mend their ways; then, Allah is All-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. (24:5)

Those who have been punished for false accusation of adultery, if they beg pardon and improve their habits, so that there is no risk of repetition of falsehood from them and also obtain forgiveness from one they had accused, then Allah Ta'ālā grants forgiveness and is Merciful.

This exemption, that is اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ تَابُوْا refers to only the last sentence of the

previous verse according to Imām Abū Ḥanīfah and some other Imāms, which is وَاُولٰٓئِکَ هُمُ الْفٰسِقُوْنَ (24:4). So, with this exemption it means that the one who is punished for false accusation is a sinner, but if he repents with sincerity and improves himself after obtaining forgiveness from the one he had falsely accused, then he will no longer remain a sinner, and his punishment will be pardoned in the Hereafter. In other words the two punishments meant for this world, which are referred in the beginning of the verse, that is eighty stripes and inadmissibility of his evidence, will remain despite the repentance. It is because the big punishment of stripes has already been executed and the second punishment is part of *ḥadd*. All scholars are unanimous on the point that repentance does not remit punishment of *ḥadd*, only the torment of the Hereafter is pardoned. Since inadmissibility of the evidence is part of *ḥadd*, it will not be remitted by repentance. Imām Shafi'i and some other Imāms have taken this exemption toward all the sentences of the previous verse, which means that as one does not remain sinner after repentance, hence he would also not be debarred from giving evidence. Jaṣṣāṣ and Maẓharī have provided arguments on both sides - Those interested may consult them.

Verses 6 - 10

وَالَّذِيْنَ يَرْمُوْنَ اَزْوَاجَهُمْ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَّهُمْ شُهَدَآءُ اِلَّآ اَنْفُسُهُمْ
فَشَهَادَةُ اَحَدِهِمْ اَرْبَعُ شَهٰدٰتٍ بِاللّٰهِ ۙ اِنَّهٗ لَمِنَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿۶﴾
وَالْخَامِسَةُ اَنَّ لَعْنَتَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْهِ اِنْ كَانَ مِنَ الْكٰذِبِيْنَ ﴿۷﴾ وَيَدْرَؤُا
عَنْهَا الْعَذَابَ اَنْ تَشْهَدَ اَرْبَعَ شَهٰدٰتٍ ۢ بِاللّٰهِ ۙ اِنَّهٗ لَمِنَ الْكٰذِبِيْنَ
﴿۸﴾ وَالْخَامِسَةَ اَنَّ غَضَبَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْهَآ اِنْ كَانَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿۹﴾
وَلَوْ لَا فَضْلُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهٗ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ تَوَّابٌ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿۱۰﴾

And those who accuse their wives (of adultery) and they have no witnesses except their own selves, then the evidence of one of them would be to swear four oaths by Allah that he is from among the truthful, [6] and the fifth (oath) that Allah's curse be on him if he is from among the liars. [7] And it will remove the punishment from the woman if she swears four oaths by Allah that

he (the accuser husband) is certainly from among the liars, [8] **and the fifth (oath) that Allah's wrath be on her if he is among the truthful.** [9] **And had it not been for the grace of Allah upon you and His mercy and (had it not been) that Allah is Most-Relenting, All-Wise (you would have been ruined).** [10]

Commentary

The fourth injunction is of Li'an (لِعَان : curse) among the adjuncts of fornication

The meaning of لِعَان and مُلَاعَنَة is to curse and praying for Allah's wrath on each other. Certain specific types of oaths between husband and wife with special connotation are called *Li'ān* (لِعَان) in Islamic law. When a husband accuses his wife of adultery or refuses to own his child as being legitimate, and his wife refutes his allegation to be false, and claims for the punishment of false accusation (قَذَف) of eighty stripes to be awarded to him, then the husband will be asked to produce four witnesses. If the husband produces four witnesses, then the wife will be awarded the punishment of adultery, and if he could not produce four witnesses, then they will be subjected to *li'ān* (لِعَان), that is first the husband will be asked to testify four times with the wordings given in the Qur'ān to the effect that he is honest, and the fifth time will say that if he was lying, then Allah's curse be on him.

If the husband hesitates from saying these words, then he should be arrested, and asked either to swear by saying these words five times or accept himself to be a liar. Until he accedes to one of the two alternatives, he should not be released. If he accepts himself to be a liar, then he should be awarded the punishment of false allegation of adultery (حد القذف), but, in case he swears by repeating the required words five times, then the wife be asked to swear five times by uttering the words given in the Qur'an for this purpose. If she refuses to swear, then she should be put under arrest until such time that either she swears five times or accepts her guilt of adultery, in which case she will be awarded the punishment for adultery. In case she agrees to swear and utters the required words five times, then the process of *li'ān* (لِعَان) has been completed. This way they both have escaped the punishment in this world, but in the Hereafter, the one who has lied will suffer the punishment, as Allah knows best who is the liar. However, in this world

also, after the process of *li'ān* (لعان) this couple will be forbidden to each other for ever. The husband should free the woman by divorcing her. If the husband does not divorce her, then the judge or the ruler can have them separated by his decree, which will have the same force as divorce. Moreover, they also cannot get married again for ever. Details of the process of *li'ān* (لعان) are given in the books of *fiqh*, where they can be seen.

The law of *li'ān* (لعان) has been placed in the Islamic jurisprudence to take care of the psychology and emotions of the husband, because in the preceding verses it has been ruled that for putting the blame of adultery on anyone it is essential to produce four eyewitnesses, and if one fails to do so, then he himself will be liable to punishment of false allegation of adultery. For a common man it is possible to keep quiet and not to accuse someone of adultery if he cannot produce four eye-witnesses, in order to save himself from the punishment of false accusation of adultery, but for the husband it is different and a very grave matter, when he has seen the adultery of his wife with his own eyes. For if he accuses his wife without the support of four eye-witnesses he will be liable to punishment of eighty stripes, and if he keeps quiet, it will be a life long agony for him to live with the knowledge that his wife has been unfaithful to him. Therefore, the husband's case has been separated from the general law and a separate provision has been prescribed, which is exclusive to the case between husband and wife. For others the directive is the same as enjoined in the preceding verses.

The books of Ḥadīth have narrated two incidents under this subject The commentators have different views as to which of the two incidents was the cause of revelation of these verses. Qurṭubī has taken both the incidents as the cause of revelation of verses so as the revelation was repeated twice. Ḥafiẓ Ibn Ḥajr, the annotator of Bukhārī, and Nawawī, the annotator of Muslim, have treated both incidents as the cause of revelation of the verses. Their reasoning is more appealing, which will soon appear. One incident is that of Hilāl bin Umayyah and his wife, which is narrated in Bukhārī on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه . The initial part of this incident, also on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه , has appeared in the Musnād of Aḥmad like this:

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه has said that when the verses of Qur'ān on

punishment of false accusation of adultery were revealed namely,

وَالَّذِيْنَ يَرْمُوْنَ الْمُحْصَنٰتِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَاْتُوْا بِاَرْبَعَةِ شُهَدَآءَ فَاجْلِدُوْهُمْ ثَمٰنِيْنَ جَلْدَةً

> And those who accuse the chaste women (of fornication), but they do not produce four witnesses, flog them with eighty stripes - 24:4.

in which it is made obligatory on the person accusing a woman of adultery to produce four eyewitnesses, one of them he being himself, and if he fails to do so, then he should be charged with the false accusation and awarded eighty stripes instead, and should also be debarred for life from giving any evidence. After hearing these verses a leader of Madīnah, Sayyidnā Sa'd Ibn 'Ubādah ﷺ enquired from the Holy Prophet ﷺ whether these verses were revealed like that only. The Holy Prophet ﷺ (was very surprised to hear this from Sa'd Ibn 'Ubādah), asked the Anṣār whether they were listening to what their leader had said. The group of Anṣār pleaded to the Holy Prophet ﷺ not to reproach him, as he had made this enquiry only because of extreme sense of honour. Then Sa'd Ibn 'Ubādah spoke himself and said "My parents be sacrificed on your honour! I know fully well that these verses are nothing but truth, and have been revealed from Allah Ta'ālā; but what I am surprised of is that if I see a shameless wife in a situation that a strange man is lying over her, then would it not be right for me to scold him and remove him from there. Instead, will it be incumbent on me to get four men and show them this situation to make them eye-witnesses, and by the time I could find four men, he runs away after performing his work?". (Sayyidnā Sa'd's wordings are recorded with slight differences by various narrators, but the gist of all is the same. - Qurṭubī)

Only a short time had lapsed after revelation of the verses of punishment against false accusation of adultery and the remarks made by Sa'd Ibn 'Ubādah, that the incident of Hilāl Ibn Umayyah ﷺ took place. It so happened that Sayyidnā Hilāl ﷺ returned from his lands late in the night, when he saw a man with his wife with his own eyes, and listened to their conversation. But he did not do any thing and waited until the dawn, when he went to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and narrated the story, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was very unhappy to hear about this incident and felt very bad. In the meantime the people of Anṣār were gathered and started discussing among themselves that the same thing had

happened as was hinted by their chief, and that Hilāl Ibn Umayyah ﷺ would be punished with eighty stripes in accordance with the Islamic law, and be debarred for life for giving any evidence. Nevertheless, Hilāl Ibn Umayyah ﷺ said 'By Allah I am very hopeful that Allah Ta'ālā will take me out of this predicament'. Ṣaḥīḥ of Bukhārī has also quoted that in fact the Holy Prophet ﷺ, after hearing the incident of Sayyidnā Hilāl ﷺ had asked him, according to Islamic law, to produce four eye-witnesses or be prepared for the punishment of eighty stripes on the back. Sayyidnā Hilāl Ibn Umayyah swore an oath by God before the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and pleaded that he was honest, and that Allah will surely send down a command which will save his back from flogging. While this conversation was still on Jibra'īl ﷺ descended with the verses containing the law of *li'ān*, that is:

وَالَّذِينَ يَرْمُونَ أَزْوَاجَهُمْ

And those who accuse their wives (of adultery). - 24:6.

Abū Ya'lā has quoted the same version on the authority of Sayyidnā Anas ﷺ, which also says that when the verses of *li'ān* were revealed, the Holy Prophet ﷺ gave the good tiding to Hilāl Ibn Umayyah ﷺ that Allah Ta'ālā has sent down the solution to his predicament. Hilāl replied that he was hoping the same from Allah Ta'ālā.

Then the Holy Prophet ﷺ called Sayyidnā Hilāl Ibn Umayyah's ﷺ wife also, and when they were both together, he inquired from the wife about the incident. She said that her husband was making a false accusation against her. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said that Allah knows one of you is a liar, so would you not dread (Allah's torment) and come out with the truth and repent. Then Sayyidnā Hilāl Ibn Umayyah ﷺ said 'My parents be sacrificed on you! I have said nothing but truth and whatever I have said is true'. After that the Holy Prophet ﷺ directed that the process of *li'ān* be conducted on both husband and wife according to the revealed verses of the Qur'ān. First Sayyidnā Hilāl ﷺ was asked to testify four times with the wordings of Qur'ān, which are, 'Believing Allah to be present everywhere and seeing everything, I testify that I am honest in my allegation', Sayyidnā Hilāl ﷺ testified four times with the Qur'ānic wordings. When it came to testify the fifth time, of which the Qur'anic wordings are, 'Allah's curse be on me, if I were lying'. At that

time the Holy Prophet ﷺ said to Sayyidnā Hilāl Ibn Umayyah ؓ, as a warning, that he must be careful and fear Allah, as worldly punishment is lighter than the torment of the Hereafter. The torment of Allah is much more severe than the punishment of people, and that the fifth testimony is the final one, on which the ruling would depend. But Hilāl Ibn Umayyah insisted that he could say under oath that Allah Ta'ālā would not punish him for his testimony in the Hereafter (as he was sure that this was a true testimony). Then he uttered the wordings of the fifth testimony. After that the Holy Prophet ﷺ obtained four oaths, in the similar manner, from his wife. She too swore with Qur'ānic wordings that her husband was lying. When it came to testify the fifth time, the Holy Prophet ﷺ asked her to wait, and warned her that it was the fifth and final testimony, and as such she should be fearful of Allah, as His torment is much more severe than the punishment by the people, that is the Islamic punishment of adultery. On hearing this, she hesitated to swear and waited in that condition for a while. Then said ultimately 'By Allah I will not disgrace my people', and testified the fifth time, saying that if her husband was true then Allah's wrath be on her. This way when the process of *li'ān* was completed, the Holy Prophet ﷺ separated the husband and wife, that is broke down their marriage, and ruled that the child to be born of this conception will take the mother's name and will not be attributed to the father, but the child should not be disparaged. (Tafsīr Maẓharī quoted from Musnad Aḥmad, authority Ibn 'Abbās).

The second incident

The second incident is also quoted in the Ṣaḥīḥs of Bukhārī and Muslim, and the details of the incident are narrated by Baghawī on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās ؓ. He has said that the Holy Prophet ﷺ , while standing on *minbar*, related the verses` in which it is enjoined to punish the man making false accusation of adultery (حدِّ القذف), that is وَالَّذِيْنَ يَرْمُوْنَ الْمُحْصَنٰتِ (24:4). At that time Sayyidnā 'Āṣim Ibn 'Adiyy al-Anṣā ؓ was also present in the crowd. He got up and pleaded 'O Messenger of Allah ﷺ, my life be sacrificed on your honour ! If any one of us discovers his wife lying in bed with another man and narrates this situation, then he will be punished with eighty stripes, and would be debarred from giving evidence for life. Moreover, the Muslims would call him liar. In such a situation how can we get the eyewitnesses immediately? And if we do, and

go in search of eyewitnesses, he would run away after doing his work, by the time we could bring the witnesses.It was the same inquiry made by 'Āṣim Ibn 'Adiyy ﷺ, which was made by Sayyidnā Sa'd Ibn 'Ubādah ﷺ in the first incident.

This inquiry was made on a Friday. After that it so happened that 'Āṣim Ibn Adiyy's ﷺ cousin, 'Uwaimir, who had married Khaula رضى الله عنهما, another cousin of Adiyy's, saw his wife involved with yet another cousin, Sharīk Ibn Saḥmā'. 'Uwaimir ﷺ related this incident to his cousin 'Āṣim Ibn 'Adiyy ﷺ, who recited اِنَّا لِلّٰهِ وَاِنَّآ اِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُوْنَ and went to see the Holy Prophet ﷺ the next day – again a Friday. 'Adiyy ﷺ said to the Holy Prophet ﷺ that he had made an inquiry on the previous Friday in which he himself has got involved unfortunately, as the same incident has taken place in his family. Baghawī has narrated the incident in great detail as to how were the husband and wife were called and went through the process of *li'ān* (Maẓharī)

This incident is narrated in the Ṣaḥīḥs on the authority of Sayyidnā Sahal Ibn Sa'd Sa'idi ﷺ that 'Uwaimir al-'Ajlānī ﷺ inquired from the Holy Prophet ﷺ that if someone finds his wife in bed with another man then should he kill that man, as a result of which he will be killed by people or what else should he do? the Holy Prophet ﷺ replied that Allah Ta'ālā has revealed an injunction for the case of your wife and yourself. Go and get your wife. Sayyidnā Sahal Ibn Sa'd ﷺ, the narrator of the Ḥadīth, narrates that the Holy Prophet ﷺ subjected them to the process of *li'ān* in the mosque (This process has been explained above). When the process of *li'ān* was completed after both husband and wife had sworn five times, 'Uwaimir said 'If I still keep her as my wife this will mean as if I had made a false accusation against her. Therefore, I am announcing three divorces to her'. (Maẓharī on authority of Ṣaḥīḥs)

In both these incidents it is reported that the verses of *li'ān* were revealed for that particular incident. Ḥafiẓ Ibn Ḥajar and Shaikh ul Islam Nawawi رحمه الله تعالى have noted the alikeness in the two by explaining that it looks the first incident was that of Hilāl Ibn Umayyah ﷺ, and the verses of *li'ān* were revealed in that connection, and immediately after that 'Uwaimir ﷺ was also confronted with a similar incident, which he presented before the Holy Prophet ﷺ, perhaps not

knowing Hilāl Ibn Umayyah's ﷺ incident, which had occurred earlier. Then the Holy Prophet ﷺ told him the judgement in his case. This appears plausible because, in the case of Hilāl Ibn Umayyah ﷺ the wordings are فنزل جبرئيل (Then Jibra'īl descended with these verses) , while in the case of 'Uwaimir ﷺ the wordings are قد أنزل الله فيک (Allah has revealed about you), the meaning of which could be that Allah Ta'ālā has enjoined His command in a case similar to yours. والله اعلم (Maẓharī)

Ruling

When *li'ān* has taken place between husband and wife before the judge then that woman becomes forbidden for good for that man, just like foster relatives are forbidden for marriage among themselves forever. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said in a Ḥadīth المتلاعنان لايجتمعان ابدًا (The spouses who have gone through *li'ān* can never join each other). Unlawfulness establishes immediately after the *li'ān*. As for the woman's second marriage with another man, she is allowed after the expiry of her *'iddah* period of three months, when she is divorced by her first husband or if he had just said that he had left her. This is the ruling given by Imām Abū Ḥanīfah رحمه الله تعالى. But if the husband does not carry out any of the two alternatives, then the ruler or the judge would order the separation, which would have the same effect as the divorce, and after that she would complete three periods of menses, and then she would be free to marry another man. (Maẓharī etc.)

Ruling

When the *li'ān* is completed, after that the child that would born from that conception would not have the name of her husband, but would be called after the name of the mother. The Holy Prophet ﷺ gave this ruling in both the cases of Hilāl Ibn Umayyah and 'Uwaimir 'Aljāni رضی الله عنهم اجمعين.

Ruling

Although the torment of Hereafter would increase on the one who is liar, after the *li'ān*, but the punishment of the world be annulled. Similarly, it is not permissible to call the woman an adulterer nor is it permissible to call her child illegitimate. This was also ruled by the Holy Prophet ﷺ in the case of Hilāl Ibn Umayyah ﷺ. وقضی بان لا تُرمٰی ولا ولدُ ها.

Verses 11 - 26

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ جَآءُو بِالْإِفْكِ عُصْبَةٌ مِّنكُمْ ۚ لَا تَحْسَبُوهُ شَرًّا لَّكُم ۖ بَلْ هُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ ۚ لِكُلِّ امْرِئٍ مِّنْهُم مَّا اكْتَسَبَ مِنَ الْإِثْمِ ۚ وَالَّذِي تَوَلَّىٰ كِبْرَهُ مِنْهُمْ لَهُ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١١﴾ لَّوْلَا إِذْ سَمِعْتُمُوهُ ظَنَّ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بِأَنفُسِهِمْ خَيْرًا وَقَالُوا هَٰذَا إِفْكٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿١٢﴾ لَّوْلَا جَآءُو عَلَيْهِ بِأَرْبَعَةِ شُهَدَآءَ ۚ فَإِذْ لَمْ يَأْتُوا بِالشُّهَدَآءِ فَأُولَٰئِكَ عِندَ اللَّهِ هُمُ الْكَاذِبُونَ ﴿١٣﴾ وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ لَمَسَّكُمْ فِي مَآ أَفَضْتُمْ فِيهِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١٤﴾ إِذْ تَلَقَّوْنَهُ بِأَلْسِنَتِكُمْ وَتَقُولُونَ بِأَفْوَاهِكُم مَّا لَيْسَ لَكُم بِهِ عِلْمٌ وَتَحْسَبُونَهُ هَيِّنًا وَهُوَ عِندَ اللَّهِ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١٥﴾ وَلَوْلَآ إِذْ سَمِعْتُمُوهُ قُلْتُم مَّا يَكُونُ لَنَآ أَن نَّتَكَلَّمَ بِهَٰذَا سُبْحَانَكَ هَٰذَا بُهْتَانٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١٦﴾ يَعِظُكُمُ اللَّهُ أَن تَعُودُوا لِمِثْلِهِ أَبَدًا إِن كُنتُم مُّؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٧﴾ وَيُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمُ الْآيَاتِ ۚ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿١٨﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُحِبُّونَ أَن تَشِيعَ الْفَاحِشَةُ فِي الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ ۚ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٩﴾ وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ رَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿٢٠﴾ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ ۚ وَمَن يَتَّبِعْ خُطُوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ فَإِنَّهُ يَأْمُرُ بِالْفَحْشَآءِ وَالْمُنكَرِ ۚ وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ مَا زَكَىٰ مِنكُم مِّنْ أَحَدٍ أَبَدًا وَلَٰكِنَّ اللَّهَ يُزَكِّي مَن يَشَآءُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢١﴾ وَلَا يَأْتَلِ أُولُوا الْفَضْلِ مِنكُمْ وَالسَّعَةِ أَن يُؤْتُوا أُولِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينَ وَالْمُهَاجِرِينَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ۖ وَلْيَعْفُوا وَلْيَصْفَحُوا ۗ أَلَا تُحِبُّونَ أَن يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ

غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿٢٢﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَرْمُوْنَ الْمُحْصَنٰتِ الْغٰفِلٰتِ الْمُؤْمِنٰتِ
لُعِنُوْا فِى الدُّنْيَا وَالْاٰخِرَةِ ۖ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيْمٌ ﴿٢٣﴾ يَّوْمَ تَشْهَدُ
عَلَيْهِمْ اَلْسِنَتُهُمْ وَاَيْدِيْهِمْ وَاَرْجُلُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٢٤﴾ يَوْمَئِذٍ
يُّوَفِّيْهِمُ اللّٰهُ دِيْنَهُمُ الْحَقَّ وَيَعْلَمُوْنَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الْحَقُّ الْمُبِيْنُ ﴿٢٥﴾
اَلْخَبِيْثٰتُ لِلْخَبِيْثِيْنَ وَالْخَبِيْثُوْنَ لِلْخَبِيْثٰتِ ۚ وَالطَّيِّبٰتُ لِلطَّيِّبِيْنَ
وَالطَّيِّبُوْنَ لِلطَّيِّبٰتِ ۚ اُولٰٓئِكَ مُبَرَّءُوْنَ مِمَّا يَقُوْلُوْنَ ۗ لَهُمْ مَّغْفِرَةٌ وَّرِزْقٌ
كَرِيْمٌ ﴿٢٦﴾

Those who have come up with the false imputation are a gang among you. Do not think it is bad for you; rather, it is good for you. Everyone of them is liable for what he earned of the sin. And the one who undertook the major part of it, for him there is a mighty punishment. [11]

Why - when you (O believers) heard of it – did the believing men and the believing women not think well on their own selves and (why did they not) say, 'This is a manifest lie'. [12] Why did they (the accusers) not bring four witnesses to prove this? So, as they did not bring the witnesses, they are the liars in the sight of Allah. [13] And had it not been for the grace of Allah upon you, and His mercy in this world and in the Hereafter, a great punishment would have reached you for what you got indulged in - [14] when you were welcoming it with your tongues and were saying with your mouths something of which you had no knowledge, and were taking it as a trivial matter, while in the sight of Allah it was grave. [15] And why, when you heard of it, did you not say, 'It is not for us to speak about this. Pure are You (O Allah). This is a terrible calumny.' [16] Allah admonishes you never to repeat something like this, if you are believers. [17] And Allah makes the signs clear to you. And Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise. [18]

Surely, those who like that shamelessness spreads among the believers, for them there is painful

punishment in this world and the Hereafter. And Allah knows and you do not know. [19] **And had it not been for the grace of Allah upon you, and His mercy and that Allah is Very-Kind, Very-Merciful (you would have been destroyed).** [20]

O those who believe, do not follow the footsteps of Satan. And whoever follows the footsteps of Satan, (should know that) he orders (one to commit) shameless acts and evil deeds. And had it not been for the grace of Allah upon you, and His mercy, not a single person from you would have ever attained purity. But Allah purifies whomsoever He wills. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. [21]

And the men of grace and wealth among you should not swear against giving (their charitable gifts) to the kinsmen and the poor and to those who have migrated in the way of Allah. And they should forgive and forego. Do you not like that Allah forgives you? And Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [22]

Surely, those who level a false charge against the chaste, naïve and believing women are cursed in this world and the Hereafter, and for them there is a mighty punishment [23] **on the Day their tongues, their hands and their legs will testify against them of what they used to do.** [24] **On that day Allah will give them their due recompense in full and they will know that Allah is the Truth Who makes all things manifest.** [25]

Vile women are for vile men, and vile men are for vile women. And good women are for good men and good men are for good women. Those are free from what they (the accusers) say. For them there is forgiveness and a graceful provision. [26]

Interconnection of verses

As has been mentioned earlier, the major part of Sūrah An-Nūr is in connection with those injunctions which are related with protection and security of chastity and continence. Diametrically to that, any attempt to debase the chastity and honour would be in violation of the injunction, for which the punishment in the world and the torment in the Hereafter are enjoined. In this connection, first the maximum punishment of adultery

(حد زنا), then the punishment for false accusation (حد قذف) and after that the process of *li'ān* have already been described. False accusation of adultery against a chaste woman, without the support of four eyewitnesses, is held to be a great sin, and for such a person the punishment of eighty stripes is prescribed. This injunction is in regard to common chaste Muslim women. But the case of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها was quite different and grave, when the hypocrites fabricated a false slander against her in 6th Hijra, and some Muslims also indulged in mentioning it. Indeed it was a much serious and grave situation than for an ordinary chaste Muslim woman, hence Allah Ta'ālā revealed ten verses at that point exonerating her from the accusation and to project her purity and chastity. These verses announce the exoneration of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها on one hand and a warning of severe punishment to all those who were involved in the slander in any way. This incident of imputation is called the episode of *ifk* (false imputation) in the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth. The word *Ifk* means worst type of lie, imputation or slander. In order to understand the explanation of these verses it is necessary to know the background of the incident of *Ifk*. Therefore, it will be in order to give a brief account of this episode to begin with.

The incident of *Ifk* and the slander

This incident has been narrated with extra ordinary details in the Ṣaḥīḥs and other books of Ḥadīth. However its brief version is as follows: When the Holy Prophet ﷺ went for the battle (بنى المصطلق) of Banī Muṣṭaliq, also known as battle (مريسيع) of *Muraisī'*, in the 6th Hijra, Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها amongst the mothers of believers, was also accompanying him. The common practice was that first she would sit in her litter and then it was placed on the back of the camel. It was because by that time the injunction in regard to *ḥijāb* had been revealed. After the battle was over and the caravan was returning to Madīnah it stopped for camping to spend the night. Towards the end of the night an announcement was made to the effect that the caravan would soon be departing, so that people should get ready after completing the necessities. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها felt the call of nature and went out to ease herself. There the string of her necklace was broken and it fell down. It took her some time to locate it, so she got a little late. By the time

she returned to the camp, the caravan had departed. As for her camel, her litter was mounted on it's back without realizing that she was not sitting in it. This happened because she was so young and frail at that time that her absence from the litter was not noticed; and also because the litter was covered. On her return to the camp when she did not find the caravan there, she did not panic nor ran helter-skelter to locate it. Instead, she acted very prudently and sat down at the camping place after wrapping herself. She did this knowing the Holy Prophet ﷺ very well that when he will not find her in her litter (هَودج) he will send out men to locate her at the camping place, and if she were gone some other place to locate them, it will only complicate things for the searching party. So, it was best to wait for them there, at the camp. Since it was still dark and she was tired, she fell asleep.

On the other hand, it so happened that Sayyidnā Safwān Ibn Mu'aṭṭal ؓ, whom the Holy Prophet ﷺ had assigned the duty to stay behind the caravan and pick up things if forgotten by anyone in a hurry, reached the camp at dawn. He saw someone sleeping. So he went there and recognized Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا, whom he had seen before the injunction of *ḥijāb* was revealed. Seeing her there like that, he was extremely dismayed and uttered إِنَّا لِلّٰهِ وَإِنَّآ إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُوْنَ. On hearing his voice she was awakened, and covered her face. Then Sayyidnā Safwān ؓ brought his camel near her and made it sit down. Sayyidah 'A'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا sat on the camel's back and rode on, while he was holding the string of the camel and walking in front. 'Abdullāh Ibn Ubbayy was a very wicked hypocrite and enemy of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. He got hold of this news and the wretched man fabricated shameless imputation against her. Unfortunately, some naïve Muslims also narrated the gossip on hearsay; for instance Sayyidnā Ḥassān and Misṭaḥ ؓ among the males and Sayyidah Ḥamnah رضی اللہ عنہا from the females. (Tafsīr Ad-Durr-al-Manthūr has reported this version with reference to Ibn Marduwaih on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ --- اعانه ای عبدالله ابن أبّی حسان ومسطح و حمنة)

When this slander of the hypocrite was publicized, the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself was also very hurt. As for Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا, it was but obvious to get hurt extremely. Even ordinary Muslims were also extremely pained on the spread of this totally false and fabricated slander. This went on for about a month, but at last Allah Ta'ālā revealed

these verses to exonerate her and condemn those who were involved in its fabrication or spread, in any way. The commentary on these verses will follow soon.

In accordance with the Qur'ānic injunction, which has been detailed above under the heading of punishment for false accusation (حدّ القذف), those who were involved in the spread of false slander were asked to produce the evidence in support of their accusation. Since that was a totally unfounded accusation, they could not produce any evidence whatsoever. As a consequence, the Holy Prophet ﷺ awarded the punishment of false accusation (حدّ القذف) to them, and each one of them was flogged with eighty stripes. Bazzār and Ibn Marduwaih have reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ awarded the punishment to three Muslims, namely, Misṭaḥ, Ḥamnah and Ḥassān ؓ, while Ṭabarani has reported on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ had awarded double the punishment of false accusation to 'Abdullāh Ibn Ubayy, the hypocrite, who had fabricated this slander. After that the Muslims repented, but the hypocrites remained as they were. (Bayān ul Qur'ān)

Commentary

Unique proficiency of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah's رضی الله عنها , and the remaining part of the incident of *Ifk*

The enemies of the Holy Prophet ﷺ did their best to harm him, and did every thing they could possibly think to afflict him. Amongst all the afflictions which were perpetrated by the infidels, perhaps the most severe and emotionally torturous was to pass slander on the most exalted, proficient, learned, and respected mother of the believers amongst all his pure wives. With the contemptible false slander the respected name of Sayyidnā Safwān Ibn Mu'aṭṭal ؓ was also maligned by the hypocrite 'Abdulālh Ibn Ubayy. The hypocrites gave the slander different colours and then spread it. The most distressful thing in this episode was that some simple Muslims were carried away by the unfortunate slander and started narrating it as well. The unfounded slander would have been exposed by the truth in a few days time, but for compensating the emotional torture inflicted on Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah and on the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself by it and for exonerating her, Allah Ta'ālā did not rest just at hinting at the episode in a revelation, but revealed almost two *ruku's* for

her exoneration. Not only that, but all those who had fabricated this slander, and those who had participated in narrating it, were warned to face the torment in this world and in the Hereafter. Perhaps never such warnings were revealed on any occasion.

In fact this incident of *Ifk* has brought into the open and highlighted the excellence of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah's superior wisdom and intelligence along with her chastity and sanctity. That is why in the very first of the above quoted verses Allah Ta'ālā has asked not to consider this incident as bad for her, rather it was a blessing. What could be a greater blessing than this, that Allah Ta'ālā has confirmed her purity in no less than ten verses, which will be recited until the Dooms Day. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا had herself said that she was quite confident that Allah Ta'ālā would exonerate her and clarify her position through a *Waḥy* (message to the Holy Prophet ﷺ), but did not consider herself to be so fortunate that Qur'ānic verses would be revealed referring to her person, which will be recited for ever. At this point it will help the readers to know some details about the incident for understanding the verses. So, they are briefly narrated here:

On return from that journey Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا got involved in her household affairs, and was not the least aware of the rumor that was circulated by the hypocrites about her. Ṣaḥīḥ of Bukhārī has narrated on the authority of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا herself that after the return from the journey she fell slightly sick, the main cause of which was that she did not notice the favour and grace from the Holy Prophet ﷺ towards her, which was his norm. Instead, she noticed during that period that when he would come home, he would only inquire about her health after the salutation and go back. Since she did not know at all anything about the rumor that was being circulated about her, hence she could not understand the cause of his attitude towards her, but took the grief to heart, which started telling on her health. One day she went out in the open to ease herself, as there used to be no latrines in the houses in those days. Because she was not keeping well she took along Misṭaḥ's mother with her. When they were returning home after she had eased herself, the foot of Misṭaḥ's mother got entangled in her sheet and she fell down. As she fell down she uttered the phrase تَعِسَ مِسْطَحٌ. This phrase is normally used by Arabs while cursing someone. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ

عنها was taken aback on hearing this phrase from Misṭaḥ's mother for her own son , and said to her that it was very bad that she was cursing her own son, who was such a gentleman and who had participated in the battle of Badr. On that Misṭaḥ's mother asked her 'My dear girl, don't you know, this son of mine, what has he been saying around?' Sayyidah 'Āishah رضی اللہ عنہا inquired as to what had he been saying around. Then Misṭaḥ's mother told her the whole story of *Ifk* fabricated by the people, and how her son was involved in it's spreading. Sayyidah 'Āishah رضی اللہ عنہا goes on to say that on hearing this her sickness was doubled. When she returned home and the Holy Prophet ﷺ came and inquired about her health after salutation as usual, she asked his permission whether she could go to her parent's house. He consented to her going to their house. The idea was to take them in confidence and have consultation. So she consulted her mother, who consoled her and said that there were people who were jealous of women like her, and spread rumors like that. So, she need not worry about it. Things would get alright on their own. On that she retorted 'Allah is Pure / Subhan Allah! People have been talking about that. How can I be patient?' Then the whole night she cried, and did not sleep a wink. On the other hand the Holy Prophet ﷺ was extremely grieved on the spread of this false story, more so, because he did not receive any revelation on the incident during that period. Therefore, he called Sayyidnā 'Alī and Usāmah Ibn Zaid رضی اللہ عنہما, who were both members of his household, and consulted them as to what should he do under the circumstances. Sayyidnā Usāmah Ibn Zaid رضی اللہ عنہ said very emphatically that on the basis of his information he had no misgivings about Sayyidah 'Āishah رضی اللہ عنہا whatsoever. There is absolutely nothing, which could point toward any mistrust. Hence he need not pay any heed to such rumors. Sayyidnā 'Alī رضی اللہ عنہ advised him (in order to bring him out of his grief and anxiety) that Allah Ta'ālā had not put any restriction on him, hence if he had any unpleasant feelings about Sayyidah 'Āishah رضی اللہ عنہا, because of the rumors, then there are many other women. Moreover he suggested another alternative to remove his unpleasant feelings, and advised him to make inquiries about her from Barīrah رضی اللہ عنہا, who was the slave girl working for Sayyidah 'Āishah رضی اللہ عنہا . Hence, the Holy Prophet ﷺ made inquiries from Barīrah رضی اللہ عنہا ,who submitted that she did not see anything unbecoming in Sayyidah 'Āishah رضی اللہ عنہا except that sometimes, because of her young

age, she would leave the dough in the open and go to sleep, and the goat would eat up the dough. (After this the Ḥadīth narrates the address of the Holy Prophet ﷺ from the rostrum in great detail in which he had complained about those who had fabricated the accusation and those who had spread the slander. A brief account of what happened next is as follows).

Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها goes on to say "I cried the whole day and the second night also continuously. My parents had also come to me, as they feared that I would break down with grief. While my parents were sitting with me the Holy Prophet ﷺ came in and sat down alongside me. He had not sit with me before ever since this incident had started. Then he recited the *khuṭbah* of *shahādah* and said 'O, 'Ā'ishah, I have received this information about you. If you are free from blame, then Allah will definitely exonerate you (that is express exoneration through revelation), but if you have slipped, then beg for Allah's pardon with repentance, because when the servant invokes His mercy after admitting his sin then Allah Ta'ālā accepts his repentance'. After the Holy Prophet ﷺ had completed his discourse, my tears dried up completely. There was not a drop in my eyes. I requested my father, Abū Bakr ؓ, to give an answer to the Holy Prophet ؓ, but he excused himself saying what could he say. Then I asked my mother to give an answer, and she too excused herself saying as to what could she say. Then per force I had to speak. I was only a young girl, and by then had not learnt much even the Qur'ān". In such a perplexing condition of grief and distress that she was in, even extremely learned and intelligent persons would have found it very difficult to express themselves in a balanced manner, but what Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها said at that time is a piece of highly intellectual and scholarly discourse. Her wordings are reproduced verbatim below:

والله لقد عرفت لقد سمعتم هذا الحديث حتّٰى استقرّ فى انفسكم وصدقتم به، ولئن قلت لكم: انّى بريئة، والله يعلم انّى بريئة، لا تصدّقونى ولئن اعترفت لكم بامر، والله يعلم انى منه بريئة، لتصدقونى، والله لا اجد لى ولكم مثلا الا كما قال ابو يوسف: فصبر جميل والله المستعان على ما تصفون

"By God, I fully realize that you listened to this talk and kept on listening until it made inroads into your heart, and you have confirmed this (by your actions). Now if I say that I am free

> from this blame, as Allah knows well that I am in reality, then you will not verify my statement. And if I make admission of the accusation, of which Allah knows I am free, then you will agree with my admission. Wallah, now I do not see any example on the issue between you and me, except the one which the father of Yūsuf ﷺ (Ya'qūb ﷺ), said after hearing the wrong statement of his sons that 'So patience is best. And it is Allah whose help is sought against what you describe."

Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا related further that "After having said so I went away and lied down on my bed. I was confident that since I was free from the blame in reality, Allah Ta'ālā would surely exonerate me by sending down a revelation. But I did not have the slightest idea or expectation that in my case Qur'ānic verses will be revealed, which will be recited forever. It was because I considered my position to be much lower than that. All I had expected was that probably my exoneration will be revealed to him in his dream". Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا goes on to narrate that "the Holy Prophet ﷺ had not got up from that company yet, nor anyone from the household had got up, when he was overtaken by the condition which he used to experience at the time of revelation of the Qur'ān. In this condition he used to perspire profusely on the forehead. When this condition was over, then the Holy Prophet ﷺ got up smiling, and the very first thing that he said was ابشری یا عائشة اما اللہ فقد ابراک that is "O 'Ā'ishah, listen the good tiding . As for Allah Ta'ālā, He has exonerated you". Then my mother said to me "Get up and go to the Holy Prophet ﷺ ". I replied, "I do not feel obliged to any one in this case, except Allah, nor would I get up. I am thankful to my Lord, and it is He who has exonerated me.".

Few distinctions of Sayyidah Ṣiddīqua رضی اللہ عنہا:

While explaining these verses Imām Baghawī رحمہ اللہ تعالیٰ has said that there were some distinctions of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا which no woman other than her could get, and Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا also used to relate them with a sense of pride (as honorable gift). First, that before the marriage with the Holy Prophet ﷺ Jibra'īl ﷺ had brought to him her image wrapped in a silk cloth, and said to him 'she is your wife', (As reported by At-Tirmidhī – from 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا) while some other versions say that Jibra'īl had brought this image in his palm.

Second, that the Holy Prophet ﷺ did not marry any maiden girl

other than her.

Third, that the Holy Prophet ﷺ died in her lap.

Fourth, that he ﷺ was buried in her house.

Fifth, that he ﷺ had received revelation even at that time also when he used to be with Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللّٰہ عنہا under the same quilt. None other wives was granted this distinction ever.

Sixth, that her رضی اللّٰہ عنہا exoneration was sent down from the Heaven.

Seventh, that she was the daughter of the caliph of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and was herself a Ṣiddīqua رضی اللّٰہ عنہا, and was among those whom Allah Ta'ālā had promised forgiveness and bountiful sustenance even during their lifetime. (Maẓharī)

After seeing Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah's رضی اللّٰہ عنہا scholarly research, understanding of jurisprudence and eloquent expression, Sayyidnā Mūsā Ibn Ṭalḥah رضی اللّٰہ عنہ commented that he had never come across a person more eloquent than her. (Tirmidhī)

Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī has related that when Sayyidnā Yūsuf علیہ السلام was falsely accused, Allah Ta'ālā exonerated him through the evidence of a baby by granting him speech, and when Sayyidah Maryam علیہا السلام was falsely accused, Allah Ta'ālā exonerated her through the evidence of her son, 'Īsā علیہ السلام, but when false accusation was leveled against Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللّٰہ عنہا , then Allah Ta'ālā sent down ten verses of the Holy Qur'ān to declare her exoneration, which has further enhanced her respect and stature.

Now the specific sentences of these verses will be discussed and elaborated:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ جَاءُوْ بِالْإِفْكِ عُصْبَةٌ مِّنْكُمْ

Those who have come up with the false imputation are a gang among you. 24:11.

Literal meaning of *Ifk* (إفك) is to turn over, reverse or to change. The worst type of lie which turns the truth to falsehood and the false as truth, and labels the pious and God fearing as sinner, and the sinner as pious

and God fearing, also falls under the connotation of *Ifk*. *'Uṣbah* :عُصۡبَه means a group of ten to forty persons, but is also used for less or more persons. The word مِنكُم (among you) in the verse refers to Muslims. Although the actual fabricator of the slander was 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Ubayy, who was a hypocrite and not a Muslim, but since the hypocrites used to claim themselves as Muslims, he too has been included within the fold of (مِنكُم). Among the Muslims two men and one woman got involved in the spread of slander, who were awarded the punishment of false accusation by the Holy Prophet ﷺ, after the revelation of these verses. But all Muslims felt penitence and their repentance was accepted by Allah Ta'ālā. Among them were Sayyidnā Ḥassān and Misṭaḥ ؓ, who had both participated in the battle of Badr, and for whom Allah Ta'ālā has declared forgiveness in the Qur'ān. For this very reason Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا used to dislike if any one would speak ill of Sayyidnā Ḥassān ؓ before her, although he was one of those two men who were punished for false accusation. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا used to say that Ḥassān ؓ was the one who had defended the Holy Prophet ﷺ in his poetry against the infidels. Hence, no one should speak ill of him. Whenever he used to visit Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا, she would make him sit with dignity and respect. (Maẓharī etc.)

لَا تَحۡسَبُوۡهُ شَرًّا لَّكُمۡ

Do not think it is bad for you - 24:11.

This sentence is addressed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا, Ṣafwān ؓ and all the Muslims, who were hurt by the spread of this rumor. The purport of the sentence is that you should not feel bad about this incident, because after the exoneration declared in the Qur'ān by Allah Ta'ālā her esteem has been raised further, and those who were involved in rumor-mongering were warned strongly in the Qur'ān, which will be recited until the Dooms Day.

لِكُلِّ امۡرِئٍ مِّنۡهُمۡ مَّا اكۡتَسَبَ مِنَ الۡاِثۡمِ

Everyone of them is liable for what he earned of the sin - 24:11.

It means that whoever had taken part in the spread of this slander, his sin has been recorded exactly in the same proportion as was his share in the spread of the slander, and he will be punished accordingly. The one who had fabricated this rumor, which will be dealt later, deserves the

most severe punishment, and the one who endorsed the rumor when it reached him, a little less than that, and the one who kept quiet after hearing it, still less than that.

وَالَّذِىْ تَوَلّٰى كِبْرَهٗ مِنْهُمْ لَهٗ عَذَابٌ عَظِيْمٌ

And the one who undertook the major part of it, for him there is a mighty punishment - 24:11.

The word كِبْر means big, large or great. Here it means that the one who has taken big part in the slander, that is who fabricated it and passed on to others, for him is the great punishment. The indication is toward 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Ubayy (Baghawi etc.).

لَوْلَآ اِذْ سَمِعْتُمُوْهُ ظَنَّ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ وَالْمُؤْمِنٰتُ بِاَنْفُسِهِمْ خَيْرًا ۙ وَّقَالُوْا هٰذَآ اِفْكٌ مُّبِيْنٌ

Why - when you (O believers) heard of it – did the believing men and the believing women not think well on their own selves and (why did they not) say, 'This is a manifest lie'. - 24:12.

It means that when the Muslim men women heard about this slander they should have a good assumption about their own-self – that is about their Muslim brother and sister – and declared that it was but an open lie. In this verse quite a few things need attention. In the first place the Holy Qur'ān has hinted by the word بِاَنْفُسِهِمْ (on their own selves) that if a Muslim defames and disgraces another Muslim, he in fact disgraces himself, because the relationship of Islam has brought them all together as one body. A similar expression is used by the Holy Qur'ān wherever the close tie between a Muslim and the whole Ummah is to be emphasized, for instance, a verse says لَاتَلْمِزُوْٓا اَنْفُسَكُمْ (49:11) which means 'Do not cast aspersion on your own-self', which actually means do not cast aspersion on any of your Muslim brethren – man or woman. At another place the Qur'ān says لَا تَقْتُلُوْٓا اَنْفُسَكُمْ, (4:29) which means 'Do not kill yourselves'. Here again the sense is the same, that is, do not kill any of your Muslim brethren. Yet at a third place it says وَلَا تُخْرِجُوْنَ اَنْفُسَكُمْ مِّنْ دِيَارِكُمْ, (2:84) which means 'You shall not drive out yourselves from your homes'. Here also it means not to expel any Muslim from his house. At a fourth place it says فَسَلِّمُوْا عَلٰٓى اَنْفُسِكُمْ, which means 'Salute your own-self', which in fact means, salute your Muslim brethren. All these verses point toward one theme, that a Muslim who casts aspersion on another Muslim or causes oppression and harm to another Muslim, he in fact casts aspersion

and causes harm to himself, because it leads to defamation of the whole Muslim Ummah, as the poet Saadi has said:

چو از قومے یکے بے دانشی کرد ☆ نہ کِہ را منزلت ماند نہ مِہ را

"When a single person from a nation does an unwise act, no one from that nation, big or small, can achieve a respectful place (in the eyes of others).

It was this teaching of the Qur'ān which brought up the Muslims into prominence, and when they gained prominence, it was the whole nation which was uplifted, both collectively and individually. One can see the result of giving up of the Qur'ānic teachings, that the Muslims have slumped into oblivion, again both collectively and individually.

The other point, which needs attention in this verse, is that after having said لَوْلَآ إِذْ سَمِعْتُمُوْهُ (Why, when you (O believers) heard of it) it was in the fitness of things that the address form should have been used by saying, "why did you not think well of your ownselves". But the verse has opted for "the believers" instead of "you". The Holy Qur'ān at this point has changed its form and said ظَنَّ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ instead ظَنَنْتُمْ. In this form there is a subtle allusion that those who had committed this act were not fit to be called Mu'mins (believers) to the extent of this act, because it was the demand of faith that a Muslim should have stuck to the favourable view for another Muslim.

The third point which needs attention is that in the last sentence of this verse وَقَالُوْا هٰذَآ إِفْكٌ مُّبِيْنٌ (24:12) it has been instilled that it was the demand of faith that the Muslims on hearing this rumor should have immediately rejected it as a total lie. This proves that to think good about any other Muslim is an obligatory demand of faith, unless an act of sin or evil is proved against him under Islamic law. Likewise, it is also the demand of faith to call an attribute of a sin or evil against a Muslim a lie, if there is no proof under Islamic law against him.

Ruling

This has proved that to think good about all Muslims men and women is obligatory, unless proved otherwise by Islamic law. And if someone accuses a Muslim without the proof under Islamic law, then the rejection of that accusation and to declare it as a lie is also obligatory, because it is nothing but backbiting and defaming an innocent Muslim. (Maẓharī)

لَوْلَا جَآءُوْ عَلَيْهِ بِاَرْبَعَةِ شُهَدَآءَ فَاِذْ لَمْ يَاْتُوْا بِالشُّهَدَآءِ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ هُمُ الْكٰذِبُوْنَ

Why did they (the accusers) not bring four witnesses to prove this? So, as they did not bring the witnesses, they are the liars in the sight of Allah - 24:13.

In the first sentence of this verse it is emphasized that the Muslims should have demanded to produce evidence from those who were spreading this rumor, instead of becoming instrumental in passing on the rumor to others. Since the accusation of adultery cannot be proved without the production of four eyewitnesses, it should have been demanded of them either to produce four eyewitnesses or keep quiet. In the second sentence of the verse it is declared that, as they could not produce four eyewitnesses, so they are the ones who are liars before Allah.

It is worth noting here that it is quite probable that a person sees such an event with his own eyes, but is unable to produce four witnesses. And if he relates the event, which, in fact, he has seen with his own eyes, then how can he be called a liar. More so, to call him liar before Allah is not at all understandable, because Allah knows the truth about every thing happening. So, how could he be declared a liar before Allah, when the incident has actually taken place. There are two answers to this. First, here عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ (in the sight of Allah) stands for Allah's command and the rule of Allah, Therefore, it means that in accordance with the rule of Allah and His command this person would be declared a liar and awarded the punishment of false accusation, because the command of Allah is not to relate the incidence, despite the fact that you have seen it, if four witnesses are not available. If someone relates it without the support of four witnesses, then he will be declared liar by law and will be punished.

The second explanation is that, it is against the dignity of a Muslim to do something having no purpose and object, especially a thing which would put blame on a Muslim. Hence, a Muslim should testify the commission of a crime or sin against another Muslim only with the intent of controlling and eradicating the crime and sin, and not for the purpose of defaming or hurting someone. So, if a person relates such an incident without the support of four witnesses claiming that he is doing it with the intent of reforming the society and for removing the evil from it, knowing that without the production of four witnesses he would neither be able to

prove the crime according to requirements of the Islamic law nor would the accused be punished, and on the other hand he will himself be liable to punishment for relating a lie, in such a situation he is عِندَ اللهِ (in the sight of Allah) a liar in the proclamation of his intent, claiming that he was testifying the incident for reforming the society and removing the evil. It is for the simple reason that in the absence of witnesses it is not possible to harbor this intention under the Islamic code. (Maẓharī)

An important and necessary warning

In both the above verses it is emphasized that every Muslim should have good opinion about other Muslims, and it is made obligatory for them to contradict and deny any insinuation and accusations without proof against the Muslims. But one should not have any doubt as to why the Holy Prophet ﷺ did not have the belief that the rumor was false, and as such denied it at the outset, instead he suffered for a month and asked Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا to beg Allah's pardon if there was a slip on her part. (Bukhārī)

The explanation for this is that the anxiety of the Holy Prophet ﷺ was not inconsistent with the injunction for Muslims to have good opinion about other Muslims, because he neither denied this rumor nor did he act on its exigency, and also he did not like the spread of the rumor. All did he say in the gathering of companions was ما علمت على اهلى الا خيرا (Bukhārī) that is, 'I do not know anything but good and virtuous about my wife,. All these things are proofs of acting in conformity with the injunction of the verses of having good opinion. However, the definite and absolute belief, which could also remove the natural anxiety, followed when the verses of exoneration were revealed.

The substance of explanation is that in such a situation, creation of doubts and anxiety is but natural, but to act with care and caution, as the Holy Prophet ﷺ did, was not against having good opinion about the Muslims, especially when no action was taken on its exigency. Those Muslims who were awarded the punishment for false accusation and were reprimanded in these two verses, had actually acted on the exigency of the rumor and were involved in its spread. Spreading falsehood was unlawful and punishable even before the revelation of these verses.

وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهٗ فِى الدُّنْيَا وَالْاٰخِرَةِ لَمَسَّكُمْ فِىْ مَآ اَفَضْتُمْ فِيْهِ

عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ

And had it not been for the grace of Allah upon you, and His mercy in this world and in the Hereafter, a great punishment would have reached you for what you got indulged in - 24:14.

This verse was revealed for those believers who had by mistake got somehow involved in the slander, but then repented and begged Allah's pardon. Some of them were even punished, but all of them were told through this verse that the crime they had committed was a very grave one, and on that crime they could have been subjected to punishment even in this world, like the one sent down on earlier people. In addition, they would have also been punished severely in the Hereafter, but Allah's dealings with those believers were that of grace and mercy, both in this world and in the Hereafter. Hence, the chastisement was withdrawn from them. The manifestation of Allah's grace and mercy in the world is that, first, the Divine help was granted to adopt Islam and its faith, then the company of the Holy Prophet ﷺ was accorded, which is an impediment for the award of punishment, and then again the Divine help was granted to repent sincerely and beg Allah's forgiveness for the sin which was committed, and ultimately the repentance was accepted and the sin was pardoned. While in the Hereafter, the token of Allah's grace and mercy is that He has promised to forgive and overlook and grant pardon.

إِذْ تَلَقَّوْنَهُ بِأَلْسِنَتِكُمْ

When you were welcoming it with your tongues - 24:15.

The word تَلَقّى means to make inquiries from each other (to be inquisitive) and repeat before others. Here it means to repeat hearsay without probe and proof. (1)

وَتَحْسَبُونَهُ هَيِّنًا ۖ وَهُوَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَظِيمٌ

And were taking it as a trivial matter, while in the sight of Allah it was grave - 24:15.

It means that you regarded it a trifle matter that you heard it and passed it on to others. But in the sight of Allah it was a great sin that without probing and finding out any proof you passed on something to

(1). Lexically the word also means 'welcoming'. This meaning is adopted in the translation of the text, because it also covers the meaning of receiving and conveying the news without hesitation. (Editor)

others to cause harm to other Muslims and to make their life miserable.

وَلَوْلَآ اِذْ سَمِعْتُمُوْهُ قُلْتُمْ مَّا يَكُوْنُ لَنَآ اَنْ نَّتَكَلَّمَ بِهٰذَا ق سُبْحٰنَكَ هٰذَا بُهْتَانٌ عَظِيْمٌ

And why, when you heard of it, did you not say, 'It is not for us to speak about this. Pure are You (O Allah). This is a terrible calumny.' - 24:16.

In this verse the same advice is repeated which was imparted in an earlier verse, with further elaboration as to what should the Muslims do in such a situation when they hear a rumor. The advice is that they should say in categorical terms that they are not allowed even to mention such a thing for which there is no proof. It is a very grave accusation.

A doubt and its answer

If someone has a doubt that just as the truth of an event cannot be verified without a proof, and hence it is unlawful to mention it and spread it, likewise, the report of that event should not be believed to be a lie and a 'terrible calumny' without a proof of its being a lie. The answer to this doubt is that it is the integral spirit of Islam to consider every Muslim as free from sins, and this is based on reasoning. Anything contrary to this proven reality is a lie if put forward without a proof, and no further proof is required to prove this assertion a lie. This is enough to call it a slander if a believer Muslim is blamed for a crime without proof.

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يُحِبُّوْنَ اَنْ تَشِيْعَ الْفَاحِشَةُ فِى الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ لا فِى الدُّنْيَا وَالْاٰخِرَةِ

Surely, those who like that shamelessness spreads among the believers, for them there is a painful punishment in this world and the Hereafter - 24:19.

Those who had taken part in any way in the slander are again condemned in this verse, and are warned with the punishment in the world and in the Hereafter. An extra element in this verse is that those who propagate such rumors actually want the spread of obscenity and immorality among the Muslims.

The Qur'ānic system for the prevention of obscenity

The Holy Qur'ān has drawn out this unique system for the prevention of obscenity that, in the first place such a news should not spread, and if at all it is leaked out, it should be backed up with lawful proof, so that the

punishment of adultery is also executed publicly, immediately after the spread of the news. This way the publicity itself will serve as a preventive measure. If there were no condition of lawful proof, then it would have been lot easy to pass on and publicize such scandals, especially, when there is no punishment attached to it. Absence of any fear against spreading scandals leads to minimizing the repulsion against immorality and obscenity from the people's mind; rather it encourages to indulge in such crimes and to propagate them. This is an every day experience that this sort of scandals is published in the newspapers daily. Young men and women read them frequently. As a result, the intensity of such wicked acts is minimized gradually, and instead a slow inclination for indulging in them develops in their minds. It is for this reason that the Holy Qur'ān has allowed publicity of such news only in such situations when it is supported with lawful evidence, so that people should see the severe punishment for the obscene crime along with the news of adultery when they learn about it. Where there is no proof and punishment, Qur'ān has proclaimed the publicity of such news as a tool for spreading obscenity among the Muslims. This vital point needs to be pondered by the Muslims. This verse actually emphasizes that to give publicity to scandals without proof will invite very severe punishment both in this world and in the Hereafter. The punishment in the Hereafter will naturally follow after the Dooms Day, and thus cannot be experienced here, but the punishment of the world can be seen. So, those who were punished for false accusation have in fact experienced the punishment of the world. If anyone has escaped the execution of the punishment for want of proof needed for the award of this punishment, even then he has earned the punishment (which will be executed in the Hereafter). For the implication of the verse even this is enough.

وَلَا يَأْتَلِ أُولُوا الْفَضْلِ مِنْكُم وَالسَّعَةِ اَنْ يُّؤْتُوْٓا اُولِى الْقُرْبٰى وَالْمَسٰكِيْنَ وَالْمُهٰجِرِيْنَ
فِىْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ صلے وَلْيَعْفُوْا وَلْيَصْفَحُوْا ط اَلَا تُحِبُّوْنَ اَنْ يَّغْفِرَاللّٰهُ لَكُمْ ط وَاللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ
رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿٢٢﴾

And the men of grace and wealth among you should not swear against giving (their charitable gifts) to the kinsmen and the poor and to those who have migrated in the way of Allah. And they should forgive and forego. Do you not like that Allah forgives you? And Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful - 24:22.

Teachings of high morals for the exalted companions

The word ائتلاء means to swear. Sayyidnā Misṭaḥ and Ḥassān ؓ got involved in the incident of slandering Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها from amongst the Muslims. They were awarded punishment for false accusation by the Holy Prophet ﷺ after the revelation of exoneration verses. Both Sayyidnā Misṭaḥ and Ḥassān ؓ were illustrious companions and had taken part in the battle of Badr, but they slipped on this occasion and received Divine help for the sincere repentance. Then the way exoneration was revealed by Allah Ta'ālā for Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها, in the same manner it was also declared that the repentance of these believers was accepted and they were pardoned.

Sayyidnā Misṭaḥ ؓ was a relative of Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ؓ, and was a poor person. Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ؓ used to help him materially. When the involvement of Misṭaḥ ﷺ in the spread of the incident of *Ifk* was established, then Sayyidnā Abū Bakr's ؓ paternal love for the daughter surged up, and he was annoyed with Sayyidnā Misṭaḥ ؓ as a natural corollary, because her feelings were deeply injured by him. He then swore an oath that he would never help Sayyidnā Misṭaḥ ؓ materially. It is obvious that to help any specific poor person is not obligatory for a Muslim, and if someone stops the material help he used to give to a poor person, it is not a sin .But Allah Ta'ālā wanted to make the illustrious group of companions as a model for the society. So, whereas on the one hand those who had slipped were granted Divine help to repent sincerely and reform themselves, on the other hand those who had sworn not to help any more the poor people, because of the natural grief and displeasure, were imparted wisdom of supreme ethics in this verse, that they should break their oath and expiate for it. It is below their dignity to stop the material help. They should also forgive and overlook, the way Allah has forgiven them.

Since it was not a religious obligation on Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ؓ to help Sayyidnā Misṭaḥ ؓ, therefore the Qur'ān has adopted the line to say that those whom Allah Ta'ālā has bestowed the knowledge and excellence, and who are granted the means to spend in the way of Allah, they should be careful not to undertake such an oath. The words أُوْلُوا الْفَضْلِ وَالسَّعَةِ (the men of grace and wealth) are used to put across this meaning.

The last sentence of this verse is أَلَا تُحِبُّوْنَ اَنْ يَّغْفِرَاللّٰهُ لَكُمْ, (24:22) which says

'Do you not like that Allah forgives you?

On this Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ﷺ said immediately والله انّى احبّ ان يغفر الله لى that is 'By God, I definitely want that Allah forgives me'. Immediately after that he restored the material help of Sayyidnā Misṭaḥ ﷺ, and said 'This help will never stop now'. (Bukhārī and Muslim)

These are the graces of ethics which were imparted to train the illustrious companions. Ṣaḥīḥ of Bukhārī has quoted on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ once said :

ليس الواصل بالمكافى ولكنّ الواصل الّذى اذا قطعت رحمه وصلها

'He is not the kind hearted towards relatives who only returns their favours, but the real kind hearted towards relatives is the one who maintains his relationship with them, despite they have severed the relations' (Maẓharī).

إِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَرْمُوْنَ الْمُحْصَنٰتِ الْغٰفِلٰتِ الْمُؤْمِنٰتِ لُعِنُوْا فِى الدُّنْيَا وَالْاٰخِرَةِ ص وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيْمٌ

Surely, those who level a false charge against the chaste, naïve and believing women are cursed in this world and the Hereafter, and for them there is a mighty punishment - 24:23.

On the face of it the same subject has been repeated in this verse which has already appeared in the verses of

وَالَّذِيْنَ يَرْمُوْنَ الْمُحْصَنٰتِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَاْتُوْا بِاَرْبَعَةِ شُهَدَآءَ فَاجْلِدُوْهُمْ ثَمٰنِيْنَ جَلْدَةً وَّلَا تَقْبَلُوْا لَهُمْ شَهَادَةً اَبَدًا وَاُولٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفٰسِقُوْنَ. اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ تَابُوْا مِنْۢ بَعْدِ ذٰلِكَ وَاَصْلَحُوْا فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ

And those who accuse the chaste women (of fornication), but they do not produce four witnesses, flog them with eighty stripes and do not accept their any evidence any more, and they are the sinners, [4] except those who repent afterwards and mend their ways; then, Allah is All-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. (24:4,5)

But in fact there is a big difference between the two, because at the end of verses on punishment of false accusation (24:4,5), those who repent are exempted and promised forgiveness. There is no such thing in this verse, and instead it announces the curse in this world and in the Hereafter, without any exception.

Therefore, it is obvious that this verse (24:23) is aimed at those who were involved in slandering Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها, and did not repent, so much so that even after the revelation of her exoneration in the Qur'ān they adhered to their malicious accusation and kept on propagating it. It is but obvious that no Muslim could do such a thing. If a Muslim disregards a categorical Qur'ānic injunction, he cannot remain a Muslim. Hence, this reference relates to those hypocrites who did not stop their slander-mongering campaign against Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها even after the exoneration was reveled in her favour. There is no doubt that they were hypocrites and disbelievers. Therefore, those who had felt remorse on their doing they were granted pardon in the two worlds by Allah's mercy, and those who did not repent are declared in this verse as cursed, both in this world and the Hereafter. Those who felt remorse were given the glad tiding of deliverance from punishment, and those who did not feel remorse were warned of severe punishment. Those who repented were given the good news in إِنَّ اللهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ, (Allah is Most forgiving Very-Merciful) and those who did not repent were warned of punishment in the next verse by saying يَوْمَ تَشْهَدُ عَلَيْهِمْ (On the Day their tongues, their hands and their legs will testify against them). (Bayān al-Qur'ān).

An important Warning

The few Muslims who got involved in the episode in connection with the slander on Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها did so at a time when verses regarding her exoneration were not revealed. After the revelation of verses of exoneration whoever makes an insinuation on her character is indeed a disbeliever and a denier of the Qur'ān, like the few groups of Shi'ities and some other individuals, who are involved in the shameful practice. There is not the slightest doubt that they are disbelievers. They are regarded disbelievers by the consensus of entire Ummah.

يَوْمَ تَشْهَدُ عَلَيْهِمْ أَلْسِنَتُهُمْ وَأَيْدِيهِمْ وَأَرْجُلُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

On the Day their tongues, their hands and their legs will testify against them of what they used to do. - 24:24.

The Day on which their own tongues, hands and feet will speak against them and will testify against their crimes, they will be punished precisely according to the crimes they had committed. It is related in Aḥādīth that on the Dooms Day those who will admit their sins will be

pardoned by Allah Ta'ālā, and He will conceal their sins from the crowd of people. If anyone will deny his sins and will claim that he did not commit them, and say that the angels did not write his record of actions correctly, then his speech will be taken away from him and his hands and feet will be asked to testify, who will speak and testify. Another verse اَلْيَوْمَ نَخْتِمُ عَلٰى اَفْوَاهِهِمْ (Today We set a seal on their mouths, - 36:65) states this very point. This verse says that their mouths will be sealed, but the verse under discussion (of Sūrah An-Nūr) says that their tongues will testify. There is no contradiction in the two verses in that they will not be able to use their tongues at their discretion. In other words they will have no control on tongues to say anything wrong, as they have in this world. Instead their tongues will say only the right things against their intent and wish. It is also possible that at a certain time their mouths and tongues will be completely sealed and then the tongues are commanded to speak the truth (Only Allah knows best)

اَلْخَبِيْثٰتُ لِلْخَبِيْثِيْنَ وَالْخَبِيْثُوْنَ لِلْخَبِيْثٰتِ ۚ وَالطَّيِّبٰتُ لِلطَّيِّبِيْنَ وَالطَّيِّبُوْنَ لِلطَّيِّبٰتِ ۚ
اُولٰٓئِكَ مُبَرَّءُوْنَ مِمَّا يَقُوْلُوْنَ ۭ لَهُمْ مَّغْفِرَةٌ وَّرِزْقٌ كَرِيْمٌ

Vile women are for vile men, and vile men are for vile women. And good women are for good men and good men are for good women. Those are free from what they (the accusers) say. For them there is forgiveness and a graceful provision - 24:26.

It means that the vulgar women are suitable for vulgar men and the vulgar men are suitable for vulgar women. And pure women are worthy for pure men and pure men are worthy for pure women.

In this last verse the common principle is stated that Allah Ta'ālā has created a connection between the people of the same nature. Thus, vulgar and unchaste women are inclined towards vulgar and unchaste men and vice versa. Similarly, pure and chaste women show inclination towards pure and decent men and vice versa. Therefore, every one tries to find the spouse according to one's inclination and liking, and in a natural way one does find one to suit him or her.

In the light of this norm and principle it is now quite clear that the messengers of Allah, who are the models of purity and chastity both outwardly and inwardly in this world, are granted spouses by Allah Ta'ālā in accordance with their status. Hence, the Holy Prophet ﷺ, who is

the head of all messengers, was bestowed with spouses who were befitting to his position and status in purity, chastity and ethical excellence, and Sayyidah 'Āishah رضی اللہ عنہا is more prominent among them all. Only those can have any doubt or suspicion about her who do not have faith in the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself. It is mentioned about the wife of Sayyidnā Nūḥ and Sayyidnā Lūṭ علیہما السلام in the Qur'ān that they were disbelievers, but it is also established that they were not involved in any obscenity or vulgarity. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ said ما بغت امراۃ نبی قط Never did a wife of a messenger commit adultery'. (ذکر فی الدر المنثور). It is, therefore, corroborated that it is possible that a messenger's wife could be a disbeliever, but it is not possible that she could be vulgar and sexually immoral, because adultery is a natural detestable act in the eyes of people, whereas disbelief is not a natural detestable thing. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Verses 27- 29

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَدْخُلُوْا بُيُوْتًا غَيْرَ بُيُوْتِكُمْ حَتّٰى تَسْتَاْنِسُوْا وَتُسَلِّمُوْا عَلٰٓى اَهْلِهَا ۭ ذٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿۲۷﴾ فَاِنْ لَّمْ تَجِدُوْا فِيْهَآ اَحَدًا فَلَا تَدْخُلُوْهَا حَتّٰى يُؤْذَنَ لَكُمْ ۚ وَاِنْ قِيْلَ لَكُمُ ارْجِعُوْا فَارْجِعُوْا هُوَ اَزْكٰى لَكُمْ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿۲۸﴾ لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ اَنْ تَدْخُلُوْا بُيُوْتًا غَيْرَ مَسْكُوْنَةٍ فِيْهَا مَتَاعٌ لَّكُمْ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تُبْدُوْنَ وَمَا تَكْتُمُوْنَ ﴿۲۹﴾

O those who believe, do not enter any houses, other than your own houses unless you seek permission and greet their inmates with Salām. That is good for you, so that you may observe advice. [27] **Then, if you do not find anyone there, do not enter therein until permission is given to you. And if it is said to you, 'Go back', just go back; it is more decent for you. And Allah is All-Knowing of what you do.** [28] **There is no sin on you if you enter uninhabited houses in which you have rightful benefit. And Allah knows what you reveal and what you conceal.** [29]

Commentary

The fifth injunction regarding mutual meetings and asking permission before entering anyone's home

Right from the beginning of Sūrah An-Nūr it is enjoined to curb the obscenity and immorality in the society, and to restrain this, various punishments are prescribed. Then labeling of false accusation on someone is condemned. After that such injunctions are enjoined which can check these obscenities and safeguard the chastity and continence, and also create an atmosphere to eliminate the conditions of their development. The issues and instructions regarding seeking permission before entering anyone's house (*Isti'dhān*) also fall within these injunctions. Hence, entering in anyone's house or to peep in without the permission of the owner has been prohibited. The wisdom in this instruction is that one should not cast an eye on women who are not one's *maḥram* (with whom marriage is prohibited). In the above verses various instructions are given against various types of houses.

There are four categories of houses. One, in which one lives, where there is no possibility of the presence of some stranger. Two, where someone else is also residing, irrespective of being *maḥram* or not, and where there is a possibility of someone's entry. Three, where there are both possibilities that someone is living or the house is empty. Four, a house which is not specified for anyone's living, such as, a mosque, school, monastery, shrine etc., where all people go in. Out of these four categories it is obvious that there is no need of asking permission to go in the houses of the first kind. Hence, the first category is not mentioned specifically in these verses, but for the other three categories injunctions are spelled out.

An important aspect of Qur'ānic social ethic is that if you go to meet someone, first ask the permission and do not enter in anyone's house without permission.

It is a pity that the amount of importance Islam has attached to ethics of visiting someone by providing detailed instructions about them in the Qur'ān, and which were strongly emphasized by the Holy Prophet ﷺ, both by practice and oral teachings, the present day Muslims neglect them by the same margin. Even the pious and educated people do not regard this a sin, nor do they make an effort to act on them. The other civilized nations of the world have adopted them to improve their society,

but the Muslims have lagged behind them all. This was the very first Islamic injunction which was overlooked by the Muslims to begin with. It is worth noting that seeking permission (*Isti'dhān*) is that injunction of the Holy Qur'ān in which even the slightest laxity or alteration is termed by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ as the rejection of the Qur'ān itself. As a matter of fact now people overlook these injunctions so much as if they are not part of the Holy Qur'ān. انا لِلّٰہِ وانّا الیہ راجعون

Wisdom of seeking permission (*Isti'dhān*)

Allah Ta'ālā has provided every person a place where he lives, whether he owns it or has acquired it on rent. Such a place is his home, and the real purpose of a home is to provide comfort and tranquility. When the Holy Qur'ān has referred to one's home as a great blessing of Allah, it has an indication towards this basic objective of a home. The Qur'ān says, جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِّنْ بُيُوتِكُمْ سَكَنًا (16:80) It means that Allah has given you peace and comfort through your homes. One can enjoy peace and comfort in his home only when he can live there without the interference of any one else, and can rest and work at will. Any interference in his freedom is tantamount to killing the very purpose of the home, which is naturally very damaging. Islam has prohibited harming anyone without any cause. A great wisdom in the injunction of seeking permission is to save people from interference of others and its consequent ill effects, which is obligatory on all peace loving people.

The other consideration in the injunction is for the visitor himself, in that if he would go in to meet someone after taking permission, then the host will also reciprocate his gesture by giving him due importance and respect. If his visit is with purpose then the host will be sympathetic and try to meet his need. On the other hand, if he would go in to call on someone without taking his permission, like an uncouth, then naturally he would not be so welcome, and the host would like to get rid of him as quickly as possible. Even if the host had any sympathy toward him, it would be reduced, and the sin for causing trouble to a Muslim would be additional.

The third consideration is the elimination of obscenity and immorality. If one enters someone's home without taking prior permission, the possibility is that he might see the ladies of the house, which may lead to temptations. It is for this reason that the injunctions on seeking

permission are placed next to punishment of adultery and punishment of false accusation etc.

The fourth consideration is that sometimes one is busy in the solitude of his home doing something which he does not want others to see. If someone comes into his house unannounced, then that act will be known to others, which he wanted to conceal. Any attempt to disclose the secrets of others is also a sin and a source of vexation. Some issues concerning seeking permission have been described in the above verses themselves, so they should be considered first. Other related issues will be dealt with later.

Ruling

In these verses the address is with the phrase يَٰٓأَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا (O those who believe) which is used for men, (because the relative pronoun in the text الذين is originally of masculine gender) but women are also included in the injunction, like other Qur'ānic injunctions, which are normally addressed to men but women are included in them, except in some cases where it is expressly mentioned that they are exclusive for men. Therefore, wives of the Ṣaḥābah included themselves in the address of the present verse and acted accordingly. Whenever they would visit any one's house, they used to seek permission. Sayyidah Umm Iyās رضی اللہ عنہا has said 'We were four women who used to visit frequently Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا together, and used to seek permission before going in the house, and would enter only after she had permitted'. (Ibn Kathīr on the authority of Ibn Abī Ḥātim)

Ruling

It is clear from the universality of this verse that on a visit to anyone's house the injunction of seeking permission is common to all, whether men or women, Maḥram or non-Maḥram. Either a woman goes to visit another woman, or a man goes to visit another man, it is obligatory on all to seek permission. Similarly, if a man visits his mother, sisters or any other Maḥram woman, he should seek permission. Imām Mālik has narrated in Muwaṭṭa' quoting 'Aṭā' Ibn Yasār رحمہم اللہ تعالیٰ that someone enquired from the Holy Prophet ﷺ whether he should seek permission before going to his mother. He ﷺ said 'Yes, do seek permission'. Then that fellow said 'O Messenger of Allah, ﷺ I live with my mother in the same house'. He ﷺ said even then you should not enter the house without taking

permission. He asked again "O Messenger of Allah, ﷺ ! 'I am always at her service'. He ﷺ replied, 'You should still ask her permission. Would you like that you see your mother naked? He said 'No, no'. Then the Holy Prophet ﷺ said 'It is for this reason that you should seek permission, because there is a possibility that she might have uncovered some of her coverable parts in the house for some need'. (Maẓharī)

One learns from this Ḥadīth that the word "other than your own houses" in the phrase غَيْرَ بُيُوتِكُمْ, (24:27) as it appears in the Qur'ān, refers to those houses where one lives alone and no one else, like parents, brothers or sisters reside with him. (It is only in this case that seeking permission is not necessary).

Ruling

If someone is living alone in the house with his wife, even then it is preferable and a *sunnah* to make some sort of sound, such as hem or thump, before entering, in order to make known his incoming, although seeking permission is not obligatory in this case. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd's wife رضي الله عنها has reported that whenever 'Abdullāh would come in the house, he would always make a hemming sound at the door to announce his arrival before entering, so that he should not see us in a condition that he would like to avoid. (Ibn Kathīr quoting Ibn Jarīr with an authentic chain). In another situation Ibn Juraij inquired from 'Aṭā' رحمه الله تعالى whether it is obligatory to seek permission before going in one's own house to his wife, and he said 'no'. Ibn Kathīr after quoting this version has explained that what it means is that it is not obligatory but preferable.

The Traditional way of seeking permission

The procedure for seeking permission, as explained in the verse is حَتّٰى تَسْتَأْنِسُوْا وَتُسَلِّمُوْا عَلٰٓى اَهْلِهَا, (24:27) that is do not enter into any one's house until carrying out two things. First, *Isti'nās* – its literal meaning is to seek acquaintance. Majority of commentators have taken this word for *isti'dhān*, that is to take permission. By the use of word *Isti'nās* instead of *isti'dhān* there is a hint that in taking permission before entering, the host gets acquainted with the visitor through his voice and the element of surprise is removed. The second requirement is greeting the inmates of the house with *salām*. Some commentators have elaborated it as; one should first seek permission and on entering the house should greet the

inmates. Qurṭubī has also adopted this explanation that one should first seek permission, and when it is granted, only then go in and greet the hosts. Sayyidnā Abū Ayyub Anṣāri's Ḥadīth also corresponds well with this explanation, to which Māwardī has added further that if the visitor happens to see an inmate of the house before seeking permission, then he should first greet him, and then seek permission to go in, otherwise one should first seek permission and then greet on entering. But the procedure that seems to be *masnun* through narrations of Ḥadīth, is that one should first greet from outside with *Assalamu 'Alaikum* (السّلام عليكم) and then by announcing his name should seek permission to go in.

Imām Bukhārī in his al-Adab ul-Mufrad has quoted on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Huraira ﷺ that if someone seeks permission before greeting, the host need not reply (because he has deviated from the practice adopted by the Holy Prophet ﷺ) (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī) Abū Dāwūd has narrated in his Ḥadīth that someone from Banī 'Āmir sought permission from the Holy Prophet ﷺ, saying أالج (that is, can I thrust in?). On hearing that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said to his servant, "this man does not know how to seek permission. Go to him and explain to him that the permission should be sought by saying السّلام عليكم أ أدخل (that is, Assalāmu 'Alaikum, can I come in?). Before the servant could go out that fellow himself said 'Assalāmu 'Alaikum' السّلام عليكم أ أدخل as he had heard the instruction of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . Then he ﷺ permitted him to come in. (Ibn Kathīr)

Baihaqi has narrated in Shu'ab-ul-'Īmān on the authority of Sayyidnā Jābir ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ once said لاتأذنوا لمن لَمْ يَبدأ بالسلام that is 'Do not let in the one who does not greet before seeking permission'. (Maẓharī). In this case the Holy Prophet ﷺ has made two corrections. One, that one should greet first. Two, that he had used the word أَدْخُلُ instead of أَلِجُ, which was not proper, because the word is derived from *wulūj* (وُلُوْج) which means, to make an entry with force into a narrow space. This expression is against all ethics. In any case, one learns from these narrations that the instruction of greetings given in the Qur'ānic verses relate to the greeting for seeking permission, which is offered from outside the house for inviting the attention of the inmates. On entering the house, the greetings should be repeated in the usual manner.

Ruling

The procedure of greeting first and then seeking permission for entry, as has been established by various Aḥādīth, can best be followed if the visitor himself announces his name for seeking permission. This was exactly the practice of Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ. He used to announce at the door of the Holy Prophet ﷺ السّلام على رسول الله، السلام عليكم أيدخل عمر؟ that is, after the greetings whether Umar can come in. (Ibn Kathīr etc.) Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim has narrated that Sayyidnā Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī ﷺ went to see Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ and sought permission to get in by saying السلام عليكم هذا ابو موسٰى، السلام عليكم هذا الاشعرى (Qurṭubī). First he gave his name as Abū Mūsā and then for further clarification added Ash'arī. This is to help the host recognize the caller immediately and respond quickly, for without recognizing the visitor the host may hesitate to give permission for getting in.

Ruling

Some people adopt the worst possible practice in this regard that they ask permission from outside to come in without disclosing their identity. And when the host inquires as to who was there, they would answer 'It is me'. This is not the right answer to the host. If he has not recognized the voice on the first call, how can he recognize with the answer – 'it is me'.

Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādi has reported in his Jāmi' quoting 'Alī Ibn 'Āṣim al-Wāsitī that when he went to Baṣrah he went to see Sayyidnā Mughira Ibn Shu'bah ﷺ, and knocked at his door. Sayyidnā Mughīrah ﷺ inquired from inside as to who was there. He answered *Ana* (أنَا) that is 'It is me'. So, Sayyidnā Mughīrah ﷺ said ' I do not have anyone among my friends by the name *Ana*' (أنَا). Then he went out and related the Ḥadīth to him that one day Sayyidnā Jābir Ibn 'Abdullāh ﷺ went to see the Holy Prophet ﷺ and knocked at his door. The Holy Prophet ﷺ inquired from inside as to who was there, and Jābir ﷺ said *Ana* (أنَا) that is 'It is me'. Then the Holy Prophet ﷺ repeated the words '*Ana Ana*' (أنَا، أنَا) to explain that there is no point in saying *Ana, Ana,* as no one can be recognized by this word.

Ruling

There is yet another very wrong practice which is commonly observed these days even by the educated people, and that is they would knock at the door and when the inmates would enquire from inside as to who was

there, they do not reply at all and remain silent. This is the worst practice to tease the host, as he remains in suspense about the identity of the visitor, and the very spirit of seeking permission is defeated.

Ruling

This has also been established by these narrations that it is also a correct procedure of seeking permission to knock at the door, provided one tells his name at the same time.

Ruling

If one knocks at the door, it should not be so strong that the inmates get upset, rather it should be mild with the sole purpose of letting the inmates know that some one is at the door. Those who used to knock at the door of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, they used to knock with their nails in a manner that the sound should not be loud enough to disturb him. (As narrated by Al-Khaṭīb in his Jāmi' – Qurṭubī) If one understands the spirit behind *isti'dhān* that it is meant to seek permission with familiarization (*isti'nās*) of the caller, then automatically he would take care of all those things which could possibly trouble the host. What is required is to knock gently and announce the name for familiarization.

Important Warning

These days people do not pay any attention toward seeking permission, which is a clear sin for forsaking an obligation. But on the other hand there are some problems in our time for those who do want to take permission in the prescribed manner, that is first offer greetings from outside and then seek permission by announcing their name. One problem is that the host to whom they want their voice to reach is not available close to the door, hence it is difficult to convey to him the sound of greetings and the name of the caller. Therefore, the important thing to note is that the spirit of the injunction is not to enter anyone's house without permission. There may be different forms of seeking permission in different places in different times. One such form is to knock at the door, which is established by the record of Ḥadīth. In the present time people fix up bells at their doors. It is sufficient for carrying out the obligation of seeking permission to press the button of the bell, provided the caller also announces his name after that in an audible voice for the host. Apart from this, it is also in order to adopt any other method of seeking permission in vogue at any place. The present day system of sending in

visiting cards to disclose the identity of the caller is a good practice in that not only the name of the caller but also his address is made known to the host without any effort on his part, which fulfils the spirit behind *isti'dhān*. Therefore, there is no harm in adopting this system.

Ruling

If a person asks permission from someone and he replies in the negative that he cannot meet at that time, then the caller should go back and not feel offended. He should realize that every one's needs and circumstances are different, and at times it is beyond the control of persons to call in the visitor or to go out and meet him. Hence, his refusal to meet should be accepted with good grace. In the present verse the same thing is emphasized وَإِنْ قِيلَ لَكُمُ ارْجِعُوا فَارْجِعُوا هُوَ أَزْكَىٰ لَكُمْ that is, 'If it is said to you, "Go back" just go back, it is more decent for you - 24:28. Some people of the past ages are reported to have said 'I waited all my life wishing that I visit someone and seek permission to go in the house, and the host turns down my request asking me to go back so that I could be rewarded the grace of this Qur'ānic injunction by following it. But, alas, I could never get that blessing'.

Ruling

The Islamic jurisprudence has established a two-sided system of teaching the mannerism of social graces and of saving all from the troubles and inconvenience. The way visitors are advised in this verse that if their request for permission to go in is turned down, they should not feel offended, similarly, the other side of the coin is taught in a Ḥadīth. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said ان لزورک علیک حقا. (Surely your visitors have some rights to be observed by you). It means that one who comes to meet you he too has his right on you. His right is that you should call him in, pay him respect and listen to him. Do not refuse to meet him without any serious excuse or a genuine reason.'

Ruling

If one goes to meet someone and seeks permission to go in, but does not get an answer, then according to practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, he should knock a second time, and still if there is no answer then he should knock a third time. If he does not get an answer the third time, then the injunction is, that he should go back. After knocking three times it becomes obvious that the inmate must have heard the knock, but

presumably he is in a condition that he cannot answer, for instance, praying or in the toilet or taking shower. Alternatively, he does not want to meet at that time. In both the situations it is not advisable to keep on staying there or keep on knocking, as it will upset the host, which must be avoided. The real purpose of *isti'dhān* is to avoid any inconvenience to the host.

Sayyidnā Abū Mūsā Ash'arī ؓ has narrated that once the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that اذا استأذن احدكم ثلاثاً فلم يؤذن له فليرجع that is, 'when someone seeks permission three times and does not get reply, he should go back' (Ibn Kathīr quoting Ṣaḥīḥ of Bukhārī). And Masnad Aḥmad has reported on authority of Sayyidnā Anas ؓ that once the Holy Prophet ﷺ had gone to meet Sayyidnā Sa'd Ibn 'Ubādah ؓ, and said *Assalāmu 'Alaikum* (السلام عليكم) from outside to seek permission (*Isti'dhān*) to go in, according to his practice. Sayyidnā Sa'd ؓ did reply the greeting but in a soft tone, so that the Holy Prophet ﷺ does not hear. He ﷺ repeated the greeting a second time and then a third time. On each occasion Sayyidnā Sa'd ؓ listened the greeting and replied in a soft tone. After that the Holy Prophet ﷺ went back. When Sayyidnā Sa'd ؓ realized that, he ran after him and explained that he heard his voice every time and also replied but in a soft tone, so that the greeting words are spoken for him repeatedly by the blessed tongue, as they will bring good fortune to him. (the Holy Prophet ﷺ explained to him the way of *sunnah* that when there is no response from inside, the visitor should go back) After that Sayyidnā Sa'd ؓ took the Holy Prophet ﷺ along with him to his house where he treated him with some refreshments, which the Holy Prophet ﷺ accepted graciously.

This action of Sayyidnā Sa'd ؓ was the result of overwhelming love and affection for the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and at that moment he did not realize that the most exalted Messenger was waiting at his door and he should immediately go out and receive him with due respect. Instead, his mind was induced toward the thought that it would be of benefit to him if the blessed tongue would utter Assalāmu 'Alaikum repeatedly. In any case this incident has established the issue that if there is no answer after seeking permission thrice, then according to practice of the Prophet ﷺ, the visitor should go back. It is against the sunnah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ to keep on waiting there, which will be a cause of trouble for the inmate and tantamount to forcing the host to come out.

Ruling

The foregoing ruling relates to the situation when one has sought permission thrice by knocking and greetings. In that situation to keep on waiting there would cause trouble to the host. But if someone waits at the door of a scholar or a pious person without seeking permission or without informing him, in the hope that he would meet him when he would come out according to his convenience, such a waiting is not undesirable, rather it is a great respect shown by the caller. The Qur'ān itself has advised people that to call the Holy Prophet ﷺ while he is inside, with the purpose of calling him out of the house is disrespect to him. People should wait for him outside until he comes out on his own according to his convenience. The related verse says وَلَوْ اَنَّهُمْ صَبَرُوْا حَتّٰى تَخْرُجَ اِلَيْهِمْ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَّهُمْ (And if they had patience until you come out to them, that would be better for them - 49:5). Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ has said, 'Sometimes I keep on waiting the whole afternoon at the door of an Anṣārī companion until he would come out on his own, for asking about some *Aḥadīth* . Had I sought permission to go in, he would have definitely allowed me, but I regarded that against ethics. That is why I used to bear the trouble of waiting'. (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī).

لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ اَنْ تَدْخُلُوْا بُيُوْتًا غَيْرَ مَسْكُوْنَةٍ فِيْهَا مَتَاعٌ لَّكُمْ

There is no sin on you if you enter uninhabited houses in which you have rightful benefit - 24:29.

Literal meaning of the word مَتَاع Matā' is to use, put to use, and to benefit from something. Anything from which some benefit is drawn is also called Matā'. In this verse Matā' is used in its literal meaning and is translated as 'rightful benefit'. It is reported by Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ؓ that when verses regarding *isti'dhān* (seeking permission) were revealed, he inquired from the Holy Prophet ﷺ "Ya Rasūl Allah! What would the traders of Quraish do after this prohibition? They travel with trading caravans from Makkah and Madīnah to Syria and have a number of resting places spread out all along the route, where they stay while traveling. There are no permanent inmates in those places. So, what will be the form of *isti'dhān* at those places? Whom will they seek the permission from?' On this enquiry the above verse was revealed (Maẓharī on authority of Ibn Abi Ḥātim).

The background of revelation of this verse tells us that the phrase بُيُوتًا غَيْرَ مَسْكُونَةٍ (uninhabited houses) relates to those houses and places which are not specifically meant for the residence of any individual or community. Rather they are open to all to go in and stay or use, such as public inns, which are made for the purpose of free stay of the travelers, mosques, shrines, schools, hospitals, post offices, railway stations, airports and community centers. Thus, all places built for the common welfare of people fall under this category, where every one is allowed to go in and use.

Ruling

In all the welfare centers where there are some restrictions or conditions placed by the owners or by the organizers for entry, their observance is obligatory by religious law also. For instance, if it is necessary for entering a railway platform to purchase the ticket, it will not be permissible in Sharī'ah to enter it without the ticket. The ticket is compulsory. Similarly, going into the restricted area of an airport is not allowed without having the necessary permission.

Ruling

However, if the specific rooms are reserved in mosques, shrines, schools, hospitals etc. for their staff, such as closets in mosques, shrines and schools or the offices in the hospitals, railway stations and airports, they do not fall under the category of 'uninhabited houses'. In all such places entry without permission is prohibited by Shariah.

Some other issues related to Isti'dhan

When we have learnt that the basic purpose of the Sharī'ah injunction of Isti'dhān is to avoid giving any trouble to others, and teaching of ethics of social graces, on the same principle the following code of conducts can also be drawn.

Some Issues relating to Telephone

To ring up anyone at a time which is normally his resting time or the time for prayers, unless extremely urgent, is not justified, for the same reason that it will be troublesome for him, just like entering anyone's house without permission, which disturbs the freedom of the host.

Ruling

If one has to talk to someone frequently, then it is desirable that it should be enquired from him the convenient time when he can talk without any trouble, and then only at that time he should be contacted on telephone.

Ruling

If one has to discuss something in detail with someone on telephone, then it is advisable that he should first find out from him whether he can talk in detail for some length of time. It is a common happening that when one is busy, the telephone bell rings, and he is compelled to lift the receiver no matter what he was doing, and if the caller talks for long, it really hurts the listener.

Ruling

Some people do not care about the ringing of telephone. It keeps on ringing but they would not lift the receiver. This habit is also against the Islamic ethics, and tantamount to usurpation of the right of the caller. As the Ḥadīth says انّ لزورك عليك حقّا (Your guests have some rights obligated on you). It indicates that the one who has come to meet you, it is his right that you talk to him, and do not refuse meeting him without reason, similarly, the one who wants to talk to you on telephone, it is his right that you respond.

Ruling

If you have gone to someone's house to meet him, and are waiting for the permission, in that situation you must not peep in, because the purpose of Isti'dhān is that you should not know what the host wants to hide from you. If you see it by peeping inside, then that purpose is lost. It is strongly prohibited in the *ḥadīth* (Bukhārī and Muslim quoting Sahal Ibn Sa'd as-Sa'idī). It was the practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that if he would go to meet someone and wait for the permission to go in, he would stand by the side of the door and not in front of it. He used to make Isti'dhān by the side of the door, because very seldom there were curtains on the door during that time, and if they were, there was the possibility of their opening up with the wind. (Maẓharī)

Ruling

The prohibition to go in the houses mentioned in the above verse is meant under normal conditions. But if there is an emergency, like fire or

demolition of the house, then one can enter without taking permission, rather it is desirable to go in immediately.

Ruling

If a person has sent someone to call another person, and he comes along with the person who had gone to fetch him, then he need not take permission to go in. The messenger who had gone to fetch him is permission by itself. But if he does not turn up along with the messenger, but goes later, then seeking of permission will be required. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said اذا دعى أحدكم فجاء مع الرسول فان ذلک له اذن 'If someone is called and he comes along with the messenger, then this by itself is permission for going in'. (Abū Dāwūd – Maẓharī)

Verses 30 - 31

قُلْ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ يَغُضُّوْا مِنْ اَبْصَارِهِمْ وَيَحْفَظُوْا فُرُوْجَهُمْ ؕ ذٰلِكَ اَزْكٰى لَهُمْ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ خَبِيْرٌۢ بِمَا يَصْنَعُوْنَ ﴿۳۰﴾ وَقُلْ لِّلْمُؤْمِنٰتِ يَغْضُضْنَ مِنْ اَبْصَارِهِنَّ وَيَحْفَظْنَ فُرُوْجَهُنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِيْنَ زِيْنَتَهُنَّ اِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَلْيَضْرِبْنَ بِخُمُرِهِنَّ عَلٰى جُيُوْبِهِنَّ ۖ وَلَا يُبْدِيْنَ زِيْنَتَهُنَّ اِلَّا لِبُعُوْلَتِهِنَّ اَوْ اٰبَآئِهِنَّ اَوْ اٰبَآءِ بُعُوْلَتِهِنَّ اَوْ اَبْنَآئِهِنَّ اَوْ اَبْنَآءِ بُعُوْلَتِهِنَّ اَوْ اِخْوَانِهِنَّ اَوْ بَنِيْٓ اِخْوَانِهِنَّ اَوْ بَنِيْٓ اَخَوٰتِهِنَّ اَوْ نِسَآئِهِنَّ اَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُهُنَّ اَوِ التّٰبِعِيْنَ غَيْرِ اُولِى الْاِرْبَةِ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ اَوِ الطِّفْلِ الَّذِيْنَ لَمْ يَظْهَرُوْا عَلٰى عَوْرٰتِ النِّسَآءِ ۖ وَلَا يَضْرِبْنَ بِاَرْجُلِهِنَّ لِيُعْلَمَ مَا يُخْفِيْنَ مِنْ زِيْنَتِهِنَّ ؕ وَتُوْبُوْٓا اِلَى اللّٰهِ جَمِيْعًا اَيُّهَ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿۳۱﴾

Say to the believing men that they must lower their gazes and guard their private parts; it is more decent for them. Surely Allah is All-Aware of what they do. [30] **And say to the believing women that they must lower their gazes and guard their private parts, and must not expose their adornment, except that which**

appears thereof, and must wrap their bosoms with their shawls, and must not expose their adornment except to their husbands or their fathers or the fathers of their husbands, or to their sons or the sons of their husbands, or to their brothers or the sons of their brothers or the sons of their sisters, or to their women, or to those owned by their right hands, or male attendants having no (sexual) urge, or to the children who are not yet conscious of the shames of women. And let them not stamp their feet in a way that the adornment they conceal is known. And repent to Allah O believers, all of you, so that you may achieve success. [31]

Commentary

An important chapter for the prevention of obscenity and security of chastity: *Ḥijāb* for women

The very first verses on the subject of *ḥijāb* for women are the ones which were revealed in Sūrah Aḥzāb at the time of marriage of the mother of the believers Sayyidah Zainab bint Jaḥash رضی اللہ عنہا with the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Some have given the date of revelation of these verses as 3rd Hijra while others say it was 5th Hijra. Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr and Nail Al-Auṭār have given preference to the latter date, while Rūḥ ul-M'ānī has reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Anas ؓ that this marriage was solemnized in Dhulqa'dah 5th Hijra. But it is an agreed position that the first verse on Ḥijāb was revealed on this occasion. As for the above referred verses of Sūrah an-Nūr, they were revealed at the time of incident of *Ifk,* which had happened on return from the battle of Banī Mustaliq or Muraisī'. This battle had taken place in the 6th Hijra. Hence, it is clear from the revelation point of view that Sūrah An-Nūr's verses on *ḥijāb* were revealed later, and Sūrah Aḥzāb's four verses were revealed earlier, and that the practice on the injunction of *ḥijāb* had started when the verses of Sūrah Aḥzāb were revealed. The subject of *ḥijāb* will be discussed Inshallah in detail under Sūrah Aḥzāb. Here the explanation will be restricted to only those verses which appear in Sūrah an-Nūr.

قُلْ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ يَغُضُّوْا مِنْ اَبْصَارِهِمْ وَيَحْفَظُوْا فُرُوْجَهُمْ ۭ ذٰلِكَ اَزْكٰى لَهُمْ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ خَبِيْرٌۢ بِمَا يَصْنَعُوْنَ

Say to the believing men that they must lower their gazes and

guard their private parts; it is more decent for them. Surely Allah is All-Aware of what they do. (24:30)

The word يَغُضُّ (*yaghuḍḍu*) is derived from غضّ (*ghaḍḍ*), which means to bring down or to lower, (Rāghib) lowering of eyes or to keep eyes down as enjoined in the verse, means to turn the eyes from something which is prohibited to be seen by Sharī'ah (Ibn Kathīr). Ibn Ḥibbān has given the explanation that to look at a non–Maḥram woman with intent to have (sexual) pleasure is totally prohibited, and to look without any such motive is *makrūh* (undesirable). To look at any woman's or man's private parts of the body is included in this explanation (except in case of dire necessity, such as medical examination). Peeping into anyone's house with the intent of finding out his secrets, and all such acts where looking is prohibited by Sharī'ah are all included in the injunction.

وَيَحْفَظُوا فُرُوجَهُمْ (24:30) Protection of private parts is purported to express that all possible situations of satisfying unlawful sexual desires be guarded against. In this, adultery, sodomy, lesbian act, masturbation and all such acts that fulfill unlawful lust and passions are prohibited. The purpose of the verse is to prohibit all illicit acts for fulfilling unlawful passions. For this purpose the initial and the ultimate acts have been mentioned rather clearly, and all those actions which fall in between them are also included in the prohibition. For unlawful sexual passion the very first act is casting eye with bad motive and its ultimate result is adultery. Both these acts have been mentioned clearly and are prohibited. All other acts falling in between, such as touching hands or having conversation, are included by implication.

Ibn Kathīr has related Sayyidnā 'Ubaidah ﷺ having said كلّ ما عصى الله به فهو كبيرة وقد ذكر الطرفين that is 'Any act done in disobedience to Allah is a major sin, but the initial and ultimate acts are mentioned at the two ends of the verse'. The initial act is to cast eye, and the ultimate is adultery. Ṭabarānī has quoted Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ once said :

النظر سهم من سهام ابليس مسموم من تركها مخافتى ابدلته ايمانا يجد حلاوته فى قلبه. (از ابن كثير)

'Casting eye is a poisonous arrow among the arrows of Satan. Whoever turns away his eye fearing from Me (despite demand of the heart), I will give him such strong faith, the delight of

which he will feel in his heart'. (Ibn Kathīr)

It is reported in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim on the authority of Sayyidnā Jarīr Ibn 'Abdullāh al-Bajali ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has advised what should one do if by chance one's eye is cast on a non-Maḥram woman. He has quoted the Holy Prophet ﷺ as saying 'Turn away your eyes from there'. (Ibn Kathīr). Sayyidnā 'Alī ﷺ has said that first sight is forgivable, but casting eye a second time is sin. Both versions are alike, that is, if one casts his eye by chance without intention, it is forgiven being not intentional, otherwise it is prohibited to cast the eye intentionally, even the first time.

To stare intentionally at boys having no beard also falls within this ruling

Ibn Kathīr has reported that many elders of the Ummah used to forbid forcefully staring at young boys (having no beard), and many scholars have declared it as forbidden (Perhaps it is in a situation when one looks with bad intention and passionate desire. God knows best)

Looking at non-Maḥram is forbidden

وَقُلْ لِّلْمُؤْمِنٰتِ يَغْضُضْنَ مِنْ اَبْصَارِهِنَّ

And say to the believing women that they must lower their gazes - 24:31.

In the initial part of this long verse the injunction is the same which has been enjoined on men-folk in the preceding verse, that is, keep the eyes down or turn away the eyes. Women-folk are also included in the injunction along with men, but in the next verse there is a separate injunction for them for laying more emphasis. Hence, it is clear that for women it is forbidden to look at any man except their *maḥrams*. Many scholars have declared that it is absolutely forbidden for women to see non-Maḥram men, irrespective of looking with bad intent and passion or without any intent and passion; in either case it is forbidden. For this ruling the argument put forward in support is the *ḥadīth* of Sayyidah 'Umm Salamah رضی اللہ عنہا, which relates that once 'Umm Salamah and Maimūnah رضی اللہ عنہما both were with the Holy Prophet ﷺ when suddenly 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umm Maktūm, the companion of the Holy Prophet ﷺ who was blind, came in, and the Holy Prophet ﷺ asked them to go inside. This incident had happened after the injunction of *ḥijāb* for

women was revealed. On this 'Umm Salamah رضی اللہ عنہا - pleaded 'O Holy Prophet! But he is only blind, he can't see us'. Then the Holy Prophet ﷺ replied 'Is it that you are blind too?' (Abū Dāwūd and Tirmidhī – Tirmidhi declared this *ḥadīth* as hasan Ṣaḥīḥ). Other jurists have ruled that there is no harm if women look at strange males without any passion. They base their argument on the *ḥadīth* of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا, in which it is related that on an Eid day some African youths were showing their military exercises in the courtyard of the Mosque of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the Holy Prophet ﷺ was watching this game, and so was Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا, under the cover of the back of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. She kept on watching the game until she herself got tired of it, but the Holy Prophet ﷺ did not object to her watching. Scholars are all unanimous on the point that looking with lust is prohibited, but looking without lust is also not a preferred act.

To look at a woman's *satr* (concealable) parts by another woman without any lawful reason is also prohibited in line with the wordings of this verse. It is for the reason that concealing of *satr* (concealable) from all, both by men and women, is obligatory by Shariah. Man's *satr* (concealable) comprises all parts of the body from navel to knees, and that of women, the whole body, except face and palms. Neither can a man see another man's *satr* nor can a woman see another woman's *satr*. Looking by a man at a woman's *satr* or of a woman at a man's *satr* is highly prohibited, and amounts to contradiction of the injunction of the Qur'ānic verse which enjoins for 'turning away the eyes'. As has been explained above in detail, it is enjoined in the verse to lower the eyes or to turn the eyes away from everything which is prohibited to be seen under Islamic injunctions. To look at a woman's *satr* by another woman is included in that.

وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَلْيَضْرِبْنَ بِخُمُرِهِنَّ عَلَىٰ جُيُوبِهِنَّ ۖ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا لِبُعُولَتِهِنَّ

And must not expose their adornment, except that which appears thereof, and must wrap their bosoms with their shawls, and must not expose their adornment except to their husbands - 24:31.

The literal meaning of *zīnah* (زِينَة) is that with which a woman adorns herself to appear attractive. It may be nice clothes or ornaments. There is

an agreement of the scholars on the point that when the clothes and ornaments are not worn by women, and are only displayed in the market place, then they are allowed to be seen by men-folk. For this reason majority of scholars have taken the meaning of *zīnah* as those parts of the body where the objects of *zīnah* are worn. Hence, the meaning of the verse is that it is obligatory for women not to show the parts of the body where the objects of adornments are worn. (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī). Whereas it is prohibited for women in this verse to show their *zīnah*, two exceptions have, however, been made. One is for that to be seen, and the other for those who see.

Exception from the injunction of *ḥijāb*

First exception is that of مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا (except that which appears thereof). It means that 'Women are not permitted to show their *zīnah* to men, except that which is revealed on its own'. The indication is that while women are working, some parts of the body get uncovered automatically, and their covering is difficult, hence, exception of such parts is permitted. There is no sin in their uncovering. (Ibn Kathīr). Which parts do really fall under this exception? On this subject Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ and 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ have given different explanations. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ has explained that what has been excepted in مَاظَهَرَمِنْهَا is the outer covering, such as veil or the sheet used for *ḥijāb*. These over-clothings are used to cover up the normal garments of *zīnah*. Hence, the meaning of the verse would be that it is not permitted to show anything from the *zīnah* (garments), except the over-clothings like veil, whose hiding is not possible when going out for some work. On the other hand Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ has interpreted that it is purported for face and palms, because when a woman is forced to go out because of necessity, it is difficult to hide face and palms while engaged in her work. Therefore, according to the explanation of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ it is not permitted for women even to uncover – their faces and palms before non-Maḥram men. Only the over-clothings, like veil etc. are excepted under necessity. But in accordance with the explanation of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ it is permitted to uncover the face and palms before the non-Maḥrams. Thus, there is a difference of opinion among the religious scholars on the issue whether it is permissible to uncover the face and palms before non-Maḥrams or not. But all agree on

that if there is a risk of *fitnah* (i.e. stimulation of illicit desires) by looking at feminine face and palms, then its uncovering is not allowed, and women are not permitted to uncover their faces and palms in that situation. All scholars also agree on that in prayers women can uncover their faces and palms and in the uncovered position their prayers will be considered valid.

Qāḍī Baiḍāwī and Khāzin have said in the explanation of this verse that the object of the verse appears to be that women should not let anything of their *zīnah* be seen, except that which gets uncovered during the process of working. In this definition the veil and sheet, as well as face and palms are all included, because when a woman goes out for some necessary work, veil and sheet are open to be seen in any case, but sometimes face and palms also get uncovered during the movements of work. Hence, their uncovering is allowed and is not regarded a sin. But it does not mean that men are allowed to see faces and palms of women unnecessarily. Instead, it is enjoined upon men to keep their eyes lower, and if a woman is constrained to uncover her face or palms, the men should turn their eyes away, unless required to see in the performance of some lawful act. In this explanation both the traditions and interpretations are reconciled. Imām Mālik رحمه الله تعالى has also ruled that it is not allowed to see the face and palms of a non-Maḥram woman without a lawful need. Ibn Ḥajar Makki Shafi'ī has quoted in his *zawājir* that Imām Shafi'ī's view is also the same that although women's face and palms are not part of their *satr*, and they are allowed to pray while these parts are uncovered, yet non-Maḥrams are not allowed to see them without a lawful need. However, this has already been stated above that even those scholars who have ruled it permissible to see women's face and palms, also agree that if there is a risk of mischief, then looking at their faces is not permissible. It is well known that the center of beauty and attraction is the face of a person, and the present age is full of temptation, mischief and lasciviousness, and people are lost in remissness. Therefore, in the present circumstances it is impermissible to uncover the face before the non-Maḥram men, except for medical treatment or in emergency. Similarly, it is not allowed for the men-folk as well to look at women intentionally, unless it is required by a genuine need.

After granting exception to the opened Zinah, it is enjoined in the

verse under reference وَلْيَضْرِبْنَ بِخُمُرِهِنَّ عَلٰى جُيُوبِهِنَّ, (24:31) that is, 'must wrap their bosoms with their shawls'. (خُمُر) Khomor is the plural of (خِمَار) Khimār. It is the piece of cloth which women use to cover their head, and it also covers up the neck and bosom. جُيُوب (*juyūb*) is the plural of جَيْب, (*jayb*) which means upper part of the shirt just below the neck. Since the time immemorial this part of the garment is placed over the chest of a person, hence the covering of *juyūb* means covering of the chest or bosom. In the beginning of the verse showing of *zīnah* was prohibited, while in this sentence hiding of *zīnah* is emphasized and a specific situation is also described, the purpose of which is to eliminate an old custom of pre-Islamic days. In the pre-Islamic time women used to place the sheet on their head and let its two sides hang on their back, with the result that their neck, ears and bosom were left uncovered. Therefore, Muslim women were enjoined not to follow this, and instead were advised to place the two sides of the sheet one over the other, so that all these parts are covered. (Ibn Abī Ḥātim from Ibn Jubair – Rūḥ)

The second exception in the verse relates to the men before whom no *hijab* is to be observed by women. There are two reasons for this exception. First, those men who are exempt from this injunction are the *maḥrams*, hence, no risk of any trouble is expected from them. Allah Ta'ālā has put in their hearts deep respect and honour of their close female relatives, hence, there is no possibility of any mischief from them. Secondly, since the close relatives normally live all together, for the sake of convenience it is required that they do not hide from each other. But this should also be kept in mind that this exception from hiding from *maḥrams* is exclusive to *ḥijāb*, and not from the *satr* of women, where the exception is allowed only to husbands. Those parts of the body of women which are included in *satr*, and which are not allowed to be uncovered in the prayers, are not permitted to be seen by any *maḥram*.

Eight types of *maḥram* men and four other types with whom no *ḥijāb* is necessary are listed in this verse. In another verse of Sūrah Aḥzāb, which was revealed before this verse, only seven types of *maḥram* are mentioned. Hence, five more types were added in the above referred verse of Sūrah an-Nūr, which is a later revelation.

Warning

It should be noted that the word *maḥram* is used here in its general

sense, which includes husband also. In the connotation used by the scholars for this word it means the person with whom marriage is not allowed. That meaning of the word is not intended here. Let us now take up the details of the twelve exceptions mentioned in the verse under consideration: The first exception is that of husband with whom hiding of any part of the wife's body is not required. But, looking at the private parts of wife without need is not a preferable act. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها has said مَا رأى منّى ولارأيت منه 'Neither he saw my private parts nor did I see his'.

Second, exception is of fathers, in which category apart from father, grandfather, great grandfather are all included. Third, is the father-in-law, and husband's grandfather and great grandfather. Fourth, are the sons. Fifth, are the husband's sons, who may be from his other wives. Sixth, are the brothers, in which category all step-brothers whether from real-mother or from real-father are included. But cousin brothers are not part of this category. They are all non-Maḥrams. Seventh, are the sons of brothers. Here also sons of step-brothers are included, but sons of cousins are not included. Eighth, are the sons of sisters, and here again sons of step-sisters are included but not those of the cousins. These are the eight categories of *maḥrams*.

Ninth category

أَوْنِسَآئِهِنَّ (31) (or to their women). These words are used for Muslim women, before whom all such parts can be uncovered which are allowed to be uncovered before father or sons. It has already been clarified earlier that this exception relates to *ḥijāb* alone and not the *satr*. It is for the simple reason that, what is not allowed to be uncovered before *maḥram* men is also not permitted to be uncovered before any Muslim woman, except for medical treatment or under dire need.

By the exception made only for Muslim women it becomes obvious that it is necessary for Muslim women to cover themselves before non-Muslim women as well. Non-Muslim women are thus in the same category as that of non-Maḥram men. Ibn Kathīr has quoted the explanation given by Mujāhid رحمه الله تعالى for this verse that it is not permissible for a Muslim woman to uncover herself before non-Muslim women. But there are Ṣaḥīḥ *aḥadīth* available which prove that non-Muslim women used to visit wives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, hence,

there is a difference of opinion among the jurists on the subject. Some have declared non-Muslim women like men for the application of this injunction, while others have placed both Muslim and non-Muslim women under one category - that is covering before them is not necessary. Imām Rāzi رحمه الله تعالى has opined that the word نِسَآئِهِنَّ (their women) encompasses both Muslim and non-Muslim women, and the practice of virtuous elders of making Muslim women covered before non-Muslim women was because it was desirable (but not obligatory). Mufti of Baghdad, 'Allāmah 'Ālūsī رحمه الله تعالى has adopted this explanation in the Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī, and has remarked هذا القول اوفق بالنّاس اليوم فانّه لايكاد يمكن احتجاب المسلمات عن الذميات (روح المعانى) This explanation is more suited to present time because it has become almost impossible for Muslim women to cover themselves before non-Muslim women. (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī)

Tenth category

اَوْمَا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُهُنَّ (24:31). (or to those owned by their right hands). The general sense of the wording includes both male and female slaves and servants, but many a scholars and jurists consider that it applies only to female slaves, and not to the male slaves. Therefore, it is obligatory to be in cover before them, like other non-Maḥrams. Sa'īd Ibn al-Mussayab رحمه الله تعالى has said expressing his final view 'Do not be under the misconception that the wordings اَوْمَا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُهُنَّ are general, and include male slaves as well. It is not so. This verse refers to only female slaves, male slaves are not included in it'. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and Ibn Sīrīn رحمهم الله تعالى have said that it is not permissible for a male slave to see his female owner's hair (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī). Now the question is that if by the wordings اَوْمَا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُهُنَّ only female slaves were meant, then they were already included in the word نِسَآئِهِنَّ (or to their women). What was the point in describing them separately? Jaṣṣāṣ رحمه الله تعالى has answered this question by explaining that the word نِسَآئِهِنَّ in its apparent sense is meant for Muslim women only, and in case there are non-Muslims also among the female slaves, they need to be separated from the rest, hence the use of this word.

Eleventh category

اَوِالتّٰبِعِيْنَ غَيْرِ اُولِى الْاِرْبَةِ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ (or male attendants having no {sexual} urge). Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ has explained that, here those confused and deranged type of persons are meant who have no liking and inclination

toward women (Ibn Kathīr). The same explanation has been put forward by Ibn Jarīr quoting Abu 'Abdullāh, Ibn Jubair, Ibn 'Aṭiyyah رحمهم الله تعالى etc. Therefore, those men are referred to here who do not have any lust or inclination towards women, nor are they interested in the beauty and charm of women, which they could describe before others. As against this, eunuchs do take interest in women's special attributes; hence women should keep covered before them. There is a *hadīth* of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها on the subject, that an eunuch used to visit the wives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and they regarded him to be included in the category of غَيْرِ أُولِى الْإِرْبَةِ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ, (31) hence they allowed him to come in their homes. When the Holy Prophet ﷺ saw him and listened his conversation, he stopped him from coming inside the homes. (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī).

For this very reason Ibn Ḥajar Makkī رحمه الله تعالى has commented in Sharaḥ al-Minhāj that no matter a man be impotent or devoid of genital organs or be very old, he is not included in the expression غَيْرِ أُولِى الْإِرْبَةِ, and women are required to cover themselves before all of them. However, addition of the word اَلتَّابِعِيْنَ with the expression غَيْرِ أُولِى الْإِرْبَةِ is meant to indicate those who are confused and deranged, and enter the houses with the purpose of eating and drinking as an attendant of some guests. Such men are excluded and it is not necessary to observe *ḥijāb* before them. They have been mentioned here because in fact there were some such men at that time, and they used to go inside the homes, only with the intention of eating and drinking, but the real cause of their being excepted from the rules of *ḥijāb* is their being of unsound mind and having no sexual urge and not being attendants of someone

Twelfth category

اَوِالطِّفْلِ الَّذِيْنَ (or to the children who are not yet conscious of the shames of women - 31). This refers to those young children who have not yet attained puberty, and are totally ignorant of ladies special attributes, gestures and postures. Any boy who takes interest in ladies company for their special attributes is nearing his puberty, and covering before him becomes obligatory.(Ibn Kathīr). Imām Jaṣṣāṣ رحمه الله تعالى has explained that the word *Ṭifl* (children) refers here to those children who do not differentiate between men and women in special attributes. (Jaṣṣāṣ has narrated this from Mujāhid).

وَلَا يَضْرِبْنَ بِأَرْجُلِهِنَّ لِيُعْلَمَ مَا يُخْفِينَ مِنْ زِينَتِهِنَّ

And let them not stamp their feet in a way that the adornment they conceal is known - 24:31.

It is incumbent upon women to step so gently that no sound is made of their ornaments and none of their *zīnah* is exposed to men.

To cause hearing of jewellery's sound to non-Maḥrams is prohibited

In the beginning of the verse it was prohibited for women to show their *zīnah* (ornaments or garments) to non-Maḥram men. At the end of it, it is reemphasized that covering of head and bosom etc. was in any way obligatory as part of hiding of *zīnah*, rather any exposure of hidden *zīnah* by any means is also prohibited. Putting in something in the ornaments so that they produce sound, or making of sound by the touch of ornaments with each other, or putting the feet on the ground in such a manner that ornaments make sound, and the non-Maḥrams listen to these sounds; they are all prohibited under the provision of this verse. In the light of this explanation many jurists have drawn the conclusion that when causing to hear the ornament's sound is prohibited, then to cause hearing of women's own voice would be prohibited even more strongly. Therefore, they have ruled that the voice of women is also included in their *satr*. For this reason it is declared in *Nawāzil* that women should learn Qur'ān from women only, as far as possible. Learning of Qur'ān from men should be as a last resort only.

Ṣaḥīḥs of Bukhārī and Muslim have quoted a *ḥadīth* which says that while offering prayers if someone passes in front, he should be warned with a loud voice by saying *Subhān Allah* by men, but the women should not make any sound, and instead hit the back of the palm with the other for warning.

The issue of women's voice

Is women's voice included in their *satr* per se, and it's causing to hear by non-Maḥrams is prohibited? The jurists differ on this issue. In the books of Imām Shafi'ī رحمه الله تعالى the voice of women is not included in their *satr*. In the case of Ḥanafī there are different views. Ibn Humām رحمه الله تعالى has included the voice in *satr* on the basis of statements in Nawāzil. Because of this the call for prayer اذان by women is regarded

makrūh by Ḥanafī School. However, it is established by *ḥadīth* that the wives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ used to talk to non-Maḥrams from behind the curtain even after the revelation of injunction of *ḥijāb*. Keeping in view all the material on this point, what seems to be the correct position is that hearing the voice of a woman is impermissible only when and where it may create a *fitnah*, but where there is no such apprehension, it is allowed. (Jaṣṣāṣ). However, the prudent way for women is to take care and avoid talking to non-Maḥrams, even from behind the curtains, unless necessary. (Only Allah knows best)

To go out wearing perfume

It is also included in this injunction that when women go out of the house for some need, they should not wear any perfume, because that is also their hidden *zīnah*, and it is impermissible to cause it to reach non-Maḥrams. In a *ḥadīth* reported by Tirmidhī from Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī ؓ those women are declared bad who go out wearing perfume.

Going out wearing decorated veil is also prohibited

Imām Jaṣṣāṣ رحمه الله تعالیٰ has commented that when Qur'ān has included even the sound of ornaments as the exposure of *zīnah* and declared it unlawful, then going out wearing decorated veil would be unlawful more strongly. By inference it is also clear that although the face of women is not included in her *satr*, but it is the pivotal point of *zīnah*, hence, its hiding from the non-Maḥrams is essential, except in cases of need. (Jaṣṣāṣ)

وَتُوبُوٓا إِلَى اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا أَيُّهَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ

And repent to Allah O believers, all of you - 24:31.

In this verse first the men have been enjoined to keep their eyes low, then the women are enjoined the same. After that women are directed to cover themselves before non-Maḥrams. After enjoining these injunctions separately to men and women, now a combined instruction is given that the sexual desire is a delicate thing, and it remains concealed from others. But everything, concealed or open, is completely known to Allah. Therefore, if someone has erred in following the foregoing injunctions, he should beg Allah's pardon, feel repentant on his past deeds and make a firm resolve not to indulge in them again.

Verse 32 - 33 ...

وَاَنْكِحُوا الْاَيَامٰى مِنْكُمْ وَالصّٰلِحِيْنَ مِنْ عِبَادِكُمْ وَاِمَآئِكُمْ ؕ اِنْ يَّكُوْنُوْا فُقَرَآءَ يُغْنِهِمُ اللّٰهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿۳۲﴾ وَلْيَسْتَعْفِفِ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يَجِدُوْنَ نِكَاحًا حَتّٰى يُغْنِيَهُمُ اللّٰهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ ؕ

And arrange the marriage of the spouse-less among you, and the capable from among your bond-men and bond-girls. If they are poor, Allah will enrich them out of His grace. And Allah is All-Encompassing, All-Knowing. [32] **And those who cannot afford marriage should keep chaste until Allah enriches them out of His grace...**

Commentary

Some injunctions regarding marriage

It has been pointed out earlier that Sūrah an-Nūr contains mostly the injunctions relating to protection of chastity and continence, and prevention of obscenity and shamelessness. In this connection severe punishments against adultery and related matters are mentioned, then *isti'dhān* is highlighted, and after that *ḥijāb* for women is described. Since Islamic jurisprudence is based on the precept of moderation, all its injunctions are moderate, and have affinity with natural human emotions and desires. It is also based on the principle to control the tendency of excessiveness and transgression. When it is enjoined to desist strictly from unlawful lust, it is equally important to provide a lawful access for the natural human emotions and desires. At the same time it is also needed both from a rational and religious point of view that men and women are shown a way for the lawful copulation for the preservation of human race. In the terminology of Qur'ān and Sunnah it is called *nikāḥ* (marriage). In the verse under consideration the guardians of unmarried girls and the owners of slave girls and boys are enjoined to marry them off.

وَاَنْكِحُوا الْاَيَامٰى مِنْكُمْ

And arrange the marriage of the spouse-less among you - 24:32.

Ayamā (ایامٰی) is the plural of Aym (ایم), which is used for all those men and women who are not married, irrespective of the situation whether

they have not yet been married or were married earlier and have become divorcee or widow /widower. The guardians of such men and women are directed in this verse to arrange their marriage.

Scholars and jurists are unanimous on the point that according to the manner of address of this verse the preferable and *masnūn* way of marriage is that men and women have it arranged through their guardians, rather than arranging it directly. There are many a worldly and religious benefits in this tradition, especially in the case of girls it is a sort of indecency that they arrange their own marriages. Also, there is a risk that this system may open the doors for obscenity. Therefore, in some narrations of *ḥadīth* women are prohibited to contract their own marriages without the mediation of guardians. Imām Abū Ḥanīfah رحمه الله تعالیٰ and some other Imāms have ruled that this instruction describes a *sunnah* and the preferred way for the contract of marriage. But if an adult girl marries someone within her own *kuf'* without her guardian's permission, it is a proper marriage, although she would be reprehensible for this act, because it is against the *sunnah,* unless she has done so under unavoidable circumstances.

Imām Shafi'ī رحمه الله تعالیٰ and some other Imāms have ruled that her marriage will be null and void if carried out without her guardian's mediation. It is not the intention to describe and argue here the details of approach and arguments put forward by the two jurists on their different points of view, but this much is obvious from the verse under discussion that it is preferable to have guardian's mediation in the matter of marriage. But the Qur'ānic verse itself is silent on the issue of status of marriage, if solemnized without the consent of guardians. The other reason is that in the word Ayāmā (أیامیٰ) both male and female adults are included, and there is consensus that the marriage of adult boys is perfectly valid if solemnized without the mediation of guardians. No one considers that marriage to be null and void. But this is true that in either case it is against the sunnah, for which both should be reproached.

The status of marriage in Sharī'ah

Jurists are almost all unanimous that whoever has a strong apprehension that in case he does not marry, he would not be able to maintain the prescribed limits of Sharī'ah and will get involved in sins, and he has the means to get married, it is obligatory on him to get

married. As long as he does not get married, he will remain a sinner. But in case he does not have the means to get married, or a suitable woman is not available, or he does not possess the needed prompt dower etc. for all such situations the injunction is given in the next verse that he should keep striving to obtain what is required and until such time that the needful is arranged, he should keep his emotions under control and wait with patience. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has advised such persons in this situation to fast continuously, for fasting calms down the sexual desire.

It is reported in Masnād of Aḥmad that the Holy Prophet ﷺ enquired from Sayyidnā 'Akkāf ؓ whether he had a wife, to which he replied in the negative. Then the Holy Prophet ﷺ enquired whether he had a lawful slave girl. He again replied in the negative. Then he ﷺ asked 'Do you have the means?'. To this he replied in the affirmative. The purpose of this enquiry was to find out whether he possessed the means to arrange his marriage, to which he answered in the positive. After that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said 'In that case you are a brother of Satan, for our *sunnah* is to get married. The worst persons among you are those who are unmarried, and the most mean among your men are those who die without marrying'. (Maẓharī).

Majority of the jurists have attributed this narration as well to that condition when there is a predominant risk of sinning by abstaining from marriage. The Holy Prophet ﷺ must have known the situation of 'Akkāf that he would not be able to resist. Similarly, it is reported in Masnād of Aḥmad on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Anas ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ had instructed him to get married, and warned against remaining bachelor. (Maẓharī). There are some other similar narrations of the *ḥadīth* as well, and majority of the jurists have held them to be applicable only in those situations where there is a strong apprehension of being involved in a sin if one avoids marriage. Similarly, jurists are almost all unanimous that if someone has strong notion that he would indulge in sin by marrying a woman, for instance he is not capable of meeting conjugal rights of the wife or will get involved for sure in some other sin, in such a situation marriage is prohibited or unbecoming for him.

Now the case of that person has to be looked at who is in an even position. For him neither the risk of sin is very strong by abstaining from marriage, nor there is a strong risk of sin if the marriage is performed. For

this situation there are different views of the jurists, that is, which act is better; to get married or abstaining from marriage and get involved in extra prayers. Imām Abū Ḥanīfah رحمه الله تعالیٰ has ruled that getting married is better than offering extra prayers, while Imām Shafi'ī رحمه الله تعالیٰ has recommended that getting involved in prayers is preferable. The reason for the different views is that by itself the marriage is a lawful act, just like eating, drinking sleeping etc. or as any other necessity of life is lawful, and the element of worship is included in marriage for the simple reason that one can save himself from sin by this act, and when the righteous children are born, it will add up to his reward. When one performs any lawful act with the intent of pleasing Allah Ta'ālā, it becomes an indirect worship for him. Eating, drinking, sleeping etc. all become indirect worship when carried out with this intention. Since occupation in prayers is a direct worship in itself, hence, Imām Shafi'ī رحمه الله تعالیٰ regards prayers to be preferable to marriage. But in the opinion of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah رحمه الله تعالیٰ the element of worship is greater in marriage than other lawful acts. In many Ṣaḥīḥ *aḥadīth* it is emphasized repeatedly to follow this tradition of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. In the light of all these *aḥadīth* it becomes evident that marriage is not just lawful like other lawful acts, but is a *sunnah* (practice) of the messengers, and has also been emphasized repeatedly in *ḥadīth*. It is a worship not only from the viewpoint of intention but also being a tradition of the messengers. If someone suggests that by the same token eating, drinking and sleeping should also be regarded as *sunnah*, because all messengers used to perform them. The answer to this is very clear that despite these acts being performed by all messengers, no one has said or narrated in any *ḥadīth* that eating, drinking and sleeping are *sunnah* of the messengers. Instead these acts are regarded as common human habits, which were observed by messengers as well. As against this, marriage is clearly declared as *sunnah* of the messengers and the *sunnah* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself.

Tafsīr Maẓharī has given a moderate view on the subject that, if someone is on an even position, that is neither he is helpless or overcome by prevalence of lust, nor feels the risk of indulging in sin by abstaining from marriage, and thinks that if he gets married, his involvement in household would not be a hindrance in his worships and remembrance of

Allah Ta'ālā, then it is preferable for him to get married. This was exactly the case of the messengers of Allah and the righteous people of the Ummah. But if he has a hunch that his marriage and involvement in household will not let him promote his religious status and will hinder Allah's remembrance, then for him abstaining from marriage for performing worship would be preferable, provided he is in an even position, described above. Many a Qur'ānic verses are in support of this position, one of them being: يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تُلْهِكُمْ اَمْوَالُكُمْ وَلَاۤ اَوْلَادُكُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللّٰهِ (O believers, let not your possessions nor your children divert you from Allah's remembrance - 63:9). This verse advises that the wealth and children should not come in the way of remembering Allah Ta'ālā.

وَالصّٰلِحِيْنَ مِنْ عِبَادِكُمْ وَاِمَآئِكُمْ

And the capable from among your bond-men and bond-girls - 24:32.

This sentence is addressed to the masters of the slaves. Here the word *ṣāliḥīn* is used in its literal meaning, that is whoever among them has the means and capacity of marrying; arrangement of his/her marriage is made incumbent upon their owners and masters. Here the word capacity is purported to have the means to fulfill the conjugal rights of wife and ability to make payment of maintenance and prompt dower. If the word *ṣāliḥīn* is taken in its common sense, that is good and pious people, then their exclusiveness from the rest will be on the basis that marriage is basically the means to keep away from the sins, a trait which only the good persons possess.

So, it is made incumbent upon the masters of the slaves and slave girls that those among them who have the ability to get married, their marriage should be arranged. It is purported to mean here that if they show their need and desire to get married, then according to some jurists it is binding on the owners to marry them off. But the majority of jurists have ruled that in such a situation it is incumbent upon the masters not to place any hindrance in their marriage and allow them to get married, because the marriage of slaves and slave girls cannot be performed without the permission of their owners. Thus, this injunction is similar in nature with another verse of the Holy Qur'ān فَلَا تَعْضُلُوْهُنَّ اَنْ يَّنْكِحْنَ اَزْوَاجَهُنَّ that is ' It is incumbent upon the guardians of women not to stop the

women under their charge from marriage'. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has also said on the subject that 'If someone of that kind comes to you with the proposal and you like his morals, then surely marry him off. If you do not do it then great mischief will be created on earth'. (Tirmidhī) The gist of this all is that the owners are instructed here not to make any delay in granting permission of marriage to their subjects, notwithstanding that arrangement of their marriage may not be their responsibility. (Allah knows best)

اِنْ يَّكُوْنُوْا فُقَرَآءَ يُغْنِهِمُ اللّٰهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ

If they are poor, Allah will enrich them out of His grace - 24:32.

There is a good news in this verse for such poor Muslims who want to marry for the security of their religious obligation, but they have no means. If they marry with the good intention for the security of their religion and to follow the *sunnah* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, Allah Ta'ālā will grant them sufficient means. There is also an advice in the verse to those who might reject the proposal of marriage from poor people on the basis of their current condition. Wealth is something which does not always stay. The important thing is merit of a person. If they possess merit then their proposal for marriage should not be turned down.

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه has said that Allah Ta'ālā has persuaded all Muslims for marriage in this verse, for which He has included every one, either free or slave, and has promised to enrich them if they marry. (Ibn Kathīr). And Ibn Abī Ḥātim has reported that Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه while addressing the Muslims said that 'You follow the injunction of Allah Ta'ālā for marriage, and He will fulfill His promise for granting the riches'. Then he recited this verse اِنْ يَّكُوْنُوْا فُقَرَآءَ يُغْنِهِمُ اللّٰهُ (32) Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه has said 'If you want to be rich, then get married, because Allah Ta'ālā has said اِنْ يَّكُوْنُوْا فُقَرَآءَ يُغْنِهِمُ اللّٰهُ (Ibn Kathīr)

Warning

It is commented in Tafsīr Maẓharī that it should, however, be noted that Allah Ta'ālā's promise to grant riches to the one who will marry is only on the condition that his intention is to safeguard his chastity and to follow the *sunnah*. After that he should have trust and faith in Allah Ta'ālā, for which the confirmation is available in the next verse, which reads: وَلْيَسْتَعْفِفِ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يَجِدُوْنَ نِكَاحًا حَتّٰى يُغْنِيَهُمُ اللّٰهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ (And those who cannot

afford marriage should keep chaste until Allah enriches them out of His grace - 24:33). 'It means that the people who do not have the material wealth for the marriage, and in case they marry, there is the risk of not fulfilling the rights of wife and their becoming sinners, they should wait with patience until Allah grants them riches from His bounty. A method has been stated in the *ḥadīth* for achieving the required patience, which is keeping fasts abundantly. If they will follow the advice, Allah Ta'ālā will grant them so much material resources that they will be able to afford the expenses of marriage.

... Verse 33

وَالَّذِيْنَ يَبْتَغُوْنَ الْكِتٰبَ مِمَّا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُكُمْ فَكَاتِبُوْهُمْ اِنْ عَلِمْتُمْ
فِيْهِمْ خَيْرًا ۖ وَّاٰتُوْهُمْ مِّنْ مَّالِ اللّٰهِ الَّذِيْٓ اٰتٰىكُمْ ۗ وَلَا تُكْرِهُوْا
فَتَيٰتِكُمْ عَلَى الْبِغَآءِ اِنْ اَرَدْنَ تَحَصُّنًا لِّتَبْتَغُوْا عَرَضَ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ۗ
وَمَنْ يُّكْرِهْهُّنَّ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ اِكْرَاهِهِنَّ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿٣٣﴾

... And those of your slaves who seek the contract of Kitābah (emancipation by paying money), contract Kitābah with them, if you know of some good in them. And give them out of the wealth of Allah that He has given to you. And do not compel your maids to prostitution - if they wish to observe chastity - in order that you may seek the temporary benefit of the worldly life. And if one compels them, then after their being compelled, Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [33]

Commentary

Owners of the slaves and slave girls were advised in the previous verse that they should allow their subjects to marry if they so desire. They should not delay their marriage to curb their natural urge for their own expediency. The essence of this advice is to save the subjects from trouble and that they be treated graciously. In the same context another direction is given in this verse to the owners of slaves and slave girls that if their subjects wish to enter into a deal with them for making payment against their freedom, then it is desirable for the owners to concede to this wish,

which will bring them good reward. This instruction is commonly taken by the jurists, like the author of Hidāyah, as a recommendatory instruction in that it is not compulsory for the owners to concede for freedom of their subjects against payment, yet it is preferable to do so. The procedure for entering into a deal of freedom is that the subject asks his owner to set up an amount with mutual consent for the freedom, which he should earn with his labour and pay to the owner. Alternatively, the owner can also initiate the deal and with mutual consent on payment of a certain amount whereby the slaves can earn their freedom. When such a deal is struck with mutual consent between the owner and the slave, then it becomes mandatory under Islamic law, and the owner has no authority to call it off. As soon as the slave makes the payment of the agreed amount, he gets free automatically.

The amount of money so agreed for the freedom of slave is called *badal-al-kitābah* for which Islamic law has fixed no limit. It may be the same as the cost of slave, or more or less. The amount on which the parties mutually agree will be regarded as *badal-al-kitābah*. The essence behind the advice given in this verse is to open up the doors of freedom for the slaves. This is but one such instruction which points out toward the underlying objective of Islamic law of allowing freedom for slaves. In all types of expiations, a common injunction is freedom of slaves. Even otherwise, there is a promise of generous blessings for freeing the slaves. Arrangement of the treaty for freedom in exchange of money is one such route. This is why there is so much persuasion and emphasis on this. However, a condition has also been placed with this treaty إِنْ عَلِمْتُمْ فِيهِمْ خَيْرًا (33). The treaty will only be in order when you notice signs of goodness in them. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar ﷺ and many other scholars have explained that here the word 'Khair' (good) is purported to mean the strength to earn. Hence, it means that someone who has the strength to earn and can make payment should be allowed to enter the deal, otherwise his labour will be wasted on one hand and the owner will also suffer loss. Some other scholars have given another explanation that goodness and betterment mean here that there should be no risk of any harm to the Muslims because of his freedom. For instance, the slave may be an infidel and he might have been helping his infidel brethren. As a matter of fact the word 'Khair' (good) stands here for both the meanings,

that is the slave should have the strength to earn, and there should be no risk of any harm to the Muslims as a result of his freedom. (Maẓharī)

وَاٰتُوْهُمْ مِّنْ مَّالِ اللّٰهِ الَّذِيْٓ اٰتٰىكُمْ

Give them out of the wealth of Allah that He has given to you - 24:33.

This address is directed towards Muslims in general, and to the owners of the slaves in particular. When the freedom of a slave is dependent on a fixed amount to be given to his owner, then it is incumbent upon Muslims to help him collect that money. For this they can pay from the *zakāh* money as well. And the owners are induced to contribute on their own or reduce the amount of the treaty. It was the practice of the Companions to reduce the amount of treaty by one third or one fourth, depending upon their capacity. (Maẓharī)

An important economic issue and the Qur'ānic verdict on it

The present day world is totally materialistic. Everyone seems to have forgotten about the life hereafter and has completely entangled himself in money making. All types of researches, contemplation and developments, revolve round economic uplift only. Detailed discussions and researches on finer economic points have raised its status many fold, and now it has assumed the position of greatest art. The world thinkers have propounded two well-known theories, which, paradoxically, are in conflict with each other. Because of the inherent conflict between them, the world at large is divided in two groups, who are unfortunately at daggers drawn with each other, resulting in the loss of peace and tranquility of the world.

One theory has given birth to capitalist system, commonly known as capitalism. The other one is the socialist system which is called as socialism or communism. It is an every day common experience, which neither of the two systems can deny, that whatever the man earns or produces in this world through his hard work, its basic source of production is the natural resources, like water, the produce from earth or any other natural produce. The man produces millions of things of his need and use from natural resources through his skill, hard work, ingenuity and composing or decomposing their certain elements. It is but natural to think that there is someone who creates the natural resources. They have not come into being of their own. It also goes without saying

that the One who has created the natural resources is the real owner and master of them all. The natural resources have been passed on to man for a limited period (his life span) for his benefit and use. It does not mean that the man has become the master of natural resources for all times, because his own life is so short. Moreover, man does not, and cannot, exercise total control and authority on all natural resources for all the time. For instance, man can irrigate the fields with water, but he cannot create water if there is a drought. Therefore, it is clear that man is not free to use or control t hem, and hence should follow the instructions given to him by their Crea or and Master. But in the frenzy of materialism everyone has forgotten even the concept of real Master and Creator. The only controversy between them is that whether the one who possesses the factors of production becomes their owner, or all these resources are common to all and everyone has a right to benefit from them.

The first theory is that of the capitalist system which grants freedom of ownership to man in that he can acquire anything by any means, and is also free to use and spend it any way he likes. There is absolutely no restriction on him. The infidels and disbelievers of the olden times professed the same belief, who objected before Sayyidnā Shu'aib ﷺ as to why should he place any restriction on their wealth, which belonged to them and they were its owners. They claimed that the prophet had no right to tell them as to where the spending was permitted and where it was not? The meaning of Qur'ānic verse اَوْاَنْ نَّفْعَلَ فِیْٓ اَمْوَالِنَا مَا نَشٰٓؤُا (or that we do with our wealth what we wish - 11:87) is the same. The other theory is that of socialism, which does not allow ownership to anyone of any thing, and professes common ownership of everyone and equal right to all. This is the original theory of communism, but when they felt that this is not practicable, they exempted some objects from the common ownership.

As against these two extremes the Holy Qur'ān has given a system in which the most fundamental concept is that every thing belongs to Allah Ta'ālā, who has given the charge of some things to man temporarily by His grace and bounty. For such things where man has been given the charge and possession, others have been debarred to make any claim on their use, without the permission of the owner. But despite the possession and ownership being given to man, he is not granted freedom to earn or spend them in any manner he likes. Both for earning and spending there

are wise and equitable rules and regulations which are clearly defined, and which clearly identify the permissible and impermissible ways of earning and spending. In addition to this, it has also been made incumbent upon him to pass on certain part of his possession to others, which is made the right of recipients on those things.

Although the verse under reference deals with a different subject yet it contains some important principles relating to this economic issue. So, look at the wordings of the verse rather intently وَاٰتُوْهُمْ مِّنْ مَّالِ اللّٰهِ الَّذِیٓ اٰتٰكُمْ 'Give them out of the wealth of Allah that He has given to you - 33'. Three things come out of this statement. One, that Allah is the real owner of every thing. Two, that He has given the possession of certain things to man by His grace. Three, that there are certain restrictions on things which He has given to man. Spending of certain things has been prohibited, and spending of other things is made obligatory, while spending of some others is made preferable.

The other injunction given in this verse is for the eradication of an uncouth custom, and for curbing adultery and obscenity وَلَا تُكْرِهُوْا فَتَيٰتِكُمْ عَلَى الْبِغَاۗءِ 'Do not compel your maid to prostitution - 33'. During the pre-Islamic period many people used to have this business done by their slave girls. When Islam placed strict punishments on adultery, both on free and slave individuals, then it was necessary to enjoin special strict orders to stop and eradicate this uncivilized custom.

اِنْ اَرَدْنَ تَحَصُّنًا (If they wish to observe chastity - 24:33). It means that when those slave girls express their wish to avoid adultery and remain pure, then pressurizing them on your part is extremely imprudent and shameless. Although the wording of the injunction is conditional, yet there is consensus of Ummah that the intention here is not to press the slave girls for adultery, irrespective of the situation whether they express their wish to avoid it or not. In other words, it is not meant here that in case they do not wish to avoid adultery, then it is permitted to force them into it. What is intended here is to tell that in the pre-Islamic days obscenity was common, so the slave girls did not mind adultery. Although after the advent of Islam they repented and wished not to be involved in this practice, yet their owners still forced them for the crime, which they resented. On this situation this injunction was revealed, in which their owners are warned and reproached that while they (the slave girls) want

to avoid a shameful act, you are trying to force it on them.

فَإِنَّ اللّٰهَ مِنْ بَعْدِ إِكْرَاهِهِنَّ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ

Then after their being compelled, Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful - 33.

The gist of this sentence is that it is prohibited to force the slave girls to adultery. If someone does that and the slave girl gets involved in adultery because of the compulsion exercised by her owner, then Allah Ta'ālā will pardon her sin and that sin will be passed on to the one who had forced her. (Mazharī).

Verses 34 - 40

وَلَقَدْ اَنْزَلْنَآ اِلَيْكُمْ اٰيٰتٍ مُّبَيِّنٰتٍ وَّمَثَلاً مِّنَ الَّذِيْنَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ وَمَوْعِظَةً لِّلْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿٣٤﴾ اَللّٰهُ نُوْرُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ط مَثَلُ نُوْرِهٖ كَمِشْكٰوةٍ فِيْهَا مِصْبَاحٌ ط اَلْمِصْبَاحُ فِيْ زُجَاجَةٍ ط اَلزُّجَاجَةُ كَاَنَّهَا كَوْكَبٌ دُرِّيٌّ يُّوْقَدُ مِنْ شَجَرَةٍ مُّبٰرَكَةٍ زَيْتُوْنَةٍ لَّاشَرْقِيَّةٍ وَّلَا غَرْبِيَّةٍ لا يَّكَادُ زَيْتُهَا يُضِيْٓءُ وَلَوْلَمْ تَمْسَسْهُ نَارٌ ط نُوْرٌ عَلٰى نُوْرٍ ط يَهْدِى اللّٰهُ لِنُوْرِهٖ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ط وَيَضْرِبُ اللّٰهُ الْاَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ ط وَاللّٰهُ بِكُلِّ شَىْءٍ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿٣٥﴾ فِىْ بُيُوْتٍ اَذِنَ اللّٰهُ اَنْ تُرْفَعَ وَيُذْكَرَ فِيْهَا اسْمُهٗ لا يُسَبِّحُ لَهٗ فِيْهَا بِالْغُدُوِّ وَالْاٰصَالِ ﴿٣٦﴾ رِجَالٌ لَّا تُلْهِيْهِمْ تِجَارَةٌ وَّلَا بَيْعٌ عَنْ ذِكْرِاللّٰهِ وَاِقَامِ الصَّلٰوةِ وَاِيْتَآءِ الزَّكٰوةِ صلى يَخَافُوْنَ يَوْمًا تَتَقَلَّبُ فِيْهِ الْقُلُوْبُ وَالْاَبْصَارُ ﴿٣٧﴾ لِيَجْزِيَهُمُ اللّٰهُ اَحْسَنَ مَاعَمِلُوْا وَيَزِيْدَهُمْ مِّنْ فَضْلِهٖ ط وَاللّٰهُ يَرْزُقُ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ ﴿٣٨﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْٓا اَعْمَالُهُمْ كَسَرَابٍ بِقِيْعَةٍ يَّحْسَبُهُ الظَّمْاٰنُ مَآءً ط حَتّٰىٓ اِذَا جَآءَهٗ لَمْ يَجِدْهُ شَيْئًا وَّوَجَدَ اللّٰهَ عِنْدَهٗ فَوَفّٰىهُ حِسَابَهٗ ط وَاللّٰهُ سَرِيْعُ الْحِسَابِ ﴿٣٩﴾ اَوْ كَظُلُمٰتٍ فِىْ بَحْرٍ لُّجِّيٍّ يَّغْشٰىهُ مَوْجٌ مِّنْ فَوْقِهٖ

مَوْجٌ مِّنْ فَوْقِهٖ سَحَابٌ ۭ ظُلُمٰتٌۢ بَعْضُهَا فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ ۭ اِذَآ اَخْرَجَ يَدَهٗ لَمْ يَكَدْ يَرٰىهَا ۭ وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَجْعَلِ اللّٰهُ لَهٗ نُوْرًا فَمَا لَهٗ مِنْ نُّوْرٍ ﴿٤٠﴾

And indeed We have sent down to you enlightening verses and an exemplary description of those who passed away before you and a good counsel for the God-fearing. [34]

Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The example of His light is that of a niche in which there is a lamp; the lamp is in a glass - the glass looks like a brilliant star - it is lit by (the oil of) a blessed tree, the olive, which is neither eastern, nor western. Its oil is about to emit light even if fire has not touched it - (it is) light upon light. Allah guides to His light whomsoever He wills. And Allah describes examples for the people, and Allah knows everything well. [35]

(The guided people worship Allah) in the houses that Allah has permitted to be raised and where His name is recounted and His purity is pronounced, in the morning and in the evening, [36] **by men whom no trade or sale makes neglectful of the remembrance of Allah, nor from establishing Ṣalāh and paying Zakāh; they are fearful of a day in which the hearts and the eyes will be overturned.** [37] **The fate (of such people) is that Allah will reward them for the best deeds they did and will give them more out of His grace. And Allah gives whom He wills without counting.** [38]

As for those who disbelieve, their deeds are like a mirage in a desert plane which a thirsty person deems to be water, until when he comes to it, he finds it nothing, and finds (the decree of) Allah with him, so He pays him his account in full. And Allah is swift at reckoning. [39] **Or (their deeds) are like layers of darkness in a vast deep sea overwhelmed by a wave, above which there is another wave, above which there are clouds - layers of darkness, one above the other. When one puts forth his hand, he can hardly see it. And**

the one to whom Allah does not give light can have no light at all. [40]

Commentary

The scholars call this verse as the 'Verse of Radiance', because it describes in great detail the radiance of faith and the darkness of disbelief.

The definition of Nūr (Light)

Imām Ghazzālī رحمه الله تعالى has given the definition of Nūr (light) as الظاهر بنفسه والمظهر لغيره that is something which is bright and manifest on its own, and makes other things bright and evident. Tafsir Maẓharī has explained that Nūr is in fact that condition which is initially perceived by man's sense of sight, and then through that perception he comprehends all those things which can be seen by eye, such as in the case of rays of sun and the moon, which on falling on a solid mass brightens it up, and then through the reflection from solid mass brightens other things. Hence, it is evident that the word Nūr cannot be used for Allah Ta'ālā in its literal or common meaning, because He is free from body and materiality. Therefore, there is consensus among the scholars that the use of word Nūr for Allah Ta'ālā in the verse under reference is purported for *Munawwir*, meaning the one who brightens, or may be the master of brightening is referred here as Nūr, in the same way as the possessor of grace is sometimes called Grace, or the possessor of justice is called the Justice. So, meaning of the verse is that Allah bestows Nūr to earth and the heaven, and to everything living there, and the Nūr is purported to be the Nūr of righteousness. Ibn Kathīr has reported the explanation put forward by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ that الله هادى اهل السمٰوٰت والارض : (that is, Allah is the Guide of all living in the heavens and the earth).

Nūr of the believer

مَثَلُ نُوْرِهٖ كَمِشْكٰوةٍ (The example of His light is that of a niche in which there is a lamp - 24:35). This is a nice example of Allah Ta'ālā's Nūr of guidance, which penetrates into the heart of the believer. Ibn Jarīr has reported its explanation put forward by Sayyidnā Ubayy b. Ka'b ﷺ.

هوالمؤمن الّذى جعل الله الايمان والقراٰن فى صدره، فضرب الله مثله فقال: الله نورالسّمٰوٰت والارض، فبدأ بنور نفسه ثم ذكر نورالمؤمن، فقال: مثل نور من امن به، فكان اُبَى بن كعب يقرأها مثل نور من امن به. (ابن كثير)

It means that this is the example of the believer in whose heart Allah Ta'ālā has laid down the Nūr of faith and of the Qur'ān. In this verse Allah Ta'ālā has first mentioned His own Nūr اَللّٰهُ نُوْرُالسَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ, and then the Nūr of the believer's heart and the following example is for the one who believes in Him. Sayyidnā Ubayy Ibn Ka'b ﷺ used to recite this verse as مثل نور من آمن به instead of مثل نوره (to explain this). Sa'īd Ibn Jubair ﷺ has also reported the same meaning and recitation of the verse from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ. Ibn Kathīr has narrated all these explanations and then remarked that there are two view points among the jurists about the pronoun of مَثَلُ نُوْرِهٖ (the example of *his* light). One, that this pronoun has reference toward Allah Ta'ālā, and thus the meaning of the verse is 'Allah's Nūr placed in the heart of believers naturally', and the example of that is كَمِشْكٰوةٍ (like a niche). This explanation is put forward by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ. The other explanation is that the personal pronoun refers to the believers, who are presumed to have been referred to by the context. So, the example given in the verse can be explained as follows: The chest of a believer is like a niche, while the heart of the believer placed in the chest is like a lamp (placed in the niche). Then the transparent oil of olive is the example of the natural *nūr* (light) of guidance which is deposited in the nature of a believer and which has the inherent capability to accept the truth (which is indicated in the verse by the words 'Its oil is about to emit light even if fire has not touched it). Then as the olive oil produces brightness when caused to burn with the flame of fire, the same way natural Nūr of guidance which is placed in the heart of the believer, when joins the message and knowledge of Allah Ta'ālā, then it gets brightened and also brightens the world. When the companions and their pupils confined this example to the heart of a believer alone, they have most probably done so because it is only the believer who draws benefit from this Nūr. Otherwise the natural Nūr of guidance which is placed in the hearts of humans at the time of their creation, is not confined to believers, but is part of the nature and instinct of every human being. It is for this reason that one can see all around the world that there are people in every nook and corner, in all societies and religions, who believe in the existence of God and His Omnipotence, and do turn towards Him. No matter one may make all types of errors in the perception and understanding of God, yet every individual does believe by nature in His existence, with the exception of a few atheists, who have

lost their natural instinct.

A Ṣaḥīḥ *ḥadīth* endorses this view, which says, كُلُّ مَوْلُوْدٍ يُوْلَدُ عَلَى الْفِطْرَةِ that is 'Every child is born with natural instinct'. Later, his parents put him on the wrong path. This natural instinct is the guidance of faith. The guidance of faith and its Nūr is bestowed to every individual at the time of his birth, and because of this Nūr of guidance, one possesses the ability to accept the truth. When they come to know about the revelations of Allah through His messengers and their deputies, they readily accept them, except those unfortunate people who have erased the Divine Nūr from their heart with their wrong doings. Perhaps this is the reason that in the beginning of the verse the bestowal of Nūr is said to be common to all, which includes every one on the earth and the heavens, without any difference between believers or disbelievers, but towards the end of the verse it is said يَهْدِى اللّٰهُ لِنُوْرِهٖ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ, that is 'Allah Ta'ālā guides to His light whomsoever He wills - 35'. Here the will of Allah is not pointing toward that Divine Nūr which is bestowed to all humans, but toward the Qur'ānic Nūr, which is not availed by every one, except those fortunate ones, to whom Divine help is granted. Otherwise even one's endeavor goes waste without Divine help, and sometimes becomes detrimental :

اذا لم يكن عون من الله للفتى فاوّل ما يجنى عليه اجتهاده

'If there is no help to man from Allah, then his striving puts him to trouble instead'.

The Nūr of the Holy Prophet ﷺ

Imām Baghawī رحمه الله تعالى has narrated that Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه once enquired from Ka'b al-Aḥbār as to how would he explain this verse مَثَلُ نُوْرِهٖ كَمِشْكٰوةٍ. Ka'b al-Aḥbār, who was a great Muslim scholar of Torah and Injīl, said that this example was meant for the heart of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Mishkāt (the niche) stands for his chest, Zujājah (glass) for his heart and Miṣbāḥ (lamp) for his prophethood. What was unique about this Nūr of prophethood was that even before the declaration of prophethood it had the illumination of light for the people. When the revelation from Allah is coupled with the Nūr of prophethood, then it turns into such radiance that the whole world is brightened.

Before the declaration of prophethood of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and even before his birth, some strange and amazing events had taken place

in the world, which were in fact advance notice of the incoming prophet, and are called *Irhaṣāt* in the vocabulary of the scholars of *ḥadīth*. The difference between this word and miracle is that the latter is used for such unusual events which are bestowed by Allah Ta'ālā to his messengers for the endorsement of their prophethood, while *Irhaṣāt* are those unusual events which happen before the declaration of prophethood. There are a number of unusual incidents which are recorded by several authentic narrations, and have been compiled by Shaikh Jalaluddīn Sayuṭī رحمه الله تعالیٰ in his book (خصائص کبریٰ -Khaṣāiṣ Kūbrā – and by Abū Nu'aim in his دَلاَئِل النبوّة - Dalail-un-Nubuwwah. Other scholars have also collected many such incidents in their books. Tafsīr Maẓharī has reproduced a good number of these events.

Benefits of olive oil

شَجَرَةٍ مُّبٰرَكَةٍ زَيْتُونَةٍ (A blessed tree, the olive - 35.). This is an endorsement that olive and its tree is blessed by Allah and is beneficial and useful. Scholars have commented that Allah Ta'ālā has instilled many a benefits in it. Olive oil is used in the burning of lamps. Its light is the brightest and clearest as against any other oil. It is eaten as a fruit and its oil is used in cooking. The interesting part is that there is no need of any machine for the extraction of its oil. When the fruit is ripe, the oil comes out automatically. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has asked to eat and massage the body with olive oil. (Baghawī – Maẓharī)

فِىْ بُيُوْتٍ اَذِنَ اللّٰهُ اَنْ تُرْفَعَ وَيُذْكَرَ فِيْهَا اسْمُهٗ ۙ يُسَبِّحُ لَهٗ فِيْهَا بِالْغُدُوِّ وَالْاٰصَالِ

(The guided people worship Allah) in the houses that Allah has permitted to be raised and where His name recounted and His purity is pronounced, in the morning and in the evening, - 36.

In the previous verse Allah Ta'ālā had given a unique example of placing His Nūr of guidance in the heart of believers. Toward the end of the verse it was clarified that only those draw benefit from this Nūr, whom Allah loves and grants Divine help. In the above verse those places and buildings are referred to where such believers spend most of their time, especially the five times of prayers. These are the buildings for which Allah Ta'ālā has instructed to keep them high in esteem, and where His name be remembered. The splendor of such buildings is that Allah's name is remembered there in the morning and evening. That is He is worshipped there all the time by the people, who's attributes will

follow soon.

The above explanation is based on the assumption that فِیْ بُیُوْتٍ (in the houses) has an association with the sentence یَهْدِی اللّٰهُ لِنُوْرِهٖ (Allah guides to this light whomsoever He wills). (Ibn Kathīr etc.) Some others are of the opinion that it has a link with the word یُسَبِّحُ (His purity is pronounced), which is used later in the verse. But the first version appears more appropriate in the context of the subject. In that case the meaning of the verse would be that the Nūr of guidance referred to in the example of the previous verse can be found in the buildings and houses where He is remembered all the time. There is consensus among commentators that here the word 'houses' is purported for mosques.

Mosques are houses of Allah and their respect is obligatory

Qurṭubī has preferred the view that the word 'raised' used in the verse means to respect the mosques and has quoted the following *ḥadīth* of Sayyidnā 'Anas ﷺ in support of his contention.

> من احبّ اللّٰه عزّوجلّ فليحبّنی، ومن احبّنی فليحبّ اصحابی، ومن احبّ اصحابی فليحبّ القراٰن، ومن احبّ القراٰن فليحبّ المساجد، فانها افنية اللّٰه اذن اللّٰه فی رفعها وبارک فيها ميمونة ميمون اهلها محفوظة محفوظ أهلها،هم فی صلاتهم واللّٰه عزّوجلّ فی حوائجهم هم فی المساجد واللّٰه من ورائهم. (قرطبی)
>
> The Holy Prophet ﷺ said "Whoever wishes to love Allah should love me, and whoever wishes to love me should love my companions, and whoever wishes to love my companions should love the Qur'ān, and whoever wishes to love Qur'ān should love the mosques, because they are Allah's houses. Allah has enjoined to 'raise' them, and has made them blessed. They are blessed and those who live there are also blessed. They are in the protection of Allah, and those who live there are also in the protection of Allah. Those who are busy there in their prayers, Allah get their works done and fulfill their needs. While they are in the mosques Allah protects their household during their absence". (Qurṭubī)

Meaning of raising of mosques

اَذِنَ اللّٰهُ اَنْ تُرْفَعَ (That Allah has permitted to be raised - 36). The word اَذِنَ (*'adhina*) is derived from اِذن (*'idhn*), which means to allow or give permission, and the word تُرْفَعَ (*turfa'a*) is derived from رَفع (*raf'*), which means to raise, uplift or exalt. So, the meaning of this verse is that Allah

has allowed the raising of the mosques. Here 'allowed' means 'enjoined', and 'raising' means 'to venerate'. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ has explained that Allah Ta'ālā has prohibited Muslims from talking or doing anything absurd in the mosques. (Ibn Kathīr).

'Ikrimah and Mujāhid رحمهم الله تعالیٰ, the two Imāms of Tafsīr, are of the opinion that raising of the mosques carries here the sense of building the mosques in the same way as Qur'ān says about the building of Ka'bah وَإِذْ يَرْفَعُ إِبْرٰهِيمُ الْقَوَاعِدَ مِنَ الْبَيْتِ (And when Ibrahim was raising up the foundations of the House - 2:127). Here the raising of foundation is purported for building (construction) of foundation. Ḥasan Baṣrī رحمه الله تعالیٰ has given a different view that the word 'raised' is used here for respect and veneration of mosques, and to keep them clean from filthy and impure things, as narrated in a *ḥadīth* that, when an impure (*najis*) thing is brought in the mosque, it contracts itself in a similar manner as the human skin contracts from the fire. Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd Khudri ﷺ has reported that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said that whoever takes out dirty, impure and vexatious things from the mosque, Allah Ta'ālā will make a house for him in paradise. (Ibn Mājah). Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی الله عنها has narrated that 'the Holy Prophet ﷺ instructed us to make mosques (special places for offering prayers) in our houses (as well), and keep them clean and pure'. (Qurṭubī).

As a matter of fact, the word تُرْفَعَ (to be raised) encompasses both the meanings of building and veneration of the mosques. It also signifies to keep them clean, which means to make them free of all types of filth and dirt. It is also part of cleanliness to keep them free of any foul smell. It is for this reason that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has prohibited to go in the mosques without cleaning the mouth after eating onions or garlic, which is reported in many books of *ḥadīth*. Cigarettes, cigars and all other preparations of tobacco also fall under the same instruction. Burning any oil which emits foul odor is also not permitted in the mosque.

Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim has recorded a narration from Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ that he said 'I had seen that in case the Holy Prophet ﷺ noticed foul smell from someone's mouth, he used to turn him out from the mosque and send to Baqī', and would say that if someone has to eat onion and garlic, he should cook it properly, so that its odor is eliminated'. Scholars have drawn the conclusion from this *ḥadīth* that if someone is suffering

from such a disease that people feel discomfort standing next to him in prayers, then he too can be removed from the mosque. In such an eventuality he should himself restrain from going to mosque and offer his prayers at home until such time that he is recovered from that disease.

Exaltation of Mosques

The majority of companions and *tābi'īn* (the generation next to them) are of the opinion that exaltation of mosques means that mosques be built and be kept free of every thing evil. Some people have also included in it the outward appearance and grandeur of the buildings of the mosques, and have argued that Sayyidnā 'Uthmān Ghanī ﷺ had used hard wood in the building of the Prophet's mosque to give it an impressive look. Later, Sayyidnā 'Umar Ibn 'Abdul Azīz رحمه الله تعالیٰ had the Prophet's mosque improved further both materially and by decoration. This was done during the lifetime of companions and their pupils, and no one objected to this. Later on, many a kings spent very lavishly on building of mosques. Walīd Ibn 'Abdul Mālik had spent during his caliphate three times the annual income from the entire Syria on the construction and decoration of the Grand Mosque of Damascus, which is still there even now. Imām Abū Ḥanīfah رحمه الله تعالیٰ has ruled that if there is no element of ostentation and egotism, and the intent is to please Allah and veneration of His house, then there is no objection in the construction and decoration of majestic and grandiose mosques, rather one should expect a good reward for that act.

Some merits of Mosques

Abū Dāwūd has reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū 'Umamah ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ once said that whoever gets out of his house after ablution with the intent of offering obligatory prayer in the mosque, his reward is like the one who has got off from his house wearing *iḥrām* for performing Ḥajj, and whoever gets out of his house after ablution for the prayer of Ishrāq in the mosque, his reward is like the one of performing 'Umrah. A prayer after another prayer, provided one does not talk or do any work in between, is written in *'illiyyīn*. Further, it is reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Buraidah ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that those who go to mosques in darkness, give them the good tiding of complete Nūr (light) on the Dooms Day. (Muslim)

Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim has reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū

Hurairah ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that a man's offering of prayer in congregation is more than twenty times better than offering in the house or in the shop. It is because if someone sets out for the mosque after ablution with the intention of offering prayers and for no other purpose, then on every single step his status will improve by one degree and one sin will be forgiven until he reaches the mosque. Then as long as he will sit in the mosque waiting for the congregation to start, he will keep getting the reward of the prayers, and the angels will keep praying for him 'Ya Allah, Bestow Your grace on him, and forgive him, until he harms someone or his ablution is wasted'. Sayyidnā Ḥakam Ibn 'Umair ﷺ has narrated that the Holy Prophet ﷺ once said 'Live in this world like a guest and make mosques your abode, and make your hearts tender (be kind hearted) and ponder (over Allah's bounties) frequently, and weep (out of His fear) very often. Let not the mundane desires overcome you to make you change from this position, and you get involved in building houses unnecessarily, where you do not ever live, and get anxious to accumulate wealth more than your need, and desire for such things for the future which you cannot get'. Sayyidnā Abū Dardah ﷺ advised his son "Mosque should be your abode, because I have heard from the Holy Prophet ﷺ that 'Mosques are the abodes of Muttaqui (the God fearing) people. Whoever makes the mosque his abode (through remembering Allah abundantly) Allah Ta'ālā becomes guarantor for his comfort and tranquility, and to make him pass through the bridge of Ṣirāṭ with ease'". Abū Ṣādiq 'Azdī wrote to Shu'aib b. Ḥabḥāb in a letter 'Get hold of mosques as a necessity, because I have learnt a tradition saying that mosques were the meeting places of messengers'.

In a *ḥadīth* it is reported that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said 'Towards the end there will be people who will sit in the mosques in circles, and will discuss worldly affairs and their love for mundane benefits. You do not sit with those people who come to the mosques for this, because Allah does not need such people to come to the mosques. 'Sayyidnā Sa'īd Ibn Musayyab ﷺ said that the one who sits in the mosque is like he sits in the company of his Lord, so it is incumbent upon him not to say anything but good words (Qurṭubī).

Fifteen etiquettes of the mosques

Scholars have named fifteen items as etiquettes of the mosques. They

are:

On entering the mosque one should greet the people already sitting there, with *salām* and if there is no one then say السلام علينا وعلى عباد الله الصالحين (But this is required when those present in the mosque are not offering their extra prayer or reciting Qur'ān. If they are busy in any of these acts, then he should not greet them.)

After getting in the mosque one should offer two Rak'ats as *tahiyyah tul-Masjid*. (This is required at a time when offering prayers is not prohibited, that is the time of sun rise, sun set or when sun is directly overhead)

Should not carry out any transactions of sale or purchase in the mosque.

Should not carry any weapons in the mosque.

Should not make an announcement for the search of any of his lost items.

Should not raise his voice in the mosque.

Should not discuss worldly affairs in the mosque.

Should not quarrel with any one in the mosque.

Should not try to force his way into a row where there is no room.

Should not cross over in front of someone offering prayer.

Should avoid spitting or blowing of nose in the mosque.

Should not crackle fingers in the mosque.

Should not play with any part of the body.

Should keep clean of any filth, and should not take a baby or an insane along in the mosque.

Should keep busy in remembrance of Allah abundantly.

After listing these fifteen etiquettes Qurṭubī has remarked that whoever has fulfilled these requirements has done justice with the mosque, and it has become a place of charm and security for him.

I have written a booklet on etiquettes and formalities of mosques

under the title "آداب المساجد" (in Urdu). Anyone interested in the subject can consult it.

Houses meant exclusively for remembrance of Allah and for learning Qur'an or religious education also have the status of mosques

Abū Ḥayān has explained in Tafsīr Baḥr ul-Muḥīṭ that the word فِی بُیُوتٍ "in the houses" used in Qur'ān has a general connotation. It includes not only the mosques but also those houses which are exclusive for teaching Qur'ān and related religious teachings, such as Madāris (religious schools) or Maktabs. They also fall under the same category, and their respect and veneration is also obligatory.

Special wisdom for using the word 'allowed' in the verse

Scholars are all unanimous that the word أَذِنَ *'adhina* (allowed) is used here for command or order. But then the question is, what is the reason for using this word (instead or 'ordered' or 'enjoined')? Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī has described a subtle consideration in that the underlying objective is to train and induce the believers and the righteous to be ever ready to perform anything which is meant for pleasing Allah Ta'ālā, so much so that they need not be ordered to perform something for the pleasure of Allah, rather they should be waiting for the permission to perform it, and the moment they receive the go-ahead signal, they should hurry to carry it out.

يُذْكَرَ فِيهَا اسْمُهُ

Where His name is recounted - 36.

Here, the expression is 'recounting the name of Allah' encompasses all types of His remembrance, which include extra prayers, recitation of Qur'ān, learning of Islamic teachings, sermons, lectures on Sharī'ah, etc.

رِجَالٌ لَّا تُلْهِيهِمْ تِجَارَةٌ وَّلَا بَيْعٌ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللّٰهِ

By men whom no trade or sale makes neglectful of the remembrance of Allah - 37.

This verse describes special attributes of those believers who are the distinguished recipients of the Nūr of guidance and remain in the mosques. By the use of word *Rijāl* رِجَال (men) there is a hint that only men's presence is required in the mosques. For women it is better that

they offer their prayers at homes.

Musnad of Aḥmad and Baihaqī have related a *ḥadīth* of Sayyidah Umm Salmah رضی اللّٰہ عنہا that the Holy Prophet ﷺ once said خیر مساجد النساء قعر بیوتھن . 'The best mosques for women are the secluded corners of their homes'.

This verse describes that the involvement in trade and sales does not stop the righteous believers from the remembrance of Allah. Since 'sale' is included in the word 'trade', some commentators have preferred to assume trade for purchase only for the sake of comparison, while others have taken the trade in its common sense, that is transactions of sale and purchase, and have explained the wisdom of using the word 'sale' separately for the reason that trade transactions have a wide scope where profits and benefits are received after a long time. On the other hand by selling something one receives the money with profit immediately in cash. Hence, it is mentioned separately to stress that they do not bring into consideration even the most lucrative mundane benefit as against the prayers and remembrance of Allah Ta'ālā.

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar ؓ has said that this verse was revealed in connection with the market people, and his son, Sayyidnā Sālim, has related that one day his father was passing through the market and the time for prayers had come. Then he noticed that people started closing their shops and set out to go towards the mosque. On that Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar ؓ said that it is for these persons that the Qur'ān has said رِجَالٌ لَّا تُلْهِيهِمْ تِجَارَةٌ وَّلَا بَيْعٌ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللّٰهِ.

There were two companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ during his time, one was a general trader and the other a blacksmith who used to produce swords and sell them. It was the habit of the trader that when he would hear the call of the prayer while weighing something, he would leave every thing there and get up to go to the mosque for prayers. The other one who was the blacksmith, when he was busy hammering the hot iron and would hear the call of the prayer, he would stop his hand wherever it was and throw the hammer out of his hand to rush to the mosque for prayers, without even bothering to strike the raised hammer. This verse was revealed in their praise. (Qurṭubī)

Most of the companions were traders

This verse also points out that most of the companions were either traders or manufacturers, that is in the professions involved with the market, because the quality mentioned in the verse can be attributed only to those who are in the profession of trade and sales and do not let their profession interfere in the remembrance of Allah Ta'ālā. Otherwise it is irrelevant. (Rūḥ)

يَخَافُونَ يَوْمًا تَتَقَلَّبُ فِيهِ الْقُلُوبُ وَالْأَبْصَارُ

They are fearful of a day in which the hearts and the eyes will be overturned - 37.

The last quality of those believers who are mentioned in the above verse is that despite being busy in Allah's obedience, remembrance and worshiping all the time, they do not become careless or free themselves from Allah's fear. Instead the fear of reckoning on the Day of Judgment is constantly in their mind, which is the fruit of Nūr of guidance granted to them by Allah Ta'ālā, mentioned in the earlier verse يَهْدِي اللَّهُ لِنُورِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ . Toward the end of the verse their reward is described that they shall be graced with the best reward for their actions by Allah Ta'ālā, and then the verse says: وَيَزِيدَهُمْ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ (and will give them more out of His grace - 38). It means that their reward will not end with the recompense against the good actions, but some extra reward will also be given on His own وَاللَّهُ يَرْزُقُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ (and Allah gives whom He wills without counting - 38), that is neither Allah is bound by any rule nor does His treasure gets depleted. He grants unlimited sustenance to whomever He likes.

So far the righteous believers were described whose chests are the niches for the Nūr of guidance and who readily accept the Nūr of guidance. In verses 39 and 40 those disbelievers are being described who were given in their nature the Nūr of guidance by Allah Ta'ālā, but when Allah's revelation reached them to lit them up, they turned away to reject it and lost the Nūr to stay in the darkness. Since the disbelievers and atheists are of two types, therefore, two examples are related here. One category is that of those disbelievers who believe in the Dooms Day and Hereafter, and have faith that some of their good acts, according to their own reckoning, will be rewarded in the Hereafter. The second category is that of atheists, who do not believe in the Hereafter and the Dooms Day.

The example of the deeds of the first category is that of a mirage, which is nothing but illusion of sight. In a level plain the shining sand creates the illusion of water from a distance, and as a thirsty person approaches near it, the illusion (mirage) disappears, leaving the thirsty completely exhausted, who ultimately dies of thirst. Similarly, a disbeliever's deeds are like a mirage which he considers of value and benefit, but in actual fact they are no better than an illusion, like mirage, and as a thirsty person discovers the illusion when it is too late, in the same way the disbelievers will find out their blunder in the Hereafter, when it will be of no avail.

The second category of deeds is that of atheists or infidels, for which the example of a deep ocean is given, which is completely dark. In the first place it is dark because of its depth, then it is covered by a big wave which is also enshrouded by another wave, and over that there is a mass of dark cloud. In short there is darkness over darkness, so much so that if someone takes out his hand, he cannot have even a glimpse of it. The inference to be drawn from this example is that those infidels who deny the coming of the Dooms Day, the Reckoning and the Hereafter are devoid of even the illusive Nūr, which the first category of disbelievers had. Although they too did not possess the useful Nūr of guidance, but at least they were under the illusion that they had done some good deeds which will help them in the Hereafter, but the latter category did not deem it necessary to work for the Hereafter, since they had no belief in it. Hence, they will have nothing but darkness and complete darkness with them on the Dooms Day.

After describing the two examples the next sentence says: وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَجْعَلِ اللّٰهُ لَهٗ نُوْرًا فَمَالَهٗ مِنْ نُّوْرٍ (And the one to whom Allah does not give light can have no light at all - 40).

This sentence about the disbelievers is like the one that appeared earlier for the believers: يَهْدِى اللّٰهُ لِنُوْرِهٖ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ (Allah guides to His light whomsoever He wills - 35). It describes the deprivation of disbelievers from the Nūr of guidance, which they lost by denying the injunctions of Allah, and when they have lost Allah's Nūr of guidance how can they get any other Nūr.

This verse also explains that no one can become a perspicacious

scholar merely by having resource of insight and knowledge, rather it is bestowed by the grace of Allah only. It is for this reason that those who are regarded naïve in mundane matters prove themselves very knowledgeable and scholarly in the cognizance of the Hereafter. And, vice versa, many who are regarded very intelligent and knowledgeable in worldly matters, prove themselves completely ignorant and foolish in the perception and comprehension of the Hereafter. (Maẓharī)

Verses 41 - 45

اَلَمْ تَرَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يُسَبِّحُ لَهٗ مَنْ فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَالطَّيْرُ صٰٓفّٰتٍ ؕ
كُلٌّ قَدْ عَلِمَ صَلَاتَهٗ وَتَسْبِيْحَهٗ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌۢ بِمَا يَفْعَلُوْنَ ﴿٤١﴾
وَلِلّٰهِ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَاِلَى اللّٰهِ الْمَصِيْرُ ﴿٤٢﴾ اَلَمْ تَرَ اَنَّ
اللّٰهَ يُزْجِىْ سَحَابًا ثُمَّ يُؤَلِّفُ بَيْنَهٗ ثُمَّ يَجْعَلُهٗ رُكَامًا فَتَرَى الْوَدْقَ
يَخْرُجُ مِنْ خِلٰلِهٖ ۚ وَيُنَزِّلُ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مِنْ جِبَالٍ فِيْهَا مِنْۢ بَرَدٍ
فَيُصِيْبُ بِهٖ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَيَصْرِفُهٗ عَنْ مَّنْ يَّشَآءُ ؕ يَكَادُ سَنَا بَرْقِهٖ
يَذْهَبُ بِالْاَبْصَارِ ﴿٤٣﴾ يُقَلِّبُ اللّٰهُ الَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ ؕ اِنَّ فِىْ ذٰلِكَ لَعِبْرَةً
لِّاُولِى الْاَبْصَارِ ﴿٤٤﴾ وَاللّٰهُ خَلَقَ كُلَّ دَآبَّةٍ مِّنْ مَّآءٍ ۚ فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ
يَّمْشِىْ عَلٰى بَطْنِهٖ ؕ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَّمْشِىْ عَلٰى رِجْلَيْنِ ۚ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ
يَّمْشِىْ عَلٰٓى اَرْبَعٍ ؕ يَخْلُقُ اللّٰهُ مَا يَشَآءُ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىْءٍ
قَدِيْرٌ ﴿٤٥﴾

Did you not realize that purity of Allah is proclaimed by all those in the heavens and the earth, and by the birds with their wings spread out? Everyone knows one's own (way of) praying (to Allah) and one's own (way of) proclaiming Allah's purity. And Allah knows well what they do. [41] **And to Allah belongs the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth, and towards Allah is the final return.** [42]

Do you not realize that Allah drives the clouds, then

joins them together, then turns them into a heap? Then you see the rain coming out from their midst. And He sends down from the sky *mountains* (of clouds) having hail in them, then He afflicts with it whomsoever He wills and turns it away from whomsoever He wills. The flash of its lightning seems to snatch away the eyes. [43] **Allah alternates the night and the day. Surely, in that there is a lesson for those who have eyes to see.** [44]

And Allah has created every moving creature from water. So, some of them move on their bellies; and some of them move on two legs and some of them move on four. Allah creates what He wills. Surely, Allah is powerful over everything. [45]

Commentary

'كُلٌّ قَدْ عَلِمَ صَلَاتَهُ وَتَسْبِيحَهُ' (Everyone knows one's own (way of) praying - 41). In the beginning of the verse it is said that every creature on earth and heavens and in between them is busy in the glorification and sanctification of Allah Ta'ālā. The meaning of Tasbīḥ is explained by Sufyān رحمه الله تعالى that Allah Ta'ālā has created every thing in this universe like earth, heavens, sun, moon, stars, water, fire, air or sand with purpose, and they are all performing all the time the task they are assigned. They cannot refuse to perform their assigned job. This obedience and submission to carry out the assigned job is referred here as Tasbīḥ. Hence, their Tasbīḥ is by action and not by words. By their actions they are confirming that they are performing this worship because they believe Allah Ta'ālā to be Pure and Almighty.

Zamakhsharī and some other commentators have, on the other hand, elaborated that it is not improbable that Allah Ta'ālā has placed so much sense and understanding in everything that they do recognize their Creator and Master. And it is also not improbable that He has taught them some sort of speech, and some special Tasbīḥ and worship in which they keep themselves busy. There is an allusion towards this point in the last sentence 'كُلٌّ قَدْ عَلِمَ صَلَاتَهُ' (Every one knows one's own {way of} praying and proclaiming Allah's purity - 41). It indicates that all creatures are busy in Tasbīḥ and worship of Allah Ta'ālā, but the manner of worship of each creature is different. Angels worship in a different manner, humans worship differently, trees and vegetation also worship differently, and

the rocks and minerals yet in another manner. Another verse of the Holy Qur'ān also confirms this view when it says اَعْطٰى كُلَّ شَىْءٍ خَلْقَهٗ ثُمَّ هَدٰى (He who gave everything its shape, then guidance - 20:50) that is 'Allah Ta'ālā created everything and then given guidance to them'. The guidance is that everything is obeying Allah and performing its assigned duty diligently. Apart from this, everything has been guided how to fulfill the need of its existence with such perfection that even the best of minds get boggled. How creative and complicated nests and holes they make for their living, and how they strive and work hard to find and collect their food is in itself a great wonder.

مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مِنْ جِبَالٍ فِيْهَا

From the sky mountains (of clouds) having hail in them - 43.

Here the word سَمَاء is purported for clouds, and Jibāl (mountains) for big masses of clouds, while hails are called Barad.

Verses 46 - 54

لَقَدْ اَنْزَلْنَآ اٰيٰتٍ مُّبَيِّنٰتٍ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يَهْدِىْ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ اِلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ
﴿٤٦﴾ وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ اٰمَنَّا بِاللّٰهِ وَبِالرَّسُوْلِ وَاَطَعْنَا ثُمَّ يَتَوَلّٰى فَرِيْقٌ مِّنْهُمْ
مِّنْۢ بَعْدِ ذٰلِكَ ؕ وَمَآ اُولٰٓئِكَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿٤٧﴾ وَاِذَا دُعُوْٓا اِلَى اللّٰهِ
وَرَسُوْلِهٖ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَهُمْ اِذَا فَرِيْقٌ مِّنْهُمْ مُّعْرِضُوْنَ ﴿٤٨﴾ وَاِنْ يَّكُنْ
لَّهُمُ الْحَقُّ يَاْتُوْٓا اِلَيْهِ مُذْعِنِيْنَ ﴿٤٩﴾ اَفِىْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ اَمِ ارْتَابُوْٓا اَمْ
يَخَافُوْنَ اَنْ يَّحِيْفَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَرَسُوْلُهٗ ؕ بَلْ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ
﴿٥٠﴾ اِنَّمَا كَانَ قَوْلَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ اِذَا دُعُوْٓا اِلَى اللّٰهِ وَ رَسُوْلِهٖ لِيَحْكُمَ
بَيْنَهُمْ اَنْ يَّقُوْلُوْا سَمِعْنَا وَاَطَعْنَا ؕ وَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿٥١﴾
وَمَنْ يُّطِعِ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ وَيَخْشَ اللّٰهَ وَيَتَّقْهِ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْفَآئِزُوْنَ
﴿٥٢﴾ وَاَقْسَمُوْا بِاللّٰهِ جَهْدَ اَيْمَانِهِمْ لَئِنْ اَمَرْتَهُمْ لَيَخْرُجُنَّ ؕ قُلْ لَّا
تُقْسِمُوْا ۚ طَاعَةٌ مَّعْرُوْفَةٌ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ خَبِيْرٌۢ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٥٣﴾ قُلْ

أَطِيْعُوا اللّٰهَ وَأَطِيْعُوا الرَّسُوْلَ ۚ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّمَا عَلَيْهِ مَا حُمِّلَ وَعَلَيْكُمْ مَّا حُمِّلْتُمْ وَإِنْ تُطِيْعُوْهُ تَهْتَدُوْا ط وَمَا عَلَى الرَّسُوْلِ إِلَّا الْبَلٰغُ الْمُبِيْنُ ﴿٥٤﴾

We have surely sent down enlightening verses. And Allah guides whom He wills to the straight path. [46]

And they say, 'We have believed in Allah and in the messenger and have taken to obedience', then a group from them goes back after all this. And those are no believers. [47] **And when they are summoned to Allah and His messenger that he (the messenger) may judge between them, in no time a group of them turns averse.** [48] **And if the right is theirs, they would come to him as (if they are) submissive ones.** [49] **Is there a malady in their hearts or do they have doubt or do they fear that Allah and His messenger will do injustice to them? Rather they themselves are the unjust.** [50] **The only reply of the (true) believers, when they are summoned to Allah and His messenger that he (the messenger) may judge between them, is that they say, 'We listen and obey.' And such people are the successful.** [51] **And whoever obeys Allah and His messenger and has awe of Him and observes Taqwā of Him, then such people are the victorious.** [52]

And they (the hypocrites) swear by Allah on eloquent oaths that if you (O prophet) order them, they will certainly leave (their homes for Jihād). Say, 'do not swear, (the reality of your) obedience is known. Indeed Allah is fully aware of what you do.' [53]

Say, 'Obey Allah and obey the messenger. But if you turn away, then on him (the messenger) lies (the responsibility of) what he is burdened with and on you lies (the responsibility of) what you are burdened with. And if you obey him, you will get the right path. And the messenger is responsible for nothing more than to convey the message clearly.' [54]

Commentary

These verses were revealed on a special occasion. Ṭabari and others

have related the incident saying that there was a hypocrite by the name Bishr, who had some dispute and enmity with a Jew over a piece of land. The Jew suggested to him to take their dispute before the Holy Prophet ﷺ for the judgement, but Bishr, the hypocrite knew well that he was on the wrong and if the dispute was taken to the Holy Prophet ﷺ he will definitely decide the case on merit, and he will lose the case. So, he did not agree with the suggestion and instead asked the Jew to take it to Ka'b Ibn Ashraf, another Jew. On this point these verses were revealed. In verse اَفِیْ قُلُوبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ (Is there any malady in their hearts - 50) the disease of firm infidelity or the doubt on prophethood have been negated to point out that this doubt and infidelity were not the real cause of evasion to take the dispute in the court of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . Although the infidelity and doubt on prophethood among the hypocrites is obvious and proven, but the underlying cause was that he (Bishr) knew well that if the case was placed before the Holy Prophet ﷺ , he would definitely lose it, because he would decide the case on merit.

Four conditions for success and victory

وَمَنْ يُّطِعِ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ وَيَخْشَ اللّٰهَ وَيَتَّقْهِ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْفَآئِزُوْنَ

And whoever obeys Allah and His messenger and has awe of Him and observes Taqwā of Him, then such people are the victorious. [52]

In this verse it is declared that those who bind themselves to follow these four things are the ones who are successful and victorious in this world and the Hereafter.

An astonishing incident

An incident of Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ is reported in Tafsīr Qurṭubī, which explains the difference between these four things and puts them in right perspective. It so happened that one day Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ was standing in the Prophet's ﷺ mosque, when suddenly a Roman villager appeared and stood beside him, and said انا اشهد ان لآ اله الاّ اللّٰه واشهد انّ محمدًا رسول اللّٰه. Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ inquired 'What is the matter?' He replied 'I have accepted Islam for Allah's sake'. Then Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ asked if there was any reason for that, to which he replied in the affirmative, and elaborated that he had read Torah, Injīl, Zabūr and a number of other books brought by past messengers. But lately he had heard a verse of the Holy Qur'ān recited by a Muslim prisoner and realized that in that small

verse all the older books have been condensed. So, he was convinced that it was Allah's revelation. Then Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ enquired from him about the verse he was referring to, and he recited this very verse. That Roman villager also gave a very astonishing commentary of the verse, which goes like this:

مَنْ يُّطِعِ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ وَيَخْشَ اللّٰهَ وَيَتَّقْهِ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْفَآئِزُوْنَ

And whoever obeys Allah and His messenger and has awe of Him and observes Taqwā of Him, then such people are the victorious. [52]

This مَنْ يُّطِعِ اللّٰهَ relates to the obligations toward Allah, and 'وَرَسُوْلَهٗ refers to Prophet's ﷺ traditions, and وَيَخْشَ اللّٰهَ alludes toward past life and وَيَتَّقْهِ is purported for the remaining life. When someone acts upon these four things he is given the good tiding of فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْفَآئِزُوْنَ (that such people are the victorious). And Fa'iz is that person who gets deliverance from Jahannam and earns a place in the Paradise. After hearing this explanation Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ said the endorsement of this is available in the utterance of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, who had said اوتيت جوامع الكلم that is ' Allah has graced me with such comprehensive expressions in which words are few but the meanings are vast'. (Qurṭubī)

Verses 55 - 57

وَعَدَ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مِنْكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ فِى الْاَرْضِ كَمَا اسْتَخْلَفَ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ۖ وَلَيُمَكِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ دِيْنَهُمُ الَّذِى ارْتَضٰى لَهُمْ وَلَيُبَدِّلَنَّهُمْ مِّنْۢ بَعْدِ خَوْفِهِمْ اَمْنًا ۗ يَعْبُدُوْنَنِىْ لَا يُشْرِكُوْنَ بِىْ شَيْـًٔا ۗ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ بَعْدَ ذٰلِكَ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْفٰسِقُوْنَ ﴿۵۵﴾ وَاَقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتُوا الزَّكٰوةَ وَاَطِيْعُوا الرَّسُوْلَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُوْنَ ﴿۵٦﴾ لَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مُعْجِزِيْنَ فِى الْاَرْضِ ۚ وَمَاْوٰىهُمُ النَّارُ ۗ وَلَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيْرُ ﴿۵۷﴾

Allah has promised those of you who believe and do good deeds that He will certainly make them (His)

vicegerents in the land, like He made those before them, and will certainly establish for them their religion that He has chosen for them and will certainly give them peace in exchange, after their state of fear; (provided that) they worship Me, ascribing no partner to Me. And whoever turns infidel after that, then such people are the transgressors. [55]

And establish Ṣalāh and pay Zakāh and obey the messenger so that you may be favored with mercy. [56] **Never think that the disbelievers are (able) to frustrate (Allah's plan) on the earth. And their abode is the Fire. And indeed it is an evil terminus.** [57]

Commentary

Background of Revelation

Qurṭubī has reported on authority of Abul 'Āliyah that the Holy Prophet ﷺ stayed in Makkah for ten years after commencement of revelation and declaration of prophethood, during which time there was a constant fear of the infidels and disbelievers. Then after the Hijrah to Madina also there was a ceaseless danger of attacks from the disbelievers. So, someone asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ "Would a time come to us when we will be able to live in peace without wearing our weaponry?' The Holy Prophet ﷺ replied 'Yes, the time is coming very soon'. On that occasion these verses were revealed. (Qurṭubī and Baḥr). Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه has said that these verses relate the promise of Allah Ta'ālā, which He had made with the Ummah of Muḥammad ﷺ before their creation in the Torah and the Injīl. (Baḥr Muḥīṭ)

Allah Ta'ālā had made three promises to the Holy Prophet ﷺ , that his Ummah will be made His vicegerent on earth and will rule over it, and His favourite religion Islam will be made victorious, and Muslims will be given so much power and grandeur that they will have no fear of any one. Allah Ta'ālā fulfilled His promise by conferring conquest over Makkah, Khaibar, Baḥrain, and the whole of Yemen and the entire peninsula of Arabia even during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . Also he received *jizyah*, (capitation tax) from the Zoroastrians of Hajar and some Syrian territories. The kings and rulers of Rome, Egypt, Iskandria, Oman and Ethiopia sent gifts to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and gave him honour and respect. Then during his caliphate Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه

crushed all the menacing uprisings. He also sent out Islamic armies to Persia, Syria and Egypt. Buṣrā and Damascus also fell to Islamic State during this time.

When the time of death of Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ﷺ approached nearer, Allah Ta'ālā put an inspiration in his heart to nominate Sayyidnā 'Umar Ibn Khaṭṭāb ﷺ as his successor. When Sayyidnā 'Umar Ibn Khaṭṭāb ﷺ took charge of the caliphate, it was so wonderful that the heavens had not witnessed such grand governance after the governance of the messengers. During his caliphate the entire land of Syria and Egypt and major part of Persia were overpowered. It was during his time that the grandeur of Caesar and Chosroes were vanished. After that period, during the caliphate of Sayyidnā 'Uthmān ﷺ the Islamic victories extended from the East to the West. In the west up to Cyprus and Andalucia, and in the east up to China. Besides, 'Irāq, Khorasan and Ahwaz all fell to Islamic State during the time of third Caliph. What the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said according to a Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth that he was shown the entire east and west of the earth by bringing them together, and that the rule of his Ummah will extend up to all those places which have been shown to him; this promise was fulfilled by Allah Ta'ālā even during the time of caliphate Sayyidna 'Uthman . (Ibn Kathīr)

According to another *ḥadīth* the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said that caliphate will last for thirty years after him. Here, the word caliphate means the Rightly Guided Caliphate (Al-Khilāfah-ar-Rāshidah), which was run exactly on the footsteps of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . It lasted up to the time of Sayyidnā 'Alī ﷺ, because this period of thirty years was finished after him.

At this point Ibn Kathīr has also reported a *ḥadīth* from Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, that Sayyidnā Jabir Ibn Samurah ﷺ has said that he had heard the Holy Prophet ﷺ saying that his Ummah will continue ruling until the twelve caliphs last. After narrating this Ibn Kathīr has commented that this *ḥadīth* is pointing that there will be twelve upright caliphs in the Muslim Ummah, which is bound to happen. However, it is not necessary that all twelve come one after the other and there is no gap in between, rather it is more likely that they turn up with an interval of time. Out of this lot, four Rightly Guided Khulafā' had appeared one after the other immediately after the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The next was Sayyidnā

'Umar Ibn 'Abdul 'Azīz ﷺ who came after a gap of some time. A few others also appeared in different times after him and will continue to come until the last caliph Sayyidnā Mahdiyy comes. There is no mention in the *ḥadīth* of those twelve caliphs which the Shiites have determined. Rather some of them are those who have no connection with the caliphate at all. It is also not necessary that all of them would be of the same status, and during their time there would be complete peace and tranquility. This promise is related to rectitude and firmness of faith, the righteous deeds and total obedience, and any difference in their degree will naturally make difference in the power and control of authority. Islamic history spread over a period of 1400 years is a witness that in different times and different countries whenever and wherever there was a just and righteous ruler, he has received his share from this promise of Allah based on the extent of righteous deeds he has performed. At another place, the Qur'ān says إِنَّ حِزْبَ اللّٰهِ هُمُ الْغَالِبُوْنَ that is 'The people of Allah are the ones to prevail.'

This verse is a proof of approval and esteem in the sight of Allah of the four rightly guided Khulafā'

This verse is also a proof of the prophethood of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, because the forecast he had made came true exactly in the manner he had predicted. The same way it is also a proof of acceptance and approval of the caliphate of Al-Khulafā' ar-Rāshidīn in the sight of Allah. It is for the simple reason that the promise Allah Ta'ālā had made with His Messenger ﷺ and his Ummah was completely fulfilled during the lifetime of the four Ṣaḥābah. If the caliphate of the earlier caliphs is not regarded legitimate and true, as claimed by some Rawāfiḍ, then the Qur'ānic promise has not been fulfilled as yet. Then the argument put forward by Rawāfiḍ that the Qur'ānic promise will be fulfilled during the life of Sayyidnā Mahdiyy is but ridiculous, as it will amount to saying that for full 1400 years the 'Ummah will live in disgrace and misery, and nearing the Dooms Day when he will get the rule, only that period is referred by this promise. The fact of the matter is that the conditions of faith and righteous deeds, on which this promise was made by Allah Ta'ālā, were present in these Ṣaḥābah to the perfection and in totality. In reality Allah's promise was fulfilled in totality in their lifetime only. After that neither the degree of faith and deeds was maintained at that level, nor

the dignity of caliphate and governance could be retained.

وَمَنْ كَفَرَ بَعْدَ ذٰلِكَ فَأُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْفٰسِقُوْنَ

And whoever turns infidel after that, then such people are the transgressors - 24:55.

The literal meaning of the word Kufr is thanklessness and in conventional sense it is the antonym of faith. In this verse there is room for taking either of the two meanings. Thus the meaning of the verse is that when Allah Ta'ālā fulfills His promise and bestows power, authority, peace and satisfaction to the Muslims, and stability to Islam, and after that someone turns apostate or avoids obeying the rules of the Islamic State, then such a person is a transgressor. In the first place he has lost the faith, and secondly, stopped obeying the rules and regulations of the Islamic State. Kufr and ingratitude are great sins in any situation, but after the establishment of Islamic rule, authority and grandeur the intensity of these sins is doubled. That is why it is emphasized by the words بَعْدَ ذٰلِكَ (after that). Imām Baghawī has said that the scholars of Tafsīr have explained that this Qur'ānic sentence came true for the first time on those who assassinated the ruling caliph Sayyidnā 'Uthmān ﷺ. When they committed this great sin, the referred graces of Allah Ta'ālā were reduced, and they were afflicted with fear and fright because of mutual killings and massacre. Despite the fact that they were like brothers to each other, they got involved in mutual killing. Baghawī has related on his own authority an address by Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Salām ﷺ, which he delivered at the time of commotion against Sayyidnā 'Uthmān ﷺ. The wordings of the address are as follows:

> "The angels of Allah had cordoned your city for security ever since the Holy Prophet ﷺ had come to Madīnah, and this measure was continuing until today. By God, if you assassinate 'Uthmān ﷺ, these angels will go back, and will never return again. By god, whoever from you will kill him will present himself before Allah with his hands cut. He will be without his hands. And know that Allah's sword was in its sheath so far. By God, if this sword comes out of its sheath, it shall never go back in sheath again, because whenever a messenger is assassinated, seventy thousand people are killed in return and when a caliph is assassinated, then thirty five thousand persons are killed" (Maẓharī).

Hence, the sequence of mutual killing which had commenced with the Shahadah (martyrdom) of Sayyidnā 'Uthmān ﷺ has continued in the Ummah throughout. Similarly, the way assassins of 'Uthmān ﷺ acted against the blessings of Allah Ta'ālā and solidarity of Islam and were ungrateful to Him, the Rawāfiḍ and Khawārij did the same after that by grouping against the Guided Khulafā'. The incident of great sacrifice of Sayyidnā Husain Ibn Ali ﷺ also happened under the same sequence. نسأل الله الهداية وشكر نعمته

Verses 58 - 60

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لِيَسْتَاْذِنْكُمُ الَّذِيْنَ مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُكُمْ وَالَّذِيْنَ لَمْ
يَبْلُغُوا الْحُلُمَ مِنْكُمْ ثَلٰثَ مَرّٰتٍ ط مِنْ قَبْلِ صَلٰوةِ الْفَجْرِ وَحِيْنَ
تَضَعُوْنَ ثِيَابَكُمْ مِّنَ الظَّهِيْرَةِ وَمِنْۢ بَعْدِ صَلٰوةِ الْعِشَآءِ ثَلٰثُ
عَوْرٰتٍ لَّكُمْ ط لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَا عَلَيْهِمْ جُنَاحٌۢ بَعْدَهُنَّ ط طَوّٰفُوْنَ
عَلَيْكُمْ بَعْضُكُمْ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ ط كَذٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللّٰهُ لَكُمُ الْاٰيٰتِ ط وَاللّٰهُ
عَلِيْمٌ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿٥٨﴾ وَاِذَا بَلَغَ الْاَطْفَالُ مِنْكُمُ الْحُلُمَ فَلْيَسْتَاْذِنُوْا كَمَا
اسْتَاْذَنَ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ط كَذٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ اٰيٰتِهٖ ط وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ
حَكِيْمٌ ﴿٥٩﴾ وَالْقَوَاعِدُ مِنَ النِّسَآءِ الّٰتِىْ لَا يَرْجُوْنَ نِكَاحًا فَلَيْسَ
عَلَيْهِنَّ جُنَاحٌ اَنْ يَّضَعْنَ ثِيَابَهُنَّ غَيْرَ مُتَبَرِّجٰتٍۭ بِزِيْنَةٍ ط وَاَنْ
يَّسْتَعْفِفْنَ خَيْرٌ لَّهُنَّ ط وَاللّٰهُ سَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿٦٠﴾

O those who believe, the slaves owned by you and those of you who have not reached puberty must seek your permission (to see you) at three times: before the prayer of Fajr, when you take off your clothes at noon and after the prayer of 'Ishā'. These are three times of privacy for you. There is no harm, neither to you nor to them after these (three times). They are your frequent visitors as some of you are (frequent visitors) of the others. This is how Allah explains the verses to you. And Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise. [58]

And when the children from among you reach puberty, they must seek permission as the permission is sought by those before them. This is how Allah explains His verses to you. And Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise. [59]

And those old women who have no hope for marriage, there is no sin on them if they take off their (extra) clothes while they do not display their adornment. And that they refrain (even from this) is better for them. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. [60]

Commentary

It has been described in the beginning of this Sūrah that the injunctions of Sūrah Nūr mostly relate to prevention of obscenity and vulgarity. Under the same sequence some injunctions regarding social etiquette and mutual meetings are also enjoined. After that the injunctions about Ḥijāb for women are prescribed.

The injunction for relatives and *maḥrams* for seeking permission at specific timings

Earlier in this Sūrah the social etiquette and manners for mutual meetings were described in verses 27, 28 and 29 under the heading 'injunctions on seeking permission', where it was enjoined that if you go to visit someone, do not enter the house without taking permission. Irrespective of the situation whether it is a female section of the house or the male section, and whether the visitor is a man or a woman, it has been made obligatory on every one to seek permission before entering the house. However, these injunctions relate to those who come in the house as visitors. But in the present verses a different type of *isti'dhān* is enjoined. Here those persons are instructed to seek permission who live together in the same house and keep roaming in the rooms freely. In this category those men are also included with whom the *ḥijāb* of women is not required (the maḥrams). They, too, are advised to make some sort of sound, either by cleaning the throat or by thumping of steps, in order to make their presence felt. This type of *isti'dhān* is preferable and not obligatory, but to give it up is Makrūh Tanzīhī. Tafsīr Maẓharī has remarked:

فمن اراد الدخول فی بیت نفسه وفیه محرماته یکره له الدخول فیه من غیر استیذان تنزیها لاحتمال رؤیة واحدة منهن عریانة وهو احتمال ضعیف ومقتضاه التنزه. (مظهری)

> The one who intends to enter his own house, while it is occupied by his maḥram ladies, it is not desirable (*makrūh tanzīhī*) for him to enter it without seeking permission, because of the possibility that one of those ladies is without clothes. However, since this possibility is a remote one, it requires precaution only (and not Prohibition).

This injunction relates to the time before entering the house, but once men-folk have entered the house, all the inmates live together and being members of the same family keep meeting each other within the house. For the family members living together there is another injunction of seeking permission at three specific times, which are the times of privacy. These three times are before the Fajr prayers, the resting time in the afternoon and in the night after 'Ishā' prayers. At these times all the *maḥrams* and relatives, even the young children and slave girls having sense, are prohibited to enter the private places without taking permission. It is to ensure that none should go in the private rooms without first seeking the permission. At these times one wants to be on one's own and sometimes takes off the extra clothes, while at times one is in a compromising position with his wife. During any of these situations one would feel very embarrassed and upset if seen by even a very young but sensible child or a woman of the household. In the least it will cause him disturbance in his rest. Hence, there is a need to take permission at these three specific times before entering the private chambers. After this injunction it is said لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَا عَلَيْهِمْ جُنَاحٌ ۢ بَعْدَهُنَّ (58) that is besides these times there is no harm if you go to each other without any permission, because during all other times people are busy doing their normal duties and are properly attired in their usual clothing. These are also not the normal times for intimacy with the wife.

Here the question arises that enforcement of injunction on adult man and woman is normal, but why the young children are also commanded to comply with this injunction, which is not the normal practice.

The answer to this confusion is that in actual fact it is the adult men and women who are charged with this duty to explain to the young children not to go to private chambers at these times without taking permission. It is in the same manner as a *ḥadīth* instructs to teach the prayers to children when they attain the age of seven years and persuade them to offer it. And when they attain the age of ten years they be bound

down to offer prayers regularly, and if they default then they should be beaten to be regular in their prayers. Similarly, the injunction of *isti'dhān* in the above verse is actually for the adult men and women. In the sentence under discussion the word Junāḥ is used to say that apart from these three times there is no harm if the inmates go in the private chambers without permission. Generally the word Junāḥ is used for sin, but sometimes it is also used for harm or obstacle. Here in this verse it is used for the latter meaning, hence, any doubt of sinning on the part of children is also removed. (Bayān ul-Qur'ān)

Ruling

The phrase الَّذِيْنَ مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُكُمْ (the slaves owned by you) used in verse (58) covers the meaning of both the slaves and the slave girls. Among them the adult slaves fall under the category of non-Maḥrams under the Islamic law. As has been explained earlier, the mistress owner woman of an adult slave is obligated to be in ḥijāb before him. Therefore, the phrase is purported to mean here the slave girls and minor slaves who roam about in the house freely.

Ruling

The scholars and jurists have different viewpoints on the question whether this type of *isti'dhān* is obligatory or merely commendable and whether this injunction is still valid or is abrogated. Majority of jurists have ruled that this verse is firm and thus not abrogated, and the injunction is obligatory both for men and women (Qurṭubī). But it is obvious that the reason and ground for the injunction to be obligatory is that which is given above, that is, one wants to be on his own at these three times and likes privacy, and sometimes gets busy with his wife. However, if people could get into the habit of keeping their concealable parts covered even at these three times, and be careful to copulate with wife only at times when there is no possibility of any one coming in, as is the norm these days, then it is not obligatory to restrain the relatives and children from entering without *isti'dhān*. In this situation it is no more obligatory for the relatives to follow it. But there is no doubt that it is a desirable and commendable act, though it seems that people have given it up for a long time. According to one narration Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ has used very strong words for ignoring it, and according to another narration he has put forward excuses for those who do not follow it.

The first narration is reported by Ibn Kathīr on authority of Ibn Abī Ḥātim that Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ has said that there are three verses which people have stopped following. One of them is this very verse of *istidhān* يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لِيَسْتَاْذِنْكُمُ الَّذِيْنَ مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُكُمْ (58) in which relatives and young children are instructed to seek permission. The second verse is وَاِذَا حَضَرَ الْقِسْمَةَ اُولُوا الْقُرْبٰى (4:8) in which people are advised to hand over a part of the inheritance to those relatives also who are present at the time of division of patrimony but have no claim on it, in order to console them. The third verse is اِنَّ اَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ اَتْقٰكُمْ in which it is declared that the noblest among you in the sight of Allah is the most god-fearing of you. But these days such persons are regarded honorable and respectable who possess plenty of wealth and palatial houses. According to some other narration Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ has also said that in respect of these three verses the Satan has overpowered the people. Then he said "I have restrained even my slave girl not to come to me without permission at these three times".

The second narration is also reported on authority of Ibn Abī Ḥātim by Sayyidnā 'Ikrimah ﷺ that two persons enquired from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ about *isti'dhān* enjoined (by this verse) upon near relatives and commented that people have stopped acting on this. Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ replied إنّ الله ستير يحبّ السّتر that Allah keeps cover on many things, and He likes the same for others. The fact of the matter is that at the time of revelation of this verse the society was very simple. People did not use curtains at the door nor did they have large beds with curtains. There used to be occasions when a child or servant would come in unannounced at a time the person was in a compromising position with his wife. It was to prevent such happenings that Allah Ta'ālā sent down this injunction to take permission at these three times. But now people use curtains at the door and large beds having curtains, which is considered enough for the purpose. Now there is no need for *isti'dhān*. (Having reproduced this narration Ibn Kathīr has said – هذا اسناد صحيح الى ابن عباس (that is, the chain of its narrators is 'Ṣaḥīḥ' i.e. authentic). In the light of this narration ascribed to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ one thing is quite clear that when there is no apprehension of any one seeing the other in an uncovered position or involved with his wife, in that case some concession is allowed.

But Qur'an teaches for a pure society so that no one interferes in

anyone's freedom and everybody lives in peace and comfort. Those who do not make their family members follow the practice of seeking permission they themselves face inconvenience and curb their natural instincts and desires.

Emphasis on *ḥijāb* for women and an exemption

The injunction on *ḥijab* for women has already appeared earlier in detail in two verses, and two exemptions were also mentioned there. One exemption relates to the one who is seeing, and the other to that who is seen. According to the first exemption, young children and the slave girls are exempt. As for the second exemption, the outward adornment is exempt from ḥijāb, which includes outer clothing like veil or covering sheet. There is agreement of all on this, but according to some, women's face and palms are also included in this exemption

In the next verse the third exemption is granted on the basis of a woman's personal situation. If a woman has grown so old that no one would have any (sexual) desire towards her, nor is she marriageable, for such a woman concession in *ḥijāb* is allowed in that even strangers (non-Maḥrams) are treated like *maḥrams* for her. She is not required to cover those parts of her body before non-Maḥrams which are not required to be covered before *maḥrams*. Hence, it is said وَالْقَوَاعِدُ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ الَّتِي (And those old women who have no hope for marriage - 60). The explanation of this verse is already given above. Although very old women are allowed to uncover those parts of their body before non-Maḥrams which are not required to be covered before mahrams, yet this exemption is allowed with the condition that they do so without applying any makeup or adornment. The other thing said in the last is وَاَنْ يَّسْتَعْفِفْنَ خَيْرٌ لَّهُنَّ (60) that is, it is better for them if they avoid going before non-Maḥrams altogether.

Verse 61

لَيْسَ عَلَى الْاَعْمٰى حَرَجٌ وَّلَا عَلَى الْاَعْرَجِ حَرَجٌ وَّلَا عَلَى الْمَرِيْضِ
حَرَجٌ وَّلَا عَلٰٓى اَنْفُسِكُمْ اَنْ تَاْكُلُوْا مِنْۢ بُيُوْتِكُمْ اَوْ بُيُوْتِ اٰبَآئِكُمْ
اَوْبُيُوْتِ اُمَّهٰتِكُمْ اَوْبُيُوْتِ اِخْوَانِكُمْ اَوْبُيُوْتِ اَخَوٰتِكُمْ اَوْبُيُوْتِ
اَعْمَامِكُمْ اَوْبُيُوْتِ عَمّٰتِكُمْ اَوْبُيُوْتِ اَخْوَالِكُمْ اَوْبُيُوْتِ خٰلٰتِكُمْ

أَوْ مَا مَلَكْتُمْ مَّفَاتِحَهٗٓ أَوْ صَدِيْقِكُمْ ۚ لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ تَأْكُلُوْا
جَمِيْعًا أَوْ أَشْتَاتًا ۚ فَإِذَا دَخَلْتُمْ بُيُوْتًا فَسَلِّمُوْا عَلٰٓى أَنْفُسِكُمْ تَحِيَّةً
مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللّٰهِ مُبٰرَكَةً طَيِّبَةً ۚ كَذٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللّٰهُ لَكُمُ الْاٰيٰتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ
تَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿٦١﴾

There is no blame on a blind person, nor is there any blame on any lame one, nor is there any blame on a patient, nor on yourselves in that you eat (something) from your own homes or from the homes of your fathers or the homes of your mothers or the homes of your brothers or the homes of your sisters or the homes of your paternal aunts or the homes of your maternal uncles or the homes of your maternal aunts or from the places the keys of which you have under your control or from (the home of) your friend. There is no sin on you if you eat together or separately. So when you enter homes, greet your own selves with Salām, a greeting prescribed by Allah which is blessed, pleasant. This is how Allah explains the verses to you so that you may understand. [61]

Commentary

Some injunctions and social etiquettes after the entry in the house

In the previous verses it was enjoined to seek permission before entering into anyone's house. In the above verse those injunctions and etiquettes are pronounced which are obligatory or preferable to follow after the permission to enter the house is granted. Before understanding the injunction contained in this verse and its purport it would be advisable to know the background in which this verse was revealed.

Every Muslim knows very well how much emphasis is laid by the Holy Qur'ān and the teachings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ for respecting and preserving the rights of the people (Ḥuqūq ul-'Ibād). Very strong warnings are sounded against using anything owned by someone else without his permission. On the other hand Allah Ta'ālā had chosen such fortunate persons for the company of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that they were all ears for any command from Allah or His Messenger. They were always

ready to put in their best on every single command. By following Qur'ānic teachings diligently and having the exalted company of the Holy Prophet ﷺ they were turned by Allah Ta'ālā into a group of whom even the angels were proud. Not to think ever to spend even slightly from other's wealth, to avoid putting in anyone into the slightest of trouble and to remain steadfast on the highest standard of Taqwā (constant awareness of Allah) were only some of the attributes of the companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Some related incidents had taken place during the life of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, in which connection the injunctions contained in the present verse were revealed. All commentators have made reference of these incidents with the difference that different incidents are quoted as the cause of revelation by different commentators. The actual position is that there is no contradiction in their assertions, and all these incidents put together are the cause of revelation of this verse. The incidents are as follows:

Imām Baghawī ﷺ has related on authority of Sa'īd Ibn Jubair رحمه الله تعالیٰ and some other commentators that it is a common habit among people to feel disgust in eating together with lame, cripple, blind and sick, and avoid it. Among the companions who had any of these disability thought that if they were to eat with others they might cause botheration and trouble to them. Therefore, they started avoiding to eat with normal persons. The blind people thought that they might eat more than others, as they cannot see, causing injustice for the rest. Justice requires that all who eat together should eat equally. Likewise, the lame thought that they would create problem for others as they could not sit properly and occupy more space, which will result in taking up the share of space of others. In this background, the above verse was revealed in which the disabled were asked to join other normal persons for eating. They were advised not to take upon themselves such painstaking precautionary measures which could lead them into trouble.

Imam Baghawī has narrated another incident related by Ibn Jarīr on authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ which presents the other side of the picture. The story goes like this; when the verse لَا تَأْكُلُوْٓا اَمْوَالَكُمْ بَيْنَكُمْ بِالْبَاطِلِ (Do not eat up each other's property by false means - 2:188) was revealed, people were hesitant to eat with the blind, lame and the sick. Their consideration was that the sick eats less because of his indisposition, so he

would suffer if he eats with others. The blind cannot differentiate between the good and ordinary food, and the lame is slow to eat because of his posture. So, people thought there is a possibility that the disabled are deprived of their due share, whereas the justice demands that all should eat equally while eating together. So, it was in this background that this verse was revealed, and people were taken out of this predicament. The spirit behind this injunction is that people should eat together and if there is a little disparity in the quantity of food taken by each one of them, it should not be a cause of botheration.

Sa'īd Ibn al-Musayyab رحمه الله تعالى has given yet another version that while going on *jihād* or battles, the Muslims used to hand over the keys of their houses to the disabled with the instructions that they can eat whatever is there in the house. On the other hand, the disabled would not eat anything, lest they spend something against the wishes of the owners. Hence, to counter this position, the above verse was revealed. Musnad al-Bazzār has also reported this version on the authority of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی الله عنها that when the Holy Prophet ﷺ used to go on a battle, it was the desire of every companion to go along with him to participate in the battle. They used to hand over the keys of their houses to the poor and disabled persons with the permission that they could eat anything available in the house during their absence. But the disabled would abstain from taking anything from the house fearing that the permission given to them to eat freely from the house might not have been given with full willingness. Baghawī has also narrated on authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﵄ that the word صَدِيقِكُمْ (your friend) used in the verse, which means that there is no harm in eating from your friend's house, was a reference toward the incident of Ḥārith b. 'Amr ﵁. The incident was that Ḥārith b. 'Amr ﵁ went for *jihād* along with the Holy Prophet ﷺ, leaving the care and custody of his house to his friend, Mālik Ibn Zaid ﵁. When Ḥārith ﵁ returned, he noticed that Mālik Ibn Zaid ﵁ had become very weak. When he enquired the reason of the weakness, Mālik ﵁ replied that he did not feel it right to eat anything from his house. (All these narrations are taken from Tafsīr Maẓharī). Indeed all these incidents had a bearing on the revelation of this verse.

Ruling

As mentioned above, a general permission was granted in this verse to

eat in certain houses without asking special consent. This permission was granted on the basis of a tradition among 'Arabs to eat freely in the houses of close relatives. There was absolutely no formality among them, and no one would ever mind this habit, rather they used to encourage it and would feel happy about it. Not only that, sometimes the relatives used to bring poor, sick or needy persons and feed them at houses of others, on which the hosts would feel happy. According to custom they would not seek special permission for this, as there was a general consent among them to follow the tradition. It therefore becomes obvious that wherever and whenever this tradition is not in vogue, or the owner's consent is doubtful, then eating without permission is forbidden. In the present time no one would like that even a close relative would eat in his house without seeking permission. Therefore, the permission granted in this verse would not apply, unless some one is absolutely sure that his eating in a relative's house would not cause any problem or displeasure, rather he would enjoy it. Only in this situation eating at such a house would be permissible under the dictate of this verse.

Ruling

It is now clear from the above statement that it is not right to say that this injunction was meant for the early days of Islam, and was abrogated later. The injunction is in force right from the beginning up to the date and shall always remain effective. The real condition of the application of this injunction is the certainty of permission of the owner of the house, and if that is not present, then the very basis of injunction is not available. (Maẓharī).

Ruling

It has also now become clear that this injunction is not restricted only to the relatives specified in the verse, but the concession is applicable to other persons also, with the sole condition that it is certain that the owner of the house will be pleased and will not be offended if someone eats and also makes others eat without seeking prior permission. (Maẓharī) These injunctions relate to the acts permitted or preferable on entering in someone's house after taking permission. The act of eating and drinking has been mentioned first due to its importance. The second act (mentioned in verse 64) relates to the etiquettes of entry.

The etiquette demands that as one enters the house with permission,

he should greet all the Muslims present there with salām. This is the purport of the words "greet your own selves", (verse 61). It is because all Muslims are a single united group. In many Ṣaḥīḥ Ahadis great emphasis is laid on Muslims for greeting each other as an act of virtue.

Verses 62 - 64

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ اٰمَنُوا بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُولِهٖ وَإِذَا كَانُوا مَعَهٗ عَلٰٓى أَمْرٍ
جَامِعٍ لَّمْ يَذْهَبُوا حَتّٰى يَسْتَأْذِنُوهُ ط إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَأْذِنُونَكَ أُولٰٓئِكَ
الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُولِهٖ ج فَإِذَا اسْتَأْذَنُوكَ لِبَعْضِ شَأْنِهِمْ فَأْذَنْ
لِّمَنْ شِئْتَ مِنْهُمْ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمُ اللّٰهَ ط إِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿٦٢﴾ لَا
تَجْعَلُوا دُعَآءَ الرَّسُولِ بَيْنَكُمْ كَدُعَآءِ بَعْضِكُمْ بَعْضًا ط قَدْ يَعْلَمُ اللّٰهُ
الَّذِينَ يَتَسَلَّلُونَ مِنْكُمْ لِوَاذًا ج فَلْيَحْذَرِ الَّذِينَ يُخَالِفُونَ عَنْ أَمْرِهٖٓ أَنْ
تُصِيبَهُمْ فِتْنَةٌ أَوْ يُصِيبَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٦٣﴾ أَلَآ إِنَّ لِلّٰهِ مَا فِي
السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ط قَدْ يَعْلَمُ مَآ أَنْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ ط وَيَوْمَ يُرْجَعُونَ إِلَيْهِ
فَيُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا عَمِلُوا ط وَاللّٰهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٦٤﴾ ع

The believers are only those who believe in Allah and His messenger and who, when they are with him for a collective matter, do not leave unless they seek his permission. Surely, those who seek your permission are the ones who believe in Allah and His messenger. So, if they seek permission from you for some business of theirs, give permission to whom you wish from among them, and pray to Allah for their forgiveness. Surely, Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [62]

Do not take the call of the messenger among you as a call of one of you to another. Allah definitely knows those of you who sneak out, covering one another. So, those who violate his (messenger's) order must beware, lest they are visited by a trial or they are visited by a painful punishment. [63]

Remember! To Allah belongs all that is there in the

heavens and the earth. He knows the condition you are in; and the Day on which they will be returned to Him, He will tell them what they did. And Allah is fully aware of everything. [64]

Commentary

Some etiquettes and injunctions in regard to meetings with the Holy Prophet ﷺ in particular, and in the society in general

The above verses contain two injunctions. The first injunction is that when the Holy Prophet ﷺ call people for the meeting in connection with *jihād* or any other religious matter, the demand of the faith is that all should attend and must not leave the meeting without his permission. If there is an emergency, permission may be sought from the Holy Prophet ﷺ , who was advised that unless there is special need and requirement, permission may be granted on such requests. In the same connection those hypocrites are condemned who would come to attend the meeting only to fulfill the obligation of faith, but would quietly sneak out under the cover of some other person.

This verse was revealed at the time of the battle of Aḥzāb, when the Arab disbelievers and other groups joined together and suddenly attacked Madīnah. After consultations with the companions, the Holy Prophet ﷺ consented to dig up a trench to defend against the attack. For this reason this battle is also known as 'the battle of trench (Khandaq)'. This battle was fought in Shawwal 5th Hijra. (Qurṭubī)

Baihaqī and Ibn Isḥāq have reported that the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself had taken part in the digging of the trench. But the hypocrites used to come late in the first place, and after doing a little bit of work just to show their presence, would sneak away quietly. As against this all the believers were putting in their best, and in case of any need or emergency would take permission from the Holy Prophet ﷺ before leaving the work. At that point this verse was revealed. (Maẓharī)

A question and its answer

It appears from this verse that it is forbidden to get up and leave from the presence of the Holy Prophet ﷺ without seeking his permission. But there are several incidents when companions used to leave his meeting when they wished and would not deem it necessary to take his permission. The answer to this point is that the injunction mentioned in

the present verse is not an injunction for ordinary meetings, but it is meant for specific gatherings, which the Holy Prophet ﷺ might have called for some need, as was the case at the time of battle of the trench. The phrase عَلٰى اَمْرٍ جَامِعٍ (for a collective matter - 62) is itself pointing toward this exclusivity.

What does اَمْرٍ جَامِعٍ (collective matter) mean?

There are different views on this point. The most evident explanation is that this phrase is used for such acts for which the Holy Prophet ﷺ felt necessary to collect the people, as he regarded it important to collect the people for digging the trench on the occasion of battle of Aḥzāb. (Qurṭubī – Maẓharī)

Is this injunction exclusive to meetings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ or is general ?

Since this injunction is issued for a religious and Islamic need, all the jurists agree that it is not exclusive to meetings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . The same injunction would apply to any Imām or ruler of the Muslims who is in control of the government, if he called up a meeting. It is obligatory to attend the meetings called up by the rulers and it is not lawful to leave it without permission. (Qurṭubī – Maẓharī – Bayān ul-Qur'ān) This is but obvious that this injunction has greater stress and emphasis for meetings called up by the Holy Prophet ﷺ , and its opposition is open callousness. As for the common meetings and gatherings (not convened by a ruler), acting upon this injunction is surely preferable and commendable from the point of view of Islamic social etiquette. When Muslims are gathered in a meeting for deliberation or action on a collective issue, one should leave the meeting only after taking permission from the presiding person.

The second injunction

The second injunction is given in the last verse:

لَاتَجْعَلُوْا دُعَآءَ الرَّسُوْلِ بَيْنَكُمْ

Do not take the call of the messenger among you as a call of one of you to another - 24:63.

One explanation of this verse is that "call of the messenger" means calling of the people by the Holy Prophet ﷺ (which implies that "call" is the act of the messenger). Thus the meaning of the verse is, when the

Holy Prophet ﷺ call people, it should not be taken as a common call of an ordinary person, in which one has the choice to go or not to go. In the case of a call by the Holy Prophet ﷺ it becomes obligatory to go to him and leaving the meeting without his permission is unlawful. In the context of the verse the above explanation appears more appropriate. That is why Maẓharī and Bayān ul-Qur'ān have adopted this explanation. The other explanation of "call of the messenger" is related by Ibn Kathīr and Qurṭubī on authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās ؓ. According to this explanation it means calling of the Holy Prophet ﷺ by the people for some need which implies that 'the messenger' is the object of the 'call'.

On the basis of this explanation the meaning of the verse would be that when you Call the Holy Prophet ﷺ for some need, do not call him by his name saying 'Yā Muḥammad یامحمد', as you call others. This is disrespect to him. Therefore, call him by an honorific form of address such as 'Yā Rasūl Allāh یا رسول الله' or 'Yā Nabiyy Allāh' یا نبی الله. In the final analysis it is obligatory on all Muslims to have respect and veneration for the Holy Prophet ﷺ and to avoid all such things which are in conflict with respect and etiquette, or which may cause inconvenience to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. This injunction is similar in nature to many of those enjoined in Sūrah al-Ḥujurāt, for instance لَاتَجْهَرُوْا لَهٗ بِالْقَوْلِ كَجَهْرِ بَعْضِكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ (49:2) It means that when you talk to the Holy Prophet ﷺ keep in mind his respect, and do not talk in a loud voice, as people do while talking to each other. A similar example is اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يُنَادُوْنَكَ مِنْ وَّرَآءِ الْحُجُرَاتِ (49:4) which means that when he ﷺ is inside the house, one must not call him out, rather wait for him outside until he comes out on his own.

A Warning

It has also been inferred from the second explanation that as a common etiquette it is incumbent upon Muslims to pay respect to the elders, and to call them by their names is disrespect. Elders should always be called with titles of respect.

Alḥamdulillāh
The Commentary on
Sūrah An-Nūr
Ends here.

Sūrah Al-Furqān

Sūrah Al-Furqān was revealed in Makkah and it contains 77 Verses and 6 sections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the Most-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 3

تَبٰرَكَ الَّذِىْ نَزَّلَ الْفُرْقَانَ عَلٰى عَبْدِهٖ لِيَكُوْنَ لِلْعٰلَمِيْنَ نَذِيْرًا ﴿١﴾
الَّذِىْ لَهٗ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَلَمْ يَتَّخِذْ وَلَدًا وَّلَمْ يَكُنْ لَّهٗ
شَرِيْكٌ فِى الْمُلْكِ وَخَلَقَ كُلَّ شَىْءٍ فَقَدَّرَهٗ تَقْدِيْرًا ﴿٢﴾ وَاتَّخَذُوْا
مِنْ دُوْنِهٖٓ اٰلِهَةً لَّا يَخْلُقُوْنَ شَيْـًٔا وَّهُمْ يُخْلَقُوْنَ وَلَا يَمْلِكُوْنَ لِاَنْفُسِهِمْ
ضَرًّا وَّلَا نَفْعًا وَّلَا يَمْلِكُوْنَ مَوْتًا وَّلَا حَيٰوةً وَّلَا نُشُوْرًا ﴿٣﴾

Glorious is the One who has revealed the Criterion to His servant, so that he may be a warner to the worlds, [1] **the One to whom belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, and who did neither have a son, nor is there any partner to him in the kingdom, and who has created everything and designed it in a perfect measure.** [2]

And they have coined gods, other than Him, who do not create any thing, rather they themselves are created, and they possess no power to cause harm or benefit even to themselves, nor do they have any power over death or life or resurrection. [3]

Special features of the Sūrah

There is consensus among the commentators that this Sūrah was revealed in Makkah. However, Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ and Qatādah ﷺ

contend that three of its verses are Madanī and rest of the Sūrah is Makkan. Yet Qurṭubī and a few others maintain that the Sūrah itself is Madanī and only a few verses are Makkan.

The gist of the subject matter of the Sūrah is to describe and define the greatness of the Holy Qur'ān and the truth of the prophethood of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, to which there were doubts expressed by the unbelievers. The Sūrah contains answers to their objections.

Commentary

تَبَارَكَ (25:1) is derived from بَرَكَة , meaning abundance of a good thing. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه has explained that the meaning of the first verse is that all blessings are from Allah alone. فُرقَان (Furqān, translated above as 'criterion')is a title of the Qur'ān and its meaning is to distinguish. The Holy Qur'ān by its very nature distinguishes between right and wrong, and differentiates, through miracles between the right people and the wrong ones, hence it is called as Furqān.

لِلْعٰلَمِيْنَ (warner to the worlds - 25:1). This proves that the Holy Prophet's ﷺ prophethood was for the entire universe and not just for a certain community or time, as was the case with other prophets. In a Ḥadīth recorded in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has pointed out six special features about his prophethood. One of the special features is the universality of his prophethood i.e. it is for all ages and all people.

Special Wisdom in every creation

فَقَدَّرَهٗ تَقْدِيْرًا (And designed it in a perfect measure - 25:2): Here تَقْدِيْر - (designing in a perfect measure) is mentioned after تَخْلِيْق (Creation). تَخْلِيْق means to create something from nothing that is to bring in something without any pre-existing substance whatsoever. And تَقْدِيْر (designed in a perfect measure) means that, whatever has been created, its components, appearance, properties and signs are made to suit the purpose of its creation. The form of the sky, its constituents and its shape are in conformity to that purpose for which Allah Ta'ālā has created it. Similarly, the stars and planets possess those qualities for which they are created. Whatever we see on the earth is absolutely perfect in its form, shape and construction to suit the purpose and requirement of its creation. For instance, earth is not made in such a liquid form, that anything put on it is drowned, nor is it made too hard like steel or

concrete to be dug. It is made in the solid form and given a hardness that it could be dug to take out underground water or to place foundations for the buildings. Water is given the liquid form which again is full of Divine Wisdom and helps meet the multifarious needs of the creatures spread all over the earth. Water does not reach on its own at all the places where it is needed. Man has to put in some skill and labour to take it to places where it is required. On the other hand air is a compulsory gift which reaches every place without any labour or an active role from human beings. Even if someone wants to avoid it, he has to exert extra labour. It is not the place to describe Divine creations and their characteristics as it needs volumes for the purpose. Each and every creation of Allah Subḥanahū is perfect in its purpose and has its own peculiar properties and traits. Imām Ghazzāli has written a book on the subject by the name الحكمة فی مخلوقات اللّٰه تعالیٰ.

These verses define the sacred and exalted position of the Holy Qur'ān and by addressing the person on whom the book is revealed as عَبْدِه (His slave) in the very beginning of the Sūrah, his honoured position is highlighted. There cannot be a greater honour for any one than to be called by Allah Ta'ālā as 'His own'..

Verses 4 - 9

وَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْٓا اِنْ هٰذَآ اِلَّآ اِفْكُ ِۨ افْتَرٰىهُ وَاَعَانَهٗ عَلَيْهِ قَوْمٌ
اٰخَرُوْنَ ۚ فَقَدْ جَآءُوْ ظُلْمًا وَّزُوْرًا ﴿٤﴾ وَقَالُوْٓا اَسَاطِيْرُ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ اكْتَتَبَهَا
فَهِيَ تُمْلٰى عَلَيْهِ بُكْرَةً وَّاَصِيْلًا ﴿٥﴾ قُلْ اَنْزَلَهُ الَّذِيْ يَعْلَمُ السِّرَّ فِي
السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا ﴿٦﴾ وَقَالُوْا مَالِ هٰذَا
الرَّسُوْلِ يَاْكُلُ الطَّعَامَ وَيَمْشِيْ فِي الْاَسْوَاقِ ؕ لَوْلَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْهِ مَلَكٌ
فَيَكُوْنَ مَعَهٗ نَذِيْرًا ﴿٧﴾ اَوْ يُلْقٰى اِلَيْهِ كَنْزٌ اَوْ تَكُوْنُ لَهٗ جَنَّةٌ يَّاْكُلُ
مِنْهَا ؕ وَقَالَ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ اِنْ تَتَّبِعُوْنَ اِلَّا رَجُلًا مَّسْحُوْرًا ﴿٨﴾ اُنْظُرْ
كَيْفَ ضَرَبُوْا لَكَ الْاَمْثَالَ فَضَلُّوْا فَلَا يَسْتَطِيْعُوْنَ سَبِيْلًا ﴿٩﴾

And said those who disbelieve, "This is nothing but a lie

he (the messenger) has fabricated and some other people have helped him in it." Thus they came up with transgression and falsehood. [4] **And they said, "(These are) the tales of the ancients he (the messenger) has caused to be written, and they are read out to him at morn and eve."** [5] **Say, "It is sent down by the One who knows the secret in the heavens and the earth. Indeed He is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful.** [6]

And they said, "What sort of messenger is this who eats food and walks in the markets? Why is it that an angel has not been sent down to him who would have been a warner alongwith him, [7] **or that a treasure is not thrown down to him, or that he has no garden to eat from it?" And the transgressors said, "You are following none but a bewitched man."** [8] **See how they coined similes for you, so they have gone astray and cannot find a way.** [9]

Commentary

From this point onward the objections raised by infidels and polytheists against the Holy Qur'ān and the prophethood of the Holy Prophet ﷺ are related together with the answers to those objections.

The first objection was that the Qur'ān was not a revealed book from Allah Ta'ālā, but has been compiled from the old stories and narrations by the Jews and Christians which have been reduced into writing by the Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, since he himself was illiterate and could not write. And because he could not read or write, he would get them read out to him day and night, so that he could remember them by heart, then he would repeat them before people and claim that he had received that revelation from Allah Ta'ālā.

The answer to this objection was given by the Holy Qur'ān قُلْ اَنْزَلَهُ الَّذِىْ يَعْلَمُ السِّرَّ فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ, that is (Say, "It is sent down by the One who knows the secret in the heavens and the earth - 25:6).

The essence of this answer is that the Qur'ān itself is an evidence to the fact that it is the Divine message from Him who is Omniscient and who knows fully well all the secrets of the Heavens and the earth. This is why Qur'ān is a miraculous Message, and the whole world is challenged to bring out a Sūrah or even a verse to match it, if its divine origin is

refused. This was a challenge to a people - the Arabs - who were well known for their literary proficiency and art of expression, and for whom composition of a piece of literature was not a problem. But they too did not dare to attempt to compose something similar to Qur'ān. Although they were willing to sacrifice all their material wealth for opposing the Holy Prophet ﷺ in his mission, so much so that they were willing to sacrifice even their children and their own lives to counter the Holy Prophet's ﷺ mission and message, but they dared not attempt to compose a passage similar to a Sūrah of the Qur'ān.

This is a clear proof of the fact that it is not a work of a human being. Otherwise other people could also have composed passages similar to Qur'ān. Therefore, it is definitely the revelation from Allah Ta'ālā. Apart from the beauty of expression and language, the Book also excels in its meanings. The multifarious subjects it covers can only be dealt by One who knows everything whether hidden or exposed. This subject has been dealt with in detail in the first volume of Ma'āriful Qur'ān.

The Second Objection was that if the Holy Prophet ﷺ was a prophet, he should not have been eating and drinking like common people; instead he should have been free from eating and drinking like angels. And if this was not so, he should have at least enough wealth and gardens to take care of his day to day needs, so that he may not need to care for his living. Furthermore, how could he be accepted as a prophet when he is neither an angel nor does an angel accompany him to endorse what he preaches, therefore it appears that he has been charmed by someone which has turned his head and that is why he talks like this. A general answer to this objection is given in the verse اُنْظُرْ كَيْفَ ضَرَبُوْا لَكَ الْاَمْثَالَ فَضَلُّوْا فَلَا يَسْتَطِيْعُوْنَ سَبِيْلًا that is (See how they coined similes for you, so they have gone astray and cannot find a way. - 25:9). The detailed answer to the objection is given in the next few verses.

Verses 10 - 20

تَبٰرَكَ الَّذِىْٓ اِنْ شَآءَ جَعَلَ لَكَ خَيْرًا مِّنْ ذٰلِكَ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِىْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ ۙ وَيَجْعَلْ لَّكَ قُصُوْرًا ﴿١٠﴾ بَلْ كَذَّبُوْا بِالسَّاعَةِ ۣ وَاَعْتَدْنَا

لِمَنْ كَذَّبَ بِالسَّاعَةِ سَعِيْرًا ﴿۱۱﴾ اِذَا رَاَتْهُمْ مِّنْ مَّكَانٍۢ بَعِيْدٍ سَمِعُوْا
لَهَا تَغَيُّظًا وَّزَفِيْرًا ﴿۱۲﴾ وَاِذَآ اُلْقُوْا مِنْهَا مَكَانًا ضَيِّقًا مُّقَرَّنِيْنَ دَعَوْا
هُنَالِكَ ثُبُوْرًا ﴿۱۳﴾ لَا تَدْعُوا الْيَوْمَ ثُبُوْرًا وَّاحِدًا وَّادْعُوْا ثُبُوْرًا كَثِيْرًا
﴿۱۴﴾ قُلْ اَذٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ اَمْ جَنَّةُ الْخُلْدِ الَّتِيْ وُعِدَ الْمُتَّقُوْنَ ؕ كَانَتْ
لَهُمْ جَزَآءً وَّ مَصِيْرًا ﴿۱۵﴾ لَهُمْ فِيْهَا مَا يَشَآءُوْنَ خٰلِدِيْنَ ؕ كَانَ عَلٰى
رَبِّكَ وَعْدًا مَّسْئُوْلًا ﴿۱۶﴾ وَيَوْمَ يَحْشُرُهُمْ وَمَا يَعْبُدُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ
اللّٰهِ فَيَقُوْلُ ءَاَنْتُمْ اَضْلَلْتُمْ عِبَادِيْ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ اَمْ هُمْ ضَلُّوا السَّبِيْلَ ﴿۱۷﴾
قَالُوْا سُبْحٰنَكَ مَا كَانَ يَنْۢبَغِيْ لَنَآ اَنْ نَّتَّخِذَ مِنْ دُوْنِكَ مِنْ اَوْلِيَآءَ
وَلٰكِنْ مَّتَّعْتَهُمْ وَاٰبَآءَهُمْ حَتّٰى نَسُوا الذِّكْرَ ۚ وَكَانُوْا قَوْمًاۢ بُوْرًا
﴿۱۸﴾ فَقَدْ كَذَّبُوْكُمْ بِمَا تَقُوْلُوْنَ ۙ فَمَا تَسْتَطِيْعُوْنَ صَرْفًا وَّلَا نَصْرًا ۚ
وَمَنْ يَّظْلِمْ مِّنْكُمْ نُذِقْهُ عَذَابًا كَبِيْرًا ﴿۱۹﴾ وَمَآ اَرْسَلْنَا قَبْلَكَ مِنَ
الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ اِلَّآ اِنَّهُمْ لَيَاْكُلُوْنَ الطَّعَامَ وَيَمْشُوْنَ فِي الْاَسْوَاقِ ؕ
وَجَعَلْنَا بَعْضَكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ فِتْنَةً ؕ اَتَصْبِرُوْنَ ۚ وَكَانَ رَبُّكَ بَصِيْرًا ﴿۲۰﴾

Glorious is the One who, if He so wills, would give you better than that - gardens beneath which rivers flow, and would give you palaces. [10] **But they have disbelieved the Hour (the Day of Judgment) and We have prepared, for those who disbelieve the Hour, a flaming fire.** [11] **When it will see them from a distant place, they will hear (the sounds of) its raging and breathing,** [12] **and when they will be thrown into a narrow place therein, while they will be chained together, they will call for death.** [13] **Do not call for one death today, but call for many a death.** [14]

Say, "Is that better or the eternal paradise the God-fearing are promised?" It will be a reward for them and a final abode. [15] **For them there will be whatever they wish, while they will be living for ever. This is a promise undertaken by your Lord, (the fulfillment of)**

which will be prayed for. [16]

And (remember) the Day when He will gather them and what they used to worship beside Allah and will say (to the latter ones), "Did you mislead these My servants or did they themselves lost the way?" [17] **They will say, "Pure are you. It was not for us to take to other guardians than You. Instead, You gave them and their fathers (worldly) benefits till they forgot the advice and became a ruined people."** [18] **Thus they will refute you in what you say and you will not be able to repulse (the punishment) or to receive help. And whoever commits injustice from among you, We will make him taste a painful punishment.** [19]

And We did not send any messengers before you, but all of them used to eat food and walk in the markets. And We have made some of you a test for some others. Would you observe patience? And your Lord is Ever-seeing. [20]

Commentary

In the forgoing verses a general answer was given to the doubts raised by the infidels and polytheists in regard to prophethood of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . Here in the above verses a detailed reply is given to the objections. The gist of the reply is that because of your ignorance and mental block you have raised the issue that if he ﷺ were really a prophet, then he should have possessed a great deal of material wealth and gardens etc. so that he should have been free from making efforts for his sustenance. The simple reply to this objection is that there is no problem for Us to provide material wealth to Our messengers; rather if We so wish we can make them kings of the mammoth empires, as we had done in the case of Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام and Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام, who were made rulers of the gigantic empires and were endowed with enormous wealth, which is a clear sign of Our omnipotence. But in the interest of common people and other numerous considerations, it is required that prophets should be kept away from the material wealth of the world. Especially in the case of the Holy Prophet ﷺ it was preferred by Allah Ta'ālā to keep him in line with the ordinary Muslims by way of worldly possessions, and he also preferred for himself to be like that. It is reported in the Musnad of Aḥmad and in Tirmidhī on the authority of Sayyidnā

Abū 'Umāmah ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that Allah Ta'ālā offered to him to turn the entire valley and hills of Makkah into gold for him. On that he requested to Him "No my Lord, I would prefer that I get sustenance one day (to offer my thanks to You) and go without food the next (to be patient). Also, Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی الله عنها has reported that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said "If I wanted, mountains of gold would have been around me." (Maẓharī)

The sum and substance of all this is that it is Allah's wisdom to keep the prophets poor which is also in the best interest of the people at large. Also, the prophets are not forced to lead a poor life. On the contrary they have a choice either to opt for an ordinary simple life or else Allah Ta'ālā can make them wealthy with a lot of property. But Allah Ta'ālā has made them such that they do not desire any material wealth and instead prefer a simple and poor life for themselves.

The second objection infidels had raised was that if he ﷺ was really a prophet, he would not have been eating and drinking like ordinary people nor would he walk in the markets to earn his livelihood. This objection was based on the assumption of many infidels that Allah's messengers could only be angels and not humans. The answer to this false notion is given in the Holy Qur'ān at several places. The answer given here is that the prophets whom you admit to be prophets were also humans and not angels. They used to eat, drink and work like ordinary human beings. Hence you should have deduced from this that eating and drinking is not something repugnant to prophethood. The last verse وَمَآ اَرْسَلْنَا قَبْلَکَ مِنَ الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ اِلَّآ اِنَّهُمْ لَيَاْكُلُوْنَ الطَّعَامَ (And We did not send any messengers before you, but all of them used to eat food - 25:20) has put forward the same argument.

There is great wisdom in economic difference between people

وَجَعَلْنَا بَعْضَكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ فِتْنَةً (And We have made some of you test for some others - 25:20). There is an allusion in the verse that Allah Ta'ālā had complete power to make all humans wealthy, prosperous, healthy and of high status. But this way nobody would have been poor, weak or sick - a position which would have created innumerable social problems resulting in chaos and confusion. Therefore, Allah Ta'ālā has made some rich and some poor, some healthy and some sick, some strong and some weak, and some with high status and some others unknown. This way every single individual is at test because of his or her peculiar placing in society and

community. The rich and healthy people are at test for their thankfulness, while poor and sick persons are on trial for their patience. For this very reason the Holy Prophet ﷺ has advised that whenever you see someone who is wealthier, healthier, stronger or higher in status you should at once try to turn towards those who are lower than you in wealth, health, strength and status so that instead of feeling jealous, which is a sin, you should thank Allah Ta'ālā for giving you better placing in this world as against those who have less than you. (Bukhārī, Muslim, Mazharī)

Verses 21 - 22

وَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يَرْجُوْنَ لِقَآءَ نَا لَوْلَآ اُنْزِلَ عَلَيْنَا الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ اَوْ نَرٰى رَبَّنَا ط لَقَدِ اسْتَكْبَرُوْا فِيْٓ اَنْفُسِهِمْ وَعَتَوْ عُتُوًّا كَبِيْرًا ﴿۲۱﴾ يَوْمَ يَرَوْنَ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةَ لَا بُشْرٰى يَوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُجْرِمِيْنَ وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ حِجْرًا مَّحْجُوْرًا ﴿۲۲﴾

And said those who do not apprehend to meet Us, "Why the angels are not sent down to us or why do we not see our Lord?" Indeed they think too highly of themselves and have gone too far in rebellion. [21] **The Day they will see the angels, there will be no good news for the sinners that day, and they will say , "(We need) a shelter, fully protected!"** [22]

Commentary

وَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يَرْجُوْنَ لِقَآءَ نَا (And said those who do not believe in meeting Us - 25:21). رَجَاء (Rajā:) means to hope for something desired. Sometimes it is also used for having fear, as mentioned by Ibn-al-Ambārī, the famous scholar of Arabic lexicon. Here in this verse it is used for apprehension and fear. Thus the meaning of the phrase is 'those who are not apprehensive of being brought before Us'. The allusion is toward those who totally deny the Hereafter as only they could have the courage to raise such preposterous and absurd points and put such frivolous demands. Those who believe in the Hereafter dread it so much all the time that they have no time to waste over such ridiculous ideas. In the present time those who appear to be unsure about the teachings and injunctions of Islam and indulge in dubious debate and arguments under

the influence of modern education allude toward weakness of their faith in the Hereafter. When one attains total faith in the Hereafter then there is no question of having such dubious doubts.

حِجْرًا مَّحْجُوْرًا (25:22) The literal meaning of حِجْر is protection, and مَحْجُوْرًا is fully protected. This word was used in Arabic language at the time of danger, when there was a danger in sight. The word was used to seek protection - that is to ask for protection against the imminent danger. Likewise, on the Dooms Day when the infidels will see angels approaching toward them with chastisement, they will utter this word as per their habit in this world to seek protection. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷛ has described the meaning of this word حَرَامًا مُحَرَّمًا (that is banned, prohibited).

According to this interpretation, the phrase will mean that on the Dooms Day when the infidels will see the angels approaching them with chastisement, they will seek their pardon and plead to let them in the paradise. In response to their pleading the angels will reply حِجْرًا مَحْجُوْرًا - that is the Paradise is banned and prohibited for infidels. (Mazharī)

Verses 23 - 31

وَقَدِمْنَآ اِلٰى مَا عَمِلُوْا مِنْ عَمَلٍ فَجَعَلْنٰهُ هَبَآءً مَّنْثُوْرًا ﴿٢٣﴾ اَصْحٰبُ الْجَنَّةِ يَوْمَئِذٍ خَيْرٌ مُّسْتَقَرًّا وَّاَحْسَنُ مَقِيْلاً ﴿٢٤﴾ وَيَوْمَ تَشَقَّقُ السَّمَآءُ بِالْغَمَامِ وَنُزِّلَ الْمَلٰئِكَةُ تَنْزِيْلاً ﴿٢٥﴾ اَلْمُلْكُ يَوْمَئِذِ ٍۨالْحَقُّ لِلرَّحْمٰنِ ط وَكَانَ يَوْمًا عَلَى الْكٰفِرِيْنَ عَسِيْرًا ﴿٢٦﴾ وَيَوْمَ يَعَضُّ الظَّالِمُ عَلٰى يَدَيْهِ يَقُوْلُ يٰلَيْتَنِى اتَّخَذْتُ مَعَ الرَّسُوْلِ سَبِيْلاً ﴿٢٧﴾ يٰوَيْلَتٰى لَيْتَنِىْ لَمْ اَتَّخِذْ فُلاَنًا خَلِيْلاً ﴿٢٨﴾ لَقَدْ اَضَلَّنِىْ عَنِ الذِّكْرِ بَعْدَ اِذْ جَآءَنِىْ ط وَكَانَ الشَّيْطٰنُ لِلْاِنْسَانِ خَذُوْلاً ﴿٢٩﴾ وَقَالَ الرَّسُوْلُ يٰرَبِّ اِنَّ قَوْمِى اتَّخَذُوْا هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنَ مَهْجُوْرًا ﴿٣٠﴾ وَكَذٰلِكَ جَعَلْنَا لِكُلِّ نَبِيٍّ عَدُوًّا مِّنَ الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ ط وَكَفٰى بِرَبِّكَ هَادِيًا وَّنَصِيْرًا ﴿٣١﴾

And We will come to whatever deeds they did and will

turn them into scattered dust. [23] **The people of Paradise, on that day will be the best in (terms of their) abode and best in (terms of their) resting-place.** [24]

And the Day the sky will break open with a cloud and the angels are sent down in a majestic descent, [25] **the Kingdom on that day will be for the Raḥmān, and for the disbelievers it will be a difficult day.** [26] **And (Be mindful of) the Day the wrongdoer will bite his hands saying, "Would that I had taken a path alongwith the messenger!** [27] **Woe to me! Would that I had not taken so-and-so for my friend!** [28] **Indeed he led me astray from the advice after it had come to me." And the Satan is man's betrayer.** [29] **And the messenger will say, "O my Lord, my people had taken this Qur'ān as a thing to be deserted."** [30]

And in a similar way We made for every prophet an enemy from among the sinners, but your Lord suffices as a guide and as a supporter. [31]

Commentary

خَيْرٌ مُّسْتَقَرًّا وَّاَحْسَنُ مَقِيْلًا (The best in (terms of their) abode and best in (terms of their) resting-place - 25:24). Permanent residence is called مُسْتَقَرّ while مَقِيل is derived from قَيْلُوْله which means siesta. Hence مَقِيل means the place for having siesta. Probably مَقِيل is specifically mentioned here because it is referred in one of the traditions that on the Dooms day Allah Ta'ālā will complete reckoning of the entire creation by noon and the people of paradise will reach Paradise at the time of siesta and so will the condemned in the Hell. (Qurṭubī)

تَشَقَّقُ السَّمَاءُ بِالْغَمَامِ (The sky will break open with a cloud - 25:25). The explanation of the verse is that the sky will rip apart and a sort of liquid cloud will descend from it which will be carrying angels with it. This cloud will look like a canopy descending from the sky and will be bearing Allah Ta'ālā's refulgence surrounded by angels. This will precede the beginning of the reckoning and the sky will rip open only to make an opening. It will not be the same ripping as the one when the *ṣūr* (صُوْر) will be blown to finish off the earth and the sky, because this descension of the cloud will take place after the second blowing of the *ṣūr* (صُوْر) when the earth and the sky would have taken the new shape. (Bayān ul-Qur'ān)

يٰوَيْلَتٰى لَيْتَنِىْ لَمْ اَتَّخِذْ فُلَانًا خَلِيْلًا (Woe to me! would that I had not taken so-and-so for my friend - 25:28). This verse was revealed on an especial occasion, but its implication is universal. The background is that 'Uqbah Ibn Abī Mu'aiṭ was one of the chieftains of polytheists in Makkah. It was customary with him that whenever he would return after an expedition, he used to invite the nobility of the city to dinner. He also used to call on the Holy Prophet ﷺ frequently. When he presented the food to the Holy Prophet ﷺ he said "I cannot eat your food until you proclaim that Allah is one and no one can be associated with Him in worship and that I am His Rasūl." 'Uqbah recited this sentence and then the Holy Prophet ﷺ ate the dinner according to his promise, 'Ubayy Ibn Khalaf was a close friend of 'Uqbah. When he learnt that 'Uqbah has accepted Islam and has recited the Kalimah Ṭayyabah he was very crossed with him. 'Uqbah tried to defend himself by explaining that Muḥammad ﷺ was an eminent person of Quraysh and if he had returned without having his meal at his house, it would have been very degrading for 'Uqbah. Therefore, in order to please him, he repeated the sentence (کلمہ). 'Ubayy Ibn Khalaf did not accept this explanation and asked 'Uqbah to go and spit on Holy Prophet's ﷺ face if he was really ashamed. The wretched man obliged his depraved friend and did as he had suggested. Allah Ta'ālā disgraced them both in this world as well, as both were killed in the battle of Badr (Baghawī). The torment he will face on the Dooms day is described in this verse that when he will see the torment before him, he will bite his fingers in distress and repentance and say "would that he had not made 'Ubayy Ibn Khalaf his friend in the world". (Maẓharī & Qurṭubī)

Friendship of wicked persons and non believers will be a matter of shame and repentance in the Hereafter

It is explained in Tafsīr Maẓharī that although these verses were revealed in respect of the 'Uqbah, yet the moral of the verse is universal. This can be noticed by the use of the word فُلَانًا (so-and-so) in the verse, which alludes that the message is universal. The moral that can be deduced from these verses is that when two friends get together in acts of immorality and sin and help each other in performing forbidden deeds, then the same will apply to them and they will be remorseful and feel sorry for their friendship in the Hereafter. Musnād Aḥmed, Tirmidhī, Abū Dāwūd etc. have reproduced a narration on the authority of Sayyidnā

Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ once said لا تصاحب الامومنا ولا یاکل مالک الا تقی (Do not make a non-Muslim your friend and your possessions should be used only by the pious persons.- Maẓharī), that is, do not have the non-pious as your friend. And Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ has reported a tradition of the Holy Prophet ﷺ :

المرء علی دین خلیله فلینظر من یخالل (رواه البخاری)

Every person is influenced by the faith and way of life of his friends. Therefore, one must be very mindful when selecting his friends. (Bukhārī)

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ has reported that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was asked what sort of friends should we keep in our company. To this he replied:

من ذکر کم باللّٰه رویته، وزاد فی علمکم منطقه، وذکرکم بالآخرة عمله (رواه البزار)

(قرطبی)

The one who reminds you of Allah when you see him, and adds to your knowledge when he speaks, and reminds you of the Hereafter when he acts. (Qurṭubī)

وَقَالَ الرَّسُوْلُ يٰرَبِّ اِنَّ قَوْمِی اتَّخَذُوْا هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنَ مَهْجُوْرًا (That is Rasūl ﷺ will say, O my Lord my people have forgotten and forsaken Qur'ān - 25:30). There is a difference of opinion among the commentators whether this complaint of the Holy Prophet ﷺ to Allah Ta'ālā about his people would be on Dooms Day or was made in his life time. Both views appear valid. But the verse following this verse suggests that he made this complaint during his lifetime and the next verse was revealed to appease him. The next verse reads وَكَذٰلِكَ جَعَلْنَا لِكُلِّ نَبِيٍّ عَدُوًّا مِّنَ الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ (In a similar way We made for every prophet an enemy from among the sinners - 25:31). It means that if your adversaries do not accept Qur'ān, it is not something new. In the past as well people have defied Our message and the messengers had to contend with that. The best course for you also is to be contended.

Abandoning to follow Qur'ān is a great sin

On the face of it abandonment of Qur'ān means its denial or non non-acceptance, which is expected only from the infidels. However, in certain traditions it is reported that those Muslim who do believe in the Qur'ān but neither they read it nor try to follow it fall as much within the ambit of this category of people. Sayyidnā Anas ﷺ has quoted the Holy

Prophet ﷺ as saying:

من تعلّم القران وعلّق مصحفه لم يتعاهده ولم ينظر فيه جاء يوم القيمٰة متعلقا به يقول: يا ربّ العٰلمين ان عبدک هذا اتخذنی مهجورًا فاقض بينی و بينه. ذكره الثعلبی (قرطبی)

The person who has learnt Qur'ān and then hanged it (on the wall), neither he recites it routinely nor ponders over its injunctions will be brought on the Doomsday with Qur'ān hanging by his neck with a sling, and will complain before Allah Ta'ālā 'this servant of Yours had abandoned me, so decide between me and him". (Qurṭubī)

Verse 32

وَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ الْقُرْاٰنُ جُمْلَةً وَّاحِدَةً ۚ كَذٰلِكَ ۚ لِنُثَبِّتَ بِهٖ فُؤَادَكَ وَرَتَّلْنٰهُ تَرْتِيْلًا ﴿٣٢﴾

And said those who disbelieved, "Why has the Qur'ān not been revealed to him all at once?" (It has been sent down) in this way (i.e. in parts) so that We make your heart firm, and We revealed it little by little. [32]

Commentary

The sequence of objections by the infidels and polytheists and their answers, which had started in the beginning of the Sūrah, is continuing. Here in this verse the objection as to why the Qur'ān was revealed gradually bit by bit and not in one go is answered. The wisdom behind gradual revelation of the Qur'ān as explained in the verse is that it was to keep the heart of the Holy Prophet ﷺ firm and strong. By gradual revelation the Holy Prophet's ﷺ heart was made strong in the following manner:

1. It was made easy for him to remember the Qur'ān by heart. If the whole Book was revealed in one go, its remembrance by heart would not have been that easy. Remembrance of the Qur'ān by heart expelled all worries from his heart.

2. Whenever an objection was raised by the infidels or a maltreatment was perpetrated, a verse would reveal to give him fortitude. In case the entire Qur'ān was revealed in one piece and the fortitude for the special

occasion had also been mentioned in it, its search in the Book would have been painstaking. Moreover, it would have been uncertain whether or not the attention of the Holy Prophet ﷺ would be drawn to the particular verse

3. Instant response by way of revelation to answer awkward questions was by itself the confirmation of Allah Ta'ālā's support which is the biggest source of strength for the heart. The wisdom of keeping the heart strong is not dependent on gradual revelations alone. Other factors in this regard are mentioned in the following verse of Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl وَقُرْاٰنًا فَرَقْنٰهُ لِتَقْرَاَهٗ عَلَى النَّاسِ عَلٰى مُكْثٍ (And We have divided the Qur'ān in portion, so that you may recite it to the people gradually - 17:106). (Bayān ul-Qur'ān)

Verses 33 - 36

وَلَا يَاْتُوْنَكَ بِمَثَلٍ اِلَّا جِئْنٰكَ بِالْحَقِّ وَاَحْسَنَ تَفْسِيْرًا ﴿٣٣﴾ اَلَّذِيْنَ يُحْشَرُوْنَ عَلٰى وُجُوْهِهِمْ اِلٰى جَهَنَّمَ ۙ اُولٰٓئِكَ شَرٌّ مَّكَانًا وَّاَضَلُّ سَبِيْلًا ﴿٣٤﴾ وَ لَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا مُوْسَى الْكِتٰبَ وَجَعَلْنَا مَعَهٗٓ اَخَاهُ هٰرُوْنَ وَزِيْرًا ﴿٣٥﴾ فَقُلْنَا اذْهَبَآ اِلَى الْقَوْمِ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا ؕ فَدَمَّرْنٰهُمْ تَدْمِيْرًا ﴿٣٦﴾

And they bring to you no hypothesis, but We bring to you the correct position and (an answer) better explained. [33]

Those who will be driven on their faces to hell - they are the worst in situation and far more astray from the path. [34]

And surely We gave Mūsā the Book and appointed his brother Hārūn as a minister with him. [35] **So we said, "Go, both of you, to the people who have rejected Our signs" Then We annihilated them totally.** [36]

Commentary

Verse no. 33 supports and accentuates the explanation given above for the wisdom in the gradual revelation of Qur'ān in as much as it promises Allah's support in any situation of awkward questions asked by the

infidel.

اَلَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا (who have rejected Our signs - 25:36). Here it is described that the people of Pharaoh had denied Allah's verses. It is to be noted that by that time Torah was not revealed to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام . Therefore it cannot be Torah which was denied. Hence it is either the proofs of the Oneness of Allah, which can be understood by any one according to his mental level, or the traditions of the past prophets which are passed on through generations, no matter in what little detail, are referred here as rejection of His message. The same thing is referred in Qur'ān as well وَلَقَدْ جَآءَكُمْ يُوْسُفُ مِنْ قَبْلُ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ (Joseph brought you the clear signs before - 40:34). It mentions about the teachings of the earlier prophets, which had also reached them. (Bayān ul-Qur'ān)

Verses 37 - 44

وَقَوْمَ نُوْحٍ لَّمَّا كَذَّبُوا الرُّسُلَ اَغْرَقْنٰهُمْ وَجَعَلْنٰهُمْ لِلنَّاسِ اٰيَةً ۖ وَاَعْتَدْنَا لِلظّٰلِمِيْنَ عَذَابًا اَلِيْمًا ﴿٣٧﴾ وَّعَادًا وَّثَمُوْدَا وَاَصْحٰبَ الرَّسِّ وَقُرُوْنًا بَيْنَ ذٰلِكَ كَثِيْرًا ﴿٣٨﴾ وَكُلًّا ضَرَبْنَا لَهُ الْاَمْثَالَ وَكُلًّا تَبَّرْنَا تَتْبِيْرًا ﴿٣٩﴾ وَلَقَدْ اَتَوْا عَلَى الْقَرْيَةِ الَّتِيْٓ اُمْطِرَتْ مَطَرَ السَّوْءِ ۗ اَفَلَمْ يَكُوْنُوْا يَرَوْنَهَا ۚ بَلْ كَانُوْا لَا يَرْجُوْنَ نُشُوْرًا ﴿٤٠﴾ وَاِذَا رَاَوْكَ اِنْ يَّتَّخِذُوْنَكَ اِلَّا هُزُوًا ۗ اَهٰذَا الَّذِيْ بَعَثَ اللّٰهُ رَسُوْلًا ﴿٤١﴾ اِنْ كَادَ لَيُضِلُّنَا عَنْ اٰلِهَتِنَا لَوْلَآ اَنْ صَبَرْنَا عَلَيْهَا ۚ وَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُوْنَ حِيْنَ يَرَوْنَ الْعَذَابَ مَنْ اَضَلُّ سَبِيْلًا ﴿٤٢﴾ اَرَءَيْتَ مَنِ اتَّخَذَ اِلٰهَهٗ هَوٰىهُ ۗ اَفَاَنْتَ تَكُوْنُ عَلَيْهِ وَكِيْلًا ﴿٤٣﴾ اَمْ تَحْسَبُ اَنَّ اَكْثَرَهُمْ يَسْمَعُوْنَ اَوْ يَعْقِلُوْنَ ۚ اِنْ هُمْ اِلَّا كَالْاَنْعَامِ بَلْ هُمْ اَضَلُّ سَبِيْلًا ﴿٤٤﴾

As for the people of Nūḥ, when they rejected the messengers, We drowned them and made them an example for mankind. And We have prepared a painful punishment for the transgressors. [37] **And (We annihilated also the peoples of) 'Ād and Thamūd and the**

people of Rass and many generations in between them. [38]

And to each (of them) We cited examples, and each of them We brought to utter ruin. [39]

And indeed they (the pagans of Makkah) have passed by the town that was afflicted by an evil rain sent down to it. So, have they not been seeing it? Rather, they do not believe in Resurrection. [40] **And when they see you, they take you as nothing but a laughing stock, (saying) "Is this the man whom Allah has sent as a messenger?** [41] **He would have almost led us astray from our gods, had we not been so firm towards them." And they will know when they will see the punishment, who is farther astray in his way.** [42] **Tell me about the one who has taken his desire as his god, would you then, become a guardian for him?** [43] **Or do you think that most of them listen or understand? They are nothing but like cattle. Rather, they are even farther astray in their way.** [44]

Commentary

In the above verses it is mentioned that it had been the common practice of the people through the ages to rebuff the prophets and the message they had brought. In order to give weight to this assertion a few of the well known prophets are mentioned who were rejected by their people and then they were subjected to Allah's wrath and were annihilated completely. By drawing a parallel with the past generations it is elucidated that the pagans of Makkah would not listen to any reason as they were no better than the animals or even worse than that.

It is stated about the people of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام that they had rejected the prophets, although they had neither seen the past prophets nor had they rejected them. What is actually meant here is that while denying Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام they had by implication rejected all the prophets, because the principals of religion expounded by all prophets are essentially the same. Hence rejection of one prophet is tantamount to rejection of all.

أَصْحٰبَ الرَّسِّ (People of Rass - 25:38). In Arabic رَسّ (Rass) means unlined well. Neither Qur'ān nor any authentic tradition describes these people in

any detail. Whatever information is available about them is through Israelite traditions, which differ from one another. It is more likely that the remaining people of Thamūd had settled down near a well. It is not mentioned in the Qur'ān or any tradition as to how they were tormented. (Bayān ul-Qur'ān)

Following forbidden things - a type of idolatory

اَرَءَيْتَ مَنِ اتَّخَذَ اِلٰهَهٗ هَوٰىهُ (Tell me about the one who has taken his desire as his god - 25:43). The one who practises forbidden things which are against the tenets of Islam to satisfy his personal desires is described in this verse as the worshiper of his own lust. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ said that the selfish desires are like an idol which is worshipped (by the infidels) and then he recited this verse to prove his point. (Qurṭubī)

Verses 45 - 62

اَلَمْ تَرَ اِلٰى رَبِّكَ كَيْفَ مَدَّ الظِّلَّ ۚ وَلَوْ شَآءَ لَجَعَلَهٗ سَاكِنًا ۚ ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَا الشَّمْسَ عَلَيْهِ دَلِيْلًا ﴿٤٥﴾ ثُمَّ قَبَضْنٰهُ اِلَيْنَا قَبْضًا يَّسِيْرًا ﴿٤٦﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِىْ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الَّيْلَ لِبَاسًا وَّالنَّوْمَ سُبَاتًا وَّجَعَلَ النَّهَارَ نُشُوْرًا ﴿٤٧﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِىْٓ اَرْسَلَ الرِّيٰحَ بُشْرًا ۢ بَيْنَ يَدَىْ رَحْمَتِهٖ ۚ وَاَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً طَهُوْرًا ﴿٤٨﴾ لِنُحْيِىَ بِهٖ بَلْدَةً مَّيْتًا وَّنُسْقِيَهٗ مِمَّا خَلَقْنَآ اَنْعَامًا وَّاَنَاسِىَّ كَثِيْرًا ﴿٤٩﴾ وَلَقَدْ صَرَّفْنٰهُ بَيْنَهُمْ لِيَذَّكَّرُوْا ۖ فَاَبٰى اَكْثَرُ النَّاسِ اِلَّا كُفُوْرًا ﴿٥٠﴾ وَلَوْ شِئْنَا لَبَعَثْنَا فِىْ كُلِّ قَرْيَةٍ نَّذِيْرًا ﴿٥١﴾ فَلَا تُطِعِ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ وَجَاهِدْهُمْ بِهٖ جِهَادًا كَبِيْرًا ﴿٥٢﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِىْ مَرَجَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ هٰذَا عَذْبٌ فُرَاتٌ وَّهٰذَا مِلْحٌ اُجَاجٌ ۚ وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَهُمَا بَرْزَخًا وَّحِجْرًا مَّحْجُوْرًا ﴿٥٣﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِىْ خَلَقَ مِنَ الْمَآءِ بَشَرًا فَجَعَلَهٗ نَسَبًا وَّصِهْرًا ۗ وَكَانَ رَبُّكَ قَدِيْرًا ﴿٥٤﴾ وَيَعْبُدُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ مَا لَا يَنْفَعُهُمْ وَلَا يَضُرُّهُمْ ۗ وَكَانَ الْكَافِرُ عَلٰى رَبِّهٖ

ظَهِيْرًا ﴿٥٥﴾ وَمَآ اَرْسَلْنٰكَ اِلاَّ مُبَشِّرًا وَّنَذِيْرًا ﴿٥٦﴾ قُلْ مَآ اَسْئَلُكُمْ
عَلَيْهِ مِنْ اَجْرٍ اِلاَّ مَنْ شَآءَ اَنْ يَّتَّخِذَ اِلٰى رَبِّهٖ سَبِيْلاً ﴿٥٧﴾ وَ تَوَكَّلْ
عَلَى الْحَيِّ الَّذِىْ لاَيَمُوْتُ وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِهٖ ط وَكَفٰى بِهٖ بِذُنُوْبِ عِبَادِهٖ
خَبِيْرًا ﴿٥٨﴾ الَّذِىْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا فِىْ سِتَّةِ
اَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوٰى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ ج اَلرَّحْمٰنُ فَسْئَلْ بِهٖ خَبِيْرًا ﴿٥٩﴾ وَاِذَا
قِيْلَ لَهُمُ اسْجُدُوْا لِلرَّحْمٰنِ قَالُوْا وَمَا الرَّحْمٰنُ ق اَنَسْجُدُ لِمَا تَاْمُرُنَا
وَزَادَهُمْ نُفُوْرًا ﴿٦٠﴾ تَبٰرَكَ الَّذِىْ جَعَلَ فِى السَّمَآءِ بُرُوْجًا وَّجَعَلَ
فِيْهَا سِرٰجًا وَّقَمَرًا مُّنِيْرًا ﴿٦١﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِىْ جَعَلَ الَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ خِلْفَةً
لِّمَنْ اَرَادَ اَنْ يَّذَّكَّرَ اَوْ اَرَادَ شُكُوْرًا ﴿٦٢﴾

Have you not turned your vision to your Lord, how He prolonged the shadow? And if He so willed, He would have made it stand still. Then We made the sun an indicator for it. [45] **Then We pulled it toward Us in a gradual manner.** [46] **And He is the One who has made the night an apparel for you, and the sleep a means of rest and has made the day a means of revival.** [47] **And He is the One who has sent the winds conveying good news before His mercy. And we have sent down purifying water from the heavens,** [48] **so that We revive a dead land therewith and give drink to the many cattle and humans We have created.** [49] **And We have distributed it (the water) among them, so that they may take lesson, then most of the people opted for nothing but ungratefulness.** [50]

And if We so willed, We would have sent a warner in every town. [51] **So do not obey the infidels and strive against them with it (the Qur'ān) a great striving.** [52]

And He is the One who joined the two seas - this is sweat, very sweat, and this is bitter, very bitter - and made between them a buffer and a barrier, prohibited (to cross). [53] **And He is the One who created man from water, then made of him kinship of blood and kinship of**

in-laws. And your Lord is All-Powerful. [54]

And they worship, instead of Allah, what can neither give them any benefit nor can cause them any harm. And the disbeliever is always a supporter (of Satan) against his Lord. [55] **And We did not send you but as a bearer of good news and as a warner.** [56] **Say, "I do not demand from you any fee except that whoever so wills should adopt a way to his Lord.** [57] **And place your trust in the Ever-Living who cannot die, and proclaim His purity alongwith His praise. And enough is He to be aware of the sins of His slaves,** [58] **the One who created the heavens and the earth and whatever lies between them in six days, then He positioned Himself on the Throne - the Raḥmān, so ask about Him someone who knows.** [59] **And when it is said to them, "Prostrate to the Raḥmān (the Most Merciful)," they say "What is Raḥmān? Shall we prostrate to that to which you direct us?" And it increases nothing in them except aversion.** [60]

Glorious is the One who made stellar formations in the sky and placed therein a lamp (sun) and a bright moon. [61] **And He is the One who made the day and the night following each other, for the one who wishes to be mindful or wishes to show gratitude.** [62]

Commentary

Relationship between causes and effects and their being subject to Allah's will

The above verses describe complete and total omnipotence of Allah Ta'ālā and His bounties and favors showered on human kind. This also proves Oneness of Allah and that no one can share His right of worship.

اَلَمْ تَرَ اِلٰى رَبِّكَ كَيْفَ مَدَّ الظِّلَّ (Have you not turned your vision to your Lord, how He prolonged the shadow? - 25:45). Sunlight and shade are such blessings of God that without them it would not have been possible for mankind to survive and carry on its day to day functions. If there is sunlight all the time, it will create problems not only for humans but for all living things. On the other hand, if there is shade all the time, then also neither man nor other living creatures can survive. Allah Ta'ālā has created these two blessings by His limitless power and made them

beneficial for the mankind. At the same time Allah Ta'ālā, through His infinite wisdom, has tied up all created things with specific causes in the sense that these things come into existence only when such causes are available, and if they are absent, these things do not exist. Similarly, if the causes are strong and available in abundance, the existence of their effects is also strong and abundant, and vice versa. Creation of crops and grass is dependent upon availability of land, water and air. Similarly, light is dependent on availability of the sun and the moon. Rain is dependent on clouds and air. Then there is such a strong bond between these causes and effects that it binds them together in such a way that there has not been the slightest deviation in the working of things even after the passage of centuries. For instance look at the solar system. This system has been working for centuries, yet there has not been the minutest change or deviation in its working, nor has there been a split of a second's difference in the movements of the entire system. Neither there is any change in the movements of the sun and the moon nor do they require any overhauling or repair work. They are moving along their orbits since the origin of the universe at a defined speed. One can calculate their movements with precision and predict their positions in advance for centuries.

This marvelous system of causes and effects was, in fact, a masterpiece of Allah's creation and a solid proof of His boundless power and infinite wisdom, but it was this firmness of the system which ultimately made people neglectful of Allah's power. When they perceived that all the 'effects' in this universe are linked with some visible causes, they confined their eyes to these visible causes only and started believing them to be the original creator of all these events. The real power of the Creator which was the original cause of all causes remained hidden behind the covers of visible causes only. The prophets are sent and the divine books are revealed to remind human beings that they must rise above this shortsightedness, and see behind the cover of these apparent causes and the omnipotence of their creator who is in fact running and controlling the whole system. This is the only way to discover the real truth about this universe. The verses under consideration are meant to point out to this reality.

In the verse اَلَمْ تَرَ اِلٰى رَبِّكَ كَيْفَ مَدَّ الظِّلَّ (Have you not turned your vision to

your Lord, how He proloneed the shadow? - 25:45). People are reminded of the perfect solar system and the benefits people draw from it. It is a common experience to see the sun rising from the east when the shades are long. Then with the passage of time they are shortened and at noon become the shortest. Then again as the sun moves toward west the shades start lengthening and before the sunsets become the longest. In this whole process the entire humanity draws unlimited benefits from sunlight and its shades, and clearly realizes that there are the effects of the movements of the sun between East and West, but little attention is paid to the question as to who has created this sun and who has bound it to a well - planned system. Answer to this question cannot be found by one's eyes, but it can be perceived by the insight of heart and mind.

If He so willed, Allah would have made sunlight and shades stationary so that where there was sunlight it would have stayed as such, and where there was shade it would have remained such for ever. Just think of the problems it would have brought about. But in His Wisdom He has not done so and instead created things which are beneficial and useful for humanity. The next verse وَلَوْشَآءَ لَجَعَلَهٗ سَاكِنًا (and if He so willed, He would have made it stand still - 45) means exactly that.

In order to explain the phenomenon of lengthening and shortening of shades, it is stated in the verse قَبَضْنٰهُ اِلَيْنَا قَبْضًا يَّسِيْرًا (45) that is "We pulled it toward Us in a gradual manner." It is well known that Allah Ta'ālā is beyond the purview of body or direction and hence there is no question of the shade being pulled toward Him. What it means is that shortening of the shades takes place by His Supreme Power.

To work during day time and rest at night is based on great Wisdom

وَهُوَ الَّذِىْ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الَّيْلَ لِبَاسًا وَّالنَّوْمَ سُبَاتًا وَّجَعَلَ النَّهَارَ نُشُوْرًا

And He is the One who has made the night an apparel for you, and the sleep a means of rest and has made the day a means of revival. [47]

The night is referred as the apparel in this verse to describe that it covers up everything like a natural sheet as does the dress to human body. The word سُبَاتًا (*subāta*) is derived from سَبْت (*sabt*) which means to cut out. سُبَات is that thing which cuts out some other thing.

Allah Ta'ālā has made the sleep to shed away the exhaustion and fatigue one develops after the day long work. In sleep one is cut off with stress and strain of mind and body while they are rested. Hence the word سُبَات is generally translated as rest, relaxation or tranquility. So the sense of the verse is that Allah Ta'ālā has created the night as a covering to everything then imposed sleep on men and all living things, so that they rest and relax.

Here one needs to ponder over a few things. Everyone knows that sleep is a blessing and a source of relaxation. But it is human nature to sleep in darkness. It is very difficult to sleep in day light, and even if one goes off to sleep, one is awakened quickly. Conforming to human needs and nature Allah Ta'ālā has made nights dark and cool, so that people can sleep and relax. Hence, night by itself is a blessing and sleep is another blessing. The third blessing is that the entire humanity and animals sleep at night instinctively. If the sleeping time of different people were different from one another, it would have created a number of problems. In such a situation some would have slept at one time and the others at some other, creating problems for one another, because when people are awake, they move about for various works and this movement would have created noise to the annoyance and disturbance for those who were sleeping. Apart from this, people are dependent on each other in many ways and different times of their sleeping would have deprived them of helping each other in their works because working time of one would have been the time of rest for the other.

If human beings would have resorted to a social contract for uniting the times of rest and work for the whole world, it was not, at the first place, an easy task to make billions of people agree on a single resolution, then the implementation of such a contract would have required a lot of formal departments, and still there would have been room for violation of such a contract through corrupt means, as is observed in the contemporary forums. All such problems have been overcome by the creation of night and sleep by Allah Ta'ālā which are greatly beneficial and necessary for human and other living beings. Allah Ta'ālā has instilled in humans such an urge to sleep at night that one can keep awake only with great difficulty and effort. فتبارك الله احسن الخالقين

Similarly in وَجَعَلَ النَّهَارَ نُشُورًا (and has made the day a means of revival -

25:47), the day is described as revival, because its opposite, that is sleep, is like death when one loses all his senses. Here again, to keep awake and attend to one's needs during the day time is made mandatory in human beings. If this was not so, some people would have attended to their work while others slept, and this would have caused all sorts of problems.

As in the case of sleep, Allah Ta'ālā has bestowed a great blessing on human beings by creating its need at night. He has also made it part of human nature to keep awake and attend to work during day time, so that people should look after each other's needs. He has also fixed certain timings for certain desires and needs common in all human beings. For instance, all people feel hungry in the mornings and evenings and want to eat. So the eating times of all humans are common which is again a great blessing from Allah Ta'ālā .

وَأَنزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً طَهُورًا (And We have sent down purifying water from the heavens - 25:48). In Arabic طَهُور (*Ṭahūr*) means something which is pure by itself and which also purifies other things. Allah Ta'ālā has given this quality to water that it is clean by itself and possesses the property to cleanse other things also. The water we use comes down from the clouds in the form of rain, hail or snow. Then some of it flows on the surface of the earth and the rest seeps down into the ground. Under the ground there is a natural drainage system which takes the under ground water to every nook of the earth and then it reappears on the surface in the form of springs, fountains etc. Sometimes the underground water is drawn out by digging wells to reach it. All these waters i.e. that which falls in the form of rain, or that which flows on the surface of earth in the form of rivers, streams or canals, or that which is preserved underground are pure in Sharī'ah and have inherent property of cleaning other things. There is consensus of opinion in *ummah* on this matter and it is the express purport of the Holy Qur'ān and Sunnah.

When the water is in large quantity as in the case of a pond, pool or a canal, it remains pure even if something filthy has fallen in it. On this point also there is a general consensus, unless the effect of filth is perceptible and the colour, taste and smell of water changes. However, if the quantity of water is small and some filth drops in it, then there is a difference of opinion among the jurists (مجتهدين) on the nature and quantity of filth as well as the quantity of water in which the filth falls.

Details on this issue are described by Maẓharī and Qurṭubī in their commentaries and are also available in the books on Fiqh.

وَّنُسْقِيَه' مِمَّا خَلَقْنَا اَنعَامًا وَّاَنَاسِىَّ كَثِيْرًا (And give drink to the many cattle and humans We have created - 25:49). The word اَنَاسِىَّ is the plural of إِنسِىّ and some linguistics have taken it as a plural of إنسان (both the words mean 'human'). This verse has described that the rain is a source of irrigation for land, while it serves as a drink for 'many cattle and humans'. The point worth consideration here is why the word 'many' is used which indicates that some human beings do not benefit from it. This question may be answered by saying that the reference here is to the cattle and human beings living in jungles and deserts who directly use the water of rain. As for the urban people, they normally use the water of wells and canals etc.

وَلَقَدْ صَرَّفْنٰهُ بَيْنَهُمْ (And We have distributed it (the water) among them - 25:50). The verse says that We keep rotating the rainfall, that is, it sometimes falls in one locality and sometimes in another. Then sometimes a locality receives in one year more rain and in subsequent years less. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās says that the presumption of some people that the quantity of rains varies from year to year is not really correct. In fact the aggregate amount of water sent down to the world (at macro-level) is equal every year. However, according to Allah's will, its allocation for different territories may change from year to year. Sometimes the quantity of water is curtailed for a specific habitation as a punishment and warning for it, and sometimes the quantity of rain is increased for a particular population, again as a punishment for their misdeeds. Thus the water that was a blessing in its origin turns into a torment for the people who are ungrateful and disobedient.

Jihād with Qur'ān (its propagation) is great Jihād

وَجَاهِدْ هُمْ بِهٖ جِهَادًا كَبِيْرًا (And strive against them with it (the Qur'ān) a great striving - 25:52). This is a Makkan verse when the injunction for Jihād, in the sense of fighting the infidels, had not been revealed. What is ordained in this verse is that you spread the message of Qur'ān among the people at large. Propagation of Qur'ānic message among people and to make them understand it is great Jihād whether it is by mouth, pen or any other means,

وَهُوَالَّذِىْ مَرَجَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ هٰذَا عَذْبٌ فُرَاتٌ وَّهٰذَا مِلْحٌ اُجَاجٌ ج وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَهُمَا بَرْزَخًا

وَحِجْرًا مَّحْجُورًا

And He is the One who joined the two seas - this is sweat, very sweat and this is bitter, very bitter - and made between them a buffer and a barrier, prohibited (to cross) - 25:53.

The word مَرَجَ (*maraja*) means to let off or allow to roam freely and hence pasture is called مَرَج (*maraj*) that is where animals can graze and roam about. عَذْب (*'adhb*) is sweet water, while فُرَات means delicious and pleasant; and مِلْح (*milh*) means salty and أُجَاج means bitter.

Allah Ta'ālā in His own Wisdom has created two types of waters. One is enormous in size called oceans and cover up about two third of the global space while the rest of the one third space is made up of land mass on which people live. The water of the oceans and seas is extremely brackish, bitter and of a bad taste. On the other hand the water found on land in different forms is potable, pleasant and tasty. This water is just right for the needs of mankind and animals alike who drink it and use it for cleaning. If the water of the seas and oceans were not brackish, it would have decayed very quickly leaving behind a pungent and foul odor making the life unbearable for humans and animals on land. Moreover, the creatures living in ocean and sea water, and number manifold than those living on land could not have survived because when they die, they perish in the brackish water. If they were to die in sweet water their decomposition would have contaminated the water making the survival of the marine life impossible and its stink would have been unbearable for the life on land. Then the garbage of the land is generally dumped in the sea where it is decomposed (except for a few modern age items which need special treatment). Therefore, brackish water of the oceans and seas is a great blessing of Allah Ta'ālā for all creatures, whether living in the sea or on the land. Without the presence of brackish water mass, there would have been no marine or land life.

In this verse it is elucidated that it is a great blessing and grace of Allah Ta'ālā to have provided two types of waters in accordance with the needs of mankind. Then it is a perfect demonstration of His complete power that when a river of sweet water falls into the sea, the two waters (the sweet and the brackish) do not mingle immediately where they meet, but for miles they remain separated from each other, despite the fact that there is no physical curtain between them. This is yet another example of

His omnipotence.

وَهُوَ الَّذِىْ خَلَقَ مِنَ الْمَآءِ بَشَرًا فَجَعَلَهٗ نَسَبًا وَّصِهْرًا(And He is the One who created man from water then made of him kinship of blood and kinship of in-laws. 25:54) نَسَب (*nasab*, translated above as 'kinship of blood') is that relationship which emanates from either parent, and صِهر (*ṣihr*, translated above as 'kinship of in-laws') is that kinship which is drawn from the wife's side and is called in - laws. All these relations and bonds are Allah's graces given to mankind for a pleasant and tranquil life. If these relations are taken away from someone's life it will be impossible for him to live by himself.

قُلْ مَآ اَسْئَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ اَجْرٍ اِلَّا مَنْ شَآءَ اَنْ يَّتَّخِذَ اِلٰى رَبِّهٖ سَبِيْلًا

Say, "I do not demand from you any fee, except that whoever so wills, should adopt a way to his Lord - 25:57.

Allah Ta'ālā advised the Holy Prophet ﷺ to say that he has no personal interest in inviting to accept and follow Allah's message in order to be profitable in this world and the Hereafter. He does not seek any reward from them for his efforts. His reward is only that they turn towards Allah. It is but obvious that if someone moves to the righteous path it is he who will be the gainer. As for the Holy Prophet ﷺ, it was his love for the people that he was striving, and has considered the gain of the people as his own. It is just like an old father asks his children to eat and drink and be merry, and declares to them that their eating and drinking is a reward for himself. It is also possible that the correct attitude of the people is taken as a reward for the Holy Prophet ﷺ because he will also be rewarded if the people take up to right path. Some authentic traditions say that if someone asks people to take up the righteous path and they oblige, then not only those who have acted righteously will be rewarded for the good acts, but also the one who has persuaded them to follow the righteous path. (Maẓharī)

فَسْئَلْ بِهٖ خَبِيْرًا (So ask about Him someone who knows - 25:59). In this verse it is described that the creation of the earth and the skies, and then to place Himself on 'Arsh in consonance to His exalted position are all acts of Allah Ta'ālā. If someone wants its confirmation, he should find out from those who know the truth. Here the allusion for knowledge is toward Allah Ta'ālā or Jibra'īl عليه السلام. It is also possible that the reference is toward

the scholars of the previous Books wherein the truth was also mentioned. (Mazharī)

قَالُوْا وَمَا الرَّحْمٰنُ (60) The word رَحْمٰن (Raḥmān, translated as All-Merciful) is an Arabic word and all Arabs knew its meaning, but they did not use it for Allah Ta'ālā. Hence they enquired who and what is Raḥmān (رَحْمٰن).

تَبٰرَكَ الَّذِىْ جَعَلَ فِى السَّمَآءِ بُرُوْجًا وَّجَعَلَ فِيْهَا سِرٰجًا وَّقَمَرًا مُّنِيْرًا ﴿٦١﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِىْ جَعَلَ الَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ خِلْفَةً لِّمَنْ اَرَادَ اَنْ يَّذَّكَّرَ اَوْاَرَادَ شُكُوْرًا ﴿٦٢﴾

Glorious is the One who made stellar formations in the sky and placed therein a lamp (sun) and a bright moon. [61] And He is the One who made the day and the night following each other, for the one who wishes to be mindful or wishes to show gratitude. [62] - 25:61,62.

In these two verses it is explained that Allah Ta'ālā has created the sun, the moon and stars which bring about the day and night (on earth) alternately, so that those who give thought to things around them should see manifestation of His omnipotence and proof His Oneness; and the thanks-givers should have occasion for thanks-giving. Therefore, whosoever does not pay heed to manifestation of His creation and does not offer Him his gratitude lives a useless life, and he has lost his capital as well (اللّٰهمّ اجعلنا من الذاكرين الشّاكرين).

Ibn al-'Arabi says that he has heard from the Great Martyr (شهيد اكبر) that the one who has attained the age of sixty years and has spent half of his life of thirty years in sleeping, and one sixth of the time of i.e. ten years in taking rest during the day time, is in a great loss. So, he has spent only twenty years of his life in working.

After pointing out about the stars, the planets and the astronomical features, the Qur'ān has made it clear that the repeated reference of these things in the Qur'ān is for the purpose that people contemplate over their creation, movements and resulting phenomenon in order to help visualize and understand the One who creates and controls them, and then pay homage and thanks to Allah Ta'ālā.

Cosmological theories and the Qur'ān

As regards the questions as to what is the reality of the stellar formations and whether the stars are fixed in the sky or are floating in

the space, no basic human need is dependent on answering these questions, neither in this world, nor in the Hereafter. Moreover, there are many issues of this type which could not be resolved finally, despite all the painstaking efforts undertaken by many researchers. Therefore, it is not a necessary service to the Qur'ān to indulge in such controversies beyond the aforesaid purpose of the Holy Qur'ān, that is, to ponder on these wonders as signs of the divine omnipotence and to pay homage to Him for their creation. The modern scientists have, no doubt, acquired wonderful achievements in inventing satellites and space-crafts, in travelling to the moon and bringing dust and stones from there, but it is a pity that the realistic approach about the Creator of this universe, suggested by the Holy Qur'ān, was not only neglected by them, but being proud of these discoveries, they became more distant from it and the people became more confused about the Qur'ānic expressions. There are some people who take these discoveries as against the Qur'ānic expressions and therefore deny the facts proved by real observations, and there are others who try to twist the Qur'ānic expressions to suit the modern theories. It is, therefore, deemed necessary to clarify the correct situation about these issues in some detail. We had already promised in our commentary to Sūrah Al-Ḥijr that we would discuss these issues in detail under Sūrah Al-Furqān. Now, here is that discussion:

Old and modern theories about the location of the planets and the Qur'ānic expressions

Let us take the question about the location of the stars. The verse 61 above says, جَعَلَ فِى السَّمَاءِ بُرُوْجًا (made the stellar formations in the sky). Here the words 'in the sky' apparently indicate that the planets are located in the sky. Similarly the words in a verse of Sūrah Nūḥ are as follows:

اَلَمْ تَرَوْا كَيْفَ خَلَقَ اللّٰهُ سَبْعَ سَمٰوٰتٍ طِبَاقًا وَّجَعَلَ الْقَمَرَ فِيْهِنَّ نُوْرًا وَّجَعَلَ الشَّمْسَ سِرَاجًا

Did you not realize how Allah has created seven skies, one over the other, and has made moon in them a light. (71:15,16)

Here again the phrase فِيْهِنَّ "in them" refers to skies which apparently indicates that moon is placed in the sky. But these expressions should not be taken as an absolute declaration that moon and other planets are located and fixed physically in the sky. The reason is that the Arabic word

"سَمَاء" (*samā'*, translated as "sky" or 'heavens') is used for two different meanings. It is sometime used for the great mass of the sky, and sometimes for every thing which is above us in the direction of the sky, including the atmosphere between earth and sky and the space. The Holy Qur'ān has used this word for both these meanings in different verses. When it speaks of the sky as a huge mass having gates guarded by angels which are opened at particular times, it takes the word for the first meaning. But when it describes the rain coming down from the sky, it takes the word 'sky' for the second sense. For example the Holy Qur'ān says,

وَأَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً طَهُوْرًا

And We have sent down purifying water from the heavens. (25:48)

Obviously the word سَمَاء (samā', translated as sky or heavens) in this verse is used in the second sense, firstly because the common observation (even in the days of the Holy Prophet ﷺ) has proved that the rain comes from the clouds and not from the sky, and secondly because the Holy Qur'ān itself has mentioned at different places in express terms that the rain comes from the clouds. For example, the following two verses are self-speaking on this point:

ءَأَنْتُمْ أَنْزَلْتُمُوْهُ مِنَ الْمُزْنِ أَمْ نَحْنُ الْمُنْزِلُوْنَ

Have you sent it (the rain) down from the clouds or are We who sends it down. (56:69)

وَأَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ الْمُعْصِرَاتِ مَاءً ثَجَّاجًا

And We sent down abundant water from clouds full of rain. (78:14)

In the light of these verses, the word سَمَاء (sky/heavens) used in verse 25:48 above is obviously used for the atmosphere above us.

Now, when the Qur'ān has itself used the word 'sky' in both senses, the verses describing the stars and planets 'in the sky' have equal possibility of either of these two senses. They can be taken to mean that the planets are placed in the mass of the sky, and they can equally be taken to mean that they are in the space. In the presence of these two possibilities no absolute declaration about this issue can be attributed to

the Holy Qur'an. Whatever situation about this issue is proved by observation or by research will not be against any express declaration of the Qur'ān.

Realities of the universe and Qur'ān

It is vital that we clear our thinking on the subject matter of the Holy Qur'ān. It should be clearly understood that Qur'ān is not a book of philosophy or astronomy. It does not deal with the subject of realities of the universe or the form, positioning and movements of its components e.g. stars, planets etc. But at the same time it does mention repeatedly about things on the earth and in the sky and in between them, and invites to ponder over them to set one's beliefs right. On going through all such verses one can make out clearly that the idea behind them is to set right the beliefs of the people or to help them draw benefits for their religious or mundane needs. For instance, Qur'ān has repeatedly mentioned about the earth and sky the stars and planets and their movements and the effects of these movements for man to ponder over in order to comprehend and understand that this spectacular phenomenon has not come into being on its own but there is someone who has created all that, and that someone is Almighty Allah Ta'ālā. For the ordinary man it is not necessary to acquire knowledge of astronomy and related sciences but instead it is sufficient for him to observe the alternation of day and night, their shortening and lengthening of duration, the change in the tilt of sun bringing different seasons, the rising and waning of the moon, the eclipses of the moon and the sun, which every individual see happening. A common man sees them happening with perfect precision and knows that it is going on without the slightest alteration for centuries. Then he can draw the conclusion that there is some Power who has created it, and is running and holding it. That "someone" or that "Power" is none else but Allah Ta'ālā. To arrive at this conclusion one neither has to acquire any special philosophical knowledge or any research data nor the Qur'ān has asked to do so. All that Qur'ān has asked in this regard is to pay attention to these phenomena which one can see by simple observation. Also the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his companions did not make any arrangement to study astronomical or cosmic theories or to collect data and information on the shape and form of celestial bodies. Had these verses on astronomical and cosmic realities been conveying the message to strive to find out such

realities, then the Holy Prophet ﷺ would have definitely made an effort in this direction, especially in a situation when facilities were available in his time for acquiring such knowledge. People in Egypt, Syria, India and China had already worked on these subjects and had acquired some knowledge. Five hundred years before Christ (B.C) Pythagorean theory was propounded and established, and later in 139 A.D. Ptolemy also propounded his well known theory. But the most revered person on whom these verses were revealed and the companions who learned them directly from him never made any attempt in that direction. Therefore it is abundantly clear that the Qur'anic verses inviting people to ponder over the cosmological signs did never intend that the space travel and the efforts to conquer the moon and other planets are the basic objectives of the Qur'an, as is suggested by some contemporary modernists under the influence of the West and its discoveries.

The fact of the matter is that the Holy Qur'ān neither invites people's attention towards any old or new philosophical thesis or scientific research nor does it deal with them, nor does it reject them. The plain and simple manner in which the Holy Qur'ān deals with the subjects concerning universe and His creation is to confine their mention only to the extent they are related to the man's religious or worldly needs, and what man can comprehend and learn easily. On the other hand Qur'ān does not involve itself in complicated philosophical discussions and researches which are beyond the comprehension of common man and which sometimes create more confusion in the minds of people for their ever changing nature because of the unending discoveries and inventions being made with the passage of time. In effect Qur'ān guides the humanity toward its ultimate goal which is to seek and follow the righteous path to comply with the Will of Allah Ta'ālā in order to win over His grace in the everlasting abode in the Hereafter. It is neither required nor is it possible for every one to indulge in the discussion of the realities of the universe for the theories of one period become obsolete in the next period by the new discoveries and inventions. Hence no theory or thesis could be regarded as final. The Holy Qur'ān however does make allusions at certain places toward some realities covering subjects like astronomy, space, atmosphere, meteorology, oceanography, geology etc. but to the extent it is needed for human life here or in the Hereafter. Similarly, the

Qur'ān makes references about His creatures on earth related with botany, zoology, petrology and social sciences including trade, agriculture, industry etc., but again to the extent it is required to guide the man to fulfill his religious and worldly duties. Qur'ān does not drag mankind toward unnecessary and futile discussions for making things complicated. However, it is only at some places in the Holy Qur'ān that it mentions a particular issue of this nature expressly or gives a hint towards it.

Criteria of acceptance or rejection of scientific and philosophical theories in the commentary of the Holy Qur'ān

The classical and modern religious scholars are unanimous on the point that if a statement is lucid and unambiguous in the Qur'ān but it contradicts with any old or new theory, it is not permissible to try to twist the Qur'ānic version to try to bring in it line with the modern theories. In such a situation the related theory would be regarded as based on some misconception. However, in the matters in which Qur'ān does not give any express statement and where more than one interpretations are possible from the wordings of the Qur'ān, then in that situation the interpretation closer to observations and evidence would be regarded as correct. For instance, we can take the case of this very verse جَعَلَ فِى السَّمَآءِ بُرُوْجًا (Stellar formations in the sky - 25:61) where it is not specified whether the stars are placed in the space or stuck in the sky. Now in the present time when it is proved by observations that stars are orbiting in the space and are not stuck in the sky, then the Pythagorean theory has been proved correct, because according to the express statements of the Qur'ān and *ahādīth*, sky has gates guarded by the angels and no one can enter into it. (Had the planets been fixed in the sky, the modern researchers would have not been able to reach them). Based on this observation the verses referring to the stars 'in the sky' will be construed to mean that these stars are in the space. And this will not be tantamount to twisting the Qur'ānic statement, but only the adoption of one of the two possible interpretations. However, if it is claimed that the skies do not exist or that they can be pierced through by the rockets, then it will be in contradiction to Qur'ānic wordings and cannot be accepted because Qur'an has clearly stated in several verses that sky is such an enclosure where there are gates guarded by the angles, and every one cannot enter there.

Similarly, the verse كُلٌّ فِىْ فَلَكٍ يَّسْبَحُوْنَ (Each floating in an orbit)

ascertains the floating of stars in their orbits. Hence, Ptolemaic theory (propounded in 139 A.D) suggesting that the stars are embedded in the body of the sky and have no movement of their own, rather they move with the movement of the sky, is no more valid after the Qur'ānic declaration that stars are orbiting.

Some earlier commentators who believed in the Ptolemaic theory which was in conflict with the Qur'ānic version on astronomy had tried to stretch and twist the meanings of the Quranic words to bring it in line with the Ptolemaic theory. Similarly, in present and recent times when some authors presume that some Qur'ānic verses are at variance with some astronomical theories, they attempt to harmonize them with modern theories by twisting their meanings. Both these attitudes are incorrect and against the classical methodology of the righteous elders. It is, however, a fact that no theory from those advanced by astronomers is in contradiction to the Qur'ān, except the theory of denial of the skies.

Sayyid Maḥmūd Ālūsī Baghdadi who is the greatest commentator and scholar of recent time because of his vast knowledge and understanding of not only the Qur'ān and Sunnah but also of philosophy and astronomical sciences has condensed the work of all classical commentators in his famous and widely acclaimed commentary - Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī. He has adopted the same principle, which is described above. His grandson Allāmah Sayyid Maḥmūd Shukrī Ālūsī has written a book on the subject in which he has endorsed modern astronomical theories in the light of Qur'ānic declarations without twisting their meanings. The relevant passage from his book is quoted below:

رأيت كثيرا من قواعدها لا يعارض النّصوص الواردة فى الكتاب والسنّة، على انها لو خالفت شيئا من ذٰلك لم يلتفت اليها ولم نؤول النصوص لاجلها، والتاويل فيها ليس من مذاهب السلف الحريّة بالقبول، بل لابدّ ان نقول ان المخالف لها مشتمل على خلل فيه، فان العقل الصريح لايخالف النقل الصحيح، بل كل منهما يصدق الاٰخر ويؤيّده (مادل عليه القرآن)

"I have checked many principles of the modern astronomy. They are not in conflict with the Qur'ānic text or Sunnah. But in case they differ with Qur'ān and Sunnah then we shall discard them and would not twist the (meaning of) Qur'ān and Sunnah because such twisting would be against the practice of the

elders. In such situations we would argue that any theory which is in conflict with the Qur'ān or Sunnah is imperfect, because the sound reason can never be against an authentic text (of Qur'ān or Sunnah) rather they are complimentary to each other."

In brief it can be said that the subject of stars and planets, their form and movements and related astronomical theories have been discussed and researched for a long time, even before the birth of Sayyidnā 'Īsā ﷺ in various countries like Egypt, Syria, India, China and Greece. Among them Pythagoras and Ptolemy are still well known.

Obviously, astronomy is not a new branch of knowledge. It has been the subject of human research since thousands of years. Egypt, Syria, India and China were the centres of astronomical research in the ancient ages. Pythagoras, the famous astronomer, used to teach astronomy in Italy five hundred years before Sayyidnā 'Īsā ﷺ. Then, in 140 BC, Ptolemy ruled the field who developed a cosmological theory that was in total contradiction the theory of Pythagoras, but it found currency with the cooperation of the government, so much so that the theory of Pythagoras was pushed back to a situation where it was ignored almost totally. When the Greek sciences were translated into Arabic, it was the theory of Ptolemy that rules the field, and was rendered into Arabic and became popular in Arabic books. Many commentators of the Qur'an discussed the subject in the light of Ptolemaic theory.

It was in the fifteenth century A.D. (corresponding to the eleventh century A.H.) that the European scholars started their research on the subject. The pioneering work in the field was done by Copernicus, followed by Keiler of Germany and Galileo of Italy. All these astronomers falsified the theory of Ptolemy and endorsed the theory of Pythagoras. In eighteenth century A.D. the discoveries of Issac Newton further confirmed the theory of Pythagoras. He propounded the theory of gravity and proved through experiments that all the planets, including earth, have gravity which makes things fall onto them from above, but the range of gravity varies from planet to planet. If something is able to cross the range of gravity of the earth, it will never fall to the ground.

This theory was proved by empirical evidence when Russian and American scientists, who benefitted from some researches of Al-Bairuni,

the well-known Muslim scientist, succeeded in sending rockets and satellites to the space which, after breaking the gravity range of the earth, started rotating around their orbit. This success prompted the scientists to travel to the planets through space, and ultimately some of them reached the moon, a fact which was admitted by all the experts and was not challenged, even by their opponents. It is from that time that the efforts to reach other planets and to undertake other missions to the space are going on upto the date.

It is interesting to note that John Glenn, the first American astronaut had written article after his successful return from the space in which he had admitted not only the existence of God, but also His omnipotence that controls the whole universe. He had also admitted that all our scientific accomplishments are almost worthless as compared to the natural process going on in the space which cannot be weighed by any type of measures. He had concluded the article with the admission that everything in this universe cannot be perceived or felt by human senses. There are many religious realities which are beyond the access of our senses, but we certainly know, through their visible effects, that they exist, and this leads us to believe that this universe is controlled by an omnipotent power. This article was published in those days in many periodicals, including Readers Digest.

This article shows that the end-result of all these effects was to admit that the mysteries of the universe are not still discovered and that all these planets are controlled by a Supreme, but incorporeal Power. And this is the reality that was declared by the prophets of Allah at the very first step, and this is the very conclusion for which the Holy Qur'ān has invited us to reflect on the creation of sky, earth, stars and planets etc.

Another point worth consideration is that these modern discoveries that cost trillions of dollars, despite their marvelous and admirable courage have not been able to solve the burning problems of humanity suffering from hunger, disease and unrest. The dust and stones brought from the moon at such a huge cost were of little benefit to those who face death on daily basis because of hunger or those who do not have clothes to wear or a home to live. The real benefit of such discoveries, that is, to believe in Allah and be grateful to Him, did not need such extra-ordinary efforts. These benefits can be drawn even by a rustic through simple

observations of these objects, and this is exactly what the Holy Qur'an has stressed upon.

The gist of the matter is that the study of cosmology for making it a source of guidance towards Allah's omnipotence, His all-encompassing wisdom and His being the sole Creator and having no partner is the objective of the Qur'ān towards which the Holy Book has invited us in many places. Secondly, study of these sciences to the extent that they are used for solving the real problems of life is also included in Qur'ānic objectives, but with the difference that the worldly affairs are not taken to be the be-all and the end-all one's activities, but the worldly life is held to be a transitory stage to be looked after to the extent of real needs. The third objective for the study of cosmology which aims at solving merely theoretical issues having no nexus with the first two objectives is a futile exercise not encouraged by the Qur'ān.

It is, therefore, clear that all the modern researches and discoveries cannot be held to be the exact objective of the Qur'an, as suggested by modern scholars. Similarly, these discoveries cannot be held to be repugnant to the Holy Qur'ān, as observed by some conservative scholars. The fact is that these issues are not the subject matter of the Qur'an which is silent about them. If a reality is proved by experiments or observations, it cannot be taken as contradictory to the Qur'ān, and that which is not yet proved no effort should be made to impose it on the Qur'ān through fanciful interpretations.

'Ibād-ur-Raḥmān

عِبَادُ الرَّحْمٰن

Verses 63 - 77

وَعِبَادُ الرَّحْمٰنِ الَّذِيْنَ يَمْشُوْنَ عَلَى الْاَرْضِ هَوْنًا وَّاِذَا خَاطَبَهُمُ الْجٰهِلُوْنَ قَالُوْا سَلٰمًا ﴿٦٣﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ يَبِيْتُوْنَ لِرَبِّهِمْ سُجَّدًا وَّقِيَامًا ﴿٦٤﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ يَقُوْلُوْنَ رَبَّنَا اصْرِفْ عَنَّا عَذَابَ جَهَنَّمَ ۖ اِنَّ عَذَابَهَا كَانَ غَرَامًا ﴿٦٥﴾ اِنَّهَا سَاۤءَتْ مُسْتَقَرًّا وَّمُقَامًا ﴿٦٦﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ اِذَاۤ

اَنۡفَقُوۡا لَمۡ يُسۡرِفُوۡا وَلَمۡ يَقۡتُرُوۡا وَكَانَ بَيۡنَ ذٰلِكَ قَوَامًا ﴿٦٧﴾ وَ الَّذِيۡنَ
لَا يَدۡعُوۡنَ مَعَ اللّٰهِ اِلٰهًا اٰخَرَ وَلَا يَقۡتُلُوۡنَ النَّفۡسَ الَّتِىۡ حَرَّمَ اللّٰهُ اِلَّا
بِالۡحَقِّ وَلَا يَزۡنُوۡنَ ۚ وَمَنۡ يَّفۡعَلۡ ذٰلِكَ يَلۡقَ اَثَامًا ﴿٦٨﴾ يُّضٰعَفۡ لَهُ
الۡعَذَابُ يَوۡمَ الۡقِيٰمَةِ وَيَخۡلُدۡ فِيۡهٖ مُهَانًا ﴿٦٩﴾ اِلَّا مَنۡ تَابَ وَ اٰمَنَ
وَعَمِلَ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا فَاُولٰٓئِكَ يُبَدِّلُ اللّٰهُ سَيِّاٰتِهِمۡ حَسَنٰتٍ ؕ وَكَانَ
اللّٰهُ غَفُوۡرًا رَّحِيۡمًا ﴿٧٠﴾ وَمَنۡ تَابَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَاِنَّهٗ يَتُوۡبُ اِلَى
اللّٰهِ مَتَابًا ﴿٧١﴾ وَالَّذِيۡنَ لَا يَشۡهَدُوۡنَ الزُّوۡرَ ۙ وَاِذَا مَرُّوۡا بِاللَّغۡوِ مَرُّوۡا
كِرَامًا ﴿٧٢﴾ وَالَّذِيۡنَ اِذَا ذُكِّرُوۡا بِاٰيٰتِ رَبِّهِمۡ لَمۡ يَخِرُّوۡا عَلَيۡهَا صُمًّا
وَّعُمۡيَانًا ﴿٧٣﴾ وَالَّذِيۡنَ يَقُوۡلُوۡنَ رَبَّنَا هَبۡ لَنَا مِنۡ اَزۡوَاجِنَا وَذُرِّيّٰتِنَا
قُرَّةَ اَعۡيُنٍ وَّاجۡعَلۡنَا لِلۡمُتَّقِيۡنَ اِمَامًا ﴿٧٤﴾ اُولٰٓئِكَ يُجۡزَوۡنَ الۡغُرۡفَةَ بِمَا
صَبَرُوۡا وَيُلَقَّوۡنَ فِيۡهَا تَحِيَّةً وَّسَلٰمًا ﴿٧٥﴾ خٰلِدِيۡنَ فِيۡهَا ؕ حَسُنَتۡ
مُسۡتَقَرًّا وَّمُقَامًا ﴿٧٦﴾ قُلۡ مَا يَعۡبَؤُا بِكُمۡ رَبِّىۡ لَوۡلَا دُعَآؤُكُمۡ ۚ فَقَدۡ
كَذَّبۡتُمۡ فَسَوۡفَ يَكُوۡنُ لِزَامًا ﴿٧٧﴾

And the slaves of the Raḥmān are those who walk on the earth humbly and when the ignorant people speak to them, they reply peacefully, [63] **and those who pass the night prostrating and standing before their Lord,** [64] **and those who say, "Our Lord, avert from us the punishment of Jahannam; indeed, its punishment is a persisting affliction.** [65] **Indeed, evil it is as an abode and a place to dwell in** [66] **- and those who, when they spend, are neither extravagant nor miserly, and it (i.e. their spending) is moderate in between (the two extremes)** [67] **- and those who do not invoke any other god alongwith Allah, and do not kill a person whom Allah has given sanctity, except rightfully, nor do they fornicate; and whoever does it, shall face the recompense of his sin,** [68] **the punishment will be doubled for him and he will remain there disdained, for**

ever, [69] except the one who repents and believes and does good deeds, then Allah will change the bad deeds of such people into good ones, and Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [70] And whoever repents and does righteous deeds turns to Allah truly [71] - and those who do not witness falsehood, and when they pass by the absurd things, Pass by with dignity [72] and those who, when they are reminded of the verses of their Lord, do not fall at them as deaf and blind ones [73] - and those who say, "Our Lord, Give us, from our spouses and our children, coolness of eyes and make us heads of the God-fearing. [74] Such people will be rewarded with the high place - because they observed patience - and will be received therein with prayers of their eternal life and peace, [75] living in it (the Paradise) for ever. It is best as an abode and as a place to dwell in. [76]

Say (O Prophet), "My Lord will never care about you, if you will not invoke Him. Now since you belied (the truth), the punishment will be inseparable from you. [77]

Commentary

Upto this point Sūrah Al-Furqān has mostly discussed the proofs of the prophethood of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and answered various objections raised in this regard by disbelievers and pagans. While dealing with this subject Allah's wrath and punishment on those who deny His injunctions was also mentioned. Now, at the end of the Sūrah it refers to those special servants of His who firmly believe in the Holy Prophet's ﷺ prophethood and their beliefs, deeds and dealings are all in conformity with the will of Allah and His messenger and who follow the Sharī'ah.

The Holy Qur'ān has awarded the title of 'Ibād-ur-Raḥmān to such special servants of Allah Ta'ālā, which is indeed the highest honour. Although all creatures are governed by His will compulsorily, but here the voluntary worship by free will is alluded. That is to surrender completely before Allah and to make all deeds and desires conforming to His pleasure with one's own choice. In these last verses of the Sūrah the special servants of Allah are described whom He has Himself called as His servants to grant them unique honour. Their traits and characteristics are mentioned in the last verses until the end of the Sūrah. In between this

description repentance from infidelity and sins and its effects are also referred to.

By calling these pious persons as His own slaves, Allah Ta'ala has given to them a great title of honour. But by selecting the name Rahman (the All-Merciful) for Himself, out of all His Beautiful Names and attributes, the hint is perhaps given to the fact that these pious people, being the slaves of the All-Merciful, should reflect and demonstrate the quality of mercifulness through their general behavior.

Special traits of Allah Ta'ālā's favoured servants

In the verses under review thirteen traits and habits of the special and favoured servants of Allah Ta'ālā are mentioned. Included among them are correct beliefs, righteous acts, both physical and financial, to obey the command of Allah and His messenger, social dealings with other persons, Allah's fear in His worship, refraining from all sorts of sins and carrying along wife and children on the righteous path with oneself.

The first characteristic of such people is that they are "slaves" (عِبَاد) which is the plural of the word عَبْد (slave) . Here it means the slave who is the property of his Master. All his deeds and prerogatives together with his very life are dedicated to follow the command and will of the Master.

Only such a person can claim to be Allah's slave whose views and beliefs, thinking and desires, and deeds and actions are totally in line with the command and pleasure of his Rab (Master) and who keeps himself alert to carry out each and every command as soon as he is required to.

The second characteristic

يَمْشُوْنَ عَلَى الْاَرْضِ هَوْنًا (25:63) that is "they walk on the earth humbly". Here the word هَوْن (*hawn*) is used in the sense of humbleness, modesty and decorum - that is one does not walk with pride or arrogance. It does not mean that one should walk very slowly, because it is against Sunnah if it is without any need. According to the description given in the books of his biography, the Holy Prophet ﷺ used not to walk slowly. Instead his walk was on quicker side. It is recorded in a Ḥadīth كانّما الارض تطوى له that is "He ﷺ used to walk in a manner as if ground was shrinking for him". (Ibn Kathīr) It is for this reason that the righteous elders have described the slow walk, like that of a sick person, as a symbol of arrogance, a sham

habit, and something unwanted (مکروہ). Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ once saw a young man walking very slowly. He ﷺ asked him" Are you sick". He replied "No". Then Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ raised his stick on him and commanded "Always walk robustly". (Ibn Kathīr)

Ḥasan Al-Baṣrī رحمه الله تعالى has said while explaining this verse يَمْشُوْنَ عَلَى الْاَرْضِ هَوْنًا (25:63) that the organs of sincere believers are always humble before Allah, so much so that the one who is not familiar with them feels that they are sick or disabled, while they are fit and healthy. As a matter of fact it is the awe of God which has overtaken them and which has not struck the others. It is the fright of Hereafter which has refrained them from unnecessary mundane practices. Those who do not have faith in God and keep themselves engrossed in worldly affairs suffer only with disappointment (because they do not get the desired result in this world, and lose their share in the Hereafter as well). And those who regard sustenance as the only reward from Allah Ta'ālā and neglect practising morality have indeed very little understanding and for them there is great punishment. (Ibn Kathīr)

The third characteristic:

وَإِذَا خَاطَبَهُمُ الْجَاهِلُوْنَ قَالُوْا سَلَامًا (And when the ignorant people speak to them, they reply peacefully - 25:63): It should be kept in mind that the word "ignorant" in this verse refers to a person who acts like an ignorant person, notwithstanding that he might be a knowledgeable person. Also, the word سَلَام (peace) is not used here in its customary sense of greeting, but for any word causing peace. What is meant here is that in response to ignorance they keep composed and answer with calmness so that others are not offended and they do not commit a sin. The same explanation is put forward by Sayyidnā Mujāhid and Muqātil etc. The intended meaning is that they do not avenge from those who talk to them like ignorant people.

The Fourth Characteristic

وَالَّذِيْنَ يَبِيْتُوْنَ لِرَبِّهِمْ سُجَّدًا وَّقِيَامًا (and those who pass the night prostrating and standing before their Lord, - 25:64). Special mention of night worship is made here firstly, because this time being a time of rest, requires extra effort, and secondly because it rules out the possibility of showing one's worship to others. The idea is to express that they spend their day and night in submission before Allah during the day by teaching and

spreading religious tenets and struggling in the way of Allah and at night by praying before Him. The sayings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ have extolled the night prayers (تهجد). Tirmidhī has reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū 'Umāmah رضي الله عنه that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Remain steadfast to your night prayers as this has been the practice of all righteous people before your time, and this will bring you closer to Allah Ta'ālā and will expiate the evils and keep you away from sins". (Maẓharī)

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه has said that one who has offered two or more Rak'ats after 'Isha' prayers is also covered by the verse. (Maẓharī from Bayhaqī) and Sayyidnā 'Uthmān رضي الله عنه is reported to have observed that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said that one who has offered his 'Isha' prayer with congregation would be regarded as having worshipped half the night and the one who has offered Fajr prayer with congregation would be regarded as having offered the other half of the night in prayers. (Aḥmed and Muslim from Maẓharī)

The Fifth Characteristic

وَالَّذِيْنَ يَقُوْلُوْنَ رَبَّنَا اصْرِفْ عَنَّا عَذَابَ جَهَنَّمَ (and those who say, "Our Lord, avert from us the punishment of Jahannam - 25:65). It means that despite their constant prayers day and night, these favoured ones do not sit content, but are always fearful of God and keep in mind the Day of Judgement. To that end they keep alive the righteous deeds as well as supplications before Allah.

The Sixth Characteristic

وَالَّذِيْنَ اِذَآ اَنْفَقُوْا لَمْ يُسْرِفُوْا وَلَمْ يَقْتُرُوْا (and those who, when they spend, are neither extravagant nor miserly - 25:67). That is Allah's blessed servants are neither spendthrifts nor misers but they spend moderately. The words اِسْرَاف (*isrāf,* i.e. extravagance) and اِقتار (*iqtār,* i.e. miserliness) are used in the verse for the two opposite traits. *Isrāf* means to cross the limits. According to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, Mujāhid, Qatādah and Ibn Juraij رحمهم الله تعالى any spending on something sinful, however little it may be, is *isrāf*, while others say that even overspending in the rightful and allowed things which is wasteful would fall under the definition of *isrāf.* It is because any wasteful spending is by itself a sin and hence *isrāf*. Allah Ta'ālā has said اِنَّ الْمُبَذِّرِيْنَ كَانُوْٓا اِخْوَانَ الشَّيٰطِيْنِ (Surely squanderers are brothers of Satan - 17:27). In this way the latter explanation is also covered in the explanation given by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه that is any spending on

some sinful thing is إسْرَاف . (Mazharī)

إقتار (*iqtār*) means to spend with miserliness. In Islamic jurisprudence it means to be tight fisted where a believer is directed to spend. In case one does not spend at all at a place where he has been directed to spend, then that is the worst situation. This explanation is also given by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ, Qatādah etc. (Mazharī) Therefore, the message of the verse is that Allah's blessed servants are neither spendthrifts nor misers but in the matter of spending they take the middle path.

There is a saying of the Holy Prophet ﷺ:

مِنْ فِقْهِ الرَّجُلِ قَصْدُهٗ فِیْ مَعِيْشَتِهٖ

That is "It is the sagacity of man to adopt the middle path in spending" In another Saying quoted by Sayyidnā Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

مَا عال من اقتصد

That is "The person who sticks to the middle path and moderation in spending will never become a destitute and poor". (Imām Aḥmad - Ibn Kathīr)

The Seventh Characteristic

وَالَّذِيْنَ لَايَدْعُوْنَ مَعَ اللّٰهِ اِلٰهًا اٰخَرَ (And those who do not invoke any other god alongwith Allah - 25:68). The first six characteristics included the principles of obedience and now the characteristics of disobedience are described. Among these the very first one relates to belief, that is these blessed servants do not associate any one with Allah Ta'ālā in His worship. This point establishes that *shirk* (شِرْك) is the biggest sin of all.

The Eighth and Ninth characteristic

لَا يَقْتُلُوْنَ النَّفْسَ الَّتِیْ حَرَّمَ اللّٰهُ (do not kill a person whom Allah has given sanctity - 25:68). This is the description of the major and grave sins pertaining to one's deeds. It is mentioned that Allah's blessed servants do not go even near them; neither they indulge in adultery nor do they kill innocent people. After describing the beliefs and big sins of one's deeds the verse says وَمَنْ يَّفْعَلْ ذٰلِكَ يَلْقَ اَثَامًا (25:68) that is, whoever will involve himself in the above mentioned sins will get punished accordingly. Abū 'Ubaidah has described the meaning of the word اَثَام (*athām*) in this verse as punishment of sin. But some other commentators have said that اَثَام is

the name of a valley in the Hell which is full of severe and rigorous punishments, and they have quoted a few sayings in support of this contention. (Maẓharī)

The next verse mentions some details of the punishment to be faced by the aforementioned sinners. In the context of these verses it is certain that this chastisement will be exclusive to those who were infidels and also indulged in adultery or homicide. In the first place the phrase يُضٰعَفْ لَهُ الْعَذَابُ (The punishment will be doubled for him - 69) cannot be applied on Muslim sinners because they are told both in the Qur'ān and in the Sunnah that they will get only one punishment against a sin. Any increase in the intensity of chastisement will not be in the case of believers. Doubling of chastisement will be exclusive to infidels i.e. the first chastisement will be for infidelity and in case they have also committed sins the chastisement will be doubled. Secondly, it is also mentioned about this chastisement that it will be perpetual (وَيَخْلُدْ فِيْهِ مُهَانًا - 25:69) i.e. the punished will be placed there forever after being disgraced and condemned. On the other hand no believer will be condemned for ever in the Jahannam, no matter how big a sin he has committed. Muslims will be taken out of the Jahannam when they have completed their term there. In brief, those infidels who reject monotheism and also commit adultery and homicide will be awarded doubled chastisement which will increase in intensity and will last forever. In the next verse there is a solace for the above type of sinners in that if they seek Allah's forgiveness and act righteously, then Allah Ta'ālā is expected to change their sins into righteous deeds. In other words, once they have repented on their past sins and accepted Islam, their past sins will be taken away from their record and all that will be left in the record would be nothing but righteous deeds. It is because Allah Ta'ālā has promised that when an infidel accepts Islam, all sins he might have committed during infidelity are pardoned. Hence their previous record which was full of sins and evil deeds will be forgiven and scraped, and will be replaced with a fresh record of good and righteous deeds which they would perform after submitting to Islam. This explanation of conversion of sins into virtues is given by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Sa'īd Ibn Jubair and Mujāhid رحمهم الله تعالىٰ (Maẓharī).

Ibn Kathīr has given another explanation for conversion of sins into

virtues. He says that when they will remember all those sins which they had committed during the period of their infidelity, they will repent and seek Allah's forgiveness. This act of repentance will replace their sins into virtues. In support of this explanation some traditions have also been quoted.

وَمَنْ تَابَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَإِنَّهُ يَتُوبُ إِلَى اللَّهِ مَتَابًا (And whoever repents and does righteous deeds he turns to Allah truly - 25:71). On the face of it, it looks repetition of the same subject as described in the preceding verse i.e. إِلَّا مَنْ تَابَ وَ اٰمَنَ وَعَمِلَ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا . But Qurṭubī while quoting Qaffāl has explained that this repentance is different and separate from the repentance described in the previous verse. It is because the previous verse related to deniers of monotheism and infidels who indulged in adultery and homicide and then submitted to Islam. Hence their sins were converted into virtues. But here the second verse speaks about the repentance of the Muslim sinners. This may be explained by the fact that in the previous verse the repentance was combined with the word اٰمَنَ which means that they accepted Islam whereas in the second verse the word اٰمَنَ is not there, which means that in the second verse the repentance is related to those sinners who had already converted to Islam or that they were Muslims, but by negligence indulged in adultery and homicide. Hence this verse relates to those Muslims who commit sins, but then repent on their folly sincerely and seek Allah's forgiveness and then keep themselves away from sins and evil deeds. Such repentance by the Muslims will be regarded in order and accepted. It should be understood here that the word تَوْبَه (*taubah*) is used here in conditional clause as well as in principal clause. In the conditional clause it means verbal repentance, and in the principal clause it refers to the practical repentance in the sense of correcting one's deeds. Hence it means that if someone repented on his sins and proved his sincerity by not indulging in those sins again would be regarded as on the right path towards Allah Ta'ālā. As against this the one who repented on his past sins but continued indulging in those sins, is like the one who has not repented.

In brief if a Muslim indulged in a sin by negligence and then realized that he has done wrong and repented and after that kept himself away from the sin, his repentance will be accepted by Allah Ta'ālā, and hopefully he will get the same benefit as described in the first verse i.e.

his sins will be converted into virtues.

Some rules of *taubah* (repentance) from sins had been mentioned during the traits of Allah's favoured servants. The next verses are back to the original subject.

The tenth characteristic

وَالَّذِيْنَ لَا يَشْهَدُوْنَ الزُّوْرَ (And those who do not witness falsehood - 25:72). That is they do not participate in the meetings where lie and falsehood has currency. The biggest falsehood is the *kufr* (disbelief) and *shirk,* and the next in order comes the common lie and acts of sin. In other words the blessed and favoured servants of Allah avoid attending such meetings. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ has said that these meetings or assemblies refer to infidels festivals, carnivals and field days; while Sayyidnā Mujāhid and Muḥammad Ibn Ḥanīfah are of the view that they relate to music concerts. According to 'Amr Ibn Qaiṣ they refer to vulgar and cheap dance parties Zuhrī and Imām Mālik term them as liquor drinking parties (Ibn Kathīr). In any case there is no contradiction in all these explanations because all such gatherings come under the definition of assembly of falsehood. The righteous people should avoid such gathering, as even an intentional look at them is tantamount to participation in them. (Maẓharī)

Some commentators have taken the sentence يَشْهَدُوْنَ الزُّوْرَ to mean that they do not give false evidence, which is one of the possible meaning of the word يَشْهَدُوْنَ (The English translation of the sentence given in the text as "do not witness falsehood" has a slight indication to this interpretation also). It is a well known fact that both Holy Qur'ān and Sunnah declare the false evidence as a great sin and an enormous evil. Bukhārī and Muslim have recorded Sayyidnā 'Abbās ؓ quoting that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that false evidence is the gravest of the major sins.

Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ said that if the offence of giving false evidence is proved against someone, he should be flogged with forty stripes, and then his face be painted black and taken round the market place, and after that put in jail for a long time. (Maẓharī)

The Eleventh Characteristic

وَاِذَا مَرُّوْا بِاللَّغْوِ مَرُّوْا كِرَامًا (and when they pass by the absurd things, Pass by with dignity - 72). That is if by chance they happen to pass by immoral gatherings, they walk away with dignity and grace. In other words as

they do not attend such gatherings intentionally, if they happen to pass by them sometimes by chance they just walk away from there in a dignified manner. That is despite their belief that their evil acts are hateful, they do not take pride or regard themselves superior for not indulging in them. Once Sayyidnā Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ happened to pass by an absurd and dissolute gathering, so he did not stop there but simply walked away. When the Holy Prophet ﷺ learnt about this incidence he remarked "Ibn Mas'ūd has become كريم (dignified)" and then recited this verse wherein it is enjoined to walk away from dissolute gatherings with dignity. (Ibn Kathīr)

The Twelveth Characteristic

وَالَّذِيْنَ اِذَا ذُكِّرُوْا بِاٰيٰتِ رَبِّهِمْ لَمْ يَخِرُّوْا عَلَيْهَا صُمًّا وَّعُمْيَانًا

And those who, when they are reminded of the verses of their Lord, do not fall at them as deaf and blind ones - 25:73

That is when the blessed servants of Allah are reminded of His verses and the Hereafter, they do not throw themselves upon them as if they were blind and dumb, but pay heed to them like sober and sensible persons, and act upon them. They do not behave like the ignorants or negligent persons as if they have not seen or listened i.e. not understood the message. Two things are mentioned in this verse. One, to fall at Divine revelation i.e. to listen them with full attention. This is a virtuous and commendable act. Second, to fall at the verses like deaf and dumb people which means to listen to the message but without any purpose or commitment and act in a manner that the real message has not been registered, and even if they follow the Qur'ānic message it is not in line with the practices of the companions of the Prophet ﷺ or their followers. Such people follow their own whims based on hearsay, which is as bad as not following the Divine message.

Self-study of religious precepts is not enough but they need to be acted upon in the light of interpretation given by classic scholars

As it is condemned in the verses under study that Divine message is ignored. It is also pointed out with equal emphasis that it is listened and acted upon without due diligence, that is without comprehending the intent and spirit of the precept and according to one's own sweet will. Ibn Kathīr has reported on the authority of Ibn 'Aun that he inquired from

Hadrat Sha'bī رحمه الله تعالیٰ that if he comes across a people who are in the state of *sajdah* (prostration), whether it is correct for him to join them in *sajdah*. Sha'bī رحمه الله تعالیٰ replied in the negative explaining that it would not be correct for him to join in their prostration unless he finds out the purpose of that act. It is not proper for a believer to join in any action without knowing the purport of that act, rather he should seek to know the purpose behind an act before taking it up for himself. When one has not listened the verse of prostration, nor does he know the reason for their prostration it is not allowed for him to go in prostration.

It is a matter of great satisfaction that there is a new tendency among the younger generation and modern educated people to study the Qur'ān but to achieve this purpose they often deem it enough to study the Qur'ān and try to understand it through the translations of the Qur'ān on their own. This practice being against the correct principles of learning something, often makes them fall into misconceptions. It is a well-settled fact that education and knowledge cannot be imparted only through books unless guidance of a teacher is available for explaining the intricacies of the subject which normally go unnoticed by an ordinary reader. It is rather strange why people feel that this basic rule does not apply to Qur'ān and its related subjects and try to indulge in interpreting the Holy Book according to their own wishes. This type of study and interpreting Qur'ān on one's own without the help and guidance of a well qualified teacher also falls under the purview of this verse i.e. "they do not throw themselves upon as if they were blind and dumb". May Allah lead us to the right path.

The Thirteenth Characteristic

وَالَّذِيْنَ يَقُوْلُوْنَ رَبَّنَا هَبْ لَنَا مِنْ اَزْوَاجِنَا وَذُرِّيّٰتِنَا قُرَّةَ اَعْيُنٍ وَّاجْعَلْنَا لِلْمُتَّقِيْنَ اِمَامًا

And those who say, "Our Lord, Give us, from our spouses and our children, coolness of eyes and make us heads of the God-fearing. (25:74)

This verse contains a prayer for one's spouses and children. According to the explanation put forward by Ḥasan al-Baṣrī رحمه الله تعالیٰ one can draw solace from his dear ones (wife and children) if they submit to the way of Allah. That is the true bliss for a man, and if the good health and well being of the wife and children is also added to this, it is also in order.

What is alluded here is that the righteous servants of God do not care about correcting themselves only, but also take care of the virtuous actions of their children and spouse, and keep trying for their improvement, and it is a part of their efforts that they pray Allah to make them take the right path. The second sentence of this verse says وَاجْعَلْنَا لِلْمُتَّقِيْنَ اِمَامًا (and make us heads of the God-fearing - 25:74) Apparently this is a prayer for getting a high status and a source of pride, which is forbidden by other injunctions of the Holy Qur'ān. The Qur'ān says at another place" تِلْكَ الدَّارُ الْاٰخِرَةُ نَجْعَلُهَا لِلَّذِيْنَ لَا يُرِيْدُوْنَ عُلُوًّا فِى الْاَرْضِ وَلَا فَسَادًا that is "As for that ultimate Abode (the Hereafter), We assign it to those who intend neither haughtiness on earth nor mischief (28:83). And the (best) end is for the God-fearing - 28:83". Hence, some scholars have commented about this sentence of the verse that everyone is the head or Imām of his family. Thus, if his family members become God fearing, he will automatically be their head or Imām. Therefore, the final outcome is that prayer was not meant for personal aggrandizement, but for the family members to follow the right path. Ibrāhīm Nakha'ī رحمه الله تعالى has also explained about this verse that the prayer contained in it is not meant for a high position or authority for oneself but to request the grant of such a disposition that people try to emulate it in religious deeds and actions, and that it be of benefit to others and thus might fetch the praying people some of its reward. And Sayyidnā Makḥūl Shāmi رحمه الله تعالى has elucidated that the purpose of the prayer is to implore an exalted status of God consciousness that even the God fearing people may also draw inspiration to follow that. Qurṭubī has narrated both these explanations and then commented that the net outcome of both is the same, that the desire for an elated position or high office in religious affairs for attaining reward in the Hereafter is not improper; rather it is allowed. On the other hand in verse لَايُرِيْدُوْنَ عُلُوًّا (who intend neither haughtiness - 28:83) the desire and search for worldly exaltation and authority has been condemned. Here the description about the main traits of 'Ibād-ur-Raḥmān or the perfect believers has been completed. Now their rewards and degrees of exaltation in the Hereafter are related.

اُولٰٓئِكَ يُجْزَوْنَ الْغُرْفَةَ (Such people will be rewarded with the high place - 75) The literal meaning of غُرْفَه (*ghrfah*) is upper story. The righteous people having special closeness to Allah will be given high chambers in Paradise

which will look like stars to common people. (al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Maẓharī)

It is narrated in Musnād of Aḥmad, Bayhaqī, Tirmidhī and Ḥākim on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Mālik al-Ash'arī that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said "In Paradise there will be such upper Houses that their interior could be seen from outside and the exterior from inside". Ṣaḥābah inquired from him as to who will live in them. Then he ﷺ replied "Those who keep their speech clean and soft, greet every Muslim, feed the poor, and offer Tahajjud prayers at night when others are sleeping." (Maẓharī)

وَيُلَقَّوْنَ فِيهَا تَحِيَّةً وَّسَلٰمًا (And will be received therein with prayers of their eternal life and peace - 25:75). That is beside other boons of Paradise they will have the honour that angels will greet and felicitate them.

Upto this point the traits and deeds of the sincere believers and their rewards and recompense were described. Then in the last verse the infidels and disbelievers have been warned again of the chastisement on which the Sūrah is concluded.

قُلْ مَا يَعْبَؤُا بِكُمْ رَبِّي لَوْلَا دُعَآؤُكُمْ (Say (O Prophet) My Lord will never care about you, if you will not invoke Him - 25:77). Different versions are given in the interpretation of this verse, but the one given in the text above is the simplest and straight forward; that is you would have no value or importance before God if you do not call Him and pray to Him. It is because the very purpose of man's creation is that he should worship Allah as mentioned in the verse وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوْنِ (I have not created Jinn and mankind except to worship Me - 51:56). After declaring the principle that man has no value and importance without worship, the infidels and disbelievers are addressed: فَقَدْ كَذَّبْتُمْ that is "since you have belied (the truth)" you are of no consequence before Him." فَسَوْفَ يَكُوْنُ لِزَامًا (the punishment will be inseparable from you - 77). That is now this rejection and disbelief have become an integral part of your being and will keep clinging to you until you are thrown in the Fire of Hell forever.

Alḥamdulillāh

The Commentary on

Sūrah Al-Furqān

Ends here.

Sūrah Ash-Shu'arā'

(The Poets)

Sūrah Ash-Shu'arā' was revealed in Makkah and it has 227 Verses and 11 sections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 9

طٰسٓمّٓ ﴿١﴾ تِلْكَ اٰيٰتُ الْكِتٰبِ الْمُبِيْنِ ﴿٢﴾ لَعَلَّكَ بَاخِعٌ نَّفْسَكَ اَلَّا يَكُوْنُوْا مُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿٣﴾ اِنْ نَّشَاْ نُنَزِّلْ عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ اٰيَةً فَظَلَّتْ اَعْنَاقُهُمْ لَهَا خٰضِعِيْنَ ﴿٤﴾ وَمَا يَاْتِيْهِمْ مِّنْ ذِكْرٍ مِّنَ الرَّحْمٰنِ مُحْدَثٍ اِلَّا كَانُوْا عَنْهُ مُعْرِضِيْنَ ﴿٥﴾ فَقَدْ كَذَّبُوْا فَسَيَاْتِيْهِمْ اَنْبٰٓؤُا مَا كَانُوْا بِهٖ يَسْتَهْزِءُوْنَ ﴿٦﴾ اَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا اِلَى الْاَرْضِ كَمْ اَنْۢبَتْنَا فِيْهَا مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجٍ كَرِيْمٍ ﴿٧﴾ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيَةً ؕ وَمَا كَانَ اَكْثَرُهُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿٨﴾ وَاِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الرَّحِيْمُ ﴿٩﴾

Ṭā sīn mīm. [1] These are the verses of the manifest Book. [2] Seemingly you are going to let yourself collapse in grief because they do not believe. [3] If We so will, We can send down to them a sign from the sky before which their necks will stay bent in submission. [4] And there comes to them no new message from the Raḥmān, but they become averse to it. [5] Thus they rejected (the Truth); so soon will come to them the real descriptions of what they used to ridicule. [6] Have they not looked at the earth, how many of the noble pairs (of vegetation) We have caused to grow therein? [7] Surely, in this there is a sign, and most of them are not to

believe [8] **And surely your Lord is the Mighty, the Merciful.** [9]

Commentary

لَعَلَّكَ بَاخِعٌ نَّفْسَكَ (Seemingly you are going to let yourself collapse in grief - 26:3). The word باخع (*bākhi'*)is derived from بخع (*bakh'*)which means to reach up to Bikhā', an artery of the neck, while slaughtering. In this verse *bāki'* is used in the sense of putting oneself into trouble and toil. 'Allāmah 'Askarī has said, 'Although at such places the sentence appears to be informative but in fact it means to prohibit or prevent'. What it conveys is that, 'O Messenger, do not be so despondent because of your people's disbelief and rejection of Islam that you cause yourself to collapse'. One learns from this verse that even if it is apparent that a disbeliever would not convert to Islam, still it is not right to stop preaching to him. The second thing one learns is that the efforts one makes for a certain objective must be balanced and moderate, and if someone is adamant not to be guided to the right path, one should not be over-grieved.

إِنْ نَّشَأْ نُنَزِّلْ عَلَيْهِم مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ آيَةً فَظَلَّتْ أَعْنَاقُهُمْ لَهَا خَاضِعِينَ

If We so will, We can send down to them a sign from the sky before which their necks will stay bent in submission. - 26:4

Allamāh Zamakhsharī has explained that the real intent of the text is to say that the disbelievers themselves will stay in submission, but the act of submission is attributed in the verse to their "necks", so that the initial object of submission is pinpointed, because yielding or bowing in humility initially appears on the neck. The substance of the message of this verse is that Allah Ta'ālā also has full authority and control to evince any sign of His Oneness and Omnipotence which brings forth the religious injunctions and the Divine Truth in such a self-evident manner that no one would have the ability to reject it. But the wisdom demands that these injunctions and the understanding of God are not made self-evident but remain visionary, so that they are dependent on deliberations and pondering. This pondering and deliberation is actually the test of man on which the reward and punishment is adjudged. Acceptance of self-evident things is a natural and involuntary phenomenon which lacks the quality of deliberate obedience. (Qurṭubī)

زَوْجٍ كَرِيْمٍ (noble pair - 26:7). The word زَوْج (*zawj*) literally means a pair. That is why man and woman, and male and female are called *Zawj*. Many species of trees have male and female among them. On this basis they can also be called Zawj (زَوْج). Sometimes the word *Zawj* is also used for a special kind. On the basis of this meaning all species of trees can be called *Zawj*. The meaning of Karīm is a nice and favourite thing.

Verses 10 - 33

وَاِذْ نَادٰى رَبُّكَ مُوْسٰٓى اَنِ ائْتِ الْقَوْمَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿١٠﴾ قَوْمَ فِرْعَوْنَ ۭ اَلَا يَتَّقُوْنَ ﴿١١﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ اِنِّيْٓ اَخَافُ اَنْ يُّكَذِّبُوْنِ ﴿١٢﴾ وَيَضِيْقُ صَدْرِيْ وَلَا يَنْطَلِقُ لِسَانِيْ فَاَرْسِلْ اِلٰى هٰرُوْنَ ﴿١٣﴾ وَلَهُمْ عَلَيَّ ذَنْبٌ فَاَخَافُ اَنْ يَّقْتُلُوْنِ ﴿١٤﴾ قَالَ كَلَّا ۚ فَاذْهَبَا بِاٰيٰتِنَآ اِنَّا مَعَكُمْ مُّسْتَمِعُوْنَ ﴿١٥﴾ فَاْتِيَا فِرْعَوْنَ فَقُوْلَآ اِنَّا رَسُوْلُ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿١٦﴾ اَنْ اَرْسِلْ مَعَنَا بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ ﴿١٧﴾ قَالَ اَلَمْ نُرَبِّكَ فِيْنَا وَلِيْدًا وَّلَبِثْتَ فِيْنَا مِنْ عُمُرِكَ سِنِيْنَ ﴿١٨﴾ وَفَعَلْتَ فَعْلَتَكَ الَّتِيْ فَعَلْتَ وَاَنْتَ مِنَ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿١٩﴾ قَالَ فَعَلْتُهَآ اِذًا وَّاَنَا مِنَ الضَّآلِّيْنَ ﴿٢٠﴾ فَفَرَرْتُ مِنْكُمْ لَمَّا خِفْتُكُمْ فَوَهَبَ لِيْ رَبِّيْ حُكْمًا وَّجَعَلَنِيْ مِنَ الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ ﴿٢١﴾ وَتِلْكَ نِعْمَةٌ تَمُنُّهَا عَلَيَّ اَنْ عَبَّدْتَّ بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ ﴿٢٢﴾ قَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ وَمَا رَبُّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٢٣﴾ قَالَ رَبُّ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا ۭ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّوْقِنِيْنَ ﴿٢٤﴾ قَالَ لِمَنْ حَوْلَهٗٓ اَلَا تَسْتَمِعُوْنَ ﴿٢٥﴾ قَالَ رَبُّكُمْ وَرَبُّ اٰبَآئِكُمُ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ ﴿٢٦﴾ قَالَ اِنَّ رَسُوْلَكُمُ الَّذِيْٓ اُرْسِلَ اِلَيْكُمْ لَمَجْنُوْنٌ ﴿٢٧﴾ قَالَ رَبُّ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا ۭ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿٢٨﴾ قَالَ لَئِنِ اتَّخَذْتَ اِلٰهًا غَيْرِيْ لَاَجْعَلَنَّكَ مِنَ الْمَسْجُوْنِيْنَ ﴿٢٩﴾ قَالَ اَوَلَوْ جِئْتُكَ بِشَيْءٍ مُّبِيْنٍ

﴿٣٠﴾ قَالَ فَأْتِ بِهٖٓ إِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿٣١﴾ فَأَلْقٰى عَصَاهُ فَإِذَا
هِيَ ثُعْبَانٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿٣٢﴾ وَّنَزَعَ يَدَهٗ فَإِذَا هِيَ بَيْضَآءُ لِلنّٰظِرِيْنَ ﴿٣٣﴾

And (remember) when your Lord called Mūsā saying, "Go to the transgressing people, [10] the people of Fir'aun (the Pharaoh). Do they not fear Allah?" [11] He (Mūsā) said, "My Lord, I fear they will belie me. [12] And my heart gets straitened and my tongue is not fluent; so send for Hārūn. [13] And they have (made) a charge of offence against me and I fear they will kill me;" [14] He (Allah) said, "Never! So go, both of you, with Our signs. We are with you, listening. [15] So, the two of you reach the Fir'aun and say, 'We both are messengers of the Lord of all the worlds, [16] (sent with the message) that you must send the children of Isrā'īl with us". [17]

He (the Pharaoh) said, "Did we not nourish you among us as a child? And you remained among us for years, [18] and you did that deed of yours which you did while you were among the ungrateful. [19] He said, "I did that at that time when I was one of the unaware people. [20] Then I fled from you when I feared you. Thereafter my Lord granted wisdom to me and made me among the messengers. [21] And this is the favor with which you are obliging me - that you have enslaved the children of Isrā'īl." [22] The Pharaoh said, "And what is the Lord of the worlds?" [23] He (Mūsā) said, "Lord of the heavens and the earth and whatever there is between them, if you are to believe" [24] He (the Pharaoh) said to those around him, "Are you not hearing?" [25] He (Mūsā) said, "Your Lord and the Lord of your early forefathers" [26] He (the Pharaoh) said, "Your messenger who is sent to you is a mad man indeed." [27] He (Mūsā) said, "Lord of the East and the West and whatever there is between them, if you are to understand" [28] He (the Pharaoh) said, "If you take to a God other than me, I will certainly put you among those imprisoned." [29] He (Mūsā) said "Will you (do this) even if I bring to you something evident?" [30] He said, "Then bring it, if you are one of the truthful." [31] So, he threw down his staff, and in no time it was a serpent, clearly visible, [32] and he drew out his hand, and right then it was a white light to the onlookers. [33]

Commentary

Request for favourable conditions for obedience is not tantamount to making excuses

قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّيٓ أَخَافُ أَنْ يُّكَذِّبُوْنِ ﴿١٢﴾ وَيَضِيْقُ صَدْرِىْ وَلَا يَنْطَلِقُ لِسَانِىْ فَأَرْسِلْ إِلٰى هٰرُوْنَ ﴿١٣﴾ وَلَهُمْ عَلَيَّ ذَنْبٌ فَأَخَافُ أَنْ يَّقْتُلُوْنِ ﴿١٤﴾

He (Mūsā) said, "My Lord, I fear they will belie me. [12] And my heart gets straitened and my tongue is not fluent; so send for Harun. [13] And they have a charge of offence against me and I fear they will kill me;" [14]

This verse indicates that Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام requested Allah to provide him with some resources to help them in carrying out his mission. It leads to the principle that so far as the objective is to obey Allah's command, praying for some helping resources cannot be regarded as seeking ruses and excuses to escape from the required act. The request of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was only to facilitate the implementation of Allah's command which is quite lawful.

The meaning of the word dalal used for Sayyidnā Mūsā

قَالَ فَعَلْتُهَآ إِذًا وَّأَنَا مِنَ الضَّآلِّيْنَ

He said, "I did that at that time when I was one of the unaware people. (26:20)

This was the answer of Mūsā عليه السلام to the objection of the Pharaoh that Mūsā عليه السلام had killed an Egyptian. The gist of the answer is that it was not a deliberate murder; in fact the Egyptian was killed by mistake, because Mūsā عليه السلام had only struck him with a blow which, by accident, caused his death. The word used, by the present verse, for this mistake is derived from ضلال (*ḍalāl*) which is commonly used for intentional error. But the word is also used for 'unawareness' (which includes unintentional mistakes) It is this meaning that is intended here. This interpretation is supported by Qatādah and Ibn Zaid رحمهم الله تعالى .

It is impossible for man to comprehend fully the entity and reality of the magnificence of Allah Ta'ālā

قَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ وَمَا رَبُّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ

Pharaoh said, "And what is the Lord of the worlds?" (26:23)

This verse proves that it is not possible to know the exact reality of Allah's Being. Since the Pharaoh had asked a question regarding Allah Ta'ālā's intrinsic-self and reality, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام instead of giving a direct answer to his query, described the attributes of Allah Ta'ālā in reply. He hinted in his reply that it is not possible for a man to perceive the essence and reality of Allah Ta'ālā. Hence, it was a futile question. (Rūḥ)

اَنْ اَرْسِلْ مَعَنَا بَنِیْٓ اِسْرَآءِ یْلَ

That you must send the children of Isra'īl with us". (26:17)

Banī Isrā'il were the residents of Syria. They wanted to go back to their land but the Pharaoh would not let them. This way four hundred years had passed and they were living in his bondage like slaves. At that time they were six hundred and thirty thousand in number. Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام when presented the message of Truth to the Pharaoh, he also asked him to stop all the cruelties he had perpetrated over Banī Isrā'il and to let them go to their homeland. (Qurṭubī)

An example of prophetic dialectic

Discussion and debate among two different persons or group of people having divergent views has been in vogue since the time immemorial. Such debates are called مُناظَرہ *munāẓarah* (dialectics) in conventional terms. But such dialectics have been reduced to a game of win or lose. People regard the outcome of dialectics should be to come out winner, even though one knows that he is on the wrong. Despite the knowledge of being on the wrong one must keep on pressing his point of view, and use the intelligence to throw in all sorts of arguments to prove his point as correct. Similarly, even if the opponents point is correct, it must be rejected with full force. In contrast to this attitude Islam has given a middle of the road stance, and set out its rules and regulations, thus making it a useful tool for preaching and reform.

A simple example of this can be seen in the above verses. When Sayyidnā Mūsā and Hārūn علیهم السلام conveyed the invitation of Truth to the mighty the Pharaoh, who was claimant of being god, in his court, he began the opposing conversation with two questions relating to the person of Mūsā's عليه السلام . When a sharp opponent is not properly equipped with the

correct arguments, he normally tries to switch the conversation towards the person of the addressee in order to find faults with him. This tactic is employed to embarrass the opponent and to make him look small before the audience. Hence, the Pharaoh also came out with two such points. First, 'We have brought you up in our household and have done so many favours to you. So, how can you have the face to speak before us.' Second, 'You have killed an Egyptian for no fault of his. This is not only cruelty but also ingratitude toward those among whom you are raised to your manhood. You have killed one from among us.' Now see the prophetic reply of Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ and how he handled the two subjects. In the first place he changed the sequence of the topics in that he brought up the case of the Egyptian first which the Pharaoh had raised latter. The wisdom in changing the sequence appears to be that in the Egyptian's case there was a weakness on his part, but he preferred to take that first, unlike present day tactics where one tries to avoid a direct reply to confuse the issue. But he, being the messenger of Allah, had nothing to hide, so while replying he accepted his weakness, and did not care at all what people in the opposition would think on acceptance of his mistake, and hence, might take it as acceptance of defeat. This course of action was totally contrary to present day tactics when people try to mix up their weakness in a manner that it is camouflaged.

Although Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ had accepted his fault while replying to the Pharaoh that it was his misjudgment when he hit the Egyptian and as a result he died, yet he made it very clear that he did not intend to kill him. His intention was right which unfortunately resulted in the wrong. The purpose of his hitting the Egyptian was to prevent him from harming the Isrā'īlī but in the process he died, which was not the intention. This act of his, despite being wrong, does not conflict with his claim to be a prophet or contradicts its veracity. So, he said 'that he realized his mistake and left the city for the fear of being caught. Then Allah was kind to him and honoured him with the prophethood.

Now the point to ponder is that at that time Mūsā ﷺ could have adopted the simple and straightforward course and have claimed that the Egyptian deserved death, and would have charged him with such accusations for which his killing was the right action. There was no one present at the time of the incident, so no one could have contradicted him.

Anyone else in his place would have certainly taken this course of action. But here it was the resolute messenger of Allah who was the truth personified and who regarded expression of truth and veracity and the declaration of fact as his victory. He accepted his guilt in the packed court of the foe and in doing that also countered any possibility of doubt on his prophethood.

After that he turned to the second point regarding his upbringing in the Pharaoh's house, upon which the Pharaoh had stressed to remind his favour to him. Mūsā عليه السلام asked him to ponder over his position as, being an Israelite, he had no occasion to reach the royal place of the Pharaoh. It was the cruelty of the Pharaoh that compelled the mother of Musa عليه السلام to throw her baby into the river, then it was by chance that the Pharaoh picked him up, and in reality it was a wise arrangement made by Allah, that the child for the fear of whom the Pharaoh had slaughtered thousands of children, was caused to be nourished by the same the Pharaoh. But in any case, the real cause of his upbringing in the home of the Pharaoh was the cruelty exercised by him against the Israelites. Musa عليه السلام pointing out to this fact, invited the Pharaoh to ponder whether this was really a favour with which he was obliging him. It is obvious that this prophetic address left a positive and convincing impression on the minds of people present there, and they were convinced that Mūsā عليه السلام was not the sort of person who would make excuses, and that he would say nothing but the truth. After that when they saw the miracles, their view was confirmed further. At that time although the Pharaoh did not admit the truth, yet he was so overwhelmed and apprehensive that just two persons without having the support of a third, would turn him and his people out of their land and country.

This is what is known as God gifted awe of truth, veracity and reality. The contentions and dialectics of Allah's messengers are also full of truth, veracity and wishing well for the addressee. That is how they become so appealing to people and convince the biggest defiant.

Verses 34 - 51

قَالَ لِلْمَلَاِ حَوْلَهٗٓ اِنَّ هٰذَا لَسٰحِرٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿۳۴﴾ يُّرِيْدُ اَنْ يُّخْرِجَكُمْ مِّنْ

اَرْضِكُمْ بِسِحْرِهٖ ۖ فَمَاذَا تَاْمُرُوْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾ قَالُوْٓا اَرْجِهْ وَاَخَاهُ وَابْعَثْ فِى الْمَدَآئِنِ حٰشِرِيْنَ ﴿٣٦﴾ يَاْتُوْكَ بِكُلِّ سَحَّارٍ عَلِيْمٍ ﴿٣٧﴾ فَجُمِعَ السَّحَرَةُ لِمِيْقَاتِ يَوْمٍ مَّعْلُوْمٍ ﴿٣٨﴾ وَّقِيْلَ لِلنَّاسِ هَلْ اَنْتُمْ مُّجْتَمِعُوْنَ ﴿٣٩﴾ لَعَلَّنَا نَتَّبِعُ السَّحَرَةَ اِنْ كَانُوْا هُمُ الْغٰلِبِيْنَ ﴿٤٠﴾ فَلَمَّا جَآءَ السَّحَرَةُ قَالُوْا لِفِرْعَوْنَ اَئِنَّ لَنَا لَاَجْرًا اِنْ كُنَّا نَحْنُ الْغٰلِبِيْنَ ﴿٤١﴾ قَالَ نَعَمْ وَاِنَّكُمْ اِذًا لَّمِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِيْنَ ﴿٤٢﴾ قَالَ لَهُمْ مُّوْسٰٓى اَلْقُوْا مَآ اَنْتُمْ مُّلْقُوْنَ ﴿٤٣﴾ فَاَلْقَوْا حِبَالَهُمْ وَعِصِيَّهُمْ وَقَالُوْا بِعِزَّةِ فِرْعَوْنَ اِنَّا لَنَحْنُ الْغٰلِبُوْنَ ﴿٤٤﴾ فَاَلْقٰى مُوْسٰى عَصَاهُ فَاِذَا هِىَ تَلْقَفُ مَا يَاْفِكُوْنَ ﴿٤٥﴾ فَاُلْقِىَ السَّحَرَةُ سٰجِدِيْنَ ﴿٤٦﴾ قَالُوْٓا اٰمَنَّا بِرَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٤٧﴾ رَبِّ مُوْسٰى وَهٰرُوْنَ ﴿٤٨﴾ قَالَ اٰمَنْتُمْ لَهٗ قَبْلَ اَنْ اٰذَنَ لَكُمْ ۚ اِنَّهٗ لَكَبِيْرُكُمُ الَّذِىْ عَلَّمَكُمُ السِّحْرَ ۚ فَلَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ۚ لَاُقَطِّعَنَّ اَيْدِيَكُمْ وَاَرْجُلَكُمْ مِّنْ خِلَافٍ وَّلَاُوصَلِّبَنَّكُمْ اَجْمَعِيْنَ ﴿٤٩﴾ قَالُوْا لَاضَيْرَ ۡ اِنَّآ اِلٰى رَبِّنَا مُنْقَلِبُوْنَ ﴿٥٠﴾ اِنَّا نَطْمَعُ اَنْ يَّغْفِرَلَنَا رَبُّنَا خَطٰيٰنَآ اَنْ كُنَّآ اَوَّلَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿٥١﴾

He (the Pharaoh) said to the chiefs around him "This man is certainly an expert sorcerer". [34] **He wants to expel you from your land with his sorcery. So what do you suggest?"** [35] **They said, "Leave him and his brother alone for a while and send to the cities men to collect,** [36] **so that they bring to you every highly expert sorcerer."** [37]

So the sorcerers were assembled for the appointed time of a known day, [38] **and it was said to the people, "Would you assemble,** [39] **so that we may follow the sorcerers if they are victorious?"** [40] **So, when the sorcerers came, they said to the Pharaoh, "Will there really be a reward for us, if we are the victorious?"** [41] **He said, "Yes, and of course, you will then be among the**

closer ones." [42]

Mūsā said to them, "Throw you down what you are to throw." [43] **So they threw down their ropes and their staffs and said, "By the majesty of the Pharaoh we are going to Prevail definitely."** [44] **Then Mūsā threw down his staff, and in no time it started swallowing the falsehood they invented.** [45] **So the sorcerers were made (by the truth they saw) to fall down in prostration.** [46] **They said, "We have believed in the Lord of the worlds,** [47] **the Lord of Mūsā and Hārūn."** [48]

He (the Pharaoh) said, "you believed in him before I permit you. Surely, he (Mūsā) is the chief of you all who has taught you sorcery. So you will soon know (your fate). I will cut off your hands and feet from different sides and will crucify you all together. [49] **They said, "There is no harm. We are to return to our Lord.** [50] **We really hope that our Lord will forgive us our faults, as we are the first of the believers."** [51]

Commentary.

اَلْقُوْا مَآ اَنْتُمْ مُّلْقُوْنَ

Mūsā said to them, "Throw you down what you are to throw." (26:43)

Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ said to the magicians 'You show the magic you wish to show'. With a cursory look one might be inclined to think that Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ ordered them to perform their magic. But with a little deep thinking it becomes clear that actually it was not an order from Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ to show magic, but the real intention was to demonstrate the fallacy of magic. This demonstration was not possible without the magic shown by them. Therefore, he asked them to show their tricks or magic. It is exactly like a *zindīq* (an extreme heretic)is asked to put forward his arguments, so that they may be countered. It is obvious that such an invitation cannot be treated as an acceptance of infidelity.

بِعِزَّةِ فِرْعَوْنَ (By the majesty of the Pharaoh - 26:44). This was an expression of pledge from the magicians, which was in vogue in the olden times. It is unfortunate that similar oaths have now become common

among the Muslims as well, which are even more evil and vile, for instance, 'by the king,' 'by the head of yours,' 'by the beard of yours,' 'by the grave of your father' etc. It is not permitted to make an oath of this nature under the Islamic law (because swearing in the name of someone other than Allah is a sin). Rather, it will not be wrong to say that swearing a true oath in this way is as much sinful as swearing a false oath in the name of Allah. (Rūḥ)

قَالُوْا لَاضَيْرَ اِنَّآ اِلٰى رَبِّنَا مُنْقَلِبُوْنَ

They said, "There is no harm. We are to return to our Lord. (26:50)

When the Pharaoh threatened the magicians to kill them, and to cut their limbs and to crucify them, the magicians replied rather indifferently, the gist of their reply was, 'You do whatever you can. We shall lose nothing. Even if we are killed we will go back to our Lord, where there is nothing but comfort'.

It is worth noting here that the magicians who had involved all their lives practicing the sinful sorcery and who believed in the Pharaoh's claim to be a god, rather, used to worship him, pronounced faith in Allah before that tyrant and despotic king and the entire nation. This was in itself something most astonishing and courageous, but it was not just the pronouncement of faith in Allah, but a demonstration of such deep devotion as if they could see the Dooms Day and the Hereafter before their eyes. The blessings and bounties of the Hereafter were within their sight, for which they raised themselves over and above any punishment or torment of this world, and said فَاقْضِ مَآ اَنْتَ قَاضٍ that is ' You do whatever you are to do (20:72). We are not going back from our faith'. This in fact was also a miracle of Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ, which was no less than the miracle of the staff and the luminous hand. Many incidents of similar nature have also occurred with our Holy Prophet ﷺ. In one such incident a drastic change had occurred in a seventy years old infidel in that within a minute he not only converte' to Islam, but was ready to lay down his life to become a martyr.

Verses 52 - 68

وَاَوْحَيْنَآ اِلٰى مُوْسٰٓى اَنْ اَسْرِ بِعِبَادِيْٓ اِنَّكُمْ مُّتَّبَعُوْنَ ﴿٥٢﴾ فَاَرْسَلَ

فِرْعَوْنُ فِي الْمَدَآئِنِ حٰشِرِيْنَ ﴿٥٣﴾ اِنَّ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ لَشِرْذِمَةٌ قَلِيْلُوْنَ ﴿٥٤﴾ وَاِنَّهُمْ لَنَا لَغَآئِظُوْنَ ﴿٥٥﴾ وَاِنَّا لَجَمِيْعٌ حٰذِرُوْنَ ﴿٥٦﴾ فَاَخْرَجْنٰهُمْ مِّنْ جَنّٰتٍ وَّعُيُوْنٍ ﴿٥٧﴾ وَّكُنُوْزٍ وَّمَقَامٍ كَرِيْمٍ ﴿٥٨﴾ كَذٰلِكَ ؕ وَاَوْرَثْنٰهَا بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ ﴿٥٩﴾ فَاَتْبَعُوْهُمْ مُّشْرِقِيْنَ ﴿٦٠﴾ فَلَمَّا تَرَآءَ الْجَمْعٰنِ قَالَ اَصْحٰبُ مُوْسٰٓى اِنَّا لَمُدْرَكُوْنَ ﴿٦١﴾ قَالَ كَلَّا ۚ اِنَّ مَعِيَ رَبِّيْ سَيَهْدِيْنِ ﴿٦٢﴾ فَاَوْحَيْنَآ اِلٰى مُوْسٰٓى اَنِ اضْرِبْ بِّعَصَاكَ الْبَحْرَ ؕ فَانْفَلَقَ فَكَانَ كُلُّ فِرْقٍ كَالطَّوْدِ الْعَظِيْمِ ﴿٦٣﴾ وَ اَزْلَفْنَا ثَمَّ الْاٰخَرِيْنَ ﴿٦٤﴾ وَاَنْجَيْنَا مُوْسٰى وَمَنْ مَّعَهٗٓ اَجْمَعِيْنَ ﴿٦٥﴾ ثُمَّ اَغْرَقْنَا الْاٰخَرِيْنَ ﴿٦٦﴾ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيَةً ؕ وَمَا كَانَ اَكْثَرُهُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿٦٧﴾ وَاِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الرَّحِيْمُ ﴿٦٨﴾

And We revealed to Mūsā saying, "Make My slaves travel at night. You will be pursued." [52] **So the Pharaoh sent into the cities (his) men to muster (people)** [53] **saying, "These are a small band,** [54] **and indeed they are enraging us,** [55] **and we are a host, well-armed."** [56]

So We expelled them from gardens and springs [57] **and from treasures and a noble abode.** [58] **Thus it was. And We made the children of Isrā'īl inherit all these.** [59] **So they (the people of the Pharaoh) pursued them (the people of Mūsā) at the time of sunrise.** [60] **And when the two hosts saw each other, the companions of Mūsā said, "Surely we are overtaken."** [61] **He said, "Never! Indeed with me is my Lord. He will guide me."** [62] **So We revealed to Mūsā saying, "Strike the sea with your staff." So it was severed apart, and each part became like a big mountain.** [63] **Then We brought others close to that place.** [64] **And We saved Mūsā and all those with him.** [65] **Then we drowned the others.** [66] **Surely, in this there is a sign, and most of them are not to believe.** [67] **And your Lord is the Mighty, the Merciful.** [68]

Commentary

وَاَوۡرَثۡنٰهَا بَنِىۡۤ اِسۡرَآءِيۡلَ

And We made the children of Isrā'īl inherit all these. [59]

Apparently it is elucidated in this verse that Banī Isrā'īl were made the owners of all the material wealth and property left by the people of the Pharaoh after their drowning. But there is a historical issue involved in this statement. The issue is that many Qur'ānic verses indicate the Banī Isrā'īl did not return to Egypt after the drowning of the Pharaoh's people. As a matter of fact they went back towards their original home, the holy land of Syria. There they were commanded to fight (wage *jihād*) with an infidel nation in order to enter their city. Banī Isrā'īl refused to comply with this command, as a punishment of which the open plain where they were camping was made a natural prison for them. They could not come out of that plain and spent forty years over there. It was in that place, which is also known as a valley of Ṭīh (Sinai), where their two prophets, Sayyidnā Mūsā and Hārūn علیهم السلام, died. Even after these incidents it is not reported in the books of history that Banī Isrā'īl as a nation or in collective form had entered Egypt, which might prove that they had taken possession of the wealth and property of the Pharaoh's people. Tafsīr Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī has reproduced two explanations on the authority of eminent commentators, Sayyidnā Ḥasan and Qatādah رضی اللہ عنہم اجمعین. Sayyidnā Ḥasan رضی اللہ عنہ has explained that the verse in question does have a mention that Banī Isrā'īl were made the heirs of the property of the Pharaoh's people, but it does not say that this had happened immediately after the death of the Pharaoh. If the Banī Isrā'īl entered Egypt some forty or fifty years after the incident of the valley of Ṭīh, there is no inconsistency in the verse. As for the argument that their collective entry into Egypt is not proved historically, it is not worth taking any notice, because the history of that period was written by Jews and Christians and is full of distortions. There is absolutely no need for interpreting the Qur'ānic verse differently for bringing it in line with the history, whose authenticity itself is questionable.

Sayyidnā Qatādah رضی اللہ عنہ has explained the situation in another way. He says that although all the Qur'ānic verses which have quoted this incident, for instance, verses 128 and 137 of Sūrah Al-A'rāf, 5 of Sūrah Al-Qaṣaṣ, 25 to 28 of Sūrah Ad-Dukhān, and the verse under reference

of Sūrah Ash-Shu'arā', invite the attention to the point that Banī Isrā'il were given the custody of that very wealth and property which the people of the Pharaoh had left in Egypt, for which it was necessary for the Banī Isrā'il to return to Egypt to take possession. But all these verses can be interpreted to mean that Banī Isrā'il were given the wealth and property equal and similar to that which was possessed by the Pharaoh's people. For this it was not necessary that the same lands and wealth of Egypt are given to Bani Isrā'il. These bounties might have been granted in Syria. This interpretation is more likely in the verse of Sūrah Al-A'raf where the land possessed by Banī Isrā'il is referred to by the words, الَّتِیۡ بٰرَکۡنَا فِیۡهَا (i.e. the land blessed by Us) because the word Bāraknā is used for the land of Syria in many verses of the Qur'ān. Therefore, Sayyidnā Qatādah ﷺ has opined that it is not correct to attribute Qur'ānic verses toward something which is in conflict with the history. The gist of the whole explanation is that if it is established through proved facts that Banī Isrā'il did not occupy the land of Egypt at any time after the death of the Pharaoh, then according to explanation of Sayyidnā Qatādah ﷺ the land of Syria is purported for the wealth and property which was granted to Banī Isrā'il. (Only God knows best)

قَالَ اَصۡحٰبُ مُوۡسٰۤی اِنَّا لَمُدۡرَکُوۡنَ ﴿۶۱﴾ قَالَ کَلَّا ۚ اِنَّ مَعِیَ رَبِّیۡ سَیَهۡدِیۡنِ ﴿۶۲﴾

(The Companions of Mūsā said: "Surely we are overtaken." He said, "Never! Indeed with me is my Lord. He will guide me - 26:61,62.

When the Pharaoh's army, which was in their pursuit, reached right behind them, all the people of Banī Isrā'il called out 'We are caught'. And there was little doubt in their nabbing as the river was in front of them and the Pharaoh's enormous army behind them. Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ was fully aware of the situation, but his belief in the promise of Allah was unshaken like a rock. He, therefore, replied firmly that they will never be caught. The reasoning for this he gave اِنَّ مَعِیَ رَبِّیۡ سَیَهۡدِیۡنِ (62) "Indeed with me is my Lord. He will guide me." Such are the moments for the test of faith, when Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ was not terror stricken at all, as if he was seeing for himself the way out. Almost the same thing happened with Holy Prophet ﷺ at the time of migration while hiding in the cave of Thaur. The enemy had reached right at the opening of the cave in his pursuit. In fact they were so close that they could have seen him if they

had looked down towards their toes. Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ﷺ got alarmed a little, but Holy Prophet ﷺ said exactly the same thing لَاتَحْزَنْ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ مَعَنَا 'Do not grieve, Allah is surely with us' (9:40). It is worth noting in the two incidents that while Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام said to his Ummah in order to console them إِنَّ مَعِىَ رَبِّى 'With me is my Lord', Holy Prophet ﷺ said to Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ﷺ in reply 'Allah is with us (two)'. It is a special privilege of the Ummah of Muḥammad ﷺ that his followers are also honoured by the company of Allah when they are with their Rasūl.

Verses 69 - 104

وَاتْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَأَ إِبْرٰهِيمَ ﴿٦٩﴾ إِذْ قَالَ لِأَبِيهِ وَقَوْمِهِ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾
قَالُوا نَعْبُدُ أَصْنَامًا فَنَظَلُّ لَهَا عٰكِفِينَ ﴿٧١﴾ قَالَ هَلْ يَسْمَعُونَكُمْ
إِذْ تَدْعُونَ ﴿٧٢﴾ أَوْ يَنْفَعُونَكُمْ أَوْ يَضُرُّونَ ﴿٧٣﴾ قَالُوا بَلْ وَجَدْنَا آبَاءَنَا
كَذٰلِكَ يَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٧٤﴾ قَالَ أَفَرَءَيْتُمْ مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْبُدُونَ ﴿٧٥﴾ أَنْتُمْ
وَآبَاؤُكُمُ الْأَقْدَمُونَ ﴿٧٦﴾ فَإِنَّهُمْ عَدُوٌّ لِّي إِلَّا رَبَّ الْعٰلَمِينَ ﴿٧٧﴾
الَّذِي خَلَقَنِي فَهُوَ يَهْدِينِ ﴿٧٨﴾ وَالَّذِي هُوَ يُطْعِمُنِي وَيَسْقِينِ ﴿٧٩﴾
وَإِذَا مَرِضْتُ فَهُوَ يَشْفِينِ ﴿٨٠﴾ وَالَّذِي يُمِيتُنِي ثُمَّ يُحْيِينِ ﴿٨١﴾
وَالَّذِي أَطْمَعُ أَنْ يَغْفِرَ لِي خَطِيئَتِي يَوْمَ الدِّينِ ﴿٨٢﴾ رَبِّ هَبْ لِي
حُكْمًا وَأَلْحِقْنِي بِالصّٰلِحِينَ ﴿٨٣﴾ وَاجْعَلْ لِّي لِسَانَ صِدْقٍ فِي
الْآخِرِينَ ﴿٨٤﴾ وَاجْعَلْنِي مِنْ وَرَثَةِ جَنَّةِ النَّعِيمِ ﴿٨٥﴾ وَاغْفِرْ لِأَبِي
إِنَّهُ كَانَ مِنَ الضَّالِّينَ ﴿٨٦﴾ وَلَا تُخْزِنِي يَوْمَ يُبْعَثُونَ ﴿٨٧﴾ يَوْمَ
لَا يَنْفَعُ مَالٌ وَلَا بَنُونَ ﴿٨٨﴾ إِلَّا مَنْ أَتَى اللّٰهَ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ ﴿٨٩﴾
وَأُزْلِفَتِ الْجَنَّةُ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٩٠﴾ وَبُرِّزَتِ الْجَحِيمُ لِلْغٰوِينَ ﴿٩١﴾
وَقِيلَ لَهُمْ أَيْنَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْبُدُونَ ﴿٩٢﴾ مِنْ دُونِ اللّٰهِ هَلْ
يَنْصُرُونَكُمْ أَوْ يَنْتَصِرُونَ ﴿٩٣﴾ فَكُبْكِبُوا فِيهَا هُمْ وَالْغَاوُونَ ﴿٩٤﴾

وَجُنُوْدُ اِبْلِيْسَ اَجْمَعُوْنَ ﴿٩٥﴾ قَالُوْا وَهُمْ فِيْهَا يَخْتَصِمُوْنَ ﴿٩٦﴾
تَاللّٰهِ اِنْ كُنَّا لَفِيْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿٩٧﴾ اِذْ نُسَوِّيْكُمْ بِرَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ
﴿٩٨﴾ وَمَآ اَضَلَّنَآ اِلَّا الْمُجْرِمُوْنَ ﴿٩٩﴾ فَمَا لَنَا مِنْ شَافِعِيْنَ ﴿١٠٠﴾
وَلَا صَدِيْقٍ حَمِيْمٍ ﴿١٠١﴾ فَلَوْ اَنَّ لَنَا كَرَّةً فَنَكُوْنَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ
﴿١٠٢﴾ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيَةً ۗ وَمَا كَانَ اَكْثَرُهُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿١٠٣﴾ وَاِنَّ
رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الرَّحِيْمُ ﴿١٠٤﴾

And recite before them the narrative of Ibrāhīm, [69] **when he said to his father and to his people, "What do you worship?"** [70] **They said, "We worship idols, and stay devoted to them."** [71] **He said, "Do they listen to you when you call** [72] **(them) or do they bring benefit to you or harm** [73]**?" They said, "No, but we have found our fathers doing like this."** [74] **He said, "Have you then ever considered what you have been worshipping,** [75] **you and your ancient fathers,** [76] **they all are an enemy to me, except the Lord of the worlds,** [77] **Who created me, then guides me,** [78] **and Who feeds me and gives me drink,** [79] **and when I become sick, He heals me,** [80] **and who will make me die, then will give me life,** [81] **and who, I hope, will forgive my fault on the Day of Retribution.** [82] **O my Lord, give me wisdom and join me with the righteous,** [83] **and destine for me a truthful description among the next generations.** [84] **And make me among those who will inherit the Garden of Bliss,** [85] **and forgive my father. Indeed he was among those who went astray.** [86] **And do not put me to disgrace on the Day when all will be raised to life,** [87] **the Day when neither wealth will be of any use (to any one) nor sons,** [88] **except to one who will come to Allah with a sound heart,** [89] **and the Paradise will be brought near to the God-fearing** [90] **and the Hell will be fully uncovered for the perverse,** [91] **and it will be said to them, 'Where is that which you used to worship** [92] **beside Allah? Can they help you or help themselves?'** [93] **So they (their false gods) will be thrown on their faces into it - they and the erring people** [94] **and the**

entire army of Iblīs, all together. [95] **They will say when they will be quarreling with each other,** [96] **'By Allah, we were in open error** [97] **when we used to equate you with the Lord of the worlds,** [98] **and none misguided us except the sinners.** [99] **Now we have neither any intercessors** [100] **nor any true friend.** [101] **Would that we have a chance to return whereby we become among the believers'!"** [102]

Surely, in this there is a sign, [103] **and most of them are not to believe. And your Lord is the Mighty, the Merciful.** [104]

Commentary

وَاجْعَلْ لِّيْ لِسَانَ صِدْقٍ فِي الْاٰخِرِيْنَ

And destine for me a truthful description among the next generations. (26:84)

The word لِسَان (*lisān*, which literally means tongue) is used in this verse in the sense of description and 'for me' means 'for my benefit. Thus meaning of the prayer is 'O Allah, grant me such delectable ways and nice signs that others may follow until the Dooms Day, and they remember me with good words and nice attributes'. (Ibn Kathīr and Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī) Allah Ta'ālā has accepted the supplication of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. All, including Jews, Christians and even the disbelievers of Makkah, have feelings of love and affection for the creed of Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, and attribute themselves to it. Although their ways are in conflict with those of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, based on infidelity and polytheism, but they claim to be following his ways. As for the Ummah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, they rightly claim to be on the ways of Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, and feel proud of it.

Love for being praised is contemptible but allowed with certain conditions

Love and aspiration for being praised and respected by others is contemptible under Islamic law. The Holy Qur'ān has made the bounties of the Hereafter dependent on desisting from the love for being praised by saying تِلْكَ الدَّارُ الْاٰخِرَةُ نَجْعَلُهَا لِلَّذِيْنَ لَا يُرِيْدُوْنَ عُلُوًّا فِي الْاَرْضِ وَلَا فَسَادًا (As for that Ultimate Abode (the Hereafter) We assign it to those who intend neither being high on earth nor mischief - 28:83) In the present verse (84) the supplication of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام for his praise and eulogy by the

coming generations apparently looks like a wish for being praised. But if the wordings of the verse are examined carefully, it would become quite evident that it was not the love for being praised, but the real purpose of the supplication was to invoke the Divine help for performing such righteous deeds which could help him in the Hereafter. Moreover, others should also get attracted towards the righteous deeds by following his example, and so should the posterity. By declaring the love for being praised as unlawful and contemptible the Holy Qur'ān and hadith actually meant the love for mundane position of importance and profit which is not the case in the prayer of Ibrāhīm عليه السلام .

Imām Tirmidhī and Nasa'ī have related on the authority of Sayyidnā Ka'b ibn Mālik رضي الله عنه that Holy Prophet ﷺ once said that 'If two hungry wolfs are let loose in a herd of goats, they would not do so much damage to the herd as two traits damage the faith of a man. One is the love for wealth and the other is the aspiration for being praised and respected'. (*Ṭabrānī from Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī, and Bazzār from Abū Hurairah*).

Dailamī has reproduced a narration on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه with a weak chain of narrators that the love for praise and worldly status makes a man blind and deaf. All these aḥadīth refer to the love that has mundane considerations, or for which one has to indulge in sin or negligence in the matter of faith. When this is not the case, aspiration for praise and high position is not contemptible. It is reported in a *ḥadīth* that Holy Prophet ﷺ himself had made the following supplication: اللّٰهُمّ اجعلنی فی عینی صغیرا وفی اعین النّاس کبیرا that is "Ya Allah, make me insignificant and disdain in my own sight, but make me great in the eyes of people". Here also the purpose of making great in the eyes of people is that people emulate him in his righteous deeds. That is why Imām Mālik رحمه الله تعالیٰ has said that the one who is in fact virtuous and pious is required only to avoid making deliberate efforts to present himself as pious in the eyes of people, otherwise, if he loves to be praised by people, it is not contemptible.

Ibn 'Arabī has said that it is evident from this verse that the desire for a righteous deed which results in people's praise is allowed. Imām Ghazzāli رحمه الله تعالیٰ has ruled that the love for being praised and the position of respect is permissible under three conditions. One, when the object is not to proclaim oneself as superior to others and to degrade them

to an insignificant position, but for the benefit in the Hereafter, so that others may be influenced to follow his example and try to emulate him. Second, when the object is not to earn false praise against a trait one does not possess, and desire that people should eulogize him for that. Third, when one does not have to indulge in a sin or negligence in the matter of faith in order to achieve it.

Supplication for the absolution of disbelievers is not allowed

وَاغْفِرْ لِأَبِيْٓ إِنَّهٗ كَانَ مِنَ الضَّآلِّيْنَ ﴿٨٦﴾

And forgive my father. Indeed he was among those who went astray. (26:86)

This prayer of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام seems to be against the following verse:

مَا كَانَ لِلنَّبِيِّ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اَنْ يَّسْتَغْفِرُوْا لِلْمُشْرِكِيْنَ وَلَوْ كَانُوْٓا اُولِيْ قُرْبٰى مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ اَنَّهُمْ اَصْحٰبُ الْجَحِيْمِ .

"It is not for the Prophet and the believers to seek forgiveness for the Mushriks, even if they are kinsmen, after it became clear to them that they are the people of hell. (9:113)

This verse clearly lays down the rule that it is not allowed for a Muslim to pray for the forgiveness of the one about whom it is certainly known that he died in the state of *kufr*.

Now the question arises here as to why did Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام supplicate for the forgiveness of his father, who was a disbeliever? Allah Ta'ālā himself has given answer to this question in the Holy Qur'ān:

وَمَا كَانَ اسْتِغْفَارُ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ لِاَبِيْهِ اِلَّا عَنْ مَّوْعِدَةٍ وَّعَدَهَآ اِيَّاهُ ۚ فَلَمَّا تَبَيَّنَ لَهٗٓ اَنَّهٗ عَدُوٌّ لِّلّٰهِ تَبَرَّاَ مِنْهُ ۭ اِنَّ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ لَاَوَّاهٌ حَلِيْمٌ.

And the prayer of Ibrāhīm for the forgiveness of his father was not but due to a promise he had made to him. Later when it became clear to him that he was an enemy of Allah, he withdrew himself from him. Surely, Ibrāhīm is oft-sighing (before Allah), forbearing. (9:114)

The gist of the answer is that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام had supplicated for the pardon of his father within his lifetime with the intent and desire

that Allah Ta'ālā would give him Divine help to turn to faith, after which the forgiveness was sure. Alternatively, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was of the opinion that his father had accepted the faith, but had not made it public. But once he learnt that his father had died as an infidel, he pronounced his complete disgust against his attitude and disowned it.

Note

The point whether Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام had become aware of the infidelity of his father within his lifetime or came to know about it after his death, or he would know this on the Dooms Day, is fully discussed in Sūrah Taubah.

يَوْمَ لَا يَنْفَعُ مَالٌ وَّلَا بَنُوْنَ ﴿٨٨﴾ إِلَّا مَنْ أَتَى اللّٰهَ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيْمٍ ﴿٨٩﴾

The Day when neither wealth will be of any use (to any one) nor sons, [88] except to one who will come to Allah with a sound heart, [26:89]

This verse has declared that wealth and children will not be of any help to a person on the Day of Judgment. This declaration is subjected to exception in the words, "except to one who will come to Allah with sound heart". (coming with sound heart means to come to Him with true faith). Now, this exception has been interpreted in two different ways. According to one interpretation adopted by some commentators this exception is not meant to exclude the believers from the rule. It is an exception of a special type which is known in Arabic grammar as "*munqaṭi'*" (This type of exception does not exclude anything from the aforementioned statement. It simply says that the thing negated in the first sentence is found in someone else.) A simple example for this expression is that a person is asked about Zaid whether he has some wealth and children, and he replies, "No, his wealth and children are nothing but his sound heart." The same expression is used in this verse. The gist of the verse, according to this interpretation would be that wealth and children will not be helpful to anyone, neither to a believer nor to a disbeliever; what will be helpful, instead of wealth and children, is one's sound heart, i.e. the true faith and righteous deeds.

The second interpretation, adopted by the majority, is that it is a normal exception which means that wealth and children may be helpful

to the one who will come to Allah with sound heart, i.e. with faith and righteous deeds, but these things will not be of any use to a disbeliever.

Another point worth noting in this verse is that while referring to 'children' the Holy Qur'ān has used the word بَنُوْن (Banūn) which is literally restricted to the male children. Probably the reason is that it is the male children from whom an effective help is expected in adverse situations. The expectation of help from female children in some calamities is very rare even in this world. Therefore, the male children are specifically mentioned in the context of the Hereafter to indicate that even those who were expected to help in the world will not be of any use there.

It may also be noted that "sound heart" literally means a healthy heart. But according to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ' here it means that heart of a believer that testifies the Oneness of Allah and is pure from *shirk*. The same interpretation is reported from Mujāhid, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and Sa'īd ibn al-Musayyab رحمهم الله تعالىٰ with different expressions. Sa'īd ibn al-Musayyab رحمهم الله تعالىٰ says that the sound heart is only that of a believer because the heart of a disbeliever is sick. The Holy Qur'ān says, فِي قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَرَضٌ (In their heart there is a malady (2:10).

Wealth, children and the family relationship can also be beneficial in the Hereafter to a believer

In accordance with the commonly adopted explanation of the verse it has now become clear that the wealth of a person could be of help to him on the Dooms Day, provided he is a Muslim. It can be elaborated by saying that the one who has spent his wealth in this world in the way of Allah and in the cause of righteous deeds or has spent in an ongoing charity (Ṣadaqah Jariyah), will get its benefit in the Hereafter if he dies with the faith of Islam and is listed as a believer on the Day of Judgment. On the other hand if he was not a Muslim or God-forbid became an apostate before his death, then all the good deeds he had done in this world will be of no benefit to him. The same rule will apply in the case of children, that is, if a person is Muslim, he can benefit from them in the Hereafter in that his children supplicate for his forgiveness after his death. Also, if he had tried to train the children to be pious, whatever good they will do, its benefit will also be passed on to him as long as they do righteous deeds. It is also possible that his pious children obtain his pardon in the Hereafter by intercession. In a few Āḥādīth it is reported

about such an intercession and its acceptance, especially the intercession of the young children yet to attain puberty. Likewise, the children will also benefit from their parents on the condition of faith in that if they were Muslims but their righteous deeds could not attain the level of their parents, then Allah Ta'ālā by taking into account their parents good deeds would place them also at the high position of their parents. The Holy Qur'ān has elucidated it in these words وَأَلْحَقْنَا بِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ (52:21) that is 'We will join together with Our righteous servants their progeny'. The above quoted famous explanation of this verse has made it clear that wherever it is mentioned in the Qur'ān or hadith that the family connection will be of no avail in the Hereafter, the reference is to the non-believers. This principle is applicable to the extent that even if the wife and children of the messenger are not believers, they too would not benefit from his prophethood in the Hereafter, as is the case of the son of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام the wife of Lūṭ عليه السلام and the father of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام . The Qur'ānic verses فَإِذَا نُفِخَ فِي الصُّورِ فَلَا أَنْسَابَ بَيْنَهُمْ "Thereafter, when the Ṣūr (the trumpet) is blown, there are no ties of kinship between them" (23:101) and يَوْمَ يَفِرُّ الْمَرْءُ مِنْ أَخِيهِ وَأُمِّهِ وَأَبِيهِ (upon the day when a man shall flee from his brother, his mother, his father - 80:34) and لَا يَجْزِي وَالِدٌ عَنْ وَلَدِهِ "nor will a son be standing for his father in any way" (31:33) all reflect this very theme. (وَاللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ)

Verses 105 - 122

كَذَّبَتْ قَوْمُ نُوحٍ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿١٠٥﴾ إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ أَخُوهُمْ نُوحٌ أَلَا
تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٠٦﴾ إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ ﴿١٠٧﴾ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُونِ
﴿١٠٨﴾ وَمَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَىٰ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ
﴿١٠٩﴾ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُونِ ﴿١١٠﴾ قَالُوا أَنُؤْمِنُ لَكَ وَاتَّبَعَكَ
الْأَرْذَلُونَ ﴿١١١﴾ قَالَ وَمَا عِلْمِي بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١١٢﴾ إِنْ
حِسَابُهُمْ إِلَّا عَلَىٰ رَبِّي لَوْ تَشْعُرُونَ ﴿١١٣﴾ وَمَا أَنَا بِطَارِدِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ
﴿١١٤﴾ إِنْ أَنَا إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ مُبِينٌ ﴿١١٥﴾ قَالُوا لَئِنْ لَمْ تَنْتَهِ يَا نُوحُ لَتَكُونَنَّ
مِنَ الْمَرْجُومِينَ ﴿١١٦﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ إِنَّ قَوْمِي كَذَّبُونِ ﴿١١٧﴾ فَافْتَحْ

بَيْنِىْ وَبَيْنَهُمْ فَتْحًا وَّ نَجِّنِىْ وَمَنْ مَّعِىَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿١١٨﴾
فَاَنْجَيْنٰهُ وَمَنْ مَّعَهٗ فِى الْفُلْكِ الْمَشْحُوْنِ ﴿١١٩﴾ ثُمَّ اَغْرَقْنَا بَعْدُ
الْبٰقِيْنَ ﴿١٢٠﴾ اِنَّ فِىْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيَةً ؕ وَمَا كَانَ اَكْثَرُهُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿١٢١﴾
وَاِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الرَّحِيْمُ ﴿١٢٢﴾

And the people of Nūḥ belied the messengers [105] **when their brother Nūḥ said to them, "Do you not fear Allah?** [106] **I am an honest messenger for you.** [107] **So, fear Allah and obey me.** [108] **And I do not claim from you any reward for it. My reward is with none but with the Lord of the worlds;** [109] **so, fear Allah and obey me."** [110] **They said, "Shall we believe in you while you are followed by the lowest people?"** [111] **He said, "I do not know about what they do;** [112] **their account is with none but with my Lord, if you have sense.** [113] **And I am not to drive the believers away;** [114] **I am not but a plain warner."** [115] **They said, "Should you not stop, O Nūḥ, you will surely be among those stoned."** [116] **He said, "My Lord, my people have belied me.** [117] **So judge between me and them with an open verdict and save me and all the believers who are with me."** [118] **So We saved him and those with him in the Ark that was fully occupied.** [119] **Then We drowned, after that, all the remaining.** [120] **Surely in this there is a sign, and most of them are not to believe.** [121] **And surely your Lord is the Mighty, the Merciful.** [122]

Commentary

وَمَآ اَسْـَٔلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ اَجْرٍ

And I do not claim from you any reward for it. - 26:109

It is learnt from this verse that charging and acceptance of wages against religious teachings and preaching is not right. Therefore, the righteous elders have ruled it as forbidden, but the later generations have allowed it under compelling circumstances. Its full details have been given under the explanation of the verse لَاتَشْتَرُوْا بِاٰيٰتِىْ ثَمَنًا قَلِيْلًا "And do not take a paltry price for My signs" - 2:41.

Special note

Here the verse فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَاَطِيْعُوْنِ (So, fear Allah and obey me - 110) is repeated twice to make clear that for the obedience of the Messenger and fear of Allah it was enough that the prophet has any one of the two qualities: One, his honesty and integrity, and the second, his teaching and preaching without a fee. But when the Messenger who is personified of all these traits, his obedience and the fear of his God becomes all the more necessary.

Nobility of a person depends on deeds and moral qualities and not on family or status

قَالُوْٓا اَنُؤْمِنُ لَكَ وَاتَّبَعَكَ الْاَرْذَلُوْنَ. قَالَ وَمَا عِلْمِىْ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ .

> They said, "Shall we believe in you while you are followed by the lowest people?" [111] He said, "I do not know about what they do. (26:111-112)

It is related in this verse that the disbelievers rejected the invitation of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام to accept the faith on the plea that his followers were worthless poor people. So, how could they, the elite and noble, mix up with them? On this Nūḥ عليه السلام replied that he did not know about their acts, thereby hinting that their understanding of nobility on the basis of family background, wealth, or status was wrong, and that the nobility or meanness and honour or disgrace is dependent on one's deeds and morals. Hence, it was their ignorance to put the label of sordidness on his followers, because they did not know about their deeds and disposition. Unless one knows fully well about the morals and deeds of others, it is not right to pass any judgment about them. (Qurṭubī).

Verses 123 - 140

كَذَّبَتْ عَادُ ۨالْمُرْسَلِيْنَ ﴿١٢٣﴾ اِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ اَخُوْهُمْ هُوْدٌ اَلَا تَتَّقُوْنَ ﴿١٢٤﴾ اِنِّىْ لَكُمْ رَسُوْلٌ اَمِيْنٌ ﴿١٢٥﴾ فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَاَطِيْعُوْنِ ﴿١٢٦﴾ وَمَآ اَسْئَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ اَجْرٍ ۚ اِنْ اَجْرِىَ اِلَّا عَلٰى رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿١٢٧﴾ اَتَبْنُوْنَ بِكُلِّ رِيْعٍ اٰيَةً تَعْبَثُوْنَ ﴿١٢٨﴾ وَتَتَّخِذُوْنَ مَصَانِعَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَخْلُدُوْنَ ﴿١٢٩﴾ وَاِذَا بَطَشْتُمْ بَطَشْتُمْ جَبَّارِيْنَ ﴿١٣٠﴾ فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ

وَأَطِيعُونِ ﴿١٣١﴾ وَاتَّقُوا الَّذِيٓ أَمَدَّكُم بِمَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٣٢﴾ أَمَدَّكُم
بِأَنْعَامٍ وَّبَنِينَ ﴿١٣٣﴾ وَجَنّٰتٍ وَّعُيُونٍ ﴿١٣٤﴾ إِنِّيٓ أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ
عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴿١٣٥﴾ قَالُوا سَوَآءٌ عَلَيْنَآ أَوَعَظْتَ أَمْ لَمْ تَكُن مِّنَ
الْوَاعِظِينَ ﴿١٣٦﴾ إِنْ هٰذَا إِلَّا خُلُقُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿١٣٧﴾ وَمَا نَحْنُ
بِمُعَذَّبِينَ ﴿١٣٨﴾ فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَأَهْلَكْنٰهُمْ إِنَّ فِي ذٰلِكَ لَآيَةً وَمَا كَانَ
أَكْثَرُهُم مُّؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٣٩﴾ وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٤٠﴾

The (people of) 'Ād belied the messengers [123] **when their brother Hūd said to them, "Do you not fear Allah?** [124] **I am an honest messenger for you,** [125] **so fear Allah and obey me.** [126] **And I do not claim from you any reward for it. My reward is with none but with the Lord of the worlds.** [127] **Do you erect on every height a sign, having no sound purpose,** [128] **and take the objects of architecture as if you are going to live for ever,** [129] **and when you seize (someone) you seize as tyrants?** [130] **So fear Allah and obey me.** [131] **And fear the One who has supported you with what you know.** [132] **He has supported you with cattle and sons,** [133] **and with gardens and springs.** [134] **In fact I fear for you the punishment of a great day."** [135]

They said, "It is all equal for us, whether you give us advice or you are not among those who give advice. [135] **This is nothing but the practice of the ancient,** [137] **and we are not going to be punished."** [138] **Thus they belied him, so We destroyed them. Surely, in this there is a sign, and most of them are not to believe.** [139] **And surely your Lord is the Mighty, the Merciful.** [140]

Commentary

Explanation of some difficult words

أَتَبْنُونَ بِكُلِّ رِيعٍ آيَةً تَعْبَثُونَ. وَتَتَّخِذُونَ مَصَانِعَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَخْلُدُونَ.

Do you erect on every height a sign having no sound purpose, [128] and take the objects of architecture as if you are going to live for ever, (26:128-129)

Ibn Jarīr رحمه الله تعالى has related from Mujāhid رحمه الله تعالى that the passage between two hills is called *Rī'* (ريع). But Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ and majority have taken the meaning of *Rī'* as a high place, and its derivative is *rī'-un-na bāt'* (ريع النبات), which means growing and climbing vegetation. Literal meaning of 'Āyah (آية) is symbol or sign, but here it means a high palace. تَعْبَثُوْنَ is derived from *'abath* (عَبث), which is something of no value and benefit neither in reality nor by implication. So, the meaning of the verse is that they used to make very high palaces of no benefit and which they did not need. It was just to fulfill their ego and pride. *maṣāni'* (مَصَانِع) is the plural of Maṣna' (مَصْنَع). Sayyidnā Qatādah has taken *maṣāni'* (مَصَانِع) for the water tank, whereas Ḥaḍrat Mujāhid رحمه الله تعالى take it to mean strong palace.

لَعَلَّكُمْ تَخْلُدُوْنَ (as if you are going to live for ever) Imām al-Bukhārī رحمه الله تعالى has commented in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī that the word *la'alla* (لَعَلَّ) in the verse is used as a word of simile, and that Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ has translated it as كَاَنَّكُمْ تَخْلُدُوْنَ that is 'as if you are..'. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

Construction of buildings without any need is contemptible

This verse indicates that the construction of houses and buildings without need is a condemnable act. The *ḥadīth* quoted by Imām Tirmidhī on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Anas ﷺ conveys exactly the same message: النفقة كلها فى سبيل الله إلا البناء فلا خير فيه (All spendings are in Allah's way, except construction, which has no merit). It means that the building which is constructed in excess of requirement has no benefit or virtue. Another narration of Sayyidnā Anas ﷺ also confirms this: ان كل بناء وبال على صاحبه إلاّ مالا، إلاّ مالا، يعنى إلاّ مالا بدّ منه - 'Every building is a tribulation for the builder, except that which is necessary, because it is not a nuisance'. It is commented in Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī that without genuine requirement construction of tall buildings is contemptible and condemned under the Sharī'ah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ .

Verses 141 - 159

كَذَّبَتْ ثَمُوْدُ الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ ﴿١٤١﴾ اِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ اَخُوْهُمْ صٰلِحٌ اَلَا تَتَّقُوْنَ ﴿١٤٢﴾ اِنِّىْ لَكُمْ رَسُوْلٌ اَمِيْنٌ ﴿١٤٣﴾ فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَاَطِيْعُوْنِ ﴿١٤٤﴾

وَمَآ اَسْئَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ اَجْرٍ ۚ اِنْ اَجْرِىَ اِلاَّ عَلٰى رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ
﴿١٤٥﴾ اَتُتْرَكُوْنَ فِىْ مَا هٰهُنَآ اٰمِنِيْنَ ﴿١٤٦﴾ فِىْ جَنّٰتٍ وَّعُيُوْنٍ ﴿١٤٧﴾
وَّزُرُوْعٍ وَّنَخْلٍ طَلْعُهَا هَضِيْمٌ ﴿١٤٨﴾ وَتَنْحِتُوْنَ مِنَ الْجِبَالِ بُيُوْتًا
فٰرِهِيْنَ ﴿١٤٩﴾ فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَاَطِيْعُوْنِ ﴿١٥٠﴾ وَلاَ تُطِيْعُوْٓا اَمْرَ
الْمُسْرِفِيْنَ ﴿١٥١﴾ الَّذِيْنَ يُفْسِدُوْنَ فِى الْاَرْضِ وَلاَ يُصْلِحُوْنَ
﴿١٥٢﴾ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّمَآ اَنْتَ مِنَ الْمُسَحَّرِيْنَ ﴿١٥٣﴾ مَآ اَنْتَ اِلاَّ بَشَرٌ
مِّثْلُنَا ۚ فَاْتِ بِاٰيَةٍ اِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿١٥٤﴾ قَالَ هٰذِهٖ نَاقَةٌ لَّهَا
شِرْبٌ وَّلَكُمْ شِرْبُ يَوْمٍ مَّعْلُوْمٍ ﴿١٥٥﴾ وَلاَ تَمَسُّوْهَا بِسُوْٓءٍ
فَيَاْخُذَكُمْ عَذَابُ يَوْمٍ عَظِيْمٍ ﴿١٥٦﴾ فَعَقَرُوْهَا فَاَصْبَحُوْا نٰدِمِيْنَ
﴿١٥٧﴾ فَاَخَذَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ ۭ اِنَّ فِىْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيَةً ۭ وَمَا كَانَ اَكْثَرُهُمْ
مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿١٥٨﴾ وَاِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الرَّحِيْمُ ﴿١٥٩﴾

The (people of) Thamūd belied the messengers [141] **when their brother Ṣāliḥ said to them, "Do you not fear Allah?** [142] **I am an honest messenger for you.** [143] **So, fear Allah and obey me.** [144] **And I do not claim from you any reward for it. My reward is with none but with the Lord of the worlds.** [145] **Will you be left secure in whatever is here,** [146] **in gardens and springs,** [147] **and in farms and date-palms, the spathes of which are interwoven?** [148] **And you hew out houses from the hills with pride.** [149] **So fear Allah and obey me,** [150] **and do not obey the order of the transgressors** [151] **make mischief on the land and who do not set things right".** [152]

They said, "You are merely one of those bewitched. [153] **You are nothing but a human like us. So, bring a sign if you are one of the truthful."** [154] **He said, "This is a she-camel - She has a share of water, and you have a share of water on a specified day.** [155] **So do not touch her with evil (intent), lest you should be seized by a painful punishment."** [156] **But they killed her, then they**

became remorseful and the punishment seized them. Surely in this there is a sign, and most of them are not to believe. [158] **And surely, your Lord is the Mighty, the Merciful.** [159]

Commentary

وَتَنْحِتُوْنَ مِنَ الْجِبَالِ بُيُوْتًا فٰرِهِيْنَ ﴿١٤٩﴾

And you hew out houses from the hills with pride. [149]

According to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ, the word فَارِهِيْنَ (Fārihīn) means arrogant and conceited people. But Abū Ṣāliḥ and Imām Raghib have taken this word to mean experts. Therefore, the meaning of the verse is that Allah Ta'ālā has favoured you by teaching such skills that you could make houses by cutting hills. The essence of all this is that you should remember the bounties of Allah Ta'ālā and should not make mischief and trouble on earth.

Useful vocations are Divine Graces provided they are not employed in bad things

This verse indicates that nice vocations are Allah's Graces, and to draw benefit from them is lawful. But if they are used for some sinful purpose or in an unlawful act, or if someone gets involved in them with unnecessary concentration, then it is not lawful to adopt them. An example of unnecessary construction of tall buildings and its contempt has just been mentioned in the previous verses.

Verses 160 - 175

كَذَّبَتْ قَوْمُ لُوْطِ ۣالْمُرْسَلِيْنَ ﴿١٦٠﴾ اِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ اَخُوْهُمْ لُوْطٌ اَلَا
تَتَّقُوْنَ ﴿١٦١﴾ اِنِّيْ لَكُمْ رَسُوْلٌ اَمِيْنٌ ﴿١٦٢﴾ فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَاَطِيْعُوْنِ
﴿١٦٣﴾ وَمَآ اَسْئَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ اَجْرٍ ۚ اِنْ اَجْرِيَ اِلَّا عَلٰى رَبِّ
الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿١٦٤﴾ اَتَاْتُوْنَ الذُّكْرَانَ مِنَ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿١٦٥﴾ وَتَذَرُوْنَ مَا
خَلَقَ لَكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ مِّنْ اَزْوَاجِكُمْ ۭ بَلْ اَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ عٰدُوْنَ ﴿١٦٦﴾ قَالُوْا
لَئِنْ لَّمْ تَنْتَهِ يٰلُوْطُ لَتَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الْمُخْرَجِيْنَ ﴿١٦٧﴾ قَالَ اِنِّيْ

لَعَمَلِكُمْ مِّنَ الْقَالِينَ ﴿۱٦٨﴾ رَبِّ نَجِّنِي وَأَهْلِي مِمَّا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿۱٦٩﴾ فَنَجَّيْنٰهُ وَأَهْلَهُ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿۱٧٠﴾ إِلَّا عَجُوزًا فِي الْغٰبِرِينَ ﴿۱٧۱﴾ ثُمَّ دَمَّرْنَا الْآخَرِينَ ﴿۱٧٢﴾ وَأَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهِم مَّطَرًا ۚ فَسَاءَ مَطَرُ الْمُنذَرِينَ ﴿۱٧٣﴾ إِنَّ فِي ذٰلِكَ لَآيَةً ۖ وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُم مُّؤْمِنِينَ ﴿۱٧٤﴾ وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿۱٧٥﴾

The people of Lūṭ belied the messengers [160] **when their brother Lūṭ said to them, "Do you not fear Allah?** [161] **I am an honest messenger for you.** [162] **So fear Allah and obey me.** [163] **And I do not claim from you any reward for it. My reward is with none but with the Lord of the worlds.** [164] **Do you go to the males(for having sex) out of the whole universe,** [165] **and leave what your Lord has created for you, that is, your wives? in fact, you are a people who cross (all) limits."** [166]

They said, "If you do not stop O Lūṭ, you shall be included among the outcast." [167] **He said "Certainly, I am hateful to your act.** [168] **O my Lord, save me and my family from what they do."** [169] **So We saved him and his family, all of them** [170] **except an old woman among those who remained behind.** [171] **Then We destroyed the others,** [172] **and subjected them to a terrible rain. So evil was the rain of those who were warned.** [173] **Surely, in this there is a sign, but most of them are not to believe.** [174] **And surely your Lord is the Mighty, the Merciful.** [175]

Commentary

Unnatural act is unlawful even with one's own wife

وَتَذَرُونَ مَا خَلَقَ لَكُمْ رَبُّكُم مِّنْ أَزْوَاجِكُم

And leave what your Lord has created for you, that is, your wives? - 26:166

In the phrase مِنْ أَزْوَاجِكُمْ the word مِنْ (*min*) *Min* could be descriptive (which is translated above as 'that is') if taken in the technical sense, which would mean that in order to satisfy your lust you go after the homosexual men instead of your wives, whom Allah has given you to

meet your natural urge. This is indeed a proof of malignity. The other possibility is that the letter '*Min*' is used to mean 'from' or 'out of'; then the meaning of the verse would be that it is a special part in the body of your wives which is created for the satisfaction of your natural urge. But you indulge in unnatural act with them, which is totally unlawful. Thus according to this second interpretation, it has also been made clear that it is not permitted to have unnatural intercourse with one's wife. In a *ḥadīth* Holy Prophet ﷺ has cast curse on such a person. نعوذ بالله منه (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī).

اِلَّا عَجُوْزًا فِى الْغٰبِرِيْنَ

Except an old woman among those who remained behind. - 26:171

The word 'old woman' is used for the wife of Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام, who was an infidel and was agreeable to the unnatural act of the people of Lūṭ عليه السلام. If the wife of Lūṭ عليه السلام was an old woman then the use of this word for her is quite clear, but if she was not old, then perhaps she was called 'old woman' for the reason that the prophet's wife is regarded like the mother of the Ummah, and to call a woman having many children as old is not unlikely.

وَاَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ مَّطَرًا ۚ فَسَآءَ مَطَرُ الْمُنْذَرِيْنَ

and subjected them to a terrible rain. So evil was the rain of those who were warned. - 26:173

This verse has confirmed that if a man commits sodomy, he may be punished with throwing a wall on him or by throwing him down from a high place, as suggested by Ḥanafī scholars, because the people of Lūṭ عليه السلام were destroyed in a similar manner. Their township was lifted and thrown on the ground. (Shāmī Kitāb Al-Ḥudūd)

Verses 176 - 191

كَذَّبَ اَصْحٰبُ لْئَيْكَةِ الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ ﴿۱۷۶﴾ۚ اِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ شُعَيْبٌ اَلَا تَتَّقُوْنَ ﴿۱۷۷﴾ۚ اِنِّىْ لَكُمْ رَسُوْلٌ اَمِيْنٌ ﴿۱۷۸﴾ۙ فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَاَطِيْعُوْنِ

﴿١٧٩﴾ وَمَآ اَسْئَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ اَجْرٍ ۚ اِنْ اَجْرِىَ اِلَّا عَلٰى رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ
﴿١٨٠﴾ اَوْفُوا الْكَيْلَ وَلَا تَكُوْنُوْا مِنَ الْمُخْسِرِيْنَ ﴿١٨١﴾ وَزِنُوْا
بِالْقِسْطَاسِ الْمُسْتَقِيْمِ ﴿١٨٢﴾ وَلَا تَبْخَسُوا النَّاسَ اَشْيَآءَهُمْ وَلَا
تَعْثَوْا فِى الْاَرْضِ مُفْسِدِيْنَ ﴿١٨٣﴾ وَاتَّقُوا الَّذِىْ خَلَقَكُمْ وَالْجِبِلَّةَ
الْاَوَّلِيْنَ ﴿١٨٤﴾ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّمَآ اَنْتَ مِنَ الْمُسَحَّرِيْنَ ﴿١٨٥﴾ وَمَآ اَنْتَ اِلَّا
بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُنَا وَاِنْ نَّظُنُّكَ لَمِنَ الْكٰذِبِيْنَ ﴿١٨٦﴾ فَاَسْقِطْ عَلَيْنَا كِسَفًا
مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ اِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿١٨٧﴾ قَالَ رَبِّىْٓ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا
تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١٨٨﴾ فَكَذَّبُوْهُ فَاَخَذَهُمْ عَذَابُ يَوْمِ الظُّلَّةِ ۗ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ
عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيْمٍ ﴿١٨٩﴾ اِنَّ فِىْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيَةً ۗ وَمَا كَانَ اَكْثَرُهُمْ
مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿١٩٠﴾ وَاِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الرَّحِيْمُ ﴿١٩١﴾

The people of Aykah belied the messengers [176] **when Shu‘aib said to them, "Do you not fear Allah?** [177] **I am an honest messenger for you.** [178] **So fear Allah and obey me.** [179] **And I do not claim from you any reward for it; my reward is with none but with the Lord of the worlds.** [180] **Give full measure and do not be among those who bring loss to others.** [181] **And weigh with an even balance.** [182] **And do not make people short of their things and do not spread disorder in the land as mischief makers.** [183] **And be fearful of the One who created you and the former generations."** [184]

They said, "You are but one of the bewitched men. [185] **And you are no more than a human like us, and in fact we consider you to be one of the liars.** [186] **So cause a piece from the sky to fall down upon us, if you are one of the truthful."** [187] **He said, "My Lord knows best what you do."** [188] **Thus they belied him, so they were seized by the torment of the Day of Canopy. Indeed it was the punishment of a terrible day.** [189] **Surely in this there is a sign, but most of them are not to believe.** [190] **And surely your Lord is the Mighty, the Merciful.** [191]

Commentary

وَزِنُوْا بِالْقِسْطَاسِ الْمُسْتَقِيْمِ

And weigh with an even balance. - 26:182

Some scholars have held the word Quisṭās as a Roman word, which means justice, while others have taken it as an Arabic word, derived from *Qisṭ*, which is also used for justice. It means to make use of the scale and other measuring tools in a straight and correct manner, where there is no possibility of weighing less.

وَلَا تَبْخَسُوا النَّاسَ اَشْيَآءَهُمْ

And do not make people short of their things - 26:183

What it means is that it is unlawful to reduce any quantity or amount from that which has been contracted with anyone, whether it is a measurable thing or otherwise. Therefore, if a servant or a laborer does not work his full time at his workplace, he too is included in this warning. Imām Malik رحمه الله تعالٰی has reported a narration in his Muwaṭṭa' that Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ noticed that someone did not join in the 'Aṣr prayer. So, he enquired about the reason for that, to which he offered some excuse. Then Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ said, طَفَّفْتَ 'You have reduced in measuring'. As prayer is not something to be measured, hence after quoting this ḥadīth Imām Malik رحمه الله تعالٰی has said that this command is not restricted to measurable things. Rather, performing any obligation less than due is included in prohibition highlighted in this verse and in Sūrah "At-taṭfīf 84".

فَاَخَذَهُمْ عَذَابُ يَوْمِ الظُّلَّةِ

so they were seized by the torment of the Day of Canopy. - 26:189

عَذَابُ يَوْمِ الظُّلَّةِ (the Torment of the Canopy), mentioned in this verse refers to an incident, which is this: Allah Ta'ālā sent down such an extreme heat on a people that they could not find comfort either inside the houses or outside. Then He sent down a mass of dark cloud over a nearby forest, under which there was a cool breeze. As the entire people were distressed due to excessive heat, they ran to take shelter under the cloud. When all of them assembled under the cover of the cloud, it rained fire

instead of water. Thus the whole nation was burnt to ashes. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

Verses 192 - 227

وَاِنَّهٗ لَتَنْزِيْلُ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿١٩٢﴾ نَزَلَ بِهِ الرُّوْحُ الْاَمِيْنُ ﴿١٩٣﴾
عَلٰى قَلْبِكَ لِتَكُوْنَ مِنَ الْمُنْذِرِيْنَ ﴿١٩٤﴾ بِلِسَانٍ عَرَبِيٍّ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿١٩٥﴾
وَ اِنَّهٗ لَفِيْ زُبُرِ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ ﴿١٩٦﴾ اَوَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَّهُمْ اٰيَةً اَنْ يَّعْلَمَهٗ عُلَمٰٓؤُا
بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ ﴿١٩٧﴾ وَلَوْنَزَّلْنٰهُ عَلٰى بَعْضِ الْاَعْجَمِيْنَ ﴿١٩٨﴾ فَقَرَاَهٗ
عَلَيْهِمْ مَّا كَانُوْا بِهٖ مُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿١٩٩﴾ كَذٰلِكَ سَلَكْنٰهُ فِيْ قُلُوْبِ
الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ ﴿٢٠٠﴾ لَايُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِهٖ حَتّٰى يَرَوُا الْعَذَابَ الْاَلِيْمَ ﴿٢٠١﴾
فَيَاْتِيَهُمْ بَغْتَةً وَّهُمْ لَايَشْعُرُوْنَ ﴿٢٠٢﴾ فَيَقُوْلُوْا هَلْ نَحْنُ مُنْظَرُوْنَ
﴿٢٠٣﴾ اَفَبِعَذَابِنَا يَسْتَعْجِلُوْنَ ﴿٢٠٤﴾ اَفَرَءَيْتَ اِنْ مَّتَّعْنٰهُمْ سِنِيْنَ
﴿٢٠٥﴾ ثُمَّ جَآءَهُمْ مَّا كَانُوْا يُوْعَدُوْنَ ﴿٢٠٦﴾ مَآ اَغْنٰى عَنْهُمْ مَّا
كَانُوْا يُمَتَّعُوْنَ ﴿٢٠٧﴾ وَمَآ اَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَرْيَةٍ اِلَّا لَهَا مُنْذِرُوْنَ ﴿٢٠٨﴾
ذِكْرٰى وَمَا كُنَّا ظٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٢٠٩﴾ وَمَا تَنَزَّلَتْ بِهِ الشَّيٰطِيْنُ ﴿٢١٠﴾
وَمَا يَنْبَغِيْ لَهُمْ وَمَا يَسْتَطِيْعُوْنَ ﴿٢١١﴾ اِنَّهُمْ عَنِ السَّمْعِ لَمَعْزُوْلُوْنَ
﴿٢١٢﴾ فَلَا تَدْعُ مَعَ اللّٰهِ اِلٰهًا اٰخَرَ فَتَكُوْنَ مِنَ الْمُعَذَّبِيْنَ ﴿٢١٣﴾
وَاَنْذِرْ عَشِيْرَتَكَ الْاَقْرَبِيْنَ ﴿٢١٤﴾ وَاخْفِضْ جَنَاحَكَ لِمَنِ اتَّبَعَكَ
مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿٢١٥﴾ فَاِنْ عَصَوْكَ فَقُلْ اِنِّيْ بَرِيْٓءٌ مِّمَّا تَعْمَلُوْنَ
﴿٢١٦﴾ وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى الْعَزِيْزِ الرَّحِيْمِ ﴿٢١٧﴾ الَّذِيْ يَرٰىكَ حِيْنَ تَقُوْمُ
﴿٢١٨﴾ وَ تَقَلُّبَكَ فِي السّٰجِدِيْنَ ﴿٢١٩﴾ اِنَّهٗ هُوَالسَّمِيْعُ الْعَلِيْمُ
﴿٢٢٠﴾ هَلْ اُنَبِّئُكُمْ عَلٰى مَنْ تَنَزَّلُ الشَّيٰطِيْنُ ﴿٢٢١﴾ تَنَزَّلُ عَلٰى كُلِّ
اَفَّاكٍ اَثِيْمٍ ﴿٢٢٢﴾ يُّلْقُوْنَ السَّمْعَ وَاَكْثَرُهُمْ كٰذِبُوْنَ ﴿٢٢٣﴾ وَالشُّعَرَآءُ

يَتَّبِعُهُمُ الْغَاوٗنَ ﴿٢٢٤﴾ اَلَمْ تَرَ اَنَّهُمْ فِىْ كُلِّ وَادٍ يَّهِيْمُوْنَ ﴿٢٢٥﴾
وَاَنَّهُمْ يَقُوْلُوْنَ مَا لَا يَفْعَلُوْنَ ﴿٢٢٦﴾ اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا
الصّٰلِحٰتِ وَذَكَرُوا اللّٰهَ كَثِيْرًا وَّانْتَصَرُوْا مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا ظُلِمُوْا ؕ
وَسَيَعْلَمُ الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْۤا اَىَّ مُنْقَلَبٍ يَّنْقَلِبُوْنَ ﴿٢٢٧﴾

And this (Qur'ān) is the revelation of the Lord of the worlds. [192] **It is brought by the Trusted Spirit down** [193] **to your heart, so that you become one of the warners** [194] **in plain Arabic language.** [195] **And of course, it is (mentioned) in the scriptures of the former people.** [196]

Is it not a proof for them that the knowledgeable of the children of Isrā'īl recognize him (the prophet)? [197] **And (even) if We had revealed it to a non-Arab,** [198] **and he would have recited it to them, they were not to believe in it.** [199] **Thus We have made it enter into the hearts of the sinners.** [200] **They will not believe in it until they will see the painful punishment** [201] **and it will come to them suddenly while they will not be anticipating (it),** [202] **and they will say, "Is it (possible) that we are given some respite?"** [203] **Are they asking then that Our punishment should come soon?** [204] **So tell me, If We give them enjoyment for years,** [205] **then comes to them what they are warned of,** [206] **what help can be provided to them by the things they were given to enjoy?** [207] **And We did not destroy any town unless it has had warners** [208] **to give advice, and We have never been unjust.** [209]

And this (Qur'ān) is not brought down by the satans. [210] **It neither fits them, nor are they able to (do this).** [211] **In fact they are kept far from hearing (it at the time of revelation).** [212] **So do not invoke any other god along with Allah, or you will be among those who are to be punished.** [213] **And warn the nearest people of your clan,** [214] **and be kind with humbleness to the believers who followed you.** [215] **So if they disobey you, then say, "I disown what you do,"** [216] **and place your trust in the Mighty, the Merciful,** [217] **Who sees you when you stand**

[218] **(in prayer) and (sees) your movement among those who prostrate.** [219] **Surely, He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing.** [220]

Shall I tell you on whom the satans descend? [221] **They descend on every sinful liar. They give ear to hear (secretly) and most of them tell lies. As for the poets, they are followed by the straying people. Did you not see that they wander in every valley and that they say what they do not do, except those who believe and do righteous deeds and remember Allah very much and defend themselves after they are wronged. And the wrongdoers will soon know to which place they are going to return.** [227]

Commentary

Qur'ān is the name of the collection of its words and meanings

نَزَلَ بِهِ الرُّوْحُ الْاَمِيْنُ ﴿١٩٣﴾ عَلٰى قَلْبِكَ لِتَكُوْنَ مِنَ الْمُنْذِرِيْنَ ﴿١٩٤﴾ بِلِسَانٍ عَرَبِيٍّ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿١٩٥﴾ وَ اِنَّهٗ لَفِيْ زُبُرِ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ ﴿١٩٦﴾

It is brought by the Trusted Spirit down [193] to your heart, so that you become one of the warners [194] in plain Arabic language. [195] And of course, it is (mentioned) in the scriptures of the former people. [196]

The words بِلِسَانٍ عَرَبِيٍّ مُّبِيْنٍ (in plain Arabic language - 195) in these verses makes it clear that Qur'ān is only that which is in Arabic language. Any translation of a passage or the whole of Qur'ān in any language cannot be called Qur'ān. But the next sentence اِنَّهٗ لَفِيْ زُبُرِ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ (And of course, it is [mentioned] in the scriptures of the former people - 196) does not seem to be in consonance with it, because the pronoun 'it' is apparently refers to the Qur'ān and means that the Qur'ān was also in the earlier scriptures, i.e. in Torah, Injīl and Zabūr. It is also well known that the earlier books, namely Torah, Injīl and Zabūr, were not in the Arabic language. Hence the inclusion of the meanings of Qur'ān in them is referred in this verse as 'Qur'ān'. Answer to this apparent contradiction is that according to majority of the Ummah, sometimes even the subject matter of the Qur'ān is called Qur'ān in a general sense, because the real purpose of a book is the subjects it deals with. The statement that earlier books also contained Qur'ān is in this sense only that they included some Qur'ānic subjects. This statement is also endorsed by many narrations of *ḥadīth*.

Sayyidnā Maquil ibn Yasar ﷺ has reported a Ḥadīth in Mustadrak of Ḥākim that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said that Sūrah Al-Baqarah was given to him from *'adh-dhikr al-'awwal'*, and Sūrah Ṭāḥā, Ṭawāsin طواسين (all Sūrahs starting from Ṭasin طس) and Ḥawāmīm حواميم (all Sūrahs beginning with Ḥāmīm) were given from the tablets of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, while Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah was given to him from under the *'Arsh* عرش (the great Throne). Ṭabarānī, Ḥākim, Baihaqī etc. have reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ that Sūrah Al-Mulk is present in Torah as well. (Al-Ḥadīth). The Sūrah سَبِّحِ اسْمَ رَبِّکَ الْاَعْلٰی has itself said, اِنَّ هٰذَا لَفِی الصُّحُفِ الْاُوْلٰی صُحُفِ اِبْرٰهِیْمَ وَمُوْسٰی (87:18,19) that is these subjects have also appeared in the books of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm and Sayyidnā Mūsā عليهم السلام.

The gist of all these verses and narrations is that many a subjects of the Qur'ān were also covered in the earlier books as well. But it does not ıean that those parts of the earlier books in which the Qur'ānic subjects were covered are given the name of Qur'ān. No one in the Ummah is of the opinion that those parts of the earlier books, be called Qur'ān. Instead the majority of Ummah believes that Qur'ān is the name not only of its wordings but also of its meanings. If someone picks up some of the Quranic words from different places and put them together to make a passage like الحمد لله العزيز الرّحيم الّذی له' ملک السّمٰوٰت وهو ربّ العٰلمين خالق کل شئ وهو المستعان, it will not be called Qur'ān, despite the fact that all these words are taken from the Qur'ān. Likewise, only the meanings of Qur'ān, irrespective of the language they are rendered in, cannot be regarded as Qur'ān.

Reciting translation of Qur'ān in prayers is not allowed by consensus of Ummah

The whole Ummah is unanimous on the rule that reciting the translation of the Qur'ān in any other language like Urdu, Persian, English etc. is not sufficient for discharging the obligation of recitation in Ṣalāh, except in a case of extreme necessity. The jurists who are reported to have relaxed this rule have, later on, changed their view.

Urdu translation of Qur'ān is not allowed to be called Urdu Qur'ān

If only the translation of the Qur'ān is written in any language without the Arabic text, it cannot be called the Qur'ān. Some people call

the Urdu translation of the Qur'ān as Urdu Qur'ān, or the English translation of the Qur'ān as English Qur'ān. It is not right and amounts to disrespect of the Holy Book. Printing, calling or trading of something in the name of Qur'ān, without the Arabic text of the Qur'ān, is not permitted. This subject is dealt with in detail in my treatise (تحذیر الاخوان عن تغییر رسم القرآن).

أَفَرَءَيْتَ إِن مَّتَّعْنٰهُمْ سِنِيْنَ ﴿٢٠٥﴾

So tell me, If We give them enjoyment for years, - 26:205.

There is a hint in this verse that those who are bestowed with long life in this world by Allah Ta'ālā, it is His grace on them. But those who show ingratitude for this grace and do not submit to Islam, to them this respite and grace will not be of any avail. Imām Zuhrī رحمه الله تعالى has related that Sayyidnā 'Umar ibn 'Abdul Azīz رحمه الله تعالى used to recite this verse every morning by holding his beard and addressing his Self:

نهارك يا مغرور سهو و غفلة وليلك نوم والرّدیٰ لك لازم

فلا انت فی الایقاظ یقظان حازم ولا انت فی النّوّام ناجٍ وسالم

وتسعٰی الٰی ما سوف تکره غبّه کذٰلك فی الدّنیا تعیش البهائم

'O the duped one! Your whole day is spent in negligence and the night in sleep, while death is inevitable for you. Neither you are awake among the alert and woken nor are you the one who will get salvation from among the sleepers. You keep endeavoring for things which will soon bring you unpleasant results. Cattle and animals live like this in the world'.

وَأَنْذِرْ عَشِيْرَتَكَ الْأَقْرَبِيْنَ ﴿٢١٤﴾

And warn the nearest people of your clan, -26:214.

'Ashirah عشيرة means clan and by limiting it with *'aqrabīn* (the nearest people) it is used for close relatives. It is worth noting here that the mission of the Holy Prophet ﷺ as a messenger is universal to the whole Ummah, then what is the wisdom in making it special for the members of the clan? But if we look at it rather closely, we will notice in it an easy and effective way for preaching, which would have far-reaching effect. One's own family members having the privilege of closeness are also entitled to

have precedence over others on initiating any act of virtue. By virtue of close mutual relations they know each other well and anyone with false claims would get exposed in no time. Conversely, the one having good reputation among the family members would be readily accepted and listened to. Once the close relatives throw their weight to support a good cause, it brings in unity and mutual help between them. This way they develop a group of the family members on the basis of trust and sincerity and it becomes very easy to spend the daily life in an atmosphere of peace to follow the religious code. Then this homogeneous and sincere group works like a small power in preaching and spreading the precepts and code of religion to others. In another verse of the Holy Qur'ān it is said قُوا أَنفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا (66:6) that is 'Save yourself and your family members from the fire of Jahannam'. Responsibility of saving one's dependent from the fire of Jahannam is placed on every member of the clan. This is an easy and simple way of reforming the conduct and morals. It is an every day experience that in order to follow good conduct and morals and then to stick to them is only possible when the environment is favourable for that. If only one person in the entire household wishes to perform his prayers regularly, even that devotee will find it difficult to carry it out. In the present environment it has become difficult to abstain from the unlawful things not because it is not possible to keep away from them, but the reason is that when the whole fraternity is involved in a sin, it becomes very difficult for just one person to keep himself aloof. When this verse was revealed to Holy Prophet ﷺ, he called out all the members of the family and conveyed to them the message of truth. Although they did not accept the truth at that time but gradually the family members started converting to Islam. When the uncle of Holy Prophet ﷺ Sayyidnā Ḥamzah رضي الله عنه, converted to Islam it provided great strength to the mission.

وَالشُّعَرَآءُ يَتَّبِعُهُمُ الْغَاوُنَ ﴿٢٢٤﴾

As for the poets, they are followed by the straying people. - 26:224.

شعر (Shi'r) which is the origin of Shu'arā' and is translated as poetry; is an Arabic word which lexically means any statement based on imagination and ideas not confirmed by serious proofs. It is not necessary for being a 'Shi'r' in original Arabic to have a particular rhythm or

qāfiyah or *radīf.*

Since the technical *shi'r* (poetry) which is always based on particular rhythms is generally composed of imaginary thoughts, the technical definition of *shi'r* (poetry) is "a composition of words having a particular rhythm and a similar sound at the end of each line (Qāfiyah)". The pagans of Makkah used to call the Holy Prophet ﷺ a *shā'ir* (a poet) and the Holy Qur'ān, a *shi'r* (poetry). Some commentators of the Holy Qur'ān are of the view that the pagans of Makkah used to call the Qur'ān a *shi'r* in its technical sense. But others are of the opinion that it was not so, because the infidels of Makkah were fully conversant with the code and principles of poetry, and it is obvious that Qur'ān is not a book of poetry. Even a non-Arab would not accept that, not to say anything of the eloquent Arabs. On the contrary, the Arabs used to call him a poet in the literal sense of the word, that is they regarded his thoughts as imaginary. Their objective was to call him a liar, because the word *Shā'ir* is also used in the sense of lie, and *Shi'r* for a liar.

وَالشُّعَرَآءُ يَتَّبِعُهُمُ الْغَاوٗنَ ﴿٢٢٤﴾

As for the poets, they are followed by the straying people. - 26:224

The word شاعر (Shā'ir) is used in this verse in its technical and commonly known meaning, that is the rhythmic composer. This interpretation is endorsed by a narration in Fataḥul Bārī that when this verse was revealed, the respected companions, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Rawāḥah, Ḥassān ibn Thābit and Ka'b ibn Mālik رضى الله عنهم اجمعين, who were well known poets, went crying to Holy Prophet ﷺ and submitted that this verse was revealed by Allah Ta'ālā and they too were poets. Then Holy Prophet ﷺ said 'You go through the last part of the verse'. What he conveyed was that their poetry was not frivolous having bad intent, hence they were included in that exception which is mentioned in the last part of the verse. The commentators have therefore, elaborated that in the beginning of the verse the disbeliever poets are purported, because depraved people, defiant Satan and disobedient Jinn followed and narrated their poetry. (Fataḥul Bārī)

The place of poetry in Islamic Sharī'ah (jurisprudence)

In the beginning of these verses the poetry is disapproved strongly and appears an object of God's wrath. But towards the end of Sūrah the exception allowed proves that poetry is not condemned completely. Only that poetry is condemned and abominable which encourages Allah's disobedience or puts hindrance in His remembrance, or disgraces and condemns someone falsely, or be obscene or leads to obscenity. But that poetry which is free from these sins and unbecoming things is exonerated by Allah Ta'ālā through this verse إِلَّا الَّذِينَ اٰمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ (227). On the other hand the poetry which deals with the subjects of wisdom based on sermons and teachings is part of the virtues carrying reward in the Hereafter as reported by Sayyidnā 'Ubayy Ibn Ka'b ﷺ إنّ من الشعر حكمة that is 'There is a poetry which contains wisdom'. (Bukhārī) Ḥāfiẓ ibn Ḥajar has said that here wisdom stands for rightful things based on truth. Ibn Baṭṭāl has explained that the poetry dealing with Oneness of Allah, His remembrance and love for Islam is desirable and praiseworthy, and in the hadith under reference that type of poetry is in view. However, the poetry dealing with falsehood and obscenity is contemptible. This explanation is also confirmed by the following narrations:

(1) 'Amr ibn Sharīd has reported through his father that Holy Prophet ﷺ had listened 100 couplets of 'Umayyah ibn aṣ-ṣalt from him.

(2) Muṭarrif has reported that he traveled with Sayyidnā 'Imrān ibn Ḥuṣain ﷺ from Kūfa to Baṣrah and he used to recite couplets on every stage of the journey.

(3) Ṭabarī رحمه الله تعالى has reported about the distinguished companions and *tābi'īn* that they used to compose, listen and recite poetry.

(4) Imām Bukhārī رحمه الله تعالى has reported that Sayyidah 'A'ishah رضى الله عنها used to compose poetry.

(5) Abū Ya'lā has reported from Ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنه that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said, "Poetry is a composition". If its subject matter is good and useful, it is good, and if its subject is bad or sinful, it is bad. (Fataḥul Bārī)

Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī has remarked that from among the ten jurists of

Madīnah, who are well known for their learning and graciousness, 'Ubaidullāh ibn 'Utbah ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ was an eloquently articulate poet, and the poetry of Qāḍī Zubair ibn Bakkār was compiled in a book. Qurṭubī has reproduced an observation of Abū 'Amr that no intelligent and knowledgeable person would take the poetry comprising of nice subjects as bad. It is also worth noting that among the noble companions who were the religious leaders, there is none who had either not composed the poetry himself or had not recited or listened to the composition of others with fondness.

Where poetry is condemned in certain narrations, it is with the purpose that one should not get engrossed so much in it that he neglects his worships and the Qur'ān. Imām Bukhārī has elaborated this subject in a separate chapter in which he has quoted from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ :

لَأَنْ يَمْتَلِئَ جَوْفُ رَجُلٍ قَيْحًا يَرِيْهِ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ أَنْ يَمْتَلِئَ شِعرًا

'It is better to fill up one's belly with pus than to fill it up with poetry'.

Imām Bukhārī has explained that according to his understanding this statement portrays the situation when the poetry becomes dominant over remembrance of Allah Ta'ālā, or in one's involvement with the Qur'ān or with acquiring knowledge. But if the poetry is kept under check, it is not bad. Similarly, there is consensus of Ummah that the poetry which is obscene or contains defaming subjects is unlawful and is not permitted. This ruling is not exclusive to poetry only, but applies to any writing – prose or poetry. (Qurṭubī)

Sayyidnā 'Umar ibn Khaṭṭāb ﷺ had dismissed his governor, 'Adiyy ibn Naḍlah from his position because he used to compose obscene poetry. Sayyidnā 'Umar ibn 'Abdul 'Azīz رحمه الله تعالى had directed to exile 'Amr ibn Rabī'ah and 'Abul Aḥwaṣ on the same charge, but when 'Amr ibn Rabī'ah repented on his deeds, his repentance was accepted. (Qurṭubī).

Every art or learning, which makes one oblivious of Allah and Hereafter, is contemptible

Ibn Abī Jamrah has ruled that excessive involvement in poetry and all such learning or art which makes one oblivious of the remembrance of Allah Ta'ālā and causes doubts in the mind about beliefs of Islam or helps

in promoting spiritual ills, fall under the same ruling as is given for contemptible poetry.

The depravity of the followers is often an indicator of the depravity of the leader

وَالشُّعَرَآءُ يَتَّبِعُهُمُ الْغَاوٗنَ ﴿٢٢٤﴾ؕ

As for the poets, they are followed by the straying people. - 26:224

The poets are blamed in this verse that their followers are misled. Here the question arises that if it is the followers who are misled, how could the poets be blamed for the acts which their followers adopt? It is because the wrong deeds adopted by the followers are normally the signs of misdeeds of the one who is followed. But Maulana Ashraf 'Ali Thanavi رحمہ اللہ تعالیٰ has clarified that this rule will apply when the one who is followed has a hand in the misdeeds of the followers. For instance if there is no check on telling lies and backbiting in the meetings of the leader, and because of that his followers, who sit in his company, also adopt this habit, then this sin committed by the followers will be regarded as a manifestation of the sin of the one who is followed. But if the misdeeds are different from the deeds of the leader, then he cannot be made responsible for the misdeeds of his followers. For example, if a person follows a scholar for his beliefs diligently and sincerely, but does not follow the scholar in his righteous deeds and morals, then the scholar cannot be blamed for the former's lack of righteousness and morality. (Allah is pure and knows best).

Alḥamdulillāh
The Commentary on
Sūrah Ash-Shu'arā'
Ends here.

Sūrah An-Naml

(The Ant)

Sūrah An-Naml was revealed in Makkah and it has 93 Verses and 7 sections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 6

طٰسٓ تِلْكَ اٰيٰتُ الْقُرْاٰنِ وَكِتَابٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿۱﴾ هُدًى وَّبُشْرٰى
لِلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿۲﴾ الَّذِيْنَ يُقِيْمُوْنَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَيُؤْتُوْنَ الزَّكٰوةَ وَهُمْ
بِالْاٰخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوْقِنُوْنَ ﴿۳﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ زَيَّنَّا لَهُمْ
اَعْمَالَهُمْ فَهُمْ يَعْمَهُوْنَ ﴿۴﴾ اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ لَهُمْ سُوْٓءُ الْعَذَابِ وَهُمْ
فِى الْاٰخِرَةِ هُمُ الْاَخْسَرُوْنَ ﴿۵﴾ وَاِنَّكَ لَتُلَقَّى الْقُرْاٰنَ مِنْ لَّدُنْ
حَكِيْمٍ عَلِيْمٍ ﴿۶﴾

Ṭā, Sīn. These are the verses of the Qur'ān and an enlightening book, [1] to give guidance and good news to the believers [2] who establish Ṣalāh and pay Zakāh and who have faith in the Hereafter. [3] As for those who do not believe in the Hereafter, We have made their deeds adorned in their sight. So they are wandering astray. [4] Those are the the people who deserve the worst punishment and who are the worst losers in the Hereafter. [5] And surely you are being given the Qur'ān by a wise, knowledgeable Being. [6]

Commentary

زَيَّنَّا لَهُمْ اَعْمَالَهُمْ (We have made their deeds adorned in their sight - 27:4)It means that those who do not believe in the Hereafter We have made their bad actions look adorned in their sight. Therefore they feel good about them and remain enthralled in depravity. Some commentators have interpreted that "their deeds" is used in this verse for good deeds. Hence meaning of the verse is that Allah had placed the good deeds before them with all their attractions. But those unjust people did not pay any attention to them, rather they remained engrossed in infidelity; hence lost their way in wilderness.

However, the first interpretation looks more appropriate and straightforward. In the first place, in the Qur'ān, the word (*Zīnah*) 'adornment' has been generally used for bad actions, for instance: زُيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ حُبُّ الشَّهَوٰتِ، (It has been made attractive for people to love the desires - 3:14) زُيِّنَ لِلَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوا الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَا (Adorned is the present life for those who disbelieve - 2:212) زَيَّنَ لِكَثِيْرٍ مِّنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ. (6:137). Its use for good actions is very rare , such as: وَلٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ حَبَّبَ اِلَيْكُمُ الْاِيْمَانَ وَزَيَّنَه' فِيْ قُلُوْبِكُمْ (But Allah has endeared to you belief, decking it fair in your hearts - 49:7). Secondly, the word اعمالهم(their deeds) used in the verse is also pointing out that bad actions are meant here and not the righteous actions.

Verses 7 - 14

اِذْ قَالَ مُوْسٰى لِاَهْلِهٖٓ اِنِّیْٓ اٰنَسْتُ نَارًا ؕ سَاٰتِیْكُمْ مِّنْهَا بِخَبَرٍ اَوْ اٰتِیْكُمْ بِشِهَابٍ قَبَسٍ لَّعَلَّكُمْ تَصْطَلُوْنَ ﴿۷﴾ فَلَمَّا جَآءَهَا نُوْدِیَ اَنْۢ بُوْرِكَ مَنْ فِی النَّارِ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا ؕ وَسُبْحٰنَ اللّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِیْنَ ﴿۸﴾ یٰمُوْسٰۤى اِنَّهٗۤ اَنَا اللّٰهُ الْعَزِیْزُ الْحَكِیْمُ ﴿۹﴾ وَاَلْقِ عَصَاكَ ؕ فَلَمَّا رَاٰهَا تَهْتَزُّ كَاَنَّهَا جَآنٌّ وَّلّٰى مُدْبِرًا وَّلَمْ یُعَقِّبْ ؕ یٰمُوْسٰى لَا تَخَفْ ۫ اِنِّیْ لَا یَخَافُ لَدَیَّ الْمُرْسَلُوْنَ ﴿۱۰﴾ اِلَّا مَنْ ظَلَمَ ثُمَّ بَدَّلَ حُسْنًۢا بَعْدَ سُوْٓءٍ فَاِنِّیْ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِیْمٌ ﴿۱۱﴾ وَاَدْخِلْ یَدَكَ فِیْ جَیْبِكَ تَخْرُجْ بَیْضَآءَ مِنْ غَیْرِ سُوْٓءٍ ۫ فِیْ تِسْعِ اٰیٰتٍ اِلٰى فِرْعَوْنَ وَقَوْمِهٖ ؕ اِنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا قَوْمًا فٰسِقِیْنَ ﴿۱۲﴾ فَلَمَّا جَآءَتْهُمْ اٰیٰتُنَا مُبْصِرَةً قَالُوْا هٰذَا

سِحۡرٌ مُّبِيۡنٌ ﴿١٣﴾ وَجَحَدُوۡا بِهَا وَاسۡتَيۡقَنَتۡهَاۤ اَنۡفُسُهُمۡ ظُلۡمًا وَّعُلُوًّا ؕ فَانۡظُرۡ كَيۡفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الۡمُفۡسِدِيۡنَ ﴿١٤﴾

(Remember) when Mūsā said to his family, "I have noticed a fire. I shall bring to you some news from it, or bring to you a live ember, so that you may warm yourselves." [7] **So when he came to it, he was called: "Blessed is the one who is in the fire and the one who is around it. And pure is Allah, the Lord of the worlds.** [8] **O Mūsā, the fact is that I AM Allah, the Mighty, the Wise.** [9] **And cast your staff down." So when he saw it moving, as if it was a snake, he retreated, turning his back and did not look behind. "O Mūsā be not scared. I am such that the messengers are not scared before Me,** [10] **except him who did wrong, then after (having done) evil, replaced (it) with good, then I am Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful.** [11] **And put your hand into your bosom, and it will come out white, without any evil, as one of the nine signs (sent) to the Pharaoh and his people. Surely they have been a sinful people.** [12]

So when Our signs came to them as an eye-opener, they said, "This is a clear magic." [13] **And they denied them out of sheer injustice and arrogance, though their hearts believed them (to be true). See, then, how was the fate of the mischief-makers.** [14]

Commentary

Adoption of natural means for one's need is not against trust in Allah

اِذۡ قَالَ مُوۡسٰى لِاَهۡلِهٖۤ اِنِّىۡۤ اٰنَسۡتُ نَارًا ؕ سَاٰتِيۡكُمۡ مِّنۡهَا بِخَبَرٍ اَوۡ اٰتِيۡكُمۡ بِشِهَابٍ قَبَسٍ لَّعَلَّكُمۡ تَصۡطَلُوۡنَ ﴿٧﴾

(Remember) when Mūsā said to his family, "I have noticed a fire. I shall bring to you some news or bring to you an inflamed ember, so that you may warm yourselves" (27:7).

Here Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام faced two necessities. One, to find out the way. which he had forgotten, and second, to warm up with the fire, because it was a cold night. For achieving this purpose he tried to go to

mount Ṭūr. But he did not make a claim of success in his endeavour, rather he uttered such words that conveyed his servitude and hope from Allah Ta'ālā. Thus, it is apparent that in order to meet one's requirements and needs in life it is not against the trust in Allah to strive and make endeavour. But the conviction should be in Allah Ta'ālā and not in one's own efforts. Perhaps, the wisdom in showing him the fire was that it had fulfilled his two needs – finding the way and to get warm with its heat. (Rūḥ)

Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام has said امْكُثُوا and تَصْطَلُوْنَ which are both in plural form, and are used where the addressees are more than one, although there was only his wife (Sayyidnā Shuaib's عليه السلام daughter) with him. Use of plural form for her only was to show respect to her. It was in the same manner as some times the noble people use plural form in addressing even a single person. It is reported from the Holy Prophet ﷺ also in aḥādīth that he used to address his wives in plural form.

It is prudent not to refer one's wife by her name in general gatherings, rather an allusion for the purpose is better

قَالَ مُوْسٰى لِاَهْلِهٖ (Mūsā said to his family) The word "Ahl" is used in this verse for the wife of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام while this word means "family" and includes all the members of one's household alongwith his wife, although the wife of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was the only one present at the time of this incident, but by the use of this word in his discourse there is a hint that while referring to one's wife in a group of people it is better to use common words. For example, 'my family members are of the opinion'.

فَلَمَّا جَآءَهَا نُوْدِيَ اَنْۢ بُوْرِكَ مَنْ فِي النَّارِ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا ؕ وَسُبْحٰنَ اللّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿۸﴾ يٰمُوْسٰۤى اِنَّهٗۤ اَنَا اللّٰهُ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ ﴿۹﴾

So when he came to it, he was called: "Blessed is the one who is in the fire and the one who is around it And pure is Allah, the Lord of the worlds. O Mūsā, the fact is that I AM Allah, the Mighty, the Wise. (27:8 - 9)

The real nature of seeing the fire and hearing the voice from it

This incident of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام has appeared in the Qur'ān at many places under different chapters. Two sentences in the above verses of Sūrah An-Naml call for special attention. One, بُوْرِكَ مَنْ فِي النَّارِ (Blessed is the one who is in the fire) and two, اِنَّهٗۤ اَنَا اللّٰهُ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ.(The fact is that I AM

Allah, the Mighty, the Wise) In Sūrah Ṭa-Ḥā, the commentary on which appears in this volume earlier, this incident is mentioned in these words:

إِذْ رَا نَارًا فَقَالَ لِأَهْلِهِ امْكُثُوْا إِنِّيْٓ اٰنَسْتُ نَارًا لَّعَلِّيْٓ اٰتِيْكُمْ مِنْهَا بِقَبَسٍ اَوْ اَجِدُ عَلَى النَّارِ هُدًى ﴿١٠﴾ فَلَمَّآ اَتٰهَا نُوْدِيَ يٰمُوْسٰى ﴿١١﴾ اِنِّيْٓ اَنَا رَبُّكَ فَاخْلَعْ نَعْلَيْكَ اِنَّكَ بِالْوَادِ الْمُقَدَّسِ طُوًى ﴿١٢﴾ وَاَنَا اخْتَرْتُكَ فَاسْتَمِعْ لِمَا يُوْحٰى ﴿١٣﴾ اِنَّنِيْٓ اَنَا اللّٰهُ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّآ اَنَا فَاعْبُدْنِيْ وَاَقِمِ الصَّلٰوةَ لِذِكْرِيْ ﴿١٤﴾

When he saw a fire and said to his family, wait. I have noticed a fire. Perhaps I bring you an ember from it, or find some guidance by the fire."

So when he came to it, he was called, "O Mūsā, it is Me, your Lord, remove your shoes, you are in the sacred valley of Tuwa. And I have chosen you, so listen to what is revealed: Surely, I AM ALLAH. There is no god but I, so worship Me and establish Ṣalāh for My remembrance. (20:10-14)

In these verses also two sentences need special attention: اِنِّيْٓ اَنَا رَبُّكَ (it is Me, your Lord) and اِنَّنِيْٓ اَنَا اللّٰهُ (I AM ALLAH). And in Sūrah Al-Qaṣāṣ the incident is related in these words:

نُوْدِيَ مِنْ شَاطِئِ الْوَادِ الْاَيْمَنِ فِي الْبُقْعَةِ الْمُبٰرَكَةِ مِنَ الشَّجَرَةِ اَنْ يّٰمُوْسٰٓى اِنِّيْٓ اَنَا اللّٰهُ رَبُّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ

He was called by a voice coming from a side of the right valley in the blessed ground, from the tree, saying" O Mūsā, I AM Allah, the Lord of the worlds" (28:30)

In all the three Sūrahs although the incident is described under different titles, yet the subject matter is the same, which is that Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام needed fire that night for quite a few reasons. Allah Ta'ālā evinced that to him on a tree of mount Ṭūr, and he heard these words from that fire or the tree:

اِنِّيْٓ اَنَا رَبُّكَ

It is Me your Lord. (20:12)

اِنَّهٗٓ اَنَا اللّٰهُ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ

The fact is that I AM ALLAH, the Mighty, the Wise. (27:9)

اِنَّنِيْٓ اَنَا اللّٰهُ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّآ اَنَا

I AM ALLAH. There is no god but I. (20:14)

إِنِّىٓ أَنَا اللّٰهُ رَبُّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ

I AM ALLAH, the Lord of the worlds. (28:30)

It is possible that this vocative might have been repeated again and again, sometime by one word and then by another. The condition of hearing this vocative as described by Abū Ḥayyān in Tafsīr Al-Baḥr ul-Muḥīṭ and by 'Ālūsī in Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī is that it was heard in a manner as if it was emanating from all sides, and not from any particular direction. The hearing of this was also very peculiar in that it was not heard by the ears only but by all the parts of the body, which was nothing less than a miracle.

It was the sound of an invisible speaker which was being heard without a particular quality (*kayf*) and without determining the direction. But its source was the fire or the tree on which the fire was glowing. Under such situations normally people get led into fallacy and involve themselves in idol worshipping. Therefore, under each title, the Oneness of Allah has been reminded and emphasized alongside. In the verse under reference سُبْحٰنَ اللّٰهِ (Pure is Allah) is added for this very warning. In Sūrah Ṭa-Ḥā the expression لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّآ اَنَا (20:14) and in Sūrah Al-Qaṣāṣ اَنَا اللّٰهُ رَبُّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ (28:30) is used for the emphasis of this point. The outcome of this discussion is that the fire was shown to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام because he was in need of fire and light at that time, otherwise there was no connection between the Word of Allah or with the entity of Allah with the fire or the tree of Ṭūr. Fire was nothing but a creature of Allah Ta'ālā like so many other creatures. This is why the commentators have different views in the interpretation of the verses under reference: اَنْۢ بُوْرِكَ مَنْ فِى النَّارِ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا (27:8) that is Blessed is the one who is in the fire and the one who is around it. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, Mujāhid and 'Ikrimah have expressed the view that the words مَنْ فِى النَّارِ (the one who is in the fire) stand for Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام because the fire he had seen was not the real fire, but the auspicious spot he had reached was so luminous that it looked like fire from a distance. Therefore, Mūsā عليه السلام was inside that fire, and مَنْ حَوْلَهَا (the one who is around it) is purported for the angels, who were present there nearby. Other commentators have put forward a totally opposite explanation, that the words "who is in the fire" refer to the

angels, while the words "who is around it" stand for Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام. Tafsīr Bayān ul Qur'ān has adopted the latter explanation. It is sufficient to know this much for the understanding of the meaning of these verses.

A narration of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās and Ḥasan Al-Baṣrī and its explanation

Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Ibn Marduwaih etc. have also quoted another explanation put forward by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās, Sayyidnā Ḥasan Al- Baṣrī and Sa'īd Ibn Jubair رضي الله عنهم about the phrase مَنْ فِي النَّارِ (who is *in the fire*) that it is meant for Allah Ta'ālā Himself. It is but obvious that fire is created by Allah, and incarnation of the Creator into anything created by Him is impossible. Therefore, this narration cannot be taken to mean that Allah Ta'ālā had transfigured into the fire, as many idol-worshippers believe in transfiguration of God in their idols. This is absolutely against the concept of Tauḥīd (Oneness of Allah). All it means is manifestation, like the reflection in the mirror. The image is manifested in the mirror but it is not transfigured in it. What is seen in the mirror is outside it, having its own entity. It is also quite evident that this manifestation, which is also called refulgence, was not the refulgence of Allah Ta'ālā. It is for the simple reason that if Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام had already witnessed the Divinity, he would not have requested at the mount of Ṭūr رَبِّ أَرِنِيْٓ أَنْظُرْ إِلَيْكَ that is, 'O my Lord, show Your Self to me (7:143), so that I may look at you'. In that case the reply لَنْ تَرَانِيْ (You will never see me - 7:143) would also have been meaningless. It is now clear that Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه in his explanation had meant the manifestation of Allah Ta'ālā, that is refulgence, which appeared in the form of fire. As it was not the transmigration, it was also not the refulgence of His real Self. The phrase لَنْ تَرَانِيْ (You will never see me) has also clarified that in this world no one can witness the refulgence of His real Self. Then what do manifestation and refulgence really mean? The answer to this is that this refulgence was figurative, which is commonly known among the mystics. It is rather difficult to comprehend it fully, but in order to make it simple according to common understanding, I have tried to explain it in my book Aḥkām ul-Qur'ān, in Arabic language,in the explanation of Sūrah Al-Qaṣaṣ. Those who are interested can see it there.

إِلَّا مَنْ ظَلَمَ ثُمَّ بَدَّلَ حُسْنًا بَعْدَ سُوْٓءٍ فَإِنِّيْ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿١١﴾

Except him who did wrong, then after (doing) evil replaced (it) with good, then I am Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. 27:11

The miracle of the staff of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was mentioned in the verse prior to this, where it was also stated that when the staff turned into serpent, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام himself started running out of fear. The other miracle of illuminative hand of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام is related in the verse next to above referred verse. Then why this exception is mentioned in between two verses relating to miracles, and whether this exception is snapped from the subject (*munqaṭi'*) or is it adjoining (*muttaṣil*)? The commentators have different view points on this subject. Some have declared it as snapped from the subject. In that case the verse will read as that in the previous verse it was stated that messengers do not get frightened, then it was also mentioned, by the way, as to who are the ones who should get frightened. They are those who have committed any sin, but later repented and sought Allah's pardon and performed good deeds. Although Allah Ta'ālā would pardon their sins, but even then there would be possibility of traces of sins being left over. It is for this reason that they always remain fearful of Allah. But If the exception is regarded adjoining with the subject, then the meaning of the verse would be that Allah's messengers do not get frightened except those who have committed some trifle or minor mistake and have repented on that. In that situation such trifle sins are forgiven. But the actual position is that even if there were some minor slips by the messengers, they were not regarded as sins – neither small nor big. Although they looked like sins but factually they were errors of *ijtihad*. According to this interpretation, this exception is an allusion toward the incident of the Egyptian who was killed by Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام by error of judgement. Although this error was pardoned by Allah Ta'ālā, yet its effect remained with Mūsā عليه السلام leaving some fear of the incident. Had this incident not have occurred, there would not have been any fear of the sort.

Verses 15 - 19

وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا دَاوٗدَ وَسُلَيْمٰنَ عِلْمًا ۚ وَقَالَا الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِىْ فَضَّلَنَا عَلٰى
كَثِيْرٍ مِّنْ عِبَادِهِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿١٥﴾ وَوَرِثَ سُلَيْمٰنُ دَاوٗدَ وَقَالَ يٰۤاَيُّهَا
النَّاسُ عُلِّمْنَا مَنْطِقَ الطَّيْرِ وَاُوْتِيْنَا مِنْ كُلِّ شَىْءٍ ۗ اِنَّ هٰذَا لَهُوَ

الْفَضْلُ الْمُبِيْنُ ﴿١٦﴾ وَحُشِرَ لِسُلَيْمٰنَ جُنُوْدُهٗ مِنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْاِنْسِ
وَالطَّيْرِ فَهُمْ يُوْزَعُوْنَ ﴿١٧﴾ حَتّٰىٓ اِذَآ اَتَوْا عَلٰى وَادِ النَّمْلِ ۙ قَالَتْ
نَمْلَةٌ يّٰۤاَيُّهَا النَّمْلُ ادْخُلُوْا مَسٰكِنَكُمْ ۚ لَا يَحْطِمَنَّكُمْ سُلَيْمٰنُ
وَجُنُوْدُهٗ ۙ وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُوْنَ ﴿١٨﴾ فَتَبَسَّمَ ضَاحِكًا مِّنْ قَوْلِهَا وَقَالَ
رَبِّ اَوْزِعْنِىْٓ اَنْ اَشْكُرَ نِعْمَتَكَ الَّتِىْٓ اَنْعَمْتَ عَلَىَّ وَعَلٰى وَالِدَىَّ وَاَنْ
اَعْمَلَ صَالِحًا تَرْضٰىهُ وَاَدْخِلْنِىْ بِرَحْمَتِكَ فِىْ عِبَادِكَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ ﴿١٩﴾

And surely We gave knowledge to Dāwūd and Sulaimān. And they said, "Praise belongs to Allah who made us excel many of His believing slaves. [15] **And Sulaimān inherited (the traits of) Dāwūd and said, "O people we have been taught the speech of birds and we have been given of everything. Indeed, this is the evident grace (of Allah)."** [16]

And mustered for Sulaimān were his forces from among the Jinns and the humans and the birds. So all of them were kept under (his) control, [17] **until when they reached the valley of the ants, one of the ants said, "O ants, enter your dwelling places, lest Sulaimān and his armies crush you unknowingly."** [18] **So he (Sulaimān) smiled, laughing at her speech and said, "My Lord, enable me that I become grateful to Your favour that you have bestowed on me and on my parents and that I do the good deeds You like, and admit me, by Your mercy, among Your righteous slaves."** [19]

Commentary

وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا دَاوٗدَ وَسُلَيْمٰنَ عِلْمًا

And surely We gave knowledge to Dāwūd and Sulaimān. (27:15)

The knowledge given to Sayyidnā Dāwūd and Sulaimān علیهما السلام was obviously the special knowledge normally given to the prophets about their functions and obligations as prophets, but at the same time it may also include other sciences and arts, as Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام was given the art of making armors. Sayyidnā Dāwūd and Sulaimān علیهما السلام

enjoyed a special position among the prophets in that they were also bestowed with the empire along with the prophethood. The empire was of a very special nature in that they ruled over not only the humans but also the Jinns and animals. While relating all these graces, knowledge is mentioned first, which is a clear hint that knowledge is superior and paramount among them all. (Qurṭubī)

There is no heritage of wealth among the prophets

وَوَرِثَ سُلَيْمٰنُ دَاوٗدَ (And Sulaimān inherited Dāwūd - 27:16). The inheritance mentioned in this verse is not the inheritance of wealth and property, because the Holy Prophet ﷺ has clearly declared that the prophets do neither inherit the property of anyone nor does their property is inherited by anyone. Tirmidhī and Abū Dāwūd have reported from Sayyidnā Abuddardā' رضي الله عنه that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said, 'Ulamā' (men of knowledge) are the inheritors of prophets, but the prophets did not leave *dirhams* or *dinars* (wealth) as their inheritance; instead, they have left knowledge as their heritage. Al-Kulaini, the famous Shi'ite scholar, has reported from Sayyidna Ja'far Aṣ-ṣādiq that he said, "Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام was the inheritor of Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام, and the Holy Prophet ﷺ was the inheritor of Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام. (Rūḥ from al-Kulaini). This statement makes the issue very clear that the inheritance is used here in the sense of heritage of knowledge (because nobody can claim that the Holy Prophet ﷺ inherited the property of Sulaimān عليه السلام. Rationally speaking also, here inheritance cannot mean wealth, because when Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام died he had 19 sons, hence if inheritance of wealth was meant to be distributed, then all these sons would have been entitled for the inheritance, and it cannot be exclusive to Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام alone. It is, therefore, quite clear that the inheritance meant here is the one in which the brothers were not included and only Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام was the inheritor. This could only be the inheritance of knowledge and prophethood. Along with that inheritance, Allah Ta'ālā also graced him with the empire of Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام and furthermore control over the Jinns, birds, animals and the wind. In the light of these proofs, the narration of Ṭabrasī is proved to be wrong in which he has regarded inheritance as that of wealth on authority of some Imāms of Ahl-ul-Bait. (Rūḥ)

The period between the death of Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام and the

birth of the last of the prophets the Holy Prophet ﷺ was seventeen hundred years, while Jews calculate this period as fourteen hundred years. The life span of Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام was a little over fifty years. (Qurṭubī)

It is permissible to use plural form for one's own self, provided it is not out of arrogance

عُلِّمْنَا مَنْطِقَ الطَّيْرِ وَأُوتِيْنَا (27:16). Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام has used plural form for himself as a regal idiom, although he was alone. It was to impress his subjects, so that they do not indulge in indolence in the obedience of Allah Ta'ālā and in following him. Similarly, there is no harm if the rulers and officials also use plural form for themselves while they are in the company of their subjects, provided it is for the esteem of the office they are holding and not out of arrogance.

Birds and animals also have sense and intelligence

There is sense and intelligence to some degree in all animals and birds. However, it is not developed to such an extent that they were made to follow any injunctions of the Sharī'ah. But the humans and jinns are bestowed with such perfected sense and intelligence that they are made the addressee and followers of the injunctions of Allah Ta'ālā. Imām Shafi'i رحمه الله تعالى has said that dove is the cleverest of all the birds, and Ibn 'Aṭiyyah has said that ant is very intelligent animal; its smelling power is very strong . If it gets hold of a grain it breaks it into two, so that it does not germinate, and thus it stock its food for the winters. (Qurṭubī)

Special Note

The expression "speech of birds" is used in the verse because of the incident of the hoopoe which is a bird, otherwise Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام was taught languages of all the beasts, birds and the insects, as mentioned in the next verse about understanding the language of the ant. Imām Qurṭubī has mentioned in his Tafsīr different incidents in which Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام told the people how different birds chirped and what did they mean. The chirping of each bird was a word of advice.

وَأُوتِيْنَا مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ (and we have been given of every thing -16). The word كُلّ (every) applies to everything of a kind, but sometimes its application is not universal but pertains to a specific purpose . Here also it is used in

that sense and "everything" refers to those things only which are needed by the government or an empire. Otherwise it is obvious that they did not have aeroplanes, motor cars or railways in those days.

رَبِّ اَوْزِعْنِىْ (My Lord, enable me - 27:19). It is derived from وَزْع (*waz'*), which lexically means to stop or restrain. Here it means 'enable me with Divine help so that I should have the trait of gratitude with me all the time and do not part with it ever', which will result in restraint. In the earlier verse فَهُمْ يُوْزَعُوْنَ (27:17) (translated as "kept under control" it was also used in the same sense, that in order to save them from confusion because of their large number the armies were restrained.

وَاَنْ اَعْمَلَ صَالِحًا تَرْضٰهُ (and that I do the good deeds You like - 27:19). Here رضا (liking) means acceptance. Thus the meaning is 'Yā Allah! Grace me with Divine help for such righteous deeds which are acceptable to You'. From this it is argued in Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī that it is not necessary for the righteous deeds to be accepted, but their acceptance is dependent on certain conditions. It is further explained that there is no relation between righteousness and acceptance either rationally or in religious law. It is for this reason that the prophets used to pray for the acceptance of their righteous deeds. Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm and Isma'īl عليهما السلام prayed while constructing the House of Allah رَبَّنَا تَقَبَّلْ مِنَّا (Our Lord accept from us - 2:127). It shows that after doing a good deed, one should not be complacent, but should pray to Allah for its acceptance.

Despite having done good deeds and their acceptance the entry into Paradise will not be possible without the grace of Allah

وَاَدْخِلْنِىْ بِرَحْمَتِكَ فِىْ عِبَادِكَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ (And admit me, by your mercy, among your righteous slaves - 27:19). Despite having performed good deeds and their acceptance, the entry into Paradise will depend on the grace and kindness of Allah Ta'ālā. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said that no one will enter into Paradise relying only on his deeds. So the companions enquired from the Holy Prophet ﷺ "Even you too?", and he answered "Yes, me too, but I am surrounded by Allah's favour and grace". (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī)

Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام was also praying for the grace of Allah for the entry into Paradise in these words 'O Allah, grace me also with your favour so that I become entitled to enter Paradise'.

Verses 20 - 28

وَتَفَقَّدَ الطَّيْرَ فَقَالَ مَالِيَ لَآ اَرَى الْهُدْهُدَ ۖ اَمْ كَانَ مِنَ الْغَآئِبِيْنَ ﴿٢٠﴾ لَاُعَذِّبَنَّهٗ عَذَابًا شَدِيْدًا اَوْلَاَاذْبَحَنَّهٗٓ اَوْلَيَاْتِيَنِّىْ بِسُلْطٰنٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿٢١﴾ فَمَكَثَ غَيْرَ بَعِيْدٍ فَقَالَ اَحَطْتُّ بِمَالَمْ تُحِطْ بِهٖ وَ جِئْتُكَ مِنْ سَبَاٍ ۢ بِنَبَاٍ يَّقِيْنٍ ﴿٢٢﴾ اِنِّىْ وَجَدْتُّ امْرَاَةً تَمْلِكُهُمْ وَ اُوْتِيَتْ مِنْ كُلِّ شَىْءٍ وَّلَهَا عَرْشٌ عَظِيْمٌ ﴿٢٣﴾ وَجَدْتُّهَا وَقَوْمَهَا يَسْجُدُوْنَ لِلشَّمْسِ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ وَزَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ اَعْمَالَهُمْ فَصَدَّهُمْ عَنِ السَّبِيْلِ فَهُمْ لَايَهْتَدُوْنَ ﴿٢٤﴾ اَلَّا يَسْجُدُوْا لِلّٰهِ الَّذِىْ يُخْرِجُ الْخَبْءَ فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا تُخْفُوْنَ وَ مَا تُعْلِنُوْنَ ﴿٢٥﴾ اَللّٰهُ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَرَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيْمِ ﴿٢٦﴾ قَالَ سَنَنْظُرُ اَصَدَقْتَ اَمْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الْكٰذِبِيْنَ ﴿٢٧﴾ اِذْهَبْ بِّكِتٰبِىْ هٰذَا فَاَلْقِهْ اِلَيْهِمْ ثُمَّ تَوَلَّ عَنْهُمْ فَانْظُرْ مَاذَا يَرْجِعُوْنَ ﴿٢٨﴾

And (once) he (Sulaimān) checked the birds and said, "What is wrong with me that I do not see the *hudhud* (hoopoe)? Rather he has disappeared. [20] **I will punish him with a severe punishment or slaughter him unless he brings to me a clear plea."** [21] **Then the bird did not take long and said (to Sulaimān), "I have discovered what you did not, and have brought to you a sure information from Saba' (Sheba).** [22] **I have found a woman ruling over them and she has been given of everything (she needs) and she has a great throne.** [23] **I have found her and her people prostrating to the sun, instead of Allah, and the Satan has beautified their deeds for them and has prevented them from the way, so they do not take the right path,** [24] **that is, they do not prostrate to Allah who brings forth what is hidden in the heavens and the earth and who knows whatever you conceal and whatever you reveal, Allah! There is no god but He, the Lord of the Great Throne."** [26]

He (Sulaimān) said, "We shall see whether you have told the truth or you are one of the liars. [27] **Go with this letter of mine and deliver it down to them, then turn back from them and see what they return."** [28]

Commentary

وَتَفَقَّدَ الطَّيْرَ (And he checked the birds - 27:20). The word تفقد (*tafaqqud*) means to verify about the presence or absence of some people. Hence it is translated as to check. Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام was bestowed by Allah Taʻālā the rule over Jinns, the beasts and the birds, apart from humans. As it is customary for the ruler to look after and take care of all of his subjects, it is stated in this verse تفقد الطَّيْرَ. That is Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام inspected the birds from his subjects, and made a note of the presence and absence of them all. The Holy Prophet ﷺ also had the habit to keep himself informed about the well-being of his companions. If some one was absent, he used to go to his house to find out his welfare. If any one was sick, he would go and visit him and do the needful nursing. If some one was afflicted with any trouble, he would make the effort to remove it.

It is necessary for the rulers to take care of their subjects and for the saints of their disciples and students

This verse has proved that Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام used to keep an eye on all types of his subjects, and used to keep himself fully informed about them, so much so that the absence of a small and weak bird like a hoopoe which has a small population compared to other birds, did not go unnoticed from him. It is also possible that his specific enquiry about the hoopoe was due to its small population and weak make-up among the species of birds. Therefore, he made special effort to keep his eyes on the weaker section of his subjects.

Among the companions, Sayyidnā 'Umar رضي الله عنه established the traditions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in totality during his tenure as caliph. He used to go round the streets of Madīnah during the nights to keep him fully abreast with the state of affairs. If he found any one in distress or need, he would help him out. A number of such incidents are related in his biography. He used to say "If a wolf kills a lamb by the side of river Euphrates, for that too 'Umar will be answerable". (Qurṭubī)

Such were the principles of rule and administration, which were taught by the prophets and practically demonstrated by the revered

companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . Because of these practices, the entire populace, both Muslims and non-Muslims, used to live in complete harmony and tranquility. Such justice and fair play, composure and tranquility were never witnessed ever in the whole world after their time.

مَالِيَ لَآ أَرَى الْهُدْهُدَ ۖ أَمْ كَانَ مِنَ الْغَائِبِينَ

"What is wrong with me that I do not see the hoopoe; rather he has disappeared? - 27:20

Taking account of one's own Self

Apparently Sulaimān عليه السلام should have said at this occasion,"What is wrong with the hoopoe that he is absent?" But Sulaimān عليه السلام asked about his own wrong when he said, "What is wrong with *me*?" Perhaps, it was because the hoopoe and all other birds were put under his control as a special reward. Initially it crossed his mind momentarily that probably His blessings have been curtailed for some slip on his part that a species of birds (the hoopoe) was not present. So, he made some soul searching to find out what could have been the reason for its absence? It was a case similar to that of the mystic saints who make enquiries from their Self before looking into the material causes for the relief of any distress, or when any blessing is reduced for them. It is their practice to take into account of any possible slips on their part in paying gratitude to Allah Ta'ālā for His bounties, which might have caused the withdrawal of the blessings from them. Qurṭubī has quoted here the practice of these saints on the authority of Ibn al-'Arabī in the following words:

اذا فقدوا آمالهم تفقّدوا اعمالهم That is 'when these saints do not succeed in their objectives, they take stock of their deeds to find out where have they committed the mistake'.

After this initial stock-taking of Self and due considerations and deliberations it is said أَمْ كَانَ مِنَ الْغَائِبِينَ (rather, he has disappeared - 27:20). Here the word أَمْ is used for the meaning of the word بَلْ (rather) (Qurṭubī). Therefore, the meaning of the sentence is 'It is not that my sight has faltered in locating the hoopoe, but in fact it is not present'.

Reason for picking up hoopoe from among the birds, and an important warning

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه was asked as to what was the

reason that the hoopoe was picked up from all the birds. He replied that Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام had camped at a place where there was no water, and Allah Ta'ālā has bestowed such a peculiar instinct to hoopoe that it can see things under the ground and can also locate the underground water. Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام wanted to find out, through the proficiency of the hoopoe, the depth and extent of the underground water. Having known the location of the underground water, he would have commanded the Jinns to excavate the ground to bring the water up – a task they would have performed very quickly. Paradoxically, despite having the piercing sight, the hoopoe gets entrapped in the nets of the hunters. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه has commented on this:

قف يا وقّاف كيف يرى الهدهد باطن الارض وهو لايرٰى الفخّ حين يقع فيه (قرطبی)

> 'O the people of knowledge! try to understand this fact that the hoopoe has the ability to see things under the ground, but the net spread out over the ground gets obscured from its sight, and hence it gets entrapped in that'.

The bottom line to understand is that whatever is destined for a person through the divine decree, whether it is trouble or comfort, has to be enforced, and no one can escape from it by his wisdom, insight or through the use of force or money.

لَأُعَذِّبَنَّهٗ عَذَابًا شَدِيْدًا اَوْلَا اَذْبَحَنَّهٗ

I will punish him with a severe punishment - 27:21

It is part of the political sagacity to punish the absentee after making due scrutiny.

It is permissible to punish a lethargic animal moderately

Allah Ta'ālā had permitted Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام to punish the animals in the same way, as He had permitted people of all ages, a permission which is still valid, to slaughter them to make use of their flesh, bones, skin etc. Similarly, if the domestic animals, such as cow, horse, camel, donkey etc., do not perform their normal duty, then it is permissible even now to punish them moderately for disciplining. Punishing animals, other than domestic, is not permissible under Islamic law. (Qurṭubī)

اَوْلَيَاْتِيَنِّىْ بِسُلْطٰنٍ مُّبِيْنٍ

Unless he brings to me a clear plea. - 27:21

That is, if the hoopoe offers a plausible excuse for its absence, then it will be saved from the punishment. There is a subtle hint in it that it is expected of a ruler or an administrator that if someone falters doing something, then it should be thoroughly investigated before punishing him. The punishment should be enforced only when the guilt is established, otherwise he should be forgiven.

اَحَطْتُّ بِمَا لَمْ تُحِطْ بِهٖ (I have discovered what you did not - 27:22). That is, the hoopoe said while offering its excuse that it knew something which he did not know. What it meant was that it had brought information, which he (Sulaimān عليه السلام) did not know before.

The prophets do not have the knowledge of the unknown

Imām Qurṭubī has deduced from this incident that the prophets do not have the knowledge of the unseen (*'Ilm ul-ghayb*), so that they could know all about every thing. It is quite evident from this verse.

وَ جِئْتُكَ مِنْ سَبَاٍ بِنَبَاٍ يَّقِيْنٍ

"And have brought to you a sure information from Saba' (Sheba)". 27:22

Saba' (Sheba) (سَبَاء) is a well-known city of Yemen, and its other name is Ma'ārib (مَآرِب). The distance between San'ā', the capital of Yemen, and Saba' is three day's journey.

Is it proper for a junior to say to his senior that he knows more than him?

On the basis of this conversation by the hoopoe, some people have deduced that it is appropriate for a pupil to say to his teacher or for a common man to say to a knowledgeable person that he knows more than the latter on the subject, provided he is absolutely confident that his knowledge on that subject is really more than others. But it is argued in Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī that such an assertion before the elders and scholars is against the etiquettes, and should be avoided. This argument, however, does not apply to the conversation of the hoopoe, because it made that statement to save itself from the punishment and to justify its excuse for the absence. The hoopoe actually wanted to place before Sulaimān عليه السلام the exact position, so that he could understand the reason for its absence.

In such situations it is not improper if something is said against the normal etiquettes.

اِنِّىْ وَجَدْتُّ امْرَاَةً تَمْلِكُهُمْ

I have found a woman ruling over them, - 27:23

The name of this woman is given in the history as Bilqīs, daughter of Sharāḥīl. But in some other narrations, it is mentioned that her mother was a jinni whose name was Bal'amah, daughter of Shīṣān. (Wuhaib b. Jarīr has reported this from Khalīl Ibn Aḥmad, Qurṭubī) Her grandfather, Hudahud, was a great king and controlled the entire land of Yemen. He had forty sons. All these sons became kings. Her father, Sūrah, had married a jinni woman, who gave birth to her (Bilqīs). Different reasons are given for his marriage to a jinni. One of them being that he used to say with arrogance "No one from you is a match for me; hence I will not marry. It is because I do not like marrying outside my matching clan". As a result of this, people got him married to a jinni woman. (Qurṭubī) Perhaps it was his conceit that he deemed his own people as not his equal. This did not go well with the Divine writ and he was made to marry a jinni woman, who was neither from his family nor his kind or race.

Is it permissible to marry a jinni?

Some people have expressed doubt on the question, because they thought the jinns are not capable of reproducing like the humans. Ibn-al-'Arabī has opined in his commentary that this is a wrong conception. It is established through authentic āḥādīth that jinns also possess all the requisites of reproduction and the essentials of male and female, as in humans.

There is another aspect to this question from the angle of Islamic law. That is, whether it is permissible for a man to marry a jinni woman? On this aspect there are different views of the Islamic jurists. Some have ruled that it is permissible, while others have ruled it out, because of their different kind, like the animals. In the book named as (آكام المرجان فى أحكام الجانّ) this subject is discussed in detail, where some incidents are quoted mentioning that Muslim men married Muslim jinni women, and they also gave birth to children. Here this subject is irrelevant, because the father of Bilqīs, who married the jinni woman, was not a Muslim. Hence, the question of permissibility does not arise here. In Islamic law the lineage is

based on father, and the father of Bilqīs was a human. Therefore, Bilqīs would also be regarded as a human. In some narrations, marriage of Sulaimān ﷺ with Bilqīs is mentioned. Even if these narrations are correct, it does not corroborate permissibility to marry a *jinni* woman, because Bilqīs herself was not a jinni, though her mother might have been one. Only Allah knows best. The marriage of Sulaimān ﷺ will be discussed later in this commentary.

Is it permissible for a woman to be king or the head or Imām of a people?

It is reported in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ that when the Holy Prophet ﷺ learnt that the people of Persia have made the daughter of Kisrā as their queen, he said لَنْ يُفْلِحَ قَوْمٌ وَلَّوْا اَمْرَهُمْ اِمْرَأَةً. That is, "Those people will never prosper who give control of authority to a woman". It is for this verdict that scholars are unanimous on the point that the control of a government, an empire or caliphate cannot be assigned to a woman. Rather the greater *imāmah* (*al-imāmah al-kubrā*) is also allowed only to men folk, like the Imāmah for prayers. As for Bilqīs being the queen of Saba', it does not make it to be a religious decree, unless it is proven that Sayyidnā Sulaimān ﷺ had married her, and then retained her as the queen. This assumption is not proven by any authentic narration, which could be trusted for the purpose of legislation of religious laws.

وَاُوْتِيَتْ مِنْ كُلِّ شَیْءٍ

She has been given of everything - 23

It means that whatever services are needed to a king or an aristocrat according to their time, they all were available to her. It is, however, obvious that those things that were not invented by then, their unavailability is not in conflict with this verse.

وَلَهَا عَرْشٌ عَظِيْمٌ (And she has a great throne - 23) Literal meaning of 'Arsh (عَرْش) is throne of the empire. A narration is attributed to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ that the length of the throne of Bilqīs was eighty yards, its breadth was forty yards and height thirty yards. It was profusely decorated with pearls, red rubies, topaz and olivine, and its legs were studded with precious stones and pearls. Its curtains were made of silk and fine cloth. The throne was secured within seven buildings, one within

the other, all well protected and locked.

وَجَدْتُّهَا وَقَوْمَهَا يَسْجُدُوْنَ لِلشَّمْسِ

I have found her and her people prostrating to the sun - 27:24

This shows that her people were star-worshippers and used to worship the sun. Some believe that they were Zoroastrians, who worship fire and all forms of light.

اَلاَّ يَسْجُدُوْا لِلّٰهِ الَّذِى يُخْرِجُ الْخَبْءَ (that is, they do not prostrate to Allah who bring forth what is hidden - 25).This sentence is linked with the previous one, "The Satan has beautified their deeds - 26" and the sense is that the Satan had engrained in their minds that they should not bow down before Allah, or had prevented them from the righteous path so that they should not prostrate before Allah Ta'ālā.

Letters and writings are enough proof on religious matters in the normal circumstances

اِذْهَبْ بِّكِتٰبِى هٰذَا (Go with this letter of mine - 28). Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام considered it enough to write to the queen of Saba' (Sheba) for the fulfillment of his duty to invite her to faith, and hence sent her a letter. This shows that in the normal circumstances the letter or writing is an acceptable proof. The religious jurists did not accept a letter as an evidence only where a proper personal evidence is required under Islamic law, because testimony is not allowed on telephone or by letter. It has been made mandatory for the witnesses to appear in person before the court. There is a lot of wisdom in this law. Under any law of the world prevalent in any country it is compulsory for the witnesses to appear before the court in person, and the testimony through letter or telephone is not accepted.

Writing letters and sending them to the disbelievers is permissible

Another matter that has been proved by the letter of Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام is that in preaching of religion and invitation to Islam it is permissible to write letters to disbelievers and infidels. According to many Ṣaḥīḥ āḥādīth it is established that the Holy Prophet ﷺ had also written letters to many infidels.

Social etiquettes should always be observed, no matter if it is a gathering of infidels

فَاَلْقِهْ اِلَيْهِمْ ثُمَّ تَوَلَّ عَنْهُمْ

Throw it down to them, then turn back from them - 27:28

When Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام made use of the hoopoe as a courier, he also taught him the social etiquette that after delivering the letter to Queen of Saba' it should move out of her court, which is the norm of the royal courts. This shows that observance of social etiquettes and good human behavior is desirable as a general rule.

Verses 29 - 37

قَالَتْ يٰٓاَيُّهَا الْمَلَؤُا اِنِّيْٓ اُلْقِيَ اِلَيَّ كِتٰبٌ كَرِيْمٌ ﴿٢٩﴾ اِنَّهٗ مِنْ سُلَيْمٰنَ
وَاِنَّهٗ بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ ﴿٣٠﴾ اَلَّا تَعْلُوْا عَلَيَّ وَاْتُوْنِيْ
مُسْلِمِيْنَ ﴿٣١﴾ قَالَتْ يٰٓاَيُّهَا الْمَلَؤُا اَفْتُوْنِيْ فِيْٓ اَمْرِيْ ۚ مَا كُنْتُ
قَاطِعَةً اَمْرًا حَتّٰى تَشْهَدُوْنِ ﴿٣٢﴾ قَالُوْا نَحْنُ اُولُوْا قُوَّةٍ وَّاُولُوْا بَاْسٍ
شَدِيْدٍ ۙ وَّالْاَمْرُ اِلَيْكِ فَانْظُرِيْ مَاذَا تَاْمُرِيْنَ ﴿٣٣﴾ قَالَتْ اِنَّ الْمُلُوْكَ
اِذَا دَخَلُوْا قَرْيَةً اَفْسَدُوْهَا وَجَعَلُوْٓا اَعِزَّةَ اَهْلِهَآ اَذِلَّةً ۚ وَكَذٰلِكَ
يَفْعَلُوْنَ ﴿٣٤﴾ وَاِنِّيْ مُرْسِلَةٌ اِلَيْهِمْ بِهَدِيَّةٍ فَنٰظِرَةٌۢ بِمَ يَرْجِعُ
الْمُرْسَلُوْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾ فَلَمَّا جَآءَ سُلَيْمٰنَ قَالَ اَتُمِدُّوْنَنِ بِمَالٍ فَمَآ اٰتٰنِۦَ
اللّٰهُ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّآ اٰتٰكُمْ ۚ بَلْ اَنْتُمْ بِهَدِيَّتِكُمْ تَفْرَحُوْنَ ﴿٣٦﴾ اِرْجِعْ اِلَيْهِمْ
فَلَنَاْتِيَنَّهُمْ بِجُنُوْدٍ لَّا قِبَلَ لَهُمْ بِهَا وَلَنُخْرِجَنَّهُمْ مِّنْهَآ اَذِلَّةً وَّهُمْ
صٰغِرُوْنَ ﴿٣٧﴾

She (the queen) said (to her officials after receiving the letter), "O chieftains, there has been delivered to me an esteemed letter. [29] **It is from Sulaimān and it is (in the following words:) With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful.** [30] **Do not rebel against me and come to me in submission."** [31] **She said, "O chieftains, advise me in the matter I have (before me). I am not the one who decides a matter absolutely unless you are present with me."** [32] **They said, "We are powerful and tough fighters, and the decision lies with**

you; so consider what command you should give." [33] **She said, "In fact when the kings enter a town, they put it to disorder and put its honorable citizens to disgrace, and this is how they normally do.** [34] **And I am going to send a gift to them, then see, what response the envoys will bring back."** [35]

So when he (the envoy) came to Sulaimān, he said, "Are you extending a financial aid to me? So what Allah has given me is much better than what He has given to you. But you yourselves are proud of your gift. [36] **Go back to them, and we will bring to them forces they have no power to face, and we will certainly drive them out from there in humiliation while they are disgraced."** [37]

Commentary

قَالَتْ يٰٓاَيُّهَا الْمَلَؤُا اِنِّیْٓ اُلْقِیَ اِلَیَّ كِتٰبٌ كَرِيْمٌ

She (the queen) said (to her officials after receiving the letter), "O chieftains, there has been thrown to me an esteemed letter, 27:29.

Literal meaning of Karīm is respectable, honorable or esteemed, and idiomatically this word is used for a letter when it is sealed. This is why Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ, Qatādah, Zohair رحمهم الله تعالى etc. have interpreted the expression كِتَابٌ كَرِيْمٌ as the sealed book, which indicates that Sayyidnā Sulaimān ؑ had put his seal on the letter. When the Holy Prophet ﷺ learnt about the tradition of the non-Arab kings that they do not read the letter if it is not sealed, he got a seal made for himself, and used it on the letters he sent to Caesar and Chosro. It shows that the practice of sealing a letter is to show respect to the letter as well as to the addressee. The present day practice is to secure the letter in an envelope, which is as good as sealing it. Where show of respect to the addressee is intended, it is closer to the practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ to secure it in an envelope.

The language of the letter of Sulaiman ؑ

Although Sayyidnā Sulaimān ؑ was not an Arab, yet it is not unlikely that he knew the Arabic language, especially when he knew the languages of the animals. As the Arabic language is supreme among all the languages, it is possible that he might have written the letter in Arabic. It is also probable because Bilqīs was an Arab by race, and she

read the letter and understood it. The other probability is that he had written the letter in his own language and an interpreter read it for her. (Rūḥ)

Some rules of writing letters

إِنَّهُ مِن سُلَيْمَٰنَ وَإِنَّهُ بِسْمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحْمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

It is from Sulaimān and it is (in the following words:) With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful. 27:30

There is not a single aspect of human life on which Qur'ān does not provide guidance. Mutual exchange of welfare and other information through letters is part of human requirements. In this Sūrah, full text of the letter from Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام to Queen Saba' has been reproduced. This is a letter from a prophet, and Qur'ān has reproduced it as an approved format for a letter. Hence, it should be taken in that light and Muslims should try to follow the guidance provided in it for letter writing.

Writer should first write his name and then of the addressee

The very first guidance provided in this letter is that Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام has begun it by writing his name. How did he write the name of the addressee, it is not mentioned in the Qur'ān. However, it does tell us that it was the practice of the prophets to write their name first, in which there are many benefits. For instance, the addressee would know even before reading the letter from whom it has come. So he would read the letter in the backdrop of his relations with the writer, and any confusion about the identity of the writer would be eliminated right in the beginning. The Holy Prophet ﷺ had also adopted the same practice in all his letters addressed to various persons, and began the letter with the wordings من محمّد عبد الله ورسوله (From Muḥammad, the slave of Allah and His messenger)

A question may arise here as to whether it would be a disrespect to the addressee if a junior writes his name first while writing to his elder, teacher or senior in status? So, is it appropriate to follow this practice or not? In this respect the companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ had acted differently. Most of them preferred to follow the practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and not the requirement of the formality, and wrote their names first even when writing to the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself. Rūḥ

ūl-Maʻānī has reproduced a narration of Sayyidnā 'Anas ﷺ from al-Baḥr ul-Muḥīṭ as follows:

> ما كان احد اعظم حرمة من رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم، وكان اصحابه اذا كتبوا اليه كتابًا بدأوا بانفسهم. قلت: وكتاب علاء الحضرمى رضى الله عنه يشهد له على ماروى.
>
> "No human is more revered than the Holy Prophet ﷺ, but when his companions used to write to him, they would first write their names, and I say that Sayyidnā 'Alā' Al-Ḥadramī's letter, which he wrote to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, is a proof to that."

However, after quoting these narrations in Rūḥ ul-Maʻānī it is observed that all this discussion is about the preferred way, otherwise both ways are permissible. If some one writes his name in the last, that too is correct. Religious jurist Abū al-Layth has written in his Bustan that if some one starts with the name of the addressee, no one can question its permissibility, because this has also been the practice among the Muslims for long, and no one has objected to that. (Rūḥ ūl-Maʻānī, Qurṭubī)

Replying to letters is also a practice of the prophets

It is observed in Tafsīr ul-Qurṭubī that if someone receives a letter, it is incumbent upon him to answer it, because a letter from someone not present is as good as the greeting of the one who is present. It is attributed to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ in a narration that he used to regard the reply of a letter as much obligatory as the reply to a greeting by *salām*. (Qurṭubī)

Starting letters with Bismillah

The letter of Sayyidnā Sulaimān ﷺ and all the letters sent by the Holy Prophet ﷺ have established that writing Bismillah at the beginning of a letter was the practice of the prophets. As to the question whether Bismillah should precede the name of the writer or not, the practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ was that he always put Bismillah before his name, and the name of the addressee after his own name. But in the Qur'ān the order is reversed and the name of Sayyidnā Sulaimān ﷺ is written first and then Bismillah. Therefore, it is also in order if the name of the writer is written first and then Bismillah. But Ibn Abī Ḥātim has reported on the authority of Yazīd Ibn Raumān that in fact Sayyidnā Sulaimān ﷺ had

written his letter in this manner: بسم اللہ الرّحمن الرّحيم. من سليمان بن داود الى بلقيس ابنة ذى شرح وقومها. ان لاتعلوا عَلَيَّ وَاتُونِى مُسْلِمِيْنَ (which means that he wrote Bismillah before his name) but when Bilqīs read out this letter to her people, she mentioned the name of Sulaimān عليه السلام first in order to let them know the name of the writer. The Holy Qur'ān has copied what Bilqīs had uttered. There is no mention in the Qur'ān whether Bismillah was written first or the name of Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام in the original letter. There is yet another possibility that the name of Sulaimān عليه السلام was written on the envelope and Bismillah at the top of the letter, and when Bilqīs read out the letter to her people she announced the name of Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام first.

Ruling

The original tradition (Sunnah) of letter writing is that all letters should begin with Bismillah. However, the religious jurists have ruled, on the authority of the indications given in the Qur'ān and Sunnah, that if there is a risk of disrespect to the name of Allah on the apprehension that the paper on which Bismillah is written would be thrown away, then it is not right to write Bismillah, lest one should get involved in sin. The present day practice is that letters are thrown away after reading and they end up in garbage. Hence, it is better to perform Sunnah by reciting Bismillah orally before starting the letter, rather than writing it on paper.

Can a paper bearing a Qur'ānic verse be given in the hands of a disbeliever?

Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام had sent this letter to Bilqīs when she was not a Muslim, but بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ was written on it. It confirms that this is permissible. The non-Arab kings to whom the Holy Prophet ﷺ had written letters were disbelievers. But the letters contained some Qur'ānic verses too. It should be understood that although it is not permitted to hand over the Holy Qur'ān to infidels, but any book or paper containing some verses of the Qur'ān does not qualify to be the Qur'ān itself; hence, such papers or books can be handed over to an infidel or to someone without wuḍū' (ablution). (Alamgiri)

Letters should be written short, comprehensive, eloquent and effective

Looking at the letter of Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام one cannot avoid noticing that it is so comprehensive that all important matters have been

put together in a few sentences, maintaining the high standard of eloquence alongwith the royal grandeur in front of the infidels. At the same time perfected attributes of Allah Ta'ālā are also described along with an invitation towards Islam. The condemnation of conceit and arrogance is also noticeable. As a matter of fact, this letter is a specimen of the marvel of Qur'ān. Sayyidnā Qatadah ﷺ has stated that it was the practice in letter writing by all the prophets to make it brief but at the same time ensuring that nothing mentionable is left out. (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī)

Consultation in important matters is a Sunnah. It provides the benefit of having views of others, and gives them a sense of participation

قَالَتْ يَاَيُّهَا الْمَلَؤُا اَفْتُوْنِىْ فِىْٓ اَمْرِىْ ۚ مَا كُنْتُ قَاطِعَةً اَمْرًا حَتّٰى تَشْهَدُوْنِ

She said, "O chieftains, advise me in the matter I have (before me). I am not the one who decides a matter absolutely unless you are present with me." - 32

The word اَفْتُوْنِىْ is derived from Fatwā فتوى, which means answering some specific issue. Here it means to give counsel or to express one's views. When Queen Bilqīs received the letter of Sayyidnā Ṣulaimān ﷺ she called the members of her government and asked their view as to what she should do. Before asking their view on the matter, she encouraged and pleased them by declaring that she did not take decisions without consulting them. Because of her remarks, the ministers and the generals expressed their readiness to sacrifice every thing they had in order to follow her command. نَحْنُ اُولُوْا قُوَّةٍ وَّاُولُوْا بَاْسٍ شَدِيْدٍ وَّالْاَمْرُ اِلَيْكِ ("We are powerful and tough fighters, and the decision lies with you - 33). Sayyidnā Qatādah ﷺ has related that according to his information there were 313 members in her consultative committee, and each one of them represented and enjoyed the support of ten thousand persons. (Qurṭubī)

This statement brings to light that having consultation with supporters is an old practice. Islam has attached great importance to consultation and has made this mandatory for the government functionaries. So much so that the Holy Prophet ﷺ, who was the recipient of revelations from Allah Ta'ālā and also used to get direct guidance from Him (thus did not have any need for consultation or advice), was also commanded to follow this practice, in order to set up a

tradition for his followers.The Holy Qur'ān directs the Holy Prophet ﷺ, وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِى الْأَمْرِ (3:159) that is, he should consult them in the matters. There is a sense of participation for the companions in this command, and an advice for the coming generations that the government functionaries must always consult on important matters.

Reaction of Queen Bilqīs on the letter of Sulaimān

After having consulted the functionaries of her government and gaining their confidence, she herself developed a strategy that she should initially test out the real intention of Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام and to find out whether he was actually a prophet and messenger of God, and whether he was really conveying the message of God or he was aspiring for a greater empire. The purpose behind this strategy was to find out that if he was a prophet in reality, then his command should be followed and no hostility be adopted against him. On the other hand if he was only a king and wished to expand his empire by subjugating her kingdom, then a different plan be worked out to face the challenge. To test out the real intention of Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام she adopted the tactic of sending to him precious gifts and presents. If he becomes satisfied after receiving the gifts, then it would indicate that he was only a king and had approached her with mundane motives. On the other hand, if he was actually a prophet then he would not agree on any thing other than acceptance of Islam. Ibn Jarīr has reported this explanation from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه Mujāhid, Ibn Juraij, and Ibn Wahb رحمهم الله تعالى with several chins of narrators.The same subject is elaborated in the following verse:

وَإِنِّى مُرْسِلَةٌ إِلَيْهِم بِهَدِيَّةٍ فَنَاظِرَةٌ بِمَ يَرْجِعُ الْمُرْسَلُوْنَ

And I am going to send a gift to them, then see, what response the envoys will bring back." 27:35.

Appearance of envoys of Bilqīs in the court of Sulaimān عليه السلام

Historical Isra'īli legends describe in great detail the incident of the visit of the envoys of Bilqīs and the gifts they had taken with them. All versions of the legends agree on that the gifts included some gold bricks, some precious stones, one hundred slaves and one hundred slave girls. But the slave girls were dressed in men's clothes and the slaves were dressed in ladies outfits. There was also a letter from Bilqīs, in which

there were some questions for testing Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام. In the selection of gifts also, his test was intended. Allah Ta'ālā had passed on detailed information of gifts to Sulaimān عليه السلام even before their arrival. Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام commanded the Jinns to lay out a floor of gold and silver bricks over a thirty miles stretch from his court, and that strange looking animals be lined up on either side of this pathway. Their excrement of bowels was also to be placed on the floor of gold and silver. Similarly, his court was decorated with special attention. Four thousand chairs of gold were placed on the left side and four thousand on the right side of the main hall for the scholars, ministers, and other officials of the court. The entire hall was bedecked with precious stones. When Bilqīs's envoys saw animals standing on the floor of gold bricks, they were embarrassed with the gifts they had brought with them. It is reported in some narrations that they threw away their gold bricks. Then as they proceeded, they saw rows of beasts and birds on either side of the pathway. After that they came across the rows of jinns. Seeing them, they were browbeaten. Ultimately, when they reached the court and stood before Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام, he received them with dignity, and entertained them with veneration. But he returned all their gifts and presents, and answered all the questions sent up by Bilqīs. (Qurṭubī)

Return of the presents of Bilqīs by Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام

قَالَ أَتُمِدُّونَنِ بِمَالٍ فَمَا آتَانِيَ اللَّهُ خَيْرٌ مِمَّا آتَاكُمْ بَلْ أَنْتُمْ بِهَدِيَّتِكُمْ تَفْرَحُونَ

"Are you giving me an aid of wealth? So what Allah has given me is much better than He has given to you. But you yourselves are proud of your gift. 27:36.

When Bilqīs's envoys reached the court of Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام with the gifts and presents sent by her, he said to them 'Do you wish to help me with wealth? Whatever wealth and bounties I have been given by Allah is much better than your wealth and material. Therefore, I do not accept your presents of wealth. You better take them away, and enjoy them yourself'.

Is it permissible to accept presents from infidels?

Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام did not accept the presents of Queen Bilqīs, which indicates that it is not permissible or not preferable to accept presents from infidels. The correct position about this question is that if

this may lead to weakening of one's position or that of Muslim community, or is likely to go against the expediency of the national interest, then it is prudent not to accept their presents. (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī). But if the interest of the Muslims is in favour of acceptance, for instance if this gesture may lead the non-Muslims to the acceptance of Islam, or may ward off some impending danger to Islam, in such situations it is permitted. It was the practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ to accept presents from some infidels and reject them from others. It is reported in 'Umdatul Qārī Sharḥ al-Bukhārī (Kitāb ul-hibah) and Sharḥ-As- Siyar-Al-Kabr on the authority of Sayyidnā Ka'b ibn Mālik رحمه الله تعالى that 'Āmir ibn Mālik, brother of Brā', went to Madīnah on some work, when he was a disbelieving infidel, and presented two horses and two pairs of garments to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. He sent back these presents with the remarks "We do not accept presents from disbelievers". Once 'Iyāḍ ibn Ḥimār al-Mujashi'ī presented to him some thing. The Holy Prophet ﷺ enquired from him whether he was a Muslim, to which he replied in the negative. So he returned his presents, explaining that Allah Ta'ālā has commanded him not to accept presents from the disbelievers.

As against this there are other narrations reporting that the Holy Prophet ﷺ had accepted presents from some disbelievers. In one such narration, it is related that Abū Sufyān had presented to him a piece of leather when he was still a disbeliever, which the Holy Prophet ﷺ had accepted. Another narration has reported that a Christian had presented to him a very shiny piece of fine silk, which was also accepted by him.

Shamsul 'A'immah has commented after citing these narrations that, in his view, the reason of rejection and acceptance of these presents by the Holy Prophet ﷺ was that where he thought that by their rejection the disbeliever would come near Islam, he rejected them, and where he considered that their acceptance will help bring the disbeliever close to Islam he did that. ('Umdatul Qārī)

Bilqīs took the rejection of her presents by Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام as a sign of his prophethood - not because the acceptance of gifts from disbelievers is not permissible - but she had purposefully sent those presents as a bribe, in order to save herself from any attack from him.

Verses 38 - 41

قَالَ يٰٓاَيُّهَا الْمَلَؤُا اَيُّكُمْ يَاْتِيْنِيْ بِعَرْشِهَا قَبْلَ اَنْ يَّاْتُوْنِيْ مُسْلِمِيْنَ ﴿٣٨﴾ قَالَ عِفْرِيْتٌ مِّنَ الْجِنِّ اَنَا اٰتِيْكَ بِهٖ قَبْلَ اَنْ تَقُوْمَ مِنْ مَّقَامِكَ ۚ وَاِنِّيْ عَلَيْهِ لَقَوِيٌّ اَمِيْنٌ ﴿٣٩﴾ قَالَ الَّذِيْ عِنْدَهٗ عِلْمٌ مِّنَ الْكِتٰبِ اَنَا اٰتِيْكَ بِهٖ قَبْلَ اَنْ يَّرْتَدَّ اِلَيْكَ طَرْفُكَ ۭ فَلَمَّا رَاٰهُ مُسْتَقِرًّا عِنْدَهٗ قَالَ هٰذَا مِنْ فَضْلِ رَبِّيْ ۖ لِيَبْلُوَنِيْٓ ءَاَشْكُرُ اَمْ اَكْفُرُ ۭ وَمَنْ شَكَرَ فَاِنَّمَا يَشْكُرُ لِنَفْسِهٖ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَاِنَّ رَبِّيْ غَنِيٌّ كَرِيْمٌ ﴿٤٠﴾ قَالَ نَكِّرُوْا لَهَا عَرْشَهَا نَنْظُرْ اَتَهْتَدِيْٓ اَمْ تَكُوْنُ مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يَهْتَدُوْنَ ﴿٤١﴾

He said, "O chieftains, which one of you will bring her throne to me before they come to me submissively?" [38] **An *'ifrīt* (stalwart) from the Jinns said, "I will bring it to you before you rise up from your place, and for this (task) I am powerful, trust-worthy".** [39] **Said the one who had the knowledge of the book, "I will bring it to you before your glance returns to you." So when he saw it (the throne) well-placed before him, he said, "This is by the grace of my Lord, so that He may test me whether I am grateful or ungrateful. And whoever is grateful is grateful for his own benefit, and whoever is ungrateful, then my Lord is Need-Free, Bountiful".** [40] **He said, "Disguise the throne for her, and we will see whether she discovers the truth or she is one of those who have no guidance."** [41]

Commentary

Bilqīs's appearance in the court of Sulaimān عليه السلام

Qurṭubī has reported, giving references of historical record, that Bilqīs's envoys returned from the court of Sulaimān عليه السلام totally dumb-founded and awe-struck, and conveyed his declaration of war to the queen. Then Bilqīs said to her people that she was already of the view that he was no ordinary king, but was on some special assignment from God, and that fighting with His messenger is like fighting with God, for which they did not have the strength. After making this statement, she started getting ready to go to Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام. She took along

with her twelve thousand chiefs, commanding an army of hundred thousand men each.[1] Allah Ta'ālā had graced Sayyidnā Sulaimān ﷺ with such awe and majesty that no one had the courage to speak before him. One day he saw a cloud of dust at some distance. So he asked from those who were present as to what that was. His people answered 'O messenger of Allah! Queen Bilqīs is coming with her people'. Some narrations relate that at that time she was about three miles from the court of Sulaimān ﷺ. At that moment Sayyidnā Sulaimān ﷺ turned to his courtiers and asked them:

قَالَ يٰٓاَيُّهَا الْمَلَؤُا اَيُّكُمْ يَاْتِيْنِىْ بِعَرْشِهَا قَبْلَ اَنْ يَّاْتُوْنِىْ مُسْلِمِيْنَ

> He said, "O chieftains, which one of you will bring her throne to me before they come to me submissively?" 27:38.

Sayyidnā Sulaimān ﷺ was already informed that Bilqīs was coming to him to submit after having been impressed by his invitation. So he decided that, apart from royal grandeur, she should also witness a prophetic miracle, which should help her convert to faith. Allah Ta'ālā had bestowed the miracle of control of *jinns* to Sayyidnā Sulaimān ﷺ. After receiving the cue from Allah Ta'ālā, he fancied to have Bilqīs's throne brought to his court even before her arrival. So he commanded the jinni, who was also present in his court, to bring her throne. Selection of throne was presumably made on the basis that it was the most secured object of her treasure, which was kept in the impregnable inner most hall of the seven castles, one within the other, properly secured under lock. So much so that her own people could not reach there. Shifting of such a huge and secured object without breaking the lock or door to a place so far away from where it was placed, could not have been possible without the help and will of Allah Ta'ālā. This was an ideal way to make her see and realize the unlimited power and control of Allah. At the same time it was also intended to make her realize that the high position and status of

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1. The learned author has already mentioned that no authentic record is available on the details of this story. However there are some details found in the Israelite traditions some of which are reproduced here. This huge number of the army of Bilqīs is also taken from those traditions; otherwise, the number given is highly exaggerated on the face of it, and 'Allāmah 'Ālūsī has opined that the tradition giving such a huge number of the army seems to be a lie.

Sulaimān عليه السلام was actually bestowed by Allah Ta'ālā, which had enabled him to perform such super-human things. (Ibn Jarīr)

قَبْلَ اَنْ يَّاْتُوْنِىْ مُسْلِمِيْنَ (before they come to me submissively - 27:38). The word مُسْلِمِيْنَ (*muslimīn*) is the plural of Muslim, the literal meaning of which is obedient or submissive. In conventional expression, 'Muslim' is equivalent of 'believer'. According to Sayyidnā ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, here *Muslimīn* is used in its literal meaning, that is, obedient or submissive. It is so because it was not established at that time that Queen Bilqīs had converted to Islam. She actually converted to Islam after talking to Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام, as is evident from the verses to follow now.

قَالَ الَّذِىْ عِنْدَهٗ عِلْمٌ مِّنَ الْكِتٰبِ (Said the one who had the knowledge of the book - 27:40). The question is as to who was this person? One possibility is that he was Sulaimān عليه السلام himself, because his knowledge of the book of Allah was most extensive. In that case this incident happened as a miracle. The objective was also that Bilqīs should have an experience of the prophetic miracle, so that no doubt was left in her mind. But Ibn Jarīr has reported from many commentators of the Qur'ān, like Qatādah, that he was a person from the companions of Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام. Qurṭubī has declared it to be the view of the majority. Ibn Ishaque has mentioned his name as 'Āṣif Ibn Barkhiyā, and has opined that he was a friend of Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام. Some other narrations say that a cousin of Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام had the knowledge of Al-Ism ul-A'ẓam, (a particular name of Allah Almighty) the speciality of which is that whatever blessing is invoked from Allah Ta'ālā by reciting this name, it is accepted, and anything requested is delivered from Him. It does not prove that Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام did not have the knowledge of Al-Ism-ul-A'ẓam. Rather it is quite likely that he considered it prudent to have the manifestation of the miracle by one of his people, which should have deeper impression on Bilqīs. Therefore, instead of performing the miracle himself, he addressed his people in the above manner. (كذا فى فصوص الحكم) In such a situation, this incident was a Karāmah, which was performed by 'Āṣif Ibn Barkhiyā.

Difference between miracle and Karāmah

Miracles take place without any involvement of natural phenomena by the exclusive act and will of Allah Ta'ālā. It is clearly defined in the Qur'ān itself وَمَا رَمَيْتَ اِذْ رَمَيْتَ وَ لٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ رَمٰى (You did not throw when you threw

but Allah did throw - 8:17). Likewise, there is no involvement of natural phenomena in the happening of Karāmah. They take place exclusively with the act and will of Allah Ta'ālā. This should also be understood that miracles and Karāmah do not take place with the wish or control of the person performing them, but only by the will and act of Allah Ta'ālā. The only difference between the two is that if such an unusual act is demonstrated through a prophet, it is known as a miracle; and if it is demonstrated through someone who is not a prophet, it is called Karāmah. In this particular incident if it is correct that 'Āṣif Ibn Barkhiyā, who was a companion of Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام, performed it, then it will be called his Karāmah. The unusual acts performed by saints are in fact the reflection of the perfections of their prophets, which in turn are deemed to be the miracles of their prophet.

The incident of the throne of Bilqīs was a Karāmah or a Taṣarruf

Shaikh Muḥiyyuddīn ibn al-'Arabī has declared it as a Taṣarruf of 'Āṣif ibn Barkhiyā. In the general use of the term, Taṣarruf means to captivate the audience by the power of sight and mind, for which it is not necessary for the person performing it that he is a prophet or saint or even a Muslim. It is something like mesmerism or hypnotism. The saints have used this power occasionally for reforming and training of their disciples also. Ibn al-'Arabi has explained that since prophets avoid using Taṣarruf, therefore Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام got this job done by 'Āṣif ibn Barkhiyā. But the Qur'ān has declared it the result of عِلْمٌ مِّنَ الْكِتَابِ (The knowledge of the book - 27:40). In the light of the wordings of the Qur'ān, it seems preferable that it was an outcome of some prayer or of Al-Ism ul-A'ẓam which falls within the purview of Karāmah, and has nothing to do with Taṣarruf.

The assertion اَنَا اٰتِيْكَ بِهٖ قَبْلَ اَنْ يَّرْتَدَّ اِلَيْكَ طَرْفُكَ (I will bring it to you before your glance returns to you - 27:40) may create confusion, because it gives the impression that this act was carried out with intent and control. That being so, it is a sign of Taṣarruf, because Karāmah is not under the control of a saint. The answer to this doubt is that presumably Allah Ta'ālā had already given the signal that if there would be a desire for that, He would fulfill it in no time.

This explanation is taken from the commentary 'Aḥkam ul Qur'ān' by Sayyidī Ḥakīmul Ummah Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thanawī, on Sūrah

An-Naml. Apart from that, he has also written a pamphlet on Taṣarruf in Arabic under the title 'At-Taṣarruf', which I have translated in Urdu and has been published separately.

Verses 42 - 44

فَلَمَّا جَآءَتْ قِيْلَ اَهٰكَذَا عَرْشُكِ ط قَالَتْ كَاَنَّهٗ هُوَ ج وَاُوْتِيْنَا الْعِلْمَ
مِنْ قَبْلِهَا وَكُنَّا مُسْلِمِيْنَ ﴿٤٢﴾ وَصَدَّهَا مَا كَانَتْ تَّعْبُدُ مِنْ دُوْنِ
اللّٰهِ ط اِنَّهَا كَانَتْ مِنْ قَوْمٍ كٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿٤٣﴾ قِيْلَ لَهَا ادْخُلِى الصَّرْحَ ج
فَلَمَّا رَاَتْهُ حَسِبَتْهُ لُجَّةً وَّكَشَفَتْ عَنْ سَاقَيْهَا ط قَالَ اِنَّهٗ صَرْحٌ مُّمَرَّدٌ
مِّنْ قَوَارِيْرَ ط قَالَتْ رَبِّ اِنِّىْ ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِىْ وَاَسْلَمْتُ مَعَ سُلَيْمٰنَ
لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٤٤﴾

So when she came, it was said (to her), "Is your throne like this?" She said, "It seems to be the same, and knowledge (of truth) was given to us even before this and we have already submitted." [42] **And she was prevented (from submitting before) by that which she used to worship instead of Allah. Indeed she was from a disbelieving people.** [43] **It was said to her, "Enter the palace." Then once she saw it, she thought it to be flowing water and uncovered her legs. He (Sulaimān) said, "This is a palace made of glasses." She said, "My Lord, I had surely wronged myself, and now I submit, alongwith Sulaimān, to Allah, the Lord of the worlds."** [44]

Commentary

Did Sayyidnā Sulaimān ﵇ marry Bilqīs?

The story of Bilqīs has ended in the above verses on the statement that she converted to Islam after coming to Sayyidnā Sulaimān ﵇. What happened after that? The Qur'ān is silent on this. It is for this reason that when someone asked 'Abdullāh ibn 'Uyaynah whether Sayyidnā Sulaimān ﵇ had married Bilqīs, he answered that her case has finished on this اَسْلَمْتُ مَعَ سُلَيْمَانَ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِيْنَ (I submit, alongwith Sulaimān, to Allah, the Lord of the worlds - 44). The idea behind this

answer was that when Qur'ān has not divulged anything after that, it is not for us to probe any further. But Ibn 'Asākir has reported on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Ikrimah ﷺ that Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام had married Bilqīs after that, and she was retained as the sovereign of her country. She was then sent back to Yemen, and Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام, used to visit her every month for three days. He got three palaces made for her in Yemen, which had no parallel of their kind. (Only God knows best)

Verses 45 - 53

وَلَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَآ اِلٰى ثَمُوْدَ اَخَاهُمْ صٰلِحًا اَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ فَاِذَاهُمْ فَرِيْقٰنِ
يَخْتَصِمُوْنَ ﴿٤٥﴾ قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ لِمَ تَسْتَعْجِلُوْنَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ قَبْلَ الْحَسَنَةِ ج
لَوْلَا تَسْتَغْفِرُوْنَ اللّٰهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُوْنَ ﴿٤٦﴾ قَالُوا اطَّيَّرْنَا بِكَ وَبِمَنْ
مَّعَكَ ط قَالَ طٰٓئِرُكُمْ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ بَلْ اَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ تُفْتَنُوْنَ ﴿٤٧﴾ وَكَانَ فِى
الْمَدِيْنَةِ تِسْعَةُ رَهْطٍ يُّفْسِدُوْنَ فِى الْاَرْضِ وَلَا يُصْلِحُوْنَ ﴿٤٨﴾
قَالُوْا تَقَاسَمُوْا بِاللّٰهِ لَنُبَيِّتَنَّهٗ وَاَهْلَهٗ ثُمَّ لَنَقُوْلَنَّ لِوَلِيِّهٖ مَا شَهِدْنَا
مَهْلِكَ اَهْلِهٖ وَاِنَّا لَصٰدِقُوْنَ ﴿٤٩﴾ وَمَكَرُوْا مَكْرًا وَّمَكَرْنَا مَكْرًا وَّهُمْ
لَا يَشْعُرُوْنَ ﴿٥٠﴾ فَانْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ مَكْرِهِمْ لا اَنَّا دَمَّرْنٰهُمْ
وَقَوْمَهُمْ اَجْمَعِيْنَ ﴿٥١﴾ فَتِلْكَ بُيُوْتُهُمْ خَاوِيَةً بِمَا ظَلَمُوْا ط اِنَّ فِىْ
ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَّعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٥٢﴾ وَاَنْجَيْنَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَكَانُوْا يَتَّقُوْنَ
﴿٥٣﴾

And We sent to Thamūd their brother Ṣāliḥ saying (to them), "Worship Allah". Then suddenly they became two groups quarrelling with each other. [45] **He said, "O my people, why do you seek evil to come sooner before good? Why do you not seek forgiveness from Allah, so that you are treated with mercy?"** [46] **They said, "We regard you and those with you as a sign of bad omen." He said, "Your omen is with Allah, but you are a people**

put to a test." [47]

And there were nine persons in the city who used to make mischief on the earth and did not put things right. [48] **They said, "Let us swear a mutual oath by Allah that we shall attack him (Ṣāliḥ) and his family at night, then will say to his heir, 'We did not witness the destruction of his family and we are really truthful.'"** [49] **And (thus) they devised a plan and We devised a plan, while they were not aware.** [50] **So look how was the fate of their plan, that We annihilated them and their people altogether.** [51] **Now those are their houses, lying empty because of the transgression they committed. Surely, in this there are signs for a people who have knowledge.** [52] **And We saved those who believed and who used to be God-fearing.** [53]

Commentary

لِمَ تَسْتَعْجِلُوْنَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ قَبْلَ الْحَسَنَةِ (why do you seek evil to come sooner before good? - 27:46). Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام is referring here to the demand of the infidels that he should bring the divine torment to them in this world, so that they may know his truthfulness. Therefore, "evil" in this sentence stands for torment, while "good" refers to their repentance and invoking divine mercy. It, therefore means, "Why are you asking me to bring the divine punishment before you repent?"

تِسْعَةُ رَهْطٍ (nine persons - 27:48). The word رَهْط (Rahṭ) is used for a group. Here each of the nine persons is called Rahṭ presumably because they were regarded superior among their clan for having wealth and dignity. Each one of them had his own separate group of people, hence they are called nine groups. They were known as the chiefs of *Ḥijr*, which was a city of the people of Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام. Ḥijr was a well-known city of Syria.

لَنُبَيِّتَنَّهٗ وَاَهْلَهٗ ثُمَّ لَنَقُوْلَنَّ لِوَلِيِّهٖ مَا شَهِدْنَا مَهْلِكَ اَهْلِهٖ وَاِنَّا لَصٰدِقُوْنَ

We shall attack him (Saliḥ) and his family at night, then will say to his heir, We did not witness the destruction of his family and we are really truthful - 27:49.

The plan was that all of them together should attack him and his companions in the darkness of night, and kill them all. And when the claimant of the blood would make the claim, they would say that they did

not kill him, and also they did not know who had killed him. In saying so they would have uttered the truth because no one could have known who had killed whom in the darkness of the night.

The point to note here is that all the acts of infidelity, disbelief, killing and pillage were being performed by the infidels, rather than those among them who were hardened criminals. Yet they were careful that they don't speak a lie or get blamed for falsehood. This shows how great the sin of falsehood is, that even the perpetrators of heinous crimes avoid it for the sake of their self-respect.

The other thing worth noting in this verse is that the one whom these infidels had mentioned as the Walī or heir of Sayyidnā Ṣaliḥ عليه السلام was a man of his own family. So, why did they leave him out from being assassinated? The answer to this question is that he might have been the successor from the lineage point of view, but otherwise he could be an infidel and be a party with the infidels. There could have been the consideration that he might claim the compensation for the blood of Sayyidnā Ṣaliḥ عليه السلام because of his relationship with him. The other possibility is that he might have been a Muslim but enjoyed a prominent position and hence there could have been the risk of uprising and reprisal among the people. Only Allah knows best.

Verses 54 - 59

وَلُوطًا إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهٖٓ أَتَأْتُونَ الْفَاحِشَةَ وَأَنْتُمْ تُبْصِرُونَ ﴿٥٤﴾ أَئِنَّكُمْ
لَتَأْتُونَ الرِّجَالَ شَهْوَةً مِّنْ دُونِ النِّسَآءِ ؕ بَلْ أَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ تَجْهَلُونَ
﴿٥٥﴾ فَمَا كَانَ جَوَابَ قَوْمِهٖٓ إِلَّآ أَنْ قَالُوْٓا أَخْرِجُوْٓا اٰلَ لُوطٍ مِّنْ
قَرْيَتِكُمْ ۚ إِنَّهُمْ أُنَاسٌ يَّتَطَهَّرُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾ فَأَنْجَيْنٰهُ وَأَهْلَهٗٓ إِلَّا امْرَأَتَهٗ ز
قَدَّرْنٰهَا مِنَ الْغٰبِرِينَ ﴿٥٧﴾ وَأَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ مَّطَرًا ۚ فَسَآءَ مَطَرُ
الْمُنْذَرِينَ ﴿٥٨﴾ قُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ وَسَلٰمٌ عَلٰى عِبَادِهِ الَّذِينَ اصْطَفٰى ؕ
آللّٰهُ خَيْرٌ أَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾

And (We sent) Lūṭ when he said to his people, "Do you

commit the shameful act while you can see (its shamelessness)? [54] **Is it that you really come to men lustfully instead of women? No, you are a people committing acts of ignorance."** [55] **So, the answer of his people was not but that they said, "Expel the family of Lūṭ from your town. They are a people who over-indulge in purity."** [56] **So We saved him and his family, except his wife. We destined her to remain among those who stayed behind.** [57] **And We rained on them a rain. So evil was the rain of those who were warned.** [58]

Say, "Praise belongs to Allah, and peace be on those of His slaves whom He has chosen." Is Allah better or that which they associate (with Him as His partners)? [59]

Commentary

This incident has been related at many places in the Qur'ān, especially in Sūrah Al-A'rāf, where its necessary details have been discussed and may be consulted if required.

قُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ (Say,"Praise belongs to Allah - 27:59). After describing some events of the prophets and earlier people, and the episodes of torments they faced, this sentence is addressed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, that he should express his gratitude to Allah Ta'ālā, for his followers have been exempted from the punishment in this world. He ﷺ is further asked to say *salām* to the earlier prophets and God-fearing persons. Majority of the commentators have adopted this explanation, but some feel that this sentence is also addressed to Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام.

It appears that the expression الَّذِيْنَ اصْطَفٰى (His slaves whom He has chosen - 27:59) is used in this verse for the prophets, like in another verse *salām* has been addressed to the prophets, وَسَلٰمٌ عَلَى الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ (And *salām* is on the messengers - 37:181). But Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه is of the opinion that it refers to the companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. This explanation is also adopted by Sufyān Ath-Thaurī. (Ibn Jarīr)

If the explanation of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه is adopted and the meaning of الَّذِيْنَ اصْطَفٰى - 27:59 is taken for the companions, then there will be a case for saying "'*Alaihis Salām*" to non-prophets also. This subject will be discussed in detail *Inshallah* under Sūrah Al-Aḥzāb for the verse

صَلُّوْا عَلَيْهِ وَسَلِّمُوْا (33:56).

Ruling

This verse also teaches the formalities of an address, a sermon or a lecture, that it should start with the praise of Allah and the *ṣalāh (durood)* and *salām* to the prophets. This had always been the practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in his addresses. His companions also adopted the same practice by commencing not only their addresses but also all the important jobs by praising Allah Ta'ālā and then *ṣalāh* and *salām* on the Holy Prophet ﷺ. (Rūḥ).

Verses 60 - 64

أَمَّنْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَأَنْزَلَ لَكُمْ مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً ۚ فَأَنْۢبَتْنَا
بِهٖ حَدَآئِقَ ذَاتَ بَهْجَةٍ ۚ مَا كَانَ لَكُمْ أَنْ تُنْۢبِتُوْا شَجَرَهَا ۗ ءَ إِلٰهٌ مَّعَ
اللّٰهِ ۗ بَلْ هُمْ قَوْمٌ يَّعْدِلُوْنَ ﴿٦٠﴾ أَمَّنْ جَعَلَ الْأَرْضَ قَرَارًا وَّجَعَلَ
خِلٰلَهَآ أَنْهٰرًا وَّجَعَلَ لَهَا رَوَاسِيَ وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ حَاجِزًا ۗ ءَ إِلٰهٌ
مَّعَ اللّٰهِ ۗ بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٦١﴾ أَمَّنْ يُّجِيْبُ الْمُضْطَرَّ إِذَا
دَعَاهُ وَيَكْشِفُ السُّوْٓءَ وَيَجْعَلُكُمْ خُلَفَآءَ الْأَرْضِ ۗ ءَ إِلٰهٌ مَّعَ اللّٰهِ ۗ
قَلِيْلًا مَّا تَذَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿٦٢﴾ أَمَّنْ يَّهْدِيْكُمْ فِيْ ظُلُمٰتِ الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَمَنْ
يُّرْسِلُ الرِّيٰحَ بُشْرًا ۢ بَيْنَ يَدَيْ رَحْمَتِهٖ ۗ ءَ إِلٰهٌ مَّعَ اللّٰهِ ۗ تَعٰلَى اللّٰهُ عَمَّا
يُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿٦٣﴾ أَمَّنْ يَّبْدَؤُا الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيْدُهٗ وَمَنْ يَّرْزُقُكُمْ مِّنَ
السَّمَآءِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۗ ءَ إِلٰهٌ مَّعَ اللّٰهِ ۗ قُلْ هَاتُوْا بُرْهَانَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ
صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿٦٤﴾

Or the One who created the heavens and the earth and sent down for you water from the sky? Then We caused to grow with it gardens, full of glamor. It was not within your ability to grow their trees. Is there any god alongwith Allah? No, but they are a people who equate (others with Allah). [60]

Or the One who made the earth a place to settle and made rivers amidst it and made mountains for (making) it (firm), and made a barrier between two seas. Is there any god alongwith Allah? No, but most of them do not have knowledge. [61] **Or the One who responds to a helpless person when He prays to Him and removes distress, and who makes you vicegerents of the earth. Is there any god alongwith Allah? No, but little you take lesson.** [62] **Or the One who guides you in depths of darkness on land and sea, and who sends the winds bearing good news before His mercy? Is there any god alongwith Allah? Allah is far higher than the *shirk* they commit.** [63] **Or the One who originated creation, then will reproduce it, and who gives you provision from the sky and the earth? Is there any god alongwith Allah? Say, "Bring your proof if you are true."** [64]

Commentary

أَمَّنْ يُّجِيْبُ الْمُضْطَرَّ إِذَا دَعَاهُ وَيَكْشِفُ السُّوْٓءَ

(Or the One who responds to a helpless when he prays to Him and removes distress - 27:62)

Word الْمُضْطَرّ (*Muḍṭar*) is derived from اِضْطِرَار (*Iḍṭirār*), which means to be helpless and restless under some necessity, and that happens when someone does not have any support and friends. Hence, *Muḍṭar* is that person who has lost all hopes from everyone and has turned to Allah as the sole redresser of his woes. This explanation of *Muḍṭar* is adopted by Suddī, Dhun-nūn Al-Miṣrī, Sahl ibn 'Abdullāh etc. (Qurṭubī). The Holy Prophet ﷺ has advised that such a person should supplicate in the following manner.

اَللّٰهُمَّ رَحْمَتَكَ اَرْجُوْا، فَلاَ تَكِلْنِيْٓ اِلٰى نَفْسِىْ طَرْفَةَ عَيْنٍ، وَاَصْلِحْ لِىْ شَاْنِىْ كُلَّهٗ، لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلاَّ اَنْتَ

'O Allah, I am an aspirant of your grace. So, please do not leave me at the mercy of myself for a moment, and set right all my matters on Your own. There is no god except You'. (Qurṭubī)

Supplication of a *Muḍṭar* is surely accepted because of its sincerity

Imām Qurṭubī has said that Allah Ta'ālā has taken upon Himself to accept the supplication of a *Muḍṭar*. He has made declaration to this

effect in this verse. The main reason for it is that by divorcing all mundane supports and connections, beseeching from Allah, while regarding Him as the sole redresser is the sincerity at its best. Sincerity has a special position before Allah Ta'ālā. Whoever evinces sincerity, no matter if he is a believer or an infidel, a pious or a sinner, because of the auspiciousness of sincerity the divine favour gets attentive towards him. Allah Ta'ālā Himself elaborates this point while describing the traits of the infidels. He has said that when they are in water and the boat is caught in storm, and they are sure of their death, they call out to Allah with all sincerity, saying that they would be thankful to Him forever if He would save their lives. But when Allah Ta'ālā rescues them and brings them to land by accepting their supplication, they again indulge in associating Him with gods دَعَوُا اللّٰهَ مُخْلِصِيْنَ لَهُ الدِّيْنَ (الى قوله) فَلَمَّا نَجّٰهُمْ اِلَى الْبَرِّ اِذَا هُمْ يُشْرِكُوْنَ.

A Ṣaḥīḥ *ḥadīth* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ says that 'Three supplications are surely accepted, in which there is no room for doubt. One, from an oppressed person, two, by a traveler, and three, from a father against his children'. After citing this *ḥadīth*, Qurṭubī has commented that in all these three cases the situation is the same as the supplication of a *Muḍṭar*, because when an oppressed person calls Allah after having been frustrated from mundane support and help, his condition is no different than that of a *Muḍṭar*. Similarly, a traveler is away from his dear ones, hence helpless, while in journey. Likewise, a father cannot plead for something against his children because of his paternal love and affection for them, unless he is totally dejected and heart-broken, and calls Allah to save himself from the misery of sufferings. 'Ajurrī, a scholar of *ḥadīth*, has quoted on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Dharr رضي الله عنه that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said 'Allah Ta'ālā has pronounced that He shall never reject an appeal from an oppressed person, even if it is made by an infidel'. (Qurṭubī) If a *Muḍṭar* or an oppressed person or a traveler has a feeling that his appeal to Allah has not been accepted, he should not be dejected and be skeptical, because sometimes the request is accepted but its manifestation is delayed due to some expediency and divine wisdom. As an alternative, such a person should search his soul to find out if there was any deficiency in his sincerity or concentration while praying to Allah Ta'ālā. (Only Allah knows best)

Verses 65 - 75

قُلْ لَّا يَعْلَمُ مَنْ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ الْغَيْبَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ ؕ وَ
مَا يَشْعُرُوْنَ اَيَّانَ يُبْعَثُوْنَ ﴿٦٥﴾ بَلِ ادّٰرَكَ عِلْمُهُمْ فِي الْاٰخِرَةِ ۫ بَلْ
هُمْ فِيْ شَكٍّ مِّنْهَا ۫ بَلْ هُمْ مِّنْهَا عَمُوْنَ ﴿٦٦﴾ وَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْٓا
ءَاِذَا كُنَّا تُرٰبًا وَّاٰبَآؤُنَآ اَئِنَّا لَمُخْرَجُوْنَ ﴿٦٧﴾ لَقَدْ وُعِدْنَا هٰذَا نَحْنُ
وَاٰبَآؤُنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ ۙ اِنْ هٰذَآ اِلَّآ اَسَاطِيْرُ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ ﴿٦٨﴾ قُلْ سِيْرُوْا فِي
الْاَرْضِ فَانْظُرُوْا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ ﴿٦٩﴾ وَلَا تَحْزَنْ
عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا تَكُنْ فِيْ ضَيْقٍ مِّمَّا يَمْكُرُوْنَ ﴿٧٠﴾ وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ مَتٰى هٰذَا
الْوَعْدُ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿٧١﴾ قُلْ عَسٰٓى اَنْ يَّكُوْنَ رَدِفَ لَكُمْ
بَعْضُ الَّذِيْ تَسْتَعْجِلُوْنَ ﴿٧٢﴾ وَ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَذُوْ فَضْلٍ عَلَى النَّاسِ
وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَشْكُرُوْنَ ﴿٧٣﴾ وَاِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَيَعْلَمُ مَا تُكِنُّ
صُدُوْرُهُمْ وَمَا يُعْلِنُوْنَ ﴿٧٤﴾ وَمَا مِنْ غَآئِبَةٍ فِي السَّمَآءِ وَالْاَرْضِ اِلَّا
فِيْ كِتٰبٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿٧٥﴾

Say, "No one in the heavens and the earth has the knowledge of the Unseen except Allah." And they do not know when they will be raised again. [65] **Rather, their knowledge failed in the matter of Hereafter. Rather, they are in doubt about it. Rather, they are blind to it.** [66] **And said those who disbelieved, "Is it, when we and our fathers become dust, shall we really be brought forth?** [67] **Indeed, it was promised to us and to our fathers before. This is nothing but the tales of the ancients."** [68] **Say, "Travel in the land and see how was the fate of the sinners.** [69] **And do not grieve for them and do not be straitened because of what they plan.** [70]

And they say, "When shall this promise come (to pass) if you are true?" [71] **Say, "It is not unlikely that some part of that (punishment) which you seek to come soon is already following you closely."** [72] **And surely, your**

Lord is graceful for the mankind, but most of the people are not grateful. [73] **And surely your Lord knows for sure what their hearts conceal and what they reveal.** [74] **And there is nothing hidden in the heavens and the earth that is not (recorded) in a manifest book.** [75]

Commentary

قُلْ لَّا يَعْلَمُ مَنْ فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ الْغَيْبَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ

Say, "No one in the heavens and the earth has the knowledge of Unseen except Allah." - 27:65

The Holy Prophet ﷺ was instructed to tell people that all the creatures that live in the heavens, like angels, and all the creatures that live in this world, like humans and jinns, none of them have any knowledge of the unseen *(ghayb)* except Allah. In the above-referred verse it has been stated very clearly that it is an exclusive attribute of Allah Ta'ālā, and no one else, not even an angel or a prophet, could share this attribute. This subject has been dealt with in detail under verse No. 59 of Sūrah al-An'ām on page No.360 in the 3rd volume. In addition to that, I have written a separate treatise on the subject under the title (كشف الريب عن علم الغيب) which has been published in my book Aḥkām-ul-Qur'ān in arabic. Those who are interested in this subject can refer to that.

بَلِ ادّٰرَكَ عِلْمُهُمْ فِى الْاٰخِرَةِ بَلْ هُمْ فِى شَكٍّ مِّنْهَا بَلْ هُمْ مِّنْهَا عَمُوْنَ

Rather, their knowledge failed in the matter of Hereafter. Rather, they are in doubt about it. Rather, they are blind to it. 27:66.

There are different recitations for the word اِدّٰرَكَ *(iddāraka)* and their meanings are also different. Those who are interested should refer to different commentaries for the details. It is enough to understand here that some commentators have taken it to mean "completion" and have explained the verse thus: "Their knowledge and understanding will be completed in the Hereafter", because then the truth about every thing shall be laid bare. But knowledge of truth at that time will be of no avail, because they had been contradicting the Hereafter in the world. But some other commentators have taken the word in the meaning of 'having failed' and 'having been lost'. The sense in this case would be that their knowledge about the Hereafter was lost, and they could not understand

what it was.

Verses 76 - 79

إِنَّ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنَ يَقُصُّ عَلٰى بَنِىٓ إِسْرَآءِيْلَ أَكْثَرَ الَّذِىْ هُمْ فِيْهِ
يَخْتَلِفُوْنَ ﴿٧٦﴾ وَإِنَّهٗ لَهُدًى وَّرَحْمَةٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿٧٧﴾ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ
يَقْضِىْ بَيْنَهُمْ بِحُكْمِهٖ ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْعَلِيْمُ ﴿٧٨﴾ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللّٰهِ ۖ
إِنَّكَ عَلَى الْحَقِّ الْمُبِيْنِ ﴿٧٩﴾

Surely this Qur'ān mentions to the children of Isrā'īl most of the matters in which they dispute. [76] **And it is guidance and mercy for the believers.** [77] **And surely your Lord will decide between them by His judgment, and He is the All-Mighty, All-Knowing.** [78] **So trust in Allah. Surely you are on the open truth.** [79]

Commentary

By describing Allah's omnipotence through different examples in the earlier verses, the reality of the Hereafter and the rational possibility of resurrection of the dead has been established. There is no logical ambiguity in that. Its definite occurrence is confirmed by the sayings of the prophets and the divine books that were revealed to them. Authenticity and establishment of any information is based on the veracity of the courier or the narrator. In this verse it is stated that the informant of this news is the Holy Qur'ān whose authenticity and truthfulness is beyond any doubt or contradiction. So much so that in matters in which the scholars of Banī Isrā'īl had differed strongly and could not resolve them, the Qur'ān has given them evaluated verdict to follow for correct judgment. It is but obvious that in matters where there is difference of opinion among the scholars, the only competent authority to overrule is the one who is superior in knowledge and status. Therefore, it is established that Qur'ān is an authentic informant. After this the Holy Prophet ﷺ was consoled that he need not be despondent over their antagonism. 'Allah Ta'ālā is to make judgment Himself in his case. He should have faith in Allah, because Allah's help and aid is with the truth. And there is no doubt that he is on the right path'. (Verse 79).

Verses 80 - 81

إِنَّكَ لَاتُسْمِعُ الْمَوْتٰى وَلَا تُسْمِعُ الصُّمَّ الدُّعَآءَ إِذَا وَلَّوْا مُدْبِرِيْنَ ﴿٨٠﴾ وَمَآ أَنْتَ بِهٰدِى الْعُمْيِ عَنْ ضَلٰلَتِهِمْ ۗ إِنْ تُسْمِعُ إِلَّا مَنْ يُّؤْمِنُ بِاٰيٰتِنَا فَهُمْ مُّسْلِمُوْنَ ﴿٨١﴾

Surely, you cannot make the dead hear, nor can you make the deaf hear your call when they turn their backs in retreat, [80] **nor can you show the right path to the blind ones against their wandering astray. You can make no one listen (to you) except those who believe in Our verses, then submit themselves (to Allah).** [81]

Commentary

It was the demand of love and affection the Holy Prophet ﷺ had for all human beings that he should save them all from the fire of *jahannam* by making them accept the message of Allah. It used to hurt him a lot if someone did not accept it. He used to feel as if someone's children were proceeding toward the fire by not heeding to the advice of his parents. Therefore, Qur'ān has adopted different expressions to console him at many places. One such advice was contained in the sentence وَلَا تَحْزَنْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا تَكُنْ فِىْ ضَيْقٍ مِّمَّا يَمْكُرُوْنَ (And do not grieve for them,and do not be straitened because of what they plan - 27:70) which has appeared in the earlier verse. In the above verse he has been consoled in a slightly different manner, that his job was only to convey the message of truth, which he had done admirably. If someone had not accepted this, it was not his fault or deficiency. So, he need not worry and be despondent. Rather it is their own fault that they have lost their sense of direction. Qur'ān has described the loss of their sense of direction by presenting three examples. First, that they were like dead bodies in the matter of acceptance of truth, and thus cannot take any one's advice to their advantage. Second, that they were like the deaf man who does not wish to hear anything, rather they turn their back and go away if someone tries to give them any advice. Third, that they were like the blind that cannot see even if someone tries to show them the path. After providing these three examples it is said:

إِنْ تُسْمِعُ إِلَّا مَنْ يُؤْمِنُ بِاٰيٰتِنَا فَهُمْ مُّسْلِمُوْنَ

You can make no one listen (to you) except those who believe in Our verses, then submit themselves (to Allah). 27:81.

It is very clear that in the subject under discussion it is not purported to make the voice reach the listener, but what is intended here is that what is conveyed should be beneficial to the addressee. The Qur'ān has defined the audition as non-audition if it is not beneficial from the objective point of view. This point is elaborated at the end of the verse where it is stated that you can cause to hear only those who are willing to believe. Should it mean to make them hear only, then the statement of the Qur'ān would have been contrary to facts and observations, because there are many undeniable proofs that divine message was conveyed to the disbelievers, which they not only listened but also answered to reject. It is therefore, quite clear that here causing to hear means the understanding which is beneficial. Then by calling them as dead bodies, it is further emphasized that you cannot make them realize the truth, because even if the dead could hear and wish to accept the truth, it would not be to their avail. The dead have passed through the worldly life, where faith and good deeds did matter. After the death, both in Barzakh and the Hereafter, all infidels and disbelievers would wish for faith and righteous deeds, but then it would be too late. This statement of the verse does not bear out that the dead cannot hear. In fact this verse is silent on the subject of hearing by the dead. This subject needs separate study which follows:

Can the dead persons hear?

The issue, whether the dead can hear or not, was one of the subjects on which the exalted companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ had different points of view. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضي الله عنه has declared the hearing of the dead as established, but Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا has negated this understanding. Because of this difference of opinion there are two groups among the companions and the *tabi'īn* (generation next to them). Some believe that the dead do hear, while others deny it. This subject is mentioned in the Qur'ān at three places. One is the same as referred above in Sūrah An-Naml. The other is in Sūrah Ar-Rūm with almost similar wordings, and in Sūrah Al-Fāṭir it has appeared with these words وَمَا اَنْتَ بِمُسْمِعٍ مَّنْ فِي الْقُبُوْرِ, that is, 'You cannot cause those who are in

the graves to hear'. It is worth noting in all the three verses that none of them has declared that the dead cannot hear. The expression used in each one of the three verses is that 'you cannot cause them to hear'. The consistent expression used in all the three verses seems to be a clear indication that the dead may have the ability to hear but we cannot cause them to listen to us.

As against these three verses, another verse relating to martyrs reveals that they are bestowed with a special type of life in their graves. In this special life they also get food and are conveyed good tidings from Allah Ta'ālā about their dear ones . The verse reads as:

وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ قُتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَمْوَاتًا ۚ بَلْ أَحْيَاءٌ عِندَ رَبِّهِمْ يُرْزَقُونَ ﴿١٦٩﴾ فَرِحِينَ بِمَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِن فَضْلِهِ وَيَسْتَبْشِرُونَ بِالَّذِينَ لَمْ يَلْحَقُوا بِهِم مِّنْ خَلْفِهِمْ أَلَّا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿١٧٠﴾

And never take those killed in the way of Allah as dead. Rather they are alive, with their Lord, well-provided, happy with what Allah has given them of His grace;and they feel pleased with the good news,about those who after them could not join them, that there shall be no fear for them, nor shall they grieve. (3:169-170)

This verse corroborates that even after death some intellect and perception may be left behind in the human spirit. Rather in the case of martyrs there is a hint that such a thing does happen. As for the argument that this position relates only to the martyrs, to whom the verse refers, and not to the ordinary dead, its answer is that at least it tells that after death some intellect and perception and understanding of the world may be left behind in the human spirit. The way Allah Ta'ālā has bestowed upon martyrs the honour of maintaining the connection of their spirits with their bodies and graves, He can also grace the other dead with the same ability. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar ﷺ, holds the view that dead do hear. This view is based on a Ṣaḥīḥ *ḥadīth*, which is reported by Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar ﷺ .It is as follows:

ما من احد يمر بقبر اخيه المسلم كان يعرفه فى الدّنيا فيسلّم عليه الاّ ردّ اللّه عليه روحه حتى يرد عليه السّلام (ذكره ابن كثير فى تفسيره مصححا عن ابن عمرؓ)

'When a person passes by the grave of a Muslim brother whom he knew when he was alive and he offers *salām* to him, Allah Tal'ālā returns his spirit into his body, so that he may return

the *salām*'. (Ibn Kathīr, declaring it as Ṣaḥīḥ)

This also proves that when a person visits the grave of a Muslim brother and offers him his *salām*, the dead listens to his *salām* and answers back. It happens like this that Allah Ta'ālā returns the spirit of the dead back to this world momentarily. It confirms two points. One, that dead can hear, and second, that their hearing and our causing them to hear is not in our control, but is dependent entirely on Allah's will. Whenever He wills, they can hear and whenever He does not will, they do not hear. The above-referred *ḥadīth* has made it clear that Allah Ta'ālā is gracious to let the dead hear the *salām* of a Muslim brother, and also grants him privilege to answer back. But for any other situation or utterance it is not known whether the dead can hear or not. The research carried out by Imām Ghazzāli and Allāmah Subki also corroborates that it is established by this Qur'ānic verse and Ṣaḥīḥ *āḥādīth* that under certain conditions the dead do hear the utterance of the living, but it is not known whether every dead person hears the utterance at all times of all those who are living. This also makes the Qur'ānic verse and narrations on the subject comparable. It is quite possible that the dead could hear the utterance of the living at certain times and could not hear at others. This is also possible that they may hear the utterance of some and do not hear of others. Yet there is another possibility that some dead could hear and others could not. It is also established by the verses of Sūrahs An-Naml, Ar-Rūm and Fāṭir that it is not under the control of human beings to cause the dead to hear; rather it rests with Allah alone to make them hear whenever He wills. Therefore, where it is established by the *Ṣaḥīḥ āḥādīth* that the dead did hear, we should believe it; and where it is not established, both the situations are possible . Hence, we should neither accept nor deny it. For further details of the subject,my treatise on the subject may be consulted. This treatise is in Arabic and is included in Aḥkām-ul-Qur'ān.

Verse 82

وَإِذَا وَقَعَ الْقَوْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ أَخْرَجْنَا لَهُمْ دَابَّةً مِّنَ الْأَرْضِ تُكَلِّمُهُمْ أَنَّ النَّاسَ كَانُوا بِآيَاتِنَا لَا يُوقِنُونَ ﴿٨٢﴾

And when the word will come to fall upon them, We will bring forth for them a beast from the earth who will speak to them that the human beings (i.e the infidels) did not believe in Our verses. [82]

Commentary

The nature of the beast coming out of the earth, and its time and place

It is reported in Musnād of Aḥmad on the authority of Sayyidnā Ḥudhaifah ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that the Doomsday would not come until you witness ten signs of it. They are:

(1) Appearance of the sun from the west.
(2) Dukhān (Smoke).
(3) Dābba-tul-arḍ, i.e the beast coming out of the earth
(4) Coming out of Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj.
(5) Descent of Sayyidnā 'Īsā ﷺ.
(6) Dajjāl.

7, 8, 9) Three lunar eclipses together – one in the west, second in the east and the third in the peninsula of Arabia.

10) A fire, that will emerge from the Gulf of Aden and drive every one towards the plain of *maḥshar;* wherever people will stop for the rest at night, the fire will also stop there, and will drive them again the next day. (Muslim, Tirmidhī)

This *ḥadīth* has informed us of the emergence of such an animal close to Doomsday that will talk to human beings. The *Tanvīn* of the word *Dābbah* indicates that this animal will be extra-ordinary. This animal will not be born by the normal way of propagation; instead, it will emerge from the ground all of a sudden. There is an allusion in this *ḥadīth* that the emergence of this animal would be one of the very last signs, after which the Doomsday will follow soon. Ibn Kathīr has reported in a lengthy *ḥadīth* on the authority of Sayyidnā Ṭalḥah ibn 'Umar ﷺ through Abū Dāwūd Ṭayālisī that this beast will emerge in Makkah from the mount of *Ṣafā,* and after cleaning the dust from its head will reach at a point between the Black Stone (Al-Ḥajar-al-Aswad) and the Station of Ibrāhīm (Maqām Ibrāhīm). Seeing this creature , people will start running helter-skelter. Only one group of people will stay behind. Then

the beast will make their faces glitter like stars. After that it will go out in the world, and put a sign of infidelity on the face of every infidel. No one will be able to get out of its grasp. It will recognize every believer and the infidel (Ibn Kathīr). And Muslim Ibn Ḥajjāj has reported on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar ﷺ that he had heard the Holy Prophet ﷺ saying, which he did not forget, that among the last signs of the Doomsday the first would be the rising of the sun from the west, and after that *Dābbah* would come out. Out of the two signs whichever appears first, the Doomsday will follow soon. (Ibn Kathīr)

Shaikh Jalaluddin Maḥallī رحمه الله تعالٰى has said that after the appearance of *Dābbah* the obligation of inviting others to good deeds and forbidding them from the evils will cease to apply, and no infidel would convert to Islam after that. This statement is inferred from many *āḥādīth* and the statements of Ṣaḥābah. (Maẓharī). Ibn Kathīr has related many a things about the appearance and activities of *Dābbah*, most of which are not trustworthy. Therefore, only that much should be trusted and believed which is contained in the Qur'ān and authentic āḥādīth. Anything beyond that should be discarded, as it is neither of any value nor benefit.

As for the question as to what this *Dābbah* will converse with people, some commentators are of the view that it will communicate what is stated in the Qur'ān, that is أَنَّ النَّاسَ كَانُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا لَا يُوْقِنُوْنَ (that the human beings did not believe in Our verses). It will communicate the message on behalf of Allah Ta'ālā that 'Many did not believe Our verses before this'. It would mean that now the time has come that every one would believe, but then it would be too late, because it would not be acceptable then. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ, Ḥasan Al-Baṣrī, Qatādah رحمهم الله تعالٰى, have reported, which is corroborated by a narration of Sayyidnā 'Alī ﷺ also, that the *Dābbah* will converse with people normally, as people do among themselves (Ibn Kathīr).

Verses 83 - 90

وَيَوْمَ نَحْشُرُ مِنْ كُلِّ اُمَّةٍ فَوْجًا مِّمَّنْ يُّكَذِّبُ بِاٰيٰتِنَا فَهُمْ يُوْزَعُوْنَ

﴿۸۳﴾ حَتّٰٓى اِذَا جَآءُوْ قَالَ اَكَذَّبْتُمْ بِاٰيٰتِىْ وَلَمْ تُحِيْطُوْا بِهَا عِلْمًا اَمَّا

ذَاكُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٨٤﴾ وَوَقَعَ الْقَوْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ بِمَا ظَلَمُوْا فَهُمْ
لَايَنْطِقُوْنَ ﴿٨٥﴾ اَلَمْ يَرَوْا اَنَّا جَعَلْنَا الَّيْلَ لِيَسْكُنُوْا فِيْهِ وَالنَّهَارَ
مُبْصِرًا ؕ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يُّؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٨٦﴾ وَيَوْمَ يُنْفَخُ فِي
الصُّوْرِ فَفَزِعَ مَنْ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَنْ فِي الْاَرْضِ اِلَّا مَنْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ ؕ
وَكُلٌّ اَتَوْهُ دٰخِرِيْنَ ﴿٨٧﴾ وَتَرَى الْجِبَالَ تَحْسَبُهَا جَامِدَةً وَّهِيَ تَمُرُّ
مَرَّ السَّحَابِ ؕ صُنْعَ اللّٰهِ الَّذِيْٓ اَتْقَنَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ ؕ اِنَّهٗ خَبِيْرٌۢ بِمَا
تَفْعَلُوْنَ ﴿٨٨﴾ مَنْ جَآءَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ فَلَهٗ خَيْرٌ مِّنْهَا ۚ وَهُمْ مِّنْ فَزَعٍ
يَّوْمَئِذٍ اٰمِنُوْنَ ﴿٨٩﴾ وَمَنْ جَآءَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ فَكُبَّتْ وُجُوْهُهُمْ فِي النَّارِ ؕ
هَلْ تُجْزَوْنَ اِلَّا مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٩٠﴾

And (remember) the day when We will gather from every nation a host of those who used to belie Our verses, and they will be kept under control. [83] **Until when they will come, He (Allah) will say, "Did you belie My verses while you did not comprehend them with knowledge, or what was it that you used to do?** [84] **And the Word will come to fall on them because of their transgression, so they will not (be able to) speak.** [85]

Did they not see that We made the night, so that they may have rest in it, and (made) the day to make them see? Surely, in this there are signs for a people who believe. [86] **And (remember) the day when the Horn will be blown; so all those in the heavens and the earth will be in panic, except such as Allah wills. And All (of them) will come to Him in humility.** [87] **And you see the mountains (at present) taking them as fixed, while they will fly like the flight of clouds - an act of Allah who has perfected every thing. Surely, He is All-Aware of what you do.** [88]

Whoever will come with the good deed will have (a reward) better than that, and such people will be immune on that day from any panic. [89] **And whoever will come with evil deed, the faces of such people will**

be thrown down into the Fire. You will not be recompensed but for what you used to do. [90]

Commentary

فَهُمْ يُوزَعُونَ (and they will be kept under control - 27:83). The word used here is derived from *Waz'*, which means to stop. The sense here is that the people in front will be stopped, so that those left behind could catch up. Some have taken the word *Waz'* in the sense of 'pushing'. Hence, it would mean that they would be pushed while being brought to their stand.

وَلَمْ تُحِيطُوا بِهَا عِلْمًا (while you did not comprehend them with knowledge - 27:84). There is an allusion in this verse that falsifying the message of Allah Ta'ālā is by itself a great sin, especially when one falsifies it without giving any consideration or thought, then the crime is doubled. This has brought to light that if an issue or subject is duly considered and thought over, and yet one could not get to the truth, in that situation the intensity of the crime is reduced. Nevertheless, the denial of the existence of Allah and His Oneness would not save any one from infidelity and adoption of the wrong path, and would thus lead to perpetual torment. It is because they are such self-evident matters that any mistake of judgment is not allowed in them.

وَيَوْمَ يُنْفَخُ فِي الصُّورِ فَفَزِعَ مَنْ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ (And [remember] the day when the Horn will be blown; so all those in the heavens and the earth will be in panic - 27:87). The word فزع *'faza'* means being nervous or perplexed. In another verse on the same subject the word فزع *Fazi'a* is substituted by صعق *Ṣa'iqa* which means losing consciousness. If both these verses are taken to refer to the first blowing of the Ṣūr (the Horn) then the total sum of the two words would be that, at the time of the blowing of the Ṣūr, every one will get nervous and perplexed initially, and then will lose consciousness, and ultimately will die. Qatādah and some other Imāms of *tafsīr* have taken this verse for the second blowing of the Ṣūr, when all the dead will resurrect. Thus the meaning of the verse would be that all the dead would get up perplexed. Some have interpreted that Ṣūr will be blown thrice. On the first blowing, every one will get nervous and perplexed, which is called 'the blowing of فزع *faza'*. On the second blowing every one will die, which is 'the blowing of صعق Ṣa'*aq*. The third blowing will be the blowing for the resurrection, on which all dead will get up. But only two blowings are mentioned in the Qur'ān and Ṣaḥīḥ *āḥādīth*.

(Qurṭubī, Ibn Kathīr). Ibn Mubarak has quoted Ḥasan al-Baṣrī رحمه الله تعالى that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said that there will be a forty years gap in between the two blowings. (Qurṭubī)

إِلَّا مَنْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ (except such as Allah wills - 27:87). This exception is from *Faza'*, which means panic and perplexity. The sense is that there will be people who will not be nervous at all at the time of resurrection. There is a *ḥadīth* reported by Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ؓ that these people would be the martyrs. At the time of second life on resurrection they will not get nervous. (This is a Ṣaḥīḥ *ḥadīth* according to Ibn al-'Arabī – Qurṭubī). Sayyidnā Sa'īd ibn Jubair ؓ has also said that the exception applies to the martyrs, who will assemble around the 'Arsh wearing their swords. Quashirī has observed that prophets are the very first included among them, because they have the status of martyrs also, and their position as prophet is still higher. (Qurṭubī)

The following verse will appear later in Sūrah Az-Zumar:

وَنُفِخَ فِى الصُّوْرِ فَصَعِقَ مَنْ فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَنْ فِى الْاَرْضِ اِلَّا مَنْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ

For the Trumpet shall be blown and whosoever is in the heavens and whosoever is in the earth shall swoon, save whom Allah wills - 39:68.

This verse tells us that when the Horn will be blown, all those in the heavens and the earth will get unconscious, and then die. Here also an exception is made, which according to one *ḥadīth* is meant for six angels, namely Jibra'īl, Mīk'āil, Isrāfīl, Malakul-Maut and Ḥamalatul- 'Arsh, who will not die by the blow of Ṣūr. Later, they will also die, as explained in the *ḥadīth*. Those who have held that *Faza'* and *Sa'aq* both relate to the same blowing, they have taken the exception, here as well, for the special angels, like Sūrah Az-Zumar. But those who have held that *Faza'* and *Ṣa'aq* relate to two different blowings, they interpret the exception in the present verse as referring to the martyrs, as explained above.

وَتَرَى الْجِبَالَ تَحْسَبُهَا جَامِدَةً وَّهِىَ تَمُرُّ مَرَّ السَّحَابِ

And you see the mountains (at present) taking them as fixed, while they will fly like the flight of clouds - 27:88

The word تَرَى *"tarā"* in the beginning of this verse is used in Arabic for both present and future tense. Therefore, it can be translated as "You see"

or as "You will see". In the latter case, the verse would be referring to the mountains as they will appear on the Doomsday. The sense in that case will be that the mountains will be uprooted and blown like clouds, which though would appear stationary to the onlookers, but in reality will actually move swiftly. When huge bodies, whose beginning and end is not visible to the eyes, move in any direction, one does not perceive their movement, no matter how swiftly they move. They look like stationary objects, although they are moving. One could experience this while looking at a mass of cloud hanging overhead. One discovers their movement only when they move out so far away that a part of the sky is left bare towards the horizon. Based on this principle, the verse means that the mountains will seem, on the Doomsday, as if they are fixed, but it will be an illusion for an onlooker, because in reality they will be moving. Most of the commentators have interpreted this verse in this manner. The other interpretation is based on regarding the word "*tarā*" as a verb in the present tense and translating it as,"You see" instead of "You will see". In this case, the verse is referring to the present state of the mountains, as they look stationary, and an ordinary onlooker thinks that they will remain fixed forever and will never move from their place, but on the Doomsday they will be floating like clouds. This interpretation is adopted by Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thanawi (and on that basis the verse is translated above as "You see")

Some scholars have pointed out that different conditions are described in the Qur'ān about mountains on the Doomsday. The first condition is that of اِندکاك Indkak and earthquake, which will envelop all the mountains of the world اِذَا دُكَّتِ الْاَرْضُ دَكًا (When the earth is ground to powder-89:21) or اِذَا زُلْزِلَتِ الْاَرْضُ زِلْزَالَهَا (When the earth is shaken with a mighty shaking - 99:1). The second condition is that their big rocks will become like carded wool وَتَكُوْنُ الْجِبَالُ كَالْعِهْنِ الْمَنْفُوْشِ (And the mountains shall be like plucked wool-tufts - 101:5). This will happen at the time when the sky will become like molten copper. Mountain rocks will go up like carded wool, and the skies will come down and meet them in the middle يَوْمَ تَكُوْنُ السَّمَآءُ كَالْمُهْلِ وَتَكُوْنُ الْجِبَالُ كَالْعِهْنِ (Upon the day when heaven shall be as molten copper and the mountains shall be as plucked wool-tufts - 70:8-9). In the third condition the carded wool will no more remain a homogeneous body like rocks, but will turn into very fine particles وَبُسَّتِ الْجِبَالُ بَسًّا فَكَانَتْ هَبَآءً مُّنْبَثًّا

(and the mountains crumbled and become a dust scattered - 56:5-6). In the fourth condition, the fine particles of mountain rocks will get dispersed فَقُلْ يَنْسِفُهَا رَبِّىْ نَسْفًا (So, you say, "My Lord will blow them up totally (as dust) - 20:105). In the fifth condition, the fine particles of mountain rocks, which will engulf the land like cloud of dust will be driven up by the winds. This cloud of dust will cover up the whole world, and will appear stationary, although there will be swift movement in it like clouds تَرَى الْجِبَالَ تَحْسَبُهَا جَامِدَةً وَهِىَ تَمُرُّ مَرَّ السَّحَابِ (And you see the mountains (at present) taking them as fixed, while they will fly like the flight of clouds - 27:88). Some of these conditions will take place at the first blowing of the Ṣūr, and some after the second blowing, when the world will be made absolutely flat plain. There will be no caves or mountains left in the world, nor will there be any building or tree فَقُلْ يَنْسِفُهَا رَبِّىْ نَسْفًا فَيَذَرُهَا قَاعًا صَفْصَفًا لَّاتَرٰى فِيْهَا عِوَجًا وَّلَآ اَمْتًا (20:105-107). (Qurṭubī, Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī)

صُنْعَ اللّٰهِ الَّذِىْٓ اَتْقَنَ كُلَّ شَىْءٍ

An act of Allah who has perfected every thing. - 27:88

Sun' means skillful act, and *'itqān'* means to make perfect and firm. Apparently this sentence is related to all the preceding subjects wherein Allah Ta'ālā's omnipotence and marvelous creations are described, where the alteration of day and night is mentioned, and the blowing of Ṣūr and resulting conditions of the Doomsday are related. It is to emphasize that all these situations should not amaze and astonish any one, because their Creator is not a man or an angel having limited knowledge and power, but the Lord of all the worlds. But if this sentence is read as referring only to the adjacent preceding sentence تَرَى الْجِبَالَ تَحْسَبُهَا جَامِدَةً (And you see the mountains (at present) taking them as fixed - 27:88) then it would mean that the phenomenon about the mountains, that they look stationary, whereas in reality they are moving, is not something astonishing, because all these happenings are not beyond the power of Allah Ta'ālā, who is All-Powerful.

مَنْ جَآءَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ فَلَهٗ خَيْرٌ مِّنْهَا

"Whoever will come with the good deed will have (a reward) better than that" - 27:89

This description relates to the situation that will take place after the

Doomsday and the account taking. Here the word *ḥasanaḥ* is purported for the *kalīmah* of لا اله إلاّ الله محمد رسول الله (as explained by Ibrāhīm) or it is an expression of sincerity (as interpreted by Qatādah). Some have interpreted this to include complete submission. The sense is that every good deed will be recompensed by a reward better than the deed; but it should be remembered that a person's righteous acts could be considered as righteous only when he fulfills its first condition of having faith in Allah Ta'ālā. Then he would get an award better than commensurable to his good deeds. It means that he would be graced with eternal bounties of the Paradise, and would escape from all troubles and torments for good. Some have interpreted that the word "better" means here that the reward of one good deed would be awarded from ten times to seven hundred times more. (Maẓharī)

وَهُمْ مِّنْ فَزَعٍ يَّوْمَئِذٍ اٰمِنُوْنَ

and such people will be immune on that day from any panic - 27:89.

Word *Faza'* is purported here for any big calamity or perplexity. Thus the meaning of the sentence is that, while living in this world, every pious person is scared of his fate in the Hereafter, and as a matter of fact, he should be scared in the light of Qur'ānic verse إِنَّ عَذَابَ رَبِّهِمْ غَيْرُ مَأْمُوْنٍ (70:28). The torment of Allah is not something to be forgotten and set aside. It is for this reason that even the prophets, the companions, and saints were always frightened and daunted. But after the account taking on Doomsday those who would bring the *ḥasanah* (the good deed contemplated in this verse) with them would be free from all fear and grief, and will live forever in complete tranquility. (Only Allah knows best)

Verses 91 - 93

إِنَّمَآ أُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَعْبُدَ رَبَّ هٰذِهِ الْبَلْدَةِ الَّذِيْ حَرَّمَهَا وَلَهٗ كُلُّ شَيْءٍ وَّأُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَكُوْنَ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ ﴿٩١﴾ وَأَنْ أَتْلُوَا الْقُرْاٰنَ فَمَنِ اهْتَدٰى فَإِنَّمَا يَهْتَدِيْ لِنَفْسِهٖ وَمَنْ ضَلَّ فَقُلْ إِنَّمَآ أَنَا مِنَ الْمُنْذِرِيْنَ ﴿٩٢﴾ وَقُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ سَيُرِيْكُمْ اٰيٰتِهٖ فَتَعْرِفُوْنَهَا وَمَا رَبُّكَ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٩٣﴾

I am but ordered to worship the Lord of this city which is sanctified by Him. And to Him belongs every thing, and I am ordered to be one of the Muslims (who submit themselves to Allah), [91] **and to recite the Qur'ān; so whoever takes the right path, takes it for his own benefit. As for the one who goes astray, say (to him), "I am only one of the warners."** [92] **And say, "Praise belongs to Allah. He will show you His sign, then you will recognize them." And your Lord is not unaware of what you do.** [93]

Commentary

رَبَّ هٰذِهِ الْبَلْدَةِ (the Lord of this city - 27:91). Majority of the commentators have taken the word بَلْدَة "Baldah" (the city) for Makkah. Allah Ta'ālā is the Lord of all the worlds and the Lord of heavens and earth. Therefore, the particular mention of Makkah here is to show its revered splendor, and its respect and honour in the sight of Allah Ta'ālā. Word Ḥaram is derived from Taḥrīm, which means "to prohibit" and also means "complete respect and veneration", and because of this respect and veneration whatever special religious prohibitions are applicable to Makkah and its surrounding land are also included in it. For instance, whoever takes refuge in Ḥaram is secured. It is not allowed to kill or take revenge from any one in the Ḥaram. Even hunting of animals and cutting of trees is not permitted in the precincts of Ḥaram. These restrictions are enjoined in the verse وَمَنْ دَخَلَهُ كَانَ اٰمِنًا (and whoever enters there is secure - 3:97), while some of them have appeared in the beginning of Sūrah Mā'idah. In addition, verse لَا تَقْتُلُوا الصَّيْدَ وَاَنْتُمْ حُرُمٌ (do not kill game when, you are in Iḥrām - 5:95) also includes this subject.

(الحمد لله) Today on Shawwal 24, 1391 Hijrah the commentary of Sūrah An-Naml is complete. The Indian army has unleashed full-scale war against Pakistan since Shawwal 14, and its aeroplanes are pounding Karachi heavily. Bombs are being dropped regularly every night on civil population as well. There is a complete blackout at nights. The houses get jolted with the explosion of the bombs. But by the grace of Allah there was no break in the writing of this commentary. During the last ten days of war twenty pages of the commentary were written.

Alḥamdulillāh
The Commentary on
Sūrah An-Naml
Ends here.

Sūrah Al-Qaṣaṣ

(The Stories)

Sūrah Al-Qaṣaṣ was revealed in Makkah and contains 88 verses and 9 sections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 to 13

طٰسٓمّٓ ﴿١﴾ تِلْكَ اٰيٰتُ الْكِتٰبِ الْمُبِيْنِ ﴿٢﴾ نَتْلُوْا عَلَيْكَ مِنْ نَّبَاِ مُوْسٰى وَفِرْعَوْنَ بِالْحَقِّ لِقَوْمٍ يُّؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٣﴾ اِنَّ فِرْعَوْنَ عَلَا فِى الْاَرْضِ وَجَعَلَ اَهْلَهَا شِيَعًا يَّسْتَضْعِفُ طَآئِفَةً مِّنْهُمْ يُذَبِّحُ اَبْنَآءَ هُمْ وَيَسْتَحْيٖ نِسَآءَ هُمْ ؕ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُفْسِدِيْنَ ﴿٤﴾ وَنُرِيْدُ اَنْ نَّمُنَّ عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ اسْتُضْعِفُوْا فِى الْاَرْضِ وَنَجْعَلَهُمْ اَئِمَّةً وَّ نَجْعَلَهُمُ الْوٰرِثِيْنَ ﴿٥﴾ وَنُمَكِّنَ لَهُمْ فِى الْاَرْضِ وَنُرِىَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَهَامٰنَ وَجُنُوْدَ هُمَا مِنْهُمْ مَّا كَانُوْا يَحْذَرُوْنَ ﴿٦﴾ وَاَوْحَيْنَآ اِلٰى اُمِّ مُوْسٰٓى اَنْ اَرْضِعِيْهِ فَاِذَا خِفْتِ عَلَيْهِ فَاَلْقِيْهِ فِى الْيَمِّ وَ لَا تَخَافِىْ وَلَا تَحْزَنِىْ ج اِنَّا رَآدُّوْهُ اِلَيْكِ وَجَاعِلُوْهُ مِنَ الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ ﴿٧﴾ فَالْتَقَطَهٗٓ اٰلُ فِرْعَوْنَ لِيَكُوْنَ لَهُمْ عَدُوًّا وَّحَزَنًا ؕ اِنَّ فِرْعَوْنَ وَ هَامٰنَ وَجُنُوْدَ هُمَا كَانُوْا خٰطِئِيْنَ ﴿٨﴾ وَقَالَتِ امْرَاَتُ فِرْعَوْنَ قُرَّتُ عَيْنٍ لِّىْ وَلَكَ ؕ لَا تَقْتُلُوْهُ ۖ عَسٰٓى اَنْ يَّنْفَعَنَآ اَوْ نَتَّخِذَهٗ وَلَدًا وَّهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُوْنَ ﴿٩﴾ وَاَصْبَحَ فُؤَادُ اُمِّ

مُوسٰى فٰرِغًا ؕ اِنْ كَادَتْ لَتُبْدِىْ بِهٖ لَوْلَاۤ اَنْ رَّبَطْنَا عَلٰى قَلْبِهَا لِتَكُوْنَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿۱۰﴾ وَقَالَتْ لِاُخْتِهٖ قُصِّيْهِ ز فَبَصُرَتْ بِهٖ عَنْ جُنُبٍ وَّهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُوْنَ ﴿۱۱﴾ وَحَرَّمْنَا عَلَيْهِ الْمَرَاضِعَ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَقَالَتْ هَلْ اَدُلُّكُمْ عَلٰۤى اَهْلِ بَيْتٍ يَّكْفُلُوْنَهٗ لَكُمْ وَهُمْ لَهٗ نٰصِحُوْنَ ﴿۱۲﴾ فَرَدَدْنٰهُ اِلٰۤى اُمِّهٖ كَىْ تَقَرَّ عَيْنُهَا وَلَا تَحْزَنَ وَلِتَعْلَمَ اَنَّ وَعْدَ اللّٰهِ حَقٌّ وَّلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۱۳﴾

Ṭā Sīm Mīm. [1] **These are verses of the clear Book.** [2] **We recite to you a part of the story of Mūsā and the Pharaoh with truth for a people who believe.** [3]

Indeed, the Pharaoh had become high-handed in the land and had divided its people into different groups; he used to persecute a group of them, slaughtering their sons and keeping their women alive. Indeed he was one of the mischief makers. [4] **And We intended to favour those who were held as weak in the land and to make them leaders and make them inheritors (of the land)** [5] **and give them power in the land, and to make the Pharaoh, Hāmān and their armies see (that) what they were fearing from (had happened).** [6]

And We inspired the mother of Mūsā saying, "Suckle him (Mūsā). Then once you fear about him, cast him in the river, and do not fear and do not grieve. Surely We are going to bring him back to you and appoint him one of (Our) messengers. [7] **So the family of the Pharaoh picked him up, so that he becomes for them an enemy and a (cause of) grief. Indeed the Pharaoh, Hāmān and their armies were mistaken.** [8] **And the wife of the Pharaoh said, (to the Pharaoh about Mūsā), "He may be a delight of eye for me and you. Do not kill him. It is hoped that he will be of benefit to us, or we will adopt him as a son." And they were not aware (of what was going to happen).** [9]

And the heart of the mother of Mūsā became restless; indeed she was about to disclose this (the real facts

about Mūsā), had We not strengthened her heart to remain among those who have firm belief (in Allah's promise). [10] **And she said to his sister, "Keep track of him." So she watched him from a distance while they were not aware.** [11] **And We had already barred him (Mūsā) from (accepting) any suckling women, so she (his sister) said (to the Pharaoh's people), "Shall I point out to you a family who will nurse him for you, and they will be his care-takers?"** [12] **Thus We brought him back to his mother, so that her eye might have comfort and she might not grieve, and so that she might know that Allah's promise is true, but most of them do not know.** [13]

Commentary

Sūrah Al-Qaṣaṣ is the very last among the Makkī Sūrahs. It was revealed between Makkah and Juḥfah (Rābigh) during the migration. It is mentioned in some narrations that during the journey from Makkah to Madīnah when the Holy Prophet ﷺ reached near Juḥfah or Rābigh, Jibra'īl عليه السلام came to him and enquired whether he was feeling home sick, as he was leaving the place where he was born and spent all his life. To this the Holy Prophet ﷺ replied in the affirmative. Then Jibra'īl عليه السلام recited this Sūrah and gave him ﷺ the good tiding that ultimately Makkah will fall to him and come under his ﷺ control. The related verse is as follows:

اِنَّ الَّذِىْ فَرَضَ عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْاٰنَ لَرَآدُّكَ اِلٰى مَعَادٍ

Surely the one who has enjoined the Qur'ān upon you will surely bring you back to the place of return - 28:85

Sūrah Al-Qaṣaṣ begins with the story of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, first briefly then in detail. First half of the Sūrah contains Sayyidnā Mūsā's episodes with the Pharaoh, and towards the end of the Sūrah his episode with Qārūn is related.

The story of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام is related extensively in the Qur'ān, at places briefly while at others in detail. In Sūrah Al-Kahf (Cave) that part of the story is related in which he encountered Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام. Then, in Sūrah Ṭāhā other parts of the story are related in some detail, while some details are related in Sūrah An-Naml. Now, in Sūrah Al-Qaṣaṣ they are being reiterated. In Sūrah Ṭāhā where Allah Ta'ālā has said about

Mūsā عليه السلام فَتَنّٰکَ فُتُوْنًا (And We tested you with a great ordeal - 20:40). Imām Nasā'ī and some other commentators have penned down the entire story at that point. The writer has followed suit, and by quoting Ibn Kathīr has written the whole story under Sūrah Ṭahā. All the relevant parts of the story, it's related important issues, and rulings have been discussed in detail under Sūrahs al-Kahf and Ṭahā. For any reference of an issue or ruling it would be apt to look up there. Now in this Sūrah commentary will be restricted to brief explanation of the wordings of these verses.

وَنُرِيْدُ اَنْ نَّمُنَّ عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ اسْتُضْعِفُوْا فِى الْاَرْضِ وَنَجْعَلَهُمْ اَئِمَّةً (And We intended to favour those who were held as weak in the land and to make them leaders - 28:5). In this verse it is emphasized that the plan of the the Pharaoh was not equal to that of the divine fate, rather it turned out to be completely ineffective and he and his entire courtiers were befooled. On the basis of the dream and it's interpretation about an Isrā'īli boy from whom the life of the Pharaoh was at risk, and because of which hundreds of newly born Isrā'īli male issues were put to death on their birth, it so turned out that Allah Ta'ālā made that very boy to grow up in his own house. Not only that, but for the solace of his mother it was arranged to send him back to her for nursing in a most astonishing manner. On top of that the Pharaoh was made to pay a service charge for nursing, which according to some narrations was one Dīnār a day. Since this service charge was taken from an infidel with his consent, hence there is no confusion about its admissibility. The cruelty he had perpetrated to quell the risk was of no avail to him, because that very danger was ultimately made to rear in his own home, and ultimately erupted like lava. This way the dream came true, and he saw that happening with his own eyes. The verse وَنُرِیَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَهَامٰنَ وَجُنُوْدَهُمَا مِنْهُمْ مَّا كَانُوْا يَحْذَرُوْنَ (and to make the Pharaoh and Hāmān and their armies see [that] what they were fearing from (had actually happened - 28:6) describes this only.

وَاَوْحَيْنَآ اِلٰٓى اُمِّ مُوْسٰٓى (28:7) The word Waḥy (inspiration) is used here in its literal meaning. It does not mean the Waḥy that is peculiar to prophets. This point has already been explained under Sūrah Ṭahā.

Verses 14 - 21

وَلَمَّا بَلَغَ اَشُدَّهٗ وَاسْتَوٰٓى اٰتَيْنٰهُ حُكْمًا وَّعِلْمًا ؕ وَكَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِى

الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ﴿١٤﴾ وَدَخَلَ الْمَدِيْنَةَ عَلٰى حِيْنِ غَفْلَةٍ مِّنْ اَهْلِهَا فَوَجَدَ فِيْهَا رَجُلَيْنِ يَقْتَتِلٰنِ ۟ هٰذَا مِنْ شِيْعَتِهٖ وَهٰذَا مِنْ عَدُوِّهٖ ۚ فَاسْتَغَاثَهُ الَّذِىْ مِنْ شِيْعَتِهٖ عَلَى الَّذِىْ مِنْ عَدُوِّهٖ ۙ فَوَكَزَهٗ مُوْسٰى فَقَضٰى عَلَيْهِ ۟ قَالَ هٰذَا مِنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطٰنِ ؕ اِنَّهٗ عَدُوٌّ مُّضِلٌّ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿١٥﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ اِنِّىْ ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِىْ فَاغْفِرْ لِىْ فَغَفَرَلَهٗ ؕ اِنَّهٗ هُوَالْغَفُوْرُ الرَّحِيْمُ ﴿١٦﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ بِمَآ اَنْعَمْتَ عَلَىَّ فَلَنْ اَكُوْنَ ظَهِيْرًا لِّلْمُجْرِمِيْنَ ﴿١٧﴾ فَاَصْبَحَ فِى الْمَدِيْنَةِ خَآئِفًا يَّتَرَقَّبُ فَاِذَا الَّذِى اسْتَنْصَرَهٗ بِالْاَمْسِ يَسْتَصْرِخُهٗ ؕ قَالَ لَهٗ مُوْسٰٓى اِنَّكَ لَغَوِىٌّ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿١٨﴾ فَلَمَّآ اَنْ اَرَادَ اَنْ يَّبْطِشَ بِالَّذِىْ هُوَعَدُوٌّ لَّهُمَا ۙ قَالَ يٰمُوْسٰٓى اَتُرِيْدُ اَنْ تَقْتُلَنِىْ كَمَا قَتَلْتَ نَفْسًا ۢ بِالْاَمْسِ ۖ ق اِنْ تُرِيْدُ اِلَّآ اَنْ تَكُوْنَ جَبَّارًا فِى الْاَرْضِ وَمَا تُرِيْدُ اَنْ تَكُوْنَ مِنَ الْمُصْلِحِيْنَ ﴿١٩﴾ وَجَآءَ رَجُلٌ مِّنْ اَقْصَا الْمَدِيْنَةِ يَسْعٰى ۟ قَالَ يٰمُوْسٰٓى اِنَّ الْمَلَاَ يَاْتَمِرُوْنَ بِكَ لِيَقْتُلُوْكَ فَاخْرُجْ اِنِّىْ لَكَ مِنَ النّٰصِحِيْنَ ﴿٢٠﴾ فَخَرَجَ مِنْهَا خَآئِفًا يَّتَرَقَّبُ ۟ قَالَ رَبِّ نَجِّنِىْ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٢١﴾ ع

And when he reached his maturity and became perfect, We gave him wisdom and knowledge. And in this manner We reward those who do good. [14] **And he entered the city at a time of unawareness of its people; so he found in it two men fighting each other: This one was from his own group and that one from his enemies. So the one from his own group called him for help against the one who was from his enemies. So Mūsā struck him with his fist and finished him off. (Then) He (Mūsā) said (out of remorse), "This is some of Satan's act. He is indeed a clear enemy who misleads."** [15] **He said, "O my Lord, I have wronged myself, so forgive me." So He forgave him. Indeed He is the most Forgiving, Very-Merciful.** [16] **He (Mūsā) said, "O my Lord, since**

You have favoured me, I will never be a supporter of the sinners." [17]

Then next morning he was fearful, waiting (for what comes next) when the man who sought his help the day before, shouted to him for help (again). Mūsā said to him, "You are surely an apparent trouble-maker." [18] **Thereafter when he intended to grasp at the one who was an enemy to both of them, the latter said, "O Mūsā, do you want to kill me as you have killed a person yesterday? You intend nothing but to become a tyrant in the land, and you do not intend to be one of the peace-makers."** [19]

And there came a man running, from the farthest part of the city. He said, "The chiefs are counselling each other about you, so that they kill you. So, leave (the city). I am one of your well-wishers." [20] **So, he went out of it (the city) in a state of fear, waiting (for what comes next). He said, "O my Lord, save me from the cruel people."** [21]

Commentary

وَلَمَّا بَلَغَ اَشُدَّهٗ وَاسْتَوٰى (And when he reached his maturity and became perfect - 28:14). The literal meaning of *'ashudd* (اَشُدّ) is to attain the peak of strength or intensity. For instance a person gradually develops from the position of juvenile weakness to the strength of adulthood. A time comes when he has attained full strength and vigour that he could achieve. That point in life is called *'ashudd*. In different parts of the world and for different people this point in life varies according to climate, character of the land, race etc. Some people attain it early while others take time. 'Abd Ibn Ḥumaid has reported that Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ and Mujāhid have placed the age of *'ashudd* as 33rd year of one's life. This is called the age of perfection or the age of discernment, when the development of body stops after reaching its peak. After this age a period of hold commences, which lasts until the age of forty. This period is mentioned in the verse as *Istawa* (translated above as became perfect). After the age of forty years the decline and weakness sets in. Hence, it can be said that *'ashudd* (اَشُدّ) of a person starts from the age of 33 years and lasts through 40 years. (Rūḥ, Qurṭubī).

اٰتَيْنٰهُ حُكْمًا وَّعِلْمًا (We gave him wisdom and knowledge - 28:14) The word

(حُکم) *Ḥukm* (translated above as 'wisdom') is used here for prophethood, and the word 'knowledge' refers to the knowledge of divine injunctions.

وَدَخَلَ الْمَدِيْنَةَ عَلٰى حِيْنِ غَفْلَةٍ مِّنْ اَهْلِهَا (And he entered the city at a time of unawareness of its people - 15). Most commentators have interpreted that the word 'city' is used here for the main city of Egypt. The words 'he entered' indicate that Mūsā عليه السلام, had gone away somewhere out of Egypt. Then he entered back at a time when people normally sleep. It is also mentioned in the incident of killing of the 'Qibṭī' that it was the time when Mūsā عليه السلام had already announced his prophethood and had started preaching the religion of truth. As a result of his preaching some people had converted, and were known as his disciples. The word مِنْ شِيْعَتِه (from his group - 28:15) is a proof of that. All these versions give credence to the narration which is quoted by Ibn Isḥāque and Ibn Zaid that when Mūsā عليه السلام had started talking to the people about the religion of truth, the Pharaoh turned against him and wanted to kill him. But on the appeal of his wife, Sayyidah 'Āsiyah, he restrained himself, and instead commanded him to go in exile. After that Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام shifted to some hiding place and would come to the city of Egypt occasionally in hiding. Most commentators are of the opinion that by عَلٰى حِيْنِ غَفْلَةٍ مِّنْ اَهْلِهَا (28:15) the time of afternoon is meant, when people generally take a siesta. (Qurṭubī)

فَوَكَزَه' مُوْسٰى (So Mūsā struck him with his fist). *Wakaza* (وَكَزَ) means to box فَقَضٰى عَلَيْهِ (28:15). The phrase of *Qaḍāhu* (قضاه) and *Qaḍā 'Alaihi* (قَضٰى عَلَيْهِ) is used when one is totally finished. Hence, here it means that he killed him. (Maẓharī)

قَالَ رَبِّ اِنِّىْ ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِىْ فَاغْفِرْ لِىْ فَغَفَرَلَه' (He said, "O my Lord, I have wronged myself, so forgive me." So he forgave him - 28:16). The gist of this verse is that Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام regarded the killing of the infidel Qibṭī as a sin, despite the fact that it had happened without any intention on his part, because it was in conflict with his status of prophethood, and thus below his dignity. So, he begged Allah's pardon for the act, which was duly granted.

The first question that arises here is that this Qibṭī was an infidel combatant (*ḥarbī*) in the religious term. Hence, his killing was permissible and preferable, because he was neither a *dhimmī* (ذِمّى), i.e the citizen of

an Islamic state nor under any covenant with Mūsā عليه السلام. Then why did Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام regarded it a sin and an act of Satan? His killing should have been regarded as an act worth the reward, because the Qibṭī was harming a Muslim unjustly, and got killed in the process when Mūsā عليه السلام tried to save the life of the Muslim. The answer to this question is that covenants of peace are sometimes written or spoken in express words, and sometimes they come into effect by consistent practice of the parties that amounts to an implied agreement and is as good as a written covenant. Violation of the covenants of this type is also prohibited in Islam. The covenant established by practice can be understood by the example that if in a non-Islamic state Muslims and non-Muslims are living in harmony and there is no conflict between them, and any pillage or fighting with each other is regarded as treachery, then this consistent practice of co-existence would be regarded as an implied agreement for peaceful living, and its violation is not allowed. The proof of this principle can be found in a lengthy *ḥadīth* of Sayyidnā Mughīrah Ibn Shu'bah رضي الله عنه that has been reported by Imām Bukhārī in his book in the chapter entitled as 'Kitāb Ash-Shurūṭ. The *ḥadīth* runs like this: Sayyidnā Mughīrah Ibn Shu'bah رضي الله عنه had good relations with a group of infidels before the advent of Islam, and later he killed them and took possession of all their wealth. Then he went to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and submitted to Islam, and presented all that wealth to him. On this action the Holy Prophet ﷺ said to him امّا الاسلام فاقبل وامّا المال فلست منه فى شئى (As far as your embracing Islam is concerned,I accept it, but I have nothing to do with this wealth) Abū Dāwūd has quoted this *ḥadīth* like this: اما المال فمال غدر لاحاجة لنا فيه (As for wealth,we have no concern with it). The Holy Prophet ﷺ declared in this *ḥadīth* that he accepted his submission to Islam, but this wealth has been snatched by breach of trust and was a treachery, hence he did not have any desire for this wealth. Ḥafiẓ Ibn Ḥajar has observed in his commentary that this *ḥadīth* has laid down the principle that grabbing of wealth of the infidels during peacetime is not permissible. It is for the simple reason that people living together in a city or township or those who work together regard themselves secured from each other. The agreement established through their practice is like a trust, which must be honoured by each and every person, no matter whether he is a Muslim or an infidel. The property of infidels permitted for possession by the Muslims is only that which is acquired during a war

with them. It is not permitted to grab the wealth of infidels during peacetime, when one feels secured from one another. Qasṭalānī has observed in his commentary on Bukhārī as follows:

انّ اموال المشركين ان كانت مغنومة عند القهر فلا يحل اخذها عند الامن، فاذا كان الانسان مصاحبًا لهم فقد امن كل واحد منهم صاحبه، فسفك الدّماء و اخذ المال مع ذلك غدر حرام الا ان ينبذ اليهم عهدهم على سواء

'No doubt the wealth of infidels is permitted (to take possession) during war or *jihād*, but in peacetime it is not lawful. Therefore, any Muslim living and socializing with infidels in the manner that they are safe and secure for each other, for him it is unlawful to slay them, or forcefully grab their wealth, unless the peace agreement established through practice is abrogated through an announcement'.

The gist of the discussion is that if the Qibṭī would have been killed with preconceived resolve in the presence of an implied peace agreement, it would not have been lawful. But Mūsā عليه السلام did not have the intention of killing the Qibṭī. He only hit him with his bare hands to save the Isrā'īlī from his grip. In the normal course, it should not have been fatal, but he died all the same by that blow. Then Mūsā عليه السلام realized that a lighter blow would also have done the job of getting rid of him. Realizing that harder blow was not needed, he repented and invoked Allah's mercy.

Special Note

The above principle was explained to me by Sayyidī Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thanāvi رحمه الله تعالى, when I was writing the commentary of Surah Al-Qaṣaṣ in Aḥkāmul-Qur'ān, the Arabic commentary written under his supervision. It is the last academic discourse of Sayyidi from which I have benefited, as he had completed this work on Rajab 2,1362 A.H, and after that his sickness intensified and on Rajab 16, 1362 , he passed away. انا لله وانّا اليه راجعون .

Some commentators have observed that although killing of the Qibṭī was permissible, but prophets take extra care in special cases even in performing permissible acts and avoid them, unless they receive a cue from Allah Ta'ālā. On this occasion Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام did not wait for the permission from Allah Ta'ālā and acted on his own. Therefore, in view of his status as a prophet, he maintained that it was a sin on his part, and hence, invoked Allah's pardon. (Rūḥ)

قَالَ رَبِّ بِمَآ اَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ فَلَنْ اَكُوْنَ ظَهِيْرًا لِّلْمُجْرِمِيْنَ (He [Mūsā] said, "O my Lord, since You have favoured me, I will never be a supporter to the sinners." - 28:17). When Allah Ta'ālā pardoned this slip of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, he said in gratitude to Allah Ta'ālā that he would never again help a criminal. The second incident of the quarrel had proved that the Isrā'īlī in whose defense Mūsā عليه السلام had involved himself in the brawl was quarrelsome. Therefore, by declaring him a criminal he vowed not to help such a person again. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه while explaining this verse, has maintained that the word 'criminals' stands here for infidels. Qatādah has also interpreted the verse in almost the same way. On the basis of these commentaries it seems that actually the Isrā'īlī, whom Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام had defended, was not a Muslim but he helped him considering that he was an oppressed person.

Rulings

It is worth noting here that this saying of Mūsā عليه السلام has established two rulings about two issues. One, that even if an oppressed person is a sinner or infidel, he should be helped. The second ruling is that it is not permitted to help any criminal or oppressor. Scholars have argued on the basis of this verse that working in the employment of cruel rulers is also not permitted, for they too would be regarded as their associates. Many citations from the righteous *salaf* (elders) have also been quoted in support of this argument. (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī) To provide support to the oppressors or to the infidels may take different forms. The different rulings about these forms are laid down in the books of *fiqh* in detail. This humble writer has also dealt with the subject in his Arabic book Aḥkāmul-Qur'ān with greater elaboration. The scholars interested in the subject may consult it.

Verses 22 - 28

وَلَمَّا تَوَجَّهَ تِلْقَآءَ مَدْيَنَ قَالَ عَسٰى رَبِّىٓ اَنْ يَّهْدِيَنِىْ سَوَآءَ السَّبِيْلِ

﴿٢٢﴾ وَلَمَّا وَرَدَ مَآءَ مَدْيَنَ وَجَدَ عَلَيْهِ اُمَّةً مِّنَ النَّاسِ يَسْقُوْنَ ۬

وَوَجَدَ مِنْ دُوْنِهِمُ امْرَاَتَيْنِ تَذُوْدٰنِ ۚ قَالَ مَا خَطْبُكُمَا ؕ قَالَتَا

لَانَسْقِىْ حَتّٰى يُصْدِرَ الرِّعَآءُ سكتة وَاَبُوْنَا شَيْخٌ كَبِيْرٌ ﴿٢٣﴾ فَسَقٰى

لَهُمَا ثُمَّ تَوَلّٰىٓ اِلَى الظِّلِّ فَقَالَ رَبِّ اِنِّىْ لِمَآ اَنْزَلْتَ اِلَىَّ مِنْ خَيْرٍ
فَقِيْرٌ ﴿٢٤﴾ فَجَآءَتْهُ اِحْدٰىهُمَا تَمْشِىْ عَلَى اسْتِحْيَآءٍ ز قَالَتْ اِنَّ اَبِىْ
يَدْعُوْكَ لِيَجْزِيَكَ اَجْرَ مَا سَقَيْتَ لَنَا ط فَلَمَّا جَآءَهٗ وَقَصَّ عَلَيْهِ
الْقَصَصَ لا قَالَ لَا تَخَفْ وقفه نَجَوْتَ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٢٥﴾ قَالَتْ
اِحْدٰىهُمَا يٰٓاَبَتِ اسْتَاْجِرْهُ ز اِنَّ خَيْرَ مَنِ اسْتَاْجَرْتَ الْقَوِىُّ الْاَمِيْنُ
﴿٢٦﴾ قَالَ اِنِّىْٓ اُرِيْدُ اَنْ اُنْكِحَكَ اِحْدَى ابْنَتَىَّ هٰتَيْنِ عَلٰٓى اَنْ تَاْجُرَنِىْ
ثَمٰنِىَ حِجَجٍ ج فَاِنْ اَتْمَمْتَ عَشْرًا فَمِنْ عِنْدِكَ ج وَمَآ اُرِيْدُ اَنْ اَشُقَّ
عَلَيْكَ ط سَتَجِدُنِىْٓ اِنْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ مِنَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ ﴿٢٧﴾ قَالَ ذٰلِكَ بَيْنِىْ
وَبَيْنَكَ ط اَيَّمَا الْاَجَلَيْنِ قَضَيْتُ فَلَا عُدْوَانَ عَلَىَّ ط وَاللّٰهُ عَلٰى مَا
نَقُوْلُ وَكِيْلٌ ﴿٢٨﴾ ع

And when he set out towards Madyan, he said, "I hope my Lord will guide me to the straight path". [22] **And when he arrived at the waters of Madyan, he found a large number of people watering (their animals) and found, aloof from them, two women keeping back (their animals). He said, "What is the matter with you?" They said, "We cannot water (our animals) unless the shepherds bring (their animals) back and our father is very old man."** [23] **So he (Mūsā) watered (their animals) for their sake, then he turned to a shade and said, "O my Lord, I am in need of whatever good you send down to me."** [24]

Then one of the two women came to him, walking with shyness. She said, "My father is calling you, so that he rewards you with something in return of your watering for us. So when he (Mūsā) came to him (the father of the women) and narrated to him the whole story, the latter said, "Do not fear; you have escaped from the wrongdoing people." [25] **One of the two women said, "Dear father, hire him; the best man you hire is the one who is strong, trustworthy."** [26] **He (the father) said (to Mūsā), "I wish to marry one of these two daughters of**

mine to you on the condition that you serve me for eight years. Then if you complete ten (years) it will be of your own accord. And I do not want to put you in any trouble; you will find me, Inshallah (God-willing) one of the righteous." [27] **He (Mūsā) said, "This is (done) between me and you. Whichever of the two terms I fulfill, there should be no excess against me, and Allah is witness to what we are saying."** [28]

Commentary

وَلَمَّا تَوَجَّهَ تِلْقَآءَ مَدْيَنَ (And when he set out towards Madyan - 28:22). Madyan (مَدْيَن) is the name of a city in *Shām* (a large territory now consisting of Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine) which was named after Madyan, the son of Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. This area was outside the empire of the Pharaoh. It was eight days journey from Egypt. When Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was taken over by the natural fright of the pursuing army of the Pharaoh, which was not in conflict either with the prophethood or with trust in Allah, he resolved to leave Egypt. Perhaps he decided to proceed toward Madyan because it was a habitation of the descendants of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, and he was also his progeny.

When Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام left Egypt, he was in a condition that he had neither any provisions for the journey nor any baggage, and also he did not know the route. In this state of helplessness he turned to Allah Ta'ālā and asked عَسٰى رَبِّيٓ اَنْ يَّهْدِيَنِيْ سَوَآءَ السَّبِيْلِ (I hope my Lord will guide me to the straight path - 28:22), Allah Ta'ālā accepted this prayer. Scholars have observed that the only food Mūsā عليه السلام had during this journey was the leaves of trees. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه has said that this was the first trial and test of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام. Details of trials and tests of Mūsā عليه السلام have already been described under Sūrah Ṭāhā while quoting a lengthy *ḥadīth.*

وَلَمَّا وَرَدَ مَآءَ مَدْيَنَ وَجَدَ عَلَيْهِ اُمَّةً مِّنَ النَّاسِ يَسْقُوْنَ (And when he arrived at the waters of Madyan, he found a large number of people watering (their animals) - 28:23) مَآءَ مَدْيَنَ (waters of Madyan) refers to the well from where people of that place used to make their animals drink water. وَوَجَدَ مِنْ دُوْنِهِمُ امْرَاَتَيْنِ تَذُوْدٰنِ (found, aloof from them, two women keeping back (their animals) - 23). That is he saw two girls stopping their goats from going to the water, so that they did not get mixed up with other goats.

قَالَ مَا خَطْبُكُمَا ۖ قَالَتَا لَا نَسْقِي حَتَّىٰ يُصْدِرَ الرِّعَاءُ ۖ وَأَبُونَا شَيْخٌ كَبِيرٌ (He said, "What is the matter with you?" They said, "We cannot water (our animals) unless the shepherds bring (their animals) back and our father is very old man." - 28:23). The word خَطْب *Khaṭb* means "matter". The sense is that Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام asked the two girls 'What was it that you are stopping your goats from coming to the well for drinking water like other goats? The two girls answered that, in order to avoid mixing with men-folk, they used to make their goats wait until men had left the place after watering their animals. The question arose here whether they did not have any male member in the family to do this job . The girls answered this question on their own by saying that their father was very old and could not perform this job. This is why they were doing the job.

Some very important points are learnt by this incident. One, that it was the practice of the prophets to help the weak. Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام saw that two girls had brought their goats for drinking water, but they were unable to find room because of the rush of people. Therefore, he asked them about their problem. Two, that there is no harm to talk to stranger women, if no mischief is involved. Three, that although this incident had happened when *ḥijāb* was not enjoined, a situation that continued even in the early days of Islam (*ḥijāb* was enjoined in Madīnah after the Hijrah), but the underlying spirit of *ḥijāb,* i.e the natural instinct of modesty and bashfulness, was there even in those days. Because of this natural instinct the two girls preferred hardship rather than getting mixed with men-folk. Four, that it was not considered desirable for women even in those days to go out and perform such type of duties. It was for this reason that they put forward the justification that their father was very old and weak.

فَسَقَىٰ لَهُمَا (So he (Mūsā) watered (their animal) for their sake - 28:24). That is Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام took pity on the girls and drew out water from the well and satiated their goats. It is reported in some narrations that the shepherds after making their cattle drink water used to place a very heavy stone on the mouth of the well to make it unusable, and hence these girls would have only the left over water for their herd. The stone was so heavy that ten men together could move it, but Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام removed it all by himself, and drew water from the well. Perhaps for this reason one of the two girls reported to her father that Sayyidnā Mūsā

عليه السلام was very strong. (Qurṭubī)

ثُمَّ تَوَلّٰی اِلَی الظِّلِّ فَقَالَ رَبِّ اِنِّیْ لِمَآ اَنْزَلْتَ اِلَیَّ مِنْ خَیْرٍ فَقِیْرٌ (Then he turned to a shade and said, "O my Lord, I am in need of whatever good you send down to me." - 28:24). Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام did not have any food for the last seven days. He came under the shade of a tree and prayed to Allah describing his condition and need in an exquisite manner. The word *Khair* is sometimes used for wealth as in the case of اِنْ تَرَکَ خَیْرَا اِلْوَصِیَّةُ (he leaves some wealth - 2:180). Sometimes it is used for strength like اَھُمْ خَیْرٌ اَمْ قَوْمُ تُبَّعٍ (Are they better, or the people of Tubba - 44:37) and sometimes for food as in the verse under reference. (Qurṭubī)

فَجَآءَتْهُ اِحْدٰىهُمَا تَمْشِیْ عَلَی اسْتِحْیَآءٍ (Then one of the two women came to him walking with shyness. - 28:25). In accordance with Qur'ānic practice the story has been summarized here. The full story runs like this: When the two girls reached home earlier than usual, their father enquired the reason for that. So they related to him the whole incident. Their father thought that he should make up for the favour Mūsā عليه السلام had done to his daughters. Hence he asked one of his daughters to bring him with her. She went to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and talked to him with an element of modesty. This shows that despite the fact that *ḥijāb* was not enjoined by then, good women would not talk to men freely. She went to him with a need, so she talked with shyness. Some commentators have given the detail of her shyness that while talking she had raised her sleeve up to her face. The narrations as related in commentaries say that Mūsā عليه السلام had asked her to walk behind him and guide him from the back. The objective was that he could not cast his eye on her. Perhaps for this reason she told her father about him to be trustworthy.

Who was the father of these two girls? Commentators have different views on this subject. But Qur'ānic verses allude that he was Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام وَاِلٰی مَدْیَنَ اَخَاھُمْ شُعَیْبًا (7:85). (Qurṭubī)

اِنَّ اَبِیْ یَدْعُوْكَ (My father is calling you - 28:25). It was possible at that time that the girl would have invited him on her own, but she did not do so. Instead, she conveyed her father's message to him, because it was against the modesty for a girl to invite a stranger at home.

اِنَّ خَیْرَ مَنِ اسْتَاْجَرْتَ الْقَوِیُّ الْاَمِیْنُ (The best man you hire is the one who is strong, trustworthy - 28:26), One of the daughters of Sayyidnā Shu'aib

عليه السلام pleaded to her father that as he needed the services of a man to help him in his daily work at home, he might consider hiring him for this purpose. In support of her suggestion she said further that two qualities are required in a servant. One, that he should be strong, and the second, that he should be trustworthy. The girl pointed out that she had seen his strength when he removed the stone from the mouth of the well, and his integrity when he made her walk behind him.

Two important conditions for hiring a person, and assigning a job

Allah Ta'ālā made the daughter of Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام say something of great wisdom. In the present set up of employment, great emphasis is laid at the time of interviews on scrutinizing the degrees and experience of a candidate, but no attention is paid to ascertain his integrity and trustworthiness. As a result of this, there is neither efficiency nor honesty of purpose in the offices. On the contrary bribery and nepotism are so common that there seems to be no law in operation. If people could pay heed to this Qur'ānic verse, many a problems would be solved automatically.

قَالَ إِنِّيٓ أُرِيدُ أَنْ أُنكِحَكَ إِحْدَى ابْنَتَيَّ هٰتَيْنِ (He (the father) said (to Mūsā), "I wish to marry one of these two daughters of mine to you on the condition that you serve me for eight years. - 28:27). Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام made the proposal of marriage of his daughter to Mūsā عليه السلام on his own. It shows that the guardian of girls need not wait for the proposal to come from the boy's side. If a suitable good match is available, the girl's guardian may take the lead, for this has been the practice of the prophets. To quote an example, Sayyidnā 'Umar Ibn Khaṭṭāb رضي الله عنه had offered his daughter, Sayyidah Ḥafṣah رضی اللہ عنہا, for marriage to Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه and to Sayyidna 'Uthmān رضي الله عنه when she became widow. (Qurṭubī)

إِحْدَى ابْنَتَيَّ هٰتَيْنِ (one of these daughters of mine - 28:27). Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام did not make the selection of one or the other girl for the proposal of marriage, rather he kept it vague. It was not the formal *nikāḥ*, that requires offer and acceptance in presence of two witnesses, but only a discussion to have his consent to work for eight years in lieu of marriage with a girl. Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام agreed to the proposal, and got married to one of the girls. The Holy Qur'ān does not describe every detail of a story, the happening of which is obvious from the context. Therefore, it

cannot be doubted here that without pinpointing the bride and without the presence of witnesses how the *nikāḥ* was solemnized. (Rūḥ, Bayān ul Qur'ān)

عَلٰٓى اَنْ تَاْجُرَنِىْ ثَمٰنِىَ حِجَجٍ (on the condition that you serve me for eight years - 28:27). Eight years service and employment was regarded the *mahr (dower)*(the dower) of marriage. Scholars have different points of view on the issue, whether a service rendered to one's wife can be taken as a valid *mahr (dower)* or not. The subject is dealt with in detail in Aḥkāmul-Qur'ān in Arabic language, under Sūrah Al-Qaṣaṣ. Those who are interested can study the details there. For the common man it is enough to understand that if it is not allowed in the Muḥammadī law, it might have been permitted in the code of law followed by Shu'aib عليه السلام. It is not uncommon to have minor differences in the laws (Sharī'ah) brought by various prophets.

Imām Abū Ḥanīfah has ruled in his Ẓāhir-ur-Riwāyaḥ that the service rendered for one's wife cannot be considered as a valid *mahr (dower)*. But in a later ruling by the scholars it is elaborated that though it is against the honour and dignity of husband to serve his wife in lieu of *mahr (dower)*, but any duty performed outside the house, such as grazing of cattle or trading, can be made a substitute for it, provided a time frame is agreed upon before hand, as was in the case of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, where the parties had agreed before hand on eight years period of service. The reason is that the remuneration of the husband payable by his wife in this case will be treated as *mahr* (dower). (Badā'i', from Nawādir Ibn Samā'ah).

Another question that arises here is that the *mahr* (dower) is the right of wife, and if it is paid to her father or any other relative without her consent, it will be taken as not paid. In this incident the words اَنْ تَاْجُرَنِىْ are a proof enough that Shu'aib عليه السلام had hired him for his duty. So, the benefit of service went to him. In that situation how could this be regarded as *mahr* (dower) of the wife? The answer to this question is that it is quite probable that the herd of goats was the property of the girls, and therefore, the benefit of service went to his wife. Alternatively, if the goats belonged to the father and the wages were due from him, then the money of the wages payable by the father belonged to the wife, as her *mahr* (dower). It is lawful for a father to spend the money of his daughter

with her permission. It is quite obvious that this whole deal was carried out with the consent of the girl.

Ruling

The word أُنْكِحَكَ (I wish to marry...with you) has proved that the father had arranged the *nikāḥ*. Jurists are unanimous that it should be done as such. It is the father's duty and privilege to make arrangements of daughter's marriage. A girl should not arrange her own marriage. But there is difference of opinion between jurists on the issue whether the *nikah* is lawful or not, if a girl arranges her own marriage due to some need or pressure. Imām Abū Ḥanīfah has ruled that it is lawful. However, this verse is silent on the issue.

Verses 29 - 35

فَلَمَّا قَضٰى مُوْسَى الْاَجَلَ وَسَارَ بِاَهْلِهٖٓ اٰنَسَ مِنْ جَانِبِ الطُّوْرِ نَارًا ۚ قَالَ لِاَهْلِهِ امْكُثُوْٓا اِنِّيْٓ اٰنَسْتُ نَارًا لَّعَلِّيْٓ اٰتِيْكُمْ مِّنْهَا بِخَبَرٍ اَوْ جَذْوَةٍ مِّنَ النَّارِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَصْطَلُوْنَ ﴿٢٩﴾ فَلَمَّآ اَتٰىهَا نُوْدِيَ مِنْ شَاطِئِ الْوَادِ الْاَيْمَنِ فِي الْبُقْعَةِ الْمُبٰرَكَةِ مِنَ الشَّجَرَةِ اَنْ يّٰمُوْسٰٓى اِنِّيْٓ اَنَا اللّٰهُ رَبُّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٣٠﴾ وَاَنْ اَلْقِ عَصَاكَ ۗ فَلَمَّا رَاٰهَا تَهْتَزُّ كَاَنَّهَا جَآنٌّ وَّلّٰى مُدْبِرًا وَّلَمْ يُعَقِّبْ ۗ يٰمُوْسٰٓى اَقْبِلْ وَلَا تَخَفْ ۣ اِنَّكَ مِنَ الْاٰمِنِيْنَ ﴿٣١﴾ اُسْلُكْ يَدَكَ فِيْ جَيْبِكَ تَخْرُجْ بَيْضَآءَ مِنْ غَيْرِ سُوْٓءٍ وَّاضْمُمْ اِلَيْكَ جَنَاحَكَ مِنَ الرَّهْبِ فَذٰنِكَ بُرْهَانٰنِ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ اِلٰى فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَا۟ئِهٖ ۗ اِنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا قَوْمًا فٰسِقِيْنَ ﴿٣٢﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ اِنِّيْ قَتَلْتُ مِنْهُمْ نَفْسًا فَاَخَافُ اَنْ يَّقْتُلُوْنِ ﴿٣٣﴾ وَاَخِيْ هٰرُوْنُ هُوَ اَفْصَحُ مِنِّيْ لِسَانًا فَاَرْسِلْهُ مَعِيَ رِدْاً يُّصَدِّقُنِيْٓ ۫ اِنِّيْٓ اَخَافُ اَنْ يُّكَذِّبُوْنِ ﴿٣٤﴾ قَالَ سَنَشُدُّ عَضُدَكَ بِاَخِيْكَ وَنَجْعَلُ لَكُمَا سُلْطٰنًا فَلَا يَصِلُوْنَ اِلَيْكُمَا ۚ بِاٰيٰتِنَآ ۚ اَنْتُمَا وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَكُمَا الْغٰلِبُوْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾

So, when Mūsā completed the term and set forth with his wife, he noticed a fire from the direction of the (mount) Ṭūr, he said to his wife, "Stay here; I have noticed a fire. May be I bring to you some information or an ember from the fire, so that you may warm yourself." [29] **So when he came to it, he was called by a voice coming from a side of the right valley in the blessed ground, from the tree, saying, "O Mūsā, I am Allah, the Lord of the worlds."** [30] **And saying, "Throw down your staff." So when he saw it moving as if it were a snake, he turned back in retreat and did not look back. (Allah said to him), "O Mūsā come forward and do not fear; you are one of those in peace.** [31] **Insert your hand into your bosom, and it will come out white without any evil (disease), and press your arm to your side for (removing) fear. Thus these are two proofs from your Lord (sent) to the the Pharaoh and his chiefs. Indeed they are transgressing people."** [32]

He said, "My Lord, I have killed a person from them; therefore I fear that they will kill me. [33] **And my brother Hārūn is more fluent with his tongue than I am; so send him with me as a helper who will bear me out. I am afraid, they will belie me."** [34] **He (Allah) said, "We will make your arm stronger through (the help of) your brother and will make you have the upper hand, so they will not reach you (to cause any harm) because of Our signs.*** **You both and those who follow you will be victorious."** [35]

Commentary

فَلَمَّا قَضٰى مُوْسَى الْأَجَلَ (So When Mūsā completed the term - 28:29). Then Sayyidna Mūsā عليه السلام completed his term of service, which was eight years compulsory and two years optional. A question arises here, whether he completed eight years of service or ten year's. Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī has reported that when this question was put to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, he answered ten years, and added that prophets always fulfill their commitments, rather they do more than what they agree to. The Holy

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* Another possible translation with a slight change in punctuation is as follows: "and will make for you the upper hand, so they will not reach you (with any harm). Because of Our signs, you both and those who follow you will be victorious." (Muhammad Taqi Usmani)

Prophet ﷺ was also in the habit of giving more than due to the one having a right. He ﷺ has also advised the Ummah to be selfless and considerate in the matters of employment, wages, and business dealings.

نُودِیَ مِنْ شَاطِئِ الْوَادِ الْاَیْمَنِ فِی الْبُقْعَةِ الْمُبٰرَکَةِ مِنَ الشَّجَرَةِ اَنْ یّٰمُوْسٰۤی اِنِّیْۤ اَنَا اللّٰهُ رَبُّ الْعٰلَمِیْنَ (He was called by a voice coming from a side of the right valley in the blessed ground, from the tree, saying" O Mūsā, I am Allah, the Lord of the worlds" - 28:30). This subject was also mentioned in Sūrahs Ṭāhā and An-Naml in the story of Mūsā عليه السلام. In Sūrah Ṭāhā it is said اِنِّیْۤ اَنَا رَبُّكَ (it is Me your Lord - 20:12) and in Sūrah An-Naml نُوْدِیَ اَنْۢ بُوْرِكَ مَنْ فِی النَّارِ (So when he came to it, he was called: "Blessed is the one who is in the fire - 27:8), while in the present Sūrah (Al-Qaṣaṣ) it appears as اِنِّیْۤ اَنَا اللّٰهُ رَبُّ الْعٰلَمِیْنَ (I am Allah the Lord of the worlds - 28:30). Although the wordings are slightly different here, yet the meanings are almost the same. The incident is related in the words which suited to the situation being described. (كذا قال الامام). The refulgence that Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام had seen in the form of fire was only in the form of an example (*mithālī*), because it is impossible for a worldly being to see the actual refulgence of Allāh Ta'ālā. Mūsā عليه السلام is called لَنْ تَرٰىنِیْ (7:143) (You will never see Me) in respect of actual refulgence.

The place also becomes auspicious if righteous deeds are performed there

فِی الْبُقْعَةِ الْمُبٰرَکَةِ (In the blessed ground - 28:30). The Holy Qur'ān has termed the mount Ṭūr as blessed ground. It is obvious that the reason of its being auspicious is the refulgence of Allah Ta'ālā, which was manifested at that spot in the form of fire. It proves that if something virtuous happens at a place, that particular spot also turns auspicious.

A sermon should have high degree of eloquence

هُوَ اَفْصَحُ مِنِّیْ لِسَانًا (He is more fluent in his tongue - 28:34). This verse points out that a high degree of oratory and eloquence is desirable for sermons and preaching, and there is no harm if one takes training in that.

Verses 36 - 42

فَلَمَّا جَآءَهُمْ مُّوْسٰی بِاٰیٰتِنَا بَیِّنٰتٍ قَالُوْا مَا هٰذَاۤ اِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُّفْتَرًی وَّمَا سَمِعْنَا بِهٰذَا فِیْۤ اٰبَآئِنَا الْاَوَّلِیْنَ ﴿٣٦﴾ وَقَالَ مُوْسٰی رَبِّیْۤ اَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ

جَآءَ بِالْهُدٰى مِنْ عِنْدِهٖ وَمَنْ تَكُوْنُ لَهٗ عَاقِبَةُ الدَّارِ ؕ اِنَّهٗ لَايُفْلِحُ
الظّٰلِمُوْنَ ﴿٣٧﴾ وَقَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ يٰٓاَيُّهَا الْمَلَاُ مَاعَلِمْتُ لَكُمْ مِّنْ اِلٰهٍ
غَيْرِىْ ۚ فَاَوْقِدْ لِىْ يٰهَامٰنُ عَلَى الطِّيْنِ فَاجْعَلْ لِّىْ صَرْحًا لَّعَلِّىْٓ اَطَّلِعُ
اِلٰٓى اِلٰهِ مُوْسٰى ۙ وَاِنِّىْ لَاَظُنُّهٗ مِنَ الْكٰذِبِيْنَ ﴿٣٨﴾ وَاسْتَكْبَرَ هُوَ
وَجُنُوْدُهٗ فِى الْاَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَظَنُّوْٓا اَنَّهُمْ اِلَيْنَا لَا يُرْجَعُوْنَ
﴿٣٩﴾ فَاَخَذْنٰهُ وَجُنُوْدَهٗ فَنَبَذْنٰهُمْ فِى الْيَمِّ ۚ فَانْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ
الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٤٠﴾ وَجَعَلْنٰهُمْ اَئِمَّةً يَّدْعُوْنَ اِلَى النَّارِ ۚ وَيَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ
لَايُنْصَرُوْنَ ﴿٤١﴾ وَاَتْبَعْنٰهُمْ فِىْ هٰذِهِ الدُّنْيَا لَعْنَةً ۚ وَيَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ هُمْ
مِّنَ الْمَقْبُوْحِيْنَ ﴿٤٢﴾ ع

So when Mūsā came to them with Our clear signs, they said, "This is nothing but a forged magic, and we did not hear about it among our forefathers." [36] **And Mūsā said, "My Lord knows best the one who has come with guidance from Him and who is going to have the best end of the abode. It is certain that the wrongdoers will not succeed."** [37]

And the Pharaoh said, "O chiefs, I do not know of any god for you other than me. So kindle for me, O Hāmān, a fire on the clay (to bake bricks) and build for me a tower, so that I may look on to the God of Mūsā. And I deem him to be one of the liars." [38] **And he and his hosts became over-proud in the land without justification and thought that they would not be returned to Us.** [39] **So We seized him and his hosts and threw them into the sea. Look then, how was the fate of the wrongdoers.** [40] **And We had made them leaders who called (people) towards hell. And on the Day of Judgment they will not be helped.** [41] **And We made a curse to pursue them in this world; and on the Day of Judgment they will be among those treated badly.** [42]

Commentary

فَاَوْقِدْ لِىْ يٰهَامٰنُ عَلَى الطِّيْنِ (So kindle for me, O Hāmān, a fire on the clay (to

bake bricks) - 28:38). When the Pharaoh planned to build a very tall palace for himself, he asked his minister Hāmān to get the bricks baked properly first, because half baked bricks could not take the load of a tall building. Some people have observed that the Pharaoh was the first one to have tough bricks baked for the buildings, as no one had used them before. Historical narrations have recorded that Hāmān had collected fifty thousand masons for building this palace. Skilled labour, such as carpenters and blacksmith, were additional. This palace was built so tall that there was no parallel to it in the world. When it was completed, Allah Ta'ālā commanded Jibra'īl عليه السلام to knock it down. He struck only one blow to it and it tumbled down in three pieces, killing thousands of soldiers of the Pharaoh's army. (Qurṭubī)

وَجَعَلْنٰهُمْ اَئِمَّةً يَّدْعُوْنَ اِلَى النَّارِ (And We had made them leaders who called (people) towards hell. - 28:41). Allah Ta'ālā had elevated the courtiers of the Pharaoh as leaders of their people, but these wrong-doers were busy inviting the people towards fire – *jahannam*. Most commentators have taken the expression 'invitation to fire' as a metaphor. That is, by fire the allusion is toward evil deeds that will result in burning in the fire of Jahannam. But according to the work of my respected teacher Sayyidnā Maulānā Sayyid Muḥammad Anwār Shah Kashmirī رحمه الله تعالیٰ the reward of the Hereafter is the deed itself. One's deeds in this world will change their forms first in *barzakh* and then in *maḥshar*. The righteous deeds will change into flowers and gardens and take the shape of the bounties of paradise; and the evil deeds will turn into snakes and scorpions, ultimately manifesting themselves in various types of torments. Therefore, if someone invites any one in this world toward evil and infidelity, he in fact is bidding him to go into the fire. Although these evils do not manifest themselves in this world as fire, yet in reality they are fire. Thus there is no metaphor in the verse, and it rests with its true meaning. If this course of argument is adopted in explaining the verses of Qur'ān, then many of them will get rid of dependence on metaphors; and it will make the reading easy and straightforward. For instance, وَوَجَدُوْا مَا عَمِلُوْا حَاضِرًا (And they will find what they did all there - 18:49) or مَنْ يَّعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَّرَهٗ (Whoever does good to the measure of a particle will see it.- 99:7)

وَيَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ هُمْ مِّنَ الْمَقْبُوْحِيْنَ (And on the Day of Judgment they will be

among those treated badly - 28:42). *Maqbūḥīn* is the plural of *Maqbūḥ*, which means spoilt, damaged or disfigured. Thus the meaning of the verse is that on the Doomsday their faces will be disfigured to turn black, and eyes will turn blue.

Verses 43 - 51

وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا مُوْسَى الْكِتٰبَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَآ اَهْلَكْنَا الْقُرُوْنَ الْاُوْلٰى
بَصَآئِرَ لِلنَّاسِ وَهُدًى وَّرَحْمَةً لَّعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿٤٣﴾ وَمَا كُنْتَ
بِجَانِبِ الْغَرْبِيِّ اِذْ قَضَيْنَآ اِلٰى مُوْسَى الْاَمْرَ وَمَا كُنْتَ مِنَ الشّٰهِدِيْنَ
﴿٤٤﴾ وَلٰكِنَّآ اَنْشَاْنَا قُرُوْنًا فَتَطَاوَلَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْعُمُرُ ۚ وَمَا كُنْتَ ثَاوِيًا
فِيْٓ اَهْلِ مَدْيَنَ تَتْلُوْا عَلَيْهِمْ اٰيٰتِنَا ۙ وَلٰكِنَّا كُنَّا مُرْسِلِيْنَ ﴿٤٥﴾ وَمَا
كُنْتَ بِجَانِبِ الطُّوْرِ اِذْ نَادَيْنَا وَلٰكِنْ رَّحْمَةً مِّنْ رَّبِّكَ لِتُنْذِرَ قَوْمًا
مَّآ اَتٰىهُمْ مِّنْ نَّذِيْرٍ مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿٤٦﴾ وَلَوْلَآ اَنْ
تُصِيْبَهُمْ مُّصِيْبَةٌۢ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ اَيْدِيْهِمْ فَيَقُوْلُوْا رَبَّنَا لَوْلَآ اَرْسَلْتَ اِلَيْنَا
رَسُوْلًا فَنَتَّبِعَ اٰيٰتِكَ وَنَكُوْنَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿٤٧﴾ فَلَمَّا جَآءَهُمُ الْحَقُّ
مِنْ عِنْدِنَا قَالُوْا لَوْلَآ اُوْتِيَ مِثْلَ مَآ اُوْتِيَ مُوْسٰى ۗ اَوَلَمْ يَكْفُرُوْا بِمَآ
اُوْتِيَ مُوْسٰى مِنْ قَبْلُ ۚ قَالُوْا سِحْرٰنِ تَظٰهَرَا ۙ وَقَالُوْٓا اِنَّا بِكُلٍّ
كٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿٤٨﴾ قُلْ فَاْتُوْا بِكِتٰبٍ مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللّٰهِ هُوَ اَهْدٰى مِنْهُمَآ اَتَّبِعْهُ
اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿٤٩﴾ فَاِنْ لَّمْ يَسْتَجِيْبُوْا لَكَ فَاعْلَمْ اَنَّمَا يَتَّبِعُوْنَ
اَهْوَآءَهُمْ ۗ وَمَنْ اَضَلُّ مِمَّنِ اتَّبَعَ هَوٰىهُ بِغَيْرِ هُدًى مِّنَ اللّٰهِ ۗ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ
لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٥٠﴾ وَلَقَدْ وَصَّلْنَا لَهُمُ الْقَوْلَ لَعَلَّهُمْ
يَتَذَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿٥١﴾

And We gave Mūsā, after We destroyed the earlier generations, the Book having insights for people and a guidance and mercy, so that they may take to advice.

[43] And you (O Muḥammad) were not there at the Western side (of the mount Ṭūr) when We delegated the matter to Mūsā, nor were you among those present, [44] but We created generations (after him) and a long time passed over them. And you were not dwelling among the people of Madyan, reciting Our verses to them, but it is We who do send messengers. [45] And you were not at the side of (the mount) Ṭūr when We called (Mūsā), but it (your prophethood through which you knew all this) is a mercy from your Lord, so that you warn a people to whom no warner has come before you, that they may take to advice. [46] And (We would not have sent the messenger) if there would have been no apprehension that, in case they suffered a calamity because of what their hands sent ahead, they would say, "Our Lord, why did You not send a messenger to us, so that we would be among the believers?" [47] But when the Truth came to them from Us, they said, "Why has he (the messenger) not been given (a book) similar to what Mūsā had been given?" Is it not that they denied what Mūsā had been given before? They said, "Both (Qur'ān and Torah) are works of magic that support each other." And they said, "We disbelieve each one of them." [48] Say, "Then bring a book from Allah which is better than both, in guidance, and I shall follow it, if you are true." [49] So if they do not respond to you, be sure that they are only following their desires. And who is more astray than the one who follows his desire without guidance from Allah. Surely Allah does not take the wrongdoing people to the right path. [50] And We have conveyed (Our) word to them one after the other, so that they may take to advice. [51]

Commentary

وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا مُوْسَى الْكِتٰبَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَآ اَهْلَكْنَا الْقُرُوْنَ الْاُوْلٰى بَصَآئِرَ لِلنَّاسِ (And We gave Mūsā, after We destroyed the earlier generations, the Book having insights for people - 28:43). The words "earlier generations" refer to the people of Nūḥ, Hūd, Ṣāliḥ, and Lūṭ عليهم السلام, who were destroyed before the time of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام because of their denial of truth. *Baṣā'ir* بصائر is the plural of *Baṣīrah* بصيرة, whose literal meaning is sagacity, insight and discernment. Here it is purported for that light or refulgence which Allah Ta'ālā bestows in the hearts of people with which they find out the truth and discern the distinction between right and wrong. (Maẓharī)

If the word *Nās* نَاس (people) is used in the phrase بَصَآئِرَ لِلنَّاسِ (28:43) (insights for people) for the people of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, then the meaning of the verse is quite clear. No doubt for the people of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام Torah was the book of wisdom . But if the word is used for all people in whom the Ummah of Muḥammad ﷺ is also included, then the question would arise that the Torah, which is available to the Ummah of Muḥammad ﷺ, is not the original one. In this Torah many changes have taken place. So, how could this Torah be regarded as a book of wisdom for them? Moreover, it will mean that the Muslims too should benefit from the Torah, while there is a well-known *ḥadīth* that Sayyidnā 'Umar رضي الله عنه once sought permission from the Holy Prophet ﷺ for reading Torah, so that he could improve his knowledge and benefit from the injunctions contained in it. On this the Holy Prophet ﷺ got angry and said that if Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was alive, he too would have been required to follow him. (The essence of this retort is that he [Sayyidnā 'Umar رضي الله عنه] should concentrate only on his teachings, and that he was not required to look into the teachings of Torah or Injīl). It is worth reminding here that it was the time when revelation of Qur'ān was still continuing, and in order to eliminate any possibility of mingling of *ḥadīth* with the Qur'ānic text, the Holy Prophet ﷺ had advised some of his companions to stop writing even the *ḥadīth*. Under such a situation it is obvious that reading of a cancelled divine book was not expedient. It, therefore, does not necessarily follow that reading of Torah and Injīl is banned for all times. On the contrary, reading and quoting by the companions of that part of these books in which coming of the Holy Prophet ﷺ was predicted is well established. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Salām and Ka'b Al-Aḥbār رضى الله عنهما are quite well known for this. Other companions also did not raise a finger against it. The bottom line of this discussion is that it is allowed to benefit from the unaltered part of these books, which no doubt contains wisdom. But only those could draw any benefit from this who can distinguish between the altered and unaltered parts of the books; and they are the expert scholars. A common man should avoid such an exercise, lest he gets entangled in a quandary. The same ruling is applicable to all those books that are a mixture of right and wrong.

لِتُنْذِرَ قَوْمًا مَّآ اَتٰهُمْ مِّنْ نَّذِيْرٍ (so that you warn a people to whom no warner has come before - 28:46). The expression 'a people' is purported here for the

Arabs, who are the progeny of Sayyidnā Ismā'īl عليه السلام. No prophet was sent to this 'people' after Sayyidnā Ismā'īl عليه السلام until the Holy Prophet ﷺ was sent. The same subject will follow in Sūrah Yāsīn. But this verse is not in conflict with the other verse إِنْ مِّنْ أُمَّةٍ إِلَّا خَلَا فِيهَا نَذِيرٌ (There is no community, but there has come a warner among them - 35:24). What the present verse means here is that there was no prophet in 'this people' for a long time after Ismā'īl عليه السلام . But after the arrival of the Holy Prophet ﷺ this void was filled up.

وَلَقَدْ وَصَّلْنَا لَهُمُ الْقَوْلَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ (And We have conveyed (Our) words to them one after the other, so that they may take to advice. - 28:51). The word وَصَّلْنَا (*waṣṣalnā*) is derived from تَوْصِيل (*Tauṣīl*), which literally means to strengthen the rope by adding more strings to its strands. Here it means that Allah Ta'ālā has maintained the continuity of guidance. Certain advisory subjects are repeated in the Qur'ān in order to make them more effective.

Certain rules for preaching

It shows that an important trait of preaching carried out by the prophets was that they used to convey the truth to people continuously. Rejection and falsifying of truth did not deter them at all from their mission. Instead, if someone did not listen to them the first time, they repeated it the second time, and if they did not succeed even the second time, they used to reiterate it a third time, and so on, without showing any sign of exhaustion. It is true that no preacher or sympathizer has power to change one's heart, but what the prophets could do was to keep on making their efforts without being disheartened or exhausted. Even today the same principle applies, and those who preach should take a serious note of it.

Verses 52 - 55

الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ مِن قَبْلِهِ هُم بِهِ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾ وَإِذَا يُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْهِمْ قَالُوا آمَنَّا بِهِ إِنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِن رَّبِّنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا مِن قَبْلِهِ مُسْلِمِينَ ﴿٥٣﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ يُؤْتَوْنَ أَجْرَهُم مَّرَّتَيْنِ بِمَا صَبَرُوا وَيَدْرَءُونَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ السَّيِّئَةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنفِقُونَ ﴿٥٤﴾ وَإِذَا سَمِعُوا اللَّغْوَ أَعْرَضُوا عَنْهُ

وَقَالُوْا لَنَآ اَعْمَالُنَا وَلَكُمْ اَعْمَالُكُمْ ۫ سَلٰمٌ عَلَيْكُمْ ۫ لَا نَبْتَغِى الْجٰهِلِيْنَ ﴿٥٥﴾

As for those to whom We gave the Book before this, they believe in it (Qur'ān). [52] **And when this (Qur'ān) is recited to them, they say, "We believe in it. It is the truth from our Lord. And we are the ones who submitted (to it) even before it (was revealed)."** [53] **Such people will be given their reward twice, because they observed patience. And they repel evil with good, and spend from what We have given to them.** [54] **And when they hear absurd talk, they withdraw from it and say, "Our deeds are for us and your deeds are for you. Peace be on you. We do not seek (the way of) the ignorant."** [55]

Commentary

اَلَّذِيْنَ اٰتَيْنٰهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ مِنْ قَبْلِهٖ هُمْ بِهٖ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ (As for those to whom We gave the Book before this, they believe in it. (Qur'ān) - 28:52). In this verse those people of the book are mentioned who had faith in the prophethood of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and revelation of the Qur'ān on the basis of the prophesies given by Torah and Injīl, even before the coming of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the Qur'ān. Thus they converted to Islam when the Holy Prophet ﷺ announced his prophethood. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه has reported that forty courtiers of the king Najāshī of Ḥabshah (Ethiopia) came to Madīnah when the Holy Prophet ﷺ was busy in the Battle of Khybar. They also joined the *jihād*, and some got wounded, but none was killed. When they noticed the economic hardship of the companions, they told the Holy Prophet ﷺ that they were, by the grace of Allāh, quite wealthy, and sought his permission to bring some of it when they would come next. On this occasion this verse was revealed اَلَّذِيْنَ اٰتَيْنٰهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ مِنْ قَبْلِهٖ هُمْ بِهٖ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ (الى قوله) وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنٰهُمْ يُنْفِقُوْنَ (52 - 54). (Marduyā, Ṭabrānī, Maẓharī)

Sayyidnā Sa'īd Ibn Jubair رضي الله عنه has narrated that when Sayyidnā Ja'far رضي الله عنه had gone to Ḥabshah before the *hijrah* to Madīnah, and presented the teachings of Islam in the court of Najāshī, at that time Najāshī and many of his courtiers, who were people of the book, had submitted to Islam, as Allah Ta'ālā had put faith in their hearts. (Maẓharī)

Is the word Muslim restricted to the Ummah of Muḥammad ﷺ or it is common to all Ummahs?

إِنَّا كُنَّا مِنْ قَبْلِهِ مُسْلِمِيْنَ (And we are the ones who submitted (to it) even before it (was revealed) - 28:53). The word used by these people of the book for their submission is '*muslims*' which may also be translated as 'We were Muslims even before the revelation of Qur'ān'. If the word Muslim is taken here in its literal meaning, submissive or obedient, then the meaning is quite clear that the faith they had in Qur'ān and the Holy Prophet ﷺ, because of their books, is referred here by the use of words Islam and Muslims in its literal sense of submission. But if the word 'Muslim' is taken in the same meaning in which it is regarded as appellation of the Ummah of Muḥammad ﷺ, then it will signify that the words 'Islam' and 'Muslim' are not restricted to Ummah of Muḥammad ﷺ alone, but they are common to the Ummahs of all the prophets. But some verses of Qur'ān suggest that words 'Islam' and 'Muslim' are special names of the Ummah of Muḥammad ﷺ, for example the assertion of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام recorded by the Qur'ān itself هُوَ سَمّٰكُمُ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ (He named you as Muslims - 22:78). 'Allāmah Suyūṭī favours this course of argument and has written a book on the subject in support of his contention. He has explained this verse advocating that the word *Muslimīn* is used here in the sense that ' we were ready and prepared to accept Islam even before'. If one looks at the issue deeply, there is no conflict in the two versions; it is possible that Islam is the common attribute of the religion of all the prophets in its literal sense, and at the same time it is a special appellation of the Ummah of Muḥammad ﷺ. It is like the appellations of Ṣiddīq and Fārūq that are exclusive for Abū Bakr and 'Umar رضى الله عنهم اجمعين in the context of Ummah of Muḥammad ﷺ but otherwise these words can apply to anyone else also falling within the scope of their attributive meaning.

أُولٰٓئِكَ يُؤْتَوْنَ اَجْرَهُمْ مَّرَّتَيْنِ (Such people will be given their reward twice - 28:54). That is, the believers who are also people of the book will be rewarded twice. A similar promise is made for the wives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ وَمَنْ يَّقْنُتْ مِنْكُنَّ لِلّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ وَتَعْمَلْ صَالِحًا نُّؤْتِهَآ اَجْرَهَا مَرَّتَيْنِ (And whoever from among you stands in obedience to Allah and His messenger and does righteous deeds, We will give her, her reward twice. - 33:31). In a *ḥadīth* of Saḥīḥ āl Bukhārī three types of persons are mentioned for double reward

One, those people of the book who had faith in their prophets initially, and then developed faith in the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Two, the slave who is submissive and obedient to Allah Ta'ālā and His Messenger ﷺ, and also to his master. Three, the one who owned a slave girl, with whom he was allowed intercourse but he freed her and made her his formal wife by performing *nikāḥ*.

The point worth consideration in this verse is the cause for which these categories of Muslims are given their reward twice. One cause could be that they have done two good deeds for which they are entitled to double reward. In all these three cases there are two good deeds involved. In the case of believers two good deeds are faith in their own prophet first, and then in the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the Qur'ān. In the case of the wives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, two good deeds are that they loved and obeyed the Holy Prophet ﷺ both as a prophet and as husband. As for the owner of the slave girl, his first good deed is to free her, and the second to marry her. But this explanation may be subjected to the objection that two rewards for two good deeds are applicable to all, according to norms of justice; so where is the distinction for the people of the book or believers, and the wives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, or the master of the slave girl? Keeping this objection in view I have answered the original question in another way which is fully described in my book Aḥkām ul-Qur'ān under Sūrah Al-Qaṣaṣ. According to that explanation, it is apparent by the wording of Qur'ān that in all these examples, the relevant persons will not get two rewards for two deeds, but they will get double reward for each single deed, because the principle of 'two rewards for two deeds' is applicable to all, according to the express declaration of the Qur'ān: لَآ أُضِيعُ عَمَلَ عَامِلٍ مِّنكُم (I do not let go to waste the labour of a worker from you - 3:195), that is Allah Ta'ālā does not waste deeds of any one of you. In fact one will get reward for every single good deed he performs. Therefore the double reward contemplated for all these types, is that for every single good deed they will be awarded double the reward. For instance, they will be given two rewards for a single prayer, two rewards for a single charity, and two rewards for each one good deed like fasting, performing Ḥajj etc.. If one contemplates on the wordings of Qur'ān he will note that for giving two rewards the appropriate word was أَجْرَيْن ,(two rewards) but instead of that Qur'ān has used the word أَجْرَهُمْ مرتين (their reward twice - 28:54), in

which there is a clear hint that all their good deeds will be written twice and they will get double the reward for each one of them.

As for the reason why these people have been chosen for such an extra ordinary reward, the straight answer is that it is Allah Ta'ālā's prerogative to declare any deed preferable or superior to other deeds, and enhance its reward. No one has the right to question as to why He has enhanced the reward for a particular act as compared to the other, or why has He increased the reward of fasting while He has not done so in the case of *zakāh* and charity. It is possible that the pedestal of deeds, mentioned in the verse under reference and the *ḥadīth* of Bukhārī, is higher in the sight of Allah in comparison to other deeds, and hence double the reward. Some prominent scholars have given the reason of this preference that they require excessive effort and hardship. This explanation is also probable, and the word بِمَا صَبَرُوْا (because they observed patience) towards the end of this verse can be taken as a proof for the argument that the ground for double reward is their endurance on hardship. (Only Allah knows best).

وَيَدْرَءُوْنَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ السَّيِّئَةَ (And they repel evil with good - 28:54). The scholars have made different assertions while explaining 'evil' and 'good deed' as they are contemplated in this verse. Some have explained that 'good deed' stands here for obedience, and 'evil' for sin, and the sense is that every good deed wipes out the sin, as is maintained in a *ḥadīth* in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ said to Sayyidnā Mu'ādh Ibn Jabal ؓ اَتْبِعِ الْحَسَنَةَ السَّيِّئَةَ تَمْحُهَا (Perform a good deed after an evil deed, and it will wipe out the evil). According to this interpretation, the verse is praising these people that whenever they commit an evil act by mistake, they wipe it out by doing some good act. Some others are of the opinion that *Ḥasanah* (good deed) in this verse is used for knowledge and serenity, and *sayyi'ah* for ignorance and negligence. Thus it means that these people respond to the ignorant acts of others with serenity and forbearance and not with a similar ignorance. As a matter of fact, there is no contradiction in these explanations, because the words *ḥasanah* and *sayyi'ah*, that is virtue and evil, encompass all these things.

There are two important advices in this verse:

Firstly, if someone commits a sin, its best remedy is that he should look for doing something good. The virtuous deed becomes expiation for the

sin, as quoted in the *ḥadīth* of Sayyidnā Mu'ādh ﷺ above. Secondly, if a person behaves with someone badly, the wronged one is within his right to take revenge, provided he does not exceed the wrong done to him. However, it is much better for him that, instead of taking revenge, he returns the cruelty with kindness and the evil with virtue. It is an act of high degree of nobility of character. There are innumerable benefits in such an act, both in this world and in the Hereafter. In another Qur'ānic verse this advice is given in very clear words اِدْفَعْ بِالَّتِىْ هِىَ اَحْسَنُ فَاِذَا الَّذِىْ بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهٗ عَدَاوَةٌ كَاَنَّهٗ وَلِىٌّ حَمِيْمٌ (Repel with that which is fairer and behold, he between whom and thee there is enmity shall be as if he were a loyal friend - 41:34). It means that one should act kindly in return of cruelty. In this way his foe will become his sincere friend.

سَلٰمٌ عَلَيْكُمْ لَا نَبْتَغِى الْجٰهِلِيْنَ (Peace be on you. We do not seek (the way of) the ignorant. - 28:55). These people have a good quality in that when they hear something stupid from an ignorant foe, they simply say *salām*, instead of giving a reply. They do not entangle themselves with the ignorant. Imām Jaṣṣāṣ رحمه الله تعالى has said that there are two kinds of *salāms*. One is for salutation, as Muslims do to one another. The other type is for *musālamah* (adopting peaceful attitude with others) and *mutārakah*, (to avoid debate) which is to convey to one's adversary that he does not wish to take note of the latter's stupidity. At this place the latter meaning is intended.

Verse 56

اِنَّكَ لَا تَهْدِىْ مَنْ اَحْبَبْتَ وَلٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَهْدِىْ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ۚ وَهُوَ اَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِيْنَ ﴿٥٦﴾

You cannot give guidance to whomsoever you wish, but Allah gives guidance to whomsoever He wills, and He knows best the ones who are on the right path. [56]

Commentary

The word هداية *hidāyah* (guidance) is used for several meanings. One meaning is to show the path, which does not necessarily mean that the one shown the path will reach his destination. Another meaning of *hidāyah* is to make one reach his destination. According to first meaning

of the word it is but obvious that the Holy Prophet ﷺ and all other prophets were guides, and that imparting guidance was within their control, because it was the obligation of their duty. If they did not have the control over imparting guidance, how could have they fulfilled their obligation? Therefore, the statement made in this verse that he did not have control over guidance, relate to the second meaning of this word that is to make one reach his destination. It means that it was not his duty or obligation to put faith in one's heart in order to make him convert to Islam by his teachings and preaching. This is in the control of Allah Ta'ālā only. The meaning and types of *hidāyah* have already been discussed in detail under Sūrah Al-Baqarah.

Saḥīḥ Muslim has reported that this verse was revealed about the Holy Prophet's ﷺ uncle, Abū Ṭālib. It was his ﷺ great desire that Abū Ṭālib should accept the faith. It was for this desire that he was advised that it was not within his control to put faith in anybody's heart. It is observed in Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī that one should abstain from discussing or passing judgment unnecessarily on the subject of acceptance of faith or otherwise by Abū Ṭālib, because this may hurt the Holy Prophet's ﷺ feelings for his natural love toward his uncle. (وَاللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ)

Verses 57 - 60

وَقَالُوٓا اِنْ نَّتَّبِعِ الْهُدٰى مَعَكَ نُتَخَطَّفْ مِنْ اَرْضِنَا ؕ اَوَلَمْ نُمَكِّنْ لَّهُمْ
حَرَمًا اٰمِنًا يُّجْبٰٓى اِلَيْهِ ثَمَرٰتُ كُلِّ شَىْءٍ رِّزْقًا مِّنْ لَّدُنَّا وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَهُمْ
لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٥٧﴾ وَكَمْ اَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَرْيَةٍۢ بَطِرَتْ مَعِيْشَتَهَا ۚ فَتِلْكَ
مَسٰكِنُهُمْ لَمْ تُسْكَنْ مِّنْۢ بَعْدِهِمْ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا ؕ وَكُنَّا نَحْنُ الْوٰرِثِيْنَ
﴿٥٨﴾ وَمَا كَانَ رَبُّكَ مُهْلِكَ الْقُرٰى حَتّٰى يَبْعَثَ فِىْٓ اُمِّهَا رَسُوْلًا
يَّتْلُوْا عَلَيْهِمْ اٰيٰتِنَا ۚ وَمَا كُنَّا مُهْلِكِى الْقُرٰٓى اِلَّا وَاَهْلُهَا ظٰلِمُوْنَ ﴿٥٩﴾
وَمَآ اُوْتِيْتُمْ مِّنْ شَىْءٍ فَمَتَاعُ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَزِيْنَتُهَا ۚ وَمَا عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ
خَيْرٌ وَّاَبْقٰى ؕ اَفَلَا تَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿٦٠﴾

And they said, "If we follow the guidance with you (O

Muḥammad), we will be driven out of our land." Is it not that We have established them in the peaceful Haram (sanctuary) to which the fruits of everything are drawn as a provision from Us? But most of them do not know. [57] **And how many a town have We destroyed that were over-proud of their means of living. So, those are their habitations which were never inhabited after them except a few, and We alone were the inheritors.** [58] **And your Lord is not to destroy the towns unless he sends to their central place a messenger who recites to them Our verses. And We are not to destroy the towns except when their people are wrongdoers.** [59] **And whatever of anything you are given is (no more than) an enjoyment of the worldly life and its decoration, and that which is with Allah is much better and far more lasting. So do you not understand?** [60]

Commentary

وَقَالُوٓا اِنۡ نَّتَّبِعِ الۡهُدٰى مَعَكَ نُتَخَطَّفۡ مِنۡ اَرۡضِنَا (And they said, "If we follow the guidance with you (O Muḥammad), we will be driven out of our land." - 28:57). Ḥārith Ibn 'Uthmān and other infidels of Makkah put forward one of the reasons for their non-acceptance of faith that although they believed that his teachings were based on truth, but they feared that if they followed him, the entire people of Arabia would turn against them, and as a consequence they will be driven out of their land. (Nasai'i etc.). The Holy Qur'ān has given three answers to their lame excuse. One, اَوَلَمۡ نُمَكِّنۡ لَّهُمۡ حَرَمًا اٰمِنًا يُّجۡبٰٓى اِلَيۡهِ ثَمَرٰتُ كُلِّ شَىۡءٍ (Is it not that We have established them in the peaceful *ḥaram* (sanctuary) to which the fruits of everything are drawn as a provision from Us - 28:57) that is this excuse of theirs is false, because Allah Ta'ālā had already made special arrangements for the safety of the people of Makkah by making its land *ḥaram*. All the tribes of Arabia, despite their mutual feuds and infidelity, were unanimous on the point that killing and feuds were strictly prohibited on the land of Makkah. If a killer of father met the son in the *ḥaram*, despite extremely strong feelings of revenge, he could not raise his hand against him. It was just not possible for any one to kill or harm his enemy on the ground of *ḥaram*. Therefore, it was not at all a convincing excuse for not converting to faith. How was it possible that the Creator of everything would let them die as a believer, when He had made arrangement for their safety in *ḥaram* even as infidels? Yaḥyā Ibn Sallām has explained this verse as:

'You were safe and secure because of *ḥaram*, and were enjoying the sustenance provided by Me in plenty, still you used to worship others instead of Me. You did not get worried over this situation of yours, and on the contrary got worried over conversion to faith in Me'. (Qurṭubī)

In this verse two qualities of *ḥaram* are described. One, that it is a place of peace, and the other that fruits from different parts of the world were brought there.

Availability of all types of produce in *Ḥaram* of Makkah is a special Divine gift

Allah Ta'ālā chose Makkah Mukkarramah, out of the whole world, to establish the Ka'ba and Haram. In terms of its environment and geography it is a region where, under the normal circumstances, hardly any economic or commercial goods and activity should have existed. Even the basic staple agricultural products like wheat, rice, gram and sundry cereals were not cultivated before on a significant scale, let alone fruits and variety of vegetables. Though, in recent years there has been some emphasis from the Saudi Government toward their cultivation. Yet, everything is available there in such an abundance that one gets amazed. During the period of *ḥajj* some two million people are drawn from all over the world and stay there for an average of one month. It has never been heard that any scarcity of food items was ever experienced there. On the contrary, everyone can witness that cooked and prepared food to cater for all types of races and people is readily available all the time. If we ponder over Qur'ānic words, which say ثَمَرَاتُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ (fruits of everything), a question arises that fruits are the product of trees, so it would have been apt to say ثَمَرَاتُ كُلِّ شَجَرٍ (fruits of every tree) rather than ثَمَرَاتُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ (fruits of every thing). Therefore, it is quite likely that the word 'every thing' used here, encompasses the produce and products of all kind, including agricultural produce. For instance, the produce of industrial factories is also their fruit. Hence, the gist of the discussion is that not only food items but also all sorts of things of human need would be made available in Makkah. Any one visiting Makkah, either for *ḥajj* or *'umrah*, can confirm that everything produced anywhere in the world is readily available there. This was one reply to the excuse put forward by the infidels of Makkah, and the gist of the reply was that the Lord who had been so kind to them that He had made available all the bounties of the world in

their city,despite the fact that they are not produced there, and who had made the city completely free of risk and danger, it is the worst kind of ignorance to presume about Him that He would deprive them of these benefits if they would believe in Him.

The second reply to their excuse is given in the next verse وَكَمْ اَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَرْيَةٍ بَطِرَتْ مَعِيشَتَهَا (And how many a town have We destroyed that were over-proud of their means of living. - 28:58). In this reply it is stressed that they should recall the plight of other infidel people of the world, how their habitations, strong forts, and all means of their protection were destroyed, because of their infidelity and rejection of the truth. What they should actually fear is their infidelity and associating others with Allah, which is the real cause of destruction. How foolish and ill informed they were that they feared faith and not the denial of truth and infidelity.

The third reply was given in the following verse: وَمَآ اُوْتِيْتُمْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ فَمَتَاعُ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا (And whatever thing you are given is the enjoyment of the worldly life - 28:60). Here it is explained that just in case they did get involved in some sort of trouble as a result of accepting faith, it would last only for a few days. Just as mundane wealth and comfort is temporary and would last for a short time only, worldly troubles are also transient and short-lived. Therefore, the wisdom lies in that one should seek and care for the comfort and happiness that is lasting. If one has to suffer trouble for a short time for the sake of permanent and ever lasting wealth and comfort, it is well worth it.

لَمْ تُسْكَنْ مِّنْ بَعْدِهِمْ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا (Which were never inhabited after them except a few - 28:56). The habitations of the earlier people, which were destroyed by the Divine torment, still lie uninhabited, with the exception of a few. If the exemption 'except a few' is taken for those living there and the places destroyed, as Zajjāj has construed it, then the meaning would be that those places could never get inhabited, except a few that are inhabited. But Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ has given another explanation of the verse. According to his interpretation, the exemption is not for the place and houses, but for the time. Thus the meaning would be that even if someone lives there, it is for a short time, like travelers, who cannot be regarded as permanent residents.

حَتّٰى يَبْعَثَ فِيْٓ اُمِّهَا رَسُوْلًا (Unless he sends to their central place a messenger -

28:59). Popular meaning of the word *'Umm* is mother, and since mother is the very basis of human creation, hence the word *'Umm* (أُمّ) is also used extensively for origin, base, and foundation. The pronoun *hā* (translated above as 'their') refers back to the towns, and 'mother of the towns' means the central town. The meaning of the verse is that Allah Ta'ālā does not destroy a people unless He had sent His message through His messengers in their main cities. When the invitation to truth had reached, and yet people did not accept it, only then the torment is sent on those cities.

This verse has pointed out that Allah's messengers and prophets are generally sent in big cities, and not in smaller towns, because such towns are normally under the influence of big cities, both for their economic and educational needs. If something is known in a big city, it becomes known automatically in the smaller towns around it. Hence, when a prophet is sent in a big city and he starts his call to the truth, the message is spread out in the surrounding towns in no time. This way Allah Ta'ālā's message reaches to all and sundry, and if they reject the message of truth, the torment is sent to all of them.

Small towns and villages are subject to the same laws as are applicable to the main cities

As in the case of economic needs, the smaller habitations are dependent on cities, and draw their requirements from there, similarly, when a law or an order is promulgated in the city, it automatically becomes effective in the surrounding towns and villages also. The excuse of having no knowledge of the law is not acceptable.

In the case of sighting of the moon for observing Ramaḍān and Eids (Shawwāl and Ḍhulhajjah) too, the same principle has been declared by the jurists as applicable. That is, if the evidence of witnesses in the city establishes the sighting of moon, then the people of towns and villages would have to follow the same. But in the case of other cities, it would only apply when the Qāḍī of that city accepts the evidence and makes the announcement. (Al-Fatāwā al-Ghayāthiyyah)

وَمَا عِندَ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ وَّأَبْقَىٰ (And that which is with Allah is much better and far more lasting - 28:60). That is the mundane wealth and comforts are all mortal. But the recompense one would get in the Hereafter for the good deeds done in the world is much superior and ever lasting as compared to

the temporary worldly wealth and comforts. The best of comforts of this world are no match to the bounties of the Hereafter. Then, no matter how attractive mundane comforts are, they are but temporary. As against that, the bounties of the Hereafter will last forever. There is no doubt that anyone having some sense would prefer the better comforts and the ones that will last for ever, rather than the short-lived temporary ones.

The sign of prudence is that one does not involve himself too much in worldly matters and cares more for the Hereafter

Imām Shafi'ī رحمه الله تعالىٰ has said that if a person bequeaths his wealth and property to be given to the wisest men, then the beneficiaries of such a will are those busy in worshipping and obeying Allah Ta'ālā, because what they are doing is the demand of wisdom, and no doubt they are the wisest among worldly people. This ruling is also mentioned in Ad-Durr-al-Mukhtār, the famous book of Ḥanafī school. See its chapter on '*wasiyyah*'.

Verses 61 - 67

أَفَمَنْ وَّعَدْنٰهُ وَعْدًا حَسَنًا فَهُوَ لَاقِيْهِ كَمَنْ مَّتَّعْنٰهُ مَتَاعَ الْحَيٰوةِ
الدُّنْيَا ثُمَّ هُوَ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ مِنَ الْمُحْضَرِيْنَ ﴿٦١﴾ وَيَوْمَ يُنَادِيْهِمْ
فَيَقُوْلُ اَيْنَ شُرَكَآءِيَ الَّذِيْنَ كُنْتُمْ تَزْعُمُوْنَ ﴿٦٢﴾ قَالَ الَّذِيْنَ حَقَّ
عَلَيْهِمُ الْقَوْلُ رَبَّنَا هٰٓؤُلَآءِ الَّذِيْنَ اَغْوَيْنَا ۚ اَغْوَيْنٰهُمْ كَمَا غَوَيْنَا ۚ تَبَرَّاْنَآ
اِلَيْكَ ز مَا كَانُوْٓا اِيَّانَا يَعْبُدُوْنَ ﴿٦٣﴾ وَقِيْلَ ادْعُوْا شُرَكَآءَكُمْ
فَدَعَوْهُمْ فَلَمْ يَسْتَجِيْبُوْا لَهُمْ وَ رَاَوُا الْعَذَابَ ۚ لَوْ اَنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا
يَهْتَدُوْنَ ﴿٦٤﴾ وَيَوْمَ يُنَادِيْهِمْ فَيَقُوْلُ مَاذَآ اَجَبْتُمُ الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ ﴿٦٥﴾
فَعَمِيَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الْاَنْۢبَآءُ يَوْمَئِذٍ فَهُمْ لَا يَتَسَآءَلُوْنَ ﴿٦٦﴾ فَاَمَّا مَنْ تَابَ
وَاٰمَنَ وَ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَعَسٰٓى اَنْ يَّكُوْنَ مِنَ الْمُفْلِحِيْنَ ﴿٦٧﴾

Is then the one, to whom We have made a good promise which he is going to meet, like the one whom We have given the benefit of enjoying the worldly life, then on

the Day of Judgment he will be among those arraigned? [61] **And (remember) the Day when He will call them and say, "Where are My 'partners' you used to claim?** [62] **Those against whom the word will come true will say, "Our Lord, these are the ones whom we led astray. We led them astray as we ourselves went astray. We negate before you our responsibility (in respect of them); it was not we (alone) whom they worshipped.** [63] **And it will be said, "Call upon your co-gods." So they will call upon them, but they will not respond to them, and they will see the punishment. Would that they had taken the right path!** [64]

And (remember) the Day when He (Allah) will call them and say, "What response did you give to the messengers?" [65] **So the events will be obscured to them and they will not (be able to) ask each other.** [66] **As for the one who repents and becomes a believer and acts righteously, it is likely that he will be among the successful.** [67]

Commentary

The very first question infidels and disbelievers will be asked at the Tumultuous Place (*maḥshar*) will be about *shirk* (associating someone else with Allah), that is, 'where are those Satans today whom you used to associate with Us? Can they provide you any help today?' In response to these queries the disbelievers would say that it was not a fault of theirs, as they did not associate them with Allah on their own. It was the Satan who deluded them. Then Allah Ta'ālā would ask the Satans to say if they had anything in their defense; who, while accepting their role of deceit, would plead that they had only misled them but did not force them to act upon the same. Thus, the Satans would confess that they did commit the crime, but the infidels too were not free from its commission. Because just as they led them astray, similarly at the same time, the prophets and their deputies also guided them towards the Right Path with sound arguments; making the Truth crystal clear to them . They rejected the Truth presented by the prophets and instead listened to us using their free will and discretion. So, how could they be free from the blame? It proves that if someone chooses to follow those who wish to put him on the wrong path on his own good will, despite the fact that he has before him clear cut arguments against them and the righteous way to follow, then he has no

excuse to offer.

Verses 68 - 73

وَرَبُّكَ يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَآءُ وَيَخْتَارُ ؕ مَا كَانَ لَهُمُ الْخِيَرَةُ ؕ سُبْحٰنَ اللّٰهِ وَتَعٰلٰى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿٦٨﴾ وَرَبُّكَ يَعْلَمُ مَا تُكِنُّ صُدُوْرُهُمْ وَمَا يُعْلِنُوْنَ ﴿٦٩﴾ وَهُوَ اللّٰهُ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ؕ لَهُ الْحَمْدُ فِى الْاُوْلٰى وَالْاٰخِرَةِ ۫ وَلَهُ الْحُكْمُ وَاِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُوْنَ ﴿٧٠﴾ قُلْ اَرَءَيْتُمْ اِنْ جَعَلَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْكُمُ الَّيْلَ سَرْمَدًا اِلٰى يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ مَنْ اِلٰهٌ غَيْرُ اللّٰهِ يَاْتِيْكُمْ بِضِيَآءٍ ؕ اَفَلَا تَسْمَعُوْنَ ﴿٧١﴾ قُلْ اَرَءَيْتُمْ اِنْ جَعَلَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْكُمُ النَّهَارَ سَرْمَدًا اِلٰى يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ مَنْ اِلٰهٌ غَيْرُ اللّٰهِ يَاْتِيْكُمْ بِلَيْلٍ تَسْكُنُوْنَ فِيْهِ ؕ اَفَلَا تُبْصِرُوْنَ ﴿٧٢﴾ وَمِنْ رَّحْمَتِهٖ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ لِتَسْكُنُوْا فِيْهِ وَلِتَبْتَغُوْا مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُوْنَ ﴿٧٣﴾

And your Lord creates what He wills and chooses. Choice is not with them. Pure is Allah and far higher than their ascribing of partners to Him. [68] **And your Lord knows what their hearts conceal and what they reveal.** [69] **And He is Allah. There is no god but He. To Him belongs the praise in the beginning and at the end, and He alone has the right to judge, and to Him you are to be returned.** [70]

Say, "Tell me, if Allah makes night continuing upon you for ever upto the Day of Judgment, which god, other than Allah, would bring to you light? Then, do you not listen?" [71] **Say, "Tell me, if Allah makes the day continuing upon you for ever upto the Day of Judgment, which god, other than Allah, would bring to you night in which you may have comfort? Then, do you not see?"** [72] **And it is out of His mercy that He has made day and night for you, so that you may have comfort therein and so that you may search for His grace, and so that you may be grateful.** [73]

Commentary

وَرَبُّكَ يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ وَيَخْتَارُ (And your Lord creates what He wills and chooses - 28:68). According to one interpretation of this verse, the choice referred to here is Allah's choice with regard to the divine commands, and the sense is that as Allah Ta'ālā is unique in the creation of universe and no one is His partner, so is He in the issuance of His commands. He can give out any command to His creatures. But Imām Baghawī, in his commentary, and 'Allāmah Ibn Al-Qayyim in the preface of Zād al-Ma'ād have adopted another interpretation according to which the choice of Allah Ta'ālā, as envisaged in this verse, relates to the prerogative of Allah Ta'ālā by which He selects any one from His creatures for His favours. According to Bagahwī, this was the reply given to the infidels of Makkah on their observation لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنُ عَلٰى رَجُلٍ مِّنَ الْقَرْيَتَيْنِ عَظِيْمٍ (Why was this Qur'ān not sent down upon some man of moment in the two cities? - 43:31) that is, 'If Allah had wished to reveal this Qur'ān He should have revealed it on some dignitary of Makkah or Ṭā'if, so that he should have had respect and reverence. What was the wisdom in revealing it on a poor orphan?' In answer to this suggestion it is said in the present verse that it is the prerogative of the Lord of universe, who has created all the creatures without any help or partner, to select any one from His creatures for the special favours He wishes to confer. It is not for you to suggest whom He should or should not select, nor is He bound to listen to your suggestions.

Giving preference to one thing over the other or to one person over the other, and determination of correct standard of preference, are all Divine prerogatives

Ḥāafiẓ Ibn Al-Qayyim has drawn an outstanding rule from this verse that the preference given to places and things in this world are not achieved by them with their own efforts or deeds, but it is the result of direct selection and prerogative of the Creator of the universe. He has created seven skies, out of which He has given preference to highest sky over others, although the material of all is the same. Similarly, He has given preference to *Jannah al- Firdaus* over all other parts of the Jannah. Then, He preferred Jibra'īl, Mikā'īl, Isrā'fīl, etc. over all other angels, and has placed prophets on highest pedestal among the humans. And among the prophets has given preference to more resolute ones over all other prophets. Then among the resolute, He has given preference to

His Khalīl Ibrāhīm and Ḥabīb Muḥammad ﷺ over all other resolute prophets. Then preference is given to progeny of Isma'īl عليه السلام over all other people of the world, then to Quraish among the progeny of Isma'īl عليه السلام, and to Banī Hashim over all the Quraish, and finally to Sayyidnā Muḥammad Muṣṭafa ﷺ over entire Banī Hashim. Similarly, the preference given to companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and other elders of the Ummah, is all under the control and prerogative of Allah Subhanahu wa Ta'ālā, and the result of His selection.

In the same way, many places of the world are preferred over other places, and many days and nights have preference over the normal days and nights. In short, the original standard of preference in the entire universe is His prerogative and selection. However, at times ,human acts may also become a cause of preference in the sense that those performing righteous acts are preferred over the others, and the places where such people live or perform virtuous acts may also acquire preference over other places. This preference can be gained by sincerity of effort and righteous deeds. The gist of this discussion is that the basis of preference in the world is dependent on two things. One is beyond one's control and rests entirely on the selection of Allah Ta'ālā, and the other is within the ability of human beings and may be achieved by righteous deeds and superior morals. Allāmah Ibn al-Qayyim has deliberated in great detail on this subject and has concluded that the four Rightly Guided Caliphs have precedence over all other companions of the Prophet ﷺ. Then Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه has preference over other three Caliphs. After that Sayyidnā 'Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb رضي الله عنه has preference over the other two, and Sayyidnā 'Uthmān رضي الله عنه over Sayyidnā 'Alī رضي الله عنه. He has proved this sequence with the help of two standards discussed above. Shah Abdul Azīz Dehlavi رحمه الله تعالى has also written a booklet on this subject in Persian language, which I have translated in Urdu and Arabic. Urdu translation has been published under the title (بعض التفصيل لمسئلة التفضيل), and Arabic translation is included in my book Aḥkām al-Qur'ān, under Sūrah Al-Qaṣaṣ. This is a research work that would be of interest to scholars.

قُلْ اَرَءَيْتُمْ اِنْ جَعَلَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْكُمُ الَّيْلَ سَرْمَدًا اِلٰى يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ مَنْ اِلٰهٌ غَيْرُ اللّٰهِ يَأْتِيْكُمْ بِضِيَآءٍ ، اَفَلَا تَسْمَعُوْنَ (الى قوله) بِلَيْلٍ تَسْكُنُوْنَ فِيْهِ اَفَلَا تُبْصِرُوْنَ.

Say, "Tell me, if Allah makes night continuing upon you for

ever upto the Day of Judgment, which god, other than Allah, would bring to you light? Then do you not listen?". Say, "Tell me, if Allah makes the day continuing upon you for ever upto the Day of Judgment, which god, other than Allah, would bring to you night in which you may have comfort. Then, do you not see?" 28:71-72.

Allah Ta'ālā has mentioned a benefit of the night in this verse, that it provides rest بِلَيْلٍ تَسْكُنُوْنَ فِيْهِ (28:72). As against this no mention is made about the benefits of day while referring to its light. The reason for this omission is but obvious. It is a well-known fact that the daylight is superior in its entity to darkness. The benefits of daylight are so numerous and well known that their repetition was not prudent. On the contrary the darkness of the night does not have any other benefit except that it provides rest to every thing. As a matter of fact, its utility is based on the rest of people, hence that has been mentioned. It is to be noted that after describing daylight it is concluded with اَفَلَا تَسْمَعُوْنَ (Do you not listen? - 28:71), and after describing the night the concluding expression is اَفَلَا تُبْصِرُوْنَ (Do you not see? - 28:72). It may have the allusion that the benefits of the day are so numerous that they cannot be seen, but can only be heard; hence the expression اَفَلَا تَسْمَعُوْنَ is used. The knowledge and understanding humans have acquired has mainly come through hearing and listening, and very little by way of seeing. The benefits of night are much less as compared to benefits of the day, and they can be seen; hence the expression اَفَلَا تُبْصِرُوْنَ (Mazhari)

Verses 74 - 75

وَيَوْمَ يُنَادِيْهِمْ فَيَقُوْلُ اَيْنَ شُرَكَآءِيَ الَّذِيْنَ كُنْتُمْ تَزْعُمُوْنَ ﴿٧٤﴾
وَنَزَعْنَا مِنْ كُلِّ اُمَّةٍ شَهِيْدًا فَقُلْنَا هَاتُوْا بُرْهَانَكُمْ فَعَلِمُوْٓا اَنَّ الْحَقَّ
لِلّٰهِ وَضَلَّ عَنْهُمْ مَّا كَانُوْا يَفْتَرُوْنَ ﴿٧٥﴾

And (remember) the Day when He (Allah) will call them (the disbelievers) and say, "Where are My 'partners' you used to claim?" [74] And We will draw out a witness from every community (to prove their disbelief) and will say, "Bring your proof". Then they will know that truth is from Allah, and all that they used to forge shall

vanish from them. [75]

Commentary

A question that will be asked from the infidels on the Day of Judgment to repeat what they had replied to the prophets on their invitation to truth was mentioned in an earlier verse. Now in this verse it is stated that the prophets would testify about the reply that was given by the infidels.

Verses 76 - 82

إِنَّ قَارُونَ كَانَ مِن قَوْمِ مُوسَىٰ فَبَغَىٰ عَلَيْهِمْ ۖ وَآتَيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْكُنُوزِ مَا إِنَّ مَفَاتِحَهُ لَتَنُوءُ بِالْعُصْبَةِ أُولِي الْقُوَّةِ إِذْ قَالَ لَهُ قَوْمُهُ لَا تَفْرَحْ ۖ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْفَرِحِينَ ﴿٧٦﴾ وَابْتَغِ فِيمَا آتَاكَ اللَّهُ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ ۖ وَلَا تَنسَ نَصِيبَكَ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا ۖ وَأَحْسِن كَمَا أَحْسَنَ اللَّهُ إِلَيْكَ ۖ وَلَا تَبْغِ الْفَسَادَ فِي الْأَرْضِ ۖ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُفْسِدِينَ ﴿٧٧﴾ قَالَ إِنَّمَا أُوتِيتُهُ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ عِندِي ۚ أَوَلَمْ يَعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ أَهْلَكَ مِن قَبْلِهِ مِنَ الْقُرُونِ مَنْ هُوَ أَشَدُّ مِنْهُ قُوَّةً وَأَكْثَرُ جَمْعًا ۚ وَلَا يُسْأَلُ عَن ذُنُوبِهِمُ الْمُجْرِمُونَ ﴿٧٨﴾ فَخَرَجَ عَلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ فِي زِينَتِهِ ۖ قَالَ الَّذِينَ يُرِيدُونَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا يَا لَيْتَ لَنَا مِثْلَ مَا أُوتِيَ قَارُونُ إِنَّهُ لَذُو حَظٍّ عَظِيمٍ ﴿٧٩﴾ وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ وَيْلَكُمْ ثَوَابُ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ لِّمَنْ آمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا ۚ وَلَا يُلَقَّاهَا إِلَّا الصَّابِرُونَ ﴿٨٠﴾ فَخَسَفْنَا بِهِ وَبِدَارِهِ الْأَرْضَ فَمَا كَانَ لَهُ مِن فِئَةٍ يَنصُرُونَهُ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُنتَصِرِينَ ﴿٨١﴾ وَأَصْبَحَ الَّذِينَ تَمَنَّوْا مَكَانَهُ بِالْأَمْسِ يَقُولُونَ وَيْكَأَنَّ اللَّهَ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَن يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ وَيَقْدِرُ ۖ لَوْلَا أَن مَّنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَيْنَا لَخَسَفَ بِنَا ۖ وَيْكَأَنَّهُ لَا يُفْلِحُ الْكَافِرُونَ ﴿٨٢﴾

Surely, Qārūn was from the people of Mūsā, then he

rebelled against them. And We had given to him such treasures as their keys would weigh too heavy for a strong group of people. (Remember) when his people said to him, "Do not exult. Surely, Allah does not like the exultant. [76] **And seek the (betterment of) the Ultimate Abode with what Allah has given to you, and do not neglect your share from this world, and do good as Allah did good to you, and do not seek to make mischief in the land. Surely, Allah does not like the mischief- makers."** [77] **He said, "This is given to me because of the knowledge (I have) with me." Did he not know that Allah had destroyed, from the generations before him, those who were stronger than him in power and greater than him in multitude? And the sinners have not to be asked about their sins.** [78] **Then (once) he came out before his people in his embellishment, said those who are desirous of the worldly life, "Would that we had the like of what Qārūn has been given! He is a man of great fortune indeed."** [79] **And said those who were given knowledge, "Woe to you, Allah's reward is much better for the one who believes and acts righteously. And this is given to none but to those who observe restraint."** [80] **Then We made him and his home sink into the earth. So there was no group for him who could help him against Allah, nor was he one of those who defend themselves.** [81] **And those who wished to be in his position the day before, started saying, "Oh, it seems that Allah extends provision to whom He wills and straitens (for whom He wills). Had Allah not favoured us, He would have made us sink (too). Oh, it seems that the infidels do not succeed."** [82]

Commentary

From the beginning of Sūrah Al-Qaṣaṣ to this point, the story of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام with the Pharaoh and his people was narrated. From here onward another story about his is being related which is about Qārūn, who belonged to his own fraternity. This story has an affinity with the previous verses in that it was said in an earlier verse that the wealth you are given in this world is temporary, and it is not wise to get involved in its love. وَمَآ أُوتِيتُم مِّن شَيْءٍ فَمَتَاعُ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا (And whatever thing you are given is the enjoyment of the worldly life - 28:60). Now in the story of Qārūn it is described that he forgot this caution after having received the

wealth and got so much intoxicated by it that he displayed ingratitude and rejected to fulfill his obligations toward Allah Ta'ālā with regard to bounties he had received from Him. As a consequence of that, he was sunk in the ground along with his treasure.

Qārūn is a non-Arabic word, perhaps from Hebrew. It is stated in the Qur'ān itself that he belonged to the fraternity of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, Banī Isrā'īl. As for his actual relationship with Mūsā عليه السلام, there are different versions. In a narration of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه he is mentioned as a cousin of Sayyidna Mūsā عليه السلام. There are some other versions also beside this. (Qurṭubī and Rūḥ).

A narration of Muḥammad Ibn Isḥāq, reproduced in Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī, has observed that Qārūn remembered Torah more than any other Isrā'īli, but turned out to be a hypocrite like Sāmirī. The cause of his hypocrisy was his misplaced love and greed for worldly wealth and status. Leadership of the entire Banī Isrā'īl was conferred on Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and his brother, Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام, who was his assistant and partner in prophethood. Hence, Qārūn got jealous that after all he was also a cousin, but why did he not have a share in the leadership. So, he made a complaint to that effect before Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام. He replied that it was all from Allah Ta'ālā, and he had no power in this matter. But Qārūn was not convinced on this reply and developed jealousy against Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام .

فَبَغٰى عَلَيْهِمْ (Then he rebelled against them - 28:76). There are quite a few meanings of the word بَغٰى *Baghā*. The more popular meaning is to commit cruelty. It is possible to take this word in this meaning here. Thus the meaning of the sentence would be that having got intoxicated by his wealth, he started perpetrating cruelty on people. Yaḥyā Ibn Sallam and Sa'īd Ibn Al-Musayyab have stated that Qārūn was a wealthy man, and was appointed by the Pharaoh to keep vigilance on Banī Isrā'īl. Taking advantage of this position, he started harassing Banī Isrā'īl. (Qurṭubī)

The other meaning of *Baghā* is conceit or arrogance. Many a commentators have adopted this meaning here. Hence, the meaning of the verse would be that having got intoxicated by his wealth, he became conceited and looked down upon Banī Isrā'īl.

وَاٰتَيْنٰهُ مِنَ الْكُنُوْزِ (And We had given to them such treasures - 28:76). *Kunūz*

(كُنُوز) is the plural of كَنز (*Kanz)*, which means buried treasure. In the commonly used religious sense *Kanz* is that treasure on which *zakāh* is not paid. Sayyidnā 'Aṭā' ﷺ has narrated that he got hold of a magnificent buried treasure of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. (Rūḥ)

لَتَنُوٓأُ بِالْعُصْبَةِ (would weigh too heavy for a strong group - 28:76). The word نَاءَ (*Nā'a)* means to bend down with weight, and عُصْبَة *'Uṣbah'* means a group. The meaning of the sentence is that his treasures were so many and their keys were in such large number, that if a group of strong people would try to lift them, they would bend down under their weight. Normally the keys of the locks are light, but because of their large number, their weight had multiplied so much that it was not possible even for a group of strong persons to lift them all. (Rūḥ)

لَاتَفْرَحْ (Do not exult - 28:76). Literal meaning of the word فَرَح (Faraḥ) is the happiness one gets as a result of an instant pleasure. Many a Qur'ānic verses have declared Faraḥ as contemptible, as in this very verse also إِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَايُحِبُّ الْفَرِحِيْنَ (Allah does not like the exultant - 28:76). In another verse it is said لَا تَفْرَحُوْا بِمَآ اٰتٰكُمْ (nor rejoice in what has come to you - 57:23). Yet another verse says فَرِحُوْا بِالْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا (And they are happy with the worldly life - 13:26). But in some verses Faraḥ is allowed, rather in a way it is declared as desirable. For example in verses, يَوْمَئِذٍ يَفْرَحُ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ (And on that day the believers will rejoice - 30:4) and فَبِذٰلِكَ فَلْيَفْرَحُوْا (with these they should rejoice - 10:58). All these verses put together give us the guideline that Faraḥ is contemptible and is not allowed when it reaches the level of arrogance and boasting. Thus one gets to a point where he regards the attainment of pleasure as his own personal achievement, and not a gift and favour from Allah Ta'ālā. But if the happiness and pleasure does not get to that position, then it is not disallowed; rather in a way it is desirable. In such a situation happiness would be to express the gratitude to Allah Ta'ālā.

وَابْتَغِ فِيْمَآ اٰتٰكَ اللّٰهُ الدَّارَ الْاٰخِرَةَ وَلَا تَنْسَ نَصِيْبَكَ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا (And seek the (betterment of) the ultimate Abode with what Allah has given to you, and do not neglect your share from this world - 28:77). The Muslims advised Qārūn that he should try to do as much good as possible for the Hereafter by utilizing the wealth Allah Ta'ālā had given him, and 'should not forget his share in the world'.

What is his 'share in this world'? Many commentators have explained that it refers to his life in this world and the deeds that may help him in the Hereafter which include charity and all other righteous deeds. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ has favoured this explanation. (Qurṭubī) By adopting this explanation, the second sentence would be regarded as an emphasized repetition of the first sentence. The first sentence has directed that one should make use of all that has been gifted – the life, wealth, health, strength etc. – to collect that which would be of help in the Hereafter. In fact this portion of the worldly possessions is one's own, which may help him in the Hereafter; the rest of the world's possessions belongs to his heirs.

However, some other commentators have explained that the meaning of the second sentence is that whatever Allah has given you, make use of it for the Hereafter, without loosing sight of your needs in this world. In other words do not become a pauper by giving away every thing in charity. Instead, retain something for your own needs as well. Under this explanation, 'your share in the world' means one's own needs in this world.

إِنَّمَآ أُوتِيتُهُۥ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ عِندِىٓ (This is given to me because of knowledge (I have) with me - 28:78). Some commentators are of the view that "knowledge" in this sentence refers to the understanding of Torah. As reported in some narrations, Qārūn remembered Torah by heart and was an authority on it. He was one of the seventy scholars whom Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ had selected for *Mīqāt* (the appointed time and place for having conversation with Allah). But he became conceited on his knowledge, and regarded it as his personal achievement. The object of his above-referred utterance was to convey that whatever wealth he had possessed was the direct result of his personal skill and intelligence. Hence, he himself had the right on it, and that no one had done any favour to him.

However, it is more plausible in the context that the knowledge he was referring to as the basic cause of his being wealthy,was the understanding and skill of managing trade and industry, which brings in wealth. Thus the meaning is that whatever wealth he had collected had come to him as a result of his personal skill and efforts, and there was no favour of Allah Ta'ālā involved in it. What the foolish conceited man had ignored was that his skill, understanding, and experience were also the

gift of Allah. He could not have gained them on his own.

اَوَلَمْ يَعْلَمْ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ قَدْ اَهْلَكَ مِنْ قَبْلِهٖ (Did he not know that Allah had destroyed, from the generations before him...28:78). The real answer to Qārūn's assertion that he had collected all his wealth by his personal skill and efforts is the one mentioned above; that even if it is accepted for a moment that he had acquired his wealth by his personal skill and knowledge, the point is that this knowledge and experience was also the gift of Allah Ta'ālā. But in order to bring home the more important aspect of the subject, the Qur'ān has stated that the abundance of wealth is of no avail and is devoid of merit, nor does it help in distress. As a proof of that, the example of the wealthy from the earlier generations has been quoted, that when they disobeyed and rejected the truth, they were suddenly caught by the torment of Allah Ta'ālā.

وَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْعِلْمَ وَيْلَكُمْ (And said those who were given knowledge - 28:80). This verse has compared the knowledgeable persons with اَلَّذِيْنَ يُرِيْدُوْنَ الْحَيٰوةَ الدُّنْيَا (Those who are desirous of the worldly life - 28:79),which clearly indicates that it is not the trait of knowledgeable persons to aspire for the acquisition of wealth and to make it the object of life. They always keep their eyes toward the lasting benefits of the Hereafter. As for the mundane wealth, they take it only to fulfill their day-to-day needs, and stay content with that.

Verses 83 - 84

تِلْكَ الدَّارُ الْاٰخِرَةُ نَجْعَلُهَا لِلَّذِيْنَ لَايُرِيْدُوْنَ عُلُوًّا فِى الْاَرْضِ وَلَا فَسَادًا ؕ وَالْعَاقِبَةُ لِلْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿۸۳﴾ مَنْ جَآءَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ فَلَهٗ خَيْرٌ مِّنْهَا ۚ وَمَنْ جَآءَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ فَلَا يُجْزَى الَّذِيْنَ عَمِلُوا السَّيِّاٰتِ اِلَّا مَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۸۴﴾

As for that Ultimate Abode (the Hereafter), We assign it to those who intend neither haughtiness on earth nor mischief. And the (best) end is for the God-fearing. [83] **Whoever brings good deed shall have better than it, and whoever brings evil deed, then those who commit evils shall not be punished except for what they used to do.** [84]

Commentary

لِلَّذِيْنَ لَايُرِيْدُوْنَ عُلُوًّا فِى الْاَرْضِ وَلَا فَسَادًا (We assign it to those who intend neither haughtiness on earth nor mischief. - 28:83). This verse tells us that only those will achieve salvation and success in the Hereafter who do not intend any mischief, nor are indulged in *'Uluww* in this world. *'Uluww* means pride or conceit, that is, to present oneself as superior before others, and to look down upon others and treat them in an insulting manner. Mischief is used here for oppression. (Sufyān Ath-Thaurī). Some commentators have observed that every sin is a 'mischief in the world', because the nuisance of the sin curtails the blessings of the world. This verse tells us that those who intend to do cruelty and feel proud, or commit sin have no share in the Hereafter.

Special Note

Arrogance and conceit as condemned in this verse, is the behavior in which one shows off as being superior, and looks down upon others. Otherwise to strive for oneself a good dress, a good house, and good food, when it is not intended to show off, is no sin, as reported in a *ḥadīth* in Saḥīḥ Muslim.

Firm intention to commit a sin is also sin

It is clarified in this verse that the intention for mischief and pride will debar one from the share of Hereafter. It is, therefore, clear that the firm intention of a sin is as much a sin. (Rūḥ). However, if one changes his mind for fear of Allah, then a reward is noted in his record instead of sin. But if he fails to act on that sin, due to reasons beyond his control, while he had firm intention to act upon it, then the sin stays against his name, and will be recorded as such. (Ghazzālī)

The last verse وَالْعَاقِبَةُ لِلْمُتَّقِيْنَ (And the (best) end is for the God-fearing - 28:83) elaborates that it is not enough to abstain from mischief and pride to get the share of the Hereafter, but following the righteous path is as much a requirement. To follow all the religious obligations is also essential for the salvation in the Hereafter.

Verses 85 - 88

اِنَّ الَّذِىْ فَرَضَ عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْاٰنَ لَرَآدُّكَ اِلٰى مَعَادٍ ؕ قُلْ رَّبِّىْٓ اَعْلَمُ مَنْ

جَآءَ بِالْهُدٰى وَمَنْ هُوَ فِىْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿٨٥﴾ وَمَا كُنْتَ تَرْجُوْٓا اَنْ
يُّلْقٰٓى اِلَيْكَ الْكِتٰبُ اِلَّا رَحْمَةً مِّنْ رَّبِّكَ فَلَا تَكُوْنَنَّ ظَهِيْرًا لِّلْكٰفِرِيْنَ
﴿٨٦﴾ وَلَا يَصُدُّنَّكَ عَنْ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ بَعْدَ اِذْ اُنْزِلَتْ اِلَيْكَ وَادْعُ اِلٰى
رَبِّكَ وَلَا تَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ ﴿٨٧﴾ وَلَا تَدْعُ مَعَ اللّٰهِ اِلٰهًا اٰخَرَ
لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ كُلُّ شَىْءٍ هَالِكٌ اِلَّا وَجْهَهٗ لَهُ الْحُكْمُ وَاِلَيْهِ
تُرْجَعُوْنَ ﴿٨٨﴾

Surely the One who has enjoined the Qur'ān upon you will surely bring you back to a place of return. Say, "My Lord knows best the one who has come with guidance and the one who is in manifest error." [85] **And you were not expecting that the Book would be sent down to you, but it was a mercy from your Lord. So, never be a supporter for the infidels.** [86] **And let them not prevent you from Allah's verses after they are sent down to you, and call (people) to your Lord, and never become one of those who associate partners with Allah.** [87] **And do not invoke any other god alongwith Allah. There is no god but He. Every thing is going to perish except His Face. He alone has the right to judge, and to Him you are to be returned.** [88]

Commentary

اِنَّ الَّذِىْ فَرَضَ عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْاٰنَ لَرَآدُّكَ اِلٰى مَعَادٍ (Surely the One who has enjoined the Qur'ān upon you will surely bring you back to a place of return. - 28:85). At the end of Sūrah these verses were revealed to console the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and to make him firm in his mission as a messenger. These verses are relevant to the previous verses in that in this Sūrah, Allah Ta'ālā has narrated in detail the story of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام with the Pharaoh, his enmity with Banī Isrā'īl, their fear of him and how he overpowered the people of the Pharaoh. Since the Holy Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ faced a similar situation in that he was harassed, and plans were made to kill him, the lives of Muslims were made miserable in Makkah, but following His old tradition, Allah graced them with victory over all of them. He finally gifted the Muslims possession of Makkah, from

where they were made to vacate.

ٱلَّذِى فَرَضَ عَلَيْكَ ٱلْقُرْءَانَ (The One who has enjoined the Qur'ān upon you - 28:85). It means that the Lord of the universe who has made it obligatory on you to recite, teach and act on it, will take you back to *Ma'ād,* which lexically means 'a place of return'. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ has explained that *Ma'ād* in this verse refers to Makkah, as reported in Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī. So, the meaning of the sentence is that although the Holy Prophet ﷺ would have to leave his hometown, especially the *ḥaram* for a short while, he would be brought back in Makkah by Allah Ta'ālā, who had revealed the Qur'ān on him, and had made it obligatory to act upon it. The Imām of tafsīr, Muqātil, has narrated that during the *hijrah* (emigration) from Makkah to Madīnah, the Holy Prophet ﷺ came out from the cave of *Thaur* at night, and bypassing the conventional route, treaded the unfamiliar paths, because the enemies were pursuing him. When he ﷺ reached Juḥfah, which was a well-known place on the way to Madīnah near Rābigh, and where the conventional route to Madīnah separates from that of Makkah, at that time he glanced back toward the route of Makkah and remembered his hometown. On that moment, Jibra'īl ﷺ descended with this verse, in which he was given the good tiding that separation from Makkah was temporary and he would return there soon. That was in fact the advance news of the victory of Makkah. It is in this background that Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ has observed in a narration that this verse was revealed in Juḥfah, and that it is neither Makkī nor Madanī. (Qurṭubī).

Qur'ān is a means of victory over enemies and of one's success in his objectives

While promising to the Holy Prophet ﷺ that he will be brought back by Allah to his hometown which will be conquered by him, Allah Ta'ālā has made a special reference to Himself as 'the One who has enjoined the Qur'ān on him'. This reference contains a hint to the fact that recitation of Qur'ān and acting on its injunctions would actually be the cause of the Divine help and manifest victory.

كُلُّ شَىْءٍ هَالِكٌ إِلَّا وَجْهَهُۥ (Every thing is going to perish except His Face - 28:88). The word 'His Face' in this verse means the very Being of Allah Ta'ālā. Hence, the meaning of the verse is that except for Allah Ta'ālā every thing is mortal and will get destroyed and will vanish. Some

commentators have taken the phrase' His Face' to mean the good deeds performed by human beings exclusively for Allah Ta'ālā. In that case the meaning of the verse would be that those actions which are performed exclusively for Allah Ta'ālā will not be destroyed, while all other things will perish.

اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰه *Alḥamdulillāh*, today on Dhulqa'dah 9, 1391 H, the commentary on Sūrah Al-Qaṣaṣ has concluded in such conditions that Pakistan was attacked by India and the unholy alliance of the big powers. For fourteen days Karachi was bombarded daily. The city was severely damaged. Hundreds of Muslims were martyred, and many a houses were demolished. Fourteen days war finished on the sad note that East Pakistan is cut off from Pakistan, and about ninety thousand troops have surrendered there. Killing is still going on in East Pakistan. Every Muslim is stuck with grief and bewilderment.

اِنَّا لِلّٰهِ وَاِنَّا اِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُوْنَ واليه المشتكى ولا ملجأ ولا منجا من الله الاّ اليه

Alḥamdulillāh
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Qaṣaṣ
Ends here.

Sūrah Al-'Ankabūt

(The Spider)

Sūrah Al-'Ankabūt was revealed in Makkah and it has 69 Verses and 7 sections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 7

الٓمّٓ ﴿١﴾ اَحَسِبَ النَّاسُ اَنْ يُّتْرَكُوْٓا اَنْ يَّقُوْلُوْٓا اٰمَنَّا وَهُمْ لَا يُفْتَنُوْنَ ﴿٢﴾ وَلَقَدْ فَتَنَّا الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ فَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ صَدَقُوْا وَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ الْكٰذِبِيْنَ ﴿٣﴾ اَمْ حَسِبَ الَّذِيْنَ يَعْمَلُوْنَ السَّيِّاٰتِ اَنْ يَّسْبِقُوْنَا ؕ سَآءَ مَا يَحْكُمُوْنَ ﴿٤﴾ مَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُوْا لِقَآءَ اللّٰهِ فَاِنَّ اَجَلَ اللّٰهِ لَاٰتٍ ؕ وَهُوَ السَّمِيْعُ الْعَلِيْمُ ﴿٥﴾ وَمَنْ جَاهَدَ فَاِنَّمَا يُجَاهِدُ لِنَفْسِهٖ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَغَنِيٌّ عَنِ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٦﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ لَنُكَفِّرَنَّ عَنْهُمْ سَيِّاٰتِهِمْ وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ اَحْسَنَ الَّذِىْ كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٧﴾

'Alif, Lām, Mīm. [1] **Do people think that they will be left (at ease) only on their saying, "We believe" and will not be put to test?** [2] **And We have surely tested those who were before them. So Allah will surely know the ones who are truthful, and He will surely know the liars.** [3]

Is it that those who are committing evils think that they will escape from Us? Evil is what they decide. [4]

Whoever hopes for meeting Allah (must be sure that) Allah's appointed time has to come. And He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing. [5] **And whoever strives, strives for his own benefit. Surely Allah is independent of all the worlds.** [6]

And those who believe and do righteous deeds, We will expiate their bad deeds and will give them a better reward (than their expectation) for what they used to do. [7]

Commentary

وَهُمْ لَا يُفْتَنُوْنَ (And will not be put to test - 29:2). It is derived from *Fitnah,* which means trial or test. The believers, especially the prophets and pious, have to go through many a trials in this world. However, they always come out victors in the end. These trials and tribulations sometimes come as a result of enmity of the infidels and sinners by way of afflictions, as have been experienced by the Holy Prophet ﷺ and many other prophets, and at times in the form of diseases, as was experienced by Sayyidnā Ayyūb عليه السلام. And for others many of these trial types are combined together.

Although the background under which this verse was revealed, according to many narrations, was the harassment faced by the companions of the Holy Qur'ān from the infidels at the time of *hijrah*, but otherwise its message is common to all times. The sense is that the pious, saints and scholars will face the trials and tribulations in all times. (Qurṭubī).

فَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ صَدَقُوْا (So Allah will surely know the ones who are truthful - 29:3). It means that through tests and hardships the good and the bad, and the sincere and non-sincere will be differentiated, because if the hypocrites are mixed up with the sincere believers and are not identified, it may create a number of problems. The object of this verse is to elucidate the difference between the good and the bad, and between the sincere and the non-sincere. The expression used for this purpose is that Allah Ta'ālā will find out who are the true ones and who are the liars. Since He knows about every one even before his birth, whether he is a true one or a liar, the sense carried by this expression is that tests and trials are conducted to bring the distinction of good and bad on surface, so

that others should also know.

Ḥakīm-ul-Ummah Thanāwi رحمه الله تعالى has copied the argument of his Shaikh, Maulānā Muḥammad Ya'qūb رحمه الله تعالى that sometimes people are addressed by descending down to their level of intellect. The common man makes distinction between the sincere and the hypocrites by testing him out. Therefore, according to their approach of understanding Allah Ta'ālā has said that, through various means, We would find out who is sincere and who is not, even though He knows every thing from the very beginning.

Verses 8 - 9

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ حُسْنًا ؕ وَإِنْ جَاهَدَاكَ لِتُشْرِكَ بِي مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ فَلَا تُطِعْهُمَا ؕ إِلَيَّ مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَأُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٨﴾ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَنُدْخِلَنَّهُمْ فِي الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿٩﴾

And We have instructed man to do good to his parents. And if they insist upon you that you should ascribe partners to Me, then do not obey them. To Me is your return; then I shall tell you about what you used to do. [8] **And those who believe and do righteous deeds, We shall include them among the righteous.** [9]

Commentary

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ (And We have instructed man - 29:8). *Waṣiyyah* (وَصِيَّة) means to call someone for some action, when the call is based on advice and well wishing. (Maẓharī)

بِوَالِدَيْهِ حُسْنًا (to do good to his parents - 29:8). The Word *Ḥusn* (حُسن) is an infinitive which means ' to be good'. What is meant here is to adopt good behavior. The meaning of the sentence is quite clear that Allah Ta'ālā has advised man to treat his parents kindly.

وَإِنْ جَاهَدَاكَ لِتُشْرِكَ بِي (And if they insist upon you that you should ascribe partners to Me - 29:8). It should be taken note of that the limit of kind treatment with parents should not go beyond the point where it comes in conflict with the injunctions of Allah Ta'ālā. If they force toward infidelity or associating some one with Allah, then they must not be obeyed, as

advised in a *ḥadīth* لاَ طَاعَةَ لِمَخْلُوقٍ فِيْ مَعْصِيَةِ الْخَالِقِ (A created being must not be obeyed in disobedience of the Creator). This *ḥadīth* has been reported by Imām Aḥmad and Ḥākim who has held it as Ṣaḥīḥ).

This verse was revealed in connection with Sayyidnā Sa'd Ibn Abī Waqqāṣ ﷺ. He was one of the ten companions to whom the Holy Prophet ﷺ had given the good news of being in paradise, and who are called *Al-'Ashrah Al-mubashsharah*. He was an extremely obedient son of his mother and was always alert to look after her comfort. When his mother, Ḥamnah bint Abī Sufyān, learnt that her son, Sa'd, had accepted Islam, she got very upset and warned him against that, and then swore an oath that she would neither eat nor drink unless he turned back to his ancestral religion, or she would die of thirst and hunger, and he would be blamed universally for being the killer of his mother. (Muslim, Tirmidhī). Through this Qur'ānic verse Sayyidnā Sa'd ﷺ was commanded not to listen to his mother.

Baghawī has reported in his narration that the mother of Sayyidnā Sa'd ﷺ did not eat and drink for a day and night, and according to some other versions, for three days and three nights, and sticking to her oath, remained hungry and thirsty. For Sayyidnā Sa'd ﷺ mother's love and obedience was one thing, but Allah's command was another, which naturally took precedence over every thing else. So he went to her and said to her firmly 'Dear mother, if there were hundred spirits in your body, and they were departing one by one, I would not have deserted my religion even seeing that scenario. It is now up to you whether you eat and drink or die. In any case I cannot abandon my religion'. Having been disappointed by his firmness, she started eating food.

Verses 10 - 13

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَّقُولُ اٰمَنَّا بِاللّٰهِ فَاِذَآ اُوْذِیَ فِی اللّٰهِ جَعَلَ فِتْنَةَ النَّاسِ كَعَذَابِ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَلَئِنْ جَآءَ نَصْرٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّكَ لَيَقُوْلُنَّ اِنَّا كُنَّا مَعَكُمْ ؕ اَوَلَيْسَ اللّٰهُ بِاَعْلَمَ بِمَا فِیْ صُدُوْرِ الْعٰلَمِیْنَ ﴿۱۰﴾ وَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ اللّٰهُ الَّذِیْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ الْمُنٰفِقِیْنَ ﴿۱۱﴾ وَقَالَ الَّذِیْنَ كَفَرُوْا

لِلَّذِينَ اٰمَنُوا اتَّبِعُوْا سَبِيْلَنَا وَلْنَحْمِلْ خَطٰيٰكُمْ ۗ وَمَاهُمْ بِحٰمِلِيْنَ مِنْ خَطٰيٰهُمْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ ۗ اِنَّهُمْ لَكٰذِبُوْنَ ﴿۱۲﴾ وَلَيَحْمِلُنَّ اَثْقَالَهُمْ وَاَثْقَالًا مَّعَ اَثْقَالِهِمْ ۚ وَلَيُسْـَٔلُنَّ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ عَمَّا كَانُوْا يَفْتَرُوْنَ ﴿۱۳﴾

And among men there are those who say, "We believe in Allah", but when they are persecuted in (the way of) Allah, they take the persecution of men, as equal to the punishment of Allah. And should any help comes from your Lord, they will certainly say, "We were with you."(1) Is it not that Allah knows well what lies in the hearts of the people of all the worlds? [10] (2) **And Allah will certainly know those who believe and He will certainly know the hypocrites.** [11] **And those who disbelieve say to those who believe, "Follow our way, and we will bear the burden of your sins." And they are not (able) to bear the burden of their sins in the least. Indeed they are pure liars.** [12] **And they shall certainly bear their own loads, and some loads alongwith their own loads. And they will certainly be questioned about what they used to forge.** [13]

Commentary

وَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا (And those who disbelieve say - 29:12). The infidels had tried all sorts of devices to mislead the Muslims and to hinder the progress of their faith. Sometimes they tried to get hold of Muslims by show of power and wealth, and at others by trying to put doubts in their minds. This verse mentions one such move made by them. They asked Muslims not to leave their ancestral religion in fear of torments in the Hereafter, because no such thing was going to happen at the first place, but even the belief of the Muslims about the Hereafter would come true, they (the infidels) were willing to undertake that they themselves would bear all the torments in the Hereafter on behalf of the Muslims, and the Muslims

1. It means that such people join the infidels when they apprehend some kind of torture from them, but when Allah's help will come to the Muslims in a battle against the infidels, they will pretend to be Muslims on the plea that they had joined the infidels only because they feared to be persecuted by them.

2. The sense is that they did not believe in Islam with their hearts, and this fact cannot be concealed from Him, because He knows whatever lies in the hearts of the people.

would not suffer at all.

A similar incident is related in the last *rukū'* of Sūrah An-Najm أَفَرَءَيْتَ الَّذِىْ تَوَلّٰى وَاَعْطٰى قَلِيْلاً وَّاَكْدٰى (Have you seen the one who turned his back, and gave a little, then stopped - 53:33,34). Once some infidels hoodwinked a naïve friend of theirs by saying that if he gave them some money here in this world, they would save him in the Hereafter by taking upon themselves his share of the torment. He in fact started paying them the amount, but later stopped it. His foolishness and the absurdity of his action are related in detail in Sūrah An-Najm.

A similar sort of offer made by the infidels to the Muslims is related here. In response to this offer Allah Ta'ālā has said that those who say so are liars. They would not take upon them the burden of any one else. وَمَاهُم بِحَامِلِيْنَ مِنْ خَطٰيٰهُم مِّنْ شَىْءٍ اِنَّهُمْ لَكٰذِبُوْنَ (And they are not (able) to bear the burden of their sins in the least. Indeed they are pure liars. - 29:12). It means that when they will see the severity of torment in the Hereafter, they would not dare to take upon themselves the share of any one else. Hence their promise is false. It is also commented in Sūrah An-Najm that even if they were ready to take upon them the torment of others, Allah Ta'ālā will not allow it. Because it is against the code of justice that someone else is made to undergo the punishment for the crime committed by another person.

The other point made by the Qur'ān here is that although they will not be able to relieve others by taking on themselves the recompense for the sins others have committed, but this much is true that their effort to misguide others and to drift them away from the righteous path is by itself a big sin, which will be loaded upon them in addition to their own sins. This way they will be carrying their own sins as well as that of misguiding others.

Invitation to sin is also a sin, the punishment of which is the same as that of committing it.

It comes out quite clearly from this verse that the one who invites others to sin, or helps others in committing it, is as much a criminal as the one who actually commits it. A *ḥadīth* quoted by Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ and Anas Ibn Mālik ﷺ relates that once the Holy Prophet ﷺ said 'Anyone inviting people toward righteousness would be entitled to the

collective blessings of all those who would act on his advice, without any reduction from the share of their reward; and anyone inviting people toward sin will also suffer the collective punishment of all those who would act upon his invitation to sin, without any reduction from the punishment of those who have committed that sin'. (Muslim, Ibn Mājah, Qurṭubī)

Verses 14 - 18

وَلَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا اِلٰى قَوْمِهٖ فَلَبِثَ فِيْهِمْ اَلْفَ سَنَةٍ اِلَّا خَمْسِيْنَ
عَامًا ؕ فَاَخَذَهُمُ الطُّوْفَانُ وَهُمْ ظٰلِمُوْنَ ﴿١٤﴾ فَاَنْجَيْنٰهُ وَاَصْحٰبَ
السَّفِيْنَةِ وَجَعَلْنٰهَآ اٰيَةً لِّلْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿١٥﴾ وَاِبْرٰهِيْمَ اِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ اعْبُدُوا
اللّٰهَ وَاتَّقُوْهُ ؕ ذٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿١٦﴾ اِنَّمَا تَعْبُدُوْنَ
مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ اَوْثَانًا وَّتَخْلُقُوْنَ اِفْكًا ؕ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ تَعْبُدُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ
اللّٰهِ لَا يَمْلِكُوْنَ لَكُمْ رِزْقًا فَابْتَغُوْا عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ الرِّزْقَ وَاعْبُدُوْهُ وَاشْكُرُوْا
لَهٗ ؕ اِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُوْنَ ﴿١٧﴾ وَاِنْ تُكَذِّبُوْا فَقَدْ كَذَّبَ اُمَمٌ مِّنْ قَبْلِكُمْ ؕ
وَمَا عَلَى الرَّسُوْلِ اِلَّا الْبَلٰغُ الْمُبِيْنُ ﴿١٨﴾

And We sent Nūḥ to his people. So he stayed with them one thousand, less fifty, years. Then the Cyclone seized them, and they were transgressors. [14] **So We saved him and the people of the Ark, and made it a sign for all the worlds.** [15] **And (We sent) Ibrāhīm when he said to his people, "Worship Allah and fear Him. That is better for you if you know.** [16] **You only worship idols beside Allah and you invent a lie. In fact those whom you worship beside Allah do not have power to give you provision. So seek provision near Allah and worship Him and be grateful to Him. To Him you are to be returned.** [17] **And if you belie me, then many nations have belied (their messengers) before you. And the messenger has no obligation but to convey the message clearly."** [18]

Commentary

It was described in the previous verses that infidels keep on their

opposition and afflictions on Muslims as a routine. In the above verses the Holy Prophet ﷺ was consoled by relating some incidents of earlier people that this practice of harassment of believers by the infidels is going on for long. But they never lost hope due to such harassments. Therefore, you too should not care about the troubles afflicted by the infidels, and should keep on performing firmly your prophetic obligations.

Among the earlier prophets, the story of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام was related first. It was so because he was the very first prophet who had to confront with the infidelity and association of others with Allah Ta'ālā. Secondly, any other prophet did not experience the extent of harassment he had to put up with from his own people. It was because he had the exclusive honour from Allah Ta'ālā of having very long life. His life span of nine hundred and fifty years (950) years as quoted by the Holy Qur'ān is true without any element of doubt. However, in certain narrations it is mentioned that this relates to the period of his preaching and teaching, and there are additional periods of his life before this and after the deluge. واللہ أعلم

Living such an unusually long life continuously in preaching and teaching, and enduring all sorts of afflictions, including drubbing and strangling throughout this period, from the infidels was a special distinction of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام. Despite all these difficulties and tribulations he did not lose heart ever.

The second story is that of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, who too passed through many testing trials. First the fire of Namrūd, then migration from Syria to a howling deserted place, then slaughtering of the son. All these tribulations tell about the hardships he had gone through. Within the story of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام a brief mention is also made of Lūṭ عليه السلام and his people. Then upto the end of the Sūrah mention is made of some other prophets and their antagonistic people. All these stories were related to keep the spirit of the Holy Prophet ﷺ high, and to make Muslims steadfast to the religion.

Verses 19 - 23

اَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا كَيْفَ يُبْدِئُ اللّٰهُ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيْدُهٗ ؕ اِنَّ ذٰلِكَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ

يَسِيْرٌ ﴿١٩﴾ قُلْ سِيْرُوْا فِى الْاَرْضِ فَانْظُرُوْا كَيْفَ بَدَاَ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ اللّٰهُ

يُنْشِئُ النَّشْاَةَ الْاٰخِرَةَ ۚ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿٢٠﴾ يُعَذِّبُ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَيَرْحَمُ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ۚ وَاِلَيْهِ تُقْلَبُوْنَ ﴿٢١﴾ وَمَآ اَنْتُمْ بِمُعْجِزِيْنَ فِى الْاَرْضِ وَلَا فِى السَّمَآءِ ۫ وَمَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ مِنْ وَّلِيٍّ وَّلَا نَصِيْرٍ ﴿٢٢﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ وَلِقَآئِهٖٓ اُولٰٓئِكَ يَئِسُوْا مِنْ رَّحْمَتِيْ وَاُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿٢٣﴾

Did they not see how Allah originates the creation, then He will do it again. Surely this is easy for Allah. [19] **Say, "Go about in the land and look how He has originated the creation. Then Allah will create the subsequent creation. Surely Allah is powerful to do everything."** [20] **He punishes whom He wills and has mercy on whom He wills. And to Him you are to be turned back.** [21] **And you are not (able) to frustrate (Allah) neither in the earth nor in the sky. And, apart from Allah, you have neither a protector nor a helper.** [22] **And those who deny the signs of Allah and meeting with Him, those will despair of My mercy, and those are the ones for whom there is a painful punishment.** [23]

Commentary

The infidels of Makkah believed that it is Allah who has created the whole universe, but they deemed it impossible that the people will be resurrected after they once die. The present verses have described the fallacy of their view. It is stated that repeating the process of creation is much easier than its origination. It is strange that these infidels do believe that Allah has originated the creation, but they deny His power to do it again, while the latter is easier than the former. Then verse 20 has induced them to look around them to appreciate the splendors of the creation, so that they may apprehend that the One who has originated this marvelous creation can easily repeat the process. After establishing the Resurrection, the last three verses describe the punishment for those who deny it.

Verses 24 - 27

فَمَا كَانَ جَوَابَ قَوْمِهٖٓ اِلَّآ اَنْ قَالُوا اقْتُلُوْهُ اَوْ حَرِّقُوْهُ فَاَنْجٰىهُ اللّٰهُ مِنَ

النَّارِ ۭ اِنَّ فِیْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يُّؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٢٤﴾ وَقَالَ اِنَّمَا اتَّخَذْتُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ اَوْثَانًا ۙ مَّوَدَّةَ بَيْنِكُمْ فِی الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ۚ ثُمَّ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ يَكْفُرُ بَعْضُكُمْ بِبَعْضٍ وَّيَلْعَنُ بَعْضُكُمْ بَعْضًا ۡ وَّمَاْوٰىكُمُ النَّارُ وَمَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ نّٰصِرِيْنَ ﴿٢٥﴾ فَاٰمَنَ لَهٗ لُوْطٌ ۘ وَقَالَ اِنِّیْ مُهَاجِرٌ اِلٰی رَبِّیْ ۭ اِنَّهٗ هُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ ﴿٢٦﴾ وَوَهَبْنَا لَهٗٓ اِسْحٰقَ وَيَعْقُوْبَ وَجَعَلْنَا فِیْ ذُرِّيَّتِهِ النُّبُوَّةَ وَالْكِتٰبَ وَاٰتَيْنٰهُ اَجْرَهٗ فِی الدُّنْيَا ۚ وَاِنَّهٗ فِی الْاٰخِرَةِ لَمِنَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ ﴿٢٧﴾

So, the response of his (Ibrāhīm's) people was none but that they said, "Kill him" or "Burn him". So Allah saved him from the fire. Surely in this there are signs for a people who believe. [24] **And he (Ibrāhīm) said, "You have taken to idols instead of Allah, only because of love (you have) with each other in the worldly life. Then on the Day of Judgment you will reject each other and will curse one another. And your abode is the Fire, and you will have no helpers."** [25] **So Lūṭ believed in him and he (Ibrāhīm) said, "I am going to leave my homeland towards my Lord. Surely He is the Mighty, the Wise.** [26] **And We granted him Isḥāque and Ya'qūb and assigned to his progeny prophethood and book, and gave him his reward in the world; and of course he, in the Hereafter, is one of the righteous.** [27]

Commentary

فَاٰمَنَ لَهٗ لُوْطٌ وَقَالَ اِنِّیْ مُهَاجِرٌ اِلٰی رَبِّیْ (So Lūṭ believed in him and he (Ibrāhīm) said, "I am going to leave my homeland towards my Lord. - 29:26). Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام was the nephew of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. He was the very first one to accept faith after watching the miracle of Ibrāhīm عليه السلام in the fire of Namrūd. When Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام planned to migrate from his hometown, Kūthā - a township of Kūfah - along with his wife Sayyidah Sārā, who was his cousin and had accepted Islam, and Lūṭ عليه السلام, he said اِنِّیْ مُهَاجِرٌ اِلٰی رَبِّیْ. That is 'I am going to leave my homeland toward my Lord' It meant that he wanted to go to some place where there was no obstacle in worshipping Allah.

Ibrāhīm An-Nakha'ī and Qatādah رحمهما الله تعالى are of the opinion that this sentence was said by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, because the next sentence, i.e وَوَهَبْنَا لَهٗ اِسْحٰقَ وَيَعْقُوْبَ (And We granted him Isḥāque and Ya'qūb) is pointing certainly toward Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. However, some other commentators are of the view that (اِنِّيْ مُهَاجِرٌ) (I am going to leave my homeland) was said by Lūṭ عليه السلام. But in the present context, the former explanation appears more appropriate. Although Lūṭ عليه السلام had accompanied Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام during this journey, but being subordinate to him, his separate mention was not called for, like Sayyidah Sārah, who was subordinate to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, was not mentioned separately.

First prophetic migration in world's history

Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was the first prophet who had to migrate from his hometown for the sake of religion. He underwent this migration at the age of 75 years. (Qurṭubī).

The reward for some actions is bestowed in this world as well

اٰتَيْنٰهُ اَجْرَهٗ فِي الدُّنْيَا (And gave his reward in the world - 29:27). That is, 'We rewarded Ibrāhīm for his sacrifices in the way of Allah and righteous actions in this world also'. He is made popular and the Imām among the people of the world. He is respected by all alike, whether Jews, Christians or idol worshippers. In the Hereafter he will be among the Ṣālihīn (righteous) of the Paradise. It clarifies that although the real reward for good deeds will be awarded in the Hereafter, but a small part of it is also given in this world. Some authentic *āḥādīth* have also described about the award of benefits in this world against good deeds, and depraved outcome of the bad deeds. Maulānā Ḥakim-ul-Ummah رحمه الله تعالى has put together all such acts in his booklet 'Jazā'-ul-A'māl' (جَزَاءُ الْاَعْمَال).

Verses 28 - 35

وَلُوْطًا اِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهٖٓ اِنَّكُمْ لَتَاْتُوْنَ الْفَاحِشَةَ ۡ مَا سَبَقَكُمْ بِهَا مِنْ اَحَدٍ مِّنَ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿۲۸﴾ اَئِنَّكُمْ لَتَاْتُوْنَ الرِّجَالَ وَتَقْطَعُوْنَ السَّبِيْلَ ۙ وَتَاْتُوْنَ فِيْ نَادِيْكُمُ الْمُنْكَرَ ۭ فَمَا كَانَ جَوَابَ قَوْمِهٖٓ اِلَّآ اَنْ قَالُوا ائْتِنَا بِعَذَابِ اللّٰهِ اِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿۲۹﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ انْصُرْنِيْ

عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْمُفْسِدِيْنَ ﴿٣٠﴾ وَلَمَّا جَآءَتْ رُسُلُنَآ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ بِالْبُشْرٰى ۙ
قَالُوْٓا اِنَّا مُهْلِكُوْٓا اَهْلِ هٰذِهِ الْقَرْيَةِ ۚ اِنَّ اَهْلَهَا كَانُوْا ظٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٣١﴾ ۚ صلے
قَالَ اِنَّ فِيْهَا لُوْطًا ۭ قَالُوْا نَحْنُ اَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ فِيْهَا ۣ لَنُنَجِّيَنَّهٗ وَاَهْلَهٗٓ اِلَّا
امْرَاَتَهٗ ۤ كَانَتْ مِنَ الْغٰبِرِيْنَ ﴿٣٢﴾ وَلَمَّآ اَنْ جَآءَتْ رُسُلُنَا لُوْطًا
سِيْٓءَ بِهِمْ وَضَاقَ بِهِمْ ذَرْعًا وَّقَالُوْا لَا تَخَفْ وَلَا تَحْزَنْ ۣ اِنَّا
مُنَجُّوْكَ وَاَهْلَكَ اِلَّا امْرَاَتَكَ كَانَتْ مِنَ الْغٰبِرِيْنَ ﴿٣٣﴾ اِنَّا مُنْزِلُوْنَ
عَلٰٓى اَهْلِ هٰذِهِ الْقَرْيَةِ رِجْزًا مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَفْسُقُوْنَ ﴿٣٤﴾
وَلَقَدْ تَّرَكْنَا مِنْهَآ اٰيَةًۢ بَيِّنَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَّعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾

And (We sent) Lūṭ when he said to his people, "Indeed you commit the shameful act that no one in the worlds has ever preceded you in it. [28] **Is it (not) a fact that you go for men (to satisfy your lust) and rob the wayfarer and commit evil in your gathering?" So the answer of his people was none but that they said, "Bring us Allah's punishment, if you are one of the truthful."** [29] **He said, "My Lord, help me against the people who make mischief."** [30]

And when Our messengers came to Ibrāhīm with the good news, they said, "We are going to destroy the people of this town. Surely its people have been transgressors." [31] **He said, "There is Lūṭ in it." They said, "We know well who is in it. We will certainly save him and his family except his wife who will be among those remaining behind."** [32] **And when Our messengers came to Lūṭ, he grieved for them and his heart was straitened because of them, but they said, "We are going to save you and your family, except your wife who will be among those remaining behind. We are going to bring down on the people of this town a punishment from the sky, because they used to act sinfully."** [34] **And We left from it (the town) an evident sign for a people who understand.** [35]

Commentary

وَلُوْطًا اِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهٖٓ اِنَّكُمْ لَتَاْتُوْنَ الْفَاحِشَةَ (And [We sent] Lūṭ when he said to his

people, "Indeed you commit the shameful act - 29:28). Here Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام has described three vicious sins of his people. One, unnatural offence of man with man; two, highway robbery against travelers; and three, commitment of sin openly before others in their group meetings. There is no specification of the third sin in the Holy Qur'ān. Thus, it is deduced that every sin, which is a sin in its own right, if committed openly with indifference, it becomes a double sin, irrespective of the type of sin. At this point, some Imāms of Tafsīr (exegesis) have listed all such sins, which these wretched persons used to commit in their meetings. For instance, throwing stones on travelers and making fun of them, as Umm Hāni' رضى الله عنها reports it in a *ḥadīth*. Other commentators have reported that these insolent people were in the habit of committing sins openly before all others.

Out of the three sins mentioned in this verse the first one is most disgusting, which was never committed before in the whole world, and even wild beasts abstain from it. The entire ummah is unanimous on that it is a worse sin than adultery. (Rūḥ)

Verses 36 - 44

وَاِلٰى مَدْيَنَ اَخَاهُمْ شُعَيْبًا ۙ فَقَالَ يٰقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ وَ ارْجُوا الْيَوْمَ
الْاٰخِرَ وَلَا تَعْثَوْا فِى الْاَرْضِ مُفْسِدِيْنَ ﴿٣٦﴾ فَكَذَّبُوْهُ فَاَخَذَتْهُمُ
الرَّجْفَةُ فَاَصْبَحُوْا فِىْ دَارِهِمْ جٰثِمِيْنَ ﴿٣٧﴾ وَعَادًا وَّثَمُوْدَا وَقَدْ تَّبَيَّنَ
لَكُمْ مِّنْ مَّسٰكِنِهِمْ ۗ وَزَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ اَعْمَالَهُمْ فَصَدَّهُمْ عَنِ
السَّبِيْلِ وَكَانُوْا مُسْتَبْصِرِيْنَ ﴿٣٨﴾ وَقَارُوْنَ وَفِرْعَوْنَ وَهَامٰنَ ۗ
وَلَقَدْ جَآءَهُمْ مُّوْسٰى بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ فَاسْتَكْبَرُوْا فِى الْاَرْضِ وَمَا كَانُوْا
سٰبِقِيْنَ ﴿٣٩﴾ فَكُلًّا اَخَذْنَا بِذَنْۢبِهٖ ۚ فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ اَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِ حَاصِبًا ۚ
وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ اَخَذَتْهُ الصَّيْحَةُ ۚ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ خَسَفْنَا بِهِ الْاَرْضَ ۚ وَمِنْهُمْ
مَّنْ اَغْرَقْنَا ۚ وَمَا كَانَ اللّٰهُ لِيَظْلِمَهُمْ وَلٰكِنْ كَانُوْۤا اَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُوْنَ
﴿٤٠﴾ مَثَلُ الَّذِيْنَ اتَّخَذُوْا مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ اَوْلِيَآءَ كَمَثَلِ الْعَنْكَبُوْتِ ۚ

ج اِتَّخَذَتۡ بَيۡتًا ؕ وَاِنَّ اَوۡهَنَ الۡبُيُوۡتِ لَبَيۡتُ الۡعَنۡكَبُوۡتِ ۘ لَوۡ كَانُوۡا يَعۡلَمُوۡنَ ﴿٤١﴾ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَعۡلَمُ مَا يَدۡعُوۡنَ مِنۡ دُوۡنِهٖ مِنۡ شَىۡءٍ ؕ وَهُوَ الۡعَزِيۡزُ الۡحَكِيۡمُ ﴿٤٢﴾ وَتِلۡكَ الۡاَمۡثَالُ نَضۡرِبُهَا لِلنَّاسِ ۚ وَمَا يَعۡقِلُهَاۤ اِلَّا الۡعٰلِمُوۡنَ ﴿٤٣﴾ خَلَقَ اللّٰهُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالۡاَرۡضَ بِالۡحَقِّ ؕ اِنَّ فِىۡ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيَةً لِّلۡمُؤۡمِنِيۡنَ ﴿٤٤﴾

And (We sent) to Madyan their brother Shu'āib. So he said, "O my people, worship Allah and expect the Last Day and do not roam about in the land as mischief makers." [36] **So they belied him, then they were seized by the earthquake and they remained in their homes lying on their faces.** [37] **And (We destroyed) 'Ād and Thamūd, and it is visible to you through their dwellings. And the Satan had beautified for them their deeds, so he prevented them from the (right) way, though they were people of insight.** [38] **And (We also destroyed) Qārūn and the Pharaoh and Hāmān. And surely Mūsā came to them with clear signs; so they acted arrogantly on the earth, and were not (able) to escape.** [39] **Thus each one of them We seized for his sin. So to some of them We sent a violent wind; and some of them were seized by a Cry; and some of them We made to sink in the earth; and some of them We drowned. And Allah was not to do injustice to them, but they used to do injustice to their own selves.** [40]

The example of those who have taken to patrons other than Allah is like the spider that has made a house. And surely the weakest of houses is the house of the spider. If only they know. [41] **Surely, Allah knows whatever thing they invoke beside Allah, and He is the Mighty, the Wise.** [42] **And these examples We site for people, and no one understands them except the knowledgeable ones.** [43] **Allah has created the heavens and the earth with truth. Surely in this there is a sign for the believers.** [44]

Commentary

The stories of the earlier people, that are mentioned in these verses

briefly, have been related in detail in the previous Sūrahs. For instance, the story of Shu'aib عليه السلام, and those of 'Ād and Thamūd have been related in Sūrahs Al-A'rāf and Hūd, and the incidents of Qārūn, Hāmān, and the Pharaoh have just passed in Sūrah Al- Qaṣaṣ.

وَكَانُوا مُسْتَبْصِرِينَ (They were people of insight - 29:38). This word is derived from *Istibṣār*, which means sight; and *Mustabṣir* is used for observer. The meaning of this sentence is that those who insisted on infidelity and *shirk* (associating partner with Allah) and got themselves involved in perdition and Allah's wrath were no fools or insane. They were very clever having insight, but their intelligence and sagacity was confined to mundane considerations. They did not realize that there would be a day of reckoning for all good and bad actions, when there would be complete justice, because the cruel and the oppressors move about in this world without hindrance, but those oppressed and afflicted are compelled to endure injustice. The day this injustice will finish and justice will be the order of the day is called the Hereafter. They are at a loss to comprehend this bit.

The same subject is coming ahead in Sūrah Ar-Rūm, where it is said يَعْلَمُونَ ظَاهِرًا مِّنَ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ عَنِ الْاٰخِرَةِ هُمْ غٰفِلُوْنَ (They know what is superficial of the worldly life, but of the Hereafter they are negligent. - 30:7). .

Some commentators have interpreted the meaning of وَكَانُوا مُسْتَبْصِرِينَ (They were people of insight) that these people did have faith in their heart and did understand well the necessity of the Day of Judgment, but the mundane considerations had compelled them to reject it.

وَإِنَّ أَوْهَنَ الْبُيُوتِ لَبَيْتُ الْعَنْكَبُوتِ (And surely the weakest of houses is the house of the spider - 29:41). 'Ankabūt (عَنْكَبُوت) is the Arabic language equivalent for spider. There are different species of spiders. Some of them live underground. Apparently those are not meant here. Instead the specie of spider meant here is the one which weaves web for itself, and stays suspended in it. It attracts and kills flies in the cobweb. Among all the known types of nests, dens and other abodes of animals, the spider's web is the weakest. Even a mild breeze can break its threads. This verse has described those who worship and place their trust in any one other than Allah, are like the web of spider, which is extremely weak. The trust of those who depend on idols or any human is as weak and fragile as the

trust of a spider on its web.

Ruling

Scholars have different viewpoints in the matter of killing of spiders and removing of cobwebs from the houses. Some do not like it, because at the time of *hijrah* the spider weaved its web at the mouth of the cave *Thaur*, and thus made a place of respect for itself. Khaṭīb has reported that Sayyidnā 'Alī ﷺ had prohibited its killing. But Tha'labī and Ibn 'Aṭiyyah have quoted a narration, again from Sayyidnā 'Alī ﷺ that says طَهِّرُوا بُيُوتَكُم مِّن نَسجِ العَنكَبُوتِ فَإِنَّ تَرْكَهٗ يُوَرِّثُ الفَقرَ (Clean your homes from the web of the spider,because its retaining causes poverty.)The chain of the narrators of both these reports is not reliable, but the second narration draws credence from other narrations in which keeping of homes clean is stressed. (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī)

وَتِلْكَ الْاَمْثَالُ نَضْرِبُهَا لِلنَّاسِ ۚ وَمَا يَعْقِلُهَآ اِلَّا الْعٰلِمُوْنَ (And these examples We cite for people, and no one understands them except the knowledgeable ones. - 29:43). After comparing the weakness of the gods of disbelievers with cobweb, it is stressed that Allah Ta'ālā provides such clear examples to elucidate the truth of Oneness. But only knowledgeable persons draw benefit from them, and the people at large do not ponder, so that they could also understand the truth.

Who is knowledgeable in the sight of Allah?

Imām Baghawī has quoted with his own *sanad* (chain of narrators) a report from Sayyidnā Jābir ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ recited this verse and said 'knowledgeable is the one who ponders over Allah's message, and acts in obedience to Him, and keeps away from the deeds that annoy Him'.

This explains that one does not become knowledgeable in the sight of Allah only by developing some understanding of Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*. To be on that high pedestal one needs to give a continual careful thought to Qur'ān, and then lead a life conforming to Qur'ānic teachings.

Musnad of Aḥmad has reproduced a narration of Sayyidnā 'Amr Ibn Al-'Āṣ ﷺ that he said he had learnt one thousand *amthāl* (maxims or examples) from the Holy Prophet ﷺ. After reproducing this narration, Ibn Kathīr has observed that it was a great honour for Sayyidnā 'Amr Ibn Al-'Āṣ ﷺ, because those who understand the examples (*Amthāl*)

given by Allah Ta'ālā and His messenger are termed by the present verse as knowledgeable.

Sayyidnā 'Amr Ibn Murrah ﷺ has said that he felt very bad whenever he came across any such verse of the Holy Qur'ān, which he could not understand, because Allah has said وَتِلْكَ الْاَمْثَالُ نَضْرِبُهَا لِلنَّاسِ ۚ وَمَا يَعْقِلُهَا اِلَّا الْعٰلِمُوْنَ (And these examples We cite for people, and no one understands them except the knowledgeable). (Ibn Kathīr).

Verse 45

اُتْلُ مَآ اُوْحِىَ اِلَيْكَ مِنَ الْكِتٰبِ وَاَقِمِ الصَّلٰوةَ ۭ اِنَّ الصَّلٰوةَ تَنْهٰى عَنِ الْفَحْشَآءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ ۭ وَلَذِكْرُ اللّٰهِ اَكْبَرُ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَصْنَعُوْنَ ﴿٤٥﴾

And recite (O Muḥammad) what is revealed to you of the Book and establish Ṣalāh. Surely Ṣalāh restrains from shamelessness and evil. And indeed remembrance of Allah is the greatest (thing). And Allah knows what you do. [45]

Commentary

اُتْلُ مَآ اُوْحِىَ اِلَيْكَ (And recite (O Muḥammad) what is revealed to you - 29:45). In the previous verses some incidents of a few prophets and their people were related, in which some rebellious infidels were also mentioned, who faced various divine punishments. There were also some words of solace for the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and consolation for the believers, in that how the earlier prophets had endured various types of hardships. There was also persuasion for continuing the work of teaching and preaching, and not to lose heart under any circumstances.

A brief but comprehensive formula for the reform of people

In the above verses the Holy Prophet ﷺ is advised a brief but comprehensive formula for inviting people towards Allah. If acted upon, this formula opens the avenues leading to practicing religion with all its precept, and the natural hurdles that come in the way in practicing it are removed easily. This elixir formula is made up of two parts; one is the recitation of the Holy Qur'ān, and the other, establishment of prayers. Although the real object here was to make all people adhere to the two basics, but for the sake of persuasion and emphasis, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was directed first to practice them, because it was much easy for the

followers to act upon the teachings of Islam when they saw the Holy Prophet ﷺ practicing it.

Out of the two components of the formula, recitation of Qur'ān is the spirit behind and foundation of every thing. The next in order is the establishment of prayers, which has been selected for mentioning here to the exclusion of all other acts and obligations. The wisdom behind placing prayer above all other worships has also been explained that it keeps one away from shameless and obscene acts. The prayer is supreme among all the worships and obligations in its own right, and is a pillar to the religion. *Faḥshā'* are all those shameless and obscene acts and utterances that are regarded bad and vile in all societies, no matter Islamic or non-Islamic, for instance, adultery, murder, abduction, robbery, lying, etc. *Munkar* (translated above as 'evil') is that act or utterance on which there is unanimity of opinion of all religious jurists as being impermissible or *ḥarām*. Therefore, if there is a difference of opinion by the religious jurists, no one of the two views can be regarded as *munkar*. The two words, *faḥashā'* and *munkar*, encompass in them all the crimes, and sins - both open and concealed - which are mischievous by themselves and a great hurdle in the way of righteous deeds.

How does prayer stop from all sins?

According to innumerous authentic *āḥādīth,* this verse means that there is a peculiar effect of the establishment of *ṣalāh* (prayer) that whoever performs it stops committing sins, provided it is not offered just for the sake of offering. One should offer prayers strictly in accordance with the wordings of Qur'ān, that is for its *iqāmah* (establishment). The meaning of *iqāmah* of Ṣalāh is to perform it both inwardly and outwardly with the manners and mores the Holy Prophet ﷺ used to perform. All along his life, he stressed that the body, clothes and the place of offering prayer should be clean. Offering prayer in congregation, and to perform all actions in line with Sunnah are outward mores of the prayer. As for inward mores, one should stand in prayer with fear of Allah and humility in a manner that he is begging from Him. The one who establishes prayer, Allah Ta'ālā graces him with Divine help to tread the righteous path, and to keep away from all types of sins. If someone does not get rid of sins despite offering prayers, then there is some flaw in his prayers. It is mentioned in a *ḥadīth* reported by Sayyidnā 'Imrān Ibn Ḥuṣain ﷺ

that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was asked about the sense of the verse إِنَّ الصَّلٰوةَ تَنْهٰى عَنِ الْفَحْشَآءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ (Surely, Ṣalāh restrains from shamelessness and evil - 29:45). The Holy Prophet ﷺ Replied,'مَنْ لَّمْ تَنْهَهُ صَلٰوتُه' عَنِ الْفَحْشَآءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ فَلاَ صَلٰوةَ لَه' (رواه ابن ابى حاتم بسنده عن عمران بن حُصَين والطبرانى من حديث ابى معاوية) That is 'if anyone's prayer did not stop him from his sins then his prayer is nothing'.

Sayyidnā Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ has reported that the Holy Prophet ﷺ once said لاَ صَلٰوةَ لِمَنْ لَّمْ يُطِعِ الصَّلٰوةَ (Ibn Jarir), that is 'one who does not obey his prayer his prayer is nothing'. The obedience of prayer is that one should keep away from sins (*faḥshā'* and *munkar*).

While interpreting this verse Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ has said that if someone's prayer does not make him do the righteous deeds and prevent from sins, then such a prayer would draw him even farther from Allah Ta'ālā.

Ibn Kathīr has reproduced all the three narrations in one place and has concluded that these *āḥādīth* are not *marfū'* which means that these words are not the words spoken by the Holy Prophet ﷺ but are the expositions put forward in explaining this verse by the three scholars namely, 'Imrān Ibn Ḥuṣain, 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd, and Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ.

Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ has reported in a narration that someone came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and said 'a person offers *tahajjud* (night prayer) at night, and steals after the day break'. The Holy Prophet ﷺ replied, 'The prayer will soon desist him from stealing'. (Ibn Kathīr). Some other narrations have also related that after this remark from him he stopped stealing.

Answer to a doubt

Some persons express their doubt that many a people offer prayers regularly and yet indulge in grave sins, which apparently looks in conflict with this verse. Some have replied to this doubt by explaining that Ṣalāh forbids those offering prayers from sins, but it is not necessary that all take up the advice in right earnest, and stop committing sins. After all Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* also desist every one from committing sins, yet many do not pay any attention to the advice, and do not refrain from sinning.

But most commentators have explained that the verse is not in the form of a command, but it is the effect of prayer, which desists those who

offer their prayers regularly from committing sins, by Divine help. But if one is not graced with the Divine help to get rid of sins, it means that there is some flaw in his prayers, and he has not been able to fulfill the requirements of *iqāmah* of Ṣalāh. Above referred *āḥādīth* also endorse this view.

وَلَذِكْرُ اللّٰهِ اَكْبَرُ وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَصْنَعُوْنَ (And indeed remembrance of Allah is the greatest (thing). And Allah knows what you do. - 29:45). Here remembrance of Allah could mean the remembrance carried out in the prayer or otherwise is supreme. The other meaning of the word could be that when His servants remember Him, it is His promise that He too remembers them before angels فَاذْكُرُوْنِىْ اَذْكُرْكُمْ (Remember Me, and I will remember you - 2:152). For the servants who worship Allah it is the biggest blessing. Many a companions and the generation that followed them have endorsed this interpretation. Ibn Jarīr and Ibn Kathīr have also preferred this view. There is also an allusion under this view that the real reason of getting rid of sins through prayers is that Allah Ta'ālā also remembers the servant at that time before the angels. Thus its auspiciousness relieves him from his sins.

Verses 46 - 55

وَلَا تُجَادِلُوْٓا اَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ اِلَّا بِالَّتِىْ هِىَ اَحْسَنُ ق صلے اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا مِنْهُمْ وَقُوْلُوْٓا اٰمَنَّا بِالَّذِىْٓ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْنَا وَاُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكُمْ وَاِلٰهُنَا وَاِلٰهُكُمْ وَاحِدٌ وَّنَحْنُ لَهٗ مُسْلِمُوْنَ ﴿٤٦﴾ وَكَذٰلِكَ اَنْزَلْنَآ اِلَيْكَ الْكِتٰبَ ط فَالَّذِيْنَ اٰتَيْنٰهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِهٖ وَمِنْ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ مَنْ يُّؤْمِنُ بِهٖ ط وَمَا يَجْحَدُ بِاٰيٰتِنَآ اِلَّا الْكٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿٤٧﴾ وَمَا كُنْتَ تَتْلُوْا مِنْ قَبْلِهٖ مِنْ كِتٰبٍ وَّلَا تَخُطُّهٗ بِيَمِيْنِكَ اِذًا لَّارْتَابَ الْمُبْطِلُوْنَ ﴿٤٨﴾ بَلْ هُوَ اٰيٰتٌ م بَيِّنٰتٌ فِىْ صُدُوْرِ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْعِلْمَ ط وَمَا يَجْحَدُ بِاٰيٰتِنَآ اِلَّا الظّٰلِمُوْنَ ﴿٤٩﴾ وَقَالُوْا لَوْلَآ اُنْزِلَ عَلَيْهِ اٰيٰتٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّهٖ ط قُلْ اِنَّمَا الْاٰيٰتُ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ ط وَاِنَّمَآ اَنَا نَذِيْرٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿٥٠﴾ اَوَلَمْ يَكْفِهِمْ اَنَّآ اَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ

الْكِتٰبَ يُتْلٰى عَلَيْهِمْ ؕ اِنَّ فِىْ ذٰلِكَ لَرَحْمَةً وَّذِكْرٰى لِقَوْمٍ يُّؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٥١﴾ قُلْ كَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ بَيْنِىْ وَبَيْنَكُمْ شَهِيْدًا ۚ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الْاَرْضِ ؕ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا بِالْبَاطِلِ وَكَفَرُوْا بِاللّٰهِ ۙ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْخٰسِرُوْنَ ﴿٥٢﴾ وَيَسْتَعْجِلُوْنَكَ بِالْعَذَابِ ؕ وَلَوْلَآ اَجَلٌ مُّسَمًّى لَّجَآءَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ ؕ وَلَيَاْتِيَنَّهُمْ بَغْتَةً وَّهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُوْنَ ﴿٥٣﴾ يَسْتَعْجِلُوْنَكَ بِالْعَذَابِ ؕ وَاِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ لَمُحِيْطَةٌ ۢ بِالْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿٥٤﴾ يَوْمَ يَغْشٰهُمُ الْعَذَابُ مِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ وَمِنْ تَحْتِ اَرْجُلِهِمْ وَيَقُوْلُ ذُوْقُوْا مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٥٥﴾

And do not debate with the people of the Book unless it is in the best way, except those from them who commit injustice. And say, "We believe in what is sent down to us and sent down to you, and our God and your God is One, and to Him we submit (ourselves)." [46]

And in the same way We have sent down the Book to you. So those to whom We have given the Book believe in it. And from these (the people of Makkah) there are ones who believe in it. And no one rejects Our verses except the infidels. [47] **And you have never been reciting any book before this, nor have you been writing it with your right hand; had it been so, the people of falsehood would have raised doubts.** [48] **But it (the Qur'ān) is clear verses in the hearts of those who are given knowledge. And no one rejects our verses except the wrongdoers.** [49] **And they said, "Why is it that no signs (miracles) have been sent down to him from his Lord?" Say, "Signs are only with Allah, and I am only a plain warner."** [50] **Is it not sufficient for them that We have sent down to you the Book that is being recited to them? Surely in it there is mercy and advice for a people who believe.** [51]

Say, "Allah is enough as a witness between me and you. He knows what is in the heavens and the earth. And those who believe in falsity and do not believe in Allah,

those are the losers. [52] And they ask you to bring the punishment soon. And had there not been an appointed time, the punishment would have come to them. And it will surely come to them suddenly while they will not be aware. [53] And they ask you to bring the punishment soon. And surely the *Jahannam* is going to overwhelm the disbelievers, [54] the Day when the punishment will envelop them from above them and from under their feet and He (Allah) will say, "Taste what you used to do." [55]

Commentary

وَلَا تُجَادِلُوٓا اَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ اِلَّا بِالَّتِىْ هِىَ اَحْسَنُ اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا (And do not debate with the people of the Book unless it is in the best way, except those from them who commit injustice. - 29:46). It means that if one has to get involved in a discussion or debate with the people of the book, he should present his arguments in an affable manner. For instance, it is prudent to answer an impudent remark with politeness, the rage with mildness, and uncivilized tumult with dignified speech.

اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا (except those from them who commit injustice - 29:46). But those who wronged you in that they stuck to their stubbornness and obstinacy in return to your dignified gentle speech, they do not deserve this kindness from you. If you give them tit for tat, you are justified, although it is still preferable that they are not replied with rudeness for rudeness, and cruelly for their cruelty. Rather they be treated with courtesy for their rudeness, and with fairness for their unfairness. Some other Qur'ānic verses elaborate this advice: وَاِنْ عَاقَبْتُمْ فَعَاقِبُوْا بِمِثْلِ مَاعُوْقِبْتُمْ بِهٖ وَلَئِنْ صَبَرْتُمْ لَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لِّلصّٰبِرِيْنَ (16:126): That is, you are entitled to take revenge of their injustice in equal manner, 'but if you opt for patience, it is definitely much better for those who are patient'.

The advice given in this verse for a polite and dignified treatment in the case of a debate with the people of the book is also accorded in Sūrah An-Naḥl with regard to the pagans. At this place the people of the book are especially identified for the reason given right after this. That is, if they were to ponder, there is a great deal common in the two faiths, which should help them accept Islam. Hence it is said قُوْلُوْٓا اٰمَنَّا بِالَّذِىْٓ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْنَا وَاُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكُمْ (And say: We believe in what is sent down to us and sent down to you - 29:46). It means that the Muslims should tell the people of the book at the

time of argument 'we have faith in the revelations sent to us through our Prophet ﷺ, and also on those revelations which were sent to you through your prophets. Hence, you have no reason for any hostility against us'.

Does this verse endorse the authenticity of Torah and Injīl in their present form?

The manner in which this verse endorses the belief of Muslims in Torah and Injīl is their general faith in them, as they were revealed in their original form. It means that whatever Allah Ta'ālā had revealed in these books, they had faith in that. It does not mean that they have faith in their altered and distorted form of the text as well. Many of the alterations were made in the books even before the time of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and many more were carried out later. This work on amendments has not ceased yet. Muslims have faith only on that part of Torah and Injīl that were revealed on Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and Sayyidnā 'Isā' عليه السلام respectively. The altered part of the books is excluded from that.

Torah and Injīl in their present form can neither be believed nor rejected altogether

It is recorded in Ṣaḥīḥ Āl- Bukhārī that Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه has reported that the People of the Book used to read Torah and Injīl in their original language, Hebrew, but for Muslims they would relate only its translation in Arabic. the Holy Prophet ﷺ instructed the Muslims in this regard that they should neither believe nor reject what they (Jews and Christians) tell them, and instead simply say اٰمَنَّا بِالَّذِیۡۤ اُنۡزِلَ اِلَیۡنَا وَ اُنۡزِلَ اِلَیۡکُمۡ (We believe in what is sent down to us and sent down to you - 29:46). That is 'We have symbolic faith in that what was revealed on your prophets, but what you are telling us we do not consider it as authentic. Therefore, we abstain from endorsing or rejecting it'.

The status of the narrations of the People of the Book quoted by the commentators in their commentaries is also the same. The object of their reproduction in the commentaries is meant to highlight their historical position. They cannot be used for determining what is permitted (*ḥalāl*) and what is not permitted (*ḥarām*).

مَا كُنْتَ تَتْلُوْا مِنْ قَبْلِهٖ مِنْ كِتٰبٍ وَّلَا تَخُطُّهٗ بِيَمِيْنِكَ اِذًا لَّارْتَابَ الْمُبْطِلُوْنَ (And you have never been reciting any book before this, nor have you been writing it with your right hand, had it been so, the people of falsehood would have

raised doubts. - 29:48). That is 'Before the revelation of the Qur'ān you could neither read nor write, rather you were unlettered (اُمّی). If it was not so, and you were literate, then there could have been a possibility of doubt for the infidels to put the blame that you were repeating what you had read in the earlier books, Torah and Injīl, and it was not a new revelation sent down on you by way of prophethood.'

It was a great honour and miracle for the Holy Prophet ﷺ to be unlettered

Allah Ta'ālā had demonstrated so many evident and clear miracles to prove the prophethood of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and it was one of those miracles that He made him unlettered. Neither he could read any thing nor could he write at all. Forty years of his life were spent in this fashion before the eyes of the people of Makkah. He did not have any acquaintance with the People of the Book wherefrom he could have learnt anything. In fact, there were no People of the Book living in Makkah. Suddenly, at the age of forty years, such a speech started flowing from his mouth that was a miracle not only in its theme and meaning, but also in the pinnacle of its eloquence.

Some scholars have tried to prove that he was unlettered in the beginning, but later Allah Ta'ālā taught him how to read and write. In support of their contention they quote a *hadīth* regarding the incident of Ḥudaibiyah, which says that when the agreement between the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the infidels of Makkah was being written, it was started by the Muslims with the words, مِنْ مُحَمَّدٍ عبد اللهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ (From Muḥammad, the slave of Allah and His messenger). On this the disbelievers of Makkah objected that his being the messenger of Allah was the real bone of contention, and if they had accepted him as a messenger of Allah, there would not have been any dispute among them. Therefore, they would not accept the words 'and His messenger' along with his name. Sayyidnā 'Alī ؓ had written this agreement, so, the Holy Prophet ﷺ asked him to erase it, to which he declined out of respect and reverence for him. Then the Holy Prophet ﷺ took the paper in his own hand, and after erasing the words 'His messenger' wrote مِنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ عَبْدِ اللهِ (From Muḥammad, the son of 'Abdullāh).

In this narration ,the act of writing has been attributed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ which led some people to think that he knew how to write. But

the correct position is that the act of writing was attributed to him in the narration as a colloquial expression. It is a fairly common idiom spoken quite widely that if someone gets something written by an ascribe, the writing is attributed to the former, even though he has not written it himself. The other possibility is that Allah Ta'ālā made him write this bit miraculously on this occasion. Also, by writing just a few words, one cannot be called a literate, but would still remain an unlettered. Furthermore, it would not be an honour for him to be labelled as literate, rather the honour is in him being an unlettered.

Verses 56 - 63

يٰعِبَادِيَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِنَّ اَرْضِيْ وَاسِعَةٌ فَاِيَّايَ فَاعْبُدُوْنِ ﴿٥٦﴾ كُلُّ
نَفْسٍ ذَآئِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ ثُمَّ اِلَيْنَا تُرْجَعُوْنَ ﴿٥٧﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا
الصّٰلِحٰتِ لَنُبَوِّئَنَّهُمْ مِّنَ الْجَنَّةِ غُرَفًا تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ
خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا نِعْمَ اَجْرُ الْعٰمِلِيْنَ ﴿٥٨﴾ الَّذِيْنَ صَبَرُوْا وَعَلٰى رَبِّهِمْ
يَتَوَكَّلُوْنَ ﴿٥٩﴾ وَكَاَيِّنْ مِّنْ دَآبَّةٍ لَّا تَحْمِلُ رِزْقَهَا اَللّٰهُ يَرْزُقُهَا
وَاِيَّاكُمْ وَهُوَ السَّمِيْعُ الْعَلِيْمُ ﴿٦٠﴾ وَلَئِنْ سَاَلْتَهُمْ مَّنْ خَلَقَ
السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ لَيَقُوْلُنَّ اللّٰهُ فَاَنّٰى
يُؤْفَكُوْنَ ﴿٦١﴾ اَللّٰهُ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهٖ وَيَقْدِرُ لَهٗ
اِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿٥٤﴾ وَلَئِنْ سَاَلْتَهُمْ مَّنْ نَّزَّلَ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ
مَآءً فَاَحْيَا بِهِ الْاَرْضَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَوْتِهَا لَيَقُوْلُنَّ اللّٰهُ قُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ
بَلْ اَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿٦٣﴾

O My slaves who believe, surely My earth is vast. So, Me alone you worship. [56] **Every person has to taste death, then to Us you are to be returned.** [57] **And those who believe and do righteous deeds, We shall accommodate them in mansions of the Paradise beneath which rivers flow, where they will live for ever. Excellent is the reward of the workers,** [58] **who**

observe restraint patiently and place their trust in their Lord alone. [59]

And how many an animal there is that does not carry its provision. Allah gives provision to it as well as to you, and He is the All-Hearing, the All-knowing. [60] **And if you ask them as to who has created the heavens and the earth and has subjugated the sun and the moon, they will certainly say, "Allah". How then are they driven aback?** [61] **Allah extends provision to whom He wills from His slaves, and straitens it (for whom He wills). Surely Allah knows every thing well.** [62]

And if you ask them as to who sends down water from the sky, then revives the land with it, they will certainly say, "Allah". Say, "Praise belongs to Allah." But most of them do not understand. [63]

Commentary

From the very beginning of this Sūrah until now the enmity of the infidels toward Muslims, their rejection of the Oneness of God and prophethood of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and putting hurdles in the way of truth and believers were described. In the above verses a way out of this entanglement is suggested in order to come out of the turmoil and spread and propagate the truth, and establish justice – the common name for this action is *hijrah* (migration).It means to leave the hometown and land where one is forced to speak and act against the truth.

Command in connection with *hijrah* and removal of doubts encountering in its way

إِنَّ أَرْضِي وَاسِعَةٌ فَإِيَّايَ فَاعْبُدُونِ (Surely My earth is vast. So, Me alone you worship - 29:56). Allah Ta'ālā has made it clear that His land is very vast and no one should have the excuse that he could not observe the Oneness of Allah, and could not worship Him because in a certain city or country the infidels were in power. It is made clear in these verses that the Muslims should leave the land for the sake of Allah where they are forced to get involved in infidelity and sin, and should try to find out a place for living where they could abide by the commands of Allah Ta'ālā, and persuade others also to follow the same. This is what *hijrah* is all about.

During the course of migration one is likely to encounter, as a rule, two types of risks, which may hold him back from migration. The first risk

is to his life in that the infidels and his adversaries would come in his way, and in order to obstruct his move might take up arms to finish him. In addition, there could be a possibility of his being caught by adversaries on his way out. Hence, there is yet another risk to his life. The answer to this problem is given in the next verse: كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَآئِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ (Every person has to taste death - 29:57) that is, no one has any escape from death anywhere in any situation. Therefore, it should not be the trait of a Muslim to be afraid of death, because despite all possible defences one may arrange for himself, death will overcome him. And it is also part of a believer's faith that death cannot come before the time Allah has determined. Therefore, fear of death should not be an impediment in one's decision about his staying at a certain place or leaving it. If death comes during the course of following a command from Allah Ta'ālā, it would bring eternal blessings and comforts, which one will get in the Hereafter, as stated in the next two verses: وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ لَنُبَوِّئَنَّهُمْ مِّنَ الْجَنَّةِ غُرَفًا تَجْرِىْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا (And those who believe and do righteous deeds, We shall accommodate them in mansions of the Paradise beneath which rivers flow, where they will live for ever - 29:58).

The other risk involved in *hijrah* (migration) is about the arrangement of sustenance in the strange land. One does manage the sustenance at one's own place through employment, trade, cultivation, or inherited land, but on migration all that is left behind. So, how would he manage the sustenance in the new environment? Answer to this apprehension is given in the next three verses by saying that you regard the mundane possessions and arrangements as the cause of your sustenance, but who has given you all this? It is your mistake to consider that you have arranged it all on your own. Without the help and will of Allah nothing could be procured. If He wills, one gets unlimited sustenance without any visible means, and if He does not, then despite all sorts of visible means, one does not get any thing. For elaborating this point first it is said: وَكَاَيِّنْ مِّنْ دَآبَّةٍ لَّا تَحْمِلُ رِزْقَهَا اللّٰهُ يَرْزُقُهَا وَاِيَّاكُمْ (And how many an animal there is that does not carry its provision. Allah gives provision to it as well as to you, - 29:60), that is, 'You should ponder over the fact that there are innumerable animals on earth who do not collect and store their sustenance, nor do they worry about its collection. But Allah Ta'ālā provides them their sustenance daily by His grace'. This applies to almost

all animals, except a few. For instance, ants and rats are two such animals that store their food. Ants do not come out of their holes in winter; hence store the food during the summer season. Among the birds crow is the only one that collects food in its nest, but then forgets it. Thus, all the countless animals living on earth are those who neither collect their food for the next day, nor do they have means to do so. It is stated in a *ḥadīth* that all the birds set off from their nests at dawn in a state of hunger, and return in the evening satiated. They all get their sustenance daily from the bounty of Allah Ta'ālā, and the practice goes on throughout their life-time.

After stating the real source of sustenance for all, that is the bounty of Allah Ta'ālā, it is said that if you ask the infidels as to who has created the earth and the skies, or who controls the movement of the sun and the moon, or who brings in the rain, and who makes the vegetation grow; then even they will admit that it is all controlled and done by One entity, that is Allah Ta'ālā. In the next sentence it is advised to ask them as to why do they then worship any other than Allah and regard it as their mentor. From the next verse وَلَئِنْ سَأَلْتَهُمْ مَّنْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الْأَرْضَ (And if you ask them as to who has created the heavens and the earth - 29:61) until the end of the *rukū'* this subject continues.

In short, the second impediment in the way of *hijrah* is one's worry for sustenance, but that too is based on wrong assumptions. Provision of sustenance is not in the hands of its resources, but it is a direct gift of Allah Ta'ālā. It was He who had provided the sustenance in the first place, and it is He who would provide it at the second place. Therefore, this second assumed apprehension should also not come in the way of *hijrah*.

When does Hijrah become obligatory?

The meaning and definition of *Hijrah* and its blessings and auspiciousness has been detailed in Sūrah An-Nisā' under verses 97 to 100. The changes in religious laws in respect of *Hijrah* were described under verse 98 in Ma'ariful Qur'ān on pages No. 552 V.2 to 558. One aspect of the subject was omitted there, which is being discussed below.

When the Holy Prophet ﷺ migrated from Makkah under instructions from Allah Ta'ālā, and in turn instructed all the Muslims to do the same,

provided they had the means, at that time, it was obligatory for all Muslims to migrate. No man or woman was exempt from this rule. The only exemption was given to those who did not have the means to migrate.

At that time migration was not just compulsory but was also regarded as a sign of being Muslim. One who did not migrate, despite having the means for it, was not considered a Muslim, and was treated like an infidel. This point has been elaborated in Sūrah An-Nisā' verse 89 حَتّٰى يُهَاجِرُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ (unless they migrate in the way of Allah - 4:89). In those days the position of *hijrah* was like professing the *kalimah* (لا اله الا الله). As one is accepted in Islam only after recitation of this *kalimah* (that is after testifying that he had accepted Islam as his faith), the same way it was regarded necessary to migrate to be a Muslim if one had the means. Similarly, as those were exempt from recitation of the *kalimah* who could not speak, those were also exempt from migration who did not have the means for it. This is also mentioned in verse 98 of Sūrah An-Nisā' اِلَّا الْمُسْتَضْعَفِيْنَ (Except the oppressed - 4:98). As for those who stayed on in Makkah, despite having the means to migrate, they were warned very strongly of *jahannam* in verse 97 of Sūrah An-Nisā' اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ تَوَفّٰهُمُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ (الى) فَاُولٰٓئِكَ مَاْوٰىهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ (Those whom the angels take while they had wronged themselves, (to them) the angels said, "What were you (involved) in?" They said, "We were oppressed in the earth." They said, "Was not the earth of Allah wide enough that you might have sought refuge in it?" As for such, their shelter is Jahannam. And it is an evil place to return. - 4:97).

After the victory of Makkah, the obligatory command for *hijrah* was withdrawn, because Makkah itself turned into a house of Islam. the Holy Prophet ﷺ issued the following order: لَاهِجْرَةَ بَعْدَ الْفَتْحِ that is, after the victory of Makkah there is no need to migrate from there. The Divine command to migrate from Makkah and later its withdrawal is established from categorical statements of the Qur'ān and Sunnah. The religious jurists have deduced the following rulings from this incident:

Ruling

If someone is not free to hold on to Islam in a city or in a country, and is constrained to act against its teachings or follow the infidel rites, then it becomes obligatory on him to migrate to a place or country where he can

follow and practice rites and teachings of Islam, provided he has the means to do so. However, if one does not have the means to travel or there is no place available to him where he could practice the religious obligations, then he is 'excused' in the religious term.

Ruling

If there is freedom of action to follow one's religion in a non-Muslim country, migration from there is still preferable, though not compulsory or obligatory. For undertaking migration it is not necessary that the country is of non-Muslims, rather it becomes obligatory from a country where the commandments of Allah are flouted openly, no matter even if it is called Islamic on the basis of its Muslim rulers.

Ḥafiẓ Ibn Ḥajar in Fatḥ al-Bārī has adopted this ruling, and it is not in conflict with the principles of *Ḥanafiyyah*. A narration quoted in Musnad of Aḥmad on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Yaḥyā Maulā-Āẓ Zubair Ibn Al-'Awwām ﷺ also endorses this view. The *ḥadīth* narrates that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

اَلْبِلَادُ بِلَادُ اللّٰهِ وَالْعِبَادُ عِبَادُ اللّٰهِ حَيْثُمَا اَصَبْتَ خَيْرًا فَاَقِمْ.

'All cities belong to Allah, and all the people are His servants. Therefore, wherever you find goodness you live there'.

Ibn Jarīr has reported with his own chain of narrators that Sayyidnā Sa'īd Ibn Jubair رحمه الله تعالى had said 'leave that city where sins and obscenity are common'. And the Imām of Tafsīr, 'Aṭā' رحمه الله تعالى, had said that 'run away from the city where you are forced to commit sins'.

Verses 64 - 69

وَمَا هٰذِهِ الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَآ اِلَّا لَهْوٌ وَّلَعِبٌ ؕ وَاِنَّ الدَّارَ الْاٰخِرَةَ لَهِيَ
الْحَيَوَانُ ۘ لَوْ كَانُوْا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٦٤﴾ فَاِذَا رَكِبُوْا فِى الْفُلْكِ دَعَوُا اللّٰهَ
مُخْلِصِيْنَ لَهُ الدِّيْنَ ۚ فَلَمَّا نَجّٰىهُمْ اِلَى الْبَرِّ اِذَا هُمْ يُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿٦٥﴾
لِيَكْفُرُوْا بِمَآ اٰتَيْنٰهُمْ ۚۙ وَلِيَتَمَتَّعُوْا ۥ فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٦٦﴾ اَوَلَمْ
يَرَوْا اَنَّا جَعَلْنَا حَرَمًا اٰمِنًا وَّيُتَخَطَّفُ النَّاسُ مِنْ حَوْلِهِمْ ؕ اَفَبِالْبَاطِلِ

يُؤْمِنُوْنَ وَبِنِعْمَةِ اللّٰهِ يَكْفُرُوْنَ ﴿٦٧﴾ وَمَنْ اَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرٰى عَلَى اللّٰهِ كَذِبًا اَوْ كَذَّبَ بِالْحَقِّ لَمَّا جَآءَهٗ ط اَلَيْسَ فِىْ جَهَنَّمَ مَثْوًى لِّلْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿٦٨﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ جَاهَدُوْا فِيْنَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا ط وَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَمَعَ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ﴿٦٩﴾

And this worldly life is nothing but an amusement and play, and the Last Abode is the real life indeed. Only if they know! [64] **So when they embark on a ship, they invoke Allah, having their faith purely in Him. But when He saves them (and brings them) to the land, in no time they start committing *shirk* (ascribing partners to Allah),** [65] **so that they be ungrateful for what We gave to them, and so that they may have enjoyment. So, they will soon come to know (the ill-fate of their attitude).** [66]

Did they not see that We have made a peaceful sanctuary (*ḥaram*) while (other) people around them are being snatched away? Do they, then, believe in falsity and reject Allah's grace? [67] **And who is more unjust than the one who forges a lie against Allah or belies the truth when it comes to him? Is there not a dwelling in *Jahannam* for disbelievers?** [68] **And those who strive in Our way, We will certainly take them to Our paths, and indeed Allah is with those who are good in deeds.** [69]

Commentary

In the preceding verses it was said about the infidels and disbelievers that if they were asked about the creation of the earth and skies, the solar system, the water cycle and its effect on growth of vegetation, they would reply that all this is created and controlled by Allah Ta'ālā. They did not believe that any one had any involvement in their creation or control, yet in their worship they associate idols with Allah. The reason for this is اَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُوْنَ (Most of them do not understand - 29:63).

At this point the question arises that, after all, they were not insane but intelligent and sensible people. They performed many important and skillful jobs. Then, how have they lost their balance of mind? The answer

to this query is given in the first of the above verses by saying that they are lost in the love of material attractions of the world, which are mortal and would disappear soon. They are totally oblivious of the life hereafter, which would last forever. The life of this world is nothing more than a pastime for amusement and fun, but the real and lasting life is that of Hereafter. وَمَا هٰذِهِ الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَآ اِلَّا لَهْوٌ وَّلَعِبٌ وَّاِنَّ الدَّارَ الْاٰخِرَةَ لَهِيَ الْحَيَوَانُ (And this worldly life is nothing but an amusement and play, and the Last Abode is the real life indeed. - 29:64). Here the word *Hayawān* is used in the sense of *ḥayāh* (life) (Qurṭubī).

In this verse the life of this world is held to be an amusement and play. It means that as amusements are finished and gone after a while and do not have any objective or lasting impact, the mundane attractions are also similar in nature.

In the next verse, yet another bad habit of the disbelievers is pointed out. Despite believing that Allah Ta'ālā is unique and solitary in His creation, they associate idols with Him ignorantly. Then, it is all the more surprising that whenever they are hit by some calamity, they have the firm belief that none of their idols had the power to take them out of that. They know well that it is only Allah who can remove the calamity, and none of their idols could do anything. To elaborate this point a paradigm is illustrated in verse 65: 'when they are on a journey in the river and there is a risk of their drowning, they call out only Allah to get rid of it, and not any of their idols'. Allah Ta'ālā listens to their prayer, as being totally helpless at that moment, they break off temporarily all their contacts with false gods and look upon Him only. So, He brings them out of the storm safely. But soon after the wretched people reach the land safely, they forget about His grace in no time, and start calling the idols as His associates. This is the meaning of the verse فَاِذَا رَكِبُوْا فِى الْفُلْكِ (29:65).

Note

This verse tells us that when an infidel regards himself totally helpless and calls out Allah Ta'ālā for help in the belief that no one else can save him from the calamity, at that moment Allah Ta'ālā accepts the prayer of even an infidel. It is because at that time he is desperate (a *muḍṭarr*), and Allah Ta'ālā has promised to accept the prayer of a *muḍṭarr*. (Qurṭubī)

The declaration in another verse وَمَا دُعَآءُ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ اِلَّا فِىْ ضَلٰلٍ (And the

prayer of the disbelievers does not but go astray - 13:14) relates to the Hereafter, where no entreaty from them will be accepted when they would appeal for mercy against the torment.

اَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا اَنَّا جَعَلْنَا حَرَمًا اٰمِنًا (Did they not see that We have made a peaceful sanctuary [*ḥaram*] - 67). In the preceding verses it was described that the deeds and actions of the infidels were foolish and irrational. On the one hand, they accept Allah as the sole Creator and master of every thing, and on the other they associate their self-chiselled idols with Him. Then, it is not that they just believe Him to be the sole Creator of every thing, but they know well that it is only He who brings them out safely from all types of calamities. But after achieving deliverance, they get involved again in associating their idols with Him.

Some disbelievers in Makkah used to put forward the plea that although they accepted Islam as the true faith, but if they were converted to it and followed its tenets, they would be risking their lives against the Arab world, who were deadly against Islam. If they became Muslims, the Arabs would pounce upon them and kill them. (Rūḥ)

In reply to this, Allah Ta'ālā said that this was also a bogus excuse, because He had accorded such an honour and eminence to Makkans, that is not available to any people living anywhere in the world. He had made the entire land of Makkah *ḥaram*. All Arabs respected *ḥaram*, whether they were believers or infidels. They all believed that killing was not allowed there. It was not only the killing and fighting that was banned in the *ḥaram* but the hunting and cutting of trees too were not permitted. If any stranger entered the *ḥaram*, his life would be completely secured. Therefore, putting forward the risk of life as justification for non-acceptance of Islam was only a lame excuse.

وَالَّذِيْنَ جَاهَدُوْا فِيْنَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا (And those who strive in Our way We will certainly take them to Our paths - 69). The real meaning of *jihād* is to put in all efforts to remove the hurdles in the way of faith. These hurdles include those that are put up by the infidels, for which fighting is at the top pedestal, and also those hurdles that are created by one's own Self and by Satan.

There is a promise in this verse for both types of *jihād*, that Allah Ta'ālā guides those waging *jihād* to the righteous way. It means that

when there is a confusion between evil and virtue, truth and false, and profit or loss, and a wise person wonders which way to adopt, on such occasions Allah Ta'ālā guides those striving in His way to the path which is straight, righteous and without risk. In other words, He turns their hearts toward a way that may bring the divine blessing and the best results.

Knowledge improves if it is acted upon

Sayyidnā Abū Ad-Dardā' ﷺ while interpreting this verse has said that the people who strive for acting in accordance with their knowledge are promised by Allah Ta'ālā in this verse that He will disclose to them some other areas of knowledge that they did not have before. Fuḍayl Ibn 'Iyāḍ رحمه الله تعالیٰ has given yet another interpretation to this verse, that is, 'those who strive for knowledge, We make it easy for them to act'. (Maẓharī). وَاللّٰه سبحانه وتعالیٰ اعلم

Alḥamdulillāh
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-'Ankabūt
Ends here.

Sūrah Ar-Rūm

(The Romans)

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 7

الٓمّٓ ﴿١﴾ غُلِبَتِ الرُّوْمُ ﴿٢﴾ فِیٓ اَدْنَى الْاَرْضِ وَهُمْ مِّنْۢ بَعْدِ غَلَبِهِمْ
سَيَغْلِبُوْنَ ﴿٣﴾ فِیْ بِضْعِ سِنِيْنَ ۗ لِلّٰهِ الْاَمْرُ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَمِنْۢ بَعْدُ ط
وَيَوْمَئِذٍ يَّفْرَحُ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٤﴾ بِنَصْرِاللّٰهِ ط يَنْصُرُ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ط
وَهُوَالْعَزِيْزُ الرَّحِيْمُ ﴿٥﴾ وَعْدَ اللّٰهِ ط لَا يُخْلِفُ اللّٰهُ وَعْدَهٗ وَلٰكِنَّ
اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَايَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٦﴾ يَعْلَمُوْنَ ظَاهِرًا مِّنَ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا صلے
وَهُمْ عَنِ الْاٰخِرَةِ هُمْ غٰفِلُوْنَ ﴿٧﴾

'Alif, Lām, Mīm. [1] **The Romans have been defeated** [2] **in the nearer land; and they, after their defeat, will be victorious** [3] **within a few years. To Allah belonged the matter before and (to Him it belongs) thereafter. And on that day the believers will rejoice** [4] **with Allah's help. He helps whomsoever He wills. And He is the Mighty, the Very-Merciful.** [5] **It is a promise of Allah. Allah does not fail in His promise, but most of the people do not know.** [6] **They know something superficial of the worldly life, but of the Hereafter they are negligent.** [7]

Commentary

Backdrop of revelation of the Sūrah – the story of war between Rūm and Persia

In the last verse of Sūrah 'Ankabūt' Allah Ta'ālā had given the good

tiding to those who would strive and struggle in His way. It was promised that for such people, He would open the doors toward Him, and that they would succeed in their objectives. The story that marks the beginning of Sūrah Ar-Rūm is a manifestation of that very Divine help. The war referred to in this Sūrah was fought between Romans and Persians, who were both disbelievers, and had nothing to do with the Muslims. The people of Persia were fire-worshippers, while those of Rūm were Christians, and hence, the People of the Book. So, naturally the people of Rūm were relatively closer to Muslims. Many of their beliefs, such as faith in the Hereafter, the prophethood, and revelations, were common to Islamic beliefs. The Holy Prophet ﷺ made use of this part of their beliefs in his letter when he wrote to the king of Rūm(Rome) inviting him to accept Islam تَعَالَوْا اِلٰى كَلِمَةٍ سَوَآءٍۢ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ (come to a word common between us and you - 3:64). In fact it was this affinity between Islam and Christianity that caused the Persians to attack Rūm. It happened when the Holy Prophet ﷺ was still living in Makkah. According to Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar, this war was fought in Syria at a place between Adhru'āt and Buṣrā. The Pagans of Makkah aspired for the victory for the Persians in this war, because the Persians shared them in their belief in polytheism, but the Muslims wished the triumph of the Christians, as they were closer to Islam in their beliefs. But as it happened, the Persians defeated the Christians, and conquered the land right up to Constantinople, and built a temple there for worshipping fire. This victory was the last for Chosroe Parvez. After that, his decline sat in, and ultimately he was removed by the Muslims. (Qurṭubī).

At the defeat of Christians, the infidels of Makkah rejoiced, and taunted the Muslims that their favourites have lost. They also claimed that as the Persian infidels defeated the Roman Christians, the same way Makkans would also beat down the Muslims. This claim hurt the Muslims to some extent. (Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Abī Ḥātim)

The opening verses of Sūrah Ar-Rūm relate to this incident in which it is predicted as a good tiding that the people of Rūm will overcome the Persians again in a few years time.

When Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ؓ learnt about these verses, he went to the infidels in the market place and suburbs of Makkah and announced that there was no occasion for them to be happy as after a few years, the

Christians would overcome the Persians again. Hearing this 'Ubayy ibn Khalaf challenged him and said it could not be so, and that he was only telling a lie. Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ﷺ said "O enemy of Allah! You are a liar, I am willing to bet on this issue that in case the Christians would not overcome the Persians in three years time, I will give you ten camels, and if they did overcome, then you will have to give me ten camels". (This was a case of gambling, but gambling was not prohibited by then). After saying that Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ﷺ went to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and narrated the episode. On that, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said to him that he did not fix the time of three years, because Qur'ān has used the word *Biḍ' Sinīn* (a few years) under which the time limit could be anything between three to nine years. Therefore, the Holy Prophet ﷺ asked Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ﷺ to go back to the person with whom he had made the bet and ask him that he would bet for hundred camels instead of ten, but the time limit would be nine (and according to some other reports, seven) years and not three. Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ﷺ followed the instructions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and 'Ubayy Ibn Khalaf also agreed on the terms of the new bet. (Ibn Jarīr) [1]

It is gathered from various *āḥādīth* that this incident had happened five years before the *hijrah*. After the passage of exactly seven years, at the time of the battle of Badr, the Romans defeated Persians. By that time, 'Ubayy Ibn Khalaf had died. So Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ﷺ demanded

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1- 'Ubayy readily accepted the new terms because he was fully confident that the Romans could not defeat the Persians. Given the circumstances prevalent at that time, such an unshaken confidence of 'Ubayy was not misconceived. The way the Persians had beaten the Roman Empire had left no room for their uprising again. The prediction that the Romans will be victorious against Persians had no basis in the visible possibilities, when it was made. Nobody could foresee, in the world of causes and effects, that such an event might take place. Edward Gibbon, the famous historian of the Roman Empire, has observed,

"Placed on the verge of the two great empires of the East, Muḥammad observed with secret joy the progress of their mutual destruction; and in the midst of the Persian triumphs he ventured to foretell that, before many years should elapse, victory would again return to the banners of the Romans. At the time when this prediction is said to have been delivered, no prophecy could be more distant from its accomplishment, since the first twelve years of Heraclius announced the approaching dissolution of the empire"

Continued on next page

a hundred camels from his heirs according to the terms of the bet, to which they complied and handed over the agreed number of camels.

Some versions of the incident state that before the *hijrah,* Ubayy Ibn Khalaf expressed his apprehension to Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ﷺ that the latter might leave Makkah, and in such a situation he would not let him go unless he appointed a guarantor for himself. It was to ensure that when the period of the bet would expire, the guarantor should arrange to deliver a hundred camels. Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ﷺ appointed his son, 'Abdur Raḥmān, as his guarantor.

When Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ﷺ won the bet according to the agreement and got hold of one hundred camels, he took them to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, who asked him to give them in charity (*ṣadaqah*). Abū Ya'lā has quoted these words in Ibn 'Asākir on the authority of Sayyidnā Brā' Ībn 'Āzib هٰذَا السُّحْتُ تَصَدَّقْ بِهِ . That is, 'this is prohibited. Give it in charity (*ṣadaqah*).' (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī).

Gambling

Qimār, that is, gambling, is absolutely prohibited according to the categorical Qur'anic injunction. After *hijrah* to Madīnah when liquor was banned, gambling was also prohibited simultaneously. It was declared an act of Satan: إِنَّمَا الْخَمْرُ وَالْمَيْسِرُ وَالْأَنْصَابُ وَالْأَزْلَامُ رِجْسٌ مِّنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطٰنِ (The truth is that wine, gambling, altar-stones and divining arrows are filth, a work of Satan - 5:90) *Maysir* (مَيْسِر) and *Azlām* (أَزْلَام) are nothing but different forms of gambling, which have been prohibited in this verse.

Betting, in which money or commodities are placed on stake and won or lost according to conditions agreed, is also a form of gambling. The bet made between Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ﷺ and 'Ubayy ibn Khalaf was also a form of gambling. But this incident had happened before the *hijrah*, when the injunction for banning the gambling was not revealed. Therefore, the commodity won in this case was not *ḥarām* (prohibited).

(Gibbon, The decline and fall of the Roman Empire, chapter 46, vol. 2, p. 125, Great Books, V.38, published by the University of Chicago, 1990) Had it not been a news given by Allah Ta'ālā, nobody could have dared to predict such an unlikely event. In particular, it was impossible for a claimant to prophethood that he would put his future at stake by predicting an event that was so improbable. This foretelling, therefore, is one of the solid proofs of the prophethood of Sayyidnā Muḥammad ﷺ. (Muḥammad Taqi 'Usmāni)

The question that arises here is that why did the Holy Prophet ﷺ ask Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ؓ to give away the camels in charity when they were not haram (prohibited), especially when in some other versions of the *ḥadīth* the word *suḥt* is used, which is commonly understood as haram? The answer to this query, as given by the religious jurists, is that although at that time those camels were *ḥalāl* (permitted) but the Holy Prophet ﷺ did not like earning through gambling, even at that time. He therefore, asked Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ؓ to give them away in charity, as they were below his stature. It is identical to the situation that the Holy Prophet ﷺ and Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ؓ did not taste liquor ever, even during the time when it was not prohibited.

As regards the use of the word *suḥt* (سُحت), in the first place the scholars of *ḥadīth* did not accept this narration as correct; and even if it is accepted as authentic, it should be kept in mind that this word has several meanings. One meaning is *ḥarām* (prohibited), and the other is abominable and undesirable. It is related in one *ḥadīth* that once the Holy Prophet ﷺ said "كَسْبُ الْحَجَّامِ سُحْتٌ that is, 'The earning of the one who undertakes treatment by cupping is *suḥt*'. The majority of religious scholars have taken the meaning of *suḥt* here as undesirable or disgusting. Imām Rāghib Iṣfahānī in his Mufradāt-ul-Qur'ān and Ibn Athīr in his Nihāyah have proved the different meanings of the word *suḥt* in the usage of Arabic language and *āḥādīth* of the Prophet.

Acceptance of this interpretation of the religious scholars is also necessary because if in fact these camels were *ḥarām*, then according to religious law this was to be returned to the person from whom it was taken. The commodity, which is *ḥarām*, can only be given in charity (*ṣadaqah*) under any one of the three situations: One, when the owner of the commodity is not known. Two, when it is not possible to deliver the commodity to the owner. And third, when there is any religious complication in the delivery of the commodity. واللہ سبحانہ و تعالیٰ اعلم

يَوْمَئِذٍ يَّفْرَحُ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِنَصْرِ اللهِ (And on that day the believers will rejoice with Allah's help - 30:4). The wording of the text apparently implies that "Allah's help" in this verse refers to His help for the people of Rūm. Although they too were disbelievers, yet compared to others, their *kufr* was light. Therefore, their being helped by Allah Ta'ālā was not a far-fetched thing, especially when it was a matter of happiness for the

Muslims.

The other possibility is that "Allah's help" in the above sentence means Allah's help for the Muslims, for which two explanations could be assigned. First, that Muslims had presented the victory of Rūm as a sign of the truthfulness of the Holy Qur'ān and the veracity of Islam. Hence, the victory of the Romans was in fact the victory of Muslims. The second reason for the help of Muslims could be that, there were two big powers of the disbelievers at that time – Persia and Rūm. By making them fight with each other, Allah Ta'ālā made them weak, which helped the Muslims defeat them later. (Rūḥ).[1]

يَعْلَمُوْنَ ظَاهِرًا مِّنَ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ عَنِ الْاٰخِرَةِ هُمْ غٰفِلُوْنَ (They know something superficial of the worldly life, but of the Hereafter they are negligent.-7). These disbelievers were quite conversant with the mundane needs, that is how to perform trading, which commodity should they trade in, where should they make purchases, where should they sell etc. Similarly, they knew well how to till, when to put seeds, and when to harvest. They were also equally knowledgeable about the construction of buildings and to furnish them with luxury goods. But they were totally ignorant and negligent about the other aspect of the worldly life which in fact is more important, and brings forth the real purpose of its creation; that is to appreciate that he is not a permanent resident of this world, rather his stay in the world is a temporary stay, like that of a visitor on a tourist visa. Man's permanent abode is in the Hereafter, and he has to collect here the goods for his comfort in the next life. The goods of comfort for the next life are the true faith and righteous deeds. This simple and straight-forward reality is not understood by these so-called intellectuals.

Another point worth consideration in this verse is about the wording

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1. There is yet another explanation of this verse offered by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ etc.They say that the news of the victory of Romans reached the Muslims the very day in which they defeated the pagans of Makkah in the battle of Badr. Therefore, the Muslims were delighted on their own victory when the news of the victory of the Romans added to their delight. According to this interpretation, "rejoicing of the believers with Allah's help" in the present verse refers to the victory of the Muslims in the battle of Badr, and the good news given by this verse is twofold; one, in relation to the Romans, and the other in relation to the Muslims themselves. (Muḥammad Taqi 'Usmāni)

used by the Holy Qur'ān in this verse. The word "*ẓāhiran*" with *tanwīn,* according to the Arabic grammar, indicates that even superficial things of the worldly life are not fully known to them;(1) what they know is only one aspect of it, while they are ignorant of its other aspects, and are totally negligent of the Hereafter.

Earning of mundane needs by neglecting the Hereafter is no sagacity

The Holy Qur'ān is full of admonitory stories of the world. Those who had earned a name for collecting all sorts of luxuries and comforts for themselves, and then their disastrous end was witnessed in this very world, will also be subjected to everlasting torment of the Hereafter. So no sane person will call them intellectual or sagacious. Unfortunately, in the present day world the height of sagacity and wisdom is attributed to the one who could accumulate the largest quantity of wealth, and arrange for himself the best of comforts and luxuries. He is called the most successful and wise, no matter how low he might be in his morals. To call such a person wise is indeed an insult to wisdom - both by religious and moral standards. By Qur'ānic standard, only those are wise who are conscious of Allah and the Hereafter, and strive for the comforts of the next life, keeping their needs of this wordly life at a level at which such needs are necessary; and do not make their achievement the sole purpose of their lives. The following verse depicts the same meaning: إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ لَآيٰتٍ لِّأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ الَّذِيْنَ يَذْكُرُوْنَ اللّٰهَ قِيَامًا وَّقُعُوْدًا وَعَلٰى جُنُوْبِهِمْ وَيَتَفَكَّرُوْنَ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هٰذَا بَاطِلًا ۚ سُبْحَانَكَ فَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ (Surely, in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and in the alternation of night and day, there are signs for the people of wisdom, who remember Allah standing and sitting, and (lying) on their sides, and ponder on the creation of the heavens and the earth (saying:) "Our Lord, You have not created all this in vain. We proclaim Your purity. So, save us from the punishment of Fire."(3:190-191).

Verses 8 - 10

أَوَلَمْ يَتَفَكَّرُوْا فِيْٓ أَنْفُسِهِمْ ۗ مَا خَلَقَ اللّٰهُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا

1. This aspect of the language used by the Holy Qur'ān has been tried to be reflected in the translation above by the words, "something superficial " instead of "what is superficial".

بَيْنَهُمَآ اِلاَّ بِالْحَقِّ وَاَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ط وَاِنَّ كَثِيْرًا مِّنَ النَّاسِ بِلِقَآئِ رَبِّهِمْ
لَكٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿٨﴾ اَوَلَمْ يَسِيْرُوْا فِى الْاَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرُوْا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ
الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ط كَانُوْآ اَشَدَّ مِنْهُمْ قُوَّةً وَّاَثَارُوا الْاَرْضَ وَعَمَرُوْهَا
اَكْثَرَ مِمَّا عَمَرُوْهَا وَجَآءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ ط فَمَا كَانَ اللّٰهُ
لِيَظْلِمَهُمْ وَلٰكِنْ كَانُوْآ اَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُوْنَ ﴿٩﴾ ثُمَّ كَانَ عَاقِبَةَ الَّذِيْنَ
اَسَآءُوا السُّوْآٰى اَنْ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ وَكَانُوْا بِهَا يَسْتَهْزِءُوْنَ ﴿١٠﴾

Did they not reflect in their own selves? Allah did not create the heavens and the earth and what is between them but with a just cause and for an appointed time. And many of the people deny the meeting with their Lord. [8] **Have they not travelled on earth, so that they may see how was the end of those before them? They were stronger than these in power, and they had tilled the land and had made it more populous than these have made it, and their messengers had come to them with clear proofs. So Allah was not to do injustice to them, but they used to do injustice to themselves.** [9] **Then the end of those who did evil was evil, because they belied the verses of Allah and used to mock at them.** [10]

Commentary

The first two verses are an appendix and endorsement to the previous subject that these disbelievers are engrossed so much in the temporary mundane glitter and transitory pleasures that they have totally forgotten the real nature of this world and its ultimate end. If they had pondered over this, the secret of this world would have dawned upon them that the Creator of this universe has not created the sky and the earth, and the creatures in between, just for nothing. There is a great wisdom and purpose behind their creation, which is, that people should recognize the Creator through all His creations, and then get on to look for things that He likes and dislikes. Once they know His likes and dislikes, they should strive to please Him as much as possible, and avoid that which displeases Him. It is obvious that there should be rewards for good deeds, and

punishments for evil doings, because equating good with bad is against justice and fair play. One should also realize that this world is not the place where his good or evil acts may be recompensed in full. On the contrary, very often it is seen that the evil-doers thrive very well in this world, and the one who abstains from evils suffers the troubles and tribulations.

Therefore, it is necessary that a time should come when this system should come to an end, and a reckoning of good and evil acts of all the persons takes place, on the basis of which rewards and punishments are awarded. The time when this will come is called the Dooms Day and the Hereafter.

The gist of this discussion is that if the disbelievers had pondered over these things, then this very sky and earth and the creatures in between them would have testified that they were not permanent. They are here but for a short time, after which a new world is to come, which will be permanent. This is the essence of the first of the above verses. اَوَلَمْ يَتَفَكَّرُوْا فِيْٓ اَنْفُسِهِمْ (30:8) This was a matter of logical rationale. In the next verse worldly thinking and experiences are presented as a testimony, and the Makkans are addressed in the following words:

اَوَلَمْ يَسِيْرُوْا فِي الْاَرْضِ (Have they not travelled on earth - 30:9). It means that the Makkans live in a land where there is neither any cultivation and industry nor any tall and beautiful buildings, but for the sake of trade they do travel to Syria and Yemen. So, have they not seen, during the course of their trips, what was the fate of the earlier people, whom Allah Ta'ālā had endowed with skills to make use of the land? For instance, they had the skill to draw underground water by excavating the earth for irrigating fields and gardens, and dig out concealed precious minerals, such as gold and silver, and make use of them to their benefit. For their advanced skills and way of living, they were regarded as civilized nations. But they got engrossed so much in material life, transitory luxuries and comforts that they forgot Allah Ta'ālā and the Hereafter. Then, Allah Ta'ālā sent prophets and books to remind them of their duties, but they did not pay any heed. Ultimately, they were overtaken by Allah's wrath even in this world. The ruins of their desolate cities still stand witness to their destruction. At the end of the verse it is suggested to ponder whether they were subjected to any oppression from Allah Ta'ālā, or they subjected themselves to their own cruelty by

accumulating causes of the divine punishment.

Verses 11 - 19

اَللّٰهُ يَبْدَؤُا الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيْدُهٗ ثُمَّ اِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُوْنَ ﴿١١﴾ وَيَوْمَ تَقُوْمُ
السَّاعَةُ يُبْلِسُ الْمُجْرِمُوْنَ ﴿١٢﴾ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَّهُمْ مِّنْ شُرَكَآئِهِمْ
شُفَعٰٓؤُا وَكَانُوْا بِشُرَكَآئِهِمْ كٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿١٣﴾ وَيَوْمَ تَقُوْمُ السَّاعَةُ يَوْمَئِذٍ
يَّتَفَرَّقُوْنَ ﴿١٤﴾ فَاَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ فَهُمْ فِيْ رَوْضَةٍ
يُّحْبَرُوْنَ ﴿١٥﴾ وَاَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَكَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَلِقَآئِ الْاٰخِرَةِ
فَاُولٰٓئِكَ فِي الْعَذَابِ مُحْضَرُوْنَ ﴿١٦﴾ فَسُبْحٰنَ اللّٰهِ حِيْنَ تُمْسُوْنَ
وَحِيْنَ تُصْبِحُوْنَ ﴿١٧﴾ وَلَهُ الْحَمْدُ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَعَشِيًّا
وَّحِيْنَ تُظْهِرُوْنَ ﴿١٨﴾ يُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَيُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتَ
مِنَ الْحَيِّ وَيُحْيِ الْاَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا ۭ وَكَذٰلِكَ تُخْرَجُوْنَ ﴿١٩﴾

Allah originates the creation, then He will create it again, then to Him you are to be returned. [11] **And on the day the Hour (Qiyāmah) will take place, the sinners will despair.** [12] **And they will have no intercessors from among their (so-called) 'partners of Allah', and they themselves will reject their (such) 'partners'.** [13] **And the day the Hour (Qiyāmah) will take place, it will be on that day that they will turn into groups.** [14] **So, as for those who had believed and had done righteous deeds, they will be in a garden, extremely delighted.** [15] **As for those who had disbelieved and belied Our verses and the meeting of the Hereafter, they will be brought for punishment.** [16] **So, proclaim Allah's purity when you see the evening and when you see the morning.** [17] **And to Him be praise in the heavens and the earth, and in the afternoon and when you enter the time of Ẓuhr (soon after the decline of the sun towards West).** [18] **He brings out the living from the dead and brings out the dead from the living, and gives life to the land after it is dead. And in similar way you will be brought out.** [19]

Commentary

فَهُمْ فِيْ رَوْضَةٍ يُّحْبَرُوْنَ (They will be in a garden, extremely delighted - 30:15).

Yuḥbarūn (يُحْبَرُوْنَ) is derived from *ḥubūr,* (حُبُوْر) which means happiness, joy, or delight. This word encompasses all types of delight, which the dwellers of paradise will draw from the bounties of Paradise. The Holy Qur'ān has not specified this, and has rather kept it generalized. At another place it is said فَلَا تَعْلَمُ نَفْسٌ مَّآ اُخْفِیَ لَهُمْ مِنْ قُرَّةِ اَعْیُنٍ (32:17) that is, 'no one knows in this world what delight and joy is in store for them (the people of Paradise) in Paradise'. While explaining this verse some commentators have mentioned various delightful things, which all fall under the category of joy and delight.

فَسُبْحٰنَ اللّٰهِ حِيْنَ تُمْسُوْنَ وَحِيْنَ تُصْبِحُوْنَ ﴿١٧﴾ وَلَهُ الْحَمْدُ فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَعَشِيًّا وَّحِيْنَ تُظْهِرُوْنَ ﴿١٨﴾

So, proclaim Allah's purity when you see the evening and when you see the morning. And to Him be praise in the heavens and the earth, and in the afternoon and when you enter the time of Ẓuhr (soon after the decline of the sun towards West). (30:17-18)

The word '*subḥān*' (سُبْحَان) is an infinitive which means 'to declare the purity of someone from defects'. The phrase '*subḥānallāh*' (سُبْحٰنَ اللّٰه) is meant to proclaim Allah's purity from all defects. To recite this phrase with this intention is called '*tasbīḥ*'. But in general usage, the word '*tasbīḥ*' often includes all forms of worship and remembrance of Allah, like *ṣalāh, dhikr,* etc. In the present verse, a verb is understood before the infinitive '*subḥān*' which is meant to direct the addressees to make '*tasbīḥ*' which, in its general sense, includes all forms of remembrance of Allah, and *ṣalāh* in particular, as explained above. In the light of this explanation, the present verse, in its beginning, enjoins upon its followers that they should remember Allah in the morning and evening, and at the end of the verse, it is instructed that they should remember Him at the other two times, عَشِيًّا ، حِيْنَ تُظْهِرُوْنَ. One of these times is '*ashiyy*' (عَشِيّ) which is the name of the last part of the day, and here it refers to the time of *'Aṣr*; and the other time is when the sun starts declining towards West, that is Ẓuhr.

In the sequence of the present verse, evening is mentioned before morning, and the end of the day ('Aṣr) is mentioned before Ẓuhr. One reason of precedence of evening over morning is that in Islamic calendar evening precedes the morning, and the date changes at the sunset (Maghrib). For precedence of *'Aṣr* over *ẓuhr* one reason could be that at

the time of 'Aṣr, which is also called the middle (*wusṭā*) prayer, people are generally busy in their work, and hence, it is rather difficult to offer prayer at that time. This is why there is greater emphasis in the Qur'ān for offering 'Aṣr prayers حَافِظُوْا عَلَى الصَّلَوٰاتِ وَالصَّلوٰةِ الْوُسْطٰى (Take due care of all the prayers, and the middle prayer, - 2:238)

In the wordings of this verse the prayer (*ṣalāh*) is not specified as such. Hence, all types of worships, whether by actions or by word of mouth, are included in the meaning of the verse. Since prayer is supreme in all worships, it is included here on priority. It is for this reason that the scholars have stated that this verse has clearly described and defined the timings of the five prayers. Someone asked Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ whether the Qur'ān has specifically mentioned about the five prayers? He answered in the affirmative, and quoted this verse as a proof. Then explaining his point, he said that the words," when you see the evening" (حَيْنَ تُمْسُوْنَ) are for *maghrib* prayer, "when you see the morning" (حِيْنَ تُصْبِحُوْنَ) for *fajr* prayer, "in the afternoon" (عَشِيًّا) for 'Aṣr prayer, "and when you enter the time of *ẓuhr*" (وحِيْنَ تُظْهِرُوْنَ) for *ẓuhr* prayer. In this way, this verse has described the four prayers very clearly. As for the *'Ishā'* prayer, it is enjoined explicitly in the verse مِنْ بَعْدِ صَلوٰةِ الْعِشَآءِ (After the prayer of *'Ishā'* - 24:58). Sayyidnā Ḥasan Al-Baṣrī رحمه الله تعالى has opined that the words, "when you see the evening" include both *maghrib* and *'Ishā'* prayers.

Special Note

This verse is the *dhikr* of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm ﷺ, which earned him the title of وَإِبْرٰهِيْمَ الَّذِىْ وَفّٰى (And Ibrāhīm who fulfilled his covenant - 53:37). Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm ﷺ used to recite these words in the morning and evening.

It is reported from Sayyidnā Mu'ādh Ibn 'Anas ﷺ with authentic proofs that the reason behind awarding the title of 'fulfilling his covenant' to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm ﷺ was his recitation of this prayer.

Abū Dāwūd, Ṭabarānī and Ibn- us- Sunnī have reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said about these two verses:

فَسُبْحَانَ اللّٰهِ حِيْنَ تُمْسُوْنَ وَحِيْنَ تُصْبِحُوْنَ وَلَهُ الْحَمْدُ فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ

وَعَشِيًّا وَّحِيْنَ تُظْهِرُوْنَ يُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَيُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتَ مِنَ الْحَيِّ وَيُحْيِ الْاَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا وَكَذٰلِكَ تُخْرَجُوْنَ.

> So, proclaim Allah's purity when you see the evening and when you see the morning. And to Him be praise in the heavens and the earth, and in the afternoon and when you enter the time of Zuhur (soon after the decline of the sun towards West). He brings out the living from the dead and brings out the dead from the living, and gives life to the land after it is dead. And in similar way you will be brought out. (30:17-19)

That whoever will recite them in the morning, all shortcomings in his acts during the day will be repaired; and whoever will recite these verses in the evening all shortcomings in his actions during the night will be repaired. (Rūḥ).

Verses 20 - 27

وَمِنْ اٰيٰتِهٖٓ اَنْ خَلَقَكُمْ مِّنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ اِذَآ اَنْتُمْ بَشَرٌ تَنْتَشِرُوْنَ ﴿٢٠﴾ وَمِنْ اٰيٰتِهٖٓ اَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِّنْ اَنْفُسِكُمْ اَزْوَاجًا لِّتَسْكُنُوْٓا اِلَيْهَا وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ مَّوَدَّةً وَّرَحْمَةً ؕ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَّتَفَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿٢١﴾ وَمِنْ اٰيٰتِهٖ خَلْقُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافُ اَلْسِنَتِكُمْ وَاَلْوَانِكُمْ ؕ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّلْعٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٢٢﴾ وَمِنْ اٰيٰتِهٖ مَنَامُكُمْ بِالَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَابْتِغَآؤُكُمْ مِّنْ فَضْلِهٖ ؕ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَّسْمَعُوْنَ ﴿٢٣﴾ وَمِنْ اٰيٰتِهٖ يُرِيْكُمُ الْبَرْقَ خَوْفًا وَّطَمَعًا وَّيُنَزِّلُ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً فَيُحْيٖ بِهِ الْاَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا ؕ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَّعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿٢٤﴾ وَمِنْ اٰيٰتِهٖٓ اَنْ تَقُوْمَ السَّمَآءُ وَالْاَرْضُ بِاَمْرِهٖ ؕ ثُمَّ اِذَا دَعَاكُمْ دَعْوَةً ۖ مِّنَ الْاَرْضِ ۖ اِذَآ اَنْتُمْ تَخْرُجُوْنَ ﴿٢٥﴾ وَلَهٗ مَنْ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ كُلٌّ لَّهٗ قٰنِتُوْنَ ﴿٢٦﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِيْ يَبْدَؤُا الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيْدُهٗ وَهُوَ اَهْوَنُ عَلَيْهِ ؕ وَلَهُ الْمَثَلُ الْاَعْلٰى فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ

الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٢٧﴾ ع

And it is among His signs that He has created you from dust, then soon you are human beings scattered around. [20] **And it is among His signs that He has created for you wives from among yourselves, so that you may find tranquility in them, and He has created love and kindness between you. Surely in this there are signs for a people who reflect.** [21]

And among His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and the difference of your tongues and colours. Surely in this there are signs for the persons of knowledge. [22] **And among His signs is your sleep by night and day, and your search for His grace. Surely in this there are signs for a people who listen.** [23]

And it is among His signs that He shows you the lightening which causes fear and hope, and that He sends down water from the sky, then He revives the earth with it after its death. Surely in this there are signs for a people who understand. [24] **And it is among His signs that the sky and the earth stand firm with His command. Then, when He will call you from the earth, by a single call, you will be coming out all at once.** [25] **And to Him belong all those in the heavens and the earth. All (of them) are obedient to Him.** [26] **And He is the One who originates the creation, then He will create it again; and it is easier for Him. And for Him is the highest attribute in the heavens and the earth, and He is the Mighty, the Wise.** [27]

Commentary

After narrating the incident of the war between Rūm and Persia in the beginning of Sūrah Ar-Rūm, it was declared that the cause of the misguidance of the infidels and their heedlessness towards the truth was their excessive love for material life and paying no heed to the Hereafter. After that, any possible misgiving regarding resurrection on the Dooms Day and about the rewards and punishment after reckoning was clarified from different angles. Then it was suggested that one should, at the first place, look and ponder within his Self, and then should look around and note what had happened to the people who had lived before, and what

was their end. After that Allah's exclusive Omnipotence was described, in which no one is His partner. The obvious conclusion of all these facts and reasoning is that no one else but Allah is entitled to being worshipped, and what He has conveyed through His prophets about the Dooms Day, resurrection, reckoning, Paradise and Hell in the Hereafter should be believed in its totality. In the above verses six manifestations of His Omnipotence together with all-encompassing wisdom are described which are the signs of His incomparable power and wisdom. These realities are termed in these verses as "signs" which in the present context mean "signs of the divine omnipotence"

First sign of divine omnipotence

Man, the most distinguished among all creatures who is the ruler of the universe, is created from earth, which is the most inferior element among all the constituting elements of nature. Among the four well-known elements, that is water, fire, air and earth, the last named does not have the slightest sense, sensation or movement. All other elements have at least some movement, but the earth is devoid of that as well. However, this element is selected by Allah Ta'ālā for the creation of humans. Iblīs (Satan) was misled by his arrogance as he regarded himself superior to man, since he is made of fire. What he failed to understand was that greatness and superiority is awarded by Allah Ta'ālā. He is free to award it to any one He chooses.

Creation of man from earth is obvious with reference to 'Ādam عليه السلام, who is the father of all mankind. Since he was created from clay, the entire mankind, being his progeny, is created indirectly from clay. Every man's creation from earth may also be explained by saying that every man or woman is created from human sperm which is constituted by different ingredients. The origin of most of these ingredients is nothing but earth.

Second sign of the divine omnipotence

Allah Ta'ālā has created women in the same genus as that of man and they are made their wives as life long partners. Men and women are created from the same matter, yet there is a world of difference in their built, appearance, looks, character, habits, morals, disposition etc. If one seeks to recognize God, even this creation provides an excellent example of His supreme power. The wisdom behind the creation of this particular

sex is said to be لِّتَسْكُنُوٓا إِلَيْهَا (So that you may find tranquility in them - 21). If one ponders, it becomes evident that all the requirements of men from women end up in drawing peace of mind, tranquility and comfort. The Holy Qur'ān has put all that in one word.

The verse has thus indicated that the total outcome of married life is peace of mind and comfort; the couple that enjoys it is successful in the object of its creation, while the family that is deprived of peace of mind and tranquility is unsuccessful in its married life. This is also true that the very foundation of a successful married life rests on a lawful marriage. If one probes into the societies that developed illicit ways of living together without the bond of marriage, he will certainly discover that the life of such people is devoid of peace and tranquility. Living like animals to fulfill lust may provide temporary pleasure, but not the lasting peace of mind and comfort one draws from a proper married life.

The object of married life is tranquility for which mutual love and affection is the key

The present verse has declared that the object of married life of man and woman is peace of mind. This could be achieved only when there is a mutual recognition of each other's rights and a sincere effort to fulfill them. Otherwise the demand for meeting one's own rights only will lead to domestic brawls and shattering of peace. One course for the fulfillment of these rights could have been to lay stress only on legislation and imposing laws, as has been done in the case of other rights of the people, where it is prohibited to usurp the rights of others and after due warnings the punishments have been prescribed, and it is advised to show sympathy and sacrifice toward others. However, it is a common experience that people cannot be corrected only by giving them a set of laws, unless they are accompanied by nurturing *taqwā* and Allah's fear in the hearts. That is why the Holy Qur'ān, whenever it gives any injunctions regarding the social life of man, comes with the directions of إِتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ، وَاخْشَوْا (Fear Allāh) as a complement to those injunctions.

Mutual relations between man and woman are of such a delicate and sensitive nature that neither a law can ensure the fulfillment of their respective rights completely, nor can any court do full justice to it. It is for this reason that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has selected those verses of the Qur'ān for the *khuṭbah* (sermon) of *nikāh* in which stress is laid on piety,

fear of Allah and the Hereafter. Only these qualities in the spouses could stand as a guarantor for the fulfillment of mutual rights.

In addition to this, Allāh Ta'ālā has not made the conjugal rignts merely a matter of rules and regulations, but also a natural and emotional requirement of every man and woman. It is on the same pattern as the mutual rights of parents and children are safeguarded by the natural love they have for each other. Allāh Ta'ālā has filled the hearts of parents with such a natural love that they are compelled to protect their children more than their ownselves. Similarly, a degree of natural love is put in the hearts of children for their parents. The same thing is done in the case of spouses, for which it is said وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَكُم مَّوَدَّةً وَّرَحْمَةً (And He has created love and kindness between you - 30:21), that is, Allah Ta'ālā has not restricted the relationship between spouses to a legal and religious relationship, but has filled their hearts with love and compassion. The literal meaning of *wudd* and *mawaddah* is 'liking', which results in love and affection. Here Allah Ta'ālā has used two words – one is *mawddah* (love or friendship) and the other *raḥmah* (kindness). It is possible that *mawaddah* (love) refers to the young age when spouses are attracted towards each other with love and affection, while *raḥmah* refers to the old age when passions subside and compassion for each other takes over. (Qurṭubī)

After that it is said إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ (Surely in this there are signs for a people who reflect - 30:21). Although this verse has mentioned only one sign, but at the end of the verse, the word 'signs' in plural is used. The reason for this is that conjugal relationship, which is being discussed here, has many aspects, religious and mundane benefits. If all these benefits are taken into consideration, it appears that this relationship contains a number of signs of the divine omnipotence.

Third sign of divine omnipotence

The people living on earth are divided into many races, having different physical features and colours. Some are white, while others are black, brown, and yellow. Rather many have multitude of in-between shades of colours, because of inter-marriages among those having different colours. They speak different languages with many different dialects. The creation of the sky and earth is no doubt a great Divine masterpiece, but the difference of 'tongues' between human beings is also

an equally astonishing Divine marvel. The difference of 'tongues' mentioned in this verse includes the difference of languages. There are hundreds of languages spoken in different parts of the world. Some of them are so much at variance from each other that there seems to be absolutely no link between them. Then, it also includes the difference of accents, pronunciations and the qualities of voices. Allah's omnipotence has created the voice of each individual distinguishable from that of the others. The voices of men are clearly distinct from those of women, and the voices of children, from those of aged people, and so on, although the apparatus of speech, i.e. the tongue, the lips, the throat etc. are the same in all human beings. تبارک اللہ احسن الخالقین .

The same way there are differences of colour and hue. It is seen that babies of different colour and hue take birth from the same parents under the same circumstances. All this is the marvel of Allah's creation. The wisdom behind the difference of colours requires a lengthy description which is beyond our scope, but many of these wisdoms can be easily understood by a little reflection.

While referring to this sign of the divine omnipotence, this verse has mentioned creation of many things, such as sky, earth, the difference of languages and dialects, difference of colour in humans, which are all signs of Divine wisdom and can be recognized and understood with little attention. Hence, it is added at the end of the verse: إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّلْعَالِمِينَ (Surely in this there are signs for the persons of knowledge - 30:22).

Fourth sign of divine omnipotence

Human sleep and economic activities both in daytime and at night have been mentioned in verse 32 as the fourth sign of Allah's omnipotence. Unlike some other verses, both night and day have been mentioned in this verse as times of sleep; similarly, economic activities are mentioned as activities performed both in daytime and at night. In other verses, sleep is described as something done at night, and earning of sustenance as an act of daytime. The reason is that the major purpose of night is to sleep, and some economic activities are also performed as a secondary function. The case of daytime is the opposite, where the major objective is to work, while a little time may be spent in having rest and sleeping. Therefore, both descriptions are correct. Some commentators have tried to interpret this verse in a way that sleep becomes restricted to

night and earning of sustenance to daytime, as mentioned in other verses. However, in the light of explanation given above, such a labored interpretation is not called for.

Sleep and economic activity is not against asceticism and trust in Allah

It is evident from this verse that sleeping at night and working at daytime is made a natural habit for the humans. It is not something that one has to cultivate, but is a natural gift bestowed by Allah Ta'ālā to all His creatures. The point can be proven by the fact that one cannot sleep at times despite making all possible arrangements for the comfort. Sometimes even the sleeping pills become ineffective. But on the other hand, when Allah wills, people go to sleep even on hard floors amidst severe hot and oppressive conditions.

The same principle applies to earning of sustenance. It is a common knowledge that two persons having equal opportunities, knowledge and intellect, and putting in equal efforts and skill for earning their livelihood, do not necessarily succeed equally. One earns more than the other, because it is decreed as such by Allah's wisdom. Therefore, one should try to earn the living through all the means available to him, but should not ignore the reality that the outcome of his endeavours depends on the will of Allah, as He is the real provider.

At the end of this sign of divine omnipotence it is said إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَسْمَعُونَ (Surely in this there are signs for a people who listen - 30:23) Perhaps dependence on listening is placed here because it is commonly seen that the sleep takes over once one lays down in comfort. Similarly, one earns his living by putting in effort and labour in trade, services etc. But the hand of nature in their attainment is not seen by the ordinary eye. This fact is described and explained by the prophets of Allah. Hence it is said that these signs are beneficial for those who listen with care, and once the reality is understood, they accept it without obstinacy.

Fifth sign of divine omnipotence

Allah Ta'ālā shows the flash of lightning to people in which there is risk of its striking, thus destruction. At the same time, there is a hope for rain following the lightning. The rain does follow with His will and gives rise to numerous types of vegetation. At the end of the verse, it is said إِنَّ

إِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَّعْقِلُوْنَ (Surely in this there are signs for a people who understand - 30:24), because the mysteries of lightning and rain, and the resultant growth of vegetation can be understood by those with intellect.

Sixth sign of divine omnipotence

Existence of the sky and earth is by the command of Allah. When He will command the break up of this system, this strong arrangement, which is working since thousands of years perfectly without a slight depreciation, will end up in no time. Then by the command of Allah all the dead will assemble in the plain for reckoning.

The sixth sign of divine omnipotence is in fact the sum and substance of the previous five signs, and they were in fact revealed to explain and elaborate this verse. The subject of this verse continues in the next few verses.

لَهُ الْمَثَلُ الْاَعْلٰى (For Him is the highest attribute - 30:27) The word مَثَل *mathal* is used for any such thing which has resemblance and similarity with something else, but its being exactly like that is not necessary. Therefore, the Qur'ān has used the word *'mathal'* for Allah Ta'ālā at several places, as in this very verse, and in another but Allah Ta'ālā's Being is completely beyond resemblance. (That is why the word *'mathal'* has been translated above as 'attribute', which is also a possible lexical meaning of the word.)

Verses 28 - 40

ضَرَبَ لَكُمْ مَّثَلًا مِّنْ اَنْفُسِكُمْ ؕ هَلْ لَّكُمْ مِّنْ مَّا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُكُمْ مِّنْ شُرَكَآءَ فِيْ مَارَزَقْنٰكُمْ فَاَنْتُمْ فِيْهِ سَوَآءٌ تَخَافُوْنَهُمْ كَخِيْفَتِكُمْ اَنْفُسَكُمْ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ نُفَصِّلُ الْاٰيٰتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَّعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿۲۸﴾ بَلِ اتَّبَعَ الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْٓا اَهْوَآءَهُمْ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ ۚ فَمَنْ يَّهْدِيْ مَنْ اَضَلَّ اللّٰهُ ؕ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِّنْ نّٰصِرِيْنَ ﴿۲۹﴾ فَاَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّيْنِ حَنِيْفًا ؕ فِطْرَتَ اللّٰهِ الَّتِيْ فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا ؕ لَاتَبْدِيْلَ لِخَلْقِ اللّٰهِ ؕ ذٰلِكَ الدِّيْنُ الْقَيِّمُ ۙ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَايَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۳۰﴾ مُنِيْبِيْنَ اِلَيْهِ وَاتَّقُوْهُ وَاَقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ

وَلَاتَكُونُوا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿٣١﴾ مِنَ الَّذِينَ فَرَّقُوا دِينَهُمْ وَكَانُوا
شِيَعًا ۖ كُلُّ حِزْبٍ بِمَا لَدَيْهِمْ فَرِحُونَ ﴿٣٢﴾ وَإِذَا مَسَّ النَّاسَ
ضُرٌّ دَعَوْا رَبَّهُمْ مُنِيبِينَ إِلَيْهِ ثُمَّ إِذَا أَذَاقَهُمْ مِنْهُ رَحْمَةً إِذَا فَرِيقٌ مِنْهُمْ
بِرَبِّهِمْ يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٣٣﴾ لِيَكْفُرُوا بِمَا آتَيْنَاهُمْ ۚ فَتَمَتَّعُوا فَسَوْفَ
تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾ أَمْ أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطَانًا فَهُوَ يَتَكَلَّمُ بِمَا كَانُوا بِهِ
يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾ وَإِذَا أَذَقْنَا النَّاسَ رَحْمَةً فَرِحُوا بِهَا ۖ وَإِنْ تُصِبْهُمْ
سَيِّئَةٌ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ إِذَا هُمْ يَقْنَطُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾ أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّ اللَّهَ
يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَقْدِرُ ۚ إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ
﴿٣٧﴾ فَآتِ ذَا الْقُرْبَىٰ حَقَّهُ وَالْمِسْكِينَ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ
لِلَّذِينَ يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَ اللَّهِ ۖ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾ وَمَا آتَيْتُمْ
مِنْ رِبًا لِيَرْبُوَ فِي أَمْوَالِ النَّاسِ فَلَا يَرْبُو عِنْدَ اللَّهِ ۖ وَمَا آتَيْتُمْ مِنْ
زَكَاةٍ تُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَ اللَّهِ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُضْعِفُونَ ﴿٣٩﴾ اللَّهُ الَّذِي
خَلَقَكُمْ ثُمَّ رَزَقَكُمْ ثُمَّ يُمِيتُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُحْيِيكُمْ ۖ هَلْ مِنْ شُرَكَائِكُمْ
مَنْ يَفْعَلُ مِنْ ذَٰلِكُمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ۚ سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَىٰ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٤٠﴾

He (Allah) gives you an example from your own selves: Do you have, from among your slaves, any partners in the wealth We have given to you, so as they and you are equal in it, (and) so as you fear them like you fear each other? This is how We explain the signs for a people who understand. [28] **But the wrongdoers have followed their desires without knowledge. So who can guide the one whom Allah leaves astray? And for them there are no helpers.** [29] **So, set your face to the Faith steadily, this (faith) being the nature designed by Allah on which He has created the mankind. There is no change in Allah's creation. That is the straight faith, but most of the people do not know.** [30] **(Set your face to the Faith) turning totally towards Him, and fear Him, and**

establish Ṣalāh, and do not be among those who associate partners with Allah [31] - **among those who split up their religion and became sects. Each group is happy with what it has before it.** [32]

And when the people are visited by some affliction, they invoke their Lord, turning totally towards Him. Then once He gives them a taste of His mercy, a group of them starts at once ascribing partners to their Lord, [33] **that they become ungrateful for what We gave to them. So enjoy; then you will soon come to know.** [34]

Or have We sent to them any authority that speaks to them about their associating partners with Him? [35] **And when We give people a taste of mercy, they are happy with it, and if they are touched by an evil because of what their hands sent ahead, they are at once in despair.** [36] **Did they not see that Allah extends provision to whom he wills, and straitens (it for whom He wills)? Surely in this there are signs for a people who believe.** [37]

So give to the kinsman his right, and to the needy and the wayfarer. That is better for those who seek Allah's pleasure. And those are the successful ones. [38] **And whatever Ribā (increased amount) you give, so that it may increase in the wealth of the people, it does not increase with Allah; and whatever Zakāh you give, seeking with it Allah's pleasure, then such people are the ones who have multiples.** [39]

Allah is the One who created you, then provided sustenance for you, then He will make you die, then He will make you alive. Is there any one from your (so-called) partners of God who does anything of that? Pure is He and far higher than what they associate (with Him). [40]

Commentary

The subject of Oneness of Allah has been dealt with in these verses by giving various proofs in different styles which are appealing to all types of people. At first, the point is explained by an example that although your servants and slaves are identical with you in looks, appearance, their make up of limbs and other physical features, yet you do not permit them

to share equally in your power and authority. You are not willing to part with the slightest part of your wealth and power in favour of your subjects, let alone sharing your power and possessions equally. They can neither spend wealth nor time the way they like, as you do. Just as you are scared of your insignificant partners while spending without checking with them, you do not allow even this position to your servants. So pause for a minute and ponder that human beings, angels, and all other things in the universe are created by Allah Ta'ālā and they are all His creations and slaves, then how could you take them as His equals or partners?

In the second verse a warning is sounded that although this argument is simple and straightforward, yet there are people who under the influence of their selfish motives do not accept and concede to anything of wisdom and knowledge.

In the third verse the Holy Prophet ﷺ is addressed and through him the entire humanity is commanded to take note that when the irrationality and the unjust nature of *shirk* (associating partners with Allah) is established, you should leave aside all trends of *shirk* and turn to Islam with full devotion. فَاَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّيْنِ حَنِيْفًا (So, set your face to the Faith steadily - 30:30).

After that, it is elaborated in the following verse as to how Islam conforms to nature and meets its requirements: فِطْرَتَ اللّٰهِ الَّتِىْ فَطَرَالنَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا ؕ لَا تَبْدِيْلَ لِخَلْقِ اللّٰهِ ؕ ذٰلِكَ الدِّيْنُ الْقَيِّمُ (this (faith) being the nature designed by Allah on which He has created the mankind. There is no change in Allah's creation. That is the straight Faith - 30:30).

This sentence فِطْرَةَ اللّٰهِ الَّتِىْ فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا (30:30) is the elucidation of the preceding sentence فَاَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّيْنِ حَنِيْفًا (So, set your face to the Faith steadily - 30:30), and it also mentions a special trait of this Faith, for which it was commanded to be followed in the first sentence, that is, Islam is the religion of nature. Although the commentators have assigned different grammatical constructions to this sentence, yet all of them agree that "the nature designed by Allah" refers to the "straight Faith" that is ordered to be followed in the first sentence. "The nature designed by Allah" is explained in the next phrase that it is the natural design on which Allah has created all people.

What is meant by nature?

Commentators have given several interpretations to the word *fiṭrah*, (nature) used in the verse, out of which two are more common:

The first interpretation is that the word 'nature' is used here for Islam. Hence the meaning is that Allah Ta'ālā has made all human beings Muslim by their nature and instinct. In other words, all humans are born Muslims but it is the surroundings and the environment they live in make them astray from the righteous path. Generally it happens that the parents teach the child things and beliefs, which are contrary to Islam, and therefore he is misled into wrong beliefs. According to Qurṭubī majority of the elders agree with this interpretation, and it is also recorded in a *ḥadīth* of *Ṣaḥīḥain*.

The second interpretation is that 'nature' means here 'capability' or 'capacity'. If this meaning of the word 'nature' is adopted, the meaning of the phrase would be that Allah Ta'ālā has bestowed the capability to every human being to discern his Creator and believe in Him. This capability automatically leads to submission to Islam, provided one makes use of this Divine grace.

There are, however, some difficulties in adopting the first interpretation. Firstly, it is said in this very verse towards the end لَا تَبْدِيْلَ لِخَلْقِ اللّٰهِ (There is no change in Allah's creation - 30). Here 'Allah's creation' means the same as 'the nature designed by Allah', which is mentioned earlier in the verse. Hence the meaning of this sentence would be that no one could change the nature designed by Allah, while a *ḥadīth* of *Saḥīḥain* itself says that the parents of a child make him Jew or Christian. If the meaning of nature is adopted as Islam, then how could the *ḥadīth* be correct in saying that the child changes later as a Jew or Christian when it is said in this very verse that the change is not possible. Moreover, this change is a common experience in that there are more disbelievers in the world than Muslims. If Islam is taken as the meaning of nature, in which any change is not possible, then how is it that there are so many disbelievers who have changed their natural instinct after their birth?

Secondly, it is stated in an authentic *ḥadīth* about the boy who was killed by Sayyidnnā Khaḍir ﷺ that infidelity was embedded in his

nature. It was for this reason that Sayyidnā Khaḍir عليه السلام killed him. In that case this *ḥadīth* is also in contradiction to the statement that all children are born on Islam.

Thirdly, if it is accepted that Islam is something embedded in human nature, and they have no control to change it, then it would not be a voluntary act. In that case there is no room for rewards in the Hereafter, because rewards will be awarded on voluntary good deeds.

Fourthly, the religious jurists have deduced from authentic *āḥādīth* that a child, before attaining puberty, is treated in this world according to the faith of his parents. If the parents are infidel, the child will also be taken as an infidel. If he dies, a minor he will not be buried according to Islamic rites.

Imām Torapushtī has listed all these doubts in his commentary on Maṣābiḥ, and has preferred the second interpretation of the word '*fiṭrah*' (nature) because of these difficulties. Also, it is appropriate to say that natural capability cannot be changed. The one who is misled by parents into infidelity does not lose his instinct to discern and comprehend Islam. In the case of the boy killed by Sayyidnā Khaḍir عليه السلام also, it is not true that he had lost the capability to discern the Truth because of his birth as infidel. Since a man makes use of this divine gift, i.e the natural capability, with his free will, the reason for his earning its reward is quite evident. By adopting the second interpretation, the statement of the *ḥadīth* of *Ṣaḥīḥain* also becomes clear, that although the child is born with the natural instinct to discern the Truth, which should lead him to accept Islam, yet his surroundings and parents make him a Jew or a Christian. As for the traditions of some elders (*salf*) who have explained the word '*fiṭrah*' (nature) by the word 'Islam', it seems that they have not used the word of 'Islam' in the meaning of the capability to comprehend and accept Islam. Muḥaddith Dehlavi رحمه الله تعالى has explained the view of the majority of the Ummah in the same manner. (لمعات شرح مشكوٰة)

Hadrat Shah Walīullah Dehlavi رحمه الله تعالى has also endorsed the same view in his book (حجة الله البالغة). The essence of his discussion is that Allah Ta'ālā has created innumerable things of various temperaments and disposition, and has placed an inherent quality in the nature of each one of them which helps him fulfill the object of his creation. The verse

اَعْطٰى كُلَّ شَىْءٍ خَلْقَهٗ ثُمَّ هَدٰى (He who gave everything its shape, then guidance - 20:50) also describes the same reality that the Creator has instructed every creature how it should fulfill the purpose of its creation. Those instructions are embodied in the capability of performing required acts by various things. The instinct given to honeybee is to distinguish plants and flowers and make selection for drawing juice from them into its belly for storage in the beehive. The same way the humans are graced with a natural instinct and capability to recognize their Creator and submit to Him. This is what Islam is all about.

The above discussion has also clarified the meaning of the sentence لَا تَبْدِيْلَ لِخَلْقِ اللّٰهِ (There is no change in Allah's creation - 30:30) meaning no one can bring about any change in the instinct and capability bestowed by Allah Ta'ālā, which helps recognize the Truth. The wrong environment can make one an infidel, but cannot eliminate his inherent capability to recognize the Truth.

This explanation also makes the meaning of the verse clear, which says وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْاِنْسَ اِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوْنِ (I have not created Jinn and mankind except to worship Me - 51:56). It means that Allah has created in their nature the inclination towards and capability to perform His worship. If they make use of this capability, they will never go wrong and astray.

It is obligatory to avoid the company of wrongdoers and evil society

Although in this verse the sentence لَا تَبْدِيْلَ لِخَلْقِ اللّٰهِ (There is no change in Allah's creation - 30:30) is in the form of information, which means that no one can change the nature designed by Allah, but it also contains a latent prohibition in the sense that this nature should not be tampered with. Therefore, it is inferred from this verse that one should avoid the situations that render the capability of accepting the truth ineffective or weak. Such situations generally emerge in an evil environment and bad company, or by reading books written by those having wrong beliefs, especially when the reader does not have extensive knowledge and information about Islam.

وَاَقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَلَا تَكُوْنُوْا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ (And establish Ṣalāh, and do not be among those who associate partners with Allah - 30:30). In the previous verse it was mentioned that the human nature is designed in a manner

that it has an inherent capability to accept the Truth. Now in this verse it is emphasized that establishment of prayer is the first requisite for the acceptance of Truth, because it is the manifestation of submission to Truth and practical affirmation of Faith in Islam. After that, it is said وَلَا تَكُوْنُوْا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ (30:31), that is, 'Do not join those indulging in shirk (associating others with Allah), because they did not avail of their natural capability to accept the Truth. Their misdeeds are mentioned in the next verse which says, مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ فَرَّقُوْا دِيْنَهُمْ وَكَانُوْا شِيَعًا (Among those who split up religion and became sects - 30:32) that is, these disbelievers are those who have created a difference between Natural Faith and the true religion, or they have alienated themselves from the Natural Faith, as a result of which they are divided into different sects. شِيَعًا : *Shiya'an* is the plural of شِيْعَة *shī'ah*. A group of people following a leader is called *shī'ah*. The fact is that the Natural Faith was based on the Oneness of Allah, by following which the entire human kind should have been one solid unit and one party. But it so happened that people split out from this unity and started following the personal views of their own leaders. Since the personal views and opinions of different people may always vary from person to person, different groups of people invented their own beliefs and religion. As a consequence, people were divided into various groups and sects, and the Satan made them believe that they were the only people on the right path كُلُّ حِزْبٍ بِمَا لَدَيْهِمْ فَرِحُوْنَ (Each group is happy with what it has before it - 30:32). That is, each group is happy and contended in its own beliefs and declare others being wrong, although they all are astray and treading the wrong path.

فَاٰتِ ذَا الْقُرْبٰى حَقَّهٗ وَالْمِسْكِيْنَ وَابْنَ السَّبِيْلِ (So give to the kinsman his right, and to the needy and the wayfarer - 30:38). In the preceding verse, it was stated that provision of sustenance is the sole prerogative of Allah Ta'ālā. He makes it abundant for whom He likes and curtails the sustenance whenever and whomever He so wills. It clearly gives the message that whoever spends it in the way of Allah, He does not make his sustenance dwindle. But if someone acts miserly and tries to accumulate what he has, then his possession does not expand.

In the background of this divine rule, the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and according to Ḥasan Al-Baṣrī رحمه الله تعالى , every person privileged with abundance, is advised not to be close-fisted in spending the wealth Allah

has graced him with. Rather it should be spent on needy cheerfully. This spending will not result in shrinking of the wealth. Some avenues of spending have also been enumerated along with this advice. First, kinsman; second, *masākīn* (the needy); third travelers; that is, these categories should be given from the wealth that Allah has granted you. At the same time, it has been clarified that this is the right of these people which has been obligated on your wealth. Therefore, while giving it to them, no favour should be shown to them, because passing on someone's share to him is an act of fairness and justice and not a favour.

'Kinsman' in this verse apparently means common relatives, whether *maḥrams* or otherwise, as explained by the majority of the commentators. The words, 'his right' also refers to the rights of the kinsmen in general terms, and encompasses obligatory rights, such as those of parents, children and other close relations. It also includes voluntary acts of beneficence and charity, which carry greater rewards when done for close relations compared to when performed in favour of any other non-relative common person; so much so that the Imām of Tafsīr Mujāhid رحمه الله تعالى has said that the charity of that person is not acceptable in the sight of Allah who neglects his own close relatives and gives it to someone else. It should also be understood that the right of close relatives is not restricted to financial support, but it includes looking after them, and providing any physical service to them as well. If nothing else is within means, they may at least be treated sympathetically and be consoled in their distress. Sayyidnā Ḥasan ﷺ has said that the one who enjoys abundance in wealth should help his close relatives with money, and the one who does not have it, should provide physical service and consolation verbally. (Qurṭubī).

After 'kinsman', the rights of indigent and then of the travelers follow. For meeting these rights also the same principle applies, that is if one has financial means, he should extend monetary help to them, otherwise physical service and consolation may discharge the right.

وَمَا آتَيْتُم مِّن رِّبًا لِّيَرْبُوَا فِي أَمْوَالِ النَّاسِ (And whatever Ribā [increased amount] you give so that it may increase in the wealth of the people, - 30:39). This verse is meant to correct an evil custom which is common in close relatives and the families at large. When people extend a gift or a present to relatives, especially at the time of marriages, they make a note of the

amount they have given, in the hope that they will get back an equal amount in return when it is their turn, rather a little more. This custom is known in Urdu as '*neota*'. It is emphasized in this verse that the instruction given in the preceding verse about the rights of relatives should be implemented in a manner that neither it be shown as a favour, nor should it be given in the hope of any return. Whoever gives out money in the hope that it will bring back something more, then it is not worthy of reward in the sight of Allah. Qur'ān has referred to it as *ribā*, alluding that it is as bad as usury or interest.(1)

Ruling

It is extremely contemptible for a person who extends a gift to someone that he expects a return for it, which is forbidden in this verse. But it is morally desirable for the one who receives a gift from someone, that he tries to give a gift to the former on his own accord, whenever he finds a suitable occasion. This was exactly the practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. He used to give present to the person who gave him one. (Qurṭubī on authority of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا). However, it should be avoided to give him an impression that the gift is being given in return of his own.

Verses 41 - 45

ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِى الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ اَيْدِى النَّاسِ لِيُذِيْقَهُمْ بَعْضَ

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1. This explanation is based on the view of a number of exegetes of Qur'ān. The word used by the Holy Qur'ān is *ribā*, a term commonly understood as equivalent to usury or interest, prohibition of which has been detailed in verses 275 to 281 of Sūrah Al-Baqarah and verse 130 of Sūrah 'Al 'Imrān. Since, according to a large number of scholars, usury was prohibited in Madinah,while the present verse is Makkan, the word *ribā* used here cannot mean usury or interest. Therefore, the word is interpreted here as a gift given to a relative in order to get back a gift of higher value from him. But some other commentators have taken the word *ribā* in the same sense as in Sūrah Al-Baqarah,i.e.usury and interest. They argue that usury was prohibited even in Makkah, but its implementation on a state level was carried out in Madīnah.The esteemed author has reconciled between these two views by saying that the direct purpose of the verse is to correct the evil custom of giving gifts in the hope of getting a higher return, as mentioned in some traditions, but the word '*ribā*' is used to indicate that this practice is tantamount to the practice of usury where an increased amount is charged from a debtor. (Muḥammad Taqi 'Usmāni)

الَّذِىْ عَمِلُوْا لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُوْنَ ﴿٤١﴾ قُلْ سِيْرُوْا فِى الْاَرْضِ فَانْظُرُوْا
كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلُ ؕ كَانَ اَكْثَرُهُمْ مُّشْرِكِيْنَ ﴿٤٢﴾
فَاَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّيْنِ الْقَيِّمِ مِنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ يَّاْتِىَ يَوْمٌ لَّا مَرَدَّ لَهٗ مِنَ اللّٰهِ
يَوْمَئِذٍ يَّصَّدَّعُوْنَ ﴿٤٣﴾ مَنْ كَفَرَ فَعَلَيْهِ كُفْرُهٗ ۚ وَمَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا
فَلِاَنْفُسِهِمْ يَمْهَدُوْنَ ﴿٤٤﴾ لِيَجْزِىَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ
مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ ؕ اِنَّهٗ لَا يُحِبُّ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿٤٥﴾

Plight has appeared on land and sea because of what the hands of the people have earned, so that He (Allah) makes them taste some of what they did, in order that they may return (to the right way). [41] **Say, "Go about in the land and see how was the end of those who were before. Most of them were *Mushriks* (i.e. those who ascribe partners to Allah)".** [42] **Then set your face to the straight Faith before the arrival of a day that will never be repulsed by Allah. On that Day the people will be split apart.** [43] **Whoever disbelieves, his unbelief will be against him; and whoever acts righteously, then such people are paving the path for themselves,** [44] **so that Allah may reward those who believed and did righteous deeds, out of His grace. Surely He does not love the unbelievers.** [45]

Commentary

ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِى الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ اَيْدِى النَّاسِ (Plight has appeared on land and sea because of what the hands of the people have earned - 30:41). The author of Rūḥ ūl-Ma'ānī has explained that the word '*fasād*' (translated in the text as 'plight') means all sorts of calamities, such as famine, epidemic diseases, frequency of the incidents of fire, drowning, lack of Allah's blessing in everything, and reduction in profits and incurring of losses in lucrative businesses. It can also be deduced from this verse that the cause of falling of calamities in the world is commission of sins and other evil acts by the people. *Shirk* (association of partners with Allah) and infidelity are the most severe of them all, and other sins follow after them.

The same subject has appeared in another verse with a difference وَمَا أَصَابَكُمْ مِّنْ مُّصِيبَةٍ فَبِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِيكُمْ وَيَعْفُوا عَنْ كَثِيرٍ (42:30) that is, whatever troubles you are inflicted with are due to your own wrong doings. The essence of this statement is that whatever troubles and tribulations people face in this world are brought about by their own sins, despite the fact that many of these sins are pardoned, and many are punished but slightly, and yet some others are left unpunished. There are only a few sins that are punished by way of calamities. If all sins were punished with the intensity they deserve, no one would have been left alive in the world. But it is our good fortune that Allah Ta'ālā forgives so many of our sins and those which are not forgiven are dealt with very mildly, as stated at the end of the verse لِيُذِيقَهُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِي عَمِلُوا (So that He (Allah) makes them taste same of what they did - 30:41) that is, He lets them taste a little of their evil deeds. After that, it is pointed out that whatever trouble and tribulation is sent down to them in this world, though as a result of their misdeeds, is in fact blessing and grace from Him, if only one could ponder. The purpose of these worldly troubles is to awaken them from their slumber, so that they get rid of their evil acts. This would naturally result in their favour and bring them blessings, as stated at the end of the verse لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ (In order that they may return (to the right way). - 30:41).

Big calamities fall upon the world because of the sins of people

It is in this backdrop that some scholars have declared that if a man commits an evil deed, he harms the entire human kind, beasts, birds and other animals, because whatever calamities fall upon earth due to his sins, all others are also affected by it. Therefore, each one of the sufferers of the calamities will lodge a claim against the sinner on Dooms Day.

Shaqīq Zāhid has said that whoever acquires something unlawfully, he does not harm only the person whom he has taken it from, but also the entire human kind. (Rūḥ). It is because this opens up the door for others to follow, and thus the whole humanity gets involved in the practice. Secondly, this evil practice invites the calamities which in turn bring about troubles for every one.

Answer to a doubt

It is recorded in authentic *aḥādīth* that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said, 'this world is a prison for the believers and heaven for the infidels.' He then elaborated that the infidels get the reward of their good deeds in this

world only in the form of wealth and health, whereas the reward of the believers is saved up to be awarded in the Hereafter. Furthermore, the believers in this world are like a branch of tree, which drifts from side to side in the breeze and stands still when the breeze stops; and ultimately they leave the world in this very condition. It is also stated that the worldly tribulations afflict the prophets most and then to those who are near to them, and then to those who are near to the near ones. اَشَدُّ النَّاسِ بَلاَءً الْاَنْبِيَاءُ ثُمَّ الْاَمْثَلُ فَالْاَمْثَلُ (The most severe trials are faced by the prophets, then by those closer to them, then by those closer to them.)

Apparently, all these authentic *āḥādīth* seem to be in conflict with the statement given in this verse. Further, it is also a common experience that generally the Muslim believers live a difficult life, whereas the infidels and libertines live a comfortable and easy life. If the troubles and difficulties were afflicted because of sins, as mentioned in the verse, the situation would have been exactly opposite.

Answer to this quandary is that the verse under reference has mentioned the sins as a cause for inviting troubles, but not the only cause (علّت تامّه) in the sense that whenever one is afflicted with troubles, it is only due to his sins. As a rule, if the cause of some happening comes to surface, its resultant effect normally follows. However, in certain cases the normal effect is overtaken by some other cause, suppressing or altogether eliminating the normal effect. For instance if someone says that purgatives are used for moving the bowls, the statement is true as far as the effect of purgatives is concerned. But sometimes they don't move the bowls under the effect of some other drug or an unknown reason. Similarly, it is also a common experience that at times antipyretics do not bring down the fever and the sleeping pills do not put one to sleep. Therefore, the upshot of the verse is that it is one of the traits of sins to invite troubles and tribulations, but sometimes due to other conflicting reasons, the troubles do not come about. On the other hand, the opposite of this can also happen at times, that is, troubles and tribulations may come about without commitment of sins, because their appearance without sins has not been ruled out in the verse altogether. Therefore, in the case of prophets and pious persons, calamities may visit them without sins. In such situations the cause of vexation is not sins, but for the sake of upgrading their status, tests and trials are conducted by putting them

into trouble.

Moreover, the Holy Qur'ān has assigned the reason for the troubles and tribulations as sins of people for such situations where these calamities engulf the whole world or the entire city, and all humans and animals are afflicted with that. Normally such calamities fall when sins are committed openly and freely. In the case of individual troubles and tribulations, this rule does not apply, because sometimes calamities befall for trials and tests, and when the individual passes the tests successfully, his position is raised in the Hereafter. In fact, such calamities prove to be blessings and graces of Allah Ta'ālā. Hence it is not correct to call a person sinner, if he is afflicted with calamity. In the same way, it is not apt to consider someone pious and righteous if he is affluent. However, the main reason for the affliction of major troubles and calamities, such as famine, storms, epidemics, inflation and lack of Allah's blessing is commission of sins openly and defiance of Allah's rule.

Special note

Hadrat Shah Waliyyullāh رحمه الله تعالى has commented in (حجة الله البالغة) that there are two types of causes, in this world, for good or evil, trouble or comfort and difficulty or ease. Causes of the first kind are visible or outward, while causes of the second type are latent or inward. Outward causes are the material causes which are seen by all and normally regarded as such; whereas the inward causes are those based on human actions, which lead to either help from the angels or to their curse and hate. For example, the causes of rain before the scientists and philosophers are the formation of vapors in the form of clouds over the oceans due to heat, then their drift toward the land by the breeze, then their ascent to heights because of the heat of land, and then freezing of vapors after attaining heights into the cooler strata, and after being defrost by the heat of sun, their ultimate fall from the height in the form of water drops. But the *aḥādīth* on the subject tell us that this whole process is an act of the angels. In fact, there is no contradiction in the two statements as there could be many causes for any one process. Hence the outward cause in this case is the scientific explanation referred above, while the inward cause could be the action of the angels. When both these causes are combined, the rain falls according to need and expectation, and if both the causes do not combine, the rainfall may be interrupted.

Explaining the subject further, Shah Waliyyullāh رحمه الله تعالىٰ has said that some causes of the tribulations of the world are physical or biological, which do not recognize good or bad. For instance, it is the characteristic of fire to burn, without considering whether some one is pious or sinner, unless it receives a Divine command to act otherwise, as was the case in the fire of Namrūd, which was commanded to cool down and be tranquil for Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. The attribute of water is to drown the heavier bodies. So it will always act to perform this duty. Similarly, other elements are also performing their assigned jobs. For some, they become troublesome and arduous, but for others they bring in comfort and ease.

Like the outward physical causes, the good or evil deeds of a person are also effective in bringing troubles and tribulations or ease and comfort. When both outward and inward causes of ease, happiness and comfort join together, the person or a group of people enjoy ease and comfort in life. As against this, if the natural causes bring in distress and problems for an individual or a group of people and his or their actions also call for troubles and tribulations, then the calamities fall as a rule.

Sometimes it happens that whereas the material outward causes are working to bring about troubles and calamity, but the good actions of a person are inclined for ease and comfort in his life. In such a conflicting situation, the inward causes are consumed in countering the influence of the outward causes. As a result, the full benefit of his friendly inward causes is not reaped. Likewise, it happens sometimes that the material causes demand the ease and comfort, but the inward causes or his actions invite troubles and tribulations. In this conflicting situation also, neither full comfort and ease is available nor the calamities take their full toll.

In a similar manner, the material causes are sometimes made unfavorable for a prophet, saint or a pious to put him to test. If this explanation is understood properly, then the mutual harmony and consistency between the Qur'ānic verses and the referred *āḥādīth* becomes apparent, and any doubts about inconsistency or conflict are removed. واللّٰه سبحانه و تعالىٰ اعلم

Difference between trial or test and punishment or torment when calamities fall

When the calamities fall, they are meant for trial and test for some

good people in order to atone their sins or raise their status, and for others to punish them for their sins. In both cases, the form of the calamities look alike. Then how should they be differentiated? Shah Waliyyullāh رحمه الله تعالیٰ has said that the calamities on good people for the sake of tests can be recognized by their endurance with contentment, which is a gift of God. They remain happy and contented in troubles and calamities like a patient, who remains contented on his treatment by medicines of bitter taste or by a painful surgery. Not only that he does not complain of the pains he faced during treatment, but also pays fees for it and deploys all sorts of resources for getting himself treated in such a painful manner. As against this, the evildoers, on whom the calamities fall as punishment, take it to heart and cry and moan against the sufferings they are placed in. Sometimes they utter words of ingratitude to the extent of blasphemy.

Sayyidī Ḥakim-ul-Ummah Ashraf ʻAlī Thanāvi رحمه الله تعالیٰ has given another distinction between the two calamities. If one becomes aware of his sins and faults and finds greater inclination toward seeking pardon from Allah Taʻālā, then it is a sign of His kindness and favour. But if one gets frustrated and indulges more in sins and evil, then it is a sign of Allah's wrath and torment. واللہ اعلم

Verses 46 - 53

وَمِنْ اٰيٰتِهٖٓ اَنْ يُّرْسِلَ الرِّيَاحَ مُبَشِّرٰتٍ وَّلِيُذِيْقَكُمْ مِّنْ رَّحْمَتِهٖ وَلِتَجْرِيَ
الْفُلْكُ بِاَمْرِهٖ وَلِتَبْتَغُوْا مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُوْنَ ﴿٤٦﴾ وَلَقَدْ
اَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ رُسُلًا اِلٰى قَوْمِهِمْ فَجَآءُوْهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ فَانْتَقَمْنَا مِنَ
الَّذِيْنَ اَجْرَمُوْا ۭ وَكَانَ حَقًّا عَلَيْنَا نَصْرُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿٤٧﴾ اَللّٰهُ الَّذِيْ
يُرْسِلُ الرِّيٰحَ فَتُثِيْرُ سَحَابًا فَيَبْسُطُهٗ فِي السَّمَآءِ كَيْفَ يَشَآءُ
وَيَجْعَلُهٗ كِسَفًا فَتَرَى الْوَدْقَ يَخْرُجُ مِنْ خِلٰلِهٖ ۚ فَاِذَآ اَصَابَ بِهٖ مَنْ
يَّشَآءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهٖٓ اِذَا هُمْ يَسْتَبْشِرُوْنَ ﴿٤٨﴾ وَاِنْ كَانُوْا مِنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ
يُّنَزَّلَ عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنْ قَبْلِهٖ لَمُبْلِسِيْنَ ﴿٤٩﴾ فَانْظُرْ اِلٰٓى اٰثٰرِ رَحْمَتِ اللّٰهِ

كَيْفَ يُحْيِ الْاَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا ؕ اِنَّ ذٰلِكَ لَمُحْيِ الْمَوْتٰى ۚ وَهُوَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿٥٠﴾ وَلَئِنْ اَرْسَلْنَا رِيْحًا فَرَاَوْهُ مُصْفَرًّا لَّظَلُّوْا مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖ يَكْفُرُوْنَ ﴿٥١﴾ فَاِنَّكَ لَا تُسْمِعُ الْمَوْتٰى وَلَا تُسْمِعُ الصُّمَّ الدُّعَآءَ اِذَا وَلَّوْا مُدْبِرِيْنَ ﴿٥٢﴾ وَمَآ اَنْتَ بِهٰدِ الْعُمْيِ عَنْ ضَلٰلَتِهِمْ ؕ اِنْ تُسْمِعُ اِلَّا مَنْ يُّؤْمِنُ بِاٰيٰتِنَا فَهُمْ مُّسْلِمُوْنَ ﴿٥٣﴾

And among His sings is that He sends winds giving good news (of rain), and so that He gives you a taste of His mercy, and that the ships may sail with His command, and that you may search for His grace, and you may be grateful. [46] **And We had indeed sent before you messengers to their people. So they came to them with clear proofs. Then We took vengeance upon those who were guilty. And it was due on Us to help the believers.** [47]

Allah is the One who sends the winds, so they stir up a cloud, then He spreads it in the sky however he wills and makes it (split) into pieces. Then you see the rain coming out from its midst. So, once He makes it reach the ones He wills from His slaves, they start rejoicing, [48] **even though they were absolutely hopeless before it was sent down to them.** [49] **So, look to the effects of Allah's mercy, how He gives life to the earth after its death. Surely That (Allah) is the One who will give life to the dead. And He has the power to do everything.** [50] **And should We send a (harmful) wind, and they see it (the tilth) turning yellow, then they will turn ungrateful, even after all the aforesaid (bounties of Allah).** [51] **So, you cannot make the dead to hear, nor can you make the deaf to hear the call when they turn their backs in retreat.** [52] **And you are not (able) to show the blind the right path against their straying. You can make none to hear except those who believe in Our signs, hence they submit.** [53]

Commentary

فَانْتَقَمْنَا مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ اَجْرَمُوْا ؕ وَكَانَ حَقًّا عَلَيْنَا نَصْرُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ (Then We took vengeance upon those who were guilty. And it was due on Us to help the believers. -

30:47). This verse tells us that Allah Ta'ālā has taken it upon Himself to help the believers. On the face of this statement, one would have expected that Muslims would never be defeated against the infidels. But on many occasions, results have been exactly opposite. Answer to this confusion is at hand in this very verse, that by the word 'believers' those believers are intended who fight with infidels purely for the sake of Allah. Allah Ta'ālā takes revenge of only such believers from the criminals and helps them overpower their adversaries. Wherever the position is different, it is due to some sort of slip on the part of the believers, as Qur'ān itself has quoted about the battle of Uhud: إِنَّمَا اسْتَزَلَّهُمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ بِبَعْضِ مَا كَسَبُوْا (Satan had but made them slip for some of their deeds - 3:155). Even in such a situation, Allah Ta'ālā graces them with victory and upper hand, once they realize their fault, as it happened in the battle of Uhud. As for such people who are Muslims only by name and are habitual defiant and negligent of the teachings of Islam, and are not penitent even when the infidels gain upper hand, they are for sure not included in this promise of Allah Ta'ālā, and do not qualify for His help. Nonetheless, Allah Ta'ālā provides help by His grace on many occasions without any one deserving it. Therefore, it is always beneficial to beg for His mercy and hope for His help.

فَإِنَّكَ لَاتُسْمِعُ الْمَوْتٰى (So you cannot make the dead to hear - 30:52). As for the issue whether the dead have the ability to hear or not, and if they have this ability, whether it is exclusive to some, or all can hear, this subject has been dealt with briefly in the commentary of Sūrah An-Naml in this volume, and a detailed discussion can be seen in my book تکمیل الحبور بسماع اهل القبور.

Verses 54 - 60

اَللّٰهُ الَّذِیْ خَلَقَكُمْ مِّنْ ضُعْفٍ ثُمَّ جَعَلَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ ضُعْفٍ قُوَّةً ثُمَّ جَعَلَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ قُوَّةٍ ضُعْفًا وَّشَیْبَةً ؕ یَخْلُقُ مَا یَشَآءُ ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَلِیْمُ الْقَدِیْرُ ﴿٥٤﴾ وَیَوْمَ تَقُوْمُ السَّاعَةُ یُقْسِمُ الْمُجْرِمُوْنَ ۙ مَا لَبِثُوْا غَیْرَ سَاعَةٍ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ كَانُوْا یُؤْفَكُوْنَ ﴿٥٥﴾ وَقَالَ الَّذِیْنَ اُوْتُوا الْعِلْمَ وَالْاِیْمَانَ لَقَدْ لَبِثْتُمْ فِیْ كِتٰبِ اللّٰهِ اِلٰی یَوْمِ الْبَعْثِ ز فَهٰذَا یَوْمُ الْبَعْثِ وَلٰكِنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ

لَاتَعۡلَمُوۡنَ ﴿٥٦﴾ فَيَوۡمَئِذٍ لَّايَنۡفَعُ الَّذِيۡنَ ظَلَمُوۡا مَعۡذِرَتُهُمۡ وَلَا هُمۡ يُسۡتَعۡتَبُوۡنَ ﴿٥٧﴾ وَلَقَدۡ ضَرَبۡنَا لِلنَّاسِ فِيۡ هٰذَا الۡقُرۡاٰنِ مِنۡ كُلِّ مَثَلٍ ؕ وَلَئِنۡ جِئۡتَهُمۡ بِاٰيَةٍ لَّيَقُوۡلَنَّ الَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡۤا اِنۡ اَنۡتُمۡ اِلَّا مُبۡطِلُوۡنَ ﴿٥٨﴾ كَذٰلِكَ يَطۡبَعُ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى قُلُوۡبِ الَّذِيۡنَ لَا يَعۡلَمُوۡنَ ﴿٥٩﴾ فَاصۡبِرۡ اِنَّ وَعۡدَ اللّٰهِ حَقٌّ وَّلَا يَسۡتَخِفَّنَّكَ الَّذِيۡنَ لَا يُوۡقِنُوۡنَ ﴿٦٠﴾

Allah is the One who created you in a state of weakness, then He created strength after weakness, then created weakness and old age after strength. He creates what He wills, and He is the All-Knowing, the All-Powerful. [54] **And on the Day when the Hour (Qiyāmah) will take place, the sinners will swear that they did not remain (in the graves) more than one hour. In the similar way they used to be contrary (to truth in their worldly life).** [55] **And those who are given knowledge and belief will say, "You remained, according to the destiny written by Allah, up to the Day of Resurrection. So this is the Day of Resurrection, but you had no belief."** [56] **So, on that Day, their apology will not benefit the wrongdoers, nor will they be asked to repent.** [57]

And surely We have given in this Qur'ān all kinds of examples for the benefit of mankind. (Still) if you bring to them a sign, the disbelievers will certainly say, "You are nothing but men of falsehood." [58] **Thus Allah seals up the hearts of those who do not believe.** [59] **So, be patient. Surely Allah's promise is true, and let not those who do not believe make you impatient.** [60]

Commentary

Greater part of this Sūrah aims at removing the doubts of the deniers of the Hereafter. For meeting this end, many verses deal with the signs of Allah's omnipotence and His all-encompassing wisdom in order to awake people from their slumber. The first of the above-referred verses deals with the same subject in a different manner. It is pointed out that man is impetuous by nature, in the sense that he gets involved in the present so much that he forgets the past and the future. This habit leads him to many a serious problems. When he is young, his strength is at its peak,

and he does not care about anyone in his over-weaning pride. He finds it difficult to remain within limits. In order to warn people, this verse has given a complete picture of the strength and weakness in human life as they come and go by. It is pointed out in the verse that the man starts his life in a state of weakness and ends it with a similar weakness. It is only in the middle of his life that he gains strength for a short period. It is in his own interest that he should keep in mind the impending weakness while he is still strong, and does not forget how he achieved strength gradually from the state of weakness.

The man is reminded of his real self in خَلَقَكُم مِّن ضَعْفٍ (Who created you in a state of weakness - 30:54). It means that his original base is a dirty drop of semen that has neither strength, nor sense or life. So ponder, who has turned this sickening drop into congealed blood, then into flesh and then transfixed bones into the flesh? After that, who has produced delicate machines of the limbs and organs to turn him into a mobile factory, which is supported by innumerous automatic machines. If one is to look more closely into this factory, one would notice that it is a mini-world of its own in which innumerable models of His creation are set in. The creation and bringing up of man is not brought about in a giant factory but in three dark stages in the womb of his mother. After spending nine months in the womb of mother, man ultimately takes birth to come out into this world. The Holy Qur'ān says, ثُمَّ السَّبِيلَ يَسَّرَهُ (Then Allah facilitated exit [from the womb] for him - 80:20).

When he came into this world, his condition was that وَاللَّهُ أَخْرَجَكُم مِّن بُطُونِ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ (And Allah has brought you forth from your mothers' wombs when you knew nothing - 16:78). Then Allah made you learn so many things. The first lesson was to teach you crying, so that you could attract the attention of your parents towards you, and they should look for your needs of thirst and hunger. Then you were taught the skill to suck milk by pressing your lips and gums from your mother's breasts for your sustenance. Who else had the power to teach these two skills to an infant having no intelligence, to meet all his needs? Indeed no one else but the Power who is responsible for his creation. The infants are weak at that stage of their life. Minor exposure to cold or heat makes them sick. They can neither ask for their needs, nor can they remove any of their miseries. Right from this stage until they attain their youth, one can see

in them a gradual development of life and strength - a process only Allah Ta'ālā can create and control and a clear manifestation of His omnipotence, if people could only contemplate.

ثُمَّ جَعَلَ مِنۢ بَعْدِ ضَعْفٍ قُوَّةً (Then He created strength after weakness - 30:54). When man reaches the stage of his strength, he gets involved in showing off his powers and intelligence. He flies to reach the moon and Mars, and tries to overpower the earth and oceans. He forgets all about his past and becomes oblivious of his future, and cries out مَنْ اَشَدُّ مِنَّا قُوَّةً (Who is stronger than us in might? - 4:15); so much so that in this state of intoxication, he even forgets his Creator and His commands. So the Nature has warned to make him realize his folly ثُمَّ جَعَلَ مِنۢ بَعْدِ قُوَّةٍ ضَعْفًا وَّشَيْبَةً (Then created weakness and old age - 30:54). O remiss! Be mindful of the fact that your present strength is temporary and you have to return to the same old weakness, and it will take you gradually to your grey hair. Then all your limbs and organs will change their shape and form. You need not go through any books and the history of the world, but look into your own concealed self, and you will be left with no other option but to accept and believe that يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَآءُ وَهُوَ الْعَلِيْمُ الْقَدِيْرُ (He creates what He wills, and He is the All-Knowing, the All-Powerful - 30:54). All this control and running of affairs are by the One who creates them. He does as He pleases, and in a manner as it pleases Him. He has no parallel in knowledge and power. Knowing all this, is there any room for doubt that He can resurrect the dead whenever He likes?

After this, the falsehood and ignorance of the deniers of the Dooms Day is mentioned وَيَوْمَ تَقُوْمُ السَّاعَةُ يُقْسِمُ الْمُجْرِمُوْنَ مَا لَبِثُوْا غَيْرَ سَاعَةٍ that is, 'When the Dooms Day will come, these deniers of the Dooms Day will start swearing by losing senses after looking at the horrid scenes, that their stay was not more than one hour'. It is probable that the stay referred to here is the stay in this world, because they spent the time in this world in comfort and ease. And when they will encounter troubles in the Hereafter, they, by way of a natural habit of man to regard the comfortable period of his life very short, will swear that they lived in the world hardly for one hour.

The other probability is that this 'stay' is their stay in graves and *barzakh*. In that case, the meaning would be that they had thought that their stay in graves, that is *barzakh*, would be very long and the Dooms Day would come after a long period, but it would seem to them that they

stayed in *barzakh* for a very short time, and the Day of Judgement dawned too early. The reason for this feeling is that they will not find any comfort for themselves in the Hereafter, rather it will bring nothing but problems for them. And it is human nature that when he is taken over by problems, he considers the time previously spent in comfort being very short-lived. Although the *barzakh* is also a place of punishment for the infidels, yet it is much lighter as compared to what they will come across in Qiyamah. Hence they will regard the period of *barzakh* as very short and swear that their stay in it was brief.

Would any one be able to lie before Allah on the Day of Resurrection?

It is revealed in this verse that the infidels will lie on the Day of Resurrection in their swearing that they did not stay in the world or *barzakh* for more than an hour. It is also revealed in another verse that the disbelievers will say on oath that they were not disbelievers وَاللّٰهِ رَبِّنَا مَا كُنَّا مُشْرِكِيْنَ (By Allah, our Lord, we ascribed no partners to Allah - 6:23). What needs to be understood here is that it will be Allah's court on the Day of Resurrection, and He will allow all and sundry to say whatever one wishes to say, whether one lies or speaks the truth. Allah is All-Knowledgeable and is not dependent on any one to find out what is false and what is true. When any one will speak a lie, his mouth will be sealed, and his skin, hair and limbs will be asked to give evidence. They will relate the truth in full detail, after which the liar will be left with no excuse. The verse اَلْيَوْمَ نَخْتِمُ عَلٰٓى اَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَتُكَلِّمُنَآ اَيْدِيْهِمْ (Today We set a seal on their mouths, and their hands will speak to Us. - 36:65) means the same. Some other Qur'ānic verses reveal that there will be different occasions for the appearance of human beings before Allah Ta'ālā on the Day of Resurrection. On one such occasion, no one will have the right to speak without permission from Allah Ta'ālā, and he will have to speak nothing but truth. It will not be possible for him to speak a lie, as stated in the verse لَايَتَكَلَّمُوْنَ اِلَّا مَنْ اَذِنَ لَهُ الرَّحْمٰنُ وَقَالَ صَوَابًا (They shall speak not, save him to whom the All-Merciful has given leave, and who speaks aright - 78:38).

No one will be able to speak a lie in the grave

As against this, it is related in some authentic *āḥādīth* in regard to questions and answers in the grave that when it will be asked from the infidels 'who is your Lord?' and 'who is Muhammad ﷺ?' they will answer هَاهْ هَاهْ لَا اَدْرِىْ That is 'Alas! I do not know any thing'. If it were possible to

speak a lie, he would have said 'Allah is my Lord' and 'Muḥammad ﷺ is His Prophet.' It looks rather strange that infidels are capable of speaking lies before Allah Ta'ālā, but not before the angels. But when it is looked at deeply, the explanation is simple, that is the angels neither have the knowledge of the unknown nor can they seek evidence from the limbs to confute the liar. If they had the capability of speaking lies before the angels, then all infidels and sinners would have been carefree about the torment of the grave. On the other hand, Allah Ta'ālā knows even the secrets of hearts, and also has the power to elicit evidence from the limbs and organs for exposing the liars. Therefore, allowing this freedom on the Day of Resurrection will not interfere with the rule of justice. والله اعلم

Sūrah Ar-Rūm was completed by grace of Allah on 28th of Dhulqa'dah, 1391 Hijrah.

Alḥamdulillāh
The Commentary on
Sūrah Ar-Rūm
Ends here.

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MA'ĀRIFUL-QUR'ĀN

BY

MAULĀNĀ MUFTI MUḤAMMAD SHAFI' رحمۃ اللہ علیہ

Translated by

Muḥammad Shamīm رحمۃ اللہ علیہ

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Maulānā Muḥammad Taqi 'Usmānī

Volume 7

(Sūrah Luqmān, As-Sajdah, Al-Aḥzāb, Saba', Faṭir, Yā Sīn, Aṣ-Ṣaffāt, Ṣād, Az-zumar, Al-Mu'min, Ḥāmīm As-Sajdah, Shūrā, Az-Zukhruf, Aljāthiyah, Ad-Dukhān, Al-Aḥkāf)

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❑❑❑

Preface

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

By the grace of Allah Almighty, the seventh volume of Ma'āriful-Qur'ān is now in the hands of the readers. But while presenting it to them, I am unable to suppress my sentiments of sorrow and grief on a shocking event that took place during the process of its completion. It was the sad demise of Professor Muḥammad Shamīm, who has been the vital spirit behind this project for about a decade. After completing the translation of the fifth volume, he had resumed his work on this seventh volume, the sixth volume being undertaken by Mr. Ishrat Ḥusain. He left Pakistan for USA on the request of his sons, so that they might look after his medical treatment. In spite of his deteriorating health during his stay in New York, he spared no effort to accomplish this volume. He worked day and night in his fervent zeal to serve the Holy Qur'ān up to his last breath, often ignoring that he was a heart patient. He started from surah Luqman and concluded Sūrah Mu'min on 7th March 2002. Immediately after he started Sūrah Ḥa Mīm As-Sajdah, he encountered a severe heart attack and, within a couple of days, passed away. *Innā lillāhī wā innā ilāihī rāji'ūn.* During his illness he used to express his desire to accomplish the work he had in hand, but a few days before his demise, he borrowed the words of the author of Ma'āriful-Qur'ān and said "I submit to Allah's will, because the Holy Qur'ān is not something to be finished, rather one should finish his life in the service of the Holy Qur'ān". Allah Ta'ālā has, perhaps, fulfilled his noble desire, and he consumed his life in carrying on this remarkable service of the Holy Book.

This seventh volume is thus appearing at a time when he is no more with us to see it. May Allah approve his sincere efforts and

bless him with eternal rewards in the Hereafter.

The translation from Sūrah Ḥā Mīm As-Sajdah was undertaken by my learned friend Mr. Shamshād Ṣiddiqī, except for sūrahs Ad-Dukhān and Aljāthiyah that are translated by Moulānā Aḥmad Khalīl 'Azīz of South Africa.

Another change that took place in the course of preparation of this volume is that the translation of the text of the Holy Qur'ān, as mentioned in the beginning of the first volume, was carried out by the joint effort of a committee, but when Professor Muḥammad Shamīm left for USA, the committee decided that the translation of the text of the Holy Qur'ān should be undertaken by me alone. Accordingly, I am responsible for the translation from Sūrah Al-Anbiyā' onwards, and I am pleased to say that Alḥamdulillāh the task has now been completed to the last Sūrah of the Holy Qur'ān. The translation of the eighth volume of the commentary is undertaken by Moulānā Aḥmad Khalīl 'Azīz of South Africa and is close to its completion.

I am extremely thankful to Mrs. Shamīm and her sons Mr. Shama'īl and Mr. Sadīm whose sincere efforts facilitated the preservation of the script of the book and its transmission to us. Acknowledgements are also due to Mr, Yousuf Noor, Mr. Isḥāq Noor, Mr. Yousuf Ghanī, Moulānā 'Abdullāh Memon, Mr. Rafat Ṣaghīr Fārooquī and Mr. Ibrāhīm Nafīs whose valuable assistance made it possible to present this volume. May Allah approve all these efforts and make it beneficial for the readers.

Muḥammad Taqi Usmānī
6.7.1424 A.H.

TRANSLITERATION SCHEME

Arabic Letter	Name of Letter		English Transliteration
ا	الف	-- Alif	a
ب	باء	-- bā	b
ت	تاء	-- tā	t
ث	ثاء	-- thā	th
ج	جيم	-- jīm	j
ح	حاء	-- ḥā	ḥ
خ	خاء	-- khā	kh
د	دال	-- dāl	d
ذ	ذال	-- dhāl	dh
ر	راء	-- rā	r
ز	زای	-- zā	z
س	سين	-- sīn	s
ش	شين	-- shīn	sh
ص	صاد	-- ṣād	ṣ
ض	ضاد	-- ḍād	ḍ
ط	طاء	-- ṭā	ṭ
ظ	ظاء	-- ẓā	ẓ
ع	عين	-- ʻayn	ʻ
غ	غين	-- ghayn	gh
ف	فاء	-- fā	f
ق	قاف	-- qāf	q
ک	کاف	-- kāf	k
ل	لام	-- lām	l
م	ميم	-- mīm	m
ن	نون	-- nūn	n
ه	هاء	-- hā	h
و	واؤ	-- wāw	w
ء	همزه	-- Hamzah	'
ی	ياء	-- yā	y

Short Vowels

	: Fatḥah	a
	: Kasrah	i
	: Ḍammah	u

Long Vowels

ا	:Shortened Alif	ā
آ	: Maddah Alif	ā
ی	: Maddah Yā	ī
ؤ	: Maddah Wāw	ū

Dipthongs

ای	: Alif and Yā	ay (also ai in some cases)
او اؤ	: Alif and Wāw	aw (also au in some cases)

Sūrah Luqmān

Sūrah Luqmān is Makkī. It has 34 Verses and 4 Sections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 9

الٓمّٓ ﴿١﴾ تِلْكَ اٰيٰتُ الْكِتٰبِ الْحَكِيْمِ ﴿٢﴾ هُدًى وَّرَحْمَةً
لِّلْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ﴿٣﴾ الَّذِيْنَ يُقِيْمُوْنَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَيُؤْتُوْنَ الزَّكٰوةَ وَهُمْ
بِالْاٰخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوْقِنُوْنَ ﴿٤﴾ اُولٰٓئِكَ عَلٰى هُدًى مِّنْ رَّبِّهِمْ وَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ
الْمُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿٥﴾ وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَّشْتَرِيْ لَهْوَ الْحَدِيْثِ لِيُضِلَّ عَنْ
سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ ۖ وَّيَتَّخِذَهَا هُزُوًا ۗ اُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّهِيْنٌ
﴿٦﴾ وَاِذَا تُتْلٰى عَلَيْهِ اٰيٰتُنَا وَلّٰى مُسْتَكْبِرًا كَاَنْ لَّمْ يَسْمَعْهَا كَاَنَّ فِيْٓ
اُذُنَيْهِ وَقْرًا ۚ فَبَشِّرْهُ بِعَذَابٍ اَلِيْمٍ ﴿٧﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا
الصّٰلِحٰتِ لَهُمْ جَنّٰتُ النَّعِيْمِ ﴿٨﴾ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا ۗ وَعْدَ اللّٰهِ حَقًّا ۗ
وَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ ﴿٩﴾

Alif Lām Mīm. [1] **These are verses of the Wise Book,** [2] **a guidance and mercy for those good in deeds** [3] **who are steadfast in Ṣalāh and who pay Zakāh and do have faith in the Hereafter.** [4] **It is these who are on guidance given by their Lord, and it is just these who are successful.** [5]

And from among the people, there is he who buys the distracting amusement of things, so that he, being

devoid of knowledge, may mislead (people) from the Way of Allah and make a mockery of it. Such people are the ones for whom there is a disgraceful punishment. [6]

And when Our verses are recited to him, he turns away in arrogance as if he did not hear them, as if there is heaviness in his ears. So give him the 'good' news of a painful punishment. [7]

Surely, those who believe and do righteous deeds, for them there are gardens of bliss [8] **where they shall live forever - an absolute promise of Allah. And He is the Mighty, the Wise.** [9]

Commentary

The words: يُؤْتُوْنَ الزَّكٰوةَ (pay Zakāh) in Verse 4 carry the injunction of Zakāh, although the verse is Makkī.. This tells us that the original injunction of Zakāh had already been revealed before Hijrah, right there in Makkah al-Mu'aẓẓamah. As for the popular assumption that the injunction of Zakāh was enforced in the second year of Hijrah, it refers to the arrangement of fixing its *nisāb* (threshold), providing details of obligatory amount to be paid, collecting and disbursing it on authorized heads by the Islāmic government. This was done in the second year of Hijrah.

Ibn Kathīr while commenting on verse 20 of Sūrah Al-Muzzammil: اَقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتُوا الزَّكٰوةَ (Establish Ṣalāh and pay Zakāh - 73:20) has arrived at the same conclusion, because Sūrah Al-Muzzammil as one of the Makkī Sūrahs was revealed during the very initial period of the revelation of the Qur'ān. This tells us that the way Ṣalāh and Zakāh have been described mostly side by side in the verses of the Qur'ān, its obligation had also taken effect side by side. Allah knows best.

The word: اشتراء (*ishtirā'*) in: وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَّشْتَرِىْ لَهْوَالْحَدِيْثِ (And from among the people who buys the distracting amusement of things - 31:6) literally means 'to buy.' And on occasions, the same word is used in the sense of 'doing an act instead of another' - as in: اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ اشْتَرَوُا الضَّلٰلَةَ بِالْهُدٰى (These are the people who have bought error at the price of guidance - 2:16, 2:175) and in some other verses.

The Cause of Revelation

This verse was revealed because of a particular event relating to Naḍr Ibn Ḥārith. He was one of the top businessmen from among the *Mushriks*

of Makkah who used to travel to different countries in connection with his business. Once he bought and brought back a collection of historical stories featuring Cyrus and other Persian kings from Iran. Thus armed, he said to the Quraish of Makkah: "Muḥammad ﷺ tells you the stories of the people of 'Ād and Thamūd and others. I shall tell you better stories, those of Rustam, Isfandyār and other kings of Persia. They started listening to his stories eagerly simply because they contained no lessons to learn and no work to do. It was nothing but some delicious stories. Because of these, many *Mushriks* who had some measure of interest in the Divine Word because of its miraculous nature, rather listened to it stealthily, found an excuse to draw away from the Qur'ān. (ذكره فى الروح عن اسباب النزول للواحدى و مقاتل و ذكر نحوه فى الدر المنثور برواية البيهقى)

And according to a narration of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه in Ad-Durr al-Manthūr, the businessman mentioned above had brought in a singing bondwoman he bought in a foreign country. It was through her that he devised a plan to stop people from listening to the Qur'ān. When he found anyone intending to go and listen to the Qu'ān, he would have him hear his bondwoman sing before him. He used to say: 'Muḥammad ﷺ makes you listen to the Qur'ān, then goes on to ask you to pray and fast which make life difficult for you. Come, you listen to this music and enjoy the fun.'

The verse of the Qur'ān being referred to here was revealed in relation to this very event. Here, the *ishtirā'* (buying) of *lahw al-ḥadīth* (the distracting amusement of things) means either those tales of the Persian kings, or this singing bondwoman. In terms of the event in the background of the revelation, the word: إشْتِرَاء (*ishtirā'*) has been used in the real sense for buying.

And in terms of the general sense of لَهْوَالْحَدِيْث (*lahw al-ḥadīth*: the distracting amusement of things) being enunciated later, the word: إشْتِرَاء (*ishtirā'*) is also in its general sense at this place, that is, to opt for something instead of something else. This includes the buying of things of '*lahw*' (amusement) as well.

As for the word: حَدِيْث (*ḥadīth*) in لَهْوَالْحَدِيْث (*lahw al-ḥadīth*), it is there in the sense of tales told and things said and done. Then the word '*lahw*' itself literally means to become heedless. In other words, things that make

one become negligent of what must be done are also called *'lahw.'* Then there are occasions when things that bring no worthwhile benefit, rather serve as pastime or entertainment only, are also referred to as لَهو *'lahw.'*

As regards the meaning and exegetical explanation of the expression: لَهْوَالْحَدِيْث (*lahw al-ḥadīth*: distracting amusement of things - 4) in the cited verse, sayings of commentators differ. In a narration of Sayyidnā Ibn Mas'ūd, Ibn 'Abbās and Jābir رضی اللّٰہ عنهم اجمعين, it has been explained as music, vocal or instrumental (reported and verified by al-Ḥākim, and al-Baihaqī in ash-Shu'ab).

And in the view of the majority of Ṣaḥābah, Tābi'īn and commentators at large, the expression: لَهْوَالْحَدِيْث (*lahw al-ḥadīth:* the distracting amusement of things) applies generally to everything which makes one fall into a state of heedlessness as to the remembrance and worship of Allah. Included therein is music accompanied by instruments, and obscene or absurd fictional narratives as well. Imām al-Bukhārī in his book, al-'Adab al-Mufrad, and al-Baihaqī in his Sunan have both elected to go by this Tafsīr. Al-Bukhārī has said:

لَهْوَالْحَدِيْثِ هُوَالْغِنَآءُ وَاَشْبَاهُه‘

'Lahw al-ḥadīth' means playing music and things similar to it (which make one heedless to the worship of Allah).

And it appears in Sunan al-Baihaqī that opting for or buying the distracting amusement of things (اِشْتِرَاء لَهْوَالْحَدِيْث : *ishtirā' lahw al-ḥadīth*) means buying a bondman or bondwoman who sings and plays instruments, or buying similar other immodest things which make one heedless to the remembrance of Allah. Ibn Jarīr has also taken to this general sense. The same generality is proved by a narration of Tirmidhī where the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said, 'Do not buy or sell singing bondwomen,' after which he said, مثل هذا انزلت هذه الاية وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَّشْتَرِىْ (About such things this verse [i.e. verse 6 which is under discussion] was revealed)

Islamic Legal Injunctions of لَهْو وَلَعِب *'Lahw wa La'ib'* (play and game) and its Equipment

Full details of these injunctions supported by proofs from the Qur'ān and Sunnah have been provided in a treatise contained in احكام القران

(Aḥkām ul-Qur'ān) written by this humble writer. It also carries an equally detailed discussion on music and musical instruments in the light of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth along with the sayings of Muslim jurists and mystics. This treatise in Arabic* has been published in volume V of Aḥkām ul-Qur'ān. Learned readers may consult it at their discretion. A gist is being given here for others interested in the subject.

First of all, it should be borne in mind wherever the Qur'ān has mentioned *Lahw* and *La'ib,* it is in the context of its disparagement and degradation, the lowest degree of which is *karāhah* (repugnance or reprehensibility) (Rūḥ ul-M'ānī and al-Kashshāf) and the cited verse is open and clear in declaring it as vice.

And in Kitābul-Jihād of al-Ḥākim's Mustadrak, it has been reported by Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

كُلُّ شَيْءٍ مِّنْ لَهْوِ الدُّنْيَا بَاطِلٌ اِلاَّ ثَلٰثة: اِنْتِضَالُكَ بِقَوْسِكَ وَتَأْدِيْبُكَ لِفَرَسِكَ، وَمُلاَعَبَتُكَ لِاَهْلِكَ فَاِنَّهُنَّ مِنَ الْحَقِّ

Every Lahw (play) of the world is false except three things: (1) that you play with your bow and arrow (2) and that you play while training your horse and (3) that you play with your wife - because these are among acceptable rights.

(Ḥākim has said that this Ḥadīth is Ṣaḥīḥ on the condition set forth by Muslim. But, adh-Dhahabī and others have not accepted it as *muttaṣil,* (of an uninterrupted chain) Instead, he calls it a *mursal* (of an interrupted chain). But, in the sight of the majority of Ḥadīth experts, a *mursal* hadith is also authentic).

In this Ḥadīth, every *'lahw'* or play has been declared as false with the exception of three. These, in reality, are just not included under the definition of *'lahw'* because *'lahw'* is supposed to be something in which there is no worthwhile religious or worldly benefit. And these three things are worthwhile. Many religious and worldly advantages are attached with them. As for archery and training of horses, they are part of the preparation for Jihād. Then, playfulness with one's wife serves the purpose of procreation. That they have been named as *'lahw'* is simply because of outward similarity. In terms of reality, they are just not included under *'lahw.'* Similarly, other than these three, there are many things that yield religious or worldly benefit while, seen outwardly, they are supposed to be *'lahw'* or play. These too have been rated as

permissible in other narrations of Ḥadīth; in fact, some of these have been declared to be commendable. Relevant detail will follow.

In gist, the doing of things which are *'lahw,'* in real terms, that is, in which there is no benefit, neither religious nor worldly, are all necessarily blameworthy and *makrūh* (repugnant, reprehensible) after all. Then, there are details about them. Some reach the extent of *kufr* (infidelity). Others are explicitly *ḥarām* (forbidden) the lowest degree of which is their being *makrūh tanzīhī*, that is, counter to the preferred choice (*khilāf al-awlā*). No *'lahw,'* which really qualifies as *'lahw,'* is exempt from it. As for the plays exempted in Ḥadīth, they just do not fall under the definition of *'lahw'* as it has been already clarified in Ḥadīth itself. In Abū Dāwūd, Tirmidhī, An-Nasā'ī and Ibn Mājah, there is a narration from Sayyidnā 'Uqbah Ibn 'Amir ؓ. It appears in Kitāb ul-Jihād in the words: لَيْسَ مِنَ اللَّهْوِ ثَلَاثٌ تَأْدِيبُ الرَّجُلِ فَرَسَهُ وَمُلَاعَبَتُهُ أَهْلَهُ وَرَمْيُهُ بِقَوْسِهِ وَنَبْلِهِ (Three things do not fall under *'lahw:'* (1) Man training his horse and (2) playing with his wife and (3) shooting with his bow and arrows (Naṣbur-Rāyah, p. 273, v. 4). This Ḥadīth has itself made it clear that these three things that have been exempted are simply not included in *'lahw.'*- and that which is really *'lahw'* is false and blameworthy. The different degrees of its blameworthiness follow next:

1. Playing that becomes a conduit of going astray from one's Religion, or making others turn away from it, is *kufr* (infidelity) - as stated in the cited verse: وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَّشْتَرِىْ لَهْوَالْحَدِيْثِ - 6. There it has been declared to be an act of grave error and infidelity, the punishment of which is painful, a punishment particular to those who have disbelieved (*kuffār*). The reason is that this verse was revealed following an event relating to Naḍr Ibn Ḥārith in which he had used this *'lahw'* to divert people from Islām. Therefore, this *'lahw'* (distracting amusement) did not remain simply *ḥarām* (forbidden), in fact, it went to the extent of becoming *kufr* (infidelity).

2. The second form is that which does not make people go astray from Islamic Beliefs, but does make them get involved with something forbidden and sinful. This, then, would not be *kufr* as such. But, patently unlawful and gravely sinful it shall remain - as do all those games played with bets. In other words, these may be games where the element of gambling (*qimār*) is present with giving or

taking of money on winning or losing, or recreational activities that impede the performance of religious duties such as prayers and fasting etc.

The reading of Shameless Fiction or Poetry or Writings of the Proponents of the False is also Not Permissible.

In our time, an alarming number of young people get introduced to shameless fiction, stories and novels based on plots featuring people who fancy and flirt with crimes, and poetry composed of indecent and shameless couplets. All these things are included under this kind of distracting amusement which is forbidden '*lahw*.' Similarly, the study of ideas dished out by the wayward proponents of the false is also not permissible for common people, because this could become an active agent in misleading them from the straight path. Should the 'Ulamā' who are well grounded in religious knowledge study them for rebuttal, it does not matter.

3. As for playing games that have neither an element of *kufr* (infidelity) nor of open sinfulness, they are *makrūh* (repugnant) in that one would be wasting his energy and time in an activity that yields no benefit.

Buying and Selling of the Equipment used in Games

From the details given above, we have also come to know the rule operating in the buying and selling of equipment used in games. The rule is that the trading, buying and selling of equipment used in games characterized by infidelity, error, unlawfulness and sin is also *ḥarām* (forbidden). And that which is used in *makrūh lahw*, its trading is also *makrūh*; and the equipment that is used in permissible and exempted games, its trading is also permissible; and the equipment that is used in permissible and impermissible activities both, its trading is permissible.

Allowed and Permissible Games

As already explained in detail, what is blameworthy and prohibited is that particular '*lahw*' or amusement or play or game which has no religious or worldly benefit in it. Games played to maintain physical health and mobility, or for some other religious or worldly need, or at the least, are for relief from fatigue without any excessive indulgence to the extent of causing disruption in necessary duties, then, such games are

allowed by the Sharī'ah. And should the participation in them be with the intention of fulfilling a religious need, then, they are *thawāb*-worthy as well.

Also mentioned in the Ḥadīth appearing above was the exemption of three game forms from the prohibition: Shooting of arrows, riding horses and playing with *'ahl'* (wife). And in a *marfū' ḥadīth* (attributed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ) from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, it appears: خير لهوالمؤمن السباحة وخير لهو المرأة المغزل (The best game for a believer is swimming and the best game for a woman is the spinning wheel) (al-Jami' aṣ-Ṣaghir, from Ibn 'Adiyy, with weak chain of narrators).

According to a narration, Sayyidnā Salamah Ibn Akwa' رضي الله عنه, says, "Someone from among the Anṣār of Madīnah was a great sprinter. No one could win a race against him. Once he publicly threw a challenge if there was anyone who would run a race against him. I sought the permission of the Holy Prophet ﷺ if I could compete against him. When he gave me the permission, I was the one who went ahead in the race.' This tells us that it is also permissible to practice foot racing.

Once, when a well-known wrestler called Rukānah challenged the Holy Prophet ﷺ to wrestle against him, he accepted the challenge and won the bout (Abū Dāwūd in al-marāsīl).

Some Ethiopian young men used to play with spears as a rehearsal. The Holy Prophet ﷺ let Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها see their game of martial skill while she stood behind his back and he said to the performers, "اِلْهُوا وَالْعَبُوا" (*ilhū wal-'abū:* have fun, keep playing) [Reported by al-Baihaqī in Ash-Shu'ab, as in al-Kanz, Bab ul-Lahw). In some narrations, the following words also appear along with it: فَاِنِّىْ اَكْرَهُ اَنْ يُّرٰى فِىْ دِيْنِكُمْ غِلْظَةٌ (I do not like that people see harshness in your religion).

Similarly, it has been reported from some Ṣaḥābah that they, when tired after their duties relating to the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth, would once in a while relax with Arab poetry or historical events (from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه in Kaff ar-Ra'a').

In a Ḥadīth, it was said: "رَوِّحُوا الْقُلُوْبَ سَاعَةً فَسَاعَةً"] (Let your hearts rest now and then).[Reported by Abū Dāwūd in his Marāsīl from Ibn Shihāb *'mursalan'*, that is, attributed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ by the student of one of the Ṣaḥābah with

the name of the narrating Ṣaḥabī not mentioned] This ḥadīth proves the permissibility of recreation meant to relax one's mind and heart and the need to spare some time for it.

However, when doing all these things, the aim should be to achieve the correct and sound objective of those games. Playing for the sake of playing should never be the objective. Even that too is restricted to the measure of need. Any indulgence that stretches to unreasonable proportions or touches the limits of excess would not be in order. Thus, the reason behind the justification of all these games is no other but that they have to be within their limits. If so, they would just not be counted as *'lahw.'*

Games Prohibited Explicitly

Along with the games mentioned above, there are others the Holy Prophet ﷺ has prohibited particularly - even though, some benefits may be seen therein - such as, chess, backgammon and others played with counters and pieces. If accompanied by giving and taking of money on winning and losing, then, this is gambling, and is absolutely *ḥarām* (forbidden). And should this not be the case and they may be played just for enjoyment, even then, they have been prohibited in Ḥadīth. According to a narration of Sayyidnā Buraidah in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "A person who plays backgammon is like the one who has smeared his hands with the blood of pig." Similar to this, there is another narration where words of curse appear against the player of chess. ('Uqaili in aḍ-Ḍu'afā' from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ as in Naṣbur-Rāyah)

Similarly, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has declared playing with pigeons as impermissible. [Abū Dāwūd in al-Marasīl from Shuraiḥ as in al-Kanz] The apparent reason for the prohibition of this type of pastimes is that the player of these games becomes so preoccupied with them that he would turn heedless towards other things he must do, even to Ṣalāh, and other religious obligations.

The Injunctions of Music and Musical Instruments

Some Ṣaḥābah have explained the expression: لَهْوَالْحَدِيْث (*lahw al-ḥadīth*: the distracting amusement of things) in the cited verse as singing and playing of musical instruments. Then, there are others who have explained it in the general sense and consider every such playful

activity that makes one heedless towards Allah to be the meaning of: لَهْوَالْحَدِيْث (*lahw al-ḥadīth*). But, even in their view, singing and playing of instrumental music are included therein.

And in another verse of the Qur'ān: لَايَشْهَدُوْنَ الزُّوْرَ (those who do not witness falsehood - Al-Furqān, 25:72), the word: ... (az-zūr: falsehood, the false) has been explained by Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, Mujāhid, Muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥanafiyyah and others as '*ghinā* (singing and playing of instrumental music).

And Abū Dāwūd and Ibn Mājah in Sunan and Ibn Ḥibbān in his Ṣaḥīḥ have reported from Sayyidnā Abū Mālik al-Ash'arī ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

لَيَشْرَبَنَّ نَاسٌ مِّنْ أُمَّتِى الْخَمْرَ يُسَمُّوْنَهَا بِغَيْرِ اسْمِهَا يُعْزَفُ عَلٰى رُؤُسِهِمْ بِالْمَعَازِفِ وَالْمُغَنِّيَاتِ، يَخْسِفُ اللّٰهُ بِهِمُ الاَرْضَ وَيَجْعَلُ اللّٰهُ مِنْهُمُ الْقِرَدَةَ وَالْخَنَازِيْرَ

Indeed some people from my community will drink wine giving it a name other than the name it already has. Music will be played right on their faces with instruments and singing women in attendance. Allah Ta'ala will make the earth sink with them, while He will make some of them monkeys and pigs.

And according to a narration from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Allah Ta'ālā has forbidden wine, gambling, drum and *sārangī* (string instrument like violin) and he said, "Everything that intoxicates is *ḥarām* (forbidden, unlawful) [Reported by Imām Aḥmad, Abū Dāwūd and Ibn Ḥibbān]

It has been reported from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

روى عن ابى هُريرةؓ قال قال رسول اللّٰه صلى اللّٰه عليه وسلّم اذا اتخذ الفئ دولاً والامانة مغنمًا والزكوٰة مغرمًا وتعلم لغيرالدين واطاع الرجل امرأته وعقّ أمّه وأدنى صديقه وأقصى أباه وظهرت الاصوات فى المساجد وساد القبيلة فاسقهم وكان زعيم القوم أرذلهم وأُكرِمَ الرّجل مخافة شرّه وظهرت القيان و المعازف وشربت الخمور ولعن أخرهذه الأمّة أوّلها فليرتقبوا عند ذٰلك ريحا حمراء وزلزلة وخسفًا ومسخًا وقذفًا وآيات تتابع كنظام بال قطع سلكه فتتابع بعضه بعضا (رواه الترمذى وقال هذا حديث حسن غريب)

When spoils are taken as personal property and trust property

as spoils and Zakāh as penalty, and religious learning is acquired for worldly objectives, and when man starts obeying his wife and disobeying his mother, and keeps his friend near and his father far, and when voices rise in mosques and the chief of a tribe becomes its worst sinner and when the chief of a people becomes their lowest of the low and when wicked people are respected out of fear for them, and when singing girls and musical instruments appear all over and when wines of all sorts are consumed and when the later of this Ummah start cursing the former - then, at that time, you wait for a red storm, and earthquake, and the sinking of the earth, and the metamorphosis of figures and faces, and missiles, and the signs of Doomsday following each other, one after the other, like a broken necklace with its beads scattered simultaneously.

(Reported by Tirmidhī calling it a Hasan-Gharīb Ḥadīth)

A Warning Not to Be Ignored!

Read the words of this Ḥadīth again and again, and you will start seeing a blueprint of the world of our time spread out before you. Here is an advance warning given by the Holy Prophet ﷺ almost fourteen hundred years ago, against sins prevailing among Muslims, and which are increasing day by day. He has reminded Muslims that they have to remain vigilant against such conditions and take full precautions to avoid such sins both personally and socially. Otherwise, once these sins become accepted common practice, such sinners will be visited by Divine punishments. Then, the very last signs of Qiyāmah will appear squarely before them. Since, the singing of women and the playing of musical instruments are included under those sins, this narration has been cited in the present context.

For that matter, there are many more authentic Aḥādīth where singing and playing of musical instruments have been declared unlawful and impermissible. Severe warnings have been given against indulging in these. This humble writer has cited all these narrations in his treatise entitled: كشف الغناء عن وصف الغنا which is in Arabic and has been published as Part V of Aḥkām ul-Qur'ān. Only some of those have been given here.

Reciting morally beneficial poetry in a good voice without musical instruments is not prohibited

In contrast to what has been stated above, there are narrations that

seem to hint towards permissibility of '*ghinā*' (singing). Such narrations have also been collected and included in the treatise referred to here. To bring the two kinds of narration in harmony, it can be said that the singing of a *non-maḥram* woman, or a song accompanied by musical instruments are forbidden. This is in accordance with what has been proved on the authority of the cited verses of the Qur'ān and from the Aḥādīth of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. However, if some poetic compositions are recited in a pleasing voice, and the reciting person is not a woman or a beardless young man, and the subject of the poetry recited is also not vulgar or indecent and is not inclusive of any other sin, then, it is permissible.

As for the reports attributed to some revered *ṣūfīs*, that they listened to '*ghinā*' (*samā'*), it is based on this kind of permissible '*ghinā*'- because, it is certain that they followed the Sharī'ah and Sunnah faithfully. That they would ever commit some such sin, simply cannot be imagined. Those learned among the Ṣūfīs have themselves explained it explicitly. The treatise mentioned earlier carries the sayings of the jurists of the four schools of jurisprudence as well as those of the Ṣūfī authorities. At this place, the summary as given has been considered sufficient in the present context.*

Verses 10 - 11

خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ بِغَيْرِ عَمَدٍ تَرَوْنَهَا وَاَلْقٰى فِى الْاَرْضِ رَوَاسِىَ اَنْ تَمِيْدَ بِكُمْ وَبَثَّ فِيْهَا مِنْ كُلِّ دَآبَّةٍ ؕ وَاَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً فَاَنْۢبَتْنَا فِيْهَا مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجٍ كَرِيْمٍ ﴿۱۰﴾ هٰذَا خَلْقُ اللّٰهِ فَاَرُوْنِىْ مَاذَا خَلَقَ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِهٖ ؕ بَلِ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ فِىْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿۱۱﴾

He has created the skies without the pillars that you may see, and placed mountains on the earth, lest it shakes with you, and spread over it all kinds of creatures. And We sent down water from the heavens and caused to grow in it every noble pair. [10] **This is**

*. The original work in Arabic and its Urdu translation with exhaustive notes under the title, "Islām *aur Mausiqi*" (Islām and Music) has been published by Maktaba-e-Darul-Uloom, Jamia Darul-Uloom, Korangi, Karachi-75180, Pakistan. Those interested in a detailed discussion of the subject would find both versions useful.

the creation of Allah. Now, show me what is created by those others, besides Him. Rather, the transgressors are in open error. [11]

Commentary

Verse 10 opens with the words: خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ بِغَيْرِ عَمَدٍ تَرَوْنَهَا (He has created the skies without the pillars that you may see). Another verse on the same subject: اَللّٰهُ الَّذِىْ رَفَعَ السَّمٰوٰتِ بِغَيْرِ عَمَدٍ تَرَوْنَهَا (Allah is the One who raised the heavens without pillars. You see them. 13:2) has appeared earlier in Sūrah Ar-Ra'd (with a different translation). Analyzed grammatically, the text admits two alternative meanings.

1. If we were to take تَرَوْنَهَا (*tarawnahā*) to be the attribute of عَمَد (*'amad*) and revert its pronoun to *'amad*, it would mean that Allah Ta'ālā created the skies without pillars that you may see, that is, had the pillars been there, you would have seen them. When pillars are not seen, it is clear that this great roof of the sky has been erected without pillars. This explanation has been reported from Sayyidnā Ḥasan ؓ and Qatādah. (Ibn Kathīr)

2. And if we were to take the pronoun of: تَرَوْنَهَا (*tarawnahā*) as reverting to: السَّمٰوٰت (*as-samāwāt*: the skies) and this sentence as standing independently, then, it would mean that 'Allah Ta'ālā created the skies without pillars as you see.' Then, there is yet another option in the case of the first grammatical analysis whereby it could also be taken to mean that 'The skies stand on pillars that you cannot see - they are invisible.' This last explanation has been reported from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās, 'Ikrimah and Mujāhid رضى الله عنهم اجمعين (Ibn Kathīr).

No matter what the option, the verse does point out to the particular sign of the perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā that He has made this extensive, high and magnificent roof in a way that no column and pillar is seen thereunder.

Verses 12 - 19

وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا لُقْمٰنَ الْحِكْمَةَ اَنِ اشْكُرْ لِلّٰهِ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّشْكُرْ فَاِنَّمَا يَشْكُرُ لِنَفْسِهٖ ۚ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَنِىٌّ حَمِيْدٌ ﴿۱۲﴾ وَاِذْ قَالَ لُقْمٰنُ لِابْنِهٖ

وَهُوَ يَعِظُهٗ يٰبُنَىَّ لَاتُشْرِكْ بِاللّٰهِ ط اِنَّ الشِّرْكَ لَظُلْمٌ عَظِيْمٌ ﴿۱۳﴾
وَوَصَّيْنَا الْاِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ ج حَمَلَتْهُ اُمُّهٗ وَهْنًا عَلٰى وَهْنٍ وَّفِصٰلُهٗ فِىْ
عَامَيْنِ اَنِ اشْكُرْ لِىْ وَلِوَالِدَيْكَ ط اِلَىَّ الْمَصِيْرُ ﴿۱٤﴾ وَاِنْ جَاهَدٰكَ
عَلٰى اَنْ تُشْرِكَ بِىْ مَالَيْسَ لَكَ بِهٖ عِلْمٌ لا فَلَا تُطِعْهُمَا وَصَاحِبْهُمَا فِى
الدُّنْيَا مَعْرُوْفًا وَّاتَّبِعْ سَبِيْلَ مَنْ اَنَابَ اِلَىَّ ج ثُمَّ اِلَىَّ مَرْجِعُكُمْ
فَاُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۱٥﴾ يٰبُنَىَّ اِنَّهَآ اِنْ تَكُ مِثْقَالَ حَبَّةٍ مِّنْ
خَرْدَلٍ فَتَكُنْ فِىْ صَخْرَةٍ اَوْ فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ اَوْفِى الْاَرْضِ يَاْتِ بِهَا
اللّٰهُ ط اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَطِيْفٌ خَبِيْرٌ ﴿۱٦﴾ يٰبُنَىَّ اَقِمِ الصَّلٰوةَ وَاْمُرْ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ
وَانْهَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَاصْبِرْ عَلٰى مَآ اَصَابَكَ ط اِنَّ ذٰلِكَ مِنْ عَزْمِ الْاُمُوْرِ
﴿۱۷﴾ وَلَا تُصَعِّرْ خَدَّكَ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا تَمْشِ فِى الْاَرْضِ مَرَحًا ط اِنَّ اللّٰهَ
لَايُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُوْرٍ ﴿۱۸﴾ وَاقْصِدْ فِىْ مَشْيِكَ وَاغْضُضْ مِنْ
صَوْتِكَ ط اِنَّ اَنْكَرَ الْاَصْوَاتِ لَصَوْتُ الْحَمِيْرِ ﴿۱۹﴾

And We gave wisdom to Luqmān, (and said), "Be grateful to Allah." And whoever is grateful is, in fact, grateful for his own benefit, and whoever is ungrateful, then Allah is free of all needs, worthy of all praise. [12]

And when Luqmān said to his son while he was advising him, "My dear son, do not ascribe partners to Allah. Indeed, ascribing partners to Allah (*shirk*) is grave transgression." [13]

We commanded man (to be good) about his parents. His mother carried him facing weakness after weakness, and his weaning is in two years: "Be grateful to Me and to your parents. To Me is the ultimate return. [14] And if they force you to ascribe to Him partners about whom you have no knowledge, do not obey them. And be with them in this world, with due fairness, and follow the way of the one who has turned himself towards Me. Then, towards Me is your return, so I shall tell you about what you had been doing." [15]

"My dear son, in fact, if there be anything to the measure of a grain of rye, and it be (hidden) in a rock or in the heavens or in the earth, Allah will bring it forth. Surely, Allah is All-Fine, All Aware. [16] **My dear son, establish Ṣalāh, and bid the Fair and forbid the Unfair, and observe patience on what befalls you. Surely, this is among the matters of determination.** [17] **And do not turn your cheek away from people, and do not walk on the earth haughtily. Surely, Allah does not like anyone arrogant, proud.** [18] **And be moderate in your walk, and lower your voice. Surely, the ugliest of voices is the voice of the donkeys."** [19]

Commentary

Who was Luqmān عليه السلام mentioned in verse 12: وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا لُقْمٰنَ الْحِكْمَةَ (And We gave wisdom to Luqmān)? According to a report of Wahb Ibn Munnabih, Luqmān, عليه السلام was a nephew of Sayyidnā Ayyūb (Job) عليه السلام while Muqātil identifies him as his brother from his maternal aunt. It appears in Tafsīr ul-Baiḍāwī and elsewhere that he lived long, as long as the time of Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام. It is proved by other reports too that Luqmān, عليه السلام appeared during the time of Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام.

And the report of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه appearing in ad-Durr al-Manthūr says that he was an Ethiopian slave who worked as a carpenter (narrated by Ibn Abī Shaibah and Aḥmad in az-Zuhd, and Ibn Jarīr and Ibn al-Mundhir and others). When the Ṣaḥābī, Sayyidnā Jābir Ibn 'Abdullāh رضي الله عنه was asked about his background, he said that he was an Ethiopian of low height and flat nose. And Mujāhid said that he was a thick-lipped, cracked-footed Ethiopian slave (al-Zajjāj). (Ibn Kathīr)

An Ethiopian came to Sa'īd Ibn al-Musayyab looking for an answer to some religious problem. The famous Tābi'ī consoled him by telling him that he should not worry about the dark color of his skin, because there were three highly revered persons from among the black people who were regarded as the best of any people anywhere. Then he cited the names of Sayyidnā Bilāl al-Ḥabashī, Sayyidnā Mahja', the freed slave of Sayyidnā 'Umar Ibn ul-Khaṭṭāb رضی اللہ عنہم اجمعین, and Luqmān عليه السلام.

The Identity of Luqmān عليه السلام

According to Ibn Kathīr, the majority of the elders concur that he was not a prophet. That he was a prophet has been reported only from

'Ikrimah , but the authority of this report is weak. Then, Imām al-Baghawī reports a consensus on the fact that he was a man of wisdom and knowledgeable in religious law, but not a prophet. (Maẓharī)

Ibn Kathīr has also pointed out to an unusual report from Sayyidnā Qatādah about him saying that Allah Ta'ālā had given Luqmān عليه السلام a choice between prophethood (*nubuwwah*) and wisdom (*ḥikmah*). He opted for wisdom. And in some reports, it appears that he was given the option to be a prophet. But he had submitted that he would be honored to accept it if that was a command, otherwise he should be excused.

Again, it has also been reported from Sayyidnā Qatādah that someone asked Luqmān, عليه السلام: 'Why did you prefer wisdom over prophethood while you were given a choice between the two?' He said, 'The office of a prophet carries great responsibilities. Had that been given to me without my choice, Allah Ta'ālā would have been sufficient to see that I am enabled to discharge its responsibilities as due. And if I had asked for it with my choice and volition, the responsibility would have been mine.' (Ibn Kathīr)

Now, it already stands established that Luqmān عليه السلام was not a *Nabiyy* or prophet. This is as held by the majority of the scholars. So, we can say that the command mentioned in the present verse (i.e.Be grateful to Allah) could have been given to him through Ilhām (inspiration) attributed to men of Allah (*awliyā' Allah*).

Before the time of Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام, Luqmān عليه السلام used to give *Fatwā* (religious rulings on questions asked by people). When Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام was invested with prophethood, he stopped this practice believing that he was not needed anymore. According to some reports, he was a judge among the Banī Isrā'īl. Many words of wisdom have been reported from him. Wahb Ibn Munnabih says that he has read more than ten thousand of these. (Qurṭubī)

On a certain day, while sage Luqmān was addressing a big gathering of people sharing his wisdom with them, there came a person and asked him point blank: 'Are you not the same person who used to graze goats with me in such and such forest?' Luqmān عليه السلام, said: 'Yes, I am the same person." The man asked, 'How then, could you achieve this status that such multitudes of people hold you in reverence and come to hear your

words from far and wide?' Luqmān ﷺ, said: 'The reason lies in two things I do: (1) Always telling the truth and (2) avoiding the useless things. It appears in another report that he said: 'I tell you about a few things that have given me this station in life. If you were to take to these, you too will have the same rank and status. These are as follow: (1) Lower your gaze and hold your tongue. (2) Stay content with lawful sustenance. (3) Guard your private parts. (4) Tell the truth and uphold it. (5) Fulfill the pledge. (6) Honor the guest. (7) Protect the neighbor. (8) Observe silence against wasteful speech and leave off all useless indulgences.' (Ibn Kathīr)

What does the '*ḥikmah*' given to Luqmān actually mean?

The word: حِكْمَة (*ḥikmah*) has been used in the Qur'ān (20 times) conveying several meanings such as wisdom, knowledge, reason, forbearance, patience, prophethood, and correctness of opinion.

Commentator Abū Ḥayyān has said: '*Ḥikmah* means a statement in words, a statement that teaches people a lesson, a lesson that goes down their hearts and which they conserve and communicate to others.'

And the famous Ṣaḥābī, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ said: '*Ḥikmah* means intellect, understanding and intelligence' while some others have said that acting in accordance with knowledge is what *Ḥikmah* is. In reality, there is no contradiction here. All these ingredients are included under the purview of *Ḥikmah*. Those who have seen the abridged *Tafsīr* of moulana Ashraf Alī Thānavi in the original Urdu version of the present Tafsīr will notice that he has translated *Ḥikmah* in the sense of prudence and wisdom and explained it as being knowledge that has been put into practice. This is very comprehensive and very clear.

After having mentioned the giving of *Ḥikmah* to Luqmān, on whom be peace, in this verse (12), it was said: "Be grateful to Allah." Here, the first probability is to take the word: قُلْنَا (*qulnā*: We said) as understood. The sense would be that 'We gave *Ḥikmah* to Luqmān and commanded him to be grateful to Allah.' Then, there are others who have also said that the statement: أَنِ اشْكُرْ لِلّٰهِ (*anishkur lillah*: Be grateful to Allah) is in itself an explanation of *Ḥikmah*. In other words, the *Ḥikmah* given to Luqmān was that 'We gave him the command to be grateful which he

carried out.' In that case, it would mean that being grateful to the blessings of Allah Ta'ālā is the greatest wisdom (*ḥikmah*). Soon after, it was explicitly clarified that this command to be grateful was not given by Allah Ta'ālā to earn some benefit for Himself. He needs no gratefulness from anyone. In fact, it has been done in the interest of human beings and for their benefit - because, according to the law of Allah, whoever is grateful to Him, He causes an increase in the blessings given to a person.

Mentioned after that there are some words of wise counsel spoken by Luqmān to his son. These have been reported by the Qur'ān so that others may also benefit from these.

Out of these wise advices, first comes the soundness of beliefs, the primary article of which is that one believes in Allah Ta'ālā to be the Creator and master of the entire universe without any association or partnership of anyone or anything. In consequence, one should not take anyone other than Allah as an object of worship, for no injustice can be as grave in this world as the act of one who stoops to equate some creation of Allah Ta'ālā with the Creator. Therefore, it was said: يٰبُنَيَّ لَا تُشْرِكْ بِاللّٰهِ اِنَّ الشِّرْكَ لَظُلْمٌ عَظِيْمٌ (My dear son, do not ascribe partners to Allah. Indeed, ascribing partners to Allah is (*shirk*) grave transgression - 13). Later, follow other words of good counsel and wisdom spoken by Luqmān to his son. In between, there appears another command to highlight the gravity of *Shirk* and that it has to be avoided under all circumstances.This command is as follows:

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْاِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ ۚ حَمَلَتْهُ اُمُّهٗ وَهْنًا عَلٰى وَهْنٍ وَّفِصٰلُهٗ فِيْ عَامَيْنِ اَنِ اشْكُرْ لِيْ وَلِوَالِدَيْكَ ۭ اِلَيَّ الْمَصِيْرُ ﴿١٤﴾ وَاِنْ جَاهَدٰكَ عَلٰى اَنْ تُشْرِكَ بِيْ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهٖ عِلْمٌ ۙ فَلَا تُطِعْهُمَا وَصَاحِبْهُمَا فِي الدُّنْيَا مَعْرُوْفًا ۡ وَّاتَّبِعْ سَبِيْلَ مَنْ اَنَابَ اِلَيَّ ۚ ثُمَّ اِلَيَّ مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَاُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١٥﴾

And We commanded man (to be good) about his parents. His mother carried him facing weakness after weakness, and his weaning is in two years: "Be grateful to Me and to your parents. To Me is the ultimate return. [14] And if they force you to ascribe to Him partners about whom you have no knowledge, do not obey them. And be with them, in this world, with due fairness, and follow the way of the one who has turned himself towards Me. Then, towards Me is your return, so I shall tell you

about what you had been doing." [15]

Gratitude and Obedience to Parents is Obligatory - but, Obedience to anyone Counter to Divine Command is not Permissible

In effect, the command quoted above means: 'No doubt, We have asked children to be grateful and obedient to their parents. We have even commanded them to be grateful to Us, and along with it, to be grateful and obedient to their parents. But, *Shirk* (the ascribing of partners in the pristine divinity of Allah Ta'ālā) is so grave a transgression and so serious a sin that it does not become permissible for anyone, not even if one's parents command or force someone to commit it. If the parents of a person start forcing him or her to take someone as a partner of Allah Ta'ālā, even in that case, it is not permissible to obey their command.'

Now, at this place, where command has been given to be grateful to parents and fulfill their rights, also pointed out is its efficient cause. Is it not that one's mother has undergone great trial in the phenomena of his or her life and survival? She has kept the child in her body for nine months remaining vigilant and protective all the time. Because of this, day by day, her weakness and discomfort kept increasing. This she braved through. Then, even after the birth of the child, she handled the task of feeding the child, a task that demanded painstaking attention day and night and which also added to the already receding graph of her weakness. Since, it is the mother who faces most of the hardship in bringing up the child, therefore, the right of mother has been made to precede even the right of father in the Shari'ah of Islām. What has been said in: وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ ج حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهٗ وَهْنًا عَلٰى وَهْنٍ وَّفِصٰلُهٗ فِىْ عَامَيْنِ (And We commanded man [to be good] about his parents. His mother carried him facing weakness after weakness, and his weaning is in two years - 14) comes to mean exactly this. After that, in: وَاِنْ جَاهَدٰكَ (And if they force you - 15), it was pointed out that the matter of ascribing anyone other than Allah with Him is serious. In it, even the (otherwise essential) obedience to parents is *ḥarām* (unlawful).

Islām's Peerless Law of Justice

Now in a situation under which the parents force a son or daughter to take to *Shirk* and *Kufr* while the command of Allah Ta'ālā tells them not to do what they say, things become difficult. One naturally fails to stay

within limits. In this case, while implementing the Divine injunction, the probability did exist that the son or daughter would have used improper language or manners in their response to parents and thus insulted them. Islām is a law, just and equitable. Here, everything has a limit. Therefore, right along with the command of not obeying parents in matters of *Shirk*, also given there was the command: صَاحِبْهُمَا فِي الدُّنْيَا مَعْرُوفًا (And be with them, in this world, with due fairness - 15).

It means: 'In the matter of the contravention of your faith and religion, do not obey parents. But, when it comes to worldly matters, such as serving parents physically or financially or in any other way necessary, do not fall short about it. Instead, deal with them in mundane matters according to recognized custom. Show no disrespect to them. Do not respond to what they say in a manner that hurts them unnecessarily. In other words, the pain you cause them by not accepting their insistence on *Shirk* and *Kufr* is something you will have to bear by, since you have no choice there. But, let this necessity stay within its functional limits and keep abstaining from causing any pain to them in other matters.'

Special Note

As for the weaning period of two years for a child mentioned in the verse, it is in accordance with customary practice. It carries no clarification concerning the injunction relevant to any additional period of suckling the child. A detailed explanation of this issue will, *insha'Allah*, appear under the commentary on the verse: وَحَمْلُهُ وَفِصٰلُهُ ثَلٰثُوْنَ شَهْرًا (And his carrying and weaning is (in) thirty months - Al-Ahqāf, 46:15).

The Second Bequest of Luqmān about Articles of Belief

One should irrevocably hold the belief that the knowledge of Allah Ta'ālā surrounds every single particle of whatever there is in and around the expanses of the heavens and the earth with His most perfect power. Nothing can - be it the smallest of the small not commonly visible, or be it the farthest of the far, or be it behind layers upon layers of darkness and curtains - simply nothing can hide from the knowledge and view of Allah Ta'ālā. And He can, when He wills, cause it to be present, where He wills. This is what is meant by verse 16: يٰبُنَيَّ اِنَّهَآ اِنْ تَكُ مِثْقَالَ حَبَّةٍ مِّنْ خَرْدَلٍ (My dear son, in fact, if there be anything to the measure of a grain of rye, and it be [hidden] in a rock or in the heavens and the earth, Allah will bring it forth. Surely, Allah is All-Fine, All Aware). Then, the all-covering

knowledge and power of Allah Ta'ālā is, in its own place, a basic belief of Islām - and certainly, a great proof of *Tauḥīd*, the belief in the Oneness of Allah.

The Third Bequest of Luqmān about the Correction of Deed

There are many obligatory deeds, but the greatest and the most important of these is Ṣalāh - and not simply that it is important by itself, it also happens to be the master deed that becomes the catalyst changing other deeds towards the better as was pointed out in the Holy Qur'ān about it: إِنَّ الصَّلٰوةَ تَنْهٰى عَنِ الْفَحْشَآءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ (Surely Ṣalāh restrains from shamelessness and evil - Al-'Ankabūt, 29:45). Therefore, out of the obligatory good deeds, the mention of Ṣalāh was considered sufficient when it was said: يٰبُنَيَّ أَقِمِ الصَّلٰوةَ (My dear son, establish Ṣalāh - 17). And as it has been explained earlier, the expression denoting the *'iqāmah'* of *ṣalāh* does not simply suggest the 'making' or 'saying' or 'doing' it. Instead of that, this term translated as 'establish' (in the absence of an exact equivalent) includes all attending considerations, such as performing it with due respect to its essentials and manners fully and faithfully, observing punctuality in its timings and being consistent in fulfilling its requisites.

The Fourth Bequest of Luqmān about the Betterment of People

Islām is a collective religion. Betterment of the community, along with the betterment of the individual, is an important part of its social system. Therefore, the duty of Bidding the Fair and Forbidding the Unfair (*amr bi 'l-ma'rūf and nahy 'ani 'l-munkar*) was mentioned along with as important a duty as the Ṣalāh. It was said: وَأْمُرْ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَانْهَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ (and bid the Fair and forbid the Unfair -17). Here are two duties: (1) Make yourself better and (2) make others better. Both need a lot of restraint and hard work. Facing these difficulties and remaining firm is no easy task. Particularly so, when those who stand to serve people by telling them what is good for them receive nothing but opposition and hostility in return. Therefore, while making this recommendation, it was also recommended: وَاصْبِرْ عَلٰى مَآ أَصَابَكَ إِنَّ ذٰلِكَ مِنْ عَزْمِ الْأُمُوْرِ (and observe patience on what befalls you. Surely, this is among the matters of determination - 17).

The Fifth Bequest of Luqmān about Social Manners

In verse 18, it was said: وَلَا تُصَعِّرْ خَدَّكَ لِلنَّاسِ (And do not turn your cheek away from people). The expression: لَا تُصَعِّرْ (*lā tuṣa''ir*) is a derivation from:

صَعَرَ (*ṣa'ara*) which is a disease among camels that causes a tilt in the neck similar to the stroke among human beings that makes the face become crooked. It carries the sense of turning one's face away (in disdain). Thus, the verse means: 'do not turn your face away from people when you meet them and talk to them for it is a sign of avoidance and arrogance and very much against the norms of gentle manners.'

In the next sentence of the verse, it was said: وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَحًا (and do not walk on the earth haughtily - 18). The last word: مَرَحًا (*maraḥa*) denotes walking proudly with assumed airs. The sense of the statement is that Allah Ta'ālā has given this earth the lowest profile from among the entire range of elements He created. Is it not that you were born from it and on it you walk around? Know your reality and do not walk haughtily. This is the way of the arrogant. Therefore, after that, it was said: إِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُوْرٍ (Surely, Allah does not like anyone arrogant, proud - 18).

Verse 19 begins with the statement: وَاقْصِدْ فِي مَشْيِكَ (And be moderate in your walk). When done otherwise, in haste or helter-skelter, it goes against decorum and dignity. Says the Ḥadīth: "Making too much haste in walking ruins the radiance of the believer (al-Jami' aṣ-Ṣaghīr from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ). Then, in a manner of walking such as this, there remains the likelihood of hurting one's own self or someone else as well. And being moderate in walking also tells us that one should not walk very slowly either. This is the habit of the arrogant and the ostentatious who like to impress people with their distinct class. Or, it is the habit of women who do not walk fast due to their natural modesty. Or, it is the habit of the sick in need of urgent medical attention who would do so out of compulsion. The first mode is *ḥarām*, and the second too, for it is not permissible if the intention is to strike a semblance with women. And when no such intention is there, the thing remains, after all, a defect for men. Finally, in the third mode, it is ungratefulness to Allah in that one stoops to feign the looks of the sick despite being all too healthy.

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ said: 'The noble Ṣaḥābah were prohibited from walking hurriedly (as if running) like the Jews and also from walking very slowly (as if crawling) like the Christians. The order given to them was that they should take to a moderate gait in between the two.'

When Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها saw a person walking very slowly as if he was going to fall dead, she asked the people around, 'Why does he have to walk like that?' They told her, 'He is one of the Qurrā'.' The word: قُرَّاء (*qurrā*') is the plural of: القارى (*al-qārī*: one trained to recite the Qur'ān in accordance with its Phonetics). In those days, someone who combined the twin mastery of reciting the Qur'ān with authenticity and observance of due etiquette as well as being a perfect scholar of the Qur'ān was also called a *Qari'*. So, by saying what they did, they meant that he was some big *Qari'* and 'Ālim, therefore, he walked like that. Thereupon, Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها said, "Umar Ibn ul-Khaṭṭāb, may Allah be pleased with him, was a lot more Qārī' than he is. But, his habit was to walk swiftly when he walked (not in the sense of post-haste walking which is prohibited, rather meaning a functional swiftness in it). And when he talked, he talked in a manner that people would hear him well (not speaking at a pitch so low as would compel his audience to ask: Beg your pardon, what did you say)?

At the end of the fifth recommendation it was said: وَاغْضُضْ مِنْ صَوْتِكَ (and lower your voice - 19). 'Lowering' means: Do not raise your voice any more than necessary. And do not shout - as it appeared in the case of Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ immediately earlier. He talked in a manner that his audience would hear him without having to put any strain on their ears. Thereafter, it was said: إِنَّ اَنْكَرَ الْاَصْوَاتِ لَصَوْتُ الْحَمِيْرِ. (Surely, the ugliest of voices is the voice of the donkeys - 19).

Regarding social manners, four prohibitions were mentioned here: (1) The prohibition of talking to and meeting with people face turned arrogantly; (2) the prohibition of walking haughtily on God's earth; (3) the instruction to be moderate in one's walking; and (4) the prohibition of talking very loudly.

All these virtues were already part of the habits and traits of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. As in the Shamā'il of Tirmidhī, Sayyidnā Ḥusain ﷺ says that he asked his father, Sayyidnā 'Alī al-Murtaḍa ﷺ about the manner in which he interacted with people he sat with. He said:

كان دائم البشر سهل الخلق ليّن الجانب ليس بفظٍّ ولا غليظ ولا صخاب فى
الاسواق ولا فحّاش ولا عيّاب ولا مُشاحٍ يتغافل عمّا لا يشتهى ولا يؤيس منه ولا

يجيب فيه قد ترك نفسه من ثلاث المراء والا كبار ومالا يعنيه

"He was always cheerful, naturally obliging, gentle. Neither impolite, nor rude, he was not clamorous or immodest and no faultfinder and no miser. He would remain indifferent to what he did not like, yet would not make others become distracted from it (if *halal* and desirable to have) and would not say anything that would stop others from having what he did not want (instead, would observe silence). There were three things he had left out for good: (1) Disputation, (2) Arrogance and (3) Indulgence with what was unnecessary, not worth doing."

Verses 20 - 32

اَلَمْ تَرَوْا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ سَخَّرَ لَكُمْ مَّا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِى الْاَرْضِ وَاَسْبَغَ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعَمَهٗ ظَاهِرَةً وَّبَاطِنَةً ؕ وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يُّجَادِلُ فِى اللّٰهِ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ وَّلَا هُدًى وَّلَا كِتٰبٍ مُّنِيْرٍ ﴿٢٠﴾ وَاِذَا قِيْلَ لَهُمُ اتَّبِعُوْا مَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ قَالُوْا بَلْ نَتَّبِعُ مَا وَجَدْنَا عَلَيْهِ اٰبَآءَنَا ؕ اَوَلَوْ كَانَ الشَّيْطٰنُ يَدْعُوْهُمْ اِلٰى عَذَابِ السَّعِيْرِ ﴿٢١﴾ وَمَنْ يُّسْلِمْ وَجْهَهٗ اِلَى اللّٰهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ فَقَدِ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقٰى ؕ وَاِلَى اللّٰهِ عَاقِبَةُ الْاُمُوْرِ ﴿٢٢﴾ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَلَا يَحْزُنْكَ كُفْرُهٗ اِلَيْنَا مَرْجِعُهُمْ فَنُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا عَمِلُوْا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلِيْمٌۢ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُوْرِ ﴿٢٣﴾ نُمَتِّعُهُمْ قَلِيْلًا ثُمَّ نَضْطَرُّهُمْ اِلٰى عَذَابٍ غَلِيْظٍ ﴿٢٤﴾ وَلَئِنْ سَاَلْتَهُمْ مَّنْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ لَيَقُوْلُنَّ اللّٰهُ ؕ قُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ ؕ بَلْ اَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٢٥﴾ لِلّٰهِ مَا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الْغَنِىُّ الْحَمِيْدُ ﴿٢٦﴾ وَلَوْ اَنَّ مَا فِى الْاَرْضِ مِنْ شَجَرَةٍ اَقْلَامٌ وَّالْبَحْرُ يَمُدُّهٗ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖ سَبْعَةُ اَبْحُرٍ مَّا نَفِدَتْ كَلِمٰتُ اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَزِيْزٌ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿٢٧﴾ مَا خَلْقُكُمْ وَلَا بَعْثُكُمْ اِلَّا كَنَفْسٍ وَّاحِدَةٍ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ سَمِيْعٌۢ بَصِيْرٌ ﴿٢٨﴾ اَلَمْ تَرَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يُوْلِجُ الَّيْلَ فِى النَّهَارِ وَيُوْلِجُ النَّهَارَ فِى

الَّيْلِ وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ ز كُلٌّ يَّجْرِيْٓ اِلٰٓى اَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى وَّاَنَّ
اللّٰهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرٌ ﴿٢٩﴾ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الْحَقُّ وَاَنَّ مَا يَدْعُوْنَ
مِنْ دُوْنِهِ الْبَاطِلُ لا وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْكَبِيْرُ ﴿٣٠﴾ اَلَمْ تَرَ اَنَّ الْفُلْكَ
تَجْرِيْ فِي الْبَحْرِ بِنِعْمَتِ اللّٰهِ لِيُرِيَكُمْ مِّنْ اٰيٰتِهٖ ط اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ
لِّكُلِّ صَبَّارٍ شَكُوْرٍ ﴿٣١﴾ وَاِذَا غَشِيَهُمْ مَّوْجٌ كَالظُّلَلِ دَعَوُا اللّٰهَ
مُخْلِصِيْنَ لَهُ الدِّيْنَ ج فَلَمَّا نَجّٰىهُمْ اِلَى الْبَرِّ فَمِنْهُمْ مُّقْتَصِدٌ ط وَمَا
يَجْحَدُ بِاٰيٰتِنَآ اِلَّا كُلُّ خَتَّارٍ كَفُوْرٍ ﴿٣٢﴾

Have you not seen that Allah has subjugated for you what is in the heavens and what is on the earth and has perfected His blessings on you, both outward and inward? And among the people there is one who debates about Allah with no knowledge, no guidance and no book to enlighten. [20] **And when it is said to them, "follow what Allah has sent down," they say, "instead, we would follow what we found our fathers on." Is it so - even though the Satan has been calling them to the punishment of the flaming Fire?** [21]

And whoever submits his self to Allah and is good in deeds, he does, in fact, hold on to the strongest ring. And towards Allah is the ultimate end of all matters. [22]

And whoever disbelieves, let not his disbelief grieve you. To Us is their return. Then We will tell them what they did. Surely, Allah is All Aware of what lies in the hearts. [23] **We let them enjoy a little, then We will drag them to a heavy punishment.** [24]

And if you ask them as to who has created the heavens and the earth, they will certainly say, "Allah." Say, *"Alhamdulillah"* (Praise be to Allah). But most of them do not know. [25]

To Allah belongs what is in the heavens and the earth. Surely, it is Allah who is free of all needs, worthy of every praise. It is Allah who is All-Independent, Ever-Praised.[26]

And if all trees that are on the earth were to be pens

and the ocean (converted into ink) is supported by seven seas following it, the words of Allah would not come to an end. Surely, Allah is Mighty, Wise. [27]

Creation and resurrection of you all is no more (to Allah) than that of one single person. Surely, Allah is All-Hearing, All Seeing. [28]

Did you not see that Allah makes the night enter into the day, and makes the day enter into the night, and He has subjugated the sun and the moon, each running towards an appointed time, and that Allah is fully aware of what you do? [29] **That is because Allah is the only Real One and what they invoke other than Him is false and Allah is the High, the Great.** [30]

Did you not see that the ships sail through the sea by the grace of Allah, so that He shows you some of His signs? In that, indeed, there are signs for every man of patience and gratitude. [31]

And when they are covered by waves like canopies, they pray to Allah, having faith purely in Him. Then, once He brings them safe to the land, some of them are (still) balanced. And no one denies Our signs except every ungrateful traitor. [32]

Commentary

At the beginning of the Sūrah, the *Kāfirs* and the *Mushriks* were admonished for still persisting with their *Kufr* and *Shirk* despite that they had seen the manifestations of the all-encompassing knowledge and the most perfect power of Allah Taʻālā. And in contrast to their condition, obedient believers were praised and mention was made of their good end. In between, the description of the bequests (*waṣāyā*) of Luqmān, peace on him, was in a way a complement of the same subject. In the verses cited above, the text reverts to the subjects of Allah Taʻālā's all-encompassing knowledge and power, His bounties and favors showered on the creations with an exhortation to believe in the principle of His Oneness.

The expression: سَخَّرَ لَكُم (*sakhkhara lakum:* translated as 'subjugated for you') in verse 20: سَخَّرَ لَكُمْ مَّا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِى الْاَرْضِ (Allah has subjugated for you what is in the heavens and what is on the earth) is well known and means to make something subservient to someone. This raises a question at this place. Is it not that, first of all, not even everything on the

earth is subservient to human will and command? In fact, there are many things that act counter to human choice. As for things of the heavens particularly, there exists just about no probability of their being subservient to human beings. The answer is that 'subjugation' really means to force something into doing a particular job in a state of virtual compulsion. So, subjugating the entire creation of the heavens and the earth for human beings means that the whole range of such creations was yoked in their service to bring all sorts of benefits to them. Out of these things, many were put in their service by subjecting them to their command as well, in that they could use them as and when they wished. But, there are other things that have been, of course, commissioned to serve them - which they are doing all right - but, such was the dictate of Divine wisdom, that they were not made subject to the command of human beings, for example, the heavenly creations, planets, stars, lighting, rains and similar others. Had they been subjugated to follow human orders, these elements of creation would have been affected by human temperaments, tastes and varying conditions. One human being would have wanted the sun to rise early while the need of the other would have it rise later. Someone would have asked for rains while the other, being in travel through an open field, would have opted for no rains. So, these divergent demands would have triggered operational malfunction in the workings of the universal heavenly system. Therefore, Allah Ta'ālā did put all these things into the service of human beings but did not make them subject to their will and command. This too is, in a way, subjugation. Allah knows best.

The word: اسباغ (*isbāgh*) in the next sentence of verse 20: 'وَاَسْبَغَ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعَمَهٗ ظَاهِرَةً وَّبَاطِنَةً (and has perfected His blessings on you, both outward and inward) means to perfect, make complete, provide in great abundance to the last fill. The Arabic word: نِعَم (*ni'am*) means 'blessings' which human beings recognize through their senses, for instance, the beauty of shape and the symmetry of human limbs made into such proportion as would allow maximum functional movement causing no disfigurement of one's shape and looks. Similarly, provisions, property; wealth, avenues of economic opportunity, health and well being are also outward and perceived blessings. In the same way, making the religion of Islām easy to follow, being enabled to obey Allah and His Rasūl, the ascendancy of

Islām över other faiths and the support given to Muslims encountering enemies also come under the same outward blessings. As for inward blessings, they relate to the human heart, such as,'Īmān (faith), knowing Allah (*ma'rifah*), intellect, reason, good morals, the good fortune of having one's sins left unexposed and of one's crimes not punished instantly and many others.

The manifestations of Allah's knowledge, power and blessings are endless. These cannot by encompassed by anyone through speech, nor can any pen write them comprehensively. This has been stated in the verse: وَلَوْ اَنَّ مَا فِى الْاَرْضِ مِنْ شَجَرَةٍ اَقْلَامٌ (27) through a similitude. Says the similitude: 'If all trees that are on the earth were to be pens (or pens were to be made of all branches on them) and the ocean (converted into ink) is supported by seven seas following it, the words of Allah would (still) not come to an end.' The expression: كلمات الله (*kalimātul-lah , i.e. the words of Allah*) means His knowledge and wisdom (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī and Maẓharī) which includes the manifestations of Divine power and Divine blessings. Then, the 'seven seas' referred to here do not mean that there are seven seas present elsewhere. Instead of that, this is a manner of saying: Suppose if this ocean were to be replenished with seven more oceans, still then, all these words of Allah could not be committed to writing. Even the number of 'seven' appears here as a part of the example. No restriction is intended. Another verse of the Qur'ān proves it. There it was said:

قُلْ لَّوْ كَانَ الْبَحْرُ مِدَادًا لِّكَلِمٰتِ رَبِّىْ لَنَفِدَ الْبَحْرُ قَبْلَ اَنْ تَنْفَدَ كَلِمٰتُ رَبِّىْ وَلَوْ جِئْنَا بِمِثْلِهٖ مَدَدًا

Say, 'If the ocean were to be ink for the Words of my Lord, the ocean would have been consumed before the Words of my Lord are exhausted, even though we were to bring another one, like it, in addition' - Al-Kahf, 18:109.

In this verse, by saying: بِمِثْلِهٖ (*bimithlihī*: like it), a clear hint has been given that, no matter how many oceans are supposed, their collective writing fluid cannot circumscribe the Words of Allah. Rationally, the reason is obvious. The oceans may be added one after the other and be they seven or seven thousand, they shall still remain limited while the Words of Allah (knowledge) are unlimited. How, then, can something limited make an all-encompassing coverage of what is unlimited?

As it appears in some narratives, this verse was revealed in response to a question posed by Jewish priests. The reason which prompted them to ask this question was the verse of the Qur'ān where it has been said: وَمَا اُوْتِيْتُمْ مِّنَ الْعِلْمِ اِلَّا قَلِيْلاً (and you are not given but a little from the knowledge - Al-'Isra', 17:85). When the Holy Prophet ﷺ came to the blessed city of Madīnah, some Jewish priests visited him and it was about this verse that they confronted him by saying, "You say that you have been given a little from the knowledge. Is this what you are saying about your people, or have you included us too therein?" The Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "I mean all," that is, 'our people and the Jews and Christians as well.' Thereupon, increasing the tempo of their opposition, they said, "To us, Allah Ta'ālā has given the Torah which stands out as: تِبْيَانٌ لِّكُلِّ شَيْءٍ (an explanation of everything)." He said, "That too is but a little as compared to Divine Knowledge. Then, even the total knowledge contained in the Torah is not known to you either - what you go by is no more than a certain measure of what you need. Therefore, as compared to the Divine Knowledge, the collective knowledge of all Scriptures and Prophets is also nothing but a little." It was to support this statement that the verse: وَلَوْ اَنَّ مَا فِي الْاَرْضِ مِنْ شَجَرَةٍ اَقْلَامٌ (And if all trees that are on the earth were to be pens... - 27) was revealed. (Ibn Kathīr)

Verses 33 - 34

يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوْا رَبَّكُمْ وَاخْشَوْا يَوْمًا لَّا يَجْزِىْ وَالِدٌ عَنْ وَّلَدِهٖ ز وَلَا مَوْلُوْدٌ هُوَجَازٍ عَنْ وَّالِدِهٖ شَيْئًا ط اِنَّ وَعْدَ اللّٰهِ حَقٌّ فَلَا تَغُرَّنَّكُمُ الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَا ـــ وَلَا يَغُرَّنَّكُمْ بِاللّٰهِ الْغَرُوْرُ ﴿٣٣﴾ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عِنْدَهٗ عِلْمُ السَّاعَةِ ج وَيُنَزِّلُ الْغَيْثَ ج وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِى الْاَرْحَامِ ط وَمَا تَدْرِىْ نَفْسٌ مَّاذَا تَكْسِبُ غَدًا ط وَمَا تَدْرِىْ نَفْسٌ م بِاَىِّ اَرْضٍ تَمُوْتُ ط اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلِيْمٌ خَبِيْرٌ ﴿٣٤﴾

O people, fear your Lord and fear a day when no father will suffice his son, nor will a son be sufficing his father in the least. Surely, the promise of Allah is true. So, the worldly life must not deceive you, nor you should ever be deceived about Allah by the Deceiver.

> [33] **Surely, it is Allah with whom rests the knowledge of the Hour; and He sends down the rain and He knows what is in the wombs. And no one knows what he will earn tomorrow and no one knows in which land he will die. Surely, Allah is All Knowing, All Aware.** [34]

Commentary

In the first of the two verses cited above, the address is to common people, believing and disbelieving both. They have been served with a notice that they will face Allah and be accountable before Him for their deeds on the day of Judgement and that they should be prepared for it. It was said: يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوْا رَبَّكُمْ (O people, fear your Lord - 33). At this place, the text has not gone by the name of Allah Ta'ālā or His some other attribute. Instead of that, it has elected to mention the attribute of *Rabb* (master, sustainer of all, usually translated as Lord with this sense included therein). This serves as an indicator towards the nature of fearing Allah Ta'ālā. Hence, the command to fear given here is not the kind of fear one habitually has from some beast or enemy. The reason is that 'Allah Ta'ālā is your *Rabb*. He nourishes, sustains and cherishes you. He is the compassionate master. Why would someone apprehend this kind of danger from Him?' Instead of that, the fear mentioned at this place is the particular 'fear' that is necessarily generated because of the sublimity and awe of one's elders. It is in that sense that a son 'fears' his father and a student, his teacher. They are no enemies. They are not going to hurt them. But, their affectionate sublimity and awe reside in hearts and it is from there that these two make one obey a father and a teacher. This is what is meant at this place and it is being said that 'the sublimity and awe of Allah Ta'ālā should reign supreme over your hearts so that you can obey Him, perfectly and easily.'

The next sentence reads: وَاخْشَوْا يَوْمًا لَّا يَجْزِى وَالِدٌ عَنْ وَّلَدِهٖ وَلَا مَوْلُوْدٌ هُوَجَازٍ عَنْ وَّالِدِهٖ شَيْئًا (and fear a day when no father will suffice his son, nor will a son be sufficing his father in the least - 33). It means the father and son out of whom one is a believer and the other, a disbeliever. The sense is that a believing father would neither be able to remit or reduce the punishment of his disbelieving son nor would he be able to bring any benefit to him. Similarly, a believing son will be of no avail to his disbelieving father.

The reason for this particularization lies in other verses of the noble Qur'ān, and the narratives of Ḥadīth. There it has been clarified that, on

the day of Judgement, parents will intercede on behalf of their children and the children on behalf of their parents. Then, this intercession will turn out to be successful as well. Says the Qur'ān: وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَاتَّبَعَتْهُمْ ذُرِّيَّتُهُمْ بِاِيْمَانٍ اَلْحَقْنَابِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ (And those who believed and their children followed them in belief, We will join their children with them - 52:21) even though their deeds may not match the ranking of the deeds of their parents, but such would be the *barakah* of righteous parents that they too would be made to reach where their parents are. But, this is subject to the condition that the children should be believers - even though, their deeds may have suffered from some shortcomings.

Similarly, in another verse, it was said: جَنّٰتُ عَدْنٍ يَّدْخُلُوْنَهَا وَمَنْ صَلَحَ مِنْ اٰبَآئِهِمْ وَاَزْوَاجِهِمْ وَذُرِّيّٰتِهِمْ (the eternal gardens they enter, and the righteous of their fathers, spouses, and progeny as well - 13:23). Qualification refers here to their being believers.

Both these verses prove that, should parents and children and, in the same way, a husband and wife, share the common denominator of being believers, then, they will receive benefit from each other even on the day of Judgement. Similar to this, there are several narratives of Ḥadīth which report children interceding on behalf of their parents. Therefore, this rule set forth in the present verse (33) - that no father can bring any benefit to his son and no son to his father on the day of Judgement - can become operative only in a situation when one of them is a believer while the other, a disbeliever. (Maẓharī)

Special Note:

Here, it should be noted that the statement declaring the inability of a father to bring benefit to his son (لَا يَجْزِىْ وَالِدٌ عَنْ وَّلَدِهٖ - 3) has been made through a verbal sentence, but two changes were made while mentioning the other side of it. Firstly, it was described in the form of a nominal sentence. Secondly, the word: مولود (*maulūd*) meaning the born one, that is, a son, was employed instead of (ولد *:walad*) which is more common for 'son.' There is a wise consideration at work here. A nominal sentence is more emphatic as compared to a verbal sentence. By this change in the sentence, a hint was released towards the difference between a father and his children. The love of a father with his children is more intense. Contrary to this, the love of children does not reach this level of intensity even in the mortal world. However, the likelihood of either of the two

bringing any benefit for each other on the day of Judgement has been negated in the case of both, but the children's lack of ability to bring benefit has been described with added emphasis. Then, there is a particular wise consideration in electing the word: مولود (*maulūd*) instead of ولد (*walad*). The word, مولود *'maulūd'* denotes one's own son or children only. As for the word,ولد *'walad,'* it is general and includes the children of one's children as well. Thus, it is from another angle that the same subject has been strengthened. It is being virtually said, 'when even the son from the very loins of the father would be of no avail to the father, any expectations from the grandson and the great grandson are futile.'

In the next verse, the knowledge of five things has been declared as exclusive to Allah Ta'ālā and that no created being has that knowledge except Him and at this ends the Sūrah Luqmān:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ عِندَهُ عِلْمُ السَّاعَةِ وَيُنَزِّلُ الْغَيْثَ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْأَرْحَامِ وَمَا تَدْرِي نَفْسٌ مَّاذَا تَكْسِبُ غَدًا وَّمَا تَدْرِي نَفْسٌ بِأَيِّ أَرْضٍ تَمُوتُ

Surely, it is Allah with whom rests the knowledge of the Hour, and He sends down the rain, and He knows what is in the wombs. And no one knows what he will earn tomorrow and no one knows in which land he will die. Surely, Allah is All Knowing, All Aware - 31:34.

Though, it has not been made explicit in the first three things that no one has their knowledge other than Allah, but the style of the statement is such that it seems to give the impression that the knowledge of these things rests limited to Divine Knowledge. As for the other two things mentioned later, there it has been explicitly said that no one has their knowledge other than Allah. These very five things have been called "keys to the Unseen" (مفاتح الغيب : *mafātiḥ al-ghayb*) in a verse of Sūrah Al-An'ām: وَعِندَهُ مَفَاتِحُ الْغَيْبِ لَا يَعْلَمُهَا إِلَّا هُوَ (And with Him are the keys of the Unseen. No one knows them but He - 6:59). In Ḥadīth, it has been referred as مفاتيح (*mafatīḥ al-ghayb*). Both مفاتح (*mafātiḥ*) and مفاتيح (*mafāt'īḥ*) are the plural forms of مفتاح (*miftāḥ*) meaning key which opens locks. It signifies sources of the Unseen that unravel its information.

The Issue of the 'Ilm ul-Ghayb (Knowledge of the Unseen)

Necessary details about this issue have been given under the commentary on verse 65: قُل لَّا يَعْلَمُ مَن فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ الْغَيْبَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ (Say, 'No one

in the heavens and the earth has the knowledge of the Unseen except Allah.' - 27:65) of Sūrah An-Naml (Ma'ariful-Qur'ān, Volume VI). That the knowledge of the unseen is particular to Allah Ta'ālā in the absolute sense has been explicitly mentioned in this verse - and this has been the belief of the entire Muslim community from the earliest to the succeeding generations. As for the description of only five things particularly - that no created being has their knowledge and that it is Allah alone who knows these - it is not meant for particularization. Otherwise, it would pose a contradiction with the verse of Sūrah An-Naml quoted above. The fact is that these five things have been mentioned here to highlight their special significance.

There is a reason for this specific treatment and marked attention. Things of the Unseen that one is generally keen to find out are just these five. Then, there are astrologers and their kind who lay a claim to the knowledge of the unseen. Things they usually pick up to inform people about, and thereby prove that they are possessors of the knowledge of the unseen, are again these very five things. And in some narratives of Ḥadīth it has been reported that someone had asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ about these five things whereupon this verse was revealed and wherein it has been stated that the knowledge of these five is particular with Allah Ta'ālā. (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī)

As for the statement of the Holy Prophet ﷺ reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar and Ibn Mas'ūd رضى الله عنهم اجمعين in Ḥadīth: أُوْتِيْتُ مَفَاتِحَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ اِلَّا الْخَمْس (I have been given the keys to everything except the five) (reported by Imām Aḥmad - Ibn Kathīr), the word: اُوتِيْتُ (I have been given) itself makes it all clear. It shows that the knowledge of unseen things other than these five which came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ came in the form of revelation (*waḥy*) from Allah Ta'ālā. Therefore, it is not included under the definition of the knowledge of the unseen ('Ilm ul-ghayb) because the news about things unseen given to the blessed prophets through *waḥy* (revelation) and to the men of Allah (*auliy'ā*') through *ilhām* (inspiration) come from Allah Ta'ālā. In terms of their reality, they are not the knowledge of the unseen based on which they could be called the possessors of 'the knowledge of the unseen' (*'ālim ul-ghayb*). They are, rather, اَنْبَاءُ الْغَيْب (news of the unseen). This is an area of Divine prerogative. Whenever Allah Ta'ālā so wills, and in whatever

measure He wills, He would bestow such information on His angels, messengers and favored servants. These are called "انبآء الغيب" (*anbā 'ul-ghayb*) in the noble Qur'ān, for instance: تِلْكَ مِنْ اَنْبَآءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوْحِيْهَآ اِلَيْكَ (These are some reports from the Unseen (events) which We reveal to you - 11:49).

Therefore, the Ḥadīth quoted above means that, no doubt, Allah Ta'ālā has made these five things so exclusive to Himself that no angel or messenger has been given their knowledge even as 'news' of the unseen. However, besides these, a fair amount of the knowledge relating to other unseen things is given out to the blessed prophets through the medium of *waḥy* (revelation).

Thus, from what has been discussed above, we now know one more reason why these five things have been mentioned specially.

A doubt and its answer

The cited verse proves that even in the absolute knowledge of the unseen which is an integral attribute of Allah Ta'ālā there are five particular things the knowledge of which is not given to any prophet even through *waḥy* (revelation). This demands that these things should never become known to anyone. However, countless events relating to men of Allah (*auliyā'*) in the Muslim community have been reported to the effect that somewhere they gave the news of rain, or pregnancy, or someone doing or not doing a deed in the future, or someone's exact place of death. And this foreboding turned out to be true as well when observed.

Similarly, there are some astrologers or people well versed in the art of divination through what is known as *Jafar* and *Ramal* who would come up with some bits of information about these things and these, at some times, would turn out to be true as well. This raises the question: How, then, could these five things remain exclusive to Divine Knowledge?

One answer to this question is the same as has appeared in details under our Commentary on Sūrah An-Naml (27:65, Ma'āriful-Qur'ān, Volume VI). A brief one has been given above to the effect that the Knowledge of the Unseen, in its real sense, is knowledge without the mediation of a physical cause - that is, *sans* medium, by itself. If these things are received by the blessed prophets through *waḥy* (revelation), by men of Allah (*auliya'*) through *ilhām* (inspiration) and by astrologers and other

claimants to divination or prediction through their calculations and physical causes, then, that is no knowledge of the unseen as such. Instead, these are 'news' of the unseen. If someone from among the creation of Allah were to receive such news relating to some partial or personal matter, it would not be contradictory of the cited verse. The reason is simple. According to the substance of the verse, the total knowledge of these five things, a knowledge which comprehends everything created as well as every relative condition, is something not given by Allah Ta'ālā to anyone, neither through *waḥy* (revelation) nor through *ilhām* (inspiration). That someone gets to receive some partial knowledge through *ilhām* (inspiration) in a stray case is not contradictory to it.

In addition to that, when we say *'ilm* (knowledge), it means absolute knowledge. That no one has except Allah Ta'ālā. The knowledge a man of Allah (*waliyy*) receives through *ilhām* (inspiration) is not absolute. Many probabilities of error or false perception exist in it. As for the information given out by astrologers and their ilk, it is a common observation that they hardly come up to the level of a single truth out of ten lies. How can that be called 'absolute knowledge'?

The issue of the Knowledge of the Unseen: An important note

My respected teacher, Shaykh ul-Islām Shabbīr Aḥmad 'Usmānī has made a brief but comprehensive comment in his explanatory notes on the Holy Qur'ān which helps remove all doubts and difficulties of the nature mentioned above. He has said that there are two kinds of *al-Ghayb* (the unseen): (1) Injunctions of the unseen (*al- aḥkām ul-ghaybiyyah*), such as, the injunctions originating from revealed laws that include the knowledge of the Being and attributes of Allah Ta'ālā as well and are called the knowledge of beliefs (*al-'aqā'id*). Also included therein are all injunctions of the Shari'ah or revealed law which tell us as to what sort of conduct meets the approval or disapproval of Allah Ta'ālā. It goes without saying that all these things belong to nowhere but the unseen.

(2) Cosmology of the unseen (*al-akwān ul-ghaybiyyah*), that is, the knowledge of the events occurring in the world. The knowledge of the unseen things of the first kind has been given by Allah Ta'ālā to His prophets and messengers. This is mentioned in the Qur'ān in the following words: فَلَا يُظْهِرُ عَلٰى غَيْبِهٖۤ اَحَدًا اِلَّا مَنِ ارْتَضٰى مِنْ رَّسُوْلٍ : '(He is the) Knower of

the Unseen. So He does not let anyone know His Unseen, except a messenger whom He chooses (to inform through revelation) - 72:26-27.

As for the unseen events and occurrences of the other kind, their knowledge - the whole of it - is just not given by Allah Ta'ālā to anyone. That remains categorically exclusive to Him as His intrinsic attribute. But, He gives partial knowledge of particular events when He wills and as much He wills. As such, the real knowledge of the unseen - all of it - remains exclusive to Allah Ta'ālā. Then, as is His customary practice, He reveals to the blessed prophets the knowledge of the injunctions of the unseen from out of His knowledge of the unseen - and this very knowledge is the purpose of their mission. Then, there is the partial knowledge of the events and occurrences of the world. That too is given by Allah Ta'ālā to prophets through revelation (*waḥy*) and men of Allah (*auliyā'*) through inspiration (*ilhām*) at His discretion and to the measure of His choice. Thus, the part of knowledge so given is knowledge that has been bestowed on them by Allah Ta'ālā. In the real sense, this cannot be called: علم الغيب (*'ilm ul-ghayb*: the knowledge of the unseen). Instead, it is called: انباء الغيب : "*an[m]bā' il-ghayb*: the news of the unseen."

Special note concerning the words of the verse

In this verse, the objective is to describe the exclusiveness of the knowledge of these five things with Allah Ta'ālā in a manner that shows marked care and attention. This objective obviously required that five things should have been enumerated under a single head saying that their knowledge is exclusive to Allah Ta'ālā and that no created entity has been given their knowledge. But, in the cited verse, this was not done. Instead, as for the knowledge of the initial three things, it was mentioned positively as being exclusive to Allah - while, in the later two things, the statement was negative declaring that no one other than Allah has their knowledge. Let us go back to the initial three things. Here, a variation in style becomes fairly visible even in these three. We see that the knowledge of the Hour has been mentioned in the following manner: إِنَّ اللّٰهَ عِندَهُ عِلْمُ السَّاعَةِ (Surely, it is Allah with whom rests the knowledge of the Hour). Then the mode changes. The second thing has been taken up in the form of a verbal sentence by saying: يُنَزِّلُ الْغَيْثَ (and He sends down the rain). It simply has no mention of the knowledge of rain. Instead, it mentions the sending down of rain. The third thing was mentioned with a

changed mode once again and it was said: وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْأَرْحَامِ (and He knows what is in the wombs). This change of modality can only be taken as a sampling of versatility in eloquence of speech. If one were to ponder, there are other elements of wisdom embedded here. The respected author of Bayān ul-Qur'ān has described these in his Tafsīr.

In brief, the last two things - what will one earn tomorrow and in which land will one die - are states connected with the human person. It was probable that one would try to seek the relevant knowledge about these. Therefore, in both these cases, the acquiring of such knowledge on the part of anyone other than Allah was negated. Also proved effectively through this statement was the absence of the knowledge of the first three things for anyone other than Allah. The argument was simple. Here is someone who does not know about his doings and earnings tomorrow. Then, he does not know the end of it all, the point when and where he will die. How could he, then, be expected to know the heavens and the coming of rains and the thing hidden in the dark layers of a mother's womb? Finally, when mentioning the last thing, it was said that one does not know the place of one's death. Yes, the text mentions 'place' only - although, one does not know one's time of death too just like the place of death. The reason is that the place of death, even if not known definitely, is something one can guess in terms of one's outward living conditions. One can naturally assume that the place where one is settled would be the place where one would die, and at the least, the place where one is to die is, after all, present somewhere in the world. This is contrary to the time of death. This time is in the future and the future is not here yet. So, a person who cannot know about his place of death, despite that it is present actually, how can it be imagined about him that he would come to know his time of death which simply does not exist then?

So, the negation of one thing here makes the negation of others obvious in the first degree. Therefore, the text takes up both these things in the negative mode. As for the first three things, they are by themselves outside the scope of human access under perceptible conditions. That human knowledge has nothing to do with it is all too clear. Therefore, a positive mode was chosen to describe their exclusiveness to Allah Ta'ālā.

Before parting with the subject, a few words about the use of nominal form in the first sentence and the verbal one in the later two sentences

may be useful. Perhaps, the wisdom therein is to suggest that the Qiyāmah or the Last Day is a definite imperative with no change in it. This is contrary to the coming of rain and the period of pregnancy. Their conditions keep changing - and the verbal sentence is suggestive of change. Therefore, that is what was used in both these cases. Then, we notice a delicacy of treatment within these two as well. When dealing with the conditions of pregnancy, what was mentioned was Divine knowledge: وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِى الْاَرْحَامِ (and He knows what is in the wombs - 34) while in taking up the subject of the coming of rain, there is just no mention of knowledge. There is a reason for it. Here, by mentioning the sending down of rain, it was tacitly suggested that the rain to which are tied thousands of human benefits is something that comes at the bidding of Allah alone and that no one else exercises the ultimate control over it. As for the essential exclusiveness of its knowledge being with Allah, it already stands proved from the very context of the statement. ...

Alhamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Luqmān
Ends here

Sūrah As-Sajdah

[The Prostration]

Sūrah As-Sajdah is Makkī. It has 30 Verses and 10 Sections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

Verses 1 - 3

الٓمٓ ﴿١﴾ تَنْزِيْلُ الْكِتٰبِ لَارَيْبَ فِيْهِ مِنْ رَّبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٢﴾ اَمْ يَقُوْلُوْنَ افْتَرٰىهُ ۚ بَلْ هُوَالْحَقُّ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ لِتُنْذِرَ قَوْمًا مَّآ اَتٰىهُمْ مِّنْ نَّذِيْرٍ مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَهْتَدُوْنَ ﴿٣﴾

With the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the All-Merciful

Alif Lām Mīm. [1] **(This) revelation of the Book - wherein there is no doubt - is from the Lord of the worlds.** [2] **Or, is it that they say, "he has fabricated it." On the contrary, it is the truth from your Lord, so that you warn a people to whom no warner has come before you; may be they take the right path.** [3]

Commentary

At this place, the word: نَذِيْر (*nadhīr*: warner) in: مَآ اَتٰىهُمْ مِّنْ نَّذِيْرٍ (to whom no warner has come.. -3)means a *rasūl* or messenger.The sense is that no messenger had appeared amidst the Quraish of Makkah before the Holy Prophet ﷺ. This does not mean that the call of the messengers had just not reached them until that time, because it was clearly said in another verse of the Qur'ān: وَاِنْ مِّنْ اُمَّةٍ اِلَّا خَلَا فِيْهَا نَذِيْرٌ (And there was no community without a warner having passed among them - 35:24). In this verse, (i.e. the verse 35:24) the word:نَذِيْر (*warner*) appears in its general lexical sense, that is, one who calls people towards Allah, whether a messenger or prophet or one of their deputies, *khalīfah* or the *'ālim* of *dīn*. So, from this verse, it seems that the call of pure monotheism (*tauḥīd*) had reached all

communities and groups. That is correct in its place and certainly the dictate of universal Divine mercy. Commentator Abū Ḥayyān says that the call to *tauḥīd* and *'īmān* has never ceased in any time or place or people. And wherever a long time passed after the appearance of a prophet, it resulted in the dearth of those having the knowledge of the legacy of prophethood. Thereupon, some new prophet or messenger was sent. This requires that the call to *tauḥīd* should have reached the Arab peoples definitely, and much earlier. But, for this it is not necessary that the call should have been brought in by some prophet or messenger in person. It is possible that it may have reached through the learned serving as deputies to the prophetic mission. Therefore, the verses of this Sūrah, Sūrah Yā Sīn and others which prove that no *nadhīr* (warner) had appeared amidst the Quraish of Arabia before the Holy Prophet ﷺ must be approached with the necessary consideration that the word: نذیر (*nadhīr*) used there should mean a prophet and messenger in the technical sense denoting that no prophet and messenger had come amidst those people before the Holy Prophet ﷺ - even though, the call to *tauḥīd* and *'īmān* may have reached there too through other means.

Before the period of فترة *fatrah,* that is, before the appearance of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, it stands proved about some blessed souls who firmly adhered to the faith of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm and Ismā'īl علیهما السلام. They believed in the Oneness of Allah and were averse to the worship of and sacrifices for idols.

Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī reports from the Maghāzī of Mūsā Ibn 'Uqbah about one such person whose name was Zayd Ibn 'Amr Ibn Nufayl. He had also met the Holy Prophet ﷺ before he was ordained as a prophet. But, it was still before his prophethood that he died in the year the Quraish had built the edifice of the Baytullah - and this happened five years prior to his prophethood. About him, Mūsā Ibn 'Uqbah says, 'He used to stop the Quraish from indulging in the worship of idols. He opposed the offering of sacrifices in the name of idols as an evil practice and would not eat the meat from animals slaughtered by the Mushriks.'

Abū Dāwūd Ṭayālisī has reported from Sayyidnā Sa'īd Ibn Zayd Ibn Amr رضی الله عنه, the son of Zayd Ibn 'Amr Ibn Nufayl, one of the celebrated ten (عشرة مبشرة) among the noble Ṣaḥābah, that he had submitted before the Holy Prophet ﷺ saying: "You already know about my father that he

adhered to pure monotheism and rejected idolatry. Can I, then, pray for his forgiveness?" The Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Yes, for him the prayer of forgiveness is permissible. He will, on the day of Qiyāmah, rise as a community of his own." (Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī)

Similarly, Warqah Ibn Nawfal who was present during the initial period of the prophethood and the revelation of the Qur'ān was an adherent of pure monotheism (*tauḥīd*). He had expressed his resolve to help the Holy Prophet ﷺ but he died soon after. These examples prove that the people of Arabia were though not totally deprived of the Divine call to faith and monotheism, but that no prophet had appeared amidst them as such. Allah knows best.

All three verses cited above carry an affirmation of the veracity of the Qur'ān and the Prophet of Islam.

Verses 4 - 9

اَللّٰهُ الَّذِىْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا فِىْ سِتَّةِ اَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ
اسْتَوٰى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ ؕ مَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِهٖ مِنْ وَّلِيٍّ وَّلَا شَفِيْعٍ ؕ اَفَلَا
تَتَذَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿٤﴾ يُدَبِّرُ الْاَمْرَ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ اِلَى الْاَرْضِ ثُمَّ يَعْرُجُ اِلَيْهِ فِىْ
يَوْمٍ كَانَ مِقْدَارُهٗۤ اَلْفَ سَنَةٍ مِّمَّا تَعُدُّوْنَ ﴿٥﴾ ذٰلِكَ عٰلِمُ الْغَيْبِ
وَالشَّهَادَةِ الْعَزِيْزُ الرَّحِيْمُ ﴿٦﴾ الَّذِىْۤ اَحْسَنَ كُلَّ شَىْءٍ خَلَقَهٗ وَبَدَاَ
خَلْقَ الْاِنْسَانِ مِنْ طِيْنٍ ﴿٧﴾ ثُمَّ جَعَلَ نَسْلَهٗ مِنْ سُلٰلَةٍ مِّنْ مَّآءٍ مَّهِيْنٍ
﴿٨﴾ ثُمَّ سَوّٰىهُ وَنَفَخَ فِيْهِ مِنْ رُّوْحِهٖ وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَالْاَبْصَارَ
وَالْاَفْئِدَةَ ؕ قَلِيْلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُوْنَ ﴿٩﴾

Allah is the One who created the heavens and the earth and all that is between them in six days, then He positioned Himself on the Throne. Other than Him, there is neither a guardian for you, nor an intercessor. Would you then not observe the advice? [4] **He manages (every) matter from the sky to the earth, then it (every matter) will ascend to Him in a day the measure of which is a thousand years according to the way you**

count. [5] **That One is the All-knower of the unseen and the seen; the All-Mighty, the Very-Merciful,** [6] **who made well whatever He created and started the creation of man from clay.** [7] **Then He made his progeny from a drop of semen, from a despised water.** [8] **Then He gave him a proportioned shape and breathed into him of His spirit. And He granted you the (power of) hearing and the eyes and the hearts. Little you give thanks.** [9]

Commentary

The length of the day of Qiyāmah

The text in verse 5 cited above says: فِىْ يَوْمٍ كَانَ مِقْدَارُهٗۤ اَلْفَ سَنَةٍ مِّمَّا تَعُدُّوْنَ (in a day the measure of which is a thousand years according to the way you count - 5). And it appears in a verse of Sūrah Al-Maʻārij: ... (in a day the extent of which is fifty thousand years - 70:4).

A simple explanation of this is what appears in Bayān-ul-Qur'ān - since this day will be horrendous, people would find it very long. Then, this length will be felt in terms of one's measure of faith and deeds. Big criminals will find the day longer while the small ones will find it comparatively shorter, so much so that the day some would feel to be of a thousand years, to others, it would appear as of fifty thousand years.

Tafsīr Rūḥ-ul-Maʻānī reports several other explanations from the 'Ulamā' and Ṣūfiyā'. But, all these are nothing but conjectures. Something which can be traced back to a proved meaning of the Qur'ān or something which can be believed in is just not there. Therefore, the most sound approach in this matter is the same as was taken by the early elders of Islam, the Ṣaḥābah and the Tābiʻīn: They had left the knowledge of this difference of one and fifty to Allah without explaining it on the basis of human whims and, on their part, they had found it sufficient to say, 'we do not know.'

About it, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ said:

هُمَا يَوْمَانِ ذَكَرَهُمَا اللّٰهُ تَعَالٰى فِىْ كِتَابِهٖ اَللّٰهُ تَعَالٰى اَعْلَمُ بِهِمَا وَاَكْرَهُ اَنْ اَقُوْلَ فِىْ كِتَابِ اللّٰهِ مَالَا اَعْلَمُ

They are two days mentioned by Allah Taʻālā in His Book. Allah Taʻālā knows best about them and I dislike to say in the matter of the Book of Allah that which I do not know.

Everything is good in this world. Evil comes through its wrong use.

In verse 7, it was said: 'الَّذِیٓ اَحۡسَنَ کُلَّ شَیۡءٍ خَلَقَه :"Who made well whatever He created good. The reason is that Allah Ta'ālā has made whatever He has created in this world under the dictate of His wisdom, and under the essential consideration of what is beneficial for the whole system. Therefore, everything has a beauty of its own. And the most beautiful and better than all is the making of man as it was said: لَقَدۡ خَلَقۡنَا الۡاِنۡسَانَ فِیۡۤ اَحۡسَنِ تَقۡوِیۡمٍ (Surely, We did create man in the best of symmetry - 95:4).

Then there are creations other than man that may outwardly be taken as bad. In fact, dogs, pigs, snakes, scorpions and wolfs are commonly considered bad because they are either poisonous or beastly. But, in terms of the expedient benefits of the world as a whole, none of these is really bad. A proverbial poetic observation in Urdu puts it as:

نہیں ہے چیز نکمی کوئی زمانے میں......☆......کوئی برا نہیں قدرت کے کارخانے میں

There is nothing useless in the world
There is no one bad in the workshop of nature.

The author of Bayān ul-Qur'ān has said, 'the text's کُلَّ شَیۡءٍ (whatever) includes all substances and accidents, that is, also things which have corporeal substance, such as, animals, plants and minerals etc. as well as incorporeal things which include even morals and deeds. So much so that morals which are identified as bad - anger, greed, desire and their likes - are not bad in themselves. The bad about them emerges when they are used out of place. If they stay in their proper place, there is nothing bad in them. But, the sense being driven home here relates to the objective of their creation (*takwīn*)and introduction of these things - for that is nothing but good according to divine wisdom. However, the qualities of 'good' and 'bad' are attached to them in relation to the human acts and their effects on individuals. We can call it one's right or choice employed in doing something. Then, in those terms, everything is not good, in fact, it is circumscribed by a little detail, that is, whatever has not been allowed by Allah Ta'ālā is not good, but is, rather bad.' Allah knows best.

The sentence that follows next reads: وَبَدَاَ خَلۡقَ الۡاِنۡسَانِ مِنۡ طِیۡنٍ (and started the creation of man from clay - 7). Earlier, it was said that Allah Ta'ālā has made everything 'good' in this world. Mentioned thereafter was man,

the most beautiful of all. Then, to give expression to His most perfect power alongside, it was also said that the making of man as the most superior form of creation was not because the essential ingredient of his creation was most noble, elegant and superior, which may have made it so. In fact, as for the essential ingredient that went into his making, it was something as mean and lowly as the semen. Thereafter, the rest was a masterpiece of His perfect power and profound wisdom. It was this great combination that took something so low to such a height that man was rated as the most noble Divine creation.

Verses 10 - 22

وَقَالُوْٓا ءَ اِذَا ضَلَلْنَا فِی الْاَرْضِ ءَ اِنَّا لَفِیْ خَلْقٍ جَدِیْدٍ ؕ بَلْ هُمْ
بِلِقَآئِ رَبِّهِمْ كٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿١٠﴾ قُلْ یَتَوَفّٰىكُمْ مَّلَكُ الْمَوْتِ الَّذِیْ وُكِّلَ
بِكُمْ ثُمَّ اِلٰی رَبِّكُمْ تُرْجَعُوْنَ ﴿١١﴾ وَلَوْ تَرٰۤی اِذِ الْمُجْرِمُوْنَ نَاكِسُوْا
رُءُوْسِهِمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ ط رَبَّنَاۤ اَبْصَرْنَا وَسَمِعْنَا فَارْجِعْنَا نَعْمَلْ صَالِحًا
اِنَّا مُوْقِنُوْنَ ﴿١٢﴾ وَلَوْ شِئْنَا لَاٰتَیْنَا كُلَّ نَفْسٍ هُدٰىهَا وَلٰكِنْ حَقَّ
الْقَوْلُ مِنِّیْ لَاَمْلَـَٔنَّ جَهَنَّمَ مِنَ الْجِنَّةِ وَالنَّاسِ اَجْمَعِیْنَ ﴿١٣﴾
فَذُوْقُوْا بِمَا نَسِیْتُمْ لِقَآءَ یَوْمِكُمْ هٰذَا ج اِنَّا نَسِیْنٰكُمْ وَذُوْقُوْا عَذَابَ
الْخُلْدِ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١٤﴾ اِنَّمَا یُؤْمِنُ بِاٰیٰتِنَا الَّذِیْنَ اِذَا ذُكِّرُوْا
بِهَا خَرُّوْا سُجَّدًا وَّسَبَّحُوْا بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ وَهُمْ لَا یَسْتَكْبِرُوْنَ ﴿١٥﴾
تَتَجَافٰی جُنُوْبُهُمْ عَنِ الْمَضَاجِعِ یَدْعُوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ خَوْفًا وَّطَمَعًا ز وَّمِمَّا
رَزَقْنٰهُمْ یُنْفِقُوْنَ ﴿١٦﴾ فَلَا تَعْلَمُ نَفْسٌ مَّاۤ اُخْفِیَ لَهُمْ مِّنْ قُرَّةِ اَعْیُنٍ ج
جَزَآءًۢ بِمَا كَانُوْا یَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١٧﴾ اَفَمَنْ كَانَ مُؤْمِنًا كَمَنْ كَانَ
فَاسِقًا ط لَا یَسْتَوٗنَ ﴿١٨﴾ اَمَّا الَّذِیْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ فَلَهُمْ
جَنّٰتُ الْمَاْوٰی ز نُزُلًۢا بِمَا كَانُوْا یَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١٩﴾ وَاَمَّا الَّذِیْنَ فَسَقُوْا
فَمَاْوٰىهُمُ النَّارُ ط كُلَّمَاۤ اَرَادُوْۤا اَنْ یَّخْرُجُوْا مِنْهَاۤ اُعِیْدُوْا فِیْهَا وَقِیْلَ

لَهُمْ ذُوْقُوْا عَذَابَ النَّارِ الَّذِيْ كُنْتُمْ بِهٖ تُكَذِّبُوْنَ ﴿٢٠﴾ وَلَنُذِيْقَنَّهُمْ
مِّنَ الْعَذَابِ الْاَدْنٰى دُوْنَ الْعَذَابِ الْاَكْبَرِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُوْنَ ﴿٢١﴾
وَمَنْ اَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ ذُكِّرَ بِاٰيٰتِ رَبِّهٖ ثُمَّ اَعْرَضَ عَنْهَا ؕ اِنَّا مِنَ الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ
مُنْتَقِمُوْنَ ﴿٢٢﴾

And they said, "Is it that when we disappear in the earth, shall we really come into a new creation?" Rather they are ones who deny the meeting with their Lord. [10] **Say, "The angel of death who has been assigned for you will take you in full, then you will be brought back to your Lord."** [11] **And (you will wonder) if you see the sinners hanging their heads before their Lord (and saying,) "Our Lord, we have now seen and heard, so send us back, and we will do righteous deeds. Surely, (now) we are believers."** [12] **And if We had so willed, We would have given everybody his right way (by force), but the word from Me had come to pass: "I will certainly fill the *Jahannam* with jinn and human beings together.:** [13]

So, have a taste, because you had forgotten the meeting of this day of yours. We have forgotten you. And taste the eternal punishment for what you used to do. [14] **Only those people believe in Our verses who, when they are reminded of them, fall in prostration and pronounce the purity with praise of their Lord, and they do not wax proud.** [15] **Their sides remain apart from their beds.They call their Lord with fear and hope, and spend from what We have given to them.** [16] **So no one knows what delight of eyes has been reserved for them in secret, as a reward of what they used to do.** [17]

So, can one who is a believer become like one who is a sinner? They cannot become equal. [18] **As for those who believe and do righteous deeds, for them there are gardens to dwell, an honorable hospitality, for what they used to do.** [19] **And the ones who disobeyed, their abode is the Fire. Whenever they wish to come out from it, they will be turned back to it, and it will be said to them, "Taste the punishment of fire that you used to deny."** [20] **And We will certainly make them taste the nearer punishment before the greater punishment, so that they may return.** [21] **And who is more unjust than**

the one who was reminded of the verses of his Lord, then he turned away from them. Surely, We have to take vengeance upon the sinners. [22]

Commentary

In verse 11, it was said: قُلْ يَتَوَفّٰىكُمْ مَّلَكُ الْمَوْتِ الَّذِىْ وُكِّلَ بِكُمْ (Say, "The angel of death who has been assigned for you will take you in full" - 11). In the verse previous to it, the deniers of the Qiyāmah were warned and an answer was given to their wondering as to how would they be brought back to life once again after they had died and become dust. In the verse cited above, such people are being reminded, 'Think of your death which is, in itself, a great manifestation of the perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā. Your heedlessness and ignorance make you think that one's death comes all by itself, just like that. This is not how it is. In fact, fixed for your death there is a time with Allah and for this there is a standing system run through angels. Sayyidnā 'Izrā'īl عليه السلام is the foremost among them, the one who is the master-manager of death throughout the world. Whenever and wherever a person is destined to die, it is precisely at that time that he draws out his soul from his body.' This is what has been stated in the cited verse. It should be noted that مَلَكُ الْمَوْتِ (*malakul-maut*: angel of death) has been mentioned in the singular form. It means Sayyidnā 'Izrā'īl عليه السلام. Please compare it with another verse where it is said: اَلَّذِيْنَ تَتَوَفّٰهُمُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ (the ones to whom the angels brought death - 16:28). Here, the word: مَلَائِكَه (*malā'ikah*: angels) has been used in the plural form. This releases the hint that Sayyidnā 'Izrā'īl عليه السلام does not do this alone. Many angels under him take part in accomplishing this duty.

Some details about the Exacting of Soul and the Angel of Death

Tafsīr authority, Mujāhid has said, 'before the angel of death, the whole world is very much like an open tray before a human being sprinkled in which there are grains and he picks up whichever he wants.' The same subject has also appeared in a *marfū' ḥadīth*, that is, traceable to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. (As mentioned by al-Qurṭubī in At-tadhkirah)

According to a *ḥadīth*, once the Holy Prophet ﷺ saw the angel of death standing behind the head of an Anṣārī *ṣaḥābī* on his death bed. He said, 'make it easy on my *ṣaḥābī*.' The angel of death said, 'Rest assured. I make it easy on every believer,' then, he added, 'just imagine the number of people living in towns or villages and in forests, mountains or waters, I

see every one of them five times a day, therefore, I am directly acquainted with everyone of them, young or old.' Then, he concluded by saying, 'O Muḥammad ﷺ, all this I am telling you about is nothing but what happens with the will and command of Allah. Otherwise, if I wanted to take the life of even a mosquito, I do not have the power to do so - unless there comes the very command of Allah Ta'ālā that I have to do it.'

The soul of animals: Does the angel of death exact that too?

From the *ḥadīth* report mentioned above, it seems that it is the angel of death who, subject to Divine permission, exacts the soul of a mosquito too. Imām Mālik رحمه الله تعالى has also said this while answering a question. But, some other reports show that this exacting of the soul is particular to human beings - because of their nobility and distinction. As for the animals, they will die under Divine will without the medium of the angel. (Mentioned by Ibn 'Atiyyah from al-Qurṭubī)

The same subject has been reported by Abū ash-Shaikh, 'Uqailī, Dailamī and others on the authority of Sayyidnā Anas ؓ narrating it from the Holy Prophet ﷺ. According to this report, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "All animals and insects keep glorifying Allah (for this is their life). When this glorification stops, Allah Ta'ālā takes their soul. The death of animals has not been entrusted with the angel of death". Another related *ḥadīth* has been reported from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar ؓ. (Maẓharī)

It appears in yet another *hadith*, 'when Allah Ta'ālā handed over to Sayyidnā 'Izrā'īl عليه السلام the charge of managing the death of everyone in the world, he pleaded, "O my Lord, You have put such a service in my charge that the entire race of the children of 'Ādam living in the world is going to give me a bad name to the extent that every time I am remembered, I shall be dubbed as evil." Allah Ta'ālā would say, "We have taken care of that by placing some obvious diseases and causes of death in the world due to which everyone will attribute death to these diseases and causes and you will remain safe from their adverse comments." (Al-Qurṭubī in his Tafsīr and Al-tadhkirah)

And Imām al-Baghawī reports on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "All diseases, and things like pain and wound, are the universal message-bearers of death. They remind every human being of his or her death. After that, when comes

the time of death, the angel of death turns towards the dying person and says, 'O servant of God, how many notices have I served on you and how many message-bearers have I sent to you one after the other! All these diseases and accidents delivered at your doors were simply to warn you that you should get ready for death. Now, here I am after whom no bearer of some message will come to you any more. Now you have got to say yes to the order of your Lord necessarily, whether willingly or unwillingly." (Maẓharī)

Ruling:

The angel of death does not know the time of anyone's death in advance - until he is ordered to exact the soul of a certain person. (Deduced by Aḥmad and Ibn Abī ad-Dunyā from Ma'mar, Maẓharī)

Before approaching verse 16: تَتَجَافٰى جُنُوْبُهُمْ عَنِ الْمَضَاجِعِ يَدْعُوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ خَوْفًا وَّطَمَعًا (Their sides remain apart from their beds. They call their Lord with fear and hope - 16), it should be borne in mind that disbelievers, Mushriks and the deniers of the day of Qiyāmah were warned in the verses previous to it. After that, starting from: اِنَّمَا يُؤْمِنُ بِآيٰتِنَا (Only those people believe in Our verses - 15) mentioned there are special attributes of sincere believers and the high ranks reserved for them. Pointed to in the cited verse is one such attribute of these believers: They leave the comfort of their beds, rise and get busy with the remembrance of Allah in submission and supplication - because, they are apprehensive of His displeasure and punishment while remaining hopeful of His mercy and reward. This very combination of fear and hope keeps them returning to Dhikr and Du'ā' repeatedly, anxiously and animated at the same time.

The Ṣalāh of Tahajjud

The majority of commentators takes the expression denoting the leaving of beds and getting busy with Dhikr and Du'ā' to mean the Ṣalāh of *Tahajjud* and *Nawāfil* that are offered after rising from sleep (which is the saying of al-Ḥasan, Mujāhid, Mālik and al-Awza'i). And it is supported by narrations of Ḥadīth as well.

According to a report in the Musnad of Aḥmad, at-Tirmidhī, an-Nasā'ī and others, Sayyidnā Mu'ādh Ibn Jabal ؓ narrates: 'Once I was in the company of the Holy Prophet ﷺ on a journey. One morning during the course of the journey when I was near him, I requested: "*Yā Rasūlallah*,

tell me to do something which helps me enter Paradise and keeps me away from Hell." He said, "You asked for something very difficult. But, for whomsoever Allah Ta'ālā makes it easy, for him it becomes easy." Then he said, "This is what you should do: Worship Allah and associate no one with Him, and establish Ṣalāh, and pay Ẓakāh, and keep the fasts of Ramaḍān, and perform the Ḥajj of Baytullah." And then he said, "Here, now let me tell you about the gateways of righteousness: Fasting is a shield (that saves you from punishment). *Ṣadaqah* puts off the fire of one's sins - so does one's Ṣalāh in the middle of the night." And after having said that, he recited the cited verse of the Holy Qur'ān: تَتَجَافٰى جُنُوْبُهُمْ عَنِ الْمَضَاجِعِ (Their sides remain apart from their beds - 16).

Sayyidnā Abū ad-Dardā', Qatādah and Ḍahhāk رضى الله عنهم اجمعين have said that this attribute of sides remaining apart from beds also applies to those who make their Ṣalāh of 'Ishā' with Jamā'ah and then go on to make their Ṣalāh of Fajr with Jamā'ah. And according to a narration of Sayyidnā Anas ﷺ appearing in Tirmidhī with sound chains of authority, this verse: تَتَجَافٰى جُنُوْبُهُمْ (Their sides remain apart) was revealed about people who do not sleep before the Ṣalāh of 'Ishā' and keep waiting for the Jamā'ah of 'Ishā'.

And according to some other reports, this verse is about people who offer *nawāfil* between Maghrib and 'Ishā' (reported by Muḥammad Ibn Naṣr). And about this verse, Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ said: People who would, on waking up, remember Allah - lying, sitting and on sides - are also included therein.

Ibn Kathīr and other Tafsīr authorities have said that there is no contradiction in all these sayings. It is correct to say that this verse is inclusive of all - while the late night Ṣalāh remains the superior most. Bayān ul-Qur'ān has also opted for this approach.

And Sayyidah Asmā' bint Yazīd رضى الله عنها narrates: The Holy Prophet ﷺ said, 'when Allah Ta'ālā will gather everyone from the first to the last, a proclaimer whose call will be heard by the entire creation will call: 'This day everyone on the plains of Resurrection will find out as to who is really deserving of honor and compliment.' Then, the proclaiming angel will proclaim: 'O people assembled on the plains of Resurrection, let those rise from among you, those whose attribute was: تَتَجَافٰى جُنُوْبُهُمْ عَنِ

الْمَضَاجِعِ (Their sides remain apart from their beds - 16)'. At this call, these people will stand up, though their number will be small. (Ibn Kathīr) And some words of the same narration say that these people will be sent to Paradise without reckoning. After that, all others will stand and face reckoning. (Maẓharī)

In verse 21:

وَلَنُذِيقَنَّهُم مِّنَ الْعَذَابِ الْأَدْنَىٰ دُونَ الْعَذَابِ الْأَكْبَرِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ

(And We will certainly make them taste the nearer punishment before the greater punishment, so that they may return),

the word: أَدْنَىٰ (*adnā*) has been used in the sense of 'nearer' and العذاب الادنى (*al-'adhāb-ul-adnā*) denotes diseases, sufferings and calamities of the world that are made to befall a lot of people by Allah Ta'ālā in order to warn them against their sins. The purpose is to chasten and alert them enough so that they leave off their sins and thus earn their deliverance from the Great Punishment of the Hereafter.

Hence, this verse seems to tell us that all these sufferings, accidents, diseases and pains that inflict sinners in the world are nothing but a sort of mercy for them in as much as they help them get out of their heedlessness and save themselves from the punishment of the 'Ākhirah. However, for people who take no lesson even from such unwelcome happenings and fail to turn to Allah, for them, this punishment becomes twofold - first, the cash punishment right here in this world and then, the other being the Great Punishment of the Hereafter. As for the hardships of many kinds that come upon prophets and men of Allah, that is a separate matter. These hardships are a trial for them and trials are the source through which their ranks are raised. What is the hallmark of this trial? How do you recognize the quality of their response? If one were to observe such people even under the stress of calamities and hardships, it will be noticed that they have a kind of peace and tranquility emanating from their trust in Allah Ta'ālā. And it is Allah who knows best.

There are some crimes the punishment of which comes even within the mortal world much before the Hereafter.

The last sentence of the set of verses cited above reads: إِنَّا مِنَ الْمُجْرِمِينَ مُنتَقِمُونَ (We have to take vengeance upon the sinners - 22). Obviously, the word: الْمُجْرِمِينَ (*al-mujrimīn*: the criminals) includes all kinds of criminals.

Then, the word: اِنتِقام (*intiqām*: revenge, retribution, return) is also general. It may be in the mortal world or in the Hereafter or in both. But, from some Ḥadith accounts it appears that there are three sins the punishment of which is experienced - before the Hereafter - right here in this world too. They are: (1) To strive against what is Right and True publicly with flags and slogans; (2) To disobey parents; (3) To help someone unjust or oppressive. (Reported by Ibn Jarīr from Sayyidnā Mu'ādh Ibn Jabal رضی اللہ عنہ)

Verses 23 - 30

وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا مُوْسَى الْكِتٰبَ فَلَا تَكُنْ فِيْ مِرْيَةٍ مِّنْ لِّقَآئِهٖ وَ جَعَلْنٰهُ
هُدًى لِّبَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ ﴿۲۳﴾ وَجَعَلْنَا مِنْهُمْ اَئِمَّةً يَّهْدُوْنَ بِاَمْرِنَا لَمَّا
صَبَرُوْا ۛ وَكَانُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا يُوْقِنُوْنَ ﴿۲۴﴾ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ يَفْصِلُ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ
الْقِيٰمَةِ فِيْمَا كَانُوْا فِيْهِ يَخْتَلِفُوْنَ ﴿۲۵﴾ اَوَلَمْ يَهْدِ لَهُمْ كَمْ اَهْلَكْنَا
مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِّنَ الْقُرُوْنِ يَمْشُوْنَ فِيْ مَسٰكِنِهِمْ ؕ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ ؕ
اَفَلَا يَسْمَعُوْنَ ﴿۲۶﴾ اَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا اَنَّا نَسُوْقُ الْمَآءَ اِلَى الْاَرْضِ الْجُرُزِ
فَنُخْرِجُ بِهٖ زَرْعًا تَاْكُلُ مِنْهُ اَنْعَامُهُمْ وَاَنْفُسُهُمْ ؕ اَفَلَا يُبْصِرُوْنَ ﴿۲۷﴾
وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ مَتٰى هٰذَا الْفَتْحُ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿۲۸﴾ قُلْ يَوْمَ الْفَتْحِ
لَا يَنْفَعُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْٓا اِيْمَانُهُمْ وَلَا هُمْ يُنْظَرُوْنَ ﴿۲۹﴾ فَاَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ
وَانْتَظِرْ اِنَّهُمْ مُّنْتَظِرُوْنَ ﴿۳۰﴾

And We did give the Book to Mūsā, so do not be in doubt about receiving it, and We made it a guidance for the children of Isra'īl. [23] **And We appointed leaders from among them who guided (people) under Our command, when they observed patience, and kept firm belief in Our verses.** [24] **Surely, your Lord will judge between them on the Day of Judgment in what they used to differ.** [25] **Has it not been a source of guidance for them as to how many generations We have destroyed before them who used to walk in their dwellings? Surely in this there are signs. So, do they not listen?** [26] **Have**

they not seen that We drive water to the dry land, then We bring forth crops thereby from which their cattle and they themselves have food? So, do they not observe? [27] **And they say, "When will this decision take place?"** [28] **Say, "On the day of decision their belief will not be of any use to disbelievers, nor shall they be given any respite."** [29] **So, turn away from them and wait. They (too) are waiting.** [30]

Commentary

The word: لقاء (*liqā'*) in the first verse (23) cited above: فَلَا تَكُنْ فِيْ مِرْيَةٍ مِّنْ لِّقَآئِهٖ (so do not be in doubt about receiving it) means meeting. Whose meeting with whom? In determining it precisely in the verse, the sayings of commentators differ. According to one of these, the pronoun in: لِقَائِهٖ (*liqā'ihī*) has been taken to be reverting to: اَلْكِتَاب (*al-kitāb*: the Book), that is, the Qur'ān, which releases the sense that 'the way Allah Ta'ālā gave the Book to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, you too should entertain no doubt about receiving your Book.' This is supported by similar words used about the Qur'an in another verse: وَاِنَّكَ لَتُلَقَّى الْقُرْاٰنَ (And indeed you [O Muḥammad] do receive the Qur'ān - An-Naml, 27:6) (Bayān ul-Qur'ān, Khulāṣah Tafsīr)

On the other hand, its *tafsīr* from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās and Qatādah رضی اللہ عنهم اجمعين has been reported as follows: The pronoun in: لِقَائِهٖ (*liqā'ihī*: read as 'meeting him') reverts to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and given in this verse is the news that the Holy Prophet ﷺ will be meeting Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and it has been said that he should have no doubt in the eventuality of his meeting with Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام. Accordingly, a meeting in the night of al-Mi'rāj (the ascent to the heavens) stands proved on the authority of Ṣaḥīḥ Aḥādīth. Then, also proved is the meeting on the day of Qiyāmah.

And Ḥasan al-Baṣrī رحمه الله تعالى explains it by saying: The way Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was given a Book, then people belied and harassed him, the prophet of Islam too should anticipate that he will have to face similar treatment at the hands of his people. Therefore, he should not grieve over the pains inflicted by disbelievers. In fact, he should take that as the blessed practice of prophets, and endure.

Two conditions for the leader of any people

In the next verse (24), it was said:

وَجَعَلْنَا مِنْهُمْ أَئِمَّةً يَّهْدُوْنَ بِأَمْرِنَا لَمَّا صَبَرُوْا ۗ وَكَانُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا يُوْقِنُوْنَ

(And We appointed leaders from among them who guided (people) under Our command, when they observed patience, and kept firm belief in Our verses).

In this verse, two reasons have been given as to why religious leadership was bestowed on some of the sages of Banī Isrā'īl: (1) Observance of patience and (2) the certitude of Divine words. In terms of the Arabic usage, the sense of doing *ṣabr* or patience is very wide and general. Literally, it means to tie or to be firm. At this place, *ṣabr* means to stay firm on the implementation of Divine injunctions and to hold one's desiring self in check against the infringement of what Allah Ta'ālā has declared to be *ḥarām* (unlawful) or *makrūh* (reprehensible). This covers one's obedience to all injunctions of the Sharī'ah which is pragmatic perfection at its best. The second reason lies in their certitude - they are certain of the Divine words. This includes the initial understanding of the sense of the verses as well as the resulting certitude which emerges from such comprehension - both. This is intellectual perfection at its best.

In short, in the sight of Allah Ta'ālā, only those who are perfect both in *'ilm* (knowledge) and *'amal* (practice) are worthy of religious leadership. It is interesting here that perfection in practice has been made to precede perfection in knowledge while, usually *'ilm* (knowledge) precedes *'amal* (practice). This arrangement releases a strong hint, that is, a knowledge which has no corresponding practice with it is just not credible in the sight of Allah.

Ibn Kathīr has reported the following saying of some 'Ulamā' in his *tafsīr* of this verse:

بِالصَّبْرِ وَالْيَقِيْنِ تُنَالُ الْإِمَامَةُ فِي الدِّيْنِ

One can arrive at the station of leadership in religion only through *ṣabr* (patience) and *yaqīn* (certitude).

The word: جُرُز (*al-juruz*) in verse 27: أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّا نَسُوْقُ الْمَاءَ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ الْجُرُزِ فَنُخْرِجُ بِهٖ زَرْعًا (Have they not seen that We drive water to the dry land, then We bring forth crops thereby - 27) means barren land where trees do not grow.

A wise system of irrigation

Usually the Qur'ān mentions the irrigating of dry lands and the

growing of crops therein by saying that the land receives rain, and becomes moist and growth-worthy. But, there is no mention of rain in this verse. Instead of that, it has been said that water itself is directed to move aground towards the dry land and thereby bring forth the growth of trees. In other words, the rain is made to fall on some other land and it is from there that water is directed to move in the form of carrier channels on the ground all the way to the dry land that receives no rain.

There is a hint embedded here. Some lands are so soft that they cannot withstand rains. If regular rains were made to fall there, buildings may collapse or trees may be uprooted. Therefore, nature has made its own arrangements for such lands. As for the rain itself, it is sent on a land which is capable of holding it. After that, water is made to flow from here all the way to such lands which cannot withstand rains - like the land of Egypt. And there are commentators who have pointed out to some lands of Yaman and Syria as being referred to in this verse. (as reported from Ibn 'Abbās and Al-Ḥasan)

And as for the correct position, this subject includes all such lands, with the inclusion of the land of Egypt known for scanty rains particularly. But, water from the rains in the Abyssinian territory of Africa comes into Egypt through the Nile bringing with it particles of the indigenous red soil which is good for the growth of crops. Therefore, the people of Egypt, despite that they have no rains in their country, do benefit by a supply of new water and soil every year. فَتَبَارَكَ اللّٰهُ اَحْسَنُ الْخَالِقِيْنَ: (So, glorious is Allah, the Best of creators - 23:14).

Verse 28 carries a question posed by disbelievers: وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ مَتٰى هٰذَا الْفَتْحُ(And they say, "When will this decision take place?)Here, they are referring to the victory of believers against disbelievers as promised by the Holy Prophet ﷺ and are wondering about it since they see no traces of this likelihood anywhere around. Instead, they see Muslims as a group of people, scared, hiding,

To answer that, Allah Ta'ala said: قُلْ يَوْمَ الْفَتْحِ لَايَنْفَعُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْٓا اِيْمَانُهُمْ (Say, 'On the day of decision their belief will not be of any use to disbelievers,'- 29) This amounts to saying: Why are you asking us about the day of our victory while that day is going to be a day of trouble for you? When victory comes to us, you would have already been overtaken by

punishment. May be, right here in this world - as it happened in the battle of *Badr* - or, in the Hereafter. And when the punishment of Allah seizes someone, then, no profession of faith at that time, no declaration of *'Īmān* at that stage is accepted. (as mentioned by Ibn Kathīr)

There are some others who have interpreted the 'day' in: مَتٰى هٰذَا الْفَتْحُ ("When will this decision take place?") as the day of Qiyāmah. The summarized explanation of this verse in Bayān-ul-Qur'ān appearing in the original edition of Ma'āriful-Qur'ān is based on this *tafsīr*. (The translation of *al-fatḥ* as 'decision' as given in the text admits both probablities)

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah As-Sajdah
Ends here.

Sūrah Al-Aḥzāb

Sūrah Al-Aḥzab is Madani and has 73 verses and 9 sections.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 3

يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّبِىُّ اتَّقِ اللّٰهَ وَلَا تُطِعِ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ وَالْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ ط اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلِيْمًا حَكِيْمًا ﴿١﴾ وَّاتَّبِعْ مَا يُوْحٰٓى اِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ ط اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرًا ﴿٢﴾ وَّتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللّٰهِ ط وَكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ وَكِيْلًا ﴿٣﴾

O Prophet, fear Allah and do not obey the disbelievers and the hypocrites. Surely Allah is All-Knowing, Wise. [1] **And follow what is revealed to you from your Lord. Surely Allah is All-Aware of what you do.** [2]

And place your trust in Allah, and Allah is enough as a guardian. [3]

Commentary

This is a Madanī Sūrah. Most of its subjects feature is the loveable persona of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his special place with Allah. There it has been variously emphasized that showing reverence for him is obligatory and that causing any pain to him is *ḥarām* (forbidden). Then the rest of the subjects taken up in the Sūrah also serve as complements to the ultimate perfection of his station.

The background of revelation

Some narrations have been reported outlining the cause of the revelation of this Sūrah:

1. When the Holy Prophet ﷺ came to live in Madīnah after his

hijrah, the environs of the city were inhabited by Jewish tribes, some of whom being Quraiẓah, Naḍīr and Banū Qainuqā'. Being the prophet of mercy for all, he wished and tried that they somehow embrace Islam. It so happened that a few men from among these Jews started visiting him and posing as Muslims hypocritically. There was no faith in their heart. The Holy Prophet ﷺ took this as sufficient to begin with in the hope that the incidence of some people becoming Muslims would make it easier for him to invite others. Therefore, he used to welcome everyone from among these people particularly and warmly, so much so that even if they happened to do something bad, he would ignore it as a measure of religious expediency. It was because of this event that the initial verses of Sūrah al-Aḥzāb were revealed. (al-Qurṭubī)

According to another event reported by Ibn Jarīr from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, it was after *hijrah* that Walīd Ibn Mughīrah and Shaibah Ibn Rabī'ah from among the *kuffār* of Makkah came to Madīnah. They made an offer before the Holy Prophet ﷺ that they would let him have half of the entire wealth of the Quraish of Makkah, if he were to withdraw his claim of prophethood. And the hypocrites and Jews of Madīnah gave him a threat that they would kill him, if he did not withdraw from his claim and call. Thereupon, these verses were revealed. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

The third event has been reported by Tha'ālibī and Wāḥidī with no ascription of authority. This event, according to them, goes back to the time when a no war pact was signed between the pagans of Makkah and the Holy Prophet ﷺ at Ḥudaibiyah. It was at that time that Abū Sufyān, 'Ikrimah, Ibn Abī Jahl and Abū al-A'war Sulamī came to Madīnah. There they said to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, 'You stop speaking ill of our objects of worship - or simply say that they will also intercede on our behalf and bring benefits to us. If you do just that much, then we, on our part, will forget about you and your Lord - and the dispute will be all over.'

What they said was very unpleasant for the Holy Prophet ﷺ and for all Muslims who wanted to kill them. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said, 'I have made a peace pact with them, therefore, this cannot be done.' Thereupon, these verses were revealed. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī) Though, these reports are different but, in reality, there is no contradiction therein. These events could also be the cause of the revelation of the cited verses.

In these verses, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been asked to do two things: (1) اِتَّقِ اللّٰهَ (*ittaqillah*), that is, 'fear Allah.' (2) لَا تُطِعِ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ (*la tuti'il-kafirin*), that is, 'do not obey the disbelievers.' The order to fear Allah was given for the reason that killing them was a breach of trust which is *ḥarām* (forbidden). As for the order of not obeying the disbelievers, it was given for the reason that the demands made by the infidels in all these events were unacceptable. Relevant details follow.

Explanation of Verses

In the opening verse of the Sūrah: يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ اتَّقِ اللّٰهَ (O Prophet, fear Allah - 1), the wording of the address to the Holy Prophet ﷺ is significant. This is a singular honor given and the high regard shown to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Nowhere in the entire Qur'ān, has he ever been addressed directly by his name - as has been the case in addressing other prophets. They have been addressed as يَا اٰدَمُ (O 'Ādam), يَا نُوْحُ (O Nūḥ), يَا اِبْرٰهِيْمُ (O Ibrāhīm), يَا مُوْسٰى (O Mūsā) and likewise, repeatedly. Contrary to this, wherever throughout the Qur'ān an address was made to the last among the prophets, may peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him, he was addressed by some title, like *nabiyy* (prophet) or *rasūl* (messenger of Allah) etc. The only exception is that of four occasions [3:144; 33:40; 47:2; 48:29] where the very purpose was to declare that he is the *rasūl* of Allah. It is there only that his blessed name has been mentioned - which was functionally necessary.

In this address, two orders were given to the Holy Prophet ﷺ: (1) That of fearing Allah in the sense that the peace pact entered into with the *Mushriks* of Makkah should not be contravened. (2) That of not yielding to what is said by the disbelievers, hypocrites and the Jews. At this point, a question may arise. Is it not that the Holy Prophet ﷺ is, after all, protected from all sins? Now, a breach of solemn pledge is obviously a major sin, and similarly, it is also a great sin to accept the offer of disbelievers and polytheists, quoted under the background of revelation. Since the Holy Prophet ﷺ was already protected from all kinds of sins, what was the need for such an order? According to Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī, these orders have the sense of instruction to abide by this conduct in future as well - as he did in the event concerned. And the order of: اِتَّقِ اللّٰهَ (*ittaqillah*: fear Allah) was made to come earlier for the reason that Muslims wanted to kill the *Mushriks* of Makkah with whom a treaty of peace was already

in effect. Therefore, the instruction to avoid a breach of pledge was made to precede through the expression: اتق الله (*ittaqillah*: fear Allah). As for the instruction of not yielding to the *kuffār* and *mushrikīn,* since no one had even wanted to do that, it was mentioned later.

And some respected commentators have said that, in this verse, though the address is to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, but the purpose is to warn the Muslim community at large. As for him, he was *ma'ṣūm*, that is, protected in the sense that there was just no probability of the contravention of Divine injunctions from him. But, the law is for the whole community. So, a corresponding mode was employed to make the community hear it and become alerted, and the address was made to the Holy Prophet ﷺ which enhanced the importance of the order significantly by suggesting: When, even the *rasūl* of Allah is the addressee of the order, how can any individual of the Muslim community remain exempted from it?

And Ibn Kathīr has said: In this verse, the real purpose of prohibiting the obedience of the disbelievers is that the Holy Prophet ﷺ should not consult with them or let them have the opportunity of sitting with him frequently, because such consultation or mutual interaction generally becomes the cause of ending up in a disposition favouring the acceptance of what they proposed. Though, there was no probability that the Holy Prophet ﷺ would do what they asked him to do, still, he was stopped from maintaining such liaison with them and from having them participate in his consultations. It is this idea that has been expressed through the word: إطاعة (*iṭā'ah*: obedience, submission or listening to and doing the bidding of someone), because such consultations and mutual interaction usually become the cause of ultimate acceptance. So, what has really been done here is that he has been prohibited from adopting the ways that could lead to such *'iṭāa'ah* or obedience. As for obedience itself, there was no probability that he would ever do that.

Now the second question that may arise here is that according to this verse, the disbelievers and the hypocrites were expected to propose things counter to the true Islamic position. To the extent of open disbelievers, such proposals coming from them were not improbable, and warning against yielding to them is understandable.But, if the hypocrites said anything counter to Islam, they would no longer remain hypocrites,

because in that case they would become open disbelievers. What, then, was the need to mention them separately? The answer is that it is possible that although the hypocrites may not have said anything against Islam very openly, but that they may have said something in support of other disbelievers.

And if the event featuring the hypocrites, described under the background of revelation, is taken to be the cause of revelation, it simply leaves no difficulty or vagueness behind - because, in terms of this event, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has simply been prohibited from dealing with Jews calling themselves Muslims in a spirit of extra civility and accommodation.

Later, towards the end of this verse, by saying: إِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلِيْمًا حَكِيْمًا (Surely, Allah is All- Knowing, Wise - 1), stated there is the wisdom of the order given immediately earlier - that is, 'fear Allah and do not obey the disbelievers and hypocrites.' The reason is that Allah Ta'ālā, who knows the consequences of everything, is most wise, and fully aware of what is better for His servants. This was said to counter some of the things put forth by the disbelievers or hypocrites which could generate for them certain advantages of lesser tension and increased mutual tolerance. But, from this Allah Ta'ālā prohibited him by declaring that even this tolerance of such people was counter to what was expedient under the circumstances and that such a policy was not going to end well.

What is said in verse 2: وَاتَّبِعْ مَا يُوْحٰىٓ اِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرًا (And follow what is revealed to you from your Lord. Surely Allah is All-Aware of what you do.) is actually a complement of the first order. It means: Do not be beguiled or taken in by what the disbelievers and hypocrites say and do not agree or yield to it. Instead of all that, whatever you have been told by Allah through *waḥy* (revelation) remains the only thing you and your companions should follow. Since, the noble companions ؓ and Muslims at large are included under this address, therefore, by saying: بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ (what you do) in the plural form at the end, everyone was alerted.

Once again, the last statement: وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللّٰهِ وَكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ وَكِيْلًا (And place your trust in Allah and Allah is enough as a guardian- 3) is also a complement of the same order. Here it is being said: As for your approach, just pay no heed to what they say and, in order to succeed in your

objective, you should trust no one but Allah for He, in Himself and by Himself, is the ultimate doer, maker and fixer of all matters and things. With Him there, you do not need to acquiesce in the opinion of anyone.

Ruling

The cited verse proves that, in religious matters, even consulting with disbelievers is not permissible. In other matters relating to technical or functional experience, there is no harm in doing so. And Allah knows best.

Verses 4 - 5

مَا جَعَلَ اللّٰهُ لِرَجُلٍ مِّنْ قَلْبَيْنِ فِيْ جَوْفِهٖ ۚ وَمَا جَعَلَ اَزْوَاجَكُمُ الّٰٓـِٔيْ
تُظٰهِرُوْنَ مِنْهُنَّ اُمَّهٰتِكُمْ ۚ وَمَا جَعَلَ اَدْعِيَآءَكُمْ اَبْنَآءَكُمْ ؕ ذٰلِكُمْ
قَوْلُكُمْ بِاَفْوَاهِكُمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يَقُوْلُ الْحَقَّ وَهُوَ يَهْدِى السَّبِيْلَ ﴿٤﴾
اُدْعُوْهُمْ لِاٰبَآئِهِمْ هُوَ اَقْسَطُ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ ۚ فَاِنْ لَّمْ تَعْلَمُوْٓا اٰبَآءَهُمْ
فَاِخْوَانُكُمْ فِى الدِّيْنِ وَمَوَالِيْكُمْ ؕ وَلَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ فِيْمَآ
اَخْطَاْتُمْ بِهٖ ۙ وَلٰكِنْ مَّا تَعَمَّدَتْ قُلُوْبُكُمْ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا ﴿٥﴾

Allah has not made for any man two hearts in his (chest) cavity, nor did he make your wives whom you subjected to *ẓihār*, your mothers, nor did he make your adopted sons your (real) sons. That is (merely) a word uttered by your mouths. And Allah says the truth and He shows the (right) way. [4] **Call them by (the name of) their (real) fathers; It is more equitable in the sight of Allah. And if you do not know their fathers, then they are your brothers in faith and your friends. And there is no sin on you in the mistake you make, but in that which you do with intention of your heart and Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful.** [5]

Commentary

Previous verses carried instructions to the Holy Prophet ﷺ asking him not to act upon their advice and not to be cajoled into what they wanted to achieve. In the cited verses, there is a refutation of three customs prevailing among disbelievers as well as of their false notions.

(1) During *Jāhiliyyah*, Arabs used to say about a person who was smarter than others that he had two hearts in his chest cage.

(2) Then they had a custom about their wives following which a person would declare his wife to be like the back of his mother, or some other part of the body, and go on to say, 'you are, for me, like the back of my mother.' This, in their usage, was called "*Ẓihār*." It is a derivation from: *Ẓahr,* which means 'back'. They thought that if a person who had done "*Ẓihār*" with his wife, she becomes *ḥarām* (unlawful) to him for ever.

(3) And then they had another custom under which one person would make the son of another his so-called or adopted son and who so would take a son in that manner, the boy would become known as 'his' son and would be addressed as such. According to their practice, this so-called or adopted son used to be recognized in all rules and regulations as a 'real' son. For instance, he would be regarded as a sharer even in inheritance, like a real offspring along with the children from his loins. Then, they would also regard the marriage relations of the so-called or adopted son as falling under the standard rule whereby the marriage with a category of certain women is unlawful. For example, as marriage with the wife of one's real son remains unlawful even after he has divorced her, they also took the divorced wife of the so-called or adopted son to be unlawful for that person.

Since the first of the three notions of the period of *Jāhiliyyah* were not tied up with religious belief or conduct, therefore, the Sharī'ah of Islām had no need to refute it. To determine whether there is just the one heart inside the chest or, may be, there are two as well was simply a case of anatomical inquiry. That it was obviously false was known to everyone. Therefore, most likely, the matter of its refutation was also introduced as a prologue to the other two issues and it was said: The way false is the saying of the people of Jāhiliyyah - that 'someone could have two hearts in his chest', the falsity of which is known to everyone - similarly, false are their notions in the matters of *Ẓihār* (falsely declaring one's wife unlawful to him like his mother) and adoption of sons.

As for the injunctions governing the two issues of *Ẓihār* and adopted son, these are among the social and familial issues that have a great importance in Islam - to the extent that even their subsidiary details have

been given in the Qur'ān by Allah Ta'ālā Himself. unlike other matters, this has not been left at the declaration of principles only with its detailed enunciation entrusted with the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Regarding both these issues, the people of Jāhiliyyah, following their baseless whims, had a bunch of self-made laws relating to the lawful and the unlawful, the permissible and the impermissible. It was the duty of the True Religion that it should refute these false notions and make the truth manifest. Therefore, it was said: وَمَا جَعَلَ أَزْوَاجَكُمُ الّٰئِي تُظٰهِرُوْنَ مِنْهُنَّ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ It means: 'You are wrong in thinking that, should someone call his wife the equal or like of his mother, the wife does not go on to become unlawful for him for ever like his real mother. Just because you say so, a wife does not become a mother, in reality. Your mother is but she who gave birth to you.' Now, at least, the notion of the people of Jāhiliyyah that *Ẓihār* makes one's wife unlawful for ever is refuted by this verse. What happens next? Does saying so bring about any legal effect? The standing injunction in this connection appears in Sūrah al-Mujādalah [58:2-4] where saying so has been called a sin and abstention from it obligatory. And it is provided there that he who has made such a declaration should offer a *kaffārah* (expiation) of having done *ẓihār* after which having intercourse with his wife becomes lawful for him. The details of this issue will appear in the Commentary on Sūrah al-Mujādalah (Mā'ariful-Qur'ān, Volume VIII).

The second issue was that of the *mutabanna, i.e* adopted son. About that, it was said: وَمَا جَعَلَ أَدْعِيَآءَكُمْ أَبْنَآءَكُمْ (nor did he make your adopted sons your (real) sons - 4). The word: أَدْعِيَاء (*ad'iyā'*) is the plural of: دَعِيٌّ (*da'iyy*) which means a so-called son. The sense is that the way no man has two hearts inside him and the way by likening one's wife to one's mother, the wife does not become the mother - similarly, the so-called son does not become your real son. In other words, neither will he be entitled to a share in inheritance with other sons, nor the precepts of the unlawfulness of marriage will apply to him. For example, the way the divorced wife of a real son is unlawful for his father for ever, the divorced wife of an adopted son is not unlawful for his so-called father. Since this last matter affects many other matters, therefore, it was complimented by another injunction, that is, even an adopted son should be attributed to his real father, and not to the person who has adopted him - because, this spells out the danger of misgiving and confusion creeping in many matters.

There is a *hadīth* from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar ﷺ appearing in al-Bukhārī, Muslim and others in which it has been said: 'Before the revelation of this verse, we used to call Zayd Ibn Ḥārithah by the name of Zayd Ibn Muḥammad (because the Holy Prophet ﷺ had taken him in as his *mutabannā*, adopted son). After the revelation of this verse, we abandoned this practice.'

Ruling

This tells us about many people who call the children of others as 'son' which, if because of simple affection, not because of declaring him an adopted son or a *mutabannā* , then, this would though be permissible, still, it is not the better choice, because it looks like violating the prohibition, at least in appearance. (As in Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī from al-Khāfajī Alā al-Baiḍāwī)

And this is the same matter which, by throwing the Quraish of Arabia into deception, led them to commit a sin of terribly serious proportions to the extent that they started blaming the Holy Prophet ﷺ by saying that he had married the divorced wife of his 'son' ,while in fact, he was not his son, but only a *mutabannā* (adopted son) - something that will be mentioned in this very Sūrah a little later.

Verse 6

اَلنَّبِیُّ اَوْلٰی بِالْمُؤْمِنِیْنَ مِنْ اَنْفُسِهِمْ وَاَزْوَاجُهٗٓ اُمَّهٰتُهُمْ ؕ وَاُولُوا الْاَرْحَامِ بَعْضُهُمْ اَوْلٰی بِبَعْضٍ فِیْ کِتٰبِ اللّٰهِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِیْنَ وَالْمُهٰجِرِیْنَ اِلَّآ اَنْ تَفْعَلُوْٓا اِلٰٓی اَوْلِیٰٓئِکُمْ مَّعْرُوْفًا ؕ کَانَ ذٰلِکَ فِی الْکِتٰبِ مَسْطُوْرًا ﴿۶﴾

The Prophet is closer to the believers than their own selves and his wives are their mothers. And those having mutual kinship are closer to one another (for the purpose of inheritance) than (other) believers and emigrants according to the Book of Allah, unless you do some good to your friends (by making a will in their favour). This had been written in the Book (the Preserved Tablet). [6]

Commentary

As stated earlier, most of the subjects in Sūrah al-Aḥzāb relate to the reverence of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and to the unlawfulness of causing pain to him. After the mention of pains caused to him by disbelievers and hypocrites at the beginning of the Sūrah, some instructions were given to the Holy Prophet ﷺ following which three customs of the Jāhiliyyah were refuted. Out of these, the last custom related to such a pain inflicted on the Holy Prophet ﷺ because the disbelievers had - at the time of the marriage of Sayyidah Zainab رضی اللہ عنہا, the divorced wife of Sayyidnā Zayd ؓ, and on the basis of their pagan custom of *mutabanna* - blamed the Holy Prophet ﷺ of having married the divorced wife of his 'son.' Thus, from the beginning of the Sūrah up to this point, the subject concerned the pain caused to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. In the present verse (6), it has been stated that the reverence of and the obedience to the Holy Prophet ﷺ more than the whole creation is *wājib* (necessary in the degree of obligation)

The meaning of the expression:"The Prophet is closer to the believers than their own selves" mentioned by Maulānā Thanavī is based on the saying of Ibn 'Aṭiyyah and others which has been opted for by al-Qurṭubī and most commentators. According to it, every Muslim is duty-bound to obey and implement the command of the Holy Prophet ﷺ more than the command of his parents. If one's parents oppose any command of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, their obedience in that matter is not permissible. Similarly, the implementation of his command takes precedence even over the pulls of one's own desiring self.

In a *hadīth* of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ؓ appearing in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī and others, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said:

مَا مِنْ مُّؤْمِنٍ اِلَّا وَاَنَا اَوْلَى النَّاسِ بِهٖ فِى الدُّنْيَا وَالْاٰخِرَةِ اِقْرَءُوْٓا اِنْ شِئْتُمْ اَلنَّبِىُّ اَوْلٰى بِالْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ مِنْ اَنْفُسِهِمْ

There is no such believer for whom I am not the closest of all people in this world and in the world to come. Read if you wish (this verse of the Qur'ān to confirm): ... (The Prophet is ...).

The sense of the statement is that his affection for every Muslim exceeds the affection of the whole world and, as such, the necessary

outcome has to be no other but that every believer holds him dearer than anyone else - which is something also said in another *hadīth*:

لَا يُؤْمِنُ اَحَدُكُمْ حَتّٰى اَكُوْنَ اَحَبَّ اِلَيْهِ مِنْ وَّالِدِهٖ وَوَلَدِهٖ وَالنَّاسِ اَجْمَعِيْنَ

> None of you can become a believer until I become the dearest one to him, dearer than his father, and his son, and the whole world full of people/and the rest of the human beings, all of them. (Al-Bukhārī and Muslim - Maẓharī)

Said in the following sentence of the verse was: وَاَزْوَاجُهٗ اُمَّهٰتُهُمْ (and his wives are your mothers). Here, the reference to the blessed wives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ as mothers of the Muslim community means being mothers in terms of their respect and honor. Injunctions relating to the mother and her children, and those of the forbiddance of marriage, and of the absence of *ḥijāb* due to having the status of a *maḥram*, and of holding a share in the inheritance are injunctions which have nothing to do with it - as made explicit towards the end of the verse. As for the forbiddance of the marriage of the blessed wives with anyone in the Muslim community, this has been declared in a separate verse. Therefore, it is not necessary that even this forbiddance of marriage may be for the reason of being mothers.

Ruling

The cited verse proves that the least breach of etiquette in the case of anyone of the blessed wives رضى الله عنهن is forbidden for two reasons: (1) That they are the mothers of the Muslim community and (2) also because any pain caused to them would cause pain to the Holy Prophet ﷺ - which is forbidden in a far too extreme a degree.

The literal sense of the expression: اُولُوا الْاَرْحَامِ (*ulu 'l-arḥām*) in the next sentence of the verse: وَاُولُوا الْاَرْحَامِ بَعْضُهُمْ اَوْلٰى بِبَعْضٍ (And those having mutual kinship are closer to one another (for the purpose of inheritance) than (other) believers and emigrants) covers all relatives, whether they are those whom Muslim jurists call by the name of: عَصَبَات (*'aṣbāt*: agnates) or those who are juxtaposed as اُولُو الاَرْحَام "*ulu 'l-arḥām*" against عَصَبَات "'*aṣbāt*" in the light of a particular terminology. This terminology used by Muslim jurists, a later day product, is not what is meant here in the Holy Qur'ān.

Thus, it means that the relationship of the revered *rasūl* and his

blessed wives with the believers of the community is, though of a degree which precedes even that of a mother and father but, on the injunctions relating to the distribution of inheritance, this has simply no bearing. This inheritance, in fact, will be distributed only on the basis of lineal and closer relationships.

In the early stage of Islam, entitlement to shares in the inheritance was based on spiritual relationship. Later on, it was abrogated in favour of closeness of relationships which has been announced by the noble Qur'ān itself. This entire detail of the abrogating and the abrogated verses has appeared in Sūrah al-Anfāl (Mā'ariful-Qur'ān, Volume IV). And in that context, the mention of: وَالْمُهَاجِرِيْنَ *(and the emigrants)* after: مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ (and the believers) is there to highlight their distinction.

And some early commentators have said that, at this place, the Believers (*'al-mu'minīn'*) mean the Anṣār and the Emigrants *(Muhājirīn)* mean the Quraish. When placed in contrast with the *Muhājirīn*, it becomes clear that the word: *'al-mu'minīn'* (the believers) is for the *Anṣār*. In that case, this verse will be an abrogator of the rule of inheritance on the basis of the *Hijrah* (توارث بالهجرة) because, during the early stage of *Hijrah*, the Holy Prophet ﷺ had, by establishing brotherly relations between the *Muhājirīn* and the *Ansar*, ordered that they will also inherit from each other. This verse abrogated that rule of 'inheritance by virtue of Hijrah' (Qurṭubī)

Soon thereafter, it was stated: اِلَّا اَنْ تَفْعَلُوْٓا اِلٰٓى اَوْلِيٰٓءِكُمْ مَّعْرُوْفًا (unless you do some good to your friends (by making a will in their favour - 6). In other words, this means that inheritance as such will be received only on the basis of relationship - anyone unrelated will not be an inheritor - but, there may be people with whom you relate as your brothers in faith. If you wish to give them something, you have the right to do so. You could do so within your lifetime and give it to them as a gift, and it is also possible to make a will in their favour so that they get it after your death.

Verses 7 - 8

وَاِذْ اَخَذْنَا مِنَ النَّبِيّٖنَ مِيْثَاقَهُمْ وَمِنْكَ وَمِنْ نُّوْحٍ وَّاِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَمُوْسٰى
وَعِيْسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ ص وَاَخَذْنَا مِنْهُمْ مِّيْثَاقًا غَلِيْظًا ﴿٧﴾ لِّيَسْـَٔلَ

الصّٰدِقِيْنَ عَنْ صِدْقِهِمْ ۚ وَاَعَدَّ لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ عَذَابًا اَلِيْمًا ﴿٨﴾

And (recall) when We took from the prophets their covenant, and from you and from Nūḥ and Ibrāhīm and Mūsā and 'Īsā, the son of Maryam. And We did take from them a firm covenant, [7] **so that He (Allah) may ask the truthful about their truth. And He has prepared a painful punishment for the disbelievers.** [8]

Commentary

At the beginning of the Sūrah, by saying: وَاتَّبِعْ مَا يُوْحٰى اِلَيْكَ , the Holy Prophet ﷺ was asked to follow the Divine revelation sent to him. Then, in the previous verse: اَلنَّبِيُّ اَوْلٰى بِالْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ , the believers have been obligated with the implementation of the orders of the recipient of the revelation. It is to further confirm and emphasize these very two things that, in the present two verses as well, the same two subjects have been reiterated, that is, the recipient of the revelation has been obligated to follow the revelation received by him from Allah and the non-recipient of the revelation has been obligated to follow the recipient of the revelation.

The Covenant of the Prophets

The covenant taken from the blessed prophets, according to the cited verse, is in addition to the universal pledge taken from the entire creation as it appears in a saying of the Holy Prophet ﷺ reported by Imām Aḥmad:

خُصُّوْا بِمِيْثَاقِ الرِّسَالَةِ وَالنُّبُوَّةِ وَهُوَ قَوْلُهٗ تَعَالٰى وَاِذْ اَخَذْنَا مِنَ النَّبِيّٖنَ مِيْثَاقَهُمْ

"It was the prophets only from whom the covenant of messenger-ship and prophethood was taken, and this is the meaning of what Allah Ta'ālā has said:....(And when We took from the prophets their covenant...to the end of the verse).

This pledge from the prophets was the pledge of discharging the duties of prophethood and messenger-ship and of attesting to the veracity of each other and of being mutually helpful - as Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Abī Ḥātim and others have reported from Sayyidnā Qatādah ؓ. And according to one narration, it was also included in this pledge of the prophets that they should also proclaim that "Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ is the messenger of Allah, and the last of the prophets. After him, there will be no prophet [مُحَمَّدٌ رَّسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ لَا نَبِيَّ بَعْدَهٗ]

And this pledge from prophets was also taken in eternity *(Azal)* at the same time when the pledge of: أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ (*alastu bi-rabbikum*: Am I not your Lord?) was taken from the created at large. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī and Maẓharī)

After having generally mentioned prophets, peace be on them all, before saying: وَمِنْكَ وَمِنْ نُّوحٍ (and from you and from Nūḥ... up to the end of the verse), five of them were particularly named on the basis of the unique distinction they have among the group of prophets. Then, even within those, it was by using the word: مِنْكَ (*minka*: from you) that the mention of the Holy Prophet ﷺ was made to precede that of others - although, his appearance in this world is later than all of them. The reason for this has been given in Ḥadīth itself:

كُنْتُ اَوَّلَ النَّاسِ فِي الْخَلْقِ وَاٰخِرَهُمْ فِي الْبَعْثِ (رواه ابن سعد وابو نعيم فى الحلية عن ميسرة الفجر والطبرانى فى الكبير عن ابن عباسؓ۔ مظهرى)

'I am the first human being in the creation and the last of them in being sent (with the prophetic mission).' (Reported by Ibn Sa'd and Abū Nu'aim in Al-Ḥilyah from Maisirah al-Mafjar and At-Tabarānī in al-Kabīr from Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ - Maẓharī)

Verses 9 - 27

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اذْكُرُوْا نِعْمَةَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ اِذْ جَآءَتْكُمْ جُنُوْدٌ فَاَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ رِيْحًا وَّجُنُوْدًا لَّمْ تَرَوْهَا ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ بَصِيْرًا ﴿۹﴾ اِذْ جَآءُوْكُمْ مِّنْ فَوْقِكُمْ وَمِنْ اَسْفَلَ مِنْكُمْ وَاِذْ زَاغَتِ الْاَبْصَارُ وَبَلَغَتِ الْقُلُوْبُ الْحَنَاجِرَ وَتَظُنُّوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ الظُّنُوْنَا ﴿۱۰﴾ هُنَالِكَ ابْتُلِيَ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ وَزُلْزِلُوْا زِلْزَالًا شَدِيْدًا ﴿۱۱﴾ وَاِذْ يَقُوْلُ الْمُنٰفِقُوْنَ وَالَّذِيْنَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ مَّا وَعَدَنَا اللّٰهُ وَرَسُوْلُهٗۤ اِلَّا غُرُوْرًا ﴿۱۲﴾ وَاِذْ قَالَتْ طَّآئِفَةٌ مِّنْهُمْ يٰۤاَهْلَ يَثْرِبَ لَا مُقَامَ لَكُمْ فَارْجِعُوْا ۚ وَيَسْتَاْذِنُ فَرِيْقٌ مِّنْهُمُ النَّبِيَّ يَقُوْلُوْنَ اِنَّ بُيُوْتَنَا عَوْرَةٌ ؕ وَمَا هِيَ بِعَوْرَةٍ ۚ اِنْ يُّرِيْدُوْنَ اِلَّا فِرَارًا ﴿۱۳﴾ وَلَوْ دُخِلَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنْ

اَقْطَارِهَا ثُمَّ سُئِلُوا الْفِتْنَةَ لَاٰتَوْهَا وَمَا تَلَبَّثُوْا بِهَآ اِلَّا يَسِيْرًا ﴿١٤﴾ وَلَقَدْ
كَانُوْا عَاهَدُوا اللّٰهَ مِنْ قَبْلُ لَايُوَلُّوْنَ الْاَدْبَارَ ؕ وَكَانَ عَهْدُ اللّٰهِ
مَسْئُوْلاً ﴿١٥﴾ قُلْ لَّنْ يَّنْفَعَكُمُ الْفِرَارُ اِنْ فَرَرْتُمْ مِّنَ الْمَوْتِ اَوِالْقَتْلِ
وَاِذًا لَّا تُمَتَّعُوْنَ اِلَّا قَلِيْلاً ﴿١٦﴾ قُلْ مَنْ ذَا الَّذِىْ يَعْصِمُكُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ
اِنْ اَرَادَ بِكُمْ سُوْٓءًا اَوْ اَرَادَ بِكُمْ رَحْمَةً ؕ وَلَا يَجِدُوْنَ لَهُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِ
اللّٰهِ وَلِيًّا وَّلَا نَصِيْرًا ﴿١٧﴾ قَدْ يَعْلَمُ اللّٰهُ الْمُعَوِّقِيْنَ مِنْكُمْ وَالْقَآئِلِيْنَ
لِاِخْوَانِهِمْ هَلُمَّ اِلَيْنَا ج وَلَا يَاْتُوْنَ الْبَاْسَ اِلَّا قَلِيْلاً ﴿١٨﴾ اَشِحَّةً
عَلَيْكُمْ صلے فَاِذَا جَآءَ الْخَوْفُ رَاَيْتَهُمْ يَنْظُرُوْنَ اِلَيْكَ تَدُوْرُ اَعْيُنُهُمْ
كَالَّذِىْ يُغْشٰى عَلَيْهِ مِنَ الْمَوْتِ ج فَاِذَا ذَهَبَ الْخَوْفُ سَلَقُوْكُمْ
بِاَلْسِنَةٍ حِدَادٍ اَشِحَّةً عَلَى الْخَيْرِ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ لَمْ يُؤْمِنُوْا فَاَحْبَطَ اللّٰهُ
اَعْمَالَهُمْ ؕ وَكَانَ ذٰلِكَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ يَسِيْرًا ﴿١٩﴾ يَحْسَبُوْنَ الْاَحْزَابَ
لَمْ يَذْهَبُوْا ج وَ اِنْ يَّاْتِ الْاَحْزَابُ يَوَدُّوْا لَوْاَنَّهُمْ بَادُوْنَ فِى الْاَعْرَابِ
يَسْئَلُوْنَ عَنْ اَنْبَآئِكُمْ ؕ وَلَوْ كَانُوْا فِيْكُمْ مَّا قٰتَلُوْٓا اِلَّا قَلِيْلاً ﴿٢٠﴾ لَقَدْ
كَانَ لَكُمْ فِىْ رَسُوْلِ اللّٰهِ اُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُوا اللّٰهَ وَالْيَوْمَ
الْاٰخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللّٰهَ كَثِيْرًا ﴿٢١﴾ وَلَمَّا رَءَا الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ الْاَحْزَابَ لا قَالُوْا
هٰذَا مَا وَعَدَنَا اللّٰهُ وَرَسُوْلُهٗ وَصَدَقَ اللّٰهُ وَرَسُوْلُهٗ ز وَمَا زَادَهُمْ اِلَّا
اِيْمَانًا وَّتَسْلِيْمًا ﴿٢٢﴾ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ رِجَالٌ صَدَقُوْا مَا عَاهَدُوا اللّٰهَ
عَلَيْهِ ج فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ قَضٰى نَحْبَهٗ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَّنْتَظِرُ صلے وَمَا بَدَّلُوْا تَبْدِيْلاً
﴿٢٣﴾ لِّيَجْزِىَ اللّٰهُ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ بِصِدْقِهِمْ وَيُعَذِّبَ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ اِنْ شَآءَ
اَوْيَتُوْبَ عَلَيْهِمْ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا ﴿٢٤﴾ وَرَدَّ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ
كَفَرُوْا بِغَيْظِهِمْ لَمْ يَنَالُوْا خَيْرًا ؕ وَكَفَى اللّٰهُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ الْقِتَالَ ؕ

وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ قَوِيًّا عَزِيْزًا ﴿٢٥﴾ وَاَنْزَلَ الَّذِيْنَ ظَاهَرُوْهُمْ مِّنْ اَهْلِ
الْكِتٰبِ مِنْ صَيَاصِيْهِمْ وَقَذَفَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمُ الرُّعْبَ فَرِيْقًا تَقْتُلُوْنَ
وَتَاْسِرُوْنَ فَرِيْقًا ﴿٢٦﴾ وَاَوْرَثَكُمْ اَرْضَهُمْ وَدِيَارَهُمْ وَ اَمْوَالَهُمْ وَاَرْضًا
لَّمْ تَطَئُوْهَا ۗ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرًا ﴿٢٧﴾

O those who believe,(1) remember Allah's favour to you, when the forces (of the infidels) came upon you, and We sent upon them a wind, and the forces (of angels) you did not see. And Allah is watchful of what you do. [9] **(Recall) when they came upon you from above you and from below you, and when the eyes were distracted and the hearts reached the throats, and you were thinking about Allah all sorts of thoughts.** [10] **At that occasion, the believers were put to a trial and were shaken with a violent convulsion.** [11] **And (remember) when the hypocrites and those having malady in their hearts were saying, "Allah and His messenger did not promise us but deceitfully;** [12] **and when a group of them said, "O people of Yathrib (Madīnah), there is no place for you to stay; so go back." And a group of them was seeking permission (to leave) from the prophet, saying, "In fact our homes are vulnerable," while they were not vulnerable; they wanted nothing but to escape.** [13] **And if it (Madīnah) is entered (by the enemy, in their presence,) from all its sides and they are asked (to join) the mischief, they would readily commit it, and would not remain in them (their homes) but for a short while(2)** [14] **despite that they had already made a covenant with Allah that they would not turn their backs; and a covenant with Allah has to be answered for.** [15](3)

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(1) These verses refer to the battle of Aḥzāb, also known as 'the battle of Khandaq' in which different tribes of Arabia, led by the Quraish invaded upon Madīnah, and the Holy Prophet ﷺ defended the city by digging a trench.

(2). It means that although they are escaping from the battle - field on the pretext that their homes are not safe, yet if the forces of the enemy invite them to join the battle against Muslims, after their having entered the city from all sides, they would easily join them in their mischief against Muslims, and would no more remain in their homes.It shows that their pretext is sham.

(3). That is, everyone who enters into a covenant with Allah, has to answer how he has fulfilled it.

Say, "Flight will never be of any use to you, if you flee from death or killing, and even then you will not be let to enjoy (life) but for a little while." [16] **Say, "Who is there to protect you from Allah, if He intends evil to you, or (who is there to prevent Him) if He intends mercy for you?" And beside Allah, they will not find for themselves either a friend or a helper.** [17]

Allah does know the ones from among you who prevent (others from joining the battle) and those who say to their brothers, "Come along with us," and who do not come to the battle but for a little while, [18] **(and that too) with a greed against you (i.e. to extract a share of spoils from you). But when fear comes, you will see them looking towards you, rolling their eyes, like the one who gets faint because of death. Then once fear is gone, they assail you with sharp tongues,in greed for the good (i.e. the wealth acquired as spopils).(4) These people did not accept faith (in real terms),therefore Allah has nullified their acts.(5) And all this is so easy for Allah.** [19] **They think that the coalition forces have not(yet) gone. And should the coalition forces come (again), they would like to be living in countryside among the Bedouins, asking (others) about your news. And even if they were to remain among you, they would not fight, but a little.** [20]

There is indeed a good model for you in the Messenger of Allah - for the one who has hope in Allah and the Last Day, and remembers Allah profusely. [21](6)

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(4). This verse has unveiled cowardice of the hypocrites on the one hand, and their greed for wealth on the other. The sense is that they are so coward that when an attack from the enemy is apprehended, they are frightened like a person who becomes faint in fear of death. But when the enemy is driven away by the Muslims, and the spoils of war are distributed, they come forward assailing the Muslims with their sharp tongues and claiming that the victory is achieved with their help, and therefore they deserve a share in the spoils.

(5). It means that virtuous acts deserve reward in the Hereafter only when they are accompanied by true faith in Allah, and since it has become evident that these hypocrites do not have true faith, even their virtuous acts will not be of any use to them in the Hereafter and will remain null and void.

(6). In the context of the battle of Aḥzab, this verse is initially meant to remind the hypocrites that they should have followed the example of the Holy Prophet ﷺ who stood firm in the battle,but according to the unique style of the Holy Qur'ān, the direction is given in generic terms to lay down a universal rule that the Muslims should follow the examples set by the Holy Prophet ﷺ in all matters of life.

And when the believers saw the coalition forces, they said, "This is what Allah and His messenger had promised us, and Allah and His messenger had told the truth." And it only increased them in faith and submission. [22]

Among the believers, there are men who came true to the covenant they had with Allah. So, some of them have fulfilled their vows(by sacrificing their lives in the way of Allah), and some of them are (still) waiting, and they did not change (their commitment) in the least. [23] (7) **(All this happened) so that Allah may give reward to the truthful for their truthfulness, and punish the hypocrites, if He so wills, or accept their repentance. Surely, Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful.** [24]

And Allah has turned back the disbelievers with all their rage, having achieved no good. And Allah sufficed the believers against fighting. (8) **And Allah is Powerful, Mighty.** [25] **And He has brought those of the people of the Book who had backed them, down from their fortresses, and cast awe into their hearts, so as to make you kill some of them and take others as captives.** [26] **And He let you inherit their land and their homes and their wealth, and a land you have not trodden (so far). And Allah is Powerful to do any thing.** [27] (9)

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(7). This verse admires those companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ who had not participated in the battle of Badr due to some valid excuses, and had vowed that whenever the next battle would come to happen,they would offer their lives in defence of faith.Then,some of them,like Sayyidnā 'Anas Ibn Naḍr ؓ and Muṣ'ab Ibn 'Umair ؓ fulfilled their vows by sacrificing their lives in the battle of 'Uḥud, while some others, like Sayyidnā 'Uthmān and Ṭalḥah ؓ remained alive, but eagerly waiting for having the honor of being martyred in the way of Allah.

(8). It means that Allah made a divine arrangement by sending a violent wind to the coalition forces which compelled them to go back, and thus the Muslims did not have to indulge in a regular battle, except to the extent of some individual encounters.

(9). These two verses refer to Banū qurayẓah, the Jewish tribe who had entered into a treaty with the Muslims not to fight against them, and not to support the enemies of the Muslims. But at the time of The battle of Aḥzāb, they violated the terms of the treaty and supported the coalition forces. Even earlier, they had been constantly conspiring against the Muslims to an intolerable extent. After the battle of Aḥzāb was over, the Holy Prophet ﷺ besieged the fortress of Banū qurayẓah, and finally, they had to surrender, and most of their men were killed, and the women and children were made captives. This event has been referred to in these verses.At the same time, Allah Ta'ālā has given a good news to the Muslims that they would conquer some other lands which they had not entered before.The words," and a land you have not trodden" refer to such future victories, especially to the conquest of Khyber that followed within a few years after the battle of Aḥzāb.

Commentary

Identified in the previous verses was the great station of the Holy Prophet ﷺ along with the instruction to Muslims that they should follow and obey him totally and perfectly. Congruent to this, these two full sections of the Qur'ān have been revealed about the event of the battle of al-Aḥzāb. Mentioned therein is the simultaneous attack of the combined forces of many groups of disbelievers and polytheists, their threatening encirclement, the subsequent blessings bestowed on Muslims by Allah Ta'ālā and the several miracles that issued forth at the hands of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Then, very much as a corollary to this, there are many instructions and injunctions relating to different departments of life. It is because of these very priceless instructions that great commentators have written about the details of the event of Aḥzāb with considered details at this place, particularly al-Qurṭubī, Maẓharī and others. Therefore, some details of the event of Aḥzab along with the instructions are being written here. Most of it has been taken from al-Qurṭubī and Maẓharī. That which has been taken from some other book carries the necessary reference.

THE EVENT OF THE BATTLE OF AL-AḤZAB

The word: الأحزاب (*al-aḥzab*) is the plural form of: حزب (*ḥizb*) which means party or group. In this battle, the combined forces of different groups of disbelievers had, under a pact to eliminate Muslims, mounted an attack on Madīnah. Therefore, this battle has been named as the battle of al-Aḥzāb. And since, in this battle, a trench was also dug under the orders of the Holy Prophet ﷺ across the line of enemy attack, therefore, this battle is also called the battle of the Trench (Khandaq). The battle of Banū Quraiẓah too - which took place immediately after the battle of al-Aḥzāb and finds mention in the cited verses as well - that too, was actually a part of the battle of al-Aḥzāb, as it would appear through the details of this event.

In the year only next to the year the Holy Prophet ﷺ graced Madīnah after migrating from Makkah al-Mukarramah, the event of the battle of Badr came to pass. In the third year, came the battle of Uḥud. In the fourth year, it was this battle of al-Aḥzāb. Some narrations say that this event came to pass in the fifth year. Nevertheless, the attacks of the

disbelievers against Muslims had been continuing since the *hijrah* up to this time without any break. The attack on the occasion of the battle of al-Aḥzāb was made with full power, determination and mutual pledge. Therefore, this battle was the severest on the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the noble Ṣaḥābah as compared with other battles - because, the count of the attacking confederate forces of the disbelievers has been given as twelve to fifteen thousand. On the other side, there were Muslims, three thousand in all, and those too very ill-equipped. Then, the time was hard winter. The Qur'ān describes the horrible severity of this event by saying things like: زَاغَتِ الْاَبْصَارُ (the eyes were distracted - 33:10), بَلَغَتِ الْقُلُوْبُ الْحَنَاجِرَ (and hearts reached the throats - 33:10) and وَزُلْزِلُوْا زِلْزَالاً شَدِيْدًا (they were shaken with a violent convulsion - 33:11).

But, the way this time was the hardest on Muslims, they were also compensated at its best by Allah Ta'ālā. It was with His help and support that the matter ended in favour of Muslims in the form of such a great success and victory that broke the back of all hostile groups of Mushriks, Jews and Hypocrites leaving them just about incapable of even thinking of some attack against Muslims in the future. From that angle, this battle was the last armed confrontation between *kufr* and Islam - fought on the plains of al-Madīnah al-Munawwarah in the fourth or fifth year of *hijrah*.

The event began when about twenty men from the Jewish tribe of Banū Naḍīr and the tribe of Abū Wā'il who were morbidly hostile to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and Muslims at large reached Makkah al-Mukarramah. They met with Quraish chiefs and roused them to start a war against Muslims. The Quraish chiefs were under the impression that the way Muslims took their idol-worship to be *kufr* (disbelief, infidelity) and for which reason they regarded their religion as ill-founded, the Jews too would be no different and their thinking would be similar to it. If so, how could they hope for a common ground of unity from them? Therefore, these chiefs asked the Jews, "You people know that there is difference of religion and creed between us and Muḥammad ﷺ. And you are the people of the Book and the people of learning. First of all, you tell us as to which religion is better in your sight, ours or theirs?"

A lie is no novelty in the arena of politics!

The reply given by these Jews was totally contrary to their knowledge

and conscience. To them, they said, "Your religion is better than the religion of Muḥammad." Thereupon, the infidels of Makkah were somewhat satisfied. Still, the matter was taken to a future demonstration of intent. It was decided that these twenty visitors joined by fifty men from among the Quraish chiefs would go to al-Masjid al-Ḥarām, cling to the walls of the Baytullah by their chests and make a solemn pledge before Allah that they would continue fighting against Muḥammad ﷺ to their last man.

A marvel of the forbearance and magnanimity of Allah Ta'ālā!

Here are the enemies of Allah in the House of Allah clinging to the walls of the Ka'abah of Allah making a compact to fight a war against His Rasūl - and then return satisfied with a new passion for war! This is unique manifestation of the forbearance and magnanimity of Allāh Ta'ālā. Then, the ultimate end of this compact is not too far to find. It will appear towards the end of the narrative in that all of them bolted from this battle.

These Jews, after having made a pact with the Quraish of Makkah, reached the tribe of Ghiṭfān, a great warring tribe of Arabia. They told them that they and the Quraish of Makkah were in full agreement with the plan to eliminate the spreaders of this new religion (Islam) once for all with their combined power. They asked them too to join hands with them in that pact. Then, they also offered them a bribe. They promised to give them the total produce of dates in one year in Khaibar - according to some narrations, they promised the half of it to the tribe of Ghiṭfān. 'Uyaiynah Ibn Ḥiṣn, the chief of the tribe of Ghiṭfān, approved of his participation in the pact under this condition. Thus, they too became a part of the war effort.

Then, in accordance with the mutual pact, the Quraish armed force of four thousand men, three hundred horses and war supplies laden on one thousand camels came out of Makkah under the command of Abū Sufyān and stopped at Marr aẓ-Ẓahrān. Here, all tribes of Aslam, Ashja', Banū Murrah, Banū Kinānah, Fazārah and Ghiṭfān joined them. Their total number has been reported in some narrations as ten thousand, as twelve thousand in some others and as fifteen thousand in still other.

The most lethal attack on Madīnah

The armed force that fought against Muslims in the battle of Badr

was that of one thousand men. Then, the army that attacked in the battle of Uḥud had three thousand men. This time, the numerical strength of the attacking forces was greater than it was any time before that - the equipment and the combined power of the Arab and Jewish tribes were also to be counted as additional factors.

Three ingredients of Muslim war effort

When the information about this aggressive united front reached the Holy Prophet ﷺ, the very first verbal reaction came out from him in the words:

حَسْبُنَا اللّٰهُ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيْلُ

Allah is all-sufficient for us, and the best One to trust in - 3:173.

After that, he assembled opinion leaders from among the Emigrants and Helpers together and went into consultation with them. Although, the blessed recipient of *Waḥy* (revelation) really needs no consultation for he acts directly with the permission of Allah Taʻālā. But, there were two advantages in having such consultation: (1) To initiate and establish the Sunnah (practice) of consultation in the Muslim community and (2) to revive mutual liaison and unity in the hearts of the believers and to persuade them to the need of helping and supporting each other. After that, they talked about matters of defence and the physical resources needed in fighting a war. Present among the group of consultants there was Sayyidnā Salmān al-Fārisī رضي الله عنه who had recently freed himself from the artificially imposed slavery of a Jew and had devoted himself to the service of Islam. He advised that in his country, the Persian kings have used trenches they arranged to be dug across the enemy line of attack. This had always helped stop the enemy. Accepting his advice, the Holy Prophet ﷺ ordered that trenches be dug - and he himself participated with others doing that.

The digging of trenches

It was decided to dig this trench on the entire passage way behind the mount of Salʻ which could be used by the enemy to come into Madīnah from the north. The ground marking of the length and width of this trench was personally drawn by the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Beginning from Shaikhayn, this trench came as far as the western corner of the mount of Salʻ and later it was extended to the intersection of the valleys of Buṭḥān

and Rātaūnā. The total length of this trench was approximately three and a half miles. The precise measurement of the width and depth could not be ascertained from any narration. But, it is obvious that the width and depth would have also been special, of the kind the enemy would have not found easy to cross.

It has appeared in the narration of the event relating to Sayyidnā Salmān ﷺ digging the trench that he used to dig his allotted portion of the trench which, at the end of the day, came to be five yards long and five yards deep (Maẓharī). From this, it can be said that the depth of the trench was five yards.

The size of the Islamic 'army'

At that time, Muslims were a total of three thousand in number along with a total of thirty six horses.

Participant age of maturity was set at fifteen years

Some non-pubert children had also come out with the Islamic 'army' with the desire to defend their faith. The Holy Prophet ﷺ asked children below the age of fifteen years to leave. Those fifteen year old were accepted - included therein were Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar, Zayd Ibn Thābit, Abu Sa'īd al-Khudrī and Barā' Ibn 'Āzib رضی اللہ عنهم اجمعين. When this Islamic force was ready to march for battle, the hypocrites who normally kept a face and remained intermingled among Muslims, started backing out. Some bolted away incognito. Others came up with false excuses and tried to get the permission of the Holy Prophet ﷺ to go back. This was a new trouble that rose from within. Some of the cited verses have been revealed about these very hypocrites. (Qurṭubī)

Islamic nationality and Islamic unity do not contradict administrative and social division

For this Jihād, the Holy Prophet ﷺ appointed Sayyidnā Zayd Ibn Ḥārithah ﷺ as the standard bearer of the *Muhājirīn* and Sayyidnā Sa'd Ibn 'Ubādah ﷺ as the standard bearer of the *Anṣār*. At that time, the mutual brotherhood among the *Muhājirīn* and the *Anṣār* stood established on very firm foundations. All of them were brothers to each other. But, it was in view of administrative convenience that the leadership of the *Muhājirīn* was separated from the leadership of the *Anṣār*. From this, we learn that Islamic nationality and Islamic unity are

not contradictory to administrative and social division. In fact, by placing the burden of responsibility on each group helped strengthen the bond of mutual confidence and cooperation. And in the very first assignment, that is, in the digging of trenches before this battle, this mutual cooperation became all too evident as described below:

The job of digging the trenches was spread over the whole army

The Holy Prophet ﷺ divided the whole army of the *Muhājirīn* and the *Anṣār* in groups of ten men each and made every group of ten men responsible for digging forty yards of the trench. Since Sayyidnā Salmān al-Fārisī was the one who had advised the digging of the trench, knew the job, was strong and was neither one of the *Anṣār* nor one of the *Muhājirīn*, it created a sort of competition among the *Anṣār* and *Muhājirīn* for each of the two wanted to have him with them. The matter reached to the extent that the Holy Prophet ﷺ had to intervene in order to avoid any dispute. He gave his verdict by saying: سَلْمَانُ مِنَّا اَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ (Salmān is part of our family).

The discrimination of local and foreign in functional expertise

The universal wont in our time is that people do not like to treat those non-resident and non-local at par with them. But, this was a place where every group felt proud of having the competent one on their side and with them. It was for this reason that the Holy Prophet ﷺ included him in his family on his own and thus put an end to the dispute. Then, he practically picked up some *Muhājirīn* and some Anṣār to form a group of ten which included Sayyidnā 'Amr Ibn 'Awf ﷺ, Sayyidnā Ḥudhaifah and others who were from among the *Muhājirīn*.

A great miracle

By chance, in the section of the trench entrusted with Sayyidnā Salmān and others with him, a huge, hard and glossy rock showed up. Sayyidnā Salmān's colleague, Sayyidnā 'Amr Ibn 'Awf ﷺ says, "This rock broke our implements and we failed to cut it apart. Then I suggested to Salmān that though it is possible to dig the trench by- passing the huge rock and join it up with the main trench with a minor crookedness in it, but we should not deviate from the line drawn by the Holy Prophet ﷺ as based on our opinion. So, you go, tell the Holy Prophet ﷺ about the position here and get an order from him about what we should do now."

Divine reminders

It is strange that in this three and a half mile stretch of land no one from among the diggers of the trench faced any impediment which would render him helpless. The only one who did face it was Sayyidnā Salmān ﷺ who had given the advice of digging a trench and the whole project had started on his advice. To him Allah Ta'ālā showed that there was no way out even after digging and making a perfect trench - except turning to Allah Ta'ālā for help in the face of the failure of all implements and instruments. Here, these blessed souls were being taught that assembling material means to the measure of capacity and ability was obligatory, but to place trust in these was not correct. The trust of a believer - even after having assembled all possible material means - should be in Allah Ta'ālā alone.

Sayyidnā Salmān ﷺ presented himself before the Holy Prophet ﷺ and told him about what had happened. At that time, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was himself working in his part of the trench. He was busy hauling the dug out earth from the trench. Sayyidnā Barā' Ibn 'Āzib ﷺ says, "I saw him. Dust had covered his blessed body in a manner that the skin on his front and back was not visible." Rather than give Sayyidnā Salmān any advice or order, he accompanied him in person to the problem spot. With the ten Ṣaḥābah busy digging the trench with Sayyidnā Salmān, he too went down into the trench and joined the diggers. He took the pickaxe in his blessed hands, struck at the rock and recited the verse: تَمَّتْ كَلِمَةُ رَبِّكَ صِدْقًا (*tammat kalimatu rabbika sidqa*: And the Word of your Lord is perfect in truth... - al-An'ām, 6:115). With this one single stroke from it, one third portion of the rock was cut off and released from this rock was a streak of light. After that, he struck at the rock once again and recited the said verse upto the end, that is: تَمَّتْ كَلِمَةُ رَبِّكَ صِدْقًا وَّعَدْلًا (*tammat kalimatu rabbika sidqan wa 'adla* : And the Word of your Lord is perfect in truth and justice - al-An'ām, 6:115). Cut off with this second stroke was an additional one third portion of the rock which released a streak of light as before. The third time, he recited the same verse in full and executed the third stroke. With it, the rock was all finished. The Holy Prophet ﷺ came out of the trench, picked up the sheet wrap he had left at the edge of the trench and sat down on one side of it. At that time, Sayyidnā Salmān al-Fārisī ﷺ said, "*Yā* Rasulallah, every time struck at the rock,

ever time I saw a light coming out of the rock." The Holy Prophet ﷺ asked Sayyidnā Salmān, "Have you really seen this light?" He said, "*Yā Rasūlallāh*, I have seen it with my own eyes."

The Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "In the light that was released after the first strike, I saw the palaces of the cities of Yaman and those of Cyrus and Angel Jibra'īl told me: 'your *Ummah* will conquer these cities.' And when I struck at the rock the second time, I was shown the red palaces of the Byzantines and Angel Jibra'īl gave the good news, 'your *Ummah* will conquer these cities as well.' " After having heard this, all Muslims felt at peace and became assured of their great successes in the future.

Hypocrites throw taunts at Muslims for believing in their Prophet's promises

At that time, the hypocrites who were part of the digging operations of the trench, started asking other Muslims, 'It is strange that you people are not surprised at what Muḥammad ﷺ is telling you. Is it not that he is making all those baseless promises to you in the depth of this trench being dug in Yathrib where he is claiming to be seeing the palaces of Ḥīrah (in the South) and Madā'in (in the North)? And on top of it all, he is telling you that it is you people who are going to conquer them! Just look at yourself. Here you are, digging and digging, forgetful of all your needs. Frankly, you do not even have the time to take care of your human compulsions. Still, is it you who are going to conquer the countries of Cyrus and others?' Thereupon, it was about this very event that, in the twelfth verse cited above, it was revealed:

إِذْ يَقُولُ الْمُنٰفِقُوْنَ وَالَّذِيْنَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ مَّا وَعَدَنَا اللّٰهُ وَرَسُوْلُهٗٓ اِلَّا غُرُوْرًا

(And (remember) when the hypocrites and those having malady in their hearts were saying, "Allah and His messenger did not promise us but deceitfully; - 12). Here, in this verse, by saying: اَلَّذِيْنَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ (and those having malady in their hearts), reference is being made to the state of the same hypocrites hidden in whose hearts there was that disease of hypocrisy.

Just imagine the kind of time it was, a severe trial indeed. At stake was the very faith of Muslims for they had to believe in the word of the Holy Prophet ﷺ with the full backing of their mind and heart despite being threatened by disbelievers from all sides. They had no servants to

dig their trench for them. They were doing this hard work with their own hands braving the lashing winter. The unfriendly weather, the approaching enemy factor, theirs was a general climate of fear all around. In a situation like that, it was not easy to be sure of even one's defence and survival within whatever means were available. How could they go on from here and start believing in the good news of the conquests of the great kingdoms of Byzantine and Persia? But, the value of *'Īmān* (faith) is the highest of all deeds for the reason that they, even when facing totally contrary causes and conditions, did not have the least doubt or qualm of conscience about what the Holy Prophet ﷺ had told them.

Seniors must share every trial with their juniors - Great guidance for Muslims

Who does not know that the Ṣaḥābah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ were such selfless servants of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that they never wanted to have him do the hard labor of digging the trench with them, but it was the personal initiative of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that he chose to share this hard labor with his noble companions to mollify their hearts and teach them their essential lesson to put mutual brotherhood to practice. Of course, the noble companions staked their lives for the Holy Prophet ﷺ on the basis of his most perfect attributes as prophet and messenger of Allah, but of the many outward causes for this attachment, there was this major cause that he would be with them on all occasions facing all sorts of trials and pains like everybody else. When he did that, nobody ever thought of what we know as a class difference. There was no ruler and there was no one being ruled. There was no king around and there was no subject paying homage. Who was the man in power and who was the man from the masses? This kind of difference was unimaginable at that time. Unfortunately, from the time the Muslim wielders of power abandoned this Sunnah (the blessed practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ,) that was the time these differences gushed forth bringing all sorts of tests and trials in their wake.

The master prescription of achieving success against something hard to accomplish

In the event mentioned above, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has recited the verse of the Qur'ān: تَمَّتْ كَلِمَةُ رَبِّكَ صِدْقًا وَّعَدْلاً لَا مُبَدِّلَ لِكَلِمٰتِهٖ (And the Word of your Lord is perfect in truth and justice. None is there to change His

Words - al-An'ām, 6:115) while striking at this invincible rock. This tells us that the recitation of this verse is a tested prescription for the resolution of something difficult.

The selfless mutual cooperation of the noble Ṣaḥābah

We already know that there were ten men appointed for the digging of the trench at every ten yards. But, it is obvious that some people are stronger and can finish their job sooner than others. The same was true here. The noble Ṣaḥābah who finished their allotted portion of digging would never go on to sit doing nothing and thinking that their duty was over. In fact, they would help out other Ṣaḥābah whose portion of digging was still incomplete. (Qurṭubī, Maẓharī)

Three and a half mile long trench was completed in six days

The outcome of the hard work put in by the noble Ṣaḥābah, may Allah be pleased with them all, was before everybody in six days in that such a long, wide and deep trench stood all completed within that short period of time. (Maẓharī)

An open miracle in the feast hosted by Sayyidnā Jābir ﷺ

It was during the digging of this very trench that the well known event came to pass. On one of those days, when Sayyidnā Jābir ﷺ looked at the Holy Prophet ﷺ, he felt deep down in his heart that he was really affected by hunger. He went to his wife and told her, "If you have something with you, cook it. I simply cannot bear by seeing this effect of hunger on his blessed person." His wife said, "We have about a *ṣā'* of barley grains in our home. I am going to grind them and make some flour." One *ṣā'* is equal to about three and a half kilograms in terms of our weights. So, his wife got busy with the grinding of barley, making flour, preparing dough and baking bread. There was a goat kid in the house. Sayyidnā Jābir ﷺ slaughtered it, cooked the meat and was ready to go out and invite the Holy Prophet ﷺ in when his wife called out to him saying, "Look, there is a crowd of the Ṣaḥābah with the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Do something and somehow invite only the Holy Prophet ﷺ alone. Please, do not put me to disgrace by causing such a big crowd of the noble Ṣaḥābah come in with the Holy Prophet ﷺ." Sayyidnā Jābir ﷺ, acting realistically, made the actual situation fully clear before the Holy Prophet ﷺ telling him that they had only that much of food in the house. But, as for the Holy Prophet ﷺ, he made a public announcement before the

entire work force asking everyone to come to the feast at Sayyidnā Jābir's home. Sayyidnā Jābir ﷺ was struck with wonder. When he reached home, his wife was extremely disturbed. She asked, "Did you tell the Holy Prophet ﷺ about the actual situation at home and the amount of food available?" Sayyidnā Jābir ﷺ said, "Yes, that I have told him." This put his wife at peace and she said, "Then we have nothing to worry about. The Holy Prophet ﷺ is our master. Let him have it the way he wishes."

Any more detail of the event is unnecessary at this place. It is enough to know the outcome that the Holy Prophet ﷺ took it upon himself to distribute the bread and curry to everybody with his own blessed hands and see that they are entertained and fed satisfactorily. As a result, the whole crowd ate to their fill. And Sayyidnā Jābir ﷺ says that "even after everybody having finished eating, our stock pot showed no dearth of meat, nor our kneaded flour any signs of decrease. All of us in the family ate to our heart's content and whatever remained we sent to the neighbours."

Thus, when the digging of the trench was finished within six days, the Confederate army arrived and the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his noble Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all, went into battle formation with the Mount of Sal' thoughtfully kept towards their rear.

The Jews of the tribe of Banī Quraiẓah break their pledge and join the Confederate aggressors

That was a time when a group of three thousand ill-equipped people standing up to fight against an equipped army of some ten to twelve thousand men was something far too wild to believe. On top of all that, there came up a new factor. Out of the Confederate forces, Ḥuyayy Ibn Akhṭab, the chief of the tribe of Banū Naḍīr who had contributed most in rallying everyone against the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his Muslim followers, took another step. He reached Madīnah and conspired to win over the Jewish tribe of Banū Quraiẓah over their side. The situation was that Banū Quraiẓah and the Holy Prophet ﷺ already had a peace treaty signed between them. This was a solemn undertaking and the two parties naturally had no apprehensions from each other. Ka'b Ibn Asad was the chief of the tribe of Banū Quraiẓah. Ḥuyayy Ibn Akhṭab went to see him. When Ka'b heard about his reported arrival, he had the gate of his castle closed, so that this man would not reach him. But, Ḥuyayy Ibn Akhṭab

hanged out there, he called and called and insisted that the gate be opened. Ka'b told him from inside the gate, "We have already made a peace treaty with Muḥammad ﷺ and we know of nothing from his side other than truth, honesty and strict adherence to the treaty right to this day, therefore, we are bound with this treaty and cannot join hands with you." For long, this dialogue between the two continued with Ḥuyayy Ibn Akhṭab insisting that the gate be opened and that Ka'b should talk to him and the later kept refusing to do that while staying inside the closed gate. But, consequently when Ḥuyayy Ibn Akhṭab challenged Ka'b's sense of shame in that he was treating a visitor in such a crude manner, the gate was opened. Once called in, Ḥuyayy Ibn Akhṭab painted such a rosv picture of his proposals that Ka'b ultimately fell into the trap laid out by him and gave his word that he would take part in the Confederate expedition. When Ka'b related what he had done before other chiefs of his tribe, they all said in one voice, "You did something terrible. You broke your pledge with Muslims for no reason whatsoever and that by going along with the other side you have exposed your own self to danger." Ka'b too was affected by their comments and even repented for what he had done. But, things had gone out of his control by that time and this very pledge-breaking finally went on to become the cause of the destruction of Banū Quraiẓah as it would be mentioned later.

At that particular time, when the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the noble Ṣaḥābah got this information, they were shocked by this breach of trust from Banū Quraiẓah. What worried them most was the strange situation created for them. They had a trench dug across the line of the marching forces of the Confederates who were coming from outside Madīnah. But, these Banū Quraiẓah people were right there inside Madīnah. How were they going to defend against them? About this when the Qur'ān says that the disbelieving forces of the Confederate army had overtaken you: مِّن فَوْقِكُمْ وَمِنْ أَسْفَلَ مِنكُمْ (from above you and from below you -10), Tafsīr authorities say that the expression: فَوْق (from above) means the Banū Quraiẓah and those who came from below them (أَسْفَل) mean the rest of the Confederates.

To find out the reality of this breach of trust and to assess the correct situation in the whole matter, the Holy Prophet ﷺ sent a deputation comprising Sayyidnā Sa'd Ibn Mu'ādh رضي الله عنه, the chief of the Anṣār tribe of

Aws and Sayyidnā Sa'd Ibn 'Ubādah, the chief of the tribe of Khazraj, to Ka'b in order to talk to him about the matter. The instruction given to them was that should the event of this breach of trust turn out to be incorrect, they were to tell the whole truth before all the Ṣaḥābah openly. And should it turn out to be true, they should, on their return, say something ambivalent which will be a message only we shall understand while the rest of the Ṣaḥābah will remain safe from facing any panic because of it.

When both these elders named Sa'd reached there, they saw open proofs of the breach of pledge all over which even went to the extent of hot exchanges of words between them and Ka'b. On their return, following the instructions given to them earlier, they reported back their findings in unclear words and thus informed the Holy Prophet ﷺ that the event of the breaking of the pledge was true.

At the time when the Jewish tribe of Banū Quraiẓah, once an ally of Muslims, also joined the war against them, something else started happening. The hypocrisy of people who posed to be a part of the Muslim community lost its cover. Some of them became far too vocal and started saying things against the Holy Prophet ﷺ as was mentioned earlier in: وَإِذْ يَقُوْلُ الْمُنٰفِقُوْنَ (and when said the hypocrites - 12). Then, they were others who cooked up all sorts of excuses to run away from the battlefield and sought the permission of the Holy Prophet ﷺ to do that - which has been mentioned in verse 13: إِنَّ بُيُوْتَنَا عَوْرَةٌ (Our homes are vulnerable).

Now according to the present state of the battle front, the Confederate forces could not march in because of the trench with the Muslim army positioned on the other side. There was almost a continuous exchange of arrows between them all the time. This state of affairs dragged on for nearly a month. They could neither confront each other in some open or decisive battle, nor could they turn heedless towards the opponent for any extended period of time. Day and night, the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his noble Ṣaḥābah would stand guard by the trench. Although, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was personally involved in this hard task like everybody else, yet the thought that all his companions were suffering from extreme anxiety due to this impasse was very painful for him.

A strategic plan of the Holy Prophet ﷺ

It was already in the knowledge of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that the chief

of the tribe of Ghiṭfān had joined hands with these Jews as tempted by the greed of having the fruits and dates of Khaibar. He sent an emissary to the two chiefs of the tribe of Ghiṭfān, 'Uyaynah Ibn Ḥiṣn and Abū al-Hārith Ibn 'Amr, with the message: "If you leave the battlefield with your men, we shall give you one-third of the fruit of Madīnah." This negotiation was still on. The two chief had agreed and a peace treaty was close to be signed. But, as was his wont and habit, the Holy Prophet ﷺ decided to consult the noble Ṣaḥābah in this matter. He called the two Sa'ds, the chiefs of the tribe of Aws and Khazraj, that is, Sayyidnā Sa'd Ibn 'Ubādah and Sa'd Ibn Mu'ādh, and sought their advice.

The Faith, the Sense of Shame and the Granite of a Determination shown by a Ṣaḥābi of the Rasūl of Allah

Both of them said, "Ya Rasūlallāh, if you have orders from Allah Ta'ālā to do this thing, then, we cannot dare say anything. We shall accept. If not, tell us: Is it your personal opinion or you have devised this as a measure to save us from all this hardship and suffering?"

The Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Neither is there a Divine order for it, nor do I have any personal inclination to do so. In fact, I have come up with this via media in view of your pain and suffering because you are surrounded from all sides. So, I simply wished to shatter the power of the adversary in this manner without losing any time." Sayyidnā Sa'd Ibn Mu'ādh رضي الله عنه said, "Ya Rasūlallāh, when we worshipped idols, we did neither know Allah nor did we worship Him. At that time, these people could not dare look at a single fruit of our city with greedy eyes - except that they be our guests and we offer some of it to them by way of hospitality, or that they would buy it from us and take it away with them. Today, when Allah Ta'ālā has, in His infinite grace, given us the ability of knowing Him, and has bestowed upon us the honor of Islam, shall we, on this day, let these people have our fruits and our wealth and our properties? We need no peace and compromise from them. As for us, we are not going to give them anything but the cutting edge of our swords - to the extent that Allah Ta'ālā Himself gives the ultimate verdict between us and them."

When the Holy Prophet ﷺ heard Sayyidnā Sa'd رضي الله عنه and saw this high determination and this great enthusiasm in the matter of his 'Īmān, he cast that thought of his aside and said, "You now have the right to do

what you wish." Sayyidnā Sa'd ﷺ took the peace treaty document from his blessed hands and erased the writing on it because it was not signed yet. 'Uyaynah and Ḥārith, the chiefs of the Ghiṭfān tribes who were present in the meeting ready to sign this treaty found themselves personally unnerved in their hearts at this demonstration of power and determination from the noble Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

The wound received by Sayyidnā Sa'd Ibn Mu'adh ﷺ and his prayer

On the other side, the activity of throwing arrows and stones on each other continued unabated. Sayyidnā Sa'd ﷺ had gone into the fortress of Banū Ḥārithah to see his mother where women had been housed under security. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها says, "At that time, I too was in the same fortress and the injunctions of *ḥijāb* for women were yet to be enforced. I saw that Sa'd Ibn Mu'ādh was wearing a small coat of mail from which his hands were protruding out rather awkwardly and his mother was telling him to make haste, go and join the men fighting with the Holy Prophet ﷺ. I said to his mother, "A larger coat of mail would have been better for him. I apprehend that his hands and feet showing out of his coat of mail may be exposed to danger." His mother said, "It does not matter. Whatever Allah has to do is what has to happen."

When Sayyidnā Mu'ādh ﷺ reached the battlefield, he was hit by an arrow which cut through his medial arm vein. At that time, Sayyidnā Mu'adh ﷺ made the following prayer:

> "O Allah, if there is yet another attack by the Quraish destined to come against the Holy Prophet ﷺ, please keep me alive for that, because I have no worthwhile wish left in me but that I fight the people who have caused all sorts of pain to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, expelled him from his homeland and falsified his person and mission. And if, in Your ultimate knowledge, this process of war has come to an end, please bless me with the death of a martyr in the way of Allah - but, let not death come to me until such time that the treachery of Banī Quraiẓah is avenged as the parting delight of my eyes."

Allah Ta'ālā answered both these prayers from him. This event of al-Aḥzāb was made to be the last attack of the disbelievers. After that, began the period of Muslim victories. First came Khaibar, then Makkah al-Mukarramah and then other areas. As for the event relating to Banū

Quraiẓah, it follows later as to how they were brought forth as captives and their case was entrusted with none else but Sayyidnā Sa'd Ibn Mu'ādh ﷺ for the final verdict. It was in accordance with his verdict that their men were killed and their women and children were taken prisoners.

During this event of al-Aḥzāb, the noble Ṣaḥābah and the Holy Prophet ﷺ had to maintain an all-night vigilance throughout the trench area. The slightest relaxation at any time had to be broken at the faintest sound of commotion from any side. In fact, the Holy Prophet ﷺ would himself put his arms back on and come out in the battle area. Umm ul-Mu'minīn Sayyidah Umm Salamah رضی اللہ عنہا says, "Every single night, this would happen several times that he would come in for a little rest and then heard some sound and went out immediately. The same thing happened again. The moment he would put his back for rest, he would hear some sound and leave as usual."

Umm al-Mu'minīn Sayyidah Umm Salamah رضی اللہ عنہا also says, "I have been with the Holy Prophet ﷺ in many battles such as Muraisī', Khaibar, Ḥudaibiyah, the battles of the conquest of Makkah and Ḥunain. None of these caused more hardship on the Holy Prophet ﷺ as did the battle of Khandaq. Muslims also received a lot more wounds in this battle. Then, they were hit by the severity of the winter chill as well. Furthermore, their circumstances were extremely straightened in terms of food and water available to them. (Maẓharī)

The Holy Prophet ﷺ had to miss four Ṣalāhs in this Jihād

One of those days, the confronting disbelievers decided to launch a joint and simultaneous attack and force their way ahead by somehow crossing the trench. Once they had resolved to do that, they threw themselves dauntlessly against the Muslims and their archers rained their arrows so incessantly that the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his noble Ṣaḥābah had to remain so engaged throughout the day that they did not find any respite to even make their Ṣalāh. As a result, four Ṣalāhs missed during the day had to be performed at the time of 'Ishā'.

The prayers of the Holy Prophet ﷺ

When things became unbearably hard on Muslims, the Holy Prophet ﷺ prayed against the Confederate forces of the disbelievers, doing that for three days consecutively on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday inside

Masjid al-Fatḥ imploring Allah Ta'ālā to bring defeat on the Confederates and victory for Muslims. It was on the third day, on Wednesday between Ẓuhr and 'Aṣr that the prayer was answered. Pleased, the Holy Prophet ﷺ came to his noble Ṣaḥābah and gave them the glad tiding of victory. They say that after that time no Muslim faced any hardship any more. (Maẓharī)

The unraveling of the causes of victory

In the combined forces of the enemy, the tribe of Ghiṭfān was a power to reckon with. It was the most perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā that put the light of faith in the heart of Nu'aim Ibn Mas'ūd who, as destiny would have it, was one of them. He presented himself before the Holy Prophet ﷺ, confessed to his faith in Islam and told him that no one from among his people is aware of the fact that he has become a Muslim. Then, he wished that he be told as to how he could serve Islam. The Holy Prophet ﷺ told him, 'You being all alone here would not be able to do anything worthwhile. If you can go back to your people, be with them and still do something in defence of Islam, then, go ahead and do it.' Nu'aim Ibn Mas'ūd was an intelligent man. He conceived of a plan of action in his heart and sought the permission of the Holy Prophet ﷺ to be given the choice of saying what is expedient when he reaches those people. He gave the permission.

From here, Nu'aim Ibn Mas'ūd went to see the tribe of Banū Quraiẓah with whom he had age-old relations since the time of Jāhiliyyah. He said to them: 'O people of Banū Quraiẓah, you know that I am an old friend of yours.' They said, 'We have no doubt about your friendship.' After that, Sayyidnā Nu'aim Ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه addressed the chiefs of Banū Quraiẓah as a well-wisher and asked them, 'You know that none of us - be they the Quraish of Makkah or our tribe of Ghiṭfān or the several other Jewish tribes - have their homes here. If these people face defeat and run, they do not lose much. Your case is different from all of them. Madīnah is your home. Your women and your properties are all here. Now, if you were to participate in the war effort with them and if, later, when these people taste defeat and run, what would happen to you? Would you be able to fight against the Muslims all by yourselves?

Therefore, as one who wishes the best for you, I advise you not to take part in the joint war effort with them until such time that they do not put

with you a certain number of their selected chiefs as ransom and guarantee that they would not throw you all at the mercy of Muslims and run.' The people of Banū Quraiẓah found this advice good. They appreciated it and said so before him.

After that, Nu'aim Ibn Mas'ūd ﵁ reached the Quraish chiefs and said to them, 'You know that I am your friend and that I have nothing to do with Muḥammad ﷺ. I have a little bit of information with me. Being one who wishes well for you, it is necessary that I pass on that information to you - of course, on the condition that you will not disclose my name as its source. Here is that information: The Jews of the tribe of Banī Quraiẓah have now regretted their decision after they had concluded their pact with you. They have sent a message to Muḥammad ﷺ about it telling him that they will be willing to go along with him subject to the condition that they would hand over some chiefs of the tribes of Quraish and Ghiṭfān and that he would then put them to the sword. Once that was done, they would join hands with him and fight against all of them. Muḥammad ﷺ has accepted this proposal made by them. Now the Banū Quraiẓah were going to demand that you put some of your chiefs as ransom with them and it was upto them to figure out what they were going to do in their case.

After that, Nu'aim Ibn Mas'ūd ﵁ went to his own tribe, Ghiṭfān and to them, he passed on the same information. Concurrent to this, Abū Sufyān appointed 'Ikrimah Ibn Abī Jahl on behalf of the tribe of Quraish and Warqā' Ibn Ghiṭfān on behalf of the tribe of Ghiṭfān to the mission of going to Banū Quraiẓah and telling them that their war supplies were diminishing and their men were getting tired of having to fight continuously. So, according to the provision of their pact, they were looking forward to their help and participation. The tribe of Banū Quraiẓah, acting in the light of 'their' (latest) understanding of the pact, told them that they will not take part in the war effort with them until such time that some chiefs from both of their tribes have been placed in their custody as ransom (guarantee, hostage). 'Ikrimah and Warqā', the two emissaries carried the message back to Abū Sufyān. As a result, the chiefs of Quraish and Ghiṭfān came to believe that the information given by Sayyidnā Nu'aim Ibn Mas'ūd ﵁ was correct. So they sent a return message to Banū Quraiẓah telling them that they were not going to let

them have any of their men. Now it was up to them. If they wished they could join the war effort with them and if they did not, they were free not to. When Banū Quraiẓah saw this state of affairs, their belief in what Nu'aim Ibn Mas'ud ؓ had said became all the more firm. It was in this manner that Allah Ta'ālā caused a rift in the ranks of the enemy through a person who came from their camp and soon after they lost their foothold on the battlefield.

Along with it there came another calamity upon them. Allah Ta'ālā caused a cold stormy wind overtake them which uprooted their tents and blew their cooking pots from their stoves. As for these, they were only outward causes generated by Allah Ta'ālā to make them desert the battlefield. More came in the form of His angels who were sent to put awe in their hearts inwardly too. These two things have been mentioned at the beginning of the verses cited above as follows: فَاَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ رِيْحًا وَّجُنُوْدًا لَّمْ تَرَوْهَا (and We sent upon them a wind, and the forces (of angels) you did not see - 9). As a consequence, they had no choice but to run.

The event of Sayyidnā Ḥudhaifah ؓ going into enemy lines and reporting back about conditions prevailing there

On the other side, when the Holy Prophet ﷺ heard the report of what Nu'aim Ibn Mas'ūd ؓ had accomplished and how a rift was caused among the Confederate forces, he was strongly inclined towards the idea of someone from among the Muslims going into the enemy lines and returning with the much needed intelligence about the enemy formations and intentions. But, this severe and chilly wind storm that was sent upon the enemy, however, did affect the whole of Madīnah and Muslims too were affected by it. The chill was bitter. The time was night. The noble Ṣaḥābah were, after the heavy grind of a long day, sitting all shattered because of the confrontation, huddled together feeling the pinch of bitter cold. Addressing the gathering, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Is there someone who would stand up and go into the enemy lines and bring some news about them and may Allah Ta'ālā admit him into Jannah?" Of course, this was a gathering of Ṣaḥābah who would have normally staked their lives at his call. But, the objective conditions prevailing with them were such that no one could stand up. The Holy Prophet ﷺ got busy with Ṣalāh. After remaining busy with Ṣalāh for a while, he addressed the gathering again saying, "Is there someone here who would bring me some

news from the enemy lines and receive Jannah in return for it?" This time too, silence prevailed over the entire gathering. No one rose. The Holy Prophet ﷺ got busy with Ṣalāh once again. After some time, it was the third time that he made the same appeal, "Whoever does it shall be in Jannah with me." But, everyone was so broken down from fatigue, hunger and chill and so utterly helpless that no one could still bring himself up to rise.

The narrator of the *ḥadīth*, Sayyidnā Ḥudhaifah Ibn Yamān, says, 'at that time the Holy Prophet ﷺ called me by name and said, "Ḥudhaifah, you go." My condition was no different from the others. But, once I was ordered by name, I had no option but to obey. I stood up while my whole body was shivering with bitter cold. He passed his blessed hand over my head and my face and said, "Go into the enemy lines and just bring back some news and do nothing before you return to me." Then he prayed for my safety. I picked up my bow and arrows, tied up my own clothes on my body and took my way towards them.

When I started moving ahead from here, I noticed something strange. The shivering sensation that had me in its grips while I was in the tent was all gone. Actually, I was walking as if one was inside a hot bath all the way up to enemy camp. Once there, I saw that the wind storm had uprooted their tents and upturned their cooking pots. Abū Sufyān was seated by the make-shift fire place relaxing before the heat. When I saw this (a sitting target), I trained my bow and arrow over my shoulders and was about to shoot Abū Sufyān with my arrow, I remembered the order given by the Holy Prophet ﷺ: 'Do nothing before you return back to me.' Abū Sufyān was absolutely within the striking range of my arrow, but it was in consideration of this order of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that I disengaged my arrow from the bow.

Disturbed by the condition around him, Abū Sufyān wanted to announce the plan to withdraw. But, in order to do that, it was necessary that he should talk to responsible people from among the combined armed forces. The night was dark and the place was desolate. The danger of a snooping spy nearby who may overhear what they were talking about was very much present. Therefore, Abū Sufyān did something smart. Before starting to talk, he asked the whole gathering to recognize the person sitting next to everyone so that no one who is not one of them

would be able to hear what they said.'

Sayyidnā Ḥudhaifah ﷺ says, "Now, I was scared. What if the person sitting next to me were to ask me: Who are you? If so, my cover will blow up.' It was with great presence of mind and courage that he himself took the initiative, and slapping the hand of the person sitting next to him, he himself asked: Who are you? The man said, 'Strange that you do not know me. I am so and so the son of so and so.' He was a member of the tribe of Hawāzin. Thus, Sayyidnā Ḥudhaifah was saved by Allah Ta'ālā from being arrested on the spot.

When Abū Sufyān ensured it that the gathering was that of his own people and that there was no stranger present among them, he related the disturbing conditions around them, how the tribe of Banū Quraiẓah had committed a breach of pledge and the extent to which their war supplies had shrunk. After having recounted the situation, he said: In my opinion, all of us should now leave and go back and I too am going back. Immediately thereafter, a state of panic hit the Confederate army and everyone started going back.

Sayyidnā Ḥudhaifah ﷺ says, "As I started going back from there, I felt as if I had some sort of a hot bath around me that was shielding me from the bitter chill. When I reached the home base, I found the Holy Prophet ﷺ busy with Ṣalāh. When he turned for Salām, I reported the event. Pleased with this happy news, the Holy Prophet ﷺ started laughing - to the extent that, in the darkness of the night, his blessed teeth were seen shining. After that, the Holy Prophet ﷺ made room for me close to his feet and covered my body with a part of the sheet he had wrapped around him until I went to sleep in that condition. When morning came, he himself woke me up saying: قُمْ يَانَوْمَانَ ('Up O big sleeper!')

Good News after the ambition of the disbelievers is shattered

According to a narration of Sayyidnā Sulaymān Ibn Ṣurad ﷺ appearing in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī, when the Confederate forces retreated, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

الْاٰنَ نَغْزُوْهُمْ وَلَا يَغْزُوْنَنَا نَحْنُ نَسِيْرُ اِلَيْهِمْ (بخاری)

Now, they shall not attack us, instead, we will attack them and run over their territory - al-Bukhārī as in Maẓharī.

After having said that, the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his noble Ṣaḥābah returned to the city of Madīnah and it was only after a month that Muslims formally disarmed themselves.

A special note

This event pertaining Sayyidnā Ḥudhaifah ؓ appears in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim. It is an example-setter of great class as well as a bearer of many elements of guidance and miracles of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Those who ponder over it would themselves find these out, therefore, any more details are not needed.

The Battle of Banū Quraiẓah

The Holy Prophet ﷺ had just about reached Madīnah when suddenly came Sayyidnā Jibra'īl al-Amīn ؑ in the guise of the Ṣaḥābī, Sayyidnā Diḥyah Ibn Khalīfah al-Kalbī ؓ and said, "Even though you people have disarmed yourselves but the angels have not. Allah Ta'ālā commands you to attack Banū Quraiẓah and I am going right there ahead of you."

To announce this in Madīnah, the Holy Prophet ﷺ sent a proclaimer who proclaimed this order of the Holy Prophet ﷺ before the people making sure that it reaches everyone. The order was: لَايُصَلِّيَنَّ اَحَدٌ الْعَصْرَ اِلَّا فِىْ بَنِىْ قُرَيْظَة (Let no man make his Ṣalāh of 'Aṣr until he reaches Banū Quraiẓah).

All Companions got ready for this second Jihād immediately and marched towards Banū Quraiẓah. On their way came the time of 'Asr. Some of them, following the outward sense of the prophetic order, did not make their Ṣalāh of 'Aṣr en route - instead, made it only after having reached the designated destination of Banū Quraiẓah. And there were others who thought that objective of the Holy Prophet ﷺ was to reach Banū Quraiẓah within the time for 'Aṣr. So, they thought, if they made their Ṣalāh en route and reached there within the time for 'Aṣr, then, it would not be contrary to the order of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Thus, they made their Ṣalāh of 'Aṣr as it became due while still en route.

In the difference of Mujtahids, no side is sinful or blameworthy

When the Holy Prophet ﷺ was informed about this difference in the practical compliance of his order on the part of the noble Ṣaḥābah, he put no blame on any of the two parties; in fact, he approved of both. From

here, the religious scholars of the Muslim community have deduced the principle that none of the different sayings of *Mujtahid 'Ulamā'* who are *Mujtahids* in the real sense of the term and have the required expertise and ability of *Ijtihād* (arriving at a Shari'ah-based religious solution of problems at the highest conceivable level) can be called 'sin' or 'blameworthy.' For both such differing sides, reward is recorded against their action as based on their respective Ijtihād.

At the time of marching out for Jihād against Banū Quraiẓah, the Holy Prophet ﷺ handed over the Muslim flag to Sayyidnā 'Ali al-Murtaḍā ؓ. Hearing about the coming of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his noble Ṣaḥābah, the Banū Quraiẓah decided to shut themselves into their fort. The Islamic army laid a siege around it.

The Speech of Ka'b, the Chief of Banū Quraiẓah

Ka'b, the Chief of the tribe of Banū Quraiẓah who had broken the pledge given to the Holy Prophet ﷺ in favor of a compact with the Confederates, assembled his people together, told them about the delicate situation and presented three possible solutions of the problem:

"To begin with, the first option is that you all embrace Islam and follow Muḥammad ﷺ because, and I tell you on oath, you already know that he is in the right and the prophecy of his coming is there in your Torah which you recite. If you were to do this, not only that you will find safety for your life, property and children in this mortal world but also that your Hereafter too will turn out to be good and correct.

The second option is that you start by first killing your women and children with your own hands and then go on to fight and kill them with all power at your command until such time that all of you are also killed in the process.

The third option is that you make a surprise attack on Muslims on the day of Sabbath - for Muslims know that fighting and killing on the day of Sabbath is unlawful in our religion. Therefore, they would not be expecting an attack from our side on that particular day. Now, if we were to launch a sudden attack, it is possible that we may succeed."

After having heard this address of their chief, Ka'b, his people replied that they will never accept the first option of embracing Islam, because

they did not want to abandon the Torah and start believing in some other Book. As for the second option, what wrong had their women and children done that they go about killing them? As for the third option, it was by itself against the commandment of the Torah and their religion. They could not do that too.

After that, all of them reached an agreement that they would lay down their arms before the Holy Prophet ﷺ and be ready to accept whatever he decided about them. Present there were some Anṣārī Ṣaḥābah belonging to the tribe of Aws. They had an age-old pact with Banū Quraiẓah. So these Ṣaḥābah from the tribe of Aws requested the Holy Prophet ﷺ that these people may be handed over to them. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Would you like me to entrust their case with one of your own chiefs?" When they agreed, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "He is your chief, Sa'd Ibn Mu'ādh. I entrust this matter with him for a judgement." Everyone approved of it.

Sayyidnā Sa'd Ibn Mu'ādh ؓ was fatally wounded during the battle of Khandaq (the Trench) by an arrow. The Holy Prophet ﷺ had housed him in a tent pegged within the compound of the Masjid so that he could be attended to. According to the order of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, the verdict on the prisoners from Banū Quraiẓah was left up to him. The verdict that he gave was that the warring young from them should be killed and women, children and the aged should be treated as prisoners of war which is well-recognized in Islam. This very verdict was enforced. Soon after this verdict, the wound of Sayyidnā Sa'd Ibn Muādh ؓ started bleeding suddenly. Therefrom he died. Allah Ta'ālā answered both prayers made by him - that there would be no attack from the Quraish against the Holy Prophet ﷺ in the future, and that the Banū Quraiẓah would receive the punishment for their treachery which Allah caused to come upon them precisely through him.

Some of those earmarked for killing were set free because of having embraced Islam. 'Aṭiyyah al-Quraẓī, well-known among the Ṣaḥābah, is one of them. Also among them, there was Zubayr Ibn Bāṭā. His freedom was specially requested from the Holy Prophet ﷺ by the Ṣaḥābī, Sayyidnā Thābit Ibn Qays Ibn Shammās ؓ. The reason was that Zubayr Ibn Bāṭā had done a favour to him during the days of the Jahiliyyah when, in the battle of Bu'āth, Thābit Ibn Qays had fallen a

prisoner in the hands of Zubayr Ibn Bāṭā who had simply cut the locks of his hair on the head and let him go free. He had not killed him.

Return of favour and national pride: Two unique models

After having received the order for the release of Zubayr Ibn Bāṭā, Sayyidnā Thābit Ibn Qays went to him and said, "I have done it to return your favor you had done to me during the battle of Bu'āth." Zubayr Ibn Bāṭā said, "There is no doubt that one gentleman deals with another gentleman just like that. But, please tell me what for would a man whose entire family is no more there like to stay alive?" When Sayyidnā Thābit Ibn Qays heard this, he presented himself before the Holy Prophet ﷺ and submitted that the life and honor of his family and children may also be spared. In his grace, he approved of it. When he informed Zubayr Ibn Bāṭā about it, he took another step forward saying, "O Thābit, now tell me how a man with a family would stay alive if he is left with nothing to support it?" Sayyidnā Thābit Ibn Qays returned to the Holy Prophet ﷺ once again and arranged to have whatever wealth or property he had also given back to him. Up to this point, narrated here was the case of the gentleness and gratitude of a true Muslim as demonstrated by Sayyidnā Thābit Ibn Qays.

Now, we can go to have a look at what happened on the other side. When Zubayr Ibn Bāṭā was fully satisfied after having earned his freedom and the freedom of his family and children as well as his wealth and property, he asked Sayyidnā Thābit Ibn Qays about the chiefs of the Jewish tribes: "What happened to Ibn Abī al-Ḥuqaiq whose face was like a Chinese mirror?" He said that he was killed. Then, he asked, "What became of the Banū Quraiẓah chiefs, Ka'b Ibn Quraiẓah and 'Amr Ibn Quraiẓah?" He told him that they too were killed. Then he asked about another two groups. In response, he was informed that all of them were killed.

Hearing this, Zubayr Ibn Bāṭā said to Sayyidnā Thābit Ibn Qays, "You have returned the favor done to you and you have fulfilled your responsibility as due. But, I am not going to rehabilitate myself on my property after they are no more. Include me among them." He meant that he too should be killed. Sayyidnā Thābit Ibn Qays refused to kill him. After that, it was on his insistence that some other Muslim killed him. (Qurṭubī)

This was the national pride or sense of communal shame demonstrated by a disbeliever, a *kafir* who, even after having been given everything back, did not like to continue living without his companions. Here we have two models of conduct demonstrated by a believer and a disbeliever, a *mu'min* and a *kafir*. Both belong to significant historical record. This victory against Banū Quraiẓah had taken place in the fifth year of Hijrah towards the end of the month of Dhulqa'dah and the beginning of Dhul-Ḥijjah. (Qurṭubī)

A special note of caution

That the battle of al-Aḥzāb and Banū Quraiẓah have been taken up here in a somewhat detailed manner is because of two factors. (1) First of all, the Qur'ān has itself opted to describe it in details spread over two sections. (2) Then, there is another reason for it. These events carry many instructions about different departments of life and they also spell out many clear miracles and lessons. These have been highlighted in the text of the present commentary under bold headings. Once we come to know the whole event, the translation of the meanings of the verses given above under the Arabic text, alongwith the footnotes, would become easier to understand. There are a few things that should, however, be taken note of:

Firstly, mention has been made of extreme hardships faced by Muslims in this battle. One state of the anxiety of believers has been pointed to in the words: تَظُنُّوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ الظُّنُوْنَا (and you were thinking about Allah all sorts of thoughts. - 10) These thoughts refer to scruples that emerge in one's heart beyond his control at the time of acute anxiety under which one may feel death as near with no hope of deliverance left, or at other occasions like that. Such non-voluntary apprehensions and scruples are neither contradictory of the perfection of 'Īmān (faith) nor that of one's nearness to Allah (*wilāyah*). Nevertheless, they do point out to the extent of the severity of distress and anxiety under which scruples had started creeping into the hearts of even the noble Ṣaḥābah who, otherwise, were virtual mountains of fortitude.

The second state mentioned here is that of the hypocrites for they had started saying that the promises of Allah and His Rasūl were a web of deception: اِذْ يَقُوْلُ الْمُنٰفِقُوْنَ وَالَّذِيْنَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ مَّا وَعَدَنَا اللّٰهُ وَرَسُوْلُهٗٓ اِلَّا غُرُوْرًا (And (remember) when the hypocrites and those having malady in their hearts

were saying, "Allah and His messenger did not promise us but deceitfully; -12). This was an externalized demonstration of their inner disbelief. Onward from here, mention has been made of two groups of hypocrites who were practically a part of the Jihād effort along with Muslims, though outwardly only. One of the two groups started running without any permission saying: وَاِذْ قَالَتْ طَائِفَةٌ مِّنْهُمْ يَا اَهْلَ يَثْرِبَ لَا مُقَامَ لَكُمْ فَارْجِعُوْا (and when a group of them said, "O people of Yathrib (Madinah), there is no place for you to stay; so go back. - 13" And the other group requested the permission of the Holy Prophet ﷺ to go back on the basis of false excuses. Their conduct has been mentioned as: وَيَسْتَاْذِنُ فَرِيْقٌ مِّنْهُمُ النَّبِيَّ يَقُوْلُوْنَ اِنَّ بُيُوْتَنَا عَوْرَةٌ (And a group of them was seeking permission (to leave) from the prophet, saying, "In fact our homes are vulnerable," while they were not vulnerable - 13). Thus, the Qur'ān exposed the hollowness of their excuses as a pack of lies. The truth of the matter was no more than that they intended to run from the battlefront: اِنْ يُّرِيْدُوْنَ اِلَّا فِرَارًا (They wanted nothing but to escape - 13). Taken up in the next several verses is their mischief-making and enmity with Muslims following which their sad end has been pointed out.

After that, the text mentions sincere believers and praises their firmness and fortitude. In the same connection, there comes a strong assertion of the need to obey and follow the Holy Prophet ﷺ almost in the form of a legal rule of conduct: لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِيْ رَسُوْلِ اللّٰهِ اُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ (There is indeed a good model for you in the Messenger of Allah - 21). From here it stands proved that all sayings and doings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ have to be followed. But, the Shari'ah authorities have explained the rule about the different degrees of following required from a Muslim. The rule is that any act or omission of the Holy Prophet ﷺ proved to have been done as an obligation would have to be obeyed and followed as *wājib* (obligatory, necessary). And any act or omission on his part that is proved to have been done as a preferable conduct (*istiḥbāb*) and not as an obligatory one, should be followed by us too as a commendable (mustaḥab) conduct and not as a necessary obligation This, in other words, means that its contravention will not be declared to be a sin. (For a detailed discussion, see al-Jaṣṣāṣ in Aḥkām ul-Qur'ān)

The last three (25-27) of the cited verses refer to the event relating to Banū Quraiāẓah. In verse 26: وَاَنْزَلَ الَّذِيْنَ ظَاهَرُوْهُمْ مِّنْ اَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ مِنْ صَيَا صِيْهِمْ it was said that Allah Ta'ālā had, by putting the awe of the Holy Prophet ﷺ

and his Muslim followers into the hearts of the people of the Book who had helped the Confederate forces, made them come down from their strong fortresses and had thus made Muslims the inheritors of their properties, homes and areas of concentration.

In the last verse (27), good news of future victories has been given. Gone is the time when disbelievers attacked. Now the cycle of Muslim victories will begin and they will come to be on lands their feet have not touched yet. And this prophecy unfolded itself during the tenure of the noble Ṣaḥābah and everyone witnessed the spectacle of great empires ruled by Cyrus and Caesar come under them. And Allah does what He wills.

Verses 28 - 34

يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُلْ لِّاَزْوَاجِكَ اِنْ كُنْتُنَّ تُرِدْنَ الْحَيٰوةَ الدُّنْيَا وَزِيْنَتَهَا
فَتَعَالَيْنَ اُمَتِّعْكُنَّ وَاُسَرِّحْكُنَّ سَرَاحًا جَمِيْلًا ﴿٢٨﴾ وَاِنْ كُنْتُنَّ تُرِدْنَ
اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ وَالدَّارَ الْاٰخِرَةَ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ اَعَدَّ لِلْمُحْسِنٰتِ مِنْكُنَّ اَجْرًا
عَظِيْمًا ﴿٢٩﴾ يٰنِسَآءَ النَّبِيِّ مَنْ يَّاْتِ مِنْكُنَّ بِفَاحِشَةٍ مُّبَيِّنَةٍ يُّضٰعَفْ
لَهَا الْعَذَابُ ضِعْفَيْنِ ؕ وَكَانَ ذٰلِكَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ يَسِيْرًا ﴿٣٠﴾ وَمَنْ
يَّقْنُتْ مِنْكُنَّ لِلّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ وَتَعْمَلْ صَالِحًا نُّؤْتِهَآ اَجْرَهَا مَرَّتَيْنِ ۙ
وَاَعْتَدْنَا لَهَا رِزْقًا كَرِيْمًا ﴿٣١﴾ يٰنِسَآءَ النَّبِيِّ لَسْتُنَّ كَاَحَدٍ مِّنَ
النِّسَآءِ اِنِ اتَّقَيْتُنَّ فَلَا تَخْضَعْنَ بِالْقَوْلِ فَيَطْمَعَ الَّذِيْ فِيْ قَلْبِهٖ مَرَضٌ
وَّقُلْنَ قَوْلًا مَّعْرُوْفًا ﴿٣٢﴾ وَقَرْنَ فِيْ بُيُوْتِكُنَّ وَلَا تَبَرَّجْنَ تَبَرُّجَ
الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ الْاُوْلٰى وَاَقِمْنَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَ اٰتِيْنَ الزَّكٰوةَ وَاَطِعْنَ اللّٰهَ
وَرَسُوْلَهٗ ؕ اِنَّمَا يُرِيْدُ اللّٰهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ اَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ
وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيْرًا ﴿٣٣﴾ وَاذْكُرْنَ مَا يُتْلٰى فِيْ بُيُوْتِكُنَّ مِنْ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ
وَ الْحِكْمَةِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ لَطِيْفًا خَبِيْرًا ﴿٣٤﴾

O prophet, say to your wives, "If you intend (to have the pleasure of) worldly life and its charm, then come on, and I shall give you some stuff, and release you in a handsome fashion. [28] and if you intend (to gain the pleasure of) Allah and His messenger and (the betterment of) the Hereafter, then, Allah has prepared a great reward for those of you who do good". [29] O wives of the Prophet, whoever from among you will commit a clearly shameful act, the punishment will be doubled for her. And it is easy for Allah to do so. [30] And whoever of you stays obedient to Allah and His messenger, and acts righteously, We shall give her twice her reward, and We have prepared for her a prestigious provision. [31] O wives of the prophet, you are not like any other women, if you observe *taqwā*. So, do not be too soft in your speech, lest someone having disease in his heart should develop fancies (about you); and do speak with appropriate words. [32] And remain in your homes, and do not display (your) beauty as it used to be displayed in the days of earlier ignorance. And establish *ṣalāh*, and pay *zakāh*, and obey Allah and His messenger. Allah only intends to keep (all sorts of) filth away from you, O members of the family (of the prophet), and to make you pure through a perfect purification. [33] And be mindful of Allah's verses and the wisdom that is recited in your homes. Surely, Allah is All-Kind, All- Aware. [34]

Commentary

Out of the objectives of this Sūrah, the most important is the stress placed on avoiding everything that may cause pain to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. In addition to that, there is a reiteration of instructions to obey him and seek his pleasure. Mentioned in connection with the event of the battle of al-Aḥzāb appearing immediately earlier was the pain caused to the Holy Prophet ﷺ at the hands of the disbelievers and hypocrites. Along with it, also mentioned there was their ultimate disgrace and the victory and success that came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ on every occasion. Also praised there were sincere believers who sacrificed what they had at the instance of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and it was said that they would have high ranks in the Hereafter.

In the verses cited above, the blessed wives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ have been particularly taught to be careful that no word or deed that

issues forth from them goes on to cause pain to him. And this is possible only when they devote themselves and become totally obedient to Allah and His Messenger. Some injunctions in this connection have been given by addressing the blessed wives directly.

As for giving the choice of the taking of divorce to the blessed wives in the initial verses, it is limited to one or some incidents that came from the side of the blessed wives. These were contrary to the intent of the Holy Prophet ﷺ which caused pain to him.

One of these incidents is reported from Sayyidnā Jābir رضي الله عنه and appears in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim and elsewhere as well. It is said there that the blessed wives got together and asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ that their sustenance allowance should be increased. Abū Ḥayyān explains it in Tafsīr al-Baḥr ul-Muḥīṭ by saying that the victories of Banū Naḍīr and Banū Quraiẓah after the battle of al-Aḥzāb coupled with the distribution of spoils had generated a certain improved economic well-being among common Muslims. At that time, the blessed wives thought the Holy Prophet ﷺ would have also set aside a share for himself in the spoils. Therefore, they appealed to him jointly saying, "*Yā Rasulallah*, these wives of Cyrus and Caesar are laden with all sorts of valuable ornaments and dresses and have maids appointed to serve them while you see how hungry and ill-clad we are. Therefore, some liberal treatment in our case seems to be in order now."

When the Holy Prophet ﷺ heard this demand from the blessed wives that they should be treated at par with the life styles of kings and the worldly-wise rich, he was grieved about how much they had missed to appreciate the worth and value of living in the home of a prophet of Allah. On their part, the blessed wives never thought that their submission would cause pain to him. It was simply because of the well-being of common Muslims around them that they had also thought of the same for themselves. Abū Ḥayyān says that the description of this incident after the battle of al-Aḥzāb also supports the likelihood that this very demand of the wives became the cause of the choice of divorce given to them. According to some Ḥadīth narratives, following the event of having a honey drink while at the home of Sayyidah Zainab ﷺ - which will appear in detail later under the commentary on Sūrah At-Taḥrīm, 66:1-5, in Mā'ariful-Qur'ān, Volume VIII - a situation created by the mutual

sense of importance among the blessed wives became the cause of this choice of divorce. If both of these happened close in time to each other, then, it is also not remote to believe that they both could be the cause. But, the words of the Verse of Choice(1) are more supportive of the understanding that some financial demand had become its cause - for it was said in this verse: إِنْ كُنْتُنَّ تُرِدْنَ الْحَيٰوةَ الدُّنْيَا وَزِينَتَهَا (If you intend (to have the pleasure of) worldly life and its charm - 28).

This verse gave all blessed wives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ the choice to either accept to continue living with him as their husband in the condition he is in (that is, in his straightened economic condition), or become free from him through divorce. If they were to take the first option, they will deserve greater reward and higher ranks in the Hereafter as compared to other women. And if they were to take the second option, that is, taking a divorce, they will not have to face any displeasure as customary with worldly people. In fact, they would be given a send-off with honor, and parting gifts in accordance with Sunnah.

Tirmidhī reports from Umm al-Mu'minīn Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا, "When this verse of choice was revealed, the Holy Prophet ﷺ disclosed it to me before any other wife. Before reciting the verse, he said: I am going to tell you something. But, you do not have to make haste in giving your response. You should rather consult your parents and then respond. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا says, "This was his special favour to me that he prohibited me from expressing my opinion without having consulted my parents first, because he was certain that my parents would never advise me to opt for separation from the Holy Prophet ﷺ. When I heard this verse, I immediately submitted before him, "Do I have to go and consult my parents in this matter? As for me, I choose Allah and His Messenger and the Home of the Hereafter." Then, after me, this command of the Qur'ān was announced to all blessed wives. All of them said what I had said first (that is, none of them elected to have worldly affluence against the honor of being the wives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ." (Tirmidhī said: This Ḥadīth is Ḥasan Ṣaḥīḥ).

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(1). The 'Verse of Choice' is the title of the verse 29 cited above where the blessed wives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ are given a choice either to seek divorce from him or to remain with him, seeking the pleasure of Allah and His Messenger.

Special Note

Choice of Divorce can be given to a woman in two different forms: (1) That the power of divorce is entrusted with the woman, that is, if she wishes, she can divorce her self and become free. (2) That the power of giving divorce, though, remains in the hands of the husband, yet the husband gives her a promise that when she will wish, he will divorce her. (in the first case, as soon as the wife opts for divorce, she becomes divorced automatically without any act on the part of the husband. But in the latter case, divorce is not effected merely by the woman opting for it unless the husband divorces her.

In the case of the cited verse (28), some commentators are of the view that the choice given to the wives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ was of the first form, while others have maintained that it was of the second form. The esteemed author of Bayān ul-Qur'ān has commented that the verse has both probabilities. Until one of the two stands determined on the authority of some definitive text, there is no need to determine any form on one's own.'

Ruling

This verse (28) tells us when there is no congruity between the temperaments of the married couple, the desirable approach is to give the wife the option to live with the husband while being content with whatever state he is in, otherwise, she should be allowed to leave honorably according to Sunnah with divorce and gift of pairs of apparel.

In this case, what can be proved from the cited verse (28) is its desirability only. There is no proof to support its obligation. Some leading Muslim jurists have argued in favour of the obligatory nature of this verse and, on the same basis, they have given the wife of a penniless man, who is incapable of providing living expenses for her, the right to secure a divorce from the court. Full details of this issue have been given in Aḥkām ul-Qur'ān, Part V, under this very verse. [1]

The particular position of the blessed wives and the rationale of hard restrictions placed on them

يٰنِسَآءَ النَّبِيِّ مَنْ يَّاْتِ مِنْكُنَّ بِفَاحِشَةٍ مُّبَيِّنَةٍ يُّضٰعَفْ لَهَا الْعَذَابُ ضِعْفَيْنِ ؕ وَكَانَ

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(1). This work in Arabic is available from Maktaba-e-Darul-'Uloom, the publishers of the present Tafsīr]

ذٰلِكَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ يَسِيْرًا ﴿٣٠﴾ وَمَنْ يَّقْنُتْ مِنْكُنَّ لِلّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ وَتَعْمَلْ صَالِحًا نُّؤْتِهَآ اَجْرَهَا مَرَّتَيْنِ ﴿٣١﴾

O wives of the Prophet, whoever from among you will commit a clearly shameful act, the punishment will be doubled for her. And it is easy for Allah to do so. [30] And whoever of you stays obedient to Allah and His messenger, and acts righteously, We shall give her twice her reward, and We have prepared for her a prestigious provision. [31]

From the above verses we notice that the Qur'ān mentions therein a particular position of the blessed wives: If they were to commit some sin, they will have to face a punishment which will be twice that of other women. In other words, one sin committed by them will be made to stand for two. Similarly, if they did good deeds, the reward given to them will also be twice that of other women - that is, one good deed done by them will stand for two.

In a way, this verse is a recompense of what the blessed wives did at the time of the revelation of the Verse of Choice whereupon they chose to remain wedded to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and sacrificed whatever material benefits there were in doing otherwise. In return for this, Allah Ta'ālā gave one good deed done by them the status of two. As for the two-fold punishment in the event of some sin from them, that too came to be because of their special superiority and distinctive gentleness and because it stands proved both rationally and textually that Divine punishment for heedlessness and rebellion does increase in proportion to the honor and regard in which one is held.

Certainly great are the blessings of Allah Ta'ālā upon the blessed wives. Allah Ta'ālā chose them to be the wives of His *Rasūl*. The Divine Revelation kept descending in their homes. Under such arrangements, is it not that the least error or shortcoming on their part would be nothing but big? And if, pain is caused to the Holy Prophet ﷺ at the hands of others, then, it would be far more severe in effect that some such occasion of pain or discomfort issues forth from their side. The very words of the Qur'ān: وَاذْكُرْنَ مَا يُتْلٰى فِيْ بُيُوْتِكُنَّ (And be mindful of Allah's verses and the wisdom that is recited in your homes) appearing in verse 34 point out to this reason.

Special Note

Looked at in terms of the Muslim community at large, this distinction of the blessed wives - that they receive a two-fold reward of their deed - does not make it necessary that no individual or group is not to be blessed with a two-fold reward for some distinction of theirs. For example, there is the case of those from among the people of the Book who embraced Islam. About them, it was said in the Qur'ān: أُولَٰئِكَ يُؤْتَوْنَ أَجْرَهُم مَّرَّتَيْنِ (Such people will be given their reward twice - al-Qaṣaṣ, 28:54).

In the blessed letter the Holy Prophet ﷺ wrote to the Byzantine Emperor, it was because of this Qur'ānic statement that he particularly wrote: يُؤْتِكَ اللَّهُ أَجْرَكَ مَرَّتَيْنِ (you will be given your reward twice by Allah). As for the clarification of 'giving a reward twice' to the people of the Book who embrace Islam, it is already present in the Qur'ān. Then, there is yet another Ḥadīth where a similar two-fold reward has been mentioned for three persons. Details about it appear in the commentary on Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ under the verse: يُؤْتَوْنَ أَجْرَهُم مَّرَّتَيْنِ (will be given their reward twice - 28:54) in Volume VI of Tafsīr Mā'ariful-Qur'ān.

The reward for the good deed of an 'Ālim exceeds that of others, and the punishment of his sin too

In Aḥkām ul-Qur'ān, Imām Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ has said: The reason for which Allah Ta'ālā has declared the reward of the good deed of the blessed wives to be two-fold and the punishment of their disobedience also to be two-fold - i.e. their being the special recipients of the prophetic knowledge and Divine revelation--- is also present there in the case of Muslim religious scholars (the '*ulamā*' of *dīn*). Therefore, an 'Ālim (Muslim religious scholar) whose practice is in accord with his '*ilm* (knowledge) will find the reward of that deed of his to be more than others. And if he were to commit some sin, the punishment too will be more than others.

The word: فَاحِشَة (*fāḥishah*) appearing in: بِفَاحِشَةٍ مُّبَيِّنَةٍ - 30) is used in the Arabic language for acts of shame as well as for disobedience and sin in an absolute sense. This word has been used in the Qur'ān at many places. In this verse, this word cannot be taken to mean acts of shame because Allah Ta'ālā has kept the wives of all His prophets immune from this serious fault. None of the wives of the blessed prophets has ever committed any act of this nature. The wives of Sayyidnā Lūṭ and

Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليهما السلام deviated from the faith preached by them, rebelled, and were punished for it. But, none of them was ever charged of committing an act of shame. As for the blessed wives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, there was absolutely no probability that any such act of immodesty will ever issue forth from them. Therefore, the word: *fāḥishah* in this verse means common sins or the causing of pain and discomfort to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Then the word: مُبَيِّنَه (*mubayyinah*: open, clear, manifest) used here along with فَاحِشَة is an evidence in support, because acts of shamelessness are not '*mubayyinah*'(clear, manifest) anywhere. That takes place secretly. So, the expression: فَاحِشَة مُّبَيِّنَة (clearly shameful act) means common sins, or the causing of pain to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Out of the Tafsīr authorities, Muqātil Ibn Sulaimān has declared that the sense of 'shameful act' in this verse is either disobeying the Holy Prophet ﷺ or demanding something from him the fulfillment of which is hard on him. (Reported by al-Baihaqī in As-Sunan)

It will be noticed that the two-fold punishment has been identified by the Qur'ān only with *'clearly shameful act'*. But, for the two-fold reward, it has imposed several restrictions, as in: وَمَنْ يَّقْنُتْ مِنكُنَّ لِلّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ وَتَعْمَلْ صَالِحًا نُّؤْتِهَآ اَجْرَهَا مَرَّتَيْنِ (And whoever of you stays obedient to Allah and His messenger, and acts righteously, We shall give her twice her reward-- 31). Here, *qunūt*, that is, staying obedience to Allah and His Messenger is a condition. Then, acting righteously is yet another condition. The reason is that reward comes only when obedience is perfect while, for punishment, even a single sin is enough.

Special Instructions given to the Blessed Wives

Before we describe these instructions in details as they appear from the next verse: يٰنِسَآءَ النَّبِيِّ لَسْتُنَّ كَاَحَدٍ مِّنَ النِّسَآءِ اِنِ اتَّقَيْتُنَّ فَلَا تَخْضَعْنَ بِالْقَوْلِ (O wives of the prophet, you are not like any other women, if you observe *taqwā.* So, do not be too soft in your speech ... 32), it will be useful to recollect that, in the previous verses, the blessed wives have been restrained from placing demands before the Holy Prophet ﷺ, the fulfillment of which will be hard on him, or those which may be inappropriate in view of his high prophetic station. And once they have chosen to live in that arrangement, their status was raised higher than other women to the extent that one deed done by them was made to stand for two. Now, in and onwards from verse 32, they have been given some instructions in order to correct and

groom their conduct as appropriate for wives living with the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Though, all these instructions are not restricted to the blessed wives in particular, in fact, virtually all Muslim women are obligated to observe these. But, at this place, the blessed wives have been addressed specially to bring it to their attention that they should make it a point to observe these rules of conduct that apply to all Muslim women as incumbent and obligatory - more avidly as compared to others. It is this kind of particularity that is meant by the expression: لَسْتُنَّ كَاَحَدٍ مِّنَ النِّسَآءِ (you are not like any other women - 32).

Are the blessed wives superior to all women of the world?

The arrangement of these words in the verse seems to obviously suggest that the blessed wives رضی اللہ عنہن are superior to the women of the whole world. But, in the verse of the Qur'ān about Sayyidah Maryam علیها السلام, it has been said: اِنَّ اللّٰهَ اصْطَفٰىكِ وَطَهَّرَكِ وَاصْطَفٰىكِ عَلٰى نِسَآءِ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ (Allah has chosen you and purified you and chosen you over the women of all the worlds - 'Āl-'Imrān, 3:42). This proves the superiority of Sayyidah Maryam over the women of all the worlds. Then, there is the Ḥadīth of Sayyidnā Anas ﷺ in Tirmidhī where the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said, 'Sufficient for you (to hold in esteem) out of all women are: Maryam daughter of 'Imrān, Khadījah daughter of Khuwailid (*Ummul- Mu'minīn*), Fāṭimah daughter of Muḥammad ﷺ and 'Āsiyah wife of the Pharaoh.' In this Ḥadīth, three other women along with Sayyidah Maryam have been identified as superior to women of all the worlds.

Therefore, the superiority or precedence of the blessed wives described in this verse occurs here in its special status, that is, the status of their being the wives and women of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, the status in which they are doubtlessly superior to women of all the worlds. However, it does not prove the kind of universally absolute superiority which may be counter to other *nusus* (textual authority). (Maẓharī)

Soon after the opening sentence of verse 32: لَسْتُنَّ كَاَحَدٍ مِّنَ النِّسَآءِ (you are not like any other woman), there appears the condition of: اِنِ اتَّقَيْتُنَّ (if you observe Taqwā). This condition refers to the superiority they have been blessed with by Allah Ta'ālā because of their being women and wives of the Prophet ﷺ. The purpose thereby is to caution them against relying solely on this relationship of theirs with the Prophet ﷺ. that they are,

after all, the wives of the Messenger of Allah. Instead of that, this superiority is based on the condition that they observe Taqwā and obey Divine injunctions. (Qurṭubī and Maẓharī)

After that, some instructions have been given to the blessed wives رضی اللہ عنہن :

The First Instruction

It relates to restrictions on the modality of voice and speech as part of the rules of *ḥijāb* or *pardah* applicable to women and begins with the words: فَلَا تَخْضَعْنَ بِالْقَوْلِ (so do not be too soft in your speech- 32). It means, even if there be the need to talk to someone who is not a *maḥram* from behind a screen (or something else obstructing the view), even then, while speaking, effort should be made to avoid the delicacy and grace in diction naturally present in the voice of women. The delicacy and grace mentioned here refer to a certain level of softness which might make some inclination rise in the heart of the addressee as stated immediately after: فَيَطْمَعَ الَّذِیْ فِیْ قَلْبِهٖ مَرَضٌ وَّقُلْنَ قَوْلاً مَعْرُوْفًا (lest someone having disease in his heart should develop fancies (about you); and do speak with appropriate words. - 32) The sense is that one should not talk softly in a manner that would cause temptation and tilt in a person who already has some disease in his heart. Disease means hypocrisy, or its offshoots. That a real hypocrite will be so tempted is all too obvious. But, a person who, despite being a sincere believer, inclines towards something unlawful may not be a hypocrite but weak in faith he certainly is. And this weakness in faith which makes one tilt towards the unlawful is really nothing but an offshoot of hypocrisy. With faith being pure and having not the least element of hypocrisy in it, no one can ever tilt towards what is *ḥarām*, unlawful. (Maẓharī)

In essence, the aim of the first instruction is to empower women to achieve the high station of self-protection from non-Maḥram men through personal avoidance and legal *ḥijāb* so that they do not go even near a non-Maḥram weak in faith lest some temptation or tilt creeps into his heart. A detailed discussion of the *ḥijāb* of women will appear within this Sūrah under the verses that follow. Being given at this point is simply an explanation of what has appeared here as part of the special instructions for the blessed wives. So, once the noble mothers of the believers had heard the instruction about speech or address, some of them were so alerted that they, while talking to a non-Maḥram male after the

revelation of this verse, used to put their hand over their mouth so that their voice would change. Therefore, it appears in a Ḥadīth of Sayyidnā 'Amr Ibn al-'Ās: إِنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ نَهٰى اَنْ يُكَلِّمَ النِّسَآءُ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ أَزْوَاجِهِنَّ (The Holy Prophet ﷺ had prohibited that women talk without the permission of their spouses) (Reported by aṭ-Ṭabarānī with 'good' chain of authority, Maẓharī)

Ruling

At least this much stands proved from this verse, and from the Ḥadīth quoted above, that the voice of a woman is not included under *satr*, that is, under what must be concealed. But, a precautionary restriction has been placed here too. Then, consideration has also been given in religious injunctions and acts of worship that women do not talk at a high pitch that could be heard by men. If the Imām makes a mistake, those following him in the congregation are duty-bound to interrupt and correct him verbally. But, women have been taught that, instead of correcting the Imām verbally, they should simply clap by striking one hand over the back of the other so that the Imām is alerted. They have to say nothing verbally.

The Second Instruction

This concerns the observance of full *ḥijāb* (*purdah* or veil). It was said: وَقَرْنَ فِيْ بُيُوْتِكُنَّ وَلَا تَبَرَّجْنَ تَبَرُّجَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ الْأُوْلٰى (And remain in your homes, and do not display (your) beauty as it used to be displayed in the days of earlier ignorance - 33). Here, the expression: اَلْجَاهِلِيَّةِ الْأُوْلٰى (the days of earlier ignorance) means the Jahiliyyah which prevailed in the world before the advent of Islam. Embedded in this expression is the hint that later than it there is to come yet another Jahiliyyah, a period of another ignorance in which a similar display of immodesty and disregard for proper covering of bodies would become rampant. That, probably, is the Jahiliyyah of modern times, something visible everywhere.

In this verse, the essential injunction about *ḥijāb* is that women stay at home (that is, do not go out without the need as admissible in the Sharī'ah). Along with it, it was also said that they should not go out moving around in public without *ḥijāb*, as it used to be the wont of women in the earlier period of Jāhiliyyah. The word: تَبَرُّج (*tabarruj*) essentially means manifestation or display and, at this place, it means the display of personal embellishment before non-Maḥram men - as it appears

in another verse: غَيْرَ مُتَبَرِّجٰتٍ بِزِينَةٍ (not displaying embellishment - An-Nūr, 24:60).

As said earlier, a full discussion of the *ḥijāb* or *pardah* of women and the injunctions related with it will follow within this Sūrah. Our present comments shall remain restricted to the explanation of the cited verse. The verse tells us two things about *ḥijāb*:

(1) For women, the real thing desirable with Allah is that they should not go out of their homes. Their creation is an answer to whatever needs to be done at home. Let them stay involved in it. As for the real *ḥijāb* desirable in the Sharī'ah, it is a *ḥijāb* that stands achieved by their staying at home, that is, the home becomes their veil or cover (حِجَابٌ بِالْبُيُوْت: *al-ḥijāb-bil-buyut*).

(2) The other thing it tells us is: If a woman has to go out of the home to take care of some need, let her not go out with any display of embellishment. Instead, she should wear what covers her whole body, a *burqa'*, or *jilbāb* (women's gown, garment or cloak) - as in the verse of this very Sūrah Al-Aḥzāb: يُدْنِيْنَ عَلَيْهِنَّ مِنْ جَلَابِيْبِهِنَّ (bring down over themselves part of their outer garments - 33:59), the details about which shall appear later, *insha'Allah Ta'ālā*.

Occasions of need have been exempted from the obligation of 'staying in homes.'

In the opening sentence of verse 33: قَرْنَ فِيْ بُيُوْتِكُنَّ (And remain in your homes), staying in homes was made obligatory (*wājib*) which apparently purports that it should be absolutely prohibited and *ḥarām* for a woman to go out of her home, but verse has, at the first place, already indicated through the use of the words: وَلَا تَبَرَّجْنَ (And do not display your beauty) within this verse that going out as needed is not prohibited in an absolute sense. Instead, what is prohibited is going out in a manner which displays embellishment. Then, there is the injunction of: يُدْنِيْنَ عَلَيْهِنَّ مِنْ جَلَابِيْبِهِنَّ (bring down over themselves part of their outer garments - 33:59) to appear later in Sūrah Al-Aḥzāb. This injunction is itself telling us that to a certain degree women do have the permission to go out of the home, of course on condition that they go out in *ḥijāb* wearing an outer garment like *burqa'* etc.

In addition to that, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has himself clarified that

occasions of need are exempt from this injunction, as in a Ḥadīth where, while addressing the blessed wives, he is reported to have said: قَدْ أُذِنَ لَكُنَّ أَنْ تَخْرُجْنَ لِحَاجَتِكُنَّ (You are permitted to go out for your needs - reported by Muslim). Then, the conduct of the Holy Prophet ﷺ after the revelation of the verse of *ḥijāb* proves that women have the permission to go out of homes on occasions of need, as the going of the blessed wives with the Holy Prophet ﷺ for *Ḥajj* and *'Umrah* stands confirmed on the authority of sound and authentic Aḥādīth. Similarly, their going with him in many battles stands proved. Then, there are many narrations of Ḥadīth which also prove that the blessed wives رضی اللہ عنہن used to go out of their homes to visit their parents, did their duty by calling on the sick among relatives and offering condolence on the death of someone among them. And during the blessed time of the Prophet ﷺ, they also had the permission to go to the *Masājid*.

And not only that it happened in the company of the Holy Prophet ﷺ or in his time alone, but even after his passing away, it is a confirmed fact that the all his blessed wives went for *Ḥajj* and *'Umrah* - with the exception of Sayyidah Saudah رضی اللہ عنہا and Sayyidah Zainab bint Jaḥsh رضی اللہ عنہا etc. No reproach or disapproval (*nakāir)* thereupon has been reported from any of the noble Ṣaḥabah. In fact, Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ sent the blessed wives of the Messenger of Allah for Ḥajj under arrangements specially made for them - he sent Sayyidnā 'Uthmān al-Ghanī ؓ and Sayyidnā 'Abd ur-Raḥmān Ibn al-'Awf ؓ with them to supervise and manage their pilgrimage. And as for the incidence of Ummul-Mu'minīn Sayyidah Saudah and Sayyidah Zainab bint Jaḥsh رضی اللہ عنہما not going for Ḥajj and 'Umrah after the passing away of the noble Prophet ﷺ, it was not on the basis of this verse, instead, it was on the basis of a Ḥadīth. That is, when on the occasion of the Last Ḥajj (*Hajjatul-Wadaā'*), the Holy Prophet ﷺ helped his blessed wives perform their Ḥajj with him personally, the remark that he made on return was: هٰذِهٖ ثُمَّ لُزُوْمُ الْحُصُر (This is it. After that, should stick to the mats at home). The first word: هٰذِهٖ (*ḥādhihī*: translated here as 'this is it') refers to this very Ḥajj and حُصُر (*ḥuṣur*) is the plural form of حَصِير (*ḥaṣīr*) which means a mat (of straw, a modest version of other floor spreads such as rug, carpet, *daree* etc.). In essence, the Ḥadīth is saying: Your going out for this alone is done. After that, you stick to the mats of your homes necessarily

without having to part therefrom. Sayyidah Saudah bint Zam'ah رضى الله عنها and Sayyidah Zainab bint Jaḥsh رضى الله عنها took this Ḥadīth to mean: 'Your going out was permissible for this very Last Ḥajj. Beyond that, it is not.' The other blessed wives - including a jurist of the class of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها - unanimously interpreted these words of the Holy Prophet ﷺ to mean that 'your going out of your homes is permissible for this kind of journey which aims at performing a recognized act of worship, otherwise you should stay at home' In gist, from the sense of the verse: وَقَرْنَ فِىْ بُيُوْتِكُنَّ (And remain in your homes - 33) - as supported by the indicators of the Qur'ān, the practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the consensus of the noble Ṣaḥābah - occasions of need are exempted which include religious obligations of Ḥajj and 'Umrah, taking care of the natural duties towards parents, visiting Maḥram relatives in health and sickness and attending to other requirements of this nature. Similarly, if a woman has no arrangement for her living expenses, then, it is also permissible for her to go out in *ḥijāb* in order to earn an honorable living. However, going out on occasions of need is subject to the condition that one does not go out to display personal embellishment. Instead, one should go out properly covered with *burqa'* or *jilbāb* (full mantle or *chadar*).

The offensive lapses of the Rawāfiḍ about the journey of Ummul-Mu'minin Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها to Baṣrah and the event of the battle of Jamal:

It has been made amply clear in the previous paragraph that the sense of the imperative of وَقَرْنَ فِىْ بُيُوْتِكُنَّ 'remain in your homes' (33) as proved from the very indicators, rather, expressions of the Qur'ān, as well as from the practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and after him from the consensus of the noble Ṣaḥābah, it is confirmed that occasions of need are exempt from it - which includes going for religious needs of Ḥajj and 'Umrah etc. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah along with Sayyidah Umm Salamah and Sayyidah Ṣafiyyah, may Allah be pleased with all of them, had gone for Ḥajj. There they heard about the martyrdom of Sayyidnā 'Uthmān رضى الله عنه and about the incidents of rebellion against him. They were intensely grieved. The apprehension of an ill-omened disorder counter to unity among Muslims was weighing heavy on their minds. Under these circumstances, Sayyidnā Ṭalḥah, Zubair, Nu'mān Ibn Bashīr, Ka'b Ibn

'Ujrah and some other noble Ṣaḥabah escaped from Madīnah and reached Makkah al-Mu'azzamah because the killers of Sayyidnā 'Uthmān ﷺ wanted to kill them too. These people were not with the rebels. In fact, they had tried to dissuade them from acting in that manner. So, as they were after them as well, these people saved their lives by escaping to Makkah al-Mu'azzamah. Once there, they presented themselves before Ummul-Mu'minīn Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا and sought her good counsel. She advised them not to go to Madīnah until such time the rebels are gathered around Sayyidnā 'Alī ﷺ and he is exercising restraint against taking Qiṣāṣ (retaliation) from them, lest the situation is aggravated further. In this situation, they should go to live for a few days at a place where they find themselves safe and the Amīr al-Mu'minīn succeeds in controlling the law and order situation in Madīnah. As for making whatever efforts they can, the best they can do is to try that these people converged around the Amīr al-Mu'minīn get scattered and he is enabled to exercise his authority to exact Qiṣāṣ (retaliation) or revenge from them.

To this, they agreed and thought of leaving for Baṣrah because at that time Muslim forces were converged there. Once their plan to go was firm, they also requested Ummul-Mu'minīn Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا to stay at Baṣrah along with them until such time that the government resumes its normal function.

And the fact of the power and dominance of the killers of Sayyidnā 'Uthmān, as well as of the leaders of disorder, and the lack of Sayyidnā 'Alī's power to enforce the Islamic legal punishment against them is something clearly proven from the report of Nahjul-Balāghah itself.(1) It should be borne in mind that Nahjul-Balāghah is regarded to be authentic by Shiites. It appears in Nahjul-Baāghah: 'To the noble Amīr (Amīr al-Mu'minīn Sayyidnā 'Alī ﷺ), some of his companions and colleagues themselves said: If you punish the people who attacked 'Uthmān ﷺ, it will be better. Thereupon, the noble Amīr said: My brother, I am not unaware of this thing you are talking about. But, how can this be done when these very people are there all over Madīnah - and your slaves and the Bedouins of the adjoining areas have also joined

(1) Nahjul-Balāghah is a compilation of the lectures of Sayyidnā 'Alī ﷺ held by the Shiites as authentic.

them. If, under these circumstances, I were to issue the orders for their punishment, how would these be implemented?

On one side, Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا realized the helplessness of Sayyidnā 'Alī ﷺ in this matter while, on the other, she also knew that the hearts of Muslims were wounded in the face of the *shahadah* of Sayyidnā 'Uthmān ﷺ. Moreover, the delay in taking the due revenge from his killers on the part of Sayyidnā 'Alī ﷺ was being watched as his helplessness while the killers of Sayyidnā 'Uthmān also used to participate in the meetings of the Amīr al-Mu'minīn. People who were not aware of his helplessness had found their reason for complaint against him as well. It was possible that this kind of complaint may trigger some other trial. Therefore, it was to exhort people to observe patience, to strengthen the hands of Amīr al-Mu'minīn for the purpose of stabilizing the rule of law in the state, to remove mutual complaints and to achieve the objective of making things work better among people that Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا decided to embark on the journey to Baṣrah. In this journey, her *Maḥram* nephew, Sayyidnā 'Abdullah Ibn Zubair ﷺ and others were with her. She had herself stated the purpose of this journey before Sayyidnā Qa'qā' ﷺ as it would appear later. And it is also obvious that the mission of conciliation and betterment among believers at the time of such a terrible trial was really a significant religious service. If, for this purpose, the Ummul-Mu'minīn took to the journey of Baṣrah while accompanied by her Maḥrams and seated in a metal-framed camel litter, why would the Shiites and Rawāfiḍ raise such a dust storm about it and say that the Ummul-Mu'minīn contravened the injunctions of the Qur'ān? What justification is there for it?

Later on the war-like situation, created by the mischief of the hypocrites and the agent provocateurs of disorder, was something even the thought of which had never crossed the mind of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا. For the explanation of this verse, this much is enough. Onwards from here, this is not the occasion for going into the details of the event of the battle of *Jamal*. But, in order to make the reality clear in brief, a few lines follow.

Circumstances that one confronts in this world at the time of mutual discord simply cannot be neglected by people of insight and experience. The same circumstances developed here too when the journey of Baṣrah

undertaken by Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا in the company of the noble Ṣaḥābah who had come from Madīnah was reported before Sayyidnā 'Alī ﷺ in a totally deformed manner by the hypocrites and the manipulators of disorder. The version they gave to him was that all those people were going to Baṣrah to join up with forces stationed there and from where they would come out to confront him. If he was the Amīr of the time, they instigated, it was his duty to preempt this threat and stop them by going to where they were, lest the danger increases any further. There were noble Ṣaḥābah of the stature of Sayyidnā Ḥasan and Ḥusain, 'Abdullāh Ibn Ja'far and 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہم اجمعین who even differed with this line of action. The advice they gave was that he should not throw his forces against them until such time that he had the correct assessment of the prevailing situation before him. But, the majority present there was of those who had tendered the first option. Sayyidnā 'Alī ﷺ, also tilting towards the same option, came out with the armed forces, and along with him, came these wicked votaries of disorder and rebellion.

When these gentlemen reached the environs of Baṣrah, they sent Sayyidnā Qa'qā' ﷺ to Ummul-Mu'minīn Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا to find out the circumstances of her visit. They asked her, 'O Mother of the Believers, what was the reason that brought you here?' Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah said, اَیْ بُنَیَّ الْاِصْلَاحُ بَیْنَ النَّاسِ (My dear son, [I am here to seek nothing but] the betterment of relations between people)'. Then, she also called Sayyidnā Ṭalḥah and Sayyidnā Zubair رضی اللہ عنہما in this meeting with Sayyidnā Qa'qā' ﷺ. He asked them, 'What do you want?' They submitted, 'We want nothing but that the Islamic legal punishment be enforced against the killers of 'Uthmān ﷺ.' In response, Sayyidnā Qa'qā' ﷺ explained by saying, 'This thing cannot be done until Muslim forces are organized and firmly established. Therefore, at this time, it is necessary that you take to a stance of conciliation.'

These blessed souls submitted to the advice. Sayyidnā Qa'qā' ﷺ went to Sayyidnā 'Alī ﷺ and told him about it. He too was very pleased, and satisfied. Everyone decided to go back. For three days, they stayed on the camping grounds in a state that no one had any doubt about the forthcoming declaration of truce between the two parties. And, on the fourth day, this announcement was going to be made and a meeting

between Sayyidnā 'Alī ﷺ and Sayyidnā Ṭalḥah and Zubair ﷺ was due to take place - in which these killers of Sayyidnā 'Uthmān ﷺ were not included. This thing was too hard for them to take. They made a plan. They told their colleagues, 'First you go into the group around Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah and unleash a spate of killing and pillage so that she and her compatriots think that the pledge was broken from the side of Sayyidnā 'Alī, as a result of which, becoming victims of this misunderstanding, they would hurl themselves against the armed forces of Sayyidnā 'Alī.' This satanic device engineered by them worked. So, when the attack on the group accompanying Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی الله عنها came from the side of the agents of disorder who had infiltrated the forces of Sayyidnā 'Alī ﷺ, they were excusable in taking this attack to have come from the forces of the Amīr al-Mu'minīn - and thus began their counter action in defence. When Sayyidnā 'Alī ﷺ saw this state of affairs, he had no option left but to fight. And the unintended mishap of mutual infighting that was to occur did occur. اِنَّا لِلّٰهِ وَاِنَّا اِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُوْن ! It is exactly like this that this event has been reported by aṭ-Ṭabarī and other reliable historians from the narrations of Sayyidnā 'Abdullah Ibn Ja'far, Sayyidnā 'Abdullah Ibn 'Abbās and others رضی الله عنهم اجمعین. (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī)

In short, as a result of the wickedness of the agent provocateurs of disorder, this event of fighting between two revered groups came to pass unconsciously. And when this *fitnah* subsided, these very two revered personalities were the ones who were intensely grieved over it. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی الله عنها, when recalled this event, would weep so much that her scarf became all wet with her tears. Similarly, Sayyidnā 'Alī ﷺ was also terribly shocked over this event. When, after the *fitnah* had subsided, he went to see the dead bodies of those killed, he beat his thighs with his hands and said, 'Would that, much before this happened, I were dead, forgotten, lost!'

And according to some narrations, when Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی الله عنها would recite the verse: وَقَرْنَ فِىْ بُيُوْتِكُنَّ (And stay in your homes - 33) in the Holy Qur'ān, she used to break into tears until her scarf would be all wet with tears. (Reported by 'Abdullāh Ibn Aḥmad in Zawā'iduz-Zuhd and Ibn ul-Mundhir and Ibn Abī Shaibah from Masrūq, Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī)

That she wept on the recital of the cited verse was neither because the contravention of the command of 'staying in homes' was a sin in her sight

nor because the journey was prohibited. Instead of all that, the serious and unwelcome event that came to pass was the cause of her natural grief. (All these narrations and the subject matter have been taken from Tafsīr Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī)

The third, fourth and fifth instruction of the Qur'ān to the blessed wives

Two instructions have appeared in detail earlier. They related to the avoidance of addressing non-Maḥram men softly and tenderly and of going out of homes unnecessarily. Now, the other three instructions are contained in the next sentence of verse 33: وَاَقِمْنَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتِيْنَ الزَّكٰوةَ وَاَطِعْنَ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ (and establish Ṣalāh, and pay Zakāh, and obey Allah and His Messenger). These are a total of five instructions. For women, these are matters of great consequences.

These five instructions apply to all Muslims universally

At least in the case of the later instructions mentioned above, no one can presume that they could be special to the blessed wives. These are Ṣalāh, Zakāh and Obedience to Allah and His Messenger. How can any Muslim anywhere be taken as exempted from these? As for the first two instructions which relate to the *ḥijāb* or *pardah* of women, a little deliberation would make it clear that they too are not special to the blessed wives. In fact, the same injunction applies to all Muslim women. The only question that has to be answered is that the Holy Qur'ān has said before these instructions,: لَسْتُنَّ كَاَحَدٍ مِّنَ النِّسَآءِ اِنِ اتَّقَيْتُنَّ (32) that is, the blessed wives are not like common women, if they take to Taqwā. This sentence apparently indicates to the speciality of the blessed wives. A clear answer to this doubt is that the speciality seen here does not mean that these injunctions are restricted to them, instead, it revolves round the care and concern to be observed in acting in accordance with them. In other words, it means that the blessed wives are not like common women, because the state of their dignity is the highest of all. Therefore, they should show the highest care and concern for following the injunctions made obligatory for all Muslim women. And Allah *subhanahu wa Ta'ālā* knows best.

We now move to the last sentence of verse 33 which says: اِنَّمَا يُرِيْدُ اللّٰهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ اَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيْرًا (Allah only intends to keep (all sorts of) filth away from you, O members of the family (of the prophet), and to

make you pure through a perfect purification. - 33). In the verses previous to this, the instructions given to the blessed wives by addressing them directly were, though, not special to them in person, rather, the entire Muslim community is obligated with these injunctions, yet the blessed wives were addressed particularly for the reason that they, in consonance with their dignity and the sanctity of the home of the Prophet, would be showing added care and concern for deeds that match their two singularities. Given in this verse is the wisdom of this particular address, that is, by the special instruction of the betterment of deeds, Allah intends to bless the household of the Messenger of Allah with an ideal state of purity by removing everything counter to it.

The word: الرِّجْس (*ar-rijs*) has been used in the Qur'ān for several meanings. At one place, *ar-rijs* has appeared in the sense of idols: فَاجْتَنِبُوا الرِّجْسَ مِنَ الْأَوْثَانِ (So refrain from the filth of idols - 22:30) and on other occasions, it is used in the sense of sin in absolute terms and at times it is employed to carry the meaning of punishment or impurity or filth. The outcome is that everything which is legally or naturally (or rationally) considered detestable is *ar-rijs*. In the present verse, the word: الرِّجْس (*ar-rijs*) appears in this very general sense. (Al-Baḥr ul-Muḥīṭ)

What does "أَهْلَ بَيْت : *Ahl al-Bayt*: People of the House" signify in this verse?

In verses appearing earlier in the present sequence, the address was to the blessed wives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, therefore, the form used was in the feminine gender. Here, the expression: أَهْلَ الْبَيْت (*ahl al-bayt*) includes, along with the blessed wives, their children and fathers as well, therefore, the form used was in the masculine gender, that is: عَنْكُمْ (from you) and: وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ (purifies you). And some Tafsīr authorities take '*ahl al-bayt*' to mean the blessed wives only. 'Ikrimah and Muqātil have said exactly this. And Sayyidnā Sa'īd Ibn Jubayr ﷺ has reported the same narration from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ saying that he has declared '*ahl al-bayt*' in this verse to mean the blessed wives and then cited the next verse: وَاذْكُرْنَ مَا يُتْلٰى فِيْ بُيُوْتِكُنَّ (and remember what is recited in your homes -34) as proof (because the address here is to the blessed wives only, as is evident from the feminine gender used in the verse and from the reference to their homes.) [reported by Ibn Abī Ḥātim and Ibn Jarīr). And the words of the address: نِسَآءَ النَّبِيِّ (O women [wives] of the prophet) in the

immediately previous verses are also its contextual evidence. Early commentator 'Ikrimah ... used to go about proclaiming in the bazaars that '*ahl al-bayt*' in the verse means the blessed wives, because this verse has been revealed to highlight their dignified status and he used to say that he was ready to enter into a *mubāhalah** (imprecation) on it.

But, several narrations of Ḥadīth reported by Ibn Katār at this place bear witness that Sayyidah Fāṭimah, Sayyidnā 'Alī and Sayyidnā Ḥasan and Ḥusain رضی اللہ عنہم اجمعین are also included in 'ahl al-bayt' - as in a Ḥadīth of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim where Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا narrates: Once the Holy Prophet ﷺ went out of the house with a black sheet from Byzantine wrapped around his blessed body. When Ḥasan Ibn 'Alī ؓ came out, he took him inside the sheet. Then Sayyidnā Ḥusain ؓ came. He took him too inside the sheet in the same manner. After that, came Sayyidah Fāṭimah رضی اللہ عنہا and then Sayyidnā 'Alī al-Murtaḍā ؓ. He also made them come inside the sheet. Thereafter, he recited the verse: إِنَّمَا يُرِيْدُ اللّٰهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ اَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيْرًا (Allah only intends to keep (all sorts of) filth away from you, O members of the family (of the prophet-33). And it also appears in some narrations that, after having recited the verse, he said: اَللّٰهُمَّ هٰؤُلَآءِ اَهْلُ بَيْتِى (O Allah, these are members of my family) (reported by Ibn Jarīr)

After having reported several reliable *aḥādīth* on this subject, Ibn Kathīr has said: In reality, there is no contradiction in the two sayings reported from Tafsīr authorities. Those who said that this verse was revealed in relation to the high station of the blessed wives and '*ahl al-bayt*' means them does not go contrary to the possible inclusion of other people too under the purview of '*ahl al-bayt*.' Therefore, the sound position is that under the words: '*ahl al-bayt*', the blessed wives are included in any case, because they themselves are the cause of the revelation of this verse. And the inclusion of the direct addressees of the revelation cannot be subjected to any doubt. And Sayyidah Fāṭimah and 'Alī and Ḥasan and Ḥusain رضی اللہ عنہم اجمعین too - in accordance with the saying of the noble Prophet - are included in '*ahl al-bayt*.' And at both places in this verse, before and after it, the address is to the wives of the prophet using the form of feminine gender. In previous verses, beginning

* A form of resolving religious disputes through bi-partite invocation. For details, please see Ma'ariful-Qur'ān, Volume II, pp. 90, 91.

from: فَلَا تَخْضَعْنَ بِالْقَوْلِ (So, do not be soft with your address - 32) up to the end all forms employed are feminine. Then, later on in: وَاذْكُرْنَ مَا يُتْلٰى (and remember what is recited - 34) the form used in the address is in the feminine gender once again. Now, when the text departs from the context in this verse (33) in between and elects to employ the form of masculine gender as in: عَنْكُمْ (*'ankum*) and: يُطَهِّرَكُمْ (*yuṭahhirakum*), it also becomes a strong evidence of the fact that included here are not only the wives, but some men as well.

As for what has been said in the verse under study: لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ اَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيْرًا (Allah only intends to keep (all sorts of) filth away from you, O members of the family (of the prophet-33), it obviously means that, through these instructions, Allah Ta'ālā will keep the *'ahl al-bayt'* protected against satanic instigations, sins and evils and cleanse them pure. In short, what is meant here is legal تشریعی *(tashrī'ī)* purification - not the creational تکوینی*(takwīnī)* purification which is the hallmark of prophets. It does not become necessary thereby that they all be مَعْصُوْم *'ma'ṣūm'* (infallible) and the commission of any sin by them should not be possible as is the case with the noble prophets, may peace be upon them all - which is the distinctive feature of creational purification. The people of Shiite persuasion have, by differing from the majority of the Muslim community, first of all claimed that the expression: *'ahl al-bayt'* is restricted to the progeny and male relatives of the Messenger and that his blessed wives are excluded from it. Then, they went on to declare the word: تَطْهِيْر (*taṭhīr*: purification) in the cited verse (34) as standing for their عِصْمَه (*'iṣmah*: the state of being protected, infallible) and thus made the *'ahl al-bayt'* اَهْلَ الْبَيْت (*ma'ṣūm*: infallible) like prophets. This humble writer has given an answer to this approach and has taken up the subject in full details in his Aḥkām ul-Qur'ān under Sūrah Al-Aḥzāb. This work defines عِصْمَة : *'ismah*, and proves that it is restricted to prophets and angels and that no one is مَعْصُوْم (*ma'ṣūm*) other than them---all this on the basis of Islamic legal arguments and proofs. People of knowledge may see it at their discretion. Others just do not need it.

The word: آيَاتُ اللهِ (*ayātillah*) in verse 34: وَاذْكُرْنَ مَا يُتْلٰى فِيْ بُيُوْتِكُنَّ مِنْ اٰيٰتِ اللهِ وَالْحِكْمَةِ (And be mindful of Allah's verses and the wisdom that is recited in your homes) means the Qur'ān and: حِكْمَة (*ḥikmah*) means the teachings and the *sunnah* of the noble Messenger of Allah - as the commentators at

large have explained حِكْمَة : *ḥikmah* at this place to mean *sunnah*. And the word: اُذْكُرْنَ (*udhkurna*) could have two meanings: (1) To personally remember and be mindful of these verses and the points of wisdom, which should result in acting according to them. (2) To mention and pass on to other members of the Muslim community whatever of the Qur'ān was revealed in their homes before them as well as the teachings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ of which they were the recipients.

Special Note

In his Aḥkām ul-Qur'ān, Ibn al-'Arabī has said: From this verse it stands proved that a person who hears a verse of the Qur'ān, or a statement of Ḥadīth, is duty-bound to convey it to the Muslim *ummah*, so much so that even the blessed wives were bound with the duty of conveying to members of the Muslim community whatever verses of the Qur'ān are revealed in their homes or the teachings that they receive from the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Both were a matter of trust placed by Allah in their hands which they had to pass on to others.

The Protection of Qur'an and Ḥadīth

The way the spreading of the message of the verses of the Qur'ān and the making of arrangements to teach it have been made necessary for the Muslim community, it is in the same way that, by calling it *ḥikmah*, the spreading and teaching of the *aḥādīth* of the Holy Prophet have also been made necessary (in the degree of incumbency). Therefore, the noble Ṣaḥābah, may Allah be pleased with them all, have obeyed and implemented this injunction under all circumstances. There is this incident related to the Sayyidnā Mu'ādh رضي الله عنه in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī. He heard a Ḥadīth from the Holy Prophet ﷺ ,but he did not narrate it publicly for the reason that he feared that people may not give it the status it deserved or may succumb to some misunderstanding. However, when came the time of his death, he assembled people around him and narrated the Ḥadīth before them and said, 'Up to this time, I had not mentioned it before anyone because of religious expediency. But, now the time of death is near, therefore, I consider it necessary to deliver this thing held in trust back to the Muslim *ummah*, its real owner.' The words of the statement in the Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī are: فَأَخْبَرَ بِهِ مُعَاذٌ عِنْدَ مَوْتِهِ تَأَثُّمًا that is, 'Sayyidnā Mu'ādh رضي الله عنه made people hear this Ḥadīth at the time of his death lest he becomes a sinner by not having conveyed the Ḥadīth of the

Rasūl of Allah to the Muslim *ummah.*'

This incident too is an apt testimony to the fact that all Ṣaḥābah considered the implementation of this injunction of the Qur'ān to be obligatory, and necessary. And since the noble Ṣaḥābah had demonstrated the highest care and concern in conveying Ḥadīth to people with utmost precaution, the protection of Ḥadīth too came, in a certain degree, fairly close to that of the Qur'ān. Picking doubts in this matter really amounts to picking doubts in the Qur'ān. Allah knows best.

Verse 35

إِنَّ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمٰتِ وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنٰتِ وَ الْقٰنِتِينَ
وَالْقٰنِتٰتِ وَالصّٰدِقِينَ وَالصّٰدِقٰتِ وَالصّٰبِرِينَ وَالصّٰبِرٰتِ وَالْخٰشِعِينَ
وَالْخٰشِعٰتِ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقِينَ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقٰتِ وَالصَّآئِمِينَ وَالصّٰئِمٰتِ
وَالْحٰفِظِينَ فُرُوجَهُمْ وَالْحٰفِظَاتِ وَالذّٰكِرِينَ اللّٰهَ كَثِيرًا وَّالذّٰكِرٰتِ ۙ
أَعَدَّ اللّٰهُ لَهُم مَّغْفِرَةً وَّأَجْرًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٣٥﴾

Surely, Muslim men and Muslim women, believing men and believing women, devout men and devout women, truthful men and truthful women, patient men and patient women, humble men and humble women, and the men who give sadaqah (charity) and the women who give sadaqah, and the men who fast and the women who fast, and the men who guard their private parts (against evil acts) and the women who guard (theirs), and the men who remember Allah much and the women who remember (Him) ---- for them, Allah has prepared forgiveness and a great reward. [35]

Commentary

The Qur'ānic addresses in masculine gender normally include women : The Wisdom behind it

In the usual injunctions of the noble Qur'ān, though, both men and women have been included as addressees, but generally the address is made to men. Women are included there as a corollary. Everywhere, by using the words: يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا (O those who have believed) women have been addressed as being included and contained therein. This releases a

hint suggesting that all matters relating to women are shielded, concealed and curtained. In this, there is honor and esteem for them. Particularly, if we were to ponder over the entire Qur'ān, we shall discover that no woman except Sayyidah Maryam bint 'Imran has been referred to by her personal name. Instead, when comes the occasion to mention them, they have been mentioned under the cover of their attribution to men, such as, اِمْرَأَةُ فِرْعَوْن (the woman or wife of the Pharaoh), اِمْرَأَةُ نُوح (the wife of Nūḥ) and اِمْرَأَةُ لُوط (the wife of Lūṭ). The exception of Sayyidah Maryam may perhaps be for the reason that Sayyidnā 'Isā ﷺ could have not been attributed to any father, therefore, the attribution had to be to the mother. So, it was for this attribution that her name was disclosed. And it is Allah who knows best.

Though, this style of the Qur'ān was rooted in great wisdom and expediency, yet it was natural that women should have a feeling of some sort of discomfort about it. Therefore, there are several narrations in Ḥadīth in which women have been reported to have said to the Holy Prophet ﷺ,"We see that Allah Ta'ālā mentions only men everywhere in the Qur'ān and it is them alone that He addresses. This tells us that women have almost no good in them. We are scared about our acts of 'Ibadah. May be, even that is not accepted from us (reported by al-Baghawī from the blessed wives). Similar submissions of this nature from Sayyidah Umm 'Umārah al-Anṣāriyyah appear in Tirmidhī with the authority rating of *ḥasan* (good) and from Sayyidah Asmā' bint 'Umays رضی اللہ عنہا in some other narrations. And in all these narrations, this very submission has been identified as the cause of the revelation of the verse cited above.

In these verses special mention has been made of the acceptability of their deeds to mollify the hearts of women. Here, it has been made very clear that the touchstone of acceptance and appreciation with Allah Ta'ālā is the righteousness of deeds and the spirit of obedience to Him. In this, there is no discrimination between man and woman.

The Injunction of Making the Dhikr of Allah Abundantly and Its Wisdom

Islam stands on five acts of *'Ibādah* or worship - Ṣalāh, Zakāh, Ṣiyām (fasting), Ḥajj and Jihād. But, there is just no injunction in the entire Qur'ān that commands any act of *'Ibadah* from out of these to be done

abundantly. However, the doing of the Dhikr (remembrance) of Allah (by heart or tongue) abundantly has been ordered in several verses of the Holy Qur'ān as in Sūrah Al-Anfal (8:45) and Sūrah Al-Jumu'ah (62:10) while in the present verse of Sūrah Al-Aḥzāb it was said: وَالذّٰكِرِيْنَ اللّٰهَ كَثِيْرًا وَّالذّٰكِرٰتِ (and the men remembering Allah much and the remembering women - 35).

What is the wisdom behind it? To begin with, it can be said that the Dhikr of Allah is the essential spirit of all acts of worship as it appears in a narration of Sayyidnā Mu'ādh Ibn Anas ﷺ. Someone asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ,"Who from among the Mujahidin deserves the best of returns?" He said, "One who makes the Dhikr of Allah most abundantly." It was asked again, "Who from among the fasting is most reward-worthy?" He said, "One who makes the Dhikr of Allah most abundantly." Then, similar questions were asked about Ṣalāh, Zakāh, Ḥajj and Ṣadaqah. Every time he said: 'One who makes the Dhikr of Allah most abundantly,' that is, he or she is more deserving of the reward (reported by Ahmad, from Ibn Kathir)

Secondly, it is the easiest of all acts of 'Ibadah. The Shari'ah too has placed no condition for it. Be it with *wuḍū'* or without, be it lying, sitting, or walking, the Dhikr of Allah can be done at all times. It demands no hard labor from anyone nor does it require any formal free time. Yet, so great is the effect and benefit of the Dhikr of Allah that, through it, even worldly chores transform into worship and religious acts. The prayers that are made before and after eating, on going out and on coming back, before travel, in travel and on returning home, and before and after starting a business have all been taught to us by the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The outcome of this enormous treasure of prophetic prayers is that no Muslim should do anything at any time while he or she may be heedless toward or negligent of Allah. And should one make it a point to recite these prayers as part of what he or she has to do in life and its work, then, *dunyā* becomes *dīn*,i.e. worldly duties start releasing the fragrance of faith, a wonderful experience indeed.

Verses 36 - 39

وَمَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ وَّلَا مُؤْمِنَةٍ اِذَا قَضَى اللّٰهُ وَرَسُوْلُهٗٓ اَمْرًا اَنْ يَّكُوْنَ

لَهُمُ الْخِيَرَةُ مِنْ اَمْرِهِمْ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّعْصِ اللّٰهَ وَ رَسُوْلَهٗ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلٰلًا مُّبِيْنًا ﴿۳۶﴾ وَاِذْ تَقُوْلُ لِلَّذِىْٓ اَنْعَمَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَاَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِ اَمْسِكْ عَلَيْكَ زَوْجَكَ وَاتَّقِ اللّٰهَ وَتُخْفِىْ فِىْ نَفْسِكَ مَا اللّٰهُ مُبْدِيْهِ وَتَخْشَى النَّاسَ ۚ وَاللّٰهُ اَحَقُّ اَنْ تَخْشٰهُ ؕ فَلَمَّا قَضٰى زَيْدٌ مِّنْهَا وَطَرًا زَوَّجْنٰكَهَا لِكَىْ لَا يَكُوْنَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ حَرَجٌ فِىْٓ اَزْوَاجِ اَدْعِيَآئِهِمْ اِذَا قَضَوْا مِنْهُنَّ وَطَرًا ؕ وَكَانَ اَمْرُ اللّٰهِ مَفْعُوْلًا ﴿۳۷﴾ مَا كَانَ عَلَى النَّبِىِّ مِنْ حَرَجٍ فِيْمَا فَرَضَ اللّٰهُ لَهٗ ؕ سُنَّةَ اللّٰهِ فِى الَّذِيْنَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ ؕ وَكَانَ اَمْرُ اللّٰهِ قَدَرًا مَّقْدُوْرَا ﴿۳۸﴾ الَّذِيْنَ يُبَلِّغُوْنَ رِسٰلٰتِ اللّٰهِ وَيَخْشَوْنَهٗ وَلَا يَخْشَوْنَ اَحَدًا اِلَّا اللّٰهَ ؕ وَكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ حَسِيْبًا ﴿۳۹﴾

And it is not open for a believing man or a believing woman -- once Allah and His messenger have decided a thing -- that they should have a choice about their matter. And whoever disobeys Allah and His messenger, he indeed gets off the track, falling into an open error. [36] **And (remember) when you were saying to the one who was favored by Allah and favored by you," Keep your wife to your self, and fear Allah." And you were concealing in your heart what Allah was going to reveal. and you were fearing people, while Allah is more entitled to be feared by you. So, when Zaid finished his desire for her, We gave her into your marriage, so that there may not be a problem for the believers in marrying wives of their adopted sons, when they finish their desire for them. And Allah's decree had to be enforced.** [37] **There is no problem for the prophet in (doing) what Allah has prescribed for him, a customary practice of Allah in the case of those who have gone before--- And Allah's command is pre-determined by destiny----.** [38] **those who convey the messages of Allah and have awe of Him and have no awe of anyone except Allah. And Allah is sufficient to take account (of everyone).** [39]

Commentary

It has been repeatedly explained earlier that the majority of

injunctions appearing in Sūrah Al-Aḥzāb relate to the reverence, love and perfect obedience of the Holy Prophet ﷺ or to the prohibition of causing any pain to him. The verses cited above have also been revealed in connection with some incidents of this nature.

One such incident related to Sayyidnā Zayd Ibn Ḥārithah who was the slave of someone. It was during the days of Jāhiliyyah that the Holy Prophet ﷺ had bought him from the famous bazaar of 'Ukāẓ. He was still very young at that time. The Holy Prophet ﷺ had freed him after purchasing him, and further honored him by adopting him as his son as was the common practice under the Arab custom of the time and went on to bring him up. In Makkah al-Mukarramah, he was called by the name of Zayd Ibn Muḥammad ﷺ. The Qur'ān declared it to be an erroneous custom of the Jāhiliyyah and prohibited the calling of the so-called or adopted son of a person as his 'son' and ordered that he should be attributed to his real father. Revealed in this connection were verses that have appeared earlier within this Sūrah: ادْعُوهُمْ لِآبَائِهِمْ (Call them by (the name of) their (real) fathers - 5) After the revelation of these injunctions, the noble Ṣaḥābah abandoned the practice of calling him by the name of Zayd Ibn Muḥammad ﷺ and started attributing him to his father, Ḥārithah.

A subtle point

Not even the name of the greatest of the great Ṣaḥābī - of course, except that of the blessed prophets - was ever mentioned throughout the Qur'ān with the sole exception of Sayyidnā Zayd Ibn Ḥārithah! Some respected elders while describing the wisdom behind it have said that the attribution of his parentage to the Holy Prophet ﷺ when severed under the injunction of the Qur'ān had him deprived of a great personal honor. However, Allah Ta'ālā had it compensated by mentioning him in the Qur'ān by name. Thus, the word: زَيْد (Zayd), being a word of the Qur'ān, has its own distinct status. On every letter of this word, in accordance with the promise in Ḥadīth, ten good deeds are recorded in the Book of Deeds. So, when his name is recited in the Qur'ān, the reciter gets thirty good deeds in return just for pronouncing his name!

Even the Holy Prophet ﷺ used to give him respect. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها says, 'Whenever he has sent him on a military expedition, it is invariably him that he has made the commander of the forces.' (Ibn Kathīr)

A lesson to remember

This, in a nutshell, was the reality of slavery at the advent of Islam when slaves were educated and trained till they became achievers and whoever from them proved his class and capability was given the rank of leaders.

When Zayd Ibn Ḥārithah grew to be a young man, the Holy Prophet ﷺ chose Sayyidah Zainab bint Jaḥsh, the daughter of his paternal aunt for marriage with him. A formal proposal of marriage was sent. Since Sayyidnā Zayd was branded with the conventional label of being a freed slave, Sayyidah Zainab and her brother, 'Abdullah Ibn Jaḥsh rejected this proposal on the basis that they were nobler than him in terms of family and lineage.

Revealed upon this incident was the verse: مَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ وَّلَا مُؤْمِنَةٍ (And it is not open for a believing man or a believing woman - 36). The instruction given there is: When the Holy Prophet ﷺ orders someone to do something as an obligation, it becomes obligatory for that person to do it. The choice of not doing it does not remain valid under Islamic Law - even if the required act may not be obligatory or necessary in its origin. But, once he does order someone to do that, it become incumbent and obligatory on him. And should someone not do so, his or her action has been termed as open error at the end of the verse.

When Sayyidah Zainab bint Jaḥsh and her brother heard this verse, they retracted from their rejection and agreed to the proposal of marriage. Thus, the marriage was solemnized. The dower of the bride was paid by the Holy Prophet ﷺ on behalf of Sayyidnā Zayd which was ten *dīnārs* [equal to approximately 4 *tola*s of gold), sixty *dirhams* (equal to approximately 18 1/2 *tola*s of silver), one beast of burden, complete pair of ladies dress, 15 *mudd* (approximately 25 kilos) of flour and 10 *mudd* (approximately 5 kilos) of dates (Ibn Kathīr). The well-known event in the background of the revelation of this verse is, according to the majority of commentators, no other but this very account of the marriage of Sayyidah Zainab bint Jaḥsh (Ibn Kathīr, Qurṭubī and Maẓharī).

Ibn Kathīr and some other commentators have also reported two additional events of this nature. There too, it has been said that the cited verse has been revealed in the background of those events. One of these

events is about Sayyidnā Julaibīb ﷺ whose proposal to marry the daughter of an Anṣārī Ṣaḥābī was turned down by the father and his family. When this verse was revealed, they agreed and the marriage was solemnized. The Holy Prophet ﷺ made a *du'ā'* (prayer)for extended means of livelihood for them. The noble Companions say that Allah had placed such *barakah* in their home that it was known to be the most generously kept home of Madīnah āṭ-Ṭayyibah. Later, Sayyidnā Julaibīb ﷺ met with his *shahadah* in a Jihād. The Holy Prophet ﷺ bathed and shrouded his body with his own blessed hands.

A similar event relating to Umm Kulthūm bint 'Uqbah Ibn Abī Mu'aiṭ has been reported in Ḥadīth narrations (Ibn Kathīr, Qurṭubī) and there is no contradiction in them. It is possible that several events of this nature may have been the cause of the revelation of the verse.

The Injunction to consider the principle of كفو (*kuf'*) in marriage

The reason why Sayyidah Zainab bint Jaḥsh and her brother 'Abdullah had initially rejected the proposal of marriage with Sayyidnā Zayd Ibn Ḥārithah was that the two of them had no familial and lineal homogeneity, which is desirable even in the sight of the Shari'ah. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said that girls should be married in their كفو (*kuf'*: equal, alike, matching) (to be explained later). Therefore, a question arises here as to why the excuse of Sayyidah Zainab and her brother was not accepted in this case?

The answer is that the equality, rather equalness (كفاءت :*kafā'ah*) and likeness of spouses in their religion is certainly incumbent and necessary for the validity of the marriage. The marriage of any Muslim girl with any disbeliever is not *ḥalāl* (lawful) under the consensus of the Muslim *ummah* - even if the girl agrees to it. The reason is that this is not simply the right of a woman which may be dropped at her pleasure. Instead, it is the right of Allah and a Divinely imposed duty. On the contrary, equality of the spouses in financial and lineal status is the right of the girl and in the matter of lineal equality, the guardians too have right alongwith the girl. If a sane and adult girl, despite being from a wealthy family, were to drop her right by agreeing to marry some pauper, the choice is hers. And in lineal equality, if the girl and her guardians, all of them, abandon this right for the sake of some other major expedient consideration and agree to the proposal of marriage from a person who is lesser than them in

terms of lineage and family status, then, they have the right to do so. In fact, should this be in view of higher religious consideration, the act of surrendering this right is most desirable and praiseworthy. It is for this reason that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has, on several occasions, recommended that this right should be ignored and marriage should be solemnized because of higher and more beneficial religious considerations.

And clear indicators set forth in the noble Qur'ān prove that the right of the Holy Prophet ﷺ on the men and women of his ummah is more than that of anyone else. In fact, it is more than that of their own self - as the Qur'ān says: اَلنَّبِیُّ اَوْلٰی بِالْمُؤْمِنِیْنَ مِنْ اَنْفُسِهِمْ that is, 'The Prophet is closer to the believers than their own selves - 33:6.' Therefore, in the case of Sayyidah Zainab and her brother, 'Abdullah, when the Holy Prophet ﷺ advised them to ignore their right to lineal equality and ordered them to agree to the marriage with Sayyidnā Zayd Ibn Ḥārithah, it was their duty to bypass their personal opinion and their own rights in the face of this prophetic order. Therefore, it was on this refusal from them that this injunction of the Qur'ān was revealed.

As for the lineal consideration in marriage, one may ask when it was worthy of consideration in the sight of the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself, why would he himself not go by it? The answer to this doubt is already clear from the earlier submission, that is, this consideration is worth surrendering in favour of other higher and more beneficial religeous considerations. During the blessed period of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, several marriages were solemnized among non-equals (*ghayr-kuf')* as based on these very kinds of beneficial religeous considerations which do not violate the principle.

The Issue of Equality in marriage (*Kafā'ah*)

Marriage (*nikāḥ*) is a matter in which the absence of homogeneity in the temperaments of the spouses disturbs the purpose of marriage, disturbs the process of fulfilling each other's rights and breeds mutual disputes. Therefore, the Sharī'ah has ordered that *kafā'ah* (mutual likeness) should be taken into consideration. But, it never means that a man of high family background starts taking a man from a family lesser than him as low and mean. In Islam, the criterion of low and high is based on Taqwā and love for one's faith. Whoever does not have it, no matter how noble his family is, he yet has no status in the sight of Allah.

So, this order to take *kafā'ah* (mutual equality) into consideration in marriages has been given only to keep the management of matters smooth and straight.

In a Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said that the *nikāḥ* (marriage) of girls should invariably be through their guardians (that is, it is not appropriate even for a pubescent girl that she settles the transaction of her *nikāḥ* (marriage) all by herself. Modesty demands that this matter should be handled by her parents and guardians). And he said that the *nikāḥ* of girls should invariably be solemnized within their *kuf'* (equal, like). Though, the authority of this Ḥadīth is weak but, with the support from the reports and sayings of the noble Ṣaḥābah, it becomes worth being used as an argument. In Kitāb ul-'Āthār, Imam Muḥammad has reported Sayyidnā 'Umar saying: "I shall issue an operative order that no girl from some high and recognized family should be given in marriage to another having a lesser status." Similarly, Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا and Sayyidnā Anas رضی اللہ عنہ have also stressed that *kafā'ah* (likeness) should be taken into consideration in *nikāḥ* (marriage) - as reported from several authorities. Imām Ibn Humām has also written about it in details in Fatḥ al-Qadīr.

Hence, the outcome is that the consideration of *kafā'ah* (equalness and likeness) in *nikāh* (marriage) is desirable in religion, so that the spouses live in accord and harmony. But, should some other important consideration, more important than this *kafā'ah*, come up, then, it is permissible for the woman and her guardians that they surrender this right of theirs and marry in *ghayr kuf'*, that is, other than equal and like. Particularly so, when there is some religeous consideration in sight - if so, it is better and more merit worthy to do so, as proved from several events pertaining to the noble Ṣaḥābah. Incidentally, from this we also know that these events do not negate the basic premise of the issue of *kafā'ah*. Allah knows best.

The Second Event

As ordered by the Holy Prophet ﷺ, the marriage of Sayyidah Zainab bint Jaḥsh رضی اللہ عنہا was solemnized with Sayyidnā Zayd Ibn Ḥārithah رضی اللہ عنہ. But, their temperaments did not match and merge with each other. Sayyidnā Zayd used to complain about the sharpness of her tongue, the airs she assumed because of her inborn lineal nobility and her failure to

listen to him. On the other side, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was informed through revelation that Zayd would divorce her whereafter she would be married to him. On a certain day, Sayyidnā Zayd presented these very complaints before the Holy Prophet ﷺ and showed his intention to divorce her. The Holy Prophet ﷺ had, though, come to know through Divine revelation that things would transpire in a way that Zayd would divorce her after which she would be married to him, but it was for two reasons that he stopped Sayyidnā Zayd from giving a divorce. Firstly, because giving a divorce, though permissible in the Shari'ah of Islam, it is not desirable. In fact, it is the most detested and repugnant of things permissible - and the happening of something as a creational (*Takwīnī*) imperative does not affect the operative religio-legal order (*al-ḥukm at-tashrī'ī*). Secondly, also crossing his blessed heart there was the thought: If Zayd were to give divorce and Zainab were to be married to him consequently, the Arabs would, very much in line with their custom of the Jāhiliyyah, throw taunts on him that he had married the wife of his son. Although, the Qur'ān has already demolished this custom of Jāhiliyyah in the previous verse of this very Sūrah Al-Aḥzāb, following which there was no danger for a believer, even no scruple about it. But disbelievers, who reject the authority of the Qur'ān itself, would still come out with their taunts because of their pagan custom of taking an adopted son as the real son in all aspects of the Law. This very apprehension also became the cause of his prohibiting Sayyidnā Zayd from divorcing his wife. Revealed thereupon was an endearing reprimand from Allah Ta'ālā in the following verses of the Qur'ān:

وَاِذْ تَقُوْلُ لِلَّذِیْٓ اَنْعَمَ اللّٰهُ عَلَیْهِ وَاَنْعَمْتَ عَلَیْهِ اَمْسِکْ عَلَیْکَ زَوْجَکَ وَاتَّقِ اللّٰهَ
وَتُخْفِیْ فِیْ نَفْسِکَ مَا اللّٰهُ مُبْدِیْهِ وَتَخْشَی النَّاسَ ۚ وَاللّٰهُ اَحَقُّ اَنْ تَخْشٰهُ ؕ

And (remember) when you were saying to the one who was favored by Allah and favored by you," Keep your wife to your self, and fear Allah." And you were concealing in your heart what Allah was going to reveal, and you were fearing people, while Allah is more entitled to be feared by you. (33:37)

The 'one favored' referred to here means Sayyidnā Zayd and the first favour bestowed on him by Allah was that he was made a Muslim and secondly, that he was given the honor of staying in the company of the Messenger of Allah. As for the favour done to him by the Holy Prophet

ﷺ, the first thing he did was that he gave him his freedom from slavery. Secondly, he favored him by grooming and training him under his personal charge, he made him into a person who was respected even by the greatest of the great among the Ṣaḥābah. Onwards from here appears what he said to Sayyidnā Zayd: اَمۡسِکۡ عَلَیۡکَ زَوۡجَکَ وَاتَّقِ اللّٰہَ (Keep your wife to your self and fear Allah). It means: 'Hold your wife in your bond of marriage, and do not divorce her and fear Allah.' The order to fear Allah at this place could also be taken to mean that divorce is a detested and repugnant act from which he should abstain. And it could also be taken in the sense that once he decides to hold her in his *nikāḥ,* let not his temperamental distaste become a cause of falling short in the fulfillment of her due rights. What the Holy Prophet ﷺ said was correct and sound in its place. But, after having learnt about the event as it would transpire through Divine revelation and after the intention of *nikāḥ* with Sayyidah Zainab having emerged in his heart, this advice of not divorcing given to Sayyidnā Zayd had remained at the level of a sort of formal expression of good wishes - something not appropriate to the station of a messenger of Allah, particularly so because, alongwith it, included therein was the apprehension of taunts from the people. Therefore, in the cited verse, the admonition was revealed in the words which mean, 'you were concealing in your heart what Allah was going to reveal.' When the information about his marriage with Sayyidah Zainab was conveyed to him from Allah and the intention of marriage had already crossed his heart, then, the act of hiding this intention and indulging in such formal remarks was not appropriate to his station. As for the apprehension of taunts from people, it was said, 'and you were fearing people, while Allah is more entitled to be feared by you - (37). In other words, 'when you knew that this thing is going to take place as a matter destined by Allah Ta'ālā - without there being any apprehension or danger of His displeasure in that case - then, simply because of the apprehension of taunts from people, such remarks were not appropriate.'

The details of this event appearing above have all been taken from Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr, Qurṭubī and Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī. As for the particular *tafsīr* of the verse: تُخۡفِیۡ فِیۡ نَفۡسِکَ مَا اللّٰہُ مُبۡدِیۡہِ (you were concealing in your heart what Allah was going to reveal - 37) that is, 'the thing that he kept to himself was the intention that should Zayd give the divorce, he would

marry her in accordance with the Divine decree' - this *tafsir* was reported by Tirmidhī, Ibn Abī Ḥātim and other Ḥadīth experts from a narration of Sayyidnā 'Alī Ibn Ḥusain Zain ul-'Ābidīn. Its words are as follows:

اَوحَی اللّٰهُ تَعَالٰی اِلَیهِ صَلَّی اللّٰهُ عَلَیهِ وَسَلَّمَ اَنَّ زَینَبَ سَیُطَلِّقُهَا زَیدٌ وَّیَتَزَوَّجُهَا بَعدَه، عَلَیهِ الصَّلٰوۃُ وَالسَّلَامُ (روح از حکیم ترمذی)

> Allah Ta'ālā had informed the Holy Prophet ﷺ through revelation that Zainab is going to be divorced by Zayd and after that she was to be married to him - Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī from Tirmidhī.

And Ibn Kathīr has reported the following words with reference to Ibn Abī Ḥātim:

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ اَعلَمَ نَبِیَّه، اَنَّهَا سَتَکُونُ مِن اَزوَاجِه قَبلَ اَن یَّتَزَوَّجَهَا فَلَمَّا اَتَاهُ زَیدٌ لِیَشکُوهَا اِلَیهِ قَالَ اِتَّقِ اللّٰهَ وَاَمسِک عَلَیکَ زَوجَکَ فَقَالَ اَخبَرتُکَ اِنِّی مُزَوِّجُکَهَا وَتُخفِی فِی نَفسِکَ مَا اللّٰهُ مُبدِیهِ،

> Allah Ta'ālā had made His prophet know that she (Sayyidah Zainab) will also become one of his blessed wives. After that, when Zayd came to him with a complaint against her, he said, 'Fear Allah, keep your wife, do not divorce her.' Thereupon, Allah Ta'ālā said, 'I had made it known to you that I shall have her married to you, and you were concealing in your heart the thing that Allah was going to disclose.'

The majority of commentators - Zuhrī, Bakr Ibn al-'Alā', al-Qushairī and Qāḍī Abū Bakr Ibn al-'Arabī - have adopted this very *tafsir*, that is, the mention of the thing he was keeping to himself was but this intention of marriage under Divine revelation. Counter to this there are narrations in which the words," and you were concealing in your heart" have been explained as love for Zainab. About this *tafsīr*, Ibn Kathīr has said, 'we did not like to mention these narrations as none of these is sound.'

Then the words of the Qur'ān themselves lend support to this very *tafsīr* mentioned above on the authority of Sayyidnā Zain ul-'Ābidīn because, in this verse, Allah Ta'ālā has Himself said very clearly that the thing hidden in the heart was what Allah Ta'ālā is going to disclose - and the thing that Allah Ta'ālā disclosed in the next verse (37) is *nikah* or marriage with Sayyidah Zainab as said in: زَوَّجْنٰکَهَا (We gave her into your marriage -37) (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī)

To protect oneself against taunts thrown by people is praiseworthy unless it affects some objective of the Shari'ah

A question arises here as to why the Holy Prophet ﷺ chose to conceal this matter which became the cause of Divine displeasure only to avoid the taunts of a hostile people? To answer that, it can be said that there is an essential general rule in this matter which stands proved from the Qur'ān and Sunnah. According to this rule, when doing an act may cause misunderstanding among people or may invite their taunts, then, in order to protect the faith of people and save them from the sin of throwing taunts, it is permissible to avoid that act, subject to the condition that this act itself should not be one of the objectives of the Shari'ah, and no religeous injunction of *ḥalāl* and *ḥarām* is related with it - even though, the act in itself be praiseworthy. In this matter, a precedent exists in the Ḥadīth and Sunnah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ who said: When the Baytullah was constructed during the period of Jāhiliyyah, several things have been done contrary to the original structure laid out by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm ﷺ. First of all, some part of Baytullah was left outside the constructed area. Then, there were two doors for people to enter inside the Baytullah in the original foundational plan of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm ﷺ, one towards the East and another towards the West because of which there used to be no difficulty with the entry in and exit from Baytullah. The people of the Jāhiliyyah made two unwarranted changes in it. They blocked the Western door totally and raised the Eastern door which used to be at ground level so high that no one could enter inside it without the help of a ladder. The purpose was to let only those they permitted go in.

The Holy Prophet ﷺ said: 'Had there been no danger of throwing neo-Muslims into misunderstanding, I would have raised the Baytullah once again in accordance with the Abrahimic foundation.' This Ḥadīth is present in all authentic books. From this we know that it was to save people from misunderstanding that the Holy Prophet ﷺ abandoned this intention of his, an intention which was, otherwise, praiseworthy in the light of the Sharī'ah. And against this there came no admonition from Allah which also shows that this conduct of his was acceptable with Him. But, this matter of reconstructing the Baytullah in accordance with the Abrahimic foundation was not something among the objective of Shari'ah, nor something relating to the precepts of *ḥalāl* and *ḥarām*.

As for the event of the marriage of Sayyidah Zainab رضى الله عنها, there was an Islamic legal objective to be achieved therewith, that is, to refute an evil custom of the Jāhiliyyah and to dispel, practically and openly, the erroneous notion of marriage being unlawful with the divorced wife of an adopted son. The reason is that eradication of wrong customs, dragging on and on among peoples for ages, becomes actually possible only when it is implemented practically and demonstrated openly. The Divine command had unfolded to fulfill this objective in a perfect manner in the case of the marriage of Sayyidah Zainab رضى الله عنها. On the basis of this deposition, the apparent dichotomy between the abandonment of the reconstruction of Baytullah and the implementation of the marriage of Sayyidah Zainab as Divinely ordained stands resolved, and answered.

And it seems that the Holy Prophet ﷺ took the oral communication of this injunction which has appeared in the earlier verses of Sūrah Al-Aḥzāb (Verses 4 & 5) as sufficient for declaring the law, while the need and wisdom of its practical demonstration escaped his attention. Therefore, he let it remain concealed despite the knowledge and intention. Allah Ta'ālā put it right and said: لِكَىْ لَا يَكُوْنَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ حَرَجٌ فِىْٓ اَزْوَاجِ اَدْعِيَآئِهِمْ اِذَا قَضَوْا مِنْهُنَّ وَطَرًا (so that there may not be a problem for the believers in marrying wives of their adopted sons, when they finish their desire for them - 37). It means: We gave Zainab in marriage to you so that Muslims do not have to face any practical difficulty in marrying the divorced wives of adopted sons.

And the statement: زَوَّجْنٰكَهَا literally means: 'We solemnized her *nikah* with you' or 'We gave her into your marriage.' This tells us that Allah Ta'ālā blessed this *nikāḥ* with such distinction that He Himself solemnized it - which makes it exempt from the usual conditions of *nikāḥ* or marriage. And it could also mean : 'We gave the command for this *nikāḥ*, now you marry her in accordance with the Islamic rules and conditions.' Some of the commentators have preferred the first probability while some others have gone by the second.

As for the saying of Sayyidah Zainab رضى الله عنها before other women, "Your *nikāḥ* was done by your parents. My *nikāḥ* was done by Allah Ta'ālā Himself on the heavens," which appears in Ḥadīth narrations, it turns out to be true both ways. Under the first probability, it is very clear while the other one too is not contrary to it.

Prefacing an answer to doubts and objections

The opening sentence of verse 38: سُنَّةَ اللّٰهِ فِى الَّذِيْنَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ ۚ وَكَانَ اَمْرُاللّٰهِ قَدَرًا مَّقْدُوْرًا (a customary practice of Allah in the case of those who have gone before--- And Allah's command is pre-determined by destiny - 38) is a preface to doubts to be encountered in the wake of this marriage, particularly about why so much concern was shown in the case of this marriage despite there being other wives in the household. It was said: 'This is a *sunnah* of Allah (His customary practice not restricted to Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ. It has continued to be so in the case of earlier prophets as well, that is, under the dictate of beneficial religeous considerations, permission was given for multiple marriages. Well recognized among them are Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام and Sayyidnā Sulaiman عليه السلام. Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام had one hundred wives in his *nikāḥ* and Sayyidnā Sulaiman عليه السلام, three hundred. Now, if permission came for the Holy Prophet ﷺ to have several marriages under beneficial religeous considerations - this *nikāḥ* being included therein - why should it be taken as something far-fetched? Neither is it contrary to the dignity and status of a prophet and messenger of Allah, nor against the norms of *zuhd* and *taqwā*. In the last sentence, it was also said that the matter of *nikāḥ* (marriage) too, like that of *rizq* or sustenance, is Divinely decided as to who will be married to whom. That which is written in the eternal destiny has to occur. In this event relating to Sayyidnā Zayd رضي الله عنه and Sayyidah Zainab رضى الله عنها, the factors of their mutual temperamental difference, the displeasure of Sayyidnā Zayd and then his resolve to divorce her were all chains of this very creational and destined imperative.

Mentioned next are particular attributes of the prophets عليهم السلام about whom we have learnt a while ago that they were permitted to have several wives in earlier times. It was said: اَلَّذِيْنَ يُبَلِّغُوْنَ رِسٰلٰتِ اللّٰهِ (those who convey the messages of Allah and have awe of Him and have no awe of anyone except Allah - 39), that is, all these esteemed prophets, may peace be upon them, convey the messages of Allah to their respective communities without fear of anyone.

A wise consideration

Perhaps, in this, there may be a hint towards the wisdom behind the multiplicity of marriages allowed to the noble prophets عليهم السلام in that

all their sayings and doings must necessarily reach their communities, while being men, they spend a substantial part of their time in the section of the house where women and children live. During this time, if there comes a revelation or the prophet himself gives some order or does something, it all becomes a property held by their wives in trust on behalf of the community which can be transferred to it through wives alone. Other alternates are not free of difficulties. Therefore, should prophets have several wives, it would become easier to convey accounts of their words and deeds and their personal character in family life. Allah knows best.

The second attribute of the noble prophets has been described as: وَيَخْشَوْنَهٗ وَلَا يَخْشَوْنَ اَحَدًا اِلَّا اللّٰهَ (and have awe of Him and have no awe of anyone except Allah - 39). It means that these prophets keep fearing Allah and fear none but Allah. It is also included there that they, if appointed to preach something by practicing it as based on beneficial religeous consideration, never fall short in it - and if some people throw taunts at them for doing so, they do not fear it.

A doubt and its answer

Here, while mentioning the prophets, it has been said that they do not fear anyone except Allah. But, in the verse previous to it while referring to the Holy Prophet ﷺ it was said: تَخْشَى النَّاسَ (you fear people - 37). How would this be correct? The answer is that, in the cited verse, this matter of prophets not fearing anyone other than Allah has been mentioned in connection with the conveying of Divine messages while the Holy Prophet ﷺ, faced the fear of being taunted in a matter which was obviously of a worldly nature. It had nothing to do with his mission and prophethood. But, as soon as it became clear to him from the cited verses that this marriage too was a part of the practical aspect of his mission and prophethood, no fear of taunts, thereafter, from anyone stopped him from doing what he had to. And this marriage took place despite the objections raised by many disbelievers - which they still keep doing.

Verse 40

مَا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ اَبَآ اَحَدٍ مِّنْ رِّجَالِكُمْ وَلٰكِنْ رَّسُوْلَ اللّٰهِ وَخَاتَمَ النَّبِيّٖنَ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ بِكُلِّ شَیْءٍ عَلِيْمًا ﴿٤٠﴾

Muḥammad is not a father of any of your men, but he is a messenger of Allah and the last of the prophets. And Allah is Knowledgeable of every thing. [40]

Commentary

The verse quoted above refutes the contention of those people who, in accordance with the custom of the days of ignorance, used to call Sayyidnā Zayd Ibn Harithah ﷺ as son of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and used to taunt at the *nikah* (marriage) of the Holy Prophet ﷺ with Sayyidah Zainab رضى الله عنها , after she had been divorced by Sayyidnā Zayd Ibn Harithah ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ had married his son's wife. It was enough to say in refutation that the father of Sayyidnā Zayd ﷺ is not the Holy Prophet ﷺ but Harithah ﷺ. But in order to emphasis the matter, the statement has been generalized in the following words: (مَا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ اَبَا اَحَدٍ مِّنْ رِّجَالِكُمْ) (Muḥammad ﷺ is not a father of any of your men). The sense is that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has no son at all. How can it be asserted against him that he has a son and that his divorced wife is forbidden to him because of being his son's wife?

A brief expression for this statement could have been مَا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ اَبَا اَحَدٍ مِّنْكُمْ(Muḥammad is not a father of any of you). But the wise Qur'ān, by adding the word (رجال) (any of your men) has removed a possible objection that the Holy Prophet ﷺ is father of four sons - three sons Qāsim, Ṭayyib and Ṭāhir ﷺ born to Sayyidah Khadijah رضى الله عنها and Ibrāhīm ﷺ born to Sayyidah Mariyah al- Qibṭiyyah رضى الله عنها but all of them died during childhood and none of them reached manhood. It can also be said that at the time of revelation of this verse, none of his sons was alive, because Qāsim ﷺ, Ṭayyib and Ṭāhir had died, while Ibrāhīm ﷺ was not born at that time.

Although the objection of the opponents had been adequately replied by the above sentence, yet in order to remove other doubts as well, it is stated وَلٰكِنْ رَّسُوْلَ اللّٰهِ (but a messenger of Allah). The word لكن *lakin* (but) is used in Arabic language to remove any doubt that could be raised about the preceding statement. In this case, a doubt could be raised against the negation of the statement that the Holy Prophet ﷺ is not a father of any one. One could say that every prophet and messenger is the father of every man and women of his Ummah, and therefore the negation of his fatherhood would be tantamount to negation of his prophethood. This

doubt has been dispelled by لٰكِنْ رَّسُوْلَ اللّٰهِ (but a messenger of Allah) which means that the rules regarding permissibility or impermissibility of marriage are applicable to the real and biological fatherhood that is quite different from a spiritual fatherhood enjoyed by the prophets in relation to the members of their Ummah. In this relationship these laws do not apply. Now the meaning of the full sentence is that the Holy Prophet ﷺ is not the biological father of any of the men of the Ummah but he is the spiritual father of all of them.

This is also a rejoinder for another sarcasm that some Mushriks (polytheists) had uttered against the Holy Prophet ﷺ that (Allah forbid) he is اَبْتَر (issueless) that is, since he has no male offspring to continue the lineage and to propagate his message further; after a few days the whole story would come to an end. The above words have made it clear that although he has no biological sons, yet the biological sons are not in any case essential to spread the message of prophethood or to maintain and propagate it. This function is normally performed by one's followers who are his spiritual children, and since he is the spiritual father of the whole Ummah who are there to carry forward his mission, he excels all of you in the number of his (spiritual)children.

Then, once the prophethood and messengership of the Holy Prophet ﷺ was mentioned here in which he carries a very special and distinct excellence over all other prophets, this distinctive eminence surpassing all other prophets has been indicated by the following words: وَخَاتَمَ النَّبِيّٖنَ (and the Last of the Prophets).

There are two ways to read the word خاتم Imām Ḥasan رحمه الله تعالیٰ and 'Aṣim read this word as *khatam* whereas other leading scholars read it as *khatim*. The meaning remains the same in both cases, that is, 'the last of the prophets'. In both the cases, the word means the 'last' as well as the 'seal'. The meaning of the seal is also the 'last' because the seal is applied to something when it is intended to be closed. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has been called the seal of the prophets because the process of sending new prophets has come to an end on his advent. This is the gist of the explanation given in Tafsīr Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī, Tafsīr of Al-Baydawī and Aḥmadi. The fact that both the words '*khatam*' and '*khatim*' carry the same meaning in this sentence has been affirmed by all the famous lexicons of the Arabic language.

Ibn Sidah, for example, in his Almuḥkam states that the the words *'khatim'* and *'khatimah'* with regard to everything means its end and its termination.

The gist is that both readings of the verse (*khatam* and *khatim*) convey the same meaning, that is, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has concluded the line of prophets; he has succeeded all the prophets and he is the last among all of them.

The Holy Prophet's ﷺ attribute of being the last of all the prophets demonstrates his excellence and distinction in all the perfections of prophethood and messengership, because in general, all things progress gradually reaching completion at the highest stage, and the end result is the real objective. The Holy Qur'ān has stated this clearly in اَلْيَوْمَ اَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِيْنَكُمْ وَاَتْمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِيْ (Today, I have perfected your religion for you and have completed My blessings upon you, - 15:3).

The religions of the previous prophets were also complete with regard to their respective times - none was defective. But absolute perfection was reached by the religion of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafa ﷺ which is the authority for all the ancient and modern human beings and will continue to be so up to the Doomsday.

By adding the phrase 'last of the prophets' after negating his being a father of a male boy, another point has been clarified here. The polytheists used to pass negative remarks against the Holy Prophet ﷺ by saying that he has no son, and therefore his lineage would not continue. By saying that he is the last of the prophets it is indicated that these remarks are based on ignorance, because he is the spiritual father of the whole Ummah which follows him and being the last prophet, all the races and nations to come in this world till the Doomsday would be included in his Ummah; as such the number of persons in his Ummah would be more than in other Ummah and his spiritual sons would be more than those of other prophets.

The Holy Prophet's ﷺ being the last prophet has also told us that his kindness and affection for his spiritual sons (i.e. for his Ummah) would be more than that of other prophets and he would be fully seized of the concern to identify and appreciate the needs which may arise till Doomsday because no prophet or wahy (Divine revelation) would come

after him. The prophets preceding him did not have this concern because they knew that when the nation would deviate and adopt erring ways, other prophets would come after them and reform the nation. But the Last Prophet ﷺ was seized of the concern that he should impart instructions to the Ummah for all the situations that it may face uptill Doomsday. The *aḥādīth* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ bear witness to the above, because he has told us even the names of most of those people who could be followed and who would come after him. Similarly, he has told us the details about the leaders who would misguide humanity in a manner that anybody who cares to ponder over those warnings would not have the slightest doubt left in his mind. That is why the Holy Prophet ﷺ said إنّى تَرَكْتُكُمْ عَلٰى شَرِيْعَةٍ بَيْضَآءَ لَيْلُهَا وَنَهَارُهَا سَوَاءٌ "I have left (you) on such an illuminated path where it does not make any difference whether it is day or night; there is no danger of being misguided at any time."

Another point to note in this verse is that Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafa ﷺ has been referred to in the beginning of the sentence as a rasul (messenger) and as such it would have been apparently more appropriate to use the word *khatam-ur-rusul* or *khatam-ul-mursalīn* (the last of the messengers) for him. But the wise Qur'ān has, instead, used the word *khatam-un-nabiyyin* (the last of the prophets). The reason is that according to the consensus of scholars, there is a difference between Nabī (prophet) and rasul (messenger). Nabī is that person whom Allah Ta'ālā (the Almighty) has selected for the reformation of His slaves and has honored him with His *Waḥy* (revelation), irrespective of whether He has given him a Book and a new Sharī'ah (set of revealed rules and precepts) or He has appointed him to guide the followers of a previous Nabī according to a previous Nabī's Book and Sharī'ah, like Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام was appointed to guide and reform his followers according to the Book and Sharī'ah of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام. On the contrary, the word rasul (messenger) is used exclusively for a particular Nabī who has been given a Book and a new Sharī'ah. As such Nabī is more general than Rasūl.

So the meaning of this verse is that the Holy Prophet ﷺ, being the last of the prophets, has concluded the line of prophets and no prophet will come after him, irrespective of whether he is given a Book and a Sharī'ah or he succeeds a previous Nabī to follow his Book and Sharī'ah.

It is now very clear that all kinds of prophets appointed by Allah came to an end with the Holy Prophet ﷺ; no prophet will be appointed after him.

Imām Ibn Kathīr, in his Tafsīr, says:

فَهٰذِهِ الْاٰيَةُ فِیْ اَنَّه' لَا نَبِیَّ بَعْدَه' وَاِذَا کَانَ لَا نَبِیَّ بَعْدَهٗ فَلَا رَسُوْلَ بِالطَّرِیْقِ الْاَوْلٰی، لِاَنَّ مَقَامَ الرِّسَالَةِ اَخَصُّ مِنْ مَّقَامِ النُّبُوَّةِ، فَاِنَّ کُلَّ رَسُوْلٍ نَبِیٌّ وَّلَا یَنْعَکِسُ، بِذٰلِکَ وَرَدَتِ الْاَحَادِیْثُ الْمُتَوَاتِرَةُ عَنْ رَّسُوْلِ اللّٰهِ صَلَّی اللّٰهُ عَلَیْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مِنْ حَدِیْثِ جَمَاعَةٍ مِّنَ الصَّحَابَةِ.

"This verse is the unambiguous proof of the belief that there would be no Nabī after the Holy Prophet ﷺ and since there would be no Nabī , there is no question of there being any rasul after him because Nabī is a general term and rasul is particular. And this is the belief which is evidenced by mutawatir *aḥādīth* which have reached us through the reports of a very large number of the Noble Companions ؓ."

The Literal explanation of this verse has been given here in considerable detail because one imposter by the name of Mirzā Qadiyānī, considering this verse to be a hindrance in his way, has distorted the meanings of the verse and has introduced a host of conjectures in its explanation. The foregoing, al-Hamdulillah, is a befitting reply.

The Issue of Termination of Prophethood

That the Holy Prophet ﷺ was the last of the prophets who has sealed and thus terminated prophethood, and that no other prophet is to be appointed after him and every claimant to prophethood is a liar and an infidel are well-settled issues on which there has been complete unanimity and consensus right from the days of the noble companions ؓ upto the date. Therefore there was no need for a lengthy discussion on this subject. But the Qadiyānī sect has put in a lot of effort to create doubts in the minds of Muslims on this issue; by publishing hundreds of pamphlets and books they have tried to misguide those Muslims who are not well versed in religious knowledge. So this humble author has written a book titled "*Khatm-e-Nabuwwat*" in which this issue has been fully detailed and clarified in the light of one hundred Qur'ānic verses, more than two hundred *aḥādīth* and hundreds of dictum of the classic as well as later scholars and learned people; the Qadiyānī deception and doubts created

thereby have been fully refuted. Some important points from that book are being reproduced here.

The Holy Prophet's ﷺ Being the Last Prophet does not negate the descent of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام in the last days

It is proved from many verses of the Qur'ān and from *mutawatir aḥādīth* that in the last days before the doomsday, Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام would come into this world again, kill Dajjal (the Antichrist) and bring all misguidance to an end. The detailed proofs of this fact are given in my Arabic book *'At-tasrih'*. Mirzā Qadiyānī, denying the descent of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام, has proclaimed himself to be the predicted Masiḥ with the reasoning that if reappearance of Sayyidnā 'Īsā Ibn Maryam عليها السلام who was a prophet of Israelites, is accepted, then it would negate the Holy Prophet's ﷺ being the last of the prophets.

The clear reply is that the Holy Prophet's ﷺ being the last prophet means that nobody would be appointed as a prophet after him; it does not imply that somebody who was appointed a prophet earlier would be dismissed from his prophethood or that such a prophet would not be able to return to this world. But, of course, the prophet who returns to this world for the reformation of the Ummah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ while maintaining his prophethood, would carry out the reforms in the *Ummah* in accordance with the teachings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, as clarified in authentic *aḥādīth*.

Imām Ibn Kathir, in explanation of this verse, has said:

والمراد بكونه عليه السّلام خاتمهم انقطاع حدوث وصف النبوّة فى احد مّن الثقلين بعد تحليته عليه السلام بها فى هٰذه النشأة، ولا يَقدح فى ذٰلِک ما اجمت عليه الامّة واشتهرت فيه الاخبار، ولعلها بلغت مبلغ التواتر المعنوى و نطق به الكتٰب علٰى قول ووجب الايمان به وأُكفر منكره كالفلاسفة من نزول عيسى عليه السلام آخرالزمان، لانَّه كان نبيًّا قبل ان يحلى نبيّنا صلى اللّٰه عليه وسلم بالنبوة فى هٰذه النشأة.

"The Holy Prophet ﷺ being the last of the prophets means that the office of prophethood stands terminated after him. No one would get this office after him. But it does not have any effect on the fact of the descent and reappearance of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام in the last days on which there is a consensus of the whole *Ummah* and which is proved by a large number of *aḥādīth* that

are almost mutawatir and by the Qur'ān itself according to some interpretations, because he had been given prophethood before the Holy Prophet ﷺ."

Distortion of the Meaning of Prophethood and invention of new kinds of Prophethood

This claimant of prophethood adopted a new trick to pave the way for his claim by inventing a new kind of prophethood which simply does not exist in Qur'ān and Sunnah and neither is there any proof for it, but according to him this new kind of prophethood does not negate the decree of Qur'ān regarding the termination of prophethood. Briefly, he has introduced in prophethood the concept of reincarnation, which is well known in Hinduism and other religions. His contention is that if a person is dyed in the color of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, by virtue of his complete obedience to him and by following his footsteps, his coming to this world is the coming of the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself; such a person is in fact the shadow and incarnate demonstration of none else but the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Therefore, his claim does not negate the belief in the termination of prophethood after him.

But how can this invented kind of prophethood find its way to Islamic beliefs? There is no proof of it. Besides, the belief in termination of prophethood is a basic belief of Islam and as such it has been so thoroughly clarified by the Holy Prophet ﷺ under different topics at various times that no imposter can distort it. The full details can be seen in this author's book referred to earlier, but only some necessary proofs of this belief are being presented here.

Ṣaḥīḥ of Bukhārī, Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim and almost all books of Ḥadīth have reported from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه with authentic chain of narrators that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said,

ان مثلی ومثل الانبیآء من قبلی کمثل رجل بنی بیتًا فاحسنه واجمله الاموضع لبنة من زاویة، فجعل الناس یطوفون به ویعجبون له ویقولون هلاّ: وضعت هذه اللبنة؟ وانا خاتم النبیین، رواه احمد والنسائی والترمذی وفی بعض الفاظه فکنت انا سددت موضع اللبنة وختم بی البنیان

"The example of all the prophets before me and of myself is like a man has built a very strong and well decorated house in one corner wall of which space has been left vacant for one brick; people roam about in the home to see it and admire the

construction but all of them say that why did not the builder put a brick in that space also which would have completed the construction. I am that last brick (of the palace of prophethood)" and in some versions he said "I have filled up that vacant space and thus completed the palace of prophethood."

The gist of this eloquent simile is that prophethood is like a grand palace composed of Prophets ﷺ. This grand palace was complete in all respects before the Holy Prophet ﷺ except for the placement of one brick. The Holy Prophet ﷺ completed this grand palace by filling up that vacant space for one brick. Now there is no more space for any prophet or messenger. Even if it is supposed that there are other kinds of prophets and messengers, there is just no more space for them in the palace of prophethood.

In another Ḥadīth narrated by Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ؓ reported in Ṣaḥīḥs of Bukhārī, Muslim, Musnad of Aḥmad, etc., the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said:

كانت بنو اسرائيل تسوسهم الانبياء كلّما هلک نبی خلفه نبی وانه لانبی بعدی و سیکون خلفاء فیکثرون (الحدیث)

"The politics and administration of Banu Isrā'īl was being handled by the prophets themselves. When one prophet expired, another prophet would take his place. And after me there is no prophet, but of course, there would be my khulafā' (caliphs - successors) who would be numerous."

This Ḥadīth has made it clear that there would be no prophet after the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the education and instruction of the Ummah would be carried out by his Khulafā'. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has explicitly and clearly told us that there is no prophethood of any kind after him, otherwise he would have mentioned it in this Ḥadīth where he has mentioned Khulafā'.

Ṣaḥīḥs of Bukhārī and Muslim have reported a Ḥadīth narrated by Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ؓ :-

لَمْ یَبْقَ مِنَ النُّبُوَّةِ اِلاَّ الْمُبَشِّرَات

"Nothing is left of prophethood except *mubashshirat* (true dreams)".

As reported in Musnad of Aḥmad, etc., Sayyidah Ṣiddiqah 'Ā'ishah

رضى الله عنها and Sayyidah Umm Kurz al- K'abiyyah رضى الله عنها have stated that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said:

لايبقى بعدى من النبوة شئ الّا المبشرات، قالوا: يا رسول اللّه! وما المبشرات؟ قال: الرؤيا الصّالحة يراها المسلم او ترى له. (طبرانى، كذا فى الكنز)

"Nothing is left of prophethood after me except mubashshirat. The noble companions ؓ asked: O Holy Prophet ﷺ! What is *mubashshirat*? He replied, 'True dreams that a Muslim sees himself or somebody else sees about him."

This Ḥadīth has so explicitly told that no kind of prophethood, either one with a new law or without it, either *Ẓilli* (shadowy) or *Buruzi* (incarnate), is possible after the Holy Prophet ﷺ; people would only have *mubashshirat* (true dreams) through which they would find out a few things.

Musnad of Aḥmad and Tirmidhī carry a narration of Sayyidnā Anas Ibn Mālik ؓ wherein the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said:

إن الرسالة والنبوة قد انقطعت فلا رسول بعدى ولا نبى (رواه الترمذى وقال: هذا حديث صحيح)

"No doubt *risalah* (messengership) and nubuwwah (prophethood) stand terminated after me; after me there would neither be a *rasūl* (messenger) nor a Nabī (prophet)".

This Ḥadīth has made it clear that prophethood even without a new law is simply not there after the Holy Prophet ﷺ what to say of *zilli* or *buruzi* prophethood which are neither any form of prophethood nor are they recognized as such in Islam.

The objective is not to collect here all the *aḥādīth* pertaining to the issue of termination of prophethood; more than two hundred *aḥādīth* on this subject have been put together in my book "Khatm-e-Nabuwwat". The objective, by quoting a few of them is to advise that the categories of *ẓilli* and *buruzi* prophethood invented by Mirzā Qadiyānī is without any basis or proof, and moreover the *aḥādīth* quoted above have told explicitly that there is no kind of of prophethood whatsoever left to come after the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

That is why, right from the days of the noble companions ؓ uptill today, all the schools of Muslim *Ummah* are unanimous on the belief that there cannot be any kind of Nabī or Rasūl after the Holy Prophet ﷺ and

whoever claims to be so is a liar and denier of the Qur'ān and is a disbeliever. The first general consensus of the noble companions ﷺ had evolved on this very issue as a result of which a holy war (*jihād*) was fought with Musaylimah, the liar, the false claimant of prophethood, during the period of the first Khalīfah Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ﷺ, in which he (Musailimah) and his followers were killed.

The dictums and clarifications of the past Imāms and wise scholars of the *Ummah* are reproduced in considerable detail in the book "Khatm-e-Nabuwwat", some of them are being copied here also.

Ibn Kathir, in his tafsir, writes under this verse:

اخبر اللّٰہ تعالیٰ فی کتابہ و رسولہ اللّٰہ صلی اللّٰہ علیہ وسلّم فی السنۃ المتواترۃ عنہ أنہ لا نبی بعدہ لیعلموا ان کل من ادعی ھذا المقام بعدہ فھو کذاب افّاک دجّال ضالّ مضل. ولو تحرّق وشعبذ واتی بانواع السحر والطلاسم والنیرنجیات فکلھا محال وضلال عند اولی الالباب کما اجری اللّٰہ سُبحانہ علی ید الاسود العنسی بالیمن ومسیلمۃ الکذاب بالیمامۃ من الاحوال الفاسدۃ والاقوال الباردۃ ما علم کُلّ ذی لُبّ وفھم وحجی انھما کاذبان ضالاّن لعنھما اللّٰہ تعالیٰ وکذلک کل مدع لذٰلک الی یوم القیٰمۃ حتّی یختموا بالمسیح الدجّال. (ابن کثیر)

"Allah Ta'ālā in this Book and the Holy Prophet ﷺ in successive *aḥādīth* has informed that there is no Nabī after the Holy Prophet ﷺ so that people should know that whoever claims to be a prophet after him is a liar, a cheat, an imposter, a deviator who misguides others, no matter how many conjuring tricks he shows, magic spells he binds or talismanic wonders and sorceries he performs which are, in fact, sheer fallacies recognized as such by the people who have have knowledge and understanding. Allah Ta'ālā had let such perverse acts and utterances manifested at the hands of Aswad Al-'Ansi (claimant of prophethood) in Yemen and Musaylimah, the liar, (another claimant of prophethood) in Yamamah in a way that every intelligent and comprehending person, after hearing and seeing them, knew that both of them were liars and misguided. May Allah curse them. In the same way anyone who claims to be a prophet upto the Doomsday is a liar and an infidel and this stream of claimants of prophethood would end at Dajjal, the Anti-Christ."

Imām Ghazzali, ,while explaining the above mentioned verse and

discussing the belief in the termination of prophethood, has observed in his book *'Al-Iqtiṣād fil I'tiqād'* as follows,

وليس فيه تاويل ولا تخصيص ومن اوّله بتخصيص فكلامه من الهذيان لايمنع الحكم بتكفيره لانّه مكذّبٌ لهذا النص الذى اجمعت الامة على انه غير مأوّل ولا مخصوص .

"The entire Ummah has unanimously understood from these words and from circumstantial evidences that there will never be a prophet after him ever, nor will ever come a messenger of Allah. These words (of the verse) can neither be interpreted in any other sense, nor can their generality be restricted."

Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ in his book 'Ash-shifa', after declaring that a person who claims to prophethood after the Holy Prophet ﷺ is a liar and an infidel who does not believe in this verse, has observed as follows:

واجمعت الامة على حمل هذا الكلام على ظاهره، وانّ مفهومه المراد به دون تاويل ولا تخصيص، فلا شك فى كفر هؤلاء الطوائف كلها قطعًا اجماعًا وسمعًا.

"The Ummah holds by consensus that this discourse bears the obvious meaning and that this verse means what it says, without any other interpretation or any exception. Therefore, there is no doubt in the *kufr* (infidelity) of all those sects (who follow any claim out of prophethood) rather their *kufr* stands absolutely proved in view of the consensus of the *Ummah* and the express texts of the Qur'ān and Sunnah.

Verses 41 - 48

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اذْكُرُوا اللّٰهَ ذِكْرًا كَثِيْرًا ﴿٤١﴾ وَّسَبِّحُوْهُ بُكْرَةً وَّاَصِيْلاً ﴿٤٢﴾ هُوَ الَّذِىْ يُصَلِّىْ عَلَيْكُمْ وَمَلٰٓئِكَتُهٗ لِيُخْرِجَكُمْ مِّنَ الظُّلُمٰتِ اِلَى النُّوْرِ ؕ وَكَانَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ رَحِيْمًا ﴿٤٣﴾ تَحِيَّتُهُمْ يَوْمَ يَلْقَوْنَهٗ سَلٰمٌ ۚ وَاَعَدَّ لَهُمْ اَجْرًا كَرِيْمًا ﴿٤٤﴾ يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّبِىُّ اِنَّآ اَرْسَلْنٰكَ شَاهِدًا وَّمُبَشِّرًا وَّنَذِيْرًا ﴿٤٥﴾ وَّدَاعِيًا اِلَى اللّٰهِ بِاِذْنِهٖ وَسِرَاجًا مُّنِيْرًا ﴿٤٦﴾ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ بِاَنَّ لَهُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ فَضْلاً كَبِيْرًا ﴿٤٧﴾ وَلاَ تُطِعِ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ وَالْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ وَدَعْ اَذٰىهُمْ وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللّٰهِ ؕ

وَكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ وَكِيْلًا ﴿٤٨﴾

O those who believe, remember Allah abundantly, [41] **and proclaim His purity at morn and eve.** [42] **He is such that He and His angels send blessings to you, so that He brings you out from all sorts of darkness into Light. And He is Very-Merciful to the believers.** [43] **Their greeting, the Day they will meet Him, will be, "Salām" (Peace). And He has prepared for them a noble reward.** [44]

O prophet, We have sent you as a witness and a bearer of good news and a warner, [45] **and as one who calls (people) towards Allah with His permission, and as a luminous lamp.** [46] **And give good news to the believers that they are to receive a huge bounty from Allah.** [47] **And do not obey the infidels and the hypocrites, and just ignore any hurt (that afflicts you) from them, and place your trust in Allah. And Allah is sufficient (for you) to take care of all matters.** [48]

Commentary

Mentioned in the preceding verse was the incident of Sayyidnā Zaid ﷺ and Sayyidah Zainab رضی اللہ عنہا, and in relation to it the Holy Prophet's being the last of the prophets has been stated in the context of directions for the respect and reverence of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and saving oneself from causing any pain to him.

Further on also, the perfect attributes of the Holy Prophet ﷺ are going to be stated; his person and attributes are the greatest blessings for Muslims in this world. The instruction of remembering Allah in abundance is given in the above verse to show gratitude for those blessings.

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ has stated that there is no form of worship except ذِکْرُاللہ *dhikrullah* (remembrance of Allah) for which Allah has not fixed a limit; for example, Ṣalāh is prescribed five times a day and the number of *rak'at* are determined for each Ṣalāh; fasting throughout the month of Ramadan is determined, Ḥajj can be performed only at a particular place and at a particular time, Zakāh is prescribed once a year at a particular rate. But *dhikrullah* is a form of worship for which there is no limit or defined quantity, no particular time or period, no defined

posture or position, nor even the state of purity through ablution is required. Dhikrullah is required all the time, in all circumstances, whether one is traveling or is at home, whether one is healthy or ill, whether one is on land or at sea, whether it is day or night - *dhikrullah* is required all the time.

Therefore no excuse is acceptable for neglecting *dhikrullah* except that one may have lost his senses and become unconscious. In case of all forms of worship, other than *dhikrullah,* if one becomes unable due to illness or compelling circumstances, one is allowed reduction, brevity or exemption altogether, but in case of *dhikrullah* there are no extenuating circumstances. Therefore, no excuse is considered valid for omitting it and the merits, blessings and rewards for doing it are also numerous.

Imām Aḥmad has reported from Sayyidnā Abū ad-Darda' ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said to the noble companions ؓ, 'Should I not tell you a thing that is better than all your deeds and is most acceptable to your Lord, and which would raise your grades, and is better than giving silver and gold in charity and alms and is also better than your embarking for Jihad wherein you face and kill the enemy and the enemy kills you? The noble companions ؓ asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ about that thing. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said, ذِکْرُ اللّٰہِ عَزَّوَجَلَّ that is, remembrance of Allah, the Mightiest the Most Glorious". (Ibn Kathīr)

Imām Aḥmad and Tirmidhī also have reported that Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ؓ said that he had heard a prayer from the Holy Prophet ﷺ which he does never miss. It is the following:

اَللّٰهُمَّ اجْعَلْنِیْ اُعَظِّمُ شُکْرَکَ وَاَتَّبِعُ نَصِیْحَتَکَ وَاُکْثِرُ ذِکْرَکَ وَاَحْفَظُ وَصِیَّتَکَ

"O Allah make me so that I keep thanking You profusely, I keep obeying your instructions, I keep remembering You abundantly and I safeguard (to follow) your advice." (Ibn Kathīr)

Here the Holy Prophet ﷺ has supplicated to Allah Ta'ālā for ability to engage in dhikrullah abundantly.

A Beduin said to the Holy Prophet ﷺ that the number of good deeds, obligations in Islam are many; so please tell me something concise and comprehensive which I could hold on to firmly. The Holy Prophet ﷺ told him,

لَايَزَالُ لِسَانُکَ رَطْبًا بِذِکْرِ اللّٰہِ تَعَالٰی

That your tongue remains always wet with the *dhikr* of Allah. (Musnad Aḥmad, Ibn Kathīr)

Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd ﷺ has narrated that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said اُذْکُرُوا اللّٰہَ تَعَالٰی حَتّٰی یَقُوْلُوا مَجْنُوْنٌ "Remember Allah, the Almighty so much so that people start calling you crazy." (Ibn Kathīr from Musnad Aḥmad)

And Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar ﷺ has narrated that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said that a gathering of people wherein Allah is not mentioned would prove to be a matter of remorse on the Doomsday for those sitting therein. (Aḥmad, Ibn Kathīr)

وَسَبِّحُوْہُ بُکْرَۃً وَّاَصِیْلًا ("And proclaim His purity at morn and eve". 33:42) Here morning and evening may, metaphorically, mean all the time. Alternatively, morning and evening have been mentioned specifically to lay emphasis on carrying out *dhikrullah* during these times and to indicate that it carries more blessings - otherwise dhikrullah is neither specified nor limited to any particular time.

ھُوَ الَّذِیْ یُصَلِّیْ عَلَیْکُمْ وَمَلٰٓئِکَتُہٗ (He is such that He and His angels send blessings to you. 33:43) It means that when you have become used to *dhikrullah* in abundance and have become regular in recounting the perfections of Allah morning and evening, Allah would honor you and respect you by bestowing His Blessings and by the angels supplicating for you.

The word 'Ṣalāh' has been used in this verse for Allah Ta'ālā as well as for the angels but the applicable meaning are different. For Allah it means His bestowing blessings, and for angels who have no volition on their own, it means their supplication to Allah to bestow His blessings.

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ has stated that Ṣalāh from Allah is blessing, from angels it is prayer for forgiveness and from humans it is supplication. The word Ṣalāh carries all the three meanings.

تَحِیَّتُھُمْ یَوْمَ یَلْقَوْنَہٗ سَلٰمٌ (Their greeting, the Day they will meet Him, will be, "Salām" - 33:44). This is the explanation of the Ṣalāh that is sent to believers from Allah. It means that the day they would meet Allah, they will be respectfully addressed by Him with the word, 'Salām' i.e. (Assalamu 'alaykum) . The day of meeting Allah according to Imām

Rāghib, would be the Doomsday; some other leading exegetes say that it would be when they enter Paradise and they would receive Salām from Allah Ta'ālā as well as from the angels; and yet other scholars consider it to be the day of death when they would leave the whole world to be present before Allah as stated by Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ that when the Angel of Death goes to a believer to extract the spirit of life out of him, he gives him a message that his Lord has sent to him Salām. The word 'meeting' is true in all the three cases. Therefore there can be no objection or contradiction in the traditions, because Salām from Allah Ta'ālā is sent on all the three occasions.

Note

This verse has proved that when Muslims meet each other, their greeting should be *assalamu 'alaykum* whether from the older to the younger or from the younger to the older.

Special Attributes of the Holy Prophet ﷺ

يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ اِنَّآ اَرْسَلْنٰكَ شَاهِدًا وَّمُبَشِّرًا وَّنَذِيْرًا وَّدَاعِيًا اِلَى اللّٰهِ بِاِذْنِهٖ وَسِرَاجًا مُّنِيْرًا

O prophet, We have sent you as a witness and a bearer of good news and a warner and as one who calls (people) towards Allah with His permission, and as a luminous lamp. (33:45-46)

The text here reverts to the special perfect attributes of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Five attributes have been mentioned here - 'Shāhīd', *'mubashshir', "nadhir', da'i ila Allah'. 'sirāj munīr'*. 'Shāhīd' (a witness) means that the Holy Prophet ﷺ will be a witness of the *ummah* on the Day of Judgment according to a *ḥadīth* narrated by Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī ﷺ and reported by Bukhārī, Nasa'ī and Tirmidhī. It is mentioned in some parts of that Ḥadīth that on the Day of Judgment when Sayyidnā Nūḥ ﷺ will be presented before Allah, he will be asked whether he had conveyed Allah's Message to his Ummah. He will reply that he did. Then his Ummah will be presented and they will deny having received any message of Allah. Then Sayyidnā Nūḥ ﷺ will be asked whether he has any witness to his claim of having conveyed the message of truth, and he will reply that Muḥammad ﷺ and his Ummah are witnesses. Some narrations have it that he will present the Ummah of Muḥammad ﷺ as witness and this Ummah will give evidence in his favour. At this, the Ummah of Sayyidnā Nūḥ ﷺ will argue 'How can they, who were not even born at that time, give evidence in our case?'.

Now the Ummah of Muḥammad ﷺ will be asked to substantiate their evidence and they will answer that no doubt they were not born at that time but they were told about it by their Holy Prophet ﷺ in whom they believe and trust. At this time the Holy Prophet ﷺ will be asked to give testimony regarding the veracity of his Ummah's statement.

Briefly, the Holy Prophet ﷺ through his testimony, will confirm and verify the statement of his Ummah that, of course, he had given them that news.

Another general meaning of being a witness for the Ummah may be that the Holy Prophet ﷺ will give evidence about the good and bad deeds of all the individuals of his Ummah. And this evidence would be on the basis that the deeds of the Ummah are presented before the Holy Prophet ﷺ every morning and evening daily; some narrations state that the deeds are presented once a week. The Holy Prophet ﷺ thus recognizes each and every individual of his Ummah by their deeds and as such he will be made witness for the Ummah on the Doomsday. (Ibn al-Mubarak from Sa'id Ibn al- Musayyab, Maẓharī)

'Mubashshshir' means bearer of good news, and as such the Holy Prophet ﷺ is the announcer of the good news of Paradise for the righteous people of his *Ummah.*

'Nadhir' means the one who warns; thus the Holy Prophet ﷺ also puts the fear of Allah's punishment in the hearts of his Ummah in case they violate or disobey the injunctions of Sharī'ah.

'One who calls people to Allah' means that the Holy Prophet ﷺ calls his Ummah to believe in Allah's Being, Oneness and obedience. The act of calling towards Allah has been qualified by the phrase 'with His permission'. It means that the Holy Prophet ﷺ calls and invites people towards Allah with His permission. This condition is an indication that preaching and inviting towards Allah are very difficult tasks which cannot be performed successfully without Allah" permission and help.

سِرَاجٌ (Sirāj) means lamp and مُنِيرٌ ('Munīr') means luminous. The fifth attribute of the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been stated that he is a luminous lamp, and some are of the view that 'luminous lamp' refers here to the Qur'ān. But the context suggests that this is also an attribute of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

Qāḍī Thana'ullāh has stated in Tafsīr Maẓharī that "the Holy Prophet's ﷺ function of calling towards Allah pertains to his speech and outward acts, his attribute of being a 'luminous lamp' pertains to his blessed heart. Just as the sun illuminates the whole world, in the same way, the hearts of the faithful become illuminated by the radiant light of his heart. That is why the noble companions who were the beneficiaries of his company in this world are superior and more exalted than the whole of the Ummah, because their hearts were illuminated and graced by his heart directly; the rest of the Ummah received this radiant light indirectly through the noble companions and their successors and so on."

It can also be said that all prophets, specially the Holy Prophet ﷺ, after having passed away from this world are alive in their graves. Their life in *barzakh* (transition between death and the Day of Resurrection) is much more superior than the transit-life of common people, the reality of which is known to Allah Ta'ālā only. However due to this life, the hearts of all Muslims would keep on receiving the radiant light of his blessed heart, and the share of each individual would be in accordance with the intensity of love and reverence he has towards the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the abundance of Ṣalāh (*durud*) he offers to him.

The radiant light of the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been metaphorically described as a 'lamp', even though his inner radiance is far brighter than the sun. This is because the sun illuminates only the surface of the world, whereas his blessed heart illuminates the inside of the whole world and the hearts of the faithful. The reason for this simile appears to be that obtaining advantage from the light of a lamp is voluntary and available all the time easily, whereas approaching the sun is well-nigh impossible and its light is not available all the time.

The attributes of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, as stated in the Holy Qur'ān, are also mentioned in Torah as reported by Imām Bukhārī that Sayyidnā 'Ata' Ibn Yasar says that one day when I met Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Amr Ibn al-'As ؓ asked him to tell me the attributes of the Holy Prophet ﷺ as stated in Torah. He said, "of course, I will tell you. By Allah! some of the attributes of the Holy Prophet ﷺ mentioned in the Qur'ān are also there in Torah" And then he quoted the following extract.

اِنَّا اَرْسَلْنٰکَ شَاهِدًا وَّمُبَشِّرًا وَّنَذِيْرًا وَّحِرْزًا لِّلْاُمِّيِّيْنَ، اَنْتَ عَبْدِیْ وَرَسُوْلِیْ سَمَّيْتُکَ

الْمُتَوَكِّل، لَيْسَ بِفَظٍّ وَّلاَ غَلِيظٍ وَّلاَ سَخَّابٍ فِى الْاَسْوَاقِ وَلاَ يَدْفَعُ السَّيِّئَةَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ وَلٰكِنْ يَّعْفُوْ وَيَغْفِرُلَنْ يَّقْبِضَهُ اللّٰهُ تَعَالٰى حَتّٰى يُقِيمَ بِهِ الْمِلَّةَ الْعَوْجَآءَ بِاَنْ يَّقُوْلُوْا لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلاَّ اللّٰهُ وَيَفْتَحُ بِهٖ اَعيُنًا عُمْيًا وَّاٰذَانًا صُمًّا وَّقُلُوْبًا غُلْفًا.

"O Prophet ﷺ! We have sent you as a witness, as a bearer of glad tidings , as a warner and as a refuge and protection for the illiterate Arabs. You are My slave and messenger. I have named you *"mutawakkil'* (i.e. one who trusts in Allah). You are neither ill-tempered nor hard natured nor one who raises noise in the markets; you do not repay wickedness with wickedness, rather you forbear and forgive. Allah Ta'ālā would not recall you from the world till He has straightened out the crooked Ummah through you and they start saying *'lā ilaha illallāh'*. Allah would open up unseeing eyes, un-hearing ears and locked-up hearts through you".

The Holy Qur'ān, after attributing the above qualities to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, is asking him to carry on his functions, that is, to give the good news to the faithful that they are going to receive great bounties and mercy from Allah and not to obey the desires of the infidels and hypocrites. It was, though, not possible for the Holy Prophet ﷺ obey the infidels and the hypocrites or to give up preaching and inviting people, yet there was a chance that, in order to avoid people's sarcasm and taunts, he might have inclined to avoid marrying Sayyidah Zainab رضى الله عنها that was, in fact, a practical demonstration of the divine rule of Sharī'ah. This has been alluded to as obeying the infidels and hypocrites. He was further directed not to mind any vexation that he may receive from the infidels and hypocrites (as he did) and also not to worry about physical harm afflicted by them, but in case such a thought crosses his mind, he was directed to trust in Allah, because Allah is enough to put all matters right - He will protect him from all harms, and if an apparent harm is caused during preaching, it is a gain in reality, and is not against the promise of protection and putting things right.

Verse 49

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِذَا نَكَحْتُمُ الْمُؤْمِنٰتِ ثُمَّ طَلَّقْتُمُوْهُنَّ مِنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ تَمَسُّوْهُنَّ فَمَا لَكُمْ عَلَيْهِنَّ مِنْ عِدَّةٍ تَعْتَدُّوْنَهَا ۚ فَمَتِّعُوْهُنَّ

وَسَرِّحُوهُنَّ سَرَاحًا جَمِيلًا ﴿٤٩﴾

O those who believe, when you marry the believing women then divorce them before you have touched them, then they have no obligation of any '*iddah* (waiting period) for you that you may count. So give them (due) benefits, and release them in a pleasant manner. [49]

Commentary

Some attributes and the special eminence of the Holy Prophet ﷺ have been mentioned in the preceding verse. Some special rules that are exclusive to him in matters of marriage and divorce are intended to be mentioned in forthcoming verses in which he has a distinction over the general Ummah. But before that, a general rule regarding divorce has been mentioned as a prologue which is applicable to all Muslims in general.

There are three injunctions regarding divorce in this verse.

The first injunction is that if after *nikah* (marriage) a woman is divorced before the spouses have had full privacy الخلوة الصحيحة (Al-khalwah Aṣ-ṣaḥīḥah), then she is not liable to any period of '*iddah* (waiting period),which means that she can enter into another marriage immediately. In the present verse, 'touching' means having sexual intercourse, either actually or by presumption, because if the spouses meet together at a private place without any apprehension of interference by someone and there is nothing to prevent them from having sex, this type of privacy (Al-khalwah Aṣ-ṣaḥīḥah) carries the same legal consequences as an actual intercourse.

The second injunction is that the divorced woman should be separated gracefully and by giving some gifts to her. Giving something to a divorced woman at the time of her departure is desirable according to Sunnah, and in some cases it is compulsory as elaborated in verse 236 of Sūrah Al-Baqarah (لَاجُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ اِنْ طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَآءَ مَالَمْ تَمَسُّوْهُنَّ - There is no sin on you if you divorce women when you have not touched them. - 2:236). The use of the word '*mata*' here is perhaps based on the wisdom that this word has a wide and general meaning and is applicable to anything which may be beneficial, which includes the woman's obligatory rights,

like *mahr* (dower), etc.,which means that the dower, if not already paid, has to be paid at the time of divorce gladly; and it also includes her rights that are not compulsory, for example, a set of clothes to be gifted to her at the time of departure, which is *mustaḥab* (commendable) in respect of every divorced woman and the Qur'ān has persuaded the husband for both, the compulsory as well as commendable rights.

A leading scholar of Ḥadīth 'Abd Ibn Ḥumayd has narrated the dictum of Sayyidnā Ḥasan ﷺ that every divorced woman has to be given something as *mut'ah* whether one has had Al-khalwah Assaḥīḥah (full privacy) with her or not and whether her *mahr* (dower) was fixed or not.

Details of Mut'ah to be given at the time of Divorce

Badai', the famous book of Ḥanafī *fiqh* has mentioned that *mut'ah* of divorce means those clothes which a woman wears necessarily when going out. It includes a pair of trousers, long shirt, *shawl* and a large sheet as covering from head to feet. Clothes can be graded as high quality, medium and ordinary. Muslim jurists have determined that if both the husband and wife belong to wealthy families, the clothes have to be of high quality; if they are both poor, then the clothes should be of ordinary quality, and if one is poor and the other wealthy, then the clothes may be of medium quality.

Islam's matchless teaching in discharging social obligations gracefully

Recognition of rights and a courteous behavior towards others is restricted in common practice to relatives, friends and at the best it is extended to common people. Recognizing and discharging of the rights of opponents and foes and devising rules and regulations for their execution is a distinct feature of Islamic teachings. Although many organizations have been established in our days exclusively for the protection of human rights, and some rules and regulations have also been devised for this purpose. Huge sums of money are collected as donations from all over the world for this objective, but all of them are politically oriented and whenever they do help the suffering people, such help is not available everywhere, nor is it without a motive. It is rather given to fulfill their own political aims. And, supposing, these organizations do start functioning properly to serve the suffering humanity, the most they can do is to help when some area is affected by a devastating storm, epidemic

disease, etc. But who would know about the suffering of individuals and single persons? Who can reach them? Let us look at the matter of divorce which obviously is a result of mutual discord, anger and disharmony which usually results in the relationship which was established on the basis of extreme concord, love and affection changing to the opposite i.e combined emotions of hate enmity and revenge. The above mentioned verse of the Holy Qur'ān and many other similar verses have given such instructions to Muslims to be observed right at the time of divorce that they fully test gracefulness of behavior and courteous discharge of social obligations.The emotions keep on inciting one to take as much revenge as one can from the woman who has inflicted so much pain and agony to him that the relationship had to be terminated. But the noble Qur'ān has bound the common divorced woman to stay during the period of *'iddah* in the house of her husband; it has been made obligatory on the husband not to turn the divorced woman out of his house during the period of *'iddah* and to continue to provide her the usual daily maintenance and upkeep during that period. It has also been made desirable for the husband to give her *mut'ah* i.e. a set of clothes at the time of departure after completion of the period of *'iddah* and to release her with grace and respect. Only those women are exempt from the period of *'iddah* who have only gone through *nikah* without stepping into the husband's house, without having had true privacy, but more stress has been laid on offering *mut'ah* to them as compared to other women.

The third injunction is: (سَرِّحُوْهُنَّ سَرَاحًا جَمِيْلًا) "Release them gracefully" which has imposed a restriction on the husband not to say anything harsh even verbally nor to indulge in taunts or sarcasms.

Only that person can honor the rights of the opponents during confrontation who can control his emotions and passions. All the teachings of Islam have laid due emphasis on this principle.

Verses 50 - 52

يٰۤاَيُّهَا النَّبِىُّ اِنَّآ اَحْلَلْنَا لَكَ اَزْوَاجَكَ الّٰتِىْۤ اٰتَيْتَ اُجُوْرَهُنَّ وَمَا
مَلَكَتْ يَمِيْنُكَ مِمَّآ اَفَآءَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْكَ وَبَنٰتِ عَمِّكَ وَبَنٰتِ عَمّٰتِكَ
وَبَنٰتِ خَالِكَ وَبَنٰتِ خٰلٰتِكَ الّٰتِىْ هَاجَرْنَ مَعَكَ ز وَامْرَاَةً مُّؤْمِنَةً اِنْ

وَّهَبَتْ نَفْسَهَا لِلنَّبِيِّ اِنْ اَرَادَ النَّبِيُّ اَنْ يَّسْتَنْكِحَهَا ۗ خَالِصَةً لَّكَ مِنْ
دُوْنِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ۭ قَدْ عَلِمْنَا مَا فَرَضْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ فِيْٓ اَزْوَاجِهِمْ وَمَا
مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُهُمْ لِكَيْلَا يَكُوْنَ عَلَيْكَ حَرَجٌ ۭ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ غَفُوْرًا
رَّحِيْمًا ﴿۵۰﴾ تُرْجِيْ مَنْ تَشَاۗءُ مِنْهُنَّ وَتُــٔوِيْٓ اِلَيْكَ مَنْ تَشَاۗءُ ۭ وَمَنِ
ابْتَغَيْتَ مِمَّنْ عَزَلْتَ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكَ ۭ ذٰلِكَ اَدْنٰٓى اَنْ تَقَرَّ اَعْيُنُهُنَّ
وَلَا يَحْزَنَّ وَيَرْضَيْنَ بِمَآ اٰتَيْتَهُنَّ كُلُّهُنَّ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِيْ قُلُوْبِكُمْ ۭ
وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلِيْمًا حَلِيْمًا ﴿۵۱﴾ لَا يَحِلُّ لَكَ النِّسَاۗءُ مِنْۢ بَعْدُ وَلَآ اَنْ
تَبَدَّلَ بِهِنَّ مِنْ اَزْوَاجٍ وَّلَوْ اَعْجَبَكَ حُسْنُهُنَّ اِلَّا مَا مَلَكَتْ يَمِيْنُكَ ۭ
وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰي كُلِّ شَيْءٍ رَّقِيْبًا ﴿۵۲﴾ ع

O prophet, We have made lawful for you all your wives whom you have given their dowers, And those (bondwomen) whom you own, out of the captives Allah has given to you as spoils of war, and daughters of your paternal uncle, and daughters of your paternal aunts, and daughters of your maternal uncle, and daughters of your maternal aunts, who have migrated with you, and a believing woman who offers herself for (marrying) the prophet without dower, if the prophet wishes to bring her into his marriage, these rules being exclusive for you, and not for the (rest of the) believers, — We know what We have prescribed for them in respect of their wives and the slave-girls they own --- so that there should be no difficulty for you. And Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [50] **You may postpone (the turn) of any one you wish from among them, and may accommodate with you any one you wish. And should you recall any one from those whom you kept aside, there is no blame on you. It is more likely, in this way, that their eyes will stay content, and they will not grieve, and all of them will be happy with whatever you give to them. And Allah knows whatever lies in your hearts. And Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.** [51] **No women are lawful for you after this, nor is it lawful that you replace them (the present wives) with other wives, even though their goodness may attract you,**

except the bond-women you own. And Allah is watchful of every thing. [52]

Commentary

These verses contain seven injunctions about marriage and divorce that are specific to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and these specifics signify his distinctive eminence and his special honor. Some of these injunctions are such that their being specific to the Holy Prophet ﷺ is absolutely plain and obvious and some of them are such that, despite their being general for all Muslims, they are subject to certain conditions and qualifications that are specific to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The details are given below:

The First injunction

اِنَّآ اَحْلَلْنَا لَکَ اَزْوَاجَکَ الّٰتِیْٓ اٰتَیْتَ اُجُوْرَھُنَّ (O prophet We have made lawful *(ḥalāl)* for you all your wives whom you have given their dowers - 50.) Apparently, this ruling is general for all Muslims, because their existing wives are lawful for them too, but the reason for its being specific is that, at the time of revelation of this verse, the Holy Prophet ﷺ had more than four wives, while it is not permissible for Muslims in general to keep more than four wives at any time. So it was particular for the Holy Prophet ﷺ that having more than four wives was made lawful for him.

The words, الّٰتِیْٓ اٰتَیْتَ اُجُوْرَھُنَّ "whom you have given their dowers" in this verse are not of restrictive nature nor a pre-condition for permissibility of keeping them as wives, but it is a statement of fact that the Holy Prophet ﷺ had paid the mahr (dower) of all the women with whom he had performed nikah promptly in cash and did not leave it as debt payable by him. His noble practice was to pay or give whatever was due to him immediately and become free of the liability,without delaying it unnecessarily. The statement of this fact is to persuade Muslims in general to follow this practice.

The second Injunction

وَمَا مَلَکَتْ یَمِیْنُکَ مِمَّآ اَفَآءَ اللّٰہُ عَلَیْکَ (And those (bond women) whom you own out of the captives Allah has given to you as spoils of war").

The word اَفَآء used here for the spoils of war is فیٔ *'fai'* which in its technical sense is restricted to the wealth acquired from the enemy without actual fighting. But at times it is used for the spoils of war acquired through actual fighting. Here the word is used in a general

sense. Moreover, it does not mean that only those slave-girls will be lawful for him who would come to him as his share in the spoils of war, but the permissibility covers those bondwomen also who were purchased by him. But, apparently, in this injunction, there is nothing particular for the Holy Prophet ﷺ because this is a rule for all Muslims and the whole Ummah that those bondwomen whom they own as their share in the spoils of war or those who are purchased for a price are lawful for them. At the same time the style of the context indicates that the injunctions contained in these verses should have some special applications for the Holy Prophet ﷺ. As such it is stated in 'Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī' as a particularity of the Holy Prophet that just as the *nikāḥ* of any of his ﷺ wives with any other Muslim is not lawful after him, similarly any of his bondwomen is not lawful for any Muslim after him ﷺ. Accordingly the *nikāḥ* of Sayyidah Mariyah Al-Qibṭiyyah رضی اللہ عنہا who was sent by the Roman Emperor Muqauqis as gift to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, was not made lawful for anyone after him.

The third Injunction

بَنٰتِ عَمِّکَ وَبَنٰتِ عَمّٰتِکَ The daughters of paternal uncle and of paternal aunts and the daughters of the maternal uncle and of maternal aunt have been made lawful for the Holy Prophet ﷺ. This injunction includes all the women of his "father's family and of his mother's family". And this rule is, though, applicable to all Muslims in general, yet in the case of the Holy Prophet ﷺ it has been subjected to a condition imposed on him exclusively that they must have migrated with him from Makkah- not necessarily in his company or at the same time, but the words, "with you" are to denote that they should have migrated at any time in accordance with his command. If any of them did not migrate for any reason, they did not become lawful for him as was the case with Umm Hani' رضی اللہ عنہا, the daughter of his paternal uncle Abū Ṭalib who, as per her statement, was not lawful for the Holy Prophet ﷺ, because she did not migrate from Makkah.

Migration being the condition of lawfulness for the Holy Prophet ﷺ was only with regard to the women of his parent's family. This condition was not applicable to other women in general - their being Muslim was enough. The wisdom in applying this condition of migration for the women of his parent's family was perhaps that the women of the family

are proud of their family which is unbecoming for the wife of a prophet. This propensity was taken care of by imposing the condition of migration, because only that women would migrate whose love for Allah and His Messenger ﷺ prevails over her love for her family, home and property. Also, one has to suffer great difficulties during migration and these sufferings in the way of Allah have a special place in ones spiritual reform.

Fourth Injunction:

وَامْرَاَةً مُّؤْمِنَةً اِنْ وَّهَبَتْ نَفْسَهَا لِلنَّبِيِّ اِنْ اَرَادَ النَّبِيُّ اَنْ يَّسْتَنْكِحَهَا ۚ خَالِصَةً لَّكَ مِنْ دُوْنِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ

> "And a believing woman who offers herself for (marrying) the prophet without dower if the prophet wishes to bring her into his marriage, these rules being exclusive for you, and not for the (rest of the) believers". (33:50)

The exclusiveness of this exception for the Holy Prophet ﷺ is absolutely obvious, because dower is an essential condition for the marriage of common Muslims, so much so that if, at the time of marriage, the woman says that she does not want any dower or the man says that he will not pay any dower, even this mutual agreement is considered by Sharī'ah as null and void, and dower as prevalent in their families would become compulsory. Only the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been exclusively permitted to marry without dower when the woman is desirous of marriage with him without dower.

Scholars differ in determining whether the Holy Prophet ﷺ did actually marry a woman without dower who offered herself for marriage without dower. Some scholars say that marriage of the Holy Prophet ﷺ with a woman in this way is not proved, whereas some others have proved some such marriages (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī)

Some scholars have considered the sentence خَالِصَةً لَّكَ (exclusively for you) to be specific to the fourth injunction, whereas some other commentators like Zamkhshri, etc., have applied it to all the injunctions mentioned before it, meaning that all the above mentioned rules are exclusively for the Holy Prophet ﷺ. And at the end it is stated لِكَيْلَا يَكُوْنَ عَلَيْكَ حَرَجٌ which means that these injunctions have been made exclusive for the Holy Prophet ﷺ to save him from any difficulty. Of these

exclusive rules mentioned above, the first rule wherein more than four wives have been allowed for him and the fourth rule that marriage without dower has been made lawful for him are obviously meant to facilitate and remove difficulties; but the second, third and fifth rules apparently add more conditions which should increase difficulty. But this is a hint that despite these conditions being apparently more strict, they are, in fact, for his good because in their absence he would have suffered from mental anguish. As such, even the additional conditions are to remove his difficulty.

Fifth Injunction:

The fifth injunction deduced from the words "believing women" in the above verses is that unlike the common Muslims who can marry the Christian or Jewish women, it is not permissible for the Holy Prophet ﷺ to marry them. It is necessary for him that his wives are Muslims.

After stating the exclusiveness of the five rules for the Holy Prophet ﷺ, the Holy Qur'ān has briefly mentioned the rule for Muslims in general:

قَدْ عَلِمْنَا مَا فَرَضْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ فِىٓ أَزْوَاجِهِمْ وَمَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُمْ

"We know what We have prescribed for them in respect of their wives and the slave girls they own" - 50.

It means that the above mentioned rules are exclusive for the Holy Prophet ﷺ, but as for the marriage of other Muslims, Allah Knows what He has prescribed for them. For example, no Muslim can marry a woman without dower and a Muslim is allowed to marry a Christian or a Jewish woman. Similarly, the conditions in the previous rules determined to be obligatory for the Holy Prophet ﷺ are not applicable to other Muslims.

Towards the end, it is said, لِكَيْلَا يَكُوْنَ عَلَيْكَ حَرَجٌ (so that there should be no difficulty for you - 50). It means that these special injunctions in the matter of *nikāḥ* for the Holy Prophet ﷺ were prescribed so that he does not face any difficulty. As for the restrictions and conditions imposed on the Holy Prophet ﷺ and not on other Muslims which appear to be difficult, but keeping in view the expedience and wisdom under which the restrictions were placed, those restrictions were, in fact, to remove the spiritual discomfort and embarrassment.

So far five rules of marriage have been enunciated which have some exclusiveness for the Holy Prophet ﷺ Further on two rules have been stated which are related to the above five rules.

Sixth Injunctions

تُرْجِیْ مَنْ تَشَآءُ مِنْهُنَّ وَتُؤْیْ اِلَیْکَ مَنْ تَشَآءُ ("You may postpone (the turn) of any one you wish from among them, and may accommodate with you any one you wish." - 51) This rule is specific to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The normal rule is that a Muslim husband having more than one wife must distribute his nights between his wives in equal numbers and similarly must provide means of sustenance and maintenance to each one of them equally. It is not permissible to violate the principle of equality. But the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been exempted from this rule and has been allowed to postpone the turn of any one of his blessed wives according to his own expedience; he could also recall the one whose turn he had postponed earlier.

Allah Almighty so honored the Holy Prophet ﷺ that he was exempted from observing equality between his wives but the Holy Prophet ﷺ never availed of this concession in practice; he always maintained full equality between all his blessed wives. Imām Abū Bakr al-Jassas has stated that as per narrations of Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet ﷺ always maintained equality between the blessed wives even after the revelation of this verse; he goes on to a Ḥadīth from Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا, with his own chain of narrators, which is also available in Musnad Ahmad, Tirmidhī, Nasa'I, Abū Dāwūd etc.:

كَانَ رَسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقْسِمُ فَيَعْدِلُ فَيَقُوْلُ: اَللّٰهُمَّ هٰذَا قسمى فِيْمَا اَمْلِكُ فَلاَ تَلُمْنِىْ فِيْمَا لَا اَمْلِكُ قَالَ اَبُوْدَاوٗد يَعْنِى الْقَلْبَ

"The Messenger of Allah ﷺ used to maintain equality between all wives and used to supplicate, "O Allah I have maintained equality in whatever is within my power (meaning provision of means of sustenance and in spending of nights), so do not reprove me for that which is not within my power (meaning love and affection being more for someone and less for another that is not within one's control).

According to another narration, also from Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا and reported by Bukhārī, if the Holy Prophet ﷺ had to postpone his visit to any of the blessed wives at her turn, for some reason, he would seek her permission even after the revelation of this verse wherein he was

exempted from observing equality between his blessed wives.

Another Ḥadīth is also well known and is found in all books of Ḥadīth that when it became difficult for the Holy Prophet ﷺ during his last illness to move between the houses of his blessed wives on daily basis, he sought permission from all of them before staying in the house of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا where he passed the remaining days of his illness.

It was the habit of all the prophets in general, and that of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in particular, that whenever a concession was given to them by Allah Ta'ālā in a rule of Sharī'ah, they generally used to act upon the original rule as a demonstration of their gratitude to Allah, and did not avail of the concession except at a time of a dire need.

The wisdom of Sixth Injunction

The Holy Qur'ān has then stated the wisdom of the sixth injunction i.e. exempting the Holy Prophet ﷺ from maintaining equality between his wives and making all options open for him in this regard. In the words of the Holy Qur'ān the wisdom behind this exemption was the following, ذٰلِکَ اَدْنٰی اَنْ تَقَرَّ اَعْیُنُھُنَّ وَلَا یَحْزَنَّ وَیَرْضَیْنَ (it is more likely, in this way, that their eyes will stay content, and they will not grieve, and all of them will be happy with whatever you give to them. - 51)

A doubt may arise here that, apparently, this rule of exemption would be against the wishes and intent of the blessed wives رضی اللہ عنہن and may cause them anguish; how can it be considered to be a source of their happiness? In answer to this question, one has to bear in mind that the real reason for one's grievance is one's perception of his or her due rights. If one believes that a certain right is due on somebody and he is neglecting or violating it, then one feels hurt and aggrieved. But if somebody who does not owe us anything and still gives us something, this act of kindness generates sheer pleasure. Accordingly, when it has been stated that it is not obligatory upon the Holy Prophet ﷺ to observe equality among all the blessed wives رضی اللہ عنہن rather he may use his discretion, then whatever attention and company a wife gets from him would be considered a favor and an act of courtesy and kindness which would be a source of happiness and satisfaction.

At the end of this injunction the Holy Qur'ān has declared:

وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ مَافِىْ قُلُوْبِكُمْ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلِيْمًا حَلِيْمًا

"And Allah knows whatever lies in your hearts. And Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise." - 51

The context of the foregoing and forthcoming verses is the mention of the rules peculiar to the Holy Prophet ﷺ in the matter of marriage. In between these rules, the statement that Allah knows whatever lies in your hearts and Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise does not appear to bear any nexus with the subject. It is stated in Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī that the permission given to the Holy Prophet ﷺ to marry more than four wives or to marry without dower could have created satanic scruples in somebody's mind. So, this verse, coming in between, has directed that Muslims have to guard themselves against such suspicions and scruples and have to firm up their faith that all these exclusive exemptions are given by Allah Almighty on the basis of His infinite wisdom and expedience, and that the selfish desires have no room here.

The pious life of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the issue of polygamy

The enemies of Islam have always targeted the issue of polygamy, specially the number of the wives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ for their criticism. But if the whole life of the Holy Prophet ﷺ is kept in view, even the Satan cannot find scope to cast doubts on the character of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. It is a proved fact that his first marriage at the age of twenty-five was with Sayyidah Khadijah رضی اللّٰہ عنہا who was an aged widow with children and had been married twice before. The Holy Prophet ﷺ spent his whole prime of life, upto the age of fifty, with that aged wife only. All these fifty years were spent right before the eyes of the people of Makkah who had started his opposition when he was of forty years and had announced his prophethood. His opponents did not leave any stone unturned in harassing and stigmatizing him. They called him a magician, a poet, a mad man, but no enemy could ever find a single chance to cast doubts in his piety, modesty or purity.

At the age of fifty, after the death of Sayyidah Khadijah, he married Sayyidah Sawdah رضی اللّٰہ عنہا who was also a widow.

After migration to Madinah, at the age of fifty-four, in the second year of Hijrah, Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللّٰہ عنہا came to the Holy Prophet's home as wife. He married Sayyidah Hafsah رضی اللّٰہ عنہا a year later and

Sayyidah Zainab bint Khuzaymah رضی اللہ عنہا a few days after that, who expired a few months later. He married Sayyidah Umm Salamah رضی اللہ عنہا, a widow with children, in the year 4 of Hijrah. In the year 5 when he was fifty eight years old, he married Sayyidah Zainab bint Jahsh رضی اللہ عنہا in accordance with Allah's order, as detailed in the beginning of the present surah. The rest of the blessed wives entered his house in the last five years.

The rules pertaining to the private life of a prophet and his domestic affairs constitute a major portion of a religion. The contribution of these nine blessed wives رضی اللہ عنہما to the propagation and education of Islam can be imagined from the fact that Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا alone narrated two thousand two hundred and ten *aḥādīth* and Sayyidah Umm Salamah رضی اللہ عنہا narrated three hundred and sixty-eight *aḥādīth* which have been collected in reliable books. Hafiz Ibn al-Qayyim, in his I'lmul Muwaqqi'in, has commented that the rulings of Sharī'ah (fatawa) disclosed by Sayyidah Umm Salamah رضی اللہ عنہا would constitute a separate book. More than two hundred noble companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ were disciples of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا who learnt *ḥadīth, fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) and fatawa from her.

Another wisdom of bringing a number of the blessed wives رضی اللہ عنہما to the house of the Holy Prophet ﷺ was to attract their clans towards Islam. After keeping these facts in view and considering the general pattern of his pure life, can one find any scope for saying that the multiplicity of his wives was, Allah forbid, to fulfill selfish or sexual desires? If this was the case, why the last stage of life would have been selected for this purpose after spending the whole prime of life either in celibacy or with an aged widow. This subject along with the religious, intellectual, biological and economic issues of the polygamy has been thoroughly discussed with full details under the explanation of the third verse of Sūrah Nisa' in volume II of this book.

Seventh Injunction:

لَايَحِلُّ لَکَ النِّسَآءُ مِنْۢ بَعْدُ وَلَآ اَنْ تَبَدَّلَ بِهِنَّ مِنْ اَزْوَاجٍ وَّلَوْ اَعْجَبَکَ حُسْنُهُنَّ

(No women are lawful for you after this, nor is it lawful that you replace them (the present wives) with other wives, even though their goodness may attract you.- 52).

The words مِنۢ بَعۡدُ "after this" in this verse may be interpreted in two ways. One is that no women are lawful for you after the present wives. Some noble companions ﷺ and leading commentators have adopted this meaning. Sayyidnā Anas ﷺ has stated that when the blessed wives رضی اللہ عنہن were given the choice by Allah Ta'ālā to either opt for the pleasure of the worldly life and its charms but separation from the Holy Prophet ﷺ or to remain with him and be content with every economic condition they may face, all of them gave up their demand for increase in maintenance and elected to remain with him. Allah Ta'ālā, as a reward for their decision, restricted the Holy Prophet ﷺ to those nine wives and it was no more permissible for him to marry other women. (Al-Baihaqi, as quoted by Rūḥ-ul- Ma'ānī)

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ has stated that Allah Ta'ālā has restricted the blessed wives رضی اللہ عنہن exclusively to the Holy Prophet ﷺ in that they could not marry anybody after him. Similarly, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been restricted to the blessed wives in the sense that he could not marry any other women. Sayyidnā 'Ikrimah has also given this explanation as per one narration.

The second interpretation of these words, as reported by different authorities, like Ibn 'Abbās, 'Ikrimah and Mujahid, according to some narrations is that مِنۢ بَعۡدُ "after this" means it is not lawful for the Holy Prophet ﷺ to marry any women beyond the categories mentioned in the earlier verse. For example, the earlier verse has allowed for him only those women of his parents' families who had migrated from Makkah to Madinah either with him or later, according to his command; similarly the restriction that his wife must be a Muslim has made the Christian or Jewish women unlawful for him. As such the meaning of the words, "after this" would be that he cannot marry those women who do not fall in the categories made lawful for him. Thus, according to this explanation, this is not a new injunction; it is rather an elaboration to highlight the consequential outcome of the rule already laid down in the preceding verse . According to this interpretation, this verse does not prohibit marriage with other women after the nine blessed wives رضی اللہ عنہن; instead, it prohibits marriage with non-Muslims and with women of the parents families who did not migrate, as already known from the previous verse.

This second interpretation finds support from a narration of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا to the effect that the permission of further marriages remained applicable for him (even after the revelation of the present verse)

وَلَآ اَنْ تَبَدَّلَ بِهِنَّ مِنْ اَزْوَاجٍ "Nor is it lawful that you replace them (the present wives) with other wives" - 52.

The clear meaning of these words in view of the second explanation of this verse is that although the Holy Prophet ﷺ is permitted to marry other women besides his present wives subject to the conditions mentioned, yet it is not lawful for him to divorce a wife and to marry another woman to replace her.

However, the meaning of these words in view of the first explanation of this verse would be that he can neither marry any woman in addition to the present wives, nor can he replace them by divorcing one and marrying another.

Towards the end of these verses it is clarified that a bond woman owned by the Holy Prophet ﷺ is exempt from fifth and seventh rules in the sense that she is lawful for him, even if she is a Christian or Jew, and it is also permitted for him to replace her with another bondwoman. Lastly it has been reminded that Allah Ta'ālā is watchful of everything's reality, appearance and underlying reasons. All these injunctions and rules are based on divine wisdom and expedience, even if the wisdom is not stated specifically, and hence no one has the right to question them or raise objections against them.

Verses 53 - 55

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَدْخُلُوْا بُيُوْتَ النَّبِيِّ اِلَّآ اَنْ يُّؤْذَنَ لَكُمْ اِلٰى
طَعَامٍ غَيْرَ نٰظِرِيْنَ اِنٰىهُ ۙ وَلٰكِنْ اِذَا دُعِيْتُمْ فَادْخُلُوْا فَاِذَا طَعِمْتُمْ
فَانْتَشِرُوْا وَلَا مُسْتَاْنِسِيْنَ لِحَدِيْثٍ ۭ اِنَّ ذٰلِكُمْ كَانَ يُؤْذِي النَّبِيَّ
فَيَسْتَحْيٖ مِنْكُمْ ۡ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يَسْتَحْيٖ مِنَ الْحَقِّ ۭ وَاِذَا سَاَلْتُمُوْهُنَّ مَتَاعًا

فَسْئَلُوْهُنَّ مِنْ وَّرَآءِ حِجَابٍ ۭ ذٰلِكُمْ اَطْهَرُ لِقُلُوْبِكُمْ وَقُلُوْبِهِنَّ ۭ وَمَا كَانَ لَكُمْ اَنْ تُؤْذُوْا رَسُوْلَ اللّٰهِ وَلَآ اَنْ تَنْكِحُوْٓا اَزْوَاجَهٗ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖٓ اَبَدًا ۭ اِنَّ ذٰلِكُمْ كَانَ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ عَظِيْمًا ﴿۵۳﴾ اِنْ تُبْدُوْا شَيْئًا اَوْ تُخْفُوْهُ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمًا ﴿۵۴﴾ لَاجُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِنَّ فِيْٓ اٰبَآئِهِنَّ وَلَآ اَبْنَآئِهِنَّ وَلَآ اِخْوَانِهِنَّ وَلَآ اَبْنَآءِ اِخْوَانِهِنَّ وَلَآ اَبْنَآءِ اَخَوٰتِهِنَّ وَلَانِسَآئِهِنَّ وَلَا مَامَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُهُنَّ ۚ وَاتَّقِيْنَ اللّٰهَ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيْدًا ﴿۵۵﴾

O those who believe, do not enter the houses of the Prophet, unless you are permitted for a meal, not (so early as) to wait for its preparation. But when you are invited, go inside. Then, once you have had the meal, then disperse, and (do) not (sit for long) being keen for a chat. This (conduct of yours) hurts the Prophet, but he feels shy of (telling) you (about it). And Allah is not shy of the truth. And when you ask any thing from them (the blessed wives of the Prophet), ask them from behind a curtain. That is better for the purity of your hearts and their hearts. And it is not allowed for you that you hurt Allah's Messenger, nor that you ever marry his wives after him. Indeed, it would be an enormity in the sight of Allah. [53] **If you disclose any thing, or conceal it, Allah is All-Knowing about every thing.** [54] **There is no sin for them (the wives of the Prophet) in (appearing without *ḥijāb* before) their fathers, or their brothers, or the sons of their brothers, or the sons of their sisters, or their own (Muslim) women, or their slave-girls. And (O wives of the Prophet,) fear Allah. Surely, Allah is witness to every thing.** [55]

Commentary

These verses have laid down some etiquettes and rules of Islamic social behavior. The reason for mentioning them in the context of the previous verses is that these rules were initially revealed for the Holy Prophet's household and his wives, although their applicability is not specific or exclusive to him.

The First Injunction

Etiquettes for hosts and guests

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَدْخُلُوْا بُيُوْتَ النَّبِيِّ اِلَّاۤ اَنْ يُّؤْذَنَ لَكُمْ اِلٰى طَعَامٍ غَيْرَ نٰظِرِيْنَ اِنٰىهُ ۙ وَلٰكِنْ اِذَا دُعِيْتُمْ فَادْخُلُوْا فَاِذَا طَعِمْتُمْ فَانْتَشِرُوْا وَلَا مُسْتَاْنِسِيْنَ لِحَدِيْثٍ

(O those who believe, do not enter the houses of the Prophet, unless you are permitted for a meal, not (so early as) to wait for its preparation. But when you are invited, go inside. Then, once you have had the meal, then disperse, and (do) not (sit for long) being keen for a chat. This (conduct of yours) hurts the Prophet, but he feels shy of (telling) you (about it). And Allah is not shy of the truth). (33:53)

This verse has laid down three rules pertaining to a situation where a person is invited to have meal in someone's house. These rules are applicable to all Muslims in general, but since they were prompted by an incident which took place in the house of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, therefore the Prophet's ﷺ house has been mentioned in the text.

The first rule is: لَا تَدْخُلُوْا بُيُوْتَ النَّبِيِّ اِلَّاۤ اَنْ يُّؤْذَنَ لَكُمْ "Do not enter the houses of the Prophet, unless you are permitted.."

The second etiquette is that despite invitation to dine and permission to enter the house, one should not enter the house so early as to wait for the meal's preparation; rather he should go inside the house when he is invited to do so.

The third etiquette is that once the invitees have had the meal, they should disperse and should not sit for long being keen for a chat. This direction is restricted to the general cases where guests' sitting for long after having the meal causes inconvenience to the host, either because the host wants to get busy with his own work, or because he has to serve meals to others after these guests. But where the practice and norm is that the guests remaining busy in conversation till late after they had their meals does not pose any problem for the hosts, as it has become customary in dinners and parties these days, this rule would not apply, because the next sentence of the verse has specifically highlighted the reason of this rule where it is said that this behavior brings discomfort to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. In the specific incident that was the cause of the revelation of this verse, the meals were served in the ladies apartments of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the discomfort caused to the family members

because of the guests staying till late is obvious.

The verse also states that although such behavior of the guests hurts the Holy Prophet ﷺ, yet since they are his own guests, he feels shy of telling and educating them them about it, but Allah Ta'ālā is not shy of telling them the truth.

The above sentence of the verse also tells us the extent to which a host is required to show respect and give honor and regard to his guests, because despite the fact that it was one of the obligations of the Holy Prophet ﷺ to teach people how they should behave when they are invited as guests, he postponed to teach his own guests this etiquette (lest they should feel disgraced) till Allah Ta'ālā Himself taught this etiquette in the Qur'ān.

The Second Injunction - Ḥijāb for Women

وَاِذَا سَاَلْتُمُوْهُنَّ مَتَاعًا فَسْئَلُوْهُنَّ مِنْ وَّرَآءِ حِجَابٍ ؕ ذٰلِكُمْ اَطْهَرُ لِقُلُوْبِكُمْ وَقُلُوْبِهِنَّ ؕ

And when you ask any thing from them (the blessed wives of the Prophet), ask them from behind a curtain. That is better for the purity of your hearts and their hearts. (33:53)

This rule has also been prompted by a particular incident involving the blessed wives ﷺ, but the rule is general for the whole Ummah. Briefly, the rule states that if non-*maḥram* men have to ask anything of common use from women, they should ask them from behind a curtain - not face to face. The reason stated for this rule is that it is better for the purity of the hearts of both.

The special Importance of Women's Ḥijāb

It is worth noting here that the men and women who are the direct addressees of these rules of ḥijāb are, on the one hand, the women who are the blessed wives رضی اللہ عنہما of the Holy Prophet ﷺ the purification of whose hearts has been undertaken by Allah Ta'ālā Himself as mentioned in the verse preceding the present one, and on the other hand they are the men who are the noble companions ؓ of the Holy Prophet ﷺ many of whom have been exalted even above angels. Despite all these credentials, *ḥijāb* was deemed to be necessary between men and women for the purity of their hearts and to protect them from sensual scruples. Who can claim that his inner-self is purer than those of the noble companions ؓ and the inner-selves of his women are purer than those of

the blessed wives رضی اللہ عنہن and thus believe that mixing of men and women would not have any bad consequences?

The Background of the revelation of these verses

Different incidents have been related by the commentators as the background for the revelation of the these verses. But there is no contradiction between these narrations, because it is likely that all these incidents combined together constitute the reason for the revelation. As for the first verse which lays down the etiquettes of guests, its background is mentioned by Sulaymān Ibn Arqam, as reported by Ibn Abī Hatim, that it was revealed about some boorish people who would enter a house without being invited and keep waiting there for the preparation of a meal.

And Imām 'Abd Ibn Ḥumaid has reported the statement of Sayyidnā Anas ﷺ that this verse was revealed about some people who would look for an opportunity to enter and sit in the Holy Prophet's ﷺ house well before the time of dining, remain busy in conversation between themselves till the preparation of the meal and then would join the dining. These incidents took place before the injunction of *ḥijāb* when men used to enter women's apartments.

As for the second rule relating to the *ḥijāb* of women, Imām Bukhari has cited two narrations about the reason for its revelation. One is narrated by Sayyidnā Anas ﷺ that Sayyidnā 'Umar Ibn Khaṭṭāb ﷺ said to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, "O Messenger of Allah ! you are visited by all sorts of people, and as such it appears advisable that you order your blessed wives رضی اللہ عنہن to observe Ḥijāb". At this, the verse of *ḥijāb* was revealed.

Imām Bukhari and Imām Muslim both have reported the following statement of Sayyidnā 'Umar Ibn Khaṭṭāb ﷺ :

وافقتُ ربّی فی ثلث: قلت یا رسول اللّٰہ! لو اتخذت فی مقام ابرٰھیم مَصَلًّی، فانزل اللّٰہ تعالٰی وَاتَّخِذُوْا مِنْ مَّقَامِ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ مُصَلًّي وَقُلْتُ: يَارَسُوْلَ اللّٰهِ! اِنَّ نِسَآءَ کَ يَدْخُلُ عَلَيْهِنَّ الْبَرُّ وَالْفَاجِرُ فَلَوْ حجبتهن فَاَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ اٰيَةَ الْحِجَاب وَقُلْتُ لِاَزْوَاجِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ لَمَّا تمالأن عَلَيْهِ فِي الْغَيْرَةِ عَسٰى رَبُّه' اِنْ طَلَّقَكُنَّ اَنْ يُّبْدِلَه' اَزْوَاجًا خَيْرًا مِّنْكُنَّ، فَنَزَلَتْ کَذٰلِکَ

> "My opinion appeared to be in consonance with my Lord in three things. One is that I asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ to adopt the Station of Ibrāhīm (Maqām Ibrāhīm) as the place of your prayers (Ṣalāh). Then Allah Ta'ālā revealed the verse وَاتَّخِذُوا مِنْ مَّقَامِ إِبْرٰهِيمَ مُصَلًّى (And take the Station of Ibrāhīm as a place of prayer). And I said to the Holy Prophet ﷺ that all sorts of good and bad people appear before your blessed wives رضى الله عنهن ; it would be better if you ask them to observe *ḥijāb*. Then the verse of *ḥijāb* was revealed. And when the blessed wives رضى الله عنهن of the Holy Prophet ﷺ developed envy between themselves, I told them that if the Messenger of Allah ﷺ divorces you, it is not unlikely that Allah Ta'ālā may provide him wives better than you. So Qur'ān was revealed in the same very words."

Sayyidnā 'Umar's respectful speech is worth noting that instead of saying that his Lord accorded with him in three things, he said that his opinion was found to be in consonance with Him in three things.

Another narration reported in Ṣaḥīḥ of Bukhārī, also from Sayyidnā Anas رضي الله عنه is that he said:

"I know the facts about the verse of *ḥijāb* more than anybody else, because I was present when Sayyidah Zainab bint Jahsh رضى الله عنها, after her marriage with the Holy Prophet ﷺ, entered his house and was present in the house with him, when some of the people whom he had invited for *walimah* (the dining arranged after consummation of marriage) which he ﷺ had got prepared for them, just kept sitting there and talking. The narration in Tirmidhī adds that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was also present there along with Sayyidah Zainab رضى الله عنهن and she had turned her face towards the wall due to modesty. The Holy Prophet ﷺ was displeased by the people sitting there so long; he went out of the house to meet and greet other blessed wives رضى الله عنهن. When he came back, they were still there. And then they realized and dispersed. The Holy Prophet entered the house, but came out after a little while. I was present there. He recited this verse of *ḥijāb* which had been revealed just at that time.

The narrations of Ḥadīth mention these three incidents as the causes for the revelation of the verses of *ḥijāb*. There is no contradiction between them, because possibly all the three incidents combined together constitute the cumulative cause of the revelation of these verses.

The Third Injunction

وَمَا كَانَ لَكُمْ اَنْ تُؤْذُوْا رَسُوْلَ اللّٰهِ وَلَآ اَنْ تَنْكِحُوْآ اَزْوَاجَهٗ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖٓ اَبَدًا ("And it is not allowed for you that you hurt Allah's Messenger, nor that you ever marry his wives after him".) (33:53)

The first part of this verse has declared all such utterances and actions unlawful (*ḥarām*) which cause anguish or hurt to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Then it is laid down that no one can marry his blessed wives رضی الله عنهن after him.

All the rules mentioned in this verse are though addressed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ or his blessed wives رضی الله عنهن, their application is general for the whole Ummah, except this last rule which is specific to the blessed wives رضی الله عنهن that they cannot marry any one after him, while the rule for the *Ummah* in general is that after the death of the husband, his wife can marry another person after the expiry of the period of *'iddah*. The reason may be that according to Qur'ān, the blessed wives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ are mothers of the Muslims, and although their being mothers does not affect their spiritual offspring in the sense that, being brothers and sisters, they would not be able to marry each other, yet their motherhood was limited to their own-selves in the sense that they cannot marry anyone.

It may also be said that they Holy Prophet ﷺ is alive in his honored grave, his ﷺ expiry being like a husband missing from his home. That is why his inheritance was not distributed, and that is why his blessed wives رضی الله عنهن were not in the same situation as that of the wives of common men after the death of their husbands.

Another reason for this injunction is that according to the rule of Sharī'ah, every woman in Paradise would be with her last husband. Sayyidnā Hudhaifah رضی الله عنه had told his wife at his death that if you wish to be my wife in Paradise, do not marry any one after me because in Paradise, a woman would go to her last husband. (Qurṭubī)

So, the honor that Allah Ta'ālā had bestowed upon the blessed wives رضی الله عنهن in this world was thus preserved for them in paradise also by forbidding their marriage to anyone after him.

Besides, no husband naturally likes that his wife should marry

anyone, but for common people, the Sharī'ah did not make it necessary to fulfill this desire. Allah Ta'ālā, by respecting this natural desire of the Holy Prophet ﷺ bestowed an exclusive honour upon him.

There is a consensus in the Ummah that the above rules apply to all the blessed wives رضى الله عنهن who remained in the bond of marriage with the Holy Prophet ﷺ till his expiry. However there are different views about whether or not this rule is applicable to those of his wives who were either divorced by him or who separated from him for some other reason. Qurṭubī has detailed these views.

إِنَّ ذٰلِكُمْ كَانَ عِندَاللّٰهِ عَظِيمًا (Indeed, it would be an enormity in the sight of Allah - 53). It means that causing any harm to or to hurt the Holy Prophet ﷺ in any way or to marry his wives after him would be an enormity in the eyes of Allah.

إِنْ تُبْدُوا شَيْئًا اَوْتُخْفُوْهُ فَإِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا (If you disclose any thing, or conceal it, Allah is All-Knowing about every thing - 33:54). It has been repeated again in this verse that Allah Ta'ālā knows even the intents and thoughts hidden in the hearts. So whether you disclose or conceal, Allah Ta'ālā knows it all.What is being emphasized here is that one should not let any doubt or suspicion enter one's mind or heart about the above-stated rules, and must avoid any violation of these rules.

The issue of Ḥijāb for women, out of the three injunctions in the above mentioned verse, needs some further elaboration which is being given below.

Injunctions of Ḥijāb

And the Islamic system for prevention of misdeeds

Immodesty, adultery and the overtures leading to them are some of those destructive evils of this world which do not only affect the individuals, but also ruin families and tribes, and sometimes destroy large countries as well. If the cases of murder and plunder in this world are thoroughly investigated, sexual emotions would be found behind the scenes. This is the reason that ever since this world came into existence, there has been no nation, religion or region that has not unanimously believed in the evil and destructive nature of these misdeeds.

The European nations in the present age, after doing away with the religions limits and breaking away from their ancient and entrenched customs and traditions, do not consider adultery a crime in itself and they have moulded their culture and society in such a fashion that sexual anarchy and immodest acts are permitted freely, but even they could not exclude the consequences of these evil acts from the list of the crimes - prostitution, rape and obscenities in public had to be declared punishable offences.

This is really comparable to somebody collecting inflammables, sprinkling oil on them, then setting them on fire and when it bursts into flames, then prohibiting the flames and taking measures to stop them. Another example would be to kindle a fire under a cooking pot and then try to stop it from steaming and boiling.

Islam, on the other hand, when declares some harmful acts as punishable offences, it also imposes restrictions on the overtures leading to them and declares them forbidden also. In the present case the real objective was to prevent adultery and fornication. So the start was made by the rule to keep one's eyes down, by preventing free mixing of men and women, by directing women to stay inside the four walls of houses; by requiring women to cover their bodies from head to feet by means of a covering dress called '*burqa*' or simply by a longish shawl when they have to go out due to some need, and to walk on the side of the street and not to wear perfume or to wear a ringing ornament when going out. If someone crosses all these limits, breaks all these barriers and defies all the restrictions to do what is forbidden, then the punishment is so severe and terrifying that once it is given to some adulterer or fornicator, the whole nation would learn an unforgettable lesson.

The Europeans and their camp-followers have put forward arguments justifying their obscenities by trying to prove the *ḥijāb* for women to be harmful for the society in regard to women's health, economic and social status and by trying to prove the benefits for women being without *ḥijāb*. Their detailed rejoinder has been given by many modern scholars in their books. Here it would be adequate to understand that no crime or sin is devoid of some gain or benefit. Even stealing, robbery, cheating are very profitable in some respects. But when the destructive harms that take place as a result and consequence of these acts come to view, nobody

dares to call them profitable businesses. The absence of *ḥijāb* for women, even if it has economic gains, cannot be called beneficial by sensible and wise people when it engulfs the whole nation and the country in mischief and disorder.

The Golden Islamic Principle of Barring the Ways and Means for Prevention of Crimes in a moderate manner

Just as the basic principles of faith, like belief in the Oneness of Allah, the prophethood and in the life Hereafter are common the religious systems of all the prophets, similarly crimes, obscenities and evil deeds have been held unlawful (*ḥarām*) in all revealed laws and divine religions. But in the previous religions and their laws, the ways and means which led to the violations were not declared absolutely unlawful in themselves, unless a crime or sin was committed through them. But since the Sharī'ah of Islam has to be be in force till the Doomsday, it has been safeguarded by Allah Ta'ālā specially in that not only the crimes and sins but even their causes and means that normally lead one to those crimes and sins have been declared unlawful themselves. For example, when drinking was forbidden, the processing, selling purchasing and presentation of alcoholic drinks was also forbidden. Similarly when interest and usury was forbidden, then all affairs involving interest or resembling usury were also declared unlawful. That is why the Islamic jurists have declared all profits derived from invalid businesses to be filthy earning like interest. To associate any being with Allah Ta'ālā (Shirk) and idolatry have been declared by Qur'ān to be the greatest injustice and unpardonable sins, so severe prohibitions have been placed on their causes and means also. Since the polytheists (*mushrikin*) used to worship the sun at sunrise, sunset and at midday, saying of prayers (Ṣalah) in those particular times would bear a resemblance to sun worshipers and this resemblance itself could lead to 'Shirk', therefore the revealed laws declared even saying of prayers (Ṣalah) and prostration (Sajdah) to be unlawful (Ḥarām) in those times. Statues and pictures of idols are very close to idolatry, so sculpturing of idol's statues and making of their pictures is forbidden and their usage is not permissible.

Similarly while forbidding adultery, all its immediate causes and means have also been declared unlawful by Sharī'ah. To look at any boy or woman with sexual lust is held as a fornication through the eyes, to

hear their speech with that intent is held as fornication through the ears, to touch them as fornication through the hands and to walk in their pursuit as fornication through the feet, as recorded in authentic Ḥadīth. The injunctions of *ḥijāb* for women were revealed to safeguard one against these very sins.

But there is a very long list of causes and means - immediate and distant. if even the distant causes of a sinful act are forbidden, life would become very difficult and considerable difficulty would be faced in carrying out day-to-day affairs which is against the nature of this religion. The Holy Qur'ān's open declaration in this matter is: مَاجَعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِى الدِّيْنِ مِنْ حَرَجٍ . It means that no difficulty has been placed on you in religion. Therefore, in the matter of causes and means, it was wisely decided that those acts and deeds which are such immediate causes of any sin that, generally, one who commits them does necessarily get involved in that sin, have been annexed with the real sin and forbidden as well. If one commits some acts and deeds that are distant causes of a sin and do not necessarily involve one generally in that sin, but they do have some share in the involvement in it, they have been declared reprehensible (makruh). Those causes which are even farther away from involving one in a sin, and which cause one's involvement in very rare cases, they have been considered permissible.

An example of the first case is selling of alcoholic drinks which has been declared as unlawful as drinking itself, because it is an immediate means of drinking. Similarly touching a non-mahram woman, although not fornication in itself, but since it is an immediate cause and means for it, it has also been declared unlawful like the fornication is unlawful.

An example of the second case would be selling of grapes to a person about whom it is known that he would make wine out of the grapes, either because he is a wine maker by profession or because he has clearly said that this is his purpose for its purchase. This is not unlawful in the same way as selling of alcoholic drinks, but this is reprehensible and not permissible. The same rule applies to renting out land or building for a cinema house or an interest-based bank that if it was known at the time of finalizing the deal or contract that the purpose of living for rent is not permissible, then renting would be Makruh Taḥrimī (reprehensible bordering on being unlawful).

An example of the third case would be selling of grapes to the common public. While it is possible that anyone of them might make wine out of the grapes, but neither has anyone said that he will do so, nor is it in the seller's knowledge that anyone makes wine, such sale and purchase has been considered permissible under the rules.

Important Caution

It is important to note that all those acts and deeds which have been declared unlawful by the rules because they are immediate causes or means of involving one in sin, all of them are absolutely unlawful now after the injunction, irrespective of whether these acts involved one in sin or not; their being unlawful is itself a permanent rule of the religion and its violation is impermissible.

It is easier to understand, after this introductory explanation that *ḥijāb* for women is also based upon this principle of barring the ways and means of a sin that leads to getting involved in sin. Here also the rules for the three categories of causes aforementioned would apply. For example, a young woman's uncovering her body in front of a young man is such an immediate cause of commission of sin that as per general nature of men and women, this act would almost certainly lead to commission of sin. Therefore the rules declare it to be forbidden just as fornication is forbidden. Now that this act has been ruled to be the same as fornication, it is absolutely prohibited, even if the person involved is innocent or he is positive that he would not commit the further sin because he has control over himself. The exemption of the circumstances of necessity, medical treatment, etc. do not effect its being forbidden. Even the change of times and ages do not affect it because the rule is just as applicable today in these times of evil and adultery as it was in the first period of Islam.

The second category of the causes would be that women step out of the four walls of their houses wearing *burqa'* (dress which covers from head to feet) or a longish shawl to cover their bodies completely from head to feet. This is a distant cause of *fitnah* (mischief). The rule in this case is that if doing so would cause *fitnah*, then it is not permissible but if there is no apprehension of *fitnah* in doing so, then it is permissible. Therefore this rule is subject to change depending upon circumstances and times. Such outings of women were not cause of mischief during the period of

the Holy Prophet ﷺ. That is why he had given permission to women to go to mosques after having covered themselves completely from head to feet, subject to certain conditions and he had forbidden people from preventing women from going to mosques. Even at that time, although women were being persuaded to offer their prayers in their own homes, because, for them, the reward of offering prayers in their homes is greater than the reward of offering their prayers in mosques, but they were not disallowed from saying their prayers in mosques because there was no apprehension of *fitnah*. The noble companions ﷺ, after the expiry of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, realized that going of women to mosques, even if they are covered from head to feet, was no longer free from apprehension of *fitnah*, so they evolved a consensus among themselves and stopped women from joining the congregation in mosques. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها stated that if the Holy Prophet ﷺ could see the circumstances prevailing today, he would, most certainly, have stopped women from going to mosques. This tells us that the decision of the noble companions was no different from that of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, rather the rule itself changed according to the change in conditions as laid down by the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

The rules regarding Ḥijāb for women have been stated in seven verses of the Holy Qur'ān - three in Sūrah An-Nūr earlier, four in Sūrah Al-Aḥzab out of which one is mentioned earlier, the second is under review and the other two would come later, wherein the determination of the category of Ḥijāb, details of the rules and the exemptions have been stated in detail. Similarly, in more than seventy *aḥādīth* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, the verbal and practical orders of Ḥijāb have been stated. All these injunctions, rules and regulations have been collected by the author in a booklet titled "Tafsilul Khitāb fi TafsīrI 'Ayat- il-ḥijāb" in Arabic language, already published as a part of Sūrah Al-Aḥzab in "Aḥkām- ul Qur'ān", some important extracts of which are being reproduced below.

The Advent of Ḥijāb in Historical Perspective

Free mixing among men and women has never been considered appropriate in the entire history of the world from Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام to the last prophet, Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Musṭafa ﷺ, and it is no peculiarity of the people following religious codes; in fact, such mixing has not been held as proper in good families universally.

At the time when Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ was traveling through Madyan, two women are mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān who were standing aside, holding their flock of goats while waiting for their turn to take these to the water trough. The reason given for this is no other but that these women did not like to push and shove into the crowd of men, instead, preferred to remain content with whatever water was left. The first verse of Ḥijāb was revealed at the time of the marriage of Sayyidah Zainab bint Jahsh رضی اللہ عنہا. Even before its revelation, a narration appearing in the Jami' of Tirmidhī describes the position in which she was sitting in the house: وَهِيَ مُوَلِّيَةٌ وَجْهَهَا إِلَى الْحَائِطِ (and she was [sitting] with her face turned towards the wall).

This tells us that, even before the revelation relating to Ḥijāb, the custom of free mixing among men and women, no-holds-barred dates, rendezvous, get-togethers and chats did not exist among good people anywhere. The First Age of Ignorance marked by personal display (*tabarruj*) by its women referred to in the Qur'ān was something peculiar to bondwomen and women of loose character - certainly, not in good families of Arabia. They saw it as low and reprehensible. The whole history of Arabia bears testimony to this. In India, among the adherents of Hindu, Buddhist and other polytheistic faiths, free mixing between men and women was not tolerated. All those claims of working with men shoulder to shoulder, parading in bazaars and streets, free mixing of men and women in almost every department of life and the chain of intimate contacts in parties and clubs are the product of immodesty and obscenity among Europeans - a disease they too have been afflicted with after having veered away from their past. In those earlier days of theirs, they too were no victims of this situation they are in. Allah Ta'ālā has created women physically different from men. Similarly, He has also placed in their temperaments the essential ingredient of natural modesty which automatically inclines them to maintain a certain aloofness from the general run of men and to remain properly covered. This screen of natural and temperamental modesty has always been present there between women and men since the very beginning. In the early period of Islam too, the mutually imposed absence of free mixing - a forerunner of the Ḥijāb - was of this very nature.

This particular kind of the Ḥijāb of women - that the real place for

women be within the walls of the home and when they have to go out to take care of a need valid in the sight of the Sharī'ah, then, they go out after having covered their whole body - was instituted after the hijrah to Madīnah in the Hijrah year 5. Relevant details follow.

By a consensus of the scholars of Muslim Ummah, the first verse about this kind of Ḥijāb is the one mentioned above: لَاتَدْخُلُوْا بُيُوْتَ النَّبِّي (do not enter the houses of the Prophet - 53) and this verse was revealed at the time of the marriage of Sayyidah Zainab bint Jahsh رضى الله عنها and her entry into the home of the prophet as his blessed wife. As for the date of this marriage, Ḥafiz Ibn Hajar in Isabah and Ibn 'Abd-ul-Barr in Isti'ab have reported two sayings that it took place in the Hijrah year 3, or in the Hijrah year 5. Ibn Kathīr has preferred Hijrah year 5. Ibn Sa'd has reported Hijrah year 5 also from Sayyidnā Anas ﷺ, This very view seems to be the preferred one from some narrations of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها as well. And Allah knows best.

In the cited verse, women were ordered to observe Ḥijāb and men were ordered to ask from them, if they have to ask for something, from behind the Ḥijāb. Here, particular emphasis has been placed on the observation of Ḥijāb in the sense that non-maḥram men and women have to remain apart, however, should there be the need to talk to women, men could do so from behind a Ḥijāb, curtain or something that obstructs the view.

Revealed in the noble Qur'ān there are seven verses about the Ḥijāb of women and its details. Out of these, four have gone by right here in Sūrah Al-Aḥzāb while three of them have already appeared in Sūrah An-Nūr (Mā'ariful-Qur'ān, Volume VI). It is universally agreed upon that the first verse to have been revealed about Ḥijāb is this very verse: لَاتَدْخُلُوْا بُيُوْتَ النَّبِيِّ اِلاَّ اَنْ يُؤْذَنَ لَكُمْ (Do not enter the houses of the prophet, unless you are permitted for a meal - 53). The three verses of Sūrah An-Nūr and the initial verse of Sūrah Al-Aḥzāb where the blessed wives have been commanded to stay in their homes though appear earlier in the order of the Qur'ān, yet in terms of their revelation, they come later. It has been explicitly said in the initial verse of Sūrah Al-Aḥzāb that the said command has been given at a time when the blessed wives were divinely given the right to choose one of the following two courses. If they wanted to have extended worldly means, they should take a divorce from the

Holy Prophet ﷺ, and if they preferred the benefits of the Hereafter and were willing to remain satisfied with whatever worldly means were available to them in their present state of life, then, they could stay married to him.

It has also been mentioned in this event of choice that, among the wives given this choice, Sayyidah Zainab bint Jaḥsh رضی اللہ عنہا was also included. This tells us that her marriage was already solemnized before the revelation of this verse. The said verse came after that. Similarly, there are the verses of Sūrah An-Nūr that carry details relating to Ḥijāb. These are, though earlier in the order of the Qur'ān, but in terms of their sequence of revelation, they too have been revealed with the incident of *Ifk* which came to pass on return from the battle of Banī al-Mustaliq or Muraisi'. This battle took place in the Hijrah year 6 - and the injunctions governing the Islamic legal Ḥijāb came to be enforced from the time when the verse of Ḥijāb was revealed in relevance to the marriage of Sayyidah Zainab رضی اللہ عنہا. The verses of Sūrah An-Nūr relating to Ḥijāb have already appeared in Sūrah An-Nūr (Mā'ariful-Qur'ān, Volume VI).

The difference between the injunctions of *Satr-ul-'Awrah* and Veiling of Women (Ḥijāb)

The part of the body, of a man or woman, called *'awrah* عورت in Arabic, *satr* (ستر) in Urdu and Persian is something the concealing of which is obligatory for everyone - legally, naturally and rationally - and is, after the initial article of Faith ('Imān), the foremost obligation which must be carried out necessarily by concealing the private parts of the body. This duty has remained an obligation since the very beginning and has been a standing obligation in all religious codes brought by the noble prophets علیہم السلام. In fact, even before the advent of religious codes when, because of the tasting of the forbidden fruit in Jannah, the Paradisical apparel of Sayyidnā 'Ādam and Sayyidah Ḥawwā' came off leaving the cover-worthy parts of the body uncovered, even in that situation which was beyond his control, Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام did not take it as permissible. Therefore, both of them, Sayyidnā 'Ādam and Sayyidah Ḥawwā', covered their private parts by placing a string of leaves over them. Thus, their *'awrah* came to be concealed. This is what is meant by the verse of the Qur'ān: طَفِقَا يَخْصِفَانِ عَلَيْهِمَا مِنْ وَّرَقِ الْجَنَّةِ (and they began to patch together upon themselves some leaves of Paradise - 7:22). From the

coming of Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام into this world right up to the last of the prophets, Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafa ﷺ, the concealment of *'awrah* has remained obligatory in the religious code of every prophet. There could be a difference in the precise determination and limitation of body parts to be concealed, but the essential obligation of *satr* is decisively established in all religious codes of the prophets. Then, this obligation applies to all human beings, men and women, in its own right - whether nor not there be someone else to see. For this reason, should there be a person who offers his Ṣalah in naked state in the darkness of night -then, despite the fact that nobody is seeing him,his Ṣalah will not be acceptable, if he does have with him something to wear that is sufficient to cover the private parts of his body (Satr) - (Al-Baḥr- ur-Rā'iq).

There is no difference of opinion in the fact that it is obligatory to cover those parts of the body which are included in '*awrah*' before people, even when one is not performing Ṣalah. But, in a state of privacy where no one is around to look, even there, it is not permissible, according to the correct view, to sit naked with one's coverable parts (*'awrah*) exposed without a need recognized by the Sharī'ah, (Al-Baḥr from Sharḥ al-Munyah).

This much was about the injunction of *satr-ul-'awrah* (the concealment of the coverable parts of the body) which has been obligatory from the advent of Islam, rather, from the very beginning, in all religious codes of the noble prophets, and in which, men and women are equal, equal in private and in public, just as it is not permissible to be naked before people, it is also not permissible to stay unnecessarily naked when alone or in private.

The second issue - the Ḥijāb of women

Ḥijāb essentially requires that women do not appear before male strangers without proper cover. About this issue, at least this much has always remained established among prophets and the righteous and noble persons that there should be no free mixing between male strangers and women. In the incident about the two daughters of Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام, it is mentioned in the Qur'ān (Sūrah Al-Qaṣaṣ, 28:23, Part 20) that when the girls went to water their goats on the public well in the locality, they found it crowded with people who were watering their own flocks. It appears in the Qur'ān that these girls were standing aside, aloof from them. Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, who was passing by as a traveler, saw the

girls standing so aloof from others. When he asked them about the reason for it, they told him two things:

1. 'Right now, there is a crowd of men out there. We shall water our goats when these people will have finished watering gone'.

2. 'Our father is old and weak' which indicates that coming out to water domestic animals was not the job of women in terms of the commonly recognized practice. But, it was because of the old age and weakness of the father, or because of the absence of any other man around, they had to do this job.

This state of the daughters of Sayyidnā Shu'aib ﷺ pointed out in the noble Qur'ān tells us that, even during that time and in their religious code too, free mixing of men and women and their working together shoulder to shoulder was not liked. In fact, any job which caused free contact with men was just not entrusted with women. However, keeping this whole thing in view, it appears that the injunction requiring women to observe regular Ḥijāb was yet to be enforced formally. Similarly, during the early period of Islam, the same situation kept prevailing. It was in the Hijrah year 3 or 5 that women were obligated with the observance of Ḥijāb before male strangers, the details of which appear later.

Now we know that the satr of *'awrah* and the Ḥijāb of women are two separate issues and different from each other. Satr-ul-'awrah (concealment of coverable parts) has always been obligatory. The Ḥijāb of women was made obligatory in the Hijrah year 5. Satr-ul-'awrah is obligatory on men and women both while Ḥijāb is obligatory on women only. Satr-ul-'awrah is obligatory both in public and in private while Ḥijāb is obligatory only in the presence of male strangers. These details have been provided for the reason that by the jumbling of both these issues so many doubts rise impeding the understanding of the rulings and injunctions of the Qur'ān. For example, the face and the palms of a woman are excluded from Satr-ul-'awrah under the authority of consensus (*ijma'*). Therefore, should the face and palms remain uncovered in the state of Ṣalāh, the Ṣalāh is permissible, as agreed upon and as borne by consensus. As for face and palms, these are exempt in accordance with definitive textual authority. The feet have been

exempted by Muslim jurists on the analogy of face and palms.

But, whether or not the face and palms are exempted in the observance of Ḥijāb before male strangers is a matter in which difference exists, details of which have appeared earlier under the commentary on the verse of Sūrah An-Nūr: لَا يُبْدِيْنَ زِيْنَتَهُنَّ اِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا (and must not expose their adornment except that which appears thereof - 24:31), a summary of which will follow later.

The degrees of Islamic legal Ḥijāb and the injunctions relating to them

The sum of seven verses of the Qur'ān and seventy narrations of Ḥadīth about the Ḥijāb of women seems to be that the real objective desirable in the sight of the Sharī'ah is Ḥijāb-ul-ashkhas i.e. physical hiding of women from strangers. In other words, women and their movement should remain hidden from the sight of men, something that can be accomplished by means of the four walls of homes or tents or hanging curtains. All forms of Ḥijāb allowed other than this are all restricted by or conditional with the ground of need, time of need and measure of need.

Thus, the first degree of Ḥijāb - which is the really desired objective of the Sharī'ah - is that women stay in their homes. But, the Sharī'ah of Islam is a comprehensive and complete social system in which full consideration has been given to all human needs. Then, it is all too obvious that women will face inevitable circumstances when they have to go out of the house at some or the other time. For this purpose, the second degree of Ḥijāb, in the light of the Qur'ān, and Sunnah, seems to be that they should go out wearing a *burqa'* or long *shawl* concealing their whole body. To see their way, they leave only one eye open from inside the sheet, or use a patch of net before the eyes as is placed in a *burqa'* for this purpose. On occasions of need, this second degree of Ḥijāb too - like the first one - is agreed upon among all Muslim scholars and jurists.

From some narrations of Ḥadīth, there seems to emerge a third degree of Ḥijāb as well - in which the views of Ṣaḥābah, the Tabi'in and the jurists of Muslim community differ - according to which women, when they go out from the house, of necessity, they can let their face and palm remain open before people subject to the condition that their entire body is

concealed. A detailed description of these three degrees of Islamic legal Ḥijāb follows.

The first degree of Ḥijāb from people by virtue of staying home

According to the Qur'ān and Sunnah, this degree is the one really desired. It stands clearly proved by the verse of Sūrah Al-Aḥzāb under study right now: وَإِذَا سَأَلْتُمُوهُنَّ مَتَاعًا فَاسْأَلُوهُنَّ مِن وَرَاءِ حِجَابٍ "And when you ask any thing from them (the blessed wives of the Prophet), ask them from behind a curtain - 53." Still more explicit is the very initial verse of Sūrah Al-Aḥzāb, that is: وَقَرْنَ فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ (And remain in your homes.) The manner in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ put the guidance given in these verses into practice hardly leaves room for any further explanation.

We have already come to know that the first verse about the Ḥijāb of women was revealed at the time of the marriage of Sayyidah Zainab رضی اللہ عنہا. As in the narrations of Ḥadīth, Sayyidnā Anas ؓ said, "I know this event of Ḥijāb more than anyone else for the reason that, at that time, I was present in the company of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. When this verse requiring the observance of Ḥijāb was revealed, he put a sort of make-shift curtain from a sheet and had thus made Sayyidah Zainab رضی اللہ عنہا seated hidden behind it - not that he would conceal her personally in a *burqa'* or long sheet.

The event relating to Sayyidnā 'Umar Ibn Khaṭṭāb ؓ appearing under the Background of Revelation described earlier also seems to indicate that Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ simply wished that the blessed wives stay inside, away from the sight of men - as is evident from the words he used on this occasion: يَدْخُلُ عَلَيْكَ الْبَرُّ وَالْفَاجِرُ (among those coming to you there are [all sorts of people] the righteous and the sinning).

According to a narration of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا appearing in the chapter of the battle of Mutah in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī, when the Holy Prophet ﷺ was informed of the Shahadah (martyrdom) of Sayyidnā Zayd Ibn Harithah, Ja'far and 'Abdullāh Ibn Rawahah ؓ, he was in the Masjid. His blessed face showed signs of intense grief and shock. I was watching what was happening there from inside my room through a crack in the door.

This proves that, the Ummul-Mu'minin, even at the time of such a shocking occurrence, did not come out in a *burqa'* to join the crowd of

people, instead, witnessed the proceedings from a crack in the door.

And in the chapter on 'Umratu 'l-Qada' in Kitāb- ul-Maghazī of the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhari, it appears that the nephew of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها, Sayyidnā 'Urwah Ibn Zubayr ﷺ, and Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar ﷺ were sitting in the Mosque of the Prophet fairly close to the outer side of the living quarters of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah and were busy talking about the 'Umra visits of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar ﷺ says that, during that time, we could hear the voice of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah doing her *miswak* and clearing her throat coming out from inside the living quarters. Onward from here, mentioned there are the 'Umra visits of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. From this narration too, we learn that soon after the revelation of the verses of Ḥijāb, it had become the regular practice of the blessed wives that they would observe Ḥijāb virtually by staying at home.

Similarly, there is a Ḥadīth in the chapter on the battle of Ṭa'if in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhari saying that the Holy Prophet ﷺ gargled in a utensil of water and gave it to Sayyidnā Abu Mūsā and Bilāl ﷺ to drink and wipe their faces with. Ummul-Mu'minin, Sayyidah Umm Salamah رضى الله عنها was watching this incident from behind a curtain. She called the two blessed souls from inside the curtain asking them to spare a little from that *tabarruk* for their mother (meaning for herself).

This Ḥadīth too testifies that soon after the revelation of the order of Ḥijāb, the blessed wives used to stay inside homes and behind curtains.

Special Note

Also noteworthy in this narration is the fact that even the blessed wives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ were fond of his *tabarrukat* (plural of *tabarruk* meaning something blessed) just like other Muslims. This too is a singularity of his sanctified person alone, otherwise, the informal relationship a husband has with his wife would have made it habitually impossible to maintain this degree of reverence.

And according to a narration of Sayyidnā Anas ﷺ in Kitāb-ul-'Adab of the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhari, he and Sayyidnā Abū Ṭalḥah ﷺ were once going somewhere with the Holy Prophet ﷺ. He was riding a camel. Ummul-Mu'minin, Sayyidah Safiyyah رضى الله عنها was also riding with him. En route, the camel stumbled all of a sudden and, according to the

report of Sayyidnā Abū Ṭalḥah, when he and Sayyidah Ṣafiyyah fell down from the back of the camel, Abū Ṭalḥah presented himself before him and submitted, 'May Allah accept me as ransom for you, are you hurt?' He said, 'No, you take care of the woman.' The first thing Sayyidnā Abū Ṭalḥah did was to hide his face with a piece of cloth, then he reached Sayyidah Ṣafiyyah and threw a sheet of cloth over her after which she stood up. Then, in the same manner, keeping her hidden behind proper cover, he had her mount her camel.

In this event too which came suddenly in the form of an accident, there is a lesson. It provides testimony to the fact that the noble Ṣaḥabah and the blessed wives gave great importance to the matter of Ḥijāb. The attention paid and the care and concern shown in this incident hardly leave any room for further explanations.

A Ḥadīth of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ud ﷺ in Jami' of Tirmidhī reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

إِذَا خَرَجَتِ الْمَرْأَةُ اسْتَشْرَفَهَا الشَّيْطٰنُ (قال الترمذى هذا حديث حسن صحيح غريب)

When a woman comes out (of her house), the Shaytan marks her out (that is, makes her a means of spreading evil among Muslims) - (Tirmidhī has termed this Ḥadīth as *ḥasan, ṣaḥīḥ, gharīb*').

And Ibn Khuzaymah and Ibn Ḥibban have also reported the following additional words in this Ḥadīth: وَاَقْرَبُ مَاتَكُوْنُ مِنْ وَّجْهِ رَبِّهَا وَهِيَ فِيْ قَعْرِ بَيْتِهَا (And [a woman] is closer to her Rabb [Lord] when she is [hidden] in the midmost [section] of her house.

Present in this Ḥadīth too is the evidence of the fact that the real thing for women is no other but that they stay in their homes and do not go out (occasions of need remaining an exception).

And in a Ḥadīth; the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said: لَيْسَ لِلنِّسَاءِ نَصِيْبٌ فِى الْخُرُوْجِ اِلَّا مُضْطَرَّةً (For women, there is no share in going out except when inevitable) - reported by Ṭabarānī, as quoted by Kanz, p. 283, v. 8)

And says a narration from Sayyidnā 'Alī ﷺ: 'Once I was present in the company of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. He asked the noble Ṣaḥabah, اَىُّ شَيْءٍ خَيْرٌ لِلْمَرْأَةِ" What is better for women? The Ṣaḥabah kept silent. They said nothing in response. Later, when I went home, I repeated the same

question before Faṭimah رضى الله عنها. She said, لَايَرَيْنَ الرِّجَالَ وَلَا يَرَوْنَهُنَّ [that is, it is better for women that] 'neither they see men, nor are seen by them.' When I reported the answer given by her to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, he said, صَدَقَتْ اِنَّهَا بِضْعَةٌ مِنِّى (She said it right. Of course, she is a part of me).

The reason why Sayyidah 'Āishah رضى الله عنها was left behind in the wilderness during the event of Ifk was no other but that the Ḥijāb of the blessed wives was not simply restricted to the *burqa'* or long sheet, in fact, even while traveling, they used to be in their camel-litter (*shughduf* or hawdaj). This *shughduf* itself was mounted on the camel and was dismounted as such. A *shughduf* is like a miniature roomette for the traveler. During the course of this event, when the caravan started leaving, the attendants following their usual practice mounted the shughduf on the back of the camel assuming that the Ummul-Mu'minīn was already in there. But, the truth of the matter was that she was not there in it, rather, had gone out of it for physical relief. It was in this misunderstanding that the caravan departed and the Ummul-Mu'minīn was left behind in the wilderness.

This event too is a strong evidence of the fact that the sense of Islamic legal Ḥijāb as understood by the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his blessed wives was but that women stay in their homes and, if traveling, in their shughduf (camel-litter), their presence was not to be exposed before men. Then, this was the care and concern shown regarding the observance of Ḥijāb from men in the state of travel. From this, one can imagine the level of importance of Ḥijāb when a woman is in her normal residence.

The second degree of Ḥijāb with *burqa'*

On occasions of need, when a woman has to go out of her house, she is required to be covered up from the head to the feet in some *burqa'* or long sheet in a manner that no part of the body is left exposed. This has its proof in the verse (59) of Sūrah Al-Aḥzāb that is coming up a little later: يَٰٓأَيُّهَا النَّبِىُّ قُلْ لِّأَزْوَاجِكَ وَبَنٰتِكَ وَنِسَآءِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ يُدْنِينَ عَلَيْهِنَّ مِنْ جَلَابِيبِهِنَّ (O prophet, tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers that they should draw down their shawls over them - 33:59). The original word used by the Qur'ān for 'shawls' is *jilbāb* (plural: *jalābīb*) which is a long sheet in which a woman gets to be hidden from the head to the feet. (This has been reported from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه)

Ibn Jarīr has, citing his own chains of authority, has reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ the manner in which a *jilbāb* is used, that is, a woman should be wrapped therein, from the head to the feet, and that her face and nose too be hidden behind it - leaving only one eye uncovered to see the way. A detailed explanation of this verse will appear later. Here, the only purpose is to point out that, on occasion of need, when a woman has to go out of the house, then, she has to opt for this degree of Ḥijāb, that is, she be covered up with a *jilbāb* or something similar from the head to the feet, and that her face too - with the exception of one eye - be hidden.

This form too is permissible on occasions of need in accordance with the consensus of the jurists of the Muslim community. But, there are Ṣaḥīḥ (sound) *aḥadīth* where some restrictions have been placed even on the choice of this form, for example, she should not be wearing perfume, or ringing ornaments, and that she should walk on the side of the street and that she should not enter a crowd of men.

The third degree of Islamic legal Ḥijāb about which jurists differ

The third degree of Ḥijāb is that the whole body of the woman is hidden from the head to the feet, but the face and palms remain open. The question whether this degree of Ḥijāb (where face and palms are exposed) is permissible has been a matter of difference of opinion between Muslim jurists which has emerged from different interpretations of the words إِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ (except that which is open) occurring in Sūrah An-Nūr (24:31) Some commentators have interpreted these words to mean the face and palms, and therefore they have exempted them from Ḥijāb, and have held that it is permissible to leave them open. (as reported from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās). But there are others among them who take the expression to mean *burqa', jilbāb* etc. These commentators hold it impermissible to expose face and palms. (as reported by Sayyidnā Ibn Mas'ūd). But, even according to those who have called it permissible,the permissibility is subject to the condition that there should be no apprehension of *fitnah* (situation resulting in some evil consequence). Since the face of a woman is at the center of her beauty and embellishment, therefore, the absence of any apprehension of *fitnah* is a rare likelihood. Ultimately, for this reason, under normal conditions, opening the face etc. is not permissible even according to the first group of commentators.

Three Imāms - Mālik, Shafi'ī and Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal - out of the four took to the strict position and held it absolutely impermissible to expose face and palms, whether or not there is an apprehension of *fitnah*. As for Imām Abū Ḥanifah, he has, though, taken a different view, yet he has subjected it to the condition that there is no apprehension of *fitnah,* and since this condition remains customarily missing, therefore, Ḥanafi jurists too have not permitted the opening of the face and palms before non-Maḥrams.

The citations regarding the views of the four Imāms have been given in detail with reference to authentic books of these schools in this humble writer's treatise entitled *Tafsīl-ul-Khitāb,* published as part of the major work on *Aḥkam-ul-Qur'ān.* Since the original ruling of the Ḥanafī jurists opts for the exemption of the face and palms from Ḥijāb, therefore, a few citations of the Ḥanafī jurists are being given here in which it is mentioned that, due to the apprehension of *fitnah,* exposing face and palms is forbidden :

> اِعْلَمْ اَنَّهٗ لَا مُلَازَمَةَ بَيْنَ كَوْنِهٖ لَيْسَ عَوْرَةً وَجَوَازِ النَّظْرِ اِلَيْهِ، فَحِلُّ النَّظَر مَنُوْطٌ لِعَدَمِ خَشْيَةِ الشَّهْوَةِ مَعَ انْتِفَآءِ الْعَوْرَةِ، وَلِذَاحُرِّمَ النَّظَرُ اِلٰى وَجْهِهَا وَوَجْهِ الْاَمْرَدِ اِذَاشَكَّ فِى الشَّهْوَةِ وَلَا عَوْرَةَ. (فتح القدير، ص ١٨١ ج ١)
>
> "Let it be understood that there is no incumbency between the non-cover-worthiness of a certain part of the body and the permissibility of looking at it, because the permissibility of looking at it depends on there being no apprehension of sexual desire - although, that part of the body is not included under 'awrah (that which is coverable). For this reason, casting a look at the face of a female stranger (non-Mahram woman) or at the face of a beardless boy is forbidden when there is no doubt about the emergence of any sexual desire, although, the face is not included under *'awrah* (that which has to be hidden)." (Fatḥ-ul-Qadīr, page 181, volume 1)

From this observation of Fatḥ-ul-Qadīr, we also come to know the exact meaning of the 'apprehension of sexual desire' i.e. for all practical purposes, though there may not exist any actual desire, but one may have a reasonable apprehension that such a desire will develop by looking at the face, it will be included in the *fitnah*. When such a doubt does exist, then, it is forbidden to look not only at the face of female strangers,

rather, even at the face of beardless boys. In addition to that, another explanation of the 'apprehension of sexual desire' appears in Jami' ar-Rumuz where it is said: 'It means that one's inner self is inclined to be close to her.' It is obvious that the absence of such a degree of inclination was rare even during the time of the early forbears of Islam (*salaf*). That the Holy Prophet ﷺ, when he saw Sayyidnā Faḍl ؓ looking at a woman, had turned his face to the other side with his own blessed hands is mentioned in Ḥadīth and is a clear proof of it. So, in this age infested with all sorts of corruption, who can claim to be immune to this apprehension?

And Imām Sarakhsi, the famous Ḥanafī scholar, has concluded his detailed discussion on the issue by saying:

> وَهٰذَا كُلُّه' اِذَا لَمْ يَكُنِ النَّظَرُ عَنْ شَهْوَةٍ، فَاِنْ كَانَ يَعْلَمُ اَنَّه' اِنْ نَظَرَ اشْتَهٰى لَمْ يَحِلّ لَهُ النَّظَرُ اِلٰى شَيْءٍ مِّنْهَا. (مبسوط، ص ١٥٢، ج ١٠)
>
> And all this (the permissibility of looking at the face and palms) is restricted to a situation where one does not look at a woman with sexual desire. And if the person doing it knows that his looking at the face of a woman may motivate sexual inclinations, then, it is not lawful for him to cast a look towards any part of her body. (Mabsūṭ, page 152, volume 10)

And in Kitāb-ul-Karāhiyah of Radd-ul-Muḥtār, 'Allamāh Shāmi has said:

> فَاِنْ خَافَ الشَّهْوَةَ اَوْشَكَّ اِمْتَنَعَ النَّظَرُ اِلٰى وَجْهِهَا، فَحِلُّ النَّظَرِ مُقَيَّدَةٌ بِعَدَمِ الشَّهْوَةِ وَاِلاَّ فَحَرَامٌ، وَهٰذَا فِىْ زَمَانِهِمْ، وَاَمَّا فِىْ زَمَانِنَا فَمُنِعَ مِنَ الشَابَّةِ اِلاَّ النَّظَرُ لِحَاجَةٍ كَقَاضٍ وَشَاهِدٍ يحكم وَيشهدُ وَاَيْضًا قَالَ فِىْ شُرُوْطِ الصَّلٰوةِ وَتُمْنَعُ الشَّابة مِنْ كَشْفِ الْوَجْهِ بَيْنَ رِجَالٍ لاَ لِاَنَّه' عَوْرَةٌ بَلْ لِّخَوْفِ الْفِتْنَةِ.
>
> "If there exists an apprehension or doubt of sexual desire, looking at her will stand forbidden, because the lawfulness of looking is tied up with the absence of sexual desire, and when this condition is missing, it will be haram (forbidden) - and this is how it was during the time of the early forbears of Islam (*salaf*). But, as for our time, looking at women stands prohibited in an absolute sense - unless looking is needed for a valid reason recognized by the Sharī'ah, such as, in the case of a judge or witness who have to give a verdict or evidence." And in Shurut-us-Ṣalāh, the author has further observed, "A young

woman is prohibited from leaving her face open before (non-Maḥram) men not because the face is included in the 'awrah, but because of the apprehension of *fitnah.*"

The gist of this debate and difference among jurists is that Imām Shafi'ī, Imām Mālik and Imām Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, may Allah have mercy on them, have held the act of glancing at young women as prohibited absolutely, because it is usually a cause of *fitnah,* even though in a particular case it does not cause *fitnah* in actual terms. This approach has many precedents in Sharī'ah. For instance, since traveling is usually a cause of difficulties, therefore, traveling itself has been held as a 'difficulty' for allowing concessions meant for difficult situations; thus a person may enjoy all concessions in Ṣalāh and fasting etc. when traveling, even if he does not face any difficulty during his journey and finds it more comfortable than his home. Similarly, since one is unconscious while asleep and wind would pass usually, therefore, sleep itself has been taken by the Sharī'ah as passing of wind, and it is held that every sleep invalidates wudu' , whether or not wind has passed in reality.

But, Imām Abū Ḥanifah did not hold the exposure of a woman's face and palms as *fitnah* in itself. Instead of that, he subjected the prohibition to the existence of *fitnah* in actual terms. In other words, this would be a situation in which there exists the apprehension or the probability of being attracted towards the woman seeking nearness to her. If so, it would stand prohibited; where this probability does not exist, it will be permissible. But, as we already know, the absence of such probability in this time of ours is absolutely rare. Therefore, the Ḥanafi jurists of later days, too, ultimately gave the same ruling given by the other three Imāms, that is, it is prohibited to look even at the face and palms of a young woman.

Now the outcome of this presentation is that, by a consensus of the four Imāms, this third degree of Islamic legal Ḥijāb, which stipulated that a woman appears before men after having covered her whole body in a burqa' or sheet etc., but leaving her face and palms exposed, stands prohibited. Therefore, what remains now of Ḥijāb is no more than its first two degrees. One of these is the real objective, that is, women remain inside their homes and do not go out without need. The other is going out

covered with *burqa'* or sheet on the basis of need, only at a time of need and to the extent of need.

Ruling

In the injunctions of Ḥijāb mentioned above, there are some exceptions . For example, some males identified as Mahrams are exempted from Ḥijāb and very old women too are somewhat exempted from the purview of the common injunction of Ḥijāb. Some of its related detail has appeared in the commentary on Sūrah An-Nūr. (Mā'ariful-Qur'ān, volume vi) Some of it will appear later in the verses of Sūrah Al-Aḥzāb where this exemption finds mention.

In view of the importance of the issue of Ḥijāb, we have reproduced a few essential points from our treatise entitled Tafsīl-ul-Khitāb fi Aḥkam-il-Ḥijāb, something sufficient for common readers. Should someone be interested in an exhaustive treatment of the subject, it could be seen in the treatise under reference. This treatise has been published in Aḥkam-ul-Qur'ān under the section dealing with the Tafsīr of Sūrah Al-Aḥzāb. (And Allah, the Pure, the High, knows best).

Verse 56

إِنَّ اللّٰهَ وَمَلٰٓئِكَتَهٗ يُصَلُّوْنَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ ؕ يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا صَلُّوْا عَلَيْهِ وَسَلِّمُوْا تَسْلِيْمًا ﴿٥٦﴾

Surely, Allah and His angels send blessings to the Prophet. O those who believe, do pray Allah to bless him, and send your Salām (prayer for his being in peace) to him in abundance. [56]

Commentary

In verses previous to this, some peculiarities and distinctions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ were mentioned as an adjunct to which the command to observe Ḥijāb was revealed while some injunctions of Ḥijāb will also appear later on. In between, the present verse contains a command to do something for which all these peculiarities and distinctions have been instituted in his blessed person, that is, the recognition and expression of the greatness of the station of the Holy Prophet ﷺ as well as an invitation to imbibe into one's own self the virtues of reverence, love and

obedience for him.

The real purpose of the verse was to obligate Muslims to send Ṣalāh (*durood*) and Salām upon the Holy Prophet ﷺ. But the command was given in a manner that, first of all, Allah Ta'ālā pointed out that He Himself and His angels perform the act of Ṣalāh for the Holy Prophet ﷺ. After that, common Muslims were ordered to follow suit. By doing so, it is indicated that the station of the Holy Prophet ﷺ is so high that the act asked to be done by common Muslims in his respect is something already done by Allah Ta'ālā Himself as well as angels with Him. Now then, common believers who are indebted to so many favours done to them by as their noble Prophet should certainly give high priority to making this act their essential concern. Then there is yet another good outcome of this modality of expression. It proves the great merit accredited to Muslims who send Ṣalāh and Salām as Allah Ta'ālā makes them share in doing what Allah Ta'ālā Himself does and so do His angels.

The Meaning of Ṣalāh (*durood*) and Salām

The word: صَلٰوة (Ṣalāh) is used in the Arabic language to convey the sense of: Mercy (*raḥmah*), prayer (*du'ā'*) and praise (*madḥ* and *thanā'*). The Ṣalāh attributed to Allah Ta'ālā in the cited verse means His sending of mercy, but Ṣalāh from the angels denotes their prayer for him, and the sense of Ṣalāh (*durood*) from common believers is a combination of *du'ā'* (prayer) and *thanā'* (praise). Most commentators have given these very meanings and Imām Al-Bukhārī has reported from Abū-l-'Āliyah that the Ṣalāh of Allah Ta'ālā means the honor accorded to him and the praise showered on him before the angels. As for the honor bestowed on him by Allah Ta'ālā within this mortal world, it translates as the high rank he was blessed with when, on many an occasion, his mention was joined with the mention of Allah Ta'ālā in *adhān* (the initial call for prayers) and *iqamah* (the call announcing the immediate start of the prayer) and elsewhere, and that Allah Ta'ālā made the religion brought by him spread and prevail throughout the world, and that He enjoined upon all people to keep acting in accordance with the Sharī'ah brought by him right through the last day of al-Qiyāmah and, along with it, He has undertaken to keep his Sharī'ah stand perennially protected. Then, as for the honor bestowed upon him in the Hereafter, it can be said that his station was made to be the most exalted of the entire creation and, at a

time when no prophet or angel could dare intercede on behalf of anyone, it was right at that time that he was blessed with the celebrated station of intercession called: مقام محمود (Al-maqām-ul- maḥmūd: Praised Station).

Given the interpretation that Allah's Ṣalāh in favour of the Holy Prophet ﷺ means praise, someone may raise a doubt that, according to the narrations of Ḥadīth, Ṣalāh and Salām are also offered to the family and companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. If so, how can anyone other than him be made to share in the honor bestowed and praise done by Allah Ta'ālā? This doubt has been answered in Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī etc. by saying that the degrees of such honor and praise are many. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has it at its highest,while his family and companions and believers in general are included with him only to a certain degree.

As for the word: سَلَام (Salām), it is an infinitive in the sense of السَّلَامَة (*as-salamah*) and means staying in peace. And اَلسَّلَامُ عَلَيْکَ (As-sala mu-'alaik: conveniently taken as 'peace on you') means: May the state of peace and security from losses, defects and calamities be with you. And since, according to the rule of Arabic grammar, this is not the occasion to use the word: عَلٰی (*'alā*: on, upon), but since the word 'Salām' implies praise, hence the word: عَلٰی (*'alā*) is appended with it.

And some other early commentators have taken the word: Salām here to mean the sacred Being of Allah Ta'ālā, because Salām is among the beautiful names of Allah Ta'ālā. According to this view the sentence will mean that Allah is enough to take care of your security and well-being.

The method of Ṣalāh and Salām

There appears a Ḥadīth in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Bukhārī and Muslim, as well as in other books of Ḥadīth, where Sayyidnā Ka'b Ibn 'Ujrah ﷺ has been reported to have said: '(When this verse was revealed), someone asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ "(The verse orders us to do two things, Ṣalāh and *salām*.) We already know the method of saying *salām*, (being اَلسَّلَامُ عَلَيْکَ اَيُّهَا النَّبِیُّ that is, may peace and safety be on you. O Prophet) now tell us the method of Ṣalāh also." He said: Say these words:

اَللّٰهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلٰی مُحَمَّدٍ وَّعَلٰی اٰلِ مُحَمَّدٍ كَمَا صَلَّيْتَ عَلٰی اِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَعَلٰی اٰلِ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ اِنَّکَ حَمِيْدٌ مَّجِيْدٌ،

اَللّٰهُمَّ بَارِکْ عَلٰی مُحَمَّدٍ وَّعَلٰی اٰلِ مُحَمَّدٍ كَمَا بَارَكْتَ عَلٰی اِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَعَلٰی اٰلِ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ

اِنَّکَ حَمِیْدٌ مَّجِیْدٌ.

"O Allah, send mercy on Muḥammad and on the progeny of Muhammad, as You sent mercy on Ibrāhīm and on the progeny of Ibrāhīm. Verily, You are Praised, Glorious. O Allah, send blessings on Muḥammad and on the progeny of Muḥammad as You sent blessings on Ibrāhīm and on the progeny of Ibrāhīm. Verily, You are Praised, Glorious."

Some other words in this respect have also been reported in other narrations of Ḥadīth.

As for the reason why the noble Ṣaḥābah asked this question, perhaps it is that they had already been taught the method of offering their Salām in the تَشَہُّد : (*tashahhud* or saying of اَلتَّحِیَّات : At-tahiyyāt) where it is said: 'اَلسَّلَامُ عَلَیْکَ اَیُّھَا النَّبِیُّ وَرَحْمَۃُ اللّٰہِ وَبَرَکَاتُہٗ' (*as-salāmu 'alaika aiyuhannabiyyu wa raḥmatullāhi wa barakātuh*: Peace and safety on you, O Prophet, and the mercy of Allah and His blessings). Therefore, they did not like to determine, on their own, the precise words in the case of the saying of Ṣalāh. Instead of that, they wanted the exact words of saying the Ṣalāh to be determined by the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself. It is for this reason that صَلٰوۃ (Ṣalāh) has generally been adopted in these very words as part of the prescribed prayers, Namāz or Ṣalāh. But, it does not mean that the obligation of sending Ṣalāh (*durud*) is restricted to these specific words, because many different forms of Ṣalāh (*durud*), have been authentically reported from the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself. The requirement of sending Ṣalāh and Salām can be fulfilled by every such sentence that has the words of Ṣalāh and Salām in it. Then, it is also not necessary that those words should have been reported exactly as said by the Holy Prophet ﷺ. In fact, the obligation may be discharged and the reward of sending Ṣalāh may be achieved by any style of address that conveys the words of Ṣalāh and Salām. But, it is obvious that the exact words reported from the Holy Prophet ﷺ are certainly much more blessed and are the cause of bringing many more rewards. It was for this very reason that the noble Ṣaḥābah had asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself to determine the words of صلوٰۃ (Ṣalāh).

In the Qa'dah (sitting position) of the prescribed prayer (Ṣalāh or Namāz), the saying of the words of Ṣalāh and Salām exactly in the manner reported above is *masnūn (per Sunnah)* right up to the last day

of Qiyāmah, (even though these words are meant to address the Holy Prophet ﷺ by saying ' Salām on you, O prophet') As for occasions outside the prescribed prayers (Ṣalāh or Namāz), these exact words should have been employed when the Holy Prophet ﷺ was addressed during his lifetime. When, after his departure from this mortal world, one has the good fortune of standing before the sacred Rawdah (the holy tomb) of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and submitting his Salām to him, then, there too, it is *masnūn* to employ the form of second person: اَلسَّلَامُ عَلَيْکَ (*as-salamu 'alaik*). Other than that, wherever Ṣalāh and Salām is recited in absentia, then, the use of the third person form has been reported from the Ṣaḥābah, Tabi'in and the Imāms of the Muslim Ummah - for example: ... (*sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam* i.e.May Allah send mercy and peace to him.- as fully demonstrated by books of Ḥadīth at large.

The wisdom behind the aforesaid method of Ṣalāh and Salām

The outcome of the method of Ṣalāh and Salām which stands proved from the blessed words spoken by him and demonstrated practically through his deeds is no other but that all of us in the Muslim Ummah should pray to Allah Ta'ālā for mercy, peace and safety for him. At this point, a question is worth noting. Is it not that the verse required us to personally fulfill the right of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that he be revered and honored, but the method proposed was that we pray to Allah? Embedded here is the hint that fulfilling the due right of honoring and obeying the Holy Prophet ﷺ was not within the power and control of any of us, therefore, it was made mandatory for us that we should supplicate before Allah Ta'ālā. (Rūḥ-ul- Ma'ānī)

The injunctions of Ṣalāh and Salām

In the last *Qa'dah* (sitting position) of the prescribed prayers, (*namāz* or Ṣalāh), the saying of درود شریف (Ṣalāh, that is, the noble *durūd*) is Sunnah Mu'akkadah (emphasized Sunnah) according to the majority of the Imāms. But, with Imām Shafi'ī and Imām Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, it is *wājib* (necessary). If abandoned, it becomes necessary,according to them, to make *namāz* or Ṣalāh all over again.

Related Rulings

1. When someone mentions the name of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, or hears someone mentioning it, reciting the words of sending Ṣalāh (the noble *durūd*) becomes *wājib* (obligatory) on him or her. This is a point of

consensus among the majority of Muslim jurists. The reason is that there are warnings in Ḥadīth against not reciting the noble durud when his blessed name is being referred. According to Jami' of Tirmidhī, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: رَغِمَ اَنفُ رَجُلٍ ذُكِرْتُ عِندَهُ، فَلَمْ يُصَلِّ عَلَيَّ : "Disgraced is the man before whom I am mentioned, yet he does not send Ṣalāh (Durūd) on me". (Tirmidhī calls this Ḥadīth 'Ḥasan', and Ibn-us- Sunni reports it with strong authorities).

And in another Ḥadīth it has been said: اَلْبَخِيلُ مَنْ ذُكِرْتُ عِندَهُ، فَلَمْ يُصَلِّ عَلَيَّ "A miser is he before whom I am mentioned yet he does not send Ṣalāh (Durūd) on me". (reported by Tirmidhī who rated it as 'Ḥasan Ṣaḥīḥ').

2. If his blessed mention is made repeatedly in a single sitting, reciting the Ṣalāh (Durūd) only once may discharge the obligation. But, the desirable (*mustaḥabb*) thing is to recite the noble Durud every time one makes his blessed mention himself, or hears someone else make it. Who can claim to mention the name of the Holy Prophet ﷺ more frequently than the scholars of the Ḥadīth? Their function is nothing but to narrate the aḥādīth of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in which they have to mention his name repeatedly. Still, their consistent practice was to recite or write the Ṣalāh each and every time. All books of Ḥadīth bear testimony to this fact. In doing so, they never bothered about this incidence of repetition of Ṣalāh and Salām which would increase the volume of the book in a sizable measure, because fairly often, there come very short aḥadīth in which his blessed name finds mention after every one or two lines - and at places, it appears more than once within one single line - still, these respected scholars and experts of Ḥadīth never abandon or ignore Ṣalāh and Salām anywhere.

3. The way it is Wājib (necessary) to say Ṣalāh and Salām vocally at the time one makes his blessed mention verbally, similarly, it is also wajib to write Ṣalāh and Salām with the pen when one uses it at the time of writing. In this case, there are people who would abbreviate its words and get away by writing صلعم (of which, "SAW" is a counterpart). This is not enough. One should write the full Ṣalāh and Salām (that is: صلی الله علیه وسلم : Ṣallallāhu 'alaihi wa sallam).

4. At the time his blessed mention is being made, the better, higher and more desirable choice is no other but that both Ṣalāh and Salām be

recited and written. But, should someone take one of these, that is, only Ṣalāh or only Salām, as sufficient, then, it is no sin in the sight of the majority of Muslim jurists. Shaykh-ul-Islām Nawawī and others have declared it as *makrūh* (reprehensible) to take only one as sufficient. Ibn Ḥajar Al-Haithami said that by Karāhah (reprehensibility) they mean its being Khilāf-ul-awla (contrary to the preferred choice) which is known as *Makrūh Tanzīhī* (not desirable). And the consistent practice of the *'ulama'* of the Muslim Ummah bears testimony to the fact that they invariably put these together while, on some occasions, they would go by only one as well.

5. Using the word: صلوٰة (Ṣalāh) for anyone other than prophets عليهم السلام is not permissible in the sight of the majority of 'Ulama'. In his Sunan, Imām Baihaqi has reported the *fatwā* of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ as follows: لاَيُصَلّٰى عَلٰى اَحَدٍ اِلاَّ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ لٰكِنْ يدعىٰ لِلْمُسْلِمِيْنَ وَالْمُسْلِمٰتِ بِالْاِسْتِغْفَارِ (Ṣalāh is not sent upon any one except the Holy Prophet ﷺ but prayer is made for Muslim men and Muslim women to seek forgiveness for them.)

With Imām Shafi'ī, using the word: صَلوٰة (Ṣalāh) for any one other than a prophet is perennially Makrūh (reprehensible, repugnant). Imām Abū Ḥanifah and his pupils also hold the same view. However, it is permissible that after saying Ṣalāh for the Holy Prophet, some other people are also included in the same sentence, like his family members ('Āl), Companions and all believers.

And Imām Juwaini said that the rule about the word: صَلوٰة (Ṣalāh) is the same as the rule about the word: سَلاَم (Salām), since it is not correct to use it for someone other than a prophet - except that one says اَلسَّلاَمُ عَلَيْكُمْ (*as-salamu-'alaikum*) as a greeting while addressing someone. This is permissible, and Masnūn. But, saying or writing: عليه السلام (*'alaihissalām*) with the name of someone absent is not correct in the case of someone other than a prophet (Al-khaṣā'is-ul-kubrā, by Suyūṭī, v.2, p. 262)

'Allāmah Liqa'ī has quoted Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ saying: Major authentic scholars of the Muslim Ummah have gone by this view, and this is the view of Imām Mālik, Sufyān and many Muslim jurists who hold that its use is not permissible for anyone other than a prophet. This is similar to the case of the use of اللّٰه سُبْحَانَه وتعالٰى (*Subḥanahū wa Ta'ālā*) which is

particular to Almighty Allah. Thus, in the case of common Muslims - with the exception of prophets - there should be a prayer for forgiveness and pleasure from Allah. This is as it appears in the Qur'ān: رَضِيَ اللّٰهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوْا عَنْهُ (Allah is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him - 5:119, 9:100, 28:22, 98:8). (Rūḥ-ul- Ma'ānī)

A detailed discussion about the injunctions of Ṣalāh and Salām appears in the treatise *Tanqīḥ-ul-kalām fī Aḥkām-is-Ṣalāh was-salām* written by this humble author. It was published as part of the commentary on Sūrah Al-Aḥzāb in the major work Aḥkām-ul- Qur'ān in Arabic.

Verses 57 - 58

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يُؤْذُوْنَ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ لَعَنَهُمُ اللّٰهُ فِى الدُّنْيَا وَالْاٰخِرَةِ وَاَعَدَّلَهُمْ عَذَابًا مُّهِيْنًا ﴿٥٧﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ يُؤْذُوْنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَالْمُؤْمِنٰتِ بِغَيْرِ مَا اكْتَسَبُوْا فَقَدِ احْتَمَلُوْا بُهْتَانًا وَّاِثْمًا مُّبِيْنًا ﴿٥٨﴾

Surely, those who annoy Allah and His Messenger are cursed by Allah in this world and the Hereafter, and He has prepared for them a humiliating punishment. [57] **And those who hurt believing men and believing women without their having done anything (wrong), they shall bear the burden of slander and a manifest sin.** [58]

Commentary

In the previous verses, Muslims were warned against doing what caused pain to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. But, some Muslims used to get involved into doing such things unintentionally simply because of their lack of knowledge or attention. For example, walking into his living quarters without having been invited or, in the event of an invitation to eat at the house, coming in and sitting there much earlier than the time set for it or, once the meals were over, just keep hanging at the house talking to each other and keep delaying their due departure. Upon this, a warning has been served in the verse: يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَاتَدْخُلُوْا بُيُوْتَ النَّبِيِّ (O those who believe, do not enter the houses of the Prophet - 33:53). This was the pain caused to the Holy Prophet ﷺ without any volition or intention, simply by negligence. On this, only a warning was considered sufficient.

Mentioned in the two verses cited above is the pain that was caused to him intentionally by the disbelievers and hypocrites. It is for this reason that Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thanāvī has parenthetically added the word: قصدا (*qaṣdan*: intentionally) at this place in his abridged summary which includes many a physical pain caused to him at the hands of disbelievers on different occasions as well as the emotional ones that were caused to him in the form of taunts and insults and false accusations against his blessed wives. The cited verses also gives a warning of Divine curse and punishment to those who cause such pains to him by intention.

Although, in the beginning of the verse, warning is given to those who cause pain to Allah (Surely, those who cause pain to Allah... 33:57), while Allah Ta'ālā is beyond any effect or impression, and no one can cause pain to Him in real terms, yet the deeds that usually cause pain to others have been referred to as 'causing pain to Allah.'

Leading authorities of Tafsīr, however, differ in defining the acts that are termed here as 'causing pain to Allah'. Some of them have maintained that these are the words and deeds about which it has been specifically declared in the spoken aḥādīth of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that they cause pain to Allah Ta'ālā. For example, it is mentioned in a Ḥadīth that those who curse the 'time' cause pain to Allah.The background of this Ḥadīth is that the people in the days of ignorance used to blame the 'time' for all sorts of accidents and sufferings, because they believed that the 'time' is the real cause of all happenings in this world. Therefore whenever they faced a suffering, they used to curse and hurl abuses to the 'time', while in fact the real doer of all acts is none but Allah Ta'ālā, and in this context their curse and abuses would turn to Him. It is therefore mentioned in the of Divine curse and punishment Ḥadīth that this behavior causes pain to Allah Ta'ālā. Moreover, as it appears in Ḥadīth narrations, making pictures of living creatures cause pain to Allah Ta'ālā. the expression of 'causing pain to Allah' would be referring to these very words and deeds.

And other authorities of Tafsīr said that the real purpose at this place is to warn against causing pain to the Holy Prophet ﷺ . But, it has been termed in the verse as causing pain to Allah Ta'ālā, because causing pain to the Prophet ﷺ is tantamount to causing pain to Allah Ta'ālā Himself. This interpretation is supported by the context of the Qur'ān, because it is the subject of causing pain to the Holy Prophet ﷺ that was mentioned in

the text earlier and the same subject is repeated again in the forthcoming words. And that the pain caused to the Holy Prophet ﷺ turns out to be pain for Allah Ta'ālā stands proved from the narration of Sayyidnā 'Abdur-Raḥmān Ibn Mughaffal al-Muzanī رضي الله عنه given below:

قَالَ رَسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: اَللّٰهَ اَللّٰهَ فِىْ اَصْحَابِىْ لَاتَتَّخِذُوْهُمْ غَرَضًا مِنْ بَعْدِىْ فَمَنْ اَحَبَّهُمْ فَبِحُبِّىْ اَحَبَّهُمْ وَمَنْ اَبْغَضَهُمْ فَبِبُغْضِىْ اَبْغَضَهُمْ وَمَنْ اٰذٰهُمْ فَقَدْ اٰذَانِىْ وَمَنْ اٰذَانِىْ فَقَدْ اٰذَى اللّٰهَ وَمَنْ اٰذَى اللّٰهَ يُوْشِكُ اَنْ يَّاْخُذَ (ترمذی)

The Holy Prophet ﷺ said: "Fear Allah, fear Allah in the matter of my Companions. Do not make them the target of your objections and criticisms because whoever loves them loves them because of his love for me, and whoever dislikes them dislikes them because of his disliking against me, and whoever caused pain to them has definitely caused pain to me and whoever caused pain to me has definitely caused pain to Allah, and whoever caused pain to Allah, it is likely that he will be seized by Him.- (Tirmidhī)

Just as this Ḥadīth tells us that the pain inflicted on the Holy Prophet ﷺ causes pain to Allah Ta'ālā, very similarly, it also tells us that inflicting pain on any of the noble Companions or being audacious enough as to speak ill of them becomes pain caused to the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

There are several narrations relating to the background in which this verse was revealed. According to some of these, it was revealed about the false accusation made against Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا. For example, a narration from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه says: When false accusation was made against Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا, some people gathered at the home of the hypocrite, 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Ubayy and indulged in the conspiracy of giving currency to this false accusation. At that time, the Holy Prophet ﷺ complained before his noble Companions saying that the man was causing pain to him - (Maẓharī).

According to some other narrations, this verse was revealed when some hypocrites had thrown taunts at the time of the marriage of Sayyidah Ṣafiyyah رضی اللہ عنہا. However, the the fact of the matter is that this verse has been revealed concerning each such case which caused pain to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Thus, included here is the false accusation made against Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا, the taunts thrown by the

hypocrites on the occasion of the marriages of Sayyidah Safiyyah and Zainab رضی اللہ عنہا as well as calling other noble Companions bad, passing ill remarks against them or maligning them in any other way, public or private تبرّاء (*tabarrā'*).

Causing pain to the Holy Prophet ﷺ in any form or manner is kufr (infidelity)

Ruling

A person who inflicts any pain on the Holy Prophet ﷺ, suggests any fault in his person or attributes, whether expressly or in an implied manner, becomes a *kāfir* - and according to this verse (57), the curse of Allah Ta'ālā will be upon him in this world as well as in the Hereafter. (As stated by *Qāḍī Thanā'ullah in at-Tafsīr al-Mażharī*).

The second verse has declared that causing pain to any believer is also forbidden (*ḥarām*) as being a grave sin a manifest slander, but in the case of common believers the prohibition of causing pain is subjected to a condition that they should not have deserved it by committing a wrongful act. This is because, in their case it is possible that they have done something as a consequence of which causing pain to them is permissible under the dictates of the Sharī'ah, while in the case of the Allah and the Holy Prophet ﷺ it is simply impossible that causing pain to Allah and His Messenger may be justified on any ground. Therefore, no such condition is mentioned in verse 57.

Hurting or causing pain to any Muslim without a valid Islamic legal justification is forbidden (Ḥarām)

It stands proved from the cited verse (58): اَلَّذِيْنَ يُؤْذُوْنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ (And those who hurt believing men and believing women without their having done anything (wrong), they shall bear the burden of slander and a manifest sin.) that it is forbidden (Ḥarām) to cause any pain, harm or hurt any Muslim without a justification recognized by Sharī'ah. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said:

اَلْمُسْلِمُ مَنْ سَلِمَ الْمُسْلِمُوْنَ مِنْ لِّسَانِهٖ وَيَدِهٖ وَالْمُؤْمِنُ مَنْ اَمِنَهُ النَّاسُ عَلٰى دِمَآئِهِمْ وَاَمْوَالِهِمْ، رواہ الترمذی عن ابی ہریرۃؓ (مظہری)

A (true) Muslim is the one from whose tongue and hands all Muslims remain unharmed and safe. And a (true) *mu'min* (believer) is the one

from whom people remain unaffected and safe in the matter of their lives (lit., bloods) and their properties (being his or her duty to ensure that so these do) - reported by Tirmidhī from Sayyidnā Abu Hurairah ؓ. (Maẓharī)

Verses 59 - 62

يٰٓأَيُّهَا النَّبِىُّ قُلْ لِّأَزْوَاجِكَ وَبَنٰتِكَ وَنِسَآءِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ يُدْنِيْنَ عَلَيْهِنَّ مِنْ جَلَابِيْبِهِنَّ ط ذٰلِكَ أَدْنٰىٓ أَنْ يُّعْرَفْنَ فَلَا يُؤْذَيْنَ ط وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا ﴿٥٩﴾ لَئِنْ لَّمْ يَنْتَهِ الْمُنٰفِقُوْنَ وَالَّذِيْنَ فِىْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ وَّالْمُرْجِفُوْنَ فِى الْمَدِيْنَةِ لَنُغْرِيَنَّكَ بِهِمْ ثُمَّ لَا يُجَاوِرُوْنَكَ فِيْهَآ إِلَّا قَلِيْلًا ﴿٦٠﴾ مَّلْعُوْنِيْنَ ج أَيْنَمَا ثُقِفُوْٓا أُخِذُوْا وَقُتِّلُوْا تَقْتِيْلًا ﴿٦١﴾ سُنَّةَ اللّٰهِ فِى الَّذِيْنَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ ج وَلَنْ تَجِدَ لِسُنَّةِ اللّٰهِ تَبْدِيْلًا ﴿٦٢﴾

O prophet, tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers that they should draw down their shawls over them. That will make it more likely that they are recognized, hence not teased. And Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [59] **If the hypocrites and those having malady in their hearts and the ones who spread rumors in Madinah do not stop (their evil deeds), We will certainly stir you up against them, then they shall no longer live in it as your neighbors, but for a little while,** [60] **(and that too in a state of being) accursed. Wherever they are found, they shall be seized, and shall be killed thoroughly.** [61] – **a consistent practice of Allah in the matter of those who have gone before. And you will never find a change in Allah's consistent practice.** [62]

Commentary

The previous verses have maintained that causing pain to any Muslim, man or woman, is forbidden and is a major sin, and in particular, inflicting pain on the Holy Prophet ﷺ is an act of infidelity, liable to Allah's curse. Now, there were two kinds of pain caused by the hypocrites to all Muslims and to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Preventive measures against these have been provided in the verses cited above. As a corollary, stated

there are a few additional injunctions in a certain congruity to be unfolded later on. One of these two kinds of pain caused was at the hands of vagabonds from among the general run of hypocrites who used to molest bondwomen from Muslim homes when they came out to take care of family chores. Then on occasions, they would mistreat free women under the impression that they were bondwomen because of which pain was caused to Muslims at large and to the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

On the other hand, the Sharī'ah of Islam has maintained a difference between free women and bondwomen in the matter of Ḥijāb. The limits of Ḥijāb prescribed for bondwomen are the limits observed by the free women before their *maḥrams* (marriage with whom is forbidden), for example, as leaving the face open before their *maḥrams* is permissible for free women, the same was permissible for bondwomen even when they went out of their homes, because their very job was to serve their masters, an occupation that took them out of the home repeatedly which made it difficult for them to keep their face and hands hidden. This is contrary to the case of free women who, even if they have to go out for some need, would be doing so rarely, an eventuality in which the observance of full Ḥijāb should not be difficult. Therefore, the command given to free women was that the long sheet with which they cover themselves when going out should be pulled from over their head downwards before their face, so that it does not get exposed before male strangers. Two things were accomplished thereby. It made their own Ḥijāb come out perfect while covering their faces served another purpose of distinguishing them from bondwomen, because of which they automatically became safe from being teased by wicked people. As for the arrangements made to keep bondwomen protected, the hypocrites were served with a warning to the effect that, should they fail to abstain from their low behavior, (the torment of the Hereafter aside) Allah Ta'ālā would have them punished at the hands of His Prophet and Muslims in this world as well.

The words used in the command about the Ḥijāb of free women in the verse under study (59) appear as follows: يُدْنِينَ عَلَيْهِنَّ مِنْ جَلَابِيبِهِنَّ in which the word: يُدْنِينَ (*yudnīna*) has been derived from: إِدْنَا (*idnā'*) which literally means to draw, pull or make come closer. The second word: عَلَيْهِنَّ (*'alaihinn*) means 'on' or 'over themselves' (hanging as a screen for the face). The third word: جَلَابِيب (*jalābīb*) in: جِلْبَاب (*jalābībihinn*) is the plural

form of: جِلْبَاب (*jilbāb*) which is the name of a particular long sheet. Sayyidnā Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ identified the form of this sheet as the one that is worn over the scarf (Ibn Kathīr) and Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ described its form in the words given below:

اَمَرَ اللّٰهُ نِسَآءَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ اِذَا خَرَجْنَ مِنْ بُيُوْتِهِنَّ فِىْ حَاجَةٍ اَنْ يُّغَطِّيْنَ وُجُوْهَهُنَّ مِنْ فَوْقِ رُؤُسِهِنَّ بِالْجَلَابِيْبِ وَيُبْدِيْنَ عَيْنًا وَاحِدَةً (ابن كثير)

"Allah Ta'ālā commanded women of the believers that, when they go out of their homes to take care of some need, they hide their faces with the long sheet (hanging down) from over their heads leaving only one eye open (to see the way)." - (Ibn Kathīr)

And Imām Muḥammad Ibn Sirin says: 'When I asked 'Ubaidah Salmānī ﷺ about the meaning of this verse and the nature of Ḥijāb, he demonstrated it by hiding his face with the long sheet pulled from the top of his head and left to hang in front of it - and thus, by keeping only his left eye open to see, he explained the words: *idnā'*: (bring close) and: *jilbāb* (long sheet or shawl) practically .'

'To have the long sheet come from over the head and hand on, or in front of, the face' which appears in the statement of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ and 'Ubaidah Salmani رحم الله تعالیٰ is the explanation (Tafsīr) of the Qur'ānic word: عَلَيْهِنَّ (*'alaihinn*: over them), that is, the sense of bringing the sheet close over them is to let the sheet come from over the head and hang on, or in front of, the face.

This verse commands the hiding of the face with ample clarity which comprehensively supports what has been stated under the commentary on the first verse of Ḥijāb appearing earlier. There it was said that, though the face and the palms of the hands are not included under satr as such but, under the apprehension of *fitnah*, hiding these too is necessary. Only situations of compulsion stand exempted.

A necessary point of clarification

This verse instructs free women to observe Ḥijāb in a particular manner, that is, they should hide their face by bringing the sheet from over the head to hang on, or in front of, the face so that they could be recognized as distinct from bondwomen in general, and thus could stay protected from the *fitnah* of wicked people. The statement referred to immediately earlier has already made it very clear that it never means

that Islam has allowed some difference to exist between free women and bondwomen in the matter of providing protection to the chastity and honor, and has protected free women and left bondwomen (to fend for themselves). Instead, the truth of the matter is that this difference was made by these wicked and low people themselves, as they simply did not dare act high-handedly against free women, but chose to tease bondwomen. The Sharī'ah of Islam took a functional advantage from this difference put into practice by them by ordering the free women to distinguish themselves, so that the majority of women becomes automatically protected through their own standing conduct in this matter. As far as the matter of bondwomen is concerned, the protection of their chastity and honor is as much necessary in Islam as that of free women. But, it could not be carried out except by using the legal authority. So, the next verse spells out that those who violate the law will not be forgiven - in fact, as and where they are found, they will be caught and killed. This is what provided a security shield for the chastity and honor of bondwomen as well.

This submission makes it clear that the interpretation offered in this verse by 'Allāmah Ibn Ḥazm and others - as different from the majority of scholars and in an effort to escape the doubt mentioned above - is something just no necessary. A doubt could have come up only when no arrangement was made for the protection of bondwomen.

A person who turns an apostate (*murtadd*) after having embraced Islam is killed in punishment

Two mischiefs made by the hypocrites have been mentioned in the cited verse and it has been said that should they fail to abstain from indulging in these any further, the punishment they shall face will be: مَلْعُوْنِيْنَ اَيْنَمَا ثُقِفُوْٓا اُخِذُوْا وَقُتِّلُوْا تَقْتِيْلًا (Wherever they are found, they shall be seized, and shall be killed thoroughly - 61). This punishment is not meant for disbelievers at large. Numerous textual authorities from the Qur'ān and Sunnah bear it out that this is not the law of the Sharī'ah of Islam for disbelievers. In fact, the law is that they should first be invited to embrace Islam along with sincere efforts to remove any doubts they may have. If, even then, they elect not to enter the fold of Islam, they should be asked to live as Dhimmī subjects of the Muslim state. If they accept that, the protection of their life, property and honor becomes obligatory on Muslims very much like that of Muslims themselves. Yes, if there are

those who do not accept this too, and choose the option of fighting, then, the command is to fight back against them.

The reason why this punishment to seize and kill them has been awarded in an absolute sense in the present verse is because this matter related to the hypocrites who used to call themselves Muslims - and when a Muslim starts demonstrating open hostility to and denial of Islam, such a person is called: *Murtadd:* apostate) in the terminology of the Sharī'ah. With such a man, there is no compromise in the Sharī'ah of Islam - except that he repents and reverts to Islam and accepts the injunctions of Islam in word and deed. Otherwise, this person will be killed as it stands proved from clear statements of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the collective practice of the noble Ṣaḥābah. The Jihād waged against the Liar Musaylimah and his cohorts with the collective approval of the Ṣaḥābah and the consequent killing of Musaylimah is sufficient as its proof. Then, in the last verse as well (62), this has been cited as the customary law and practice of Allah Ta'ālā which tells us that the punishment of an apostate (*murtadd*) in the religious laws of past prophets was no other but killing.

Some Rulings:

This verse proves that:

(1) When women have to go out of the house to take care of some need, they should go with their whole body covered with a long sheet and walk face-hidden with this sheet brought from over the head to hang on, or in front of, the face. The common '*burqa*' also serves the same purpose.

(2) Spreading rumors among Muslims that subject them to anxiety or worry or cause harm is *ḥarām* (forbidden, unlawful).

Verses 63 - 68

يَسْئَلُكَ النَّاسُ عَنِ السَّاعَةِ ط قُلْ اِنَّمَا عِلْمُهَا عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ ط وَمَا يُدْرِيْكَ
لَعَلَّ السَّاعَةَ تَكُوْنُ قَرِيْبًا ﴿٦٣﴾ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَعَنَ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ وَاَعَدَّ لَهُمْ
سَعِيْرًا ﴿٦٤﴾ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَآ اَبَدًا ج لَايَجِدُوْنَ وَلِيًّا وَّلَا نَصِيْرًا ﴿٦٥﴾
يَوْمَ تُقَلَّبُ وُجُوْهُهُمْ فِى النَّارِ يَقُوْلُوْنَ يٰلَيْتَنَآ اَطَعْنَا اللّٰهَ وَاَطَعْنَا
الرَّسُوْلَا ﴿٦٦﴾ وَقَالُوْا رَبَّنَآ اِنَّآ اَطَعْنَا سَادَتَنَا وَكُبَرَآءَنَا فَاَضَلُّوْنَا

السَّبِيْلَا ﴿٦٧﴾ رَبَّنَآ اٰتِهِمْ ضِعْفَيْنِ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ وَالْعَنْهُمْ لَعْنًا كَبِيْرًا ﴿٦٨﴾

People ask you about the Hour (i.e.the Day of Judgment). Say," Its knowledge is only with Allah." And what can let you know? It may be that the Hour is near. [63]

Surely, Allah has cursed the infidels, and has prepared for them a flaming fire, [64] **wherein they will live for ever, finding no one to protect or to help.** [65] **The Day their faces will be rolled in the fire, they will say, " Oh, would that we had obeyed Allah and obeyed the Messenger !".** [66] **And they will say, " Our Lord, we obeyed our chiefs and our elders, and they made us go astray from the path.** [67] **Our Lord, give them twice the punishment, and send a curse on them, an enormous curse.** [68]

Commentary

Those hostile to Allah and the Messenger were warned of and alerted to curse and punishment in the present world and in the Hereafter while many factions among the disbelievers, in their own place, simply denied the eventuality of any Qiyāmah (Doomsday) or 'Ākhirah (Hereafter) and, because of their denial, used to mockingly ask: When would that Qiyāmah come? An answer to their question has been given in the cited verse, that the Doomsday may be in near future. It has been said so because nobody knows the exact date of the Doomsday, and therefore everyone should be prepared for it as if it were very close. Another reason for its being declared as close is that after facing the horrible incidents of Qiyāmah the entire worldly life of thousands of years will seem to be very short (and the Qiyāmah very close to it).

Verses 69 - 71

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَاتَكُوْنُوْا كَالَّذِيْنَ اٰذَوْا مُوْسٰى فَبَرَّاَهُ اللّٰهُ مِمَّا قَالُوْاؕ وَكَانَ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ وَجِيْهًا ﴿٦٩﴾ يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَقُوْلُوْا قَوْلًا سَدِيْدًا ﴿٧٠﴾ يُّصْلِحْ لَكُمْ اَعْمَالَكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْلَكُمْ

ذُنُوبَكُمْ ۗ وَمَن يُطِعِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ فَازَ فَوْزًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٧١﴾

O those who believe, do not be like those who caused pain to Musa, then Allah cleared him of what they said. And he was honorable in the sight of Allah. [69] **O those who believe, fear Allah, and speak what is straight forward.** [70] **Allah will correct your deeds for your benefit, and forgive for you your sins. And whoever obeys Allah and His Messenger achieves a great success.** [71]

Commentary

That causing pain to Allah and His Messenger brings fatal consequences was the subject of the previous verse. The present verse instructs Muslims that they should particularly guard against falling into any stance of hostility to Allah and His Messenger because it causes pain to them.

In the first verse (69), by mentioning an event relating to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, an event in which his people had caused pain to him, Muslims have been warned that they should never do something like that. From this, it does not necessarily follow that Muslims may have actually done so. Instead of that, by relating this incident, they have been forewarned as a matter of precaution. As for the incident of some Ṣaḥābah reported in a narration, it is likely that they would have not realized at that time that the word being said would cause pain to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. That a Ṣaḥābī would intentionally cause pain to the Holy Prophet ﷺ is not possible. Whatever incidents of intentional causing of pain there are, they all relate to hypocrites. Then, by citing the incident relating to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has himself explained the meaning of this verse as it has been reported by Imām al-Bukhārī from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ in Kitabut-Tafsīr and Kitabul-Anbiya'. There it is said that Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was a man of modesty and very particular in keeping his body properly covered. No one had the occasion to see his body uncovered. Whenever he needed a bath, he would take it inside a screened place. Conversely, his people, the Bani Isrā'il, had a common custom of their own. Among them, men would bathe naked before everybody. So, some of them started saying that the reason why Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام would not take a bath before anyone is that he had

some defect in his body, either leprosy or enlarged testicles or some other evil-fated deformity because of which he preferred to remain hidden. Allah Ta'ālā willed that Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام be cleared from the attribution of such defects. On a certain day, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام went in for a bath in private while he put off his clothes and placed these on a rock. When done with his bath, he moved to pick up his clothes from the rock. At that time, this rock (moving under Divine command) started running away. Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, with his staff in hand, went after the rock saying: ثَوْبِى حَجَرُ ثَوْبِى حَجَرُ (O rock, my clothes! O rock, my clothes!). But the rock kept moving until it stopped at a place crowded with the people of Banī Isrā'il. At that time, when the Banī Isrā'il saw Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام undressed from the head to the feet, they saw a body that was perfect (having no defect attributed by them). Thus, Allah Ta'ālā made it clear before everyone that Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was free from these supposed defects. The rock had stopped at this place. Once Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام had picked up his clothes and put these on, he started beating up the rock with his staff. "By Allah," said the Holy Prophet ﷺ "the strikes of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام against the rock left some three or four or five traces on it!"

After having recounted this event, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: This is what this verse of the Qur'ān means, that is, the verse under study: كَالَّذِيْنَ اٰذَوْا مُوْسٰى (Like those who caused pain to Mūsā.. - 33:69). The explanation of the pain caused to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام in this incident has been reported from the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself. There is yet another story relating to the pain caused to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام reported from the noble Ṣaḥābah which is also necessarily appended to it. But, the weightier Tafsīr or explanation is the the one that is present in the Ḥadīth reported from the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself.

At the end of verse 69, it was said: وَكَانَ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ وَجِيْهًا (And he was honorable in the sight of Allah). The Arabic word used for Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام *wajih* denotes the honor and elegance of someone who deserves regard and consideration. When used with: *'indallāh*: in the sight of Allah), it would mean a person whose prayer is answered by Allah Ta'ālā and whose wish He does not turn down. Hence, the station of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام as a person whose prayers were answered (popularly known as: *mustajab-ud-da'awāt*) is proved from many events mentioned in the

Qur'ān where he prayed to Allah for something and He answered it the way he wanted it to be. Most unique of these is the prayer he made about Sayyidnā Hārūn (Aaron) عليه السلام where he wished that he be made a prophet. Allah Ta'ālā accepted his prayer and made him a co-prophet with Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام - although, the high office of prophethood is not given to someone on someone's recommendation. (Ibn Kathīr)

Customarily, Allah Ta'ālā keeps prophets free from physical defects causing aversion

In this event, Allah Ta'ālā has demonstrated such unusual concern to have Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام absolved of the blame imputed to him by his people which took no less than a miracle whereby a rock ran away with Sayyidnā Mūsā's clothes and he, compelled by circumstances beyond his control, came out undressed before the people. This extra-ordinary care shown by Allah Ta'ālā to free his prophet from this blame points out to the fact that Allah Ta'ālā keeps even the bodies of His prophets generally free and pure from defects that appear repulsive and undignified - as it stands proved from the Ḥadīth of Bukhārī that all prophets are lineally high-born. The reason is that it would be hard to agree to listen to, accept and follow someone from the line and family regarded by people as customarily low. Similarly, the history of prophets does not bear out that any prophet was blind, deaf, dumb or handicapped. As for the case of Sayyidnā Ayyūb عليه السلام, it cannot be used to raise any objection, for what happened to him was the dictate of Divine wisdom, a particular trial, a temporary discomfort which was eliminated later on. Allah knows best.

يَآيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَقُوْلُوْا قَوْلًا سَدِيْدًا ﴿۷۰﴾ يُّصْلِحْ لَكُمْ اَعْمَالَكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْلَكُمْ ذُنُوْبَكُمْ

O those who believe, fear Allah, and speak what is straight forward. Allah will correct your deeds for your benefit, and forgive for you your sins. (33:70-71)

The original word used in the text for "what is straight forward" is '*sadīd*' which has been explained by some exegetes as what is the truth. Others explain it as straight, while still others, as correct. Quoting all of these, Ibn Kathīr calls all these true (on the beam hitting the target). The Holy Qur'ān has chosen this word, instead of *ṣādiq* or *mustaqīm*, because the present word holds all these attributes of ideal speech within itself. It

was for this reason that Kāshifī said in Rūḥ-ul-Bayān: *Qawl Sadīd* is the saying of what is true having no trace of falsity; correct having no trace of error, right thing being no joke or fun; spoken softly, not harshly.

Correct use of one's power of speech is an effective source of correcting all deeds issuing forth from other parts of the body

The basic command given to all Muslims in this verse is: اِتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ (Take to *taqwa*, that is, fear Allah and act accordingly). The reality of *taqwā* lies in one's total obedience to all Divine injunctions whereby one carries out everything enjoined and abstains from everything declared prohibited and repugnant. And it is obvious that doing so is no easy task for human beings. Therefore, immediately after the main guideline of اِتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ. (*ittaqullāh*: Fear Allah and act accordingly), there appears an instruction to start doing something particular, that is, the correction and reform of one's speech. Though, this too is nothing but a part of *taqwa* itself, yet it is one such part of it that, should this thing come under control, all other remaining components of the comprehensive requirement of *taqwā* would start becoming achievable automatically, as the verse itself has promised that, as a result of one's making his or her speech truthful and straight, Allah will correct his deeds. In other words it means that, 'should you succeed in holding your tongue and avoiding errors of speech and get used to saying what is correct, straight and right, Allah Ta'ālā will correct every other deed you do and make all of them better.' Then, concluding the verse, another promise was made and it was said: يُصْلِحْ لَكُمْ اَعْمَالَكُمْ (and He will forgive for you your sins). It means: 'One who gains control over his tongue, learns to harness his or her power of speech and becomes used to saying what is true and right, then, Allah Ta'ālā will take care of the rest of his or her deeds, have them corrected and made better as well as forgive any errors or slips made therein.'

Injunctions of the Qur'ān were made easy to follow

Deliberation in the general style of the noble Qur'ān shows that at a place where acting upon a Qurā'nic injunction seems to be difficult, a method has also been suggested along with it to make it easy. And since *taqwā* is the essence of the entire religion of Islam and fulfilling its dictates on all counts is very hard indeed, therefore, speaking generally, wherever the command to observe *taqwā* (*'ittaqullāh'*) has been given, there appears soon after, the suggestion to do something that facilitates

acting in accordance with the rest of the elements of Taqwā, something that comes from the side of Allah as His grace and *taufīq*. An apt and ready at hand example of it lies in this very verse where the suggestion of: قُوۡلُوۡا قَوۡلاً سَدِيۡدًا (say the right thing) follows soon after the command of: اِتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ (*ittaqullāh*: Fear Allah). And immediately earlier too, in verse 69, after saying: *ittaqullāh*:(Fear Allah), it was said: "Do not be like those who caused pain to Mūsā) whereby people were reminded that causing pain to righteous and favoured servants of Allah is the most serious impediment in the achievement of *taqwa* and, once this impediment was removed, the way to *taqwā* will become easy.

Similarly in another verse the command to observe Taqwā has been supplemented by the direction of having the company of 'truthful persons' (9.118) which means that the easiest way to acquire the quality of *taqwā* is to remain in the company of righteous people. At another place the command of *taqwā* is followed by the direction of pondering on what one has sent ahead for the Hereafter, because it leads one to observe Taqwā (59.18).

Saying what is right leads to doing what is right both here and Hereinafter

Shāh 'Abdul-Qādir of Delhi رحمه الله تعالىٰ has translated this verse in a way that leads to the conclusion that the promise of correction and betterment of deeds made to those who get used to speaking in straight forward manner is not restricted to religious deeds alone. In fact, everything one does in this material world is also included therein. Anyone who gets used to saying the right thing - that is, never lies, speaks with deliberation without erring or wavering, does not deceive anyone and does not say what would hurt - shall find his spiritual deeds for his eternal life in the Hereafter, also come out right for him. As for the things he must do to live in this mortal world, these too will turn for the better. (The Urdu speaking readers should refer to the original translation of Shāh Abdul Qādir to have a taste of its sweetness-editor)

Verses 72 - 73

إِنَّا عَرَضۡنَا الۡاَمَانَةَ عَلَى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالۡاَرۡضِ وَالۡجِبَالِ فَاَبَيۡنَ اَنۡ يَّحۡمِلۡنَهَا

وَاَشْفَقْنَ مِنْهَا وَحَمَلَهَا الْاِنْسَانُ ؕ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ ظَلُوْمًا جَهُوْلًا ﴿۷۲﴾ لِّيُعَذِّبَ اللّٰهُ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ وَالْمُنٰفِقٰتِ وَالْمُشْرِكِيْنَ وَالْمُشْرِكٰتِ وَيَتُوْبَ اللّٰهُ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَالْمُؤْمِنٰتِ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا ﴿۷۳﴾

We did offer the Trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused to bear its burden and were afraid of it, and man picked it up. Surely, he was unjust (to himself), unaware (of the end), [72] **with the result that Allah will punish the hypocrites, men and women, and the Mushriks, men and women, and will accept the repentance of the believing men and women. Surely Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful.** [73]

Commentary

Emphasis has been placed in this entire Sūrah on the reverence of the Messenger of Allah and on the obligation of obeying him. Now in the later part of the Sūrah, the great station and rank of this obedience has been identified. Here, the obedience to Allah and His Messenger and the implementation of their commands has been expressed through the word: *amanah*: (Trust), the reason of which will appear later.

What does "*amanah*" mean?

What is meant by the word: *amānah* at this place? many views of the leading exegetes among Ṣaḥabah and Tabi'īn, and others, have been reported to answer this question. Different things have been held to be the '*amānah*', such as, Islamic Legal Obligations, Protection of Chastity, Properties held under Trust, Removal of Impurity through having bath, Ṣalāh, Zakāh Fasting, Ḥajj etc. Therefore, the majority of commentators have said that all areas of religious conduct are included in it. (Qurṭubī)

In Tafsīr Maẓharī, it was said: The whole package of all obligations and prohibitions set by the Sharī'ah is *amanah*. In Al-Baḥr-ul-Muḥīṭ, Abū Ḥayyān said:

اَلظَّاهِرُ اَنَّهَا كُلُّ مَايُؤْتَمَنُ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ اَمْرٍ وَنَهْيٍ وَشَانُ دِيْنٍ وَدُنْيَا وَالشَّرْعُ كُلُّهٗ اَمَانَةٌ وَهٰذَا قَوْلُ الْجُمْهُوْرِ

Apparently every thing one is trusted with (by the Sharī'ah) from obligations and prohibitions, and every state of life which relates to this world or the Hereafter - in fact, the Sharī'ah, all

of it, is *amanah*. And this is the position the majority of Muslim scholars has taken.

In short, *amānah* (trust) means to be obligated with the precepts and injunctions of the Sharī'ah and being under command to carry these out. Once this is accomplished to the best of one's ability, the eternal blessings of Jannah (Paradise) have been promised, and on any contravention or shortcoming, there shall be the punishment of Jahannam (Hell). Some early commentators have said that *amānah* (trust) refers to the capability of fulfilling the heavy responsibility placed by Divine injunctions, something that depends on a particular degree of reason and awareness - and moving forward therein and deserving Divine vice-regency depends on this very capability. The species of creation that do not have this capability, no matter how high or superior their placement, simply cannot advance from their given place. For this reason, the skies and the earth, even angels, have no inherent ability to go forward from the place they are in. Everything from these creatures is restricted to whatever station of nearness (to the Creator) it has. Their state is aptly pointed to in a verse of the Qur'ān where it was said: مَامِنَّآ اِلَّا لَهٗ مَقَامٌ مَّعْلُوْمٌ (There is no one among us who does not have a known station - As-Ṣāffāt, 37:164)

Under this sense of *amānah* (trust), all narrations of Ḥadīth about *amānah* turn out to be symmetrical and the sayings of the majority of commentators also converge on almost a mutual agreement.

In the Ṣaḥīḥs of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, and in the Musnad of Aḥmad, there is a narration from Sayyidnā Ḥudhaifah رضي الله عنه saying that, 'the Holy Prophet ﷺ had told us about two things. One of these we have already witnessed with our own eyes. The unfolding of the other is still awaited. The first thing was that, "First of all, *amānah* was sent down into the hearts of the men of faith. Then, the Qur'ān was revealed and then the people of faith acquired knowledge from the Qur'ān, and practice from the Sunnah".

After that, he narrated the other Ḥadīth as follows: "A time will come when no sooner does a man rise from sleep, amanah (trust) will be confiscated from out of his heart leaving some of its traces behind, just like you would roll down an ember from the fire on your feet (and this ember will certainly roll away but) its traces will survive in the form of

inflammation or blister - although, no constituent element of the fire itself is left out there. So much so that people will enter into mutual transactions and contracts, but no one will fulfill the obligations of amanah due against him and (there will be such a dearth of trustworthy men that) people will be found saying that there is a trustworthy man in such and such tribe!"

In this Ḥadīth *amānah* has been declared to be something which relates to the heart and this alone has the ability of fulfilling the obligations and duties imposed by the Sharī'ah of Islam.

And according to a narration of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Amr ﵁ appearing in the Musnad of Aḥmad, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said, "There are four things which, if you come to have them, and you have nothing out of so many worldly things, you are still no loser. (Those four things are): Guarding of trust, telling the truth, good morals and lawful sustenance. (From Ibn Kathīr)

An investigation into the way the 'trust' was 'offered'

In the cited verse (72), it was said that Allah Ta'ālā placed this *amānah* (trust) before the heavens, the earth and the mountains and all of them refused to bear the burden of this responsibility shrinking from it out of the danger of not being able to fulfill its due right - but, man did.

Here, it is worth pondering that the heavens, the earth and the mountains that are inanimate and, obviously devoid of knowledge and consciousness, how then would it be possible to rationalize the presentation of such an offer before them and that of their response to it? Some early commentators have taken this to be a figure of speech - as the noble Qur'ān has said elsewhere by way of comparison: لَوْ اَنْزَلْنَا هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنَ عَلٰى جَبَلٍ لَّرَاَيْتَهٗ خَاشِعًا مُّتَصَدِّعًا مِّنْ خَشْيَةِ اللّٰهِ (Had We sent down this Qur'ān to a mountain, you would have seen it humbled, burst apart out of awe for Allah - Al-Ḥashr 59:21). It is obvious that this example has been given as a matter of supposition - not that it was really revealed to or on a mountain. So, these commentators have taken the 'offer' of 'trust' to the heavens etc. also in a figurative or metaphorical sense.

But, in the sight of the majority of Muslim scholars, it is not correct, because in the verse of Sūrah Al-Ḥashr, the Qur'ān has itself made it clear, by initiating the statement with the word: 'if,'that it is just a

hypothetical statement. On the contrary, the present verse is an affirmation of an incident in a descriptive style, and it is not permissible to take it in figurative or metaphorical sense without any proof. And if it is argued that these things have no senses and therefore no question can be asked from them and no answer is expected from them, then this argument stands rejected on the basis of other express statements of the Qur'ān. The reason is that the Qur'ān has explicitly said: وَإِنْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا يُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِهٖ (And there is not a single thing that does not extol His purity and praise - Al-Isra', 17:44). And it is obvious that knowing Allah Ta'ālā, realizing that He is the Creator, the Master, the highest and the best, and glorifying Him consequently is something not possible without knowledge and consciousness. Therefore, it stands proved from this verse that knowledge and consciousness do exist in all elements of creation to the extent that these are also there in what is considered to be inanimate. On the basis of this knowledge and consciousness, these can be addressed and a response can be expected from them. Their response could take different forms. It could take the form of words and letters and - it is not rationally impossible - that Allah Ta'ālā could bestow on the heavens and the earth and the mountains the functional ability to verbalize and speak. Therefore, in the sight of the majority of the learned among the Muslim Ummah, the phenomenon of this *'ard* of *amānah* (the placement or offer of trust) came to pass in reality and these entities expressed their inability to bear the burden of this responsibility - also in reality. There is no simile or metaphor at work here.

The acceptance of the offer of the 'trust' was optional, not mandatory

A question may be asked here. When Allah Ta'ālā personally made the offer of this great trust before the heavens and the earth and the mountains, how could they dare refuse it? If they had contravened the Divine order, they would have been destroyed totally. In addition to that, the obedience of the heavens and the earth to divine orders is also proved from the verse: اَتَيْنَا طَآئِعِيْنَ (we come in obedience - Fuṣṣilat, 41:11) which means: When Allah Ta'ālā ordered the heavens and the earth to come to implement His command, be it willingly or unwilling, both of these responded by saying that they were pleased to come to obey His command.

The answer is that, in the cited verse (41:11), the command given had a

mandatory command with it where it was also said that they were to come with pleasure, or without it but, no matter what is the case, they had to obey the command. This is contrary to the present verse featuring the offer of the trust where following its presentation, they were given the choice of taking or not taking this awesome responsibility.

Ibn Kathīr has, with the support of various authorities, reported from several Ṣaḥābah and Tabi'īn - Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās, Ḥasan al-Baṣri, Mujāhid and others - the following details of this offer of the trust:

'What Allah Ta'ālā offered first to the heavens, then to the earth, and then to the mountains as a matter of choice was: Would you undertake to carry out the responsibility imposed by this trust (obedience to given injunctions) from Us against a return fixed for it?' Everyone asked, 'What is the return?' It was said, 'If you fulfill the demands of this trust (obedience to given injunctions) to the best of your ability, you will have the best of reward, and particularly the honor of having nearness to Allah, and if you failed to implement these injunctions, or fell short in it, you will be punished.' Hearing this, all these huge big bodies responded by saying, 'O our Lord, we are operating under Your command even now. But (now when we have been given a choice), we find ourselves weak and unable to bear the burden of this heavy responsibility. As reward, we do not want it, and as for punishment, we cannot bear it.' And Tafsīr Qurṭubī, with reference to Hakim Tirmidhi, has reported from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: '(After the offer of the trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, and after their response), Allah Ta'ālā addressed Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام and said: 'We offered Our trust to the heavens and the earth but they expressed their inability to bear the burden of this responsibility. Now, would you assume this responsibility knowing that which goes with it?' 'Ādam عليه السلام asked, 'O Lord, what is it that goes with it?' The answer was: 'If you succeeded in fulfilling the demands of this trust to your best (that is, remained obedient to your best), you will be rewarded (which will be in the form of the nearness and pleasure of Allah and the eternal bliss of Jannah (Paradise), and if you let this trust go to waste, you will be punished.' 'Ādam عليه السلام (eager to advance towards nearness and pleasure of Allah Ta'ālā) went ahead and assumed this responsibility. However, from the moment he assumed the burden of this heavy trust, not much time had passed, not even that much as is between the Ṣalāh of 'Aṣr and Ẓuhr,

within which the Satan snared him into that well-known slip and he was made to leave Jannah.

During which period of time did this event of the offer of trust take place?

From the narration of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ which has appeared immediately above, it seems that this offer of trust made to the heavens and the earth and the mountains was made before the creation of 'Ādam. Then, following the creation of Sayyidnā 'Ādam ﷺ, it was also said before him that this trust was also offered to the heavens and the earth earlier, and that they did not have the ability to bear the burden of this responsibility, therefore, they excused themselves out of it.

And what is apparent here is that this event of the offer of trust came before the Covenant of Eternity, that is, the Covenant of 'Alast because the Covenant of أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ (Am I not your Lord?) is a phase of this very acceptance to carry out the responsibility of fulfilling the trust - and stands for taking a solemn pledge to hold and discharge the responsibilities enjoined by an office.

For vicegerency on the earth, the ability to bear the responsibilities of the great trust was necessary

As eternally predestined, Allah Ta'ālā had already decided to appoint Sayyidnā 'Ādam ﷺ His Khalīfah (vicegerent) on the earth and this Khilafah (vicegerency) could only be entrusted with one who bears the responsibility of upholding the essential obedience to Divine injunctions - because, it is the very objective of this Khīlafah that the Law of Allah be implemented on the earth and that the creation of Allah be induced to obey Divine injunctions. Therefore, as a matter of creational imperative, Sayyidnā 'Ādam ﷺ agreed to bear the burden of the responsibility of this trust - although the inability of other humongous units of creation to bear it was already in his knowledge. (Maẓharī and Bayān-ul-Qur'ān).

In the last sentence of verse 72: إِنَّهُ كَانَ ظَلُومًا جَهُولًا : Surely, he was unjust (to himself) unaware (of the end), the word: 'Zalūm' means one who is unjust to himself, and *'jahūl'* means one who is unaware of the end. From this sentence, it is generally assumed that it has appeared here blaming man in an absolute sense, that is, so ignorant was man that he went ahead inflicting injustice upon himself by accepting to carry such a big burden of responsibility, something beyond his power. But, in the light of

explicit statements in the Qur'ān, this is not actually so because 'man' may mean either Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام or whole mankind. Now Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام is, as a prophet, protected by Allah from committing sins. The burden of responsibility which he had assumed was carried out by him duly and certainly. As a result of this, he was made a vicegerent of Allah (Khalīfatullāh) and sent to the earth. He was made the object of prostration by angels and, in the Hereafter, his station is far higher than that of the angels. And if 'man' must mean mankind, then, in this class, there are several hundred thousands of noble prophets عليهم السلام and several millions of the righteous and the men of Allah (awliya' Allah) even angels emulate - those who proved by their conduct in life that they were capable of handling and deserving this Divine trust. It was because of the basis laid out by these very noble souls, who duly vacated the rights and demands inherent in the great trust, that the Holy Qur'ān declared mankind to be the noblest of Divine creation: وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِیٓ اٰدَمَ (And We bestowed dignity on the Children of 'Ādam - Al-Isra', 17:70). This proves that neither is Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام blameworthy, nor the mankind as a whole. Therefore, commentators have said that this sentence is not there to impute a blame, rather, it appears there as the description of the actual event with regard to the most of individuals in the class. As such, the sense is that the majority of human kind proved to be *zalūm* (one who inflicts injustice upon himself) and *jahūl* (one who is unaware of the end) that failed to fulfill the rights and demands of this trust and fell into the abyss of loss. And since this was the state of affairs with the majority, therefore, it was attributed to humankind.

In short, in the verse, the two words (*Ẓalūm* and *Jahūl*) mentioned above have been used for those particular individuals among human beings who did not obey the injunctions of the Sharī'ah as they were expected to, and failed to fulfill the right entailed by the *amānah* or trust placed with them - that is, the disbelievers, hypocrites, transgressors, the wicked, and sinning Muslims of the community. This Tafsīr has been reported from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, Sayyidnā Ibn Jubayr رضي الله عنه, Ḥasan Al-Baṣri رحمه الله تعالیٰ and others. (Qurṭubī)

And there are others who have said that Ẓalūm and Jahūl has been used at this place in the sense of 'naïve', as an affectionate form of address carrying the thought that man, brimming with love for his Creator and in quest of the station of nearness to Him, simply forgot the

end of the whole thing. Similarly, these words could also be taken to have been spoken for the entire humankind. In Tafsīr Maẓharī, details of this aspect have been reported from Mujaddid Alf Thānī and other noble Ṣufīs.

لِيُعَذِّبَ اللّٰهُ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ وَالْمُنٰفِقٰتِ (with the result that Allah will punish the hypocrites, men and women, and the Mushriks, men and women, and will accept the repentance of the believing men and women. Surely Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [73]) The letter 'lam' used in the beginning of this verse is not for mentioning the cause or aim, as generally understood in common usage, but it is the lam of 'aqibah in the terminology of Arabic linguistics. It points out to the end of something, as it appears in a line of Arabic poetry which reads:

لِدُوْا لِلْمَوْتِ وَابْنُوْا لِلْخَرَابِ

'Be born only to be dead and build only to be ruined'

It does not mean that the aim of one's birth was to be dead or that the aim of constructing of a building was that it could be ruined, but it simply means that the end of everyone born is death and the end of every building is falling into ruins.

The sense of the verse is that, as a result of man's assumption of responsibility for the trust, mankind will split in two groups: (1) Disbelievers, hypocrites and others who will rebel against Divine orders and become wasters of the great 'trust'. They will be punished. (2) There will be believing men and believing women who, through their obedience to Divine injunctions, will fulfill the dictates of the trust reposed in them. They will be treated with mercy and forgiveness.

The Tafsīr of the two words: Ẓalūm and Jahūl that has been reported above from most Tafsīr authorities finds additional support in this last sentence as well - that these words are not meant for the whole mankind. In fact, they particularly refer to those individuals who wasted away the Divine trust reposed in them. And Allah, Pure and High, knows best.

The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Aḥzāb ends here
With the help of and praise for Allah Ta'ālā

Sūrah Saba'
(Sheba)

Sūrah Saba' is Makkī. It has 50 Verses and 6 Sections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 9

اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِىْ لَهٗ مَافِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِى الْاَرْضِ وَلَهُ الْحَمْدُ فِى
الْاٰخِرَةِ ؕ وَهُوَالْحَكِيْمُ الْخَبِيْرُ ﴿۱﴾ يَعْلَمُ مَا يَلِجُ فِى الْاَرْضِ وَمَا
يَخْرُجُ مِنْهَا وَمَا يَنْزِلُ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ وَمَا يَعْرُجُ فِيْهَا ؕ وَهُوَالرَّحِيْمُ
الْغَفُوْرُ ﴿۲﴾ وَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لَاتَاْتِيْنَا السَّاعَةُ ؕ قُلْ بَلٰى وَرَبِّىْ
لَتَاْتِيَنَّكُمْ ۙ عٰلِمِ الْغَيْبِ ۚ لَايَعْزُبُ عَنْهُ مِثْقَالُ ذَرَّةٍ فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَلَا
فِى الْاَرْضِ وَلَآ اَصْغَرُ مِنْ ذٰلِكَ وَلَآ اَكْبَرُ اِلَّا فِىْ كِتٰبٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿۳﴾
لِّيَجْزِىَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمْ مَّغْفِرَةٌ وَّرِزْقٌ
كَرِيْمٌ ﴿۴﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ سَعَوْا فِىْٓ اٰيٰتِنَا مُعٰجِزِيْنَ اُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مِّنْ
رِّجْزٍ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿۵﴾ وَ يَرَى الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْعِلْمَ الَّذِىْٓ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ
هُوَالْحَقَّ ۙ وَيَهْدِىْٓ اِلٰى صِرَاطِ الْعَزِيْزِ الْحَمِيْدِ ﴿۶﴾ وَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ
كَفَرُوْا هَلْ نَدُلُّكُمْ عَلٰى رَجُلٍ يُّنَبِّئُكُمْ اِذَا مُزِّقْتُمْ كُلَّ مُمَزَّقٍ ۙ اِنَّكُمْ
لَفِىْ خَلْقٍ جَدِيْدٍ ﴿۷﴾ ج اَفْتَرٰى عَلَى اللّٰهِ كَذِبًا اَمْ بِهٖ جِنَّةٌ ؕ بَلِ الَّذِيْنَ
لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ فِى الْعَذَابِ وَالضَّلٰلِ الْبَعِيْدِ ﴿۸﴾ اَفَلَمْ يَرَوْا اِلٰى

مَابَيْنَ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۭ اِنْ نَّشَاْ نَخْسِفْ بِهِمُ الْاَرْضَ اَوْنُسْقِطْ عَلَيْهِمْ كِسَفًا مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ ۭ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيَةً لِّكُلِّ عَبْدٍ مُّنِيْبٍ ﴿٩﴾

Praise be to Allah, to whom belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is on the earth. And for Him is the praise in the Hereafter. And He is the Wise, the All-Aware. [1] He knows all that goes into the earth and all that comes out therefrom, and all that comes down from the sky and all that ascends thereto. And He is the Very-Merciful, the Most-Forgiving. [2] And said those who disbelieve, "The Hour (i.e. the Day of Judgment) will not come to us." Say, "Why not? By my Lord, the knower of the Unseen, it will come to you. Nothing in the heavens and in the earth, even to the measure of a particle, can escape Him, nor is there anything smaller than that or bigger, that is not recorded in a manifest book. [3] (The Hour will come,) so that He rewards those who believed and did righteous deeds. For such people, there is forgiveness (from Allah) and a noble provision. [4] And those who strived against Our signs to defeat (the messenger), for such people there is a painful punishment of the divine wrath. [5] And those blessed with knowledge see that what is sent to you from your Lord is the truth and it guides (people) to the path of the All-Mighty, the All-Praised. [6] And the disbelievers said," Shall we point out to you a man who informs you that, when you are totally torn into pieces, you will certainly be (raised) in a new creation? [7] Has he forged a lie against Allah, or is there a madness in him?" No, but those who do not believe in the Hereafter are in torment and far astray from the right path. [8] Have they not, then, looked to the sky and the earth that lies before them and behind them? If We so will, We would make the earth swallow them up, or cause pieces of the sky fall upon them. Surely, in this there is a sign for a slave of Allah who turns to Him.[9]

Commentary

عَالِمِ الْغَيْبِ (the knower of the unseen). This is an attribute of the Rabb (Lord) in whose name an oath has been taken in verse 3. At this place, out of the many attributes of Allah Ta'ālā, the attribute of all-encompassing knowledge and the knowledge of the unseen has,

perhaps, been mentioned particularly because the text is dealing with the matter of the deniers of the day of Resurrection. The major reason why the disbelievers rejected the inevitability of Qiyāmah, the day of doom, was their inability to comprehend how the whole thing would work out. When all human beings die, and become dust, and the particles of this dust get scattered all over the world, they wondered, how would it be possible to collect all these particles, separate the particles belonging to each human being from the particles of all others, and then go on to put the relevant particles back into the frame of everyone's existence? And they took it as impossible because they had very conveniently taken the knowledge and power of Allah Ta'ālā on the analogy of their own knowledge and power! Allah Ta'ālā has told them that His knowledge encompasses the entire universe in a manner that He knows everything in the heavens and the earth to the extent that He also knows where and in what state it is. Not a single particle of what has been created remains outside His knowledge - and this comprehensive and all-encompassing knowledge is hallmark of Allah Ta'ālā. No created entity, whether an angel or prophet, can ever have such an all-encompassing knowledge that no particle of this universe remains outside it. Then, for a Being that has such an all-encompassing knowledge, why would it be difficult to reclaim the scattered particles of a human being from all over the universe, each separate from the other, and reconstitute their bodies from these once again?

لِيَجْزِىَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا

(So that He rewards those who believed - 4)

This sentence is connected with the earlier one: لَتَاْتِيَنَّكُمْ that is, al-Qiyāmah or the Doomsday is bound to come and its purpose will be to reward believers and to provide for them the best sustenance from Jannah (Paradise). And in contrast to them stand: اَلَّذِيْنَ سَعَوْا فِىْٓ اٰيٰتِنَا (5) i.e. those who made efforts to find faults with Our verses and tried to stop people from believing in them.

The word: مُعٰجِزِيْنَ which appears immediately after the verse cited above means that this effort by them was as if they would render Us helpless in seizing them and would thus go scot-free from having to be present on the last day of Qiyāmah.

The sentence that follows immediately after: أُولٰئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مِّنْ رِّجْزٍ اَلِيْمٌ means that these people shall receive punishment, a severe punishment that will be painful.

Verse 6: وَ يَرَى الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْعِلْمَ (34:6) talks about believers in contrast with those who denied the coming of the Qiyāmah. The former had put their faith in it and became the beneficiaries of the knowledge given by Allah Ta'ālā to the Holy Prophet ﷺ by revelation.

Reported in verse 7: وَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا هَلْ نَدُلُّكُمْ عَلٰى رَجُلٍ يُّنَبِّئُكُمْ اِذَا مُزِّقْتُمْ كُلَّ مُمَزَّقٍ اِنَّكُمْ لَفِيْ خَلْقٍ جَدِيْدٍ (Shall we point out to you a man...). There is a statement of disbelievers who denied the coming of Qiyāmah. In an exercise of mockery, they used to say, 'come, let us identify an unusual person for your benefit, a person who loves to tell you how, when you die and become dust, totally powdered into countless particles, even after all that, you will be brought into a new creation - and that you, all reshaped into the form you once were, will be made to stand up alive!'

It is obvious that the person alluded to here is no other but the Holy Prophet ﷺ who used to tell people that Qiyāmah will come when the dead will become alive once again, and exhorted people to put their faith in it. All these people who were deriding him knew him perfectly well, but in the present context, they have mentioned him in a manner as if they knew nothing else about him - nothing else but that he tells people about the dead rising alive on the day of Qiyāmah. They had purposely elected to refer to him in that manner just to mock and deride him.

The word: مُزِّقْتُمْ (when you are totally torn into pieces) is a derivation from: مَزْق (*mazq*) which means splitting apart and rendering to pieces, and: كُلَّ مُمَزَّقٍ (*kulla mumazzaq*: (totally torn) means the disintegration of the human body in a manner that all its particles get dispersed separately. Onwards from here, they take up another mode to comment on his statement relating to the Qiyāmah.

They say: اَفْتَرٰى عَلَى اللّٰهِ كَذِبًا اَمْ بِهٖ جِنَّةٌ (Has he forged a lie against Allah, or is there a madness in him?"- 34:8). The drive of their remark is that the idea that all totally disintegrated particles of the body will stand reassembled together, turn into the human body once again and be alive as well, is so unreasonable, to start with, that there remains practically no question of entertaining or accepting it. Therefore, this claim of the Holy Prophet ﷺ

is either a deliberate attempt to fabricate a lie against Allah Ta'ālā, or the person who says so is insane and no premise of his statement is correct.

The last verse (9): اَفَلَمْ يَرَوْا اِلٰى مَابَيْنَ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ (Have they not, then, looked to the sky and the earth that lies before them and behind them?) carries two chastening messages:

(1) It proves that one can come to believe in the coming of the Qiyāmah by pondering over what has been created in the heavens and the earth, and once the perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā becomes visible through observation, the element of improbability which prohibited its deniers from accepting it could stand removed.

(2) Then, right along with this positive invitation to see and learn on their own, the deniers have also been served with a warning of punishment. They have been told that should they continue to hold firmly to their attitude of rejection and denial, then, they should also realize that it is within this power of Allah Ta'ālā which could make the very same blessings to become a punishment for them, such as, the earth swallows them, or that the sky cracks apart and falls on them.

Verses 10 - 14

وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا دَاوٗدَ مِنَّا فَضْلًا ط يٰجِبَالُ اَوِّبِىْ مَعَهٗ وَالطَّيْرَ ج وَ اَلَنَّا لَهُ
الْحَدِيْدَ ﴿١٠﴾ اَنِ اعْمَلْ سٰبِغٰتٍ وَّقَدِّرْ فِى السَّرْدِ وَاعْمَلُوْا صَالِحًا ط
اِنِّىْ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ بَصِيْرٌ ﴿١١﴾ وَلِسُلَيْمٰنَ الرِّيْحَ غُدُوُّهَا شَهْرٌ
وَّرَوَاحُهَا شَهْرٌ ج وَاَسَلْنَا لَهٗ عَيْنَ الْقِطْرِ ط وَمِنَ الْجِنِّ مَنْ يَّعْمَلُ بَيْنَ
يَدَيْهِ بِاِذْنِ رَبِّهٖ ط وَمَنْ يَّزِغْ مِنْهُمْ عَنْ اَمْرِنَا نُذِقْهُ مِنْ عَذَابِ السَّعِيْرِ
﴿١٢﴾ يَعْمَلُوْنَ لَهٗ مَا يَشَآءُ مِنْ مَّحَارِيْبَ وَتَمَاثِيْلَ وَجِفَانٍ
كَالْجَوَابِ وَقُدُوْرٍ رّٰسِيٰتٍ ط اِعْمَلُوْٓا اٰلَ دَاوٗدَ شُكْرًا ط وَقَلِيْلٌ مِّنْ
عِبَادِىَ الشَّكُوْرُ ﴿١٣﴾ فَلَمَّا قَضَيْنَا عَلَيْهِ الْمَوْتَ مَادَلَّهُمْ عَلٰى مَوْتِهٖٓ
اِلَّا دَآبَّةُ الْاَرْضِ تَاْكُلُ مِنْسَاَتَهٗ ج فَلَمَّا خَرَّ تَبَيَّنَتِ الْجِنُّ اَنْ لَّوْ كَانُوْا

يَعْلَمُونَ الْغَيْبَ مَالَبِثُوا فِي الْعَذَابِ الْمُهِينِ ﴿١٤﴾

And surely We bestowed grace from Us on Dāwūd." O mountains, pronounce with him Allah's purity repeatedly -- and you too O birds!" And We made the iron soft for him [10] **(saying to him,)" Make coats of armour, and maintain balance in combining (their) rings, and do, all of you, righteous deeds. Surely I am watchful of what you do."** [11] **And for Sulayman (We subjugated) the wind; its journey in the morning was (equal to the journey of) one month, and its journey in the afternoon was (equal to the journey) of another month. And We caused a stream of copper to flow for him. And there were some Jinns who worked before him by the leave of his Lord. And whoever of them would deviate from Our command, We would make him taste the punishment of the blazing fire.** [12] **They used to make for him whatever he wished of castles, images, basins as (large as) tanks and big cook-wares fixed (in their places). " Do good, O family of Dāwūd , in thankfulness. And few from My slaves are thankful."** [13] **So, when We decided (that) death (should come) upon him, nothing gave them any indication of his death, except a creature of the earth that had eaten up his sceptre. So, when he fell down, the Jinns came to know that if they had the knowledge of the Unseen, they would not have stayed (so long) in the humiliating punishment.** [14]

Commentary

The preceding verses have addressed the arguments of those who denied the possibility of the life after death, and believed it to be irrational that a person may be revived after he has died and the parts of his body are decomposed and turned into dust. Now the stories of Sayyidnā Dāwūd and Sulaymān عليهما السلام have been narrated in the present verses to show that Allah Ta'ālā has already demonstrated His power by the miraculous acts that were deemed by people to be impossible, like making iron as soft as wax, subjugating the wind and making copper as liquid as water.

The word: فضل (*fadl*) in the opening sentence of verse 10: وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا دَاوٗدَ مِنَّا فَضْلًا (And surely We bestowed grace from Us on Dāwūd) means excess, favor or grace. The reference is to particular attributes bestowed on him in excess of others. Allah Ta'ālā has blessed every prophet with some

unique attributes that are considered to be their distinctive excellence. Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام was given a few of his own. Besides being a prophet and messenger of Allah, he was also blessed with power over the world of his time. Then there was his gifted voice. When he was busy with the dhikr of Allah or the recitation of Torah, the birds flying above would converge over him to listen. He was blessed with similar other miracles which find mention a little later.

The word: اَوِّبِی (*awwibi*) in the direct address appearing next: یَا جِبَالُ اَوِّبِی (*ya jibalu awwibi*) is a derivation from: تَاوِیب (*ta'wib*) which means to return or repeat. The sense is that Allah Ta'ālā had commanded the mountains that once Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام starts making Dhikr and Tasbiḥ (the glorification of Allah), the mountains too should start reciting the same words after him.

Similar to this is the tafsir of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه who has explained: اَوِّبِی (awwibi: return, or repeat after) as being in the sense of: سَبِّحِی (*sabbiḥi*: glorify, recite the praise of Allah). (Ibn Kathīr)

This Tasbiḥ (glorification of Allah) the mountains used to do along with Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام is in addition to the universal Tasbiḥ done by the entire creation of Allah that goes on everywhere, all the time, in every age - as said in the noble Qur'ān: وَاِنْ مِّنْ شَیْءٍ اِلَّا یُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِهٖ وَلٰكِنْ لَّا تَفْقَهُوْنَ تَسْبِیْحَهُمْ (And there is not a single thing that does not extol His purity and praise, but you do not understand their extolling - 17:44). The tasbih mentioned here has the status of a miracle shown at the hands of Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام. For this reason, it is obvious that common listeners would be hearing and understanding this Tasbiḥ. Otherwise, it would have just not been a miracle.

From here we also learn that the mountains synchronizing their voice with the voice of Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام and repeating the Tasbiḥ after him was not in the manner sound reverberates, something commonly heard when someone calls inside a dome or well or elsewhere and the voice reverberates or returns. The reason is that the noble Qur'ān has mentioned the manifestation of this phenomenon as a special gift and grace bestowed upon Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام. The reverberation of sound is a physical thing. It has nothing to do with someone's excellence. It will work for anyone, even for a disbeliever. At a place where sound

reverberates, his or her voice too will shoot back.

The word: وَالطَّيْرَ (*wattair*: and you too O birds) refers to the phenomenon of birds joining up in the air at his voice and doing tasbih like the mountains - as it has been mentioned in another verse of the Qur'ān: إِنَّا سَخَّرْنَا الْجِبَالَ مَعَهُ يُسَبِّحْنَ بِالْعَشِيِّ وَالْإِشْرَاقِ وَالطَّيْرَ مَحْشُورَةً (We had subjugated the mountains to join him (in) making *tasbiḥ* (i.e. pronouncing Allah's purity) at evening and sunrise, and the birds as well mustered together 38:18).

In the last sentence of verse 10 and the first sentence of verse 11, it was said: وَأَلَنَّا لَهُ الْحَدِيْدَ أَنِ اعْمَلْ سٰبِغٰتٍ وَّقَدِّرْ فِي السَّرْدِ (And We made the iron soft for him (saying to him,)" Make coats of armour, and maintain balance in combining (their) rings,' - 34:10). This is another miracle that iron was made soft for him. Early tafsir authorities - Ḥasan Baṣri, Qatādah, A'mash, and others - said that Allah Ta'ālā had, by way of a miracle, turned iron soft as wax for him. To make something out of it, he needed no fire, or hammer, or any other tools. The part of the statement appearing in verse 11 goes on to state that the iron was made soft for him so that he could easily make coats of mail with iron. In another verse, it has also been mentioned that Allah Ta'ālā had Himself taught him the making of coats of mail: وَعَلَّمْنٰهُ صَنْعَةَ لَبُوْسٍ لَّكُمْ (And We taught him making of armour as dress for you - 21:80). And what appears later in this very verse 11: قَدِّرْ فِي السَّرْدِ (and maintain balance in combining (their) rings) also leads to the final stage of training in this craft. The word: قَدِّرْ (*qaddir*) is derived from: تَقْدِيْر (*taqdīr*) which means making on a certain measure while the word: سَرْد (*sard*) literally means to weave. The sense thus released is to make a coat of mail in a manner that its links come out balanced and proportionate without one being small and the other being big, so that it turns out strong as well as looks good when seen. This tafsir of: قَدِّرْ فِي السَّرْدِ (and maintain balance in combining (their) rings) has been reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ.' (Ibn Kathīr)

Special Note

1. This also tells us that the consideration for apparent beauty in man-made things is desirable, since Allah Ta'ālā has given a particular instruction for it.

2. Some early commentators take taqdir in: قَدِّرْ فِي السَّرْدِ (*qaddir fi 's-sard:* and maintain balance in combining (their) rings) to mean that

there should be a fixed measure of time devoted to this craft, lest most of the time is consumed in that single pursuit causing disruption in duties of 'ibadah and responsibilities of the office and state. In the light of this tafsir, we come to know that people in areas of industry and labor should also spare some time for *'ibādah* and personal enrichment while remaining duly organized as far as the necessary management of time is concerned. (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī)

The merit and grace of inventing, making and producing things

The verse under study proves that making and manufacturing things of need is so significant that Allah Ta'ālā has taken it upon Himself to teach its mores to His great prophets. That Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام was trained to make coats of mail already stands proved from this very verse. Then, this is how Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام was inducted into boat building. He was told: وَاصْنَعِ الْفُلْكَ بِاَعْيُنِنَا : "Build the boat before Us" [literally, 'with Our Eyes' or 'under Our Eyes'] - 11:37. 'Build before Us' simply means 'build the way We tell you to.' That some other prophets were also taught the making of different things in a similar manner stands proved from some narrations of Ḥadīth. There is a published book with the title of al-tibb al-nabawii attributed to Ḥadīth authority, Ḥafiẓ Shamsuddīn adh-Dhahabi. It contains a narration to the effect that the making of almost all important and necessary things in human life - such as, house-building, cloth-weaving, tree-planting, food-processing and wheel-based conveyances for transportation etc. - was taught by Allah Ta'ālā to His prophets عليهم السلام through the medium of wahy (revelation).

It is a sin to take the labourers as low in rank

In Arabia, different people used to go in different professions. No profession or occupation was considered low or disgraceful and no one was taken to be any better or worse on the basis of work, trade, or occupation, nor would brotherhoods and communities rise solely on the basis of occupation. The promotion of the idea of such communities as based on occupation and the attitude of taking some professions low and mean as such was alien there. This was a product of Hindu India. Having lived there with them, Muslims too were influenced by it.

The wisdom of having Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام trained into the making of coat of mail

From a narration of the Ḥadīth authority, Ḥafiẓ Ibn 'Asākir, it has

been reported in Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr that during the period of his rule, Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام used to visit bazaars and public places while in disguise and would ask people coming in from different sides as to what they thought about Dāwūd. Since, justice reigned in the kingdom of Sayyidnā Dāwūd, people were living a good life, no one had any complaints against the government of the time, therefore, whoever he asked, the addressee would have words of praise for him and express his gratefulness for the prevailing equity and justice.

It was for his education and grooming that Allah Ta'ālā sent an angel in the shape of a man. When Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام came out on his routine quest for truth, this angel met him. As usual with him, he put the same question to him. The angel said, 'Dāwūd is a very good man and as compared to everyone, he is doing better for himself and better for his people and subjects too. But, he has one habit which, if it were not there, he would have been perfect.' Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام asked, 'What habit is that?' The angel said, 'He takes the expenses on himself and his family from the property of Muslims, that is, from the Baytul-Mal (The Public Treasury of a Muslim State).'

Hearing this, Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام made it a point to immediately turn to Allah subhanahu wa Ta'ālā with self-reproach, lamentation and prayer, saying, 'Teach me to do something for which I have to work with my own hands and support myself and my family with wages from it while working gratis (free, without compensation) to serve Muslims and run their state.' Allah Ta'ālā answered his prayer and taught him the art of making coats of mail and the honor, befitting a prophet, He bestowed on him was that iron was made wax for him so that it became unusually easy for him to earn his sustenance within a short period of time and thus use the rest of his time for 'Ibadah (worship) and obligations of state management.

Ruling

For a Khalifah (Muslim head of an Islamic state) of the time, or a king, or ruler who spends all his time in taking care of state affairs, it is permissible in the Sharī'ah of Islam that he takes his average living expenses from Baytul-Mal. But, should there be some other means of livelihood available, then, that would be more desirable - as it was with Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام. Allah Ta'ālā had put the treasures of the whole

world at his disposal. Gold, precious stones and everything needed was available to him in abundance. Then Allah Ta'ālā had also allowed him to expend whatever he wished from the holdings of the Baytul-Mal, and according to the verse: فَامْنُنْ اَوْ اَمْسِکْ بِغَیْرِ حِسَابٍ (So, do favour (to someone) or withhold (it) with no (requirement to give) account - 38:39), he was also given the assurance that he could spend in whatever manner he wished and that he did not have to account for it. But, this event came to pass because Allah Ta'ālā, in His wisdom, would have the noble prophets occupy a very high station and, it was after that, that Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام - despite being the ruler of an empire - used to earn his living with his own hands, and was always satisfied with it.

'Ulama' (religious scholars) who serve the religious cause of education and communication (Ta'lim and Tabligh) without remuneration, and the Qāḍī (judge) and Mufti (juri-consult, Muslim jurist highly trained to deliver authenticated rulings on problems and issues for the benefit of the community at large) who spend their time in public service are also governed by the same injunction, that is, they can take their living expenses from the Baytul-Mal. But, should there be some other way to eke out a living - which does not hinder the ongoing religious service being performed - then, that would be better.

Special Note

From this conduct of Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام, whereby he demonstrated the great concern he had to find out the informal, free and totally unfettered opinions of people about his ways of doing things, it is proved that one usually does not know his own shortcomings, therefore, this should be found out from others. The well-known jurist of Islam, Imām Mālik رحمه الله تعالیٰ also paid particular attention to find out what common people thought about him.

We can now turn to verse 12: وَلِسُلَیْمٰنَ الرِّیْحَ غُدُوُّهَا شَهْرٌ وَّرَوَاحُهَا شَهْرٌ (And for Sulaymān: (We subjugated) the wind; its journey in the morning was (equal to the journey of) one month, and its journey in the afternoon was (equal to the journey) of another month). After having mentioned the blessings bestowed upon Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام, the text refers to Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام. It was said that the way Allah Ta'ālā had subjugated mountains and birds for Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام, similarly, the Wind was subjugated for Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام. It would take the

throne of Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام on which he was seated with a large number of his courtiers to wherever he wished always under his command. Early exegete, Ḥasan al-Baṣri has said that the miracle of the subjugation of the Wind was bestowed upon Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام in return for what he had done once while inspecting his stable of horses. So engrossed he became in this activity that he missed the Ṣalah of al-'asr. Since the horses became the cause of this negligence, Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام decided to eliminate the very cause of negligence. He sacrificed these horses by slaughtering them (since the sacrifice of horses was also permissible in the law of Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام very much like the cows and oxen) and since these horses were owned by Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام, the question of bringing loss to the Baytul-Mal simply does not arise, and the doubt of wasting personal property because of the sacrifice also does not hold good. Full relevant details about it will appear in the commentary on Sūrah Sad (38:30-40, appearing later in this very Volume VII). In short, because Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام sacrificed the horses he rode, Allah Ta'ālā blessed him with a better ride. (Qurṭubī)

In the other part of the verse taken up immediately earlier: غُدُوُّهَا شَهْرٌ وَّرَوَاحُهَا شَهْرٌ (34:12), the word: غُدُوّ (*ghuduww*) means moving in the morning and the word: رَوَاح (*rawaḥ*) means moving in the evening. Thus, the sense of the verse comes to be that this throne of Sulaymān perched on the wings of the wind from the morning to the afternoon would cover the travel distance of one month, and then, from early evening to late night, that of another one month. In this way, it used to cover the travel distance of two months in one full day.

According to Ḥasan al-Baṣri رحمه الله تعالى, Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام would leave Baytul-Maqdis in the morning, reach Istakhr by afternoon and had his lunch there. Then he would leave after Zuhr and by the time he got to Kābul, it would be night. The travel distance between Baytul-Maqdis and Istakhr is something a swift rider could cover in a month. Similarly, the travel distance from Istakhr to Kābul is also what a swift rider could cover in a month. (Ibn Kathīr)

To explain the next sentence of verse 12: وَأَسَلْنَا لَهُ عَيْنَ الْقِطْرِ (And We caused a stream of copper to flow for him), it can be said that Allah Ta'ālā made a metal as hard as the copper turn into a liquid flowing like water, even gushing forth like a stream of water, and was not hot either - so

that, utensils and other things of need could be easily shaped from of it.

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ said that this stream started flowing as far as it would take a travel of three days and three nights to cover that distance. And this was located in the land of Yemen. Then, in the narration of Mujahid, it appears that this stream started from San'a' in Yemen and continued to flow like a stream of water up to a travel distance of three days and three nights. Famous grammarian, Khalīl Nahwi said that the word: قِطْر (*qiṭr*) mentioned in this verse means molten copper. (Qurṭubī)

The next sentence: وَمِنَ الْجِنِّ مَنْ يَّعْمَلُ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ (And there were some Jinns who worked before him by the leave of his Lord - 34:12) is also connected with the ellipsis (محذوف : maḥdhuf) of : سَخَّرْنَا (*sakhkharna*: We subjugated). The sense is that 'We subjugated for Sulaymān ﷺ such people from among the Jinns who would do the chores he assigned to them before him - as commanded by their Lord. The addition of the expression: بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ (baiyna yadaiyhi: before him) may, perhaps, be there to make it clear that the subjugation of Jinns was not of the kind mentioned in the Qur'ān where the text talks about harnessing the Moon and the Sun into the service of human beings. Instead, this subjugation was in the nature of mastery over the Jinns who worked before him like vassals busy doing chores assigned to them.

The matter of the subjugation of Jinns

As for the subjugation of Jinns (for Sulaymān ﷺ) mentioned at this place, it was by the command of Allah Ta'ālā and there can be no doubt about its possibility. Similarly, what has appeared in some narrations about some noble Sahabah that they had Jinns made subservient to them, it was the same kind of subjugation by the leave of Allah with which they were blessed as a Karamah. It was not based on any act or recitation (Waẓifah) on their part - as mentioned by 'Allamah Sharbini in Tafsīr As-sirajūl-Munīr under his commentary on this verse. He has cited several events relating to Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah, 'Ubaiyy Ibn Ka'b, Mu'adh Ibn Jabal, 'Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭab, Abū Ayyūb al-Anṣārī, Zayd Ibn Thabit and others رضی الله عنهم اجمعین which prove that the Jinns used to be at their service. But, it was nothing but the grace and mercy of Allah Ta'ālā that, like Sayyidnā Sulaymān ﷺ, He made some Jinns subservient to these blessed souls.

But, the particular 'subjugation' through incantations and correlated sets of self-invented actions popular among 'amils or practitioners of this line of activity is something one should take with a pinch of salt and first find out the Islamic rule of guidance in this matter. Qadi Badruddin Shibli al-Ḥanafi who is one of the scholars of the eighth century has written a book, 'Akam- ul-Marjan fi Aḥkām- il-Jann' on this subject. According to him, it is Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام who has been the first one to have the Jinn into his service with the leave of Allah and as a miracle. And the people of Persia attribute this to Jamshaid Ibn Onjahan as being served by the Jinns. Similarly, there are events on record about 'Asif Ibn Barkhiya and others who were connected with Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام which indicate that they too had Jinns subservient to them. Then, the most famous among Muslims are Abū Naṣr Aḥmad Ibn Hilal al-Bukail and Hilal Ibn Wasif attributed to whom there are many unusual events of the subservience of the Jinns to them. Hilal Ibn Wasif has written a full book in which he has put together what the Jinns said to Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام and the pledges Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام took from them.

Qāḍī Badruddīn has written in this very book that generally the 'amils who do their thing to subjugate the Jinns use satanic words of infidelity (Kufr) and sorcery (Seḥr) liked by infidel Jinns and satans. The secret of why they would accept to become their vassals is nothing but that they stand placated by their deeds soaked in kufr and shirk and go on to do a few jobs for them by way of bribe. This is the reason why in doing things of this nature, they would write the Holy Qur'ān with blood and other impurities. Hence, the disbelieving Jinns and satans, pleased with their evil offering, would do what they want them to do. However, about a person named Ibn al-Imām, he has written that he lived during the period of Khalifah Mu'tadid bil-lah and he had subjugated the Jinns through the effective use of Divine Names. As such, there was nothing in his recitations that would go counter to the Sharī'ah. ('Akam-ul-Marjan, p. 100)

In short, if the Jinns get subjugated for someone, without his own intention or motivated action, solely being something from Allah, as it stands proved in the case of Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام and some noble Ṣaḥabah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, then, that is included under Mu'jizah

(miracle shown at the hands of a prophet of Allah) or karamah (working of wonder in the nature of a miracle shown at the hands of men of Allah). And such subservience when achieved through bland pragmatism of formula incantations (*'amaliyāt*) would be judged on the basis of its active content. If it contains words of Kufr, or deeds of kufr, it will be nothing but kufr (disbelief, infidelity) - and if it is composed of disobedience or sin only, then, it is a major sin. Then, there are strange words used in such formula invocations and actions. Their meanings are not known. These too have been classed by Muslim jurists as impermissible on the basis that the possibility of such words being loaded with words that contain kufr, shirk and sinfulness cannot be ruled out. In 'Akam-ul-Marjan, Qāḍī Badruddīn has written that the use of words the meanings of which are not known is also impermissible.

And if this act of subjugation be through Divine Names or Qur'ānic Verses and there also be no such sin like the use of impurities in it, then, it is permissible with the condition that the aim thereby should be to remain personally safe against harm caused by the Jinns, or save other Muslims from it. In other words, the aim should be to remove harm, and not to secure benefits, because if it is adopted as a profession to earn money, it amounts to the enslavement of someone created free and to exacting forced labour without remuneration, hence prohibited (ḥarām). Allah knows best.

The last sentence of verse 12 is: وَمَنْ يَّزِغْ مِنْهُمْ عَنْ اَمْرِنَا نُذِقْهُ مِنْ عَذَابِ السَّعِيْرِ (And whoever of them would deviate from Our command, We would make him taste the punishment of the blazing fire.) Most commentators have taken this to mean the punishment of Jahannam (Hell) in the hereafter. Some others have said that, in this world as well, Allah Ta'ālā had set an angel upon them who, in case they fell short in obeying Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام, would beat them with burning lashes and force them to work. (Qurṭubī) The doubt that the Jinns are made of fire after all and the fire would hardly affect them is not worth entertaining here. The reason is that the Jinns are made of fire in the same sense as man is made of dust. It means that the preponderant element of man is dust. Still if man were to be hit by a clod of clay, or stone, it would hurt him. Similarly, the preponderant element of the Jinns is fire. But, pure and potent fire would burn them too.

In verse 13: يَعْمَلُوْنَ لَهٗ مَا يَشَآءُ مِنْ مَّحَارِيْبَ وَتَمَاثِيْلَ وَجِفَانٍ كَالْجَوَابِ وَقُدُوْرٍ رّٰسِيٰتٍ (They used to make for him whatever he wished of castles, images, basins as (large as) tanks and big cook-wares fixed in their places), there is a somewhat detailed description of the jobs Sayyidnā Sulaymān ﷺ assigned to the Jinns. The word: مَحَارِيْبَ (*maḥarib*, translated above as 'castles') is the plural form of: مِحْرَاب (*miḥrab*) and is used to identify the noblest part of the house. When kings and men of authority make a state operation chamber, sort of power niche for themselves, it is also known as mihrab. Then the word: is a derivation from: حَرْب (*ḥarb*) meaning war. One makes a seat of power for himself, keeps it safe against being approached by others, and should anyone resort to any high-handedness, he would fight against the aggressor. Given this congruity, the special section of a mansion is called mihrab. Then the masajid or mosques as such are, on occasions, referred to as maharib. When reference is made to the maharib of sahabah from among the maḥarib of Banī Isrā'il and Islam, it means their Masajid or mosques.

The injunction of having a separate place for making a Miḥrab in Masajid

As far as the blessed period of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the rightly-guided Khulafa' is concerned, the custom of making the place where the Imām stands as a separate special unit just did not exist. After the early centuries of Islam, the kings promoted this custom for their security and, among common Muslims, it found currency due to the expedient consideration that the whole row where the Imām stands remains empty. It is in view of the large number of people praying in the congregation of masajid already short on space that only a place for the Imām to stand is made by going in depth toward the wall facing the Qiblah so that full rows could be formed behind him. Since this method did not prevail during the early centuries of Islam, some 'Ulama' have dubbed it as *bid'ah* (innovation in the established religious practice of Islam). Shaykh Jalaluddin as-Suyuṭī has written a regular treatise entitled: I'lam-ul-'Aranib fi Bid'atil-Maḥarib on this issue. However, the correct position in this matter is that, should mihrabs of this nature be made for the convenience of the people praying, and in the best interests of the masjid - without taking it to be the desired Sunnah - then, there is no reason to call it a *bid'ah* (innovation in established religion). Yes, if

this is made to be the desired Sunnah, and whoever does anything against it gets to be censured, then, this excess (*ghuluww*) can make such an action fall under the purview of *bid'ah*.

Ruling

If *miḥrab* is made in the form of a regular place for the Imām to stand and lead the prayers, it is incumbent on the Imām that he stands slightly outside the miḥrab in a manner that his feet remain out of the miḥrab, so that the place in which the Imām and the *muqtadis* (those praying behind the Imām) can be counted as one. Otherwise, reprehensible and impermissible is the situation in which the Imām stands alone in a separate place and the rest of the muqtadis, in another. Some masajid would make a *miḥrab* so spacious that it would be good enough to hold a small row of *muqtadis* within it. In a mihrab such as this, should a row of muqtadis also stand in the *miḥrab* and the Imām stands ahead of them, being fully inside the *miḥrab*, then, because of the Imām and the *muqtadis* being on common grounds, the element of *karahah* (reprehensibility) will no more be there.

The next word: تَمَاثِيل (*tamathīl*, translated above as 'images') is the plural form of: تِمثَال (timthal). It appears in the Arabic Lexicon, al-Qamus, that: تَمثَال (*tamthāl*) with a fathah on the letter: التاء (*ta'*) is a verbal noun, and the word: تِمثَال (*timthal*) with a kasrah on the letter: التاء (*ta'*) denotes a picture. In Aḥkam-ul-Qur'ān, Ibn-ul-'Arabi has said that timthal, that is, a picture is of two kinds: (1) The picture of animate and living things, (2) that of inanimate and lifeless things. After that, inanimate things are further divided in two kinds: (1) Jamad or inorganic in which there is no increase and growth, such as, rock or soil, (2) nami or organic in which increase and growth go on, such as, trees and crops. The Jinns used to make pictures of all kinds of these things for Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام. To begin with, the very generality of the Qur'ānic word: تَمَاثِيل (*tamathīl*: images) lends support to the view that these pictures were not those of some particular kind, instead, were common to all kinds. Then there are the historical narratives in which the presence of the pictures of birds on the throne of Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام has also been mentioned.

The prohibition of making and using pictures of the living in Sharī'ah

The cited verse (12) tells us that making and using pictures of the

living was not haram (forbidden) in the Sharī'ah of Sayyidnā Sulaymān ﷺ. But, experience bore out that pictures of people were made among past communities to pay homage to them, then they were put in their houses of worship to serve as reminders of their devotion in the hope that it might enable them too to devote likewise. This did not happen. Gradually, what really happened was that these people made these very pictures the objects of their worship and thus began the worship of idols and icons.

In short, the pictures of the living creatures made in past communities became the conduit of idol-worship. Since it is divinely destined that the Sharī'ah of Islam must stay and survive right through the Day of Judgment, therefore, particular attention has been paid there to block the intrusion of the undesirable. Hence, the way sins and initially haram things have been made unlawful, similarly, their conduits and close causes have also been made unlawful by appending these to main sins and haram things. Of crimes, the real one, and the most serious, happens to be shirk and idol-worship. When this was forbidden, the law of Islam did not leave the ways and means that could smuggle idol-worship in it unchecked. It was boldly and wisely checked when the conduits and close causes of idol-worship were also prohibited. Making and using pictures of the living was made prohibited on this very basis. That it is unlawful stands proved on the authority of the aḥādīth of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, aḥādīth that are sound, authentic, and have been transmitted in an uninterrupted succession.

Similarly, when liquor was made haram, also made haram were its buying and selling, wages to deliver or carry it, and its making, everything about it, being the conduits of drinking. When theft was made haram, the very entry in someone's house without permission, in fact, even peeping in from outside the house was prohibited. When zina (fornication, adultery) was made haram, even casting a look intentionally at a non- mahram was also made haram. Comparable examples of it abound in the Sharī'ah of Islam.

The prohibition of pictures: A common doubt and its answer

It can be said that the use of pictures during the blessed time of the Holy Prophet ﷺ could have become a source of idol-worship. But, in our time, pictures serve many purposes, such as establishing identity of

criminals, advertising trade marks, meeting friends and relatives, investigating events and circumstances and so many other things. For this reason, it has been included in one of the necessities of life. In this, the apprehension of any idol-worship is far too remote to conceive. As such, this prohibition that was made to offset the danger of idol-worship should now be lifted.

Answer to this doubt is that First of all, it is not correct to say that, in our time, pictures are no more a source of idol-worship. Even today, there are so many sects and groups who worship their peers. Then, it is not necessary either that the wisdom behind an operative divine order should be found in every individual case. In addition to that, the sole reason for the prohibition of pictures is not that it is a conduit of idol-worship. In fact, there are Ṣaḥīḥ (sound and authentic) aḥādīth in which other reasons for this prohibition have also been given. For example, picture making is a duplication of the special attribute of Allah Taʿālā. The name: مصوّر (musawwir: the giver of form, shape, color and real presence) is one of the most beautiful names of *Allah Subḥanahu wa Taʿālā,* and making of pictures (and the giving of form, shape and presence) is, in reality, befitting for Him and it lies within His power to create among His creations thousands in terms of genus, race, class, category and kinds with millions and billions of living units in each kind, each different in shape. Take the example of human beings. The form and shape of men is different. So is the form and shape of women. There have been billions of individual men and women. None of them were absolutely like anyone else . The distinct features of every person are so manifest that an onlooker would easily recognize him without much hesitation. Who can claim to give the creatures such marvelous shapes other than Allah Almighty? A human being who makes a picture, or painting, or statue of someone living is claiming, for all practical purposes, that he or she too can make (the same) 'images.' Therefore, it appears in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhari and in other aḥādīth that, on the Day of Judgment, those who make pictures will be told: When you have tried to imitate Us, make the imitation perfect too - if you have the power to do so. We did not simply make an image. We have invested it with a spirit too. If you claim to have 'created' it, then, you better put a spirit inside the thing you have 'made'.

Another reason why a picture is prohibited appears in Ṣaḥīḥ aḥādīth

where it is said that the angels of Allah hate pictures and dogs. Angels do not enter the house that has these, because of which, the bliss and radiance of the house is gone, and the ability of the inmates to worship and remain obedient to Allah is reduced. Then, along with it, not so wrong is the well-known saying: خانه خالی را دیو می گیرد (A vacant house is occupied by demons). So, when some house remains unvisited by angels of mercy, who else but the devils and demons will be all over it staying there to sow scruples of sins first and then give the intention and the courage to fall into them.

Yet another reason appearing in some aḥādīth is that pictures are unnecessary embellishment of this world. Of course, in our time, pictures yield many benefits but thousands of crimes, including those that range between immodesty and pornography, also breed and flourish from these very pictures. In short, it is not simply one reason alone that was made basis for its prohibition, rather, there is a host of reasons why the Sharī'ah of Islam has declared it prohibited to make and use pictures of the living. Now, if we were to suppose that there is some particular person in whom those causes are not found, then, from this stray incidence, the rule of the Sharī'ah cannot change.

According to a narration from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ appearing in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhari and Muslim, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said:

اَشَدُّ النَّاسِ عَذَابًا يَّوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ الْمُصَوِّرُوْنَ

Of people the most affected by punishment on the Day of Judgment shall be the makers of pictures.

And in some other narrations of Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have cursed the makers of pictures. Then, a narration from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ appearing in the two Ṣaḥīḥs of al-Bukhari and Muslim reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

كُلُّ مُصَوِّرٍ فِى النَّارِ

Every maker of pictures will be in the Jahannam.

This humble writer has put together detailed evidences concerning this issue from the narrations of Ḥadīth and the practice of the early forbears of Islam in his treatise entitled, *At-taswir li-aḥkam-it-taswir.*

Also included in it, there are answers to doubts entertained by people. If needed, please consult.

A photograph is also a picture

Some people argue that a photo is outside the definition of taswir or picture, because it is a shadow, or reflection, as it would appear in mirror or water. So, they would argue, the way it is permissible to look at your self in a mirror, in the same way, a photo picture is also permissible. But this argument is absolutely wrong, because a reflection or shadow is a reflection until it has not been made to last through some device. Take the example of mirror or water. Your reflection in it will be gone once you move away from it. If the reflection of this figure were to be made lasting through the use of some chemical process or device, this very thing will become a picture, the forbiddance and prohibition of which stands proved from aḥādīth appearing in an uninterrupted succession. A detailed discussion relating to the issue of photographs has also been included in my treatise on pictures referred to earlier.

The next word: جفان (*jifan*, translated in the text as 'basins') is the plural of: جَفْنَة (*jafnah*) which means a large dish-like pan or tub to hold ample supply of water, and the word: اَلْجَوَاب (*aljawāb*, translated above as 'tanks') in: كَالْجَوَاب (*kaljawāb*) is the plural of: جَابِيَة (*jabiyah*). A small water tank is called: جابيه (jabiyah). The sense is that they would make water-storing utensils so large as would hold water equal to that of a small tank. The first of the next two words: قُدُوْر (*qudur*, translated above as 'cook-wares') is the plural of: قِدْر (*qidr*) which is spelt with the Kasrah of the letter: القاف (*qaf*). It means a pot (to boil or cook. The last of the two words: رَاسِيَات (rasiyat, translated as 'fixed at their place') refers to their state as being set where they were. The sense is that they used to make these cauldrons so huge and heavy that they were virtually immovable - and it is also possible that they would have made these cauldrons fixed on the ovens of solid rock, and therefore they were immovable in that respect. Early Tafsīr authority, Daḥḥāk has given this very explanation of these words.

In verse 13: اِعْمَلُوْا اٰلَ دَاوٗدَ شُكْرًا وَّقَلِيْلٌ مِّنْ عِبَادِيَ الشَّكُوْرُ (Do good, O family of Dāwūd , in thankfulness. And few from My slaves are thankful." [34:13]), after having stated that Sayyidnā Dāwūd and Sulaymān عليهما السلام were particularly blessed by Allah Ta'ālā, they and their family and children

have been ordered to remain grateful.

The reality of Shukr (gratitude) and its injunctions

According to Al-Qurṭubī, the reality of *shukr* (gratitude) is that one admits that this blessing has been bestowed by such and such giver and then goes on to use it in consonance with the spirit of his pleasure and in obedience to him. Therefore, using the blessing bestowed by someone counter to his pleasure is ungratefulness and a virtual denial of that blessing. This tells us that the way gratefulness can be in words, it can also be expressed by acts. When expressed by acts, it would mean the use of that blessing in accordance with the pleasure of the giver and in obedience to him. Abu 'Abdur-Rahman As-Sulami has said that Ṣalah is gratitude, fasting is gratitude, and every good deed is gratitude. And Muḥammad Ibn Ka'b al-Qurazi says that gratitude is the name of piety and righteous conduct. (Ibn Kathīr)

In the verse under study, the noble Qur'ān could have used the comparatively brief expression اُشْكُرُوْنِى (ushkuruni: thank Me), but the words used are اِعْمَلُوْا شُكْرًا Perhaps this expression is adopted to release the hint that the gratitude expected from the House of Dāwūd was gratitude in practice. (The translation in the text has taken care of this hint by saying, 'Do good....')

This injunction was carried out so faithfully by Sayyidnā Dāwūd and Sulaymān عليهما السلام and their families and children, both in word and deed, that no time passed in their homes when they did not have an individual member of the family standing exclusively devoted to worship. In fact, specific time was allotted to all family members for this purpose. As a result, the prayer mat of Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام would not remain unoccupied at any time by one or the other maker of prayer. (Ibn Kathīr)

According to Ḥadīth in al-Bukhari and Muslim, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that the dearest prayer to Allah is that of Dāwūd عليه السلام. He would sleep half of the night, stand in worship for one third of it, and then, sleep during the last one sixth. And the dearest fasts to Allah are the fasts of Dāwūd عليه السلام, for he would fast on alternate days. (Ibn Kathīr)

It has been reported from Fuḍayl رحمه الله تعالى that following the revelation of this command of gratitude to Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام, he submitted before Allah Ta'ālā: 'O my Lord, how could I show my gratitude

to You fully and sufficiently while my gratitude too, be it oral or practical, is nothing but a blessing bestowed by You? On this too, a separate gratitude becomes due.' Allah Ta'ālā said, اَلْاٰنَ شَكَرْتَنِیْ یَادَاوٗدُ (Now, O Dāwūd, you did thank Me). The reason was that he had realized his inability to thank Him as was His due, and had made a confession to that effect.

Tirmidhī and Abu Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ report from Sayyidnā 'Ata' Ibn Yasār ﷺ that when this verse: اِعْمَلُوْا اٰلَ دَاوٗدَ شُكْرًا (Do good, O family of Dāwūd , in thankfulness) was revealed, the Holy Prophet ﷺ came to the pulpit, recited this verse and then said, "There are three acts whoever accomplishes them would achieve the same excellence as was bestowed on the House of Dāwūd." The noble Ṣaḥabah asked: "Yā Rasūlallāh, what are those three acts?" He said, "Staying firm on justice in states of pleasure and displeasure both; and taking the path of moderation in states of prosperity and adversity both; and fearing Allah both in private and in public." (Qurṭubī, Aḥkam ul-Qur'ān, al-Jaṣṣāṣ)

In the last sentence of verse 13: وَقَلِیْلٌ مِّنْ عِبَادِیَ الشَّكُوْرُ, soon after having given the command for gratitude with special emphasis, the reality on ground was also pointed to by saying that 'And few from My slaves are thankful.' which is an admonition for a believer, and an incitement to observe gratitude.

The word: مِنسَأَ (*minsa'ah*, translated in the text as 'sceptre') in verse 14 beginning with: فَلَمَّا قَضَیْنَا عَلَیْهِ الْمَوْتَ (So, when We decided (that) death (should come) upon him, - 14) appears in the sense of staff or pole (as of purpose or authority). Some early commentators have said that it is a word taken from the Ethiopian language and denotes staff. Others have said that it is an Arabic word from: نَسَاء (*nasa'*) which means move back, drive away, postpone. Since a staff or stick is used to remove things undesirable or harmful, therefore, it was called: مِنسَأة : '*minsa'ah*,' that is, the device to remove. By describing the circumstances of Sayyidnā Sulaymān's unusual death, the text has opened a gateway of many lessons and gems of guidance.

The strange event of the death of Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام

The elements of guidance embedded in this event are many. For example, Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام was a ruler having such an unmatched state at his command that ruled not simply over the world of

his time, but over the Jinns and birds and the wind as well. Yet, despite all these assets at his command, he too had no escape from death, and that it had to come only when the time was appointed for it to come. The construction of Baytul-Maqdis started by Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام and completed by Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام had part of it still unfinished. This construction job was entrusted with the Jinns. They were contumacious by nature but kept working in fear of Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام. If they were to find out that he had died, they would have stopped working instantly and the structure would have been left incomplete. With the leave of Allah, Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام made appropriate arrangements to offset this situation. So, when came the time of his death, he got ready for it and entered the *mihrab* (seat of authority in the palace) which was made of sparking transparent glass. His presence could be clearly seen from outside. As was his routine, he stood there in a stance of worship slightly supported by his scepter, so that, once his soul departs (when he dies), the body remains poised at its place with the support of his staff. The soul of Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام was taken away at the appointed hour, but he kept firmly reclining on his staff and from the outside it appeared as if he was engrossed in worship. In that state, Jinns would not dare come close and peek at him. They kept working under the impression that Sayyidnā Sulaymān was alive. Thus passed a full year and when the remaining work on Baytul-Maqdis was complete, Allah Ta'ālā empowered the termite, (which is referred to by the Qur'ān as دابّة الارض (*dābbatul-arḍ*: a creature of the earth), to occupy the staff of Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام. The termite ate out the wood and weakened the staff. When the staff was gone, Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام fell down. That was the time when the Jinns came to know about his death.

Allah Ta'ālā has given the Jinns the capability of traversing very long distances within moments. They used to be aware of many circumstances and events not known by human beings. When they would communicate this information to human beings, they took it to be news from the unseen surmising that the Jinns too possess the knowledge of the unseen ('ilm-ul-ghaib). Moreover, the possibility that the Jinns themselves had a claim of possessing the knowledge of the unseen cannot be ruled out. But, this unusual incidence of death unfolded the reality of all that. The Jinns themselves found out - and human beings too - that the Jinns are no

possessors of the knowledge of the unseen. Because, had that been the case and had they been aware of the workings of the unseen, they would have come to know about the death of Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام more than a year ago, and would have been spared of the hard labor they went on doing on the assumption that he was alive. This is what has been stated in the last sentence of the verse:

فَلَمَّا خَرَّ تَبَيَّنَتِ الْجِنُّ أَن لَّوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ الْغَيْبَ مَا لَبِثُوا فِي الْعَذَابِ الْمُهِينِ

> So, when he fell down, the Jinns came to know that if they had the knowledge of the Unseen, they would not have stayed (so long) in the humiliating punishment. (34:14).

Here, the expression: الْعَذَابِ الْمُهِينِ (*al-'adhabil-muhīn*: humiliating punishment) refers to the hard labor they had to do in completing the edifice of Baytul-Maqdis under the orders of Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام. Part of this unusual event of the death of Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام has been mentioned in this very verse of the Qur'ān while its details have been reported from several Tafsīr authorities, including Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, and are there in Ibn Kathīr and all other Tafsīrs.

From this unusual event, we also learn the essential lesson that there is no escape from death for anyone and also that Allah Ta'ālā can, when He decides to have someone do something, arrange to have it done the way He wills. This is exactly as it happened during the course of this event when Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام was kept, despite his death, standing at his place and the Jinns were made to complete the work assigned to them. This event also shows that all causes and instruments of the whole world keep fulfilling their function until such time as Allah would let them do so. When He would not let them do so, causes and instruments fail, like the support of the staff here that was terminated through the termite. Moreover, soon after the death of Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام, there existed the danger that people, who notice the astonishing performance of the Jinns and come across their apparently unbelievable access to things unseen, might take them as their objects of worship. This danger was also eliminated by this event of death. Everyone came to know that the Jinns were really unaware and helpless in this matter.

From this submission, it becomes clear that Sayyidnā Sulaymān ﷺ had adopted this particular mode at the time of his death for two reasons: (1) That the remaining work on the construction of Baytul-Maqdis gets to be completed. (2) That people find out the truth about the Jinns, realize that they were really unaware and helpless, and thus there remains no danger of Jinns being taken by them as objects of veneration and worship. (Qurṭubī)

According to a narration of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Amr ﷺ reported by Imām Nasa'ī with sound chains of authority, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "When Sulaymān ﷺ accomplished the building of Baytul-Maqdis, he made some prayers that were answered. One of these was: O Allah, whoever enters this *masjid* with the sole intention of making Ṣalah (and having no other worldly motive), purify him before he goes out of this masjid, from all his sins (making him) as pure as he was when born from the womb of his mother."

And in the narration of Suddiyy, it also appears that soon after Sayyidnā Sulaymān ﷺ was finished with the building of Baytul-Maqdis, he sacrificed twelve thousand cows and heifers and twenty thousand goats as a token of thanksgiving and declared the feast open to all. Celebrating the day as a day of rejoicing, he stood on the Sakhrah of Baytul-Maqdis praying: O Allah, it is You who bestowed this power, and all these resources, on me by virtue of which the edifice of Baytul-Maqdis reached its completion. Now, also give me the ability to thank you for this blessing; and give me death while adhering to the faith you chose for me; and once you have given me right guidance, let there come no crookedness or deviation in it." And he further supplicated, "O my Lord, for a person who enters this masjid, I ask you of five things:

(1) Accept the repentance of a sinner who enters this masjid to confess and repent, and forgive his sins.

(2) Guarantee peace for a person who enters this masjid to remain safe from fear and danger, and deliver him from all dangers.

(3) Heal the sick person who enters this masjid.

(4) Make the poor person who enters here need-free.

(5) Let Your mercy be on the person who enters it as long as he

remains here - except a person who is busy doing something unjust or faithless. (Qurṭubī)

This Ḥadīth tells us that the work of building Baytul-Maqdis was already completed during the lifetime of Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام. But, the event mentioned above is really not contrary to the possibility that there remained some construction work left out even after the completion of the main building, as is usually done in the case of such huge projects. May be, Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام had devised the plan mentioned above for the completion of the remaining work.

It has also been reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه that Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام kept standing for a year supported by his staff, even after his death. (Qurṭubī) And according to some narrations, when the Jinns found out that a long time had passed since the death of Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام while they had remained in the dark all along, they tried to determine the time of his death, and for that purpose, they went for an experiment. They released a termite on a piece of wood. Thus, from whatever of the wood was eaten by the termite in one day and night, they calculated that a year had passed over the staff of Sayyidnā Sulaymān in that state.

Special Note

Citing historians, al-Baghawi has said that Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام lived for fifty- three years and ruled for forty years. He had succeeded to the throne at the age of thirteen years and had started building Baytul-Maqdis in the fourth year of his reign. (Maẓharī, Qurṭubī)

Verses 15 - 19

لَقَدْ كَانَ لِسَبَاٍ فِىْ مَسْكَنِهِمْ اٰيَةٌ ۚ جَنَّتٰنِ عَنْ يَّمِيْنٍ وَّشِمَالٍ ۬ كُلُوْا
مِنْ رِّزْقِ رَبِّكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوْا لَهٗ ؕ بَلْدَةٌ طَيِّبَةٌ وَّرَبٌّ غَفُوْرٌ ﴿١٥﴾
فَاَعْرَضُوْا فَاَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ سَيْلَ الْعَرِمِ وَبَدَّلْنٰهُمْ بِجَنَّتَيْهِمْ جَنَّتَيْنِ
ذَوَاتَىْ اُكُلٍ خَمْطٍ وَّاَثْلٍ وَّشَىْءٍ مِّنْ سِدْرٍ قَلِيْلٍ ﴿١٦﴾ ذٰلِكَ جَزَيْنٰهُمْ
بِمَا كَفَرُوْا ؕ وَهَلْ نُجْزِىْٓ اِلَّا الْكَفُوْرَ ﴿١٧﴾ وَجَعَلْنَا بَيْنَهُمْ وَبَيْنَ

الْقُرَى الَّتِيْ بٰرَكْنَا فِيْهَا قُرًى ظَاهِرَةً وَّقَدَّرْنَا فِيْهَا السَّيْرَ سِيْرُوْا فِيْهَا
لَيَالِيَ وَاَيَّامًا اٰمِنِيْنَ ﴿١٨﴾ فَقَالُوْا رَبَّنَا بٰعِدْ بَيْنَ اَسْفَارِنَا وَظَلَمُوْٓا
اَنْفُسَهُمْ فَجَعَلْنٰهُمْ اَحَادِيْثَ وَمَزَّقْنٰهُمْ كُلَّ مُمَزَّقٍ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ
لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّكُلِّ صَبَّارٍ شَكُوْرٍ ﴿١٩﴾

There was indeed a sign for (the community of) Saba' in their home-land: two gardens, on the right and on the left." Eat of the provision from your Lord, and be grateful to Him-- (You have) a good city, and a Most-Forgiving Lord." [15] **Then they turned away. So We released over them the flood of the dam, and replaced their two gardens with two gardens having fruits of bitter taste, and tamarisk and some of the lot-trees.** [16] **Thus We punished them because of their ungratefulness. And We do not give (such a) punishment but to the ungrateful.** [17] **And We had made towns to be seen between them and between the towns in which We had placed Our blessings, and had measured the journey between them: " Travel along them at nights and days peacefully."** [18] **Then they said," Our Lord, make (the phases of) our journeys more distant." And they wronged themselves, therefore We turned them into stories and tore them into pieces. Surely in this, there are signs for everyone who is ever- patient, fully grateful.** [19]

Commentary

In previous verses, warning was given to those who denied prophethood and the Day of Judgment and failed to realize that the power of Allah Ta'ālā was most perfect. Reference was then made to miracles shown at the hands of past prophets and mention was made of the events relating to Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام and Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام. Now the text mentions the limitless blessings bestowed on the people of Saba' who were later punished because of their ungratefulness.

The people of Saba' and the particular blessings of Allah upon them

Ibn Kathīr has said that Saba' is the title of the kings and citizens of Yemen. Tababi'ah (plural of *tubba'*) who ruled this country were these very people of Saba', and Queen Bilquīs who has been mentioned along

with Sayyidnā Sulaymān ﷺ in Sūrah An-Naml was also from among these people. Allah Ta'ālā had opened the doors of His blessing on them providing their state with all conceivable comforts. Against these blessings they were asked to believe in one God and obey His commandments and thus be grateful for blessings bestowed on them. For a certain period of time, these people stayed straight with their mandate and kept enjoying ease and comforts. Then came the time when they became so engrossed in the good things of life they were blessed with that they started touching the limits of negligence, even denial. Then Allah Ta'ālā sent thirteen of His prophets to warn them. They did their best to admonish them and bring them round to the straight path. But, these people kept persisting with their attitude of negligence. Then came the consequence. A flood was sent over them, a punishment that devastated their once flourishing city of gardens. (Reported by Muḥammad Ibn Isḥāq - Ibn Kathīr)

Imām Aḥmad reports from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ that someone asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ if Saba' mentioned in the Qur'ān was the name of a man, woman or some country. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said: This is the name of a man who had ten sons among his progeny. Out of these, six remained settled in Yemen and four migrated to Syria. The names of those who lived in Yemen were: Mudhhij, Kindah, Azd, Ash'ari, Anmar, Himyar (from the progeny of these six sons, there came to be six tribes known by those very names).

And the names of those who settled in Syria are: Lakham, Judham, 'Amilah, Ghassan (tribes coming in their lines were known by the same names). This narration has also been reported by Ḥāfiẓ Imām Ibn 'Abd-ul-Barr in his book, al-Qasd wa al-Amam bi Ma'arifati Ansab-il-'Arab wa-l-'Ajam.

According to Ibn Kathīr's research with reference to scholars of genealogy, these ten sons were not directly from the loins of Saba', rather, they were born in the third or fourth generation of Saba'. After that, their tribes spread out in Syria and Yemen and got to be known by their very names. And the real name of Saba' was 'Abd-ush-Shams. His genealogical tree becomes established by the name Saba' 'Abd Shams son of Yashhab son of Ya'rub son of Qaḥṭan. Historians write that Saba' 'Abd Shams had, during this time, given the glad tidings of the coming of the Last Prophet, Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafa ﷺ. It is possible that he

came to know about it from early books of the Torah and Injīl, or from astrologers or soothsayers. He has also composed some lines of poetry in Arabic in which he has mentioned his coming and wished to have been during his time and been of some help to him. Then, he has also exhorted his people to believe in him and support him.

As for the statement of the Ḥadīth quoted above in which it is said that out of the ten sons of Saba', six settled in Yemen and four went towards Syria, this event relates to the time after the coming of the punishment of flood against them which means that these people had scattered towards different directions and cities at the time the flood came. (Ibn Kathīr) Quoting Qushairi, al-Qurṭubī has reported that the period of the people of Saba' is after Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and before the coming of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and thus it falls in the period known as: فترته (fatrah or gap).

The 'flood of the dam' (sayl al-'arim) and the Dam of Ma'arib (the sadd of Ma'arib)

The word: عرم ('arim) in: فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ سَيْلَ الْعَرِمِ (So We sent to them the flood of the dam - 16) carries several recognized meanings in terms of Arabic lexical usage and the scholars of tafsir have explained this verse in terms of every such meaning. But, the meaning more in consonance with the context of the Qur'ān is the one that appears in the Arabic lexicons like Qāmūs, Ṣiḥaḥ of Jawhari and others, that is, 'arim' means a dam that is made to block water. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه has also given the meaning of 'arim as dam. (Qurṭubī)

The episode regarding the 'flood of the dam' referred to in this verse, according to the statement of Ibn Kathīr, is that in the country of Yemen, three miles away from its capital, San'a', there was a city by the name of Ma'rib settled in which the people of Saba' used to live. The city was located in between two mountains. Water from rains used to come from the two mountains, leaving the city inundated. The city had the reputation of being a target of such deluges. Rulers of the city (of those, Queen Bilquis has been mentioned particularly) built a strong and fortified dam between these two mountains, a dam that would remain unaffected by the flow of water. This dam stopped the serial surges of flooded water that entered from the two mountains and turned the place into a great big storage of water. Even the water from rains falling on the

mountains started flowing in there. Provided inside this dam, there were three gates at appropriate levels , so that this storage of water could be released systematically for people of the city to irrigate their farms and gardens. To accomplish this objective, they would first open the topmost gate and use water as needed. When no water remained at that level, they would open the gate in the middle and after that came the turn of the third and last gate until came the time of rains next year, and the whole dam would stand filled to the brim all over again. Then, engineered and built under the dam, there was a huge big tank in which twelve outlets of water were provided to supply water to twelve canals serving different parts of the city with water flowing in all canals uniformly and was used to take care of various needs of the city. (Maẓharī)

The slopes of the two mountains to the right and left of the city were landscaped with rows of gardens fed by canals of water. These gardens stood adjacent to each other in two continuous rows by the slopes of the mountains. Though many in number, but the Qur'ān identified them as: جَنَّتَانِ (*jannatan*: Two gardens) because it has taken all the gardens in one row to be one due to their proximity, and then all the gardens on the other side as the other garden.

Trees and fruits of all sorts used to grow in these gardens so abundantly that, according to the statement of the leading early authority, Qatadah, and others, a woman would walk with an empty basket perched on her head, and it would automatically get filled with fruits falling off from the trees without the least need to make use of her hands. (Ibn Kathīr)

The second sentence of verse 15: كُلُوْا مِنْ رِّزْقِ رَبِّكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوْا لَهٗ ۭ بَلْدَةٌ طَيِّبَةٌ وَّرَبٌّ غَفُوْرٌ (Eat of the provision from your Lord, and be grateful to Him-- (You have) a good city, and a Most-Forgiving Lord - 34:15) means that Allah Ta'ālā had ordered them through His prophets that they should make use of their extended means of livelihood provided by Allah Ta'ālā and continue to be grateful to Him through their good deeds and unfailing obedience to Divine injunctions, for He had made that city of theirs a really good city. It had a moderate climate without any extremes of heat or chill, so healthy, clean and bracing - to the extent that there was no trace of any hurting life forms like mosquitoes, flies, fleas, snakes and scorpions anywhere throughout the city. In fact, when travelers from outside would

reach the city - having lice or other harmful parasites in their clothes - these would die off naturally as soon as they arrived there (Ibn Kathīr)

At the end of the verse (15), by adding: بَلْدَةٌ طَيِّبَةٌ (a good city) along with رَبٌّ غَفُورٌ (a Most Forgiving Lord), reference to divine blessings has been made all the more perfect by suggesting that 'this good life is not restricted to the life of the present world, in fact, should you remain consistent with your gratefulness, the promise of greater and more everlasting blessings of the Hereafter also holds good. The reason is simple. He is the creator and master-dispenser of all blessings and the one who sustains you - and should you, at one or the other time, inadvertently fail to be grateful or betray by negligence or shortcoming, Allah Ta'ālā is a great forgiver too and will forgive your shortcomings.'

In verse 16, it was said: فَأَعْرَضُوا فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ سَيْلَ الْعَرِمِ (Then they turned away. So We released over them the flood of the dam). In other words, 'when the people of Saba' flouted the commandments of Allah through their contumacy and rebellion, despite having such blessings and despite having been warned by the noble prophets, We released a flood from the dam over them.' We already know that 'arim means a dam. This flood was attributed to 'arim for the reason that this very 'arim, a source of security and prosperity, was transformed by Allah Ta'ālā into a source of calamity for them. According to an account of the event given by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ, Wahb Ibn Munnabih, Qatādah, Daḥḥak and other early Tafsīr authorities, when Allah Ta'ālā decided to undo the dam of Ma'rib (*'arim*) and punish and destroy these people through a flood, blind rats were set upon this great *dam*, who weakened its foundation and made it hollow. When came the time of rains and the flooding of water, the pressure of water broke through the already weakened foundation creating gaps and crevices in the dam. Ultimately, the water collected behind the dam ran over the entire valley in which this city of Ma'rib was located. Houses collapsed. Trees were uprooted. The water feeding the twin rows of gardens by the mountain slopes was dried up.

It appears in the report of Wahb Ibn Munabbih that it was already predicted in the books of these people that rats will destroy this *dam*. When people saw rats near the dam, they were alerted by the danger. As a defensive measure, a large number of cats were released under the dam in the hope that they would stop the rats from coming close to the dam.

But, when came the divine decree, the rats overcame the cats and entered into the foundation of the dam.

Then there are historical narratives that also say that as soon as some smart and far-sighted people saw the rats, they decided to leave the place and move to somewhere else. In fact, they made the necessary arrangements and got out of there one by one. Others stayed. But, once came the flood, they too shifted. However, there were many who were swallowed by the flood. In short, the whole city was destroyed. Some details about residents of the city who had migrated to towns in other countries have been given in the Ḥadīth of the Musnad of Aḥmad appearing earlier. Six of their tribes were scattered in Yemen, four in Syria and some of these very tribes came to be the forerunners of the larger population of Madīnah-at-Ṭaiyyibah. Related details appear in books of history.

What happened to the twin rows of gardens after the coming of flood and the destruction of the city? This has been stated in the second sentence of verse 16 as: وَبَدَّلْنٰهُمْ بِجَنَّتَيْهِمْ جَنَّتَيْنِ ذَوَاتَىْ اُكُلٍ خَمْطٍ وَّاَثْلٍ وَّشَىْءٍ مِّنْ سِدْرٍ قَلِيْلٍ (and replaced their two gardens with two gardens having fruits of bitter taste, and Tamarisk and some of the lot-trees), that is, their trees that yielded fruit having good taste were replaced by trees that bore fruit having an evil taste. As for the word: خَمْط (Khamt), most commentators take it to mean the arak (a pungent, thorny desert tree). The lexicographer, Jawhari says that there is a kind of arak which bears some fruit and which is eaten. But, the fruit that grew on this tree was bad in taste. And 'Abu 'Ubaidah ﷺ said that every tree that is thorny and of bitter taste is called: خَمْط (*khamt*). The next word: اَثْل (*athl*) means a kind of tree that is also known in Arabic as : طرفاء (*ṭurfa'*) according to the majority of commentators and both are generally equated with tamarisk in English. No fruit it bears is worth eating. Some commentators said that 'athl' in the sense of samr (Mimosa, Egyptian thorn) or babul or kikar, (Acacia Arabica found in the sub-continent) is a thorny tree the fruit of which is fed to goats.

The word: سِدْر (*sidr*) means beri or ber in Urdu and is translated in English as the lote-fruit or lotus tree in English. Sidr is of two kinds. The one planted on farms bears fruits of pleasant taste (something close to crunchy pears) and carries more of fruits and less of thorns. The other

kind is wild and grows in the form of thorny shrubs and trees with more thorns and less fruits that are bitter as well. At this place, the use of the word: قليل (*qalil*: little, some) along with (sidr: *bair* or lote) perhaps indicates that this too was wild which bears less fruit and is bitter. Allah knows best.

The next verse: ذٰلِكَ جَزَيْنٰهُمْ بِمَا كَفَرُوْا (Thus We punished them because of their ungratefulness.- 34:17) means that they were punished because they committed kufr. Kufr has two meanings. It could mean ungratefulness and it could mean the denial of the true faith. At this place, both meanings can be applied because they did both. They were ungrateful and they rejected the thirteen prophets sent to them.

Special Note

There are two things here that are likely to raise a question. It has been said earlier that Allah Ta'ālā had sent thirteen prophets to the people of Saba'. Then, it has also been stated above that the event relating to these people and the flood of 'arim or dam transpired during the interim period after Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and before Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafa ﷺ called the period of fatrah or gap. During this period, according to the majority of Muslim scholars, simply no prophet was sent which is the reason why it is called the period of fatrah or gap. If so, the question is, how can the coming of these thirteen prophets be held as correct? An answer to this appears in Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī. There it is said that from the event of the flood of the dam ('arim) being in the period of fatrah or gap, it does not become necessary that these prophets too came during that very period. It is possible that the coming of the prophets to these people dates back prior to the period of fatrah or gap while their contumacy and hostility to faith may have increased during the period of fatrah whereupon the punishment of the flood from the dam was sent upon them in the period of fatrah. Allah knows best.

The word: كَفُوْر (*kafur*) in the second sentence of verse 17: وَهَلْ نُجٰزِىٓ اِلَّا الْكَفُوْرَ (And We do not give (such a) punishment but to the ungrateful - 34:17) is an emphatic form of: كَافِر (kafir) which means one who is very ungrateful or is an absolute disbeliever. As such, the verse could be taken to mean: 'We do not punish anyone other than the one who is very ungrateful or is an absolute disbeliever.' This, quite obviously, is counter to all those verses of the Qur'ān and sound aḥādīth which prove that

Muslim sinners will also receive the punishment of Jahannam (Hell) to the measure of their deed - even though, finally, once they have gone through their punishment, they will be taken out of the Jahannam because of their 'Īmān or faith and admitted into Jannah (Paradise). To resolve this difficulty, it has been said that it does not signify punishment in some absolute sense, instead, it means a mass punishment as was sent over the people of Saba'. This one is particular to disbelievers. Such punishment does not befall Muslim sinners. (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī)

This finds support in the saying of a Ta'bai Ibn Khiyarah. He said,'جَزَاءُ الْمَعْصِيَةِ الْوَهْنُ فِى الْعِبَادَةِ وَالضِّيْقُ فِى الْمَعِيْشَةِ وَالتَّعَسُّرُ فِى اللَّذَّةِ قَالَ لَايُصَادِفُ لَذَّةً حَلَالًا اِلَّا جَآءَه مَنْ ينغصه إيّاها (The punishment of sin is that the sinning person becomes sluggish in acts of worship (*'ibādah*) his economic conditions becomes straitened, and enjoyment (itself) becomes hard to bear...' Ibn Khiyarah explained the latter part of his statement by saying, 'When one is blessed with something *ḥalāl* he can enjoy, there comes one or the other reason which spoils this enjoyment'. (Ibn Kathīr) This tells us that the punishments given to Muslim sinners are of this nature. No open punishment hits them either from the heavens or from beneath the earth. That is particular to disbelievers.

And sage Ḥasan al-Baṣri said: صَدَقَ اللّٰهُ الْعَظِيْمُ لَايُعَاقَبُ بِمِثْلِ فِعْلِهِ اِلَّا الْكَفُوْر ('Great is Allah and He said it right: The punishment of an evil deed exactly in proportion to it is not given to anyone but the *kafur'* - someone very ungrateful or absolutely disbelieving). (Ibn Kathīr) This is because a believer, who is no *kafur*, receives some concession with respect to his or her sins as well.

An interpretation of the sense of this verse appears in Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī with reference to Kashf. There it is said that the statement is made in its real sense. Punishment as punishment is given only to a disbeliever and whatever pain is caused to a believing sinner through things like fire is only an apparent punishment. In reality, the purpose is to cleanse him from sin. This is like heating up gold in a furnace. The purpose is to remove its unwanted sediments. This holds true in the case of a believer as well. If he too is put in Jahannam as a consequence of some sin of his, it will be to burn out those elements of his body that have grown on him from consuming what is haram. Once this is taken care of, he is ready to go to Jannah and it does not take much time that he is taken out of

Jahannam (Hell) and admitted into the Paradise (Jannah).

In verse 18, it was said: وَجَعَلْنَا بَيْنَهُمْ وَبَيْنَ الْقُرَى الَّتِيْ بٰرَكْنَا فِيْهَا قُرًى ظَاهِرَةً وَّقَدَّرْنَا فِيْهَا السَّيْرَ.... (And We had made towns to be seen between them and between the towns in which We had placed Our blessings, and had measured the journey between them: "Travel along them at nights and days peacefully. - 18") This verse mentions yet another blessing Allah Ta'ālā had bestowed on the people of Saba'. Then it goes on to refer to the ungratefulness of those people who acted ignorantly and chose to ask for a reversal of this blessing by praying that the thing be made harder and more challenging for them. The statement: الْقُرَى الَّتِيْ بٰرَكْنَا فِيْهَا (towns in which We had placed Our blessings) in this verse probably means the rural areas of the country of Syria, because the reference to the descent of mercy in several verses of the Qur'ān is specifically related to that country. The sense of the verse is that Allah Ta'ālā had made their travels to the towns of Syria very easy for them during their trips they had to undertake for their business. Given the conditions that prevailed in the world of that time, the travel distance between the city of Ma'arib and the country of Syria was fairly long with routes being uneven. In view of this difficulty, Allah Ta'ālā had blessed the people of Saba' by having made for their convenience a series of towns at intermittent distances all the way from the city of Ma'arib to the country of Syria.

These habitations were close by the main road, therefore, these were called: قَدَّرْنَا فِيْهَا السَّيْرَ (had measured the journey between them). These habitations appearing one after the other were a source of convenience for weary travelers. If a traveler from one of them left home in the morning, he had the choice of reaching some other town on his way, stop there, have lunch or take rest as he wished and could leave after Zuhr and reach the next stage by sundown and spend the night there. The sentence: سِيْرُوْا فِيْهَا لَيَالِيَ وَاَيَّامًا اٰمِنِيْنَ (Travel along them at nights and days peacefuly - 18) means that these habitations were made at distances that were balanced and equal so that they would reach from one to the other within a fixed time.

In the last sentence of verse 18: (Travel along them at nights and days peacefully.), mention has been made of a third blessing bestowed on the people of Saba'. It means that these settlements were located at such equal and balanced distances that a traveler would be able to cover them

in almost identical time. Then the routes were secure. Theft and highway robbery were unknown. One could travel at any time of the night or day without any hesitation or concern.

Verse 19 opens with the statement: فَقَالُوْا رَبَّنَا بٰعِدْ بَيْنَ اَسْفَارِنَا وَظَلَمُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ فَجَعَلْنٰهُمْ اَحَادِيْثَ وَمَزَّقْنٰهُمْ كُلَّ مُمَزَّقٍ (Then they said," Our Lord, make (the phases of) our journeys more distant." And they wronged themselves, therefore We turned them into stories and tore them into pieces - 34:19). It means that so unjust were these people that they would go to the extent of dismissing the very blessing of Allah placed there to eliminate the hardships of travel, rather went deeper into their lack of recognition and straight ungratefulness by coming forward to pray that their Lord makes the distances they cover in travel longer - hoping that the habitations do not appear at such close distances, and wishing to see some hard areas of a forest or wilderness which ask for some rough traversing as well. Their case was similar to that of the Bani Isra'il. They used to get the excellent sustenance of mann and salwa, all free of cost. Bored with it, they asked Allah to replace it with vegetables and greens. In return for their ungratefulness and lack of recognition for blessings, Allah Ta'ālā released the punishment on them that has been called the flood of the dam earlier. The ultimate consequence of this very punishment has been stated in this verse in strong words, that is, they were virtually expunged from this world leaving nothing but idle tales of their wealth and luxury.

The word: مَزَّقْنٰهُمْ (*mazzaqnahum*) is a derivation from: تَمْزِيْق (*tamziq*) which means to tear and scatter (a people) or to destroy (a kingdom). The sense is that some of the inhabitants of this city of Ma'arib were destroyed on the spot and some others were scattered in a manner that small groups of them spread out to various countries. This destruction and scattering away of the people of Saba' became proverbial in Arabia. On such occasions, there is an Arab idiom: تَفَرَّقُوْا اَيَادِیَ سَبَاَ that is, these people got scattered away as were the luxury-laden people of the Saba'.

Ibn Kathīr and other commentators have reported a long narrative about a soothsayer who had come to know about the coming of the punishment of the flood a little before it actually did. He made a swift and unique plan. First of all, he sold his entire property. When he had the money in his hands, he told his people about the coming flood and exhorted them to get out of the area immediately. He also told them that

those who intend to shift to a safe far-away place should go to 'Amman, and those who have a taste for liquor, pita bread and fruits should move to Busra in the country of Syria, and those who would settle for rides that go through mud, come handy during the time of famine and prove efficient when dashing on a journey, should go to Yathrib (Madīnah) which abounds in dates. His people followed his advice. The tribe of Azd went towards 'Amman, the Ghassān to Busra in the country of Syria and the Aws and Khazraj and Banū 'Uthmān started off in the direction of Yathrib, the home of date palms. After reaching Batn Murr, Banū 'Uthman liked the place and settled right there. Because of this divergence, Banū 'Uthmān were given the title of Khuza'ah. Batn Murr is closer to Makkah al-Mukarramah where they had chosen to settle down. As for Aws and Khazraj, they reached Yathrib and stayed there. After the long narrative in Ibn Kathīr, the same detail about people scattering to different places has been reported on the authority of Sa'id from Qatadah from al-Sha'bi. Thus, says Ibn Kathīr, these people of Saba' were shredded into pieces, people who have been mentioned in: مَزَّقْنَاهُمْ كُلَّ مُمَزَّقٍ (We torn them into pieces).

The concluding statement in verse 19: اِنَّ فِیْ ذٰلِکَ لَاٰیٰتٍ لِّکُلِّ صَبَّارٍ شَکُوْرٍ (Surely in this, there are signs for everyone who is ever- patient, fully grateful - 34:19) means that there is a great sign and lesson in the rise and fall and in the radical change that hit the life cycle of the people of Saba' for a person who is enduring and grateful at its best, that is, when faced with some distress or pain, one observes patience over it, and when blessed with things of comfort, one is readily grateful for it. This is a life style in which one always comes out a winner. No matter what the state of his life is, he ends up in nothing but pluses, profits and gains. So says a Ḥadīth of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ appearing in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhari and Muslim where the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said:

'Certainly unique is the state of life a true believer is always in. No matter what Allah decrees for him, it turns for him into nothing but good and profitable. If he is blessed in one way or the other or has the desire of his heart fulfilled, he thanks Allah for it and it becomes good and beneficial for him in the Hereafter. And if he suffers from some pain or distress, he bears it with considered patience for which he is rewarded in a

big way and thus, this suffering too, becomes good and beneficial for him' - from Ibn Kathīr.

Some commentators have taken the word: صَبَّار (Ṣabbar: very patient) in the general sense of sabr or patience - which includes remaining firm in all acts requiring obedience as well as abstaining from sins. In the light of this tafsir or explanation, a true believer remains comprehensively attuned to Ṣabr (patience) and shukr (gratitude) under all conditions and then, for that matter, every sabr is shukr and every shukr is sabr. Allah knows best.

Verses 20 - 21

وَلَقَدْ صَدَّقَ عَلَيْهِمْ إِبْلِيسُ ظَنَّهُ فَاتَّبَعُوهُ إِلَّا فَرِيقًا مِّنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ
﴿٢٠﴾ وَمَا كَانَ لَهُ عَلَيْهِم مِّن سُلْطَانٍ إِلَّا لِنَعْلَمَ مَن يُؤْمِنُ بِالْآخِرَةِ
مِمَّنْ هُوَ مِنْهَا فِي شَكٍّ ۗ وَرَبُّكَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ حَفِيظٌ ﴿٢١﴾

And Iblīs has found his assessment true about them. So they followed him, except a group of the believers. [20] **And he did not have any power over them, but for the reason that We should know the one who believes in the Hereafter as distinct from the one who is in doubt about it. And your Lord is Watchful over every thing.** **And he did not have any power over them, but for the reason that We should know the one who believes in the Hereafter as distinct from the one who is in doubt about it. And your Lord is Watchful over every thing.** [21]

Verses 22 - 27

قُلِ ادْعُوا الَّذِينَ زَعَمْتُم مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ ۚ لَا يَمْلِكُونَ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ فِي
السَّمَاوَاتِ وَلَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا لَهُمْ فِيهِمَا مِن شِرْكٍ وَمَا لَهُ مِنْهُم
مِّن ظَهِيرٍ ﴿٢٢﴾ وَلَا تَنفَعُ الشَّفَاعَةُ عِندَهُ إِلَّا لِمَنْ أَذِنَ لَهُ ۗ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا
فُزِّعَ عَن قُلُوبِهِمْ قَالُوا مَاذَا ۙ قَالَ رَبُّكُمْ ۗ قَالُوا الْحَقَّ ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ
الْكَبِيرُ ﴿٢٣﴾ قُلْ مَن يَرْزُقُكُم مِّنَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۗ قُلِ اللَّهُ ۙ

وَإِنَّآ أَوْ إِيَّاكُمْ لَعَلَىٰ هُدًى أَوْ فِى ضَلَٰلٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿٢٤﴾ قُل لَّا تُسْـَٔلُونَ
عَمَّآ أَجْرَمْنَا وَلَا نُسْـَٔلُ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾ قُلْ يَجْمَعُ بَيْنَنَا رَبُّنَا ثُمَّ
يَفْتَحُ بَيْنَنَا بِٱلْحَقِّ ط وَهُوَ ٱلْفَتَّاحُ ٱلْعَلِيمُ ﴿٢٦﴾ قُلْ أَرُونِىَ ٱلَّذِينَ
أَلْحَقْتُم بِهِۦ شُرَكَآءَ كَلَّا ط بَلْ هُوَ ٱللَّهُ ٱلْعَزِيزُ ٱلْحَكِيمُ ﴿٢٧﴾

Say." Call upon those whom you claim (to be your gods) beside Allah. They do not possess (any thing) even to the measure of a particle, neither in the heavens nor in the earth. They have no contribution at all in either of the two, and He (Allah) has no helper from among them. [22] **And intercession before Him is of no benefit, but for the one whom He has permitted. (And those who will ask for intercession will remain fearful) Until when fear is removed from their hearts, they will say (to each other), " What did your Lord say?" They say, "the Truth". And He is the High, the Great.** [23] **Say, "Who gives you sustenance from the heavens and the earth?" Say, " Allah. And We or you are either on the right path or in open error."** [24] **Say, "You will not be asked about the sins we committed, and we will not be asked about what you do.** [25] **Say, " Our Lord will assemble us together, then will judge between us with truth. And He is the best Judge, the All-Knowing.** [26] **Say, "Show me the ones whom you have associated with Him as partners. Never! He is but Allah, the Mighty, the Wise."** [27]

Commentary

These verses are meant to prove the falsity of three different types of idol-worshippers. The first group among them, and the most absurd of all, was of the people who believed that these idols, made of stones are the partners of Allah and His associates in all His powers. The beginning part of the verse 22 refutes their presumption by saying, "They do not possess (any thing) even to the measure of a particle...". The second group of them used to believe that these idols are the helpers of Allah in managing affairs of the universe. The last part of Verse 22 deals with this group by saying, "And He (Allah) has no helper from among them." There was a third group of people who did not hold the idols as gods or helpers of god, but they maintained that these idols are so close to Allah that their

intercession is always approved by Him, and whoever has the advantage of their intercession, his desires may well be fulfilled. Verse 23 has refuted this belief by saying, "And intercession before Him is of no benefit, but for the one whom He has permitted." The sense is that their assumption that idols are close to Allah is not correct.They are neither close to Allah, nor do they have any power of intercession before Him. Then the text clarifies that even angels who are close to Allah cannot intercede for anyone without Allah's permission, and even if they are allowed to intercede, it is not easy for them to do that, because of Allah's awe they have in their hearts. The usual way in which they receive a command from Allah is that they become nervous , due to Allah's awe, when they receive it. Then once they return to their normal condition, they ask each other about the command to ensure its correct nature. This is the sense of the later part of Verse 23 where it is said, "Until when fear is removed from their hearts, they will say (to each other), "What did your Lord say?" They say, "the Truth". [1]

As for angels becoming nervous out of awe referred to in verse 22, its full description is given in a report from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ appearing in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhari. Says the relevant part of the long Ḥadīth report: When a command from Allah Ta'ālā issues forth through the heavens, all angels start flapping their wings in humility and emotional readiness to obey (as if dazed or benumbed of consciousness). When that effect of nervousness, awe and majesty recedes from their hearts, they say: 'What did your Lord say?' Others tell them that He has spoken the truth and that such and such command has come from Him.

And it appears in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim that Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ reports from some Ṣaḥabi that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, 'When our Rabb, may His name be exalted, gives a command, the angels holding the Divine Throne start reciting tasbih (saying glory) for Him. Hearing the tasbih done by them, angels of the next lower level of the heavens follow suit until this chain of glorification reaches the lowest level that is the firmament of the world (making it a simultaneously recited tasbih by angels from all heavens). Then, they ask the angels who are close to the Throne, 'What did your Lord say?' This they tell them. Then, in the same manner, those of the lower heavens ask those of the upper the same

[1] This part is abridged from Khulasa-e-tafsīr.('Uthmānī)

question until this chain of question and answer extends up to the firmament of the world' - excerpt from a long Ḥadīth. (Maẓharī)

Consideration of the psychology of the addressee in debates and avoidance of any approach that may provoke violent attitude

In verse 24: وَإِنَّآ اَوْاِيَّاكُمْ لَعَلٰى هُدًى اَوْفِىْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ (And We or you are either on the right path or in open error - 34:24), this address is beamed at polytheists and disbelievers. In their case, what was needed was already done. That Allah Ta'ālā was the creator, the master, and all-powerful in the absolute sense was proved decisively and explicitly. That idols and everything else other than Allah was weak and helpless was demonstrated clearly. After having done all this, the occasion demanded that Mushriks are told in clear terms that they were ignorant and astray in bypassing Allah and electing to worship idols and satans. But, the noble Qur'ān has opted for a wonderfully wise form of address, something that should serve as a guidance for all those who are engaged in the mission of da'wah and tabligh or in debates against opponents of Islam and votaries of the false. It will be noticed that the disbelieving adversaries addressed in this verse were not called kafirs, infidels, disbelievers or the ones gone astray. Rather, a change was introduced in the mode and content of the address. The arguments and proofs were already clear. In their presence, no sensible person could say that tauhid (Oneness of Allah or pure monotheism) and shirk (the attribution of partners in the pristine divinity of Allah) are equally true and that the adherents of both are following the truth. Instead of that, it is certain that one of these two is following the path of truth while the other is in error. Now, it is up to you. You think and you decide as to who is on the side of truth. Is it we or is it you? Had the addressee been called a disbeliever or someone who had gone off the track of truth, it could have made him angry. This approach was avoided. In its place, the approach was kept so affectionate and disarming that it would make even the most diehard adversary left with no choice but to consider what was being proposed (from Qurṭubī and Bayān-ul-Qur'ān)

This method of prophetic call, good counsel and good-mannered debate - in line with the command of the Qur'ān: وَجَادِلْهُمْ بِالَّتِىْ هِىَ اَحْسَنُ (*wa jādilhum bil-latī hiya aḥsan*: (and argue with them in the best manners - 16:125) - is something 'Ulama' should keep in sight all the time. Once this

stands ignored, everything done in the fair name of da'wah, tabligh and debate becomes ineffective, rather harmful. As a result, adversaries turn adamant and cling to their error far more firmly.

Verse 28

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنٰكَ إِلَّا كَآفَّةً لِّلنَّاسِ بَشِيْرًا وَّنَذِيْرًا وَّلٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۲۸﴾

And We did not send you (O prophet,) but to the entire mankind, as a bearer of good news and as a warner, but most people do not know. [28]

Commentary

That Allah is One and that His power is absolute was the subject in previous verses. In the present verse, it is being said that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was sent as the Messenger of Allah to all peoples of the world who are there now or will come in the future.

The word: كَآفَّة (Kaaffah) in: كَآفَّةً لِّلنَّاسِ (Kaaffatal-lin-naas: for all peoples) is used in the sense of making something universal and inclusive of all without the exclusion of anyone from it. The grammatical arrangement of the text required saying: لِلنَّاسِ (lin-naasi kaaffatan: for the people as a whole) because the word: كَآفَّة (kaaffah: all) is grammatically a hal (adverb) relatable to the word نَاس (naas: people). But, in order to put a clear accent on the universality of the mission of the Last Rasūl of Allah, the word: كَآفَّة (Kaaffah: all) was set to come earlier.

The mission of a messenger or prophet assigned to all prophets sent before the Holy Prophet ﷺ was restricted to some particular people and particular geographical area. It is the peculiarity of the Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafa ﷺ that his prophetic mission is common and open to all peoples of the world. In fact, it is not simply for human beings, but is so for the Jinns as well. And then, it is not just for those who were present during his blessed time, but is universally applicable to all human generations to come right up to the last day of Qiyāmah. And this very fact of the continuity and survival of his mission as prophet and messenger demands that he has to be the Last and Final of the prophets and that no prophet is to come after his appearance. The reason is that

another prophet is sent when the law and teachings of the one before him are distorted or altered. Thus, a second prophet is sent to reform the people and reinstate them according to Allah's pleasure. As for the Sharī'ah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and that of His own Book, the Qur'ān, right through the last day of Qiyāmah, the responsibility of its protection has already been undertaken by Allah Ta'ālā Himself. Therefore, it will hold on and survive till Qiyāmah in its original state and there would be no need for some other prophet to be sent.

According to a narration of Sayyidnā Jabir رضی اللہ عنہ appearing in the Ṣaḥīḥs of al-Bukhari and Muslim and elsewhere, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said: 'I have been given five things that have not been given to anyone else before me: (1) That Allah Ta'ālā helped me by placing in my person such an awe as it is felt by the people from the distance of a month of travel. (2) That the whole earth has been declared to be a masjid and a purifier for me (in the religious codes of past prophets, their worship used to be performed only in particular places set up as houses of worship. Worship was not allowed outside their appointed prayer places, either in the open or inside homes. For the Muslim community, Allah Ta'ālā made the whole earth a masjid in the sense that Ṣalah can be made everywhere - and in the absence of water not being available or its use being harmful, the dust of the earth was made tahur or purifier so that it could be used to make tayammum which becomes a valid alternate of wudu). (3) That property from the spoils has been made halal for me. Before me, it was not halal for any other community (among whom the rule was to assemble the war spoils collected from the disbelieving adversary and deposit it at an appointed place in the belief that some fire or lightening would descend from the heavens and burn it, and this act of burning would itself be the sign of the acceptance of their religious war. For the Muslim community, distributing the spoils in accordance with the rule enunciated by the Qur'ān and spending it as needed was made permissible). (4) That I was given the station of the Great Intercession (الشفاعة الكبرى : ash-Shafa'ah al-Kubrā) (that is, when no prophet would dare intercede on behalf of others on the fateful plains of the Resurrection [al-hashr], I shall, then, be given the opportunity to intercede). (5) That before me, every prophet was sent to his particular people - I have been sent as a prophet to all peoples of the world. (Ibn Kathīr)

Verses 29 - 33

وَيَقُولُونَ مَتٰى هٰذَا الْوَعْدُ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿۲۹﴾ قُلْ لَّكُمْ مِّيْعَادُ يَوْمٍ لَّاتَسْتَاْخِرُوْنَ عَنْهُ سَاعَةً وَّلَا تَسْتَقْدِمُوْنَ ﴿۳۰﴾ وَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لَنْ نُّؤْمِنَ بِهٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنِ وَلَا بِالَّذِيْ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ ط وَلَوْ تَرٰٓى اِذِ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ مَوْقُوْفُوْنَ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ صلے يَرْجِعُ بَعْضُهُمْ اِلٰى بَعْضِ ِۨالْقَوْلَ ج يَقُوْلُ الَّذِيْنَ اسْتُضْعِفُوْا لِلَّذِيْنَ اسْتَكْبَرُوْا لَوْلَآ اَنْتُمْ لَكُنَّا مُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿۳۱﴾ قَالَ الَّذِيْنَ اسْتَكْبَرُوْا لِلَّذِيْنَ اسْتُضْعِفُوْٓا اَنَحْنُ صَدَدْنٰكُمْ عَنِ الْهُدٰى بَعْدَ اِذْ جَآءَكُمْ بَلْ كُنْتُمْ مُّجْرِمِيْنَ ﴿۳۲﴾ وَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ اسْتُضْعِفُوْا لِلَّذِيْنَ اسْتَكْبَرُوْا بَلْ مَكْرُ الَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ اِذْ تَاْمُرُوْنَنَآ اَنْ نَّكْفُرَ بِاللّٰهِ وَنَجْعَلَ لَهٗٓ اَنْدَادًا ط وَاَسَرُّوا النَّدَامَةَ لَمَّا رَاَوُا الْعَذَابَ ط وَجَعَلْنَا الْاَغْلٰلَ فِيْٓ اَعْنَاقِ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا ط هَلْ يُجْزَوْنَ اِلَّا مَاكَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۳۳﴾

And they say, " When will this promise (of the Day of Judgment) be fulfilled, if you are truthful?" [29] Say," You have the promise of a day from which you can neither be late for a while, nor can you be ahead of it. [30] And those who disbelieve say," We will never believe in this Qur'an, nor in that which was before it." But if you could see when the wrongdoers will be made to stand before their Lord, repulsing words (of blame) to one another! Those who were held as weak will say to the overbearing," Had you not been there, we would have been believers." [31] Those who were overbearing will say to those weak,"Was it we who stopped you from (accepting) guidance after it came to you? Rather, you were guilty. [32] And those weak will say to those overbearing, "But (it was your) intriguing day and night (that stopped us from accepting guidance), when you were directing us to disbelieve in Allah and to set up rivals to Him." And all of them will conceal (their) penitence when they will see the punishment.[1] And We

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[1] They will conceal their penitence from each other, so that they may not face embarrassment before others.

will place iron-collars around the necks of those who disbelieved. They will not be recompensed except for what they used to do. [33]

Verses 34 - 38

وَمَا اَرْسَلْنَا فِیْ قَرْیَةٍ مِّنْ نَّذِیْرٍ اِلَّا قَالَ مُتْرَفُوْهَآ ۙ اِنَّا بِمَا اُرْسِلْتُمْ بِهٖ كٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿۳۴﴾ وَقَالُوْا نَحْنُ اَكْثَرُ اَمْوَالًا وَّ اَوْلَادًا ۙ وَّمَا نَحْنُ بِمُعَذَّبِیْنَ ﴿۳۵﴾ قُلْ اِنَّ رَبِّیْ یَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ یَّشَآءُ وَیَقْدِرُ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَایَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۳۶﴾ وَمَا اَمْوَالُكُمْ وَلَا اَوْلَادُكُمْ بِالَّتِیْ تُقَرِّبُكُمْ عِنْدَنَا زُلْفٰٓی اِلَّا مَنْ اٰمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا ۫ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمْ جَزَآءُ الضِّعْفِ بِمَا عَمِلُوْا وَهُمْ فِی الْغُرُفٰتِ اٰمِنُوْنَ ﴿۳۷﴾ وَالَّذِیْنَ یَسْعَوْنَ فِیْٓ اٰیٰتِنَا مُعٰجِزِیْنَ اُولٰٓئِكَ فِی الْعَذَابِ مُحْضَرُوْنَ ﴿۳۸﴾

And We did not send a warner to a township, but said those who lived a luxurious life therein," We reject what you have been sent with." [34] **And they said, " We are superior in riches and children, and we are not going to be punished".** [35] **Say, "In fact, my Lord extends provision to whom He wills, and straitens (it for whom He wills),but most of the people do not know".** [36] **And neither your riches nor your children are the things that bring you near Us closely; however, the one who believes and acts righteously (is close to Us). Therefore, such people will have the double reward for what they did, and they will be at peace in the upper chambers (of Paradise).** [37] **As for those who strive against our signs trying to frustrate (them), they will be arraigned into the torment.** [38]

Commentary

The age-old satanic illusion of taking worldly riches and honours as a proof of being loved by Allah

All along the lanes of time since the very beginning, people intoxicated with material wealth and luxury have always opposed the voice of truth and taken a stance of hostility against the prophets and the pious people, except those whom Allah willed otherwise. On top of this,

they also used to argue in favor of their satisfaction with the existing stance against the people of truth by saying: Had Allah disliked our doings and ways, why would He give us wealth, recognition and power in this world? The noble Qur'ān has answered it in several verses taking different approaches. The revelation of the cited verses is also related to an event of this nature which provides an answer to this absurd argument.

It appears in Ḥadīth that, during the period of Jāhiliyah, two persons ran a business in partnership. Then, one of them left the place and went to some coastal area. When the Holy Prophet ﷺ was ordained as prophet, and people in Arabia started talking about it, the former business partner then living in a coastal area wrote a letter to his former business partner in Makkah and asked him about his reaction and the reaction of other people against this person claiming to be a prophet. The former partner in Makkah wrote back telling him that no one from among the Quraish had followed him, except that a few people of no consequence, mostly poor and needy, were going for him. The man of the coast left his business behind, came to Makkah and asked his former partner there to tell him the address of the person who claimed to be a prophet. This coastal friend who used to study old scriptures, such as the Torah and the Evangile, presented himself before the Holy Prophet ﷺ and asked him: 'What is it to which you invite people to come?' He told him about the main elements of his da'wah of Islam. Immediately after having heard the da'wah (call) to Islam in his blessed words, he said: اَشْهَدُ اَنَّکَ رَسُوْلُ اللهِ (*Ashhadu annaka rasūlallāh*: (i.e.'I bear witness that you are, without any doubt, the messenger of Allah'). He asked him: "How did you know this?" He submitted: '[As for your call being true, I understood it through my reason, and then the sign of it was that:] Adherents of all noble prophets who have come earlier have, in the beginning, always been the weak and the meek, the poor and needy, people who did not matter much among those they were sent to.' Revealed thereupon was the verse under study: وَمَا اَرْسَلْنَا فِیْ قَرْیَةٍ مِّنْ نَّذِیْرٍ اِلَّا قَالَ مُتْرَفُوْهَآ... (And We did not send a warner to a township, but said those who lived a luxurious life therein," We reject what you have been sent with." - 34:34) (Ibn Kathīr and Maẓharī)

In this verse, the word: مُتْرَف (*mutraf*, translated above as 'those who lived a luxurious life) has been derived from: تَرَف (*taraf*) which carries the

sense of a life abounding in material assets, ease and comfort. Hence, مُتْرَفِيْنَ (*mutrafin*) denotes rich people of a community (who are arrogant and careless about what is right or wrong) .The Holy Qur'ān is saying in the verse cited above that whenever Allah has sent a messenger, these people intoxicated with their riches and pampered by a life of luxury have always confronted him with a flat denial of his mission.

Quoted in the next verse (35) is their saying: نَحْنُ اَكْثَرُ اَمْوَالاً وَّ اَوْلَادًا وَّمَا نَحْنُ بِمُعَذَّبِيْنَ which, in effect, means: "We are superior in riches and children, and we are not going to be punished - 35". (Obviously, by it, they meant: If we had been deserving of punishment in the sight of Allah Ta'ālā, why would He give us all this wealth and recognition)? The noble Qur'ān gives an answer in the next two verses by saying: ...قُلْ اِنَّ رَبِّىْ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَيَقْدِرُ ("In fact, my Lord extends provision to whom He wills, and straitens (it for whom He wills),but most of the people do not know". 34:36] And neither your riches nor your children are the things that bring you near Us closely; however, the one who believes and acts righteously (is close to Us) وَمَا اَمْوَالُكُمْ وَلَا اَوْلَادُكُمْ 34:37). The gist of the answer is that having more wealth and recognition in this world, or not having any, is no proof of someone being acceptable or unacceptable in the sight of Allah. In fact, it is in view of creational considerations that Allah Ta'ālā would give, at least in this world, property and wealth in abundance to whomever He wills, and gives less to whomever He wills. He alone knows the creational consideration behind it. But, taking the abundance of wealth and children to be a proof of being acceptable in the sight of Allah is sheer ignorance because, with Him, the criterion of acceptability, approval, support and pleasure is no other but 'Imān (faith) and good deed. One who does not carry these two assets - no matter how much wealth and how many children one has - these cannot make him or her acceptable in the sight of Allah.

This very subject has been taken up in several other verses of the noble Qur'ān. In Sūrah al-Mu'minun, it was said:

اَيَحْسَبُوْنَ اَنَّمَا نُمِدُّهُمْ بِهٖ مِنْ مَّالٍ وَّبَنِيْنَ نُسَارِعُ لَهُمْ فِى الْخَيْرٰتِ بَلْ لَّا يَشْعُرُوْنَ

Do they think that by consistently providing them with wealth and children, We are accelerating the (real) good things to them? The fact, however, is that they do not understand (the reality) - 23:55,56.

And the reality is that wealth and children that make man negligent of Allah become a curse for him. Then, in a verse of Surah At-Taubah, it was said:

فَلَا تُعْجِبْكَ اَمْوَالُهُمْ وَلَآ اَوْلَادُهُمْ اِنَّمَا يُرِيْدُ اللّٰهُ لِيُعَذِّبَهُمْ بِهَا فِى الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَتَزْهَقَ اَنْفُسُهُمْ وَهُمْ كٰفِرُوْنَ

And their wealth and children should not attract you. Allah only wants to punish them with these in this world and that their souls depart while they are disbelievers - 9:85.

In that case, it will end up into the everlasting punishment of the Hereafter. As for punishing through wealth and children right here in this world, it means that they become so involved in and infatuated with wealth and property that they never find the time to think about their ultimate fate or turn towards Allah and 'Ākhirah - the end of which is punishment that will last for ever. Then there are many who have wealth and children both. It is within this world that, for the sake of wealth and children, rather, through the wealth and children, they have to suffer from thousands of distresses and pains. As such, their punishment starts taking effect right from this very world.

According to a narration of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﵁, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: Allah Ta'ālā does not see you or your wealth. He sees your hearts and your deeds - reported by Aḥmad, Ibn Kathīr)

In the last sentence of verse 37: فَاُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمْ جَزَآءُ الضِّعْفِ بِمَا عَمِلُوْا وَهُمْ فِى الْغُرُفٰتِ اٰمِنُوْنَ (Therefore, such people will have the double reward for what they did, and they will be at peace in the upper chambers (of Paradise).- 34:37), mentioned there is the state of the people of 'Imān (faith) and good deeds for they are the ones acceptable with Allah. Whether or not they are recognized in this world, their return in the Hereafter will be double or manifold. The word: ضِعف (*ḍi'f*) with a kasrah of the letter: ضاد (*ḍād*) is a verbal noun which means 'like a thing' or 'the likes of a thing'. The sense is that the way wealthy people keep amassing their wealth in the worldly life, Allah Ta'ālā would increase the return for His accepted people in the Hereafter many times over. For example, the return for one deed would be ten of its likes, or ten times as much. Then, it is not so restricted either. Granted the person's sincerity in deed and in view of other causes and considerations, the return of one such deed can go up to seven hundred

times. That returns at this high scale would also be given as stands proved from Ṣaḥīḥ aḥādīth. It is interesting that this too is not restricted. It could be more than that. In short, these people of faith and good deed shall be residing in the elevated chambers of Paradise in perfect peace and forever shielded against all sorrows.

The word: غُرُفَاتٌ (*ghurufat*) is the plural form of: غُرْفَة (*ghurfah*). It denotes a part of the mansion considered distinct and high as compared to other parts.

Verse 39

قُلْ إِنَّ رَبِّي يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ وَيَقْدِرُلَهُ ۚ وَمَآ أَنْفَقْتُمْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ فَهُوَ يُخْلِفُهُ ۚ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الرّٰزِقِيْنَ ﴿٣٩﴾

Say, "Surely, my Lord extends provision for whomsoever He wills out of His servants, and straitens (it) for him. And whatever thing you spend, He replaces it. And He is the best of the sustainers. [39]

Commentary

This verse has appeared a little earlier (36) almost in the same words. As obvious, the same thing has been mentioned here, however, it has a difference. At this place, there is an addition of: مِنْ عِبَادِهِ (out of His servants) after: مَنْ يَّشَاءُ (whomsoever He wills) and: 'لَهُ (lahu: for him or whomever) after: يَقْدِرُ (yaqdir: straitens). From the statement: مِنْ عِبَادِهِ (min 'ibadihi: from His servants), it is gathered that this rule of guidance has been put forth for His particular servants, that is, for the believers, and the purpose is to alert people of faith that they should not start loving wealth and comfort to the extent that their hearts choke when it comes to spending at occasions and on rights enjoined by Allah Ta'ālā. As for the earlier verse (36) that carries the same text, it was addressed to disbelievers and polytheists who prided on the worldly assets of wealth and children and declared these to be the proof of their success in the Hereafter. Thus, any discordance between the addressee and the purpose of address stands eliminated. Maulāna Ashraf 'Alī Thanāvi, in his *khulasah* of Tafsir Bayān ul-Qur'ān, has taken the same approach by first adding 'the believers' in parenthesis while explaining this verse.

Another difference between these two verses pointed to by some commentators is that mentioned in the first verse was the distribution of sustenance between different human beings, that is, Allah Ta'ālā gives more of wealth and property to some, and less to some others - all in His wisdom and in the light of universal considerations. And in this verse, only one person and his different states have been mentioned, that is, this one person has, at times, more with him, then, comes another time and the same person has much less as well. The word: 'لَهٗ (lahu: for him) which appears in this verse after: يَقْدِرُ (yaqdiru: straitens) releases an indication in this direction. This approach too leaves no discordance behind. Rather, the first verse turns out as relating to different individuals and the present verse, to different states of one single person.

The sentence: 'وَمَا اَنْفَقْتُمْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ فَهُوَ يُخْلِفُهٗ (And whatever thing you spend, He replaces it. And He is the best of the sustainers.) in verse 39 literally means: 'For anything that you spend, Allah Ta'ālā gives you a return from His unseen treasures - at times, within this world and at times, in the Hereafter and at times, in both.' In things happening around us, we see that water comes down from above, animals and humans use it freely, needs of farms and forests are satiated, and no sooner does that supply of water gets used up, than another supply descends to replenish it. Similar is the case of wells dug for water that, no matter how much water is spent out of these, it stands replenished by nature from other sources of water beneath the bed. Man eats up his food leaving the impression that he has finished it, but Allah Ta'ālā provides him with other food in its absence. Physical exercise burns out calories of food and other workings of nature turn it into energy. In short, whatever man spends out in this world, it is the customary practice of Allah Ta'ālā that He would replace it with something else similar to it. Something happening contrary to this, as an exceptional case, - either to punish one, or for the sake of some other creational consideration - will not be deemed as contrary to this customary Divine practice.

According to a Ḥadīth of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ in Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Everyday when people rise to see another morning, two angels descend from the heavens and pray: اَللّٰهُمّ اعطِ منفقا خلفا واعط ممسكا تلفا (O Allah, bless the one who spends [out of what You gave him or her] with its return, and let the one who withholds [what

You gave him or her] find it wasted." And according to another Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Allah Ta'ālā has told me: You spend on people, I shall spend on you."

There is no promise of a return for spending that is not in accordance with the Sharī'ah

Says a Ḥadīth of Sayyidnā Jabir ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Good deed is *sadaqah* (an act of charity in the way of Allah). When someone spends on himself or his children and family, that spending too falls under sadaqah. It brings *thawab* (reward from Allah). And one who spends to protect his integrity and honor, this too is sadaqah. And whoever spends whatever he does in obedience to the command of Allah, He has taken it upon Himself that He will give him its return - except that which is spent in (wasteful, extra to need) building or sinful activity, for there is no promise of a return for it."

After hearing this Ḥadīth from Sayyidnā Jabir ؓ, his disciple, Ibn al-Munkadir asked him: 'What is the meaning of spending to protect one's honor?' He said, 'There may be a person about whom one apprehends that, should he not give him something, he would go about maligning him in all sorts of ways. In this case, giving to such a person is in order to save one's honor.' (Reported by ad-Darquṭni, Qurṭubī)

With the decrease in the use of something, its production also decreases

The hint embedded in this verse also tells us that as long as the things of use provided by Allah Ta'ālā for consumption of human beings and animals keep being consumed, these keep being replaced by Him constantly. The rule seems to be that the more the consumption of something, the more its production. The multiple uses made of domestic animals like goats, sheep and cows put them high on the list of consumption. They are slaughtered. Their meat is eaten. Then, they are also slaughtered under Islamic legal requirements, such as, the Qurbānī or sacrifice, and in Kaffarat (plural of kaffarah or expiation) and jinayat (faults, offences against religious prohibitions). The more they are consumed, the more increased becomes their frequency of production from Allah Ta'ālā. This is common experience everywhere. The number of these animals, despite being under the knife all the time, remains the highest in the world. The number of dogs and cats is not that high,

although the reproduction of dogs and cats should obviously be much more as they produce four or five puppies and kittens in a single pregnancy. A cow or goat delivers two calves or kids at the most. Cows and goats keep being slaughtered all the time. Dogs and cats are (generally) not touched by anyone. But, as far as common observations goes, it cannot be denied that the number of cows, sheep and goats comparatively exceeds the number of dogs and cats. Since the time restrictions have been placed on the slaughter of cows in India, the production of cows has gone down there in that very ratio. Otherwise, every village and every home would have been full of cows that stayed spared from being slaughtered.

Once the Arabs tapered down their use of camels for riding and transport purposes, the usual increase in the populations of their camels has also gone down. Incidentally, what has been said here also helps remove that atheistic doubt usually dished out with reference to the Islamic injunctions of sacrifice saying that it is likely to affect the economy of Muslims adversely.

Verses 40 - 42

وَيَوْمَ يَحْشُرُهُمْ جَمِيعًا ثُمَّ يَقُولُ لِلْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ أَهٰٓؤُلَآءِ إِيَّاكُمْ كَانُوا يَعْبُدُونَ ﴿٤٠﴾ قَالُوا سُبْحٰنَكَ أَنْتَ وَلِيُّنَا مِنْ دُونِهِمْ ۚ بَلْ كَانُوا يَعْبُدُونَ الْجِنَّ ۚ أَكْثَرُهُمْ بِهِمْ مُّؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٤١﴾ فَالْيَوْمَ لَا يَمْلِكُ بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ نَّفْعًا وَّلَا ضَرًّا ۗ وَنَقُولُ لِلَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا ذُوقُوا عَذَابَ النَّارِ الَّتِي كُنْتُمْ بِهَا تُكَذِّبُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾

And (remember) the Day when He will gather them all together, then will say to the angels," Is it you that these people used to worship?" [40] **They will say, " Pure are You! You are our mentor, not these. Rather, they used to worship the Jinns. Most of these believed in them."** [41] **So, you have no power today to benefit or harm one another, and We will say to the wrongdoers, " Taste the punishment of Fire that you used to belie."** [42]

Verses 43 - 50

وَإِذَا تُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْهِمْ آيٰتُنَا بَيِّنٰتٍ قَالُوْا مَا هٰذَآ إِلَّا رَجُلٌ يُّرِيْدُ أَنْ يَّصُدَّكُمْ
عَمَّا كَانَ يَعْبُدُ آبَآؤُكُمْ ۚ وَقَالُوْا مَا هٰذَا إِلَّآ إِفْكٌ مُّفْتَرًى ۗ وَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ
كَفَرُوْا لِلْحَقِّ لَمَّا جَآءَهُمْ ۙ إِنْ هٰذَا إِلَّآ سِحْرٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿٤٣﴾ وَمَآ آتَيْنٰهُمْ
مِّنْ كُتُبٍ يَّدْرُسُوْنَهَا وَمَآ أَرْسَلْنَآ إِلَيْهِمْ قَبْلَكَ مِنْ نَّذِيْرٍ ﴿٤٤﴾ وَكَذَّبَ
الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ۙ وَمَا بَلَغُوْا مِعْشَارَ مَآ آتَيْنٰهُمْ فَكَذَّبُوْا رُسُلِيْ ۖ
فَكَيْفَ كَانَ نَكِيْرِ ﴿٤٥﴾ قُلْ إِنَّمَآ أَعِظُكُمْ بِوَاحِدَةٍ ۚ أَنْ تَقُوْمُوْا لِلّٰهِ
مَثْنٰى وَفُرَادٰى ثُمَّ تَتَفَكَّرُوْا ۖ مَا بِصَاحِبِكُمْ مِّنْ جِنَّةٍ ۗ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا نَذِيْرٌ
لَّكُمْ بَيْنَ يَدَيْ عَذَابٍ شَدِيْدٍ ﴿٤٦﴾ قُلْ مَا سَأَلْتُكُمْ مِّنْ أَجْرٍ فَهُوَ لَكُمْ ۗ
إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى اللّٰهِ ۚ وَهُوَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيْدٌ ﴿٤٧﴾ قُلْ إِنَّ رَبِّيْ
يَقْذِفُ بِالْحَقِّ ۚ عَلَّامُ الْغُيُوْبِ ﴿٤٨﴾ قُلْ جَآءَ الْحَقُّ وَمَا يُبْدِئُ
الْبَاطِلُ وَمَا يُعِيْدُ ﴿٤٩﴾ قُلْ إِنْ ضَلَلْتُ فَإِنَّمَآ أَضِلُّ عَلٰى نَفْسِيْ ۚ وَإِنِ
اهْتَدَيْتُ فَبِمَا يُوْحِيْٓ إِلَيَّ رَبِّيْ ۗ إِنَّهٗ سَمِيْعٌ قَرِيْبٌ ﴿٥٠﴾

And when Our evident verses are recited to them, they say," He is nothing but a man who wishes to divert you from what your fathers used to worship." And they say," This is nothing but a forged lie." And the disbelievers say about the Truth, when it came to them,"This is nothing but an explicit magic." [43] And We did not give them any books that they might study, nor did We send to them any warner before you. [44] And those before them had rejected (the messengers), while these(infidels of Makkah) have not reached even one tenth of what We gave to those (before them). So, they rejected my Messengers. Then (imagine) how was My censure! [45]

Say," I advise you for one thing only : that you stand up before Allah, in pairs and in singles, then reflect; (you will easily appreciate that) there is no madness in your fellow (the Holy Prophet). He is none but a warner to you in the face of a stern torment. [46] Say, "If I had ever

claimed any reward from you, then it is yours. My reward is with none but Allah. And He is witness over every thing." [47] **Say," My Lord sends forth the Truth. He is the Best-Knower of the Unseen."** [48] **Say, " Truth has come, and falsehood (has vanished so as it) has no power to produce or reproduce (anything)."** [49] **Say, " If I go astray, I shall go astray only to my own detriment. And if I follow the right path, it is because of what my Lord reveals to me. Surely He is All-Hearer, Ever-Near.** [50]

Commentary

The word: مِعْشَار (*mi'shar*) in verse 45: وَمَا بَلَغُوا مِعْشَارَمَا اٰتَيْنٰهُم (while these(infidels of Makkah) have not reached even one tenth of what We gave to those (before them).) has been taken to mean: عُشْر (*'ushr*: a tenth) by some early commentators. Some scholars have interpreted it as: عُشْرُ الْعُشْر ('ushr-ul-'ushr: a hundredth) while others call it: عُشْرُ الْعَشِير (*'ushr-ul-'ashir*: a thousandth). Obviously, the later has a higher degree of exaggeration as compared to 'ushr or ten. The sense of the verse is that not even a tenth, rather a thousandth, of the worldly wealth, power, blessings of age and health given to earlier communities was received by the people of Makkah. Therefore, they should take lesson from what happened to past communities and the evil end they faced. These were people who invited upon themselves the wrath of Allah when they rejected prophets and messengers and, consequently, when came the actual punishment, their power, bravery, wealth and fortified fortresses could do nothing for them.

Call to the disbelievers of Makkah

In verse 46: إِنَّمَآ أَعِظُكُم بِوَاحِدَةٍ (I advise you for one thing only), in order to negate any excuse for the people of Makkah, they have been shown a shortcut to ascertain truth. For this, they had to do just one thing: Stand for Allah, in pairs and singles. 'Standing for Allah' does not mean standing in the physical sense, something like standing up from the posture of sitting or lying. Instead of that, it means having the resolve to show full care and concern for the assignment in sight. Then, by adding: لِلّٰهِ (lil-lah: For Allah) with the word: قِيَام (*qiyam*: To stand), the purpose is to make it clear that one should start looking for truth with a mind cleansed of previous thoughts and beliefs for the good pleasure of Allah alone, so that previous thoughts and deeds do not obstruct one's way to

an acceptance of the truth. And then, the expression 'in pairs and singles' is not intended to point out a particular number. The sense is that there are two ways of pondering over something: (1) To think it out alone and in private. (2) To consult friends and elders, discuss it with them and then arrive at some conclusion. It is being said here that, 'out of these two methods, you can go by the one you like.'

The conjunction: ثُمَّ (*thumma*: then) in the next sentence in verse 46: ثُمَّ تَتَفَكَّرُوا (*thumma tatafakkaru:* then ponder) refers back to: أَنْ تَقُومُوا (*an taqumu*: That you stand) appearing earlier in the same verse where the purpose of standing has been spelt out - that is, 'cleanse your mind of all previous thoughts, get ready to act for the good pleasure of Allah, think about the call of the prophet of Islam, Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafa ﷺ and decide for yourself whether or not it is true and it does not matter whether you do this thinking on your own and all alone, or you do it by consulting others and arriving at some conclusion following discussions with them.'

Onwards from here, another line of thinking has been suggested: Here is a solitary person, all by himself, with no power or group to back him and no wealth or property to strengthen him. Here he comes proclaiming an article of faith counter to that of his own people, rather that of the whole world, something having taken firm roots over centuries and something they all agree to. Such a proclamation can come only in two forms: (1) Either the person making the proclamation is totally insane who has no idea of his gain or loss and is ready to invite the wrath of his people and all sorts of hardship for him. (2) Or, what he is saying might as well be true - that he is a rasul or messenger from Allah and fears none in conveying and implementing His command.

Now, think hard with an open mind as to which of the two things is the real thing. If you think in that manner, you would be left with no choice but to become certain that he cannot be insane. The entire city of Makkah and everyone in the large tribe of Quraish is aware of his wisdom and character. He has spent forty years of his life among his people. From childhood to his youth, everything about him has been before them. No one has ever found any word or deed issuing forth from him to be counter to reason, wisdom, sobriety and gentleness. And other than the kalimah of: لا اله الا الله : la ilaha il-lal-lah (there is no god but

Allah) to which he invites people, no one can doubt any of his word and deed to be counter to reason and wisdom, even today. Given these conditions, it becomes quite obvious that he cannot be insane. This was established in the next sentence of the verse by saying: مَابِصَاحِبِكُمْ مِّنْ جِنَّةٍ (there is no madness in your fellow (the Holy Prophet)). Here, the word: صَاحِبِكُمْ (*sahibikum*: your fellow) releases a hint in this direction. It is suggesting that should it be the case of a visitor coming in from outside whose antecedents are unknown and who is heard saying something counter to the belief of a whole people, then, it is possible to call him insane. But, this cannot be true in his case. He is one of you, he lives in your city, he belongs to your brotherhood and abides in your company be it day or night. Nothing he does is hidden from you. In fact, even you yourselves have never cast aspersions against him in that manner before this.

And when the absence of the first situation becomes clear, the second situation stands established that has been mentioned in the last sentence of this very verse (46) as: اِنْ هُوَ اِلَّا نَذِيْرٌ لَّكُمْ بَيْنَ يَدَىْ عَذَابٍ شَدِيْدٍ (He is none but a warner to you in the face of a stern torment). It means that his presence among them signifies nothing but that he has been sent there to save people from the severe punishment of the Day of Judgment by warning them of it in advance.

Verse 48: اِنَّ رَبِّىْ يَقْذِفُ بِالْحَقِّ عَلَّامُ الْغُيُوْبِ (Say," My Lord sends forth the Truth. He is the Best-Knower of the Unseen." - 34:48) Say, "Truth has come, and falsehood (has vanished so as it) has no power to produce or reproduce (anything)". It means that my Lord who is the Knower of the Unseen strikes out the false with a throw of the truth (as a result of which the false is destroyed, as it was said: فَاِذَا هُوَ زَاهِقٌ : 'and there it is all gone'- Al-Anbiya', 21:18). Literally, the word: قَذَفَ (qadhf) means to hit by throwing. Here, the purpose is to highlight the truth as set against the false. Perhaps, there may be a wise consideration behind expressing this phenomenon through the word: يَقْذِفُ (yaqdhifu: He throws), may be the purpose is to point out to the after effect of the truth prevailing over the false. It appears here in the form of a simile as the throwing of something heavy over something feeble that shatters into pieces. So it happens in the confrontation between truth and falsehood when the later lies shattered. Therefore, it was said next: وَمَا يُبْدِئُ الْبَاطِلُ وَمَا يُعِيْدُ (and falsehood

(has vanished so as it) has no power to produce or reproduce anything) that is, falsehood becomes so incapacitated in the face of truth that it can neither originate anything nor can it bring it back.

Verses 51 - 54

وَلَوْ تَرٰٓى اِذْ فَزِعُوْا فَلَا فَوْتَ وَاُخِذُوْا مِنْ مَّكَانٍ قَرِيْبٍ ﴿٥١﴾ وَّقَالُوْٓا اٰمَنَّا بِهٖ ۚ وَاَنّٰى لَهُمُ التَّنَاوُشُ مِنْ مَّكَانٍۢ بَعِيْدٍ ﴿٥٢﴾ وَّقَدْ كَفَرُوْا بِهٖ مِنْ قَبْلُ ۚ وَيَقْذِفُوْنَ بِالْغَيْبِ مِنْ مَّكَانٍۢ بَعِيْدٍ ﴿٥٣﴾ وَحِيْلَ بَيْنَهُمْ وَبَيْنَ مَا يَشْتَهُوْنَ كَمَا فُعِلَ بِاَشْيَاعِهِمْ مِّنْ قَبْلُ ۗ اِنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا فِيْ شَكٍّ مُّرِيْبٍ ﴿٥٤﴾

And if you could only see when they will be terrified! Then there will be no escape, and they will be seized from a place near at hand. [51] And they will say, " We believe in Him." And how can they achieve it (the faith) from a place (so) far off, [52] while they had rejected it before, and used to make conjectures from a place (so) far off ? [53] And a barrier will be placed between them and that which they desire, as it will be done with the people of their kind who were before (them). They were in a perplexing doubt. [54]

Commentary

According to most commentators, the attending condition described in verse 51: وَاُخِذُوْا مِنْ مَّكَانٍ قَرِيْبٍ (and they will be seized from a place near at hand) refers to the Day of Resurrection (al-ḥashr) from the terror of which disbelievers and sinners will not be able to escape even if they try to do so. In our normal experience in this world, when a culprit runs away, he has to be searched for. Something like that will not happen in the present case. In fact, all of them will be seized from where they are located. No one will have the chance to escape. Others have taken this time to be that of the agony of death, that is, when the time of death comes, they will be terrified and, unable to extricate themselves from the hands of the angels, they will be seized where they are with their soul taken out.

The word: تَنَاوُش (tanawush) in verse 52: وَقَالُوٓا اٰمَنَّا بِهٖ وَاَنّٰی لَهُمُ التَّنَاوُشُ مِنْ مَّکَانٍ بَعِيْدٍ (And they will say, " We believe in Him." And how can they achieve it (the faith) from a place (so) far off?) means to pick up something by stretching one's hand. Then, it is obvious that one can pick up only what is near at hand. If it is very far, it will be out of reach. The subject of the verse is that disbelievers and deniers, once they see reality as it is on the Day of Judgement, will say, "We have now come to believe in the Qur'ān, or the messenger of Allah to whom it was revealed." But, they would not know that the time and place for embracing 'Iman (faith) has receded far away from them for the reason that 'Iman is a thing of the life of the mortal world and that alone is what is accepted. The 'Ākhirah (the Hereafter) is not the venue of deeds, the place to act right (*darul-'amāl*). Nothing done there can be taken into account. Therefore, how is it possible that they pick up the great wealth of 'Iman just by stretching their hand for it.

The word: قَذْف (*qadhf*) in verse 53: وَقَدْ کَفَرُوْا بِهٖ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَيَقْذِفُوْنَ بِالْغَيْبِ مِنْ مَّکَانٍ بَعِيْدٍ (while they had rejected it before, and used to make conjectures from a place (so) far off) means to hit something by throwing. In the Arab idiom, anyone talking out of his hat having no proof for it is referred to by the expressions: رجم بالغيب (*rajm bil-ghayb*) and: قذف بالغيب (*qadhf bil-ghayb*), that is, this person shoots arrows in the dark which has no aim or target. At this place, the expression: مِنْ مَّکَانٍ بَعِيْدٍ (from a place far away) means 'what they say is far from their hearts, that is, they do not believe in it by heart.'

In the last verse (54), it was said: وَحِيْلَ بَيْنَهُمْ وَبَيْنَ مَا يَشْتَهُوْنَ (And a barrier will be placed between them and that which they desire,) that is, they were not allowed to have it. This description could be true about the Day of Judgment in the sense that these people will be seeking salvation and Paradise but would fail to have it. Then, it could also apply to the time of death in the world, that is, they wished to have worldly wealth that was made to stay away from them by the barrier of death.

The word: اَشْيَاع (*ashya'*) in: کَمَا فُعِلَ بِاَشْيَاعِهِمْ (as it will be done with the people of their kind who were before (them). They were in a perplexing doubt.) is the plural form of: شِيْعَه (*shi'ah*). One who is a follower of someone and thinks alike is called a shi'ah or partisan of that person. The sense is that the punishment of having been deprived of what they

wished to have was no other but a punishment that had already been given to people like them who indulged in doings their disbelief prompted them to do. The reason was that they were deep in doubt, that is, they did not believe in the prophethood of Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafa ﷺ nor did they have the certitude of and faith in the Qur'ān being the Divine word. And Allah is Pure and High and He knows the best.

Alḥamdulillāh
The Commentary on
Sūrah Saba'
Ends here

Sūrah Faṭir

(Creator/Originator)

Sūrah Faṭir was revealed at Makkah and it has 45 verses and 5 sections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 3

اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ فَاطِرِ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ جَاعِلِ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ رُسُلًا اُولِيْٓ
اَجْنِحَةٍ مَّثْنٰى وَثُلٰثَ وَرُبٰعَ ؕ يَزِيْدُ فِي الْخَلْقِ مَا يَشَآءُ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلٰى
كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿۱﴾ مَا يَفْتَحِ اللّٰهُ لِلنَّاسِ مِنْ رَّحْمَةٍ فَلَا مُمْسِكَ لَهَا ۚ
وَمَا يُمْسِكْ ۙ فَلَا مُرْسِلَ لَهٗ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖ ؕ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ ﴿۲﴾ يٰٓاَيُّهَا
النَّاسُ اذْكُرُوْا نِعْمَتَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ ؕ هَلْ مِنْ خَالِقٍ غَيْرُ اللّٰهِ يَرْزُقُكُمْ
مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ۖ فَاَنّٰى تُؤْفَكُوْنَ ﴿۳﴾

All praise belongs to Allah, the Originator of the heavens and the earth, who makes the angels messengers having wings, in twos, threes and fours. He adds to the creation what He wills. Indeed, Allah is powerful to do every thing. [1] Whatever blessing Allah opens for the people, there is none to hold it back, and whatever He holds back, there is none to release it thereafter. And He is the Mighty, the Wise. [2] O mankind, remember Allah's blessing upon you. Is there any creator other than Allah who gives you provision from the sky and the earth? There is no god, but He. So, to where are you being turned around (by your desires)? [3]

Commentary

As for the statement: جَاعِلِ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ رُسُلًا (who makes the angels messengers), it means that angels were assigned to convey the messages and injunctions of Allah Ta'ālā. From this, it is obvious that they are sent to the noble prophets علیهم السلام as the message-bearers or envoys of Allah. They convey the revelations and the injunctions of Allah to them. And it is also possible that the word: رسول (Rasūl) used here may be denoting the sense of link at this place, that is, they become a link between Allah Ta'ālā and His universal creation out of which the noble prophets علیهم السلام are the superior-most. Thus, they also become an intermediary link for the transmittal of revelation from Allah Ta'ālā to them. Then, these very angels happen to be the means of bringing the mercy of Allah or His punishment to the universal creation.

The next statement: اُولِيْٓ اَجْنِحَةٍ مَّثْنٰى وَثُلٰثَ وَرُبٰعَ (having wings, in twos and threes and fours) means that Allah Ta'ālā has given to the angels feathered wings they can fly with. The wise consideration behind it is obvious as they traverse the distance between the heavens and the earth repeatedly, and this can become possible only when they are endowed with the necessary speed to so traverse, something that can come about in the mode of flying only.

And the words: مَثْنٰى وَ ثُلٰثَ وَرُبٰعَ (in twos and threes and fours) are, evidently enough, numerical adjectives referring to: اَجْنِحَة (wings) in the sense that the number of the feathers angels have varies from angel to angel . Some have only two wings. Others have three. Still others have four. Even the numbers mentioned here are not comprehensive, rather they are mentioned here just as an example, because it is proved by a Ḥadīth in Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim that Sayyidnā Jibra'īl عليه السلام, has six hundred feathers. (Qurṭubī, Ibn Kathīr)

Moreover, it is also possible that these three words are numerical adjectives referring to the word: رُسُلًا (rusulan: bearers of the message) in the sense that these angels who deliver messages from Allah Ta'ālā to this world sometimes come in twos and at others in threes or fours. Once again, in this situation too, the number of four is not intended for restriction. It is there just for example because the coming of angels in a much larger number stands proved from the Qur'ān itself. (Abū Ḥayyan in al-Baḥr ul-Muḥīṭ)

The next sentence: يَزِيْدُ فِى الْخَلْقِ مَايَشَآءُ (He adds to the creation what He wills) means that Allah Ta'ālā has the power to increase whatever He wills and as much as He wills in the creation of everything He has originated. This obviously is related to: أَجْنِحَة (ajnihah: wings) in that the feathers and wings of the angels are not something simply restricted to two or four in numbers, for they could be many more than these if Allah Ta'ālā so wills. Most commentators say exactly this. And Tafsīr authorities Zuhri, Qatadah and others have said that this increase in creation is to be taken in its general sense which includes increase in the feathers and wings of angels as well as the increase of particular attributes in the creation of different human beings which, then, includes the beauty of form, the beauty of character, the beauty of voice and many more increased assets like these. Abū Ḥayyan has, in al-Baḥr ul-Muḥīṭ, followed this track of explanation and said that things like good manners, beauty of figure and face, perfection of reason and intellect, politeness in discourse and similar others are all included therein. This second Tafsīr proves that the beauty or perfection of anything one has is invariably a gift and blessing from Allah Ta'ālā for which one should be grateful to Him.

The word: رَحْمَة (*raḥmah*: mercy) appearing in verse 2: مَايَفْتَحِ اللّٰهُ لِلنَّاسِ مِنْ رَّحْمَةٍ فَلَا مُمْسِكَ لَهَا (Whatever blessing Allah opens for the people, there is none to hold it back,) is general at this place. It includes blessings of one's religion in this world along with those of the Hereafter, such as, faith, knowledge, rightly guided conduct as well as the mission of a prophet and the station of a Waliyy or man of Allah. And it also includes material blessings in the present world, such as, provisions, means, comfort, health, wealth, property, recognition and things like that. The meaning of the verse is quite obvious. It is being said here that the person for whom Allah Ta'ālā intends to open the doors of His mercy, there is no one who can stop it.

Similarly, the second sentence: وَمَا يُمْسِكْ (wa ma yumsik: there is none to hold it back) is general, meaning: what Allah Ta'ālā holds back cannot be released by anyone. This includes hardships and sorrows of the world. For example, when Allah intends to shield some servant of His from these, then, there is no one who can dare harass or harm him. And included here is the matter of mercy as well in the sense that, should Allah Ta'ālā

decide to deprive a person of His mercy due to some wise consideration of His, then, there is no one who can dare pass it on to him. (Abū Ḥayyan)

Related to this very subject of the verse, there is a Ḥadīth that reports that Sayyidnā Mu'awiyah ﷺ wrote to Sayyidnā Mughirah Ibn Shu'abah ﷺ, his governor at Kufah, asking him to send back to him in writing some Ḥadīth he had personally heard from the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Sayyidnā Mughirah ﷺ called Rawwad, his chief scribe, in his office and dictated his report as: 'I heard from the Holy Prophet ﷺ soon after he finished his salah his recitation of the words: اَللّٰهُمَّ لَا مَانِعَ لِمَا اَعْطَيْتَ وَلَا مُعْطِيَ لِمَا مَنَعْتَ وَلَا يَنْفَعُ ذَا الْجَدِّ مِنْکَ الْجَدُّ (O Allah, for that which You give, there is no one to stop, and for that which you hold back, there is no one to give it out, and no effort[1] by any maker of effort works against Your will'). (Ibn Kathīr from the Musnad of Aḥmad)

And according to a narration of Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī ﷺ in Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim, he said these words at the time he raised his head from the (bending) position of *ruku'* before another sentence: اَحَقُّ مَا قَالَ الْعَبْدُ وَکُلُّنَا لَکَ (that is, these words, out of all that a servant of Allah can say, are the most true, incumbent and superior).

Trust in Allah delivers from all hardships

The lesson taught by the cited verse (2) to all human beings is that one should not hope any benefit or fear any harm from anyone other than Allah, instead, one should keep his or her sight trained towards Allah alone. This is the master prescription for a better life in this world as well as in the life to come. This simple antidote delivers one from thousands of anxieties and sorrows. (Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī)

Sayyidnā 'Amir Ibn 'Abd Qays ﷺ said: Once I get to recite four verses of the noble Qur'ān in the morning, I stop worrying about what would happen in the morning and what would happen in the evening. These verses are as follows. The first one is this very verse under study: مَا يَفْتَحِ اللّٰهُ لِلنَّاسِ مِنْ رَّحْمَةٍ فَلَا مُمْسِکَ لَهَا وَمَا يُمْسِکْ فَلَا مُرْسِلَ لَهٗ مِنْ بَعْدِهٖ (Whatever blessing Allah opens for the people, there is none to hold it back, and whatever He holds back, there is none to release it thereafter - 35:2). The second verse

[1] This translation is based on one way of reading this prayer, that is, jidd (with kasrah on the letter jim, but if it is read as jadd, the the correct translation would be: 'no high status of a person may benefit him against Your decree.

(Muḥammad Taqi Usmani)

having the same sense appears in Sūrah al-An'am, 6:17: اِنْ يَّمْسَسْكَ اللّٰهُ بِضُرٍّ فَلَا كَاشِفَ لَهٗٓ اِلَّا هُوَ وَاِنْ يُّرِدْكَ بِخَيْرٍ فَلَا رَآدَّ لِفَضْلِهٖ (And if Allah causes you some harm, no one is there to remove it except He Himself; and if He causes you some good, then He is powerful over everything - 6:17). The third verse is from Sūrah At-Ṭalaq, 65:7: سَيَجْعَلُ اللّٰهُ بَعْدَ عُسْرٍ يُّسْرًا (Allah will soon bring ease after a difficulty). The fourth verse is from Sūrah Hūd, 11:6: وَمَا مِنْ دَآبَّةٍ فِى الْاَرْضِ اِلَّا عَلَى اللّٰهِ رِزْقُهَا (And there is no creature on earth whose sustenance is not on Allah - 11:6). (Narrated by Ibn al-Mundhir, as in Ruḥ ul-Ma'ani)

And when Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ saw rain falling, he used to say: مُطِرْنَا بنوء الْفَتْحِ (The rain has come upon us through the rise of fath: (the opening) and would, then, recite the verse: مَا يَفْتَحِ اللّٰهُ لِلنَّاسِ مِنْ رَّحْمَةٍ (Whatever blessing Allah opens for the people, there is none to hold it back,- 34:2). This term of 'rise of fath' used by him was in rebuttal of the false notion prevailing among Arabs of those days who used to attribute the coming of rains to the rise of particular stars and said that the rains had come upon them through the rise of such and such star. Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ countered it by saying that (the mercy of) rains came to him through (the statement in) the verse of fath or opening. By this, he meant this very verse quoted above. He used to recite it particularly on such occasions. (Reported by Imām Mālik in al-Mu'waṭṭā)

Verses 4 - 8

وَاِنْ يُّكَذِّبُوْكَ فَقَدْ كُذِّبَتْ رُسُلٌ مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ ؕ وَاِلَى اللّٰهِ تُرْجَعُ الْاُمُوْرُ ﴿٤﴾ يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اِنَّ وَعْدَ اللّٰهِ حَقٌّ فَلَا تَغُرَّنَّكُمُ الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَا ٚ وَلَا يَغُرَّنَّكُمْ بِاللّٰهِ الْغَرُوْرُ ﴿٥﴾ اِنَّ الشَّيْطٰنَ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ فَاتَّخِذُوْهُ عَدُوًّا ؕ اِنَّمَا يَدْعُوْا حِزْبَهٗ لِيَكُوْنُوْا مِنْ اَصْحٰبِ السَّعِيْرِ ﴿٦﴾ اَلَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيْدٌ ؕ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ لَهُمْ مَّغْفِرَةٌ وَّاَجْرٌ كَبِيْرٌ ﴿٧﴾ اَفَمَنْ زُيِّنَ لَهٗ سُوْٓءُ عَمَلِهٖ فَرَاٰهُ حَسَنًا ؕ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُضِلُّ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَيَهْدِيْ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ۖ فَلَا تَذْهَبْ نَفْسُكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَسَرٰتٍ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلِيْمٌۢ بِمَا يَصْنَعُوْنَ ﴿٨﴾

And if they reject you,(it is not something new, because) many messengers have been rejected before you. And to Allah all matters are to be returned. [4] **O mankind, Allah's promise is definitely true, therefore, the worldly life must not deceive you, nor should you be deceived about Allah by the big deceiver (Satan).** [5] **Surely Satan is an enemy for you. So, take him as an enemy. He invites his group only to cause them to be among the people of blazing fire.** [6] **Those who disbelieve will have a severe punishment; and those who believe and do righteous deeds will have forgiveness and a great reward.** [7] **Is it, then, that the one whose evil deed has been made attractive to him so much that he deems it to be good (will be held equal to him who differentiates between right and wrong) ? The fact, therefore, is that Allah lets go astray whomsoever He wills , and leads to the right path whomsoever He wills. So, let not your soul collapse in grief for them. Surely Allah fully knows what they are doing.** [8]

Commentary

The word: غَرور (gharur) is an emphatic form of an adjective that means one who is very deceiving (hence, rendered here as 'big deceiver'). It refers to the Shaitan (Satan) whose sole job is to deceive people and throw them into disbelief and sin. And the expression: لَا يَغُرَّنَّكُمْ بِاللّٰهِ الْغَرُوْرُ (5) means 'nor should you be deceived about Allah'. To explain this deception, it can be said that the Shaitan may not, by showing your evil deeds as good, cause you to become so involved with these that you reach the stage when you go on committing a sin and, at the same time, keep thinking that you are of those accepted in the sight of Allah, and that you will not have to undergo any punishment.' (Qurṭubī)

Imām al-Baghawi has reported on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ that the verse: فَإِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُضِلُّ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَيَهْدِي مَنْ يَّشَآءُ (The fact, therefore, is that Allah lets go astray whomsoever He wills , and leads to the right path whomsoever He wills.- 8) was revealed at a time when the Holy Prophet ﷺ had made the prayer: 'O Allah, bless Islam with prestige and power, through 'Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭzb, or Abū Jahl.' Out of the two, Allah Ta'ālā showed the right path to Sayyidnā 'Umar and made him the cause of Islam's prestige and power, while Abū Jahl remained as astray as he was. (Maẓharī)

Verses 9 - 14

وَاللّٰهُ الَّذِيْٓ اَرْسَلَ الرِّيٰحَ فَتُثِيْرُ سَحَابًا فَسُقْنٰهُ اِلٰى بَلَدٍ مَّيِّتٍ فَاَحْيَيْنَا بِهِ الْاَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا ؕ كَذٰلِكَ النُّشُوْرُ ﴿۹﴾ مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيْدُ الْعِزَّةَ فَلِلّٰهِ الْعِزَّةُ جَمِيْعًا ؕ اِلَيْهِ يَصْعَدُ الْكَلِمُ الطَّيِّبُ وَالْعَمَلُ الصَّالِحُ يَرْفَعُهٗ ؕ وَالَّذِيْنَ يَمْكُرُوْنَ السَّيِّاٰتِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيْدٌ ؕ وَمَكْرُ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُوَ يَبُوْرُ ﴿۱۰﴾ وَاللّٰهُ خَلَقَكُمْ مِّنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ نُّطْفَةٍ ثُمَّ جَعَلَكُمْ اَزْوَاجًا ؕ وَمَا تَحْمِلُ مِنْ اُنْثٰى وَلَا تَضَعُ اِلَّا بِعِلْمِهٖ ؕ وَمَا يُعَمَّرُ مِنْ مُّعَمَّرٍ وَّلَا يُنْقَصُ مِنْ عُمُرِهٖٓ اِلَّا فِيْ كِتٰبٍ ؕ اِنَّ ذٰلِكَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ يَسِيْرٌ ﴿۱۱﴾ وَمَا يَسْتَوِي الْبَحْرٰنِ ۖ هٰذَا عَذْبٌ فُرَاتٌ سَآئِغٌ شَرَابُهٗ وَهٰذَا مِلْحٌ اُجَاجٌ ؕ وَمِنْ كُلٍّ تَاْكُلُوْنَ لَحْمًا طَرِيًّا وَّتَسْتَخْرِجُوْنَ حِلْيَةً تَلْبَسُوْنَهَا ۚ وَتَرَى الْفُلْكَ فِيْهِ مَوَاخِرَ لِتَبْتَغُوْا مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُوْنَ ﴿۱۲﴾ يُوْلِجُ الَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ وَيُوْلِجُ النَّهَارَ فِي الَّيْلِ ۙ وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ ۖ كُلٌّ يَّجْرِيْ لِاَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ؕ ذٰلِكُمُ اللّٰهُ رَبُّكُمْ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ ؕ وَالَّذِيْنَ تَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِهٖ مَا يَمْلِكُوْنَ مِنْ قِطْمِيْرٍ ﴿۱۳﴾ اِنْ تَدْعُوْهُمْ لَا يَسْمَعُوْا دُعَآءَكُمْ ۚ وَلَوْ سَمِعُوْا مَا اسْتَجَابُوْا لَكُمْ ؕ وَيَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ يَكْفُرُوْنَ بِشِرْكِكُمْ ؕ وَلَا يُنَبِّئُكَ مِثْلُ خَبِيْرٍ ﴿۱۴﴾

And Allah is the One who sends the winds, then they raise up the clouds, then We drive them to a dead land and revive the land through them after its death. In similar way shall be the resurrection. [9] Whoever desires honor, then all honor lies with Allah alone. Towards Him ascends the pure word, and the righteous deed uplifts it. As for those who plot evils, for them there is a severe punishment, and their plot itself will perish. [10] And Allah has created you from dust, then

from a drop of semen, then He made you couples. And no female conceives nor gives birth without His knowledge. And no aged person is made to advance in age, nor a part is curtailed from his age, but all this is (recorded) in a book. Surely all this is easy for Allah. [11] **And two seas are not alike; this one is sweet, saturating, pleasant to drink, and that one is saltish, bitter. And from each, you eat fresh meat, and derive ornaments that you wear. And you see the boats therein cleaving through water, so that you may search for His grace, and that you may be grateful.** [12] **He makes the night enter into the day and makes the day enter into the night, and He has subjugated the sun and the moon; each one of them is running towards an appointed time. That is Allah, your Lord. To Him belongs the kingdom. And those whom you invoke beside Him do not own even the membrane on a date-stone.** [13] **If you call them, they do not hear your call, and even if they were to hear, they would not respond to you. And on the Day of Judgment they will deny your having held them as Allah's partners. and none can inform you like Him who is Aware.** [14]

Commentary

In verse 10, it was said: 'إِلَيْهِ يَصْعَدُ الْكَلِمُ الطَّيِّبُ وَالْعَمَلُ الصَّالِحُ يَرْفَعُهُ' (Towards Him ascends the pure word, and the righteous deed uplifts it). Immediately earlier to this, it was declared that the person seeking honor and power should understand that these matters are not controlled by anyone other than Allah. As for those who have taken certain things as objects of worship or have taken some people as friends in the hope of being honored by them, they cannot give honor to anyone. Given in the present verse, there is a method of acquiring the gifts of grace and honor from Allah Ta'ālā. It has two parts: (1) Good word (that is, the kalimah of tauhid: la ilaha il-lal-lah) and the knowledge of the being and attributes of Allah. (2) Good deed, that is, to believe by heart and then act in accordance with its dictates under the Sharī'ah. Shah 'Abdul Qadir رحمه الله تعالى has said in Mudih-ul-Qur'ān that this prescription of becoming a recipient of honor is perfectly true and tested, however, the condition is that one remains constant in remembering Allah and doing good deeds. When this constancy reaches an appointed limit, Allah Ta'ālā blesses the doer of these with an everlasting and unparalleled honor both in this world and in the world to come.

These two parts have been expressed in the cited verse by saying that good word ascends towards Allah and reaches Him while good deed uplifts it and makes it reach Him. In the grammatical arrangement of: اَلْعَمَلُ الصَّالِحُ يَرْفَعُهُ (the good deed uplifts it) there are certain probabilities. The meanings of the sentence change in terms of each such probability. Authorities in Tafsīr have explained it in line with the respective probabilities that they have deemed to be appropriate by them. According to the first probability, the subjective pronoun in: يَرْفَعُهُ (uplifts) should be taken as reverting to: ... (the good deed) and the objective pronoun (it) to: ... (good word) meaning: 'good words ascend to Allah, but the thing through which they are made to ascend are good deeds (as in the khulasa-e-Tafsīr of Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanavi). The majority of Tafsīr authorities - Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās, Ibn Jubayr, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Mujahid, Dahhak, Shahr Ibn Hawshab and others - have opted for this very approach. And the sense of ascending to and being helped to ascend is being accepted in the sight of Allah, therefore, the gist of the sentence would be that good word, be it the kalimah of tauhid or others words of the remembrance and glorification of Allah, nothing of it gets to be acceptable with Allah without good deed. Here, the confirmation by heart is an integral part of good deed the most important part of which is the belief by heart in His Oneness. This belief by heart is a necessary condition for the acceptance of deeds in the absolute sense. Without it, neither the Kalīmah: لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا اللّٰه (*la ilaha il-lal-lah*) nor any other Dhikr of Allah is acceptable.

Then, there are the other parts of good deed, such as, prayers and fasting and abstinence from forbidden and reprehensible things. Though, the acceptability of the 'good word' ,that is, the kalimah of tauhid does not depend on such good deeds, yet these deeds too are conditions to a perfect acceptability of the 'good words'. If a person simply does not have faith, and its confirmation, in his heart, then, no matter how many times he repeats the words of the cardinal statement of one's Islam (Kalīmah Tauḥīd: *la ilaha il-lal-lah*) and remains engaged with dhikr and Tasbiḥ of Allah, he will not deserve the least of acceptability in the sight of Allah. In contrast, there is the case of the other person who does have faith and its confirmation, but fails to do other good deeds or falls short in them, then, his saying of the kalimah of tauhid and the doing of the dhikr of

Allah will, though, not go to waste totally, however, its benefit will be restricted to delivering him from the everlasting punishment. The consequence will be that he will go through a certain punishment for some time that will be in proportion to his abandonment of duty and the shortcoming.

In a Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said, 'Allah Ta'ālā does not accept any word without deed, and any word and deed without the intention, and any word, deed and intention without compatibility with sunnah (as said and done by him).' (Qurṭubī)

This tells us that correspondence with sunnah is the condition of perfect acceptability. Even if the word, the deed and the intention, all these, are also correct but the mode and method of conduct is not in accordance with sunnah, then, one cannot become a recipient of perfect acceptability with Allah.

Some commentators suggest another syntactical arrangement in respect of this sentence. According to them, the subjective pronoun in: يَرْفَعُه (uplifts) reverts to: ضمير فاعل (good word) and the objective pronoun (i.e.'it') to: كلم طيّب (good deed). Thus, the meaning of the sentence become totally different from that of the earlier, that is, 'good word' which is the dhikr of Allah, makes 'good deed' ascend and makes it rise higher up, that is, makes it worthy of being accepted. The outcome would then be that a person who does good deeds, and along with it, also does his dhikr of Allah abundantly, then, this dhikr of Allah embellishes his deed and makes it acceptable.

The sense of the verse: وَمَا يُعَمَّرُ مِنْ مُّعَمَّرٍ وَّلَا يُنْقَصُ مِنْ عُمُرِهٖٓ اِلَّا فِىْ كِتَابٍ (And no aged person is made to advance in age, nor a part is curtailed from his age, but all this is (recorded) in a book - 35:11), according to the majority of the commentators is that if Allah Ta'ālā blesses a person with a long age, it is a fact already on record in the Preserved Tablet (*al-lawḥ al-maḥfuẓ*). Similarly, when the age of a certain person is kept at a lower mark in terms of the number of years, that too already stands recorded in *al-lawḥ al-maḥfuẓ*. The outcome of it all is that the text, at this place, is not referring to one individual person's age being long or short, instead, the statement relates to humankind as a whole, in the sense that some individuals from it are given long ages and others, a comparatively

shorter ones. The explanation has been reported by Ibn Kathīr from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ. Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ reports the same saying from Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and Daḥḥak. Therefore, in general books of Tafsīr, such as, Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathīr, Rāḥ ul-Ma'ānī and others, this very explanation has been declared as the view of the majority of commentators. However, some early commentators have said: Should the length of age concerns one single person, then, decrease in age would mean that the age of every person as already written by Allah Ta'ālā is certain, and every day that passes decreases one day from this pre-fixed age. If two days pass, two days decrease. In the same way, every day, in fact, every single breath keeps decreasing one's age. This Tafsīr or explanation has been reported from Sha'bi, Ibn Jubayr, Abū Mālik, Ibn 'Atiyyah and Suddiyy. (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī)

This subject has been succinctly expressed in an Arabic couplet as:

حَيَاتُكَ اَنْفَاسٌ تُعَدُّ فَكُلَّمَا......☆...... مَضٰى نَفَسٌ مِّنْهَا انْتَقَصَتْ بِهٖ جُزْءٌ

Your life is (the name of) counted breaths. So, whenever passes away a breath from it, a part of it decreases.

In his explanation of this verse, Imām an-Nasa'ī has reported from Sayyidnā Anas Ibn Mālik ﷺ that he heard the Holy Prophet ﷺ saying, "مَنْ سَرَّهٗ اَنْ يُّبْسَطَ لَهٗ فِىْ رِزْقِهٖ وَيُنْسَأَ فِىْ اَثَرِهٖ فَلْيَصِلْ رَحِمَهٗ" This Ḥadīth has also been reported by al-Bukhari, Muslim and Abū Dāwūd on the authority of a narration from Yūnus Ibn Yazid Ayli. The Ḥadīth means: 'He who wishes that his sustenance and age is increased should treat his close relatives well (*Ṣilatu-r-raḥim*).' This obviously suggests that the these deeds increase one's age. But, another Ḥadīth given below has itself clarified its sense:

Ibn Abī Ḥatim reports from Sayyidnā Abū-d-Darda' ﷺ. He says, 'when we mentioned this (subject) before the Holy Prophet ﷺ, he said, "(Age as such is already fixed and determined by Allah), when the fixed term is over, no one is given the least respite. In fact, increase in age means (in the Ḥadīth cited above) that Allah Ta'ālā blesses one with good children who keep praying for him. This person is not there anymore, but he keeps receiving their prayers in his grave (that is, he keeps on receiving the benefits one would have received if one were alive. Thus, in a way, his age has increased"). (Both narrations appearing above have been

reported by Ibn Kathīr). In short, Aḥadīth that say that some deeds cause age to increase mean increase in the barakah or bliss of age.

In the next verse: وَمِنْ كُلٍّ تَأْكُلُوْنَ لَحْمًا طَرِيًّا وَّتَسْتَخْرِجُوْنَ حِلْيَةً تَلْبَسُوْنَهَا (And from each, you eat fresh meat, and derive ornaments that you wear - 35:12), it is being said that one gets fresh meat, that is, fish to eat from both waters, sweet or brackish. In this verse, by alluding to fish as meat, the hint released is that fish is meat, already halal by itself. One does not have to slaughter it. This is contrary to the case of the animals found on land. Unless one slaughters them with the name of Allah, they do not become halal. Fish does not have this condition. It is meat, ready to eat. And the word: حِلْيَة (*ḥilyah*) means ornament and refers to pearls. The verse tells us that the way pearls are found in brackish waters, they are also found in sweet waters, something contrary to the general belief, since it is well known that pearls are harvested from the brackish water of the seas. However, the reality is what is evident from the words of the Qur'ān that they form in both - yes, much less in sweet waters and far more in the brackish waters of the sea. That they are found in seas excessively contributed to the popular belief that pearls come only from brackish waters.

By using the masculine form in the last word: تَلْبَسُوْنَهَا (*talbasunaha*: that you wear), a hint is being released that the use of pearls is permissible for men as well - contrary to gold and silver, the use of which as an ornament is not permissible for men. (Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī)

In the last verse: اِنْ تَدْعُوْهُمْ لَا يَسْمَعُوْا دُعَآءَكُمْ ۚ وَلَوْ سَمِعُوْا مَا اسْتَجَابُوْا لَكُمْ (If you call them, they do not hear your call, and even if they were to hear, they would not respond to you. - 35:14). To explain, it can be said that if you call those idols or some prophets or angels you take as god and worship them asking them to help you in distress, they will, first of all, be unable to listen to you because idols do not have the ability to listen. Though, prophets and angels have this ability, yet they are not present everywhere nor do they hear that which is said by everybody. Further on, it was said that, should they, as a matter of supposition, be able to listen, as in the case of angels and prophets, still, they would not fulfill your request, because they themselves have no control over it, and cannot intercede with Allah on behalf of anyone without His permission.

The issue of the ability of the dead to hear (سماع الموتى: sama'-ul-mawta) has appeared earlier. The present verse neither confirms nor rejects it. Arguments and proofs relating to this issue are different. They have already been mentioned in details under the commentary on Sūrah Ar-Rūm [30] (Ma'ariful-Qur'ān, Volume VI).

Verses 15 - 26

يٰۤاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اَنْتُمُ الْفُقَرَآءُ اِلَى اللّٰهِ ۚ وَاللّٰهُ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيْدُ ﴿١٥﴾ اِنْ
يَّشَاْ يُذْهِبْكُمْ وَيَاْتِ بِخَلْقٍ جَدِيْدٍ ﴿١٦﴾ وَمَا ذٰلِكَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ بِعَزِيْزٍ
﴿١٧﴾ وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِّزْرَ اُخْرٰى ؕ وَاِنْ تَدْعُ مُثْقَلَةٌ اِلٰى حِمْلِهَا
لَا يُحْمَلْ مِنْهُ شَيْءٌ وَّلَوْ كَانَ ذَا قُرْبٰى ؕ اِنَّمَا تُنْذِرُ الَّذِيْنَ يَخْشَوْنَ
رَبَّهُمْ بِالْغَيْبِ وَاَقَامُوا الصَّلٰوةَ ؕ وَمَنْ تَزَكّٰى فَاِنَّمَا يَتَزَكّٰى لِنَفْسِهٖ ؕ
وَاِلَى اللّٰهِ الْمَصِيْرُ ﴿١٨﴾ وَمَا يَسْتَوِى الْاَعْمٰى وَالْبَصِيْرُ ﴿١٩﴾ وَلَا
الظُّلُمٰتُ وَلَا النُّوْرُ ﴿٢٠﴾ وَلَا الظِّلُّ وَلَا الْحَرُوْرُ ﴿٢١﴾ وَمَا يَسْتَوِى
الْاَحْيَآءُ وَلَا الْاَمْوَاتُ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُسْمِعُ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ۚ وَمَآ اَنْتَ بِمُسْمِعٍ
مَّنْ فِى الْقُبُوْرِ ﴿٢٢﴾ اِنْ اَنْتَ اِلَّا نَذِيْرٌ ﴿٢٣﴾ اِنَّآ اَرْسَلْنٰكَ بِالْحَقِّ
بَشِيْرًا وَّنَذِيْرًا ؕ وَاِنْ مِّنْ اُمَّةٍ اِلَّا خَلَا فِيْهَا نَذِيْرٌ ﴿٢٤﴾ وَاِنْ يُّكَذِّبُوْكَ
فَقَدْ كَذَّبَ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ۚ جَآءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ وَبِالزُّبُرِ
وَبِالْكِتٰبِ الْمُنِيْرِ ﴿٢٥﴾ ثُمَّ اَخَذْتُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا فَكَيْفَ كَانَ نَكِيْرِ
﴿٢٦﴾

O men, you are the ones who need Allah, and Allah is the Need-Free, the Ever-Praised. [15] If He so wills, He can do away with you and bring a new creation. [16] And for Allah, that is not something difficult. [17] And no bearer will bear the burden of any other person. And if a person carrying a heavy load calls (someone) to (share) his load, nothing from it shall be carried (by the latter), even though he be a near of kin. You can

warn only those who fear their Lord unseen and establish salah. And whoever gets purified gets purified for his own benefit. And to Allah is the final return. [18] **And the blind and the sighted are not equal,** [19] **nor darkness and light,** [20] **nor shade and heat of the sun.** [21] **And the living and the dead are not alike. Allah makes hear whomsoever He wills. And you cannot make hear those who are in the graves.** [22] **You are but a warner.** [23] **Surely We have sent you with truth as a bearer of good news and as a warner, and there was no community without a warner having passed among them.** [24] **And if they reject you, (it is not something new, because) those before them have (also) rejected (messengers). Their messengers came to them with clear proofs and with scriptures and with the enlightening book.** [25] **Then I seized those who disbelieved. So, how was My censure !** [26]

Commentary

Verse 18: وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِّزْرَ اُخْرٰى (And no bearer will bear the burden of any other person) means that, on the Day of Judgment, no one will be able to bear the burden of another person's sins. Everyone will have to bear his or her burden. As for what appears in Sūrah Al-'Ankabūt (29:13): اَثْقَالَهُمْ وَاَثْقَالًا مَّعَ اَثْقَالِهِمْ , which means that people who make others go astray will not only bear the burden of going astray personally, but will also bear the burden of having made others go astray. it does not mean that they will somehow lighten the burden of those they had caused to go astray. Instead, their burden will weigh on them as it was in its own place and because of the crime of those who made people go astray, being twofold, their burden too will become twofold, one: that of being astray and two: that of making others go astray. Therefore, there is no contradiction in these two verses. (Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī)

Explaining this verse, Sayyidnā 'Ikrimah ﷺ said: On that Day, a father would say to his son, 'You know how affectionate a father I was to you?' He will say, 'yes, your favors to me are countless. You have certainly faced many a hardship for me during the life of the world.' Then, the father will say, 'son, today I need you. Give me some of your good deeds, so that I can have my salvation.' The son will say, 'father, the return you asked for is not much, but what can I do? If I were to give that to you, I shall be facing the same situation that you are facing now,

therefore, I am sorry, I cannot help you.' Then, he will say the same thing to his wife, 'I sacrificed everything for you during the life of the world. Today, I need a few of your good deeds. Please give these to me.' The wife will give him the same answer as was given by the son.

Sayyidnā 'Ikrimah ﷺ said that this is what the verse: لَاتَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِّزْرَ اُخْرٰى (And no bearer will bear the burden of any other) means. Then he said that the noble Qur'ān has taken up this subject in several of its verses. At one place, it has said: لَايَجْزِى وَالِدٌ عَنْ وَّلَدِهٖ وَلَامَوْلُوْدٌ هُوَجَازٍ عَنْ وَّالِدِهٖ شَيْئًا that is, on that Day, neither a father would be able to have his son be spared from the punishment, nor would a son be able to do that for his father (31:33). The essential sense is that no one will save another person by carrying the burden of his sins over one's own shoulders. However, the matter of intercession (*shafa'ah*) is different. Similarly, in another verse, it was said: يَوْمَ يَفِرُّ الْمَرْءُ مِنْ اَخِيْهِ وَاُمِّهٖ وَاَبِيْهِ وَصَاحِبَتِهٖ وَبَنِيْهِ that is, on that Day, one will run from his brother and his mother and father and his wife and children (80:34,35). The purpose of running is no other but that he would be in fear, lest these people try to pass on the burden of their sins on him or come up with a request for some of his good deeds. (Ibn Kathīr)

At the beginning of the verse: وَمَآ اَنْتَ بِمُسْمِعٍ مَّنْ فِى الْقُبُوْرِ (And you cannot make hear those who are in the graves - 22.), disbelievers have been likened to the dead and believers, to the living. In congruence to this, the expression: مَّنْ فِى الْقُبُوْرِ (those in the graves) here means the disbelievers. The sense is that 'the way you cannot make the dead hear you, you can also not make these living disbelievers hear you.'

This verse has itself clarified it that, at this place, making someone hear means the kind of listening that is going to be useful, effective and beneficial. Otherwise, the effort to make disbelievers listen, in the absolute sense, has remained an exercise in futility since ever. It has even been a matter of common observation that a call was beamed at them, and they did listen to it. Therefore, the verse means that 'the way you cannot bring the dead to the right path by making them hear the Divine Word because they have shifted from the avenue of deeds in the world to the arena of recompense in the Hereafter where, even if they confess to their faith, it will not be deemed as trustworthy, similar to that is the condition of the disbelievers. This proves that the negation of making the dead hear referred to in this verse means a particular listening that is

beneficial, something because of which the listener forsakes the false and takes to the true. From this presentation, it becomes clear that the present verse has nothing to do with the issue of the ability of the dead to hear. Whether or not the dead hear the living is a different issue in its own place. A detailed discussion about it has appeared in the commentary on Sūrah Ar-Rūm and Sūrah An-Naml (Ma'āriful-Qur'ān, Volume VI).

Verses 27 - 28

اَلَمْ تَرَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ اَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً ۚ فَاَخْرَجْنَا بِهٖ ثَمَرٰتٍ مُّخْتَلِفًا اَلْوَانُهَا ؕ وَمِنَ الْجِبَالِ جُدَدٌ ۢبِيْضٌ وَّحُمْرٌ مُّخْتَلِفٌ اَلْوَانُهَا وَغَرَابِيْبُ سُوْدٌ ﴿٢٧﴾ وَمِنَ النَّاسِ وَالدَّوَآبِّ وَالْاَنْعَامِ مُخْتَلِفٌ اَلْوَانُهٗ كَذٰلِكَ ؕ اِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللّٰهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمٰٓؤُا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَزِيْزٌ غَفُوْرٌ ﴿٢٨﴾

Did you not see that Allah has sent down water from the sky? Then We brought forth with it fruits having different colors. And among the mountains there are tracks, white and red-- of different colors, and (others) utterly black. [27] **And among humans and beasts and cattle, there are those having different colors as well. Only those of His slaves fear Allah who are knowledgeable. Surely Allah is Mighty, Forgiving.** [28]

Commentary

Sequence of the Verses

Some early commentators have said that these verses return to the subject of Tauḥid, Oneness of Allah or pure monotheism supported by proofs of Divine power and mastery in nature. Some others have said that described in the previous verses were different states of people along with examples, such as: وَمَا يَسْتَوِى الْاَعْمٰى وَالْبَصِيْرُ وَلَا الظُّلُمٰتُ وَلَا النُّوْرُ وَلَا الظِّلُّ وَلَا الْحَرُوْرُ (And the blind and the sighted are not equal, (35:19) nor darkness and light, nor shade and heat of the sun - 35:20). What is being said here further clarifies that mutual difference in Divine creations is something inherent. It exists even in organic and inorganic substances, in fact, it is present not only in shapes and colors, but in traits and temperaments as well.

A subtle grammatical point

The Holy Qur'ān has mentioned different colors of fruits at the first place in Verse 27, and of the mountains at the second place. But the grammatic style is different in both places. With regard to fruits the difference of colors is mentioned by an adverbial phrase (translated above as ' having different cobblers', while in the case of mountains, it has been expressed by an adjectival phrase (translated above as ' of different cobblers'. According to the Arabic grammar, an adjective normally refers to the permanent quality of a thing, while an adverb may refer to a quality or condition that is subject to change. Keeping this in view, there may be a hint here to the effect that the difference of colors in fruits does not remain constant in a single state, rather keeps changing after brief intervals. On the contrary, there are the colors of human beings and other life forms. These are generally fast and abiding, and do not change.

And in case of mountains, used there was the word: جُدَدٌ (*judad*). This is the plural form of: جُدَّةٌ (*juddah*) the well-recognized meaning of which is that of a mini pathway also known as: جاده (*jadah*). Some respected elders have taken juddah in the sense of a tract, patch or segment that, in both situations, denotes parts of the mountains being different in colors. Out of these, white was mentioned first while black, last. In between, along with the mention of red, the expression: مُخْتَلِفٌ اَلْوَانُه (of different colors) was introduced. This could be releasing a hint that, in reality, the colors in this world are no more than two - white and black. The rest of the colors in the spectrum emerge by compounding different degrees of white and black.

The place where the word: كَذٰلِکَ (*kadhalik*: translated above by the words, 'as well') appears in verse 28 just before: كَذٰلِکَ اِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللّٰهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمٰٓؤُا (Only those of His slaves fear Allah who are knowledgeable), but in the translation above it has been separated from the next verse by a full stop, because this is the place of a stop (*waqf*) according to the consensus of the majority of commentators and scholars. As such, it is a sign denoting that this word is related to the previous subject, that is, the creation of all that exists in categories and kinds and different colors is a very special sign of the power and wisdom of Allah Ta'ālā.

Then there are narrations that suggest that this word is related to the

next sentence. If this interpretation is adopted, the full stop would be appropriate after the words, 'having different colors, and the word 'kadhalika' should be translated as 'similarly' in which case, it would mean that 'the way fruits, mountains, human beings and other life forms are marked out by different colors, similarly, there are different degrees among people who have the awe or fear of Allah in their hearts. Someone may have achieved its highest degree. Others may have arrived at what is less than that. Then, the whole thing depends on knowledge. Whoever has a certain degree of knowledge will have a corresponding degree of the awe or fear of Allah. (Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī)

In previous verses, it was said: إِنَّمَا تُنذِرُ الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُم بِالْغَيْبِ (18) This is to give solace to the Holy Prophet ﷺ which means, 'when you warn people and convey the message of Allah to them, only those who have the awe of Allah without having seen Him get the maximum benefit out of it.' In symmetry with this, the present verse: إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاءُ (Only those of His slaves fear Allah who are knowledgeable - 35:28) has mentioned people about whom it can be said that they have the awe of Allah and fear Him as is His due. Then, there is another parallelism here. Mentioned earlier were disbelievers and deniers along with the different states they were submerged in. In the present verse, what has been put forth is the opposite of it. The verse talks about the men of Allah (the auliya' of Allah) particularly. The word: إِنَّمَا (*innama*) is used in the Arabic language to describe *ḥaṣr* or exclusiveness. Therefore, this sentence obviously means that only the 'Ulama' (the knowing, the learned, the initiated) fear Allah or have the genuine awe of Allah. But Tafsīr authority, Ibn 'Atiyyah and others said that the way إِنَّمَا (*innama*) is employed to show exclusiveness, it is also used to describe the singularity of something, and the later is what is meant here - that fearing Allah and remaining in awe of Him is a specially incumbent attribute of the 'Ulama'. It does not necessarily imply that those other than them have no such fear and awe in them. (Al-Baḥr ul-Muḥīṭ, Abū Ḥayyān)

And the word: عُلَمٰٓؤُا ('Ulama') in the verse means people who have due knowledge of the being and attributes of Allah Ta'ālā and who have the fact of His power and control, and His favors and blessings, on what He has created, always in sight. In the terminology of the Qur'ān, no one is considered to be an '*alim* simply by virtue of knowing the Arabic

language, grammar and rhetoric unless he has acquired the knowledge and understanding of the attributes of Allah Taʻālā in the manner stated above.

Explaining this verse, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī said: 'Alim is a person who fears Allah in private and in public, and likes what Allah likes him to do, and hates what is detestable in the sight of Allah.

And Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ said:

لَيْسَ الْعِلْمُ بِكَثْرَةِ الْحَدِيْثِ وَلٰكِنَّ الْعِلْمَ عَنْ كَثْرَةِ الْخَشْيَةِ

Memorizing many aḥādīth (or, talking a lot) is no *'ilm* (knowledge). Instead, (real) knowledge comes when one has the awe and fear of Allah with it.

In short, the degree of the fear of Allah one has shall go on to make him an 'Alim of that very degree. And Aḥmad Ibn Ṣaliḥ al-Miṣrī said: Fear of Allah cannot be recognized on the basis of someone's prolific reporting of events or abundance of knowledge, in fact, it is identified through one's adherence to the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of the Prophet. (Ibn Kathīr)

Shaykh Shahabuddīn as-Suhrawardi رحمه الله تعالى said: This verse clearly indicates that a person who has no fear of Allah is no *'alim*. (Maẓharī) This is confirmed by the sayings of the early forbears of Islam (Salaf).

Sayyidnā Rabi' Ibn Anas ﷺ said:

مَنْ لَّمْ يَخْشَ فَلَيْسَ بِعَالِمٍ

One who does not fear Allah is not an *'alim*.

And early commentator, Mujāhid said:

اِنَّمَا الْعَالِمُ مَنْ خَشِيَ اللّٰهَ

Only he who fears Allah is the (real) *'alim*.

Someone asked Sa'd Ibn Ibrāhīm: Who knows Divine Law at its best in the city of Madīnah? He said: اَتْقَاهُمْ لِرَبِّهٖ (He who is the most fearing of his Lord).

And Sayyidnā 'Alī al-Murtada ﷺ defined a Faqih (master of Islamic jurisprudence) by saying:

اِنَّ الْفَقِيْهَ حَقَّ الْفَقِيْهِ مَنْ لَّمْ يَقنط النَّاسَ مِنْ رَّحْمَةِ اللّٰهِ وَلَمْ يرخص لَهُمْ فِىْ مَعَاصِى اللّٰهِ تَعَالىٰ، وَلَمْ يُؤْمِنْهُمْ مِّنْ عَذَابِ اللّٰهِ تَعَالىٰ وَلَمْ يَدَعْ الْقُرْاٰنَ رَغْبَةً عَنْهُ اِلىٰ غَيْرِهٖ اَنَّه لَاخَيْرَ فِىْ عِبَادَةٍ لَّاعِلْمَ فِيْهَا وَلَا عِلْمٍ لَّا فِقْهَ فِيْهِ وَلَا قِرَاءَةٍ لَّا تَدَبُّرَ فِيْهِ (قرطبى)

A Faqih, perfect as he must be, is he who would not make people lose hope in the mercy of Allah, nor leave them free to indulge in acts of disobedience to Him, nor give them the guarantee of remaining safe from the punishment of Allah, nor forsake the Qur'ān by indulging in pursuits other than it. (And he said): Verily, there is no good in an act of worship that is without knowledge, and there is no good in a knowledge that is without understanding, and there is no recitation (Qira'ah of the Qur'ān) without deliberation in it. (Qurṭubī)

The clarifications appearing above also help remove the doubt about many 'Ulama' who do not seem to have the kind of awe and fear of Allah required of them. These clarifications tell us that, in the sight of Allah, the bland knowledge of Arabic is not what '*ilm* is, and certainly, the one who is proficient in it is not an 'Alim. Anyone who does not have the fear of Allah in his heart is simply not an 'Alim in the terminology of the Qur'ān. However, at times, awe and fear of Allah are rooted in one's creed and reason because of which one adheres to the injunctions of the Sharī'ah as a matter of obligation. Then, there are occasions when this awe and fear of Allah become the very state of one's existence and rise to the degree of a firmly ingrained asset whereby the readiness to follow the Sharī'ah becomes a natural reflex. The first degree of the awe and fear of Allah is mandatory and, for an 'Alim, necessary. The second degree is certainly superior and sublime, but not necessary. (Bayān ul-Qur'ān)

Verses 29 - 37

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَتْلُوْنَ كِتٰبَ اللّٰهِ وَاَقَامُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاَنْفَقُوْا مِمَّا رَزَقْنٰهُمْ سِرًّا وَّعَلَانِيَةً يَّرْجُوْنَ تِجَارَةً لَّنْ تَبُوْرَ ﴿٢٩﴾ لِيُوَفِّيَهُمْ اُجُوْرَهُمْ وَيَزِيْدَهُمْ مِّنْ فَضْلِهٖ ط اِنَّهٗ غَفُوْرٌ شَكُوْرٌ ﴿٣٠﴾ وَالَّذِيْٓ اَوْحَيْنَآ اِلَيْكَ مِنَ الْكِتٰبِ هُوَ الْحَقُّ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ ط اِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِعِبَادِهٖ لَخَبِيْرٌ م بَصِيْرٌ ﴿٣١﴾ ثُمَّ اَوْرَثْنَا الْكِتٰبَ الَّذِيْنَ اصْطَفَيْنَا مِنْ عِبَادِنَا ج فَمِنْهُمْ ظَالِمٌ لِّنَفْسِهٖ ج

وَمِنْهُمْ مُّقْتَصِدٌ ۚ وَمِنْهُمْ سَابِقٌ ۢ بِالْخَيْرٰتِ بِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ ؕ ذٰلِكَ هُوَ
الْفَضْلُ الْكَبِيْرُ ﴿٣٢﴾ جَنّٰتُ عَدْنٍ يَّدْخُلُوْنَهَا يُحَلَّوْنَ فِيْهَا مِنْ اَسَاوِرَ
مِنْ ذَهَبٍ وَّلُؤْلُؤًا ۚ وَلِبَاسُهُمْ فِيْهَا حَرِيْرٌ ﴿٣٣﴾ وَقَالُوا الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ
الَّذِيْۤ اَذْهَبَ عَنَّا الْحَزَنَ ؕ اِنَّ رَبَّنَا لَغَفُوْرٌ شَكُوْرُ ﴿٣٤﴾ الَّذِيْۤ اَحَلَّنَا
دَارَ الْمُقَامَةِ مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ ۚ لَا يَمَسُّنَا فِيْهَا نَصَبٌ وَّلَا يَمَسُّنَا فِيْهَا لُغُوْبٌ
﴿٣٥﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لَهُمْ نَارُ جَهَنَّمَ ۚ لَا يُقْضٰى عَلَيْهِمْ فَيَمُوْتُوْا وَلَا
يُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُمْ مِّنْ عَذَابِهَا ؕ كَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِيْ كُلَّ كَفُوْرٍ ﴿٣٦﴾ وَهُمْ
يَصْطَرِخُوْنَ فِيْهَا ۚ رَبَّنَاۤ اَخْرِجْنَا نَعْمَلْ صَالِحًا غَيْرَ الَّذِيْ كُنَّا
نَعْمَلُ ؕ اَوَلَمْ نُعَمِّرْكُمْ مَّا يَتَذَكَّرُ فِيْهِ مَنْ تَذَكَّرَ وَجَآءَكُمُ النَّذِيْرُ ؕ
فَذُوْقُوْا فَمَا لِلظّٰلِمِيْنَ مِنْ نَّصِيْرٍ ﴿٣٧﴾

Surely those who recite Allah's Book and have established salah and have spent, from what We have provided them, secretly and openly,--- they hope for a trade that will never crash, [29] so that He pays them their rewards in full, and gives them more out of His grace. Surely He is Most-Forgiving, Very- Appreciative. [30] And the Book We have revealed to you is the Truth, confirming what was (revealed) before it. Surely Allah , in respect of His slaves, is All-Aware, All-Seeing. [31] Then We conveyed the Book as an heritage to those of Our slaves whom We chose. Then, some of them are those who wrong their own selves, and some of them are mediocre, and some of them are those who outpace (others) in righteous deeds with Allah's permission. That is the great bounty, [32] gardens of eternity they enter. They will be ornamented with bracelets of gold and with pearls, and their dress therein will be (of) silk. [33] And they will say, " Praise be to Allah who has removed all sorrow from us. Surely our Lord is Most-Forgiving, Very-Appreciative, [34] who, out of His grace, has made us land at a home of eternal living where neither we are touched by weariness, nor are we touched by boredom." [35] And those who disbelieve, for them shall be the fire of Jahannam; neither they will be

sentenced to death, so that they die, nor will its torment be lightened for them. It is in this way that We punish every infidel. [36] **And they will be crying therein, " Our Lord, take us out from here, and we will act righteously, not in the way we have been doing before." (Allah will say to them,) " Did We not give you an age in your life in which lesson could have been learnt by the one who wished to take lesson? And (furthermore) the warner had (also) come to you. So, have a taste, because the wrongdoers will have no supporter.** [37]

Commentary

Mentioned earlier, in verse 28, there was a quality of true 'Ulama' who acknowledge Allah. This quality related to the heart. It was to have Allah's awe in the heart. In the first of the present verses (29), some those qualities of the same blessed people, the *awliya'* or men of Allah, are mentioned that find expression through outward parts of the body. Out of these, the first quality is the tilawah (recitation) of the Qur'ān. This denotes the people who recite the Book of Allah constantly. The use of the aorist tense (*mudari'*) in: يَتْلُوْنَ (*yatluna*: they recite) releases a hint in this direction. Then, there are other elders who have taken: يَتْلُوْنَ (*yatluna*) at this place in its literal sense, that is, they follow the Qur'ān in deed. But, the first Tafsīr is weightier, even though, it also stands determined from the context that recitation can be trustworthy only when it brings forth actions in accordance with the Qur'ān. But, the word: تِلاوت (tilawah or recitation) used here appears in its recognized sense. Similarly, Mutarrif Ibn 'Abdullāh Ibn Shikhkhir رحمه الله تعالىٰ said: هٰذِهٖ اٰيَةُ الْقُرَّاءِ (This verse is for al-qurra'), the phoneticians of the Qur'ān, who make the recitation of the Qur'ān their special activity of life.

The second quality they have is the establishing of Ṣalah and the third is the spending of their wealth in the way of Allah. When the text says 'secretly and openly', it indicates that it is often better to spend secretly in order to stay safe from *riya'* (show off) in acts of worship. But, there are occasions when religious considerations require that it should be done openly, as in the case of congregational prayers for which the command is to call adhan from minarets and perform salah openly with the highest possible attendance. Similarly, there are occasions when it is necessary to let spending in the way of Allah be open in order to persuade others to do the same. Muslim jurists have laid out details in the matter of

salah and spending in the way of Allah. According to them, when it is fard (obligatory), Wājib (necessary) or sunnah mu'akkadah (emphasized sunnah), doing this openly is better. Other than this, when doing *nafl* salah, it is better to do it privately. Similarly, in instances when spending one's wealth is Farḍ or Wājib, such as, the obligatory Zakāh or sadaqatul-fitr or qurbani, spending openly on these is better and worthy of more merit. As for the rest of voluntary charities (Ṣadaqatun-nāfilah), spending these secretly carries more merit and grace.

From people who carry these three qualities in their person, that is, they recite the Qur'ān constantly, establish salah as due and spend in the way of Allah cheerfully, it is also expected that they would not simply stop at Farḍ and Wājib spending, rather, would also be contributing to voluntary charities. Identified next, there is yet another attribute of theirs: يَرْجُوْنَ تِجَارَةً لَّنْ تَبُوْرَ (they hope for a trade that will never crash,). The expression: لَنْ تَبُوْرَ (*lan tabur*) is a derivation from: بَوَار (*bawar*) which means to go waste. The verse means that believers having these attributes hope to go in a trade that never runs into a loss. The very word: يَرْجُوْنَ (*yarjun*: hope) indicates that a believer has no room for certainty in any good deed done by him or her in this mortal world. No one can say it will definitely bring forgiveness to them and that they will get its reward for sure - because, no matter how good one is in deeds, one simply cannot fulfill the right of reverence and worship Allah Ta'ālā has on His servants. Therefore, forgiveness for one and all will not be possible without the grace of Allah Ta'ālā, as has been clearly stated in a Ḥadīth. In addition to that, with the doing of everything good, one should not neglect the danger of some secret trick of Satan or one's own self getting mixed up with so many good deeds because of which they do not remain acceptable. Or, on occasions, along with a good deed, some bad deed gets to be committed which in turn stops the good deed from being accepted. Therefore, by introducing the word: يَرْجُوْنَ (yarjun: hope) in the verse, it was pointed out that even after having become particular with all possible good deeds, no one has the right to become sure of his or her salvation and of high ranks that follow in its wake. The most one can do is hope. (Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī)

Good deeds likened with trade

In this verse, good deeds mentioned above have been likened to a

trading activity - as it was done in another verse where Faith and Jihād in the way of Allah have been expressed as trade or business deal:

هَلْ اَدُلُّكُمْ عَلٰى تِجَارَةٍ تُنْجِيْكُمْ مِّنْ عَذَابٍ اَلِيْمٍ. تُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ وَتُجَاهِدُوْنَ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ بِاَمْوَالِكُمْ وَاَنْفُسِكُمْ

> O those who believe, shall I tell you about a trade that saves you from a painful punishment? (It is that) you believe in Allah and His Messenger, and carry out Jihād in His way with your riches and your lives - Aṣ-Ṣaff, 61:10).

It has been characterized as trade in the sense that a trader invests his capital and time in some venture only when he hopes that by doing so, his capital will increase and he will profit by it. But, every trading activity in this world is hemmed with the probability of loss along with the hope of profit. In the present verse, by adding the word: لَّنْ تَبُوْرَ (lan tabur) to trade, it was pointed out that in this deal made for the sake of the benefits of the Hereafter, there was no probability of a loss. Then, the good people of Allah who take pains to do what is good and right do not go about running a business as businesses are commonly run. Instead of that, they hope to engage in a trading activity that never suffers a loss. As for the mention of the stance of hope on the part of such people, it serves as a delicate hint in the direction that Allah Ta'ālā is the noblest of the noble and the most generous of the generous, so He will not sever the hope of the hopeful, instead, would fulfill it. In fact, in the next sentence, it was also said that their hope is limited to receiving only a full return of their deed, but Allah Ta'ālā would, in His infinite mercy, bestow on them much more, far more than they would have ever hoped: لِيُوَفِّيَهُمْ اُجُوْرَهُمْ وَيَزِيْدَهُمْ مِّنْ فَضْلِهٖ (so that He pays them their rewards in full, and gives them more out of His grace - 30). The word: لِيُوَفِّيَهُمْ (liyuwaffiahum: so that He pays them in full) is connected with: لَّنْ تَبُوْرَ (lan tabur: has no loss), that is, this trade of theirs not only that it admits of no loss, but that it will also bring their return and reward in full, and in addition to that, Allah Ta'ālā will bless them, out of His grace, with much more, rather, far beyond their fondest hopes of returns.

Included within this grace and increase is the promise of Allah Ta'ālā that He rewards the deed of a believer multiplied many times, the lowest denominator of which could be ten times of the deed, and the highest could reach seven hundred times, even higher than that. Then, also

included in this grace is the acceptance of their intercession on behalf of sinners - as it appears in a Ḥadīth narrated by Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ where he has reported the explanation of this grace from the Holy Prophet ﷺ: 'These people will intercede on behalf of anyone who had done some favor to them during the life of the mortal world. Then, despite being deserving of the punishment of Jahannam, such people will stand delivered of it by virtue of their intercession.' (Tafsīr Maẓharī with reference to Ibn Abī Ḥatim) (And it is obvious that intercession will be possible only for the people of faith. No one will be allowed to intercede on behalf of a disbeliever) Similarly, the foremost part of this grace is that they will have an opportunity to see Allah Ta'ālā

The word: ثُمَّ (*thumma*: Then) in verse 32: ثُمَّ اَوْرَثْنَا الْكِتٰبَ الَّذِيْنَ اصْطَفَيْنَا مِنْ عِبَادِنَا (Then We conveyed the Book as an heritage to those of Our slaves whom We chose.) serves as a conjunction to denote that the two things mentioned before and after it, despite having common characteristic, are marked by precedence and succession. What comes first has precedence, and that which comes after, succeeds. In addition to that, on some occasions, this precedence and succession takes effect in terms of time while, on some others, in terms of rank and degree. In this verse, the word: ثُمَّ (*thumma*: Then) is عطف ('*atf*: Conjunctive particle) connected to the word: اَوْحَيْنَا (*awḥaina*: We revealed). It means: This Book, that is, the Qur'ān which is nothing but the truth, and confirms all earlier Scriptures, We first sent to you as a revelation. After that, We made those We chose out of Our servants inherit the Book. The earlier and later of it, or the precedence and succession of it in terms of rank and degree is already very obvious in the sense that the sending of the Qur'ān to the Holy Prophet ﷺ through the medium of wahy (revelation) has precedence in rank and degree. Then, its bestowal on the community of Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafa ﷺ takes effect in succession to it. And if making the Muslim ummah the inheritor of the Qur'ān is taken to mean that he ﷺ, rather than leave behind his legacy in the form of wealth and lands, left behind the Book of Allah as his legacy or inheritance - as borne by Ḥadīth: 'Prophets do not leave coins of gold and silver as inheritance: They leave (true) knowledge as their legacy.' Or, "'Ulama' are inheritors of prophets" - then, in those terms, this precedence and succession could also reflect a time frame in the sense that 'We have blessed you with this

Book. After that, you passed it on to your ummah as its inheritor.' To make someone inherit something means to bestow it on someone, give it as legacy, gift. This act of bestowal when expressed as inheritance points out to the fact that the way an inheritor gets his or her share from the inheritance without he or she having done anything to acquire it, similarly, this wealth of the noble Qur'ān has been given as a gift to these chosen servant without any effort on their part.

A peculiarity of the Muslim Community, and that of its 'Ulama'

According to the majority of commentators, the sentence: اَلَّذِيْنَ اصْطَفَيْنَا مِنْ عِبَادِنَا (those of Our slaves whom We chose) in verse 32, means the ummah (community) of Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafa ﷺ, its 'Ulama' - directly, and others, through the 'Ulama'. Reporting a Tafsīr of this verse from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭalḥah has said: The expression: اَلَّذِيْنَ اصْطَفَيْنَا (those whom We chose) means the the ummah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ). These are the people Allah Ta'ālā has made the inheritors of every Book He has revealed (that is, the Qur'ān, as being the Book that confirms and preserves all previous Scriptures, encompasses the contents of all revealed Books. Being its inheritor amounts to inheriting all revealed Books). Then he (Ibn 'Abbās) said: فَظَالِمُهُمْ يُغْفَرُلَه، وَمُقْتَصِدُهُمْ يُحَاسَبُ حِسَابًا يَّسِيْرًا وَّسَابِقُهُمْ يُدْخَلُ الْجَنَّةَ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ that is, even the unjust one from among them will be forgiven, and those who pursue a middle course among them will pass through a reckoning that is easy, while those who excel in good deeds will enter Jannah without reckoning. (Ibn Kathīr)

The word: اِصْطَفَيْنَا (istafaina: We chose) used in this verse shows the great honor bestowed upon the Muslim ummah, because this word: اِصْطِفَاء (*istifa'*: to choose) has frequently appeared for prophets in the Holy Qur'ān as in: اَللّٰهُ يَصْطَفِىْ مِنَ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ رُسُلًا وَّمِنَ النَّاسِ (Allah chooses messengers from the angels and from men. - al-Ḥajj, 22:75) and in: اِنَّ اللّٰهَ اصْطَفٰٓى اٰدَمَ وَنُوْحًا وَّاٰلَ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَاٰلَ عِمْرَانَ عَلَى الْعٰلَمِيْنَ (Verily, Allah has chosen Ādam and Nūḥ and the House of Ibrāhīm and the House of 'Imrān over the worlds - Al-'Imrān, 3:33). In the verse under study, Allah Ta'ālā has put the Muslim ummah in line with the chosen ones, the prophets and the angels, although the degrees of such choice vary. The choice of prophets and angels occupies a higher degree, while the choice of the Muslim ummah, one that is posterior.

Three kinds of the Muslim ummah

The sentence: فَمِنْهُمْ ظَالِمٌ لِّنَفْسِه وَمِنْهُمْ مُّقْتَصِدٌ وَّمِنْهُمْ سَابِقٌ بِالْخَيْرَاتِ (Then, some of

them are those who wrong their own selves, and some of them are mediocre, and some of them are those who outpace (others) in righteous deeds with Allah's permission - 35:32) is virtually an explanation of the first sentence of the verse. In other words, it means that 'there are three kinds of Our servants We have chosen and have made them inherit the Qur'ān: (1) The unjust (2) The moderate (3) The excellent.

Imām Ibn Kathīr has explained these three kinds by saying: The one who wrong himself means a person who falls short in fulfilling some obligatory duties, and goes on to commit some of what is forbidden as well. And the one who follows the middle course is a person who fulfills all legally binding obligations and avoids everything forbidden, but on occasions, leaves out what has been recommended and falls into what is reprehensible. And excellent is the one who goes ahead of everyone in good deeds, fulfills all obligatory and recommended duties and avoids everything declared forbidden or considered reprehensible and goes on to leave what is allowed to him because of his devotion to acts of worship or because of some doubt in its lawfulness.

This is what Ibn Kathīr has said. Other commentators have reported many more sayings while explaining these three kinds. Tafsīr Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī mentions forty-three sayings with reference to at-Tahrir. But, on deliberation, the outcome of most is the same as stated with reference to Ibn Kathīr.

A doubt and its answer

The explanation given above proves that الَّذِيْنَ اصْطَفَيْنَا (those whom We chose) means the Muslim ummah that has three kinds and that its first kind - the unjust - is also included among the chosen servants of Allah. Taking this probability to be obviously remote, some people have said that this kind of people (who have wronged themselves) is excluded from the definition of: الَّذِيْنَ اصْطَفَيْنَا (We chose) and from the Muslim ummah. But, it already stands proved from many authentic aḥādīth that each one of these three kinds relate to Muslim ummah and are not excluded from the characteristic of: اصْطَفَيْنَا (We chose). In fact, this is the ultimate merit of the believing servants of the Muslim ummah that even those who are somewhat wanting in the matter of deeds are also sharers in this supreme distinction. At this place, Ibn Kathīr has put together all those Ḥadīth narrations, some of which are being cited below:

According to a narration of Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī ؓ, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said about these three kinds of: اَلَّذِيْنَ اصْطَفَيْنَا (those We chose): 'They rank alike and alike they are in Jannah, all of them.' The expression 'being in one rank' means that all of them will be forgiven and all of them will go to Jannah - not that there will be no variance among them in terms of their ranks.

Then, there is a Ḥadīth reported from Sayyidnā Abū-d- Darda' ؓ which is supported by several chains of authorities. Ibn Kathīr has documented all of them. One of these has been reported by Ibn Jarir from Sayyidnā Abū Thabit ؓ who, when he went to the Masjid one of those days, found Sayyidnā Abū-d- Darda' ؓ already sitting there. Sayyidnā Abū Thabit went close, sat down by his side and started making a prayer: اَللّٰهُمَّ اٰنِسْ وَحْشَتِيْ وَارْحَمْ غُرْبَتِيْ وَيَسِّرْلِيْ جَلِيْسًا صَالِحًا ('O Allah, mollify the loneliness and anxiety of my heart, and have mercy on me in my state of homelessness, and make it easy on me by (sending) a good companion'). (At this point, it is worth recalling that the great emphasis was placed by the early forbears of Islam on the quest for a good companion. They took this need to be an important objective in life and considered it to be a cure of all anxieties, so much so that they would raise their hands of prayer before Allah and ask Him that they be blessed with one). When Sayyidnā Abū-d- Darda' ؓ heard this prayer, he said, 'If you are honest in your prayer (for a companion), then, I am more fortunate than you (in the sense that Allah blessed me with a good companion like yourself, on the spot, without asking). Then, he said, 'I relate to you a Ḥadīth I have heard from the Holy Prophet ﷺ. But, since the time I heard it, I did not have the occasion to relate it before anyone. Here is the Ḥadīth: He mentioned this verse: ثُمَّ اَوْرَثْنَا الْكِتٰبَ الَّذِيْنَ اصْطَفَيْنَا (Then We conveyed the Book as an heritage to those of Our slaves whom We chose - 32). Then, he said, 'As for those who race ahead of others in the matter of good deeds, out of the three kinds, they will go to Jannah without reckoning. And those who are in the middle will face an accounting that will be easy on them. And the unjust, the ones who fall short in deeds and are prone to slip into sins, will be overwhelmed with remorse at this juncture. After that, they too will be asked to enter Jannah and all their sorrows will stand removed from them.' It finds mention in the next verse: وَقَالُوا الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِيْٓ اَذْهَبَ عَنَّا الْحَزَنَ (" Praise be to Allah who has removed all sorrow from us. Surely our Lord

is Most-Forgiving, Very-Appreciative,").

And at-Ṭabarānī reports from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, 'وَكُلُّهُمْ مِنْ هٰذِهِ الْأُمَّة' It means that each of the three kinds will be from this very Ummah of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ.

Abū Dāwūd at-Ṭayalisi reports from 'Uqbah Ibn Ṣahban Hana'i that he asked the Tafsīr of this verse from Ummul-Mu'minin, Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها. She said, "My son, all these three kinds are to go to Paradise. Out of these, those who were ahead of everyone in good deeds were people who passed away during the period of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. He himself testified that they are to go to Jannah. And those who took the middle course are people who followed the former as their role models to the extent that they joined up with them. As for those who have been unjust to themselves, they are people like me and you!"

Certainly great was the modesty of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها that she counted herself too as part of the third kind, that is, among those who are unjust to themselves - although, according to very clear statements in sound and authentic aḥādīth, she ranks high among the very first and foremost people (as-sabiqun al-awwalun) of early Islam.

And Ibn Jarīr has reported from Muḥammad Ibn-ul- Ḥanafiyyah رحمه الله تعالىٰ who said, 'This ummah is a community of people blessed with the mercy of Allah so en masse that even the unjust one in it stands forgiven, and the one of the middle course is in Jannah and the one way ahead in good deeds enjoys high ranks with Allah.'

And Sayyidnā Muḥammad Ibn 'Alī al-Bāqir ﷺ, while explaining: ظَالِمٌ لِّنَفْسِهٖ (*ẓālim linafsihī*: who wrong himself), said: اَلَّذِىْ خَلَطَ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَّاٰخَرَ سَيِّئًا meaning: 'a person who mixes good and bad deeds.'

The great merit of the 'Ulama' of the Muslim ummah

In this verse, Allah Ta'ālā has said that He has made a particular people to become inheritors of His Book, people who are chosen and honored ones from among His servants. Then, it is also obvious that 'Ulama' are the direct inheritors of the knowledge relating to the Book of Allah and the mission of prophets, as it has also been stated in the Ḥadīth: اَلْعُلَمَاءُ وَرَثَةُ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ ('Ulama' inherit [the legacy of] prophets). In sum,

people who have been so blessed by Allah Ta'ālā that they engage in the pursuit of the fields of knowledge relating to the Qur'ān and Sunnah with unalloyed sincerity is, in itself, a sign of their being men of Allah worthy of the task. This is as it has been supported by a narration of Sayyidnā Tha'labah Ibn al-Hakam ﷺ that reports the Holy Prophet ﷺ to have said, 'Allah Ta'ālā will address the 'Ulama' of the Muslim community on the Day of Judgment and say, "I had placed My knowledge and wisdom in your chests, for I had intended to forgive you irrespective of the nature of your actual deeds." (From the earlier presentation, it is already established that a person who has no awe and fear of Allah is simply not counted as one of the 'Ulama'. Therefore, this address will be to people for whom the awe and fear of Allah has become their natural reflex. Hence, it would be virtually impossible for them to indulge in sins carelessly. Yes, on occasions, they too could slip or make a mistake under the dictates of human temperament. This very aspect was alluded to in the Ḥadīth mentioned above where it was said - no matter the nature of your deeds, forgiveness is destined for you).

All these narrations have been taken from Ibn Kathīr. The last Ḥadīth reported from Sayyidnā Tha'labah ﷺ has also been reported by at-Tabarani with all chains of authority cited by him being reliable. (Tafsīr Maẓharī) And in Tafsīr Maẓharī, the subject of the same Ḥadīth has been reported from Abū 'Umar San'ani with reference to Ibn 'Asakir. Similarly, according to a narration of Sayyidnā Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī ﷺ, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, 'On the Day of Resurrection (*al-maḥshar*), Allah Ta'ālā will gather all His servants together. Then, He will assemble the 'Ulama' from among them at a prominent place and will say to them:

إِنِّىْ لَمْ أَضَعْ عِلْمِىْ فِيْكُم إِلَّا لعلمى بِكُمْ وَلَمْ أَضَعْ عِلْمِىْ فِيْكُمْ لِأُعَذِّبَكُمْ اِنْطَلِقُوْا قَدْ غَفَرْتُ لَكُمْ

I had placed My *'ilm* in you since I knew you (that you will fulfill the due rights of this *'ilm*, the knowledge given to you) and I had not placed My *'ilm* in you so that I punish you. Go, I have forgiven you - Maẓharī.

Special Note

In this verse, mentioned first was the category of the unjust, then of those following the middle course, and finally, of those who are ahead in good deeds. The reason for this order may, perhaps, be that the number of

those unjust to them selves is larger, those following the middle course are less than them and those ahead in good deeds happen to be less than the later. Thus, those whose number was large were made to appear first.

A close look at the last sentence of verse 32 and the statement in verse 33: ذٰلِكَ هُوَالْفَضْلُ الْكَبِيْرُ جَنّٰتُ عَدْنٍ يَّدْخُلُوْنَهَا يُحَلَّوْنَ فِيْهَا مِنْ اَسَاوِرَمِنْ ذَهَبٍ وَّلُؤْلُؤاً وَلِبَاسُهُمْ فِيْهَا حَرِيْرٌ (That is the great bounty, gardens of eternity they enter. They will be ornamented with bracelets of gold and with pearls, and their dress therein will be (of) silk. - 35:32,33) shows that in the beginning of verse 32, Allah Ta'ālā has pointed out to three kinds of His chosen servants following which it was said: ذٰلِكَ هُوَالْفَضْلُ الْكَبِيْرُ : That is, 'this counting of all these three among His chosen servants is the great bounty.' Next comes the statement relating to their recompense - that they will go to Jannah, that they will be given bracelets of gold and ornaments of pearls to wear and that their dress shall be of silk.

For men, in this mortal world, it is haram to wear ornaments of gold, and dresses made of silk too. To compensate, they will have these in Jannah. Let there be no doubt about it, something like: Ornaments are for women, not for men in whose case these do not suit. The reason is simple. Taking the conditions prevailing in the 'Akhirah (Hereafter) and Jannah (Paradise) on the analogy of conditions prevailing in the mortal world is unreasonable, even dumb.

According to a narration of Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī ﷺ, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, 'Crowns on the heads of the people of Jannah will be studded with pearls. Light emitted by the smallest of its pearls will fill the entire horizon from the East to the West.' (Reported by at-Tirmidhī and al-Ḥakim, who has authenticated it, and by al-Baihaqi - from Maẓharī)

Imām al-Qurṭubī said: Commentators explain that every inmate of Jannah will have bracelets to wear on their hands - of gold, silver, and pearls. About this celestial bracelet, a verse mentions 'of silver' (76:21) while others, 'of gold' (18:31; 22:23; 35:33; 43:53). The present explanation brings both verses in correspondence.

A person who will use utensils of gold and silver and dresses of silk will remain deprived of these in Jannah

Sayyidnā Hudhaifah ﷺ says that he heard the Holy Prophet ﷺ saying, 'Do not wear dresses of silk and do not drink water in utensils of

gold and silver, nor use plates made of these in eating food - because, these things are for disbelievers in this world and for you, in the Hereafter.' (al-Bukhari and Muslim)

And Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, 'Any male who wore a dress made of silk in this world will not wear it in the Hereafter' (al-Bukhari and Muslim). And a narration of Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī ﷺ says, 'A male who wears a dress made of silk in this world will remain deprived of it in the Hereafter, even if he were to go to Jannah.' (Maẓharī)

The next verse (34): وَقَالُوا الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِيْٓ اَذْهَبَ عَنَّا الْحَزَنَ (And they will say, "Praise be to Allah who has removed all sorrow from us.") tells us about what the people of Paradise will say when they enter Jannah. What does 'sorrow' mean at this place? Leading commentators have given various explanations about it. However, the truth of the matter is that all sorrows stand included therein. In this world, one may become a king or a prophet or a saint, yet no one can escape it:

دریں دنیا کسے بےغم نباشد......☆......وگر باشد بنی آدم نباشد

In this world, no one is free of sorrow
And if one is, one is not a human being.

In this world of our experience, no one good or bad can get away from one or the other concern, anxiety or sorrow. Therefore, people of wisdom call this world a home of sorrows. The sorrow the removal of which this verse mentions includes all these mortal states of concern. The second concern is that of the Day of Judgment and Resurrection. The third concern is that of Reckoning of Deeds, and the fourth, that of the punishment of Jahannam. From the people of Jannah, Allah Ta'ālā will remove all these concerns, anxieties and sorrows.

According to a narration of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar ﷺ, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, 'For the people who uphold the Kalīmah of la ilaha il-lal-lah (there is no God but Allah), there is no fear and loneliness at the time of death, nor in the grave, nor when they rise again on the Day of Resurrection - as if I am virtually seeing them rise from their respective graves saying: اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِيْٓ اَذْهَبَ عَنَّا الْحَزَنَ (Praise be to Allah who has removed all sorrow from us.").' (Reported by at-Ṭabarānī, Maẓharī)

At this point, let us refer back to the Ḥadīth of Sayyidnā Abū-D-Darda' ؓ that has appeared a little earlier. There it has been stated that it will be said by the unjust, those who have wronged their own selves. This is because they would initially face great anxiety on the plains of Resurrection but, finally, when they are asked to enter Paradise, it will stand removed. This statement does not contradict the Ḥadīth of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar ؓ appearing immediately above. Again, the reason is that the person who has wronged himself would have an additional sorrow on his hands, more serious than that of others, on the plains of the Resurrection as well - something that will stand removed at the time of one's entry into the Paradise. In short, this is a statement that will be made by all people of Jannah, no matter to which kind they belong, to the ones who have been ahead of all in good deeds, or to those who have followed the middle course, or to those who have been unjust to their own selves. But, the thought of everyone's roster of sorrows being separate from each other is not too far out.

Imām Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ said: It is the typical state of a believer that he never remains free of concerns while in this world. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said that the world is a prison for the believer. This is the reason why it appears in the accounts of the lives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his great Ṣaḥabah that these blessed souls used to look sad fairly often.

In verse 35: الَّذِیْٓ اَحَلَّنَا دَارَ الْمُقَامَةِ مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ ۚ لَا يَمَسُّنَا فِيْهَا نَصَبٌ وَّلَا يَمَسُّنَا فِيْهَا لُغُوْبٌ (who, out of His grace, has made us land at a home of eternal living where neither we are touched by weariness, nor are we touched by boredom."), some characteristics of Jannah have been described: (1) That it is an eternal home with no danger of any lapse of time, or expulsion from there at any time. (2) That no one will face any sorrow while there. (3) That no one there will experience the least fatigue or boredom, as it happens in the mortal world where one needs to sleep after work. Life in Jannah will be free from this too. This subject also finds mention in some narrations of Ḥadīth. (Maẓharī)

When the people in Jahannam will plead with their Lord that they be delivered from its punishment, so that they could do good deeds then, and not do the bad ones they did earlier, at that time they will be told: اَوَلَمْ نُعَمِّرْكُمْ مَّا يَتَذَكَّرُ فِيْهِ مَنْ تَذَكَّرَ وَجَآءَكُمُ النَّذِيْرُ ("Did We not give you an age in your life in which lesson could have been learnt by the one who wished to take

lesson - 37) Sayyidnā 'Alī Ibn Ḥusain Zain ul-'Abidīn ﷺ said, "It means the age of seventeen years." And Qatadah رحمه الله تعالى gave the age as eighteen years, meaning thereby the age of puberty. And the difference of seventeen and eighteen is possible in determining the age of puberty, as someone may reach puberty at the age of seventeen and someone else at, eighteen. In the Sharī'ah, the age of puberty is the first line of demarcation after having crossed which a person is Divinely blessed with enough reason, so that one can understand what is good or bad in his or her case. Therefore, this address will be to disbelievers at large irrespective of their ages being long or short. However, the one who had a long lease of life, yet did not come to his senses, saw all sorts of physical proofs scattered around and heard the teachings of the prophets, still did not recognize the truth - so then, this one will be more blameworthy.

In short, the person who saw nothing beyond the age of puberty, he too was given enough power of discrimination by nature that he could have used to distinguish between the true and the false. When he failed to do that, he too is deserving of censure and punishment. But, the person who was given long years to live, the warning of Allah stood served against him in a more conclusive degree. Then, if he could still not shake off his disbelief and disobedience, he would be more deserving of punishment and blame.

Sayyidnā 'Alī al-Murtada ﷺ said, 'The age whereupon Allah Ta'ālā has asked His sinning servants to beware is that of sixty years.' Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ, according to one narration, has given it as forty years while, according to another narration, as sixty. He has said that this is the age when the argument and warrant of Allah stands served conclusively on an erring person who, then, is left with no room for making excuses. Ibn Kathīr has given preference to the second Ḥadīth of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ.

From the presentation made above, it is clear that there is no contradiction in the narrations pointing out to the age of seventeen / eighteen and sixty. Though, someone at the age of seventeen/eighteen is able to distinguish between the true and the false. Therefore, one has been obligated with precepts of the Sharī'ah from this benchmark this very age of puberty. But, the age of sixty is such a long period of time that, should one still fail to recognize the truth, there remains no room for

making any more excuses. Against such a person, the argument of Allah stands firmly established. Therefore, the aggregate ages of people in this blessed ummah are destined to be between sixty and seventy years - as said in Ḥadīth:

اَعْمَارُ اُمَّتِی مَابَیْنَ السِّتِّیْنَ اِلَی السَّبْعِیْنَ وَاَقَلُّهُمْ مَّنْ یَّجُوْزُ ذٰلِکَ

> The ages of my ummah will be in between sixty and seventy and there will be few of those who will exceed that - reported by al-Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah, Ibn Kathīr.

Towards the end of the verse (37), it was said: وَجَآءَكُمُ النَّذِيْرُ (And (furthermore) the warner had (also) come to you.). Given here is a hint that Allah Ta'ālā gives one from the age one attains puberty enough ability to rationalize and recognize at least his or her creator and master and then goes on to live a life the purpose of which is to seek His pleasure. To do only this much, human reason alone would have been sufficient. But, Allah Ta'ālā did not leave it simply at that. In fact, He sent His special people called: نَذِيْر (*nadhir*) to help them reason it out. This word is usually translated as 'one who warns' or 'warner' in English (the later, though, not formally admissible in the language, but is still used in the absence of a suitable equivalent). In fact, a nadhir is a person who, by virtue of his mercy and compassion, asks his people to stay away from things that are likely to bring harm to them or cause their total ruination as a people and tries to instill the fear of such things in their hearts, lest it actually happens. In terms of its well-recognized meaning, it refers to the noble prophets عليهما السلام, and to the 'Ulama' who carry out their mission as their deputies. The outcome of the verse is: 'We gave them reason to recognize the true from the false. Along with it, We also sent Our prophets who would guide them on the path of truth and keep them safe from the false.'

And it has been reported from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, 'Ikrimah رضي الله عنه and Imām Ja'far Bāqir that *nadhir* means the gray hair of the old age. When they flare up, they give a message to human beings: Here comes the time to go! This statement too is not contradictory to the first one for gray hair might as well serve as the standard bearers of warning along with Anbiya' and 'Ulama'.

And the truth of the matter is that all conditions faced by human

beings after their age of puberty and all minor and major changes that take place in their persons and in that they are surrounded with are, all of them, heralds of warning for human beings.

Verse 38 - 41

إِنَّ اللَّهَ عٰلِمُ غَيْبِ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌۢ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ ﴿٣٨﴾ هُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَكُمْ خَلٰٓئِفَ فِي الْأَرْضِ ۚ فَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَعَلَيْهِ كُفْرُهُ ۖ وَلَا يَزِيدُ الْكٰفِرِينَ كُفْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ إِلَّا مَقْتًا ۖ وَلَا يَزِيدُ الْكٰفِرِينَ كُفْرُهُمْ إِلَّا خَسَارًا ﴿٣٩﴾ قُلْ أَرَءَيْتُمْ شُرَكَآءَكُمُ الَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ ۖ أَرُونِي مَاذَا خَلَقُوا مِنَ الْأَرْضِ أَمْ لَهُمْ شِرْكٌ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ ۚ أَمْ آتَيْنٰهُمْ كِتٰبًا فَهُمْ عَلٰى بَيِّنَتٍ مِنْهُ ۚ بَلْ إِنْ يَعِدُ الظّٰلِمُونَ بَعْضُهُمْ بَعْضًا إِلَّا غُرُورًا ﴿٤٠﴾ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُمْسِكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضَ أَنْ تَزُولَا ۚ وَلَئِنْ زَالَتَآ إِنْ أَمْسَكَهُمَا مِنْ أَحَدٍ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهِ ۚ إِنَّهُ كَانَ حَلِيمًا غَفُورًا ﴿٤١﴾

Surely Allah is the Knower of the unseen in the heavens and the earth. Indeed He fully knows what lies in the hearts. [38]

He is the One who has made you successors (of the past generations) in the earth. So the one who becomes infidel, his infidelity will go against himself. And their infidelity adds nothing to the infidels but anger with their Lord, and their infidelity adds nothing to the infidels but loss. [39] **Say, "Tell me about your (presumed) co-gods whom you invoke beside Allah. Show me that part of the earth that they have created, or do they have a share in the (creation) of the heavens? " Or have We given them a book so that they are upon a clear proof from it? No, but the wrongdoers promise one another nothing but delusion.** [40] **Undoubtedly, Allah holds back the heavens and the earth from leaving their existing state, and if they were to leave, there is none who can hold them back, except Him. Surely He is Forbearing, Most-Forgiving.** [41]

Commentary

The word: خلائف (*khala'if*) in verse 39: هُوَالَّذِىْ جَعَلَكُمْ خَلٰٓئِفَ فِى الْاَرْضِ (He is the One who has made you successors (of the past generations) in the earth.) is the plural of: خَلِيْفَة (*khalifah*) which means deputy or vice-regent. The general sense is that Allah Ta'ālā has let human beings have lands and houses that keep passing on from one to the other. In this phenomena, there is a great lesson - turn to Allah. Then, the statement could also be taken to have been addressed to the ummah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ saying, 'After past communities, We made you take their place with authority to make life better around you, so it is your duty that you learn your lesson from what happened to people earlier than you, and hence you, on your part, do not while away precious moments of your life in negligence.'

In the expression: اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُمْسِكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ (Undoubtedly, Allah holds back the heavens and the earth - 35:41), the 'holding' of the heavens or the skies does not mean that their movement was stopped. Instead, it means holding them from moving askance - as the word: اَنْ تَزُوْلَا (*an tazula*: from leaving their existing state,) bears it out. Therefore, in this verse, there exists no supporting evidence on either side as to the skies move or they are static.

Verses 42 - 45

وَاَقْسَمُوْا بِاللّٰهِ جَهْدَ اَيْمَانِهِمْ لَئِنْ جَآءَهُمْ نَذِيْرٌ لَّيَكُوْنُنَّ اَهْدٰى مِنْ
اِحْدَى الْاُمَمِ ۚ فَلَمَّا جَآءَهُمْ نَذِيْرٌ مَّا زَادَهُمْ اِلَّا نُفُوْرًا ﴿٤٢﴾ اِسْتِكْبَارًا
فِى الْاَرْضِ وَمَكْرَ السَّيِّئِ ؕ وَلَا يَحِيْقُ الْمَكْرُ السَّيِّئُ اِلَّا بِاَهْلِهٖ ؕ
فَهَلْ يَنْظُرُوْنَ اِلَّا سُنَّتَ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ ۚ فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لِسُنَّتِ اللّٰهِ تَبْدِيْلًا ۚ
وَلَنْ تَجِدَ لِسُنَّتِ اللّٰهِ تَحْوِيْلًا ﴿٤٣﴾ اَوَلَمْ يَسِيْرُوْا فِى الْاَرْضِ
فَيَنْظُرُوْا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ وَكَانُوْٓا اَشَدَّ مِنْهُمْ قُوَّةً ؕ
وَمَا كَانَ اللّٰهُ لِيُعْجِزَهٗ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَلَا فِى الْاَرْضِ ؕ اِنَّهٗ
كَانَ عَلِيْمًا قَدِيْرًا ﴿٤٤﴾ وَلَوْ يُؤَاخِذُ اللّٰهُ النَّاسَ بِمَا كَسَبُوْا مَا تَرَكَ

عَلٰى ظَهْرِهَا مِنْ دَآبَّةٍ وَّلٰكِنْ يُّؤَخِّرُهُمْ اِلٰٓى اَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ۚ فَاِذَا جَآءَ اَجَلُهُمْ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ بِعِبَادِهٖ بَصِيْرًا ﴿٤٥﴾

And they had sworn forceful oaths that if a warner would come to them, they would be more receptive to guidance than any other community. But when a warner came to them, it added nothing to them but aversion, [42] because of their showing arrogance in the land and plotting of evil. And the evil plot envelops none but its own people (who make it). So, they are looking for nothing but the (divine) practice with the earlier people. So you will never find in Allah's practice any change, and you will never find in Allah's practice any diversion. [43] Did they not travel in the land and see how was the end of those before them ? And they were stronger than these in power. And Allah is not such that something in the heavens or the earth can frustrate Him. Surely He is All-Knowing, All-Powerful. [44] And if Allah were to take mankind to task for what they did, He would have not left a living creature on its back, but He delays them upto an appointed time. So when their time will come, then Allah is the One who will see His slaves. [45]

Commentary

The word: لَايَحِيْقُ (*lā yaḥīq*) in verse 43: وَلَا يَحِيْقُ الْمَكْرُ السَّيِّئُ اِلَّا بِاَهْلِهٖ (And the evil plot envelops none but its own people (who make it) carries the sense of: لَايُحِيْطُ (*lā yuḥīṭ*: does not surround) or: لَايُصِيْبُ (*lā uṣīb*: does not afflict). Thus, it comes to mean that the curse of making an evil plan falls on none but the one who makes it. In other words, a person who wishes evil for others, he himself falls a victim to it.

A doubt may arise at this point. It is commonly seen in this worldly life that someone with an evil plan gets away with it and the loss intended for anyone stands inflicted on him. The answer to this has been given by Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanavi by saying that the pain or loss inflicted on such a person was a loss limited to this mortal world, while the loss to be the fate of the maker of such evil plan in the Hereafter was not only heavier, but was more lasting too. So, if compared, his worldly loss amounts to nothing.

There is another answer given by some elders who say that there are

occasions when the curse of contriving against someone innocent or inflicting injustice on him, more than often, falls on the person causing it, right here in this world as well. Muḥammad Ibn Ka'b al-Qurazi said: There are three things the doer of which does not remain safe against its curse and punishment even in this world. These are: (1) Causing harm or pain to some innocent person by engineering evil against him. (2) Inflicting any injustice. (3) Breaking of pledge. (Ibn Kathīr) Particularly so, when things like that are done against a person who is helpless or does not have the power to avenge or elects to endure despite having that power. Experience bears out that no one who does things like that has ever remained unaffected by the curse of injustice thus inflicted even in this world. Hence, the outcome will be that the element of restriction (Ḥasr) visible here appears in terms of a majority rule and not in any absolute sense. Allah knows best.

Alhamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Faṭir
Ends here

Sūrah Yā Sīn

Sūrah Yā Sīn was revealed at Makkī and it has 83 verses and 5 sections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 12

يٰسٓ ﴿١﴾ وَالْقُرْاٰنِ الْحَكِيْمِ ﴿٢﴾ اِنَّكَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ ﴿٣﴾ عَلٰی
صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ ﴿٤﴾ تَنْزِيْلَ الْعَزِيْزِ الرَّحِيْمِ ﴿٥﴾ لِتُنْذِرَ قَوْمًا مَّآ اُنْذِرَ
اٰبَآؤُهُمْ فَهُمْ غٰفِلُوْنَ ﴿٦﴾ لَقَدْ حَقَّ الْقَوْلُ عَلٰٓی اَكْثَرِهِمْ فَهُمْ
لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٧﴾ اِنَّا جَعَلْنَا فِیْٓ اَعْنَاقِهِمْ اَغْلٰلًا فَهِیَ اِلَی الْاَذْقَانِ فَهُمْ
مُّقْمَحُوْنَ ﴿٨﴾ وَجَعَلْنَا مِنْۢ بَيْنِ اَيْدِيْهِمْ سَدًّا وَّمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ سَدًّا
فَاَغْشَيْنٰهُمْ فَهُمْ لَا يُبْصِرُوْنَ ﴿٩﴾ وَسَوَآءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ ءَاَنْذَرْتَهُمْ اَمْ لَمْ
تُنْذِرْهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿١٠﴾ اِنَّمَا تُنْذِرُ مَنِ اتَّبَعَ الذِّكْرَ وَخَشِیَ
الرَّحْمٰنَ بِالْغَيْبِ ۚ فَبَشِّرْهُ بِمَغْفِرَةٍ وَّاَجْرٍ كَرِيْمٍ ﴿١١﴾ اِنَّا نَحْنُ نُحْیِ
الْمَوْتٰی وَنَكْتُبُ مَا قَدَّمُوْا وَاٰثَارَهُمْ ۭ وَكُلَّ شَیْءٍ اَحْصَيْنٰهُ فِیْٓ اِمَامٍ
مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿١٢﴾

Yā Sīn [1] By the Qur'ān, that is full of wisdom, [2] You are truly one of the messengers, [3] on a straight path

1. Today, when I am beginning the *Tafsir* of Sūrah Yā Sīn, this is the ninth day of the month of Ṣafar. On the same day in the Hijrah year 1355, my respected father, Maulānā Muḥammad Yāsīn, may Allah have mercy on him, had died. His association with the name of this Sūrah and the date of his death revived fond memories of him. Generous readers are requested to pray for the forgiveness of this humble writer and his parents, and should someone have the heart to recite Sūrah Yā Sīn and pray for the transmittal of its *thawāb* to them, then, *Subḥānallah,* it wll be so nice of them. - the author.

[4], (this Qur'ān being) a revelation from the All-Mighty, the Very-Merciful, [5] so that you may warn a people whose fathers were not warned, and hence, they are unaware. [6] The word has indeed come true about most of them, so they will not believe. [7] Surely We have placed iron collars on their necks, so they are reaching upto their chins, and their heads are forced to remain upraised. [8] And We have placed a barrier in front of them and a barrier behind them, and (thus) they are encircled by Us ; so they do not see. [9] And it is all equal for them whether you warn them or do not warn them, they will not believe. [10] You can (usefully) warn only the one who follows the advice and fears the Raḥmān (the All-Merciful) unseen. So give him the good news of forgiveness and of a noble reward. [11] Surely We will give new life to the dead, and We are recording whatever (deeds) they send ahead and whatever effects they leave behind. And every thing is fully computed by Us in a manifest source-book. [12]

Commentary

The Merits of Sūrah Yā Sīn

Sayyidnā Ma'qil Ibn Yasār ﷺ narrates that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: يٰسٓ قَلْبُ الْقُرْآن (Sūrah Yā Sīn is the heart of the Qur'ān) and some words of this Ḥadīth tell us that a person who recites Sūrah Yā Sīn exclusively for the sake of Allah and the 'Akhirah is forgiven, and that it should be recited over the dead among us (reported by Aḥmad and Abū Dāwūd and an-Nasā'ī and Ibn Ḥibbān and al-Ḥakim and others - as in Rūḥ-ul- Ma'ānī and al-Maẓharī).

Imām al-Ghazzālī said that one reason for calling Sūrah Yā Sīn the heart of the Qur'ān could be that, in this Sūrah, themes relating to the Day of Judgment and the Resurrection have appeared with particular details and eloquent presentation. Then, out of the principles of faith, there is the belief in the Hereafter, something on which depends the soundness of human deeds. The fear of the Hereafter makes one ready for good deeds and this is what stops one from indulging in desires that are impermissible and things that are unlawful. So, the way soundness of the body depends on the soundness of the heart, similarly the soundness of the faith ('Imān) depends on the concern for the Hereafter (Rūḥ). And the way Yā Sīn is a well recognized name of this Sūrah, it is named in a Ḥadīth also as 'Azīmah (reported by Abū Naṣr as-Sajazī from Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah

رضی اللہ عنہا). And according to another Ḥadīth the name of this Sūrah has appeared in Torah as مُعِمَّة (*Mu'immah*), that is, a Sūrah that universalizes its blessings in worldly life and in the Hereafter for its readers, and the name of its reader has been given as Ash-Sharīf, and it was said that his intercession on the Day of Judgment will be accepted for a number of people that would exceed the number of people in the tribe of Rabi'ah (reported by Sa'īd Ibn Manṣur and al-Baihaqī from Ḥassan Ibn 'Atiyyah) and in some narrations, its name has also been cited as: مُدَافِعَة.. (*mudāfi'ah*) that is, it removes misfortunes from its readers, while some others mention it by the name قَاضِيَة (Qāḍiyah) that is, the caretaker of needs (Rūḥ-ul- Ma'ānī).

And narration of Sayyidnā Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī ﷺ says: The reciting of Sūrah Yā Sīn near a dying person makes the ordeal of death easy on him (reported by ad-Dailami and Ibn Hibban - Maẓharī).

And Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Zubayr ﷺ said: Whoever puts Sūrah Yā Sīn ahead of his need, his need is fulfilled (reported by al-Mahamili in his 'Amali - Maẓharī)

And Yaḥyā Ibn Kathīr said: Whoever recites Sūrah Yā Sīn in the morning will remain happy until evening and whoever recites it in the evening will be happy until morning and he said that this thing was confided to him by a person who had experienced it (reported by Ibn al-Faris - Maẓharī).

Yā Sīn (يٰسٓ): According to the well-known position concerning this word, it is one of the 'isolated letters' (*al-ḥurūf-ul-muqaṭṭa'āt*) the knowledge of which rests with Allah alone. Hower, Ibn-ul- 'Arabi has reported that Imām Mālik has said that it is one of the names of Allah. And a narration from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ also says that it is one of the Divine Names. And according to another narration, this is a word from the Ethiopian language that means: 'O human person' and denotes the person of the noble Prophet ﷺ. And, it is gathered from a saying of Sayyidnā Ibn Jubayr ﷺ that the word: Yā Sīn is the name of the noble Prophet ﷺ. It appears in Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī that giving the Holy Prophet ﷺ a name composed of these two elegant letters - Yā and Sīn - has great secrets behind it.

About Giving someone the name: يٰسٓ (Yā Sīn: written as Yāsīn):

Imām Mālik does not like to name a person as Yāsīn for the reason that, according to him, it is one of the Divine Names and its exact meaning remains unknown. Therefore, it is possible that it may have some meaning that is exclusive to Allah Ta'ālā, and nobody is allowed to have that name, for example: اَلْخَالِقُ (*al-khāliq*: The Creator), رَازِق (*ar-rāziq*: The Provider-Sustainer) and other names of this nature. Still, if this word is written with a script that reads: يٰسٓ (Yasin), it is permissible to give that name to a human being, because the Qur'ān says: سَلاَمٌ عَلٰى ال يٰسِيْنَ (Peace on Ilyāsīn or Āl Yāsīn) (Ibn al-'Arabi). The well recognized rendering (*qira'ah*) of this verse is: اِلْيَاسِيْنَ (ilyasin) but, in some renderings, it also appears as: ال يَاسِيْنَ (āl-yāsīn).

The word: آباء (fathers) in verse 6: لِتُنْذِرَ قَوْمًا مَّآ اُنْذِرَ اٰبَاؤُهُمْ (so that you may warn a people whose fathers were not warned) means the Arabs. The sense is that no warner, that is, a prophet, has come to their ancestors since a long time, the reference being to the ones nearer among them. Since the coming of their patriarch, Sayyidnā Ibrahim عليه السلام and with him, Sayyidnā Ismā'īl عليه السلام, no prophet had appeared among the Arabs for several centuries, even though, the work of calling people to the true faith with warnings and glad tidings kept going on as mentioned in the verse of the Qur'ān: وَاِنْ مِّنْ اُمَّةٍ اِلاَّ خَلاَ فِيْهَا نَذِيْرٌ (and there was no community without a warner having passed among them - 35:24) also confirms the same truth - that Divine mercy has never kept any nation or community deprived of the essential call and warning at any time and in any region. But, it is obvious that teachings of prophets when communicated by their deputies do not bring about the same effect as it is witnessed when the prophets do it in person. Therefore, in the present verse, it was said about the Arabs that no warner came to them. As a fall out of this situation, there was no regular system of education in Arabia where people could learn and teach which was why they came to be called: اُمِّيِّيْنَ (*ummiyyun*: the unlettered ones).

Verses 7 and 8: لَقَدْ حَقَّ الْقَوْلُ عَلٰٓى اَكْثَرِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَايُؤْمِنُوْنَ اِنَّا جَعَلْنَا فِيْٓ اَعْنَاقِهِمْ اَغْلٰلًا (The word has indeed come true about most of them, so they will not believe. Surely We have placed iron collars on their necks, so they are reaching up to their chins, and their heads are forced to remain upraised.) mean that Allah Ta'ālā has already placed before human beings two alternate ways

of life - the way of kufr (disbelief) and 'Imān (faith) and the way of Jannah (Paradise) and Jahannam (the Hell) - and to give direction and substance to this call of faith, He also sent prophets and Books. In fact, He went further ahead by giving human beings the choice to first identify what is good or bad for one and then take to either of the two ways. Now if there is that unfortunate person who does neither think, nor ponders over proofs spread throughout nature, nor listens to the call of the prophets, nor deliberates in the Book of Allah, then, once this person has made a choice and has taken to a way thus chosen, Allah Ta'ālā assembles for him everything he needs to achieve that end. One who embraces the wont of disbelief, for him the supply of things and circumstances that would increase his disbelief never run short. This is what has been expressed as: لَقَدْ حَقَّ الْقَوْلُ عَلَىٰ أَكْثَرِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ (7) which means that against most of these people, because of their choice of the evil, the decisive verdict of Allah - that they are not going to believe - already stands pronounced.

Given next is a similitude of their condition by saying that they look like people whose necks have been shackled in a manner that causes their faces and eyes stay upraised rendering them totally unable to see their way on the ground. If so, it is obvious that one cannot remain safe against the likelihood of falling down into some ditch or abyss.

Then comes another similitude. It was said that it is like a wall having been placed as a barrier all around someone. Thus surrounded, this person becomes unaware of what is going on outside. Similarly, these infidels are surrounded by their ignorance and, on top of it, by their hostility and doggedness. Under these conditions, it is as if the truth present elsewhere simply does not reach them.

Imām Rāzī has said that there are two kinds of barriers against perception. One barrier is of the kind that prevents one from seeing even himself. The second barrier is the inability to see one's surrounding. For the disbelievers, both kinds of barriers against seeing the truth were present. Therefore, the first example is that of the first barrier, that is, one who cannot bend his neck to lower his eyes cannot see even his own self or the state in which he exists. Then the second example is that of the second barrier that stops one from seeing his surrounding. (Rūḥ-ul- Ma'ānī)

The majority of commentators have declared the present verse to be a similitude of their disbelief and hostility only. And some commentators, on the basis of some narrations, have taken it to be the description of an event, that is, Abū Jahl and some others, bent on killing or hurting the Holy Prophet ﷺ, lunged towards him but Allah Ta'ālā cast curtain over their eyes. Thus, rendered helpless, they went back. Many similar events have been reported in books of Tafsir, such as, Ibn Kathīr, Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī, al-Qurṭubī, Maẓharī and others. But, most of these are weak narrations. The Tafsir of the verse cannot be based on such sources.

In verse 12, by saying: وَنَكْتُبُ مَا قَدَّمُوا وَاٰثَارَهُمْ (and We are recording whatever (deeds) they send ahead and whatever effects they leave behind.), the doing of deeds has been equated with 'sending ahead' to point out that good or bad deeds done in the mortal world have not gone the way of all flesh right here. Instead of that, these were their wherewithal, their baggage that has gone ahead of them to their destination in the next world that they have to confront. Now, if these deeds were good, they will make them look handsome in Paradise, and if they were bad, the embers of Hell will be their fate. The real purpose of 'recording' these deeds is to keep them preserved. Writing too is a means of doing that, so that there remain no probability of error, forgetfulness, increase or decrease.

The effects of deeds are also recorded like the deeds themselves

The terse statement: وَاٰثَارَهُمْ (*wa 'atharahum*: and their effects) in Verse 12 means that the way deeds done by them are written, so are their effects too. The word: آثار (*'āthār*: traces, or effects) denotes fruits, outcomes and consequences that show up later and keep surviving. For example, someone helped people learn their religion, told them about its injunctions or wrote a book for to enable them to get the best out of their faith, or instituted some sort of endowment that turned out to be beneficial for people after him and, for that matter, did something that brought benefit to common Muslims, then, as far as the effects of this good deed remain, and as long as they bring fruits, they all will continue to be written in his Book of Deeds. Similar is the case of bad deeds, the evil fruits and effects of which continue to remain in the world. For example, someone instituted oppressive laws, or institutions that tend to corrupt the human deeds and morals, or made people follow the way of

error and evil, then, as far as and as long as the evil outcomes of his deed keep taking shape, these will continue to be recorded in his Book of Deeds - as it has been said by the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself while explaining this verse. Narrates Sayyidnā Jarir Ibn 'Abdullāh al-Bajali ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

> مَنْ سَنَّ سُنَّةً حَسَنَةً فَلَه' اَجْرُهَا وَاَجْرُ مَنْ عَمِلَ بِهَا مِنْ بَعْدِهٖ مِنْ غَيْرِ اَنْ يُنْقَصَ مِنْ اُجُوْرِهِمْ شَيْئاً وَّمَنْ سَنَّ سُنَّةً سَيِّئَةً كَانَ عَلَيْهِ وِزرُها وَ وِزْرُمَنْ عَمِلَ بِهَا مِنْ بَعْدِهٖ لَا يُنْقَصُ مِنْ اَوْزَارِهِمْ شَيْئًا، ثُمَّ تَلَا وَنَكْتُبُ مَا قَدَّمُوْا وَاٰثَارَهُمْ، (ابن كثير عن ابن ابى حاتم)
>
> "Whoever started a good practice, he will have its reward, and the reward of whoever acts in accordance with it after him, without the least decrease in the reward of others acting upon it. And whoever started a bad practice, on him shall be its sin along with the sin of whoever acts in accordance with it after him, without the least decrease in the sins of others acting upon it" - Ibn Kathīr from Ibn Abī Ḥatim.

The word: آثار (*'āthār*: traces or effects) is also used in the sense of footprints. As in Ḥadīth, when one walks to the Masjid, one good deed is recorded at every step he takes. Some Ḥadīth narrations seem to indicate that the word: آثار (*'āthār*: traces) appearing in this verse refers to these very footprints. The way the reward of Ṣalāh is written down, similarly, on every step taken while going for Ṣalāh, one good deed is recorded. At this stage in his Tafsīr, Ibn Kathīr has put together all narrations that mention that there were many people in Madīnah whose homes were at some distance from the Prophet's Masjid. They thought of setting up their homes closer to the Masjid. The Holy Prophet ﷺ told them not to do that. He advised them: Live where you do. When you walk in from afar, do not take this time to have been wasted. The more your steps, the more shall be your reward.

There could be a possible doubt here in that the present Sūrah is Makkī, while the event mentioned in these Ḥadīth belongs to Madīnah. This could be answered by saying that the verse might as well be in its general sense - that is, the traces of deeds are also written - and that this verse may have been revealed in Makkah. But thereafter, when this event came to pass in Madīnah, he mentioned this verse in support. Then he counted footprints too within the effects and traces the writing of which has been mentioned in this verse of the Qur'ān. This way the

apparent contradiction between these two explanations also stands removed (as explicated and preferred by Ibn Kathīr).

Verses 13 - 32

وَاضْرِبْ لَهُمْ مَّثَلًا اَصْحٰبَ الْقَرْيَةِ ۘ اِذْ جَآءَهَا الْمُرْسَلُوْنَ ﴿١٣﴾ اِذْ
اَرْسَلْنَآ اِلَيْهِمُ اثْنَيْنِ فَكَذَّبُوْهُمَا فَعَزَّزْنَا بِثَالِثٍ فَقَالُوْٓا اِنَّآ اِلَيْكُمْ
مُّرْسَلُوْنَ ﴿١٤﴾ قَالُوْا مَآ اَنْتُمْ اِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُنَا ۙ وَمَآ اَنْزَلَ الرَّحْمٰنُ مِنْ
شَيْءٍ ۙ اِنْ اَنْتُمْ اِلَّا تَكْذِبُوْنَ ﴿١٥﴾ قَالُوْا رَبُّنَا يَعْلَمُ اِنَّآ اِلَيْكُمْ
لَمُرْسَلُوْنَ ﴿١٦﴾ وَمَا عَلَيْنَآ اِلَّا الْبَلٰغُ الْمُبِيْنُ ﴿١٧﴾ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّا تَطَيَّرْنَا
بِكُمْ ۚ لَئِنْ لَّمْ تَنْتَهُوْا لَنَرْجُمَنَّكُمْ وَلَيَمَسَّنَّكُمْ مِّنَّا عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿١٨﴾
قَالُوْا طَآئِرُكُمْ مَّعَكُمْ ۭ اَئِنْ ذُكِّرْتُمْ ۭ بَلْ اَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ مُّسْرِفُوْنَ ﴿١٩﴾
وَجَآءَ مِنْ اَقْصَا الْمَدِيْنَةِ رَجُلٌ يَّسْعٰى قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ اتَّبِعُوا الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ
﴿٢٠﴾ اتَّبِعُوْا مَنْ لَّا يَسْـَٔلُكُمْ اَجْرًا وَّهُمْ مُّهْتَدُوْنَ ﴿٢١﴾ وَمَا لِيَ لَآ
اَعْبُدُ الَّذِيْ فَطَرَنِيْ وَاِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُوْنَ ﴿٢٢﴾ ءَاَتَّخِذُ مِنْ دُوْنِهٖٓ اٰلِهَةً اِنْ
يُّرِدْنِ الرَّحْمٰنُ بِضُرٍّ لَّا تُغْنِ عَنِّيْ شَفَاعَتُهُمْ شَيْـًٔا وَّلَا يُنْقِذُوْنِ ﴿٢٣﴾
اِنِّيْٓ اِذًا لَّفِيْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿٢٤﴾ اِنِّيْٓ اٰمَنْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ فَاسْمَعُوْنِ ﴿٢٥﴾
قِيْلَ ادْخُلِ الْجَنَّةَ ۭ قَالَ يٰلَيْتَ قَوْمِيْ يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٢٦﴾ بِمَا غَفَرَ لِيْ رَبِّيْ
وَجَعَلَنِيْ مِنَ الْمُكْرَمِيْنَ ﴿٢٧﴾ وَمَآ اَنْزَلْنَا عَلٰى قَوْمِهٖ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖ مِنْ
جُنْدٍ مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ وَمَا كُنَّا مُنْزِلِيْنَ ﴿٢٨﴾ اِنْ كَانَتْ اِلَّا صَيْحَةً
وَّاحِدَةً فَاِذَا هُمْ خٰمِدُوْنَ ﴿٢٩﴾ يٰحَسْرَةً عَلَى الْعِبَادِ ۚ مَا يَاْتِيْهِمْ مِّنْ
رَّسُوْلٍ اِلَّا كَانُوْا بِهٖ يَسْتَهْزِءُوْنَ ﴿٣٠﴾ اَلَمْ يَرَوْا كَمْ اَهْلَكْنَا قَبْلَهُمْ مِّنَ
الْقُرُوْنِ اَنَّهُمْ اِلَيْهِمْ لَا يَرْجِعُوْنَ ﴿٣١﴾ وَاِنْ كُلٌّ لَّمَّا جَمِيْعٌ لَّدَيْنَا
مُحْضَرُوْنَ ﴿٣٢﴾

And cite to them the example of the People of the Town, when the messengers came to it, [13] when We sent to them two (apostles), and they rejected them both, so We supported them with a third one. So they said, "We are sent to you. " [14] They (The people of the Town) said, " You are no more than human beings like us, and the Raḥmān has not sent down any thing. You are but telling a lie." [15] They (the messengers) said," Our Lord knows that we are undoubtedly sent to you. [16] And our obligation is no more than to convey the message clearly." [17] They (the People of the Town) said," We take you as a bad omen for us. If you do not desist, we will certainly stone you, and you will be subjected to a painful punishment from us. [18] They said, "Your bad omen is with yourselves. (Do you take it as bad omen) if you are given a good counsel? Rather, you are a people who cross all limits." [19] And there came a man rushing from the farthest part of the city. He said, " O my people, follow the messengers. [20] Follow those who do not claim any reward from you, and they are on the right path. [21] And what excuse do I have if I do not worship the One who has created me and to whom you will be returned? [22] Shall I adopt those gods besides Him that if the Raḥmān intends to do harm to me, their intercession cannot help me in the least, nor can they come to my rescue? [23] In that case, I will be in open error indeed. [24] Undoubtedly I have believed in your Lord; so listen to me." [25] (Thereafter when his people killed him,) it was said to him, " Enter the Paradise". He said," Would that my people knew [26] how my Lord has forgiven me and placed me among the honored ones!" [27] And We did not send down to his people any army from the heavens after him, nor were We (in need) to send down. [28] It was no more than a single Cry, and in no time they were extinguished. [29]

Alas for the slaves (of Allah)! No messenger came to them, but they have been mocking at him. [30] Did they not see how many generations We have destroyed before them who will not come back to them? [31] And all of them are but to be assembled together (and) to be arraigned before Us. [32]

Commentary

The expression: ضرب مثل(cite an example) in verse 13: وَاضْرِبْ لَهُمْ مَّثَلًا اَصْحٰبَ الْقَرْيَةِ (And cite to them the example of the People of the Town) is generally

used to prove something by giving the example of a similar thing. The following event has been narrated by the Holy Qur'ān to alert people against disbelievers who rejected the very notion of there being a prophet or messenger.

The town in which this event took place

The Qur'ān does not tell us the name of this town. In historical narrations, Muḥammad Ibn Isḥāq has reported from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ, Ka'b Aḥbār and Wahb Ibn Munabbih that it was the town of Anṭākiyah (Antioch) and majority of commentators have opted for it. Abū Ḥayyān and Ibn Kathīr have said that no statement counter to it has been reported from any of the commentators. According to details given in Mu'jim-ul-Buldān, Anṭākiyah is a well-known town of Syria, famous for its verdant growth and stability. Its fort and its protective wall around the town are considered ideal. The town has many churches with inlay work in gold and silver. This is a coastal town. During the Islamic period, it was conquered by the famous Ṣaḥābi Sayyidnā Abū 'Ubaidah Ibn Jarrāḥ ﷺ. Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, the author of Mu'jim-ul-Buldān has also written that the grave of Ḥabīb Najjār (whose story appears a little later in this verse) is a known site in Anṭākiyah. People from far and near come to visit it. From this clear statement from him also, it seems likely that the town mentioned in this verse is this very town of Anṭākiyah.

Ibn Kathīr has written that Anṭākiyah is one of the four major towns which have been deemed to be the centers of the Christian faith, that is, al-Quds, (Jerusalem), Rumiyyah (Rome), Iskandariyyah (Alexandria) and Anṭākiyah (Antioch). And he also said that Anṭākiyah is the first city that embraced the faith brought by Sayyidnā 'Īsā al-Masīḥ عليه السلام. It is on this very ground that Ibn Kathīr is reluctant in accepting that the town mentioned in this verse could be the famous town of Anṭākiyah - because, according to the explicit statement of the Qur'ān, this was a town of disbelievers who refused to accept any prophet or messenger. And according to historical accounts, they were idolaters and polytheists. If so, how can Anṭākiyah, that was foremost in welcoming and embracing the faith of Sayyidnā 'Īsā al-Masīḥ عليه السلام, be the town referred to here?

In addition to that, it is also proved from the cited verses of the Qur'ān that this whole town was hit by a punishment that left no one alive. No such event about the town of Anṭākiyah - that all its inhabitants had

simultaneously died at some time - has been reported in history. Therefore, according to Ibn Kathīr, either the town mentioned in this verse is some town other than Anṭākiyah, or that it is some other town bearing the same name of Anṭākiyah which is not the famous town of Anṭākiyah.

Though, the author of Fatḥ-ul-Mannan has also given answers to the doubts expressed by Ibn Kathīr, however, the easiest way out has been offered by Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī in Tafsīr Bayān-ul-Qur'ān. To understand the subject of these verses of the Qur'ān, he says, it is not necessary to determine the location of this town, and since the noble Qur'ān has kept it ambiguous, there is just no need to exert so much effort to determine it. The famous saying of the early forbears of Islam that: أَبْهِمُوْا مَا أَبْهَمَهُ اللهُ (Leave ambiguous that which Allah has left ambiguous) also requires nothing but this.

In the next sentence of verse 13: إِذْ جَآءَهَا الْمُرْسَلُوْنَ إِذْ أَرْسَلْنَآ إِلَيْهِمُ اثْنَيْنِ فَكَذَّبُوْهُمَا فَعَزَّزْنَا بِثَالِثٍ فَقَالُوْٓا إِنَّآ إِلَيْكُمْ مُّرْسَلُوْنَ (when the messengers came to it... - 13). The text has briefly mentioned the coming of messengers to the town. The number of the messengers sent has been identified in verse 14: إِذْ جَآءَ هَا إِنَّا إِلَيْكُمْ مُّرْسَلُوْنَ (when We sent to them two (apostles), and they rejected them both, so We supported them with a third one. So they said, "We are sent to you".) This shows that three messengers were sent to the said town. First came two, the people of the town rejected them and refused to listen to them. Then Allah Ta'ālā strengthened them by sending the third messenger. After that, all three addressed the people of the town, telling them that they had been sent to guide them to the straight path.

What does 'messenger' mean? Who were these people?

In the Qur'ān, the word: رسول (rasul: messenger) and: مرسل (mursal: sent) is generally used for a prophet or apostle of Allah. In this verse, Allah Ta'ālā has attributed their sending to Himself. This too indicates that they are prophets who have been sent to accomplish some mission. This is what Ibn Isḥāq reports from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ, Ka'b Aḥbār ﷺ and Wahb Ibn Munabbih. According to the reports, these three elders mentioned as the ones sent to this town were the prophets of Allah. Their names as given in this narration are Ṣādiq, Ṣadūq and Shalūm, while in another narration, the name of the third appears as Sham'ūn. (Ibn Kathīr)

And it has been reported from Sayyidnā Qatādah ﷺ that the word: مُرْسَلُوْنَ (*mursalūn*: sent ones) has not been used here in its technical sense, instead, it appears in the sense of a bearer of message, and the three elders who were sent to this town were no prophets themselves, rather, were from among the disciples of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and were sent for the guidance of this town under his order (Ibn Kathīr). And since their sender, Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام was a messenger of Allah, therefore, in a way, his sending was indirectly the sending of Allah Ta'ālā. Hence, his sending has been attributed to Allah Ta'ālā. Out of the commentators, Ibn Kathīr has opted for the first saying while al-Qurṭubī and others have gone by the second. From the apparent sense of the text of the Qur'ān too, it is generally gathered that these blessed souls were prophets of Allah. Allah knows best.

The word: تَطَيُّر (*taṭayyur*) in verse 18: قَالُوْٓا اِنَّا تَطَيَّرْنَا بِكُمْ (We take you as a bad omen for us.) means the seeing of an evil omen in someone or taking someone to be wretched. It is being said here that the people of this town did not listen to these blessed souls sent to them and chided them as being wretched or carriers of misfortune. It appears in some narrations that a famine had overtaken this town, because the people of the town had curtly turned down the good counsel of the messengers. That is why the people of the town called them wretched, or may be they were hurt in some other way. So, as is the common habit of disbelievers, they would hasten to attribute any distress that afflicts them to prophets and the righteous who are nothing but their guides and benefactors. Hence, in this case too, they lost no time and attributed their own wretchedness to these blessed elders. This happens to be similar to what has been said in the Qur'ān about the people of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام: فَاِذَا جَآءَتْهُمُ الْحَسَنَةُ قَالُوْا لَنَا هٰذِهٖ وَاِنْ تُصِبْهُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ يَّطَّيَّرُوْا بِمُوْسٰى وَمَنْ مَّعَهٗ (So when something good come to them they said, "This is our right". And if they suffered from something evil, they ascribed it as an ill omen to Mūsā and those with him - 7:131). Similarly, the people of Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام said to him: تَطَيَّرْنَا بِكَ وَبِمَنْ مَّعَكَ (They said, "we regard you and those with you as a sign of bad omen". - 27:47).

The sense of the statement: قَالُوْا طَآئِرُكُمْ مَّعَكُمْ (They said, "Your bad omen is with yourselves - 19) is that misfortune is an outcome of your own

deeds.' The word: طَائِر (*ṭa'ir*) essentially denotes bad omen or misfortune and, on occasions, it is also used to refer to the effects of misfortune, that is, wretchedness. Here, this is what it means. (Ibn Kathīr, Qurṭubī)

In verse 20, it was said: وَجَآءَ مِنْ اَقْصَى الْمَدِيْنَةِ رَجُلٌ يَّسْعٰى (And there came a man rushing from the farthest part of the city.) In the first verse (13), the place where this incident transpired was expressed as: اَلْقَرْيَة (al-qaryah: town) which, according to the Arabic lexical usage, does not signify a small village, instead, it means a habitation in the absolute sense. It may be a small habitation or a big city. Now, in this verse, this place has been identified as: الْمَدِيْنَة (al-madīnah), a name used only for a big city . From here, we learn that the habitation where this event took place was some big city. Hence, this too supports the saying where it has been identified as Anṭākiyah. The expression: اَقْصَى الْمَدِيْنَة (*aqṣal-madīnah*: farthest part of the city) means outskirts of the city. The word: يَّسْعٰى (*yas'ā*: rushing) in the phrase: رَجُلٌ يَّسْعٰى has been derived from: يَسْعٰى، سَعٰى (run) which means to walk in a running gait. Therefore, the expression would mean that a man came running from the farthest part of the city. Then, there are occasions when this word is also used in the sense of walking with concern, poise and sense of purpose to be accomplished - which may not include running - as in Sūrah Al-Jumu'ah: فَاسْعَوْا اِلٰى ذِكْرِ اللّٰهِ (*fas 'aw ilā dhikril-lāh*: hasten for the remembrance of Allah (Khuṭbah and Ṣalāh of Jumu'ah) - 62:9). Here, this very sense is intended.

The event relating to the person coming from the farthest part of the city

The noble Qur'ān has left this too as ambiguous. It does not mention his name, nor does it say who he was. As part of historical narrations, Ibn Ishaq has reported from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās, Ka'b al-Aḥbār And Wahb Ibn Munabbih that the name of this person was Ḥabīb. There are different sayings about his profession. The most famous is the one that says that he was a carpenter. (Ibn Kathīr).

Other historical narrations reported by commentators at this stage tell us that this person too was initially an idolater. He happened to meet the two messengers who came to this town the first time. It was either as a result of their teachings or, as it appears in some narrations, by seeing extraordinary working of wonders at their hands, his heart was lit with faith. He repented from past idolatry, embraced Islam and retired to a

cave devoting to worship. When he got the news that the people of the city have rejected the teachings of these messengers, have become hostile to them and were threatening to kill them, he came to his people prompted by the mixed objectives of his concern for their good as well as the safety of the messengers. He advised them to follow these messengers and declared that he himself had become a believer: إِنِّيْ اٰمَنْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ فَاسْمَعُوْنِ (I have believed in your Lord; so listen to me.- 25). The addressee here could be his own people where calling Allah Ta'ālā their Lord was to express a reality - though, they did not accept it. Then, it could also be that this address is to the messengers and the purpose of saying: فَاسْمَعُوْنِ (listen to me) may be that they should hear what he was saying and bear witness before Allah that he was a believer.

Verse 26 states: قِيْلَ ادْخُلِ الْجَنَّةَ قَالَ يٰلَيْتَ قَوْمِيْ يَعْلَمُوْنَ بِمَا غَفَرَلِيْ رَبِّيْ وَجَعَلَنِيْ مِنَ الْمُكْرَمِيْنَ (it was said to him, " Enter the Paradise". He said,"Would that my people knew how my Lord has forgiven me and placed me among the honored ones!" - 26, 27), that is, it was said to the person who had come from the farthest part of the city to prompt people to believe in the messengers, "Enter Paradise."

It is obvious that this address was communicated through some angel who told him to go into the Paradise. In fact, the essential sense of asking him to enter Paradise is to give him the good news that his place in Paradise is a settled matter which would translate into reality at its appointed time after going through the process of Resurrection. (Qurṭubī)

And the possibility that he was shown his place in Paradise at that very point of time is not so remote. In addition to that, there is the post-death and pre-resurrection state known as *barzakh*. In this state of *Barzakh* too, people bound to go to Paradise are treated well with provision of comfort from Paradise. Therefore, the arrival of such people in the state of *Barzakh* is, in a way, virtual entry into Paradise.

By the words, "Enter Paradise" a hint is released to suggest that this person was martyred - because, entering Paradise or being enabled to perceive the traces of Paradise can come about only after death.

In historical narratives, it has been reported from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās عليه السلام and early Tafsīr authorities, Muqātil and Mujāhid that this person was Ḥabīb Ibn Ismā'īl an-Najjār and he is among people who had

believed in our noble Prophet ﷺ six hundred years before he actually appeared - as it has been reported about the great *tubba'* (line of kings in Yemen) that he had come to believe in him much before he was born by reading the prophesies of his coming given in past scriptures. The third respected elder who believed in him before he was ordained and gave his call as prophet is Waraqah Ibn Nawfal who has been mentioned in the Ḥadīth of the Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī as part of the events that relate to the initial descent of Waḥy (revelation). This too is a singularity of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that these three persons had believed in him before his birth and ordainment. This did not come to pass in the case of any other messenger or prophet.

According to the report of Wahb Ibn Munabbih, this person was a leper. He lived in a house at the farthest gate of the city. For seventy years, he kept praying to his assumed gods that he be delivered from his ailment. By chance, these messengers entered the city of Anṭākiyah from that very gate. When he met them the first time, they advised him to shun idolatry and invited him to turn to the worship of Allah Ta'ālā for all his needs. He asked them if they had any proof for the correctness of their assertion. When they answered in affirmative, he told them about the disease of leprosy he suffered from and asked them if they could remove it from him. They said, 'We shall pray to our Lord. He will make you healthy.' He said, 'How strange of you to say that. Here I am, praying to my gods for the past seventy years, yet nothing has happened. How can your Lord change my condition in a single day?' They said, 'Our Lord is powerful over everything, while those you have taken as gods have no reality. They can neither bring benefit to anyone nor can they cause loss.' After hearing what they said, this person believed and those blessed souls prayed for him. Allah Ta'ālā blessed him with perfect health, leaving no traces of the disease he suffered from. Now, his faith became firm, and he promised to himself that he would spend the half of what he will earn in a day in the way of Allah. When he heard that people of the city were mobbing the messengers, he came running, tried to explain that the messengers were true, and that he himself was a believer. The result was that his people charged at them in fury. It appears in the narration of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ؓ that with their kicks and blows they martyred them. According to some other narrations, they threw rocks at

them. As for him, even at a time such as this, when he was being beaten mercilessly, he kept saying: رَبِّ اهْدِ قَوْمِى (My Lord, show my people the right way).

It is mentioned in some narrations that these people martyred the three messengers as well. But, no authentic narration mentions specifically as to what happened to them. Probably, they were not killed. (Qurṭubī)

Since this man of piety laid down his life valiantly in the way of Allah, he was blessed with honor as said in Verses 26 and 27: قَالَ يٰلَيْتَ قَوْمِى يَعْلَمُوْنَ بِمَا غَفَرَلِى رَبِّى وَجَعَلَنِى مِنَ الْمُكْرَمِيْنَ ("He said, 'Would that my people knew how my Lord has forgiven me and placed me among the honored ones!"). He was asked to enter Paradise. When he saw the supreme rewards and blessings of Paradise, he remembered his people and wished that if his people could know how generously he was rewarded and what honors were bestowed on him in return for believing in the messengers, perhaps, they too would have believed. This is the wish expressed in this verse.

The prophetic method of *da'wah (preaching)* : Significant guidance for message bearers of Islam

The way the three messengers sent to this habitation addressed polytheists and disbelievers, the way these blessed souls responded to their harsh remarks and threats, and similarly, the way in which Ḥabīb Najjār, who had believed as a result of the Da'wah of these messengers, addressed his people is something worth repeated consideration, for it has great lessons for everyone who is serving the cause of religious preaching and public welfare.

In response to the honest call and advice of these messengers, the polytheists had said three things:

1. You are human beings like us. Why should we do what you ask us to do?

2. Allah, the Raḥmān has not sent any message and book to anyone.

3. You are plain liars.

Just think about it. What sort of reply would this hard talk deserve? Particularly so, when it was in answer to words of selfless good counsel?

But, imagine what these messengers said. They said no more than: رَبُّنَا يَعْلَمُ اِنَّآ اِلَيْكُمْ لَمُرْسَلُوْنَ (Our Lord knows that we have been sent to you). And they said: مَا عَلَيْنَآ اِلَّا الْبَلٰغُ الْمُبِيْنُ (Our obligation is no more than to convey the message clearly.") which amounts to saying, 'We had a duty to do. This we have done. We have spoken plainly and clearly making the message of Allah clear to you. From this point onwards, the choice is yours - you may or may not accept it.' Nothing in their speech has any reflection of the heated remarks made by their addressees. Indeed, their reply is kind and reflecting goodwill for them.

After that, these people became more aggressive. They said, "We take you as a bad omen for us. If you do not desist, we will certainly stone you, and you will be subjected to a painful punishment from us. (36:18) The answer that they deserved was: 'You yourself are the wretched ones and this is because of the nemesis of your own deeds.' But, these messengers said it briefly without alluding to their wretchedness openly and directly. In fact, they said: طَآئِرُكُمْ مَّعَكُمْ (Your bad omen is with your selves). Then, they returned to the same soft approach and said: اَئِنْ ذُكِّرْتُمْ ([Do you take it as bad omen] if you are given a good counsel? which amounts to saying: Would you just think about it? Have we done anything against you? What we have done here is no more than give you some good counsel in your interest. Yes, they did make the gravest of their remark when they said: بَلْ اَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ مُّسْرِفُوْنَ (Rather, you are a people who cross all limits.") which amounted to saying that their remarks were out of context, not limited to what was being said.

That was a dialogue featuring these messengers. Now, let us turn to what a neo-believer who responded to the invitation of these messengers has to say to his people. He started by telling his people two things, and then invited them to listen to the messengers and accept their good counsel. The first thing he said was: Just imagine, here are these people coming to you from a far place only to give you some good counsel. They are taking care of themselves while bearing by the hardships of travel to and stay at a place that is not their home, yet they are not asking you for anything in return. This is something unusual, and by itself invites an honest person to think. These are selfless people. Why not listen to them? Why not give it a little thought? The second thing is about what they are saying. And what they are saying is reasonable, pure and simple, just

and right. If not this, what else could guide anyone to the true path? After that, since the purpose was to warn his people against their error and straying, it was said: You have forsaken your Creator who is powerful over everything and, in His place, you have taken to gods you have carved out yourself, assuming that they will give you what you need. Why does it not occur to you that they, on their own, can do nothing for you, nor do they have any access to Allah by virtue of which they could ask Him to do what you need to be done?

It will be noticed that Ḥabīb Najjār did not attribute all these things to them, rather, gave it the form of attributing it to his own self, something like saying, 'If I were to do so, it would really be a grave error' and he said: وَمَا لِيَ لَآ اَعْبُدُ الَّذِىْ فَطَرَنِىْ (And what excuse do I have if I do not worship the One who has created me...). This he said so that the adversary might not be enraged, rather, should think about it with a cool mind. After that, when his people remained unmoved by his soft pleas, even threatened to kill him, even then, he uttered no word of curse against them, rather, surrendered his life saying nothing but: رَبِّ اهْدِ قَوْمِىْ (My Lord, show my people the right way). Far too strange is what happened after this oppressed martyr saw the blessings and rewards given to him by Allah in the Paradise. Even at that time, he remembered nobody but his own unjust people and, still filled with goodwill for them, he wished that somehow his people were to know how generously he was welcomed in Paradise - may be, they would abandon their ways of disbelief and started sharing the blessings of Paradise with him! Subḥānallāh, the love and concern for the creatures of Allah run through their blood despite that they are treated unjustly. This is one thing that has changed the destinies of nations, taking them out of the darkness of disbelief and error, and blessing them with a station that even angels envy them.

In our time, *da'wah* workers have generally abandoned this prophetic way, therefore, their call and communication have lost effectiveness. Betraying anger and making damaging comments against the adversary are supposed to be master strokes in lectures and sermons while, in reality, such tactics push the adversary to more hardened stances of doggedness and hostility. O Allah make us follow the way of prophets and bless us with the good fortune of doing what you like and are pleased with.

In verses 28 and 29, it was said: وَمَآ اَنْزَلْنَا عَلٰى قَوْمِهٖ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖ مِنْ جُنْدٍ مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ وَمَا كُنَّا مُنْزِلِيْنَ اِنْ كَانَتْ اِلَّا صَيْحَةً وَّاحِدَةً فَاِذَاهُمْ خَامِدُوْنَ (And We did not send down to his people any army from the heavens after him, nor were We (in need) to send down. It was no more than a single Cry, and in no time they were extinguished.)

Mentioned here is the Divine punishment that descended upon the people who had rejected the messengers and had beaten up Ḥabīb Najjār until he died a martyr. And regarding the sending of punishment, it was said that Allah did not have to send an army of angels to seize these people - nor was it the way of Allah to send such an army, because just a single angel of Allah is enough to destroy the greatest, mightiest and the bravest of nations. Why would he need to send an army of angels? After that, given there was a crisp description of the punishment coming upon them - it was just a single shrill Cry of the angel, and there they were, all extinguished under its sonic sweep. It appears in Ḥadīth narrations that the archangel, Jibra'il al-'amin, holding the two sides of the city gate, came up with a hard and horrendous Cry, the shock from which proved unbearable for any living soul, and they all succumbed to sudden death.

The state of their dying has been expressed through the word: خَامِدُوْنَ (*khāmidun*) by the Qur'ān. The words: خامدا (*khāmada*) and خُمُوْد (*khumud*) are used to mean the extinguishing or dying of fire. The life of the living depends on energy. When this energy is not there, what remains is death. So, '*khāmidun*' means extinguished, gone extinct, put off.

Verses 33 - 44

وَاٰيَةٌ لَّهُمُ الْاَرْضُ الْمَيْتَةُ ۖۚ اَحْيَيْنٰهَا وَاَخْرَجْنَا مِنْهَا حَبًّا فَمِنْهُ يَاْكُلُوْنَ ﴿٣٣﴾ وَجَعَلْنَا فِيْهَا جَنّٰتٍ مِّنْ نَّخِيْلٍ وَّاَعْنَابٍ وَّفَجَّرْنَا فِيْهَا مِنَ الْعُيُوْنِ ﴿٣٤﴾ لِيَاْكُلُوْا مِنْ ثَمَرِهٖ ۙ وَمَا عَمِلَتْهُ اَيْدِيْهِمْ ؕ اَفَلَا يَشْكُرُوْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾ سُبْحٰنَ الَّذِيْ خَلَقَ الْاَزْوَاجَ كُلَّهَا مِمَّا تُنْۢبِتُ الْاَرْضُ وَمِنْ اَنْفُسِهِمْ وَمِمَّا لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٣٦﴾ وَاٰيَةٌ لَّهُمُ الَّيْلُ ۖۚ نَسْلَخُ مِنْهُ

النَّهَارَ فَإِذَا هُمْ مُّظْلِمُونَ ﴿٣٧﴾ وَالشَّمْسُ تَجْرِي لِمُسْتَقَرٍّ لَّهَا ۚ ذَٰلِكَ
تَقْدِيرُ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ ﴿٣٨﴾ وَالْقَمَرَ قَدَّرْنَاهُ مَنَازِلَ حَتَّىٰ عَادَ
كَالْعُرْجُونِ الْقَدِيمِ ﴿٣٩﴾ لَا الشَّمْسُ يَنبَغِي لَهَا أَن تُدْرِكَ الْقَمَرَ وَلَا
اللَّيْلُ سَابِقُ النَّهَارِ ۚ وَكُلٌّ فِي فَلَكٍ يَسْبَحُونَ ﴿٤٠﴾ وَآيَةٌ لَّهُمْ أَنَّا
حَمَلْنَا ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ فِي الْفُلْكِ الْمَشْحُونِ ﴿٤١﴾ وَخَلَقْنَا لَهُم مِّن مِّثْلِهِ
مَا يَرْكَبُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾ وَإِن نَّشَأْ نُغْرِقْهُمْ فَلَا صَرِيخَ لَهُمْ وَلَا هُمْ يُنقَذُونَ
﴿٤٣﴾ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً مِّنَّا وَمَتَاعًا إِلَىٰ حِينٍ ﴿٤٤﴾

And a sign for them is the dead land. We gave it life and brought forth grain from it; so from it they eat. [33] **And We have placed gardens of date-palms and grapes and caused springs to gush forth therein,** [34] **so that they may eat fruits thereof, while it was not made by their hands. Would they not then offer gratitude?** [35] **Pure (from every fault) is the One who has created all the pairs of whatever the earth grows, and of the humans themselves, and of that which they do not know.** [36]

And a sign for them is the night. We strip the (cover of) day from it, and they are suddenly in darkness. [37] **And the sun is quickly proceeding towards its resting place. That is the designing of the All-Mighty, the All-Knowing.** **[38] And for the moon, We have appointed measured phases, until it turned (pale, curved and fine) like an old branch of date-palm.** [39] **Neither it is for the sun to overtake the moon, nor can the night outpace the day. And each one is floating in an orbit.** [40] **And a sign for them is that We boarded their children at the loaded ship,** [41] **and created for them things similar to it on which they ride.** [42] **And if We so will, We can drown them; then no one will respond to their cry, nor will they be rescued,** [43] **unless there be mercy from Us, and (unless) We let them enjoy for a while.** [44]

Commentary

Most of the subjects taken up in Sūrah Yā Sīn related to signs of Divine power and the rewards and favors bestowed on human beings. These have been harnessed to prove that there is a life hereafter and that

people need to be firm in their belief in being raised again and having to face the Day of Judgment. In the verse cited above, the Divine signs pointed to are, on one hand, clear proofs of His perfect power, while on the other, they serve as mirrors of particular rewards and favors of Allah Ta'ālā bestowed on human beings and the rest of creatures. In this, lie unusual lessons of wisdom.

In the first verse (33), the land on which we live has been cited as an example. It is there, all the time, before everyone., It is physically seen, when rain come down from the sky and pour water over the dry land, that it is revived by the rain which makes it, so to say, live again. The outcome starts showing up in the form of vegetation, trees and their fruits. Mentioned thereafter were streams that were made to run below the land and on its surface in order to help the trees grow and survive. It was said: لِيَأْكُلُوا مِنْ ثَمَرِهٖ (so that they may eat fruits thereof). In other words, the purpose of harnessing the entire range of the natural forces of winds, clouds and the land is that people get to eat their fruits. All these things can be observed by seeing with one's own eyes. And everyone knows how to do that. Onwards from here, human beings were alerted to something for which this whole universal system was put into place.

Growth of vegetation is not an act of man

It was said: وَمَا عَمِلَتْهُ اَيْدِيْهِمْ (*wa mā 'amilathu aiydīhim*: while it was not made by their hands). The majority of commentators have taken the letter: مَا (*mā*) in this verse for negation which means that 'it was not made by their hands. According to this interpretation, this sentence has a ring of warning given to heedless man: Just think about your job and the labor you put in it. What is your true share in the great blossoming of fruits? Of course, you put the seed in the land, water it, let the earth be soft so that delicate buds sprout without being obstructed by something. But, making a whole tree grow from that tiny seed, having leaves and branches shoot out from it and then commission it to produce all sorts of fruits is something totally different. What is your contribution in all these things?

This is the unshared domain of the one who is absolutely powerful, wise and knowing, and this can only be an act of God. Therefore, human beings are duty-bound to derive benefit out of these things, yet they should never forget the Creator and master of whatever there is. Parallel

to this, there is a verse of Sūrah Waqi'ah where it was said: أَفَرَءَيْتُم مَّا تَحْرُثُونَ ءَأَنتُمْ تَزْرَعُونَهُ أَمْ نَحْنُ الزَّارِعُونَ (Well, tell Me about that (seed) which you sow: Is it you who grow it, or are We the One who grows? - 56:63-64). The outcome is: 'Even though human beings do not share in the making of these fruits in any way, yet it was Our grace that We created them, made them the owners of the whole range, as well as taught them the ways of eating and deriving other benefits out of these.'

The particular difference between human and animal food

Ibn Jarīr and some other commentators have not taken the letter (مَا) *mā* in: وَمَا عَمِلَتْهُ (*wa mā 'amilath*) for negation, rather have read it as a relative pronoun in the sense of: الَّذِي (*al-ladhī*: that which). In that case, this part of verse 35 would come to mean that all these things have been created, so that they eat fruits therefrom, and also eat that which human hands make, produce or process out of these vegetations and fruits. For example, desserts made from fruit, chutneys and pickles, and the extracts of oil from some fruits are the outcome of human effort and processing. This would come to mean that these fruits created by nature are firstly made edible without any functional human input, then Allah Ta'ālā has given man the ingenuity to prepare all sorts of delicious and useful things from each single kind of fruit.

Thus, creating fruit and giving man the expertise to compound fruit with other ingredients and turn it into a variety of tasteful and useful edibles is yet another blessing from Allah. After having reported this Tafsir of Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Kathīr has said that this Tafsir is supported by the phonetic rendering (Qirā'ah) of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ؓ as well because, the word: مِمَّا (*mimmā*) takes the place of: مَا (*mā*) in his *qirā'ah*, that is: مِمَّا عَمِلَتْهُ أَيْدِيهِمْ (*mimmā 'amilathu aidīhim*: from that which their hands have processed).

Going into a little detail, it can be said that animals too eat vegetation and fruits. Some eat meat. Some others eat soil. But, they all feed on simples. The grass eater eats grass only. The meat eater eats meat only. Preparing different kinds of food by combining a variety of ingredients whereby the addition of salt, chilies, sugar and the sour makes food turn into tens of kinds happens to be the singularity of human beings alone. They alone have been given the ability to put different edibles together and come out with a meal tasting different from the other. This is

ingenious. The preparation of meat with salt and seasonings and fruits with sweeteners is a culinary art Allah Ta'ala has taught human beings to use to their advantage. The text, after recounting the substance and design of these great Divine blessings in these verses, concludes by saying: اَفَلَا يَشْكُرُوْنَ (afala yashkurun: Would they not then offer gratitude?) which means that even after having seen all these things how is it possible from a reasonable person that he does not be grateful to Allah? Onwards from here, after having mentioned land produce and climate, human beings and animals have been included in the spectrum whereby there appears yet another sign of the absolute Power: سُبْحٰنَ الَّذِىْ خَلَقَ الْاَزْوَاجَ كُلَّهَا مِمَّا تُنْبِتُ الْاَرْضُ وَمِنْ اَنْفُسِهِمْ وَمِمَّا لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ (Pure is the One who has created all the pairs of whatever the earth grows, and of the humans themselves, and of that which they do not know. - 36:36). Here, the word: اَزْوَاج (*azwaj*) is the plural form of: زَوْج (*zawj*) and means pairs. A pair is two things of the same kind and refers to a couple, or a match of the other. For example, a married man and woman is a pair, hence, each one of them is the zawj of the other. Similarly, males and females of animals are pairs. In the botanical kingdom, many trees have been found as having males and females among them. Date palms and Papaya are common examples. Others may also be like these as is the case with all trees bearing fruits and flowers in which, according to modern scientific information, procreation has been identified. In the same way, it is not improbable if the same arrangement of male and female exists in solids, minerals and other elements of creation, though in a manner not discovered as yet - towards which the text points out in: مِمَّا لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ (*mimma la ya 'lamun*: and from that which they do not know - 36). Generally, commentators refer to: اَزْوَاج (*azwaj*: pairs) as categories and kinds because the way male and female are called pairs, similarly, two contrasting things are also referred to as pairs, like chill and heat, land and water, sorrow and happiness, health and sickness, then, within each of these, many further degrees, categories and kinds come up in terms of high, low and the average. Similarly, there are many categories and kinds in human beings and animals in terms of color, form, language and way of life. The word: اَزْوَاج (*azwaj*: pairs) is inclusive of all these categories and kinds. In the present verse (36), mentioned first is: مِمَّا تُنْبِتُ الْاَرْضُ (all the pairs of whatever the earth grows,) - These are the categories and kinds of vegetation. After that, in: مِنْ اَنْفُسِهِمْ (and of the humans themselves,) mentioned there are

the categories and kinds of human selves as such. And after that, in: مِمَّا لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ (and from that which they do not know) included there are thousands of such creations as have not yet unfolded before human beings. Allah Ta'ālā alone knows how many categories and kinds of living forms, vegetation and minerals exist under the layers of the earth and in rivers and in mountains.

In verse 37, it was said: وَاٰيَةٌ لَّهُمُ الَّيْلُ نَسْلَخُ مِنْهُ النَّهَارَ (And a sign for them is the night. We strip the [cover of] day from it, and they are suddenly in darkness.). After having described the signs of Divine power in what was created on the earth, the text mentions cosmic creations. The word: سَلْخ (salkh) literally means to skin. If the skin from an animal or the cover from things is removed, the thing inside becomes obvious. Allah Ta'ālā has, in this similitude, pointed out that the real element in this world is darkness. Light is transitory, for it spreads over the earth through planets and stars. In a predetermined system, at a fixed time, this light that is spread over the darkness of the world is removed from on top. What remains is darkness. This, in common parlance, is called night.

In verse 38, it was said: وَالشَّمْسُ تَجْرِىْ لِمُسْتَقَرٍّ لَّهَا ذٰلِكَ تَقْدِيْرُ الْعَزِيْزِ الْعَلِيْمِ (And the sun is quickly proceeding towards its resting place. That is the designing of the All-Mighty, the All-Knowing. 36:38). The word: مُسْتَقَرّ (*mustaqarr*) is used to denote place of rest as well as time of rest, that is, it could be time-oriented and, space-oriented too. Then, this word is also employed in the sense of the end or destination of a course or journey - even if another journey begins immediately after it without any break or stillness (as mentioned by Ibn Kathīr).

Some respected commentators have taken the word: مُسْتَقَرّ (mustaqarr) at this place as a time-oriented destination, that is, when the sun reaches the end of its movement already determined - and that time is the Day of Doom (the Qiyāmah). In the light of this Tafsir, the verse would mean that the sun is moving on its orbit supported by such a precise and perfect system that does never betray the difference of even a minute or second. Thousands of years have passed over this orbit. But, all this is not everlasting. There is a particular point in time and space for it. When that is arrived at, this solar system and the movement will stop, end - and that is the Day of Qiyāmah. This Tafsir has been reported from Qatādah ﷺ (Ibn Kathīr).

And a verse from Sūrah Az-Zumar in the Holy Qur'ān also supports it, that is, the word: مُسْتَقَرٌّ (*mustaqarr*) means a time-oriented destination or abode and refers to the Day of Qiyāmah. The words of the verse of Sūrah az-Zumar are:

خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ يُكَوِّرُ الَّيْلَ عَلَى النَّهَارِ وَيُكَوِّرُ النَّهَارَ عَلَى الَّيْلِ وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ كُلٌّ يَّجْرِىْ لِاَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى

He created the heavens and the earth in His wisdom. He wraps the night over the day and He wraps the day over the night, and He has put the Sun and the Moon under His command, each one of tham moving for an appointed term. (39:5)

The statement in this verse is nearly the same as given in the present verse of Sūrah Yā Sīn. Firstly, the alternation of the night and the day has been described through a similitude in terms of common perception - Allah Ta'ālā puts the cover of night over the day and that of day over the night. Thus, the night and the day have been likened to two covers. The cover of the night is draped over the day and it is night, and the cover of the day is draped over the night and it is day. After that, it was said that the sun and the moon are both subjugated before Allah Ta'ālā and are subservient to His command. Each is moving up to an appointed term. The words used in the text are: اَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى (*ajalim-musammā*) meaning fixed term, and the verse means that the movement of both the sun and the moon is not everlasting. When it reaches a certain fixed term, that is, the Day of Qiyāmah, this movement shall stand terminated. In the present verse of Sūrah Yā Sīn too, the word: مُسْتَقَرٌّ (mustaqarr) quite obviously means this very fixed or appointed term, that is, a time-oriented point of arrival, destination or abode. In the light of this Tafsir, neither does the sense of the verse present any difficulty, nor is there any objection in terms of astronomy and mathematics.

And some respected commentators have taken it to mean a spatial destination or abode as based on the following Ḥadīth reported in the Ṣaḥīḥs of al-Bukhārī and Muslim and others from several Ṣaḥabah and chains of authority.

According to a narration of Sayyidnā Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī ﷺ, once he was present in the company of the Holy Prophet ﷺ at the time of sunset. Addressing him, he said, "Abū Dharr, do you know where the sun sets?" Sayyidnā Abū Dharr ﷺ says that he submitted: "Allah and His

Messenger know best." Thereupon, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, " The sun keeps on moving until when it reaches beneath the 'Arsh (the Throne) it makes *sajdah* (*sujūd* or prostration)." After that, he said, "This is what 'mustaqarr' means in this verse: وَالشَّمْسُ تَجْرِى لِمُسْتَقَرٍّ لَّهَا (And the sun is quickly proceeding towards its resting place.).

In a narration, again from Sayyidnā Abū Dharr, there appear the additional words to the effect: "I asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ the explanation of: وَالشَّمْسُ تَجْرِى لِمُسْتَقَرٍّ لَّهَا (And the sun is quickly proceeding towards its resting place.). He said: مُسْتَقَرُّهَا تَحْتَ الْعَرْشِ (mustaqarruha that al-'Arsh: Its resting place is under the 'Arsh). Al-Bukhārī has reported this narration at several place and, with the exception of Ibn Mājah, this narration is present in all Six Books.

And there is a Ḥadīth bearing on the same subject reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ as well. It has some additions to the effect that, every day, when the sun reaches beneath the 'Arsh, it performs a Sajdah and seeks permission for the next orbit. After the permission, it starts the next orbit - until, there will come that day when it will not have the permission to start the next orbit. Instead, it will be commanded to go back towards where it had come from. In other words, it would be asked to go beneath the earth from the side of the West, then, return from the same side of the West and rise from the West. The day it happens, it will be the sign of the Day of Qiyāmah being absolutely close and, thereafter the doors of 'iman and *taubah* (repentance) will be closed. That will be a time when the *taubah* (repentance) of anyone sunk in sin or the *taubah* of anyone soaked in shirk and kufr will not be accepted (Ibn Kathīr with reference to 'Abd-ur- Razzaq).

The prostration of the sun: A look into the phenomenon of the sun performing *sajdah* (prostration) beneath the *'Arsh*

From these narrations of Ḥadīth, we learn that *mustaqarr* means a spatial destination, that is, a place where one orbit of the movement of the sun stands completed - and they also tell us that this place is beneath the *'Arsh*. Hence, the verse would mean that, every day, the sun moves towards a particular destination, and once it has reached there, it performs *sajdah* before Allah Ta'ālā and seeks His permission for the next orbit. Once the permission is given, it begins the next orbit.

But, when seen outwardly, several strong difficulties arise on the

basis of principles laid down by experiments, observations and astronomy.

1. The state of the 'Arsh of Raḥmān (generally referred to as the Divine Throne) as understood from the Qur'ān and Sunnah is that it surrounds all that we know as the masses of land and expanses of the sky. All these masses and expanses along with planets and stars, without any exception, are enclosed within the 'Arsh - and the 'Arsh of Raḥmān holds this entire cosmic universe inside itself. If seen from this angle, the sun is, in all conditions and at all times, simply under the 'Arsh. What, then, would be the sense of going beneath the 'Arsh after it sets?

2. It is common observation that the sun, after it sets at some place, does rise elsewhere. Therefore, its rising and setting is an ongoing phenomenon. What then is the meaning of going beneath the 'Arsh after setting and doing Sajdah?

3. From the apparent sense of the Ḥadīth mentioned above, we learn that the sun, after having reached its destination (mustaqarr), pauses within which it offers Sajdah before Allah and seeks the permission for the next orbit - although, there being no break in the movement of the sun at any time is an open observation. And since this rising and setting of the sun keeps taking place all the time in terms of different locations, therefore, this pause should also be there all the time as a result of which the sun should not have any movement any time.

Such difficulties are related not only to astronomy, but also to observations and experiences that cannot be bypassed. Technically, the daily movement of the sun under the arrangement of the celestial sphere and its being positioned in the fourth heaven is a theoretical assumption of Ptolemy that was refuted by Pythagoras. Modern knowledge has confirmed the error in the theory of Ptolemy and also brought the soundness of the theory of Pythagoras to the level of certitude. Then there are the space flights in our time and the spectacle of human access to the moon that makes at least this much certain that all planets are in the lower space of the sky, not inside. The verse of the Qur'ān: وَكُلٌّ فِي فَلَكٍ يَّسْبَحُونَ (And each one is floating in an orbit. - Yā Sīn, 36:40) which is to appear a little later also confirms this view. Since this view is also suggestive of the daily rising and setting as being from the movement of the earth and not from the movement of the sun, another technical

difficulty is added to the understanding of the aforementioned Ḥadīth.

To understand its answer, it must be borne in mind that to the extent the explanation of the cited verse is concerned, no difficulty out of the doubts and difficulties mentioned above relates to the Qur'ān. The sense it carries is no more than that Allah Ta'ālā has commissioned the sun to move in such an organized and steady way that it keeps moving continuously in a single state towards its destination (mustaqarr). If, this destination is taken to mean a time-oriented destination - that is, the Ḍay of Qiyāmah - as in the Tafsir of Qatādah, then, it would mean that this movement of the sun shall continue in a single state right through the last Day of Qiyāmah - and shall terminate on that very Day. And if it were to be taken as a spatial destination, even then, its destination can be said as being the point in the orbit of the sun, the point from which the sun started its movement at the time of the initial creation. When it reaches that point, one orbit through a day and night stands completed, for this very point is the end of its journey and, once it reaches there, the next orbit begins. As for the precise determination of where lies that point from which this magnificent orbit of the sun started in eternity, the noble Qur'ān does not throw human beings into unnecessary debates of this nature, something that does not bring them any benefit, neither in this world nor in the world-to-come. This is an inquiry of this very nature. Therefore, the Qur'ān has bypassed it and drawn attention to the essenṭial purpose. That purpose is to put particular aspects of the most perfect power and wisdom of Allah Ta'ālā into clear focus. It was said that the sun is the largest and the brightest sphere of this universe. That too did neither come into existence automatically, nor does it move on its own, nor can it sustain. In its present movement through days and nights all the time, it moves under the permission and will of Allah Ta'ālā.

Any doubt, out of the doubts mentioned above, does not apply to what has been said in the cited verse. However, all these doubts and difficulties in comprehension do arise from the Ḥadīth statement about the sun that soon after its setting, it goes beneath the 'Arsh, performs *sajdah* and seeks permission to start the next orbit. And this debate sprung up in relation to this verse for the reason that, in some words of the Ḥadīth, reference has been made to this verse. Answers to these doubts given by experts of Ḥadīth and commentators of the Qur'ān differ. From the apparent

connotation of the words there, it is generally gathered that this *sajdah* of the sun takes effect only once in a day-night span after its setting. Respected writers, who have taken the Ḥadīth in terms of its apparent sense, have laid down three probabilities concerning the setting: (1) That it may refer to the setting in the main part of populated areas, that is, of a place the setting of the sun whereat holds good for its setting for the majority of the population of the world; (2) that it be the setting of the Equator; or (3) the setting on the horizon of Madīnah. Thus, the difficulty that the setting and rising of the sun is a phenomenon which keeps manifesting itself all the time, every moment, does not remain there, because this Ḥadīth is talking about the setting of a particular horizon. But, the clear-cut and cloudless rejoinder seems to be that which my teacher, 'Allamāh Shabbīr Aḥmad Usmanī has given in his treatise: سُجُوْدُ الشَّمس (Sujudu'sh-Shams: The Prostration of the Sun) which finds support in the statements of several leading commentators.

Before one proceeds to understand the presentation, it is useful to first understand a matter of principle about prophetic teachings and interpretations. The noble prophets, may peace be upon them, and the Scriptures they bring incessantly invite the entire Divine creation to ponder over whatever has been created in the heavens and the earth, and it is from these that they build their argument to prove the existence of Allah Ta'ālā, His Oneness, Knowledge and Power. But, deliberation in these things is desirable, according to Shari'ah, only to the extent of its relevance to one's worldly and social requirement or religious and other worldly need. Beyond that, the great mass of the creation of Allah is not thrown into the senseless concern of digging into bland philosophical hair splitting and the ultimate reality of things. The reason is that, first of all, the real and perfect knowledge of the ultimate reality of things is something scientists and philosophers have themselves been unable to find out, despite having spent their entire lives in the pursuit - not to say much about the poor masses. Let us suppose, even if this could be acquired somehow, yet it fulfills no religious need, nor does it help to acquire something materially sound and worthwhile, what is the sense of indulging in this unnecessary and wasteful debate? Obviously, nothing but a waste of wonderful years of life and a waste of precious wealth!

It should be borne in mind that the argument of the Qur'ān and the

noble Prophets through the creations in the heavens and the earth and the major changes that occur therein is limited to the extent that could be rationalized by every human beings by virtue of bare observation and elementary deliberation. Technical refinements of philosophy and mathematics that can be resolved by experts in the field alone are not the material on which an argument of this nature is based, nor are people invited to deliberate in these. The reason is simple. Believing in Allah Ta'ālā and acting in accordance with His message is the duty of every human being - learned or illiterate, man or woman, urbanite or villager, dweller of some mountain or island. Therefore, prophetic teachings are synchronized with the level of perception, reason and understanding of common people that need no technical expertise.

Take the example of knowing the times of Ṣalāh, fixing the orientation to Qiblah, and knowing the months, years and dates. The knowledge of all these things can also be acquired through mathematical computations. But, the Sharī'ah of Islam has, rather than rely on high-tech mathematical calculations to determine any of these things, placed reliance on common observations. Months and years and their dates were set in accordance with the lunar calendar. The basis of determining whether the new moon has or has not appeared was declared to be physical observation alone, the seeing of the new moon. The days of fasting and the Ḥajj were fixed on that very basis. When some people asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ about the secret behind the waning, waxing and disappearing of the moon and then its rising again, the answer to it was given by the Qur'ān on his behalf: قُلْ هِيَ مَوَاقِيتُ لِلنَّاسِ وَالْحَجِّ (Say: They are indicative of time for the people, and of the Ḥajj - Al-Baqarah, 2:189). In other words, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was asked to tell people that all those changes occurring in the life of the moon are there so that they could find out when the month begins and ends and then find out its dates and determine the days of the Ḥajj. This answer served them with a warning against their unnecessary and ineffectual question, because no business of theirs, in this world or in the next, hinges on finding the reality behind it. Therefore, they were supposed to ask only about something that related to either their worldly or other worldly need.

After these initial remarks, let us give a little thought to the essential matter before us. Is it not that, in the cited verses, Allah Ta'ālā has, after

having mentioned some manifestations of His perfect power and infinite wisdom, invited human beings to believe? Of these, mentioned first was the land that is before us all the time: وَاٰيَةٌ لَّهُمُ الْاَرْضُ (And a sign for them is the land.- 33). Then, mention was made of how rains made it come alive and the growth of trees and other produce became possible - something everyone sees and knows: اَحْيَيْنٰهَا وَاَخْرَجْنَا مِنْهَا حَبًّا (We gave it life and brought forth grain from it.- 33). Mentioned first after that was the daily alternation of the night and day: وَاٰيَةٌ لَّهُمُ الَّيْلُ (And a sign for them is the night) Mentioned thereafter were planets and stars. Out of these, about the sun it was said: وَالشَّمْسُ تَجْرِىْ لِمُسْتَقَرٍّ لَّهَا ذٰلِكَ تَقْدِيْرُ الْعَزِيْزِ الْعَلِيْمِ (And the sun is quickly proceeding towards its resting place. That is the designing of the All-Mighty, the All-Knowing.- 38). Think about it. The purpose here is to tell that the sun is not moving on its own, not of its volition or power. Instead, it is moving in subservience to the One who is Mighty and Knowing, and moving under the predetermined system originated by an entity with great power and knowledge. The Holy Prophet ﷺ, close to the time of one sunset, had alerted Sayyidnā Abū Dharr al-Ghiffārī رضي الله عنه to the reality behind it during a question answer interlude with him. He has told him that the sun, at the time of its setting, performs a Sajdah before Allah Ta'ālā beneath the 'Arsh and seeks the permission to start the next orbit. When it has the permission, it moves as usual and rises from the east in the morning. Its outcome is no more than that the atmosphere of the world goes through a new transformation at the time of the setting and rising of the sun, something that depends on the sun. The Holy Prophet ﷺ, took this moment as suitable to teach human beings their essential lesson that they should not take the sun to be an independent entity moving of its own volition and power. It moves only under the permission and will of Allah Ta'ālā. Every time it rises and every time it sets has to be with His permission, for it is subservient to His permission. This very act of moving under the command of Allah Ta'ālā has been declared to be its *sajdah*, the act of prostration before its creator. The reason is that a Sajdah made by anything happens to be appropriate to its state of being as the Qur'ān has itself clearly said: 'كُلٌّ قَدْ عَلِمَ صَلوٰتَهٗ وَتَسْبِيْحَهٗ' : "Everything [in the creation of Allah] already knows its Ṣalāh [mode of worship] and its *tasbih* [mode of Divine glorification" - An-Nūr, 24:41]. It means that the entire creation of Allah is engaged in worshipping and glorifying Allah, but each has its own separate way of doing it that has

already been taught to it just like human beings who have been told how to do their Ṣalāh and Tasbīḥ. Therefore, taking the *sajdah* of the sun to mean that it can take effect only when it places its forehead on some floor like a human being would not be correct.

And when it stands clarified from the statements of the Qur'ān and Sunnah that the Divine Throne, the 'Arsh of the Raḥmān, surrounds all heavens and stars and surfaces, it is already obvious that the sun is nowhere but under the 'Arsh, at all times and at every place. And when experience bears out that the time the sun is setting at one place, it is also rising at another. Therefore, no moment of the sun is free of either rising or setting. Thus, the being of the sun under the 'Arsh is also perennial under all states and so is its setting and rising. Therefore, the outcome of the subject mentioned in the Ḥadīth is that the sun, in its entire orbit, remains in the state of prostration (Sajdah) before Allah under the 'Arsh, that is, it moves under His permission and command. And this cycle will stay activated right through the proximity of the last day of the Qiyāmah until comes the time for the emergence of the sign that the Qiyāmah is very close. When this happens, the sun will, rather than start its next orbit, be commanded to turn back - and then, it will rise from the west. At that time, the door of *taubah* (repentance) will be closed and no declaration of faith ('Īmān) or repentance (Taubah) from anyone shall remain acceptable at that hour.

In short, this particularity of the setting of the sun, its passing under the 'Arsh, the making of prostration there and the incidence of seeking permission for the next orbit mentioned in the narration being studied is simply a similitude in consonance with the mores of effective prophetic teaching and in terms of common perception. Neither does it make it necessary that it performs Sajdah on some land surface like a human being, nor does it make it necessary that there be some pause in the movement of the sun at the time of making a *sajdah*, nor does it mean that it goes to some particular place doing only one *sajdah* during a day and night, and nor that it goes beneath the 'Arsh after setting only. But, at this time of great alternation, when people are seeing that the sun is receding away from them, what has been done is that they have been appraised of the truth of what is happening in the manner of a similitude while the reality is that this whole thing is happening because of the sun

moving beneath the 'Arsh in subservience to the Divine command - the sun does not have any capability or power of its own. So, the way, at this time, the people of Madīnah were convinced that the sun would now make its *sajdah* and seek permission for the next orbit, similarly, the message was relayed onwards to every place where the sun would be setting and everyone there would stand advised of the lesson thereof. Thus, the truth of the matter turns out to be that the sun at every moment while moving on its orbit keeps offering *sajdah* before Allah Ta'ālā and keeps seeking permission to move ahead - and it needs no pause or break to make Sajdah or seek permission.

Following this submission, there remains no doubt concerning the Ḥadīth quoted, neither in terms of observations, nor in terms of the rules of astronomy, nor in the light of the position taken by Ptolemy or Pythagoras - though, the latter has found support in newer investigation. In either case, there remains no doubt or difficulty in the comprehension of the said Ḥadīth.

As for the question about the sun making Sajdah and seeking permission to start the next orbit as mentioned in the Ḥadīth, where it is stressed that doing all this required life, awareness and reason. The sun and the moon are devoid of life and consciousness. How could these actions issue forth from them? An answer to this has already appeared under the verse of the Qur'ān: وَإِنْ مِّنْ شَىْءٍ إِلَّا يُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِهٖ (And there is not a single thing that does not extol His purity and praise - Al-'Isrā', 17:44). (For commentary, please see Ma'ariful Qur'ān, English, Vol. V, pp. 506-510). There it was said that things we take to be devoid of life, sense and consciousness do have a special share of spirit, life, sense and consciousness. However, their life, sense and consciousness are insignificant as compared with humans and animals, so insignificant that these cannot be perceived commonly. But, there is no proof for its absence either, neither in the revealed law, nor in reason while the noble Qur'ān, in the verse cited above, has proved their being possessors of the elements of life, reason and consciousness, something also recognized in new investigations: وَاللّٰه سبحانه و تعالٰى اعلم And Allah who is pure and High knows best.

Special Note

From these clarifications of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth, it is established that both the sun and the moon are in motion, moving for a fixed term.

This refutes the theory that the sun has no movement at all. The findings of the latest research have also refuted this presumption.

The text now turns to: وَالْقَمَرَ قَدَّرْنَاهُ مَنَازِلَ حَتّٰى عَادَ كَالْعُرْجُوْنِ الْقَدِيْمِ (And for the moon, We have appointed measured phases, until it turned [pale, curved and fine] like an old branch of date-palm.- 36:39). The dried bough of a date tree that gets bent like a bow is called: عُرْجُوْن (*'urjūn*).

The stages of the moon

The word: مَنَازِل (*manāzil*) is the plural of: مَنْزِل (*manzil*) and denotes the place one arrives at. Allah Ta'ālā has bound the movement of the sun and the moon both with particular points, each of which is known as a Manzil or stage. Since the moon completes its orbit in one month, therefore, it has thirty or twenty-nine stages. But, as the moon disappears at least for a day during every month, therefore, its stages are generally taken to be twenty-eight. Astronomers have given these stages particular names in congruence with the stars that are found in the frontal proximity of these stages. Even during the days of Arabs of Jāhiliyyah, stages were determined by these very names. The Holy Qur'ān is far above these technical names. What it means to communicate are only the distances the moon traverses during particular days.

Relevant details have appeared in the commentary on Sūrah Yūnus. It can be seen in Ma'āriful-Qur'ān, English, Volume IV, pages: 515-520. In this verse of Sūrah Yūnus 10:5, the stages of the sun and the moon both have been mentioned: جَعَلَ الشَّمْسَ ضِيَآءً وَّالْقَمَرَ نُوْرًا وَّقَدَّرَهٗ مَنَازِلَ: "[He is the One who] has made the sun a glow and the moon a light, and determined for it the stages - 10:5". The only difference is that the stages of the moon are identified through observation, while the stages of the sun are calculated mathematically. By saying: حَتّٰى عَادَ كَالْعُرْجُوْنِ الْقَدِيْمِ (until it turned [pale, curved and fine] like an old branch of date-palm.- 36:39), described there is the state of the moon towards the end of the month when it recedes from the stage of the full moon to the extent that it transforms into the shape of a dried old bough bent like a bow. It is in consonance with the Arab surrounding that it has been likened to a dried bough of the date tree that assumes the shape of a crescent.

In verse 40, it was said: وَكُلٌّ فِيْ فَلَكٍ يَّسْبَحُوْنَ (And each one is floating in an orbit - 40). Literally, the word: فَلَك (falak) does not mean the sky.

Instead, it means the orbit in which some star moves. This verse has also appeared earlier in Sūrah Al-Anbiyā' (21:33). It tells us that the moon is not contained within some sky as presumed by the astronomical theory of Ptolemy. Instead, it moves in a particular orbit in the space lower than it. Then, there are recent investigations as well as the human access to the moon that have made it certain.

In verse 41 and 42, it was said: وَاٰيَةٌ لَّهُمْ اَنَّا حَمَلْنَا ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ فِى الْفُلْكِ الْمَشْحُوْنِ وَخَلَقْنَا لَهُمْ مِّنْ مِّثْلِهٖ مَا يَرْكَبُوْنَ (And a sign for them is that We boarded their children at the loaded ship, and created for them things similar to it on which they ride.). Mentioned earlier to these verses were manifestations of Divine power and wisdom in what was created on the earth and in the heavens in that order. In the present verses, Divine power over the sea and its adjuncts has been mentioned. It was said that Allah Ta'ālā has made heavily laden boats and ships capable of sailing on the surface of the waters and reach distant places without getting drowned in route. Then, it was said in the verse that "We boarded their children at the loaded ship" - although, those who embarked the Ark were these very people. Perhaps, children were mentioned for the reason that one's children and family place a great burden of responsibility on parents, particularly when unable to move around. Thus, the sense of the verse is to emphasize that it is not only they who were riding the boat, but there also were young children and aged men and women and their belongings with them. The boat carried both, people and their things. In the verse following immediately (42), it was said: خَلَقْنَا لَهُمْ مِّنْ مِّثْلِهٖ مَا يَرْكَبُوْنَ (and created for them things similar to it on which they ride.- 36:42). It means that human beings have not only been provided with boats and ships that serve as rides for themselves and carry their things, but Allah has also created other rides like the boat. From this, people of Arabia have taken it to mean the ride of camels as habitually familiar to them, particularly so, because the camel is a carrier of things. It takes heavy loads across countries, therefore, the Arab called camels: The Boat of the Land.

No wonder if the Qur'ān is alluding to the aeroplane!

But, it is obvious that the Qur'ān has not specifically named a camel or some other particular mode of conveyance at this place. This includes every such means of transportation that carries people and their baggage, accompanied or unaccompanied, right up to their desired destination. In

our time, the invention of aeroplanes has made it amply clear that aeroplanes are the greatest substantiation of the Qur'ānic statement: مِنْ مِّثْلِهٖ (*mim-mithlihī*: things similar to it). Then, its similarity with boat or ship is strongly supportive of it, because the way the ship of the sea sails on the surface of the water, and the mass of water does not make it drown, similarly, the airplane sails or flies over the bed of air and it does not throw it down. No wonder if the Qur'ān may have left the statement: مِنْ مِّثْلِهٖ مَا يَرْكَبُوْنَ (*mim-mithlihī mā yarkabūn*: things similar to it that they ride) ambiguous, so that all modes of conveyance and transportation that continue to be invented right through the last Day of Qiyāmah get to be included therein. And Allah knows best.

Verses 45 - 47

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمُ اتَّقُوا مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيكُمْ وَمَا خَلْفَكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ
﴿٤٥﴾ وَمَا تَأْتِيهِم مِّنْ آيَةٍ مِّنْ آيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ إِلَّا كَانُوا عَنْهَا مُعْرِضِينَ
﴿٤٦﴾ وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ أَنفِقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللَّهُ قَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا
لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنُطْعِمُ مَن لَّوْ يَشَاءُ اللَّهُ أَطْعَمَهُ إِنْ أَنتُمْ إِلَّا فِي ضَلَالٍ
مُّبِينٍ ﴿٤٧﴾

And (they pay no heed) when it is said to them, " Save yourselves from that (punishment) which is before you (in this world) and that which will come after you (die), so that you may receive mercy". [45] And there comes to them no sign from the signs of your Lord, but they turn averse to it. [46] And when it is said to them, " Spend (to the needy) from the provision Allah has given to you", the disbelievers say to the believers, " Shall we feed those whom Allah could have fed , if Allah so willed ? You are but in the open error." [47]

Commentary

In the previous verses, through a description of Divine manifestations of power and wisdom in the creation of the heavens and the earth, people were invited to recognize their creator and believe that He alone is worthy of worship and, on the acceptance of this invitation, a promise of everlasting blessings was made along with a warning of severe

punishment on its rejection. In the present verses and in the verses following these, there is a description of the disbelieving people of Makkah who were their direct addressees and who remained unmoved and unaffected either when persuaded to do something reward worthy, or when warned against some likely punishment.

In this connection, two dialogues between believers and disbelievers have been narrated. Believers invite them to fear the punishment of Allah that can come before them even in this mortal world while, after their death, it has to come to them in the Hereafter after all. If they, it is said to them, were to believe in fear of this punishment, it would be better for them. But, the disbelievers show their aversion despite having heard all that. This aversion of theirs has not been expressly mentioned here in the words of the Qur'ān, because the 'I'rād' or aversion mentioned in the next verse automatically proves their aversion here too. And in accordance with the rule of syntax, the apodosis or principal clause of the condition: اِذَا قِيْلَ لَهُمْ (*idhā qīla lahum*: When it is said to them) remains elided. The word of the next verse (46) bear witness to this elision, that is, whenever a verse or sign from their Lord comes to them, they show nothing but their aversion to it. (And that is why the words "they pay no heed" are added in brackets in the translation of this verse above.)

The wisdom behind some people receiving their sustenance indirectly

In the second dialogue, believers exhort the disbelievers to help the poor and needy and feed the hungry and prompt them to give to the destitute from what Allah had given to them. In their sarcastic response, the disbelievers say: You say that Allah is the provider and sustainer of the entire creation, yet He did not give them anything. Why should we? As for your words of advice to us that we should provide for them, this is nothing but that you have gone astray. Do you want to make us their Razzāq: Provider? These disbelievers too confessed that Allah Ta'ālā was the Provider as in the Qur'ān: وَلَئِنْ سَاَلْتَهُمْ مَّنْ نَّزَّلَ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً فَاَحْيَابِهِ الْاَرْضَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَوْتِهَا لَيَقُوْلُنَّ اللّٰهُ. (And if you ask them "as to who sends down water from the sky, then revives the land with it, they will certainly say, "Allah". - Al-'Ankabūt, 29:63)

This tells us that they too regarded Allah Ta'ālā as the ultimate Razzāq or Provider, but when in confrontation with believers, they

sarcastically remarked: When Allah is the Razzāq, the Provider, let Him provide for them too - why should we? This was as if these dim-witted people thought that giving in the way of Allah and providing for the poor was contrary to Allah's attribute in being the Master-Provider of all sustenance! They just did not understand that as the absolute Giver and Provider, He has His own wise law operating in this world. By giving to one person, He makes that person a conduit for others and thus gives them indirectly - although, he is perfectly and certainly capable of having everyone's sustenance delivered personally and directly, as is the case with animals and insects where everyone in that kingdom receives sustenance directly. There is no one rich and no one, poor. No one gives to anyone. Everyone dines from nature's own food spread. But, human beings are different. It is to make their system of social living just and to inculcate in them the spirit of mutual help and cooperation, that He makes some of them the medium of delivering sustenance to some others, so that the one who spends gets its reward, and the one who receives becomes grateful to the giver. The reason is that this whole phenomenon of mutual human cooperation and help on which depends the entire functional order of the world can survive only when one person needs the other. A poor person needs the money a rich person has, and a rich person needs the labor of a poor person. Neither of the two is free of the need for the other - and a little reflection would reveal that nobody is doing a favor to anybody. Whatever a person gives to the other person gives, in the ultimate analysis, in one's own interest and for one's own good.

Now, there remains the question: On which basis, did the believers ask the disbelievers to spend in the way of Allah, particularly when they simply did not have the very faith in Allah and, as the jurists maintain, they were no addressees of the subsidiary injunctions of the Sharī'ah? The answer to that is clear. When the believers said that, they had no intention to have disbelievers implement some religious injunction, it was said on the basis of the accepted norm of human good will, sympathy and gentleness.

Verses 48-68

وَيَقُولُونَ مَتٰى هٰذَا الْوَعْدُ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿٤٨﴾ مَا يَنْظُرُونَ اِلَّا

صَيْحَةً وَّاحِدَةً تَاْخُذُهُمْ وَهُمْ يَخِصِّمُوْنَ ﴿٤٩﴾ فَلَا يَسْتَطِيْعُوْنَ
تَوْصِيَةً وَّلَآ اِلٰٓى اَهْلِهِمْ يَرْجِعُوْنَ ﴿٥٠﴾ وَنُفِخَ فِى الصُّوْرِ فَاِذَا هُمْ مِّنَ
الْاَجْدَاثِ اِلٰى رَبِّهِمْ يَنْسِلُوْنَ ﴿٥١﴾ قَالُوْا يٰوَيْلَنَا مَنْۢ بَعَثَنَا مِنْ
مَّرْقَدِنَا سكتة هٰذَا مَا وَعَدَ الرَّحْمٰنُ وَصَدَقَ الْمُرْسَلُوْنَ ﴿٥٢﴾ اِنْ كَانَتْ
اِلَّا صَيْحَةً وَّاحِدَةً فَاِذَا هُمْ جَمِيْعٌ لَّدَيْنَا مُحْضَرُوْنَ ﴿٥٣﴾ فَالْيَوْمَ
لَا تُظْلَمُ نَفْسٌ شَيْـًٔا وَّلَا تُجْزَوْنَ اِلَّا مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٥٤﴾ اِنَّ
اَصْحٰبَ الْجَنَّةِ الْيَوْمَ فِىْ شُغُلٍ فٰكِهُوْنَ ﴿٥٥﴾ هُمْ وَاَزْوَاجُهُمْ فِىْ ظِلٰلٍ
عَلَى الْاَرَآئِكِ مُتَّكِـُٔوْنَ ﴿٥٦﴾ لَهُمْ فِيْهَا فَاكِهَةٌ وَّلَهُمْ مَّا يَدَّعُوْنَ ﴿٥٧﴾
سَلٰمٌ قَوْلًا مِّنْ رَّبٍّ رَّحِيْمٍ ﴿٥٨﴾ وَامْتَازُوا الْيَوْمَ اَيُّهَا الْمُجْرِمُوْنَ
﴿٥٩﴾ اَلَمْ اَعْهَدْ اِلَيْكُمْ يٰبَنِىْٓ اٰدَمَ اَنْ لَّا تَعْبُدُوا الشَّيْطٰنَ اِنَّهٗ لَكُمْ
عَدُوٌّ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿٦٠﴾ وَّاَنِ اعْبُدُوْنِىْ هٰذَا صِرَاطٌ مُّسْتَقِيْمٌ ﴿٦١﴾ وَلَقَدْ
اَضَلَّ مِنْكُمْ جِبِلًّا كَثِيْرًا اَفَلَمْ تَكُوْنُوْا تَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿٦٢﴾ هٰذِهٖ جَهَنَّمُ
الَّتِىْ كُنْتُمْ تُوْعَدُوْنَ ﴿٦٣﴾ اِصْلَوْهَا الْيَوْمَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْفُرُوْنَ ﴿٦٤﴾
اَلْيَوْمَ نَخْتِمُ عَلٰٓى اَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَتُكَلِّمُنَآ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَتَشْهَدُ اَرْجُلُهُمْ بِمَا
كَانُوْا يَكْسِبُوْنَ ﴿٦٥﴾ وَلَوْ نَشَآءُ لَطَمَسْنَا عَلٰٓى اَعْيُنِهِمْ فَاسْتَبَقُوا
الصِّرَاطَ فَاَنّٰى يُبْصِرُوْنَ ﴿٦٦﴾ وَلَوْ نَشَآءُ لَمَسَخْنٰهُمْ عَلٰى مَكَانَتِهِمْ
فَمَا اسْتَطَاعُوْا مُضِيًّا وَّلَا يَرْجِعُوْنَ ﴿٦٧﴾ وَمَنْ نُّعَمِّرْهُ نُنَكِّسْهُ فِى
الْخَلْقِ اَفَلَا يَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿٦٨﴾

And they say, "When will this promise come true, if you are truthful? " [48] **They are looking for nothing but for a single Cry that will seize them when they will be quarreling.** [49] **So they will not be able to make a bequest, nor will they return to their household.** [50] **And the Horn will be blown, and suddenly they will be rushing from their graves towards their Lord.** [51] **They**

will say, " Woe to us! Who has raised us from our sleeping place? " This is what the Rahman had promised, and the messengers had told the truth. [52] It will be no more than a single Cry, and in no time they will all be arraigned before Us. [53] Then, nobody will be subjected to injustice in the least, and you will not be recompensed but for what you used to do. [54] The people of the Paradise are engaged today in (their) activities, happily enjoying (them). [55] They and their spouses are in pleasant shades, reclining on couches. [56] For them there are fruits, and for them there is whatever they ask for. [57] "Salam"(Peace upon you) is the word (they receive) from Merciful Lord. [57] "And get apart (from the believers) today O the guilty ones. [58] Did I not direct you, O children of 'Adam, that you must not worship the Satan, (because) he is an open enemy for you, [60] and that you must worship Me, (because) this is the straight path? [61] And he had misguided lot many people from among you. So, did you not have sense? [62] (Now) this is the Jahannam of which you were consistently warned. [63] Enter it today , because you have been persistently denying (the truth)." [64] Today We will set a seal on their mouths, and their hands will speak to Us, and their legs will bear witness about what they used to do. [65] And had We willed, We would have wiped out their eyes, and they would have been racing towards the way, but how would they see? [66] And had we willed, We would have disfigured them at their places, and they would have not been able to move , nor would they return. [67] And whomsoever We give long life, we reverse him in creation. So, do they not have sense? [68]

Commentary

مَا يَنْظُرُوْنَ اِلَّا صَيْحَةً وَّاحِدَةً (They are looking for nothing but for a single Cry that will seize them - 36:49). The question of the disbelievers quoted here is the one they used to ask the Muslims by way of mockery, and the real purpose was to deny the Day of Judgment. It was not asked for finding out the truth, nor as a serious effort to reach the reality. It was simply a way of taunting the Muslims and making fun of them. And even if it were for finding out the true nature of the event, then, the mercy of the Lord of the universe requires that the full and precise knowledge of the year and day of the coming of Qiyāmah should not be given to anyone, so much so that it was not given even to any one from among His noble prophets and

messengers. Even if this question asked by these dimwit people was no more than a fact-finding exercise on their part, it was patently absurd. Therefore, rather than tell them, in response, the time when Qiyāmah will come, they were admonished. They were told that reasonable people, once they become aware of something that is bound to come in all certainty, should start making necessary preparations ahead of it, and not go about wasting precious time in trying to find out its precise hour and day. Common sense required that, once they had heard the foreboding of Qiyāmah, they should have believed and did what it takes to achieve success in that life to come. But, so entangled they are in their heedlessness that they virtually seem to be waiting for nothing short of the time when the day of Qiyāmah comes before them - and then, they would think about it. Therefore, it was said that these people were waiting for the Qiyāmah - while, Qiyāmah will have a scenario of its own, for it would be just one terrible sound of the Horn (Ṣūr) that will seize everyone all of a sudden in a way that people will be busy in their businesses settling their disputes and they all, in this very condition, will lie dead.

It appears in Ḥadīth that two men will be engaged in their activity of buying and selling cloth. Stretched before them will be the yardage of the cloth pieces while, of a sudden, Qiyāmah will come - and they would be unable to complete their deal of cloth. Then, there will be someone else busy plastering his water tank who will fall dead in the same state (reported by Abū Nu'aym from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ - al-Qurṭubī).

In verse 50, it was said: فَلَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ تَوْصِيَةً وَّلَآ إِلَىٰٓ أَهْلِهِمْ يَرْجِعُونَ (So they will not be able to make a bequest, nor will they return to their household.), that is, people who are gathered there will not have the respite to make a will among themselves to do something on their behalf, and those who are still outside their houses will not find the respite even to go into their houses. They will lie dead in the very state in which they would be at that time. This is a description of the first blowing of the Horn of the day of Qiyāmah as a result of which the entire gamut of the earth and heavens will be destroyed.

After that, it was said: وَنُفِخَ فِى الصُّوْرِ فَإِذَا هُمْ مِّنَ الْأَجْدَاثِ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَنْسِلُوْنَ (And the Horn will be blown, and suddenly they will be rushing from their graves towards their Lord. (36:51). Here, the word: أَجْدَاث (*ajdāth*) is the plural

form of: جَدَث (*jadath*) which means a grave. And: يَنْسِلُوْنَ (*yansilūn*) is a derivation from: نسلان (*nasalān*) which means to walk swiftly as it appears in another verse: يَخْرُجُوْنَ مِنَ الْاَجْدَاثِ سِرَاعًا (they will come out of their graves in haste - Al-Maʿārij, 71:43). As for what is said in another verse: فَاِذَاهُمْ قِيَامٌ يَّنْظُرُوْنَ (and suddenly, they will stand up, looking around - Az-Zumar, 39:68), it is not contrary to that, for first came the instant of standing up in wonder and then came the act of racing toward the plains of the Resurrection. There is no contradiction in between these two. Then, as it is already proved from the verses of the Qur'ān that the angels will call them to come to the plains of the Resurrection, it becomes clear that the presence of disbelievers on the plain of the Resurrection will not be out of their pleasure, rather, it would be out of compulsion whereby the call of the angels will prompt them to come hastening toward it.

In verse 52, it was said: قَالُوْا يَاوَيْلَنَا مَنْ بَعَثَنَا مِنْ مَّرْقَدِنَا (They will say, "Woe to us! Who has raised us from our sleeping place?"). Though the disbelievers were already having their punishment in their graves with no sign of any relief, yet this punishment will appear as nothing when compared with the punishing circumstances of the day of Qiyāmah, therefore, they will cry out as to why they had to be taken out of their graves, for it would have been better if they had stayed right there. A response to this will come from either the angels or the common believers.

This response appears immediately next in verse 52: هٰذَا مَا وَعَدَ الرَّحْمٰنُ وَصَدَقَ الْمُرْسَلُوْنَ ("This is what the Raḥmān had promised, and the messengers had told the truth.) - to which they paid no attention. At this place, a choice has been made in using the word: رَحْمٰن (Raḥmān: The Most Merciful) out of the many attributes of Allah. It serves as an indicator - as for Him, He had already made elaborate arrangements, in His mercy, that you remain safe from this punishment, and that His act of alerting you in advance through His promise and through His Books and Prophets was, in fact, but a dictate of His attribute of mercy.

Then, in verse 55, it was said: اِنَّ اَصْحٰبَ الْجَنَّةِ الْيَوْمَ فِىْ شُغُلٍ فٰكِهُوْنَ (The people of the Paradise are engaged today in (their) activities, happily enjoying [them]) - 36:55). After having mentioned the worries of the people of Jahannam, described here is the state of the people of Paradise on the day of Qiyāmah that they will be enjoying themselves. The word: فٰكِهُوْنَ (fākihūn) is the plural form of: فَاكِهٌ (*fākih*). It signifies happiness of the

heart as well as happiness out of one's surroundings. As for the expression: فِىْ شُغُلٍ (*fī shugul*) appearing before it, it could also mean that they will be totally unaffected by the misfortunes afflicting the people of Jahannam (as said by some commentators).

And then it is also possible that, at this place, this expression: فِىْ شُغُلٍ (*fī shugul*) has been added to remove the thought - when, in Jannah, there will be no religious duty like obligatory or necessary worship, nor the job of earning one's livelihood, would this lack of activity not leave one uptight or bored? - hence, it was said that their enjoyment itself will be their principal activity, and the question of any boredom simply does not arise.

Next, in verse 56, it was said: هُمْ وَاَزْوَاجُهُمْ (They and their spouses...). The word: اَزْوَاج (azwāj) as used here includes the Ḥūrs of Jannah as well as wives of the mortal world.

The word: يَدَّعُوْنَ (*yaddaʿūn*) appearing in verse 57: وَلَهُمْ مَّا يَدَّعُوْنَ (*wa lahum mā yaddaʿūn*) is a derivation from: دعوى (*daʿwah*) which means to call, that is, the thing the people of Jannah will call or wish to have, will come to them. The Qur'ān has not used the word: يَسْئَلُوْنَ (*yas'alūn*: they ask) at this place, because having something after having asked for it is also a sort of exertion, something the Jannah will be free from, in fact, it will be a place where everything needed will be ready and present.

In verse 58, it was said: وَامْتَازُوا الْيَوْمَ اَيُّهَا الْمُجْرِمُوْنَ (And get apart (from the believers) today O the guilty ones.- 36:58) On the plains of the Resurrection, initially when people rise from their graves, they will be scattered all mixed up as said in the Qur'ān: كَاَنَّهُمْ جَرَادٌ مُّنْتَشِرٌ (*kaannahum jarādum-muntashir*: as if they are scattered locusts - Al-Qamar, 54:7). But, later on, group by group, they will be separated in terms of their deeds - disbelievers at one place and the believers, at another, and sinners at one place and the righteous and the accepted, at another - as it has been stated elsewhere: وَاِذَا النُّفُوْسُ زُوِّجَتْ (And when the persons will be divided into pairs- at-Takwir, 81:7) In the said verse, this same distinction to be made has been described.

In verse 60, it was said: اَلَمْ اَعْهَدْ اِلَيْكُمْ يٰبَنِىْٓ اٰدَمَ اَنْ لَّاتَعْبُدُوا الشَّيْطٰنَ (Did I not direct you, O children of 'Ādam, that you must not worship the Satan, (because) he is an open enemy for you,- 36:60). In other words, this would be said on

the day of Qiyāmah to all human beings, (even to the Jinn). But, the question remains that the disbelievers did not generally worship the Satan. They worshipped idols or other things. Therefore, how does this blame fall on them? The answer is that submitting before some entity in the absolute sense and to obey that entity in word and deed in everything and under all conditions is nothing but worship. Since these people always followed Satanic teachings, therefore, they were called the worshipers of the Satan - as said in Ḥadīth that a person who, driven by love for money or spouse, starts doing everything that would increase wealth or please the spouse, even at the cost of the displeasure of Allah, is an obedient servant of the silver coin and the obedient servant of the spouse (*'Abd-ud-dirham, 'Abd-uz-zawjah*).

In verse 65, it was said: اَلْيَوْمَ نَخْتِمُ عَلٰى اَفْوَاهِهِمْ (Today We will set a seal on their mouths). On the day of Resurrection, when comes the time to account for deeds, everyone will be free to offer any excuse one has. But, Mushriks, the practitioners of shirk, those who associate partners in the pristine divinity of Allah Ta'ālā, will declare on oaths that they never had anything to do with *shirk* and *kufr*: وَاللّٰهِ رَبِّنَا مَا كُنَّا مُشْرِكِيْنَ (By Allah, our Lord, we ascribed no partners to Allah - Al-An'am, 6:23).

And some of them will also say that they were free of whatever the angels had written down in their book of deeds. At that time, Allah Ta'ālā will put a seal on their mouths, so that they would not speak. Then, He will give power of speech to their own body parts, the hands and the feet, who will testify to all their deeds as court witnesses against them. As for the present verse, it mentions the speaking of hands and feet only. In another verse, mentioned there is the speaking of one's ear, eye and skin: شَهِدَ عَلَيْهِمْ سَمْعُهُمْ وَاَبْصَارُهُمْ وَجُلُوْدُهُمْ (their ears and their eyes and their skins will testify against them - 41:20). As for what has been said at one place: تَشْهَدُ عَلَيْهِمْ اَلْسِنَتُهُمْ (and their tongues will testify against them - An-Nūr, 24:24), it is not contrary to 'putting a seal on their mouths' because putting a seal means that they will be unable to say anything out of their own volition. Their tongue will speak counter to their personal choice and will testify to the truth.

As for the question how these parts of the body would acquire power of speech, the Qur'ān has already answered that by saying: اَنْطَقَنَا اللّٰهُ الَّذِیْٓ اَنْطَقَ كُلَّ شَیْءٍ (Why did you testify against us? - 41:20) that is, these parts of

the body will say that Allah, who has given power of speech to all things endowed with the ability to speak, has also enabled us to speak.

In the last of the verses cited above, it was said: وَمَنْ نُعَمِّرْهُ نُنَكِّسْهُ فِى الْخَلْقِ اَفَلَا يَعْقِلُوْنَ (And whomsoever We give long life, we reverse him in creation. Do they then not have sense ?). The word: نُعَمِّر (*nu'ammir*: We give a long life) in this verse has been derived from: تَعْمِير (*ta'mīr*) which means to prolong years of life. And the word: نُنَكِّسْهُ (*nunakkishū*) is a derivation from: تَنْكِيس (*tankīs*) which means to reverse, invert or turn upside down. In this verse, Allah Ta'ālā has described yet another manifestation of His perfect power and eloquent wisdom in that every living being lies under the free will of Allah Ta'ālā all the time. The process of nature is going on. The thing started from a lifeless drop. Wrapped with three layers of darkness in the womb of the mother, that which came to be was this essence of the universe, and a small world in its own right. Countless was the number of most delicate mechanisms that were embedded into its life form. Then it was made to come alive with the infusion of the spirit. After having been nourished and grown for nine months inside the womb of the mother, a perfect human being came into this world. Of course, perfect it was, but the body it had was weak. Nature took care of that by placing in the breast of the mother food that would suit an infant's physical requirement. This gave it the gradual supply of needed energy. From that time to the time of youth, passed many stages and then came a strong body at its total bloom. Then came claims of the power thus acquired and rose the desire to defeat every conceivable adversary.

But, that was not the end. When the creator and master of this new aspirant into the world decided otherwise, all these strengths started waning. Even the decline was not sudden. It took time. There were countless stages. Finally, came the fag end of the years of life. Once there, just imagine, has this person not reached back into the stage of one's childhood. Habits started changing. Reflexes became different. Things that used to be the dearest started appearing hateful. What was comfort once turned into suffering. This is what the Qur'ān calls "*tankīs*," that is, being turned upside down. One trusts what one sees with one's own eyes and what one hears with one's own ears in the life of this world. This too does not remain trustworthy during the later years of old age. Clearly understanding what is being said becomes difficult because one becomes

hard of hearing. The same thing happens to the sense of sight that becomes weak. One cannot see well enough. The classical Arab poet, al-Mutanabbi has said:

ومن صحب الدّنيا طويلا تقلّبتْ......☆......على عينهِ حتّى يرى صدقها كذبا

And for one who lives long in the world, it will turn upside down right before his eyes to the extent that what he saw as truth will start appearing to be a lie.

Not only that this major change in man's frame of existence is a standing manifestation of the unique power of Allah Ta'ālā, it is also a great favor to him. Is it not that all strengths the supreme Creator has placed in the living presence of man are, in reality, the God-given functional devices issued to him with the clarification that they were neither his property nor were they everlasting and that, finally, they will be taken back from him. This obviously required that, once came the time of such take over, all such strengths should have been taken back simultaneously. But, the most merciful and sublime Lord has not elected to do that. Instead, He has allowed that these strengths be taken back in installments that too are prominently long and spaced apart. Thus, these are taken back gradually, bit by bit, so that one gets alerted and starts getting ready to embark on the ultimate journey of the Hereafter. And Allah knows best.

Verses 69 - 75

وَمَا عَلَّمْنٰهُ الشِّعْرَ وَمَا يَنْبَغِيْ لَهٗ ؕ اِنْ هُوَ اِلَّا ذِكْرٌ وَّقُرْاٰنٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿۶۹﴾ لِّيُنْذِرَ مَنْ كَانَ حَيًّا وَّيَحِقَّ الْقَوْلُ عَلَى الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿۷۰﴾ اَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا اَنَّا خَلَقْنَا لَهُمْ مِّمَّا عَمِلَتْ اَيْدِيْنَآ اَنْعَامًا فَهُمْ لَهَا مٰلِكُوْنَ ﴿۷۱﴾ وَذَلَّلْنٰهَا لَهُمْ فَمِنْهَا رَكُوْبُهُمْ وَمِنْهَا يَاْكُلُوْنَ ﴿۷۲﴾ وَلَهُمْ فِيْهَا مَنَافِعُ وَمَشَارِبُ ؕ اَفَلَا يَشْكُرُوْنَ ﴿۷۳﴾ وَاتَّخَذُوْا مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ اٰلِهَةً لَّعَلَّهُمْ يُنْصَرُوْنَ ﴿۷۴﴾ لَا يَسْتَطِيْعُوْنَ نَصْرَهُمْ ۙ وَهُمْ لَهُمْ جُنْدٌ مُّحْضَرُوْنَ ﴿۷۵﴾

And We did not teach him (the Holy Prophet) poetry, and it is not proper for him. It is nothing (of that sort) but (it is) an advice and a readable book that explains (the truth), [69] so that it warns him who is alive (to listen to the truth), and so that the word may prove true against the disbelievers. [70] Did they not see that We have created for them cattle, among things made (directly) by Our hands, then they are their owners? [71] And We have brought them under their control, so as some of them are their means of transport, and some of them they eat. [72] And for them there are (other) benefits in them and things to drink. So, would they not be grateful? [73] And they have adopted other gods than Allah, so that they may be helped (by them). [74] They cannot help them, rather they (the disbelievers themselves) are (like) an army brought forth for (protecting) them (the so-called co-gods) [75]

Commentary

In the first verse cited here, it was said: 'وَمَا عَلَّمْنَاهُ الشِّعْرَ وَمَا يَنْبَغِيْ لَه (And We did not teach him poetry and it is not proper for him.) Since the deniers of the appearance of a prophet and messenger with a mission could not deny the unique effectiveness of the Qur'ān and its ability to move hearts that was a matter of common experience, therefore, they invented convenient excuses. At times, they would call this Divine Word, some magic and the Holy Prophet ﷺ, a magician. Then, on other occasions, they would say that this Word was poetry and he was a poet. By saying that, they wanted to prove that this unique effectiveness did not come out of the Divine Word as such, instead, they were either words of magic or sorcery that made an impression on hearts, or it is poetic speech for that too affects hearts.

In this verse, Allah Ta'ālā said that He did not teach His prophet the art of poetry, nor was it appropriate to his station and saying that he was a poet, is false and wrong.

Here, we have a question. Is it not that Arabs are a people who have poetry in their blood? Even their women and children would compose impromptu lines of poetry. They knew poetry and its reality. How could they say that the Qur'ān was poetry and the Holy Prophet ﷺ was a poet? On what basis could this be because neither is the Qur'ān restricted by the compulsion of poetic meter, nor of *radīf* (the unchanging word that

appears at the end of the hemistich) and *qāfiyah* (the changing rhymed word that appears before the *radīf*) anywhere in the text? Not even someone who is pathetically ignorant of the mores of poetry would think of calling this poetry.

To answer this, it can be said that, essentially, poetry is composed of self-structured imaginary subjects, whether in poetry or prose. By calling the Qur'ān, poetry and the Holy Prophet ﷺ, a poet their purpose was to tell him that the Divine Word he claims to have brought, is no more than imaginary tales. Or, may be, they called him a poet in terms of the well recognized meaning of poetry with a certain congruity in mind, that is, the effect produced by the Qur'ān is similar to the effect produced by poetic compositions.

Quoting his own chain of authority, Imām Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ has reported that someone asked Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا if the Holy Prophet ﷺ used to recite some verse of poetry once in a while. To that, she said, "No, however, he once did recite a verse of Ibn Ṭarfah:

ستبدی لک الایام ما کنت جاھلا......☆...... ویأتیک بالاخبار من لّم تزوّد

"The time will reveal to you that which you did not know, and the news will be brought to you by one whom you did not appointed to do so.

But the holy Prophet ﷺ recited this as: وزن شعری in a manner that broke the poetic measure. Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ submitted, 'Yā Rasūlallah, this verse is not like that.' He said, 'I am not a poet, nor is poetry appropriate for me.'"

Ibn Kathīr has reported this narration in his Tafsīr, and at-Tirmidhī, an-Nasā'ī and Imām Aḥmad have also reported it. This tells us that he simply did not consider reciting verses of poetry composed by others as appropriate for him. That he would compose it himself was unthinkable. As for some sentences having the resonance of poetic measure reported from the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself, they did not issue forth from him with the intention of composing formal poetry. They were casual, and should some one or two lines issue forth from a person that fall into poetic measure, these do not make him a poet. But, from this natural condition of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that was based on great considerations of wisdom, it does not become necessary that poetry should be taken as blameworthy

in any absolute sense - as explained under the details of injunctions relating to poetry in our commentary on verse 224 of Sūrah Ash-Shu'arā' (26) appearing at its end in Volume VI of Ma'āriful-Qur'ān, English. Those interested may see it there.

In verse 71, it was said: اَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا اَنَّا خَلَقْنَا لَهُمْ مِّمَّا عَمِلَتْ اَيْدِيْنَآ اَنْعَامًا فَهُمْ لَهَا مَالِكُوْنَ (Did they not see that We have created for them cattle, among things made (directly) by Our hands, then they are their owners?). Along with the mention of the Divine novelty and beneficence in the creation of the cattle in this verse, yet another great favor of Allah Ta'ālā has been identified. It has been said that man has played no role in the creation of these cattle. Allah Ta'ālā made them, exclusively, by His own hands, so to say. Then, He not only let human beings benefit from these cattle with His permission, but also made them their owners, so that they could dispose them off in any manner they chose - use them to their advantage or sell them off and use the money thus acquired.

Gift of God - not capital or labor - is the real wisdom behind the ownership of things

In our day, debate is still going on between various economic theories as to the basis of production of things and their ownership. Is it wealth, or is it labor? The votaries of the capitalist economic system declare capital and wealth as its basis. The protagonists of the socialist and communist system support labor as the real reason or justification behind production of things and their ownership. This decree of the Qur'ān tells us that none of these two has any role to play in the creation of things and their ownership. The creation of anything does not rest in the possession or control of human beings. That is an act of Allah Ta'ālā, directly. Then, reason demands that the one who creates something should also be its owner. Therefore, when it comes to things of this world, the essential and real ownership is that of Allah Ta'ālā. The ownership of human beings in anything whatsoever can take effect only when Allah Ta'ālā passes it on to them in His mercy. Allah Ta'ālā has already revealed the law of the proof and transfer of ownership through his prophets. Counter to this law, no one can become the owner of anything.

In verse 72: وَذَلَّلْنَاهَا لَهُمْ (And We have brought them under their control), yet another favor and blessing has been pointed to. If one were to look at the camel, horse, elephant, ox and other animals, it will be

realized that they are seemingly far stronger than human beings. Man is weak as compared to them - as a result of which, it should have not been possible for him to tame and control them. But, Allah Ta'ālā had it arranged in His own way. The way He created these animals and gifted them to human beings, in the same way, He made these free animals naturally subservient to man. A boy reins a strong horse and rides on its back to anywhere he likes to go. This thing too is no achievement of man. This comes from Allah Ta'ālā as His grace, a blessing that is given to man without asking.

In the last verse cited above (75), it was said: وَهُمْ لَهُمْ جُندٌ مُّحْضَرُونَ (rather they are an army brought forth for them). One sense of this verse is to take the word: جُند (army) in the text to mean an opponent or adversary and take the verse to mean that the things they have made their objects of worship in the mortal world will turn against them on the Day of Judgment and also bear witness against them.

And according to a Tafsir reported from Ḥasan and Qatādah رحمهم الله, it means that these people had taken to idols as gods in the hope that they would help them. But, the reality on the ground proved to be that they were already incapable of helping them. As a result, the very people who used to worship them as their servants and soldiers are now guarding them to the extent that they would take their side and fight against anyone who opposes them (al-Qurṭubī). The translation given in the text (with brackets) is based on this interpretation.

Verses 76 - 83

فَلَا يَحْزُنكَ قَوْلُهُمْ ۘ إِنَّا نَعْلَمُ مَا يُسِرُّونَ وَمَا يُعْلِنُونَ ﴿٧٦﴾ أَوَلَمْ يَرَ
الْإِنسَانُ أَنَّا خَلَقْنَٰهُ مِن نُّطْفَةٍ فَإِذَا هُوَ خَصِيمٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿٧٧﴾ وَضَرَبَ لَنَا
مَثَلًا وَنَسِيَ خَلْقَهُ ۖ قَالَ مَن يُحْيِ الْعِظَامَ وَهِيَ رَمِيمٌ ﴿٧٨﴾ قُلْ
يُحْيِيهَا الَّذِىٓ أَنشَأَهَآ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ ۖ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ خَلْقٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٧٩﴾ الَّذِى
جَعَلَ لَكُم مِّنَ الشَّجَرِ الْأَخْضَرِ نَارًا فَإِذَآ أَنتُم مِّنْهُ تُوقِدُونَ ﴿٨٠﴾
أَوَلَيْسَ الَّذِى خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِقٰدِرٍ عَلَىٰٓ أَن يَخْلُقَ مِثْلَهُم ۚ

بَلٰى ۚ وَهُوَ الْخَلّٰقُ الْعَلِيْمُ ﴿٨١﴾ اِنَّمَآ اَمْرُهٗٓ اِذَآ اَرَادَ شَيْـًٔا اَنْ يَّقُوْلَ لَهٗ كُنْ فَيَكُوْنُ ﴿٨٢﴾ فَسُبْحٰنَ الَّذِيْ بِيَدِهٖ مَلَكُوْتُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَّاِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُوْنَ ﴿٨٣﴾

So, their remarks must not grieve you. Surely We know what they conceal and what they disclose. [76] **And did man not see that We have created him from a drop of semen? Then suddenly he stood as an open adversary (to Us).** [77] **And he has set up an argument about Us and forgot his creation. He said, "Who will give life to the bones when they are decayed?"** [78] **Say, "These will be revived by the same One who had created them for the first time, and who is fully aware about every creation,** [79] **– the One who created for you fire from the green tree, and in no time you kindle from it."** [80] **Is it that the One who has created the heavens and the earth has no power to create ones like them? Why not? And He is the Supreme Creator, the All-Knowing.** [81] **His practice, when He intends to do something, is no more than He says, "Be", and it comes to be.** [82] **So, pure (from every fault) is the One in whose hand is the dominion of all things. And towards Him you are to be returned .** [83]

Commentary

The last five verses of Sūrah Yā Sīn were revealed in the background of a particular event. This event has been attributed to Ubayy Ibn Khalaf in some narrations, and to 'Āṣ ibn Wā'il in some others. And there is no improbability in that such an event came to pass with both of them. The first narration was reported by al-Baihaqī in Shu'abul-'Imān, and the other reported by Ibn Abī Ḥāatim from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ says that 'Āṣ Ibn Wā'il picked up a bone from the sandy and pebble-strewn valley of Makkah and after breaking it with his hands rubbed it into a handful of bone meal and then said to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, "Will Allah revive this bone you are seeing in my hands?" The Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Yes, Allah Ta'ālā will put you to death, then bring you back to life and then He will put you in Hell." (Ibn Kathīr)

The expression: خَصِيْمٌ مُّبِيْنٌ (an open adversary) in verse 77 means that this man was created from a lowly drop, yet he has the audacity to

challenge Allah, and refuse to accept His power. In verse 78, it was said: ضَرَبَ لَنَا مَثَلًا (And he has set up an argument about Us). Here, the expression refers to the event described above, that is, while smashing and rubbing the bone into bone meal, its revival was considered improbable. After that, it was said: وَنَسِيَ خَلْقَهُ (and forgot his own creation). It means while he was giving that example, he forgot the example of his own creation as to how he himself was created by infusing life in a lowly, impure and lifeless drop - a bland anatomy of his creation indeed. Had he not forgotten his real genetic origin, he would have never come up with such examples and would have never dared saying no to Divine power.

In verse 80, it was said: جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِّنَ الشَّجَرِ الْأَخْضَرِ نَارًا (the One who created for you fire from the green tree .). Two trees used to be well known in 'Arabia - Markh (Cynanchum Vinimale) and 'Afār. The Arabs were accustomed to cutting two twigs from these two trees as they did with *siwāk* or *miswāk*. These twigs would be solid, green, and full of fresh water inside. By rubbing one on the other, it worked like firestone. They could strike fire out of these. This is what has been alluded to in striking fire out of the green tree. (Qurṭubī) And if we were to consider the ultimate fate of trees, every green tree that flourishes initially, then, later on, once dried, it becomes a source of fuel and fire. Seen from this angle, every tree can be meant here - as seems to be the sense in the following verse of the noble Qur'ān: اَفَرَءَيْتُمُ النَّارَ الَّتِيْ تُوْرُوْنَ ءَ اَنْتُمْ اَنْشَاْتُمْ شَجَرَتَهَآ اَمْ نَحْنُ الْمُنْشِئُوْنَ (Now tell Me about the fire you kindle: Is it you who have originated its tree, are We the Orginiator? - 56:71, 72).

But, in the present verse, since the quality of the 'shajar' or tree has also been mentioned as being 'akhdar' or green, therefore, here it seems that meant here are those particular trees that used to be a source of fire despite being green and moisturized.

In verse 82, it was said: اِنَّمَآ اَمْرُهٗٓ اِذَآ اَرَادَ شَيْئًا اَنْ يَّقُوْلَ لَهٗ كُنْ فَيَكُوْنُ (His practice, when He intends to do something, is no more than He says, "Be", and it comes to be.). In other words, the verse means that when Allah Ta'ālā intends to create something, He has no need to follow the way things are made by human beings who have to collect raw materials, assemble technicians and work for a certain period of time until the thing is ready. His way, to use an understatement, is different. Whenever, He intends to create something, for Him it is sufficient to give the command: "Be." Right

then, the thing so commanded comes into existence. From this, it does not necessarily follow that the creation of everything should invariably be instant. Instead, when the creation of something instantly under the dictate of the wisdom of the Creator is expedient, it stands created on the beam without any gradual mode or respite. And when the creation of something is decreed to be appropriate only as gradual due to some wise consideration, it comes into existence gradually - whether it is destined to be created along with a particular gradual mode in the very first decree, or it is addressed with a separate command of '*kun*' or 'be' at each gradual stage. وَاللّٰه سبحانهٗ وتعالٰى اعلم (And Allah, the Pure, the High knows best).

Alḥamdulillāh

The Commentary on

Sūrah Yā Sīn

Ends here

Sūrah Aṣ-Ṣaffāt

Sūrah Aṣ-Ṣaffat is Makki and it has 182 verses and 5 sections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1- 10

وَالصّٰٓفّٰتِ صَفًّا ﴿١﴾ فَالزّٰجِرٰتِ زَجْرًا ﴿٢﴾ فَالتّٰلِيٰتِ ذِكْرًا ﴿٣﴾ اِنَّ اِلٰهَكُمْ لَوَاحِدٌ ﴿٤﴾ رَبُّ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا وَرَبُّ الْمَشَارِقِ ﴿٥﴾ اِنَّا زَيَّنَّا السَّمَآءَ الدُّنْيَا بِزِيْنَةِ ۨالْكَوَاكِبِ ﴿٦﴾ وَحِفْظًا مِّنْ كُلِّ شَيْطٰنٍ مَّارِدٍ ﴿٧﴾ لَا يَسَّمَّعُوْنَ اِلَى الْمَلَاِ الْاَعْلٰى وَيُقْذَفُوْنَ مِنْ كُلِّ جَانِبٍ ﴿٨﴾ دُحُوْرًا وَّلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ وَّاصِبٌ ﴿٩﴾ اِلَّا مَنْ خَطِفَ الْخَطْفَةَ فَاَتْبَعَهٗ شِهَابٌ ثَاقِبٌ ﴿١٠﴾

(I swear) by those who stand in rows, [1] then by those who prevent firmly [2], then by those who recite the *dhikr,* [3] surely your God is but One, [4] the Lord of the heavens and the earth and what is between them, and Lord of the points of the sunrise. [5] Verily, We have decorated the nearest sky with an adornment, the stars, [6] and (have made them) a security against every rebellious shaitan (satan). [7] They cannot listen to the Upper Realm and are hit from every side [8] to be driven off, and for them there is a lasting punishment, [9] however, if one snatches a little bit, he is pursued by a bright flame. [10]

Commentary

Subjects of the Sūrah

This Sūrah is Makkī, that is, it was revealed in Makkah

al-Mukarramah. Like other Makkī Sūrahs, matters of faith have been taken up as its essential subject. In it, beliefs about Divine Oneness, the mission of messengers and the certain eventuality of the Hereafter have been fortified with proofs presented in various ways. As a corollary, a refutation of the beliefs of Mushriks as well as the scenes of Paradise and Hell also appear in the Sūrah. After providing rational support for beliefs that formed part of the call of the noble prophets عليهم السلام and after removing doubts and objections raised by disbelievers, the Sūrah describes how Allah Ta'ālā dealt with those who embraced these beliefs in the past and what was the fate of those who opted to take the road to denial and disbelief? Accordingly, in that wise, events relating to Sayyidnā Nūḥ, Ibrāhīm, Mūsā, Hārūn, Ilyās, Lūṭ and Yūnus عليهم السلام have been mentioned, briefly at some places and in details at others.

The Mushriks of Makkah used to call angels: Daughters of God. Towards the end, this belief has been refuted in details and an overall view of the Sūrah seems to indicate that the refutation of this particular kind of *shirk* (ascribing partners to the Divinity of Allah by declaring angels to be the daughters of God) has been kept in marked sight. Therefore, the Sūrah has been initiated with an oath taken in the name of angels combined with a declaration of the attributes of their servitude. والله سبحانه اعلم (And Allah, who is Pure, knows best).

Tauḥīd: The Oneness of Allah is the first subject

The Sūrah has been initiated by a description of the belief in Tauḥīd, the Oneness of Allah and the real purpose of the first four verses is to state: اِنَّ اِلٰهَكُمْ لَوَاحِدٌ (surely your God is but One - 37:4). But, before this is asserted, three oaths are sworn ahead of it. A simple literal translation of these oaths is given below: "(I swear) by those who stand in rows, [1] then by those who prevent firmly [2], then by those who recite the *dhikr*.

Who are these people identified as "those who stand in rows," then, "those who prevent firmly" and then, "those who recite the dhikr?" There is no clarification in the words of the noble Qur'ān about it. Therefore, different views have been expressed to explain it. Some respected commentators say that these refer to living warriors who come out to wage Jihad in the way of Allah and who stand in rows after rows, so that they prevent the aggression of the forces of the false, and even when they file in readiness for combat, even then, they remain engaged in dhikr,

tasbih and the recitation of the Qur'ān as well.

Some others have said that they mean the performers of prayers who stand in rows in the Masjid and prevent Satanic thoughts denying access to them by means of a total concentration on dhikr and the recitation of the Qur'ān (Tafsīr Kabīr and Qurṭubī). Other than these, there are some explanations that do not bear much congruity with the actual words of the Qur'ān.

But, the Tafsīr or explanation which found the widest acceptance with the majority of commentators was that the reference here is to angels, and given here are three attributes credited to them:

1. The first attribute is: اَلصّٰفّٰتِ صَفًّا (those who stand in rows). This expression comes from the word: صَفّ (*ṣaff*) and it means 'to align some group on a straight line' (Qurṭubī). Thus, it means precisely as it has been translated above.

That the angels stand in the formation of rows has also been mentioned later in this very Sūrah: وَاِنَّا لَنَحْنُ الصَّآفُّوْنَ (and We, surely We are those who stand in rows - 37:165). When are these rows formed? In answer to that, some respected commentators - such as, Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and Qatādah - have said that angels are always standing in their rows in space awaiting the command of their Lord, and when it comes, they carry it out (Maẓharī). Some others particularize it with the time of worship, that is, when the angels are engaged in *'ibādah,* dhikr and tasbih (worship, remembrance and glorification of Allah), they are in a row formation (Tafsīr Kabīr).

Discipline is desirable in Islam

From this verse, we learn that doing everything in an organized and disciplined manner and giving due consideration to order and skill in whatever we do is something expected of us and is certainly liked by Allah Ta'ālā;. It is obvious that the two objectives of the worship of Allah Ta'ālā and the implementation of His command might have as well been achieved if the angels, rather than form rows, could have assembled in the form of a disorganized mob. But, instead of being subjected to something so haphazard, they were given the taufiq or ability to make rows. Then, by mentioning this very attribute first out of their good attributes in this verse, it was pointed out that Allah Ta'ālā likes this style

of propriety very much.

The importance of making rows come straight and right in Ṣalāh

So this is not for angels only. Human beings too have been induced to and bound with the need to make their rows straight and right during *'ibādah'*. According to a narration of Sayyidnā Jābir Ibn Samurah ﷺ, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said to him and those with him, "Why do you not align yourself in perfect rows (while offering Ṣalāh) as do the angels before their Lord?" The Ṣaḥābah asked, 'How do the angels form their rows before their Lord?' He said, "They complete the rows and stand compactly (that is, leave no gap in between the row)." (Tafsīr Maẓharī)

So many *aḥādīth* stressing on the need to make rows complete and keep them straight in Ṣalāh have appeared that they could fill an independent treatise on the subject. Sayyidnā Abū Mas'ūd al-Badrī ﷺ says that the Holy Prophet ﷺ would touch our shoulders with his blessed hand during Ṣalāh and say, "Stand straight, do not step ahead or fall behind, other wise, it will cause dissension to creep up in your hearts." (Jam' al-Fawa'id, with reference to Muslim and an-Nasā'ī, p. 91, v.1)

2. The second attribute of the angels has been described as: فَالزّٰجِرٰتِ زَجْرًا (*fazzajirāti zajran*: those who prevent firmly). This word has been derived from زَجْر (*zajr*) which means to hold in check, block, prevent or restrain, also to drive back, repel or reprimand. Maulana Thanavi has translated it in the sense of those who place an impregnable check - which comprehends every possible sense of the word. Now, what is that against which the angels place their check? In view of the context of the Holy Qur'ān, most commentators have answered it by saying that the enforcing of check at this place means the act of angels through which they stop the satans from reaching the higher levels, and a detailed description of which is going to appear a little later in the Qur'ān itself.

3. The third attribute is: فَالتّٰلِيٰتِ ذِكْرًا (*fattaliati dhikran*) that is, these angels are those who recite the *'dhikr'*. The core sense of *'dhikr'* is 'word of good counsel' as well as 'the remembrance of Allah.' In the first instance, it would mean that these angels are those who recite everything Allah Ta'ālā has revealed as word of good counsel through Scriptures. And this recitation could be as a means of earning *barakah* and also as an act of *'ibādah'*. Then, it is also possible that it means the angels who

bring wahy (revelation) to the prophets, since they recite these Scriptures carrying good counsel before the prophets عليهم السلام and thus they convey the message of Allah to them. And in the second instance, if *'dhikr'* were to be taken to mean the remembrance of Allah, then, it would mean that they keep busy reciting those words, words that prove their commitment to the glory and sanctity of Allah.

At this place, by mentioning these three attributes of angels, the noble Qur'ān has put together all essential qualities of ideal servitude. To sum up: (1) Stand in perfect linear formation for *''ibādah',* (2) preventing rebellious forces from disobedience to Allah and (3) to recite the good counsel and commandments of Allah in person as well as to communicate to others. It is obvious that no act of servitude can remain devoid of these three departments. Hence, the sense of all four verse (37:1-4) turns out to be: 'By the angels who imbibe in them all ideal attributes of servitude, your true Lord is but One.'

Why has the statement been sworn by the angels?

The reason why angels have been sworn by in the Sūrah particularly - as already submitted - lies in the central theme of this Sūrah. It aims at refuting the peculiar kind of shirk (ascribing of partners in the pure divinity of Allah) based on which the people of Makkah used to call angels the daughters of Allah. Accordingly, at the very beginning of the Sūrah, by swearing in the name of the angels, described there were their unique attributes that demonstrated their perfect servitude. In other words, the sense is that should you ponder over these angelic attributes of servitude, they will themselves become a witness before you that their relationship with Allah Ta'ālā is not that of a father and daughter, instead, it is that of servants and the Master.

Injunctions about sworn statement of Allah Ta'ālā: Three questions and their answers

In the noble Qur'ān, there are statement in which Allah Ta'ālā has sworn in various ways in order to lay emphasis on many matters of principles relating to faith and its articles. At some places, it is that of His own Being while, at other places, it is that of particular things out of what He has created. This raises many questions. Therefore, it has become a detailed issue in the science of the Tafsīr (exegesis) of the noble Qur'ān. Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Qaiyyim has written a regular book on the subject entitled التبيان

فى احكام القرآن at-Tibyan fi Aqsam-il- Qur'ān. 'Allāmah as-Suyūṭī has, in his book الاتقان al-Itqān on the principle of Tafsīr has discussed it in details in the sixty-seventh category of discussions. Some necessary components are being given here:

Question One: When Allah Ta'ālā makes a sworn statement, a question naturally arises: Is it not that Allah Ta'ālā is the most need free of all? Why would he need to strengthen His statement with an oath in order to make someone believe?

Abulqasim al-Qushairi has answered to this question by saying that Allah needs not to swear before anyone, but His compassion towards His servants invited Him to do so in the hope that they, after hearing such a sworn statement made by Allah Ta'ālā, may tend to accept the truth and save themselves from the punishment. When an Arab bedouin heard the verse وَفِى السَّمَآءِ رِزْقُكُمْ وَمَا تُوْعَدُوْنَ. فَوَرَبِّ السَّمَآءِ وَالْاَرْضِ اِنَّهٗ لَحَقٌّ (And in heaven is your provision, and that you are promised, it is surely true as that you have speech - 51:22-23) where Allah Ta'ālā has sworn by 'the Lord of the heavens and the earth', he remarked, "Who has annoyed the Almighty to make Him swear an oath?"

In short, as said earlier, this is something necessitated by Divine compassion for His creation. Is it not that we have with us a recognized method of settling disagreements and differences? A witness is presented to support a claim. If there is no witness, a sworn statement is offered. Similarly, Allah Ta'ālā has elected to go by this familiar way of human beings in their interest. On occasions, He has laid stress on the subject by using the word: شَهَادَت (witness) as in: شَهِدَ اللّٰهُ اَنَّهٗ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ (Allah bears witness that there is no god but He - And [so do] the angels and the men of knowledge - 'Al-'Imrān, 3:18). Then, there are occasions when words of oath have been used as in: اِىْ وَرَبِّىْٓ اِنَّهٗ لَحَقٌّ (Yes, by my Lord, it is true - Yūnus, 10:53).

Question Two: When it comes to taking an oath, it is usually done in the name of someone comparatively higher, bigger or more significant. But, how is it that Allah Ta'ālā has sworn by things in His creation that are inferior to Him in all conceivable respects?

It can be answered by saying that there simply is, nor can there be, any being or entity greater than Allah Ta'ālā. When so, it is obvious that

the oath of Allah Ta'ālā cannot be like that of the common creation. Therefore, on occasions, *Allah subḥānahu wa Ta'ālā* has sworn by His own pristine Being as in: اِیْ وَرَبِّیْ (Yes, by my Lord - 10:53). Then, there are seven places in the Qur'ān where oaths are sworn by Allah Himself. Then there are other places where oaths are sworn by Divine acts or attributes and the Qur'ān itself, for example: وَالسَّمَآءِ وَمَا بَنٰهَا، وَالْاَرْضِ وَمَا طَحٰهَا، وَنَفْسٍ وَّمَا سَوّٰهَا (And by the sky, and One who built it, and by the earth, and the One who spread it, and by the soul, and who made it well - ash-Shams, 91:5-7). And most of such oaths relate to the objects of creation that, being the means of recognition of Allah, do but revert back to Allah Himself as the ultimate source of all creation. (as mentioned by Ibn-ul- Qayyim)

Out of the things in creation that have been sworn by, at places, the purpose is to highlight the sublimity of that particular thing, as is the case with an oath by the blessed life of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in the Holy Qur'ān by saying: لَعَمْرُكَ اِنَّهُمْ لَفِیْ سَكْرَتِهِمْ يَعْمَهُوْنَ (By your life [O prophet], they are wandering blindly in their intoxication [misguidance] - al-Ḥijr, 15:72). Ibn Marduwayh reports the saying of Sayyidnā 'Abdullah Ibn 'Abbās ؓ that Allah Ta'ālā has not created anyone or anything in this world more sublime and esteemed than the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself, and it is for this reason that no oath by the person of any prophet or messenger appears anywhere in the entire Qur'ān. The only such oath being by the blessed life of the Holy Prophet ﷺ appears in the verse mentioned here. Similarly, the two oaths in: وَالطُّوْرِ (By the Mount - at-Ṭūr, 52:1) and وَكِتٰبٍ مَّسْطُوْرٍ (By the Written Book - at-Ṭūr, 52:2) appear there to highlight the greatness of the two objects sworn by.

And on occasions, a certain created object has been sworn by for the reason that it yields a lot of benefits as in: وَالتِّيْنِ وَالزَّيْتُوْنِ (By the fig, and the olive - at-Tīn, 95:1). And there are other occasions where some created object has been sworn by for the reason that its creation is the manifestation of the great power of Allah Ta'ālā, and an important source of getting to know the Master-Creator of the universe. And in most cases, the thing sworn by does have some role to play in proving the subject stressed with the force of an oath. This unveils itself with a little deliberation wherever it occurs.

Question Three: For human beings in general, the well-known rule of the Sharī'ah is that swearing by anyone other than Allah Ta'ālā is not

permissible. This poses a question: Is it not that the statements sworn by Allah Ta'ālā in the name of His own created objects go on to prove that a statement sworn in the name of someone other than Allah will also become permissible for others as well? This has been answered by Ḥasan al-Baṣrī by saying:

إِنَّ اللّٰهَ يقسم بما شاء من خلقه وليس لاحد ان يقسم الّا باللّٰه

(رواه ابن ابی حاتم از مظهری)

> Surely, Allah Ta'ālā has the right to swear by whatever of His creation He wills, but it is not for anyone else to swear by anyone other than Allah (reported by Ibn Abī Ḥātim, as in Maẓharī).

Here, the core sense is that taking one's own self on the analogy of the most-exalted Allah is wrong and false. Once the Divine Law has prohibited swearing by anyone other than Allah in the case of human beings at large, any effort to counter argue on the basis of what He elects to do on His own, simply cannot be anything but false.

Explanation of verses

Turning to the explanation of the verses cited above, we see that the statement: معبود برحق (Verily, your God is but One - 4) has been placed at the end of the first three verses in which oaths by angels are sworn. Though, during the course of these oaths, mentioned therein are particular attributes of angels that, if deliberated upon even in a modest measure, would turn out to be nothing short of initial proofs of the belief in Tauḥīd, the Oneness of Allah. But , in the six verses that follow next, a standing proof of Tauḥīd has also been supplied.

It was said: رَبُّ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا وَرَبُّ الْمَشَارِقِ (the Lord of the heavens and the earth and what is between them, and Lord of the points of the sunrise. - 37:5). Now, a Being to whom goes the credit of having created and sustained such a mind-boggling range of creations has to be the One most deserving of ownership. And this entire universe is a positive proof of His existence and Oneness. The word: اَلْمَشَارِق (*al-mashāriq*) as used here is the plural form of مَشْرِق *mashriq* or East. Since, the sun rises from a new point every day of the year, therefore, its orientations in the East are many, and it is on this basis that the plural form has been employed here.

In the next verse, it was said: اِنَّا زَيَّنَّا السَّمَآءَ الدُّنْيَا بِزِيْنَةِ ۣالْكَوَاكِبِ (Verily, We

have decorated the nearest sky with an adornment, the stars, - 37:6). Here, the expression: اَلسَّمَآءَ الدُّنْيا (*as-sama'ud-dunyā*: the nearest sky) means the closest sky. The sense is that Allah Ta'ālā has made this sky closest to the world look good through the glittering presence of stars. Now, it is not necessary that these stars are located precisely within the sky. In fact, even if they are detached from it, even then, should they be looked at from the earth, they appear to be on the sky - and keep imparting a glow to it. What is being said here is no more but that this star spangled sky is an open proof of the fact that it did not come into existence on its own, instead, it has been created by its creator. And why a Being that can bring such enormous things into existence would need any partner and sharer in His creation? In addition to that, when even the disbelievers find it a settled matter that Allah Ta'ālā is the creator of all heavenly bodies, would it not be injustice that, despite His being the Creator and Master, someone or something else be taken as the object of worship? As for the problem of stars being part of the sky or being separate from it in the light of the Qur'ān as well as that of the coherence of astronomy with the noble Qur'ān, these have been taken up in detail in the commentary on Sūrah al-Ḥijr (Ma'āriful-Qur'ān, Volume V, Verses 15:16, page 302)

In the last four verses, (37:7-10): 'وَحِفْظًا مِّنْ كُلِّ شَيْطٰنٍ مَّارِدٍ (الى قوله تعالى) فَاَتْبَعَهٗ شِهَابٌ ثَاقِبٌ' and [have made them] a security against every rebellious shaitan [satan]. They cannot listen to the Upper Realm and are hit from every side, to be driven off, and for them there is a lasting punishment, (however, if one snatches a little bit, he is pursued by a bright flame - 37:10). It has been said that stars have yet another benefit besides being a decoration of the sky. Through these, wicked Satans are restrained from approaching the higher levels to eavesdrop. They do that to gather whatever news of the unseen they can gather by reaching the fringes of the sky. But, they are denied the opportunity to listen to what angels say to each other. If some Satan picks up even a part of their conversation, and tries to decamp with it, he is hit by a blazing flame, so that he remains unable to pass on this information to his devotees among soothsayers in the world. It is this blazing flame that has been called: شِهَابٌ ثَاقِب (*shihāb thāqib*: meteor).

Some details about meteors have appeared in Sūrah al-Ḥijr

(Ma'āriful-Qur'ān, volume V. 15:17,18, pages 303-305). At this place, it should be borne in mind that early Greek scientists believed in meteors being terrestrial substance that rose up with vapors and would burn up when it reached the fire zone. But, the words of the Qur'ān, as they appear here, seem to suggest that a meteor is not some terrestrial substance, rather, is something generated only in the upper atmosphere. At this stage, earlier commentators have been saying all along that the Greek assumption about meteors - that it was some terrestrial substance - was no more than a conjecture. Therefore, this cannot be used to raise an objection against the Qur'ān. As for the other possibility - that some terrestrial substance rises up and ignites itself in the upper atmosphere - that too offers no contradiction with the Qur'ān.

But, once we are in the age of modern scientific discoveries, the question has been put to rest. Astronomers tell us that meteors (*shihāb thāqib*) are small pieces from countless stars, generally of the size of large bricks. They stay in space. One of their groups is known as *'asadiyyah'*, (Leo, or Lion, out of the signs of Zodiac). It keeps revolving around the sun on its path through the imaginary belt in the heavens. One orbit by it is completed in thirty-three years. Light is emitted in these pieces because of their speed and abrasion against heavenly bodies. These pieces fall mostly during the nights of August 10 and November 27. Then, during the nights of April 20, October 18 and November 28, and on the nights of December 6, 9 and 13, their fallings tapers off. (Tafsīr al-Jawahir by Ṭanṭawī, page 15, volume 8).

This investigative approach of modern science corresponds to the Qur'ānic description. Yes, as for people who take the phenomena of satans being hit by meteors beyond conception, the late Tantawi has offered a good advice for them in his Tafsīr al-Jawahir. He has said:

> "Our forebears and scholars also took it with a heavy heart that the noble Qur'ān would say something counter to contemporary astronomy of their time. But, the commentators of the Qur'ān did not compromise their position. They did not agree to accept their thinking and surrender the position of the Qur'ān. Instead of doing something like that, they bypassed their philosophical assumptions and continued to stay with the Qur'ān. After the passage of some time, it became automatically established that the early Greeks were wrong in their assumptions. Now, if we

were to acknowledge that these stars hit, hurt and burn satans, what is there to stop us from doing so? Thus, here we are in our time embracing this statement of the Qur'ān as true. And we are faithfully waiting for the future (when science will also confirm it)." - al-Jawahir, page 14, volume 8.

The Real Objective

At this place, by mentioning the skies, the stars and the meteors, two objectives have been achieved. The first real objective is to assert the Oneness of Allah who has, all by Himself, created and managed a universal system so magnificent and, therefore, He alone is worthy of being worshipped as well. Then, there is the second objective whereby the false notion of those who take satans as their objects of worship has been refuted by telling them that they are the most accursed of the creation, and have nothing to do with the supreme station of godhead.

In addition to that, also refuted here is the objection of those who used to degrade the Divine revelation (*waḥy*) sent to the Holy Prophet ﷺ as the predictions of the soothsayers. These verses clearly indicate that the noble Qur'ān rejects the soothsayers for the sum-total of their information is what they receive through the satans. And the Qur'ān says that the satans do not have access to the higher echelons. They cannot bring back the true information out of what remains in the realm of the Unseen (*alghayb*). When the Qur'ān states this as its creed relating to soothsaying, how can it become soothsaying as such? Thus, these verses carry clear hints to the subject of Allah's Oneness and the veracity of the mission of the prophet. Later on, through the example of these very cosmic creations, the belief in the Hereafter has been proved.

Verses 11 - 18

فَاسْتَفْتِهِمْ اَهُمْ اَشَدُّ خَلْقًا اَمْ مَّنْ خَلَقْنَا ط اِنَّا خَلَقْنٰهُمْ مِّنْ طِيْنٍ
لَّازِبٍ ﴿١١﴾ بَلْ عَجِبْتَ وَيَسْخَرُوْنَ ﴿١٢﴾ وَاِذَا ذُكِّرُوْا لَا يَذْكُرُوْنَ
﴿١٣﴾ وَاِذَا رَاَوْا اٰيَةً يَّسْتَسْخِرُوْنَ ﴿١٤﴾ وَقَالُوْٓا اِنْ هٰذَآ اِلَّا سِحْرٌ
مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿١٥﴾ ءَاِذَا مِتْنَا وَكُنَّا تُرَابًا وَّعِظَامًا ءَاِنَّا لَمَبْعُوْثُوْنَ ﴿١٦﴾
اَوَاٰبَآؤُنَا الْاَوَّلُوْنَ ﴿١٧﴾ قُلْ نَعَمْ وَاَنْتُمْ دَاخِرُوْنَ ﴿١٨﴾

Now ask them, "Are they stronger in the formation of their bodies, or those (other beings) We have created?" Certainly, We did create them from sticky clay. [11] **But you wonder (at their denial), and they mock (at the idea of an Hereafter).** [12] **And when any advice is given to them, they pay no heed to it.** [13] **And when they see a sign, they make fun of it,** [14] **and say, "This is nothing but an open magic.** [15] **Is it when we have died and become dust and bones, that we shall be raised again,** [16] **and even our fathers of a foretime?"** [17] **Say, "Yes - and you shall be disgraced (too)!"** [18]

Commentary

After having proved the belief in the Oneness of Allah, described in the present eight verses is the belief in the 'Ākhirah or Hereafter along with an answer to doubts entertained by disbelievers about it. First of all, a rational proof has been given in support of the possibility of human resurrection in the very initial verse cited above. In gist, it refers to the huge heavenly bodies of the universe mentioned in previous verses, and points out to the obvious weakness of human beings as compared to them. Now when disbelievers do recognize that such great objects of creation as angels, Moon, stars, Sun and the meteors, were created by Allah Ta'ālā through His infinite power, how could it become difficult for Him to make a weak creation like human beings die and then come alive once again? It is being said that the way they were fashioned in the beginning with sticky clay followed by a blowing of spirit in them, similarly, when they will have died and become dust, even then, Allah Ta'ālā will give them life once again.

As for the statement: (Certainly, We did create them from sticky clay - 37:11), either it means that their forefather, Sayyidnā Adam عليه السلام, was created with clay, or it is also possible that it means every human being. Therefore, if seen with a little deliberation, water-based clay is the essence of every human being cyclically. Human creation is from sperm, sperm from blood and blood from food. The essence of food, no matter in which form, is vegetation and vegetation comes from the combination of clay and water.

Anyway, the first verse (11) provides a rational proof of the belief in the 'Ākhirah or Hereafter. This has been posed in the form of a question beamed right at them: Who is more difficult in the process of creation?

You? Or, are the many objects of creation We have mentioned more difficult to create? Therefore, no elaborate explanation was considered necessary. It was deemed sufficient to allude to it through a hint by saying - 'Certainly, We did create them with sticky clay.'

After that, in the five verses that follow it, described there is the reaction the disbelievers show on hearing the proofs in support of the Hereafter. The proofs of the belief in the Hereafter presented before disbelievers were of two kinds: (1) Rational proofs as given in the first verse. (2) Reported proofs, that is, they were shown miracles in support of the veracity of the mission of the Holy Prophet ﷺ as prophet and messenger of Allah asserting that he was, as such, from Allah and a prophet of Allah can never lie. He receives the authority of what he says from the heavens. And when he is telling us that the last day of Qiyāmah will come, there will be a Resurrection and human beings will account for their deeds, then, this information given by him is definitely true, and it must be accepted as true.

As for the reaction of disbelievers on rational proofs, it was said: بَلْ عَجِبْتَ وَيَسْخَرُوْنَ. وَإِذَا ذُكِّرُوْا لَا يَذْكُرُوْنَ (But you wonder [at their denial], and they mock [at the idea of an Hereafter]. And when any advice is given to them, they pay no heed to it. - 12,13). Given here first is the stance of the Holy Prophet ﷺ who wonders as to how could these people, after having such clear proofs before them, still remain reluctant to accept the truth while these people, on the contrary, indulge in making fun of the proofs and beliefs presented by him before them. In fact, no amount of advice and counsel given to them works. They are just averse to any understanding.

As for reported proofs, their reaction is: وَإِذَا رَاَوْا اٰيَةً يَّسْتَسْخِرُوْنَ (And when they see a sign, they make a fun of it - 37:14). It means if they see a miracle that confirms the veracity of his prophethood, and the belief in 'Ākhirah ultimately, they ridicule even something so serious and dismiss it by saying that it was nothing but clear magic. Why would they so scoff and jeer? Did they have some basis, some argument in support?

They did and it was: ءَ إِذَا مِتْنَا وَكُنَّا تُرَابًا وَّعِظَامًا ءَ إِنَّا لَمَبْعُوْثُوْنَ اَوَاٰبَآؤُنَا الْاَوَّلُوْنَ (Is it when we have died and become dust and bones, that we shall be raised again, and even our fathers of a foretime?"- 16,17). In other words, the problem of comprehension that confronted them was as to how in the

world could they - once they and their forefathers had become dust and bones - be brought back to life all over again. They were really not willing to admit any proof in this matter, neither that of reason nor that of miracle. Allah Ta'ālā has chosen to answer their question in a single sentence at the end in the words: قُلْ نَعَمْ وَأَنْتُمْ دَاخِرُوْنَ (Say, "Yes - and you shall be disgraced (too)!" - 37:18)

Outwardly, this is a dismissive answer, as is usually given to rigid people. But, a little deliberation would reveal that it happens to be a full-fledged argument as well. Imām Rāzī has explained it in Tafsīr Kabīr. He says: By the rational proof of resurrection given earlier, it already stands established that the rising of human beings once again after death is not something impossible. Then, the rule is that the physical happening of anything rationally possible can be proved on the authority of the statement of someone who is harbinger of nothing but the truth. So, once this much is settled that rising again is possible, then, should some true prophet of Allah simply say thereafter: 'Yes, you shall definitely rise again," this will be an absolute proof that the said event is bound to happen.

The proof of the miracles of the Holy Prophet ﷺ

The word: آية (*'āyatan*) in verse 14: وَإِذَا رَأَوْا آيَةً (And when they see a sign) literally means 'sign' and at this place it means 'miracle.' Hence, this verse proves that Allah Ta'ālā had given to the Holy Prophet ﷺ some other miracles as well in addition to that of the noble Qur'ān - which refutes those who take the miracles of the Holy Prophet ﷺ as effects of physical causes, and thereby claim that no miracle, other than that of the Qur'ān, was shown at the blessed hands of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

In this verse (14), Allah Ta'ālā has clearly said: وَإِذَا رَأَوْا آيَةً يَّسْتَسْخِرُوْنَ (And when they see a sign, they make fun of it). Some people who deny miracles say that, at this place, the word: آية (*'āyat*) does not mean مُعْجِزَة (*'mu'jizah*) or miracle, instead, it means rational arguments. But, this approach is patently wrong in view of what is said in the next verse that follows immediately: وَقَالُوْٓا إِنْ هٰذَآ إِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُّبِيْنٌ (and they say, "this is nothing but an open magic - 37:15). It is obvious that declaring an evidence and argument to be open magic does not make any sense. They could have said something like this only when they had seen a miracle.

Some deniers of miracles also say that the word: آية (*'āyat*) means ayat

or verses of the Qur'ān, as it is these verses that the disbelievers declare as magic. But, the word: رَأَوْا (*rā aw*: they see) of the noble Qur'ān is flatly contradicting this assertion. The verses of the Qur'ān were not seen. Instead, they were heard. Hence, wherever Qur'ānic verses have been mentioned in the noble Qur'ān, the words used there are those of hearing, not of seeing. And place after place in the Qur'ān, the word: آية (*'āyat*) has appeared in the sense of *mu'jizah* or miracle. For instance, while reporting the demand of the Pharaoh from Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام it was said:

إِنْ كُنتَ جِئْتَ بِآيَةٍ فَأْتِ بِهَآ إِنْ كُنتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ

If you have come with a sign bring it out, if you are one of the truthful (7:106).

In response, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام had shown the miracle of his staff turning into a serpent. As for the verses of the Qur'ān where it has been mentioned that the Holy Prophet ﷺ did not accede to their demand for a miracle, the fact is that miracles had been repeatedly shown thereby, but they used to ask for an ever-new miracle of their choice almost everyday. It was in response to such demands for miracles that they were turned down. It was done for the reason that a prophet of Allah shows miracles at the will and command of Allah Ta'ālā. If anyone still refuses to accept the true message conveyed by him, then, coming up with a new miracle everyday is counter to the dignity of the prophet, as well as counter to the will of Allah Ta'ālā.

In addition to that, it has been the customary practice of Allah Ta'ālā that, once some people were granted the miracle they had asked for - and they still failed to believe - then, they were destroyed through a mass punishment. But, in view of the intended survival of the community of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and with the objective of keeping it safe from any mass punishment, no such miracle on demand was shown before it.

Verses 19 - 26

فَإِنَّمَا هِيَ زَجْرَةٌ وَّاحِدَةٌ فَإِذَاهُمْ يَنْظُرُونَ ﴿١٩﴾ وَقَالُوا يٰوَيْلَنَا هٰذَا يَوْمُ الدِّيْنِ ﴿٢٠﴾ هٰذَا يَوْمُ الْفَصْلِ الَّذِىْ كُنْتُمْ بِهٖ تُكَذِّبُونَ ﴿٢١﴾ اُحْشُرُوا الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا وَاَزْوَاجَهُمْ وَمَا كَانُوْا يَعْبُدُوْنَ ﴿٢٢﴾ مِنْ

دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ فَاهْدُوْهُمْ اِلٰى صِرَاطِ الْجَحِيْمِ ﴿٢٣﴾ وَقِفُوْهُمْ اِنَّهُمْ مَّسْئُوْلُوْنَ ﴿٢٤﴾ مَالَكُمْ لَاتَنَاصَرُوْنَ ﴿٢٥﴾ بَلْ هُمُ الْيَوْمَ مُسْتَسْلِمُوْنَ ﴿٢٦﴾

So, it will be only a single (castigating) Call, and all of a sudden they will begin to see. [19] **And they will be saying, "Woe to us; this is the Day of Retribution."** [20] **(It will be said to them,) This is the Day of Judgment that you used to deny. [21] Muster all those who were unjust, and their fellows, and whatever they used to worship** [22] **other than Allah, and show them the way to Jahannam,** [23] **and make them stop (for a while) - they are to be questioned:** [24]**" What has happened to you that you do not help each other?"** [25] **On the contrary, all of them today are totally submissive .** [26]

Commentary

After having shown the possibility and proof of 'Ākhirah or Hereafter, Allah Ta'ālā has described some events relating to Resurrection in these verses.

Given in the first verse (19) is the mode in which the dead will rise again. It was said: فَاِنَّمَا هِىَ زَجْرَةٌ وَّاحِدَةٌ (So, it will be only a single [castigating] Call and all of a sudden they will begin to see - 37:19). The word: زَجْرَةٌ (*Zajrah*) is a noun derived from زَجْرٌ (*zajr*), and it is used to carry many meanings in the Arabic language. Out of these, one meaning is: 'To utter such sounds which, when heard by cattle, would motivate them to rise and get moving.' Here, it means the second Ṣūr (Horn or Trumpet) that will be blown by the angel, Sayyidnā Isrāfīl عليه السلام. Hence, it has been expressed as *'zajrah'* for the reason that the way some sounds are produced to prompt cattle to rise and get moving, very similarly, this Ṣūr will be blown to make the dead rise. (Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī)

Though Allah Ta'ālā is, in His infinite power, inherently capable of making the dead rise again without having the Ṣūr blown, yet this Ṣūr will be blown in order to highlight the awe of the Resurrection (Tafsīr Kabīr). Its effect on the disbelievers has been identified as: فَاِذَاهُمْ يَنْظُرُوْنَ (and all of a sudden they will begin to see - 37:19), that is, the way they could see in the mortal world, in the same way, they would be able to see there.

Some other commentators have explained it by saying that, overtaken by wonder, they will start looking at each other. (Qurṭubī)

In verse 22, it was said: اُحْشُرُوا الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا وَاَزْوَاجَهُمْ (Muster all those who were unjust, and their fellows). Here, the text has used the word: اَزْوَاج (*azwāj*) for cohorts, fellow travelers,or people of the same persuasion - a word literally meaning 'pair'. Then, this word is very commonly used in the sense of spouses. That is why some commentators have said that it means wives of the Mushriks who were also Mushriks. But, in the sight of most commentators, the word: اَزْوَاج (*azwāj*) at this place means nothing but people of the same persuasion, and it also finds support in a saying of Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ. Imām al-Baihaqī, 'Abd-ur-Razzāq and others have reported this saying of Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ under their explanation of this verse. They have said that the word: اَزْوَاجُهُمْ (azwājuhum) in the text means 'other people like them.' Thus, (while mustering the unjust), huddled together there will be the people of the same interest, fornicators with other fornicators and drunkards with other drunkards. (Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī and Maẓharī)

In addition to that, by saying: وَمَا كَانُوْا يَعْبُدُوْنَ (and whatever they used to worship - 37:22), it was expressly laid out that, along with the Mushriks, all those false objects and entities like idols and satans they used to worship and equate with Allah as His associates in the life of the world will all be mustered together - so that, at that time, the helplessness of these false objects of worship could be demonstrated publicly.

After that, a command will go forth to angels: فَاهْدُوْهُمْ اِلٰى صِرَاطِ الْجَحِيْمِ (and show them the way to Jahannam - 37:23). When the angels will take them away, and reach close to the Bridge of Sirat, they will be commanded: قِفُوْهُمْ اِنَّهُمْ مَّسْئُوْلُوْنَ (make them stop - they are to be questioned - 37:24). Thereupon, at this place, they will be questioned about their beliefs and deeds - that have been mentioned in the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth at many places.

Verses 27 - 40

وَاَقْبَلَ بَعْضُهُمْ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ يَّتَسَآءَلُوْنَ ﴿٢٧﴾ قَالُوْآ اِنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ تَاْتُوْنَنَا عَنِ الْيَمِيْنِ ﴿٢٨﴾ قَالُوْا بَلْ لَّمْ تَكُوْنُوْا مُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿٢٩﴾ وَمَا

كَانَ لَنَا عَلَيْكُم مِّن سُلْطٰنٍ ۚ بَلْ كُنتُمْ قَوْمًا طٰغِينَ ﴿٣٠﴾ فَحَقَّ عَلَيْنَا قَوْلُ رَبِّنَا ۖ إِنَّا لَذَآئِقُونَ ﴿٣١﴾ فَأَغْوَيْنٰكُمْ إِنَّا كُنَّا غٰوِينَ ﴿٣٢﴾ فَإِنَّهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ فِى الْعَذَابِ مُشْتَرِكُونَ ﴿٣٣﴾ إِنَّا كَذٰلِكَ نَفْعَلُ بِالْمُجْرِمِينَ ﴿٣٤﴾ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوٓا إِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ لَآ إِلٰهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ ۙ يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾ وَيَقُولُونَ أَئِنَّا لَتَارِكُوٓا ءَالِهَتِنَا لِشَاعِرٍ مَّجْنُونٍ ﴿٣٦﴾ بَلْ جَآءَ بِالْحَقِّ وَصَدَّقَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿٣٧﴾ إِنَّكُمْ لَذَآئِقُوا الْعَذَابِ الْأَلِيمِ ﴿٣٨﴾ وَمَا تُجْزَوْنَ إِلَّا مَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٣٩﴾ إِلَّا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ الْمُخْلَصِينَ ﴿٤٠﴾

And some of them (the followers of their chiefs) will turn to others (the chiefs), asking questions from one another. [27] They (the followers) will say, "You were the ones who used to come to (mislead) us forcefully." [28] They (the chiefs) will say, "On the contrary, you yourselves were no believers. [29] And we had no authority over you at all, but you yourselves were a transgressing people. [30] So, the word of our Lord has come true against us. Indeed, we have to taste (the punishment). [31] We did misguide you, (because) we were ourselves erroneous". [32] So, this day, they will be sharers in the punishment. [33] This is how we deal with the criminals. [34] They were those to whom when it was said: 'there is no god but Allah', they waxed proud, [35] and used to say, "Are we really to leave our gods because of an insane poet?" [36] No, he has come with the truth and has confirmed all the messengers (of Allah). [37] Surely you have to taste the painful punishment- [38] And you will be recompensed for nothing but for what you used to do - [39] unlike the chosen servants of Allah. [40]

Commentary

When the leading elders among disbelievers who had misled their common adherents appear before their followers on the plains of resurrection, they would, rather than help each other, start arguing among themselves. The present verses carry a sampling of the same

mutual argumentation between the contesting parties as well as the sad end they will have to face. Two things are noteworthy here:

1. The word: يمين (Yamīn) in: إِنَّكُمْ كُنتُمْ تَأْتُونَنَا عَنِ الْيَمِينِ (You were the ones who used to come to [mislead] us forcefully.- 37:28) may have several meanings. One possible meaning of the expression: عَنِ الْيَمِينِ (*'ani 'l-yamīn*) is 'powerfully' or 'forcefully'. The translation given in the text above is based on this meaning, which seems to be fairly clear and cloudless. In addition to that, 'yamin' is also used to mean oath. Some commentators have explained it as: 'you came to us with oaths,' that is, 'you made us believe on oath that our creed is correct and the teaching of the messenger of Allah is, God forbid, false.' In terms of the words of the Qur'ān, both these explanations are possible and acceptable comfortably.

2. From verse 33: فَإِنَّهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ فِي الْعَذَابِ مُشْتَرِكُونَ (So, this day, they will be sharers in the punishment.), we learn that should a certain person invite someone else to participate in what is impermissible and use his clout to coax him into sin, then, he will certainly incur the punishment of so inviting that person to sin. But, a person who accepts his invitation of his volition and choice, he too cannot be absolved from the sin of his deed. He cannot appear in the Hereafter and get away by saying that he was made to go astray by this or that person. Yes, if he has not committed sin by his volition and choice, instead, has done so under coercion, just to save his life, then, insha'Allah, it is hoped that he will be forgiven.

Verses 41 - 61

أُولَٰٓئِكَ لَهُمْ رِزْقٌ مَّعْلُومٌ ﴿٤١﴾ فَوَاكِهُ ۚ وَهُم مُّكْرَمُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾ فِي
جَنَّٰتِ النَّعِيمِ ﴿٤٣﴾ عَلَىٰ سُرُرٍ مُّتَقَٰبِلِينَ ﴿٤٤﴾ يُطَافُ عَلَيْهِم بِكَأْسٍ
مِّن مَّعِينٍ ﴿٤٥﴾ بَيْضَآءَ لَذَّةٍ لِّلشَّٰرِبِينَ ﴿٤٦﴾ لَا فِيهَا غَوْلٌ وَلَا هُمْ
عَنْهَا يُنزَفُونَ ﴿٤٧﴾ وَعِندَهُمْ قَٰصِرَٰتُ الطَّرْفِ عِينٌ ﴿٤٨﴾ كَأَنَّهُنَّ
بَيْضٌ مَّكْنُونٌ ﴿٤٩﴾ فَأَقْبَلَ بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ يَتَسَآءَلُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾
قَالَ قَآئِلٌ مِّنْهُمْ إِنِّي كَانَ لِي قَرِينٌ ﴿٥١﴾ يَقُولُ أَئِنَّكَ لَمِنَ

الْمُصَدِّقِيْنَ ﴿٥٢﴾ ءَاِذَا مِتْنَا وَكُنَّا تُرَابًا وَّعِظَامًا ءَاِنَّا لَمَدِيْنُوْنَ ﴿٥٣﴾
قَالَ هَلْ اَنْتُمْ مُّطَّلِعُوْنَ ﴿٥٤﴾ فَاطَّلَعَ فَرَاٰهُ فِیْ سَوَآءِ الْجَحِيْمِ ﴿٥٥﴾
قَالَ تَاللّٰهِ اِنْ كِدْتَّ لَتُرْدِيْنِ ﴿٥٦﴾ وَلَوْلَا نِعْمَةُ رَبِّیْ لَكُنْتُ مِنَ
الْمُحْضَرِيْنَ ﴿٥٧﴾ اَفَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَيِّتِيْنَ ﴿٥٨﴾ اِلَّا مَوْتَتَنَا الْاُوْلٰى وَمَا
نَحْنُ بِمُعَذَّبِيْنَ ﴿٥٩﴾ اِنَّ هٰذَا لَهُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيْمُ ﴿٦٠﴾ لِمِثْلِ هٰذَا
فَلْيَعْمَلِ الْعٰمِلُوْنَ ﴿٦١﴾

Those are the people for whom there is a known provision, [41] the fruits; and they will be honored [42] in Gardens of Bliss [43] facing each other on couches. [44] They will be served with a cup from a flowing drink, [45] white, delicious for those who drink. [46] There will be no headache therein, nor will they be intoxicated with it, [47] and by their side there will be females restricting their gazes (to their husbands), having pretty big eyes, [48] as if they were eggs hidden (under feathers protected from pollution). [49] Then they will turn to each other asking questions mutually, [50] A speaker from them will say, " I had a companion [51] who used to say (to me), 'Are you one of those who believe? [52] Is it when we have died and become dust and bones? Is it true that we are going to be recompensed [for our deeds]?'" [53] He (the speaker) will say (to other people in Paradise) "Would you like to have a look (to Jahannam to find out what happened to that companion of mine)?" [54] So he looked - and he saw him in the middle of Jahannam. [55] He said, "By Allah, you were going almost to ruin me. But for the favour of my Lord, I would have been among those produced for punishment." [57] (Then the speaker will address the other people of Paradise in delight and wonder, saying, "Are we not then to die anymore [58] beyond our first death, nor are we going to be punished? [59] This is, indeed, the great success. [60] For this kind (of achievement), all workers must work. [61]

Commentary

After having described the condition of the people of Jahannam (Hell), the verses cited above have mentioned the condition of the people

of Jannah (Paradise). This description is in two parts. The initial ten verses describe the comforts the people of Jannah will be blessed with. After that, the verses that follow take up an event relating to a particular inmate of Jannah which has lessons of guidance. Out of what has been said in the first ten verses, a few things are worth mentioning. These are as follows:

1. It was said in the first verse (41): أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ رِزْقٌ مَّعْلُومٌ (Those are the people for whom there is a known provision,). Commentators explain it variously. (1) Some say that it refers to the detailed description of the provisions of Paradise mentioned in different Sūrahs of the Qur'ān. Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavi has elected to go by this very Tafsīr. (2) Others have said that 'known provision' means that its timings are determined and known, that is, it will be bestowed punctually all mornings and evenings as indicated in another verse (بُكْرَةً وَّعَشِيًّا : 'and for them there is their provision in it, morning and evening' -Maryam, 19:62) where the words: صبح و شام (morning and evening) have been explicitly mentioned. (3) Then, there is a third Tafsīr as well. According to this explanation, 'known provision' means that this provision will be certain and everlasting - unlike the world of our experience where no one can say with any degree of certainty what and how much of that provision he or she is going to get; nor does anyone know how long his provision will remain available to him or her. Every human heart is all the time under the fear that the blessings he has may disappear in future- may be, comes a tomorrow and they are no more there. Jannah will be free of this danger. Instead, the provision of Paradise will be certain and everlasting, both. (Qurṭubī, and others)

2. By saying: فَوَاكِهُ (*fawākih*: fruits - 42) immediately after, the Qur'ān has itself explained *'rizq'* (provision) - that it will comprise fruits. The word: فواكه explained (*fawākih*) is the plural form of: فَاكِهَةٌ (*fākihah*) and it denotes everything eaten for the taste and not to remove hunger. It is conveniently translated as fruit since it is eaten for the taste. Otherwise, the sense of *fākihah* is much wider than that of fruit. Imām Rāzī has culled the subtle point from this very word that the cuisine offered in Jannah will be for the taste of it, and not for removing hunger. The reason is that in Jannah there is nothing one would really need. Once there, one would need no food or energy-giving intake in order to sustain

life or preserve health. Yes, there will be wish. The fulfillment of wish will bring the pleasure of satiation - and that would be the objective of all blessings of Paradise. (Tafsīr Kabīr, page 98. v.7)

3. Then, by saying: وَهُمْ مُّكْرَمُوْنَ (*wa hum mukramūn*: and they will be honored), it was given to understand that this provision will be presented to the people of Jannah with full protocol of hospitality and honor, for an absence of it would render even the most delicious offering remain without relish. From here, we also learn that the right of a guest is not fulfilled simply by feeding him or her. In fact, the warmth of hospitality and the according of honor to a guest is also included under his or her rights.

4. After that, it was said: عَلٰى سُرُرٍ مُّتَقٰبِلِيْنَ (*'alā sururim-mutaqabilīn*: facing each other on couches. - 37:44). This is a portrayal of the state in which the people of Jannah will be sitting - no backs against each other. How would that seating arrangement turn out to be in practice? That only Allah knows best. Some commentators say that the circuit of the seating arrangement would be so extensive that no one will need to sit with one's back towards anyone, and Allah Ta'ālā will bless the people of Jannah with such power of sight, audition and speech that they would be able to comfortably converse with people sitting at varying distances. Then, there are some other commentators who have also said that these couches, thrones or settees will be revolving - readily zooming towards whomsoever one wishes to talk to. And Allah knows best.

5. The word: لَذَّةٍ appearing in verse 46: لَذَّةٍ لِّلشّٰرِبِيْنَ (*ladhdhatil-lishshāribīn*: delicious for those who drink) is essentially a verbal noun which means 'to be tasteful'. Therefore, some commentators have said that, at this place, the adjunct (*mudaf*) stands elided. Initially, it was: ذَاتِ لَذَّةٍ (*dhati ladhdhatin*: having taste). But, there is no need for this labored approach. First of all, even if *'ladhdhah'* is taken to mean nothing but a verbal noun is frequently used in the sense of *ismul-fā'il*. In that case, it would mean that it would be 'a taste personified' for those who drink. In addition to that, there is another adjectival form of: لَذَّةٌ : *ladhdhatun* besides لَذِيْذٌ : *ladhidhun* - that is, لَذٌّ : *ladhdhun*. It is possible that the word: لَذَّةٌ : *ladhdhatun* used here may be a feminine form of the same لَذٌّ : *ladhdhun* (Tafsīr Qurṭubī). In this case, it would mean: 'delicious for those who drink.'

6. The word: غَوْلٌ (*ghaul*) in verse 47: لَافِيْهَا غَوْلٌ (*lā fihā ghaulūn*) has been explained variously as 'headache' or 'abdominal pain' or 'smell or corruption' or 'muddling of reason'. The fact is that the word: غَوْل (*ghaul*) is used to convey all these meanings, while Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Jarīr says that '*ghaul*' appears here in the sense of bane, trouble or unwelcome consequences which makes it mean that the drink offered in Jannah will have no such evil consequences as are found in wines consumed in the mortal world - no hangovers of headache, stomach pain, bad breath or loss of reason. (Tafsīr Ibn Jarīr).

7. In verse 48, it was said: قٰصِرٰتُ الطَّرْفِ (restricting their gazes). This is an attribute of the hurs or houris of Jannah - wide eyes with lowered gaze. It means that except for the mates to whom Allah Ta'ālā gives them in marital bond, they will not raise their eyes to cast a look at any other male. 'Allamah Ibn-ul-Jauzi reports: These women will tell their spouses, 'By the honor of our Lord, I see no one better than you in this Jannah. Praised be Allah who made me your spouse and made you, mine.'

'Allāmah Ibn-ul-Jauzī has given yet another sense of 'those with lowered gaze' when he says that they will cause the gaze of their spouses remain lowered. In other words, they will be so beautiful and so faithful that their spouses would simply not have a wish to look at anyone else. (Tafsīr Zad-ul-Masīr , pages 57, 58, volume 8)

8. In verse 48: كَاَنَّهُنَّ بَيْضٌ مَّكْنُوْنٌ (as if they were hidden eggs). As obvious, the hurs of Jannah have been likened to hidden eggs in this verse. The simile was popularly recognized among the people of Arabia. The egg hidden under feathers remains safe from the pollution, therefore it is always neat and clean. Moreover, its color is yellowish white,which was deemed by the Arabs as the most attractive color for women. Then there are other commentators who say that this simile does not relate to eggs as such, instead, the simile relates to the membrane hidden in the egg, and the sense is that the skin of those women will be as soft as the membrane of the eggs. (Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī) Allah knows best.

An inmate of Jannah and his disbelieving acquaintance

After having described the general condition of the people of Jannah, one of them has been mentioned particularly. Once he has settled down with other inmates of Jannah, he will recall a disbelieving acquaintance

who denied the possibility of the Hereafter during his mortal life. Then, with the permission of Allah Ta'ālā, he will be given an opportunity to talk to him by peeping into the Jahannam. The identity of this man has not been given in the Qur'ān. Therefore, it cannot be said with any degree of certainty as to who this person could be. Still, some commentators have opined that the name of the believer was Yahudah and the name of his disbelieving acquaintance was Maṭrus, and they were the same two comrades mentioned earlier in the verse of Sūrah al-Kahf: وَاضْرِبْ لَهُمْ مَّثَلاً رَّجُلَيْنِ... (And give them an example. There were two men... - 18:32). (Tafsīr Maẓharī)

And to determine the identity of this person, 'Allāmah as-Suyūṭī has reported yet another event from several tabi'in that there were two partners in a business. They earned eight thousand dinars out of it, and took four thousand dinars each. One partner spent one thousand dinars from his share to buy a land. The other partner was a pious man. He prayed: 'O Allah, this person has bought a plot of land for one thousand dinars. I buy a plot of land from You in Jannah against one thousand dinars' - and gave away one thousand dinars in Ṣadaqah (charity). Then, his partner-friend spent another one thousand dinars and made a house for himself. Then, the pious man said, 'O Allah, this man has made a house for himself by spending one thousand dinars. I buy a house in Jannah against one thousand dinars' - and, having said that, he gave away another one thousand dinars in Ṣadaqah. After that, his partner-friend married a woman and spent one thousand dinars over her. Then, he said: 'O Allah, this man has married a woman, and has spent one thousand dinars over her. I propose to one of the women in Jannah and offer this modest sum of one thousand dinars' - and, having said that, he gave away yet another one thousand dinars in Ṣadaqah. Finally, when his partner-friend bought some attendants and things by spending one thousand dinars, the pious partner, once again, gave out one thousand dinars in Ṣadaqah and prayed to Allah that he be blessed with attendants and things of Jannah against it.

After that, this believing servant of Allah was caught in some dire need, and he thought of his former partner hoping that he would be good enough to help him. So, he told him about his need. His former partner asked him, 'What became of your share of money?' In answer, he told him

the whole story. Wondering thereupon, he asked, 'Do you really believe it as true that, once we die and become dust, we shall get another life and, in that life, we shall be given the return for our deeds? Get lost. I am not going to give you anything.' After that, both of them died. The man of Jannah referred to in the cited verses is the servant of Allah who had given all his wealth in Ṣadaqah for the sake of 'Ākhirah (life in the Hereafter), and his acquaintance in Jahannam is the same partner who had chided him on his confirmation of the life to come, the 'Ākhirah. (Tafsīr ad-Durr-ul-Manthūr with reference to Ibn Jarīr and others, p. 165, v. 5)

An advice to avoid bad company

Anyhow, whoever this person may be - it does not matter. This event has been mentioned with a purpose. The noble Qur'ān is really alerting people towards a beneficial rule operative in human relations. Let everyone make a careful survey of his or her circle of friends, and try to find out whether or nor there is someone included therein who may actually be dragging them towards the sad end of the Jahannam. The destruction bad company can bring about can only be discovered fully and truly in the Hereafter - and that will be a time when there will be no escape from such destruction. Therefore, it is better to take one's guard right here in this world in matters concerning the taking of friends and promoting of relationships, something that must be done with due caution and judgment. There are occasions and circumstances when one does not foresee what would happen after having inculcated relationships with someone who disbelieves or disobeys. What ultimately happens is that one starts becoming affected by his ideas, thoughts and way of life without having any sense of that which is happening to him. This attitude proves lethal for one who is so affected in terms of the end he would have in the Hereafter.

Wondering about not having to die anymore

When the man who has been mentioned here will peep into Jahannam to have a look at his disbelieving acquaintance, it has been mentioned that the same man will be so delighted with the blessings of Jannah that he will exclaim: "Is it that we do not have to die anymore?" It does not mean that he will not be certain of the eternal life of Jannah. Instead, it is like the case of a person who achieves the highest degree of happiness. Such a person would occasionally break into exclamations that

show as if he does not believe his eyes on having received such enormous blessings. These remarks are of the same nature.

Towards the end, the noble Qur'ān turns our attention to the essential lesson embedded in this event and says: لِمِثْلِ هٰذَا فَلْيَعْمَلِ الْعٰمِلُوْنَ which means 'For this kind (of achievement), all workers must work.'

Verses 62 - 74

اَذٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ نُّزُلًا اَمْ شَجَرَةُ الزَّقُّوْمِ ﴿٦٢﴾ اِنَّا جَعَلْنٰهَا فِتْنَةً لِّلظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٦٣﴾ اِنَّهَا شَجَرَةٌ تَخْرُجُ فِيْٓ اَصْلِ الْجَحِيْمِ ﴿٦٤﴾ طَلْعُهَا كَاَنَّهٗ رُءُوْسُ الشَّيٰطِيْنِ ﴿٦٥﴾ فَاِنَّهُمْ لَاٰكِلُوْنَ مِنْهَا فَمَالِئُوْنَ مِنْهَا الْبُطُوْنَ ﴿٦٦﴾ ثُمَّ اِنَّ لَهُمْ عَلَيْهَا لَشَوْبًا مِّنْ حَمِيْمٍ ﴿٦٧﴾ ثُمَّ اِنَّ مَرْجِعَهُمْ لَاِلَى الْجَحِيْمِ ﴿٦٨﴾ اِنَّهُمْ اَلْفَوْا اٰبَآءَهُمْ ضَآلِّيْنَ ﴿٦٩﴾ فَهُمْ عَلٰٓى اٰثٰرِهِمْ يُهْرَعُوْنَ ﴿٧٠﴾ وَلَقَدْ ضَلَّ قَبْلَهُمْ اَكْثَرُ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ ﴿٧١﴾ وَلَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا فِيْهِمْ مُّنْذِرِيْنَ ﴿٧٢﴾ فَانْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُنْذَرِيْنَ ﴿٧٣﴾ اِلَّا عِبَادَ اللّٰهِ الْمُخْلَصِيْنَ ﴿٧٤﴾

Is that better as hospitality or the tree of Zaqqūm? [62] **We have made it a test for the unjust.** [63] **It is a tree that comes out in the bottom of Jahannam.** [64] **Its fruits are like the heads of satans.** [65] **So, they have to eat from it and have to fill their bellies with it.** [66] **Then they will have, on top of it, a mixture made of boiling water.** [67] **Then, their return is but to the Fire.** [68] **They found their fathers on the wrong path.** [69] **So, they used to run in their foot steps.** [70] **And most of the earlier ones (too) had gone astray before them.** [71] **And We did send warners among them.** [72] **So look, how was the end of those warned -** [73] **except the chosen servants of Allah.** [74]

Commentary

After having described the conditions prevailing in Jahannam and Jannah briefly, Allah Ta'ālā has invited every human being to compare and decide as to which of the two conditions is better. It was said: اَذٰلِکَ خَیْرٌ

نُّزُلًا اَمْ شَجَرَةُ الزَّقُّوْمِ that is, 'there are these blessings of Jannah mentioned here - are they better? Or, is it the tree of Zaqqūm the fruits of which will be fed to the people of Jahannam?

The reality of Zaqqūm

A tree by the name of Zaqqūm is found in the territory of Tihāmah, a part of the Arabian Peninsula, and 'Allāmah 'Ālūsi has written that it is also found in other barren deserts. Some say that this is the same tree known as تھوہر *thohar* (Euphorbia neriifolia or antiquorum) in Urdu and Hindi. Some others point out to another tree known as *nagphan* (hood of serpent) found in India as being the *zaqqūm* that appears to be more likely. Now, commentators differ in this matter. What tree is it the fruit from which the people of Jahannam will be given to eat? Is it one of the trees found somewhere in this world, or is it some other tree? Some support the view that it is what is found growing in this world. Some others say that the zaqqum of Jahannam is an entirely different thing. It has nothing to do with the earthly *zaqqūm*. Apparently, the way there are snakes and scorpions in the mortal world, it seems they are there in Jahannam as well. But, it goes without saying, that the snakes and scorpions of the Jahannam will be far ferocious than their counterparts here. Similarly, the *zaqqūm* of Jahannam will, though, be like the zaqqum of this world in terms of its genus, but it will be far too gruesome to look at, and far too unpalatable to eat. And Allah is pure and high who knows best.

In verse 63, it was said: اِنَّا جَعَلْنٰهَا فِتْنَةً لِّلظّٰلِمِيْنَ (We have made it [the tree of zaqqum] a test [*'fitnah'*] for the unjust). Here, according to some commentators, فِتْنَة *(fitnah)* means punishment, that is, 'have turned this tree into a source of punishment.' But, most commentators say that it is more appropriate to translate *'fitnah'* at this place as 'trial' or 'test'. The purpose here is to say that Allah wishes to test as to who believes in it, and who ridicules it. Consequently, what happened was that the disbelievers of Arabia failed this test. Rather than fear this punishment and believe, they opted for the method of confrontation and ridicule. According to Ḥadīth narrations, when the verses of the Qur'ān in which it has been mentioned that the disbelievers will be made to eat the fruit of *zaqqūm*, Abū Jahl said to his accomplices: "Your friend (Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafa ﷺ) says that there is a tree in the Fire -

although, fire eats the tree - while we, by God, do know this much that zaqqum is the name of butter-topped dates. So, come and eat this date and butter" (ad-Durr-ul-Manthūr, p. 277, v. 5). In fact, in the language of the Berbers, dates topped with butter or cream were known as zaqqum, therefore, Abū Jahl made use of this opportunity to ridicule the prophet of Islam. To the two things he said, Allah Ta'ālā gave an answer in a single sentence by saying: إِنَّهَا شَجَرَةٌ تَخْرُجُ فِيْٓ أَصْلِ الْجَحِيْمِ (That is a tree that comes out in the bottom of Jahannam - 37:64). Thus, neither does it mean date and butter, nor the objection as to how could a tree survive in fire hold valid - particularly when that tree owes its very origin to the fire itself. Hence, Allah Ta'ālā has placed such properties in it that instead of getting burnt in fire, it is actually nurtured by it. For example, there are many life forms that would survive only in fire that does not burn them, in fact, makes them grow.

By saying: طَلْعُهَا كَأَنَّهُ رُءُوْسُ الشَّيٰطِيْنِ (Its fruits are like the heads of the satans.- 65), the fruits of *zaqqūm* have been likened to the heads of the satans. Some commentators have translated the word: اَلشَّيٰطِيْنِ (*ash-shayāṭīn*) in this verse as 'serpents' since the fruit of *zaqqūm* resembles the hood of the serpent. Therefore, in Urdu and Hindi tóo, it is called 'nagphan' (hood of the serpent) for this very reason. But most commentators have said that the word: اَلشَّيٰطِيْنِ (ash-shayāṭīn) here should be taken in its well-recognized sense. Thus, it would mean that, in its ugliness, the fruit of *zaqqūm* is like the head of the satans. Now, let there be no doubt here that nobody has seen the Shaitan, why then, would something be likened to him? The reason is that it is an imaginative simile. Speaking metaphorically, things ugly and grotesque are commonly likened to satans, Jinns and ghosts. The purpose is only to express an extreme degree of ugliness. The simile used here is also of this very nature. (Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī and others).

The sense of the rest of the verses is clear from their translation.

Verses 75 - 82

وَلَقَدْ نَادٰىنَا نُوْحٌ فَلَنِعْمَ الْمُجِيْبُوْنَ ﴿٧٥﴾ وَنَجَّيْنٰهُ وَاَهْلَهٗ مِنَ الْكَرْبِ الْعَظِيْمِ ﴿٧٦﴾ وَجَعَلْنَا ذُرِّيَّتَهٗ هُمُ الْبٰقِيْنَ ﴿٧٧﴾ وَتَرَكْنَا عَلَيْهِ فِى

الْاٰخِرِيْنَ ﴿٧٨﴾ سَلٰمٌ عَلٰى نُوْحٍ فِى الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٧٩﴾ اِنَّا كَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِى الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ﴿٨٠﴾ اِنَّهٗ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿٨١﴾ ثُمَّ اَغْرَقْنَا الْاٰخَرِيْنَ ﴿٨٢﴾

And Nūḥ did call Us (for help after he was disappointed from his people), so We were the best to respond. [75] **And We delivered him and his family from the great agony,** [76] **and made his progeny the sole survivors.** [77] **And We left for him (a word of praise) among the later people, (that is):** [78] **Salām be on Nūḥ among (the people of) all the worlds.** [79] **Certainly, this is how We reward those who are good in deeds.** [80] **He was one of Our believing servants.** [81] **Then, we drowned others.** [82]

Commentary

In the previous verses, it was said that Allah had sent messengers to warn the earlier communities as well, but most of the people did not listen to them, therefore, they met a very sad end. Now, from here details of that brief statement made earlier are being given. As a corollary, events relating to several noble prophets have been narrated. Mentioned first in these verses was Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام. The event relating to Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام has appeared in Sūrah Hud (11) with sufficient details. A few things connected with the explanation of these very verses particularly are being taken up here.

In verse 75, it was said: وَلَقَدْ نَادٰنَا نُوْحٌ (And Nūḥ did call Us). According to most commentators, it means either the prayer of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام mentioned in Sūrah Nūḥ: رَبِّ لَا تَذَرْ عَلَى الْاَرْضِ مِنَ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ دَيَّارًا (My Lord, do not leave on earth even a single inhabitant (surviving) from the disbelievers - 71:26), or that which appears in Sūrah Al-Qamar: اَنِّىْ مَغْلُوْبٌ فَانْتَصِرْ (I am overpowered, so defend me - 54:10). Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام had made this prayer at a time when his people had crossed all limits in being wicked and unruly to him and had gone as far as conspiring to kill him.

And in verse 77, it was said: وَجَعَلْنَا ذُرِّيَّتَهٗ هُمُ الْبٰقِيْنَ (And [We] made his progeny the sole survivors.). According to most commentators, this verse means that the majority of world population was annihilated in the great flood during the time of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام. After that, all races in the

entire world originated from the three sons of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام. Sam was one of his sons. His children were the forbears of the peoples of Arabia and Persia. The second son was named Ham. The populations in African countries came from him. Some scholars have included the people of India in the same racial stock. Yafith was the third son. From him came the races known as Turk, Mongol and Gog and Magog. Out of the people who had embarked the ark of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام and had survived the Flood, the three sons of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام were the only ones whose progeny survived later on.

However, some scholars - whose number is very small - hold the view that the Flood during the time of Sayyidnā Nūḥ was not world wide, instead, it was restricted to the land of ancient Arabia. In their sight, it was only in that land area where the progeny of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام flourished and survived, and it was through them that the Arab race came. That the race of others spread out in other regions of the world does not go on to contradict this verse. (Bayān-ul-Qur'ān)

A third group of commentators says that as for the Great Flood, it was worldwide, but the universal racial stock did not come from the sons of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام alone. Rather, it spread out from all those people who were on board with Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام. This group of commentators takes the restrictive statement of the Qur'ān in the sense of relative restriction, and says that, at this place, the real purpose is to state that the race of the people drowned did not continue. (Qurṭubī)

Given the context of the Qur'ān, this third view is very weak, while the first view is the best for the reason that it is supported by some *aḥādīth* as well which Imām Tirmidhī and others have reported directly from the Holy Prophet ﷺ under the Tafsīr of this verse. In a narration from Sayyidnā Samurah Ibn Jundub رضي الله عنه, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said: "Sam is the father of the people of Arabia; Ḥām is the father of the people of Ethiopia, and Yafith, that of the people of Byzantine." Imām Tirmidhī calls this Ḥadīth as Ḥasan, while Imām Ḥākim rates it as Ṣaḥīḥ (Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī, p. 98, v.23).

In verses 78 and 79, it was said: وَتَرَكْنَا عَلَيْهِ فِي الْآخِرِينَ سَلَامٌ عَلَى نُوحٍ فِي الْعَالَمِينَ (And We left for him (a word of praise) among the later people, (that is): Salām be on Nūḥ among [the people of] all the worlds.). It means that, in

the sight of those who were born after Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام, he was made so revered that they would continue praying for his peace and well-being right through the last day of the Qiyāmah. As such, this is how it actually happened. All religions with attribution to Divine Scriptures subscribe to the mission of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام as a prophet and hold him in great reverence. In addition to Muslims, even Jews and Christians regard him as being their spiritual leader.

Verses 83 - 98

وَاِنَّ مِنْ شِيْعَتِهٖ لَاِبْرٰهِيْمَ ﴿٨٣﴾ اِذْ جَآءَ رَبَّهٗ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيْمٍ ﴿٨٤﴾ اِذْ قَالَ
لِاَبِيْهِ وَقَوْمِهٖ مَاذَا تَعْبُدُوْنَ ﴿٨٥﴾ اَئِفْكًا اٰلِهَةً دُوْنَ اللّٰهِ تُرِيْدُوْنَ ﴿٨٦﴾
فَمَا ظَنُّكُمْ بِرَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٨٧﴾ فَنَظَرَ نَظْرَةً فِى النُّجُوْمِ ﴿٨٨﴾ فَقَالَ
اِنِّىْ سَقِيْمٌ ﴿٨٩﴾ فَتَوَلَّوْا عَنْهُ مُدْبِرِيْنَ ﴿٩٠﴾ فَرَاغَ اِلٰٓى اٰلِهَتِهِمْ فَقَالَ
اَلَا تَاْكُلُوْنَ ﴿٩١﴾ مَا لَكُمْ لَا تَنْطِقُوْنَ ﴿٩٢﴾ فَرَاغَ عَلَيْهِمْ ضَرْبًا
بِالْيَمِيْنِ ﴿٩٣﴾ فَاَقْبَلُوْٓا اِلَيْهِ يَزِفُّوْنَ ﴿٩٤﴾ قَالَ اَتَعْبُدُوْنَ مَا تَنْحِتُوْنَ
﴿٩٥﴾ وَاللّٰهُ خَلَقَكُمْ وَمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٩٦﴾ قَالُوا ابْنُوْا لَهٗ بُنْيَانًا فَاَلْقُوْهُ
فِى الْجَحِيْمِ ﴿٩٧﴾ فَاَرَادُوْا بِهٖ كَيْدًا فَجَعَلْنٰهُمُ الْاَسْفَلِيْنَ ﴿٩٨﴾

And certainly from his adherents was Ibrāhīm. [83] **(Remember) when he came to his Lord with a pure heart,** [84] **when he said to his father and his people, "What is that which you worship? Do you wish (to have) fallacious gods other than Allah?** [86] **Then, what is your opinion about the Lord of the worlds?"** [87]

Then, he cast a look at the stars, [88] **and then said, "I feel indisposed"** [89] **So they departed from him, turning their backs.** [90] **And he made his way to their gods and said to them, "Why would you not eat?** [91] **What is wrong with you that you do not speak?"** [92] **Then he attacked them striking with his right hand.** [93] **Then, they (the idolaters) came to him rushing.** [94] **He said, "Do you worship what is carved by yourselves,** [95] **while Allah has created you and what you make?"** [96] **They said, "Build for him a structure, and throw him**

into the blazing fire." [97] **So, they intended to bring harm to him, but We made them the lowest (by frustrating their plan).** [98]

Commentary

After having related the event concerning Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام the Qur'ān mentions two events from the blessed life of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. Both events highlight the great sacrifices Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام offered for the sake of Allah alone. Out of these, the first event mentioned in the verses cited above relates to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام being thrown into the fire. Its details have already appeared in Sūrah Al-Anbiyā' (21: 51-70). Yet, the way it has been described at this place, it needs some explanatory notes that appear below.

The word: شِيْعَة (*shi'ah*) in verse 83: وَإِنَّ مِنْ شِيعَتِهِ لَإِبْرٰهِيمَ (And certainly from his adherents was Ibrāhīm.) is used in the Arabic language for a group or party the individuals from which are similar to each other in basic concepts and methods - and here it is obvious that the pronoun in: شِيعَتِهِ (*shi'atihi*) is reverting to Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام. Therefore, it would mean that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام adhered to the way of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام, the prophet preceding him, and that there was a perfect agreement between them on the basic principles of faith - and it is also possible that the religious codes they had could also be the same, or similar. Let us bear in mind that, according to some historical narratives, there is a gap of two thousand six hundred and forty years between them, and there was no prophet except Sayyidnā Hūd and Sayyidnā Ṣaliḥ عليه السلام during this period. (Kashshaf, p. 48, v. 4)

In verse 84, it was said: إِذْ جَاءَ رَبَّهُ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ (when he came to his Lord with a pure heart,). Here, 'coming to his Lord' means 'to turn to Allah, to zero in one's attention towards Him and to worship Him.' By placing the restriction of 'with a pure heart' it has been indicated that no act of devotion (*'ibādah*) to Allah is acceptable until the heart of the devotee is cleansed pure from false beliefs and ill intentions. If a certain act of devotion is performed while laced with some false belief, then, no matter how hard the devotee has worked in this process, it will still not be acceptable. Similarly, if the main purpose of the devotee happens not to be the seeking of the sole pleasure of Allah - but, is a simple show off or some material gain, then, that act of devotion is not praiseworthy. The

passion with which Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm ؑ turned towards Allah was free of all such adulterations.

In verses 88 and 89, it was said: فَنَظَرَ نَظْرَةً فِى النُّجُوْمِ فَقَالَ اِنِّى سَقِيْمٌ (Then, he cast a look at the stars, and then said, "I feel indisposed" 37:88-89). There is a background to these verses. The people of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm ؑ used to have a festival on a particular day. When that day came, they invited Sayyidnā Ibrahim to go with them and enjoy the festival. Their purpose was that if he accompanies them in the festival, he might be impressed with them and forget about calling them to his faith. (ad-Durr-ul-Manthūr, Ibn Jarīr and others). But, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm ؑ had something else on his mind. He wanted to make use of this occasion to pursue an agenda of his own. He thought when all these people go to celebrate their festival, he would have the time to go into their temple and break their idols, so that when they returned, they would see the helplessness of their false gods with their own eyes. It was quite possible that this scenario makes someone's heart lit with the spark of true faith and, may be, he repents and shies away from shirk. This being his aim, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm ؑ refused to go with them. But, he chose a particular method of saying 'no' to his people when he cast a full, animated look at the stars (expressed in the text by saying: فِى النُّجُوْمِ [*fī-n-nujūm*: into the stars] as explained below) and then said that he was indisposed. His people took his excuse to be valid, left him alone and went away to enjoy their festival.

Several exegetic and juristic issues are related with this event. A gist is being presented here.

The purpose of casting a glance at the stars

The first debatable issue is to determine the purpose for which Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm ؑ cast a glance at the stars before he could give an answer. Some commentators have said that this happened as a matter of chance. When someone has something important on his mind, there are occasions he would start looking at the sky quite unintentionally. At the time Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm ؑ was invited to come to the festival, he was left thinking as to how could he excuse himself out of this invitation. It was in this state of indecision that he, quite involuntarily, cast a glance towards the stars and, only after that, came his response. This explanation of casting a glance towards the stars apparently seems to be

cloudless. But, in view of the style of the noble Qur'ān, it is difficult to call it correct. First of all because the style of the Qur'ān is such that it limits itself to the narration of only important and necessary units of events while it leaves off details that are unnecessary . Even in these very verses under study, several units of the events have been elided to the extent that its entire background was also not spelt out. Therefore, it is not possible to believe that the Qur'ān would have left out the background of this event, lest it becomes too long while it would take an absolutely involuntary action not even distantly related to the event and describe it in a whole verse. Secondly, if no particular wise consideration was in sight while casting a glance towards the stars, instead, it had happened involuntarily - then, according to the grammatical rules of the Arabic language, one would say: فَنَظَرَ نَظْرَةً إِلَى النُّجُوْمِ and not: فِي النُّجُوْمِ as in the text.

This tells us that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام did have some particular expedient consideration before him in having a glance at the stars, and that is why the noble Qur'ān has mentioned it with such stress on its importance. Now the question is: What was that expedient consideration? In answer, most commentators have said that the people of Ibrāhīm عليه السلام believed in astrology and used to do everything they had to do by looking at stars. The purpose behind the answer that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام gave by looking at the stars was to let his people understand that the statement being given by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام about his indisposition was not something unfounded, instead, what he was saying was being said on the basis of his assessment of the movement of stars. Although, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was not a believer in astrology personally, but the method he used functionally in order to avoid his participation in the festival was precisely what would appear trustworthy in their sight - and since he made no reference to astrology verbally, nor did he declare that his aim was to seek help from his knowledge of stars - instead, what he did was no more than having looked at the stars rather fully - therefore, this also had no aspect of some lie in it.

Here, one may doubt that this act of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام might have encouraged disbelievers who were not only believers in astrology, in fact, took stars to be effective agents in the events of the world. But, this doubt can be answered by saying that the likelihood of an encouragement was possible only when Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام would have not clearly

warned them on their erroneous conduct later on. Here, this entire plan was being enacted for the sole purpose that the invitation to pure monotheism be communicated to them in the most effective manner possible. Hence, it was after a short while that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام laid bare every possible error of their conduct before his people. Therefore, there is no question of providing encouragement to disbelievers simply on the basis of this ambiguous act. Here the purpose was to get rid of the compulsion of having to participate in the festival so that effort could be made to create a conducing atmosphere to present the call of true faith. This method of considered ambiguity for the purpose in sight is based on nothing but wisdom - and no reasonable objection can be raised against it.

This explanation of casting a glance towards the stars has been reported from most commentators. Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavi has also gone by this very Tafsīr in Bayān-ul-Qur'ān.

Astrology: Its status in Islam

Another question which comes under this verse relates to the status astrology has in the Sharī'ah of Islam. A brief answer to this question is being submitted here.

At least this much is a settled matter that Allah Ta'ālā has placed specific properties in the Moon, Sun and the stars that affect human lives. Some of these are such as could be observed by everyone, for instance, the feeling of being hot or cold due to the Sun being near and far or the high and low tides of the seas due to the waxing and waning of the Moon and similar other phenomena. Now, some commentators just limit themselves to saying that the properties of these stars are no more than what we can gather from common observation - while there are others who say that there are some additional and particular properties in the position and movement of stars which affect most human matters. The moving of some star in a particular constellation becomes for some human beings the cause of happiness and success while the cause of sorrow and failure for some others. Then there are some people who believe that stars are the sole effective agents in the case of all successes and failures. And there are still others who say that there is no effective agent but Allah Ta'ālā, however, He has endowed stars with such properties, therefore, very much like other causes, they too serve as yet another cause of human successes and failures.

As for those who believe in stars being effective agents, and hold that events and revolutions of the world depend on stars alone, and they alone decide what happens in the world - their notion is wrong and false without any doubt. In fact, this belief takes one to the borderline of *shirk* (the ascribing of partners to the pristine divinity of Allah). This was the kind of belief the people of Arabia entertained in the matter of rains. According to them, a particular star (called: نوء : *naw'*) brought rains and it was an effective agent as far as rains are concerned. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has strongly refuted this belief the detailed description of which appears in *aḥādīth*.

Now, there remains the thinking of people who, for all intents and purposes, do believe that Allah Ta'ālā is the ultimate effective agent in world events, yet they also subscribe to the view that the Almighty has endowed stars with such properties which affect human lives in the degree of a general cause. For example, as far as rain is concerned, it is Allah alone who brings it, but clouds happen to be the obvious cause of rains. Similarly, the real fountainhead of all successes and failures is no other but the will of Allah Ta'ālā. But, these stars become the cause of those successes and failures. Hence, this thinking is no *shirk* - and neither do the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth confirm or reject it. Therefore, it is not too far out to think that Allah Ta'ālā might as well have embedded some such effects in the position, movement, rising and setting of stars. But, the acquiring of the knowledge of astrology in order to pursue and discover these effects, and then placing reliance on this knowledge, and then issuing decrees for the future on that basis is, after all, prohibited and impermissible and *aḥādīth* forbid it. According to a narration of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

إِذَا ذُكِرَ الْقَدْرُ فَامْسِكُوْا وَإِذَا ذُكِرَتِ النُّجُوْمُ فَامْسِكُوْا وَإِذَا ذُكِرَ اَصْحَابِیْ فَامْسِكُوْا

(تخریج احیاء العلوم للعراقی بحوالۂ طبرانی وهو حدیث حسنه العراقی)

> When destiny is mentioned - observe restraint; and when stars are mentioned - observe restraint; and when my Companions are mentioned - observe restraint [that is, do not deliberate or debate or dwell on differences]. 'Iraqi on Iḥyā'-ul-'Ulum, with reference to Ṭabarānī, and rating as 'ḥasan')

And Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ said:

تَعَلَّمُوا مِنَ النُّجُوْمِ مَا تَهْتَدُوْنَ بِهٖ فِی الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ ثُمَّ اَمْسِكُوْا (احیاء علوم الدین للغزالیؒ)

Acquire knowledge of stars to the extent you are guided right on land and at sea - then, stop. ('Iḥyā'-ul-'Ulum -Ghazzālī)

This prohibition does not necessitate rejection of properties and effects of stars. But, any relentless digging into these properties and effects - and wasting precious time while hankering after these is what has been prohibited. Imām al-Ghazali has, while discussing this subject in Iḥyā'-ul-'Ulum, identified several elements of wisdom behind this prohibition.

The first wise consideration under which astrology has been declared as blameworthy and prohibited lies in a person's accelerated devotion to it. Experience bears out that once this happens, he gradually starts taking stars as the be-all and end-all of everything, and this false perception then drags him on to the polytheistic belief of taking stars as the real effective agents.

Then there is yet another wise consideration behind it. Even if Allah Ta'ālā has placed some properties and effects in the stars, we have, on our part, no certain source of knowledge about these, except through wahy or revelation. It appears in *aḥādīth* about Sayyidnā Idrīs عليه السلام (Enoch) that Allah Ta'ālā had given him some knowledge of this nature. But, that knowledge based on Divine revelation (*waḥy*) is no more there in this world. Now, whatever the so-called experts of astrology have with them is merely a collection of inferences, conjectures and whims based on which no certain knowledge can be acquired. This is the reason why countless predictions of astrologers keep being proved false. Someone has made a lively comment on this field of knowledge by saying:

مفیدہ' غیر معلوم و معلومہ غیر مفید

The useful of it is unknown, and the known of it is useless!

'Allāmah 'Ālūsi has, in his Tafsīr Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī, has cited several examples from historical events where the way an event should have transpired under the accepted rules of astrology came, in reality, to transpire almost contrarily. Therefore, so many great people that devoted their lives to astrology were finally compelled to confess that the ultimate end of this field of knowledge is no more than conjectures and estimations.

A famous astrologer, Koshyar Dailami has written in his book al-Mujmal fi-l-Ahkam:

> "Astrology is a field of knowledge not supported by evidence, proof, or argument. It has a lot of leeway for human scruples and conjectures." (Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī, p. 116, v. 23)

'Allāmah 'Ālūsi has also reported similar sayings from several other scholars of astrology. Nevertheless, this much is settled that astrology is not a field of knowledge that could offer any degree of certainty. Countless probabilities of errors lurk behind it. But, what actually happens is that people who pursue this field of knowledge end up giving it status of a science that is absolute and certain. On this very basis they arrive at their decrees for the future, and because of it they go on to entertain good or bad opinions about others. Moreover, far serious is the false pride in this field that, on some occasions, pushes its votaries to start claiming that they have the knowledge of the unseen (*al-ghayb*). And it goes without saying that everything pointed to here generates all sorts of corruption.

There is yet another reason for the prohibition of astrology in that it amounts to allowing dear life to be consumed in a pursuit that has no benefit in the real sense. When one cannot have something certain come out of it, how is it going to be helpful in doing so many things one has to do in this world? Now, running after something useless for no valid reason is totally against the spirit and temperament of the Shari'ah of Islam. Therefore, it has been prohibited.

How to explain the 'indisposition' of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام ?

The third problem that emerges from this verse relates to the statement of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. In response to the invitation of his people, he said: إِنِّى سَقِيمٌ (I feel indisposed). Now the question is: Was he really sick at that time? In the Qur'ān, there is no clarification about it. But, from a Ḥadīth of the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī it seems that he was not so sick at that time as would make him unable to go with his people. Therefore, we have to determine as to how could he say that.

The answer to that, according to the majority of commentators, is that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام had really employed the mode of توریہ : *tauriyah* (equivocation). Tauriyah means: 'To say something that is apparently

counter to the actual fact, but the speaker means a remote sense in it that matches the actual fact.' Here, the apparent sense of the remark made by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام is that 'Right now, I am sick.' But, this is not what he really meant. Now, what did he really mean? About this, commentators have expressed different opinions. Some said that it was prompted by his instinctive aversion at the sight of the polytheistic activities of his people. This view is supported by the fact that the word used here is: سَقِيم (*'saqim':* indisposed), a word that is much lighter than: مَرِيض (*marīḍ* : sick). This sense could be conveyed in English by saying: I am indisposed (as in the translation of the text). It is obvious that this sentence has ample room to incorporate the sense of instinctive aversion alluded to earlier.

And some commentators have said that by saying: إِنِّي سَقِيمٌ (*inni saqīm*), Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام intended to convey the sense of 'I am going to be sick' for the reason that, in the Arabic language, the form of active participle noun (*ism-u-l-fa'il*) is frequently used for the future tense. In the Qur'ān itself, it was said while addressing the Holy Prophet ﷺ: إِنَّكَ مَيِّتٌ وَّإِنَّهُم مَّيِّتُونَ (which can be literally translated in terms of the outwardly apparent words by saying: 'You too are dead and they too are dead.' But, as obvious, it means: "Certainly, you will die and they [too] will die - (Az-Zumar, 39:30). Similarly, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام had said: إِنِّي سَقِيمٌ (inni saqim) only to convey the sense of 'I am going to be sick' and he said that because one has to fall sick some or the other time much before death comes. Even if someone does not suffer from a regular sickness, even then, one is temperamentally disturbed before death that is something inevitable.

If someone is not satisfied with these interpretations, then the best explanation is that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was really somewhat indisposed at that time, but his indisposition was not such as would have prevented him from participating in the festival Actually, he talked about his casual indisposition in a particular setting where his listeners thought he was suffering from some major disease because of which he was really unable to go with them. This explanation of the equivocation used by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام is most reasonable and satisfactory.

This explication also makes it clear that the use of the word: كَذِبَة(*kadhibah*: lie) for the statement: إِنِّي سَقِيمٌ (inni saqim) uttered by

Sayyidnā Ibrahim, as is reported in the Ḥadīth of Bukhārī, actually means " (توریہ : equivocation) which has the apparent form of a lie but it is no lie in terms of the sense intended by the speaker. In some narrations of this very Ḥadīth, the following words have also appeared:

مَا مِنْهَا كَذِبَةٌ اِلَّا مَاحَلَّ بِهَا عَنْ دِيْنِ اللّٰهِ

Out of these, there is no lie that has not been spoken for the sake of defending and supporting the religion of Allah.

These words are self-explanatory. They tell us that the word *'kadhib'* or lie in the Ḥadīth carries a sense that is separate from its common meaning. A slightly detailed discussion regarding this very Ḥadīth has already appeared in the commentary on Sūrah Al-Anbiyā' under the verse: قَالَ بَلْ فَعَلَهُ كَبِيْرُهُمْ (He said Rather, this is done by this chief of theirs - 21:63). (Ma'āriful-Qur'ān, volume VI)

The Islamic legal ruling on (equivocation)

Also from these very verses comes the ruling that resorting to tauriyah on occasions of need is permissible. One form of *tauriyah* is verbal, that is, saying something the apparent sense of which is counter to the actual fact, while the inward sense corresponds to it. Then there is the practical *tauriyah,* that is, to act in a manner that makes the onlooker interpret one's intention in a certain way while, in reality, one's intention is quite different. This is also known as: اِیْہَام (*'iham*). When Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm ﷺ cast a glance towards the stars, it was 'iham. (as held by most commentators) and calling himself sick was *tauriyah* or equivocation.

On specific occasions of need, resorting to both these kinds of *tauriyah* stands proved from the Holy Prophet ﷺ in person. When he was on his journey of *hijrah*, and the disbelievers were looking for him frantically, someone en route asked Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ؓ about the Holy Prophet ﷺ. He answered by saying: هُوَهَادٍ يَّهْدِيْنِي (He is my guide. He shows me the way). From his answer, the listener gathered that he was referring to him as some usual pathfinder or guide (hired for this purpose in travel through unknown desert terrain). Therefore, he did not bother and went his way - although, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ؓ had still not surrendered the truth of the matter that he was his religious and spiritual guide or leader.

Similarly , says Sayyidnā Ka'b Ibn Mālik ؓ, 'when the Holy Prophet

ﷺ had to go in a certain direction for Jihad, he would, while coming out of Madīnah, rather than go in his intended direction, would start marching towards some other direction - so that onlookers do not find out the correct destination towards which he was really headed (Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim and others). This was practical tauriyah (equivocation) and *'īham*.

On occasions of good cheer and light humor too, *tauriyah* stands proved from the Holy Prophet ﷺ. According to narration from the Shamā'il of Tirmidhī, the Holy Prophet ﷺ humorously said to an old woman, "No old woman will go to Paradise." That woman became very anxious. Then he explained that he meant that the old women will not go Paradise in the state of their old age - yes, they will go there after having turned young.

Verses 99 - 113

وَقَالَ اِنِّیْ ذَاهِبٌ اِلٰی رَبِّیْ سَیَهْدِیْنِ ﴿٩٩﴾ رَبِّ هَبْ لِیْ مِنَ الصّٰلِحِیْنَ ﴿١٠٠﴾ فَبَشَّرْنٰهُ بِغُلٰمٍ حَلِیْمٍ ﴿١٠١﴾ فَلَمَّا بَلَغَ مَعَهُ السَّعْیَ قَالَ یٰبُنَیَّ اِنِّیْۤ اَرٰی فِی الْمَنَامِ اَنِّیْۤ اَذْبَحُكَ فَانْظُرْ مَاذَا تَرٰی ؕ قَالَ یٰۤاَبَتِ افْعَلْ مَا تُؤْمَرُ ؗ سَتَجِدُنِیْۤ اِنْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ مِنَ الصّٰبِرِیْنَ ﴿١٠٢﴾ فَلَمَّاۤ اَسْلَمَا وَتَلَّهٗ لِلْجَبِیْنِ ﴿١٠٣﴾ وَنَادَیْنٰهُ اَنْ یّٰۤاِبْرٰهِیْمُ ﴿١٠٤﴾ قَدْ صَدَّقْتَ الرُّءْیَا ۚ اِنَّا كَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِی الْمُحْسِنِیْنَ ﴿١٠٥﴾ اِنَّ هٰذَا لَهُوَ الْبَلٰٓؤُا الْمُبِیْنُ ﴿١٠٦﴾ وَفَدَیْنٰهُ بِذِبْحٍ عَظِیْمٍ ﴿١٠٧﴾ وَتَرَكْنَا عَلَیْهِ فِی الْاٰخِرِیْنَ ﴿١٠٨﴾ سَلٰمٌ عَلٰۤی اِبْرٰهِیْمَ ﴿١٠٩﴾ كَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِی الْمُحْسِنِیْنَ ﴿١١٠﴾ اِنَّهٗ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُؤْمِنِیْنَ ﴿١١١﴾ وَبَشَّرْنٰهُ بِاِسْحٰقَ نَبِیًّا مِّنَ الصّٰلِحِیْنَ ﴿١١٢﴾ وَبٰرَكْنَا عَلَیْهِ وَعَلٰۤی اِسْحٰقَ ؕ وَمِنْ ذُرِّیَّتِهِمَا مُحْسِنٌ وَّظَالِمٌ لِّنَفْسِهٖ مُبِیْنٌ ﴿١١٣﴾

And he said, "I am going to my Lord. He will show me the way. [99] **O my Lord, bless me with a righteous son."**

[100] **So, We gave him the good news of a forbearing boy.** [101] **Thereafter, when he reached an age in which he could work with him, he said, "O my little son, I have seen in a dream that I am slaughtering you, so consider, what do you think? " He said, "O my dear father, do what you have been ordered to do. You will find me, insha'Allah, (if Allah wills) one of those who endure patiently."** [102] **So, (it was a great episode) when both of them submitted themselves (to Allah's will), and he laid him on his forehead** [103] **and then We called out to him, "O Ibrāhīm, you did make the dream come true." This is how We reward those who are good in deeds.** [104] **This was indeed a trial that clearly demonstrated (their obedience).** [106] **And We ransomed him with a great sacrifice.** [107] **and We left for him (a word of praise) among the later people,** [108] **(that is,)" Salam be on Ibrahim!** [109] **This is how We reward those who are good in deeds.** [110] **Surely, he is among Our believing servants.** [111] **And We gave him the good news of Isḥāq, a prophet from among the righteous.** [112] **And We did bless him, and Isḥāq - and among the progeny of both of them, some are good and some are utterly unjust to their own selves.** [113]

Commentary

The sacrifice of a son

Another event in the blessed life of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام has been described in the verses cited above. This is the event of the sacrifice of his first-born son in the way of Allah.

Explanatory Notes on the verses

The first verse (99) opens with the words: ... وَقَالَ إِنِّىٓ ذَاهِبٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّى (And he said, "I am going to my Lord...). Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام said this at a time when he was totally disappointed by his countrymen, for nobody except Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام, his nephew, was willing to believe in him. The statement: دارالكفر (I am going to my Lord) means that he will leave the abode of disbelief and go to a place whereto Allah Ta'ālā has commanded him to go, a place where he will be able to worship his Lord in peace. So, he started on a journey accompanied by his blessed wife, Sayyidah Sārah رضى الله عنها and his nephew, Sayyidnā Lūṭ. After having passed through different areas of Iraq, he finally reached Syria. Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام had no children until then, therefore, he made the prayer mentioned in the next verse (100).

He said: رَبِّ هَبْ لِيْ مِنَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ (O my Lord, bless me with a righteous son."- 100). His prayer was answered and Allah Ta'ālā gave him the good news of the birth of a son.

Thus, by saying 'forbearing' in: فَبَشَّرْنٰهُ بِغُلٰمٍ حَلِيْمٍ (So, We gave him the good news of a forbearing boy- 101), it was indicated that this newborn would demonstrate such patience, control and forbearance in his life as would be exemplary in the world. The birth of this son had a background of its own. When Sayyidah Sārah رضی اللہ عنہا realized that she is not being blessed with children, she took herself to be barren. On the other hand, the Pharaoh had given his daughter named Hajirah as gift to Sayyidah Sārah, so that she could help her in household chores. Sayyidah Sārah passed on this very Hajirah as gift to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام who married her. Then the son mentioned here was born to this Hajirah and he was named Isma'īl عليه السلام.

In verse 102, it was said: فَلَمَّا بَلَغَ مَعَهُ السَّعْيَ قَالَ يٰبُنَيَّ اِنِّيْٓ اَرٰى فِي الْمَنَامِ اَنِّيْٓ اَذْبَحُكَ (Thereafter, when he reached an age in which he could work with him, he said, "O my little son, I have seen in a dream that I am slaughtering you, so consider, what do you think?"). From some narrations, it appears that this dream was shown to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام for three consecutive days (Qurṭubī). Then, it already stands settled that the dream of blessed prophets is a revelation (*waḥy*). Therefore, this dream meant that Allah Ta'ālā was asking Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام to slaughter his firstborn son. For that matter, this command could have been revealed directly through an angel. But, the wisdom behind communicating it through a dream was to unravel the obedience of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام at its most sublime form. A command given through a dream could have a lot of room for interpretations and excuses by the human self. But, this was Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. He did not take to the way of excuses. On the contrary, he simply bowed down (sans interpretations, sans hesitations) before the command of his Lord. (Tafsīr Kabīr)

In addition to that, the purpose of the great Creator here was neither to have Sayyidnā Isma'īl عليه السلام be slaughtered actually, nor was it to make it binding upon Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام that he slaughters him ultimately, instead, the purpose was to give the command that he should, on his part, do everything necessary to slaughter him and take all steps leading to his slaughter. Now, had this command been given to him

verbally, it would disclose that the actual slaughter is not intended, and the element of test would have remained missing. Therefore, he was shown in a dream that he was slaughtering his son. From this Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام understood that what he was been commanded with is slaughter - and he was all set for it literally and comprehensively. Thus, the element of trial went the full circle, and the dream also came true. So, as said earlier, if this thing were to come through a verbal command, either there would have been no test, or the command would have to be abrogated afterwards.

How hard this test was! It is to allude to this aspect that Allah Ta'ālā has placed additional words in the statement here: فَلَمَّا بَلَغَ مَعَهُ السَّعْيَ (Thereafter, when he reached an age in which he could work with him, - 102). In other words, it could be said that he was commanded to sacrifice his son he had so wistfully prayed for at a time when this son was old enough to walk by the side of his father, and the days when he could become the right arm of his father were not far. Commentators say that the age of Sayyidnā Isma'īl عليه السلام was thirteen years at that time. Some others say that he had crossed the age of puberty. (Tafsīr Maẓharī)

In the next sentence of verse 102, it was said: فَانْظُرْ مَاذَا تَرٰى (So consider, what do you think?) When Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام posed this question before Sayyidnā Isma'īl عليه السلام he really had no hesitation about carrying out the Divine command. In fact, he wanted to accomplish two things by doing so. Firstly, he wanted to test his son as to the extent to which he was ready to face this trial. Secondly, the noble prophets عليهم السلام always have a way of their own - they are prepared to carry out Divine commands at all times. But, they always opt for methods that are suitable in such obedience, methods that are based on wisdom and all possible convenience. Had Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام started laying down his son in readiness for slaughter without having said any thing to him or having heard any thing from him in advance, it would have caused difficulties for both of them. Now, this thing that he said to him was in the spirit and manner of a tender consultation with his son. What he intended thereby was to let his son become aware of the command of Allah in advance, so that he is all prepared to endure the pain of being slaughtered well before the zero hour comes. Moreover, even if there emerged some hesitation in the heart of his son, there will still be the time to make him understand

the situation. (Rūḥ-ul- Ma'ānī and Bayān-ul-Qur'ān)

But, that son was no less than the son of the Friend of Allah, and the one who himself was bound to rise to the office and station of a prophet. In his answer, he said: يٰٓاَبَتِ افْعَلْ مَا تُؤْمَرُ (O my dear father, do what you have been ordered to do - 102). Not only that this statement provides an evidence of the unique passion of Sayyidnā Isma'īl عليه السلام to surrender his life in the way of Allah, it also shows the kind of intelligence and knowledge Allah Ta'ālā had blessed him with at such a tender age. It should be borne in mind that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام had not referred to any command from Allah before him, in fact, had mentioned a dream only. But, Sayyidnā Isma'īl عليه السلام got the point. He understood that the dream of a prophet is a revelation (*waḥy*) - and this dream too was, in reality, a form of Divine command as such. Hence, in his response, rather than mention the dream, he referred to the Divine order.

The proof of 'revelation not recited' (وحی غیرمتلو : *waḥy ghayr matluww*)

Right from here comes a clear refutation of those who deny the authority of Ḥadīth and who do not accept the existence of any revelation that is not recited. They say that wahy or revelation is only that which has been revealed in the Scripture, the Book of Allah - other than that, no other form or kind of revelation exists. You have already noticed that the command to sacrifice his son was given to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام through a dream, and Sayyidnā Isma'īl عليه السلام had declared it to be the command of Allah in very clear words. Now, if 'the revelation not recited' (*waḥy ghayr matluww*) is nothing, then where did this command come from and in which Scriptures was it revealed?

After that, Sayyidnā Isma'īl عليه السلام also gave an assurance to his great father from his own side by saying: سَتَجِدُنِيْٓ اِنْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ مِنَ الصّٰبِرِيْنَ (You will find me, *insha'Allah,* [if Allah wills] one of those who endure patiently."- 102). Just look at the extreme etiquette and modesty demonstrated by Sayyidnā Isma'īl عليه السلام in this brief statement of his. First of all, by saying "*insha'Allah*" (if Allah wills), he entrusted the matter with Allah Ta'ālā, and thus he eliminated any flair of having made a boastful claim through this promise. Then, he could have also said: 'You will, *insha'Allah,* find me enduring.' But, he did not say that. What he actually said was: "You will find me one of those who endure patiently."). Thereby he released the

hint that all this endurance and patience is no feat of his all alone, rather, there have been many more of those who have been enduring and patient - *insha'Allah*, he too will hope to become one of them. Thus, through this statement, he eliminated the possibility of any traces of pride, arrogance, egotism and conceit, rather replaced it with the finest in manners and modesty. (Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī) From here we learn the lesson that no matter how much confidence one has in one's own self, he should never make tall claims that smack of pride and bragging. If there is a compulsive need to have to say something of this nature, due attention should be paid to the choice of words that are being said. The best course is to shift the focus from one's own person and say what shows trust in Allah. In manners and attitudes too, one should try not to cut loose from the norms of modesty to the best of one's ability.

The word: أَسْلَمَ (*aslama*: both of them submitted) in verse 103: فَلَمَّآ أَسْلَمَا means to submit, bow down, become obedient, rendered ready to carry out the command. Hence, it releases the sense of having bowed down before the Divine command, that is, in plain words, the father resolved to slaughter the son and the son, to be slaughtered by him. At this place, the word used is: لَمَّا (*lamma*: when), but its apodosis or the complement of the condition has not been mentioned - in other words, it has not been said later on as to what happened when this thing came to pass. This releases a hint towards the uniqueness of this bold initiative of self-submission undertaken by the father and son - so unique that words just fail to convey a fuller description.

Some historical and exegetical reports tell us that the Shaitan tried to seduce Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام away from it three times and every time Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام pelted seven pebbles on him, and drove him away. Right through up to this day, on the three pillars of Minā, pebbles are thrown to commemorate this very endearing act. Finally, when both father and son reached the place of slaughter to offer this unique act of worship, Sayyidnā Isma'īl عليه السلام said to his father, "My dear father, tie me down well enough so that my body may not toss and turn too much; and also keep your dress protected, lest the drops of my blood spoil it which might reduce my reward with Allah, and moreover, if my mother were to see this blood, she will be virtually smitten with sorrow. And sharpen your knife, and run it fast over my throat, so that my last breath comes easy on

me, for death is hard; and when you return to my mother, pay my respects to her and should you wish to take my shirt to her, you are welcome to do so, may be it would give her the comfort she needs." Hearing these words coming from the lips of the only son a father has, who can imagine what would have been going on in his heart. But, here was Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. Like a mountain of fortitude, he says to his son, "Son, what a good helper you are for me in this task assigned by Allah." Saying this, he kissed his son and, with wet eyes, he tied him. (Maẓharī)

And then came the stage about which the text says: وَتَلَّهٗ لِلْجَبِيْنِ (and he laid him on his forehead - 103). According to an explanation of this statement as reported from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, 'he laid him down on his side in a manner that one edge of the forehead was touching the ground' (Maẓharī). Lexically, this explanation is weightier for the reason that the word: جَبِيْن (*jabīn*) is applied to the two curvatures of the forehead while the middle part of the forehead is called: جَبْهَة (*jabhah*). Therefore, Moulānā Thānavi has translated it carrying the sense of 'laying down on the side.' But, other respected commentators have explained it as 'laid him down on the ground face down.' Whatever be the case, the reason given in historical accounts for this manner of laying him down is that, initially, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام had laid him down face up. But, once he started moving the knife on his throat, it would not cut despite repeated efforts, because a copper plate had come as a barrier in between by the will of Allah. At that time, the son himself requested his father that he be laid down on the side face down for the reason that once he looked at him, his filial compassion unnerved his hand, and the throat is not cut as required. In addition to that, he said, when he looked at the knife, he too started feeling nervous. So Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام started using his knife in the manner he was told (Tafsīr Maẓharī). Allah knows best.

In verse 104, 105, it was said: وَنَادَيْنٰهُ اَنْ يّٰاِبْرٰهِيْمُ قَدْ صَدَّقْتَ الرُّءْيَا (and then We called out to him, "O Ibrāhīm, you did make the dream come true."), that is, in accomplishing the task entrusted with him in obedience to the command of Allah, he left nothing undone, in fact, did it perfectly to the letter (more likely so because in the dream too, it was shown that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام is simply moving his knife to slaughter his son). Now that test was over, so he should let him go.

By saying: إِنَّا كَذَٰلِكَ نَجْزِى الْمُحْسِنِينَ (This is how We reward those who are good in deeds - 110), the sense is, 'when a servant of Allah bows down before the command of Allah and is ready to sacrifice all personal thoughts and feelings, then, ultimately, We take care of him, so that he remains safe from whatever could have afflicted him here in this world, and as for the recompense and reward of the Hereafter, that We write down in his book of deeds.'

In verse 107, it was said: وَفَدَيْنَٰهُ بِذِبْحٍ عَظِيمٍ (And We ransomed him with a great sacrifice.). In Ḥadīth reports, it is said that on hearing this voice from the heavens, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام looked up and saw Sayyidnā Jibrā'il with a ram. From some reports, it appears that it was the same ram that was offered as sacrifice by Hābil (Abel), the son of Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام. Allah knows best. In short, a present of this ram of Paradise was made to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, and he sacrificed it in lieu of his son as commanded by Allah. This sacrificial animal was called: عَظِيم (*'aẓīm*: great) because it had come by way of mercy from Allah, and no one can entertain any doubt about the acceptance of its sacrifice. (Tafsīr Maẓharī, and others)

Which son was to be slaughtered? Was it Sayyidnā Isma'īl عليه السلام? Or, was it Sayyidnā Isḥāq?

The Tafsīr of the verses cited above has been described on the assumption that the son who was to be slaughtered was Sayyidnā Isma'īl عليه السلام. But, the truth of the matter is that there is a severe difference of opinion among commentators and historians about it. That this son was Sayyidnā Isḥāq عليه السلام has been reported from among the Ṣaḥābah by Sayyidnā 'Umar, Sayyidnā 'Alī, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd, Sayyidnā 'Abbās, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās and Sayyidnā Ka'b al-Aḥbār رضي الله عنهم, and from among the Tabi'īn by Sa'īd Ibn Jubayr, Qatādah, Masrīq, 'Ikrimah, 'Atā', Muqātil, Zuhri and Suddiyy رحمهم الله تعالى Counter to this is the narrations from Sayyidnā 'Alī, Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar, Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah and Sayyidnā Abū-ṭ-Ṭufayl from among the Ṣaḥābah, and Sa'īd Ibn Musaiyyab, Sa'īd Ibn Jubayr, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Mujāhid, 'Umar Ibn 'Abd-ul-'Azīz, Sha'bi, Muḥammad Ibn Ka'b al-Qurazi from among the Tabi'īn from whom it has been reported that that this son was Sayyidnā Isma'īl عليه السلام. It is to be noted that the names of Sayyidnā 'Alī, Ibn 'Abbās and Sa;id ibn Jubayr

appear in both groups. This is because reports of both views are attributed to them. (Usmānī)

Out of the latter commentators, Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Jarīr at-Ṭabarī has preferred the first view, while Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Kathīr and others have not only gone by the second view, but have also refuted the first one. Here, it is not possible to present a critique of arguments advanced by the two groups. Nevertheless, in terms of the descriptive arrangement of the noble Qur'ān and the strength of Ḥadīth narrations, the weightier view seems to be that the son of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام who was commanded to be slaughtered was but Sayyidnā Isma'īl عليه السلام. Relevant proof appears below:

1. After having reported the whole event relating to the sacrifice, the noble Qur'ān says in verse 112: وَبَشَّرْنٰهُ بِإِسْحٰقَ نَبِيًّا مِّنَ الصّٰلِحِينَ (And We gave him the good news of Isḥāq, a prophet from among the righteous). This clearly tells us that the son who was to be sacrificed under Divine command was someone else - other than Sayyidnā Isḥāq - and the glad tidings of the birth of Sayyidnā Isḥāq عليه السلام was given after the event of the sacrifice.

2. Mentioned in this very glad tidings relating to Sayyidnā Isḥāq عليه السلام is that he will be a prophet. In addition to this, it has been said in another verse that along with the glad tidings of the birth of Sayyidnā Isḥāq عليه السلام, it was also said that, later on, Sayyidnā Isḥāq will have a son - Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام: فَبَشَّرْنٰهَا بِإِسْحٰقَ وَمِن وَّرَآءِ إِسْحٰقَ يَعْقُوبَ (so, We gave her the good news about Isḥāq, and about Ya'qūb after Isḥāq - Hud, 11:71). It clearly shows that he will live a long life to the extent that he will be blessed with an offspring. How could he, then, be commanded to slaughter that very offspring - before becoming a prophet - which would have given Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام the understanding that he has to become a prophet and the birth of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام is due to come from his loins, therefore, the act of slaughtering cannot bring death to him. It is obvious that, in this situation, neither would this have been some major trial, nor had Sayyidnā Ibrahim been deserving of any praise on its implementation. This element of trial is possible only in a situation that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام fully realizes that his son will die as a result of this act of slaughtering, and only then he takes the initiative of slaughtering him. This whole thing perfectly falls into place in the case of Sayyidnā Isma'īl عليه السلام, because Allah Ta'ālā had made no prediction about his remaining alive and becoming a prophet.

3. From the statement of the Qur'ān it seems that the son who was to be slaughtered under Divine command was the first son of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. Therefore, while migrating from his homeland, he had prayed for a son. In answer to this prayer, he was given the good news that he will have a son who will be forbearing. Then, about this very boy it was said that, by the time he grew old enough to work with his father, came the Divine order that he be slaughtered. This whole chain of events is telling us that this boy was the first son of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. Now, it was Isma'īl عليه السلام who was the first son of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, while Sayyidnā Isḥāq عليه السلام was his second son. After that, no doubt remains about the fact that the son who was to be slaughtered under Divine order was but Sayyidnā Isma'īl عليه السلام.

4. Then, it is also nearly settled that this event of the sacrifice of a son has come to pass within the environs of Makkah al-Mukarramah. It is for this reason that the custom of sacrifice during the period of Ḥajj pilgrimage prevailed among the people of Arabia. In addition to that, the horns of the ram sent from Paradise as ransom for the son of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام have remained hanging in the Holy Ka'bah for years. Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Kathīr has reported several narrations in support, and has gone on to even quote 'Amir Sha'bi as saying: 'I have personally seen the horns of this ram in the Ka'bah' (Ibn Kathīr, p. 18, v. 4). And Sufyan says: 'The horns of this ram remained hanging in the Ka'bah continuously until when (during the time of Ḥajjāj Ibn Yūsuf) there was a fire in Ka'bah during which these horns were also burnt to ashes' (Ibn Kathīr, p. 17, v. 2). Now it becomes fairly obvious that Sayyidnā Isma'īl عليه السلام was the one living in Makkah al-Mukarramah - not Sayyidnā Isḥāq عليه السلام. Therefore, it is equally obvious that the command to slaughter related but to Sayyidnā Isma'īl عليه السلام - and not to Sayyidnā Isḥāq عليه السلام.

As for the narrations in which it has been said that different Ṣaḥāabah and tabi'in have declared Sayyidnā Isḥāq عليه السلام as the *dhabih* (the one to be slaughtered), Ibn Kathīr has said:

> 'Allah knows best, but evidently all these sayings have come from Ka'b al-Aḥbār. When he embraced Islam during the period of Sayyidnā 'Umar رضي الله عنه, he started telling him reports from his old (Jewish) books. On occasions, Sayyidnā 'Umar listened to what he had to say. This provided room for others too. They too heard his

narrations and started passing them on. These narrations were a bunch of absurdities. This ummah does not need even one word out of it. Allah knows best. - Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr, p. 17, v. 4)

This reasoning of Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Kathīr is fairly acceptable, because the basis of taking Sayyidnā Isḥāq عليه السلام to be the *dhabih* (the one to be slaughtered) rests on Isra'ilite reports that take Sayyidnā Isḥāq عليه السلام as dhabih instead of Sayyidnā Isma'īl عليه السلام. This event has been described in the current Bible in the following words:

"After these things God tested Abraham, and said to him, 'Abraham,' And he said, 'Here am I.' He said, 'Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering upon one of the mountains of which I shall tell you." (Genesis 22: 1,2)

Here, the event of the slaughter has been attributed to Sayyidnā Isḥāq عليه السلام. But, a little justice and proper investigation would reveal that the Jews have, following their traditional prejudice, interpolated in the text of the Torah - because, the word "your only son" in the very text of Genesis quoted above is telling us that the son whose sacrifice Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was ordered to make was his 'only' son. Later on, in the chapter, it also appears:

"you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me." (Genesis 22:12)

In this sentence too, it is explicitly said that this son was the 'only' son of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. On the other hand, it is already established that Sayyidnā Isḥāq عليه السلام was not his 'only' son. If the word 'only' can be applied to anyone, it has to be Sayyidnā Isma'īl عليه السلام alone. There are several other textual evidences from the Book of Genesis itself that bear testimony to the fact that the birth of Sayyidnā Isma'īl عليه السلام had taken place much before the birth of Sayyidnā Isḥāq عليه السلام. For example:

"Now Sarai, Abram's wife, bore him no children. She had an Egyptian maid whose name was Hagar; and Sarai said to Abram, ' Behold now, the Lord has prevented me from bearing children; go in to my maid; it may be that I shall obtain children by her....And he went in to Hagar, and she conceived....And the angel of the Lord said to her, 'Behold, you are with child, and shall bear a son; you shall call his name Ishmael;...Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram." (Genesis 16: 1-4 and 10-16)

In the next chapter, it appears:

> "And God said to Abraham, 'As for Sarai your wife,...I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her;...Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said to himself, " Shall a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child? And Abraham said to God, ' O that Ishmael might live in thy sight!' God said, 'No, but Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac." (Genesis 17:15-20)

After that, the birth of Sayyidnā Isḥāq عليه السلام has been described as follows:

> "Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him." (Genesis 21:5)

It becomes very clear from the texts quoted above that Sayyidnā Isḥāq عليه السلام was fourteen years younger than Sayyidnā Isma'īl عليه السلام - and during this period of fourteen years, he was the 'only' son of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. Contrary to this, there was no time in the life of Sayyidnā Isḥāq عليه السلام when he could be taken as the 'only' son of his father. Now, after that, when the Book of Genesis mentions the sacrifice of the son in chapter 22, we see that the word 'your only son' as used here is testifying to the fact that it means Sayyidnā Isma'īl عليه السلام while some Jewish scribe has added the word: "Issac" with it so that the line of Isḥāq - and not the line of Isma'īl عليه السلام - receives this honor.

In addition to that, in this very Book of Genesis in the Bible, where Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام has been given the good news of the birth of Sayyidnā Isḥāq عليه السلام, it has also been mentioned there:

> "I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall come from her"(Genesis 17:16) *

Now, in the matter of a son about whom it has already been announced that he will have children and nations will come from his progeny, how can an order be given that he should be sacrificed? This too

*. These extracts are taken from the revised standard version of the Bible published by the British and Foreign Bible Society 1952. And the next sentence in Genesis 17:19 is more clear on the point that the long life of Sayyidnā Isḥāq عليه السلام was predicted well before his birth. It says, " I will establish my covenant with him (Isaac) as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him." (Muhammad Taqi Usmani)

tells us that this command related to Sayyidnā Isma'īl عليه السلام and not to Sayyidnā Isḥāq عليه السلام.

After having seen these statements in the Bible, one comes to realize the truth of what Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Kathīr has said:

> "It has been clearly stated in the sacred books of the Jewish people that, at the time Sayyidnā Isma'īl عليه السلام was born, the age of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was eighty six years and when Sayyidnā Isḥāq عليه السلام was born, his age was one hundred years. Then, it is also written in their books that Allah Ta'ālā had commanded Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام to slaughter his only son - and in another copy of the text, the word "firstborn" has been used instead of "only." So, the Jews have added the word "Isḥāq" on their own by way of malignant imputation. There is no justification in declaring it as correct, because it is counter to what their books clearly say. They have added this word for the reason that Sayyidnā Isḥāq عليه السلام is their venerable forefather, while Sayyidnā Isma'īl عليه السلام is that of the Arabs. So envy drove them to add this word, while now they explain "only" as meaning: "the son, other than whom, there is no one else present with you at that time" - because, Sayyidnā Isma'īl عليه السلام and his mother were not present there at that time (therefore, given that sense, Sayyidnā Isḥāq could be called "only"). But, this interpretation is totally wrong amounting to a distortion of the text, because the word "only" is applied to a son whose father has no son other than him." - Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr, p. 14, v. 4.

The same Ibn Kathīr has also reported that someone from among the Jewish scholars had converted to Islam during the time of the pious caliph, 'Umar Ibn 'Abdul-'Azīz who asked him, "Which of the sons of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was it who was commanded to be slaughtered?" He said, "By Allah, O Commander of the faithful, he was Sayyidnā Isma'īl عليه السلام. The Jews know it well. But, they say so because of their envy for you Arabs." (Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr, p. 14, v. 14)

In the light of these proofs, it is almost certain that Sayyidnā Isma'īl عليه السلام was the dhabih (the son Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was commanded to slaughter). Allah is Pure and He knows best.

In the last verse, it was said: وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِهِمَا مُحْسِنٌ وَّظَالِمٌ لِّنَفْسِهٖ مُبِيْنٌ (and among the progeny of both of them, some are good and some are utterly unjust to their own selves.- 37:113). Refuted through this verse is the false pride of the Jews that being among the progeny of these noble prophets عليهم السلام

is in itself sufficient to bless one with merit and salvation. This verse openly declares that having lineal connection with a man of virtue is not a sufficient guarantee of one's salvation, in fact, this thing depends on one's own beliefs and deeds.

Verses 114 - 122

وَلَقَدْ مَنَنَّا عَلٰى مُوسٰى وَهٰرُوْنَ ﴿١١٤﴾ وَنَجَّيْنٰهُمَا وَقَوْمَهُمَا مِنَ
الْكَرْبِ الْعَظِيْمِ ﴿١١٥﴾ وَنَصَرْنٰهُمْ فَكَانُوْا هُمُ الْغٰلِبِيْنَ ﴿١١٦﴾
وَاٰتَيْنٰهُمَا الْكِتٰبَ الْمُسْتَبِيْنَ ﴿١١٧﴾ وَهَدَيْنٰهُمَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيْمَ
﴿١١٨﴾ وَتَرَكْنَا عَلَيْهِمَا فِى الْاٰخِرِيْنَ ﴿١١٩﴾ سَلٰمٌ عَلٰى مُوْسٰى
وَهٰرُوْنَ ﴿١٢٠﴾ اِنَّا كَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِى الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ﴿١٢١﴾ اِنَّهُمَا مِنْ
عِبَادِنَا الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿١٢٢﴾

And We did bestow favors upon Mūsā and Hārūn, [114] **and We delivered them and their people from the great agony,** [115] **and We helped them, so they became victors,** [116] **and We gave them the clear book,** [117] **and guided them to the straight path.** [118] **And We left for them (a word of praise) among the later people ,** [119] **(that is,) Salam on Mūsā and Hārūn!** [120] **This is how We reward those who are good in deeds.** [121] **Surely, both of them are among Our believing servants.** [122]

Commentary

Described in the verses cited above is the third event relating to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and Hārūn عليه السلام. It has appeared in details at several places. Here it serves as an indicator. The purpose is to tell how Allah Ta'ālā helps out His sincere and obedient servants, and how He bestows so many of His rewards on them. Mentioned here are His favors bestowed upon Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and Hārūn عليه السلام. These favors are of two kinds. First come positive favors that bring benefits as in: وَلَقَدْ مَنَنَّا عَلٰى مُوْسٰى وَهٰرُوْنَ (And We did bestow favors upon Mūsā and Hārūn - 37:114). This points out towards those beneficial favors. Then there are negative favors that save from loss or harm. Later verses spell out details of the other kind.

Verses 123 - 132

وَاِنَّ اِلۡيَاسَ لَمِنَ الۡمُرۡسَلِيۡنَ ﴿١٢٣﴾ اِذۡ قَالَ لِقَوۡمِهٖۤ اَلَا تَتَّقُوۡنَ ﴿١٢٤﴾
اَتَدۡعُوۡنَ بَعۡلًا وَّتَذَرُوۡنَ اَحۡسَنَ الۡخٰلِقِيۡنَ ﴿١٢٥﴾ اللّٰهَ رَبَّكُمۡ وَرَبَّ
اٰبَآئِكُمُ الۡاَوَّلِيۡنَ ﴿١٢٦﴾ فَكَذَّبُوۡهُ فَاِنَّهُمۡ لَمُحۡضَرُوۡنَ ﴿١٢٧﴾ اِلَّا عِبَادَ
اللّٰهِ الۡمُخۡلَصِيۡنَ ﴿١٢٨﴾ وَتَرَكۡنَا عَلَيۡهِ فِى الۡاٰخِرِيۡنَ ﴿١٢٩﴾ سَلٰمٌ
عَلٰۤى اِلۡ يَاسِيۡنَ ﴿١٣٠﴾ اِنَّا كَذٰلِكَ نَجۡزِى الۡمُحۡسِنِيۡنَ ﴿١٣١﴾ اِنَّهٗ
مِنۡ عِبَادِنَا الۡمُؤۡمِنِيۡنَ ﴿١٣٢﴾

And surely, Ilyās (Eliah) is one of the messengers. [123] **(Remember) when he said to his people: "Do you not fear Allah? Do you invoke Ba'l, and ignore the Best of the creators,** [125] **that is, Allah who is your Lord and the Lord of your forefathers?"** [126] **Then they rejected him. Therefore, they will be arraigned -** [127] **except the chosen servants of Allah.** [128] **And We left for him (a word of praise) among the later people,** [129] **(that is,) "Salam on Ilyāsin (Ilyās).** [130] **This is how We reward those who are good in deeds.** [131] **Surely, he is from among Our believing servants.** [132]

Commentary

Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام

Described in the verses cited above is the fourth event relating to Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام. Before we take up the explanation of these verses, a few bits of information about Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام are being given below.

Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام has been mentioned in the noble Qur'ān only at two places: Firstly, in Sūrah Al-An'ām (6:85) and secondly, in these very verses of Sūrah Aṣ-Ṣaffāt (37:123) and (37:130). As for the reference in Sūrah Al-An'am, his good name appears there only as part of a list of righteous prophets, and no event finds mention there. However, at this place in the present Sūrah, an event relating to his mission and call has been described very briefly.

Since details about the personal antecedents of Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام do not find mention in the noble Qur'ān, nor do these appear in authentic

aḥādīth, different sayings and variant narrations about him are found in books of Tafsīr, most of which have been taken from Isra'īlī narratives.

A small group of commentators holds that 'Ilyās' is simply another name of Sayyidnā Idrīs عليه السلام (Enoch), and there is no difference between these two persons. Some others have also said that there is no difference between Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام and Sayyidnā Khaḍir عليه السلام (ad-Durr-ul-Manthūr, pp. 285, 286, v. 5). But, researchers have refuted these sayings. The Qur'ān too has mentioned Sayyidnā Idris and Sayyidnā Khaḍir عليه السلام separately in a manner that it leaves no room for declaring these two as being the same. Therefore, what Hafiz Ibn Kathīr has adjudged as correct is but that both of them are two separate messengers (al-bidāyah wa-n-nihāyah, p. 339, v. 1).

When and where did he appear?

The Qur'ān and Ḥadīth also do not tell us as to when and where he appeared. But, historical and Isra'ilite narratives almost concur that he was sent to the Banī Isra'īl after Ḥizqil عليه السلام (Ezekiel), and before Al-Yasa' عليه السلام. This was a time when the kingdom of Bani Isra'īl had split into two states. One part was called Yahudiyah (Judah) with its capital at Baytul-Maqdis (Jerusalem) while the other part was known as Isra'īl, and its capital was Samaria (present Nablus). Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام was born at Jal'ād in Jordan. The name of the king who ruled the Isra'īl has been given as Ahab in the Bible and Ajib or Akhib in Arab historical and exegetic writings. His wife Isabelle worshiped an idol called Ba'l, and it was she who had put the entire Banī Isra'īl on the path of idolatry by raising a huge altar dedicated to Ba'l in the country of Isra'īl. Allah Ta'ālā commanded Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام to go in that area, preach pure monotheism and dissuade Israelites from indulging in idol worship (please see Tafsīr Ibn Jarīr, p. 53, v. 23; Ibn Kathīr, p. 19, v. 4; Tafsīr Maẓharī, p. 134, v. 8 and the Bible: Kings I: 16:29-33 and 17:1).

Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام: The struggle with his people

Very much like other noble prophets عليهم السلام Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام too had to engage in a severe struggle with his people. Since the noble Qur'ān is no book of history, therefore, rather than describe details of this struggle, it restricts itself to saying only that which was necessary for taking a lesson. In other words, his people belied him, and no one except a few chosen servants of Allah listened to Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام, therefore,

they will have to face their terrible fate in afterlife.

At this stage, some commentators have described this struggle in details. Out of the customary books of Tafsīr, the most exhaustive mention of Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام appears in Tafsīr Maẓharī with reference to 'Allāmah al-Baghawī. The events mentioned there have almost all been taken from the Bible. Some parts of these events in other books of Tafsīr as well have been described with reference to Wahb Ibn Munnabih and Ka'b al-Aḥbār رحمه الله, being those who report Isra'īlī narratives mostly.

In sum, the common factor that emerges from all these narratives is that Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام, by asking Ahab, the king of Isra'īl, and his people to shun idolatry, invited them towards pure monotheism. But, except for a few votaries of truth, no one listened to him, in fact, tried to harass him in all sorts of ways, so much so that Ahab and his wife, Isabelle planned to kill him. He took refuge in a far out cave where he stayed for a considerably long period of time. After that he prayed that the people of Isra'īl be seized with famine, so that he may show them some miracles at his hand for removing the famine, may be, they would, then, come to believe. So, they were struck with a famine.

After that, following a command of Allah Ta'ālā, Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام met Ahab and told him that the famine was there because of disobedience to Allah, and if he were to abstain from it even that late, that punishment could stand removed. Then this was, he told him, the best opportunity for him to test his veracity. He said, 'you say your god Ba'l has four hundred and fifty apostles in this part of Isra'īl. Gather them together before me on a day of your choice. Let them offer their sacrifice in the name of Ba'l, and I shall offer my sacrifice in the name of Allah. The one whose offering the heavenly fire would come and burn to ashes will be the one whose faith will be true'. Everyone readily agreed to this proposal.

So, they gathered at Mount Carmel, the appointed place. The false apostles of Ba'l offered there sacrifice and remained busy with their entreaties before Ba'l from morning till afternoon. But, no answer came. After that, Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام offered his sacrifice whereupon came the fire from the heavens and burnt the sacrifice offered by Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام reducing it to ashes. Seeing this, many people fell prostrated in sajdah - the truth laid manifested before them. But, the false apostles of

Ba'l still remained adamant. Therefore, Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام had them killed in the valley of Kishon.

After this event came heavy rains. The whole region turned verdant. But Isabelle, the wife of Ahab, was still not ready to learn her lesson. Rather than believe in the message of Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام, she actually turned more hostile against him by preparing to have him killed. When Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام came to know about it, he left Samaria, and went into hiding once again. After the passage of some time, he started preaching in Judah, the other country of the Bani Isra'īl - because, the epidemic of idolatry had gradually reached there as well. Jehuram, the king out there also did not listen to him until he was destroyed following a prophecy of Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام. A few years later, he returned to Isra'īl once again, and tried to reform Ahab and his son, Ahaziah. But they continued to stick to their misdeeds until came the time when they were hit by foreign intrusions and fatal diseases. Thereafter, Allah Ta'ālā recalled His prophet back unto Him.

Is Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام alive?

Also debated among historians and commentators there is the issue whether Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام is alive, or has he died? In the lengthy narrative reported in Tafsīr Maẓharī with reference to 'Allamah al-Baghawi, it has also been mentioned that Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام was lifted towards the heavens mounted on a horse of fire, and that he is alive there like Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام (Maẓharī, p. 141, v. 8). 'Allāmah as-Suyūṭī has also reported several narratives from Ibn 'Asakir, Hakim and others which indicate that he is alive. It has been reported from Ka'b al-Ahbar that four prophets are still alive: two on the earth - Sayyidnā Khaḍir and Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام; and two in the heavens - Sayyidnā 'Isa and Sayyidnā Idris (ad-durr-ul-manthūr, p. 285, 286, v. 5). Indeed, some have gone to the extent of saying that Sayyidnā Khiḍr and Sayyidnā Ilyās get together in Baytul-Maqdis during the month of Ramaḍān and keep fasts. (Tafsīr Qurṭubī, p. 116, v. 15)

But, authentic scholars like Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Kathīr have not declared these narratives to be sound. About narratives of this nature, he writes:

وهو من الاسرائيليات التى لا تصدّق ولا تكذب بل الظاهر أن صحّتها بعيدة (البداية والنهاية، ص ٣٣٨ ج ١)

This is one of those Isra'īlī (Judaic) narratives that are neither confirmed nor falsified. Instead, what is obvious is that (the proposition of) its soundness is remote.

In addition to that, he says:

"Ibn 'Asākir has reported several narratives of people who have met Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام. But, none of these is satisfactory - either for the reason that the chain of authority cited therein is weak, or for the reason that people to whom these events have been attributed are unknown" - al-bidayah wa-n-nihayah, p. 339, v. 1)

It is fairly evident that this idea of Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام having been lifted towards the heavens has been taken invariably from the Isra'īli narratives. The Bible says:

"And as they still went on and talked, behold, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them. And Elijah (Ilyas) went up by a whirlwind into heaven."(2 Kings 2:11)

For this reason, came the belief among Jews that Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام will return to the earth once once again. Hence when Sayyidnā Yaḥyā عليه السلام was sent as a prophet, they doubted if he was Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام. It appears in the Bible:

"And they asked him, 'What then? Are you Elijah?' He said, 'I am not." (Gospel of John 1:21)

It seems that scholars like Ka'b al-Aḥbār and Wahb Ibn Munabbih who were well versed in the religious background of the People of the Book would have described these very narratives before Muslims as a result of which this idea of Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام being alive found currency among some Muslims. Otherwise, there is nothing in the Qur'ān, or the Ḥadīth, that provides any proof of his being alive or having been raised up unto the heavens. What we have here is only one narrative found in the Mustadrak of al-Ḥākim where it has been said that, on his way to Tabūk, the Holy Prophet ﷺ met Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام. But, this report is, as held by Ḥadīth experts, 'mawdu' or fabricated or technically apocryphal. Ḥāfiẓ adh-Dhahabi says:

بل هو موضوع قبّح الله من وضعه وما كنت احسب ولا أجوّز انّ الجهل يبلغ بالحكام الى ان يصحّح هذا (درمنثور، ص ٢٨٦ ج٥)

"In fact, this is fabricated. Cursed be whoever fabricated it. I had never imagined that the inadvertence of al-Ḥākim could overtake him to the extent that he would admit this thing as sound - ad-Durr-ul-Manthur, p. 286, v. 5.

In short, it is not proved from any authentic Islamic report that Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام is alive. Hence, in this matter, the safest (and the sanest) course is to observe silence. Particularly, in the case of Isra'īlī (Judaic) narratives, one should follow the teaching of the Holy Prophet ﷺ: 'neither confirm, nor falsify these.' The reason is that the Qur'ān has a purpose - that is, it should be understood, provide lessons and give good counsel. This purpose can be achieved fully even without having to do something like this. And Allah is Pure and High - He knows best. Now, we can turn to an explanation of the verses.

The word: بعل (*ba'l*) in verse 125: اَتَدْعُوْنَ بَعْلًا (Do you invoke Ba'l...) literally means husband, master etc. But, it was the name of a particular idol that the people of Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام had taken to as the object of their worship. The history of the worship of *ba'l* (Baal) goes way back in time. It was worshipped in the country of Syria during the time of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and it used to be the most popular idol-god they had. Ba'labakk, (Baalbek or ancient Heliopolis in present Lebanon), the once famous city of Syria was also named after it. Some people think that Hubal, the well-known idol of the pre-Islam people of Ḥijāz, was this very *ba'l* (Qaṣaṣ-ul-Qur'ān, p. 28, v. 2).

In the next sentence of the same verse, it was said: وَتَذَرُوْنَ اَحْسَنَ الْخَالِقِيْنَ (Do you invoke Ba'l, and ignore the Best of the creators,). This refers to Allah Ta'ālā while the expression: اَحْسَنَ الْخَالِقِيْنَ (*aḥsanul-khāliqīn*: the best of the creators) never means that there could be, God forbid, some other creator as well. On the contrary, the drive and the sense of the statement is that He is the one most exalted of all those false objects of worship they had taken to as being some sort of a creator (Qurṭubī). Some commentators have said that the word: خَالِق (*khāliq*: creator, maker) has been used here in the sense of صَانِع (*sāni'* : maker), that is, 'He is far ahead and far better than all other makers.' What do all other makers really do? They do no more than take different components, put them together and here is something they have made. Bringing something out from nothingness into existence is what they do not have under their power and control -

and Allah Ta'ālā does. He has that inherent power to make what is not become what is. (Bayān-ul-Qur'ān)

Ascribing the attribute of creation to anyone other than Allah is not permissible

At this point, it should be borne in mind that خَلَق (*khalq*) means to create, that is, to bring something from the state of non-being into the state of being solely on the strength of the creator's inherent power. Therefore, this attribute is particular to Allah Ta'ālā. Ascribing it to someone else is not permissible. Hence, the custom prevailing in our time that the articles of writers, compositions of poets and paintings of painters are readily referred to as their 'creations' is simply not permissible. How can people who write become 'creators' of those articles? It is not correct. Allah is the *khāliq*, the creator. This is Him alone - no one else can be. Therefore, their good writings should be called articles or something else that alludes to their effort, imagination, research work or whatever applies as appropriate - but, not 'creation.'

In verse 127, it was said: فَكَذَّبُوْهُ فَاِنَّهُمْ لَمُحْضَرُوْنَ : "Then they rejected him. Therefore, they will be arraigned." It means that they will have to taste the consequence of having belied the true messengers of Allah. It could also be referring to the punishment of the Hereafter as well as their sad end within this world. That the rulers of both the countries of Isra'īl and Judah had to face destruction as a result of their having rejected Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام has been mentioned earlier. The detailed account of this destruction is present in Tafsīr Maẓharī and in the Bible: Kings I, Chapter 22; Kings II; Chapter 1 and Chronicles II; Chapter 21.

In verse 128, it was said: اِلَّا عِبَادَ اللّٰهِ الْمُخْلَصِيْنَ (except the chosen servants of Allah). Here, the word used is: مُخْلَصِيْنَ (*mukhlāsīn*) (pronounced with a fathah on the letter lam) which means chosen, elected, people Divinely identified as special. As such, these will be people whom Allah has elected to become recipients of the honor of having obeyed Him perfectly and made themselves deserving of the best returns and rewards from Him. Hence, it would be more appropriate to translate it in the sense of 'the chosen' rather than 'sincere.'

The word: اِلياسين (*il yā sīn*) used in: سَلٰمٌ عَلٰٓى اِلْ يَاسِيْنَ (Salam on il ya sin - 130) is also the very name of Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام. The people of Arabia

are used to adding the letters *'yā'* and *'nūn'* with non-Arab names fairly often - for example, سِينَا (sinā: Sinai) could take the form of سِينِين (*sinin*). Similarly, here too, two letters have been added.

Verses 133 - 138

وَإِنَّ لُوطًا لَّمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿١٣٣﴾ إِذْ نَجَّيْنَاهُ وَأَهْلَهُ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿١٣٤﴾
إِلَّا عَجُوزًا فِي الْغَابِرِينَ ﴿١٣٥﴾ ثُمَّ دَمَّرْنَا الْآخَرِينَ ﴿١٣٦﴾ وَإِنَّكُمْ
لَتَمُرُّونَ عَلَيْهِم مُّصْبِحِينَ ﴿١٣٧﴾ وَبِاللَّيْلِ ۚ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٣٨﴾

And surely, Lūṭ is one of the messengers. [133] **(Remember) when We saved him and his family, all of them,** [134] **except an old woman among those remaining behind.** [135] **After that, We destroyed others** [136] **and you do pass over them at daybreak** [137] **and by nightfall. Would you still not understand?** [138]

Commentary

Mentioned in these verses is the fifth event that relates to Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام. This event has appeared at several places earlier, therefore, no more details are needed. Here, the people of Makkah have been particularly admonished that they passed by the site of Sadum (Sodom) day and night while traveling with theirs trade caravans to the country of Syria, and Sadum was a place where this grave event came to pass, an event full of vital lessons, yet they failed to learn any. The time of morning and evening was particularly mentioned for the reason that the people of Arabia generally used to pass through here during these very hours. Says Qadi Abu-s-Sa'ud: 'Perhaps, this site of Sodom was located at a stage on this route that those who departed from here did so in the hours of the morning and those who arrived here did so at the time of the evening' (Tafsīr abi-s- Sa'ūd).

Verses 139 -148

وَإِنَّ يُونُسَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿١٣٩﴾ إِذْ أَبَقَ إِلَى الْفُلْكِ الْمَشْحُونِ
﴿١٤٠﴾ فَسَاهَمَ فَكَانَ مِنَ الْمُدْحَضِينَ ﴿١٤١﴾ فَالْتَقَمَهُ الْحُوتُ

وَهُوَ مُلِيْمٌ ﴿١٤٢﴾ فَلَوْلَآ اَنَّهٗ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُسَبِّحِيْنَ ﴿١٤٣﴾ لَلَبِثَ فِيْ
بَطْنِهٖٓ اِلٰى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُوْنَ ﴿١٤٤﴾ فَنَبَذْنٰهُ بِالْعَرَآءِ وَهُوَ سَقِيْمٌ ﴿١٤٥﴾
وَاَنْۢبَتْنَا عَلَيْهِ شَجَرَةً مِّنْ يَّقْطِيْنٍ ﴿١٤٦﴾ وَاَرْسَلْنٰهُ اِلٰى مِائَةِ اَلْفٍ اَوْ
يَزِيْدُوْنَ ﴿١٤٧﴾ فَاٰمَنُوْا فَمَتَّعْنٰهُمْ اِلٰى حِيْنٍ ﴿١٤٨﴾

And surely, Yūnus (Jonah) is from among the messengers. [139] (Remember) when he ran away towards the boat already loaded. [140] Then he participated in drawing lots (to offload one of the passengers) and was the one who was defeated. [141] Then the fish swallowed him while he was reproaching his own self. [142] Had he not been of those who proclaim Allah's purity, [143] he would have definitely lived in its belly till the day when the dead will be raised. [144] Then We cast him ashore in the open while he was ill. [145] and We caused a tree of ourds to grow over him. [146] And We had sent him (as messenger) to one hundred thousand, or more. [147] So, they believed, then, We let them enjoy for a time. [148]

Commentary

The last event described in this Sūrah is that of Sayyidnā Yūnus (عليه السلام). This event, along with its details, has appeared towards the later part of Sūrah Yūnus (please see Ma'āriful-Qur'ān, English, Volume IV, pages 573-588). However, a few necessary comments about these particular verses are being given below.

In the opening verse (139), it was said: وَاِنَّ يُوْنُسَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ (And surely, Yūnus is from among the messengers). Was Sayyidnā Yūnus (عليه السلام) ordained as a messenger much earlier than his encounter with the fish, or did it come to pass after that? This issue has been a subject of debate among some commentators and historians. Some of them think that he was made a messenger after this event. But, in view of the apparent order and style of the noble Qur'ān, and from most Ḥadīth narrations, it is more likely that he was invested with the mission of prophethood earlier. The event of the fish came later.

The word: اَبَقَ (*abaqa*) in the next verse (140): اِذْ اَبَقَ اِلَى الْفُلْكِ الْمَشْحُوْنِ (when he ran towards the boat already loaded) has been derived from: اِبَاقٌ

(ibaq) which means 'escaping of a slave from his master'. Allah Ta'ālā has used this word for Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام for the reason that he had started off without waiting for the revelation from his Lord. The noble prophets are the close ones among the servants of Allah. The slightest slip from them causes the swiftest grip. Hence comes this strong expression (*'abaqa'*: 'he ran').

Verse 141 opens with the statement: فَسَاهَمَ (*fasahama*: Then he participated in drawing lots...). These lots were drawn at a time when the boat was caught by a storm while in the middle of the waters. It was apprehended that its excessive weight might cause it to drown. It was decided that one person from the boat should be cast off into the waters. Lots were drawn to determine who would it be.

The Injunction of drawing lots

At this point, it should be borne in mind that the drawing of lots is a method of selecting somebody to do something through which one can neither prove someone's right, nor indict someone as a criminal. For example, no one can be proved to be a thief by drawing lots. Similarly, should two persons differ about the ownership of some property, it cannot be decided by drawing lots as to who owns it. However drawing of lots is permissible - rather, better - on an occasion where a person is totally entitled, Shari'ah-wise, to opt for any course out of the few permissible courses of action available. Now, it is up to him. He can, rather than go by his will and choice and select a course of action, arrive at a decisive line of action by drawing lots. For example, someone who has more than one wife and is going on a journey, then, he has the right to take the wife he elects to take with him. Now, rather than do this following his will and choice, if he were to draw lots, it would be better - so that no one is disheartened. The Holy Prophet ﷺ used to do that.

The purpose behind the drawing of lots in this event relating to Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام was not to label anyone as some culprit. In fact, to save a whole boat-full of passengers, anyone could have been cast away into the waters. So, the name of the person to be cast was determined by drawing lots.

Immediately next in the verse, it was said: فَكَانَ مِنَ الْمُدْحَضِينَ : " and was the one who was defeated." The word: اِدْحَاضٌ (*idḥāḍ*) literally means to

defeat someone or to make him fail, lose. The sense is that it was his name that came up in the draw - and he threw himself into the waters. No one should raise the objection that it was some sort of a suicide plunge, for it is possible that the shore was near and he intended to swim ashore.

In verse 143, it was said: فَلَوْ لَآ اَنَّهٗ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُسَبِّحِيْنَ (Had he not been of those who proclaim Allah's purity,....). From this verse, it is wrong to assume that had Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام not been making tasbih, that fish would have been living right through the last day of Qiyāmah. Instead, the sense is that the very belly of this fish would have been made the grave of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام.

Distress is removed by *tasbih* (remembrance) and *istighfar* (repentance)

From this verse we also learn that *tasbīḥ* (لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّآ اَنْتَ سُبْحٰنَكَ اِنِّيْ كُنْتُ مِنَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ : the act of proclaiming the purity of Allah) and istighfar (... : the act of seeking forgiveness from Him) have a proven efficacy of their own. It has already appeared in Sūrah Al-Anbiyā' [21] that Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام, while in the belly of the fish, used to recite the following sentence of tasbīḥ:

لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّآ اَنْتَ سُبْحٰنَكَ اِنِّيْ كُنْتُ مِنَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ

There is no god but You - Pure are You - Indeed I was among the wrongdoers - Al-Anbiyā', 21:87.

By the Barakah of this very Tasbīḥ, Allah Ta'ālā had him delivered from this trial, and he came out safe and sound from the belly of the fish. Therefore, it has been continuously reported from pious elders that they recite this tasbih one hundred and twenty-five thousand times at the time they faced any individual or collective distress and, by virtue of its barakah, Allah Ta'ālā would have this distress removed from them.

According to a narration from Sayyidnā Sa'd Ibn Abī Waqqāṣ رضي الله عنه appearing in Abū Dāwūd, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: "Any Muslim who recites the prayer Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام had made while in the belly of the fish, that is: لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّآ اَنْتَ سُبْحٰنَكَ اِنِّيْ كُنْتُ مِنَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ (*lā ilāha illā anta - subḥānaka - inni kuntu minaẓ-ẓālimīn*: There is no god but You - Pure are You - Indeed I was among the wrongdoers - 21:87) for any (permissible) objective, his du'a or prayer will be answered." (Tafsīr Qurṭubī)

In verse 145, it was said: فَنَبَذْنٰهُ بِالْعَرَآءِ وَهُوَ سَقِيْمٌ (Then We cast him ashore in the open while he was ill.) The word: العراء (*al-'ara'*) used in the text means an open land with no trees. Some narrations tell us that, at that time, Sayyidnā Yūnus ﷺ had become very weak because of having remained confined within the belly of the fish and that he had no hair left on his body.

Said next, it was: وَاَنْۢبَتْنَا عَلَيْهِ شَجَرَةً مِّنْ يَّقْطِيْنٍ (and We caused a tree of gourd to grow over him. - 146). The word: يَقْطِيْنٌ (*yaqṭīn*) signifies every such tree that has no trunk. It appears in Ḥadīth narrations that it was a gourd creeper. The purpose of having a tree grow there was to make the provision of shade for Sayyidnā Yūnus ﷺ. The word: شَجَرَة (*shajarah*: tree) at this place serves as an indicator of two possibilities: Either Allah had made this very plant of gourd grow with a trunk by way of a miracle, or it was some other tree on which the creeping plant of gourd was made to wind its way up, so that it could provide a thick shade, otherwise, having enough shade from a winding plant alone would have been difficult.

It was said in verse 147: وَاَرْسَلْنٰهُ اِلٰى مِائَةِ اَلْفٍ اَوْ يَزِيْدُوْنَ (And We had sent him [as messenger] to one hundred thousand, or more). A difficulty may arise here. Is it not that Allah Ta'ālā is Knowing and Aware? Why would He have to express the doubt that the number of those people was 'one hundred thousand, or more?' It can be answered by saying that this statement has been made in congruity with the view of common people, that is, if an average person would have seen them, he would have said that their number is one hundred thousand or somewhat more than that (Maẓharī). Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavi has said that nothing is being doubted here in the text itself. They could be called one hundred thousand, and also more than that - for example, if one eliminates the fraction, their number was one hundred thousand, and if the fraction were also taken into account, it would be more than one hundred thousand. (Bayān-ul-Qur'ān)

The expression: اِلٰى حِيْنٍ (*ilā ḥīn*: for a time) in: فَاٰمَنُوْا فَمَتَّعْنٰهُمْ اِلٰى حِيْنٍ ([147] So, they believed, then, We let them enjoy for a time.- 148) means that as long as they did not revert to their kufr and shirk, no punishment visited them.

Exposing the fraud of the Qadyani imposter

It has already been demonstrated in the Tafsīr of Sūrah Yūnus (Ma'āriful-Qur'ān, English, Volume IV), and it is clear from this verse too, that the reason why the punishment due to visit the people of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام was averted was that his people had started believing on time - before it actually materialized. This puts the fraudulent claim of Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad Qādiāni (the false pretender to prophethood from Qadian located in Punjāb, now called Haryana in India) when he had challenged his adversaries that, should they continue to oppose him, it stood decreed that Divine punishment would descend upon them by such and such time. But, quite conversely, the adversaries became stronger and more vocal, yet the punishment never came. At that time, in order to salvage himself out from the disgrace of failure, the Qadiani imposter started saying that since his adversaries were really scared in their hearts, therefore, this punishment stood removed from them - as it had stood removed from the people of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام. But, this verse of the noble Qur'ān declares this interpretation to be false and rejected. The reason is that the people of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام had stayed safe from the punishment because of their *'imān*, belief and faith. Contrary to this was the case of the adversaries of Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad of Qādian - not only that they did not believe in him, in fact, their struggle against him gained more strength and momentum.

Verses 149 - 166

فَاسْتَفْتِهِمْ أَلِرَبِّكَ الْبَنَاتُ وَلَهُمُ الْبَنُونَ ﴿١٤٩﴾ أَمْ خَلَقْنَا الْمَلٰٓئِكَةَ
إِنَاثًا وَّهُمْ شٰهِدُونَ ﴿١٥٠﴾ أَلَآ إِنَّهُمْ مِّنْ إِفْكِهِمْ لَيَقُولُونَ ﴿١٥١﴾ وَلَدَ
اللّٰهُ وَإِنَّهُمْ لَكٰذِبُونَ ﴿١٥٢﴾ أَصْطَفَى الْبَنَاتِ عَلَى الْبَنِينَ ﴿١٥٣﴾
مَالَكُمْ كَيْفَ تَحْكُمُونَ ﴿١٥٤﴾ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿١٥٥﴾ أَمْ لَكُمْ
سُلْطٰنٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿١٥٦﴾ فَأْتُوا بِكِتٰبِكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِينَ ﴿١٥٧﴾
وَجَعَلُوا بَيْنَهُ وَبَيْنَ الْجِنَّةِ نَسَبًا وَلَقَدْ عَلِمَتِ الْجِنَّةُ إِنَّهُمْ
لَمُحْضَرُونَ ﴿١٥٨﴾ سُبْحٰنَ اللّٰهِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ ﴿١٥٩﴾ إِلَّا عِبَادَ اللّٰهِ

ٱلْمُخْلَصِينَ ﴿١٦٠﴾ فَإِنَّكُمْ وَمَا تَعْبُدُونَ ﴿١٦١﴾ مَآ أَنتُمْ عَلَيْهِ بِفَٰتِنِينَ ﴿١٦٢﴾ إِلَّا مَنْ هُوَ صَالِ ٱلْجَحِيمِ ﴿١٦٣﴾ وَمَا مِنَّآ إِلَّا لَهُۥ مَقَامٌ مَّعْلُومٌ ﴿١٦٤﴾ وَإِنَّا لَنَحْنُ ٱلصَّآفُّونَ ﴿١٦٥﴾ وَإِنَّا لَنَحْنُ ٱلْمُسَبِّحُونَ ﴿١٦٦﴾

So ask them, "Does your Lord have daughters while they have sons?" [149] **Or, did We create the angels as females while they were witnessing?** [150] **Beware! They are the ones who, by way of a lie of theirs, (have the audacity to) say,** [151] **"Allah has children" - and they are absolute liars.** [152] **Is it that Allah has chosen daughters (for Himself) instead of sons?** [153] **What is the matter with you? How (arbitrarily) do you judge?** [154] **Then, is it that you do not think about it?** [155] **Or, is it that there is some open authority with you?** [156] **Then bring your book, if you are truthful.** [157] **And they have made up between Him and the Jinns some kinship, while the Jinns already know that they are bound to appear (before Him).** [158] **Pure is Allah from what they describe -** [159] **except the chosen servants of Allah.** [160] **So, you and those whom you worship -** [161] **none of you can make one turn away from Him -** [162] **except the one who is to burn in Jahannam.** [163] **And (the angels say,) "There is no one among us who does not have a known station,** [164] **and We, surely We, are those who stand in rows** [165] **and We, surely We, are those who proclaim Allah's purity."** [166]

Commentary

Events relating to the noble prophets described earlier provided some good counsel and some lessons to learn. Now, once again, the text turns to the essential subject of the affirmation of pure monotheism (*tauḥīd*) and the refutation of ascribing partners to the pristine divinity of Allah (*shirk*). Then, described at this particular place is the *shirk* of a particular kind. The disbelievers of Arabia believed that angels were the daughters of Allah Ta'ālā, and the daughters of the chieftains of Jinns were the mothers of angels. According to 'Allāmah Wāḥidī, this belief was not restricted to the Quraish alone. It also prevailed among the tribes of Juhainah, Banū Salamah, Banū Khuza'ah and Banū Maliḥ (Tafsīr Kabīr, p. 112, v. 7)

In verses beginning with: فَٱسْتَفْتِهِمْ (So ask them... -149) and ending at:

إِنْ كُنتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ (if you are truthful - 157), arguments have been given in support of the refutation of this belief of the disbelievers of Arabia. In gist, it has been said here: To begin with, this belief of yours is totally wrong in terms of your own recognized practice and customs, since you yourself regard daughters to be a source of shame. Now, what is a source of shame for you personally, how could this thing be proved to be good for Allah Ta'ālā? Then, you have declared angels to be daughters of Allah. What proof do you have for saying so? There could be three kinds of arguments to prove a claim: (1) Observation (2) Report, that is, the saying of an entity or person whose veracity is established and (3) Reason. As far as observation is concerned, it is obvious that you have just not seen Allah Ta'ālā creating angels that could have given you the knowledge of the gender of angels. Therefore, you have no proof from observation with you. When it was said: اَمْ خَلَقْنَا الْمَلٰئِكَةَ اِنَاثًا وَّهُمْ شٰهِدُوْنَ (Or, did We create the angels as females while they were witnessing? - 150), this is what it means. As for a reported proof, you do not have that too because one only goes by the word of people who are trustworthy and whose veracity is well established. Quite contrary to this, there are those who hold this kind of belief but they are liars. Nothing they say can be a binding argument. When it was said: ... اَلَآ اِنَّهُمْ مِّنْ اِفْكِهِمْ لَيَقُوْلُوْنَ (Beware! They are the ones who, by way of a lie of theirs, [have the audacity to] say, "Allah has children" - and they are absolute liars - 151,152), this is what it means. As for the rational argument, even that does not go in your favor because, in your view, daughters have a lower status as compared to that of the sons. Now, think of the great Being of Allah that holds the superior most status in the entire universe - how can this superior most Being like to have something of a lower status? When it was said: اَصْطَفَى الْبَنَاتِ عَلَى الْبَنِيْنَ (Is it that Allah has chosen daughters (for Himself) instead of sons? - 153), this is what it means. Now, this leaves only one likelihood unexplored - may be, you have been blessed with some scripture from the heavens through the medium of revelation (*waḥy*) in which you have been asked to believe as you do. So, if this be the case, come out and show us the proof - where is that revelation and where is that Book? When it was said: اَمْ لَكُمْ سُلْطٰنٌ مُّبِيْنٌ، فَأْتُوْا بِكِتٰبِكُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ (Or, is it that there is some open authority with you? Then bring your book if you are truthful - 156, 157) this is what it means.

An *ilzāmi* (الزامی) answer (based on adversary's assumption) is more appropriate for the obstinate

From these verses we learn that it is more appropriate to tackle people bent on obstinacy with an *ilzāmi* response. An *ilzāmi* response means that their claim should be refuted through the analogy of some other view of things they themselves have. In doing so, it is never necessary to concede that we too subscribe to this other view, in fact, there could be occasion when that other view is also incorrect. But, it is only to drive some sense into the obstinate adversary that it is put to use functionally. Here, to refute their belief, Allah Ta'ālā has used their own view that the existence of daughters is a cause of disgrace. It is obvious that it does not mean that it is so with Allah Ta'ālā as well, nor does it mean that, had they called angels 'sons of God' rather than 'daughters of God,' it would have been correct. In fact, this is an *ilzāmi* response, and its aim is to refute their belief by citing their own claims. Otherwise, the real response to beliefs of this nature is no other but that which finds mention in the noble Qur'ān itself - that Allah Ta'ālā is independent and need-free and neither does He need any children, nor does it befit His Most Exalted State of Being.

In verse 158, it was said: وَجَعَلُوا بَيْنَه، وَبَيْنَ الْجِنَّةِ نَسَبًا (And they have made up between Him and the Jinns some kinship). There are two explanations of this sentence. According to the first Tafsīr, this is a description of the false belief held by the Mushriks of Arabia that the daughters of the chieftains of the Jinns are mothers of the angels. As if, God forbid, the daughters of the chieftains of the Jinns have marital relations with Allah Ta'ālā and, as a result of this bond, angels have come to exist. Hence, it appears in an exegetical narration when the Mushriks of Arabia declared angels to be the daughters of Allah, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ﷺ asked, "Who is their mother?" They said, "Daughters of the Jinns" (Tafsīr ibn Kathīr, p. 23, v. 4). But, this Tafsīr leaves an unresolved difficulty behind: The verse is talking about the attribution of kinship between Allah Ta'ālā and the Jinns, while the marital relationship of a husband and wife is not based on kinship.

For this reason, another Tafsīr that has been reported from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās, Hasan al-Basri and Dahhak seems to be weightier. According to this Tafsīr, some of the people of Arabia also believed that, God forbid,

Iblis was a brother to Allah Ta'ālā who was the creator of good while he was the creator of evil. Here, this very false belief has been refuted (please see Tafsīr ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī and Tafsīr Kabīr).

Immediately next within verse 158 it was said: وَلَقَدْ عَلِمَتِ الْجِنَّةُ إِنَّهُمْ لَمُحْضَرُوْنَ: (158)', while the Jinns already know that they are bound to appear (before Him).' Here, 'they' could be referring to the kinds of Mushriks who took Jinns and satans as equals of God, meaning thereby that the Jinns know that these Mushriks will appear before Allah Ta'ālā for being punished, and could also refer to the Jinns themselves. In this situation, the sense of the verse would come to be that 'the satans and Jinns you have taken to be associated with Allah in one or the other form already know very well that they are going to face a terrible fate in the Hereafter. For example, Iblis is perfectly aware of his evil end. Now, someone who himself believes that he has to taste his punishment could hardly be the equal of God and taking him to be so would certainly be a gross lack of good sense.

Verses 167 - 179

وَإِنْ كَانُوْا لَيَقُوْلُوْنَ ﴿١٦٧﴾ لَوْ أَنَّ عِنْدَنَا ذِكْرًا مِّنَ الْأَوَّلِيْنَ ﴿١٦٨﴾ لَكُنَّا عِبَادَ اللّٰهِ الْمُخْلَصِيْنَ ﴿١٦٩﴾ فَكَفَرُوْا بِهٖ فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿١٧٠﴾ وَلَقَدْ سَبَقَتْ كَلِمَتُنَا لِعِبَادِنَا الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ ﴿١٧١﴾ إِنَّهُمْ لَهُمُ الْمَنْصُوْرُوْنَ ﴿١٧٢﴾ وَإِنَّ جُنْدَنَا لَهُمُ الْغٰلِبُوْنَ ﴿١٧٣﴾ فَتَوَلَّ عَنْهُمْ حَتّٰى حِيْنٍ ﴿١٧٤﴾ وَّأَبْصِرْهُمْ فَسَوْفَ يُبْصِرُوْنَ ﴿١٧٥﴾ أَفَبِعَذَابِنَا يَسْتَعْجِلُوْنَ ﴿١٧٦﴾ فَإِذَا نَزَلَ بِسَاحَتِهِمْ فَسَآءَ صَبَاحُ الْمُنْذَرِيْنَ ﴿١٧٧﴾ وَتَوَلَّ عَنْهُمْ حَتّٰى حِيْنٍ ﴿١٧٨﴾ وَّأَبْصِرْ فَسَوْفَ يُبْصِرُوْنَ ﴿١٧٩﴾

And they used to say, [167] "Had there been a scripture like that of the former ones with us, [168] certainly we would have been the chosen servants of Allah." [169] Then they disbelieved in it. So, very soon, they will come to know. [170] And Our Word has already gone

ahead in favor of Our servants - the messengers - [171] **they are the ones who will have Allah's support,** {172] **and verily it will be Our army (of chosen servants) that prevails.** [173] **So, withdraw your attention from them for a time.** [174] **But, see them for they shall soon see.** [175] **Are they asking for Our punishment to come sooner?** [176] **So, when it descends in their courtyard, then, evil will be the dawn of those warned.** [177] **So, withdraw your attention from them for a time.** [178] **And watch them, for they shall soon see.** [179]

Commentary

After having provided proofs of the basic beliefs of Islam, these verses now mention the obstinacy of the disbelievers. It has been said that, before the blessed appearance of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, these people used to crave for the coming of some prophet from Allah, so that they could follow him. But, when he did come, they started confronting him with a posture of obstinacy and hostility. After that, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been comforted that he should not worry about the pain these people cause to him. The time was coming very soon when he will prevail, and his oppressors will be defeated and punished. That this will unfold comprehensively in the Hereafter is already settled, but in the mortal world too, Allah Ta'ālā showed the spectacle that, in every Jihad from the battle of Badr up to the conquest of Makkah, His blessed rasul came out victorious and his adversaries, disgraced.

The sense of 'the victory of the people of Allah'

In verses 171-173, it was said: وَلَقَدْ سَبَقَتْ كَلِمَتُنَا (الیٰ قوله تعالیٰ) وَإِنَّ جُنْدَنَا لَهُمُ الْغٰلِبُوْنَ (And Our Word has already gone ahead in favor of Our servants - the messengers - they are the ones who will have Allah's support, and verily it will be Our army that prevails). The sense of these verses is that it stands predetermined with Allah that His chosen servants, that is, the prophets would be the ones to prevail. This may raise a difficulty, for in the mortal world, some prophets did not. For an answer to this, it could be said that the majority of prophets consists of the noble souls whose people belied them and met their punishment while they were kept safe from it. There are only a few among the blessed prophets who, though, could not prevail outwardly and physically right up to the end of their tenure in this world, but they always enjoyed ascendancy in the field of logic and argument, and the ultimate intellectual victory remained always theirs.

However, the physical traces of this ascendancy were - due to some consideration of wisdom, such as a trial, or its likes - deferred until the Hereafter. Hence, as said by sage Thanavi, it is like the case of a highway robber, who starts harassing a high appointee of the state while on his journey. But, this appointee would never, by virtue of his God-given intellectual sobriety, stoop to the low-down robber, until he reaches the capital of his state where the robber will be seized and punished. Therefore, simply due to this temporary ascendancy, neither can we call that robber an authority, nor that authority a subject. In fact, given the true state of affairs, that robber - despite this temporary ascendancy - is still a subject, while that man of authority - despite his temporary lack of ascendancy - is still the authority he had been all along. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ has expressed this more briefly and lucidly by saying: اِنْ لَّمْ يُنْصَرُوْا فِى الدُّنْيَا يُنْصَرُوْا فِى الْاٰخِرَةِ (Those who are not helped to ascend in the present world are helped to ascend in the Hereafter) - Bayān-ul- Qur'ān, the Tafsīr of Sūrah al-Ma'idah (5).

But, it should always be borne in mind that no group of people achieves this supremacy or ascendancy, whether in the present world or in the Hereafter, simply by having particular racial traits, or by belonging to a religion only in name. In fact, this actually happens only when every human being makes himself a member of 'the army of Allah.' It necessarily implies that he or she should be committed to the obedience of Allah in every department of life as the objective of his or her life. Here, the word: "جُنْدَنَا" (Our army) is telling us very clearly that the person who embraces Islam will have to enter into a solemn pledge to devote his or her entire life in waging a struggle against the forces of self and Satan - and his or her supremacy, whether material or moral, whether in this world or in the Hereafter, depends on this condition.

In verse 177, it was said: فَإِذَا نَزَلَ بِسَاحَتِهِمْ فَسَآءَ صَبَاحُ الْمُنْذَرِيْنَ (So, when it descends in their courtyard, then, evil with be the dawn of the warned). The word: سَاحَة (*sahah*) appearing in this verse literally means a courtyard, and the expression: نَزَلَ بِسَاحَتِهٖ (*nazala bisahatihi:* descended in his courtyard) is an Arabic idiom that denotes the appearance of a calamity face to face, while the time of morning has been specified, as an attack would usually come at that hour among the people of Arabia. This also used to be the practice with the Holy Prophet ﷺ that, should he

reach the territorial jurisdiction of some enemy at the time of night, he used to postpone his attack until the morning (Maẓharī) According to Ḥadīth narrations, when the Holy Prophet ﷺ attacked the fort of Khaibar during the morning hours, he said: الله اكبر، خربت خيبر، انّا اذا نزلنا بساحة قوم فساء صباح المنذرين (Allāhu Akbar, Khaibar is destroyed. Verily, when we descend on the courtyard of a people, the morning of those who had been already warned is too bad).

Verses 180 - 182

سُبْحٰنَ رَبِّكَ رَبِّ الْعِزَّةِ عَمَّا يَصِفُوْنَ ﴿۱۸۰﴾ وَسَلٰمٌ عَلَى الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ ﴿۱۸۱﴾ وَالْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿۱۸۲﴾

Pure is your Lord, the Lord of all might and honor, from what they describe [180] **and salam be on the messengers** [181] **and praised is Allah, Lord of all the worlds.** [182]

Commentary

Sūrah Aṣ-Ṣaffāt has been concluded on these verses, and the truth of the matter is that it would take volumes to explain this beautiful finale. In sum, Allah Ta'ālā has compressed all subjects of this Sūrah in these three verses. The Sūrah began with a description of tauhid, the theme of the Oneness of Allah, the essence of which was that Allah Ta'ālā is free from everything the Mushriks attribute to Him. Accordingly, the first verse serves as an indicator of this very detailed subject. After that, described in the Sūrah there were events relating to the noble prophets. Accordingly, a hint towards these has been made in the second verse. After that, it was very openly and explicitly that the beliefs, doubts and objections of disbelievers were refuted, both in terms of report and reason and, along with that, it was also declared that supremacy will ultimately be the lot of the people of truth - and whoever listens to these statements with good sense and insight is bound to end up praising Allah Ta'ālā. Accordingly, it is on this note of praise for Allah that the Sūrah has been concluded.

In addition to that, in these verses, the basic beliefs of Islam - *tauhid* (Oneness of Allah) and *risalah* (prophethood) - were mentioned clearly,

while the mention of the Hereafter also came up as a corollary, things the confirmation of which was the real purpose of the Sūrah. Along with it, given there was the teaching that it is naturally expected of a true Muslim that he or she would conclude every article, every address and every sitting by admitting and stating the greatness of Allah Ta'ālā, and by saying words of praise for Him. Accordingly, at this place, 'Allāmah al-Qurṭubī has, on his authority, reported this saying of Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī ﷺ:

"I have heard it many times from the Holy Prophet ﷺ that he, after the Ṣalāh was over, used to recite these verses:

سُبۡحٰنَ رَبِّکَ رَبِّ الۡعِزَّۃِ عَمَّا یَصِفُوۡنَ

> "Pure is your Lord, Lord of great might and honor, from what they describe and salam be on the messengers and all praise belongs to Allah, Lord of the worlds - 180-182 - Qurṭubī.

In addition to that, there are several commentaries in which the following saying of saying of Sayyidnā 'Alī has been reported with reference to Imām al-Baghawi:

> "Whoever wishes to have the best of return filled to the brim on the Day of Judgment should recite this at the end of every sitting attended:

سُبۡحٰنَ رَبِّکَ رَبِّ الۡعِزَّۃِ عَمَّا یَصِفُوۡنَ

> Ibn Abi Hatim has also reported this very saying from a narration of Sha'bi that ascends to the Holy Prophet ﷺ - Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr.

سُبۡحٰنَ رَبِّکَ رَبِّ الۡعِزَّۃِ عَمَّا یَصِفُوۡنَ وَسَلٰمٌ عَلَی الۡمُرۡسَلِیۡنَ وَالۡحَمۡدُ لِلّٰہِ رَبِّ الۡعٰلَمِیۡنَ

By the grace of Allah Ta'ālā
The commentary on
Sūrah Aṣ-Ṣaffāt
Ends here.

Sūrah Ṣād

Sūrah Ṣād was revealed in Makkah and it has 88 verses and 5 sections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 16

صٓ وَالْقُرْاٰنِ ذِی الذِّكْرِ ﴿۱﴾ بَلِ الَّذِیْنَ كَفَرُوْا فِیْ عِزَّةٍ وَّ شِقَاقٍ ﴿۲﴾ كَمْ اَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِّنْ قَرْنٍ فَنَادَوْا وَّلَاتَ حِیْنَ مَنَاصٍ ﴿۳﴾ وَعَجِبُوْٓا اَنْ جَآءَهُمْ مُّنْذِرٌ مِّنْهُمْ وَقَالَ الْكٰفِرُوْنَ هٰذَا سٰحِرٌ كَذَّابٌ ﴿۴﴾ اَجَعَلَ الْاٰلِهَةَ اِلٰهًا وَّاحِدًا اِنَّ هٰذَا لَشَیْءٌ عُجَابٌ ﴿۵﴾ وَانْطَلَقَ الْمَلَاُ مِنْهُمْ اَنِ امْشُوْا وَاصْبِرُوْا عَلٰٓی اٰلِهَتِكُمْ اِنَّ هٰذَا لَشَیْءٌ یُّرَادُ ﴿۶﴾ مَا سَمِعْنَا بِهٰذَا فِی الْمِلَّةِ الْاٰخِرَةِ اِنْ هٰذَآ اِلَّا اخْتِلَاقٌ ﴿۷﴾ ءَاُنْزِلَ عَلَیْهِ الذِّكْرُ مِنْۢ بَیْنِنَا بَلْ هُمْ فِیْ شَكٍّ مِّنْ ذِكْرِیْ بَلْ لَّمَّا یَذُوْقُوْا عَذَابِ ﴿۸﴾ اَمْ عِنْدَهُمْ خَزَآئِنُ رَحْمَةِ رَبِّكَ الْعَزِیْزِ الْوَهَّابِ ﴿۹﴾ اَمْ لَهُمْ مُّلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَمَا بَیْنَهُمَا فَلْیَرْتَقُوْا فِی الْاَسْبَابِ ﴿۱۰﴾ جُنْدٌ مَّا هُنَالِكَ مَهْزُوْمٌ مِّنَ الْاَحْزَابِ ﴿۱۱﴾ كَذَّبَتْ قَبْلَهُمْ قَوْمُ نُوْحٍ وَّعَادٌ وَّفِرْعَوْنُ ذُوالْاَوْتَادِ ﴿۱۲﴾ وَثَمُوْدُ وَقَوْمُ لُوْطٍ وَّ اَصْحٰبُ لْئَیْكَةِ اُولٰٓئِكَ الْاَحْزَابُ ﴿۱۳﴾ اِنْ كُلٌّ اِلَّا كَذَّبَ الرُّسُلَ فَحَقَّ عِقَابِ ﴿۱۴﴾ وَمَا یَنْظُرُ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ اِلَّا صَیْحَةً وَّاحِدَةً مَّا لَهَا مِنْ فَوَاقٍ ﴿۱۵﴾ وَقَالُوْا رَبَّنَا عَجِّلْ لَّنَا قِطَّنَا قَبْلَ یَوْمِ الْحِسَابِ ﴿۱۶﴾

Ṣād. By the Qur'ān, (the book) of advice, (this is true,) [1] but those who disbelieve are (involved) in false pride and opposition. [2] How many a generation We have destroyed before them, so they cried out (for mercy), while no time was left for having refuge. [3] And they wonder that a warner has come to them from among themselves. And the disbelievers say, " This is a magician, a sheer liar. [4] Has he (not) turned all the gods into a single God? Certainly, it is a very strange thing." [5] And the leaders among them went forth saying (to their followers)," Walk away (from the Prophet) and stay firm on (adhering to) your gods. This (call of the Prophet) is surely something designed (for his personal benefit). [6] We never heard of it in the former faith (of ours).This is nothing but a false invention. [7] Is it (believable) that the message of advice has been sent down to him (alone) from among all of us?"__ The fact is that they are in doubt about My message; rather, they have not yet tasted My punishment. [8] Do they have the treasures of the mercy of your Lord, the Mighty, the Bountiful? [9] Or do they have the ownership of the heavens and the earth and what lies between them? Then let them ascend (to the sky) by ropes. [10] What is there (in Makkah) is just a host of the (opposing) groups that has to be defeated. [11] Even before them, the people of Nūḥ and 'Ad and Fir'aun (Pharaoh), the man of stakes, [12] and Thamud and the people of Lūṭ and the people of Aykah have rejected (the messengers). They were the (strong) groups. [13] All of them did nothing but declare the messengers as liars; hence, My punishment became due. [14] And these people are waiting for nothing but for a single Cry (the sound of the Trumpet to be blown on the Doomsday) that will have no pause. [15] And they say, " O our Lord, give us our share (of the punishment) sooner, before the Day of Reckoning." [16]

Commentary

The background of the revelation

The background of the revelation of the initial verses of this Sūrah was that Abū Ṭālib, the uncle of the Holy Prophet ﷺ was doing his best as his guardian, despite that he had not yet embraced Islam. When he fell sick, the chiefs of the tribe of Quraish held a consultative meeting in which Abū Jahl, 'Aṣ Ibn Wā'il, Aswad Ibn Muṭṭalib, Aswad Ibn 'Abd Yaghuth and several other chiefs participated. They discussed the

situation they faced. Abū Ṭālib was sick. If he were to pass away and they were to take some strong action against the Holy Prophet ﷺ to restrain his activities in favor of promoting his new faith, the people of Arabia will throw taunts at them and say, 'Here are these people who could do nothing against him while his uncle Abū Ṭālib was alive while, now when he has died, they have stood up against him as their target. So, they came to the conclusion that they should decide this thing about Muḥammad ﷺ while Abū Ṭālib was still alive, so that he would stop speaking ill about their objects of worship.

Accordingly, these people came to Abū Ṭālib and said to him that his nephew spoke ill of their objects of worship. They appealed to his sense of justice, and asked him to tell his nephew that he was free to worship any god he liked, but say nothing against their objects of worship. The truth of the matter was that the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself did not say about these idols anything more than that they were insensate and lifeless. They were not their creators, nor their sustainers, and that nothing that could benefit or harm them was in their control. Abū Ṭālib asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ to come in the meeting. To him, he said, 'My dear nephew, these people are complaining about you that you speak ill of their objects of worship. Leave them on their faith and, on your part, you keep worshiping your God.' People from the Quraish also kept making their comments following it.

Finally, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, 'My dear uncle, should I not be inviting them to something that is better for them?' Abū Ṭālib said, 'What thing is that?' He said, 'I want them to say a particular *kalīmah* (statement) by virtue of which the whole Arabia will be at their feet, and they will become masters of the non-Arab lands beyond it.' Thereupon, Abū Jahl said, 'Tell us. What that kalimah is? By your father, not simply one kalimah, we are ready to say ten of them.' To this he replied, 'Just say: لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ (*lā ilaha il-lal-lah*: There is no god (worthy of worship) but Allah). Hearing this, all of them rose to leave saying, 'Are we supposed to leave all objects of worship we have, and take to just one? This is something very strange.' It was on this occasion that these verses of Sūrah Ṣād were revealed. (Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr, pp. 27, 28 v. 4)

In verse 6, it was said: ... وَانْطَلَقَ الْمَلَاُ مِنْهُمْ (And the leaders among them went forth saying (to their followers)," Walk away (from the Prophet) and

stay firm on (adhering to) your gods - 12). This is pointing out to the event mentioned above that, once they heard the call to pure monotheism (*tauhid),* they left the meeting.

وَفِرْعَوْنُ ذُوالْأَوْتَادِ (and Fir'aun, the man of the stakes - 12). The literal meaning of this expression appearing in verse 12 is 'Pharaoh of the stakes or pegs'. The commentators have explained this phrase in different ways. Some of them have said that this phrase refers to the stability of his dominion, and the sense is that the stakes or pegs of his kingdom were well-rooted in his country. Maulānā Thānavi has translated the phrase according to this explanation. Some others have said that he used to punish people by making them lie flat on the ground and driving stakes or pegs through their hands and feet, and on top of that, he would have snakes and scorpions released over the victim's body. Still others have said that he used to play some kind of a game with ropes and pegs and then, there are those who say that 'al-autad' or pegs means buildings for he had set up very strong structures (Tafsīr Qurṭubī). Pure is Allah who knows best.

أُولٰئِكَ الْأَحْزَابُ (They were the [strong] groups. - 38:13) One explanation of this statement is that it is the description of the word 'groups' in verse 11. In other words, 'these are the groups or Confederates that have been pointed out in this verse.' Maulānā Thānavi has gone by this Tafsīr in his explanation of the verse. But, other commentators explain it in the sense that actually they were the groups that were really strong, not these people of Makkah. In other words, those who possessed real strength and power were the people of Nūḥ and 'Ad and Thamud and others like them. Compared with them, the *Mushriks* of Makkah were nothing. When such powerful people could not escape Divine punishment, they would hardly count. (Qurṭubī)

The word: فَوَاقٍ (*fawāq*) in verse 15: مَالَهَا مِنْ فَوَاقٍ (that will have no pause.) is used in Arabic to convey several meanings. To begin with, '*fawāq*' is the period of time that intervenes between milking an animal and creation of milk in its teats once again. Then, it also means 'comfort.' Whatever the case, the sense is that the Horn (Ṣūr) blown by Sayyidnā Israfīl عليه السلام would be so continuous that there will be no pause in it. (Qurṭubī)

عَجِّل لَّنَا قِطَّنَا (O our Lord, give us our share [of the punishment] sooner, - 38:16). The word: قِطّ (*qiṭṭ*) used here is, in reality, the document through which someone has been promised with a reward. Later, this word came to be used also as a 'share' in an absolute sense. Here, this very sense is meant, that is, 'let us have whatever share is coming to us from the reward and punishment of the Hereafter right here in this world.'

Verses 17 - 20

اِصْبِرْ عَلٰى مَايَقُوْلُوْنَ وَاذْكُرْ عَبْدَنَا دَاوٗدَ ذَا الْاَيْدِ ۚ اِنَّهٗٓ اَوَّابٌ ﴿۱۷﴾ اِنَّا سَخَّرْنَا الْجِبَالَ مَعَهٗ يُسَبِّحْنَ بِالْعَشِيِّ وَ الْاِشْرَاقِ ﴿۱۸﴾ وَالطَّيْرَ مَحْشُوْرَةً ۭ كُلٌّ لَّهٗٓ اَوَّابٌ ﴿۱۹﴾ وَشَدَدْنَا مُلْكَهٗ وَاٰتَيْنٰهُ الْحِكْمَةَ وَفَصْلَ الْخِطَابِ ﴿۲۰﴾

Bear patiently with what they say, and remember Our slave Dāwūd, the man of might. Surely he was ever-turning to Allah. [17] **We had subjugated the mountains to join him (in) making *tasbiḥ* (i.e. pronouncing Allah's purity) at evening and sunrise,**[18] **and the birds as well, mustered together. All were turning to Allah with him.** [19] **And We made his kingdom strong, and gave him wisdom and decisive speech.** [20]

Commentary

It was said in verse 17: وَاذْكُرْ عَبْدَنَا دَاوٗدَ ذَا الْاَيْدِ (and remember Our servant, Dāwūd, the man of might). Nearly all commentators have explained it in the sense that he used to demonstrate great courage and strength during the course of his acts of worship (*'ibādah*), therefore, soon after it, comes the sentence: اِنَّهٗٓ اَوَّابٌ (Surely, he was ever-turning to Allah - 38:17). Accordingly, in a Ḥadīth of the Ṣaḥīḥayn (al-Bukhārī and Muslim), the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: "In sight of Allah, the most liked Ṣalāh is the Ṣalāh of Dāwūd عليه السلام and the most liked fasts are the fasts of Dāwūd عليه السلام. He would sleep half a night, worship a third of it, and then sleep during the sixth part, and would fast one day and remain without fast on the other; and when he confronted the enemy, he would never desert the battlefield; and, without any doubt, he turned to Allah sincerely and profusely." (Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr)

This method of *'ibādah* has been called most likeable for the initial reason that it is harder. A lifetime of fasting would make one used to it with the result that, after a passage of time, it does not remain that hard. But fasting by skipping a day in between is different. Here, the element of hardship continues. Then, there is another aspect of this method of fasting in that one who fasts in that manner becomes capable of combining his or her *'ibādah* with the necessary fulfillment of the rights of one's self, family and circle of acquaintances.

In verse 18, it was said: إِنَّا سَخَّرْنَا الْجِبَالَ مَعَهُ...' (We had subjugated the mountains to join him in making *tasbiḥ* (i.e.pronouncing Allah's purity) at evening and sunrise). In this verse, mention has been made of mountains and birds joining Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام in the act of *tasbiḥ*. Detailed explanation of this phenomenon has already appeared in the commentary on Sūrah Al-Anbiyā' and Saba'. Here, it is worth noting that the *tasbiḥ* of mountains and birds has been mentioned at this place in a manner that it was a particular blessing for Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام. The question is: How did this become a blessing for Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام and what particular benefit accrued from the *tasbiḥ* of mountains and birds?

One answer to this is that it unravels a miracle at the hands of Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام - and it goes without saying that it is a great reward and blessing. In addition to that, Maulānā Thānavi has given a subtle explanation about it. He says that the *tasbiḥ* performed by mountains and birds had created in him a special taste for the remembrance of Allah, something that generates initiative, courage and verve in acts of worship (*'ibādah*). Collective *dhikr* has another benefit - that the Barakah that issues forth from it reflects on each other from the participants. There is a particular method of *dhikr* and spiritual engagement (*shughl*) recognized among the noble Ṣūfis in which the participant imagines that the whole universe is making *dhikr*. This method has an unusual efficacy of its own in correcting and purifying one's inner state as well as in his enthusiasm for '*'ibādah*. The basis of this method of *dhikr* is also deduced from this verse. (Masa'ilu-s- Sulūk, Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavi)

The Ṣalāh of ad-Duḥā (صلوٰة الضحى)

At the end of verse 18, it was said: بِالْعَشِيِّ وَالْإِشْرَاقِ (at evening and sunrise).

The word: عَشِيّ (*'ashiyy*) used here means the time following Ẓuhr up to the next morning while اِشْرَاق (*ishrāq*) means the time of the morning when sunshine has spread over the land. From this verse, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ has argued that the Ṣalāh of *ad-duḥā* stands proved. This Ṣalāh is also called the Ṣalāh of al-Awwābīn. There are others who call it the Ṣalāh of al-Ishrāq - though, later on, the name of the Ṣalāh of al-Awwābīn became particularized with the six nafls made after Maghrib, while the Ṣalāh of al-Ishrāq became well known for the two or four nafls offered close after sunrise.

In the Ṣalāh of *ad-duḥā*, one could choose to offer any (even) number of *rak'āt* from two to twelve. Ḥadīth mentions many benefits it brings. According to a narration of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ appearing in Jami' of Tirmidhī, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: "Anyone who were to become particular about two *rak'āt* of the Ṣalāh of *ad-duḥā*, has his sins forgiven - even if they be like the froth of the sea." In another narration from Sayyidnā Anas ﷺ, he is reported to have said: "Anyone who were to make twelve *rak'āt* of the Ṣalāh of ad-duḥā, for him or her Allah Ta'ālā will make a palace of gold in Jannah." (Qurṭubī)

'Ulama' have said that any (even) number of *rak'āt* from two to twelve that can be performed conveniently is correct. But, having some particular routine in the case of its number is better, and if this routine reaches the minimum of four *rak'āt*, it is much better - because, the normal routine of the Holy Prophet ﷺ was to do four *rak'āt*.

The word: اَلْحِكْمَة (*al-ḥikmah*) appearing in verse 38:20: وَاٰتَيْنٰهُ الْحِكْمَةَ وَفَصْلَ الْخِطَابِ (and gave him wisdom, and a decisive speech), as obvious, means wisdom, that is, 'We had blessed him with the precious assets of reason, insight and vision.' Some elders have suggested that it means 'nubuwwah', the station and mission of a prophet. As for the second gift: فَصْلَ الْخِطَاب (*faṣl al-khiṭāb*: translated here as: a decisive speech), it has been explained in different ways by commentators. Some have said that it means power of oration - and the fact is that Sayyidnā Dāwūd ﷺ was a great orator. He was the first one who started saying اَمَّا بَعْد (*amma ba'd*: after that) following *ḥamd* and Ṣalāh in his religious sermons. Some others have said that it means the ability to make a decision at its best, that is, Allah Ta'ālā had given him the ability and power to resolve disputes and decide matters comprehensively. The truth of the matter is

that the words used in the Qur'ān seem to have ample room for both meanings, and both are meant. Incidentally, the translation done by Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavi - *'Faisla kar denay wali taqrir'* - helps accommodate both meanings. (And so does the English translation given above.)

Verses 21 - 25

وَهَلْ اَتٰىكَ نَبَؤُا الْخَصْمِ ۘ اِذْ تَسَوَّرُوا الْمِحْرَابَ ﴿٢١﴾ اِذْ دَخَلُوْا عَلٰى
دَاوٗدَ فَفَزِعَ مِنْهُمْ قَالُوْا لَا تَخَفْ ۚ خَصْمٰنِ بَغٰى بَعْضُنَا عَلٰى بَعْضٍ
فَاحْكُمْ بَيْنَنَا بِالْحَقِّ وَلَا تُشْطِطْ وَاهْدِنَآ اِلٰى سَوَآءِ الصِّرَاطِ ﴿٢٢﴾
اِنَّ هٰذَآ اَخِىْ قف لَهٗ تِسْعٌ وَّتِسْعُوْنَ نَعْجَةً وَّلِىَ نَعْجَةٌ وَّاحِدَةٌ قف فَقَالَ
اَكْفِلْنِيْهَا وَعَزَّنِىْ فِى الْخِطَابِ ﴿٢٣﴾ قَالَ لَقَدْ ظَلَمَكَ بِسُؤَالِ
نَعْجَتِكَ اِلٰى نِعَاجِهٖ وَاِنَّ كَثِيْرًا مِّنَ الْخُلَطَآءِ لَيَبْغِىْ بَعْضُهُمْ عَلٰى
بَعْضٍ اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ وَقَلِيْلٌ مَّا هُمْ ؕ وَظَنَّ دَاوٗدُ
اَنَّمَا فَتَنّٰهُ فَاسْتَغْفَرَ رَبَّهٗ وَخَرَّ رَاكِعًا وَّاَنَابَ ﴿٢٤﴾ السجدة فَغَفَرْنَا لَهٗ ذٰلِكَ ؕ
وَاِنَّ لَهٗ عِنْدَنَا لَزُلْفٰى وَحُسْنَ مَاٰبٍ ﴿٢٥﴾

And has there come to you the story of the litigants, when they entered the sanctuary by climbing over the wall? [21] When they entered upon Dāwūd, and he was scared of them, they said, " Be not scared. We are two litigants; one of us has wronged the other, so decide between us with truth, and do not cross the limits, and guide us to the right path. [22] This is my brother; he has ninety nine ewes, and I have a single ewe; still he said, 'Give it into my charge.' And he overpowered me in speech." [23] He (Dāwūd) said, "He has certainly wronged you by demanding your ewe to be added to his ewe. And many partners oppress one another, except those who believe and do righteous deeds, and very few they are." And Dāwūd realized that We had put him to a test, so he prayed to his Lord for forgiveness, and bowing down, he fell in prostration, and turned (to Allah). [24] So we forgave him that (lapse), and surely he

has a place of nearness in Our presence, and an excellent resort. [25]

Commentary

In these verses, Allah Ta'ālā has mentioned an event relating to Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام. The way in which this event has been described in the noble Qur'ān, it tells only this much that Allah Ta'ālā had put him to some test by sending two disputing parties into his place of worship. Alerted thereby, Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام sought forgiveness from Allah Ta'ālā, and fell in prostration, and He forgave him. Since the real purpose of the noble Qur'ān at this place is to communicate that Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام used to turn to Allah Ta'ālā in every matter of concern he faced, and should he ever sense the least slip issuing forth from him, he would immediately seek forgiveness for it. Therefore, no details have been given as to what that test was, and what was that slip he committed against which he sought forgiveness, something that Allah Ta'ālā forgave him for.

Therefore, some investigative and cautious commentators have said in their explanation of these verses that Allah Ta'ālā has not given a detailed description of this slip and test relating to this great prophet of His due to some particular wise consideration. Hence, we too should not go about pursuing it, and whatever has been mentioned in the noble Qur'ān should be precisely what we should believe in. Even a great research-oriented commentator of the class of Ibn Kathīr has elected to follow this rule and has observed silence as far as details of this event are concerned. Then there is no doubt that this is the ideal course of caution, moderation and sound policy. Therefore, the learned from among the early forbears of Islam (*salaf*) used to say: ابهموا ما ابهمه الله (What Allah has left ambiguous, you too let it remain ambiguous). In this, there is wisdom, and expedient consideration. Then, it is obvious that it means the ambiguity of matters that do not relate to what we do and what we take as halal and haram and, as for matters that concern the collective deeds of Muslims, any ambiguity existing there has already been removed by the Holy Prophet ﷺ through his word and deed.

But, there are other commentators who have tried to determine the exact nature of this test and trial in the light of pre-Islam narratives. In this connection, there is that vulgar yarn that Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام

happened to have cast a look at the wife of Uriah, who was one of his military officers, that put the desire of marrying her in his heart and he, in order to get Uriah killed, entrusted with him a dangerous mission in which he was really killed and later on, he married his wife. It was to admonish him on this act of his that these two angels were sent in human form and shape.

But, this narrative is doubtlessly from among the absurdities that had found currency among Muslims under the influence of Jews. This narrative has been taken from the Bible, the Book of Samuel II, chap. 11. The only difference is that, in the cited reference, an open charge has been leveled against Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام that he had (refuge with Allah) committed adultery with the wife of Uriah prior to marriage. As for these narratives accommodated in some exegetical works, the part relating to adultery has been deleted. It appears that someone looked at the Judaic narrative, took out the allegation of adultery, and did an edit-copy-paste job while explaining the above mentioned verses of the noble Qur'ān - although, this book of Samuel itself is inherently baseless, while this narrative has the status of absolute lie and fabrication. For this reason, all authentic commentators have sternly rejected it.

In addition to Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Kathīr, 'Allāmah Ibn Jauzī, Qāḍī Abu-s-Sa'ūd, Qāḍī al-Baidawī, Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ, Imām Rāzī, 'Allāmah Abū Ḥayyān al-Andalusī, Khāzin, Zamakhsharī, Ibn Ḥazm, 'Allāmah Khafāji, Aḥmad Ibn Naṣr, Abū Tammām, 'Allāmah 'Ālūsi and many others have declared it to be a lie and fabrication. Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Kathīr writes:

> "Some commentators have mentioned a tale at this point most of which has been taken from Judaic narrations. Nothing the following of which is obligatory is proved in this matter on the authority of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Only Ibn Abī Ḥatim has reported a Ḥadīth here, but its authority is unsound."

In short, in the light of many proofs - some detail of which is available in Tafsīr Kabīr of Imām Rāzī and Zād-ul-Masīr of Ibn-ul-Jauzī - this Ḥadīth report goes out of the pale of discussion totally as far as the Tafsīr of this verse is concerned.

Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavi has explained this element of test by saying that these two adversaries climbed over the wall, barged in and started addressing him so insolently that they started off by asking

Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام to be just and not to be unjust. This audacity would have been reason enough for an ordinary person who would have answered them only by punishing them. Allah Ta'ālā tested Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام by seeing whether he too is enraged and punishes him or listens to them demonstrating the high moral traits of pardon and forbearance.

Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام came out successful in this test, except a little slip that remained - when he was giving his verdict, rather than address the perpetrator of injustice, he addressed the one oppressed which betrayed a certain element of partisanship - but, he immediately got alerted, fell down in prostration and Allah Ta'ālā forgave him. (Bayān-ul-Qur'ān)

According to the explanation of this 'slip' given by some commentators, when Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام found the defendant silent, it was without listening to what he had to say, and rather having listened to the plaintiff only, he said things as part of his advice that virtually appeared to be supportive of the plaintiff - although, he should have first asked the defendant as to what his stand was. This statement of Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام was, though, simply advisory in nature, and time has not yet arrived for the final judgment in the case, however, for a great prophet of his caliber, it was not befitting. To this very thing he was later alerted and fell into prostration. (Rūḥ-ul- Ma'ānī)

Some others have said that Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام had managed his time in a manner that every twenty four hours of a day and night one or the other member of his household would be found engaged in some act of devotion to Allah like *'ibādah*, *dhikr* and *tasbiḥ*. On a certain day, he submitted before Allah Ta'ālā, 'My Lord, there is not a single moment of day and night during which one or the other member of the household of Dāwūd is not busy with *'ibādah*, Ṣalāh, *tasbiḥ* and dhikr before Thee!' Allah Ta'ālā said, 'O Dāwūd, all this comes from My *taufīq*. If I do not help you do it, you cannot do it on your own - and one of these days I am going to leave you on your own.' Thereafter, came a day when something different took place. That was a time when Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام was supposed to be engaged in worship. When this unforeseen thing happened, his timetable was shattered, and he got busy with resolving a dispute. No other member of the household of Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام was

engaged in remembering Allah at that time. Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام was alerted immediately. He recalled the self-congratulatory statement that had slipped out of his tongue. He realized he had made a mistake. Therefore, he sought the forgiveness of Allah and fell in prostration. This explanation is supported by a saying of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه which has been reported in the Mustadrak of Ḥākim with sound chains of authority. (Ahkam-ul- Qur'ān)

It has been unanimously agreed upon in these explanations that this litigation was not hypothetical. In fact, it was real and the form of the litigation had nothing to do with the test or slip of Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام. Contrary to this, many commentators have explained it in a manner that postulates that parties to this dispute were not human beings. Rather, they were angels, and Allah Ta'ālā had sent them to present such a simulated form of litigation as would alert Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام to his slip.

Accordingly, these commentators say that as far as this story of the killing of Uriah and marrying his wife is concerned, it is incorrect. But, conditions that actually prevailed among the people of Banī Isra'īl were such that asking someone - 'divorce you wife and give her in marriage to me' - was not considered offensive. This kind of request had also become customary at that time, and was not taken to be impolite as well. It was in this prevailing climate and on this basis that Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام had made his request to Uriah whereupon Allah Ta'ālā alerted him by sending these two angels. Some others have said that this was a simple matter. Uriah had already sent a proposal to a woman. Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام happened to send his proposal to the same woman. This hurt Uriah. Thereupon, as admonition, Allah Ta'ālā sent these two angels and alerted him to his slip in a subtle manner. Qāḍī Abū Ya'lā has based his argument on the words of the Qur'ān: وَعَزَّنِي فِي الْخِطَابِ (And he overpowered me in speech - 23). He says that this sentence supports the view that this matter came to pass only in connection with: خِطْبَه (*khiṭbah*: proposal of marriage), for Dāwūd عليه السلام has not yet married her. (Zād-ul- Masīr by Ibn-ul-Jauzī, p. 116, v. 7)

Most commentators have preferred the last two explanations, and they find support in some reports from the Ṣaḥābah (please see Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī, Tafsīr Abī-s- Sa'ūd, Zād-ul-Masīr, Tafsīr Kabīr etc.) But, the truth

of the matter is that any detail of this test or slip is neither proved from the Qur'ān, nor from some Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth. Therefore, at least this much stands settled that this widely known story of having Uriah killed is incorrect. But, about the actual event, all probabilities mentioned above exist, and no one of these can be called absolute and certain. Therefore, the safest way out is what Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Kathīr has taken: 'That which Allah Ta'ālā has left ambiguous should be left as is. We should not force out its details through our guesses and conjectures - particularly when no deed of ours hinges on it. Certainly there is some wisdom in this ambiguity as well. Therefore, one should believe in as much as has been mentioned in the Qur'ān. As for the details, let these be resigned to Allah. Nevertheless, since there are many benefits that issue forth from this event, more attention should be paid to these. Therefore, let us now turn to an explanation of the verses where, *insha'Allah,* these beneficial notes will keep appearing as we go along.

In the first verse (21), it was said: إِذْ تَسَوَّرُوا الْمِحْرَابَ (when they entered the sanctuary by climbing over the wall?). The word: مِحْرَاب (*miḥrāb*) is essentially applied to an elevated chamber, or the front elevation of a house. Later, the front portion of a mosque or any other House of Worship came to be called by that name in particular. In the Qur'ān, this word has been used in the sense of a place of worship. 'Allāmah Suyūṭī has written that contemporary arched mihrabs of mosques in vogue now were not present during the time of the Holy Prophet ﷺ (Rūḥ-ul- Ma'ānī).

About Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام, it was said in verse 22: فَفَزِعَ مِنْهُمْ (and he was scared of them). The reason of being scared was quite obvious. Two men barging into one's privacy in that manner at an odd hour beating the security cordon can only be because of some bad intention in most cases.

Natural fear is not contrary to the station of a prophet or man of Allah

This tells us that being naturally affected at the sight of something fearful is not contrary to the station of a prophet or man of Allah. Yes, allowing this fear to overtake one's heart and mind and abandoning duties enjoined is certainly bad. Hence, a doubt may arise here. Is it not that the Qur'ān portrays the elegant status of the noble prophets by saying: لَا يَخْشَوْنَ أَحَدًا إِلَّا اللّٰهَ (They do not fear anyone but Allah - Al-Aḥzāb,

33:39)? Why then, was Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام in fear on this occasion? For an answer, it could be said that there are two kinds of fear. There is the fear that comes from being hurt by what causes pain. In Arabic, this is called: خَوف (*khauf*: fear). Then there is the other kind of fear. This emerges because of someone great, majestic, awesome. This is called: خَشيَة (*khashyah*: awe) (al-Mufradāt, Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī). There should be no *khashiyah* for anyone other than Allah - and noble prophets, may peace be on them all, are exactly like that. They are not awed by anyone. Yes, as said earlier, one can have a feeling of fear from naturally hurtful things.

Observe patience against contravention of established rules of etiquette until attending circumstances unfold

The statement in verse 22: قَالُوا لَا تَخَف (They said: "Be not scared") was made by the sudden entrants who said this and then started telling Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام what they wanted to while he kept listening to them silently. This tells us that, should someone commit something irregular all of a sudden, one should not start rebuking and chastising him for that on the spur of the moment, instead, one should first listen to what he has to say, so that one can find out whether or not this person had any justification for his irregular behavior. Had it been someone else, he would have unleashed his anger against such unauthorized entrants on the spot. But, Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام waited till the reality was unfolded, may be these people had some genuine excuse.

The entrant also said: وَلَا تُشطِط (and do not cross the limits - 38:22). This manner of address was obviously very audacious as coming from a stranger. First of all, they came at a late hour, and that too by climbing over the wall. Then, once they were in, they started teaching a prophet as august as Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام lessons in morality by asking him to be just and not to be unjust. All this was heedless simplicity. But, Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام observed patience over whatever they did and said, and just avoided telling anything bad to them in response.

A man of stature should observe patience to the best of his ability over errors made by those in need

This tells us that a person whom Allah has blessed with some high rank - and the needs of people are tied to him should do his best to remain patient over their irregular behavior and errors of expression, for this is

the demand of his rank or office. Particularly so, a Ḥākim (official of the government), a Qāḍī (judge of the judiciary) and a Muftī (authentic consultant responsible for giving fatwa in the light of Islam's sources of jurisprudence) should pay full attention to this need. (Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī)

Verse 24 opens with the words: قَالَ لَقَدْ ظَلَمَكَ بِسُؤَالِ نَعْجَتِكَ اِلٰى نِعَاجِهٖ (He said, 'He has certainly wronged you by demanding your ewe to be added to his ewe.'). Two things are worth pondering here. First of all, Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام made this statement simply after having listened to the plaintiff. He did not hear the statement of the respondent. About it, some elders have said that this was the slip for which he sought forgiveness from Allah. But, other commentators have said that, in reality, full details of the litigation are not being described here. Taken up here is only what was necessary. Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام must have surely heard the stand of the defendant. But, it was not described here for the reason that this is the recognized method when judgments are delivered. Everyone can understand that the part relating to asking the defendant at this place is elided (understood).

In addition to that, it is also possible that, though the visitors had asked Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام for a court judgment, but that was no time for a court session, nor was it a judicial sitting, nor Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام had the necessary resources available at hand in order to implement his judgment, therefore, he did not give his judgment in the status of a qadi (judge), instead, what he gave was a fatwa (ruling) in his status as a mufti (juri-consult) - and it is not the job of a mufti to go about investigating into the nature of an event, rather, the thing depends on the question asked, and it is in accordance with it that he has to give his answer.

Soliciting contribution, or even gift, under pressure of any kind is usurpation

Something else worth pondering here is that Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام equated the act of a person demanding simply an ewe with injustice or oppression - although, casually asking someone for something is not a crime. The reason is that the form in which it was being asked did have the outward anatomy of a request. But, in the presence of the amount of verbal and practical pressure being put behind this asking, this thing had assumed the proportions of usurpation, something being taken forcibly,

compulsively, illegally or by extortion.

From here we learn that, should a person ask for something from someone in a manner that the addressee, whether willing or unwilling, is left with no way out other than giving it, then, (soliciting aside) even demanding a gift in that manner is also included under *ghasb* or usurpation. Therefore, if the person asking is a man of office or power, or someone respectable and elegant-looking - and the addressee cannot afford to say no because of the pressure of this man's personality - then, even if the form of the situation is that of soliciting a gift, but in reality, it translates as nothing but ghasb or usurpation, and, the use of the thing acquired in this manner is never permissible for the person asking for it. This point needs the particular attention of those who solicit and receive contributions for *madaris* and *makātib* (religious schools), *masajid* (mosques) or societies and associations in the religious field. For them, only that donation is halal and good that has been given to them by the donor voluntarily and cheerfully. If those seeking such contributions use the pressure of their personality or eight or ten of them simultaneously descend on someone, render him helpless, and succeed in gouging that contribution out of him, then, this would be a flagrantly impermissible act on their part. The Ḥadīth carries a very clear statement of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in this matter:

لایحلّ مال امریٔ مسلم اِلاّ بطیب نفس منه

The property of a Muslim is not halal unless it is with his sweet will.

Partnership in transactions needs great caution

In verse 24, it was said: وَاِنَّ كَثِيْرًا مِّنَ الْخُلَطَآءِ لَيَبْغِىْ بَعْضُهُمْ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ (And many partners oppress one another). By saying this, we have been alerted that it is not unusual when mutual rights are compromised between two persons having a partnership deal. There are occasions when one of them would take something as ordinary, and goes ahead and does it. But, in reality, it becomes the cause of sin. Therefore, great caution is needed in this matter.

Later, in the same verse, it was said: وَظَنَّ دَاوٗدُ اَنَّمَا فَتَنّٰهُ (And Dāwūd realized that We had put him to a test,- 38:24). If the form of the litigation is taken to be a similitude of the slip of Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام, then, the

occurring of such a thought is fairly obvious. And if the form of the litigation has nothing to do with it, even then, the overall condition of the parties involved was enough to show that the two of them have been sent by way of a test. On the one hand, these disputants were in such hurry to get their litigation resolved that they were audacious enough to jump the wall and barge in. On the other hand, when the case was presented, the defendant sat silent and accepted, verbally or practically, the plea of the plaintiff without any ifs and buts.

If the defendant agreed with the event as described by the plaintiff, he hardly had the need to come to Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام to seek a verdict in the dispute. Even a person of average intelligence could have gathered that, in this situation, Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام will invariably decide in favor of the plaintiff. This mysterious conduct of the two disputants was betraying that it was an event of some extraordinary nature. Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام had no difficulty in seeing through it, that they had come as sent from Allah and their objective was to test him. In some narrations, it also appears that, after having heard the verdict, they exchanged furtive smiles, and in no time disappeared into the skies. Allah knows best.

In the last sentence of verse 24, it was said: فَاسْتَغْفَرَ رَبَّهُ وَخَرَّ رَاكِعًا وَّ اَنَابَ (so he prayed to his Lord for forgiveness, and bowing down, he fell in prostration, and turned [to Allah].). It should be noted that the word used here is that of: رُكُوع (*rukū*') which literally means 'to bow down' while, with most commentators, it denotes سَجْدَة (*sajdah*: prostration). According to the Ḥanafiyyah, by reciting this verse, *sajdah* becomes obligatory.

By doing *rukū'* the *sajdah* of *tilāwah* (recitation) stands performed

And Imām Abū Ḥanīfah has proved from this verse that, in case a verse requiring *sajdah* has been recited within the Ṣalāh, then, forming the intention of *sajdah* in the *ruku'* makes the obligation of *sajdah* stand performed. The reason is that here Allah Ta'ālā has used the word: رُكُوع (*rukū'*) for: سَجْدَة (*sajdah*) which proves that *rukū'* too can become the replacement of *sajdah*. But, in this connection, a few necessary points should be borne in mind.

The sajdah of *tilawah* (recitation): Some rulings.

1. Sajdah when being performed through an obligatory *rukū'* in

Ṣalāh can only be performed validly on condition that the verse of sajdah has been recited within the Ṣalāh. When reciting the Qur'ān outside the Ṣalāh, the *sajdah* of *tilāwah* cannot be performed validly through a *rukū'*. The reason is that *rukū'* is an act of *'ibādah* only in Ṣalāh - outside Ṣalāh, it is not recognized as an act of worship. (Badā'i').

2. A *rukū'* can stand for *sajdah* of *tilāwah* only when *rukū'* has been done soon after having recited the verse of sajdah or having recited at the most two or three additional verses. And if, after the verse of *sajdah*, one has made a long recitation in the standing position, the *rukū'* would not stand for *sajdah*.

3. If one is thinking of performing the *sajdah* of *tilāwah* in the position of *rukū'*, then, he should better make the intention of the *sajdah* of *tilawah* while bowing down for the *rukū'*, otherwise, the obligation of sajdah will not stand discharged by this *rukū'*. Yes, once the person starts going for sajdah, the sajdah will stand performed even without the intention.

4. The preferred practice, however, in any case is that the *sajdah* of tilawah is performed as a regular *sajdah* before *rukū'*, and then, one rises from the state of *sajdah,* recites one or two verses and then goes for *rukū'*, rather than it is performed in the obligatory *rukū'* of the Ṣalāh. (BadB'i ').

In verse 25, it was said: وَإِنَّ لَهُ عِندَنَا لَزُلْفَىٰ وَحُسْنَ مَآبٍ (and surely he has a place of nearness in Our presence, and an excellent resort.). By concluding this event on this verse, a hint was released towards the fact that, no matter whatever the slip of Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام would have been, once he had sought forgiveness from Allah and had passionately turned to Him, it goes without saying that the level of his communion with Allah Ta'ālā had increased further.

When warn, warn with wisdom!

Yet another aspect of this event needs to be mentioned here. Let this slip of Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام be whatever it was, it was a matter between him and his Lord who could have alerted him to it even directly through a revelation. But, rather than do something of this nature, why was a particular method used when the case of a dispute was sent in his court to alert him thereby? The truth of the matter is that this method invites deliberation. It helps us realize that it provides guidance for those who

are engaged in preaching and bidding the Fair and forbidding the Unfair. Those who do their duty in this field should know that the conduct of a person is not to be corrected casually. It takes a lot of wisdom to do it. To alert someone to his error, it is better to take to a method that helps the concerned person realize his error on his own, without having recourse to warn him verbally. For that purpose, it is more effective to use such examples as may convey the message without hurting the addressee in the least.

Verse 26

يٰدَاوٗدُ اِنَّا جَعَلْنٰكَ خَلِيْفَةً فِى الْاَرْضِ فَاحْكُمْ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِالْحَقِّ وَلَا
تَتَّبِعِ الْهَوٰى فَيُضِلَّكَ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَضِلُّوْنَ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ
اللّٰهِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيْدٌۢ بِمَا نَسُوْا يَوْمَ الْحِسَابِ ﴿٢٦﴾

O Dāwūd, We have made you a vicegerent on earth, so judge between people with truth, and do not follow the selfish desire, lest it should lead you astray from Allah's path. Surely those who go astray from Allah's path will have a severe punishment, because they had forgotten the Day of Reckoning. [26]

Commentary

Not only that Allah Ta'ālā had made Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام a prophet, He had also placed a government and state at his command. Accordingly, in this verse, he has been entrusted with a basic guideline for the conduct of governance and politics. Three things have been said in this guideline:

1. We have made you Our *khalifah* (caliph, deputy, successor, vicar, vicegerent) on the earth.

2. In this capacity, your basic duty is to decide matters in accordance with the truth.

3. And to accomplish this mission, abstention from following personal desires is a binding condition.

As for the sense of making someone a khalifah on the earth, it has been discussed in the commentary on Sūrah Al-Baqarah (please see Ma'āriful-Qur'ān, English, Volume I, pages 158-171) and from it emerges the

essential principle of Islamic political theory that "Sovereignty belongs to Allah Taʻālā." All rulers of the earth are bound to operate in accordance with His injunctions alone. They cannot go out of it. Therefore, the ruler of Muslims, the consultative body or assembly might explain or codify Islamic law as such, but the reality is that they are not lawgivers, instead, are introducers of the law of Allah.

The basic function of an Islamic state is to establish truth

Secondly, it has been made very clear here that the basic function of an Islamic state is to establish truth. It is incumbent on the government that it should establish the rule of truth and justice in all its matters from administration to resolution of disputes.

Since Islam is a religion for all times to come, it has not fixed such administrative details as would have to be changed with changing circumstances. Instead of that, it has blessed its followers with the basic guidelines in the light of which administrative details can be settled according to the needs of every period of time. Therefore, no doubt, this much has been made clear here that the essential function of the government is to establish truth, but along with it, its administrative details have been left in the safe hands of sound thinking Muslims of every period.

The relationship of the Judiciary and the Executive

Accordingly, no such fixed injunction as would stand unalterable in every period of time has been given on the issue of whether the Judiciary remains separate from the Executive or remains part of it. If, in some period of time, full trust can be placed in the honesty and trustworthiness of the rulers, the duality of the judiciary and the executive branches of the government can be eliminated - and if, in a certain period, full trust cannot be placed in the honesty and trustworthiness of the rulers, the Judiciary can also be kept totally independent of the Executive.

Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام was a great prophet of Allah. Who could have claimed to be as honest and trustworthy as he was? Therefore, he was simultaneously made the head of both the Executive and the Judiciary who also had the responsibility of delivering a verdict in disputes. In addition to the noble prophets عليهم السلام, the same practice continued among the rightly guided *khulafa'* of the Muslim community (*al-khulafa'*

ar-rashidūn) when the *amirul-mu'minīn* (the leader of Muslims or head of the Muslim state) used to be the Qāḍī (judge) as well. This practice was discontinued by later Islamic governments when the *amirul-mu'minīn* was made the head of the Executive, and the qadi-l-qudat (Chief Justice) that of the Judiciary.

The third guideline on which the heaviest stress has been laid in this verse simply says: Do not follow the desires of your self and keep the day of Reckoning in sight all the time. The reason for such a stress is that this thing is the very foundation of any effort to establish the supremacy of truth. Only a Ḥākim (ruler) or Qāḍī (judge) who has the fear of Allah and the concern of Hereafter in his heart can establish the supremacy of truth and justice in the real sense of the term. Nothing short of this would work. You are welcome to make laws, the best you can. The ability of the desiring human self to conceal its stratagems and carve out an operational outlet through any law or system is virtually unbeatable. As long as this thing is there, the best of law and system cannot establish the rule of law, truth and justice. The history of the world and the current scenario of our time bear witness to this submission.

The first thing to watch around offices charged with responsibility is the character of the human being sitting there

Right from here we also learn that in order to place someone in a position of authority, such as an official of the government, or a judge of the judiciary (or someone in any other role of public or private responsibility), the first thing one has to look for is whether or not this person has the fear of Allah in his heart, the concern for 'Ākhirah, the life to come on his mind and, of course, the state of his morals and character. If it is realized that he has nothing of the sort as the fear of Allah in his heart, instead, his desiring self sits there as the monarch of all it surveys, then, no matter how high his degrees in education, and no matter how superb his expertise and experience in the field, he is not deserving of any high office of responsibility in the sight of Islam.

Verses 27 - 29

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَآءَ وَالْاَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا بَاطِلاً ط ذٰلِكَ ظَنُّ الَّذِيْنَ

كَفَرُوْا ج فَوَيْلٌ لِّلَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنَ النَّارِ ﴿٢٧﴾ ط اَمْ نَجْعَلُ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا

وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ كَالْمُفْسِدِيْنَ فِى الْاَرْضِ ز اَمْ نَجْعَلُ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ كَالْفُجَّارِ ﴿۲۸﴾ كِتٰبٌ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ اِلَيْكَ مُبٰرَكٌ لِّيَدَّبَّرُوْٓا اٰيٰتِهٖ وَلِيَتَذَكَّرَ اُولُوا الْاَلْبَابِ ﴿۲۹﴾

And We did not create the heavens and the earth and what is between them in vain. That is the thinking of those who disbelieve. So, woe to the disbelievers because of the Fire (they have to face). [27] **Shall We make those who believe and do righteous deeds equal to those who commit mischief on the earth? Or shall We make the God-fearing equal to the sinners?** [28] **This is a blessed Book We have revealed to you, so that they deliberate in its verses and, and so that the men of understanding may take to advice.** [29]

Commentary

The delicate order of the verses

These verses in which the basic beliefs of Islam, particularly that of the Hereafter, have been emphatically confirmed appear in between the description of events relating to Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام with an order that is extremely delicate and sublime. Says Imām Rāzī, if someone is refusing to understand because of obstinacy, the wiser approach is to put away the subject under discussion aside, and start talking about something totally unrelated - and when his mind stands diverted from the first subject, he should be brought around during the flow of conversation to concede to the original proposition. At this place, it is to dwell upon and secure confirmation of the Hereafter that this very method has been used. Being mentioned before the description of the event relating to Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام there were some postures of obstinacy demonstrated by the disbelievers that concluded at the verse: وَقَالُوْا رَبَّنَا عَجِّلْ لَّنَا قِطَّنَا قَبْلَ يَوْمِ الْحِسَابِ (And they said, " O our Lord, give us our share [of the punishment] sooner, before the Day of Reckoning." - 38:16). The outcome of all this was to state that those people rejected the existence of the Hereafter and made fun of it. Immediately after that, it was said: اِصْبِرْ عَلٰى مَايَقُوْلُوْنَ وَاذْكُرْ عَبْدَنَا دَاوٗدَ (Observe patience over what they say and remember Our servant, Dāwūd - 38:17). By saying so, a new subject was introduced. But, the event relating to Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام has been concluded with the statement:

> O Dāwūd, We have made you a vicegerent on earth, so judge between people with truth. (38:26).

Now, from here it is in an imperceptible manner that the Hereafter has been positively confirmed by positing that here is the supreme Being of Allah asking his deputy on the earth to establish the rule of law and justice resulting in punishment for the evil and peace for the good - when so, is it not that the same Being would necessarily establish justice and equity in this universe? Most certainly, it is the dictate of His wisdom that He, rather than herd everyone good or bad with the same stick, punishes the doers of evil and rewards the doers of good. This, then, is the purpose of the creation of this universe, and in order that it translates into reality, it is necessary that there be a Qiyāmah (the Last Day) and an 'Ākhirah (the Hereafter) - something that precisely corresponds to His wisdom. Those who reject the Hereafter are virtually saying that this universe has been created aimlessly, devoid of any wisdom behind it, for everyone good or bad will live his or her time and die with nobody around to ask questions - although, one who has faith in the wisdom of Allah Ta'ālā can never accept this line of reasoning.

In verse 28, it was said: اَمْ نَجْعَلُ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا (الی قوله تعالیٰ) كَالْفُجَّارِ (Shall We make those who believe and do righteous deeds equal to those who commit mischief on the earth? Or shall We make the God-fearing equal to the sinners?) - that is, this can never be. In fact, the end of both will be totally different. Right from here, we learn that this difference between a believer and disbeliever is there in terms of the injunctions of the Hereafter. While living in the present world, it is quite possible that a disbeliever has a lot more comforts than a believer. Likewise, it cannot be deduced thereby that the material rights of the disbeliever cannot be equal to the rights of the believer, instead, the truth of the matter is that a disbeliever could be allowed human rights equal to a believer. Accordingly, non-Muslim minorities who live in an Islamic state under mutual pledges shall be given all human rights that will be but equal to those of Muslim.

Verses 30 - 33

وَوَهَبْنَا لِدَاوٗدَ سُلَيْمٰنَ ؕ نِعْمَ الْعَبْدُ ؕ اِنَّهٗۤ اَوَّابٌ ﴿۳۰﴾ؕ اِذْ عُرِضَ عَلَيْهِ

بِالْعَشِيِّ الصّٰفِنٰتُ الْجِيَادُ ﴿٣١﴾ فَقَالَ اِنِّیْۤ اَحْبَبْتُ حُبَّ الْخَیْرِ عَنْ
ذِكْرِ رَبِّیْ ۚ حَتّٰی تَوَارَتْ بِالْحِجَابِ ﴿٣٢﴾ رُدُّوْهَا عَلَیَّ ؕ فَطَفِقَ
مَسْحًاۢ بِالسُّوْقِ وَالْاَعْنَاقِ ﴿٣٣﴾

And We blessed Dāwūd with Sulaymān. He was an excellent slave (of Allah). Surely, he was great in turning (to Us, in penitence and praise). [30] **(Worth remembering is the incident) when the swift horses of high breeding were presented before him in the evening.** [31] **He said, " I held the love of the good things (i.e. these horses) dearer than the remembrance of my Lord, until it (the sun) went behind the veil.** [32] **Bring them back to me" - and he started passing his hands over the shanks and the necks.** [33]

Commentary

In these verses, an event relating to Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام has been mentioned. The gist of the well known Tafsīr of this event is that Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام was so engrossed in the inspection of the horses that he missed to perform the Ṣalāh of Al-'Aṣr at his usual time. Later, when he was alerted to this loss, he slaughtered all those horses as the unfortunate interference in the remembrance of Allah took place because of them.

This missed Ṣalāh could be a *nafl ṣalāh*. Given this situation, there should be no difficulty in understanding what Sulaymān عليه السلام did, for the noble prophets try to make amends for even this much of negligence. And it is also possible that the Ṣalāh concerned was obligatory (*farḍ*) and his engrossment in the inspection might have caused him to forget. Although if someone forgets to perform the *fard* (obligatory) Ṣalāh, it does not cause a sin to have been committed, but Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام, in view of his high station, expiated for that too.

This Tafsīr of the cited verses has been reported from several leading authorities among the commentators. Even a great scholar of Ibn Kathīr's stature has preferred this Tafsīr. Then, it is also supported by a *marfu'* Ḥadīth (attributed to the noble Prophet ﷺ) reported by 'Allamah Suyuti with reference to the Mu'jim of aṬabarānī, Isma'īlī and Ibn Marduwayh:

عن ابی بن کعب رضی الله عنه عن النّبی صلی الله علیه وسلّم فی قوله فطفق مسحًا بالسّوق والاعناق قال قطع سوقها وأعناقها بالسیف)

From 'Ubaiyy Ibn Ka'b ﷺ, from the Holy Prophet ﷺ: About the word of Allah: (and he started passing his hands over the shanks and the necks.), he said: "Cut their legs and necks with the sword."

'Allāmah Suyūṭī has declared its rating as Ḥasan. (ad-Durr-ul-Manthūr, p. 309, v. 5) and quoting this Ḥadīth in Majma'-uz-Zawa'id, 'Allāmah Haithami says:

> 'Ṭabarānī has reported this in al-Awsat. Sa'īd Ibn Bashīr is one of the narrators there. He has been called trustworthy by Shu'bah and others. Ibn Ma'in and others call him weak. The rest of the men reporting are trustworthy.' (Majma'-uz-Zawa'id, p. 99, v. 7, Kitabu-t-Tafsīr)

Because of this Ḥadīth, this Tafsīr becomes fairly strong. But, it generally lends to the doubt that the horses were a gift of Allah and wasting one's property in that manner does not seem to befit the station of a prophet. Commentators have answered it by saying that Sayyidnā Sulaymān ﷺ owned these horses, and the sacrifice of horses was also permissible in his code of law very similar to that of cows, goats and camels. Therefore, he never wasted the horses, in fact, sacrificed them in the name of Allah. Just as the act of sacrificing a cow or goat is not tantamount to wasting it, instead, it is an act of *'ibādah*, the sacrifice of horses offered by him was nothing but an act of *'ibādah* (Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī).

Most commentators have explained this verse in this very manner. But, there is another Tafsīr of these verses reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ where the description of the event differs. A gist of the Tafsīr is that the horses presented before Sayyidnā Sulaymān ﷺ were specially prepared for Jihād. Sayyidnā Sulaymān ﷺ was pleased to see them while he also said that the attachment he had to those horses was not because he loved worldly life, rather it was because of his remembrance of Allah in that these were prepared for Jihād, and Jihād was and act of worship at its highest. In the meantime, that lineup of horses went out of his sight. He asked that they be brought back again. Accordingly, when they appeared before him once again, he started stroking and patting their necks and legs with affection.

According to this Tafsīr, the word: عَن (*'an*: from or because) in: عَن ذِكْرِ رَبِّى (*'an dhikri-rabbī*: from or because of the remembrance of my Lord) is the 'an of cause' عَن سَببيّه ('an sababiyah), and the pronoun in: تَوَارَت (*tawarāt*: disappeared) is invariably reverting to horses, and: مَسْحٌ (*masḥ*) does not mean to cut, instead, it means to pass or wipe hands (over the body of the horses) with affection.

Classical commentators like Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Jarīr Ṭabarī, Imām Rāzī and others have preferred this very Tafsīr, because it is free from any possible doubt about property being wasted.

In terms of the words of the noble Qur'ān, there is room for both explanations. But, since a *marfu'* Ḥadīth has appeared in favor of the first Tafsīr, a Ḥadīth that is *ḥasan* (good) as regards its authority, therefore, it has become weightier and more acceptable.

The story of the return and resetting of the Sun

Some early interpreters have, while following the first Tafsīr, also said that soon after having missed the Ṣalāh of al-'Aṣr, Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام prayed to Allah Ta'ālā, or requested the angels, that the Sun should be made to return. Accordingly, the Sun was returned and he was enabled to perform his appointed Ṣalāh. After that, the Sun set once again. These people take the pronoun in: رُدُّوهَا (*rudduhā*: Bring it back to me - 38:33) as reverting to the Sun.

But, investigative commentators, for instance, 'Allāmah 'Ālūsī and others have rejected this fictional approach, and have said that the pronoun in: رُدُّوهَا (*rudduhā*: Bring them back to me) is reverting to 'horses' and not to the Sun - not because, refuge with Allah, making the Sun to return is not within the power and control of Allah Ta'ālā, but because this story does not stand proved from the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth. (Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī)

In the event one neglects the remembrance of Allah, some self-imposed penalty is in order as part of one's remorse

Anyway, this much does stand proved from the event that, should there come a time when one happens to have been neglectful of the remembrance of Allah, then, in order to punish one's aberrant self, depriving it of some lawful thing is permissible. This, in the terminology of the noble Ṣūfīs, is called: غيرت (*ghayrah*: sense of honor or shame).

(Bayān-ul-Qur'ān)

Imposing such penalties on one's own self for the purpose of training it to do what is good is a prescription of self-reform - and this event seems to suggest its justification, in fact, recommendation. It has also been reported from the Holy Prophet ﷺ that, on a certain occasion, Sayyidnā Abū Jahm ﷺ presented to him the gift of a Syrian throw-over shawl having some sort of design embroidered or painted on it. He made his Ṣalāh covering himself with this shawl. Then, he came to Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا and said to her, "Return this shawl to Abū Jahm, because I happened to have cast a look at the design it had during the course of my Ṣalāh, and this design would have almost thrown me into some trial" (Aḥkām-ul- Qur'ān with reference to al-Muwaṭṭa' of Imām Mālik).

Similarly, there is an incident related to Sayyidnā Abū Ṭalḥah ﷺ. Once, while making Ṣalāh in his fruit-farm, he happened to have turned his attention to look at a bird, and as a result, his attention was diverted away from the Ṣalāh (a contravention of the essential etiquette of Ṣalāh being offered before Allah Ta'ālā). After that, he gave the whole farm as sadaqah (charity).

But one has to bear in mind that the penalty thought of for this purpose should be permissible by itself. Wasting away some property for no valid reason is not permissible. Therefore, no such action is correct as would result in the wastage of property. Among the Ṣūfīs, the famous Shibli رحمہ اللہ تعالیٰ had once burnt his clothes as part of this kind of self-imposed penalty. But, the more discerning among Ṣūfīs, such as Shaikh 'Abdul-Wahhāb Sha'rānī رحمہ اللہ تعالیٰ, did not approve of that action of his as correct and sound. (Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī)

The ruler should personally keep watching over the functions of the state

The second line of conduct that emerges from this event is that the person responsible for the affairs of the state or its high officials (who share this responsibility with him) should personally keep watching over their subordinate departments in a way that they never sit relaxed after having passed on the trust to their deputies and assistants. This is the reason why Sayyidnā Sulaymān ﷺ who had a host of subordinates at his command, inspected the horses in person. This concern (to be

personally vigilant against any malfunction of the state system) stands proved also from the examples set by the rightly guided caliphs of Islam, particularly from the practice of Sayyidnā 'Umar رضي الله عنه.

At the time of one act of *'ibādah* (worship), engaging in another is an error

The second line of conduct that stands proved from this event is that the time of an *'ibādah* that is already bound with a certain hour should not be spent in getting busy with some other act of *'ibādah*. It is obvious that the inspection of horses prepared for Jihad amounted to a significant act of worship in its own right. But, as this was not the time for this kind of *'ibādah*, rather, was the time of the prescribed *'ibādah* of Ṣalāh, therefore, Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام counted this too as an error, for which he made amends. Hence, Muslim jurists say that the way it is not permissible to stay occupied with buying and selling activity after the *adhan* (call for prayer) of Jumu'ah Ṣalāh, similarly, it is also not correct to stay occupied with some chore other than the preparation for the Jumu'ah Ṣalāh, even if it happens to be the *'ibādah* of reciting the Qur'ān or making *nafl ṣalāh*.

Verse 34

وَلَقَدْ فَتَنَّا سُلَيْمٰنَ وَاَلْقَيْنَا عَلٰى كُرْسِيِّهٖ جَسَدًا ثُمَّ اَنَابَ ﴿٣٤﴾

And We, indeed, tested Sulaymān while We threw on his throne a body after which he turned (to Us). [34]

Commentary

In this verse, Allah Ta'ālā has mentioned yet another test of Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام with a simple statement saying that, during this test, some body, or part of it, was put on the throne of Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام. As for what that body was and what its placement on the throne means and how it was a test, these details are not available in the noble Qur'ān, nor are they proved from any Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth. Therefore, some authentic commentators, for instance, Ibn Kathīr seems to incline to the approach that anything the Qur'ān has left ambiguous should be left as is, without having to dig into its details. One should simply believe this much that Allah Ta'ālā had put Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام to some test after which he turned to Allah more than before - and the real purpose of

the Qur'ān stands accomplished by saying that which has already been said.

Still, some commentators have tried to go after the details of this test, and have come up with several probabilities in this connection. Some of these probabilities happen to have been extracted exclusively from Judaic narrations. For example, the story that secret of the power of Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام was in his ring. On a certain day, the Satan got hold of his ring, and ended up sitting on the throne of Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام as the ruler looking like him. Forty days later, that ring of Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام was retrieved from the belly of a fish. After that, he regained his authority as the ruler once again. This narrative annexed with additional tales appears in several books of Tafsīr. But, Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Kathīr, after identifying all such narratives as Judaic reports, writes in his Tafsīr:

> "There is a group among the people of the Book that does not believe in Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام as a prophet. Therefore, it is obvious, all these false tales have been forged by them" - Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr, p. 36, v. 4.

Hence, labeling narratives of this nature as being the Tafsīr of this Qur'ānic verse is not correct by any standard.

There is another event relating to Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام that finds mention in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī and elsewhere too. Finding some parts of this event resembling the text of this verse, some commentators have declared it to be the Tafsīr of this verse. The gist of the event is that once Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام confided as to when he would go to his wives, each of them would give birth to a boy who will carry out Jihād in the way of Allah. But, while verbalizing his thought, he forgot to say: *Insha'Allah* (If Allah wills) Allah Ta'ālā did not like this slip coming from his great prophet, and He proved this claim of his as false as only one out of all his wives gave birth to a still child that had one side missing.

Some commentators have applied the anatomy of this event on this verse, and have said that the expression: 'threw or put the body or its part on the throne' means that some attendant of Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام brought this body of the baby, and put it on the throne. Thereupon, Sayyidnā Sulaymān got alerted, and he realized that it was the

consequence of not saying: *Insha'Allah* on his part. Accordingly, he turned to Allah and sought forgiveness for this slip.

Discerning commentators like Qāḍī Abū-s-Sa'ūd, 'Allāmah 'Ālusī and others have followed this Tafsīr. Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavi has also gone by it in his Tafsīr Bayān-ul-Qur'ān. But, the reality is that even this event cannot be called the Tafsīr of this verse in a certain manner for the reason that no Ḥadīth narration that mentions this event has any indication that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has ever mentioned it as part of his explanation of the verse under study. Even Imām Bukhari has reported this Ḥadīth in his Kitāb-ul-Jihād, Kitāb-ul-Anbiyā', Kitāb-ul-Aymān wā-n-Nudhūr and elsewhere with various versions, but he has not mentioned it under the head of the Tafsīr of Sūrah Ṣād anywhere in his Kitābu-t-Tafsīr. In fact, he has reported another narration under the verse: وَهَبْ لِي مُلْكًا (bless me with a kingdom - 38:35) (which follows immediately next to the verse under discussion here) and has not made any mention of this Ḥadīth. This shows that, even in the sight of Imām Bukhārī, this particular event is not a Tafsīr of the verse under study. Instead, this too, like the several other events relating to the noble prophets described by the Holy Prophet ﷺ, is a separate event that does not necessarily have to be the Tafsīr of one or the other verse.

A third Tafsīr is credited to Imām Rāzī and some others. According to this Tafsīr, once Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام became very sick. He grew so weak because of it that, at the time he was brought in to sit on the throne, he gave the impression of a body without the soul. Later, Allah Ta'ālā enabled him to get well. At that time, he turned to Allah, expressed his gratitude before Him, sought His forgiveness - and along with all that, also prayed for an unmatched kingdom for himself in the future.

But, this Tafsīr too is simply conjectural. It also does not carry much congruence with the words of the noble Qur'ān, and there is no proof for it from any Ḥadīth narration as well.

The reality is that there is no source with us to find out the certain details of the event alluded to in the verse under study - nor are we duty-bound to go about finding it. Therefore, we have zero in our faith on this much that Allah Ta'ālā had put Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام to a certain test after which his passion to return to Allah came out stronger than ever

before - and that the real purpose of the Qur'ān in mentioning this event is to invite all human beings to turn to Allah like Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام as and when they face any distress or trial. As for the details of the test and trial of Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام, let these be entrusted with Allah. Allah knows best.

Verses 35 - 40

قَالَ رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِي وَهَبْ لِي مُلْكًا لَّا يَنْبَغِي لِأَحَدٍ مِّنْ بَعْدِي ۚ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْوَهَّابُ ﴿٣٥﴾ فَسَخَّرْنَا لَهُ الرِّيحَ تَجْرِي بِأَمْرِهِ رُخَآءً حَيْثُ أَصَابَ ﴿٣٦﴾ وَالشَّيٰطِينَ كُلَّ بَنَّآءٍ وَّغَوَّاصٍ ﴿٣٧﴾ وَّاٰخَرِينَ مُقَرَّنِينَ فِي الْأَصْفَادِ ﴿٣٨﴾ هٰذَا عَطَآؤُنَا فَامْنُنْ أَوْ أَمْسِكْ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ ﴿٣٩﴾ وَإِنَّ لَهُ عِنْدَنَا لَزُلْفٰى وَحُسْنَ مَاٰبٍ ﴿٤٠﴾

He said, "O my Lord, forgive me, and bless me with a kingdom that will not be available to anyone after me. Surely, You are the Bountiful. [35] **Then We subjugated the wind for him that blew smoothly on his command to wherever he wished,** [36] **and (We subjugated to him) the satans (among Jinns), all builders and divers,** [37] **and many others held in chains.** [38] **This is Our gift. So, do favor (to someone) or withhold (it), with no (requirement to give) account.** [39] **He has a place of nearness in Our presence, and an excellent end.** [40]

Commentary

It was said in verse 35: هَبْ لِي مُلْكًا لَّا يَنْبَغِي لِأَحَدٍ مِّنْ بَعْدِي (bless me with a kingdom that will not be available to anyone after me.). Some commentators explain the sense of this prayer as 'let not a great kingdom like mine belong to anyone else during my time.' In other words, they take *"min ba'dī"*: or 'after me' in the sense of 'other than me.' Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavi has done his translation accordingly. But, with most commentators, the sense of the prayer is: 'Even after me, let no one have a kingdom as great as this.' Accordingly, so it happened. The kingdom that Allah Ta'ālā gave to Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام was a kingdom the like of which never became the lot of anyone else. The reason was simple. The subjugation of the wind and the command over the genre of the Jinn

were exclusive traits of his kingdom, and no kingdom that followed him had these characteristics. There are some people who carry out mysterious exercises (*'amaliyyāt*) through which they are known to subjugate Jinns, a phenomenon that does not fall contrary to this, because it cannot be compared, in the least, to the subjugation of the jinn Allah had allowed for Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام. Moreover, these experts in *'amaliyyāt* are able to make just about one or a few Jinns become obedient to them, but the kind of wide spread kingdom that Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام had was not acquired by anyone.

Praying for office and power

At this place, it should be borne in mind that no prayer made by the noble prophets is made without the will and permission of Allah Ta'ālā. Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام had made this prayer too by the will and permission of Allah Ta'ālā. And since some bland seeking of power was not his aim, rather the driving desire to implement Divine laws and the passion to make truth triumph was behind it - and Allah Ta'ālā knew that once Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام had the power, he would work for these very high objectives, and would never entertain negative feelings of office, power and recognition - therefore, he was given the permission to make this prayer, and it was accepted as well. But, common people have been prohibited in Ḥadīth from seeking power following their own initiative. The reason is that such an initiative usually gets to be tainted with the desire for power, influence, money and property. Accordingly, where one has the certitude of being free of such selfish desires and one really would love to see the banner of truth fly high without the least hunger for power hidden anywhere in the recesses of his heart - then, for such a person, praying for power and authority of government is permissible. (Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī etc.)

In verse 38, it was said: مُقَرَّنِينَ فِى الْأَصْفَادِ (held in chains). Details about the subjugation of Jinns and the services they performed have appeared earlier in the commentary on Sūrah Saba' within this Volume VII. Here, it has been said that Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام was holding the unruly Jinns by having them chained. Now, it is not necessary that these chains be the visible chains of iron. It is possible that there could have been some other method used to tie them up more tightly or securely - and it has been expressed as 'chains' for the sake of common comprehension.

Verses 41 - 44

وَاذْكُرْ عَبْدَنَآ اَيُّوْبَ ۘ اِذْنَادٰى رَبَّهٗٓ اَنِّىْ مَسَّنِىَ الشَّيْطٰنُ بِنُصْبٍ وَّعَذَابٍ ﴿٤١﴾ اُرْكُضْ بِرِجْلِكَ ۚ هٰذَا مُغْتَسَلٌۢ بَارِدٌ وَّشَرَابٌ ﴿٤٢﴾ وَوَهَبْنَا لَهٗٓ اَهْلَهٗ وَمِثْلَهُمْ مَّعَهُمْ رَحْمَةً مِّنَّا وَذِكْرٰى لِاُولِى الْاَلْبَابِ ﴿٤٣﴾ وَخُذْ بِيَدِكَ ضِغْثًا فَاضْرِبْ بِّهٖ وَلَا تَحْنَثْ ۭ اِنَّا وَجَدْنٰهُ صَابِرًا ۭ نِعْمَ الْعَبْدُ ۭ اِنَّهٗٓ اَوَّابٌ ﴿٤٤﴾

And remember Our slave, Ayyūb (Job) - when he called his Lord, "The Shaiṭān (Satan) has inflicted weariness and pain upon me." [41] **(Allah said to him,) "Strike (the ground) with your foot: Here is a cool water to bathe, and a drink!"** [42] **And We let him have his family and the like of them besides, as a mercy from Us, and a reminder for the people of understanding.** [43] **And (We said to him,) "Take (a bundle of) thin twigs in your hand, and strike with it, and do not violate your oath. Surely, We found him very enduring. He was really an excellent slave. Surely, he was great in turning (to Us, in penitence and praise).** [44]

Commentary

The event relating to Sayyidnā Ayyūb عليه السلام has been introduced here to comfort and prompt the Holy Prophet ﷺ, so that he would also observe patience. This event has appeared with details in our commentary on Sūrah Al-Anbiyā' (Ma'ariful-Qur'an, Volume V1). A few significant notes are being added here.

In the opening verse (41), it was said: مَسَّنِىَ الشَّيْطٰنُ بِنُصْبٍ وَّعَذَابٍ (The Shaiṭān has inflicted weariness and pain upon me). Some early commentators have given details as to how the Shaiṭān had caused this affliction and pain. They say that the disease from which Sayyidnā Ayyūb عليه السلام suffered had overtaken him under the influence of the Shaiṭān. What happened was that once the angels praised Sayyidnā Ayyūb عليه السلام in a manner that made the Shaiṭān envy him. He prayed to Allah Ta'ālā that he be given such control over his body, wealth and children that allowed him to do whatever he liked with him. Allah Ta'ālā too intended to test Sayyidnā Ayyūb عليه السلام, therefore, the Shaiṭān was

given this right, and he made him suffer from this disease.

But, discerning commentators have refuted this story by saying that, in terms of the clear statement of the noble Qur'ān, the Shaiṭān cannot gain control over the blessed prophets, therefore, it is not possible that he could have made him suffer from this disease.

Some others have explained the Shaiṭān having afflicted pain by saying that the Shaiṭān used to plant all sorts of scruples in the heart of Sayyidnā Ayyūb ﵇, while he was very sick which hurt him all the more. This is what he has mentioned here. But, the best explanation of this verse is what Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavi has given in Bayān-ul-Qur'ān. This is being reproduced here from the Khulāsa-e-Tafsīr in Ma'āriful-Qur'ān:

'This affliction and pain, according to the saying of some commentators, is what Imām Aḥmad has reported from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﵄ in his Kitābu-z-zuhd, in which it has been stated that the Shaiṭān had once met the wife of Sayyidnā Ayyūb ﵇ in the guise of a physician during the days of his sickness. Since he had posed himself as a physician, she requested him to treat her husband. He agreed subject to the condition that once he got cured, she would tell him that she was the one who cured him, and assured her that he wanted no more in return. She mentioned this to Sayyidnā Ayyūb ﵇. He said, "O my simple wife, he was the Shaiṭān. Now, I solemnly resolve that, should Allah Ta'ālā make me get well again, I am going to beat you with one hundred sticks of branches.' So, he was particularly shocked that Shaiṭān had become so high-handed that he wanted to make his own wife say words that evidently amount to shirk, though they may not prove to be so if subjected to interpretation. Though, Sayyidnā Ayyūb ﵇ had made prayers for the removal of his affliction earlier as well, yet after this incident, he turned back to Him in plaint and prayer more fervently, and his prayer was answered: (Reported by Aḥmad).

The nature of the ailment of Sayyidnā Ayyūb ﵇

The Qur'ān tells us only this much that Sayyidnā Ayyūb ﵇ was afflicted with a serious disease, but nothing was said about the nature of this disease. Even in Aḥādīth, no details about it have been reported from the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Nevertheless, from some reports attributed to the

Ṣaḥābah, it appears that blisters had erupted all over his body, and people had put him off on a dirt-heap out of nausea. But, some discerning commentators have refused to accept these attributed reports as correct. They say that diseases can afflict the blessed prophets, but they are not made to suffer from such diseases as would make people nauseated with it. Hence, this sort of disease cannot be attributed to Sayyidnā Ayyūb عليه السلام. Instead, they say, it was some common disease. Therefore, reports in which blisters have been attributed to Sayyidnā Ayyūb عليه السلام or in which it has been said that he was put off on a dirt-heap are not trustworthy, neither in terms of the authenticity of the report, nor rationally (abridged from Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī and Aḥkām-ul-Qur'ān).

In verse 44, it was said: خُذْ بِيَدِكَ ضِغْثًا (Take [a bundle of] thin twigs in your hand). This was said in the background when Sayyidnā Ayyūb عليه السلام intended to fulfill the oath he had taken. But, as his wife had taken good care of him, and had done nothing to deserve being chastised (with one hundred strokes of some stick as sworn by him), Allah Ta'ālā, in His mercy, showed him the way-out as to how he could do it symbolically and still fulfill his oath (as in khulasa-e-Tafsīr of Bayān-ul-Qur'ān).

Some issues relating to legal aspects of this event are being identified here.

Firstly: This event tells us that, should someone declare on oath that he or she would punish someone else to a count of one hundred strokes (using a small, thin, dry branch as beating stick) and then, rather applying one hundred strokes separately, he makes a bundle of all these branches and applies a single strike with it, the oath stands fulfilled. This was the reason why Sayyidnā Ayyūb عليه السلام was asked to do so. This is also the ruling given by Imām Abū Ḥanīfah. But, as says 'Allāmah Ibn-ul-Humām, it is subject to two essential conditions: Firstly, each stick must have made contact with the body of the particular person length-wise or width-wise. Secondly, it should have caused at least some pain. If the strokes were so light that they caused no pain, the oath will not be fulfilled. When Maulānā Thānavi said in Tafsīr Bayān-ul-Qur'ān that the oath will not be fulfilled, he probably meant thereby the same thing, that is, if there is no pain at all, or one of the sticks fails to make contact with the body, the oath will not be fulfilled. Otherwise, Hanafi jurists have clearly said that, should the striking be accomplished subject

to these two conditions, the oath is fulfilled. (Please see Fatḥ-ul-Qadīr, p. 137, v. 4).

The Islamic Legal Status of Stratagems

Secondly: From this verse, we also learn that in order to sidetrack and remain unaffected by something inappropriate or reprehensible, should some legal stratagem be opted for, then, it becomes permissible (known as *sharī ḥilah* [plural: *ḥiyāl*] as admissible in the Sharī'ah of Islam). It is obvious that the essential requisite of the oath in this event of Sayyidnā Ayyūb عليه السلام was that he should subject his blessed wife to full one hundred strokes to vacate his oath. But, his wife was innocent. She had taken remarkably good care of Sayyidnā Ayyūb عليه السلام during the days of his suffering. Therefore, Allah Ta'ālā Himself prompted Sayyidnā Ayyūb عليه السلام to take to a via media, a *ḥilah* or smart escape route (from his predicament), and also made it clear to him that his oath will not stand broken thereby. Therefore, this event provides an argument in favor of the justification of the device of *ḥilāh*.

But, one should remember that such hiyal or stratagems become permissible only when they have not been reduced to an excuse for nullifying the objectives of the Sharī'ah. And if the purpose of such *ḥilah* is to nullify the right of some genuine holder of right, or to make what is openly haram become halal for one's own person while the spirit of the prohibited act has been retained intact, then, such a *ḥilah* is absolutely impermissible. For instance, there are people who make a hilah to avoid having to pay Zakāh. Just before the end of the year, they would pass on their wealth and property into the ownership of their wives. After some time, the wife passes it on into the ownership of her husband. And when the next year is about to close, the husband gifts it to the wife. This way no one remains obligated with the payment of Zakāh. Since, doing something like this is an effort to nullify the objectives of the Sharī'ah, therefore, it is *ḥarām* (unlawful) - and perhaps, the curse of this stratagem might as well be more punishing than the curse that would fall as a result of the abandonment of Zakāh. (Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī from al-Mabsut of Sarakhsi)

Resorting to an oath to do what is inappropriate

The third ruling that we come to know from this verse is: If someone utters an oath to do an act that is inappropriate or wrong or impermissible, the oath stands effectively concluded, and should it be

broken, one will have to make amends and pay *kaffārah* (expiation). It is evident enough that, should there have been no kaffarah becoming due in that situation, Sayyidnā Ayyūb ﷺ would have not been asked to take to that hilah. But, along with it, one should also bear in mind that in the event one happens to have uttered an oath to do something inappropriate, then, the law of the Sharī'ah is that the oath should be broken, and *kaffārah* should be paid. In a Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said:

> "A person who utters an oath, then he decides that doing otherwise is better, then he should invariably do what is better - and pay *kaffārah* for his oath."

Verses 45 - 64

وَاذْكُرْ عِبٰدَنَآ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَاِسْحٰقَ وَيَعْقُوْبَ اُولِي الْاَيْدِيْ وَالْاَبْصَارِ
﴿٤٥﴾ اِنَّآ اَخْلَصْنٰهُمْ بِخَالِصَةٍ ذِكْرَى الدَّارِ ﴿٤٦﴾ وَاِنَّهُمْ عِنْدَنَا لَمِنَ
الْمُصْطَفَيْنَ الْاَخْيَارِ ﴿٤٧﴾ وَاذْكُرْ اِسْمٰعِيْلَ وَالْيَسَعَ وَذَا الْكِفْلِ ط
وَكُلٌّ مِّنَ الْاَخْيَارِ ﴿٤٨﴾ هٰذَا ذِكْرٌ ط وَاِنَّ لِلْمُتَّقِيْنَ لَحُسْنَ مَاٰبٍ
﴿٤٩﴾ جَنّٰتِ عَدْنٍ مُّفَتَّحَةً لَّهُمُ الْاَبْوَابُ ﴿٥٠﴾ مُتَّكِئِيْنَ فِيْهَا يَدْعُوْنَ
فِيْهَا بِفَاكِهَةٍ كَثِيْرَةٍ وَّشَرَابٍ ﴿٥١﴾ وَعِنْدَهُمْ قٰصِرٰتُ الطَّرْفِ اَتْرَابٌ
﴿٥٢﴾ هٰذَا مَا تُوْعَدُوْنَ لِيَوْمِ الْحِسَابِ ﴿٥٣﴾ اِنَّ هٰذَا لَرِزْقُنَا مَا لَهٗ مِنْ
نَّفَادٍ ﴿٥٤﴾ هٰذَا ط وَاِنَّ لِلطّٰغِيْنَ لَشَرَّ مَاٰبٍ ﴿٥٥﴾ جَهَنَّمَ ج يَصْلَوْنَهَا ج
فَبِئْسَ الْمِهَادُ ﴿٥٦﴾ هٰذَا فَلْيَذُوْقُوْهُ حَمِيْمٌ وَّغَسَّاقٌ ﴿٥٧﴾ وَّاٰخَرُ مِنْ
شَكْلِهٖٓ اَزْوَاجٌ ﴿٥٨﴾ هٰذَا فَوْجٌ مُّقْتَحِمٌ مَّعَكُمْ ج لَا مَرْحَبًا بِهِمْ ط اِنَّهُمْ
صَالُوا النَّارِ ﴿٥٩﴾ قَالُوْا بَلْ اَنْتُمْ لَا مَرْحَبًا بِكُمْ ط اَنْتُمْ قَدَّمْتُمُوْهُ لَنَا ج
فَبِئْسَ الْقَرَارُ ﴿٦٠﴾ قَالُوْا رَبَّنَا مَنْ قَدَّمَ لَنَا هٰذَا فَزِدْهُ عَذَابًا ضِعْفًا فِي
النَّارِ ﴿٦١﴾ وَقَالُوْا مَا لَنَا لَا نَرٰى رِجَالًا كُنَّا نَعُدُّهُمْ مِّنَ الْاَشْرَارِ ﴿٦٢﴾
اَتَّخَذْنٰهُمْ سِخْرِيًّا اَمْ زَاغَتْ عَنْهُمُ الْاَبْصَارُ ﴿٦٣﴾ اِنَّ ذٰلِكَ لَحَقٌّ

تَخَاصُمُ اَهْلِ النَّارِ ﴿٦٤﴾ ع

And remember Our servants - Ibrāhīm and Isḥāq and Ya'qub - men of strength and men of vision. [45] We chose them for a trait of remembering the (eternal) Home (in the Hereafter). [46] And surely they are, in Our sight, among the the chosen, the best of the righteous. [47] And remember Isma'il and al-Yasa' and Dhul-Kifl. Each of them was among the best of the righteous. [48] This is a reminder (of what has passed). And surely the God-fearing will have the best place to return: [49]- everlasting gardens, with (their) doors opened for them. [50] They will be relaxing therein, calling there for plenteous fruits and drinks; [51] and in their company there will be females restricting their glances (to their husbands, and) of matching ages. [52] This is what you are being promised for the Day of Reckoning. [53] Surely, that is provision provided by Us to which there is no end. [54] Having said this, the transgressors will surely have the most evil place to return: [55] the Jahannam, in which they will enter. So, how evil is that place to rest? [56] Let them taste this: hot water and pus, [57] and other things similar to it of various kinds. [58] (When the leaders of the infidels will see their followers entering the hell after them, they will say to each other,) "This is a multitude rushing in (the hell) with you - they are not welcome - they are to burn in the Fire." [59] They (the followers) will say (to their leaders) "No, it is you - you are not welcome - you are the ones who brought this upon us." So, how evil is the place to stay (for ever)! [60] They (the followers) will say, "Our Lord, whoever has brought this on us, do increase his punishment twofold in the Fire." [61] And they (the infidels) will say, "What is the matter with us that we do not see those men whom we used to count amongst the worst? (i.e the Muslims whom the infidels used to treat as the worst people among them) [62] Had we taken them as a laughing-stock (unjustly), or have our eyes missed them?" [63] That is going to happen definitely, that is, the mutual quarrel of the people of the Fire. [64]

Commentary

The expression: أُولِى الْاَيْدِىْ وَالْاَبْصَارِ (translated as: men of strength and men of vision) literally means 'owners or possessors of hands and eyes.'

The sense is that they devoted their physical and intellectual energies in remaining obedient to Allah Ta'ālā. When this is said, a hint is being released to the fact that the real end use of human body parts is no other but that they are spent or utilized in obedience to the Divine commands, and the those parts of the body that are not utilized in it, their existence or non-existence remains equal.

Concern for 'Ākhirah is a distinct attribute of the noble prophets

The word 'home' in the statement: ذِكْرَى الدَّارِ (remembering the [eternal] Home [in the Hereafter]- 38:46) refers to the 'Ākhirah, (the Hereafter, the life-to-come). Instead of using the word: 'Ākhirah, the text has used the word: اَلدَّارِ (ad-dar: home) whereby it has warned human beings that they must take 'Ākhirah as their real Home, and make the concern for it the basis for whatever they think and do. Right from here, we also come to know that the concern for 'Ākhirah further sharpens and furbishes one's intellectual and physical faculties (helping it to flourish in an essentially true perspective). Hence, the view of some atheists that such concern blunts human faculties is baseless.

The Prophet : (al-Yasā': Elisha) عليه السلام

In verse 48, it was said: وَالْيَسَعَ (and [remember] al-Yasā'). Sayyidnā al-Yasā' عليه السلام is a prophet from among the prophets of Banī Isra'īl, peace be upon them all. He has been mentioned in the Qur'ān only at two places, once in Sūrah Al-An'ām and then, here in Sūrah Ṣād. No details have been mentioned at any of the two places, rather his name appears there as part of a list of the blessed prophets.

Historical chronicles report that he is a cousin of Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام and was his deputy. He lived in his company and was made a prophet after him. Details about him appear in the Bible, the Book of Kings I, Chapter 19, and Kings II, Chapter 2, and elsewhere. There he has been mentioned by the name of اِلْيَشَعْ بن سافط (Elisha son of Sāfiṭ).

In verse 52, it was said: وَعِنْدَهُمْ قٰصِرَاتُ الطَّرْفِ اَتْرَابٌ (and in their company there will be females restricting their glances (to their husbands, and) of matching ages.). Meant by these are the Ḥūrs or Houris of Jannah (referred to, fondly enough for some people, even as 'nymphs of Paradise'). Being of matching ages could mean that they will be of the same age as among themselves. And it could also mean that they will be

of the same age as their spouses. In the first situation, if they were of the same age, the good thing about it would be that they would be relating to each other in mutual amity as friends, and not as 'the other woman' something very welcome for spouses.

Consideration of matching age between spouses is better

Then there is the other situation. If being of the same age is taken to mean that spouses will be of the same age, the good thing about it would be that there would be temperamental harmony between them, and they will have consideration for each other's preferences. This tells us that consideration should be made to keep ages of spouses matched, for it generates mutual love, and makes the relationship of marriage pleasant and permanent.

Verses 65 - 88

قُلْ اِنَّمَآ اَنَا مُنْذِرٌ ق صلے وَّمَا مِنْ اِلٰهٍ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ ﴿٦٥﴾ رَبُّ
السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا الْعَزِيْزُ الْغَفَّارُ ﴿٦٦﴾ قُلْ هُوَ نَبَؤٌا
عَظِيْمٌ ﴿٦٧﴾ اَنْتُمْ عَنْهُ مُعْرِضُوْنَ ﴿٦٨﴾ مَا كَانَ لِيَ مِنْ عِلْمٍ بِالْمَلَاِ
الْاَعْلٰى اِذْ يَخْتَصِمُوْنَ ﴿٦٩﴾ اِنْ يُّوْحٰۤى اِلَيَّ اِلَّاۤ اَنَّمَاۤ اَنَا نَذِيْرٌ مُّبِيْنٌ
﴿٧٠﴾ اِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ اِنِّيْ خَالِقٌ بَشَرًا مِّنْ طِيْنٍ ﴿٧١﴾ فَاِذَا
سَوَّيْتُهٗ وَنَفَخْتُ فِيْهِ مِنْ رُّوْحِيْ فَقَعُوْا لَهٗ سٰجِدِيْنَ ﴿٧٢﴾ فَسَجَدَ
الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ كُلُّهُمْ اَجْمَعُوْنَ ﴿٧٣﴾ اِلَّاۤ اِبْلِيْسَ ط اِسْتَكْبَرَ وَكَانَ مِنَ
الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿٧٤﴾ قَالَ يٰۤاِبْلِيْسُ مَا مَنَعَكَ اَنْ تَسْجُدَ لِمَا خَلَقْتُ بِيَدَيَّ ط
اَسْتَكْبَرْتَ اَمْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الْعَالِيْنَ ﴿٧٥﴾ قَالَ اَنَا خَيْرٌ مِّنْهُ ط خَلَقْتَنِيْ
مِنْ نَّارٍ وَّخَلَقْتَهٗ مِنْ طِيْنٍ ﴿٧٦﴾ قَالَ فَاخْرُجْ مِنْهَا فَاِنَّكَ رَجِيْمٌ ﴿٧٧﴾
وَّاِنَّ عَلَيْكَ لَعْنَتِيْۤ اِلٰى يَوْمِ الدِّيْنِ ﴿٧٨﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ فَاَنْظِرْنِيْۤ اِلٰى يَوْمِ
يُبْعَثُوْنَ ﴿٧٩﴾ قَالَ فَاِنَّكَ مِنَ الْمُنْظَرِيْنَ ﴿٨٠﴾ اِلٰى يَوْمِ الْوَقْتِ

الْمَعْلُومِ ﴿٨١﴾ قَالَ فَبِعِزَّتِكَ لَأُغْوِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿٨٢﴾ إِلَّا عِبَادَكَ مِنْهُمُ الْمُخْلَصِينَ ﴿٨٣﴾ قَالَ فَالْحَقُّ وَالْحَقَّ أَقُولُ ﴿٨٤﴾ لَأَمْلَأَنَّ جَهَنَّمَ مِنْكَ وَمِمَّنْ تَبِعَكَ مِنْهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿٨٥﴾ قُلْ مَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُتَكَلِّفِينَ ﴿٨٦﴾ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ لِلْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٨٧﴾ وَلَتَعْلَمُنَّ نَبَأَهُ بَعْدَ حِينٍ ﴿٨٨﴾

Say, " I am only a warner - and there is no god but Allah, the One, the All- Dominant, [65] the Lord of the heavens and the earth and what is between them, the Mighty, the Very-Forgiving." [66] Say, "It is a great news [67] to which you are averse. [68] I had no knowledge of the Heavenly Beings when they were debating (about the creation of 'Ādam).[1] [69] Revelation is sent to me only because I am a plain warner. [70][2]

When your Lord said to the angels, "I am going to create man from clay. [71] So, once I make him perfectly and breath My spirit into him, you fall down in prostration before him. [72] Then, the angels prostrated, all of them together - [73] except Iblis. He waxed proud, and became one of the disbelievers. [74] He (Allah) said, "O Iblis, what did prevent you from prostrating before what I created with My hands? Did you wax proud or were you among the lofty ones?" [75] He said, "I am better than him. You created me from fire, and created him from clay." [76] He said, "Then, get out from here, for you are accursed, [77] and on you shall remain My curse till the Day of Judgement." [78] He said, "O my Lord, then give me respite till the day they are raised again." [79] He said, "Then, you have been made one of those given respite, [80] until the Day of the Appointed Time." [81]

(1). The reference here is to the conversation that took place between Allah Ta'ālā and His angels when He expressed His intention to create 'Ādam عليه السلام, and which is being mentioned in verse 71 below.

(2). The sense is that I never knew about what Allah said to His angels when He intended to create 'Ādam عليه السلام, nor was there any source of knowledge available to me other than the revelation from Allah. Now that I am narrating to you these events without having any other source of knowledge, it clearly proves that I am receiving revelation from Allah which has been sent to me only for the purpose that I warn you clearly about the evil fate of rejecting the truth.

He said, "Then, I swear by Your Might, that I will definitely lead them astray, all of them - [82] except Your chosen servants among them." [83] He (Allah) said, "Then, the truth is-and it is (always) the truth that I speak--- [84] that I will definitely fill the Jahannam with you and with those who will follow you from among them, all together." [85]

Say, "I do not demand from you any fee for it, nor am I from among those who make up things artificially. [86] It is nothing but an advice for all the worlds. [87] And you will come to know its reality after a while." [88]

Commentary

A Gist of the Subjects of the Sūrah

In verse 65, it was said: قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا مُنذِرٌ (Say, " I am only a warner)

At the beginning of the Sūrah, you have seen that the real objective of this Sūrah was the affirmation of the prophethood of the noble Prophet ﷺ a refutation of what the disbelievers said. In this connection, events relating to blessed prophets of the past were mentioned for two reasons. Firstly, that they bring comfort to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and that he too observes patience against the absurd allegations leveled by those who disbelieved - the same patience as observed by the blessed prophets before him. Secondly, that those who were denying the credentials of a true prophet should themselves learn their lesson through these events. After that, another method was used to invite the disbelievers to Islam. For this purpose, their attention was drawn to the good end of the believers, as opposed to the severe punishment awaiting disbelievers, while they were also warned that the people they were following were the ones who were prompting them to belie the true messenger of Allah, and the same people will refuse to help you in any way on the Day of Judgment, in fact, they would paint you black and you would curse them.

After a delineation of these subjects, the text has, in the concluding part, reverted to the main purpose, that is, it takes up the confirmation of prophethood of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. In this process, along with a presentation of necessary arguments, a compassionate invitation to believe has also been given.

In verse 69, it was said: مَا كَانَ لِيَ مِنْ عِلْمٍ بِالْمَلَإِ الْأَعْلَىٰ إِذْ يَخْتَصِمُونَ (I had no knowledge of the Heavenly Beings when they were debating (about the

creation of 'Ādam). Means: 'It is a clear proof of my prophethood that I am telling you these things from such a high assembly, things that cannot be found out through any medium other than wahy (revelation).' The words 'these things' refer to the conversation between Allah Ta'ālā and the angels at the time of the creation of Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام and which finds mention in Sūrah Al-Baqarah where the angels had said: اَتَجْعَلُ فِيْهَا مَنْ يُّفْسِدُ فِيْهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَآءَ (They said, "Will You create there one who will spread disorder on the earth and cause bloodsheds...? - 2:30). This conversation has been expressed here through the word: اختصام (*ikhtiṣām*) which literally means 'quarrel' or 'debate' - although, the angels never posed that question in terms of some objection or debate, instead, they wanted to find out the wise consideration behind the creation of Sayyidnā 'Ādam, عليه السلام but the outward pattern of the questions and answers had taken the form of some sort of a debate, therefore, it was alluded to as 'ikhtisam' or debate. This is similar to a younger person questioning an elder person, who refers to that question and answer, in a frank and casual manner, as a debate or quarrel.

In verse 71, it was said: اِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ (When your Lord said to the angels...):

Mentioned here is the event of the creation of 'Ādam عليه السلام. Not only that it alludes to the conversation between Allah Ta'ālā and the angels mentioned above, but also invites our attention towards the way Iblis had refused to prostrate himself before Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام just because of his envy and arrogance, very similarly, the Mushriks of Arabia were not willing to accept his advice because of their envy and arrogance - hence, they were going to meet the same fate as was met by Iblīs. (Tafsīr Kabir)

In verse 75, it was said: لِمَا خَلَقْتُ بِيَدَيَّ (what I created with My hands...):

Here, it is about Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام that Allah Ta'ālā has said that it is He who had created him with His hands. There is a consensus among the majority of the Muslim Ummah that "hands" do not mean that Allah Ta'ālā has hands as human being do. The reason is that Allah Ta'ālā is absolutely pure and free from the need of body or its active limbs. Therefore, it means the power and control of Allah Ta'ālā and that the word: يَدٌ (*yad*: hand) is commonly used in the Arabic language in the sense of power - for example, it was said: بِيَدِهٖ عُقْدَةُ النِّكَاحِ (in whose hand lies

the marriage tie - 2:237). Therefore, the verse means: 'I created 'Ādam with My power.' For that matter, everything in this universe owes its creation to nothing but Divine power. But, when Allah Ta'ālā intends to manifest the particular sublimity of something, He would specially attribute it to Himself, for instance, by such attribution the Ka'bah becomes Baytullah, the House of Allah; the she-camel of Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام - ناقة الله *'nāqatullāh'*, the She-Camel of Allah; and Sayyidnā 'Isa عليه السلام - *'kalīmatullah,'* 'the Word of Allah' or *'rūḥullāh,'* 'the Spirit of Allah.' Here too, this attribution has been introduced there to enhance the grace of Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام. (Qurṭubī)[1]

In verse 86, it was said: وَمَآ اَنَا مِنَ الْمُتَكَلِّفِيْنَ (nor am I from among those who make up things artificially.).

The blameworthiness of artificial behavior

The statement means: 'I am not declaring my prophethood artificially, nor am I falsely pretending to have knowledge and wisdom, rather, I am conveying the commandments of Allah to you as they are. From this we learn that feigned formality and pretension is blameworthy in the light of the Sharī'ah. Accordingly, there are some *aḥādīth* that condemn it. In the Ṣaḥīḥayn (al-Bukhārī and Muslim), it has been reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd عليه السلام:

> "O people, whoever from among you knows something, let him tell people about it. But, that which he does not know, let him simply say: الله اعلم (Allah knows best) (because) Allah Ta'ālā has said about his Rasūl ﷺ: قُلْ مَآ اَسْئَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ اَجْرٍ وَّمَآ اَنَا مِنَ الْمُتَكَلِّفِيْنَ (Say, "I do not demand from you any fee for it, nor am I from among those who make up things artificially."- 38:86)." (Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī)

alḥamdulillāh
The Commentary on
Sūrah Ṣād

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1. This interpretation is based on the line adopted by some theologians. The others are of the view that the word *'yad'* (hand) used for Allah does not refer to a limb like the hand of human beings. It is rather an attribute of Allah Ta'ālā, the exact nature of which is unknown. The third view is of some other elders who abstain from indulging in the interpretation of such expressions and prefer to keep silent about them, and leave their exact meaning to Allah Ta'ālā. Muhammad Taqi Usmani

Sūrah Az-zumar

(The Groups)

Sūrah Az-Zumar is Makkī, and it has 75 verses and 8 sections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 6

تَنْزِيْلُ الْكِتٰبِ مِنَ اللّٰهِ الْعَزِيْزِ الْحَكِيْمِ ﴿۱﴾ اِنَّآ اَنْزَلْنَآ اِلَيْكَ الْكِتٰبَ
بِالْحَقِّ فَاعْبُدِ اللّٰهَ مُخْلِصًا لَّهُ الدِّيْنَ ﴿۲﴾ اَلَا لِلّٰهِ الدِّيْنُ الْخَالِصُ ط
وَالَّذِيْنَ اتَّخَذُوْا مِنْ دُوْنِهٖٓ اَوْلِيَآءَ م مَا نَعْبُدُهُمْ اِلَّا لِيُقَرِّبُوْنَآ اِلَى اللّٰهِ
زُلْفٰى ط اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَهُمْ فِيْ مَا هُمْ فِيْهِ يَخْتَلِفُوْنَ ط اِنَّ اللّٰهَ
لَا يَهْدِيْ مَنْ هُوَ كٰذِبٌ كَفَّارٌ ﴿۳﴾ لَوْ اَرَادَ اللّٰهُ اَنْ يَّتَّخِذَ وَلَدًا
لَّاصْطَفٰى مِمَّا يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَآءُ لا سُبْحٰنَهٗ ط هُوَ اللّٰهُ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ ﴿۴﴾
خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ ج يُكَوِّرُ الَّيْلَ عَلَى النَّهَارِ وَيُكَوِّرُ
النَّهَارَ عَلَى الَّيْلِ وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ ط كُلٌّ يَّجْرِيْ لِاَجَلٍ
مُّسَمًّى ط اَلَا هُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْغَفَّارُ ﴿۵﴾ خَلَقَكُمْ مِّنْ نَّفْسٍ وَّاحِدَةٍ ثُمَّ
جَعَلَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَاَنْزَلَ لَكُمْ مِّنَ الْاَنْعَامِ ثَمٰنِيَةَ اَزْوَاجٍ ط يَخْلُقُكُمْ
فِيْ بُطُوْنِ اُمَّهٰتِكُمْ خَلْقًا مِّنْۢ بَعْدِ خَلْقٍ فِيْ ظُلُمٰتٍ ثَلٰثٍ ط ذٰلِكُمُ
اللّٰهُ رَبُّكُمْ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ ط لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ج فَاَنّٰى تُصْرَفُوْنَ ﴿۶﴾

This is the revelation of the Book from Allah, the Mighty, the Wise. [1] Surely We have revealed the Book to you with the truth; so worship Allah in submission to Him exclusively. [2] Remember, Allah alone deserves the exclusive submission. As for those who have taken to guardians other than Him (saying), "We worship them for no other reason than that they would bring us near to Allah closely." Allah will judge between them in the matters they had been differing in. Surely, Allah does not give guidance to anyone who is liar, highly infidel. [3] Had Allah opted to have a son of His own, He would have definitely chosen anyone, as He wished, out of what He had created. (But), Pure is He. He is Allah, the Only One, the All-Dominant [4] He created the heavens and the earth in His wisdom. He wraps the night over the day and He wraps the day over the night, and He has put the Sun and the Moon under His command, each one of them moving for an appointed term. Remember, He is the Mighty, the Most-Forgiving . [5] He created you from a single person, then (once this person was created,) He made from him his match, and sent down for you eight pairs of the cattle. He creates you in the wombs of your mothers, creation after creation, in three layers of darkness. That is your Allah, your Lord. To Him belongs the whole kingdom. There is no god but He. Then, to where are you being diverted? [6]

Commentary

In verse 2, it was said: فَاعْبُدِ اللّٰهَ مُخْلِصًا لَّهُ الدِّيْنَ اَلاَ لِلّٰهِ الدِّيْنُ الْخَالِصُ (so worship Allah in submission to Him exclusively. Remember, Allah alone deserves the exclusive submission.). The word: دِيْن (*dīn*) at this place means worship, submission, devotion or obedience which is inclusive of adhering to all religious injunctions. In the first statement earlier to this, the address was to the Holy Prophet ﷺ where he was commanded to make the worship of and obedience to Allah sincere and exclusive for Him, so as there remains no trace of *shirk* or of any hypocrisy or false pretension. The second statement is to emphasize the first statement in that sincerity in worship is the exclusive right of Allah and no one else, other than Him deserves it.

It has been reported from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ؓ that someone submitted before the Holy Prophet ﷺ, 'Yā rasūlallāh, there are occasions when I give in charity or do a favor to somebody, but my intention gets

mixed up - I do look forward to seek the pleasure of Allah thereby, but I also hope that people will praise me for it.' The noble prophet of Allah ﷺ said, "By the One in whose hands lies the life of Muhammad, Allah Ta'ālā does not like anything in which someone or something else has been associated as a partner or sharer with Him. Then he recited the verse quoted here as the proof: اَلَا لِلّٰهِ الدِّيْنُ الْخَالِصُ (Remember, Allah alone deserves the exclusive submission.)". (Qurṭubī)

Acceptance of deeds with Allah depends on unalloyed measure of sincerity

Several verses of the Qur'ān bear out that the deeds are not measured with Allah by numbers, instead, they are measured by weight, for example: وَنَضَعُ الْمَوَازِيْنَ الْقِسْطَ لِيَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ (and We shall place scales to do justice on the Day of Judgment - Al-Anbiyā', 21:47). This verse read in juxtaposition with the verses cited above tell us that the value and weight of deeds is judged by the amount of sincerity with which they are performed, and it goes without saying that perfect sincerity cannot be achieved without perfect faith, because perfect sincerity means that one should not take someone as having intrinsic power to benefit or harm someone other than Allah, nor take someone other than Allah as disposer of one's acts, nor allow the thought of someone other than Allah enter into any act of worship or obedience of his volition. As for non-voluntary scruples, Allah Ta'ālā forgives them.

The noble Sahabah are the front line of Muslims. Their practice of prayers and good deeds may not appear to be very prominent numerically. But, despite all this, the reason why the single insignificant most of their deeds was superior to the highest of the high deeds of the rest of the Ummah was no other but their very perfection of *'imān* (faith) and perfection of *ikhlāṣ* (sincerity).

The next sentence in verse 3 says: وَالَّذِيْنَ اتَّخَذُوْا مِنْ دُوْنِهٖٓ اَوْلِيَآءَ مَا نَعْبُدُهُمْ اِلَّا لِيُقَرِّبُوْنَآ اِلَى اللّٰهِ زُلْفٰى (As for those who have taken to guardians other than Him [saying], "We worship them for no other reason than that they would bring us near to Allah closely." - 39:3). This is a description of the creed of the Mushriks of Arabia. Even the common people among them during that period of time more or less had the same belief that Allah Ta'ālā is the creator, owner and master in all matters. But when the Shaiṭān (Satan) instigated them, they started making idols in the image of angels,

as they imagined they would be. They knew it well that these idols made by them had no consciousness, reason or power, yet they believed that by showing their reverence for these idols, those angels (in whose images these idols are designed) will be pleased with them, and the angels have nearness to Allah. They compared Allah's nearness with that of the worldly kings where a courtier who is pleased with someone could put in a good word for him with the king and have him included among his inner circle. So, they surmised that the angels too could recommend anyone they chose very much like the royal courtiers of their world. But, all these ideas they nursed were totally false, in fact, they were nothing but satanic deception. First of all, who can say whether or not these idols happen to be on the real form of the angels and, even if they were, one cannot expect angels close to Allah showing their pleasure over being worshipped by somebody on the earth. In fact, they temperamentally hate everything that Allah Ta'ālā does not like. In addition to that, angels cannot intercede on behalf of anyone before Allah on their own, unless they are allowed to make their intercession about a particular person. The verse of the Qur'ān: وَكَمْ مِّنْ مَّلَكٍ فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ لَاتُغْنِىْ شَفَاعَتُهُمْ شَيْئًا اِلاَّ مِنْ بَعْدِ اَنْ يَّاْذَنَ اللّٰهُ لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَيَرْضٰى (And how many angels there are in the heavens whose intercession cannot benefit (anyone) at all, but after Allah allows (it) for whomsoever He wills and pleases - An-Najm, 53:26) means exactly this.

Even the polytheists of that period were better than the disbelievers of today

Modern day materialistic disbelievers already deny the very existence of Allah Ta'ālā and would not demur when making audacious remarks against Him. Kufr or disbelief is now an imported stuff. Take the *kufr* that is imported from Europe. It may come in different colors and shades, like capitalism and communism. Yet, there is a common denominator. God forbid, they hold, nothing like God exists. We are masters of our destiny. There is no one to question us as to what we are doing. Terrible ingratitude indeed! As a consequence, peace has disappeared from the whole world. Ever-new gadgets of comfort proliferate, but real comfort remains missing. Advancements in health care have never been at a level they are today, but there is a matching abundance of diseases hitherto unheard of. Security arrangements, police, guards, surveillance abound, but the graph of crime keeps rising. This craze for new instrumentation and gadgetry and this relentless pursuit of pleasure and comfort through

state-of-the-art objects one is being pushed to live with are things, if someone cares to think about it, that have assumed the proportions of a curse for innocent human beings so fondly created by their Maker. As for the punishment of *kufr* in the Hereafter, it is, as due for all disbelievers, an everlasting stay in the Jahannam. But, one should not forget that this blind ingratitude could not go unaccounted for. The ungrateful person has to undergo some punishment for it within this world for the reason that the ungrateful person used the blessings of Allah even to ride the skies, yet failed to thank Him for it. How apt is the Persian quip: 'In the middle of the house, I forgot the master of the house!'

The first sentence of verse 4: لَوْاَرَادَ اللّٰهُ اَنْ يَّتَّخِذَ وَلَدًا (Had Allah opted to have a son of His own) is a refutation of the allegation of those who said that angels were the progeny of Allah. The idea was false and absurd. Taking it on as a supposition of the impossible, it was said: If Allah Ta'ālā were to have, God forbid, any children, it goes without saying that it could not have happened without His intention and will, for it would have been impossible as children are not imposed on anyone - definitely not so in the case of Allah. Then, suppose He had the intention, in which case, everyone other than Him happens to have been created him, so He would have picked up one of them to be His progeny. Now, children have to be of the same genus as the father, and the created cannot be of the same genus as the creator, therefore, the intention to have progeny from the created becomes impossible.

In verse 5, it was said: يُكَوِّرُ الَّيْلَ عَلَى النَّهَارِ (He wraps the night over the day and He wraps the day over the night,). The word: تَكْوِيْر (*takwīr*) means to throw something on top of the other and thereby hide it. The Qur'ān has elected to express the phenomenon of the alternation of the night and day in terms of common perception - when night comes, it is as if a curtain has been thrown against the light of the day, and when the day comes, the darkness of the night goes behind the curtain.

Both the Moon and the Sun move

Later in verse 5, it was said: كُلٌّ يَّجْرِىْ لِاَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى (each one of them moving for an appointed term.) This tells us that both the Sun and the Moon move. Scientific researches in astronomy and geology are not the subject of the noble Qur'ān, or of any other scripture. But, it is obligatory to believe in whatever appears there as a corollary in this matter.

Scientific findings, old or new, keep changing all the time. Qur'ānic facts are changeless. Whatever the cited verse tells us - that the Sun and the Moon are both moving - believing in it is obligatory. Now, there remains the other matter - does the rising and setting of the Sun relate to the movement of the earth, or to the movement of these very planets? The Qur'ān neither confirms nor rejects it. Hence, there is no hitch in accepting what experience or experiment bears out.

In verse 6, it was said: وَاَنْزَلَ لَكُمْ مِّنَ الْاَنْعَامِ ثَمٰنِيَةَ اَزْوَاجٍ (and sent down for you eight pairs of the cattle.). The creation of the cattle has been expressed in this verse by saying that they have been 'sent down from the skies' whereby an indication has been given that a major factor in their creation is water that is sent down from sky. Therefore, it can be said that these too were as if sent down from the skies. The noble Qur'ān has used the same expression for human dress: اَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكُمْ لِبَاسًا (We have sent down to you clothing - Al-A'rāf, 7:26). Then, this word also appears in relation to some minerals, for instance, iron: وَاَنْزَلْنَا الْحَدِيْدَ (and We sent down iron - Al-Ḥadīd, 57:25). The purpose is to emphasize that these things were created through the intrinsic power of Allah Ta'ālā, and that they were given to human beings as His blessings. (Qurṭubī)

Towards the later part of verse 6, it was said: خَلْقًا مِّنْۢ بَعْدِ خَلْقٍ فِيْ ظُلُمٰتٍ ثَلٰثٍ (He creates you in the wombs of your mothers, creation after creation, in three layers of darkness.) Here, some clues to the mysteries of Divine power that work in the creation of man have been released. First of all, it was well within the power of Allah Ta'ālā that He could have made the infant come to be created whole and complete in the womb of the mother within a single instant. But, such was the dictate of wisdom and expedient consideration that it was not done. Instead, a process of gradualness was opted for as indicated by: خَلْقًا مِّنْۢ بَعْدِ خَلْقٍ (creation after creation). The purpose was to ensure that the woman in whose womb this 'mini universe' was taking shape should gradually become used to bearing its burden. Secondly, the creation of this matchless marvel of beauty and efficiency provided with hundreds of precision gadgets, hair-thin veins to carry life-blood and spiritual input was not to look like things created by common industrialists in spacious factories under glowing lights. Instead of that, this marvel of creation has reached its completion at a place shielded by three layers of darkness, a location so

hidden from sight that it beats all imagination. فَتَبَارَكَ اللّٰهُ اَحْسَنُ الْخَالِقِيْنَ (So glorious is Allah, the best of the Creators - Al-Mu'minūn, 23:14).

Verses 7 - 10

اِنْ تَكْفُرُوْا فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَنِيٌّ عَنْكُمْ وَلَا يَرْضٰى لِعِبَادِهِ الْكُفْرَ وَاِنْ
تَشْكُرُوْا يَرْضَهُ لَكُمْ وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِّزْرَ اُخْرٰى ثُمَّ اِلٰى رَبِّكُمْ
مَّرْجِعُكُمْ فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ اِنَّهٗ عَلِيْمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُوْرِ
﴿٧﴾ وَاِذَا مَسَّ الْاِنْسَانَ ضُرٌّ دَعَا رَبَّهٗ مُنِيْبًا اِلَيْهِ ثُمَّ اِذَا خَوَّلَهٗ نِعْمَةً
مِّنْهُ نَسِيَ مَا كَانَ يَدْعُوْٓا اِلَيْهِ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَجَعَلَ لِلّٰهِ اَنْدَادًا لِّيُضِلَّ عَنْ
سَبِيْلِهٖ قُلْ تَمَتَّعْ بِكُفْرِكَ قَلِيْلًا اِنَّكَ مِنْ اَصْحٰبِ النَّارِ ﴿٨﴾ اَمَّنْ
هُوَ قَانِتٌ اٰنَآءَ الَّيْلِ سَاجِدًا وَّقَآئِمًا يَّحْذَرُ الْاٰخِرَةَ وَيَرْجُوْا رَحْمَةَ
رَبِّهٖ قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِيْنَ يَعْلَمُوْنَ وَالَّذِيْنَ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ اِنَّمَا
يَتَذَكَّرُ اُولُوا الْاَلْبَابِ ﴿٩﴾ قُلْ يٰعِبَادِ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اتَّقُوْا رَبَّكُمْ
لِلَّذِيْنَ اَحْسَنُوْا فِيْ هٰذِهِ الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةٌ وَاَرْضُ اللّٰهِ وَاسِعَةٌ اِنَّمَا
يُوَفَّى الصّٰبِرُوْنَ اَجْرَهُمْ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ ﴿١٠﴾

If you disbelieve, then, Allah does not need you at all, however He does not like for His servants to be disbelievers, and if you are grateful, He will like it for you. And no one will bear the burden of someone else. Then, to your Lord is your return, so He will tell you about what you used to do. He is aware of whatever lies in the hearts. [7] **And when man is afflicted by pain, he calls his Lord turning to Him passionately. Thereafter, when He blesses him with some favor from Him, he forgets that for which he was calling Him earlier, and sets up partners for Allah, so that he leads others astray from His way. Say, "Enjoy (the pleasure of) your disbelief for a while, (then) surely, you are from among the people of the Fire."** [8]

Can (such people be equal to) the one who worships during the hours of the night, prostrating and standing,

fearing the Hereafter and having hopes in his Lord's mercy? Say, "Can those who know and those who do not know become equal?" It is only the people of understanding who are receptive of the advice. [9] **Say (on My behalf) "O My servants who believe, fear your Lord. Those who do good in this world will have a good return, and the earth of Allah is wide. Certainly those who observe patience will be given their reward in full without measure.** [10]

Commentary

In the opening verse (7), it was said: اِنْ تَكْفُرُوْا فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَنِيٌّ عَنْكُمْ (If you disbelieve, then, Allah does not need you at all,) that is, neither does your faith bring any benefit to Allah Ta'ālā, nor does your disbelief or ingratitude, any loss. According to a Ḥadīth in Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim, Allah Ta'ālā said: "O My servants, even if the first and the last among you and the humans and the Jinns, all of them, were to fall in sin and disobedience, it does not affect My power and authority in the least." (Ibn Kathīr)

Next it was said: وَلَا يَرْضٰى لِعِبَادِهِ الْكُفْرَ (however He does not like for His servants to be disbelievers,) The word: رِضَاء (*riḍā*) means love, liking, pleasure, or to intend to do something without objection. Its antonym: سَخَط (*sakhaṭ*) means to detest something or take it to be objectionable - even if it is coupled with intention.

Ruling

Ahl-us-sunnah wa-l-Jama'ah believe that nothing good or bad, faith or disbelief can come into existence without the will and intention of Allah Ta'ālā. Therefore, for everything to come into existence, the intention of Allah Ta'ālā is a binding condition. However, the pleasure and favor of Allah Ta'ālā relates to *'imān* (faith) and good deeds only. Kufr (disbelief), Shirk (ascribing of partners to Allah) and acts of disobedience are things He does not like. Shaikh-ul-Islam Nawawi writes in his book, الاصُول وَالضّوَابط *al-uṣul wa-d- ḍawabiṭ*:

مذهب اهل الحق الايمان بالقدر واثباته وان جميع الكائنات خيرها وشرها بقضاء الله وقدره وهو مريد لها كلها ويكره المعاصى مع انه تعالىٰ مريد لها لحكمة يعلمها جل وعلا. (روح المعانى)

The creed (*madhhab*) of people who follow the truth

> (ahl-ul-haqq) is to believe in destiny (*al-qadr*) and that all existents, good or bad, come into existence under the decision (*qaḍā'*) and destination (*qadar*) of Allah Ta'ālā, and Allah Ta'ālā does make the intention to create these, but He dislikes acts of disobedience and sin - though, the intention of creating these materializes in view of some wise consideration which He alone knows in His most exalted majesty. (Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī)

In the first sentence of verse 9, it was said: اَمَّنْ هُوَ قَانِتٌ اٰنَآءَ الَّيْلِ (Can (such people be equal to) the one who worships during the hours of the night, prostrating and standing, fearing the Hereafter and having hopes in his Lord's mercy?). The first word: اَمَّنْ (*amman*) is a combination of two words: اَمْ (*am*: an interrogative particle) and: مَنْ (*man*: relative pronoun). Before this sentence, the disbelievers have told on behalf of Allah Ta'ālā that they can go ahead and enjoy the fruits of their disbelief and sin during this mortal life, but finally they are doomed to stoke the fire of Jahannam. After then, the present sentence takes up the description of an obedient believer that has been initiated with the question word of اَمَّنْ (*amman*). Scholars of exegesis have said that there is an ellipsis of a sentence that should have appeared earlier, that is, the disbeliever will be told, 'are you better, or is it the obedient believer who has been mentioned later?'. The word: قَانِت (qanit) has been explained variously. That which comprehends all these meanings comes from Sayyidnā Ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه. According to him, it means devotedly obedient, and when this word is used in conjunction with Ṣalāh, as in: قُوْمُوْا لِلّٰهِ قٰنِتِيْنَ (Stand before Allah in total devotion - Al-Baqarah, 2:238), there it means the person who lowers his gaze in salah, does not see right and left, does not play with his body or clothes and does not voluntarily remember anything from his worldly life. Any incidence of forgetfulness or involuntary scruple would not be considered contrary to this. (Qurṭubī)

Immediately next in verse 9, it was said: اٰنَآءَ الَّيْلِ (during the hours of the night). The expression means hours of the night and denotes the early, the middle and the last part of the night. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه said that, 'a person who wishes that Allah Ta'ālā would make the reckoning on the plains of Resurrection easy on him should so manage himself that Allah Ta'ālā finds him in the state of Sujud (prostration) and Qiyam (stance of standing) during the darkness of the night in an emotional condition in which he is concerned about his fate in the

Hereafter, yet is hoping for the mercy of Allah.' Some early commentators have identified the time between Maghrib and 'Isha' also as included in the expression: اناء الليل (*'ana'-ul-lail*). (Qurṭubī)

In verse 10, it was said: وَأَرْضُ اللّٰهِ وَاسِعَةٌ (and the earth of Allah is wide).In the sentence previous to this, Good deeds had been enjoined. This might prompt someone to come up with the excuse, 'The city or country in which I live, or the social milieu I am stuck with around me stops me from doing good deeds.' This sentence carries an answer to this excuse - 'if you find adherence to Islamic legal injunctions difficult while living in some particular country, city or social setup, then, leave it. The earth of Allah is wide enough. Go and live at a place and in a surrounding that is conducive to remaining obedient to Divine commandments.' This persuades one to migrate from a place living in which one cannot dutifully follow and observe what has been enjoined by his religion. Some rules relating to hijrah (emigration) have already appeared in the commentary on Sūrah An-Nisā' (Ma'āriful-Qur'ān, Volume II, Index p. 659, see under Hijrah).

In the last sentence of verse 10, it was said: إِنَّمَا يُوَفَّى الصَّابِرُوْنَ أَجْرَهُمْ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ (Certainly those who observe patience will be given their reward in full without measure.) The expression: بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ (*bighayri-ḥisāb*: without measure) means that the reward of those who endure ordeals will not be given to them under some pre-determined calculations or measures, instead, it will be sans-calculation, sans-reckoning, in a spirit of generosity at its most sublime as mentioned in a Ḥadīth narration that follows. Some others have interpreted this expression in the sense of request, or claim, that is, in this worldly life, should someone have some right due on someone, he has to initiate the claim for it. But, with Allah, those who observe patience will be given their reward without any request or claim.

Qatādah reports from Sayyidnā Anas ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, 'On the Day of Judgment, a Scale of Justice will be set in place. When people who had given Sadaqah (charity) come forward, whatever they had given will be weighed, and they will be given their full reward against it. Similarly, the acts of worship such as Ṣalāh and Ḥajj will be weighed, and its reward would be duly given to those who had performed these. And when come those who had stood patient against trials and

tribulations, for them, there will be no measure and weight, instead, their return and reward will be rolled down towards them without calculation, measure or reckoning - because, Allah Ta'ālā has said: اِنَّمَا يُوَفَّى الصّٰبِرُوْنَ اَجْرَهُمْ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ (Certainly those who observe patience will be given their reward in full without measure. - 39:10). So much so that people who had lived their life of the mortal world in perfect peace and comfort would wish, 'alas! Had our bodies been shredded with scissors during our life in the mortal world, we too would have earned a similar return for our endurance and patience against trials.'

Imām Mālik رحمه الله تعالیٰ has taken: صابرین (*aṣ-ṣabirūn*) in this verse to mean people who endure hardships and remain patient over sorrows of the mortal life. Some elders have said that it means people who hold their self in check against acts of disobedience and sin. Qurṭubī says, 'when the word: صَابِر (*ṣābir*: patient) is uttered unaccompanied by some other word, it invariably means a person who observes patience against hardships caused during the process of making one's desiring self abstain from sins. And when the word: صَابِر (ṣābir) is used for a person who remains patient against distress, it is coupled with some other words: صَابِر عَلٰی كَذَا (one who is patient against such and such distress). والله اعلم Allah knows best.

Verses 11 - 20

قُلْ اِنِّیْۤ اُمِرْتُ اَنْ اَعْبُدَ اللّٰهَ مُخْلِصًا لَّهُ الدِّیْنَ ﴿۱۱﴾ وَ اُمِرْتُ لِاَنْ
اَكُوْنَ اَوَّلَ الْمُسْلِمِیْنَ ﴿۱۲﴾ قُلْ اِنِّیْۤ اَخَافُ اِنْ عَصَیْتُ رَبِّیْ عَذَابَ
یَوْمٍ عَظِیْمٍ ﴿۱۳﴾ قُلِ اللّٰهَ اَعْبُدُ مُخْلِصًا لَّهٗ دِیْنِیْ ﴿۱۴﴾ فَاعْبُدُوْا
مَا شِئْتُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِهٖ ؕ قُلْ اِنَّ الْخٰسِرِیْنَ الَّذِیْنَ خَسِرُوْۤا اَنْفُسَهُمْ
وَاَهْلِیْهِمْ یَوْمَ الْقِیٰمَةِ ؕ اَلَا ذٰلِكَ هُوَ الْخُسْرَانُ الْمُبِیْنُ ﴿۱۵﴾ لَهُمْ مِّنْ
فَوْقِهِمْ ظُلَلٌ مِّنَ النَّارِ وَمِنْ تَحْتِهِمْ ظُلَلٌ ؕ ذٰلِكَ یُخَوِّفُ اللّٰهُ بِهٖ
عِبَادَهٗ ؕ یٰعِبَادِ فَاتَّقُوْنِ ﴿۱۶﴾ وَالَّذِیْنَ اجْتَنَبُوا الطَّاغُوْتَ اَنْ یَّعْبُدُوْهَا
وَاَنَابُوْۤا اِلَی اللّٰهِ لَهُمُ الْبُشْرٰی ۚ فَبَشِّرْ عِبَادِ ﴿۱۷﴾ الَّذِیْنَ یَسْتَمِعُوْنَ
الْقَوْلَ فَیَتَّبِعُوْنَ اَحْسَنَهٗ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِیْنَ هَدٰىهُمُ اللّٰهُ وَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمْ

أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ ﴿١٨﴾ أَفَمَنْ حَقَّ عَلَيْهِ كَلِمَةُ الْعَذَابِ ۗ أَفَأَنْتَ تُنْقِذُ مَنْ فِي النَّارِ ﴿١٩﴾ لَٰكِنِ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا رَبَّهُمْ لَهُمْ غُرَفٌ مِنْ فَوْقِهَا غُرَفٌ مَبْنِيَّةٌ ۙ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ ۖ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ ۖ لَا يُخْلِفُ اللَّهُ الْمِيعَادَ ﴿٢٠﴾

Say, "I have been ordered to worship Allah, making my submission exclusive to Him. [11] **And I have been ordered to be the first of those who submit."** [12] **Say, "if I were to disobey my Lord, I fear the punishment of a great day."** [13] **Say, "It is Allah whom I worship, making my submission exclusive to Him.** [14] **So, worship what you wish other than Him." Say, "Indeed, the losers are those who (will) lose their selves and their people on the Day of Judgment. Beware, that is really the obvious loss."** [15] **For them there are canopies of fire on top of them and canopies (of fire) underneath them. That is the thing against which Allah frightens His servants. 'So, O servants of Mine, fear Me.'** [16] **And those who abstain from worshipping the Taghut and turn fervently to Allah, for them there is good news. So, give the good news to My servants** [17] **who listen to what is said, then, follow the best of it. Those are the ones whom Allah has guided, and those are the ones who possess understanding.** [18] **So tell Me about the one for whom the word of punishment is destined, - is it you, then, who would save someone who is already in the Fire?** [19] **But, for those who fear their Lord, there are chambers with chambers on top of them built ready, with rivers running from underneath them. This is a promise of Allah. Allah does not go back on the promise.** [20]

Commentary

In the Tafsīr of verses 17 and 18: 'فَبَشِّرْ عِبَادِ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَمِعُونَ الْقَوْلَ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ أَحْسَنَهُ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ هَدَاهُمُ اللَّهُ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمْ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ' (So, give the good news to My servants who listen to what is said, then, follow the best of it. Those are the ones whom Allah has guided, and those are the ones who possess understanding), there are several views expressed by learned commentators. One of these is what Ibn Kathīr has opted for. Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavi has also gone by it. According to this view, the word:

القول (*al-qawl*:what is said) used here means Qur'ān, the Word of Allah, or it means the Qur'ān inclusive of the teachings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ - and all of it is but the best. Therefore, the obvious dictate of the occasion was to say: يَسْتَمِعُوْنَ الْقَوْلَ فَيَتَّبِعُوْنَه (who listen to what is said, then, follow it). But, that is not how it was said, instead, the word: اَحْسَن (*aḥsan*) was added which indicates that these people did not follow the Qur'ān and the teachings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ with any lack of discernment as is the way of some common people who hear something from someone and start following it without any inquiry, deliberation or insight. In fact, these are believers who have followed the Word of Allah and the teachings of His Rasūl after having found it true and best. As a result, towards the end of the verse, they have been praised as being: أُولُوالْاَلْبَابِ (*ulu-l-al-bab*) that is, the people of understanding, (the wise, the farsighted, and the discerning ones). Another example of this appears in the Qur'ān itself when Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام is being addressed about the Torah in the following words: فَخُذْهَا بِقُوَّةٍ وَّأْمُرْ قَوْمَكَ يَاْخُذُوْا بِاَحْسَنِهَا (So hold it firm, and ask your people to hold on to the best things in it - Al-A'rāf, 7:145). Here too, the word: اَحْسَن (ahsan) means the entire Torah and its injunctions. Similarly, in the verses cited above, 'listening to the word' means 'listening to the Qur'ān' and 'following the best' means 'following the entire Qur'ān' which has been referred to as: اَحْسَنَ الْحَدِيْثِ (ahsan al-Ḥadīth: the best thing said). In connection with this very Tafsīr - that 'al-qawl' should be taken to mean the Qur'ān particularly - some elders have also said that in the Qur'ān as well there are many injunctions that have degrees of حَسَن (*ḥasan*: good) and اَحْسَن (*aḥsan*: better, best). For example, retaliation and pardon are both permissible, but pardon is better and more graceful: وَاَنْ تَصْبِرُوْا خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ (and that you be patient is better for you - An-Nisā' - 4:25). There are many things in which the Qur'ān gives one the choice to take to what one likes without any apprehension of sin, but, on occasions, it has also pinpointed one of these as being the best and most graceful thing to do, for example: وَاَنْ تَعْفُوْآ اَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوٰى (And it is closer to taqwa that you forgive - Al-Baqarah, 2:237). There are many things in which concession has been granted, but opting for the way of courage and determination has still been called better and more graceful. Thus, the verse comes to mean that these people listen to the injunctions of the Qur'ān - those relating to concession (*rukhsah*) as well as those relating to the courageous determination (*'azimah*) - but elect to follow the course of determination instead of

concession. And in everything where they have a choice between two things, one being good and the other, better, then, invariably they elect to do what is better.

Then, there are many commentators who take *'al-qawl'* at this place to mean what is said by common people that includes things about *tauḥīd, shirk, kufr, Islām, ḥaqq* and *bāṭil,* even about the refinements of truth as good, better, weightier and outweighed. If we were to follow this Tafsīr, the verse would mean that, as far as listening is concerned, these people do listen to what everyone has to say - be they disbelievers or believer, be it truth or falsehood, good or bad, everything - but, when it comes to following, they follow only that which is the best. Thus, they follow *tauḥīd,* not *shirk; ḥaqq* (truth), not *bāṭil* (falsehood), and if they have to choose between the degrees of *ḥaqq*, they follow that which is better and weightier. Therefore, these people were credited with two attributes: (1) Firstly, by virtue of: هَدٰىهُمُ اللّٰهُ (Allah has guided them - 39:18), therefore, they do not go astray after having listened to so many different things. (2) Secondly, by the compliment of: اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمْ اُولُوا الْاَلْبَابِ (and they are the ones who possess understanding - 39:18), that is, they are sensible people, and their good sense, insight and discernment helps them draw the line between good and bad, true and false. Thus, when such people have the ability to distinguish between good and better and when it comes to opting for one of the two, they would opt for the better.

Therefore, it has been said that this verse was revealed about Sayyidnā Zayd Ibn 'Amr Ibn Nufayl, Sayyidnā Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī and Sayyidnā Salmān al-Farisī رضی اللہ عنہم اجمعین. Sayyidnā Zayd Ibn 'Amru Ibn Nufayl ﷺ used to hate shirk and idol worship even during the days of Jāhiliyyah. The other two Ṣaḥābah, Sayyidnā Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī and Sayyidnā Salmān al-Farisi رضی اللہ عنہم اجمعین listened to people of different religions, to the mushriks, the Jews and the Christians, and saw their ways of life, and it was only then that they embraced Islam and, finding the teachings of the Qur'ān as the best, they preferred them. (Qurṭubī)

Verses 21 - 23

اَلَمْ تَرَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ اَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً فَسَلَكَهٗ يَنَابِيْعَ فِى الْاَرْضِ ثُمَّ

يُخْرِجُ بِهٖ زَرْعًا مُّخْتَلِفًا اَلْوَانُهٗ ثُمَّ يَهِيْجُ فَتَرٰىهُ مُصْفَرًّا ثُمَّ يَجْعَلُهٗ حُطَامًا ؕ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَذِكْرٰى لِاُولِي الْاَلْبَابِ ﴿٢١﴾ اَفَمَنْ شَرَحَ اللّٰهُ صَدْرَهٗ لِلْاِسْلَامِ فَهُوَ عَلٰى نُوْرٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّهٖ ؕ فَوَيْلٌ لِّلْقٰسِيَةِ قُلُوْبُهُمْ مِّنْ ذِكْرِ اللّٰهِ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ فِيْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿٢٢﴾ اَللّٰهُ نَزَّلَ اَحْسَنَ الْحَدِيْثِ كِتٰبًا مُّتَشَابِهًا مَّثَانِيَ ۖۗ تَقْشَعِرُّ مِنْهُ جُلُوْدُ الَّذِيْنَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ ۚ ثُمَّ تَلِيْنُ جُلُوْدُهُمْ وَقُلُوْبُهُمْ اِلٰى ذِكْرِ اللّٰهِ ؕ ذٰلِكَ هُدَى اللّٰهِ يَهْدِيْ بِهٖ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ؕ وَمَنْ يُّضْلِلِ اللّٰهُ فَمَا لَهٗ مِنْ هَادٍ ﴿٢٣﴾

Have you not seen that Allah sent down water from the sky, then made it penetrate into the earth (and gush forth) in the form of springs? Then He brings forth with it the crops of different colors, and afterwards they wither, and you see them turned yellow, then He makes them chaff. Surely in that there is a lesson for the people of understanding. [21] **So I ask about a person whose heart Allah has opened up for Islam, and consequently he proceeds in a light from his Lord. (Can he be equal to the one whose heart is hardened?) So, woe to those whose hearts are too hard to remember Allah. Those are wandering in open error.** [22] **Allah has sent down the best discourse, a book containing subjects resembling each other, mentioned again and again, shivered from which are the skins of those who have awe of their Lord. Then, their skins and their hearts become soft enough to tend to the remembrance of Allah. This is the Guidance of Allah with which He brings to the right path whomsoever He wills. As for the one whom Allah lets go astray, for him there is no one to guide.** [23]

Commentary

The word: يَنَابِيعَ (*yanābi'*) in verse 21: فَسَلَكَهٗ يَنَابِيعَ فِي الْاَرْضِ (made it penetrate into the earth [and gush forth] in the form of springs) is the plural form of: يَنْبُوْع (*yanbu'*) which means springs that gush out from the soil. The sense is that the act of sending down water from the sky is by itself a great blessing, but also crucial was the arrangement to conserve it underground. But for this arrangement to save this blessing of water, its

users would have derived benefit from it only at the time of rains, or for a few days following it. Although, on water depends their life, and it is the kind of need one cannot stay free from, even for a day. Therefore, Allah Ta'ālā did not consider it sufficient to just send down this blessing, instead, made elaborate and very unique arrangements for its conservation. Some of it gets deposited in ditches, ponds, tanks and reservoirs. Then a huge supply is turned into ice and made to sit on mountain peaks and its ridges, an arrangement that takes care of the danger of water going bad. Then ice melts and water travels through veins in the mountains until it reaches the land and gushes out in the form of streams, all over, on its own, without any human input, and finally finds its way through the land in the form of rivulets and rivers. Rest of the water keeps flowing underground which can be retrieved by digging a well almost anywhere.

Details of this water supply system as they appear in the noble Qur'ān have been given in the commentary of Sūrah Al-Mu'minūn under the verse: (then We lodged it in the earth, and of course, We are able to take it away - Al-Mu'minun, 23:18). (Please see Ma'āriful-Qur'ān, Volume VI, under 23:18, pages 311 to 313).

Later in verse 21, it was said: مُخْتَلِفًا اَلْوَانُه (the crops of different colours). At the time the crops grow and ripen, colors keep changing from one to the other. Since these colors change, therefore, the word: مُخْتَلِفًا (*mukhtalifan*), in terms of its grammatical analysis, has been used in the form of: حال (*ḥāl*: state, circumstantial condition) which denotes change.

In the last sentence of verse 21, it was said: اِنَّ فِیْ ذٰلِکَ لَذِکْرٰی لِاُولِی الْاَلْبَابِ (Surely, in that, there is a lesson for the people of understanding), that is, in this process - when water is sent down, is conserved, is made available to human beings to grow all sorts of crops and trees the colors of which change following which they turn yellow and dry making grains separate from chaff - there is a great lesson for people of understanding, because they provide the proof of the infinite power and wisdom of Allah Ta'ālā. These are visible signs that could lead human beings to discover the reality behind their own creation, and that in turn, could become the means through which one succeeds in recognizing his or her own creator and master.

In the first sentence of verse 22, it was said: اَفَمَنْ شَرَحَ اللّٰهُ صَدْرَهٗ لِلْاِسْلَامِ فَهُوَ عَلٰى نُوْرٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّهٖ (So I ask about a person whose heart Allah has opened up for Islam, and consequently he proceeds in a light from his Lord.). The word: شَرَح (*sharḥ*) literally means to open, enlarge or extend. The expression: شرح الصدر (sharḥ-uṣ-ṣadr) means the capacity or capability of the heart (to receive and accommodate input). The sense is that one's heart is capable of learning lessons and receiving benefits by deliberating into Divine signs of creation in the heavens and the earth, particularly so by deliberating in his own creation. Similar is the case with other signs of Allah revealed in the form of scriptures and injunctions. One's heart also has to have the ability to deliberate in them and be benefited by them. In contrast, there is a heart that is straightened or hardened. The statement in a verse of the Qur'ān: يَجْعَلْ صَدْرَهٗ ضَيِّقًا حَرَجًا (He makes his heart narrow, much too narrow - Al-An'ām, 6:125) and the one in the next verse at this place: لِلْقَاسِيَةِ قُلُوْبُهُمْ "woe to those whose hearts are too hard to remember Allah - 39:23" has appeared in contrast to this very 'sharḥ-uṣ-ṣadr' (a heart opened to acceptance of truth and at ease with it).

According to a narration from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ, when the Holy Prophet ﷺ recited this verse: اَفَمَنْ شَرَحَ اللّٰهُ صَدْرَهٗ (Is it not that, a person for whom Allah opens up his heart...), we asked him about the meaning of 'sharh-us-sadr'. He said, "when the light of *'imān* (faith) enters the human heart, it enhances its capacity (which makes the comprehension and implementation of Divine commandments easy on the person concerned)." We submitted, *'yā rasūlallāh*, what is the sign of it (that is, of 'sharḥ-uṣ-ṣadr')?' Then, he said:

الانابة الى دارالخلود والتجا فى عن دارالغرور والتأهب للموت قبل نزوله.

رواه الحاكم فى المستدرک والبيهقى فى شعب الايمان. (روح المعانى)

"Longing passionately for the eternal home, and seeking refuge from the deceptive abode, and preparing for death before its arrival." - Reported by al-Ḥākim in al-Mustadrak and al-Baihaqī in Shu'ab-ul-'imān (Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī).

The verse under study has been initiated as headed by an interrogative particle: اَفَمَنْ (*afaman*). The sense it carries can be explained by saying: 'Can a person whose heart has been opened up for Islam - and he is on the light coming from his Lord, that is, does everything under it - and another person with a hardened heart be equal?' The contrasting

part relating to the hardened heart has been mentioned in the next verse with a warning of woeful punishment attached to it.

In this verse (22), it was said: فَوَيْلٌ لِّلْقٰسِيَةِ قُلُوْبُهُمْ (woe to those whose hearts are too hard to remember Allah). The word: قَاسِيَة (*al-qāsiyah*) is a derivation from: قَسَاوَت (*qasawah*) which means to be hard-hearted, having no mercy for anyone, and also the one who remains totally unaffected by the need to remember Allah and follow His injunctions.

Verse 23 opens with the words: اَللّٰهُ نَزَّلَ اَحْسَنَ الْحَدِيْثِ كِتٰبًا مُّتَشَابِهًا مَّثَانِيَ (Allah has sent down the best discourse, a book containing subjects resembling each other, mentioned again and again,). In the verse previous to it, the state of the faithful servants of Allah was mentioned as: يَسْتَمِعُوْنَ الْقَوْلَ فَيَتَّبِعُوْنَ اَحْسَنَهٗ (who listen to what is said, then, follow the best of it - 39:18). Here, in the verse under study (23), we have been told that the whole Qur'ān is *'aḥsan-ul-ḥadīth,'* the best of what is said. The word: حَدِيْث (Ḥadīth) literally means the speech or account that is related. The outcome of calling Qur'ān, *'aḥsan-ul-ḥadīth*, is that, out of everything human beings say or relate, the Qur'ān remains the most eloquent. Onwards from here, some attributes of the Qur'ān have been mentioned: (1) It is: كِتٰبًا مُّتَشَابِهًا (a book containing subjects resembling each other). At this place, the word: مُتَشَابِه (*mutashabih*) means resembling each other or mutually corresponding, that is, the subjects dealt with in the Qur'ān are related to each other, and are similar. So much so that one verse gets to be explained or confirmed by another verse. This 'word' is free of contradiction and conflict. (2) The second attribute is: مَثَانِيَ (*mathani*) which is the plural form of: مَثْنٰى (*mathna*) which means repeated. The sense is that a subject is taken up repeatedly in the Qur'ān to help make it settle down in one's mind. (3) As for the third attribute, it was described in very eloquent words by saying: تَقْشَعِرُّ مِنْهُ جُلُوْدُ الَّذِيْنَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ (shivered from which are the skins of those who have awe of their Lord.) that is, 'so overwhelmed and apprehensive the God-fearing become before the greatness of Allah that they, when reciting the Qur'ān, are gripped with such an state of awe that it makes their hair stand on end.' (4) The fourth attribute has been identified as: ثُمَّ تَلِيْنُ جُلُوْدُهُمْ وَقُلُوْبُهُمْ اِلٰى ذِكْرِ اللّٰهِ (Then, their skins and their hearts become soft enough to tend to the remembrance of Allah.), that is, the recitation of the Qur'ān affects them in two ways. First, as said immediately above, when they hear the warnings of

punishment, it makes their hair stand on end. Then they listen to the verses promising mercy and forgiveness which takes them to a state when their bodies and hearts turn tenderized, mellowed in the remembrance of Allah. Sayyidah Asmā' bint Abī Bakr ﷺ says that this used to be the common emotional state of the noble Ṣaḥābah - when the Qur'ān was recited before them, tear would be rolling down their eyes, and the hair would be standing on end. (Qurṭubī)

It has been narrated by Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "A servant over whose body hair would stand on end due to the fear of Allah, then, Allah Ta'ālā forbids the Fire from ever touching his body. (Qurṭubī)

Verses 24 - 28

أَفَمَنْ يَتَّقِي بِوَجْهِهِ سُوءَ الْعَذَابِ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ ۚ وَقِيلَ لِلظّٰلِمِينَ ذُوقُوا مَا كُنتُمْ تَكْسِبُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾ كَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ فَأَتٰىهُمُ الْعَذَابُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾ فَأَذَاقَهُمُ اللّٰهُ الْخِزْيَ فِي الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ۖ وَلَعَذَابُ الْآخِرَةِ أَكْبَرُ ۚ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾ وَلَقَدْ ضَرَبْنَا لِلنَّاسِ فِي هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنِ مِن كُلِّ مَثَلٍ لَّعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٢٧﴾ قُرْاٰنًا عَرَبِيًّا غَيْرَ ذِي عِوَجٍ لَّعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾

Tell Me about the one who tries to save himself from the worst punishment with his face on the Day of Doom, (whether he is equal to the one who is not liable to any punishment.) And it will be said to the wrongdoers, "Have a taste of what you used to earn." [24] **Those before them had also rejected (the messengers) and consequently, the punishment came upon them in a way that they had never imagined.** [25] **Then Allah made them taste disgrace in the worldly life, and of course the punishment of the Hereafter is much greater. Only if they knew!** [26] **And We have cited for people all sorts of examples in this Qur'ān, so that they may receive the message** [27] **through an Arabic Qur'ān that has no digression (from the truth), so that they may be God-fearing.** [28]

Commentary

Verse 24: أَفَمَنْ يَتَّقِي بِوَجْهِهِ (Tell Me about the one who tries to save himself from the worst punishment with his face ...) carries a description of the terrifying scenario of Jahannam. If one faces something hurtful in his mortal life, he tries to fight it off by using his hands and feet as defensive shields to protect his face. But, refuge with Allah, the people of Jahannam will not be able to use even their hands and feet to defend themselves. The punishment that comes will fall directly on their faces. Even if he wished to ward off the punishment in defense, he would have no option but to use his very face as the shield, because he would have been thrown in Jahannam with his hands and feet tied. We seek refuge with Allah from such a fate.

Out of the authorities of Tafsīr, 'Aṭā' and Ibn Zayd said that a person condemned to Jahannam will have his hands and feet tied before being dragged in there. (Qurṭubī)

Verses 29 - 35

ضَرَبَ اللّٰهُ مَثَلًا رَّجُلًا فِيهِ شُرَكَآءُ مُتَشٰكِسُوْنَ وَرَجُلًا سَلَمًا لِّرَجُلٍ ط هَلْ يَسْتَوِيٰنِ مَثَلًا ط اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ ط بَلْ اَكْثَرُهُمْ لَايَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٢٩﴾ اِنَّكَ مَيِّتٌ وَّاِنَّهُمْ مَّيِّتُوْنَ ﴿٣٠﴾ ثُمَّ اِنَّكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ عِنْدَ رَبِّكُمْ تَخْتَصِمُوْنَ ﴿٣١﴾ فَمَنْ اَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ كَذَبَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ وَكَذَّبَ بِالصِّدْقِ اِذْ جَآءَهٗ ط اَلَيْسَ فِيْ جَهَنَّمَ مَثْوًى لِّلْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿٣٢﴾ وَالَّذِيْ جَآءَ بِالصِّدْقِ وَصَدَّقَ بِهٖٓ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُوْنَ ﴿٣٣﴾ لَهُمْ مَّا يَشَآءُوْنَ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ ط ذٰلِكَ جَزٰٓؤُا الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ﴿٣٤﴾ قصلے لِيُكَفِّرَ اللّٰهُ عَنْهُمْ اَسْوَاَ الَّذِيْ عَمِلُوْا وَيَجْزِيَهُمْ اَجْرَهُمْ بِاَحْسَنِ الَّذِيْ كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾

Allah has given an example: There is a (slave) man owned by some partners quarrelling with each other, and (on the other hand,) there is a man solely owned by a single man. Can they be equal in comparison? Praise

be to Allah! (The truth stands established). But, most of them do not know. [29] **Verily, you are to die and they are to die.** [30] **After that, on the Day of Doom, you will surely place your disputes before your Lord.** [31]

So, who is more unjust than him who forges a lie against Allah and rejects the truth when it reached him? Is it not that in Jahannam (hell) there is an abode for the disbelievers? [32] **As for the one who has come with the truth and believed it to be true, then such people are the ones who are God-fearing.** [33] **For them, with their Lord, there is what they wish. That is the reward of those who are good in deeds,** [34] **so that Allah wipes out from them the worst deeds they did, and gives their reward to them for the best of what they used to do.** [35]

Commentary

In verse 30, it was said: إِنَّكَ مَيِّتٌ وَّإِنَّهُمْ مَّيِّتُوْنَ (Verily, you are to die and they are to die). The word: مَيِّت (*mayyit*) with a doubling sound on the letter: الياء (*al-yā'*) denotes someone who will die in the future and مَيْت (*mait*) with the letter *al-yā'* remaining quiescent, someone who has died. In this verse, the address is to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and it is being said to him that he too is to die and so are his friends and foes, who will also die. The objective behind the statement is to alert and persuade everyone to be concerned about the Hereafter and be ready to do everything necessary to achieve this goal. Then, as an inter-related side of the subject, the purpose is also to make it very clear that the Holy Prophet ﷺ too, despite being the most sublime among the creation and the foremost among prophets, is not exempted from death, so that people would not differ about this matter after his passing away from this mortal world (from al-Qurṭubī).

Justice in the court of Resurrection: The form in which the right of the oppressed will be retrieved from the oppressor.

In verse 31, it was said: ثُمَّ إِنَّكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ عِنْدَ رَبِّكُمْ تَخْتَصِمُوْنَ (After that, on the Day of Doom, you will surely place your disputes before your Lord.). Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه says that the word: إِنَّكُمْ (*innakum*: surely you...) at this place includes - believers, disbelievers, Muslims - all of them, oppressor or oppressed. All of them will submit their cases in the court of their Lord, and He will have the right of the oppressed paid back by the oppressor whether a disbeliever, or believer. And the form in which

these rights will be paid back will be what has mentioned in a narration of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ that appears in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī. According to this, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, 'a person who has a right of someone due against him should either pay it off, or have it forgiven right here in this world and become halal, that is, stand absolved of any responsibility on that count. The reason is that there are not going to be any currencies of dirhams and dinars (or any others found in the mortal world) in the universe of the Hereafter. If the oppressor has some good deeds in his account, then, these deeds will be taken from him to the measure of the oppression he did, and will be given to the oppressed. And in case he has no good deeds with him, bad deeds and sins of the oppressed will be taken from him and put into the account of the oppressor.

And there is a narration of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim according to which the Holy Prophet ﷺ on a certain day asked his noble Sahabah, "Do you know who a pauper is?" The Sahabah said, '*yā rasūlallāh*, as for us, a pauper is one who has neither cash nor things needed (to run one's life).' He said, "The real pauper in my Ummah is a person who will come to the Day of Judgment with lots of good deeds, prayers, fasts, zakah and things like that, but such would the record (of his dealings with others) that he (in his mortal life) would have hurled invectives on someone, leveled false accusation against someone, devoured someone's property by unfair means, had someone killed, beaten or harassed. All those so oppressed will take their plaint before Allah, and the good deeds of the oppressor will be distributed over the oppressed. After that, when no good deeds are left, and the claims of the oppressed still remain to be settled, then, the sins of the oppressed will be passed on to the oppressor, and he will be thrown into the Jahannam. [Hence, this person despite having everything, ended up being a pauper on the Day of Judgment - he is what a real pauper is!]

And Ṭabarānī, citing a trustworthy authority, has reported from Sayyidnā Abū Ayyūb al-Anṣārī ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "The first case presented in the court of Allah will be that of man and his wife and, by God, the tongue will be silent there, instead, hands and feet of the woman will bear witness as to blames she used to impute to her husband. Similarly, the hands and feet of the man will bear witness as to

how he used to cause pain to his wife. After that, servants will be brought before their respective masters, and redress will be provided for their complaints. After that, people from common markets with whom one had one or the other dealing will be presented, and if one of them has been subjected to some injustice, his right will be duly vacated.'

All deeds will be given against oppressions and infringement of rights, but one's *'imān* (faith) will not be given

After having reported all Ḥadīth narrations cited above, it has been said in Tafsīr Maẓharī that the thing mentioned about giving the deeds of the oppressor in settlement of the rights of the oppressed means deeds other than *'imān* (faith). The reason is that all oppressions and injustices are acts of sin. They are not *kufr* or disbelief. And the punishment of sinful deeds will be limited as against *'imān* (faith) which is a limitless deed. Its reward too is limitless, that is, living in Jannah forever - even though, it may happen after having gone through the punishment of sins and staying in Jahannam for a certain period of time. The outcome is, when the good deeds of the oppressor - with the exception of *'imān* (faith) - will finish once given to the oppressed to the last deed leaving nothing behind but *'imān*, then, this *'imān* will not be taken away from him forcibly. Instead, the rights of the oppressed will be paid back by putting the sins of the oppressed in the account of the oppressor. As a result, this person will, after he has undergone the punishment of his sins, will finally enter the Jannah, and then this state of his will be everlasting. The author of Tafsīr Maẓharī says that Imām al-Baihaqī has also said so.

In verse 32, it was said: كَذَّبَ بِالصِّدْقِ (rejects the truth) while in verse 33, it was said: الَّذِىْ جَآءَ بِالصِّدْقِ (As for the one who has come with the truth): At both these places, the word: اَلصِّدْق (*aṣ-ṣidq*: the truth) means teachings brought by the Holy Prophet ﷺ, whether it be the Qur'ān, or be other teachings of aḥādīth in addition to the Qur'ān. And the expression: صَدَّقَ بِهٖ (*ṣaddaqa bihi*: and believed it to be true - 39:33) includes all believers who have testified to it.

Verses 36 - 41

اَلَيْسَ اللّٰهُ بِكَافٍ عَبْدَهٗ ؕ وَيُخَوِّفُوْنَكَ بِالَّذِيْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِهٖ ؕ وَمَنْ
يُّضْلِلِ اللّٰهُ فَمَالَهٗ مِنْ هَادٍ ﴿۳۶﴾ وَمَنْ يَّهْدِ اللّٰهُ فَمَالَهٗ مِنْ مُّضِلٍّ ؕ

اَلَيْسَ اللّٰهُ بِعَزِيْزٍ ذِى انْتِقَامٍ ﴿٣٧﴾ وَلَئِنْ سَاَلْتَهُمْ مَّنْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ لَيَقُوْلُنَّ اللّٰهُ ؕ قُلْ اَفَرَءَيْتُمْ مَّاتَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ اِنْ اَرَادَنِىَ اللّٰهُ بِضُرٍّ هَلْ هُنَّ كٰشِفٰتُ ضُرِّهٖٓ اَوْ اَرَادَنِىْ بِرَحْمَةٍ هَلْ هُنَّ مُمْسِكٰتُ رَحْمَتِهٖ ؕ قُلْ حَسْبِىَ اللّٰهُ ؕ عَلَيْهِ يَتَوَكَّلُ الْمُتَوَكِّلُوْنَ ﴿٣٨﴾ قُلْ يٰقَوْمِ اعْمَلُوْا عَلٰى مَكَانَتِكُمْ اِنِّىْ عَامِلٌ ۚ فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٣٩﴾ مَنْ يَّاْتِيْهِ عَذَابٌ يُّخْزِيْهِ وَيَحِلُّ عَلَيْهِ عَذَابٌ مُّقِيْمٌ ﴿٤٠﴾ اِنَّآ اَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتٰبَ لِلنَّاسِ بِالْحَقِّ ۚ فَمَنِ اهْتَدٰى فَلِنَفْسِهٖ ۚ وَمَنْ ضَلَّ فَاِنَّمَا يَضِلُّ عَلَيْهَا ۚ وَمَآ اَنْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِوَكِيْلٍ ﴿٤١﴾

Is Allah not sufficient for (the protection of) His slave? And they are frightening you of those (false gods whom they worship) other than Him. And whomsoever Allah would let go astray, for him there is no one to guide. [36] **And whomsoever Allah gives guidance, for him there is no one to misguide. Is it not that Allah is Mighty, Powerful to avenge?** [37] **And if you ask them as to who created the heavens and the earth, they will certainly say, "Allah." Say, "Then, tell me about those whom you invoke other than Allah, if Allah intends to cause some harm to me, are they (able) to remove the harm caused by Him? Or if He intends to bless me with mercy, are they (able) to hold back His mercy (from me)?" Say, "Allah is sufficient for me. In Him trust those who (rightly) trust (in someone)."** [38] **Say, "O my people, do at your place (what you are doing). I am to do (what I have been ordered to do). Very soon, you will come to know** [39] **as to who will be visited by a punishment that will disgrace him, and upon whom a lasting punishment will befall.** [40] **We have sent down to you the Book for the people with the truth. So, whoever follows the guidance, it is for his own good, and whoever goes astray, he will go astray only to his detriment - and you are not responsible for them.** [41]

Commentary

In the first verse (36), it was said: 'اَلَيْسَ اللّٰهُ بِكَافٍ عَبْدَهٗ' (Is Allah not sufficient for (the protection of) His slave?). This verse was revealed in the

background of an event. The disbelievers had threatened the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his noble Ṣaḥābah by saying that, should they act irreverently against their idols, they would never escape the curse of these idols, something very lethal to face. In reply, they were told: Is Allah not sufficient for His slave?

Therefore, some commentators have taken: عَبْدَهُ (*'abdāhu*: His slave) here to mean a particular slave of Allah, that is, the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavi, a summary of whose Tafsīr appears in the original edition of Ma'āriful-Qur'ān, has also opted for this very Tafsīr. Then there are other commentators who have taken *'abd* or slave in its general sense. Another *qira'ah* (rendition) of this verse as: عِبَادَهُ (*'ibādihī*: His slaves) supports this position. And as for the subject itself, it is, after all, general in the sense that Allah Ta'ālā is sufficient for everyone among His slaves.

A lesson, and a good counsel

In verse 36, it was said: وَيُخَوِّفُونَكَ بِالَّذِينَ مِنْ دُونِهِ (And they are frightening you of those [false gods whom they worship] other than Him.), that is, 'the disbelievers frighten you with the displeasure of their false objects of worship'. Readers of this verse generally tend to pass by it thinking that it is talking about a particular event that relates to the threats of disbelievers and to the blessed person of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, hence they would not exert enough to find out the guidance that it has for us. Although, it is an open fact that anyone who threatens a Muslim on the ground that, should he not do such and such haram act or sin, his superiors at whose mercy he is, will be displeased with him, and may even hurt him is also included under this verse, even if the person giving a threat is a Muslim, and the person he is being threatened of is also no one else but a Muslim, virtually Muslims on both sides. And these are terrible times for all. This happens all over the world, in most jobs they do. They have to face a dilemma. Are they willing and ready to contravene the Divine laws (they are bound with)? Or else, are they prepared to become targets of the wrath and retribution of their superior officers? This verse gives a guideline good enough for all of them: Is Allah Ta'ālā not sufficient to protect you? Here you are. You make a resolve that you will abstain from committing sins exclusively for the sake of Allah. Then you simply do not care about any officer, any authority asking you to act

counter to Divine laws. If you do just that, the help and support of Allah Ta'ālā shall be with you. The worst that can happen is that you may lose that job. So, what? Allah Ta'ālā will make some other arrangement for your sustenance. And for that matter, it is typical of a believer that he himself keeps trying to find a suitable job elsewhere after which he is placed in a position of leaving it immediately.

Verses 42 - 45

اَللّٰهُ يَتَوَفَّى الْاَنْفُسَ حِيْنَ مَوْتِهَا وَالَّتِيْ لَمْ تَمُتْ فِيْ مَنَامِهَا ۚ فَيُمْسِكُ
الَّتِيْ قَضٰى عَلَيْهَا الْمَوْتَ وَيُرْسِلُ الْاُخْرٰى اِلٰى اَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ۭ اِنَّ فِيْ
ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَّتَفَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿٤٢﴾ اَمِ اتَّخَذُوْا مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ شُفَعَاۗءَ ۭ قُلْ
اَوَلَوْ كَانُوْا لَا يَمْلِكُوْنَ شَيْئًا وَّلَا يَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿٤٣﴾ قُلْ لِّلّٰهِ الشَّفَاعَةُ
جَمِيْعًا ۭ لَهٗ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۭ ثُمَّ اِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُوْنَ ﴿٤٤﴾ وَاِذَا ذُكِرَ
اللّٰهُ وَحْدَهُ اشْمَاَزَّتْ قُلُوْبُ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ ۚ وَاِذَا ذُكِرَ الَّذِيْنَ
مِنْ دُوْنِهٖٓ اِذَا هُمْ يَسْتَبْشِرُوْنَ ﴿٤٥﴾

Allah fully takes away the souls (of the people) at the time of their death, and (of) those who do not die, in their sleep. Then He withholds those on whom He had decreed death, and sends the others back upto an appointed term. Surely, in this, there are signs for a people who ponder. [42] **Is it that they have adopted intercessors out of those (whom they invoke) other than Allah? Say, "(Do you take them as intercessors) even though they have no power at all, nor do they understand?"** [43] **Say, "Intercession belongs entirely to Allah.** [44] **And when Allah is mentioned alone, the hearts of those who do not believe in the Hereafter are filled with disgust, and when those (whom they worship) other than Him are mentioned, they become happy forthwith.** [45]

Commentary

The time to sleep and the time to die: How is the soul exacted and what is the difference between the two

In verse 42, it was said: اَللّٰهُ يَتَوَفَّى الْاَنْفُسَ حِيْنَ مَوْتِهَا وَالَّتِيْ لَمْ تَمُتْ فِيْ مَنَامِهَا (Allah

fully takes away the souls [of the people] at the time of their death, and [of] those who do not die, in their sleep.). The word: توفّی (*tawaffa*) literally means to receive, to take back, exact. In this verse, Allah Ta'ālā has stated very clearly and emphatically that the spirits or souls (*arwah*) of living beings are under the free will and discretionary dispensation of Allah Ta'ālā at all times and under all conditions. He can seize, exact and take them back at will. And there is at least one manifestation of this absolutely autonomous dispensation that every living being sees and feels everyday when, once asleep, the *rūḥ* (spirit, soul) of a person is, so to say, taken away from the body, then, returned on rising from sleep, and ultimately, one such time is bound to come when this ruh stands seized, absolutely and conclusively, following which, this will never be returned.

According to Tafsīr Maẓharī, the sense of 'taking the *rūḥ* away' is to sever its connection with the human body. There are occasions when it is totally severed, both outwardly and inwardly. This is what death is. Then, there are occasions when it is severed only outwardly while it remains active inwardly, the effect of which is that it is only the sense and volitional movement - being obvious signs of life - that are severed, however, the connection of *rūḥ* with the body remains active inwardly. Under this arrangement, one breathes and stays alive, however, the form it takes is that the human spirit (*rūḥ*) is made to turn its attention to a (panoramic) study of the universe of images ('Alam-ul-mithal), and whereby it is made to pass into a state of forgetfulness and suspension away from this universe, so that one can become fully at rest. And then, at times, even this inward connection is severed because of which the life of the body goes extinct, totally.

In the verse cited above, the word: توفّی (*yatawaffa*) in the sense of 'takes in full' (*qabḍ*) is used by way of *'umum-ul- majāz* which covers both meanings. This difference of ruh (spirit, soul) being taken away both in death and sleep delineated earlier also finds support in a saying of Sayyidnā 'Alī ﷺ. He said that, at the time of sleep, the *rūḥ* of a person goes away from his body, but a beam or ray of *rūḥ* stays behind in the body due to which one remains alive - and it is through this 'beamed' connection that one sees a dream. Then this dream, in the event that it has been seen in the state the attention of the ruh was raptly turned towards the universe of images, is a true dream. But, if it was seen in a

state when the *rūḥ* was returning back to the body, then, it becomes polluted with Satanic inputs, and that dream no more remains a true dream. And he also said that the *rūḥ* that comes out of the body of a person during the state of sleep returns to the body when one wakes up within a time that is much less than an eye would take to wink.

Verses 46 - 52

قُلِ اللّٰهُمَّ فَاطِرَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ عٰلِمَ الْغَيْبِ وَ الشَّهَادَةِ اَنْتَ تَحْكُمُ
بَيْنَ عِبَادِكَ فِیْ مَاكَانُوْا فِيْهِ يَخْتَلِفُوْنَ ﴿٤٦﴾ وَلَوْ اَنَّ لِلَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا مَا
فِی الْاَرْضِ جَمِيْعًا وَّمِثْلَهٗ مَعَهٗ لَافْتَدَوْا بِهٖ مِنْ سُوْٓءِ الْعَذَابِ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ ط
وَبَدَا لَهُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ مَالَمْ يَكُوْنُوا يَحْتَسِبُوْنَ ﴿٤٧﴾ وَبَدَا لَهُمْ سَيِّاٰتُ
مَاكَسَبُوْا وَحَاقَ بِهِمْ مَّاكَانُوْا بِهٖ يَسْتَهْزِءُوْنَ ﴿٤٨﴾ فَاِذَا مَسَّ الْاِنْسَانَ
ضُرٌّ دَعَانَا ز ثُمَّ اِذَا خَوَّلْنٰهُ نِعْمَةً مِّنَّا لا قَالَ اِنَّمَا اُوْتِيْتُهٗ عَلٰی عِلْمٍ ط بَلْ هِیَ
فِتْنَةٌ وَّلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَهُمْ لَايَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٤٩﴾ قَدْ قَالَهَا الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ فَمَا
اَغْنٰی عَنْهُمْ مَّا كَانُوْا يَكْسِبُوْنَ ﴿٥٠﴾ فَاَصَابَهُمْ سَيِّاٰتُ مَاكَسَبُوْا ط
وَالَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا مِنْ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ سَيُصِيْبُهُمْ سَيِّاٰتُ مَا كَسَبُوْا لا وَمَاهُمْ
بِمُعْجِزِيْنَ ﴿٥١﴾ اَوَلَمْ يَعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَيَقْدِرُ ط
اِنَّ فِیْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يُّؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٥٢﴾ ع

Say, "O Allah, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, the Knower of the unseen and the seen, you will judge between Your servants in that about which they used to differ. [46] **And were the wrongdoers to own all that is on earth, and even twice as much, they would surely seek to ransom themselves with it against the evil punishment on the Day of Judgment. And there will appear to them from Allah what they have never imagined.** [47] **And unveiled to them will be the evils of what they used to earn; and encircled they will be by what they used to ridicule.** [48]

And when man is visited by a trouble, he prays to Us, but when, after that, We favor him with some blessing from

Us, he says, "This is given to me because of (my) knowledge." No, but this is a trial, yet most of them do not know. [49] The same was said by those before them, but what they used to earn was of no avail to them, [50] and they were overtaken by the evils of what they had earned; and the wrongdoers from these (infidels too) will be overtaken by the evils of what they have earned- and they are not (able) to escape. [51] Do they not know that it is Allah who extends provision for whomsoever He wills, and straitens (it for whomsoever He wills). Surely in that, there are signs for a people who believe. [52]

In verse 46, it was said: قُلِ اللّٰهُمَّ فَاطِرَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ (Say, "O Allah, Creator of the heavens and the earth...). According to a narration of Sayyidnā 'Abd-ur-Raḥmān Ibn 'Awf ﷺ appearing in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, he says, "I asked Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا as to what it was from which the Holy Prophet ﷺ began his nightly prayer (*tahajjūd*)? She said, 'When he rose for the *ṣalāh* of *tahajjūd,* he used to recite this prayer:

اَللّٰهُمَّ رَبَّ جِبْرِيْلَ وَمِيْكَائِيْلَ وَاِسْرَافِيْلَ، فَاطِرَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ عٰلِمَ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ اَنْتَ تَحْكُمُ بَيْنَ عِبَادِكَ فِيْمَا كَانُوْا فِيْهِ يَخْتَلِفُوْنَ، اِهْدِنِيْ لِمَا اخْتُلِفَ فِيْهِ مِنَ الْحَقِّ بِاِذْنِكَ اِنَّكَ تَهْدِيْ مَنْ تَشَآءُ اِلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ.

O Allah, Lord of Jabra'īl and Mika'īl and Israfīl, Creator of the heavens and the earth, Knower of the unseen and the seen, you will judge between Your servants in that about which they used to differ.. Guide me, with Your will, to the truth in which people have disputes, for You are the One who guides whomsoever He wills to the straight path.

A prayer that is answered

Sayyidnā Sa'īd Ibn Jubayr ﷺ says that he knows a verse of the noble Qur'ān after reciting which the prayer one makes is answered. Then he pointed out to this very verse that begins with the words: اَللّٰهُمَّ فَاطِرَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ (O Allah, Creator of the heavens and the earth... to the end of verse 39:46) - (al-Qurṭubī)

In verse 47, it was said: وَبَدَا لَهُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ مَالَمْ يَكُوْنُوْا يَحْتَسِبُوْنَ (And there will appear to them from Allah what they have never imagined.) The famous *tabi'ī,* Sufyān Thawrī recited this verse and said, 'Ruined are those who did good deeds only to pretend their piety before people. (He repeated this sentence twice) This verse is about them. They did good deeds in their mortal life to impress people, who took them to be good people. Even they

themselves used to deceive themselves by thinking that these deeds will become a source of salvation for them in the Hereafter. But, as these were never performed with unalloyed sincerity (*'ikhlāṣ*), they deserve no reward in the sight of Allah. So, once they are in the life after death, the punishment would come upon them suddenly against their expectation.' (Qurṭubī)

An important instruction concerning '*mushajarāt*' (disagreements among Ṣaḥābah)

Someone asked Rabi' Ibn-ul-Khaitham about the *shahādah* (martyrdom) of Sayyidnā Ḥusain ﷺ. He sighed and recited the verse (46): قُلِ اللّٰهُمَّ فَاطِرَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ عٰلِمَ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ اَنْتَ تَحْكُمُ بَيْنَ عِبَادِكَ (O Allah, Creator of the heavens and the earth, Knower of the unseen and the seen, You will judge between Your servants...) and said, 'whenever you have a doubt in your heart about the mutual difference of the noble Ṣaḥābah, do recite this verse.' Tafsīr Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī reports this statement and then says: This teaches us the best etiquette in regard to this issue, and is something one should always bear in mind.

Verses 53 - 61

قُلْ يٰعِبَادِيَ الَّذِيْنَ اَسْرَفُوْا عَلٰۤى اَنْفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوْا مِنْ رَّحْمَةِ اللّٰهِ ؕ
اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوْبَ جَمِيْعًا ؕ اِنَّهٗ هُوَ الْغَفُوْرُ الرَّحِيْمُ ﴿۵۳﴾ وَاَنِيْبُوْۤا
اِلٰى رَبِّكُمْ وَاَسْلِمُوْا لَهٗ مِنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ يَّاْتِيَكُمُ الْعَذَابُ ثُمَّ لَا تُنْصَرُوْنَ
﴿۵۴﴾ وَاتَّبِعُوْۤا اَحْسَنَ مَاۤ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكُمْ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ مِّنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ يَّاْتِيَكُمُ
الْعَذَابُ بَغْتَةً وَّاَنْتُمْ لَا تَشْعُرُوْنَ ﴿۵۵﴾ۙ اَنْ تَقُوْلَ نَفْسٌ يّٰحَسْرَتٰى عَلٰى
مَا فَرَّطْتُّ فِیْ جَنْۢبِ اللّٰهِ وَاِنْ كُنْتُ لَمِنَ السّٰخِرِيْنَ ﴿۵۶﴾ۙ اَوْ تَقُوْلَ
لَوْ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ هَدٰىنِیْ لَكُنْتُ مِنَ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿۵۷﴾ۙ اَوْ تَقُوْلَ حِيْنَ تَرَى
الْعَذَابَ لَوْ اَنَّ لِیْ كَرَّةً فَاَكُوْنَ مِنَ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ﴿۵۸﴾ بَلٰى
قَدْ جَآءَتْكَ اٰيٰتِیْ فَكَذَّبْتَ بِهَا وَاسْتَكْبَرْتَ وَكُنْتَ مِنَ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ
﴿۵۹﴾ وَيَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ تَرَى الَّذِيْنَ كَذَبُوْا عَلَى اللّٰهِ وُجُوْهُهُمْ مُّسْوَدَّةٌ ؕ

أَلَيْسَ فِي جَهَنَّمَ مَثْوًى لِّلْمُتَكَبِّرِينَ ﴿٦٠﴾ وَيُنَجِّي اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا
بِمَفَازَتِهِمْ لَا يَمَسُّهُمُ السُّوءُ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٦١﴾

Say (on My behalf), "O servants of Mine who have acted recklessly against their own selves, do not despair of Allah's mercy. Surely, Allah will forgive all sins. Surely, He is the One who is the Most-Forgiving, the Very-Merciful. [53] **Turn passionately towards your Lord, and submit to Him before the punishment comes to you, after which you will not be helped.** [54] **And follow the best of what has been sent down to you from your Lord before the punishment comes to you suddenly when you do not even expect,** [55] **lest someone should say, "Pity on me, because I fell short in respect of (observing the rights of) Allah and in fact, I was one of those who mocked",** [56] **or, (lest) someone should say, "If Allah were to show me the way, I would have surely been among those who fear Allah",** [57] **or, (lest) someone should say when he sees the punishment, "O that I had a chance to return, so that I may become one of those who are good in deeds."** [58] **Why not? My verses had reached you, but you called them untrue, and waxed proud, and became of those who disbelieved.** [59] **And on the Day of Judgment, you will see those who had forged lies against Allah (in a state) that their faces are turned black. Is it not that in Jahannam there is an abode for the arrogant?** [60] **And Allah will save the God-fearing (from Jahannam), with utmost success granted to them, so as no evil will touch them, nor will they grieve.** [61]

Commentary

Verse 53 opens with the words: قُلْ يٰعِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ اَسْرَفُوْا (O servants of Mine who have acted recklessly against their own selves, do not despair of Allah's mercy. Surely, Allah will forgive all sins.). Taba'ī, Sa'īd Ibn Jubayr reports from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ that there were some people who had killed a lot of people unjustly and had committed a lot of shameful acts. They came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and submitted before him, 'The religion you invite us to is, no doubt, very good, but we have a problem. We think about all those major sins we have already committed. Now if we were to become Muslims, do you hope that our repentance will be accepted?' Thereupon, Allah Ta'ālā revealed this verse to the Holy

Prophet ﷺ - reported by al-Bukhārī in that sense (al-Qurṭubī).

Therefore, the outcome of the subject taken up in the verse comes to be that, well before death arrives, the repentance made from sins, no matter how serious, even from *kufr* (disbelief) and *shirk* (ascribing of partners to Allah), gets to be accepted. And by virtue of a genuine taubah (repentance), all sins will be forgiven, therefore, no one should lose hope in the mercy of Allah.

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar ؓ said that, out of all verses of the Qur'ān, this verse brings the strongest message of hope for sinners. But, Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ said that the strongest such verse is: اِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَذُوْ مَغْفِرَةٍ لِّلنَّاسِ عَلٰى ظُلْمِهِمْ (And surely, your Lord is the lord of forgiveness for the people against their wrongdoings - Ar-Ra'd, 13:6)

In verse 55, it was said: وَاتَّبِعُوْٓا اَحْسَنَ مَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكُمْ (and follow the best of what has been sent down to you). The second phrase: اَحْسَنَ مَآ اُنْزِلَ (the best of what has been sent down) means the Qur'ān, and the whole Qur'ān is but ahsan, the best - and the Qur'ān can be called: احسن و اكمل (best) also in the sense that out of all scriptures - Torah, Injīl, Zabūr - revealed from Allah Ta'ālā, the Qur'ān is the best and the most perfect. (Qurṭubī)

The next three verses (56-58), beginning from: اَنْ تَقُوْلَ نَفْسٌ يّٰحَسْرَتٰى (Pity on me, because I fell short in respect of Allah... 39:56) and concluding on: مِنَ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ (...become one of those who are good in deed - 39:58), have elaborated and emphasized the subject of the three verses earlier to it (53-55), that no sinner of any description should despair of the mercy of Allah, for should he repent, Allah will forgive all his past sins. But through the use of the expression: اَنْ تَقُوْلَ نَفْسٌ (lest someone should say) at the head of the three verses: 56, 57 and 58, it was reminded that the time of taubah has a deadline - it has to be well before death. If someone were to think of making his taubah after death on the Day of Judgment, or is simply filled with remorse over what awful things he had done to himself, then, that will bring him no benefit.

In this context, it has been mentioned that some disbelievers, on the Day of Judgment, would express different wishes, regretting what they had done. Someone will be filled with remorse as to why did he have to fall short in obeying the commands of Allah Ta'ālā. Then, there will be that odd person even at a place like that who would love to wriggle out of

the impasse blaming his destiny for his misconduct by saying - 'Had Allah Taʻālā given me the necessary guidance, I too would have been one of those who feared Him, but since He gave me no guidance, there was nothing I could do about it.' Still someone else would wish: 'Would that I were to be sent back into the world to become an observing believer, obeying the commandments of Allah at its best.' But, that will be a time when no wish and no remorse of any kind will work.

These three different wishes could belong to different people, and it is also possible that these three wishes could have come, one after the other, from a single group of disbelievers, because, with the last saying which mentions the wish to be sent back to this world, it has been said in the verse that it will come to pass after they had seen the punishment. This obviously suggests that the first two sayings belong to a time before they saw the punishment, that is, it will be on the very first day of Qiyāmah that they will remember the shortcomings of their deeds and say: يٰحَسْرَتٰى عَلٰى مَا فَرَّطْتُّ فِىْ جَنْبِ اللّٰهِ (Pity on me, because I fell short in respect of Allah ...39:56). Later, as an excuse, they will say that they were helpless, and had Allah guided them, they too would have become obedient and fearing, but when He Himself gave them no guidance, they were hardly at fault. After that, when they see the punishment, they would wish to be sent back into the world. In these three verses, Allah Taʻālā has made it very clear that the forgiveness and mercy of Allah is very extensive. But, it can be won only when one repents before death. Therefore, Allah was alerting them right there against the possibility that they start to show remorse after death, and indulge in these redundant wishes in the Hereafter.

In verse 59, it was said: بَلٰى قَدْ جَآءَتْكَ اٰيٰتِىْ فَكَذَّبْتَ بِهَا (Why not? My verses had reached you, but you called them untrue, and waxed proud, and became of those who disbelieved....). In this verse, what the disbelievers said in: (If Allah were to show me the way, I would have surely been among those who fear Allah",- 39:57) has been answered. The outcome of this verse is that Allah had already given the necessary guidance, fully and conclusively. He had sent His books, verses and signs. Therefore, their claim that Allah gave them no guidance was absurd. Of course, once He had given the guidance, Allah never forced anyone to be good and obedient. In fact, every servant of His was given the choice to take to

either the way of the truth or the way of the false. This was a test for the maker of the choice. On this depended his or her success or failure. Whoever took to the way of error by one's own free will, choice and volition, he or she is, himself or herself, responsible for it.

Verses 62 - 67

اَللّٰهُ خَالِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ ز وَّهُوَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَّكِيْلٌ ﴿٦٢﴾ لَهٗ مَقَالِيْدُ
السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ط وَالَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ
الْخٰسِرُوْنَ ﴿٦٣﴾ ع قُلْ اَفَغَيْرَ اللّٰهِ تَاْمُرُوْنِّيْٓ اَعْبُدُ اَيُّهَا الْجٰهِلُوْنَ ﴿٦٤﴾
وَلَقَدْ اُوْحِيَ اِلَيْكَ وَاِلَى الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ ج لَئِنْ اَشْرَكْتَ لَيَحْبَطَنَّ
عَمَلُكَ وَلَتَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الْخٰسِرِيْنَ ﴿٦٥﴾ بَلِ اللّٰهَ فَاعْبُدْ وَكُنْ مِّنَ
الشّٰكِرِيْنَ ﴿٦٦﴾ وَمَا قَدَرُوا اللّٰهَ حَقَّ قَدْرِهٖ صلے وَالْاَرْضُ جَمِيْعًا قَبْضَتُهٗ
يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ وَالسَّمٰوٰتُ مَطْوِيّٰتٌ بِيَمِيْنِهٖ ط سُبْحٰنَهٗ وَتَعٰلٰى عَمَّا
يُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿٦٧﴾

Allah is Creator of everything, and He is the Guardian over everything. [62] **To Him belong the keys to the heavens and the earth. As for those who have rejected the verses of Allah, it is they who are the losers.** [63] **Say, "Is it, then, someone other than Allah that you ask me to worship, O ignorant people?"** [64] **And it has already been revealed to you and to those before you (that): If you associate (partners with Allah), your deeds shall be rendered useless, and you shall be among the losers.** [65] **On the contrary, it is Allah whom you should worship; and be among the grateful.** [66] **And they did not hold Allah in His true esteem. And the whole earth will be in a single grip of His hand on the Day of Doom, and the heavens (will be) rolled up on his right hand. Pure is He, far too high from what they ascribe to Him.** [67]

Commentary

The word: مَقَالِيْد (*maqālīd*) in: لَهٗ مَقَالِيْدُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ (To Him belong the keys to the heavens and the earth.- 39:63) is the plural form of: مِقْلَاد

(*miqlād*) or: مِقْلِيد (*miqlid*) meaning a key. It has been said that this word has really been Arabicized from the Persian language. In Persian, a key is called كليد (*kalid*). When Arabicized, it became: اقليد (*iqlid*) with its plural being: مَقَالِيد (*maqālid*) (Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī). Having keys in one's hand denotes ownership, possession and the ability to dispense at will. Therefore, the sense of the verse is that the keys to whatever treasures lie hidden in the heavens and the earth are in the hands of Allah and He alone is the custodian and the dispenser in that it is He who gives whenever He wills to whomever He wills and as much as He wills - and would just not give to anyone He so wills.

And in some narrations of Ḥadīth, the third kalimah, that is: سُبْحَانَ اللّٰهِ وَالْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ وَلَآ اِلٰهَ اِلاَّ اللّٰهُ وَاللّٰهُ اَكْبَرُ وَلَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ اِلاَّبِاللّٰهِ الْعَلِيِّ الْعَظِيْم (Pure is Allah and Praised is Allah and there is no god worthy of worship but Allah and Allah is Great and there is no strength and there is no power except from Allah, the High, the Great) has been called: مَقَالِيْدُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ('the keys to the heavens and the earth' - 39:63). The outcome is: One who recites this kalimah, mornings and evenings, is blessed by Allah Ta'ālā from the treasures of the heavens and the earth. Ibn-ul-Jawzi has declared these narrations to be: موضوع (mawdu': fabricated, forged;). But, other Ḥadīth experts have rated these as weak ضعيف (*ḍa'if*) *aḥādīth* that can be relied upon in the matter of the merits of good deeds. (Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī)

In the last verse (67), it was said: وَالْاَرْضُ جَمِيْعًا قَبْضَتُهٗ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ وَالسَّمٰوٰتُ مَطْوِيّٰتٌۢ بِيَمِيْنِهٖ (and the whole earth will be in a single grip of His hand on the Day of Doom and the heavens, rolled up on His right hand). The earth being in the hand-grip of Allah Ta'ālā and the heavens being rolled up on His right hand appears here, in the view of the early forbears of Islam, in its real sense. But, the subject of the verse falls in the category of al-mutashabihat (of hidden meaning) the reality of which is not known to anyone except Allah Ta'ālā. For people in general, even trying to find out its reality is forbidden. Hence, the thing to do is no more but to believe that whatever Allah Ta'ālā means thereby is true and correct. And since the apparent words of this verse seem to suggest grasp, grip or a hand holding something ('qabdah', mutthi, handful) as well as the presence of a right hand that are parts of a body while Allah Ta'ālā is pure and free from body and physicality. To this, towards the end of the verse, a hint was released: Do not take these words on the analogy of your body limbs.

Allah Ta'ālā is free from these: سُبْحٰنَهٗ وَتَعٰلٰى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُوْنَ (Pure is He, far too high from what they ascribe to Him - 39:67).

Later day scholars, taking this verse to be metaphorical, explain it by saying that having something grasped in hand and having something in the right hand is an allusion to having something under full possession and control - and it is this perfect possession and control that is meant here. And Allah, He is pure and high - He knows best.

Verses 68 - 75

وَنُفِخَ فِي الصُّوْرِ فَصَعِقَ مَنْ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَنْ فِي الْاَرْضِ اِلَّا مَنْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ ؕ ثُمَّ نُفِخَ فِيْهِ اُخْرٰى فَاِذَا هُمْ قِيَامٌ يَّنْظُرُوْنَ ﴿٦٨﴾ وَاَشْرَقَتِ الْاَرْضُ بِنُوْرِ رَبِّهَا وَوُضِعَ الْكِتٰبُ وَجِايْٓءَ بِالنَّبِيّٖنَ وَالشُّهَدَآءِ وَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ بِالْحَقِّ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٦٩﴾ وَوُفِّيَتْ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا عَمِلَتْ وَهُوَ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَفْعَلُوْنَ ﴿٧٠﴾ وَسِيْقَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا اِلٰى جَهَنَّمَ زُمَرًا ؕ حَتّٰۤى اِذَا جَآءُوْهَا فُتِحَتْ اَبْوَابُهَا وَقَالَ لَهُمْ خَزَنَتُهَآ اَلَمْ يَاْتِكُمْ رُسُلٌ مِّنْكُمْ يَتْلُوْنَ عَلَيْكُمْ اٰيٰتِ رَبِّكُمْ وَيُنْذِرُوْنَكُمْ لِقَآءَ يَوْمِكُمْ هٰذَا ؕ قَالُوْا بَلٰى وَلٰكِنْ حَقَّتْ كَلِمَةُ الْعَذَابِ عَلَى الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿٧١﴾ قِيْلَ ادْخُلُوْٓا اَبْوَابَ جَهَنَّمَ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا ۚ فَبِئْسَ مَثْوَى الْمُتَكَبِّرِيْنَ ﴿٧٢﴾ وَسِيْقَ الَّذِيْنَ اتَّقَوْا رَبَّهُمْ اِلَى الْجَنَّةِ زُمَرًا ؕ حَتّٰۤى اِذَا جَآءُوْهَا وَفُتِحَتْ اَبْوَابُهَا وَقَالَ لَهُمْ خَزَنَتُهَا سَلٰمٌ عَلَيْكُمْ طِبْتُمْ فَادْخُلُوْهَا خٰلِدِيْنَ ﴿٧٣﴾ وَقَالُوا الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِيْ صَدَقَنَا وَعْدَهٗ وَاَوْرَثَنَا الْاَرْضَ نَتَبَوَّاُ مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ حَيْثُ نَشَآءُ ۚ فَنِعْمَ اَجْرُ الْعٰمِلِيْنَ ﴿٧٤﴾ وَتَرَى الْمَلٰٓئِكَةَ حَآفِّيْنَ مِنْ حَوْلِ الْعَرْشِ يُسَبِّحُوْنَ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ ۚ وَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ بِالْحَقِّ وَقِيْلَ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٧٥﴾

And Horn (*sūr*) will be blown, and all those in the

heavens and all those in the earth will faint, except the one whom Allah wills (otherwise). Thereafter, it will be blown once again, and suddenly they will stand up, looking around. [68] And the earth will shine with the light of its Lord, and the book (of everyone's deeds) will be placed, and the prophets and the witnesses will be brought, and matters will be decided between them with truth, and they will not be wronged. [69] And everyone will be paid in full for what he did - and He knows best as to what they do. [70] And those who disbelieved will be driven towards the Jahannam in groups, until when they reach it, its gates will be opened, and its keepers will say to them, "Did messengers from among you not come to you reciting to you the verses of your Lord, and warning you about the meeting of this day of yours?" They will say, "Yes (they did), but the word of punishment had become certain against those who disbelieved." [71] It will be said, "Enter the gates of Jahannam to live in there forever. So, how evil is the dwelling-place of the arrogant! [72] And those who used to fear their Lord will be led towards the Jannah in groups, until when they reach it, while its gates will be (already) opened (for them), and its keepers will say to them, "salamun-'alaikum (peace be on you). How good are you. So, enter it to live here forever." [73] And they will say, "alhamdulillah: Praise belongs to Allah who made His promise come true for us, and made us inherit the territory, so as we can dwell anywhere we wish in Jannah. So, excellent is the reward of those who did (good) deeds. [74] And you will see the angels ringed around the Throne proclaiming the purity of their Lord, along with His praise, and matters will stand settled between them rightfully, and it will be said: "*alḥamdulillahi-rabbil'alamīn*: Praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of the worlds." [75]

Commentary

In verse 68, it was said: فَصَعِقَ مَنْ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَنْ فِي الْاَرْضِ اِلاَّ مَنْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ : "and all those in the heavens and all those in the earth will faint, except the one whom Allah wills." The word: صَعِقَ (*sa'iqa*) literally means to swoon, faint or fall unconscious, and the sense is that they all will become unconscious first, then die, and those who had already died, their spirits will become unconscious (as in Bayān ul-Qur'ān under the commentary on Sūrah An-Naml and in Ibn Kathīr likewise).

The last part of the verse: اِلَّا مَنْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ : "except those whom Allah wills [otherwise]" needs to be explained. Included here, according to the narrations of ad-durr-ul-manthur, there are four angels - Jibra'īl, Mika'īl, Israfīl and 'Izra'īl (the angel of death) - and as in some narrations, the angels bearing the Throne are also included therein. That they have been so exempted means that the effect of the blowing of the *sūr* will not cause death to them. But, later on, they too will meet their death. And no one, except the one and single Being of *Allah subḥānahu wā ta'ālā,* will remain alive at that time. Ibn Kathīr has also opted for this view, and has said that, even out of all of them, the angel of death will be the last to die. Another verse similar to this has appeared in Sūrah An-Naml also where instead of the word: صَعِقَ (*sa'iqa*: faint), the word used is: فَزِعَ (*fazi'a*: frightened). Some details about it have been given there as well. (Ma'āriful-Qur'ān, Volume VI, please see under commentary on Sūrah An-Naml, 27:87).

In verse 69, it was said: وَجِآئَ بِالنَّبِيّنَ وَالشُّهَدَآءِ (and the prophets and the witnesses will be brought,) It means that, at the time of reckoning on the plains of Resurrection, present there will be all prophets as well as all other witnesses. The prophets themselves will also be among the witnesses as said in the Qur'ān: جِئْنَا مِنْ كُلِّ اُمَّةٍ بِشَهِيْدٍ (We shall bring a witness from every community - An-Nisā', 4:41). And angels too will be among the witnesses, as in the Qur'ān: مَعَهَا سَآئِقٌ وَّشَهِيْدٌ (with each someone [meaning an angel] to drive and someone [meaning an angel] to bear witness - Qāf, 50:21) where the identity of the driver and the witness has been clearly established as being the angels (Tafsīr Ad-Durr-ul-Manthur). And among the witnesses, there will be the followers of the prophet of Islam as in the Qur'ān: لِتَكُوْنُوْا شُهَدَآءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ (and [so that] you become witnesses to [other] people - Al-Ḥajj, 22:78). And, for that matter, even one's own body limbs will appear as witnesses as said in the Qur'ān: تُكَلِّمُنَا اَيْدِيهِمْ وَتَشْهَدُ اَرْجُلُهُمْ (their hands will speak to Us and their feet will bear witness - Yā Sīn, 36:65).

In verse 74, it was said: نَتَبَوَّاُ مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ حَيْثُ نَشَآءُ (we can dwell anywhere we wish in Jannah). The sense is that, apart from their own special dwelling places, the people of Jannah will be allowed to visit others there and take pleasure trips around. Ṭabaranī, Abū Nu'aym and Diya', have reported, through a chain rated as '*ḥasan*', from Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها that someone came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and said to him, '*yā rasūlallāh,* I

love you so much that I keep thinking of you even when I go back home and I remain uncomfortable and impatient until I return to you. But, when I remember my death and remember your death, then, it occurs to me that you will be in the higher stations of Jannah and even if I reach there somehow, it is certain that I shall be on a level much below it. My worry is: How am I going to see you?' The Holy Prophet ﷺ heard what he said, but he remained silent until came the angel, Jibra'īl with the following verse:

وَمَنْ يُّطِعِ اللّٰهَ وَالرَّسُوْلَ فَاُولٰٓئِکَ مَعَ الَّذِيْنَ اَنْعَمَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنَ النَّبِيّٖنَ وَالصِّدِّيْقِيْنَ وَالشُّهَدَآءِ وَالصّٰلِحِيْنَ وَحَسُنَ اُولٰٓئِکَ رَفِيْقًا

And those who obey Allah and the Messenger are with those whom Allah has blessed, namely, the prophets, the *Ṣiddiqin*,[1] the *Shuhada'*,[2] and the righteous - and what a good company they are. - an-Nisā', 4:69.

In this verse, it was clearly stated that Muslims who obey Allah and the Messenger would invariably be with the prophets and those others mentioned therein. Then, from the verse under study we also come to understand that they will be allowed to visit higher stations of Jannah. May Allah Ta'ālā, in His mercy, make us join up with them in Jannah.

Alhamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Az-Zumar
Ends here

1. Ṣiddiq, lexically means 'very truthful'. In the Islamic terminology, it normally refers to those Companions of a prophet who excel all others in their submission to Allah and His Messenger. They enjoy the highest status of piety after the Prophets, like Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه. (back)

2. Shuhada (pl. of Shāhid) means the persons who sacrificed their lives in the way of Allah. The word has not been translated here by the word 'martyr' which sometimes is taken as an equivalent of Shahid, because the word 'martyr' is also applied for the persons killed in ethnic or racial wars while they may not be termed as 'Shuhada in the Islamic terminology

Sūrah Al-Mu'min
(The Believer) or
Sūrah Ghāfir
(The Forgiver)

Sūrah Al-Mu'min is Makkī, and it has 85 verses and 9 sections

بسم اللہ الرحمن الرحیم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 9

حٰمٓ ﴿١﴾ تَنْزِيْلُ الْكِتٰبِ مِنَ اللّٰهِ الْعَزِيْزِ الْعَلِيْمِ ﴿٢﴾ غَافِرِ الذَّنْبِ وَقَابِلِ التَّوْبِ شَدِيْدِ الْعِقَابِ ذِى الطَّوْلِ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ اِلَيْهِ الْمَصِيْرُ ﴿٣﴾ مَا يُجَادِلُ فِىْٓ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا فَلَا يَغْرُرْكَ تَقَلُّبُهُمْ فِى الْبِلَادِ ﴿٤﴾ كَذَّبَتْ قَبْلَهُمْ قَوْمُ نُوْحٍ وَّالْاَحْزَابُ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهِمْ وَهَمَّتْ كُلُّ اُمَّةٍ بِرَسُوْلِهِمْ لِيَاْخُذُوْهُ وَجَادَلُوْا بِالْبَاطِلِ لِيُدْحِضُوْا بِهِ الْحَقَّ فَاَخَذْتُهُمْ فَكَيْفَ كَانَ عِقَابِ ﴿٥﴾ وَكَذٰلِكَ حَقَّتْ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْٓا اَنَّهُمْ اَصْحٰبُ النَّارِ ﴿٦﴾ اَلَّذِيْنَ يَحْمِلُوْنَ الْعَرْشَ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهٗ يُسَبِّحُوْنَ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ وَيُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِهٖ وَيَسْتَغْفِرُوْنَ لِلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا رَبَّنَا وَسِعْتَ كُلَّ شَىْءٍ رَّحْمَةً وَّعِلْمًا فَاغْفِرْ لِلَّذِيْنَ تَابُوْا وَاتَّبَعُوْا سَبِيْلَكَ وَقِهِمْ عَذَابَ

الْجَحِيْمِ ﴿٧﴾ رَبَّنَا وَاَدْخِلْهُمْ جَنّٰتِ عَدْنِ ِالَّتِىْ وَعَدْتَّهُمْ وَمَنْ صَلَحَ
مِنْ اٰبَآءِهِمْ وَاَزْوَاجِهِمْ وَذُرِّيّٰتِهِمْ ط اِنَّكَ اَنْتَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ ﴿٨﴾
وَقِهِمُ السَّيِّاٰتِ ط وَمَنْ تَقِ السَّيِّاٰتِ يَوْمَئِذٍ فَقَدْ رَحِمْتَهٗ ط وَذٰلِكَ هُوَ
الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيْمُ ﴿٩﴾

Ḥā Mīm. [1] This is revelation of the Book from Allah, the Mighty, the All-Knowing, [2] the One who forgives sins and accepts repentance, the One who is severe in punishment, the One who is the source of all power. There is no god but He. To Him is the ultimate return (of all). [3] No one quarrels about the verses of Allah, except those who disbelieve. So, their (prosperous) movements in the cities should not deceive you. [4] Before these, the people of Nūḥ and the groups after them had rejected (the messengers). And every group intended to seize their messenger, and raised disputes on the basis of falsehood, so that they might refute the truth with it, hence I seized them. So, how was My punishment? [5] And similarly, the word of your Lord has become due against those who disbelieve, that they are the people of the Fire. [6]

Those who are bearing the Throne and those who are around it pronounce the purity of your Lord alongwith His praise, and believe in Him, and pray for the forgiveness of those who believe: "Our Lord, Your mercy and knowledge comprehends everything, so forgive those who repent and follow Your way, and save them from the punishment of the Fire. [7] And, our Lord, admit them to the eternal gardens of Jannah that You have promised for them, and (admit) those as well who did good from among their fathers and wives and children. You, only You, are the Mighty, the Wise, [8] and save them from evils (of punishment). And whomsoever you save from evils that day, it is surely because you bless him with mercy. And that is the great achievement indeed. [9]

Commentary

Sūrah Al-Mu'min: Characteristics and Merits

From here (40) to Sūrah Al-Aḥqāf (46) starts a series of seven Sūrahs that begin with the isolated letters: حٰمٓ (Ḥā Mīm). These are called: اٰل حٰمٓ

('Āl Ḥā Mīm) or حواميم (*ḥawāmīm*). Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ said, آل حٰمٓ ('Āl Ḥā Mīm) is: ديباج القرآن (*dibāj-ul- Qur'ān*): Dibāj, in Arabic, is the cloth of pure silk, and here it signifies embellishment. Mis'ar Ibn Kidām says, 'These are called: عرائس (*'arā'is*: brides).' Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ said, 'Every thing has an essence. The essence of the Qur'ān lies in آل حٰمٓ ('Āl Ḥā Mīm)' or said, 'حواميم (*ḥawāmīm*).' All these reports appear in Faḍā'īl-ul-Qur'ān by the great scholar, Abū 'Ubaid Qasim Ibn Sallam.

And Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh (Ibn Mas'ūd) ﷺ said that the example of the Qur'ān is similar to that of a person who started out to look for a place where he and his family could live. Here, he finds some green open land and is pleased with it. Then, he moves ahead, and finds gardens and settling places far more verdant and growth-prone. He says, 'I was wondering about the greenery produced by rains that I saw first, but these are more wonderful'. Then, it would be said to him, 'The first all green layout is like the Qur'ān in general, and the gardens and lodges are like آل حٰمٓ ('Al Ḥā Mīm) from out of the Qur'ān.' Therefore, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ said, 'As for me, when I, during the recitation of the Qur'ān, arrive at: آل حٰمٓ ('Al Ḥā Mīm), it is as if I am enjoying myself.'

Protection against everything unwelcome

Al-Bazzār, quoting his own chains of authority in his Musnad, reports from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "A person who has recited the 'Ayah of Kursiyy and the first three verses (1-3) of Sūrah Al-Mu'min up to: إِلَيْهِ الْمَصِيرُ (ilaihil-masir: To Him is the return) early during the day, he (or she) will, on that day, remain safe from everything bad and painful.' It has also been reported by Tirmidhi, though, one of the reporting links in the chain of authority is doubtful. (Ibn Kathīr, page 69, volume 4)

Protection against an enemy

There appears a narration from Sayyidnā Muhallab Ibn Abī Ṣafrah ﷺ in Abū Dāwūd and Tirmidhī through a chain rated as 'Ṣaḥīḥ' in which he said, 'it was reported to me by a person who had himself heard the Holy Prophet ﷺ saying (on the occasion of some Jihad concerning a night vigil) that 'should you be attacked at the time of night, you recite: حٰمٓ لَايُنْصَرُوْنَ (Ḥā Mīm la yunṣarun) which means reciting حٰمٓ (Ḥā Mīm) and praying that the enemy does not succeed. Then there are some narrations in which this formulation appears as: حٰمٓ لَايُنْصَرُوْا (Ḥā Mīm la yunṣaru -

without the letter: نون (nun) at the end) the outcome of which is that, 'should you say: حٰمٓ (Ḥā Mīm), the enemy will not succeed.' From this we learn that حٰمٓ (Ḥā Mīm) serves as a fortress against the enemy. (Ibn Kathīr)

A strange event

Thābit Bunanī says, 'I was with Sayyidnā Muṣ'ab Ibn Zubayr ﷺ in a certain section of the city of Kufah. I walked into a garden to make two *raka'āt* of *ṣalāh* there. Before I would start my salah, I recited the verses of Ḥā Mīm Al-Mu'min (40:1-3) up to: إِلَيْهِ الْمَصِيرُ (*ilaihil-maṣīr*: To Him is the return). Of a sudden, I saw a man in Yemeni attire astride a white mule standing behind me. This man said to me, 'when you say: غَافِرِ الذَّنْبِ (ghafiridh-dhanbi: Forgiver of sins), with it, you should pray: يَاغَافِرَ الذَّنْبِ اِغْفِرْلِيْ (*yā ghafiradh-dhanbi, ighfirli*: O Forgiver of sins, forgive me). And when you say: قَابِلِ التَّوْبِ (qabilit-tawbi: Accepter of repentance), you should pray: يَا قَابِلَ التَّوْبِ اقْبَلْ تَوبَتِيْ (*yā qabilata-tawbi, iqbal tawbati*: O Accepter of repentance, accept my repentance). After that, when you say: شَدِيْدِ الْعِقَابِ (*shadidil-'iqābi*: Severe in punishment), you should pray: يَا شَدِيْدَ الْعِقَابِ لَا تُعَاقِبْنِيْ (*yā shadidal-'iqābi, la tu'aqibni*: O Allah, severe in punishment, please do not punish me). And when you say: ذِى الطَّوْلِ (*dhiṭ-ṭawli*: Source of all power), you should pray: يَا ذَا الطَّوْلِ طُلْ عَلَيَّ بِخَيْرٍ (*yā dhaṭ-ṭawli, tul 'alaiyya bikhayr*: O source of power, bestow the best on me).

Thābit Bunani says, 'After having heard this good counsel from him, when I looked back at him, there was no one there. Looking for him, I went to the gate of the garden. I asked people there if they had seen a person in Yemeni attire passing through here. Everyone said that they had not seen anyone like that.' In another narration from Thabit Bunani, it has also been said that people think this person was Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام while it has not been mentioned in the other. (Ibn Kathīr)

The effect of these verses in reforming people, and a great directive of Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ

Ibn Kathīr has reported on the authority of Ibn Abī Ḥātim that there was a man of strong and dignified bearing among the Syrians who used to visit Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ. When he did not show up for a longer than usual period of time, Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ inquired about him. People said, *'yā amiral-mu'minīn*, please do not ask about him. He has become a drunkard. Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ called his scribe and dictated a letter to him in which he said:

من عمر بن الخطاب الى فلان بن فلان. سلام عليک فانی احمد اليک اللّٰه الذی لاَ اله اِلاّ هو غافر الذّنب و قابل التّوب شديد العقاب ذی الطول لاَ اِلٰهَ اِلاّ هُو اِلَيْهِ الْمَصِيْرُ.

"From 'Umar son of al-Khaṭṭāb to --- son of ---. salamun 'alaik, peace on you. After that, I praise Allah before you, other than whom there is no god worthy of worship. He is the One who forgives sins and accepts repentance, the One who is severe in punishment, the One who is the source of all power. There is no god but He. To Him is the ultimate return (of all)."

Then he turned toward those around him and said, 'Let us all join in to pray for him that Allah Ta'ālā reverses his heart and accepts his repentance.' Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ had instructed the messenger who was to deliver his letter that he was not to hand over the letter to the person addressed until such time that he became sober, and that he was not to hand over the letter to anyone other than the person intended to receive it. So, when this person received this letter, he read it repeatedly and thoughtfully while realizing that it carried a warning of punishment against him with a concurrent promise of forgiveness for him. Then he started weeping. Finally, he stopped drinking and made such a firm taubah that he never touched it again.

When Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ learnt about the effective manifestation of these words, he said to people around, 'In such matters, you too should do the same. When some brother falls into some slip of conduct, think of ways to bring him back to his normal and better self. Prompt him to turn to Allah, to place his trust in Him, to rely on His mercy. Pray to Allah for him, pray that he is enabled to repent and make his taubah. And do not become an accomplice of Satan against him (that is, if you chide him or infuriate him and thereby estrange him from his religion, then, you would actually be helping the Satan). (Ibn Kathīr)

A warning

For people who work for the betterment of Allah's creation and serve in the field of tabligh and da'wah, this verse offers great guidance. Here is a person you would love to become a better person. First, you yourself pray for him. Then, use soft ways to bring him towards that betterment. Do not be aggressive towards him, for it would do no good to him, in fact, it would amount to helping the Satan, for he would push him onto more

ways of error.

Explanation of Verses

Some commentators have said that: حٰمٓ (Ḥā Mīm) is the name of Allah Ta'ālā. But, in the sight of early authorities, these isolated letters (*al-ḥuruf-ul-muqatta'āt*) are all from the category of: متشابهات (*mutashabihat*: of hidden meaning). Their meanings are known to Allah Ta'ālā alone - or, that they are a secret between Allah Ta'ālā and the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

The expression: غَافِرِ الذَّنْبِ وَقَابِلِ التَّوْبِ (*ghāfiridh-dhanb*) in verse 3: غَافِرِ الذَّنْبِ literally means the one who puts a cover on sins (in the sense that they are no more seen or known by anyone), and: قَابِلِ التَّوْبِ (*qābilit-tawb*) means: He who accepts taubah or repentance. These two expressions appear separately, though the sense of both appears to be almost the same. The reason is that by saying: غَافِرِ الذَّنْبِ (*ghāfiridh-dhanb*), the purpose is to indicate that Allah Ta'ālā does already possess the standing authority and power to forgive the sin of a servant even without taubah - while forgiving those who repent is yet another attribute of Allah. (Maẓharī)

The word: طَوْل (*ṭawl*) which follows immediately in: ذِى الطَّوْلِ (*dhit-ṭawl*) literally means vastness and being need-free. Then, it could also mean power or favor. (Maẓharī)

In verse 4, it was said: مَا يُجَادِلُ فِىٓ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا (No one quarrels about the verses of Allah, except those who disbelieve.). This verse declares quarreling in the matter of the Qur'ān an act of *kufr* (disbelief). And the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said: اِنَّ جِدَالاً فِى الْقُرْاٰنِ كُفْرٌ (Surely, quarreling (*jidāl*) in the Qur'ān is *kufr*.' (Reported by al-Baghawi, al-Baihaqī in ash-Shu'ab from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ؓ; and reported by Abū Dāwūd and al-Ḥākim who has rated it as 'Ṣaḥīḥ- Maẓharī)

It appears in Ḥadīth that, on a certain day, the Holy Prophet ﷺ heard two persons quarreling about some verse of the Qur'ān. He got angry, and came out with his blessed face showing the signs of anger. He said, 'communities before you were ruined because they had started quarreling in the matter of the Book of Allah.' (Reported by Muslim from 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Amr Ibn Shu'aib - Maẓharī)

This جِدَال (*jidāl*) declared as: كُفر (*kufr*) by the Qur'ān, and Ḥadīth, means throwing taunts, passing sarcastic remarks, engineering disputes over self-invented and absurd doubts, or to give such meaning of a verse of the Qur'ān as is counter to other verses of the Qur'ān and to the binding textual imperatives of Sunnah - something that amounts to alteration in the Qur'ān. Otherwise, any honest inquiry about something ambiguous or vague, or trying to find a solution of a difficult word or expression, or to mutually investigate and discuss possibilities while deducing injunctions and rulings from the text of some verse are things not included under this *jidāl*, in fact, it is an act of *thawāb* (reward) in its own place (al-Qāḍī al-Baidawi, Qurṭubī and Maẓharī).

In the last sentence of verse 4, it was said: فَلَا يَغْرُرْكَ تَقَلُّبُهُمْ فِى الْبِلَادِ (So, their [prosperous] movements in the cities should not deceive you.). The *kuffar* (disbelievers) from the tribe of Quraish used to travel to Yemen during winter and to Syria in summer with their trading caravans. They were held in esteem all over Arabia because of their services to Baytullah at Makkah, therefore, they remained safe during their travels and profited from their commercial ventures. This was the backbone of their wealth and territorial power. That this state of affairs with them kept continuing despite the challenge from Islam and the Holy Prophet ﷺ was a matter of pride for them - 'Had we been the culprits in the sight of Allah, all these blessings would have been taken away from us!' This situation could have made even some Muslims easy victims of doubt. Therefore, in this verse, it was said that Allah Ta'ālā had granted them a temporary respite in His wisdom and under His expedient consideration. So, let Muslims not be deceived by this leash given to them. Once this period of respite is over, they are going to be visited by a punishment, and this territorial power of theirs is going to be taken away from them. This started from the Battle of Badr, and up to the Conquest of Makkah, the foreboding manifested itself fully and conclusively within a span of six years.

In verse 7, it was said: اَلَّذِيْنَ يَحْمِلُوْنَ الْعَرْشَ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهٗ (Those who are bearing the Throne and those who are around it). The present count of angels who bear the Throne (*'arsh*) is four and, on the day of Qiyāmah (the Day of Judgment), they will be eight, and only Allah knows the number of angels around the *'arsh*. Some Ḥadīth narrations give the number of

their rows that reaches several hundred thousands. They are called: كرّوبى (*karrubi*, [Heb. Kerubh or kerub], plural: [Eng. Cherubin, or Cherubim, Heb. Cherubim]). They are angels close to Allah. In this verse, it has been said that all these angels close to Allah pray for all believers, particularly those who repent from their sins and follow the Sharī'ah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Either Allah Ta'ālā has appointed them to perform this task, or their nature is such that they keep praying for the good servants of Allah. Therefore, Sayyidnā Mutarrif Ibn 'Abdullāh Ibn Shikhkhir said that out of all servants of Allah, the angels of Allah are the foremost among those who wish well for believers. Firstly, they pray for them. They implore Allah to forgive them, to save them from the punishment of Jahannam and to admit them to the everlasting gardens of Jannah. Along with it, they also pray for: وَمَنْ صَلَحَ مِنْ اٰبَائِهِمْ وَاَزْوَاجِهِمْ وَذُرِّيّٰتِهِمْ (... those as well who did good from among their fathers and wives and children. - 40:8), that is, also admit anyone from among their fathers and forefathers, and their wives, and their children - who meet the criterion of goodness that makes them deserving of forgiveness, a criterion that requires that they should have departed from the mortal world while adhering to their *'imān* or faith - yes, admit them too with the same believers into the Jannah.

This tells us that one's *'imān* or faith is the basic condition of salvation (*najah*). After *'imān* come other good deeds. The relatives of Muslim believers - fathers, grandfathers or wives and children - even if they are ranked lower than them, such is the munificence of Allah Ta'ālā that He would, in deference to them, also let the relatives of a lesser rank be along with them in Jannah, so that their happiness becomes total and complete as it has been said in another verse of the Qur'ān appearing elsewhere: ... (We will join their children with them - At-Ṭur, 52:21).

Sa'īd Ibn Jubayr has said, 'When a believer goes to Jannah, he will ask about his father, son, brother and others, and would want to know where they are. He will be told that their deeds were not like yours (therefore, they will not be there). He will say, 'whatever good I did (was not for me alone), in fact, it was for me and them both.' Then, the command will come, 'admit them too into the Jannah.' (Ibn Kathīr)

After having reported this Ḥadīth narration in Tafsīr Maẓharī, the author said, 'this *'mawquf'* (a Ḥadīth mawquf or restricted tradition from

a Companion who does not connect it to the Holy Prophet ﷺ) has the same authority and force as *'marfu''* (a Ḥadīth *marfu'* is a tradition attributed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ) and is explicit on the point that 'doing good' that is held as a pre-condition for having this privilege means 'Imān' or adhering to the true faith.

Verses 10 - 12

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا يُنَادَوْنَ لَمَقْتُ اللّٰهِ اَكْبَرُ مِنْ مَّقْتِكُمْ اَنْفُسَكُمْ اِذْ تُدْعَوْنَ اِلَى الْاِيْمَانِ فَتَكْفُرُوْنَ ﴿١٠﴾ قَالُوْا رَبَّنَآ اَمَتَّنَا اثْنَتَيْنِ وَاَحْيَيْتَنَا اثْنَتَيْنِ فَاعْتَرَفْنَا بِذُنُوْبِنَا فَهَلْ اِلٰى خُرُوْجٍ مِّنْ سَبِيْلٍ ﴿١١﴾ ذٰلِكُمْ بِاَنَّهٗٓ اِذَا دُعِيَ اللّٰهُ وَحْدَهٗ كَفَرْتُمْ ۚ وَاِنْ يُّشْرَكْ بِهٖ تُؤْمِنُوْا ۭ فَالْحُكْمُ لِلّٰهِ الْعَلِيِّ الْكَبِيْرِ ﴿١٢﴾

Those who disbelieve will be addressed (by a voice saying): " The hatred of Allah (for you), when you were invited to the true faith and you refused, used to be greater than your hatred for yourselves (today when you are hating your own selves out of remorse). [10] **They will say, "Our Lord, You gave us death twice and You gave us life twice. Now we confess our sins. So, is there any way to come out of here?"** [11] **(The reply will be, "No.) This is because whenever Allah alone was invoked, you used to disbelieve, and if partners were associated with Him, you used to believe. Now the decision lies with Allah, the High, the Great."** [12]

Verses 13 - 22

هُوَ الَّذِيْ يُرِيْكُمْ اٰيٰتِهٖ وَيُنَزِّلُ لَكُمْ مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ رِزْقًا ۭ وَمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ اِلَّا مَنْ يُّنِيْبُ ﴿١٣﴾ فَادْعُوا اللّٰهَ مُخْلِصِيْنَ لَهُ الدِّيْنَ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْكٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿١٤﴾ رَفِيْعُ الدَّرَجٰتِ ذُو الْعَرْشِ ۚ يُلْقِي الرُّوْحَ مِنْ اَمْرِهٖ عَلٰى مَنْ يَّشَآءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهٖ لِيُنْذِرَ يَوْمَ التَّلَاقِ ﴿١٥﴾ يَوْمَ هُمْ بٰرِزُوْنَ ۚ لَا يَخْفٰى عَلَى اللّٰهِ مِنْهُمْ شَيْءٌ ۭ لِمَنِ الْمُلْكُ الْيَوْمَ ۭ لِلّٰهِ الْوَاحِدِ الْقَهَّارِ ﴿١٦﴾

اَلْيَوْمَ تُجْزٰى كُلُّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ لَاظُلْمَ الْيَوْمَ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ سَرِيْعُ
الْحِسَابِ ﴿١٧﴾ وَاَنْذِرْهُمْ يَوْمَ الْاٰزِفَةِ اِذِ الْقُلُوْبُ لَدَى الْحَنَاجِرِ
كٰظِمِيْنَ مَالِلظّٰلِمِيْنَ مِنْ حَمِيْمٍ وَّلَا شَفِيْعٍ يُّطَاعُ ﴿١٨﴾ يَعْلَمُ
خَآئِنَةَ الْاَعْيُنِ وَمَا تُخْفِى الصُّدُوْرُ ﴿١٩﴾ وَاللّٰهُ يَقْضِىْ بِالْحَقِّ
وَالَّذِيْنَ يَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِهٖ لَايَقْضُوْنَ بِشَىْءٍ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ السَّمِيْعُ
الْبَصِيْرُ ﴿٢٠﴾ اَوَلَمْ يَسِيْرُوْا فِى الْاَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرُوْا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ
الَّذِيْنَ كَانُوْا مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ كَانُوْا هُمْ اَشَدَّ مِنْهُمْ قُوَّةً وَّاٰثَارًا فِى الْاَرْضِ
فَاَخَذَهُمُ اللّٰهُ بِذُنُوْبِهِمْ وَمَا كَانَ لَهُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ مِنْ وَّاقٍ ﴿٢١﴾ ذٰلِكَ
بِاَنَّهُمْ كَانَتْ تَّاْتِيْهِمْ رُسُلُهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ فَكَفَرُوْا فَاَخَذَهُمُ اللّٰهُ اِنَّهٗ
قَوِىٌّ شَدِيْدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿٢٢﴾

It is He who shows you His signs and sends down provision for you from the sky; and no one takes lesson but the one who turns to Him. [3] So, worship Allah, making your submission exclusive for Him, even though the disbelievers dislike. [14] He is High in stations, the Owner of the Throne. He sends the spirit down, under His command, on whomever He wills from among His servants, so that he warns of the Day of Encounter - [15] the day they will come in open view. Nothing about them will remain hidden from Allah: To whom belongs the kingdom today? To Allah alone, the One, the All-Dominant. [16] Today, everyone will be recompensed for what one earned. There is no injustice today. Surely, Allah is swift in reckoning. [17] And warn them of the Day of approaching horror, when hearts will jump up into the throats, (and they will be) choked. There will be neither a friend, for the unjust, nor an intercessor to be listened to. [18] He knows the treachery of the eyes and whatever is concealed by the hearts. [19] And He will give His judgment with truth. And those whom they invoke beside Him cannot judge anything. Surely, it is Allah who is Hearing, Seeing. [20] Have they not traveled through the earth and seen how was the fate of those who used to be before them? They were stronger

than these in power and in traces left on the earth, but Allah seized them because of their sins. And there was no one to save them from Allah. [21] **That was because messengers used to come to them with clear signs, but they disbelieved. Then, Allah seized them. Surely, He is Strong, severe in punishment.** [22]

Commentary

The word: دَرَجٰت (*darajāt*,translated above as 'stations') in: رَفِيْعُ الدَّرَجَاتِ (He is High in stations - 40:15) has been taken by some commentators as meaning 'attributes.' If so, the sense of the expression would be that His attributes of perfection are most exalted. Ibn Kathīr has relied on the words as they appear outwardly and has said that it refers to the most exalted 'arsh' (throne) for it comprehends all land masses and heavens and is located above them all like a roof as in Sūrah Al-Ma'ārij: مِنَ اللّٰهِ ذِی الْمَعَارِجِ تَعْرُجُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ وَالرُّوْحُ اِلَيْهِ فِىْ يَوْمٍ كَانَ مِقْدَارُهٗ خَمْسِيْنَ اَلْفَ سَنَةٍ (From Allah, the Lord of the stairways to whom ascend the angels and spirit, in a day the length of which is fifty thousand years - 70:3,4).

According to some further investigation into this verse by Ibn Kathīr, it should be borne in mind that this measure of fifty thousand years is a description of the travel distance from the seventh level of the earth up to the *'arsh*, and this is what has been declared as the preferred position by a majority of earlier and later scholars. He has also said that according to many scholars, 'arsh is made of a red ruby the diameter of which is so big as would take a travel distance of fifty thousand years to cover. Similarly, its height would take an identical travel distance to cover. Then there are commentators who have said that رَفِيْعُ الدَّرَجَاتِ (*rafī'u-d-darajāt*) appears in the sense of رَافِعُ الدَّرَجَاتِ (*rāfi'u-d-darajāt*: that is, the One who elevates others in ranks), that is, Allah Ta'ālā is the one who elevates the ranks of believers who have His fear in their hearts as borne by verses of the Qur'ān, such as: نَرْفَعُ دَرَجٰتٍ مَّنْ نَّشَآءُ (We raise in ranks whom We will - Al-An'ām, 6:83) and هُمْ دَرَجٰتٌ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ (They are of various ranks with Allah - 'Al-'Imrān, 3:163).

The word: بَارِزُوْنَ (*barizun*) in verse 16: يَوْمَهُمْ بَارِزُوْنَ لَايَخْفٰى عَلَى اللّٰهِ مِنْهُمْ (the day they will come in open view) refers to what would happen on the day of Resurrection when its land surface will be turned into a single level without any mountains, caves, trees or buildings that could obstruct the view. Therefore, everyone will be in an open expanse, open to view.

In the concluding sentence of the same verse, it was said: لِمَنِ الْمُلْکُ الْیَوْمَ (To whom belongs the kingdom today?). This statement has appeared in this verse after یَوْمَ التَّلَاقِ (a day of encounter) and یَوْمَ ھُمْ بَارِزُوْنَ (the day they will come in open view) and it is obvious that 'the day of encounter' and 'the day of gathering together' will materialize after the second Horn has been blown. Similarly, the event of 'the day they will come in open view' will also materialize after the second Horn has been blown, and a new venue in the form of a level surface will be put in place, a place with no natural or man-made object obstructing the view. After that, now that this statement: لِمَنِ الْمُلْکُ الْیَوْمَ (To whom belongs the kingdom today?) has been introduced, it only shows that this statement of Allah Ta'ālā will be made after everyone has been raised again by virtue of the blowing of the second Horn. Al-Qurṭubī has presented a Ḥadīth in support with reference to Naḥḥas. This Ḥadīth has been reported by Abū Wa'il from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ. According to this Ḥadīth, all human beings will be assembled together on a clear surface, a surface on which no sin would have been committed by anyone. At that time, a herald will be commanded to herald: لِمَنِ الْمُلْکُ الْیَوْمَ (To whom belongs the kingdom today?). Thereupon, the entire creation, believer or disbeliever, will respond saying: لِلّٰہِ الْوَاحِدِ الْقَهَّارِ (To Allah alone, the One, the All-Dominant.). As for the believers, they will be more than pleased to say so, for this would be part of their belief. As for the disbelievers, they will confess to it sadly and helplessly.

But, some other narrations show that this statement will be made by Allah Ta'ālā Himself when the entire creation will lie annihilated after the blowing of the first Horn, and when even specially close ones, the angels - Jibra'īl, Mika'īl, Israfīl and the angel of death - will also meet death, and no one except the One Being of Allah *subḥanahu wa ta'ālā* will remain, that will be the time He will say: لِمَنِ الْمُلْکُ الْیَوْمَ (To whom belongs the kingdom today?). Since there will be no one to answer at that time, He will Himself answer: لِلّٰہِ الْوَاحِدِ الْقَهَّارِ (To Allah alone, the One, the All-Dominant.). Sage Hasan al-Basri has said: In this situation, the entity asking the question and the entity responding to it is no other but the entity of one and only Allah. Muḥammad Ibn Ka'b al-Quraī also says this. It is supported by the Ḥadīth of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah and Ibn 'Umar ﷺ in which it is said, 'On the Day of Judgment, Allah Ta'ālā will -

with all earth surfaces rolled up in His left hand and all heavens rolled up in His right hand - say: "انا الملک این الجبارون این المتکبرون" (I am the owner of the kingdom. Where are the tyrants? Where are the arrogant?). In Tafsir Ad-Durr-ul- Manthūr where, after reporting both narrations of this nature, it has been said that it is possible that this statement is made twice, the first being at the time of the annihilation of the existing universe following the first blowing of the Horn, and the second at the time the entire creation has been brought back to life following the second blowing of the Horn. Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavi has said in Bayān-ul-Qur'ān that the Tafsir of the noble Qur'ān does not hinge on declaring it as made twice only, instead, it is also possible that the cited verse is mentioning the event that will come to pass after the first blowing of the Horn, but it has been referred to here (while mentioning the events after the second blowing) as a reminder of what happened before. Allah knows best.

In verse 19, it was said: يَعْلَمُ خَائِنَةَ الْاَعْيُنِ (He knows the treachery of the eyes), in other words, eyes that betray the trust. It means the action of a person who would, secretly and surreptitiously, cast a glance over something haram and impermissible for him or her, for example, casts a glance at a non-maḥram person with sexual desire, and takes it away in the event someone was around, or casts a glance in a manner that is not noticed by others. All these things are open before Allah Ta'ālā.

Verses 23 - 46

وَلَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا مُوْسٰى بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَسُلْطٰنٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿٢٣﴾ اِلٰى فِرْعَوْنَ وَهَامٰنَ
وَقَارُوْنَ فَقَالُوْا سٰحِرٌ كَذَّابٌ ﴿٢٤﴾ فَلَمَّا جَآءَهُمْ بِالْحَقِّ مِنْ عِنْدِنَا
قَالُوا اقْتُلُوْا اَبْنَآءَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مَعَهٗ وَاسْتَحْيُوْا نِسَآءَهُمْ ط وَمَا كَيْدُ
الْكٰفِرِيْنَ اِلَّا فِيْ ضَلٰلٍ ﴿٢٥﴾ وَقَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ ذَرُوْنِيْٓ اَقْتُلْ مُوْسٰى
وَلْيَدْعُ رَبَّهٗ ج اِنِّيْٓ اَخَافُ اَنْ يُّبَدِّلَ دِيْنَكُمْ اَوْ اَنْ يُّظْهِرَ فِي الْاَرْضِ
الْفَسَادَ ﴿٢٦﴾ وَقَالَ مُوْسٰٓى اِنِّيْ عُذْتُ بِرَبِّيْ وَرَبِّكُمْ مِّنْ كُلِّ مُتَكَبِّرٍ
لَا يُؤْمِنُ بِيَوْمِ الْحِسَابِ ﴿٢٧﴾ وَقَالَ رَجُلٌ مُّؤْمِنٌ صلے ق مِّنْ اٰلِ فِرْعَوْنَ

يَكْتُمُ اِيْمَانَهٗۤ اَتَقْتُلُوْنَ رَجُلًا اَنْ يَّقُوْلَ رَبِّيَ اللّٰهُ وَقَدْ جَآءَكُمْ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ
مِنْ رَّبِّكُمْ ؕ وَاِنْ يَّكُ كَاذِبًا فَعَلَيْهِ كَذِبُهٗ ۚ وَاِنْ يَّكُ صَادِقًا يُّصِبْكُمْ
بَعْضُ الَّذِيْ يَعِدُكُمْ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَهْدِيْ مَنْ هُوَ مُسْرِفٌ كَذَّابٌ ﴿٢٨﴾
يٰقَوْمِ لَكُمُ الْمُلْكُ الْيَوْمَ ظٰهِرِيْنَ فِي الْاَرْضِ ۫ فَمَنْ يَّنْصُرُنَا مِنْۢ بَاْسِ
اللّٰهِ اِنْ جَآءَنَا ؕ قَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ مَاۤ اُرِيْكُمْ اِلَّا مَاۤ اَرٰى وَمَاۤ اَهْدِيْكُمْ اِلَّا
سَبِيْلَ الرَّشَادِ ﴿٢٩﴾ وَقَالَ الَّذِيْۤ اٰمَنَ يٰقَوْمِ اِنِّيْۤ اَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ مِّثْلَ
يَوْمِ الْاَحْزَابِ ﴿٣٠﴾ مِثْلَ دَاْبِ قَوْمِ نُوْحٍ وَّعَادٍ وَّثَمُوْدَ وَالَّذِيْنَ مِنْۢ
بَعْدِهِمْ ؕ وَمَا اللّٰهُ يُرِيْدُ ظُلْمًا لِّلْعِبَادِ ﴿٣١﴾ وَيٰقَوْمِ اِنِّيْۤ اَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ
يَوْمَ التَّنَادِ ﴿٣٢﴾ يَوْمَ تُوَلُّوْنَ مُدْبِرِيْنَ ۚ مَا لَكُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ مِنْ عَاصِمٍ ۚ
وَمَنْ يُّضْلِلِ اللّٰهُ فَمَا لَهٗ مِنْ هَادٍ ﴿٣٣﴾ وَلَقَدْ جَآءَكُمْ يُوْسُفُ مِنْ
قَبْلُ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ فَمَا زِلْتُمْ فِيْ شَكٍّ مِّمَّا جَآءَكُمْ بِهٖ ؕ حَتّٰۤى اِذَا هَلَكَ
قُلْتُمْ لَنْ يَّبْعَثَ اللّٰهُ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖ رَسُوْلًا ؕ كَذٰلِكَ يُضِلُّ اللّٰهُ مَنْ
هُوَ مُسْرِفٌ مُّرْتَابُ ﴿٣٤﴾ ۚۖ الَّذِيْنَ يُجَادِلُوْنَ فِيْۤ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ بِغَيْرِ سُلْطٰنٍ
اَتٰىهُمْ ؕ كَبُرَ مَقْتًا عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ وَعِنْدَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا ؕ كَذٰلِكَ يَطْبَعُ اللّٰهُ
عَلٰى كُلِّ قَلْبِ مُتَكَبِّرٍ جَبَّارٍ ﴿٣٥﴾ وَقَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ يٰهَامٰنُ ابْنِ لِيْ
صَرْحًا لَّعَلِّيْۤ اَبْلُغُ الْاَسْبَابَ ﴿٣٦﴾ اَسْبَابَ السَّمٰوٰتِ فَاَطَّلِعَ اِلٰۤى اِلٰهِ
مُوْسٰى وَاِنِّيْ لَاَظُنُّهٗ كَاذِبًا ؕ وَكَذٰلِكَ زُيِّنَ لِفِرْعَوْنَ سُوْٓءُ عَمَلِهٖ وَصُدَّ
عَنِ السَّبِيْلِ ؕ وَمَا كَيْدُ فِرْعَوْنَ اِلَّا فِيْ تَبَابٍ ﴿٣٧﴾ وَقَالَ الَّذِيْۤ اٰمَنَ
يٰقَوْمِ اتَّبِعُوْنِ اَهْدِكُمْ سَبِيْلَ الرَّشَادِ ﴿٣٨﴾ يٰقَوْمِ اِنَّمَا هٰذِهِ الْحَيٰوةُ
الدُّنْيَا مَتَاعٌ ۫ وَّاِنَّ الْاٰخِرَةَ هِيَ دَارُ الْقَرَارِ ﴿٣٩﴾ مَنْ عَمِلَ سَيِّئَةً
فَلَا يُجْزٰۤى اِلَّا مِثْلَهَا ۚ وَمَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ اَوْ اُنْثٰى وَهُوَ

مُؤْمِنٌ فَأُولَٰٓئِكَ يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ يُرْزَقُونَ فِيهَا بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ ﴿٤٠﴾
وَيٰقَوْمِ مَالِىٓ أَدْعُوكُمْ إِلَى النَّجٰوةِ وَتَدْعُونَنِىٓ إِلَى النَّارِ ﴿٤١﴾
تَدْعُونَنِى لِأَكْفُرَ بِاللّٰهِ وَأُشْرِكَ بِهِ مَا لَيْسَ لِى بِهِ عِلْمٌ وَّأَنَا أَدْعُوكُمْ
إِلَى الْعَزِيزِ الْغَفّٰرِ ﴿٤٢﴾ لَاجَرَمَ أَنَّمَا تَدْعُونَنِىٓ إِلَيْهِ لَيْسَ لَهُ دَعْوَةٌ
فِى الدُّنْيَا وَلَا فِى الْاٰخِرَةِ وَأَنَّ مَرَدَّنَآ إِلَى اللّٰهِ وَأَنَّ الْمُسْرِفِينَ هُمْ
أَصْحٰبُ النَّارِ ﴿٤٣﴾ فَسَتَذْكُرُونَ مَآ أَقُولُ لَكُمْ ۚ وَأُفَوِّضُ أَمْرِىٓ إِلَى
اللّٰهِ ۚ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ بَصِيرٌۢ بِالْعِبَادِ ﴿٤٤﴾ فَوَقٰهُ اللّٰهُ سَيِّاٰتِ مَا مَكَرُوا
وَحَاقَ بِاٰلِ فِرْعَوْنَ سُوٓءُ الْعَذَابِ ﴿٤٥﴾ اَلنَّارُ يُعْرَضُونَ عَلَيْهَا غُدُوًّا
وَّعَشِيًّا ۚ وَيَوْمَ تَقُومُ السَّاعَةُ ۗ أَدْخِلُوٓا اٰلَ فِرْعَوْنَ أَشَدَّ الْعَذَابِ
﴿٤٦﴾

And We did send Mūsā with Our signs and a manifest proof [23] to the Pharaoh and Hamān and Qarūn, but they said, "He is a sorcerer, a liar." [24] And when he brought them the truth from Us, they said, "Kill the sons of those who have accepted faith with him, and spare the lives of their women." And the plot of the disbelievers is nothing but a failure. [25] And the Pharaoh said, "Let me kill Mūsā, and let him call his Lord. I am afraid that he will change your religion or that he will cause havoc to appear in the land." [26] And Mūsā said, "I have sought protection of my Lord and your Lord from every arrogant man who does not believe in the day of reckoning." [27] And said a believing man from the House of the Pharaoh who had kept his faith secret, "Would you kill a man because he says - 'Allah is my Lord' - while he has come to you with clear signs from your Lord? And if he is a liar, then, his lie will fall back on himself, and if he is truthful, some of that (punishment) of which he warns you will afflict you. Indeed, Allah does not give guidance to anyone who is transgressor, a liar. [28] O my people, the kingdom is yours today, while you are dominant on the land. But, who is going to help us against the punishment of Allah, if it comes upon us?" Pharaoh said, " I do not give

you an opinion unless I myself believe it to be correct, and I do not direct you to anything but to the right way." [29] And said he who had believed, "I fear for you something like a day of the (disbelieving) groups (of the past) , [30] like the fate of the people of Nūḥ and 'Ad and Thamud and those who were after them - and Allah does not intend to do any injustice to His servants. [31] And O my people, I fear for you a day when people will call one another, [32] a day when you will turn back on your heels, having no one to save you from Allah - but, whomever Allah lets go astray, for him there is no one to guide. [33] And Yusuf had already come to you earlier with clear signs, but you remained in suspicion about what he brought to you - until when he died, you said, 'Allah will never send a messenger after him.' That is how Allah lets him go astray who crosses limits and lives in doubt, - [34] those who quarrel in the matter of the verses of Allah without any authority having reached them. It is terribly hateful with Allah and with those who believe. That is how Allah stamps a seal on the entire heart of an arrogant tyrant." [35] And the Fir'aun (the Pharaoh) said, "O Haman, make a tower for me, perhaps I could reach the ways- [36] - the ways to the heavens, and peek towards the God of Mūsā. And I do think that he is a liar." And that is how his evil deeds were made attractive to Fir'aun, and (how) he was held back from the way. And the evil design of the Fir'aun was (to end) in nothing but ruin. [37] And said he who had believed, "O my people, follow me, I will show you the path of guidance. [38] O my people, this life of the world is only a (momentary) benefit, while the Hereafter is, indeed, the place of permanent living. [39] The one who does something evil will not be punished but in its equal proportion, but the one who does a righteous deed, be he male or female, while he is a believer, then, such people will enter the Jannah where they will be provided with bounties beyond reckoning. [40] And O my people, what is wrong with me that I call you to salvation and you call me to the Fire? You invite me to reject my belief in Allah and ascribe to Him partners about whom I have no knowledge, while I invite you to (Him who is) the Mighty, the Most-Forgiving. [42] It is obvious that those (gods) to whom you are inviting me are not worth calling, neither in this world nor in the world to come, and that we have to return back to Allah, and that the

transgressors are indeed the people of the Fire. [43] **Soon you will remember what I am saying to you. And I entrust my matter with Allah. Surely, Allah has all (His) servants in sight."** [44] **Then Allah saved him from the evils of what they designed, and the House of the Pharaoh was encircled by an evil punishment.** [45] **It is the Fire before which they are presented morning and evening. And on the day when the Hour (of final judgment) will take place, (the order will be released,): "Admit the family of the Pharaoh into the most severe punishment."** [46]

Commentary

Frequent references were made earlier in the text to the warnings given to deniers of pure monotheism and prophethood which brought more opposition and hostility from disbelievers. Naturally, this situation made the Holy Prophet ﷺ sad. It was to comfort him that, in nearly two sections cited above, mentioned there is the story of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and Pharaoh. In this story, there is a lengthy dialogue between the Pharaoh, his people and a righteous elder who, despite being a scion of the House of the Pharaoh, had believed in the faith of Sayyidnā Mūsā after having seen the miracles shown at his hands - but, had kept his faith secret until that time. Once this dialogue took place, his faith stood declared automatically and conclusively.

Out of early Tafsir authorities, Muqātil, Suddiyy and Ḥasan have said that he was a cousin of the Pharaoh and was the same person who, at the time they were talking in the court of Pharaoh about killing Sayyidnā Mūsā in retaliation against the killing of the Copt, had come running from the far side of the city and apprised Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام of the danger and advised him to go out of Egypt. This event has been mentioned in Sūrah Al-Qaṣaṣ: وَجَآءَ رَجُلٌ مِّنْ اَقْصَى الْمَدِيْنَةِ يَسْعٰى (And there came a man running, from the farthest part of the city. - Al-Qaṣaṣ, 28:20)

The name of this believing member of the House of the Pharaoh has been given as Ḥabib in some sources. But, the truth of the matter is that Ḥabib is the name of the person who has been mentioned in Sūrah Yā Sīn (36:20). The name of this person is شمعان (Sham'ān). *Suhaili* considers this name as most correct. Others say that his name is Ḥizqil. Tha'labi has reported the same name from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه.

In a Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, 'Of some صدّیقین (ṣiddiqīn: the truthful ones), there is Ḥabib *najjār* (carpenter) whose incident appears in Sūrah Yā Sīn; the other is the believer from the House of Pharaoh; the third, Abū Bakr (Sayyidnā Abū Bakr aṣ-Ṣiddiq رضي الله عنه), and he is the foremost among them.' (Qurṭubī)

In verse 28, it was said: 'يَكْتُمُ اِيمَانَه' (who had kept his faith secret). This tells us that a person who does not declare his *'īmān* (faith) before people, yet remains staunch in his faith by heart, then, this person is a believer. But, it stands proved from clear textual authority (of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth) that, for *'īmān* to be acceptable, the simple certitude of the heart is not enough, instead, it is subject to the condition of a verbal confession and declaration. Unless the person concerned declares it verbally, he or she will not be regarded as a believer. However, making this verbal declaration before people publicly is not necessary. The only reason why it is needed is that unless people come to know about the person's *'īmān*, they would remain unable to interact with him or her in the same way as they do with Muslims. (Qurṭubī)

Earlier in the verse, by saying: مُؤْمِنٌ مِّنْ الِ فِرْعَوْنَ (a believing man from the House of the Pharaoh), it is virtually demonstrated that the believer, in his ensuing dialogue with Pharaoh and his people, invited them toward truth and faith as well as restrained them from killing Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام.

In verse 32, it was said: يٰقَوْمِ اِنِّيْٓ اَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ يَوْمَ التَّنَادِ (O my people, I fear for you a day when people will call one another,). The last word: تناد (*tanād*) with a kasrah on the letter: دال (*dāl*) is an abbreviated form of the word: تَنَادِی (*tanādi*) which means calling each other. The day of Qiyāmah (the Day of Doom, or Judgment) was called: يَوْمُ التَّنَادِ (*yowm-ut-tanād*) for the reason that this horrendous day would be reverberating with countless calls and cries. According to a narration of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar رضي الله عنه, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "When comes the day of Qiyāmah, an announcer from Allah will proclaim: 'Let the adversaries of Allah stand'. It would mean people who rejected taqdir or predestination. And then, the people of Jannah will call out to the people of Jahannam, and the people of Jahannam will call out to the people of Jannah, and the people of the A'rāf (Heights) will call out to both, all saying things about themselves. And at that time, names will be announced, names of the lucky and the

unlucky, alongwith their parentage. It will be like an announcement of results indicating that such and such person named is fortunate and successful, and that the probability of any misfortune for him or her stands eliminated - and that such and such person has turned out to be unfortunate, and that the probability of any good fortune for him or her stands eliminated." (Reported by Ibn Abī Ḥātim in As-Sunnah - Maẓharī)

And it has been reported from Sayyidnā Abū Ḥāzim Al-A'raj ﷺ that he used to address his own self saying, "O A'raj, when comes the call on the day of Qiyāmah: 'Let those who committed such and such sins stand' - you would be standing with them; and when comes the call: 'Let those who committed such and such sins stand', you would be standing with them too; and when comes the call: 'Let those who committed such and such sins', you would be standing with them too - and I believe, every time a sin is announced, you would have to stand with them (because you have all sorts of sins in store with you!") - Reported by Abū Nu'aym - Maẓharī.

In verse 33, it was said: يَوْمَ تُوَلُّوْنَ مُدْبِرِيْنَ (a day when you will turn back on your heels,). In the summary of *tafsīr* from Bayān-ul-Qur'ān of Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavi (forming a part of the original Urdu edition of Ma'āriful-Qur'ān), it has been said with reference to Imām al-Baghawi that this is a description of the state in which culprits will be taken from the locale of reckoning out to the Jahannam. The outcome is that all calls and announcements mentioned in the explanation of *'yowm-ut-tanād'* ('a day when people will call one another') would have been made and, after that, these people will be made to detour from the locale of reckoning on to their final destination towards the Jahannam.

And according to some commentators, this reflects the state that will prevail in the world at the time of the first blowing of the Horn, that is, when the Horn will be blown the first time, the earth will crack open, and they will start running here and there but there will be angels on every outlet, and there will be no way of escape. In the view of these commentators, this يَوْمَ التَّنَادِ (*yowm-ut-tanād*) too means the time of the first blowing of the Horn, for here too there will be calls and cries coming from all corners. This view finds it support from another قراءت (*qirā'ah:* rendition) of this verse reported from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ and Ḍaḥḥāk who used to recite the words: يَوْمَ التَّنَادِ (*yowm-ut-tanād*) with a *tashdid* (double sound) on the last letter: دال (*dāl*) which is a derivation

from the infinitive: نَدّ (*nadd*) meaning to run away. Hence, according to this Tafsīr, يَوْمَ التَّنَادِ will mean 'the day of running' and the expression: تُوَلُّوْنَ مُدْبِرِيْنَ (you will turn back on your heels - 33) will become its explanation.

There is a lengthy Ḥadīth in Tafsīr Maẓharī. It has been reported from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ with reference to Ibn Jarīr, Musnad Abū Ya'la, al-Baihaqī, Musnad 'Abd Ibn Ḥumaid and others. It mentions three soundings of the Horn on the day of Qiyāmah. The first blowing of the Horn will cause consternation, the second, unconsciousness and the third, resurrection. The sonic outburst causing consternation will make the entire creation panic, then, this very outburst will become long enough to make everyone unconscious following which everyone will die. Generally, the combination of these two sonic outbursts has been called the first blowing of the Horn for the obvious reason that a single blowing will bring forth two manifestations, first - panic, then - swoon or unconsciousness. In this Ḥadīth too, it has been mentioned that, at the time of the blowing causing consternation, people would be running around in panic: وَهُوَ الَّذِیْ يَقُوْلُ اللّٰهُ يَوْمَ التَّنَادِ (And that is what Allah says the day of myriad calls is) which tells us that, in this verse, the statement: يَوْمَ التَّنَادِ (*yowm-ut-tanād*) means people running around in panic at the time of the first blowing of the Horn. And Allah is Pure and High who knows best.

In verse 35, it was said: كَذٰلِکَ يَطْبَعُ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ قَلْبِ مُتَكَبِّرٍ جَبَّارٍ (That is how Allah stamps a seal on the entire heart of an arrogant tyrant), that is, the way the hearts of Pharaoh and Haman remained unaffected by the good counsel of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and the believer from the House of Pharaoh, similarly, Allah Ta'ālā cancels out or puts a seal on the heart of every such person who is arrogant and tyrannical (someone proud and arrogant, someone unjust and oppressive). When this happens, the effect is that the light of faith does not enter that heart, and one is rendered unable to distinguish between good and bad. In one قراءت (*qirā'ah*: rendition of the Qur'ān), the words for 'arrogant' and 'tyrant' have been identified as attributes of the heart for the reason that the heart is the reservoir of all morals and deeds. Every deed, good or bad, is born in the heart. Therefore, it has been said in Ḥadīth that there is a piece of flesh (heart) in the human body which, when it works right, it makes the whole body work right, and when it goes bad, it makes the whole body go bad.

(Qurṭubī)

The word: صَرْح (*ṣarḥ*) in verse 36: وَقَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ يَاهَامٰنُ ابْنِ لِىْ صَرْحًا (And the Pharaoh said, "O Haman, make a tower for me,) means a structure that rises high. An outward look at this statement suggests that the Pharaoh ordered his minister, Haman to build a structure that rises high into the sky close enough for him to go up, peek in and have a glimpse of God. If this wild thought, not imaginable even in the case of a man of very ordinary commonsense, really comes from Pharaoh, the sole master of the kingdom of Egypt, then, it is an evidence of his unbelievable folly - and if the minister carried out his orders, then, the apple did not fall far from the tree, as the king, so the courtier! Since no one expects any head of the state to go that wild in his imagination, therefore, some commentators have said that this much he too knew that, no matter how high a structure is made for him, he still cannot reach the skies (by that mode of ascent). But, he did that only to impress or confuse his people. Then, we have no sound and strong report to prove whether or not such a palatial high structure was ever raised. However, al-Qurṭubī reports that this building was constructed, but once it reached its higher levels, it collapsed.

My respected father, Maulānā Muḥammad Yāsīn, a dear disciple of Maulānā Muḥammad Ya'qūb, the first principal of the famous Darul-'Uloom of Deoband in India has reported his learned teacher saying, 'For this lofty palace to collapse, it is not necessary that it be hit by some Divine punishment. The fact is that the height of every building depends on the capability of its foundation to bear weight. No matter how deep the foundation is laid, it cannot go deeper than a certain limit. Now, when levels after levels were added to this building, it was inevitable that, once it exceeded the capability of its foundation to bear additional weight, it must collapse.' This provides another proof of the folly of Pharaoh and Haman. Allah knows best.

In verse 44, it was said: فَسَتَذْكُرُوْنَ مَآ اَقُوْلُ لَكُمْ وَاُفَوِّضُ اَمْرِىْٓ اِلَى اللّٰهِ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ بَصِيْرٌ بِالْعِبَادِ (Soon you will remember what I am saying to you. And I entrust my matter with Allah. Surely, Allah has all (His) servants in sight.). This is what the believer from the House of Pharaoh said at the end of his address to his people inviting them to accept the message of truth. Here, it was said that, should they not listen to him within that point of time,

there would come a time when the punishment would seize them, and they would remember what he had told them. But, the remembrance of that particular time will be useless. And when by virtue of this lengthy dialogue, advice and invitation, the *'īmān* or faith of this believer from the House of Pharaoh stood disclosed before these people, he realized that they might bring some harm to him, therefore, he said that he was leaving his case to rest with Allah, for He is the guardian and protector of His servants. Early tafsir authority, Muqatil says: When the people of the Pharaoh, as he had apprehended, went after him, he escaped towards the mountains and they could not catch him.

This has been mentioned in verse 45 in the following words: فَوَقٰهُ اللّٰهُ سَيِّاٰتِ مَا مَكَرُوْا وَحَاقَ بِاٰلِ فِرْعَوْنَ سُوْٓءُ الْعَذَابِ (Then Allah saved him from the evils of what they designed, and the House of the Pharaoh was encircled by an evil punishment.), that is, Allah Ta'ālā saved the believer from the harm the people of Pharaoh planned to bring to him, but they themselves were seized by a severe punishment. First of all, Allah Ta'ālā, in His mercy, saved the believer belonging to the House of Pharaoh right here in this world from the aggressive designs of the people of the Pharaoh against him, the details of which have not been mentioned in the Qur'ān. But, the words of the Qur'ān seem to say simply that the people of the Pharaoh had made many plans to hurt and kill him, and when the people of Pharaoh were drowned, Allah Ta'ālā saved this believing servant of Allah along with Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام. As for salvation in the Hereafter, it is fairly obvious.

In the last verse cited here, it was said: اَلنَّارُ يُعْرَضُوْنَ عَلَيْهَا غُدُوًّا وَّعَشِيًّا ج وَيَوْمَ تَقُوْمُ السَّاعَةُ قف اَدْخِلُوْٓا اٰلَ فِرْعَوْنَ اَشَدَّ الْعَذَابِ (It is the Fire before which they are presented morning and evening. And on the day when the Hour (of final judgment) will take place, (the order will be released,): "Admit the family of the Pharaoh into the most severe punishment."- 46). Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه explained this verse by saying, "Spirits of people from the House of Pharaoh are presented before the Jahannam in the form of black birds, twice every day, morning and evening, and by pointing out to the Jahannam, it is said to them: This is your abode." (Reported by 'Abd-ur-Razzāq and Ibn Abī Ḥātim - Maẓharī)

And according to a narration of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar رضي الله عنه appearing in the two Ṣaḥīḥs of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, the Holy Prophet

ﷺ said, (the meaning of which is): "When one of you dies (and is in the universe of *barzakh*, the post-death ~ pre-resurrection state) he is shown, morning and evening, the place he is to reach after the reckoning of the Day of Judgment. And this place is shown to him everyday, and he is told that he has to reach there finally. If this person is from among the people of Jannah, then, Jannah will be shown to him as his place. And if he is from among the people of Jahannam, then, Jahannam will be shown to him as his place."

Punishment in graves

This verse is a proof of punishment in graves. Uninterrupted reports of aḥādīth and the consensus (*ijma'*) of the Muslim Ummah confirm it. This humble writer has put together all such material, along with relevant verses from the Qur'ān, in a regular treatise entitled: السبر بعذاب القبر *Aṣ-ṣabr bi'adhabi-l-qabr*. This treatise has been published in Arabic as part of Aḥkām-ul-Qur'ān.

Verses 47 - 50

وَاِذْ يَتَحَآجُّوْنَ فِي النَّارِ فَيَقُوْلُ الضُّعَفٰٓؤُا لِلَّذِيْنَ اسْتَكْبَرُوْٓا اِنَّا كُنَّا
لَكُمْ تَبَعًا فَهَلْ اَنْتُمْ مُّغْنُوْنَ عَنَّا نَصِيْبًا مِّنَ النَّارِ ﴿٤٧﴾ قَالَ الَّذِيْنَ
اسْتَكْبَرُوْٓا اِنَّا كُلٌّ فِيْهَآ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ قَدْ حَكَمَ بَيْنَ الْعِبَادِ ﴿٤٨﴾ وَقَالَ
الَّذِيْنَ فِي النَّارِ لِخَزَنَةِ جَهَنَّمَ ادْعُوْا رَبَّكُمْ يُخَفِّفْ عَنَّا يَوْمًا مِّنَ
الْعَذَابِ ﴿٤٩﴾ قَالُوْٓا اَوَلَمْ تَكُ تَاْتِيْكُمْ رُسُلُكُمْ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ قَالُوْا بَلٰى
قَالُوْا فَادْعُوْا وَمَا دُعٰٓؤُا الْكٰفِرِيْنَ اِلَّا فِيْ ضَلٰلٍ ﴿٥٠﴾

And (worth remembering is the time) when they (the infidels) will argue with each other in the Fire. So, the weak will say to those who were arrogant, "Surely, we used to be your followers, would you, then, stand for us in (suffering at least a) part of the (punishment of) Fire?" [47] Those who were arrogant will say, "We all are in it. Allah has already passed the judgment between (His) servants. [48] And those in the Fire will say to the keepers of Jahannam, "Pray to your Lord to lighten the punishment for us some day." [49] They will say, "Had

your messengers not been coming to you with open signs?" They will say, "Of course, (they had come)." They (the keepers) will say, "Then, you pray" - and praying of disbelievers (in the Hereafter) is no more than straying off the track. [50]

Verses 51 - 60

اِنَّا لَنَنْصُرُ رُسُلَنَا وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا فِى الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَيَوْمَ يَقُوْمُ الْاَشْهَادُ
﴿٥١﴾ يَوْمَ لَا يَنْفَعُ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ مَعْذِرَتُهُمْ وَلَهُمُ اللَّعْنَةُ وَلَهُمْ سُوْٓءُ الدَّارِ
﴿٥٢﴾ وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا مُوْسَى الْهُدٰى وَاَوْرَثْنَا بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ الْكِتٰبَ
﴿٥٣﴾ هُدًى وَّذِكْرٰى لِاُولِى الْاَلْبَابِ ﴿٥٤﴾ فَاصْبِرْ اِنَّ وَعْدَ اللّٰهِ حَقٌّ
وَّاسْتَغْفِرْ لِذَنْۢبِكَ وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ بِالْعَشِيِّ وَالْاِبْكَارِ ﴿٥٥﴾ اِنَّ
الَّذِيْنَ يُجَادِلُوْنَ فِيْٓ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ بِغَيْرِ سُلْطٰنٍ اَتٰىهُمْ ۙ اِنْ فِيْ صُدُوْرِهِمْ
اِلَّا كِبْرٌ مَّا هُمْ بِبَالِغِيْهِ ۚ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللّٰهِ ۭ اِنَّهٗ هُوَ السَّمِيْعُ الْبَصِيْرُ ﴿٥٦﴾
لَخَلْقُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ اَكْبَرُ مِنْ خَلْقِ النَّاسِ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ
لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٥٧﴾ وَمَا يَسْتَوِى الْاَعْمٰى وَالْبَصِيْرُ ۙ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا
وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ وَلَا الْمُسِيْٓءُ ۭ قَلِيْلًا مَّا تَتَذَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿٥٨﴾ اِنَّ
السَّاعَةَ لَاٰتِيَةٌ لَّا رَيْبَ فِيْهَا وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٥٩﴾ وَقَالَ
رَبُّكُمُ ادْعُوْنِيْٓ اَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ ۭ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَسْتَكْبِرُوْنَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِيْ
سَيَدْخُلُوْنَ جَهَنَّمَ دٰخِرِيْنَ ﴿٦٠﴾

Surely, We do help Our messengers and those who believe in the worldly life, as well as on the day in which witnesses will stand (to give their testimony)- [51] **a day when the apology of the unjust will bring them no benefit, and on them shall be the curse, and for them will be the evil abode.** [52] **And We gave Guidance to Mūsā, while We made the children of Isra'il inherit the Book -** [53] **as a guide and advice for people of understanding.** [54] **So, be patient -- surely the promise**

of Allah is true - and seek forgiveness for your sins, and proclaim the purity and praise of your Lord in the afternoon and at dawn. [55] **Surely, those who quarrel in the matter of the verses of Allah without any authority having reached them, there is nothing in their hearts but pride of greatness that they are not (able) to reach. So, seek refuge with Allah. Surely, He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing.** [56] **Certainly, the creation of the heavens and the earth is greater than the creation of human beings, but most human beings do not know.** [57] **And the blind one and the sighted one are not equal, and those who believed and did good deeds and the evil ones are not (equal) either. Little you learn!** [58] **Certainly, the Hour is bound to come. There is no doubt in it, but most of the people do not believe.** [59] **And your Lord has said, "Call Me, I will respond to you. Definitely those who show arrogance against worshipping Me shall enter Jahannam, disgraced.** [60]

Commentary

In the opening statement of verse 51, it was said: إِنَّا لَنَنْصُرُ رُسُلَنَا وَالَّذِينَ اٰمَنُوْا فِي الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا (Surely, We do help Our messengers and those who believe in the worldly life, 40:51). This verse carries the promise of Allah Ta'ālā that He would keep helping His messengers and believers, both in the present world and in the Hereafter. It is obvious that this help is intended to be against adversaries and enemies. That it so happened in the case of most prophets علیهم السلام, peace be on them all, is clear enough. But, there were prophets علیهم السلام, such as, Sayyidnā Yaḥyā, Zakariyyā and Shu'aib علیهم السلام, who were either martyred by enemies or had to abandon their home country and migrate to some other place - as was the case with Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام and the last of the prophets, Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafa ﷺ. There may be some doubt about that.

Ibn Kathīr has, with reference to Ibn Jarīr, answered this possible doubt by saying that, in this verse, نصرت (*nuṣrah*: help) means: انتصار (*intiṣār*: victory) or subduing of the enemy in retaliation - whether it happens at their hands while they are alive, or after their death. This meaning applies to all prophets and believers without any exception. History bears witness as to how those who killed their prophets علیهم السلام were later on subjected to terrible punishments and the disgrace that followed. Upon those who killed Sayyidnā Yaḥyā, Zakariyyā and Shu'aib علیهم السلام, their enemies were set who showed no mercy while disgracing

and killing them. As for Namrūd (Nimrod), terrible was the punishment that overtook him. And Allah Ta'ālā set the power of Byzantine against the enemies of Sayyidnā 'Isa ﷺ that defeated and disgraced them. And to him Allah Ta'ālā will give ascendancy over his enemies close to the last day of al-Qiyāmah. As for the enemies of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, Allah Ta'ālā had them stand subdued at the hands of Muslims themselves. Their arrogant chiefs were killed. Some were taken prisoners. The rest were rounded up at the time of the conquest of Makkah, but the Holy Prophet ﷺ let them have their freedom. His message spread all over. The faith prevailed. The state of Islam stood established on the entire Arabian Peninsula within the lifetime of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

In the later part of verse 51, it was said: يَوْمَ يَقُوْمُ الْاَشْهَادُ (as well as on the day in which witnesses will stand [to give their testimony]. It means the day of Qiyāmah (Doomsday). Once they are there, Divine help for prophets and believers will show itself specially.

In verse 56, it was said: اِنْ فِيْ صُدُوْرِهِمْ اِلاَّ كِبْرٌ مَّاهُمْ بِبَالِغِيْهِ (there is nothing in their hearts but pride of greatness that they are not [able] to reach). It means that people who quarrel in the matter of the verses of Allah without having any valid argument really look forward to rejecting this faith simply because their hearts are filled with pride and arrogance. They would like to stay ahead in the game and are so dim-witted that they have taken for granted that they have this position of strength as a result of their staunch adherence to their faith, and if they were to surrender this stance by becoming Muslims, they will be left without any power and territory of their own. The Qur'ān said: مَاهُمْ بِبَالِغِيْهِ (they are not [able] to reach), that is, these people will never reach the goals of their assumed pride, greatness and state power without embracing Islam. However, had they embraced Islam, honor and greatness would have followed in their footsteps. (Qurṭubī)

The reality of *du'ā'* (supplication) and its merits, levels and conditions of acceptance

In the last verse cited in this unit, it was said:

وَقَالَ رَبُّكُمُ ادْعُوْنِيْٓ اَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ ۭ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَسْتَكْبِرُوْنَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِيْ سَيَدْخُلُوْنَ جَهَنَّمَ دَاخِرِيْنَ

And your Lord has said, "Call Me, I will respond to you.

Definitely those who show arrogance against worshipping Me shall enter Jahannam, disgraced. - 40:60.

Literally, *du'ā'* means to call, and it is frequently used to call for something needed. On occasions, the *dhikr* of Allah (acts devoted to His remembrance) is also referred to as *du'ā'*. This verse confers a special honor on the large community of the followers of the Holy Prophet ﷺ when they were ordered to make *du'ā'* with the assurance that it would be answered. And whoever does not make a prayer has been warned of punishment.

Qatādah reports from Ka'b Aḥbār that earlier this used to be peculiar to prophets, as they were the ones who were ordered by Allah Ta'ālā that they should make *du'ā'* and He would answer. Now, it is the distinction of the followers of the Holy Prophet ﷺ (popularly identified as Ummah Muḥammadiyyah) that this order was universalized for his entire Ummah. (Ibn Kathīr)

Explaining this verse, Sayyidnā Nu'mān Ibn Bashīr ﷺ narrated a Ḥadīth that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: إنَّ الدُّعَاءِ هُوالعِبَادة (Surely, prayer is worship on its own) and then supported it by reciting this verse: إِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَسْتَكْبِرُوْنَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِي (Definitely those who show arrogance against worshipping Me shall enter Jahannam, disgraced.) (reported by Imām Aḥmad, Tirmidhī, Nasā'ī, Abū Dāwūd and others - Ibn Kathīr)

It appears in Tafsir Maẓharī that, if looked at under the rules of Arabic diction (confining of the predicate to the subject), the Ḥadīth: إنَّ الدُّعَاءِ هُوالعِبَادة, could mean: '*du'ā'* is the very name of '*'ibādah*' or worship, that is, every *du'ā'* is but *'ibādah*. Then, by reversing the same rule (confining the subject to the predicate), it could also mean that every act of *'ibādah* is itself nothing but a *du'ā'*. Both probabilities exist here. And at this place, the meaning is that *du'ā'* (prayer, supplication) and *'ibādah* (worship, devotion) are, though separate from each other in terms of the literal sense, yet in terms of substantiation, they are unified, as every *du'ā'* is *'ibādah* and every *'ibādah* is *du'ā'*. The reason is that *'ibādah* is the name of the attitude of showing one's utter modesty and abasement before someone, and it is all too obvious that showing one's utter helplessness before someone and extending one's hand before him with the beggar's bowl is a matter of great disgrace - which is the very sense of

'ibādah. Similarly, the outcome of every *'ibādah* is also to ask Allah Ta'ālā for forgiveness and Jannah and that He blesses us with a perfect state of well being in this world and in the world to come. Therefore, it appears in a Ḥadīth qudsī (- a Ḥadīth in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ conveys a saying from Allah that is not included in the Qur'ān) that Allah Ta'ālā said: "One who is so engrossed in remembering Me that he does not have even the time to ask for what he needs, I shall give him more than those who ask (by fulfilling his needs without the asking)" (reported by al-Jazri in An-Nihayah) and in a narration appearing in Tirmidhi and Muslim, the words are: من شغله القران عن ذكرى ومسئلتى اعطيته افضل ما اعطى السائلين ("One who is so engrossed in the recitation of the Qur'ān that he does not have even the time to ask for what he needs, I shall give him even more than what those who ask ever get"). This tells us that every *'ibādah* brings the same benefit as is the benefit of *du'ā'*.

And in the Ḥadīth of 'Arafat, it appears that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "In 'Arafāt, my *du'ā'* and the *du'ā'* of prophets before me is (the saying of): لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلاَّ اللّٰهُ وَحْدَهٗ لَا شَرِيْكَ لَهٗ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ وَلَهُ الْحَمْدُ وَهُوَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَیْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ: (*lā ilaha il-lal-lahu wahdahu la sharika lahu lahul-mulku wa lahul-hamdu wa huwa 'ala kulli shai'in qadir:* There is no god but Allah who is one. No one shares His godhead . To Him belongs the kingdom and to Him belongs all praise, and He is powerful over everything) (reported by Ibn Abī Shaibah - Maẓharī).

Here, عِبَادَة (*'ibādah*: worship) and ذِكْرُاللّٰه (*dhikrullāh*: the *dhikr* or remembrance of Allah) has been called: دُعَا (*du'ā'*: prayer, supplication).

In this verse under study, those who abandon *du'ā'* in the sense of *'ibādah* the warning of Jahannam given to them is in the eventuality of being too proud, that is, a person who, in his pride, considers himself in no need of making a *du'ā'* and actually abandons it, then, this is a sign of kufr (open infidelity), therefore, the warning of Jahannam became due against him. Otherwise, making of *du'ā'*s, prayers and supplications as such is not fard (obligatory) or wajib (necessary). Leaving it off brings no sin. However, by a consensus of 'ulama', doing so is mustahabb (recommended) and is: افضل (*afḍal*: better, meritworthy) (Maẓharī) and in accordance with clarifications in *aḥādīth*, it is a source of many a *barakah* (blessing)

Merits of du'ā'

HADITH: The Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "There is nothing more deserving of regard by Allah Ta'ālā than *du'ā'*" - Tirmidhī, Ibn Mājah and Hakim from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ.

HADITH: The Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "*du'ā'* is the essence of *'ibādah*" - Tirmidhi from Sayyidnā Anas Ibn Mālik ﷺ.

HADITH: The Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Ask Allah Ta'ālā of His grace because Allah Ta'ālā likes being asked, and it is a great act of *'ibādah* that one waits for ease while in hardship" - Tirmidhī from Sayyidnā Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ.

HADITH: The Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Verily, one who does not pray to Allah in his needs, He becomes angry with him" - Tirmidhī from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ, Ibn Ḥibbān and Ḥākim.

In Tafsīr Maẓharī, after having reported all these narrations, it has been said that the warning of Divine wrath on a person who does not make a *du'ā'* is applicable only when this abstention from asking is based on arrogance, and on taking oneself to be need free, as it stands proved from the words of this verse: إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ (Definitely those who show arrogance against worshipping Me shall enter Jahannam, disgraced. 40:60).

HADITH: The Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Do not be weary of *du'ā'*, for nobody dies of making *du'ā'*" - Ibn Ḥibbān and Ḥākim from Sayyidnā Anas Ibn Mālik ﷺ.

HADITH: The Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "*du'ā'* is a weapon of the believer, a pillar of the faith, and the light of the heavens and the earth" - Ḥākim in al-Mustadrak from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ.

HADITH: The Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "If the gates of *du'ā'* are opened for someone (actually) the doors of mercy are opened for him, and no *du'ā'* made before Allah Ta'ālā is appreciated more than that in which one asks of 'afiyah (well-being) from Him" - Tirmidhī and Ḥākim from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar ﷺ.

The word: عافية (*'afiyah*) appearing in the Ḥadīth mentioned immediately earlier is a very comprehensive word (usually rendered in

English as 'well-being' meaning a state of being healthy and happy, though somewhat outdated in contemporary usage). Apart from a good life, it includes other things like security from unwelcome happenings, trials and calamities as well as a satisfactory fulfillment of all needs in life.

Ruling:

Making *du'ā'* for committing a sin or for severance of blood relationships is *ḥarām* (forbidden) - and, for that matter, such a *du'ā'* does not get to be accepted with Allah either - as in a Ḥadīth from Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī ﷺ.

***Du'ā'* and the promise of acceptance**

In this verse, it has been promised that the *du'ā'* a servant makes is accepted. But, on occasions, one also sees that a *du'ā'* was made and it was not accepted. The answer to this appears in a Ḥadīth of Sayyidnā Abū Sa'ī al-Khudrī ﷺ where the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said, "Whatever a Muslim prays for before Allah, He would let him have it - subject to the condition that the *du'ā'* made was not for something sinful or for the severance of relationships that Allah has enjoined to be kept intact. As for the acceptance of *du'ā'*, it takes one of the three forms given here: (1) That one gets exactly what one asked for. (2) That in lieu of what one wanted to have, one was given a certain return or reward of the Hereafter. (3) That one did not, though, get what one wanted, but some hardship or calamity that was due to fall on one stood removed. (Musnad Aḥmad - Maẓharī)

Conditions of the acceptance of *du'ā'*

As for the present verse, it obviously seems to have no condition, almost to the extent that even being a Muslim is not a condition of *du'ā'*. Allah Ta'ālā accepts the *du'ā'* of a kafir (disbeliever) as well in this world to the extent that the *du'ā'* of Iblis to be allowed to live until the last day of Qiyāmah was accepted. For *du'ā'*, there is no condition of time, nor is there any condition that one must be with taharah (state of purity from pollutants) or wudu (ablution). But, there are trustworthy *aḥādīth* that identify a few things that preclude the chances of its acceptance. One must abstain from these. It appears in a Ḥadīth from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "...a man having been on a long journey is all disheveled and dust-coated and he stretches his hands upwards for *du'ā'* (saying): 'O my Lord! O my Lord!' while his food is

haram (unlawful), his drink: *ḥarām*, his dress: *ḥarām*, and he himself was brought up on the haram - how then, could his *du'ā'* become worth accepting?" (Reported by Muslim)

Similarly, if we were to say the words of *du'ā'* negligently, heedlessly, without paying any attention, the Ḥadīth says something about that too - that such a *du'ā'* is also not accepted. (Tirmidhī from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه)

Verses 61 - 68

اَللّٰهُ الَّذِیْ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الَّیْلَ لِتَسْكُنُوْا فِیْهِ وَالنَّهَارَ مُبْصِرًا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَذُوْ فَضْلٍ عَلَی النَّاسِ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا یَشْكُرُوْنَ ﴿٦١﴾ ذٰلِكُمُ اللّٰهُ رَبُّكُمْ خَالِقُ كُلِّ شَیْءٍ ؕ لَاۤ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ۫ فَاَنّٰی تُؤْفَكُوْنَ ﴿٦٢﴾ كَذٰلِكَ یُؤْفَكُ الَّذِیْنَ كَانُوْا بِاٰیٰتِ اللّٰهِ یَجْحَدُوْنَ ﴿٦٣﴾ اَللّٰهُ الَّذِیْ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْاَرْضَ قَرَارًا وَّالسَّمَآءَ بِنَآءً وَّصَوَّرَكُمْ فَاَحْسَنَ صُوَرَكُمْ وَرَزَقَكُمْ مِّنَ الطَّیِّبٰتِ ؕ ذٰلِكُمُ اللّٰهُ رَبُّكُمْ ۚۖ فَتَبٰرَكَ اللّٰهُ رَبُّ الْعٰلَمِیْنَ ﴿٦٤﴾ هُوَ الْحَیُّ لَاۤ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ فَادْعُوْهُ مُخْلِصِیْنَ لَهُ الدِّیْنَ ؕ اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِیْنَ ﴿٦٥﴾ قُلْ اِنِّیْ نُهِیْتُ اَنْ اَعْبُدَ الَّذِیْنَ تَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ لَمَّا جَآءَنِیَ الْبَیِّنٰتُ مِنْ رَّبِّیْ ۫ وَاُمِرْتُ اَنْ اُسْلِمَ لِرَبِّ الْعٰلَمِیْنَ ﴿٦٢﴾ هُوَ الَّذِیْ خَلَقَكُمْ مِّنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ نُّطْفَةٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ عَلَقَةٍ ثُمَّ یُخْرِجُكُمْ طِفْلًا ثُمَّ لِتَبْلُغُوْۤا اَشُدَّكُمْ ثُمَّ لِتَكُوْنُوْا شُیُوْخًا ۚ وَمِنْكُمْ مَّنْ یُّتَوَفّٰی مِنْ قَبْلُ وَلِتَبْلُغُوْۤا اَجَلًا مُّسَمًّی وَّلَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿٦٧﴾ هُوَ الَّذِیْ یُحْیٖ وَیُمِیْتُ ۚ فَاِذَا قَضٰۤی اَمْرًا فَاِنَّمَا یَقُوْلُ لَهٗ كُنْ فَیَكُوْنُ ﴿٦٨﴾

Allah is the One who made for you the night, so that you may have rest in it, and the day to let you see. Surely, Allah is most kind to the people, but most of the

people do not offer gratitude. [61] This is Allah, your Lord, the Creator of everything. There is no god but He. Then, from where are you being reversed (by your selfish desires)? [62] Similarly reversed were those who used to deny Our verses. [63] Allah is the One who made, for you the earth a place to live, and the sky a roof; and shaped you, and made your shapes so good - and provided you with a lot of good things. That is Allah, your Lord. So, Glorious is Allah, the Lord of the worlds. [64] He is Ever-living. There is no god but He. So worship Him making your submission exclusive for Him. All praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of all the worlds. [65]

Say, "I have been ordered not to worship those whom you invoke beside Allah when clear signs from my Lord have (already) come to me, and I have been ordered that I submit to the Lord of the worlds." [66] He is the One who created you from dust, then from a drop of semen, then from a clot. After that, He takes you out as an infant. Then, (He makes you grow) so that you reach your full maturity, and, thereafter, become old - and some of you die earlier - and so that you reach the appointed term, and so that you understand. [67] He is the One who gives life and brings death, and when He decides to do something, He only says to it: "Be" and it comes to be. [68]

Commentary

In the verses cited above, after having presented a few manifestations of Allah's blessings and His perfect power, an invitation to belief in the Oneness of Allah has been extended.

In the first verse (61), it was said: جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الَّيْلَ لِتَسْكُنُوْا فِيْهِ وَالنَّهَارَ مُبْصِرًا (Allah is the One who made for you the night, so that you may have rest in it, and the day to let you see.). Just imagine how great a blessing it is that all human beings, even animals, have been naturally tuned to a set time for sleep, and that this time has been, in a manner of saying, virtually switched off in perfect synchronization with the need to sleep. In fact, it was made the part of everyone's psyche that this is the time, the time of night, that would bring a sound sleep. Otherwise, had sleep been in one's own control and had everyone been making one's own program to sleep at different hours, as he or she does to set a timetable for business or personal preferences, it would have left all sleepers deprived of the bliss of

sleep, nor would it have been convenient for those awake to set their own hours of work right. The reason is that human needs are inter-related. Had sleeping hours been different, jobs of the awake connected with the sleeping would have gone topsy-turvy, and the jobs of the sleeping connected with the awake would have fared no better. Also, if only human beings had a set time for sleep - with wild beasts and animals sleeping at some other time - even then, the system of human engagement with work would have gone haywire.

In verse 64, it was said: وَصَوَّرَكُمْ فَأَحْسَنَ صُوَرَكُمْ (and shaped you, and made your shapes so good -). Allah Ta'ālā has blessed the human person with the most distinct, superior and better-balanced form and shape out of all animals. He was given reason. He was given such hands and feet that he could get together materials to make things for his needs and comfort. Then, his eating and drinking is different, rather far distinct from common animals. They eat or graze or drink directly with their mouth. He uses hands. Common animals eat singles. Some eat meat, others eat grass or leaves, that too in singles. Contrary to that, man eats by combining different things like meat, vegetables, spices, herbs and fruits. He eats by making his food taste good. His culinary creativity knows no bounds when he would take a single fruit from nature, and turn it into all sorts of delicious eatables like pies, fruit cakes, jams, preserves and chutneys. فتبارک اللہ احسن الخالقین (Blessed is Allah, the Best Creator).

Verses 69 - 78

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِيْنَ يُجَادِلُوْنَ فِيْٓ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ ؕ اَنّٰى يُصْرَفُوْنَ ﴿٦٩﴾
الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِالْكِتٰبِ وَبِمَآ اَرْسَلْنَا بِهٖ رُسُلَنَا ۛ فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُوْنَ
﴿٧٠﴾ اِذِ الْاَغْلٰلُ فِيْٓ اَعْنَاقِهِمْ وَالسَّلٰسِلُ ؕ يُسْحَبُوْنَ ﴿٧١﴾ فِي
الْحَمِيْمِ ۙ ثُمَّ فِي النَّارِ يُسْجَرُوْنَ ﴿٧٢﴾ ثُمَّ قِيْلَ لَهُمْ اَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ
تُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿٧٣﴾ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ ؕ قَالُوْا ضَلُّوْا عَنَّا بَلْ لَّمْ نَكُنْ نَّدْعُوْا
مِنْ قَبْلُ شَيْئًا ؕ كَذٰلِكَ يُضِلُّ اللّٰهُ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿٧٤﴾ ذٰلِكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ
تَفْرَحُوْنَ فِي الْاَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَبِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَمْرَحُوْنَ ﴿٧٥﴾ اُدْخُلُوْٓا

أَبْوَابَ جَهَنَّمَ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا ۚ فَبِئْسَ مَثْوَى الْمُتَكَبِّرِيْنَ ﴿٧٦﴾ فَاصْبِرْ
اِنَّ وَعْدَ اللّٰهِ حَقٌّ ۚ فَاِمَّا نُرِيَنَّكَ بَعْضَ الَّذِىْ نَعِدُهُمْ اَوْنَتَوَفَّيَنَّكَ فَاِلَيْنَا
يُرْجَعُوْنَ ﴿٧٧﴾ وَلَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلاً مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْهُمْ مَّنْ قَصَصْنَا
عَلَيْكَ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ لَّمْ نَقْصُصْ عَلَيْكَ ؕ وَمَا كَانَ لِرَسُوْلٍ اَنْ يَّاْتِىَ
بِاٰيَةٍ اِلاَّ بِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ ۚ فَاِذَا جَآءَ اَمْرُاللّٰهِ قُضِىَ بِالْحَقِّ وَخَسِرَ هُنَالِكَ
الْمُبْطِلُوْنَ ﴿٧٨﴾

Have you not seen those who quarrel in the matter of the verses of Allah? From where are they being turned away (by their selfish desires?) [69] - those who rejected the Book and what We sent with Our messengers. So, they will soon come to know. [70] - when shackles will be round their necks, and chains. They will be dragged [71] into the hot water after which they will be thrown in the Fire as a fuel. [72] Then, it will be said to them, "Where are those whom you used to associate (in worship) [73] beside Allah?" They will say, "They are lost to us, rather, we used to invoke nothing at all. This is how Allah makes disbelievers get lost. [74] (It will be said to them,) "This is because you used to rejoice on the earth wrongfully, and because you used to show arrogance. [75] Enter the gates of Jahannam to live in it forever. So, how evil is the abode of the arrogant. [76]

Therefore, be patient. Surely, the promise of Allah is true. Then, whether We show you (in your life) a part of the promise We are making to them, or make you die (before they are punished), in any case they have to be returned to Us. [77] And We had sent messengers before you. Among them there are those whose history We have narrated to you, and of them there are those whose history We did not narrate to you. And it is not up to a messenger that he could come up with a Sign without the permission of Allah. So, when the command of Allah will come, matters will stand decided justly, and on that occasion all adherents of falsehood will turn into losers. [78]

Commentary

In verses 71 and 72, it was said: يُسْحَبُوْنَ فِى الْحَمِيْمِ ثُمَّ فِى النَّارِ يُسْجَرُوْنَ (They

will be dragged [71] into the hot water after which they will be thrown in the Fire as a fuel.). The word: حَمِيم (*al-ḥamīm*) is boiling hot water. The verse seems to suggest that the people of Jahannam will first be put into the hamim, then, into the jahim, that is, the Jahannam. Again, it also seems to suggest that the hamim is somewhere outside the Jahannam. The verse: ثُمَّ اِنَّ مَرْجِعَهُمْ لَا اِلَى الْجَحِيْمِ (Then, their return is but to the Fire - Aṣ-Ṣaffāt, 37:68) also appears to be suggesting that the hamim is located somewhere outside the Jahannam. The people of Jahannam will be brought here to drink its water, and will then be returned to Jahannam. Then there are some verses of the Qur'ān that suggest that the hamim too is within the jahim or Jahannam as in: هٰذِهٖ جَهَنَّمُ الَّتِىْ يُكَذِّبُ بِهَا الْمُجْرِمُوْنَ يَطُوْفُوْنَ بَيْنَهَا وَبَيْنَ حَمِيْمٍ اٰنٍ (This is the Jahannam (Hell) that the guilty people deny. They will circle around between it and between hot, boiling water - Ar-Raḥmān, 55:43,44). Here too, it is explicitly said that the hamim is also within the Jahannam.

A little deliberation shows that there is no contradiction between these two things. There will be many strata or sections of Jahannam itself serving as venues of many kinds of punishment. One of these could be that of hamim which could as well be called as being outside the Jahannam because of its separate and distinct location, and since this is also a section of Jahannam itself, therefore, it could also be called the Jahannam. Ibn Kathīr has said that the people of Jahannam, shackled in chains, will sometime be dragged into the hamim and at others, in Jahannam.

In verse 74, it was said: قَالُوْا ضَلُّوْا عَنَّا (They will say, "They are lost to us,....), that is, once they reach Jahannam, the disbelievers will say that all those idols and satans they used to worship have disappeared in the sense that they do not see them around, though, they might as well be lying somewhere in a corner of Jahannam, as their being in Jahannam stands proved from other verses of the Qur'ān, for instance: اِنَّكُمْ وَمَا تَعْبُدُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ حَصَبُ جَهَنَّمَ (Surely, you and whatever you worship other than Allah are the fuel for Jahannam - Al-Anbiyā', 21:98)

The word: تَفْرَحُوْنَ (*tafraḥun*) in verse 75: بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَفْرَحُوْنَ فِى الْاَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَبِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَمْرَحُوْنَ (This is because you used to rejoice on the earth wrongfully, and because you used to show arrogance.) has been derived from: فَرَح (*faraḥ*) which means to be happy while the word: تَمْرَحُوْنَ (*tamraḥun*) is

from: مرح (*maraḥ*) which means to exult unduly or to trample over the rights of others by priding on one's wealth and power. Hence, this kind of marah or undue exultation is absolutely blameworthy and *ḥarām* (unlawful). As for *faraḥ* or mirth, it can be explained by saying that seeking enjoyment out of sinfulness under the intoxication of wealth coupled with the absence of any thought of there being a God is certainly *ḥarām* and impermissible. Meant in this verse is this kind of *faraḥ* - as it also appears in the story of Qārūn (Korah) in the same sense: لاتَفرَح اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَايُحِبُّ الفَرِحِينَ ("Do not exult. Surely, Allah does not like the exultant.- al-Qaṣaṣ, 28:76). There is another degree of *faraḥ* - that one takes good things of life as blessings from Allah Ta'ālā, and expresses his or her joy on having these - this is permissible, in fact, is recommended (*mustaḥabb*), and desirable. It is about such *faraḥ* that the Qur'ān has said: فَبِذٰلِكَ فَليَفرَحُوا (with these they should rejoice - Yūnus, 10:58). As for *maraḥ*, it is a cause of punishment absolutely, without any restriction. Therefore, no qualifying words were added to it. But, in the case of *faraḥ*, the words: بِغَيرِ الحَقِّ (*bi ghayril-ḥaqq*: wrongfully) are added. It was thus pointed out that jubilating over the undue and the impermissible was forbidden (*ḥarām*) while being pleased with blessings that are rightful and permissible as an expression of gratitude was an act of *'ibādah* (worship of Allah) and *thawāb* (reward from Him).

In verse 77, it was said: فَاصبِر اِنَّ وَعدَ اللّٰهِ حَقٌّ فَاِمَّا نُرِيَنَّكَ (Therefore, be patient. Surely, the promise of Allah is true. Then, whether We show you [in your life] a part of the promise We are making to them, or make you die [before they are punished], in any case they have to be returned to Us). From this verse it appears that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was hopefully waiting for the disbelievers to be punished. Therefore, it was to comfort him that he was asked to be somewhat patient about it. The promise of Allah for them, that they will be punished, will certainly be fulfilled - may be during his lifetime, or after he has departed from the mortal world. Waiting for the disbelievers to be punished apparently seems contrary to the dignity of one who was sent with universal mercy. But, here the matter is different. When the purpose of punishing criminals is to bring comfort to innocent believers who were oppressed, then, the punishment of criminals is not contrary to compassion and mercy. Nobody regards the punishment given to a criminal against the dictate of mercy.

Verses 79 - 85

اَللّٰهُ الَّذِىْ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْاَنْعَامَ لِتَرْكَبُوْا مِنْهَا وَمِنْهَا تَاْكُلُوْنَ ﴿٧٩﴾
وَلَكُمْ فِيْهَا مَنَافِعُ وَلِتَبْلُغُوْا عَلَيْهَا حَاجَةً فِىْ صُدُوْرِكُمْ وَعَلَيْهَا
وَعَلَى الْفُلْكِ تُحْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٨٠﴾ وَيُرِيْكُمْ اٰيٰتِهٖ ۖ فَاَىَّ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ
تُنْكِرُوْنَ ﴿٨١﴾ اَفَلَمْ يَسِيْرُوْا فِى الْاَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرُوْا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ
الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ۗ كَانُوْٓا اَكْثَرَ مِنْهُمْ وَاَشَدَّ قُوَّةً وَّاٰثَارًا فِى الْاَرْضِ
فَمَآ اَغْنٰى عَنْهُمْ مَّا كَانُوْا يَكْسِبُوْنَ ﴿٨٢﴾ فَلَمَّا جَآءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُمْ
بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ فَرِحُوْا بِمَا عِنْدَهُمْ مِّنَ الْعِلْمِ وَحَاقَ بِهِمْ مَّا كَانُوْا بِهٖ
يَسْتَهْزِءُوْنَ ﴿٨٣﴾ فَلَمَّا رَاَوْا بَاْسَنَا قَالُوْٓا اٰمَنَّا بِاللّٰهِ وَحْدَهٗ وَكَفَرْنَا
بِمَا كُنَّا بِهٖ مُشْرِكِيْنَ ﴿٨٤﴾ فَلَمْ يَكُ يَنْفَعُهُمْ اِيْمَانُهُمْ لَمَّا رَاَوْا بَاْسَنَا ۗ
سُنَّتَ اللّٰهِ الَّتِىْ قَدْ خَلَتْ فِىْ عِبَادِهٖ ۚ وَخَسِرَ هُنَالِكَ الْكٰفِرُوْنَ
ع ﴿٨٥﴾

Allah is the One who made for you the cattle, so that you may ride some of them, and of them you eat. [79] and for you there are (other) benefits in them and so that, (riding) on them, you meet any need you have in your hearts; and on them and on boats you are carried. [80] And He shows you His signs. Then, which of the signs of Allah would you (still) deny? [81] Have they not traveled through the earth and seen how was the fate of those before them? Most of them were more in numbers than these, and superior in vigor and vestiges left on the earth. So then, whatever they used to earn did not work for them at all. [82] And when their messengers came to them with manifest signs, they exulted because of whatever of knowledge they had, and they were encircled by what they used to ridicule. [83] And when they saw Our punishment, they said, "We have (now) come to believe in Allah alone, and We have rejected everything we used to ascribe (to Him) as partners." [84] But, their profession of faith was not (competent) to benefit them, once they had seen Our punishment - a

customary practice of Allah that has been there all along in the matter of His servants - and hence, the disbelievers became the losers. [85]

Commentary

In verse 83, it was said: فَرِحُوا بِمَا عِنْدَ هُمْ مِّنَ الْعِلْمِ (they exulted because of whatever of knowledge they had,) that is, when the messengers of Allah Ta'ālā came to these deniers, who were utterly oblivious to their end, with clear arguments in favor of *tauḥīd* (Oneness of Allah) and *'imān* (faith), they took their knowledge to be better and truer than the knowledge brought by prophets, and started rejecting what they said. What was this knowledge with which the disbelievers were exultant to the extent that they would even reject the body of knowledge brought by prophets? It could be some sort of 'compounded ignorance' جهل مركب (*aljahl-ul-murakkab* whereby an ignorant person, despite his sheer ignorance, believes himself to be knowledgeable). This does not qualify to be 'knowledge' at all. Or, this knowledge of theirs means awareness in the fields of trade, industry and things like that. They really had expertise in these fields according to their time. The noble Qur'ān alludes to this knowledge of theirs in a verse of Sūrah Ar-Rūm in the following words: يَعْلَمُوْنَ ظَاهِرًا مِّنَ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ عَنِ الْاٰخِرَةِ هُمْ غٰفِلُوْنَ (They know something superficial of the worldly life, but of the Hereafter they are negligent.- Ar-Rūm, 30:7) It means that these people do know a good deal about the material life of the world, and also know how to get most benefited by it, but are totally ignorant or heedless of the Hereafter where they have to live for ever, either in bliss or in bane, and both of which are also everlasting. In this verse, even if we were to take this knowledge to be the worldly knowledge only, it would means 'since these people deny the Day of Judgment and the Hereafter and do not know, or want to know, its everlasting reward and punishment, therefore, they do not see anything beyond their knowledge of the apparent and are quite pleased with it, and as a result do not pay heed to areas of knowledge brought by the noble prophets.' (Maẓharī)

In verse 85, it was said: فَلَمْ يَكُ يَنْفَعُهُمْ إِيْمَانُهُمْ (But, their profession of faith was not [competent] to benefit them, once they had seen Our punishment), that is, it is after seeing the punishment that these people are confessing to the true faith, but a declaration of faith at this late hour is not acceptable and trustworthy with Allah. It appears in Ḥadīth: يقبل الله توبة العبد مالم يغرغر (Allah accepts the taubah [repentance] of the servant

before the agony and rattle of death overtakes him). (Ibn Kathīr) Similarly, once Divine punishment has come face to face, no repentance and no declaration of faith made by anyone remains acceptable.

اَللّٰهُمَّ اِنّا نَسئَلك العفووالعافية والتوبة قبل الموت واليسر والمعافاة عند الموت والمغفرة والرَّحمة بعد الموت ببركة الِ حٰمٓ وصلى اللّٰه تعالىٰ على النّبى الكريم.

O Allah, we ask of You the obliteration of all sins, and well-being, and repentance before death, and ease and pardon at the time of death, and forgiveness and mercy after death with the barakah of 'Al Ḥā Mīm, and blessings of Allah on the noble prophet صلى اللّٰه عليه وسلم .

Alḥamdulillāh

The Commentary on

Sūrah Al-Mu'min

[Ghāfir]

Sūrah Ḥāmīm As-Sajdah

Sūrah Ḥāmīm As-Sajdah is Makkī. It has 54 verses and 6 sections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 8

حٰمٓ ﴿۱﴾ تَنْزِيْلٌ مِّنَ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ ﴿۲﴾ كِتٰبٌ فُصِّلَتْ اٰيٰتُهٗ قُرْاٰنًا
عَرَبِيًّا لِّقَوْمٍ يَّعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۳﴾ بَشِيْرًا وَّنَذِيْرًا ۚ فَاَعْرَضَ اَكْثَرُهُمْ فَهُمْ
لَا يَسْمَعُوْنَ ﴿۴﴾ وَقَالُوْا قُلُوْبُنَا فِيْٓ اَكِنَّةٍ مِّمَّا تَدْعُوْنَآ اِلَيْهِ وَفِيْٓ اٰذَانِنَا
وَقْرٌ وَّمِنْۢ بَيْنِنَا وَبَيْنِكَ حِجَابٌ فَاعْمَلْ اِنَّنَا عٰمِلُوْنَ ﴿۵﴾ قُلْ اِنَّمَآ اَنَا
بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ يُوْحٰٓى اِلَيَّ اَنَّمَآ اِلٰهُكُمْ اِلٰهٌ وَّاحِدٌ فَاسْتَقِيْمُوْٓا اِلَيْهِ
وَاسْتَغْفِرُوْهُ ۗ وَوَيْلٌ لِّلْمُشْرِكِيْنَ ﴿۶﴾ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْتُوْنَ الزَّكٰوةَ وَهُمْ
بِالْاٰخِرَةِ هُمْ كٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿۷﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ لَهُمْ
اَجْرٌ غَيْرُ مَمْنُوْنٍ ﴿۸﴾

Ḥā Mīm [1] This is a revelation from the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful- [2] a book whose verses are elaborated in the form of an Arabic Qur'ān for a people who understand[3], having good news and warning. Yet most of them turned away, so they do not listen. [4] And they say, " Our hearts are [wrapped] in covers against that to which you invite us, and in our ears there is deafness, and between you and us there is a barrier. So, do (in your way). We too are doing (in our own way)". [5] Say, " I am but a human being like you; it is revealed

to me that your god is only One God. So, become straight towards Him, and seek forgiveness from Him, and woe to the Mushriks (those who ascribe partners to Allah) [6] **who do not pay *zakāh*; and of the life of the Hereafter, they are deniers."** [7] **As for those who believe and do righteous deeds, for them there is a reward that will never be interrupted.** [8]

Commentary

The seven Sūrahs that commence with "Ḥā Mīm" are known as "Al Ḥāmīm' or 'Hawamim'. Some more words are added as suffixes in their names to differentiate between them, for example, the 'Ḥā Mīm' of Sūrah Mu'min is called "Ḥā Mīm Al-Mu'in, and 'Ḥā Mīm' of this Sūrah is called 'Ḥā Mīm Sajdah' or 'Ḥā Mīm Fuṣṣilat'. Both the names of this Sūrah are well-known.

The first addressees of this Sūrah are Quraysh of 'Arabia among whom Qur'ān was revealed in their own language. They had witnessed the marvel of the Qur'ān, and they had also seen innumerable miracles of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. And yet they turned away from the Qur'ān. What to say of understanding, they did not even bear to listen to the Qur'ān. Eventually , in response to the affectionate advices of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, they declared that they neither understand what he says, nor do their hearts accept it, nor are their ears prepared to listen to it, and that there are double barriers between him and them, so he should carry on with his business and leave them to their own.

This is the meaning of the first five verses of this Sūrah. In these verses, Allah Almighty has specially addressed and advised Quraysh that Qur'ān has been revealed in Arabic language, so that you do not have any difficulty in understanding the contents. At the same time three qualities of the Holy Qur'ān have been stated.. Firstly it is said, 'فُصِّلَتْ اٰيٰتُهٗ' Here, the word *'fuṣṣilat'* is a derivative of *faṣl* which originally means distinguishing the subjects by separating them. So فُصِّلَتْ means stating things very clearly by explaining in detail, either by separating them subject - wise in different chapters, or by mentioning them at one place. Different subjects like injunctions of Shari'ah, stories, beliefs, refutation of the people of false beliefs, etc. have been stated separately in the verses of the Holy Qur'ān, and each subject has been explained by examples as well. The second and third qualities of the Holy Qur'ān have been stated

as that of communicating good news of everlasting happiness to the believers and of warning the non-believers of perpetual scourges.

And after stating these qualities, it is said towards the end of the verse-3, لِقَوْمٍ يَّعْلَمُوْنَ (for a people who understand) which means that the verses of the Holy Qur'ān being in Arabic, their being clear and evident and their communicating good news as well as warnings can only benefit those people who intend to ponder over them and understand them. But the Arabs and the Quraysh, despite all this, turned away from the Qur'ān, and let alone trying to understand, they did not even bear to listen to the Qur'ān. This has been mentioned at the end of verse 4: "Yet most of them turned away, so they do not listen."

An offer by the infidel's of Makkah to the Holy Prophet ﷺ

The infidels of Quraysh, who are the direct addressees of this Sūrah, tried very hard to suppress the propagation of Islam in early days after the revelation of the Qur'ān, through the use of physical force, and tried equally hard to intimidate the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and those who believed in him by causing to them all sorts of pains and agonies. But despite their opposition, Islam kept on widening the circle of its adherents, and increasing in strength. At first powerful and valiant persons like Sayyidnā 'Umar Ibn Khaṭṭāb رضي الله عنه entered Islam, then Sayyidnā Hamzah رضي الله عنه, one of the accepted leaders of Quraysh, embraced Islam. Now the Quraysh of Makkah started thinking that, instead of intimidation, persuasion and temptation may be more effective in blocking the way for Islam. An incident of this nature has been reproduced by Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Kathīr from the reports of Musnad of Bazzār, Abū Ya'lā and Baghawī. There are some differences in these reports. Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Kathīr has considered the report of Baghawi to be the nearest to the truth. And then he has reproduced this incident from the book 'Kitāb-us-Sirah' written by Muḥammad Ibn Isḥāq and has preferred this version to the other three. Therefore, this incident is being reproduced here in accordance with the report of Ibn Isḥāq.

Muḥammad Ibn Isḥāq has stated that Muḥammad Ibn Ka'b Quraẓī says that this report has reached him from 'Utbah Ibn Rabī'ah who was recognized as one of the foremost leaders of Quraysh. One day he was sitting in Almasjid-ul-Ḥarām with a party of Quraysh, while the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was sitting alone in a corner on the other side.

'Utbah asked his people, "If you agree, I would like to talk to Muḥammad ﷺ and offer him some attractions, so that if he accepts them, we give them to him and he, in exchange, would cease to propagate against our religion and faith. This was a time when Sayyidnā Ḥamzah ؓ had become a Muslim, and the number of Muslims was increasing, and they were getting stronger day by day. All of 'Utbah's men spoke with one voice, and said "O 'Abul-Walīd ('Utbah's filial name)! "Do so. Please talk to him".

'Utbah got up from his place, and went upto the Holy Prophet ﷺ and said, "O nephew! you know that you are high-born and a noble man of the Quraysh; your family is large, noble and respectable to all of us. But you have put the tribe in a great difficulty. You have given such an invitational call which has created differences among us, has made us fools, has stigmatized our deities and our religion, and declared our forefathers to be infidels. So please listen to me. I am going to present a few things to you, so that you may select any of them. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "O 'Abdul Walīd! go ahead and say what you wish to say; I am listening to you."

'Utbah 'Abul Walīd said, "O nephew! If the purpose of your movement is to collect possessions, we promise to collect so much wealth for you that you would become the wealthiest person of the nation. If the purpose is to become a leader and a ruler, then all of us would accept you as the leader of the whole of Quraysh, and would not do anything without your order. If you want kingdom, then we accept you as our king. And if the case is that some Jinn or Satan comes to you, and compels you to do these things and you are unable to drive him away, then we will have you treated at our expense, because we know that a person prevailed upon by a Satan can be cured by treatments." 'Utbah kept on speaking at some length and the Holy Prophet ﷺ kept on listening to him.

At the end, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "O 'Abdul Walīd! Have you finished? When he said yes, then the Holy Prophet ﷺ said to him, "Now please listen to me." And 'Utbah replied, "No doubt, I would listen to you."

The Holy Prophet ﷺ, instead of saying anything himself started reciting Sūrah Fuṣṣilat (the present Sūrah):

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ. حٰمٓ. تَنْزِيْلٌ مِّنَ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ . كِتٰبٌ فُصِّلَتْ اٰيٰتُهٗ قُرْاٰنًا عَرَبِيًّا لِّقَوْمٍ يَّعْلَمُوْنَ.

"With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful." Merciful. Ḥā Mīm. This is a revelation from the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful-- a book whose verses are elaborated in the form of an Arabic Qur'an for a people who understand."

Bazzār and Baghawī narrate that, during the recitation of the verses of this Sūrah, when the Holy Prophet ﷺ reached this verse:

فَاِنْ اَعْرَضُوْا فَقُلْ اَنْذَرْتُكُمْ صَاعِقَةً مِّثْلَ صَاعِقَةِ عَادٍ وَّثَمُوْدَ

"So, if they turn away, then say, " I have warned you of a calamity like the calamity of 'Ad and Thamūd,"(41:13)

'Utbah put his hand on the blessed mouth of Holy Prophet ﷺ, and asked him to have mercy on his lineage and relationship, and not to recite any further for their sake. Ibn Isḥāq narrates that when the Holy Prophet ﷺ commenced the recitation of these verses, 'Utbah listened quietly and attentively while supporting his back by his hands, till the Holy Prophet ﷺ reached the verse of Sajdah in this Sūrah and prostrated. Then he addressed 'Utbah, and said to him, "You have heard what you heard, and now you are free to do what you like." 'Utbah got up and started walking towards his party. When they saw him coming, his party members started saying among themselves that, by God, 'Abul Walīd's face has changed - it is not the same as it was when he had gone. When 'Utbah reached them, they asked him, "What is the news you have come with?" He said to them:

اِنی سمعت قولا واللّٰہ ما سمعت مثله قط، واللّٰہ ما هو بالسحر ولا بالشعر ولا بالکهانة، یا معشر قریش اطیعونی واجعلوها لی' خَلُوّا بین الرجل وبین ما هو فیه فاعتزلوه فواللّٰہ لیکونن لقوله الذی سمعت نباء، فان تصبه العرب فقد کفیتموه بغیرکم، وان یظهر علی العرب فملکه ملککم وعزه عزّکم وکنتم اسعد الناس به

"I heard such a discourse that, by God, I have never heard any discourse like it before; by God, it is neither a sorcerer's enchantment, nor a poet's poetry, nor a wizard incantation (which they obtain from satans). O my tribe of Quraysh! Listen to me, and let me handle this matter. My advice is that you should give up confronting him, and let him go about his business, because this discourse of his is bound to receive

> eminence. You should wait and see how the rest of Arabia treats them. If, besides Quraysh, the rest of Arabs defeat them, then your problem is solved without any effort on you part, and if he prevails on the rest of Arabs, then his rule will be your rule, their honor will will be your honor, and you will be the luckiest people because of him." (Ibn Kathīr p. 91, vol. 4)

When his Qurayshi companions heard his speech, they said to him "O Abūl Walīd! Muḥammad ﷺ has cast an enchanting spell upon you with his words." ʻUtbah replied to them, "I have given you my advice, and now it is upto you to do what you like.

وَقَالُوا قُلُوبُنَا فِیٓ اَکِنَّةٍ - (And they say, " Our hearts are [wrapped] in covers against that to which you invite us - 41:5) Here three statements of the infidels of Quraysh are reproduced. Firstly, they said that there was a cover on their hearts against his discourse, and therefore they do not understand what he says. Secondly, that their ears are deaf to listen to his speech. Thirdly, that there are barriers between him and them. The Holy Qur'ān has reproduced this statement of theirs in the context of denouncing it, which indicates that these statements are wrong. But at another place, Qur'ān has also stated their condition to be the same. A verse of Sūrah Anʻām states:

وَجَعَلْنَا عَلٰى قُلُوْبِهِمْ اَكِنَّةً اَنْ يَّفْقَهُوْهُ وَفِیْٓ اٰذَانِهِمْ وَقْرًا

> But We have put coverings on their hearts, so that they do not understand, and heaviness in their ears. - 6:25.

One may doubt that there is a conflict between this verse and that of Sūrah An'ām in this respect. But the answer is that the infidels, by saying the above, meant that they were helpless and excusable, because their hearts were curtained, their ears were leaden and there were barriers between them and him. So how could they listen to him and accept what he said? This is how they proved themselves to be helpless. And when the Holy Qur'ān stated their condition (in Sūrah An'ām) to be the same, it did not consider them to be helpless, rather held them fully capable of hearing and understanding. It is when they refused even to hear, and had no intention of understanding, then as a punishment, heedlessness and ignorance were imposed upon them, but not to the degree that they were deprived of their volition; rather if they had changed their minds even then, their abilities of hearing and

understanding would have been restored fully. (Bayān-ul-Qur'ān)

Prophetic reply to the Denial and Ridicule of Disbelievers

The infidels saying that their hearts were covered and their ears were leaden, etc., was not because they had become deaf and bereft of intellect; rather it was a kind of ridicule and jest that they used to make. But the reply to this offensive ridicule that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was directed to give was not to be offensive in the like manner, but to express his ﷺ humility that he ﷺ is not God, having authority over everything, rather he ﷺ is also a human being; the only difference is that his Lord has given him ﷺ guidance through *waḥy*, and has supported him with miracles. It should have resulted in all of them declaring their faith in him. Even now they are advised to turn in worship and obedience to Allah only and to repent and renounce the past sins.

Toward the end of the address, Both the aspects of glad tidings and of warnings of the Qur'ān have been presented to them, making it clear that there are dire consequences for the *mushrikīn* (those who associate partners with Allah) and eternal rewards for the believers. In the context of the evil fate of the Mushriks, one reason for it has been mentioned that these people did not use to pay *Zakāh*. This gives rise to some questions. The first one is that these verses were revealed in Makkah, whereas *Zakāh* was made obligatory in Madīnah. So, how can they be accused of non-payment of *Zakāh* before *Zakāh* was made obligatory?

Ibn Kathīr, in reply to this question, has said that *Zakāh,* in principle, had been obligated alongwith Ṣalāh right from the beginning of Islam, as mentioned in Sūrah Muzzammil. However the determination of the Nisāb (minimum capital and property for the applicability of *Zakāh*) and the arrangements for its collection were made in Madīnah. Therefore it is not correct to say that *Zakāh* was not obligated in Makkah.

Are Non-Muslims required to follow the practical injunctions of Shari'ah?

The second doubt is that many jurisprudents do not consider Non-muslims to have been asked or required to carry out religious deeds such as *Ṣalāh,* Fasting, *Ḥajj* and *Zakāh*. The direction is that they have to embrace the faith first, and then they are liable to the practical precepts of Sharī'ah. According to this view, they are not liable to pay

zakāh. Why then have they been reprimanded for not paying Zakāh in this verse?

It can be said in reply that many of the leading scholars and experts of Islamic jurisprudence are of the view that even the Non-Muslims are required to carry out the obligatory duties of religion; If this view is adopted, there remains no doubt about this verse that has mentioned non-payment of *zakāh* as one of the reasons for their being punished. As for those scholars who do not consider Non-Muslims to have been asked to carry out the obligatory duties, they can say that the real denunciation is not for non-payment of Zakāh, but because this non-payment is due to their disbelief and is a sign of it. Therefore the object of the reprimand is that had they been believers, they would have been strict in paying Zakāh; their fault is their failure to embrace the faith. (Bayān-ul-Qur'ān).

The detailed discussion of whether or not the infidels have been asked to follow the practical precepts of Sharī'ah may be found in the fifth volume of the author's Arabic book "Aḥkām-ul-Qur'ān".

The third question which arises here is that the commandment for Ṣalāh is the most important of all the commandments of Islam which has not been mentioned here, so what is the wisdom behind making a special mention of Zakāh? Qurṭubī etc., have said in reply that Quraysh of Arabia were wealthy people, and they were known for their trait of giving alms and charity and helping the poor. But when somebody would become a Muslim, they would deprive him of such financial help and social assistance also. Zakāh has been specially mentioned because the object is to denounce this practice. (Allah knows best)

لَهُمْ اَجْرٌ غَيْرُ مَمْنُوْنٍ (For them there is a reward that will never be interrupted.....41:8) The word *mamnūn* used here means something interrupted. The sense is that the reward of those people who are firm in their faith and regular in their good deeds would be continuous and eternal. Some exegetes have explained the intention of the verse that if a Muslim, despite being regular in religious duties, could not perform them at any time due to illness, travel or some other reason, the reward for the good deeds is not cut off. Rather, Allah Almighty orders the angels to keep on crediting those good deeds to his account which he used to carry out regularly in normal conditions, but could not do them due to illness or

some other reason. Aḥādīth on this subject are narrated in Ṣaḥīḥ of Bukhārī as reported by Sayyidnā Abū Mūsā Ash'arī and in Sharḥ-us-Sunnah of Baghawī by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar ﷺ and by Sayyidnā Anas ﷺ and in Razīn by Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ (Maẓharī)

Verses 9 - 12

قُلْ اَئِنَّكُمْ لَتَكْفُرُوْنَ بِالَّذِىْ خَلَقَ الْاَرْضَ فِىْ يَوْمَيْنِ وَتَجْعَلُوْنَ لَهٗ
اَنْدَادًا ۭ ذٰلِكَ رَبُّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٩﴾ وَجَعَلَ فِيْهَا رَوَاسِيَ مِنْ فَوْقِهَا
وَبٰرَكَ فِيْهَا وَقَدَّرَ فِيْهَآ اَقْوَاتَهَا فِىْٓ اَرْبَعَةِ اَيَّامٍ ۭ سَوَاۗءً لِّلسَّاۗىِٕلِيْنَ ﴿١٠﴾
ثُمَّ اسْتَوٰٓى اِلَى السَّمَاۗءِ وَهِىَ دُخَانٌ فَقَالَ لَهَا وَلِلْاَرْضِ ائْتِيَا طَوْعًا
اَوْ كَرْهًا ۭ قَالَتَآ اَتَيْنَا طَاۗىِٕعِيْنَ ﴿١١﴾ فَقَضٰىهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمٰوَاتٍ فِىْ
يَوْمَيْنِ وَاَوْحٰى فِىْ كُلِّ سَمَاۗءٍ اَمْرَهَا ۭ وَزَيَّنَّا السَّمَاۗءَ الدُّنْيَا
بِمَصَابِيْحَ ڰ وَحِفْظًا ۭ ذٰلِكَ تَقْدِيْرُ الْعَزِيْزِ الْعَلِيْمِ ﴿١٢﴾

Say, Do you really disbelieve in the One who has created the earth in two days, and ascribe to Him partners? That is the Lord of the worlds. [9] **He has placed firm mountains in it (the earth) towering above it, and put blessings in it, and proportioned its foods therein, in four days, equal for those who ask.** [10] **Then He turned straight to the sky, while it was a smoke, and said to it and to the earth, " Come (to My obedience), both of you, willingly or unwillingly." Both said, " We come willingly."** [11] **So He accomplished them as seven skies in two days, and settled in every sky its (due) thing. And We have decorated the closest sky with lamps, and protected it properly. All this is the determination of the All-Mighty, the All-Knowing.** [12]

Commentary

The real objective of these eloquent verses is to warn the people who, denying the Oneness of Allah, associate others with Him. With reference to the great creations of Allah Almighty in the form of heavens and the earth, and the wisdom underlying their creation, the Mushriks are

reprimanded that they are so irrational in their beliefs that they believe such a Great and Omni-potent Creator to be in need of having partners in carrying out His divine functions. A reprimanding statement with a similar nature has also appeared in Sūrah Al-Baqarah in the following words:

كَيْفَ تَكْفُرُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَكُنْتُمْ اَمْوَاتًا فَاَحْيَاكُمْ، ثُمَّ يُمِيْتُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُحْيِيْكُمْ ثُمَّ اِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُوْنَ ﴿٢٨﴾ هُوَالَّذِىْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مَّا فِى الْاَرْضِ جَمِيْعًا ، ثُمَّ اسْتَوٰى اِلَى السَّمَآءِ فَسَوّٰهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمٰوٰتٍ ط وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿٢٩﴾

"How is it that you deny Allah despite that you were lifeless and He gave you life, then He will make you die, then make you alive again, and then to Him you will be returned? It is He who created for you all that the earth contains; then He turned to the heavens and made them seven skies -- and He is the knower of all things." (Verses 2:28-29)

The order of creation, the number of days in which this creation took place and other details are not given in the verses of Sūrah Al-Baqarah; they are mentioned here in Sūrah Fuṣṣilat.

The order of creation of the skies and the earth, and the Days of Creation

Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānawi has stated in Bayān-ul-Qur'ān that, although the creation of the earth and the skies has been mentioned briefly or in detail at hundreds of places in the Qur'ān, yet the sequence of their creation is probably mentioned in three verses only. One is this verse of Ḥā Mīm Sajdah, the second is the above mentioned verse of Sūrah Al-Baqarah, and the third is the following verse of Sūrah Nāzi'āt:

ءَ اَنْتُمْ اَشَدُّ خَلْقًا اَمِ السَّمَآءُ بَنٰهَا رَفَعَ سَمْكَهَا فَسَوّٰهَا وَاَغْطَشَ لَيْلَهَا وَاَخْرَجَ ضُحٰهَا وَالْاَرْضَ بَعْدَ ذٰلِكَ دَحٰهَا اَخْرَجَ مِنْهَا مَآءَهَا وَمَرْعٰهَا وَالْجِبَالَ اَرْسٰهَا

"Are you more difficult to create, or the sky? He has built it, He has raised its height, then made it proper and darkened its night and brought forth its daylight and, after that, He spread out the earth. From it He brought out its water and its meadows, and firmly fixed the mountains."(79:27-32)

During a cursory look into these three verses, one may feel a sort of apparent contradiction between them, because we find from Sūrah Al-Baqarah and Sūrah Ḥā Mīm that the earth was created before the

sky, whereas in Sūrah Nāzi'āt, earth appears to have been created after the sky. Maulānā Thānawi رحمہ اللہ تعالیٰ has stated that after a careful study of all these verses, it appears to him that only the matter of the earth came into existence first, and before it was molded into shape, the matter of sky came into existence in the form of a smoke. After that, the earth was molded into shape with mountains, trees, etc. and then the seven skies were given form out of the floating smoky matter. He hopes that this clarification would explain the harmony between all the verses. Only Allah knows the truth. (Bayān-ul-Qur'ān – Sūrah Al-Baqarah, section 3).

Some questions regarding this verse and their answers given by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ have been reported in Ṣaḥīḥ of Bukhārī. The explanation of this verse given by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ is about the same as that given above by Maulānā Thānawī رحمہ اللہ تعالیٰ – the words quoted by Ibn Kathīr are:

وخلق الارض فی یومین ثم خلق السمآء ثم استوٰی الی السّمآء فسوّٰبهنّ فی یومین اٰخرین ثم دحی الارض ودحیها ان اخرج منها المآء والمرعٰی وخلق الجبال والرمال والجماد و الآکام وما بینهما فی یومین اٰخرین فذٰلک قوله تعالیٰ دَحٰها.

Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Kathīr has also quoted the following as explanation of this verse given by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ with reference to Ibn Jarīr:

"The Jews of Madinah came to see the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and asked him about the creation of the earth and of the skies. The Holy Prophet ﷺ told them that Allah Almighty created the earth on Sunday and Monday, the mountains and the minerals therein on Tuesday, and the trees, water springs, cities, buildings and desolate plains on Wednesday – all this in four days as stated in the verse.

اَئِنَّكُمْ لَتَكْفُرُوْنَ بِالَّذِیْ خَلَقَ الْاَرْضَ فِیْ یَوْمَیْنِ وَتَجْعَلُوْنَ لَهٗۤ اَنْدَادًاؕ ذٰلِكَ رَبُّ الْعٰلَمِیْنَ . وَجَعَلَ فِیْهَا رَوَاسِیَ مِنْ فَوْقِهَا وَبٰرَكَ فِیْهَا وَقَدَّرَ فِیْهَاۤ اَقْوَاتَهَا فِیْۤ اَرْبَعَةِ اَیَّامٍؕ سَوَآءً لِّلسَّآئِلِیْنَ .

Then He created the sky on Thursday. And on Friday, He created the stars, the sun, the moon and the angels. All this was completed on Friday when three hours were still left. All the disasters and troubles that everything is going to face were created in the second hour, and in the third period Sayyidnā 'Ādam ﷺ was created and lodged in Paradise, Iblīs was

> commanded to prostrate before Sayyidnā 'Ādam ﷺ and turned out of Paradise when he refused to prostrate. All this was completed till the end of the third hour....(Ibn Kathīr). At the end, Ibn Kathīr says: "This *ḥadīth* has an element of gharabah" (that is, the contents of this Ḥadīth are not corroborated by other sources)

The commencement of creation took place on Saturday according to a Ḥadīth narrated by Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ, reported in Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim. As per this Ḥadīth, it took seven days for the creation of the earth and skies. But generally the explicit verses of the Qur'ān mention the duration of creation to be six days.

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا فِىْ سِتَّةِ اَيَّامٍ وَّمَا مَسَّنَا مِنْ لُّغُوْبٍ

> "And We created the heavens and the earth and all that is between them in six days, and no weariness even touched Us."(50:38)

Because of this, and also because of its (weak) chain of narrators, this Ḥadīth has been held as *'ma'lul'* (defective) by the leading *muḥaddithīn*. Ibn Kathīr رحمه الله تعالىٰ has stated that this Ḥadīth is one of the strange ones of Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim, and then stated that Imām Bukhārī, in his book Tarikh Kabīr, has considered this narration to be *ma'lul* (defective). And some scholars have quoted this statement as a saying of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ, narrated by Ka'b Aḥbār, and not as a statement of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and have said that this is the most correct. (Ibn Kathīr p. 94, vol. 4)

Similarly, other masters of Ḥadīth like Ibn-ul-Madini, Baihaqī, etc. have also considered it to be a statement of Ka'b Aḥbār. (Foot note of Zād-ul-Masīr by Ibn-ul-Jauzī, p. 273, vol. 7)

The narration of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ quoted above from Ibn Jarīr has also an element of *gharabah,* (being against other sources) according to Ibn Kathīr. One reason for its *gharabah* is that in this narration creation of Sayyidnā 'Ādam ﷺ took place alongwith the creation of skies in the last hour of Friday, and the divine order for prostration and the exit of Iblis from the Paradise is also mentioned to have taken place in the same hour. But it is patently clear from the text of many verses of the Qur'ān that creation of Sayyidnā 'Ādam ﷺ took place a long time after the creation of the earth and skies, when the earth

was provided with all the necessities, and it was inhabited by the Jinns and satans (devils). It was after all this that Allah Ta'ālā told the angels that He was going to make a vicegerent on the earth. (Maẓharī)

Briefly, of all the *aḥādīth* wherein the duration, days and sequence of creation of the earth and skies is narrated, no narration is such which can be said to be as absolutely certain as the Qur'ān. Rather, it is very likely that these may be Israelite traditions, not noble *aḥādīth*, as clarified by Ibn Kathīr about the Ḥadīth quoted in Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim and Nasā'ī. Therefore conclusions should be drawn from the verses of the Qur'ān only. The one thing found absolutely certain from the verses of the Qur'ān collectively is that the earth, the skies and whatever is inside them were created in six days only. The other thing found from the verses of Sūrah Ḥā Mīm Sajdah is that the creation of the earth, its mountains, trees, etc. took full four days. The third thing found is that the creation of skies took two days – it is not clarified whether it took two full days. There is some indication that two full days were not used and some part of the last day, being Friday, was left unused. It appears from these verses that it took four days for the creation of the earth and the remaining two days for the creation of the skies, the earth having been created first. But the verse of Sūrah Nazi'āt states clearly that the laying out of the earth and its completion took place after the creation of the skies. Therefore the sequence stated above, with reference to Bayān-ul-Qur'ān, that the creation of the earth took place in two stages, is not beyond reason. In the first two days, the earth and the matter for mountains, etc. were created, in the next two days the skies were created, and in the last two days the laying out of the earth and the creation of the mountains, trees rivers, springs etc. was completed. In this way the four days of the creation of the earth were not continuous. As for the sequence mentioned in the present verse of Sūrah Ḥā Mīm Sajdah, it is stated first that the creation of the earth took place in two days: خَلَقَ الْاَرْضَ فِىْ يَوْمَيْنِ (the One who has created the earth in two days, - 41:9), then after giving a reprimand to the *mushrikīn*, it is stated separately: وَجَعَلَ فِيْهَا رَوَاسِىَ مِنْ فَوْقِهَا وَبٰرَكَ فِيْهَا وَقَدَّرَ فِيْهَا اَقْوَاتَهَا فِىْ اَرْبَعَةِ اَيَّامٍ (He has placed firm mountains in it [the earth] towering above it, and put blessings in it, and proportioned its foods therein, in four days - 10). It should be remembered that the four days mentioned in this verse are inclusive of the first two days mentioned in verse 9, according to the

consensus of the exegetes. The first two days and the later four days are not separate, otherwise the total period of creation would become eight days which is against the explicit statement of the Qur'ān.

It appears that it would have been more proper at this point if, after mentioning the creation of earth in two days, the creation of mountains etc. were also mentioned in two days, and thus it would have been known that the total number of days taken for the creation of earth was four. But by choosing to state that the number of days including the remainder of the earth's creations totals four, Qur'ān has probably indicated that the four days were not continuous, but in two parts – two days before the creation of the skies, and two days after it. The creation of mountains etc. mentioned in the verse 10, relates to the period after the creation of the skies. And Allah knows best.

وَجَعَلَ فِيهَا رَوَاسِيَ مِن فَوْقِهَا (He has placed firm mountains in it (the earth) towering above it,...41:10) The mountains have been created to maintain the earth's balance as has been clarified in many verses of Qur'ān. It was not necessary for this purpose to raise them above the earth's surface and to make them so high – they could have been placed inside the earth also. But in raising them above and making them so high as to keep them away from the reach of human beings and animals, generally, there were thousands, rather innumerable, benefits for the inhabitants of the earth. Hence the words, "towering above it" in this verse point out to this special blessing.

وَقَدَّرَ فِيهَا أَقْوَاتَهَا فِي أَرْبَعَةِ أَيَّامٍ سَوَآءً لِّلسَّآئِلِينَ (and proportioned its foods therein, in four days, equal for those who ask......41:10) اقوات (*Aqwāt*) is plural of *Qūt* قُوت which means food, sustenance, including common necessities of human life. (Abū 'Ubaid – Zād-ul-Masīr by Ibn-ul- Jauzī)

Ḥasan ﷺ and Suddī have said in its explanation that Allah Almighty has predetermined the sustenance and maintenance for the inhabitants of every region according to their need and expedience in the sense that He issued directions that such and such items be produced in such and such qualities in this region of the earth. This predetermination has caused every region of the earth to have characteristics of its own, and different kinds of minerals, different kinds of vegetation, trees and animals have been created according to the needs, nature and preferences

of that zone.

This arrangement results in every region having different products and different dresses – *'Aṣb* in Yemen, Saburi in Sābūr, Ṭayalisah in Ray, wheat in some region, rice and other grains in other regions, cotton in some areas, jute in some others, apples and grapes in some areas, mangos in others; these differences in items accord with the differences in the nature of the different regions. 'Ikrimah and Ḍaḥḥāk state that these differences in the products in different regions have opened ways for international trade and for mutual cooperation between different regions and countries of the world. No region is independent of other regions for the fulfillment of its needs; mutual wants are the only firm basis for mutual cooperation. 'Ikrimah has stated that in some areas salt is sold for an equal weight of gold.

In fact, Allah Almighty has made this earth, so to say, such a great store of all necessities such as food, shelter, clothes, etc. of all its inhabitant, including billions and billions of humans and innumerable animals that are to come in this world up to Doomsday. These necessities have been kept inside it, and they will keep on growing and being supplied as needed until the Last Day of this world. All a man has to do is to take the necessities out of the earth according to his need and use them.

Further on, the text states: سَوَآءً لِّلسَّآئِلِيْنَ (equal for those who ask -10). Most of the commentators (*mufassirīn*) have related this sentence to the four days. It means that all these great creations took place in exactly four days. Generally 'four' does not always mean exactly four – it may be slightly more or slightly less, but the fractions are disregarded in such cases, and it is still called 'four'. The addition of the word 'equal' here in the verse has eliminated this possibility, and clarified that the creation of the earth and the skies and what is placed in them took place in exactly four days. And the word 'for those who ask' means those people who asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ regarding the creation of the earth and the skies, as the Jews did according to Tafsīr Ibn Jarīr and Ad-Durr-ul-Manthur. They have been told that all this creation took place in exactly four days. (Ibn Kathīr, Qurṭubī, Rūḥ)

And some exegetes Ibn Zayd, etc., have linked the words 'for those

who ask' with the foregoing sentence 'proportioned its foods therein" and held 'those who ask' to mean the needy people who ask for food. The meaning in this case would be that Allah Almighty has created all these different kinds and species of foods and necessities for the benefit of those who need and seek them, and since needy people usually ask for food, they have been called 'those who ask'. (Al-Baḥr-ul-Muḥīṭ)

Ibn Kathīr has quoted this explanation and said that it is like the statement of the Qur'ān اٰتٰىكُمْ مِّنْ كُلِّ مَا سَاَلْتُمُوْهُ (And He gave you whatever you asked for. - 14:34) 'you asked for' in this verse means 'you were in need of' even though it has not been asked literally, because Allah Almighty has bestowed those things even to those who did not ask for them.

فَقَالَ لَهَا وَلِلْاَرْضِ ائْتِيَا طَوْعًا اَوْ كَرْهًا قَالَتَآ اَتَيْنَا طَآئِعِيْنَ (and said to it and to the earth, "Come [to My obedience], both of you, willingly or unwillingly." Both said, "We come willingly." - 41:11) This command addressed to the earth and sky and their compliant and obedient reply, according to some exegetes, is a metaphorical expression for the readiness of the earth and the sky to comply with every order from Allah Almighty. But Ibn 'Aṭiyyah and other leading research scholars have stated that this is no metaphor – it is based on reality. Allah Almighty had endowed the earth and the skies with the faculty of intellect and comprehension of the commands addressed to them and also with the power of speaking and replying. Tafsīr Al-Baḥr-ul-Muḥīṭ, after quoting this explanation, has held it to be the most suitable and the best. Ibn Kathīr, after quoting the above explanation, has also quoted the statement of some exegetes that the earth's reply was given by that portion of the earth on which Baytullah has been constructed and the sky's reply was given by that portion of the sky which is just above the Baytullah, known as Al-Bayt-ul- Ma'mūr.

Verses 13 – 25

فَاِنْ اَعْرَضُوْا فَقُلْ اَنْذَرْتُكُمْ صٰعِقَةً مِّثْلَ صٰعِقَةِ عَادٍ وَّثَمُوْدَ ﴿١٣﴾
اِذْ جَآءَتْهُمُ الرُّسُلُ مِنْ بَيْنِ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ اَلَّا تَعْبُدُوْا اِلَّا اللّٰهَ
قَالُوْا لَوْ شَآءَ رَبُّنَا لَاَنْزَلَ مَلٰٓئِكَةً فَاِنَّا بِمَآ اُرْسِلْتُمْ بِهٖ كٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿١٤﴾ فَاَمَّا

عَادٌ فَاسْتَكْبَرُوْا فِى الْاَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَقَالُوْا مَنْ اَشَدُّ مِنَّا قُوَّةً ؕ
اَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ الَّذِىْ خَلَقَهُمْ هُوَ اَشَدُّ مِنْهُمْ قُوَّةً ؕ وَكَانُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا
يَجْحَدُوْنَ ﴿١٥﴾ فَاَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ رِيْحًا صَرْصَرًا فِىْٓ اَيَّامٍ نَّحِسَاتٍ
لِّنُذِيْقَهُمْ عَذَابَ الْخِزْىِ فِى الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ؕ وَلَعَذَابُ الْاٰخِرَةِ اَخْزٰى
وَهُمْ لَا يُنْصَرُوْنَ ﴿١٦﴾ وَاَمَّا ثَمُوْدُ فَهَدَيْنٰهُمْ فَاسْتَحَبُّوا الْعَمٰى عَلَى
الْهُدٰى فَاَخَذَتْهُمْ صٰعِقَةُ الْعَذَابِ الْهُوْنِ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَكْسِبُوْنَ ﴿١٧﴾
وَنَجَّيْنَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَكَانُوْا يَتَّقُوْنَ ﴿١٨﴾ وَيَوْمَ يُحْشَرُ اَعْدَآءُ اللّٰهِ
اِلَى النَّارِ فَهُمْ يُوْزَعُوْنَ ﴿١٩﴾ حَتّٰىٓ اِذَا مَا جَآءُوْهَا شَهِدَ عَلَيْهِمْ
سَمْعُهُمْ وَاَبْصَارُهُمْ وَجُلُوْدُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٢٠﴾ وَقَالُوْا
لِجُلُوْدِهِمْ لِمَ شَهِدْتُّمْ عَلَيْنَا ؕ قَالُوْٓا اَنْطَقَنَا اللّٰهُ الَّذِىْٓ اَنْطَقَ كُلَّ
شَىْءٍ وَّهُوَ خَلَقَكُمْ اَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَّاِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُوْنَ ﴿٢١﴾ وَمَا كُنْتُمْ
تَسْتَتِرُوْنَ اَنْ يَّشْهَدَ عَلَيْكُمْ سَمْعُكُمْ وَلَآ اَبْصَارُكُمْ وَلَا جُلُوْدُكُمْ
وَلٰكِنْ ظَنَنْتُمْ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَعْلَمُ كَثِيْرًا مِّمَّا تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٢٢﴾ وَذٰلِكُمْ
ظَنُّكُمُ الَّذِىْ ظَنَنْتُمْ بِرَبِّكُمْ اَرْدٰىكُمْ فَاَصْبَحْتُمْ مِّنَ الْخٰسِرِيْنَ ﴿٢٣﴾
فَاِنْ يَّصْبِرُوْا فَالنَّارُ مَثْوًى لَّهُمْ ؕ وَاِنْ يَّسْتَعْتِبُوْا فَمَا هُمْ مِّنَ الْمُعْتَبِيْنَ
﴿٢٤﴾ وَقَيَّضْنَا لَهُمْ قُرَنَآءَ فَزَيَّنُوْا لَهُمْ مَّا بَيْنَ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ
وَحَقَّ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقَوْلُ فِىْٓ اُمَمٍ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِّنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْاِنْسِ ج
اِنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا خٰسِرِيْنَ ﴿٢٥﴾

So, if they turn away, then say, "I have warned you of a calamity like the calamity of 'Ād and Thamūd, [13] when the messengers came to them from their front and from their back, saying, "Do not worship anyone but Allah." They said, "Had our Lord (really) willed (to send someone as messenger), He would have sent down angels. So, we are deniers of what you have been sent

with." [14] As for 'Ad, they showed arrogance in the land with no right (to do so), and said, "Who is stronger than us in power?" Did they not see that Allah, who created them, is stronger than them in power? And they used to reject Our signs. [15] So, We let loose a wild wind on them in unlucky days to make them taste the humiliating punishment in the present life. And of course, the punishment of the Hereafter will be much more humiliating, and they will not be helped. [16] And as for Thamud, We showed them the way, but they preferred blindness to the guidance. Therefore, they were seized by the bang of the abasing punishment because of what they used to earn. [17] And We saved those who believed and used to be God-fearing. [18] And (remind them of) the day when Allah's enemies will be mustered towards the Fire. So they will be kept under control, [19] until when they will come to it, their ears and their eyes and their skins will testify against them about what they used to do. [20] And they will say to their skins, "Why did you testify against us?" They (the skins) will say, " We were made to speak by Allah, the One who has made every thing to speak." And He had created you the first time, and to Him you are going to be returned. [21] And you had not been hiding your selves (when committing sins) because of (the apprehension) that your ears and your eyes and your skins would bear witness against you, but you thought that Allah did not know much of what you did. [22] And this thought of yours that you conceived about your Lord brought you to ruin, and you became among the losers. [23] Now, if they endure patiently, even then the Fire is their abode, and if they seek forgiveness, they are not among those (who could be) forgiven. [24] And We had assigned for them fellows (in the worldly life) who beautified for them what was before them and what was behind them, and thus they believed that whatever they were doing was good. 'what was before them' refers to their present acts, while 'what was behind them' refers to their past acts. And (thus) the word (of punishment) became due against them along with the communities that passed before them from Jinns and human beings. Surely they were the losers. [25]

Commentary

The basic purpose of these verses is to warn the people of Makkah

that if, even after seeing the manifest proofs of the Oneness of Allah, they do not accept the call of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, they may face a punishment like the earlier people of 'Ād and Thamūd had faced. In this context, a brief account of what happened to these people has been given. The people of Makkah are also reminded that their punishment on the Day of Judgment will be much more severe, and they will not be able to escape it, because even the organs of their body will testify against them. And in this context, some events of that Day are mentioned.

فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ رِيْحًا صَرْصَرًا (So, We let loose a wild wind on them - 41:16) This is the explanation of what was mentioned as 'calamity of 'Ād and Thamud' in the earlier verse. The Arabic word used in the text is *ṣā'iqah*. It originally means 'something that renders one unconscious. That is why the thunderbolt is also called *ṣā'iqah,* and unforeseen calamity and disaster is also called ṣā'iqah. The storm which entrapped the people of 'Ād was also a *'ṣā'iqah',* and has been mentioned in the present verse as 'wild wind' which was a wild tempest of extremely high speed and had piercing sound. (Qurṭubī)

Mentioning the details of this tempest, Ḍaḥḥāk ﷺ has said that rains had been totally stopped from them by Allah Almighty for three years, and dry tempestuous winds kept on blousing all the time, and for eight days and seven nights, they had continuous extremely severe windstorm. Some narrations have it that this event took place in the end of month of Shawwal, commenced on a Wednesday and kept on till the next Wednesday. Whenever any nation has been subjected to a scourge, it has happened on a Wednesday. (Qurṭubī, Maẓharī)

Sayyidnā Jābir Ibn 'Abdullāh ﷺ has stated that when Allah Almighty wants the welfare of a nation, He orders rain to fall on them, and stops very fast winds from blousing over them, whereas when a nation is to face a misfortune, rain is withheld from them, and strong winds start blousing frequently.

فِيْٓ أَيَّامٍ نَّحِسَاتٍ (in unlucky days....41:16). It is established by the principles of Islam and *aḥādīth* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that no day or night is in itself unlucky or ill-omened. The days of the windstorm over the people of 'Ād have been called 'unlucky' because those days had become ill-omened for them due to their misdeeds. It does not necessarily

mean that those days were ill-omened for every body. (Maẓharī and Bayān-ul-Qur'ān). The detailed investigation as to whether anything can be ill-omened by its nature can be seen in the author's book Aḥkām-ul-Qur'ān Vol. 5 in Arabic)

فَهُمْ يُوْزَعُوْنَ (So they will be kept under control.....41:19) The original word used in the text is '*Yuza'ūn*' which is derived from *waz'* which means 'to stop', 'to prevent'. Most of the learned exegetes have explained it in the sense that when people of Hell, who will be numerous, will be taken forward to the field of hashr and the place of reckoning, the people in the front will be halted for a while, so that the people in the rear also catch up with them. This will be done to avoid indiscipline. (It is this interpretation of the verse on the basis of which it is translated as 'kept under control'.) And some exegetes have translated 'Yuza'ūn' as 'pushed' which means that they would be driven towards the place of reckoning by being pushed. (Qurṭubī)

وَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَسْتَتِرُوْنَ اَنْ يَّشْهَدَ عَلَيْكُمْ سَمْعُكُمْ (And you had not been hiding your selves [when committing sins] because of [the apprehension] that your ears and your eyes and your skins would bear witness against you,.....41:22) This verse means that if anyone wants to commit a sin or a crime, he may hide it from others, but how can he hide it from his own limbs and organs? When it is known that our ears, eyes, hands, feet, skin and hair are not ours, rather they are witnesses of the state against us, and when they would be questioned about our deeds, they would give true evidence, then there is no way to hide the commitment of a crime or a sin. The only way to avoid the disgrace is to keep away from sin. Although it is not expected from the deniers of Oneness of Allah and of prophethood, that it would enter their minds that their organs and limbs would speak up before Allah Almighty and give evidence against themselves, yet any intelligent person could have understood that it is totally impossible that the One who has created him from a lowly matter, given him ability to hear and see, brought him up and made him young, will not fully know his deeds and state of affairs. But you had thought, against this evident matter, that Allah Almighty had no knowledge of many of your deeds. This false assumption encouraged you to commit '*shirk*' and '*kufr*'. This is the meaning of Verse 23 where it is said, وَذٰلِكُمْ ظَنُّكُمُ الَّذِىْ ظَنَنْتُمْ بِرَبِّكُمْ اَرْدٰىكُمْ "And this thought of yours that you conceived

about your Lord brought you to ruin..."

The Evidence of Man's Limbs and organs after Resurrection

According to a narration reported in Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim Sayyidnā Anas ﷺ says, "One day we were with the Holy Prophet ﷺ when he started laughing. Then he asked us whether we knew why he was laughing. We said that Allah and His Rasūl ﷺ knew best. Then he said "What made me laugh was the dialogue a slave will have with his Lord on the Day of Resurrection. The slave will say, "O my Lord! Did you not give me protection from injustice?" Allah Almighty will say, 'No doubt, I did.' Then this slave will say, 'Since this is so, I would not be satisfied with any evidence in the matter of my accountability, except that some part of my own being stands up as witness.' Allah Almighty will say, كَفٰى بِنَفْسِكَ الْيَوْمَ عَلَيْكَ حَسِيْبًا 'Your own being is enough today to take your account. (17:14)' Then his mouth will be sealed, and his limbs and organs will be asked to tell about his deeds. Every organ would speak up and give true evidence. After that his mouth will be unsealed, and then he will say to his own organs in displeasure, بُعْدًا لَّكُمْ وَسُحْقًا فَعَنْكُنَّ أُنَاضِلُ 'May you be ruined. May you be destroyed; whatever I had done in the world was only to make you comfortable', (whereas you have stated to furnish evidence against me.)

And according to another narration by Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ؓ, this person's mouth will be sealed, and his thigh will be called to speak and tell about his deeds. Then his thigh, its flesh and bone will all give evidence of his deeds. (Muslim, Maẓharī)

Sayyidnā Ma'qil Ibn Yasār ؓ has narrated that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said that every new day calls the humans saying, 'I am a new day, and I shall be a witness to whatever you do today. So you should do some good deed before I come to an end, in order that I may give evidence, because once I am gone, you will never find me again. Similarly, every night gives the same call.' (Al-Qurṭubī, with reference to Abū Nu'aim)

Verses 26 – 29

وَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لَا تَسْمَعُوْا لِهٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنِ وَالْغَوْا فِيْهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَغْلِبُوْنَ ﴿٢٦﴾ فَلَنُذِيْقَنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا عَذَابًا شَدِيْدًا ۙ وَّلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ

اَسْوَاَ الَّذِىْ كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٢٧﴾ ذٰلِكَ جَزَآءُ اَعْدَاءِ اللّٰهِ النَّارُ ۚ لَهُمْ فِيْهَا دَارُالْخُلْدِ ۗ جَزَآءً بِمَا كَانُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا يَجْحَدُوْنَ ﴿٢٨﴾ وَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا رَبَّنَآ اَرِنَا الَّذَيْنِ اَضَلّٰنَا مِنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْاِنْسِ نَجْعَلْهُمَا تَحْتَ اَقْدَامِنَا لِيَكُوْنَا مِنَ الْاَسْفَلِيْنَ ﴿٢٩﴾

And said those who disbelieved, "Do not listen to this Qur'ān, and make noise during its recitation, so that you may overcome." [26] **So, We will certainly make them taste a severe punishment, and will certainly recompense them for the worst of what they used to do.** [27] **That is the recompense of the enemies of Allah– the Fire. For them there is the eternal home, as a recompense for their persistent denial of Our verses.** [28] **And those who disbelieve will say, "Our Lord, show us the two who led us astray, out of the Jinns and the humans, and we will put both of them under our feet, so that they become among the lowest."** [29]

Commentary

لَا تَسْمَعُوْا لِهٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنِ وَالْغَوْا فِيْهِ (Do not listen to this Qur'ān, and make noise during its recitation, - 41:26) When all the efforts of the disbelievers failed in confronting the Holy Qur'ān, they started doing such mischievous acts as mentioned in this verse. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ has stated that Abū Jahl got his people primed up and ready to make noises whenever Muhammad ﷺ recited the Qur'ān, so that people might not find out what he is saying. Some have said that preparations were made to stop people from listening to the Qur'ān by whistling, clapping and by making all sorts of noises during the recitation.

It is Wājib (necessary) to listen quietly while Qur'ān is being recited; It is infidel's way not to remain quiet.

It is learnt from the above verse that making noises with the intention of creating disturbance in the recitation of the Qur'ān is a sign of disbelief. It is also known that to listen quietly to the recitation of the Qur'ān is *wājib* (necessary) and a sign of faith. It has become a usual practice in our days that people put their radios (and cassette players) on where the Holy Qur'ān is recited with loud voice, which can be heard in about every restaurant and place of gathering, while people go about

their business never paying any attention to the Holy Qur'ān. This practice presents a picture that was a sign of infidels. May Allah Almighty guide Muslims. They should either avoid the recitation of the Holy Qur'ān at such places and on such occasions where people are unable to listen to it, or if they wish to benefit from the blessing of the recitation, they must listen to it quietly and attentively.

Verses 30 – 36

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ قَالُوْا رَبُّنَا اللّٰهُ ثُمَّ اسْتَقَامُوْا تَتَنَزَّلُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ اَلَّا
تَخَافُوْا وَلَا تَحْزَنُوْا وَاَبْشِرُوْا بِالْجَنَّةِ الَّتِيْ كُنْتُمْ تُوْعَدُوْنَ ﴿٣٠﴾
نَحْنُ اَوْلِيٰٓؤُكُمْ فِي الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِي الْاٰخِرَةِ ۚ وَلَكُمْ فِيْهَا مَا
تَشْتَهِيْٓ اَنْفُسُكُمْ وَلَكُمْ فِيْهَا مَا تَدَّعُوْنَ ﴿٣١﴾ نُزُلًا مِّنْ غَفُوْرٍ رَّحِيْمٍ
﴿٣٢﴾ وَمَنْ اَحْسَنُ قَوْلًا مِّمَّنْ دَعَآ اِلَى اللّٰهِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا وَّقَالَ
اِنَّنِيْ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ ﴿٣٣﴾ وَلَا تَسْتَوِي الْحَسَنَةُ وَلَا السَّيِّئَةُ ۭ اِدْفَعْ
بِالَّتِيْ هِيَ اَحْسَنُ فَاِذَا الَّذِيْ بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهٗ عَدَاوَةٌ كَاَنَّهٗ وَلِيٌّ حَمِيْمٌ
﴿٣٤﴾ وَمَا يُلَقّٰهَآ اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ صَبَرُوْا ۚ وَمَا يُلَقّٰهَآ اِلَّا ذُوْ حَظٍّ عَظِيْمٍ
﴿٣٥﴾ وَاِمَّا يَنْزَغَنَّكَ مِنَ الشَّيْطٰنِ نَزْغٌ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللّٰهِ ۭ اِنَّهٗ هُوَ السَّمِيْعُ
الْعَلِيْمُ ﴿٣٦﴾

Surely, those who have declared: "Our Lord is Allah", then remained steadfast, on them the angels will descend, saying, "Do not fear, and do not grieve; and be happy with the good news of the Jannah that you had been promised. [30] **We have been your friends in the worldly life, and (will remain as such) in the Hereafter. And for you here is whatever your souls desire, and for you here is whatever you call for** [31] **– a gift of welcome from the Most-forgiving, the Very-Merciful".** [32] **And who can be better in words than the one who calls towards Allah, and acts righteously and says, "I am one of those who submit themselves (to Allah)"?** [33] **And good and evil are not equal. Repel (evil) with what is**

best, and you will see that the one you had mutual enmity with him will turn as if he were a close friend. [34] **And no one is blessed with this (attitude) but those who observe patience, and no one is blessed with this (attitude) but a man of great luck.** [35] **And should a stroke from Shaitan (Satan) strike you, seek refuge with Allah. Surely, He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing.** [36]

Commentary

Those who rejected the Qur'ān, the prophethood and the Oneness of Allah have been addressed from the beginning of the Sūrah. With reference to the signs of Allah's Omnipotence, they are invited to believe in Oneness of Allah. Mentioned thereafter is the evil fate of those who reject the life hereinafter with a detailed account of the punishment of hell in that life. Now the text takes up, henceforth, the conditions of the believing people and of those having perfect faith, their being honored and exalted in this world and in eternity along with some special directions for them. Believers and those having perfect faith are those people who not only stick to the straight path and abide by the revealed laws themselves in their deeds and morals, but also call others towards Allah and care about their reformation. It is in this connection that those who invite others towards Islam are directed to remain patient and to repay evil with goodness.

The sense of being upright

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ قَالُوْا رَبُّنَا اللّٰهُ ثُمَّ اسْتَقَامُوْا (Surely, those who have declared: "Our Lord is Allah", then remained steadfast - 41:30) This verse has mentioned two qualities of these people. One is affirming Allah as their Lord. This refers to their '*'imān*'(faith). The other quality is of their remaining steadfast which refers to their good deeds. In this way, the verse says that these people combine the true faith with good practice. The word used in the text for this second aspect is *istiqamah* (translated above as being steadfast) which has been taken by Maulānā Thānawi to mean firmness in unshaken faith. This explanation is reported from Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ﷺ. The explanation given by Sayyidnā 'Uthmān ﷺ is nearly the same, as according to him *istiqamah* means *ikhlāṣ* (sincerity) in deeds. And Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ has explained *istiqāmah* in the following words,

الاستقامة ان تستقيم على الامروا النهى ولا تروغ روغان الثعالب. (مظهرى)

> *Istiqamah* is that you hold on unwaveringly to all the injunctions of Allah – carry out the good deeds and stay away from prohibitions, and do not seek escape-routes like foxes. (Maẓharī).

That is why scholars have said that *Istiqāmah* is a small word, but it comprises all the revealed laws of Islam which includes carrying out all the orders of Allah and staying away from all prohibitions and odious things on a permanent basis. It is stated in Tafsīr Kashshaf that a person's declaration that his Lord is Allah can only be true when he believes from the bottom of his heart that he is being brought up by Allah Almighty in all situations and at every step, that he cannot take even one breath without His mercy, and all this demands that one should be so devoted and steadfast in his ways of worship that neither his heart nor his body should deviate even to a hair's breadth from submission to Him like a slave.

That is the reason that once the Holy Prophet ﷺ was asked by Sayyidnā Sufyān Ibn 'Abdullāh Thaqafi ؓ to tell him something so comprehensive about Islam that he should not have to ask anybody else afterwards for anything. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said to him:

قُلْ اٰمَنْتُ بِاللّٰهِ ثُمَّ اسْتَقِمْ (رواه مسلم)

"Say, 'I have faith in Allah', and then remain steadfast to it."

Remaining steadfast apparently means to hold on firmly to the faith and to the good deeds which the faith demands.

Sayyidnā 'Alī ؓ and Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ have defined *Istiqāmah* (Steadfastness) as discharge of obligatory duties, and Ḥasan Baṣrī said that *Istiqāmah* is to obey Allah in all deeds, and to avoid His disobedience. This tells us that the above quoted description of *Istiqāmah* given by Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ, is the most comprehensive. The descriptions of Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ؓ and Sayyidnā 'Uthmān ؓ also result in the above, because sincerity in deeds has been stressed upon by them alongwith good deeds. (Tafsīr Maẓharī). Jaṣṣāṣ has also adopted the above explanation by quoting Abūl 'Āliyah and so has Ibn Jarīr.

تَتَنَزَّلُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ (on them the angels will descend - 41:30). The descent of angels and their address as mentioned in this verse will take place at the

time of one's death according to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ, but according to Qatādah, it will take place on the Day of Resurrection at the time of rising from the graves. And according to Waki' Ibn Jarraḥ, it would happen on three occasions, first at the time of death, secondly in the graves, and thirdly on the Day of Resurrection at the time of rising from graves. And Abū Ḥayyān has opined in Al-Baḥr-ul-Muḥīṭ that, in fact, angels keep on descending upon Mu'mins (believers) all the time, even in this life, and their effects and blessings are found in the deeds of the believers; but they will be visible on these occasions only, and it is at that time that the voice of angels will be heard.

Abū Nu'aim has reported about Thābit Al-bunānī رحمه الله تعالى that while reciting Sūrah Ḥa Mīm Sajdah, when he reached the present verse (on them the angels descend), he said, "According to a Ḥadīth that has reached us, the Mu'min at the time of rising in his grave on the Day of Resurrection, will be met by the two angels who used to be with him in the world, and they will console him not to worry or be afraid, rather be happy with the glad tidings of Paradise, which was being promised to him. These words of the angels will bring serenity to the Mu'min. (Maẓharī)

لَكُمْ فِيْهَا مَا تَشْتَهِيْٓ اَنْفُسُكُمْ وَلَكُمْ فِيْهَا مَاتَدَّعُوْنَ . نُزُلاً مِّنْ غَفُوْرٍ رَّحِيْمٍ (And for you here is whatever your souls desire, and for you here is whatever you call for. - 41:31,32) In other words, 'all your desires' would be fulfilled whether you request or you don't.' The word used after that is '*nuzulan*'[1] meaning hospitality indicates that many the delights provided to you there will be such that even desire had not entered your heart, as happens to a guest, specially of a great personage, that many such things also are presented to him that the guest had not even imagined. (Maẓharī)

It is stated in a Ḥadīth that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that in Paradise, if the desire comes into your heart to eat the flesh of a flying bird you are looking at it, it would immediately fall in front of you completely cooked, ready to eat. Some narrations have it that the bird would not have been touched either by fire or smoke, but would come

1. This which originally means 'a thing prepared by a host to be offered to him soon after his arrival'. That is why it is translated by us above as a 'welcome-gift'. But for the sake of brevity and in general usage, it is generally translated as 'hospitality'. Muhammad Taqi Usmani

down already cooked. (Al-Bazzār, Al-Baihaqī – narrated by Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ – Maẓharī)

In another Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that if a Mu'min in Paradise wishes to have a child born in his house, the conception, delivery, weaning, growing into being an adult – all this would take place in a moment. (Tirmidhī, Baihaqī, etc. – Maẓharī)

وَمَنْ اَحْسَنُ قَوْلاً مِّمَّنْ دَعَآ اِلَى اللّٰهِ (And who can be better in words than the one who calls towards Allah, and acts righteously and says, "I am one of those who submit themselves [to Allah]"? - 33) This is the second aspect of the state of the totally obedient Mu'mins, that they not only have faith and carry out good deeds themselves, but they also invite others to do the same. The Qur'ān states that who can say anything better than the one who calls others towards Allah. So we know that the best and most excellent discourse of a man is to call others towards truth. This includes all the ways of calling towards Allah – through the spoken word, through writing or through any other manner. The one who calls *adhān* (call to obligatory prayer) is also included in this category, because he calls others towards prayers. That is why Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها has said that this verse is about mu'adhdhins (those who proclaim *adhān*), and that the words, 'and acts righteously 'after this means offering of two *rak'āt* of prayers between adhan and *iqamah.*

It is narrated in a Ḥadīth that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that the supplication between *adhān* and *Iqāmah* is not rejected (Abū Dāwūd and Tirmidhī – narrated by Sayyidnā Anas ﷺ – Maẓharī)

The merits and blessings of *adhān* and its reply are very great, as stated in Ṣaḥīḥ *aḥādīth*, provided that the *adhān* is proclaimed purely for Allah, and not for any payment or compensation. These *aḥādīth* have been collected in Tafsīr Maẓharī`.

وَلَاتَسْتَوِى الْحَسَنَةُ وَلَا السَّيِّئَةُ (And good and evil are not equal - 34). The special instructions for those who are engaged in calling others towards Allah commence from here. The gist of these instructions is not to repay evil with evil, but to be patient and to be obliging اِدْفَعْ بِالَّتِىْ هِىَ اَحْسَنُ (Repel (evil) with what is best, - 34) means that the habit of those people who are engaged in calling others towards Allah should be to reply to the evil behavior of the addressees in the best possible manner. No doubt, it is

good not to repay evil with evil and to forgive, but it is much better to do some good to the evil-doer after forgiving him. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ has said that the instruction in this verse is to be patient with the one who is expressing his anger with you, to be tolerant and forbearing with the one who is being ignorant with you and to forgive the one who has made you suffer. (Maẓharī)

Some narrations have it that someone either abused or reviled Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ﷺ who said to him, 'If what you are saying is true that I am at fault and am bad, then I pray Allah Ta'ālā to forgive me, and if you have told a lie then may Allah Forgive you. (Qurṭubī)

Verses 37 – 39

وَمِنْ اٰيٰتِهِ الَّيْلُ وَالنَّهَارُ وَالشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ ط لَاتَسْجُدُوْا لِلشَّمْسِ وَلَا
لِلْقَمَرِ وَاسْجُدُوْا لِلّٰهِ الَّذِىْ خَلَقَهُنَّ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ اِيَّاهُ تَعْبُدُوْنَ ﴿٣٧﴾ فَاِنِ
اسْتَكْبَرُوْا فَالَّذِيْنَ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ يُسَبِّحُوْنَ لَهٗ بِالَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَهُمْ
لَا يَسْئَمُوْنَ ﴿٣٨﴾ السجدة وَمِنْ اٰيٰتِهٖٓ اَنَّكَ تَرَى الْاَرْضَ خَاشِعَةً فَاِذَآ اَنْزَلْنَا
عَلَيْهَا الْمَآءَ اهْتَزَّتْ وَرَبَتْ ط اِنَّ الَّذِىْٓ اَحْيَاهَا لَمُحْيِ الْمَوْتٰى ط اِنَّهٗ
عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿٣٩﴾

And among His signs are the night and the day, and the sun and the moon. Do not make *sajdah* (prostration) to the sun, or to the moon. And make *sajdah* to Allah who has created them, if it is Him whom you worship. [37] **Still, if they show arrogance, then those who are with your Lord proclaim His purity night and day, and they do not get weary.** [38] **And among His signs is that you see the land inactive, Then, once We send down water thereto, it gets excited and swells. Surely, the One who has given life to it is the One who gives life to the dead. No doubt, He is powerful to do everything.** [39]

It is Not permissible to prostrate before anyone except Allah Almighty

لَاتَسْجُدُوْا لِلشَّمْسِ وَلَا لِلْقَمَرِ وَاسْجُدُوْا لِلّٰهِ الَّذِىْ خَلَقَهُنَّ (Do not make *sajdah* [prostration] to the sun, or to the moon. And make *sajdah* to Allah who

has created them - 37). It is learnt from this verse that prostration is the right of the Creator of the Universe only. The consensus of the Ummah is that to prostrate before any star, human being, etc. is *ḥarām* (forbidden), whether it is for worship, or just as a gesture of respect and reverence. The only difference is that if someone prostrates before anyone other than Allah with intention to worship him, he becomes an infidel, and the one who prostrates simply as a mark of respect and reverence is not called an infidel, but he is guilty of committing a serious haram act and is a sinner.

Prostration of worship for any being other than Allah has never been lawful for any *Ummah* in any Sharī'ah of any prophet, because it becomes a practice of *shirk* (polytheism) and *shirk* has never been allowed in any code of shari'ah revealed to any prophet. However, prostration in respect and reverence of anyone (with no intention to worshipping him) had been allowed in the codes of shari'ah revealed to some prophets. All the angels were ordered to prostrate before Sayyidnā 'Ādam ﷺ before he came into this world. It is stated in the Qur'ān that the father and brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ prostrated before him. But the jurisprudents of this *Ummah* are unanimous on the point that such a prostration was permissible in the earlier codes only, and it stands abrogated in Islam. Prostration for any being other than Allah has been declared absolutely haram (forbidden). Full details of this issue are given in the author's booklet (المقالة المرضية فى حكم سجدة التحية) *Al-maqalat-ul-marḍiyyah, fī Ḥukmi sajdat-it-taḥiyyah'* in Arabic, and its Urdu translation has also been published.

وَهُمْ لَايَسْئَمُوْنَ (and they do not get weary. - 38) This is one of the verses called 'Verses of *sajdah'* the recitation of which makes it obligatory to perform *sajdah* (prostration) for the one who recites them and the one who listens to them. This *sajdah* is called *sajdah* of *tilawah*. There is consensus of the *Ummah* on the point that *sajdah* of *tilawah* is *wājib* (obligatory) in this Sūrah, but the scholars differ regarding the exact place where it becomes *wājib*. Qāḍī Abū Bakr Ibn-ul-'Arabi has written in Aḥkām-ul-Qur'ān that Sayyidnā 'Alī ؓ and Sayyidnā Ibn Mas'ūd ؓ used to prostrate at the end of the verse 37 i.e. at the end of اِنْ كُنْتُمْ اِيَّاهُ تَعْبُدُوْنَ (if it is Him whom you worship.) Imām Mālik has adopted this very stance. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ, however, used to prostrate at the end of the verse 38 i.e. at the end of لَايَسْئَمُوْنَ (and they do not get weary.)

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar ﷺ has also advised prostration at this place. Masrūq, Abū 'Abdur Raḥmān Sulamī, Ibrāhīm Nakha'ī, Ibn Sīrīn, Qatādah, etc., and most jurists used to prostrate at verse 38, i.e. at the end of لَايَسْئَمُوْنَ. Imām Abū Bakr Jaṣṣāṣ has said in Aḥkām-ul-Qur'ān that this has been the view of all the leading Ḥanafī scholars. He has further said that in view of the differences, it is on the safer side to prostrate at the end of the verse 38, because even if prostration becomes *wājib* at the end of the verse 37, then the obligation would be discharged if it is performed after the recitation of the verse 38, and if it becomes *wājib* at the verse 38, then, the discharge of obligation (if it is performed after verse 38) is more obvious.

Verses 40 – 46

إِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يُلْحِدُوْنَ فِيْٓ اٰيٰتِنَا لَايَخْفَوْنَ عَلَيْنَا ۭ اَفَمَنْ يُّلْقٰى فِى النَّارِ خَيْرٌ اَمْ مَّنْ يَّاْتِيْٓ اٰمِنًا يَّوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ ۭ اِعْمَلُوْا مَاشِئْتُمْ ۙ اِنَّهٗ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ بَصِيْرٌ ﴿٤٠﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا بِالذِّكْرِ لَمَّا جَآءَهُمْ ۚ وَاِنَّهٗ لَكِتٰبٌ عَزِيْزٌ ﴿٤١﴾ لَّايَاْتِيْهِ الْبَاطِلُ مِنْ ۢ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَلَا مِنْ خَلْفِهٖ ۭ تَنْزِيْلٌ مِّنْ حَكِيْمٍ حَمِيْدٍ ﴿٤٢﴾ مَايُقَالُ لَكَ اِلَّا مَا قَدْ قِيْلَ لِلرُّسُلِ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ ۭ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَذُوْ مَغْفِرَةٍ وَّذُوْعِقَابٍ اَلِيْمٍ ﴿٤٣﴾ وَلَوْ جَعَلْنٰهُ قُرْاٰنًا اَعْجَمِيًّا لَّقَالُوْا لَوْلَا فُصِّلَتْ اٰيٰتُهٗ ۭ ءَاَعْجَمِيٌّ وَّعَرَبِيٌّ ۭ قُلْ هُوَ لِلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا هُدًى وَّشِفَآءٌ ۭ وَالَّذِيْنَ لَايُؤْمِنُوْنَ فِيْٓ اٰذَانِهِمْ وَقْرٌ وَّهُوَ عَلَيْهِمْ عَمًى ۭ اُولٰٓئِكَ يُنَادَوْنَ مِنْ مَّكَانٍ ۢ بَعِيْدٍ ﴿٤٤﴾ وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا مُوْسَى الْكِتٰبَ فَاخْتُلِفَ فِيْهِ ۭ وَلَوْلَا كَلِمَةٌ سَبَقَتْ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ لَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ ۭ وَاِنَّهُمْ لَفِيْ شَكٍّ مِّنْهُ مُرِيْبٍ ﴿٤٥﴾ مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلِنَفْسِهٖ ۚ وَمَنْ اَسَآءَ فَعَلَيْهَا ۭ وَمَا رَبُّكَ بِظَلَّامٍ لِّلْعَبِيْدِ ﴿٤٦﴾

Surely those who go crooked about Our signs are not hidden from Us. So, tell me which one is better: the one who is thrown into the Fire, or the one who will come

safely on the Day of Judgment? Do whatever you wish. He is watchful of whatever you do. [40] Surely those who have rejected the advice (the Qur'an) when it came to them (are the ones who go crooked and are not hidden from Us). And surely, it is an unassailable book [41] that cannot be approached by falsehood, neither from its front, nor from its behind _ a revelation from the Wise, the Ever-Praised. [42] Nothing is being said to you but what has been said to the messengers before you. Your Lord is certainly the lord of forgiveness and the lord of painful punishment. [43] And had We made it a non-Arabic Qur'ān, they would have said, "Why are its verses not clearly explained? Is it a non- Arabic (book) and an Arab (messenger)?" [1] Say, "For those who believe, it is guidance and cure. As for those who do not believe, there is deafness in their ears, and for them it is blindness. Such people are being called from a distant place." [44] And We gave Musa the book, then it was disputed (as well). And but for a word that had already come from your Lord, the matter would have been decided between them. And they are in confounding doubt about it. [45] If someone acts righteously, he does so for the benefit of his own soul, and if someone commits evil, he does so against it. And your Lord is not unjust to His slaves. [46]

Commentary

Description and Rules of Ilḥād – A particular kind of *kufr*

إِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يُلْحِدُوْنَ فِيْٓ اٰيٰتِنَا (Surely those who go crooked about Our signs are not hidden from Us.....41:40) In the earlier verses, there were warnings, threats and mention of scourge for those who used to openly deny the Oneness of Allah and the prophethood of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Now a particular kind of denial is being described which is called *'ilḥād'*. The lexical meaning of *'ilḥād'* is to deviate, to incline towards one side, being

(1). This verse was revealed in answer to an objection raised by some people of Quraish who, according to a report of Sa'īd Ibn Jubair reproduced by Suyuṭi in his Ad-Durr-ul-Manthur, had said that some part of the Qur'ān should have been in a language other than Arabic, so that its miraculous nature would have been more pronounced in the sense that an Arab prophet would have been reciting verses in a language he did not know. The gist of the answer given in this verse is that there is no end to such absurd objections. Had Allah revealed the Qur'ān in some other language, they would have come with another objection that it is not understandable, and that an Arab messenger is not supposed to convey his message in any language other than Arabic.

crooked. In the terminology of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth, *'ilḥād'* means to deviate from the verse of the Holy Qur'ān. Lexically, this word is applicable to both cases of deviation, be it open denial, or through false interpretation. But, generally, the term of *'ilḥād'* is used for a deviation that apparently purports to have faith in the Qur'ān and its verses, but attributes such self-assumed meanings to the Qur'ān that are against the clear and explicit meanings accepted and recognized by the majority of the ummah, and that change the intention of the Qur'ān in its entirety. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ has given this very meaning of *'ilḥād'* in the explanation of this verse by saying: الالحاد هو وضع الكلام على غير موضعه (*'ilḥād'* is to use a statement at an irrelevant place). The words, لَا يَخْفَوْنَ عَلَيْنَا "are not hidden from Us" in the present verse 40 indicate that *'ilḥād'* was a kind of *'kufr'* that they wanted to hide. So Allah Almighty said that they could not hide their *kufr* (infidelity) from Him.

And this verse has advised clearly that deviation from the verses of the Qur'ān, whether openly in distinct words or by trying to change the injunctions of the Qur'ān through false interpretations, all are *'ilḥād'* and *kufr*.

Briefly, *'ilḥād'* is a kind of hypocritical *kufr* which in appearance claims and admits to have faith in the Qur'ān and its verses, but fabricates meanings of the verses of the Qur'ān which are against the explicit provisions of the Qur'ān, Sunnah and principles of Islam.

Imām Abū Yūsuf has stated in Kitāb-ul-Kharāj:

كذالک الزنادقة الّذين يلحدون وقد كانوا يظهرون الاسلام

"Similar are zindiqs who deviate; and they used to pretend Islam.

This tells us that *zindiq* and *mulḥid* (one who practices *'ilḥād'*) are one and the same. Both words are used for an infidel who outwardly claims to follow Islam, but in reality refuses to obey the injunctions through distortion in the meaning of the Qur'ān against the explicit and definite meanings accepted by the Ummah as a whole.

Removal of a Misunderstanding:

One of the rules described in books of Islamic theology is that a *muta'awwil* (i.e. the one who adheres to a wrong belief on the pretext of a

different interpretation of the Qur'ān and Sunnah) should not be declared to be a *kāfir* or a Non-Muslim. But if this rule is taken to be so general that no matter how false a pretext one applies to even an absolute and certain injunction, one would, however not become a *kāfir* (infidel), then the inevitable consequence would be that none of the polytheists, idolaters, Jews or Christians should be called Non-Muslims or *Kāfir*, because the pretext of the idolaters is stated in the Qur'an itself:

مَانَعْبُدُهُمْ اِلاَّ لِيُقَرِّبُوْنَآ اِلَى اللّٰهِ زُلْفٰى

"And we do not worship them (the idols) but for the reason that they will bring us closer to Allah." (39:3)

The pretext was that they do not worship the idols themselves, but as intercessors to take us nearer to Allah Almighty and as such, in reality, they worship Allah. But the Qur'ān has declared them to be *kāfir*, despite this pretext. The pretexts of Jews and Christians are very well known, despite they have been called *Kāfir* in the explicit verses of Qur'ān and Sunnah. Hence it is established that the rule of not calling a *muta'awwil* as *Kāfir* is not applicable so generally.

Therefore, the scholars and jurisprudents have clarified that the rule mentioned above is subject to a condition that the interpretation in matters relating to the self-evident elements (*Ḍaruriyyat-ud-dīn*) should not be against their definite (*qat'ī*) meanings. Self-evident elements of religion (*Ḍaruriyyat-ud-dīn*) are those injunctions and rules of Islam which are so continuously practiced, established, and well-known that even illiterate and ignorant Muslims are aware of them, such as the obligation of salah five times a day, two *rak'āt* of *ṣalāh* in *fajr* and four *rak'āt* in *ẓuhr* and fasting during the month of Ramaḍān, all being obligatory duties; similarly the prohibition of *ribā'* (usury), alcoholic drinks, pig, etc. If anyone gives such false interpretations of the verses of the Qur'ān pertaining to these matters which perverts their well-known and established meanings accepted by the Muslims throughout the history by way of *tawatur* (uninterrupted), then such a person would, no doubt, by consensus of the *'Ummah*, be a *kāfir*, because he is, in reality, denying the teaching of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. And the definition of *'imān* (faith) recognized by the consensus of *'ummah* is the following:

تَصدیق النّبی صلّی اللّٰه عَلیهِ وسَلّم فیما علم مجیئه بهٖ ضرورة

"To believe in whatever is established to be the teaching of the

Holy Prophet ﷺ in a self-evident manner known not only to scholars, but also to the general public.

Therefore, in comparison, the description of *kufr* would be the denial of any of the things mentioned above.

So the person who changes any injunction pertaining to the self-evident elements of the religion through false explanations or pretexts is actually denying the teachings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

Since ignorance of and negligence about religion and its injunctions have reached alarming proportions these days, many people who do not know the principles of Sharī'ah, and whatever information they have about Islam is based on what they have learnt from the Western scholars, have started in our days distorting the teachings of Islam by presenting false interpretations of the Holy Qur'ān and Sunnah. Such people often seek help from the rule mentioned above and claim that these interpretations cannot be held as *kufr*.

Therefore, in view of the serious need of the times, my respected teacher Maulānā Muḥammad Anwar Shāh Kashmīrī رحمه الله تعالیٰ has written a book on this issue, which is published with the title of *Ikfar-ul-mulḥidīn*. It has been proved in this book, on the basis of clarifications of scholars and jurisprudents of every school of thought, that in the self-evident elements of religion (*Ḍaruriyyat-ud-dīn*) nobody's pretext is valid, and such a pretext does not protect one from being *kāfir*. This humble writer has summarized the contents of this book in his Urdu booklet (ایمان اور کفر، قرآن کی روشنی میں) *'Imān or kufr Qur'ān kī roshnī meyn'*. The gist of the discussion is given in that book from a writing of Shāh 'Abdul-'Azīz Muḥaddīth Dehlawī رحمه الله تعالیٰ in the following way:

He says that false interpretation of the Qur'ān may be of two kinds. One, is an interpretation that goes against the definite, unambiguous texts of the Qur'ān or of the mutawatir *aḥādīth* or of absolute consensus of the *ummah*. This kind of interpretation is *kufr* undoubtedly. The second kind is an interpretation against the texts that are, though clear and semi-certain, are not certain or definite in absolute terms. This kind of false interpretation is not *kufr*, however, it is *fisq* and misguidance. Apart from these two kinds, any interpretation that is based on a possible understanding of the text is the field of the jurists exercising *ijtihād*, and

it carries reward from Allah in any case, as declared by a Ḥadīth.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِالذِّكْرِ لَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ ۖ وَإِنَّهُ لَكِتَابٌ عَزِيزٌ لَّا يَأْتِيهِ الْبَاطِلُ مِن بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَلَا مِنْ خَلْفِهِ
(Surely those who have rejected the advice, when it came to them [are the ones who go crooked and are not hidden from Us]. And surely, it is an unassailable book that cannot be approached by falsehood, neither from its front, nor from its behind. - 41:41,42) Most Exegetes have stated that the 'advice' in this verse refers to the Qur'ān, and the sentence "those who have rejected the advice when it came to them" is a complement of the former phrase "those who go crooked about Our verse" and hence, according to Arabic grammar, is subject to the same predicate, and thus the meaning is that these people cannot be hidden from Us, and consequently cannot escape the scourge. Further on is stated that the Qur'ān is protected by Allah. إِنَّهُ لَكِتَابٌ عَزِيزٌ (And surely, it is an unassailable book) meaning that Allah Almighty holds this Book dear and fully protected; no falsehood can enter this Book. (Narrated by Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ – Maẓharī)

لَّا يَأْتِيهِ الْبَاطِلُ مِن بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَلَا مِنْ خَلْفِهِ (that cannot be approached by falsehood, neither from its front, nor from its behind.) Qatādah and Suddī have stated that *'bāṭil'* (falsehood) in this verse means Shaiṭān (Satan), and 'neither from its front, nor from its behind' means 'from any side'. To sum up, Satan's manipulation and contrivance just do not work on this Book; Satan cannot distort this Book by adding something to it, or deleting something from it.

The author of Tafsīr Maẓharī, after quoting this explanation, has added that Satan here includes the satans both from jinn and from humans – neither can carry out any change or distortion in the Qur'ān. Some *Rawafid* [1].

Abū Ḥayyān has stated in Al-Baḥr-ul-Muḥīṭ that the word *bāṭil* (falsehood) as a word is not specific to Satan; any falsehood or falsifier, whether from Satan or from any other source, cannot succeed in the Qur'ān. Then, referring to Ṭabarī, he has mentioned that this verse means that a disbeliever can neither dare to carry out any change in this

(1) This term is used for the extremists among the Shi'ites who tried to add ten parts (Ajza') and some tried to add some particular verses, but none could succeed.

Book openly, nor can he distort its meaning through *ilḥād* covertly.

The explanation of Tabari is very appropriate here, because there can be only two ways of introducing any distortion or *ilḥād* in the Qur'ān. First, that any disbeliever tries openly to add something to or delete something from the Qur'ān. This has been denoted by the words, 'from its front'. The second way of distortion is that somebody, claiming to have faith, tries to distort the meaning of the Qur'ān covertly through false interpretations. This has been referred to by the words, 'nor from its behind'.

The sense, in nut shell, is that this Book is so noble and protected by Allah that nobody has the power to bring any addition, omission or change in its words, nor can one succeed in bringing any change in the injunctions of the Qur'ān by distorting its meaning. Whenever any wretched person attempted to do so, he had to face ignominy –The Qur'ān remained pure and untouched by his evil plans. As for its protection from open distortion or change, everybody can see that there is no way for anyone to do it, because it is being read and recited throughout the world for the last fourteen centuries, fully memorized by hundreds of thousands of people; if anybody makes even the slightest mistake, the young, the old, the learned scholars, the illiterate – thousands and thousands of Muslims raise their voice for correction. The words 'nor from its behind' in the present verse indicate that the protection of the Qur'ān that has been undertaken by Allah Almighty Himself by saying "And We are there to protect it." (15:9) is not limited to its words only; rather Allah Almighty has ensured that its meanings will remain protected as well. Allah Almighty has so safeguarded even the meaning and injunctions of Qur'ān through His Messenger ﷺ and his direct disciples, the noble Companions ؓ, that if any infidel attempts to distort it through false explanations, thousands of scholars stand up to refute it, and he faces rejection. The fact is that in the verse إِنَّا لَهُ لَحٰفِظُوْنَ (We are there to protect it) the pronoun 'it' points towards the Qur'ān and Qur'ān is not just the name of words, but is the name of both words and meanings.

It is clearly mentioned in correct *aḥādīth* that a group will always remain among Muslims, till Doomsday, who would expose the distortions of those who commit *ilḥād* (false interpretation), and would clarify the correct meaning of the Qur'ān. They may hide their *kufr* from the whole

world, but they cannot hide it from Allah Almighty, and since Allah Almighty is aware of their conspiracy, they are bound to face punishment.

ءَ اَعْجَمِيٌّ وَّعَرَبِيٌّ (Is it a non- Arabic [book] and an Arab [messenger]? - 44) The original word used for non-Arabic in the text is a'jamiyy (with *ḥamza* before the letter *'ain*) which is an Arabic term for 'ineloquent speech', while '*ajam*' (without *ḥamzah* in its beginning) means any nation other than Arabs. Therefore 'ajamiyy is a person who is non-Arab, even though he may speak eloquently, and a'jamiyy is a person who cannot speak eloquently. (Qurṭubī). The use of the word اَعْجَمِيٌّ *a'jamiyy* in this verse means that if We had revealed the Qur'ān in any language other than Arabic, then the Quraysh who are the first addressees of the Qur'ān would have complained that they did not understand this Book and would have said wonderingly that the prophet is an 'Arab, but the book is *a'jamiyy* which is ineloquent.

قُلْ هُوَ لِلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا هُدًى وَّشِفَآءٌ (Say, "For those who believe, it is guidance and cure. - 44) Two attributes of The noble Qur'ān are stated here. One is that Qur'ān gives guidance – such guidance in all spheres of life as is beneficial and useful for human beings. The second attribute is that the Qur'ān is cure. That it is a cure for spiritual ailments like *kufr, shirk*, arrogance, jealousy, greed, etc. is quite obvious, but is also cure for bodily ailments, as has been proved by experience of treating patients through Qur'ānic prayers which has been successful.

اُولٰٓئِکَ يُنَادَوْنَ مِنْ مَّكَانٍ بَعِيْدٍ (Such people are being called from a distant place. - 44) This is a similitude. A person who understands what is being said, the Arabs say to him, اَنْتَ تَسْمَعُ مِنْ قَرِيْب (you are listening from a near place) and if a person does not understand the discourse, they say to him, اَنْتَ تُنَادٰى مِنْ بَعِيْد (you are being called from a distant place) (Qurṭubī). The meaning is that since these people do not intend to listen and to understand the directions of the Qur'ān, their ears are almost deaf and their eyes are blind, therefore teaching them the Qur'ānic guidance is like calling someone from such a distant place that the voice does not reach his ears.

Verses 47 – 54

اِلَيْهِ يُرَدُّ عِلْمُ السَّاعَةِ ؕ وَمَا تَخْرُجُ مِنْ ثَمَرٰتٍ مِّنْ اَكْمَامِهَا وَمَا

تَحۡمِلُ مِنۡ اُنۡثٰى وَلَا تَضَعُ اِلَّا بِعِلۡمِهٖ ؕ وَيَوۡمَ يُنَادِيۡهِمۡ اَيۡنَ شُرَكَآءِىۡ ۙ
قَالُوۡۤا اٰذَنّٰكَ ۙ مَا مِنَّا مِنۡ شَهِيۡدٍ ﴿۴۷﴾ وَضَلَّ عَنۡهُمۡ مَّا كَانُوۡا يَدۡعُوۡنَ
مِنۡ قَبۡلُ وَظَنُّوۡا مَا لَهُمۡ مِّنۡ مَّحِيۡصٍ ﴿۴۸﴾ لَا يَسۡـَٔمُ الۡاِنۡسَانُ مِنۡ دُعَآءِ
الۡخَيۡرِ ۫ وَاِنۡ مَّسَّهُ الشَّرُّ فَيَـُٔوۡسٌ قَنُوۡطٌ ﴿۴۹﴾ وَلَئِنۡ اَذَقۡنٰهُ رَحۡمَةً مِّنَّا
مِنۡۢ بَعۡدِ ضَرَّآءَ مَسَّتۡهُ لَيَقُوۡلَنَّ هٰذَا لِىۡ ۙ وَمَاۤ اَظُنُّ السَّاعَةَ قَآئِمَةً ۙ
وَّلَئِنۡ رُّجِعۡتُ اِلٰى رَبِّىۡۤ اِنَّ لِىۡ عِنۡدَهٗ لَلۡحُسۡنٰى ۚ فَلَنُنَبِّئَنَّ الَّذِيۡنَ
كَفَرُوۡا بِمَا عَمِلُوۡا ۫ وَلَنُذِيۡقَنَّهُمۡ مِّنۡ عَذَابٍ غَلِيۡظٍ ﴿۵۰﴾ وَاِذَاۤ اَنۡعَمۡنَا
عَلَى الۡاِنۡسَانِ اَعۡرَضَ وَنَاٰ بِجَانِبِهٖ ۚ وَاِذَا مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ فَذُوۡ دُعَآءٍ
عَرِيۡضٍ ﴿۵۱﴾ قُلۡ اَرَءَيۡتُمۡ اِنۡ كَانَ مِنۡ عِنۡدِ اللّٰهِ ثُمَّ كَفَرۡتُمۡ بِهٖ مَنۡ
اَضَلُّ مِمَّنۡ هُوَ فِىۡ شِقَاقٍۢ بَعِيۡدٍ ﴿۵۲﴾ سَنُرِيۡهِمۡ اٰيٰتِنَا فِى الۡاٰفَاقِ وَفِىۡۤ
اَنۡفُسِهِمۡ حَتّٰى يَتَبَيَّنَ لَهُمۡ اَنَّهُ الۡحَقُّ ؕ اَوَلَمۡ يَكۡفِ بِرَبِّكَ اَنَّهٗ عَلٰى
كُلِّ شَىۡءٍ شَهِيۡدٌ ﴿۵۳﴾ اَلَاۤ اِنَّهُمۡ فِىۡ مِرۡيَةٍ مِّنۡ لِّقَآءِ رَبِّهِمۡ ؕ اَلَاۤ اِنَّهٗ
بِكُلِّ شَىۡءٍ مُّحِيۡطٌ ﴿۵۴﴾

To Him alone is referred the knowledge of the Hour (the exact time of Doomsday).[1] And no fruits come out of their sheaths, nor does a female conceive a baby, nor does she deliver it, but with His knowledge. And (remember) the day He will call them (saying), "Where are My partners?" They will say, "We declare to you that no one of us is to testify (that you have partners)." [47] And lost to them will be whatever they used to invoke earlier, and they will realize that they have no

(1) It means that whenever a question is asked about the exact time when the Day of Judgment will come, the answer is to be referred to Allah Ta'ala alone, because no one except Him has the knowledge about it. The next verse has mentioned that Allah's exclusive knowledge is not restricted to the Day of Judgment. He knows every minute event that takes place in this world, like the fruits coming out of their sheaths, and the women conceiving and delivering their babies; nothing happens in this world without His knowledge.

way to escape. [48] And man[1] does not get weary of craving for (all sorts of) good things; and if he is touched by some evil, he is disappointed, devoid of any hope. [49] And if We give him a taste of some mercy from Us after some hardship has touched him, he is sure to say, "This is my right. And I do not think the Hour (Hereafter) is going to occur. And even if I am brought back to my Lord, I will have the best (life) with Him (too)." So, We will let the disbelievers know what they did, and let them taste a stern punishment. [50] And when We bestow Our favour upon man, he avoids (to appreciate it) and keeps himself far aside (from obedience), and when some evil touches him, he is full of broad prayers. [51] Say (to the disbelievers), " Tell me, if it (the Qur'ān) is from Allah, and still you reject it, then who can be more erroneous than him who is (involved) in far reaching schism?" [52] We will show them Our signs in the universe and within their own beings until it will become manifest to them that it is the truth. Is it not enough about your Lord that He is witness to everything? [53] Beware, they are in doubt about meeting their Lord. Beware, He is the One who encompasses everything. [54]

Commentary

فَذُوْ دُعَآءٍ عَرِيْضٍ (he is full of broad prayers - 51.) The nature of an infidel is being stated here that when Allah Almighty bestows upon him the good things: wealth, honor and peace, the infidel gets so involved in them and so intoxicated with them that he becomes even more distant from the true Benefactor, Allah Almighty, and his pride and heedlessness increase even more. But when he faces some distress, then he starts long and lengthy supplications to Allah Almighty. Here the Qur'ān has used the word 'broad' to describe their lengthy supplications, because what is wider will automatically be longer too. That is why, when describing the span of Paradise, Allah Almighty has used the word عَرْضُهَا السَّمٰوٰتُ وَالْاَرْضُ (a paradise the width of which spans the heavens and the earth - 3: 133)

Lengthy supplications in themselves are praiseworthy and desirable as is proved by authentic *aḥādīth* about the etiquettes of supplication

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(1). 'Man' here refers to a man who does not believe in Allah or in His Oneness. The purpose of the verse is to mention some evil effects that disbelief or kufr brings to the nature of a man, that is, he becomes greedy, ungrateful in his good times and totally dismayed in hardships.

where it is mentioned that, while praying to Allah Ta'ālā, beseeching tearfully and repeatedly is desirable. (Bukhārī and Muslim) Therefore, the denunciation of the infidel is actually not for lengthy supplications, but for his mean disposition that when Allah blesses him with His bounties, he gets intoxicated with arrogance and pride, and when he faces distress, he keeps on praying in a way of wailing and complaining about his difficulties, as is the habit of heedless people; the intent is not to supplicate, but to wail about his misfortunes and to keep on telling the people about it. (Allah knows best)

سَنُرِيْهِمْ اٰيٰتِنَا فِى الْاٰفَاقِ وَفِيْٓ اَنْفُسِهِمْ (We will show them Our signs in the universe and within their own beings - 53). The word ''*Afaq*' used in the text literally means 'horizons' which includes all sides of the whole universe. (That is why it is translated above as 'universe') In other words, if one looks at the creatures and creations of the whole universe, big and small, in the skies, on the earth and in between them, they all bear witness not only to the existence of Allah Ta'ālā, but also to His Knowledge, His all-encompassing authority, and to His being One and unique. If one looks even nearer, at one's own self, at each organ and limb, at the fine and fragile mechanisms and systems functioning inside him to provide ease and comfort, it simply leaves one wondering. And these fragile mechanisms and systems have been made so durable that they do not wear out even after seventy, eighty year's use. Look at the springs inside the joints. Had they been made of steel by humans, they would have been rendered unserviceable long ago. Look at the skin of the hands and then lines made thereon that last for the whole life, and yet do not wear out. If a person of even an ordinary intellect ponders over these matters, he is bound to believe that the Creator and Sustainer of all these things is a Being who has limitless knowledge and Authority, and there simply cannot be anyone like Him.[1]

Alhamdulillah
the commentary on
Sūrah Ḥāmīm As-Sajdah
ends here.

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(1). The words used in the text are, "We will show them Our signs" which indicate that the the signs of Allah's power and majesty that have been manifested to the mankind so far are not the only signs of Allah. In fact Allah Ta'ālā will continue to show His signs, both in the universe and in man's own creation, up to the Day of Judgment. Thus the present verse covers all the new discoveries of science that man is able to reach till the end of the universe.

Sūrah Shūrā

Sūrah Shūrā was revealed in Makkah and has 53 Verses and 5 Sections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 – 9

حٰمٓ ﴿١﴾ عٓسٓقٓ ﴿٢﴾ كَذٰلِكَ يُوْحِيْٓ اِلَيْكَ وَاِلَى الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ ۙ
اللّٰهُ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ ﴿٣﴾ لَهٗ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ ۭ وَهُوَ
الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيْمُ ﴿٤﴾ تَكَادُ السَّمٰوٰتُ يَتَفَطَّرْنَ مِنْ فَوْقِهِنَّ وَالْمَلٰۗىِٕكَةُ
يُسَبِّحُوْنَ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ وَيَسْتَغْفِرُوْنَ لِمَنْ فِي الْاَرْضِ ۭ اَلَآ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ
هُوَ الْغَفُوْرُ الرَّحِيْمُ ﴿٥﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ اتَّخَذُوْا مِنْ دُوْنِهٖٓ اَوْلِيَاۗءَ اللّٰهُ حَفِيْظٌ
عَلَيْهِمْ ښ وَمَآ اَنْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِوَكِيْلٍ ﴿٦﴾ وَكَذٰلِكَ اَوْحَيْنَآ اِلَيْكَ قُرْاٰنًا
عَرَبِيًّا لِّتُنْذِرَ اُمَّ الْقُرٰى وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا وَتُنْذِرَ يَوْمَ الْجَمْعِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيْهِ ۭ
فَرِيْقٌ فِي الْجَنَّةِ وَفَرِيْقٌ فِي السَّعِيْرِ ﴿٧﴾ وَلَوْ شَاۗءَ اللّٰهُ لَجَعَلَهُمْ اُمَّةً
وَّاحِدَةً وَّلٰكِنْ يُّدْخِلُ مَنْ يَّشَاۗءُ فِيْ رَحْمَتِهٖ ۭ وَالظّٰلِمُوْنَ مَا لَهُمْ مِّنْ
وَّلِيٍّ وَّلَا نَصِيْرٍ ﴿٨﴾ اَمِ اتَّخَذُوْا مِنْ دُوْنِهٖٓ اَوْلِيَاۗءَ ۚ فَاللّٰهُ هُوَ الْوَلِيُّ
وَهُوَ يُحْيِ الْمَوْتٰى ۡ وَهُوَ عَلٰي كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿٩﴾

Ḥā Mīm [1] 'Ayn Sīn Qāf [2]. This is how Allah, the Mighty, the Wise, sends revelation to you and to those who were before you. [3] To him belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth. And He is the

High, the Supreme. [4] The heavens almost burst apart from their above side, and the angels proclaim the purity and praise of their Lord, and pray for the forgiveness of those on the earth. Be aware that Allah is the Most-Forgiving, the Very-Merciful. [5] And those who have adopted patrons instead of Him, Allah is on watch against them, and you are not responsible for them. [6] And thus We have revealed to you an Arabic Qur'ān, so that you may warn the town that is the mother of all towns, and those around it, and warn (them) of the Day of Gathering, about which there is no doubt_(when) one group of people will be in Paradise, and another group in the blazing Fire. [7] And had Allah willed, He would have made all of them a single group; but He admits whomsoever He wills into His mercy. As for the wrongdoers, they have neither a patron nor a helper. [8] Is it that they have adopted patrons instead of Him? So, it is Allah who is the Patron, and He gives life to the dead, and He is Powerful to do every thing. [9]

Commentary

(Ḥā Mīm 'Ayn Sīn Qāf) Only Allah knows the meaning of these letters. The gist of the first five verses is as follows:

Just as this surah was revealed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ for the ascertainment of the religious principles and for other benefits, similarly Allah Ta'ālā, has been sending other prophets who preceded him. His Magnificience is such that whatever there is in the heavens and in the earth is His. He is the Supreme, the Most Magnificent. Even though some of the people of this world do not recognize and do not admit the greatness of His magnificence, yet the number of the angels in the heavens, who know Him and recognize His greatness, is so large that their load may, quite likely, cause the heavens to burst apart from above. A hadith narrated in Tirmidhī and Ibn Mājah states that due to the large number of the angels, such crackling sounds are produced in the heavens as are produced when an excessive load is placed on something. And that is how it should be, because throughout the heavens there is not even a space of four fingers left vacant by angels who are in the state of prostration.

يَتَفَطَّرْنَ (burst apart). It has been stated in the above hadith that the load of angels began producing such crackling sounds in the heavens as are produced when excessive load is placed on something. This tells us that angels have weight and this is not beyond reason, because it is

confirmed that angels also have physical bodies, even though very light in weight. And even light bodies add up to a considerable load when they are in huge numbers. (Bayān-ul-Qur'ān)

These angels in the heavens proclaim the perfection of their Lord and utter His praises. They also ask for forgiveness of the dwellers of this earth who do not give what is due to Allah's greatness, rather indulge in associating others with Him and in infidelity and hence become liable to suffer scourge. Their asking for forgiveness for disbelievers is for a limited period only and is a supplication that some severe worldly scourge may not befall the humans which may destroy all of them; their safety against ordinary punishments of this world and the real scourge of the Hereafter are not included in this supplication. And Allah, the Almighty accepts this supplication, and saves them from the general scourge in this world. It must be understood thoroughly that Allah and Allah alone is the forgiver and Merciful although this forgiveness of infidels is for a limited duration and is limited to this world only.

لِتُنْذِرَ اُمَّ الْقُرٰی (So that you may warn the town that is the mother of all towns) – *Umm-ul- Qurā* (mother of all the towns) means the origin and foundation of all habitations and cities which is Makkah. This title has been given to this city because, to Allah Almighty, it is more distinguished and more excellent than all other cities, habitations and the whole earth. Imam Ahmad has narrated in Musnad, with the authority of Sayyidnā 'Adiyy Ibn Ḥamrā' Az-zuhrī ؓ that he heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ at a market of Makkah when he ﷺ was migrating from the city. He was addressing Makkah in the following words:

انك لخير ارض الله واحبّ ارض اللهِ اِلَيَّ ولو لا اِنّى اُخرجْت منك لما خرجت

> "To me, you are better and dearer than the whole of Allah's earth; if I had not been expelled from your vicinity, I would never have left it of my own accord." (At-tirmidhī, An-Nasa'ī, Ibn Mājah – rated as 'ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ' by Tirmidhī)

وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا – means the suburbs in the neighborhood of Makkah Mukarramah; it could mean the neighboring Arab countries as well as the whole of the earth from east to west.

Verses 10 – 12

وَمَا اخْتَلَفْتُمْ فِيهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَحُكْمُهُ إِلَى اللّٰهِ ۚ ذٰلِكُمُ اللّٰهُ رَبِّي عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ ۖ وَإِلَيْهِ أُنِيبُ ﴿١٠﴾ فَاطِرُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِّنْ أَنفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا وَّمِنَ الْأَنْعَامِ أَزْوَاجًا ۖ يَذْرَؤُكُمْ فِيهِ ۚ لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ ۖ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ ﴿١١﴾ لَهُ مَقَالِيدُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۖ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَّشَاءُ وَيَقْدِرُ ۚ إِنَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١٢﴾

And (Say O prophet to your opponents,) "Whatever dispute you have in any matter, its judgment lies with Allah. That One is Allah, the Lord of mine; in Him alone I have placed my trust, and to Him alone I turn (in every matter)." [10] **He is the Creator of the heavens and the earth. He has made for you pairs from among yourselves, and pairs from the cattle. He makes you expand in this way. Nothing is like Him. And He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing.** [11] **To Him belong the keys of the heavens and the earth. He extends provision for whomsoever He wills and straitens (it for whomsoever He wills). Surely He is All-Knowing in respect of every thing.** [12]

Commentary

وَمَا اخْتَلَفْتُمْ فِيهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَحُكْمُهُ إِلَى اللّٰهِ (Whatever dispute you have in any matter, its judgment lies with Allah. - 10) It means that the judgement in all those matters in which you dispute lies with Allah, because the sovereignty belongs to Allah only, as stated in another verse: إِنِ الْحُكْمُ إِلَّا لِلّٰهِ (The Decision belongs to none but Allah - 6:57). The direction in many verses to obey Rasūlullāh ﷺ and in some verses to obey those in authority does not contradict the above, because the orders of Rasūlullāh ﷺ and of the authorities are also, in a way, orders of Allah. If the order has been received through '*waḥy*' or based upon the clear and definite verses (*nuṣūṣ*) of the Qur'ān and *sunnah,* then its being an order of Allah is obvious. And if the order is an '*ijtihād*' (inference) which in turn is based upon *nusus* of Qur'ān and sunnah, then also, in a way, it is an order of Allah. '*Ijtihadāt*' (plural of '*ijtihād*') of the '*mujtahidīn*' of the

ummah (those who are competent to interpret the Qur'ān and Sunnah, and infer Islamic laws from them) on this basis, are included in orders of Allah. That is why the learned scholars have declared that the *fatwā* (ruling) given by a '*muftī*' (A competent Islamic scholar) is to be taken as a part of the religious law by the common masses who do not have the ability to understand the Qur'ān and the sunnah directly.

Verses 13 -15

شَرَعَ لَكُمْ مِّنَ الدِّيْنِ مَا وَصّٰى بِهٖ نُوْحًا وَّالَّذِيْٓ اَوْحَيْنَآ اِلَيْكَ وَمَا
وَصَّيْنَا بِهٖٓ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَمُوْسٰى وَعِيْسٰٓى اَنْ اَقِيْمُوا الدِّيْنَ وَلَا تَتَفَرَّقُوْا فِيْهِ
ؕ كَبُرَ عَلَى الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ مَا تَدْعُوْهُمْ اِلَيْهِ ؕ اَللّٰهُ يَجْتَبِيْٓ اِلَيْهِ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ
وَيَهْدِيْٓ اِلَيْهِ مَنْ يُّنِيْبُ ﴿۱۳﴾ وَمَا تَفَرَّقُوْٓا اِلَّا مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا جَآءَهُمُ
الْعِلْمُ بَغْيًاۢ بَيْنَهُمْ ؕ وَلَوْلَا كَلِمَةٌ سَبَقَتْ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ اِلٰٓى اَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى
لَّقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ ؕ وَاِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْرِثُوا الْكِتٰبَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهِمْ لَفِيْ شَكٍّ مِّنْهُ
مُرِيْبٍ ﴿۱۴﴾ فَلِذٰلِكَ فَادْعُ ۚ وَاسْتَقِمْ كَمَآ اُمِرْتَ ۚ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ
اَهْوَآءَهُمْ ۚ وَقُلْ اٰمَنْتُ بِمَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ مِنْ كِتٰبٍ ۚ وَاُمِرْتُ لِاَعْدِلَ
بَيْنَكُمْ ؕ اَللّٰهُ رَبُّنَا وَرَبُّكُمْ ؕ لَنَآ اَعْمَالُنَا وَلَكُمْ اَعْمَالُكُمْ ؕ لَا حُجَّةَ
بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ ؕ اَللّٰهُ يَجْمَعُ بَيْنَنَا ۚ وَاِلَيْهِ الْمَصِيْرُ ﴿۱۵﴾

He has ordained for you the same religion as He had enjoined upon Nūḥ, and that which We have revealed to you, and that which We had enjoined upon Ibrāhīm and Mūsā and 'Īsā by saying, " Establish the religion, and be not divided therein." Arduous for the *mushriks* (polytheists) is that to which you are inviting them. Allah chooses (and pulls) toward Himself anyone He wills, and guides to Himself anyone who turns to Him (to seek guidance). [13] And they were not divided, in jealousy with each other, but after the knowledge had come to them. And had it not been for a word that had come forth earlier from your Lord (and was effective) until a specified time, the matter would have been decided between them. And those who were made to

inherit the Book after them are in confounding doubt about it. [14] **So, (O prophet,) towards that (faith) invite (people), and be steadfast as you are commanded, and do not follow their desires, and say, "I believe in whatever book Allah has sent down. And I have been ordered to do justice among you. Allah is our Lord and your Lord. For us are our deeds, and for you, your deeds. There is no argumentation between us and you. Allah will bring us together, and to Him is the final return."** [15]

Commentary

شَرَعَ لَكُمْ مِّنَ الدِّيْنِ مَاوَصّٰى بِهٖ نُوْحًا (He has ordained for you the same religion as He had enjoined upon Nūḥ-- 42:13) Allah Almighty's obvious and material blessings were stated in the previous verses. Stated from here are the inner and spiritual blessings. That is, He has blessed you with that very cogent and infallible religion which has been common between all the prophets عليهم السلام. Five of the prophets عليهم السلام have been mentioned in the verse. Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام has been mentioned first, and our Prophet ﷺ in the end, while Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام in the middle, because he is the father of prophets and was accepted as a prophet even by Arabs, despite their *'kufr'* and *'shirk'*. Sayyidnā Mūsā and 'Īsā عليهما السلام have been mentioned after him, because their followers were the ones who were present when Qur'ān was being revealed. These five prophets عليهم السلام are also the ones named in Sūrah Aḥzāb where the covenant of the prophets given to Allah is mentioned, the difference being that the last of the Prophet ﷺ has been mentioned before Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام in Sūrah Aḥzāb, whereas Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام has been mentioned before our Prophet ﷺ in the present surah. Perhaps this is to indicate that although the last of the Prophets ﷺ was born and sent as a prophet after all other prophets, yet he preceded everyone else in the originally destined (*azalī*) distribution of prophethood and messengership. This has been stated in a Ḥadīth: 'I preceded all the other prophets in the original creation and I am last of all the prophets in being sent." (Reported by Ibn Mājah, Dārimī, from Bahz Ibn Ḥakīm, and rated as *'ḥasan'*—See Mishkāh)

Now the question arises that the very first prophet is Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام, but the mention of prophets عليهم السلام does not commence with his name. The reason is that Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام was the first prophet to have come in this world, and although he has commonality in principles of

beliefs and important features of faith, yet during his period, no *'kufr'* and *'shirk'* had appeared in the people. Confrontation with *'kufr'* and *'shirk'* commenced with Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام, who is the first prophet to have faced such problems which were to be faced by later prophets, and as such Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام has been mentioned first. (Allah knows best).

أَنْ أَقِيمُوا الدِّينَ وَلَا تَتَفَرَّقُوا فِيهِ (Establish the religion, and be not divided therein. - 42:13). – This is an explanation of the preceding sentence which means that the *'dīn'* (religion) which is common to all the prophets and in which all are agreed has to be established and maintained; opposing this religion or creating differences in it is not only impermissible, but also liable to a destructive end.

Establishing the Dīn is obligatory Duty and Dissension in it is forbidden

Two orders have been given in this verse – one, 'Establish the religion' and the second, 'Be not divided therein.' which forbids dissension in religion. This sentence is preceded by the word *'an'* which has been translated above as, 'by saying'. As such, this is an explanation of the word, 'ordained' occurring in the beginning. Therefore the word 'din' (religion) in this verse means the same *'dīn'* which has been common between all the prophets, and which calls for adherence to the belief in Oneness of Allah, prophethood, the life after death, and to the principles of worship as *ṣalāh,* fasting, *ḥajj* and *zakāh;* it forbids theft, robbery, adultery, telling of lies, deceit, hurting others without a valid reason, breach of promise – all these have been common injunctions between all divine religions.

On the other hand, It is also proved through an unambiguous verse of the Qur'ān لِكُلٍّ جَعَلْنَا مِنكُمْ شِرْعَةً وَّمِنْهَاجًا (For each of you We have made a way and a method - 5:48) that there are ancillary differences in the details of the revealed laws of different prophets عليهم السلام. In the light of all these facts taken together, it becomes clear that the order of establishing the religion and prohibition of dissension pertains to those divine laws which have been common and consistent in the codes of all the prophets عليهم السلام – It is these injunctions in which creating differences is forbidden.

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه states that one day Rasūlullāh ﷺ drew a straight line in front of us, and then drew other small lines on the

right and left of the straight line and said that the lines on the right and left were the ways invented by devils, and each of those ways is controlled by a Shaiṭān (Satan) who incites people to follow that path; and then, pointing towards the straight line, he said وَاَنَّ هٰذَا صِرَاطِی مُسْتَقِیْمًا فَاتَّبِعُوْهُ (And this my path, straight. So follow it - 6:153.) (Aḥmad, An-Nasa'ī, Dārimī – Maẓharī)

The straight path in the above simile means the same path of true *'dīn'* (religion) which has been common to all the prophets ﷺ creating diversions in it is to create differences which is forbidden and an act of Shaiāṭāns (Satan). Correct *aḥādīth* strictly forbid creating differences in such injunctions which are unanimously agreed. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said من فارق الجماعة شبرا فقد خلع ربقة الاسلام من عنقه (Aḥmad, Abū Dāwūd) meaning that the person who moves away even one span from the general body of Muslims has taken out the neck-band of Islamic beliefs from his neck. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ has stated that Rasūlullāh ﷺ said يَدُ اللّٰهِ على الجماعة (Tirmidhī, with rating as *'hasan'*) meaning that Allah's hand is upon the general body. Sayyidnā Mu'ādh Ibn Jabal ؓ has narrated that Rasūlullāh ﷺ said that for humans, Shaiāṭān (Satan) is like a wolf after a herd of goats, catching hold of the goat which has strayed away from the herd. Therefore you should stay with the general body, and do not separate yourself. (Aḥmad, as quoted by Tafsīr Maẓharī)

Differences in the ancillaries between leading *Mujtahidin* is not covered by the dissension forbidden in this verse

It is obvious from the above that differences of opinions between leading *'mujtahidīn'* in ancillary matters where express injunctions are not found in the Qur'ān and *aḥādīth* or where there is an apparent contradiction between the *nusus* of the Qur'ān and *aḥādīth* and where opinions are bound to differ, do not bear any relation to the forbidden dissension. Such differences have been continuing since the days of the Holy Prophet ﷺ starting with the noble companions ؓ themselves and are considered to be blessings by the jurisprudents unanimously.

Establishing *'dīn'* that has been obligated in this verse means to hold on to the rules of religion steadfastly, not to let any doubt or distrust creep into it and not to give it up in any case. (Qurṭubī)

كَبُرَ عَلَى الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ مَا تَدْعُوْهُمْ اِلَيْهِ (Arduous for the *mushriks* (Polytheists) is that to which you are inviting them - 42:13). Addressing the Holy Prophet

ﷺ, the verse says, 'Your call to the belief in Oneness of Allah, which is the foundation of the true religion, seems very difficult to the polytheists, although it has been proved to be true through the consensus of all the prophets, because they follow their desires and the teachings of the Shaiṭān (Satan), and have therefore strayed from the right path, which is prohibited as mentioned above.

اَللّٰهُ يَجْتَبِيْٓ اِلَيْهِ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَيَهْدِيْٓ اِلَيْهِ مَنْ يُّنِيْبُ (Allah chooses [and pulls] towards Himself anyone He wills and guides anyone who turns to Him. - 42:13). There are only two ways for one to have the straight path. One is that Allah Almighty himself selects him for the straight path of His religion and moulds his nature and inclinations accordingly, which happens in the case of prophets and His special friends. It is about them that Qur'ān states اِنَّآ اَخْلَصْنٰهُمْ بِخَالِصَةٍ ذِكْرَى الدَّارِ (We them chose for a trait of remembering the [eternal] Home [in the Hereafter] - 38:46). The Holy Qur'ān has used the word, *'mukhlaṣīn'* for some particular prophets which means 'chosen'. This peculiar way of guidance has been mentioned in the first sentence of the present verse which says, اَللّٰهُ يَجْتَبِيْٓ اِلَيْهِ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ "Allah chooses [and pulls] towards Himself anyone He wills." This method of instruction is exceptional and limited. The other method which is general for getting guidance is that when someone turns towards Allah and intends to follow His *'dīn'*, then Allah Almighty guides him towards His *'dīn'*. This way of guidance is referred to in the second sentence of the verse which says, وَيَهْدِيْٓ اِلَيْهِ مَنْ يُّنِيْبُ "...and guides anyone who turns to Him."

The reason why the *mushrikīn* (polytheists) of Makkah found it difficult to accept the invitation towards the faith in Oneness of Allah is that they did not even have the intention of understanding and following the truth.

وَمَا تَفَرَّقُوْٓا اِلَّا مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا جَآءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ (And they were not divided, in jealousy with each other, but after knowledge had come to them - 42:14). Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنهما has explained that the pronoun 'they' in this sentence refers to the Quraysh of Makkah, and thus he has taken the verse to mean that the aversion of the infidels of Quraysh to the straight path was in itself a matter of utter ignorance, but on top of it they did so even after knowledge had been imparted by Allah. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās has held the coming of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ who was the source of all Divine knowledge, to be the imparting of knowledge by Allah. Some scholars,

however, have referred the pronoun 'they' towards the past *ummahs,* and held the meaning to be that the people of the bygone *ummahs* created dissension in the true faith of their respective prophets, and adopted separate ways despite their having received the knowledge of the stright path from then prophets عليهم السلام.

Be that as it may, the pagans of Makkah and the infidels of the early ages, both demanded that their prophets should also follow the misguidance they themselves had adopted. Therefore the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been addressed in the following verse as follows:

فَلِذٰلِکَ فَادْعُ ج وَاسْتَقِمْ كَمَا أُمِرْتَ ج وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ اَهْوَآءَهُمْ ج وَقُلْ اٰمَنْتُ بِمَا اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ
مِنْ كِتٰبٍ ج وَاُمِرْتُ لِاَعْدِلَ بَيْنَكُمْ ط اَللّٰهُ رَبُّنَا وَرَبُّكُمْ ط لَنَآ اَعْمَالُنَا وَلَكُمْ اَعْمَالُكُمْ ط
لَاحُجَّةَ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ ط اَللّٰهُ يَجْمَعُ بَيْنَنَا ج وَاِلَيْهِ الْمَصِيْرُ

"So, (O prophet,) towards that (faith) invite (people), and be steadfast as you are commanded, and do not follow their desires, and say, "I believe in whatever book Allah has sent down. And I have been ordered to do justice among you. Allah is our Lord and your Lord. For us are our deeds, and for you, your deeds. There is no argumentation between us and you. Allah will bring us together, and to Him is the final return." (42:15)

Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Kathīr has stated that this verse comprises ten sentences, and each sentence carries a specific order. As such, ten types of precepts are stated in this one verse. No other verse in the entire Qur'ān has this peculiarity, except *'Āyat-ul-kursiyy* which comprises ten types of precepts as well.

The first order فَلِذٰلِکَ فَادْعُ (So, O Prophet, towards that faith invite people) means: 'Although your call towards *'tauḥīd'* (Oneness of Allah) sits very heavy on the polytheists, it is no cause for you to give up your invitational call, and you should continue with it.

The second order وَاسْتَقِمْ كَمَا أُمِرْتَ (and be steadfast as you are commanded) says, 'You yourself ought to stand firm in the religion towards which you are inviting other people. This firmness has to be in accordance with the command of Allah, that is, to be on the moderate side in your beliefs, deeds, morals, habits and social behavior – there should not be even the slightest inclination towards the extremes of *ifrāt* (overdoing something) or *tafrīṭ* (falling short in something). Obviously

such a firmness is not easy. That is why when some noble companions ﷺ pointed out to the Holy Prophet ﷺ that some of hairs have turned grey, he said, "Sūrah Hūd has turned me old." This very order (of standing firm as commanded) has been given in Sūrah Hūd also in the same very words. (The meaning of standing firm, the difficulties in observing it and its importance are discussed in detail in the commentary on Sūrah Hūd on page 673 of volume 4 of Ma'āriful Qur'ān).

The third command وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ اَهْوَآءَهُمْ (do not follow their desires -) directs the Holy Prophet ﷺ not to be concerned about the opposition of any opponent in his duty of propagation.

The fourth command قُلْ اٰمَنْتُ بِمَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ مِنْ كِتَابٍ (and say "I believe in whatever book Allah has sent down") is to announce that the Holy Prophet ﷺ believes not only in the Book that has been revealed to him, but he believes in all the former divine books.

The fifth command اُمِرْتُ لِاَعْدِلَ بَيْنَكُمْ (I have been ordered to do justice among you) apparently relates to doing justice in the matters of dispute brought to him. But some exegetes have taken the meaning of *'adl'* to be 'equality' and thus have taken the sentence to mean that he should treat all the commands of religion equally by believing in all the prophets ؑ, in all the Books and by obeying all the Divine laws without any exception.

The sixth sentence اَللّٰهُ رَبُّنَا is 'Allah is our Lord and you Lord.' which means that all of us are nourished by Allah.

The seventh sentence لَنَآ اَعْمَالُنَا وَلَكُمْ اَعْمَالُكُمْ (For us are our deeds and for you, your deeds) states that our deeds would be for us only and you would neither gain nor lose due to our deeds, and your deeds would be for you only and we would neither gain nor lose due to your deeds. Some exegetes have stated that this verse was revealed in Makkah before the command for *jihād* with non-muslims was revealed; the verses conveying the command for *jihād* have cancelled this command, because the essence of *jihād* is to subjugate those people by fighting who do not accept the advice and exhortation – not to let them remain in the state of *kufr*. And some exegetes have stated that this command has not been cancelled; what it means is that since the truth has been proved through logical arguments, its non-acceptance can only be due to enmity and obstinacy,

and as such, everybody is responsible for his own deeds . (Qurṭubī)

The eight command لَا حُجَّةَ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ (there is no argumentations between us and you -) is that since the disbelievers do not accept the truth, despite its having been proved, which demonstrates their enmity, therefore, further discussion is useless and now there would be no more arguments between the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the disbelievers.

The ninth sentence اَللّٰهُ يَجْمَعُ بَيْنَنَا (Allah will bring us together -) states that on the Day of Judgment, Allah Almighty would gather all of us together and would requite every deed.

The tenth declaration وَإِلَيْهِ الْمَصِيْرُ (and to Him is the final return -) is that all of us would return to Him.

Verses 16 – 18

وَالَّذِيْنَ يُحَآجُّوْنَ فِي اللّٰهِ مِنْۢ بَعْدِمَا اسْتُجِيْبَ لَهٗ حُجَّتُهُمْ دَاحِضَةٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَعَلَيْهِمْ غَضَبٌ وَّلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيْدٌ ﴿١٦﴾ اَللّٰهُ الَّذِيْٓ اَنْزَلَ الْكِتٰبَ بِالْحَقِّ وَالْمِيْزَانَ ؕ وَمَا يُدْرِيْكَ لَعَلَّ السَّاعَةَ قَرِيْبٌ ﴿١٧﴾ يَسْتَعْجِلُ بِهَا الَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِهَا ۚ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مُشْفِقُوْنَ مِنْهَا ۙ وَيَعْلَمُوْنَ اَنَّهَا الْحَقُّ ؕ اَلَآ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يُمَارُوْنَ فِي السَّاعَةِ لَفِيْ ضَلٰلٍۢ بَعِيْدٍ ﴿١٨﴾

And those who argue about Allah after He has been responded to[1], their argument is void in the sight of their Lord, and upon them is wrath, and for them is a severe punishment. [16] **Allah is the One who has sent down the Book with truth, and the Balance as well. And what can let you know? May be, the Hour is near.** [17] **Those who do not believe in it demand for its coming soon, and those who believe are fearful of it, and know it to be a truth. Be aware that those who dispute concerning the Hour are wandering afar from the right path.** [18]

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[1]. i.e. after many people responded to the call of His prophets by accepting Islam.

Commentary

In the previous verses, all the people of the whole world had been invited towards the original *'dīn'* (religion) common between all the revealed Books and between all the prophets عليهم السلام, and were advised to be faithful to it and be steadfast in it. But some infidels, who had no intention of listening and accepting, started arguing with the Muslims, even at this invitation. Some narrations have it that some people of the Book, the Jews and the Christians, put forward the argument that our prophet came before yours and our Book was given before yours, hence our religion is superior to yours. And some narrations have it that this very argument was put forward by the infidels of Quraysh, because they called themselves followers of the religion of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام.

The Noble Qur'ān has warned these people that the explanations and proofs in favour of Islam and Qur'ān have been fully provided to you, and your own sensible and fair minded people, having accepted them, have embraced Islam, and now their argumentation is nothing but falsehood and misguidance. If they do not accept it, then divine punishment will visit them. This warning is followed by the statement that the Qur'ān is from Allah and contains comprehensive commandments regarding Allah's rights and the rights of the human beings between one another. This fact is stated in the next sentence, أَنزَلَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ وَالْمِيزَانَ "has sent down the Book with truth and the Balance as well - 17." Here 'the Book' means the Qur'ān, and all the previous revealed Books, and 'truth' means the divine religion mentioned above, and 'the Balance' literally means a weighing balance. Since it is an instrument of weighing one's due and establishing justice, Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه has taken it to mean 'equity' and 'justice'. Mujāhid رحمه الله a leading exegete, has said that here the 'Balance' means full payment of everyone's rights and doing justice. As such the word 'truth' points towards Allah's rights over His servants, and the word مِيزَان *mīzān* (Balance) points towards the rights of human beings over one another.

The statement that those who believe are fearful of the Doomsday means the fear generated due to cognizance of the awesome horrifying happenings which will take place on the Doomsday, and also due to cognizance of one's own short comings and wrong-doings. However, sometimes a believer's eagerness to meet his Lord Allah Almighty overcomes that fear, which does not contradict this statement; some dead

ones are proved to have said in their graves that they wish Doomsday would come soon because the glad tidings given by angels that they would be forgiven and treated kindly, had overcome the fear of Doomsday.

Verses 19 – 20

اَللّٰهُ لَطِيفٌۢ بِعِبَادِهٖ يَرْزُقُ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ۚ وَهُوَالْقَوِيُّ الْعَزِيزُ ﴿١٩﴾ مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ حَرْثَ الْاٰخِرَةِ نَزِدْ لَهٗ فِيْ حَرْثِهٖ ۚ وَمَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ حَرْثَ الدُّنْيَا نُؤْتِهٖ مِنْهَا ۙ وَمَا لَهٗ فِي الْاٰخِرَةِ مِنْ نَّصِيبٍ ﴿٢٠﴾

Allah is kind to His slaves. He gives provision to whom He wills. And He is the Strong, the Mighty. [19] **Whoever intends (to have) the harvest of the Hereafter, We will increase in his harvest; and whoever intends (to have) the harvest of the world (only), We will give him thereof, while in the Hereafter there is no share for him.** [20]

Commentary

اَللّٰهُ لَطِيفٌۢ بِعِبَادِهٖ (Allah is kind to His slaves - 42:19). The word, *latīf* used in the text has more than one lexical meanings. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ has translated it here as kind, and Sayyidnā 'Ikrimah ﷺ has translated it as benefactor.

Muqātil ﷺ has said that Allah Almighty is kind to all His servants, so much so that even the infidels and sinners keep on being showered with His worldly blessings. There are many types and kinds of the divine bounties, graces and favours showered upon His servants. That is why many meanings of the word *latīf* have been stated in the Tafsīr of Qurṭubī, all of which are covered by the words 'kind' and 'benefactor'.

Although Allah Ta'ālā provides sustenance to all His creatures without any exception – even to those animals on land and in waters whom nobody knows, yet the present verse states that He provides sustenance 'to whom He wills'. This is better understood from the explanation given in Tafsīr Maẓharī which says that there are countless types and kinds of sustenance provided by Allah Ta'ālā; sustenance as necessary is provided to all and sundry, whereas some special kinds of

sustenance are distributed by Him in degrees and quantities determined by His perfect wisdom. Somebody is given more of wealth and goods, somebody is given more of health and strength, somebody is given more of learning and knowledge and somebody is given more of other types and kinds; in this way everybody is dependent on another person and it is this dependence which persuades people to co-operate with and help each other and which is the foundation of human civilization.

Ja'far Ibn Muḥammad رحمه الله تعالىٰ has said that Allah Ta'ālā's kindness to His servants in the matter of sustenance is in two ways. Firstly, He provides food and other necessities to every living being as per his needs, and secondly, He does not provide sustenance for anyone for the whole of his life all at once, rather gives him gradually according to his need, otherwise its preservation would not have been feasible. (Maẓharī, Qurṭubī)

Note

Shāh 'Abdul Ghanī Phūlpūrī رحمه الله تعالىٰ relates from Ḥāji Imdādullah رحمه الله تعالىٰ that anyone who recites the above verse i.e. اَللّٰهُ لَطِيْفٌ بِعِبَادِهٖ يَرْزُقُ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ۚ وَهُوَ الْقَوِيُّ الْعَزِيْزُ seventy times every morning regularly, would be preserved from shortage of sustenance and said that experience has shown it to be very effective.

Verses 21 – 23

اَمْ لَهُمْ شُرَكٰٓؤُا شَرَعُوْا لَهُمْ مِّنَ الدِّيْنِ مَالَمْ يَاْذَنْۢ بِهِ اللّٰهُ ؕ وَلَوْلَا كَلِمَةُ الْفَصْلِ لَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ ؕ وَاِنَّ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿٢١﴾ تَرَى الظّٰلِمِيْنَ مُشْفِقِيْنَ مِمَّا كَسَبُوْا وَهُوَ وَاقِعٌۢ بِهِمْ ؕ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ فِيْ رَوْضٰتِ الْجَنّٰتِ ۚ لَهُمْ مَّايَشَآءُوْنَ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ ؕ ذٰلِكَ هُوَالْفَضْلُ الْكَبِيْرُ ﴿٢٢﴾ ذٰلِكَ الَّذِيْ يُبَشِّرُاللّٰهُ عِبَادَهُ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ ؕ قُلْ لَّآ اَسْئَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ اَجْرًا اِلَّا الْمَوَدَّةَ فِي الْقُرْبٰى ؕ وَمَنْ يَّقْتَرِفْ حَسَنَةً نَّزِدْ لَهٗ فِيْهَا حُسْنًا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ شَكُوْرٌ ﴿٢٣﴾

Is it that they have associate-gods who have prescribed for them a religion that is not sanctioned by Allah? And, had it not been for a decisive word, the matter would have been decided between them (here in this world). And of course, for the wrongdoer there is a painful punishment (in the Hereafter). [21] You will see the wrongdoers fearful of what they earned, and (the punishment) it (entails) is sure to befall them. As for those who believed and did righteous deeds, they will be in meadows of the Gardens. For them there is, with their Lord, whatever they wish. That is the great bounty. [22] That is the good news that Allah gives to His slaves who believed and did righteous deeds. Say, "I do not ask you any fee for it, except the love of kinship." And whoever performs a good act, for him We will increase goodness therein. Surely Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very Appreciative. [23]

Commentary

قُلْ لَّآ اَسْئَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ اَجْرًا اِلَّا الْمَوَدَّةَ فِى الْقُرْبٰى (Say, "I do not ask you any fee for it, except the love of kinship - 42:23). The explanation of this verse that has been adopted by most of the exegetes is that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been directed to say the following to the infidels of Quraish, "My real right over all of you is that I am the Messenger of Allah, and you should admit it and obey me for your reformation and betterment; but even if you do not accept my prophethood and messengership, there is still one more right I have over you which you cannot deny; and that is the right of relationship which I have with most of your tribes. You also do not deny the right of relatives and the need of behaving kindly towards them. Therefore, I am not asking you for any compensation for my preaching; all I want is that you should consider my right of being you relative, and refrain from animosity and hostility, irrespective of whether you accept what I am saying or you do not."

Now it is obvious that consideration of the rights of kinship was their own obligation, and could not be taken as compensation for preaching services. Hence the use of the word 'except' in this verse is in its idiomatic sense meaning that although, in reality, it is no compensation, and if you consider it to be so, it is your own mistake. In fact, I do not charge any fee at all. However, I ask you to refrain from the hostile behavior, and to fulfill the rights of kinship which you should do any way.

This explanation of this verse is reported from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Bukhārī and Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim; Mujāhid, Qatādah and a very large group of leading exegetes have also adopted this explanation. All prophets ؑ in every age have openly told their people that they never asked any compensation or payment in lieu of the efforts that they were making for their betterment and well-being; Their compensation would be given by Allah Almighty only. This being so, how could the chief of all the prophets ؑ, who is the most honoured and exalted of all of them, ask for compensation from his people.

Sa'īd Ibn Manṣūr, Ibn Sa'd, 'Abd Ibn Ḥumaid, Ḥākim and Baihaqī have related an incident of Imām Sha'bī, which has been certified by Ḥākim to be correct, that Imām Sha'bī was questioned by people regarding the explanation of this verse, and thereupon he wrote to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ for the correct explanation. The reply he got was the same as explained above. Those interested may consult Tafsīr Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī for the full text of the reply given by Ibn 'Abbās ؓ. Some words of his reply are added in the report of Ibn Jarīr which may be found in the same book.

There is, however, another narration reported with a weak chain of reporters, according to which Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ says that when this verse was revealed, people asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ as to who are his kinsfolk, and he replied that Sayyidnā 'Alī ؓ, Sayyidah Fāṭimah رضی اللہ عنہا and their offspring's. The authenticity of this narration has been considered weak by Suyūṭī in Ad-Dur-ul-Manthūr and by Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar in Takhrīj of the Aḥādīth of Kashshāf. According to this narration, the meaning would be that the only compensation the Holy Prophet ﷺ asks from the ummah for his services is that they should take care of his progeny. Obviously, this proposition does not befit the high stature of prophets ؑ, and specially that of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Therefore the correct and preferred explanation which is generally favoured by the ummah is the one given above. But the Shi'ites have not only adopted this doubtful narration, but have also made up a huge stock of baseless presumptions on its basis.

Respect and Love for the Holy Prophet's ﷺ family and progeny

The explanation given above is to clarify that the Holy Prophet ﷺ did not ask his people to respect and love his progeny in exchange of his

services. But it does not mean that the respect and love for the Holy Prophet's ﷺ progeny has no importance. Only an ill-fated, misguided person can think of such a thing. The fact is that one's being a Muslim depends on having reverence and love for the Holy Prophet ﷺ much more than any other person in the whole universe. Naturally, the logical consequence of this reverence and love is to have reverence and love for his close relatives according to the degree of their closeness to the Holy Prophet ﷺ which is obligatory for every Muslim. Since one's children are the closest relations, hence the reverence and love for the children of the Holy Prophet ﷺ is undoubtedly a necessary element of faith. But it does not mean that one should ignore or forget the pure wives رضی اللہ عنہن اجمعین or other noble Companions ﷺ who had manifold associations, closeness and relationships with the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

The gist is that love for the progeny and for the family members of the Holy Prophet ﷺ has never been a matter of controversy in the ummah. it has been taken by the entire ummah unanimously as an essential requirement of faith. Controversies arise when the reverence of others is attacked, otherwise reverence and love for even common descendents of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, known as *sādat*, no matter how distantly related to him, is an honour for a Muslim and is a source of reward in the Hereafter. Since many people started neglecting it, Imām Shāfi'ī رحمہ اللہ تعالیٰ denounced this attitude in a few couplets reproduced below:

یاراکبًا قف بالمحصّب من منًی　　واهتف بساكن خيفها والناهض

سحرًا إذا فاضَ الحَجيج الٰى منًى　　فيضًا كملتطم الفرات الفائض

إن كان رفضًا حُبُّ الِ محمَّدٍ　　فليشهد الثقلان انّی رافضی

"O rider! Halt near the valley of Muḥaṣṣab in Minā, and when the sea of Ḥajj pilgrims advances in quick waves towards Minā in the morning, announce to every passer-by and inhabitant of the area that if only the love of the progeny of the Holy Prophet ﷺ is *rifḍ* (extreme Shi'ism), then I ask all the jins and humans of this universe to witness that I am also a *rāfiḍī* (staunch Shī'ah)"

This statement of Imām Shāfi'ī, in fact, is the standpoint of the whole ummah.

Verses 24 – 26

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرٰى عَلَى اللّٰهِ كَذِبًا ۚ فَإِنْ يَّشَإِ اللّٰهُ يَخْتِمْ عَلٰى قَلْبِكَ ۗ وَيَمْحُ اللّٰهُ الْبَاطِلَ وَيُحِقُّ الْحَقَّ بِكَلِمٰتِهٖ ۗ إِنَّهٗ عَلِيْمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُوْرِ ﴿٢٤﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِىْ يَقْبَلُ التَّوْبَةَ عَنْ عِبَادِهٖ وَيَعْفُوْا عَنِ السَّيِّاٰتِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا تَفْعَلُوْنَ ﴿٢٥﴾ وَيَسْتَجِيْبُ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ وَيَزِيْدُهُمْ مِّنْ فَضْلِهٖ ۗ وَالْكٰفِرُوْنَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيْدٌ ﴿٢٦﴾

Is it that they say, "He has forged a lie against Allah"? So, if Allah wills, He may put a seal on your heart.[1] And Allah blots out falsehood and establishes truth with His words. Surely, He is fully aware of what lies in the hearts. [24] **And He is the One who accepts repentance from His slaves, and forgives evil deeds, and knows whatever you do.** [25] **And He responds to (the prayer of) those who believe and do righteous deeds, and gives them more out of His grace. As for the disbelievers, for them there is a severe punishment.** [26]

Commentary

The first verse conveys Allah Almighty's reply to those who held the prophethood and messengership of the Holy Prophet ﷺ to be false, the Qur'ān to be wrong and forged. The the reply is based on a divine rule that miracles or events occurring against normal course which cannot be performed by ordinary human beings are created and shown through prophets, by Allah Almighty's Grace, to prove their prophethood, without any discretion of the prophets themselves.

Although some magicians also do perform such magical tricks, but obviously neither the prophets nor the magicians can perform any of these things without Allah Almighty's intent and scheme. He allows the magicians to perform their tricks as a measure of test and trial. However,

1. It means that the miraculous Qur'ān recited by the unlettered Prophet ﷺ is in itself a clear proof of its being revealed by Allah Ta'ālā. Allah's practice is such that if a person falsely claims to be a prophet, He does not let him show any miracle. Therefore, had there been, God forbid, something forged by the Holy Prophet ﷺ in the Qur'ān, Allah would have put a seal on his heart, and he would have never been able to come up with such a miraculous discourse.

to differentiate between magic and miracle and between a magician and a prophet, the rule devised by Him is that no false claimant of prophethood can perform any magical trick successfully; magical tricks can be performed successfully by one until he claims prophethood, but the magic vanishes as soon as one lays a false claim of prophethood.

When Allah Ta'ālā bestows prophethood and messengership on anyone, He also favours him with miracles and makes those miracles highly visible. Thus He provides physical and decreed proof of his prophethood. And He also confirms him in His Divine Book.

In view of this rule, it should be understood that the Noble Qur'ān is such a miracle that all the humans and all the jins of this world are unable to produce even one verse comparable to the verse of the Qur'ān. Their inability to do so was proved in the days of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and continues till today. Such an open and obvious miracle cannot be accomplished by a false claimant of prophethood. The Holy Prophet's claim to *'waḥy'* and messengership is, therefore, correct and true, and those who hold it to be incorrect and forged are misguided calumniators.

The deniers and opponents have been advised in the second verse that there is still time to give up and renounce their disbelief and *'kufr'*. Allah is very merciful and Most Beneficent; He accepts the repentance of those who truly repent, and forgives their sins.

The Reality of *'Taubah'* (Repentence)

The literal meaning of *'taubah'* is to return and turn to; in religious terminology, giving up and renunciation of any sin is called *'taubah'*. There are three conditions for its being proper and genuine.

One is to give up, immediately, the sin one is involved in. The second is to repent for the past sin, and the third is to determine firmly not to commit it in future. If it pertains to neglect of any obligatory duty *(farḍ)*, one has to start observing it or start offering *'qaḍā'*'(prescribed compensation). If it relates to the rights of another person and if that right is monetary or material and the concerned person is alive, then the material or money has to be returned to him, unless he agrees to forgo, and if that person is not alive, but his heirs are available, then the material or money has to be returned to the heirs; if the heirs are also not available, then the material or money has to be deposited in the Islamic

public treasury (*bait-ul-māl*) – if there is no public treasury, or it is not managed properly, then the material or money has to be given as alms on his behalf. If the right owed to another person is not monetary or material, for example, if another person has been distressed unduly, or he has been abused or his backbiting has been committed, then he has to be pleased and forgiveness has to be sought and obtained from him or her.

It is important to note that for all kinds of 'taubah', giving up of sin must be for the sake of Allah, and not due to any physical inability or weakness. The 'Sharī'ah' demands that one ought to renounce all the sins, but if someone renounces only a particular sin, Ahl-us-Sunnah hold that that particular sin would be forgiven, whereas his liability for other sins would continue.

Verses 27 – 35

وَلَوْ بَسَطَ اللّٰهُ الرِّزْقَ لِعِبَادِهٖ لَبَغَوْا فِی الْاَرْضِ وَلٰكِنْ يُّنَزِّلُ بِقَدَرٍ
مَّا يَشَآءُ ؕ اِنَّهٗ بِعِبَادِهٖ خَبِيْرٌۢ بَصِيْرٌ ﴿۲۷﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِیْ يُنَزِّلُ الْغَيْثَ مِنْۢ
بَعْدِ مَا قَنَطُوْا وَيَنْشُرُ رَحْمَتَهٗ ؕ وَهُوَ الْوَلِیُّ الْحَمِيْدُ ﴿۲۸﴾ وَمِنْ اٰيٰتِهٖ
خَلْقُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَمَا بَثَّ فِيْهِمَا مِنْ دَآبَّةٍ ؕ وَهُوَ عَلٰی
جَمْعِهِمْ اِذَا يَشَآءُ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿۲۹﴾ وَمَآ اَصَابَكُمْ مِّنْ مُّصِيْبَةٍ فَبِمَا كَسَبَتْ
اَيْدِيْكُمْ وَيَعْفُوْا عَنْ كَثِيْرٍ ﴿۳۰﴾ وَمَآ اَنْتُمْ بِمُعْجِزِيْنَ فِی الْاَرْضِ ۚۖ
وَمَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ مِنْ وَّلِیٍّ وَّلَا نَصِيْرٍ ﴿۳۱﴾ وَمِنْ اٰيٰتِهِ الْجَوَارِ
فِی الْبَحْرِ كَالْاَعْلَامِ ﴿۳۲﴾ اِنْ يَّشَاْ يُسْكِنِ الرِّيْحَ فَيَظْلَلْنَ رَوَاكِدَ
عَلٰی ظَهْرِهٖ ؕ اِنَّ فِیْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّكُلِّ صَبَّارٍ شَكُوْرٍ ﴿۳۳﴾ اَوْ يُوْبِقْهُنَّ
بِمَا كَسَبُوْا وَيَعْفُ عَنْ كَثِيْرٍ ﴿۳۴﴾ وَّيَعْلَمَ الَّذِيْنَ يُجَادِلُوْنَ فِیْ
اٰيٰتِنَا ؕ مَا لَهُمْ مِّنْ مَّحِيْصٍ ﴿۳۵﴾

And should Allah expand the provision for His slaves (to its full extent), they would spread mischief on earth; but He sends down what He wills in (due) measure.

Surely, with regard to His slaves, He is All-Aware, Ever-Watchful. [27] And He is the One who sends down rain after they have lost hope, and He extends His mercy. And He is the Guardian, Worthy of all praise. [28] And among His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and of the creatures He has spread in them. And He is Powerful to assemble them whenever He so wills. [29] And whatever hardship befalls you is because of what your own hands have committed, while He overlooks many (of your faults). [30] And you are not able to frustrate (Him) in the earth. And, besides Allah, you have neither someone to protect, nor someone to help. [31] And among His signs are ships in the sea, like mountains. [32] If He wills, He may stop the wind, so they will stand still on its back. Surely in this, there are signs for everyone who is ever patient, fully grateful. [33] Or He may destroy them because of what they earned, and may overlook many, [34] and (in such an event) those who raise disputes in Our verses will come to know that there is no way for them to escape. [35]

Commentary

Sequence and background of Revelation

In these verses, Allah Almighty has given the proof of His Oneness by pointing out to the perfection of His Wisdom through which He has tied up the whole universe with a stable system, which is surely being supervised by a Being who is All-Wise and All-Aware.

Allah Almighty has opened this subject by pointing towards the economic system which He, in His Wisdom, has established in this world. This subject bears a relationship with the previous verses wherein it had been stated that Allah Almighty accepts the worships of the believers which includes acceptance of their supplications as well. Here one could get perplexed by the frequent observation that a Muslim supplicates for some worldly need, but his objective is not met; this doubt has been removed in the first of the above verses. The gist of the clarification is that sometimes fulfillment of one's all desires is neither in his own interest nor in the interest of his society. As such, if any supplication of anyone at any time has apparently not been accepted, it would be for the sake of greater well-being of the universe which nobody knows, except the All-knowing, All-wise Creator. If every human being of this world is given every kind

of sustenance and every kind of blessings, this system of the world just cannot be managed wisely. (Tafsīr Kabīr)

Some narrations also corroborate that this verse was revealed about those Muslims who used to wish that they also should get the same wealth and opulence as was available to the infidels. Imām Baghawī رحمه الله تعالى has reproduced the statement of Sayyidnā Khabbāb Ibn 'Aratt ﷺ that when they saw the wealth and opulence of Banū Quraiẓah, Banū Naḍīr and Banū Qainuqā' (the Jewish tribes), the desire to have such affluence welled up in their hearts also, and thereafter this verse was revealed. And Sayyidnā 'Amr Ibn Ḥārith ﷺ states that some of the companions of Ṣuffah had expressed their desire to the Holy Prophet ﷺ that Allah Almighty may make them wealthy and this verse was revealed thereafter. (Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī, etc.)

General Abundance of Wealth in the World is cause of Tumult

However, this verse states that had every kind of sustenance and every kind of blessing been provided abundantly to every individual of this world, the discord and dispute between one another would have crossed all limits, because due to abundance of wealth, nobody would be in need of another person, nor would one be subdued by another. On the other hand, one attribute of wealth is that greed and inordinate desire also increase with the increase in wealth. It would necessarily have resulted in the common use of force to get possession of another person's property, hence disputes and fights, rebellion and other misdeeds would have crossed all limits. That is why Allah Ta'ālā, instead of providing everybody with every kind of sustenance and every kind of blessing, has distributed his blessings in such a way that somebody has abundance of riches and wealth, another person is healthier and stronger than others, yet another person is more comely and beautiful than others, and yet another has surpassed others in knowledge and wisdom. In short, everybody is dependent on others for one thing or another, and it is this inter-dependence which is the foundation of civilization.

This is the meaning of وَلٰكِنْ يُّنَزِّلُ بِقَدَرٍ مَّا يَشَآءُ (but He sends down what He wills in (due) measure - 42:27) It means that Allah has bestowed His blessings upon the people of this world in a special way. And by stating further on اِنَّهٗ بِعِبَادِهٖ خَبِيْرٌ بَصِيْرٌ (Surely, with regard to His slaves, He is All-Aware, Ever-watchful - 42:27) it has been indicated that Allah

Almighty knows very well what is good for a person and what is harmful. Accordingly, He has provided everybody with what is good for him, and if He has deprived somebody of anything, it is because of his and the whole world's welfare. It is not at all necessary that we should understand the underlying wisdom and welfare behind the decision about every individual, because everyone thinks on the basis of his limited knowledge, whereas Allah Almighty is looking at the whole world. Therefore it is simply not possible to gauge all of His Wisdom. A perceivable parallel would be the case of an honest head of state who has passed certain orders which happen to affect some people adversely, and these people naturally face problems. Now a person who has been so affected adversely is quite likely to feel bad about those orders of the head of the state, because his thinking is limited to his own interest. But a person who is looking at the circumstances of the whole state and the whole nation and who appreciates that the whole state cannot be sacrificed for the sake of one individual's interest, does not consider such a step to be bad. Then how is it possible to gauge the Wisdom of the Being who is managing the system of the whole universe? If this point is kept in mind, the confusion and perplexity generated by the sight of anyone surrounded by tribulation would disappear by itself.

This verse also tells us that distribution of wealth and goods equally to all the people of the world is neither possible, nor desirable nor is it required for the existence of the system of the universe. This issue will be discussed in detail in explanation of the verse نَحۡنُ قَسَمۡنَا بَيۡنَهُمۡ مَّعِيۡشَتَهُمۡ (43:32) of surah Zukhruf.

The Difference between Paradise and the World

Here a question may arise that all kinds of blessings will be provided in abundance to all human beings in Paradise, so why would it not cause mischief there? And the answer is that the cause of mischief in this world is the abundance of wealth and goods coupled with greed and inordinate desire to have more and more which keeps on increasing with wealth. But greed and inordinate desire would simply not be there in Paradise, although blessings and delights will keep on being showered. And that is why this mischief would not surface there.

The question why could not greed and inordinate desire be removed and wealth and goods be provided in abundance in this world as well, is

quite irrelevant. The very purpose of creating this world is to have co-existence of good and evil. It is simply not possible without it to arrange trial of human beings which is the real purpose of creation of the universe. Therefore, the real purpose of creating this universe would have failed, if greed and desire had been removed altogether from human beings. Paradise, on the other hand, would comprise goodness only, therefore, such base emotions will simply not be there.

هُوَ الَّذِىْ يُنَزِّلُ الْغَيْثَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا قَنَطُوْا (And He is the One who sends down rain after they have lost hope - 42:28)". It is usual for Allah Almighty to send down rain whenever the earth is in severe need of water. But by saying "after they have lost hope", attention is being drawn towards the fact that sometimes Allah Almighty, in deviation from His usual norm, delays sending down rain so much that people begin losing hope. Apart from trial, such a happening is to warn that rain and famine are all in the power of Allah Ta'ālā; whenever He wants, He stops rain because of people's misdeeds, etc., so that people turn their attention towards His kindness, and display their humility and dependence. If rains had been subject to a strict time-table without any deviation, people would have considered rains to be purely subject to apparent causes, and would have become inattentive to Allah's Almighty's power. Here losing hope means losing hope in their contrivances because disappointment with Allah's kindness is *kufr* (infidelity).

وَمَا بَثَّ فِيْهِمَا مِنْ دَآبَّةٍ (and the creatures He has spread in them - 29). The original lexical meaning of دَابَّة *'dābbah'* (used in the text and translated as 'creatures') is anything which moves about of its own will; later on this word began to be used for animals. This verse states that Allah Almighty has created many creatures which move about on the earth as well as in the sky. The creatures which move about on the earth are all too visible; the ones which move about in the sky could well be the angels as well, and it is quite possible that there may be some animals in the sky so far unknown to man.

Briefly, in view of the system of the universe, Allah Almighty has not provided every one with wealth and goods in abundance, rather He has distributed them in accordance with the dictates of wisdom. But the good things of universe which are of general benefit have been provided to everyone. Rain, clouds, earth, sky and the creatures therein have all been

created for the benefit of human beings, and they all demonstrate the Oneness of Allah. If after all this, anyone suffers any hardship, he should consider it to be due to his own deeds, and he should do a little heart searching, instead of complaining against Allah Ta'ālā.

وَمَآ اَصَابَكُمْ مِّنْ مُّصِيْبَةٍ فَبِمَا كَسَبَتْ اَيْدِيْكُمْ وَيَعْفُوْا عَنْ كَثِيْرٍ (And whatever hardship befalls you is because of what your own hands have committed, while He overlooks many [of your faults].... 42:30) means exactly the same. Sayyidnā Ḥasan ﷺ has narrated that when this verse was revealed, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said "I swear by the Being Who holds my life, that anyone who gets scratched by a piece of wood, or his nerve shivers or his step falters is all due to his sins, and Allah Ta'ālā does not punish for every sin, rather the number of sins He overlooks far exceeds those for which any punishment is given." Maulānā Ashraf Alī Thānavi رحمه الله تعالى has stated that just as the physical hardships and tortures befall due to sins, the inner ailments are also caused by sins. One sin committed by a person becomes the cause for getting involved in other sins. Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Qayyim has written in his book *Ad-Dawā-'ush- Shāfī* that one prompt punishment of a sin is that one gets involved in other sins; similarly the prompt reward of a virtuous deed is that it attracts another virtue. Baiḍāwī and others have stated that this verse is specifically meant for those people who are likely to commit sins. The hardships and the troubles that befall prophets who are innocent of sins, children who have not reached the age of puberty and mad persons, who do not commit any sin, are not covered by this verse. There are other reasons for them, for example, they are upgraded in their rewards. And in reality a man cannot fathom the depths of wisdom behind them. (Allah knows best)

It is proved from some narrations of Ḥadīth, as reproduced by Ḥākim in Mustadrak and by Baghawī on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Alī ﷺ that those sins for which punishment is given in this world are forgiven for Muslims in the Hereafter. (Maẓharī)

Verses 36 – 43

فَمَآ اُوْتِيْتُمْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ فَمَتَاعُ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ۚ وَمَا عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ خَيْرٌ وَّاَبْقٰى لِلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَلٰى رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُوْنَ ﴿۳۶﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ يَجْتَنِبُوْنَ

كَبٰٓئِرَ الْاِثْمِ وَالْفَوَاحِشَ وَاِذَا مَا غَضِبُوْا هُمْ يَغْفِرُوْنَ ﴿٣٧﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ
اسْتَجَابُوْا لِرَبِّهِمْ وَاَقَامُوا الصَّلٰوةَ ص وَاَمْرُهُمْ شُوْرٰى بَيْنَهُمْ ص وَمِمَّا
رَزَقْنٰهُمْ يُنْفِقُوْنَ ﴿٣٨﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ اِذَآ اَصَابَهُمُ الْبَغْيُ هُمْ يَنْتَصِرُوْنَ
﴿٣٩﴾ وَجَزٰٓؤُا سَيِّئَةٍ سَيِّئَةٌ مِّثْلُهَا ج فَمَنْ عَفَا وَاَصْلَحَ فَاَجْرُهٗ عَلَى اللّٰهِ ط
اِنَّهٗ لَا يُحِبُّ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٤٠﴾ وَلَمَنِ انْتَصَرَ بَعْدَ ظُلْمِهٖ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ مَا
عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنْ سَبِيْلٍ ﴿٤١﴾ اِنَّمَا السَّبِيْلُ عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ يَظْلِمُوْنَ النَّاسَ
وَيَبْغُوْنَ فِي الْاَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ ط اُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿٤٢﴾
وَلَمَنْ صَبَرَ وَغَفَرَ اِنَّ ذٰلِكَ لَمِنْ عَزْمِ الْاُمُوْرِ ﴿٤٣﴾

So, whatever thing has been given to you is an enjoyment of the worldly life. And that which is with Allah is much better, and much more durable for those who believe and place their trust in Allah, [36] and (for) those who abstain from the major sins and from shameless acts; and (for those who) when they get angry, they forgive, [37] and those who have responded to their Lord (in submission to Him), and have established salah, and whose affairs are (settled) with consultation between them, and who spend out of what We have given to them, [38] and those who, when they are subjected to aggression, defend themselves. [39] And the recompense of evil is evil like it. Then the one who forgives and compromises has his reward undertaken by Allah. Surely, He does not like the unjust. [40]

And the one who defends himself after having been wronged, there is no blame on such people. [41] Blame, in fact, is upon those who wrong people and make mischief on earth unjustly. For such people there is a painful punishment. [42] And if one observes patience and forgives, it is, of course, one of the courageous conducts. [43]

Commentary

The above verses state the imperfection and temporary nature of the blessings of this world, as against the perfection and permanence of the blessings of the Hereafter. The most important and major condition for

obtaining the heavenly blessings in the Hereafter is faith and belief, without which nobody can get them. However, if in addition to faith, one has taken full care of virtuous deeds as well, then one will get the heavenly blessings right from the beginning, otherwise one would get them after being punished for one's sins and shortcomings. That is why the first condition stated in the above verses is belief referred to by the words, "those who believe". Then those particular deeds have been stated without which, according to the rule, the bounties of the Hereafter will not be obtained from the beginning, but after having been punished for one's sins. The rule is there for application in general, but if Allah Ta'ālā wills, He may forgive all the sins of the greatest of the sinners, and give him the blessings of the Hereafter right from the beginning, He is not subject to any rule or code. Now, let us look at those particular virtues and deeds which have been mentioned with such an importance.

First virtue: عَلٰى رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُوْنَ (and place their trust in Allah - 36,) meaning those who place their trust in Allah, under all circumstances, in all matters; they do not consider anyone else to be the real cause of any thing.

Second virtue: اَلَّذِيْنَ يَجْتَنِبُوْنَ كَبٰٓئِرَ الْاِثْمِ وَالْفَوَاحِشَ (those who abstain from the major sins and from shameless acts - 37). What are major sins? Details have already been stated in the commentary of Sūrah Nisā'; the author has also given a complete list of major and minor sins in his booklet in Urdu published under the little of "Gunah-e- bay ladhdhat (گناہ بے لذت)".

The wisdom behind specially mentioning shameless acts, apart from all the other major sins, is that they are not only graver, but also infectious in that they influence others also. Shameless acts include adultery and the acts that precede it as preludes, and those bad deeds which are committed brazenly in public, because they corrupt the whole society and their liability is also very severe.

Third virtue: وَاِذَا مَا غَضِبُوْا هُمْ يَغْفِرُوْنَ (and when they get angry, they forgive - 37,) This is a moral quality of the highest order, because when love and anger prevail upon someone, they make him blind and deaf, and he loses his ability to distinguish right from wrong, and true from false, rather, he cannot appreciate the results of his own actions.The one who is angry tries his utmost to vent his anger fully upon the one with

whom he is angry. That is why Allah Ta'ālā has defined this quality of Mu'mins and virtuous persons that when they are angry, they not only maintain the limits of right and wrong, but also forgo their justified rights.

Fourth virtue: وَالَّذِيْنَ اسْتَجَابُوْا لِرَبِّهِمْ وَاَقَامُوالصَّلٰوةَ (and those who have responded to their Lord [in submission to Him] and have established Ṣalāh - 38,). 'Responding to the Lord' means to accept Allah's orders immediately, without questioning them, and get ready to obey them, irrespective of whether the order is or is not according to one's liking. This includes carrying out all the obligatory duties and avoiding all the things considered unlawful and undesirable in Islam. But *ṣalāh* being the most important of all the obligations, and having the quality of enabling discharge of other duties and avoidance of unlawful things, has been mentioned prominently.

The fifth virtue: وَاَمْرُهُمْ شُوْرٰى بَيْنَهُمْ (whose affairs are settled with consultation between them - 38). The sense is that in all important affairs where the Shari'ah is silent, they they consult each other. 'Affairs' have been qualified by us with the word 'important', because the word 'Amr' used in the text signifies importance in common usage. It has been clarified in the explanation of the verse (وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِى الْاَمْرِ And consult them in the matter - 3:159) of sūrah 'Āl-'Imrān that important affairs include affairs of the state as well as important affairs in general. Ibn Kathīr has stated that consultation in the important affairs of the state is compulsory. The selection of the head of the state through consultation, ordained by Islam, brought to an end the autocratic rule of kings of the days of ignorance who used to take the state as an inherited estate. As such, Islam laid the foundation of real democracy by ending autocracy. But Islam, unlike western democracies, has not given total authority to the public. There are certain restrictions on the members of the advisory body. So the system of government in Islam is a very moderate one, quite apart from autocracy and western democracy. Please see details in the second volume of Ma'arifulQur'ān from page 227 to 238.

Imām Jaṣṣāṣ has stated in Aḥkām-ul-Qur'ān that this verse has made the importance of consultation evident, and we are under orders to consult wise and far sighted people for taking action in important matters requiring advice, and not to act hurriedly relying only on ourselves.

Importance of consultation and its process

Khaṭīb Baghdādī has narrated the following statement of Sayyidnā 'Alī ﷺ "I asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ that if, after you we face a situation about which neither the Qur'ān has any specific ruling, nor have you given any direction, how should we proceed?" The Holy Prophet ﷺ replied by saying,

اجمعوا له العابدين من امتى واجعلوه بينكم شورٰى ولا تقضوا برأى واحد

"In such a case, assemble *'ābidīn* (the worshipping people) of my ummah, and decide the matter by mutual consultation; do not take decision on any individual's single opinion." (Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī, referring to Khaṭīb)

In some versions of this narration, the word '*fuqahā*' (jurists) also appears alongwith *'ābidīn* (the worshipping people) which means that the jurists who have understanding of the religion and worshipers are the ones who should be consulted.

The author of Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī has stated that if the above process is not followed in consultation, rather irreligious people and people without proper knowledge of religion are consulted, the ill effects would prevail upon the good in their advice.

Baihaqī رحمه الله تعالى has narrated in Shu'ab-ul-'Īmān from Sayyidnā Ibn Umar ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said, "Anyone who intends to do something, and he takes that action after consultation, Allah Ta'ālā would guide him towards the best possible option." It means that He will turn that person's direction towards an option that results in his betterment. A similar *ḥadīth* reported by Sayyidnā Ḥasan ﷺ has been reproduced by Bukhārī in Al-Adab-ul-Mufrad, and by 'Abd Ibn Ḥumaid in his Musnad that the Holy Prophet ﷺ, after reciting the above verse, said:

ما تشاور قوم قط الا هدُوا لأرشد أمرهم

"When a nation takes an action after mutual consultation, it is surely guided towards the correct course."

As reported in a hadith, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "So far as your rulers are the best among you, your rich people are generous (enough to spend in the way of Allah and on poor people) and your affairs are

decided through mutual consultation, then the back of the earth would be better for you than its belly (i.e. the life would be better than death) but when your rulers are the worst from among you, your rich people are misers and your affairs are given in the charge of women, then the belly of the earth will be better for you than its back (i.e. death will be better than life). (Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī)

Sixth virtue:- مِمَّا رَزَقْنٰهُمْ يُنْفِقُوْنَ (who spend out of what We have given to them - 38) It refers to spending for virtuous deeds, such as *zakāh*, obligatory and optional alms. Qur'ān usually mentions *zakāh* and *ṣadaqāt* (alms) immediately after *ṣalāh*. But the mention of mutual consultation immediately after *ṣalāh* and the mention of *Zakāh* after it is perhaps to attract attention to the possibility of utilizing the five times daily *ṣalāh* congregation in mosques for the purpose of consultation also in matters which require mutual consultation. (Ruh-ul-Ma'ani)

Seventh virtue:- وَالَّذِيْنَ اِذَا اَصَابَهُمُ الْبَغْيُ هُمْ يَنْتَصِرُوْنَ (and those who, when they are subjected to aggression, defend themselves - 39.) The original word used in the text is '*yantaṣirūn*' which may be translated as 'defend themselves' and also as 'retaliate'. In the latter case, retaliation must be equal, and should in no case exceed the limit of equality. This quality, in reality, is a further elaboration of the third virtue, i.e forgiving the opponents. It means that though forgiveness is a good quality, yet one may face certain situations where the mischief gets a fillip if one forgives, and hence it is better to take revenge in those situations. This verse has defined the rule that in those situations where taking revenge is the more suitable option, one has to take care that one does not exceed the equalizing limit, otherwise he will become unjust and transgressor. That is why this verse is followed by the verse 40, وَجَزٰٓؤُا سَيِّئَةٍ سَيِّئَةٌ مِّثْلُهَا (and the recompense of evil is evil like it.) which lays down the equitable rule of retaliation that one may cause just as much physical or monetary harm to his opponent as he has received from him; but the condition is that causing that harm is not a sin in itself. For example, if someone has been forced by another to take an alcoholic drink, it would not be permissible for him to force the other person to take an alcoholic drink.

Although permission has been given in this verse to take revenge in equal measure, but immediately thereafter it is emphasized again that فَمَنْ عَفَا وَاَصْلَحَ فَاَجْرُهٗ عَلَى اللّٰهِ "the one who forgives and compromises has his reward

undertaken by Allah. - 40" The instruction is that to forgive is better. More details are given in the later two verses.

The Moderate decision between forgiveness and revenge

Ibrāhīm Nakha'ī رحمه الله تعالى has stated that former virtuous elders did not like that Muslims are disgraced and debased by the sinners and oppressors who, if not taken to task, may be encouraged to their further wrongdoings. Therefore, where it is apprehended that the sinners and oppressors would become more daring and would harass the decent people if they are forgiven, then it is better to take revenge from them. And to forgive would be better in case the transgressor is repentant, and there is no apprehension of his becoming more daring. Qāḍī Abū Bakr Ibn-ul-'Arabī in Aḥkām-ul-Qur'ān and Qurṭubī in his Tafsīr have concurred to the view that forgivness and revenge are applicable as suitable, in different situations,. For one who is repentant after having transgressed, it is better to forgive and for one who is stubborn and insistent upon transgression, it is better to take revenge.

Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thanawi رحمه الله تعالى has, however, explained the issue in Bayān-ul-Qur'ān from a little different angle. He says that Allah Ta'ālā has mentioned two qualities particular to the true, sincere and virtuous Muslims in both the verses. The verse emphasizing on forgiveness tells us that they are not overcome by anger, rather kindness and generosity remains dominant in their temperament because of which they forgive the ones who commit excess against them. And in the verse that refers to revenge, we are told that it is a particular quality of these virtuous people that if at any time their heart is inclined to take revenge of an injustice and they do so, they do not exceed the equitable limit, although to forgive is always better for them.

Verses 44 – 50

وَمَنْ يُّضْلِلِ اللّٰهُ فَمَا لَهٗ مِنْ وَّلِيٍّ مِّنْۢ بَعْدِهٖ ؕ وَتَرَى الظّٰلِمِيْنَ لَمَّا رَاَوُا
الْعَذَابَ يَقُوْلُوْنَ هَلْ اِلٰى مَرَدٍّ مِّنْ سَبِيْلٍ ﴿٤٤﴾ۚ وَتَرٰىهُمْ يُعْرَضُوْنَ
عَلَيْهَا خٰشِعِيْنَ مِنَ الذُّلِّ يَنْظُرُوْنَ مِنْ طَرْفٍ خَفِيٍّ ؕ وَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ
اٰمَنُوْٓا اِنَّ الْخٰسِرِيْنَ الَّذِيْنَ خَسِرُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ وَاَهْلِيْهِمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ ؕ

اَلَآ اِنَّ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ فِىْ عَذَابٍ مُّقِيْمٍ ﴿٤٥﴾ وَمَا كَانَ لَهُمْ مِّنْ اَوْلِيَآءَ يَنْصُرُوْنَهُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ ۗ وَمَنْ يُّضْلِلِ اللّٰهُ فَمَا لَهٗ مِنْ سَبِيْلٍ ﴿٤٦﴾ اِسْتَجِيْبُوْا لِرَبِّكُمْ مِّنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ يَّاْتِىَ يَوْمٌ لَّا مَرَدَّ لَهٗ مِنَ اللّٰهِ ۗ مَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ مَّلْجَاٍ يَّوْمَئِذٍ وَّمَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ نَّكِيْرٍ ﴿٤٧﴾ فَاِنْ اَعْرَضُوْا فَمَآ اَرْسَلْنٰكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِيْظًا ۗ اِنْ عَلَيْكَ اِلَّا الْبَلٰغُ ۗ وَاِنَّآ اِذَآ اَذَقْنَا الْاِنْسَانَ مِنَّا رَحْمَةً فَرِحَ بِهَا ۚ وَاِنْ تُصِبْهُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ ۢبِمَا قَدَّمَتْ اَيْدِيْهِمْ فَاِنَّ الْاِنْسَانَ كَفُوْرٌ ﴿٤٨﴾ لِلّٰهِ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۗ يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَآءُ ۗ يَهَبُ لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ اِنَاثًا وَّيَهَبُ لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ الذُّكُوْرَ ﴿٤٩﴾ اَوْ يُزَوِّجُهُمْ ذُكْرَانًا وَّاِنَاثًا ۚ وَيَجْعَلُ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ عَقِيْمًا ۗ اِنَّهٗ عَلِيْمٌ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿٥٠﴾

And the one whom Allah lets go astray, there is no one for him to protect thereafter. And you will see the wrongdoers, when they will see the punishment, that they will say, "Is there any way to be sent back (to the world)? " [44] And you will see them being presented to it (the Fire), downcast because of humiliation, looking with stealthy glance. And those who believe will say, "The real losers are those who have lost their own selves and their families on the Day of Judgment." Be aware that the wrongdoers are in lasting punishment. [45] And for them there will not be any friends who may help them besides Allah. And the one whom Allah lets go astray, for him there is no way (to save himself). [46] Respond to your Lord before there comes a day for which there will be no reversal from Allah's side. For you there will be neither a refuge that day, nor an opportunity to question (Allah about your fate). [47] So, if they turn away, then We did not send you as a supervisor over them. You are not responsible but for conveying the message. And when We make man taste mercy from Us, he rejoices with it, and if an evil befalls him because of what their hands sent ahead, then man becomes ungrateful. [48] To Allah belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth. He creates what He wills. He grants females to whom He wills, and grants males to whom He wills. [49] Or He combines for them

couples, both males and females, and makes whom He wills barren. Surely, He is All-Knowing, Very-Powerful. [50]

Commentary

The earlier three of the above verses state the end of those people who, as against the virtuous Muslims, remained desirous of the delights and luxuries of this world, instead of caring about the Hereafter. Then in verse 47, they have been advised to repent and embrace faith before the scourge of Doomsday comes upon them. Thereafter, in verse 48, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been comforted and assured that if these people do not come to their senses, despite your preaching again and again, and despite your tireless efforts, then you should not worry: فَإِنْ اَعْرَضُوْا فَمَا اَرْسَلْنٰكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِيْظًا "So, if they turn away, then We did not send you as a supervisor over them. You are not responsible but for conveying the message" - 48.

Verses 49 and 50 state the absolute power and perfect wisdom of Allah Ta'ālā in the creation of this universe in which He has no partner, and then mankind has been called to believe in the Oneness of Allah. In this regard, after stating the creation of the earth and the heavens, Allah Almighty has stated a fact about His power in verse 49, يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ (He creates what He wills.) to indicate that He has absolute Power to create anything small or big. He creates whatever He wills whenever He wills. In this context, creation of mankind has been mentioned by saying, "He grants females to whom He wills, and grants males to whom He wills. Or He combines for them couples, both males and females, and makes whom He wills barren. Surely He is All-Knowing, Very Powerful. (49,50)" It means that nobody's intention or authority has anything to do in the creation of a human being, nor does anybody have its knowledge. What to say of anybody else, even the intention or choice of the parents, who are the apparent agents of the creation of a human beings, does not have any bearing on the child's creation. Let alone having a say in the child's creation, the mother does not even know before the child is born.as to what is being formed in her womb, and how it is being processed.

It is Allah Ta'ālā alone who grants female children to whom He wills, and male children to whom He wills; to some He grants both male and female children, and He renders some females barren who do not have any children.

While stating the sex of children in this verse, Allah Ta'ālā has mentioned females first, and males later. Taking a hint from this verse, Sayyidnā Wāthilah Ibn Asqa' ﷺ has said that blessed is the woman who gives birth to a daughter first. (Qurṭubī)

Verses 51 – 53

وَمَا كَانَ لِبَشَرٍ اَنْ يُّكَلِّمَهُ اللّٰهُ اِلَّا وَحْيًا اَوْمِنْ وَّرَآئِ حِجَابٍ
اَوْيُرْسِلَ رَسُوْلًا فَيُوْحِيَ بِاِذْنِهٖ مَايَشَآءُ ؕ اِنَّهٗ عَلِيٌّ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿٥١﴾
وَكَذٰلِكَ اَوْحَيْنَآ اِلَيْكَ رُوْحًا مِّنْ اَمْرِنَا ؕ مَا كُنْتَ تَدْرِيْ مَا الْكِتٰبُ
وَلَا الْاِيْمَانُ وَلٰكِنْ جَعَلْنٰهُ نُوْرًا نَّهْدِيْ بِهٖ مَنْ نَّشَآءُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا ؕ
وَاِنَّكَ لَتَهْدِيْٓ اِلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ ﴿٥٢﴾ صِرَاطِ اللّٰهِ الَّذِيْ لَهٗ مَا فِي
السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ ؕ اَلَآ اِلَى اللّٰهِ تَصِيْرُ الْاُمُوْرُ ﴿٥٣﴾

And it is not (possible) for a human being that Allah speaks to him, except by way of revelation, or from behind a curtain, or that He sends a messenger, then he reveals, with His permission, what He wills. Surely, He is High, Wise. [51] **And in similar way, We have revealed to you a Spirit from Our command. You did not know earlier what is the Book or what is 'Iman' (true faith), but We have made it (the Qur'ān) a light with which We guide whomsoever We will from among Our slaves. And indeed you are guiding (people) to a straight path,** [52] **the path of Allah, the One to whom belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth. Be aware that towards Allah all matters shall finally return.** [53]

Commentary

The first of the above verses (51) was revealed in response to a hostile Jewish demand. As mentioned by Baghawī, Qurṭubī and others, the Jews asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ, "How can we believe in you while you neither see Allah Ta'ālā, nor do you speak to Him face to face, as Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام used to see and converse with Allah Ta'ālā?"

The Holy Prophet ﷺ told the Jews that it is wrong to say that Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام has seen Allah Ta'ālā. Then this verse was revealed

to announce that it is not possible for any human being to converse with Allah Ta'ālā face to face in this world. Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ also did not hear Allah Ta'ālā face to face, but only heard the voice from behind a curtain.

This verse also tells us that there are only three ways in which Allah Ta'ālā speaks to a human being. One is '*waḥy*' which is infusion of something in the heart. It can happen while one is awake, and it can also happen during sleep in the form of a dream as stated in many *aḥādīth* that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, اُلقِیَ فی روعی (This has been infused in my heart. And the dreams of the prophets ﷺ are also a form of wahy, because Satan cannot find his way in them. In case of dreams, the words do not usually come from Allah Ta'ālā; only the subject matter is infused in the mind which is then rendered by the prophets in their own words.

The second way in which Allah may address a person, as mentioned in the above verses, is that Allah speaks from behind a curtain, as happened to Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ on Mount Ṭūr, where he heard the speech of Allah Ta'ālā, but did not see Him. Therefore he asked Allah Ta'ālā to show Himself. The reply was in negative, as mentioned by the Holy Qur'ān in sūrah A'rāf (7:143).

And this curtain which prevents man from seeing Allah Ta'ālā is not something which can hide Allah Ta'ālā, because nothing can hide His All-Pervasive Light. Rather, it is the weakness of man's vision that becomes a curtain against seeing Allah. That is why when his vision would be strengthened in Paradise, every dweller of Heaven will be favoured with ability to see Allah Ta'ālā, as per the creed of Ahl-us-Sunnah wal-Jamā'ah in accordance with the explanations of correct *aḥādīth*.

This rule that no one can converse face to face with Allah Ta'ālā, without any curtain in-between, pertains to this world. The specific mention of 'human being' in this verse is because the intention here is to address mankind. Otherwise, apparently Allah Ta'ālā does not speak face to face even with the angels, as stated by Sayyidnā Jibra'īl ﷺ in a narration of Tirmidhī, "I had become very close, and yet there were seventy-thousand more curtains." And if the face to face conversation of the Holy Prophet ﷺ with Allah Ta'ālā during the Night of Ascension

(*Lailat-ul-mi'rāj*) is proved, as stated by certain learned persons, it would not negate this rule, because that conversation did not take place in this world, but in the Heavens. (Allah knows best)

The third method is mentioned in the verse as اَوْ يُرْسِلَ رَسُوْلاً "that He sends a messenger" (42:51). The messenger could be Jibra'īl ﷺ or any other angel who may carry Allah Ta'ālā's message, and read it out to the prophet. And this has been the most common way.The whole of Glorious Qur'ān has been revealed in this fashion through angels. It should be noted that the word '*waḥy*' has been explained above to mean infusion in mind or heart only, but this word is often used for all kinds of Divine discourses also, as narrated in a lengthy *ḥadīth* of Bukhārī where the message sent through an angel has also been termed as one kind of '*waḥy*'. And there are two forms in which the angel carries the message. Sometimes he appears in his original form, and sometimes in the human form. (Allah knows best)

مَا كُنْتَ تَدْرِىْ مَا الْكِتٰبُ وَلَا الْاِيْمَانُ وَلٰكِنْ (You did not know earlier what is the Book or what is "Īmān', but We have made it a light with which We guide whomsoever we will from among Our slaves - 42:52). This verse is a complement of the subject of the first verse. The gist is that in this world, nobody has ever seen, nor can ever see and converse face to face with Allah Ta'ālā. However, Allah Ta'ālā does send '*waḥy*' to His chosen bondsmen in three ways described in the first verse. And in accordance with Allah Ta'ālā's practice, '*waḥy*' is sent to the Holy Prophet ﷺ as well. The demand of Jews that Allah Ta'ālā should speak to him face to face is simply a display of ignorance and hostility. That is why Allah Ta'ālā has stated that whatever knowledge a man obtains, even a prophet for that matter, is all a grant of Allah Ta'ālā. Until Allah Ta'ālā tells them through '*waḥy*', they would neither be aware of any Book nor would they know the details of faith. Unawareness of the Book before '*waḥy*' is quite obvious; absence of knowledge of faith means that its details, rules and regulations, and its exalted place become known to a prophet after '*waḥy*', not before it, otherwise it is proved with consensus of the ummah that whomever Allah chooses to make His Messenger or Prophet, He gives him faith and belief right from the beginning of his birth; his faith is engraved in his nature. These chosen people are firm believers, even before prophethood and before '*waḥy*' is sent to them. Principles of belief become

a part of their nature and behaviour. That is why all the prophets were opposed by their people and they piled up all sorts of allegations against them, but no one had ever accused a prophet of idolatry, even before he was appointed as a prophet. Qurṭubī, in his Tafsīr, and Qāḍī 'Ayād in Shifā' have dealt with this subject in full detail.

Alḥamdulillah
the commentary on
Sūrah Shūrā
ends here.

Sūrah Az-Zukhruf

The Gold

Sūrah Az-Zukhruf is Makkī. It has 89 Verses and 7 Sections

بسم اللہ الرحمن الرحیم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 8

حٰمٓ ﴿١﴾ وَالْكِتٰبِ الْمُبِيْنِ ﴿٢﴾ اِنَّا جَعَلْنٰهُ قُرْءٰنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَّعَلَّكُمْ
تَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿٣﴾ وَاِنَّهٗ فِيْٓ اُمِّ الْكِتٰبِ لَدَيْنَا لَعَلِيٌّ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿٤﴾ اَفَنَضْرِبُ
عَنْكُمُ الذِّكْرَ صَفْحًا اَنْ كُنْتُمْ قَوْمًا مُّسْرِفِيْنَ ﴿٥﴾ وَكَمْ اَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ
نَّبِيٍّ فِي الْاَوَّلِيْنَ ﴿٦﴾ وَمَا يَاْتِيْهِمْ مِّنْ نَّبِيٍّ اِلَّا كَانُوْا بِهٖ يَسْتَهْزِءُوْنَ
﴿٧﴾ فَاَهْلَكْنَآ اَشَدَّ مِنْهُمْ بَطْشًا وَّمَضٰى مَثَلُ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ ﴿٨﴾

Ḥā Mīm. [1] By the manifest Book, [2] We have made it an Arabic Qur'ān, so that you may understand. [3] And it is, in the Mother of the Book (the Preserved Tablet) with us, surely sublime, full of wisdom. [4] Shall We remove the advice away from you because you are a transgressing people? [5] And how many a messenger have We sent to the earlier people! [6] And no messenger came to them, but they used to mock at him. [7] So We have destroyed those who were stronger than these (people of Makkah) in power, and the example of the earlier people has already passed. [8]

Commentary

This Sūrah is Makkī, although Muqātil رحمه الله تعالى has said that the verse وَاسْئَلْ مَنْ اَرْسَلْنَا (43:45) is Madanī, and according to another view, this

Sūrah was revealed in Heaven during *Lailat-ul-Mi'rāj* (the Night of Ascention) (Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī) - Allah knows best.

Ḥā Mīm- Only Allah knows its meaning.

وَالْكِتٰبِ الْمُبِيْنِ (By the manifest Book - 43:2) The book in this verse refers to the Holy Qur'ān. Whenever Allah swears by anything, it is usually an argument for the statement that follows. Swearing by the Qur'ān in this verse is an indication that the Qur'ān, by virtue of being a miracle, is a proof in itself of its being a Divine Book. To call it a 'manifest book' means that its subjects consisting of exhortations and advices are easily understandable; but as far as deduction of the precepts of 'Sharī'ah' is concerned, it certainly is a difficult job which cannot be performed without complete capability of *'ijtihād'*. This point has been clarified in Sūrah Alqamar, verse 17, وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْاٰنَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِنْ مُّدَّكِرٍ (And indeed We have made the Qur'ān easy for seeking advice. So, is there one to seek advice? - 54-17). Here, it has been stated that the Qur'ān is easy for obtaining advice. Hence, it does not necessarily follow that *ijtihād* and inferring injunctions will be easy also; rather, it is proved through other evidences that full expertise in related subjects is a necessary condition for this exercise.

A Preacher must not give up his preaching due to disappointment

اَفَنَضْرِبُ عَنْكُمُ الذِّكْرَ صَفْحًا اَنْ كُنْتُمْ قَوْمًا مُّسْرِفِيْنَ (Shall we remove the advice away from you because you are a transgressing people? - 43:5) The meaning is that We will not give up advising you through the Qur'ān, no matter how rebellious and disobedient you may become. This tells us that the person who is engaged in preaching and inviting others towards Islam should carry the message to everybody; he must not give up preaching to some people or any group simply because they are non-believers, highly irreligious, sinners and transgressors.

Verses 9 - 25

وَلَئِنْ سَاَلْتَهُمْ مَّنْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ لَيَقُوْلُنَّ خَلَقَهُنَّ الْعَزِيْزُ
الْعَلِيْمُ ﴿٩﴾ الَّذِيْ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْاَرْضَ مَهْدًا وَّجَعَلَ لَكُمْ فِيْهَا سُبُلًا

لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُوْنَ ﴿١٠﴾ وَالَّذِىْ نَزَّلَ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً ۢ بِقَدَرٍ فَاَنْشَرْنَا
بِهٖ بَلْدَةً مَّيْتًا ۚ كَذٰلِكَ تُخْرَجُوْنَ ﴿١١﴾ وَالَّذِىْ خَلَقَ الْاَزْوَاجَ كُلَّهَا
وَجَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِّنَ الْفُلْكِ وَالْاَنْعَامِ مَا تَرْكَبُوْنَ ﴿١٢﴾ لِتَسْتَوٗا عَلٰى
ظُهُوْرِهٖ ثُمَّ تَذْكُرُوْا نِعْمَةَ رَبِّكُمْ اِذَا اسْتَوَيْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ وَتَقُوْلُوْا سُبْحٰنَ
الَّذِىْ سَخَّرَ لَنَا هٰذَا وَمَا كُنَّا لَهٗ مُقْرِنِيْنَ ﴿١٣﴾ وَاِنَّآ اِلٰى رَبِّنَا لَمُنْقَلِبُوْنَ
﴿١٤﴾ وَجَعَلُوْا لَهٗ مِنْ عِبَادِهٖ جُزْءًا ؕ اِنَّ الْاِنْسَانَ لَكَفُوْرٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿١٥﴾
اَمِ اتَّخَذَ مِمَّا يَخْلُقُ بَنٰتٍ وَّاَصْفٰكُمْ بِالْبَنِيْنَ ﴿١٦﴾ وَاِذَا بُشِّرَ اَحَدُهُمْ
بِمَا ضَرَبَ لِلرَّحْمٰنِ مَثَلًا ظَلَّ وَجْهُهٗ مُسْوَدًّا وَّهُوَ كَظِيْمٌ ﴿١٧﴾ اَوَ
مَنْ يُّنَشَّؤُا فِى الْحِلْيَةِ وَهُوَ فِى الْخِصَامِ غَيْرُ مُبِيْنٍ ﴿١٨﴾ وَجَعَلُوا
الْمَلٰٓئِكَةَ الَّذِيْنَ هُمْ عِبٰدُ الرَّحْمٰنِ اِنَاثًا ؕ اَشَهِدُوْا خَلْقَهُمْ ؕ سَتُكْتَبُ
شَهَادَتُهُمْ وَيُسْئَلُوْنَ ﴿١٩﴾ وَقَالُوْا لَوْ شَآءَ الرَّحْمٰنُ مَا عَبَدْنٰهُمْ ؕ
مَا لَهُمْ بِذٰلِكَ مِنْ عِلْمٍ ۗ اِنْ هُمْ اِلَّا يَخْرُصُوْنَ ﴿٢٠﴾ اَمْ اٰتَيْنٰهُمْ كِتٰبًا
مِّنْ قَبْلِهٖ فَهُمْ بِهٖ مُسْتَمْسِكُوْنَ ﴿٢١﴾ بَلْ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّا وَجَدْنَآ اٰبَآءَنَا عَلٰٓى
اُمَّةٍ وَّاِنَّا عَلٰٓى اٰثٰرِهِمْ مُّهْتَدُوْنَ ﴿٢٢﴾ وَكَذٰلِكَ مَآ اَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ
فِىْ قَرْيَةٍ مِّنْ نَّذِيْرٍ اِلَّا قَالَ مُتْرَفُوْهَآ ۙ اِنَّا وَجَدْنَآ اٰبَآءَنَا عَلٰٓى اُمَّةٍ وَّاِنَّا
عَلٰٓى اٰثٰرِهِمْ مُّقْتَدُوْنَ ﴿٢٣﴾ قٰلَ اَوَلَوْ جِئْتُكُمْ بِاَهْدٰى مِمَّا وَجَدْتُّمْ
عَلَيْهِ اٰبَآءَكُمْ ؕ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّا بِمَآ اُرْسِلْتُمْ بِهٖ كٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿٢٤﴾ فَانْتَقَمْنَا مِنْهُمْ
فَانْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُكَذِّبِيْنَ ﴿٢٥﴾

And should you ask them as to who has created the heavens and the earth, they will certainly say, "They are created by the All-Mighty, the All-Knowing," [9] the One who has made the earth a cradle for you, and has made for you pathways therein, so that you may be guided, [10] and the One who has sent down water from the sky in due measure, then We have revived with it a dead

town.__ In the same way, you will be brought out (alive from the graves), [11] – **and the One who has created all the pairs, and has made for you the boats and the cattle that you ride,** [12] **so that you may mount on their backs, then recall the favour of your Lord after having mounted on it and say, 'Pure is the One who has subjugated this for us, and We were not able to have control over it,** [13] **and of course, towards our Lord we have to return.'** [14]

And they have ascribed to Him (that He is composed of) parts, (and that too) out of His slaves. Surely, man is openly ungrateful. [15] **Is it that He has adopted daughters from those whom He has created, and chosen you for (having) sons?** [16] **And when one of them is given the good news of (the birth of) that which he has claimed to be like *Raḥmān* (i.e. the daughters), his face turns black, and he becomes choked with sorrow.** [17] **Is it that (Allah has chosen) those (as His offspring) who are grown up in ornaments, and who cannot express themselves in debate clearly?** [18] **And they have held angels, who are the slaves of the *Raḥmān*, as females. Have they witnessed their creation? Their testimony will be recorded, and they will be questioned.** [19] **And they say, "Had the *Raḥmān* so willed, we will not have worshipped them." They have no knowledge of that. They do nothing but make conjectures.** [20] **Or have We given to them a book before this, and they are adhering to it?** [21] **Instead, they say, "We have found our fathers on a certain way, and we are on their footprints, fully guided."** [22] **And similarly, We did not send a warner to a town before you, but its affluent people said, "We have found our fathers on a certain way, and we are following their footprints."** [23] **He said, "Even if I bring to you something better in guidance than that on which you have found your fathers?" They said, "We totally disbelieve in what you are sent with."** [24] **So, We took revenge from them. Now look, how was the end of those who rejected (Our messengers).** [25]

Commentary

جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ مَهْدًا (has made the earth a cradle for you - 10) meaning that the comfort provided by the earth is that of a cradle; its apparent look of being a plain floor does not negate its being spherical.

وَجَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِّنَ الْفُلْكِ وَالْأَنْعَامِ مَا تَرْكَبُوْنَ (and has made for you the boats and the

cattle that you ride, - 12). There are two kinds of means of transport employed by man - one those vehicles which are made by man himself, and two the animals in whose creation human effort is not involved at all. 'Boats' include all kinds of man-made vehicles, and 'cattle' include all the animals used for riding. Both these means of transport are great blessings of Allah Ta'ālā. That cattle are Allah's great blessings is obvious, because despite their being many times stronger than man, Allah Almighty has made them so submissive to him that even a child leads them to wherever he wants through a hatter or mor-string. Similarly the man made vehicles, right from the bicycles to the aeroplanes and the space-crafts are also great blessings of Allah Almighty, because they are, though, made by man apparently, there is no other than Allah Ta'ālā who has provided man with ability and techniques to manufacture them? Allah Almighty, the All-Powerful is the One Who has endowed the human intellect with the power that moulds iron like wax. And besides, all the raw materials used in their manufacturing and their properties are direct creations of Allah Almighty.

ثُمَّ تَذْكُرُوْا نِعْمَةَ رَبِّكُمْ (then recall the favour of your Lord - 13). This tells us that a sensible and alert person should not display negligence, carelessness or his need-free of the divine help while enjoying the blessings of the Actual Benefactor, rather he should acknowledge that it is a reward from Allah Almighty, obliging him to be grateful and to display his impotence and humility. Actually this is the difference between an infidel and a *Mu'min* that an infidel uses the good things of this world carelessly and negligently, while the *Mu'min* congnizant of the blessings of Allah bows his head to Allah Almighty in humility. It is for this reason that the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* have taught supplications for patience, steadfastness and gratefulness, and if anyone makes a habit of supplicating those prayers in his daily life while getting up, sitting down, walking about, etc., then all his (or hers) permissible activities turn into acts of worship. These supplications are collected by 'Allāmah Ibn-ul-Jazrī in his book Al-Ḥisn-ul-Ḥaṣīn, and Maulānā Thanawi in Munajat-e-Maqbūl.

Supplications of a traveler

سُبْحٰنَ الَّذِىْ سَخَّرَ لَنَا هٰذَا (Pure is the One who has subjugated this for us - 13). These words of supplication are to be said when mounting a transport.

This was the practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ according to many narrations. The *mustaḥab* (preferable) way to ride a transport, as stated by Sayyidnā 'Alī رضي الله عنه, is to say بِسْمِ اللّٰه *'Bismillāh'* (With the name of Allah) when one is putting the first foot on the animal or the vehicle, and after one has set himself or herself on the transport, one should say اَلْحَمْدُلِلّٰه *'Alḥamdulillāh'* (All praise belongs to Allah), and then one should say the words mentioned in this verse from سُبْحٰنَ الَّذِیْ سَخَّرَلَنَا upto لَمُنْقَلِبُوْنَ (Qurṭubī). Moreover according to some reports, the Holy Prophet ﷺ, after saying these words, used to supplicate in the following words also:

اَللّٰھُمَّ اَنْتَ الصَّاحِبُ فِی السَّفَرِ وَالْخَلِیْفَةُ فِی الْاَھْلِ وَالْمَالِ اَللّٰھُمَّ اِنِّیْ اَعُوْذُبِکَ مِنْ وَّعْثَآءِ السَّفَرِ وَکَآبَةِ الْمُنْقَلَبِ، وَالْحَوْرِ بَعْدَ الْکَوْرِ وَسُوْءِ الْمَنْظَرِ فِی الْاَھْلِ وَالْمَالِ.

"O Allah, you are my companion in the journey, and my substitute for my family. O Allah, I seek your refuge from the sufferings of the journey, and from coming back in a sad situation, and from a bad state of being after a good one, and from a bad scenario appearing to me about my family and my belongings."

According to one narration, the following words are added to the above supplication,

اَللّٰھُمَّ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلاَّ اَنْتَ ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِیْ فَاغْفِرْلِیْ اِنَّه' لاَ یَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوْبَ اِلاَّ اَنْتَ

O Allah, there is no god but You. I have done wrong to myself; so forgive me. Surely, no one can forgive the sins, but You alone. (Qurṭubī)

وَمَا کُنَّا لَه مُقْرِنِیْنَ (and we were not able to have control over it - 13). This statement is as true for mechanical means of transport as for cattle and animals, because if Allah Ta'ālā had not created their raw materials, or had not endowed them with their particular properties, or had not endowed the human intellect with capability to discover those properties, even the whole universe, acting together in unison, could not have produced these vehicles.

وَاِنَّا اِلٰی رَبِّنَا لَمُنْقَلِبُوْنَ (and of course, towards our Lord we have to return - 14). These words teach us that every time a man embarks on a journey, he should think of his last arduous journey to the Hereafter also, which one has to undertake in all circumstances; – and the only way to make it easy is to have a vehicle of good deeds.

وَجَعَلُوا لَهٗ مِنْ عِبَادِهٖ جُزْءًا (And they have attributed to Him [that He is composed of] parts [and that too] out of His slaves...43:15) 'parts' in this verse means 'offspring', because the polytheists used to say that angels are daughters of Allah, and by using the word 'parts' instead of 'offspring' the fallacy of their claim has been pointed out on pure logical ground. The gist of the argument is that had Allah any offspring, that offspring will have been His part, because a son is a part of his father, and it is a rule of logic that an entity that consists of parts is dependent upon its parts for its full existence. This will then necessarily mean that Allah Ta'ālā is also dependent on His offspring, which is obviously impossible, because dependence of any kind, being a negation of the Divine Majesty, is out of question in Allah's case.

اَوَمَنْ يُّنَشَّؤُا فِي الْحِلْيَةِ (Is it that (Allah has chosen) those (as His offspring) who are grown up in ornaments,... 43:18). This tells us that use of ornaments and adornment in accordance with 'Shari'ah is permissible for women. As such, there is consensus on this issue, but at the same time the manner of speech indicates that getting so much involved in adornment that one is busy in it the whole day long, is not proper; it is not only a symptom of one's being short-sighted, but also a cause of it.

وَهُوَ فِي الْخِصَامِ غَيْرُ مُبِيْنٍ (and who cannot express themselves in debate clearly - 18). This reflects the reality that a great majority of women do not have the same ability as men to express their feelings clearly. Therefore, if it comes to argumentation, it is difficult for them to prove their own contention and to refute the other's arguments in a clear manner. But this applies to the majority. If some women are eloquent in their speech and excel even men in this regard, it does not go against this verse, because the rule applies to the majority, and not to every single individual.

Verses 26 - 30

وَاِذْ قَالَ اِبْرٰهِيْمُ لِاَبِيْهِ وَقَوْمِهٖٓ اِنَّنِيْ بَرَآءٌ مِّمَّا تَعْبُدُوْنَ ﴿٢٦﴾ اِلَّا الَّذِيْ فَطَرَنِيْ فَاِنَّهٗ سَيَهْدِيْنِ ﴿٢٧﴾ وَجَعَلَهَا كَلِمَةًۢ بَاقِيَةً فِيْ عَقِبِهٖ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُوْنَ ﴿٢٨﴾ بَلْ مَتَّعْتُ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ وَاٰبَآءَهُمْ حَتّٰى جَآءَهُمُ الْحَقُّ

وَرَسُوْلٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿٢٩﴾ وَلَمَّا جَآءَهُمُ الْحَقُّ قَالُوْا هٰذَا سِحْرٌ وَّاِنَّا بِهٖ كٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿٣٠﴾

And (recall) when Ibrāhīm said to his father and to his people, "I disown that which you worship, [26] **except the One who has originated me; so He will guide me."** [27] **And he made it a word lasting among his posterity, so that they may return.** [28] **But, I gave these and their fathers enjoyment, until the truth came to them, and a messenger who explains (it).** [29] **And when the truth came to them, they said, "This is magic, and we totally disbelieve in it."** [30]

Commentary

وَاِذْ قَالَ اِبْرٰهِيْمُ (And [recall] when Ibrāhīm said to his father and to his people,..... 43:26) At the end of the previous verses, Allah Ta'ālā had stated that the *'mushrikīn'* (polytheists) of Arabia had no argument in favour of their *'shirk'* (polytheism) except that they were carrying on the customs of their forefathers. Obviously, sticking to such customs against logical and historical arguments is far from truth and justice. Now the point made in the present verses is that, even if they are adamant on following their ancestors, why do they not follow Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام who is the most noble of their ancestors, and it is taken by themselves as a matter of pride to be among his offspring. He was not only a believer in *'tauḥīd'* (Oneness of Allah) who emphatically directed all his children to remain adherent to this belief, but his life-long behavior also indicates that following forefathers against logical and historical proofs is not permissible. When he was ordained prophethood in the world, all his people were polytheists in pursuit of the customs of their forefathers, but he, instead of blindly following his forefathers, announced his dissociation from his people, according to the dictates of positive proofs; hence his declaration: اِنَّنِيْ بَرَآءٌ مِّمَّا تَعْبُدُوْنَ "I disown that which you worship" (43:26).

We find from this verse that if anyone lives among a group or people who are misguided or involved in bad deeds, and his silence about their attitude may be construed as being agreeable to them, then it is not enough for him to simply correct his own beliefs and deeds, rather he has to disown their beliefs and deeds as well. This is what Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام did - he not only made his belief and actions distinctly different in

practice, but he also disowned their belief and deeds vocally.

وَجَعَلَهَا كَلِمَةً بَاقِيَةً فِي عَقِبِهِ (And he made it a word lasting among his posterity.) It means that Ibrāhīm ﷺ did not keep the belief in *'tauḥīd'* restricted to himself, rather he emphasized upon his posterity also to remain firm on this faith, as a result of which a large number of his posterity adhered to *tauḥīd.* In Makkah and its surroundings, there were many blessed souls, even till the advent of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, who had remained steadfast in the original *'dīn'* of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام.

We learn from this verse that it is one of the obligatory duties of a Muslim to try his best to put his or her children on the path of the correct religion and to make them practice it throughout their lives. The Holy Qur'ān tells us that Sayyidnā Yaqūb ﷺ also had directed his sons, shortly before his death, to remain firm on the correct faith. As such, it is necessary, as a consistent practice of the prophets, to employ one's best possible efforts to reform the morals and deeds of his or her children. So to say, there are many ways to reform one's offspring which should be used according to the situation, but Shaikh Abdul Wahhāb Sha'rānī رحمه الله تعالى has said in his book *Laṭā'if-ul-Minan wal-Akhlāq* that the most effective way for the betterment of one's offspring in matters pertaining to *'dīn'* is that the parents should pray to Allah regularly to make them true practicing Muslims . Alas! The negligence of parents from this easy way is becoming very common these days, and the parents themselves are witnessing the ill effects of this negligence.

Verses 31 - 32

وَقَالُوا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنُ عَلٰى رَجُلٍ مِّنَ الْقَرْيَتَيْنِ عَظِيمٍ ﴿٣١﴾ اَهُمْ يَقْسِمُوْنَ رَحْمَتَ رَبِّكَ ؕ نَحْنُ قَسَمْنَا بَيْنَهُمْ مَّعِيْشَتَهُمْ فِي الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَرَفَعْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ دَرَجٰتٍ لِّيَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُهُمْ بَعْضًا سُخْرِيًّا ؕ وَرَحْمَتُ رَبِّكَ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّا يَجْمَعُوْنَ ﴿٣٢﴾

And they say, "Why was this Qur'ān not revealed on a great man from (either of) the two towns?" [31] Is it they who distribute the mercy of your Lord? We have distributed among them their livelihood in the worldly

life, and have raised some of them over others in ranks, so that some of them may put some others to work. And the mercy of your Lord is much better than what they accumulate. [32]

Commentary

Allah Ta'ālā has in these verses, has replied to an objection of the pagans of Arabia used to be raised against the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Actually, they were not prepared to accept, at the first place, that a man could be a messenger of Allah Ta'ālā. The Holy Qur'ān has referred, at many places, to their objection that they could not accept Sayyidnā Muhammad ﷺ as a messenger of Allah, while he eats and drinks and walks about in the market places like any ordinary man. When it was clarified through many verses of the Qur'ān that not only the Holy Prophet ﷺ, but all the prophets who came to this world, were human beings, they started advancing another argument that if prophethood had to be bestowed upon a human being, why was it not given to some wealthy man of a high rank and position from Makkah or Ṭā'if instead of the Holy Prophet ﷺ who was not so wealthy? According to some narrations, they had proposed the names of Walīd Ibn Mughīrah and 'Utbah Ibn Rabī'ah from Makkah, and 'Urwah Ibn Mas'ūd Thaqafī, Ḥabīb Ibn 'Amr Thaqafī or Kinānah Ibn 'Abdiyālīl from Ṭā'if. (Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī)

Allah Almighty has given two answers to this objection. The second answer is found in the next verses which will be explained there, while the present verse (32) has provided the first answer in the words, "Is it they who distribute the mercy of your Lord?". "Mercy of your Lord" refers here to 'prophethood' and the gist of the answer is that appointing someone as a prophet is a mercy from Allah which he bestows upon and allocates to human beings on the basis of His absolute wisdom, and according to His exclusive discretion for which He needs not to consult anyone, nor has anyone a right to interfere with it. You have no concern with distribution of prophethood so that your advice should be sought before anyone is made a prophet. Your intellect and understanding is too deficient to be entrusted with selecting suitable persons for the office of prophethood, or for the distribution of this divine mercy among people. How can you distribute among people an office as high as prophethood, while you have no ability to distribute something that is much lower and easier, that is, your economy. You are not good enough even to carry out

the distribution of your wealth and means of sustenance. We know that if you are entrusted with this responsibility, you will not be able to manage it even for one day, and the whole system will simply collapse. That is why Allah Ta'ālā has not assigned the distribution of provisions in this world to you; rather He has kept it in His own hands. Since this comparatively ordinary work cannot be entrusted to you, how can a great job like distribution of prophethood be given in your hands?

This is what the above verses mean, but in the context of replying to the *'mushrikīn'*, many economic principles are laid down and indications are given by Allah Ta'ālā regarding the economic system of the world; their brief explanation is necessary here.

The Natural system of Distribution of wealth

نَحْنُ قَسَمْنَا بَيْنَهُمْ مَّعِيشَتَهُمْ (We have distributed among them their livelihood). This is to say that Allah in His infinite wisdom, has devised such a system for the world that everybody is dependent on another for meeting his needs. Thus all the people, bound in this mutual inter-dependence, are fulfilling the needs of the whole society. This verse has made it quite clear that Allah Almighty has not assigned the work of distributing livelihood to any human organization or authority that works out a plan (as claimed by the socialist theory) how to define the needs of a society, how to meet those needs, how to allocate the means of production to various channels, and how to distribute the income, and on what basis. Instead, all these functions rest with Allah Ta'ālā. What it means is that by making every person dependent upon another, an automatic system has been developed that may solve these issues, with the only condition that it is not hindered by unnatural factors like monopolies etc. This system of mutual interdependence is known in modern economic terminology as the 'supply and demand mechanism'. The natural law of 'supply and demand' is that shortage in the supply of an item results in an increase in its price, and thus attracts more factors of production towards its production, so that they may earn more profit. But when the production outpaces the demand, its prices decrease, and so does the profit, thereby diverting the means of production towards more profitable items. Islam has employed this natural mechanism of supply and demand to produce and distribute wealth, and has not assigned the distribution of livelihood to any organization under ordinary circumstances. The reason is that human

planning, however advanced it may be, cannot take into account every element of human necessities; such social issues are usually resolved through a natural process that works in an automatic manner. If such problems are entrusted to human planning, it can only result in artificial restraints imposed on the natural human freedom. For example, the fact that the hours of daylight are for working, and the night is meant for sleeping was not determined by any social contract or by human planning; it came about through nature's automatic process. Similarly, who should marry whom is automatically arranged in accordance with the natural system of personal inclinations; nobody has even thought of arranging it through planning. If the question of selecting a particular field of academic specialization is entrusted to the planning of a government, instead of one's own inclination and taste, it will result in nothing but coercion and compulsion which may, in turn, disturb and spoil the natural human life. Similarly, the economic system is taken care of by Allah's wisdom and power; everybody knows in his heart what he wants to do, which job is more suitable for him, and which he can perform properly. As such, everybody, even if he is a sweeper, is happy loving his work, and is proud of it.

However, unlike capitalism, Islam has not given so much freedom to the individuals as allows them to accumulate wealth by any means, lawful or unlawful, and deprive others of their livelihood. Islam has therefore drawn a clear line between *ḥalāl* (permissible) and *ḥarām* (impermissible) sources of income. It has, on the one hand, totally prohibited usury or interest, speculative transactions, hoarding and gambling (which in its technical sense in Islamic law is much more general than its lexical meaning in English), and on the other hand, has levied *zakāh*, *'ushr*, etc., even on permitted income. And thus Islam has closed the doors of those social ills that are found in the present day capitalistic system. If despite all this, monopolies are created at any time, government has been permitted to intervene and break them up. Details on this subject can be seen in the author's Urdu books on 'The Issue of Interest' 'Distribution of Wealth in Islam' and 'Economic Reforms in Islamic System'.

The truth about economic equality

وَرَفَعْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ دَرَجٰتٍ (and have raised some of them over others in

ranks). This tells us that economic equality, in the sense that the income of all the individuals of this world should be equal, is neither desirable nor practically feasible. The reason is that Allah Ta'ālā has charged every member of this universe with some duties, and has given them rights in proportion to their obligations. All the creatures, excepting man, are liable for the least duties in the sense that there is nothing like lawful, unlawful or prohibited for them, and hence they have the least rights. Accordingly, man has been given vast freedom in dealing with them; he can use them in any way for his benefit, subject to some minor restrictions. He uses some animals as his food, some he rides and some creatures are trodden under his feet, but these things are not considered to be the denial of the rights of those creatures, because their duties are very few, hence their rights are also to that proportion. Human beings and jinns have been given more responsibilities in their duties than any other creature of this universe in that they are accountable to Allah Ta'ālā in each utterance, each deed each move and each movement; if they do not carry out their duties, they are liable to punishment in the Hereafter. That is the reason why Allah Ta'ālā has given much more rights to human beings and jinns as compared to other creatures. And then, even among human beings, those whose duties and obligations are more than others have been given more rights as well. As such, prophets عليهم السلام whose responsibilities exceed those of all other human beings, were given more rights than others in many respects.

The same principle has been applied by Allah Ta'ālā to the economic system also. Allah has given economic advantages and rights to anyone in accordance with his duties and obligations. It is obvious that equality in duties and obligations is not possible, and differences are unavoidable. It is simply not feasible that everybody's economic benefits i.e. income and duties be exactly equal, because they depend on one's natural abilities which include physical strength, health, intellectual power, age, level of intelligence, efficiency and quickness; it is obvious to everyone that it is beyond the capability of even the most advanced communist state to create homogeneity and equality among people in respect of these qualities. When differences in the abilities of human beings are unavoidable, there have to be differences in their economic duties. And since economic rights are linked with these duties, differences in economic

rights i.e. incomes are also unavoidable, because if everybody's income is made equal, while duties continue to be different, equity and justice cannot be established. It is now quite evident that complete equality in incomes can never be fair at any time. As such the communist claim that equality will be achieved in the ultimate stage of completion of communism, is neither practicable nor equitable.

To determine whose duties are more and whose are less and to determine their rights accordingly is an extremely sensitive and difficult task, and man does not have any perfect standard, as yet, to measure it. Sometimes one gets the feeling that an expert and experienced engineer has earned in only one hour what a common unskilled laborer could not, even by carrying tons of earth during the whole day. But in all fairness, one has to concede that the whole day's carefree hard work of the laborer just cannot match the burden of responsibility of the engineer. Besides, the income of the engineer is not compensation for only one hour's work, but it really is compensation partly for the exercise of the mind, burning of the mid-night oil and effort put in to get engineering education and training, and then in getting experience and expertise. In its early days, communism has accepted the differences in incomes and as such there are vast differences in the incomes of different categories of the populace in all the communist countries. But where they have slipped is that they have given control over all means of production to the government, thereby determination of duties and commensurate distribution of incomes has also come under the control of the government. As mentioned earlier, man does not have a perfect standard to measure that the rights are in accordance with one's duties; as such a few functionaries of the government in communist countries have the power to dole out, as much as they want, to any person and withhold, as much as they want from anyone. In the first place, such discretionary powers give rise to corruption, nepotism etc. Secondly, even if one presumes that all the functionaries of the government are angels, and they truly desire to distribute the incomes in the country according to the dictates of justice and equity, then what is the measure through which they may be able to determine the difference in the duties of an engineer and a laborer, and in that context what should be the difference between their incomes?

The fact is that the right decision in this matter is beyond human

understanding, and that is why it has been kept in the domain of nature. This is what Allah Ta'ālā has hinted at in the verse under discussion which says, "and have raised some of them over others in ranks". Instead of leaving human beings determine this difference, Allah Ta'ālā has kept it in His own hands in the sense that by associating others in the fulfillment of everyone's needs, a system has been developed where everyone is constrained to pay the other's rightful dues for the fulfillment of his own needs. Here also, the mechanism of supply and demand based upon mutual dependence, determines everybody's income. In other words, everyone determines for himself the compensation that is adequate for the responsibilities he has undertaken; if he is offered less than that, he will not agree, and if he demands more than that, the other person will not agree to get the work done by him. This is exactly what the verse says: "so that some of them may put some other to work.") meaning that Allah has made the incomes of the people different, so that one person may employ another; if their incomes had been the same, nobody will have been of use to another person.

Of course, in abnormal situations, big capitalists may take undue advantage of this natural system of supply and demand, and may compel poor people to work for lesser wages than their actual entitlement. In order to prevent this, Islam has, in the first place, given thorough injunctions of *ḥalāl* (lawful) and *ḥarām* (unlawful), and a wide-ranged code of ethics based on the concept of the Day of Retribution. But if at any time, such a situation does appear, then the Islamic government has been given an authority to determine the wages and salaries during those abnormal conditions. But this authorization is limited to the abnormal conditions, and there is no need to let the government have control of all means of production for this purpose, because its harm far outweighs its gains.

The Meaning of Islamic equality

It is quite clear from the above discussion that complete equality in incomes is neither a requirement of equity and justice, nor has it been actually established anywhere; It is not possible or desired in Islam either. Of course, the equality that Islam has established is in the matters of law, social behavior and in honoring the rights of everyone. What it means is that everybody is equal in exercising one's legal, civil and social rights for

obtaining his economic dues as determined by the natural system mentioned above. What it does not mean is that a rich man or a man of rank and position should obtain his right with ease and dignity, while a poor man has to knock on the doors and has to lose his respect and dignity to obtain his rights, or that the law should protect the rights of the rich, and leave the poor to fend for themselves. This kind of inequality is not tolerable in Islam, and this is what Sayyidnā Abū Bakr Ṣiddīq ﷺ had said in one of his addresses:

> وَاللّٰه ما عندی اقویٰ من الضّعیف حتّٰی آخذ الحق له ولا عندی اضعف من القویّ حتّی اخذ الحقّ منه'
>
> "I swear by Allah that nobody is more forceful to me than a weak man until I cause his right to be given to him, and nobody is weaker than a powerful man till I obtain from him the right of the weak one."

Islamic equality, therefore, from the purely economic point of view means that everybody should have equal opportunities to earn livelihood, and Islam does not tolerate that a few wealthy persons should control and monopolize the sources of wealth whereas small traders should be unable to do business in the market place. By forbidding interest, speculative transactions, gambling, hoarding, monopolistic trade agreements, and by applying *zakāh, 'ushr, kharāj,* maintenance allowances, alms and other compulsory payments, an environment of freedom has been created in which every individual can get an opportunity of earning livelihood according to his ability, endeavor and investment. A prosperous society can be built upon this foundation. The differences in incomes which remain despite all this are actually unavoidable, and cannot be erased just as the differences in human beings in respect of beauty and elegance, health and vigor, sense and intelligence and offspring and progeny cannot be wiped out.

Verses 33 - 35

وَلَوْلَآ اَنْ يَّكُوْنَ النَّاسُ اُمَّةً وَّاحِدَةً لَّجَعَلْنَا لِمَنْ يَّكْفُرُ بِالرَّحْمٰنِ لِبُيُوْتِهِمْ سُقُفًا مِّنْ فِضَّةٍ وَّمَعَارِجَ عَلَيْهَا يَظْهَرُوْنَ ﴿۳۳﴾ وَلِبُيُوْتِهِمْ اَبْوَابًا وَّسُرُرًا عَلَيْهَا يَتَّكِئُوْنَ ﴿۳۴﴾ وَزُخْرُفًا ؕ وَاِنْ كُلُّ ذٰلِكَ لَمَّا

مَتَاعُ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ۗ وَالْاٰخِرَةُ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ لِلْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾

And were it not that all people will become of a single creed (i.e. disbelief), We will have caused, for the benefit of those who disbelieve in Raḥmān, roofs of their houses to be made of silver, and the stairs as well, on which they will climb, [33] **and doors of their homes, and the coaches on which they will recline,** [34] **and (will have made some of these things) of gold-ornaments. And all this is nothing but an enjoyment of the worldly life. And the Hereafter, with your Lord, is (destined) for the God-fearing.** [35]

Commentary

Superiority is not based upon wealth and property

This is the second reply to the infidels of Makkah for their question why prophethood was not bestowed upon some very rich and wealthy person of Makkah or Ṭā'if? The gist of the answer is that some qualities and abilities are undoubtedly necessary for choosing someone as a prophet. But abundance of riches and wealth cannot be taken as the basis of this choice. Wealth and property are so worthless in Allah's view that if there was no apprehension of all the people becoming disbelievers, He will have showered gold and silver upon all the infidels. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has stated, in a *ḥadīth* reported by Tirmidhī,

لو كانت الدّنيا تعدل عند الله جناح بعوضةٍ ماسقى كافرًا منها شربة ماء

"If the worth of the whole world, in Allah's sight, had been equal to that of one wing of a mosquito, Allah Ta'ālā will not have given even one drop of water from this world to an infidel (kāfir)".

This tells us that neither abundance of wealth and property owned by someone can be a cause of his superiority, nor can one's poverty be taken as an indication of his being lower in rank. As for those excellent qualities which are necessary for prophethood, they are found in the Holy Prophet ﷺ, to their perfection. Their objection is, therefore, false and baseless.

The statement in these verses that if gold and silver had been showered upon all the infidels, all the people will have become disbelievers is meant for most of the people. Even today, there are people who are certain that if they become disbelievers, they will get abundance

of riches and wealth, but they do not lose their faith for the sake of wealth and property; such people will have remained steadfast to their belief and faith, perhaps even at that time, but the number of such people will have been very little indeed.

Verses 36 - 45

وَمَنْ يَّعْشُ عَنْ ذِكْرِ الرَّحْمٰنِ نُقَيِّضْ لَهٗ شَيْطٰنًا فَهُوَ لَهٗ قَرِيْنٌ ﴿٣٦﴾
وَاِنَّهُمْ لَيَصُدُّوْنَهُمْ عَنِ السَّبِيْلِ وَيَحْسَبُوْنَ اَنَّهُمْ مُّهْتَدُوْنَ ﴿٣٧﴾
حَتّٰٓى اِذَا جَآءَنَا قَالَ يٰلَيْتَ بَيْنِىْ وَبَيْنَكَ بُعْدَ الْمَشْرِقَيْنِ فَبِئْسَ
الْقَرِيْنُ ﴿٣٨﴾ وَلَنْ يَّنْفَعَكُمُ الْيَوْمَ اِذْ ظَّلَمْتُمْ اَنَّكُمْ فِى الْعَذَابِ
مُشْتَرِكُوْنَ ﴿٣٩﴾ اَفَاَنْتَ تُسْمِعُ الصُّمَّ اَوْ تَهْدِى الْعُمْىَ وَمَنْ كَانَ
فِىْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿٤٠﴾ فَاِمَّا نَذْهَبَنَّ بِكَ فَاِنَّا مِنْهُمْ مُّنْتَقِمُوْنَ ﴿٤١﴾
اَوْ نُرِيَنَّكَ الَّذِىْ وَعَدْنٰهُمْ فَاِنَّا عَلَيْهِمْ مُّقْتَدِرُوْنَ ﴿٤٢﴾ فَاسْتَمْسِكْ
بِالَّذِىْٓ اُوْحِىَ اِلَيْكَ ۚ اِنَّكَ عَلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ ﴿٤٣﴾ وَاِنَّهٗ لَذِكْرٌ
لَّكَ وَلِقَوْمِكَ ۚ وَسَوْفَ تُسْئَلُوْنَ ﴿٤٤﴾ وَسْئَلْ مَنْ اَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ
مِنْ رُّسُلِنَآ اَجَعَلْنَا مِنْ دُوْنِ الرَّحْمٰنِ اٰلِهَةً يُّعْبَدُوْنَ ﴿٤٥﴾

And whoever makes himself blind against the advice of the *Raḥmān*, We assign for him a devil who accompanies him all the time. [36] And they (the devils) prevent such people from the (right) way, while they deem themselves to be on the right path, [37] until when such a person will come to us, he will say (to the devil), "Will that there were the distance of East and West between me and you, because you were the worst companion." [38] And (it will be said to such people,) 'Since you were wrongdoers, it will never benefit you today that you are sharing the punishment with each other.'[39] So, can you (O prophet) make the deaf to hear, or can you show the way to the blind and the one who is in open error? [40] So, even if We take you away, We will surely take vengeance on them. [41] Or (if) We show you (in your life) that (punishment) with which

We have threatened them, then We have full control over them. [42] **So, hold fast to that which has been revealed to you. Surely, you are on the straight path.** [43] **And certainly this (Qur'ān) is a word of honor for you and your people. And you will be questioned.** [44] **And ask Our messengers whom We sent before you whether We had appointed gods to be worshipped besides Raḥmān.** [45]

Commentary

وَمَنْ يَّعْشُ عَنْ ذِكْرِ الرَّحْمٰنِ (And whoever makes himself blind against the advice of the Raḥmān, We assign for him a devil who accompanies him all the time - 43:36) It means that whoever knowingly turns a blind eye towards Allah's advice i.e. the Holy Qur'ān and *waḥy*, Allah assigns to him a devil who accompanies him all the time in this world to prevent him from virtuous deeds, and to divert him towards evil. When such a man is resurrected in the Hereafter, his devil will also be with him, till they both are pushed in Hell. (Qurṭubī).

We learn from this that the punishment one gets even in this world for turning away from Allah's remembrance is that he gets into bad company and *'shaiṭāns'* (devils), whether from humans or from jinns, keep diverting him from virtues to vices. He commits vices but thinks that he is doing very well. (Qurṭubī). This devil who is assigned to such a person, as mentioned here, is in addition to the *'Shaiṭān'* (Satan) who is attached to every believer and disbeliever, because that *'shaiṭān'* (Satan) does leave the man alone at certain specific times, whereas this devil accompanies him all the time. (Bayān-ul-Qur'ān)

وَلَنْ يَّنْفَعَكُمُ الْيَوْمَ ('Since you were wrongdoers, it will never benefit you today that you are sharing the punishment with each other.'...43:39) There can be two explanations of this verse. One is that since your *'kufr'* and *'shirk'* (disbelief and ascribing partners to Allah) has been proved, your longing in the Hereafter in the words, "Will that this devil had been away from me," will be of no avail, because all of you will be sharing the same punishment.

The other explanation could be that after getting in Hell, your sharing the punishment with the devil will not benefit you. In this world, indeed it happens that when a few people share the same misfortune, everyone's burden of misery becomes somewhat lighter, but there in Hell,

everybody will be so terrorized that nobody will be able to lighten another's misery and hence sharing of the punishment will be of no benefit. (The translation given above is based on this interpretation.)

Good Fame is liked by Islam

وَإِنَّهُ لَذِكْرٌ لَّكَ وَلِقَوْمِكَ (And certainly this Qur'ān is a word of honor for you and your people...43:44) The original word used in the text is *dhikr* which here means 'good name' or 'fame'. The verse means that the Noble Qur'ān is a matter of great honour and good fame for the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his people. Imām Rāzī has concluded from this verse that good fame is a desirable thing, because Allah Ta'ālā has stated this as a matter of favor and that is why Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام had supplicated:

وَاجْعَلْ لِّيْ لِسَانَ صِدْقٍ فِي الْاٰخِرِيْنَ

(And destine for me a truthful description among the next generations) (26:84)

But one must keep in mind that the good fame is praiseworthy only when it is received as an automatic result of virtuous deeds, but when virtuous deeds are done for the sake of good fame, then it becomes *riyā'* (ostentation) which not only nullifies all the rewards of good deeds, but also renders one guilty of a major sin.

In this verse the words 'your people' have been taken by some exegetes to mean the tribe of Quraish only, thereby proving the superiority of Quraish, whereas 'Allāmah Qurṭubī says that, according to the correct view, these words refer to the whole Ummah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, irrespective of color or race, and the Noble Qur'ān is a matter of honor and good fame for the whole Ummah. (Qurṭubī)

وَسْئَلْ مَنْ اَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْ رُّسُلِنَا (And ask Our messengers whom We sent before you...43:45) A question may arise here: Since all the earlier prophets عليهم السلام had expired at the time of the revelation of this verse, how could the Holy Prophet ﷺ ask any question from his predecessors? Some exegetes have taken the verse in the sense that if, as a miracle, Allah Ta'ālā arranges for the Holy Prophet ﷺ to meet the earlier prophets عليهم السلام, then he should ask them about it. And it is well-established that the Holy Prophet ﷺ met all the preceding prophets عليهم السلام during the Night of Ascension. 'Allāmah Qurṭubī quotes some narrations according to which the Holy Prophet ﷺ asked them this very thing after

leading them in the prayers; but we could not discover the source of these narrations. Most exegetes have, therefore, explained that the verse does not mean to ask the prophets verbally. What is meant by the verse is to consult the divine Scriptures revealed to the earlier prophets, and to ask their learned scholars. And the scriptures of the prophets of Banī Isrā'īl which are available now, despite so many distortions, contain teachings about *'tauḥīd'* (Oneness of Allah) and condemnation of *'shirk'* (associating others with Allah) even today. For example, some excerpts from the Bible are quoted below:

Teachings about Oneness in the Scriptures of the earlier prophets

Here are two quotations from the Scriptures claimed by Jews and Christians to be the 'Pentateuch' or 'Torah' :-

> "The Lord has shown you this, to prove to you that he alone is God and that there is no other." (Deuteronomy, 4:35)

and

> "Israel, remember this! The Lord–and the Lord alone–is our God. Love the Lord your God with all your heart." (Deuteronomy, 6:4)

The scripture of Shi'yā عليه السلام (known as Isaiah) says,

> "I am the Lord; there is no other god. I will give you the strength you need, although you do not know me. I do this so that everyone from one end of the world to the other may know that I am the Lord and that there is no other god." (Isaiah, 45:5,6)

The books claimed by the Christians to be the Gospels contain this statement of Sayyidnā Masīḥ عليه السلام (Jesus Christ):

> "Listen, Israel! The Lord our God is the only Lord. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength." (Mark, 12:29, Matthew 22:36)

It is narrated that once Sayyidnā Masīḥ عليه السلام (Jesus Christ) said the following words during a supplication:

> "And eternal life means knowing you, the only true God, and knowing Jesus Christ, whom you sent." (Yuhanna 17:3)[1]

[1] These excerpts are taken from Good News Bible, Today's English Version, Published by the Bible Societies in 1976. (Muhammad Taqi Usmani)

Verses 46 - 56

وَلَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا مُوْسٰى بِاٰيٰتِنَآ اِلٰى فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَا۟ئِهٖ فَقَالَ اِنِّىْ رَسُوْلُ رَبِّ
الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٤٦﴾ فَلَمَّا جَآءَهُمْ بِاٰيٰتِنَآ اِذَا هُمْ مِّنْهَا يَضْحَكُوْنَ ﴿٤٧﴾
وَمَا نُرِيْهِمْ مِّنْ اٰيَةٍ اِلَّا هِىَ اَكْبَرُ مِنْ اُخْتِهَا ز وَاَخَذْنٰهُمْ بِالْعَذَابِ
لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُوْنَ ﴿٤٨﴾ وَقَالُوْا يٰٓاَيُّهَ السّٰحِرُ ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ بِمَا عَهِدَ
عِنْدَكَ ج اِنَّنَا لَمُهْتَدُوْنَ ﴿٤٩﴾ فَلَمَّا كَشَفْنَا عَنْهُمُ الْعَذَابَ اِذَا هُمْ
يَنْكُثُوْنَ ﴿٥٠﴾ وَنَادٰى فِرْعَوْنُ فِىْ قَوْمِهٖ قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ اَلَيْسَ لِىْ مُلْكُ
مِصْرَ وَهٰذِهِ الْاَنْهٰرُ تَجْرِىْ مِنْ تَحْتِىْ ج اَفَلَا تُبْصِرُوْنَ ﴿٥١﴾ اَمْ اَنَا
خَيْرٌ مِّنْ هٰذَا الَّذِىْ هُوَ مَهِيْنٌ ۙ وَّلَا يَكَادُ يُبِيْنُ ﴿٥٢﴾ فَلَوْلَآ اُلْقِىَ
عَلَيْهِ اَسْوِرَةٌ مِّنْ ذَهَبٍ اَوْ جَآءَ مَعَهُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ مُقْتَرِنِيْنَ ﴿٥٣﴾
فَاسْتَخَفَّ قَوْمَهٗ فَاَطَاعُوْهُ ط اِنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا قَوْمًا فٰسِقِيْنَ ﴿٥٤﴾ فَلَمَّآ
اٰسَفُوْنَا انْتَقَمْنَا مِنْهُمْ فَاَغْرَقْنٰهُمْ اَجْمَعِيْنَ ﴿٥٥﴾ فَجَعَلْنٰهُمْ سَلَفًا
وَّمَثَلًا لِّلْاٰخِرِيْنَ ﴿٥٦﴾ ع

And We sent Mūsā with Our signs to Fir'aun (Pharaoh) and his chiefs; so he said, "I am the messenger of the Lord of the worlds." [46] **So, when he came to them with Our signs, they at once started laughing at them.** [47] **And We did not show them a sign, but it used to be greater than its predecessor. And We seized them with punishment, so that they may return.** [48] **And they said, "O magician, pray for us to your Lord by the covenant He has made with you; we will certainly come to guidance."** [49] **Then, when We removed the punishment from them, they at once broke their word.** [50] **And Fir'aun proclaimed among his people, saying, "Does not the kingdom of Egypt belong to me? And these rivers are flowing right underneath me. Do you, then, not discern?** [51] **Or (do you not see that) I am much better than this one (Mūsā) who is worthless and can hardly express himself?** [52] **So why were the bracelets of gold not sent down to him, or (why) did the angels**

not come along with him as companions?" [53] **Thus he made fool of his people, and they obeyed him. Surely they were a sinful people.** [54] **So, when they provoked Our anger, We took vengeance on them, and drowned them all together,** [55] **and made them a people of the past, and an example for the later generations.** [56]

Commentary

Incidents related to Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ have been stated by the Qur'ān at many places repeatedly, and the incidents referred to in the present verses have been described in detail in Sūrah Al-A'rāf. The reason for reminding these incidents here is to show that the objection of the infidels of Makkah that the Holy Prophet ﷺ is not a wealthy man is not a new objection; Fir'aun had expressed the same doubt against Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ and his prophethood. His contention was that being the ruler of Egypt, and owner of the palaces and rivers flowing beneath them, how could Mūsā ﷺ claim to be a prophet against him. But just as Fir'aun's disbelief could be of no avail to him, and he got drowned along with his people, this objection of '*kuffār*' of Makkah, too, will not save them from the divine punishment in this world, or in the Hereafter.

وَلَا يَكَادُ يُبِيْنُ (and can hardly express himself - 43:52). Although as a result of his own supplication, the stammering of Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ had been removed by Allah Ta'ālā, Fir'aun remembered his previous state only, and hence this aspersion. And it is possible also that by saying this, Fir'aun did not mean stammering in speech, but he meant that Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ could not put forward adequate logical arguments to satisfy him, although this was nothing but a false accusation, because Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ had completely overwhelmed Fir'aun through his arguments and proofs against which he had no answer. (Tafsīr Kabīr and Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī).

فَاسْتَخَفَّ قَوْمَهٗ (Thus he made fool of his people - 43:54). According to the Arabic expression, this sentence may be translated in two ways; the translation adopted in the text above is based on one of them. The second one may be: "He (Fir'aun) easily made his people to follow him". (Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī)

فَلَمَّآ اٰسَفُوْنَا (So, when they provoked our anger, - 43:55). Since Allah Almighty is pure of the states of anger and sorrow, the meaning is that their behavior caused Us to decide that they should be punished.

(Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī)

Verses 57 - 65

وَلَمَّا ضُرِبَ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ مَثَلاً اِذَا قَوْمُكَ مِنْهُ يَصِدُّوْنَ ﴿٥٧﴾ وَقَالُوْآ ءَ اٰلِهَتُنَا خَيْرٌ اَمْ هُوَ مَا ضَرَبُوْهُ لَكَ اِلاَّ جَدَلاً ط بَلْ هُمْ قَوْمٌ خَصِمُوْنَ ﴿٥٨﴾ اِنْ هُوَ اِلَّا عَبْدٌ اَنْعَمْنَا عَلَيْهِ وَجَعَلْنٰهُ مَثَلًا لِّبَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ ﴿٥٩﴾ وَلَوْنَشَآءُ لَجَعَلْنَا مِنْكُمْ مَّلٰٓئِكَةً فِي الْاَرْضِ يَخْلُفُوْنَ ﴿٦٠﴾ وَاِنَّهٗ لَعِلْمٌ لِّلسَّاعَةِ فَلَا تَمْتَرُنَّ بِهَا وَاتَّبِعُوْنِ ط هٰذَا صِرَاطٌ مُّسْتَقِيْمٌ ﴿٦١﴾ وَلَا يَصُدَّنَّكُمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ ج اِنَّهٗ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿٦٢﴾ وَلَمَّا جَآءَ عِيْسٰى بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ قَالَ قَدْ جِئْتُكُمْ بِالْحِكْمَةِ وَلِاُبَيِّنَ لَكُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِيْ تَخْتَلِفُوْنَ فِيْهِ ج فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَاَطِيْعُوْنِ ﴿٦٣﴾ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ رَبِّيْ وَرَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوْهُ ط هٰذَا صِرَاطٌ مُّسْتَقِيْمٌ ﴿٦٤﴾ فَاخْتَلَفَ الْاَحْزَابُ مِنْ بَيْنِهِمْ ج فَوَيْلٌ لِّلَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا مِنْ عَذَابِ يَوْمٍ اَلِيْمٍ ﴿٦٥﴾

And when the example of the son of Maryam was cited, your people started at once shouting at it (in joy), [57] and said, "Are Our gods better or is he?" And they did not cite it but for the sake of disputation. Rather, they are a quarrelsome people. [58] He ('Īsā) is no more than a slave (of Allah) whom We favored and made an example for the children of Isra'il. [59] And if We will, We may create angels from you who succeed you on the earth. [60] And he ('Īsā) is a source of knowledge of the Hour (the Day of Judgment); so do not be in doubt about it, and follow me. This is the straight way. [61] And let not the shaitan (Satan) prevent you (from following this way). He is surely an open enemy for you. [62] And when 'Īsā came with clear proofs, he said, "I have come to you with wisdom, and to explain to you some of those matters in which you differ. So, fear Allah, and obey me. [63] Surely, it is Allah who is my Lord and your Lord; so worship Him. This is the straight way." [64] Then different groups, out of them, fell into disagreement. So, woe to the wrongdoers

because of the punishment of a painful day. [65]

Commentary

وَلَمَّا ضُرِبَ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ مَثَلًا اِذَا قَوْمُکَ مِنْهُ يَصِدُّوْنَ (And when the example of the son of Maryam was cited, your people started at once shouting at it [in joy]...43:57). Exegetes have narrated three events as background of the revelation of these verses. One is that once the Holy Prophet ﷺ had addressed the tribe of Quraish and said, "O people of Quraish! there is no good in whatever is worshipped beside Allah." The polytheists responded by saying, "The Christians worship Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام, although you yourself say that he was a virtuous slave of Allah, and His prophet." These verses were then revealed in reply to this objection (Qurṭubī).

The second narration is that the objection of the infidels related to the following verse of the Holy Qur'ān:

اِنَّکُمْ وَمَا تَعْبُدُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ حَصَبُ جَهَنَّمَ

"Surely, you and whatever you worship other than Allah are the fuel of Jahannam." (21:98)

When this verse was revealed, 'Abdullah Ibn-uz-ziba'ra claimed that he had the proper answer to this verse which was that the Christians worship Sayyidnā Masih ('Īsā عليه السلام) and Jews worship Sayyidnā 'Uzair عليه السلام, so will they both become fuel of Hell? Upon hearing this, the polytheists of Quraish became very joyful, and Allah then revealed the following verse of the Holy Qur'ān:

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ سَبَقَتْ لَهُمْ مِّنَّا الْحُسْنٰٓى اُولٰٓئِکَ عَنْهَا مُبْعَدُوْنَ

"Surely, those for whom the good (news) from Us has come earlier shall be kept away from it." (21:101)

The above verses of Sūrah Zukhruf was also revealed in this context. (Ibn Kathīr, etc.,)

The third narration is that once the pagans of Makkah expressed the absurd thought that the Holy Prophet عليه السلام wanted to claim godhead for himself, so that he might be worshipped like Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام is worshipped by the Christians; these verses were revealed in that context.

In reality, there is no conflict between these three narrations. The infidels will have said all the three things, and in reply Allah Ta'ālā

revealed these verses in such a comprehensive manner that took care of all the three objections. The answer to the last objection is quite clear in these verses as to those who started worshipping Sayyidnā 'Īsa عليه السلام did not do so in obedience to any Divine command, nor had Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام ever desired it for himself, nor does the Qur'ān support it. Their misconception was based on the miraculous birth of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام without a father which was, according to them, a sign of his being god or a son of God. The Holy Qur'ān has refuted this misconceived argument. How is it then possible that the Holy Prophet ﷺ will claim Godhead in imitation of the Christians?

The gist of the objection mentioned in the first and second narrations is essentially the same. The statement in the Qur'ān that all those who are worshipped except Allah will become fuel for Hell or the statement of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that there is no good in whatever is worshipped except Allah, refer to the lifeless objects of worship, such as idols or those living beings who directed their followers towards their own worship, or who liked to be worshipped, such as *shaiṭāns*, Fir'aun, Namrūd, etc.. So Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام is obviously not included in this category, since at no stage did he like to be worshipped. Christians do not worship him because of any direction having being given by Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام, rather they were misled and started worshipping him by deducing the wrong conclusion from his birth without a father which was a sample of Allah's power to show to the people that Allah does not need even any apparent cause or means to create something. This worship of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام by Christians was not only irrational, but also against his own teachings, because he had always preached *'tauḥīd'* (Oneness of Allah); his own disgust against being worshipped simply does not allow his inclusion in the ranks of false gods.

وَلَوْ نَشَآءُ لَجَعَلْنَا مِنكُم مَّلٰٓئِكَةً فِى الْاَرْضِ يَخْلُفُوْنَ (and if we will, We may create angels from you who succeed you on the earth...43:60) This is in reply to the gravely mistaken conclusion drawn by Christians from the miraculous birth of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام without a father as a result of which they attributed godhead to him, and started worshipping him. Allah Ta'ālā states to controvert their argument that Sayyidnā 'Īsā's عليه السلام birth was merely a demonstration of His power, and He has the power to do even more supernatural things like creating Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام without

father and mother. And if He wills, He may do as unprecedented things as causing angels to be born out of human beings.

وَاِنَّهٗ لَعِلْمٌ لِّلسَّاعَةِ (And he ('Īsā عليه السلام) is a source of knowledge of the Hour [the day of judgement] - 43:61). This verse has been explained in two different ways. One is that Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام being born without a father is a proof to the fact that Allah Almighty can create people without apparent causes. Thus resurrecting the dead is not at all difficult for Him. But most exegetes have taken this verse in another sense. According to them it means that the descent of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام from the sky is a sign of the Doomsday. And his coming to this world again in its last days and killing Dajjāl (the Antichrist) is proved by *mutawātir aḥādīth*. Some details on this subject have already been given in the explanation of the verse (3:54,55) of Sūrah 'Āl-'Imrān, (See V,2, pp.76 onward of this book) and in Sūrah Nisā' 3:54,55 (See V. 2, PP. 622 onward of this book) and some in Sūrah Al-Mā'idah (5:110). For more details one should refer to the author's book "التصریح بما تواتر فی نزول المسیح" *At-Taṣrīḥ bi mā tawātara fī nuzūl-il-Masīḥ* in Arabic and "مسیح موعود کی پہچان" *Masīḥ-e-Mau'ūd kī pehchān* in Urdu.

وَلِاُبَیِّنَ لَکُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِیْ تَخْتَلِفُوْنَ فِیْهِ (and to explain to you some of those matters in which you differ...43:63) Since Banū Isrā'īl were drowned in arrogance and obstinacy, they had tampered with the Divine laws. Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام disclosed the reality of such distortions. The words 'some matters' are used because some other matters were purely of mundane nature. He might have not felt the need to deal with those differences. (Bayān-ul-Qur'ān).

Verses 66 - 77

هَلْ یَنْظُرُوْنَ اِلَّا السَّاعَةَ اَنْ تَاْتِیَهُمْ بَغْتَةً وَّهُمْ لَا یَشْعُرُوْنَ ﴿٦٦﴾
اَلْاَخِلَّآءُ یَوْمَئِذٍۭ بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ اِلَّا الْمُتَّقِیْنَ ﴿٦٧﴾ یٰعِبَادِ
لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَیْکُمُ الْیَوْمَ وَلَآ اَنْتُمْ تَحْزَنُوْنَ ﴿٦٨﴾ اَلَّذِیْنَ اٰمَنُوْا بِاٰیٰتِنَا
وَکَانُوْا مُسْلِمِیْنَ ﴿٦٩﴾ اُدْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ اَنْتُمْ وَاَزْوَاجُکُمْ تُحْبَرُوْنَ
﴿٧٠﴾ یُطَافُ عَلَیْهِمْ بِصِحَافٍ مِّنْ ذَهَبٍ وَّاَکْوَابٍ ۚ وَفِیْهَا

مَاتَشْتَهِيهِ الْأَنْفُسُ وَتَلَذُّ الْأَعْيُنُ ۚ وَأَنْتُمْ فِيهَا خٰلِدُوْنَ ﴿٧١﴾ وَتِلْكَ الْجَنَّةُ الَّتِيٓ أُوْرِثْتُمُوْهَا بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٧٢﴾ لَكُمْ فِيهَا فَاكِهَةٌ كَثِيرَةٌ مِّنْهَا تَأْكُلُوْنَ ﴿٧٣﴾ إِنَّ الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ فِي عَذَابِ جَهَنَّمَ خٰلِدُوْنَ ﴿٧٤﴾ لَا يُفَتَّرُ عَنْهُمْ وَهُمْ فِيهِ مُبْلِسُوْنَ ﴿٧٥﴾ وَمَا ظَلَمْنٰهُمْ وَلٰكِنْ كَانُوْا هُمُ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٧٦﴾ وَنَادَوْا يٰمٰلِكُ لِيَقْضِ عَلَيْنَا رَبُّكَ ۖ قَالَ إِنَّكُمْ مّٰكِثُوْنَ ﴿٧٧﴾

They are waiting for nothing but for the Hour to come upon them suddenly, while they will not even imagine (it). [66] **Friends, on that day, will become enemies to one another, except the God-fearing,** [67] **(to whom it will be said) "O my slaves, there is no fear for you today, nor will you grieve-** [68]**-(that is, O) those (slaves) who believed in Our signs, and remained obedient.** [69]**-- Enter the Paradise, you and your spouses, showered with bliss."** [70] **Circulated among them will be the bowls of gold, and glasses. And therein will be whatever souls desire and that in which eyes delight. "And you will be living in it for ever.** [71] **And that is the Paradise that you are made to inherit because of what you used to do.** [72] **For you there are fruits in abundance from which you will eat."** [73] **The sinners (on the other hand) will be in the punishment of Jahannam, living there for ever.** [74] **It will not be lightened for them, and they will be there, devoid of all hopes.** [75] **And We did not do injustice to them, rather, they themselves were the unjust.** [76] **And they will call (Malik, the keeper of the hell,) "O Malik, let your Lord do away with us." He will say, " You have to stay on."** [77]

Commentary

The only real friendship is that which is in the sake of Allah

اَلْاَخِلَّاءُ يَوْمَئِذٍۢ بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ اِلَّا الْمُتَّقِيْنَ (Friends, on that day, will become enemies to one another, except the God-fearing 43:67). This verse tells us plainly that the friendly relations in which we take so much pride in this world, and for which we don't even care about *ḥalāl* (permitted) and *ḥarām* (unlawful), will be of no use on the Day of judgment, rather they will turn into enmity. In this connection, Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Kathīr has reproduced

a discourse of Sayyidnā 'Alī ﷺ narrated by 'Abdur Razzāq in his Muṣannaf and by Ibn Abī Ḥātim regarding two Muslim friends and two Non-Muslim friends. One of the Muslim friends died and when he was given the glad tidings of Paradise, he recollected his friend and supplicated in his favour: "O Allah! That friend of mine used to advise me to obey You and to obey the Holy Prophet ﷺ, he used to direct me towards virtues and to prevent me from vices, and kept on reminding me that one day I would have to meet You. So O Allah! Do not misguide him after me, so that he may also see the scenes of Paradise as You have shown to me, and be pleased with him, as you have been with me." In reply, it will be said to him, "Do not worry, if you know what reward I have stored for your friend, you will weep less and laugh more." Later, when the friend will also have died, both the souls will get together and Allah Ta'ālā will direct them that each one of them should praise the other. Thereupon, each one of them will say about the other that he is the best brother, best companion and the best friend.

As against this, when one of the Non-Muslim friends will die, and he will be told that he will go to Hell, he will recollect his friend and will supplicate thus "O Allah! That friend of mine used to insist upon me to disobey You and your messenger, used to direct me towards vices and used to prevent me from virtues and used to tell me that I would never meet You. So O Allah! Do not give him guidance after me, so that he may also see the scenes of Hell, as You have shown to me, and be displeased with him just as You have been displeased with me." Later, when the other friend will also have died, both their souls will be get together, and they will be directed to praise the other. Then each one of them will say about the other, "He is the worst brother, worst companion and worst friend. (Ibn Kathīr p. 134, v.4)

Therefore the best friendship, in respect of this world as well as the Hereafter, is the one that is for the sake of Allah. Many are the merits stated in '*aḥādīth*' for those two Muslims who love each other purely for the sake of Allah. One of these merits is that they will be in the shade of the "'Arsh" (Throne) of Allah. And 'love for the sake of Allah' means to love someone because he is a true follower of the religion prescribed by Allah. As such, it includes sincere love for teachers of religious subjects, spiritual guides, reformers, religious scholars and devotees of Allah, as

well as for all the Muslims.

Verses 78 -89

لَقَدْ جِئْنٰكُمْ بِالْحَقِّ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَكُمْ لِلْحَقِّ كٰرِهُوْنَ ﴿٧٨﴾ اَمْ اَبْرَمُوْٓا اَمْرًا فَاِنَّا مُبْرِمُوْنَ ﴿٧٩﴾ اَمْ يَحْسَبُوْنَ اَنَّا لَا نَسْمَعُ سِرَّهُمْ وَنَجْوٰىهُمْ ط بَلٰى وَرُسُلُنَا لَدَيْهِمْ يَكْتُبُوْنَ ﴿٨٠﴾ قُلْ اِنْ كَانَ لِلرَّحْمٰنِ وَلَدٌ صلے فَاَنَا اَوَّلُ الْعٰبِدِيْنَ ﴿٨١﴾ سُبْحٰنَ رَبِّ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ رَبِّ الْعَرْشِ عَمَّا يَصِفُوْنَ ﴿٨٢﴾ فَذَرْهُمْ يَخُوْضُوْا وَيَلْعَبُوْا حَتّٰى يُلٰقُوْا يَوْمَهُمُ الَّذِيْ يُوْعَدُوْنَ ﴿٨٣﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِيْ فِي السَّمَآءِ اِلٰهٌ وَّفِي الْاَرْضِ اِلٰهٌ ط وَهُوَ الْحَكِيْمُ الْعَلِيْمُ ﴿٨٤﴾ وَتَبٰرَكَ الَّذِيْ لَهٗ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا ج وَعِنْدَهٗ عِلْمُ السَّاعَةِ ج وَاِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُوْنَ ﴿٨٥﴾ وَلَا يَمْلِكُ الَّذِيْنَ يَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِهِ الشَّفَاعَةَ اِلَّا مَنْ شَهِدَ بِالْحَقِّ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٨٦﴾ وَلَئِنْ سَاَلْتَهُمْ مَّنْ خَلَقَهُمْ لَيَقُوْلُنَّ اللّٰهُ فَاَنّٰى يُؤْفَكُوْنَ ﴿٨٧﴾ وَقِيْلِهٖ يٰرَبِّ اِنَّ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ قَوْمٌ لَّا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٨٨﴾ فَاصْفَحْ عَنْهُمْ وَقُلْ سَلٰمٌ ط فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٨٩﴾

Indeed We have brought to you the truth, but it is the truth that most of you detest. [78] **Is it that they have firmly resolved to do something (harmful to Our messenger)? Then, We have firmly resolved (to frustrate their plan.)** [79] **Do they think that We do not hear their secrets and their whispers? Why not? And Our messengers (angels) are with them who record.** [80] **Say, "Had there been a son for the *Raḥmān*, I would have been the first to worship."** [81] **Pure is the Lord of the heavens and the earth, the Lord of the Throne, from what they describe (about Him).** [82] **So, let them indulge (in their fallacy) and play, until they face their Day that they are promised.** [83] **And He is the One who is God to be worshipped in the sky, and God to be worshipped on the earth. And He is the Wise, the**

All-Knowing. [84] And Glorious is the One to whom belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth and whatever lies between them. And with Him is the knowledge of the Hour; and towards Him you are to be returned. [85] And those whom they invoke besides Him have no power to intercede, but those who bear witness to the truth, while they have knowledge (may intercede for the believers with Allah's permission). [86] And if you ask them as to who has created them, they will certainly say, "Allah". Then, to where are they driven back (by their false desires)? [87] And (Allah has the knowledge) of his (prophet's) saying, "O my Lord, these are a people who do not believe." [88] [1] So, turn away from them, and say, "Salām!" (good-bye!). Then, soon they will come to know. [89]

Commentary

قُلْ إِنْ كَانَ لِلرَّحْمٰنِ وَلَدٌ فَأَنَا أَوَّلُ الْعٰبِدِيْنَ (Had there been a son for the *Rahmān*, I would have been the first to worship - 43:81) It does not mean that, God forbid, there is any possibility of *Rahmān* (Allah) having offspring. What is really being said is that the Holy Prophet ﷺ is not denying your beliefs due to enmity or obstinacy, but because they are illogical. If precise logical arguments could prove the existence of offspring of Allah, he would certainly have accepted it. But every intellectual argument contradicts this possibility, and therefore there is no question of accepting it. This tells us that it is lawful, rather desirable, to declare during a debate with erring people that if their claim had been proved by strong arguments, it would have been accepted, because such a manner of speech may sometimes soften the heart of the opponent and may persuade him to accept the truth.

وَقِيْلِهٖ يٰرَبِّ إِنَّ هٰؤُلَاءِ قَوْمٌ لَّا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ (And [Allah has the knowledge] of His prophet's saying, "O my Lord, these are a people who do not believe." 43:88) The point made by this sentence is that there are very serious reasons for Allah's wrath descending upon these infidels. On the one

(1) This translation is based on the construction adopted by many exegetes, including Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thanawi رحمه الله تعالى. However, according to Imām Rāzī, the translation will be as follows, " And (remember the time) of his (Prophet's) saying....." This rendering seems to be closer to the text in view of the grammatical construction of the verse. (For details, please see At-tafsīr-ul-kabīr, by Imām Rāzī v.27, p.234) (Muhammad Taqi Usmani)

hand, there are their severe crimes themselves, and on the other when the Messenger ﷺ, who has been sent as a "blessing for the world" and "interceder for the sinners", himself complains against them and says that these people do not believe, despite repeated good counsels given to them, it indicates that they must have agonized the Holy Prophet ﷺ to an extreme extent, otherwise "the blessing for the worlds" would not have made such a plaint merely on an ordinary hurt.

It should be noted that the present verse has been construed in different ways. The above translation is based on the construction adopted by Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thanawi رحمه الله تعالى. Various other constructions are given in Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī.

وَقُلْ سَلَامٌ (and say, Salām [good-bye]. Then soon they will come to know---43:89). At the end of the Sūrah, the same advice has been given to the Holy Prophet ﷺ that is always given to every preacher of truth. The gist of the advice is that one may reply to the arguments and doubts of the opponents, but when they start talking ignorantly, foolishly or are involved in hurling abuses, then instead of replying in their language, one should keep quiet. And the instruction to say Salām does not mean that *"Assalāmu 'alaikum"* is to be said to them, because this salutation is not permissible for any non-Muslim; rather it is an idiomatic expression for parting of ways. As such, the view of those who deduce from this verse that saying *"Assalāmu 'alaikum"* to non-Muslims is permissible does not carry much weight. (Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī).

Alḥamdulillāh
The Commentary on
Sūrah Az-Zukhruf (The Gold)
Ends here

Sūrah Ad-Dukhān

The Smoke

Sūrah Ad-Dukhān is Makkī. It has 59 Verses and 3 Sections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 9

حٰمٓ ﴿١﴾ وَالْكِتٰبِ الْمُبِيْنِ ﴿٢﴾ اِنَّآ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ فِىْ لَيْلَةٍ مُّبٰرَكَةٍ اِنَّا كُنَّا
مُنْذِرِيْنَ ﴿٣﴾ فِيْهَا يُفْرَقُ كُلُّ اَمْرٍ حَكِيْمٍ ﴿٤﴾ اَمْرًا مِّنْ عِنْدِنَا ط اِنَّا كُنَّا
مُرْسِلِيْنَ ﴿٥﴾ رَحْمَةً مِّنْ رَّبِّكَ ط اِنَّهٗ هُوَ السَّمِيْعُ الْعَلِيْمُ ﴿٦﴾ رَبِّ
السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا ۘ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّوْقِنِيْنَ ﴿٧﴾ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا
هُوَ يُحْيٖ وَيُمِيْتُ ط رَبُّكُمْ وَرَبُّ اٰبَآئِكُمُ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ ﴿٨﴾ بَلْ هُمْ فِىْ
شَكٍّ يَّلْعَبُوْنَ ﴿٩﴾

Ḥā Mīm. [1] By the manifest Book, [2] We have sent it down in a blessed night, (because) We had to warn (people). [3] In that (night), every wise thing is decided [4] through a command from Us. We were to send the Messenger [5] as a mercy from your Lord, – Surely, He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing – [6] the Lord of the heavens and the earth and of whatever there is between them, if you are to believe. [7] There is no god, but He. He gives life and brings death. He is your Lord and the Lord of your forefathers. [8] But they, being in doubt, are playing around. [9]

Commentary

The Merit of the Sūrah

Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ reports that the Messenger of Allah said that whoever recites Sūrah Dukhān on Friday night, his sins will have been forgiven by the morning. Sayyidnā Umāmah ﷺ narrates that the Messenger of Allah said anyone who recites Sūrah Dukhān on Friday, in the night or in the day, Allah will build for him a house in Paradise. (Qurṭubī on the authority of Tha'labī).

In the present set of verses, the greatness of Qur'ān and some of its special features are described. وَالْكِتَابِ الْمُبِينِ "By the manifest Book". This verse refers to the Holy 'Qur'ān'. In the verse Allah swears an oath by the magnificent Qur'ān to state that it was revealed in a blessed and auspicious Night, the purpose of which is to awaken the unmindful human beings from their deep slumber. A similar oath was taken, in exactly the same words, at the commencement of Sūrah Az-Zukhruf (Chapter 43). The oath-phrase has been fully discussed there.

لَيْلَةٍ مُّبٰرَكَةٍ 'blessed night', in verse 2 according to majority of the Commentators, refers to *'laylatul Qadr'* or the 'Night of Power' which occurs in the last ten nights of the month of Ramaḍān. During this night Allah sends down countless blessings for his slaves/servants. It has been explicitly mentioned in Sūrah Al-Qadr, thus:

اِنَّا اَنْزَلْنٰهُ فِىْ لَيْلَةِ الْقَدْرِ

"We sent it (the Qur'ān) down in the Night of *Qadr*". (97:1)

This clearly indicates that the phrase *'laylah mubārakah'* (blessed night) occurring in the verse refers to the 'Night of Power'. It is narrated in a Tradition of the Prophet ﷺ that all Prophets عليهم السلام, since the inception of man till the end, received their respective Books in the month of Ramaḍān on different dates. Sayyidnā Qatādah ﷺ reports on the authority of Sayyidnā Wāthilah ﷺ that the Messenger of Allah said that Prophet Ibrāhīm عليه السلام received his Scriptures on 1st Ramaḍān, Torah was revealed on 6th Ramaḍān, Zabūr was revealed on 12th Ramaḍān, Injīl was revealed on 18th Ramaḍān and the Holy Qur'ān was revealed on the night of 24th, that is , on 25th Ramaḍān . (Qurṭubī).

The statement that the 'Qur'ān was revealed in the Night of Power'

means that it was revealed in its entirety from the Preserved Tablet to the lowest Firmament in one night of the month of Ramaḍān. But, it was revealed to the Prophet ﷺ gradually over a period of twenty-three years . Some scholars have expressed the opinion that the installment of the Qur'ān that was destined to be revealed in a given year used to be sent down on the Night of Power from the Preserved Tablet to the Firmament of the Earth. (Qurṭubī).

Some other scholars of Tafsīr, like 'Ikrimah, interpret the phrase *'laylah mubārakah'* (blessed night) as referring to *'laylat-ul-bara'ah'* (the Night of Immunity), that is, the 15th night of Sha'bān. But to say that the Qur'ān was revealed during this night goes against the clear texts of the Qur'ān: In شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِیٓ اُنْزِلَ فِيْهِ الْقُرْاٰنُ and in اِنَّآ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ فِیْ لَيْلَةِ الْقَدْرِ we come across "The month of Ramaḍān is the one in which the Qur'ān was revealed...(2:185)" and "We have sent it (the Qur'ān) in the Night of *Qadr* - (97:1)". In the presence of such clear texts, it cannot be accepted, without any strong evidence, that the Qur'ān was revealed in the Night of Immunity. There are, however, certain Traditions that speak highly of this night - that it is a night of blessings and that it is a night during which Allah showers His mercy. Some versions of the Tradition use exactly the same words as the Qur'ān uses in the verse to describe *'laylah mubārakah'* - فِيْهَا يُفْرَقُ كُلُّ اَمْرٍ حَكِيْمٍ اَمْرًا مِّنْ عِنْدِنَا "In that (night), every wise thing is decided (4) through a command from Us...(5)". In interpreting this verse Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه says that it refers to the Night of Power, in which the Qur'ān was revealed. In it all matters are decreed to happen from the present Night of Power to the next, relating to all creation, their births, their deaths, their provisions and other details. Other leading authorities on Tafsīr, like Sayyidnā Ḥasan, Qatādah, Mujāhid and others رحمهم الله, concur with Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه. Mahdawī says that all matters decreed by Allah are, on this night, transferred to the angelic scribes who record the decrees of the coming year. Other texts of Qur'ān and Suunah bear testimony to the fact that Allah had decreed all matters in pre-eternity (*azal*) even before the creation of man. Therefore, the statement that man's destiny is decreed in this night simply means that the decrees for the whole year are handed over, in this night, to the relevant angels for implementation. (Qurṭubī).

Because some versions of the Tradition state that births, deaths and

sustenance are decreed in the night of immunity or 15th night of Sha'ban, some of the scholars have interpreted the phrase *'laylah mubārakah'* in the current verse as referring to *'laylat-ul-barā'ah'* or 'the Night of Immunity'. But this is not correct, because here the revelation of the Qur'ān is mentioned first; and its revelation in the month of Ramaḍān is confirmed by the clear texts of the Qur'ān. Some versions state that sustenance and other things are decreed in the Night of Immunity. Ibn Kathīr, first of all, says this Tradition is *mursal* and such Tradition cannot be reliable in the presence of clear/express texts. Qāḍī Abū Bakr Ibn 'Arabi asserts that no authentic Tradition relating to mid-Sha'bān is available which may show that sustenance, births and deaths are determined and decreed in that night. He further rejects the idea that there is any reliable Tradition on the merit of this night. Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī, however, cites a Tradition, without a chain of transmitters, narrated by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ in which he says that sustenance, life and death are determined in the mid-Sha'bān night, and in the Night of Power the decrees are handed over to the angels. If this Tradition is confirmed, then the two interpretations can be reconciled and synchronized. Otherwise, the express words of Qur'ān and authentic Traditions relating to *'laylah mubārakah'* and *'fīhā yufraqu...'* in the verse of Sūrah Dukhān فِيهَا يُفْرَقُ clearly show that they refer to the 'Night of Power'. As far as the merit of the night of mid-Sha'bān is concerned, it is a separate issue. Some Traditions do speak about it but they are weak. Therefore, Qāḍī Abū Bakr Ibn 'Arabi denied any merit of this night. Chains of transmission of Traditions concerning mid-Sha'bān are all weak but, it may be suggested that, if the various ways of transmission are put together, they gain strength. Therefore, many great scholars have accepted the Traditions about mid-Sha'ban because there is room to act upon weak Traditions relating to meritorious actions. Allah knows best!

Verses 10 - 16

فَارْتَقِبْ يَوْمَ تَأْتِي السَّمَآءُ بِدُخَانٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿١٠﴾ يَّغْشَى النَّاسَ ۖ هٰذَا
عَذَابٌ اَلِيمٌ ﴿١١﴾ رَبَّنَا اكْشِفْ عَنَّا الْعَذَابَ اِنَّا مُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿١٢﴾ اَنّٰى
لَهُمُ الذِّكْرٰى وَقَدْ جَآءَهُمْ رَسُوْلٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿١٣﴾ ثُمَّ تَوَلَّوْا عَنْهُ وَقَالُوْا

مُعَلَّمٌ مَّجْنُوْنٌ ﴿١٤﴾ إِنَّا كَاشِفُوا الْعَذَابِ قَلِيْلًا إِنَّكُمْ عَآئِدُوْنَ ﴿١٥﴾
يَوْمَ نَبْطِشُ الْبَطْشَةَ الْكُبْرٰى ۚ إِنَّا مُنْتَقِمُوْنَ ﴿١٦﴾

So, wait for a day when the sky will come up with a visible smoke [10] that will envelop people. This is a painful punishment. [11] (Then they will say,) " O our Lord, remove from us the punishment; we will truly believe." [12] How will they take lesson, while there has already come to them a messenger making things clear, [13] then they turned away from him, and said, " (He is) tutored, crazy."? [14] (Well,) We are going to remove the punishment for a while, (but) you will certainly go back *(to your original position)*. [15] (Then,) the day We will seize (you) with the greatest seizure, We will take vengeance. [16]

Commentary

دُخَانٌ مُّبِيْنٌ "...visible smoke" in verse (10) embodies a prophecy and the Prophet ﷺ was asked to watch for the Day when the sky will bring forth a manifest smoke covering the people. There are three opinions recorded about this from the Companions and their pupils.

The first view is that the smoke is one of the portents of the Day of Judgement which will occur very close to the Day of Judgement. This view is held by Sayyidnā 'Alī al-Murtaḍā, Ibn 'Abbās, Ibn 'Umar, Abū Hurairah, Zaid Ibn 'Alī رضي الله عنهم, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī Ibn Abī Mulaikah and others رحمهم الله تعالى. This view is recorded traceably on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī and Ḥudhaifah Ibn 'Usaid al-Ghifārī رحمهم الله تعالى which will be set out in detail later.

The second view is that this prophecy has already occurred. This refers to the event when the Quraish did not respond to Islam's call and they grew obstinate, the Apostle of Allah invoked against them that they would suffer seven years of drought and famine as it happened in the time of Prophet Yūsuf عليه السلام. They became so exhausted and hungry that they were forced to eat bones and carrion. When they looked at the sky, they saw nothing but smoke or smoky haze because of their exhaustion, instead of rain-laiden clouds. This view is held by Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه and others.

The third view is held by Sayyidnā 'Abdur-Raḥmān al-'A'raj and others. They say that the 'smoke' refers to the 'dust' which had been stirred up to the sky, and had covered the firmament of Makkah on the day of 'the Conquest of Makkah'. (Qurṭubī).

The first two views are most popular. Ibn Kathīr says regarding the third view:

هذا القول غريب جدًا بل مُنكر

> "This view is *gharīb* (unfamiliar), in fact *munkar* (against authentic reports)".

The other two views are confirmed by authentic Traditions. Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī supports the second view. Tafsīr Bayān-ul-Qur'ān prefers this view. It would appear that Ibn Kathīr and Qurṭubī prefer the first view. Allah knows best!

Narrations relating to the two views are as follows. It is recorded in Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim that Sayyidnā Ḥudhaifah Ibn 'Usaid al-Ghifārī ﷺ said: "The Messenger of Allah looked out upon us from a room while we were discussing the Hour. He said:

'The Hour will not come until you see ten signs. The rising of the sun from the west; the smoke; the beast (*dābbat-ul-'arḍ*); the emergence of Gog and Magog; the appearance of 'Īsā son of Maryam; the Dajjāl (anti-Christ); three cases of the earth collapsing - one in the east, one in the west, and one in the Arabian peninsula; and a fire that will emerge from the bottom of Aden and will drive the people - or gather the people - stopping with them when they stop to sleep at night or rest during the day.'" (Ibn Kathīr).

Ibn Jarīr has recorded on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Mālik Ash'arī ﷺ that the Messenger of Allah said: "I warn you against three things: one, the smoke which will only cause cold in a believer, but will permeate the entire body of an unbeliever so much so that it will ooze out from every pore and minute hole of the skin; the second thing is the beast (of the earth which will be of a strange/unusual type); the third thing will be Dajjāl". Having cited this narration, Ibn Kathīr said: هذا اسناد جيّد "This chain of transmitters is good". Ibn Kathīr has cited another narration on the same subject vide Ibn Abī Ḥātim on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū

Sa'īd al-Khudrī. He also cites a narration with reference to Ibn Abī Ḥātim on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Alī al-Murtaḍā ﷺ to the following effect: "This prophecy has not yet been fulfilled. (It will happen close to the Hour). This smoke will be the cause of catarrh for the believer but it will penetrate the entire body of an unbeliever and ooze out of the tiny holes of his skin". Ibn Jarīr cites a narration on the same subject on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar and Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ. Ibn Kathīr cites this and writes:

> هذا اسناد صحيح الى ابن عباسؓ حبرالامة وترجمان القران وهكذا قول من وافقه من الصّحابة والتابعينؒ مع الاحاديث المرفوعه من الصحاح والحسان وغيرهما الّتى اوردوها مما فيه مقنع ودلالة ظاهرة على ان الدّخان من الايات المنتظرة مع انّه ظاهر القران (فَارْتَقِبْ يَوْمَ تَأْتِي السَّمَاءُ بِدُخَانٍ مُّبِيْنٍ) وعلى ما فسره ابن مسعود انما هوخيال رأوه فى اعينهم من شدّة الجوع والجهد و هكذا قوله تعالىٰ (يَغْشَى النَّاسَ) او يتغشاهم ويعمهم ولوكان امرًا خياليا يخص اهل مكة المشركين لما قيل فيه يغشى الناس.
>
> "This chain of transmitters is authentic up to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ, the scholar of the Ummah, interpreter of the Qur'ān. This is the view of other Companions and their pupils who concur with Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ, together with prophetic Traditions - some being *sahih* and others *ḥasan*. They too are sufficient to prove that the 'smoke' is one of the portents of the Hour. It has not yet occurred, especially since the apparent wordings of the Qur'ān bear evidence to this fact. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd's ﷺ popular interpretation of the word 'smoke' refers to an imaginary smoke/an illusion which they saw because of their intense hunger and exhaustion, but it is inconceivable that the Qur'ān would use a phrase like يغشى الناس 'that will envelop people ...(11)' because this imaginary smoke was experienced by Makkans only. The wordings of the phrase 'that will envelop people ...(11)" show that the smoke had enveloped all the people.

Earlier on, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd's ﷺ view was given as follows as recorded in the two Ṣaḥīḥs, Musnad of Aḥmad, Tirmidhī, Nasa'ī and others. Sayyidnā Masrūq ﷺ narrates: 'We entered the mosque of Kūfah at the gates of kindah - and a preacher recited the verse يَوْمَ تَأْتِي السَّمَآءُ بِدُخَانٍ مُّبِيْنٍ "a day when the sky will come up with a visible smoke

(44:10)" and asked the audience : "Do you know what smoke is that ?" Then he said that that is the smoke which will emerge on the Day of Resurrection. It will take away the hearing and sight of the hypocrites, but for the believers it will be like having a cold. Sayyidnā Masrūq ﷺ says, 'when we heard this we went to Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ and told him about it. He was lying down, and he sat up with a start and said: "Allah has given to his prophet the following direction: قُلْ مَآ اَسْئَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ اَجْرٍ وَّمَآ اَنَا مِنَ الْمُتَكَلِّفِيْنَ Say, "I do not demand from you any fee for it, nor am I from among those who make up things artificially" (38:86). This verse proves that it is also a part of knowledge that when a man does not know something, he should say frankly that he does not know and that the correct knowledge is with Allah.(and he should not pretend that he knows it) "Then he narrated a Ḥadīth which interprets the meaning of the verse, thus: When the Quraish did not respond to the call of Islam and grew stubborn, the Messenger of Allah imprecated against them that they should have years like the years of drought and famine during the time of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. They became so exhausted and hungry that they ate dead meat and bones. When they looked at the sky, they saw nothing but smoke.

According to another report, a man would look at the sky and he would see nothing between him and the sky except a smoky haze on account of intensity of hunger and exhaustion. In support of his argument he recited فَارْتَقِبْ يَوْمَ تَاْتِي السَّمَآءُ بِدُخَانٍ مُّبِيْنٍ "So, wait for a day when the sky will come up with a visible smoke (44:10)". When this event took place, people came up to the Prophet of Allah and requested him to pray to Allah to send down rain to his tribe of Mudar. Otherwise, they all will perish. So, the Holy Prophet ﷺ prayed for rain for them, and the rain came down. On that occasion the following verse was revealed اِنَّا كَاشِفُوا الْعَذَابِ قَلِيْلاً اِنَّكُمْ عَآئِدُوْنَ "We are going to remove the punishment for a while, (but) you will certainly go back (to your original position). (44:15)" As predicted, when they were granted ease or reprieve, they reverted to their former state of *kufr* (disbelief) and Allah revealed the following verse يَوْمَ نَبْطِشُ الْبَطْشَةَ الْكُبْرٰى ج اِنَّا مُنْتَقِمُوْنَ "(Then,) the day We will seize (you) with the greatest seizure, We will take vengeance. (44:16)"

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ says that بطشہ کبری "greatest seizure" refers to the battle of Badr. After reporting this incident,

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ says that five events have already taken place:

(1) the smoke;
(2) the (defeat of the) Romans;
(3) the (splitting of the) moon;
(4) the seizure; and
(5) the *lizām*. (Ibn Kathīr).

The 'smoke', according to this interpretation, refers to the drought and famine in Makkah. The defeat of the Romans was prophesied in the Sūrah Ar-Rūm, thus: وَهُم مِّن بَعْدِ غَلَبِهِمْ سَيَغْلِبُونَ "and they, after their defeat, will be victorious." (30:3) The splitting of the moon refers to the miracle given by Allah to Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ that is described in Sūrah Al-Qamar, thus: اِقْتَرَبَتِ السَّاعَةُ وَانْشَقَّ الْقَمَرُ "The Hour (of doom) has drawn near, and the moon has split asunder (54:1)". The 'seizure', according to this interpretation, refers to the consequences of the pagan Quraish in the Battle of Badr. The *'lizām'* refers to فَسَوْفَ يَكُونُ لِزَامًا "Now since you belied (the truth), the punishment will be inseparable from you (25:77)", meaning the unbelievers' persistent denial of the truth will inevitably cause them torment.

A careful analysis of the verses embody several prophecies. First, the appearance of smoke on the sky and enveloping all the people. Second, that the pagans will not be able to bear the torment, so they will pray to Allah for its removal promising that they will believe. Third, they will go back on their words and break their promise. Fourth, Allah - despite their false promise - will remove the punishment for a short while in order to establish an argument against them, showing that they will not keep to their promise. Fourth, He will launch the greatest assault on them again to take revenge. According to Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd's ﷺ interpretation, all the prophecies have been fulfilled. The first four prophecies were fulfilled during the period when the people of Makkah suffered a severe drought and famine until this torment was lifted. The fifth one was fulfilled on the occasion of the battle of Badr. But the difficulty in this interpretation is that it seems inconceivable that the express wordings of the Qur'ān such as تَأْتِي السَّمَاءُ "...the sky will come دُخَانٍ مُّبِينٍ a visible smoke (10) يَغْشَى النَّاسَ will envelop people ... (11)" would refer

to an imaginary smoke on account of intensity of hunger. The wordings expressly refer to the distinctive smoke that would be brought forth in the open and clear sky, enshrouding all the people. But in this interpretation, there is neither visible smoke in the sky nor is it enveloping the people. The smoke was as a result of the intensity of their own exhaustion. Therefore, following the express wordings of the Qur'ān, Ibn Kathīr prefers to interpret the expression دُخَانٍ مُّبِينٍ "visible smoke" as referring to one of the signs/portents of the Hour. Furthermore, this interpretation is preferable because this is based on Prophetic *aḥādīth*, while the other interpretation is based merely on a saying of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ.

But a strong objection on the interpretation of Ibn Kathīr may be raised on the basis of the verse that says, اِنَّا كَاشِفُوا الْعَذَابِ قَلِيْلًا اِنَّكُمْ عَآئِدُوْنَ "(Well,) We are going to remove the punishment for a while, (but) you will certainly go back (to your original position). (44:15)". The problem here is that on the Day of Judgement no punishment of the unbelievers will be removed. The assertion that their punishment will be removed for a few days does not appear to coincide with the interpretation that takes the 'smoke' as a sign of Qiyāmah. Responding to this objection, Ibn Kathīr has observed that it could have one of two meanings. For one thing, it could mean 'If We, in keeping with your request, grant you reprieve from your torment and send you back to the world, you will revert to your former state of *kufr*'. This may be compared to another verse on the same subject: وَلَوْ رَحِمْنَاهُمْ وَكَشَفْنَا مَابِهِمْ مِّنْ ضُرٍّ لَّلَجُّوا فِىْ طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُوْنَ "And even if We have mercy on them and remove whatever distress they have, they would still persist obstinately in their rebellion, wandering blindly (23:75)". Similarly, another verse وَلَوْ رُدُّوْا لَعَادُوْا لِمَا نُهُوْا عَنْهُ "...And if they were sent back, they would again go for what they were forbidden from...". (6:28)

The other meaning of كَاشِفُوا الْعَذَابِ "We are going to remove the punishment" could be that all the causes of punishment have been completed and the punishment is imminent, but it is postponed for a few days, as it was delayed in the case of the people of Yūnus ﷺ The Qur'ān says كَشَفْنَا عَنْهُمُ الْعَذَابَ "Surely We have removed from them their punishment" whereas the punishment on the people of Yūnus ﷺ had not yet arrived - only the signs of punishment were visible when it was

delayed, but it is described as removal of punishment.

In conclusion, if the prophecy of *dukhān* ('smoke') be taken as one of the portents of the Hour, so the phrase *kāshiful 'adhāb* (We are going to remove the punishment - كَاشِفُوا الْعَذَابِ) does not create any problem. In this interpretation, the phrase يَوْمَ نَبْطِشُ الْبَطْشَةَ الْكُبْرٰى "(Then,) the day We will seize (you) with the greatest seizure ... (44:16)" refers to the seizure of the Day of Judgement. In Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd's ﷺ interpretation it refers to the seizure of the battle of Badr. This is correct because that too was a great seizure, but that does not necessarily mean that a greater seizure will not be made on the Day of Judgement. It is possible that the Qur'ān, through these verses, is warning the unbelievers of an impending punishment. Whenever a punishment befell the enemies, the noble Companions took the verses to apply to that particular punishment. This does not negate its being one of the signs of the Hour. Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī cites Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Masud's narration with reference to 'Allamah Saffarini's book البحور الزاخرة 'al-Buhūr-uz-Zākhirah', thus:

هما دخانان مضى واحد والّذى بقى يملأ مابين السّماء والارض ولا يصيب المؤمن الا بالزكمة واما الكافر فيشق مسامعه فيبعث اللّه تعالٰى عند ذٰلك الرّيح الجنوب من اليمن فتقبض روح كل مؤمن ويبقٰى شرار النّاس. (روح)

"Two clouds of 'dukhān or smoke' will be produced at two different times: One, in fact, has already occurred on the occasion of the famine of Makkah and the other is still going to be produced. The second smoke will fill the atmosphere between the heaven and the earth. A believer will feel it like having a cold but it will tear through all the pores of an unbeliever. At that time Allah will send southerly wind from Yemen which will take away the soul of every believer; and there shall remain only the unbelievers, the worst of people." (Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī)

The author of Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī, in terms of his preferred interpretation, has expressed his suspicion on the authenticity of this narration. However, if the narration can be confirmed, then there will remain no conflict between the Tafsīr of Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ and the express wordings of the Qur'ān and the Prophetic ahadith . Allah, the Pure and Exalted, knows best!

Verses 17 - 33

وَلَقَدْ فَتَنَّا قَبْلَهُمْ قَوْمَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَجَآءَهُمْ رَسُوْلٌ كَرِيْمٌ ﴿١٧﴾ اَنْ اَدُّوْٓا اِلَيَّ عِبَادَ اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنِّيْ لَكُمْ رَسُوْلٌ اَمِيْنٌ ﴿١٨﴾ وَّاَنْ لَّا تَعْلُوْا عَلَى اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنِّيْٓ اٰتِيْكُمْ بِسُلْطٰنٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿١٩﴾ وَاِنِّيْ عُذْتُ بِرَبِّيْ وَرَبِّكُمْ اَنْ تَرْجُمُوْنِ ﴿٢٠﴾ وَاِنْ لَّمْ تُؤْمِنُوْا لِيْ فَاعْتَزِلُوْنِ ﴿٢١﴾ فَدَعَا رَبَّهٗٓ اَنَّ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ قَوْمٌ مُّجْرِمُوْنَ ﴿٢٢﴾ فَاَسْرِ بِعِبَادِيْ لَيْلًا اِنَّكُمْ مُّتَّبَعُوْنَ ﴿٢٣﴾ وَاتْرُكِ الْبَحْرَ رَهْوًا ؕ اِنَّهُمْ جُنْدٌ مُّغْرَقُوْنَ ﴿٢٤﴾ كَمْ تَرَكُوْا مِنْ جَنّٰتٍ وَّعُيُوْنٍ ﴿٢٥﴾ وَّزُرُوْعٍ وَّمَقَامٍ كَرِيْمٍ ﴿٢٦﴾ وَّنَعْمَةٍ كَانُوْا فِيْهَا فٰكِهِيْنَ ﴿٢٧﴾ كَذٰلِكَ ۟ وَاَوْرَثْنٰهَا قَوْمًا اٰخَرِيْنَ ﴿٢٨﴾ فَمَا بَكَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّمَآءُ وَالْاَرْضُ وَمَا كَانُوْا مُنْظَرِيْنَ ﴿٢٩﴾ وَلَقَدْ نَجَّيْنَا بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ الْمُهِيْنِ ﴿٣٠﴾ مِنْ فِرْعَوْنَ ؕ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ عَالِيًا مِّنَ الْمُسْرِفِيْنَ ﴿٣١﴾ وَلَقَدِ اخْتَرْنٰهُمْ عَلٰى عِلْمٍ عَلَى الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٣٢﴾ وَاٰتَيْنٰهُمْ مِّنَ الْاٰيٰتِ مَا فِيْهِ بَلٰٓؤٌا مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿٣٣﴾

And We did test the people of Fir'aun prior to them, and a noble messenger came to them [17] saying, " Deliver to me the slaves of Allah. I am an honest messenger to you." [18] and saying, " Do not be haughty against Allah. I bring to you a clear proof. [19] And I have sought refuge with my Lord and your Lord, lest you stone me to death. [20] And if you do not believe in me, then keep away from me." [21] Then he prayed to his Lord saying, " These are a guilty people." [22] (So, Allah answered his prayer saying,) " Now, take away my slaves at night. You will certainly be chased. [23] And leave the sea in the state of stillness; they are an army that is sure to be drowned." [24] How many gardens and fountains have they left behind_ [25]_ and how many fields and noble sites, [26] and how many a luxury they used to rejoice in! [27] This is how it happened. And We made other people inherit all this. [28] So, neither the sky and earth wept over them, nor were they given a respite. [29] And

We delivered the children of Isra'il from the humiliating punishment, [30] **from Fir'aun. Indeed, he was haughty, one of the transgressors.** [31] **And We chose them, with knowledge,[1] above all the worlds.** [32] **And We gave them the clear signs in which there was a manifest blessing.** [33]

Commentary

وَاِنِّىْ عُذْتُ بِرَبِّىْ وَرَبِّكُمْ اَنْ تَرْجُمُوْنِ "And I have sought refuge with my Lord and your Lord, lest you stone me to death. (44:20)" The word rajm means 'to stone to death'. Another meaning of the word is 'to revile or to make a verbal assault or to heap up insults'. Both senses are possible here, but it seems more likely that the word is used here in the sense of stoning to death, because Fir'aun's people must have been threatening Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام with death.

وَاتْرُكِ الْبَحْرَ رَهْوًا "And leave the sea in the state of stillness; (44:24)" The word *rahwan* means 'to be still/calm/motionless'. When Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام and his companions crossed the sea, Mūsā عليه السلام naturally desired for the sea to go back to its original state. So he wanted to strike it with his staff so that it would form a barrier between them and Fir'aun to prevent him from reaching them. But Allah commanded him to leave it as it was, quiet and divided, and gave him the glad tidings that they were a host to be drowned, and he should not fear either being overtaken by Fir'aun or drowning in the sea. When Fir'aun, with his host, will reach the middle of the dry path, Allah will cause the water to flow and they will drown. (Ibn Kathīr).

وَاَوْرَثْنٰهَا قَوْمًا اٰخَرِيْنَ "...And We made other people inherit all this." (44:28) In Sūrah Shu'ara', it is explicitly stated that 'other people' refers to the Children of Israel. It is objected that there is no historical evidence to show that the Children of Israel ever settled again in Egypt. This objection has been rebutted in Sūrah Shu'arā'.

Weeping of the Sky and the Earth

فَمَا بَكَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّمَآءُ وَالْاَرْضُ "So, neither the sky and earth wept over them... (44:29)". This means they did not perform any righteous deeds on

(1) It means that the preference given to them was based on the divine knowledge that they deserved it, because they were the only people at that time who believed in the Oneness of Allah and had submitted themselves to His commands.

earth which would weep for them when they died, nor did any of their righteous deeds ascend through the gates of heaven, so that the sky would weep on their death. There are several ahadith which confirm that when a righteous person dies, the heaven and earth weep. Ḥāfiẓ Abū Ya'lā reports on the authority of Sayyidnā Anas ﷺ that the Prophet of Allah said: "For every person there are two gates in the heaven/sky. Through one of them his sustenance descends, and through the other his deeds and his conversation ascend. When he dies, the gates remember him and weep. Then the Prophet ﷺ recited the following verse as an evidence of his statement: فَمَا بَكَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّمَاءُ وَالْأَرْضُ " So, neither the sky and earth wept over them...(44:29)". Similar reports are narrated on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ (Ibn Kathīr). Sayyidnā Shuraih Ibn 'Ubaid al-Ḥaḍramī ﷺ narrates that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: "If a believer dies away from home where there is no one to weep for him, the heaven and earth weep for him." On this occasion too, the Holy Prophet ﷺ recited the same verse (29), adding that neither the sky nor the earth weeps for a non-believer. (Ibn Jarīr). Sayyidnā 'Alī ﷺ also upholds that the heaven and earth weep for a righteous person. (Ibn Kathīr).

Some scholars interpret the verse metaphorically, not literally. They say that the sky and the earth do not really weep, in the primary sense of the word. The verse purports to say that their existence is so insignificant that when they were wiped out, it did not cause grief to anyone. In the light of the above narratives, the real weeping of the heaven and earth in this context appears to be preferable. If the literal or primary sense of an expression is possible, there is no need to interpret it metaphorically or figuratively. The narratives quoted above support our argument - that the verse must be interpreted in its basic sense, and not in the figurative sense. It may be objected that neither the heaven nor the earth has any sense so that they would weep in the primary sense in which we understand it. Its rebuttal is simple: Obviously, every member of the universe has some sense, to a higher or lower degree, as attested by the Qur'ān إِن مِّن شَيْءٍ إِلَّا يُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِهِ "...And there is not a single thing that does not extol His purity and praise, but you do not understand their extolling... (17:44)". Gradually, contemporary science - through its research and experiment - is now reaching the same conclusion. Of course, it is not necessary for the heavens and the earth to be weeping in

the same way as human beings do. The way of their weeping would surely be different from humans but we are unaware of its reality.

وَلَقَدِ اخْتَرْنٰهُمْ عَلٰى عِلْمٍ عَلَى الْعٰلَمِيْنَ "And We chose them, with knowledge above all the worlds. (44:32)," This does not imply that the Children of Israel are superior to the Ummah of Muḥammad ﷺ, because the verse means that the Children of Israel were given superiority over all the people of their time. This is just like the Qur'ān has described the merit of Sayyidah Maryam علیها السلام as being superior to the نِسَاءِ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ "women of the worlds (3:42) which means that she was superior to the women of her time." It is also possible that the Children of Israel have some sort of superiority to all the people of all times and ages from a particular angle, but collectively the Ummah of the Final Messenger ﷺ holds the highest status. (See Ibn Kathīr and other sources for details.)

عَلٰى عِلْمٍ "with knowledge" means that every work of Allah has wisdom. Thus wisdom underlying Allah's knowledge dictated that they be granted superiority, and they were granted accordingly.

وَاٰتَيْنٰهُمْ مِّنَ الْاٰيٰتِ مَافِيْهِ بَلٰٓؤٌا مُّبِيْنٌ "And We gave them the clear signs in which there was a manifest blessing. (44:33) " The word 'signs' refers to the miracles of the staff, the shining hand and others. The word بَلٰٓؤٌ *bala'* has two senses: (1) blessing; and (2) trial. Here both senses are possible. (Qurṭubī).

Verses 34 - 42

اِنَّ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ لَيَقُوْلُوْنَ ﴿٣٤﴾ اِنْ هِىَ اِلَّا مَوْتَتُنَا الْاُوْلٰى وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمُنْشَرِيْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾ فَاْتُوْا بِاٰبَآئِنَآ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿٣٦﴾ اَهُمْ خَيْرٌ اَمْ قَوْمُ تُبَّعٍ ۙ وَّالَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ؕ اَهْلَكْنٰهُمْ ۫ اِنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا مُجْرِمِيْنَ ﴿٣٧﴾ وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا لٰعِبِيْنَ ﴿٣٨﴾ مَا خَلَقْنٰهُمَآ اِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَهُمْ لَايَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٣٩﴾ اِنَّ يَوْمَ الْفَصْلِ مِيْقَاتُهُمْ اَجْمَعِيْنَ ﴿٤٠﴾ يَوْمَ لَايُغْنِىْ مَوْلًى عَنْ مَّوْلًى شَيْئًا وَّلَاهُمْ يُنْصَرُوْنَ ﴿٤١﴾ اِلَّا مَنْ رَّحِمَ اللّٰهُ ؕ اِنَّهٗ هُوَالْعَزِيْزُ الرَّحِيْمُ ﴿٤٢﴾

These people say, [34] "The real end is nothing but our first death, and we are not going to be resurrected. [35] So, (O believers,) bring our fathers, if you are true (in your belief in resurrection.)" [36] Are they better or the people of Tubba' and those who were before them? We have destroyed them. They were guilty indeed. [37] And We did not create the heavens and the earth and what is between them just as players. [38] We did not create them but with true purpose, but most of them do not know. [39] The Day of Decision is the appointed time for all of them - [40] the day when no close relation will be of any use to any close relation, nor will they be helped, [41] except the One on whom Allah has mercy. Of course, He is the All-Mighty, the Very-Merciful. [42]

Commentary

فَأْتُوا بِآبَائِنَا إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ("Bring our fathers, if you are true (in your belief in resurrection".) (44:36)". Allah did not give an answer to this argument of theirs, because it was too obvious to need explanation, for the resurrection will happen on the Day of Judgement, not in this world. Allah will bring back to life all human beings in the Hereafter. Life and death in this world are bound by specific natural laws and wisdom. If Allah is not bringing back to life those who died long ago at this time, it does not necessarily imply that He will not be able to give life after death in the Hereafter. The following statement embodies their false/absurd reasoning: In logical terminology, it may be said that the negation of a particular thing does not necessarily imply the negation of a general thing.
(Bayān-ul-Qur'ān)

The Story of *Tubba'*

أَهُمْ خَيْرٌ أَمْ قَوْمُ تُبَّعٍ "Are they better or the people of *Tubba'*? (44:37)". The people of *Tubba'* have been referred to twice in the Qur'ān. Here and in Sūrah Qāf. In both places only their name has been mentioned without recounting their chronicle. Therefore, the commentators have discussed extensively about the people of Tubba' , trying to identify them and their history. *Tubba'* is not the name of a particular individual, but is said to be the royal title of the kings of Ḥimyar in Yemen. The Kings of Yemen were only known by this title when held sway over Ḥimyar, Arabia, Syria, 'Irāq and parts of Africa for a long time; western part of Yemen was their capital. Therefore, the plural of Tubba' is Tababi'ah, and the kings are called Tababi'ah of Yemen. It is not clear which of the Tababi'ah is

referred to here. Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Kathīr's research and conclusion would appear to be most plausible. His conclusion is that *Tubba'* here refers to *Tubba'* Ausat (Middle *Tubba'*) whose name was As'ad Abū Kuraib Ibn Ma'dīkarab Yamani. This King ruled at least seven hundred years before the advent of the Holy Prophet of Allah ﷺ. Among the Ḥimyarī Kings, he ruled the longest. During his rule, he went on a journey of conquest invading many regions and annexing them to his domain until he reached Samarqand, expanding his kingdom. According to Muḥammad Ibn Isḥāq's narration, during his conquests once he passed by the area of Madīnah and intended to attack it. The inhabitants of Madīnah adopted the attitude that during the day they used to resist his attacks and during the night they entertained him. He felt embarrassed and abandoned the intention of fighting. During this period, two Jewish Rabbis warned him that that was the place of migration of the Final Prophet of Allah, and that he would never be able to prevail over that city. He was thus persuaded and left Madīnah and went away with the two Rabbis to Yemen. The Rabbis invited him to embrace the Mosaic religion, and he did accept it. As a result, his people were also influenced by him and they too embraced the Mosaic religion. However, after his death they went astray and reverted to idolatry and fire-worship. This brought down on them the Divine wrath, the details of which are available in Sūrah Saba'. (Condensed from Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr: vol. 4 /p 144). This incident shows that the Tubba' mentioned here had himself embraced Islam, but his people later went astray. On both occasions the Qur'ān has made reference to the 'people of *Tubba'*, and not to Tubba' himself . This is supported by the narratives of Sayyidnā Sahl Ibn Sa'd and Ibn 'Abbās ؓ which are recorded by Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Imām Aḥmad, Ṭabarānī and others that the Messenger of Allah said: لاتسبّوا تبّعا فانّه قد كان اسلم "Do not revile *Tubba'*, because he had embraced Islam." (ibidem).

مَا خَلَقْنٰهُمَآ اِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَهُمْ لَايَعْلَمُوْنَ "We did not create them but with true purpose, yet most of them do not know. (44:39)" In other words, every wise and thinking person should realise that there is a purpose and objective for creating this universe. The heavens and the earth and everything created in them manifest many realities. Examples are: (1) the manifestation of Divine power; (2) the possibility of the Hereafter. Obviously, the Supreme Creator Who drew out such huge bodies from the

realm of non-existence into the realm of existence surely has the power to destroy them and re-create them; (3) the need for retribution (reward/punishment). If there is no retribution in the Hereafter, the very existence of the universe would be rendered purposeless or its purpose would be defeated. The wisdom underlying the creation of the universe is to make it *dar-ul-imtiḥān* (the domain of test-n-trial) and the Hereafter is the domain of reward and punishment. Otherwise, the outcome of both good and bad will necessarily be the same. This is far from Divine wisdom, or not in keeping with Divine wisdom; and (4) urging the thinking people to obey Allah and thank Him for having granted man this entire universe or creation as His great blessing

Verses 43 - 59

إِنَّ شَجَرَتَ الزَّقُّومِ ﴿٤٣﴾ طَعَامُ الْأَثِيمِ ﴿٤٤﴾ كَالْمُهْلِ يَغْلِي فِي الْبُطُونِ ﴿٤٥﴾ كَغَلْيِ الْحَمِيمِ ﴿٤٦﴾ خُذُوهُ فَاعْتِلُوهُ إِلَىٰ سَوَاءِ الْجَحِيمِ ﴿٤٧﴾ ثُمَّ صُبُّوا فَوْقَ رَأْسِهِ مِنْ عَذَابِ الْحَمِيمِ ﴿٤٨﴾ ذُقْ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْكَرِيمُ ﴿٤٩﴾ إِنَّ هَٰذَا مَا كُنْتُمْ بِهِ تَمْتَرُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾ إِنَّ الْمُتَّقِينَ فِي مَقَامٍ أَمِينٍ ﴿٥١﴾ فِي جَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ ﴿٥٢﴾ يَلْبَسُونَ مِنْ سُنْدُسٍ وَإِسْتَبْرَقٍ مُتَقَابِلِينَ ﴿٥٣﴾ كَذَٰلِكَ وَزَوَّجْنَاهُمْ بِحُورٍ عِينٍ ﴿٥٤﴾ يَدْعُونَ فِيهَا بِكُلِّ فَاكِهَةٍ آمِنِينَ ﴿٥٥﴾ لَا يَذُوقُونَ فِيهَا الْمَوْتَ إِلَّا الْمَوْتَةَ الْأُولَىٰ وَوَقَاهُمْ عَذَابَ الْجَحِيمِ ﴿٥٦﴾ فَضْلًا مِنْ رَبِّكَ ذَٰلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ ﴿٥٧﴾ فَإِنَّمَا يَسَّرْنَاهُ بِلِسَانِكَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٥٨﴾ فَارْتَقِبْ إِنَّهُمْ مُرْتَقِبُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾

Indeed the tree of *zaqqūm* [43] **is the food of the sinful,** [44] **like dregs of oil. It will boil in the bellies** [45] **like the boiling of hot water.** [46] **(It will be said,) "Seize him, and drag him into the midst of the Hell.** [47] **Then pour on his head some torment of boiling water."** [48] **"Have a taste! You are the 'one of might', the 'one of honour'.** [49] **This is the thing about which you used to be sceptic."**

[50] **Indeed the God-fearing will be in a place free from fear,** [51] **in gardens and fountains.** [52] **They will be dressed in fine silk and thick silk, facing each other.** [53] **Thus (it will happen,) and We will marry them with houris having big dark eyes.** [54] **They will call therein for every fruit peacefully.** [55] **They will not taste death therein, except for the first death (they faced in the world). And He will save them from the torment of the Hell,** [56] **as a favour from your Lord. That is the great achievement.** [57] **So, We had made it (the Qur'an) easy in your tongue, so that they may take lesson.** [58] **Now wait. They too are waiting.** [59]

Commentary

Punishment and Reward of the Hereafter

In these verses, according to the style of the Qur'ān, Allah describes Hell and the way the unbelievers will be punished, and Paradise and the way the believers will be rewarded.

Punishment of the Dwellers of Hell

إِنَّ شَجَرَتَ الزَّقُّومِ "Indeed the tree of *zaqqūm*... (44:43)". Some necessary information regarding the reality of *zaqqūm* has been given in Sūrah Aṣ-Ṣāffāt. Please see under (37:64-65). Here the Qur'ān apparently indicates that the infidels will be given *zaqqūm* to eat even before they enter Hell, because in this verse the Qur'ān says that after having fed them with *zaqqūm* they will be seized by the keepers of Hell and dragged into the middle of the blazing fire of Hell. According to some commentators, this is the meaning of (56:56) Sūrah Al-Wāqi'ah هٰذَا نُزُلُهُمْ يَوْمَ الدِّيْنِ (This will be their entertainment on the Day of Requital". They argue that the word *nuzul* (entertainment) originally refers to the starter food and provision served to guests to make them feel welcome before the main course of entertainment is served. The main course of food and provision served later on is called *ḍiyāfah* or *ma'dubah*. The wordings of the Qur'ān do carry the possibility that the feeding of *zaqqūm* could be after the entry into Hell. In this case the word *nuzul* would refer, by extension, to the main course of meals and provisions served. The verse under comment which speaks about 'dragging the dweller of Hell towards the middle of the blazing fire' means, he would already be in Hell but after feeding him *zaqqūm* he will be dragged towards the middle of the fire to expose him to a greater degree of disgrace and torture. Allah knows

best! (Condensed from Bayān-ul-Qur'ān).

Reward of the Inmates of Paradise

اِنَّ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ فِىْ مَقَامٍ اَمِيْنٍ (Indeed the God-fearing will be in a place free from fear, - 44:51). The current set of verses describes the eternal blessings of Paradise. Almost all sorts of blessings have been referred to in these verses, because the following are generally the human needs:

(1) fine dwelling;

(2) fine clothing;

(3) the best life-partner;

(4) the best food;

(5) the satisfaction that these blessings will remain available; and

(6) assurance of total security from grief and affliction. In these verses all the six kinds of blessings for the inmates of Paradise have been mentioned.

Let us carefully analyze the six verses in this set. The dwelling of the inmates is described as *'āmin* "free from fear". The best human dwelling, according to verse (51), is the one that is secure from all kinds of dangers.

سُنْدُسٍ وَّ اِسْتَبْرَقٍ (... fine silk and thick silk.... - 44:53) Both the words refer to 'silk'. The word sundus refers to "fine silk" and the word *istabraq* refers to "thick silk".

وَزَوَّجْنٰهُمْ بِحُوْرٍ عِيْنٍ (We will marry them with houris having big dark eyes) - 44:54). The word *tazwīj* originally means 'to make one person partner of another'. Later on it came to be utilised abundantly in the sense of 'marrying'. According to the second sense, the men of Paradise will be married technically to houris having big dark eyes. This is the apparent sense of verse (54). Although the inmates of Paradise will not be legally obligated to observe the precepts of Sharī'ah, the purpose of marriage will be to honour them. Therefore, this should not raise any objection. If the word is taken in the first sense, houris having big dark eyes will be given as life partners to the men of Paradise. The houris in this case will be granted to them as a gift. There will be no need for a contract of marriage as is done in this world.

لَايَذُوقُونَ فِيهَا الْمَوْتَ إِلَّا الْمَوْتَةَ الْأُولٰى (They will not taste death therein, except for the first death (they faced in the world) - 44:56). In other words, they shall suffer no death other than the first death which they had encountered at the end of their lives in this world. The dwellers of Hell as well will suffer only one death at the end of their lives in this world. The latter, however, will suffer a greater degree of torture when they will know that they will remain alive in this miserable state of punishment, whereas for the former the thought that Allah has saved them from the torment of the Hell, that the gardens of Paradise are eternal, that they will enjoy the delights of paradise for ever and its blessings will never cease or be taken away from them, will enhance the degree of their happiness, never to diminish .

Alḥamdulillah
the commentary on
Sūrah Ad-Dukān
ends here.

Sūrah Aljāthiyah

(Kneeling)

Sūrah Aljāthiyah is Makkī, and it has 37 verses and 4 sections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 11

حٰمٓ ﴿١﴾ تَنْزِيْلُ الْكِتٰبِ مِنَ اللّٰهِ الْعَزِيْزِ الْحَكِيْمِ ﴿٢﴾ اِنَّ فِى
السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿٣﴾ وَفِىْ خَلْقِكُمْ وَمَا يَبُثُّ
مِنْ دَآبَّةٍ اٰيٰتٌ لِّقَوْمٍ يُّوْقِنُوْنَ ﴿٤﴾ۙ وَاخْتِلَافِ الَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَمَآ اَنْزَلَ
اللّٰهُ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مِنْ رِّزْقٍ فَاَحْيَا بِهِ الْاَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا وَتَصْرِيْفِ
الرِّيٰحِ اٰيٰتٌ لِّقَوْمٍ يَّعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿٥﴾ تِلْكَ اٰيٰتُ اللّٰهِ نَتْلُوْهَا عَلَيْكَ بِالْحَقِّ ۚ
فَبِاَيِّ حَدِيْثٍۢ بَعْدَ اللّٰهِ وَاٰيٰتِهٖ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٦﴾ وَيْلٌ لِّكُلِّ اَفَّاكٍ اَثِيْمٍ ﴿٧﴾ۙ
يَّسْمَعُ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ تُتْلٰى عَلَيْهِ ثُمَّ يُصِرُّ مُسْتَكْبِرًا كَاَنْ لَّمْ يَسْمَعْهَا ۚ
فَبَشِّرْهُ بِعَذَابٍ اَلِيْمٍ ﴿٨﴾ وَاِذَا عَلِمَ مِنْ اٰيٰتِنَا شَيْئَا ۨ اتَّخَذَهَا هُزُوًا ۗ
اُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّهِيْنٌ ﴿٩﴾ۗ مِنْ وَّرَآئِهِمْ جَهَنَّمُ ۚ وَلَا يُغْنِىْ عَنْهُمْ
مَّا كَسَبُوْا شَيْئًا وَّلَا مَا اتَّخَذُوْا مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ اَوْلِيَآءَ ۚ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ
عَظِيْمٌ ﴿١٠﴾ۗ هٰذَا هُدًى ۚ وَالَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا بِاٰيٰتِ رَبِّهِمْ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مِّنْ

رِّجْزٍ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿١١﴾

Hā Mīm. [1] This is revelation of the Book from Allah, the All-Mighty, the All-Wise. [2] Surely in the heavens and the earth, there are signs for those who have faith. [3] And in your creation and in the living beings that He scatters on the earth, there are signs for a people who believe. [4] And in the alternation of the day and the night, and in the provision He has sent down from the sky, then has revived the earth after its death, and in changing of the winds, there are signs for a people who understand. [5] These are Allah's verses that We recite to you rightly. Then, in which discourse, after Allah and His verses, will they believe? [6] Woe to every sinful liar, [7] who hears Allah's verses being recited to him, then he remains adamant out of arrogance, as if he never heard them. So give him the 'good news' of a painful punishment. [8] And when he learns about something of Our verses, he takes it as a laughing stock. For such people, there is a humiliating punishment. [9] In front of them, there is Jahannam. And whatever they have earned will not be of any use to them, nor the patrons they have adopted instead of Allah. And for them, there is a great punishment. [10] This is a guidance. And those who reject the verses of their Lord, for them there is a painful punishment of the divine wrath. [11]

Commentary

This entire Sūrah was revealed at Makkah except for one verse. According to one view, the following verse was revealed at Madīnah: قُل لِّلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا يَغْفِرُوْا لِلَّذِيْنَ لَايَرْجُوْنَ اَيَّامَ اللّٰهِ ("Tell those who believe that they should forgive those who do not believe in Allah's days ... 45:14)". According to this opinion, the rest of the Sūrah was revealed at Makkah. The overwhelming view, however, is that the entire Sūrah was revealed before hijrah or migration. Like other Makkī Sūrahs, its basic subject-matter is the basic beliefs of Islam, such as Oneness of Allah, messenger-ship of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the Hereafter.

Arguments and evidence have been adduced in favour of all fundamental articles of Islamic Faith. Evidence, especially in favour of the Hereafter, has been advanced. Criticisms of atheists, and the fallacious arguments of the sceptics have been refuted elaborately.

إِنَّ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ("Surely in the heavens and the earth, there are signs for those who have faith.. ..45:3)" The purpose of this verse, and similar other verses, is to affirm the Oneness of Allah. Similar verses are available in [2:164] إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ("Surely, in the creation of heavens and earth...") where their detailed commentary will be found. How the two verses prove the Oneness of Allah is also explained on that occasion. In the two places, there is a slight difference in the argumentation: Scholars interested might find the finer points of the difference discussed by Imām Rāzi in his Tafsīr Kabīr rather interesting. It is worth noting that in all these verses reference is made to the various signs in nature and a concluding statement is made on each occasion: Here it concludes: 'there are signs for those who have faith', in another place it concludes: 'there are signs for those who believe' and in a third place it concludes: 'there are signs for those who understand'. In all these cases, there are stylistic variations, but in addition the current verse points to the fact that only those people will be able to benefit who have faith. In the second case, it will be beneficial to those people who might not immediately embrace the Faith, but they do develop certainty in their hearts, in that these signs do point to the Oneness of Allah. Possibly this certainty one day or the other will turn into 'Faith'. In the third case, it could benefit those who may not be immediate believers or firm in belief, but they do have sound heart to understand. If they search into the signs with deep insight, they will inevitably end up with faith and firm belief. However, people devoid of sound intellect or unwilling to use it will remain unconvinced, even if thousands of evidence or arguments are put forward to them.

وَيْلٌ لِّكُلِّ أَفَّاكٍ أَثِيْمٍ ("Woe to every sinful liar... 45:7)" There are several views related to the background of revelation of this verse. Some Traditions relate that the verse was revealed in connection with Naḍr Ibn Ḥārith. Others report that it was revealed in connection with Ḥārith Ibn Kaldah, and yet others feel it is about Abū Jahl and his comrades. (Qurṭubī). There is no need to refer to a particular person in order to determine the meaning of a Qur'ānic verse. The word kull [every] refers to every person who bears the characteristics of the three persons who might have been in the background of the revelation of the verse.

مِنْ وَّرَآئِهِمْ جَهَنَّمُ "In front of them, there is Jahannam...45:10" The word

وَرَاء *warā'* in Arabic is mostly used in the sense of "behind" and occasionally used in the sense of "front". Most commentators have taken the word in this context to mean 'front' and we have translated it accordingly. However, some of the commentators have taken it in this context to mean 'back/behind' and interpreted it to mean that those who are living in haughtiness and arrogance, the fire of Hell is trailing behind/after them. (Qurṭubī).

Verse 12-15

اَللّٰهُ الَّذِیْ سَخَّرَلَكُمُ الْبَحْرَ لِتَجْرِیَ الْفُلْكُ فِیْهِ بِاَمْرِهٖ وَلِتَبْتَغُوْا مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُوْنَ ﴿۱۲﴾ وَسَخَّرَلَكُمْ مَّا فِی السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِی الْاَرْضِ جَمِیْعًا مِّنْهُ ؕ اِنَّ فِیْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰیٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ یَّتَفَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿۱۳﴾ قُلْ لِّلَّذِیْنَ اٰمَنُوْا یَغْفِرُوْا لِلَّذِیْنَ لَایَرْجُوْنَ اَیَّامَ اللّٰهِ لِیَجْزِیَ قَوْمًا ۢ بِمَا كَانُوْا یَكْسِبُوْنَ ﴿۱۴﴾ مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلِنَفْسِهٖ ۚ وَمَنْ اَسَآءَ فَعَلَیْهَا ۫ ثُمَّ اِلٰی رَبِّكُمْ تُرْجَعُوْنَ ﴿۱۵﴾

Allah is the One who has subjugated for you the sea, so that the ships may sail in it with His command, and so that you may seek His grace, and so that you offer gratitude. [12] **And He has subjugated for you whatever there is in the heavens and whatever there is in the earth, all from His own. Surely in this, there are signs for a people who reflect.** [13] **Tell those who believe that they should forgive those who do not believe in Allah's days, so that He may recompense a people for what they used to earn.** [14] **Whoever acts righteously, it is for his own benefit, and who does evil, it is against it. Then towards your Lord, you will be returned.** [15]

Commentary

اَللّٰهُ الَّذِیْ سَخَّرَلَكُمُ الْبَحْرَ (الی) وَلِتَبْتَغُوْا مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ ("Allah is the One who has subjugated for you the sea, so that you may seek His grace, ... 45:12)". Generally, when Qur'ān uses the expression 'to seek His grace' it refers to exerting oneself in seeking one's livelihood. Another meaning of the phrase could be that man has been given the skill to move the boats or pilot the ships on the surface of the waters so that he may carry out his

commercial activities across the globe. It is possible that 'seeking grace' does not have anything to do with the sailing of the boats or the ships. Therefore, a third meaning is possible. 'Subjugating the sea' has a special meaning, that is, Allah has created many useful things in the sea and subjugated the sea for the benefit of mankind so that they may exploit the minerals and other wealth. Contemporary science confirms that the oceans and seas have much more minerals and much more wealth hidden in them than in the dry land.

قُلْ لِّلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا يَغْفِرُوْا لِلَّذِيْنَ لَايَرْجُوْنَ اَيَّامَ اللّٰهِ ("Tell those who believe that they should forgive those who do not believe in Allah's days ...14)". There are two narrations recorded relating to its cause of revelation. According to one narration, a pagan in Makkah reviled Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ and the latter intended to retaliate, but this verse came down and asked the believers to forgive the unbelievers and endure their harm that they direct against them. According to this incident the verse is Makkī. Another narration reports that on the occasion of the battle of Banī-l-Muṣṭaliq, the Prophet of Allah and his Companions pitched their tent at a well called Muraisī'. 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Ubayy, the leader of the hypocrites, was with the Muslims. He sent his servant to fetch water from the well. He was delayed in returning. 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Ubayy asked him to give reason why he was late. He replied that one of Sayyidnā 'Umar's ﷺ servants was sitting on the bank of the well. He did not permit anyone to draw water unless the water-skins of the Prophet of Allah ﷺ and Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ﷺ were filled. 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Ubayy cynically quoted the following proverb: سمّن كلبك ياكلك "Fatten your dog and it will eat you up." Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ heard about it, he armed himself with his sword and went towards 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Ubayy. This verse was revealed on that occasion. According to this incident, the verse is Madanī. (Qurṭubī and Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī). If both the chains of transmitters can be authenticated, the two incidents can be synchronized thus: In the first instance, the verse was originally revealed in Makkah. Then a similar incident took place on the occasion of the battle of Banī-l-Muṣṭaliq. The Messenger of Allah recited the verse and applied it to the second incident. This often happened in cases of the causes of Qur'ānic revelation. Another likelihood is that when the incident of the battle of Banī-l-Muṣṭaliq took place, Sayyidnā Jibra'īl ﷺ might have come down with the verse the second time and reminded that this is

an occasion to act upon it. In the technical parlance of Tafsīr, it is called نزول مکرر or 'repeated revelation'. The verse contains the expression اَیَّامَ اللّٰهِ (Allah's days) which, according to most commentators, refers to 'reward and punishment' which Allah will requite on the Day of Requital. The word *ayyām* (days) in the Arabic language is abundantly used in the sense of 'turn of events'.

Another point worth noting is that when the Qur'ān commanded 'Say, [O Muḥammad], to the believers that they should forgive the disbelievers, it did not say, "forgive the idolators"; instead it has said, "...forgive those who do not believe in Allah's days ...[14]". This probably purports to say that the real chastisement awaits them in the Hereafter, but because the unbelievers do not believe in the Hereafter, the punishment will be unexpected for them. An unexpected torture is most excruciating, and therefore the torment will be most harrowing and agonizing. Thus they will be recompensed and repaid fully for all their evil deeds. The Muslims are not to bother about taking them to task for every little thing.

Some of the scholars maintain that the rule of forgiving the infidels applied only before the revelation of the verse of jihad. When *jihād* was ordained, the rule of forgiveness, in terms of the current verse, was abrogated. However, most research scholars express the view that this verse has nothing to do with the verse of *jihād*. The current verse sets down the general social law that the Muslims should not wreak vengeance for every little thing. This law is universally applicable in every age and situation - the social law is needed even at the present time, and therefore it is not accurate to treat it as abrogated - especially if we were to take into account the circumstances under which it was revealed: the battle of Banī-l-Muṣṭaliq. If this battle is the cause of revelation of this verse, then verses of *jihād* cannot be the abrogators, because they were revealed before this event.

Verses 16 - 20

وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ الْكِتٰبَ وَالْحُكْمَ وَالنُّبُوَّةَ وَرَزَقْنٰهُمْ مِّنَ الطَّيِّبٰتِ وَفَضَّلْنٰهُمْ عَلَى الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿١٦﴾ وَاٰتَيْنٰهُمْ بَيِّنٰتٍ مِّنَ الْاَمْرِ ج

فَمَا اخْتَلَفُوْٓا اِلَّا مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا جَآءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ ۙ بَغْيًاۢ بَيْنَهُمْ ۭ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَقْضِىْ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ فِيْمَا كَانُوْا فِيْهِ يَخْتَلِفُوْنَ ﴿١٧﴾ ثُمَّ جَعَلْنٰكَ عَلٰى شَرِيْعَةٍ مِّنَ الْاَمْرِ فَاتَّبِعْهَا وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ اَهْوَآءَ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿١٨﴾ اِنَّهُمْ لَنْ يُّغْنُوْا عَنْكَ مِنَ اللّٰهِ شَيْـًٔا ۭ وَ اِنَّ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ بَعْضُهُمْ اَوْلِيَآءُ بَعْضٍ ۚ وَاللّٰهُ وَلِيُّ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿١٩﴾ هٰذَا بَصَآئِرُ لِلنَّاسِ وَهُدًى وَّرَحْمَةٌ لِّقَوْمٍ يُّوْقِنُوْنَ ﴿٢٠﴾

And We gave the children of Isrā'īl the book and the wisdom and the prophethood, and provided them with good things, and preferred them above the worlds. [16] And We gave them clear proofs of the Matter (i.e. the religion). So they did not fall into disagreement out of mutual jealousy, but after the knowledge had come to them. Surely your Lord will judge between them, on the Day of Judgment, in the matters in which they used to differ. [17] Then We have put you on a certain way of the Matter (i.e. the religion); so follow it, and do not follow the desires of those who do not know. [18] They will never avail you against Allah in the least. And the wrongdoers are friends to one another. And Allah is the friend of the God-fearing. [19] These are insights for the people, and guidance and mercy for a people who believe. [20]

Commentary

These verses purport to confirm the risalah of the Final Messenger of Allah. Under this subject-matter, the Prophet of Allah is consoled for the persecution carried out by the enemies against him.

اِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَقْضِىْ بَيْنَهُمْ ("...Surely your Lord will judge between them, on the Day of Judgement, in the matters in which they used to differ... 45:17)" This far the verses confirm two points: This verse purports to say, firstly, that the Book of Mūsā ﷺ contains many clear prophecies about the advent of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and, secondly to comfort the Holy Prophet ﷺ, that the Israelites rejected him not because there was any dearth of arguments, signs and Divine prophecies to support and establish his claim, but because of jealousy, love of the world and personal desires, that

is, they did not like the very idea that the Final Messenger should have appeared from among the non-Israelites . (Bayān-ul-Qur'ān).

The Status of Previous Shari'ahs for Muslims

ثُمَّ جَعَلْنٰکَ عَلٰی شَرِیْعَةٍ مِّنَ الْاَمْرِ "Then We have put you on a certain way of the Matter (i.e. the religion)... 45:18". Here it may be borne in mind that the religion of Islam has certain fundamental articles of faith, such as the Oneness of Allah, the Hereafter and so on; and there are ordinances, laws and injunctions related to practical life. As far as the fundamental articles of faith are concerned, they are immutable and were imparted to every Prophet and his Ummah since the inception of man. However, laws relating to practical life were different for different Prophets and their people. The sacred laws of previous Sharī'ahs kept changing according to the needs of time and exigencies of circumstances. In the verse under comment, the second type of practical laws has been described as "...a certain way of the Matter (i.e. the religion)...". The jurists, on the basis of this verse, have ruled that the Ummah of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ must, of necessity, follow the sacred laws of the Sharī'ah of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. As far as the sacred laws of the previous Sharī'ah are concerned, this Ummah is not legally bound to them unless the Qur'ān and Sunnah support or confirm them. Support or confirmation may take one of two forms, as follows: (1) the Qur'ān and Sunnah may explicitly say that a certain law of a certain Prophet must be followed by this Ummah; or (2) the Qur'ān and Sunnah may speak highly and favourably about a certain law of a previous Ummah without hinting that it is abrogated for this Ummah. This indicates that the law is applicable in the Sharī'ah of this Ummah also. In that case, the previous law becomes part of this Sharī'ah, and as such this Ummah is legally bound to follow it. This much is sufficient for us to understand the status of the previous Sharī'ahs. Details are available in the books of the Islamic jurisprudence.

Verses 21 - 22

اَمْ حَسِبَ الَّذِیْنَ اجْتَرَحُوا السَّیِّاٰتِ اَنْ نَّجْعَلَهُمْ كَالَّذِیْنَ اٰمَنُوْا
وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ ۙ سَوَآءً مَّحْیَاهُمْ وَمَمَاتُهُمْ ؕ سَآءَ مَا یَحْكُمُوْنَ
﴿۲۱﴾ وَخَلَقَ اللّٰهُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ وَلِتُجْزٰی كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ۢ

بِمَا كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾

Do those who have committed evils assume that We will make them like those who believe and do righteous deeds, so as their life and death becomes equal? Evil is what they judge. [21] **And Allah has created the heavens and the earth with just purpose, and so that everybody is recompensed for what he (or she) earned. And they will not be wronged.** [22]

Commentary

The Hereafter: Divine Requital is Rationally Necessary

Of the two verses mentioned, the first one argues rationally that Divine reward and punishment are necessary. Every person is a witness to the fact that no one receives his full measure of reward or punishment for the good or bad deeds he does in this world. Generally, the unbelievers and evil-doers wallow in wealth and lead a life of luxury. The obedient servants of Allah, on the other hand, live in poverty, hardship and misery. In the first place, the crimes of the wicked criminals are often not detected. Even if they are detected, more often than not, they are not apprehended. If they are apprehended, they swear oaths - lawfully or unlawfully, truthfully or falsely - and try to find loopholes to escape punishment. In this way, one in a million might be punished and that too not fully. As a result, the rebels, who follow their selfish and base desires, move about in high spirits and without any hindrance, enjoying full powers in this world. The believers, on the other hand, who follow the Shari'ah strictly, do not touch many kinds of wealth and give up many pleasures because they treat them as unlawful. They only adopt the lawful ways of gaining anything in order to avoid calamities and afflictions. Thus they are deprived of many a comfort and pleasure in this world. Since this is the state of affairs where people are not rewarded or punished in this world in commensurate with their actions, it follows necessarily that there must be another world - the Hereafter and life after death - where people will be recompensed fully for their deeds. Otherwise, it would be absurd to refer to stealing, robbery, adultery, fornication, murder and so on as crimes, in this world. These people often lead a very successful life in this world. A thief or a robber acquires so much of wealth in a night that a university graduate might not be able to acquire it in years of employment and hard work. If there is no such world as the

Hereafter and accountability, then the thief or the robber would be thought to be better than the respectable university graduate. No reasonable person would ever accept this position. If it be pointed out that every government in the world has legislated severe punishments for criminals, then we would respond that experience shows that only the foolish criminals get caught. The clever habitual criminals always find loopholes, and ways and means of escaping punishment. For instance, the escape-door of bribery is always open for them and that is sufficient for them.

In short, the need for the Day of Requital may be denied only when it is conceded that there is no such thing as good and bad; or that whatever one acquires, by fair means or foul, it is absolutely rewardable. But no one accepts this position. Similarly it is absurd to believe that there is distinction between good and evil, but the consequences are equal, rather the criminal should have a more comfortable life than the righteous and innocent ones. There could be no greater degree of wrong than this. It is to this absurd judgement that the Qur'ān refers in سَوَآءً مَّحْيَاهُمْ وَمَمَاتُهُمْ ("...so as their life and death becomes equal? Evil is what they judge... 45:21)". It is a very unreasonable and unjustifiable position that evil-doers should be placed on the same pedestal as the righteous persons. Since the reward and punishment in this world are not given in full measure, then it necessarily follows that there should be life after death in the Hereafter where reward and punishment will be paid in full measure. Thus the second verse in the set complements the same subject وَلِتُجْزٰى كُلُّ نَفْسٍۢ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُوْنَ (...and so that everybody is recompensed for what he (or she) earned. And they will not be wronged. - 45:22). In other words, the Day of Requital is necessary in order to wipe out wrong and injustice. As for the question, why the people are not requited or recompensed for the good or bad deeds in this world, we would respond that this is not in keeping with the Divine wisdom of creation: He made this world the 'domain of deeds and test-n-trial', not the 'domain of requital'. Allah knows best!

Verses 23-26

اَفَرَءَيْتَ مَنِ اتَّخَذَ اِلٰهَهٗ هَوٰىهُ وَاَضَلَّهُ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى عِلْمٍ وَّخَتَمَ عَلٰى

سَمْعِهٖ وَقَلْبِهٖ وَجَعَلَ عَلٰى بَصَرِهٖ غِشٰوَةً ؕ فَمَنْ يَّهْدِيْهِ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ اللّٰهِ ؕ اَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿٢٣﴾ وَقَالُوْا مَا هِيَ اِلَّا حَيَاتُنَا الدُّنْيَا نَمُوْتُ وَنَحْيَا وَمَا يُهْلِكُنَآ اِلَّا الدَّهْرُ ۚ وَمَا لَهُمْ بِذٰلِكَ مِنْ عِلْمٍ ۚ اِنْ هُمْ اِلَّا يَظُنُّوْنَ ﴿٢٤﴾ وَاِذَا تُتْلٰى عَلَيْهِمْ اٰيٰتُنَا بَيِّنٰتٍ مَّا كَانَ حُجَّتَهُمْ اِلَّآ اَنْ قَالُوا ائْتُوْا بِاٰبَآئِنَآ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿٢٥﴾ قُلِ اللّٰهُ يُحْيِيْكُمْ ثُمَّ يُمِيْتُكُمْ ثُمَّ يَجْمَعُكُمْ اِلٰى يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ لَارَيْبَ فِيْهِ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَايَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٢٦﴾ ع

So, have you seen him who has taken his desires as his god, and Allah has let him go astray, despite having knowledge, and has sealed his ear and his heart, and put a cover on his eye? Now who will guide him after Allah? Still, do you not take lesson? [23] **And they say, "There is no life but our worldly life. We die and live, and nothing destroys us except time." And they have no knowledge about that; they do nothing but make conjectures.** [24] **And when Our verses are recited to them in all their clarity, their argument is none but that they say, "Bring our fathers, if you are truthful."** [25] **Say, "Allah gives you life, then makes you die, then He will assemble you on the Day of Judgement in which there is no doubt, but most of the people do not know.** [26]

Commentary

مَنِ اتَّخَذَ اِلٰهَهٗ هَوٰىهُ ("Have you seen him who has taken his desires as his god...45:23) In other words, he who has made his selfish desires his object of worship. Obviously, no unbeliever claims that his desires are his object of worship. Keeping this in view, this verse of the Qur'ān indicates that 'worship' actually means 'obedience'. Thus anyone who undertakes to obey someone against the obedience of Allah makes him the object of his worship instead of Allah. There are people who ignore what Allah has declared lawful and unlawful or what He has permitted and what has forbidden. People who do not care what Allah has forbidden and follow their whims and fancies, their desires are their god, in this sense, although they may not have uttered it by word of mouth. The same

theme has been versified by an 'Ārif:

سودہ گشت از سجدۂ راہِ بُتاں پیشانیم   چند برخود تہمت دینِ مسلمانی نہم

"My forehead has swollen by prostrating before the statues of beauty, although I claim to profess the religion of Islam."

In this couplet, the poet has portrayed selfish desires as statues. He who takes his desires as his leader and follows them is as good as their worshipper, that is why they have been described as their deities. Sayyidnā Abū 'Umāmah ﷺ narrates that the Messenger of Allah said: "Of all the deities worshipped under the firmament of the earth, the most detestable one in the sight of Allah is *hawa*, that is, selfish desires. Sayyidnā Shaddād Ibn 'Aws ﷺ narrates that the Messenger of Allah said: "A wise person is he who keeps his desires under control and works for life after death; and sinful is he who runs after his desires and yet expects the best in the Hereafter." Sayyidnā Sahl Ibn 'Abdullāh Tustarī ﷺ said: "Your ailment is your selfish desires. And if you oppose them, it will turn into your cure." (All these narratives have been adapted from Qurṭubī).

وَمَايُهۡلِكُنَآ اِلَّا الدَّهۡرُ "...and nothing destroys us except time...(45:24)" The word *dahr* means 'time from the beginning of the world to its end'. It also refers to 'a very long period of time'. The atheists alleged that their life and death have nothing to do with Divine will and command. They happen under natural causes. Death is a process which they say they experience when their human limbs, organs and abilities diminish on account of constant use and, with the passage of time, the matter becomes dissolved and is destroyed; and that this is the be-all and end-all of human existence, there being no life hereafter. Likewise, life has nothing to do with Divine will and command. Life too, like death, happens under movement of material causes .

Reviling Time Is Inappropriate

Atheists believed that 'Time' is the cause of life, death, vicissitudes of conditions and adversities, and also the cause of the revolution of the entire universe. Every happening used to be attributed to 'Time' by them as indicated in this verse, whereas the fact is that everything happens with the Divine will and volition. Therefore, authentic Traditions prohibit reviling of time. The power which the unbelievers describe as 'time' is in fact the Divine power. When people curse or revile time for their

adversities, they are in fact directing their reproach to Allah. The Messenger of Allah said: "Do not revile time because time actually is Allah." The ignorant who claim that a particular work was done by time is actually the work of Divine power - time is nothing. It does not necessarily follow from this proposition that *ad-dahr* is one of the names of Allah. Here Allah is referred to as ad-dahr metaphorically or figuratively.

Verses 27 - 37

وَلِلّٰهِ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ وَيَوْمَ تَقُوْمُ السَّاعَةُ يَوْمَئِذٍ يَّخْسَرُ
الْمُبْطِلُوْنَ ﴿٢٧﴾ وَتَرٰى كُلَّ اُمَّةٍ جَاثِيَةً ۫ كُلُّ اُمَّةٍ تُدْعٰۤى اِلٰى كِتٰبِهَا ؕ
اَلْيَوْمَ تُجْزَوْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٢٨﴾ هٰذَا كِتٰبُنَا يَنْطِقُ عَلَيْكُمْ
بِالْحَقِّ ؕ اِنَّا كُنَّا نَسْتَنْسِخُ مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٢٩﴾ فَاَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا
وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ فَيُدْخِلُهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ فِيْ رَحْمَتِهٖ ؕ ذٰلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ
الْمُبِيْنُ ﴿٣٠﴾ وَ اَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا ۫ اَفَلَمْ تَكُنْ اٰيٰتِيْ تُتْلٰى عَلَيْكُمْ
فَاسْتَكْبَرْتُمْ وَكُنْتُمْ قَوْمًا مُّجْرِمِيْنَ ﴿٣١﴾ وَاِذَا قِيْلَ اِنَّ وَعْدَ اللّٰهِ حَقٌّ
وَّالسَّاعَةُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيْهَا قُلْتُمْ مَّا نَدْرِيْ مَا السَّاعَةُ ۙ اِنْ نَّظُنُّ اِلَّا ظَنًّا وَّمَا
نَحْنُ بِمُسْتَيْقِنِيْنَ ﴿٣٢﴾ وَبَدَا لَهُمْ سَيِّاٰتُ مَا عَمِلُوْا وَحَاقَ بِهِمْ
مَّا كَانُوْا بِهٖ يَسْتَهْزِءُوْنَ ﴿٣٣﴾ وَقِيْلَ الْيَوْمَ نَنْسٰىكُمْ كَمَا نَسِيْتُمْ لِقَآءَ
يَوْمِكُمْ هٰذَا وَمَاْوٰىكُمُ النَّارُ وَمَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ نّٰصِرِيْنَ ﴿٣٤﴾ ذٰلِكُمْ
بِاَنَّكُمُ اتَّخَذْتُمْ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ هُزُوًا وَّغَرَّتْكُمُ الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَا ۚ فَالْيَوْمَ
لَا يُخْرَجُوْنَ مِنْهَا وَلَا هُمْ يُسْتَعْتَبُوْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾ فَلِلّٰهِ الْحَمْدُ رَبِّ
السَّمٰوٰتِ وَرَبِّ الْاَرْضِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٣٦﴾ وَلَهُ الْكِبْرِيَآءُ فِي
السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۪ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ ﴿٣٧﴾

And to Allah belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth. And the day the Hour will take place, the adherents of falsehood shall lose. [27] **And you will see**

every community kneeling down. Every community will be called to its Book (of record). Today you will be recompensed for what you used to do. [28] This is Our book that speaks against you with truth. We used to get recorded all that you used to do. [29] Then, as for those who believed and did righteous deeds, their Lord will admit them to His mercy. That is indeed the achievement, visible to all. [30] And as to those who disbelieved, (it will be said to them,) " Had My verses not been recited to you? But you showed arrogance, and you were a guilty people. [31] And when it was said to you that Allah's promise is true and there is no doubt in the (arrival of the) Hour, you used to say, 'We do not know what the Hour is. We do not think (about it) but as an assumption, and we are not sure.'" [32] And revealed to them will be the evils of what they did, and encircled they will be by what they used to ridicule. [33] And it will be said, "Today We will forget you like you forgot facing this your day, and your abode is the Fire, and for you there are no helpers at all. [34] That is because you took Allah's verses as a laughing stock, and the worldly life deceived you." So today they will neither be brought out of it, nor will they be asked to repent. [35] So, to Allah belongs all praise, who is the Lord of the heavens and the earth, the Lord of the worlds. [36] And to Him belongs majesty in the heavens and the earth. And He is the Mighty, the Wise. [37]

Commentary

وَتَرَىٰ كُلَّ أُمَّةٍ جَاثِيَةً ("And you will see every community kneeling down... 45:28"). The word *jāthiyah* is derived from جُثُوّ *juthuww*. It means 'to sit with knees upon the ground'. Sayyidnā Sufyān ﷺ says that the word means 'to sit in such a way that only the knees and the toes of the feet rest on the ground'. The latter type of sitting will be on account of awe, horror and fear. The words, كُلَّ أُمَّة "every community" means that horrors of Resurrection will be felt by all on the plain - believers, non-believers, and righteous and unrighteous, all of them. There are other verses and traditions that exclude the Prophets and the righteous from experiencing the horrors of the Plains of Resurrection. The present verse is not in conflict with them. It is possible that the Prophets and the righteous will experience the horrors of the Plains of Resurrection for a short period of time - the period of time will be so short as if it never existed. It is also possible that the word *kull* is not used in the sense of "every" but in the

sense of 'most' - as is used occasionally. From this point of view, the phrase would mean not all the people on the Plain of Resurrection but 'most people' will experience horror, thus the prophets and the righteous are excluded. Some of the scholars take the position that the word *jathiyah* means 'to sit like the sitting posture in salah'. If this be taken for granted, the difficulty automatically disappears because such a sitting is not out of fear or horror. It is out of respect and honour.

كُلُّ اُمَّةٍ تُدعىٰٓ اِلىٰ كِتٰبِهَا "...Every community will be called to its book (of record)...45:28". The word *kitāb*, according to most commentators, refers to 'book of record' which the angels have been writing in the world. The record-books will be thrown on the Plains of Resurrection and each one will receive his respective record-book and it will be said to him: اِقرَاْ كِتَابَكَ كَفٰى بِنَفسِكَ اليَومَ عَلَيكَ حَسِيبًا "Read your book. This day you yourself are enough to take your own account. (17:14)" The phrase 'Calling towards the record-books' purports to say that they will have to render an account of their deeds before Allah in the next life.

Alhamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Aljāthiyah
Ends here

Sūrah Al-Aḥqāf

The Sand-dunes

Sūrah Al-Aḥkāf is Makkī. It has 35 Verses and 4 Sections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 6

حٰمٓ ﴿۱﴾ تَنْزِيْلُ الْكِتٰبِ مِنَ اللّٰهِ الْعَزِيْزِ الْحَكِيْمِ ﴿۲﴾ مَا خَلَقْنَا
السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَآ اِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَاَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ؕ وَالَّذِيْنَ
كَفَرُوْا عَمَّآ اُنْذِرُوْا مُعْرِضُوْنَ ﴿۳﴾ قُلْ اَرَءَيْتُمْ مَّا تَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ
اللّٰهِ اَرُوْنِيْ مَاذَا خَلَقُوْا مِنَ الْاَرْضِ اَمْ لَهُمْ شِرْكٌ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ ؕ
اِيْتُوْنِيْ بِكِتٰبٍ مِّنْ قَبْلِ هٰذَآ اَوْ اَثٰرَةٍ مِّنْ عِلْمٍ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿۴﴾
وَمَنْ اَضَلُّ مِمَّنْ يَّدْعُوْا مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ مَنْ لَّا يَسْتَجِيْبُ لَهٗٓ اِلٰى يَوْمِ
الْقِيٰمَةِ وَهُمْ عَنْ دُعَآئِهِمْ غٰفِلُوْنَ ﴿۵﴾ وَاِذَا حُشِرَ النَّاسُ كَانُوْا لَهُمْ
اَعْدَآءً وَّكَانُوْا بِعِبَادَتِهِمْ كٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿۶﴾

Ḥā Mīm. [1] This is the revelation of the book from Allah, the Mighty, the Wise. [2] We did not create the heavens and the earth but with true purpose and for a specified term. And those who disbelieve are averse to what they are warned of. [3] Say, "Tell me about those whom you invoke instead of Allah, (and) show me what they have created of the earth; Or have they a share in (the creation of) the heavens? Bring to me a book

(revealed) before this one, or a trace of knowledge, if you are truthful. [4] **And who is more astray than him who invokes, instead of Allah, such a one as will not respond to him until the Day of Judgement; and they are totally unaware of their prayers,** [5] **and when people will be assembled (on the Day of Judgment), they will be enemies to them, and will refuse even their having worshipped them.** [6]

Commentary

قُلْ اَرَءَ يْتُمْ مَّا تَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ (Say, "Tell me about those whom you invoke instead of Allah,...46:4) In these verses, the claim of the polytheists about the existence of some other gods has been refuted by demanding a proof to substantiate this claim, because no claim can be accepted, neither rationally nor according to the religious principles, unless it is proved by concrete evidences to support it. Then dealing with all possible types of arguments, it has been proved that they do not have any evidence or proof in their favor, and that their insisting on such a baseless claim is nothing but deviation from the truth. The arguments have been classified by these verses in three types. One is a rational argument. Verse 4 negates any argument of this type in their favor by saying, اَرُوْنِىْ مَاذَا خَلَقُوْا مِنَ الْاَرْضِ اَمْ لَهُمْ شِرْكٌ فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ "Show me what they have created of the earth; Or have they a share in (the creation of) the heavens?" (46:4)

The second type of argument is that which refers to and relies on the statement of an authority. It is obvious that, in any matter concerning Allah, no one can be an authority except Allah Himself, and His statements can be proved either by the divine books, like Torah, Injīl or Qur'ān, or by the sayings of the prophets sent by Him. Negation of the first type of authority in their case is established by saying, اِيْتُوْنِىْ بِكِتٰبٍ مِّنْ قَبْلِ هٰذَا "Bring to me a book (revealed) before this one, (46:4)" meaning that if you have any proof of this type, then bring the book revealed before the Qur'ān which allows idol-worship. And the second type of argument (that may be based on the saying of a prophet) has been negated by saying, اَوْ اَثٰرَةٍ مِّنْ عِلْمٍ "or a trace of knowledge," (46:4) meaning thereby that if you cannot bring any revealed book to prove the validity of idol-worship, then at least put forward any authentic saying of any prophet which proves your contention. And if you can do neither, then your words and deeds are totally misguided.

The original word used in the text is اَثَرَةٍ *'athārah'* which is an infinitive in the sense of 'reporting' and has been explained by 'Ikrimah and Muqātil to mean a dictum of a prophet.

The explanation given above is taken from the Tafsīr of Qurṭubī, and this is the explanation accepted by most exegetes. There are some other views in the interpretation of this verse, but they are neither well-established, nor in full harmony with the textual structure. Therefore, they are not adopted by the majority of the exegetes. (Allah knows best)

Verses 7 - 10

وَاِذَا تُتْلٰى عَلَيْهِمْ اٰيٰتُنَا بَيِّنٰتٍ قَالَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لِلْحَقِّ لَمَّا جَآءَهُمْ لا
هٰذَا سِحْرٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿٧﴾ اَمْ يَقُوْلُوْنَ افْتَرٰىهُ ط قُلْ اِنِ افْتَرَيْتُهٗ فَلَا تَمْلِكُوْنَ
لِيْ مِنَ اللّٰهِ شَيْئًا ط هُوَ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا تُفِيْضُوْنَ فِيْهِ ط كَفٰى بِهٖ شَهِيْدًا ۢ بَيْنِيْ
وَبَيْنَكُمْ ط وَهُوَ الْغَفُوْرُ الرَّحِيْمُ ﴿٨﴾ قُلْ مَا كُنْتُ بِدْعًا مِّنَ الرُّسُلِ
وَمَآ اَدْرِيْ مَا يُفْعَلُ بِيْ وَلَا بِكُمْ ط اِنْ اَتَّبِعُ اِلَّا مَا يُوْحٰٓى اِلَيَّ وَمَآ اَنَا اِلَّا
نَذِيْرٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿٩﴾ قُلْ اَرَءَيْتُمْ اِنْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللّٰهِ وَكَفَرْتُمْ بِهٖ وَشَهِدَ
شَاهِدٌ مِّنْۢ بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ عَلٰى مِثْلِهٖ فَاٰمَنَ وَاسْتَكْبَرْتُمْ ط اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا
يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿١٠﴾

And when Our verses are recited to them in all their clarity, the disbelievers say about the truth when it comes to them, "This is an open magic." [7] **Is it that they, rather, say, "He has forged it (the Qur'ān)"? Say, "If I have forged it, then you do not have any power to help me against Allah. He is well aware of that in which you indulge. He is enough as a witness between me and you, and He is the Most-Forgiving, the Very-Merciful."** [8] **Say, "I am not something unprecedented among the messengers, and I do not know what will be done to me or to you. I do not follow anything but what is revealed to me, and I am only a clear warner.** [9] **Say, "Tell me, If it (the Qur'ān) is from Allah and you reject it, and a**

> **witness from the children of Isrā'īl testifies about something similar to it and comes to believe (in it), while you persist in your arrogance, (then, how unjust you are!) Surely, Allah does not give guidance to the unjust people.** [10]

Commentary

وَمَآ اَدْرِىْ مَايُفْعَلُ بِىْ وَلَابِكُمْ ؕ اِنْ اَتَّبِعُ اِلَّا مَا يُوْحٰى اِلَىَّ (and I do not know what will be done to me or to you. I do not follow anything but what is revealed to me - 46:9) The sentence, "I do not follow anything but what is revealed to me," has been used here as an 'exception' to the previous sentence, meaning thereby that I do not know anything except what is revealed to me through *waḥy*. The gist of the explanation given to this verse by Imām Ḍaḥḥāk رحمه الله تعالىٰ, is that the knowledge of some unseen things can be obtained by the Holy Prophet ﷺ only through *waḥy*, and he does not have any knowledge about those unseen things which were not revealed to him through *waḥy*, be they about his own self, about the believers and disbelievers among his people, or about matters pertaining to this world or to the Hereafter. Whatever the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said about the unseen things is obtained through *waḥy*. The noble Qur'ān has declared that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was blessed by the knowledge of innumerable things from the Unseen (*ghaib*), but all this knowledge was given to him by the divine revelation. This is exactly what the Holy Qur'ān means by saying,

تِلْكَ مِنْ اَنْۢبَآءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوْحِيْهَآ اِلَيْكَ

> "These are some reports from the unseen (events) which We reveal to you." (11: 49)

Details of matters relating to the Hereafter, Hell, Paradise, accountability, reward and punishment are given in the Holy Qur'ān itself, and many details of certain future events that had to take place in this world are given in authentic *aḥādīth* reported from the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Thus the substance of the present verse is simply that the knowledge of the Holy Prophet about the Unseen is not all-encompassing as is that of Allah Almighty, nor is it independently obtained; he simply reproduces whatever Allah Almighty tells him through *waḥy*.

After having reproduced this explanation, the author of Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī says,

> "It is my belief that the Holy Prophet ﷺ did not leave this world until he was blessed by *waḥy* with such a knowledge about Allah Ta'ālā, His attributes and about all those things the knowledge of which could be meritorious that no other in the whole universe has ever been blessed with. But I do not believe that unawareness about trivial worldly affairs like the acts of some particular individuals and what they do at their homes and what happens to them one day or the other can in any way reduce his excellence."

Dictate of etiquette regarding the knowledge of the Holy Prophet ﷺ about unseen matters

Respect for the Holy Prophet ﷺ demands that one should not say that he did not know the Unseen; rather one should say that Allah Ta'ālā had given such vast knowledge of unseen matters to him as was not given to any other prophet.

The explanation given by some exegetes that the negation in this verse is only about the unseen affairs pertaining to this world, and not about the Hereafter (as stated by Qurṭubī) is probably because they have not taken the words, "I do not follow anything but what is revealed to me," in the sense of an exception to the previous sentence; hence the negation of the knowledge of unseen things has been made specific to the affairs of this world, because the Holy Prophet ﷺ has told very clearly about the Hereafter that the Mu'min would go to Paradise, and the 'kafir' would go to Hell.

وَشَهِدَ شَاهِدٌ مِّنۢ بَنِىٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ عَلٰى مِثْلِهٖ فَاٰمَنَ وَاسْتَكْبَرْتُمْ (and a witness from the children of Isra'il testifies about something similar to it and comes to believe in it while you persist in your arrogance, [then, how unjust you are!]....- 46:10) The subject of this verse is almost the same as of the verse of the last chapter of Sūrah As-Shu'ara'

اَوَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَّهُمْ اٰيَةً اَنْ يَّعْلَمَهٗ عُلَمٰٓؤُا بَنِىٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ

> Is it not a proof for them that the knowledgeable of the children of Isrā'īl recognize him (the Prophet)? (26: 197)

The gist is that these ignorant Jews and Christians who deny the messengership of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and disbelieve the Qur'ān are ignorant of their own books, because many scholars of Banī Isrā'īl having found the prophethood of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and its signs mentioned in

their books and having witnessed those signs, have come to believe in him. Even the testimony of their own scholars is not enough for these ignorant people.

Verse 10 of this Sūrah states that their falsification of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and their claim about the Qur'ān that it is a forgery, is baseless firstly because, as mentioned in verse 8, if anyone lays a false claim to prophethood, he has to be eliminated by the divine punishment right in this world, so that the common people may be saved from his fraudulent claims, Secondly, if they do not accept this argument, they should, at least, not overlook the possibility that if his claim is correct, and this book is actually from Allah Ta'ālā, and they continue to persist in their arrogance, denial and disbelief, specially when one of their own learned scholar from Banī Isrā'īl testifies the Book to be from Allah, and comes to believe in it, then what will be their end and how severe a punishment will they deserve?

This verse does not name any particular scholar of Banī Isrā'iil, nor does it specify whether the testimony had already been given before this verse was revealed, or it would come afterwards. It, in effect, sounds a warning that should such a situation have already arisen or if it should arise in future, one should worry about saving one's skin. Therefore, understanding this verse is not dependent upon the determination of a particular testifier; rather all the Jews and Christians who embraced Islam, of which Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Salām is more prominent, are included herein, although he embraced Islam in Madīnah, while this verse was revealed in Makkah. (Ibn Kathīr)

The statement by Sayyidnā Sa'd ؓ reported in some narrations of Bukhārī, Muslim and Nasa'ī, that this verse was revealed about Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Salām ؓ and the same statement from Ibn 'Abbās ؓ, Mujahid , Ḍaḥḥāk, Qatādah ؓ, etc. is not against this verse being Makki, as in this case, it will be a prophecy for the future. (Ibn Kathīr)

Verses 11 - 12

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَوْ كَانَ خَيْرًا مَّا سَبَقُونَا إِلَيْهِ ۚ وَإِذْ لَمْ
يَهْتَدُوا بِهِ فَسَيَقُولُونَ هَٰذَا إِفْكٌ قَدِيمٌ ﴿١١﴾ وَمِن قَبْلِهِ كِتَابُ مُوسَىٰ

إِمَامًا وَّرَحْمَةً ۚ وَهٰذَا كِتٰبٌ مُّصَدِّقٌ لِّسَانًا عَرَبِيًّا لِّيُنْذِرَ الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا ۖ وَبُشْرٰى لِلْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ﴿۱۲﴾

And the disbelievers say about the believers, "Had it (Islamic faith) been a good thing, these (weak and poor) people would not have preceded us (in proceeding) towards it." And since they did not accept guidance through it (the Qur'ān), they will say, "This is a classical lie." [11] **And before this there was the Book of Mūsā, a guide and a mercy. And this is a Book confirming (it) in Arabic tongue, that it may warn the wrongdoers and give good news to those who are good in deeds.** [12]

Commentary

لَوْ كَانَ خَيْرًا مَّا سَبَقُوْنَآ اِلَيْهِ (Had it [Islamic faith] been a good thing, these [weak and poor] people would not have preceded us [in proceeding] towards it._ 46:11) Arrogance and pride pervert the human intellect also. An arrogant person considers his own opinions and deeds to be the criteria for determining right and wrong, good and bad. If he does not like anything, no matter how well it is believed to be by others, he considers all those people to be stupid, while he himself is stupid. The arrogance and pride of the infidels was of this very kind, and since they did not like Islamic faith, they used to say about it's lovers that had it been a good thing, they themselves would have been the first to adopt it, and that one should not trust the choice of these poor people.

Ibn Mundhir رحمه الله تعالىٰ etc., have reproduced a narration according to which this verse was revealed about a slave-girl of Sayyidnā 'Umar Ibn Khaṭṭāb ؓ named Zunairah who had embraced Islam when he was still a disbeliever. She used to be beaten up and threatened by him, so that she might give up Islam somehow or the other, and the kuffar of Quraish used to say that had Islamic faith been a good thing, such a worthless woman as Zunairah would not have preceded us in embracing it. (Maẓharī)

وَمِنْ قَبْلِهٖ كِتٰبُ مُوْسٰٓى اِمَامًا وَّرَحْمَةً (And before this, there was the Book of Mūsā, a guide and a mercy. - 46:12) This verse, for one thing, gives proof of the statement mentioned in verse 9 that the Holy Prophet ﷺ is not an unprecedented messenger and Qur'ān is not a singular divine Book which

may create doubts in the minds. Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام came before him ﷺ as a messenger, and Torah was revealed to him which is accepted by all these Jews and Christians. Secondly, it supports the verse 10 above, because Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and Torah themselves are witnesses to the Holy Prophet ﷺ being the messenger of Allah and the Qur'ān being Allah's Book.

Verses 13 - 20

إِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ قَالُوْا رَبُّنَا اللّٰهُ ثُمَّ اسْتَقَامُوْا فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ
يَحْزَنُوْنَ ﴿١٣﴾ أُولٰٓئِكَ أَصْحٰبُ الْجَنَّةِ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا ۚ جَزَآءًۢ بِمَا
كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١٤﴾ وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ إِحْسٰنًا ۖ حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهٗ
كُرْهًا وَّوَضَعَتْهُ كُرْهًا ۖ وَحَمْلُهٗ وَفِصٰلُهٗ ثَلٰثُوْنَ شَهْرًا ۖ حَتّٰٓى إِذَا بَلَغَ
أَشُدَّهٗ وَبَلَغَ أَرْبَعِيْنَ سَنَةً ۙ قَالَ رَبِّ أَوْزِعْنِيْٓ أَنْ أَشْكُرَ نِعْمَتَكَ الَّتِيْٓ
أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ وَعَلٰى وَالِدَيَّ وَأَنْ أَعْمَلَ صَالِحًا تَرْضٰىهُ وَأَصْلِحْ لِيْ
فِيْ ذُرِّيَّتِيْ ۚ إِنِّيْ تُبْتُ إِلَيْكَ وَإِنِّيْ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ ﴿١٥﴾ أُولٰٓئِكَ
الَّذِيْنَ نَتَقَبَّلُ عَنْهُمْ أَحْسَنَ مَا عَمِلُوْا وَنَتَجَاوَزُ عَنْ سَيِّاٰتِهِمْ فِيْٓ
أَصْحٰبِ الْجَنَّةِ ۖ وَعْدَ الصِّدْقِ الَّذِيْ كَانُوْا يُوْعَدُوْنَ ﴿١٦﴾ وَالَّذِيْ
قَالَ لِوَالِدَيْهِ أُفٍّ لَّكُمَآ أَتَعِدَانِنِيْٓ أَنْ أُخْرَجَ وَقَدْ خَلَتِ الْقُرُوْنُ مِنْ
قَبْلِيْ ۚ وَهُمَا يَسْتَغِيْثٰنِ اللّٰهَ وَيْلَكَ اٰمِنْ ۖ إِنَّ وَعْدَ اللّٰهِ حَقٌّ ۚ
فَيَقُوْلُ مَا هٰذَآ إِلَّآ أَسَاطِيْرُ الْأَوَّلِيْنَ ﴿١٧﴾ أُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ حَقَّ عَلَيْهِمُ
الْقَوْلُ فِيْٓ أُمَمٍ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِّنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْإِنْسِ ۖ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا
خٰسِرِيْنَ ﴿١٨﴾ وَلِكُلٍّ دَرَجٰتٌ مِّمَّا عَمِلُوْا وَلِيُوَفِّيَهُمْ أَعْمَالَهُمْ وَهُمْ
لَا يُظْلَمُوْنَ ﴿١٩﴾ وَيَوْمَ يُعْرَضُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا عَلَى النَّارِ ۖ أَذْهَبْتُمْ
طَيِّبٰتِكُمْ فِيْ حَيَاتِكُمُ الدُّنْيَا وَاسْتَمْتَعْتُمْ بِهَا ۚ فَالْيَوْمَ تُجْزَوْنَ عَذَابَ

الْهُوْنِ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَسْتَكْبِرُوْنَ فِى الْاَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَبِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَفْسُقُوْنَ ﴿٢٠﴾

Surely, those who said, "Our Lord is Allah" then stayed firm, for them, there is no fear, nor shall they grieve. [13] Those are the people of Paradise, living there forever, as a reward for what they used to do. [14] And We have enjoined upon man to do good to his parents. His mother carried him with toil and delivered him with toil. And his carrying and his weaning is (in) thirty months, until when he attains his maturity, and reaches forty years, he says, "My Lord, grant me that I offer gratitude for the favor You have bestowed upon me and upon my parents, and that I do righteous deeds that You like. And grant for my benefit goodness in my progeny. Of course, I repent to you, and truly I am one of those who submit to You." [15] Such are the people from whom We accept the best of what they did, and overlook their evils, (so as they will be) among the people of the Paradise according to the true promise that was made to them. [16] And (Contrary to this is the case of) the one who said to his parents, "Fie upon you both! Do you promise to me that I shall be brought out (from the grave), while generations have passed before me?" And they (the parents) were crying for Allah's help, (and saying to their son,) "Woe to you. Believe. Allah's promise is certainly true." Then he says, "This is nothing but the tales of the ancients." [17] Such are the people on whom the word (of punishment) has come true along with the communities of the Jinn and the humans that have passed before them. Surely they were losers. [18] And for each (of these two groups) there are (different) ranks, because of what they did, and so that He may repay them in full for their deeds, and they will not be wronged. [19] And the day the disbelievers will be presented before the Fire, (it will be said to them,) " You have consumed your good things in your worldly life, and have enjoyed them. So, today you will be punished with the torment of humiliation for the arrogance you used to show on earth having no right (to do so), and for the sins you used to commit. [20]

Commentary

The first two of the above verses are a complement to the previous

verses which announce punishment for the unjust, and glad tidings of success and reward for the virtuous Muslims. In the first verse إِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ قَالُوْا رَبُّنَا اللّٰهُ ثُمَّ اسْتَقَامُوْا "Surely, those who said, 'Our Lord is Allah' then stayed firm, (46:13)" all the basic faith and virtuous deeds required by Islam have been comprehensively referred to with great eloquence. The admission that رَبُّنَا اللّٰهُ "Our Lord is Allah." is the whole of faith, and staying firm in it includes holding on to it till death, as well as carrying out all its obligations. The meaning and importance of *istiqamah* ('Staying firm), have been explained in detail in the commentary of Sūrah Ḥā Mīm As-Sajdah (41:30). In this verse here, those who embrace faith and remain steadfast to it are being promised freedom from anxiety and suffering in future, and dispelling of their grief and sorrow over past sufferings. The following verse gives glad tidings of the permanence and continuity of this matchless comfort. In the four verses which follow, man is being directed to behave beautifully with his parents, and is being censured for ill-behaviour towards them; and in this context, the kindness of the parents to him and the parents' bearing hard labor and toiling for their children have been mentioned, and then man has been advised to repent and turn towards Allah Ta'ālā when he gets older. The connection between these verses and the earlier ones, according to Ibn Kathīr, is that the usual style of the Holy Qur'ān is to instruct man to behave beautifully, to serve and to obey his parents along with the call to obey and worship Allah Almighty. Many verses of the Holy Qur'ān in various Sūrahs bear witness to this style. Here also, in the same way, mention has been made of beautiful behaviour for parents alongwith the call to believe in the Oneness of Allah Ta'ālā. And Qurṭubī, with reference to Qushairi has stated the connection to be that there is a kind of solace in it for the Holy Prophet ﷺ that he should continue calling people towards faith and '*tauḥīd*' (the Oneness of Allah) and should not be disheartened if some people do not accept his invitation, because men, by nature, are of diverse characteristics, and some of them do not refrain even from ill-treatment to their parents. (Allah knows best)

In any case, the real subject of these four verses is to instruct man to behave beautifully with one's parents, and in that context there are other instructions also. Although some narrations of *ḥadīth* indicate that these verses were revealed about Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ؓ, it is obvious that even if any verse of the Qur'ān is revealed about any particular person or about any particular incident, the rule laid down thereby remains

generally applicable to all. Therefore, even if the verse was revealed about Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ؓ, its application is general, regardless of some specifications of age etc. that may appear particular to him.

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ إِحْسَانًا (And We have enjoined upon man to do good to his parents.- 46:15) The word *wasiyyah* used in the text means 'emphatic order' and *iḥsān* means 'doing good' or 'behaving beautifully' which includes service, obedience, respect and reverence.

حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ كُرْهًا وَّ وَضَعَتْهُ كُرْهًا (His mother carried him with toil and delivered him with toil.- 46:15) The word كُرْه *kurh* means the toil that one has to endure for some reason, while كَرْه *karh* means the toil one has to undertake under compulsion from someone else. This sentence puts emphasis on the instruction given in the previous sentence for doing good to the parents, and spells out one of the reasons for it. The verse addresses everyone and draws his attention to the fact that parents have gone through hardships and have endured toil for his sake, right from his birth up to his youth. The toil and labor of the mother, specially, is much more prominent. That is why only toil of mother has been stated here by reminding that she carries the baby inside her womb during pregnancy of nine long months, during which she had to bear all kinds of hardship and suffering, and then she endures extreme pain during delivery.

Mother has more rights than father

Although the first part of this verse is a command to do good to both the parents, the second sentence refers only to the hardships suffered by the mother, because they are unavoidable, and no child can be born without them. Every mother has to go through the problems of pregnancy and severe pains of delivery. As against this, it is not necessary for a father that he suffers any hardship in bringing up and educating the child, if he can afford to pay somebody else for these services. That is why the Holy Prophet ﷺ has given more rights to the mother than anybody else. According to a *ḥadīth*, He has said,

صِلْ أُمَّکَ ثُمَّ أُمَّکَ ثُمَّ أُمَّکَ ثُمَّ اَبَاکَ ثُمَّ اَدْنَاکَ فَاَدْنَاکَ

"Do good to and serve your mother, then your mother, then your mother, then your father, then the near relatives and then those who come after them." (Maẓharī)

وَحَمْلُهُ وَفِصٰلُهُ ثَلٰثُوْنَ شَهْرًا (And his carrying and his weaning is in thirty

months - 46:15). This sentence too describes the hardships suffered by mother for her baby. It points out that even after suffering hardships during the pregnancy and the severe labor pains, the mother does not get respite from toils, because the natural food of the infant is in her breasts, and she has to suckle the infant.

This verse states that the total period of pregnancy and then of weaning is thirty months, Sayyidnā 'Alī ؓ has deduced from this verse that the minimum period of pregnancy is six months, because the Holy Qur'ān has determined the maximum weaning period as two complete years in another verse which says,

وَالْوَالِدَاتُ يُرْضِعْنَ اَوْلَادَهُنَّ حَوْلَيْنِ كَامِلَيْنِ

And mothers suckle their children for full two years; it is for one who wants to complete (the period of) suckling. (2: 233)

The total period of pregnancy and suckling has been mentioned in the verse under discussion (46:15) as thirty months. If the maximum period of suckling, that is twenty four months according to the verse 2:233 cited above, is deducted from thirty months, the balance is no more than six months which has been taken as the minimum period of pregnancy.

It is narrated that during the period of Sayyidnā 'Uthmān ؓ, a woman gave birth to a child in six months, as against the normal period of nine months, or at least seven months. Sayyidnā 'Uthmān ؓ decided this to be the case of an illegitimate birth and gave orders for punishment. When Sayyidnā 'Alī ؓ came to know the incident, he advised Sayyidnā 'Uthmān ؓ against the decision, and argued that the minimum period of pregnancy is six months as deduced from the verses mentioned above. Sayyidnā 'Uthmān ؓ accepted his argument and cancelled his order. (Qurṭubī)

That is why all the jurists of the Ummah are unanimous on the point that the minimum period of pregnancy can be six months, while they differ about the maximum period of pregnancy, because the Holy Qur'ān has not given any ruling about it.

Conclusion

This verse has defined the minimum period of pregnancy to be six months; a perfect and sound baby cannot be born in a lesser period; the

maximum period has not been defined, as it may vary with individuals. Similarly, the maximum period for suckling has been defined to be two years; the minimum period has not been defined, because some women do not produce any milk at all; some have their milk dried up within few months, and some babies are not very fond of mother's milk, or it is harmful for them, and they are fed from other sources.

Different views of Jurists about maximum period of pregnancy and maximum period of suckling

The great Imam Abu Hanifah holds the maximum period of pregnancy to be two years. There are different narrations from Imām Mālik about the maximum period of pregnancy to be four, five or seven years, whereas Imām Shāfi'ī holds it to be four years, which is also the view of Imām Aḥmad, according to more recognized reports from him. (Maẓharī). The maximum suckling period, which governs the rules of fosterage, is two years according to the majority of the jurists. Imām Mālik, Shāfi'ī, Aḥmad Ibn Hanbal رحمهم الله تعالى and Abū Yūsuf and Muḥammad from the Ḥanafī school, are all unanimous on it, and this is also the dictum of Sayyidnā 'Umar and Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ from the Noble Companions. (Ad-Darqutani) Sayyidnā 'Alī ﷺ and Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ also have the same standpoint. (Ibn Abī Shaibah). Only the great Imām Abū Ḥanīfah has been quoted as saying that a baby can be suckled up to two years and a half. But the correct meaning of this view according to the majority of the Ḥanafī school is that if the baby is weak and does not take any food except mother's milk even after attaining the age of two years, then it is permissible to suckle him for another six months, because it is agreed by all that feeding the baby with mother's milk after the suckling period is unlawful. However, the prevalent *fatwā* (religious verdict) of the Ḥanafī jurists is in accordance with the majority of Imams holding that if a child is suckled after the period of two years, it would not result in creating the relationship of fosterage. Maulānā Thanawi رحمه الله تعالى has opined in Bayān-ul-Qur'ān that although the fatwa is in accordance with the view of the majority, yet it is better to be careful in arranging marriage of someone who has been suckled within six months after two years, which means that fosterage relationship should be presumed, as a matter of precaution, even if a child is suckled within six months after reaching the age of two

years.

Some exegetes have tried to interpret the verse وَحَمْلُهٗ وَفِصٰلُهٗ ثَلٰثُوْنَ شَهْرًا (And his carrying and his weaning is [in] thirty months - 46:15) in a manner that it may support the view of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah that the suckling period is two years and a half. But it is not correct, because, as stated in Tafsīr Maẓharī, the noble companions Sayyidnā 'Alī ﷺ and Sayyidnā 'Uthmān ﷺ have determined the meaning of this verse that the period of thirty months comprises the minimum period of six months for pregnancy, and twenty-four months for suckling.

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ has said that Qur'ān has determined the combined period for pregnancy and suckling to be thirty months without defining each period separately, because if a baby is born in the normal period of nine months, the suckling period of twenty-one months is adequate, and if the baby is born in seven months, then a suckling period of twenty-three months is required, and if a baby is born in six months only, then a suckling period of full two years is required. (Maẓharī)

حَتّٰى إِذَا بَلَغَ أَشُدَّهٗ وَبَلَغَ أَرْبَعِيْنَ سَنَةً (until when he attains his maturity and reaches forty years - 46:15). The lexical meaning of the word أَشُدّ 'ashudd (translated above as 'maturity') is 'stregnth'. The same word used in Sūrah al-An'am (6:152) has been explained to mean 'the age of puberty'. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ has explained it to mean reaching the age of eighteen years.

In the present verse too, some exegetes have taken the word أَشُدّ *'ashudd'* to mean "the age of puberty", and then they have taken the following words, وَبَلَغَ أَرْبَعِيْنَ سَنَةً "and reaches forty years" as a separate stage in one's life, and not an explanation of 'maturity'. This is the view of Sha'bī and Ibn Zayd رحمہ اللہ تعالیٰ. But Ḥasan Baṣrī رحمہ اللہ تعالیٰ has held both the sentences to have the same meaning and 'reaching the age of forty years' to be the explanation of 'attaining maturity'. (Qurṭubī) Thus the sequence of the events mentioned in the verse is such that pregnancy has been mentioned first, then the delivery of the child, followed by the suckling period. The reference to the maturity after that means that the child lived, became mature in his physical and mental strength and reached the age of forty years. It was at that point that he was able to turn towards his Creator, and began to pray to Him:

رَبِّ اَوْزِعْنِيْٓ اَنْ اَشْكُرَ نِعْمَتَكَ الَّتِيْٓ اَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ وَعَلٰى وَالِدَيَّ وَاَنْ اَعْمَلَ صَالِحًا تَرْضٰىهُ وَاَصْلِحْ لِيْ فِيْ ذُرِّيَّتِيْ ۚ اِنِّيْ تُبْتُ اِلَيْكَ وَاِنِّيْ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ

"My Lord, grant me that I offer gratitude for the favor You have bestowed upon me and upon my parents, and that I do righteous deeds that You like. And grant for my benefit goodness in my progeny. Of course, I repent to you, and truly I am one of those who submit to You." (46:15)

All this description is given by the Holy Qur'ān in past tenses and in a style indicating that this description relates to a particular person and a particular event that had already happened before the verse was revealed. That is why Tafsīr Maẓharī has opined that all these circumstances relate to Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ﷺ, which have been mentioned in a general form to induce other Muslims also to act in a similar manner. This view is supported by the narration of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ reproduced by Qurṭubī. The gist of this narration is that when the Holy Prophet ﷺ traveled to Syria for trading financed by Sayyidah Khadijah رضی اللہ عنہا, he was twenty years old. Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ﷺ was with him, and he was eighteen years old, and had 'reached his maturity' in the words of the Holy Qur'ān. He witnessed such qualities of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in that journey that he became his ardent admirer, and started accompanying him everywhere even after returning from that journey. When the Holy Prophet ﷺ reached the age of forty years, and Allah Ta'ālā blessed him with prophethood, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ﷺ was thirty-eight years old, and he became the first adult male to embrace Islam. When he became forty years old, he prayed to Allah as stated in this verse above; hence the words of the Holy Qur'ān: 'and reached forty years'. Allah Ta'ālā accepted his supplication and gave him *'taufīq'* (ability and willingness) to purchase and then set free nine slaves who had embraced Islam and were being tortured mercilessly by their masters.

Similarly his prayer "Grant for my benefit goodness in my progeny" was also accepted in that all his children embraced Islam. Of all the noble companions, only Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ﷺ has the distinction that he himself, his parents and his offspring, all embraced Islam and had the honor of being noble companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

The question that arises here is that Abū Quḥāfah ﷺ, the father of Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ﷺ, embraced Islam after the conquest of Makkah,

while the whole of this Sūrah is Makki, so how was it appropriate for Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ﷺ, to mention Allah's blessings upon his parents at that stage when his father had not embraced Islam? One answer is that some exegetes have held these verse to be Madani. Given this view, there is no room for any such question. But if the verse is taken to have been revealed in Makkah, the inclusion of his parents in this supplication of Abū Bakr ﷺ was by way of praying that they should be blessed by Allah with Islam. (Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī) [1]

Although, according to this explanation, all these descriptions relate to Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ﷺ, yet the instruction is general for all Muslims that when they reach the age of forty years, their care for the Hereafter should take precedence over all their activities; one ought to repent afresh for the past sins, and take all precautions to save oneself from sins in future, because the experience shows that the ethical manners and habits that one is accustomed to at the age of forty years become permanent in his character, and are not easily changed.

It is reported by Sayyidnā 'Uthmān ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said that when a Mu'min reaches the age of forty years, Allah Ta'ālā becomes lenient in taking account of his deeds; at the age of sixty years Allah gives him *taufīq* of *inābah* (frequently turning) towards Himself; at the age of seventy years all heavenly beings start loving him; at the age of eighty years, Allah Ta'ālā lets his virtues stand, and sins erased; and at the age of ninety years, Allah Ta'ālā forgives all his sins - past and future, and authorizes him to plead for the forgiveness of his family members, and in the heavens it is written alongside his name that he is detained by Allah on earth. (Ibn Kathīr, Musnad of Aḥmad, etc.) It is obvious that all this is about a Mu'min who has lived his life avoiding sins and in accordance with the injunctions of 'Sharī'ah'.

Since Ibn Kathīr رحمه الله تعالى has adopted the first explanation, that the verse does not refer to any particular person, like Sayyidnā Abū Bakr

[1] In order to understand this, one should recapitulate the words of the prayer under discussion. These are: "My Lord, grant me that I offer gratitude for the favor You have bestowed upon me and upon my parents." According to this explanation, the 'favor bestowed' on the parents of Abū Bakr ﷺ would mean the mundane benefits they were enjoying. Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ﷺ prayed that they should be granted *taufīq* to offer gratitude to Allah on these favors by embracing Islam. (Muhammad Taqi Usmanī)

ﷺ, but it is meant for a common people, the specific words, like 'until when he reached his maturity and attained the age of forty years" are all by way of example, wherein the instruction is being imparted that when one reaches the age of forty years, one should have due care for correcting himself and his family members, and his endeavor for the betterment of the Hereafter should take precedence over all his thoughts. (Allah knows best)

أُولَٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ نَتَقَبَّلُ عَنْهُمْ اَحْسَنَ مَاعَمِلُوْا وَنَتَجَاوَزُ عَنْ سَيِّاٰتِهِمْ (Such are the people from whom we accept the best of what they did and overlook their evils.... - 46:16) This, too, is a general rule, and if the verse was revealed with reference to Sayyidnā Abu Bakr ﷺ, then he would be the first to be included in its generality. A quotation from Sayyidnā 'Alī ﷺ which is given below also indicates that sense of the verse is general. Ibn Kathīr has reported the narration of Muḥammad Ibn Ḥāṭib رحمه الله تعالیٰ that once he was with Sayyidnā 'Alī ﷺ along with some other persons who blamed Sayyidnā 'Uthmān ﷺ for some wrong-doings. Thereupon Sayyidnā 'Alī ﷺ said:

> كان عثمان رضى الله عنه من الّذين قال الله تعالیٰ فيهم أُولَٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ نَتَقَبَّلُ عَنْهُمْ اَحْسَنُ مَاعَمِلُوْا وَنَتَجَاوَزُ عَنْ سَيِّاٰتِهِمْ فِىْ اَصْحٰبِ الْجَنَّةِ وَعْدَ الصِّدْقِ الَّذِىْ كَانُوْا يُوْعَدُوْنَ، قَال وَاللّٰه عثمان واصحاب عثمان رضى الله عنهم، قالها ثلاثا. (ابن كثيرؒ)
>
> ('Uthmān ﷺ was one of those people about whom Allah Ta'ālā has said: "Such are the people from whom We accept the best of what they did, and overlook their evils, (so they will be) among the people of Paradise according to the true promise that was made to them." (46:16) I swear by Allah that 'Uthmān ﷺ and his companions were examples of this verse." Sayyidna 'Alī ﷺ repeated this three times.

وَالَّذِىْ قَالَ لِوَالِدَيْهِ اُفٍّ لَّكُمَا (And, [contrary to this is the case of] the one who said to his parents, 'Fie upon you both!' - 46:17). The previous verse has laid down the order to serve and obey the parents; this verse announces punishment for one who maltreats his parents and is impertinent to them, specially when they are calling him towards Islam and virtuous deeds, because rejecting their call is a double sin. Ibn Kathīr has said that the verse is general and applies to anyone who maltreats his parents.

Marwan's saying, in one of his addresses, that this verse holds true for 'Abdur Raḥmān Ibn Abī Bakr ﷺ has been contradicted by Sayyidah

'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا, as narrated in Ṣaḥīḥ of Bukhārī. The fact of the matter is that the verse is general in sense, and there is no correct narration which states this verse to hold true for a particular person.

اَذْهَبْتُمْ طَيِّبٰتِكُمْ فِىْ حَيَاتِكُمُ الدُّنْيَا ("You have consumed your good things in your worldly life - 46:20), It means that the infidels will be told that they had already been awarded delights, luxuries and enjoyment in the worldly life for whatever good deeds they had done there; now there is nothing left for them in the Hereafter. It is known from this verse that the good deeds of disbelievers do not have any worth in the Hereafter due to lack of belief or faith, but Allah Ta'ālā compensates them in this world. The riches and wealth, honour and dignity, etc., which are enjoyed by disbelievers in this world are all recompense for their good deeds, benevolence, sympathy, truthfulness, etc. This rule does not apply to Mu'mins (believers) that if they get any delights, riches and wealth in this world, they would be deprived of their right in the Hereafter.

Incentive for avoiding worldly delights and luxuries

The punishment stated in this verse for the disbelievers is because of their being engrossed in worldly enjoyments. So, the Holy Prophet ﷺ, his noble companions ﷺ and Tabi'īn رحمهم الله تعالیٰ had made it a habit to avoid worldly enjoyments, as is evident from their lives. The Holy Prophet ﷺ had charged Sayyidnā Mu'ādh ﷺ, when sending him to Yemen, to keep on avoiding the luxuries of this world. Sayyidnā 'Alī ﷺ has reported the Holy Prophet ﷺ saying that one who is happy with Allah Ta'ālā giving him scanty sustenance finds Allah Ta'ālā also happy at his meager deeds. (Maẓharī from al-Baghawī)

Verses 21- 28

وَاذْكُرْ اَخَا عَادٍ ۭ اِذْ اَنْذَرَ قَوْمَهٗ بِالْاَحْقَافِ وَقَدْ خَلَتِ النُّذُرُ مِنْۢ بَيْنِ
يَدَيْهِ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهٖٓ اَلَّا تَعْبُدُوْٓا اِلَّا اللّٰهَ ۭ اِنِّىْٓ اَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ
عَظِيْمٍ ﴿٢١﴾ قَالُوْٓا اَجِئْتَنَا لِتَاْفِكَنَا عَنْ اٰلِهَتِنَا ۚ فَاْتِنَا بِمَا تَعِدُنَآ اِنْ
كُنْتَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿٢٢﴾ قَالَ اِنَّمَا الْعِلْمُ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ ڮ وَاُبَلِّغُكُمْ مَّآ
اُرْسِلْتُ بِهٖ وَلٰكِنِّىْٓ اَرٰىكُمْ قَوْمًا تَجْهَلُوْنَ ﴿٢٣﴾ فَلَمَّا رَاَوْهُ عَارِضًا

مُّسْتَقْبِلَ اَوْدِيَتِهِمْ ۙ قَالُوْا هٰذَا عَارِضٌ مُّمْطِرُنَا ۭ بَلْ هُوَ مَا اسْتَعْجَلْتُمْ
بِهٖ ۭ رِيْحٌ فِيْهَا عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿٢٤﴾ تُدَمِّرُ كُلَّ شَيْءٍۢ بِاَمْرِ رَبِّهَا
فَاَصْبَحُوْا لَا يُرٰٓى اِلَّا مَسٰكِنُهُمْ ۭ كَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِي الْقَوْمَ الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ
﴿٢٥﴾ وَلَقَدْ مَكَّنّٰهُمْ فِيْمَآ اِنْ مَّكَّنّٰكُمْ فِيْهِ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُمْ سَمْعًا
وَّاَبْصَارًا وَّاَفْـِٕدَةً ڮ فَمَآ اَغْنٰى عَنْهُمْ سَمْعُهُمْ وَلَآ اَبْصَارُهُمْ وَلَآ
اَفْـِٕدَتُهُمْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ اِذْ كَانُوْا يَجْحَدُوْنَ بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ وَحَاقَ بِهِمْ
مَّا كَانُوْا بِهٖ يَسْتَهْزِءُوْنَ ﴿٢٦﴾ وَلَقَدْ اَهْلَكْنَا مَا حَوْلَكُمْ مِّنَ الْقُرٰى
وَصَرَّفْنَا الْاٰيٰتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُوْنَ ﴿٢٧﴾ فَلَوْلَا نَصَرَهُمُ الَّذِيْنَ اتَّخَذُوْا
مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ قُرْبَانًا اٰلِهَةً ۭ بَلْ ضَلُّوْا عَنْهُمْ ۚ وَذٰلِكَ اِفْكُهُمْ وَمَا
كَانُوْا يَفْتَرُوْنَ ﴿٢٨﴾

And remember the brother of (the nation of) 'Ād, when he warned his people at the long, curved sand-dunes__ while many warners have passed before him and after him (with the same message)__saying, "Do not worship anyone except Allah. Surely I fear for you the punishment of a terrible day. [21] They said, "Have you come to make us deviate from our gods. So bring us that with which you are threatening us, if you are truthful." [22] He said, "The knowledge is with Allah alone, and I am conveying to you what I am sent with, but I see that you are a people who behave ignorantly." [23] So, when they saw *it*, in the *form of a* cloud proceeding towards their valleys, they said, "This is a cloud that will bring us rain." No, it is what you asked to come soon__ a wind in which there is a painful punishment, [24] that will destroy every thing with the command of its Lord! So they became such that nothing remained to be seen except their dwelling places. This is how We punish the guilty people. [25] And indeed We had established them in a powerful position in which We did not establish you, and had given to them ears and eyes and hearts, but neither their ears availed them in the least, nor their eyes, nor their hearts, as they used to reject Allah's signs; and they were encircled by what they

used to ridicule. [26] **And We have (also) destroyed (other) towns around you**[1] **while We had given to them a variety of signs, so that they might return (from disbelief).** [27] **So, why were they not helped by those whom they had taken as gods, instead of Allah, to achieve closeness (to Him)? Instead, they vanished from them. And (in fact) it was their lie and something they used to forge.** [28]

Commentary

These verses are to remind the infidels of the severe punishments faced by earlier people who rejected the messengers sent to them. Special reference is made to 'Ād, the people of Sayyidnā Hūd عليه السلام who has been described as their 'brother', firstly because he belonged to their tribe, and secondly because he was their well-wisher as a brother. Since this nation lived in valleys surrounded by long, curved sand dunes, called in Arabic *'Aḥqāf'*, special reference is made to these dunes, so that one could find out their places, if he so wishes when traveling to their localities. It is mentioned in verse 22 that they themselves demanded Allah's punishment to be brought upon them. Then verse 24 states that the punishment was sent to them in the form of a cloud that appeared to be benign, and therefore they were happy to see it in the hope that it would bring rain to them, but in fact it contained the divine punishment in the form of a violent wind that destroyed every thing, leaving nothing except their empty homes that remained as a sign for those who might learn a lesson. The detailed account of the story of 'Ād and Thamūd has already been given in Sūrah Hud (11:50) for which volume 4, page 643 of this book may be consulted. Mention of these events in these verses is in the form of a brief reference, and in verse 26 the infidels of Makkah are reminded that those nations were much more powerful and well-established than the people of Makkah. Still, their power and strength was of no use to them against Allah's punishment. Moreover, verse 28 points out that the false gods believed by them to be their patrons could not save them from the torment they faced, because they were coined only by their false imagination, having no real existence at all.

{1} The reference here is to the towns of Thamūd and the people of Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام that were in the way of the people of Arabia while they travelled to Syria. The people of 'Ād were in Yemen, towards South from Makkah, while the towns of Thamūd and those of Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام were towards North, hence the words, "around you"

Verses 29 - 32

وَاِذْ صَرَفْنَآ اِلَيْكَ نَفَرًا مِّنَ الْجِنِّ يَسْتَمِعُوْنَ الْقُرْاٰنَ ۚ فَلَمَّا حَضَرُوْهُ
قَالُوْٓا اَنْصِتُوْا ۚ فَلَمَّا قُضِيَ وَلَّوْا اِلٰى قَوْمِهِمْ مُّنْذِرِيْنَ ﴿٢٩﴾ قَالُوْا
يٰقَوْمَنَآ اِنَّا سَمِعْنَا كِتٰبًا اُنْزِلَ مِنْ ۢ بَعْدِ مُوْسٰى مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ
يَهْدِيْٓ اِلَى الْحَقِّ وَاِلٰى طَرِيْقٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ ﴿٣٠﴾ يٰقَوْمَنَآ اَجِيْبُوْا دَاعِيَ
اللّٰهِ وَاٰمِنُوْا بِهٖ يَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ مِّنْ ذُنُوْبِكُمْ وَيُجِرْكُمْ مِّنْ عَذَابٍ اَلِيْمٍ
﴿٣١﴾ وَمَنْ لَّا يُجِبْ دَاعِيَ اللّٰهِ فَلَيْسَ بِمُعْجِزٍ فِي الْاَرْضِ وَ لَيْسَ
لَهٗ مِنْ دُوْنِهٖٓ اَوْلِيَآءُ ۭ اُولٰٓئِكَ فِيْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿٢٨﴾

And (recall) when We directed a group of Jinns towards you, who started listening to the Qur'ān. So, when they attended it, they said (to each other), "Keep quiet." Then once it was over, they went back to their people as warners. [29] **They said, "O our people, we have heard a book sent down after Mūsā, confirming what was before it, which guides to the truth and to a straight path.** [30] **O our people, respond to Allah's herald, and believe in him, and (once you do that,) Allah will forgive your sins for you, and will save you from a painful punishment.** [31] **And the one who does not respond to Allah's herald is not (able) to frustrate (Allah by escaping) in the land, and for him there are no supporters besides Him. Such people are in open error."** [32]

Commentary

The previous verses have condemned the infidelity and the arrogant attitude of the infidels and its destructive results. In these verses, the people of Makkah are being put to shame by telling them that even jinn, who are even more proud and haughty than you, had their hearts softened after hearing the Qur'ān, and they became Muslims; Allah has given the humans more sense and intelligence than jinns, and despite that they do not embrace faith.

The incident of the jinn listening to the Qur'ān and then embracing faith is stated in authentic *aḥādīth*. When the Holy Prophet ﷺ was

blessed with prophethood, the jinns were stopped from listening to the news of the heavens, and if a jinn ventured to go upwards to overhear the heavenly news, was chased away by a meteor directed towards him.

The jinns consulted each other to find out the cause of this new phenomenon that has stopped them from listening to the news from the heavens. They believed that some new event happening in the world may have been the cause. In order to discover that event, various groups of jinns spread out in different parts of the world to investigate this phenomenon. One of the groups reached Ḥijāz also when the Holy Prophet ﷺ along with some of his companions was present at a place called Baṭn Nakhlah and was intending to go to the fair of 'Ukāẓ'. (Arabs used to setup trade-fairs on special days in various places for commercial and social purposes where people of all areas used to assemble, set up shops and arrange meetings and social gatherings much like the exhibitions of our days. One such fair used to be set up in 'Ukāẓ where the Holy Prophet ﷺ was intending to go probably for preaching and calling towards Islam.) The Holy Prophet ﷺ was leading the morning prayers in Baṭn nakhlah when the jinns reached there. After hearing the Qur'ān, they exclaimed that this was that new matter which has come between them and the heavenly news. (Aḥmad, Bukhārī, Muslim, Tirmidhī, Nasa'ī, etc., with the authority of Ibn 'Abbās)

According to another narration, when the jinns came there, they directed each other to keep quiet and listen to the Qur'ān. When the Holy Prophet ﷺ finished his prayers, they put their belief in Islam, embraced it, went back to their people and informed them of the real cause of the new phenomenon. They also told their people that they had become Muslims and advised them that they should also embrace the faith. But the Holy Prophet ﷺ did not become aware of the jinns coming and going and of their embracing the faith after listening to the Qur'ān until Sūrah jinn was revealed wherein he was informed of this incident. (Ibn-ul-Mundhir quoting 'Abdul Mālik)

Another narration states that these jinns were inhabitants of Naṣībīn, either seven or nine in number. When they told their nation about it and motivated them to embrace faith, three hundred of them presented themselves for embracing Islam. (Abū Nu'aim, Al-Wāqidī, quoting Ka'b al-Aḥbār, as in Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī). There are diverse narrations in other *aḥādīth* also, but

since they are about various incidents at different times, there is no contradiction between them. That these are different incidents is supported by a statement of Ibn 'Abbās reported by Ṭabarānī in Awsaṭ and by Ibn Marduwaih that the jinns came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ many times.

Khafājī has said that the cumulative outcome of various *aḥādīth* is that jinn presented themselves to the Holy Prophet ﷺ six times for benefiting from his teachings. (Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī and Bayān-ul-Qur'ān)

كِتٰبًا أُنْزِلَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مُوْسٰى (a book sent down after Mūsā). Here the words 'after Mūsā have been taken by some exegetes to indicate that these jinns were Jews, because Injīl that was revealed to Sayyidnā 'Īsā ﵇, after Sayyidnā Mūsā ﵇, has not been mentioned. But there is no clear narration to support this inference. That they did not refer to Injīl cannot be a sufficient proof for the jinns being Jews. Another reason for not mentioning Injīl may be that Injīl follows Torah in most commandments, and the Qur'ān, like Torah, is an independent Book, having different commands, rules and regulations. It is likely that the underlying idea was to state that the Qur'ān is the Book which is independent like Torah.

يَغْفِرْلَكُمْ مِّنْ ذُنُوْبِكُمْ (will forgive your sins for you,) The word '*min*' used in the text gives the sense of 'some'. If it is taken in this sense here, it would mean that 'some sins' will be forgiven by embracing Islam. It will indicate that only sins relating to the rights of Allah would be forgiven but not the rights of people. But some exegetes have taken '*min*' in this verse as an extra word that has no additional meaning in Arabic idioms. Given this interpretation, no explanation is required.

Verses 33 - 35

اَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ الَّذِىْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ وَلَمْ يَعْىَ بِخَلْقِهِنَّ
بِقٰدِرٍ عَلٰٓى اَنْ يُّحْيِۦَ الْمَوْتٰى ؕ بَلٰٓى اِنَّهٗ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿۳۳﴾
وَيَوْمَ يُعْرَضُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا عَلَى النَّارِ ؕ اَلَيْسَ هٰذَا بِالْحَقِّ ؕ قَالُوْا بَلٰى
وَرَبِّنَا ؕ قَالَ فَذُوْقُوا الْعَذَابَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْفُرُوْنَ ﴿۳۴﴾ فَاصْبِرْ كَمَا

صَبَرَ اُولُوا الْعَزْمِ مِنَ الرُّسُلِ وَلَا تَسْتَعْجِلْ لَّهُمْ ۭ كَاَنَّهُمْ يَوْمَ يَرَوْنَ مَا يُوْعَدُوْنَ ۙ لَمْ يَلْبَثُوْٓا اِلَّا سَاعَةً مِّنْ نَّهَارٍ ۭ بَلٰغٌ ۚ فَهَلْ يُهْلَكُ اِلَّا الْقَوْمُ الْفٰسِقُوْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾

Have they not seen that Allah who has created the heavens and the earth, and was not wearied by their creation, does have power to give life to the dead? Yes of course, He is powerful to do every thing. [33] **And the day the disbelievers will be presented to the Fire, (it will be said to them,) "Is this not true?" They will say, "Yes, Our Lord!" He will say, "Then taste the punishment, for you used to disbelieve."** [34] **So, (O prophet,) observe patience, as the resolute messengers observed patience, and be not in haste about them. The Day they will see what they are promised, (it will be) as if they did not stay (in the world) more than an hour in a single day. This is a message. So, none will be destroyed except the sinners.** [35]

Commentary

اُولُوا الْعَزْمِ مِنَ الرُّسُلِ (...as the resolute messengers observed patience - 46:35). The word 'resolute' has been used here as a qualification for all the messengers, and not only for some of them, because the word *'min'* used with *'rusūl'* is not, according to the authentic exegetes, in the sense of 'some'. It is rather for 'Bayān' (description), to use the grammatical term. The sense is that all messengers are resolute people. Of course, variation in the grades of qualities between messengers is proved from the Holy Qur'ān itself:

تِلْكَ الرُّسُلُ فَضَّلْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ

Those are the messengers some of whom We have given excellence over some others (2:253)

Therefore those prophets who excel other prophets in the quality of being resolute and courageous have been given this title in a special way, although there are differences of opinion as to who they are. Majority opinion is that this special title is given to those prophets who have been mentioned in the following verse of Sūrah Al-Ahzab verse 7:

وَاِذْ اَخَذْنَا مِنَ النَّبِيّٖنَ مِيْثَاقَهُمْ وَمِنْكَ وَمِنْ نُّوْحٍ وَّاِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَمُوْسٰى وَعِيْسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ

> And (recall) when We took from the prophets their covenant, and from you and from Nūḥ and Ibrāhīm and Mūsā and 'Īsā, the son of Maryam. And We did take from them a firm covenant, (33:7)

Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا states that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said "The delights, luxuries and pleasures of this world do not befit Muḥammad ﷺ and his family, because Allah Ta'ālā does not accept anything less than patience from those who are 'resolute', and I have received this divine order: فَاصْبِرْ كَمَا صَبَرَ أُولُوا الْعَزْمِ مِنَ الرُّسُلِ "So, O prophet, observe patience, as the resolute messengers observed patience. (46:35)"

Alḥamdulillāh
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Aḥkāf (The Sand-dunes)
Ends here

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B

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MAʻĀRIFUL-QUR'ĀN

BY

MAULĀNĀ MUFTI MUḤAMMAD SHAFIʻ رحمۃ اللہ علیہ

Translated by

Maulānā Aḥmed Khalīl Azīz

Revised by

Maulānā Muḥammad Taqi ʻUsmānī

Volume 8

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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

Preface

الحمدلله رب العالمين، والصلاة والسلام على رسوله الكريم، وعلى آله وصحبه
أجمعين وعلى كل من تبعهم بإحسان إلى يوم الدين

By the grace of Allah Ta'ālā this last volume of Ma'āriful Qur'ān is now in your hands. When presenting it to the readers, I am unable to find suitable words to express my gratitude to Allah Ta'ālā who has enabled us to accomplish this project. It was a long journey that I commenced more than thirty years ago with numerous obstacles in my way. Alhamdulillah, it is reaching its final destination today. Ma'āriful Qur'ān, with all its eight volumes, is perhaps the first complete and comprehensive commentary on the Holy Qur'ān that appeared in English, and I hope it will help the English speaking people to fully understand the message of the last Divine Book in its true perspective.

I am extremely grateful to Maulānā Aḥmed Khalīl Azīz who translated this volume in such a speedy manner that the work did not stop for a moment. May Allah grant him the best of health and bless him with the best of rewards both here and in the hereafter.

Acknowledgements are due to Mr. Ibrāhīm Nafīs who composed the whole work, to Mr. Rafat Saghīr Farooqui and Maulānā 'Abdullāh Memon who were responsible for proofreading, and to Mr. Yūsuf Ghani who not only rechecked the final proof but also prepared the basic material for the Index.

I am also thankful to Mr. Khalīl Ashraf 'Usmānī, Mr. Isḥāq Noor and Mr. Yousuf Noor whose financial contributions facilitated the process of translation and publication of this volume. May Allah bless all of them with His pleasure and His rewards in the hereafter.

Lastly, I would request the readers to remember the esteemed author of the book, all the translators and this humble servant in their prayers. May Allah make this book beneficial to all those who wish to understand the message of their Creator and to order their lives in accordance with its guidance. A'min.

Muḥammad Taqi Usmānī

11 Rajab 1425 - 28th August 2004

Transliteration Scheme

Arabic Letter	Name of Letter		English Transliteration
ا	الف	-- Alif	a
ب	باء	-- bā	b
ت	تاء	-- tā	t
ث	ثاء	-- thā	th
ج	جيم	-- jīm	j
ح	حاء	-- ḥā	ḥ
خ	خاء	-- khā	kh
د	دال	-- dāl	d
ذ	ذال	-- dhāl	dh
ر	راء	-- rā	r
ز	زای	-- zā	z
س	سين	-- sīn	s
ش	شين	-- shīn	sh
ص	صاد	-- ṣād	ṣ
ض	ضاد	-- ḍād	ḍ
ط	طاء	-- ṭā	ṭ
ظ	ظاء	-- ẓā	ẓ
ع	عين	-- ‘ayn	‘
غ	غين	-- ghayn	gh
ف	فاء	-- fā	f
ق	قاف	-- qāf	q
ک	کاف	-- kāf	k
ل	لام	-- lām	l
م	ميم	-- mīm	m
ن	نون	-- nūn	n
ه	هاء	-- hā	h
و	واؤ	-- wāw	w
ء	ہمزہ	-- hamzah	’
ی	یاء	-- yā	y

Short Vowels

	: Fatḥah	a
	: Kasrah	i
	: Ḍammah	u

Long Vowels

ا	: Shortened Alif	ā
آ	: Maddah Alif	ā
ی	: Maddah Yā	ī
ؤ	: Maddah Wāw	ū

Dipthongs

ای	: Alif and Yā	ay (also ai in some cases)
او۔اؤ	: Alif and Wāw	aw (also au in some cases)

Sūrah Muḥammad

Sūrah Muḥammad was revealed in Madīnah It has 38 Verses and 4 Sections.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 3

الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَصَدُّوا عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَضَلَّ أَعْمَالَهُمْ ﴿١﴾ وَالَّذِينَ
آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَآمَنُوا بِمَا نُزِّلَ عَلَىٰ مُحَمَّدٍ وَهُوَ الْحَقُّ
مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ ۙ كَفَّرَ عَنْهُمْ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ وَأَصْلَحَ بَالَهُمْ ﴿٢﴾ ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّ الَّذِينَ
كَفَرُوا اتَّبَعُوا الْبَاطِلَ وَأَنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّبَعُوا الْحَقَّ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ ۚ
كَذَٰلِكَ يَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ لِلنَّاسِ أَمْثَالَهُمْ ﴿٣﴾

Those who disbelieved, and prevented (others) from Allah's way, He (Allah) has rendered their deeds vain. [1] **And those who believed and did righteous deeds and believed in that which is revealed to Muḥammad-and it is the truth (that has come) from their Lord-, He will write off their evil deeds, and will set aright their state of affairs.** [2] **That is because the disbelievers have followed falsehood, while the believers have followed the truth (that has come) from their Lord. This is how Allah explains their (respective) situations to the people.** [3]

Commentary

Another name of Sūrah Muḥammad is Sūrah Al-Qitāl [Sūrah of war] because this Sūrah lays down the rules of Jihād and Qitāl [i.e.armed struggle in the cause of Allah]. This Sūrah was revealed immediately

after migration to Madīnah. Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ is reported to have said regarding Verse 13 كَأَيِّن مِّن قَرْيَةٍ "And how many a city ... have We destroyed!,..." that it was revealed in Makkah, because it was revealed at a time when the Holy Prophet ﷺ left Makkah with the intention of migration, and looked at the sacred city of Makkah and the Holy Ka'bah and said: "You are the dearest of all cities to me in the world. Had it not been for Makkans driving me out from this place, I would never have given up this Holy City." According to the technical parlance of the Qur'ānic commentators, verses revealed in the course of migration from Makkah to Madīnah are regarded as Makkī. In sum, the Sūrah was revealed immediately after migration to Madīnah, reaching shere, ordinances relating to *jihād* and war with infidels were revealed.

In the phrase صَدُّوا عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ "prevented (others) from Allah's way" (47:1), "Allah's way" refers to Islam. The phrase اَضَلَّ اَعْمَالَهُمْ "He (Allah) has rendered their deeds vain" (47:1) includes actions which are good in themselves, as for instance, helping and assisting the destitute, supporting and protecting the neighbours, generosity, charity and other good deeds. These deeds are, though, good and righteous in themselves, in the Hereafter they will yield benefit only if blessed with faith, because faith is a necessary condition for the credibility of good actions. Thus these righteous deeds will be of no use to the infidels in the Hereafter. The disbelievers take their comfort in this worldly life as a reward of their good deeds. In the Hereafter they will be punished with Hell-fire.

وَاٰمَنُوْا بِمَا نُزِّلَ عَلٰى مُحَمَّدٍ

...and believed in that which is revealed to Muḥammad ...(47:2)

Although the previous sentence has referred to faith and righteous deeds which includes faith in the messengership of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ and the revelation that was sent down to him, this sentence specifies explicitly the fact that the actual basis of faith is to embrace all the teachings of the Last Holy Prophet ﷺ.

The word "بال" (*bāl*) in "وَاَصْلَحَ بَالَهُمْ"...and will set aright their state of affairs..(47:2)" is sometimes used in the sense of state of affairs and condition, and at other times in the sense of heart. Here it could refer to both the senses. In the first sense, it means that Allah has set all their affairs aright, that is, He has set aright all their matters of this world and

of the Hereafter. In the second sense, it would mean that Allah has improved their hearts. This also has the same implication, that is, corrected all their works, because correction of works is a logical result of improvement of heart, both being necessary to each other.

Verse 4...

فَإِذَا لَقِيتُمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَضَرْبَ الرِّقَابِ ط حَتَّىٰٓ إِذَآ أَثْخَنتُمُوهُمْ فَشُدُّوا الْوَثَاقَ لا فَإِمَّا مَنًّا بَعْدُ وَإِمَّا فِدَآءً حَتَّىٰ تَضَعَ الْحَرْبُ أَوْزَارَهَا ۚ

So, when you encounter those who disbelieve, then (aim at) smiting the necks, until when you have broken their strength thoroughly, then tie fast the bond, (by making them captives). Then choose (to set them free) either (as) a favour, or (after receiving) ransom, until the war throws down its load of arms...

Commentary

This verse lays down two points of law: first, it lays down that when war breaks the might and power of the enemy, and does away with their pomp and glory, they should be arrested rather than being killed. The Muslims are then given two options regarding the prisoners of war - either confer favour on them and release them without ransom or compensation; or release them against payment of ransom. There are several ways in which ransom may be taken, for instance by exchanging Muslim prisoners of war for non-Muslim prisoners of war. It is also possible to set them free after accepting pecuniary ransom. This injunction is apparently in conflict with the rule mentioned in Sūrah Al-Anfāl. The prisoners of the battle of Badr were released against the payment of ransom, but Allah disapproved and expressed His displeasure against those who opined in favour of releasing them on ransom. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ is reported to have said: "A grave punishment of Allah for this action of ours was very close, and if it had been meted out, no one besides 'Umar Ibn Khaṭṭāb and Sa'd Ibn Mu'adh would have been spared, because only these two companions had disagreed with the idea of accepting pecuniary compensation for the release of the Prisoners of War (POW). (For details, see Ma'āriful Qur'ān, vol 4. pp 272-281). In short, the verses of Sūrah Al-Anfāl prohibits release of prisoners against ransom,

consequently their release without ransom would be prohibited all the more.

On the other hand, this verse of Sūrah Muḥammad permits both the alternatives. Therefore, most of the Companions and jurists express the view that this verse of Sūrah Muḥammad has abrogated the verse of Sūrah Al-Anfāl. Tafsīr Maẓharī records this to be the opinion of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar, Ḥasan, 'Aṭā' رضى الله عنهم اجمعين and majority of the Companions and majority of the jurists. Among the jurists, Thawrī, Shāfi'ī, Aḥmad and Isḥāq also hold this view.

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ says that on the occasion of the battle of Badr, the number of Muslims was small. Therefore, releasing the prisoners against ransom or releasing them as a gesture of grace were both prohibited. Finally, when Islam and Muslims went on to achieve total ascendancy, Allah Ta'ālā abrogated the earlier injunction, and revealed this verse which permits both options. Qāḍī Thana'ullah cites this in his Tafsīr Maẓharī confirming that this is the authentic and preferred view, because the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself acted upon it, and after him the Righteous Caliphs also did the same. Therefore, this verse repeals the verse of Sūrah Al-Anfāl - the reason being that the verse of Sūrah Al-Anfāl was revealed on the occasion of the battle of Badr which took place in the 2nd year of Hijrah. The prisoners that were released by the Holy Prophet ﷺ in the battle of Ḥudaibiyah without ransom in the 6th year of Hijrah was in accordance with this verse of Sūrah Muḥammad.

It is recorded in Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim on the authority of Sayyidnā Anas ﷺ that about eighty Makkans climbed down the mount Tan'īm with the intention of launching a sudden attack on the Messenger of Allah and the Muslim camp. They were all captured, but the Messenger of Allah set them free without any compensation, lest it became the cause of war on that critical occasion. At this, the following verse of Sūrah Al-Fatḥ [48:24] was revealed:

وَهُوَالَّذِىْ كَفَّ اَيْدِيَهُمْ عَنْكُمْ وَاَيْدِيَكُمْ عَنْهُمْ بِبَطْنِ مَكَّةَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ اَنْ اَظْفَرَكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ

"It is He who held their hands back from you, and your hands from them in the valley of Makkah, after giving you victory over them." [2]

According to one version, a popular view of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah is that setting the prisoners of war free with or without ransom is not lawful. Therefore, the Ḥanafī scholars regard this verse of Sūrah Muḥammad as abrogated by the verse of Sūrah Al-Anfāl. But Tafsīr Maẓharī made it clear that the verse of Sūrah Al-Anfāl was revealed first, and the verse of Sūrah Muḥammad later - thus the later verse repealing the earlier verse. Therefore, the preferred view of Imām A'ẓam - in keeping with the opinion of the great majority of the Companions ﷺ and leading jurists - it is lawful, if it is in the best interest and well-being of the Muslims. From amongst the Ḥanafī scholars, 'Allāmah Ibn Humām shows his inclination towards this view in his Fatḥ-ul-Qadīr. He writes that according to the version cited in Qudūrī and Hidāyah, Imām Abū Ḥanīfah does not see it permissible to set prisoners of war free against payment of ransom. But according to another version of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, cited in As-Siyar-ul-Kabīr, it is permitted in conformity with the majority view. Among these two versions, the latter is more likely to be his preferred view. Imām Ṭaḥāwī in his Ma'ānī-l-'Athār has also regarded the latter version as that of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah.

In sum, according to the majority of Companions ﷺ and jurists, neither of the verses under discussion is abrogated. The wordings of the verses of Sūrah Al-Anfāl and Sūrah Muḥammad leave us with the impression that none of these two can be called the abrogator or the abrogated. In fact, they are two injunctions for different situations. The leader of the Muslims may adopt either of the options depending on the conditions and needs of the Muslims. Qurṭubī, on the basis of the Holy Prophet's ﷺ practice and that of the Righteous Caliphs ﷺ, has shown that the prisoners of war were sometimes killed, sometimes enslaved, at other times they were set free against ransom, and yet at other times they were released without compensation. Exacting ransom includes exchange of non-Muslim POWs for Muslim POWs or setting non-Muslim POW free against pecuniary compensation. Having cited these cases, he says that verses that have been regarded as abrogator and abrogated are in fact *Muḥkam* or operative and perspicuous. Thus none of them is abrogated, because when the disbelievers are arrested and come into our control, the leader of the Muslims has four options: [1] if he deems appropriate, he may kill them ; [2] if he feels that it is in the best interest of the Muslims,

he may hold them in bondage; [3] if it is appropriate, he may release them in lieu of pecuniary ransom or in exchange of Muslim POWs ; and [4] if it seems proper, they may be released.

"This is the view of the scholars of Madīnah, Imām Shāfi'ī and Abū 'Ubayd. Imām Ṭaḥāwī cites this as the opinion of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah as well, although his generally known view is that which we have already mentioned. [Qurṭubī: V. 16, p. 228; sentence 16].

Four Options Regarding POW

The foregoing discussion makes clear that the leader of the Muslims has four options regarding prisoners of war. There is a consensus of the entire Ummah on the permissibility of killing them and holding them in bondage. Although there is some difference of opinion on the issue of setting them free against ransom or without ransom, majority of the jurists holds the latter options lawful as well.

The Issue of Slavery in Islam

A question arises here regarding prisoners of war. There are some juristic differences whether they could be set free, but there is no difference of opinion with regard to the permissibility of the latter two cases, i.e. killing them or holding them in bondage. Why did the Qur'ān not mention these two cases explicitly? It merely mentions the two cases where it is permissible to release them. Imām Fakhr-ud-dīn Rāzī responds to this in his Tafsīr Kabīr. He says that only those two options have been mentioned here which are not permissible to enslave Arab POW. Killing of the crippled is not lawful either. Besides, the question of killing has been dealt with elaborately earlier. [Tafsīr Kabīr: p. 508; v. 7].

Another point needs consideration: the permissibility of killing and enslaving was a common knowledge; all knew that the two cases are lawful. As opposed to this, the setting free of POW was prohibited on the occasion of the battle of Badr. On the present occasion, however, the intention was to permit them to be released with or without compensation. Here, there was no need to mention cases that were already known to be permissible. Therefore, these verses are silent about them. Thus, it is not correct to conclude from these verses that after their revelation, the permission to kill or enslave them has been abrogated. If the injunction to enslave had been abrogated, its prohibition would have been mentioned

somewhere in the Qur'ān or in a Ḥadīth. If this verse was an indication of its prohibition, then why were POW held in bondage by the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and after him by the Companions ؓ so ardently dedicated to Qur'ān and Ḥadīth, in a large number of battles after the revelation of the present verses? The narratives of enslaving are recorded in such large numbers in Ḥadīth and history with chains of transmission effectively uninterrupted that denying them would be unreasonable obstinacy.

An objection and its rebuttal

Let us now address the objection that Islam is the great upholder of human rights. Then how is it that it allows the enslaving of human beings?

This objection is a fallacy based on the false analogy drawn between Islamic concept of slavery and its practice in other religions and communities; whereas in Islam after the rights given to the slaves and the social status granted to them, they can hardly be called slaves in the generally accepted sense of the word. They in fact constitute a brotherhood. If the reality and spirit of Islamic concept of slavery is analyzed, we will realize that no better treatment can be meted out to POW than these instances found in Islamic history. A famous orientalist in his book Arab Civilization writes:

> "When the word 'slave' is uttered in the presence of a European who is used to reading American writings, he conceives in his mind those helpless people who are shackled with chains, around whose necks are iron collars, who are lashed with whips and driven forth, whose food is barely enough to subsist, and for whom nothing more than dark dungeons are available to live in. I am not concerned here with how far this is true and to what extent atrocities committed by the British in America for the past several years fit the description . . . However, there is absolutely no doubt about the fact that Islam's concept of slavery is completely different from the Christian concept of slavery ."

The truth of the matter is that in many instances there is no better solution than enslaving the POW, because if they are not enslaved, then logically there are three ways of sorting out the problem: either kill them, or set them free, or keep them as prisoners permanently. More often than not, all these three possibilities might not be in the best interest of the

Muslim Ummah. Killing them might not be appropriate because the POW might be a talented person and his talent would be wasted and lost. Setting him free might be risking the danger of his going away to Dar-ul-ḥarb and once again conspiring against the Muslims. Now there remains two options only: Either to keep him as a prisoner for good and confine him to some remote and separate island as has been the practice nowadays, or enslave him, make use of his talent and take full care of his human rights. It is obvious to every one which of these options is the best, especially since the Islamic viewpoint regarding slaves has been made plain in a famous Ḥadīth of the Holy Prophet ﷺ as follows:

اخوانکم جعلهم اللّٰه تحت ایدیکم فمن کان اخوه تحت یدیه فلیطعمه ممّا یاکل ولیلبسه ممّا یلبس ولا یکلّفه' ما یغلبه فان کلّفه' ما یغلبه فلیعنه' (بخاری، مسلم، ابو داود وغیرهم)

"Your slaves are your brothers, and Allah has put them under your control. So whoever has a brother under his command should feed him of what he eats, and dress him of what he wears. Do not overburden them [slaves] to do things beyond their capacity, and if you do so, then help them." [Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dawūd and others]

The social and civil rights that Islam has accorded to the slaves are almost equal to free individuals. Thus, as opposed to other nations, Islam has not only permitted the slaves to marry but also emphasized that the masters should marry off those of their slaves and slavegirls who are righteous [24:32] so much so that he can even marry a free woman. A slave's share from the spoils of war is equal to that of a free *mujāhid*. If he gives refuge to an enemy, it would be respected in the same way as given by a free individual. There are so many injunctions in Qur'ān and Ḥadīth regarding good treatment of slaves that if they are collected together, they can be compiled into a voluminous book. Sayyidnā 'Alī رضی اللہ عنہ says that the last words of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ before his departure from this earthly life were:

الصّلوٰة الصّلوٰة، اتّقوا اللّٰهَ فیما مَلکت ایمانکم

"Take care of prayer; take care of prayer. Keep your duty to Allah regarding slaves under your command".

Islam organized education and training programme for slaves: its

effect was seen during the reign of 'Abd-ūl-Mālik Ibn Marwān in almost all the provinces of Islamic State. Some of the best and greatest authorities on education and intellectual development were slaves whose chronicles are narrated in several history books. Furthermore, this nominal slavery was gradually abolished or reduced. There is a huge number of Qur'ānic verses and Holy Prophetic Traditions which set out the virtues and merits of setting the slaves free. There is no act better than emancipation of slaves. In juristic injunctions, pretexts have been looked for to emancipate slaves: expiation for violating fast, for murder, for *zihār*, for violating oaths and vows - in all these cases the first compulsory command is to emancipate a slave. A Ḥadīth tells us that if a person has slapped a slave, its expiation is to set him free. Thus, the Companions used to emancipate slaves in large numbers. The author of al-Najm-ul-Wahhāj gives us the following table of the slaves set free by the Companions:

1. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا 69
2. Sayyidnā 'Abbās ﷺ 70
3. Sayyidnā Ḥakīm Ibn Ḥizām ﷺ 100
4. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar ﷺ 1000
5. Sayyidnā 'Uthmān Ghani ﷺ 20
6. Sayyidnā Dhul-Kilā'' Al-Himyari ﷺ .... 8000 [in a day]
7. Sayyidnā 'Abdurraḥmān Ibn 'Auf ﷺ ....30 000 [11]

This table shows that only seven Companions ﷺ set free 39, 259 slaves. Obviously, thousands of other Companions ﷺ must have emancipated countless slaves.

To sum up: anyone who looks impartially at the comprehensive reforms Islam introduced in the system of slavery, he cannot escape the conclusion that drawing analogy between Islamic concept of slavery and its practice among other nations is absolutely false. In fact, permission to enslave POW after these reforms is a great boon to them.

Furthermore, holding POW in bondage is only up to the point of permissibility which means that if an Islamic State deems it appropriate, it may hold them in bondage, but it has not been taken as an obligatory or as a commendable act. As a matter of fact, the collective teachings of

Qur'ān and Ḥadīth lead us to believe that emancipating them is more meritorious. Then this permission, too, extends up to the time the Muslims have not entered into a compact with the enemies. If there is an agreement with the enemies which includes a clause to the effect that neither the enemies will enslave Muslim POW nor will the Muslims enslave the enemy POW, the clause will be binding. In our times, many countries have entered into such covenants. If Muslim countries have participated in such covenants, it would not be lawful for them to enslave as long as this agreement stands.

Verses ...4 - 11

ذٰلِكَ ط وَلَوْ يَشَآءُ اللّٰهُ لَانْتَصَرَ مِنْهُمْ لا وَلٰكِنْ لِّيَبْلُوَا بَعْضَكُمْ بِبَعْضٍ ط
وَالَّذِيْنَ قُتِلُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ فَلَنْ يُّضِلَّ اَعْمَالَهُمْ ﴿٤﴾ سَيَهْدِيْهِمْ
وَيُصْلِحُ بَالَهُمْ ﴿٥﴾ وَيُدْخِلُهُمُ الْجَنَّةَ عَرَّفَهَا لَهُمْ ﴿٦﴾ يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ
اٰمَنُوْٓا اِنْ تَنْصُرُوا اللّٰهَ يَنْصُرْكُمْ وَيُثَبِّتْ اَقْدَامَكُمْ ﴿٧﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا
فَتَعْسًا لَّهُمْ وَاَضَلَّ اَعْمَالَهُمْ ﴿٨﴾ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمْ كَرِهُوْا مَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ
فَاَحْبَطَ اَعْمَالَهُمْ ﴿٩﴾ اَفَلَمْ يَسِيْرُوْا فِي الْاَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرُوْا كَيْفَ كَانَ
عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ط دَمَّرَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمْ ز وَلِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ اَمْثَالُهَا ﴿١٠﴾
ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّ اللّٰهَ مَوْلَى الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَاَنَّ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ لَا مَوْلٰى لَهُمْ ﴿١١﴾ ع

That (is the law). And if Allah willed, He would have (Himself) taken vengeance upon them, but (Allah ordered you to fight,) so that He may test some of you through some others. And those who are killed in Allah's way, He will never let their deeds go in vain. [4] **(Instead,) He will guide them, and will set aright their state of affairs,** [5] **and will admit them to the Paradise He has identified for them.** [6] **O those who believe, if you will help (the religion prescribed by) Allah, He will help you, and will stabilize your footings.** [7] **As for those who disbelieve, (destined) for them is destruction, and He has rendered their deeds vain.** [8] **That is because they hate what Allah has sent down; therefore Allah has nullified their deeds.** [9] **Have they not travelled in the land so that they might**

see how was the end of those before them? Allah brought utter destruction on them. And (ready) for (these) disbelievers are the likes thereof. [10] **That is because Allah is the supporter of those who believe. As for the disbelievers, there is no supporter for them.** [11]

Commentary

Wisdom in the Legality of Jihād

وَلَوْيَشَآءُ اللّٰهُ لَانْتَصَرَمِنْهُمْ (And if Allah willed, He would have [Himself] taken vengeance upon them,...- 47:4) In this verse Allah says that legalizing of armed struggle in His cause against the infidels is a blessing as it replaces celestial punishments. The previous nations were punished with celestial and earthly calamities for their infidelity to Allah, for idolatry and for rebellion against Allah. The Ummah of Muḥammad ﷺ could have suffered the same fate but the Holy Prophet ﷺ is a mercy unto mankind. as a result, the Ummah has been spared destruction by such general calamities. In place of them, *jihād shar'i* has been instituted. This, compared to general calamities, has many facilities and expedience. First of all, in general calamities the entire nation including men, women and children are decimated whereas in the case of Jihād according to the rules of war, women and children are safe and secure. As far as men are concerned, only those of the unbelieving men will have to face the believers who commit aggression and violence against those who protect the religion of Allah. Even among them not all men are killed, because many of them develop the ability to embrace Islamic faith, (or submit themselves as subjects of an Islamic state). Another wisdom in the institution of *Jihād* is that both the sides of war - Muslims and the enemies - are tested: which side is willing to sacrifice his life and wealth at the command of Allah and which side obstinately and stubbornly continues to reject the Truth or, having seen the crystal-clear evidence of Truth and being convinced by the Qur'ānic arguments, embraces Islam.

وَالَّذِيْنَ قُتِلُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ فَلَنْ يُّضِلَّ اَعْمَالَهُمْ (And those who are killed in Allah's way, He will never let their deeds go in vain. - 47:4) At the beginning of the Sūrah it was asserted that those who persist in infidelity and idolatry and obstruct others from practising Islam, Allah rendered all their good deeds void, such as charity, alms, donations, and philanthropic and public welfare activities, because these deeds are not worthy of reward in the Hereafter without faith. Faith is a necessary condition for good works to

be rewarded in the next world. As opposed to the case of the infidels, this verse asserts that those who sacrificed their lives to acquire the glorious privilege of a martyr in the cause of Allah - Allah will never imprint their works with irreverence, profanity or damnation. Even if they did commit sins, their sins will not have a negative impact on their good actions. In fact, often these good deeds of theirs will serve as an expiation for their sins.

سَيَهْدِيهِمْ وَيُصْلِحُ بَالَهُمْ (He will guide them, and will set aright their state of affairs - 47:5). This sentence refers to two of Allah's bounties: First, He will steer them by His guidance; and secondly, He will improve their conditions. The word "state of affairs" includes the conditions of both the worlds - those of this world and those of the Hereafter. Even if a Muslim did not acquire the glorious privilege of a martyr in this world, he too will receive the reward of a martyr; and in the Hereafter he will be spared the torment of the grave and the anxiety of resurrection. If he violated the rights of some human beings, Allah will take upon Himself the responsibility of vindicating him and clearing him of all blame. Steering them by His guidance through the Holy Prophet ﷺ means causing them to reach their desired destination which is the Paradise. The Qur'ān says that the inmates of Paradise, having entered the gardens of Paradise, will show their gratitude to Allah by saying:

اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِیْ هَدٰىنَا لِهٰذَا

"All praise to Allah who has led us unto this. [7:43].

وَيُدْخِلُهُمُ الْجَنَّةَ عَرَّفَهَا لَهُمْ (and will admit them to the Paradise He has identified for them. - 47:6). This is the third bounty of Allah. He will not only admit them into Paradise but will identify for them the gardens of bliss and will make them familiar with such bounties as houris and mansions in a way that it would seem to them that they have been living there since eternity. If such an acquaintance was not made, Paradise would have seemed a strange world. It would have taken them time to find their abode, to accustom themselves with the new environment, and they would not overcome the sense of unfamiliarity for a period of time.

Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه reports that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "By Him who sent me with the religion of Truth! As you are closely familiar with your wives and homes in this world, so you will know your abode

and your wives of Paradise - rather even better. Some reports of Ḥadīth tell us that an angel will be appointed for every single inmate of Paradise who will introduce them to their abode and wives in Paradise. Allah knows best.

وَلِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ اَمْثَالُهَا (And [ready] for [these] disbelievers are the likes thereof. - 47:10). Grammatically, the article "*alif lām*" *in al-kafirīna*" in this context is used to indicate some specific disbelievers, and refers to the infidels of Makkah. The purpose of this sentence is to warn them: as the previous generations were punished for their iniquity, so will you meet similar fate for your iniquitous behavior. Do not be unconcerned!

وَاَنَّ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ لَا مَوْلٰى لَهُمْ (As for the disbelievers, there is no supporter for them. - 47:11). The word مولى "*mawlā*" is used in several different senses. One of its meanings is "protector" or "supporter". This is the sense in which it is used here. Another sense of the word is "owner/master". In Qur'ān [10:30] we come across: رُدُّوْا اِلَى اللّٰهِ مَوْلٰىهُمُ الْحَقِّ "They will be returned to Allah, their Master, the Truth" (10:30). In this phrase, Allah is called the "*mawlā*" of the infidels, that is, their Master / Owner because the mastership / ownership of Allah extends over all - the believers as well as the non-believers; without any exclusion.

Verses 12 - 15

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُدْخِلُ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِىْ مِنْ
تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ ؕ وَالَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا يَتَمَتَّعُوْنَ وَيَاْكُلُوْنَ كَمَا تَاْكُلُ الْاَنْعَامُ
وَالنَّارُ مَثْوًى لَّهُمْ ﴿۱۲﴾ وَكَاَيِّنْ مِّنْ قَرْيَةٍ هِىَ اَشَدُّ قُوَّةً مِّنْ قَرْيَتِكَ
الَّتِىْٓ اَخْرَجَتْكَ ۚ اَهْلَكْنٰهُمْ فَلَا نَاصِرَ لَهُمْ ﴿۱۳﴾ اَفَمَنْ كَانَ عَلٰى بَيِّنَةٍ
مِّنْ رَّبِّهٖ كَمَنْ زُيِّنَ لَهٗ سُوْٓءُ عَمَلِهٖ وَاتَّبَعُوْٓا اَهْوَآءَهُمْ ﴿۱۴﴾ مَثَلُ الْجَنَّةِ
الَّتِىْ وُعِدَ الْمُتَّقُوْنَ ؕ فِيْهَآ اَنْهٰرٌ مِّنْ مَّآءٍ غَيْرِ اٰسِنٍ ۚ وَاَنْهٰرٌ مِّنْ لَّبَنٍ لَّمْ
يَتَغَيَّرْ طَعْمُهٗ ۚ وَاَنْهٰرٌ مِّنْ خَمْرٍ لَّذَّةٍ لِّلشّٰرِبِيْنَ ۚ وَاَنْهٰرٌ مِّنْ عَسَلٍ مُّصَفًّى
ؕ وَلَهُمْ فِيْهَا مِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرٰتِ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّهِمْ ؕ كَمَنْ هُوَ خَالِدٌ فِى

النَّارِ وَسُقُوا مَآءً حَمِيمًا فَقَطَّعَ أَمْعَآءَهُمْ ﴿١٥﴾

Surely, Allah will admit those who believe and do good deeds to the gardens beneath which rivers flow. And those who disbelieve enjoy (the worldly life), and eat as cattle eat, and the Fire is the final abode for them. [12] **And how many a town, stronger in might than your town that has expelled you, have We destroyed! Then, there was none to help them.** [13] **Then, can one who holds on to a clear proof from his Lord be like those for whom their evil deeds are beautified, and who followed their desires?** [14] **(Here is) a description of the Paradise that is promised for the God-fearing! In it there are rivers of water, never spoiling, and rivers of milk the taste of which would not go bad, and rivers of wine, delicious to the drinkers, and rivers of honey, fully purified. And for them there are all sorts of fruits, and forgiveness from their Lord. Are they like those who will live in Fire forever, and will be given boiling water to drink, and it will tear their bowels into pieces.** [15]

Commentary

Essential Characteristics of Paradise

Verse sixteen mentions four kinds of favours and blessings in the next world, that is, rivers of pure water, rivers of milk of which the taste does not change, rivers of wine which gives delight and rivers of purified honey which will be given to the righteous in plenty.

Worldly waters become polluted by getting mixed with earth, vegetation and other adulterating substances which make them stink. But in Paradise, there will be rivers having un-pollutable water. The river of pure, clean water that will not go bad in taste, smell or colour, (and will flow uninterruptedly without layers of dregs, scum or any other unpleasant- looking substances).

Milk, in this world, is secreted by the mammary glands of female mammals, such as the cow's udders or the breasts of the human female, and soon it starts to deteriorate. In Paradise it will flow in rivers and the Heavenly milk will never be spoilt. Its taste will be eternally delicious, relishing and delightful.

Worldly wine has a foul smell and a bitter taste, (though the ones

addict to it do not feel its bitterness, being accustomed to it). But the Heavenly wine will give endless delight to the drinker. In Sūrah As-Ṣaffāt [37:47] the Qur'ān describes the Heavenly wine as لَافِيْهَا غَوْلٌ وَّ لَاهُمْ عَنْهَا يُنْزَفُوْنَ : "which has no headache in it, nor from it will they be intoxicated."

Honey, in this world, is the secretion derived principally from the nectaries of flowers, from which it is extracted by bees in the form of nectar and deposited in their honey-sacs, where it undergoes a certain change prior to storage in the cells of the comb. When it is ripe, that is, it has become sufficiently thick by evaporation, it may now be extracted or thrown from the honey-comb by centrifugal force or by gravity. When it is so extracted, it needs to be clarified of the accompanying particles of wax, scum and other unwanted substances. However, the honey in Paradise will be pure and clean and will be available amply, as rivers of honey will flow uninterruptedly without layers of dregs, scum or any other unpleasant-looking substances.

All four kinds of rivers - of water, milk, wine and honey - are used in their primary senses. There is no need to apply them unnecessarily in their figurative sense. However, it is obvious that the bounties of Paradise cannot be compared to things of this world. The taste and quality of the bounties of Paradise will be unique and can only be experienced in the gardens of Paradise.

Verses 16 - 18

وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَّسْتَمِعُ اِلَيْكَ حَتّٰىٓ اِذَا خَرَجُوْا مِنْ عِنْدِكَ قَالُوْا لِلَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْعِلْمَ مَاذَا قَالَ اٰنِفًا قف اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ طَبَعَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى قُلُوْبِهِمْ وَاتَّبَعُوْٓا اَهْوَآءَهُمْ ﴿١٦﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ اهْتَدَوْا زَادَهُمْ هُدًى وَّاٰتٰىهُمْ تَقْوٰىهُمْ ﴿١٧﴾ فَهَلْ يَنْظُرُوْنَ اِلَّا السَّاعَةَ اَنْ تَاْتِيَهُمْ بَغْتَةً ۚ فَقَدْ جَآءَ اَشْرَاطُهَا ۚ فَاَنّٰى لَهُمْ اِذَا جَآءَتْهُمْ ذِكْرٰىهُمْ ﴿١٨﴾

And among them there are ones who (pretend to) give ear to you, until when they go out from your presence, they say to those who have been given knowledge, "What

did he say just now?" Those are the ones on whose hearts Allah has put a seal, and they have followed their desires. [16] **As for those who have adopted right path, Allah improves them in guidance, and gives them their piety.** [17] **They are waiting for nothing but the Hour that it should come upon them suddenly. So, its signs have already come. Then, once it will come upon them, how would they have an opportunity to accept the advice (already) given to them?** [18]

Commentary

The lexical item اشراط *"ashrāṭ"* occurring in this passage means "signs". The portents of the last Hour starts with the very advent of Khatam-un-Nabiyyīn [the Last of the Holy Prophets] as the end of the Holy Prophethood is the sign of the approach of the last Hour. The miracle of the splitting of the moon by the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been described thus in the Holy Qur'ān [54:1]: اِقْتَرَبَتِ السَّاعَةُ "The hour has drawn near and the moon has split." - indicating that this miracle is also one of the signs of the last Hour. These are initial portents of the Hour which appeared at the time of the revelation of the Qur'ān. Besides, there are many other portents that have been predicted in authentic Aḥādīth, one of which is reported by Anas ؓ in which he says that I have heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say: "Among the signs of the last hour is the removal of knowledge, abundance of ignorance, the prevalence of fornication, the prevalence of wine-drinking, the small number of men and the large number of women so that fifty women will have one man to look after them". (Bukhari and Muslim) A version has "knowledge will dwindle and ignorance will be widespread."

Abū Hurayrah ؓ reports Allah's Messenger ﷺ as saying: "When the spoils of war are taken as personal wealth, property given in trust is treated as spoil, *zakāh* is treated as a fine, learning is acquired for other than religious purpose, a man obeys his wife and is undutiful towards his mother, brings his friend near and drives his father far off, voices are raised in the mosques, the most wicked member of a tribe becomes its ruler, the most worthless member of a people becomes its leader, a man is honored through fear of the evil he may do, singing-girls and stringed-instruments make their appearance, wines are drunk, and the last members of this community curse the earlier ones, look at that time for a violent wind, an earthquake, being swallowed up by the earth,

metamorphosis, pelting rain, and signs following one another like bits of a necklace falling one after the other when its string is cut. (Tirmidhi)

Verse 19

فَاعْلَمْ اَنَّهٗ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لِذَنْۢبِكَ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَالْمُؤْمِنٰتِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ مُتَقَلَّبَكُمْ وَمَثْوٰىكُمْ ﴿۱۹﴾

So, know for sure that there is no god but Allah, and seek forgiveness for your fault, and for (the faults of) the believing men and believing women. And Allah knows your moving from place to place and your permanent abode. [19]

Commentary

In this verse the address is to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and he is, through an imperative verb, commanded to know that there is no object of worship besides Allah. It is quite obvious that every Muslim has the knowledge of this - let alone the leader of the Holy Prophets ﷺ who should have its knowledge more profoundly. Then why is he enjoined to acquire this knowledge? There can be two responses to this question: it can either mean that the Holy Prophet ﷺ is enjoined to be steadfast in his worship of Allah or it could mean that he must fulfill the demands of his knowledge. Qurṭubī cites the incident of Sufyān Ibn 'Uyaynah رحمه الله تعالى who was asked about the significance of knowledge, he replied: Did you not read verse 19 of Sūrah Muḥammad: فَاعْلَمْ اَنَّهٗ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لِذَنْۢبِكَ "So, know for sure (O Holy Prophet ﷺ) that there is no god but Allah, and seek forgiveness for your fault. It is required in this verse that knowledge should be acquired before action. Similarly, on other occasions in the Qur'ān, first it is enjoined to acquire knowledge and then to fulfil its corresponding demands. For example, in [57:20] the Holy Qur'ān has said, اِعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّمَا الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَا لَعِبٌ وَّلَهْوٌ "Know that the present life is but a sport and a diversion ..." Then it was said, سَابِقُوْٓا اِلٰى مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ "Race to forgiveness from your Lord (57:21)". In Sūrah Anfāl, (verse) the Qur'ān says: وَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّمَآ اَمْوَالُكُمْ وَاَوْلَادُكُمْ فِتْنَةٌ .

"Know that your wealth and children are a trial..." The demand of this knowledge is mentioned in Sūrah At-Taghābun (Verse 14): فَاحْذَرُوْهُمْ "...so be fearful of Him.". Thus on these occasions first the knowledge of

different things are imparted, and then it is enjoined to fulfil the demands of that knowledge.

In this context, although the Holy Prophet ﷺ had prior knowledge of the Oneness of Allah, the injunction here is for the Holy Prophet ﷺ to fulfil the demand of this fundamental knowledge, that is, "وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لِذَنْبِكَ and ask forgiveness for your faults (47:19)". The Holy Prophet ﷺ is infallible and immune from sin, and therefore the possibility that he would commit sins is unthinkable. Despite this, the possibility of Allah's Holy Prophets ﷺ committing misjudgment in *Ijtihād* cannot be ruled out. But, according to the sacred law, such mistakes are not regarded as sins. In fact, they are rewarded, though the prophets علیهم السلام are told about the correct position, and keeping in view the high status of the prophets, such mistakes too are sometimes referred to as "*dhanb*" (fault or sin), as for instance in Sūrah 'Abasa [80] the Holy Prophets] was criticized for his misjudgment. The details will be set out when discussing that Sūrah. The error of judgement referred to in that Sūrah was not really a sin. In fact, a reward was promised to him for that, but because it was not in conformity with his high status, Allah Ta'ālā expressed His dislike. This type of "*dhanb*" (fault) is referred to in the current verse.

Note

Sayyidnā Abū Bakr Ṣiddīq رضی الله عنه reports that Allah's Messenger ﷺ said: Recite لا اله الا الله *lā-ilāha-illallāh* and استغفار *istighfār* frequently because Iblīs (Satan) says, 'I got people involved in sins and destroyed them, but they destroyed me by reciting *illallāh*, so I got them involved in false and baseless thoughts and notions which they pursue as true, authentic and righteous, (for instance, the common religious innovations (*bid'āt*), because they treat them as righteous,) hence, they do not feel any need to repent for their practice of innovations.

مُتَقَلَّبَكُمْ وَمَثْوٰىكُمْ, last line (your moving from place to place and your permanent abode.) The word مُتَقَلَّب *mutaqallab* lexically means "turning around or turning over". The word *mathwā* means "permanent resting place ". It is open to several interpretations. As a result, the commentators have assigned different meanings to the phrase. As a matter of fact, all the meanings attached to the phrase are correct, sound, authentic and true, because human beings are confronted by two types of conditions: in

the one case their involvement in something is temporary, and in the other case it is permanent. Likewise, in some places man's stay is temporary and in other places it is permanent. In the concluding phrase of the current verse, the word مُتَقَلَّب *mutaqallab* has been used to describe "temporary" and مَثْوًى *mathwā* is used to describe "permanent". Thus this verse signifies that Allah is fully aware of all conditions of human beings.

Verses 20 - 31

وَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ اٰمَنُوا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَتْ سُورَةٌ ۚ فَإِذَآ أُنْزِلَتْ سُورَةٌ مُّحْكَمَةٌ وَّذُكِرَ فِيهَا الْقِتَالُ ۙ رَأَيْتَ الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ يَّنْظُرُونَ إِلَيْكَ نَظَرَ الْمَغْشِيِّ عَلَيْهِ مِنَ الْمَوْتِ ۖ فَأَوْلٰى لَهُمْ ﴿٢٠﴾ طَاعَةٌ وَّقَوْلٌ مَّعْرُوفٌ ۚ فَإِذَا عَزَمَ الْأَمْرُ ۚ فَلَوْ صَدَقُوا اللّٰهَ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَّهُمْ ﴿٢١﴾ فَهَلْ عَسَيْتُمْ إِنْ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ أَنْ تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَتُقَطِّعُوٓا أَرْحَامَكُمْ ﴿٢٢﴾ أُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِينَ لَعَنَهُمُ اللّٰهُ فَأَصَمَّهُمْ وَأَعْمٰٓى أَبْصَارَهُمْ ﴿٢٣﴾ أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْاٰنَ أَمْ عَلٰى قُلُوبٍ أَقْفَالُهَا ﴿٢٤﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ ارْتَدُّوا عَلٰٓى أَدْبَارِهِمْ مِّنْ ۢ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الْهُدَى ۙ الشَّيْطٰنُ سَوَّلَ لَهُمْ ۖ وَأَمْلٰى لَهُمْ ﴿٢٥﴾ ذٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَالُوا لِلَّذِينَ كَرِهُوا مَا نَزَّلَ اللّٰهُ سَنُطِيعُكُمْ فِي بَعْضِ الْأَمْرِ ۚ وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ إِسْرَارَهُمْ ﴿٢٦﴾ فَكَيْفَ إِذَا تَوَفَّتْهُمُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ يَضْرِبُونَ وُجُوهَهُمْ وَأَدْبَارَهُمْ ﴿٢٧﴾ ذٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمُ اتَّبَعُوا مَآ أَسْخَطَ اللّٰهَ وَكَرِهُوا رِضْوَانَهُ فَأَحْبَطَ أَعْمَالَهُمْ ﴿٢٨﴾ أَمْ حَسِبَ الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ أَنْ لَّنْ يُّخْرِجَ اللّٰهُ أَضْغَانَهُمْ ﴿٢٩﴾ وَلَوْ نَشَآءُ لَأَرَيْنٰكَهُمْ فَلَعَرَفْتَهُمْ بِسِيمٰهُمْ ۖ وَلَتَعْرِفَنَّهُمْ فِي لَحْنِ الْقَوْلِ ۖ وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ أَعْمَالَكُمْ ﴿٣٠﴾ وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ حَتّٰى نَعْلَمَ الْمُجٰهِدِينَ مِنْكُمْ وَالصّٰبِرِينَ ۙ وَنَبْلُوَا أَخْبَارَكُمْ ﴿٣١﴾

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And the believers say, "Why has a (new) *sūrah* not been revealed?" Then, once an operative *sūrah* is sent down, and fighting (in Allah's way) is mentioned in it, you notice those who have disease in their hearts, looking to you like one who is faint because of death. So, destruction is very close to them. [20] **The (reality of their) obedience and (truthfulness of their) speech is fully known (as being mere deception). So, had they been truthful to Allah, once the matter had become serious, it would have been much better for them.** [21] **So, (O hypocrites,) do you not apprehend that, in case you turn away (from Jihād), you will spread disorder in the land, and will sever your ties of kinship? Those are the ones whom Allah has cursed; so He has made them deaf, and made their eyes blind.** [23] **Then, do they not give serious thought to the Qur'ān, or do they have locks on their hearts?** [24] **Surely those who turn back after the guidance has appeared to them clearly, it is Satan who has tempted them and involved them in far-fetched fancies.** [25] **That is because they say to those who hate that which Allah has revealed, "We will obey you in some respects." And Allah knows their secret talk.** [26] **So, how (will it be) when the angels will exact their souls, smiting their faces and their backs.** [27] **That is because they followed that which has angered Allah, and they disliked His pleasure; therefore He has nullified their deeds.** [28] **Do those having disease in their hearts rather think that Allah will never expose their grudges (against Islam)?** [29] **And if We will, We would show them to you, so as you would definitely recognize them by their features. And (still) you will recognize them by the tone of (their) speech. And Allah knows (all) your deeds.** [30] **And We will certainly test you until We know those of you who carry out Jihād (struggle in Allah's way) and observe patience, and until We check the reports about you.** [31]

Commentary

سُوْرَةٌ مُّحْكَمَةٌ (an operative *sūrah*): The word مُّحْكَمَةٌ *muḥkamah* lexically means "firm". In this lexical sense, every *sūrah* is *muḥkam,* but here it is used in its technical sense. In the technical parlance of the sacred law, the term *muḥkam* is used as an antonym of *mansūkh,* ("abrogated"). Here the word Sūrah has been qualified by the adjective *muḥkamah* so that the eagerness of the believers for a new Sūrah is understandable only when it embodies an operative divine commandment that is not abrogated.

Qatādah says that all Sūrahs which contain the injunctions of *Jihād* and *Qitāl* are operative and not abrogated. As the main objective of this Sūrah is to enjoin fighting and to persuade people to carry out the injunction, the adjectival phrase is: Sūrah *muḥkamah* - indicating the injunction of *Jihād*. (Qurtubi)

أَوْلٰى لَهُمْ (So, destruction is very close to them - 47:20] The Arabic word used in the text, according to Asma'ī, means that the causes of destruction have approached or drawn near to them (Qurtubi).

فَهَلْ عَسَيْتُمْ إِنْ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ أَنْ تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَتُقَطِّعُوا أَرْحَامَكُمْ (So, [O hypocrites,] do you not apprehend that, in case you turn away (from *Jihād*), you will spread disorder in the land, and will sever your ties of kinship? - 47:22). The word تَوَلّٰى *'tawalla'* used in the text lexically has two senses: it could mean *I'rāḍ*, that is, "turning away" and it could also mean to be placed in authority over the people. Some of the commentators of the Qur'ān assigned the first meaning to this word in the context of this verse, and Abū Ḥayyān in his Al-Baḥr-ul-Muḥīṭ prefers this interpretation, (and the translation given above is based on it.) From this point of view the meaning of the verse would be: If you turned away from Jihād [struggling in the cause of Allah] and other injunctions of Sharī'ah, you would return to the ancient system of ignorance which Islam has abolished. In the Pre-Islamic Days, according to the practices of *jāhiliyyah*, for centuries they caused corruption and severed ties of kinship. For example, they practiced injustice; they cut each other's throat; one tribe attacked another tribe; they committed carnage and massacre; and they buried alive their daughters with their own hands. Islam abolished and wiped out all these and other heinous practices of the Days of Ignorance. In order to wipe out these heinous crimes of those days, Islam enjoined Jihād which apparently seems to be bloodshed, but in reality it is analogous to amputation of the diseased limb of a body, so that the rest of the body may remain healthy. Jihād establishes justice and equity and maintains ties of kinship and relationship.

Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī, Qurṭubī and others take the second meaning of the word *tawallī* in this context, that is, to be placed in authority over people. From this point of view, the meaning of the verse would be: if your ambitions of being placed in authority over people and the affairs of the world are entrusted to you whilst you are morally unhealthy, you would

cause corruption in the land and cut off ties of kinship and relationship.

Strict Maintenance of Kinship Ties

The word أَرْحَام *'arḥām'* is the plural of رَحِم *'raḥīm'* (womb). This is a receptacle or repository in the mother where the young humans are conceived, held, protected and developed before birth. Because that is the source of all relationships and kinship, it is idiomatically used in the sense of human relationship and kinship. Tafsīr Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī, on this occasion, has explained in detail the relations covered by the term *dhawil arḥām* or *arḥām*. Islam has laid great stress on fulfilling the rights of relationship. Bukhārī records a Ḥadīth on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ and two other Companions to the effect that whoever maintains good relations with the kith and kin Allah will keep good relations with him, but whoever severs his bonds of kinship, Allah too will sever His relations with him. This Ḥadīth indicates how important it is to treat relatives kindly in terms of words, deeds and wealth. In the same Ḥadīth, Abū Hurairah ﷺ refers to the verse under discussion [47:22] and says "Read it if you wish to". In another Tradition, the Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said that there is a sin for which one will be punished, not only in the Hereafter, but also in this world, that is, ... breaking kinship bonds. In Thawbān ﷺ Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said: "Whoever wishes to have his life prolonged and his sustenance blessed should treat his relatives kindly." We come across the following Ḥadīth in Bukhārī:

ليس الواصل بالمكافى ولكنّ الواصل الذى اذا قطعت رحمه وصلها

> "The person who perfectly maintains the ties of kinship is not the one who does it because he gets recompensed by his relatives for being kind and good to them, but the one who truly maintains the bonds of kinship is he who treats his kinsmen fairly, even though others have severed the ties of kinship with him." (Ibn Kathīr)

أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ لَعَنَهُمُ اللَّهُ (Those are the ones whom Allah has cursed - 47:23) In other words, people who cause corruption in the land and break bonds of kinship have been cursed by Allah, that is, Allah has driven them away from His mercy. On the basis of this verse, Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ regarded the sale of *ummul-walad* unlawful. *Ummul-walad* is a term used in Islamic law for a female slave who has borne a child to her master, and

who is consequently free at his death. Thus the sale of the mother would result in separating the child from the mother, and this would lead to severing kinship tie between mother and child which necessitates the curse of Allah. Therefore, the sale of *ummul-walad* was declared unlawful [23].

Law Relating to Cursing a Particular Person: The Issue of Cursing Yazīd

When 'Abdullāh asked his father Imām Aḥmad about the permissibility of cursing Yazīd, the Imām replied: "Why should we not curse a person whom Allah has cursed in the Qur'ān?" 'Abdullāh said that he read the Qur'ān in its entirety but he did not find Yazīd is cursed anywhere. The father recited the present verse and said, 'Who could be worse than Yazīd in breaking up relationships? He did not even care for the Holy Prophet's ﷺ relations.' However, majority of the Ummah hold the view that it is not permissible to curse any particular person unless we know for sure that he died in the state of disbelief. We can nevertheless use cursing phrase with general characteristics, such as curse of Allah be upon the liars, curse of Allah be upon the mischief-makers, and curse of Allah be upon the breaker of kinship]. Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī on this occasion has discussed this issue elaborately.

اَمْ عَلٰى قُلُوْبٍ اَقْفَالُهَا (or do they have locks on their hearts? - 47:24) The meaning of this phrase is synonymous with similar phrases in other verses of the Qur'ān where words like *khatm* or *ṭab'* "[Allah] has set a seal [on their hearts] have been used to describe how the disbelievers refuse to employ their hearts for the comprehension of truth, as a natural consequence their capacities to distinguish right from wrong have become atrophied. Carelessly, committing sins all the time is the main cause of this. Allah forbid!

الشَّيْطٰنُ سَوَّلَ لَهُمْ ؕ وَاَمْلٰى لَهُمْ (it is Satan who has tempted them and involved them in far-fetched fancies. - 47:25). In this sentence, two acts have been ascribed to the devil: - *taswīl* [meaning the act of decking out evil works fair to some people, and *imlā'* meaning the act of giving respite. First, he made their evil works look good and beautiful to them, and then prolonged their false hopes which will never be fulfilled.

اَمْ حَسِبَ الَّذِيْنَ فِىْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ اَنْ لَّنْ يُّخْرِجَ اللّٰهُ اَضْغَانَهُمْ (Do those having disease in

their hearts rather think that Allah will never expose their grudges [against Islam]? - 47:29)" The word *aḍghān* is the plural of *ḍighn* which means secret enmity, rancour, malice or spite. This verse was revealed in connection with hypocrites to expose their bitter hatred and rancour against Islam which they were hiding in their hearts. Outwardly, they expressed their love for the Holy Prophet ﷺ and inwardly they harbored violent hatred and enmity for him. They knew that Allah is the knower of the unseen, yet they were not concerned that He would expose their inner secret and covert enmity to the people. Ibn Kathīr says in Sūrah Barā'ah that Allah has described their works, actions and activities which expose their hypocrisy and they would be identified as hypocrites. Therefore, another name of that Sūrah is *fāḍiḥah* meaning exposing to shame or disgrace, because specific qualities of the hypocrites are set out in it.

وَلَوْ نَشَاءُ لَأَرَيْنٰكَهُمْ فَلَعَرَفْتَهُمْ بِسِيمٰهُمْ (And if We will, We would show them to you, so as you would definitely recognize them by their features - 47:30). In other words, if Allah wishes, He could pinpoint and define precisely who the hypocrites are and describe their features so that the Holy Prophet ﷺ could identify each hypocrite personally. Grammatically, the Qur'ān has introduced this clause by the hypothetical particle *lau* "if". Thus introduced, the sentence implies that what is supposed either does not occur or is not likely to take place. From this point of view, the clause implies that if Allah had willed, He would have pinpointed every hypocrite to you personally, but His wisdom and clemency did not wish to expose them to shame and disgrace in this way, and thus maintain the principle that all worldly matters be decided by their outer appearance, and the inner conditions and matters of the heart be left to the All-Knowing Allah. However, Allah has given to the Holy Prophet ﷺ the insight, so that he is able to perceive into the inner nature and real character of the hypocrites by the style of their speech. This is the meaning of وَلَتَعْرِفَنَّهُمْ فِىْ لَحْنِ الْقَوْلِ "... And (still) you will recognize them by the tone of (their) speech. - 47:30]...". (Ibn Kathir)

Sayyidnā 'Uthmān Ibn 'Affān رضي الله عنه says that anyone who conceals a secret in his heart, Allah displays it on his face, and brings it out by the slip of his tongue. In other words, in the course of conversation, some such words slip out which express their inner secrets. Likewise there is a Ḥadīth which reports that any person harboring a secret thought in his

heart, Allah puts a cover on it; if it is good, it becomes manifest, and if it is evil, that too becomes manifest. Some narrations of *aḥādīth* have described that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was imparted the knowledge of a group of the hypocrites by name. For example, it is recorded in Musnad of Imām Aḥmad on the authority of 'Uqbah Ibn 'Amr ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ in one of his sermons called out the names of particular hypocrites and asked them to leave the congregation. Thirty-six names were counted altogether. (Ibn Kathir)

حَتّٰى نَعْلَمَ الْمُجٰهِدِيْنَ مِنْكُمْ (...until We know those of you who carry out Jihād,... - 47:31) Allah's knowledge of every person's works and deeds is all-encompassing and eternal. It may be noted here that knowledge is of two kinds: [i] a *priori* knowledge or fore-knowledge, knowledge about a thing before its occurrence; and [ii] a *posteriori* knowledge or -in Mariam knowledge, knowledge about a thing after it has actually happened. Here knowledge refers to the second category. Allah's knowledge of things is since eternity. In this context, the knowledge about things is a *posteriori*, after the occurrence of the events in the external world. (Ibn Kathir) (The purport of this part of the verse is that Allah has enjoined fighting on the believers so that sincere believers may become distinguished from the hypocrites who shrink in horror at the very thought of fighting). Allah knows best.

Verses 32 - 38

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَصَدُّوْا عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ وَشَآقُّوا الرَّسُوْلَ مِنْ بَعْدِ
مَاتَبَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الْهُدٰى لَنْ يَّضُرُّوا اللّٰهَ شَيْئًا وَسَيُحْبِطُ اَعْمَالَهُمْ
﴿٣٢﴾ يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اَطِيْعُوا اللّٰهَ وَاَطِيْعُوا الرَّسُوْلَ وَلَا تُبْطِلُوْٓا
اَعْمَالَكُمْ ﴿٣٣﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَصَدُّوْا عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ثُمَّ مَاتُوْا
وَهُمْ كُفَّارٌ فَلَنْ يَّغْفِرَ اللّٰهُ لَهُمْ ﴿٣٤﴾ فَلَا تَهِنُوْا وَتَدْعُوْٓا اِلَى السَّلْمِ
وَاَنْتُمُ الْاَعْلَوْنَ وَاللّٰهُ مَعَكُمْ وَلَنْ يَّتِرَكُمْ اَعْمَالَكُمْ ﴿٣٥﴾ اِنَّمَا
الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَا لَعِبٌ وَّلَهْوٌ وَاِنْ تُؤْمِنُوْا وَتَتَّقُوْا يُؤْتِكُمْ اُجُوْرَكُمْ وَلَا
يَسْئَلْكُمْ اَمْوَالَكُمْ ﴿٣٦﴾ اِنْ يَّسْئَلْكُمُوْهَا فَيُحْفِكُمْ تَبْخَلُوْا وَيُخْرِجْ

اَضْغَانَكُمْ ﴿٣٧﴾ هٰٓاَنْتُمْ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ تُدْعَوْنَ لِتُنْفِقُوْا فِىْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ۚ فَمِنْكُمْ مَّنْ يَّبْخَلُ ۚ وَمَنْ يَّبْخَلْ فَاِنَّمَا يَبْخَلُ عَنْ نَّفْسِهٖ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ الْغَنِىُّ وَاَنْتُمُ الْفُقَرَآءُ ۚ وَاِنْ تَتَوَلَّوْا يَسْتَبْدِلْ قَوْمًا غَيْرَكُمْ ۙ ثُمَّ لَا يَكُوْنُوْٓا اَمْثَالَكُمْ ﴿٣٨﴾

Those who disbelieve and prevent (others) from Allah's way, and oppose the Messenger, after the Guidance has appeared to them clearly, shall never bring harm to Allah in the least, and He will render their deeds vain. [32] **O those who believe, obey Allah and obey the Messenger, and do not nullify your deeds.** [33] **Those who disbelieve and prevent (others) from Allah's way, then die as unbelievers, Allah will never forgive them.** [34] **So, do not lose heart, and do not appeal for peace; you will be the uppermost, and Allah is with you; and He will never deprive you of your deeds.** [35] **The worldly life is but play and pastime. And if you believe and be God-fearing, He will give you your rewards, and will not ask you your riches.** [36] **If He were to ask you of it, and were to press you, you would show miserliness, and He would expose your grudges.** [37] **Yes, you are such that you are called upon to spend in Allah's way, but some of you withhold in miserliness_ and he who withholds in miserliness withholds against himself_ and Allah is the Need-Free, and you are the needy. And if you turn away, He will replace you by some other people, then they will not be like you.** [38]

Commentary

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَصَدُّوْا عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ (Those who disbelieve and prevent (others) from Allah's way ... - 47:32) This verse also refers to the hypocrites, and the Jewish tribes of Banū Quraiẓah and Banū Naḍīr. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ says that this verse refers to those hypocrites who, on the occasion of the battle of Badr, joined forces with the infidels of Quraysh and helped them in such a way that twelve men of the two tribes took upon themselves the responsibility of feeding the entire army. Each one of the twelve men took turns to organize meal for the enemy camp on different days.

وَسَيُحْبِطُ اَعْمَالَهُمْ (...and He will render their deeds vain - 47:32)

Ḥabt-ul-a'māl (rendering deeds vain) could have one of the two meanings: [i] their efforts to undermine Islam would be unsuccessful and fail as explained in the foregoing commentary of this verse; and [ii] on account of their disbelief and hypocrisy, their good deeds - such as charity , free will offerings, philanthropic activities and so on - will all be rendered void and will not be acceptable.

لَاتُبْطِلُوْٓا اَعْمَالَكُمْ (... and do not nullify your deeds... - 47:33) Here the Qur'ān has employed the phrase *ibṭāl-ul-a'māl* instead of *ḥabṭ-ul-a'māl* because the scope of the former phrase is much wider than the latter phrase, because *ibṭāl-ul-a'māl* may be interpreted in two ways: In the one case it takes place on account of disbelief which was described in the foregoing verse by the phrase *ḥabt-ul-a'māl* because no action of a die-hard infidel is ever acceptable on account of disbelief. If anyone embraced Islam and later abandoned it, all his good actions performed during the days of Islam will be rendered vain albeit good works of the days of Islam are acceptable. The good works, in this case, will be made vain because of the subsequent disbelief and apostasy.

The other case of *ibṭāl-ul-a'māl* is that the acceptability of some righteous deeds is sometimes conditional upon other righteous acts. If the condition is not fulfilled, the righteous deeds will be rendered fruitless. For example, for every righteous action to be acceptable, the necessary condition is that it must be performed exclusively and sincerely for Allah. It must not be performed to make an ostentatious display to people. Let us take a few examples of this rule from the Qur'ān: In [98:5] we read:

وَمَآ اُمِرُوْٓا اِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ مُخْلِصِيْنَ لَهُ الدِّيْنَ

"They were commanded only to worship Allah, making their submission sincere for Him, (98:5)".

On another occasion in the Qur'ān [39:3] we read:

اَلَا لِلّٰهِ الدِّيْنُ الْخَالِصُ

"Unquestionably, for Allah is the pure religion" [39:3].

This goes to show that all good works - to be acceptable - must be done with the sincerity of heart and honesty of purpose. Otherwise they will be rendered void by Allah. On a third occasion in the Qur'ān [2:264] we read: لَاتُبْطِلُوْا صَدَقٰتِكُمْ بِالْمَنِّ وَالْاَذٰى "O those who believe, do not nullify your charities

by boasting about favour, and teasing (2:264)". This shows that giving charity to a needy person and then following it up by demands of gratitude or insulting words or hurting him in some other way will only nullify his charitable act. This probably could be the meaning of what Ḥasan Baṣrī has said when interpreting this verse: "Do not render vain your own good works by means of sins." Although the apparent sense of this statement is that if one commits a sin, all his good deeds are nullified, yet this being against the well-established position, its real purpose cannot be other than it refers only to those sins that are relevant to a particular virtuous act and which nullify that particular act only. It is similar to what Ibn Jurayj has said to explain this verse: "(Do not nullify your virtuous acts) by doing them only to show off and to win a good name among the people." Likewise, Muqātil and others have explained it by saying: *bil-manni,* that is, (Do not nullify your deeds) by boasting about your favour. Otherwise, according to the unanimity of *ahl-us-sunnah wal-jamā'ah*, no sin - not even a major sin other than *kufr* or *shirk* -- can destroy the righteous acts of a believer. For example, if a believer, who performs his prayer regularly and keeps his fasts, were to steal something, the sacred law does not declare his prayers and fasts null and void or demand him to repeat them. Therefore, in the statement of Ḥasan Baṣrī the word 'sins' refers only to those sins refraining from which is a necessary condition for the acceptability of good works. For example, the acceptability of good works, it is necessary to refrain from *riyā'*, that is, to avoid showing off or making an ostentatious display of accomplishments. Moreover, it is also possible that Ḥasan Baṣrī statement regarding refers to the deprivation of the blessings of righteous works, and not to the absolute nullification of a righteous work itself. This may apply to all types of sin in the sense that if a believer's sins are much more than his good deeds, the few good deeds that he has to his credit will be devoid of the blessing that may save him from the punishment of his sins. According to the rule of retribution, he will be punished first for his sins and finally through the virtue of his faith he will attain salvation and be admitted into the gardens of Paradise.

Ruling:

If a believer starts a *nafl* (an act of worship that is not obligatory), and then deliberately disrupts it before its completion, this too is deemed

by Imām Abū Ḥanīfah as nullifying the deed, and is impermissible according to him. Therefore, if a person commences righteous acts that were initially not compulsory or obligatory, their completion, according to this interpretation of the verse, becomes obligatory. Otherwise he would be committing *ibṭāl-ul-a'māl* [nullification of actions]. If anyone does this without a legitimate reason or nullifies them purposely, he would be a sinner, and it would be obligatory for him to make *qaḍā'* for such nullification. According to Imām Shafi'ī, neither he is a sinner nor is it obligatory for him to make *qaḍā'* . His argument is that the act was not initially compulsory or obligatory, therefore its abandonment or nullification would not entail a sin. Ḥanafīs argue that the wordings of the current verse are general in their scope embracing all righteous acts, whether obligatory or supererogatory. Therefore, if a supererogatory act is initiated, its completion becomes obligatory. On this occasion, in Tafsīr Maẓharī, a large number of *aḥādīth* are quoted and the issue is discussed in detail.

إِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَصَدُّوْا عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ثُمَّ مَاتُوْا وَهُمْ كُفَّارٌ (Those who disbelieve and prevent (others) from Allah's way, Allah will never forgive them...- 47:34): verse [32] has a similar warning in similar words. The present verse [34] seems to repeat almost the same warning. But the difference is probably that verse 32 describes the loss of the infidels in this world, and the current verse describes their loss in the next world as indicated in the commentary. It is also possible that in the earlier verse the reference was to infidels in general which included those people who embraced Islam later on. The ruling regarding them was that all the good works which they had done in the state of disbelief would go to waste. Even after embracing Islam they would not be rewarded for them. The current verse refers in particular to those infidels who persisted in their disbelief and idolatry until their dying day. The ruling regarding them is that Allah will never forgive them in the next world. Allah knows best.

فَلَا تَهِنُوْا وَتَدْعُوْٓا اِلَى السَّلْمِ (So, do not lose heart, and do not appeal for peace;) ... - 47:35". This verse prohibits the Muslims to invite the infidels to enter into peace treaty. But on another occasion in the Qur'ān such a treaty is allowed : وَاِنْ جَنَحُوْا لِلسَّلْمِ فَاجْنَحْ لَهَا "And if they tilt towards peace, you tilt towards it..." (9:61). This verse indicates that if the infidels want peace, it is permissible to enter into peace agreement with them. Therefore, some

scholars think that the permission in this verse is conditional upon the assumption that the infidels take initiative for peace negotiations. The current verse prohibits the Muslims from taking initiative for peace. Thus there is no conflict between the two verses. However, the authentic ruling is that it is permissible for Muslims even to take initiative in negotiating peace with the infidels if it could be in the best interest of the Muslims - not by reason of cowardice and involvement in a life of luxury. The Qur'ān by the employment of the imperative sentence *falā-tahinū* [do not lose heart] in this verse indicates that the prohibition is meant for such an appeal for peace that is based on cowardice and escaping from Jihād. In this case too there is no conflict between the two verses, because the direction of tending to peace in verse 9:61 is restricted to a situation where it is based on the interest of the Muslims, and not on cowardice or leisure. Allah knows best.

وَلَنْ يَّتِرَكُمْ اَعْمَالَكُمْ (...and He will never deprive you of your deeds...47:35) It means that Allah will not diminish the reward of the believers. This indicates that if they were to suffer any pain or loss in this world, they will receive a huge reward in the next world. Thus a believer is never unsuccessful even in the face of pain or difficulty.

إِنَّمَا الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَا (The worldly life is but play and pastime - 47:36.) As Muslims have been enjoined to fight in the cause of Allah, they will, for this purpose, have to make sacrifices of life and money. But the love of this world is the only thing that can prevent man from fighting. In this verse we are told that neither of these mundane benefits is permanent. After all, they all will perish and come to an end. Even if we succeed in saving them for now, they will be lost another time. The bounties of the next world are permanent and eternal: the believers need to develop love for them - not for the perishable things of this ephemeral world.

وَلَا يَسْئَلْكُمْ اَمْوَالَكُمْ (...and will not ask you your riches... 47:36). The apparent meaning of this verse is that Allah does not demand or urge you to hand over your wealth. But the Qur'ān is replete with verses relating to payment of *zakāh*, charities and spending wealth in the way of Allah. Even in the next verse, the reader is emphatically called upon to expend in Allah's way. Thus there appears to be conflict between these verses. Some scholars resolve the conflict by saying that the present verse means that Allah does not need their money for His benefit, but it is for their

own benefit that sacrifices of life and money are demanded of them. Earlier in this very verse, it has been declared expressly: يُؤْتِكُمْ اُجُوْرَكُمْ)...He will give you your rewards, (47:36)". The believers are required to spend in Allah's way which will help them in the Hereafter where they will need their righteous works most pressingly. That is where they will be rewarded. This interpretation of the verse has been preferred by Maulānā Thanawī رحمه الله تعالى. A verse of identical meaning is مَا اُرِيْدُ مِنْهُمْ مِّنْ رِّزْقٍ (I do not desire [to receive] any provision from them, nor do I desire that they should feed Me...51:57)

Other scholars, however, assign another meaning to the words, "and will not ask you your riches". They say that "asking your riches" means to demand all of one's wealth. Their argument is that this clause needs to be read in conjunction with the next verse [37] which says, اِنْ يَّسْئَلْكُمُوْهَا فَيُحْفِكُمْ (If He were to ask you of it, and were to press you,...) the word *yuḥfi* is derived from *iḥfā'* which means to pursue a work persistently and insistently until it is accomplished. All scholars agree that the meaning of verse [37] is that if Allah demands for all of their wealth, they would become niggardly and acting upon this injunction would displease them. This displeasure would become visible at the time of expending. To sum up: the meaning of verse [36] is the same as verse [37]. The general meaning of the former verse is restricted by the latter verse. The meaning of these two verses is as follows: The pecuniary obligations, such as *zakāh*, that Allah has imposed on the believers is for their own benefit - Allah does not need their money or wealth. Further, Allah, through His grace and compassion, has imposed a nominal percentage for expending. For example, only 1/40th = 2.5% for *zakāh*, 1/10th = 10% or 1/20th = 5% for agricultural produce, and one goat out of every hundred goats, have been imposed. Thus it is clear that Allah is not demanding for all of our wealth because that would be displeasing and a burden and it would weigh heavily on us. In fact, He has asked for so little of our wealth that we should discharge our obligation readily and happily. The concluding clause in verse [37] يُخْرِجْ اَضْغَانَكُمْ "...you would show miserliness, and He would expose your grudges." contains the word *aḍghān* which is the plural of *ḍighn*. It refers to secret malice, grudge or hatred. Naturally, man feels unhappy to part with all of his wealth. Even if he does not express his unhappiness openly, he would procrastinate at the time of

payment. Procrastination would disclose his unhappiness. In short, if Allah had demanded from people all of their wealth, they would be tight-fisted and because of tight-fistedness their hearts will harbor rancour, malice and spite against spending in the cause of Allah which would be exposed. Therefore, He has imposed upon their wealth a small and nominal percentage to expend in the cause of Allah, but people are niggardly even in this case. This is what the Qur'ān says in the last verse: تُدْعَوْنَ لِتُنْفِقُوا فِى سَبِيلِ اللّٰهِ ۚ فَمِنْكُمْ مَّنْ يَّبْخَلُ "... you are called upon to spend in Allah's way, but some of you withhold in miserliness.". Further the verse reads: وَمَنْ يَّبْخَلْ فَإِنَّمَا يَبْخَلُ عَنْ نَّفْسِهٖ (and he who withholds in miserliness withholds against himself - 47:38) it means that any person practising miserliness will himself suffer loss or detriment because he will have to carry the burden of failing to fulfil his obligation and thus will be deprived of reward in the Hereafter. This point is made even more clear by saying "_ and Allah is the Need-Free, and you are the needy." In other words, Allah is free of want and beyond any need but man is in need of means of comfortable subsistence. So spending in the way of Allah is for man's own good and to fulfil his own needs.

وَإِنْ تَتَوَلَّوْا يَسْتَبْدِلْ قَوْمًا غَيْرَكُمْ ۙ ثُمَّ لَا يَكُونُوٓا أَمْثَالَكُمْ : (...And if you turn away, He will replace you by some other people, then they will not be like you. - 47:38) This verse has explained that Allah is the most need-free of all. This attribute is described so lucidly that it brings to our mind the fact that let alone people's wealth, He does not even need their existence. If they stop acting upon His injunctions, He will bring another people who will not turn away from the sacred injunctions, but will obey Him completely as long as Allah wants to maintain the religion of truth, Islam. Sayyidnā Ḥasan Baṣrī says that the reference in this verse is to non-Arabs and Sayyidnā 'Ikramah says that the reference is to Persians and Romans. Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ؓ reports that when Allah's Messenger recited this verse in the presence of the Companions ؓ they asked him: "Who are those people that will be brought instead of us if we, God forbid, turn away from Allah'a injunctions and those people will not turn away like us?" Sayyidnā Salmān Fārisī ؓ was sitting among the Companions رضى الله عنهم اجمعين, the Holy Prophet ﷺ slapped on his thigh and said: "If Faith [i.e. the religion of truth] were to go up to the Pleiads [accessibility to which is difficult], a man of Persian descent will acquire it from there and

act upon it." .

Shaikh Jalāl-ud-Dīn Suyūṭī wrote a book on the biography of Abū Ḥanīfah where he identifies him and his disciples as being the people referred to in the Ḥadīth quoted earlier, because no group among the Persians reached that high point of knowledge where Abū Ḥanīfah and his disciples reached .

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
The Sūrah Muḥammad
ends here.

Sūrah Al-Fatḥ

(The Victory)

Sūrah Al-Fatḥ was revealed in Madīnah. It has 29 Verses and 4 Sections.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 3

إِنَّا فَتَحْنَا لَكَ فَتْحًا مُّبِينًا ﴿١﴾ لِّيَغْفِرَ لَكَ اللَّهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِن ذَنبِكَ وَمَا تَأَخَّرَ وَيُتِمَّ نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكَ وَيَهْدِيَكَ صِرَاطًا مُّسْتَقِيمًا ﴿٢﴾ وَيَنصُرَكَ اللَّهُ نَصْرًا عَزِيزًا ﴿٣﴾

Surely, We have granted you an open victory, [1] so that Allah may forgive you of your previous and subsequent faults, and may complete His favour upon you, and may guide you to a straight path, [2] and so that Allah may support you with a mighty support. [3]

Preliminary Remarks

According to the consensus of scholarly opinion of Ṣaḥābah (Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ), Tabi'īn (Pupils of *ṣaḥābah*) and the leading authorities on Qur'ānic commentary, the Sūrah was revealed when, after signing the Treaty of Ḥudaibiyah, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was on his way back to Madīnah, in the 6th year of Hijrah in the month of Dhul Qa'dah. In other words, the Holy Prophet ﷺ with a party of his Companions set out for Makkah with the intention of performing the 'Umrah. When he approached the sanctuary of Makkah he halted at a place called Ḥudaibiyah.

The Quraish, however, debarred his entry into Makkah. Later they were willing to compromise that he must go back home that year and make up for the missed 'Umrah the following year. Many companions, especially Sayyidnā 'Umar ﵁, were greatly upset but the Holy Prophet ﷺ accepted it under Divine direction because he felt that this would pave the way to Muslim success. The details are set out later in the Sūrah. When the Holy Prophet ﷺ put off his *Iḥrām*, this Sūrah was revealed on his return journey from Ḥudaibiyah in which it is pointed out that his vision is true which will most certainly be fulfilled at the appropriate time. But this is not the right time for it. It will happen after the conquest of Makkah. The Treaty of Ḥudaibiyah in this Sūrah is described as "an open victory" because this Treaty was in fact the forerunner of the conquest of Makkah. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ﵁ and some other Companions say "you think the conquest of Makkah is 'Victory'" but we regard "The very Treaty of Ḥudaibiyah as the real 'Victory'". Likewise Sayyidnā Jābir ﵁ says "We think the Treaty of Ḥudaibiyah is 'Victory'". Barā' Ibn 'Āzib says "You think 'Victory' refers to the conquest of Makkah. No doubt, it does, but we think the Pledge of Riḍwān on the occasion of Ḥudaibiyah is the real 'Victory' where the Companions [some 1400] were asked by the Holy Prophet ﷺ under an acacia tree to declare on solemn oath that they would stand by him at all costs and would fight under his banner to the bitter end. The Pledge of *Jihād* is referred to later on in this Sūrah. (Ibn Kathīr) As mentioned earlier, this Sūrah was revealed on the occasion of Ḥudaibiyah, and since some parts of this incident are referred to in this Sūrah, it seems pertinent to first give details of this incident. Tafsīr Ibn Kathir elaborates on the event and gives many small details. Tafsīr Maẓharī develops it even more elaborately. He has, on this occasion, written about fourteen pages, narrating the story from the beginning to the end with reference to authentic collections of Ḥadīth. The narrative comprises many miracles, pieces of advice, and educational, religious and political points of wisdom. We intend to give the details of those parts of the narrative which are referred to in the Sūrah itself, or are profoundly relevant to the Sūrah, so that it may facilitate the understanding of those verses which are related to the incident. The details given below are mainly adopted from Tafsīr Maẓharī, and reference is made to other commentaries from where other details are taken.

The Event of Ḥudaibiyah:

Ḥudaibiyah is a plain situated outside Makkah on the way to Jeddah which is very close to the boundaries of Ḥaram. It is now called *Shumaisiyy*. This is the site where the incident took place.

Part [1]: The Prophet's ﷺ Vision

It is reported by Ibn Jarīr, 'Abd Ibn Ḥumaid, Baihaqī, and others that the Holy Prophet ﷺ saw in a dream in Madīnah that he had gone to Makkah with his Companions, entered it peacefully and performed the 'Umrah (shorter pilgrimage). He and his Companions put off their pilgrim-garb and, according to the rule, some had their heads shaven and others had their hair cut short. The Holy Prophet ﷺ then entered the House of Allah, and the key of the House fell into his hand. This part of the event is referred to later on in this Sūrah [48:27]. The dream of the Prophets علیهم السلام is not a mere dream or fiction. It is a Divine revelation, acting upon which is necessary. Therefore, this vision of the Holy Prophet ﷺ was not merely a dream, but a Divine inspiration which he had to strictly obey and follow. However, no time or date was specified for this. In fact, this vision was to be fulfilled at the time of the conquest of Makkah. But when the Holy Prophet ﷺ narrated this vision to his companions, they in their enthusiasm to visit Makkah and perform the *ṭawāf* (circumambulation) of the House, started preparations forthwith. When a party of the Companions was in full readiness to depart, the Holy Prophet ﷺ too made up his mind to accomplish his vision, since no time or date was specified, it is possible, he thought, that this purpose could be achieved instantly (Bayān-ul-Qur'ān, citing from Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī).

Part [2]: The Prophet ﷺ Invites his Companions and Bedouins to Join him: Some refused

It is reported on the authority of Ibn Sa'd and others that when the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his Companions made up their mind to perform *'umrah,* the Holy Prophet ﷺ had the apprehension that the pagans of Makkah might hinder them from performing *'umrah*, and it was possible also that an armed clash might ensue. Therefore, he invited people from the neighbouring villages to join him for the pilgrimage. Many of the village bedouins refused to join him claiming that Muḥammad ﷺ and his Companions wanted to push them into the jaws of death. They said that Muḥammad and his Companions wanted to get them into an armed clash

with Makkans who were superior to them in terms of weapons and power. They felt that as a result of this superiority, the Muslims would not come back alive (Maẓharī).

Part [3]: Setting out for Makkah

According to the versions of Imām Aḥmad, Bukhārī, Abū Dāwūd, Nasa'ī and others the Holy Prophet ﷺ before setting out for the journey, took a bath, put on his new clothes and mounted his camel Qaṣwā'. He was accompanied by his blessed wife 'Umm Salamah رضي الله عنها. A large number of the *Muhājirīn*, *Anṣār* and the village folks was with him. This constituted, according to most versions, 1400 people altogether. No one doubted that Makkah will be conquered on that day on account of the Holy Prophet's ﷺ vision, whereas they did not have any weapons except swords. The Holy Prophet ﷺ and his Companions set out for this journey on Monday at the beginning of Dhul-Qa'dah. He reached Dhul-Ḥulaifah and donned the pilgrim-robe with the intention of 'Umrah (Shorterned from Maẓharī).

Part [4] : Preparing for Confrontation with Makkans

When the people of Makkah received news about the Prophet's ﷺ journey to Makkah with a large number of his Companions, they gathered together, and expressed their concern that if Muḥammad was allowed entry into Makkah, the entire Arabia would be under the impression that the Makkans were subdued by him, while several battles had been fought between them and Muḥammad. As such, they were not willing to allow him entry into the city. Thus they dispatched an advance cavalry towards Kura'-ul-Ghamīm under the command of Khālid Ibn Walīd رضي الله عنه [who until then was not a Muslim] to intercept him. The neighboring villagers were also attached to the cavalry, and the tribe of Banū Thaqīf from Ṭā'if joined them as well. They pitched their tents in a place called Baldaḥ. They pledged to debar the Holy Prophet ﷺ from entering into Makkah and to declare war against him.

A Strange and Simple Network of Communication

The enemies set up a network of communication from Baldaḥ to the place where the Holy Prophet ﷺ had reached. They placed a few men on the top of each mountain to observe the movement, activity and position of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and inform the people on the adjacent mountain in a loud voice, they in turn relayed the message to the people on the next

mountain, they would then convey the information to the third mountain, and so on. In this way they communicated the details of the Holy Prophet's ﷺ activities to the people of Baldah within a few minutes.

The Informants of Holy Prophet ﷺ

The Holy Prophet ﷺ dispatched Bishr Ibn Sufyān ؓ to Makkah in advance as a secret informer, so that he may secretly observe the activities and movements of the Quraish and keep him fully informed of their intentions and activities. When he returned from Makkah, he informed the Holy Prophet ﷺ that the Makkans were preparing for an all-out war. The Holy Prophet ﷺ expressed his regret that several wars had already weakened the strength of Quraish, and yet they would not give up fighting. The Prophet ﷺ said: "This was an ideal opportunity for them to leave me and the other Arabs alone. If these Arabs had vanquished me, they would have accomplished their objective without any pain; and if I had vanquished them, one of two things could have happened - either they would have embraced Islam or if they intended to fight me they would have braced themselves to face me. But nobody knows what is wrong with them! By Him who has sent me with His commands, I shall never cease to fight them until my neck is separated from the rest of my body."

Part [5]: The Camel of the Holy Prophet ﷺ Refuses to Move

After that the Holy Prophet ﷺ gathered the people and delivered a sermon in which he consulted them whether they should start the fight against the enemies then and there, or press forward and make forced entry into Makkah, and "if they debar us we shall fight them." Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ؓ and other companions said, " You have come out on a peaceful mission with the intention of visiting the House of Allah, not with the belligerent intention of fighting. Therefore, adhere to your peaceful intention. However, if anyone bars us from entering Makkah, then we shall fight." Sayyidnā Miqdād Ibn Aswad ؓ stood up and said: "O Allah's Messenger! We are not like the children of Israel who would say اِذْهَبْ اَنْتَ وَرَبُّكَ فَقَاتِلَا اِنَّا هٰهُنَا قٰعِدُوْنَ - {5:24} 'So go, you and your Lord, and fight. As for us, we are sitting here'. We shall fight with you at all costs." Having seen the Companions' determination, Allah's Messenger ﷺ responded that they should press forward in the direction of Makkah in the name of Allah. When the Holy Prophet ﷺ approached the Holy City,

and Khālid Ibn Walīd and his cavalry noticed them moving forward in the direction of *qiblah*, he arrayed his army into regiments and stood up there like adamantine walls. Allah's Messenger appointed 'Abbād Ibn Bishr as the commander of a unit that was arrayed in opposition to Khālid Ibn Walīd. In the meanwhile it was time for Ẓuhr Ṣalāh. Sayyidnā Bilāl called the *adhān*, and the Holy Prophet led the congregation in prayer. Khālid and his cavalry looked on. Later on Khālid Ibn Walīd said: "We lost a golden opportunity to wipe them out whilst they were praying. It does not matter, wait for another time, because soon they will be praying again." But in the meantime Jibra'īl brought down the injunction of *Ṣalāt-ul-Khawf*. Having made Allah's Messenger aware of their intentions, he was shown how the army should be divided into two groups in times of danger. Allah's Messenger followed the direction of the Qur'ān. Each group performed the prayer in alternation. (When one group prayed, it was guarded and protected by the armed regiment who remained on the alert for a possible attack by the enemy. It took its turn when the praying group had finished.)

Part [6] : A Miracle at Ḥudaibiyah

When Allah's Messenger was nearing Ḥudaibiyah, the forelegs of his she-camel (named Qaṣwā) slipped and it sat down. The Companions tried to urge it up, but in vain. The Companions thought that Qaṣwā was enraged, but Allah's Messenger said that it was no fault of Qaṣwā nor is it its usual habit to do this. In fact, it has been stopped by the same One who had blocked the men of elephant. [Probably Allah's Messenger by then had discerned that the time was not up for the fulfillment of his vision.] With this discernment, Allah's Messenger declared: "By Him in whose hand is Muḥammad's life, today I shall accept all the demands of the Quraish in which the Symbols sanctified by Allah are held in full esteem." Then he called out the she-camel and it stood up. Allah's Messenger moved away from the spot where Khālid Ibn Walīd was staying, and stationed himself on the other side of Ḥudaibiyah where there was very little water. Khālid Ibn Walīd and the people of Baldaḥ had occupied the places where water was available in abundance. Here a miracle of Allah's Messenger shown by Allah Ta'ālā. At this place there was a well in which very little water trickled. He rinsed his mouth in it, and got one of his arrows pitched therein. As soon as this happened, its

water bubbled almost up to the brim of the well. People on the upper side of the well drew water and quenched their thirst.

Part [7]: Negotiation with the Deputations of the People of Makkah

In this way all the Companions were satisfied and settled there, and started negotiations with the people of Makkah through their deputations. First, Budail Ibn Warqa' [who later on embraced Islam] along with his companions paid a visit to Allah's Messenger ﷺ and informed him, as a well-wisher, that the entire Makkah had come out in full force to confront him. They have occupied all the water spots. "They will never allow you to enter into Makkah." He said. Allah's Messenger ﷺ replied, "We have not come to fight anyone. However, if they block us from performing *'umrah*, we will fight". Then he repeated what he had said to his spy Bishr رضي الله عنه: "Several wars have weakened the Quraish. If they wish, a peace treaty could be arranged for a specified period of time, so that they may peacefully prepare themselves. In the meantime they should leave us and the rest of the Arabs alone. If these Arabs vanquish me, they would have accomplished their objective without any pain; and if I vanquish them, and they started entering into the fold of Islam, then the Quraish will have two options: either they too will embrace Islam, or if they will intend to fight me, they will have braced themselves to face me. But if they refuse this, then I swear by Him who has sent me with His commands, I shall never cease to fight them until my neck is left separated from the rest of my body." Budail, saying that he will convey the message to the Quraish leaders, went back. When he returned to the Quraish and communicated the Holy Prophet's ﷺ response, some of them did not want to even hear him, and were in a fit of war, while others, like 'Urwah Ibn Mas'ūd, the leader of his tribe, advised them to at least hear him. Then when Budail conveyed the message of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, 'Urwah said to the leaders of Quraish that Muḥammad's suggestions were fair and satisfactory, and therefore, they should be accepted. He opted to negotiate and asked for their permission to confer with the Holy Prophet ﷺ with the aim of reaching an agreement of peace. Thus the second person to pay a visit to the Holy Prophet ﷺ in an attempt to negotiate was 'Urwah who said to the Holy Prophet ﷺ: "If you wipe out your own people, the Quraish, will it be good for you? Have you ever heard anyone

destroying his own people?" Then there was a heated and protracted parleys between 'Urwah and the Companions, and while this was going on, 'Urwah observed that when the Holy Prophet ﷺ performed his ablutions, his companions would not allow the water to fall on the ground but would rub it on their bodies and clothes. When the Holy Prophet ﷺ spoke, they would lower their voices. 'Urwah went back to the Quraish leaders, and described the whole scenario to them, adding that "I have been to the courts of the Caesar and Khosroes, and the Negus also, but by God, never have I seen any people so devoted to a king as are the Companions of Muḥammad to him. He is suggesting a correct proposal, and I suggest that you accept it." But the people replied that they could not accept it; "Muḥammad must go back this year, and may come again the following year." When 'Urwah's suggestion was not accepted, he returned with his people. After him a person by the name of Jalīs Ibn 'Alqamah, the leader of the bedouins, visited the Holy Prophet ﷺ . He saw the Companions in pilgrim-robes with sacrificial animals. He too returned and explained to his people that these people had come to perform their 'Umrah in the House of Allah. "It is not proper in any way to debar them." The people did not pay heed to his suggestion either. He too went away back with his deputation. A fourth person arrived to confer with the Holy Prophet ﷺ and persuade him to give up his intention to enter Makkah. But the Holy Prophet ﷺ repeated the same reply to this deputation that he had made to Budail and 'Urwah. He went back to Quraish and communicated the Holy Prophet's ﷺ reply to them.

Part [8] : Sayyidnā 'Uthmān Despatched as a Special Envoy

Imām Baihaqī reports on the authority of 'Urwah Ibn Zubair رضي الله عنه that when Allah's Messenger ﷺ settled in Ḥudaibiyah, it unnerved the Quraish. He decided to send an envoy with the message that he had not come to fight, but to perform 'Umrah. Therefore, they should not block his way. He called upon Sayyidnā 'Umar رضي الله عنه for this task. He said, "Quraish are my implacable enemy, because they are fully aware of my ardent support for Islam, and there is not a single member of my tribe in Makkah that will support me. As a result, I will not be able to change their mind. I propose the name of 'Uthmān for this task. He is the most appropriate person who, because of his tribe, holds a special power and honour in the whole of Makkah." Allah's Messenger ﷺ accepted the proposal and sent

off Sayyidnā 'Uthmān ﷺ for the task. He also advised him to visit the socially and economically disabled Muslim men and women who were not able to migrate from Makkah and were suffering hardships. He was to console them that they should not be distressed. Soon, Allah willing, Makkah will be conquered and their difficulties will end. First, Sayyidnā 'Uthmān ﷺ went to those people who had gathered in Baldaḥ to block the way of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and confront him. He communicated to them the same message that was conveyed to them by Budail and 'Urwah. They replied that they had heard the message and that it was not acceptable. Having received their reply, he attempted to get into Makkah. Abān Ibn Sa'īd [who later on embraced Islam] met him and welcomed him warmly. He took him into his refuge and allowed him to convey his message anywhere in Makkah without any fear of hindrance. Then he gave his mount to Sayyidnā 'Uthmān ﷺ which he rode and entered Makkah, because his tribe Banū Sa'īd was eminently powerful.

Sayyidnā 'Uthmān ﷺ met each one of the Quraish leaders, and conveyed the Holy Prophet's ﷺ message: "We have not come to fight, but to perform *'umrah*. After completing the rites of pilgrimage we shall return home. Indeed, if the road is blocked, we shall fight. Quraish themselves have been debilitated by several wars. Therefore it would be to their advantage to leave us and other Arabs alone. Then we shall see who overpowers the other. If the Arabs overpower us, then their objective would be accomplished. If we overpower them, then too they will have a choice to fight at that stage. During this time they will have the opportunity to improve and preserve their strength." But they rejected his proposal. Then 'Uthmān ﷺ visited the helpless Muslims and conveyed to them the Holy Prophet's ﷺ message. This communication pleased them immensely, and they asked him to convey their *salam* to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Having communicated the Holy Prophet's ﷺ message, the Makkans allowed Sayyidnā 'Uthmān ﷺ to perform the *ṭawāf* of the House if he wished. But he refused saying he would not do that unless the Holy Prophet ﷺ would have first performed it. 'Uthmān ﷺ stayed in Makkah for three nights, and continued to invite the Quraish leaders to accept the Holy Prophet's ﷺ message.

Part [9] : Tension between Quraish and Muslims: Seventy Makkans Captured

In the meanwhile Quraish selected fifty men and asked them to be on

the look-out for the Holy Prophet ﷺ. As soon as they find an opportunity, their task was to assassinate him. Whilst the men were on the look-out for the Holy Prophet ﷺ, Muḥammad Ibn Maslamah ؓ, the Holy Prophet's ﷺ body-guard, captured them and brought them to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. On the other hand, Sayyidnā 'Uthmān ؓ was already in Makkah and ten more Muslims joined him in the Holy City. When the Quraish heard that fifty of their men have been captured, they detained 'Uthmān ؓ and other Muslims. A cavalry of Quraish marched towards the Muslim caravan and shot arrows and threw stones at them. One Companion - Ibn Zanīm by name - was martyred. The Muslims captured ten of the Quraish horse-riders. In the meantime a rumour reached the Holy Prophet ﷺ that 'Uthmān ؓ has been assassinated.

Part [10] : The Pledge of Riḍwān

Having received this rumour, the Holy Prophet ﷺ gathered his Companions under an acacia tree and took a solemn pledge from them that they would fight the Quraish to the last breath of their lives. This pledge came to be known as *bai'at-ur-Riḍwān*, which signified those lucky people who had taken the oath had obtained Allah's pleasure. This is referred to later on in the Sūrah. Authentic Prophetic Traditions speak eminently of the people who participated in this pledge. Since 'Uthmān ؓ was on a mission to Makkah under the direction of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, he was absent at the time of the solemn pledge. So the Holy Prophet ﷺ placed one of his own hands on the other hand of his and said, "This is 'Uthmān's pledge." This illustrates the distinction of Sayyidnā 'Uthmān ؓ.

Part [11] : Peace Treaty at Ḥudaibiyah

A distinct event or episode of the scenario of Ḥudaibiyah is that through, the grace of Allah, the Quraish were overawed and subdued by the Muslims. As a result, they themselves were then willing to make peace. Thus they sent three of their men as representatives, namely, Suhail Ibn 'Amr, Ḥuwaiṭib Ibn 'Abdul 'Uzzā and Mikraz Ibn Ḥafṣ. (Later the first two of the representatives embraced Islam.) They apologised to the Holy Prophet ﷺ on behalf of their people. Suhail Ibn 'Amr said to the Holy Prophet ﷺ "The report that 'Uthmān ؓ and his companions have been killed is absolutely false. They are being sent to you. Set free our men you have captured." The Holy Prophet ﷺ set them free. It is

recorded in Musnad of Aḥmad and Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim on the authority of Sayyidnā Anas ﷺ that verse 24 of this Sūrah هُوَالَّذِىْ كَفَّ اَيْدِيَهُمْ عَنْكُمْ refers to this episode. Then Suhail and his deputation went to Quraish and described to them the amazing scene of *bai'at-ur-Riḍwān* where the *ṣaḥābah* showed their readiness to lay down their lives and willingness to make the supreme sacrifice. The opinion-makers of Quraish suggested that nothing would be better for them than they would compromise on Muslims' retiring that year without entering Makkah, but the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his Companions may visit Makkah the following year only for three days to perform 'Umrah. On that occasion they may slaughter the sacrificial animals and put off their pilgrim-robes, otherwise the impression created would be that attempts were made to block the Holy Prophet's ﷺ way, but he forced his entry into Makkah, which would be tantamount to a humiliating defeat for them. When Suhail arrived again with message, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "It seems that Quraish has decided to make peace. That is why they have sent Suhail again." The Holy Prophet ﷺ sat up cross-legged. Two of his Companions, 'Abbād Ibn Bishr and Salamah, رضى الله عنهم اجمعين armed themselves with weapons and stood on his sides to guard him. Suhail came, whilst sitting courteously in front of him, delivered the message of Quraish. The Companions generally were not happy to put off the pilgrim-garb without performing 'Umrah. They spoke harshly to Suhail - the voices sometimes became loud and at other times low. 'Abbād Ibn Bishr ﷺ reprimanded Suhail for raising his voice in the presence of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. After heated and protracted parleys, the Holy Prophet ﷺ agreed to enter into Peace Treaty. Suhail wanted to have the Peace Treaty reduced to writing. The Holy Prophet ﷺ called Sayyidnā 'Alī ﷺ and dictated to him to write the words, بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ *bismil- lāhir-raḥmanir-raḥīm*. Suhail objected to this - saying that the words *raḥmān* and *raḥīm* do not exist in our idiom. He said they should write the words that used to be written before, that is, بِاسْمِكَ اَللّٰهُمَّ *bismika- allāhumma*. The Holy Prophet ﷺ agreed to this and asked Sayyidnā 'Alī ﷺ to erase the بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ *bismil-lāhir- raḥmanir-raḥīm* and insert بِاسْمِكَ اَللّٰهُمَّ *bismika- allāhumma*. Then the Holy Prophet ﷺ asked Sayyidnā 'Alī ﷺ to write "This is the Peace Treaty into which Muḥammad, the Messenger of Allah entered." Suhail objected to this as well, and argued that they did not recognise him as the 'Messenger of Allah'. If they had, they would never have prevented

him from visiting Allah's House. There should be no such expression in the Treaty that would be in defiance of any party's belief system. Therefore, it should read Muḥammad, the son of 'Abdullāh. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ granted this and dictated to Sayyidnā 'Alī ؓ to erase the words, 'the Messenger of Allah' and replace it with 'the Son of 'Abdullāh.' Sayyidnā 'Alī ؓ, despite being an embodiment of obedience, said he could not erase the attributive title *rasūl* [Messenger] of Allah from his name. Sayyidnā 'Usaid Ibn Ḥuḍair and Sa'd Ibn 'Ubādah ؓ withheld Sayyidnā 'Alī's ؓ hand so that he might not rub the attributive title out. He should not write any appellation with his name other than the *rasūl* [Messenger] of Allah. "If they do not accept it, then the sword will decide the matter" they said. Voices arose all around. Despite the fact that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was an Ummi who had never written before, took the document in his hand and wrote with his own pen the following preamble:

هذا ما قاضى محمد بن عبد الله وسهيل بن عمرو واصلحا على وضع الحرب عن النّاس عشر سنين يأ من فيه النّاس ويكف بعضهم عن بعض

"This is the Treaty into which Muḥammad the Son of 'Abdullāh and Suhail Ibn 'Amr entered. They agree that war shall be suspended for ten years, during which time people would be able to live peacefully and no party would indulge in any hostility against the other."

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ wanted that the treaty should have a clause to the effect that the Muslims would not be hindered from performing *ṭawāf* that year, but Suhail swore by God to say that it was not possible. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ conceded that to him. Suhail then inserted his own clause: if a Makkan [even if he is a believer] were to go over to Muḥammad ﷺ without his guardian's permission, he shall be sent back to his guardian; but should any of Muḥammad 's followers return to the Quraish, he shall not be sent back. At this, the common Muslims raised their voices and exclaimed that it was not tolerable to send one of their own Muslim brethren back to the pagans. However, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ accepted this clause as well, and explained that if any of the believers is gone over to the Quraish of his own accord, Allah has distanced him from the Muslims, and they should not bother about him. If any of their men comes over to the Muslims and they send him back to

the pagans, Allah will pave the way for him.

Sayyidnā Barā' ﷺ summarises that the Treaty contained three clauses: [1] If anyone during that period from among the Quraish went over to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, without his guardian's permission, he would return him to them; [2] if a Companion of the Holy Prophet ﷺ came over to the Quraish, they would not return him; and [3] the Holy Prophet ﷺ, together with his men, should retire that year, and visit Makkah the following year only for three days to perform 'Umrah, but they shall carry no arms save sheathed swords. Towards the end of the Treaty, the concluding statement was appended: "This Agreement between the people of Makkah and the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is a guarded document which none shall violate. Whosoever would like to join the Holy Prophet ﷺ and make himself a party to the Treaty from his side, shall have the liberty to do so; and likewise whosoever would like to join the Quraish and make himself a party to the Treaty from their side, shall have the liberty to do so."

As soon as this proclamation was made, Banū Khuzā'ah jumped at the opportunity, and entered into alliance with the Holy Prophet ﷺ, but Banū Bakr, on the other hand, sided with the Quraish and allied themselves with them.

Terms and Provisions of the Treaty Upset the Companions

The Muslims were noticeably perturbed over the terms of the Treaty that were apparently tilted against their interests. Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ exclaimed in extreme grief and indignation: "O Messenger of Allah! are you not the True Prophet of Allah?" He replied: "Why not!" Then Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ asked: "Are we not on the right path and they on the wrong?" He replied: "Why not!" Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ asked: "Is it not a fact that our martyrs are in the Paradise and their slain ones in the Fire?" He replied: "Why not!" Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ then said: "Why should we submit to this humiliation and return without observing 'Umrah or Allah decides the matter through war?" The Messenger of Allah ﷺ replied: "I am the servant of Allah and His Messenger. I can never violate His command. He will never destroy me. He is my Helper. Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ posed more questions to the Prophet ﷺ: "O Messenger of Allah! did you not promise us that we would visit Allah's House and perform *ṭawāf*?" He replied: "Yes, indeed, I did promise, but did I promise that it will happen this

year?" Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ replied: "No, you did not promise that." The Messenger of Allah ﷺ responded: "The event will definitely happen as I promised. You will visit the House and perform the *ṭawāf*."

Sayyidnā 'Umar Ibn Khaṭṭāb ﷺ kept quiet, but his grief and indignation did not subside. After the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, he went to Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ﷺ and repeated his questions to him as he had posed them to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. He replied that the Prophet ﷺ is the servant of Allah and His Messenger. He is not at liberty to violate any Divine decree. Allah is his Helper. Therefore, hold on to his stirrup until the last breath of your life. By Allah! he is on the path of Truth. In short, Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ was in intense grief and pain because of the seemingly unfavourable terms and provisions of the Treaty. In fact, he is reported to have said: " I never gave way to doubt since I embraced Islam, but on this occasion I could not avoid it." (Transmitted by Bukhārī) Sayyidnā Abū 'Ubaidah ﷺ allayed his misgivings and suggested to seek refuge with Allah from the evils of Shaiṭān. Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ said: "I seek refuge in Allah from the evils of the Shaiṭān." He says that since he realised his misgivings, he continued to observe voluntary prayers, keep voluntary fasts, emancipate slaves and give alms, so that Allah may pardon his error.

The Case of Abū Jandal: The Prophet's Commitment to the Treaty

The terms and provisions of the Treaty had just been concluded, and Companions were still grieving over them. Suhail Ibn 'Amr was the chief negotiator on behalf of Quraish. Abū Jandal was Suhail's son. He embraced Islam and was imprisoned by his father. He used to persecute him harshly; fetters were put about his ankles; and there were signs of violence on his body. He could not bear the persecution, so somehow he managed to escape to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and sought asylum. Some of the Muslims went forward and granted him the asylum. Suhail yelled out: "This is the first instance of the violation of a proviso of the Treaty. If he is not returned, I shall never accept any of the other provisions in the document". The Holy Prophet ﷺ had already entered into the Treaty and was bound by its terms and provisions, therefore he called Abū Jandal and asked him to be patient for a little while longer. Soon Allah will pave the way for him and other helpless Muslims, who are detained in

Makkah, to live in easier circumstances and in a peaceful atmosphere. This case of Abū Jandal really rubbed salt into the wound or added fuel to the fire. The Companions were sure that Makkah will be conquered instantaneously, but when they experienced the apparently unfavourable situation, their grief and disappointment knew no bounds. They were on the brink of disaster and ruination. However, the Treaty was concluded, and on behalf of the Muslims Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Abdur-Raḥmān Ibn 'Awf, 'Abdullāh Ibn Suhail Ibn 'Umar, Sa'd Ibn Abī Waqqāṣ, Muḥammad Ibn Maslamah, 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib and others رضى الله عنهم اجمعين had appended their signatures. Likewise on behalf of the idolaters, Suhail and a few others appended their signatures.

Putting Off the Pilgrim-Garb and Slaughtering the Sacrificial Animals

When the document was finalised , the Holy Prophet ﷺ addressed the Companions, and asked them to slaughter their sacrificial animals in that very place, shave their heads and put off the pilgrim-robes, but they were so overwhelmed by grief that no one moved from his position to comply. This depressed the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and he went up to his blessed wife Umm Salamah رضى الله عنها and expressed his grief to her. She gave him the most apt advice, saying: "Do not reprimand them at this time, because they are acutely grieved by the terms of the Treaty and by returning without observing 'Umrah. Call the barber in the presence of all, and get your own head shaved, put off your pilgrim-garb and slaughter your own camel." He followed her advice. When the Companions saw this, they followed suit. They started shaving each other's head, slaughtered their animals and put off their pilgrim-robes. The Holy Prophet ﷺ earnestly supplicated for all.

The Holy Prophet ﷺ stayed on the plain of Ḥudaibiyah for nineteen days and, according to other versions, twenty days. He then started his return journey. With his Companions he first went to Marr Ẓahrān, and then arrived in 'Usfān. When they reached here, their provisions were depleted: very little food and water had been left for them. The Holy Prophet ﷺ spread a dining-sheet and asked everyone to put the little they had on the sheet. In this way the left-overs were collected on the sheet. There were 1400 people: they all sat around the sheet, the Holy Prophet ﷺ supplicated and asked them to eat. The noble Companions

report that 1400 people ate to the full and in addition they filled their bowls - yet nothing had diminished. This was the Holy Prophet's second miracle that appeared on this plain. The Holy Prophet ﷺ, seeing this, was highly delighted.

The Noble Companions' Strength of Faith and Obedience of the Holy Prophet ﷺ Tested Once Again

It was noticed in the foregoing sections that the Companions were extremely unhappy at the terms and provisions of the Treaty. They found it even more difficult and painful to return without performing 'Umrah or fighting a war. It was their strength of faith that despite all odds and the awkward situation, they persisted in their faith in and obedience of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. On his way back from Ḥudaibiyah, at Kura'-ul-Ghamīm Sūrah Al-Fatḥ was revealed which the Prophet ﷺ recited to the blessed Companions. Despite the terms and provisions of the Treaty and returning home without 'Umrah wounding their hearts, this Sūrah calls the trip "a manifest Victory". Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ could hardly contain himself and inquired: "Messenger of Allah! is this 'victory'?" He replied: "By Him in whose Hand is my life, this is indeed 'a manifest Victory'!" The noble Companions submitted to him and thus were assured that it was "a manifest Victory".

The Effects and Advantages of the Treaty

One immediate effect of this Treaty was that the misplaced obstinacy of Quraish and their followers became manifest, and a schism arose among themselves, and they were divided into different groups as a result of differences in thinking and attitudes. Budail Ibn Warqā' separated himself with his comrades from the Quraish. Following his example, 'Urwah Ibn Mas'ūd separated with his group.

Secondly, the Quraish of Makkah were highly impressed by the unparalleled self-sacrifice of the noble Companions. They were also profoundly touched by the unwavering obedience of, and love and reverence for, the Holy Prophet ﷺ. This inclined them to make peace. This was an ideal opportunity for them to wipe out the Muslims, because they were at home with all its conveniences, and the Muslims were on a journey with all its inconveniences. The Quraish had captured all the water spots, whereas the Muslims had to occupy waterless spots - lacking in foodstuffs. They were in full force, whereas the Musims were

ill-equipped in weaponry. Allah infused terror into their hearts. Many members of their group had the opportunity to meet and mingle with the Holy Prophet ﷺ, as a result the cheerfulness of Islamic faith was infused into their hearts. Later on they embraced it.

Thirdly, the Peace Treaty made the road safe and secure. The way was opened for the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the blessed Companions to call the people towards Islam. Arab delegations visited the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The blessed Companions, together with the Holy Prophet ﷺ, spread Islam rapidly in every nook and corner. Letters were sent to the rulers of the world - inviting them to the call of Islam. Some of the prominent rulers were impressed. On the occasion of Ḥudaibiyah, there were not more than 1500 Muslims with him, despite the Holy Prophet's ﷺ general invitation for all Muslims to join him to observe 'Umrah. But after the Treaty, people entered Allah's religion in throngs. In the year 7 Hijri Khaibar was conquered, and considerable amount of booty fell into the hands of the Muslims. This strengthened their material power. Hardly two years had passed during which time an unprecedented large number of people joined the Islamic camp. When the Quraish violated the terms of the Treaty, the Holy Prophet ﷺ secretly started preparing for the conquest of Makkah. The Quraish came to know about this, and were unnerved. They sent Abū Sufyān to apologise and to negotiate the renewal of the Treaty, but the Holy Prophet ﷺ refused. As a result of violation by the Quraish of the terms of the Treaty, the Holy Prophet ﷺ within twenty-one months marched towards Makkah with ten thousand strong faithful soldiers of Allah. The Quraish were so overwhelmingly subdued that no fighting took place. There are differing views among the leading jurists whether Makkah was conquered by force of arms or by peaceful means. Nevertheless while in Makkah, the Holy Prophet ﷺ had the following announcement made: "Whoever shuts his door shall be safe; whoever enters the mosque shall be safe; whoever enters Abū Sufyān's house shall be safe." This announcement made them concerned about saving themselves. This, on the part of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, was a master-stroke of political sagacity, strategy and ingenuity. As a result, no fighting took place. In sum, Makkah was conquered easily and very comfortably. Thus the Holy Prophet's ﷺ vision turned into a reality. The Companions fearlessly performed the *ṭawāf* of the House, then had their heads shaved or cut short, the Holy Prophet ﷺ, together with his Companions, then entered the Ka'bah where he received its keys. At that

moment, the Holy Prophet ﷺ addressed Sayyidnā 'Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb ؓ in particular and other Companions in general, saying: "This is the incident that I have been narrating to you." On the occasion of the Farewell Pilgrimage, the Holy Prophet ﷺ repeated his address to Sayyidnā 'Umar Ibn Khaṭṭāb ؓ who replied: "Undoubtedly there is no better and greater 'Victory' than the Treaty of Ḥudaibiyah." Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ؓ believed from the very outset that the Treaty of Ḥudaibiyah was indeed the 'Victory', but people did not have the insight and foresight to discern the reality that was determined between Allah and His Messenger. Allah does not do anything because of people's impatience. Instead, He does what His wisdom demands that everything should take place at the right moment. Therefore, 'a manifest Victory' in this Sūrah refers to the Treaty of Ḥudaibiyah.

These were the most important elements of the event of Ḥudaibiyah. This will facilitate the understanding of forthcoming verses of this Sūrah.

Analysis of Verses

لِيَغْفِرَلَكَ اللّٰهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِكَ وَمَا تَاَخَّرَ (so that Allah may forgive you of your previous and subsequent faults...." - 48:2). If the particle "*lam*" (translated above as 'so that') is taken to be for "*ta'līl*", it indicates the purpose for which, and the reason why, such a manifest Victory is given to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. It is mentioned in this verse that the victory was given to him to bless him with three different bounties. The first bounty is forgiveness of all his past and future shortcomings. Attention was drawn in Sūrah Muḥammad that all Prophets علیهم السلام are infallible. Wherever words like ذنب *dhanb* and عصیان *'iṣyān* ('sin' or 'fault') are attributed to them in the Qur'ān, they are in relation to their lofty status. Works that are merely unadvisable contrary to the preferred practice are also referred to as *dhanb* in relation to the high status of the Prophets by way of reprimand. 'Previous' refers to shortcomings committed before conferment of prophethood, and 'subsequent' refers to shortcomings committed after the conferment of prophethood (Maẓharī). The reason why this victory caused forgiveness for such shortcomings is that large masses of people entered the fold of Islam after it, and naturally the credit of spreading the call of Islam goes to the Holy Prophet ﷺ for which he deserved the divine reward, and an increase in reward always entails forgiveness of the shortcomings.

وَيَهْدِيَكَ صِرَاطًا مُّسْتَقِيْمًا ("...and may guide you to a straight path," 48:2.) This is the second bounty which resulted from the manifest victory. Here arises a question of the highest significance: The Holy Prophet ﷺ was established in the right path from the very outset. Not only was he himself on the right path, but also a source of guidance for the entire world. His night-and-day preoccupation was to call the people towards the Straight Path. So what then is the meaning of guidance to the straight path through manifest victory in the 6th year of Hijrah? A detailed answer to this question can be found in Ma'ariful-Qur'an Vol 1/pp 71-81 - particularly look at the definitions and the three degrees of Hidāyah [guidance].

Definition of Hidāyah

Hidāyah has been defined as to show the path or to lead someone gently and kindly towards his destination. The real destination of man is to attain Allah's pleasure and his proximity. The degrees of pleasure and proximity are unlimited. Having attained the first degree, man needs to go for the next one, then he should aim for the third one and so on to no end. Not any man, Muslim, saint or prophet is above the need of such spiritual and moral attainment. Therefore, the instruction to pray for right guidance in the first Sūrah is not only to the Muslim Community, but also to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. He is to soar higher and higher in the path of spiritual and moral attainment. Allah has, in this manifest victory, raised the Holy Prophet ﷺ to the highest pinnacles of spiritual eminence which is described by the clause *yahdiyaka*.

وَيَنْصُرَكَ اللّٰهُ نَصْرًا عَزِيْزًا (and so that Allah may support you with a mighty support - 48:3.) This is the third bounty which follows naturally from the preceding circumstance of the manifest victory. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has always had help from Allah, but on this occasion he received a very large share.

Verses 4 - 7

هُوَالَّذِيْٓ اَنْزَلَ السَّكِيْنَةَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ لِيَزْدَادُوْٓا اِيْمَانًا مَّعَ اِيْمَانِهِمْ ۭ وَلِلّٰهِ جُنُوْدُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۭ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلِيْمًا حَكِيْمًا ﴿۴﴾ لِّيُدْخِلَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَالْمُؤْمِنٰتِ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا وَيُكَفِّرَ عَنْهُمْ سَيِّاٰتِهِمْ ۭ وَكَانَ ذٰلِكَ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ فَوْزًا عَظِيْمًا

﴿٥﴾ وَّيُعَذِّبَ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ وَالْمُنٰفِقٰتِ وَالْمُشْرِكِيْنَ وَالْمُشْرِكٰتِ الظَّآنِّيْنَ بِاللّٰهِ ظَنَّ السَّوْءِ ۭ عَلَيْهِمْ دَآئِرَةُ السَّوْءِ ۚ وَغَضِبَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَنَهُمْ وَاَعَدَّ لَهُمْ جَهَنَّمَ ۭ وَسَآءَتْ مَصِيْرًا ﴿٦﴾ وَلِلّٰهِ جُنُوْدُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۭ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَزِيْزًا حَكِيْمًا ﴿٧﴾

He (Allah) is such that He sent down tranquility into the hearts of the believers, so that they grow more in faith along with their (existing) faith - And to Allah belong the hosts of the heavens and the earth, and Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise - [4] **so that He admits the believing men and the believing women to the gardens beneath which rivers flow, to live therein for ever, and so that He may write off their evil deeds and that is a great achievement in Allah's sight,** [5] **and so that He may punish the hypocrites, men and women, and the *mushriks*, men and women, who think evil thoughts about Allah. Upon them there is a vicious circle, and Allah has become angry with them, and He has prepared *Jahannam* for them, and it is an evil destination.** [6] **And to Allah belong the hosts of the heavens and the earth. And Allah is Mighty, Wise.** [7]

Bounties of Allah upon the Participants of Ḥudaibiyah

In the first three verses of this Sūrah, reference was made to Allah's particular bounties bestowed upon the Holy Prophet ﷺ in the wake of the manifest victory. Some of the participants of Ḥudaibiyah congratulating the Holy Prophet ﷺ, asked him that the favours are conferred exclusively upon him, but what is there in it for them? In response to this query, verses 4-7 were revealed. They distinctly refer to the good graces of Allah upon the participants of Ḥudaibiyah and the Pledge of Riḍwān. These favours were generously bestowed upon them because of faith in, and obedience to, the Holy Prophet ﷺ. All believers whose faith and obedience are complete and perfect will receive similar good graces of Allah.

Verses 8 - 10

اِنَّآ اَرْسَلْنٰكَ شَاهِدًا وَّمُبَشِّرًا وَّنَذِيْرًا ﴿٨﴾ لِّتُؤْمِنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ

وَتُعَزِّرُوهُ وَتُوَقِّرُوهُ ۚ وَتُسَبِّحُوهُ بُكْرَةً وَأَصِيلًا ﴿٩﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ
يُبَايِعُونَكَ إِنَّمَا يُبَايِعُونَ اللَّهَ يَدُ اللَّهِ فَوْقَ أَيْدِيهِمْ ۚ فَمَن نَّكَثَ
فَإِنَّمَا يَنكُثُ عَلَىٰ نَفْسِهِ ۖ وَمَنْ أَوْفَىٰ بِمَا عَاهَدَ عَلَيْهُ اللَّهَ فَسَيُؤْتِيهِ
أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا ﴿١٠﴾

Indeed, We have sent you (O Prophet,) as a witness and as a bearer of good news and as a warner, [8] **so that you (O people,) believe in Allah and His Messenger, and support him and revere him, and pronounce His (Allah's) purity morning and evening.** [9] **Those who pledge allegiance with you by placing their hands in your hand they, in fact, pledge allegiance with Allah. Allah's hand is over their hands. Then, whoever breaks his pledge breaks it to his own detriment, and whoever fulfils the covenant he has made with Allah, He will give him a great reward.** [10]

Injunctions and Related Considerations

In the preceding verses, Allah referred to the favours he bestowed generously upon the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his *Ummah,* especially upon those who participated in the pledge of Riḍwān. The Bestower of the favours is Allah and the medium is the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Therefore, in the current set of verses, the right of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the obligation of the Ummah to honour and revere him is entrenched. First, three attributes of the Holy Prophet ﷺ are referred to: *shāhid, mubashshir, nadhīr. Shāhid* means 'witness' and its sense here is the same as that of shahid which occurs in [4:41].

فَكَيْفَ إِذَا جِئْنَا مِن كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ بِشَهِيدٍ وَجِئْنَا بِكَ عَلَىٰ هَٰؤُلَاءِ شَهِيدًا

"How would it, then, be when We shall bring a witness from every community and shall bring you over them as a witness.

Both forms of the word mean "a witness". Every Prophet will bear testimony to the fact that he has delivered Allah's message to his particular community - some accepted and others rejected. See Ma'āriful Qur'ān, Vol 2/pp 442-3 for details. Likewise the Holy Prophet ﷺ will bear witness for his community. Qurṭubī writes under [4:41] that the prophets' testimony will be for the people of their respective time as to who accepted

their call to the Truth and who defied it. Likewise the Holy Prophet's ﷺ testimony will be for the people of his particular time. Other scholars express the view that the Holy Prophet ﷺ will bear witness to the entire community's good and bad works, and to its obedience and defiance, because, according to some versions, angels present to the Holy Prophet ﷺ morning and evening the works of the community. Thus he is aware of the entire community's works.

Mubashshir and *Nadhīr*: *Mubashshir* connotes bearer of good tidings and *nadhīr* means a warner. That is to say, he gives glad tidings of Paradise to the believing and obedient sector of the community. On the other hand, he is a Warner to those who rejected the message - making them aware of the punishment of such defiance. Further, the purpose of sending the Messenger has been indicated - that is, to believe in Allah and his Messenger. In addition, it is mentioned that the believers must be characterized by three more qualities:

[1] that they should "support him"
[2] "and revere him"; and
[3] "pronounce His (Allah's) purity morning and evening."

The first phrase contains a verb which is derived from the infinitive or verbal noun *ta'zīr* which denotes to help or support. Punishment is also called *ta'zīr* because the idea underlying punishment is to give real help to the criminal by punishing him (Rāghib: Mufradatul Qur'ān). The second phrase contains a verb which is derived from the infinitive or verbal noun *tawqīr* which means to show reverence. The third phrase contains a verb which is derived from the infinitive or verbal noun *tasbīḥ* which connotes to declare the purity of Allah. In this phrase, the third person anaphoric pronoun attached to the verb refers, by consensus of Qur'ānic grammarians, to "Allah", and there can be no other possibility. Therefore, most of them believe that the third person anaphoric pronouns attached to the respective verbs of the first two phrases also refer to "Allah". From this point of view, the three phrases mean: believe in Allah and help His religion and His Messenger, revere Him and pronounce His purity.

Other scholars refer the third person anaphoric pronouns attached to the verbs of the first two phrases to the "Messenger". From this point of view, the phrases mean: Help the Messenger and revere him; and

pronounce the purity of Allah. However, there is a third group of scholars who feel that in this interpretation there is *intishār-ud-damā'ir* or unconcentrated distribution of pronouns - leading to pronominal ambiguity and vagueness, and making it difficult to follow the meaning of the constructions which is not in conformity with the rules of Arabic rhetoric or *'ilm-ul-balāghah*. Allah knows best.

After that, there is reference to the pledge of Riḍwān which was narrated in part [10] of the story of Ḥudaibiyah. The purpose of the believers in entering into the pledge at the hands of the Holy Prophet ﷺ was to act upon the command of Allah and to receive His good pleasure. Therefore, when the blessed Companions placed their hands on the hand of the Holy Prophet ﷺ it was tantamount to taking the pledge at the hands of Allah. 'Allah's hand' is in any case something falling in the category of *mutashābihāt* the correct nature of which is cannot be known to us, nor should we attempt to investigate its reality. The significance of the pledge of Riḍwān is described later in the Sūrah. The word *bai'ah*, lexically, connotes a pledge to do some particular work. The ancient and traditional method of this pledge is for the pledging parties to place their hands upon each other, although the placing of hands is not a necessary condition. Nevertheless once the pledge is consummated, juristically it is binding, and its violation is unlawful. Therefore, it is later laid down that whoever violates the pledge will cause loss to himself. It will not cause loss to Allah and His Messenger. Whoever fulfils the terms of the pledge will receive a mighty reward from Allah.

Verses 11 - 14

سَيَقُوْلُ لَكَ الْمُخَلَّفُوْنَ مِنَ الْاَعْرَابِ شَغَلَتْنَآ اَمْوَالُنَا وَاَهْلُوْنَا
فَاسْتَغْفِرْلَنَا ۚ يَقُوْلُوْنَ بِاَلْسِنَتِهِمْ مَّالَيْسَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ ۭ قُلْ فَمَنْ
يَّمْلِكُ لَكُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ شَيْئًا اِنْ اَرَادَ بِكُمْ ضَرًّا اَوْ اَرَادَ بِكُمْ نَفْعًا ۭ بَلْ
كَانَ اللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرًا ﴿١١﴾ بَلْ ظَنَنْتُمْ اَنْ لَّنْ يَّنْقَلِبَ الرَّسُوْلُ
وَالْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ اِلٰٓى اَهْلِيْهِمْ اَبَدًا وَّزُيِّنَ ذٰلِكَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِكُمْ وَظَنَنْتُمْ ظَنَّ
السَّوْءِ ۚ وَكُنْتُمْ قَوْمًۢا بُوْرًا ﴿١٢﴾ وَمَنْ لَّمْ يُؤْمِنْۢ بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ

فَإِنَّآ أَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ سَعِيْرًا ﴿١٣﴾ وَلِلّٰهِ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ط
يَغْفِرُ لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَيُعَذِّبُ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ط وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا ﴿١٤﴾

Those of the Bedouins who remained behind will say to you, "Our possessions and our families kept us busy, (hence we could not accompany you in your journey to Ḥudaibiyah). So, pray to Allah for our forgiveness." They say with their tongues what is not in their hearts. Say, "Then, who has power to avail you in any thing against Allah, if He intends to do you harm, or intends to do you good? Rather, Allah is fully aware of what you do. [11] **No, but you thought that the Messenger and the believers would never ever return to their families, and it seemed good to your hearts, and you thought an evil thought and became a ruined people."** [12] **And if one does not believe in Allah and His Messenger, then We have prepared a blazing fire for the disbelievers.** [13] **And to Allah belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth. He forgives whomsoever He wills, and punishes whomsoever He wills. And Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful.** [14]

Related Considerations

Reference in this passage is to those Bedouin tribes who were invited by Allah's Messenger ﷺ to join the party of 1400 Muslims who were marching to Ḥudaibiyah but on one pretext or another, they requested to be excused. This was narrated in part [1] of the story of Ḥudaibiyah. According to some versions, some of those people later repented and became sincere Muslims.

Verses 15 - 17

سَيَقُوْلُ الْمُخَلَّفُوْنَ إِذَا انْطَلَقْتُمْ إِلٰى مَغَانِمَ لِتَأْخُذُوْهَا ذَرُوْنَا نَتَّبِعْكُمْ ج
يُرِيْدُوْنَ أَنْ يُّبَدِّلُوْا كَلٰمَ اللّٰهِ ط قُلْ لَّنْ تَتَّبِعُوْنَا كَذٰلِكُمْ قَالَ اللّٰهُ مِنْ
قَبْلُ ج فَسَيَقُوْلُوْنَ بَلْ تَحْسُدُوْنَنَا ط بَلْ كَانُوْا لَا يَفْقَهُوْنَ إِلَّا قَلِيْلًا
﴿١٥﴾ قُلْ لِّلْمُخَلَّفِيْنَ مِنَ الْأَعْرَابِ سَتُدْعَوْنَ إِلٰى قَوْمٍ أُولِيْ بَأْسٍ
شَدِيْدٍ تُقَاتِلُوْنَهُمْ أَوْ يُسْلِمُوْنَ ج فَإِنْ تُطِيْعُوْا يُؤْتِكُمُ اللّٰهُ أَجْرًا حَسَنًا ج

وَإِنْ تَتَوَلَّوْا كَمَا تَوَلَّيْتُمْ مِّنْ قَبْلُ يُعَذِّبْكُمْ عَذَابًا اَلِيْمًا ﴿١٦﴾ لَيْسَ
عَلَى الْاَعْمٰى حَرَجٌ وَّلَا عَلَى الْاَعْرَجِ حَرَجٌ وَّلَا عَلَى الْمَرِيْضِ
حَرَجٌ ط وَمَنْ يُّطِعِ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ يُدْخِلْهُ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِىْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا
الْاَنْهٰرُ ج وَمَنْ يَّتَوَلَّ يُعَذِّبْهُ عَذَابًا اَلِيْمًا ﴿١٧﴾

And those who remained behind will say, when you will proceed to the spoils (of war) to receive them, "Let us follow you." They wish to change the statement of Allah. Say, "You shall not follow us. Allah had said like this beforehand." Then they will say, "No, but you are jealous of us." On the contrary, they do not understand (the reality) but a little. [15] **Say to those of the Bedouins who remained behind, "You will be called against a people possessed of strong fighting power; you will have to fight them, or they will submit. So if you obey, Allah will give you a good reward, and if you turn away, as you had turned away before, He will punish you with a painful punishment.** [16] **There is no blame on the blind, nor is there any blame on the lame, nor is there any blame on the sick. And whoever obeys Allah and His Messenger, He will admit him to the gardens beneath which rivers flow. And whoever turns away, He will punish him with a painful punishment.** [17]

Injunctions and Related Issues

The reference in this passage is to the incident which took place in the 7th year of Hijrah after the Holy Prophet ﷺ returned from Ḥudaibiyah. When he intended to march on Khaibar, he took with him only those sincere Muslims who were with him at Ḥudaibiyah and participated in the Pledge of Riḍwān. When Allah promised His Messenger the conquest of Khaibar and great spoils, those Bedouin tribes who had contrived to remain behind when the Holy Prophet ﷺ went for 'Umrah, requested the Holy Prophet ﷺ to be allowed to join the Muslim army, either because they guessed that Khaibar would be conquered and they would receive a good share of the booty, or because they perceived the divine blessings bestowed on the Muslims as a result of the expedition of Hudaibiah' and being remorseful on their wrong decision, they intended to join the new expedition. In response to their request, the Qur'ān says: يُرِيْدُوْنَ اَنْ يُّبَدِّلُوْا كَلٰمَ اللّٰهِ "They wish to change the statement of Allah...[48:15]" 'Allah's

statement' refers to the injunction that the right to participate in the expedition of Khaibar and receiving a share in its spoils is reserved exclusively for those sincere Muslims who were with the Holy Prophet ﷺ at Ḥudaibiyah. The same injunction is again referred to by saying, كَذٰلِكُم قَالَ اللّٰهُ مِن قَبلُ "Allah had said like this beforehand.... [48:15]" It means that the injunction of restricting the right of participation in Khyber to the participants of Hudaibiah had been revealed by Allah before the revelation of these verses. However, this injunction is not available in the Qur'ān anywhere else. So the question is: how is it then correct to refer this injunction as a 'statement of Allah' or as 'Allah has said like this'? Answer to this question depends on understanding the different kinds of the divine revelation which follow:

Divine Revelation is not restricted to the Qur'ān; Many injunctions are revealed without being a part of the Qur'ān, and Prophetic *aḥādīth* have also the status of being 'Allah's injunctions'

Waḥy [revelation] is divisible into two types: [1] *Waḥy Matluww* or recited revelation; and [2] *Waḥy Ghayr-Matluww* or unrecited revelation. *Waḥy Matluww* refers to the Qur'ān - the words and meanings of which are both from Allah. *Waḥy Ghayr-Matluww* refers to the Ḥadīth of the Holy Prophet ﷺ - the wordings of which are from the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the meanings of which are from Allah (See Ma'āriful Qur'ān: Vol. 2/570). *Waḥy Ghayr-Matluww,* like *Waḥy Matluww,* is one of the fundamental sources of Islamic injunctions.

With this juristic principle in mind, scholars have explained that the restrictive injunction made to the participants of Ḥudaibiyah is nowhere asserted explicitly in the Qur'ān or *Waḥy Matluww*. However, it was made for them to the Holy Prophet ﷺ through *Waḥy Ghayr-Matluww* on his way to Ḥudaibiyah to which the Qur'ān refers by the phrases *Kalāmullah* (the statement of Allah) and *qālallāh* (Allah said). From this a general juristic rule may be deduced that the injunctions entrenched in *aḥādīth ṣaḥīḥah* [Authentic Prophetic Traditions] have the status of being 'Allah's statement'and 'Allah's saying'. These verses are sufficient to unmask the deviation of those who turned aside from the truth by refusing to accept *aḥādīth* as a religious authority.

Some people have tried to argue that the restrictive injunction is found in the Qur'ān itself, that is in verses 18 and 19 of this very Sūrah "so He sent down tranquillity upon them, and rewarded them with a well-nigh victory, and many spoils that they would receive." This verse was revealed in the beginning of the journey to Ḥudaibiah, and "well-nigh victory" refers, according to consensus of Qur'ānic scholars, to the victory of Khaibar. Thus the phrases *Kalāmullah* (the statement of Allah) and *qālallāh* (Allah said) could refer to verses 18 and 19, and it is not necessary that it is construed as an injunction conveyed through *Waḥy Ghayr-Matluww*. But this argument is misconceived because verse 18 and 19 contain a promise that the participants of Ḥudaibiah would receive many spoils in the victory of Khaibar, but it is nowhere mentioned in these verses that these spoils will be restricted to the participants of Hudaibiah and no one else will participate in them. Therefore, No doubt, this restriction was made by *Waḥy Ghayr-Matluww* or the Ḥadīth of the Holy Prophet ﷺ which is meant by the Qur'ānic phrases *Kalāmullah* and *qālallāh*.

Some people have applied the words, 'the statement of Allah' occurring in verse 15 to verse 83 of Sūrah At-Taubah:

فَاسْتَاْذَنُوْكَ لِلْخُرُوْجِ فَقُلْ لَّنْ تَخْرُجُوْا مَعِىَ اَبَدًا وَّلَنْ تُقَاتِلُوْا مَعِىَ عَدُوًّا ط اِنَّكُمْ رَضِيْتُمْ بِالْقُعُوْدِ اَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ

They sought disorder even earlier and tried to upset matters for you, until the Truth arrived and the will of Allah prevailed, though they disliked it. [Sūrah Taubah: 48]

This is not true, because the verses of Sūrah At-Taubah pertain to the battle of Tabūk which took place in the 9th year of Hijrah whereas the expedition of Khaibar took place two years earlier in the 7th year of Hijrah (Qurṭubī; and others).

قُلْ لَّنْ تَتَّبِعُوْنَا ("...say: 'You shall not follow us' - 48:15".) In this clause, the laggards who contrived to be left behind are emphatically told that they could not be allowed to march against the Jews of Khaibar and partake of the booty. However, this prohibition is restricted to the expedition of Khaibar, but in the near future they would be allowed to fight other battles. This is the reason why from among the laggards, the tribes of Muzainah and Juhainah later on fought in the company of the Holy

Prophet ﷺ (al-Rūḥ citing from al-Baḥr; Bayān).

Some of the Laggards Repent and Become Sincere Muslims

All the laggards that did not march towards Ḥudaibiyah were prohibited from taking part in the expedition of Khaibar, whereas not all of them were hypocrites, some were sincere Muslims. And some at that particular time were hypocrites, but later on, through the Grace of Allah, they became sincere Muslims. Verse [16] consoles and comforts the laggards that though, because of Allah's promise made to the participants of Ḥudaibiyah, they cannot be allowed to take part in the expedition of Khaibar, yet in the near future the sincere Muslims would be called upon to fight against much more powerful enemies. Thus the Qur'ān predicts سَتُدْعَوْنَ اِلٰى قَوْمٍ اُولِیْ بَأْسٍ شَدِیْدٍ تُقَاتِلُوْنَهُمْ اَوْیُسْلِمُوْنَ "You will be called against a people possessed of strong fighting power; you will have to fight them, or they will submit". (48:16)

We need to bear in mind the verse foretells that they will be invited to take part in battles that will be fought against a formidable militant nation. Islamic history bears ample testimony to the fact that this prediction was not fulfilled during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. There are several reasons for this. First of all, though battles did take place during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet ﷺ after the expedition of Khaibar, there is no proof that the Holy Prophet ﷺ called upon the Bedouins to fight. Secondly, after that no battle took place with such a nation whose fighters were so brave, chivalrous and formidable as the Qur'ān describes. Although in the battle of Tabūk the encounter was with a formidable force, neither is there any evidence that the Bedouins were invited to fight, nor did any actual fighting take place in Tabūk, because Allah had infused terror in the minds of the opponents, and they did not turn up. As far as the battle of Ḥunain is concerned, there is no proof of their being invited, nor was the opponent so powerful. Therefore, some of the leading scholars of Tafsīr express the view that the prediction in the verse refers to the fierce and protracted wars with the Byzantine and Iranian empires which took place during the reign of Sayyidnā Al-Farūq-ul-A'ẓam ؓ (Ibn 'Abba, 'Ata, Mujāhid, Ibn Abī Laila, and Hasan in Qurṭubī'). Sayyidnā Rāfi' Ibn Khadīj ؓ says: " We read this verse in the Qur'ān in which the word '*qawm*' (people) occurs, but we did not know to which '*qawm*' reference is made, until after the Holy Prophet ﷺ when Abū Bakr

Ṣiddīq ﷺ took over the reign of Caliphate and invited us to take up arms against Banū Ḥanīfah, the people of Yamāmah, that is, Musailimah Al-Kadhdhāb. So we thought the Qur'ān refers to this '*qawm*' (people)." However, there is no conflict or contradiction between these views. The word '*qawm*' (people) could comprehend all these nations. Having cited all these views, Imām Qurṭubī asserts that this verse confirms the legitimacy of the Caliphate of Sayyidnā Abū Bakr and Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ. The Qur'ān itself asserts in the above-quoted verse their calling upon the people to fight.

تُقَاتِلُوْنَهُمْ اَوْيُسْلِمُوْنَ ("...you will have to fight them, or they will submit") According to the *qirā'ah* (reading) of Sayyidnā 'Ubaiyy ﷺ in the second disjunctive clause اَوْ يُسْلِمُوْا *au yuslimū* the *nūn* has been omitted. Therefore, Imām Qurṭubī takes the disjunctive particle *au* originally standing for "or" in the sense of *ḥattā* (until). In other words, the fighting will carry on with that nation until they surrender - whether by embracing Islam or by submitting to the Islamic rule.

لَيْسَ عَلَى الْاَعْمٰى حَرَجٌ (There is no blame on the blind, nor is there any blame on the lame, nor is there any blame on the sick...48:17) Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ reports that when some sincere Muslimss who were physically unable to fight read the concluding clause of verse 16: وَاِنْ تَتَوَلَّوْا كَمَا تَوَلَّيْتُمْ مِّنْ قَبْلُ يُعَذِّبْكُمْ عَذَابًا اَلِيْمًا "And if you turn away, as you had turned away before, He will punish you with a painful punishment. [48:16]" they expressed their concern about the warning. Verse [17] was revealed to exempt them from the injunction of *jihād*. These people included blind, lame or sick persons (Qurṭubī). And Allah knows best!

Verses 18 - 21

لَقَدْ رَضِيَ اللّٰهُ عَنِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ اِذْ يُبَايِعُوْنَكَ تَحْتَ الشَّجَرَةِ فَعَلِمَ
مَافِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ فَاَنْزَلَ السَّكِيْنَةَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَاَثَابَهُمْ فَتْحًا قَرِيْبًا ﴿١٨﴾
وَّمَغَانِمَ كَثِيْرَةً يَّاْخُذُوْنَهَا ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَزِيْزًا حَكِيْمًا ﴿١٩﴾ وَعَدَكُمُ
اللّٰهُ مَغَانِمَ كَثِيْرَةً تَاْخُذُوْنَهَا فَعَجَّلَ لَكُمْ هٰذِهٖ وَكَفَّ اَيْدِيَ النَّاسِ
عَنْكُمْ ۚ وَلِتَكُوْنَ اٰيَةً لِّلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَيَهْدِيَكُمْ صِرَاطًا مُّسْتَقِيْمًا ﴿٢٠﴾

وَّأُخْرٰى لَمْ تَقْدِرُوْا عَلَيْهَا قَدْ أَحَاطَ اللّٰهُ بِهَا ۗ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرًا ﴿٢١﴾

Allah was pleased with the believers when they were pledging allegiance with you by placing their hands in your hands under the tree, and He knew what was in their hearts, so He sent down tranquility upon them, and rewarded them with a well-nigh victory, [18] **and many spoils that they would receive. And Allah is Mighty, Wise.** [19] **Allah had promised you many spoils that you would receive, so He gave these to you sooner, and stopped the hands of the people from (harming) you. And (He did this) so that it becomes a sign for the believers, and so that He guides you to the right path.** [20] **And (there are) other (victories) that have not come within your power as yet, (but) Allah has encompassed them. And Allah is Powerful over every thing.** [21]

Commentary

لَقَدْ رَضِيَ اللّٰهُ عَنِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ إِذْ يُبَايِعُوْنَكَ تَحْتَ الشَّجَرَةِ (Allah was pleased with the believers when they were pledging allegiance with you by placing their hands in your hands under the tree,...48:18). The reference in this verse is to the same pledge that was given at Ḥudaibiyah and which was referred to earlier in verse 10. Verse [18] reinforces verse [10.]. In verse [18] Allah announces that those sincere participants who took this solemn oath have obtained His pleasure. Therefore, the oath came to be known as *bai'at-ur-Riḍwān* (that is, the pledge that earned Allah's pleasure). The purpose of this is to compliment the participants of the allegiance and to emphasise the obligation of fulfilling the covenant. It is recorded in Bukhārī and Muslim on the authority of Sayyidnā Jābir ؓ that on the day of Ḥudaibiyah, the companions were 1400 people, and the Holy Prophet ﷺ said to them: أَنْتُمْ خَيْرُ أَهْلِ الْأَرْضِ "You are the best of people living on the surface of the earth." It is recorded in Muslim on the authority of Umm Bishr رضی اللہ عنہا that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said, لَا يَدْخُلُ النَّارَ أَحَدٌ مِّمَّنْ بَايَعَ تَحْتَ الشَّجَرَةِ "None of those who swore fealty under the tree will enter the Fire" (Maẓharī). Therefore, the participants of this allegiance are like the participants of the battle of Badr. The Qur'ān and Ḥadīth give glad tidings of Allah's pleasure and Paradise to the participants of the battle of Badr. Likewise the sources give glad tidings of Allah's pleasure and

Paradise to the participants of *bai'at-ur-Riḍwān*. These tidings bear testimony to the fact that these sincere participants meet their end in the state of faith, righteousness, and with deeds that please Allah, because this announcement of Allah's pleasure guarantees that.

Vilification of, and Finding Fault with, the Noble Companions Prohibited

Tafsīr Maẓharī says that the noble Companions are among the best of the Prophet's ﷺ followers, and as such Allah has announced forgiveness of their sins, shortcomings and slips - if they committed any. Therefore, it is against the declaration of this verse to investigate into those of their deeds that are not laudable, and to make it a subject of debate. It is also a crystal clear denunciation of the attitude of *Rawāfiḍ*, the Shi'ites, who reject the legitimacy of the caliphs Abū Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthmān, ؓ and vilify them and other blessed Companions - condemning them as unbelievers and hypocrites.

The Tree of *Riḍwān*

The tree that is mentioned in this verse refers to mimosa arabica or the gum-acacia tree. It is reported that after the Holy Prophet ﷺ some people used to take walk there and perform *ṣalāh*. Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ came to know about this and feared that the future generation lacking in knowledge might start worshipping the very tree, as it happened in the past generations. Therefore, he had the tree felled. However, it is recorded in Bukhārī and Muslim on the authority of Sayyidnā Ṭāriq Ibn 'Abdur-Raḥmān ؓ who reports: "I once went for Ḥajj, and I passed by some people who had gathered in a place and were performing *ṣalāh*. I asked them: 'Which mosque is this?'. They replied: 'This is the tree under which the Holy Prophet ﷺ took *bai'at-ur-Riḍwān*.' After that I went up to Sayyidnā Sa'īd Ibn Muṣayyab ؓ and narrated this incident to him. He said: 'My father was one of those who participated in *bai'at-ur-Riḍwān*. He said to me that when he went to Makkah the following year he looked for the tree, but could not find it.' Then Sayyidnā Sa'īd Ibn Muṣayyab ؓ added: 'Companions who participated in *bai'at-ur-Riḍwān* at the hands of the Holy Prophet ﷺ themselves are unaware of the location of the tree, but it is strange that you should know about it. Are you more knowledgeable than they are?'" (Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī). This goes to show that later on people must have determined conjecturally -

based on incomplete and doubtful evidence - about a particular tree that it was the tree under which the pledge was taken. As a result, they frequented the place and performed *ṣalāh*. Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ knew that it was not the real tree. Then he apprehended people's involvement in shirk. Therefore, he had the tree felled.

Conquest of Khaibar

Khaibar is the name of a province which comprises many settlements, fortresses and gardens (Maẓharī). Verse 18 refers to the victory of Khaibar by saying, وَاَثَابَهُمۡ فَتۡحًا قَرِيۡبًا "and rewarded them with a well-nigh victory,". There is consensus of the scholars on that 'well-nigh victory' in this verse means the victory of Khaibar which occurred after returning from Ḥudaibiyah. According to some versions, the Holy Prophet ﷺ stayed in Madinah after returning from Ḥudaibiyah only for ten days, and according to other versions, he stayed for twenty days. Then he marched against Khaibar. According to Ibn Isḥāq's version, he returned to Madīnah in the month of Dhulḥijjah and set out for Khaibar in the month of Muḥarram in the 7th year of Hijrah.

Khaibar was conquered in the month of Ṣafar in the 7th year of Hijrah. This is reported by Waqidī's Maghāzī. According to Ḥāfiẓ Ibn-Hajar, this is the preferred opinion. (Tafsīr Maẓharī)

In any case, this shows that the conquest of Khaibar took place many days after the march to Ḥudaibiyah. According to consensus of scholarly opinion, Sūrah Al-Fatḥ was revealed in the course of his return journey from Hudaibiya. However, there is a difference of opinion whether the Sūrah was revealed in its entirety or some of its verses were revealed later. If the first view is preferred, then the conquest of Khaibar is a prophecy that Muslims will definitely achieve and is described in past perfect tense to denote that it is as certain as an event that has already happened in the past. If the second view is preferred, it is possible that these verses were revealed after the conquest of Khaibar. Allah knows best!

وَمَغَانِمَ كَثِيۡرَةً يَّاۡخُذُوۡنَهَا (and many spoils that they would receive...48:19) This clause refers to the great booty that fell into the hands of Muslims during the conquest of Khaibar.

وَعَدَكُمُ اللّٰهُ مَغَانِمَ كَثِيۡرَةً تَاۡخُذُوۡنَهَا فَعَجَّلَ لَكُمۡ هٰذِهٖ (Allah had promised you many

spoils that you would receive, so He gave these to you sooner - 48:20). The phrase "many spoils" mentioned here refers to the sizeable spoils that fell into the hands of Muslims in the conquests which followed the victory at Khaibar, in the rest of Arabia and the neighbouring countries. This verse embodies a prophecy that Muslims will achieve other great victories after the victory of Khaibar, and in consequence many spoils until the end of the world. However, before those numerous conquests, the conquest of Khaibar was given first, the spoils of which were reserved by Allah exclusively for the participants of Ḥudaibiyah. But the spoils to be achieved in all the next conquest would be common to all. This shows that the injunction of reserving the right of participating in Khaibar is not laid down explicitly in these verses. That injunction was laid down, as detailed earlier, in a separate category of revelation, that is, in the unrecited revelation. The Holy Prophet ﷺ acted upon the injunction and imparted its knowledge to the noble Companions.

وَكَفَّ اَيْدِىَ النَّاسِ عَنْكُمْ (...and stopped the hands of the people from (harming) you. ... 48:20). This refers to the unbelievers of Khaibar. In this battle, Allah did not allow them the opportunity to show much strength or force. Imām Baghawī says that the tribe of *Ghaṭafān* was the ally of the Jews of Khaibar. When it heard of the Holy Prophet's march against the Jews of Khaibar, it equipped itself with heavy arms to defend the Jews. But Allah infused terror into their minds, and they were worried that if they went forward, it was possible that a Muslim army might attack their homes in their absence. As a result, they got cold feet and did not have the courage to proceed (Maẓharī).

وَيَهْدِيَكُمْ صِرَاطًا مُّسْتَقِيْمًا (...And (He did this) so that He guides you to the right path.... 48:20) It is clarified earlier (in the commentary on verse 2 of this Sūrah that there are several degrees of guidance. From that point of view, they were all already guided on the straight path. Here it refers to the degree of guidance which they had not yet attained, that is, full reliance on Allah and increase in the power of faith.

وَاُخْرٰى لَمْ تَقْدِرُوْا عَلَيْهَا قَدْ اَحَاطَ اللّٰهُ بِهَا (And (there are) other (victories) that have not come within your power as yet, (but) Allah has encompassed them...." (48:21). This verse embodies a prophecy that Muslims will achieve many more great victories after the victory of Khaibar. But Allah says that they were unable to achieve them at that time; they would happen in

future. Among these victories, Makkah was the first one to be achieved. Therefore, some scholars refer this to the victory of Makkah. However, the wordings are general and refer to all the victories that will be achieved till the end of the world (Maẓharī).

Verses 22 - 26

وَلَوْ قٰتَلَكُمُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لَوَلَّوُا الْاَدْبَارَ ثُمَّ لَا يَجِدُوْنَ وَلِيًّا وَّ لَا
نَصِيْرًا ﴿٢٢﴾ سُنَّةَ اللّٰهِ الَّتِيْ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلُ ۚۖ وَلَنْ تَجِدَ لِسُنَّةِ
اللّٰهِ تَبْدِيْلًا ﴿٢٣﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِيْ كَفَّ اَيْدِيَهُمْ عَنْكُمْ وَاَيْدِيَكُمْ عَنْهُمْ
بِبَطْنِ مَكَّةَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ اَنْ اَظْفَرَكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ ۭ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ
بَصِيْرًا ﴿٢٤﴾ هُمُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَصَدُّوْكُمْ عَنِ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ
وَالْهَدْيَ مَعْكُوْفًا اَنْ يَّبْلُغَ مَحِلَّهٗ ۭ وَلَوْلَا رِجَالٌ مُّؤْمِنُوْنَ وَنِسَاۗءٌ
مُّؤْمِنٰتٌ لَّمْ تَعْلَمُوْهُمْ اَنْ تَطَـُٔوْهُمْ فَتُصِيْبَكُمْ مِّنْهُمْ مَّعَرَّةٌۢ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ ۚ
لِيُدْخِلَ اللّٰهُ فِيْ رَحْمَتِهٖ مَنْ يَّشَاۗءُ ۚ لَوْ تَزَيَّلُوْا لَعَذَّبْنَا الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا
مِنْهُمْ عَذَابًا اَلِيْمًا ﴿٢٥﴾ اِذْ جَعَلَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمُ الْحَمِيَّةَ
حَمِيَّةَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ فَاَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ سَكِيْنَتَهٗ عَلٰى رَسُوْلِهٖ وَعَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ
وَاَلْزَمَهُمْ كَلِمَةَ التَّقْوٰى وَكَانُوْٓا اَحَقَّ بِهَا وَاَهْلَهَا ۭ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ بِكُلِّ
شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمًا ﴿٢٦﴾

And had the disbelievers fought you, they would have certainly turned their backs, then they would have found neither a supporter nor a helper - [22] **- according to the consistent practice of Allah that went on since before, and you will never find a change in Allah's consistent practice.** [23] **And He is the One who restrained their hands from you and your hands from them in the valley of Makkah after He had let you prevail over them, and Allah is watchful over what you do.** [24] **They are those who disbelieved and prevented you from the Sacred Mosque (Al-Masjid-ul-Ḥarām), and**

(prevented) the sacrificial animals that were detained from reaching their due place. And (Allah would have allowed you to fight,) had there not been believing men and believing women whom you did not know that you might have trampled them, and thus an embarrassing situation might have befallen you because of them unknowingly, (but this was avoided) so that Allah may admit to His mercy whom He wills. And if they (the believing men and women) had been separate (from disbelievers), We would surely have punished those of them who disbelieved with a painful punishment. [25] **When the disbelievers developed in their hearts indignation, the indignation of ignorance; then Allah sent down tranquility from Himself upon His Messenger and upon the believers, and made them stick to the word of piety, and they were very much entitled to it, and competent for it. And Allah is All-Knowing about every thing.** [26]

Commentary

بِبَطْنِ مَكَّةَ (...in the valley of Makkah...) The Arabic word used here is *baṭn* which means 'belly' and in relation to a city, it refers to its center. However, in the present context it is used for Ḥudaibiyah, because of its close proximity to Makkah. This supports the Ḥanafī view that some parts of Ḥudaibiyah are included in the *ḥaram*. The relevant details may be found in our commentary on the verse 2:196.

فَتُصِيبَكُمْ مِّنْهُمْ مَّعَرَّةٌ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ (and thus an embarrassing situation might have befallen you because of them unknowingly....48:25): According to some authorities on lexicology *ma'arrah* connotes "sin"; according to others it means "*harm*"; and other authorities say it denotes "shame" or "embarrassment". In this context, apparently the last meaning appears to be apt. There was a nucleus of Muslims in Makkah and if the fight had broken out, Muslim army would have unwittingly killed their own Muslim brethren in faith, thereby causing great injury to their own cause, and incurring *obloquy* and *opprobrium* for themselves.

Natural Safeguard of the Noble Companions against Mistakes

Imām Qurṭubī says that if a Muslim unknowingly kills another Muslim, it is not a sin or crime. It is, however, certainly a source of shame, embarrassment and regret. Since it is a *Qatl Khaṭa'*, the laws of *diyah* [blood-wit] will apply. Allah has protected the noble Companions against

this as well. This shows the noble Companions are not infallible like the prophets of Allah, but Allah has in general terms safeguarded them in a natural way against mistakes which would be a cause of embarrassment, obloquy and opprobrium to them.

لِيُدْخِلَ اللّٰهُ فِي رَحْمَتِهِ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ (so that Allah may admit to His mercy whom He wills...48:25): It means that Allah infused patience in Muslims on this occasion to avoid war, because He knew that many people in future would embrace Islam on whom His mercy will be showered. Similarly the nucleus of Muslims who were detained in Makkah will also receive a large share of His mercy.

لَوْتَزَيَّلُوا (And if they [the believing men and women] had been separate, [from disbelievers], We would surely have punished those of them who disbelieved....48:25) Lexically, the word *tazayyul* denotes 'separation'. The sense is that if Muslims detained in Makkah had been separate and distinct from the unbelievers, the Muslims coming from Madīnah would have been able to save them in case of war, and Allah would have had the disbelievers punished then and there, because that was the demand of their attitude. However, the Makkan society at that time was a mixed society - helpless Muslim men and women and non-Muslims were living together. The Muslims were indistinguishable from non-Muslims. If fighting had broken out, there would have been no way to save the Muslims. Therefore, Allah averted the war.

وَاَلْزَمَهُمْ كَلِمَةَ التَّقْوٰى وَكَانُوْٓا اَحَقَّ بِهَا وَاَهْلَهَا (and made them stick to the word of piety, and they were very much entitled to it, and competent for it - 48:26)". The construction *kalimat-at-taqwā* connotes the word of the pious persons, that is, the *Kalimah* of *Tauḥīd* and *Risālah* whereby a person declares his faith in Allah's Oneness and in the Messengership of Sayyidnā Muḥammad ﷺ. It is named here as 'word of piety' because this word is the foundation of piety, righteousness and right conduct. The noble Companions here are said to have better right to it and more worthy of it, and thus Allah exposed and unmasked those people who accused them of infidelity and hypocrisy. Allah asserts that the noble Companions are more worthy of the word of Islam and better entitled to it, and thus made them adhere to it firmly, whereas the wretched evil-minded people refuse to acknowledge their value and entitlement.

Verses 27 - 29

لَقَدْ صَدَقَ اللّٰهُ رَسُوْلَهُ الرُّءْيَا بِالْحَقِّ ۚ لَتَدْخُلُنَّ الْمَسْجِدَ الْحَرَامَ اِنْ
شَآءَ اللّٰهُ اٰمِنِيْنَ ۙ مُحَلِّقِيْنَ رُءُوْسَكُمْ وَمُقَصِّرِيْنَ ۙ لَا تَخَافُوْنَ ۗ فَعَلِمَ
مَا لَمْ تَعْلَمُوْا فَجَعَلَ مِنْ دُوْنِ ذٰلِكَ فَتْحًا قَرِيْبًا ﴿۲۷﴾ هُوَ الَّذِيْٓ اَرْسَلَ
رَسُوْلَهٗ بِالْهُدٰى وَدِيْنِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهٗ عَلَى الدِّيْنِ كُلِّهٖ ۗ وَكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ
شَهِيْدًا ﴿۲۸﴾ مُحَمَّدٌ رَّسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ ۗ وَالَّذِيْنَ مَعَهٗٓ اَشِدَّآءُ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ
رُحَمَآءُ بَيْنَهُمْ تَرٰىهُمْ رُكَّعًا سُجَّدًا يَّبْتَغُوْنَ فَضْلًا مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَرِضْوَانًا ۫
سِيْمَاهُمْ فِيْ وُجُوْهِهِمْ مِّنْ اَثَرِ السُّجُوْدِ ۗ ذٰلِكَ مَثَلُهُمْ فِي التَّوْرٰىةِ ۛۚ
وَمَثَلُهُمْ فِي الْاِنْجِيْلِ ۛۚ كَزَرْعٍ اَخْرَجَ شَطْاَهٗ فَاٰزَرَهٗ فَاسْتَغْلَظَ
فَاسْتَوٰى عَلٰى سُوْقِهٖ يُعْجِبُ الزُّرَّاعَ لِيَغِيْظَ بِهِمُ الْكُفَّارَ ۗ وَعَدَ اللّٰهُ
الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ مِنْهُمْ مَّغْفِرَةً وَّاَجْرًا عَظِيْمًا ﴿۲۹﴾

Indeed, Allah has made true to His Messenger the dream (shown) with truth: You will most definitely enter the Sacred Mosque inshaallah (if Allah wills,) peacefully, with your heads shaved, and your hairs cut short, having no fear. So He knew what you did not know, and He assigned before that a well-nigh victory. [27] **He is the One who has sent His Messenger with Guidance and the religion of truth, so that He makes it prevail over all religions. And Allah suffices as a witness.** [28] **Muḥammad is the messenger of Allah, and those who are with him are hard against the disbelievers, compassionate among themselves; you will see them bowing down in Rukū', prostrating in Sajdah, seeking bounty from Allah and (His) good pleasure; their distinguishing feature is on their faces from the effect of Sajdah (prostration). This is their description in the Torah; and their description in the Injīl is: like a sown crop that brings forth its shoot, then makes it strong, then it grows thick and stands straight on its stem, looking good to the farmers, – so that He may enrage the disbelievers through them. Allah has promised forgiveness and a huge reward to those of them who**

believe and do good deeds. [29]

Recapitulation of the Event of Hudaibiyah

When the Peace Treaty of Hudaibiyah was completed, it was decided that the Muslims would not enter Makkah that year, and would return to Madīnah without performing 'Umrah. They were highly upset at this, because the blessed Companions' determination to perform 'Umrah was on account of the Holy Prophet's ﷺ vision, which is also a kind of revelation. The fact that everything was apparently happening contrary to the vision, they could not understand how the Holy Prophet's ﷺ journey had served its purpose. Some of the noble Companions, as a result, began to doubt, God forbid!, whether the vision was not fulfilled. The non-believers and hypocrites, on the other hand, taunted the believers that their Prophet's dream was not translated into reality. At this, the current set of verses was revealed (Transmitted by Baihaqī and others from Mujāhid).

لَقَدْ صَدَقَ اللّٰهُ رَسُوْلَهُ الرُّءْيَا بِالْحَقِّ (Indeed, Allah has made true to His Messenger the dream (shown) with truth...48:27). *Ṣidq* [truth] is, lexically, the antonym of *kidhb* [lie or falsehood]. Both these words are used for statements. If a statement is conformable to existing fact or reality, it is *ṣidq*. If it lacks accord with fact or reality, it is *kidhb*. Sometimes this word is used in relation to actions. In that case the word connotes the realization of an action, as for instance in [33:23], رِجَالٌ صَدَقُوْا مَا عَاهَدُوا اللّٰهَ (Among the believers are men who were true to their covenant with Allah;...). In this case the word *ṣidq* takes two grammatical objects, as in this verse the first object of the verb *ṣadaqa* is *rasūlahū* and its second object is *ru'yā*. The verse says that Allah has made true the dream. Here the event that was to take place in future has been expressed in the past perfect tense because of its certainty of occurrence. A reinforcing context that this event is definitely going to take place in future is expressed in energetic aorist thus: لَتَدْخُلُنَّ الْمَسْجِدَ الْحَرَامَ "You will most definitely enter the Sacred Mosque." (The construction under analysis *la-tadkhulu-nna* is made up of the following constituents: The corrobarative *la* is prefixed to the aorist denoting "Certainly" + the doubled energertic or corrobatative *nun* reinforcing the sense of "most definitely" appended as a suffix to the future tense *tadkhulu* "you shall most definitely enter"). That is to say, the vision you had seen that you

have entered the sacred Mosque will most definitely happen. It will not happen this year. It will happen at a future date. The date had not been specified in the dream. The blessed Companions in their enthusiasm made up their mind to set out for the journey that very year, and the Holy Prophet ﷺ concurred with their determination. There was much Divine wisdom in it which became manifest at the time of the Treaty of Ḥudaibiyah and served many useful purposes to which reference is already made. For example, when Sayyidnā 'Umar رضي الله عنه questioned the whole situation and expressed his doubt, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه allayed his suspicions and misgivings. He said no particular date and year was specified in the Holy Prophet's ﷺ vision. If it did not happen now, it does not matter; it will happen at some other time (Qurṭubī).

Importance of *insha-allāh* for the Performance of Future Works

In this verse Allah promises the Muslims that they will most definitely enter the sacred precincts of Makkah at a future time, and in making His promise He employed the phrase إِنْ شَاءَ اللّٰهُ *insha-allāh* [If Allah wills or God willing]. Allah being fully aware of His Will, there was no need for Him to have used the phrase, yet He used it (Qurṭubī). This has been done for the purpose of teaching the Messenger and the people the importance of *insha-allāh*. (Qurṭubī)

مُحَلِّقِيْنَ رُءُوْسَكُمْ وَمُقَصِّرِيْنَ (...your heads shaved, your hair cut short... 48:27). It is recorded in Bukhārī that when 'Umrah that was missed in the sixth year of Hijrah was performed in Dhul Qa'dah of the following year [7 .H.] and came to be known in history as *'Umrat-ul-Qaḍā'*, Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah رضي الله عنه says he trimmed the blessed hair of the Holy Prophet ﷺ with a pair of scissors. This incident took place in *'Umrat-ul-Qaḍā'*, not in *ḥajja-tul-wadā'* [farewell pilgrimage] because on the latter occasion he had his head shaved (Qurṭubī).

فَعَلِمَ مَالَمْ تَعْلَمُوْا (So He knew what you did not know....48:27). It was within Allah's power to have allowed the Muslims to enter the sacred Mosque and perform their 'Umrah that very year. However, there was great wisdom in deferring it until the following year which Allah only knew and the Muslims generally did not know. Among these benefits was the conquest of Khaibar which Allah had willed must be achieved first, so that the Muslims may become a powerful force in terms of material resources. This would make it possible for them to perform their 'Umrah

peacefully and with tranquility. Thus the Qur'ān says: فَجَعَلَ مِنْ دُوْنِ ذٰلِكَ فَتْحًا قَرِيْبًا (and He assigned before that a well-nigh victory.) [27]" دُوْنَ ذٰلِكَ *Dūna dhālika* (before that) in this context stands for دُوْنَ الرُّؤْيَا *Dunar-ru'yā*, that is to say, before the fulfilment of this vision, the Muslims must achieve the conquest of Khaibar which is near at hand.* Some scholars have expressed the view that فَتْحًا قَرِيْبًا *fatḥan qarīban* [nigh victory] refers to the Peace Treaty of Ḥudaibiyah itself, because that opened the gate for the victory of Makkah and all subsequent victories. Eventually, all the noble Companions acknowledged the Treaty to be the greatest of all victories. The meaning of the verse would be: you did not know what wisdom and good lay hidden in your determination to march, then your apparent failure to accomplish it, and eventually in reaching a peace settlement the terms of which seemed to be hurtful to your self-respect but Allah was fully acquainted with it. He had ordained that before the Holy Prophet's ﷺ vision should manifest itself, you might be blessed with another victory in the form of the Peace Treaty of Ḥudaibiyah - a victory near at hand. As a result of this victory, it was seen by all that while on the occasion of Ḥudaibiyah the noble Companions did not number more than 1500, later they increased in number to about 10000 (Qurṭubī).

هُوَالَّذِيْٓ اَرْسَلَ رَسُوْلَهٗ بِالْهُدٰى وَدِيْنِ الْحَقِّ (He is the One who has sent His Messenger with Guidance and the religion of truth, so that He makes it prevail over all religions....48:28). In the preceding verses, promises were made about conquests and spoils of war; reference was made to the special merits of the participants of Ḥudaibiyah and general merits of all the noble Companions; and glad tidings were given to them. Now at the conclusion of the Sūrah all these themes are summarized and emphasized. Because these blessings were showered and the glad tidings were given as a result of accepting and obeying the Holy Prophet ﷺ, the verse lays further stress on strengthening the acceptance and obedience of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. It also denounces those who reject the messengership of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and allays suspicions of those Muslims who were dissatisfied with the terms and provisions of the Treaty

*. This was necessary because the Jews of Khaibar always conspired with the disbelievers of Makkah against the Holy Prophet ﷺ who was encircled by the Makkans from the South, and by the Jews of Khaibar from the North. Any possible battle with any of them would entail the danger from the backside. The Treaty of Hudaibiah made the South safe for the Muslims, and they were able to conquer Khaibar on the North without any fear from their back. **(Muhammad Taqi Usmani)**

of Ḥudaibiyah. The verse in addition confirms the messengership of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and, giving glad tidings, makes a very bold prophecy to the effect that not only would Islam prevail in Arabia but would also eventually triumph over all other religions.

مُحَمَّدٌ رَّسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ (Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allah...48:29). The general style of the Qur'ān is that, instead of referring to the Holy Prophet ﷺ by his name, he is normally called by one or another of his characteristic or attributive names especially in vocative cases, as for example, *yā ayyuhan-nabiyyu, yā ayyuhar-rasūlu, yā ayyuhal-muzzammilu* and so on, unlike other prophets who are addressed by their personal names, as for instance, *yā ibrahīmu, yā mūsā, yā 'īsā*. The Holy Prophet ﷺ is addressed four times only in the entire Qur'ān by his personal name Muḥammad. This is done only where there is a special reason for it. Here the reason is that when at Ḥudaibiyah, the Peace Treaty was being written, the unbelievers had objected to the use of the characteristic or attributive name [*rasūlul-lāh*] with the personal name of the Messenger of Allah. The pagan Quraish wiped off Muḥammad *rasūl-ul-lāh,* and insisted that it be replaced with Muḥammad Ibn 'Abdullāh. By the command of Allah, the Messenger accepted it. However, Allah on this occasion, in the Qur'ān, especially attached the characteristic phrase *rasūlul-lāh* [Messenger of Allah] to his personal name [Muḥammad] and thus entrenched it permanently in His Last Book, the Holy Qur'ān, so that it will be written and recited like that until the Judgement Day.

وَالَّذِيْنَ مَعَهٗٓ اَشِدَّآءُ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ رُحَمَآءُ بَيْنَهُمْ تَرٰىهُمْ رُكَّعًا سُجَّدًا يَّبْتَغُوْنَ فَضْلًا مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَرِضْوَانًا (...and those who are with him are hard against the disbelievers, compassionate among themselves; you will see them bowing down in *ruku'*, prostrating in *sajdah*, seeking bounty from Allah and (His) good pleasure;.... 48:29). From this point onwards the merits of the noble Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ are described. Although the immediate addressees of the verse are the noble participants of Ḥudaibiyah and *bai'at-ur-Riḍwān*. But on account of the generality of words, all blessed Companions are included in the description, because a *ṣaḥābī* or Companion is one who embraced Islam, saw the Holy Prophet ﷺ and accompanied him, even for a short time.

The Qualities, Merits and Special Marks of the Noble Companions

Allah Ta'ālā, on this occasion, describes the messengership of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and makes a prophecy to the effect that not only would Islam prevail in Arabia, but would also eventually triumph over all other religions. In addition, He has described the qualities, the merits and the special marks of the noble Companions ﵃. The severe test which they had to undergo at the time of the Treaty of Ḥudaibiyah has also been described. The passage describes that they never wavered from the path of rectitude despite the fact that the Treaty was against their firm belief and heart-felt emotions, and despite the fact that they could not enter the sacred Mosque, and had to return without performing 'Umrah. In these unfavourable circumstances, they displayed an unusual obedience of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and their strength of faith. The blessed Companions have been described here fully, because the Holy Prophet ﷺ is the Final Messenger and there shall be no prophet or messenger after him. He left behind him the Book of Allah and the paradigm of noble Companions to follow. Specific injunctions have been laid down to emulate their pattern of life. Therefore, the Qur'ān too describes the merits of the blessed Companions, and encourages and emphasizes to follow their model of life.

The first quality of the Companions mentioned here is that they are hard against the unbelievers, and merciful to one another. It was proven time and again that they were harsh against the unbelievers. They sacrificed all their ethnic and tribal relations for the sake of Islam. This was especially demonstrated on the occasion of Ḥudaibiyah. The tenderness of the blessed Companions was especially demonstrated when Islamic brotherhood [*mu'ākhāt*] was created between *muhājirs* [emigrants from Makkah] and *anṣār* [helpers from Madīnah]. Anṣār invited the *muhājirīn* to share with them in their holdings. The Qur'ān describes this quality of the blessed Companions first, because nothing they practiced - whether friendship or enmity, love or hatred - was for any selfish reasons. Everything was for the sake of Allah and His Messenger - and this is the highest degree of perfect faith. In a Ḥadīth recorded by Bukhārī, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said,

من احبّ لله وابغض لله فقد استكمل ايمانه

"He who loves for the sake of Allah and hates for the sake of

Allah has attained the highest degree of faith."

This means that anyone who has subjugated his friendship, love, hatred and enmity under the Will of Allah has perfected his faith. This clarifies another point: The Companions' being hard against the unbelievers does not imply that they were never tender towards any non-believer. In fact it means that where Allah and His Messenger enjoins them to be hard against the non-believers, they would simply comply without taking into account the relations of kinship or friendship. As far as kind and equitable dealing with them is concerned, the Qur'ān itself promulgates:

لَايَنْهٰكُمُ اللّٰهُ عَنِ الَّذِيْنَ لَمْ يُقَاتِلُوْكُمْ فِى الدِّيْنِ وَلَمْ يُخْرِجُوْكُمْ مِّنْ دِيَارِكُمْ

"Allah does not forbid you from those who did not fight you on account of faith, and did not expel you from your homes, that you do good to them, and deal justly with them." (60:8).

There is a large number of incidents where Allah's Messenger and the blessed Companions displayed their kindness and compassion to the helpless and needy unbelievers. Treating them with justice and equity is the general injunction of Islam. No activity flouting justice and equity is permissible even in the field of pitched battle.

The second quality of the blessed Companions is that they are generally preoccupied with bowing and prostrating. The first quality is the mark of their perfection in faith and the second quality is the mark of their perfection in deeds, because *ṣalāh* is the most meritorious of all the good deeds.

سِيْمَاهُمْ فِىْ وُجُوْهِهِمْ مِّنْ اَثَرِالسُّجُوْدِ (their distinguishing feature is on their faces from the effect of *sajdah* (prostration)....48:29). That is to say, *ṣalāh* has become such a permanent routine of their life that the special effects of *ṣalāh* and *sajdah* are evident on their faces. These distiguishing features do not necessarily refer to any physical sign on the forehead on account of constant prostration. This in fact refers to the light and brightness that is reflected naturally on the faces of the devout as a result of humility, meekness and gentleness of disposition. Particularly this is one of the effects that follow from offering *tahajjud ṣalāh* regularly. It is recorded in Ibn Mājah on the authority of Syyidna Jābir ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said,

من كثر صلوٰته باللّيل حسن وجهه بالنّهار

"He who offers his *ṣalāh* abundantly at night, his face looks good during the day."

Ḥaḍrat Ḥasan Baṣrī رحمه الله تعالیٰ has said that the "features" in the verse refer to the light that the faces of those who pray will emit on the Day of Judgement.

ذٰلِكَ مَثَلُهُمْ فِي التَّوْرٰىةِ ۚ وَ مَثَلُهُمْ فِي الْإِنْجِيلِ ۚ كَزَرْعٍ اَخْرَجَ شَطْاَهٗ فَاٰزَرَهٗ فَاسْتَغْلَظَ فَاسْتَوٰى عَلٰى سُوْقِهٖ يُعْجِبُ الزُّرَّاعَ لِيَغِيْظَ بِهِمُ الْكُفَّارَ ۗ وَعَدَ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ مِنْهُمْ مَّغْفِرَةً وَّاَجْرًا عَظِيْمًا

(This is their description in the Torah; and their description in the Injil is: like a sown crop that brings forth its shoot, then makes it strong, then it grows thick and stands straight on its stem, looking good to the farmers, so that He may enrage the disbelievers through them. Allah has promised forgiveness and a huge reward to those of them who believe and do good deeds.... 48:29)

This part of the verse states the description of the noble Companions given above about the light of their prostration and prayers on their forehead is the same description as was given in the Torah for the Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. And another parable of them is put in the Gospel [*injīl*]: When a farmer sows a seed in his field, it grows over a period of time - especially so that it changes from its original form into a form which is at first weak like a thin needle, then it develops into branches getting stronger, larger and more complicated. Eventually when it is fully grown, it is the strongest of shrubs and becomes a tree. Likewise the Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in the beginning were very few. At one time, besides the Holy Prophet ﷺ there were only three Muslims: Among men, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr Aṣ-Ṣiddīq رضي الله عنه; among women, Sayyidah Khadījah رضي الله عنها; and among children, Sayyidnā 'Alī رضي الله عنه. Gradually, but progressively, the strength of the Muslims continued to grow, so much so that the number of the noble Companions who performed the farewell pilgrimage with the Holy Prophet ﷺ is said to be about One hundred and fifty thousand (150,000).

There are three possibilities in this verse: First, the grammatical pause be observed at *fit-tawrāh* in which case it will mean that the previous likeness, that is, the light of the faces is described in the Torah. In this

case, a grammatical pause would not be observed at *fil-injīl*, but one should proceed without stopping, and it will mean that the parable of the noble Companions in the Gospel is like a field or tree which at the beginning is very weak but gradually it grows strong.

The second possibility is that the pause be observed at فِى الْاِنْجِيْلِ *fil-injīl* rather than at فِى التَّوْرٰتِهِ *fit-tawrāh*, in which case the meaning would be that the description of the light of their faces is found both in Torah and the Gospel, as here in the Qur'ān. Then *Ka-zar-'in* "like a sown crop" may be treated as a separate parable.

The third possibility is that the statement does not end at *fit-tawrāh* nor at *fil-injīl*. In this case *dhalika,* the demonstrative pronoun, would point to the next parable, and it would mean that the description of the Companions is given in both the Torah and the Gospel "like a sown crop". If the Torah and the Gospel had been intact in their original form, we could have compared the parables as given in those books with those given here in the Qur'ān and determined its exact meaning. However, the present-day Torah and the Gospel have been subjected to many alterations and distortions. Therefore, its true import cannot be determined with any degree of certainty. Nevertheless, most commentators prefer the first possibility according to which the first description is found in the Torah and the second parable is found in the Gospel. Imām Baghawī says that this description of the noble Companions is found in the Gospel in the following way : At the beginning they will be few in number, then the number will grow and become strong. Qatādah quotes from the Injīl as follows: "Such a people will emerge who will grow like a crop; they will enjoin good works and forbid evil works" (Maẓharī). Despite changes in the present-day Torah and Gospel, the following prophecy is found:

> "He said: The Lord came from Mount Sinai; and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand went a fiery law for them. Yea, he loved the people; all his saints are in thy hand: and they sat down at thy feet; every one shall receive of thy words." [Deut. 33:2]

As pointed out earlier, at the time of the conquest of Makkah there were 10000 Companions who entered the City of Khalīl Ibrāhīm عليه السلام

(Makkah) with the embodiment of light [Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ] whose advent was from the mount Paran (in which the Cave of Ḥirā' is situated). The expression "in his hand will be a fiery sacrosanct law [Sharī'ah]" probably refers to أَشِدَّاءُ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ "hard against the unbelievers". The expression "he will love his people" is understood to refer to رُحَمَاءُ بَيْنَهُمْ "compassionate to one another". The details are set out together with other references in a work Iẓhār-ul-ḥaq, Vol. 3/ chap. 6: p.256. This book was written by Maulānā Raḥmatullāh Kairānwī against the Priest Fonder . In this book, the parable of Injīl is qouted as follows:

> Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof. [Matthew 13:31-32]

The following passage is quoted from Mark 4:26 in Iẓhār-ul-ḥaq, Vol 3/chap 6:p. 310:

> And he said, so is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; And should sleep, rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come. (Mark 4: 27-29)(*)

The expression "kingdom of heaven" on various occasions in the Gospel seems to refer to the Final Messenger. Allah knows best!

لِيَغِيظَ بِهِمُ الْكُفَّارَ (...so that He may enrage the disbelievers through them...48:29). That is, Allah has characterized the blessed Companions by some noble qualities. He made them strong after being weak and multiplied them into large numbers after being small in numbers. Seeing the growth and expansion of Islam and Muslims, the unbelievers became furious and angry towards them, and envious of them, burning in the fire of jealousy. Abū 'Urwah Zubairi says he was sitting in one of the sessions of Imām Mālik when a person uttered a belittling statement against the blessed Companions. The Imam recited this entire verse. When he came to the clause "so that He may enrage the disbelievers through them. [29]", he

(*). These quotations are taken from King James Version of the Bible.

said this warning will apply to anyone who belittles the blessed Companions (Qurṭubī). The Imām did not say that such a person would become *kāfir*, however he said that the warning applies to such a person. It means that the conduct of such a person will be like that of unbelievers.

وَعَدَ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ مِنْهُمْ مَّغْفِرَةً وَّاَجْرًا عَظِيْمًا (Allah has promised forgiveness and a huge reward to those of them who believe and do good deeds...48:29). The preposition *min* in the prepositional phrase *min-hum* is by consensus of Qur'ānic scholarly opinion an explicative or *min lil-bayān* or *tabyīn*. Therefore, it means that it is Allah's promise to those Muslims who are selfless in faith and strong in character that He will forgive them and give them a great reward. The preposition min serves to make clear and explains that all the blessed Companions - without any exception - believe and do deeds of righteousness. The second point this verse clarifies is that Allah has promised them all without any exception forgiveness and a mighty reward. *Min lil-bayān* or *tabyīn* is frequently used in the Qur'ān. For example, the command in [22:30] فَاجْتَنِبُوا الرِّجْسَ مِنَ الْاَوْثَانِ وَاجْتَنِبُوْا قَوْلَ الزُّوْرِ "So, refrain from the filth of the idols and refrain from a word of falsehood" (22:30). In this clause, the preposition *min* explicates the obscure noun *rijs* as referring to the "idols". Likewise the prepositional phrase *min-hum* here is explicative of "those who believe". *Rawāfiḍ*, however, treat the preposition *min* as partitive denoting a part as distinct from the whole - meaning the promise of forgiveness and mighty reward applies only to a part of those who believed and worked deeds of righteousness. This is completely incompatible with the context and in conflict with the above verses. This verse undoubtedly comprehends all the blessed Companions. However, the immediate application of this verse is to the participants of Ḥudaibiyah and the Pledge of Riḍwān. In the preceding verses Allah has announced that they have incurred His pleasure:

لَقَدْ رَضِيَ اللّٰهُ عَنِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ اِذْ يُبَايِعُوْنَكَ تَحْتَ الشَّجَرَةِ

"Allah was pleased with the believers when they were pledging allegiance with you by placing their hands in your hands under the tree,..."(18)

This verse is a guarantee that they will all be firmly established in their faith and righteousness, because Allah is All-knowing and Well-Aware of what is going to happen. If Allah knows that anyone at

anytime will turn away from the faith, He will never announce about His pleasure. Ibn 'Abdul Barr, quoting this verse in the introduction to his book *istī'āb,* writes:

ومن رضى الله عنه لم يسخط عليه ابدًا

"He with whom Allah is pleased, He will never be displeased with him.".

On the basis of this verse, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that no one from among the participants of the Pledge of Riḍwān will ever enter the Fire. It is absolutely invalid to exclude some of those who were originally promised forgiveness and a mighty reward. Hence there is unanimity among *ummah* on the point that all the noble Companions are impartial, unbiased and worthy of confidence.

All Companions Are Inmates of Paradise: Their Sins Are Forgiven and to Belittle them is a Major Sin

Many verses of the Qur'ān bear testimony to this fact. Some of the verses are part of this Sūrah. For instance,

لَقَدْ رَضِيَ اللّٰهُ عَنِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ

"Allah was pleased with the believers...48:29"

and

اَلْزَمَهُمْ كَلِمَةَ التَّقْوٰى وَكَانُوْٓا اَحَقَّ بِهَا وَاَهْلَهَا

"...and made them stick to the word of piety, and they were very much entitled to it, and competent for it.". (48:26)

Besides, in several verses scattered in various other Sūrahs the same position has been affirmed for all the Companions:

يَوْمَ لَا يُخْزِى اللّٰهُ النَّبِيَّ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مَعَه،

"on the Day when Allah will not disgrace the Prophet and those who believed with him." [66:8]

وَالسّٰبِقُوْنَ الْاَوَّلُوْنَ مِنَ الْمُهٰجِرِيْنَ وَالْاَنْصَارِ وَالَّذِيْنَ اتَّبَعُوْهُمْ بِاِحْسَانٍ رَّضِيَ اللّٰهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوْا عَنْهُ وَاَعَدَّلَهُمْ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِىْ تَحْتَهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ

"As for the first and foremost of the Emigrants and the Supporters, and those who followed them in goodness, Allah is pleased with them, and they are pleased with him; and He has

prepared for them gardens berneath which rivers flow..."[9:100]

And in Sūrah Al-Ḥadīd, Allah has promised the Companions as follows:

وَكُلًّا وَعَدَ اللّٰهُ الْحُسْنٰى

"...Allah has promised Husna (the good) for each." (57:10)

And about Ḥusnā it is said in Sūrah Anbiyā':

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ سَبَقَتْ لَهُمْ مِّنَّا الْحُسْنٰى اُولٰٓئِكَ عَنْهَا مُبْعَدُوْنَ

Surely, those for whom the good (news) from Us has come earlier shall be kept far away from it (the Hell) [21: 100]

The Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said:

خیرالقرون قرنی ثم الّذین یلونهم ثمّ الذین یلونهم.

"The best of generations is my generation, then that which follows it immediately and then that which follows it immediately (Bukhārī)."

In a Ḥadīth the Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said: "Do not revile my Companions, for if one of you contributed as much gold as the mount 'Uḥud, it would not amount to as much as the *mudd* of one of them, or half of it (Bukhārī). A *mudd* in Arabia was a measure which, according to the Ḥanafī school of Fiqh, is equal to 1.032 litre or 815. 39 grams and, according to the other three major schools, it is equal to 0. 687 litre or 543 grams. Bazzār records with a sound chain of transmitters that Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said: "Of all the people in the entire world Allah has chosen my Companions, and of all the Companions He has particularly chosen four for me - Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān and 'Alī ﷺ. (See Jam'-ul-Fawā'd)

There is a Ḥadīth recorded in Tirmidhī on the authority of 'Abdullāh Ibn Mughaffal ﷺ. In it the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

اللّٰه اللّٰه فی اصحابی لا تتّخذوهم غرضا من بعدی فمن احبّهم فبحبّی احبّهم ومن ابغضهم فببغضی ابغضهم ومن آذاهم فقد اذانی ومن اذانی فقد اذی اللّٰه ومن اذی اللّٰه فیوشک ان یأخذه (راه الترمذی عن عبداللّٰه بن المغفل از جمع الفوائد)

"Fear Allah, fear Allah regarding my Companions! Do not make them a target of your criticism after me. He who loves

> them does so on account of my love; he who hates them does so on account of hating me; and he who injures them has injured me, and he who injures me has injured Allah. He who intends to injure Allah will soon be punished by Him."

I have written a book entitled *maqām-e-ṣaḥābah* in which I have collected relevant Qur'ānic verses and Prophetic Traditions pertaining to the status of the Companions. This book has already been published in Urdu. The 'Ummah is unanimous on the point that all the blessed Companions are righteous and worthy of confidence. The book deals elaborately with their disagreements and the civil wars that took place among them. It also explains how a Muslim critic should deal with the differences of the *ṣaḥābah* and whether it should be made a subject of debate and investigation or one should avoid commenting on them. Some of these issues to the degree necessary have been included in the commentary of Sūrah Muḥammad. Please refer to the relevant section there. Allah's help is sought and on Him is our reliance!

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Fatḥ
Ends here

Sūrah Al-Ḥujurāt

(The Apartments)

Sūrah Al-Ḥujurāt was revealed in Madīnah. It has 18 Verses and 2 Sections.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 5

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تُقَدِّمُوْا بَيْنَ يَدَيِ اللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ ؕ اِنَّ
اللّٰهَ سَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿١﴾ يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَرْفَعُوْۤا اَصْوَاتَكُمْ فَوْقَ
صَوْتِ النَّبِيِّ وَلَا تَجْهَرُوْا لَهٗ بِالْقَوْلِ كَجَهْرِ بَعْضِكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ اَنْ
تَحْبَطَ اَعْمَالُكُمْ وَاَنْتُمْ لَا تَشْعُرُوْنَ ﴿٢﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَغُضُّوْنَ اَصْوَاتَهُمْ
عِنْدَ رَسُوْلِ اللّٰهِ اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ امْتَحَنَ اللّٰهُ قُلُوْبَهُمْ لِلتَّقْوٰى ؕ لَهُمْ
مَّغْفِرَةٌ وَّاَجْرٌ عَظِيْمٌ ﴿٣﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يُنَادُوْنَكَ مِنْ وَّرَآءِ الْحُجُرٰتِ
اَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿٤﴾ وَلَوْ اَنَّهُمْ صَبَرُوْا حَتّٰى تَخْرُجَ اِلَيْهِمْ لَكَانَ
خَيْرًا لَّهُمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿٥﴾

O those who believe, do not proceed ahead of Allah and His Messenger, and fear Allah. Surely Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. [1] O those who believe, do not raise your voices above the voice of the Prophet, and be not loud when speaking to him, as you are loud when speaking to one another, lest your good deeds become void while you are not aware. [2] Surely, those who lower their voices before Allah's Messenger are the

ones whose hearts Allah has tested for piety; for them there is forgiveness, and a great reward. [3] **As for those who call you from behind the apartments, most of them lack understanding.** [4] **Had they remained patient until you come out to them, it would have been much better for them. And Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful.** [5]

Background of Revelation

According to Qurṭubī, there are six narratives cited as the background of revelation of these verses. Qāḍī Abū Bakr Ibn 'Arabī confirms that all the narratives are correct, because they all are included in the general meaning of the verses. One of the narratives, reported by Bukhārī, is that once some people from the tribe of Tamim came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. During their stay, one of the issues under discussion was to appoint someone as a ruler of this tribe. Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ؓ suggested the name of Qa'qā' Ibn Ma'bad, while Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ proposed the name of Aqra' Ibn Ḥābis. Both of them discussed the issue for a while during which the voices of both became loud. These verses were revealed in this background.

لَا تُقَدِّمُوا بَيْنَ يَدَيِ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ (...do not proceed ahead of Allah and His Messenger - 49:1) The phrase بَيْنَ الْيَدَيْنِ, literally, means "between the two hands", but in Arabic usage it means 'in front of' or 'ahead of'. It means: do not go ahead of or in front of Allah's Messenger. The Qur'ān does not say in what matter they are prohibited from preceding him. It would appear that the general prohibition includes preceding by word or deed. Wait for the Messenger's reply unless he himself appoints someone to reply. Likewise if he is walking, no one should overtake him. If they are sitting in a dining session, no one should start eating before him. If there is a clear indication or strong evidence that he himself wants to send someone forward, this would be possible, for example some people used to be asked to go on a journey or war ahead of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

Respect for Islamic Scholars and Religious Leaders

Some of the scholars have ruled that Muslims should observe the same rule in respect of Islamic scholars and spiritual masters as enjoined by the Qur'ān, because they are the heirs of the Holy Prophet's ﷺ .One day the Holy Holy Prophet ﷺ saw Sayyidnā Abūd-Dardā' ؓ walking in front of Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ؓ, he reprimanded him saying: "you are walking in front of a person who is better than you in this world and in

the hereafter". Then he added : "The Sun did not rise or set on any man better than Abū Bakr ؓ in the world besides the Prophets". (Rūḥ-ul-Bayān on the authority of Kashf-ul-Asrār). Therefore, scholars have ruled that teachers and spiritual guides should be treated with similar respect.

لَا تَرْفَعُوْٓا اَصْوَاتَكُمْ فَوْقَ صَوْتِ النَّبِيِّ (...do not raise your voices above the voice of the Prophet. - 49:2) This is another etiquette to be observed while in the presence of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . This verse teaches the believers that they should not raise their voices above the voice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ nor speak aloud to him as one speaks aloud to another in general discussions. The verse warns that neglecting this etiquette may entail nullification of one's virtuous deeds, because this is a kind of disrespect to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Thus when this verse was revealed, the blessed Companions became very apprehensive and very cautious. Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ؓ said: "By God! O Messenger of Allah, from now till my last breath, I shall speak to you as if someone is whispering." (Ad-Durr-ul-Manthūr on the authority of Baihaqī) When this verse was revealed, Sayyidnā 'Umar's ؓ voice became so low that the Holy Prophet ﷺ had to ask him to repeat what he said, so that he could understand what he was saying to him (Ṣiḥāḥ). Thābit Ibn Qays ؓ had a naturally loud voice. When he heard this verse, he feared that his good deeds would be rendered void, he wept and lowered his voice (Ad-Durr-ul-Manthūr on the authority of Baihaqī).

It is Prohibited to Greet and Speak Aloud in front of the Holy Prophet's ﷺ Mausoleum

Qāḍī Abū Bakr Ibn 'Arabī says that respect for the Holy Prophet ﷺ after his demise is just as compulsory as it was during his life-time. Therefore, some of the scholars have expressed the view that it is disrespectful to say *salām* or speak very loudly in front of the Holy Prophet's ﷺ mausoleum. Likewise it is discourteous to make noise where Prophetic traditions are recited, because when the blessed words of the Holy Prophet ﷺ are being recited, it is compulsory to listen to them silently. In the same manner, it is an unmannerly behaviour to raise voices after his demise when his noble words are repeated.

Ruling

As the Qur'ānic injunction "do not proceed ahead of Allah and His Messenger" applies to 'Ulamā' as the heirs of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, likewise the injunction "do not raise your voices above the voice of the

Prophet." is applicable to the great scholars of Islam also. When sitting in their assembly, it is impolite to raise voices so loudly that their voices are suppressed (Qurṭubī).

أَنْ تَحْبَطَ اَعْمَالُكُمْ وَاَنْتُمْ لَا تَشْعُرُوْنَ (lest your good deeds become void while you are not aware - 49:2.) This clause is indicating the reason why the Muslims are directed not to raise their voices above the voice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. They are warned that non-compliance of the rule may nullify their virtuous deeds. According to the axioms of Sharī'ah and universally established principles, a few perturbing questions arise here. First of all, according to the unanimous view of *Ahl-us-Sunnah wal-Jama'ah*, the only thing that can destroy righteous deeds is *kufr* or disblief. No sin can destroy good deeds. Here the Qur'ān addresses the noble Companions and the believers. It addresses them by calling them "O believers" which goes to show that they are "believers" and not "disbelievers" - so how can their righteous works be rendered void? The second point is that "faith" is an act of free will. A person cannot be a believer unless he embraces faith with his own free will. Likewise "disbelief" [*kufr*] is an act of free will. A person does not become *kāfir* [unbeliever] unless he adopts disbelief with his own free will. The concluding phrase "while you are not aware" seems to be against this principle: Failure of good deeds is the punishment of disbelief which ought to be a result of one's own free will and the phrase shows that the punishment lacks "free will". So how can the good deeds go to waste?

My master, the honorable sage of the Ummah has in his Bayān-ul-Qur'ān explicated the passage in such a manner that all these perturbations are resolved. He says the meaning of the verse is thus: O Muslims, avoid raising your voices above the voice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ or speaking loudly to him, because in so doing there is the fear that your deeds should be thwarted. The danger in raising your voices above that of the Holy Prophet ﷺ lies in the fact that it is tantamount to discourtesy to the Holy Prophet ﷺ which is the same as vexing him. It is unthinkable that the noble Companions would intentionally attempt to hurt him. However, it is possible that certain deeds and actions, such as "advancing forward" and "raising voices", without the intention of hurting could upset or offend him. Therefore, all such conducts have been absolutely prohibited, forbidden and regarded as sin. The essential characteristics of

some of the sins are such that the people who commit them lose the Divine aid of repentance and the ability or capacity to perform righteous works. As a result, he gets so engrossed in sins that they lead him to "disbelief" and thus the righteous deeds fail. Likewise hurting one's religious leader, teacher or spiritual guide is a sin that runs the risk of losing the Divine aid. Thus conducts such as "advancing before the Holy Prophet ﷺ" or "raising voices" are such sinful conducts that can cause the Divine help to be taken away. This situation eventually leads one to "disbelief" which destroys one's good works. Because the believer may not have intentionally performed the act of hurting, thus he would not even perceive how he got involved in the process of "disbelief", and "thwarting of good deeds". Some of the scholars have expressed the view that if someone has taken a righteous, holy person as his spiritual guide, then he shows disrespect to him, then such a person may suffer the same consequences: that is, sometimes it becomes the cause of Divine aid being removed and of incurring His wrath which eventually destroys the treasure of "faith". We seek refuge with Allah from it!

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُنَادُونَكَ مِن وَرَاءِ الْحُجُرَاتِ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ (As for those who call you from behind the apartments, most of them lack understanding. - 49:4) In this verse, Allah Ta'ālā has mentioned a third etiquette about dealing with the Holy Prophet ﷺ. It is directed that when he is at home, one should not call him from outside. Particularly calling him by his name is an unmannered attitude. Reasonable persons would not do it. The term *ḥujurāt* (translated above as 'apartments') is the plural of *ḥujrah*. Lexically, it refers to a four-walled apartment or dwelling, comprising a courtyard and a roofed building . In Madīnah, the Holy Prophet ﷺ had nine wives. Each one of them had a separate apartment, where on different days, he used to stay in succession.

The Apartments of the Mothers of the Faithful

Ibn Sa'd on the authority of 'Aṭā' Al-Khurāsānī gives a description of these dwellings. He writes that these apartments were built of palm branches and their doors were covered with thick black woolen curtains. Imām Bukhārī in Al-'Adab-ul- Mufrad and Baihaqī in his collection record that Dāwūd Ibn Qais reports that he had visited these "apartments" and estimated that from the door of the "apartment" to the roofed part of the

building, it must be about seven cubits, the room about ten cubits and the height of the roof about eight cubits[1]. These apartments of the Mothers of the faithful were included in the Holy Prophet's ﷺ mosque during the reign of Walīd Ibn 'Abd-ul-Mālik at his own command. On that day in Madīnah, people were lamenting and bewailing.

Occasion of Revelation

Imām Baghawī, on the authority of Qatādah رضي الله عنه, reports that the delegation of Banū Tamīm arrived in Madīnah in the afternoon and came up to the Holy Prophet ﷺ when he was resting in one of his apartments. These bedouins were not acquainted with the social manners and etiquette of a civil society. They stood outside the apartment and called out: O Muḥammad, come out to us! On this occasion, verse [4] was revealed (Musnad of Aḥmad, Tirmidhī, and others record similar reports in differential wordings as quoted by Maẓharī).

Additional Notes

The noble Companions and their followers showed the same respect and courtesy to their scholars and spiritual masters as enjoined by the Qur'ān for the Holy Prophet ﷺ. It is recorded in Bukhārī and other collections that when Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنهما wanted to inquire about any Prophetic Tradition from any knowledgeable Companion, he would go to his house and sit at the threshold without calling him or knocking at the door. He would wait there until the Companion himself comes out. When he came out on his own, he would ask him about the Tradition. However, the scholar himself would say to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنهما: "O cousin of Allah's Messenger, why did you not knock at the door and inform me about your arrival?" Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنهما would reply: "A scholar in his community is like a prophet, and Allah has directed us that we should wait until he comes out on his own. Sayyidnā Abū 'Ubaidah رضي الله عنه says, "I never knock on the door of any scholar at any time, but I wait until he himself has emerged and then meet him (Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī).

Ruling

In the clause of verse حَتّٰى تَخْرُجَ اِلَيْهِمْ "...until you come out to them ...49:5", the prepositional phrase *ilaihim* "to them" is a restrictive phrase, and it implies that people must wait until the Holy Prophet ﷺ emerges to talk to them, but if he has emerged for some other reason or purpose,

(1) One Cubit= about 18 inches

even in this case it is not appropriate to talk to him. The speakers should wait until a suitable situation or occasion arises for them to speak: that is, they should speak about their particular issue when the Holy Prophet ﷺ turns his attention to them for that purpose.

Verse 6

يَآيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِنْ جَآءَ كُمْ فَاسِقٌۢ بِنَبَاٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوْٓا اَنْ تُصِيْبُوْا قَوْمًاۢ بِجَهَالَةٍ فَتُصْبِحُوْا عَلٰى مَا فَعَلْتُمْ نٰدِمِيْنَ ﴿٦﴾

O those who believe, if a sinful person brings you a report, verify its correctness, lest you harm a people out of ignorance then become remorseful on what you did. [6]

Background of Revelation

According to Ibn Kathir, it is reported in Musnad of Ahmad that Ḥārith Ibn Ḍirār Ibn Abī Ḍirār, the leader of the tribe of Banul-Muṣṭaliq, whose daughter Sayyidah Juwairiyah رضی اللہ عنہا was one of the blessed wives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, came up to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and he called him towards Islam and asked him to pay his Zakah. He says, "I embraced Islam and pledged to pay *Zakāh*, and said to the Holy Prophet ﷺ that I would go to my people, call them towards Islam and ask them to pay *Zakāh*. Those who would accept my invitation and pay the compulsory alms, I would collect their alms. I requested that on a designated date of a designated month, a collector be sent to me, so that the alms might be handed over to him." Accordingly, when Ḥārith had collected the alms of the believers and the alms collector did not arrive on the designated date or even long after that, he feared that may be the Holy Prophet ﷺ is displeased with them for some reason or the other. Otherwise it was unlikely for the Holy Prophet ﷺ not to keep his promise. Harith expressed his apprehension to the leaders of the new Muslims, and wanted them to go to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. On the other hand, the Holy Prophet ﷺ had sent Walīd Ibn 'Uqbah to collect the *Zakāh* from them. However, on his way he thought that the members of that tribe are his old enemies and feared that they might kill him. With this fear he

returned to Madīnah, and said to the Holy Prophet ﷺ that they refused to pay *Zakāh*, and wanted to kill him. On hearing this, the Holy Prophet ﷺ became very angry, and under the command of Khālid Ibn Walīd ؓ he dispatched a force of fighters in the way of Allah. On the one hand, this contingent was dispatched, and on the other hand Ḥārith Ibn Dirār with his people was on his way to meet the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The two groups met near Madīnah. Ḥārith inquired: "To whom have you been sent?" They replied: "We are sent to you". Ḥārith inquired: "for what purpose?" They narrated the mission of Walīd Ibn 'Uqbah who reported to the Holy Prophet ﷺ that the tribe of Banul-Muṣṭaliq refused to pay Zakāh and planned to kill him. Ḥārith said on oath, "I swear by Allah who sent Muḥammad as His true Messenger, Walid did not arrive in the location, nor did I see him. Since no envoy had come to us at the appointed location, I apprehended that you are annoyed with me due to some shortcoming on my part. Therefore, I have come here. Ḥārith says that the present verse of Sūrah Al-Ḥujurāt was revealed on this occasion (Ibn Kathīr).

Other versions have it that Walīd Ibn 'Uqbah did go to the tribe of Banul-Muṣṭaliq. As the tribe was expecting the Holy Prophet's ﷺ envoy to arrive on a designated date, they came out of their settlement as a mark of respect to welcome him. Walīd Ibn 'Uqbah suspected that they might have come out to kill him on account of their old hostility. Therefore he returned instantly from there, and went up to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and reported to him, according to his suspicion, that they were not willing to pay the alms and wanted to kill him. On hearing this report, the Holy Prophet ﷺ dispatched Sayyidnā Khālid Ibn Walīd ؓ to make a thorough investigation, so that appropriate measures could be taken. Sayyidnā Khālid Ibn Walīd ؓ arrived near the settlement at night and encamped there. He selected a few of his men and sent them furtively as spies into the location to investigate. They returned and reported that the members of the tribe were Muslims and believers; they were regular with their prayers and in paying their alms; and they did not find the tribe doing anything contrary to Islam. Sayyidnā Khālid Ibn Walīd ؓ came back, and reported the whole story to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. This verse was revealed on that occasion (Ibn-Kathīr - summary of several reports).

Ruling

On the basis of this verse, it may be ruled that if a mischief-monger, sinner, wicked or corrupt person complains about any person or nation, or accuses them of any wrong-doing, it is not lawful to act upon the sole information or evidence of such a person without making a thorough investigation.

Injunctions and Rulings Related to Verse [6]

Imām Jaṣṣāṣ in Aḥkām-ul-Qur'ān says that this verse indicates that it is not lawful to accept any information conveyed by a sinful person and act upon it unless it is investigated by other sources and confirmed. This verse contains the injunction *fatabayyanu* (verify its correctness). In another reading the word '*tathabbatu*' conveys the same meaning. The sense is: "Do not rush into taking actions or measures; be stable, and stand firmly in your place; and do not be easily moved or shaken. Wait until the news or information is confirmed by other independent sources. Since it is not lawful to accept the information or report of an ungodly sinful person, then the testimony of such a person would not be acceptable with greater force, because every testimony is a statement which is confirmed by a kind of oath.

Therefore, according to majority of scholars a statement or evidence of an ungodly person, in terms of Sharī'ah, is not acceptable. However, all scholars agree that as far as the common worldly affairs are concerned, it is not necessary to ascertain the accuracy or truth of every news and the reliability of every informer. The jurists are clear that this rule of law does not apply in the case of ordinary matters, because the rule is governed by an effective cause which is laid down in the explicit text of this verse: أَنْ تُصِيبُوا قَوْمًا بِجَهَالَةٍ (lest you harm a people out of ignorance - 49:6). Thus matters which are not governed by the effective cause will be an exception to, and excluded from, the rule of this verse. For instance, if a wicked person, or for that matter even an unbeliever, delivers a gift to someone, stating that this gift has been sent by a certain person, it would be lawful to accept the gift and the statement. Details may be found in books of Fiqh, such as in *mu'īn-ul-ḥukkām* and others. I have given the details in part six of Aḥkām-ul-Qur'ān [Arabic version]. Learned scholars may peruse them there.

An Important Question and Answer Regarding the Truthfulness of the Companions

Authentic *Aḥādīth* verify that this verse was revealed in connection with Walīd Ibn 'Uqbah, and in the verse he is referred to as *fāsiq* (sinner). Apparently, it goes to show that a *ṣaḥābi* (Companion) can be a *fāsiq*. This is in conflict with the universally established maxim الصّحابة كلّهم عدول, (the Companions are all truthful and reliable). None of their statements, reports or testimony can be doubted. 'Allāmah 'Ālusī in Rūḥ-ul- Ma'ānī says that the truth of the matter is according to the majority of the scholars, the blessed Companions are not infallible; it is possible for them to commit sins - major sins which is *fisq*; at the time of committing the sin they will be dealt with in the appropriate manner in terms of the punishment prescribed for that act; and if any of them is found guilty of lying, his news, information, report or testimony will be rejected. However, on the basis of the express texts of the Qur'ān and Sunnah, *Ahl-us-suunah wal-Jama'ah* believe that Companion can, though, commit sins, they do not persist in it. There is no companion of the Holy Prophet ﷺ who has not repented and purified himself after committing a sin. The Qur'ān, referring to the general class of the Companions, announces in general terms رَضِيَ اللّٰهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ (...Allah is well-pleased with them and they are well-pleased with Him - 98:8). The pleasure of Allah is not possible without forgiveness of sins. Qāḍī Abū Ya'la says that Allah's pleasure is one of His eternal attributes. He expresses His pleasure only for those about whom He knows they will die whilst seeking His pleasure (Ibn-Taimiyyah in Aṣ-ṣārim-ul-Maslūl).

In sum: From amongst the magnificent group of the noble Companions, it is possible for a handful of them to commit a sin sometime or the other, but Divine aid comes to their rescue and they immediately repent. Through the blessing of the Holy Prophet's ﷺ company, Allah had made Sharī'ah their nature. As result, it was very rare for them to do anything contrary to Sharī'ah and very unlikely to commit sins. It was natural for them to dedicate themselves to performing righteous deeds in conformity with the Holy Prophet's ﷺ paradigm and the principles established by Islam. They exerted such efforts in obeying Allah and His Holy Prophet ﷺ in all matters of life, the example of which is never found in any of the previous religious communities. In comparison to the

uncountable good works, merits and excellence to their credit, even if they commit a sin once in a life-time, it would be quashed or would be counted as non-existent. Furthermore, *ḥadīth* collections record a number of incidents where the noble Companions expressed their supreme love and devotion for Allah and His Holy Prophet ﷺ. They expressed their highest degree of fear for Allah at the time of committing the most minor sins and repented forthwith. We have on record that some of the Companions presented themselves for punishment when they did something wrong and others tied themselves up to the column of the mosque; and so on. A *ḥadīth* informs us that "He who repents on a sin is like him who has not committed any sin". The Qur'ān says:

إِنَّ الْحَسَنٰتِ يُذْهِبْنَ السَّيِّاٰتِ

Surely, good deeds erase bad deeds. [Surah Hud: 114]

This rule applies to them with greater force, since their good deeds are not like the good deeds of the general class of people. In fact, the status of their good deeds has been described in the collections of Abū Dāwūd and Tirmidhī on the authority of Sa'īd Ibn Zaid ؓ:

واللّٰه لمشهد رجل منهم مع النّبیّ صلی اللّٰه علیه وسلّم یغبّر فیه وجهه خیر من عمل احدکم ولو عمر عمر نوح

"By Allah, anyone of them who participated in a *jihād* with the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his face got covered with dust is better than your life-long obedience and worship, even if you attained the age of Nūḥ ؑ."

Therefore, they will receive the same punishment that is prescribed for a sin or crime which they might have committed. However, despite this it is not lawful for any of us to regard any of them as *fāsiq*. Consequently, if any Companion during the time of the Holy Prophet ﷺ committed a sin or crime which could be the cause of producing in him the effect of *fisq*, as a result of which he might have been referred to as a *fāsiq* on that account, it does not become possible for that *fisq* to be regarded as his permanent characteristic to call him, God forbid!, as a *fāsiq* for all times to come (Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī).

Nevertheless, it is not at all necessary that in the current verse, Walīd Ibn 'Uqbah is categorically referred to as *fāsiq*. Despite the fact that the

verse is supposed to have been revealed in his incident, it does not mean that the word '*fāsiq*' is used for him, because before this incident, Walīd Ibn 'Uqbah had not done any such thing on account of which he could be referred to as *fāsiq*. An analysis of the incident of Banul-Muṣṭaliq indicates that he conveyed an incorrect information about that tribe which, acting in good faith, he thought was true whereas in reality it was not. Therefore, the plain import of the current verse would be that it simply establishes the general rule that the news conveyed by a *fāsiq* would be unacceptable. However, it may be emphasized that Walīd Ibn 'Uqbah was not a *fāsiq,* but his information, because of strong external context, did not seem acceptable. As a result, the Holy Prophet ﷺ refrained from taking any measures merely on his information, and sent Khālid Ibn Walīd ؓ for proper investigation. If this is the case of the news conveyed by a *bona fide* reliable and righteous person, then with the stronger reason a *fāsiq's* news should be rejected and should not be acted upon. The truthfulness of the Companions is discussed fully by this author in his book "The Status of the Companions" which is already published in Urdu. It will partly be discussed under forthcoming verses 9-10.

Verses 7 - 8

وَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ فِيْكُمْ رَسُوْلَ اللّٰهِ ؕ لَوْ يُطِيْعُكُمْ فِيْ كَثِيْرٍ مِّنَ الْاَمْرِ
لَعَنِتُّمْ وَلٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ حَبَّبَ اِلَيْكُمُ الْاِيْمَانَ وَزَيَّنَهٗ فِيْ قُلُوْبِكُمْ وَ كَرَّهَ
اِلَيْكُمُ الْكُفْرَ وَالْفُسُوْقَ وَالْعِصْيَانَ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الرّٰشِدُوْنَ ﴿۷﴾
فَضْلًا مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَنِعْمَةً ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿۸﴾

And know that among you there is the Messenger of Allah. If he obeys you in many a matter, you will certainly fall into hardship. But Allah has endeared to you the Faith, and caused it to look beautiful to your hearts, and made detestable to you the disbelief and sins and disobedience. Such people are rightly guided, [7] **as a grace from Allah, and as a blessing. And Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.** [8]

The Holy Prophet's ﷺ Decision is Better

According to the previous verse, Walīd Ibn 'Uqbah reported that

Banul-Muṣṭaliq had turned apostate and refused to pay Zakāh. At this the blessed Companions were disturbed and infuriated. They expressed the view that *jihād* should be declared on them immediately, but the Holy Prophet ﷺ rejected his report on the basis of strong circumstantial evidence to the contrary. He sent Khālid Ibn Walīd رضي الله عنه for investigation. In the foregoing verse, the Qur'ān enjoined that if there are strong reasons to doubt the report conveyed by any person, it is not lawful to act upon it before investigation. In this verse the noble Companions are given one more guideline: 'Although when you heard the news about Banul-Mustaliq's apostasy, you reacted the way you reacted, and that was on account of your religious zeal and enthusiasm, yet your view was not right and proper. The decision taken by the Holy Prophet ﷺ proved to be better (Maẓharī). Thus in matters requiring consultation it is proper to express a view but it is not proper for you to exert efforts to get the Holy Prophet ﷺ to act upon your opinion. Although there is a rare possibility that an opinion expressed by the Holy Prophet ﷺ in some worldly matters comes to be against worldly expedience, and this is not contrary to the station of his prophethood, yet Allah has gifted him with such insight, perspicacity and discernment which you do not have. Therefore, if the Holy Prophet ﷺ were to follow your opinion, in many matters, you will suffer loss and fall into difficulties. If rarely ever your opinion is right or proper, it is still better to abandon your opinion and obey the Holy Prophet ﷺ. By doing so it is possible that you may suffer some worldly loss, but it would not be as harmful as his following your opinion. In this case, even if you suffer any worldly loss, the reward of obedience to the Holy Prophet ﷺ is a better compensation.

Lexically, the word عَنِتُّم is derived from عَنَت and it connotes "to commit a sin or crime" and it also means "to suffer from hardship". In this context, both connotations appropriately fit (Qurṭubī).

Verses 9 - 10

وَاِنْ طَآئِفَتٰنِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ اقْتَتَلُوْا فَاَصْلِحُوْا بَيْنَهُمَا ج فَاِنْۢ بَغَتْ اِحْدٰىهُمَا عَلَى الْاُخْرٰى فَقَاتِلُوا الَّتِىْ تَبْغِىْ حَتّٰى تَفِىْٓءَ اِلٰٓى اَمْرِ اللّٰهِ ج فَاِنْ فَآءَتْ فَاَصْلِحُوْا بَيْنَهُمَا بِالْعَدْلِ وَاَقْسِطُوْا ط اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحِبُّ

الْمُقْسِطِيْنَ ﴿٩﴾ إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ إِخْوَةٌ فَأَصْلِحُوْا بَيْنَ أَخَوَيْكُمْ ج وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُوْنَ ﴿١٠﴾ ع

And if two groups of the believers fight each other, seek reconciliation between them. And if one of them commits aggression against the other, fight the one that commits aggression until it comes back to Allah's command. So if it comes back, seek reconciliation between them with fairness, and maintain justice. Surely Allah loves those who maintain justice. [9] **All believers are but brothers, therefore seek reconciliation between your two brothers, and fear Allah, so that you may be blessed with mercy.** [10]

Linkage

In the foregoing verses the rights of the Prophet ﷺ were set out. They also laid down the mannerism in which he should be treated. The verses prohibited any act that would annoy or hurt him. Now this set of verses [9-10] establishes the manners, mores, injunctions, and mutual rights and obligations to be observed in individual and social life. The common value of all these rules is to avoid causing any inconvenience to the members of the society.

Occasion of Revelation

The commentators have narrated several incidents as a background of the revelation of these verses. Among them is the clash that took place between two Muslim groups. It is not inconceivable that the totality of these incidents might have been the occasion of revelation. It is also possible that one of these incidents has been the cause of revelation and the other incidents, being similar, were also termed as the occasion of revelation.

Although the immediate addressees of this verse are rulers and those in authority who have the means to fight and wage war, [as stated by Abū Ḥayyān in Al-Baḥr and preferred by 'Alusī in Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī] all Muslims are addressed in this verse indirectly to assist those in authority in this matter. Where there is no leader, 'amir, king or president, the rule is that the two warring parties should be advised, as far as possible, to cease war. If this is not possible, common people are ordered to stay away from both warring groups: they should neither oppose nor aid any one of them.

[Bayān-ul-Qur'ān].

Related Issues and Injunctions

There are several forms of mutual fighting between two Muslim parties: [1] both parties are subjects of a Muslim government; [2] neither of the parties is the subject of a Muslim government; [3] one of the parties is the subject of a Muslim government, but not the other. In the first case, it is compulsory for common Muslims to bring about an understanding between them and try to stop the mutual fighting. If they do not cease fighting by negotiations, then it is imperative for the Muslim ruler to take measures against them. If both parties cease fighting by the intervention of the Islamic government, then the laws of retaliation, retribution and blood-wit will apply. If they do not cease, then both parties will be treated like rebels. If one of the parties withdrew and the other persisted in oppression and transgression, then the persistent group will be treated like a rebel group. The obedient group will be designated as "*'Adil*" (just). The detailed laws pertaining to rebels may be perused in books of Islamic law. Briefly, the law comprehends the following: Before fighting, their weapons must be seized and confiscated. Then they must be arrested and kept in prison until they repent. Neither in the course of fighting nor after fighting should their children be enslaved. Their wealth should not be treated like the spoils of war. In fact, their wealth will be held in trust until they repent. After repentance their belongings will be returned to them. In the above verses, we come across the following directive:

فَإِنْ فَآءَتْ فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا بِالْعَدْلِ وَأَقْسِطُوا

'...So if it comes back, seek reconciliation between them with fairness, and maintain justice.' [49:9]

It means that if the belligerent party ceases fighting, then do not only stop fighting but also think about eliminating the cause of war and mutual dissatisfaction, so that the heart-burnings may come to an end. All enmity and hostilities will thus cease and an atmosphere of brotherhood may prevail for all times to come. Since these people have fought against the Muslim ruler, it was possible that they would not be treated by him equitably. Therefore, the Qur'ān lays stress on setting things right between them equitably and justly, so that the rights of no one are violated [Adapted from Bayān-ul-Qur'ān with reference to Hidāyah].

Ruling

If a very powerful group of Muslims revolts against the Muslim ruler, then it is necessary for the ruler to first hear out their complaint or cause of their dissatisfaction. If a doubt or a misunderstanding has arisen in their mind about some matter, it should be removed. If they show such cause on the basis of which it is permissible in Sharī'ah to oppose a Muslim leader or ruler, like unjust behavior on the part of the government, it is essential for the general body of Muslims to assist the group, so that the leader or ruler may refrain from his tyranny, provided that his tyranny is proved beyond any shadow of doubt (Ibn-ul-Humam; Maẓharī). If they cannot show any clearly legitimate reason for their dissatisfaction, revolt, disobedience, and waging war against the Muslim ruler, it is permitted for Muslims to wage war against the rebels. Imām Shafi'ī رحمه الله تعالیٰ held that the Muslims should not initiate fight against the rebels unless they first start the fight [Maẓharī]. This law applies when it is positively and unquestionably clear that the group is rebellious. However, if it is difficult to determine which group is rebellious and which is just, because each party has a valid Shar'ī argument to justify its course of action, then the pros and cons of both parties may be weighed to determine the party that is "just" on the principle of probability. If the juristic argument of one party seems to someone more convincing, it is permitted for him to assist such a group. If someone cannot prefer the standpoint of any one of them, he should remain neutral, as it happened in the civil wars of the Battle of Camel and the Battle of Siffin when many noble Companions remained aloof.

Conflicts of the Noble Companions ﷺ

Imām Abū Bakr Ibn-ul-'Arabī says that this verse of battle between Muslims covers all cases. It includes the case where both parties prepare for war on grounds of a principle of Sharī'ah. Civil wars of the noble Companions ﷺ were of this nature. Qurṭubī, quoting this view of Ibn-ul-'Arabi, explains the actual situation of the Battle of Camel and the Battle of Siffin and gives guidelines for later generations of Muslims to follow in the light of the battles of the blessed Companions. This author has dealt with this subject in "Aḥkām-ul-Qur'ān" in Arabic and his Urdu book "Maqāme-Ṣaḥābah".The summary of the discussion given in that book with reference to Qurṭubī (V.16, P.322) is as follows:

It is not permitted to attribute categorically, and with certainty,

to any of the Companions that he was absolutely wrong in his action, because each of them acted according to his own Ijtihād. Their objective was to seek the pleasure of Allah. The Companions are all our leaders, and it is enjoined upon us that we should hold back our tongue from talking about their mutual differences, and always speak the best things about them. Prophet's companionship is a highly honourable position which should not be violated. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has prohibited to revile them or talk bad about them, and informed us that they have been forgiven and that Allah is pleased with them. Besides, there is the *Hadith* regarding Sayyidnā Ṭalḥah ؓ reaching us through several transmitting authorities that:

ان طلحة شهيد يمشى على وجه الارض

"Ṭalḥah is a martyr walking on the face of the earth."

If Sayyidnā Ṭalḥah ؓ was committing a clear sin by going out to wage war against Sayyidnā 'Alī ؓ, he could not attain the high status of a martyr. In the same way, if his act might be regarded as a failure to perform his duty on the basis of a clearly wrong interpretation, he would still not attain the status of martyrdom. Martyrdom is attained only when a person is killed in obedience of Allah. Therefore, it is necessary to construe the matter of the Companions in terms of the principle mentioned above.

Another proof of this is available in authentic and well-established *Aḥādīth* which are reported by Sayyidnā 'Alī ؓ himself where the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: "The killer of Zubair is in Hell." Furthermore, Sayyidnā 'Alī ؓ reports that the Prophet ﷺ said: "Give news to the killer of Sayyidah Ṣafiyyah's رضى الله عنها son that he will be in Hell." In the light of this we need to believe that Sayyidnā Zubair ؓ and Sayyidnā Ṭalḥah ؓ were not sinners or disobedient to Allah in the position taken by them in the battle. Otherwise the Holy Prophet ﷺ would not have referred to Sayyidnā Ṭalḥah ؓ as a martyr, nor would he predict about the killer of Zubair that he would be in Hell. Also, he is counted among the ten who were given the glad tidings of attaining Paradise. Traditions relating to this subject have almost reached the grade of continuity [*tawātur*] and the Traditions are referred to as *ḥadīth mutawātir*.

Likewise the noble Companions, who did not participate in the battles on either side, cannot be regarded as defaulters because their behaviour,

conduct and attitude in this matter was also based on their *ijtihād*, and Allah maintained them thus. Therefore, it is not proper in any sense of the word to curse them, to taunt them, to hold them as sinners, and to neglect their virtues, their struggles and their great religious stations. Some of the scholars were posed the question: what is your view regarding the blood that was shed in the battles that took place among the blessed Companions? They simply recited the following verse of the Qur'ān:

تِلْكَ أُمَّةٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَلَكُم مَّا كَسَبْتُمْ وَلَا تُسْئَلُونَ عَمَّا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

'Those are a people who have passed away. For them what they earned, and for you what you earned. And you shall not be questioned as to what they have been doing. [2:134]'

The same question was posed to another scholar. He replied: "Allah saved my hands from being soiled with that blood. Now I will not soil my tongue with it." He meant that he does not wish to make the mistake of categorically adjudging any one of the groups as the defaulter.

'Allāmah Ibn-Fuwarrak رحمه الله تعالى says:

"Some of our colleagues feel that the example of the conflicts that took place between the noble Companions is like that of the episodes of conflict that occurred between Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام and his brothers. They, despite their mutual differences, did not lose their status of *wilāyah* and *nubuwwah*. The same principle applies to the matter of conflicts that occurred between the Companions."

Sayyidnā Muḥasibi رحمه الله تعالى says: "As far as this blood-shed is concerned, it is difficult for us to say anything because there was a difference of opinion in this regard among the noble Companions themselves."

When Ḥasan Al-Baṣrī رحمه الله تعالى was asked the question concerning the wars between the noble Companions, he replied:

"Those were fights in which the Companions were present and we were not. They knew all the circumstances and we do not know them. The matter in which the Companions are unanimous, we follow; and the matter in which there is difference of opinion, we observe silence."

Sayyidnā Muhasibi رحمه الله تعالى says:

"We concur with Ḥasan Al-Baṣrī رحمه الله تعالى. We know that when the noble Companions meddled in any matter, they knew fully well why they were doing it. Our task is merely to follow them where they are unanimous, and where they differ we observe silence. We should not on our own introduce new ideas. We are assured that they must have exercised *ijtihād* and sought the pleasure of Allah. Therefore, in matters of religion they are all beyond doubt."

Verses 11

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا يَسْخَرْ قَوْمٌ مِّنْ قَوْمٍ عَسٰٓى اَنْ يَّكُوْنُوْا خَيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ وَلَا نِسَآءٌ مِّنْ نِّسَآءٍ عَسٰٓى اَنْ يَّكُنَّ خَيْرًا مِّنْهُنَّ ۚ وَلَا تَلْمِزُوْٓا اَنْفُسَكُمْ وَلَا تَنَابَزُوْا بِالْاَلْقَابِ ۭ بِئْسَ الِاسْمُ الْفُسُوْقُ بَعْدَ الْاِيْمَانِ ۚ وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَتُبْ فَاُولٰۗىِٕكَ هُمُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ ﴿١١﴾

O those who believe, no men should ever mock at other men, since it is possible that the latter are better than the former, nor (should) women (ever mock) at other women, since it is possible that the latter women are better than the former ones. And do not find fault with one another, nor call one another with bad nicknames. Bad is the name of sinfulness after embracing Faith. * **And whoever does not repent, such people are the wrongdoers.** [11]

Prohibition of Ridiculing One Another

The beginning part of this chapter laid down the Prophet's ﷺ rights and the etiquettes to be observed when dealing with him. Then the Holy Qur'ān has started mentioning the mutual rights and good manners for the general body of Muslims to be observed among themselves. The injunctions laid down in the preceding two verses related to the collective reformation of the society. Now the current verse mentions the rights and etiquettes to be observed between individuals. Thus the verse prohibits three social evils: [1] ridiculing one another; [2] finding fault with one

(*). It means that calling others with bad nicknames is a sinful act, and the real bad name for a person after embracing Faith is that he is known among people for sinful acts. Therefore, if a Muslim commits the sin of calling others with bad nicknames, and it is known among people, then the real bad name is earned by himself, and not by the person whom he has abused with that nickname. (Muhammad Taqi Usmani)

another; and [3] reviling one another with nicknames.

According to Qurṭubī, mocking or scoffing does not only connote mocking with the tongue, but it also implies mimicking someone, making pointed references to him, laughing at his words, his works, his appearance, his dress or calling people's attention to some of his defects, so that they may laugh at him. Mocking includes all of this. By the clear text of the Qur'ān, poking fun at someone or ridiculing him is absolutely forbidden.

Stylistically, the Qur'ān has, on this occasion, addressed men and women separately. Men are referred to as *qawm*, a word that is specifically reserved for male members of the human society, though by extension the word most often includes the female members of the human society as well. The Qur'ān, however, generally employs the word *qawm* for both men and women, but here it is specifically used for men in contradistinction to the word *nisa'* which specifically refers to women. Here both men and women are reminded that mocking one another is a disdainful and evil act. They must refrain from it, because it is very likely that the man who is mocked at may be better than the mocking person and the woman who is mocked at may be better than the mocker. Here the Qur'ān prohibits men from mocking other men, and women from mocking other women. This, however, does not mean that it is permitted for men to mock at women or for women to mock at men. The actual reason for making separate mention of the two sexes is that Islam does not allow free intermingling of the two sexes. Ridiculing each other generally occurs where there is such an intermingling. Therefore, in a Muslim society it is inconceivable that men would mock a woman or women would mock a man in an intermingling situation.

In short: no one dare make mockery of a person whose body, face, shape and stature are defective, imperfect, impaired or deformed, because he does not know that the other person, in the sight of Allah, might be better than him on account of his sincerity and purity of heart. When the righteous predecessors heard this verse, they adopted a conducive attitude: For example, Sayyidnā 'Amr Ibn Shurahbil ﵁ said that he would not laugh at a person when he sees him drink milk direct from the udders of a goat, lest he should become one like him. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ﵁ said: "I would not like to scoff at a dog, lest I be

metamorphosed into a dog (Qurṭubī)."

It is recorded in Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: "Allah does not look at your faces and your wealth; He looks at your hearts and your works." Qurṭubī derives a legal maxim from this tradition of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that in any matter it is not proper to pass a categorical judgment on the basis of overt evidence or circumstances, because it is possible that a person's overt actions might seem to be good but in the sight of Allah, on account of the insincerity and impurity of his heart, they could be bad, as He is fully aware of the inner state of people's hearts. On the contrary, a person's overt actions might seem to us bad, but in the sight of Allah, on account of the sincerity and purity of his heart, they could serve as an expiation of the bad actions, as He is fully aware of the inner state of people's heart.

The next thing that is prohibited in the verse is *lamz* which connotes to find fault with someone or to upbraid him. The verse says, وَلَا تَلْمِزُوْٓا اَنْفُسَكُمْ literally it means, "Do not find fault with your selves." But the intention is: "Do not find fault with one another-" [49:11] as is seen in the translation above. This expression is similar to the expression لَا تَقْتُلُوْٓا اَنْفُسَكُمْ '...And do not kill yourselves - [4:29]'. Although the verse commands "do not kill yourselves", it purports to say "do not kill one another". This expression indicates that, from one point of view, killing another person amounts to killing oneself. Often it happens that if one person kills another person, the victim's supporters kill the murderer. Even if this does not happen, a Muslim is the brother of another Muslim. Killing one's brother is like killing oneself and rendering oneself crippled, helpless and powerless. Similarly, the expression لَا تَلْمِزُوْٓا اَنْفُسَكُمْ 'and not find fault with yourselves' means when you find fault with others and upbraid them, others will find fault with you and upbraid you, because no man is normally free from any fault. Scholars have formulated the maxim: وفيک عيوب وللنّاس اعين "You have faults and people have eyes" with which they see them. Thus if someone seeks out the imperfections of some other person and broadcasts them, the latter will do the same in return. If, however, he exercises patience and evades retaliation to his verbal attacks, it comes down to the same thing: If one considers carefully, he will find that defaming and despising one's Muslim brother is actually casting aspersions on oneself.

Scholars have suggested that the satisfaction, well-being and happiness of man lies in examining his own faults and finding ways of mending them. This approach to life will give him no time to find fault with others and broadcast it. How well the last king of India Bahadur Shah Zafar has versified it!

نہ تھی حال کی جب ہمیں اپنی خبر، رہے دیکھتے لوگوں کے عیب و ہنر
پڑی اپنی بُرائیوں پر جو نظر، تو جہان میں کوئی بُرا نہ رہا

As long as we were unaware of our own faults, we looked into the faults and failings of others; But when we looked at our own faults there remained no one faulty in the world.

The third thing that is prohibited in the verse is reviling one another with nicknames which are offensive to them, e.g. calling a person lame, hands cropped, blind or one-eyed; or referring to him by other offensive nicknames. Sayyidnā Abū Jabirah Anṣārī ﷺ says, "This verse was revealed in connection with us. When we migrated to Madinah, most of us had two or three names. Some of them were popularised in order to denigrate, defame or belittle the bearer of the name. The Holy Prophet ﷺ was not aware of this situation; as a result he sometimes called them by one of these offensive names unwittingly. The noble Companions informed the Prophet ﷺ that the name offends the bearer of that name. This verse was revealed on that occasion." Sayyidnā Ibn-'Abbās ﷺ says that prohibition of *tanābuz bil-alqāb* means that if a person committed a sin or performed an evil deed from which he repented and mended his ways, it is unlawful for anyone to call him by denigrating names, such as thief, an adulterer, a drunkard or any such name. The Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said: "Anyone who denigrates a Muslim who has committed a sin of which he has repented, Allah takes it upon Himself that He will get the person to commit the very same sin and expose him to embarrassment and humiliation in this world and in the Hereafter [Qurṭubī].

Exception to the Rule

There are some nicknames, which though apparently offensive, are not intended to defame or insult the bearer of that name, but they rather serve as a symbol of identification. That is why scholars have permitted to attach titles to the names of the traditionalists - like *A'raj* [lame, cripple]

or *ahdab* [humpbacked, hunchbacked] provided they are not intended to insult or defame. The Holy Prophet ﷺ himself named a Companion *dhul-yadain* because his hands were relatively long. 'Abdullāh Ibn Mubārak was posed the question: " In the *asanid* [chains of authorities on which a tradition is based] we come across names to which are attached titles like Ḥamid At-Ṭawil [Ḥamid, the Tall], Sulaimān al-A'mash [Sulaimān the weak-eyed] and

Marwān al-Aṣfar [Marwān, the Yellow]: are these titles allowed?" He replied: " If your intention is not to insult or defame, but rather to complete identification, it is permitted." [Qurṭubī]

It is Sunnah to call people by Good Titles

The Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said that it is the right of a believer to call his fellow-believers by good names and titles which they like the best. Therefore the use of *kunniyyah* [agnomen/cognomen] had become commonplace in Arabia. The Holy Prophet ﷺ also favoured this, and consequently he himself bestowed appropriate titles on some of the individual Companions, e.g. Abū Bakr Ṣiddiq رضي الله عنه received the title of *'Atīq* [the noble], Sayyidnā 'Umar رضي الله عنه, the title of *Fārūq* [he who distinguishes truth from falsehood], Sayyidnā Ḥamzah the title of *Asadullāh* [the lion of Allah] and Khālid Ibn Walīd, the title of *Saifullāh* [the sword of Allah].

Verse 12

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اجْتَنِبُوْا كَثِيْرًا مِّنَ الظَّنِّ ز اِنَّ بَعْضَ الظَّنِّ اِثْمٌ وَّلَا
تَجَسَّسُوْا وَلَا يَغْتَبْ بَّعْضُكُمْ بَعْضًا ط اَيُحِبُّ اَحَدُكُمْ اَنْ يَّاْكُلَ
لَحْمَ اَخِيْهِ مَيْتًا فَكَرِهْتُمُوْهُ ط وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ ط اِنَّ اللّٰهَ تَوَّابٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿۱۲﴾

O those who believe, abstain from many of the suspicions. Some suspicions are sins. And do not be curious (to find out faults of others), and do not backbite one another. Does one of you like that he eats the flesh of his dead brother? You would abhor it. And fear Allah. Surely Allah is Most-Relenting, Very-Merciful. [12]

Analysis of the Verse

This verse too comprises injunctions relating to mutual rights and manners to be observed in social life. It prohibits three things: [1] *ẓann* [unfounded suspicion], the details to follow: [2] *tajassus* [spying, looking secretly into the faults of others]; and [3] *ghibah* [backbiting, speaking ill of a person behind his back which if he heard would hurt or injure his feelings].

[1] Prohibition of Unfounded Suspicion

Ẓann primarily denotes assumption on probable evidence. In the first instance, the Qur'ān sets down "Abstain from many of the suspicions." and gives reason for that: "some suspicion are sins.". This shows that not all types of suspicion is a sin. Thus it is incumbent on the readers to investigate which type is a sin, so that they may avoid it. If the uneasy feeling and the conviction that something is wrong, someone is guilty, or some danger is afoot is based on partial evidence, and not confirmed by out-and-out evidence, it is not permitted to act on it. Scholars and jurists have given a detailed account of it. Qurṭubī says that in this context *Ẓann* connotes "accusation", that is, a charge of wrongdoing, as with guilt, crime, offense or blame without any strong evidence. Imām Abū Bakr Jaṣṣāṣ in Aḥkām-ul-Qur'ān gives the following details. *Ẓann* is divisible into four categories. [1] prohibited; [2] imperative; [3] recommended, desirable; and [4] permissible. Distrust of Allah or suspecting His trust is prohibited. For instance, it is not permitted to think ill of Allah in that He will punish him or keep him in calamity all the time without forgiving him or showing mercy to him, thus despairing of His grace. Sayyidnā Jābir ؓ reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

لا يموتنّ احدكم الّا وهو يحسن الظنّ باللّٰه

"None of you should die without having favourable thoughts about Allah."

According to another *ḥadīth*, Allah Ta'ālā says:

اَنَا عند ظنّ عبدى بى

"I treat my servants the way they think about me."

This shows that holding favourable thoughts about Allah is compulsory and thinking ill of Him is prohibited. Likewise it is prohibited

to entertain suspicion, without rational grounds, about Muslims whose outer conditions show that they are good and noble.

Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

اياكم والظّنّ فانّ الظّنّ اكذب الحديث

"Avoid suspicion, for suspicion is the worst of false talks...".

In this context, *Ẓann* by common consent of scholars stands for thinking ill of a Muslim without any concrete proof . However, if there is a matter in which it is necessary to take a decision in either way, and there is no absolute and clear-cut proof based on the Qur'ān and Sunnah for that particular situation, it is imperative to act on the strength of the best possible assessment, termed in Islamic jurisprudence as '*Aẓ-ẓann-ul-ghalib*' This is the approved practice in cases that come to the law-courts for settlement. In a court of law, a judge has to deliver his decision on the basis of the principle of "the best possible assessment" relying on the testimony of people worthy of confidence, even though there is the possibility that one of the witnesses at that particular moment might have lied. The testimony of the witness is based on "best assessment" and not on "absolute certainty". The judge does not have direct knowledge of the facts of the matter, nor is there a transparent text of the Qur'ān and Sunnah. In cases like these where one or the other decision has to be taken, and the absolute knowledge of the reality cannot possibly be attained, there is no way out but to formulate a judgement on the basis of 'best possible assessment.'

Likewise when the direction of *qiblah* is not known, nor is there a person that can show one the direction of *qiblah,* it is compulsory for him to determine it on the basis of "best possible assessment". If a person has destroyed a valuable thing of someone, and a compensation has been imposed on him, he is liable to pay the value of it on the basis of 'best possible assessment'.

The example of permissible *Ẓann* is like that of a person performing prayers and in the course of it suspects whether he has performed three *rak'āt* or four, he is permitted to apply the 'best possible assessment' and complete the prayers accordingly. If, however, he does not wish to apply this principle, but wishes to act on the principle of 'certainty', thinking

that he has certainly performed three *rak'āt*, and thus completes the fourth one, that too is possible.

And desirable *Ẓann* refers to having favourable thoughts about every Muslim. That is rewardable [condensed from Jaṣṣāṣ].

Qurṭubī quotes the Qur'ānic verse

لَوْلَآ اِذْ سَمِعْتُمُوْهُ ظَنَّ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ وَالْمُؤْمِنٰتُ بِاَنْفُسِهِمْ خَيْرًا

'...why, when you (O believers,) heard of it, did the believing men and women not think well on their own selves - [24:12]'.

This verse emphasizes to have good thoughts about the believers. The following aphorism apparently seems contrary to this rule:

انّ من الحزم سوء الظّنّ

"It is prudence to have ill thoughts about every person."

But this means to be as precautious when dealing with others as one would deal in suspicious cases: e.g. one should not hand over one's thing to anyone without strong reliance. It does not mean that he should regard anyone as a thief or run him down. In brief, one should take precautionary measures in the predicament one is placed in without labeling people as thieves or perfidious.

[2] Prohibition of Spying

The second social evil that is prohibited in the verse is *tajassus*, spying or prying secretly into the faults of others. An alternative reading of تَجَسُّس *tajassus* [with "*J*"] is تَحَسُّس *taḥassus* [with "*H*"]. In a *ḥadīth* recorded in *Ṣaḥīḥain* on the authority of Abū Hurairah ؓ the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

لَا تَجَسَّسُوْا وَلَا تَحَسَّسُوْا

"...do not spy on one another; do not look for other's faults...".

The two words in Arabic are near-synonyms. *Akhfash* draws attention to the nuances or subtle differences in their meaning: *tajassus* connotes looking into the affairs of people which they have kept hidden, whilst *taḥassus* connotes searching in general as in the following verse of the Holy Qur'ān.

تَحَسَّسُوْا مِنْ يُّوْسُفَ وَ اَخِيْهِ

'...search for Yūsuf and his brother' - [12:87]

However, the term *taḥassus* [searching], like *tajassus* [spying], could have an evil connotation in which case the Holy Prophet ﷺ has prohibited it. The verse signifies that one may take into account what is presented in evidence, but it is not permitted to search for faults that are not overt. The Holy Prophet ﷺ says:

لا تغتابوا المسلمين ولا تتّبعوا عوراتهم فان من اتبعّ عوراتهم يتبع اللّٰه عورته ومن يتّبع اللّٰه عورته يفضحه فى بيته (قرطبى)

"Do not speak ill of Muslims behind their backs, and do not search out their faults, for he who searches out their faults will have his faults searched out by Allah, and he whose faults are searched out by Allah will be exposed by Him, even though he should be in the interior of his house" [Qurṭubī].

Bayān-ul-Qur'ān interprets that *tajassus* [spying] and *taḥassus* [searching] include the sense of listening to people without their permission when they are talking, or eavesdropping at their doors. However, if there is an apprehension that some member of the Muslim community may be harmed by some mischief-makers, it is permitted for others to spy to protect the innocent and peaceful people, and search furtively for the intentions and conspiracies of such people who are a danger to the society.

[3] Prohibition of Backbiting

The third social evil this verse prohibits is *ghibah* [backbiting]. This connotes speaking ill of a person behind his back which if he heard would hurt or injure his feelings, even if what was said about him was the truth; if what was said about him was untruth, it is slander or false accusation. The prohibition of slander is prohibited elsewhere in the Qur'ān. In the definition of backbiting the phrase "behind his back / in his absence" appears. This does not mean that it is permissible to say hurtful things in the presence of somebody. This may not be backbiting, but it certainly falls under *lamz* which is prohibited in the preceding verse.

اَيُحِبُّ اَحَدُكُمۡ اَنۡ يَّاۡكُلَ لَحۡمَ اَخِيۡهِ مَيۡتًا

(Does one of you like that he eats the flesh of his dead brother? - 49:12)

This verse sternly warns against disgracing a Muslim and compares it to eating the flesh of a human being. If the victim of disgrace is present

before the offender, it is like eating the flesh of a living person, and the Holy Qur'ān has termed it as *'lamz'* which is prohibited in verse 11, as well as in another Sūrah by saying,

وَيْلٌ لِّكُلِّ هُمَزَةٍ لُّمَزَةٍ

'Woe to every backbiter, derider [104:1]'

And if the victim is not present, and someone speaks ill of him in a way that he is insulted, then it is like eating the flesh of a dead human being. Just as it does not cause any physical torture to a dead body, backbiting does not hurt the victim when he is not aware of it, but just as eating the flesh of a dead body is an extremely inhuman act, so is the backbiting. Both are prohibited. Otherwise also, speaking ill of someone in his absence is an unkind, mean and malicious act; it is not an act of valour and bravery.

This verse prohibits three social evils: unfounded suspicion, unjustifiable search for faults and backbiting. However, backbiting is most severely and harshly condemned. It is compared to eating the flesh of a dead Muslim, thus bringing out the gravity of its prohibition, unkindness and meanness. The wisdom of it lies in the fact that saying hurtful things to the face of someone is prohibited, but the man, being present, will be able to defend himself. Further, for fear of defense not everybody will have the courage to utter hurtful things to the face of someone, and usually it does not last long. It is unlike backbiting where there is no one to defend it, and thus the most mean person would pluck the courage to backbite the greatest of men. Because it is not defended, generally the ball keeps rolling, and more and more people get involved. Therefore, backbiting is prohibited most severely and harshly. It is necessary for the general body of Muslims to defend their brother, if possible, when people speak ill of him in his absence. If that is not possible, they should at least abstain from listening to it, because listening to it willfully and intentionally is like backbiting itself.

Some Issues Related to Backbiting

Sayyidnā Maimūn ﷺ says that once he saw in a dream that there is a dead body of a Negro. A caller addressed him and said: "Eat this." Sayyidnā Maimūn ﷺ says: "I said: 'O servant of God! Why should I eat this?'". The caller replied: "Because you have been backbiting a certain

person's Negro slave." Sayyidnā Maimūn ﷺ said: "By God, I did not do that." The caller replied: "Yes, you did: you listened to people backbiting him and remained silent as if you were in agreement with them." After this dream, Sayyidnā Maimūn ﷺ composed himself and he himself stopped backbiting and he did not allow anyone else in his presence to backbite.

In a narration of Sayyidnā Anas Ibn Mālik ﷺ relating to Holy Prophet's ﷺ experience of Mi'rāj , the Messenger of Allah said: "When I was taken up to the heaven, I passed by people who had fingernails of copper and were scratching their faces and breasts violently. I asked Jibra'īl : 'Who are these people?' He replied: 'They are those people who were given to backbiting their brothers and who aspersed their honour.' [transmitted by al-Baghawī as cited in Maẓharī]. Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd and Jābir ﷺ report that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said:

> "Backbiting is worse than adultery. The noble Companions inquired: 'How so, Messenger of Allah?' He replied: 'A person may commit fornication, repent of it and his sin is forgiven. But the sin of backbiting is not forgiven unless the injured party forgives.'" [Transmitted by Tirmidhī and Abū Dāwūd, as cited in Maẓharī].

This *ḥadīth* indicates that backbiting is not only a violation of the Divine right, but also a violation of human right. Therefore, it is necessary to seek the forgiveness of the injured party. Some of the scholars express the view that backbiting does not become a human right unless the injured party comes to know about it. Therefore, seeking his pardon is not necessary [Quoted in Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī from Ḥasan, Al-Khayyāṭī, Ibn-uṣ-ṣabbāgh, An-Nawawī, Ibn-uṣ-ṣalāh, Az-Zarakshī, Ibn 'Abd-ul-Barr from Ibn-ul-Mubārak]. This is quoted in Bayān-ul-Qur'ān and explained as follows: If the victim of backbiting is not aware that someone has spoken ill of him, it might not be necessary for the backbiter to beg pardon of the victim, but it is necessary that he falsifies himself before the person whom he addressed when backbiting, or at least confesses his guilt before him. If the victim is dead or has disappeared, the atonement is recorded in a narration of Sayyidnā Anas ﷺ where the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said:

ان من كفّارة الغيبة ان يستغفر لمن اغتابه تقول اللّٰهمّ اغفرلنا وله

"The atonement of backbiting is to invoke forgiveness of Allah

for the victim in the following words: O Allah, forgive our sins and his sins". [Transmitted by Baihaqī and cited in Maẓharī].

Ruling [1]

It is prohibited to backbite children, insane and non-Muslim citizens of an Islamic state, because hurting them is prohibited. Hurting *ḥarbī* infidels who are the inhabitants of Dār-ul-Ḥarb [hostile country] is not prohibited. However, backbiting them, on account of wastage of time, is *makrūh*, and reprehensible.

Ruling [2]

Backbiting does not only connote speaking ill of a person behind his back, but it also connotes an action or pointed reference to him, as for instance if someone imitates the limp or uneven walking of a lame person to make fun of him, it is not permitted.

Ruling [3]

Some narrations show that the general prohibition of backbiting in the verse is subject to exceptions in special cases and specific circumstances. It is permitted if the need for backbiting is real and genuine from the Sharī'ah point of view. Examples are as follows:

[a] Complaining against a tyrant before a person who can relieve him from the tyranny and injustice.

[b] Complaining about the wife and children to the father and husband who can put them right.

[c] Giving a full account of the case in order to obtain a *fatwa* (ruling of Sharī'ah)

[d] Warning the Muslims of the mischief of a mischief-monger so that they may ward off the evil.

[e] When someone consults another person in any matter, it is obligatory for him to apprise him of all aspects, including weaknesses, so that he is not deceived because of ignorance.

[f] If a person commits sins openly and publishes his ungodly behaviour himself, it is not prohibited to make mention of his bad deeds. However, it is abominable and reprehensible to indulge in it on account of wastage of time [Bayān-ul-Qur'ān with reference to

Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī].

But the necessary condition for invoking these exceptions is that speaking ill of someone is not with the intention of insulting or disgracing him, but only to fulfill a genuine need.

Verse 13

يَآيُّهَا النَّاسُ اِنَّا خَلَقْنٰكُمْ مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ وَّاُنْثٰى وَجَعَلْنٰكُمْ شُعُوْبًا وَّقَبَآئِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوْا ؕ اِنَّ اَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ اَتْقٰكُمْ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلِيْمٌ خَبِيْرٌ ﴿١٣﴾

O mankind, We have created you from a male and a female and made you into races and tribes, so that you may identify each other. Surely the noblest of you, in Allah's sight, is the one who is most pious of you. Surely Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware. [13]

All of Mankind are the Children of 'Ādam and Ḥawwā' عليهما السلام

In the preceding verses, six social evils in connection with human and Islamic rights were prohibited, and principles of good manners were laid down to be observed in social life. The current verse proceeds to set down the basis of an all-comprehensive and all-pervading principle of human equality. It has firmly laid the axe at the false and foolish notions of superiority, born of racial arrogance or national conceit. All men have been created from a single male ['Ādam عليه السلام] and a single female [Ḥawwā'] as human beings. Therefore, all people are the descendants of 'Ādam and Hawwa' عليهما السلام and have been declared equal in the sight of Allah. No one is allowed to take pride nor to degrade others on the basis of pigment of his skin, the amount of wealth he possesses or by his rank or by his social status, descent or pedigree, but by his moral uprightness and the way he discharges his obligations to Allah and man. The entire human race is but one family. Division into nations, tribes and sub-tribes of all sizes, and races is meant only to give a better identification of one another.

Circumstances of Revelation

This verse was revealed on the occasion of the conquest of Makkah. When it was time for prayer, the Holy Prophet ﷺ asked Sayyidnā Bilāl رضي الله عنه to call the *adhān*. One of the pagan Quraish cynically remarked:

Thank God that my father died before this happened, and he did not have to see this bad day. Ḥārith Ibn Hishām remarked: Could Muḥammad not find anyone better than this black crow to sound the *adhān* in the Sacred Mosque! Abū Sufyān said: I do not wish to utter anything for fear that the master of the heavens will inform him. Thus Jibra'īl ﷺ came down and informed the Holy Prophet ﷺ about this conversation. The Holy Prophet ﷺ called them and asked them about it. They admitted. At this, the current verse was revealed.

Taqwā of Allah is the basis of Honour

This verse made it plain that human beings can earn honour on account of their faith and righteousness. The immediate application of the verse was to Sayyidnā Bilāl ﷺ, and therefore the Holy Prophet ﷺ said to those people: "You are empty (i.e. you have no moral leg to stand on.) Sayyidnā Bilāl ﷺ, on the other hand, is equipped (with high moral qualities); and he is better and more honourable than any of you." [Baghawī, as cited in Maẓharī]. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar ﷺ reports that on the day when Makkah was conquered, the Holy Prophet ﷺ performed *ṭawāf* (circumambulation of Ka'bah) in the state of riding on his she-camel, [so that all the people could see him]. Then having completed his *ṭawāf*, he delivered a sermon in which he said:

الحمد للّٰه الّذی اذهب عنکم عبّیة الجاهلیة وتکبّرها. الناس رجلان برّ تقیّ کریم
علی اللّٰه وفاجر شقی هین علی اللّٰه ثم تلا: يٰۤاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اِنَّاخَلَقْنٰكُمْ (ترمذی وبغوی)

"O people! Allah has removed from you the pride of Jāhiliyyah and its arrogance. People are of two types: a man who is righteous, fearful of Allah and he is honourable to Allah; or a man who is sinful, wretched, and he is disgraced and little to Allah [Timidhī and Baghawī]."

Then he recited the current verse.

Sayyidnā Ibn-'Abbās ﷺ says: For people "honour" lies in wealth, whilst in the sight of Allah it lies in righteousness.

Analysis of Important Words in the Verse

The word شُعُوْبًا Shu'ūb is the plural of Sha'b which refers to a large group of persons of the same origin, (like a nation). Then it consists of clans and tribes. The largest group in this arrangement is called *sa'b*, and the smallest is called *'ashīrah*. Abū Ruwāq says that the words Shu'ūb

and Sha'b refer to non-Arab nations whose lineage is not preserved, whilst *qabāil* refers to Arabs whose lineage is well-preserved. The word *asbāt* is used to refer to the children of Israel.

Lineal, National and Linguistic Division of Mankind: The Underlying Divine Wisdom is identification

The Qur'ān in this verse has made it clear that Allah has created all mankind from a single mother and a single father, and made them into a single brotherhood. But he has divided them into different tribes, nations, races, lineage and language-speakers/linguistic groups. The underlying Divine wisdom in such a division is mutual identification. For example, if there are two persons bearing the same name, they could be differentiated by family name. It can also show the near and remote relations. Their Shar'ī rights can be fulfilled on the basis of near and distant lineage. It is incumbent to determine the near and remote agnate heirs when applying the law of succession or dividing the estate of a deceased. In short, reference to one's lineage for the purpose of identification is not deemed to be pride and conceit.

Verses 14 - 18

قَالَتِ الْاَعْرَابُ اٰمَنَّا ؕ قُلْ لَّمْ تُؤْمِنُوْا وَلٰكِنْ قُوْلُوْٓا اَسْلَمْنَا وَلَمَّا يَدْخُلِ الْاِيْمَانُ فِیْ قُلُوْبِكُمْ ؕ وَاِنْ تُطِيْعُوا اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ لَا يَلِتْكُمْ مِّنْ اَعْمَالِكُمْ شَيْئًا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿۱۴﴾ اِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَرْتَابُوْا وَجَاهَدُوْا بِاَمْوَالِهِمْ وَاَنْفُسِهِمْ فِیْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الصّٰدِقُوْنَ ﴿۱۵﴾ قُلْ اَتُعَلِّمُوْنَ اللّٰهَ بِدِيْنِكُمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِی السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِی الْاَرْضِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ بِكُلِّ شَیْءٍ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿۱۶﴾ يَمُنُّوْنَ عَلَيْكَ اَنْ اَسْلَمُوْا ؕ قُلْ لَّا تَمُنُّوْا عَلَیَّ اِسْلَامَكُمْ ۚ بَلِ اللّٰهُ يَمُنُّ عَلَيْكُمْ اَنْ هَدٰىكُمْ لِلْاِيْمَانِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿۱۷﴾ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَعْلَمُ غَيْبَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ بَصِيْرٌۢ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۱۸﴾

The Bedouins say, "We have come to believe." Say, "You have not come to believe; instead you (should) say, 'We

have surrendered' and the belief has not entered your hearts so far. And if you obey Allah and His Messenger, He will not curtail (the reward of) any of your deeds in the least. Surely Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [14] **Believers, in fact, are those who believe in Allah and His Messenger, then have no doubt, and struggle, with their riches and their lives, in the way of Allah. Those are the truthful.** [15] **Say, "Would you apprise Allah of your religion, while Allah knows all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth, and Allah is All-Knowing about every thing?"** [16] **They oblige you that they have accepted Islam, (as if it was a favour shown to you). Say, "Do not oblige me for your accepting Islam. Rather, Allah makes you obliged for His having guided you to the Faith, if you are truthful.** [17] **Surely Allah knows the Unseen of the heavens and the earth, and Allah keeps in sight whatever you do.** [18]

Sequence of Verses in the Sūrah

In the preceding verses of the Sūrah it was stated that the basis of honour in the sight of Allah is righteousness which is an inner quality, and Allah alone knows it. It is improper for any man to claim self-sanctification. In the current set of verses, it is stated, on account of a particular incident, that the real basis of faith is the inner acceptance of the heart. Mere lip-service to faith does not count the person as a faithful believer. In the entire Sūrah, first the rights of the Prophet were set out and then the rules of how to respect and honour him. Next the individual and collective rights and rules of mannerism were set down to be applied in social life. Now at the conclusion of the Sūrah it is reiterated that in the Hereafter good deeds will be accepted and rewarded on the basis of faith, sincere belief of the heart and obedience to Allah and His Messenger.

Circumstances of Revelation

According to Imām Baghawī, this verse was revealed in connection with the tribe of Banu Asad. A few members of that tribe came up to the Holy Prophet ﷺ in Madīnah during a severe drought. These people were not sincere believers. They had expressed their Islam merely to demand financial help from the Muslim *Ṣadaqāt* funds. As they were not believers in the real sense of the word, they were unaware of Islamic injunctions and manners. They spread filth and excrement on the streets of Madīnah. In the marketplaces they increased the prices of necessary items. First they made a false claim of faith in the presence of the Holy Prophet ﷺ;

second they wanted to deceive him; and third they regarded their Islam as a favour to him. They said: "We embraced Islam without any conflict: we did not fight against you as did other tribes for a length of time and then they became Muslims; therefore you should value us." This was a sort of disrespect to the Messenger ﷺ, because they considered their Islam as a favour to him. Their sole purpose was to derive financial aid from the Muslim *Ṣadaqāt* funds, enrich themselves and eradicate their poverty. True and sincere faith is the most precious possession of a Muslim. By accepting Islam, he does no show a favour to anybody; on the contrary, it is a favour of Allah that he is guided to the Truth. On this occasion, the current set of verses was revealed in which their false claim is refuted and they have been taken to task for boasting of their so-called kindness and favour conferred upon the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

وَلٰكِن قُولُوٓا اَسْلَمْنَا ('...Say, 'We have surrendered'- 49:14). They had not achieved the reality of faith. Thus they were claiming falsely to be Muslims on the basis of their outward actions. The Qur'ān first negates their false claim of faith: You cannot claim "*āmannā*" ['We have come to believe']; the most you can say is "*aslamnā*" ['We have surrendered'], because the literal meaning of Islam is to recite the *kalimah* of Islam, enter the fold of the religion and surrender. Obviously, being devoid of the true spirit, this kind of Islam is mere superficial, not real and total. As far as faith is concerned, it is related to the real belief by heart. Therefore, mere verbal claim or lip-profession is meaningless, if it is not supported by the heart.

Lexical and Technical Analysis of the Concepts "Islām" and "'Imān"

The foregoing discussion clarifies that the term "Islam" in this verse bears the literal meaning of outward submission and not the technical sense. Therefore, the verse does not show the technical difference between the terms "Islām" and "'Īmān".The two terms, technically, connote different senses. "'Īmān", in the technical sense of Sharī'ah, refers to the belief by heart and thus connotes a firm and unshakable belief in the Oneness of Allah and in His Messenger. "Islam", on the other hand, stands for complete surrender and obedience to Allah and His Messenger. However, "Islām" and "'Īmān" of a person need to complement each other. In Sharī'ah, the belief of the heart must manifest itself by performing

deeds outwardly, the least degree of which is to proclaim the *kalimah* of Islām verbally. But the outward performance of deeds is not recognised by Sharī'ah unless the faith goes deep down into his heart. Otherwise it would be hypocrisy. Thus in the original and final analysis "Islam" and "'Īmān" are different concepts. "'Īmān" is the inner quality of the heart and manifests outwardly whilst "Islām" starts out in outward actions and culminates in the inner sincere affirmation of the heart. But in terms of their goal, they are mutually necessary and complementary in that "'Īmān" without "Islām" is not possible, nor is "Islam" possible without "'Īmān". Hence, it is not true to say that "Muslim" and "*Mu'min*" are antonyms and mutually contradictory concepts. In Sharī'ah, it is not possible for a person to be a "Muslim" but not a "*Mu'min*" or be a "*Mu'min*" but not a "Muslim". However, this is possible only lexically, as is the case of all hypocrites who used to be treated like Muslims, because of their outward obedience of Islamic injunctions, but their hearts were devoid of sincere faith, belief and affirmation. They were not believers. Allah, the Pure and Exalted, knows best.

Alhamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Ḥujurāt
Ends here

Sūrah Qāf

This Sūrah Qāf is Makkī. It contains 45 verses and 3 sections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 15

قٓ ۚ وَالْقُرْاٰنِ الْمَجِيْدِ ﴿١﴾ بَلْ عَجِبُوْٓا اَنْ جَآءَهُمْ مُّنْذِرٌ مِّنْهُمْ فَقَالَ
الْكٰفِرُوْنَ هٰذَا شَيْءٌ عَجِيْبٌ ﴿٢﴾ ءَاِذَا مِتْنَا وَكُنَّا تُرَابًا ۚ ذٰلِكَ رَجْعٌ ۢ
بَعِيْدٌ ﴿٣﴾ قَدْ عَلِمْنَا مَا تَنْقُصُ الْاَرْضُ مِنْهُمْ ۚ وَعِنْدَنَا كِتٰبٌ حَفِيْظٌ
﴿٤﴾ بَلْ كَذَّبُوْا بِالْحَقِّ لَمَّا جَآءَهُمْ فَهُمْ فِيْٓ اَمْرٍ مَّرِيْجٍ ﴿٥﴾ اَفَلَمْ
يَنْظُرُوْٓا اِلَى السَّمَآءِ فَوْقَهُمْ كَيْفَ بَنَيْنٰهَا وَزَيَّنّٰهَا وَمَا لَهَا مِنْ فُرُوْجٍ
﴿٦﴾ وَالْاَرْضَ مَدَدْنٰهَا وَاَلْقَيْنَا فِيْهَا رَوَاسِيَ وَاَنْۢبَتْنَا فِيْهَا مِنْ كُلِّ
زَوْجٍ ۢ بَهِيْجٍ ﴿٧﴾ تَبْصِرَةً وَّذِكْرٰى لِكُلِّ عَبْدٍ مُّنِيْبٍ ﴿٨﴾ وَنَزَّلْنَا مِنَ
السَّمَآءِ مَآءً مُّبٰرَكًا فَاَنْۢبَتْنَا بِهٖ جَنّٰتٍ وَّحَبَّ الْحَصِيْدِ ﴿٩﴾ وَالنَّخْلَ
بٰسِقٰتٍ لَّهَا طَلْعٌ نَّضِيْدٌ ﴿١٠﴾ رِّزْقًا لِّلْعِبَادِ ۙ وَاَحْيَيْنَا بِهٖ بَلْدَةً مَّيْتًا ۭ
كَذٰلِكَ الْخُرُوْجُ ﴿١١﴾ كَذَّبَتْ قَبْلَهُمْ قَوْمُ نُوْحٍ وَّاَصْحٰبُ الرَّسِّ
وَثَمُوْدُ ﴿١٢﴾ وَعَادٌ وَّفِرْعَوْنُ وَاِخْوَانُ لُوْطٍ ﴿١٣﴾ وَّاَصْحٰبُ الْاَيْكَةِ
وَقَوْمُ تُبَّعٍ ۭ كُلٌّ كَذَّبَ الرُّسُلَ فَحَقَّ وَعِيْدِ ﴿١٤﴾ اَفَعَيِيْنَا بِالْخَلْقِ
الْاَوَّلِ ۭ بَلْ هُمْ فِيْ لَبْسٍ مِّنْ خَلْقٍ جَدِيْدٍ ﴿١٥﴾

Qāf. (I swear) by the glorious Qur'ān, (you are sent as a messenger.) [1] But they wonder that a warner has come to them from among themselves, so the disbelievers said, "This is something strange. [2] Is it when we die and become dust (that we will be brought to life again?) That is a return, far (from understanding)." [3] We know very well how much of them is diminished by the earth, and We have a Book that records every thing. [4] Rather, they rejected the truth when it came to them; so they are in a confused state. [5] Did they not, then, look to the sky above them, how We have built it and beautified it, and it has no cracks? [6] And the earth–We have spread it out, and cast on it firm hills, and caused to grow therein every kind of delightful things, [7] as a source of vision and as a lesson to every slave (of Allah) who turns (to Him for guidance). [8] And We sent down blessed water from the sky, and caused to grow therewith gardens and grain of harvest, [9] and towering date palms that have spadices, put one upon another, [10] as a provision to the slaves (of Allah). And We gave life with it to a dead land. Similar will be the exit (of the dead from their graves). [11] It (resurrection) was rejected prior to them by the people of Nūḥ, and the people of Rass and Thamūd, [12] and 'Ād, and Fir'aun, and the brothers of Lūṭ, [13] and dwellers of Aykah, and the people of Tubba'. Each one of them rejected the messengers; so My threat came true. [14] Is it then that We were worn out by the first creation? No, but they are in confusion about the new creation. [15]

Linkage with the preceding Sūrah

This Sūrah mostly contains subjects relating to the Day of Judgment, Resurrection, the Reckoning, Paradise, the Fire, Allah's reward and punishment etc. Thus this Sūrah is linked with Sūrah Al-Ḥujurāt because the concluding part of the latter Sūrah dealt with these subjects.

Characteristics and Virtues of Sūrah Qāf

It is reported in Muslim, as cited in Qurṭubī, that Umm Hishām Bint Ḥārithah Ibn Nu'mān رضی اللہ عنہا said: "For around two years, or a year and a part of another year, we shared one single oven with the Holy Prophet ﷺ. I memorized Sūrah Qāf from the Holy Prophet ﷺ who used to recite it every Friday while standing on the pulpit delivering the Friday sermon to the people."

Sayyidnā 'Umar Ibn-ul-Khaṭṭāb رضي الله عنه asked Abū Wāqid Al-Laithī:

"What did the Holy Prophet ﷺ recite during the *'Īd* prayers?" He replied: "Sūrah Qāf and Sūrah Qamar." Sayyidnā Jābir رضي الله عنه reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ used to recite Sūrah Qāf often in the morning prayer. (Despite that this Sūrah is rather long,) the prayer was felt light (Qurṭubī). It was the special trait of the recitation of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that praying behind him caused no stress, even when he recited the long Sūrahs.

Is it Possible to Observe the Heaven?

أَفَلَمْ يَنظُرُوٓا إِلَى السَّمَآءِ (Did they not, then, look to the sky above them? - 50:6). Apparently this sentence indicates that it is possible to see the sky, while the general impression is that the blue colour that we see above is the colour of the atmosphere, and not that of the heaven. However, there is no proof for non-existence of the sky, nor of the presumption that the colour of the heaven is not blue. Besides, the word *naẓar* (seeing) used in the verse could mean perceiving through reason, that is, thinking, pondering etc. (Bayān-ul-Qur'ān)

Removal of a Doubt relating to Resurrection

قَدْ عَلِمْنَا مَا تَنقُصُ الْأَرْضُ مِنْهُمْ (We know very well how much of them is diminished by the earth,... 50:4). The disbelievers wondered at the idea that when they are dead and reduced to broken bones and particles of dust and scattered all over the world, whether it is possible that, on the Day of Resurrection, they will be raised up again. They thought that it was impossible when they are dead, disintegrated, with their organs torn apart that they will be brought back to their original shape and bodies. The verse refutes the disbelievers' objection: Allah says that He knows that which the earth takes of them, meaning He knows what the earth consumes of their dead bodies; where and how the bodies disintegrated, what they turned into and how they have become. Man's knowledge is limited and narrow in scope which should not be compared to Allah's vast, unlimited and encompassing knowledge - even the particles of objects which the earth disintegrates are well preserved in Allah's infinite knowledge. And a little reflection may reveal that even the body of a living person is composed of innumerable particles that have been joined together by Allah from different places. Whatever a person intakes in the form of food or medicine is derived from different parts of the earth, and all this forms part of his body. Then why should it be difficult for Him if He recollects all these parts after they are disintegrated? Not only this, he had a perfect and full knowledge of every man's destiny even before

creating him as to what transformation will come about in every moment of his life and what phases he will go through after his death. All this is precisely recorded in the Preserved Tablet.

It is astonishing indeed that the disbelievers wonder at Him whose knowledge is so perfect, full, complete and encompassing and whose power is so infinite and discount the possibility of Resurrection!

This interpretation of 'diminishing by earth' is reported from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbas ﷺ, Mujāhid and majority of the interpreters (Al-Baḥr-ul-Muḥīṭ).

فِىٓ أَمۡرٍ مَّرِيجٍ (so they are in a confused state... 5). The word *Marīj*, (translated above as 'confused') means something mixed up with different elements. Such a thing generally becomes corrupt or spoiled. Therefore, Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ translates the word *marīj* as "corrupt". Sayyidnā Ḍaḥḥāk, Qatādah ﷺ, Ḥasan Baṣrī رحمه الله تعالى and others interpret the word *marīj* to mean "in disarray, in a confused state". This is the state of those who deny the prophethood of the Holy Prophet ﷺ: whatever they say and utter is no more than confusion. They are not even consistent in their claims. Sometimes they call the Holy Prophet ﷺ a sorcerer, at other times a poet; and yet at other times they refer to him as a soothsayer or an astrologer. They were so confused that they could not extricate themselves from their perplexity.

After mentioning the confused state of the infidels, Allah draws man's attention to His infinite power which He demonstrated by creating what is bigger than that which they wondered about and whose possibility they discounted. Referring to the heaven, the Qur'ān says: وَمَا لَهَا مِن فُرُوجٍ (...and it has no cracks...50:6). Lexically, the word *furūj* is the plural of *farj* which means a crack, or an opening. This and the following few verses draw attention to the marvels of Allah's creation, the wonderful design in the universe, and to the flawless celestial firmament. If this was made by man there would have been patches, cracks, clefts or rifts. But no one can find any sort of patchwork or stitching in the sky. This, however, does not negate the existence of doors in the heaven. A door is not referred to as a crack.

Consoling the Holy Prophet ﷺ

كَذَّبَتۡ قَبۡلَهُمۡ قَوۡمُ نُوحٍ وَأَصۡحَٰبُ ٱلرَّسِّ (It [resurrection] was rejected prior to them by the people of Nūḥ, and the people of Rass - 50:12). It was mentioned in the preceding verses that the infidels rejected the Prophethood of

Sayyidnā Muḥammad ﷺ and the Hereafter. This obviously perturbed and upset him. In this verse Allah comforts him by narrating the stories of the previous prophets and their communities. Every community in the past persecuted their respective prophets. This was the behavior pattern of all disbelieving nations against their prophets throughout history. Thus the Holy Prophet ﷺ is consoled that he should not be disheartened by this behavior. The story of the people of Nūḥ عليه السلام is repeated several times in the Qur'ān in that the Holy Prophet Nūḥ عليه السلام preached to his people for 950 years but in response they not only rejected him but also subjected him to various hardships.

Who are people of Rass?

Lexically, the word *rass* in Arabic has several meanings. Most prominently it refers to a well that has not been built by bricks or stones. People of Rass were the remnants of Thamūd who had remained alive after the punishment. Ḍaḥḥāk رحمه الله and other commentators narrate their story that follows. When the people of Ṣaliḥ عليه السلام were destroyed by Allah's punishment, a remnant [about 4000] of them escaped it, because they had reposed faith in him and obeyed him. They left their original place and took shelter in Ḥaḍramaut (a city in Yemen). Holy Prophet Ṣaliḥ عليه السلام was with them. They went to a well and stayed there. Ṣaliḥ عليه السلام passed away here; therefore this place is called *Ḥaḍara Maut* [death overcame] and the people settled there permanently.

Later their descendants took to idol-worship, to whom a prophet was sent to preach and reform, but they killed him. The community was annihilated by Divine punishment. Their well, on which their lives depended, was rendered useless; and their buildings and dwellings were desolated. The Qur'ān has described it in the following words, فَهِيَ خَاوِيَةٌ عَلَىٰ عُرُوشِهَا وَبِئْرٍ "So, there they are, fallen down on heir roofs, and Chow many a deserted well ane well-built castle!" (22:45). For discerning eyes the abandoned well and desolate lofty palaces are sufficient to judge and decide on the consequences of one's deeds.

Thamūd

These are the people of the Prophet Ṣaliḥ عليه السلام whose story has been repeated several times in the Qur'ān.

'Ād

The nation of 'Ād was proverbial in their size, physical strength and power as well as the strength that came to them in the wake of their

increased wealth and children. Holy Prophet Hūd (عليه السلام) was sent to them. Eventually, they were annihilated by the Divine punishment of a wind storm.

Fir'aun

This is the title of the Egyptian king (The Pharaoh) notorious for his tyranny.

Brothers of Lūṭ

It means the community of the Prophet Lūṭ (عليه السلام), whose story is narrated several times in the Qur'ān.

Dwellers of Aikah

Aikah means a dense bush; wood; forest; jungle, These people resided in such a place. Holy Prophet Shu'aib (عليه السلام) was sent to this nation. They disobeyed him and were destroyed by Divine punishment.

People of Tubba'

Tubba' was the title of the king of Yemen. The necessary explanation has been given in volume seven in Sūrah Ad-Dukhān under [44:37].

Verses 16 - 29

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْاِنْسَانَ وَنَعْلَمُ مَا تُوَسْوِسُ بِهٖ نَفْسُهٗ ۚ وَنَحْنُ اَقْرَبُ
اِلَيْهِ مِنْ حَبْلِ الْوَرِيْدِ ﴿١٦﴾ اِذْ يَتَلَقَّى الْمُتَلَقِّيٰنِ عَنِ الْيَمِيْنِ وَعَنِ
الشِّمَالِ قَعِيْدٌ ﴿١٧﴾ مَا يَلْفِظُ مِنْ قَوْلٍ اِلَّا لَدَيْهِ رَقِيْبٌ عَتِيْدٌ ﴿١٨﴾
وَجَآءَتْ سَكْرَةُ الْمَوْتِ بِالْحَقِّ ؕ ذٰلِكَ مَا كُنْتَ مِنْهُ تَحِيْدُ ﴿١٩﴾
وَنُفِخَ فِى الصُّوْرِ ؕ ذٰلِكَ يَوْمُ الْوَعِيْدِ ﴿٢٠﴾ وَجَآءَتْ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ
مَّعَهَا سَآئِقٌ وَّشَهِيْدٌ ﴿٢١﴾ لَقَدْ كُنْتَ فِىْ غَفْلَةٍ مِّنْ هٰذَا فَكَشَفْنَا
عَنْكَ غِطَآءَكَ فَبَصَرُكَ الْيَوْمَ حَدِيْدٌ ﴿٢٢﴾ وَقَالَ قَرِيْنُهٗ هٰذَا مَا لَدَىَّ
عَتِيْدٌ ﴿٢٣﴾ اَلْقِيَا فِىْ جَهَنَّمَ كُلَّ كَفَّارٍ عَنِيْدٍ ﴿٢٤﴾ مَّنَّاعٍ لِّلْخَيْرِ مُعْتَدٍ
مُّرِيْبِ ﴿٢٥﴾ الَّذِىْ جَعَلَ مَعَ اللّٰهِ اِلٰهًا اٰخَرَ فَاَلْقِيٰهُ فِى الْعَذَابِ
الشَّدِيْدِ ﴿٢٦﴾ قَالَ قَرِيْنُهٗ رَبَّنَا مَآ اَطْغَيْتُهٗ وَلٰكِنْ كَانَ فِىْ ضَلٰلٍ بَعِيْدٍ

﴿۲۷﴾ قَالَ لَا تَخْتَصِمُوْا لَدَیَّ وَقَدْ قَدَّمْتُ اِلَیْکُمْ بِالْوَعِیْدِ ﴿۲۸﴾ مَا یُبَدَّلُ الْقَوْلُ لَدَیَّ وَمَآ اَنَا بِظَلَّامٍ لِّلْعَبِیْدِ ﴿۲۹﴾

And indeed We have created man, and We know whatever thoughts his inner self develops, and We are closer to him than (his) jugular vein, [16] **when the two receiving angels receive (every human act to record it), seated (one) on the right and (one) on the left.** [17] **Not a single word is uttered by one, but there is a watcher near him, ready (to record).** [18] **And the daze of death has (to) come with truth. That is what you tried to escape.** [19] **And the Horn will be blown. That will be the day of (which) threat (was given).** [20] **And everybody will come, along with one (angel) to drive (him to the field of reckoning) and one (angel) to testify (about his deeds).** [21] **"You were heedless of this. Now We have removed your veil from you; so your sight today is sharp."** [22] **And his companion (i.e. the angel who recorded his deeds) will say, "This is what I have with me, ready (to be presented as his record of deeds)."** [23] **(Then it will be said,) "Cast, both of you (O angels,) into Jahannam (hell) every stubborn disbeliever** [24] **who used to prevent (others) from good, who transgressed all bounds, who cast doubts (in true faith),** [25] **who set up another god along with Allah. So cast him (O angels) in the painful punishment."** [26] **His (evil) companion (i.e. the Satan) will say, "O our Lord, I did not cause him to rebel, but he was himself (involved) in straying far from the track.** [27] **He (Allah) will say, "Do not quarrel before Me, while I had sent to you My threat well in advance.** [28] **The Word is not changed with Me, and I Am not a wrongdoer to My slaves."** [29]

Linkage

The preceding verses purported to quell the doubt of those who denied the possibility of Resurrection and who thought that raising the dead was inconceivable. As a result, the unbelievers drew a false analogy between their finite knowledge and power and the infinite knowledge and power of Allah. Therefore, the perplexity arose in their mind: 'after we die, disintegrate, with our organs torn apart, our bodies reduced to particles of dust and scattered or spread all over the world, how is it possible to gather them together and recompose them back into our original shape and

bodies?'

The preceding verses responded that the Divine knowledge is all-encompassing and He knows every single particle of the universe, and therefore it is not difficult for Him to recollect these particles. The same subject has been further elaborated in the present verses by declaring that Allah not only has the complete knowledge of man's scattered particles, but He also has the full knowledge of all thoughts that cross the mind of man. The verse explains the reason for that: Allah is nearer to him than his jugular vein, on which is dependent his very life. Therefore, He knows man's conditions and circumstances more than man himself.

Allah is Nearer to Man than his Jugular Vein: An Analysis

The concluding part of verse [16] says: نَحْنُ اَقْرَبُ اِلَيْهِ مِنْ حَبْلِ الْوَرِيْدِ (We are closer to him than [his] jugular vein). The 'closeness' in the verse, by consensus of scholars, refers to "nearness in terms of all-encompassing knowledge" not in terms of physical closeness. In this manner, the verse means that Allah's power and knowledge has so encompassed man from within and without that His power and knowledge is nearer to him than his own jugular vein.

The term *warīd* [pl. *awridah*] in the Arabic language are animal veins which supply blood to the entire body. Medically, there are two types of veins: [1] the veins that emerge from the liver and supply pure blood to the entire human body. Medically, only these veins are referred to as *warīd* [*awridah*]; and [2] the veins that emerge from animal heart and supply the subtle vapor of blood to the entire human body which in medical terminology is referred to as *rūḥ* [soul]. These veins are called in Arabic *shiryān* [which actually refers to an artery]. The first type of veins is thick-walled and the second type is thin-walled.

The word *warīd* in the above verse does not necessarily apply to the vein that comes from the liver in the medical sense. In fact it could well apply, in the literal sense, to the vein that comes from the heart because in that too a type of blood circulates. As the purport of this verse is to show that Allah possesses full knowledge of all thoughts that cross the mind of man, the literal sense of the term seems more appropriate. Nevertheless, whether the word *warīd* is taken medically in the sense of a vein coming from the liver or in the sense of an artery coming from the heart is immaterial. In both cases the living creatures' life depends on it.

If the veins or arteries are cut, they lose their soul and die. In short, Allah encompasses complete and full knowledge about everything of man, because He is closer to him than his neck-vein.

According to the Honourable Ṣūfis, here the term *qurb* (closeness) goes beyond the concept of nearness in terms of knowledge. It is a special type of *ittiṣāl* [contact or bond or relationship between Allah and His creation, including man who is placed at the centre of the wonderful universe], the reality and nature of which is not known to anyone, but it does necessarily exist *bilā kaif* "without how" or indescribably. Various Qur'ānic verses and authentic Prophetic Traditions bear ample testimony to this fact. For example, the Qur'ān commands: وَاسْجُدْ وَاقْتَرِبْ (and bow down in *sajdah*, and come closer....Al-'Alaq: 18) This is just like what the Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said: "The closest that a servant can be to his Lord is when he is in prostration. Therefore, make abundant supplications (i.e. while prostrating) ." Another Tradition reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: "When My servant performs supererogatory prayers, he attains proximity to Me." On the occasion of migration to Madīnah, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said to Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه إِنَّ اللّٰهَ مَعَنَا "Allah is with us. (9:40)" Holy Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام said to the children of Israel: إِنَّ مَعِيَ رَبِّي "My Lord is with me." (26:62)

This *qurb* [nearness or proximity to Allah], which man attains through nearness of obligatory and supererogatory works and through his efforts, is reserved exclusively for a believer. Such believers are called *awliyā'ullah* [the friends of Allah: they are those whom Allah has chosen as His friends]. This special bond with Allah is different from the general relationship between Allah and man, whether believer or non-believer. In brief, the above verses and narrations bear testimony to the fact that man has a special type of proximity to his Creator and Master though its reality and nature cannot be perceived. Maulānā Rūmī رحمه الله تعالى has versified this concept thus:

اتصالے بے مثال و بے قیاس..........ہست ربّ النّاس را با جانِ ناس

The Lord of the people has a special contact with the people which is beyond one's perception and has no other example.

This nearness and proximity cannot be perceived by the ordinary sensation of physical sight, but it is attained through *farāsah* of *'īmān*

[perspicacity through faith]. Tafsir Mazhari interprets *qurb* and *ittiṣāl* in this verse in the same sense. We have learnt earlier the interpretation of the majority of the commentators that it is not physical proximity, but rather the all-encompassing, full and complete knowledge of Allah. Apart from these two interpretations, Ibn-Kathir interprets it in a third way. He says that the pronoun "We" does not refer to the "Being" of Allah, but to His angels who are all the time with man. They know man's soul so closely that man himself is not so well aware of it. Allah knows best!

The Two Recording Angels with every Man

إِذْ يَتَلَقَّى الْمُتَلَقِّيٰنِ (when the two receiving angels receive (every human act to record it - 50:17) In the phrase *idh yatalaqq al-mutalaqqiyāni*, (when the two receiving angels receive) the verb *yatalaqqā* is aorist from the infinitive *talaqqī* which denotes to take, to accept, to receive, to learn as in the verse فَتَلَقّٰى اٰدَمُ مِنْ رَّبِّهٖ كَلِمٰتٍ "Thereafter 'Ādam received a few words from his Lord (2:37)". The word *mutalaqqiyani* in the verse is the dual of *al-mutalaqqī* and refers to the two angels that accompany every human being all the time to receive and record the deeds of mankind. The phrase عَنِ الْيَمِيْنِ وَعَنِ الشِّمَالِ قَعِيْدٌ(seated [one] on the right and [one] on the left. 50:17) means that the angel sitting on the right records one's good actions, and that on the left, his bad actions. The word *qa'īd* is used in the sense of *qa'id*, like *jalīs* in the sense of *jalis* - both meaning "sitting". The word *qa'īd* is used for singular as well as plural. However, there is a difference in the usage of *qa'īd* and *jalīs* as opposed to *qa'īd* and *jalīs* in that the former means a person who is actually sitting. But *qa'īd* and *jalīs* are used in the general sense of the words, that is, he who accompanies someone whether sitting, standing or moving around. The word *qa'īd* is used in the verse to describe the two angels, because they accompany human beings all the time and in every state - whether sitting or standing, whether moving or sleeping. The angels move out only when the humans undress their private parts for purposes of responding to the call of nature or having sexual intercourse. However, Allah has equipped them with a special innate sensing device, so that they realize the sins, or become aware of the sins that are being committed in their absence. Ibn Kathir states that, according to the narration of Aḥnāf Ibn Qais, the angel sitting on the right records the good deeds, and he is also the supervisor over the angel on the left. If a person commits a sin, the angel

on the right says to the one on the left, "Do not write it yet; give him a chance; may be he will repent; if he does, then let it go; otherwise record it in your record of deeds". (Ibn-Abī Ḥātim transmitted it)

Explanation of Ḥasan Baṣrī رحمه الله تعالى

Ḥasan Baṣrī recited the above verse containing the phrase عَنِ الْيَمِيْنِ وَعَنِ الشِّمَالِ قَعِيْد (seated one on the right, and one on the left) and said:

> "O son of 'Ādam! Your record of deeds has been spread, and two honorable angels have been appointed. One on your right side and the other on your left. The one on your right side records your good deeds, and the one on your left records your evil deeds and sins. Focus on this reality, and do what you desire, increase it or decrease it. When you die, your record of deeds will be folded, and put around your neck. It will go with you in the grave, and remain there. When you will rise from your grave on the Day of Judgement, Allah will say:
>
> وَكُلَّ إِنسَانٍ أَلْزَمْنٰهُ طٰٓئِرَهُ فِى عُنُقِهِ وَنُخْرِجُ لَهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ كِتٰبًا يَّلْقٰهُ مَنْشُوْرًا. اِقْرَأْ كِتٰبَكَ كَفٰى بِنَفْسِكَ الْيَوْمَ عَلَيْكَ حَسِيْبًا .
>
> "And every human's (deeds determining his) fate We have tied up to his neck, and We shall bring forth for him, on the day of Resurrection, a book he will receive wide open. [13] "Read your book. This day you yourself are enough to take your own account." [14] (Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl - 13, 14).

Then Ḥasan Baṣrī رحمه الله تعالى said:

> "By God! The Supreme Being has done a great justice in that He has appointed you to take account of your own actions". (Ibn Kathīr)

Obviously the book or the ledger of deeds would not be made up of mundane paper, so that there should be any difficulty in understanding how it will go with him in the grave and remain there with him until the Day of Resurrection. It is a transcendental reality, the actual nature of which is known only to Allah. Therefore, it should not be surprising if the book is put as a garland round the neck and remains there until the Day of Resurrection.

Every Utterance of Man is Recorded

مَا يَلْفِظُ مِنْ قَوْلٍ اِلَّا لَدَيْهِ رَقِيْبٌ عَتِيْدٌ (Not a single word is uttered by one, but there is a watcher near him, ready [to record]...50:18) In other words,

there is always a supervising angel [the scribe] whose responsibility is to record any word that the human utters or speaks. Sayyidnā Ḥasan Baṣrī and Qatādah said that this angel records every single word - whether or not it is sinful or rewardable. Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ said that only those utterances are recorded that are sinful or rewardable. Ibn Kathīr, having quoted both these views, preferred the first view on the basis of the general words of the verse that every utterance is recorded. According to another narration of Sayyidnā Abū Ṭalḥah ﷺ from Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ both the views can be accommodated. This narration states that in the first instance every utterance is recorded, whether or not it is sinful or rewardable. Once a week on Thursdays, the angels review the recorded utterances and retain only those that are sinful or rewardable, good or bad; the rest are discounted. Thus the Qur'an says: يَمْحُوا اللّٰهُ مَا يَشَآءُ وَيُثْبِتُ وَعِنْدَهٗٓ اُمُّ الْكِتٰبِ "Allah wipes off what He wills and affirms (what He wills). And with Him is the Mother Book." (Ar-Ra'd 39)

Imām Aḥmad has reported from Sayyidnā Bilāl Ibn Ḥārith Al-Muzanī ﷺ that the Messenger of Allah has said:

> "Verily, a man sometime utters a good word that pleases Allah, unaware of how highly it will be rewarded, and on its account Allah decrees His pleasure of him until the Day he meets Him. Similarly, a man might utter a word that angers Allah, unaware of how dreadful its punishment will be, and on its account Allah decrees for him His anger until the Day he meets Him."

Sayyidnā 'Alqamah ﷺ, after narrating this from Bilāl Ibn Ḥārith ﷺ, used to say: "How many words did I not utter because of this *ḥadīth*." (Ibn Kathīr)

Daze of Death

وَجَآءَتْ سَكْرَةُ الْمَوْتِ بِالْحَقِّ ؕ ذٰلِكَ مَا كُنْتَ مِنْهُ تَحِيْدُ (And the daze of death has [to] come with truth. That is what you tried to escape...50:19) The phrase *sakrat-ul-maūt* denotes the agony and the stupor or daze of death that a dying person experiences. Abū Bakr Ibn-ul-Anbārī رحمه الله تعالى with his own transmitting authorities reports from Masrūq that when the signs of death appeared on Sayyidnā Abū Bakr Ṣiddīq ﷺ, Ṣiddīqah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها was called. She came and when she saw her father's condition, she spontaneously versified and recited:

إِذَا حَشْرَجَتْ يَوْمًا وَضَاقَ بِهَا الصَّدْرُ

"When the soul one day will be uneasy and the breast thereby will become narrow".

Sayyidnā Abū Bakr Ṣiddīq ﷺ heard this and said: "You recited this verse inappropriately; why did you not recite the Qur'ānic verse [19] وَجَآءَتْ سَكْرَةُ الْمَوْتِ بِالْحَقِّ ۖ ذَٰلِكَ مَا كُنتَ مِنْهُ تَحِيدُ (And the daze of death has [to] come with truth. That is what you tried to escape...) When the Holy Prophet ﷺ faced the same state, he would put his hand in the water and wipe it over his blessed face, reciting لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ اِنَّ لِلْمَوْتِ سَكَرَات "There is no god but Allah, indeed death has its pangs or stupor."

In the prepositional phrase بِالْحَقِّ "with truth", through the preposition بِ "ba" the action of the verb is passed on to the object, meaning " the pangs of death brought forth things that are true and real which none can escape or avoid" (Maẓharī).

ذَٰلِكَ مَا كُنتَ مِنْهُ تَحِيدُ (That is what you tried to escape...50:19) *taḥīdu* is derived from *ḥaid* which denotes to incline; to turn aside or escape from a place; to avoid or shun it; and to acknowledge. Apparently, this verse addresses the entire mankind. Every man is naturally afraid or scared of, or alarmed and terrified by, the thought of death. Life is dear to him and death is a calamity for him. As a result, he makes plans to run away from death. This is from Shar'i point of view not wrong or a sin. Death, however, is inevitable. The purport of the verse is to show that 'this is the end you were trying to escape or avert or flee from; it has come to you. Therefore, your desire will not be completely fulfilled; you will have neither a shelter nor a refuge nor a sanctuary nor an asylum from it.'

Two Angels to Lead Man to the Plane of Ḥashr

وَجَآءَتْ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّعَهَا سَآئِقٌ وَّشَهِيدٌ (And everybody will come, along with one [angel] to drive [him to the field of reckoning] and one [angel] to testify [about his deeds] 50:21). The verse before this depicts the way the Day of Judgement will be established. This verse describes the way in which all human beings will be brought to the plane of Ḥashr. With every man there will be a *Sā'iq* and a *Shahīd*. *Sā'iq*, literally, denotes a person who remains behind a herd of animals or behind a group of people and drives them to a particular place. And *Shahīd* refers to a witness. As for *Sā'iq*, by the consensus of traditions, it refers to an angel. But there are

different views of scholars of Tafsīr regarding *Shahīd*. Some say that it too refers to an angel. In this way, there are two angels - *Sā'iq* and *Shahīd*. *Sā'iq's* duty is to drive the people to the gathering place, and *Shahīd's* task is to bear witness when the people's deeds will be presented. Another possible interpretation is that these two angels refer to the "honorable scribes" who used to accompany human beings all the time in the world on the right and left to record their deeds. A third possibility is that they refer to some other angels besides the ones mentioned here.

Some scholars interpret *Shahīd* as referring to man's action, and other scholars think that the reference is to man himself. Ibn Kathīr opines that the apparent context of the verse indicates that *Shahīd* is also an angel who will bear witness to man's actions. Sayyidnā 'Uthmān Ibn 'Affān ﷺ whilst delivering a sermon recited this verse and said: "*Sā'iq* will drive every person to Allah, and *Shahīd* will testify about what one has done." Interpreters like Sayyidnā Mujāhid, Qatādah and Ibn Zaid ﷺ placed the same interpretation on the two names. Ibn Jarīr has preferred this interpretation.

The Unseen World Becomes Visible at Death

فَكَشَفْنَا عَنكَ غِطَآءَكَ فَبَصَرُكَ الْيَوْمَ حَدِيدٌ (Now We have removed your veil from you; so your sight today is sharp...50:22). There is a difference of opinion regarding the addressees of this verse. The preferred opinion is that Allah addresses mankind in general. This includes the believers, the unbelievers, the pious and the wicked. Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Kathīr and others have adopted this interpretation. The analogy drawn here is that this world is like the dream-world and the Hereafter is like the state of wakefulness. When man is in the dream-world, his eyes are closed and cannot perceive by his physical organs of sight the stark realities of the next world. When the physical organs of sight close, his dream-world ends and the state of wakefulness begins, and he is able to discern the stark realities of the Hereafter. Therefore, scholars have formulated the following aphorism:

اَلنَّاسُ نِيَامٌ فَإِذَا مَاتُوا انْتَبَهُوا

"People are sleeping in this world; when they die, they will wake up."

قَالَ قَرِينُهُ هٰذَا مَا لَدَيَّ عَتِيدٌ (And his companion will say, "This is what I have

with me, ready (to be presented as his record of deeds)... 50:23]. The word *qarīn* (translated above as 'companion) refers to the recording angel that accompanies man all the time. Earlier we have learnt that there are two angels that record deeds. In the preceding verse they were referred to as *Sā'iq* and *Shahīd*. The context indicates that, on the Day of Resurrection, the two scribes will be entrusted with two different tasks. One, named as *Sā'iq*, will drive the people to the gathering place, and the second, named as *Shahīd* will carry the records of deeds and it is this angel who, after reaching the plane of Ḥashr, will say, هٰذَا مَالَدَيَّ عَتِيْدٌ "This is what I have with me, ready (to be presented as his record of deeds)." Ibn Jarīr, in his *tafsīr*, states that the word *qarīn* comprehends both the angels *Sā'iq* and *Shahīd*.

اَلْقِيَا فِيْ جَهَنَّمَ كُلَّ كَفَّارٍ عَنِيْدٍ (Cast, both of you [O angels,] into Jahannam every stubborn disbeliever.... 50:24]. The verb *alqiyā* is grammatically dual in number, that is, addressed to two persons. It appears that Allah will say these words to the *Sā'iq* and *Shahīd* angels; Allah will order them to throw him in the fire of Hell. Some other scholars explain it differently (Ibn Kathīr).

Man and Devil Dispute before Allah

قَالَ قَرِيْنُهٗ رَبَّنَا مَآ اَطْغَيْتُهٗ (His (evil) companion (i.e. the Satan) will say, "O our Lord, I did not cause him to rebel,...50:27). The word *qarīn* literally denotes a companion, that is, one who accompanies or associates with another. From this point of view, *qarīn* in the preceding verse referred to the two angels that accompany human beings and record their deeds. Just as there are two angels in the company of man, there is a devil entrusted to every man, who calls him towards commission of sins, and thus leads him astray. In this verse *qarīn* refers to that devil. When it will be ordered that the person be thrown into Hell, it seems that he will say that the devil had led him astray, otherwise he would have done righteous deeds. In response, the devil will disown him and say about the human who came on the Day of Resurrection as an unbeliever that "I did not lead him astray. In fact he himself was misguided, paying no heed to the truth". In response Allah will say what follows in the next verse.

لَا تَخْتَصِمُوْا لَدَيَّ وَقَدْ قَدَّمْتُ اِلَيْكُمْ بِالْوَعِيْدِ ("Do not quarrel before Me, while I had sent to you My threat well in advance.... 50:28) It means :

"I have given you sufficient proof by the words of the past Messengers, and I have sent down the Divine Books; the evidences, signs and proofs have thus been established against you; your flimsy excuses, arguments and disputes will not work today.'

مَا يُبَدَّلُ الْقَوْلُ لَدَيَّ وَمَآ اَنَا بِظَلَّامٍ لِّلْعَبِيْدِ (The Word is not changed with Me, and I Am not a wrongdoer to My slaves." [50:29]

That is, 'I have made my decision which will certainly be implemented: it will never be changed. I will not punish anyone, except on account of their sins after the proof has been established against them. This is an absolutely fair and just decision.'

Verses 30 - 35

يَوْمَ نَقُوْلُ لِجَهَنَّمَ هَلِ امْتَلَأْتِ وَتَقُوْلُ هَلْ مِنْ مَّزِيْدٍ ﴿٣٠﴾ وَأُزْلِفَتِ الْجَنَّةُ لِلْمُتَّقِيْنَ غَيْرَ بَعِيْدٍ ﴿٣١﴾ هٰذَا مَا تُوْعَدُوْنَ لِكُلِّ اَوَّابٍ حَفِيْظٍ ﴿٣٢﴾ مَنْ خَشِيَ الرَّحْمٰنَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَجَآءَ بِقَلْبٍ مُّنِيْبٍ ﴿٣٣﴾ اِۨدْخُلُوْهَا بِسَلٰمٍ ط ذٰلِكَ يَوْمُ الْخُلُوْدِ ﴿٣٤﴾ لَهُمْ مَّا يَشَآءُوْنَ فِيْهَا وَلَدَيْنَا مَزِيْدٌ ﴿٣٥﴾

(Remind them of) the Day when We will say to *Jahannam* (hell), "Are you filled up?" and it will say, "Are there some more?" [30] **And the Jannah (Paradise) will be brought close for the God-fearing, no longer distant.** [31] **(And it will be said,)" This is what you were promised for everyone oft-returning to Allah, vigilant (against sins),** [32] **the one who fears the Raḥmān (The All-Merciful), without seeing Him, and comes up with a heart oriented towards Him.** [33] **Enter it in peace. That is the Day of Eternity." [34] For them there will be whatever they wish, and with Us there is even more.** [35]

Analysis of "Awwāb" and "Ḥafīẓ"

لِكُلِّ اَوَّابٍ حَفِيْظٍ (" This is what you were promised for everyone oft-returning to Allah, vigilant....50:32). That is to say, Paradise has been promised to every person who is *awwāb* and *ḥafīẓ*. *Awwāb* refers to the

person who turns to Allah. Here it means who turns to Him in repentance against sins. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Masūd ﷺ, Sha'bī and Mujāhid رحمهم الله تعالیٰ said that *Awwāb* refers to a person who recalls his sins in loneliness, private and secret, and seeks Allah's forgiveness. 'Ubaid Ibn 'Umair ﷺ said that *Awwāb* is one who seeks Allah's forgiveness of his sins in every sitting. And he further said that we are advised to recite the following invocation:

سُبْحَانَ اللّٰهِ وَبِحَمْدِهٖ اَللّٰهُمَّ اِنِّیْ اَسْتَغْفِرُکَ مِمَّآ اَصَبْتُ فِیْ مَجْلِسِیْ هذا

"Pure is Allah and praise be to Him. O Allah, I seek Your forgiveness of the evil that I might have committed in this sitting."

In a Prophetic Tradition, we are advised to recite the following supplication when dispersing. Allah will forgive all the sins that might have been committed in that session:

سُبْحَانَکَ اللّٰهُمَّ وَبِحَمْدِکَ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّآ اَنْتَ اَسْتَغْفِرُکَ وَاَتُوْبُ اِلَیْکَ

"Pure are You, O Allah, and praise be to You. There is no god but You. I seek Your forgiveness and turn to You in penitence."

Ḥafīẓ (حَفِیْظ), according to Sayyidnā 'Abdullah Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ, is one who remembers his sins, so that he may return to Allah in penitence and make amends. Another report from him defines اَلْحَفِیْظُ هُوَ الْحَافِظُ لِاَمْرِ اللّٰهِ *ḥafīẓ* as one who remembers his covenant with Allah, and does not break or betray it. Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ reports from the Holy Prophet ﷺ who said: "Whoever performs four *rak'āt* of *Ishrāq* prayer early in the day is *Awwāb* and Ḥafīẓ (Qurṭubī).

In verse [33] we have the statement وَجَآءَ بِقَلْبٍ مُّنِیْبٍ (...and comes up with a heart oriented towards Him....50:33]. Abū Bakr Warrāq رحمه الله تعالیٰ says that the characteristics of a *munīb* is that he always maintains respect for Allah and humbles himself to Him and gives up his sensual and base desires.

Verse [35] depicts the delights of Paradise: The first part states لَهُمْ مَّایَشَآءُوْنَ فِیْهَا (For them there will be whatever they wish,,,,, 50:35]. In other words, the righteous will have whatever delights they wish brought forthwith without any delay. It is recorded in Musnad of Aḥmad on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd Khudrī ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ

said: "If anyone in Paradise wishes for children, the conception, delivery of the baby and its growth will all take place in a short span of time." (Ibn Kathīr)

The second part of the verse states: وَلَدَيْنَا مَزِيْدٌ (and with Us there is even more.) In other words, there are with Allah such desirable delights which have not been conceived of by any man and, therefore, they could not wish or desire for them. Sayyidnā Anas and Jābir ﷺ said that "more" in this context refers to the greatest reward of enabling the people of Jannah to see Allah *bila kaif* [without "how" or in an indescribable manner]. This, according to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, is similar to His other statement in [10:26] لِلَّذِيْنَ اَحْسَنُوا الْحُسْنٰى وَزِيَادَةٌ "For those who have done good is the best and even more." Some reports narrate that the inmates of Paradise will see Allah on Friday [Qurṭubī].

Verses 36 - 40

وَكَمْ اَهْلَكْنَا قَبْلَهُمْ مِّنْ قَرْنٍ هُمْ اَشَدُّ مِنْهُمْ بَطْشًا فَنَقَّبُوْا فِى الْبِلَادِ ۭ هَلْ مِنْ مَّحِيْصٍ ﴿۳۶﴾ اِنَّ فِىْ ذٰلِكَ لَذِكْرٰى لِمَنْ كَانَ لَهٗ قَلْبٌ اَوْاَلْقَى السَّمْعَ وَهُوَ شَهِيْدٌ ﴿۳۷﴾ وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا فِىْ سِتَّةِ اَيَّامٍ ۖ وَّمَا مَسَّنَا مِنْ لُّغُوْبٍ ﴿۳۸﴾ فَاصْبِرْ عَلٰى مَا يَقُوْلُوْنَ وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ قَبْلَ طُلُوْعِ الشَّمْسِ وَقَبْلَ الْغُرُوْبِ ﴿۳۹﴾ وَمِنَ الَّيْلِ فَسَبِّحْهُ وَاَدْبَارَالسُّجُوْدِ ﴿۴۰﴾

And how many a generations We have destroyed before them who were stronger than these in their grip on power, and they searched out the cities: Was there any place to escape? [36] **Indeed, there is a lesson in all this for him who has a heart and gives ear (to the truth) attentively.** [37] **And We created the heavens and the earth and all that is between them in six days, and no weariness even touched Us.** [38] **So, bear with patience what they say, and proclaim His purity along with your Lord's praise before sunrise and before sunset.** [39] **And in hours of night, do proclaim His purity, and at the ends of prostration.** [40]

Warning the Disbelievers of the imminent Torment

In the concluding sentence of verse [36] نَقَّبُوْا فِى الْبِلَادِ ۗ هَلْ مِنْ مَّحِيْصٍ (and they searched out the cities: Was there any place to escape?), the verb نَقَّبُوْا *naqqabū* is derived from the infinitive *tanqīb* which literally means to make a hole, to perforate or pierce. Idiomatically, it connotes to go or go away through the distant land or country or journey or traverse. (al-Qāmūs).

The word *maḥīṣ* means asylum or a place of refuge. In this verse Allah poses a rhetorical question to the unbelievers: How many generations We have destroyed before you! They were more numerous and mightier than you, and they traveled throughout the land for trade and business, but they could not find shelter from their destined death. No land could give them shelter.

Channels of Acquiring Knowledge

لِمَنْ كَانَ لَهُ قَلْبٌ (who has a heart - 50:37). Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ has said that here the word *qalb* [heart] means *'aql* [intellect], because the centre of intellect is heart. Some scholars of Qur'ān say that "heart" here refers to life, because the axis of life is heart. Thus the verse means only that person will be able to benefit from the advice and lesson of the Qur'ān who has life or a sound understanding with which he comprehends. The one devoid of intellect cannot benefit from the Qur'ān.

اَوْ اَلْقَى السَّمْعَ وَهُوَ شَهِيْدٌ (and gives ear [to the truth] attentively....50:37). The phrase *Ilqā'-us- sam'* connotes to listen to someone attentively and the word *Shahīd* means present. The message of the above verses is that two types of people benefit: [1] a person who has the mind and the intellect who understands it in his mind and accepts it; and [2] a person who gives his ears and listens to the Divine verses with an attentive heart, while his heart is present and not absent. Maẓharī interprets that the first type is called *kamīlin* [thoroughly proficient members of the Islamic community]. The second type are their followers and sincere seekers of Reality who are under the direction of a spiritual guide who, on account of their sincerity and purity of heart, accept the teachings of the religion.

وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ قَبْلَ طُلُوْعِ الشَّمْسِ وَقَبْلَ الْغُرُوْبِ (and proclaim His purity along with your Lord's praise before sunrise and before sunset... 50:39). The

imperative verb *sabbiḥ* is derived from the infinitive *tasbīḥ* which originally means to declare or proclaim the purity of Allah. This comprehends the verbal declaration or proclamation and the worship, such as prayer. Therefore, some scholars say that *tasbiḥ* before sunrise refers to the morning prayer, and *tasbīḥ* before sunset refers to 'Aṣr (late afternoon) prayer. Sayyidnā Jarīr Ibn 'Abdullāh reports from the Holy Prophet ﷺ [as part of a long Tradition]

اِنِ اسْتَطَعْتُمْ اَنْ لَّا تُغْلَبُوْا عَلٰى صَلٰوةٍ قَبْلَ طُلُوْعِ الشَّمْسِ وَقَبْلَ غُرُوْبِهَا، يَعْنِى الْعَصْرَ وَالْفَجْرَ ثُمَّ قَرَأَ جَرِيْرٌ وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ قَبْلَ طُلُوْعِ الشَّمْسِ وَقَبْلَ الْغُرُوْبِ . (بخاری و مسلم واللفظ لمسلم)

> "So if you can avoid missing the prayer before the sunrise and the prayer before sunset, that is the 'Asr prayer and the morning prayer, you must do so." (Bukhārī and Muslim - the wordings of Muslim: vide Qurṭubī)

Although according to the majority of commentators, *tasbīḥ* in the verse refers to *ṣalāh* (prayer), yet the general words of *tasbīḥ* include all those invocations also the recitation of which is encouraged by authentic *āḥadīth* at the time of morning and evening. Bukhārī and Muslim have recorded a Tradition on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

> "If you recite morning and evening *subḥānallāh* a hundred times,no one will bring, on the Day of Judgement, a virtuous act better than it, except those who would recite the same *tasbīḥ* in the same number or even more than that."

In the same collections, a narration by the same authority, says that whosoever recites *subḥānallāhi wa bi ḥamdihī* one hundred times in a day, his sins will be forgiven, even though they may be more than the waves of the sea. (Maẓharī)

وَاَدْبَارَ السُّجُوْدِ (...and at the ends of prostration.... 50:40) Mujāhid رحمه الله تعالٰی interprets *sujud* in this verse to refer to the five obligatory prayers, and the phrase "at the ends of the prostrations", according to him, refers to all those *tasbiḥāt* which authentic *āḥadīth* encourage us to recite after every prayer. Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: "Whosoever recites after every obligatory prayer 33 times *subḥānallāh* (سبحان الله), 33 times *al-ḥamdulillāh* (الحمد لله) and 33 times

allāhu 'akbar (الله اكبر), and once:

لا اله الّا اللّٰه وحده، لاشريک له، له الملک وله الحمد وهو علیٰ کلّ شئ قدير

lā ilāha illallāhu waḥdahū lā-sharīka lahū lah-ul-mulku wa-lah-ul- ḥamdu wa huwa 'alā kulli shai'in qadīr.

- all his sins will be forgiven, even though they may be equal to the waves of the sea (Bukhārī and Muslim). The phrase "at the ends of the prostrations" could also refer to the supererogatory prayers to be performed after the obligatory prayers as authentic Traditions testify (Maẓharī).

Verses 41 - 45

وَاسْتَمِعْ يَوْمَ يُنَادِ الْمُنَادِ مِنْ مَّكَانٍ قَرِيْبٍ ﴿٤١﴾ يَّوْمَ يَسْمَعُوْنَ الصَّيْحَةَ بِالْحَقِّ ؕ ذٰلِكَ يَوْمُ الْخُرُوْجِ ﴿٤٢﴾ اِنَّا نَحْنُ نُحْيٖ وَنُمِيْتُ وَ اِلَيْنَا الْمَصِيْرُ ﴿٤٣﴾ يَوْمَ تَشَقَّقُ الْاَرْضُ عَنْهُمْ سِرَاعًا ؕ ذٰلِكَ حَشْرٌ عَلَيْنَا يَسِيْرٌ ﴿٤٤﴾ نَحْنُ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَقُوْلُوْنَ وَمَآ اَنْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِجَبَّارٍ قف فَذَكِّرْ بِالْقُرْاٰنِ مَنْ يَّخَافُ وَعِيْدِ ﴿٤٥﴾

And listen: The Day when the caller will call out from a near place, [41] the Day they will hear the Cry in reality–that will be the Day of Resurrection. [42] Surely We alone give life and bring death, and to Us is the final return [43] on the Day when the earth will burst apart exposing them, while they will be hurrying up (to come out). That is a mustering, so easy for Us. [44] We know well what they say, and you are not one to compel them. So give advice, through the Qur'ān, to the one who fears My warning. [45]

يَوْمَ يُنَادِ الْمُنَادِ مِنْ مَّكَانٍ قَرِيْبٍ (...the Day when the caller will call from a near place - 50:41). Sayyidnā Ibn 'Asākir ﷺ reports from Zaid Ibn Jābir Shafi'ī that the "caller" referred to here is the angel Isrāfīl عليه السلام who will stand on the Dome of the Rock (*Ṣakhrah*) and will address all the dead people of the entire world : "O you rotten bones! O you decomposed skins! O you scattered hair! Listen, Allah commands you to reassemble to render account of your actions (Maẓharī)." This scene depicts how, after the second blowing of the trumpet, the world will be resurrected. The phrase "a near place" refers to the fact that the voice of the angel will reach everybody

who rises from death anywhere on the surface of the earth, and will feel as though the angel had called him from a nearby place. 'Ikrimah ﷺ says that the voice will be heard in such a way as if someone is speaking to us in our ears. Other scholars have said that "a near place" refers to the Dome of the Rock, because that is the centre of the earth, and is equidistant, being separated by equal distances from all sides of the globe. (Qurṭubī)

يَوْمَ تَشَقَّقُ الْأَرْضُ عَنْهُمْ سِرَاعًا (...on the Day when the earth will burst apart exposing them, while they will be hurrying up. - 50:44). The Prophetic Tradition indicates that this 'hurrying up' will be towards Syria where the Dome of the Rock is situated. Isrāfīl عليه السلام will stand on it, and call the people on the Day of Judgement. It is recorded in Jāmi' Tirmidhī, on the authority of Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah Ibn Ḥayadah ﷺ, that the Holy Prophet ﷺ, pointing towards Syria, said:

مِنْ هٰهُنَا إِلىٰ هٰهُنَا تُحْشَرُوْنَ رُكْبَانًا وَّمُشَاةً وَّتُجَرُّوْنَ عَلىٰ وُجُوهِكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ

"From here towards that [pointing towards Syria] you will be raised, some riding, and others on foot, and yet others will be dragged on the faces on the Day of Judgement..."

فَذَكِّرْ بِالْقُرْاٰنِ مَنْ يَّخَافُ وَعِيْدِ (So give advice, through the Qur'ān, to the one who fears My warning... 50:45). This means that the message of the Qur'ān is to be conveyed to the entire mankind, to all and sundry. However, only those who fear Allah and dread His torment will remember and heed. Qatādah ﷺ used to recite this verse and supplicate in the following words:

اَللّٰهُمَّ اجْعَلْنَا مِمَّنْ يَّخَافُ وَعِيْدَكَ وَيَرْجُوْا مَوْعُوْدَكَ يَا بَارُّ يَا رَحِيْمُ

"O Allah! Make us among those who fear Your threat, and hope for Your promise, O the One who fulfills His promise, O Raḥīm [the Most Merciful]."

Alhamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Qāf
Ends here

Sūrah Adh-Dhāriyāt

(The Scatterers)

This Sūrah was revealed in Makkah. It contains 60 verses and 3 sections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 23

وَالذّٰرِيٰتِ ذَرْوًا ﴿١﴾ فَالْحٰمِلٰتِ وِقْرًا ﴿٢﴾ فَالْجٰرِيٰتِ يُسْرًا ﴿٣﴾
فَالْمُقَسِّمٰتِ اَمْرًا ﴿٤﴾ اِنَّمَا تُوْعَدُوْنَ لَصَادِقٌ ﴿٥﴾ وَّاِنَّ الدِّيْنَ لَوَاقِعٌ
﴿٦﴾ وَالسَّمَآءِ ذَاتِ الْحُبُكِ ﴿٧﴾ اِنَّكُمْ لَفِيْ قَوْلٍ مُّخْتَلِفٍ ﴿٨﴾
يُّؤْفَكُ عَنْهُ مَنْ اُفِكَ ﴿٩﴾ قُتِلَ الْخَرّٰصُوْنَ ﴿١٠﴾ الَّذِيْنَ هُمْ فِيْ غَمْرَةٍ
سَاهُوْنَ ﴿١١﴾ يَسْئَلُوْنَ اَيَّانَ يَوْمُ الدِّيْنِ ﴿١٢﴾ يَوْمَ هُمْ عَلَى النَّارِ
يُفْتَنُوْنَ ﴿١٣﴾ ذُوْقُوْا فِتْنَتَكُمْ ؕ هٰذَا الَّذِيْ كُنْتُمْ بِهٖ تَسْتَعْجِلُوْنَ ﴿١٤﴾
اِنَّ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ فِيْ جَنّٰتٍ وَّعُيُوْنٍ ﴿١٥﴾ اٰخِذِيْنَ مَآ اٰتٰهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ ؕ اِنَّهُمْ
كَانُوْا قَبْلَ ذٰلِكَ مُحْسِنِيْنَ ﴿١٦﴾ كَانُوْا قَلِيْلًا مِّنَ الَّيْلِ مَا يَهْجَعُوْنَ
﴿١٧﴾ وَبِالْاَسْحَارِ هُمْ يَسْتَغْفِرُوْنَ ﴿١٨﴾ وَفِيْۤ اَمْوَالِهِمْ حَقٌّ لِّلسَّآئِلِ
وَالْمَحْرُوْمِ ﴿١٩﴾ وَفِي الْاَرْضِ اٰيٰتٌ لِّلْمُوْقِنِيْنَ ﴿٢٠﴾ وَفِيْۤ اَنْفُسِكُمْ ؕ
اَفَلَا تُبْصِرُوْنَ ﴿٢١﴾ وَفِي السَّمَآءِ رِزْقُكُمْ وَمَا تُوْعَدُوْنَ ﴿٢٢﴾ فَوَرَبِّ
السَّمَآءِ وَالْاَرْضِ اِنَّهٗ لَحَقٌّ مِّثْلَ مَآ اَنَّكُمْ تَنْطِقُوْنَ ﴿٢٣﴾

(I swear) by those (winds) that scatter dust, [1] then by those (clouds) that bear loads, [2] then by those (boats) that sail with ease, [3] then by those (angels) who distribute things, [4] whatever you are being promised is surely true, [5] and Recompensing (of deeds) is sure to happen. [6] By the sky, having paths, [7] you are (involved) in a contradictory statement. [8] Turned away from this (Qur'ān) is the one who is turned away (totally from the Truth.) [9] Death upon those who make conjectures (against the true faith), [10] those who are drowned in ignorance, forgetful! [11] They ask, "When shall be the Day of Recompense?" [12] (It will be) the Day when they will be heated on the Fire, [13] (and it will be said to them,) "Taste (the punishment of) your mischief. This is what you have been asking to be brought sooner." [14] The God-fearing (on the other hand) will be in gardens and springs, [15] receiving what their Lord will have given to them. Indeed, prior to this, they were good in their deeds. [16] They used to sleep little in the night, [17] and in the hours before dawn, they used to pray for forgiveness, [18] and in their wealth, there was a right for the one who asks and the one who is deprived. [19]

And in the earth, there are signs for those who (seek truth to) believe, [20] and in your own selves! So, do you not perceive? [21] And in the heavens, there is your sustenance and all that you have been promised. [22] So, by the Lord of the heavens and the earth, it (the Day of Recompense) is a reality, as sure as that you speak. [23]

Affirmation of After-Life

The subject-matter of Sūrah Adh-Dhāriyāt, like its predecessor Sūrah Qāf, is mainly the Hereafter, Resurrection, Reckoning, Judgement, and Allah's reward and punishment. The first few verses contain an oath from Allah that the promise of Resurrection is true, and shall come to pass. In these verses Allah swears an oath by four phenomena, as follows:

وَالذّٰرِيٰتِ ذَرْوًا . فَالْحٰمِلٰتِ وِقْرًا. فَالْجٰرِيٰتِ يُسْرًا. فَالْمُقَسِّمٰتِ اَمْرًا .

(I swear) by those (winds) that scatter dust, then by those (clouds) that bear loads, then by those (boats) that sail with ease, then by those (angels) who distribute things, (51:1-4)

There is a Ḥadīth whose attribution to the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been held by Ibn Kathīr as *ḍa'īf* [weak], but it is also reported as a saying of

Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ and 'Alī ﷺ. It explains these four things as follows: The expression Dhāriyāt [scatterers] refers to the wind that blows up dust; the expression *ḥāmilāt-i-wiqran* literally denotes burden-bearers and contextually refers to the clouds that carry the burden of water or rain; the expression *jāriyāt-i-yusran* refers to the ships that sail smoothly and with ease in the water; and the expression *muqassimāt-i-amran* refers to the angels who distribute to all creatures their sustenance and water, and different kinds of difficulties and comfort as determined by Allah's orders and decrees (Ibn Kathīr, Qurṭubī and Ad-Durr-ul-Manthūr quote these narrations both as *marfū'* and *mawqūf*).

وَالسَّمَآءِ ذَاتِ الْحُبُکِ، اِنَّکُمْ لَفِیْ قَوْلٍ مُّخْتَلِفٍ (By the sky, having paths, you are (involved) in a contradictory statement - 51:7-8) *Ḥubuk* is the plural *ḥabīkah* and primarily denotes thin irregular lines or streaks on fabrics when woven. They resemble tracks and pathways; therefore pathways are also referred to as *ḥubuk* in Arabic. Most interpreters take this to be the meaning in this context. Some scholars say that the 'tracks' refer to pathways used by the angels for entrance and exit. Others say that the tracks or paths of heaven are those orbits of planets and stars that are visible in the sky.

As the streaks of the woven fabric is its beauty, some scholars tend to interpret the verse as 'By the heaven full of beauty, grace, magnificence and perfection'.

Differing Beliefs of the Pagans

اِنَّکُمْ لَفِیْ قَوْلٍ مُّخْتَلِفٍ (you are [involved] in a contradictory statement... 51:8) Verse [7] was an oath and this verse is the statement for which oath is sworn. Apparently, the verse addresses the pagans of Makkah who assigned contradictory attributes to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, calling him at different times a madman, a sorcerer, a poet and other discordant names. According to another possible interpretation, the verse addresses the entire humankind - Muslims as well as non-believers. Thus 'contradictory statement' would mean that a sector believed in the Holy Prophet ﷺ and accepted him; and another sector rejected him and opposed him (Maẓharī).

یُؤْفَکُ عَنْهُ مَنْ اُفِکَ (Turned away from this (Qur'ān) is the one who is turned away.....51:9). The word *'ufik* literally denotes to turn away. The pronoun in *'anhu* has two possibilities: [1] it could be referring to Qur'ān and Rasūl. In this case, the verse would mean that only that person turns

away from the Qur'ān who has been destined to be deprived of their guidance. And [2] the pronoun could be referring to the 'contradictory statement' in which case the meaning would be: he who turns away from the truth because of your discordant thoughts, is the one deprived of truth.

قُتِلَ الْخَرّٰصُوْنَ (Death upon those who make conjectures - 51:10). The expression *kharrāṣūn* is the plural of *kharrāṣ* which means one who estimates or say things by conjecture. In this context the word refers to those stubborn and obstinate infidels who, without any reason or evidence, say discordant things about the Messenger ﷺ. Thus it would not be out of turn to interpret *kharrāṣūn* as *kadhdhābūn*, meaning 'the great liars' as they are condemned, denounced, cursed and imprecated (Mazhari) in this statement. After the mention of infidels, several verses that follow describe the qualities of the righteous people and the pleasant consequences of their righteousness.

Remaining Awake at Night for Voluntary Prayers

كَانُوْا قَلِيْلًا مِّنَ الَّيْلِ مَا يَهْجَعُوْنَ (They used to sleep little in the night,... 51:17). The imperfect verb *yahja'ūn* is derived from the infinitive *hujū'* which means to sleep at night. The verse describes the quality of the righteous believers is that they spend their nights in voluntary worship of Allah. They sleep little at night and remain awake during the greater part of it. Ibn Jarīr preferred this interpretation. Sayyidnā Ḥasan Baṣrī رحمه الله تعالى said: "The righteous perform voluntary night prayers, and do not sleep during the night except a little." Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās, Qatādah ؓ, Mujāhid رحمه الله تعالى and other leading scholars of Tafsīr have taken the particle *mā* in the sense of negation, that is, grammatically they treat it as *mā nāfiyah* or negative particle, meaning they spend a little part of every night awake,and not sleeping. They would worship Allah and perform voluntary prayers every night, even during a small part of the night. From this point of view, it includes all those people who pray to Allah during any part of the night - whether in the beginning, or in the middle, or at the end of it. Therefore, Sayyidnā Anas Ibn Mālik ؓ and 'Abul-'Āliyah said: "They used to pray between Maghrib and 'Ishā'." Imām Abū Ja'far Baqir said that this includes those people who do not sleep before 'Ishā' prayer (Ibn Kathīr).

Ḥasan Baṣrī رحمه الله تعالى reports from Aḥnaf Ibn Qais who used to say: "When I compared my deeds with those of the inmates of Paradise, I

found that they are a people who occupy a very high, lofty and elevated status; and they are a people whose deeds are incomparable and our deeds cannot match theirs, because they sleep little at nights and worship much. When I compared my deeds with those of the inmates of Hell , I found that they give the lie to Allah and His Holy Prophet ﷺ and are sceptical about the Hereafter [from which Allah has protected us]. Therefore, in comparison, our deeds match neither with those of the real inmates of Paradise, nor [praise be to Allah] with those of the inmates of Hell. Thus we learn that from the viewpoint of action, our position is what the Qur'ān describes: خَلَطُوا عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَّاٰخَرَ سَيِّئًا '...(They had mixed a good deed with another that was evil. - 9:102) Thus the best person amongst us is the one who would at least remain within the boundaries of this class of people."

'Abd-ur-raḥmān Ibn Zaid Ibn Aslam ؓ says that a member of the tribe Banū Tamīm said to my father: "O Abū 'Usāmah, we do not find that quality in us which Allah mentions in describing the righteous, that is, كَانُوْا قَلِيْلاً مِّنَ الَّيْلِ مَا يَهْجَعُوْنَ "They used to sleep little in the night," because our position is quite the contrary: قَلِيْلاً مِّنَ الَّيْلِ مَا نَقُوْمُ 'We are very little awake at night to worship Allah'. My father replied:

طوبى لمن رَقد اذا نعس واتقى الله اذا اسْتَيْقَظَ

'Good tidings for him who sleeps away when he feels sleepy and exercises righteousness when he is awake, that is, does not do any work that is contrary to Shari'ah.'"

In other words, acceptance in the sight of Allah is not necessarily restricted to protracted waking hours at night for worship. If a person is impelled to sleep, and does not remain awake for long, but abstains from any sinful activities when awake, he is also worthy of felicitation.

'Abdullāh Ibn Salām ؓ reports from the Holy Prophet ﷺ who said:

يَآ يُّهَا النَّاسُ اَطْعِمُوا الطَّعَامَ وَصِلُوا الْاَرْحَامَ وَافْشُوا السَّلَامَ وَصَلُّوْا بِالَّيْلِ وَالنَّاسُ نِيَامٌ تَدْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ بِسَلَامٍ . (ابن كثير)

"O people, feed people, do good to kith and kin, greet each otherwith *salām*, pray at night while people are asleep, and you will enter Paradise in peace." (Ibn Kathīr)

Merits of Seeking Forgiveness in the hours before dawn

وَبِالْاَسْحَارِهُمْ يَسْتَغْفِرُوْنَ (and in the hours before dawn, they used to pray for

forgiveness..., 51:18) The word *asḥār* is the plural of *saḥar,* and it refers to the latter sixth part of the night. This verse speaks of the significance of seeking forgiveness in the latter part of the night. Another verse [3:17] also speaks of the significance of seeking forgiveness at the last hours of the night thus: وَالْمُسْتَغْفِرِيْنَ بِالْاَسْحَارِ (...and who seek forgiveness in pre-dawn hours. - 3:17) It is confirmed in the Ṣaḥīḥ collections as well as others, from several Companions, that the Messenger of Allah said:

> "Allah, the Most High, descends each night to the lowest heaven when the last third of the night remains. He says: 'Is there anyone who is repenting, so that I may accept his repentance? Is there anyone seeking forgiveness, so that I may forgive him? Is there anyone asking of Me, so that I may grant him his request?'

Here it may be noted that in this verse Allah is describing the pre-dawn prayer of forgiveness of those righteous ones who, according to the preceding verse, are preoccupied for the major part of the night with the worship of Allah and sleep very little. Thus there seems to be no link between their previous description and their description of asking for forgiveness in this verse, because forgiveness is sought when there are sins. People who spent the entire night in worshipping Allah - what does it mean to seek forgiveness of sins? The answer to this question is that these people have the true appreciation of Allah's majesty, dignity and splendour, and they realise that there are shortcomings in their night-long worship. Therefore they seek Allah's forgiveness for failing to perform His worship as due. (Maẓharī)

Special Guidance for Philanthropists

وَفِیْۤ اَمْوَالِهِمْ حَقٌّ لِّلسَّآئِلِ وَالْمَحْرُوْمِ (and in their wealth, there was a right for the one who asks and the one who is deprived...51:19) The word *sā'il* means the poor or needy who begs others, that is, he expresses his needs to people who help him. The word *maḥrūm* also refers to a poor or needy, but who cannot express his needs from a sense of self-respect or a feeling of shame, and thus is deprived of people's help. In this verse another quality of the believers and the righteous is mentioned, that is, their quality of spending in charity in Allah's way. When spending, they do not only give to those who ask for help, but they also make it their responsibility to find out who are needy ones and do not disclose their needs to others.

The purpose of the verse is to show that the believers and the righteous do not only perform bodily worship, such as prayers and remaining awake at night, but they also play a major role in performing pecuniary worship, in that besides helping the people who beg they also look for, and help, those who out of self-respect do not express their needs to anyone. When mentioning this pecuniary worship, the expression used by the Qur'ān is the following, وَفِيٓ اَمْوَالِهِمْ حَقٌّ "and in their wealth, there was a right". It means that when they meet the needs of the poor, they do not deem it a favour shown to them, but they appreciate that the poor have a 'right' in the wealth Allah has blessed them with, and fulfilling one's right is not a favour; it is rather a duty and responsibility that one has to discharge.

Allah's Signs on the Earth and in Mankind

وَفِي الْاَرْضِ اٰيٰتٌ لِّلْمُوْقِنِيْنَ (And in the earth, there are signs for those who [seek truth to] believe,... 51:20). In the preceding verses in the first instance a description of the infidels and rejecters and their evil fate was given. As against those who flounder in the welter of wrong beliefs and evil deeds and deny the possibility of the Day of Judgement, the qualities of the believers and the righteous were subsequently given, and their elevated position was described. Now once again attention is drawn to those who deny the possibility of Judgement Day. They are invited to ponder on the signs of Allah on earth that testify to the might of the Creator and His boundless power, and thus the skeptics are advised to desist from denying the Judgement Day. In this way the statement is connected to the preceding statement in verse [8] "You are involved in contradictory statement."

Tafsīr Maẓharī is of the view that this verse too describes the quality of the believers and the righteous. The word *mūqinīn* (those who have certainty of faith) refers to the same God-fearing people mentioned in an earlier verse. The sense is that these people keep pondering on the divine signs spread on earth and in their own beings, and it increases their belief. In another verse they are described as وَيَتَفَكَّرُوْنَ فِيْ خَلْقِ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ "...and ponder on the creation of the heavens and the earth...". (3:191)

Allah's signs on earth include what Allah has placed on the earth, the various plants, animals, valleys, mountains, deserts, rivers and oceans. He also created mankind with different languages, colours, intentions and abilities, and a variety among them, differences in the power of

understanding and comprehension, their deeds, and ultimately earning happiness or misery. Allah put every organ in their bodies in its rightful place where they most need it to be. Thus Allah says: وَفِيٓ اَنۡفُسِكُمۡ، اَفَلَا تُبۡصِرُوۡنَ (... and in your own selves! So, do you not perceive? ....51:21). Out of the innumerous signs of Allah's power which are present everywhere in the universe, including the heavenly and celestial beings and creatures, only those signs are referred to here which are available on earth, because they are very close to man's experience, and he resides and moves about among them. The present verse now speaks of man himself. Man is required to ponder on his own body, its limbs and organs. Every single part of the body testifies to the boundless Wisdom of Allah, and it will make him realize that his small being represents and encompasses almost all the divine signs that are scattered in the vast universe. That is why man is termed as 'the universe in miniature', because all types of creation are present in his existence. If a man thinks of all phases he has passed through right from his birth till his death, he may perceive the power of Allah Ta'ālā as if he discerns Him clearly.

The Development of the Sperm and Embryo in the Womb

Human microscopic sperm and egg is an amazing phenomenon. It is made up of foodstuff and tenuous particles from various parts of the world. If the sperm establishes itself in the mother's womb, then more material is added to it, and it changes into a red clot. It then changes and becomes a shapeless lump of flesh, like a piece of meat with no form or shape. Then out of this shapeless lump bones are fashioned; then the bones are clothed with flesh; and it starts to take on a form and shape, developing a head, arms, chest, stomach, thighs, legs, feet and all its members. A wonderful brain is placed under its skull in whose complicated layers lie all mental abilities. Thus equipping it, Allah sends an angel to it who breathes the soul into it. After the completion of its creation, it is brought into this world where he develops from infancy to full adulthood to old age. Then he gradually progresses from zero level of knowledge and consciousness to an intelligent, rational and active being. The human forms and shapes are so different that no two faces are identical in millions and billions of people even in a small area. Furthermore, there are differences in their temperaments, dispositions and habits. There is unity in this diversity. All this is the marvel of the perfect power of Allah who has neither partners nor rivals: فَتَبٰرَکَ اللّٰهُ اَحۡسَنُ الۡخٰلِقِيۡنَ "So blessed is Allah, the Best Creator!"(23:14)

Man experiences all this not from outside himself, but within himself, day and night. Only a person who is absolutely blind and senseless will ever deny the existence of Allah. Therefore, at the conclusion of the verse, the Qur'ān poses the rhetorical question: أَفَلَا تُبْصِرُوْنَ "So, do you not perceive?" (21) A person need not be very intelligent to understand the facts of life. If his sight is intact, he can arrive at the right conclusion.

وَفِي السَّمَآءِ رِزْقُكُمْ وَمَا تُوْعَدُوْنَ (And in the heavens, there is your sustenance and all that you have been promised.... 51:22). The plain and simple interpretation of this is that 'in heaven' here means what has been written in the Preserved Tablet *(Al-Lauḥ-ul-Maḥfūẓ)*. It is clear that man's sustenance, what has been promised to him and whatever its consequences will be - are all preserved in the Preserved Tablet. Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd Khudrī ﷺ reports that the Holy Messenger ﷺ said: "Even if someone tries to avoid and run away from his designated sustenance, he will not succeed, because his sustenance will pursue him just as he cannot run away from his death". (Qurṭubī) Some scholars say that 'sustenance' here signifies "rain". In this case 'heaven' will not refer to the body, arch or vault of the sky. It refers to anything that hangs overhead and covers things in its shade, including the celestial atmosphere and clouds from where the rain falls. The expression 'all that you have been promised' refers to Paradise and its delights. Allah, the Pure and Exalted, knows best.

إِنَّهُ لَحَقٌّ مِّثْلَ مَا أَنَّكُمْ تَنْطِقُوْنَ (...it [the Day of Recompense] is a reality, as sure as that you speak....51:23). It means that all of the matters relating to Judgement, Resurrection and Recompense that they have been promised shall certainly occur. Therefore, it is the truth, there being no doubt about it, so they should not doubt its coming, just as they do not doubt that they can speak. There are five physical sensations of perception: sight, hearing, tasting, feeling and smelling. Here 'speaking' has been singled out probably because the faculty of speech is the only one where there can be no trace of deception or illusion, whereas the other sensations, on account of ailments, can get contorted. Differences in hearing and seeing are known. In sickness the sensation of tasting gets reversed or distorted in some other way. Sometimes sweet things taste bitter and bitter things taste sweet. (Qurṭubī)

Verses 24 - 46

هَلْ اَتٰىكَ حَدِيْثُ ضَيْفِ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ الْمُكْرَمِيْنَ ﴿٢٤﴾ اِذْ دَخَلُوْا عَلَيْهِ

فَقَالُوْا سَلٰمًا ؕ قَالَ سَلٰمٌ ۚ قَوْمٌ مُّنْكَرُوْنَ ﴿٢٥﴾ فَرَاغَ اِلٰٓى اَهْلِهٖ فَجَآءَ بِعِجْلٍ سَمِيْنٍ ﴿٢٦﴾ فَقَرَّبَهٗٓ اِلَيْهِمْ قَالَ اَلَا تَاْكُلُوْنَ ﴿٢٧﴾ فَاَوْجَسَ مِنْهُمْ خِيْفَةً ؕ قَالُوْا لَا تَخَفْ ؕ وَبَشَّرُوْهُ بِغُلٰمٍ عَلِيْمٍ ﴿٢٨﴾ فَاَقْبَلَتِ امْرَاَتُهٗ فِيْ صَرَّةٍ فَصَكَّتْ وَجْهَهَا وَقَالَتْ عَجُوْزٌ عَقِيْمٌ ﴿٢٩﴾ قَالُوْا كَذٰلِكِ ۙ قَالَ رَبُّكِ ؕ اِنَّهٗ هُوَالْحَكِيْمُ الْعَلِيْمُ ﴿٣٠﴾ قَالَ فَمَا خَطْبُكُمْ اَيُّهَا الْمُرْسَلُوْنَ ﴿٣١﴾ قَالُوْا اِنَّآ اُرْسِلْنَآ اِلٰى قَوْمٍ مُّجْرِمِيْنَ ﴿٣٢﴾ لِنُرْسِلَ عَلَيْهِمْ حِجَارَةً مِّنْ طِيْنٍ ﴿٣٣﴾ مُّسَوَّمَةً عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ لِلْمُسْرِفِيْنَ ﴿٣٤﴾ فَاَخْرَجْنَا مَنْ كَانَ فِيْهَا مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾ فَمَا وَجَدْنَا فِيْهَا غَيْرَ بَيْتٍ مِّنَ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ ﴿٣٦﴾ وَتَرَكْنَا فِيْهَآ اٰيَةً لِّلَّذِيْنَ يَخَافُوْنَ الْعَذَابَ الْاَلِيْمَ ﴿٣٧﴾ وَفِيْ مُوْسٰٓى اِذْ اَرْسَلْنٰهُ اِلٰى فِرْعَوْنَ بِسُلْطٰنٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿٣٨﴾ فَتَوَلّٰى بِرُكْنِهٖ وَقَالَ سٰحِرٌ اَوْمَجْنُوْنٌ ﴿٣٩﴾ فَاَخَذْنٰهُ وَجُنُوْدَهٗ فَنَبَذْنٰهُمْ فِي الْيَمِّ وَهُوَ مُلِيْمٌ ﴿٤٠﴾ وَفِيْ عَادٍ اِذْ اَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ الرِّيْحَ الْعَقِيْمَ ﴿٤١﴾ مَا تَذَرُ مِنْ شَيْءٍ اَتَتْ عَلَيْهِ اِلَّا جَعَلَتْهُ كَالرَّمِيْمِ ﴿٤٢﴾ وَفِيْ ثَمُوْدَ اِذْ قِيْلَ لَهُمْ تَمَتَّعُوْا حَتّٰى حِيْنٍ ﴿٤٣﴾ فَعَتَوْا عَنْ اَمْرِ رَبِّهِمْ فَاَخَذَتْهُمُ الصّٰعِقَةُ وَهُمْ يَنْظُرُوْنَ ﴿٤٤﴾ فَمَا اسْتَطَاعُوْا مِنْ قِيَامٍ وَّمَا كَانُوْا مُنْتَصِرِيْنَ ﴿٤٥﴾ وَقَوْمَ نُوْحٍ مِّنْ قَبْلُ ؕ اِنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا قَوْمًا فٰسِقِيْنَ ﴿٤٦﴾

Has there come to you the story of the honoured guests of Ibrāhīm? [24] When they entered unto him and said, "We greet you with *salām*." He said, "*salām* on you." (And he said to himself,) "(They are) unknown people." [25] Then he slipped off to his home, and fetched a fattened calf. [26] So he brought it close to them (to eat, but being angels, they refrained.) He said, "Would you not eat?" [27] So he felt some fear in his heart. They said, "Be

not scared." And they gave him the good news of (the birth of) a knowledgeable boy. [28] **So his wife came forward with a clamour and slapped her own face and said, "(How can I have a child when I am) a barren old woman?"** [29] **They said, "This is how your Lord has said. Surely, He is All-Wise, All-Knowing."** [30] **He (Ibrāhīm) said (to the angels), "Then, what is your mission O messengers?"** [31] **They said, "We are sent to a guilty people,** [32] **so that we may send down upon them stones of clay,** [33] **marked, with your Lord, for the transgressors."** [34] **So, We let the believers who were there to come out (from danger),** [35] **but We did not find in it any Muslims, except one house.** [36] **And We left in this (event) a sign (of deterrence) for those who fear the painful punishment.** [37] **And (We left a similar sign) in (the story of) Mūsā, when We sent him to Fir'aun (the Pharoah) with a clear proof.** [38] **So he turned away along with his chiefs and said, " (Mūsā is) a magician or a madman!"** [39] **So We seized him and his army, and cast them into the sea, as he was the one who came up with culpable behaviour.** [40] **And (a similar sign was left) in (the story of) 'Ād, when We sent upon them the wind that was barren (from any benefit);** [41] **it spared nothing it came upon, but rendered it like a stuff smashed by decay.** [42] **And (a similar sign was left) in (the story of) Thamūd, when it was said to them, "Enjoy yourselves for a while."** [43] **Then they rebelled against the command of your Lord; so the thunderbolt (of divine punishment) seized them, while they were looking on.** [44] **Then they were neither able to stand upright, nor could they defend themselves.** [45] **And (We have destroyed) the people of Nūḥ before; indeed they were a sinful people.** [46]

Comforting the Messenger of Allah ﷺ

فَقَالُوْا سَلٰمًا ط قَالَ سَلٰمٌ ("We greet you with *salām*." He said, "Salām on you." 51:25). The angels greeted him with *salāman* in the accusative case, whereas Holy Prophet Ibrāhīm عليه السلام responded to the greeting in the nominative case thus: *salāmun*. The nominative case in Arabic is a nominal sentence which carries the sense of greater strength, continuity and persistence. The Qur'ānic injunction is that 'when you are greeted with a salutation, greet one better than it...', so Holy Prophet Ibrāhīm

عليه السلام, the Friend of Allah chose a better reply, implementing Allah's command: reciprocating the greeting with the term *salāmun* is stronger than the greeting using the term *salāman*.

قَوْمٌ مُّنكَرُوْنَ ("[They are] unknown people."... 51:25). The word *munkar*, the letter [m] carrying *ḍammah* and the letter [k] carrying *fatḥ* means "unknown". As sin or sinful work is unknown in Islām, it is also referred to as *munkar*. The angels came to Holy Prophet Ibrāhīm عليه السلام in the image of handsome young wonderfully graceful men; therefore he could not recognize them. He thought to himself that these are strangers and said to himself 'They are unknown to me'. Or it is possible that he might have mentioned this to the guests in the form of a question and the purpose might have been to find out who they were.

رَاغَ إِلَى أَهْلِهِ (Then he slipped off to his home - 51:26). *Rāgha* is derived from *rawgh* which means to slip out quietly. In other words, Holy Prophet Ibrāhīm عليه السلام discreetly went in the house in haste to arrange for meal for his guests, so that they do not sense it. Otherwise they would have stopped him.

Rules of Entertaining Guests

Ibn Kathīr says that this verse indicates proper manners for entertaining guests: Holy Prophet Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, the host, did not first mention that he would make food for them. He slipped out quietly, and brought the food to his guests quickly, while they were unaware that it was being prepared for them. Rather, he discreetly had it prepared and placed before them. He prepared the best kind of food he had, a young, fat roasted calf. Moreover, he did not place the food far from them and invite them to come close to it to eat. Rather, he placed it close to them 'فَقَرَّبَهُ إِلَيْهِمْ 'brought it close to them' and refrained from ordering them to eat. Instead he invited them politely, kindly and cordially to partake thus أَلَا تَأْكُلُوْنَ 'Would you not eat?' This statement in the form of a question is similar to one of us saying to a guest, 'Would you kindly partake of it - even if you are not hungry, at least for my sake?'

فَأَوْجَسَ مِنْهُمْ خِيفَةً (So he felt some fear in his heart...51:28). When the guests did not eat the food, the Holy Prophet Ibrāhīm عليه السلام conceived fear of them. In those days it was the custom of the noble people to entertain the guests who were expected to accept the hospitality of the host. If they

did not, the host would become apprehensive that there is some danger afoot - probably they are enemies who came to cause some kind of trouble for them. In those days, even the rogues and wrongdoers had the noble quality that they would not cause any harm to anyone whose food they had eaten. Hence refusing to eat was a sign of hostility or danger.

فَأَقْبَلَتِ امْرَأَتُهُ فِي صَرَّةٍ (So his wife came forward with a clamour,...51:29). The word *ṣarrah* means vociferation or clamour or most vehement clamour of crying. *Ṣarīr* is the sound of a pen when it is writing. When Sayyidah Sārah رضی اللہ عنہا heard that the angels were giving good news to her husband Ibrāhīm عليه السلام of the birth of a son, she thought that this news was as good to her as it was to her husband, for the son would be theirs, and therefore, they both were getting some good news. As a result, she involuntarily screamed loudly, she struck herself upon her forehead as women do when confronted with an amazing thing and said: and slapped her own face and said, عَجُوزٌ عَقِيمٌ "A barren old woman?" meaning 'How can I give birth while I am an old woman? And even when I was young I was barren and could not have children.' The angels replied that Allah has power over all things and therefore this would happen even so: "This is how your Lord has said." Thus when Holy Prophet Isḥāq عليه السلام was born, Sayyidah Sārah رضی اللہ عنہا was ninety-nine years old and Holy Prophet Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was one hundred years old. (Qurṭubī)

When, in the course of the conversation, Holy Prophet Ibrāhīm عليه السلام discovered that the guests were angels, he asked them what was their mission and they replied that they had been sent to the people of Lūṭ عليه السلام to destroy them as a punishment for their unspeakable crime. They would be stoned to death, but not with large stones. Small pebbles of baked clay would be sent down upon them: مُسَوَّمَةً عِندَ رَبِّكَ "marked, with your Lord, for the transgressors."... 51:34), that is, pebbles conspicuously marked by Allah. Some scholars say that each stone bore the name of the person with which he was to be destroyed, and if he ran in any particular direction, he was pursued by the same stone. Other verses say that these people were destroyed by Jibra'īl's عليه السلام turning their territory upside down. The two descriptions of the punishment are not mutually contradictory: Probably, the stoning incident took place first, and then the earth was turned upside down.

After the mention of the people of Lūṭ عليه السلام, the people of Mūsā عليه السلام,

Fir'aun and others are taken up briefly. When Mūsā عليه السلام delivered the message of truth to Fir'aun, the latter reacted thus: فَتَوَلّٰى بِرُكۡنِهٖ (So he turned away along with his chiefs,...51:39) The original word used for 'his chiefs' is *rukn* which means power. Here it is used to refer to his army and chiefs of his government. In the story of Lūṭ عليه السلام he has been mentioned saying, اَوۡ اٰوِىۡۤ اِلٰى رُكۡنٍ شَدِيۡدٍ (or that I had the backing of a strong group' The word *rukn* is used there in the same sense. (See Ma'āriful Qur'ān, Vol. 4/p. 658, 661: '...or that I had the backing of some strong group...')

After this, the stories of the people of 'Ād, Thamūd and Nūḥ عليه السلام are told. These stories were narrated many times before.

Verses 47 - 55

وَالسَّمَآءَ بَنَيۡنٰهَا بِاَيۡدٍ وَّاِنَّا لَمُوۡسِعُوۡنَ ﴿٤٧﴾ وَالۡاَرۡضَ فَرَشۡنٰهَا فَنِعۡمَ
الۡمٰهِدُوۡنَ ﴿٤٨﴾ وَمِنۡ كُلِّ شَىۡءٍ خَلَقۡنَا زَوۡجَيۡنِ لَعَلَّكُمۡ تَذَكَّرُوۡنَ
﴿٤٩﴾ فَفِرُّوۡۤا اِلَى اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنِّىۡ لَكُمۡ مِّنۡهُ نَذِيۡرٌ مُّبِيۡنٌ ۚ ﴿٥٠﴾ وَلَا تَجۡعَلُوۡا
مَعَ اللّٰهِ اِلٰهًا اٰخَرَ ؕ اِنِّىۡ لَكُمۡ مِّنۡهُ نَذِيۡرٌ مُّبِيۡنٌ ۚ ﴿٥١﴾ كَذٰلِكَ مَاۤ اَتَى
الَّذِيۡنَ مِنۡ قَبۡلِهِمۡ مِّنۡ رَّسُوۡلٍ اِلَّا قَالُوۡا سَاحِرٌ اَوۡ مَجۡنُوۡنٌ ۚ ﴿٥٢﴾
اَتَوَاصَوۡا بِهٖ ۚ بَلۡ هُمۡ قَوۡمٌ طَاغُوۡنَ ۚ ﴿٥٣﴾ فَتَوَلَّ عَنۡهُمۡ فَمَاۤ اَنۡتَ بِمَلُوۡمٍ
﴿٥٤﴾ وَّذَكِّرۡ فَاِنَّ الذِّكۡرٰى تَنۡفَعُ الۡمُؤۡمِنِيۡنَ ﴿٥٥﴾

And the sky was built by Us with might, and indeed, We are the One who expands. [47] **And the earth was spread by Us as a floor; so excellent Spreader are We.** [48] **And from every thing We have created (a pair of) two kinds, so that you may receive advice.** [49] **So flee to Allah. Indeed I am a plain warner sent by Him for you.** [50] **And do not make up any other god along with Allah. Indeed I am a plain warner sent by Him for you.** [51] **In similar way, no messenger came to those before them, but they said, "(He is) a magician or a madman."** [52] **Have they handed down (this saying) to each other as a legacy? No, but they are a rebellious people.** [53] **So, turn away from them, for you are not blamed.** [54] **And**

keep reminding, because reminding benefits the believers. [55]

Proofs of Allah's Oneness abound in the Creation of the Heavens and Earth

The preceding verses mentioned the reality of the Hereafter and the Judgement Day, and the punishment of those who denied the reality. The present set of verses reaffirm the perfect power of Allah, reminding us about the reality of the Day of Resurrection and allaying the doubt and suspicion of those who deny the reality. It proves the oneness of Allah and reiterates emphatically to believe in the Messenger ﷺ.

بَنَيْنٰهَا بِاَيْدٍ وَّاِنَّا لَمُوْسِعُوْنَ (And the sky was built by Us with might, and indeed, We are the One who expands.... 51:47). The word *aidin*, according to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, means strength or power in this context.

فَفِرُّوْا اِلَى اللّٰهِ (So flee to Allah....51:50). Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه said: "It means: Flee from your sins and take shelter in Allah for repentance." Abū Bakr Warrāq and Junaid Baghdādī رحمهما الله تعالى said that the base self of man and the devil invite him to commit sins, and they deceive him. He needs to take refuge in Allah who will protect him against their evil. (Qurṭubī)

Verses 56 - 60

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْاِنْسَ اِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوْنِ ﴿٥٦﴾ مَآ اُرِيْدُ مِنْهُمْ مِّنْ رِّزْقٍ وَّمَآ اُرِيْدُ اَنْ يُّطْعِمُوْنِ ﴿٥٧﴾ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الرَّزَّاقُ ذُو الْقُوَّةِ الْمَتِيْنُ ﴿٥٨﴾ فَاِنَّ لِلَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا ذَنُوْبًا مِّثْلَ ذَنُوْبِ اَصْحٰبِهِمْ فَلَا يَسْتَعْجِلُوْنِ ﴿٥٩﴾ فَوَيْلٌ لِّلَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْ يَّوْمِهِمُ الَّذِيْ يُوْعَدُوْنَ ﴿٦٠﴾

And I did not create the Jinns and the human beings except that they should worship Me. [56] **I do not want any sustenance from them, nor do I want them to feed Me.** [57] **In fact, Allah is the All-Sustainer, Possessor of power, the Strong.** [58] **So, those who did wrong deserve a share (in the punishment) like the share of their companions. So, they should not ask Me to hasten on.** [59] **Woe, then, to those who disbelieve because of the Day of**

theirs that they are promised (for punishment). [60]

The Purpose of Jinn's and Mankind's creation

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوْنِ (And I did not create the Jinns and the human beings except that they should worship Me."...51:56). This apparently may raise two questions: [1] If Allah has created a creature for a particular task, and it is His will that it should perform that task, rationally it is impossible for it to deviate from that task, because doing anything contrary to the will of Allah is inconceivable. [2] The purpose of *jinn's* and man's creation has been restricted to the worship of Allah whereas there are many other underlying reasons and benefits in their creation.

Scholars have made different approaches to solve these problems. Some say that this verse pertains to the believers only, that is, only believing *jinn* and believing mankind are created for worship and for no other task. It is obvious that the believers are more or less steadfast to worship. This is the view of Ḍaḥḥāk, Sufyān Thawrī and others. According to one version of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ, the word *mu'minīn* does occur in the verse thus: وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوْنِ 'And I have not created the believing *jinn* and mankind except that they should worship Me'. This version supports the view that the verse is only in connection with the believers.

Another answer to the question, given by Moulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thanawī رحمه الله تعالى, is that: Allah has commanded all to worship, but at the same time He has equipped them with free will. Some of them exercised their God-given free will correctly and chose to worship Him, but others used their God-given free will incorrectly and deviated from worshipping Him. This is what Sayyidnā 'Alī ﷺ has said, as quoted by Baghawī. Tafsīr Maẓharī gives a plain and simple explication of this verse: Allah has equipped every *jinn* and man with the innate capacity to worship. Some use the capacity rightly and succeed, while others employ it wrongly in sinning and fulfilling their base emotions, and thus destroy it. The Messenger ﷺ is reported to have said:

كُلُّ مَوْلُوْدٍ يُوْلَدُ عَلَى الْفِطْرَةِ فَاَبَوَاهُ يُهَوِّدَانِهِ اَوْيُمَجِّسَانِهِ

"Every child is born according to the *fitrah* but his parents [cause him to deviate from the unadulterated propensity] and

turn him into a Jew or a Christian or a Magian."

According to the majority of the scholars, *fitrah* here refers to the religion of Islam. Just as this Tradition tells us that every man is born with the natural capacity for Islam and true faith, but his parents adulterate and destroy that capacity, and put him on to the ways of disbelief, in the same way the phrase 'except that they should worship Me' could mean that every member of jinn and mankind has the natural, inborn capacity to worship. Allah, the Pure and Exalted, knows best.

Answer to the second question is that bringing any creation into being for the purpose of worship does not necessarily imply that they are unfit for other functions of life.

مَآ أُرِيْدُ مِنْهُمْ مِّنْ رِّزْقٍ (I do not want any sustenance from them, nor do I want them to feed Me...51:57). It means that by creating *jinn* and mankind, Allah does not stand in need of them, so that they will have to produce sustenance for Him or for themselves or for any of His other creations or that they earn to feed Him. This has been stated according to the general trend of people. The most affluent of men buys a slave and spends on him not for nothing, but he has an underlying purpose: He expects the slaves to work for him, help him in his tasks, fulfil his needs and earn livelihood for his master. Allah is immaculate, pure and above all these things. In creating human beings, He does not profit or benefit anything.

The word ذَنُوب *dhanūb* in verse 59 is with *fath* on the letter [*dh*] which means a large bucket that is kept at the common wells of a locality for the purpose of drawing and filling water. A turn is designated for each of the persons using the large common bucket to draw out water from the well, so that he is conveniently able to fill it in his own private bucket in his turn. Thus the word here is employed in the sense of turn, share or portion. Hence it is translated above as follows: "So, those who did wrong deserve a share (in the punishment) like the share of their companions." The verse purports to warn the disbelievers that the past communities were given an opportunity to work. When each of these communities did not take advantage of the opportunity in their respective time and persisted in their evil course, they were punished and destroyed. Likewise, the present pagans of Makkah are designated a time and opportunity. If

they do not take advantage of the allocated time and opportunity and persist in their paganism, they will be punished in this world; otherwise the punishment of the Hereafter is most certain. They will thus meet with a fate similar to that of the opponents of former Prophets. Like them they will come to a sad end. This verse, in which the word *dhanūban* occurs, indicates that they will receive their due share of the torment, and it will surely come in due time; so they should not ask for it to be hastened on or rushed to them.

Alḥamdulillāh
The Commentary on
Sūrah Adh-Dhāriyāt
Ends here

Sūrah Aṭ-Ṭūr

(The Mount)

Sūrah Aṭ-Ṭūr was revealed in Makkah It has 49 Verses and 2 Sections.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 28

وَالطُّوْرِ ﴿١﴾ وَكِتٰبٍ مَّسْطُوْرٍ ﴿٢﴾ فِىْ رَقٍّ مَّنْشُوْرٍ ﴿٣﴾ وَّالْبَيْتِ
الْمَعْمُوْرِ ﴿٤﴾ وَالسَّقْفِ الْمَرْفُوْعِ ﴿٥﴾ وَالْبَحْرِ الْمَسْجُوْرِ ﴿٦﴾ اِنَّ
عَذَابَ رَبِّكَ لَوَاقِعٌ ﴿٧﴾ مَّالَهٗ مِنْ دَافِعٍ ﴿٨﴾ يَّوْمَ تَمُوْرُ السَّمَآءُ مَوْرًا
﴿٩﴾ وَّتَسِيْرُ الْجِبَالُ سَيْرًا ﴿١٠﴾ فَوَيْلٌ يَّوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُكَذِّبِيْنَ ﴿١١﴾
الَّذِيْنَ هُمْ فِىْ خَوْضٍ يَّلْعَبُوْنَ ﴿١٢﴾ يَوْمَ يُدَعُّوْنَ اِلٰى نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ دَعًّا
﴿١٣﴾ هٰذِهِ النَّارُ الَّتِىْ كُنْتُمْ بِهَا تُكَذِّبُوْنَ ﴿١٤﴾ اَفَسِحْرٌ هٰذَآ اَمْ اَنْتُمْ
لَا تُبْصِرُوْنَ ﴿١٥﴾ اِصْلَوْهَا فَاصْبِرُوْٓا اَوْ لَا تَصْبِرُوْا ۚ سَوَآءٌ عَلَيْكُمْ ؕ
اِنَّمَا تُجْزَوْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١٦﴾ اِنَّ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ فِىْ جَنّٰتٍ وَّنَعِيْمٍ
﴿١٧﴾ فٰكِهِيْنَ بِمَآ اٰتٰهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ ۚ وَوَقٰهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ عَذَابَ الْجَحِيْمِ
﴿١٨﴾ كُلُوْا وَاشْرَبُوْا هَنِيْٓـًٔا بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١٩﴾ مُتَّكِـِٕيْنَ عَلٰى
سُرُرٍ مَّصْفُوْفَةٍ ۚ وَزَوَّجْنٰهُمْ بِحُوْرٍ عِيْنٍ ﴿٢٠﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا
وَاتَّبَعَتْهُمْ ذُرِّيَّتُهُمْ بِاِيْمَانٍ اَلْحَقْنَا بِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ وَمَآ اَلَتْنٰهُمْ مِّنْ

عَمَلِهِمْ مِّنْ شَىْءٍ ۭ كُلُّ امْرِئٍۭ بِمَا كَسَبَ رَهِيْنٌ ﴿٢١﴾ وَاَمْدَدْنٰهُمْ
بِفَاكِهَةٍ وَّلَحْمٍ مِّمَّا يَشْتَهُوْنَ ﴿٢٢﴾ يَتَنَازَعُوْنَ فِيْهَا كَاْسًا لَّا لَغْوٌ
فِيْهَا وَلَا تَاْثِيْمٌ ﴿٢٣﴾ وَيَطُوْفُ عَلَيْهِمْ غِلْمَانٌ لَّهُمْ كَاَنَّهُمْ لُؤْلُؤٌ
مَّكْنُوْنٌ ﴿٢٤﴾ وَاَقْبَلَ بَعْضُهُمْ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ يَّتَسَآءَلُوْنَ ﴿٢٥﴾ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّا
كُنَّا قَبْلُ فِىْٓ اَهْلِنَا مُشْفِقِيْنَ ﴿٢٦﴾ فَمَنَّ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْنَا وَوَقٰنَا عَذَابَ
السَّمُوْمِ ﴿٢٧﴾ اِنَّا كُنَّا مِنْ قَبْلُ نَدْعُوْهُ ۭ اِنَّهٗ هُوَالْبَرُّ الرَّحِيْمُ ﴿٢٨﴾

By the mount of Ṭūr, [1] and by a book, written [2] on an unrolled scroll, [3] and by the Populated House (Al-Bait-ul-Ma'mūr), [4] and by the roof, raised high, [5] and by the sea, filled up with fire, [6] the punishment of your Lord is sure to fall. [7] There is nothing to push it back, [8] the Day when the sky will tremble, a horrible trembling, [9] and the mountains will move about, a terrible movement. [10] So, woe to those who reject (the true faith), [11] who are indulged in vain talk, playing (with truth), [12] the Day they will be pushed to the Fire forcefully, [13] (and it will be said to them,) "This is the Fire you used to deny. [14] Is it then magic, or do you not see? [15] Enter it. Now, whether you act patient or impatient, it is all the same for you; you are merely rewarded for what you used to do." [16] Of course, the God-fearing will be in gardens and bliss, [17] enjoying what their Lord will give to them, and their Lord will save them from the punishment of Hell. [18] (It will be said to them,) "Eat and drink pleasantly because of what you used to do, [19] relaxing on lined up couches". And We will marry them with big-eyed houris. [20] And those who believed and their children followed them in belief, We will join their children with them, and will not curtail (the reward of) any of their deeds at all. Every person will be pledged for what he earned. [21] And We will give them a lot of what they desire from fruits and meat. [22] They will snatch from one another (in a friendly manner) a glass (of wine) in which there is neither an absurd talk, nor something leading to sin. [23] And they will be frequented by the serving boys of their own, (neat and clean) as if they were hidden pearls. [24] And they will advance to one another, asking (about each other). [25] They will say, "Indeed we were

afraid (of Allah's punishment) when we were amidst of our family, [26] **but Allah did favour to us and saved us from the torment of Fire's scorching breath.** [27] **We used to pray to Him before. He is surely the Most-Kind, the Very-Merciful.** [28]

Commentary

وَالطُّوْرِ (By the Mount *Ṭūr*,....52:1) The word Ṭūr in Hebrew means a mountain that has trees [as opposed to *jabal* a mountain that does not have trees {Trn.}]. Here *Ṭūr* stands for mount Sinai which is situated in the land of Madyan where the Holy Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام had the honour of Allah's speaking to him. Some reports narrate that there are four mountains of Paradise in this world, and one of them is *Ṭūr* (Qurṭubī). Swearing an oath by *Ṭūr* carries a special significance and honour of the mount. It also signifies that certain injunctions have been revealed by Allah for people to follow. Compliance with them is obligatory.

وَكِتٰبٍ مَّسْطُوْرٍ فِىْ رَقٍّ مَّنْشُوْرٍ (and by a book, written on an unrolled scroll....52:2-3) The word *raqq* means fine parchment or fine piece of skin, used for the purpose of writing on it. It is, therefore, usually translated as paper. Here it could be referring to man's account-book of deeds or, according to some of the scholars, it stands for the Qur'ān. (Qurṭubī)

Al-Bait-ul-Ma'mūr

وَالْبَيْتِ الْمَعْمُوْرِ (and by the Populated House [Al-Bait-ul-Ma'mūr],...52:4) *Al-Bait-ul-Ma'mūr* is the *Ka'bah* in the heaven meant for the angels' service and is parallel to the *Ka'bah* on earth. According to a Tradition in Ṣaḥīḥain that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said about his Ascension to the seventh heaven: "Then, I was taken to *Al-Bait-ul-Ma'mūr*. It is visited every day by seventy thousand angels who will not come back to visit it again " because every day other new angels take their turn to visit it. (Ibn Kathīr)

Al-Bait-ul-Ma'mūr is the *Ka'bah* of the angels who reside in the seventh heaven. When the Holy Prophet ﷺ reached the seventh heaven on the Night of Ascension, he saw Holy Prophet Ibrāhīm عليه السلام reclining with his back on *Al-Bait-ul-Ma'mūr*. It was Holy Prophet Ibrāhīm عليه السلام who built the *Ka'bah* on earth, and thus the reward is compatible with his action in that Allah Ta'ālā has blessed him with a special connection with *Al-Bait-ul-Ma'mūr* (Ibn Kathīr).

وَالْبَحْرِ الْمَسْجُوْرِ (and by the sea, filled up with fire...52:6) The word *baḥr* means sea and the passive participle *masjūr* is derived from *sajr* which is used in several different senses, one of which is to kindle with fire. Some of the commentators interpret the participle in this sense here, that is, by the sea which will be kindled with fire on the Day of Resurrection, just as Allah said in another verse وَإِذَا الْبِحَارُ سُجِّرَتْ "And when the seas will be kindled with fire". In other words, it will be kindled with fire and become a raging fire surrounding the people in the plain of hashr. This was reported by Sayyidnā Sa'id Ibn Musayyab from Sayyidnā 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭalib ﷺ. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās, Mujāhid, and 'Ubaidullāh Ibn 'Umair ﷺ also report likewise. (Ibn Kathīr)

A Jewish person asked Sayyidnā 'Alī ﷺ 'where is the Hell?'. He replied 'the sea'. The Jew, who was the scholar of the previous scriptures, confirmed this. (Qurṭubī) Sayyidnā Qatādah ﷺ and others interpreted the phrase to mean 'filled sea'. Ibn Jarīr رحمه الله تعالى preferred this interpretation (Ibn Kathīr). ' This is the interpretation adopted by Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thanawī رحمه الله تعالى.

إِنَّ عَذَابَ رَبِّكَ لَوَاقِعٌ مَّا لَهُ مِنْ دَافِعٍ (the punishment of your Lord is sure to fall. There is nothing to push it back,....52:7-8) Verses 1-6 constituted swearing of an oath, and the present verse is *jawab-ul-qasam* or the fact for which the oath is sworn, assuring that the torment of Allah will come to pass, and none will be able to avert it.

The Incident of Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ

Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ one day recited Sūrah Ṭūr. When he came to these verses, he heaved a cool sigh after which he fell ill for about twenty days. During his illness the people would visit him, not knowing what caused his illness. (Ibn Kathīr)

Sayyidnā Jubair Ibn Muṭ'im ﷺ says that before embracing Islam, he once went to the holy city of Madinah to negotiate regarding the prisoners of the battle of Badr. When he arrived there, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was reciting Sūrah Ṭūr in Maghrib *ṣalāh* and his voice could be heard outside the mosque. When he recited verses [7] and [8]: 'The punishment of your Lord is sure to fall. There is nothing to push it back,' He suddenly felt that his heart would burst through fear. He instantly embraced Islam. He felt at the time that he would not be able to move unless the torment would descend on him. (Qurṭubī)

يَوْمَ تَمُورُ السَّمَاءُ مَوْرًا (...the Day when the sky will tremble, a horrible trembling, ...52:9) The lexicographical denotation of the word *mawr* is violent shaking, or movement caused by unrest. This verse describes the violent movement of the heavens on the Day of Resurrection.

The Believing Children of the Righteous will benefit from their relationship with their Believing Parents in Paradise

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَاتَّبَعَتْهُمْ ذُرِّيَّتُهُم بِإِيمَانٍ أَلْحَقْنَا بِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ (And those who believed and their children followed them in belief, We will join their children with them,... 52:21) Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbas ؓ reports from the Holy Prophet ﷺ who said:

> "Verily, Allah elevates the ranks of the believers' children to the rank of their parents, even though the latter do not deserve the same rank as their parents deserve, so that the eyes of the parents are comforted." (Ḥākim, al-Baihaqī in his Sunan, al-Bazzār, Abū Nu'aim in al-Ḥilyah, ibn-Jarīr and ibn-Abī Ḥātim as quoted by Mazharī [Tr.])

It is recorded in Ṭabarānī that Sa'īd Ibn Jubair رحمه الله تعالى reports "Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ said, [and I think he reports this from the Holy Prophet ﷺ] :

> "When a person enters Paradise, he will inquire about his parents, and wife and children [as to where they are]. He will be told that they have not attained your grade. [Therefore, their place is elsewhere in Paradise]. The person will say: 'O Lord! I had worked not only for myself, but for all of them.' Allah will command that they all be kept together with him in the same rank of Paradise." (Ibn Kathīr)

Ḥāfiẓ Ibn-Kathīr, having quoted all these Traditions, says that it is certainly Allah's grace and favour that He grants the children this blessing because of the righteous deeds of their parents. He also grants His favour to parents on account of their children's praying Allah for them. Imām Aḥmad has recorded that Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ؓ has reported the following statement of the Holy Prophet ﷺ .

> "Verily, Allah shall elevate the grade of a righteous servant in Paradise, who will ask: 'O Lord! How did I earn this?' Allah will reply: 'Through your son's invoking Me to forgive you.'" (ibn-Kathīr says that this Tradition has an authentic chain of transmitters, but was not recorded in Ṣaḥīḥain this way. However there is a corroborating narration (*shāhid*) for it in

Muslim on the authority of Abū Hurairah. [Tr.])

وَمَآ اَلَتْنٰهُمْ مِّنْ عَمَلِهِمْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ (...and will not curtail (the reward of) any of their deeds at all...52:21) The past perfect verb *alatna* is the first person plural of *alāta* which literally means to decrease, to reduce or to diminish (Qurṭubī). The verse means that for upgrading the children of the believers who died in the state of true faith, no part of the reward of their parents will be diminished for them to make up for the children's deeds. In fact, this equalization will take place as a result of Allah's grace.

Allah's Fairness to Sinners

كُلُّ امْرِئٍ بِمَا كَسَبَ رَهِيْنٌ (Every person will be pledged for what he earned.) After Allah mentioned His favour of elevating the children to the ranks of their parents, even though the deeds of the former did not qualify them, He affirmed His fairness in that, He does not punish anyone for the sins of others. Therefore, every person will be responsible for his actions. No sins committed by others shall ever be added to one's load, even if committed by his parents or children. (Ibn Kathīr)

Verses 29 - 49

فَذَكِّرْ فَمَآ اَنْتَ بِنِعْمَتِ رَبِّكَ بِكَاهِنٍ وَّلَا مَجْنُوْنٍ ﴿٢٩﴾ اَمْ يَقُوْلُوْنَ
شَاعِرٌ نَّتَرَبَّصُ بِهٖ رَيْبَ الْمَنُوْنِ ﴿٣٠﴾ قُلْ تَرَبَّصُوْا فَاِنِّيْ مَعَكُمْ مِّنَ
الْمُتَرَبِّصِيْنَ ﴿٣١﴾ اَمْ تَاْمُرُهُمْ اَحْلَامُهُمْ بِهٰذَآ اَمْ هُمْ قَوْمٌ طَاغُوْنَ
﴿٣٢﴾ اَمْ يَقُوْلُوْنَ تَقَوَّلَهٗ ۚ بَلْ لَّا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٣٣﴾ فَلْيَاْتُوْا بِحَدِيْثٍ مِّثْلِهٖٓ
اِنْ كَانُوْا صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿٣٤﴾ اَمْ خُلِقُوْا مِنْ غَيْرِ شَيْءٍ اَمْ هُمُ الْخٰلِقُوْنَ
﴿٣٥﴾ اَمْ خَلَقُوا السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ ۚ بَلْ لَّا يُوْقِنُوْنَ ﴿٣٦﴾ اَمْ عِنْدَهُمْ
خَزَآئِنُ رَبِّكَ اَمْ هُمُ الْمُصَيْطِرُوْنَ ﴿٣٧﴾ اَمْ لَهُمْ سُلَّمٌ يَّسْتَمِعُوْنَ فِيْهِ ۚ
فَلْيَاْتِ مُسْتَمِعُهُمْ بِسُلْطٰنٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿٣٨﴾ اَمْ لَهُ الْبَنٰتُ وَلَكُمُ الْبَنُوْنَ
﴿٣٩﴾ اَمْ تَسْـَٔلُهُمْ اَجْرًا فَهُمْ مِّنْ مَّغْرَمٍ مُّثْقَلُوْنَ ﴿٤٠﴾ اَمْ عِنْدَهُمُ
الْغَيْبُ فَهُمْ يَكْتُبُوْنَ ﴿٤١﴾ اَمْ يُرِيْدُوْنَ كَيْدًا ۭ فَالَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا هُمُ

الْمَكِيدُوْنَ ﴿٤٢﴾ اَمْ لَهُمْ اِلٰهٌ غَيْرُ اللّٰهِ ۚ سُبْحٰنَ اللّٰهِ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُوْنَ
﴿٤٣﴾ وَاِنْ يَّرَوْا كِسْفًا مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ سَاقِطًا يَّقُوْلُوْا سَحَابٌ مَّرْكُوْمٌ
﴿٤٤﴾ فَذَرْهُمْ حَتّٰى يُلٰقُوْا يَوْمَهُمُ الَّذِىْ فِيْهِ يُصْعَقُوْنَ ﴿٤٥﴾ يَوْمَ
لَا يُغْنِىْ عَنْهُمْ كَيْدُهُمْ شَيْـًٔا وَّلَا هُمْ يُنْصَرُوْنَ ﴿٤٦﴾ وَاِنَّ لِلَّذِيْنَ
ظَلَمُوْا عَذَابًا دُوْنَ ذٰلِكَ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٤٧﴾ وَاصْبِرْ
لِحُكْمِ رَبِّكَ فَاِنَّكَ بِاَعْيُنِنَا وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ حِيْنَ تَقُوْمُ ﴿٤٨﴾
وَمِنَ الَّيْلِ فَسَبِّحْهُ وَاِدْبَارَ النُّجُوْمِ ﴿٤٩﴾

So keep reminding (them), because by the grace of your Lord, you are neither a soothsayer, nor a madman. [29] **Do they rather say, "He is a poet for whom we are awaiting the accident of death."?** [30] **Say, "Wait! I am waiting with you, too."** [31] **Do their intellects direct them to (say) this, or are they a rebellious people?** [32] **Do they rather say, "He has forged it (the Qur'ān.)"? No, but they do not believe.** [33] **So, let them bring a discourse like this, if they are truthful.** [34] **Is it that they are created by none, or are they themselves the creators?** [35] **Or have they created the heavens and the earth? No, but they are sure of nothing.** [36] **Or do they have the treasures of your Lord, or have they acquired control (over them)?**[1] [37] **Or have they a stairway (to the heavens) by means of which they listen (to the divine decrees)? If so, their listener must bring a clear proof.** [2] [38] **Is it that He has daughters and you have sons?** [39] **Or is it that you (O prophet) ask them for a**

{1} This is an answer to one of the objections frequently raised by the disbelievers of Makkah against the prophethood of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. They used to ask why he was chosen for messengership, and not one of the outstanding chiefs of the tribe. The answer given in this verse is that the selection of prophets is the exclusive prerogative of Allah. He has the treasures of knowledge, and it is He who decides to whom they should be given. The attitude of those who raise objections against His decision is tantamount to claiming that the disposal of these treasures should have been in their hands, and they should have the decisive power to select prophets. (Muhammad Taqi Usmani)

{2} It means that their arguments against Islam having failed on rational grounds, the only possibility was that they had a direct link with Allah whereby they have ensured that their faith was true, but no one could bring any proof of having such a link with Allah. (Muhammad Taqi Usmani)

fee, and therefore they are burdened with a debt? [40] Or have they the knowledge of the Unseen, and they are recording it? [41] **Or do they intend to conspire (against the prophet)? Then the disbelievers themselves shall be the victim of the conspiracy.** [42] **Or do they have a god other than Allah? Pure is Allah from what they associate with Him.** [43] **And even if they see a piece falling down from the sky, they would say, "It is a cumulated cloud."** [44][3] **So, leave them until they face their Day in which they will be struck by a thunderbolt,** [45] **the Day their planning will not avail them in the least, nor will they be helped.** [46] **And for those who did wrong there is another punishment before that,[4] but most of them do not know.** [47] **And (O prophet) be patient about the decision of your Lord, because you are before Our Eyes. And proclaim the purity of your Lord along with His praise when you stand (in Prayer),** [48] **And, in parts of night too, proclaim His purity, and at setting of the stars.** [49]

Commentary

فَإِنَّكَ بِأَعْيُنِنَا (...you are before Our Eyes....) The hostility of the enemies towards, and their opposition to, and rejection of the Holy Prophet ﷺ depressed him. At the conclusion of the chapter, the Qur'ān says 'You are before Our eyes', that is, under Our care and We shall protect you from every evil. Do not be anxious about it. On another occasion, the Qur'ān says, وَاللّٰهُ يَعْصِمُكَ مِنَ النَّاسِ 'And Allah shall protect you from the people'.

Then the verse goes on to say, وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ حِيْنَ تَقُوْمُ (And proclaim the purity of your Lord along with His praise when you stand [in Prayer]... 48]. To proclaim the purity and praise of Allah is the real purpose of life, and also the real cure of every calamity. Thus the Qur'ān enjoins it upon the Holy Prophet ﷺ. 'When you stand' could mean to stand up for the *Ṣalāh* or to arise or get up from sleep or bed. The latter meaning is

{3} This points out to the demand of the pagans of Makkah that they would not believe in the Holy Holy Prophet ﷺ unless he brings some pieces of the sky falling down from above. (See 17:92 and 26:187 in the Qur'ān) The answer given is that even if Allah fulfils this absurd demand, they would still not believe and would seek other excuses like claiming that the mass they are seeing is nothing but a cloud. (Muhammad Taqi Usmani)

{4} It refers to the punishments faced by the disbelievers right in this world, like famines and the deterrent defeat in the battle of Badr. (Muhammad Taqi Usmani).

preferred by Ibn Jarīr. This view is supported by the Tradition recorded in the Musnad of Imām Aḥmad Ibn Hanbal on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Ubadah Ibn Samit ﷺ who reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: ""Whoever gets up at night and recites:

لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ وَحْدَهٗ لَاشَرِيْكَ لَهٗ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ وَلَهُ الْحَمْدُ وَهُوَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْر،
سُبْحَانَ اللّٰهِ وَالْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ وَلَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ وَاللّٰهُ اَكْبَرُ وَلَاحَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ اِلَّا بِاللّٰهِ

'There is no God except Allah. He is One without partners. For Him is the kingdom and all praise is due to Him. He has power over all things. Glory be to Allah and all praise is due to Allah, and there is no God except Allah, and Allah is the Greatest. There is neither might nor power except with Allah.'"

Then, if he intends to pray, and performs prayer after ablution, the prayers will be accepted. (Ibn Kathīr)

Kaffārat-ul-Majlis : A recitation at the end of a meeting that expiates sins

Sayyidnā Mujāhid, Abūl Aḥwaṣ and other leading authorities on Tafsīr have interpreted "when you stand" in this verse to mean that when a person wants to stand from a gathering or a meeting, he should recite: سُبْحَانَكَ اللّٰهُمَّ وَبِحَمْدِكَ 'I proclaim Your Purity, O Allah, along with Your praise'. Sayyidnā 'Aṭā' Ibn Abī Rabāḥ, interpreting this verse, has said:

"When you stand from a gathering, proclaim the purity and praise of Allah. If you have done any good work, your good work will be increased and enhanced. If you had done any bad deed, these words of proclamation will serve as an expiation and atonement".

On the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ, the Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said:

"Whoever sits in a gathering in which he speaks idle excessively, but says before he stands up to depart that gathering, سُبْحَانَكَ اللّٰهُمَّ وَبِحَمْدِكَ اَشْهَدُ اَنْ لَّآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّآ اَنْتَ اَسْتَغْفِرُكَ وَاَتُوْبُ اِلَيْكَ ('I proclaim Your Purity, O Allah, along with Your praise', I testify that there is no God except You, I seek Your forgiveness, I repent to You.') Allah will forgive him what he has said in that gathering ".

وَمِنَ الَّيْلِ فَسَبِّحْهُ (And, in parts of night too, proclaim His purity, and at setting of the stars...52:49) 'Proclaiming the purity of the Lord in parts of

night' includes Maghrib and 'Isha' prayers, as well as the general *tasbīḥāt* (proclamation of the purity of the Lord). The concluding part of this verse; وَإِدْبَارَ النُّجُوْمِ "...and at setting of the stars" refers to the *Fajr* prayer and the *tasbīḥāt* recited at that time. (Ibn Kathīr)

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Aṭ-Ṭūr
Ends here

Sūrah An-Najm

(The Star)

This Sūrah is Makkī. It contains 62 verses and 3 sections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 18

وَالنَّجْمِ اِذَا هَوٰى ﴿۱﴾ مَا ضَلَّ صَاحِبُكُمْ وَمَا غَوٰى ﴿۲﴾ وَمَا يَنْطِقُ
عَنِ الْهَوٰى ﴿۳﴾ اِنْ هُوَ اِلَّا وَحْىٌ يُّوْحٰى ﴿۴﴾ عَلَّمَهٗ شَدِيْدُ الْقُوٰى
﴿۵﴾ ذُوْ مِرَّةٍ فَاسْتَوٰى ﴿۶﴾ وَهُوَ بِالْاُفُقِ الْاَعْلٰى ﴿۷﴾ ثُمَّ دَنٰى
فَتَدَلّٰى ﴿۸﴾ فَكَانَ قَابَ قَوْسَيْنِ اَوْ اَدْنٰى ﴿۹﴾ فَاَوْحٰى اِلٰى عَبْدِهٖ مَا
اَوْحٰى ﴿۱۰﴾ مَا كَذَبَ الْفُؤَادُ مَا رَاٰى ﴿۱۱﴾ اَفَتُمٰرُوْنَهٗ عَلٰى مَا يَرٰى
﴿۱۲﴾ وَلَقَدْ رَاٰهُ نَزْلَةً اُخْرٰى ﴿۱۳﴾ عِنْدَ سِدْرَةِ الْمُنْتَهٰى ﴿۱۴﴾ عِنْدَهَا
جَنَّةُ الْمَاْوٰى ﴿۱۵﴾ اِذْ يَغْشَى السِّدْرَةَ مَا يَغْشٰى ﴿۱۶﴾ مَا زَاغَ الْبَصَرُ
وَمَا طَغٰى ﴿۱۷﴾ لَقَدْ رَاٰى مِنْ اٰيٰتِ رَبِّهِ الْكُبْرٰى ﴿۱۸﴾

By the star when it goes down to set, [1] your companion (the Holy Prophet ﷺ) has neither missed the way, nor did he deviate. [2] And he does not speak out of (his own) desire. [3] It is not but revelation revealed (to him). [4] It is taught to him by one (angel) of strong faculties, [5] one of vigour. So he stood poised, [6] while he was on the upper horizon. [7] Then he drew near, and came down, [8] so as he was at a distance between two bows (joined together), rather even nearer. [9] Thus He (Allah) revealed to His slave what He

revealed. [10] **The heart did not err in what he saw.** [11] **Do you quarrel with him in what he sees?** [12] **And indeed he saw him another time** [13] **by *sidrat-ul-muntaha* (the lote-tree in the upper realm),** [14] **near which there is *Jannat-ul-ma'wa* (the Paradise of Abode),** [15] **when the lote-tree was covered by that which covered it.** [16] **The eye neither went wrong, nor did exceed the limit.** [17] **He has indeed seen a part of the biggest signs of your Lord.** [18]

Characteristics of Sūrah An-Najm

Sūrah An-Najm is the first chapter that the Holy Prophet ﷺ proclaimed in Makkah ('Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه has transmitted it - as in Qurṭubī) and this is the first Sūrah in which a verse of *sajdah* (prostration) is revealed. The Holy Prophet ﷺ recited it and prostrated. A strange thing happened on this occasion: When the Holy Prophet ﷺ finished reciting the Sūrah before a mixed gathering of Muslims and disbelievers, and, along with his followers, he prostrated himself on the ground. The disbelievers too prostrated, except one proud and arrogant man (regarding whose name there is a difference of opinion (Tr.)) who took a handful of soil and, having applied it on his forehead, said, 'this is enough'. 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه [the transmitter of the Tradition] said that he saw this man lying dead in the state of disbelief [*kufr*]. (Bukhārī, Muslim and other compilers of Sunan - Ibn-Kathīr [condensed])

At the outset of this Sūrah, the truth of the Qur'ānic revelation and of the Divine claim is sought to be established. In a very exquisite and forceful style, it is stated that the Holy Prophet ﷺ is a true Messenger of Allah, and there is no room for any doubt about this.

Allah Swears that the Messenger is True

وَالنَّجْمِ إِذَا هَوٰى (By the star when it goes down to set,.... 53:1) The word *najm* means a star, and as a common noun every star is referred to as *najm*, and in that case the plural is *nujum*. There are however occasions when *najm* specifically refers to *thurayyā*. In this case it is used as a proper noun and it signifies "the Pleiades" which is a loose cluster of many (hundred) stars, (six of which are visible to ordinary sight). In this context, some scholars, taking the word as a proper noun, interpret *najm* as *thurayyā*. Farrā' and Ḥasan Baṣrī prefer the first interpretation, and take the word as a common noun (Qurṭubī). This is the interpretation that

is adopted in the translation.

The verb *hawā* means to fall or plunge. When stars fall, they set. In this verse Allah swears an oath to show that the Messenger is true, and his words are a revelation from Allah, in which there is no room for any doubt. In Sūrah Aṣ-Ṣāffāt it has been explained in detail that the Creator, for various wise reasons, swears by whatever He wills among His creation, but His created beings only swear by the Creator. They are not allowed to swear by anything else. Here Allah has sworn an oath by the stars. Probably, the underlying wisdom in this is that as the Arabs are used to determine the course and direction of, and are guided in their travels by the movements of the stars in the sandy waste of Arabia, so they would now be led to the goal and end of their spiritual journey by the star *par excellence,* that is, by the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

مَاضَلَّ صَاحِبُكُمْ وَمَا غَوٰى (your companion [the Holy Prophet ﷺ] has neither missed the way, nor did he deviate. [53:2] Verse [1] was *qasam* or oath and verse [2] is *jawāb-ul-qasam* or the subject for which oath is sworn. The verse means that the path towards which the Holy Prophet ﷺ is calling the people is the perfectly straight path leading to the desired goal of Allah's good pleasure. He is following the right guidance and has not deviated from the path of righteousness.

The Reason for Describing the Holy Prophet ﷺ as 'your companion'

The Qur'ān on this occasion, when referring to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, does not refer to him by his blessed name or refer to him as a Messenger or a Holy Prophet. In fact, it refers to him as *Ṣāḥibukum* or "your companion". In this there seems to be a subtle rebuke to the pagans of Makkah, telling them in effect that the Holy Prophet ﷺ is not an outsider, nor a stranger to them. He was their constant companion. He was born amongst them, he spent his childhood amongst them, and he grew up as a youth amongst them. He has lived among them a whole life-time, and they had always looked upon him as a paragon of honesty, integrity and truthfulness calling him "امین" (The Honest One). But now – after his claim of Prophethood – they dare impute to him such a heinous sin as forging lies against Allah. A man who withheld himself from telling lies about men, how could he possibly forge lies against Allah? How inconsistent is their attitude?

The Holy Prophet's Words are a Revelation from Allah

وَمَا يَنطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوٰى إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْىٌ يُوْحٰى (And he does not speak out of (his own) desire. It is not but revelation revealed [to him]....53:3-4] The verses tell us that it is absolutely impossible for the Messenger ﷺ to forge lies and impute them to Allah. Nothing he utters is of his own wish or desire. He only conveys to the people what he was commanded to convey, in its entirety, without additions or deletions. An analysis of the various Traditions in Bukhārī indicates that there are many categories or types of *waḥy* [inspiration or revelation]. Type one is that in which the wordings and the meaning are both directly from Allah. This is called Qur'ān. Type two is the one in which only the meaning comes from Allah, and the Messenger ﷺ expresses the meaning in his own words. This is called Ḥadīth or Sunnah [Tradition]. The subject of Ḥadīth, which comes from Allah, sometimes lays down injunctions or rules of conduct in clear and express terms, and at other times it establishes a general principle from which the Messenger ﷺ derives laws on the basis of *ijtihād* or anology, and promulgates them. In this there does exist the possibility of mistake of judgement. But it is the characteristic of the Messenger ﷺ and other Prophets عليهم السلام that if they commit any error of judgement, Allah sends down a revelation to amend it, so that they do not unwittingly persist in their mistaken *ijtihād*. Unlike other scholars of *ijtihād*, who can persist in their erroneous conclusions. However, their error is not only forgiven, but they also receive one reward for exerting their utmost effort in comprehending the rule of religion to the fullest extent, as authentic and well-known Traditions bear testimony to this fact.

The foregoing discussion also allays the following doubt: It seems, according to the above verses, that the Messenger ﷺ does not speak of his own desire, but whatever he conveys to the people is a revelation from Allah. It follows from this that he does not exercise independent reasoning in any matter whatsoever, whereas authentic Traditions show otherwise. There are incidents recorded that at the beginning, he promulgated one law, but, later on, revelation descended and the law was changed. This is an indication that the earlier law was not the law of Allah, but it was based on his *ijtihād*. The foregoing paragraph already responded to this objection: The second type of revelation establishes a general principle of law from which the Messenger ﷺ derives laws on the basis of *ijtihād*, and

promulgates them. Because the general principle has descended from Allah, all the laws are said to be the revelation from Allah. Allah knows best!

عَلَّمَهٗ شَدِيْدُ الْقُوٰى (It is taught to him by one [angel] of strong faculties,... 53:5) From here upto the eighteenth verse, لَقَدْ رَاٰى اٰيٰتِ رَبِّهِ الْكُبْرٰى the subject-matter is the revelation from Allah. It has been established that the Qur'ān is a record of verbal revelation vouchsafed to the Holy Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. There is no room for doubt about the fact that it is the very Words of Allah. It was sent down in such a way that no possibility of confusion or error ever existed.

Divergent Interpretation of the Verses of Najm

Regarding these verses of Sūrah Najm, two divergent interpretations of the leading commentators are reported. The summary of one interpretation is that all these verses relate to the incident of Mi'rāj (Ascension of the Holy Prophet ﷺ to the heavens). As a result, words and phrases like شَدِيْدُ الْقُوٰى *shadīd-ul-quwā* (One of strong faculties), *dhū mirrah* (one of vigour) فَاسْتَوٰى *fastawā* (he stood poised), and دَنٰى فَتَدَلّٰى *danā fatadallā* (then he drew near, and came down,) are all qualities and actions of Allah. (It means that Allah Ta'ālā has taught the Holy Prophet ﷺ directly without any media, and that he came close to Him. The Qur'ān further speaks of Vision [*ru'yah*] and Witnessing [*mushāhadah*]. They too have been taken to mean the Vision and Witnessing of Allah. Among the noble Companions, Sayyidnā Anas and Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنهما have adopted this interpretation. In Tafsīr Maẓharī too this interpretation has been given preference. Many noble Companions, *tabi'īn* [Companions' pupils] and other leading commentators, however, take these verses to refer to the event when the Holy Prophet ﷺ saw the noble angel Jibra'īl عليه السلام in his original shape. According to them, شَدِيْدُ الْقُوٰى*shadīd-ul-quwā* (one of strong faculties), and other qualities and acts mentioned in these verses are the qualities of Jibra'īl عليه السلام. There are many factors in support of this interpretation. Historically, Sūrah An-Najm is one of the very early Sūrahs and, according to Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه, this is the first Sūrah the Holy Prophet ﷺ recited in public in the Sacred city of Makkah. Obviously, the incident of Mi'rāj took place much later. This argument, however, may be debatable. But the stronger proof in favor of the second interpretation is that in a tradition recorded in the Musnad of

Aḥmad, the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself interprets these verses that they relate to seeing the noble Jibra'īl عليه السلام

عَنِ الشَّعْبِى عَنْ مَسْرُوْق قَالَ كُنْتُ عِنْدَ عَائِشَةَ رضى الله عنها فَقُلْتُ اَلَيْسَ اللّٰهُ يَقُوْلُ (وَلَقَدْ رَاٰهُ بِالْاُفُقِ الْمُبِيْنِ، وَلَقَدْ رَاٰهُ نَزْلَةً اُخْرٰى) فَقَالَتْ اَنَا اَوَّلُ هٰذِهِ الْاُمَّة سَاَلْتُ رَسُوْلَ اللّٰهِ صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ عَنْهَا فَقَالَ اِنَّمَا ذَاكَ جِبْرَئِيْلُ لَمْ يَرَهٗ فِىْ صُوْرَتِهِ الَّتِىْ خُلِقَ عَلَيْهَا اِلَّا مَرَّتَيْنِ رَاٰهُ مُنْهَبِطًا مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ اِلَى الْاَرْضِ سَادًّا عِظَم خَلْقِهٖ مَابَيْنَ السَّمَآءِ وَ الْاَرْضِ، اَخرجاه فى الصّحيحين من حديث الشعبى. (ابن كثير)

Masrūq reports from Sha'bī رحمه الله تعالى: Masrūq ﷺ said: "One day I was sitting with Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها and I asked her. 'Did not Allah say وَلَقَدْ رَاٰهُ بِالْاُفُقِ الْمُبِين وَلَقَدْ رَاٰهُ نَزْلَةً اُخْرٰى 'And indeed he saw him in the clear horizon' and 'Indeed he saw him another time' she replied: 'I was the first among the Ummah to ask the Holy Prophet ﷺ about it.' He said: 'That was Jibra'īl. He only saw him twice in his actual and real figure. He saw Jibra'īl descend from heaven to earth, and he was so huge that he covered the entire horizon between the sky and the earth." (Ibn-Kathīr)

The wordings of this narration in Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim are almost the same as recorded above. Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Hajar, in the chapter of Tafsīr of Fatḥ-ul-Bārī, has narrated this tradition on the authority of Ibn Marduwaih in the following words:

اَنَا اَوَّلُ مَنْ سَاَلَ رَسُوْلَ اللّٰهِ صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ عَنْ هٰذَا، فَقُلْتُ: يَارَسُوْلَ! اللّٰهِ هَلْ رَاَيْتَ رَبَّكَ؟ فَقَالَ: لَا، اِنَّمَا رَاَيْتُ جِبْرَئِيْلَ مُنْهَبِطاً. (فتح البارى، ص ٤٩٣ ج٨)

Ṣiddīqah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها says: "I asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ about It, and I said, 'Did you see your Lord?' He replied, 'No: I saw Jibra'īl descending.'" (Fatḥ-ul-Bārī vol, 8/p, 493)

Ṣaḥīḥ of Bukhārī records that Shaibani asked Sayyidnā Zirr about the meaning of the verses فَكَانَ قَابَ قَوْسَيْنِ اَوْ اَدْنٰى فَاَوْحٰى اِلٰى عَبْدِهٖ مَآ اَوْحٰى (so as he was at a distance between two bows (joined together), rather even nearer. Thus He [Allah] revealed to His slave what He revealed - 53:9,10) He replied that 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ narrated to us that Muḥammad ﷺ saw Jibra'īl عليه السلام having six hundred wings. Ibn Jarīr, with his own chain of transmitters, reports that Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ, interpreting the verse 11: مَاكَذَبَ الْفُؤَادُ مَا رَاٰى ("The heart did not err in what he saw") says that the Holy Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ saw Jibra'īl عليه السلام clad

in *rafraf* [green] garment filling the entire space between heaven and earth.

Ibn Kathīr's Findings

Ibn Kathīr has quoted all these narrations in his Tafsīr and said that in all the above-quoted verses perception and proximity refer to seeing and being close to Jibra'īl عليه السلام. From among the noble Companions, this is the view of the Mother of the Faithful Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها and of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd, Abū Dharr Ghifārī, Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنهم and others. This is why Ibn Kathīr says:

> Vision and proximity in these verses refer to seeing and being close to Jibra'īl عليه السلام when the Holy Prophet ﷺ had seen him for the first time in his original shape. Then he saw him for the second time on the night of Mi'rāj near *Sidrat-ul-Muntaha* (Lote-tree of the Uppermost Boundary). He saw him the first time at the very beginning of his Prophethood when Jibra'īl عليه السلام descended with the very first installment of revelation, and delivered to him Sūrah Iqra'. After that, there was an interval which caused terrible grief and [spiritual] depression. As a result, time and again, the thought crossed his mind that he should go to the top of the mountain and fall from there and give his life away. Whenever such a situation arose, Jibra'īl عليه السلام called out to him invisibly from the air: 'O Muḥammad! You are Allah's Messenger; you are true; and I am Jibra'īl.' The voice would calm his heart, and recompose it. Whenever such a thought crossed his mind, Jibra'īl عليه السلام would comfort him by his voice. But the comforting and consoling were always invisible. One day Jibra'īl عليه السلام was in an open field at Baṭḥā' in his original shape with six hundred wings which had covered the entire horizon. Then Jibra'īl عليه السلام came close to Allah's Messenger, and delivered the Divine revelation to him. On that occasion, the reality of the greatness of Jibra'īl عليه السلام and his majestic value in the sight of Allah became manifest to Allah's Messenger ﷺ.

In short, Imām Ibn Kathīr himself, on the basis of the statement of the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself and the views of the blessed Companions, preferred this interpretation of the above verses of Sūrah An-Najm, that

is, it refers to seeing Jibra'il عليه السلام and being close to him. This was the Holy Prophet's ﷺ first experience of seeing Jibra'il عليه السلام in this world on the horizon of Makkah. Some of the versions narrate that when the Messenger of Allah ﷺ saw him in his actual and real shape for the first time, he became unconscious. Then Jibra'il عليه السلام came very close to him in the shape of a human being [and he regained consciousness].

The second incident of Holy Prophet's ﷺ seeing Jibra'il عليه السلام is mentioned in Verse 13 and 14 of this Sūrah in the following words: وَلَقَدْ رَآهُ نَزْلَةً أُخْرَىٰ عِندَ سِدْرَةِ الْمُنتَهَىٰ (And indeed he saw him another time [13] by *sidrat-ul-muntaha* (the lote-tree in the upper realm), [14]". This verse mentions that the Holy Prophet ﷺ saw Jibra'il عليه السلام for the second time, and this happened on the Night of Ascension (Mi'rāj). On the basis of reasons stated above, the commentators generally adopt this interpretation. Ibn Kathīr's arguments have just been put forward. Qurṭubī, Abū Ḥayyān, Imām Rāzī and others normally prefer this interpretation. My mentor Maulānā Ashraf Alī has also preferred this interpretation, the summary of which is that the earlier verses of Sūrah An-Najm which makes mention of *ru'yah* (seeing) does not refer to having a Vision of Allah, but of Jibra'il عليه السلام. Nawawī, in his commentary on Muslim, and Ḥāfiẓ in Fatḥ-ul-Bārī also have preferred this interpretation.

ذُو مِرَّةٍ فَاسْتَوَىٰ وَهُوَ بِالْأُفُقِ الْأَعْلَىٰ (one of vigour. So he stood poised, while he was on the upper horizon...53:6-7] The word *mirrah* means 'strength' or 'vigour'. This is another quality of Jibra'il عليه السلام, in that he is no weakling, but strong, mighty in power and firm, so that it may not be suspected that the devil may intercept the angel carrying the Divine revelation and snatch it away from him. Jibra'il عليه السلام is so mighty in power and strength that the devil dare not come anywhere near him. The word اِسْتَوٰى *istawā* means to be or become straight or to level. The verse means that when he saw Jibra'il عليه السلام the first time, the latter was descending from the heaven. Having descended, he sat or settled straight on the highest part of the horizon. *Ufuq* [horizon] is qualified by *a'lā* [the highest part or uppermost] and it signifies that Jibra'il عليه السلام was shown on the uppermost horizon, [so that he could be seen clearly] because the lower part of the horizon which seems to be adjacent to the earth is normally hidden from the sight [as a result he would not have been visible to the Holy Prophet ﷺ].

ثُمَّ دَنَا فَتَدَلّٰى (Then he drew near, and came down,... 53:8). The word *danā* means to draw near and *tadalla* means to hang or to come down. The verse means that Jibra'īl عليه السلام drew near by coming down.

فَكَانَ قَابَ قَوْسَيْنِ اَوْ اَدْنٰى (so as he was at a distance between two bows (joined together), rather even nearer....53:9). The noun *qāb* refers to the distance between the curved handle of a bow and the tight chord that releases arrows. This distance is estimated about the length of one hand. The expression *qāba qawsain* is based on an ancient Arab custom, according to which when two persons pledged themselves to firm friendship, each one of them would turn the wooden part of their bows towards themselves, but they would turn the chord part towards the other. In this way when the chords of their bows were joined together, this used to be regarded as the proclamation of proximity, love and affection at the time of which the distance between the two persons would be two bows' length - approximately the length of two arms or one cubit. The expression *aw adnā* ('rather even nearer') signifies that the relationship of closeness was no ordinary one, it in fact was more intimate than could be conceived. The reason for the mention of such intimacy with Jibra'īl عليه السلام in the above verses is to confirm that the revelation which he delivered is indubitably and truly from Allah, and he heard it with absolute accuracy in every detail: There is no room for any doubt in this. This closeness and intimacy further allays the suspicion that the Holy Prophet ﷺ might have not recognized Jibra'īl عليه السلام and that the devil might interfere.

فَاَوْحٰۤى اِلٰى عَبْدِهٖ مَاۤ اَوْحٰى (Thus He [Allah] revealed to His slave what He revealed... 53:10) The subject pronoun understood in the past perfect verb *awḥā* (He revealed) refers to Allah, and so does the pronoun in *'abdihī* (His slave), and the verse means: Allah revealed to His servant Muḥammad ﷺ whatever He revealed through the medium of Jibra'īl عليه السلام by attaching him so intimately to the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

An Academic Problem and its Solution

Here an apparent problem arises which at best can be described as academic, because it does not relate to a real situation. According to an overwhelming consensus of the *Mufassirīn* and *Muḥaddithīn*, all the pronouns in the above verses refer to Jibra'īl عليه السلام. Likewise, all the pronouns in the sentences from فَاسْتَوٰى *fastawā* to فَكَانَ قَابَ قَوْسَيْنِ اَوْ اَدْنٰى *fa kāna qāba qawsaini aw adnā* refer to him. The forthcoming verses,

according to consensus of the commentators, also speak of Jibra'īl عليه السلام. Therefore, referring the intervening pronouns of *awhā* and *'abdihī* is contrary to the context and causes *intishār-uḍ-ḍamā'ir* (inconsistency of the pronouns).

Our honourable mentor Maulānā Sayyid Muḥammad Anwar Shah Kashmirī رحمه الله تعالى has responded to this problem thus: There is neither any contextual confusion here, nor any pronominal ambiguity. In point of fact, early part of Sūrah An-Najm in verse [4] it was mentioned إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُّوحٰى (It is not but revelation revealed [to him]...4)'. Now in verse [10] أَوْحٰى إِلٰى عَبْدِهٖ مَآ أَوْحٰى (So He [Allah] revealed to His servant whatever He revealed.) the same theme is continued, reinforced and consolidated in this way: Obviously, the One who sends down revelation is Allah Ta'ālā and none else. However, there is a medium through whom the revelation is delivered to the Holy Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. Verse [4] may be treated as a preamble to the theme of revelation. Verses [5-9] describe the strong qualities and other characteristics of the medium of revelation Jibra'īl عليه السلام. Verse [10] is thus the complement or epilogue to the preamble. In this verse there cannot be *intishār-uḍ-ḍamā'ir* because the antecedents of the pronouns in verse 10 cannot possibly be anyone but Allah. Thus the antecedent of these pronouns was determined from the very outset. In the phrase *māawḥā* 'whatever He revealed' is obscure or vague. *Mā* [whatever] is sometimes used to denote honour, surprise, magnificence, grandeur, splendor, opulence or for emphasis. Here it is employed to indicate 'the majestic or glorious status of revelation'.

It is learnt from a Ḥadīth recorded in chapter [1] of the Ṣaḥīḥ of Bukhārī, that the revelation which was sent down at this time was the initial verses of Sūrah Al-Muddaththir [Chapter 74]. Allah knows best!

Thus marked by thematic and structural coherence, the Qur'ān confirms that it is an absolutely true and veritable words of Allah. This may be compared to the Muhaddithins' study of Ḥadīth. In order to verify the authenticity of the Traditions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ they trace in full the chains of authorities from themselves [that is, the last of the authorities] to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. In these verses Allah sets up the chain of authorities: [1] Allah is the *Mūḥī*, that is, He is the Ultimate Source from where the revelation originates; and [2] Jibra'īl عليه السلام is the transmitting authority between Allah and the Messenger of Allah. The

above verses describe Jibra'īl عليه السلام as magnificent in status and mighty in power: This confirms his honesty and integrity as the transmitting authority.

مَا كَذَبَ الْفُؤَادُ مَا رَاٰى (The heart did not err in what he saw....53:11) *Fu'ād* means heart, and the verse means whatever the eyes saw, the heart did not err in its grasping. This erring in the verse is described as *kidhb* [lying]. In other words, the heart did not lie in connection with the perceived objects. It did not err or slip up. In the phrase *mā ra'ā* 'what he saw', the Qur'ān does not specify what it saw. The blessed Companions and their followers, and the leading authorities on Tafsīr hold two divergent views as was discussed in detail earlier: [1] The phrase means it [the Holy Prophet's ﷺ heart] saw Allah (and this is the view of Ibn 'Abbās); and [2] others (like Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah, Ibn Mas'ūd, Abū Hurairah and Abū Dharr Ghifārī رضي الله عنهم) express the view that the Holy Prophet ﷺ saw Jibra'īl عليه السلام in his original shape. The Arabic verb *ra'ā* originally means to see with physical eyes, and after having seen with physical eyes the heart grasps and comprehends. Thus the Holy Prophet ﷺ first saw Jibra'īl عليه السلام with his physical eyes, and then grasped and comprehended him with his heart. Therefore, there is no need to take the word *ru'yah* in the figurative or metaphorical sense of *ru'yah qalbiyah* [to see with the heart] as did Al-Qurṭubī.

One more question remains: In this verse *idrāk* [grasping, comprehending, discerning, cognizing and perceiving] has been attributed to the heart, whereas according to most famous philosophers, it is related to *'aql* [the intellect] or the soul endowed with the faculty of speech. Answer to this question is that many verses of the Qur'ān show that the real centre of *idrāk* is the heart. Therefore, sometimes the word '*qalb* (heart) is used for *'aql* (intellect), as for example the word *qalb* (plural: *qulūb*) in the following verses bear ample testimony to this fact: لِمَنْ كَانَ لَهٗ قَلْبٌ (for him who has a heart - 50:37) and لَهُمْ قُلُوْبٌ لَّا يَفْقَهُوْنَ بِهَا 'they have hearts with which they do not comprehend' - (7:179). *Qalb* (heart) here refers to *'aql* (intellect) because heart is the centre of intellectual activities.

وَلَقَدْ رَاٰهُ نَزْلَةً اُخْرٰى، عِنْدَ سِدْرَةِ الْمُنْتَهٰى (And indeed he saw him another time by *sidrat-ul-muntahā* [the lote-tree in the upper realm]...53:13-14). Here too there are two views regarding the antecedent of the pronoun *hu* (him):

[1] that it refers to seeing Allah; or [2] that it refers to seeing Jibra'īl عليه السلام. The adverb نَزْلَةً أُخْرىٰ *nazlatan 'ukhrā* [another time or at another descent], according to overwhelming majority, this *nuzūl* refers to the second descent of Jibra'īl عليه السلام. The first vision was experienced in this world on the uppermost horizon of Makkah. The second vision was experienced on the seventh heaven near the Lote-Tree of the Uppermost Realm. Obviously, the Holy Prophet ﷺ went up to the seventh heaven on the Night of Mi'rāj. Thus it is possible to determine the approximate time of the second experience, which took place on that occasion. The word *sidrah* literally denotes lote-tree and *muntaha* means the place of *intihā'* [end]. Thus *sidrat-ul-muntahā* is the Lote-Tree on the seventh heaven under the Throne of the Gracious Allah. According to a narration in Muslim, the Tree is on the sixth heaven. Reconciliation is possible between the two apparently conflicting versions in that its root is on the sixth heaven and its branches are spread on the seventh heaven (Qurṭubī). Generally the access of angels ends at this point, and therefore, it is called *muntahā* (the end). Some Traditions inform us that the Divine injunctions first descend from the Divine Throne to the *sidrat-ul-muntahā* which are handed over to the relevant angels. Similarly, angels going up from the earth to the heaven with Books of Deeds etc. convey them to this point. Then there may be some other way for their presentation to Allah Almighty. This subject is reported from 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه as recorded by Imām Aḥmad in his Musnad.

عِندَهَا جَنَّةُ الْمَأْوىٰ (near which there is *Jannat-ul-ma'wā* [the Paradize of Abode],... 53:15) The word *ma'wā* means 'abode' and a place where one resides or reposes comfortably. The *Jannah* (Paradize) is called مَأْوىٰ *ma'wa* because this is man's original abode. This is where 'Ādam and Ḥawwa' عليهما السلام were created; from here they were sent down to the earth; and this is where the people of Paradise will be sent back to reside permanently.

The Present Locale of Paradise and Hell

This verse verifies that Paradise exists at the present moment, as is the belief of the overwhelming majority of the Ummah. They believe that Paradise and Hell have been created and are already in existence. This verse pointed out that the location of Paradise is on the seventh heaven under the Divine Throne. In other words, the seventh heaven is, as though, the floor of Paradise and its roof is the Divine Throne. The

location of Hell is not explicitly stated anywhere in the Qur'ān or Prophetic Traditions. Some scholars of the Qur'ān deduce from the verse [6] of Sūrah Aṭ-Ṭūr وَالْبَحْرِ الْمَسْجُوْرِ (and by the sea, filled up with fire,) that Hell is situated beneath the sea in the deep recesses of the earth which are presently hidden under some heavy covering. On the Day of Resurrection, it will be split asunder, and the sea will be kindled, thus turning the entire ocean into a raging and blazing fire.

Many European excavators and explorers of the current age made attempts to dig into the ground in order to build roads so as to travel around from place to place for many long years. For this task, they invented the largest and most sophisticated machinery. Various groups of scientists and experts exerted efforts in this direction. The most successful group was the one who by means of various types of machinery was able to dig six miles deep into the recesses of the earth, but beyond that they came across immovable rocks which frustrated them. They attempted to excavate in another place and dug for six miles and again came across unshakeable rocks beyond which they could not dig. In this way they experimented in many places and came to the conclusion that beyond the depth of six miles into the recesses of the earth there is a rocky covering on the entire earth at that level where no machinery can penetrate. The earth covers thousands of miles in diameter but despite advances and strides made in sciences they could have access only to the depth of six miles. Beyond that point they acknowledged the existence of impenetrable rocky covering and abandoned their attempts. This scientific experiment to excavate and explore supports the notion that the entire earth is covered with adamantine rocks, and access beyond them is not possible. If any authentic narration proves the location of Hell in this rocky covering, it should not come as a surprise. Allah knows best!

إِذْ يَغْشَى السِّدْرَةَ مَا يَغْشَى (when the lote-tree was covered by that which covered it...53:16) Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim records a Tradition on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ who said: "Golden butterflies were at that time falling on *sidrat-ul-muntahā* from all sides, and it seemed as if it was specially decorated for that occasion in honour of the most revered guest, the Holy Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ."

مَازَاغَ الْبَصَرُ وَمَا طَغَى (The eye neither went wrong, nor did exceed the limit...53:17) The verb *zāgha* is derived from the infinitive *zaigh* which

denotes to become crooked or go astray. *Ṭaghā* is derived from *ṭughyān* which means to transgress or exceed the limit. The two expressions purport to say that in whatever the Holy Prophet ﷺ saw, his eyes did not err or slip up. This verse allays the suspicion that sometimes human sight errs or slips up, especially when some wonderful or unusually marvelous thing is seen. In response to this suspicion the Qur'ān uses two expressions because there are two ways in which human sight can go awry: [1] not looking at the object directly that one was supposed to see, and turning the eye to some other side. *Mā zāgha* (neither went wrong) negates this situation. The Holy Prophet's ﷺ sight did not swerve or turn right or left, and thus did not miss the intended object. He saw exactly what was meant for him to see. [2] looking at the desired object, but at the same time looking at other objects also. In this situation too there is sometimes the fear of losing sight of the main object and causing confusion. *Mā ṭaghā* (nor did it exceed the limit) in the verse is used to remove this doubt that the Holy Prophet ﷺ might have looked at other things in addition to what he was ordained to see.

Scholars who interpret the preceding verses as referring to the vision of Jibra'īl عليه السلام explain this verse to mean that the eye of the Holy Prophet ﷺ did not err in seeing him. This had to be clarified because Jibra'īl عليه السلام is the transmitting medium. If the Holy Prophet ﷺ did not see him clearly and recognize him, the revelation would not be beyond doubt.

Scholars who interpreted the preceding verses as speaking of Allah's Vision interpret this verse too in the same vein that the eyes of the Holy Prophet ﷺ did not err or slip up in the Vision of Allah. This verse further clarifies that the Vision was with the physical eyes, not only with the eyes of the heart.

Another Approach to Interpreting the Preceding Verses: A Useful Analysis

Our venerable mentor Maulānā Sayyid Muḥammad Anwar Shah Kashmirī رحمه الله تعالى was a typical example of the Traditionalists who preceded him. He no doubt was a symbol of Allah and His proof on earth. His grasp of knowledge and Islamic sciences was without a doubt an exact replica of the leading authorities on the sciences of Prophetic Tradition like Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar and Dhahabī. His *Mushkilāt-ul-Qur'ān* is an invaluable treasure trove of the profoundest study of Islamic knowledge

and sciences. The noble Companions and their followers, and subsequently the scholars of Tafsīr and Ḥadīth have interpreted the verses of Sūrah An-Najm differently which gave rise to some scholarly questions. *Mushkilāt-ul-Qur'ān* interprets the verses in such a way that most of the different views have been reconciled.

Then when my another mentor Shaikh-ul-Islam Maulānā Shabbīr Aḥmad 'Uthmānī رحمه الله تعالیٰ wrote his *Fatḥ-ul-Mulhim,* the commentary of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, he came across the description of the Holy Prophet's nocturnal journey of *Isrā'* and Mi'rāj with reference to the verses of Sūrah An-Najm. In view of the complexity of the problem, he requested the venerable Allāmah Anwar Shah رحمه الله تعالیٰ to write the interpretation and made it a part of his *Fatḥ-ul-Mulhim,* and adopted it in his *fawā'id-ul-Qur'ān.* In this way this research is the unanimous outcome of the two of my most distinguished teachers and mentors. Before reading on, it is necessary to keep in mind a few principal points which are recognized by almost all the scholars and leading authorities: [1] the Holy Prophet ﷺ saw Jibra'īl عليه السلام twice in his original shape. The vision on both the occasions is mentioned in this chapter. We were able to determine that the second vision took place on the seventh heaven near *sidrat-ul-muntahā.* Obviously, this happened on the Night of Mi'rāj. In this way, we know the time and locale of the vision. The locale and time of the first vision cannot be determined by these verses, but they can be determined by the following narration of Jābir Ibn 'Abdullāh as recorded in Ṣaḥīḥ of Bukhārī, chapter entitled: 'How the revelation started':

قال وهو يحدث عن فترة الوحی فقال فی حديثه بينا انا امشی اذ سمعت صوتا من السمآء فرفعت بصری فاذا الملك الذی جاء نی بحراء جالس علی كرسی بين السمآء و الارض فرعبت منه فرجعت فقلت زملونی فانزل الله تعالیٰ يٰٓاَيُّهَا الْمُدَّثِّرُ قُمْ فَاَنْذِرْ (الیٰ قوله) وَالرُّجْزَ فَاهْجُرْ فحمی الوحی وتتابع.

Jābir Ibn 'Abdullāh رضي الله عنه said, speaking of the temporary break in revelation, [the Holy Prophet] said in his narrative: "Whilst I was walking along, I heard a voice from heaven and I raised up my eyes, and lo! The Angel that had appeared to me in [the cave of] *Hira'* was sitting on a chair [suspended] between heaven and earth, and I was struck with awe on account of him and I returned and said, 'Wrap me up, Wrap me up,' then Allah sent down [74: 1-5 يٰٓاَيُّهَا الْمُدَّثِّرُ، قُمْ فَاَنْذِرْ، وَرَبَّكَ فَكَبِّرْ. وَثِيَابَكَ فَطَهِّرْ وَالرُّجْزَ فَاهْجُرْ] 'O you, enveloped in a mantle, stand up and warn, and pronounce

the greatness of your Lord, and purify your clothes, and keep away from filth, "Then revelation became copious and came in succession."

This narration indicates that the first occasion on which the Holy Prophet ﷺ saw Jibra'īl عليه السلام in his original shape was in the course of temporary break in revelation in Makkah when he was walking along in the city of Makkah. This confirms that the first incident took place before Mi'rāj on this earth in Makkah, and the second incident took place on the seventh heaven on the Night of Mi'rāj.

Another point on which all concur is that the initial verses of Sūrah An-Najm, at least from verse [13] to verse [18], all relate to the incident of Mi'rāj.

In view of the foregoing points, the venerable mentor, Maulana Sayyid Muḥammad Anwar Shah Kashmiri رحمه الله تعالى has interpreted the initial verses of Sūrah An-Najm in the following way:

The Qur'ān, according to its normal style, has mentioned two incidents in the initial verses of Sūrah An-Najm. One incident relates to seeing Jibra'īl عليه السلام in his original shape in Makkah when the Holy Prophet ﷺ was going somewhere when there was a temporary break in revelation. This incident took place before the incident of Isra' and Mi'rāj. The second incident relates to the night of Mi'rāj. Here it is mentioned that he saw Jibra'īl عليه السلام in his original shape together with some of the other greatest, wonderful, marvelous and glorious signs of Allah, and the possibility cannot be ruled out that these signs included the Vision of Allah Ta'ala Himself.

The main theme of the initial verses of Sūrah An-Najm is to confirm the prophethood of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, and to remove doubts about the authenticity of his revelation. Thus swearing an oath by the stars, Allah says that there are neither any voluntary nor involuntary errors in his instructions to the Ummah, nor does he say anything out of his own selfish desires. He only transmits to the people what he was commanded to convey, in its totality without additions or omissions. Jibra'īl عليه السلام was the transmitting agent, therefore his special characteristics and high position have been described in several verses. Another reason for giving a greater account of this Angel is probably

because the pagans of Makkah were not aware of this Angel, though they were aware of the Angels Isrāfīl and Mīka'īl. At any event, having described the imposing and majestic qualities of Jibra'īl عليه السلام in full, attention is drawn to the main theme of revelation. فَاَوْحٰى اِلٰى عَبْدِهٖ مَا اَوْحٰى 'So He [Allah] revealed to His servant whatever He revealed.'(verse 10). Up to this point there are ten verses, in the course of verifying the authenticity of revelation and messenger-ship, Jibra'īl's عليه السلام qualities have been portrayed. If we analyze Jibra'īl's عليه السلام qualities, it will be seen that they apply to the Angel directly and candidly. If we say that the qualities apply to Allah - as did some of the commentators - they can hardly apply to Him without a labored interpretation. For example, phrases like شَدِيْدُ الْقُوٰى 'one of strong faculties', ذُوْ مِرَّةٍ 'one of vigour', ثُمَّ دَنٰى فَتَدَلّٰى 'Then he drew near, and came down, فَكَانَ قَابَ قَوْسَيْنِ اَوْ اَدْنٰى so as he was at a distance between two bows, rather even nearer.' can, though,be applied to Allah, but not without labored interpretation. However, they do apply appropriately to Jibra'īl عليه السلام without any far-fetched interpretation. Therefore, with regard to the initial verses - in which there is reference to 'vision', 'closeness' and 'proximity'- it seems more appropriate to refer them to the 'vision' of Jibra'īl عليه السلام.

However, from verse [11] مَا كَذَبَ الْفُؤَادُ مَا رَاٰى 'The heart did not err in what he saw' to verse [18] لَقَدْ رَاٰى مِنْ اٰيٰتِ رَبِّهِ الْكُبْرٰى 'He has indeed seen a part of the biggest signs of your Lord.' describes the incidents of Isrā' and Mi'rāj. Though in this passage too the vision of Jibra'īl عليه السلام is mentioned, yet it is a part of' many great signs' The possibility cannot be ruled out that the phrase'greatest Signs' includes the '*ru'yat*' (vision) of Allah' which is supported by authentic Traditions and the views of noble Companions and their followers, which cannot be overlooked or ignored. Verse [11] مَا كَذَبَ الْفُؤَادُ مَا رَاٰى "The heart did not err in what he saw", means that what the Holy Prophet ﷺ saw with his eyes his blessed heart confirmed that he saw correctly, with no mistakes. '*Mā kadhaba*' describes this situation and the particle '*Ma*' [whatever]is general, referring to the vision of Jibra'īl عليه السلام and whatever else he saw on the Night of Mi'rāj and above all the Vision of Allah Himself. This is supported by verse [12] اَفَتُمٰرُوْنَهٗ عَلٰى مَا يَرٰى 'Do you quarrel with him in what he sees?' This verse addresses pagans of Makkah that they should not dispute or be sceptical about what he saw [in the past]or will see in the future. Everything he

saw was the veritable truth and whatever he will see in the future will be a veritable reality. This verse did not say قَدْ راٰى [...*qad ra'ā*] '...he saw' [using the past perfect tense] but rather عَلٰى مَايَرٰى [*'alā mā yara*] which may be translated as '...will see' [using the future tense] which indicates that he will see him on the Night of Mi'rāj. Thus verse [13] وَلَقَدْ رَاٰهُ نَزْلَةً اُخْرٰى 'And indeed he saw him another time' is explicit on the point. This verse too has two possible interpretations: [1] he saw Jibra'īl عليه السلام; and [2] he saw Allah. That he saw Jibra'īl عليه السلام is perfectly obvious to any scholar. But there may be a hint to the fact that he saw Allah also, because seeing requires proximity and closeness to Allah, and the verse 14 عِنْدَ سِدْرَةِ الْمُنْتَهٰى 'by *sidrat-ul-muntahā* (the lote-tree in the upper realm) indicates this closeness, meaning when the Holy Prophet ﷺ was near *sidrat-ul-muntahā* and had reached a high stage of nearness to Allah, he saw Him. The Tradition cited below supports the notion of the Vision of Allah:

> وَاَتَيْتُ سِدْرَةَ الْمُنْتَهٰى فَغَشِيَتْنِىْ ضَبابَة خَرَرْتُ لَهَا سَاجِدًا وَهٰذِهِ الضَّبَابَةُ هِىَ الظُّلَلُ مِنَ الْغَمَامِ الَّتِىْ يَاْتِىْ فِيْهَا اللّٰهُ وَيَتَجلّٰى.
>
> 'When I reached *sidrat-ul-muntahā*, I was overshadowed by something like the cloud and I fell prostrate for it. On the Day of Resurrection, there will be something like clouds overshadowing in which His Majestic Descent will manifest.'

Likewise, verse [53:17] مَازَاغَ الْبَصَرُ وَمَا طَغٰى (The eye neither went wrong, nor did exceed the limit.) includes both possibilities - vision of Jibra'īl عليه السلام and Vision of Allah - and it further proves that the this vision took place in the state of wakefulness with his physical eyes [that is, it was not a dream experience].

In sum, verses that relate to the Night of Mi'rāj and contain words pertaining to 'seeing' carry the equal possibility of seeing Jibra'īl عليه السلام and seeing Allah Ta'ālā Himself. Other scholars too have interpreted them as the Vision of Allah. The Qur'ānic words have possibility to be interpreted in that way.

The Question of the Beatific Vision of the Creator

All Companions, their immediate followers and overwhelming majority of the Ummah concur that the inmates of Paradise and the believers in general will see Allah. Authentic Traditions bear ample testimony to this

fact and verity. They indicate that the Vision and Witnessing of Allah is not impossible. However, human sight cannot bear to see Him in this mundane world, because the capacity of the eyes is not powerful enough. Thus nobody can see Allah in this world. Regarding the Hereafter, the Qur'ān says

فَكَشَفْنَا عَنْكَ غِطَآءَكَ فَبَصَرُكَ الْيَوْمَ حَدِيْدٌ

"You were heedless of this. Now We have removed your veil from you; so your sight today is sharp." [50:22]

Venerable Imām Mālik رحمه الله تعالى says that it is not possible for any human being to see Allah in this world, because his sight is perishable, and Allah is Eternal. In the Hereafter, man will be given non-perishable sight, as a result nothing will prevent it from the seeing Allah. Venerable Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ says something similarly. A narration recorded in Muslim in the following words makes the point explicit:

وَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّكُمْ لَنْ تَرَوْا رَبَّكُمْ حَتّٰى تَمُوْتُوْا

"And know that you shall never see your Lord, until you die" (Fatḥ-ul-Bārī: vol 8/p. 493)

This indicates the possibility that if the Holy Prophet ﷺ is equipped with extraordinarily powerful faculty of sight, he should be able to see Allah in this world too on a special occasion. But on the Night of Ascension he was called in the most distinguishable manner from this world to see and witness the heavens, Paradise and Hell, and other great Signs of Allah and manifestation of His power. On this occasion, the Vision of Allah is an exception to the general rule, because he is out of the mundane world. The possibility of the Vision of Allah has thus been confirmed and verified.

So far we have proved that the possibility does exist, but the question is whether it really occurred. In this matter, the Traditions vary, and the Qur'ānic verses are interpretable in two possible ways. Therefore, this question was always debatable among the Companions, their followers and leading authorities on religion. Ibn-Kathīr says that under the interpretation of these verses Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه verifies that the Holy Prophet ﷺ saw Allah and a group of righteous predecessors have followed him. Other groups of Companions and their followers have

differed from this viewpoint. He further adduced the evidences of both the groups.

Likewise, Ḥāfiẓ رحمه الله تعالىٰ in Fatḥ-ul-Bārī [vol 8/p.494] under the Tafsīr of Sūrah An-Najm has cited the differences of the Companions and their followers and then quoted some such statements which reconcile the divergent views. He further says that Qurṭubī in his work *mufhim* prefers to observe silence in the matter and not to decide either way, because this question does not concern our practical life so that we have to choose a particular direction. The question concerns our belief system, in which case incontestable evidence is required. In any matter which cannot be proved incontestably, the rule is to observe silence. This author believes that this is the most sound and circumspect approach to the issue. Therefore, the arguments of the two groups have not been cited. Allah, the Pure and the Exalted, knows best!

Verses 19 - 28

اَفَرَءَيْتُمُ اللّٰتَ وَالْعُزّٰى ﴿١٩﴾ وَمَنٰوةَ الثَّالِثَةَ الْاُخْرٰى ﴿٢٠﴾ اَلَكُمُ
الذَّكَرُ وَلَهُ الْاُنْثٰى ﴿٢١﴾ تِلْكَ اِذًا قِسْمَةٌ ضِيْزٰى ﴿٢٢﴾ اِنْ هِىَ اِلَّآ
اَسْمَآءٌ سَمَّيْتُمُوْهَآ اَنْتُمْ وَاٰبَآؤُكُمْ مَّآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ بِهَا مِنْ سُلْطٰنٍ ؕ اِنْ
يَّتَّبِعُوْنَ اِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَمَا تَهْوَى الْاَنْفُسُ ۚ وَلَقَدْ جَآءَهُمْ مِّنْ رَّبِّهِمُ
الْهُدٰى ﴿٢٣﴾ اَمْ لِلْاِنْسَانِ مَا تَمَنّٰى ﴿٢٤﴾ فَلِلّٰهِ الْاٰخِرَةُ وَالْاُوْلٰى
﴿٢٥﴾ وَكَمْ مِّنْ مَّلَكٍ فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ لَا تُغْنِىْ شَفَاعَتُهُمْ شَيْـًٔا اِلَّا مِنْ
بَعْدِ اَنْ يَّاْذَنَ اللّٰهُ لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَيَرْضٰى ﴿٢٦﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ
بِالْاٰخِرَةِ لَيُسَمُّوْنَ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةَ تَسْمِيَةَ الْاُنْثٰى ﴿٢٧﴾ وَمَا لَهُمْ بِهٖ مِنْ
عِلْمٍ ؕ اِنْ يَّتَّبِعُوْنَ اِلَّا الظَّنَّ ۚ وَاِنَّ الظَّنَّ لَا يُغْنِىْ مِنَ الْحَقِّ شَيْـًٔا ﴿٢٨﴾

Have you ever considered about the (idols of) *Lāt* and *'Uzzā*, [19] **and about the other, the third, the *Manāt*,?** [20] **Is it that you have males and He (Allah) has females?** [21] **If so, it is a totally unjust division.** [22] **These are nothing but names you and your fathers have**

invented; Allah has sent down no authority attached to them. They are following nothing but conjecture and what their own souls desire, while guidance from their Lord has surely reached them. [23] **Is it that man gets whatever he wishes?** [24] **(No,) because to Allah alone belongs the (good of) the Hereafter and the former life (of this world).** [25] **And how many angels there are in the heavens whose intercession cannot benefit (any one) at all, but after Allah allows (it) for whomsoever He wills and pleases.** [26] **Those who do not believe in the Hereafter name the angels after the names of the females.** [27] **And they do not have knowledge about it. They follow nothing but conjecture, and conjecture is of no use in (the matter of) Truth.** [28]

Refuting Idolatry

The preceding verses declared the Glory of Allah, His Majesty and Dignity. They further confirmed and verified in the fullest details the Prophet-hood and messenger-ship of Muḥammad ﷺ, and the preservation of his revelation. The present two verses imply a subtle rebuke to the Makkan pagans. The purport of the verses is to say to them that without any proof, instead of adoring such a Mighty and Powerful Creator and Lord, they stoop so low as to worship gods made of wood and stone. They allege that the angels are the daughters of God. According to other narratives, they also alleged that these idols are the daughters of God.

Pagans of Arabia had countless idols that they worshipped. However, there were three of them that were most popular, and they were worshipped by strong and powerful tribes of Arabia. The three idols were Lāt, 'Uzzā and Manāt. Lāt was the idol of the tribe of Thaqīf or of the residents of Ṭā'if , 'Uzzā was the idol of Quraish, and Manāt was the idol of Banū Hilāl. They built houses for their idols to resemble the Ka'bah. After the conquest of Makkah, the Holy Prophet ﷺ demolished them. (Qurṭubī)

قِسۡمَةٌ ضِيزٰى (If so, it is a totally unjust division.... 53:22)" Ḍīzā means to act or behave unjustly or to defraud one of one's right or due. Therefore, Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه interprets the phrase as unjust or unfair division.

Various Types of Ẓann

اِنۡ يَّتَّبِعُوۡنَ اِلَّا الظَّنَّ ۚ وَاِنَّ الظَّنَّ لَا يُغۡنِىۡ مِنَ الۡحَقِّ شَيۡـًٔا (and conjecture is of no use in [the

matter of] Truth.... 53:28) The Arabic word *Ẓann* is used in several different senses, and one of them is baseless thoughts. This is the sense in which it is employed in the verse, because baseless thoughts were the cause of idolatry. And the verse purports to remove the cause. *Ẓann* is also used as the antonym of *yaqīn*. *Yaqīn* refers to assured or definitive knowledge about something that really exists, not the figment of someone's imagination. In this case, there is no room for any doubt or suspicion, as for instance knowledge gained from the Qur'ān and Prophetic Traditions uninterruptedly reported by an indefinite number of people or by such a large number that it is impossible that they should agree upon falsehood. As opposed to this certain knowledge, *ẓann* is sometime used for the knowledge that is based on a proof, and not on baseless thoughts, but the proof is not so certain as may rule out other possibilities, as for example, injunctions based on general narratives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The first type of injunctions is referred to as *qaṭ'iyyāt* or *yaqīniyyāt* and the second type is referred to as *ẓanniyyāt*. This type of *Ẓann* is recognized by Sharī'ah. There is ample evidence in Qur'ān and Sunnah of its recognition. The entire Ummah concurs that it is obligatory to act upon it. The above verse when denouncing *ẓann*, refers to the first type of *ẓann* which connotes baseless thoughts. Thus there is no contradiction.

Verses 29 - 32

فَاَعْرِضْ عَنْ مَّنْ تَوَلّٰى ۙ عَنْ ذِكْرِنَا وَلَمْ يُرِدْ اِلَّا الْحَيٰوةَ الدُّنْيَا ﴿٢٩﴾
ذٰلِكَ مَبْلَغُهُمْ مِّنَ الْعِلْمِ ؕ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ اَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيْلِهٖ
وَهُوَ اَعْلَمُ بِمَنِ اهْتَدٰى ﴿٣٠﴾ وَلِلّٰهِ مَا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِى الْاَرْضِ
ۙ لِيَجْزِىَ الَّذِيْنَ اَسَآءُوْا بِمَا عَمِلُوْا وَيَجْزِىَ الَّذِيْنَ اَحْسَنُوْا
بِالْحُسْنٰى ﴿٣١﴾ اَلَّذِيْنَ يَجْتَنِبُوْنَ كَبٰٓئِرَ الْاِثْمِ وَالْفَوَاحِشَ اِلَّا اللَّمَمَ ؕ
اِنَّ رَبَّكَ وَاسِعُ الْمَغْفِرَةِ ؕ هُوَ اَعْلَمُ بِكُمْ اِذْ اَنْشَاَكُمْ مِّنَ الْاَرْضِ وَاِذْ
اَنْتُمْ اَجِنَّةٌ فِىْ بُطُوْنِ اُمَّهٰتِكُمْ ۚ فَلَا تُزَكُّوْا اَنْفُسَكُمْ ؕ هُوَ اَعْلَمُ بِمَنِ
اتَّقٰى ﴿٣٢﴾

So, turn away from him who turns away from Our advice, and seeks nothing but (pleasure of) the worldly life. [29] **That is the limit of their excess in knowledge. Indeed only your Lord knows well about the one who has gone astray from his way, and He knows well about the one who has adopted the right path.** [30] **And to Allah belongs whatever there is in the heavens and whatever there is in the earth, so that He gives punishment to evil-doers for what they did and rewards those who did good for their good deed,** [31] **those who abstain from the major sins and from shameful acts, except minor involvements. Indeed your Lord is One of extensive forgiveness. He knows you more than anyone else (from a time) when He created you from the earth and when you were embryos in the wombs of your mothers. So, do not claim purity (from faults) for your selves. He knows best who is God-fearing.** [32]

Necessity of turning away from the Misguided People

فَاَعۡرِضۡ عَنۡ مَّنۡ تَوَلّٰی ۙ عَنۡ ذِکۡرِنَا وَلَمۡ یُرِدۡ اِلَّا الۡحَیٰوۃَ الدُّنۡیَا. ذٰلِکَ مَبۡلَغُهُمۡ مِّنَ الۡعِلۡمِ (So, turn away from him who turns away from Our advice, and seeks nothing but (pleasure of) the worldly life.... 53:29-30)

A Special Warning

The Qur'ān here describes the condition of those unbelievers who denied the Hereafter and the Day of Judgement. Regretfully, nowadays the Muslims have characterized themselves by the same condition as a result of Western education and material needs and desires. All our attempts to make progress in the fields of various branches of knowledge, sciences and arts pivot on, or revolve around, economics. They do not think even by mistake about *ma'ādiyyāt* (matters relating to the Life Hereinafter). We believe in the Holy Prophet ﷺ and hope for his intercession. But Allah commands the Holy Prophet ﷺ to withdraw from the people of misguidance and shun them. We seek refuge in Allah from such misguidance!

Allah Forgives the Small Faults, *Al-Lamam*

اَلَّذِیۡنَ یَجۡتَنِبُوۡنَ کَبٰٓئِرَ الۡاِثۡمِ وَالۡفَوَاحِشَ اِلَّا اللَّمَمَ (those who abstain from the major sins and from shameful acts, except minor involvements....53:32) The preceding verse praises those who follow the right guidance of Allah and do good deeds. In the present verse, it is stated that the good-doers are those who avoid major sins and, especially immoral sins and shameful

deeds. There is one exception made by the expression *lamam* [which will be elaborated upon later].It means that they sometimes do commit minor sins [*lamam*] but that does not exclude them from the category of being *muḥsinīn* [good-doers].

The Companions and their followers interpret the word لَمَم *lamam* in two different ways:

[1] Some commentators are of the view that it refers to small faults and minor errors which in Sūrah An-Nisā' has been described as *sayyi'at:* إِنْ تَجْتَنِبُوْا كَبَآئِرَ مَا تُنْهَوْنَ عَنْهُ نُكَفِّرْ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّاٰتِكُمْ "(f you abstain from the major (sins) out of what you have been forbidden from We shall write off your minor sins - 4:31". Ibn-Kathīr has reported this from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās and Abū Hurairah ﷺ;

[2] Some other scholars have held that *lamam* means, a sin that a person commits incidentally and then repents. After repentance, he never repeats it. Ibn Kathīr has reported a narration from Ibn Jarīr, first through Sayyidnā Mujāhid, and again through Sayyidnā 'Aṭā', from Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ, and through Hasan Basri from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ. The gist of that narration too is that even if a person were to commit a major sin incidentally and repents, he will not be excluded from the ranks of the God-fearing people. Verse [135] of Sūrah 'Al-'Imrān:

وَالَّذِيْنَ اِذَا فَعَلُوْا فَاحِشَةً اَوْظَلَمُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ ذَكَرُوا اللّٰهَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا لِذُنُوْبِهِمْ وَمَنْ يَّغْفِرُ الذُّنُوْبَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ وَلَمْ يُصِرُّوْا عَلٰى مَافَعَلُوْا وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُوْنَ.

And those who, when they happen to commit a shameful act or wrong themselves, remember Allah, then, seek forgiveness for their sins - and who is there to forgive sins except Allah? - and do not persist in what they have done, knowingly. [3:135]

It should be noted that overwhelming majority of scholars concur that if a person persists in a minor sin and continues to do it in a determined way so that it becomes a habit, it will no longer be a minor sin, but will turn into a major sin. Therefore, Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thanawī has explained the word *lamam* as those small sins in which the doer does not persist.

Definition of Major and Minor Sins

This subject is taken up in full detail in Sūrah An-Nisā' in this book Vol. 2/pp404-410, under verse [31] إِنْ تَجْتَنِبُوْا كَبَآئِرَ مَاتُنْهَوْنَ عَنْهُ "If you abstain

from major [sins] out of what you have been forbidden from, We shall write off your minor sins..." , [q.v.].

هُوَ اَعۡلَمُ بِكُمۡ اِذۡ اَنۡشَاَكُمۡ مِّنَ الۡاَرۡضِ وَاِذۡ اَنۡتُمۡ اَجِنَّةٌ فِىۡ بُطُوۡنِ اُمَّهٰتِكُمۡ (He knows you more than anyone else [from a time] when He created you from the earth and when you were embryos in the wombs of your mothers...53:32) The word *ajinnatun* is the plural of *janīn* which means embryo or foetus. This verse purports to say that man does not have knowledge of himself as much as Allah knows him. When he went through the various phases of his creation in his mother's womb, he did not have any knowledge or sense. But his Creator knows fully well how wisely He was creating him. Thus he is made aware of his inability and lack of sufficient knowledge. Having said this, he is further made aware of the fact that any good he does is not his personal accomplishment. The ultimate source of his achievement is Allah: It is Allah who has given him limbs, organs and other parts of the body to perform the righteous deeds; it is He who has equipped him with the ability to move his limbs; then He has created the urge, will and determination to perform righteous actions. Hence, not even the greatest righteous, pious and God-fearing person has the right to pride upon his works and behave arrogantly. Besides, no one yet knows what the end result of his activities will be. Yet the end result is the most important factor in our life. Therefore, pride and arrogance is meaningless.

The concluding part of the verse puts it thus:

فَلَا تُزَكُّوۡا اَنۡفُسَكُمۡ ؕ هُوَ اَعۡلَمُ بِمَنِ اتَّقٰى

So, do not claim purity [from faults] for your selves. He knows best who is God-fearing... (53:32).

In other words, the merit of a person lies not only in his outer actions, but in *taqwā* in one's heart and in his inner moral excellence and uprightness which endures till his death. Only Allah knows who is perfect in this quality.

Sayyidah Zainab bint Abī Salamah رضی اللہ عنہا was named by her parents as *Barrah* which means 'righteous or upright'. The Holy Prophet ﷺ recited the concluding part of this verse فَلَا تُزَكُّوۡا اَنۡفُسَكُمۡ (Do not claim purity for your selves.) and suggested the name be changed. Therefore, they changed her name to 'Zainab'. Imām Aḥmad records on the authority of 'Abdur-Raḥmān Ibn Abī Bakrah ﷺ that a person praised

another person in the presence of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. He stopped him and said "If you have to praise a person, then say, 'according to my knowledge the person appears to be upright and God-fearing وَلَا اُزَكِّىْ عَلَى اللّٰهِ اَحَدًا and I cannot say that he is so in the sight of Allah as well'.

Verses 33 - 62

اَفَرَءَيْتَ الَّذِىْ تَوَلّٰى ﴿٣٣﴾ وَاَعْطٰى قَلِيْلًا وَّاَكْدٰى ﴿٣٤﴾ اَعِنْدَهٗ عِلْمُ
الْغَيْبِ فَهُوَ يَرٰى ﴿٣٥﴾ اَمْ لَمْ يُنَبَّاْ بِمَا فِىْ صُحُفِ مُوْسٰى ﴿٣٦﴾
وَاِبْرٰهِيْمَ الَّذِىْ وَفّٰۤى ﴿٣٧﴾ اَلَّا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِّزْرَ اُخْرٰى ﴿٣٨﴾ وَاَنْ لَّيْسَ
لِلْاِنْسَانِ اِلَّا مَا سَعٰى ﴿٣٩﴾ وَاَنَّ سَعْيَهٗ سَوْفَ يُرٰى ﴿٤٠﴾ ثُمَّ يُجْزٰىهُ
الْجَزَآءَ الْاَوْفٰى ﴿٤١﴾ وَاَنَّ اِلٰى رَبِّكَ الْمُنْتَهٰى ﴿٤٢﴾ وَاَنَّهٗ هُوَ
اَضْحَكَ وَاَبْكٰى ﴿٤٣﴾ وَاَنَّهٗ هُوَ اَمَاتَ وَاَحْيَا ﴿٤٤﴾ وَاَنَّهٗ خَلَقَ
الزَّوْجَيْنِ الذَّكَرَ وَالْاُنْثٰى ﴿٤٥﴾ مِنْ نُّطْفَةٍ اِذَا تُمْنٰى ﴿٤٦﴾ وَاَنَّ عَلَيْهِ
النَّشْاَةَ الْاُخْرٰى ﴿٤٨﴾ وَاَنَّهٗ هُوَ اَغْنٰى وَاَقْنٰى وَاَنَّهٗ هُوَ رَبُّ الشِّعْرٰى
﴿٤٩﴾ وَاَنَّهٗ اَهْلَكَ عَادَا اِلْاُوْلٰى ﴿٥٠﴾ وَثَمُوْدَا فَمَآ اَبْقٰى ﴿٥١﴾ وَقَوْمَ
نُوْحٍ مِّنْ قَبْلُ ؕ اِنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا هُمْ اَظْلَمَ وَاَطْغٰى ﴿٥٢﴾ وَالْمُؤْتَفِكَةَ
اَهْوٰى ﴿٥٣﴾ فَغَشّٰىهَا مَا غَشّٰى ﴿٥٤﴾ فَبِاَىِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكَ تَتَمَارٰى ﴿٥٥﴾
هٰذَا نَذِيْرٌ مِّنَ النُّذُرِ الْاُوْلٰى ﴿٥٦﴾ اَزِفَتِ الْاٰزِفَةُ ﴿٥٧﴾ لَيْسَ لَهَا مِنْ
دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ كَاشِفَةٌ ﴿٥٨﴾ اَفَمِنْ هٰذَا الْحَدِيْثِ تَعْجَبُوْنَ ﴿٥٩﴾
وَتَضْحَكُوْنَ وَلَا تَبْكُوْنَ ﴿٦٠﴾ وَاَنْتُمْ سٰمِدُوْنَ ﴿٦١﴾ فَاسْجُدُوْا لِلّٰهِ
وَاعْبُدُوْا ﴿٦٢﴾ سجده

Did you see the one who turned away, [33] **and gave a little, and stopped?** [34] **Does he have knowledge of the Unseen whereby he sees (what he believes)?** [35] **Has he not been told of what was (revealed) in the scriptures of Mūsā** [36] **and of Ibrāhīm who fulfilled (his covenant)?**

[37] **(It was) that no bearer of burden shall bear the burden of the other,** [38] **and that a man does not deserve but (the reward of) his own effort,** [39] **and that his effort will soon be seen,** [40] **then he will be recompensed for it in full,** [41] **and that to your Lord is the end (of every one),** [42] **and that He is the One who makes (one) laugh and makes (him) weep,** [43] **and that He is the One who gives death and gives life,** [44] **and that He creates the pairs, male and female,** [45] **from a sperm-drop when it is poured (into a womb),** [46] **and that the second creation is undertaken by Him,** [47] **and that He is the One who gives wealth and preserves (it),** [48] **and that He is the One who is the Lord of Sirius (the star worshipped by pagans),** [49] **and that He has destroyed the earlier 'Ād,** [49] **and Thamūd, so spared none,** [51] **and (destroyed) the people of Nūḥ even before. Surely they were more unjust and more rebellious.** [52] **And He destroyed the overturned towns (of the people of Lūṭ) also,** [53] **so covered they were by that which covered.** [54] **Then, concerning which of your Lord's bounties would you remain in doubt?** [55] **This (Holy Prophet) is a warner from the (genus of the) previous warners.** [56] **The Imminent (Hour) has approached.** [57] **There is no one, beside Allah, to remove it.** [58] **Do you then wonder at this discourse,** [59] **and laugh (at it), and not weep,** [60] **while you are engaged in vain play?** [61] **Now, fall down in prostration and worship (Allah).** [62]

Background of Revelation

Ad-Durr-ul-Manthūr reports from Ibn Jarir that a person embraced Islam and one of his friends rebuked him for having abandoned his forefather's religion. He responded that he fears Allah's chastisement. The friend told him to make a certain payment to him, and he will take upon himself his punishment of the Hereafter. Thus he [the new Muslim] will be spared from the chastisement, and consequently he made the payment to him. The friend demanded more payment. After a scuffle, he made the additional payment to him, and for the balance a document was drawn up with signatures of witnesses. That person, according to Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī, was Walīd Ibn Mughīrah who was inclined towards Islam. But his friend reproached him and took the responsibility of punishment upon his own shoulders.

اَفَرَءَيۡتَ الَّذِیۡ تَوَلّٰی (Did you see the one who turned away,... 53:33) The

word *tawalla* literally means 'to turn the face away', and it connotes in this context a person who turns away from Allah's obedience.

وَاَعْطٰى قَلِيْلًا وَّاَكْدٰى (and gave a little, and stopped? ...53:34) The word *akda* is derived from *kudyah* which refers to a hard or stony piece of ground or clod that appears in the course of digging a well or a trench. As a result, the digger cannot dig any further. Thus the meaning of the verse is that at first he gave a little, then he stopped giving. In view of the incident narrated under the heading of "Background of Revelation", the meaning is quite clear. [For the person in that incident paid a little amount and then stopped payment.] Apart from this meaning, Sayyidnā Mujāhid, Sa'īd Ibn Jubair, 'Ikrimah, Qatādah and others interpret this word to imply that a person spent a little in Allah's way, then stopped it; or at first he was somewhat inclined towards Allah's obedience, and he obeyed Him for a while, and then gave it up [vide Ibn Kathīr].

اَعِنْدَهٗ عِلْمُ الْغَيْبِ فَهُوَ يَرٰى (Does he have knowledge of the Unseen whereby he sees [what he believes]?...53:35) According to the story recounted in connection with the occasion of revelation, the verse means: The person who embraced Islam and later abandoned it because his friend assured him that he would bear the punishment in the Hereafter on his behalf, and spare him the pain. The fool believed him and took for granted the assurance given to him. Does he have the knowledge of the Unseen, so that he is able to see that the chastisement he deserves for disbelief will be taken over for sure by his friend? This is wholly a make-believe situation. He neither has the knowledge of the Unseen, nor can he take on the punishment of somebody else and save him. Apart from the story recounted in connection with the occasion of revelation, the verse would mean: Does this person, who stopped giving for fear of poverty and ended his acts of charity have knowledge of the Unseen and thus knows that if he does not stop spending, his wealth will go away? No. This is absolutely false. Such a person has neither the knowledge of the Unseen so that he is able to see that if he goes on spending, his wealth will be depleted and not replenished. He stopped spending in charity for righteous causes, and did not keep relations with kith and kin because of his miserliness, being stingy and out of fear of poverty. The Qur'ān makes plain in [34:39]

مَآ اَنْفَقْتُمْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ فَهُوَ يُخْلِفُهٗ ۚ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الرّٰزِقِيْنَ

And whatever thing you spend, He replaces it. And He is the best of the sustainers. [34:39]

If man thinks carefully, this verse does not only concern wealth and money, but it also concerns every power, strength and energy of our body. When we expend it and it gets depleted, Allah replaces it and has arranged for its replenishment. Imagine even if our limbs, organs and other body parts were made of steel and worked constantly for 60-70 years, they would have diminished long ago. However, as they diminish, Allah replenishes them inwardly as though by means of an automatic machine. Likewise, man keeps spending and it is constantly replenished.

The Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said:

اَنْفِقْ يَا بِلَالُ وَلَا تَخْشَ مِنْ ذِى الْعَرْشِ اِقْلَالًا

"O Bilāl, spend and do not fear that the Lord of the Throne will render you indigent." (Ibn Kathīr)

اَمْ لَمْ يُنَبَّاْ بِمَا فِىْ صُحُفِ مُوْسٰى. وَاِبْرٰهِيْمَ الَّذِىْ وَفّٰىٓ (Has he not been told of what was [revealed] in the scriptures of Mūsā and of Ibrāhīm who fulfilled [his covenant]?... 53:37- 38) In verse [37], the Prophet Ibrāhīm عليه السلام has been described by the expression *waffā* which is derived from the root word *wafā'* and it means to fulfill faithfully the covenant one has made with someone.

Special Characteristic of Ibrāhīm عليه السلام: fulfillment of Covenant

Holy Prophet Ibrāhīm عليه السلام had a covenant with Allah that he will obey Him and convey His Message to all the people. He fulfilled faithfully the covenant: He obeyed Allah and delivered His Message to His creatures. As a result, he was made to pass through severe trials and tribulations. This is the interpretation placed upon the expression *waffā* (fulfilled) by Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Kathīr and others.

Several narratives describe particular works of Holy Prophet Ibrāhīm عليه السلام as a purport of the expression *waffā*, but the two versions are not contradictory, because fufillment of covenant is general. It comprehends acting upon all the Divine injunctions, obeying Allah in all actions, fulfilling the duties of Prophet-hood and messenger-ship and reforming the creation of Allah.

Let us consider the narrative which Ibn Abī Ḥātim has reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū 'Umāmah رضي الله عنه that the Holy Prophet ﷺ recited the verse 37, and asked: Do you know what is the meaning of

waffā (fulfilled)? Sayyidnā Abū 'Umāmah ﷺ replied: Allah and His Rasūl know best. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

وَفّٰى عَمَلَ يَوْمِهٖ بِاَرْبَعِ رَكْعَاتٍ فِىْ اَوَّلِ النَّهَارِ. (ابن كثير)

"He fulfilled the day's work by starting it with the performance of four *rak'at* [that is, *ṣalāt-ul-ishrāq*]."

This is supported by the Tradition recorded in Tirmidhī on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Dharr ﷺ, according to whom the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

اِبْنَ اٰدَمَ ارْكَعْ لِىْ اَرْبَعَ رَكْعَاتٍ مِّنْ اَوَّلِ النَّهَارِ اَكْفِكَ اٰخِرَهٗ (ابن كثير)

"O Son of 'Ādam! Perform four *rak'āt* of prayer in the early part of the day, I shall take of you in all your affairs till the end of the day."

Ibn Abī Ḥātim reports another Tradition from Sayyidnā Mu'ādh Ibn Anas ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: "Do you know why Allah gave Ibrāhīm ﷺ the title of *al-ladhi waffā* (the one who fulfilled)? Then, he said, 'Because he used to recite the following *dhikr* every morning and evening:

فَسُبْحٰنَ اللّٰهِ حِيْنَ تُمْسُوْنَ وَحِيْنَ تُصْبِحُوْنَ وَلَهُ الْحَمْدُ فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَعَشِيًّا وَّحِيْنَ تُظْهِرُوْنَ. (ابن كثير)

Scriptures of Mūsā and Ibrāhīm ﷺ: Special Guidance and Teachings

Whenever any command, statement, action or teaching of Allah is quoted in the Qur'ān from the scriptures of the former Prophets ﷺ, it means that it is obligatory for this 'Ummah to act upon it, unless there is an explicit text abrogating the previous teachings. Forthcoming eighteen verses elaborate on the special teachings of the scriptures of Holy Prophets Mūsā and Ibrāhīm عليهما السلام. Of them only two of the previous teachings are concerned with practical life. The rest are meant to advise, warn and draw attention to the Signs of Allah. The two verses [38] and [39] concerned with prescriptive teachings are as follows:

None shall carry the Burden of Any Other on the Day of Resurrection

اَلَّا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِّزْرَ اُخْرٰى ﴿٣٨﴾ وَاَنْ لَّيْسَ لِلْاِنْسَانِ اِلَّا مَا سَعٰى ﴿٣٩﴾

(It was) that no bearer of burden shall bear the burden of the

other, [38] and that a man shall not deserve but (the reward of) his own effort, [39]

The word *wizr* originally means a burden, and the verse purports to say that every man shall have to carry his own wrongdoings, whether disbelief or sin, and none else shall carry his burden of sin, as Allah states in [35:18].

وَإِنْ تَدْعُ مُثْقَلَةٌ إِلَى حِمْلِهَا لَا يُحْمَلْ مِنْهُ شَيْءٌ

And if a person carrying a heavy load calls (someone) to (share) his load, nothing from it shall be carried (by the latter), even though he be a near of kin. .... [18]

By load or burden is meant the load or burden of sin and its punishment, signifying that on the Day of Resurrection the punishment of one will not be given to another, nor will anyone have the choice to pay for another's sin as the verse quoted above clearly indicates.

This verse also refutes the thinking of the person which was narrated above as Background of Revelation: He had become a Muslim or was going to become one, and his friend rebuked him, saying that if any punishment is meted out to him, he guarantees him that no harm will come to him. The friend assured him that he would bear the burden of his punishment, and save him. This verse further clarifies that in matters, such as these, there is no possibility that one person may commit the sin and another is held accountable to pay the price.

As for the Ḥadīth of Ibn 'Umar ﷺ, as recorded in Ṣaḥīḥain, that the dead are punished because of the weeping and wailing of their families on his death, it relates to the person who himself used to weep and wail for the deceased and was wont to it, or who had advised his heirs to weep and wail for him after his death. (Maẓharī). In this case he is punished for his own deed, not on account of other people's deed.[1]

The second injunction is contained in verse [39] وَأَنْ لَّيْسَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ إِلَّا مَا سَعٰى

(1). It should be noted here that if one weeps on the death of a person in a way that he or she cannot control his or her emotions, it is not a sin in Shari'ah. The wailing that has been prohibited is a particular type of wailing that was customary in Pre-Islam Arab society, and is still in vogue in some areas, in which one would cry loudly, often in an artificial manner, and would invite others to weep, slapping his face, tearing his clothes and complaining of the destiny.It is this type of formal wailing that is meant here by the esteemed author. (Muhammad Taqi Usmani)

(and that a man does not deserve but [the reward of] his own effort,....53:39) The summary of this verse is that just as no person shall carry the burden of sin of any other, so shall he benefit only from the good that he himself has done. It is not the case that a person performs a righteous act instead of someone else, and the latter is absolved of his responsibility. For example, if a person performs the obligatory prayers and fasts on behalf of somebody else, the latter will not be absolved of his religious duties and obligations. He is still liable for them. Likewise, if a person embraces faith on behalf of somebody else, the latter cannot be regarded as a believer.

Thus interpreted, no juristic problems arise in connection with this verse. However, some superficial questions do arise regarding Hajj and *Zakāh*. In times of necessity Sharī'ah permits to perform Ḥajj on behalf of somebody else, or pay Zakāh on his behalf with his permission. How is this possible? A careful analysis of the two situations does not pose any problem: In the case of *Ḥajj-e-Badal*, the sender of a person to perform this type of pilgrimage bears the expenses himself,[2] and thus it is his [the sender's] own act for which he will be rewarded. In the case of *Zakāh*, appointing someone to pay is also the act of the person who made the appointment, and not that of the appointee. Therefore, the two cases are not in conflict with verse [39].

Offering Reward of Good Deeds to others

In the foregoing section we have explained that verse [39] means that no person can perform an obligatory act, such as faith, prayers and fasts, on behalf of some other person to free him of his religious duties. He will be able to benefit only from the good he himself has done. This, however, does not imply that a person cannot perform supererogatory acts and proffer their reward to someone else. There is ample textual evidence of Shári'ah that a person can supplicate or give charity or do any other good deed and proffer its reward to others. Further, there is an overwhelming consensus of the Ummah on this issue. (Ibn Kathīr)

However, only Imām Shāfi'ī رحمه الله تعالیٰ differs on this issue. He says that the reward of recitation of the Qur'ān cannot be proffered to anyone

(2). It should be kept in mind that this is allowed only when one is unable to perform Hajj due to a physical constraint, and therefore his obligation becomes limited to sending someone else with his own expense. (Muhammad Taqi Usmani)

else. He takes the above verse in a general sense and argues that the rewards of the purely bodily acts of worship, such as the prayer, fasting and recitation of the Qur'ān and so on, cannot be passed on to any other person. According to Imām Abū Hanifah رحمه الله تعالىٰ and majority of the leading jurists, it is permissible. They argue that just as it is possible to pray for and proffer the reward of charity to another person, so likewise it is possible to recite the Qur'ān and perform other voluntary prayers to pass the reward to another person who will receive it. Qurṭubī says, in his Tafsīr, a large number of Traditions bear testimony to the fact that a believer will receive the reward of the righteous acts of another person. Tafsīr Maẓharī has, on this occasion, collected all the relevant Traditions which prove that another person does receive the benefit of *'Iṣāl-e-Thawāb* (proffering the reward of good acts).

The foregoing verses have elaborated on two issues with reference to the scriptures of Prophets Mūsā and Ibrāhīm عليهما السلام: [1] No one will bear the burden of another's sin and punishment; and [2] No one shall be freed of his Shar'ī obligations, unless he himself performs them. These two rules of law were available in the Sharī'ah of all the Prophets. However, they are especially mentioned in relation to Mūsā and Ibrāhīm عليهما السلام probably because in their days an evil custom had taken deep root that the son used to be killed instead of the father; and father, brother, sister or some other member of the family used to be killed instead of the son. The Sharī'ah of these prophets abolished all the evil customs of the dark age.

وَاَنَّ سَعْيَهٗ سَوْفَ يُرٰى (and that his effort will soon be seen...53:40) In other words, outer actions of a person are not sufficient. Allah will take into account the real, inner motive and driving force behind them whether they were performed with the sincerity of purpose, or they were done with some ulterior motive. The Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said:

اِنَّمَا الْاَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَّاتِ

"Actions shall be judged only by the intentions."

That is, the outer aspect of actions is not sufficient. The inner aspect is also necessary. Actions must be performed purely for the good pleasure of Allah and in compliance with His command.

وَاَنَّ اِلٰی رَبِّکَ الْمُنْتَهٰی (and that to your Lord is the end [of every one],... 53:42) This means that ultimately every one will return to Allah on the Day of Resurrection, and give an account of his actions.

Some of the commentators interpret that this statement purports to say that the access of human thought and imagination ends with Allah. The reality of His Being and attributes cannot be discovered by human imagination, because they are beyond conceptualization. Thus we are clearly prohibited from deliberating (See Ma'āriful Qur'ān, Vol.2/pp 277-280 [Tr.]) in His Being and His Attributes. There are narrations that tell us to ponder over the manifestation of His Attributes and bounties, and not to conceptualize His Being and His Attributes or Qualities, the reality of which should be left to the Divine Knowledge only.

وَاَنَّہٗ هُوَ اَضْحَکَ وَاَبْکٰی (and that He is the One who makes [one] laugh and makes [him] weep,...53:43) Mankind experiences happiness and grief, and consequently laughing and weeping. Man assigns this to the secondary causes [which refer to every existent thing in this universe, and that is where he ends the matter. If we analyze carefully and profoundly, the whole system of cause and effect ends with Allah, the Primary and Supreme Cause. No secondary cause makes anyone happy or sad, nor does it make him to laugh or weep. Both of these things are created by Allah. He created the series of secondary causes and effects in our finite world. But as the Primary and Supreme Cause, He can at any moment make the laughing person weep, and make the weeping person laugh. How well it has been versified!

بگوش گل چہ سخن گفتۂ کہ خندان ست...... بعند لیب چہ فرمودۂ کہ نالاں ست

> What have You whispered to the ear of a flower (O Allah) whereby it is smiling?
>
> And what have You said to the nightingale whereby it is weeping all the times?

وَاَنَّہٗ هُوَ اَغْنٰی وَاَقْنٰی (and that He is the One who gives wealth and preserves [it]...53:48) The word *ghinā* means affluence, and *ighnā'* means to give wealth to somebody else, and enrich him. The word *aqnā* is derived from *qinyatun* which means preserving and reserve wealth. The meaning of the verse is that it is Allah Who enriches His servants and grants wealth to them to their satisfaction, so that they are able to use some and keep

some in their reserve fund for future use.

وَاَنَّهٗ هُوَرَبُّ الشِّعْرٰى (and that He is the One who is the Lord of Sirius ...53:49) The word *shi'rā* with the diacritical symbol *kasrah* under the letter *shīn* is the name of a star, called Sirius which is behind Jauzā'. Some of the Arab tribes worshipped the mighty star, Sirius, because they regarded it as a source of good or bad luck for them. Allah mentions this star in particular in order to refute their false notion and to affirm that He is the Lord and Master of this star as well, although He is the Creator, Master and Lord of all the stars, heavens and the earth.

وَاَنَّهٗ اَهْلَكَ عَادًا الْاُوْلٰى وَثَمُوْدَا فَمَآ اَبْقٰى (and that He has destroyed the earlier 'Ād, and Thamūd, so spared none,...53:50-51) The people of 'Ād were among the strongest, fiercest people and the most rebellious against Allah. There are two branches of this people: one of them is known as *'ūlā* [the first] and *'ukhrā* [the latter or the second]. Holy Prophet Hūd عليه السلام was sent to 'Ād, but they disobeyed him, as a result Allah annihilated the entire nation by a violently furious wind. This is the first nation that was destroyed in punishment after the destruction of the people of Holy Prophet Nūḥ عليه السلام. (Maẓharī) Holy Prophet Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام was sent to the tribe of Thamūd, being the second 'Ād, but they too disobeyed their Prophet. Those who transgressed were caught by the awesome Cry of Jibra'īl عليه السلام and their hearts were burst by the horrific sound resulting in the mass destruction of those people. (See Ma'āriful Qur'ān Vol. 4/p. 651 and the cross-reference given there. [Tr.])

وَالْمُؤْتَفِكَةَ اَهْوٰى (And He destroyed the overturned towns also,... 53:53) The word *Mu'tafikah* literally means *mu'talifah* (joined together). These were a few settlements adjacent to the city. Holy Prophet Lūṭ عليه السلام was sent to them. Because of disobedience and commission of shameful and unspeakable sins, their cities [of Sodom and Gomorrah] were turned upside down by Jibra'īl عليه السلام.

فَغَشّٰىهَا مَاغَشّٰى (so covered they were by that which covered.... 53:54). This refers to the fact that the cities were first overturned, and after that stones of hard clay were sent down on them, which covered them.

Here ends the teachings of the scriptures of Mūsā and Ibrāhīm عليهما السلام.

فَبِاَیِّ الآءِ رَبِّکَ تَتَمَارٰی (Then, which of your Lord's bounties would you dispute?....53:55). *Tamārā* means to dispute and oppose. According to Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ, the verse is addressed to every human being. After seeing so many and so clear and invincible arguments in the preceding verses and the Signs in the scriptures of Mūsā and Ibrāhīm ﷺ that support and substantiate the claims of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ about the truth of his revelation, the verse says to the obstinate disbelievers: How long will you continue to deny the truth and wander in the wilderness of disbelief? The verse further makes it abundantly clear for those who think and deliberate that there should be no room for any doubt in the Messenger of Allah, his revelation and his teachings. Having heard about the stories of destruction and punishment of past nations, this is an opportune occasion for them to straighten out. This well-timed occasion is a favour of Allah. They should take advantage of it instead of fighting and opposing it.

هٰذَا نَذِیْرٌ مِّنَ النُّذُرِ الْاُوْلٰی (This [Holy Prophet] is a warner from the (genus of the) previous warners...53:56). *Hādha* is a demonstrative pronoun and points either to the Holy Prophet ﷺ or to the Qur'ān. With reference to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, it means that in the past, many Prophets were sent to their respective nations, and the Holy Prophet ﷺ is sent to all mankind, and he is not a new thing among the Messengers. He is well-established in the straight path. With reference to the Qur'ān, it means that he has come with a book of guidance which, if complied with, assures them of success in this world and in the Hereafter. The opponents should fear the Divine punishment.

اَزِفَتِ الْاٰزِفَةُ لَیْسَ لَهَا مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ کَاشِفَةٌ (The Imminent (Hour) has approached. [53:57] There is no one, beside Allah, to remove it...53:58). The verb *'azifa* is used in the sense of *qaruba* which means to draw near. *Āzifah* is the feminine active participle from the verb *azifa* and it refers to the Imminent Event. In other words, the Imminent Event has drawn near, referring to the Day of Resurrection. No one besides Allah can prevent it from happening , nor does anyone know when it will happen, except Him. The imminence of Resurrection is in relation to the age of the entire world. The Ummah of Holy Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ is right at the end of it near the Day of Judgement.

اَفَمِنْ هٰذَا الْحَدِیْثِ تَعْجَبُوْنَ وَتَضْحَکُوْنَ وَلَا تَبْکُوْنَ (Do you then wonder at this

discourse, and laugh [at it], and not weep....53:59-60). The phrase 'this discourse' refers to the Qur'ān. That is, the Qur'ān, the Divine Discourse, which is itself a miracle, has already come to them. They are surprised at it and laugh in jest and mock at it, and do not weep at their sins and shortcomings.

وَأَنْتُمْ سٰمِدُوْنَ (while you are engaged in vain play? ....53:61). *Sāmidūn* is the plural of "*sāmid*" from the root word *sumud* which literally denotes to be heedless. *Sāmidūn* is used in the sense of *ghafilun,* meaning unmindful. Some of the Imāms have interpreted the word *sumud* to mean to sing. That meaning can equally fit or apply in this context.

فَاسْجُدُوْا لِلّٰهِ وَاعْبُدُوْا (Now, fall down in prostration and worship [Allah]...53:62). It means that preceding verses have a lesson for everyone who considers them seriously that he should worship Allah and bow down before him in humbleness.

It is recorded in Bukhārī on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ that when the Holy Prophet ﷺ recited this verse he prostrated, and all those around him also prostrated along with him-Muslims, pagans, Jinns and mankind. Another report from 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd, as recorded in Bukhārī and Muslim, narrates that when the Holy Prophet ﷺ finished reciting the Sūrah before a mixed gathering of Muslims and disbelievers, and, along with his followers, he prostrated himself on the ground, the disbelievers too prostrated, except one old Quraishi man who took a handful of soil and, having applied it on his forehead said, 'This is enough for me.' 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ said that he saw this man later on killed as a disbeliever. Following the example of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, the Muslims were expected to prostrate. As far as the idolaters are concerned, having been profoundly impressed with the solemnity of the occasion and being overawed by the august recitation of the Qur'ānic words, as well as by the Divine Majesty and Glory, might also have fallen in prostration. However, since this prostration was performed in the state of disbelief, it did not carry any reward, but it did leave a deep impression on them; and as a result of this impact, they all later on embraced the Islamic faith, except one person who died in the state of *kufr*, because he arrogantly refrained from performing the *sajdah*.

Ṣaḥīḥain record a report from Sayyidnā Zaid Ibn Thābit ﷺ to the

effect that he recited the entire Sūrah An-Najm in the presence of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, but he [the Holy Prophet ﷺ] did not perform the *sajdah*. It does not necessarily follow from this that the *sajdah* is not obligatory or compulsory. It is possible that at that particular moment, he did not have his ablution or there must have been some other legitimate reason for not performing the *sajdah*. In such situations, it is not obligatory to perform the *sajdah* forthwith. It can be delayed until the reason has ceased. And Allah, the Pure and Exalted, knows best!

Sūrah An-Najm, through the help and grace of Allah, the Pure, the exalted, ended on Friday night 1st Rabi'-uth-Thānī 1391, in one week. Allah willing, this chapter will be followed by Sūrah Al-Qamar. Allah grants success!

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah An-Najm
Ends here

Sūrah Al-Qamar
(The Moon)

This Sūrah is Makkī. It contains 55 verses and 3 sections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 8

اِقْتَرَبَتِ السَّاعَةُ وَانْشَقَّ الْقَمَرُ ﴿١﴾ وَاِنْ يَّرَوْا اٰيَةً يُّعْرِضُوْا وَيَقُوْلُوْا
سِحْرٌ مُّسْتَمِرٌّ ﴿٢﴾ وَكَذَّبُوْا وَاتَّبَعُوْٓا اَهْوَآءَهُمْ وَكُلُّ اَمْرٍ مُّسْتَقِرٌّ ﴿٣﴾
وَلَقَدْ جَآءَهُمْ مِّنَ الْاَنْۢبَآءِ مَا فِيْهِ مُزْدَجَرٌ ﴿٤﴾ حِكْمَةٌ ۢ بَالِغَةٌ فَمَا تُغْنِ
النُّذُرُ ﴿٥﴾ فَتَوَلَّ عَنْهُمْ يَوْمَ يَدْعُ الدَّاعِ اِلٰى شَيْءٍ نُّكُرٍ ﴿٦﴾ خُشَّعًا
اَبْصَارُهُمْ يَخْرُجُوْنَ مِنَ الْاَجْدَاثِ كَاَنَّهُمْ جَرَادٌ مُّنْتَشِرٌ ﴿٧﴾
مُّهْطِعِيْنَ اِلَى الدَّاعِ ۭ يَقُوْلُ الْكٰفِرُوْنَ هٰذَا يَوْمٌ عَسِرٌ ﴿٨﴾

The Hour (of doom) has drawn near, and the moon has been split asunder. [1] And when these people see a sign, they turn away and say, "(This is) a transient magic." [2] And they have rejected (the Truth) and followed their desires, while every matter has to be settled (at some time). [3] And there has come to them as much news (of the earlier communities) as contains enough to warn, [4] a perfect wisdom, but the warnings are of no avail (to them). [5] Therefore, turn aside (O Prophet,) from them. (They will see the reality) on the Day when the caller will call to a terrible thing. [6] With their eyes humbled, they will come out of the graves like locusts spread all over, [7] rushing quickly towards the caller. (On that Day) the disbelievers will say, "This is a

difficult day." [8]

Linkage between Sūrah An-Najm and Sūrah Al-Qamar

Whereas the preceding Sūrah An-Najm had ended on a note of warning to disbelievers in the words: أَزِفَتِ الْآزِفَةُ *azifat-il-'āzifah*, i.e., the Hour of their doom has drawn near, the present Sūrah opens with a similar sentence, "The Hour (of doom) has drawn near" and this statement is followed by one of its proofs, that is, the appearance of the miracle of the moon being split asunder. There are many signs of the Day of Doom; one of them is the advent of the last of the Prophets Sayyidnā Muḥammad ﷺ itself, as reported in a *ḥadīth* 'I was sent like this with the last Hour' and he pointed with his middle and index fingers. There are many other Traditions mentioning that the advent of the Holy Prophet ﷺ is close to the Day of doom. Likewise, a great sign of Doomsday is the miracle of the Prophet ﷺ when he split the moon into two pieces, then he rejoined them. Also, the miracle of 'moon-splitting' is significant from another point of view: Just as Allah's power split the moon into two, so will planets and stars be destroyed by Him by breaking them into very small pieces which is not impossible, as has been proved by the miracle of splitting the moon.

The Phenomenon of Moon-Splitting : A Miracle

The disbelievers of Makkah asked the Messenger of Allah to produce a proof in support of his claim, and he, with the dispensation of Allah, split the moon into two parts. This miracle is verified by the concluding part of verse 1: 'and the moon has been split asunder.'. The incident has been narrated successively in Traditions of reliable authority, and reported by such learned Companions as 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd, 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar, Jubair Ibn *Muṭ'im*, 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās, Anas Ibn Mālik ؓ and others. 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ؓ reports that he himself was present and witnessed when the Messenger of Allah performed this miracle. Imāms Ṭaḥāwī and Ibn Kathīr رحمهما الله تعالى have stated that the reports narrating the phenomenon of 'moon-splitting' are *mutawātir* (i.e. it has been reported successively and uninterruptedly by such a large number of authorities that their concurrence on falsehood is inconceivable.) Therefore, this Prophetic miracle has been proved by incontrovertible evidence.

It was mentioned earlier that a large number of Traditions report the

incident of 'moon-splitting', which may be summarized as follows: Whilst the Messenger of Allah was sitting at Minā in Makkah, the pagans demanded that the Messenger of Allah should produce a proof substantiating his claim. Allah split the moon in two parts. A part of the moon was over one mountain on the eastern side, and another part was over another mountain on the western side. Thus there was a mountain between the two parts. This incident took place on a moonlit night. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said to all who were present: 'Be witnesses'. When all the people saw the miracle clearly, the two pieces rejoined. It was not possible for any person with eyes to deny this clear miracle. However, the pagans said: 'Muḥammad has ensorcelled us, but he cannot bewitch the whole world; so let us wait for people to come from the neighboring parts of the country and hear what they have to say'. (Baihaqī and Abū Dāwūd Ṭayālisī) Ṭayālisī records on the authority of 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه that when travelers from the neighboring parts of the country arrived, they confirmed that they did see the moon in two parts. Some reports indicate that the miracle of 'moon-splitting' occurred twice, but more authentic reports confirm that the miracle occurred once only. (Bayān-ul-Qur'ān) The following Traditions are worth noting, which have been taken from Ibn Kathīr:

(1) Sayyidnā Anas Ibn Mālik رضي الله عنه narrates, as recorded in Ṣaḥīḥ of Bukhārī:

إِنَّ اَهْلَ مَكَّةَ سَاَلُوْا رَسُوْلَ اللّٰهِ صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ اَنْ يُّرِيَهُمْ اٰيَةً فَاَرَاهُمُ الْقَمَرَ شِقَّيْن
حَتّٰى رَاَوْاحِرَاءَ بَيْنَهُمَا. (بخاری و مسلم)

'The people of Makkah asked the Messenger of Allah to show them a sign, and he split the moon into two parts until they saw the mount of Hira' between them'.

(2) Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه narrates, as recorded in Ṣaḥīḥs of Bukhārī and Muslim, and in Musnad of Aḥmad,

اِنْشَقَّ الْقَمَرُ عَلٰى عَهْدِ رَسُوْلِ اللّٰهِ صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ شِقَّيْنِ حَتّٰى نَظَرُوْا اِلَيْهِ فَقَالَ
رَسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ اشْهَدُوْا.

"The moon was split in two parts during the time of Allah's Messenger, and they saw its two parts. Allah's Messenger said: 'Be witnesses'."

Ibn Jarīr has cited this report with the following addition:

كُنَّا مَعَ رَسُوْلِ اللّٰهِ صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ بِمِنىٰ فَانْشَقَّ الْقَمَرُ فَاَخَذَتْ فِرْقَةٌ خَلْفَ الْجَبَلِ فَقَالَ رَسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ اشْهَدُوْا اشْهَدُوْا .

"Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ says: 'We were with Allah's Messenger at Minā. Suddenly the moon split in two pieces, and one piece went away behind the mountain. Allah's Messenger said: "Be witnesses; be witnesses."'

(3) The narration of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ is recorded by Baihaqī and Abū Dāwūd Ṭayālisī in the following words:

اِنْشَقَّ الْقَمَرُ بِمَكَّةَ حَتّٰى صَارَ فِرْقَتَيْنِ فَقَالَ كُفَّارُ قُرَيْشٍ اَهْل مَكَّة هٰذَا سِحْرٌ سَحَرَكُمْ بِهٖ اِبْنُ اَبِىْ كَبْشَةَ اُنْظُرُوا السُّفَّارَ فَاِنْ كَانُوْا رَأَوْامَا رَاَيْتُمْ فَقَدْ صَدَقَ وَاِنْ كَانُوْا لَمْ يَرَوْا مِثْلَ مَارَاَيْتُمْ فَهُوَ سِحْرٌ سَحَرَكُمْ بِهٖ فَسُئِلَ السُّفَّارُ قَالَ وَ قَدِمُوْا مِنْ كُلِّ جِهَةٍ فَقَالُوْ رَاَيْنَا. (ابن كثير)

"In Makkah, the moon was split into two parts. The disbelieving Quraish claimed: 'This is sorcery. Ibn Abī Kabshah [the Prophet] has ensorcelled you. Therefore, wait for the neighboring travelers to arrive. If they too have seen the two pieces of the moon, so he has spoken the truth. But if they have not seen the parts of the moon, then this is indeed a magical illusion which he has performed on you.' When the travelers arrived and were asked about it, they all confirmed that they did see the two parts of the moon.' : (Ibn Kathir)

Criticism against the Miracle of 'Moon-Splitting'

The critics have raised two types of criticism against the miracle: one is based on the assumptions of Greek philosophers, and the other is based on layman's thinking.

The deviant Greek philosophers assume that it is not possible for the heaven and other celestial bodies to split or crack, and rejoin. But this is merely an idea unsubstantiated by any solid or concrete proof. Whatever proof or evidence the philosophers have advanced is flimsy, shaky, inadequate and unsubstantial. The Islamic philosophers [*mutakallimīn*] have broken down their arguments and have shown that they are baseless, false and absurd. They could not prove by any rational argument that 'moon-splitting' is impossible. Indeed, illiterate people regard every unusual thing as impossible. Obviously, the very meaning of

mu'jizah or a prophetic miracle is that it is an unusual event that is abnormal and out of general habit, which cannot be performed by common people. Any ordinary work which can be performed at any time cannot be called *mu'jizah* or miracle.

The other criticism based on a layman's thinking is that if such a wonderful event had taken place, its knowledge would have been commonplace and would have found its mention in the books of history, but they say that they have found no such thing recorded.

Such a thinking is too simplistic which lacks careful analysis. A careful analysis shows that the event had occurred in Makkah at night. At that particular moment, in many parts of the world it must have been day time where and when the question of witnessing this event does not even arise. In many other countries, it must have been middle of the night, or last part of the night when the people normally sleep. Furthermore, people who are awake also do not stare at the moon all the time. Splitting of the moon would not make any difference on the moonlight spread on the earth, so that it would attract people's attention. The event took place suddenly and lasted for a short while. It is a daily experience that in particular countries at different times lunar eclipse takes place. Nowadays a forecast is made about its occurrence well in advance, yet there are hundreds of thousands of people who are absolutely unaware of it. Can this be the proof that the lunar eclipse did not take place? Thus if the event is not recorded in world history books, its occurrence cannot be denied or refuted.

Besides, the event is recorded in the famous and reliable history book of India called 'Tarīkh-e-Farishtah'. It has been mentioned in this book that the Mahārājah, a native ruler, of Malabār had witnessed this phenomenon that night with his own eyes, and had it entered in his diary. This incident was the cause of his embracing Islam. Earlier on the narratives of Abū Dāwūd Ṭayālisī and Baihaqī were quoted about the pagans of Makkah themselves who inquired from the people arriving from the neighboring parts of the country and they confirmed and verified that they had seen it. Allah, the Pure and the Exalted, knows best!

وَاِنْ يَّرَوْا اٰيَةً يُّعْرِضُوْا وَيَقُوْلُوْا سِحْرٌ مُّسْتَمِرٌّ (And when these people see a sign, they

turn away and say, "[This is] a transient magic.... 54:2). The word *mustamirr*, in the popular sense of the word, as used in Persian and Urdu, means something lasting or enduring. However, in the Arabic language it is sometimes used in the sense of passing away or coming to an end, being derived from *marra* and *istamarra*. Leading authorities on Tafsīr, like Mujāhid and Qatādah رحمهما الله تعالیٰ, have applied this sense of the word in the present context. Thus the verse means that the Quraish alleged that the sign of moon-splitting they saw was an illusion and false; its effect will soon diminish and fade away. Another meaning of the word *mustamirr* is strong and firm. Abūl-'Āliyah and Ḍaḥḥāk رحمهما الله تعالیٰ interpret the word in this sense, meaning that this is a very potent sorcery.

وَكُلُّ اَمْرٍ مُّسْتَقِرٌّ (...while every matter has to be settled....54:3). The literal meaning of the word *istiqrār* is to settle. The verse means that everything must ultimately reach its end and the matter must become clear. If a veil is fabricated and cast over the truth or reality, eventually [in its designated time] the false veil will be removed and the truth and falsehood will be clearly distinguished.

مُّهْطِعِيْنَ اِلَى الدَّاعِ (rushing quickly towards the caller....54:8). The word *muhṭi'īn* literally denotes walking quickly with one's head raised above. This, together with the two preceding verses, gives a graphic picture of the Day of Gathering or Reckoning. The people will hasten hurriedly in the direction of the voice of the Caller towards the *maḥshar* (area of Reckoning). The words: "With their eyes humbled,." in preceding verse (7) are in no conflict with the present verse, because there will be many different occasions in *maḥshar*. On some of these occasions, the eyes of all the people will be cast down.

Verses 9 - 17

كَذَّبَتْ قَبْلَهُمْ قَوْمُ نُوْحٍ فَكَذَّبُوْا عَبْدَنَا وَقَالُوْا مَجْنُوْنٌ وَّازْدُجِرَ ﴿٩﴾ فَدَعَا رَبَّهٗٓ اَنِّیْ مَغْلُوْبٌ فَانْتَصِرْ ﴿١٠﴾ فَفَتَحْنَآ اَبْوَابَ السَّمَآءِ بِمَآءٍ مُّنْهَمِرٍ ﴿١١﴾ وَّفَجَّرْنَا الْاَرْضَ عُيُوْنًا فَالْتَقَى الْمَآءُ عَلٰٓى اَمْرٍ قَدْ قُدِرَ ﴿١٢﴾ وَحَمَلْنٰهُ عَلٰى ذَاتِ اَلْوَاحٍ وَّدُسُرٍ ﴿١٣﴾ تَجْرِیْ بِاَعْيُنِنَا ۚ جَزَآءً

لِّمَنْ كَانَ كُفِرَ ﴿١٤﴾ وَلَقَدْ تَّرَكْنٰهَآ اٰيَةً فَهَلْ مِنْ مُّدَّكِرٍ ﴿١٥﴾ فَكَيْفَ كَانَ عَذَابِىْ وَنُذُرِ ﴿١٦﴾ وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْاٰنَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِنْ مُّدَّكِرٍ ﴿١٧﴾

The people of Nūḥ denied (the truth) before them. So they rejected Our slave, and said, "(He is) a madman", and he was (also) threatened (by them). [9] **So he prayed to his Lord saying, "I am overpowered, so defend (me)."** [10] **So We opened the gates of the sky with water pouring forth profusely,** [11] **and We caused the earth to gush forth as springs; so the water (of both kinds) met together for a destined event.** [12] **And We caused him (Nūḥ) to board that (ship) which had planks and nails,** [13] **which sailed under Our Eyes, as a reward for the one who was rejected (by the infidels).** [14] **And We left it (the ship) as a sign. So, is there one to take lesson?** [15] **How then was My torment and My warnings?** [16] **And indeed We have made the Qur'ān easy for seeking advice. So, is there one to seek advice?** [17]

The Story of the People of Nūḥ عليه السلام and the Lesson Learnt from it

مَجْنُوْنٌ وَّازْدُجِرَ (and said, "(He is) a madman", and he was threatened... 54:9). The word *wazdujira* literally denotes 'he was rebuked'. It refers to the attitude of the people of Nūḥ عليه السلام who rebuked and threatened him to stop him from preaching. On another occasion in the Qur'ān, we read that the people of Nūḥ عليه السلام threatened and warned him that if he does not stop propagating his message, he would be stoned to death.

'Abd Ibn Ḥumaid reports from Mujāhid that when some of his people found him somewhere, they would choke him, as a result he would become unconscious. But when he recovered, he would pray to Allah, 'O Allah! Forgive my people, for they do not know the truth'. In this way, he endured the persecution of his people patiently for nine hundred and fifty years, prayed for their forgiveness and understanding of the truth. Eventually, when the situation became intolerable, and he could no longer resist his people, he invoked Allah to help him against them. As a result, Allah opened the gates of the heaven with torrential rain, and the entire nation was drowned which is mentioned in the forthcoming verse.

فَالْتَقَى الْمَآءُ عَلٰٓى اَمْرٍ قَدْ قُدِرَ (so the water [of both kinds] met together for a

destined event....54:12). In other words, the rain water pouring down from the skies in torrents and also bubbling water gushing forth from under the ground, caused the Deluge [a huge flood] which engulfed the entire land, and thus the Divine decree was fulfilled, destroying the people of Nūḥ عليه السلام to the last man, and even the peaks of the mountains could not give them any shelter.

ذَاتِ أَلْوَاحٍ وَّدُسُرٍ (to board that [ship] which had planks and nails...54:13). The word *alwāḥ* is the plural of *lawḥ* and it refers to a board or a plank. The word *dusur* is the plural of *disār* and it stands for nail. It also means a cord of fibres of the palm tree with which the planks of a ship are bound together.

وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْآنَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِنْ مُّدَّكِرٍ (And indeed We have made the Qur'ān easy for seeking advice. So, is there one to seek advice?....54:17). The word *dhikr* in the prepositional phrase '*lidh-dhikr*' has several shades of meaning: to remember or memorize or by-heart; and to take heed of admonition and warnings. Both these meanings are equally applicable here. Allah has made it easy to memorize the Holy Qur'ān. The followers of the previous scriptures were not privileged to memorize their entire book, word by word - whether Torāh, Injīl or Zabūr. It is one of the privileges conferred on Muslims that He has made it easy, even for the tender-aged children, to commit the entire Qur'ān to memory, word for word, without missing out a single letter. The Qur'ān is preserved in the hearts of hundreds of thousands of Ḥuffaẓ for the past fourteen hundred years in every age, people and their children of every level, in every region or territory of the world.

The verse could also mean that Allah has made the Qur'ān so simple that just as an intellectual and knowledgeable person benefits from its contents, so does a layman, having no expertise in relevant sciences. He too can benefit from its admonition and warnings (at his own level).

Qur'ān is Made Simple to Memorize and to Take Heed; Not for *Ijtihād* or *Istinbāṭ*

In this verse the verb يَسَّرْنَا *yassarnā* [We have made easy] is qualified by the prepositional phrase لِلذِّكْرِ *lidh-dhikri* [for seeking advice]. This implies that the Qur'ān has been made easy to the extent of memorizing it and paying heed to its advice and warnings, from which all can benefit -

whether a learned scholar or an unlearned person, whether young or old. This does not necessarily imply that derivation or deduction of laws and injunctions from the Qur'ān is easy for everybody. *Ijtihād* or *Istinbāṭ* (deduction) of injunctions from the Qur'ān is a science, having its own complex rules. Scholars well-grounded in knowledge have spent years of their life to attain to the position where they could exercise *Ijtihād* and Istinbāṭ. It is not a field where every ordinary person or layman can play his role

This indicates the error of some of the deviant people who, on the strength of this statement, wish to pose as *mujtahid* and derive laws and injunctions with their own reasoning, without acquiring complete and profound knowledge of the Qur'ān, and without fully grasping its methodological principles and rules. This is clear deviation!

Verses 18 - 42

كَذَّبَتْ عَادٌ فَكَيْفَ كَانَ عَذَابِىْ وَنُذُرِ ﴿١٨﴾ اِنَّا اَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ رِيْحًا صَرْصَرًا فِىْ يَوْمِ نَحْسٍ مُّسْتَمِرٍّ ﴿١٩﴾ تَنْزِعُ النَّاسَ كَاَنَّهُمْ اَعْجَازُ نَخْلٍ مُّنْقَعِرٍ ﴿٢٠﴾ فَكَيْفَ كَانَ عَذَابِىْ وَنُذُرِ ﴿٢١﴾ وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْاٰنَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِنْ مُّدَّكِرٍ ﴿٢٢﴾ كَذَّبَتْ ثَمُوْدُ بِالنُّذُرِ ﴿٢٣﴾ فَقَالُوْٓا اَبَشَرًا مِّنَّا وَاحِدًا نَّتَّبِعُهٗٓ اِنَّآ اِذًا لَّفِىْ ضَلٰلٍ وَّسُعُرٍ ﴿٢٤﴾ ءَاُلْقِىَ الذِّكْرُ عَلَيْهِ مِنْۢ بَيْنِنَا بَلْ هُوَ كَذَّابٌ اَشِرٌ ﴿٢٥﴾ سَيَعْلَمُوْنَ غَدًا مَّنِ الْكَذَّابُ الْاَشِرُ ﴿٢٦﴾ اِنَّا مُرْسِلُوا النَّاقَةِ فِتْنَةً لَّهُمْ فَارْتَقِبْهُمْ وَاصْطَبِرْ ﴿٢٧﴾ وَنَبِّئْهُمْ اَنَّ الْمَآءَ قِسْمَةٌ بَيْنَهُمْ كُلُّ شِرْبٍ مُّحْتَضَرٌ ﴿٢٨﴾ فَنَادَوْا صَاحِبَهُمْ فَتَعَاطٰى فَعَقَرَ ﴿٢٩﴾ فَكَيْفَ كَانَ عَذَابِىْ وَنُذُرِ ﴿٣٠﴾ اِنَّآ اَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ صَيْحَةً وَّاحِدَةً فَكَانُوْا كَهَشِيْمِ الْمُحْتَظِرِ ﴿٣١﴾ وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْاٰنَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِنْ مُّدَّكِرٍ ﴿٣٢﴾ كَذَّبَتْ قَوْمُ لُوْطٍ بِالنُّذُرِ ﴿٣٣﴾ اِنَّآ اَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ حَاصِبًا اِلَّآ اٰلَ لُوْطٍ نَجَّيْنٰهُمْ

بِسَحَرٍ ﴿٣٤﴾ نِّعْمَةً مِّنْ عِندِنَا ۭ كَذَٰلِكَ نَجْزِى مَن شَكَرَ ﴿٣٥﴾ وَلَقَدْ أَنذَرَهُم بَطْشَتَنَا فَتَمَارَوْا بِالنُّذُرِ ﴿٣٦﴾ وَلَقَدْ رَٰوَدُوهُ عَن ضَيْفِهِۦ فَطَمَسْنَآ أَعْيُنَهُمْ فَذُوقُوا عَذَابِى وَنُذُرِ ﴿٣٧﴾ وَلَقَدْ صَبَّحَهُم بُكْرَةً عَذَابٌ مُّسْتَقِرٌّ ﴿٣٨﴾ فَذُوقُوا عَذَابِى وَنُذُرِ ﴿٣٩﴾ وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْءَانَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِن مُّدَّكِرٍ ﴿٤٠﴾ وَلَقَدْ جَآءَ ءَالَ فِرْعَوْنَ النُّذُرُ ﴿٤١﴾ كَذَّبُوا بِـَٔايَٰتِنَا كُلِّهَا فَأَخَذْنَٰهُمْ أَخْذَ عَزِيزٍ مُّقْتَدِرٍ ﴿٤٢﴾

(The people of) 'Ād rejected (their prophet). How then was My torment and My warnings? [18] We did send to them a furious wind in a day of lasting bad luck, [19] plucking people away, as if they were trunks of uprooted palm-trees. [20] How then was My torment and My warnings? [21] And indeed We have made the Qur'ān easy for seeking advice. So, is there one to seek advice? [22] (The people of) Thamūd rejected the warners. [23] So they said, "Shall we follow a single human being from among us? Then we will be in error and insanity. [24] Is it that the advice has been cast upon him alone out of all of us? No, but he is a bragging liar." [25] Tomorrow they will know who is the bragging liar! [26] We are going to send the She-camel as a trial for them; so watch them (O Ṣāliḥ,) and keep patience, [27] and tell them that water (of the well) is to be shared between them (and the She-camel), so as the right of having water shall be attended by each (alternatively). [28] Then they called their man (to kill the She-camel,) so he undertook (the task) and killed (the She-camel). [29] How then was My torment and My warnings? [30] We sent upon them a single Cry, and they were like crushed leafs of a hedge-builder. [31] And indeed We have made the Qur'ān easy for seeking advice. So, is there one to seek advice? [32] The people of Lūṭ rejected the warners. [33] We sent upon them a rain of stones, except the family of Lut whom We saved in the last hours of night, [34] as a grace from Us. This is how We reward the one who offers gratitude. [35] And he (Lut) had certainly warned them of Our grasp, but they disputed the warnings. [36] And they had even tried to tempt him against his guests (so that they may snatch them away for bad purpose,) but We blinded their eyes: "Now taste

My torment and My warnings!" [37] **And on the next morning, a lasting torment overtook them:** [38] **"Now taste My torment and My warnings."** [39] **And indeed We have made the Qur'an easy for seeking advice. So, is there one to seek advice?** [40] **And the warners came to the family of Fir'aun (Pharaoh).** [41] **(But) they rejected all Our signs; so We seized them – a seizure by a Mighty, a Powerful Being.** [42]

Lexicological Analysis

The word سُعُر *su'ur* has appeared twice in this Sūrah. First it has appeared in verse 24 in connection with the people of Thamūd where it is their own word, and means 'madness or insanity'. The second time, the word appears in connection with the punishment of the sinners where it is the word of Allah in the forthcoming verse [47] فِىْ ضَلٰلٍ وَّسُعُرٍ Here the word *su'ur* may also be taken in the sense of Hell-Fire. According to lexicologists, the word *su'ur* is used in both these senses.

رَاوَدُوْهُ عَنْ ضَيْفِهٖ (And they had even tried to tempt him against his guests...54:37). The word *murawadah* signifies to entice someone to satisfy one's lust. This verse refers to the night when the angels came to Prophet Lūṭ عليه السلام in the shape of handsome young men, as a test from Allah for his people who were addicted to homosexuality. Prophet Lūṭ عليه السلام hosted his guests. The licentious people came to him from every direction, and the Prophet Lūṭ عليه السلام had to shut the door to protect his guests. They came during the night and tried to break the door down and scale the walls to come in. The immoral behaviour of his people distressed Prophet Lūṭ عليه السلام but when the guests revealed to him that they were angels and have been sent by Allah to inflict destructive punishment on his people, he felt comforted; they assured him that they will not be able to hurt them in any way.

Sūrah Al-Qamar started on the note that Doomsday is fast approaching, so that the infidels and pagans, who have lust and greed for this world and are unaware of the Hereafter, come to their senses. First, the punishment of the Hereafter is mentioned. Then the evil consequences of their misdeeds in the present life are cited. Reference is made to the conditions of world-famous nations, their opposition to their respective prophets and its evil consequences. The people of Nūḥ عليه السلام were the first people who were destroyed by Divine punishment. Many different kinds of devastating torments were inflicted on the people of Nūḥ, the tribes of 'Ad, Thamud and Lūṭ عليه السلام and the people of Fir'aun in

this world. Their stories and histories are recounted in detail on several occasions in the Qur'ān. Here they have been condensed.

All these five nations were the strongest and resourceful. It was not possible for any of the subdued nations to overcome any of these superpowers. The current set of verses show how the superpowers were destroyed by Divine punishment. After describing the punishment of each nation, the Qur'ān repeats the following statement as a refrain: فَكَيْفَ كَانَ عَذَابِىْ وَنُذُرِ (How then was My torment and My warnings?). That is, when the Divine chastisement overtook these nations who were very powerful in terms of might, wealth and number were killed like flies and mosquitoes. In addition, the following verse is repeated to advise the Muslims and the infidels in general: وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْاٰنَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِنْ مُّدَّكِرٍ (And indeed We have made the Qur'ān easy for seeking advice. So, is there one to seek advice?) This is to indicate that the only way to avoid the terrible chastisement is to take to the advice of the Qur'ān. Allah has made the Qur'ān easy to the extent of paying heed to the admonition and warnings. Only the most ill-fated person will not take advantage of the warnings.

The forthcoming verses address the people of the time of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ that they are not more powerful in terms of wealth, number and might than the people of Prophet Nūḥ عليه السلام, the tribes of 'Ād and Thamuū, Prophet Lūṭ's عليه السلام people and the people of Fir'aun. Then how are they sitting in a careless manner?

Verses 43 - 55

اَكُفَّارُكُمْ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ اُولٰٓئِكُمْ اَمْ لَكُمْ بَرَآءَةٌ فِى الزُّبُرِ ﴿٤٣﴾ اَمْ يَقُوْلُوْنَ نَحْنُ جَمِيْعٌ مُّنْتَصِرٌ ﴿٤٤﴾ سَيُهْزَمُ الْجَمْعُ وَيُوَلُّوْنَ الدُّبُرَ ﴿٤٥﴾ بَلِ السَّاعَةُ مَوْعِدُهُمْ وَالسَّاعَةُ اَدْهٰى وَاَمَرُّ ﴿٤٦﴾ اِنَّ الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ فِىْ ضَلٰلٍ وَّسُعُرٍ ﴿٤٧﴾ يَوْمَ يُسْحَبُوْنَ فِى النَّارِ عَلٰى وُجُوْهِهِمْ ؕ ذُوْقُوْا مَسَّ سَقَرَ ﴿٤٨﴾ اِنَّا كُلَّ شَىْءٍ خَلَقْنٰهُ بِقَدَرٍ ﴿٤٩﴾ وَمَآ اَمْرُنَآ اِلَّا وَاحِدَةٌ كَلَمْحٍ بِالْبَصَرِ ﴿٥٠﴾ وَلَقَدْ اَهْلَكْنَآ اَشْيَاعَكُمْ فَهَلْ مِنْ مُّدَّكِرٍ ﴿٥١﴾ وَكُلُّ شَىْءٍ فَعَلُوْهُ فِى الزُّبُرِ ﴿٥٢﴾ وَكُلُّ صَغِيْرٍ وَّكَبِيْرٍ

مُّسْتَطَرٌ ﴿٥٣﴾ إِنَّ الْمُتَّقِينَ فِي جَنّٰتٍ وَّنَهَرٍ ﴿٥٤﴾ فِي مَقْعَدِ صِدْقٍ عِنْدَ مَلِيكٍ مُّقْتَدِرٍ ﴿٥٥﴾

(Now) are the disbelievers among you in a better position than all of them (the aforesaid punished people), or do you have immunity (recorded) in the sacred books? [43] **Or do they say,"We are a large group, well-defended."?** [44] **Soon shall this 'large group' be defeated, and all will turn their backs.** [45] **Rather the Hour (of judgment) is their appointed time (for their full recompense), and the Hour is more calamitous and more bitter.** [46] **Surely the guilty ones are in error and madness.** [47] **On the Day when they will be dragged into the Fire on their faces, (it will be said to them,) "Taste the touch of Hell."** [48] **Verily, We have created every thing according to (Our) predestination.** [49] **And (implementation of) Our command is no more than a single act like the twinkling of an eye.** [50] **And We have destroyed people like you; so, is there one to take lesson?** [51] **And every thing they have done is recorded in the books (of deeds).** [52] **And every thing, small and big, is written down.** [53] **Of course, the God-fearing will be in gardens and rivers,** [54] **in a seat of Truth, near to the Omnipotent Sovereign.** [55]

Lexicological analysis

The word زُبُر *zubūr* (in verse 43) is the plural of *zabūr*, which stands for any written book. It specifically refers to the Scripture that was revealed to Prophet Dāwūd عليه السلام.

أَدْهٰى وَأَمَرّ (...more calamitous and more bitter...54:46). The word *adhā* means more or most calamitous. The word *amarr* is derived from *murr* which originally means 'bitter'. By extension anything 'difficult' or 'painful' is also referred to as *amarr* and *murr*. In the phrase فِي ضَلٰلٍ وَّسُعُرٍ *fī ḍalālin wa su'ur*, *ḍalāl*, as is known, means 'error' or 'deviation' and the word *su'ur* in the present context means the 'Hell-Fire'.[1] In the phrase *ashyā'akum*, (verse 51) *ashyā'* is the plural of *shi'ah*, and it means a 'follower', that is, those who follow their pattern of life.

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(1). This is according to one interpretation. The other meaning of the word is 'madness' and the translation in the text is based on this meaning. (Muhammad Taqi Usmani)

In the phrase مَقْعَدِ صِدْقٍ *maq'adi-ṣidqin*, the word *maq'ad* means 'seat' and the word *ṣidq* means 'truth' and implies the 'seat of truth' where there will be no idle and obscene talks.

اِنَّا كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقْنٰهُ بِقَدَرٍ (Verily, We have created every thing according to [Our] predestination...54:49). In the prepositional phrase *bi-qadar,* the word *qadar* literally denotes to 'measure' and to create something with a proper measure and proportion. It is possible for this literal sense of the word to apply in the current verse: Allah is the Supreme Sage Who created every species of the existent entity wisely with proper measurement - whether big or small, and in different shapes and sizes. Having created, He maintains the structure of every individual in a very wise measurement: The fingers and toes are not equal in size; the lengths are different; the length and breadth of hands and legs are wisely structured; and their bones, muscles and skins are created flexible to stretch and contract. When we analyze every single part of every single limb and organ of [human] body, we discern the wondrous vistas of Divine wisdom opening up.

As a theological term, *qadar* is used in the sense of *taqdīr* [Divine predetermination, predestination, preordainment, preordering or decree]. Most authorities on Tafsīr , on account of some versions of *ḥadīth*, take the word *qadar* here in this sense. It is recorded in Musnad of Aḥmad, Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim and Tirmidhī on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ that once the pagans of Quraish came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ debating and arguing with him on the question of *taqdīr* (Predestination). On that occasion this verse was revealed. In the light of this tradition, the verse purports to say that Allah has predetermined the total sum of everything. He created everything with predestined limits before they were created. He knew everything that will occur before it occurred, and recorded everything [time and place, growth and decline] that will occur, before they occurred. Everything that occurs in this world, occurs according to the Divine Plan worked out in Pre-Eternity or Eternity-without-Beginning.

The question of *taqdīr*, according to *Ahl-us-sunnah wal-jamā'ah*, is one of the affirmed and standard articles of faith in Islam. Anyone who denies it outright is an atheist or goes out of the pale Islam, and the sects that deny it by convoluted or twisted interpretation are *fāsiqīn* [sinners or

transgressors]. Imām Aḥmad, Abū Dāwūd and Ṭabarānī record a Tradition on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar ﷺ that the Holy Messenger ﷺ said: "Some members of every community are Magians, and the Magians of my Ummah are those who deny *taqdīr*. If they fall ill, do not visit them; and if they die, do not attend their funerals." (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī.) Allah, the Pure and Exalted, knows best!

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Qamar
Ends here

Sūrah Ar-Raḥmān
(The All-Merciful)

This Sūrah is Madanī, and it has 78 verses and 3 sections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 25

اَلرَّحْمٰنُ ﴿۱﴾ عَلَّمَ الْقُرْاٰنَ ﴿۲﴾ خَلَقَ الْاِنْسَانَ ﴿۳﴾ عَلَّمَهُ الْبَيَانَ
﴿۴﴾ اَلشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ بِحُسْبَانٍ ﴿۵﴾ وَّالنَّجْمُ وَالشَّجَرُ يَسْجُدٰنِ
﴿۶﴾ وَالسَّمَآءَ رَفَعَهَا وَوَضَعَ الْمِيْزَانَ ﴿۷﴾ اَلَّا تَطْغَوْا فِى الْمِيْزَانِ
﴿۸﴾ وَاَقِيْمُوا الْوَزْنَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا تُخْسِرُوا الْمِيْزَانَ ﴿۹﴾ وَالْاَرْضَ
وَضَعَهَا لِلْاَنَامِ ﴿۱۰﴾ فِيْهَا فَاكِهَةٌ وَّالنَّخْلُ ذَاتُ الْاَكْمَامِ ﴿۱۱﴾
وَالْحَبُّ ذُوالْعَصْفِ وَالرَّيْحَانُ ﴿۱۲﴾ فَبِاَىِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ
﴿۱۳﴾ خَلَقَ الْاِنْسَانَ مِنْ صَلْصَالٍ كَالْفَخَّارِ ﴿۱۴﴾ وَخَلَقَ الْجَآنَّ
مِنْ مَّارِجٍ مِّنْ نَّارٍ ﴿۱۵﴾ فَبِاَىِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿۱۶﴾ رَبُّ
الْمَشْرِقَيْنِ وَرَبُّ الْمَغْرِبَيْنِ ﴿۱۷﴾ فَبِاَىِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿۱۸﴾
مَرَجَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ يَلْتَقِيٰنِ ﴿۱۹﴾ بَيْنَهُمَا بَرْزَخٌ لَّا يَبْغِيٰنِ ﴿۲۰﴾ فَبِاَىِّ اٰلَآءِ
رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿۲۱﴾ يَخْرُجُ مِنْهُمَا اللُّؤْلُؤُ وَالْمَرْجَانُ ﴿۲۲﴾ فَبِاَىِّ
اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿۲۳﴾ وَلَهُ الْجَوَارِ الْمُنْشَئٰتُ فِى الْبَحْرِ

كَالْاَعْلَامِ ﴿٢٤﴾ فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿٢٥﴾

The Raḥmān (The All-Merciful) [1] **has taught the Qur'ān.** [2] **He has created man.** [3] **He has taught him (how) to express himself.** [4] **The sun and the moon are (bound) by a (fixed) calculation.** [5] **And the vine and the tree both prostrate (to Allah).** [6] **And He raised the sky high, and has placed the scale,** [7] **so that you should not be wrongful in weighing.** [8] **And observe the correct weight with fairness, and do not make weighing deficient.** [9] **And the earth is placed by Him for creatures,** [10] **in which there are fruits and the date-palms having sheaths,** [11] **and the grain having chaff, and fragrant flowers.** [12] **So, (O mankind and Jinn,) which of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?** [13] **He has created man from dry clay, ringing like pottery,** [14] **and created Jann (father of the Jinn) from a smokeless flame of fire.** [15] **So, (O mankind and Jinn,) which of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?** [16] **He is the Lord of both points of sunrise and both points of sunset.** [17] **So, which of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?** [18] **He has set forth the two seas that meet together,** [19] **while between them there is a barrier they do not transgress.** [20] **So, which of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?** [21] **From both of them come forth the pearl and the coral.** [22] **So, which of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?** [23] **And His are the sailing ships raised up in the sea like mountains.** [24] **So, which of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?** [25]

Linkage of the Sūrah and the Wisdom of Repeating the words, 'Which of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?'

The preceding Sūrah Al-Qamar was mainly concerned with some of the rebellious nations of antiquity who were punished for rejecting the Divine Message. The description of every punishment was followed by the sentence: فَكَيْفَ كَانَ عَذَابِىْ وَنُذُرِ (Then how was My torment and My warnings? ...54:16). This sentence was repeated many times in order to warn people against similar Divine punishment. Another verse that was repeated as a refrain at telling intervals is وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْاٰنَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِنْ مُّدَّكِرٍ "And indeed We have made the Qur'ān easy for seeking advice. So, is there one to seek advice?...54:17). This verse urges people to accept the Qur'ānic Message, believe in it and follow its right guidance.

Sūrah Ar-Raḥmān, on the other hand, mainly describes the boons and bounties of Allah, of this world as well as of the Hereafter. Thus when a particular bounty of Allah is described, the verse فَبِاَيِّ الآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ *fa-bi-ayyi' ālā'i Rabbikumā tukadhdhibān* (So, which of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?) is used deliberately as a refrain in order to awaken the people and urge them to give thanks to Allah for His favours. This verse is repeated thirty-one times in the Sūrah. According to the rules of stylish usage, repetition of an expression serves the deliberate purpose of 'emphasis'. Especially, the repetition in these two Sūrahs of the Qur'ān is repetition only in apparent form. In reality, the repeated sentence is each time related to a new subject, and having its own significance, cannot be taken as redundant. In Sūrah Al-Qamar, the فَكَيْفَ كَانَ عَذَابِىْ (Then how was My torment 54:16) has followed the description of each new torment. Likewise, in Sūrah Ar-Raḥmān, after the description of every new bounty the verse فَبِاَيِّ الآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ (So, (O mankind and Jinn,) which of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?) is repeated, which being related to a new subject is not redundant. 'Allāmah Suyūṭī رحمه الله تعالىٰ terms this device of repetition as *At-tardīd*. Arab masters of eloquence, regard this device as aesthetically beautiful, polished, effective, moving, forceful and persuasive use of language. The device is used both in prose as well as in poetry. It is used not only in Arabic but [almost in all the languages of the world, as for instance] the most accomplished and consummate poets of Persian and Urdu have used them. This is no occasion to collect samples of their compositions here. Tafsīr Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī has collected its several examples on this occasion.

Was Sūrah Ar-Raḥmān Revealed in Makkah or Madinah?

On the basis of a few narratives Imām Qurṭubī concluded that this Sūrah was revealed in Makkah, and he prefers this view. Tirmidhī records from Sayyidnā Jābir ﷺ that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ recited this Sūrah before some people who remained silent. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

> "I recited this Sūrah to the Jinns, on the night of Jinn, and their receptive response was better than yours! Whenever I recited Allah's statement فَبِاَيِّ الآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ (So, (O mankind and Jinn,) which of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?) They said: لَابِشَيْءٍ مِّنْ نِّعَمِكَ رَبَّنَا نُكَذِّبُ فَلَكَ الْحَمْدُ 'None of your bounties do we deny, our Lord! All praise is due to You'".

This narrative indicates that this Sūrah was revealed in Makkah, because 'the night of the Jinn' refers to the night when the Messenger of Allah ﷺ met the Jinns to convey to them the Message of the Qur'ān and impart knowledge to them. This incident took place in Makkah. Likewise, Imām Qurṭubī refers to a few more narratives which indicate that this Sūrah was revealed in Makkah .

The opening word of the first verse of the Sūrah is Ar-Raḥmān (The All-Merciful). One of the reasons for beginning the Sūrah with this name of Allah is presumably that the infidels of Makkah were unaware of this name of Allah. They used to say, مَا الرَّحمٰن؟ "What is Ar-Raḥmān? " [as mentioned in 25:60] This name has been selected here to let them know it.

The second reason could be to indicate that teaching the Qur'ān, which has been mentioned in the next verse as Allah's act, was a sheer gift flowing from Allah's beneficence, and not because this or any other act is obligatory on Allah for which He could be held responsible, nor because He is in need of anyone.

In the entire Sūrah, Allah's bounties - worldly as well spiritual - are continuously recounted. The greatest of all bounties is the knowledge of the Holy Qur'ān, because it is an all-comprehensive Book directing man in temporal and spiritual matters and in matters relating to this world and the next. Those who heeded the Holy Qur'ān and fulfilled its right, like the blessed Companions, Allah raised their status in the Hereafter and blessed them with inconceivable bounties and favours. In this world too they are promoted to such high stations as the greatest of kings were not able to attain.

Grammatically speaking, the verb عَلَّمَ *'allama* [to teach] requires two objects, the direct and the indirect: [1] that of which the knowledge is imparted; and [2] he to whom the knowledge is imparted. Here the first object [the Holy Qur'ān] is explicitly stated, but the second object is not. Some of the exegetes express the view that the second object is the Messenger of Allah ﷺ who was taught the Qur'ān directly by Allah, and through him the entire creation. It is possible to look at it from another point of view: The purpose of the Holy Qur'ān is to give guidance to the entire creation of Allah, and to teach them good morals and the righteous deeds. Therefore, no particular object has been specified. The fact that the

second object has not been explicitly specified indicates its generality, that is, it refers to the totality of human beings.

خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ عَلَّمَهُ الْبَيَانَ (He has created man. He has taught him [how] to express himself...55:4) Man's creation itself is a great boon of Allah and in the natural order of things he is first and foremost, so much so that even imparting the knowledge of the Qur'ān, which is mentioned first, can only take place after his creation. However, the bounty of Qur'ānic knowledge is mentioned first, and the creation of man later, because the fundamental object of man's creation is to impart to him the knowledge of the Holy Qur'ān, and for him to follow its guidance as stated elsewhere in the Qur'ān: وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوْنِ (And I did not create the Jinns and the human beings except that they should worship Me.) [51:56] Surely, worship without Divine guidance is not possible. The source of the Divine guidance is the Holy Qur'ān. Thus Qur'ānic knowledge is mentioned before man's creation.

Having created man, uncountable bounties are bestowed upon him. Of them, imparting the knowledge of expression has been mentioned especially, because the bounties necessary for man's growth and development, and his existence and survival like his food and water, his protection against cold and heat, his dwelling arrangements and so on are bounties in which all creatures are equal partners. Among the bounties that are peculiar to human beings Knowledge of the Qur'ān has been mentioned first, and it was followed by the knowledge of expressions, because deriving benefit from the Qur'ān, and imparting it to others, is dependent on the knowledge of expression. The word *bayān* ('how to express himself') comprehends all the means of communication created by Allah, like speech, writing etc. There are various languages and dialects of various nations in various regions of the world. All these are constituent parts of linguistic knowledge which is the practical interpretation or application of the verse عَلَّمَ اٰدَمَ الْاَسْمَآءَ كُلَّهَا (And He taught Adam the names, all of them) [2:31] فَتَبٰرَكَ اللّٰهُ اَحْسَنُ الْخٰلِقِيْنَ

Allah's Signs

اَلشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ بِحُسْبَانٍ (The sun and the moon are [bound] by a [fixed] calculation...55:5) This verse draws attention to two of the celestial bodies from among the bounties of Allah. They are especially mentioned presumably because the entire system of this world depends on the

movement of these bodies in their orbits in perfect succession, according to precise calculation that is never delayed nor disturbed.

The word حُسبَان *hūsban* with *ḍammah* [=u] on the first letter is, according to some lexicologists, used in the sense of *ḥisāb*, the infinitive, meaning 'to calculate', like غفران *ghufrān* [to forgive], سُبْحَان *sūbhan* [to declare purity], قرآن Qur'ān [to recite or read]. Other lexicologists feel that *hūsban* is the plural of *ḥisāb*. The meaning of the verse, according to the former lexicologists, would be: The two bodies, on which depends man's entire life, run on fixed courses. They are subject to certain laws and they perform regularly, punctually and unerringly their allocated tasks - alternation of night and day, change of seasons and determination of years and months. If we go by the latter lexicologists' interpretation that *husbān* is the plural of *ḥisāb,* then it will refer to the fact that each of the sun and the moon has its own calculated orbits. The entire solar system is proceeding on the basis of different calculations, and each one of them is so firm and accurate that no deviation has ever occurred, since millions of years, even for a second.

This age is regarded as an age of ascension for science. The marvelous new inventions of the scientific age have caused wonders even for the philosophers. However, there is a clear difference between human inventions and Divine creation, which every discerning person can observe. Human inventions are subject to a series of continuous breakdown and damage, which require to be serviced, repaired, overhauled or refurbished. A machine, no matter how strong or sophisticated, needs to be repaired or at least serviced after a while. If this is not done in time, it will remain useless. The huge Divine creation, on the other hand, needs no repairs, no service nor refurbishing at any time. Neither the solar system overtakes the lunar movement, nor does the lunar movement outstrip the solar system. The sun and the moon and other celestial bodies, each float and move in its own orbit.

وَالنَّجْمُ وَالشَّجَرُ يَسْجُدَان (And the vine and the tree both prostrate [to Allah]....55:6). The word *najm* refers to the 'plants having no stem' and the word *shajar* refers to any 'tree' with stems or trunk, twigs and branches. All of them prostrate to Allah. *Sajdah* or prostration is the supreme symbol of humility, respect, surrender and unconditional love and obedience of Allah. In this context, the verse means that Allah has

assigned a specific task to every tree, plant, creeper, and their leaves and fruits for the benefit of mankind and they are performing their tasks without the slightest deviation from their assigned duties. The plants without stems and the trees humbly submit themselves to Allah's will. Verse [6], read along with the preceding verse [5], shows that everything, from the largest celestial body to the smallest plant, is subject to His laws manifest in nature. A little disturbance in or deviation from their set course would bring down in pieces the whole universe, which has been created for the service of man. It is inconceivable, therefore, that man for whose service this vast and complicated but perfectly regulated universe has been brought into being would have been created without a purpose. The life of man surely has a grand Divine aim to which repeated reference has been made in this entire Surah and in other parts of the Qur'ān. There are two types of obedience: [1] obedience that is carried out by free will, as for instance, man and *jinn* are given free will to choose between obeying Allah's laws or disobeying them; and [2] all other creation of Allah are assigned specific tasks or duties to perform without any choice. The latter is referred to as *iṭā'ah takwīniyyah* or *jabriyyah* 'compelled or coerced obedience'. In the current verse, the word *sajdah* refers to this type of 'obedience to Allah's laws in nature' where the natural objects have no choice.

وَالسَّمَاءَ رَفَعَهَا وَوَضَعَ الْمِيزَانَ (And He raised the sky high, and has placed the scale....55:7) The verbs *rafa'a* and *waḍa'a* are antonyms: *rafa'a* means 'to raise up' and *waḍa'a* means 'to put down'. The verse first describes that Allah has raised the heavens. This could have its obvious or outer meaning referring to the physical height of the sky, and it could also have its metaphorical meaning, referring to the high status of the heaven: In relation to the earth, the heaven occupies a higher position. Normally, the earth is understood to be the opposite of the heaven. From this point of view, the heaven and the earth are treated as opposites and mentioned throughout the Holy Qur'ān in that way. Having described the high position of the heaven, the Qur'ān goes on to describe that Allah has set the balance, but 'placing the scale' *vis-à-vis* 'raising the heaven' does not seem to form a suitable pair according to the linguistic norm. As a matter of fact, a closer analysis of the context indicates that the verse is describing the 'placing of the earth'. Three verses later, verse (10) reads

وَالْأَرْضَ وَضَعَهَا لِلْأَنَامِ (And the earth is placed by Him for creatures...55:10) Thus the Qur'ān is actually describing the heaven and the earth as opposites. In between the two, a third factor [that of placing the scale] is inserted for a sage reason. The wisdom in this seems to lie in the fact that the verses that follow lay stress on observing justice and fairness. They do not allow violation of rights and practice of injustice. Following the verses referring to 'raising the heaven' and 'placing the earth' are verses that describe the scale and enjoin the correct use of it. This implies that the ultimate purpose of creating the heaven and the earth was to establish justice, peace and harmony. Peace, safety, security and harmony cannot prevail on earth without establishing justice. Without justice, chaos, disorder, mischief and corruption will hold sway in the land. Allah, the Pure and the Most High, knows best!

The word مِيزَان *mizān* has been interpreted variously. In the current verse, scholars like Mujāhid, Qatādah, Suddī and others interpret it in the sense of 'justice', because that is the purpose of *mizān* [scale]. Other scholars have taken the word in its obvious sense of a piece of equipment used to determine the weights of people or things. This equipment could be a pair of scales, consisting of a bar with a pan or a dish at each end or it may be some modern equipment used for the purpose of measuring and weighing. The ultimate sense of this interpretation in any case is maintaining rights and establishing justice and fair play.

أَلَّا تَطْغَوْا فِي الْمِيزَانِ (so that you should not be wrongful in weighing....55:8). The earlier verse stated the creation of the scale, and this verse states the reason for its creation. The imperfect verb تَطْغَوْا *taṭghaw* is derived from طُغْيَان *ṭughyān* which stands for 'injustice'. Thus verses [7] and [8] put together mean: '[The '*mizān* or scale' has been created so that you may not transgress the balance and thus practice injustice'.

وَأَقِيمُوا الْوَزْنَ بِالْقِسْطِ (And observe the correct weight with fairness, ...55:9). The word قِسْط *qisṭ* literally means 'justice'. The meaning is obvious: 'And observe the weight with equity'.

وَلَا تُخْسِرُوا الْمِيزَانَ (and do not make weighing deficient...55:9). The word خسر *khusr* means 'to skimp or make deficient'. The opening part of verse [9] was the positive aspect of the injunction, and the concluding part is its negative aspect, in that it is unlawful to fall short of measure or weight.

The two parts, positive and negative, put together the verse as a whole means 'Do not cheat in weights and measures, but rather observe justice and fairness'.

وَالْأَرْضَ وَضَعَهَا لِلْأَنَامِ (And the earth is placed by Him for creatures...55:10). The word أنَامٌ *'anām* with *fatḥa* [=a] on the first letter on the grammatical measure of سَحَاب *saḥāb*, refers to all the creatures that are on the surface of the earth. Baiḍāwī translates the word as 'everything having a soul'. Evidently, the word *'anām* in the verse refers to mankind and the *jinn,* because only these two species of Allah's creation are obligated to observe the precepts of Sharī'ah. Furthermore, they are addressed throughout the Sūrah. For instance in the refrain verse فَبِأَيِّ الَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ (So, [O mankind and Jinn,] which of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?...55:13) The dual second person attached pronouns and the dual forms of the verbs second person sustained throughout Sūrah Ar-Raḥmān are addressed to Jinn and mankind.

فِيهَا فَاكِهَةٌ (in which there are fruits ....55:11). The word فَاكِهَة *fākihah* refers to fruits that are normally eaten after food for pleasure.

وَالنَّخْلُ ذَاتُ الْأَكْمَامِ (...and the date-palms having sheaths...55:11). The word أَكْمَام *akmām* is the plural of كِمّ *kimm,* and refers to 'the cover that surrounds and protects dates and other fruits in the beginning'.

وَالْحَبُّ ذُوالْعَصْفِ (and the grain having chaff, ...55:12). The word حَبّ *ḥabb* means grain, as for instance 'wheat', 'gram', 'rice', 'a kind of vetch', 'lentil' and so on. The word *'aṣf* is the outer cover of some type of grains, like rice or wheat husk, which Allah creates with His power and consummate wisdom. Man's attention is drawn to the fact that each grain of the food he eats several times a day has been created by Allah, out of His unbounded grace and beneficence, from soil and water in inconceivably wonderful ways. He protected every grain against insects with the outer cover until maturity, so that it was prepared as a morsel of food. The current verse, thus, briefly points to all those natural things that are so essential for the physical development of man. The mention of *'aṣf* [husk] is to remind that it is the fodder for your animals. This is another bounty of Allah because man needs the milk of the animals for nourishment. Furthermore, animals are used as a means of transportation to convey human beings from place to place as well as to

carry load, cargo and luggage.

وَالرَّيْحَانُ (...and fragrant flowers....55:12). The popular meaning of the word الرَّيْحَان *raiḥān* is fragrance or fragrant plant or sweet-scented plants. Ibn Zaid has interpreted the word thus in the current verse. Allah has produced a variety of fragrances and sweet-smelling flowers on plants and trees. Sometimes the word *raihan* is used in the sense of livelihood and sustenance. It is said in Arabic: خَرَجْتُ اَطْلُبَ رَيْحَانَ اللّٰهِ (I came out looking for sustenance provided by Allah.) Sayyidna Ibn 'Abbās ؓ interprets it in this strain.

Mankind and Jinn are surrounded by Divine Bounties

فَبِاَيِّ الَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ (So, [O mankind and Jinn,] which of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?...55:13). The word آلاء *'ālā'* is the plural and it means 'benefits, benefaction, favour, boon, blessing or bounty'. The address is to the two species of Jinn and men referred to in verse 33 below and many other verses of Sūrah Ar-Raḥmān where Jinn are specifically mentioned.

The Creation of Humans and Jinns

خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ صَلْصَالٍ كَالْفَخَّارِ (He has created man from dry clay, ringing like pottery...55:14). The word *insān* [man] in this context refers unanimously to 'Ādam ؑ. The word *ṣalṣāl* [clay] refers to the wet soil when it becomes dry and heavy. The word *fakhkhār* refers to the wet soil when it is baked.

وَخَلَقَ الْجَآنَّ مِنْ مَّارِجٍ مِّنْ نَّارٍ (and created *Jānn* [father of the *Jinns*] from a smokeless flame of fire...55:15) The word جَانّ *jann,* refers to the class of beings called '*jinn*'. The word مَارِج *mārij* refers to the ' smokeless flame of fire'. The major element in the creation of *jinn* is the smokeless flame of fire, just as the major element in the creation of man is dry sounding clay.

Allah is the Lord of the Two Points of Sunrise and the Two Points of Sunset

رَبُّ الْمَشْرِقَيْنِ وَرَبُّ الْمَغْرِبَيْنِ (He is the Lord of both points of sunrise and both points of sunset...55:17) The sun rises at different cardinal points in the east in winter and in summer: Thus we have the two easts [*mashriqain*]. Similarly, the sun sets at different cardinal points in the west in winter and summer: Thus we have two wests [*maghribain*].

Allah created Different Types of Water

مَرَجَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ يَلْتَقِيٰنِ (He has set forth the two seas that meet together...55:19). Literally, the verb *maraja* means 'to let loose'. The word *baḥrain* [two seas or two types of waters] refers to sweet and salty waters. Allah has created two types of waters. In some places the two seas meet together, the samples of which are available in every region of the world. However, where the sweet and salty waters meet, there is a distinct barrier between the sweet and salty waters. In some cases, the two types of waters are seen distinctly in higher or lower position. If the salty water overrides the sweet water, the characteristics of the sweet water will not be spoiled; nor will the characteristics of the salty water be affected in any way if the sweet water overrides it. Thus the Qur'ān states: مَرَجَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ يَلْتَقِيٰنِ بَيْنَهُمَا بَرْزَخٌ لَّا يَبْغِيٰنِ "He has set forth the two seas that meet together, while between them there is a barrier they do not transgress....55:20)

يَخْرُجُ مِنْهُمَا اللُّؤْلُؤُ وَالْمَرْجَانُ (From both of them come forth the pearl and the coral....55:22). The meaning of لُؤْلُؤ *lu'lu'* is quite well-known, that is, 'pearl'. The word مَرْجَان *marjān* too is one of the 'precious jewels or gems'. It is a hard substance formed from coral which has branches like trees. Both these precious jewels or gems are produced in the waters. It is generally understood that pearls and corals are both hunted or fished for in the salty waters, not in the fresh waters, whereas the verse states that they are fished for in both kinds of waters. It is possible to reconcile the verse with the general understanding: Pearls as well as corals originate in sweet waters where it is not easy to hunt for or from which to fish out the gems or jewels. The sweet waters flow into the salty waters where the substances are carried and deposited. The pearls and corals are brought out from there. Therefore, the source of the pearls and corals is said to be the salty seas.

وَلَهُ الْجَوَارِ الْمُنْشَئٰتُ فِي الْبَحْرِ كَالْأَعْلَامِ (And His are the sailing ships raised up in the sea like mountains...55:24). The word جَوَارِى *jawarī* is the plural of جَارِيَة *jāriyah*. One of its meanings is ship and that is the sense in which it is used in the current verse. The word مُنْشَئٰت *munsha'āt* is derived from نَشَأ *nasha'a* which means 'to rise up or high, be lofty'. *Al-munsha'āt* thus refers to 'sails of the ships that are lofty'. The verse describes the wisdom of making the ship and its running on the surface of the water.

Verses 26 - 45

كُلُّ مَنْ عَلَيْهَا فَانٍ ﴿٢٦﴾ وَّيَبْقٰى وَجْهُ رَبِّكَ ذُوالْجَلٰلِ وَالْاِكْرَامِ
﴿٢٧﴾ فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَاۤءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿٢٨﴾ يَسْئَلُهٗ مَنْ فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ
وَالْاَرْضِ ط كُلَّ يَوْمٍ هُوَ فِىْ شَاْنٍ ﴿٢٩﴾ فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَاۤءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ
﴿٣٠﴾ سَنَفْرُغُ لَكُمْ اَيُّهَ الثَّقَلٰنِ ﴿٣١﴾ فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَاۤءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿٣٢﴾
يٰمَعْشَرَ الْجِنِّ وَالْاِنْسِ اِنِ اسْتَطَعْتُمْ اَنْ تَنْفُذُوْا مِنْ اَقْطَارِ السَّمٰوٰتِ
وَالْاَرْضِ فَانْفُذُوْا ط لَاتَنْفُذُوْنَ اِلَّا بِسُلْطٰنٍ ﴿٣٣﴾ فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَاۤءِ رَبِّكُمَا
تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿٣٤﴾ يُرْسَلُ عَلَيْكُمَا شُوَاظٌ مِّنْ نَّارٍ ۙ وَّنُحَاسٌ فَلَا تَنْتَصِرٰنِ
﴿٣٥﴾ فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَاۤءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿٣٦﴾ فَاِذَا انْشَقَّتِ السَّمَاۤءُ فَكَانَتْ
وَرْدَةً كَالدِّهَانِ ﴿٣٧﴾ فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَاۤءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿٣٨﴾ فَيَوْمَئِذٍ
لَّايُسْئَلُ عَنْ ذَنْۢبِهٖۤ اِنْسٌ وَّلَاجَاۤنٌّ ﴿٣٩﴾ فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَاۤءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ
﴿٤٠﴾ يُعْرَفُ الْمُجْرِمُوْنَ بِسِيْمٰهُمْ فَيُؤْخَذُ بِالنَّوَاصِىْ وَالْاَقْدَامِ
﴿٤١﴾ فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَاۤءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿٤٢﴾ هٰذِهٖ جَهَنَّمُ الَّتِىْ يُكَذِّبُ بِهَا
الْمُجْرِمُوْنَ ﴿٤٣﴾ يَطُوْفُوْنَ بَيْنَهَا وَبَيْنَ حَمِيْمٍ اٰنٍ ﴿٤٤﴾ فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَاۤءِ
رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿٤٥﴾

Every *one* who lives on it (the earth) has to perish. [26] **And your Lord's Countenance will remain, full of majesty, full of honour.** [27] **So, which of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?** [28] **All those in the heavens and the earth beseech Him (for their needs.) Every day He is at some task.** [29] **So, which of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?** [30] **Soon We are going to spare Ourselves for you (to reckon your deeds), O two heavy species (of Jinns and mankind)!** [31] **So, which of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?** [32] **O genera of Jinns and mankind, If you are able to penetrate beyond the realms of the heavens and the earth, then penetrate. You cannot penetrate except with an authority.** [33] **So, which of the bounties of your Lord**

will you deny? [34] **A flame of fire and a smoke will be loosed against you, and you will not (be able) to defend.** [35] **So, which of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?** [36] **So, (it will be a terrible event) when the sky will be split apart and will become rosy, like (red) hides.** [37] **So, which of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?** [38] **On that day, neither a man will be questioned about his sin, nor a Jinn, (because every thing is known to Allah).** [39] **So, which of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?** [40] **The guilty ones will be recognized (by the angels) by their marks and will be seized by foreheads and feet.** [41] **So, which of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?** [42] **This is the Jahannam (Hell) that the guilty people deny.** [43] **They will circle around between it and between hot, boiling water.** [44] **So, which of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?** [45]

Allah is the Ever-living, Free of all Need

كُلُّ مَنْ عَلَيْهَا فَانٍ وَّيَبْقٰى وَجْهُ رَبِّكَ ذُوالْجَلٰلِ وَالْاِكْرَامِ (Every one who lives on it (the earth) has to perish, and your Lord's Countenance will remain, full of majesty, full of honour...55:26-27). The attached pronoun [it] refers to الارض *al-ard* [the earth] which has been explicitly mentioned antecedently in verse [10] وَالْاَرْضَ وَضَعَهَا لِلْاَنَامِ (And the earth is placed by Him for creatures..). Furthermore, 'the earth' is one of those general things that can be referred to by a pronoun even if they are not mentioned explicitly as an antecedent. Verse [26] means that man and *jinn* that dwell on the earth are subject to decay and death. *Jinn* and man have specifically been singled out in this verse, because in this Surah these two species of Allah's creation are mainly addressed. This, however, does not necessarily imply that the heaven and the celestial beings are not perishable. In fact, on another occasion in the Qur'ān Allah has stated in general terms: كُلُّ شَيْءٍ هَالِكٌ اِلَّا وَجْهَه (Everything is going to perish except His Face). (28:88)

وَجْهُ رَبِّكَ (...your Lord's Countenance ....55:27). The word *wajh* [Face], according to majority of the exegetes, stands for the 'Being of Allah'. The attached second person pronoun in *rabb-i-kā* [=your Lord] refers to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. It is a great honour for him that he should be remembered by Allah in special ways when praising him, as for instance, *'abduhū* (His servant). Here, Allah, the Lord of lords, declares His direct special relationship with the Holy Prophet ﷺ and addresses him thus:

rabb-i-kā [your Lord].

According to the well-known exegetes, the verse purports to convey that since everything [including *jinn* and mankind] dwelling on earth will be reduced to nothing, and the heavenly bodies all brought to naught, and the whole material universe made non-existent, still human reason demands that there should be a Being who should remain and who should never die. Such a Being is Allah Who created the whole universe and Who is the First and the Final Cause of all things. He alone will abide because He is Self-Subsisting, All-Sustaining, Independent and Besought of all.

The word *fanā'* has two possible meanings: [1] everything is potentially subject to decay and death and is eventually destined to perish, having no capacity for permanence and immortality; and [2] all things will actually pass away on Doomsday.

Other exegetes have interpreted the phrase وَجْهُ رَبِّكَ 'your Lord's Countenance' to mean 'your side', that is, out of all existent beings only those things will attain permanence that are on the side of Allah. This includes the Being of Allah and His Attributes. It also includes the actions and conditions of Allah's creation that remain firmly attached to Allah and is never separated from Him in any situation. In sum, the verse means: 'Everything that man, *jinn* and angels do for Allah's pleasure will remain under His care and protection and as such will attain permanence, never to perish .' This interpretation is supported by another verse: مَا عِنْدَكُمْ يَنْفَدُ وَمَا عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ بَاقٍ (What is with you shall end and what is with Allah shall last....16:96) The phrase 'what is with you' refers to 'wealth and power, comfort and discomfort, love and hatred'. All these states and matters are transitory and must perish. The phrase 'what is with Allah' refers to 'man's actions and states which remain firmly attached to Allah and is never separated from Him in any situation are destined to last, never to perish. Allah, the Pure and Most Exalted, knows best!

ذُوالْجَلٰلِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ (...full of majesty, full of honour...55:27). In other words, the Lord is the Master of Greatness, Grandeur and Tremendousness. This is Allah's Majesty that overwhelms His creation and fills them with awe. The Lord is also the Master of Honour, signifying that those who benefit by the great favours Allah has bestowed upon them and walk in the path

of truth and righteousness will be granted more favours by the Lord of Honour. Despite being the Lord of Greatness and Majesty, Allah is not like the worldly kings and rulers who would not pay attention to others or the indigent people. He grants their petition and invocation. The next verse [to be analysed in the forthcoming paragraph] bears testimony to this interpretation. The current phrase under discussion constitutes one of those special Attributes of Allah which if a suppliant were to invoke before calling upon Allah for help, protection, inspiration and a host of other things, the supplication will be readily granted as recorded in Tirmidhi, Nasā'ī and Musnad of Aḥmad. Ibn 'Amir ﷺ has transmitted that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: اَلِظُّوْا بِيَا ذَا الْجَلَالِ وَالْاِكْرَامِ (Persist [in invoking Allah] with 'O Lord of Majesty and Honour'." The imperative *alizzū* is derived from the infinitive *ilzāz* which means 'to continue firmly in some course of action'. [Maẓharī]

يَسْئَلُهٗ مَنْ فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ كُلَّ يَوْمٍ هُوَ فِىْ شَاْنٍ (All those in the heavens and the earth beseech Him. Every day He is at some task...55:29) The verse signifies that all creatures stand in need of Allah, in all conditions and situations. They all seek His help willingly or unwillingly. The earthly creatures ask for their specific needs. In this world, they need sustenance, health and welfare, and comfort; and in the Hereafter, they need forgiveness, mercy and Paradise. The celestial creatures do not eat and drink, they do however need Allah's mercy and grace. Allah's grace, forgiveness and so on surround them all the time. The phrase كُلَّ يَوْمٍ 'every day' is the adverb of time of the verb 'يَسْئَلُهٗ' 'beseech'.[1] The 'day' is not used in its popular sense, but in the sense of 'time' in general. All His creation, in different regions, in different languages implore for their needs all the time. Obviously, each member of the earthly and celestial beings has countless needs. Who else besides the Absolutely Powerful Being, the Lord of Majesty, is able to respond to their needs every moment of the time? Therefore, 'every day' is followed by the sentence هُوَ فِىْ شَاْنٍ 'He is at some task', that is, His Attributes know no limit or count, and keep finding their manifestations in diverse ways all the time. He gives life to some and causes others to die. He elevates some and others He abases. Some He

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(1) This is according to one construction of the sentence. Other exegetes have taken the phrase 'every day' as relating to 'He is at some task'. The translation of the verse given above is based on this latter construction, which is also adopted by Moulana Thanawi رحمہ اللہ تعالیٰ. (Muhammad Taqi Usmani).

causes to become ill and others He cures. He alleviates the adversity of some; He causes the aggrieved ones to smile; He grants the requests of suppliants; He forgives the sins of the sinners and makes them deserving of Paradise; He gives power to some, and He snatches it away from others and abases them. In sum, every Attribute of Allah keeps finding its manifestation in diverse ways all the time.

A Warning for Humans and Jinn

سَنَفْرُغُ لَكُمْ اَيُّهَ الثَّقَلٰنِ (Soon We are going to spare Ourselves for you [to reckon your deeds], O two heavy species! ...55:31) The word ثقلان *thaqalān* is the dual of ثقل *thaqal* which denotes 'burden or load'. Thus the word *ath-thaqalān* [the dual form] denotes 'the two heavy or weighty things', and signifies 'the men' and 'the *Jinn*' as the context shows. In Arabic, the word *thaqal* refers to anything the weight or value of which is well-known. It is in this sense that the word has occurred in the following Prophetic Tradition: اِنِّیْ تَارِکٌ فِيْكُمُ الثَّقَلَيْنِ (Indeed I leave amongst you two weighty and valuable things... which will continue to guide you.) Some versions of the Tradition state that those two weighty and valuable things are: كِتَابُ اللّٰهِ وَعِتْرَتِی "Allah's Book and my family" and others state: كِتَابُ اللّٰه وَ سُنَّتِی "Allah's Book and my normative Sunnah [practices]". The end result of both the versions amount to the same thing because *'itrah* refers to both types of family, lineal or spiritual. Therefore, it refers to all the noble Companions. The end result of the Tradition is that after the Prophet ﷺ there are two things that will serve to guide and set aright the Muslims: [1] the Book of Allah; and [2] the example of the blessed Companions in all their mutual dealings and transactions. The version that uses *'itrah* instead of *Sunnah* means the teachings of the Prophet ﷺ that reached the Muslims through the noble Companions.

Be that as it may, the word ثَقَلَين *thaqalain* in the Tradition refers to the two weighty and valuable things. From this point of view, *Ath-thaqalān*, in the current verse, refers to the two species of Allah's creation, *Jinn* and human beings, because they are the weightiest and most valuable beings [possessed of soul] dwelling on earth.

Then the verse says, 'Soon We are going to spare Ourselves for you' The verb سَنَفْرُغُ *sanafrughu* is derived from فَرَاغ *farāgh*, which means to be free from occupation. The antonym of *farāgh* is شُغُل *shughl* [to occupy]. The word *farāgh* informs us of two things: [1] that one was occupied with

something; and [2] now he has become free from that occupation. This type of *farāgh* is common in human beings. However, neither of these senses apply to Allah. He is above them. Surely, nothing will occupy Allah from attending to anything else, nor does He become free or unoccupied like human beings do. Therefore, the verb *sanafrughu* [We are going to spare Ourselves to you] is employed as a metaphor. This metaphorical use of the word is common in human speech. This expression is used to show the importance of some work: 'We are now free to attend to you, being fully focused on you'. Anyone who fully focuses attention on any work, idiomatically it is said that 'he has no other work or he has nothing else to do'. In a verse preceding this [29], it was mentioned that the earthly beings ask for their specific needs, such as sustenance, health and welfare, and comfort; and forgiveness, mercy and Paradise. The celestial beings need Allah's mercy, grace and forgiveness which surround them all the time. From this point of view, Allah is, every moment, in a state of characteristic manifestation of His Divinity and Divine Attributes. The verse *sanafrughu* [We are going to spare Ourselves for you...] indicates that on the Day of Judgement all petitions, their acceptance and acting on them will come to an end. Of all the manifestations, there shall remain only one manifestation and that is taking account of deeds and passing judgement with absolute justice and equity. [Rūḥ]

يٰمَعْشَرَ الْجِنِّ وَالْاِنْسِ اِنِ اسْتَطَعْتُمْ اَنْ تَنْفُذُوْا مِنْ اَقْطَارِ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ فَانْفُذُوْا ؕ لَاتَنْفُذُوْنَ اِلَّا بِسُلْطٰنٍ ﴿۳۳﴾

(O genera of Jinns and mankind, If you are able to penetrate beyond the realms of the heavens and the earth, then penetrate. You cannot penetrate except with an authority....55:33)

In the preceding verse *jinn* and mankind were addressed as *Ath-thaqalan* and warned that their deeds will be reviewed and every single one of them will attract reward or punishment. The current verse purports to say that no one will be able to hide from death, nor will anyone be able to escape from attendance or giving account of actions on the Day of Judgement. This verse does not use the expression ثَقَلٰن *Thaqalan* as in the preceding verse but explicitly uses the expression يٰمَعْشَرَ الْجِنِّ وَالْاِنْسِ (O genera of *Jinns* and mankind) '*Jinn*' is mentioned first followed by 'men' presumably because a high-power energy is required to pass through the confines of heaven and earth. Allah has given Jinns

more power than human beings in such matters. The meaning of the verse is: 'O Company of *Jinn* and human beings, if you think that you will be able to find refuge and thus avert death by avoiding the angel of death or run away from the Plains of Gathering or the Plains of Reckoning, then try to cross the bounds of the heavens and the earth if you have the power and ability to do so.' This is no mean task. This requires high-powered energy. The combined forces of Jinns and mankind will not be able to harness the energy to go beyond the confines of the heavens and the earth. The purport of the verse is not to show the possibility or probability of passing beyond the zones of the heavens and the earth. The proposition is hypothetical. The purport of the verse is to demonstrate the utter powerlessness and inability of men and Jinns to achieve this feat.

If the purpose of 'penetrating through the heavens and the earth' mentioned in the verse is to escape death, then it refers to this world and means: It is not within the power of any man or *Jinns* to cross the bounds of the heavens and the earth and escape death. This is stated according to human thinking. Otherwise, no one is outside the power and the authority of Allah, even if he crosses the bounds of the heaven and the earth. And if the escape intended by 'penetrating through the heavens and the earth' stands for 'escaping accountability on the Day of Reckoning', the purport of the verse is to demonstrate its absolute impossibility. For according to other Qur'ānic verses and Traditional narratives the heaven will crack open, on the Day of Judgement, and all the angels will border on the sides of the earth and the people will be hemmed in from all sides. The Jinn and human beings will experience the horrors of the Day of Resurrection and run in different directions. In whichever direction they run the angels will lay siege to the areas that Allah has fortified for the purpose of recapturing the escapees. [Rūḥ]

This Verse does not point to Space Exploration by Rockets and Sputniks

In the present scientific age, experiments are being conducted in an effort to come out of the gravity of the earth and to explore the heavenly bodies by rockets, sputniks and other spacecrafts. Obviously, none of these experiments are conducted beyond the bounds of the heaven. In fact, they are far below the surface of the heaven, let alone crossing the

heavenly confines. Thus this verse has no bearing on space travels and reported incidents of reaching some of the heavenly bodies. Some simple-minded people posit this verse as the basis of demonstrating the possibility of space travels, whereas these simpletons are merely displaying ignorance about the actual meaning of the Qur'ān.

يُرْسَلُ عَلَيْكُمَا شُوَاظٌ مِّنْ نَّارٍ وَّنُحَاسٌ فَلَا تَنْتَصِرٰنِ (A flame of fire and a smoke will be loosed against you, and you will not [be able] to defend...55:35) Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ and other leading authorities on Qur'ānic exegesis have said that the word *shuwaz* with refers to 'flame or fire without smoke' and the word nuḥās refers to 'smoke in which there is no flame'. This verse too addresses the two species of creation, the *jinns* and mankind. It addresses them and describes how fire and smoke will be unleashed against them. The verse could mean that after the reckoning is over, and the disbelievers are sent to the Hell, they will experience two different types of punishment. In some places there will be only fire and flame, with no smoke at all. In other places there will be only smoke and no flame or fire. Other Qur'ānic exegetes regard this verse as a supplement to the preceding one, and assign the following meaning to it: O *jinn* and mankind, it is not within your power to cross the bounds of the heavens. If you do attempt to escape on the Day of Resurrection, then the angels [including those guarding the Hellfire] will bring you back by directing the flames of fire and smoke. The verb فَلَا تَنْتَصِرٰنِ *falā-tantaṣirān* is derived from اِنْتِصَار *intiṣār* which means 'to help someone to defend him against a calamity' and thus the words فَلَاتَنْتَصِرٰنِ *falā-tantaṣirān* signify that the *jinns* and mankind will not be able to help each other against Divine punishment, try as they might.

The Horrors of the Day of Resurrection

فَيَوْمَئِذٍ لَّايُسْئَلُ عَنْ ذَنْبِهٖٓ اِنْسٌ وَّلَاجَانٌّ (On that day, neither a man will be questioned about his sin, nor a *Jinn*...55:39) One interpretation of this verse is that no one will be asked whether or not he had committed the sin, because it will have already been recorded by the angels in the ledger of deeds, and Allah has the Pre-Eternal knowledge of it. The question will be 'why' did they commit the sin? This is the interpretation of Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ. Mujāhid رحمه الله تعالى interprets it as follows: There will be no need for the angels of punishment to question the criminals whether or not they committed the sin. They will be known by their special marks [See verse

(41) below] clearly showing on their faces. The angels will be able to recognize them by the their distinguishing marks and hurl them into the Hellfire according to the type of misdeeds they might have committed. A composite interpretation of the two explanations is as follows: This event will take place when people will have given account of their deeds, and judgment will have been passed against the criminals to go to Hell on the Day of Reckoning. They will not be questioned nor will any negotiation be held about their sins at that stage. Their characteristic signs will be seen on their faces, and accordingly they will be hurled into Hell.

Qatādah رحمه الله تعالیٰ says that the verse refers to a stage after they will have been questioned about their sins, but they will have refused under oath. Then their mouths and tongues will be sealed, and their hands and feet will be asked to bear witness. At that stage no more questions will be asked from them. Ibn Kathīr notes all three explanations. They are close to each other, and thus there is no conflict.

يُعْرَفُ الْمُجْرِمُوْنَ بِسِيْمٰهُمْ فَيُؤْخَذُ بِالنَّوَاصِيْ وَالْاَقْدَامِ (The guilty ones will be recognized [by the angels] by their marks and will be seized by foreheads and feet...55:41) The word *sima* means 'a sign'. Ḥasan Baṣrī رحمه الله تعالیٰ says that the day when sentence will be passed against the guilty to go to Hell, the following will be their signs: They will be known by their dark faces and their blue eyes. Through grief their faces will turn pale. The angels will recognize the guilty by these signs and seize them.

The word نَوَاصِیْ *nawāṣī* is the plural of نَاصِيَةٌ *nāṣiyah,* and means 'forelock'. Some will be dragged by their forelocks, and others will be dragged by their feet. Or it could mean that sometimes they will be dragged by their forelocks and at other times they will be dragged by their feet. The third explanation could be that the angels of punishment will bend their foreheads down to their feet and tie the forelocks to the feet, and throw them into the Hellfire . Allah knows best!

Verses 46-78

وَلِمَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهٖ جَنَّتٰنِ ﴿٤٦﴾ فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿٤٧﴾
ذَوَاتَآ اَفْنَانٍ ﴿٤٨﴾ فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿٤٩﴾ فِيْهِمَا عَيْنٰنِ

تَجْرِيٰنِ ﴿٥٠﴾ فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَاۤءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿٥١﴾ فِيْهِمَا مِنْ كُلِّ فَاكِهَةٍ
زَوْجٰنِ ﴿٥٢﴾ فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَاۤءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿٥٣﴾ مُتَّكِئِيْنَ عَلٰى فُرُشٍۢ
بَطَآئِنُهَا مِنْ اِسْتَبْرَقٍ ؕ وَجَنَا الْجَنَّتَيْنِ دَانٍ ﴿٥٤﴾ فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَاۤءِ رَبِّكُمَا
تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿٥٥﴾ فِيْهِنَّ قٰصِرٰتُ الطَّرْفِ ۙ لَمْ يَطْمِثْهُنَّ اِنْسٌ قَبْلَهُمْ وَلَا
جَآنٌّ ﴿٥٦﴾ فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَاۤءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿٥٧﴾ كَاَنَّهُنَّ الْيَاقُوْتُ
وَالْمَرْجَانُ ﴿٥٨﴾ فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَاۤءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿٥٩﴾ هَلْ جَزَآءُ
الْاِحْسَانِ اِلَّا الْاِحْسَانُ ﴿٦٠﴾ فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَاۤءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿٦١﴾ وَمِنْ
دُوْنِهِمَا جَنَّتٰنِ ﴿٦٢﴾ فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَاۤءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿٦٣﴾ مُدْهَآمَّتٰنِ
﴿٦٤﴾ فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَاۤءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿٦٥﴾ فِيْهِمَا عَيْنٰنِ نَضَّاخَتٰنِ ﴿٦٦﴾
فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَاۤءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿٦٧﴾ فِيْهِمَا فَاكِهَةٌ وَّنَخْلٌ وَّرُمَّانٌ ﴿٦٨﴾
فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَاۤءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿٦٩﴾ فِيْهِنَّ خَيْرٰتٌ حِسَانٌ ﴿٧٠﴾ فَبِاَيِّ
اٰلَاۤءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿٧١﴾ حُوْرٌ مَّقْصُوْرٰتٌ فِى الْخِيَامِ ﴿٧٢﴾ فَبِاَيِّ
اٰلَاۤءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿٧٣﴾ لَمْ يَطْمِثْهُنَّ اِنْسٌ قَبْلَهُمْ وَلَا جَآنٌّ ﴿٧٤﴾
فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَاۤءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿٧٥﴾ مُتَّكِئِيْنَ عَلٰى رَفْرَفٍ خُضْرٍ
وَّعَبْقَرِيٍّ حِسَانٍ ﴿٧٦﴾ فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَاۤءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿٧٧﴾ تَبٰرَكَ اسْمُ
رَبِّكَ ذِى الْجَلٰلِ وَالْاِكْرَامِ ﴿٧٨﴾

And for the one who is fearful of having to stand before his Lord, there are two gardens [46] **So, which of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?** [47] **both having lot of branches.** [48] **So, which of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?** [49] **In both there are two flowing springs.** [50] **So, which of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?** [51] **In both there are two kinds of every fruit.** [52] **So, which of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?** [53] **(The people of these gardens will be) reclining on floorings whose (even) linings are of thick silk, and the fruits plucked from the two gardens will be at hand.**

[54] So, which of the bounties of your Lord will you deny? [55] In them there are maidens restraining their glances, whom neither a man will have touched before them, nor a Jinn. [56] So, which of the bounties of your Lord will you deny? [57] They look like rubies and corals. [58] So, which of the bounties of your Lord will you deny? [59] Is there any reward for goodness other than goodness? [60] So, which of the bounties of your Lord will you deny? [61] And lesser than these two, there are two other gardens (for the second category of the God-fearing), [62] So, which of the bounties of your Lord will you deny? [63] both dark green! [64] So, which of the bounties of your Lord will you deny? [65] In both there are two springs gushing forth profusely. [66] So, which of the bounties of your Lord will you deny? [67] In both there are fruits and date-palms and pomegranates. [68] So, which of the bounties of your Lord will you deny? [69] In them there are women, good and gorgeous, [70] So, which of the bounties of your Lord will you deny? [71] the houris, kept guarded in pavilions [72] So, which of the bounties of your Lord will you deny? [73] whom neither a man will have touched before them, nor a Jinn. [74] So, which of the bounties of your Lord will you deny? [75] (The people of these gardens will be) reclining on green cushions and marvelously beautiful mattresses. [76] So, which of the bounties of your Lord will you deny? [77] Glorious is the name of your Lord, the Lord of Majesty, the Lord of Honour. [78]

The Delight of the Righteous in Paradise

The foregoing verses spoke of the horrible punishments to be faced by the disbelievers. In the current set of verses we are told about the rewards and bounties reserved for the righteous believers. The verse 46 speaks of two Gardens that are exclusively reserved 'for those who are fearful of having to stand before their Lord'. This phrase refers to those fortunate believers who are, at all times, concerned about reckoning on the Day of Judgement and, as a result, keep away from all sorts of sins under all circumstances. Obviously, these are the people who enjoy special nearness to Allah. In verse [62] below we read: وَمِنْ دُوْنِهِمَا جَنَّتٰنِ (And lesser than these two, there are two other gardens...55:62) This verse does not specify the class of righteous believers who will receive these gardens. However, the phrase مِنْ دُوْنِهِمَا *min dunihimā* ('and lesser than these two') indicates that

the Gardens mentioned in verse [62] are for the general body of believers who are lesser in their spiritual attainment than the foremost believers who are granted special nearness to Allah.

The Qur'ānic exegetes have explained the two sets of pairs of Gardens in other ways as well. Here we have adopted the most plausible and preferable explanation: that is, the first two Gardens are reserved exclusively for the foremost believers who are granted special nearness to Allah; and the second two Gardens are reserved for the general body of believers. That the two Gardens mentioned in Verse 62 are inferior to the first two is supported by authentic Traditions. Bayān-ul-Qur'ān cites the Prophetic Tradition from Ad-Durr-ul-Manthūr to the effect that while interpreting verses [46] and [62] the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: جَنَّتَانِ مِنْ ذَهَبٍ لِلْمُقَرَّبِيْنَ وَجَنَّتَانِ مِنْ وَرَقٍ لِأَصْحٰبِ الْيَمِيْنِ "There are two Gardens made of gold for believers who are granted special nearness to Allah; and there are two Gardens made of silver for the People of the Right [that is, for general body of righteous believers]." Also, it is recorded in Ad-Durr-ul-Manthūr that Sayyidnā Barā' Ibn 'Āzib ﷺ said, اَلْعَيْنَانِ الَّتِىْ تَجْرِيَان خَيْرٌ مِّنَ النَّضَّاخَتَيْنِ "The two springs that are flowing freely [in the first two Gardens] are better than the two other springs that are mentioned as 'gushing forth' (in the second two gardens). In verse [50] springs (in the first two gardens) promised to the believers have been described as flowing freely and ceaselessly تَجْرِيَانِ [*tajriyān*] while in verse [66] the springs (in the second two gardens) are described as 'gushing forth' نَضَّاخَتٰنِ [*naḍḍākhatān*]. The quality of 'gushing forth' is the characteristic of all springs, but the quality of 'flowing' is an additional characteristic of specific springs. This is the concise description of all four springs that the inmates of Paradise will be given.

Related Considerations

In Verse 46, the phrase, وَلِمَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهٖ (for the one who is fearful of having to stand before his Lord...55:46) refers, according to most exegetes of the Qur'ān, to standing before Allah on the Day of Resurrection to give the account of one's deeds. The word 'fearful' signifies that he is mindful under all conditions, whether in public or in private, that one day he has to appear in the Court of Allah to give an account of his deeds. Evidently such a person will never go near the sinful acts.

Other exegetes, like Qurṭubī and others, interpret this to mean : 'the

one who is fearful of the Station of His Lord'. That is, he is mindful of the High Station of Allah whereby He is watchful and keeps guard over his words and deeds, overt or covert. All his movements and activities are known to Him. This explanation is close to the previous explanation, in that Allah's keeping guard over him will keep him away from sins.

ذَوَاتَا اَفْنَان (both having lot of branches...55:48). This describes the first two Gardens. There will be plenty of trees abounding in branches and consequently their shade will be dense, and the fruits will be in abundance. The other two Gardens are described later. No such qualities are mentioned about them, which may imply their relative deficiency in this quality.

فِيهِمَا مِنْ كُلِّ فَاكِهَةٍ زَوْجٰنِ (In both there are two kinds of every fruit...52). The phrase مِنْ كُلِّ فَاكِهَةٍ "of every fruit " denotes that the first two gardens will comprehend all kinds of fruit. As opposed to this, verse [68] simply states فَاكِهَةٌ *fākihah* [=fruits] about the second two gardens. The word زَوْجٰن *zawjān* [two kinds] means every fruit will be of two types. This may be referring to one kind of dried fruits, and the other of fresh ones. It could also mean that one kind will be of normal taste, and the other of some extra ordinary flavor. [Maẓharī]

لَمْ يَطْمِثْهُنَّ اِنْسٌ قَبْلَهُمْ وَلَا جَآنٌّ (...whom neither a man will have touched before them, nor a *Jinn*....55:56). The word طَمْث *ṭamth* has different meanings. 'Menstrual discharge' is termed as *ṭamth,* and the menstruating woman as طَامِث *'ṭamith'*. It also means 'sexual intercourse with a virgin'. This second sense is meant here in this verse.

هَلْ جَزَآءُ الْاِحْسَانِ اِلَّا الْاِحْسَانُ (Is there any reward for goodness other than goodness?...55:60). Having described the two Gardens for the intimate believers, it is declared as a principle that a good deed attracts a good reward. The righteous believers will be blessed, therefore, with good rewards.

مُدْهَآمَّتٰنِ (both dark green!...55:64). This is one word verse, and it means 'dark green with foliage'. The word is derived from *idhimām* signifying, for a meadow or garden, to become of dark green hue inclining to black by reason of abundance of moisture or irrigation. This description is not assigned to the first two Gardens. This does not necessarily imply that they do not have this quality. The former Gardens are described as ذَوَاتَا

أَفۡنَان 'having lot of branches'. This comprehends the quality of 'dark green' as well.

فِيهِنَّ خَيۡرٰتٌ حِسَانٌ (In them there are women, good and gorgeous,...55:70) The word خَيۡرٰت *khairāt* (translated above as 'good') refers to 'the good character of those women'; and the word حِسَان *ḥisān* (translated above as 'gorgeous') refers to 'women who have beautiful features'. These qualities too will be common with the maidens of both the Gardens, to which reference was made in the foregoing verses.

مُتَّكِـِٔينَ عَلٰى رَفۡرَفٍ خُضۡرٍ وَّعَبۡقَرِيٍّ حِسَانٍ (...reclining on green cushions and marvelously beautiful mattresses....55:76) Qāmūs explains that the word رَفۡرَف *rafraf* means 'silk fabric greenish in colour' which is used in making carpets, pillows, cushions and other items of decoration. It is mentioned in the Arabic lexicon *Ṣiḥāḥ* that they are embellished with arboreal and floral patterns, which, in Urdu, is called مُشَجَّر *mushajjar*. The noun عَبۡقَرِی *'abqariyy* refers to 'every fine, beautiful fabric or material' and the adjective *ḥisān* [beautiful] qualifies it.

تَبٰرَكَ اسۡمُ رَبِّكَ ذِى الۡجَلٰلِ وَالۡاِكۡرَامِ (Glorious is the name of your Lord, the Lord of Majesty, the Lord of Honor....55:78) Sūrah Ar-Raḥmān is replete with verses that call attention to Allah's blessings, boons and bounties, and His favors upon man. In conclusion, this verse has been appended as a synopsis: What can one say about the Pure Being? Even His Name is Glorious. All Divine boons and bounties subsist by virtue of His Name. Allah, the Pure and the Most High, knows best!

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Ar-Raḥmān
Ends here

Sūrah Al-Wāqi'ah

(The Imminent Event)

This Sūrah is Makkī, and it has 96 verses and 3 sections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 56

إِذَا وَقَعَتِ الْوَاقِعَةُ ﴿١﴾ لَيْسَ لِوَقْعَتِهَا كَاذِبَةٌ ﴿٢﴾ خَافِضَةٌ رَّافِعَةٌ
﴿٣﴾ إِذَا رُجَّتِ الْاَرْضُ رَجًّا ﴿٤﴾ وَّبُسَّتِ الْجِبَالُ بَسًّا ﴿٥﴾ فَكَانَتْ
هَبَآءً مُّنْۢبَثًّا ﴿٦﴾ وَّكُنْتُمْ اَزْوَاجًا ثَلٰثَةً ﴿٧﴾ فَاَصْحٰبُ الْمَيْمَنَةِ ۙ مَآ
اَصْحٰبُ الْمَيْمَنَةِ ﴿٨﴾ وَاَصْحٰبُ الْمَشْئَمَةِ ۙ مَآ اَصْحٰبُ الْمَشْئَمَةِ
﴿٩﴾ وَالسّٰبِقُوْنَ السّٰبِقُوْنَ ﴿١٠﴾ اُولٰٓئِكَ الْمُقَرَّبُوْنَ ﴿١١﴾ فِيْ جَنّٰتِ
النَّعِيْمِ ﴿١٢﴾ ثُلَّةٌ مِّنَ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ ﴿١٣﴾ وَقَلِيْلٌ مِّنَ الْاٰخِرِيْنَ ﴿١٤﴾ عَلٰى
سُرُرٍ مَّوْضُوْنَةٍ ﴿١٥﴾ مُّتَّكِئِيْنَ عَلَيْهَا مُتَقٰبِلِيْنَ ﴿١٦﴾ يَطُوْفُ عَلَيْهِمْ
وِلْدَانٌ مُّخَلَّدُوْنَ ﴿١٧﴾ بِاَكْوَابٍ وَّاَبَارِيْقَ ۙ وَكَاْسٍ مِّنْ مَّعِيْنٍ ﴿١٨﴾
لَّا يُصَدَّعُوْنَ عَنْهَا وَلَا يُنْزِفُوْنَ ﴿١٩﴾ وَفَاكِهَةٍ مِّمَّا يَتَخَيَّرُوْنَ ﴿٢٠﴾
وَلَحْمِ طَيْرٍ مِّمَّا يَشْتَهُوْنَ ﴿٢١﴾ وَحُوْرٌ عِيْنٌ ﴿٢٢﴾ كَاَمْثَالِ اللُّؤْلُؤِ
الْمَكْنُوْنِ ﴿٢٣﴾ جَزَآءًۢ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٢٤﴾ لَا يَسْمَعُوْنَ فِيْهَا
لَغْوًا وَّلَا تَاْثِيْمًا ﴿٢٥﴾ اِلَّا قِيْلًا سَلٰمًا سَلٰمًا ﴿٢٦﴾ وَاَصْحٰبُ الْيَمِيْنِ ۙ

مَآ اَصۡحٰبُ الۡيَمِيۡنِ ﴿٢٧﴾ فِىۡ سِدۡرٍ مَّخۡضُوۡدٍ ﴿٢٨﴾ وَّطَلۡحٍ مَّنۡضُوۡدٍ
﴿٢٩﴾ وَّظِلٍّ مَّمۡدُوۡدٍ ﴿٣٠﴾ وَّمَآءٍ مَّسۡكُوۡبٍ ﴿٣١﴾ وَّفَاكِهَةٍ كَثِيۡرَةٍ
﴿٣٢﴾ لَّا مَقۡطُوۡعَةٍ وَّلَا مَمۡنُوۡعَةٍ ﴿٣٣﴾ وَّفُرُشٍ مَّرۡفُوۡعَةٍ ﴿٣٤﴾ اِنَّآ
اَنۡشَاۡنٰهُنَّ اِنۡشَآءً ﴿٣٥﴾ فَجَعَلۡنٰهُنَّ اَبۡكَارًا ﴿٣٦﴾ عُرُبًا اَتۡرَابًا ﴿٣٧﴾
لِّاَصۡحٰبِ الۡيَمِيۡنِ ﴿٣٨﴾ ثُلَّةٌ مِّنَ الۡاَوَّلِيۡنَ ﴿٣٩﴾ وَثُلَّةٌ مِّنَ الۡاٰخِرِيۡنَ
﴿٤٠﴾ وَاَصۡحٰبُ الشِّمَالِ ۙ مَآ اَصۡحٰبُ الشِّمَالِ ﴿٤١﴾ فِىۡ سَمُوۡمٍ
وَّحَمِيۡمٍ ﴿٤٢﴾ وَّظِلٍّ مِّنۡ يَّحۡمُوۡمٍ ﴿٤٣﴾ لَّا بَارِدٍ وَّلَا كَرِيۡمٍ ﴿٤٤﴾ اِنَّهُمۡ
كَانُوۡا قَبۡلَ ذٰلِكَ مُتۡرَفِيۡنَ ﴿٤٥﴾ وَكَانُوۡا يُصِرُّوۡنَ عَلَى الۡحِنۡثِ
الۡعَظِيۡمِ ﴿٤٦﴾ وَكَانُوۡا يَقُوۡلُوۡنَ ۙ اَئِذَا مِتۡنَا وَكُنَّا تُرَابًا وَّعِظَامًا ءَاِنَّا
لَمَبۡعُوۡثُوۡنَ ﴿٤٧﴾ اَوَ اٰبَآؤُنَا الۡاَوَّلُوۡنَ ﴿٤٨﴾ قُلۡ اِنَّ الۡاَوَّلِيۡنَ وَالۡاٰخِرِيۡنَ
﴿٤٩﴾ لَمَجۡمُوۡعُوۡنَ ۙ اِلٰى مِيۡقَاتِ يَوۡمٍ مَّعۡلُوۡمٍ ﴿٥٠﴾ ثُمَّ اِنَّكُمۡ اَيُّهَا
الضَّآلُّوۡنَ الۡمُكَذِّبُوۡنَ ﴿٥١﴾ لَاٰكِلُوۡنَ مِنۡ شَجَرٍ مِّنۡ زَقُّوۡمٍ ﴿٥٢﴾
فَمَالِـُٔوۡنَ مِنۡهَا الۡبُطُوۡنَ ﴿٥٣﴾ فَشٰرِبُوۡنَ عَلَيۡهِ مِنَ الۡحَمِيۡمِ ﴿٥٤﴾
فَشٰرِبُوۡنَ شُرۡبَ الۡهِيۡمِ ﴿٥٥﴾ هٰذَا نُزُلُهُمۡ يَوۡمَ الدِّيۡنِ ﴿٥٦﴾

When the Imminent Event (of Doom) will occur, [1] **there will be no one to deny its occurrence.** [2] **It will be abasing (some), exalting (others)** [3] **when the earth will be jolted with a quake,** [4] **and the mountains will be crumbled with a thorough crumbling,** [5] **until they will become dust, scattered in the air,** [6] **and you will be (divided into) three categories.** [7] **As for the People of the Right, how (lucky) are the people of the Right!** [8] **And the People of the Left? How (wretched) are the People of the Left!** [9] **And the Foremost are the foremost.** [10] **Those are the ones blessed with nearness (to Allah)** [11] **in gardens of bliss,** [12] **many from the earlier generations,** [13] **and of a small number from the later ones.** [14] **(They will be sitting) on thrones woven**

with gold, [15] reclining on them, facing each other. [16] They will be served in rounds by Immortal boys [17] with bowls and jugs and a goblet of pure wine, [18] from which they will neither suffer headache, nor will they be intoxicated, [19] and with fruits of their choice, [20] and the meat of birds that they desire. [21] And (for them there will be) houris, having lovely big eyes, [22] all (neat and clean) like a hidden pearl, [23] as a reward for what they used to do. [24] They will hear neither an absurd talk therein, nor something leading to sin, [25] but the words of *salām, salām* (as greetings). [26] As for the People of the Right, how (lucky) are the People of the Right! [27] (They will be) amid lote-trees with no thorns, [28] and the trees of *ṭalḥ*, (banana, or a fragrant tree) having layers one upon the other, [29] and a shade, spread all over, [30] and water, poured forth, [31] and a lot of fruits, [32] neither interrupted (in any season), nor prohibited, [33] and mattresses of high quality. [34] Surely We have created those (females) a fresh creation, [35] and have made them virgins, [36] amorous to their husbands, matching them in age, [37] for the People of the Right, [38] (comprising) many from the earlier generations, [39] and many from the later ones. [40] As for the People of the Left, How (wretched) are the People of the Left! [41] (They will be) in burning wind and boiling water, [42] and in a shade of black smoke, [43] neither cool nor graceful. [44] They were before that indulged in luxuries, [45] and used to persist in major sins, [46] and used to say, "Is it that when we die and become dust-is it that we will be raised again, [47] and our ancient fathers as well?" [48] Say, "All the earlier and the later ones [49] will be gathered together for a fixed time of a specified Day. [50] Then O you, the erring, the denying people, [51] you will have to eat from the tree of *Zaqqūm*, [52] and to fill with it the bellies, [53] then you will have to drink boiling water on top of it, [54] and to drink like camels suffering from the disease of over-thirst. [55] This will be their entertainment on the Day of Requital. [56]

Special Characteristic of Sūrah Al-Wāqi'ah: Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd's Didactic Story on his Deathbed

Ibn Kathīr cites a story on the authority of Ibn 'Asakir from Abū Ẓabyah that when Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ؓ was lying on his deathbed, Sayyidnā 'Uthmān ؓ paid him a visit and the following

conversation ensued.

'Uthmān ﷺ: مَاتَشْتَكِى؟ "What are you suffering from?"

Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ: ذُنُوبِى "from my sins."

'Uthmān ﷺ: مَا تَشْتَهِى؟ "Do you desire anything?"

Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ: رَحْمَةَ رَبِّى "Yes, Allah's mercy."

'Uthmān ﷺ: الاَ آمُرُلَکَ بِطَبِيبٍ؟ "Shall I call a doctor for you?"

Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ: اَلطَّبِيبُ اَمْرَضَنِى "It is the doctor who has given me the ailment."

'Uthmān ﷺ: الاَ آمُرُلَکَ بِعَطَاءٍ؟ "May I send you an allowance from the public treasury?"

Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ: "لاَحَاجَةَ لِى فِيهِ I have no need for it."

'Uthmān ﷺ: يَكُونُ لِبَنَاتِکَ مِنْ بَعْدِکَ "Accept it, [please]. You are leaving daughters behind you. It will help them."

Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ: أَتَخْشىٰ عَلى بَنَاتِي الْفَقْرَ إِنِّي اَمَرْتُ بَنَاتِي يَقْرَأْنَ كُلَّ لَيْلَةٍ سُوْرَةَ الْوَاقِعَة. إِنِى سَمِعْتُ رَسُوْلَ اللّٰهِ صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُوْلُ: مَنْ قَرأ سُوْرَةَ الْوَاقِعَة كُلَّ لَيْلَةٍ لَمْ تُصِبْهُ فَاقَةٌ اَبَدًا. (ابن كثير ٣٠٢:٤) "You are worried about my daughters that they must not suffer from poverty. I have no such worry, because I have instructed them to recite Sūrah Al-Wāqi'ah every night. I have heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say, مَنْ قَرَأَ سُوْرَةَ الْوَاقِعَةِ كُلَّ لَيْلَةٍ لَّمْ تُصِبْهُ فَاقَةٌ اَبَدًا 'Whoever recites Sūrah Al-Wāqi'ah every night will never suffer from poverty'."

Ibn Kathīr, after citing this story from Ibn 'Asākir, has supported it with other chains of transmitters and other sources.

Horrors of the Day of Resurrection

إِذَا وَقَعَتِ الْوَاقِعَةُ (When the Imminent Event (of Doom) will occur...56:1). Ibn Kathīr says Al-wāqi'ah is one of the names of the Day of Resurrection, because there is no room for doubt in its occurrence. It is real and will surely come to pass.

لَيْسَ لِوَقْعَتِهَا كَاذِبَةٌ (...there will be no one to deny its occurrence...56:2). The word *kādhibah* in this context is the verbal noun, like *'āfiyah* and *'āqibah*. The sense of the verse is that 'the news of the occurrence of this event cannot be a false news'. Some authorities have taken the word

kādhibah in the sense of *takdhīb* [to deny] and the meaning, in that case, is clear that 'no one can deny the fact that it will come to pass'.

خَافِضَةٌ رَّافِعَةٌ (It will be abasing [some], exalting [others]...56:3). The verse means that the 'Inevitable Event' referred to in the previous verse will bring about a great revolution in the lives of men, as is witnessed at the time of revolution of governments. The high and the mighty will be laid low and the despised and down-trodden will be exalted; the poor become rich and the rich become poor. This is how Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ interprets this statement. The purpose is to depict the horrors of the Day of Resurrection.

Three Categories of People on the Day of Resurrection

وَكُنتُمْ أَزْوَاجًا ثَلَٰثَةً (and you will be [divided into] three categories...56:7). Ibn Kathīr says that people will be divided into three different categories on the Day of Resurrection. One group will be on the right side of Allah's Throne, and they are those who were brought forth from the right side of the loin of 'Ādam عليه السلام. These people will be given their Ledgers of Deeds in their right hands and will be taken to the right side of the Divine Throne. They are the inmates of Paradise.

The second category comprises those who will be placed to the left of Allah's Throne. These are people who were brought forth from the left side of the loin of 'Ādam عليه السلام. This category will be given their Ledgers of Deeds in their left hands and will be taken to the left side of the Divine Throne. They are the inhabitants of the Fire. [We seek refuge in Allah from their behaviour pattern!]

The third category consists of *As-sābiqūn* [the foremost] who are described as *Al-muqarrabūn* [the fortunate believers who are granted special nearness to Allah]. They will be placed in front of the Divine Throne. They include the Messengers, the Prophets, *Ṣiddiqīn,* martyrs and the friends of Allah. They are fewer than those on the right side. Towards the end of the Surah, the description of the three categories will be taken up again to mention that some signs start appearing, right from the time of death of a person, to indicate in which category he or she is going to fall.

وَالسَّٰبِقُونَ السَّٰبِقُونَ (And the Foremost are the foremost....56:10) Imām Aḥmad رحمه الله تعالى has recorded a Tradition on the authority of Sayyidah

'Ā'ishah Ṣiddīqah ﷺ that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ asked the noble Companions: "Do you know who will be the first to be accommodated in the Divine Shade on the Day of Resurrection?" The noble Companions replied: اَللّٰهُ وَرَسُوْلُه اَعْلَمُ "Allah and His Messenger know best." The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "They are those who accept the truth when it is presented to them; when they are asked for the rights due from them, they fulfill them; and they judge about the matters of others as they would judge about themselves."

Mujāhid says that As-sābiqūn (the Foremost) refers to 'the Prophets'. Ibn Sirin says that it refers to early Muslims who performed their prayers facing the two qiblas, namely, *baytul-maqdis* and *baitullllah.* Ḥasan and Qatādah say that in every Ummah there will be As-sābiqūn. Some of the commentators express the view that they are people who go first to the mosque.

Ibn-Kathīr cites all these views and concludes that they are all correct and authentic in their own right. The opinions are not in conflict with one another, because *As-sābiqūn* are those who must have been foremost in their invincible faith and righteous deeds in this world, and as such they would be the 'Foremost' in the Hereafter in terms of reward which will befit their faith and good deeds.

ثُلَّةٌ مِّنَ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ وَقَلِيْلٌ مِّنَ الْاٰخِرِيْنَ (...many from the earlier generations, and of a small number from the later ones....56:13-14) The word ثُلَّةٌ *thullatun,* means 'a party, group, company'. Zamakhsharī says that *thullatun* refers to 'a throng or a large number of people '.

Who are اَوَّلِيْنَ Awwalin (earlier generations) and آخِرِيْنَ 'Ākhirin (later ones)?

The words '*awwalīn*' (earlier generations) and '*ākhirīn*' (later ones) are used twice: First, in connection with *As-sābiqūn* (the Foremost) who are favoured with special Divine nearness; and secondly, in connection with Ashab-ul-yamin [the People of the Right, or the general body of believers]. In the case of the 'Foremost' it is mentioned that there will be 'many' from amongst the '*awwalīn*' (earlier generations) who will be categorized as 'the Foremost', but from amongst the later generations, the number of the 'Foremost' will be smaller. As opposed to this, in the description of the People of the Right, the word '*thullah*' (many) is

applied to both 'earlier' and 'later' generations in the following words: ثُلَّةٌ مِّنَ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ وَثُلَّةٌ مِّنَ الْاٰخِرِيْنَ (many from the first generations, and many from the later ones...56:39-40)

The question now is: Who are 'earlier generations' and 'later generations'? In this connection, two views of the commentators have been recorded: The first view is that 'earlier generations' include all the creation of Allah from the time of 'Ādam عليه السلام to the time just prior to the advent of the 'Holy Prophet ﷺ'. And 'later generations' include all the creation of Allah from the time of the advent of the Holy Prophet to the Doomsday. This interpretation is recorded by Ibn Abi Hatim [with a chain of transmitters] from Mujāhid and Ḥasan Baṣrī. Ibn Jarīr has preferred this interpretation. This interpretation has also been adopted in the Bayān-ul-Qur'ān. This is supported by the Prophetic Tradition transmitted on the authority of Sayyidnā Jābir رضي الله عنه. Ibn 'Asākir reports the Tradition [with his chain of transmitters] thus: "When the first pair of verses regarding 'the Foremost' was revealed stating that they will comprise 'many from the first generations, and of a small number from the later ones, ثُلَّةٌ مِّنَ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ وَقَلِيْلٌ مِّنَ الْاٰخِرِيْنَ [56:13-14], Sayyidnā 'Umar Ibn Khaṭṭāb رضي الله عنه enquired: 'O Messenger of Allah, will there be a larger number of 'the Foremost' from among the earlier generations and a small number from amongst us?' For about a year, no revelation in this connection came down. A year later, verses [39] and [40] ثُلَّةٌ مِّنَ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ وَثُلَّةٌ مِّنَ الْاٰخِرِيْنَ "many from the first generations, and many from the later ones." were revealed. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ called Sayyidnā 'Umar رضي الله عنه and said to him:

اِسْمَعْ يَاعُمَرُ مَا قَدْ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ ثُلَّةٌ مِّنَ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ وَثُلَّةٌ مِّنَ الْاٰخِرِيْنَ اَلَا وَاِنَّ مِنْ اٰدَمَ اِلَيَّ ثُلَّةٌ وَّاُمَّتِيْ ثُلَّةٌ. (الحديث)۔ ابن كثير.

"O 'Umar, listen to what Allah has revealed many from the first generations, and many from the later ones). Behold! From 'Ādam to me is one *thullah* (throng) and my Ummah is another *thullah*' (throng)."

The theme of this Tradition is supported by the Tradition recorded by Imām Aḥmad and Ibn Abī Ḥātim رحمهم الله تعالى on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه that when verses [13] and [14] were revealed, the Companions رضي الله عنهم found this painful, because they understood them to mean that the foremost believers from earlier nations are more numerous

than those of this Ummah. As a result, verses [39] and [40] were revealed and the Messenger of Allah ﷺ stated 'I hope that you will comprise a quarter of the inmates of Paradise, a third of the inmates of Paradise. Rather, you are a half of the inmates of Paradise, and will have a share in the other half.' (Ibn Kathīr) Thus, collectively, majority of the inmates of Paradise will be the followers of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. However, a question arises about both these Traditions. The question is that verse 40 relates to the People of the Right, while verse 13 was about the Foremost. Then, how can verse 40 remove the concern of the Companions about verse 13?

Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī resolves the problem thus: The noble Companions, in general, and Sayyidnā 'Umar رضي الله عنه in particular, were saddened by the verse 13 presumably because they thought that the proportion of the later generations in the 'People of the Right' will be the same as it is in the Foremost, and thus the later generations will be small in number even among the 'People of the Right'. From this point of view, they thought their number in relation to all the inmates of Paradise, put together, will be very small. But when verses [39] and [40] were revealed, the point was clarified that collectively the majority of the inmates of Paradise will be the followers of the Holy Prophet ﷺ even though the collective number of later generations in the category of 'the Foremost' may be smaller as compared to the previous nations, especially since a large number of the previous nations will comprise the Prophets. In relation to them, it does not matter if the followers of the Holy Prophet ﷺ are fewer.

However, Ibn Kathīr, Abū Ḥayyān, Qurṭubī, Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī, Maẓharī and others prefer another interpretation: 'the earlier generations' and 'the later generations imply, according to them, the earlier and the latter followers of the Holy Prophet's ﷺ own Ummah. 'Earlier generations', in their view, are the Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and their pupils, who are termed in a Ḥadīth as '*khair-ul-qurūn*' (the best generation), and 'later generations' include all those who came after them.

As for the Ḥadīth narrated by Jābir ﷺ quoted above from Ibn Kathīr, in support of the first interpretation, Ibn Kathīr himself has expressed his reservation about its chain of transmitters. He writes وَلٰكِنْ فِىْ اِسْنَادِهٖ نَظَرٌ "In its chain of transmission, there is some defect." In support of his own interpretation, he quotes verses relating to Ummah of the Holy Prophet

ﷺ being the best of nations, as for instance كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ "You are the best of nations...". (3:110) Therefore, it is not possible that the foremost believers from earlier nations are more numerous than those of this Ummah. Thus ثُلَّةٌ مِّنَ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ 'many from the earlier generations' refers to the earlier generation of this Ummah and قَلِيْلٌ مِّنَ الْاٰخِرِيْنَ 'of a small number from the later generations' refers to the later generation of this Ummah from whom a small number will be included in the category of the 'Foremost'.

In support of this view, Ibn Kathīr has cited the statement of Sayyidnā Ḥasan Baṣrī, as recorded by Ibn Abī Ḥātim, to the effect that he recited the Verse 10 about 'the Foremost' and said, 'They have predeceased, but O Allah! make us from amongst the People of the Right hand'. In another statement, Sayyidnā Ḥasan Baṣrī is reported to have said in explanation of Verse 13: ثُلَّةٌ مِّمَّنْ مَّضىٰ مِنْ هٰذِهِ الْاُمَّةِ 'Those foremost Faith are all from this Ummah'. Likewise, Muḥammad Ibn Sirin said in connection with Verse 13 and 14: 'The scholars stated and hoped that they (the Foremost of earlier and later generations) will all be from amongst this Ummah.'

Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī puts forward the following Prophetic Ḥadīth with a good chain of transmitters in support of the second interpretation:

اَخْرَجَ مُسَدَّدٌ فِىْ مُسْنَدِه وَابْنُ الْمُنْذِرِ وَالطَّبْرَانِىْ وَابْنُ مَرْدويه بِسَنَدٍ حَسَنٍ عَنْ اَبِىْ بَكْرَةَ عَنِ النَّبِىِّ صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فِىْ قَوْلِه سُبْحَانَه ثُلَّةٌ مِّنَ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ وَثُلَّةٌ مِّنَ الْاٰخِرِيْنَ قَالَ هُمَا جَمِيْعًا مِّنْ هٰذِهِ الْاُمَّةِ.

"Musaddad in his Musnad, Ibn-ul-Mundhir, Ṭabarānī and Ibn Marduyah report with a good chain on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Bakrah رضي الله عنه that, while interpreting verses [39] and [40] (Many from the earlier generations and of a small number from the later ones), the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: 'They are both from this Ummah.'"

Many Scholars of Ḥadīth report another Prophetic Tradition with a weak chain on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه also. The wordings are: هُمَا جَمِيْعًا مِّنْ اُمَّتِىْ "They [the earlier and the later generations] are from my Ummah." From this point of view, verse [7] of this Chapter وَكُنْتُمْ اَزْوَاجًا ثَلٰثَةً "and you will be (divided into) three categories. [7]" addresses the Ummah of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ and all three categories will be from this Ummah .

Mazharī has held the first interpretation as improbable, because according to the clear text of the Qur'ān, this Ummah is the best and most honoured of all nations. Therefore, it is inconceivable that the foremost believers from earlier nations should be more numerous than those of this Ummah. The higher rank of this Ummah visa-vis the other nations is proved by the express texts of the Holy Qur'ān. The Qur'ānic verse [3:110] reads: كُنتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ "You are the best Ummah raised for the good of mankind...".Verse [3:110] reads: لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَآءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا "...so that you should be witnesses over the people, and the Messenger a witness to you." Tirmidhī, Ibn Majah and Darimi have recorded a narration on the authority of Sayyidnā Bahz Ibn Ḥakīm ﷺ in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said:

اَنْتُمْ تُتِمُّونَ سَبْعِيْنَ اُمَّةً اَنْتُمْ اَخِيْرُهَا وَاَكْرَمُهَا عَلَى اللّٰهِ تَعَالٰى

"You are complement to the seventy nations of the days of yore. You are the choicest one and the most honourable one in the sight of Allah."

Imām Bukhārī narrates a Tradition on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ in which the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is reported to have said: "Will it please you if you are a quarter of the inmates of Paradise?" The Companions replied: "Yes, indeed, it would please us." The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

وَالَّذِىْ نَفْسِىْ بِيَدِهٖ اِنِّىْ لَاَرْجُوْ اَنْ تَكُوْنُوْا نِصْفَ اَهْلِ الْجَنَّةِ

"By Him in Whose control is my life! I hope that you will comprise a half of the inmates of Paradise." (Mazharī)

Tirmidhī, Ḥākim and Baihaqī report on the authority of Sayyidnā Buraidah ﷺ that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

اَهْلُ الْجَنَّةِ مِائَةٌ وَّعِشْرُوْنَ صَفًّا ثَمَانُوْنَ مِنْهَا مِنْ هٰذِهِ الْاُمَّةِ وَاَرْبَعُوْنَ مِنْ سَائِرِ الْاُمَمِ

"The inmates of Paradise will be ranged in 120 ranks: eighty of them will be from this Ummah, and forty from the rest of the nations." (Tirmidhī has rated this tradition as '*Ḥasan*' and Hakim as '*ṣaḥīḥ*'.)

The ratio between this Ummah and other communities in Paradise is given differently at different times, ranging between one third, one quarter, a half and two-thirds. There is no conflict in the ratios mentioned on different occasions. That was based on the estimation of the Holy

Prophet ﷺ which has been increasing at different times.

The reward of As-Sabiqun

عَلٰى سُرُرٍ مَّوْضُوْنَةٍ ([They will be sitting] on thrones woven with gold...56:15) The word مَوْضُوْنَة *mawdunah,* according to Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, as recorded by Ibn Jarir, Ibn Abi Hatim, Baihaqi and others, means 'fabric woven or inwrought with gold thread'.

وِلْدَانٌ مُّخَلَّدُوْنَ (...by Immortal boys...56:17) meaning that the boys will never grow up, get old or change in shape. The preferred opinion is that the youths of Paradise, like the fair damsels of Paradise, will have been born in Paradise. They will be the servants of the inmates of Paradise. Ḥadīth narratives indicate that there will be thousands of such servants for each of the inmates of Paradise.

بِاَكْوَابٍ وَّاَبَارِيْقَ وَكَاْسٍ مِّنْ مَّعِيْنٍ (with bowls and jugs and a goblet of pure wine...56:18). The word *akwāb,* plural of *kūb,* refers to 'cups or glasses used for drinking. The word *abārīq,* plural of *ibrīq,* refers to 'jugs with sprouts'. The word *ka's* refers to 'a wine glass'. The word *ma'īn* refers to the fact that the glasses will contain wine drawn from a flowing spring.

لَايُصَدَّعُوْنَ عَنْهَا (from which they will neither suffer headache ....56:19). The Arabic verb is derived from *sudā'* which means 'headache'. When worldly wine is taken in large quantity, it gives the drinker excruciating headache and makes him feel dizzy. The Heavenly wine is free from such harmful effects.

لَايُنْزِفُوْنَ (..., nor will they be intoxicated...56:19). The Arabic verb is derived from *nazf,* the root-meaning of which being 'the well became empty, all the water having been taken out of it.' Here it means 'the spring of his brain or mind or senses became exhausted.'

وَلَحْمِ طَيْرٍ مِّمَّا يَشْتَهُوْنَ (and the meat of birds that they desire....56:21]. It is recorded in a Prophetic Tradition that the inmates of Paradise will get meat of whatever birds they desire, as and when they desire it.

The Reward of Those on the Right

وَاَصْحٰبُ الْيَمِيْنِ مَآ اَصْحٰبُ الْيَمِيْنِ (As for the People of the right, How (lucky) are the People of the Right!...56:27). The People of the Right are initially the God-fearing and the righteous believers. Sinful believers will also join the People of the Right, some through the sheer grace of Allah, and others

will be forgiven through the intercession of a prophet or a friend of Allah. Some sinful believers will be punished for their sins, but after serving their punishment, they too will be purified and cleansed of the dross of their sins, after which they will join the People of the Right, because the fire of the Hell is not, in fact, a punishment; it is rather a way to cleanse him from the dross of his sins. (Maẓharī)

فِي سِدْرٍ مَّخْضُوْدٍ (..amid lote-trees with no thorns - 58:28). The word *sidr* refers to 'lote-tree' and *makhḍūd* refers to 'a tree having its thorns removed'. It also means 'a tree having the branches bent because of abundance of its fruit'. Unlike the lote-trees of this world, the Heavenly lote-trees have a different description. Their fruits will be as large as the clay jugs, and their taste cannot be compared to those found in this world, (as described in a Ḥadīth).

طَلْحٍ مَّنْضُوْدٍ (and the trees of *tulh*, having layers one upon the other - 28:29). The word *ṭalḥ* refers to 'banana tree' and *manḍūd* means 'clustered', fruits piled on top of each other as in a bunch of bananas.

ظِلٍّ مَّمْدُوْدٍ (and a shade, spread all over...56:30). The Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said, as recorded in Ṣaḥīḥain, that in Paradise there is a tree so large that a rider may travel for a hundred years under its shade, but would not be able to pass it.

وَمَاءٍ مَّسْكُوْبٍ (...and water, poured forth...56:31) This means the water will be flowing constantly on the surface of the ground.

وَّفَاكِهَةٍ كَثِيْرَةٍ (and a lot of fruits...56:32). The word *Kathīrah* [abounding] has two senses: [1] there will be plenty of fruits; and [2] there will be an uncountable variety and kinds of fruits.

لَّامَقْطُوْعَةٍ وَّلَا مَمْنُوْعَةٍ (neither interrupted [in any season], nor prohibited ...56:33) The word *maqṭū'ah* means the fruits the supply of which is cut off at the end of the season. In this world most fruits are seasonal; some bear in summer, some in winter and others in rainy season. Once the season of the fruit is over, it ceases to be available. However, the supply of the fruits of Paradise never runs out in any season. Rather they will always be available for those who want to eat from them. Whenever these fruits are desired, they will be available and easy to grasp by Allah's power. The word *mamnū'ah* (prohibited) means that in this world there are

caretakers appointed to look after the gardens, who stop and prohibit people from picking the fruits, but in the gardens of Paradise there will be no such hindrance. The inmates will be able to pick them whenever they wish.

وَّفُرُشٍ مَّرْفُوْعَةٍ (...and mattresses of high quality....56:34). The word *fūrūsh* is the plural of *firāsh* which means 'bed, couch, mattress'. The word *marfū'ah* lexically means 'upraised, elevated'. The couches could be upraised or elevated for one of several reasons: [1] because the place itself is high; [2] because the mattresses will not be on the ground, but on the thrones or beds; or [3] because the couches themselves will be thick (and of high quality). Some exegetes have taken the word '*fūrūsh*' in the sense of 'women', because it is one of the meaning of '*firāsh*' is referred as *firash,* as in the Prophetic Tradition اَلْوَلَدُ لِلْفِرَاشِ 'The child belongs to the *firash*'. The word *firāsh* refers to 'wife'. This is corroborated by the characteristics of the women of Paradise described in the forthcoming verses. In this case, the word *marfū'ah* would mean 'high-ranking'.

اِنَّاۤ اَنْشَاْنٰهُنَّ اِنْشَآءً (Surely We have created those [females] a fresh creation...56:35) The word *insha'* means 'to create'. The pronoun هُنَّ *hunna* refers to the women of Paradise, although there is no mention of them in the immediately preceding verses. However, they have been mentioned in connection with 'the Foremost' in distantly foregoing verses [22-23]. If the word *firāsh* in the foregoing verse (34) refers to the women of Paradise, the antecedent of the pronoun is quite obvious. Likewise, the mention of beds, couches, thrones and other delightful items gives the pronoun the context to refer to women. The meaning of the verse is: 'We have created the Paradisiacal women in a special way, that is, the houris are created without being born biologically, and the women of this world who will enter the Paradise will also be reshaped in a way that the women who were ugly, dark-coloured or old in this world will be made beautiful, young and graceful.' It is recorded in Tirmidhī and Baihaqī on the authority of Sayyidnā Anas ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said in explanation of Verse 35 that the women who were old, blear eyed, with gray hair and ugly features in the world will be made beautiful and young in this new creation. Baihaqi also reports from Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah ﷺ that an old lady asked the Messenger of Allah ﷺ to pray to Allah that she may enter Paradise. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said in a humorous

way: لَاتَدْخُلُ الْجَنَّةَ عَجُوزٌ "Old ladies will not enter Paradise." Hearing this the old lady got very sad, and according to some narrations, started weeping. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ then explained that she would not be old when she would enter Paradise; she would be transformed into a young beautiful woman. Then the Holy Prophet ﷺ recited this verse 35. [Mazhari]

أَبْكَارًا (...virgins... - 56:36). The word *abkāran*, being the plural of *bikr,* means 'virgins'. The sense is the creation of the maidens of Paradise will be of such a nature that, even after every sexual intercourse, they will remain like virgins.

عُرُبًا (...amorous to their husbands,...56:37). The word *'urub*, is the plural of *'arūbah*. This refers to a woman who loves her husband passionately and is his beloved.

أَتْرَاب (...matching them in age...56:37) The word *atrāb* is the plural of *tirb*, meaning 'a person of equal age who played together with his mate in dust'. The verse means that men and women will be made of equal ages in Paradise. Some narrations report that they will be about thirty-three years old. [Mazhari]

ثُلَّةٌ مِّنَ الْأَوَّلِينَ وَثُلَّةٌ مِّنَ الْآخِرِينَ (many from the earlier generations, and many from the later ones....56:39-40) In connection with *sābiqūn*, (the Foremost) two views of the commentators were quoted earlier as to the identity of 'the earlier' and the 'later' generations. If 'the earlier' refers to the generations from 'Ādam عليه السلام to the period just prior to the advent of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and 'the later generations' refers to the 'Ummah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ till the Day of Judgment, as some of the commentators have opined, then the verses would mean: 'the People of the Right' will constitute a 'large party' of believers and the righteous from all the previous communities combined together, while there will be a 'large party' from the Ummah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ alone. In this case, it is a great honor for the Ummah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that, despite the short period they lived in this world, they could be compared to all the previous communities who were headed by hundreds of thousands of Prophets. Besides, the words 'many from the later generations' has the scope of being larger in number than the 'many from the earlier generations'.

If we go by the second view of the commentators, who say that both

'earlier' and 'later' generations are from the *ummah* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, then even the later generations of this *ummah* will not be totally deprived of 'the Foremost', though their number in later generations will be less. As for the People of the Right, their number will be large in both 'earlier' and 'later' generations. This fact is proved by a Ḥadīth reported by Bukhārī and Muslim from Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah رضي الله عنه in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said, 'A group of my 'Ummah will always remain on the truth and dominant, unharmed by those who fail to support them and those who defy them, until the Last Hour begins.'.

Verses 57-74

نَحْنُ خَلَقْنٰكُمْ فَلَوْلَا تُصَدِّقُوْنَ ﴿٥٧﴾ اَفَرَءَيْتُمْ مَّا تُمْنُوْنَ ﴿٥٨﴾ ءَاَنْتُمْ
تَخْلُقُوْنَهٗۤ اَمْ نَحْنُ الْخٰلِقُوْنَ ﴿٥٩﴾ نَحْنُ قَدَّرْنَا بَيْنَكُمُ الْمَوْتَ وَمَا
نَحْنُ بِمَسْبُوْقِيْنَ ﴿٦٠﴾ عَلٰۤى اَنْ نُّبَدِّلَ اَمْثَالَكُمْ وَنُنْشِئَكُمْ فِيْ مَا لَا
تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٦١﴾ وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمُ النَّشْاَةَ الْاُوْلٰى فَلَوْلَا تَذَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿٦٢﴾
اَفَرَءَيْتُمْ مَّا تَحْرُثُوْنَ ﴿٦٣﴾ ءَاَنْتُمْ تَزْرَعُوْنَهٗۤ اَمْ نَحْنُ الزّٰرِعُوْنَ ﴿٦٤﴾
لَوْ نَشَآءُ لَجَعَلْنٰهُ حُطَامًا فَظَلْتُمْ تَفَكَّهُوْنَ ﴿٦٥﴾ اِنَّا لَمُغْرَمُوْنَ ﴿٦٦﴾
بَلْ نَحْنُ مَحْرُوْمُوْنَ ﴿٦٧﴾ اَفَرَءَيْتُمُ الْمَآءَ الَّذِيْ تَشْرَبُوْنَ ﴿٦٨﴾
ءَاَنْتُمْ اَنْزَلْتُمُوْهُ مِنَ الْمُزْنِ اَمْ نَحْنُ الْمُنْزِلُوْنَ ﴿٦٩﴾ لَوْ نَشَآءُ جَعَلْنٰهُ
اُجَاجًا فَلَوْلَا تَشْكُرُوْنَ ﴿٧٠﴾ اَفَرَءَيْتُمُ النَّارَ الَّتِيْ تُوْرُوْنَ ﴿٧١﴾ ءَاَنْتُمْ
اَنْشَاْتُمْ شَجَرَتَهَآ اَمْ نَحْنُ الْمُنْشِئُوْنَ ﴿٧٢﴾ نَحْنُ جَعَلْنٰهَا تَذْكِرَةً
وَّمَتَاعًا لِّلْمُقْوِيْنَ ﴿٧٣﴾ فَسَبِّحْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الْعَظِيْمِ ﴿٧٤﴾

We have created you; then why do you not appreciate it as true? [57] **So, tell Me about the semen you drop (in the wombs):** [58] **Is it you who create it, or are We the Creator?** [59] **We have appointed (the times of) death among you, and We cannot be frustrated** [60] **from replacing you with others like you, and creating you (afresh) in that (form) which you do not know.** [61] **And you certainly know the first creation; then why do you**

not take lesson? [62] Well, tell Me about that (seed) which you sow: [63] Is it you who grow it, or are We the One who grows? [64] If We so will, We can certainly make it crumbled, and you will remain wondering, [65] (and saying,) "We are laden with debt, [66] rather we are totally deprived." [67] Again, tell Me about the water you drink: [68] Is it you who have brought it down from the clouds, or are We the One who sends (it) down? [69] If We so will, We can make it bitter in taste. So why do you not offer gratitude? [70] Now tell Me about the fire you kindle: [71] Is it you who have originated its tree, or are We the Originator? [72] We have made it a reminder (of Our infinite power, and of the fire of hell) and a benefit for travelers in deserts. [73] So, proclaim the purity of the name of your Lord, the Magnificent. [74]

Proof of the occurrence of the Day of Resurrection

Thus far the Sūrah dealt with three categories of people on the Plain of Ḥashr (Gathering.) The verses so far described the reward and punishment of these three groups. The current set of verses warn the deviant skeptics and atheists who completely deny the Day of Judgement and life after death, or set up partners to Allah in His worship. The verses purport to tear down the curtain of negligence and ignorance that has kept man in the dark. Whatever exists, or is coming into existence at the present time, or will come into existence in the future in this cosmic world is as a result of the creative power of Allah. He brings them into existence, retains them and makes them subservient to man. The apparent causes of these events act as veils over Reality. Had these veils been removed and man is able to witness the creation of these things directly without the mediation of these apparent causes, he will be forced to believe in Allah. However, Allah has made this world a venue of test. Therefore, whatever comes into existence comes under the veils of causes.

Allah has, with His encompassing power and consummate wisdom, created a strong connection or relation between 'causes' and 'effects'. Wherever and whenever a secondary cause occurs, the effect necessarily follows. A casual observer assigns to every 'effect' a 'secondary or extrinsic cause', thus straying into the philosophy of 'causes' and 'effects'. Man does not seem to realize that the whole system of cause and effect ends with Allah. He is the First or Primary or Intrinsic Cause or Cause of all causes [*musabbib-ul-asbāb*]. It was explained earlier in Sūrah An-Najm that a

natural order of cause and effect pervades the entire universe. Every cause, which is not itself primary, is traceable to some other cause, and this to another and so on. But as the series of cause and effect in our finite world cannot be indefinite, it must terminate at some point. The Final Cause is, therefore, the Author of the universe. It is this Final Cause towards which the present verses call our attention.

نَحْنُ خَلَقْنَاكُمْ فَلَوْلَا تُصَدِّقُوْنَ. اَفَرَءَ يْتُمْ مَاتُمْنُوْنَ. ءَ اَنْتُمْ تَخْلُقُوْنَهٗ اَمْ نَحْنُ الْخَالِقُوْنَ (We have created you; then why do you not appreciate it as true? So, tell Me about the semen you drop [in the wombs]: Is it you who create it, or are We the Creator?...57-59). With verse 57 begins a series of arguments in support of Allah's Oneness and His power to raise the dead. The first argument in the current verse is taken from the very subtle and wonderful phenomenon of man's birth, starting with a drop of semen and developing into a full-fledged human being - the crown of all creation. Humans stop at thinking that male-female cohabitation in the process of their creation is the ultimate or real cause. Therefore, the Qur'ān poses the question to them in verse [58]: اَفَرَءَ يْتُمْ مَاتُمْنُوْنَ. ءَ اَنْتُمْ تَخْلُقُوْنَهٗ اَمْ نَحْنُ الْخَالِقُوْنَ 'So, tell Me about the semen you drop [in the wombs]: Is it you who create it, or are We the Creator? In other words, a male plays a very insignificant biological role in the birth of a child in that he delivers a drop of microscopic semen in the womb of a female to combine with the microscopic ovum. Once this is done, it goes through several stages of growth and development without anyone, besides Allah, knowing what is happening. Eventually it forms into a foetus with a bone-structure. The skeleton is then clothed with flesh and skin. The soul is infused into it and the little universe [microcosm] comes into being with various systems: The nutritive and digestive system, the blood and the circulatory system, a system of human senses [sight, touch, smell, hearing and taste] and communication and the ability to think and understand. Man thus becomes a moving factory, and in none of these biological processes he has any say.

Neither of the parents [especially the mother in whose womb all this is taking place] knows whether the child is a boy or a girl, until it is born. The question is: Who creates the child in the womb of the mother, creation after creation, within three darknesses [ie the darkness of belly, the darkness of womb and the darkness of amniotic membrane]? Who made it beautiful, gave it the power of hearing and sight? Who bestowed on it the

faculty of thinking and comprehension? Only mentally blind person will fail to exclaim: "Blessed is Allah, the Best of Creators!"

The forthcoming verses [60 and 61]

نَحْنُ قَدَّرْنَا بَيْنَكُمُ الْمَوْتَ وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَسْبُوقِيْنَ ﴿٦٠﴾ عَلَىٰٓ اَنْ نُّبَدِّلَ اَمْثَالَكُمْ وَنُنْشِئَكُمْ فِيْ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٦١﴾

"We have appointed (the times of) death among you, and We cannot be frustrated from replacing you with others like you, and creating you [afresh] in that [form] which you do not know....56:60-61]."

'Death' is the end of all physical life. This is the eternal law of Allah from which there is no escape. Allah pre-determines the time of human death. Man has no choice in the matter of death which frees the human soul from the fetters and shackles of its physical habitat. Allah has pre-designated a particular point in time up to which he could live. But one should not remain lulled into a fancy that he would continue to enjoy power and his free will. Allah has the power to eliminate him any time, and create another people in his place. This is the import of the words, نَحْنُ قَدَّرْنَا بَيْنَكُمُ الْمَوْتَ وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَسْبُوقِيْنَ عَلىٰٓ اَنْ نُّبَدِّلَ اَمْثَالَكُمْ "We have appointed (the times of) death among you, and We cannot be frustrated from replacing you with others like you," The concluding part of verse [61] وَنُنْشِئَكُمْ فِيْمَا لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ '...and creating you (afresh) in that (form) which you do not know" implies that 'Allah has the power to reshape you in a form unknown to you at the moment.' It may happen either by one's turning into dust after death, or by his being metamorphosed into an animal shape as it happened in the past nations, some turned into monkeys and others into swine by way of punishment. It is also possible that they might be transformed into stones or minerals.

Creation of Plants, Sending down of Rain and Creation of Fire are Proof of Allah's Oneness

After referring to the birth of man from very insignificant beginning, the Sūrah, from verse [63] onwards, proceeds to give a brief account of things upon which man's life on earth depends. There are three principal things upon which man's life in this world depends - food, water and fire. The first thing is food to which verse [63] refers.

اَفَرَءَيْتُم مَّاتَحْرُثُوْنَ (Well, tell Me about that [seed] which you sow:...56:63) In the matter of human creation, man was lost in the secondary or extrinsic causes and lost sight of his Real Creator and Master, the Primary or Intrinsic Cause of his creation. This unawareness was unveiled in a particular way. In a similar style, the reality of his source of nourishment is explicated. Allah poses the question to man: 'Indeed you till the land and plant the seeds but who causes them to sprout and grow - you or Allah?' When considered carefully, we will come up with the answer that the farmer or tiller has a very limited role to play. He ploughs the land and fertilizes the soil with manure, and thus softens it so that if the seed germinates, it will not be hampered by the hard ground. All of man's efforts move around this point. Once the plant sprouts, he takes care of it in that direction. But man is not the primary cause of the shoots pushing forth from the seed nor can he claim that he made the plant or tree. Therefore, we go back to the fundamental question: Who caused the seed lying under heaps and heaps of sand to germinate and come out to the surface of the earth so beautifully, comprising untold benefits? There can be only one answer to this question: The All-Encompassing Power and the Most Wonderful creation of the Master Creator of the universe.

Next to food, water is the most important thing upon which human life depends for its sustenance. Here too the Qur'ān, in its inimitable style, poses the question: 'Have you considered the water you drink? Did you send it down from the clouds, or did We send it?' The answer is obvious: 'Allah'. Fire plays a most important part in the life of man. Much of his physical comfort depends upon it. [It is a thing of great utility. In this mechanistic age life is inconceivable without the use of fire. No industry, trade or travel is possible without it.] The Qur'ān again, in its unique and unparalleled style, poses the question: 'Have you considered the fire you kindle? Did you make its timber to grow, or did We make it?' Here too the answer is obvious: 'Allah'. Of course, in both instances the Qur'ānic answers are elaborate.

The last answer is summarized thus in verse [73] نَحْنُ جَعَلْنٰهَا تَذْكِرَةً وَّمَتَاعًا لِّلْمُقْوِيْنَ "We have made it a reminder [of Our infinite power, and of the fire of hell] and a benefit for travelers in deserts....56:73) The word *muqwīn* is derived from the infinitive *iqwā'* and it comes from the root-word *qiwā'* which means 'waste, barren land, ruin or desert'. Thus the word *muqwī*

means 'a traveler or a wayfarer of a desert who alights to prepare his meals'. The verse purports to say that all these creations are the result of Allah's power and wisdom.

فَسَبِّحْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الْعَظِيْمِ (So, proclaim the purity of the name of your Lord, the Magnificent...56:74) The logical and rational conclusion of the above considerations should be for man to believe in the All-Encompassing Divine Power and in His Oneness, and declare the Purity of the Great Lord; for that is the way to express His gratitude.

Verses 75 - 96

فَلَآ اُقْسِمُ بِمَوٰقِعِ النُّجُوْمِ ﴿٧٥﴾ وَاِنَّهٗ لَقَسَمٌ لَّوْتَعْلَمُوْنَ عَظِيْمٌ ﴿٧٦﴾
اِنَّهٗ لَقُرْاٰنٌ كَرِيْمٌ ﴿٧٧﴾ فِىْ كِتٰبٍ مَّكْنُوْنٍ ﴿٧٨﴾ لَّايَمَسُّهٗٓ اِلَّا
الْمُطَهَّرُوْنَ ﴿٧٩﴾ تَنْزِيْلٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٨٠﴾ اَفَبِهٰذَا الْحَدِيْثِ
اَنْتُمْ مُّدْهِنُوْنَ ﴿٨١﴾ وَتَجْعَلُوْنَ رِزْقَكُمْ اَنَّكُمْ تُكَذِّبُوْنَ ﴿٨٢﴾ فَلَوْلَآ
اِذَا بَلَغَتِ الْحُلْقُوْمَ ﴿٨٣﴾ وَاَنْتُمْ حِيْنَئِذٍ تَنْظُرُوْنَ ﴿٨٤﴾ وَنَحْنُ اَقْرَبُ
اِلَيْهِ مِنْكُمْ وَلٰكِنْ لَّاتُبْصِرُوْنَ ﴿٨٥﴾ فَلَوْلَآ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ غَيْرَ مَدِيْنِيْنَ
﴿٨٦﴾ تَرْجِعُوْنَهَآ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿٨٧﴾ فَاَمَّآ اِنْ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِيْنَ
﴿٨٨﴾ فَرَوْحٌ وَّرَيْحَانٌ ۙ وَّجَنَّتُ نَعِيْمٍ ﴿٨٩﴾ وَاَمَّآ اِنْ كَانَ مِنْ
اَصْحٰبِ الْيَمِيْنِ ﴿٩٠﴾ فَسَلٰمٌ لَّكَ مِنْ اَصْحٰبِ الْيَمِيْنِ ﴿٩١﴾ وَاَمَّآ
اِنْ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُكَذِّبِيْنَ الضَّآلِّيْنَ ﴿٩٢﴾ فَنُزُلٌ مِّنْ حَمِيْمٍ ﴿٩٣﴾
وَّتَصْلِيَةُ جَحِيْمٍ ﴿٩٤﴾ اِنَّ هٰذَا لَهُوَحَقُّ الْيَقِيْنِ ﴿٩٥﴾ فَسَبِّحْ بِاسْمِ
رَبِّكَ الْعَظِيْمِ ﴿٩٦﴾

So, I swear by the setting places of the stars, [75] – **and indeed it is a great oath, if you are to appreciate** – [76] **it is surely the Noble Qur'ān,** [77] **(recorded already) in a protected book (i.e. the Preserved Tablet)** [78] **that is not touched except by the purified ones (the angels).** [79] – **a revelation from the Lord of the worlds.** [80] **Is it this**

discourse that you take lightly, [81] **and take your denial as your livelihood?** [82] **So why (do you) not (interfere) when the soul (of a dying person) reaches the throat,** [83] **and you are watching?** [84] **And We are closer to him than you, but you do not perceive.** [85] **So, if you are not going to be recompensed (in the Hereafter for your deeds), then why do you not** [86] **bring the soul back, if you are truthful?** [87] **So, in case he (the dying person) is from among those blessed with nearness,** [88] **then (for him) there is comfort and fragrance and garden of bliss.** [89] **And in case he is from among the People of the Right,** [90] **then, (it will be said to him,) " Peace is for you, being one of the People of the Right."** [91] **But if he is one of the deniers, the astray,** [92] **then (for him) there is entertainment from boiling water,** [93] **and burning in the Hell.** [94] **Indeed this is certainty in its true sense.** [95] **So, proclaim the purity of the name of your Lord, the Magnificent.** [96]

Sequencing of Arguments

Preceding verses put forward rational arguments, in support of life after death, by inviting attention to Allah's infinite power. The current verses are meant to prove this fact by giving an authoritative reference, that is, the Qur'ān.

Allah swears to the Greatness of the Qur'ān

فَلَآ أُقْسِمُ بِمَوٰقِعِ النُّجُوْمِ (So, I swear by the setting places of the stars...56:75) The words لَآ أُقْسِمُ 'I swear' are prefixed in the text by the particle لَا *lā* [no] which is not translated in the text, because it is idiomatically prefixed to 'oath', as for example لَاوَاللهِ *lā wallāh* [No, by Allah]. In pre-Islamic Arabic, we come across the idiomatic oath لَاوَأَبِيْکَ *lā wa-abīk* [No, by your father]. Some lexicologists say that the particle *lā* is added only as an idiomatic expression [*zā'idah*] which carries no sense, and others say that when the refutation of an addressee's hypothesis is intended, لَا *lā* is used to signify that the assumption of the addressee is not correct, but the right thing is that which follows.

The word مَوَاقِع *mawāqi'* is the plural of مَوْقَع *mawq'* and refers to the points where or times when the stars set. Here, like in Sūrah An-Najm وَالنَّجْمِ إِذَا هَوىٰ "By the star when it goes down to set, [1]", the oath of stars is qualified by their setting-time. The wisdom underlying this is that when the stars set, their function seems to have been cut off from the horizon,

and we witness effects of their vanishing. This is the proof of their perishability and dependence on Divine power.

إِنَّهُ لَقُرْاٰنٌ كَرِيمٌ فِي كِتٰبٍ مَّكْنُونٍ. لَّا يَمَسُّهُ إِلَّا الْمُطَهَّرُونَ (It is surely the Noble Qur'ān (recorded already) in a protected book [i.e. the Preserved Tablet] that is not touched except by the purified ones [the angels]....77-79) Verses [75-76] constituted oath and the current set of verses is the subject of the oath [*jawāb-ul-qasam*]. The Qur'ān is a noble and glorious Book. The verse refutes the assumption of the pagans that this Book has been forged by a human being or that [God forbid!] it is a speech inspired by the devil.

The phrase كِتٰبٍ مَّكْنُونٍ 'a protected book' refers to *lawḥ maḥfūz* [i.e. the Preserved Tablet]. لَا يَمَسُّهُ إِلَّا الْمُطَهَّرُونَ (that is not touched except by the purified ones ...56:79). Two issues require clarification here. The commentators have different views about them, because the structure of verse 78 and 79 has two possibilities grammatically: The first possibility is that the phrase 'that is not touched except by the purified ones' is the qualification of the Preserved Tablet referred to in the previous verse. In this case, 'the purified ones' can refer only to angels, and the phrase 'not touched' cannot be taken in its literal sense of physical touch; it would rather mean 'being awre of'. The sense of the verse would be that no one is aware of the Preserved Tablet and its contents except the purified angels. (Qurṭubī) This interpretation is adopted in Bayān-ul-Qur'ān as well. The second possibility is that the phrase 'that is not touched except by the purified ones' is taken as a qualification of the Qur'ān referred to in the previous verse. In this case the word Qur'ān would refer to the scrolls or scripts in which it is written, and 'not touched, will remain in its literal sense of referring to physical touch by hand etc. The sense would be that the Script of the Qur'ān is not touched by anyone except by the purified angels who bring revelation to the Prophet ﷺ. Since this interpretation does not need to take the word 'touch' in its figurative sense, Qurṭubī and some other commentators have preferred this interpretation. Imām Mālik رحمه الله تعالى says, 'The best interpretation of verse [77 and 78] I have ever heard is what is mentioned in Sūrah 'Abas (80) verses [13-16]: فِي صُحُفٍ مُّكَرَّمَةٍ مَّرْفُوعَةٍ مُّطَهَّرَةٍ بِأَيْدِي سَفَرَةٍ كِرَامٍ بَرَرَةٍ (It is [recorded] in those scripts [of the Preserved Tablet] that are honoured, exalted, purified, in the hands of those scribes who are honourable, righteous.)

The second issue that requires consideration in this verse is what is meant by the phrase 'the purified ones'. A large group of the Companions, their followers and leading authorities on Qur'ānic commentary think that the referent of 'the pure ones' are the angels who are purified of the dross and adulteration of sins, and who are innocent. This is the view of Sayyidnā Anas ﷺ, Sa'īd Ibn Jubair ﷺ and of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ. Imām Mālik رحمه الله تعالى has also adopted this view .

Some of the commentators think that Qur'ān refers to the copy of the Holy Book that is in our hands, and the referent of the word '*muṭahharūn*' ('purified ones) are people free from minor impurity and major impurity. Minor impurity means to be without *wuḍū'* and minor impurity can be cleansed by making *wuḍū'* or *tayammum* [cleaning with dust]. Major impurity refers to the state of impurity which is caused by sexual intercourse, lustful discharge of semen during sleep, and menstrual and postpartum discharges. *Ghusl* (having bath) is the only means of achieving purity from this state. This interpretation is placed on the text by 'Aṭā', Ṭā'ūs, Sālim and Muḥammad Bāqir رحمهم الله تعالى. In this case, although verse "that is not touched except by the purified ones...56:79) is a declarative sentence, it is in fact used in the sense of prohibiting human beings to touch the Qur'ān without being free from the minor and major impurities: The person who wishes to touch the Qur'ān needs to be purified of the visible as well as the invisible impurities by taking *wuḍū'*, *tayammum* or *ghusl,* as required. Qurṭubī and Maẓharī prefer this interpretation.

In the incident of Sayyidnā 'Umar's ﷺ embracing Islam, we come across the part of the story where he asked his sister to give him the pages of the Qur'ān, she recited verse [79] of this Sūrah, refused to give him the pages and said 'only the pure ones can touch it'. As a result, he was forced to take a bath, and then recite the contents of the pages. This incident also lends support to the last interpretation. The versions of the Tradition that prohibit the impure people from touching the Qur'ān are put forward by some authorities to argue in favour of the last interpretation.

However, since Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ, Anas ﷺ and others have a different view about the interpretation of this verse, as mentioned above, many scholars did not base the prohibition of touching the Qur'ān without ablution on verse [79]. Rather, the prohibition is established by

the following Traditions:

Imām Mālik cites, as evidence, the Holy Prophet's letter in his Muwatta' which he wrote to 'Amr Ibn Hazm. It contains the following statement: لَايَمَسُّ الْقُرْآنَ إِلَّا طَاهِرٌ "Only a clean one may touch the Qur'ān". Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī gives the following references: Musnad of 'Abdurrazzāq, Ibn Abī Dāwūd and Ibn-ul-Mundhir, Ṭabarānī and Ibn Mardūyah record a Tradition on the authority of 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar ﷺ that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: لَايَمَسُّ الْقُرْآنَ إِلَّا طَاهِرٌ (Only a clean one may touch the Qur'ān.)

Some Rulings about touching the Holy Qur'ān

(1) On the basis of the foregoing Prophetic Aḥādīth, the overwhelming majority of the 'Ummah and the four major schools concur that 'purity' is a condition for the permissibility of touching the Holy Qur'ān and it is not allowed to touch it in a state of impurity. It means that before touching the Holy Qur'ān, one must make sure that no *najāsah* (i.e. things declared by Sharī'ah as filth) is attached to one's hand, and that he or she is in the state of *wuḍū'* and is not in the state of *Janābah* (the state in which it is obligatory to take bath.) The divergence of interpretation referred to earlier is only in connection with whether or not verse [79] can be the basis of such a prohibition. Some jurists think that the verse as well as the relevant Traditions bear the same sense, hence they use them as supportive of each other in evidence of their ruling. Others, on account of divergence of interpretation among the Companions, exercised precaution in using the Qur'ānic text as evidence in support of their ruling. But because of the Traditions, they ruled that touching the Qur'ān without ablutions is impermissible. In sum, there are no differences in their rulings. The differences are only in supportive evidence of these rulings.

(2) If the Qur'ān is in a cover which is sewn or permanently attached to it in some way, it is not permitted - according to the four major schools - for an unclean person to touch it without ablutions. If however the Qur'ān is covered in something that is not permanently attached to it, an unclean person may, according to Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, touch it without ablutions. However, according to Imāms Mālik and Shāfi'ī, an unclean person is not permitted to touch it before taking ablutions. [Maẓharī]

(3) If a person is wearing a garment, it is not lawful for him to touch the Qur'ān with his sleeves or skirt if he is unclean. However, he may touch it with a handkerchief or a sheet. [Maẓharī]

(4) Scholars have ruled it which is proved by this very verse with grater force that a person in the state of *janābah* (sexual defilement) and a woman in the state of menstruation or postpartum bleeding cannot recite it, even from memory until bath has been taken, because if it is obligatory to honour the written letters of the Holy Qur'ān by touching them only in the state of purity, its spoken words deserve the same honour with greater importance. The requirement of this honour should have been that even in the state of minor impurity a person should not be allowed to recite the Holy Qur'ān. But Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās and 'Alī ﷺ report that the Holy Prophet ﷺ recited the Qur'ān without *wuḍū'*. On this basis, the jurists have ruled that it is permissible to recite it without *wuḍū'*. (But in the case of major impurity the rule will remain intact.). [Maẓharī]

أَفَبِهَٰذَا الْحَدِيثِ أَنتُم مُّدْهِنُونَ (Is it this discourse that you take lightly,...56:81) The word مُدْهِنُونَ *mudhinun* is the plural of *mudhin*, being the active participle from إدْهَان *idhan*, which literally means 'to apply or rub oil on the body'. When oil is applied or rubbed on the body, the muscles are relaxed, and parts of the body become soft and supple. By extension, the word is employed in the sense of showing flexibility and softness on inappropriate occasions. Hence, it is used in the sense of hypocrisy. In the current verse the word is used in the sense of hypocrisy and rejection of Allah's verses carelessly.

فَلَوْلَا إِذَا بَلَغَتِ الْحُلْقُومَ ﴿٨٣﴾ وَأَنتُمْ حِينَئِذٍ تَنظُرُونَ ﴿٨٤﴾ وَنَحْنُ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيْهِ مِنكُمْ وَلَٰكِن لَّا تُبْصِرُونَ ﴿٨٥﴾ فَلَوْلَا إِن كُنتُمْ غَيْرَ مَدِينِينَ ﴿٨٦﴾ تَرْجِعُونَهَا إِن كُنتُمْ صَٰدِقِينَ ﴿٨٧﴾

(So why [do you] not [interfere] when the soul [of a dying person] reaches the throat, and you are watching? And We are closer to him than you, but you do not perceive. So, if you are not going to be recompensed [in the Hereafter for your deeds], then why do you not bring the soul back, if you are truthful?...56:83-87)

The preceding verses proved two facts through rational arguments and by swearing an oath by the falling stars: [1] that the Holy Qur'ān is

the word of Allah. Neither Jinn nor devil can ever tamper with it. Everything it contains is the truth; and [2] one of the most fundamental articles of faith enshrined in the Qur'ān is the Day of Resurrection and Reckoning. Towards the end of the passage, it is mentioned that the infidels and idolaters, in spite of clear arguments and evidence, reject life after death.

Their denial of Resurrection by the unbelievers, in a way, amounts to a claim that their lives and souls are under their own control, and they have a say in the matter of life and death. In order to refute this assumption, the above verses give the example of a dying person. When the soul reaches his throat, all of his near and dear ones look at him and express their desire that he may live longer, but none of them is able to intervene and save his life. All the people around him seem absolutely helpless. However, Allah is nearer to the dying person than the people around him even though they are unable to see Him. In other words, that is, He is nearer to him in terms of knowledge and power. He is fully aware of the person's inner and outer conditions and has complete control over him.

In short, it is not within people's power to get together and save a soul or life. Allah is nearer to a dying person than his soul or life. Allah has pre-designated a particular time for the soul to be separated from the body. None can avert it. In view of this graphic picture, the disbelievers are reminded that if they think that they cannot be resurrected after death, and they are too strong to come under Allah's grasp, then they must restore the soul when it has reached the throat and is about to depart from the body or it has already departed and died. If it is not possible to do any of these, how illogical or irrational it is for man to think that he can escape the Divine grasp and reject life after death!

فَاَمَّآ اِنْ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِيْنَ (So, in case he [the dying person] is from among those blessed with nearness...56:88). In the foregoing verses, it was made clear that one day the present world will come to an end. It was also testified that at the time of death the near and dear ones, friends and relatives, and doctors all stand helplessly around the dying person. Likewise, resurrection, reckoning, and reward and punishment, after account of deeds, are all a reality and certainty of the highest degree. At the commencement of the Sūrah, it was mentioned that there will be

three categories of the people in regard to their reward or punishment. The gist of this subject is again summarized here. If the dying person is among the Foremost believers, he will experience comfort, fragrance of happiness and a Garden of bliss. If he is not from the Foremost, but from the People of the Right hand, i.e. from the general body of believers, he will also experience the bounties and pleasures of Paradise. But if he is one of the People of the Left hand, the deniers and the deviant ones, then he will be in the blazing fire of Hell where he will be served with boiling water to drink.

At the end of this subject the Qur'ān says:

إِنَّ هٰذَا لَهُوَ حَقُّ الْيَقِيْنِ (Indeed this is certainty in its true sense...56:95). None of the reward or punishment mentioned in the preceding verses is refutable because they are a dead certainty that has no room for any doubt or suspicion.

فَسَبِّحْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الْعَظِيْمِ (So, proclaim the purity of the name of your Lord, the Magnificent...56:96). The Sūrah concludes with an imperative addressed to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ to pronounce the *tasbīḥ* of His Lord. This includes all kinds of *tasbiḥāt* (rememberances)- within *ṣalāh* and outside *ṣalāh*. Ṣalāh itself is sometimes referred to as *tasbīḥ*. Thus this verse enjoins to keep up the regular performance of *ṣalāh*.

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Wāqi'ah
Ends here.

Sūrah Al-Ḥadīd
(The Iron)

This Sūrah is Madanī, and it has 29 verses and 4 sections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 6

سَبَّحَ لِلّٰهِ مَا فِی السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ج وَهُوَ الْعَزِیْزُ الْحَكِیْمُ ﴿١﴾ لَهٗ
مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ج یُحْیٖ وَیُمِیْتُ ج وَهُوَ عَلٰی كُلِّ شَیْءٍ
قَدِیْرٌ ﴿٢﴾ هُوَ الْاَوَّلُ وَالْاٰخِرُ وَالظَّاهِرُ وَالْبَاطِنُ ج وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَیْءٍ
عَلِیْمٌ ﴿٣﴾ هُوَ الَّذِیْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ فِیْ سِتَّةِ اَیَّامٍ ثُمَّ
اسْتَوٰی عَلَی الْعَرْشِ ط یَعْلَمُ مَا یَلِجُ فِی الْاَرْضِ وَمَا یَخْرُجُ مِنْهَا وَمَا
یَنْزِلُ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ وَمَا یَعْرُجُ فِیْهَا ط وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ اَیْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ ط وَاللّٰهُ
بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ بَصِیْرٌ ﴿٤﴾ لَهٗ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ط وَاِلَی اللّٰهِ
تُرْجَعُ الْاُمُوْرُ ﴿٥﴾ یُوْلِجُ الَّیْلَ فِی النَّهَارِ وَیُوْلِجُ النَّهَارَ فِی الَّیْلِ ط
وَهُوَ عَلِیْمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُوْرِ ﴿٦﴾

Allah's purity has been proclaimed by all that is in the heavens and the earth, and He is the Mighty, the Wise. [1] **To Him belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth. He gives life and brings death, and He is Powerful to do every thing.** [2] **He is the First and the Last, and the Manifest and the Hidden, and He is All-Knowing about every thing.** [3] **He is the One who created the heavens and the earth in six days, then He positioned**

Himself on the Throne. He knows whatever goes into the earth and whatever comes out therefrom, and whatever descends from the sky, and whatever ascends thereto. And He is with you wherever you are, and Allah is watchful of whatever you do. [4] **To Him belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, and to Allah all matters are returned.** [5] **He makes the night enter into the day, and makes the day enter into the night, and He is All-Knowing about whatever lies in the hearts.** [6]

Some of the Merits of Sūrah Al-Hadid

It is recorded in Abū Dāwūd, Tirmidhī and Nasa'ī that Sayyidnā 'Irbāḍ Ibn Sāriyah ﷺ said that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ used to recite Al-Musabbihat before he went to sleep and said: "In them there is a verse that is more meritorious than a thousand verses." The collective name of the series Al-Musabbiḥāt refers to the following five Sūrahs: [1] Al-Ḥadīd; [2] Al-Ḥashar; [3] Aṣ-Ṣaff; [4] Jumu'ah; and [5] At-Taghābun. Having cited this Ḥadīth, Ibn Kathīr says that the best verse referred to in Sūrah Al-Ḥadīd is verse [3] هُوَالْأَوَّلُ وَالْآخِرُ وَالظَّاهِرُ وَالْبَاطِنُ ۚ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ (He is the First and the Last, and the Manifest and the Hidden, and He is All-Knowing about every thing....57:3] Among the five Sūrahs, the first three, namely Al-Ḥadīd, Al-Ḥashr and Aṣ-Ṣaff commence with the past perfect tense '*sabbaha*' [purity has been proclaimed] whilst the last two, namely Al-Jumu'ah and Al-Taghābun commence with the imperfect tense *yusabbiḥu* [purity is proclaimed]. This implies that the purity of Allah should be declared at all times, the past, the present and the future. [Maẓharī]

Remedy for Diabolical Whisperings

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ said that if the Satan casts an evil scruple in anyone's heart, and thus causes skepticism about Allah and the religion of truth, he should softly recite the following verse [3]: هُوَالْأَوَّلُ وَالْآخِرُ وَالظَّاهِرُ وَالْبَاطِنُ ۚ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ (He is the First and the Last, the Manifest and the Hidden and He is All-Knowing about every thing.)

What is meant by Allah's being First and Last, and Manifest and Hidden? There are more than ten different interpretations of these attributes, and they are not contradictory. The scope is wide enough to accommodate all interpretations. The meaning of the attribute *al-awwal* [the First] is more or less fixed, signifying that ontologically there was

nothing before Allah, and that He created everything and He is the First Cause of all existent things. The attribute *Al-'ākhir* [the Last] means that He will exist even after everything will perish, as the following verse testifies: 'كُلُّ شَيْءٍ هَالِكٌ إِلَّا وَجْهَهُ (Everything has to perish except His Countenance... [28:88] It should be noted that death or perishing covers two possibilities, either actual death or potential death. Therefore the verse means that all existent creatures will either actually perish on the Day of Judgment, or they may not actually perish, but potentially they could perish. They have the inherent capacity for death and destruction. Thus despite their being existent they may still be described as *ḥalik* or *fānī* [perishing]. As for instance. Paradise and Hell, and the righteous or unrighteous inmates entering them will not actually perish, but potentially they have the inherent capacity to perish. Only the Supreme Being of Allah is such that neither non-existence has ever occurred to Him, nor can death overtake Him. Thus Allah is *Al-'Ākhir* [the Last].

Imām Ghazālī رحمه الله تعالیٰ has another explanation. He interprets the attribute 'Ākhir [the Last] from the point of view of *ma'rifah* [Knowledge] in the sense that knowing Allah Ta'ālā is the ultimate goal which man hopes to achieve. He moves in the direction of this goal, passing on the way through all the different stages and stations until he attains the Divine Knowledge. [Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī].

The attribute *Az-zāhir* [the Manifest] signifies a Being whose manifestation is superior to everything. Since 'manifestation' is an offshoot of 'existence', and the Existence of Allah is First and superior to all existent entities, the Divine Manifestation surpasses the manifestation of all other beings. Nothing in this universe is more manifest than Him. The manifestation of His wisdom and His power is visible in every particle of this world.

The attribute *Al-bāṭin* [the Hidden] means that the accurate nature and essence of Allah's Being is hidden in the sense that the Divine Essence [*dhāt*] is beyond human perception. No intellect or thought can ever reach the accurate and Intrinsic Essence of Allah.

اے برتراز قیاس و گمان و خیال و وہم
وزہرچہ دیدہ ایم شنیدہ ایم وخواندہ ایم

He is far beyond any hypothesis, any guess, any, assumption, any imagination,

And who is far beyond whatever we have ever seen, heard or read about.

اے بروں از جملہ قال وقیلِ من
خاك بر فرق من و تمثیل من

He is beyond all our discussions and debates.

Whatever example I cite to explain Him is no more than a sheer failure.

وَهُوَمَعَكُمْ اَيْنَمَا كُنْتُمْ (...And He is with you wherever you are, ...57:4) No man is able to comprehend the essential nature of Allah's company or His being with us, though it is absolutely true that He is with us, because no man can exist or do any work without it. The Divine Will [*mashiyyah*] and power is necessary for everything. Therefore, Allah is with every human being in every situation, at every place. Allah knows best!

Verses 7 - 11

اٰمِنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ وَاَنْفِقُوْا مِمَّا جَعَلَكُمْ مُّسْتَخْلَفِيْنَ فِيْهِ ؕ فَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مِنْكُمْ وَاَنْفَقُوْا لَهُمْ اَجْرٌ كَبِيْرٌ ﴿۷﴾ وَمَا لَكُمْ لَا تُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ ۚ وَالرَّسُوْلُ يَدْعُوْكُمْ لِتُؤْمِنُوْا بِرَبِّكُمْ وَقَدْ اَخَذَ مِيْثَاقَكُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿۸﴾ هُوَالَّذِيْ يُنَزِّلُ عَلٰى عَبْدِهٖۤ اٰيٰتٍۭ بَيِّنٰتٍ لِّيُخْرِجَكُمْ مِّنَ الظُّلُمٰتِ اِلَى النُّوْرِ ؕ وَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِكُمْ لَرَءُوْفٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿۹﴾ وَمَا لَكُمْ اَلَّا تُنْفِقُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ وَلِلّٰهِ مِيْرَاثُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ لَا يَسْتَوِيْ مِنْكُمْ مَّنْ اَنْفَقَ مِنْ قَبْلِ الْفَتْحِ وَقٰتَلَ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ اَعْظَمُ دَرَجَةً مِّنَ الَّذِيْنَ اَنْفَقُوْا مِنْۢ بَعْدُ وَقٰتَلُوْا ؕ وَكُلًّا وَّعَدَ اللّٰهُ الْحُسْنٰى ؕ وَاللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرٌ ﴿۱۰﴾ مَنْ ذَا الَّذِيْ يُقْرِضُ اللّٰهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا فَيُضٰعِفَهٗ لَهٗ وَلَهٗۤ اَجْرٌ كَرِيْمٌ ﴿۱۱﴾

Believe in Allah and His Messenger, and spend out of that (wealth) in which He has appointed you as

deputies. [1] So, for those of you who have believed and spent (in Allah's way), there is a big reward. [7] **And what is wrong with you that you do not believe in Allah, while the Messenger invites you to believe in your Lord, and He has taken your covenant, if you are believers?** [8] **He is the One who reveals clear verses to His slave, so that He brings you out from layers of darkness towards the light. And to you, indeed, Allah is Very-Kind, Very-Merciful.** [9] **And what is wrong with you that you should not spend in the way of Allah, while to Allah belongs the inheritance of the heavens and the earth? Those who spent before the Conquest (of Makkah), and fought (in Allah's way), are not at par (with others). Those are much greater in rank than those who spent later and fought, though Allah has promised the good (reward) for each. And Allah is well aware of what you do.** [10] **Who is the one who advances a loan, a good loan, to Allah so that He multiplies it for him, and he may have a noble reward?** [11]

Ordering Faith

وَقَدْ اَخَذَ مِيْثَاقَكُمْ (...and He has taken your covenant ....57:8) This could refer to the covenant taken in *'azal'* (pre-eternity). According to verses 172-174 of Sūrah Al-A'rāf, Allah gathered all the souls even before they took the form of their existence, and took the covenant of '*alast*' [the pre-eternal covenant]. He asked them: اَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ ("Am I not your Lord?")

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[1] The original word used in the text is '*mustakhlafin*' which has two meanings: 'deputies' and 'successors'. Taken in the first meaning, the verse indicates that the wealth held by human beings originally belongs to Allah, but He has made them His deputies or representatives to use it according to His directions. Although He has allowed them to use it for their own benefit, it should always be subject to the rules prescribed by Him in Shari'ah. Once it is believed that one is not the absolute owner of this wealth, it should not be difficult for him to spend according to the command of its absolute Owner. This is the interpretation of the verse according to the majority of commentators. However, some other exegetes have taken the word '*mustakhlafin*' in the sense of 'successors'. In this case the verse reminds us that whatever wealth we have in our hands today has reached us from other people who owned it before us. We have succeeded them in its ownership, and ultimately it will be passed on to some others through any mode of transfer including inheritance. All kinds of wealth are thus in transit, moving from one person to another. Therefore, one should not hesitate in spending it in Allah's way, because it has to be passed on to some others in any case. **(Muhammad Taqi Usmani)**

They replied: بَلٰى (Of course You are, we affirm). Another possibility is that this covenant could refer to the pledge taken from the previous prophets and their followers to believe in the final Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ and support him. This covenant is mentioned by the Holy Qur'ān in the following words:

ثُمَّ جَآءَكُمْ رَسُوْلٌ مُّصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَكُمْ لَتُؤْمِنُنَّ بِهٖ وَلَتَنْصُرُنَّهٗ قَالَ ءَاَقْرَرْتُمْ وَاَخَذْتُمْ عَلٰى ذٰلِكُمْ اِصْرِيْ قَالُوْٓا اَقْرَرْنَا قَالَ فَاشْهَدُوْا وَاَنَا مَعَكُمْ مِّنَ الشّٰهِدِيْنَ.

> "...then comes to you a messenger verifying what is with you; you shall have to believe in him and you shall have to support him. He said: 'Do you affirm and accept my covenant in this respect?' They said: 'We affirm.' He said: 'Then, bear witness, and I am with you among the witnesses.'" (3:81)

اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ (...if you are believers - 57:8). A question may arise here: In the earlier part of this very verse [8], the infidels and idolaters were reprimanded in the following words, "And what is wrong with you that you do not believe in Allah" This goes to show that the addressees of this phrase are 'non-believers', then how is it appropriate to say 'if you are believers'?

The answer to this question is that the unbelievers did not deny the existence of the Creator. In point of fact, they claimed to believe in God, and thus they used to say مَانَعْبُدُهُمْ اِلَّا لِيُقَرِّبُوْنَآ اِلَى اللّٰهِ زُلْفٰى (We only worship them [the idols] that they may bring us nearer to Allah in position....39:3) In this context, the concluding phrase of verse [8] implies that 'If your claim [that you believe in God] is true, then go about the perfect and right way in "believing in God" which is not only to believe in God but also to believe in His Messenger.

وَلِلّٰهِ مِيْرَاثُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ (...while to Allah belongs the inheritance of the heavens and the earth?....57:10) The word *mīrāth* [inheritance, heritage] is the process by which the assets of a deceased person pass to the living heirs and beneficiaries. This transfer of cwnership takes place automatically by virtue of the law of Sharī'ah; the deceased has no choice in the matter. On this occasion, Allah has described the ownership of heaven and earth by the expression *mīrāth* [inheritance, heritage] presumably because all those assets deemed to be owned by men will ultimately return to Allah, no matter whether men like it or not. Although

the Real Owner and Master of the heavens and the earth is Allah, He transferred part-ownership of things to man by His grace, but on the Day of Judgment, even this outward and partial ownership will no longer remain in the hands of anyone. At that stage, all sorts of ownership, apparent and real, outward and inward, will belong to none but Allah. Therefore, if those who are apparently owners of some wealth today spend it in Allah's way, they will receive its compensation in the Hereafter, and thus anything spent in the way of Allah will become the eternal property of the spender.

It is recorded in Tirmidhī on the authority of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها that one day a goat was slaughtered. Most of it was distributed among other people, except for a foreleg. The Holy Prophet ﷺ wanted to know from her whether any part of it was spared from distribution. She said 'yes, a foreleg'. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "The entire goat is spared, except this foreleg." He meant that the entire goat was spent in the way of Allah and thus it was spared for their benefit in the Hereafter, because it would remain with Allah for compensation. On the contrary, there would be no compensation for the foreleg that had been kept for later use, because that would perish here. [Maẓharī]

لَايَسْتَوِىْ مِنْكُمْ مَّنْ اَنْفَقَ مِنْ قَبْلِ الْفَتْحِ وَقَاتَلَ (...Those who spent before the Conquest [of Makkah], and fought [in Allah's way], are not at par [with others]. ...10) It means that there are two types of people who spend wealth in the way of Allah: [1] those who embraced Islam before the victory of Makkah and, being believers, spent their wealth in the cause of Allah; [2] those who participated in *jihād* after the conquest of Makkah and spent their wealth in Allah's way. The two types are not equal in the sight of Allah. They differ in status and reward. The first category is described as higher in status and reward than the second category who will receive reward commensurate with their status.

Conquest of Makkah: The Dividing Line in Determining the Status of the noble Companions رضي الله عنهم

The verse declares the Conquest of Makkah as the dividing line in determining the status of the two categories of the noble Companions, presumably because the political conditions of Makkah before the Conquest were very bleak and difficult for Muslims. In terms of extrinsic causes, the survival of Muslims was threatened and their progress was

doubted. The people at large could not rule out the possibility that, like other movements, Islam would soon erode and suffer a natural attrition or death. Wise men of the world would not join a movement where there was a fear of defeat or annihilation. They wait for results. When the movement shows signs of success, they join it. Some people, though think that it is the truth, do not pluck courage to join it for fear of persecution and on account of their own weaknesses. But when the courageous and determined people are convinced about the veracity of a theory or belief system, they accept it instantly. They do not bother about victory or defeat, and smaller or larger membership of the movement does not concern them.

The people, who embraced Islam before conquest of Makkah, were witnessing the small number and political weakness of the Muslims and the consequent hardships. Muslims were very small in number and they were weak, on account of which the pagans persecuted them. Especially in the early days of Islam, disclosing one's faith in Islam would amount to losing his life, hearth and home. It is obvious that those who put their lives at stake by embracing Islam in such circumstances, and offered their lives and wealth for the help of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and for the service of Islam had such a high level of sincerity in their faith and practice that no other people can be compared to them.

Gradually, conditions changed. Muslims grew in power, so much so that eventually Makkah was conquered, after which Islam spread tremendously throughout the Arab world, people embraced the religion of Allah en masse [as the Qur'ān says: يَدْخُلُوْنَ فِىْ دِيْنِ اللّٰهِ اَفْوَاجًا (...people entering Allah's [approved] religion in multitudes) [110:2] This happened because many people were convinced of the veracity of Islam, but reluctant to embrace it publicly on account of their own weaknesses, owing to the might and power of the opposition and for fear of their persecution. These hurdles were now out of their way, and they started entering the fold of Islam in multitudes.

Although such people too are shown respect and honour by this verse, and forgiveness and mercy is promised to them, it has been made clear that their status cannot be equal to those who, due to their unshaken faith and resolute courage, declared their Islam despite all apprehensions of extreme hardships and persecution, and offered themselves to Islam in

very difficult times.

Allah promises Paradise and Forgiveness to all Noble Ṣaḥābah ﷺ

In the current set of verses, a distinction is drawn between the different categories of the noble Ṣaḥābah (Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, but towards the end of verse 10 it is declared that وَكُلًّا وَّعَدَ اللّٰهُ الْحُسْنٰى (...though Allah has promised the good [reward] for each ....57:10). The word *ḥusnā* [good reward] means that the promise of Paradise and forgiveness extends to all the noble Companions, whether they spent and fought before or after the Conquest. This includes almost the entire concourse of Companions, because it is hardly conceivable that, despite being Muslims, some of them might have not spent anything in Allah's way or not participated against the hostile foes of Islam. Thus the Qur'ānic proclamation of Paradise and forgiveness is for the general body of Companions.

Ibn Ḥazm رحمه الله تعالى says that the meaning of verse [10] becomes even clearer when we append to it verses [101-102] of Sūrah Al-Anbiyā': إِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ سَبَقَتْ لَهُمْ مِّنَّا الْحُسْنٰى أُولٰٓئِكَ عَنْهَا مُبْعَدُوْنَ. لَايَسْمَعُوْنَ حَسِيْسَهَا وَهُمْ فِيْمَا اشْتَهَتْ اَنْفُسُهُمْ خٰلِدُوْنَ (Surely, those for whom the good (news) from Us has come earlier shall be kept far away from it (i.e. from the Hell). They will not hear the slightest of its sound, and they will remain forever in what their selves desire.) [21:101-102].

The verses under comment contain the phrase كُلًّا وَّعَدَ اللّٰهُ الْحُسْنٰى (..though Allah has promised the good (reward) for each ...[57:10] In verses [21:101-102], Allah Ta'ālā proclaims that those who have received the good news of reward [*al-ḥusnā*] will be kept far away from Hell. The Qur'ān thus guarantees that all the Companions, whether from the first category or from the second one, are immune from Hell. Even if someone from them would commit a sin, he will not persist in it, but he will either repent from it, or will be forgiven for it because of the blessed company of the Holy Prophet ﷺ he enjoyed, his help offered to him, the good deeds he performed and many services he rendered to Islam. Therefore, he would not leave this world unless his sins would be forgiven and his account of deeds would have been clear. It is also possible that worldly calamities would serve as an expiation to wipe out his shortcomings or painful experience in the grave or *'Alam-ul-barzakh* will expiate his

faults.

There are Traditions that report torment for some of the noble Companions, but that does not refer to the torture of the Hereafter or punishment of the Hell. It refers to the chastisement of the grave or *'Alam-ul-barzakh*. It would not be far-fetched to assume that if a Companion committed a sin and did not find an opportunity to repent and cleanse himself, he would be purified by infliction of the grave, so that no chastisement will be inflicted on him in the Hereafter.

The Status of the Noble Ṣaḥābah in the light of Qur'ān and Sunnah, not in terms of Historical Narratives

The Noble Ṣaḥābah are not like the general body of the Muslim Community. They are a medium between the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the general body of the Muslim Community. Without them neither the Qur'ān nor its meaning or the teachings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ can reach the Ummah. Therefore, they enjoy a special status in Islam. The status of the blessed Companions cannot be recognized by the historical narrations that are a mixture of right and wrong. It is rather recognized in the light of Qur'ān and Sunnah.

If any of them slips up, in most cases it would not exceed a *khaṭa' ijtihādī* or error in judgement, not a sin or willful transgression of law. In fact, according to the clear text of a Prophetic Tradition, if a *mujtahid* were to slip up or err in his judgement, he still receives one reward. Even if they committed a sin, it would be counted as nil in view of their life-long righteous deeds, and supporting the Holy Prophet ﷺ and Islam. The reverence and awe of Allah was engrossed in their hearts to such a high degree that they would shudder at the very thought of ordinary sins and would repent forthwith. As a result, they would inflict punishment on themselves. Some would tie themselves to the column of the mosque, and as long as they are not certain that their sins would be forgiven they would remain tied.

In addition, each one of them performed so many righteous deeds that they could expiate for their sins. Moreover, Allah has announced a general amnesty for their sins in this and other verses. He not only pardoned their sins, but also proclaimed رَضِيَ اللّٰهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوْاعَنْهُ (Allah is well-pleased with them, and they are well-pleased with Him. 98:8). It is

absolutely forbidden to speak ill of them or taunt them or revile them because of their mutual differences and disagreements. According to a Prophetic Tradition, doing so is incurring Allah's curse and putting one's own faith in jeopardy.

Nowadays, on the basis of false and weak historical narratives some writers have made the noble and blessed Companions the target of taunts and reproach. First of all, the basis on which the historical narratives are founded are unreliable and questionable. Even if it is taken for granted that they have some historical substance, they are clearly in conflict with Qur'ān and Sunnah. Hence, they must be refuted in the strongest terms possible. The original statement stands: The noble and blessed Companions are forgiven and pardoned.

Unanimous Belief of the Ummah regarding the Noble Ṣaḥābah

It is obligatory on Muslims to show respect and honour to all the Companions, to love them and praise them. It is likewise imperative to observe silence regarding their mutual differences and disagreements. It is compulsory to abstain from making any of them the target of accusations and reproach. All texts of Islamic beliefs make plain this consensual belief of the Ummah. Imām Aḥmad رحمه الله تعالیٰ has written a monograph on the subject which reached us on the authority of Iṣṭakhrī. A section of it partly reads:

لَايَجُوزُ لِاَحَدٍ اَنْ يَّذْكُرَ شَيْئًا مِّنْ مَّسَاويهم وَلَا يَطْعَنُ عَلى اَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ بِعَيْبٍ وَلَا نَقْصٍ فَمَنْ فَعَلَ ذٰلِكَ وَجَبَ تَاْدِيْبُهٗ.

> "It is not lawful for anyone to speak ill of the Companions, or cast aspersions against them, or find fault with them. Whoever does so should be punished." [Sharḥ-ul-'Aqīdah Al-Wāsiṭiyyah, known as Ad-Durrah Al-Mudi'ah]

Ibn Taimiyyah in his As-Ṣārim-ul-Maslūl has cited many verses of the Qur'ān and Prophetic Traditions regarding the virtues and characteristics of the noble Companions, after which he concludes:

وَهٰذَا مِمَّا لَا نَعْلَمُ فِيْهِ خِلَافًا بَيْنَ اَهْلِ الْفِقْهِ وَالْعِلْمِ مِنْ اَصْحَابِ رَسُوْلِ اللّٰهِ صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَالتَّابِعِيْنَ لَهُمْ بِاِحْسَان وَسَائِرِ اَهْلِ السُّنَّةِ وَالْجَمَاعَةِ فَاِنَّهُمْ مُجْمِعُوْنَ عَلٰى اَنَّ الْوَاجِبَ الثَّنَاءُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَالْاِسْتِغْفَارُ لَهُمْ وَالتَّرَحُّمُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَالتَّرَضِّى عَنْهُمْ وَاعْتِقَادُ مَحَبَّتِهِمْ وَمَوالَاتِهِمْ وَعَقُوْبَةُ مَنْ اَسَاءَ فِيْهِمُ الْقَوْل.

"As far as we know, there is no difference of opinion in this issue among the scholars and the jurists from Companions and their followers, and the Ahl-us-sunnah wal-jama'ah. There is consensus of the Ummah that it is imperative to praise the Companions, to seek forgiveness for them, to remember them with compassion and pleasure, and to express love and friendship for them. Anyone who dishonours them should be punished."

Ibn Taimiyyah confirms, in Sharḥ-ul-'Aqīdah Al-Wāsiṭiyyah, the consensual belief of the *Ahl-us-sunnah wal-jama'ah* of the entire Ummah of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ relating to the mutual disagreement of the Companions:

وَيُمْسِكُوْنَ عَمَّا شَجَرَ بَيْنَ الصَّحَابَةِ وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ هٰذِهِ الْاٰثَارُ الْمَرْوِيَّةُ فِىْ مَسَاوِيْهِمْ مِنْهَا مَاهُوَ كِذْبٌ وَّ مِنْهَا مَازِيْدَ فِيْهَا وَنُقِصَ وَغُيِّرَ وَجْهُه' وَالصَّحِيْحُ مِنْهُ هُمْ فِيْهِ مَعْذُوْرُوْنَ إِمَّا مُجْتَهِدُوْنَ مُصِيْبُوْنَ وَاما مُجْتَهِدُوْنَ مُخْطِئُوْنَ، وَهُمْ مَعَ ذٰلِكَ لَايَعْتَقِدُوْنَ اَنَّ كُلَّ وَاحِدٍ مِّنَ الصَّحَابَةِ مَعْصُوْمٌ مِّنْ كَبَائِرِ الْاِثْمِ وَصَغَائِرِهٖ بَلْ يَجُوْزُ عَلَيْهِمُ الذُّنُوْبُ فِى الْجُمْلَةِ وَلَهُمْ مِّنَ الْفَضَائِلِ وَالسَّوَابِقِ مَايُوْجِبُ مَغْفِرَةً مَا يَصْدُرُ مِنْهُمْ حَتّٰى اَنَّهُمْ يُغْفَرُلَهُمْ مِّنَ السَّيِّئَاتِ مَالاَ يُغْفَرُ لِمَنْ بَعْدَهُمْ.

"*Ahl-us-sunnah wal-jama'ah* observe silence relating to matters in which the noble Companions mutually disagreed. According to them, the position of the narratives that find fault with them may be summarized as follows: Some of them are absolutely false whilst others have been distorted or perverted. Reports that are authentic have a plausible explanation, (because they did what they did on the basis of '*ijtihād*' which Sharī'ah recognizes). If they reached the right conclusion (by exercising reasoning), they would be rewarded doubly; and if they arrived at an incorrect conclusion (by exerting effort to derive the law on an issue by expending all the available means of interpreting at the jurist's disposal and by taking into account all the legal evidences related to the issue,) they are still excused (and deserve a single reward). Despite this situation, the Ummah does not believe that every Companion is innocent, infallible or sinless. In fact, it is possible for them to commit sins - major or minor, but their virtues and great services to Islam are such that they demand forgiveness. The scope of their forgiveness and pardon would be so wide that the later members of the Ummah would not have such a wide scope."

A detailed account of the status of the sahabah is given in Sūrah Al-Fatḥ under verse [29]. I have written a book entitled *maqām-e-ṣaḥābah*

in which I have collected relevant Qur'ānic verses and Prophetic Traditions pertaining to the status of the Companions. This book has already been published. The Ummah is unanimous on the point that all the blessed Companions are impartial, unbiased, reliable and worthy of confidence. The book deals elaborately with their disagreements and the civil wars that took place among them. It deals with the status of the historical narratives and their true place in critical study. Some of these issues to the degree necessary have been included in the commentary of Sūrah Muḥammad and Sūrah Al-Fatḥ. Please refer to the relevant sections there. Allah's help is sought and on Him is our reliance!

Verses 12 - 19

يَوْمَ تَرَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَالْمُؤْمِنٰتِ يَسْعٰى نُوْرُهُمْ بَيْنَ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَ
بِاَيْمَانِهِمْ بُشْرٰىكُمُ الْيَوْمَ جَنّٰتٌ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ
فِيْهَا ؕ ذٰلِكَ هُوَالْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيْمُ ﴿١٢﴾ يَوْمَ يَقُوْلُ الْمُنٰفِقُوْنَ وَالْمُنٰفِقٰتُ
لِلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا انْظُرُوْنَا نَقْتَبِسْ مِنْ نُّوْرِكُمْ ۚ قِيْلَ ارْجِعُوْا وَرَآءَكُمْ
فَالْتَمِسُوْا نُوْرًا ؕ فَضُرِبَ بَيْنَهُمْ بِسُوْرٍ لَّهٗ بَابٌ ؕ بَاطِنُهٗ فِيْهِ الرَّحْمَةُ
وَظَاهِرُهٗ مِنْ قِبَلِهِ الْعَذَابُ ﴿١٣﴾ يُنَادُوْنَهُمْ اَلَمْ نَكُنْ مَّعَكُمْ ؕ قَالُوْا
بَلٰى وَلٰكِنَّكُمْ فَتَنْتُمْ اَنْفُسَكُمْ وَتَرَبَّصْتُمْ وَارْتَبْتُمْ وَغَرَّتْكُمُ الْاَمَانِيُّ
حَتّٰى جَآءَ اَمْرُ اللّٰهِ وَغَرَّكُمْ بِاللّٰهِ الْغَرُوْرُ ﴿١٤﴾ فَالْيَوْمَ لَا يُؤْخَذُ
مِنْكُمْ فِدْيَةٌ وَّلَا مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا ؕ مَاْوٰىكُمُ النَّارُ ؕ هِيَ مَوْلٰىكُمْ ؕ
وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيْرُ ﴿١٥﴾ اَلَمْ يَاْنِ لِلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اَنْ تَخْشَعَ قُلُوْبُهُمْ
لِذِكْرِاللّٰهِ وَمَا نَزَلَ مِنَ الْحَقِّ ۙ وَلَا يَكُوْنُوْا كَالَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ
مِنْ قَبْلُ فَطَالَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْاَمَدُ فَقَسَتْ قُلُوْبُهُمْ ؕ وَكَثِيْرٌ مِّنْهُمْ فٰسِقُوْنَ
﴿١٦﴾ اِعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحْيِ الْاَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا ؕ قَدْ بَيَّنَّا لَكُمُ الْاٰيٰتِ
لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿١٧﴾ اِنَّ الْمُصَّدِّقِيْنَ وَالْمُصَّدِّقٰتِ وَاَقْرَضُوا اللّٰهَ

قَرْضًا حَسَنًا يُّضٰعَفُ لَهُمْ وَلَهُمْ اَجْرٌ كَرِيْمٌ ﴿١٨﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ
وَرُسُلِهٖٓ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الصِّدِّيْقُوْنَ ۖق وَالشُّهَدَآءُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ ؕ لَهُمْ
اَجْرُهُمْ وَنُوْرُهُمْ ؕ وَالَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَكَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَآ اُولٰٓئِكَ اَصْحٰبُ
الْجَحِيْمِ ﴿١٩﴾ ع

On the Day when you will see the believing men and the believing women, their light proceeding in front of them and to their right hands, (it will be said to them,) "Good news for you today! Gardens beneath which rivers flow, to live therein for ever! That is the great achievement, [12] the Day when the hypocrite men and hypocrite women will say to those who believe, "Wait for us, so that we may have a share from your light.", it will be said (to them), "Go back to your rear, and search for light." Then a wall will be placed between them, which will have a gate. In its inner side, there will be the divine mercy, while towards its outer side, there will be the divine punishment. [13] They (the hypocrites) will call out to them (the believers), "Were we not with you?" They will say, "Yes, (you were,) but you led your souls to a wrong way, and kept waiting (for an evil end to the Muslims), and remained in doubt, and were deluded by fancies, until Allah's command came to pass, and you were deceived about Allah by the Big Deceiver (Iblīs). [14] So, no ransom will be accepted from you today, nor from those who disbelieved (openly). Your abode is the Fire, and it is an evil end." [15] Has the time not yet come for those who believe that their hearts should be humble for the remembrance of Allah and for the truth that has descended (through revelation)? And they must not be like those to whom the Book was given before, but a long period passed on them (in which they did not repent), therefore their hearts became hard, while many of them were sinners. [16] Know well that Allah revives the land after its death. We have made the signs clear for you, so that you may understand. [17] Surely those men who give *ṣadaqah* (charity) and those women who give *ṣadaqah* and have advanced a good loan to Allah, for them it will be multiplied, and for them there is a noble reward. [18] And those who believed in Allah and His Messengers, it is they who are the *ṣiddīqs* (the most righteous after prophets) and the *shuhadā'*

(martyrs) in the sight of your Lord. For them shall be their reward and their light. And those who disbelieved and rejected Our verses – those are the people of the Hell. [19]

The Believers will be awarded Light on the Day of Resurrection

يَوْمَ تَرَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَالْمُؤْمِنٰتِ يَسْعٰى نُوْرُهُمْ بَيْنَ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَ بِاَيْمَانِهِمْ (On the Day when you will see the believing men and the believing women, their light proceeding in front of them and to their right hands,....57:12) 'The day' refers to the 'Day of Resurrection'. The fact of 'light running before them' will take place just prior to people's passing over the bridge of *sirat*. The details are given in a Tradition reported by Sayyidnā Abū Umāmah Bāhilī ؓ. Ibn Kathīr has cited it on the authority of Ibn Abī Ḥātim. The Tradition is lengthy. It recounts that Sayyidnā Abū Umāmah Bāhilī ؓ attended a funeral in Damascus. When it was over, he reminded people about death, the grave, the Resurrection and the Hereafter. A few of the statements are reproduced below in translation:

> "Then you will be transferred from the graves to the plane of gathering where there will be different stages and spots to stand or wait. Then there will come a stage when some faces will brighten up and others will be darkened by the Divine command. Then there will come a stage when people - believers and non-believers - all will assemble on the Plane of Gathering. An intense darkness will prevail and nobody will be able to see anything. Thereafter light will be distributed. (Another report of Ibn Abī Ḥātim, reported by Ibn Kathir, which he narrates on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullah Ibn Mas'ūd ؓ says that each believer will receive the light commensurate with his deeds; some will have light as large as a mountain, some as a date tree, some as big as the height of a man. The least among them will have a light as big as his index finger; it will lit at times and extinguished at other times.) Sayyidnā Abū Umāmah Bāhilī ؓ then went on to say that the hypocrites and the infidels would not receive any light. The Holy Qur'ān exemplifies it thus:
>
> اَوْ كَظُلُمٰتٍ فِيْ بَحْرٍ لُّجِّيٍّ يَّغْشٰهُ مَوْجٌ مِّنْ فَوْقِهٖ مَوْجٌ مِّنْ فَوْقِهٖ سَحَابٌ ظُلُمٰتٌ بَعْضُهَا فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ
> اِذَآ اَخْرَجَ يَدَهٗ لَمْ يَكَدْ يَرٰىهَا وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَجْعَلِ اللّٰهُ لَهٗ نُوْرًا فَمَا لَهٗ مِنْ نُّوْرٍ
>
> 'or their deeds are like layers of darkness in a vast deep sea overwhelmed by a wave, above which there is another wave–layers of darkness, one above the other. When one puts forth his hand, he can hardly see it. And the one to whom Allah does not give light can have no light at all." (24:40)

From this narration, it is learnt that the infidels and the hypocrites

will be deprived of the light from the very beginning point where Allah will distribute light to the believing men and women after the intensely dark spot. But Ṭabrānī reports a Tradition on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

> "Allah will send light to every believer at the bridge, and also to every hypocrite, but when the hypocrites reach the bridge, their light will be snatched away."(Ibn Kathīr)

This shows that the hypocrites will initially receive light, but when they reach the bridge, they will be deprived of it. Be that as it may, whether they will be deprived of light initially or it will extinguished later on after receiving it at an earlier stage, they will plead to the believers: 'Please wait for us! Let us take advantage of your light, because we were with you in the world when we performed *ṣalāh*, paid *zakāh*, performed *Ḥajj* and even participated in *jihād* expeditions?' The request will be declined. The rejoinder to this plea is forthcoming in full details. It is in keeping with the characteristic of the hypocrites that they should first be shown the light, then it should be extinguished to leave them in total darkness, just as they behaved deceitfully in the world, as the Qur'ān states:

يُخٰدِعُوْنَ اللّٰهَ وَهُوَ خَادِعُهُمْ

> Surely, the hypocrites [try to] deceive Allah while He is the One who leaves them in deception ... [4:142]

Imām Baghawī says that 'deception' here means that first the light will be sent to them, but it will be snatched away from them just in the nick of time when they will be needing it most crucially. At that crucial moment, the believers too will fear lest their light should be snatched away. As a result, they would implore thus:

يَوْمَ لَايُخْزِى اللّٰهُ النَّبِىَّ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مَعَهٗ نُوْرُهُمْ يَسْعٰى بَيْنَ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَبِاَيْمَانِهِمْ
يَقُوْلُوْنَ رَبَّنَآ اَتْمِمْ لَنَا نُوْرَنَا وَاغْفِرْلَنَا اِنَّكَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ.

> "...on the Day when Allah will not disgrace the Prophet and those who believed with him. Their light will run before them and to their right hands. They will say, "Our Lord, perfect for us our light, and forgive us. Indeed you are powerful over every thing." [66:8] (Maẓharī)

Muslim, Aḥmad and Darquṭnī record on the authority of Sayyidnā Jābir Ibn 'Abdullah the Prophetic Ḥadīth that at first, light will be given

to both believers and hypocrites, but when the latter would reach the bridge, it will be snatched away from the hypocrites.

Maẓharī reconciles the two versions thus: There are two types of hypocrites, one of whom appeared in the time of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. This type will be treated like the infidels. The non-believers will not receive light from the very outset. Likewise, the hypocrites of the time of the Holy Prophet ﷺ will be deprived of the light from the very outset. The second type of hypocrites appeared after the time of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, but they cannot be so called in the true sense of the word because revelation ended with the departure of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and without definitive evidence on the basis of revelation no one can be labeled, identified or classified as a *munāfiq* [hypocrite]. The *munāfiq* manifests the form of a man of faith in his outward practice, but his inner dimension is completely devoid of faith and belief. There is no way of knowing this for common people. However, Allah is fully aware of his inner and outer dimensions. He will treat each one accordingly. The *munāfiqs* will be shown the light in the beginning, but when they would arrive at the bridge, their light will be put out and they will be groping in total darkness.

In this category of *munāfiqs* fall those people of this Ummah who distort the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth twisting their meanings to suit their own purposes. We seek Allah's refuge from it.

Causes of Light and Darkness on the Plane of Gathering

Tafsīr Maẓharī, on this occasion, has, on the basis of Qur'ān and Ḥadīth, described the causes of light and darkness on the Plane of Gathering. Below, we reproduce those causes the knowledge of which is more important than pure academic research, in the hope that Allah will grant us light:

[1] The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Give glad tidings to those who go to the mosque in the darkness of night that they will receive perfect light on the Day of Judgment." (Reported by Abū Dāwūd and Tirmidhī from Buraidah ؓ, and Ibn Mājah from Anas ؓ. This Ḥadīth is also reported by Sahl Ibn Sa'd, Zaid Ibn Harithah, Ibn 'Abbās, Ibn 'Umar, Harithah Ibn Wahb, Abū 'Umamah, Abu-ad-Dardā', Abū Mūsā, Abū Hurairah, 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہم اجمعین)

[2] The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

مَنْ حَافَظَ عَلَى الصَّلَوَاتِ كَانَتْ لَهُ نُوْرًا وَّبُرْهَانًا وَّنَجَاةً يَّوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ وَمَنْ لَّمْ يُحَافِظْ عَلَيْهَا لَمْ يَكُنْ لَّهُ نُوْرًا وَّلَا بُرْهَانًا وَّلَا نَجَاةً وَّكَانَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ مَعَ قَارُوْن وَهَامَانَ وَفِرْعَوْنَ.

"He who takes care of his five daily prayers [that is, performs them regularly fulfilling all their essentials], it will serve as light, proof and salvation for him on the Day of Judgement. He who fails to take care of it, there will be no light, nor proof or salvation for him on the Day of Judgement. The latter will be in the company of Qārūn, Hāmān and Fir'aun."

(Reported by Aḥmad and Ṭabarānī from Ibn 'Umar ؓ)

[3] The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Whoever recites Sūrah Al-Kahf, there will be so much of light for him on the Day of Judgement that it will spread from his place to Makkah." In another narration, "Whoever recites Sūrah Al-Kahf on a Friday, light will extend from his feet to the heights of the heaven on the Day of Judgment." (Reported by Ṭabarānī from Abū Sa'īd ؓ)

[4] The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Whoever recites just a single verse of the Qur'ān, it will be a light for him on the Day of Judgement." (Reported by Aḥmad from Abū Hurairah ؓ)

[5] The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Whoever sends *ṣalāh* (*durūd*) to me, it shall be the cause of light on the Bridge of Ṣirāt." (Reported by Dailamī from Abū Hurairah ؓ)

[6] The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said when detailing the rules of Ḥajj: "The hair, that falls on the ground at the time of shaving it when coming out of the state of *iḥrām,* will be a light for him on the Day of Judgement" (Ṭabarānī from 'Ubādah Ibn samit ؓ)

[7] The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Stoning the *jamarāt* in Minā will be a light on the Day of Judgement." (Musnad of Bazzār from Ibn Mas'ūd ؓ)

[8] The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "He whose hair turns gray in Islam, it will be a light for him on the Day of Judgement." (Ṭabarānī, with a good chain, from Abū Hurairah ؓ)

[9] The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "He who shoots even one arrow in

Allah's way while fighting in *jihād*, it will be a light for him on the Day of Judgement." (Bazzār with a good chain from Abū Hurairah ﷺ)

[10] The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "He who remembers Allah in the marketplace will receive light for every strand of hair on the Day of Judgement." (Baihaqī in Shu'ab-ul-Īmān with an interrupted chain from Ibn 'Umar ﷺ)

[11] The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "He who alleviates the calamity of a Muslim, Allah will create two compartments of light for him at the bridge which will brighten up a whole world. No one besides Allah knows its number." (Ṭabarānī from Abū Hurairah ﷺ)

[12] The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: إِيَّاكُمْ وَالظُّلْمَ فَإِنَّهُ هُوَ الظُّلُمٰتُ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ "Beware of *ẓulm* [injustice] because that will yield *zulumāt* [layers of darkness] on the Day of Judgement." (Bukhārī and Muslim from Ibn 'Umar ﷺ, Muslim from Jābir ﷺ and Ḥakim from Abū Hurairah ﷺ and Ibn 'Umar, and Ṭabarānī from Ibn Ziyad ﷺ).

يَوْمَ يَقُوْلُ الْمُنٰفِقُوْنَ وَالْمُنٰفِقٰتُ لِلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا انْظُرُوْنَا نَقْتَبِسْ مِنْ نُّوْرِكُمْ (...the Day when the hypocrite men and hypocrite women will say to those who believe, "Wait for us, so that we may have a share from your light...(57:13) The meaning is self-evident.

قِيْلَ ارْجِعُوْا وَرَآءَكُمْ فَالْتَمِسُوْا نُوْرًا (...it will be said [to them], "Go back to your rear, and search for light ....57:13) This reply will be given by either the believers, or by the angels. [Ibn 'Abbās and Qatādah]

فَضُرِبَ بَيْنَهُمْ بِسُوْرٍ لَّهٗ بَابٌ ط بَاطِنُهٗ فِيْهِ الرَّحْمَةُ وَظَاهِرُهٗ مِنْ قِبَلِهِ الْعَذَابُ (...Then a wall will be placed between them, which will have a gate. In its inner side, there will be the Divine mercy, while towards its outer side, there will be the Divine punishment...57:13). Having received the reply from either the believers or the angels, the hypocrites will return to the place where the light was distributed. They will find nothing there, so they will attempt to go back to the believers but in the meantime a wall will be set up between the hypocrites and the believers. As a result, the hypocrites will be separated from the believers and will not be able to reach them. They will be left in complete darkness. On the side of the believers there will be Allah's mercy while on the side of the hypocrites there will be chastisement.

Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī cites Ibn Zaid's view that this wall refers to A'rāf,

which will be a barrier between the believers and the hypocrites. Other commentators express the view that the wall is not the barrier of A'rāf, but it is some other wall or barrier. The door in the wall could serve one of two purposes: [1] It will be a way through which the believers and the hypocrites will communicate with one another; or [2] all the believers will pass through this door and then sealed off permanently.

Special Note

In the matter of light, the infidels are not mentioned anywhere, because in their case there is no question of having such a light. The hypocrites are, however, mentioned and there are two narrations concerning them: [1] That they will not receive light at all from the outset; or [2] They will receive it at first, but when they arrive at the Bridge of *Ṣirāṭ*, it will be extinguished. A wall will be erected as a barrier between them and the believers. This goes to show that only the believers will cross the Bridge of *Ṣirāṭ* from above the Hell. The infidels and pagans will not pass through the Bridge. They will be pushed into the Fire direct through the doors of Hell. The sinful believers, who will be kept in the Hell for a while to be cleansed of their sins, will fall into the Hell while crossing the Bridge. The rest of the believers will cross the bridge safely and enter Paradise, as explicitly stated by Shah 'Abdul-Qādir Dehlawī رحمه الله تعالى and supported by Durr. Allah knows best!

اَلَمْ يَاْنِ لِلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اَنْ تَخْشَعَ قُلُوْبُهُمْ لِذِكْرِ اللّٰهِ وَمَا نَزَلَ مِنَ الْحَقِّ (Has the time not yet come for those who believe that their hearts should be humble for the remembrance of Allah and for the truth that has descended [through revelation]?...57:16) The phrase *khushū'-ul-qalb* means 'for the heart to soften; to be receptive to advice; to be obedient; to submit'. [Ibn Kathīr] In the Qur'ānic context, it implies 'a complete willingness to yield to the Divine injunctions, or the Divine imperatives and prohibitions without allowing any laxity in following them. [Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī]

This verse admonishes the believers. Sayyidnā 'Abdullah Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنهما reports that some of the believers were found to be lacking in firmness, and somewhat laziness was felt in their practices. So this verse was revealed. Imām A'mash رحمه الله تعالى said: After settling down in Madīnah, the blessed Companions experienced socio-economic comfort and prosperity; as a result some of them relaxed in exerting their efforts to do good works as they used to do previously. Thus this verse was revealed.

[Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī]

Sayyidnā 'Abdullah Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ's narration also carries the additional information that this admonitory verse was revealed thirteen years after the revelation had started. [Recorded by Ibn Abī Ḥātim] Sayyidnā 'Abdullah Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ narrates that this admonitory verse was revealed four years after they had embraced Islam to administer this mild reproof. Allah knows best!

In any case, the Muslims are cautioned in this verse that they should prepare themselves to turn to Allah totally and completely, and act upon the teachings of their religion. All actions revolve around *khushū'-ul-qalb* Sayyidnā Shaddād Ibn Aws ﷺ narrates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "The first thing that will be taken away from the people will be their humility or humbleness [*khushū'*]." [Ibn Kathīr]

Is every Believer a 'Ṣiddīq' and a 'Shahīd'?

وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَرُسُلِهٖٓ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الصِّدِّيْقُوْنَ ۖ وَالشُّهَدَآءُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ "And those who believed in Allah and His messengers, it is they who are the *ṣiddīqs* [the most righteous] and the *shuhadā'* (martyrs) in the sight of your Lord. ....57:19) This verse indicates that every 'believer' is a 'Ṣiddīq' and a 'Shahīd'. On the basis of this verse Qatādah and 'Amr Ibn Maimūn maintain that anyone who believes in Allah and His Messenger is a 'Ṣiddīq' and a 'Shahīd'. Ibn Jarīr reports that Sayyidnā Bara' Ibn 'Āzib ﷺ narrates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: مُؤْمِنُوْا اُمَّتِىْ شُهَدَآءُ "The believers of my Ummah are all Shahīds (martyrs)." In support of this, he recited the current verse.

Ibn Abī Ḥātim reports that Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ narrates that one day some of the Companions had gathered around him, and he stated كُلُّكُمْ صِدِّيْقٌ وَّشَهِيْدٌ "Each one of you is a 'Ṣiddīq' and a 'Shahīd'". This startled them and they exclaimed: "What are you saying, Abū Hurairah?" He replied: "If you do not believe me, then read the present verse [19] وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَرُسُلِهٖٓ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الصِّدِّيْقُوْنَ وَالشُّهَدَآءُ

However, another verse of the Qur'ān seems to be against this concept. It is the verse [4:69]: فَاُولٰٓئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِيْنَ اَنْعَمَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنَ النَّبِيّٖنَ وَالصِّدِّيْقِيْنَ وَالشُّهَدَآءِ وَالصّٰلِحِيْنَ (And those who obey Allah and the Messenger are with those whom Allah has blessed, namely, the Prophets, the Ṣiddīqīn, the

Shuhadā' and the righteous...) This indicates that not every believer is a 'Ṣiddīq' and a 'Shahīd' because in addition to the Prophets, the general body of Muslims comprise three categories of believers who are specially mentioned: [1] the Ṣiddīqin; [2] the Shuhadā'; and [3] the righteous. It would appear that the three categories are distinctly different. Otherwise, there would have been no need to mention them separately. Therefore, some scholars believe that the 'Ṣiddīqin' and the 'Shuhadā'' in fact constitute the highest and most sublime categories bearing the supreme attributes. Here all believers are referred to as 'Ṣiddīq' and 'Shahīd' in the sense that every believer is in some degree included in the group of 'Ṣiddīqin' and 'Shuhadā''. Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī states that it is appropriate to believe that the verse under comment refers to people who have perfect faith and perform deeds of righteousness. Otherwise, people who are believers but indulge in deeds that are not in keeping with the dictates of their faith can hardly be called 'Ṣiddīq' or 'Shahīd'.

The Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said: اَللَّعَّانُوْنَ لَايَكُوْنُوْنَ شُهَدَاءَ (The cursers cannot be 'Shuhadā''." This Tradition supports the notion. Sayyidnā 'Umar Al-Fārūq رضي الله عنه once said to the people: "What is the matter with you? You see someone defaming people, you neither stop him nor do you raise your eyebrows about it! They replied: 'We are afraid of his violent tongue. If we tell him something, he will also attack our honour.' Sayyidnā 'Umar رضي الله عنه made a rejoinder 'if that is the case, then you cannot be 'Shuhadā''". Ibn Athīr cited this narration and said: 'This means that such coward people will not be among the 'Shuhadā' who will bear witness against the communities of the previous Prophets.' [Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī]. Maẓharī states that the word اَلَّذِيْنَ آمَنُوْا 'believers' in verse [19] refers only to the Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ who reposed their faith in Allah and His Messenger, saw him and had the pleasure of his company. As such, the restrictive phrase, هُمُ الصِّدِّيْقُوْنَ 'it is they who are the Ṣiddīqs..' in Verse [19] indicate that the status of Ṣiddīq is limited or restricted to the noble Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Mujaddid Alf Thānī states that all the noble Companions had a share in the noble qualities of prophet-hood. Any Companion who saw him in a state of faith even for a short time is absorbed and drowned in such qualities of perfection. Allah, the Pure and Exalted, knows best!

Verses 20 - 21

اِعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّمَا الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَا لَعِبٌ وَّلَهْوٌ وَّزِيْنَةٌ وَّتَفَاخُرٌۢ بَيْنَكُمْ وَتَكَاثُرٌ
فِي الْاَمْوَالِ وَالْاَوْلَادِ ۭ كَمَثَلِ غَيْثٍ اَعْجَبَ الْكُفَّارَ نَبَاتُهٗ ثُمَّ يَهِيْجُ
فَتَرٰىهُ مُصْفَرًّا ثُمَّ يَكُوْنُ حُطَامًا ۭ وَفِي الْاٰخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ شَدِيْدٌ ۙ وَّمَغْفِرَةٌ
مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَرِضْوَانٌ ۭ وَمَا الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَآ اِلَّا مَتَاعُ الْغُرُوْرِ ﴿٢٠﴾
سَابِقُوْٓا اِلٰى مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا كَعَرْضِ السَّمَاۗءِ
وَالْاَرْضِ ۙ اُعِدَّتْ لِلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَرُسُلِهٖ ۭ ذٰلِكَ فَضْلُ اللّٰهِ يُؤْتِيْهِ
مَنْ يَّشَاۗءُ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيْمِ ﴿٢١﴾

Know well that the worldly life is but a play and an amusement, and a show of beauty, and exchange of boastful claims between you, and a competition of increase in riches and children. (All this is) like a rain, the vegetation of which attracts the farmers, then it withers, and you see it turning yellow, then it becomes straw. And in the Hereafter there is a severe punishment (for the disbelievers), and forgiveness from Allah and (Allah's) pleasure (for the believers and the righteous). And the worldly life is nothing but a material of delusion. [20] **Compete each other in proceeding towards forgiveness from your Lord, and to Paradise the width of which is like the width of the sky and the earth. It has been prepared for those who believe in Allah and His messengers. That is the bounty of Allah that He gives to whomever He wills, and Allah is the Lord of the great bounty.** [21]

The Life of this World is Fleeting Enjoyment

The preceding verses described the conditions of the inmates of Paradise and those of the inhabitants of Hell, which will materialize in the Hereafter and will be permanent and eternal. Since the basic cause for one's deprivation of the bounties of the Hereafter and his being seized by the divine punishment is his involvement in the temporary pleasures of this worldly life that tempt him to forget the life to come, the verse under comment describes the reality of the worldly life and its being unreliable. The verse depicts the involvements of a human being that he

cheerfully enjoys from the inception of his life up to its end. The verse summarizes these involvements in the same order in which they occur. From the inception to the end of his life, man leads his life in the following order: *la'ib* [play], *lahw* [amusement], *zīnah* [show of beauty], *tafākhur* [exchange of boastful claims] and *takāthur* [competition of increase in riches and children].

The word *la'ib* (play) refers to a play that has no purpose at all, like the movements of little children. The *lahw* [amusement or pastime] is a game or sport meant initially for amusement and enjoyment, but it may serve also some other subsidiary purpose like physical exercise. It includes all the sports of the bigger children such as playing with a ball or swimming or target-shooting. Prophetic Traditions have termed swimming and target-shooting as good sports. The early stage of one's life is spent in play and amusement. Then comes a stage in his youth when man wants to adorn his body and dress and to show their beauty, which is described in the verse as '*zīnah*'. Then comes a stage in which man is tempted to prove his superiority over his mates and to make boastful claims. In old age, a keen competition and rivalry sets in to amass wealth and multiply children.

When man goes through a particular phase of life, he feels satisfied with it. But when that phase is over, he realizes its absurdity and hollowness and takes to the next phase of life. For example, a child is most fascinated with his phase of life and regards the stage of *la'ib* (play) the goal of his life. Should someone snatch one of his toys, he feels as much aggrieved as a big man is grieved by his valuable wealth and property being usurped. However, when he grows a little bigger, he realizes the things he deemed to be the goal of his life were nothing but some useless and absurd activities. The same thing happens in one's youth when he is attracted by adorned beauties. In old age, man gathers wealth and multiplies children. Power, prestige, pride and position are his capital goods and investments to wield dominance in life. The Qur'ān reminds him that this phase too will pass away. The next stage is *barzakh* [grave] followed by the Day of Resurrection. Man needs to think about those stages or phases of life because they are really eternal without an end. Allah has described the fleeting enjoyment of this world in such an order that the appropriate parable given in verse [20] follows naturally.

(كَمَثَلِ غَيْثٍ اَعْجَبَ الْكُفَّارَ نَبَاتُهُ ثُمَّ يَهِيجُ فَتَرٰىهُ مُصْفَرًّا ثُمَّ يَكُوْنُ حُطَامًا ...[All this is] like a rain, the vegetation of which attracts the farmers, then it withers, and you see it turning yellow, then it becomes straw....57:20) The word *ghaith* means 'rain'. The word *kuffar,* being the plural of *kāfir,* is generally used as opposed to *mu'minin* [believers], in the sense of non-believers, but its literal sense carries the meaning of 'farmers' also. Some scholars have taken the word here in this literal sense, explicating that the farmers are happy to see the vegetation that grows in the aftermath of rain. Other commentators have taken the word *kuffar* in its popular sense of non-believers, explaining the verse to mean that the non-believers are attracted by the greenery. This explanation may be criticized on the ground that being happy with the greenery is not confined to non-believers, but also the believers admire the lush vegetation when it abounds in vigorous growth. The commentators have appraised the criticism thus: There is a world of difference between the happiness and admiration of a believer and that of a non-believer. A believer's pleasure is directed towards Allah. He believes that everything is the outcome of Allah's power, wisdom and mercy. He does not make it the goal of his life; he gives up the cherished and precious things of this mortal world in consideration for the higher, eternal things of the life yet to come in the Hereafter. That is the goal of his life he worries about. Therefore, any believer who fulfills the requirements of his faith is not attracted, even by the biggest wealth in this world as a *kāfir* does. That is why the attraction by the vegetation is attributed to a non-believer.

In short, the parable means that in the wake of rain vegetation of all sorts grows, and it pleases the farmers, especially the non-believers. But the vegetation soon turns yellow in colour, after being fresh and green. After that, the green fades away and become scattered particles of dust. This is example of mankind in this life. They are young and strong in the beginning. In this stage of life, they look youthful and handsome. Gradually, old age overcomes them which does away with all their beauty and freshness until they die and become dust. This parable indicates the end of this life, while in contrast, the Hereafter is surely coming, the significance of which is given in the following words:

(وَفِى الْاٰخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ شَدِيْدٌ ۙ وَّمَغْفِرَةٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَرِضْوَانٌ ...And in the Hereafter there is a severe punishment [for the disbelievers], and forgiveness from Allah and

[Allah's] pleasure [for the believers and the righteous] ...57:20). In the Hereafter the people will certainly have to face one of two things: [1] severe punishment for the non-believers; and [2] forgiveness of Allah, His mercy and His good pleasure. Punishment has been mentioned here first, because the preceding verses described the behavior of the infidels that they are over-absorbed in worldly pleasures, the outcome of which is also severe chastisement. As opposed to this outcome, two things have been laid down for the believers: [1] Divine forgiveness; and [2] Divine pleasure. This indicates that forgiveness of sins is though a boon that saves one from the punishment, yet in addition to being saved from the punishment, he will attain Paradise and its eternal favors. This will be the manifestation of Divine pleasure.

وَمَا الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَآ اِلَّا مَتَاعُ الْغُرُوْرِ (And the worldly life is nothing but a material of delusion....57:20) The current phrase states concisely the reality of this world. Having seen and understood all that has been explained in the foregoing verses about the transitory nature of this world, sound and intelligent people can come to only one conclusion: that is, the life of this world is a material of delusion; it is not a capital that may be useful in odd times. Therefore, after knowing the reality of the worldly life and the punishment of the Hereafter, a reasonable man should not be over-involved in worldly pleasures, and should be eager to obtain the bounties of the Hereafter. This is what the next verses say.

سَابِقُوْٓا اِلٰى مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا كَعَرْضِ السَّمَآءِ وَالْاَرْضِ (Compete each other in proceeding towards forgiveness from your Lord and to Paradise, the width of which is like the width of the sky and the earth ...57:21) The competition or race referred to in this verse may have either of the two meanings: [1] No one has a guarantee for the continuance of his life, health and strength. One should not procrastinate, delay, defer, or put off performing righteous deeds for future, because the time might not come on account of illness, any inability or even death. One should race against inability, weakness and death, so that one may accumulate the treasure of good deeds that may lead one to Paradise before such inabilities may arrive and stop one from the good deeds. [2] Another meaning may be to compete with one another in good deeds, as Sayyidnā 'Alī ﷺ advises: "Be among the first ones to go to the mosque and the last ones to come out." Sayyidnā 'Abdullah Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ advises: "Go forward to be in the first

line of *jihād*." Sayyidnā Anas ﵁ states: "Try to be present for the first *takbīr* of the congregational prayer." [Rūḥ]

The verse under comment defines that Paradise will be as wide as the heaven and the earth. A similar verse occurs in Sūrah Al-'Imrān [3:133] where the word '*skies*' is plural, whereas here the word *sama'* (sky) is singular, from which we gather that both the words, the singular as well as the plural, refer to all the seven heavens, meaning if the vastness of the seven heavens and the earth are put together, that will be the width of Paradise. Obviously, the length of anything is greater than its breadth. This shows that the legnth of Paradise is greater than the legnth of the seven heavens and earth. Sometimes the word width or breadth is used in the general sense of 'vastness' irrespective of its length. In both cases, the purport of the verse is to describe that Paradise is very vast, so vast that it can accommodate the entire heavens and the earth in its vastness .

ذٰلِكَ فَضْلُ اللّٰهِ يُؤْتِيهِ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ ذُوالْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ (That is the bounty of Allah that He gives to whomever He wills, and Allah is the Lord of the great bounty...57:21) The foregoing verse enjoined upon us to march forth and compete each other in marching to Paradise and its bounties. This could give rise to the thought that Paradise and its eternal pleasures and delights are the direct result of our actions. This verse clarifies the point that good actions are not necessarily the sufficient cause for the attainment of Paradise. Man's life-long actions cannot be an adequate price even for the bounties he has received in this world, let alone the everlasting bounties of Paradise and its eternal blessings. Anyone who enters Paradise will do so out of Allah's grace and mercy, as is mentioned in a Prophetic Ḥadīth, recorded in Ṣaḥīḥain on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﵁ who reports that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ has said: "No one will attain salvation by means of his actions only." The Companions enquired: "Not even you, O Messenger of Allah?" He replied: "No, not even I will attain Paradise because of my actions, unless Allah bestows His grace and compassion on me." [Maẓharī]

Verses 22 - 24

مَآ اَصَابَ مِنْ مُّصِيْبَةٍ فِى الْاَرْضِ وَلَا فِىْٓ اَنْفُسِكُمْ اِلَّا فِىْ كِتٰبٍ مِّنْ

قَبْلِ اَنْ نَّبْرَاَهَا ؕ اِنَّ ذٰلِكَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ يَسِيْرٌ ﴿۲۲﴾ لِّكَيْلَا تَاْسَوْا عَلٰى مَافَاتَكُمْ وَلَا تَفْرَحُوْا بِمَآ اٰتٰىكُمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُوْرِ ﴿۲۳﴾ الَّذِيْنَ يَبْخَلُوْنَ وَيَاْمُرُوْنَ النَّاسَ بِالْبُخْلِ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّتَوَلَّ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَالْغَنِىُّ الْحَمِيْدُ ﴿۲۴﴾

No calamity befalls the earth or your own selves, but it is (pre-destined) in a Book before We bring it into being, Indeed it is easy for Allah. [22] **so that you may neither grieve on what has escaped you, nor over-exult on what He has given you. And Allah does not love any self-admirer, over-proud,** [23] **those who are miserly and bid others to be miserly. And whoever turns away, then Allah is the All-Independent, the Ever-Praised.** [24]

Factors affecting Mankind are duly measured and destined

There are two sets of factors that make man unmindful of Allah and the Hereafter: [1] wealth, comfort and other luxuries of this world; one's over-involvement in such luxuries makes him neglectful of Allah. The previous verses have warned against it. [2] calamities, problems and other hardships that cause one to be hopeless and in turn neglectful towards Allah. The current set of verses deal with this second cause of negligence.

مَآ اَصَابَ مِنْ مُّصِيْبَةٍ فِى الْاَرْضِ وَلَا فِىْٓ اَنْفُسِكُمْ اِلَّا فِىْ كِتٰبٍ مِّنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ نَّبْرَاَهَا (No calamity befalls the earth or your own selves, but it is [pre-destined] in a Book before We bring it into being ....57:22) The expression 'Book' refers to 'Preserved Tablet [*lawḥ maḥfūẓ*] and the verse means that Allah had measured and decided the destiny of all things even before He created them. The expression 'No affliction befalls in the earth' refers to famine, earthquake, destruction of crops, loss in business, loss of wealth and property and loss of friends and loved ones. The expression 'in yourselves' refers to illnesses of all sorts, all kinds of wounds, hurt and injury.

Patience and Gratitude

لِّكَيْلَا تَاْسَوْا عَلٰى مَافَاتَكُمْ وَلَا تَفْرَحُوْا بِمَآ اٰتٰىكُمْ (...so that you may neither grieve on what has escaped you, nor over-exult on what He has given you ...57:23) This means that Allah has informed us of His encompassing knowledge, recording all things before they occur and creating all things in due measure known to Him, so that we may know that what has met us

would never have missed us, and what has missed us would never have met us. Therefore, we are commanded not to over-grieve on the good things we have missed, nor to over-exult on the comforts or wealth we enjoyed in this life, and in turn be neglectful about Allah and the Hereafter. Sayyidnā 'Abdullah Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ says that it is man's natural disposition that certain things cheer him up and other things make him miserable, whereas the true position should have been as follows: When any misery befalls him, he should endure it with patience and earn reward in the Hereafter, and when he experiences joy, he should experience it with gratitude to Allah and earn reward in the Hereafter. [Reported by Ḥākim who rates it as *ṣaḥīḥ*. See Rūḥ]

وَاللّٰهُ لَايُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُوْرٍ (...And Allah does not love any self-admirer, over-proud...57:23) The expression "does not love" in fact implies that Allah 'hates' those who become proud of the bounties they enjoy in this world. But instead of using the word 'hates' the expression 'does not love' is perhaps an indication that an intelligent person should consider about all his actions whether or not the intended act is dear to Allah. This is the reason why the verse uses the phrase 'does not love'.

Verse 25

لَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ وَاَنْزَلْنَا مَعَهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ وَالْمِيْزَانَ لِيَقُوْمَ النَّاسُ بِالْقِسْطِ ۚ وَاَنْزَلْنَا الْحَدِيْدَ فِيْهِ بَاْسٌ شَدِيْدٌ وَّ مَنَافِعُ لِلنَّاسِ وَلِيَعْلَمَ اللّٰهُ مَنْ يَّنْصُرُهٗ وَرُسُلَهٗ بِالْغَيْبِ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ قَوِيٌّ عَزِيْزٌ ﴿٢٥﴾

We have indeed sent Our messengers with clear proofs, and sent down with them the Book and the Balance, so that people may uphold justice. And We sent down iron in which there is strong power, and benefits for the people; and (We did it) so that Allah knows the one who helps Him and His messengers without seeing (Him). Surely Allah is Strong, Mighty. [25]

Establishing Justice: The Real Purpose of sending Prophets and Divine Books

لَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ وَاَنْزَلْنَا مَعَهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ وَالْمِيْزَانَ لِيَقُوْمَ النَّاسُ بِالْقِسْطِ ۚ وَاَنْزَلْنَا الْحَدِيْدَ فِيْهِ بَاْسٌ شَدِيْدٌ

> We have indeed sent Our messengers with clear proofs, and sent down with them the Book and the Balance, so that people may uphold justice. And We sent down iron in which there is strong power, and benefits for the people; and [We did it] so that Allah knows the one who helps Him and His messengers without seeing [Him]. Surely Allah is Strong, Mighty (57:25)

The word *bayyināt* means 'clear' or 'evident' things. It could also mean 'clear injunctions'. It may refer to 'miracles, clear proofs and evidences of Prophet-hood and Messenger-ship. [Ibn Kathīr and Ibn Ḥayyān]. After *bayyināt,* the mention sending down the Book supports the last interpretation, that is, *bayyināt* refers to 'miracles and proofs' and that 'the Book' sets out details of injunctions. In addition to the Book, another thing has been mentioned, which is *mīzān* [Balance or Scale]. Originally, this word refers to an instrument of weighing. Besides the customary balance, there are other kinds of instruments that are invented from time to time to weigh and measure other things. For example, nowadays we have instruments with which to weigh and measure 'light', 'wind' and other things. All these instruments will fall under the category of '*mīzān* [Balance]

This verse speaks of sending down 'the Balance' like 'the Book'. The notion of the Book coming down from the heaven and reaching the prophets through the agency of the angels is quite understandable. But it is not clear what it means for the Balance to come down. Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī, Maẓharī and others have explained that 'the coming down of Balance' refers to the Divine laws that were revealed pertaining to the use of the Balance and administration of justice. Qurṭubī explains that it was the Book that was sent down, the Balance has been merely appended to the same verb but connoting the sense of inventing and placing. This is quite common in Arabic language and literature. Thus this sentence in full will read as follows: أَنْزَلْنَا الْكِتٰبَ وَ وَضَعْنَا الْمِيْزَانَ (We sent down the Book and placed the Scale.) The readers may compare this verse with verse [7] of Sūrah Ar-Raḥmān وَالسَّمَآءَ رَفَعَهَا وَوَضَعَ الْمِيْزَانَ (And He raised the sky high, and placed the scale...55:7) where Scale is said to have been set up or placed.

Some Traditions narrate that a balance was actually sent down from the heavens to Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام and he was enjoined to weigh with it and fulfill the rights of people. Allah knows best!

Alongside 'the Book ' and 'the Balance', a third thing was sent down, that is, 'the iron'. The verb 'sent down' in relation to the iron stands for 'created' because it was not sent down from the heaven. There are other occasions where the verb *anzala* [He sent down] is used in the sense of *khalaqa* [He created], as for instance in this verse وَاَنْزَلَ لَكُمْ مِّنَ الْاَنْعَامِ ثَمٰنِيَةَ اَزْوَاجٍ (He sent down to you of the cattle eight couples...39:6) In this verse, the verb *anzala* [He sent down] is unanimously used in the sense of *khalaqa* [He created]. This expression is adopted to indicate that everything in this world is 'sent down from the heaven' in the sense that everything that exists in the world was recorded in the Preserved Tablet long before it came into existence. [Rūḥ-ul-Maʻānī]

According to the verse, 'iron' serves two purposes: [1] it represent power and holds the hostile opponents in great awe, and may compel the rebellious people to abide by Divine laws and system of justice. [2] it also holds great benefits for man. In other words, iron is a thing of common utility as it is used on a large scale in various industries. It is indispensable for the invention of every device, machine, mechanical apparatus, contrivance, and there is some iron in almost everything man innovates. No contrivance is possible without iron.

Special Note [1]

The fundamental purpose of sending the Prophets, revealing the divine books and erecting the Balance is mentioned as follows: لِيَقُوْمَ النَّاسُ بِالْقِسْطِ (so that people may uphold justice...57:25) After that a third element is introduced: the creation of 'iron'. This, in fact, complements the same basic purpose of 'administration of justice' because the Prophets and the Divine Books set forth clear and sound arguments to establish justice. If the defiant group fails to establish it, it is warned about punishment in the Hereafter. The 'Balance' sets up the parameters within which justice should operate. If the defiant group obdurately refuses to accept the parameters of justice and is left free to go about violating them, he will not allow justice to be established. In this case, the higher authority of the state will have no choice but to take up arms against them.

Special Note [2]

Another point of consideration here is that the Holy Qur'ān has set forth two factors as fundamental to the establishment of justice: [1] the Book; and [2] the Balance. The Book sets forth the Divine rights and the

human rights, and the need to fulfil them; it prohibits their violation. The Balance lays down the system which maintains just equilibrium in human social relations. The purpose of revealing these two factors is لِيَقُوْمَ النَّاسُ بِالْقِسْطِ (so that people may uphold justice...57:25) The factor of 'iron' has been mentioned last. This indicates that in the establishment of justice iron may be used only as a last resort, not as the first step. The real purpose of improving human society and establishing justice among them is to improve them in intellectual development and growth. The government may not exert its might and power to achieve the purpose of developing them intellectually. It may use it, only as the ultimate option, if they stand in the way of justice. The main thing is to cultivate the minds of the people by educating them.

وَلِيَعْلَمَ اللّٰهُ مَنْ يَّنْصُرُهٗ وَرُسُلَهٗ بِالْغَيْبِ (...and [We did it] so that Allah knows the one who helps Him and His messengers without seeing ....57:25) Here the conjunction 'and', according to Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī, explains that this subjunctive phrase is conjoined to another subjunctive phrase that is understood in the context: لِيَنْفَعَهُمْ (so that it may benefit them) in their trade and industry; so that Allah may legally and outwardly know who will assist Him and His Messenger by carrying weapons of war made of iron and fight *jihād* in defence of His religion'. The restrictive adverbs 'legally and outwardly' have been added because Allah knows everything pre-eternally as He pre-recorded them in the Book of Decrees, and when man performs the action, it is recorded in his Account Book by the angels. In this way, its legal manifestation becomes plainly apparent.

Verses 26- 29

وَلَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا نُوْحًا وَّاِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَجَعَلْنَا فِيْ ذُرِّيَّتِهِمَا النُّبُوَّةَ وَالْكِتٰبَ فَمِنْهُمْ مُّهْتَدٍ ۚ وَكَثِيْرٌ مِّنْهُمْ فٰسِقُوْنَ ﴿٢٦﴾ ثُمَّ قَفَّيْنَا عَلٰٓى اٰثَارِهِمْ بِرُسُلِنَا وَقَفَّيْنَا بِعِيْسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ وَاٰتَيْنٰهُ الْاِنْجِيْلَ ۙ وَجَعَلْنَا فِيْ قُلُوْبِ الَّذِيْنَ اتَّبَعُوْهُ رَاْفَةً وَّرَحْمَةً ۗ وَرَهْبَانِيَّةَ ۨ ابْتَدَعُوْهَا مَا كَتَبْنٰهَا عَلَيْهِمْ اِلَّا ابْتِغَآءَ رِضْوَانِ اللّٰهِ فَمَا رَعَوْهَا حَقَّ رِعَايَتِهَا ۚ فَاٰتَيْنَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مِنْهُمْ اَجْرَهُمْ ۚ وَكَثِيْرٌ مِّنْهُمْ فٰسِقُوْنَ ﴿٢٧﴾ يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا

اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَاٰمِنُوْا بِرَسُوْلِهٖ يُؤْتِكُمْ كِفْلَيْنِ مِنْ رَّحْمَتِهٖ وَيَجْعَلْ لَّكُمْ
نُوْرًا تَمْشُوْنَ بِهٖ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿٢٨﴾ لِّئَلَّا يَعْلَمَ اَهْلُ
الْكِتٰبِ اَلَّا يَقْدِرُوْنَ عَلٰى شَيْءٍ مِّنْ فَضْلِ اللّٰهِ وَاَنَّ الْفَضْلَ بِيَدِ اللّٰهِ
يُؤْتِيْهِ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيْمِ ﴿٢٩﴾

And we have indeed sent Nūḥ and Ibrāhīm, and kept the Book and prophet-hood (continuing) in their progeny. So, some of those (to whom they were sent) were on the right path, and many of them were sinners. [26] **Then We made Our messengers follow them one after the other, then We sent after them 'Īsā, the son of Maryam (Jesus, son of Mary), and gave him the Injīl, and placed tenderness and mercy in the hearts of his followers. As for monasticism, it was invented by them; We did not ordain it for them, but (they adopted it) to seek Allah's pleasure, then could not observe it as was due. So We gave those of them who believed their reward. And many of them are sinners.** [27] **O those who believe, fear Allah, and believe in His Messenger, and He will give you two shares (of reward) out of His mercy, and will make for you a light whereby you will walk, and will forgive you,-And Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful.** [28] **so that the People of the Book may know that they have no power over any thing from Allah's bounty, and that bounty is in Allah's hand; He gives it to whom He wills, and Allah is the Lord of the great bounty.** [29]

Many of the Nations of the Prophets were Rebellious

In the preceding verses it was mentioned that in order to give guidance to the world and to establish justice therein, Allah sent His Messengers and revealed to them the divine books and set up Balance. The current verses give specific names of some of those Divine Messengers. Among them, Prophet Nūḥ عليه السلام stands first in the list, because he is second 'Ādam عليه السلام in the sense that all human beings after the Deluge were from his progeny. Then the Prophet Ibrāhīm Khalīl-ullāh عليه السلام is mentioned as he is the father of the prophets and recognized as an ideal for all the divine religions. It has been made plain here that all the Prophets and Messengers sent after these two prophets were from their offspring. Out of many branches of the progeny of

Nūḥ عليه السلام, the branch singled out for prophet-hood was that of Prophet Ibrāhīm Khalīl-ullāh عليه السلام. After specific mention of these two Prophets, the whole chain of prophets is referred to by the words, ثُمَّ قَفَّيْنَا عَلٰٓى اٰثَارِهِمْ بِرُسُلِنَا "Then We made Our messengers follow them one after the other". Lastly 'Īsā عليه السلام has been specifically mentioned, as he was the last among the Israelite prophets. Then the Last of all prophets Sayyidnā Muḥammad ﷺ and his Sharī'ah has a pointed reference in the next verse.

The special characteristics of the disciples of Prophet 'Īsā عليه السلام are given in part of verse 27 as follows: وَجَعَلْنَا فِىْ قُلُوْبِ الَّذِيْنَ اتَّبَعُوْهُ رَاْفَةً وَّرَحْمَةً (...and placed tenderness and mercy in the hearts of his followers) In other words, Allah inculcated two qualities in the hearts of the followers of Prophet 'Īsā عليه السلام and his Divine Book Injīl [Gospel]: [1] tenderness and [2] mercy. As a result, they showed tenderness and compassion to one another. Or it could mean that they showed tenderness and kindness to the entire creation of Allah.

Generally, the two words *ra'fah* (tenderness) and *raḥmah* (mercy) are treated as synonyms or near-synonyms, but since they are employed here in opposition to each other, some lexicologists explained that the word *ra'fah* is stronger in degree than the word *raḥmah*. Others have explained that there are two requirements of tenderness and mercy. The word *ra'fah* means to alleviate the calamity of someone, while the word *raḥmah* means to give to someone what he needs. In short, *ra'fah* is concerned with repelling harm and *raḥmah* is concerned with deriving benefit. As 'repelling harm' is normally prior to 'deriving benefit', *ra'fah* takes precedence over *raḥmah* when the two words are expressed simultaneously.

On this occasion, 'tenderness' and 'mercy' are mentioned as the special characteristics of the disciples [*Ḥowāriyyūn*] of the Prophet 'Īsā عليه السلام. Similarly, some characteristics of the blessed Companions of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ are given in Sūrah Al-Fatḥ, one of which is رُحَمَآءُ بَيْنَهُمْ (...compassionate among themselves....48:29). But another characteristic of them is given before this as: اَشِدَّآءُ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ (...hard against the disbelievers ....48:29). The reason for this difference seems to be that there were no laws pertaining to *jihād* against the non-believers in the Sharī'ah of the Prophet 'Īsā عليه السلام. Therefore, there was no occasion for them to be hard against the disbelievers. Allah knows best!

Monasticism: An Analysis

وَرَهْبَانِيَّةً ابْتَدَعُوهَا (...As for monasticism, it was invented by them;). The word *rahbāniyyah* (monasticism) is attributed to *ruhbān*. The words *rāhib* (singular) and *ruhbān* (plural) mean 'the one who fears'. After Prophet 'Īsā عليه السلام, transgression became common. In particular, the kings and the leaders publicly defied the laws of the Gospel. When the scholars and the righteous people among them attempted to stop them from doing evil deeds, they were put to death. Those that remained, felt that they would not be able to stop them, nor did they have the power of resistance. If they lived in society, there was every likelihood that their religion too would be destroyed. Therefore, they took upon themselves in earnest that they would give up all pleasures and comforts of this life including the legitimate ones. Thus they avoided marriage, abandoned any activity to earn livelihood and any effort to build homes, and took to jungles, mountains and caves, or took to nomadic life in order to protect their religion and follow their religious duties freely and completely. They did all this out of fear of God. Therefore, they were referred to as *rāhib* or *ruhbān*. Their practice is referred to as *rahbāniyyah*.

As the Christians introduced monasticism under forced circumstances in order to protect their faith, it was not reproachable in its origin. But once anyone has imposed anything on himself, it becomes binding on him, and its violation is a sin. For example, making a vow for an act of worship is not obligatory. But if a person were to vow to do an act of worship or abstain from a lawful thing, it becomes binding on him in Sharī'ah to maintain the vow; its violation becomes a sin. Some of the Christian monks invented monasticism with the best of intentions, but there were others who could not endure the hardships of monastic life and soon succumbed to the pursuit of material gains and physical pleasures when the general body of people believed in them, offered them gifts and oblations. History bears ample testimony to the fact that the monks who detested the system of marriage indulged in indecent acts and fornication. (The free intermingling of men and women in monasteries turned those places into centres of evil.)

The current verse denounces the practice of the monks who imposed monasticism upon themselves, and once they had imposed it, they should have observed its requirements which they did not.

That there was nothing wrong originally in what they had introduced as *rahbaniyyah* is proved by a Ḥadīth narrated by Sayyidnā 'Abdullah Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ and recorded by Ibn Kathīr with reference to Ibn Abī Ḥātim and Ibn Jarīr who have cited a lengthy narration in which the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is reported to have said:

> "Allah has split the Children of Israel into seventy-two sects. Only three of them were saved from punishment. These are groups who, after Prophet 'Isā ﷺ, stopped the oppressive kings and affluent and powerful transgressors from violating the Divine laws. Among those who raised the voice of Truth against them and invited them to the religion of Prophet 'Īsā ﷺ, the first group faced the oppressors with whatever power they had at their command, but they were defeated and killed. Then after them a second group stood against the tyrants and aggressors who did not have even that much fighting strength as the first group had. However they conveyed the Truth without caring for their lives. This group too was killed. Some of them were ripped apart with saws and others were burnt alive. But they, for the sake of Allah's pleasure, bore all pains and attained salvation. Then a third group stood against them. But this group was weak: They had no resources to fight the tyrants nor could they live in that corrupt society and follow their religion. Therefore, they took to the jungles and mountains, and became monks. It is to this third group that Allah refers in the current verse وَرَهْبَانِيَّةً ابْتَدَعُوهَا مَا كَتَبْنَهَا عَلَيْهِمْ 'As for monasticism, it was invented by them; We did not ordain it for them, ...'."

This narration indicates that the people who originally adopted monasticism from among the Israelites and took care of its essentials and endured its hardships were among those who attained salvation.

According to this interpretation, the present verse shows that the monasticism initially adopted by such people was not bad or evil in itself, though it was not a religious obligation either. They had made it obligatory on themselves at their own will and wish. The element of evil

starts from the fact that after making it binding on themselves, most of them were not able to keep to its essentials. As a result, in keeping with the adage لِلْاَكْثَرِ حُكْمُ الْكُلِّ (Majority takes the status of all), the Qur'ān attributed this evil aspect to the entire Israelites in that they invented it and could not practice it and did not take care of its requirements : فَمَارَعَوْهَا حَقَّ رِعَايَتِهَا (...but [they adopted it] to seek Allah's pleasure, then could not observe it as was due. ....57:27).

It is also learnt from the above discussion that the word *ibtidā'*, derived from *bid'ah,* used in اِبْتَدَعُوْهَا (...it was invented by them ...) is used in its literal sense of invention, and not in its technical or religious sense of heresy. The religious concept of *bid'ah* (which refers to a baseless faith or practice that is made part of the religion) has been denounced in the following narration of the Holy Prophet ﷺ: كُلُّ بِدْعَةٍ ضَلَالَةٌ (Every religious innovation is deviation).

The context of the verse is very clear about it. Let us first study the following sentence: وَجَعَلْنَا فِيْ قُلُوْبِ الَّذِيْنَ اتَّبَعُوْهُ رَاْفَةً وَّرَحْمَةً وَرَهْبَانِيَّةً (And We placed in the hearts of his followers tenderness and mercy and the monasticism they had invented; We did not prescribe it for them, except to seek Allah's pleasure. Then they did not observe it as was due...57:27)(1) The context indicates that just as 'tenderness and mercy' are not evil qualities, likewise 'monasticism' which they adopted is not an evil quality in itself. Otherwise Allah would not have listed it alongside the favorable qualities of 'tenderness and mercy'. Scholars, like Qurṭubī, who held monasticism as absolutely prohibited, had to face grammatical difficulties. They had to go out of their way to show that *rahbaniyyah* is not a part of the conjunctive expression joined together by the conjunction '*waw*' [and] They treated the sentence starting with "...and monasticism..." as a separate sentence, and understood the verb *ibtadā'* as omittted. The interpretation adopted above renders this construction unnecessary. That is why the Holy Qur'ān does not reject their adoption of monasticism in principle, but their failure to keep it up, and take care of its rights and

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(1) It should be noted that according to the grammatical construction of this verse, it can be translated in two ways. One translation is given above in the text. The second possible translation is that which is given here. Since the following discussion is based on this second translation, we have adpted it here instead of the translation given in the text. **Muhammad Taqi Usmani**

obligations. This interpretation is possible only if the word *ibtidā'* (invention) is taken in its literal sense. Had it been employed in its religious or technical sense, the Qur'ān would have denounced adoption of monasticism in itself, because *bid'ah* (innovation in religion) in its technical sense is deviation.

Sayyidnā 'Abdullan Ibn Mas'ūd's ﷺ foregoing narration makes it clear that the groups that adopted monastic life attained salvation. If they were guilty of committing religious innovation, they would never have been counted among the saved ones, but rather among the deviant ones.

Is *rahbaniyyah* (Monasticism) absolutely Prohibited or is it a relative Concept?

The fact is that *rahbaniyyah* (translated as monasticism) generally means to give up some lawful things and pleasures. It has several stages, one of which is to treat a permissible thing as impermissible doctrinally or practically. This is distortion of religion. From this point of view, monasticism is absolutely prohibited as declared by the Holy Qur'ān at several places, like verse [87] of Sūrah Al-Mā'idah that lays down the principle يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تُحَرِّمُوْا طَيِّبٰتِ مَآ اَحَلَّ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ (O believers, do not prohibit the good things which Allah has made lawful to you...) The prohibitive verb ('do not prohibit') in this verse indicates that it relates to a situation where a person holds unlawful what Allah has made lawful, either in his belief or in practice, and as such it will amount to distortion or perversion of the Divine laws.

The second stage is when a person does not, dogmatically or practically, turn a lawful thing into unlawful, but gives it up for some mundane or religious reason. In mundane affairs, a person might give up eating a lawful thing on account of some disease. In religious matters, a person might give up the company of people and mixing with them, lest he should commit moral sins like lying and backbiting, or he might abandon some permissible things temporarily in order to suppress his base desires. This restriction is no more than a treatment of a spiritual disease. When the treatment is over, the restriction is no longer observed. Some Ṣufī adepts require a novice in the initial stages of his spiritual journey to exercise ascetic discipline, such as eating little, sleeping little and mixing little with people. This brings him to a state of greater harmony and balance [*I'tidāl*]. This ascetic discipline is a 'means' and not an 'end' in

itself. When the perfect balance is attained and the *nafs* (inner-self) is brought under control, and there is no longer the danger of committing sins, they are asked to give up the exercise. This in fact is not monasticism but *taqwā* or righteousness which the religion requires and was practiced by our predecessors, the blessed Companions, their followers and the leaders in religion.

The third stage is when a person does not turn a permissible thing into unlawful. However, he abstains from its use under the belief that its giving up has more virtue and carries more reward, while such use is proved through *Sunnah* (the practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ) This is in fact *ghuluww* (over-indulgence). Many of the Prophetic Traditions prohibit *ghuluww*.

The Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said: لَارَهْبَانِيَّةَ فِى الْإِسْلَامِ (There is no monasticism in Islam.) This relates to a situation where someone abandons permissible things with the mistaken notion that it will bring him reward. If the Children of Israel initiated monasticism for the protection of their religion, it will fall under the second category of righteousness. But the people of the book were given to *ghuluww* or practicing religious fanaticism. If they turned lawful into unlawful, they fell under the first category and are guilty of committing *ḥarām*. If they fall under the third category, then too they are guilty of committing something that is condemned. Allah, the Pure and Exalted, knows best!

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَاٰمِنُوْا بِرَسُوْلِهٖ يُؤْتِكُمْ كِفْلَيْنِ مِنْ رَّحْمَتِهٖ (O those who believe, fear Allah, and believe in His Messenger, and He will give you two shares [of reward] out of His mercy,..28) The vocative expression يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ آمَنُوْا "O those who believe..." in this verse refers to the People of the Book who believed in Prophet 'Īsā عليه السلام. As a general rule, the Qur'ān uses this vocative expression for Muslims only, not for Jews or Christians. The expression used for them is *ahlul-kitāb* [People of the Book] because their believing in Prophets Mūsā and 'Īsā عليهما السلام is not tantamount to being 'believers'. They need to believe in the Holy Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. Only in that case can they be called اَلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا "O those who believe". But here the Qur'ān deviates from the general rule, and addresses them by the words, "O those who believe" presumably because the concluding verse reminds the Christians that believing in Prophet 'Īsā عليه السلام is not sufficient: the true meaning of believing in Prophet 'Īsā عليه السلام dictates that they should believe

in the Last Prophet ﷺ. If they do, then they deserve to be called as الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا 'those who believe'.

Then the verse promises the People of the Book that believe in the Holy Prophet ﷺ, their reward will be doubled. The first reward is on account of their believing in Prophet ʽĪsā عليه السلام or Mūsā عليه السلام and following their Sharīʽah, and the second reward is for their believing in the Holy Prophet ﷺ and acting upon his Sharīʽah. The reason for their double reward is that Jews and Christians were unbelievers until they believed in the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and no worship of an unbeliever is acceptable. It required that any action they had performed according to a previous Sharīʽah would go waste. But the present verse clarifies that when an unbeliever embraces Islam, all his good actions are restored, hence he is doubly rewarded.

لِئَلَّايَعْلَمَ اَهْلُ الْكِتٰبِ (so that the People of the Book may know ....57:29) The negative particle *lā* [no] is grammatically redundant [but rhetorically it serves to emphasise the expression]. This final verse states that the People of the Book need to know that faith in Prophet ʽĪsā عليه السلام is not necessarily faith in the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. In the circumstances, they do not deserve any Divine grace unless they embrace faith in the Last Prophet ﷺ. Allah, the Pure and Exalted, knows best!

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Ḥadīd
Ends here

Sūrah Al-Mujādalah

(The Debate)

This Sūrah is Madanī, and it has 22 verses and 3 sections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 6

قَدْ سَمِعَ اللّٰهُ قَوْلَ الَّتِيْ تُجَادِلُكَ فِيْ زَوْجِهَا وَتَشْتَكِيْٓ اِلَى اللّٰهِ ۖ وَاللّٰهُ يَسْمَعُ تَحَاوُرَكُمَا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ سَمِيْعٌۢ بَصِيْرٌ ﴿۱﴾ اَلَّذِيْنَ يُظٰهِرُوْنَ مِنْكُمْ مِّنْ نِّسَآئِهِمْ مَّا هُنَّ اُمَّهٰتِهِمْ ؕ اِنْ اُمَّهٰتُهُمْ اِلَّا الّٰٓـِٔيْ وَلَدْنَهُمْ ؕ وَاِنَّهُمْ لَيَقُوْلُوْنَ مُنْكَرًا مِّنَ الْقَوْلِ وَزُوْرًا ؕ وَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَعَفُوٌّ غَفُوْرٌ ﴿۲﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ يُظٰهِرُوْنَ مِنْ نِّسَآئِهِمْ ثُمَّ يَعُوْدُوْنَ لِمَا قَالُوْا فَتَحْرِيْرُ رَقَبَةٍ مِّنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ يَّتَمَآسَّا ؕ ذٰلِكُمْ تُوْعَظُوْنَ بِهٖ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرٌ ﴿۳﴾ فَمَنْ لَّمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامُ شَهْرَيْنِ مُتَتَابِعَيْنِ مِنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ يَّتَمَآسَّا ۚ فَمَنْ لَّمْ يَسْتَطِعْ فَاِطْعَامُ سِتِّيْنَ مِسْكِيْنًا ؕ ذٰلِكَ لِتُؤْمِنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ ؕ وَتِلْكَ حُدُوْدُ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَلِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿۴﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يُحَآدُّوْنَ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ كُبِتُوْا كَمَا كُبِتَ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ وَقَدْ اَنْزَلْنَآ اٰيٰتٍۢ بَيِّنٰتٍ ؕ وَلِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ عَذَابٌ مُّهِيْنٌ ﴿۵﴾ يَوْمَ يَبْعَثُهُمُ اللّٰهُ جَمِيْعًا فَيُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا عَمِلُوْا ؕ اَحْصٰىهُ اللّٰهُ وَنَسُوْهُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيْدٌ ﴿۶﴾

Allah has heard the talk of the woman who was debating with you about her husband, and was complaining to Allah. And Allah was hearing the conversation between both of you. Indeed, Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. [1] **Those of you who declare *ẓihār*** [1] **against their wives, they are not their mothers. Their mothers are but only those who have given birth to them. And undoubtedly they utter an evil word and a lie. And Allah is surely Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful.** [2] **And those who declare *ẓihār* against their wives, then retract what they said, obligated on them is to free the neck (of a slave) before the two (spouses) touch one another. This is what you are advised with, and Allah is Well-Aware of what you do.** [3] **But whoever does not find (a slave) has to fast for two consecutive moths before the two (spouses) touch one another. Then the one who is not able to do so has to feed sixty indigent persons. This is (laid down) so that you believe in Allah and His Messenger. And these are the limits set by Allah. And for the disbelievers there is a painful punishment.** [4] **Surely those who oppose Allah and His Messenger shall be disgraced, just as those before them were disgraced. And We have sent down clear verses, and for the disbelievers there is a humiliating punishment** [5] **on the Day when Allah will raise all of them, and will tell them what they did; Allah has its full account, while they have forgotten it. And Allah is witness to every thing.** [6]

Commentary

Cause of Revelation

The initial verses of this Sūrah refer to a particular incident: Sayyidnā Aus Ibn Ṣāmit ﷺ said to his wife Sayyidah Khaulah bint Tha'labah ﵂ أَنْتِ عَلَيَّ كَظَهْرِ أُمِّي which, literally, means 'You are to me like the back of my mother.' Its underlying meaning is 'You are unlawful to

(1) *Ẓihār* is a term denoting a custom of the Arabs in the days of Ignorance. In case of disagreement with their wives they used to say to them, "You are for me like the back of my mother." After saying this, they used to take their wives as their real mothers in being prohibited for them, and the ties of marriage were held to have been broken for good, with no possibility of their restoration. These verses have been revealed in a similar case where a husband (Aus ibn. Ṣāmit) had declared *ẓihār* against his wife (Khawlah) who approached the Holy Prophet ﷺ and complained about her husband. The custom of the days of Ignorance was condemned, and the rules of Shari'ah about *ẓihār* were laid down by these verses. **(Muhammad Taqi Usmani)**

me for cohabitation just like my mother.' Such an utterance, in the days of ignorance, amounted to divorce - even worse because it was taken to imply that the husband is rescinding all marital ties with his wife and, in addition, he is classifying her within the prohibited degree or permanently forbidden women like his mother. According to pre-Islamic custom, reunion with the wife was possible after divorce, but not after *ẓihār*, as she became permanently and absolutely forbidden. When this incident took place, the aggrieved lady went to the Messenger of Allah complaining about her husband and seeking redress for her problem according to Sharīʿah. Up to that point in time the Messenger of Allah had not received any revelation concerning that legal issue. Therefore, he pleaded his inability to do anything to help her in the absence of a revealed ordinance and said to her: مَا أُمِرْتُ فِيْ شَانِكِ بِشَيْءٍ حَتَّى الْآنَ "I have not yet received any ordinance regarding your matter." However he expressed his opinion according to common custom and said: مَا أَرَاكِ إِلَّا قَدْ حَرُمْتِ عَلَيْهِ "In my opinion, you have become forbidden to him." Having heard this ruling, she pleaded: "O Allah's Messenger! He spent my wealth, exhausted my youth and my womb bore abundantly for him. When I became old, unable to bear children, he pronounced the *ẓihār* formula on me. Where shall I go and how will my children do their living?" According to another version, she said: مَاذَكَرَ طَلَاقًا "My husband did not mention the word 'divorce', so how can this be counted as 'divorce'?" According to another version, she pleaded to Allah: اَللّٰهُمَّ إِنِّيْ أَشْكُوْا إِلَيْكَ "O Allah! I direct my complaint to You . This was the cause of the revelation of verses [1-6] (Al-Durarul Manthūr and Ibn Kathīr) which clearly state that Allah heard Sayyidah Khaulah's ﷺ complaint and revealed the rule of Shari'ah to redress her grievances. Allah not only made matters easy for her, but the rule has been eternally enshrined in the Holy Qur'ān for all sensible people to follow.

The noble Companions greatly respected Sayyidah Khaulah ﷺ because her case has been the cause of the revelation of the current set of verses, which abolished once and for all the long-standing social evil that was practiced in Arabia. Once Sayyidnā ʿUmar Fārūq, the Great ﷺ, was on his way with some of the blessed Companions when he came across a woman who stopped him. He instantly stopped and listened attentively to her with his head bent down. He did not move till she completed what she

wanted to say. Some of the noble Companions said: "O Commander of the Faithful! You have held back such a large group of people for such a long time on account of this old lady!" Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ said: "Do you know who this lady is? She is Sayyidah Khaulah ﷺ, the lady whose complaint was heard in the seventh heaven. So, how can 'Umar not listen to her? She should be heard for a longer period of time and with greater attention. By Allah! If she did not take leave of her own accord, I would have stood with her here till the nightfall." [Ibn Kathīr]

قَدْ سَمِعَ اللّٰهُ (Allah has heard....1) The reference in the verse is to Sayyidah Khaulah ﷺ, the wife of Sayyidnā Aus Ibn Ṣāmit ﷺ, as mentioned above. Thus this verse and the rest of the verses lay down not only the rule of Sharī'ah pertaining to *ẓihār* and redress the grievances of women placed in such awkward situation, but the first verse also is in honour of the pleading lady which consoles her, in that it says that Allah was listening to her words when she was pleading her case. The word *mujādalah* means 'to plead, argue or dispute consistently and convincingly about one's problem or case'. According to some narratives, when the Messenger of Allah ﷺ pleaded his inability to do anything for her, as noted above, the aggrieved lady uttered spontaneously that 'you receive ordinances in all matters, then how is it that no ordinance was revealed to you in my case?' Thus the verse was revealed: وَتَشْتَكِيْٓ اِلَى اللّٰهِ "...and was complaining to Allah...[1]". [Qurṭubī]

Sayyidah 'A'ishah ﷺ is reported to have said: " Pure is He, Whose hearing encompasses all things. I heard what Khaulah bint Tha'labah said about her husband while some of it I could not hear despite being so close to her in the same room, but Allah heard all her conversation and said : قَدْ سَمِعَ اللّٰهُ 'Allah has heard...'." [Bukhārī, Ibn Kathīr].

Ẓihār

اَلَّذِيْنَ يُظٰهِرُوْنَ مِنْكُمْ مِّنْ نِّسَآئِهِمْ (Those of you who declare *ẓihār* against their wives...58:2) The aorist *yuzahirūna* is derived from *ẓihār*. There was a cruel custom in pre-Islamic Arabia, as pointed out earlier, where the husband would utter the *ẓihār* formula اَنْتِ عَلَيَّ كَظَهْرِ اُمِّي 'You are to me as my mother's back', and thus she would become permanently and absolutely unlawful to him for cohabitation like the mother. Here the word *zahr* (back) metonymically refers to batn 'stomach or womb'. [Qurṭubī]

Definition of *ẓihār* and its effect in Sharī'ah

In order to understand the definition of *ẓihār* in terms of Sharī'ah, it should be noted first that there are some women who are permanently forbidden for a man, such as mother, sister, daughter and others in the prohibited degree. Although looking at such women is permissible in general, yet looking at some parts of their body is not permissible, (like abdomen, back etc.) Now the definition of *ẓihār* is 'to compare one's wife with any of such parts of the body of such prohibited women'. According to the old Arab custom all conjugal relations ceased permanently between a man and his wife when he would use these words; rather it was worse than divorce. In the case of divorce, it was possible to retract and take back the wife. But in the case of *ẓihār*, according to the old Arab custom, it was not at all possible to restore the conjugal rights.

The current set of verses brought about reform in the custom in two ways: [1] *ẓihār* has been declared a sinful act. If a person is placed in a situation where he needs to separate from his wife, he must choose the method of 'divorce'. *Ẓihār* should not be resorted to for this purpose, because the utterance of *ẓihār* formula is absurd, nonsense and false. Obviously, their wives are not their mothers, the Quran reads thus: مَاهُنَّ أُمَّهٰتِهِمْ اِنْ أُمَّهٰتُهُمْ اِلَّا الّٰئِىْ وَلَدْنَهُمْ "...Their mothers are but only those who have given birth to them ...[58:2]". The وَاِنَّهُمْ لَيَقُوْلُوْنَ مُنْكَرًا مِّنَ الْقَوْلِ وَزُوْرًا further says: "...and undoubtedly they utter an evil word and a lie...[58:2]" In other words, their utterance is false, meaning 'calling one's wife mother' is contrary to truth and fact, and also a heinous sin.

[2] The second reform the Qur'ān brought about is as follows: If an ignorant person or a person unacquainted with the legal formalities of Islam were to utter the *ẓihār* formula, his wife does not become permanently unlawful to him, nor does he have an open licence to do as he wishes - like enjoying intimacy with her. The guilty person will have to pay a penalty for uttering such evil, false and obnoxious words. He cannot take back his wife without first paying the prescribed expiation. The following verse prescribes this expiation.

The Expiation for *Ẓihār*

وَالَّذِيْنَ يُظٰهِرُوْنَ مِنْ نِّسَآئِهِمْ ثُمَّ يَعُوْدُوْنَ لِمَا قَالُوْا (And those who declare *ẓihār* against their wives, then retract what they said, ...58:3). The preposition *lam* in the phrase يَعُوْدُوْنَ لِمَا قَالُوْا "...retract what they said..." is used in the sense of

'an [from]. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ interprets 'retract' in the sense of 'regret': 'they regret what they said and wish to be intimate or cohabit with their wives'. [Maẓharī]

The verse shows that the penalty has been imposed on the husband for the purpose of making the wife lawful - without it she cannot become lawful to him. *ẓihār* per se is not the cause of the expiation. In fact, *ẓihār* is a heinous sin for which repentance and seeking pardon and forgiveness is absolutely necessary. The concluding part of verse [2] وَإِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَعَفُوٌّ غَفُورٌ "...Allah is surely Most-forgiving, Very-Merciful." points to this fact. In other words, Allah in His great mercy has made allowance for man's weaknesses and He is always ready to forgive his lapses, provided he comes to Allah with a penitent heart and makes amends. However, if a person did commit *ẓihār* and does not wish to take back his wife and enjoy intimacy with her, expiation is not obligatory on him. However, destroying a wife's conjugal rights is unlawful. If she demands, it is obligatory for him to pay the expiation and take her back, should he wish to do so; or if she demands, he must divorce her and set her free from the bond of marriage. If he does not divorce her and set her free, then she has the right to apply to a Qāḍī or an Islamic court to compel him to either pay the expiation and take her back or to divorce her and set her free so that she could contract a second marriage. Islamic works on jurisprudence set down details of the laws pertaining to *ẓihār*.

The penalty for *ẓihār* is obligatory, which is given in this and the next verse. There are three options: [1] فَتَحْرِيرُ رَقَبَةٍ (...obligated on them is to free the neck [of a slave]...) [2] If a person cannot afford to do that, he must keep fast for two consecutive months; and [3] if he is so weak or ill that he cannot fast, then he must feed sixty poor people. The expiation will be fulfilled if one poor person is given two meals for sixty days. Alternatively, it is possible to give two meals to sixty poor persons on a single day. In each case, the poor should be fed to their fill. Another possible alternative is to give to a poor person about 1.6 kg wheat or 2.12 kg dates or barley for sixty days or the equivalent price of these food items may be given. The details of the law appertaining to *ẓihār* and its expiation are available in the texts of Islamic jurisprudence.

It is recorded in Traditions that when Sayyidah Khaulah رضي الله عنها complained to Allah's Messenger ﷺ about her husband and pleaded her

case to Allah, verses relating to *ẓihār* and its expiation were revealed. So, Allah's Messenger called for the husband. When he came, the Holy Prophet ﷺ noticed that he was a weak-sighted old man. He recited to him the verses resolving his case, and commanded him to emancipate a slave, he said that he does not have the means to do that. The Holy Prophet ﷺ then asked him to fast two successive months, to which he replied: "By Him Who has sent you as the true Messenger, if I do not have two or three meals a day, I lose my sight completely." The Holy Prophet ﷺ said 'Then feed sixty poor people'. He said 'I do not have the ability for that either, unless you help me'. The Holy Prophet ﷺ gave him some food grain, and also other people gathered more food grain for him, which amounted to the measure of *ṣadaqatul-fiṭr* for sixty poor men, and in this way the expiation was made. [Ibn Kathir]

ذٰلِكَ لِتُؤْمِنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ ط وَتِلْكَ حُدُوْدُ اللّٰهِ ط وَلِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ (...This is [laid down] so that you believe in Allah and His Messenger. And these are the limits set by Allah. And for the disbelievers there is a painful chastisement. 58:4) This part of the verse contains the phrase 'so that you believe'. Belief here implies 'to act upon the sacred laws, ordinances and injunctions or obey the commandments of Allah and His Messenger'. Then the verse says that the laws of expiation are limits set by Allah. It is prohibited to exceed them. It indicates that in matters of marriage, divorce, incestuous comparison and so on, Islam has abolished all traces of pre-Islamic pagan elements of customs and practices, and set down the just and approved code of conduct. Man is required to stick strictly to the parameters of Islam. Those who oppose and deny the Divine limits will be tormented most severely.

The Fate of those who Challenge Allah and His Apostle

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يُحَآدُّوْنَ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ كُبِتُوْا كَمَا كُبِتَ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ (Surely those who oppose Allah and His Messenger shall be disgraced, just as those before them were disgraced....58:5) In the preceding verse, stress was laid on keeping to Divine limits and to the sacred laws of Islam. The current verse warns those who oppose or reject them. Their profane designs shall be foiled and they shall be humiliated in this world and a condign torment shall be inflicted on them in the Hereafter.

اَحْصٰىهُ اللّٰهُ وَنَسُوْهُ (...Allah has its full account, while they have forgotten it....58:6) Man is very forgetful. He persists in committing sins and

transgressions, but because he treats them as trivial and insignificant, he is unable to remember and recall them. However, they are all recorded and kept safely with Allah, even though the humans have done the actions and forgotten them. Allah will call them to give an account of them on the Day of Resurrection and chastise them.

Verses 7 - 13

اَلَمْ تَرَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِى الْاَرْضِ ؕ مَا يَكُوْنُ مِنْ
نَّجْوٰى ثَلٰثَةٍ اِلَّا هُوَ رَابِعُهُمْ وَلَا خَمْسَةٍ اِلَّا هُوَ سَادِسُهُمْ وَلَاۤ اَدْنٰى
مِنْ ذٰلِكَ وَلَاۤ اَكْثَرَ اِلَّا هُوَ مَعَهُمْ اَيْنَ مَا كَانُوْا ۚ ثُمَّ يُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا عَمِلُوْا
يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِكُلِّ شَىْءٍ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿٧﴾ اَلَمْ تَرَ اِلَى الَّذِيْنَ نُهُوْا
عَنِ النَّجْوٰى ثُمَّ يَعُوْدُوْنَ لِمَا نُهُوْا عَنْهُ وَيَتَنٰجَوْنَ بِالْاِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ
وَمَعْصِيَتِ الرَّسُوْلِ ۫ وَاِذَا جَآءُوْكَ حَيَّوْكَ بِمَا لَمْ يُحَيِّكَ بِهِ اللّٰهُ ۙ
وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ فِىْۤ اَنْفُسِهِمْ لَوْلَا يُعَذِّبُنَا اللّٰهُ بِمَا نَقُوْلُ ؕ حَسْبُهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ ۚ
يَصْلَوْنَهَا ۚ فَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيْرُ ﴿٨﴾ يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْۤا اِذَا تَنَاجَيْتُمْ فَلَا
تَتَنَاجَوْا بِالْاِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ وَمَعْصِيَتِ الرَّسُوْلِ وَتَنَاجَوْا بِالْبِرِّ
وَالتَّقْوٰى ؕ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ الَّذِىْۤ اِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُوْنَ ﴿٩﴾ اِنَّمَا النَّجْوٰى مِنَ
الشَّيْطٰنِ لِيَحْزُنَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَلَيْسَ بِضَآرِّهِمْ شَيْـًٔا اِلَّا بِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ ؕ
وَعَلَى اللّٰهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿١٠﴾ يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْۤا اِذَا قِيْلَ
لَكُمْ تَفَسَّحُوْا فِى الْمَجٰلِسِ فَافْسَحُوْا يَفْسَحِ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ ۚ وَاِذَا قِيْلَ
انْشُزُوْا فَانْشُزُوْا يَرْفَعِ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مِنْكُمْ ۙ وَالَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْعِلْمَ
دَرَجٰتٍ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرٌ ﴿١١﴾ يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْۤا اِذَا
نَاجَيْتُمُ الرَّسُوْلَ فَقَدِّمُوْا بَيْنَ يَدَىْ نَجْوٰىكُمْ صَدَقَةً ؕ ذٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ
وَاَطْهَرُ ؕ فَاِنْ لَّمْ تَجِدُوْا فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿١٢﴾ ءَاَشْفَقْتُمْ اَنْ

تُقَدِّمُوْا بَيْنَ يَدَیْ نَجْوٰىكُمْ صَدَقٰتٍ ؕ فَاِذْ لَمْ تَفْعَلُوْا وَتَابَ اللّٰهُ
عَلَيْكُمْ فَاَقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتُوا الزَّكٰوةَ وَاَطِيْعُوا اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ
خَبِيْرٌۢ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۱۳﴾

Have you not seen that Allah knows all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth? No secret consultation takes place between three, but He is fourth of them, nor between five, but He is sixth of them, nor between fewer than that or more, but He is with them wherever they may be. Then He will tell them on the Day of Judgment what they did. Surely Allah is All-Knowing about every thing. [7]

Did you not see those who were forbidden from holding secret counsels, then they do again what they were forbidden to do? And they whisper for sinful act and wrongdoing and disobedience of the prophet, and when they come to you, they greet you the way Allah does not greet you, and say to themselves, "Why does Allah not punish us for what we say?" Enough for them is *Jahannam* (Hell); they will enter it, and it is an evil end. [8]

O those who believe, when you hold secret counsel, do not whisper for sinful act and wrongdoing and disobedience of the prophet, and do whisper for righteousness and *taqwā* (God-fearing). And fear Allah, before whom you will be gathered together. [9] **Whispering (for sinful acts) comes from the *Shaiṭān* (Satan), so that he may grieve those who believe, while it is not harmful to them in the least, except with Allah's permission. And in Allah the believers must place their trust.** [10] **O those who believe, when it is said to you, "Make room (for others) in the sittings", then make room, and Allah will make room for you (in the Hereafter). And when it is said, "Rise up", then rise up, and Allah will raise those, in ranks, who have believed and are given knowledge. And Allah is well-aware of what you do.** [11] **O those who believe, when you consult the Messenger in private, then offer something in charity before your consultation. That is better for you and purer. But if you find nothing (to offer), then Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful.** [12] **Have you become afraid of offering charities before**

your consultation? So when you did not do so, and Allah has forgiven you, then establish *ṣalāh*, and pay *zakāh*, and obey Allah and His Messenger. And Allah is well-aware of what you do. [13]

Commentary

Circumstances of Revelation

There are several incidents related to the revelation of the current set of verses. [1] there was a peace agreement between the Jews and Muslims. But when one of the Holy Prophet's ﷺ Companions would pass by a gathering of Jews, they would speak among themselves in secret, prompting the believer to think that they were plotting to harm or hurt him. The Holy Prophet ﷺ advised them to give up their secret plots and conspiracies but they did not heed. As a result, verse اَلَمْ تَرَ اِلَى الَّذِيْنَ نُهُوْا عَنِ النَّجْوٰى was revealed.

[2] Likewise, the hypocrites used to hold secret counsels or conferences, in consequence of which verses: اِذَا تَنَا جَيْتُمْ فَلَا تَتَنَاجَوْا and اِنَّمَا النَّجْوٰى مِنَ الشَّيْطٰنِ were revealed.

[3] When the Jews came to see the Holy Prophet ﷺ, they, with a little twist of the tongue, would invoke curses upon him by greeting him mischievously *'As-Sāmu 'alaykum'* اَلسَّامُ عَلَيْكُمْ [death to you!] instead of saluting him with the usual اَلسَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ *'As-Salāmu 'alaykum'* [peace be upon you]. On this occasion, verse وَاِذَا جَآءُوْكَ حَيَّوْكَ was revealed..

[4] Ibn Kathīr cites Imām Aḥmad's narration in which it is reported that the Jews used to greet in this way, changing the meaning of Islamic greeting into an abusive statement, and then say, لَوْلَا يُعَذِّبُنَا اللّٰهُ بِمَا نَقُوْلُ 'Had he been a Prophet, Allah would have punished us for the sin we committed - why did He not punish us?'.

[5] Once the Holy Prophet ﷺ was sitting in the *ṣuffah* of the mosque. The congregation was large in the mosque. Some of the participants of the battle of Badr arrived late and they could not find place to sit, nor did the people sitting in the mosque make room for the late-comers. The Holy Prophet ﷺ asked some of the people to stand up and leave. The hypocrites, however, found this objectionable. He also asked the people to spread out and make room for their fellow-believers and he prayed Allah for such people to show His mercy them. Verse يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِذَا قِيْلَ لَكُمْ تَفَسَّحُوْا

was revealed on that occasion. [Transmitted by Abū Ḥātim]. Piecing all the elements of the narrations together, it is possible that at first the Holy Prophet ﷺ might have asked the Companions to spread out and make room for their companions. Some of them might have complied and others probably did not. So, the Holy Prophet ﷺ might have admonished them to stand up and leave as the students of seminaries are admonished to do in a similar situation. Probably, the hypocrites objected to this.

[6] Some wealthy people used to come to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and consult him in private for a long time which inconvenienced him and the poor people would not get much time to consult him. For this reason, verse إِذَا نَاجَيْتُمُ الرَّسُوْلَ was revealed. It is cited in Fatḥul Bayān from Zaid IbnAslam, without any authoritative source, that the Jews and hypocrites used to hold unnecessary private conferences with the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The Muslims were perturbed by this because they gained the impression that this type of consultation might be harmful. As a result verse نُهُوْا عَنِ النَّجْوٰى was revealed. When they did not heed, verse 12 إِذَا نَاجَيْتُمُ الرَّسُوْلَ was revealed which required them to spend something in charity before their holding a private conference. At this point the fallacious people stopped from consulting the Holy Prophet ﷺ, because their greed for wealth did not allow them to do so.

[7] When verse إِذَا نَاجَيْتُمُ الرَّسُوْلَ was revealed requiring people to give alms before private conferences with the Holy Prophet ﷺ, many people stopped even the necessary private consultation with him. So, verse [13] ءَاَشْفَقْتُمْ اَنْ تُقَدِّمُوْا was revealed. Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thanawī رحمه الله تعالیٰ says that the concluding part of verse [12] فَإِنْ لَّمْ تَجِدُوْا (...but if you find nothing [to offer], then Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful...58:12) had already given a concession to poor people from the requirement of charity before consultation with the Holy Prophet ﷺ. However some people are neither completely destitute nor are they completely wealthy, even though they might have the minimum *zakātable* wealth. Probably, people in this category might have felt it difficult to advance freewill alms, because on the one hand, their means were limited, and on the other hand, they were unsure whether they were indigent. As a result, they could neither pay the charity, nor could they deem themselves exempt from the requirement of the verse. They felt that consultation was not an act of worship or devotion; and if they abandoned it, it could not be the cause of reproach.

Therefore, they stopped consulting altogether. [All narratives are from Ad-Durr-ul-Manthūr]. These causes of revelation will help and facilitate the comprehension of this passage. [Bayān-ul-Qur'ān].

Ethics and Etiquette of Secret Consultation

Although the present verses were revealed in some particular events, as detailed above, the rules laid down by them are of general application, regardless of their cause of revelation. Thus the present verses contain instructions about secret or private consultations. They are explained below.

Secret conferences are normally convened with special confidants to whom secrets are imparted trustingly. Members of the secret society are satisfied that they will not be betrayed. It is on the basis of this confidence that evil people design plots to oppress someone, or to kill him, or to usurp his wealth and property, and so on. In verse [7], Allah mentions that His knowledge is All-encompassing - it encompasses the entire creation. He is observing or watching them, perfectly hearing their speech and seeing them - whether in public or private, wherever and in whatever condition they may be. No plots or conspiracies of any kind are hidden from Him. If they commit any sin, they will not be able to escape the Divine chastisement. Allah is present in all their secret meetings or conferences - no matter how few or many people constitute their assembly. For example, if there are three people in the assembly, Allah will be the fourth one; and if there are five people in the gathering, Allah will be the sixth one - nor numerically less or numerically more but He is with them wheresoever they may be.

Verse 7 specifies 'three' and 'five' numbers probably because Allah prefers that an assembly or congregation should comprise an odd number of members. This is the essence of verse [7].

Mischief of the Jews

It was narrated earlier that there was a peace treaty between the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the Jews. During this period, if one of the noble Companions passed by an assembly of the Jews, they would confer secretly among themselves in such a manner as to arouse suspicion and anxiety in the mind of the believer making him think that they were conspiring to injure or hurt him. Verse [8] اَلَمْ تَرَ اِلَى الَّذِيْنَ نُهُوْا عَنِ النَّجْوٰى (Did you

not see those who were forbidden to hold secret counsels,....58:8) prohibits the holding of such secret conferences. This rule applies not only to the enemies but also to the Muslims, in that they should not hold secret conference to harm or hurt another Muslim. However, the Muslims and others are allowed to hold secret conferences to promote good and righteous causes . A narration of Sayyidnā 'Abdullah Ibn 'Abbās ﵄ is recorded in Bukhārī, Muslim and other authentic collections, according to which the Messenger of Allah ﷺ has stated: إِذَا كُنتُمْ ثَلٰثَةً فَلَا يَتَنَاجَا رَجُلَانِ دُوْنَ الْاٰخَرِ حَتّٰى يَخْتَلِطُوْا بِالنَّاسِ فَاِنَّ ذٰلِكَ يَحْزُنُه (If you were three, then two of you should not hold secret conference leaving aside the third person [in another narration of Muslim : 'except with his permission'] because this bad manners would cause him anxiety and wound his feelings", [i.e. because he will feel estranged or alienated and possibly suspicions may arise that the two are plotting something against him and keeping it as a secret.] [Mazharī]

Manners of the Secret Conference

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِذَا تَنَاجَيْتُمْ فَلَا تَتَنَاجَوْا بِالْاِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ وَمَعْصِيَتِ الرَّسُوْلِ وَتَنَاجَوْا بِالْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوٰى (O those who believe, when you hold secret counsel, do not whisper for sinful act and wrongdoing and disobedience of the Messenger, and do whisper for righteousness and *taqwā* [God-fearing]... 58:9) In this and the preceding verses secret societies of the unbelievers have been condemned, but the condemnation is not unreserved or unqualified. The current verse guides the Muslims to be conscious of the fact that Allah is fully aware of their conversation and all of their conditions. Therefore, all their secret conferences must be held for good purposes. It is the object or motive of a particular conference that determines its nature. Thus in the present verse, as indicated earlier, the believers have been allowed to hold secret conferences only to promote good and righteous causes.

Return Good for Evil

It was narrated earlier that one of the evil practices of some of the Jews of Madīnah was that when they came to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, they greeted him by invoking curses upon him, thus: اَلسَّامُ عَلَيْكُمْ '*As-Sāmu 'alaykum*' [death to you!] instead of saluting him with the usual اَلسَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ '*As-Salāmu 'alaykum*' [peace be upon you]. The word '*As-Sām*' means 'death' instead of '*As-Salām*' which means 'peace'. The latter word was distorted and pronounced with a little twist of the tongue, which

sounded like the former word, but the difference between the two words was so subtle that the Companions could hardly detect the difference. One day, however, Sayyidah Ṣiddīqah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها detected that the Jews were invoking curses upon the Messenger of Allah ﷺ by saying اَلسَّامُ عَلَيْكُمْ '*As-Sāmu 'alaykum*' [death to you!], so she replied: اَلسَّامُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَعَنَكُمُ اللّٰهُ وَغَضِبَ عَلَيْكُمْ '*As-Sāmu 'alaykum wa la'anakumullah wa ghaḍiba 'alaykum*' [death to you, and the curse of Allah be on you, and His wrath!]. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ prevented her from this and said: "O 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها, Allah does not like rudeness and foul speech." Sayyidah Ṣiddīqah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها said: "O Messenger of Allah, did you not hear what they said." He said to her: "Did you not hear my answering them back by saying وَعَلَيْكُمْ '*wa 'alaykum*' [same to you]?" He further said to her 'Allah accepts our supplication against them, but not theirs against us'. This event tells us that even in response to the mischievous words of the infidels, the Muslims should always adopt a soft and noble way.

Manners for Assemblies

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْۤا اِذَا قِيْلَ لَكُمْ تَفَسَّحُوْا فِى الْمَجٰلِسِ فَافْسَحُوْا (O those who believe, when it is said to you 'Make room [for others] in the sittings', then make room, ...58:11) Allah teaches His servants good manners and enjoins upon them to be kind to each other when they are sitting together. There are two main rules of assemblies: The first rule states that people sitting in an assembly should make space for those who came late. They should sit together in such a way that there is enough room for others. If this is done, Allah promises that He will widen their scope in the Hereafter. However, it is not inconceivable that this space or room might be created for them in the life of this world as well.

The second rule states: اِذَا قِيْلَ انْشُزُوْا فَانْشُزُوْا ('When it is said to you, 'Rise up', then rise up...58:11) This means when people sitting in an assembly are told to stand up and leave, they should stand up and leave. This verse uses the passive voice [it is said] but it is not mentioned who says it or who should say it. Authentic traditions make it plain that the late comer himself cannot move somebody out of his place and use it for himself, nor force his way into a gathering. Thus it is recorded in the Ṣaḥīḥain and in the Musnad of Aḥmad on the authority of 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar رضي الله عنهما that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: لَايُقِيْمُ الرَّجُلُ الرَّجُلَ مِنْ مَّجْلِسِهٖ فَيَجْلِسَ فِيْهِ وَلٰكِنْ تَفَسَّحُوْا وَتَوَسَّعُوْا "One of you should not move some other person up from his place

and sit in it, but instead, spread out and make space for the comer." This explicitly shows that it is not possible for the late-comer to tell anyone to move out of his place and take his place. Therefore, it would appear that the rule would apply to the master of ceremony or the organisers of the assembly or the host. Hence, the meaning of the verse is: When the host or his representative requests a member of the audience to stand up and leave for a legitimate reason, they should comply and avoid clash with the host. There are several reasons why this might become necessary. [1] Occasionally, the host himself might need privacy for his own reason. [2] He might need privacy to share confidential information with special guests. [3] The capacity of the room cannot accommodate the late comers, and no alternative arrangement can be made. So, the host is allowed to courteously request some of the familiar guests to leave the room to make space for the late-comers, provided it is certain that the leaving guests will not suffer any loss. They will be able to benefit in another session. However, the host or his representative must ensure that the guests do not feel belittled or hurt in the process.

It was alluded earlier that this verse was revealed when the Holy Prophet ﷺ was sitting in the *ṣuffah* of the mosque. The congregation had filled up the *ṣuffah.* Some of the participants of the battle of Badr arrived late and they could not find place to sit, and remained standing. As a mark of respect for them, the Holy Prophet ﷺ gave a general order to the entire congregation to spread out and make room for their fellow-believers, and prayed to Allah to make room for such people. Some of them might have complied and there was no problem with them; and probably others did not comply. So, the Holy Prophet ﷺ might have admonished them to rise up and leave.

At any rate, this verse and Traditions related to the verse yield several rules:

[1] The members of a conference must spread out and make space for the late comers. [2] The late comers should not remove other members of the conference and make room for themselves. [3] At times of need, the host or the master of ceremony may courteously request some of the members of the audience to leave. Late comers may not force their way into a congested congregation, but take their position in a corner or a side as recorded in Bukhārī: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was once sitting in the

mosque and the people with him, when three persons arrived, one of them could not find space in the congregation but found some space on one side or in a corner and sat there. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ lauded him or praised him highly.

Ruling

Another etiquette of an assembly is that if two persons are sitting closely, a new comer should not intrude between them. In a *ḥadīth,* the Holy Prophet ﷺ has explained this etiquette in the following words: لَايَحِلُّ لِرَجُلٍ اَنْ يُّفَرِّقَ بَيْنَ اثْنَيْنِ اِلَّا بِاِذْنِهِمَا "It is not permissible for any man to break up the meeting of two persons, who are sitting together, unless they themselves permit him." [Ibn Kathīr cited this Tradition and said that Abū Dāwūd and Tirmidhī transmitted it on the authority of Usamah Ibn Laithiy ؓ].

The reasoning behind the ruling is that sometimes two persons sit together for some specific purpose, and breaking them up might defeat that purpose.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِذَا نَاجَيْتُمُ الرَّسُوْلَ (O those who believe, when you consult the Messenger of Allah, ...58:12) The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was preoccupied day and night with educating the people and improving their quality of life. In his general assemblies, all the members of the audience benefited from his teachings. However, there were people who wanted private meetings with the Holy Prophet ﷺ and he would grant them that. Obviously, it was not possible to grant everyone's request as it required time and effort, and that was difficult. The hypocrites made matters worse when they asked for private audiences with the Holy Prophet ﷺ in order to hurt the sincere Muslims. Besides, the hypocrites held protracted conferences with him. Some of the illiterate Muslims also held private audiences with him for a longer time than normal or necessary. This made things difficult for him. Allah provided a way to stop their irksome behaviour by this verse which lightened the burden of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Initially, the verse provided that anyone who wishes to hold a private conference with him must advance a freewill charity, the amount or measure of which is not specified in the Qur'ān. However, when this verse was revealed Sayyidnā 'Alī ؓ was the first Companion to act upon it: He offered one Dinar in charity and requested a private audience with the Prophet ﷺ.

Only Sayyidnā ‘Alī ؓ Acted upon the verse

It is a remarkable co-incidence that most of the blessed Companions, because of financial constraints, were unable to act upon this verse. Its provision was repealed. Sayyidnā ‘Alī ؓ used to say that there is a verse in the Qur'ān that none before me and none after me has ever acted upon it. The meaning of the phrase 'none before me' is obvious. The phrase 'none after me' means 'none after me will practise it' because the verse is abrogated. Although the ordinance is repealed, it achieved its basic purpose. The Muslims, because of the dictates of their sincere love, avoided their protracted audiences with the Prophet ﷺ so that he is not inconvenienced in any way. The hypocrites avoided protracted audiences with him because they feared that they would be recognized for what they are and their hypocrisy would be exposed. Allah knows best!

Verses 14 - 22

اَلَمْ تَرَ اِلَى الَّذِيْنَ تَوَلَّوْا قَوْمًا غَضِبَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمْ ؕ مَاهُمْ مِّنْكُمْ
وَلَامِنْهُمْ ۙ وَيَحْلِفُوْنَ عَلَى الْكَذِبِ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿١٤﴾ اَعَدَّ اللّٰهُ
لَهُمْ عَذَابًا شَدِيْدًا ؕ اِنَّهُمْ سَآءَ مَاكَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١٥﴾ اِتَّخَذُوْٓا
اَيْمَانَهُمْ جُنَّةً فَصَدُّوْا عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ فَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّهِيْنٌ ﴿١٦﴾ لَنْ
تُغْنِيَ عَنْهُمْ اَمْوَالُهُمْ وَلَآ اَوْلَادُهُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ شَيْئًا ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ اَصْحٰبُ
النَّارِ ؕ هُمْ فِيْهَا خٰلِدُوْنَ ﴿١٧﴾ يَوْمَ يَبْعَثُهُمُ اللّٰهُ جَمِيْعًا فَيَحْلِفُوْنَ لَهٗ
كَمَا يَحْلِفُوْنَ لَكُمْ وَيَحْسَبُوْنَ اَنَّهُمْ عَلٰى شَيْءٍ ؕ اَلَآ اِنَّهُمْ هُمُ
الْكٰذِبُوْنَ ﴿١٨﴾ اِسْتَحْوَذَ عَلَيْهِمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ فَاَنْسٰهُمْ ذِكْرَاللّٰهِ ؕ
اُولٰٓئِكَ حِزْبُ الشَّيْطٰنِ ؕ اَلَآ اِنَّ حِزْبَ الشَّيْطٰنِ هُمُ الْخٰسِرُوْنَ
﴿١٩﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يُحَآدُّوْنَ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗٓ اُولٰٓئِكَ فِي الْاَذَلِّيْنَ ﴿٢٠﴾
كَتَبَ اللّٰهُ لَاَغْلِبَنَّ اَنَا وَرُسُلِيْ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ قَوِيٌّ عَزِيْزٌ ﴿٢١﴾ لَاتَجِدُ
قَوْمًا يُّؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ يُوَآدُّوْنَ مَنْ حَآدَّ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ

وَلَوْ كَانُوٓا اٰبَآءَهُمْ اَوْ اَبْنَآءَهُمْ اَوْ اِخْوَانَهُمْ اَوْ عَشِيْرَتَهُمْ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ
كَتَبَ فِىْ قُلُوْبِهِمُ الْاِيْمَانَ وَاَيَّدَهُمْ بِرُوْحٍ مِّنْهُ ؕ وَيُدْخِلُهُمْ جَنّٰتٍ
تَجْرِىْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا ؕ رَضِىَ اللّٰهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوْا عَنْهُ ؕ
اُولٰٓئِكَ حِزْبُ اللّٰهِ ؕ اَلَآ اِنَّ حِزْبَ اللّٰهِ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿٢٢﴾

Have you not seen who have friendship with a people with whom Allah is angry. They are neither of you nor of them. And they swear false oaths while they know. [14] **Allah has prepared a severe punishment for them. Indeed, evil is what they used to do.** [15] **They have taken their oaths as a shield, then have prevented (people) from the way of Allah. Therefore, for them there is a humiliating punishment.** [16] **Their riches and their children will never benefit them against Allah. They are the people of the Fire. They will live there for ever** [17] **(It will be) on the Day when Allah will raise all of them, and they will swear before Him as they swear before you, and will think that they have some standing. Beware that they are sheer liars.** [18] **The *shaiṭān* (Satan) has prevailed upon them, so he has made them forget the remembrance of Allah. They are the party of *shaiṭān*. Be sure that it is (the members of the) party of *Shaiṭān* that are the losers.** [19] **Indeed, those who oppose Allah and His Messengers, they are among the lowest.** [20] **Allah has written (in His pre-destined decree), "I will certainly prevail, both I and My messengers." Surely Allah is All-Strong, All-Mighty.** [21] **You will not find those who believe in Allah and in the Hereafter having friendship with those who oppose Allah and His Messenger, even though they were their fathers or their sons or their brothers or their clan. They are such that Allah has inscribed faith on their hearts, and has helped them with a spirit from Him. And He will admit them to gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein they will live forever. Allah is pleased with them, and they are pleased with Allah. Those are the party of Allah. Be sure that it is (the members of) the party of Allah that are the successful.** [22]

Commentary

Chastising the Hypocrites for their Secret Alliance with the Jews

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ تَوَلَّوْا قَوْمًا غَضِبَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ (Have you not seen those who have friendship with a people with whom Allah is angry? ....58:14) Allah condemns the hypocrites who secretly formed an alliance with the Jews who challenge Allah and His Apostle, while in effect they belong neither to the Muslims nor to the Jews. Consequently, Allah has prepared for them a humiliating and condign chastisement. It is not permissible to have a friendly intimacy with the enemies of Allah and His Messenger - whether the unbelievers are Jews, or Christians, or pagans or of any other creed. Even rationally this is not possible, because the capital asset of a believer is the love of Allah, while a non-believer relishes in opposing and challenging Him. It is not possible for a person to have sincere love and affection for someone and to love and have intimacy with the latter's enemy. Here 'love', 'affection' or 'intimacy' refers to the one coming from the heart involving intense emotional commitment (which necessarily includes having love with his way of life. Ed.). This is called *Muwālāh* or 'intimate friendship'. This type of friendship is limited to sincere Muslims. Therefore, the Qur'ānic verses on many occasions strictly prohibit Muslims from having this sort of relationship with non-Muslims. Any Muslim who has such intimate friendship with non-Muslims will be seen to fall in the circle of unbelievers.

In contra-distinction to *Muwālāh* [intimate friendship], there is a concept of *Muwāsāh* which refers to the relationship based on sympathy, kindness and concern. It includes charitable assistance and support, business, commercial, trade dealings and economic co-operation, condolence and consolation and any well-meaning attitude of well-being and welfare. Barring unbelievers who are at war with the believers, this kind of relationship is permissible with all other non-Muslims. The paradigm of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the noble Companions in this direction is ample testimony to this practice. However, it is necessary to ensure that the relationship of *Muwāsāh* is not harmful to the cause of religion; it should not create laxity in 'faith and practice' of Islam nor should it 'harm, hurt or injure' other Muslims. Please see Ma'āriful Qur'ān, Vol. 2/ pp 54-61: under Surah Al-'Imran: v.28-30 for a detailed account of the distinction between *Muwālāt* [intimate friendship], *Muwāsāt*

[sympathy] and *Mu'āmalāt* [dealings] or *Mudārah* [cordiality].

وَيَحْلِفُوْنَ عَلَى الْكَذِبِ (and they swear false oaths ...58:14). It means they swear oaths profanely. According to some reports, this verse was revealed in connection with 'Abdullah Ibn 'Ubayy and 'Abdullah Ibn Nabtal: One day the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was sitting with his noble Companions and said to them: "Soon a person will come to you whose heart will be the heart of a tyrant and who sees through the Satan's eyes." Soon afterwards 'Abdullah Ibn Nabtal, the hypocrite, entered. He was blue-eyed, wheat-coloured, short-statured and skimpy-bearded. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ asked him: "Why do you and your comrades use obscene words against me?" He swore that he did not do that. Then he called his comrades and they too took this false oath. Allah told the Holy Prophet ﷺ about their lie and profane oath. [Qurṭubī]

Believers cannot entertain intimacy with non-Believers

لَاتَجِدُ قَوْمًا يُّؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ يُوَآدُّوْنَ مَنْ حَآدَّ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ وَلَوْكَانُوْٓا اٰبَآءَهُمْ (You shall not find those who believe in Allah and in the Hereafter having friendship with those who oppose Allah and His Messenger, even though they were their fathers....58:22). The preceding verses showed that those [hypocrites] who are in intimate friendship with unbelievers and pagans shall incur Allah's wrath, indignation and severe torment. This verse describes the condition of sincere believers who would not take an enemy of Faith, the opponents of Allah, for intimacy and friendship, even though such people are their own fathers, children, brothers or any other blood relatives. The bond of belief transcends all other bonds, even the close ties of blood. This description fits all noble Companions. Commentators on this occasion have cited a number of incidents of the blessed Companions which describe how, when they heard their fathers, sons and brothers or other blood relations utter blasphemy against Islam or the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, they left all ties aside and punished them or even killed them.

'Abdullah, the son of 'Abdullah Ibn 'Ubayy, the leader of the hypocrites in Madīnah, heard his father make some blasphemous remarks against the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The son came up to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and sought his permission to kill his father. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ stopped him. Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ؓ heard his father, Abū Quḥāfah, uttering some insulting words against the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The

most compassionate Ṣiddīq ﷺ became indignant and unexpectedly gave him such a hard slap that he fell down. When the Messenger of Allah ﷺ heard about it, he advised Abū Bakr Ṣiddīq ﷺ not do it again. In the battle of Uḥud, Sayyidnā Abū 'Ubaidah's father, Jarrah, was fighting on the side of the unbelievers against the Muslims. In the battlefield, while the battle was on, he purposely came time and again face to face with Sayyidnā Abu 'Ubaidah ﷺ and pursued him. Every time his father came in front of him, Sayyidnā Abū 'Ubaidah ﷺ would, as a mark of respect, move out. But when he persisted, Sayyidnā Abū 'Ubaidah ﷺ had no choice but to kill him. The biography of the blessed Companions is replete with similar incidents. The present set of verses was revealed to laud them. [Qurṭubī]

Ruling

Many jurists have ruled that this rule applies equally to all Muslims who transgress or violate the sacred laws of Sharī'ah or in their practical life turn away from them, in that the sincere Muslims should not maintain an intimate friendship or relationship with such transgressors. As explained earlier, *Muwālāh* [intimate friendship] with a *fāsiq* [transgressors] is not possible because intimacy with them is possible if and only if the germs of *fisq* [transgression] are lurking in the people befriending them. *Muwāsāh* [sympathy] and *Mu'āmalāt* [dealings] or *Mudārāh* [cordiality] are, however, a different matter to the degree of necessity. This is the reason why the Messenger of Allah ﷺ used to pray: اَللّٰهُمَّ لَاتَجْعَلْ لِفَاجِرٍ عَلَیَّ یَدًا "O Allah, do not give any transgressor the upper hand over me." The Messenger of Allah ﷺ prayed thus because if anyone has the upper hand in a situation, he is most likely to get his own way. He will, for instance, show kindness to people and thus gain the upper hand; and the noble persons, on account of the kindness, will feel obliged or duty-bound to return his kindness with love. Thus the Messenger of Allah ﷺ sought refuge with Allah from this situation. [Qurṭubī]

وَاَیَّدَهُمْ بِرُوْحٍ مِّنْهُ (...and has helped them with a Spirit from Him....58:22) The word *rūḥ,* according to some authorities on Tafsīr, stands for 'light', which radiates or emanates from Allah and enters the heart of a believer which urges him to perform righteous deeds, and is the source of peace and contentment of the heart. This tranquility and satisfaction is the source of great strength and power. Other authorities say that this word

stands for the Holy Qur'ān and the arguments of the Holy Qur'ān. This is the real strength and power of a believer. [Qurṭubī]. Allah, the Pure and Exalted, knows best!

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Mujādalah
Ends here.

Sūrah Al-Ḥashr
(The Mustering)

This Sūrah is Madanī, and it has 24 verses and 3 sections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 5

سَبَّحَ لِلّٰهِ مَا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِى الْاَرْضِ ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ ﴿۱﴾ هُوَ الَّذِىْٓ اَخْرَجَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْ اَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ لِاَوَّلِ الْحَشْرِ ؕ مَا ظَنَنْتُمْ اَنْ يَّخْرُجُوْا وَظَنُّوْٓا اَنَّهُمْ مَّانِعَتُهُمْ حُصُوْنُهُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ فَاَتٰىهُمُ اللّٰهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَمْ يَحْتَسِبُوْا وَقَذَفَ فِىْ قُلُوْبِهِمُ الرُّعْبَ يُخْرِبُوْنَ بُيُوْتَهُمْ بِاَيْدِيْهِمْ وَاَيْدِى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ۙ فَاعْتَبِرُوْا يٰٓاُولِى الْاَبْصَارِ ﴿۲﴾ وَلَوْلَآ اَنْ كَتَبَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْجَلَآءَ لَعَذَّبَهُمْ فِى الدُّنْيَا ؕ وَلَهُمْ فِى الْاٰخِرَةِ عَذَابُ النَّارِ ﴿۳﴾ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمْ شَآقُّوا اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ ۚ وَمَنْ يُّشَآقِّ اللّٰهَ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ شَدِيْدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿۴﴾ مَا قَطَعْتُمْ مِّنْ لِّيْنَةٍ اَوْ تَرَكْتُمُوْهَا قَآئِمَةً عَلٰٓى اُصُوْلِهَا فَبِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ وَلِيُخْزِىَ الْفٰسِقِيْنَ ﴿۵﴾

Allah's purity has been proclaimed by all that is in the heavens and all that is on the earth. And He is the All-Mighty, the All-Wise. [1] **He is the One who expelled**

the disbelievers of the People of the Book from their homes at the time of the first gathering.[1] You did not expect that they would leave, and they deemed that their fortresses would protect them from Allah. But Allah came to them from where they did not expect, and cast fear in their hearts when they were spoiling their homes with their own hands and with the hands of the believers. So, learn a lesson, O those who have eyes. [2] **And if Allah had not destined exile for them, He would have punished them in the world. And for them in the Hereafter is the torment of the Fire.** [3] **That is because they were hostile to Allah and His Messenger. And whoever has hostility with Allah, then Allah is severe in punishment.** [4] **Whatever palm-trees you have cut down, or have left them standing on their roots, it was with Allah's permission, and so that He might disgrace the transgressors.** [5]

Commentary

Sequencing of Sūrahs

The preceding Sūrah had condemned the close friendship developed by the hypocrites with the Jews. The present Sūrah describes the punishment faced by the Jews in this world in the form of exile and in the Hereafter in the form of grievous torment.

Cause of Revelation

The story of their banishment from Madīnah is that when the Messeger of Allah ﷺ migrated to Madīnah, he concluded a peace treaty with the Jews. Banū Naḍīr, one of the Jew tribes living around Madīnah, were one of the three signatories. The latter tribe lived about two miles

(1) The original word used in the text is '*ḥashr*' which means 'gathering' or 'mustering' and after which this Sūrah is named. In the present context, it may be interpreted in two different ways. One, that it refers to the gathering of the Muslims who ordered the Jews to leave Madīnah due to their constant conspiracies and breaches of the treaty they had with the Muslims. According to this interpretation, the verse means that the Jews of Bani Naḍīr were made to leave the city at the first gathering of the Muslims without fighting and without any further attempt to attack them. The second interpretation is that it refers to the gathering of the Jews for the purpose of emigration. In this case the verse indicates that it was their first exile before which they did not face such a situation. It has another subtle indication to the fact that this was their first exile which will be followed by another one, i.e. the exile faced by the Jews in the days of Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ. (Muhammad Taqi Usmani)

away from Madīnah. Once it happened that 'Amr Ibn 'Umayyah Ḍamurī killed two persons by mistake. According to Law, the Muslims jointly had to settle the blood-wit. The Holy Prophet ﷺ first collected money from the Muslims for this purpose. Then he decided to collect money from the Jews as well in terms of the treaty he already had with them. The Holy Prophet ﷺ visited the tribe of Banū Naḍīr for this purpose. Before his arrival, they conspired to put an end to his life. When he reached there, they made him sit against a wall and said to him that they were going to gather the blood money. In the meanwhile, they secretly plotted that someone should climb the particular wall in the shade of which the Holy Prophet ﷺ was sitting and drop a rock on him and kill him. But before the Jews could execute their sinister plan, Allah revealed to him in time about their plot and conspiracy. The Holy Prophet ﷺ instantly left the place, returned to Madīnah and sent a message to Banū Naḍīr that they have betrayed the treaty. Therefore, they are given ten days in which to leave the town and go into exile, and were warned that if they would not meet the deadline, they might be killed at sight. They decided to leave, but 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Ubayy prevented them. He said that they did not have to leave because he had an army of two thousand men who were willing to lay down their lives to protect the Jewish lives. It is stated in Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī on the authority of Ibn Isḥāq that along with 'Abdullāh were Wadī'ah Ibn Mālik, Suwaid and Rā'ish. The Jews fell into the trap of the three and sent a message to the Holy Prophet ﷺ that they would not leave. As a result, he together with the noble Companions marched on that tribe. The Jews locked themselves up in the fortresses, but the hypocrites, being essentially cowards, hid themselves. The Holy Prophet ﷺ laid a siege to the Jewish fortresses. Some of their date palms were felled and others were burnt down. Eventually, they agreed to go into exile. So, the Holy Prophet ﷺ forced them to evacuate and abandon their fortresses and, in kindness, allowed to take with them enough provisions, whatever their cavalry and camelry could carry except arms and weapons, which, they were told, would be confiscated. Some of them went to Syria, while others went to Khaibar. On account of their greed, they carried with them even beams, rafters, woods and the doors of their houses. This incident took place after the battle of Badr in Rabī'-ul-Awwal 4 AH. Sayyidnā 'Umar رضي الله عنه, during his caliphate, sent them away to Syria to live with the rest of the Jews. The two banishments go under

the names of the 'first banishment' and the 'second banishment'. [Zād-ul-Ma'ād].

The Characteristics of Sūrah Al-Ḥashr and the History of Banū Naḍīr

The entire Sūrah Al-Ḥashr was revealed in connection with Banū Naḍīr [Ibn Isḥāq]. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ used to call this Surah, Sūrah Banī Naḍīr. [Ibn Kathīr]. Banū Naḍīr were the descendents of the Holy Prophet Hārūn ﷺ. Their forefathers were scholars of Torah, which contained a full description of the Last Prophet ﷺ such as his physical features, his signs of Prophet-hood and his migration to Yathrīb (Madīnah). This tribe was under the impression that the Last Prophet would be one of the descendents of Holy Prophet Hārūn ﷺ and they would have the pleasure of being in his company. For this reason, they migrated from Syria and settled in Yathrīb. Some of the contemporaries of the Holy Prophet ﷺ were also scholars of the Torah, who saw his physical features and other signs of Prophet-hood and recognized him as the Final Messenger but, as they thought that he would be one of the descendents of Hārūn ﷺ, they were disappointed when he was raised among the descendents of Ismā'īl ﷺ. They were jealous and, on account of their jealousy, they were inhibited from embracing the Faith. But in their heart of hearts they knew that Sayyidnā Muḥammad ﷺ was the Final Messenger of Allah. When, in the battle of Badr, they saw the amazing victory of the Muslims and the humiliating defeat of the pagan Quraish, their degree of certainty was somewhat augmented. They even expressed their amazement. But distinguishing between truth and falsehood on the basis, measurement, or standard of the apparent victory and defeat is a weak yardstick. As a result, when in the battle of Uḥud, Muslims initially suffered a temporary setback and some of the Companions were martyred, their certainty was shaken. After that they started conspiring with the pagan Arabs.

When the Messenger of Allah ﷺ migrated to Madīnah, as stated earlier, he with his political sagacity felt his first task was to enter into a peace treaty with the Jews of Madīnah and other neighbouring Jewish tribes, stipulating that he would not fight them and they would not fight him, nor would they aid and abet those who take up arms against the Muslims, and if the Jews were attacked, the Muslims would assist them.

There were many other clauses in the peace accord, the details of which are available in 'Sīrah of Ibn Hishām'. All the Jewish tribes, including Banū Naḍīr, had their area, strong fortresses and orchards at a distance of 3.2 kilometers from Madīnah.

Up to the point of the battle of 'Uḥud, they apparently kept to the terms of the treaty. But after that battle, they betrayed the treaty and started conspiring secretly, in that a leader of Banū Naḍīr, Ka'b Ibn Ashraf, went to Makkah with a caravan of forty Jewish members to curry favour with the pagan Quraish who were anxious to avenge the defeat of the battle of Badr, and had gone to the battle of 'Uhud for that reason but were eventually defeated in the latter battle as well. The defeated men returned and the Jews met them. They conspired and agreed to wage a war against the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and the Muslims. Ka'b Ibn Ashraf with his forty Jewish members and Abū Sufyān with his forty members of pagan Quraish entered the Sacred Mosque and, holding on the curtain of the House of Allah, pledged that they would jointly fight the Muslims and annihilate them.

When, after this pledge, Ka'b Ibn Ashraf returned to Madīnah, Jibra'īl ؑ descended and informed the Messenger of Allah ﷺ about the entire episode and the details of the pledge. In the meantime, the Holy Prophet ﷺ issued the command to kill Ka'b Ibn Ashraf. A noble Companion Muḥammad Ibn Maslamah killed him.

Subsequently, Banū Naḍīr hatched many different plots to harm the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, one of which was, as reported earlier, their plot to kill him. The Holy Prophet ﷺ, after collecting blood money from the Muslims in a particular case of murder, decided to collect money from the Jews in terms of the treaty that was concluded between himself ﷺ, the tribes of Banū Naḍīr, Banū Qainuqā' and Banū Quraiẓah. Before his arrival, they planned to kill him, as detailed above. The person who was entrusted with the task of throwing a rock on the head of the Holy Prophet ﷺ was a Jew 'Umar Ibn Jaḥḥāsh by name who had volunteered himself for the task. Had it not been for the revelatory information the Holy Prophet ﷺ received from Allah, their plot would have worked. But Allah protected His Messenger ﷺ and the conspiracy was thus thwarted and their plan failed.

A Lesson

It is a remarkable co-incidence that subsequently the entire Banū Naḍīr clan was expelled from Madīnah except for two persons who embraced the Islamic Faith and were spared: One of them was 'Umar Ibn Jaḥḥāsh and the other was his paternal uncle Yamin Ibn 'Amr Ibn Ka'b. [Ibn Kathīr].

The Story of 'Amr Ibn Umayyah Ḍamurī

Under the rubric of 'cause of revelation' above, reference was made to the incident that 'Amr Ibn Umayyah Ḍamurī accidentally killed two men. The Muslims as well as the Jews had to jointly settle the blood-wit in terms of the treaty existing between them. The Holy Prophet ﷺ collected money from the Muslims for this purpose. Then he decided to collect money from the Jews. The Holy Prophet ﷺ visited the tribe of Banū Naḍīr in their area for this purpose. Ibn Kathīr writes that the enemy plans to harm the Muslims are many and long-drawn-out. One famous incident in Islamic history is that of Bi'r Ma'ūnah: Some of the hypocrites and the non-believers requested the Messenger of Allah ﷺ to send a band of the noble Companions to preach the religion of Islam. He dispatched about seventy Companions for the purpose. Later on it was discovered that this was a mere conspiracy. The plan was to surround them and kill them, in which they succeeded. Of the seventy Muslims, only 'Amr Ibn Umayyah Ḍamurī managed to escape. He had seen and experienced the dishonesty and treachery of the non-believers, and how they mercilessly massacred sixty-nine of his brethren. In the circumstances, one can imagine how his emotions would have been against the enemies. Co-incidentally, when he was returning to Madīnah he encountered two non-believers and killed them. Later on it was discovered that the two men killed were members of Banī 'Āmir, a tribe which was an ally of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Banū Naḍīr was also an ally of Banī 'Āmir tribe.

The agreements of Muslim politicians were not like the political agreements of today in which every effort is made at the vey beginning to find out ways to escape or violate it. In the case of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the early sincere Muslims, whatever the tongue uttered or the pen wrote was treated as part of religion and Divine law and binding. When the Messenger of Allah ﷺ learnt about 'Amr Ibn 'Umayyah Ḍamruī's error of judgement, he decided to pay the blood-wit, in terms of the sacred

law of Sharīʻah, for the two men killed. In this matter, he first collected money from the Muslims and then he had to go to Banū Naḍīr for collection. [Ibn Kathīr]

Tolerance and Human Rights in Islam: A Model for Present-day Politicians

There are many lessons in the incidents cited above for the heralds of human rights, and for the political leaders and the big powers who talk highly about them and are deemed as 'Champions of Human Rights'. Let us look at the case of Banū Naḍīr: They unceasingly were involved in conspiracies, endlessly behaved treacherously and continuously plotted to kill the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. Would the present-day political leaders or heads of governments tolerate all this? How would they treat them? Nowadays, the opponents are killed even by sprinkling petrol on them or in some other execution style. There is no need for political leadership or government for that purpose. A few wicked hooligans gather together and carry out the executions. The official wrath and anger manifest itself much more grievously .

But here we are describing the government of Allah and His Messenger ﷺ: Even when the enemy conspiracies and treacheries reached the peak, no massacre was contemplated. No thought of usurping their property and wealth was ever considered. In fact, the following humane punitive measures were taken:

[1] They were allowed to take all their wealth with them, and were ordered only to evacuate the town.

[2] To do this, they were given ten days, so that they might be able to take their things comfortably and transfer themselves to some other place. When they did not comply, it became necessary to take a sterner measure at national level.

[3] Some trees were though cut down and others were burned down, but even at that stage, no edict was issued to burn down their fortresses or attack them and kill them on a large scale.

[4] When they expressed that it was in their best interests to go into exile, they were given the choice that each man could take with him as much provisions as his camel could carry. As a result, they carried their

hooks, latches, doors, planks, beams and rafters.

[5] No Muslim ever frowned upon any of the persons transferring his stuff. They took their things and moved out peacefully and safely.

The Holy Prophet ﷺ showed this kindness to them when they were completely subdued and he was in complete command of the situation. He had the power to fully avenge their treachery, dishonesty and conspiracy. But he did not do it. This behavior of the Holy Prophet ﷺ corresponds to his behavior with the pagans of Makkah when he entered the city after the triumph.

Let us now explain some expressions of these verses in the background of these events.

لِأَوَّلِ الْحَشْرِ (...at the time of the first gathering...59:2). The word *ḥashr* means 'to rise'. One reason for referring to it as the 'first mustering' is given by Maulānā Thanawi in his Tafsīr. They were settled at one place since ancient times. This event of banishment took place for the first time in their life. The second reason could be that all the non-Muslims of the Arabian peninsula would have to be evacuated in future, so that the peninsula might become a strong fortress of Islam. As a result, a second banishment was to take place at some later time. This happened during the caliphate of 'Umar رضي الله عنه, the Holy Prophet's ﷺ Second Successor. He banished all the Jews who had settled in Khaibar. He ordered all the Jews to leave the Arabian peninsula. From this point of view, Banū Naḍīr's banishment is the 'first banishment' and the 'second banishment' took place in the time of Sayyidnā 'Umar رضي الله عنه.

فَاتٰىهُمُ اللّٰهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَمْ يَحْتَسِبُوْا (...But Allah came to them from where they did not expect...59:2). The phrase 'Allah came' means 'the command of Allah and His obedient angels came'.

يُخْرِبُوْنَ بُيُوْتَهُمْ بِاَيْدِيْهِمْ وَاَيْدِى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ (...they were spoiling their homes with their own hands and with the hands of the believers....59:2) Banū Naḍīr had spoiled their houses by removing their doors and shutters. 'Spoiling their homes with the hands of the believers' means that when the Jews locked themselves up in their fortresses, the Muslims destroyed the trees and homes outside the fortresses to make them surrender.

مَا قَطَعْتُمْ مِّنْ لِّيْنَةٍ اَوْتَرَكْتُمُوْهَا قَآئِمَةً عَلٰى اُصُوْلِهَا فَبِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ وَلِيُخْزِىَ الْفٰسِقِيْنَ (Whatever

palm-trees you have cut down, or have left them standing on their roots, it was with Allah's permission, and so that He might disgrace the transgressors....59:5). The word *līnah* refers to a 'palm-tree'. Another opinion states that besides *'ajwah*, all other palm trees are referred to as *līnah*. Banū Naḍīr's orchards were comprised of palm trees. The reference in the verse is to the cutting, by the orders of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, of the palm trees of Banū Naḍīr who had shut themselves in their fortresses in defiance of the Holy Prophet's orders to surrender. So, some of the blessed Companions, in order to anger them or cast terror into their hearts, cut and burned down some of their date trees. Other Companions felt that the palm-trees should not be destroyed because soon, God willing, the Muslims will be victorious and the orchards will fall to their lot as booty. Thus they did not participate in the destruction of the trees. This was a difference of opinion. Later on when this disagreement was discussed, the Companions who participated in the destruction of the trees or orchards felt guilty. They asked the Messenger of Allah ﷺ whether they were really guilty of a sin, in that they destroyed the property that was going to fall to the lot of the Muslims. Verse [5] was revealed on that occasion to assuage the guilt-feeling of the Muslims that whatever they have done, whether they cut the trees or left them uncut, was by Allah's leave and it was done to degrade the ungodly Jews.

Commandment of the Holy Prophet ﷺ is in fact the Commandment of Allah: A Warning for those who Refute the authority of the Aḥādīth

In verse [5], the cutting down of the trees or leaving them uncut is called *bi-idhni-llah* [with Allah's permission] whereas neither of the actions was the explicit command of Allah. Apparently, whatever each group did was on the basis of independent reasoning [*Ijtihād*]. At most, it is possible that they might have sought the permission of the Holy Prophet ﷺ which is a Ḥadīth. The 'Prophet's permission' is referred to as 'Allah's permission' in the Qur'ān. Thus the Qur'ān makes plain that Allah has given His Messenger the right to legislate laws. The forthcoming verse [7] of this Surah puts it that believers need to hold fast to what the Messenger bids them and abstain from what he forbids them. This shows conclusively that the Sunnah is an independent source of the Islamic Law .

Disagreement in *ijtihād* is not a sin

Another important principle derived from this verse is that if those who are competent to undertake *ijtihād* disagree with another on a particular issue, so as one of them holds something as permissible, while the other takes it as impermissible, neither of them would be counted as sinners, nor will the principle of *nahy 'anil-munkar* (forbidding evil) be applied to this situation, because none of the two rulings is an 'evil' in the sight of Allah. Under the concluding phrase of verse [5] وَلِيُخْزِيَ الْفٰسِقِيْنَ (...and that he might disgrace the transgressors) it was explained that the act of cutting or burning down the trees cannot be construed as disorderliness. But it was done to degrade the unbelievers, and therefore it carries reward in the Hereafter.

Ruling

Is it legitimate to demolish or burn down the homes of the infidels, or cut or burn down their trees, or destroy their fields and farms? The leading authorities on Islamic Jurisprudence are not unanimous on this question. Imām A'zam Abū Ḥanīfah رحمه الله تعالىٰ rules that all of these actions are permitted. Shaikh Ibn Humam رحمه الله تعالىٰ, however, qualifies the ruling and restricts it. He rules that all of the above are permitted if and only if the enemies cannot be vanquished or overpowered without resorting to the above measures, or if the victory of Muslims is not probable or likely. The whole purpose of this ruling is to break the might and power of the enemy. In the case where Muslims do not win the struggle, destruction of their moveable and immovable properties may be included in weakening their might and main. [Mazharī]

Verse 6 - 10

وَمَآ اَفَآءَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى رَسُوْلِهٖ مِنْهُمْ فَمَآ اَوْجَفْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ خَيْلٍ وَّ لَا
رِكَابٍ وَّلٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُسَلِّطُ رُسُلَهٗ عَلٰى مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ
شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿٦﴾ مَآ اَفَآءَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى رَسُوْلِهٖ مِنْ اَهْلِ الْقُرٰى فَلِلّٰهِ وَ
لِلرَّسُوْلِ وَلِذِى الْقُرْبٰى وَالْيَتٰمٰى وَالْمَسٰكِيْنِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيْلِ ۙ كَيْ
لَايَكُوْنَ دُوْلَةًۢ بَيْنَ الْاَغْنِيَآءِ مِنْكُمْ ۭ وَمَآ اٰتٰىكُمُ الرَّسُوْلُ فَخُذُوْهُ ۚ

وَمَا نَهٰىكُمْ عَنْهُ فَانْتَهُوْا ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ ۗ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ شَدِيْدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿٧﴾ لِلْفُقَرَآءِ الْمُهٰجِرِيْنَ الَّذِيْنَ اُخْرِجُوْا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ وَاَمْوَالِهِمْ يَبْتَغُوْنَ فَضْلًا مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَرِضْوَانًا وَّيَنْصُرُوْنَ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ ۗ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الصّٰدِقُوْنَ ﴿٨﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ تَبَوَّءُو الدَّارَ وَالْاِيْمَانَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ يُحِبُّوْنَ مَنْ هَاجَرَ اِلَيْهِمْ وَلَا يَجِدُوْنَ فِيْ صُدُوْرِهِمْ حَاجَةً مِّمَّآ اُوْتُوْا وَيُؤْثِرُوْنَ عَلٰٓى اَنْفُسِهِمْ وَلَوْ كَانَ بِهِمْ خَصَاصَةٌ ۗ وَمَنْ يُّوْقَ شُحَّ نَفْسِهٖ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿٩﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ جَآءُوْ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهِمْ يَقُوْلُوْنَ رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْلَنَا وَلِاِخْوَانِنَا الَّذِيْنَ سَبَقُوْنَا بِالْاِيْمَانِ وَلَا تَجْعَلْ فِيْ قُلُوْبِنَا غِلًّا لِّلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا رَبَّنَآ اِنَّكَ رَءُوْفٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿١٠﴾

And whatever *fai'* [1] (left over property) Allah has passed on to His Messenger from them, you had not urged on your horses or camels for it, but Allah gives predominance to His messengers over whomsoever He wills, and Allah is Powerful over every thing. [6] **Whatever *fai'* Allah has passed on to His Messenger from the people of the towns is for Allah and for the Messenger, and for the kinsmen and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer, so that it may not circulate only between the rich among you. And whatever the Messengers gives you, take it, and whatever thing he forbids you, abstain (from it). And fear Allah. Indeed Allah is severe in punishment.** [7] **(And *fai'* is especially) for the poor emigrants who were expelled from their homes and properties, while they were seeking the grace of Allah and (His) pleasure, and were helping Allah and His Messenger. They are the truthful.** [8] **And (*fai'* is also for) those who established themselves in the homeland (of Madīnah) and in faith before the former ones (arrived in Madīnah), who have love for those who emigrated to them, and do not feel in their hearts any**

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[1] *fai'* is a term for the properties left over by the non-Muslims and possessed by a Muslim state without fighting. As opposed to this, *ghanīmah* (booty) is a property taken over by fighting. The properties of Bani Naḍīr were taken over without fighting, hence the word *fai'*. That is why we did not translate *fai'* as 'booty'.

(Muhammad Taqi Usmani)

need for what is given to the former ones (from *fai'*), and give preference to them over themselves, even though they are in poverty. And whoever is saved from the greed of his soul, then such people are the successful. [9] **And (*fai'* is also) for those who came after them saying, "Our Lord, forgive us and those of our brothers who preceded us in faith, and do not place in our hearts any rancor against those who believe; Surely, Our Lord, you are Very-Kind, Very-Merciful."** [10]

Commentary

The Concept of *Fai'* and its Law of Distribution

وَمَآ اَفَآءَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى رَسُوْلِهٖ مِنْهُمْ (And whatever *fai'* [left over property] Allah has passed on to His Messenger from them, ...59:6). The word *afā'a* is derived from *fai'un* which means 'to return'. Thus the time of the afternoon when the shade of things returns to the east is referred to as *fai'*. The real ownership of the entire universe belongs to Allah. The ownership of things can be ascribed to human beings when Allah Himself declares them, through His Law, to be under the ownership of a human being. However, when people rebel against Allah, indulging in disbelief and *shirk*, their lives and properties are confiscated through properly constituted Authority and their ownership return to the Real Owner, Allah. From this point of view, all properties acquired from the unbelievers should be called *fai'*. However, the sacred Law of Sharī'ah draws a distinction between the terms *ghanīmah* [spoils] and *fai'*. The former refers to a property which is acquired from non-Muslims through active armed struggle, as in [8:41] وَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّمَا غَنِمْتُمْ مِّنْ شَیْءٍ (And know that whatever spoils you receive...). However, the word '*fai*'' refers to a property acquired without resorting to an actual fight, (like in a state of peaceful surrender.) These two terms have been used to set down rules of these two types in the Holy Qur'ān. Sūrah Al-Anfāl dealt with injunctions relating to *ghanīmah* or spoils, which is acquired from non-Muslims in the wake of armed struggle. The present Sūrah takes up the subject of *fai'* and the law of its distribution. The term *fai'* includes any property or wealth which the non-Muslims might leave behind and run away, or make over to the Muslim Authority willingly or with consent like *Khirāj*, *jizyah* or commercial duty.

مَآ اَفَآءَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى رَسُوْلِهٖ مِنْ اَهْلِ الْقُرٰى (Whatever *fai'* Allah has passed on to His Messenger from the people of the towns... 59:7). The phrase *ahl ul-qurā*

or 'the people of the towns' refers to the Jewish tribes like Banū Naḍīr and Banū Quraiẓah whose wealth and property were obtained without armed struggle. The laws pertaining to the distribution of the two types of spoils are different. Unlike *ghanīmah* [spoils of war], *fai'* is not distributed among the *mujāhidīn* (participants in fighting). The Holy Prophet ﷺ is granted full authority to give as much as he likes to whomsoever he likes or to retain for himself at his discretion. However, a few classes of beneficiaries have been clearly defined. The *fai'* must be distributed among the defined five classes.

The foregoing verses set down the rules pertaining to *fai'*, its beneficiaries and its method of distribution. Some details are available at the beginning of Sūrah Al-Anfāl in Volume 4 of Ma'āriful Qur'ān, pages 148-151 and more details of the injunctions are available in the same volume on pages 221-229, under verse 41. It needs to be borne in mind that the wordings of Sūrah Al-Anfāl regarding *Khums* [1/5th] of *ghanīmah* is almost identical to the wordings of *fai'* mentioned in the present verse. Let us compare: 8:41 reads: 'وَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّمَا غَنِمْتُمْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ فَاَنَّ لِلّٰهِ خُمُسَه وَلِلرَّسُوْلِ وَلِذِی الْقُرْبٰی وَالْيَتٰمٰی وَالْمَسٰكِيْنِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيْلِ (And know that whatever spoils you receive, its one-fifth is for Allah and His Messenger and for kinsmen and orphans and the needy and the wayfarer... 8:41). Verse [7] of the present Sūrah reads as above which means: "Whatever *fai'* Allah has passed on to His Messenger from the people of the towns is for Allah and for His Messenger, and for kinsmen and orphans and the needy and the wayfarer....59:7). In both these verses, six classes of beneficiaries are mentioned: Allah, the Messenger, kinsmen, orphans, the needy and the wayfarer. It is all too clear that Allah is the Real Owner and Master of this world, the next world and the entire creation. The name of Allah in relation to the shares has been mentioned by way of blessing or benediction, because the wealth or property thus associated with Allah's name attains honour and distinction. It also points to the permissibility and purity of the wealth. This is the view of Sayyidnā Ḥasan Al-Baṣrī, Qatādah, 'Aṭā', Ibrāhīm, Sha'bī and the commentators in general. [Maẓharī]

In the commentary of Sūrah Al-Anfāl, it was fully and exhaustively explained how wealth attains honour and distinction by the mention of Allah's name which, in brief, amounts to the following: The prophets are

not allowed to avail of Ṣadaqāt or charities, even though they are derived from the pure wealth of the Muslims. The question might arise how the *ghanīmah* and *fai'* are made lawful for the Holy Prophet ﷺ, while they are derived from the infidels? By mentioning Allah's name at the beginning of the verse, this doubt has been removed. The point is that Allah is the real owner of the entire universe. Human beings come to own certain things when Allah by His own grace declares for them to pass into human ownership. However, when a certain segment of human beings rebels against Allah, Jihād is waged against them by Allah's command, which means that, during the war, their lives and properties are no longer sacred. In this way, all their wealth is confiscated in the name of the Authority in command. The confiscated properties are named *ghanīmah*, spoils or war booty - which goes out of the ownership of disbelievers and gets itself deposited separately as being under the ownership of Allah alone. And as stated earlier, the word *fai'* contains the meaning of 'return' and the wealth is so called because its ownership is restored to the original owner, Allah. No human being has any entitlement to it. The beneficiaries who will receive a share of it will receive it direct from Allah, and therefore it will be lawful and pure like water and self-growing grass which are direct Divine gift, lawful and pure.

In short, the mention of Allah's name in this context points to the fact that the entire wealth belongs to Allah, and it is granted to the beneficiaries on His behalf. It is no *ṣadaqah* or *khairāt* [charity].

This leaves us with five classes of beneficiaries: [1] The Messenger ﷺ; [2] kinsmen; [3] orphans; [4] the needy; and [5] the wayfarer. The same five classes of beneficiaries of *khums* [1/5th] were determined in [8:41] and now the same classes of beneficiaries are determined for *fai'* property. The rules relating to both *ghanīmah* and *fai'* properties are identical: They are in full authority of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, and after him in the authority of the Caliphs. The Authority may retain them for the benefit of Muslims in general, or they may deposit them in *bait-ul-māl* [public treasury] and do not grant anything to anyone, or they may distribute them. If it is decided to be distributed, it must be done within the five classes defined. [Qurṭubī]

The practice of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs and of other noble

Companions shows that *fai'* property was in the Authority of the Holy Prophet ﷺ during his time, and was left to his discretion. He may disburse it as he deemed fit. After him, his Caliphs controlled it and disbursed it according to their best judgement.

After the demise of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, his share of the booty fell into disuse. The word 'Kinsmen' in the verse means the kinsmen of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. There were two reasons why they were granted a share from this booty: Firstly, because they helped the Holy Messenger ﷺ and supported him in his Islamic activities. Therefore, even the rich kinsmen of the Holy Prophet ﷺ used to be granted a share from the booty. [2] Ṣadaqah [charity] was unlawful for the Holy Prophet's kinsmen. Therefore, the poor and needy relatives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ used to be granted a share from the *fai'* rather than from the Ṣadaqah [charity]. After the demise of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, helping and supporting him came to an end. The first reason no longer existed. Therefore, the share from the *fai'* of the rich relatives fell into disuse like that of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. However, the poor and the needy relatives continued to receive their share from the *fai'* on account of poverty and need. Priority was given to the poor and needy relatives of Allah's Messenger ﷺ over other poor and needy people. [Hidāyah]. See Ma'āriful Qur'ān, Vol. 4/pp 228-229.

كَيْ لَا يَكُونَ دُولَةً بَيْنَ الْأَغْنِيَاءِ مِنكُمْ (...so that it may not circulate only between the rich among you. ....59:7). The word *dūlatah* refers to the 'wealth or good fortune that exchange hands'. [Qurṭubī] The verse means that Allah has determined the heads of expenditure for the *fai'* in this way so that the wealth does not circulate among the wealthy, who would spend it as they wish and desire and give none of it to the poor. The verse is aimed at abolishing an old practice of the Days of Ignorance where the circulation of such wealth used to remain confined to the privileged and propertied class or caste. The poorer segment of the society had no entitlement to the wealth of the nation.

Effective Measures taken by Islam against concentration of wealth

Allah is the creator, cherisher and sustainer of the universe. He knows the human needs. All human beings, whether believers or non-believers, whether lineally rich or poor, are equal in the sight of

Allah. Allah has to a very large extent kept the distribution of man's natural and basic needs in His own Hands, so that every class, every region, every weak and strong people might be able to benefit equally. Allah has, through His consummate wisdom, kept all such needs beyond man's personal domination. No human being dare take possession of these things personally. Air, wind, atmosphere, the Sun, the Moon, the light of the stars and planets, the rain-laden clouds – all these things are such without which no human can survive for a moment. Allah, the Almighty, has declared all natural resources a public endowment for all. Not even the greatest of sovereign authorities, by virtue of their ruling powers , can ever monopolize or take possession of them. Allah's creation avails of them equally everywhere.

The second category of necessities of life is what the earth produces, as for instance water and other food-stuff. This is not commonly available. However, Islamic law has declared hills and mountains, unpopulated jungles and natural springs as public endowments. However, legitimate right of ownership of some parts of the earth are allowed under special laws to specific human beings. Some people illegitimately grab the land, but naturally even the greatest capitalist cannot derive benefit from the land without the help of the poor, the farmers or the laborers. Thus despite a sort of ownership of it, he is forced to give shares to other powerless and the indigent.

The third category is gold, silver and money, which do not fall under the basic and natural necessities of life. But Allah has made them the means of acquiring all essentials of life. People who mine gold and silver from the ground become their owners subject to certain rules. The right of their ownership is transferred in various ways to other people. If they are widely distributed and are in easy circulation in human society, no individual will go without food and clothing. But what happens in our days is that the greedy people want to benefit from the wealth to the exclusion of others. This led to miserliness and greed which, in turn, led to some old and some new systems of monopolization and concentration of wealth. As a result, people's wealth concentrated in the hands of a few capitalists and people at the helm of affairs. The rest of the population who were poor and indigent had to suffer, because they were deprived of their share in the nation's wealth. This economic situation, as a reaction, gave birth to such unreasonable economic systems as communism and

socialism.

Islamic economic system, on the one hand, shows the highest respect to individual property rights, in that an individual's lawful property is as sacred and inviolable as human life itself, and human life is as sacred and inviolable as the House of Allah. Its violation has been most strongly prohibited. On the other hand, if a hand filches or steals it, it is, under penal law, amputated. In the third place, all such doors have been shut, through which a particular individual or group of individuals might monopolize it and deprive the general public.

The unjust and unbalanced way of acquisition of wealth, such as by usury, speculation, gambling and betting, allows wealth to concentrate and circulate in the hands of a few individuals. Islam has declared all such gains as unlawful and cut at the root of all such transactions in trade and tenancy that are based on unlawful practices. Wealth that is gained through lawful means has specific ways of spending: The needy and the indigent are shareholders in the wealth in the form of *Zakāh, 'Ushr, Ṣadaqat-ul-Fiṭr* [*'Id* charity], various forms of expiation and so on. The surplus wealth may be given away in voluntary charity. If a man leaves behind assets at the time of his death, Divine wisdom has set down specific rules according to which it must be distributed. The shareholders in the assets are the relatives of the deceased, the principle in this case being *al-'aqrab- fal-'aqrab*, that is 'relatives in order of relationship'. In other words, Islamic law of succession is based on blood relationship; the nearer in degree to the deceased excludes the more remote. The needy in general have not been made the shareholders, because if that were the case, the dying person would have felt the need to spend his assets anyhow, rightly or wrongly, before his death. When he sees only his near and dear ones receiving, this urge does not develop in his heart.

This means of acquiring wealth blocks the way to monopolization. The second means of acquiring wealth is war and *jihād*. The gains made in this way are distributed according to the Islamic rules. Some of them have been set down in Sūrah Al-Anfāl and others in this Sūrah. How unwise and short-sighted are those people who give up Islam's balanced system of economics based on justice, fair-play and compassion, and innovate new systems of wealth distribution, which are unjust and unbalanced, and disturb world peace?

وَمَآ اٰتٰىكُمُ الرَّسُوْلُ فَخُذُوْهُ ۚ وَمَا نَهٰىكُمْ عَنْهُ فَانْتَهُوْا ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ (...Whatever the Messenger gives you, take it; and whatever thing he forbids you, abstain [from it]. And fear Allah....59:7). This verse is in connection with *fai'* property, and it purports to say that Allah has set down the beneficiaries of this property. However, the question which beneficiary will receive how much have been left to the discretion of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Therefore, the Muslims are advised to happily accept the amount the Holy Prophet ﷺ grants them, and they should not be anxious to receive what he has not given to them. This has been further emphasized by the injunction اِتَّقُوْا اللّٰه (Fear Allah). If anyone collects under false pretext more than what he is granted, Allah is fully aware and will punish him.

The Messenger's Command is Binding like the Qur'ānic Command

Although the verse was revealed in connection with *fai'*, its words are general. They are not specific to wealth. They cover all the commands as well. Hence, the generalized meaning of the verse is that whatever the Holy Prophet ﷺ gives to a person, be it wealth, any other grant or any command, the people must show their willingness to accept it. And whatever he forbids them, they should stay away from it.

Many of the Companions took the generalized sense of the verse, and on the basis of it, they took the Holy Prophet's ﷺ commandment as binding as the Qur'ānic commandment. Qurṭubī said that in this verse the antonym of *'ātā* [gives] is *nahā* [forbids]. This shows that the verb *'ātā* [gives] is used in the sense of *amara* [commands] which is the direct antonym of *nahā* [forbids]. The Qur'ān, instead of using the direct opposite of naha [forbids] which is *amara* [commands], employed the verb *'ātā* [gives] presumably to embrace the context of the subject-matter where the verse occurs, that is, the disbursement of *fai'* property.

Sayyidnā 'Abdullah Ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه once saw a person in the state of *iḥrām* wearing sewn clothes (which is impermissible in that state). He asked him to take off the clothes. The person asked him to recite a Qur'ānic verse in support of his claim that a pilgrim is prohibited to put on a sewn garb. Sayyidnā 'Abdullan Ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه recited this very verse مَآ اٰتٰىكُمُ الرَّسُوْلُ فَخُذُوْهُ (Whatever the Messenger gives you, take it....".

Imām Shāfi'ī رحمه الله تعالىٰ once said to his congregation: (Ask whatever question you wish, and I will answer from the Qur'ān.) A person said that

a pilgrim killed a wasp in the state of *iḥrām* and asked: "What is the rule about it?" Imām Shāfi'ī رحمه الله تعالى recited this verse of the Qur'ān مَا اٰتٰكُمُ الرَّسُوْلُ فَخُذُوْهُ (Whatever the Messenger gives you, take it...." and coupled it with a Tradition which gives the injunction relating to the killing of a wasp. [Qurṭubī].

لِلْفُقَرَآءِ الْمُهٰجِرِيْنَ ([And *fai'* is especially] for the poor emigrants...[59:8]". The few verses from here till the end of the section describe the poor emigrants (*muhājirīn*), helpers (*Anṣār*) and the general members of Ummah that were yet to come in this world. Grammatically, the prepositional phrase 'for the emigrants' is a complement to the prepositional phrase 'for the kinsmen' occurring in verse [7] [Maẓharī]. What this verse purports to say is that although the beneficiaries of *fai'* are orphans, the needy and the wayfarers as mentioned in the preceding verse, priority and precedence will be given to those whose service to religion, personal qualities and religious perfection are well- known.

Priority should be given to the Indigent Righteous and Religious Scholars serving the Cause of Islam when distributing Charity

This shows that although charities, especially *fai'* are meant to fulfill the needs of the indigent Muslims in general, the righteous, especially students and learned scholars serving the cause of religion should be given priority over all others. This is the reason why Islamic governments gave allowance from the *fai'* fund to learned scholars, *muftīs* and judges for serving the cause of education, propagation of Islam and reform of human beings, because these verses establish two categories of the noble Companions. Under the first category fall the emigrants who in the very first instance made great sacrifices for Islam and the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. They endured great hardships, and eventually bid farewell to their wealth and property, to their land and country, and to their relatives and the near and dear ones, and emigrated to Madīnah. Under the second category fall the *Anṣār*, the natives of Madīnah who helped the emigrants and cooperated with them. They invited the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and with him the emigrants and thus caused the whole world around them to stand in their opposition. Their hospitality is unparalleled in the annals of the nations of the world. After these two major categories, comes a third category which comprises those people who embraced Islam after the blessed Companions and followed their footsteps closely. The last category

embraces all Muslims who will follow until the Last Hour. The three categories are discussed below, in succession.

The Merits of al-Muhājirīn [The Emigrants]

لِلْفُقَرَاءِ الْمُهَاجِرِينَ الَّذِينَ أُخْرِجُوا مِن دِيَارِهِمْ وَأَمْوَالِهِمْ يَبْتَغُونَ فَضْلًا مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانًا وَيَنصُرُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الصَّادِقُونَ

([And *fai'* is especially] for the poor emigrants who were expelled from their homes and properties, while they were seeking the grace of Allah and (His) pleasure, and were helping Allah and His Messenger. They are the truthful....59:8)

This verse describes all the characteristics of the emigrants. The first of them is that they were driven from their homes and wealth, that is to say, their only crime was that they had embraced Islam and supported the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, as a result of which the pagans of Makkah persecuted them, so much so that they had to abandon their hearths and homes and emigrate to Madīnah. Some of them had to tie stones to their stomach on account of unbearable hunger, and others used to protect themselves against cold by digging holes in the ground, because they did not have clothes to save them from the chill of winter. [Maẓharī, Qurṭubī]

An Important Issue: The rule about the control of unbelievers over the wealth and property of the Muslims

This verse describes the emigrants as poor, whereas a *faqīr* [poor] in Islamic law refers to a person who has no property whatever, or a person who possesses a little property, but is poor because he does not possess the minimum amount of property constituting *niṣāb* of *Zakāh*. However, most of the emigrants were rich, wealthy and affluent while they were in Makkah. Even after migration, if the wealth had remained in their ownership, it would be inappropriate to refer to them as 'poor' because they had *niṣāb* of *Zakāh*. But the Qur'ān refers to them as 'poor' and thus points out that the wealth and property which they had left behind in Makkah, and the pagans subsequently took possession of them, became the property of the pagans and the Muslims lost its ownership.

Therefore, Imāms Abū Ḥanīfah and Mālik رحمهم الله تعالى ruled that if Muslims abandon their homes and possessions and migrate to some other land, and the non-believers take control of their abandoned homes and property, the ownership passes into their hands and Muslims lose

ownership. Similarly, if - God forbid! - the unbelievers conquer an Islamic country, usurping Muslim property and wealth, then after having full control over it, they are deemed as owners of that property. Consequently, their transactions of sale and purchase of such properties are recognized in Sharī'ah. Maẓharī has, on this occasion in his commentary, cited all the relevant Traditions supporting this view.

The second characteristic of the emigrants is described thus: يَبْتَغُوْنَ فَضْلًا مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَرِضْوَانًا (...seeking the grace of Allah and [His] pleasure...59:8). When they embraced Islam, abandoned their country and wealth and migrated, they did not have any ulterior motive. They did all this only to seek Divine favour and gain His good pleasure. This indicates their perfect sincerity. The word *faḍl* [bounty, grace] is normally used for worldly blessings and *riḍwān* [good pleasure] for blessings of the Hereafter. From this viewpoint, the verse purports to describe that the emigrants gave up all their previous means of luxury, such as their hearths and homes, and now they were in quest of their worldly needs and the blessings of the Hereafter in the shade of Islam. Their objective was to seek the necessities of worldly life under the banner of Allah's and His Messenger's ﷺ efficacious grace.

The third characteristic of the emigrants is described thus: وَيَنْصُرُوْنَ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ (...and were helping Allah and His Messenger...59:8). The phrase 'help Allah' means to help His religion, for which they made tremendous and amazing self-sacrifices.

The fourth characteristic of the emigrants is described thus: أُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الصّٰدِقُوْنَ (... They are the truthful...59:8). That is, such people are sincerely true in words and deeds. The covenant they made with Allah and His Messenger by reciting the *kalimah*, they duly fulfilled it and proved themselves to be true about it. This verse candidly testifies to the truthfulness of all emigrant Companions. Anyone calling any of them a 'liar' cannot be a Muslim, because he is rejecting this verse. God forbid! Rawāfiḍ call these Companions 'hypocrites'. This is a clear rejection of the verse. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ held the emigrant Companions in such high esteem that when he prayed to Allah, he would supplicate through their *wasilah*. [as transmitted by Al-Baghawī and Maẓharī].

The Merits of Anṣār [The Helpers]

وَالَّذِيْنَ تَبَوَّءُو الدَّارَ وَالْاِيْمَانَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ (And [*fai'* is also for] those who established

themselves in the homeland [of Madīnah] and in faith before the former ones [arrived in Madīnah] ...59:9). The word *tabawwu'* means 'to make dwelling in the abode'. The word *dar* refers to Madīnah which has a special distinction. Therefore, Imām Mālik ﷺ, from one point of view, regarded Madīnah Ṭayyibah as the most distinguishable of all the cities in the world. He used to say that wherever Islam reached and any city that was conquered, it was conquered by means of *jihād* - including Makkah Mukarramah. Madīnah Ṭayyibah is the only exception. It was conquered by means of *'Īmān*. [Qurṭubī].

In this verse, under the word *tabawwu'* [to settle in an abode] the words *dār* [home] and *'īmān* [faith] are coupled. It could be objected that a 'home' can be found in a place where a person might settle in, but 'faith' is not an 'abode' where a person might find a place to settle in. Some of the scholars take the position that in this context the following verbs اَخْلَصُوا or تَمَكَّنُوا to be understood and they mean "These are the people who settled in their abode and became sincere and strong in their faith". It is possible to take the word 'faith' in its metaphorical sense, that is in the sense that 'it is a fortified house' where refuge is taken. The phrase *min qablihim* [before them] describes another characteristic of Anṣār, which means that they had settled in Madīnah before the Emigrants, while Madīnah was so important a city that all the Muslims living in Makkah were ordered to emigrate to it and it became the center of Islam.

The second characteristic of the Helpers is described in يُحِبُّوْنَ مَنْ هَاجَرَ اِلَيْهِمْ (...have love for those who emigrated to them...59:9) The Emigrants from Makkah came to the Helpers, deprived and denuded of all their possessions. Normally, no community is willing to allow such a large number of distressed people to settle in their city. Instead, the quarrels between natives and emigrants are found everywhere. But the Anṣār received them with open arms and made them equal partners in their belongings. The bond of love and brotherhood which the Messenger of Allah ﷺ established between the Emigrants and the Helpers, and to which this verse bears an eloquent testimony, stands unrivalled in the whole history of human relationships. There was no dearth of the Helpers who were eager to take on the Emigrants. In fact, for each Emigrant there were several applications to take him on. There were many instances in which lots had to be cast. When the lot of a particular Helper

fell in favour of a particular Emigrant, he was handed to him. [Maẓharī]

The third characteristic of the Helpers is described in وَلَا يَجِدُونَ فِي صُدُورِهِمْ حَاجَةً مِّمَّا أُوتُوا (...and do not feel in their hearts any need for what is given to the former ones [from *fai'*], ...[59:9]". This statement is concerned with the banishment of Banū Naḍīr and their orchards and homes falling into Muslim hands.

Distribution of Banū Naḍīr's properties

As stated earlier, the relevant verse has given discretionary powers to the Holy Prophet ﷺ in matters of distributing the *fai'* property. It was a time when the Muhājirīn (Emigrants) had neither homes of their own nor any property. They lived in the homes of the Anṣār, and worked on their farms to earn their livelihood. When the wealth of Banū Naḍīr and Banū Qainuqā' were obtained as *fai'*, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ called the leader of the Anṣār, Sayyidnā Thābit Ibn Qais Ibn Shammās ؓ, and asked him to bring his people to him. He asked: "O Messenger of Allah, should I call my tribe of the Anṣār, Banū Khazraj, or all of the tribes of the Anṣār?" He replied: "All of them." They all gathered. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ delivered a sermon in which he spoke highly of the Anṣār as to the manner in which they accommodated the Refugee brethren. He said it was a work of great determination and courage. After that he said: 'Allah has granted you the wealth of Banū Naḍīr. If you wish, I will divide the wealth between the Muhājirīn and the Anṣār; and the Refugees will remain as usual in the homes of the Anṣār. Or if you wish, the wealth may be distributed among the homeless Refugees; and they may move out of your homes and settle in their own homes.'

Having heard this sermon, two of the great chiefs of the Anṣār, Sayyidnā Sa'd Ibn 'Ubadah and Sa'd Ibn Mu'ādh ؓ - stood and said: "O Messenger of Allah, we are of the view that the entire wealth of *fai'* be distributed among the Refugee brethren, and in addition they may continue to reside in our homes as usual." At this all the Anṣār unanimously said, "We concur with this decision and are happy with it." On that occasion, the Holy Prophet ﷺ supplicated for the Anṣār and their children. He then distributed the entire *fai'* among the Muhājirīn. Only two of the Anṣār received a grant from the *fai'* , because they were very poor. Their names are Sayyidnā Sahl Ibn Ḥunaif ؓ and Abū Dujānah ؓ. Sayyidnā Sa'd Ibn Mu'ādh ؓ was given a sword which was a

distinguished sword of Ibn Abil-Ḥuqaīq. [Maẓharī with reference to Sabī-ur-Rashād by Muḥammad Ibn Yūsuf As-Ṣāliḥī]

The present verse admires the Anṣār on this attitude by saying, وَلَا يَجِدُوْنَ فِىْ صُدُوْرِهِمْ حَاجَةً مِّمَّآ اُوْتُوْا (...and do not feel in their hearts any need for what is given to the former ones [from *fai'*], ...59:9). The word 'need' means 'any item of need'. The verse means 'Whatever the Muhājirīn were granted in this distribution, the Anṣār happily accepted it as if they had no need for any of those items. It was inconceivable that they would complain about it enviously.' When Baḥrain was conquered, the same spirit of self-sacrifice was displayed again by the Anṣār. The Holy Prophet ﷺ expressed his intention to distribute the entire conquered lands of that territory among the Anṣār, but they courteously refused to accept any share of it unless a similar share was granted to the Muhājirīn.

The fourth characteristic of the Anṣār is described in the verse is: وَيُؤْثِرُوْنَ عَلٰٓى اَنْفُسِهِمْ وَلَوْ كَانَ بِهِمْ خَصَاصَةٌ (...and give preference (to them) over themselves, even though they are in poverty ....59:9). The word *khaṣāṣah* means 'poverty' and the word *'īthār* means 'to prefer the wish, need and desire of others above those of oneself'. The meaning of the verse is that the Anṣār used to prefer the needs of others (i.e. the Muhājirīn,) to their own needs. That is, the former used to fulfil the needs of the latter first, then they would fulfil their own needs, even though they themselves were poor and needy.

For the interpretation of the Qur'ānic verses, there is no need to recount incidents. But because they develop in human beings the highest degree of human qualities and bring about a reform in their lives, the commentators have recounted these events in detail on this occasion, especially Qurṭubī. We cite below a few of them from his commentary.

It is recorded in Tirmidhī on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ؓ that one night a guest came to an Anṣārī's house. The latter had only as much food as he and his children could eat. He said to his wife: 'Put the children off to sleep somehow, and put out the lamp. Then place the food in front of the guest, and sit next to him so that he may be under the impression that we too are eating, but we will not eat so that the guest may be able to eat comfortably.' At this, the present verse was revealed. [At-Tirmidhī has rated this *ḥadīth* as '*ḥasan, ṣaḥīḥ*'].

Tirmidhī records another narration on the authority of Sayyidnā Abu Hurairah ﷺ that a person came to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and said: "I am hungry and distressed." The Holy Prophet ﷺ sent a message to one of his blessed wives, but she replied: "We do not have anything except water." Then he sent a message to his another wife, and she made the same reply. Then to a third one and then to a fourth one until the message went to all the mothers of the faithful, and they all replied that they had nothing besides water. Then he addressed the congregation and asked if any of them would be willing to entertain the guest, in response to which a venerable Anṣārī said: "O Messenger of Allah, I will entertain him." So he took him with and asked his wife whether there was anything to eat. She replied: "Only as much as our children could eat." He asked his wife to put the children to sleep and then said: "Place the food in front of the guest, sit and then get up and put out the lamp. The guest should not feel that we are not eating." The guest ate the food. In the morning, the Companion went to the Holy Prophet ﷺ who informed him that Allah was very pleased with the way he handled the situation the previous night.

Mahdawī narrates a similar incident of Sayyidnā Thābit Ibn Qais ﷺ, a venerable Anṣārī who entertained his guest one night by putting the light off. There is a common statement appended to all these incidents: 'The above verse was revealed in connection with this event.'

Qushairī cites a story on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar ﷺ who reports that a person sent the head of a goat as a gift to a venerable personality from among the blessed Companions. He thought that about a Muslim brother that he and his family are more in need of this, so he sent the head to him. When the second venerable Companion received it, he sent it to a third person who in turn sent it to a fourth person. In this way it circulated in seven houses and eventually it returned to the first venerable personality. On this occasion, the verse was revealed. Tha'labī has also recorded this narration on the authority of Sayyidnā Anas ﷺ.

It is recorded in Muwaṭṭā' of Imām Mālik رحمه الله تعالى on the authority of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah ﷺ that a poor person wanted something to eat. She had only one bread, and she was fasting that day. She asked her maid to give him the bread. The maid said that if it was given away,

there would be nothing left for her to break her fast in the evening. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah ﵂ insisted and gave the bread to the poor person. The maid says: "It so happened after this that a person, who was not accustomed to send any gift, sent a whole roasted goat which was completely covered with batter on the outside, which is thought to be the best Arab dish." Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah ﵂ called the maid and said: "Come, eat this. This is better than that bread of yours."

Nasā'ī has recorded that once Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar ﵄ fell sick and he felt like eating grapes. A bunch of grapes was bought for him for a dirham. Co-incidentally, a poor person came begging. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar ﵄ said that the bunch be given to him. One of the Companions furtively followed him, and bought off the bunch from the beggar and gave it back to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar ﵄, but the beggar came again and begged, Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar ﵄ gave it to him again. Again someone went behind the beggar secretly and bought off the bunch from him for a dirham and gave it to Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar ﵄. The beggar wanted to turn up the third time and beg, but the people stopped him. If Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar ﵄ knew that the bunch is the same one that he gave out in *ṣadaqah,* he would never have accepted it and eaten it. He probably thought that someone had brought it for him from the market-place, and therefore he had eaten it.

Sayyidnā Ibn Mubārak reports on the authority of his chain of transmitters that once Sayyidnā 'Umar ﵁ sent four thousand Dīnārs in a moneybag to Sayyidnā Abu 'Ubaidah ﵁ with his servant, with the message that the money was being sent as a gift. He should use it as he deemed fit. The servant was instructed to remain for a while in the house to see what he would do with the money. The servant, accordingly, gave the moneybag to him and waited for a while. Sayyidnā Abu 'Ubaidah ﵁ took the bag full of money and supplicated for Sayyidnā 'Umar ﵁ that Allah may reward him and shower his mercy upon him. Instantly, he called his slave-girl and instructed her to give seven Dīnārs to so-and-so, five Dīnārs to so-and-so until all four thousand Dīnārs were distributed then and there.

The servant came back and narrated the story. Sayyidnā 'Umar ﵁ filled another moneybag with four thousand Dīnārs and sent it with the servant to Sayyidnā Mu'ādh Ibn Jabal ﵁, with the same message to him

and with the same instruction to the servant. The servant followed the instruction. Sayyidnā Mu'ādh Ibn Jabal ﷺ took the bag of money and supplicated to Allah for Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ, thus: رَحِمَهُ اللهُ وَ وَصَلَه "May Allah shower His mercy upon him and reward him." Then he too immediately sat down to distribute the money. He divided the money into many portions and sent them to different houses. His wife was watching all that was happening. She could not hold herself and eventually spoke out: "By Allah! We too are poor and we should also receive something." At that time only two Dīnārs had remained in the bag, and he gave them to her. The servant saw all this, returned to Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ and reported to him all that he saw. He said: "They are all brothers, and they all have the same disposition."

Sayyidnā Ḥudhaifah 'Adawī ﷺ narrates: "During the battle of Yarmūk, I went out in search of my paternal uncle's son [cousin] among the martyrs, and took with me some water just in case there was the last breath of life left in him, so I would give him a sip of water. When I reached him, there was the last spark of life left in him. I asked him whether he would like to have a sip of water, and he nodded 'yes'. Just as I was going to pour the water into his mouth, another martyr next to him heaved a sigh. My cousin indicated to give him the water. When I reached him and was about to give him the water, I heard the voice of a third martyr. The second martyr indicated to give the water to the third one. This series of events continued up to seven martyrs. When I reached the seventh martyr to give water, he had already breathed his last. From there I went back to my cousin, he had also met his end."

These are a few events, some of which relate to the Anṣār, and others to the Muhājirīn. About a number of these incidents, it is said that the verse under comment was revealed regarding them. In fact, there is no contradiction in these narrations, because it is a well-known habit of narrators that if a verse was revealed under a certain circumstance, and a similar incident took place on another occasion, they mention the second incident as a cause of revelation of that verse as well. In fact, all similar incidents can be said to be the cause of revelation of the verse or, at least, included in its purport.

Disposing of a Possible Doubt

Here we need to dispose of a possible doubt that might arise from the

noble Companions' narratives of self-sacrifice that were recounted above. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has prohibited for a Muslims to give away all his wealth in charity. For instance, it is reported in a Tradition that a person came with a piece of gold, about the size of an egg, so that it may be given in charity. The Holy Prophet ﷺ threw it towards himself and said: "Some of you bring all your wealth to be given away in charity, then they become poor and go around begging." The question is how and why did the Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ give away whatever they had in the incidents cited above despite the prohibition of such an act?

Answer to this question can be inferred from these very narratives. In fact, people's conditions are different. Accordingly, the rulings differ from condition to condition. The ruling of prohibition applies to those people who, after giving away all their wealth in charity, regret, and cannot endure their poverty but go around begging. But those people who, after giving away all their wealth in charity, do not regret or feel distressed or agitated, they in fact face the situation with calm courage and resolute endurance. For such people, it is permitted to spend all their wealth in Allah's way. Let us take the case of Sayyidnā Ṣiddīq Akbar رضي الله عنه who donated all his belongings when fund was being collected for a *jihād*. The stories narrated above belong to this category. Such people trained and developed their families also to face the ordeals of life with the same calm courage and resolute endurance. Therefore, their rights were not usurped or destroyed either. If the wealth were in the control of their families, they too would have done the same thing.

Muhājirīn [The Refugees] Reciprocate the Anṣārs' Self-Sacrifice

No social activities or self-sacrifice is possible unilaterally. It has to be bilateral. Therefore, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ has urged the Muslims to exchange gifts with each other and thus enhance their mutual love. So likewise, if a Muslim has given a gift to another, he should repay the gift as a gesture of goodwill. If Allah has granted him abundant wealth, then he should use the wealth to reciprocate. Otherwise, supplication should be enough to reciprocate. It is not in keeping with the principles of ethics or good manners to owe a debt of gratitude to people.

The Anṣār displayed a great deal of self-sacrifice in the matter of the Muhājirīn. The former made the latter partners in their homes, their shops, their businesses, their land and their agriculture. When Allah gave

the Muhājirīn affluence, they did not fall short in doing a good turn in return for their favours.

Qurṭubī cites a narration of the two Ṣaḥīḥs on the authority of Sayyidnā Anas Ibn Mālik ﷺ that when the Muhājirīn arrived in Madīnah from Makkah, they were absolutely empty-handed. The Anṣār, on the other hand, had properties and lands, and they shared half-and-half of all their holdings with the Muhājirīn. The former gave half of their fruits to the latter annually. Umm Sulaim رضي الله عنها, the mother of Sayyidnā Anas ﷺ, gave a few of her palm trees to the Holy Prophet ﷺ which he granted to Usāmah Ibn Zaid's mother, Umm 'Aiman رضي الله عنها.

Imām Zuhrī says that Sayyidnā Anas Ibn Mālik ﷺ reports that when the Holy Prophet ﷺ returned successfully from the expedition of Khaibar to Madīnah, the Refugees - all of them - calculated all the gifts of the Anṣār and returned them. The Holy Prophet ﷺ took back the trees that were granted to 'Umm 'Aiman and returned them to 'Umm Sulaim رضي الله عنها, and granted trees to 'Umm 'Aiman from his own orchard.

وَمَنْ يُّوقَ شُحَّ نَفْسِهٖ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُوْنَ (... And whoever is saved from the greed of his soul, then such people are the successful....59:9) After the mention of the Anṣār's selflessness and self-sacrifice, a general rule of law or a universal principle is being laid down in the concluding part of verse [9]. The words *shuḥḥ* [avarice] and *bukhl* [greed, miserliness] are near synonyms. The word *shuḥḥ*, however, yields the sense of intensive greed for money and possessions. *Shuḥḥ* [avarice] and *bukhl* [greed, miserliness] are absolutely forbidden when a person fails to fulfil obligatory rights, which might be Divine rights, such as *Zakāh*, *ṣadaqat-ul-fiṭr*, 'Ushr, oblation and so on, or they might be human rights, such as the maintenance of the family, needy parents and relatives. It is repugnant and reprehensible if *shuḥḥ* [avarice] and *bukhl* [greed, miserliness] prevent one from spending for laudable and rewardable acts. If one does not spend on customary things, it is not *shuḥḥ* [avarice] and *bukhl* in terms of the sacred laws of Sharī'ah.

Avarice, niggardliness and jealousy are such evil qualities as the Qur'ān and Prophetic Traditions have severely denounced. There are glad tidings for those who avoid them. The Anṣār have many good qualities, among which is their immunity from avarice and jealousy.

Being free of Malice and Jealousy is a sign of one's being in Paradise

Ibn Kathīr, with reference to Imām Aḥmad, cites the following narration on the authority of Sayyidnā Anas ﷺ, who says:

> "We were sitting with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ when he said, 'A man is about to arrive who is from among the inmates of Paradise'. One of the Anṣārs arrived, from whose beard dripped fresh water of minor ablution [*wuḍū'*] and in his left hand were his shoes. The same incident occurred the following day. The same person came in front in the same condition. The same incident happened the third day. The same person entered in the condition described above. When the Messenger of Allah ﷺ dissolved the assembly, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Amr Ibn-ul-'Āṣ ﷺ followed the Anṣārī [so as to find out the secret of his being an inmate of Paradise] and said to him: 'I had a quarrel in some matter and took an oath that I would not go home for three days. If possible, please accommodate me for three days at your home.' He agreed. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Amr ﷺ spent the three nights with him. But he noticed that he did not wake up for '*tahajjud*' (voluntary nightly prayers) at night. However, when he lied on bed, he recited some '*dhikr* of Allah'. Then he would wake up for *Fajr ṣalāh*. In the course of three days, he did not hear him utter a single word but that of good. 'Abdullāh ﷺ says, 'When three nights were over, and I almost thought his actions were insignificant, I gave up my secret that I had no domestic quarrel. But I continuously heard for three days the Messenger of Allah ﷺ saying a man is about to arrive who is from among the inmates of Paradise'. And for three days you arrived. Therefore, I was curious to stay with you and find out your secret act, on account of which you have attained this high status. But strangely enough I did not see you do any extraordinary deed.' Then I asked him: 'What gave you this high status?' He said, 'I have no deed more than what you have seen.' I heard this and was about to return. He called me back and said: 'O Yes, there is something. I do not harbour in my heart any malice or evil against any Muslim, I am not jealous or envious of any Muslim, if Allah has given him anything good.' Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Amr Ibn-ul-'Āṣ ﷺ said: 'That exactly is the quality that has taken you to the lofty status.'"

Having cited this narration, Ibn Kathīr says that Nasā'ī has also cited this narration in his '*Amal-ul-Yawm wal-Laylah*' and its chain of narrators is authentic according to the standard of Bukhārī and Muslim.

All Muslims after the Muhājirīn and the Anṣār are entitled to *fai'*

وَالَّذِيْنَ جَآءُوْ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ هِمْ "And [*fai'* is also] for those who came after them ....59:10) This verse lays down that all Muslims until the Last Hour, after the noble Companions from amongst the Muhājirīn and Anṣār, are entitled to a share in the *fai'* property. This was the reason why Sayyidnā 'Umar Al-Fārūq ؓ conquered great territories like 'Irāq, Syria, Egypt and so on, but did not distribute them among the fighters. He retained them as public endowment for next generations, so that the income might accrue to the Islamic public treasury, and the Muslims till the Last Hour may benefit from it. When some of the blessed Companions enquired about the distribution of the conquered territories, he referred to this verse and said: "Had it not been for the future generations of Muslims, I would have distributed all the conquered territories among the fighters as they were captured, following the example of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. When Khaibar was conquered, the Holy Prophet ﷺ distributed all its lands. If all the lands are distributed among the present Muslim generation, nothing will be left for future generations." [Transmitted by Mālik and Qurṭubī].

Love for the Blessed Companions is a sign that the Ummah is on Truth

On this occasion, Allah has put the Ummah of Muḥammad ﷺ into three different categories: [1] Muhājirīn; [2] Anṣār; and [3] the general body of the Ummah. The special characteristics of the Muhājirīn and the sterling qualities of the Anṣārs are described in the relevant verses above. As for the merits of the rest of the Ummah, the verse merely mentions one quality of theirs that they recognize the high status of Muhājirīn and the Anṣār in that they had preceded them in faith and were means of communicating it to us. Further, they pray for forgiveness of all, and also pray that their own hearts be completely cleansed of all bitterness and spite towards true and sincere Muslims.

This shows that for the validity and acceptance of faith and Islam of all the coming generations of Muslims, after the blessed Companions, it is a necessary condition that they have love and respect for the Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and pray for their brethren in Faith of earlier generations. Where this necessary condition is lacking, such people are not worthy of being called Muslims. Therefore, Sayyidnā Mus'ab Ibn Sa'd

ﷺ says that the Muslims of this Ummah are divided into three categories, of which two categories [those of Muhājirīn and Anṣār] have already been mentioned. The third category remains. If anyone wishes to have a place in the Ummah, he should join the third category by showing love, respect and honour to the blessed Companions.

Someone approached Sayyidnā Ḥusain ﷺ and inquired about Sayyidnā 'Uthmān ﷺ [who had by then been martyred], the former asked the inquirer: "Are you one of the Muhājirīn?" He replied : "No". Then he asked him: "Are you one of the Anṣār?" He replied: "No." He then said: 'There remains only the third verse اَلَّذِيْنَ جَآءُوْ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ هِمْ "And... those who came after them...[59:10]": If you wish to create doubt about Sayyidnā 'Uthmān ﷺ, then you will have to leave this category as well.'

Qurṭubī says that this verse is a proof that love of the blessed Companions is obligatory. Sayyidnā Imām Mālik رحمه الله تعالىٰ says that any person who reviles a Companion or holds a grudge against him, will not have a share in the *fai'* property of the Muslims. Then he argues, on the basis of this verse, that every Muslim has a share in the *fai'* property, and anyone who has no share, his faith in Islam is doubtul.

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ has stated that Allah has commanded all Muslims to pray for the Companions of Muḥammad ﷺ and for their forgiveness, whereas Allah knew that there would be conflicts and civil wars between them. Therefore, it is not permissible for any Muslim to hold evil thoughts about them on account of their conflicts.

Sayyidah 'Ā'shah Ṣiddīqah ﷺ says, "I have heard your Holy Prophet ﷺ say that this community will not perish unless the later generations curse the earlier generations."

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar ﷺ says: "When you hear anyone reviling a Companion, tell him, 'May the curse of Allah be upon the one who is the worst of you'." Obviously, no Companion can ever be worse. The one who is cursing would be the worst one. In a word, it is a cause of curse to revile a Companion.

'Amr Ibn Ḥaushab رحمه الله تعالىٰ says: "I have found the earlier generations of this Ummah uniformly and strongly advise people to describe the merits of the noble Companions and their good qualities, so

that they may develop love for them. Do not ever talk about their conflicts and disagreements, so that people may become bold and show disrespect to them." [All these narratives have been adapted from Qurṭubī].

Verses 11 - 17

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ نَافَقُوا يَقُولُونَ لِإِخْوَانِهِمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ أَهْلِ
الْكِتٰبِ لَئِنْ أُخْرِجْتُمْ لَنَخْرُجَنَّ مَعَكُمْ وَلَا نُطِيعُ فِيكُمْ أَحَدًا أَبَدًا لا
وَّإِنْ قُوتِلْتُمْ لَنَنْصُرَنَّكُمْ ط وَاللّٰهُ يَشْهَدُ إِنَّهُمْ لَكٰذِبُونَ ﴿١١﴾ لَئِنْ
أُخْرِجُوا لَا يَخْرُجُونَ مَعَهُمْ ج وَلَئِنْ قُوتِلُوا لَا يَنْصُرُونَهُمْ ج وَلَئِنْ
نَّصَرُوهُمْ لَيُوَلُّنَّ الْأَدْبَارَ قف ثُمَّ لَا يُنْصَرُونَ ﴿١٢﴾ لَأَنْتُمْ أَشَدُّ رَهْبَةً فِي
صُدُورِهِمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ ط ذٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَّا يَفْقَهُونَ ﴿١٣﴾ لَا يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ
جَمِيعًا إِلَّا فِي قُرًى مُّحَصَّنَةٍ أَوْ مِنْ وَّرَاءِ جُدُرٍ ط بَأْسُهُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ شَدِيدٌ ط
تَحْسَبُهُمْ جَمِيعًا وَّقُلُوبُهُمْ شَتّٰى ط ذٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَّا يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٤﴾ ج
كَمَثَلِ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ قَرِيبًا ذَاقُوا وَبَالَ أَمْرِهِمْ ج وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ
﴿١٥﴾ ج كَمَثَلِ الشَّيْطٰنِ إِذْ قَالَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ اكْفُرْ ج فَلَمَّا كَفَرَ قَالَ إِنِّي
بَرِيءٌ مِّنْكَ إِنِّي أَخَافُ اللّٰهَ رَبَّ الْعٰلَمِينَ ﴿١٦﴾ فَكَانَ عَاقِبَتَهُمَا
أَنَّهُمَا فِي النَّارِ خَالِدَيْنِ فِيهَا ط وَذٰلِكَ جَزٰٓؤُا الظّٰلِمِينَ ﴿١٧﴾ ع

Did you not see the hypocrites saying to their brothers who disbelieve from the people of the Book, "If you are expelled, we will certainly go out with you, and we will not obey any one about you. And if you are fought against, we will definitely help you." And Allah bears witness that they are pure liars. [11] If they are expelled, they will not go out with them, and if they are fought against, they will not help them. And even if they help them, they will surely turn their backs; then they will not be helped. [12] In fact, your fear in their hearts is greater than (that of) Allah. That is because they are a people who do not understand. [13] They do not fight you, even assembled together, but in fortified

towns, or from behind the walls. Their battle between themselves is severe. You think that they are united, while their hearts are divided. That is because they are a people who have no sense. [14] **The example (of Banū Naḍīr) is like those who were before them in near past, (i.e. the Jews of Banū Qainuqa') who tasted the evil consequence of their conduct, and for them (in the Hereafter) there is a painful punishment.** [15] **The example (of the hypocrites) is like the Shaiṭān when he says to a human being, "Become a disbeliever" then once he disbelieves, he says, "I disown you; I fear Allah, the Lord of the worlds."** [16] **So the end of both of them is that they will be in the Fire, living there forever. And that is the punishment of the wrongdoers.** [17]

Commentary

كَمَثَلِ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ قَرِيْبًا (...like those who were before them in near past ....59:15) This refers to the case of Banū Naḍīr, and Mujahid رحمهم الله تعالى says that the phrase الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ قَرِيْبًا "those who were before them in near past " refers to the Quraish of Makkah who sustained an ignominious defeat at Badr. According to Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ, it refers to Banū Qainuqā', a Jewish tribe, who were punished for their mischief and machinations after Badr. Banū Naḍīr were banished after the battles of Badr and 'Uḥud, and Banū Qainuqā' had been banished after Badr. At Badr seventy thousand pagan Arabs were killed, and the survivors returned home disgracefully. Since pagans of Makkah and Banū qainuqā', both of them faced a deterrent punishment after Badr, both can be the purport of the words, 'who were before them in the past, and of : ذَاقُوْا وَبَالَ اَمْرِهِمْ "...tasted the evil consequence of their conduct...[59:15]"

The Expulsion of Banū Qainuqā'

As stated earlier, when the Holy Prophet ﷺ migrated from Makkah and settled in Madīnah, he concluded a peace treaty with the Jewish tribes of Madīnah, and of its neighbourhood. One of its conditions stipulated that they would not fight the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and the Muslims, or assist their enemies. Banū Qainuqā' was a party to this peace agreement and was the first one to break the pledged word, within a few months. On the occasion of the battle of Badr, they connived with the Quraish of Makkah, and some incidents of their connivance came out in the open. On that occasion, the following verse was revealed وَاِمَّا تَخَافَنَّ مِنْ قَوْمٍ خِيَانَةً فَانْبِذْ اِلَيْهِمْ عَلٰى سَوَآءٍ (And if you apprehend a breach from a people, then,

throw [the treaty] towards them being right forward ...[8:58]". Banū Qainuqā‘, through their treachery, had already broken the treaty. Therefore, The Holy Prophet ﷺ declared war against them and the banner of *jihād* was given in the hands of Sayyidnā Ḥamzah رضي الله عنه and, appointing Sayyidnā Abū Lubābah رضي الله عنه his deputy in the city of Madīnah, the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself joined the fighting force. Having seeing the Muslim army, the Jews shut themselves up in the fortress. The Holy Prophet ﷺ laid a siege to it for fifteen days, and the Jews had no choice but to surrender. Eventually, Allah cast terror into their hearts and they realized that fighting would not pay off. So, they opened the gate of the fortress and expressed their willingness to abide by the decision of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

The Holy Prophet's ﷺ decision was to have the Jewish men executed. But ‘Abdullāh Ibn ’Ubayy, the hypocrite, intervened and pleaded to the Holy Prophet ﷺ to pardon them. In the end, it was decided that they should leave the area and go into exile and their belongings would be the spoils falling to the lot of the Muslims. Accordingly, they left Madīnah and proceeded to settle in an area called Adhra‘āt in Syria. In compliance with the law of spoils, one-fifth was retained for *Bait-ul-Māl* [public treasury] and the rest of the spoils was disbursed among the fighters. After the battle of Badr, this was the first one-fifth of the booties that was retained for the public treasury. This incident took place on Monday, 15th Shawwāl, in the 2nd year of Hijrah - twenty months after the migration.

كَمَثَلِ الشَّيْطٰنِ اِذْ قَالَ لِلْاِنْسَانِ اكْفُرْ (The example [of the hypocrites] is like the Shaiṭān when he says to a human being, "Become a disbeliever" then once he disbelieves, he says, "I disown you; I fear Allah, the Lord of the worlds."....59:16) This is another example of the hypocrites who made false promises of solidarity and support to the Banū Naḍīr, and provoked the latter to fight against the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. But when the Muslims besieged them, not a single hypocrite came forward to assist. The Qur'ān here uses a simile to illustrate the similarity between a hypocrite and the Satan. The Satan incited man to disbelieve and promised him the world, but when he was seriously involved in disbelief, he said that he has nothing to do with him. Only Allah knows how many such episodes the devil must have been involved in, textually, however, we find one such episode narrated in the Qur'ān in Sūrah Anfāl, verse [48] :

وَاِذْ زَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ اَعْمَالَهُمْ وَقَالَ لَا غَالِبَ لَكُمُ الْيَوْمَ مِنَ النَّاسِ وَ اِنِّيْ جَارٌ لَّكُمْ فَلَمَّا تَرَآءَتِ الْفِئَتٰنِ نَكَصَ عَلٰى عَقِبَيْهِ وَقَالَ اِنِّيْ بَرِیْٓءٌ مِّنْكُمْ اِنِّيْٓ اَرٰى مَالَا تَرَوْنَ اِنِّيْٓ اَخَافُ اللّٰهَ ط وَاللّٰهُ شَدِيْدُ الْعِقَابِ.

"And when the Satan beautified their deeds for them and said, 'None of the people is to overpower you today, and I am a protector for you.' But, when the two groups saw each other, he turned back on his heels and said, 'I have nothing to do with you. I am seeing what you do not see. I am scared of Allah, and Allah is severe in punishment.'"

This incident occurred on the occasion of the battle of Badr when the Satan misled the pagan Quraish, urged them to wage a war against Muslims, and then he withdrew, and left them in the lurch when they were in the middle of a pitched-battle. It is not clear how the Satan did all this, whether he cast suggestions into their minds or whether he came to them in human shape and spoke to them face to face. A full explanation is available in Volume [4] of Ma'āriful Qur'ān, pages 242-247.

If the verse refers to this incident, in which the Satan provokes man to disbelieve and when he does that, he washes his hands of them, it does not seem that the Satan asked them to commit *kufr*, because they were already *kāfirs*. He asked them to be firm in opposing the Messenger. The answer is all too obvious, in that it is all the same whether he asked them to commit *kufr*, or bids them to remain firm in their *kufr* or fight the Messenger of Allah, because it is also tantamount to *kufr*.

Tafsīr Maẓharī, Qurṭubī, Ibn Kathīr and others have cited several incidents where monks and devotees were deceived into *kufr*. For example, one of the Israeli monks devoted himself to Allah in his synagogue, and fasted consecutively and broke his fast only once in ten days. In this way, he spent seventy years of his life. The accursed Satan pursued him. He sent after him the most cunning devil in the shape of a monk, a devotee of God. He went up to him and exerted himself in the worship of God and thus built up confidence in the genuine monk. Eventually, the impostor succeeded in teaching the monk a few of the prayers that are efficacious in curing the sickly people. Then the former exerted his influence on many people to fall sick, and gave them the monk's address. When the latter recited the prayers, the devil would remove his influence and thus they would feel cured. He kept up this

process for a long period of time, until one day he performed his exertion on the beautiful daughter of an Israelī leader. He sent her also to the monk. He succeeded in getting her into his synagogue and gradually he succeeded in getting him to commit fornication with the girl who, as a result, fell pregnant. He suggested that the girl be killed to save face. After the killing, the devil himself went around telling the story of the killing and put up the people against the monk. They, in their fury, demolished the synagogue and decided to kill him and crucify him. Then the Satan went back to the monk and said to him that there is no way out to save his life. 'Of course', he said to him, 'there is one way of saving your life, in that you prostrate to me and I will save your life.' The monk had already committed all the sins. The way to commit *kufr* was paved. So, he prostrated. At that juncture, the Satan said to him plainly, 'You were not falling into my trap. I adopted all these guiles for you to commit *kufr*. I cannot assist you in any way.' This story is recounted fully in Tafsīr Maẓharī and Qurṭubī. Allah, the Pure and Exalted, knows best!

Verses 18 - 24

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَلْتَنْظُرْ نَفْسٌ مَّا قَدَّمَتْ لِغَدٍ ۚ وَاتَّقُوا
اللّٰهَ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ خَبِيْرٌۢ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۱۸﴾ وَلَا تَكُوْنُوْا كَالَّذِيْنَ نَسُوا
اللّٰهَ فَاَنْسٰىهُمْ اَنْفُسَهُمْ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْفٰسِقُوْنَ ﴿۱۹﴾ لَا يَسْتَوِيْۤ
اَصْحٰبُ النَّارِ وَاَصْحٰبُ الْجَنَّةِ ؕ اَصْحٰبُ الْجَنَّةِ هُمُ الْفَآئِزُوْنَ
﴿۲۰﴾ لَوْ اَنْزَلْنَا هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنَ عَلٰى جَبَلٍ لَّرَاَيْتَهٗ خَاشِعًا مُّتَصَدِّعًا مِّنْ
خَشْيَةِ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَتِلْكَ الْاَمْثَالُ نَضْرِبُهَا لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿۲۱﴾
هُوَ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْ لَاۤ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ۚ عٰلِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ ۚ هُوَ الرَّحْمٰنُ
الرَّحِيْمُ ﴿۲۲﴾ هُوَ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْ لَاۤ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ۚ اَلْمَلِكُ الْقُدُّوْسُ السَّلٰمُ
الْمُؤْمِنُ الْمُهَيْمِنُ الْعَزِيْزُ الْجَبَّارُ الْمُتَكَبِّرُ ؕ سُبْحٰنَ اللّٰهِ عَمَّا
يُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿۲۳﴾ هُوَ اللّٰهُ الْخَالِقُ الْبَارِئُ الْمُصَوِّرُ لَهُ الْاَسْمَآءُ

الْحُسْنٰى ۭ يُسَبِّحُ لَهٗ مَا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ ﴿٢٤﴾

O those who believe, fear Allah, and everybody must consider what he (or she) has sent ahead for tomorrow. And fear Allah. Surely Allah is fully aware of what you do. [18] **And do not be like those who forgot Allah, so He made them forget their own selves. Those are the sinners.** [19] **The people of the Fire and the people of the Paradise are not equal. The people of the Paradise are the successful.** [20] **Had We sent down this Qur'ān to a mountain, you would have seen it humbled, burst apart out of awe for Allah. And such examples are cited by Us for the people, so that they may ponder.** [21] **He is Allah, besides whom there is no god, the Knower of the unseen and the seen. He is the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful.** [22] **He is Allah, besides whom there is no god, the Sovereign, the Most Pure [from all defects], the Most Safe [from all defects], the Peace-Giver, the Guardian, the All-Mighty, the Restorer [of the losses], the Lord of Greatness. Pure is Allah from what they associate with Him.** [23] **He is Allah, the Creator, the Inventor, the Originator-Of-Shapes. His are the Most Beautiful Names. His purity is proclaimed by all that is in the heavens and the earth, and He is the All-Mighty, the All-Wise.** [24]

Commentary

The Command to Taqwā and to prepare for the Day of Resurrection

The earlier parts of Sūrah Al-Ḥashr has described different events relating to the Jews, the pagans and the hypocrites and their punishments in this world and in the next. Now the concluding part of the Sūrah makes the believers conscious of their duty towards Allah and advises them to perform the righteous deeds regularly.

The first verse in this set reads يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَلْتَنْظُرْ نَفْسٌ مَّا قَدَّمَتْ لِغَدٍ (O those who believe, fear Allah, and everybody must consider what he [or she] has sent ahead for tomorrow. ....59:18) In an eloquent style, the verse enjoins upon the believers to take care of the Hereafter and commands them to prepare for it. Here a few points need to be considered:

First: In this verse, the Hereafter is described as *ghad* [tomorrow], which means the 'day after today'. This points to two things. First of all, it means that the entire period of this world, compared to the Hereafter, is very short. That is, this entire world, in relation to the Hereafter, is like one day. In fact, in terms of pure calculation, this comparison too is difficult to imagine, because the Hereafter is eternal which will exist without an end. The age of human world is said to be a few thousand years old. If this is calculated with the creation of the heaven and the earth, it will extend to a few million years, which in any case will be a limited period. This is no comparison to an unlimited or infinite period of time. Some Traditions state اَلدُّنْيَا يَوْمٌ وَلَنَا فِيْهِ صَوْمٌ (The entire world is a day and on that day we fast.) Whether we calculate from human creation or from the creation of the heaven and the earth, it does not matter, because neither of these factors is important for a human individual. In fact, every individual's world is made up of the days and years of his age. Every person should be able to realize how short a period that is in relation to the eternity of the Hereafter.

Second of all, this verse shows that the Day of Resurrection is as certain as the arrival of tomorrow after today which is a stark reality, and no one doubts it. Likewise the Hereafter is beyond any reasonable doubt.

Thirdly, the Day of Resurrection will happen very shortly. Just as tomorrow is not very far away from today, it is thought to be very near, likewise, the Day of Resurrection will happen very soon after this world. The first phase of the Hour is when an individual dies, his Hour is already established as stated in a Tradition: 'مَنْ مَّاتَ فَقَدْ قَامَتْ قِيَامَتُه "He who dies, his Day of Judgement has been established" because the signs of the next world start from the grave and examples of reward and punishment come forward. The world of grave or the world of *barzakh* is like a waiting room in this world which accommodates all types of people, ranging from the first class to the third class. The waiting room of the criminals is the prison house. A person should be able to determine his position and status in the waiting room. Therefore, every person's Judgement Day starts with his death. Man's death has been made such a puzzling phenomenon that not even the greatest philosopher or scientist can with any degree of certainty determine the exact time of its occurrence. In fact, every coming moment is fraught with the danger that one may not live to see it,

especially in this time and age when it is moving at the pace of lightning and heart-failure is the order of the day. The second phase of the Hour is when the entire world, the heaven and earth and everything else, will perish, though this might take place after hundreds of thousands of years, it is very close in relation to the eternity of the Hereafter .

In short, this verse by describing *qiyāmah* [Doomsday] as *ghad* [tomorrow] made man conscious of the fact that the Doomsday is not very far off; it is very close like tomorrow. It is also possible that it might come even before tomorrow.

The second point put by this verse for consideration is that the arrival of Doomsday being certain and also near, everyone is invited to think what he has prepared for the Day of Resurrection. This shows that his original abode is the Hereafter. His residence in this world is like a wayfarer. It is necessary to send something from here for the eternal abode. The main purpose of man's residence is to live here, acquire and accumulate things and send them forward to the eternal abode of the Hereafter. It is quite obvious that no material wealth or property can be taken with from this world. There is only one way of transferring wealth [gold, silver, money and so on] from one country to another, that is to deposit it into the bank from where the currency of another country is obtained. In exactly the same manner, wealth is spent in the way of Allah and the sacred laws of Allah are implemented and deposited in the Divinely celestial bank, where the currency of reward is recorded in the celestial Account-Book. When a believer reaches the eternal abode, it is handed over to him without claim or demand.

The phrase مَاقَدَّمَتْ لِغَدٍ 'what he (or she) has sent ahead' carries the general sense of the good, as well as, the bad deeds. He who sends forth good deeds will obtain the currency of reward in the Hereafter; and he who sends forth evil deeds will be indicted in the Hereafter. The command of "...fear Allah...[18]" has been repeated. It could be for emphasis, or the first of such command is for man to fulfil the obligatory and imperative duties, and the repetition of the command is to abstain from sins. The second explanation is given by Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānawī رحمه الله تعالى.

Also, it is possible that the first command to fear Allah is to send forth good deeds for the Hereafter by acting upon imperatives set by Allah, and

the second command to fear is to ensure that what is being sent is not fake or counterfeit. Fake or counterfeit deeds, in relation to the Hereafter, would imply the deeds done seem to be genuinely righteous deeds, but they lack sincerity of purpose and the good pleasure of Allah. What was done ostentatiously or for ulterior motive or an ostensible action that seems like an act of worship, but having no base in religion, it is tantamount to innovation (*Bid'ah*). Thus the second command to fear Allah implies that for the Hereafter it is not sufficient to merely accumulate ostensible actions, but to send forth genuine deeds performed with sincerity according to the rules set in religion. Spurious actions will not be acceptable there.

فَاَنْسٰىهُمْ اَنْفُسَهُمْ (...so He made them forget their own selves....59:19) It means they did not forget Allah but themselves, because they are unaware of their own loss and gain.

لَوْاَنْزَلْنَا هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنَ عَلٰى جَبَلٍ (Had We sent down this Qur'ān to a mountain, ...59:21) This is a parable that Allah is using to illustrate the fact that if the Holy Qur'ān were to be revealed on such strong, firm and unmovable mountain and endowed with intelligence like man, it would have submitted to the greatness of the Qur'ān, nay, it would have crushed to pieces. But man is too selfish and proud. As a result, he has lost his natural intelligence and remains unaffected by the powerful message of the Qur'ān. This, it would appear, is a hypothetical example, that is 'if' mountains had sense or intelligence. Some scholars have stated that reason and revelation both bear testimony to the fact that everything in nature has sense, perception and intelligence, be it a mountain or a tree. Therefore, this is not a hypothetical example. It is a stark reality. [Maẓharī]. And Allah knows best!

A Few of Allah's Attributes of Perfection

Having urged the people to be concerned about the Hereafter and having asserted the greatness of the Qur'ān, this Sūrah is concluded with a few of Allah's attributes of perfection, as follows:

عٰلِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ (...the Knower of the unseen and the seen - 23). The attribute 'the Knower of the Unseen and the seen' means that Allah knows all things, visible or invisible.

اَلْقُدُّوْس The attribute Al-Quddūs means 'the Most Pure from all defects',

that is, Allah is the Being Who is free from all kinds of defect, deficiency and imperfection which are not in conformity to His Supreme status.

الْمُؤْمِن The word *mu'min,* when applied to a human being, means a believer, but when this attribute is applied to Allah, it means the one who provides peace and safety, as explained by Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ. It means that He provides safety and perfect peace to those who believe in Allah and His Messengers.

الْمُهَيْمِن The attribute *Al-Muhaimin*, according to Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ, Mujāhid and Qatādah means 'Guardian'. The Arabic lexicon Al-Qamus has explained that its route is *'hamn'* which means 'to look after or take care of or watch over'. [Maẓharī].

اَلْعَزِيْز The attribute Al-'Azīz means 'the Almighty'.

اَلْجَبَّار The attribute Al-Jabbār means the One who is dominant. It could also be derived from the word *jabr*, meaning to 'join broken bones' and thus we have the word *jabīrah*, which refers to the bandage or plaster that is used in binding the broken bones. From this point of view, the attribute would mean that Allah is the Being Who sets aright every broken and useless things, matters or restores all losses and rectifies situations or mends every breakage.

اَلْمُتَكَبِّر The attribute *Al-Mutakabbir* [the Lord of Greatness] is derived from *takabbur* and that from *kibriyā'* meaning 'greatness' which is one of the peculiar characteristics of Allah. It implies that every greatness is attributable only to Allah who is not in need of anyone. Whoever is in need cannot be great. Therefore, if this word is used for a person other than Allah, it is a defect and sin, because the claim of greatness by a person who is not actually great is false and tantamount to a claim of being a partner of Allah, the Besought of all, in one of His exclusive attributes. That is why the word *Al-Mutakabbir,* when attributed to Allah is an attribute of perfection, but in respect of others it is no more than a false claim.

الْمُصَوِّر (...the Originator of all Shapes....59:24) In other words, He gives shape to every thing He creates. He has given particular shapes to all creatures whereby they are distinguished from one another. Every species has a shape distinguishable from all other species. Within one species too,

there are differences in shape between males and females. Then there are uncountable differences between the shapes of the individuals of even one sex. The excellence of shaping or fashioning is of such high degree that the shapes of zillions of men and women are different from one another in a way that no face is an absolute copy of some other face. Had it not been so, no one could be distinguished from the other. This excellence and perfection of creative power belongs to none but Allah. Just as *takabbur* (show of greatness) is not permissible for anyone other than Allah [as *kibriyā'* is His exclusive attribute'], likewise no one, besides Allah, is permitted to do picture-making, because that too is the exclusive characteristic of Allah, and picture-making is an implied claim of being associate with Allah in this attribute.

لَهُ الْأَسْمَآءُ الْحُسْنٰى (... His are the Most Beautiful Names ....59:24). The Holy Qur'ān has not given the exact number of these Most Beautiful Names of Allah. Authentic Prophetic *aḥādīth* have counted them ninety-nine. Tirmidhī has collected all the ninety-nine names in one Tradition. Many scholars have written full books on the subject of *Asmā'ul-Ḥusnā* or 'Most Beautiful Names of Allah'. The present writer has also compiled a concise monograph on the subject of 'Most Beautiful Names of Allah' published as an annexure to Munājāt-i-Maqbūl (by Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thanawī رحمه اللّٰه تعالیٰ)

يُسَبِّحُ لَهٗ مَا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ (...His purity is proclaimed by all that is in the heavens and the earth ....59:24). That all creatures in the heavens and the earth declare the purity of Allah in unuttered language is self-evident: The wonderful, marvelous and amazing things created by Allah, and the awe-inspiring and staggering shapes fashioned by Him proclaim the praises of their Creator in unuttered language. However, it is possible too that the word '*tasbīḥ*' is used here in its real and literal sense, because according to the authentic view everything in this universe has some kind of sense that accords to its ability. Now, the foremost and primary requirement of this sense is to recognize one's Creator and paying gratitude to Him. Based on this premise, it is not far-fetched to conceive that everything in nature really declares the purity of Allah in articulate language, though human ears might not be able to hear it. Thus the Qur'ān on one occasion says وَلٰكِنْ لَّا تَفْقَهُوْنَ تَسْبِيْحَهُمْ (...but you do not understand their extolling.) (17:44)

Benefits and Blessings of the Concluding Verses of Sūrah Al-Ḥashr

It is recorded in Tirmidhī on the authority of Sayyidnā Ma'qil Ibn Yasār ؓ that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ has stated that Allah appoints 70,000 angels who pray for Divine mercy for anyone who recites the following three times: اَعُوْذُ بِاللّٰهِ السَّمِيْعِ الْعَلِيْمِ مِنَ الشَّيْطٰنِ الرَّجِيْمِ and the last three verses of Sūrah Al-Ḥashr هُوَاللّٰهُ الَّذِىْ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّاهُوَ. If he dies the same day, he will attain the status of a martyr. If a person recites the same solemn words in the evening, he will attain the same status. [Maẓharī].

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Ḥashr
Ends here

Sūrah Al-Mumtaḥinah

(The Examiner)

This Sūrah is Madanī, and it has 13 verses and 2 sections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 6

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَتَّخِذُوْا عَدُوِّيْ وَعَدُوَّكُمْ اَوْلِيَآءَ تُلْقُوْنَ اِلَيْهِمْ
بِالْمَوَدَّةِ وَقَدْ كَفَرُوْا بِمَا جَآءَكُمْ مِّنَ الْحَقِّ ۚ يُخْرِجُوْنَ الرَّسُوْلَ
وَاِيَّاكُمْ اَنْ تُؤْمِنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ رَبِّكُمْ ؕ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ خَرَجْتُمْ جِهَادًا فِيْ سَبِيْلِيْ
وَابْتِغَآءَ مَرْضَاتِيْ تُسِرُّوْنَ اِلَيْهِمْ بِالْمَوَدَّةِ ۖ وَاَنَا اَعْلَمُ بِمَآ اَخْفَيْتُمْ
وَمَآ اَعْلَنْتُمْ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّفْعَلْهُ مِنْكُمْ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ سَوَآءَ السَّبِيْلِ ﴿١﴾ اِنْ
يَّثْقَفُوْكُمْ يَكُوْنُوْا لَكُمْ اَعْدَآءً وَّيَبْسُطُوْٓا اِلَيْكُمْ اَيْدِيَهُمْ وَاَلْسِنَتَهُمْ
بِالسُّوْٓءِ وَوَدُّوْا لَوْ تَكْفُرُوْنَ ﴿٢﴾ لَنْ تَنْفَعَكُمْ اَرْحَامُكُمْ وَلَآ
اَوْلَادُكُمْ ۚ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ ۚ يَفْصِلُ بَيْنَكُمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ بَصِيْرٌ
﴿٣﴾ قَدْ كَانَتْ لَكُمْ اُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ فِيْٓ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَالَّذِيْنَ مَعَهٗ ۚ اِذْ قَالُوْا
لِقَوْمِهِمْ اِنَّا بُرَءٰٓؤُا مِنْكُمْ وَمِمَّا تَعْبُدُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ ۫ كَفَرْنَا بِكُمْ
وَبَدَا بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمُ الْعَدَاوَةُ وَالْبَغْضَآءُ اَبَدًا حَتّٰى تُؤْمِنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَحْدَهٗٓ
اِلَّا قَوْلَ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ لِاَبِيْهِ لَاَسْتَغْفِرَنَّ لَكَ وَمَآ اَمْلِكُ لَكَ مِنَ اللّٰهِ مِنْ
شَيْءٍ ؕ رَبَّنَا عَلَيْكَ تَوَكَّلْنَا وَاِلَيْكَ اَنَبْنَا وَاِلَيْكَ الْمَصِيْرُ ﴿٤﴾ رَبَّنَا لَا

تَجْعَلْنَا فِتْنَةً لِّلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَاغْفِرْ لَنَا رَبَّنَا ۚ إِنَّكَ أَنتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ
﴿٥﴾ لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِيهِمْ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَن كَانَ يَرْجُوا اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ
الْآخِرَ ۚ وَمَن يَتَوَلَّ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ ﴿٦﴾

O you who believe, do not take My enemies and your enemies for friends, expressing love with them, while they have rejected the Truth that has come to you, expelling the Messenger and your selves (from Makkah), merely because you have faith in Allah, your Lord, if you have set out to do *jihād* (struggle) in My way, and to seek My pleasure. You express love with them secretly, while I know what you have concealed and what you have revealed. And any of you who does this has missed the straight path. [1] **Should they have access to you, they will become your enemies, and will stretch their hands and tongues towards you with evil; and they desire that you should reject the (True) faith.** [2] **Neither your womb-relations nor your children will avail you on the Day of Judgment. He will decide between you, and Allah is watchful of what you do.** [3] **Indeed, there is an excellent example for you in Ibrāhīm and those with him, when they said to their people, "We disown you and what you worship instead of Allah. We disbelieve in you. Enmity and hatred has arisen between us and you forever, unless you believe in Allah alone", - but (his example is) not (to be followed) in what Ibrāhīm said to his father, "I will pray to my Lord for your forgiveness, and I have no power from Allah (to do any thing) for you." - "O our Lord, in you alone we trust, and to you alone we turn for help, and to you is the final return.** [4] **Our Lord, do not make us persecuted by those who disbelieve, and forgive us, our Lord! You, only You, are the All-Mighty, the All-Wise."** [5] **Indeed, for you there is an excellent example in them, for anyone who hopes (to meet) Allah and the Last Day. And whoever turns away, then Allah is Free of all needs, Worthy of all Praise.** [6]

Commentary

The Sūrah opens with a prohibitory injunction to Muslims against having close and intimate friendship with disbelievers and those who

associate partners with Allah. This injunction was revealed in the context of a particular incident which is mentioned below:

Background of Revelation

The *tafsīr* of Qurṭubī, with reference to Qushairi and Tha'labī, records that after the battle of Badr, before the Conquest of Makkah, a Makkan female vocalist whose name was Sārah, first arrived in Madīnah. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ asked her whether she had migrated to Madīnah. She replied in the negative. Then he asked her whether she had embraced Islam. Again her reply was in the negative. Then he asked her to explain the reason why she arrived in Madīnah. She explained, 'You belong to the high society of Makkah and I used to do my living amongst you. The great leaders of Makkah were killed in the battle of Badr, and you have moved here. My living has become impossible. I am down-and-out and hard-pressed. I have come to you for help.' The Holy Prophet ﷺ said to her, 'You are a professional female singer of Makkah and where are the Makkan youngsters who used to shower money on you?' She said that after the battle of Badr all her functions and singing sessions had come to an end. "Since that time", she said, "nobody has invited me." The Holy Prophet ﷺ encouraged Banū 'Abd-ul-Muṭṭalib to assist her. They helped her with money, clothing and other things and sent her off.

This happened at a time when the pagans of Makkah had failed to honour the treaty of Ḥudaibiyah, and the Holy Prophet ﷺ was making secret preparations to march on Makkah. He had also prayed to Allah that his secret plan must not be prematurely divulged to the people of Makkah. However, from amongst the foremost *Muhājirīn* (Refugees) there was a Companion Sayyidnā Ḥāṭib Ibn Abī Balta'ah رضي الله عنه. He was originally from Yemen, who had settled in Makkah where he had no relatives and had embraced Islam. After migration, he settled in Madīnah, but his family was still in Makkah. The pagans of Makkah used to persecute the Muslims tortuously who had remained in Makkah after the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and his blessed Companions migrated to Madīnah. The Refugees who had relatives in Makkah had some degree of protection. But Sayyidnā Ḥāṭib Ibn Abī Balta'ah رضي الله عنه was worried that he had no relatives to protect his family from the persecution. He seized this opportunity to have his family protected from Makkan persecution. So, he

thought if he did a favor to the Makkans, they would feel obliged to him, and in return they will take care of his family and protect them.

Sayyidnā Ḥāṭib Ibn Abī Balta'ah ؓ was sure that Allah would grant victory to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, and leaking the secret information would not harm the Holy Prophet ﷺ or Islam. He thought if he were to write a letter and inform the Makkans that the Holy Prophet ﷺ intends to attack them, his children would be safe. He thus committed the mistake of writing a letter to the people of Makkah telling them the intention of the Holy Prophet ﷺ to invade upon Makkah. He dispatched the letter with the singing woman, Sārah, who was on her way to Makkah. [Qurṭubī and Maẓharī].

Allah Ta'ālā informed the Holy Prophet ﷺ about it through revelation, and he was also informed that the bearer of the letter, a woman, has reached the place known as *Rauḍah Khākh*. According to a narration in the two Ṣaḥīḥs on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Alī ؓ, the Holy Prophet ﷺ called for him, Abū Marthad and Zubair Ibn 'Awwām ؓ and commanded them to ride their horses and pursue the woman who would be found in Rauḍah Khākh. He said: "There you will find a pagan woman bearing a letter from Sayyidnā Ḥāṭib Ibn Abī Balta'ah ؓ addressed to the pagans of Makkah. Overtake her and bring back the letter." The Companions, in pursuance of the command, galloped on their horses and went after the woman and found her in the place where the Holy Prophet ﷺ had named. She was seen there riding a camel. They made the camel sit and searched for the letter, but to no avail. They said to themselves that she must have the letter with her because the information of the Holy Prophet ﷺ could never be wrong. She must have hidden it somewhere. They asked her to produce the letter, but she denied any knowledge of it. They then had to adopt a sterner attitude and threatened to remove all her clothes, if she did not surrender the letter. When she saw their determination, she produced it from her loincloth. The letter was brought back to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. When Sayyidnā 'Umar Al-Fārūq ؓ heard the story, he exclaimed seeking the Holy Prophet's ﷺ permission to behead the one who betrayed Allah, His Messenger and all the Muslims.

The Holy Prophet ﷺ asked Sayyidnā Ḥāṭib Ibn Abī Balta'ah ؓ: 'O Ḥāṭib! What has prompted you to do this?' Sayyidnā Ḥāṭib Ibn Abī

Balta'ah ؓ replied that his faith was not shaken in the least. He explained that he intended to do a favor to the residents of Makkah, so that they might not harm his family. He pleaded that all other *muhājirīn* (Emigrants) had their clans in Makkah, while his family had no one to take care of them.

The Holy Prophet ﷺ said to his Companions: "He has told you the truth." Sayyidnā 'Umar Al-Fārūq ؓ was not convinced on account of his zeal of faith, and repeated his request to kill him. The Holy Prophet ﷺ put forward more compelling arguments. He said:

> 'He attended Badr. What can I tell you, perhaps Allah looked at those who attended Badr and said, "O People of Badr, do what you like, for I have forgiven you.'

Having heard this, tears rolled down from Sayyidnā 'Umar's ؓ eyes and he said: "Allah and His Messenger alone has the knowledge of reality." [This narration of Bukhārī is recorded in the Book of Mghāzī: The Battle of Badr, as quoted by Ibn Kathīr]. Some of the versions also have the additional statement of Sayyidnā Ḥāṭib Ibn Abī Balta'ah ؓ: "I never did this to harm Islam or the Muslims because I knew for sure that Allah will grant victory to the Holy Prophet ﷺ irrespective of whether or not the Makkans came to know about the impending attack."

It was with reference to this incident that Allah revealed the opening verses of Sūrah Al-Mumtaḥinah forbidding the Muslims vehemently to have friendly relations with the infidels.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَتَّخِذُوْا عَدُوِّيْ وَعَدُوَّكُمْ اَوْلِيَآءَ تُلْقُوْنَ اِلَيْهِمْ بِالْمَوَدَّةِ (O you who believe, do not take My enemies and your enemies for friends, expressing love with them...60:1). The immediate occasion of the revelation of the verse under comment was the incident stated earlier. Such a letter written to the disbelievers amounted to having friendly intimacy with them. This verse uses the expression عَدُوِّيْ وَ عَدُوَّكُمْ "My enemy and your enemy" instead of *kuffār* [infidels] presumably to indicate the underlying cause of the injunction, in that hopes of friendship from your enemy and Allah's enemy are illusory. It needs to be avoided. Furthermore, this expression is an indication that an infidel, as long as he is an infidel, can never be a friend of a Muslim as long as he is a Muslim. An infidel is the enemy of Allah, whereas a Muslim loves Allah. How can there be an intimate

friendship between the two?

وَقَدْ كَفَرُوْا بِمَا جَآءَكُمْ مِّنَ الْحَقِّ ۚ يُخْرِجُوْنَ الرَّسُوْلَ وَاِيَّاكُمْ اَنْ تُؤْمِنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ رَبِّكُمْ (...while they have rejected the Truth that has come to you, expelling the Messenger and your selves [from Makkah], merely because you have faith in Allah, your Lord...60:1). The word *ḥaqq* [truth] refers either to the Qur'ān or to Islam. This part of the verse refers to their *kufr* (rejection of Truth) as the real reason of their enmity. Then it points out even to their hostile attitude, proved on the ground, that they drove the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his followers out of their dear homes, not for any worldly grudge, but for one and only one reason, that is, their faith. Thus it becomes clear that believers as long as they are believers, the non-believers cannot be their intimate friends. This also clarifies that the position Ḥāṭib ؓ had taken was inappropriate. He was wrong in his thinking that if he did them a favor, they would be obliged to him and take care of his family, because they were enemies of the faith. Unless [God forbid!] one loses one's faith, the hope of friendly intimacy with the enemies of Allah is illusory and virtually impossible.

اِنْ كُنْتُمْ خَرَجْتُمْ جِهَادًا فِيْ سَبِيْلِيْ وَابْتِغَآءَ مَرْضَاتِيْ (...if you have set out to do *jihād* (struggle) in My way, and to seek My pleasure...60:1). This statement also points out that if the migration was indeed for the sake of Allah and His good pleasure, it is impossible for an infidel, the enemy of Allah, to take care of Allah's friend.

تُسِرُّوْنَ اِلَيْهِمْ بِالْمَوَدَّةِ ۖ وَاَنَا اَعْلَمُ بِمَآ اَخْفَيْتُمْ وَمَآ اَعْلَنْتُمْ (...You express love with them secretly, while I know what you have concealed and what you have revealed ....60:1). This statement makes it clear that anyone who secretly maintains a friendly intimacy with the unbelievers should not think that it will remain secret. Allah is fully aware of what people do secretly and openly, as it happened in the story recounted above. Allah informed the Holy Prophet ﷺ by revelation and had the secret plot thwarted.

اِنْ يَّثْقَفُوْكُمْ يَكُوْنُوْا لَكُمْ اَعْدَآءً وَّيَبْسُطُوْٓا اِلَيْكُمْ اَيْدِيَهُمْ وَاَلْسِنَتَهُمْ بِالسُّوْٓءِ (Should they have access to you, they will become your enemies, and will stretch their hands and tongues towards you with evil;...60:2). The verse indicates how bitter are the feelings of disbelievers towards Muslims. They would use all means, their hands and their tongues, and would spare no effort to harm the Muslims. Therefore, it is impossible that when they find an

opportunity in their favor and overpower Muslims, they will ever exercise tolerance towards them.

وَدُّوْا لَوْ تَكْفُرُوْنَ (...and they desire that you should reject the (true) faith...60:2). The greatest desire of the non-believers' hearts is to see the Muslims revert to disbelief. Thus when the Muslims stretch their hand of friendship towards them, it will be at the cost of their belief. They will never be happy with the Muslims unless they give up their faith.

لَنْ تَنْفَعَكُمْ اَرْحَامُكُمْ وَلَآ اَوْلَادُكُمْ ۚ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ يَفْصِلُ بَيْنَكُمْ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ بَصِيْرٌ (Neither your womb-relations nor your children will avail you on the Day of Judgment. He will decide between you, and Allah is watchful of what you do...60:3). The verse refutes the plea of Sayyidnā Ḥāṭib ﷺ He did what he did for the love of his children, but they will be of no help on the Day of Resurrection. All relations on that day will come to an end. Parents will flee from their children, and children from their parents, and no secret will ever remain hidden from Allah.

قَدْ كَانَتْ لَكُمْ اُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ فِيْٓ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ......حَتّٰى تُؤْمِنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَحْدَهٗ (Indeed, there is an excellent example for you in Ibrāhīm and those with him, when they said to their people, "We disown you and what you worship instead of Allah. We disbelieve in you. Enmity and hatred has arisen between us and you forever, unless you believe in Allah alone",....60:4). This verse supports and emphasizes the abstaining from maintaining close friendly relations with non-believers. This rule of law is illustrated by the excellent example of Holy Prophet Ibrāhīm عليه السلام whose entire family worshipped idols, but he not only washed his hands of them and disowned them, but also announced, and erected a wall of, enmity and hatred with them for ever, unless and until they give up idol-worship and have belief in Allah alone.

Allaying a Doubt

The current verse emphasizes that Muslims should follow the excellent model of Holy Prophet Ibrāhīm عليه السلام and, it is established in Sūrah Taubah and in other places in the Qur'ān that, he prayed for the forgiveness of his father who was an idol-worshipper. This could create doubt that, in pursuance of the command of Allah to follow the example of Prophet Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, it is permitted to pray for the forgiveness of one's parents or other relatives who are idol-worshippers. But the later part of Verse [4] makes an exception to the command of following Ibrāhīm عليه السلام.

إِلَّا قَوْلَ إِبْرٰهِيمَ لِأَبِيهِ لَأَسْتَغْفِرَنَّ لَكَ (...but [his example is] not [to be followed] in what Ibrāhīm said to his father, "I will pray to my Lord for your forgiveness... 60:4). This implies that it is imperative to follow the model of Holy Prophet Ibrāhīm عليه السلام in all respects, except in the case of prayer for his father's forgiveness. It is not permitted to emulate his *sunnah* in this respect. His reason for praying for his father's forgiveness has been explained in Sūrah Taubah. He prayed for his father's forgiveness before the prohibitory injunction was ordained, or probably when he felt that faith has entered into his father's heart, but when it became plain to him that he was Allah's enemy he washed his hands of him and disowned him, thus فَلَمَّا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ أَنَّهُ عَدُوٌّ لِّلَّهِ تَبَرَّأَ مِنْهُ (...and when it became clear to him that he was an enemy of Allah, he renounced him....9:114)

Some of the scholars analyze the phrase إِلَّا قَوْلَ إِبْرٰهِيمَ (but not in what Ibrāhīm said ...) grammatically as *istithna' munqaṭi'*, that is, exceptive sentence in which the exception is severed from, or wholly different in kind from, the general term. In terms of this grammatical analysis, praying for his father's forgiveness is not contrary to Abrahamic model. Holy Prophet Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was under the impression that his father had become a Muslim, so he prayed for the forgiveness of his Muslim father. Later when he learnt the truth, he gave up praying for him and renounced him. If anyone believes, even today, that a particular unbeliever has most probably embraced Islam, there is no harm in praying for his pardon. [Qurṭubī]. Allah knows best!

Verses 7 - 9

عَسَى اللّٰهُ أَنْ يَّجْعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَ الَّذِينَ عَادَيْتُمْ مِّنْهُمْ مَّوَدَّةً ۗ وَاللّٰهُ قَدِيرٌ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿٧﴾ لَا يَنْهٰكُمُ اللّٰهُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَلَمْ يُخْرِجُوكُمْ مِّنْ دِيَارِكُمْ أَنْ تَبَرُّوهُمْ وَتُقْسِطُوا إِلَيْهِمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ ﴿٨﴾ إِنَّمَا يَنْهٰكُمُ اللّٰهُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ قَاتَلُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَأَخْرَجُوكُمْ مِّنْ دِيَارِكُمْ وَظٰهَرُوا عَلٰى إِخْرَاجِكُمْ أَنْ تَوَلَّوْهُمْ ۚ وَمَنْ يَّتَوَلَّهُمْ فَأُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الظّٰلِمُونَ ﴿٩﴾

Hopefully Allah will bring about love between you and those of them with whom you have enmity. And Allah is Powerful, and Allah is Most-forgiving, Very-Merciful. [7] **Allah does not forbid you from doing good and justice to those who did not fight you because of faith, and did not expel you from your homes. Surely Allah loves those who maintain justice.** [8] **Allah forbids you only from having friendship with those who fought you on account of faith, and expelled you from your homes, and helped (others) in expelling you. And those who develop friendship with them, it is they who are the wrongdoers.** [9]

Commentary

The preceding verses vehemently prohibited Muslims to maintain any friendly intimacy with non-believers, even though they had very near blood relationships with them. The noble Companions used to carry out the commands of Allah and His Messenger in letter and spirit. In this matter, they did not care about their personal desires, or about their near and dear ones. This command was also carried out with the result that in some homes the father was a Muslim and the son was an unbeliever or *vice versa.* Friendly relations were severed. Obviously, this situation was not easy for their human nature. That is why Allah gives them the assurance that soon the hardship will be over.

According to some *aḥādīth*, when a servant of Allah gives up his favorite thing for the sake of Allah, Allah delivers it to him in a lawful manner, and at times he is granted something better than it.

The present verses give an indication that those who are implacable enemies of Muslims because of their disbelief would soon become their friends. In other words, Allah will grant the enemies the ability to embrace the Faith and thus restore the mutual relationships. This prophecy was fulfilled on the occasion of the Conquest of Makkah when, besides the unbelievers who were killed, the rest of the people became Muslims. [Maẓharī]. The Holy Qur'ān describes it thus يَدْخُلُوْنَ فِيْ دِيْنِ اللّٰهِ اَفْوَاجًا (...and you see people entering Allah's [approved] religion in multitudes..) [110:2]

It is recorded in Sahih of Bukhari, on the authority of Sayyidah Asmā' bint Abū Bakr ﷺ, that her mother arrived in Madīnah from

Makkah in the state of disbelief. According to a narration in Musnad of Aḥmad, this incident occurred when peace treaty of Ḥudaibiyah with the Makkan Quraish had been concluded and was in force. Her mother's name was Qutailah. She brought gifts for her daughter Sayyidah Asmā' ﷺ, but she refused to accept them. She did not even allow her to enter her house unless she sought the permission of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Sayyidah Asmā' ﷺ asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ how to treat her mother who came to her while still disbeliever. The Holy Prophet ﷺ advised her to treat her kindly, politely and courteously. On that occasion, the following verse was revealed لَا يَنْهٰىكُمُ اللّٰهُ عَنِ الَّذِيْنَ لَمْ يُقَاتِلُوْكُمْ فِى الدِّيْنِ (Allah does not forbid you from doing good and justice to those who did not fight you because of faith ....60:8)

Some reports indicate that Sayyidah Asmā''s ﷺ mother Qutailah was divorced by Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ﷺ in the Days of Ignorance. Sayyidah Asmā''s sister, Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah ﷺ, was born of the second wife of Abū Bakr ﷺ, namely, Umm Rūmān, who had embraced Islam. [Ibn Kathīr and Maẓharī].

The verse directs that justice and good behavior should be maintained with those unbelievers who did not fight the Muslims. As for justice, it is obligatory to maintain with every non-Muslim, whether he is a citizen of an Islamic State, or the Muslims have peace agreement with him, or a citizen of an un-Islamic State, even though he is at war with Muslims. Rather, Islam enjoins upon Muslims to do justice even to animals. We are not allowed to lay a burden on them more than they can bear. We need to take care of their fodder and comfort. The focus of the verse, therefore, is upon the direction that they should be treated, not only with justice, but also in good and courteous manner.

Ruling

This verse proves that optional charities may be spent on non-Muslim citizens of an Islamic State and on non-Muslims with whom the Muslims have a peace pact. It is, however, forbidden to spend on non-believers who are at war with Muslims.

اِنَّمَا يَنْهٰىكُمُ اللّٰهُ عَنِ الَّذِيْنَ قَاتَلُوْكُمْ فِى الدِّيْنِ وَاَخْرَجُوْكُمْ مِّنْ دِيَارِكُمْ وَظَاهَرُوْا عَلٰٓى اِخْرَاجِكُمْ اَنْ تَوَلَّوْهُمْ (Allah forbids you only from having friendship with those who fought you on account of faith, and expelled you from your homes, and helped

(others) in expelling you....60:9) This verse speaks of those unbelievers who fought the Muslims in the matter of religion, drove them from their homes or supported their expulsion. These are hostile disbelievers and the Divine injunction in connection with them is to abstain from having friendly or cordial intimacy with them. This verse does not forbid just and kind treatment of them. It merely forbids friendly intimacy and relations. Prohibition of having such friendly intimacy is not restricted only to those enemies who actively wage war against Muslims, but it is extended to *ahludh- dhimmah* [non-Muslim citizens of an Islamic State] and to *ahluṣ-sulḥ* [non-Muslims with whom there is a peace pact]. Intimate and heart-felt friendship is not allowed with them too. On the basis of this juristic principle, Maẓharī has ruled that justice, equity and fairness are necessary even with the hostile disbelievers who are at war with Muslims. Prohibition applies only in the case of cordial and friendly intimacy, not in the case of courteous attitude and kindness. This shows that it is permissible to be polite and courteous to those hostile enemies who are at war with Muslims. However, treating them with tenderness and courtesy should not cause danger, threat, harm or loss to Muslims. Wherever courtesy or tenderness might pose such a danger, it is not permitted to be tender or courteous towards them. Of course, justice and equity in all cases and under all circumstances are necessary and imperative. Allah, the Pure and Exalted, knows best!]

Verses 10 - 13

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِذَا جَآءَكُمُ الْمُؤْمِنٰتُ مُهٰجِرٰتٍ فَامْتَحِنُوْهُنَّ ط
اَللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ بِاِيْمَانِهِنَّ ج فَاِنْ عَلِمْتُمُوْهُنَّ مُؤْمِنٰتٍ فَلَا تَرْجِعُوْهُنَّ اِلَى
الْكُفَّارِ ط لَاهُنَّ حِلٌّ لَّهُمْ وَلَاهُمْ يَحِلُّوْنَ لَهُنَّ ط وَاٰتُوْهُمْ مَّآ اَنْفَقُوْا ط
وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ اَنْ تَنْكِحُوْهُنَّ اِذَآ اٰتَيْتُمُوْهُنَّ اُجُوْرَهُنَّ ط وَلَا
تُمْسِكُوْا بِعِصَمِ الْكَوَافِرِ وَسْئَلُوْا مَآ اَنْفَقْتُمْ وَلْيَسْئَلُوْا مَآ اَنْفَقُوْا ط
ذٰلِكُمْ حُكْمُ اللّٰهِ ط يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَكُمْ ط وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿١٠﴾ وَاِنْ
فَاتَكُمْ شَيْءٌ مِّنْ اَزْوَاجِكُمْ اِلَى الْكُفَّارِ فَعَاقَبْتُمْ فَاٰتُوا الَّذِيْنَ ذَهَبَتْ

أَزْوَاجُهُم مِّثْلَ مَآ أَنفَقُوا ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِىٓ أَنتُم بِهِ مُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١١﴾
يَٰٓأَيُّهَا النَّبِىُّ إِذَا جَآءَكَ الْمُؤْمِنَٰتُ يُبَايِعْنَكَ عَلَىٰٓ أَن لَّا يُشْرِكْنَ بِاللَّهِ
شَيْـًٔا وَلَا يَسْرِقْنَ وَلَا يَزْنِينَ وَلَا يَقْتُلْنَ أَوْلَٰدَهُنَّ وَلَا يَأْتِينَ بِبُهْتَٰنٍ
يَفْتَرِينَهُۥ بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِنَّ وَأَرْجُلِهِنَّ وَلَا يَعْصِينَكَ فِى مَعْرُوفٍ ۙ فَبَايِعْهُنَّ
وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُنَّ اللَّهَ ۖ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١٢﴾ يَٰٓأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا
لَا تَتَوَلَّوْا قَوْمًا غَضِبَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ قَدْ يَئِسُوا مِنَ الْءَاخِرَةِ كَمَا يَئِسَ
الْكُفَّارُ مِنْ أَصْحَٰبِ الْقُبُورِ ﴿١٣﴾

O you who believe, when the believing women come to you as *emigrants*, put them to a test. Allah knows best about their faith. So, if you find them faithful, do not send them back to the disbelievers. Neither these (women) are lawful for them, nor are those (disbelievers) lawful for these (women). And give them (the disbelievers) that (dower) which they had paid (to these women). And there is no sin for you if you marry them, when you give them their dowers. And do not hold on to the ties of marriage with the disbelieving women, and ask (their new non-muslim husbands to pay to you) that (dower) which you had paid (to such women), and they (the previous non-muslim husbands of the Muslim women) should ask (their new Muslim husbands) to pay that (dower) which they had paid (to their previous wives). That is the decision of Allah. He decides between you. And Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise. [10] **And if some of your (non-muslim) wives have slipped from you, (and their present non-muslim husbands do not pay to you the dower as aforesaid,) and you have your turn (of paying dower to the previous non-muslim husbands of your present wives), then (instead of paying dower to them,) give those whose wives have slipped the like amount of what they had paid (to them). And fear Allah, the One in whom you believe.** [11]

O Prophet, when the believing women come to you, seeking *bai'ah* (a pledge of allegiance) with you that they will not ascribe any thing as a partner to Allah, and will not commit theft, and will not commit

fornication, and will not kill their children, and will not come up with a calumny that they falsely attribute between their hands and their feet, and will not disobey you in what is recognized (in Sharī'ah), then effect *bai'ah* with them (i.e. accept their pledge) and pray Allah for their forgiveness. Surely Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [12]

O you who believe, do not have friendship with a people with whom Allah is angry. They have despaired from the Hereafter as the infidels have despaired from those (buried) in the graves. [13]

Commentary

Cause of Revelation

Peace Treaty of Ḥudaibiyah and an Analysis of some of its Clauses

These verses are related to the event of the treaty of Ḥudaibiyah which was discussed at legnth in Sūrah Al-Fatḥ. After protracted negotiation, a treaty was concluded between the Quraish of Makkah and the Messenger of Allah ﷺ for ten years. Some of the terms of the treaty were accepted only under pressure and the Muslims apparently felt subdued and thus were greatly disturbed. Therefore, the noble Companions expressed extreme grief and indignation but the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was working under Divine direction, in that the temporary feeling of defeat is actually a prelude to 'a clear victory', so he conceded to the fragile terms and conditions of the treaty, and eventually the blessed Companions also accepted.

One of the terms of the treaty was that if any person goes away to Madīnah from Makkah, the Holy Prophet ﷺ will send him back to Makkah, but if any person goes away to Makkah from Madīnah, he will not be returned. The wordings of this clause are general, apparently covering both men and women. In other words, if a Muslim man or woman goes to the Holy Prophet ﷺ from Makkah, he shall send him or her back.

The treaty had hardly been concluded while the Holy Prophet ﷺ was still in Ḥudaibiyah, several incidents occurred that were trying for the Muslims. One such incident was that of Sayyidnā Abū Jandal رضي الله عنه who was imprisoned and held captive by the pagan Quraish in Makkah.

Somehow he managed to escape and appeared before the Holy Prophet ﷺ in the Muslim camp with his feet in fetters. When the blessed Companions saw him, they were totally puzzled. They felt that he should be returned in terms of the treaty but, on the other hand, they thought it would be improper for them to hand their oppressed brother back to the oppressive enemies. But the Holy Prophet ﷺ had already concluded the treaty and the protection and firmness of the principles of Sharī'ah could not be sacrificed on account of an individual. The Holy Prophet ﷺ was, at the same time, foresighted and farsighted. He could foresee the victory of the oppressed Muslims and their salvage very soon. The Holy Prophet ﷺ for sure must have felt natural grief about returning Sayyidnā Abū Jandal رضي الله عنه, but as he was bound by the terms of the treaty, he explained to him the situation and sent him off.

A similar incident was that of Sayyidah Sa'īdah bint al-Ḥārith al-Aslamiyyah رضي الله عنها, a Muslim lady. She was married to Ṣaifi Ibn Anṣab who was a non-believer. Some reports give his name as Musāfir al-Makhzūmī. Up to this point, marriage relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims was not forbidden. This Muslim lady escaped from Makkah and went to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The husband followed her and demanded that the Holy Prophet ﷺ should restore his wife to him because he [the Holy Prophet ﷺ] has accepted this condition and the seal of the treaty is still fresh. On that occasion, the above verses were revealed, which declare that marriage tie between Muslims and idol-worshippers is forbidden. Consequently, if a Muslim lady, whether her Islam was known from beforehand, as in the case of Sayyidah Sa'īdah bint al-Ḥārith رضي الله عنها, or her Islam is verified at the time of migration, emigrates and joins the Holy Prophet ﷺ, she will not be returned to her non-Muslim husband, because she is forbidden to him. [Qurṭubī cited this incident in his commentary on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه].

Hence, these verses clarify that the assumption that the general sense of the wordings of the treaty cover both genders, males as well as females, is incorrect. This condition is acceptable in the case of men, and not in the case of women. The best that can be done in their case is as follows: If a lady becomes Muslim and emigrates to the Muslim land, her *mahr* [dower] should be returned to her non-Muslim husband which he had spent on

her. On the basis of these verses, the Holy Prophet ﷺ clarified the meaning of the clause. Hence, he did not restore the aforementioned Sa'īdah رضي الله عنها to her non-Muslim husband.

According to some reports, Umm Kulthūm, the daughter of the notorious 'Utbah Ibn Abī Mu'aiṭ, emigrated from Makkah and came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The disbelievers invoked the treaty and demanded her return. Some reports also indicate that she was married to 'Amr Ibn al-'Āṣ [who had not become a Muslim until then]. Her two brothers along with her escaped from Makkah and reached the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Her husband 'Amr Ibn al-'Āṣ came to Madīnah to take her back. In compliance with the terms of the treaty, the two brothers, 'Umarah and Walid, were sent back, but the Holy Prophet ﷺ did not send Sayyidah Umm Kulthūm رضي الله عنها and said that the clause applied to men, not to women. At this, the verses were revealed and confirmed the Holy Prophet's ﷺ interpretation.

Besides, several other reports relate similar incidents of other women who reached the Holy Prophet ﷺ after embracing Islam. Obviously, there is no contradiction in these narratives. Possibly all these incidents have taken place.

Exemption of Women from the Terms of the Treaty is not a Breach of Treaty. It is a clarification by Mutual Agreement of Parties Concerned.

Qurṭubī's above narration indicates that the wordings of the relevant clause were, though general, did not, according to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, cover women. Therefore, he clarified this position in Ḥudaibiyah, and these verses were revealed to confirm it. According to other versions, it seems that the Holy Prophet ﷺ went along with the general import of the clause, which covered women as well as men. These verses abrogated the general meaning of it, and the Holy Prophet ﷺ made it clear to the Quraish of Makkah, then and there, that the women are exempted from the clause. Consequently, he did not send them back. This shows that this exception was neither a breach of the treaty, which was highly unlikely from the Holy Prophet ﷺ, nor was it the case of ending the treaty. It was, in fact, a case of clarifying the true import of the clause. It does not matter whether this was the Holy Prophet's ﷺ understanding from the outset or whether he restricted the generality of the clause to men, to the exclusion

of women, after the revelation of the verse. At any rate, even after the clarification, both parties confirmed the peace treaty and acted upon it for a period of time. As a result of the peace pact, roads were safe and secure. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ wrote letters to the kings and emperors of the world. Abū Sufyān's trading caravan freely went into the Syrian territory where Heraclius invited him to his royal court and investigated about the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.

In short, even after the clarification both parties took the treaty as a valid document and acted upon it for a period of time. Therefore, it is not true to construe the clarification of the clause as a breach or termination of the treaty. Allah knows best!

Let us now study the meaning of the verses:

Testing the Believing Emigrant Women

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓا۟ إِذَا جَآءَكُمُ ٱلْمُؤْمِنَٰتُ مُهَٰجِرَٰتٍ فَٱمْتَحِنُوهُنَّ ۖ ٱللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِإِيمَٰنِهِنَّ (O you who believe, when the believing women come to you as emigrants, put them to a test, Allah knows best about their faith...60:10). The verse purports to say that women are exempted from the relevant clause of the treaty because of their being Muslims. Since it was possible that a woman had fled from Makkah, not because of her faith, but on account of displeasure with her husband or being in love with some person in Madīnah or for some other mundane motive. Such women are not exempted from the terms of the treaty, but it is incumbent to send her back. Therefore the Muslims were ordered by this verse that they should put such a woman to a test to discover whether she was sincere and honest in her faith. Allah further states : ٱللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِإِيمَٰنِهِنَّ (Allah knows best about their faith... 60:10) It indicates that real faith belongs to human heart which none besides Allah knows. It is possible to estimate a man's faith by his verbal confession and circumstantial evidence. Muslims are legally obliged to do just this much.

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه has explained the method of their testing as follows: An oath used to be taken from an emigrant woman to assert that she had not come because of hatred for her husband, or for the love of any man in Madīnah, or for any mundane reason, but purely and solely for the sake of Allah and for the love and pleasure of His Messenger ﷺ. When she swore an oath to this effect, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ would permit her to reside in Madīnah and would return to her disbelieving

husband the dower [*mahr*] etc. that he might have spent on the believing emigrant wife. [Qurṭubī]

Sayyidah Ṣiddiqah ﷺ reports, as recorded in Tirmidhī [and he grades it as '*ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ*'], that the method of testing them was the pledge of allegiance as in the forthcoming verse: اِذَا جَآءَكَ الْمُؤْمِنٰتُ يُبَايِعْنَكَ (... when the believing women come to you, seeking *bai'ah* [a pledge of allegiance] with you ....60:12). In other words, the methodology of testing the faith of the emigrant women was the pledge the women swore on the blessed hands of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ as set out in this verse. It is not inconceivable that they had first to take an oath as mentioned in the narration of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ and then they had to accomplish it by giving an oath of loyalty as mentioned in the verse 12. And Allah knows best!

فَاِنْ عَلِمْتُمُوْهُنَّ مُؤْمِنٰتٍ فَلَا تَرْجِعُوْهُنَّ اِلَى الْكُفَّارِ (...So, if you find them faithful, do not send them back to the disbelievers. . .60:10). In other words, when you have tested the emigrant women according to the above method and ascertained to your satisfaction that they were sincere and honest in their faith, then it is not permissible to send them back to the unbelievers.

لَاهُنَّ حِلٌّ لَّهُمْ وَلَاهُمْ يَحِلُّوْنَ لَهُنَّ (...Neither these [women] are lawful for them, nor are those [disbelievers)] lawful for these [women]. ..60:10). That is to say, neither the believing women are permitted to remain in marriage with the unbelieving men nor are the unbelieving men permitted to marry them again.

Ruling

The verse states that any woman who was married to an unbeliever, but later she embraced Islam while her husband did not, the marriage tie between a believing woman and her disbelieving husband was *ipso facto* dissolved. This is the reason why women were exempted from the relevant clause of the treaty, as she was no longer permitted to her disbelieving husband.

وَاٰتُوْهُمْ مَّآ اَنْفَقُوْا (...And give them [the disbelievers] that [dower] which they had paid [to these women]....60:10) In other words, the emigrant believing woman's unbelieving husband should be refunded the dower etc. that he spent on her at the time of marriage. The relevant clause of treaty merely exempted women from being returned to their disbelieving husbands, because the relationship is not permitted, but the wealth or

money the latter had spent on the former should be paid back. The verse does not address the emigrant women to refund what their former husbands have spent on them. It addresses the Muslim Community as a whole to return the wealth or money, because it was possible, rather most likely that the wealth that was given to her might have finished or might have been depleted and they might be left with nothing to return. Hence, the Muslim Community as a whole was entrusted with the responsibility of paying back on her behalf to fulfil the terms of the treaty. If this responsibility could be carried out by the State from its public treasury [*bai-ul-māl*], it would be so much the better, or it should have been paid by contributions of the Muslims. [Qurṭubī]

وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ اَنْ تَنْكِحُوْهُنَّ اِذَآ اٰتَيْتُمُوْهُنَّ اُجُوْرَهُنَّ (...And there is no sin for you if you marry them, when you give them their dowers....60:10) The previous verse made it clear that the marriage tie between the emigrant believing woman and her disbelieving husband dissolves, and thus she is forbidden to him. The current verse clarifies that it is possible for a Muslim man to marry this emigrant lady, although her former husband is still alive and did not divorce her, but in terms of the sacred law of Sharī'ah, the marriage with him stands dissolved. Marriage, therefore, with another Muslim is permitted.

It is clear from the above verse that if an unbeliever's wife becomes Muslim, the marriage tie is automatically broken. The question now is when will it be possible for her to marry another Muslim man. According to Imām Abū Ḥanīfah رحمه الله تعالى, the basic principle is as follows: When the wife becomes a convert to the Islamic faith and her husband remains an infidel, the Muslim ruler should call upon the husband to embrace the faith also. If he accepts, the woman continues to be his wife; but if he refuses, the Muslim ruler must separate them. Thus separation is completed between them. She may then marry any Muslim man of her choice. But obviously, a Muslim ruler can approach the husband only in an Islamic country. It is not possible to approach him, if he is in a non-Muslim country, to make any such requisition and decide on separation in case of refusal. In such an instance, the way out is for the woman to migrate to the Islamic State or join the Muslim army base, in which case the separation will be accomplished. This situation, in the legal parlance of the jurists, is referred to as *ikhtilāf-ud-dārain* or difference of

states. It means that if there is a difference of states between an unbelieving husband and a believing wife, the former being in un-Islamic State and the latter in the Islamic state, the separation is accomplished, and the wife is free to marry someone else. [Hidāyah and others]

The verse, while permitting the Muslims to marry such women, has added: إِذَا اٰتَيْتُمُوْهُنَّ أُجُوْرَهُنَّ "when you give them their dowers". This in fact is not a condition of marriage, because the jurists unanimously agree that the validity of marriage is not conditional upon payment of dower [*mahr*], though its payment is compulsory on or after marriage. It has been mentioned here as a condition presumably because one *mahr* has already been returned to the unbelieving husband, and the Muslim who wished to marry her might think that there was no need for him to pay another *mahr,* since her *mahr* has already been paid. Hence, the verse clarifies that the previous *mahr* was in lieu of the previous marriage. When the next marriage would take place, another *mahr* would be compulsory.

وَلَا تُمْسِكُوْا بِعِصَمِ الْكَوَافِرِ (...And do not hold on to the ties of marriage with the disbelieving women....60:10) The word *'isam* is the plural of *'ismah,* which originally means 'protection//bond' and it refers to the marriage bond that is protected. The word *kawāfir* is the plural of *kāfirah* and it refers to a 'pagan woman'. It cannot refer to an unbelieving woman who is a *kitābiyyah* [a follower of a previously revealed scripture, like a Jew or a Christian], because it is permitted to marry her by the express text of the Qur'ān. The purport of the verse is to explain that the marriage between the Muslims and the pagans that was allowed so far is now repealed. It is forbidden for a Muslim now to marry a pagan woman. Such marriages that had been contracted previously have also been cancelled. It is not lawful for any Muslim man to carry on marriage ties with women who are polytheists. When this verse was revealed, the blessed Companions gave up their wives who were polytheists. Sayyidnā 'Umar رضي الله عنه had two pagan wives who were with him until the migration, but when the migration took place, they remained in Makkah. When this verse was revealed, Sayyidnā 'Umar رضي الله عنه divorced them. [Transmitted by al-Baghawi from Zuhrī, as quoted by Maẓharī]. The word *ṭalāq* (divorce) used in this narration means to 'sever relationship'. *Ṭalāq* in its technical sense was not needed here, because by virtue of this verse the marriage tie or bond has already been broken.

وَاسۡـَٔلُوۡا مَاۤ اَنۡفَقۡتُمۡ وَلۡيَسۡـَٔلُوۡا مَاۤ اَنۡفَقُوۡا (..., and ask that which you had paid, and they should ask to pay that which they had paid ....60:10). It was stated previously that when a woman converts to Islam and emigrates to Madīnah, she is not sent back to Makkah, but becomes part of the Muslim Community, and the marriage tie between an emigrant believing woman and her disbelieving husband becomes dissolved in this way. However, it is necessary to give back the *mahr* (dower) of the disbelieving husband that he paid to her. Similarly, if [God forbid!] a Muslim woman becomes an apostate and absconds to Makkah, or if she was an infidel from beforehand and flees from her Muslim husband, the pagans of Makkah will not send her back, but they would be legally responsible to return the *mahr* that the Muslim husband had paid to her. Therefore, the amounts thus obligated should be determined by mutual understanding of the accounts. The Muslims acted upon this law willingly, because they sincerely believed that adherence to the command of the Qur'ān is binding. Thus they paid back the *mahr* to all unbelieving husbands who had paid it to their women. The pagans of Makkah, however, did not believe in the Qur'ān. Therefore, they did not act upon it, on which occasion the following verse was revealed. [Mentioned by al-Baghawī on the authority of Zuhrī, as quoted by Maẓharī]

وَاِنۡ فَاتَكُمۡ شَىۡءٌ مِّنۡ اَزۡوَاجِكُمۡ اِلَى الۡكُفَّارِ فَعَاقَبۡتُمۡ فَاٰتُوا الَّذِيۡنَ ذَهَبَتۡ اَزۡوَاجُهُمۡ مِّثۡلَ مَاۤ اَنۡفَقُوۡا ‌ؕ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ الَّذِىۡۤ اَنۡتُمۡ بِهٖ مُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ

> And if some of your [non-Muslim] wives have slipped from you, [and their present non-Muslim husbands do not pay to you the dower as aforesaid,] and you have your turn [of paying dower to the previous non-Muslim husbands of your present wives], then [instead of paying dower to them,] give those whose wives have slipped the like amount of what they had paid [to them]. And fear Allah, the One in whom you believe. (60:11)

The verb *'āqabtum* is derived from *mu 'āqabah*. It means 'to retaliate'. This meaning is possible here [as reported by Qatādah, Mujāhid and Qurṭubī]. In this case, it implies that if some of the wives of the Muslims desert to disbelievers, it was legally binding on them in terms of the treaty to pay back the dowers given to them by the Muslim husbands, just as the Muslims gave them back the dowers given by the pagan husbands to the emigrant Muslim women. But since the pagans failed to reciprocate, and

did not pay the dower money, the believing husbands are entitled to retaliate by withholding an amount equal to what was due on the disbelieving husbands who married the deserting wives of the Muslims, and did not pay it. How this withheld amount will be spent is mentioned in the following sentence: فَاٰتُوا الَّذِيْنَ ذَهَبَتْ اَزْوَاجُهُمْ مِّثْلَ مَآ اَنْفَقُوْا (... then [instead of paying dower to them,] give those whose wives have slipped the like amount of what they had paid.) This means that the amounts withheld as aforesaid shall be given to the Muslims whose wives had gone to the pagans, and they did not pay back their dowers to their Muslim husbands.

Another sense of the verb *'āqabtum, 'āqqabtum* and *a'qabtum* in its variant form is 'to acquire spoils of war'. The verb *'āqabtum* is read in these variant forms (*qirā'āt*) by various master readers of the Qur'ān. Authorities like Qatādah and Mujāhid ﷺ have said that all these three forms of the verb mean to 'acquire spoils of war'. In this case the verse means: if the Muslim husbands' wives fled to the unbelievers and, in terms of the treaty, they did not return the dowers to the Muslim husbands, they would be compensated from the booty acquired in war.(1)

Did some of the Muslim Women become Apostates and flee to Makkah?

Some of the authorities believe that the situation mentioned in this verse arose only in one incident. The wife of Sayyidnā 'Iyāḍ Ibn Ghanam Quraishī, Umm-ul-Hakam bint Abī Sufyān, abandoned the Islamic Faith and fled to Makkah. However, later on she reverted to Islam.

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ reports that about six women altogether abandoned Islam and deserted to the unbelievers, one of whom is the woman whose name has been given in the previous paragraph. The other

(1) A third interpretation of the word is that it is derived from *'aqibah'* which means 'turn', and the infinitive *mu'aqabah* means 'to take turn in riding a horse etc.' In this case the verb *'āqabtum* in the verse would mean: 'you have your turn', and the sense would be that when it is your turn to pay the dowers to the unbelievers, you should, instead of paying it to them, pay it to those Muslims whose wives have deserted them and joined the unbelievers who did not return to their husbands the dower they had paid to deserting wives and were entitled, by virtue of the treaty, to take it back from the unbelievers. This interpretation is adopted by 'Ālūsī in Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī, and by Maulana Ashraf 'Alī Thanawi رحمه الله تعالى. The translation in the text is based on it. **(Muḥammad Taqi Usmānī)**

five of them were infidels from outset and remained in Makkah at the time of migration. When this verse was revealed dissolving the marriage between Muslims and pagans, they stubbornly clung to their disbelief and were not willing to embrace the Faith. As a result, these women were also counted among those whose dowers should be paid to their Muslim husbands by the pagans of Makkah. But they did not pay, so the Messenger of Allah ﷺ compensated for the loss of their dowers from the spoils of war.

This indicates that there is only one incident where a woman actually became an apostate and fled to Makkah from Madīnah. The rest of the five women were unbelievers from beginning. As reported earlier, even the woman who abandoned Islam and fled to Makkah later on reverted to Islam. [Qurṭubī]. Baghawī cites, on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنهما, that all five women who are counted as apostates reverted to Islam later on. [Maẓharī].

Bai'ah of Women

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلنَّبِىُّ إِذَا جَآءَكَ ٱلْمُؤْمِنَٰتُ يُبَايِعْنَكَ عَلَىٰٓ أَن لَّا يُشْرِكْنَ بِٱللَّهِ شَيْـًٔا (O Prophet, when the believing women come to you, seeking *bai'ah* [a pledge of allegiance] with you that they will not ascribe any thing as a partner to Allah, ...60:12). This verse requires the Holy Prophet ﷺ to take a pledge from the Muslim women not only to adhere to Islamic articles of faith, but also to all the Islamic precepts. Previously, in verse [10] Allah had directed that when the emigrant women come to the believers, they should be tested and examined. The pledge of allegiance in the present verse is a complement to this test of the faith. But the words of the verse are general, and not confined to new Muslim emigrants. In fact, it covers all Muslim women. Accordingly, when the pledge was actually taken, it was not restricted to the emigrant new Muslim women, but the earlier Muslim women joined it as well, as is recorded in Ṣaḥīḥ of Bukhārī, on the authority of Sayyidah Umm 'Aṭiyyah رضي الله عنها. It is also recorded by Baghawi from Sayyidah Umaimah bint Ruqaiqah رضي الله عنها who adds that in the company of a few other women she gave *bai'ah* (pledge) to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. The Holy Prophet ﷺ added the following over-rider فِيمَا اسْتَطَعْتُنَّ وَاَطَقْتُنَّ (In as much as you have the ability and strength to carry them out.) Sayyidah Umaimah رضي الله عنها says: "This shows that the Holy Prophet ﷺ had more mercy and

compassion for us than ourselves, as we wanted to pledge without any restriction or condition, but by utterance of this sentence he reduced the burden and tension of the terms of the loyalty, so that we may not be held guilty for any violation under compelled circumstances." [Maẓharī].

Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah ﵂ says, as recorded in Bukhārī, that the loyalty of women was their verbal pledge of allegiance, not by touching the hand of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, as was the custom in the case of men's loyalty. The Holy Prophet's ﷺ blessed hand never touched the hand of any non-*maḥram*. [Maẓharī]

Reports indicate that the *bai'ah* (pledge of allegiance) of women took place not only on this occasion after Ḥudaibiyah, but several times later as well. Such a pledge was taken on the day of the Conquest of Makkah. At first, the Holy Prophet ﷺ took pledge of loyalty from men, then he took it from women at mount Ṣafā. Sayyidnā 'Umar Ibn Khaṭṭāb ﵁ used to relay the words of loyalty, on behalf of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, to the women gathering at the foot of the mountain, who participated in this pledge. Abū Sufyān's wife, Hind, also participated in this pledge. At first, she felt embarrassed and wanted to hide herself. But the pledge contained some injunctions of Sharī'ah, and she was forced to speak and asked several questions. Maẓharī sets out a detailed account of this incident.

Men's *bai'ah* was Concise and Women's *bai'ah* Elaborate

Generally, the *bai'ah* taken from men was about Faith and Islam. Their pledge did not contain the details of injunctions of Sharī'ah, unlike the pledge of women, which contained the details that are forthcoming. The difference between the two pledge is that men's pledging for faith and obedience secures an undertaking to practice the entire system of Sharī'ah and religion, and therefore there was no need for details. Women, on the other hand, are generally less intelligent than men. Therefore, details were thought to be necessary. This is the *bai'ah* that started with women, but later on was not confined to them. As time went on, the same detailed *bai'ah* was taken from men as well. Prophetic Traditions confirm this [as transmitted by Sayyidnā 'Ubādah Ibn Ṣāmit ﵁] [Qurṭubī]. Furthermore, the injunctions mentioned in the *bai'ah* of women in this verse are those regarding which they are normally lax.

That is another reason why the following details had to be set out. There are six injunctions mentioned in the verse; يُبَايِعْنَكَ عَلَىٰٓ اَنْ لَّا يُشْرِكْنَ بِاللّٰهِ شَيْئًا (... seeking *bai'ah* (pledge of allegiance) with you that they will not ascribe any thing as a partner to Allah,....60:12) The first is that they will not ascribe any partner to Allah. Affirmation of faith and avoidance of *shirk* are vows common to men as well as women. The second pledge is that they shall not commit theft. Many women are wont to stealing from their husband's possessions. Therefore, this vow has been taken. The third vow is that they shall avoid committing adultery. If the women are firm in this, it shall make men's salvation from this sin easier. The fourth vow is that they shall not kill their children. In the Days of Ignorance, it was a common practice to bury infant girls alive and destroy their lives. This clause of the vow is a bar to it. The fifth vow is that they shall not bring calumny against anyone. While referring to this injunction, following words are added: بَيْنَ اَيْدِيْهِنَّ وَاَرْجُلِهِنَّ (...that they falsely attribute between their hands and their feet") This phrase has been added in order to indicate that on the Day of Resurrection man's hands and feet will bear witness against his actions. The verse thus warns that he is committing such sins in the presence of four witnesses who will bear witness against him.

The word *buhtān* [calumny] is used in its general sense and it is totally forbidden, whether against the husband or any other person or even against a non-believer. *Buhtān* is even more severe sin if it is against the husband. Commentators have interpreted that the clause of *buhtān* may take place in the following ways: [1] a woman may claim that a child born to her from another man is her husband's; [2] a woman may take custody of another child and claim that it is her husband's; and [3] God forbid! a woman may commit adultery and conceive, and when the child is born, she may impute it to her husband. In short, it is prohibited to give a false ascription of paternity in anyway whatsoever.

The sixth vow is a general rule: وَلَا يَعْصِيْنَكَ فِيْ مَعْرُوْفٍ (...and will not disobey you in what is recognized [in Sharī'ah]....60:12) This vow means that they shall obey Allah's Messenger ﷺ and will not disobey him. But the obedience is qualified by the words, "in what is recognized in Sharī'ah" that is, the right and good things, although we know for sure

that Allah's Messenger ﷺ will only command people to do right and good. This is because the Muslims in general are made to understand clearly that obedience to any creation in disobedience to Allah is absolutely forbidden, so much so that even obedience to the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been qualified by this condition.

Another reason for adding this phrase may be that since this pledge of obedience was taken from women, the Satan could whisper evil thoughts into their minds and create deviant ways for them to go awry. The restriction blocked the way. Allah, the Pure and Exalted, knows best!

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Mumtaḥinah
Ends here

Sūrah As-Saff

(The Row)

This Sūrah is Madanī, and it has 14 verses and 2 sections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 9

سَبَّحَ لِلّٰهِ مَا فِی السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِی الْاَرْضِ ج وَهُوَالْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ
﴿١﴾ يٰاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لِمَ تَقُوْلُوْنَ مَالَا تَفْعَلُوْنَ ﴿٢﴾ كَبُرَ مَقْتًا عِنْدَ
اللّٰهِ اَنْ تَقُوْلُوْا مَالَا تَفْعَلُوْنَ ﴿٣﴾ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحِبُّ الَّذِيْنَ يُقَاتِلُوْنَ فِیْ
سَبِيْلِهٖ صَفًّا كَاَنَّهُمْ بُنْيَانٌ مَّرْصُوْصٌ ﴿٤﴾ وَاِذْ قَالَ مُوْسٰی لِقَوْمِهٖ
يٰقَوْمِ لِمَ تُؤْذُوْنَنِیْ وَقَدْ تَّعْلَمُوْنَ اَنِّیْ رَسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ اِلَيْكُمْ ط فَلَمَّازَاغُوْا
اَزَاغَ اللّٰهُ قُلُوْبَهُمْ ط وَاللّٰهُ لَايَهْدِی الْقَوْمَ الْفٰسِقِيْنَ ﴿٥﴾ وَاِذْ قَالَ
عِيْسَی ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ يٰبَنِیْٓ اِسْرَآئِيْلَ اِنِّیْ رَسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ اِلَيْكُمْ مُّصَدِّقًا لِّمَا
بَيْنَ يَدَیَّ مِنَ التَّوْرٰىةِ وَمُبَشِّرًام بِرَسُوْلٍ يَّاْتِیْ مِنْۢ بَعْدِی اسْمُهٗٓ
اَحْمَدُ ط فَلَمَّا جَآءَهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ قَالُوْا هٰذَا سِحْرٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿٦﴾ وَمَنْ اَظْلَمُ
مِمَّنِ افْتَرٰی عَلَی اللّٰهِ الْكَذِبَ وَهُوَ يُدْعٰٓی اِلَی الْاِسْلَامِ ط وَاللّٰهُ لَا
يَهْدِی الْقَوْمَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٧﴾ ج يُرِيْدُوْنَ لِيُطْفِئُوْا نُوْرَاللّٰهِ بِاَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَاللّٰهُ
مُتِمُّ نُوْرِهٖ وَلَوْكَرِهَ الْكٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿٨﴾ هُوَالَّذِیْٓ اَرْسَلَ رَسُوْلَهٗ بِالْهُدٰی
وَدِيْنِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهٗ عَلَی الدِّيْنِ كُلِّهٖ لا وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿٩﴾ ع

Allah's purity has been proclaimed by all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth, and He is the All-Mighty, the All-Wise. [1] **O those who believe, why do you say what you do not do?** [2] **It is severely hateful in Allah's sight that you say what you do not do.** [3] **Surely Allah loves those who fight in His way in firm rows, as if they were a solid edifice.** [4] **And (remember) when Mūsā said to his people, "O my people, why do you hurt me, while you know that I am a messenger of Allah towards you." So, when they adopted crookedness, Allah let their hearts become crooked. And Allah does not guide the sinful people.** [5] **And (remember) when 'Īsā, son of Maryam, said, "O children of Isrā'īl, I am a messenger of Allah towards you, confirming the Taurah that is (sent down) before me, and giving you the good news of a messenger who will come after me, whose name is Aḥmad." But when he came to them with manifest signs, they said, "This is a clear magic."** [6] **And who is more unjust than the one who forges a lie against Allah, while he is invited to Islam? And Allah does not guide the unjust people.** [7] **They wish to extinguish the light of Allah with their mouths, but Allah is to perfect His light, even though the disbelievers dislike (it).** [8] **He is the One who has sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth, so that He makes it prevail over all religions, even though the *mushriks* (those who ascribe partners to Allah) dislike (it).** [9]

Commentary

Background of the revelation

Tirmidhī has recorded, on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Salām ﷺ, that a group of Companions discussed among themselves that if we come to know which is the dearest of actions in the sight of Allah, we shall act upon it. Ḥākim reported this Tradition and graded its chain as '*ṣaḥīḥ*'. Baghawī in his citation added the following words: "If we come to know which is the dearest of actions in the sight of Allah, we shall dedicate our lives and wealth to it." [Maẓharī].

Ibn Kathīr, with reference to Musnad of Aḥmad, reports that some of the Companions gathered and wanted someone to go to Allah's Messenger ﷺ and ask him about the action that is dearest to Allah, but no one dared to do so. Whilst this discussion was going on, the Holy Messenger ﷺ sent a man to call each one of them by name. When they all arrived, the Holy

Prophet ﷺ recited the entire Sūrah Aṣ-Ṣaff which had been revealed just then. This Sūrah shows that the 'dearest action' they were looking for was '*jihād* in the cause of Allah' and their statement that 'if we come to know about it, we shall dedicate our lives in acting upon it' was a sort of claim of having ability to do it. At this, they are admonished that it is not proper for any believer to make such a claim, because no one can for sure know whether he will be able to implement his intentions when the time arrives. It is not in his power that all the causes of action are made effective and all impediments are removed. Nor are the abilities and strengths of his hands or arms or limbs or organs altogether in his power. Nor is his determination or intention completely in his control. Therefore, even the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been instructed in the Qur'ān, thus:

وَلَا تَقُوْلَنَّ لِشَایْءٍ اِنِّیْ فَاعِلٌ ذٰلِكَ غَدًا اِلَّآ اَنْ یَّشَآءَ اللّٰهُ

"And never say about anything, 'I am going to do this tomorrow, unless [you say - 'if] Allah wills.) [18: 23-24]

Although the intention of the blessed Companions was not to make a boastful claim, it did seem apparently as a claim, which Allah dislikes. If a person makes a commitment to do something in the future, he needs to surrender it to the Divine will and affirm it by saying 'If Allah wills'. The following verses are revealed to admonish the believers.

یٰٓاَیُّهَا الَّذِیْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لِمَ تَقُوْلُوْنَ مَالَا تَفْعَلُوْنَ ﴿۲﴾ كَبُرَ مَقْتًا عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ اَنْ تَقُوْلُوْا مَالَا تَفْعَلُوْنَ ﴿۳﴾

(O those who believe, why do you say what you do not do? It is severely hateful in Allah's sight that you say what you do not do...61:2-3)

Apparently, the phrase 'what you do not do' implies that one should not claim to do something he does not intend to do. From this it may be deduced that it is prohibited to make a commitment to do a work while a person does not have the genuine intention to really do it, because this would be ostentation and a false commitment. Obviously, the blessed Companions, in the story of the background of revelation, were not making such promises without having intention to fulfill them. Instead, their intention was genuine. From this we learn that the verse includes a situation where a person commits to do something with true intention to do it, but relies solely on his own strength, it is not in keeping with his

station of *'abdiyyah* or 'servitude'. First of all, there is no need to make such a claim. If the occasion does arise to do something, he may go ahead and do it. If, for some reason or the other, a person has to make a promise or claim, he may affirm it by saying 'If Allah wills'. In this way, it would not be a boastful claim.

Ruling

It follows from the above discussion that if a person claims that he will do something in future but has no intention to do it, it is a major sin (*kabīrah*) and a cause of incurring Allah's wrath. The sentence: كَبُرَ مَقْتًا عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ "It is severely hateful in Allah's sight that you say what you do not do....[61:3]" applies to this situation. However, in a situation where one makes a claim to do something in future with real intention to do it, it is *makrūh* [reprehensible] and forbidden only if he makes the claim relying on his own strength and ability.

Difference between a Claim (*Da'wā*) and Preaching (*Da'wah*)

It is learnt from the foregoing discussion that these verses are related to false claims (*Da'wā*) to do something in future without intention to do it, which incurs Divine displeasure and indignation. This verse is not related to a situation where a preacher invites others to do something, while he himself does not do it. The rules of this situation are mentioned in other verses and Aḥadīth. For example: اَتَاْمُرُوْنَ النَّاسَ بِالْبِرِّ وَتَنْسَوْنَ اَنْفُسَكُمْ (Do you bid others to righteousness while you ignore your own selves) [2:44] This verse puts to shame such preachers who do not practice what they preach. The import of this verse is that when they are preaching to others, they should preach to themselves with greater force, and if they are calling other people to do good deeds, they too should practice them.

All this does not imply that if a person has been lax in the performance of good deeds, he should abandon preaching to others. Or if he has been indulging in any kind of sin, he should not forbid others from indulging in such sins. It needs to be borne in mind that the performance of a righteous deed is one form of virtue, and urging others to perform this righteous deed is another form of virtue in its own right. Obviously, if one has abandoned one form of virtue, it does not necessarily follow that he should abandon the other form as well. It is possible that through the blessing of the preachment, the preacher might develop the ability to perform the righteous deed. This has been experienced widely and on a

large scale. However, if the deed belongs to the category of *wājib* or *sunnah mu'akkadah,* it is obligatory, in the light of the verses, to continuously show remorse and regret on one's not practicing it. And if the action belongs to the category of *mustaḥabbāt*, it is *mustaḥab* [rewardable] to show remorse and regret.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِهِ صَفًّا كَأَنَّهُم بُنْيَانٌ مَّرْصُوصٌ (Surely Allah loves those who fight in His way in firm rows, as if they were a solid edifice...61:4) The main subject of this Sūrah for which it was revealed is to mention the dearest action in the sight of Allah. This verse states that it is *jihād* in Allah's way, and that the best row of battle in the sight of Allah is the one firmly established against Allah's enemies to make Allah's word prevail, and which, on account of the valor and unshaken determination of Mujāhidīn, looks like a strong structure cemented with molten lead.

This is followed by a description of the Jihāds which Prophets Mūsā and 'Īsā عليهما السلام fought in Allah's Cause, and how they suffered at the hands of the enemies. After this description, the Muslims are directed to undertake *jihād*. The stories of Prophets Mūsā and 'Īsā عليهما السلام have many academic and practical lessons and guidance to offer. For instance, it is described in the story of 'Īsā عليه السلام that when he invited the Children of Israel to accept his prophet-hood and obey him, he mentioned two things in particular. First, he said that he was not a unique Prophet who came with unique teachings. In fact, his teachings were the same as those of the previous prophets. They are mentioned in the earlier celestial scriptures, and the same teachings will be imparted later by the Final Messenger of Allah ﷺ. From among the earlier Scriptures, Torah is specially mentioned in this context, probably because that was the latest Scripture that was revealed to the Children of Israel. Otherwise belief in the Prophets embraces all the previous Scriptures of Allah. This also points out that the Sharī'ah of 'Īsā عليه السلام was, though an independent Sharī'ah, its most rules conformed to the sacred laws of Mūsā عليه السلام and the Torah. Only a few laws had been changed. This theme covered the subject of belief in the previous Prophets and their Books.

The second thing 'Īsā عليه السلام mentioned in particular was the good news of the advent of the Final Messenger ﷺ. This too points out that his teachings will also be the same as those of the previous Prophets, and therefore it is the demand of reason and honesty to believe in him.

Prophet 'Īsā ﷺ foretold the Children of Israel that a Final Messenger ﷺ will come after him by the name of Aḥmad. When he appears, it would be obligatory for them to embrace faith in him and obey him مُبَشِّرًا بِرَسُولٍ يَّأْتِي مِنْ بَعْدِى اسْمُهُ أَحْمَدُ (...and giving you the good news of a messenger who will come after me, whose name is Aḥmad."...6) The name of the Final Messenger is given here as Aḥmad. The name of the Final Messenger ﷺ was Muḥammad and Aḥmad. He had some other names as well. However, the name given in Injīl is Aḥmad rather than Muḥammad, perhaps because Muḥammad was a common name in Arabia since time immemorial. There was a possibility that the people might take the reference to some other person, rather than the Final Messenger of Allah. The name Aḥmad, on the other hand, was an uncommon name in Arabia, and was exclusive to the Final Messenger of Allah ﷺ.

Prophecy of The Final Messenger of Allah in Injīl

It is a known fact that the previously revealed Divine scriptures have been changed and distorted. The Jews and the Christians themselves had to admit that Torah and Injīl have been subjected to changes and distortion. As a matter of fact, the distortions made in these scriptures are so drastic that it is hardly possible to make out the original texts of the scriptures. Based on the distorted version of Injīl, the Christians today challenge the correctness of the Qur'ānic version of the prophecy, asserting that no prophecy in the name of Aḥmad is found in the Injīl. An elaborate response to Christian challenge has been prepared by Maulana Raḥmatullah Kairānwī رحمه الله تعالىٰ. The name of his book is *Izhār-ul -Ḥaqq*. He has thoroughly analyzed Christianity and changes made in the Bible. He concludes that despite drastic changes in the present Biblical version the prophecy about the Prophet Aḥmad ﷺ is still available.

This book was originally written in Arabic, later its translations appeared in Turkish and English. Christian missionaries attempted their utmost to destroy it. Its Urdu translation was not available until recently. A little while back, Maulana Akbar 'Alī, a lecturer at Dārul Uloom Karachi, translated it into Urdu, with in-depth research into current versions of the Bible by Maulana Muḥammad Taqi, lecturer at Darul Uloom, and published in three volumes. Volume [3] from pages 182 to 362 elaborates on the prophecies pertaining to the Holy Prophet ﷺ with

reference to the currently published Bibles, and rebuts their doubts and allays their suspicions.

Verse 10 - 14

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا هَلْ اَدُلُّكُمْ عَلٰى تِجَارَةٍ تُنْجِيْكُمْ مِّنْ عَذَابٍ اَلِيْمٍ
﴿١٠﴾ تُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ وَتُجَاهِدُوْنَ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ بِاَمْوَالِكُمْ
وَ اَنْفُسِكُمْ ؕ ذٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿١١﴾ يَغْفِرْلَكُمْ
ذُنُوْبَكُمْ وَيُدْخِلْكُمْ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ وَمَسٰكِنَ
طَيِّبَةً فِيْ جَنّٰتِ عَدْنٍ ؕ ذٰلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيْمُ ﴿١٢﴾ وَاُخْرٰى تُحِبُّوْنَهَا ؕ
نَصْرٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَفَتْحٌ قَرِيْبٌ ؕ وَبَشِّرِالْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿١٣﴾ يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا
كُوْنُوْۤا اَنْصَارَاللّٰهِ كَمَا قَالَ عِيْسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ لِلْحَوَارِيّٖنَ مَنْ اَنْصَارِيْۤ
اِلَى اللّٰهِ ؕ قَالَ الْحَوَارِيُّوْنَ نَحْنُ اَنْصَارُ اللّٰهِ فَاٰمَنَتْ طَّآئِفَةٌ مِّنْۢ بَنِيْۤ
اِسْرَآئِيْلَ وَكَفَرَتْ طَّآئِفَةٌ ۚ فَاَيَّدْنَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا عَلٰى عَدُوِّهِمْ
فَاَصْبَحُوْا ظٰهِرِيْنَ ﴿١٤﴾

O those who believe, shall I tell you about a trade that saves you from a painful punishment? [10] (It is that) you believe in Allah and His Messenger, and carry out *jihād* in His way with your riches and your lives. That is much better for you, if you but know. [11] (If you do this,) He will forgive for you your sins, and will admit you to gardens beneath which rivers flow, and to pleasant dwellings in gardens of eternity. That is the great achievement. [12] And (He will give you) another thing that you love: Help from Allah, and a victory, near at hand. [13] O those who believe, be supporters of (the religion of) Allah, just as 'Īsā, son of Maryam, said to the Disciples, "Who are my supporters towards Allah?" The Disciples said, "We are the supporters of (the religion of) Allah." So a group from the children of Isrā'īl believed, and another group disbelieved. Then We supported those who believed against their enemy, and they became victorious. [14]

Commentary

تُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ وَتُجَاهِدُوْنَ فِیْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ بِاَمْوَالِكُمْ وَ اَنْفُسِكُمْ) ...you believe in Allah and His Messenger, and carry out *jihād* in His way with your riches and your lives....61:11) This verse refers to 'faith and *jihād* (struggle) in Allah's way with one's wealth and life' as a trade, because when man invests wealth in trade and works hard, he gains profit. Likewise, when man believes in Allah and invests his life and wealth in His cause, he incurs Allah's pleasure and attains the eternal blessings of the Hereafter, which is mentioned in the forthcoming verse that whoever carries out this trade, Allah will forgive his sins and provide him with dwellings in the Gardens of Eternity with all sorts of luxuries and comforts, as is mentioned by the Holy Prophet ﷺ in explanation of 'pleasant dwellings'. Alongside the blessings of the Hereafter, the next verse promises some blessings of this world too:

وَاُخْرٰى تُحِبُّوْنَهَا ؕ نَصْرٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَفَتْحٌ قَرِيْبٌ (And [He will give you] another thing that you love: Help from Allah, and a victory, near at hand ...61:13) This verse adds that the blessings of this trade are not restricted to the Hereafter. There is one blessing that will be granted right here in this world, which is the Divine help and an imminent victory, that is, conquests of enemy territories. If the word *qarīb* (near) is taken as the opposite of Hereafter, it would include all later Islamic conquests of Arab and non-Arab territories. And if the word *qarīb* (near) is taken in its normal sense, it would, in the first instance, apply to the conquest of Khaibar, and in the second instance it would apply to the Conquest of Makkah. This 'near victory' is referred to as تُحِبُّوْنَهَا "that you love". It implies that this worldly blessing is dear to man, because he is by nature haste-prone as the Qur'ān says وَكَانَ الْاِنْسَانُ عَجُوْلًا "...and man is prone to haste. [17:11] This, however, does not imply that the blessings of the Hereafter are not dear to him. It simply means that the love of seeking the blessings of the Hereafter is quite obvious, but he naturally would love to have the blessings of this world as well. They too will be granted to him.

كَمَا قَالَ عِيْسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ لِلْحَوَارِيّٖنَ مَنْ اَنْصَارِیْٓ اِلَى اللّٰهِ (...just as 'Īsā, son of Maryam, said to the Disciples, "Who are my supporters towards Allah?" ...[61:14]" The word حَوَارِيّٖنَ *ḥawāriyyīn* is the plural of *ḥawāriyy* which connotes a 'sincere friend who is free from any kind of adulteration' [Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī,

referring to Azharī]. This is the reason why people who believed in Prophet Jesus ﷺ are called *ḥawāriyy*. They were twelve in number, as is already discussed in Sūrah 'Al-'Imrān. This verse refers to an incident of Prophet 'Īsā ﷺ and urges the Muslims to gird up their loins to unselfishly help and support the religion of Allah, as when Prophet 'Īsā ﷺ was hurt by the enemies, he asked his disciples مَنْ اَنْصَارِیْٓ اِلَی اللّٰہِ "Who are my supporters towards Allah?" ...[14] In other words, 'who will help and support me in propagating the religion of Allah?' Twelve people volunteered and pledged to his loyalty and helped him in preaching the religion. Following this example, the Muslims ought to help and support Allah's religion. The blessed Companions of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ followed this example to the fullest extent, and acted upon this command to the highest degree, so much so that the example of the Holy Prophets' Companions stands unparalleled in the history of other ummahs. They helped the Holy Prophet ﷺ and, in the process, incurred the wrath and enmity of Arab and non-Arab communities for the sake of Allah's religion. They bore their tortures and persecution. They dedicated their lives, wealth and children to the cause. Eventually, Allah granted them help and victory. He granted them triumph and mastery of the world, and the territories of the enemies fell into their hands.

Three Groups of Christians

فَاٰمَنَتْ طَّآئِفَةٌ مِّنْۢ بَنِیْٓ اِسْرَآئِیْلَ وَ كَفَرَتْ طَّآئِفَةٌ ۚ فَاَیَّدْنَا الَّذِیْنَ اٰمَنُوْا عَلٰی عَدُوِّهِمْ فَاَصْبَحُوْا ظٰهِرِیْنَ

(So, a group from the children of Isra'il believed, and another group disbelieved. Then We supported those who believed against their enemy, and they became victorious...61:14)

Baghawi interprets this verse in the light of a narration of Sayyidna 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ that when Prophet 'Īsā ﷺ was raised to the heaven, his followers disagreed and became three groups. A group claimed that He was Himself God who went back to the heaven. The second group claimed that He Himself was not God, but God's son. God lifted him up and salvaged him from the enemies and granted him superiority. The third group proclaimed the truth and said that he was neither god nor the son of god, but he was Allah's servant and His Messenger. Allah took him away to the heaven to protect him from the enemies, and to raise his status. These people were the true believers.

Different sectors of the general public attached themselves to each one of these groups. The groups clashed with one another. The two of the non-believing groups overpowered the third group, which was a group of true believers. Eventually, Allah raised the Final Messenger of Allah ﷺ who supported the group of the true believers. This group thus dominated the others because of their correct belief and its solid proofs confirmed by the Qur'ān. [Maẓharī].

In this interpretation, the phrase الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا "those who believed [14]" would refer to the believers of the Ummah of the Prophet 'Īsā عليه السلام who would triumph against the unbelievers with the help and support of the Final Messenger ﷺ. [Maẓharī]. Some scholars hold that when Prophet 'Īsā عليه السلام was raised to the heaven, his followers were divided into two groups. One of them believed that he was God or God's son and thus they became polytheists. The other group believed that he was the servant of Allah and His Messenger, and thus they stuck to the right religion. Then there was a war between the believers and the unbelievers. Allah granted victory to the believing faction of Prophet 'Īsā عليه السلام against the unbelieving faction. But it is popularly understood that in the religion of Prophet 'Īsā عليه السلام the institution of *jihād* did not exist. Therefore, it is inconceivable that believers would have waged a war. [Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī]. However, it is possible that the unbelieving Christians might have started the war and the believing Christians were forced to defend themselves. This will not fall under the category of war.

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Aṣ-Ṣaff
Ends here

Sūrah Al-Jumu'ah
(The Friday)

This Sūrah is Madanī, and it has 11 verses and 2 sections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 8

يُسَبِّحُ لِلّٰهِ مَا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِى الْاَرْضِ الْمَلِكِ الْقُدُّوْسِ الْعَزِيْزِ الْحَكِيْمِ ﴿١﴾ هُوَالَّذِىْ بَعَثَ فِى الْاُمِّيّٖنَ رَسُوْلًا مِّنْهُمْ يَتْلُوْا عَلَيْهِمْ اٰيٰتِهٖ وَيُزَكِّيْهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ ق وَاِنْ كَانُوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ لَفِىْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿٢﴾ وَّاٰخَرِيْنَ مِنْهُمْ لَمَّا يَلْحَقُوْا بِهِمْ ط وَهُوَالْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ ﴿٣﴾ ذٰلِكَ فَضْلُ اللّٰهِ يُؤْتِيْهِ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ط وَاللّٰهُ ذُوالْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيْمِ ﴿٤﴾ مَثَلُ الَّذِيْنَ حُمِّلُوا التَّوْرٰىةَ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَحْمِلُوْهَا كَمَثَلِ الْحِمَارِ يَحْمِلُ اَسْفَارًا ط بِئْسَ مَثَلُ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ ط وَاللّٰهُ لَايَهْدِى الْقَوْمَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٥﴾ قُلْ يٰاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ هَادُوْٓا اِنْ زَعَمْتُمْ اَنَّكُمْ اَوْلِيَآءُ لِلّٰهِ مِنْ دُوْنِ النَّاسِ فَتَمَنَّوُا الْمَوْتَ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿٦﴾ وَلَا يَتَمَنَّوْنَهٗٓ اَبَدًا بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ اَيْدِيْهِمْ ط وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌۢ بِالظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٧﴾ قُلْ اِنَّ الْمَوْتَ الَّذِىْ تَفِرُّوْنَ مِنْهُ فَاِنَّهٗ مُلٰقِيْكُمْ ثُمَّ تُرَدُّوْنَ اِلٰى عٰلِمِ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٨﴾ ع

All that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth

proclaim the purity of Allah, the Sovereign, the Supreme in Holiness, the All-Mighty, the All-Wise. [1] **He is the One who raised amidst the unlettered people a messenger from among themselves who recites to them His verses, and purifies them, and teaches them the Book and the wisdom, although they were in an open error before.** [2] **And (this Messenger is sent also) to others of them who did not join them so far, and He is the All-Mighty, the All-Wise.** [3] **That is Allah's bounty that He gives to whomsoever He wills, and Allah is the Lord of the great bounty.** [4] **The example of those who were ordered to bear (the responsibility of acting upon) the Torah, then they did not bear it, is like a donkey that carries a load of books. Evil is the example of those who have rejected the verses of Allah. And Allah does not guide the wrongdoing people.** [5] **Say, "O those who are Jews, if you claim that you are the friends of Allah to the exclusion of all other people, then express your desire for death, if you are true.** [6] **And they will never express this desire, because of what their hands have sent ahead. And Allah is fully aware of the wrongdoers.** [7] **Say, "Indeed, the death from which you (try to) run away has to visit you, then you will be sent back to the Knower of the unseen and the seen, and He will tell you what you used to do.** [8]

Commentary

يُسَبِّحُ لِلّٰهِ مَا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِى الْاَرْضِ (All that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth proclaim the purity of Allah,...62:1] Surahs of the Qur'ān that begin with '*sabbaḥa*' or '*yusabbihu*' [proclaiming Allah's purity] are called *Musabbiḥāt*, in all of which it is established that everything in the heaven and earth proclaims the purity of Allah.

That all creatures in the heavens and the earth declare the purity of Allah in a symbolic way is understandable. Everyone may understand that every single particle created by Allah bears testimony to the wisdom and power of the Wise Creator in their circumstantial language, which is their *tasbīḥ* (proclamation). However, the fact is that, every thing proclaims *tasbīḥ* in its real sense in its own way, because Allah has bestowed some sort of sense and perception to every particle of this universe, even to stones and trees, according to their ability. Since the first demand upon sense and perception is to recognize its Creator and Maker, and glorify Him, therefore, it is not far-fetched to conceive that

everything in nature really declares the purity of Allah in its own peculiar language, though human ears might not be able to hear it. Thus the Qur'ān on one occasion says: وَلٰكِنْ لَّا تَفْقَهُوْنَ تَسْبِيْحَهُمْ (...but you do not understand their extolling ...[17:44] At the commencement of most Surahs called *Musabbihāt* the past indefinite tense *sabbaha* is employed. Only at the beginning of Sūrahs Al-Jumu'ah and At-Taghābun the present form *yusabbihu* is used. The different forms at the beginning of different Surah have fresh rhetorical elegance and refinement. The past tense connotes certitude, and therefore mostly this tense has been used. The present form connotes continuity, which is employed in two places for this purpose.

هُوَالَّذِىْ بَعَثَ فِى الْاُمِّيّٖنَ رَسُوْلًا مِّنْهُمْ (He is the One who raised amidst the unlettered people a messenger from among themselves...62:2) The word *ummiyyin* is the plural of *ummiyy,* which denotes 'unlettered'. The Arabs were known by this title, because they did not know how to read and write. Very few of them had the knowledge of reading and writing. The Arabs in this verse are specially referred to in order to express the great power of Allah. The Holy Prophet ﷺ is also sent amongst them, who is himself unlettered. The duties and reformative functions of a Prophet [as set out in the forthcoming verse] are based on knowledge and education. These reforms are such that no unlettered individual can ever teach them, nor is it possible for an unlettered nation to learn. It was only through the Divine Supreme Power and the miracle of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ that when these reforms started, great scholars, intellectuals, men of letters, savants and sages were born among the unlettered people, and their knowledge, wisdom, sagacity and erudition was recognized by the entire world.

The Three Objectives of the Advent of the Prophet ﷺ

يَتْلُوْا عَلَيْهِمْ اٰيٰتِهٖ وَيُزَكِّيْهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ (...to recite His verses to them, and to make them pure, and to teach them the Book and the Wisdom....62:2) In the context of the Divine blessings bestowed to the mankind, three qualities of the Holy Prophet ﷺ have been mentioned. One, to recite the verses of the Qur'ān to his Ummah. Two, to purify them of all the outer and inner defilements. This includes outer purification that relates to one's body and dress, and also the inner purification that relates to one's faith, actions and moral attitude. Three, to teach the Book

and the wisdom. These three factors are Divine blessings to the mankind on the one hand, and these are the basic objectives and the terms of reference of the Holy Prophet ﷺ for which he was sent to this world.

يَتْلُوا عَلَيْهِمْ اٰيٰتِهٖ (...to recite His verses to them) The word *tilāwah* lexically signifies 'to follow, to obey' but in the terminology of the Qur'ān, it signifies 'recitation or reading of the Divine Words'. The word *'āyāt* refers to the verses of the Qur'ān. The prepositional phrase *'alaihim* [to them] signifies that one of the objectives or duties of the Prophet ﷺ is to recite the verses of the Qur'ān to the people.

In the current verse, the second objective of the Holy Prophet ﷺ is to: يُزَكِّيهِمْ (make them pure) which is derived from *tazkiyah* and it means 'to make pure'. Often it is used exclusively for inner cleanliness, that is, to be free from such inner adulterating matter as *kufr, shirk* and free from inner moral defilement. But occasionally, it is used in the general sense of both outer and inner cleanliness. Probably, in this context it is used in the general sense of the term.

يُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ (...to teach them the Book and the Wisdom...62:2) The word *al-Kitāb* refers to the Holy Qur'ān, and the word *al-ḥikmah* refers to all the teachings and guidance that have been received from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ orally or practically. As a result, many of the commentators have interpreted the word *ḥikmah* as the Approved Way [Sunnah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ].

A Question and its Answer

A question arises here that the natural order of wording in the verse should have been thus: [1] recitation or teaching of words; followed by [2] teaching of meaning; and consequently [3] making pure by inculcating righteous deeds and high morals. However, in most places the Qur'ān has changed the sequence by inserting '[3] *tazkiyah* or making pure' between '[1] *tilāwah* (recitation) and '[2] *ta'līm* (teaching). Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī explains that if the natural order of wording were to be maintained in all verses, all three elements would have combined together and become 'one', as it happens in pharmaceutical mixing of many substances, the aggregate of which loses the separate identity of each element, and becomes a single 'compound' whereas probably Allah wanted to maintain separate identities of the Divine blessings and the three Prophetic duties separately

identifiable. By changing the natural order in most places, the Holy Qur'ān has probably alluded to this fact.

Please see Ma'arif-ul-Qur'ān Vol. 1/pp 331-343, under the Surah Al-Baqarah Verse 129, for fuller explanation of this verse.

وَاٰخَرِيْنَ مِنْهُمْ لَمَّا يَلْحَقُوْا بِهِمْ ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ (...And [this Messenger is sent also] to others of them who did not join them so far. And He is the All-mighty, the All-wise...62:3) The word *'ākharīn* means 'other people' and the phrase لَمَّا يَلْحَقُوْا بِهِمْ means 'those people who have not yet joined the unlettered people'. This refers to all those Muslims who will enter the fold of Islam until the Last Hour [as transmitted by Ibn Zaid, Mujāhid and others]. This indicates that the succeeding generations of Muslims will be appended to the earlier generations of believers, that is, the noble Companions. This is great good news for the succeeding generations of Muslims. [Rūḥ].

Grammatically, there are two views regarding the conjoining of the word *'ākharīn*. One view holds that it is conjoined to *ummiyyīn* and it means that 'Allah has sent his Messenger among the unlettered people and also among those who have not yet joined them'. Sending the Prophet among the present unlettered people is quite obvious, but 'sending him among those who have not yet come' needs explanation. Bayan-ul-Qur'ān explains that 'sending among them' stands for 'sending for them' because the preposition *fī* in Arabic is also used in the sense of 'for'. According to some other grammarians, however, the word *'ākharīn* is conjoined to the objective pronoun him attached to the verb *yu'allimu-hum,* in which case the interpretation would be 'the Prophet teaches the unlettered people and also the people who have not joined them so far'. [Maẓharī prefers the latter interpretation].

Sayyidna Abū Hurairah ﷺ narrates, as recorded in Bukhārī and Muslim, that they were sitting in the company of the Holy Prophet ﷺ when Sūrah Al-Jumu'ah was revealed. He recited it to them, and when he reached the verse وَاٰخَرِيْنَ مِنْهُمْ لَمَّا يَلْحَقُوْا بِهِمْ (...and others of them who have not joined them so far...62:3) they asked him who are these 'others'. He remained silent. They asked him the second time and he remained silent. They asked him the third time, and he put his blessed hand on the back

of Sayyidna Salmān Al-Fārisī ﷺ [who was at that time in the gathering] and said: "If faith were on Pleiades, even then some men or a man from these people would attain it." [Maẓharī]. This narration does not specify people of Persia, but it does prove that they are included in the general sense of 'others'. This narration speaks greatly of all non-Arabs who embrace Islam. [Maẓharī].

مَثَلُ الَّذِيْنَ حُمِّلُوا التَّوْرٰىةَ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَحْمِلُوْهَا كَمَثَلِ الْحِمَارِ يَحْمِلُ اَسْفَارًا (The example of those who were ordered to bear (the responsibility of acting upon) the Torah, then they did not bear it, is like a donkey that carries a load of books...5) The word *asfār* is the plural of *sifr,* which means a 'large book'. The preceding verses described that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was raised up among the unlettered people having three main objectives of his mission. The previous Divine Book Torah described the Holy Prophet ﷺ almost with the same qualities as are described in the Qur'ān, which required that as soon as the Jews saw the Holy Prophet ﷺ, they should have recognized him and believed in him. But the material position and possessions blinded them to the teachings of Torah. Despite their knowledge of Torah, they acted as practical ignoramus. The verse describes their block-headed behaviour with the example of a donkey loaded with weighty tomes. The donkey carries its loads, but it is neither aware of its subject-matter, nor does it benefit by it. Similarly, the Jews carry around the Torah for material gains and to seek position and status among people, but they do not benefit by its guidance.

The Example of a Non-Practicing Scholar

Commentators have stated that the example given by the verse for Jews applies to any religious scholar who does not act upon his knowledge. A Persian poet has put it thus:

نہ محقق بود نہ دانش مند......چار پائے برو کتا بے چند

'He is neither a scholar, nor a knowledgeable person.

He is but an animal of four legs, carrying the load of some books'

قُلْ يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ هَادُوْۤا اِنْ زَعَمْتُمْ اَنَّكُمْ اَوْلِيَآءُ لِلّٰهِ مِنْ دُوْنِ النَّاسِ فَتَمَنَّوُا الْمَوْتَ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ

(Say, "O those who are Jews, if you claim that you are the

friends of Allah to the exclusion of all other people, then express your desire for death, if you are true...62:6)

Despite their *kufr*, *shirk* and moral aberration, the Jews claimed نَحْنُ اَبْنٰٓؤُ اللّٰهِ وَاَحِبّٰٓؤُهٗ (...We are the sons of Allah and His favourites) [5:18] and they also claimed لَنْ يَّدْخُلَ الْجَنَّةَ اِلَّا مَنْ كَانَ هُوْدًا (...no one shall ever enter Paradise unless he is a Jew) [2:111] In other words, they believed themselves to be safe and immune from the punishment of the Hereafter, and thought that the blessings of Paradise are their personal property. Obviously, if a person believes that the blessings of the Hereafter are a zillion times better than the blessings of this world, he must, of necessity, wish for death, so that he is able to enter Paradise sooner and start enjoying its blessings forthwith. He sees with his own eyes that this world is not free from miseries, sorrows and hardships and one has to suffer from certain diseases as long as he is living here. Then if he believes that, as soon as he dies, he will certainly receive those numerous and eternal blessings, a wise man should naturally wish for death in his heart, so that he may be set free from this miserable world and reach the next world where he will reside for ever in eternal peace and comfort. That is why the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is instructed in the present verse to challenge the Jews that if they are Allah's children and His beloved ones and they do not have any fear of punishment in the Hereafter, then the reason demands that they should wish for death. Then the Holy Qur'ān itself falsified them in the following words:

وَلَا يَتَمَنَّوْنَهٗ اَبَدًا بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ اَيْدِيْهِمْ (And they will never express this desire, because of what their hands have sent ahead...62:7) In other words, they will not wish for death because of the *kufr* and *shirk* and the evil deeds they have committed . They fully know that there will be nothing for them in the Hereafter but the punishment of Hell. Their claim that they are Allah's children and His loved ones is absolutely false, a claim that they themselves know is false. They make such claims for worldly and material gains. They also know that if they accept the Holy Prophet's ﷺ challenge and invoke death upon themselves, it would be readily accepted and they would die instantly. Being convinced of the falsity of their position, the Jews will refuse to accept the challenge. A Prophetic

Tradition reports that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ has stated that if any one of them at that time had wished for death, he would have died instantly. [Rūḥ]

Is Longing for Death Permissible?

This subject has been fully discussed in Sūrah Al-Baqarah. Traditions forbid anyone to wish for death. The most important reason behind this is that no one has the right to believe that as soon as he dies, he will certainly enter Paradise and will have no fear of any punishment. Wishing for death in such a state of mind is tantamount to show bravery before Allah.

قُلْ إِنَّ الْمَوْتَ الَّذِي تَفِرُّوْنَ مِنْهُ فَإِنَّهُ مُلٰقِيْكُمْ (Say, "Indeed, the death from which you [try to] run away has to visit you,...62:8) In other words, the Jews' running away from longing for death despite their aforesaid claim is tantamount to running away from death itself. The Holy Prophet ﷺ is instructed in the verse to tell them that the death from which they are fleeing would inevitably catch up with them. If that would not happen instantly, it would certainly happen sometime later. Thus it is impossible for anyone to avoid or avert death in any way.

Laws pertaining to Avoiding the Causes of Death

There are many normal causes of death, from which both reason and Sharī'ah require man to avoid. Once the Holy Prophet ﷺ passed under a bent wall [as if it was about to fall down or collapse] and he passed it quickly, lest it should fall down or collapse on him. Likewise, if fire breaks out at some place, both reason and Sharī'ah dictate that one should run away from there. These circumstances of fleeing from death do not fall under fleeing from death denounced in the above verse, if our faith is sound and we believe that when the predetermined time of our death will approach, we will not be able to escape. Since we do not know for sure whether fire, or poison, or some other obnoxious thing will be the destined cause of our death in a particular situation, running away from them would not amount to fleeing from death that is denounced in the verse.

As far as bubonic plague or epidemic is concerned, it is a separate issue. The details appear in books of jurisprudence and Ḥadīth which may be consulted. The author of Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī has on this occasion discussed

this issue exhaustively and clarified it to a great degree. Some of its details have already been given in this book under the verses 2:243 to 244. See vol. 1, pp. 619-622.

Verses 9 - 11

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓا۟ إِذَا نُودِىَ لِلصَّلَوٰةِ مِن يَوْمِ ٱلْجُمُعَةِ فَٱسْعَوْا۟ إِلَىٰ ذِكْرِ ٱللَّهِ وَذَرُوا۟ ٱلْبَيْعَ ۚ ذَٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٩﴾ فَإِذَا قُضِيَتِ ٱلصَّلَوٰةُ فَٱنتَشِرُوا۟ فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ وَٱبْتَغُوا۟ مِن فَضْلِ ٱللَّهِ وَٱذْكُرُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ كَثِيرًا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿١٠﴾ وَإِذَا رَأَوْا۟ تِجَٰرَةً أَوْ لَهْوًا ٱنفَضُّوٓا۟ إِلَيْهَا وَتَرَكُوكَ قَآئِمًا ۚ قُلْ مَا عِندَ ٱللَّهِ خَيْرٌ مِّنَ ٱللَّهْوِ وَمِنَ ٱلتِّجَٰرَةِ ۚ وَٱللَّهُ خَيْرُ ٱلرَّٰزِقِينَ ﴿١١﴾

O you who believe, when the call for *ṣalāh* (prayer) is proclaimed on Friday, hasten for the remembrance of Allah, and leave off business. That is much better for you, if you but know. [9] **Then once the *ṣalāh* is finished, disperse in the land, and seek the grace of Allah. And remember Allah much, so that you may be successful.** [10] **And when they see some merchandise or amusement, they break away to it, and leave you standing. Say, "What is with Allah is much better than the amusement and the merchandise, and Allah is the best giver of sustenance."** [11]

Commentary

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓا۟ إِذَا نُودِىَ لِلصَّلَوٰةِ مِن يَوْمِ ٱلْجُمُعَةِ فَٱسْعَوْا۟ إِلَىٰ ذِكْرِ ٱللَّهِ وَذَرُوا۟ ٱلْبَيْعَ

O you who believe, when the call for *ṣalāh* (prayer) is proclaimed on Friday, hasten for the remembrance of Allah, and leave off business....[62:9]

The Arabic word for Friday is 'Yaum-ul-Jumu'ah' and is so called because it is the day of congregation for Muslims. Allah created the heavens, the earth and the entire universe in six days, and Friday was the last day when the creation was completed. Prophet 'Ādam عليه السلام was created on that day; he was admitted into Paradise on that day; he was

sent down to the earth on that day; the Last Hour or the Day of Resurrection will occur on that day; and on the same day there is a moment when supplications are readily accepted. All this is established on the authority of authentic Traditions. [Ibn Kathīr]

Allah had appointed Friday as the day of congregation and festivity for the people, but the previous nations were not fortunate enough to appoint it as their sacred day. The Jews regarded Saturday as their day of congregation. The Christians made Sunday their day of congregation. Allah gave this Ummah the ability to elect Friday as their day of congregation. [as transmitted by Bukhārī and Muslim on the authority of Abū Hurairah ﷺ as quoted by Ibn Kathīr]

During the Days of Ignorance, Friday was known as 'Yaum-ul-'Arubah'. The first Arab to change the name of this day to 'Yaum-ul-Jumu'ah' was Ka'b Ibn Lu'ayy. The Quraish used to gather or congregate on this day, and Ka'b ibn Lu'ayy used to deliver his sermon. This happened 560 years before the advent of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Ka'b Ibn Lu'ayy was among the Holy Prophet's ﷺ forefathers. Even during the Days of Ignorance, Allah had kept him away from idol worship and granted him the ability to believe in the Oneness of Allah. He had also given people the glad tidings of the advent of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. His greatness among Quraish may be judged from the fact that the year of his death, which occurred 560 years before the Holy Prophet ﷺ, was marked as the new calendar era for computation of dates. In Arabia, at first the calendar era was established when Ka'bah was built and dates were computed accordingly. Then Ka'b Ibn Lu'ayy's death marked another era, and the dates were computed on that basis. When the Event of the Elephant occurred in the year of the birth of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, that set in a new era of Arab calendar, and the dates were computed accordingly. In sum, the importance of 'Yaum-ul-Jumu'ah' had been recognized in Arabia before Islam in the time of Ka'b Ibn Lu'ayy, to whom is ascribed the naming of the day as 'Yaum-ul-Jumu'ah'. [Maẓharī] According to some narrations, the Ansar of Madīnah used to gather and pray, before migration, on Friday before Jumu'ah prayer became obligatory, and they organized this on the basis of their own *Ijtihād* (assessment). [as transmitted by Abd-ur-Razzāq with an authentic chain of

narrators on the authority of Muḥammad Ibn Sīrīn, as quoted by Maẓharī]

إِذَا نُودِيَ لِلصَّلٰوةِ مِن يَّوْمِ الْجُمُعَةِ (...when the call for salah (prayer) is proclaimed on Friday, hasten for the remembrance of Allah, and leave off business ...62:9) The word *nidā'* refers to *adhān* or call for prayer. In the sentence فَاسْعَوْا إِلَىٰ ذِكْرِ اللّٰهِ (...hasten to Allah's remembrance...) the word *sa'y* means to 'run or rush' as well as to 'take care of a task consciously'. In this context, the word is used in the latter sense, because the Holy Prophet ﷺ has prohibited to go to prayer running or walking quickly. He said when anyone hears the *iqāmah*, he should proceed to offer the prayer with calmness and dignity. The verse implies that when believers are called to prayer on the Day of Jumu'ah, they should proceed to the remembrance of Allah, that is, they should carefully go to the mosque for Jumu'ah prayer and its Sermon. Just as a person running towards something does not pay heed to anything else, a Muslim should not pay attention, after the call, to anything besides *adhān* and *khuṭbah*. [Ibn Kathīr]. The phrase ذِكْرِ اللّٰهِ (...Allah's remembrance...) could refer to Jumu'ah prayer as well as to Jumu'ah Sermon, which is one of the conditions of the validity of Jumu'ah prayer. Therefore, the phrase may most appropriately be interpreted as referring to the package of Jumu'ah prayer and Jumu'ah Sermon. [Maẓharī and others].

وَذَرُوا الْبَيْعَ (...and leave off business...) The literal meaning of the word '*bai*' is 'sale'. Although the intent is to ban all activities of buying and selling, the verse has mentioned 'sale' only, because when one aspect of trading is abandoned, the other aspect would automatically come to an end. If there is no one to sell, there will be no one to buy, because trade is a bilateral transaction..

The verse under comment indicates that the bar on the activities of buying and selling after the *adhān* of Jumu'ah needs to be implemented for practical purposes in such a way that the shops are closed at that particular time, so that all trading activities automatically come to a halt. The underlying wisdom is that there are uncountable number of customers and buyers, and it would not be possible to stop them all. The sellers and shopkeepers, however, are limited and they can be stopped. If they are stopped from selling, the buyers automatically will stop buying. Hence, the verse deemed it sufficient to impose the bar on 'sale'.

Special Note

The purport of the verse is to forbid, after the *adhān* of Jumu'ah, all activities that hamper preparation for Jumu'ah prayer and sermon activities such as trading, agriculture, labour or anything else, - but the Qur'ān mentions only selling. This could imply that only people living in towns and cities are commanded to offer the Jumu'ah prayer, and not the people residing in small villages, rural areas and jungles. Thus activities that are carried out by people in towns and cities, that is, trade activities, have been forbidden. But activities related to land, such as agricultural activities, are generally carried out in rural areas where Jumu'ah prayer is not required. Therefore, such activities are not mentioned here. However, The jurists of the Ummah unanimously agree that the word '*ba*' occurring in the verse does not refer only to 'selling' but to all such activities that can hinder preparing for and proceeding to the Jumu'ah prayer. Thus eating, drinking, sleeping, talking, and even studying are forbidden after Jumu'ah *adhān*. Only activities related to Jumu'ah may be carried out.

***Adhān* of Jumu'ah**

In the beginning, there was only one *adhān* for Jumu'ah, which was called at the time of the Khuṭbah in front of the Imam. This situation existed in the time of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and this practice continued in the time of Sayyidna Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه and 'Umar رضي الله عنه However, the Muslim population grew by leaps and bounds in the time of Sayyidna 'Uthmān رضي الله عنه and spread in the outskirts of Madīnah. The *adhān* that was given in front of the Imam at the time of the khuṭbah could not be heard by the large Muslim population in the distance. He therefore initiated another *adhān* that was called in the trading area further from the mosque at his house in az-Zaura', which could be heard throughout Madīnah. None of the noble Companions objected to this. Thus this first *adhān* by consensus of the Companions became instituted. All trading and other activities that were forbidden after the Jumu'ah *adhān* before the Imam are now forbidden after the first *adhān* introduced by Sayyidna 'Uthman رضي الله عنه, taking into account the wordings of the Qur'ān نُودِىَ لِلصَّلٰوةِ مِنْ يَّوْمِ الْجُمُعَةِ (when the call for *ṣalāh* (prayer) is proclaimed on Friday,). Details are available in the canonical collections of Traditions, commentaries and jurisprudence. There is no disagreement on the issue.

There is consensus of the entire Ummah that on Friday Ṣalāt-ul-Jumu'ah shall be performed instead of Ṣalāt-uz-Ḍuhur and there is also consensus that Ṣalāt-ul-Jumu'ah is not like the five daily prayers. There are some additional pre-requisites attached to it. The five daily prayers can be performed individually without congregation, or they could be performed in congregation with only two individuals. Ṣalāt-ul-Jumu'ah, on the other hand, is not valid without congregation. There is disagreement among the jurists about the number of individuals that can constitute a congregation. The five daily prayers may validly be held anywhere, on the sea, ocean, mountains or in the jungles. But Ṣalāt-ul-Jumu'ah on the other hand, is not valid in jungles or deserts according to any of the jurists. It is not obligatory on women, the sickly or the wayfarers. The latter should perform Ḍuhur prayer instead of Jumu'ah. There is disagreement among the jurists about the type of locality where Jumu'ah prayer may be held. According to Imām Shafi'ī, Ṣalāt-ul-Jumu'ah is valid in a habitation where forty free, sane and adult men reside. If there are less than forty such men, it is not valid. According to Imām Mālik, the habitation must be such as to have houses adjacent to one another, and it must also have a bazaar or a market-place. According to Imām Abū Hanīfah رحمه الله تعالى, for Ṣalāt-ul-Jumu'ah to be held validly the following pre-requisites are necessary: The habitation must be a town, city or a very large village which has streets, market places, a Muslim ruler and a judge who can restore the rights of people and decide cases of dispute. This is no occasion to go into details of the issue and proofs thereof. Venerable scholars have written separate books on the topic and clarified the position.

In brief, the generality of the command to attend Ṣalāt-ul-Jumu'ah is restricted to a specific sector of the addressees. It is not obligatory on every members of the Muslim community, but for it to be compulsory, there are some conditions and pre-requisites. The disagreement exists only in identifying the pre-requisites. But where the pre-requisites apply and Ṣalāt-ul-Jumu'ah becomes obligatory according to any school of thought, it is very important to observe it, and there is grave warnings for those who neglect it without any valid reason in terms of Sharī'ah. On the other hand, there is a promise of great reward and blessings for those who offer it fulfilling all its conditions and pre-requisites.

Blessings in Business after Jumu'ah

فَإِذَا قُضِيَتِ الصَّلٰوةُ فَانْتَشِرُوْا فِى الْاَرْضِ وَابْتَغُوْا مِنْ فَضْلِ اللّٰهِ (Then once the *ṣalāh* is finished, ḍisperse in the land, and seek the grace of Allah...62:10). The preceding verses prohibited trading and all other worldly activities, after the *adhān* of Jumu'ah. The present verse permits those activities after the Jumu'ah prayer is over; we are allowed to spread throughout the land in search of our livelihood and sustenance.

When Sayyidna 'Irāk Ibn Mālik ﷺ finished his Jumu'ah prayer, he would come out and, standing on the threshold of the mosque, he would pray:

اَللّٰهُمَّ اِنِّىْ اَجَبْتُ دَعْوَتَكَ وَصَلَّيْتُ فَرِيْضَتَكَ وَانْتَشَرْتُ كَمَا اَمَرْتَنِىْ فَارْزُقْنِىْ مِنْ فَضْلِكَ وَاَنْتَ خَيْرُ الرّٰزِقِيْنَ. (رواه ابن ابی حاتم، از ابن کثیر)

"O Allah, I responded to Your call and performed the Salah which You have prescribed for me as an obligation, and I am going out as You have commanded me in search of livelihood. So, grant me my livelihood out of Your grace. And You are the best giver of sustenance." [Transmitted by Ibn Abī Ḥātim, as quoted by Ibn Kathīr]. Some of the righteous elders have reported that anyone who performs his trading activities after Jumu'ah, Allah will grant him blessings seventy folds. [Ibn Kathīr]

It is reported from the righteous elders that whoever carries out his commercial activities after the prayer of Jumu'ah is favoured by Allah with seventy blessings. (Ibn Kathīr)

وَاذْكُرُوا اللّٰهَ كَثِيْرًا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُوْنَ (And remember Allah much, so that you may be successful - 62:10). It means that commercial activities are though allowed after the prayer, one should not neglect Allah's remembrance during these activities as the infidels do. Even during such activities one must remain mindful of Allah and His remembrance.

Admonishing those who abandon the Imām while he is delivering the Jumu'ah Khuṭbah [Sermon]

وَاِذَا رَاَوْا تِجَارَةً اَوْ لَهْوَ اِنْفَضُّوْٓا اِلَيْهَا وَتَرَكُوْكَ قَآئِمًا ؕ قُلْ مَا عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ خَيْرٌ مِّنَ اللَّهْوِ وَمِنَ التِّجَارَةِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ خَيْرُ الرّٰزِقِيْنَ

And when they see some merchandise or amusement, they

break away to it, and leave you standing. Say, "What is with Allah is much better than the amusement and the merchandise, and Allah is the best giver of sustenance." (62:11)

The verse admonishes those who once abandoned the Friday sermon and attended some trade activity. Imām Ibn Kathīr says that this incident took place when the Holy Prophet ﷺ used to deliver the Friday sermon after the Jumu'ah prayer, as it happens on 'Īdain even in our days. It once happened that the Friday prayer had finished and the Holy Prophet ﷺ was delivering his sermon. Suddenly a trading caravan arrived in the market-place of Madīnah. Drums were beaten to announce the arrival of the caravan. The Friday prayer had finished and the sermon was in progress. Many of the noble Companions went away to the market-place. Only a few of them had remained behind with the Holy Prophet ﷺ who were about twelve in number [according to a narration in Marāsil of Abū Dāwūd]. According to some narratives, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "If all had gone, the entire valley of Madīnah would have been filled with the fire of punishment". [Transmitted by Abū Ya'lā, as quoted by Ibn Kathīr].

Muqatil, the leading scholar of Qur'ānic commentary, says that this was the trading caravan of Diḥyah Ibn Khalaf Kalbī, which had come from Syria. This caravan normally came to Madīnah with all the essentials, especially essential foodstuff. Whenever it arrived in Madīnah, and the people came to know about it, men and women all rushed towards it. Diḥyah Ibn Khalaf was not a Muslim until then. He became a Muslim later on.

Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and Abū Mālik said that that was a time when there was scarcity and dearth of things. [Maẓharī]. There were several factors on account of which a large group of the blessed Companions left the mosque when they heard the sound of the caravan. First, the *farḍ* prayer had already finished, and they did not know until then the status of the Friday sermon whether it was part of the *fard* prayer. Second, there was scarcity and dearth of essential goods and items. Third, buyers would rush to the caravan and they feared that if they did not make it in time, they would not be able to obtain their essentials. As a result, the noble Companions committed the mistake and the above Tradition sounded a warning, that is, if all of them had gone the Divine punishment would

have overtaken them. The current verse إِذَا رَأَوْا تِجَارَةً was revealed to admonish them and put them to shame. For this reason, the Holy Prophet ﷺ, since that day, changed the order of Friday sermon and prayer, delivering the sermons before the prayer. This is now the approved way [Sunnah]. [Ibn Kathīr]

The verse under comment instructs the Holy Prophet ﷺ to tell the people that what is with Allah is better than the merchandise and amusement of this world, that is, the reward of the Hereafter. It is not far-fetched to conceive that people who forsake business and earning of livelihood for the sake of prayer and sermon will attract ample blessings in their provision from Allah, even in this world, as was cited earlier from the righteous elders on the authority of Ibn Kathīr.

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Jumu'ah
Ends here.

Sūrah Al-Munāfiqūn

(The Hypocrites)

This Sūrah is Madanī, and it has 11 verses and 2 sections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 8

إِذَا جَآءَكَ الْمُنٰفِقُوْنَ قَالُوْا نَشْهَدُ إِنَّكَ لَرَسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ ۘ وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ إِنَّكَ
لَرَسُوْلُهٗ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يَشْهَدُ إِنَّ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ لَكٰذِبُوْنَ ﴿١﴾ اِتَّخَذُوْۤا أَيْمَانَهُمْ
جُنَّةً فَصَدُّوْا عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ؕ إِنَّهُمْ سَآءَ مَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٢﴾ ذٰلِكَ
بِأَنَّهُمْ اٰمَنُوْا ثُمَّ كَفَرُوْا فَطُبِعَ عَلٰى قُلُوْبِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يَفْقَهُوْنَ ﴿٣﴾ وَإِذَا
رَأَيْتَهُمْ تُعْجِبُكَ أَجْسَامُهُمْ ؕ وَإِنْ يَّقُوْلُوْا تَسْمَعْ لِقَوْلِهِمْ ؕ كَأَنَّهُمْ
خُشُبٌ مُّسَنَّدَةٌ ؕ يَحْسَبُوْنَ كُلَّ صَيْحَةٍ عَلَيْهِمْ ؕ هُمُ الْعَدُوُّ
فَاحْذَرْهُمْ ؕ قٰتَلَهُمُ اللّٰهُ ۚ أَنّٰى يُؤْفَكُوْنَ ﴿٤﴾ وَإِذَا قِيْلَ لَهُمْ تَعَالَوْا
يَسْتَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ رَسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ لَوَّوْا رُءُوْسَهُمْ وَرَأَيْتَهُمْ يَصُدُّوْنَ وَهُمْ
مُّسْتَكْبِرُوْنَ ﴿٥﴾ سَوَآءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ أَسْتَغْفَرْتَ لَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ ؕ
لَنْ يَّغْفِرَ اللّٰهُ لَهُمْ ؕ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَهْدِى الْقَوْمَ الْفٰسِقِيْنَ ﴿٦﴾ هُمُ الَّذِيْنَ
يَقُوْلُوْنَ لَا تُنْفِقُوْا عَلٰى مَنْ عِنْدَ رَسُوْلِ اللّٰهِ حَتّٰى يَنْفَضُّوْا ؕ وَلِلّٰهِ
خَزَآئِنُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلٰكِنَّ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ لَا يَفْقَهُوْنَ ﴿٧﴾

يَقُوْلُوْنَ لَئِنْ رَّجَعْنَآ اِلَى الْمَدِيْنَةِ لَيُخْرِجَنَّ الْاَعَزُّ مِنْهَا الْاَذَلَّ ۭ وَلِلّٰهِ الْعِزَّةُ وَلِرَسُوْلِهٖ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَلٰكِنَّ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٨﴾

When the hypocrites come to you, they say, "We bear witness that you are indeed the messenger of Allah." And Allah knows that you are really His messenger. And Allah bears witness that the hypocrites are actually liars. [1] **They have made their oaths a shield, and thus they have prevented (others) from the way of Allah. Surely evil is what they have been doing.** [2] **That is because they declared their faith (apparently), then disbelieved (secretly). Therefore a seal has been set on their hearts, and thus they do not understand.** [3] **And if you see them, their bodies would attract you, and if they speak, you would listen to their speech. (Yet, being devoid of substance,) it is as if they were propped up pieces of wood. They deem every shout (they hear) to be against them (out of cowardice). They are the enemy; so beware of them. May Allah destroy them. How perverted are they!** [4] **And when it is said to them, "Come on, Allah's Messenger will pray for your forgiveness", they twist their heads, and you see them turning away in arrogance.** [5] **It is equal in their case, whether you pray for their forgiveness or do not pray, Allah will not forgive them. Indeed Allah does not guide the sinning people.** [6] **They are the ones who say, "Do not spend on those who are with Allah's Messenger so that they disperse." And to Allah belong the treasures of the heavens and the earth, but the hypocrites do not understand.** [7] **They say, "If we return to Madīnah, the more honourable ones will drive out the meaner ones from there." And to Allah belongs the honour, and to His Messenger, and to the believers, but the hypocrites do not know.** [8]

Commentary

Background of Revelation

The incident, in which this Sūrah was revealed, took place in the campaign against Banul-Muṣṭaliq which happened, according to Muḥammad Ibn Isḥāq, in Sha'bān 6 AH and, according to Qatādah and 'Urwah, in Sha'bān 5 AH. [Maẓharī]. According to Muḥammad Ibn Isḥāq and most historians, the details of the incident is as follows: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ received the news that the leader of

Banul-Muṣṭaliq, namely, Ḥārith Ibn Dirar, is preparing for a campaign against him. Ḥārith Ibn Dirar was the father of Sayyidah Juwairiyah ﷺ who later on embraced Islam and became one of the Holy wives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Ḥārith Ibn Dirār ﷺ himself later on embraced Islam.

Nevertheless, when the messenger of Allah ﷺ received the news about the campaign against him, he gathered a group of Muslims and went out to face them. Many hypocrites joined the Muslims to fight the *jihād* in the hope that they will receive a share in the spoils of war, because they, despite having disbelief in their hearts, were sure that Divine help will be on the Prophet's side, and he will attain victory.

When the Messenger of Allah ﷺ reached Banul-Muṣṭaliq's settlement, he faced Ḥārith Ibn Ḍirār's army near a well that was known as Muraisī'. Therefore, the campaign is also known as the battle of Muraisī'. The combatants arrayed themselves and shot arrows at each other. Many of the Banul-Muṣṭaliq's men were killed and others fled; and some men and women were captured as prisoners of war. Some of their belongings fell into Muslim hands as spoils of war. Allah granted victory to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the *jihād* came to an end.

Co-operation on the basis of Tribal, Racial, National or Regional Bias is the Slogan of Pre-Islamic Paganism

Whilst the Muslim army was still at the well of Muraisī', an unpleasant scene broke out between a *Muhājir* (emigrant) and an *Anṣārī* (helper). They quarrelled over the same water where the battle was fought. The Emigrant called their fellow-Emigrants for help, and the Helpers called the fellow-Helpers for help. Some individuals came forward to help their respective sides, and the dispute might have led to a fight between the Emigrants and the Helpers. When the Holy Prophet ﷺ came to know about this, he immediately went to the scene of dispute, and expressed his indignation, saying مَابَالُ دَعْوَى الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ "What is this slogan of paganism [that you call for defence on the basis of regional, racial and national bias]?" دَعُوهَا فَإِنَّهَا مُنْتِنَةٌ "Give up the slogan. It stinks." He said that every Muslim should help another Muslim brother, whether oppressor or oppressed. Helping the oppressed is quite obvious, but helping the oppressor implies to stop him from oppression. In all matters it is necessary to find out who is the oppressed and help him and who is the oppressor and stop him from oppressing, even though he may be his own

brother or father. The racial, lineal, regional or national pride and prejudice is a filthy slogan, and it gives out nothing but bad odour.

The speech of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ brought the quarrel to an end, and the dispute was thus quelled. The two people involved in this dispute were Jahjāh, the Emigrant, and Sinān Ibn Wabrah al-Juhanī, the Helper. In this matter, the former was more on the wrong, and the latter was wounded. Sayyidnā 'Ubādah Ibn Ṣāmit رضي الله عنه explained to Sinān Ibn Wabrah al-Juhanī رضي الله عنه, and he took understanding and pardoned Jahjāh رضي الله عنه. The oppressor and the oppressed thus became brothers.

The hypocrites had joined the Muslims for greed of receiving a share from the spoils. Their leader was 'Abdullah Ibn Ubayy. Like other hypocrites, he called himself a Muslim for mundane benefits, but concealed enmity in his heart against the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and the Muslims. When he came to know about the clash between the Muhājirs (Emigrants) and Anṣār (the Helpers), he found this an ideal opportunity to cause friction among the Muslims. So he addressed an assembly in which there were hypocrites and a Muslim Zaid Ibn Arqam رضي الله عنه where he strongly provoked the Helpers with his fiery speech against the Emigrants, saying: "You have brought all this on yourselves. You have let them settle in your land and share your wealth and property. They are fed on your breads until they became strong and now they rival you. If you do not realize the consequences of your helping them, they will make your life miserable. Therefore, in future you should abandon them and stop helping them with your property, and they would themselves disperse to other areas. By Allah, when we go back to Madīnah the most honourable of the inhabitants of Madīnah shall drive out the meanest of them from there." He termed his own group and the Anṣār as 'the honourable ones', and [God forbid!] the Holy Prophet ﷺ along with the *muhajirin* as 'the meanest ones'. When Sayyidnā Zaid Ibn Arqam رضي الله عنه heard his speech, he retorted instantly: "By Allah, you are mean, low and despicable. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ is successful by God-given honour, and by the love of the Muslims.

Since 'Abdullāh Ibn Ubayy wanted to keep his hypocrisy under a veil, he concealed his intention under the cover of the vague expression of 'the most honoured and the meanest'. When Sayyidnā Zaid Ibn Arqam رضي الله عنه made a sharp retort, he realized that his disbelief would be uncovered, he

apologized to Sayyidna Zaid Ibn Arqam ؓ that he was merely joking and did not mean to do anything against the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.

Sayyidnā Zaid Ibn Arqam ؓ left the assembly and went to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and reported to him the whole story about 'Abdullah Ibn Ubayy. This news was very disturbing and trying for the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The colour of his blessed countenance changed. Sayyidnā Zaid Ibn Arqam ؓ was a young Companion at the time. The Holy Prophet ﷺ asked him: "Boy! Are you not perhaps lying?" Sayyidnā Zaid Ibn Arqam ؓ swore by Allah and said: "I heard these words with my own ears." The Holy Prophet ﷺ said to him: "Are you sure you are not saying this on the basis of some suspicion?". Sayyidnā Zaid Ibn Arqam ؓ made the same reply. After that, the news of Ibn Ubayy's fiery speech spread throughout the Muslim army. No one spoke anything but about this speech. On the other hand, the Helpers reproached Sayyidnā Zaid Ibn Arqam ؓ. They said that he has accused the venerable leader of the nation (that is, Ibn Ubayy) and severed kinship ties with him. Sayyidnā Zaid Ibn Arqam ؓ swore by Allah and said that in the entire tribe of Khazraj, Ibn Ubayy was the dearest person to him, but when he uttered the unpleasant words against the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, he could not hold himself. "Even if that were my father," he went on, "I would have certainly reported his speech to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ."

When Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ heard the story, he said: "O Allah's Messenger! Permit me to behead this hypocrite." According to another narration, Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ said: "Permit 'Abbād Ibn Bishr to cut off his head and present it to you." The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said that if he were to permit them to do that, the news will spread among people that Muḥammad ﷺ kills his own Comrades. As a result, he did not allow Ibn Ubayy to be killed. When this news about Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ reached 'Abdullah Ibn Ubayy's son who also bore the same name as his father's, 'Abdullah, but he was a sincere Muslim, he immediately went up to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and said: "If you wish my father to be killed because of his speech, then allow me to kill him and bring his head to you before you arise from your assembly. The entire tribe of Khazraj is a witness to the fact that no one is more serving and obedient to my parents than myself. But I will not tolerate any of their mischief against Allah and His Messenger ﷺ. If you allow anyone else to kill my father and he

kills him, then, I am afraid, when I see my father's killer walking freely, my tribal jealousy may overcome me and I may be tempted to kill him, and that might be the cause of my punishment." The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "I do not have the intention of killing him, nor have I instructed anyone else to kill him."

After this incident, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ announced, at an unusual time against his normal habit, that he would immediately set out on his journey back to Madīnah. So he mounted his she-camel Quṣwā' and started his journey at an unusual time. When the general body of the blessed Companions had set out on the journey, the Holy Prophet ﷺ called 'Abdullah Ibn Ubayy and asked him: "Did you say this?" He took oath and denied everything that was imputed to him, and claimed that the boy, Zaid Ibn Arqam, was a liar. 'Abdullah Ibn Ubayy was the respectable chief of his people. All the people felt that may be Zaid Ibn Arqam رضي الله عنه was under some misconception, and Ibn Ubayy did not say it as was conveyed.

In any case, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ accepted Ibn Ubayy's oath and explanation. The reproach of the people against Zaid Ibn Arqam رضي الله عنه was further aggravated. This embarrassed him and he hid himself from the people. Then the Messenger of Allah ﷺ travelled with the entire Muslim army the whole day and night and the next morning, until the bright sun was out. Then he, together with the army, halted in a place. They were all exhausted on account of the long and strenuous journey. As soon as they touched the ground, they fell into deep sleep.

The narrator reports that the purpose of this unusually immediate and long journey was to close the chapter of the story of Ibn Ubayy, which had by and by spread among the entire Muslim community, and they talked about it all the time.

After that, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ started the journey, in the course of which Sayyidnā 'Ubādah Ibn Ṣāmit رضي الله عنه suggested to Ibn Ubayy to approach the Holy Prophet ﷺ and admit his guilt before him who would pray Allah for his pardon and he would attain salvation. When he heard this suggestion, he turned his head away. No Qur'ānic verses pertaining to Ibn Ubayy were revealed until then, but when he turned himself away in haughty arrogance, Sayyidnā 'Ubādah Ibn Ṣāmit رضي الله عنه

said: "Certainly, the Qur'ān will reveal verses pertaining to your turning down the advice."

While the Holy Prophet ﷺ was on his journey, Sayyidnā Zaid Ibn Arqam ؓ came near him again and again, and he was firm that since this hypocrite has called him a liar and embarrassed him in front of the entire nation. Allah would surely reveal verses to clear him and give the lie to the hypocrite. Suddenly Sayyidnā Zaid Ibn Arqam ؓ noticed that the Holy Prophet ﷺ entered into the state that he experienced when he received revelation: He started breathing heavily, his forehead dripped with perspiration and his mount, the she-camel, began to feel the weight of the revelation. Sayyidnā Zaid Ibn Arqam ؓ sensed that some revelation was coming down regarding that matter. When that state of revelation was over, and, because his own mount was closer to the mount of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, he held the ear of Zaid ؓ and said يَا غُلَامُ صَدَّقَ اللّٰهُ حَدِيثَكَ وَنَزَلَتْ سُورَةُ الْمُنٰفِقِينَ فِى اِبْنِ اُبَيٍّ مِنْ اَوَّلِهَا اِلَى اٰخِرِهَا "O Boy, Allah has confirmed the veracity of your statement, and the entire Sūrah Al-Munāfiqūn - from the beginning to the end - has been revealed in connection with Ibn Ubayy's incident."

This shows that Sūrah Al-Munāfiqūn was revealed in the course of the journey. According to Baghawī's narration, however, the Holy Prophet ﷺ had reached Madīnah and Sayyidnā Zaid Ibn Arqam ؓ was hiding himself in the house for fear of reprisal, when this Surah was revealed. And Allah knows best!

According to another narration, when the Messenger of Allah ﷺ approached Madīnah at the valley of 'Aqiq, 'Abdullah, the son of the hypocrite 'Abdullah Ibn Ubayy, who was a faithful believer, went forward and searched through the throng of mounts and, finding his father's mount, made it sit. He placed his foot on its knees and said to his father: "By Allah! You cannot enter Madīnah unless the Messenger of Allah permits you, and unless you clarify who are the most honourable inhabitants of Madīnah that will expel the meanest ones. Tell me who is the most honourable one, the Messenger of Allah or you? " Passers-by were reproaching 'Abdullah as to how unkindly he was treating his father. By then the mount of Allah's Messenger ﷺ came near. He inquired what was happening. People said that 'Abdullah has barred his father's entry into Madīnah unless Allah's Messenger permits him. The

Holy Prophet ﷺ saw that the hypocritical Ibn Ubayy declared to his son that he himself was the meanest of the citizens of Madīnah, even meaner than children and women, and the Holy Prophet ﷺ the most honourable of them. At this, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said to the son: "Leave his way; let him enter." The son then let him enter.

Only this much is the story of the revelation of Sūrah Al-Munāfiqūn. At the beginning of the story, a concise reference was made to the campaign of Banul-Muṣṭaliq where it was shown that the real person responsible for the campaign was Ḥārith Ibn Ḍirār who at that time was not a Muslim but embraced Islam later. He was the father of Sayyidah Juwairiyah رضي الله عنها who too was not a Muslim but embraced Islam later, and became one of the noble wives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

Musnad of Aḥmad, Abū Dāwūd and others record that when Banul-Muṣṭaliq were defeated, spoils of war, together with prisoners of war, fell into Muslim hands. According to Islamic Law, all prisoners and spoils of war were distributed among the Mujāhidīn. Among the prisoners of war was Juwairiyah رضي الله عنها the daughter of Ḥārith Ibn Ḍarār. She fell to the lot of Sayyidnā Thābit Ibn Qais Ibn Shammās. He entered into the contract of *kitābah* to set her free in lieu of a specified sum of money.[1]

According to Sayyidah Juwairiyah's رضي الله عنها contract of *kitābah*, the sum specified was very large and she could not pay off the large sum of money to purchase her freedom. She came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and said: "I have embraced Islam and I bear witness that there is only One Allah and He has no partners, and that you are Allah's Messenger." Then she went on to narrate her story: "I fell to the lot of Thābit Ibn Qais Ibn Shammās, but we entered into the contract of *kitābah* and the sum specified in the contract is so large that I cannot manage. Please do help me." The Holy Prophet ﷺ acceded to her request. In addition, he expressed his intention to emancipate her and marry her. For Sayyidah Juwairiyah رضي الله عنها, this was a great boon. How could she refuse to accept this offer? She accepted the offer whole-heartedly, and thus became one of the noble wives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The Mother of the Faithful, Sayyidah Juwairiyah رضي الله عنها says that three days before the Holy Prophet ﷺ came for the campaign of Banul-Muṣṭaliq, 'I saw in my dream that the moon arose in Yathrib and it

(1) For fuller explanation of the contract of *kitābah*, see volume 6, pp.426-427 of this book under the commentary of Sūrah 24:33. (Muḥammad Taqi Usmani)

came and fell in my lap. I did not narrate this dream to anyone at that time. Now I have seen its interpretation with my own eyes.'

She was the daughter of the leader of her nation. When she became one of the wives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, it exerted a great influence on the entire tribe. One advantage that accrued to all women captured with her was that all of them were emancipated. They were relatives of the Mother of the Faithful. The Muslims set free all slave-girls related to her when they came to know of her joining the rank of the Mother of the Faithful. They felt that it is disrespectful to keep any of her relatives as a slave-girl. About one hundred of them were emancipated with her. Her father saw a miracle of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and embraced Islam.

The Above Story Imparts Guiding Principles on Important Issues

The circumstances, under which Sūrah Al-Munāfiqūn was revealed, indeed help us understand the basic interpretation of the Sūrah. Additionally, they bring out some important guiding principles related to moral or ethical, political and social issues. That is why the full story has been fully recounted here. The guiding principles derived from this story are given below:

The Foundation Stone of Islamic Polity: Establishment of Islamic Brotherhood which Aims at Ending Colour, Racial and Linguistic Discriminations, and Indigenous-Alien Prejudices

The episode of the dispute that broke out between an Emigrant and a Helper, and each side calling their fellow-Emigrants and their fellow-Helpers respectively for help was the icon of paganism which the Holy Prophet ﷺ destroyed. He established the principle that all believers are brothers, regardless of their race, colour, language, or nationality. The bond of brotherhood the Holy Prophet ﷺ established between the Refugees and the Helpers had made them like real brothers. It is, however, the ancient Satanic network to get people involved in mutual dispute and quarrel on the basis of nationality, race, language, colour and regionalism. Satan calls for mutual co-operation and help on this basis alone. This necessarily results in blocking out the Islamic concept of mutual co-operation which is based on Truth, justice, fair play and equity *vis-à-vis* the un-Islamic co-operation based on race and nationalism taken place. In this way, the Satan causes friction among Muslims. In this

instance also a similar situation would have developed if the Holy Prophet ﷺ did not arrive on the scene in time and quell the dispute and said to them that it was the stinking slogan of paganism and that they should give it up. He re-established them on the Qur'ānic principle of mutual co-operation تَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوٰى وَلَا تَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ (And help each other in righteousness and piety, and do not help each other in sin and aggression....5:2) In other words, the standard for Muslims to help others or to receive help from others is good will, justice, fair play and equity. They should co-operate mutually on this basis, even though the others may belong to another race, ethnic group, or to another region. They should not unite in one conjoint to co-operate in sin and injustice, even though he may be father or brother. This is the just and rational foundation which Islam has laid, and the Messenger of Allah ﷺ himself took care of this every step of the way and commanded everyone to follow the principle. In his Farewell Address, he said that all customs of paganism are trampled under his feet. The idols of discrimination of Arab-non-Arab, white-black and indigenous- aliens have been broken. Islamic principle of mutual help and co-operation is Truth and justice. All should apply it.

Another lesson that stems from this story is that the enemies of Islam since time immemorial use nationalism and regionalism to cause friction, and break up the Muslim Community. Whenever the opportunity arises, they split them up.

Alas, the Muslims have long forgotten this lesson, and the enemies have once more set up the same Satanic network to break up Islamic unity. The Muslims all over the world have put the religion and the religious principles into oblivion. As a result, they have become victims of civil wars. Their united front to fight disbelief has been smashed. The Muslim world is divided not only into Arabs and non-Arabs, but further divided into Egyptian, Syrian, Ḥijāzī and Yemeni. In the Indo-Pak sub-continent, the Punjabis, Bengalis, Sindhis, Hindis, Pathans and Balochis are victims of mutual differences. To Allah we direct our complaint! The enemies of Islam are toying with our differences. As a result, they are overcoming us in all fields, and we are defeated everywhere. We have developed a slavish mentality and are forced to take refuge in them. Even today we can see with our open eyes Divine

help and assistance coming to us, provided we adopt the Qur'ānic principles and the guidance of Allah's Messenger ﷺ; provided we adhere to a strong Islamic brotherhood instead of showing a slavish devotion to the lifestyle of others; and provided we break down the idols of colour, race, language and region.

The Noble Companions' Unparalleled Adherence to Islamic Principles and their Lofty Station

This incident further shows that though the Satan made some people raise the slogan of paganism temporarily, the 'Īmān was so engrossed in their hearts that the slightest admonition was sufficient to jolt them into repenting. They had such a high degree of love and reverence for Allah and His Messenger ﷺ that no relationship and sense of nationality could act as a barrier against it. An eloquent testimony of that is contained in the statement of Zaid Ibn Arqam ؓ. He himself was a member of the tribe of Khazraj and Ibn Ubayy was the leader of that tribe, and the former loved and venerated the latter most dearly, but he could not tolerate the provocative words uttered against the Refugee Muslims and Allah's Messenger ﷺ by his leader, and he made a blunt reply then and there. Then he went up to Allah's Messenger ﷺ and complained to him about the hypocrite. The tribal-worshippers of the present age would never have dared to take the complaint of their leaders to the Holy Prophet ﷺ

The attitude of Ibn Ubayy's son 'Abdullah in this incident makes it crystal clear that his real love and veneration was dedicated to Allah and His Messenger ﷺ. When he heard him utter words against them, he went to Allah's Messenger ﷺ and sought his consent to cut off his father's head. When the Holy Prophet ﷺ did not permit him, he made his father's mount sit, when he approached Madīnah, blocked his way and forced him to admit that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is 'the most honourable' and that he himself is 'the meanest one'. He did not open the way for his father before the Holy Prophet's ﷺ permission.

Besides, the idols of nation-worship and land-worship were broken to pieces in the battles of Badr, Uḥud and Aḥzāb, which proved that all Muslims are brothers, no matter which nationality, country, colour or language group they belong to. Anyone who does not believe in Allah and His Messenger ﷺ is an enemy, even though he may be his own real

brother or father.

هزار خویش که بیگانه از خدا باشد......فدائے یك تنِ بیگانه کآشنا باشد

Thousands of relatives who are alien to Allah

May be sacrificed to an alien who is faithful to Allah.

Taking Care of General Welfare of Muslims: Protecting them from Misunderstanding

Another point illustrated by this incident is that an act which is permissible in itself should be avoided if it may create a misunderstanding in the mind of a Muslim, or may provide an opportunity for the enemies to spread misunderstanding among them. Thus, despite the fact that Ibn Ubayy's hypocrisy was exposed openly, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ did not permit Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ to behead him when he sought his permission, because the enemies could create misunderstanding in the public minds that Muḥammad ﷺ killed his own Comrades. But it should be noted that, as other traditions prove, such acts may be abandoned only when they are not from the basic objectives of Sharī'ah, though they may be laudable. As for the basic objectives of Sharī'ah, they cannot be abandoned for such an apprehension. Instead, attempts must be made to remove the danger and do the work dictated by the objectives of Sharī'ah.

Let us now study some specific sentences of the Sūrah:

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ تَعَالَوْا يَسْتَغْفِرْلَكُمْ رَسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ (And when it is said to them, "Come on, and Allah's Messenger will pray for your forgiveness"...63:5) When this Sūrah exposed the false oaths of 'Abdullah Ibn Ubayy, the leader of the hypocrites, people went up to him to advise him to approach the Holy Prophet ﷺ and admit his guilt. They said that he has still time to request the Holy Messenger ﷺ to pray to Allah to forgive him. To this, he responded by turning his head around and saying arrogantly: " I believed when you asked me to believe; I paid *Zakāh* when you asked to; and now the only thing left is for you to ask me to prostrate to Muḥammad ﷺ." The above verses were revealed on this occasion, which make plain that he has no faith, and therefore asking forgiveness for him cannot benefit him in any way.

Ibn Ubayy, after this incident, returned to Madīnah, lived for a few days, and died soon thereafter. [Maẓharī].

هُمُ الَّذِيْنَ يَقُوْلُوْنَ لَاتُنْفِقُوْا عَلٰى مَنْ عِنْدَ رَسُوْلِ اللّٰهِ حَتّٰى يَنْفَضُّوْا (They are the ones who say, "Do not spend on those who are with Allah's Messenger, so that they disperse...63:7) This verse points out to the foolish statement that Ibn Ubayy had made at the time of the dispute between Jahjāh, the Emigrant, and Sinān, the Helper. Allah Ta'ālā has responded to it that these foolish people have presumed that the Emigrants need their donations and they are their sustainers, while all treasures of heavens and the earth belong to Allah. If He wills, He can provide to them everything without any contribution from their side. Since the statement made by Ibn Ubayy was an evidence of his foolishness, the Holy Qur'ān states: لَايَفْقَهُوْنَ "...but the hypocrites do not understand [7]."

يَقُوْلُوْنَ لَئِنْ رَّجَعْنَآ اِلَى الْمَدِيْنَةِ لَيُخْرِجَنَّ الْاَعَزُّ مِنْهَا الْاَذَلَّ (They say, "If we return to Madīnah, the more honourable ones will drive out the meaner ones from there."....63:8) This too is the statement of Ibn Ubayy, the hypocrite. Although the words used by him were ambiguous, the intention was clear. He termed himself and the natives of Madīnah as 'honourable' and the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the Emigrant Companions as (God forbid!) the 'meanest'. He thus provoked the Helpers of Madīnah against the Emigrants that the former should drive out the latter from their city. In answer to this, Allah recoiled his boastful statement against himself by pointing out that if those who are really 'honourable' drive out those who are really the 'meanest', it will go against themselves, because all honour belongs to Him, His Messenger and the believers. The hypocrites, however, are unaware of this because of their ignorance. The concluding phrase of this verse is لَايَعْلَمُوْنَ '...but the hypocrites do not know. [8]' This may be contrasted with the concluding phrase of verse لَايَفْقَهُوْنَ 'but they do not understand'. The reason for the distinction between 'do not understand' and ' do not know' is as follows: If a person thinks that he is the provider of others, this is completely irrational. This is the sign of his foolishness. Honour and dishonour, on the other hand, can fall to anyone's lot. Therefore, if he errs in his judgement, this is ignorance of facts or true state of affairs. Thus we have here لَايَعْلَمُوْنَ '...but the hypocrites do not know. [8]'

Verses 9 - 11

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَاتُلْهِكُمْ اَمْوَالُكُمْ وَلَآ اَوْلَادُكُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللّٰهِ ۚ

وَمَنْ يَّفْعَلْ ذٰلِكَ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْخٰسِرُوْنَ ﴿٩﴾ وَاَنْفِقُوْا مِنْ مَّا رَزَقْنٰكُمْ مِّنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ يَّاْتِيَ اَحَدَكُمُ الْمَوْتُ فَيَقُوْلَ رَبِّ لَوْلَآ اَخَّرْتَنِيْٓ اِلٰٓى اَجَلٍ قَرِيْبٍ فَاَصَّدَّقَ وَاَكُنْ مِّنَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ ﴿١٠﴾ وَلَنْ يُّؤَخِّرَ اللّٰهُ نَفْسًا اِذَا جَآءَ اَجَلُهَا ؕ وَاللّٰهُ خَبِيْرٌۢ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١١﴾

O those who believe, your riches and your children must not divert you from the remembrance of Allah. And those who do that are the losers. [9] **And spend out of what We have given to you before death overtakes one of you and he says, "My Lord, would you not respite me to a near term, and I will pay *ṣadaqah* (alms) and will become one of the righteous."** [10] **And Allah will never respite anyone, once his appointed time will come. And Allah is All-Aware of what you do.** [11]

Commentary

Linkage between Sections [1] and [2]

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تُلْهِكُمْ اَمْوَالُكُمْ وَلَآ اَوْلَادُكُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللّٰهِ

O those who believe, your riches and your children must not divert you from the remembrance of Allah. (63:9)

The preceding section dealt with the hypocrites, their false oaths and their conspiracies. In sum, their nefarious activities were based on their excessive love for the worldly gains. They outwardly claimed to be Muslims, so that they might not suffer loss at the hands of the sincere Muslims, and might share the spoils of war with them. One of the consequences of this mentality was their design to stop spending on the Emigrant Companions. Now, this second section addresses the sincere and faithful believers, and warns them against being intoxicated with the love of this world, as the hypocrites foolishly did. There are two major objects in this world that divert a person from the remembrance of Allah: [1] wealth; and [2] children. Therefore, these two things have been named in particular. Otherwise, it refers to all the means of enjoyments in the world. The import of the verse is that love of wealth and children to some extent is not bad. Being engaged with them to a certain degree is not only permissible but also obligatory. But there is a dividing line between permissible and impermissible love that must always be borne in mind.

The criterion is that this love must not deviate one from Allah's remembrance. The word *dhikr* (remembrance) in this context has been variously interpreted by different commentators. Some say it refers to the five daily prayers, while others say it refers to Zakāh or Ḥajj. Some refer it to the Qur'ān. Ḥasan Baṣrī expresses the view that the word *dhikr* here refers to all forms of obedience and worship. This is the most comprehensive interpretation. [Qurṭubī]

In short, we are permitted to be involved in the material wealth up to the degree that it does not divert us from Allah's obedience. If one becomes engrossed in the material wealth or become absorbed in the forbidden or abominable things, which divert him from our duties and obligations towards Allah, the sentence أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْخٰسِرُوْنَ "...they are the losers" will apply, because he has sold the great and eternal reward of the Hereafter for the petty and perishable enjoyment of this world. What loss could be greater than this!

وَاَنْفِقُوْا مِنْ مَّا رَزَقْنٰكُمْ مِّنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ يَّأْتِيَ اَحَدَكُمُ الْمَوْتُ (And spend out of what We have given to you before death comes to one of you...63:10) 'Coming of death' in this verse refers to 'witnessing the signs of death'. The verse exhorts the believers to make the best of their opportunities to spend in the way of Allah, in the state of good health and strength, before the signs of death appear, and thus they should have their degrees of rank elevated in the Hereafter. Once death overtakes them, the opportunity to spend will be lost, and the wealth will be of no use. Earlier on it was learned that the word *dhikr* (remembrance of Allah) refers to all forms of obedience and following the dictates of Sharī'ah, which include spending wealth as due. Despite that, spending wealth on this occasion has been mentioned separately. There may be two reasons for it: Firstly, one of the major objects that divert man from acting upon the sacred laws of Sharī'ah is wealth. Therefore, spending wealth, in the form of Zakāh, 'Ushr, Ḥajj and so on, is specifically mentioned. Secondly, when a person sees the signs of death, it is not in his power to perform his missed prayers, or his missed Ḥajj, Ramaḍān fasts. However, the wealth is in front of him, and he is sure that soon it will slip out of his hand. So he may spend the wealth to compensate his shortfalls in worship and so attain salvation from such shortcomings. Furthermore, charity [*ṣadaqah*] is efficacious in averting calamities and punishment.

Ṣaḥiḥ of Bukhārī and Muslim record on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﵁ that a person asked the Messenger of Allah ﷺ: "Which *ṣadaqah* attracts most reward?" The Messenger of Allah ﷺ replied: "To spend in Allah's way when a person is in a state of good health, and yet he fears, in view of future needs, that if he spends the wealth he may become poor." Then he continued: "Do not delay spending in Allah's way until such time when your death reaches your throat, and at that moment you instruct (your heirs), 'Give this much to so-and-so and give this much for such and such work.'"

فَيَقُوْلَ رَبِّ لَوْلَآ اَخَّرْتَنِيْٓ اِلٰٓى اَجَلٍ قَرِيْبٍ (...and he says, "My Lord, would you not respite me to a near term, and I will pay *ṣadaqah* (alms) and will become one of the righteous....63:10) Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﵁ says, in the interpretation of this verse, that if *Zakāh* was due on a person and he failed to pay it, and *Ḥajj* was obligatory and he failed to perform it, he will express this desire when death approaches him. He will want a little more time so that he can give *ṣadaqah* and اَكُنْ مِّنَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ 'become one of the righteous' [10] In other words, he will also desire that he is given a little more time so that he may act righteously by fulfilling his obligations that he has missed out and repent and ask pardon for the forbidden and abominable acts he might have indulged in. But Allah makes it clear in the next verse that once his time has come, He will not give any more time to anyone. This desire at that stage is futile.

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Munāfiqūn
Ends here

Sūrah At-Taghābun
(Loss and Gain)

This Sūrah is Madanī, and it has 18 verses and 2 sections

بسم اللہ الرحمن الرحیم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 10

يُسَبِّحُ لِلّٰهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ ۚ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ وَلَهُ الْحَمْدُ
وَهُوَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿١﴾ هُوَ الَّذِيْ خَلَقَكُمْ فَمِنْكُمْ كَافِرٌ
وَّمِنْكُمْ مُّؤْمِنٌ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ بَصِيْرٌ ﴿٢﴾ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ
وَالْاَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ وَصَوَّرَكُمْ فَاَحْسَنَ صُوَرَكُمْ ۚ وَاِلَيْهِ الْمَصِيْرُ ﴿٣﴾
يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا تُسِرُّوْنَ وَمَا تُعْلِنُوْنَ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ
عَلِيْمٌۢ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُوْرِ ﴿٤﴾ اَلَمْ يَاْتِكُمْ نَبَؤُا الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ
فَذَاقُوْا وَبَالَ اَمْرِهِمْ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿٥﴾ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهٗ كَانَتْ تَّاْتِيْهِمْ
رُسُلُهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ فَقَالُوْۤا اَبَشَرٌ يَّهْدُوْنَنَا فَكَفَرُوْا وَتَوَلَّوْا وَّاسْتَغْنَى اللّٰهُ ؕ
وَاللّٰهُ غَنِيٌّ حَمِيْدٌ ﴿٦﴾ زَعَمَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْۤا اَنْ لَّنْ يُّبْعَثُوْا ؕ قُلْ بَلٰى
وَرَبِّيْ لَتُبْعَثُنَّ ثُمَّ لَتُنَبَّؤُنَّ بِمَا عَمِلْتُمْ ؕ وَذٰلِكَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ يَسِيْرٌ ﴿٧﴾
فَاٰمِنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ وَالنُّوْرِ الَّذِيْۤ اَنْزَلْنَا ؕ وَاللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرٌ
﴿٨﴾ يَوْمَ يَجْمَعُكُمْ لِيَوْمِ الْجَمْعِ ذٰلِكَ يَوْمُ التَّغَابُنِ ؕ وَمَنْ يُّؤْمِنْۢ

بِاللّٰهِ وَيَعْمَلْ صَالِحًا يُّكَفِّرْ عَنْهُ سَيِّاٰتِهٖ وَيُدْخِلْهُ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِىْ مِنْ
تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَآ اَبَدًا ؕ ذٰلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيْمُ ﴿۹﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ
كَفَرُوْا وَكَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَآ اُولٰٓئِكَ اَصْحٰبُ النَّارِ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا ؕ وَبِئْسَ
الْمَصِيْرُ ﴿۱۰﴾ ع

Allah's purity is pronounced by all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth. To Him belongs the kingdom, and for Him is all praise, and He is powerful over every thing. [1] **He is the One who created you, then some of you are disbelievers, and some of you are believers. And Allah is Watchful of what you do.** [2] **He has created the heavens and the earth with truth, and shaped your figures, and made your figures good, and to Him is the final return.** [3] **He knows all that is in the heavens and the earth, and He knows whatever you conceal and whatever you reveal. And Allah is All-Aware of what lies in the hearts.** [4] **Did the news of those people not come to you who disbelieved earlier, and tasted (in this world) the evil consequence of their conduct, and for them (in the Hereafter) there is a painful punishment?** [5] **That is because their messengers used to bring them clear proofs, but they said, "Shall some mortals give us guidance?" Thus they disbelieved and turned away, and Allah did not care. And Allah is All-Independent, Ever-Praised.** [6] **The disbelievers claim that they will never be raised again (after death). Say, "Why not? By my Lord, you will be raised again, then you will be told about what you did. And that is easy for Allah."** [7] **So, believe in Allah and His Messenger, and in the light We have sent down. And Allah is All-Aware of what you do.** [8] **(Be mindful of) the day He will gather you for the Day of Gathering. That will be the Day of loss and gain. And whoever believes in Allah, and does righteously, He will write off his evil deeds, and will admit him to gardens beneath which rivers flow, where they will live forever. That is the great achievement.** [9] **And those who disbelieve and reject Our signs_they are the people of the Fire. And it is an evil place to return.** [10]

Commentary

هُوَالَّذِىْ خَلَقَكُمْ فَمِنْكُمْ كَافِرٌ وَّمِنْكُمْ مُّؤْمِنٌ (He is the One who created you, then

some of you are disbelievers, and some of you are believers...64:2) In the phrase *fa-minkum,* the particle '*fa*' [translated here as 'then'] denotes 'one thing happening after another '. In this instance, the phrase '*khalaqakum*' [created you] indicates that at the inception of creation there were no unbelievers [*kāfirs*]. Human beings were, subsequently, divided into believers and non-believers by their own free will and choice with which Allah has invested them. They are rewarded or punished on account of exercising the free will and choice. A Prophetic Tradition states: كُلُّ مَوْلُوْدٍ يُّوْلَدُ عَلَى الْفِطْرَةِ فَاَبَوَاهُ يُهَوِّدَانِهٖ وَيُنَصِّرَانِهٖ (Everyone is born a Muslim, but his parents make him a Jew, a Christian...) [Qurṭubī].

Two Nations Theory

The Holy Qur'ān has divided mankind here into two groups: a believing group and a non-believing one. This indicates that the children of 'Ādam عليه السلام is one single brotherhood, and all human beings are members of this brotherhood. *Kufr* [unbelief] is the only dividing line that severs relationship with this brotherhood and creates another group. He who becomes a *Kāfir* has severed the relationship of human brotherhood. Thus group-formation can only take place on the basis of *'Īmān* and *Kufr*. Neither colour nor language, neither lineage nor family, neither land, territory or geographical region can divide human brotherhood into rival groups. The offspring of one father may live in different cities, or use different languages, or have different colours, but it does not divide them into different groups. Despite differences of colour, language, country or territory, they are members of the same brotherhood. No sane person will ever regard them as different groups.

In the Days of Ignorance, ethnicity and tribal divisions had become the basis of factionalism, but the Messenger of Allah ﷺ broke down these idols, which they pursued. By the express text of the Holy Qur'ān اِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ اِخْوَةٌ 'All believers are but brothers' irrespective of their country or territory, their colour or family, or their language. They all belong to one brotherhood. So likewise, the non-believers, in the sight of Islam, belong to a single community.

The above verse also bears evidence to the fact that Allah has divided all mankind into two groups - the believers and the non-believers. The variety of languages and colours, according to the Qur'ān, is no doubt a sign of the perfect power of Allah, and having many socio-economic

benefits, it is a great blessing, but it is not permitted to use it as the basis of factionalism or group-formation among mankind.

Moreover, the binary division of mankind on the basis of *'Īmān* and *Kufr* is a matter of free will and choice. Both *'Īmān* and *Kufr* may be adopted by one's free will. If a person chooses out of his own free will to abandon his group and join another, he can do it very easily: He may give up his articles of faith, choose another faith and thus join the other group. On the other hand, the affiliations of race, lineage, colour, language or territory are not within the power or control of anyone. No one can change his affiliation with his race, colour or language.

It was this Islamic brotherhood that, in a short span of time, joined uncountable members of believers in a single string, from east to west, north to south, white and black, and Arabs and non-Arabs, whose might and power could not be resisted by the nations of the world, and therefore they revived once again the idols that were shattered by the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and Islam. They partitioned the one mighty *ummah* of Muslims into small bits and pieces of nations based on territory, homeland, language and colour, race and lineage, and caused them to collide with one another. This cleared the way for the enemies of Islam to attack, the consequences of which are visible to every eye today. The Muslims of east and west were one nation and one heart, but are now divided into small groups fighting one another. As against this, the Satanic forces of *Kufr*, despite mutual disagreements, look like a united force against the Muslims.

وَصَوَّرَكُمْ فَأَحْسَنَ صُوَرَكُمْ (...and shaped your figures, and made your figures good...64:3) Shaping the figures of the creatures is one of the exclusive attributes of Allah, That is why *Al-Musawwiru* [the Shaper] is one of His attributive names. If we analyze or look carefully into the universe, there are several classes of things. Each class has several species and each species has several sexes. Each sex has billions of members. No single shape ever resembles another shape. Among humankind, for instance, on account of differences of country or territory, or differences of stock and nations, there is clear distinction in the shapes and faces of individuals. The face and shape of each individual is so amazingly unique and that it baffles the human imagination. The human face is no more than six to seven square inches, and there are uncountable faces of the same type,

and yet one face does not look exactly like the other one so that distinguishing one from the other would be difficult. The present verse mentions figure-making as one of the Divine blessings and immediately thereafter it goes on to say فَاَحْسَنَ صُوَرَكُمْ (and made your figures good). In the entire universe, Allah made the human shape the most beautiful. No matter how ugly a man or an individual might seem in his community, he is still beautiful in his own right, relative to the shapes of all other non-human creatures.

فَقَالُوْٓا اَبَشَرٌ يَّهْدُوْنَنَا (...but they said, "Shall some mortals give us guidance?"...64:6) Though the word *bashar* [mortal(s)] is singular, but in meaning it is plural. Therefore, the verb يَهْدُوْنَنَا 'give us guidance' is plural. All unbelievers held the notion that prophets and messengers cannot be human beings. The Qur'ān has time and again falsified and refuted this notion of the unbelievers. Alas, there is also a group of Muslims who denies the mortality of the Allah's Messenger. They need to think in which direction they are moving. His mortality is not contradictory to his prophet-hood, nor is it incompatible with his high station of messenger-ship, nor is his being a Messenger inconsistent with his being a Nūr (light). He is Nūr (light) as well as a mortal. It is a false analogy to compare his light with that of a lamp or of the sun or the moon.

فَاٰمِنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ وَالنُّوْرِ الَّذِيْٓ اَنْزَلْنَا (So, believe in Allah and His Messenger, and in the light We have sent down...64:8) The word Nūr [light] in this context refers to the Qur'ān. 'Light' fulfils two functions: In the first place it is itself luminous and in the second place it makes other things luminous and bright. The Qur'ān, on account of its miraculous nature, is itself luminous, and it illuminates what pleases or displeases Allah, the sacred laws, injunctions and commands, and the realities of the Hereafter, which human beings ought to know.

The Reason Why the Day of Gathering is called the Day of Loss and Gain

يَوْمَ يَجْمَعُكُمْ لِيَوْمِ الْجَمْعِ ذٰلِكَ يَوْمُ التَّغَابُنِ ([Be mindful of] the day when He will gather you for the Day of Gathering. That will be the Day of loss and gain...64:9) 'The Day of Gathering' and 'The Day of Loss and Gain' are both the names of the Day of Judgement. The reason why that day is called 'The Day of Gathering' is quite obvious. On that day all creations, the earlier generations as well as the later generations, will be brought

together to give account of their deeds and for reward and punishment. The reason for calling the day as 'The Day of Loss and Gain' is because the word *taghābun* is derived from *ghabn* which means 'loss'. Financial loss as well as mental deficiency is referred to as *ghabn.* Imām Rāghib Iṣfahānī in his *Mufradā-ul-Qur'ān* says that when the word refers to financial loss, it is expressed in the passive voice thus *ghubina fulānun* 'so-and-so suffered financial loss' When one wants to say that 'he was or became deficient in his opinion or judgement', one would express it thus *ghabina* from the triliteral verb form, the second radical being vowelled with *kasrah* [-i-] on the measure of *sami'a.* The word *taghābun* is a two-way process and signifies 'mutuality of actions', where two parties mutually cause loss to each other, or they make manifest each other's loss. In the context of this verse, however, it is one-sided or one-way process of making manifest of non-believer's loss. The latter sense is also its recognized use. 'The Day of Loss and Gain' is so called because, according to authentic Traditions, Allah has created two abodes for everyone in the Hereafter_one in Hell and another in Paradise. Before admitting the righteous believers to Paradise, they will be shown the abode in Hell, which they would have received if they failed to believe and act righteously, so that they may appreciate their abode in Paradise more highly and thank Allah more profoundly. On the other hand, the non-believers will be shown their abode in Paradise, which they would have received had they believed and acted righteously, so that they may regret more bitterly and be more remorseful. These narratives also tell us that the abodes in Paradise that were prepared for the non-believers will be given to the believers in Paradise, and the abodes in Hell that were prepared for the believers will be given to the non-believers in Hell. These Traditions are elaborately recorded in the two Ṣaḥīḥs and other collections of Traditions. When the inmates of Paradise will attain the places originally prepared for the disbelievers, the latter will realize what they have lost and what they have gained.

Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Tirmidhī and others record on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ؓ that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ asked the noble Companions: "Do you know who is a pauper?" They replied: "One who has no possessions." The Messenger ﷺ said that a pauper in my community is one who will come on the Day of Judgement with a heap of

righteous deeds, such as prayers, fasting, alms-giving and so on, but he might have reviled someone in the world, or he might have slandered another person, or he might have killed or murdered some other person, and he might have taken away someone's property unlawfully. All these people will gather around him and demand their rights. One will take away his prayers, another will snatch away his fasts, someone will take away his alms and a third person will carry away his other good deeds. When all his good deeds would be exhausted, the sins of the oppressed will be loaded on the oppressor, and in this way the score will be settled. Consequently, he will be pushed into the Fire of Hell. [Mazharī].

It is recorded in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Bukhārī that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said, "Whoever has an obligation towards someone should discharge it or ask his obligor to forgive it here in this world. Otherwise, he will have no dirhams or dinars (money) there in the Hereafter to set off his liabilities. The obligors will be given the good deeds of the debtor in lieu of their unfulfilled rights. When his good deeds will be exhausted, the sins of the oppressed will be added to the account of the oppressor."

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه and other leading authorities on Tafsīr have given the foregoing reason for naming the Day of Judgement as 'The Day of Loss and Gain'. Other authorities express the view that the grief of loss will not only be felt by the miserable non-believers, but also by the righteous believers. The latter will feel a sense of loss in that they will bitterly regret that they wasted much of their time in life and failed to carry out more good deeds, so as to attain more blessings and favours in Paradise, as is stated in a Prophetic Tradition.

مَنْ جَلَسَ مَجْلِسًا لَّمْ يَذْكُرِ اللّٰهَ فِيْهِ كَانَ عَلَيْهِ تِرَةً يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ

(He who sits in an assembly and does not remember Allah in the entire session, this assembly will be a source of bitter regret for him.)

Qurṭubī writes that on that Day every believer will feel a sense of loss on account of shortcomings in the fulfillment of his duties and obligations in life. Naming the Judgement Day as the 'Day of Loss and Gain' is like its being named as 'The Day of (Bitter) Regret' in Sūrah Maryam, thus وَأَنْذِرْهُمْ يَوْمَ الْحَسْرَةِ إِذْ قُضِىَ الْأَمْرُ 'And warn them of the Day of (Bitter) Regret when the affair will be resolved...19:39) Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī interprets this

verse as implying that on that day the unjust and unrighteous people will bitterly regret their shortcomings, and the righteous believers will regret their shortcomings in the performance of their righteous deeds. In this way, everyone on the Day of Judgement will regret and have a feeling of loss at his shortcomings. Therefore, this day is named as the 'Day of Loss and Gain'.

Verses 11 - 18

مَآ اَصَابَ مِنْ مُّصِيْبَةٍ اِلَّا بِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ ط وَمَنْ يُّؤْمِنْ بِاللّٰهِ يَهْدِ قَلْبَهٗ ط
وَاللّٰهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿١١﴾ وَاَطِيْعُوا اللّٰهَ وَاَطِيْعُوا الرَّسُوْلَ ج فَاِنْ
تَوَلَّيْتُمْ فَاِنَّمَا عَلٰى رَسُوْلِنَا الْبَلٰغُ الْمُبِيْنُ ﴿١٢﴾ اَللّٰهُ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ط
وَعَلَى اللّٰهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿١٣﴾ يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِنَّ مِنْ
اَزْوَاجِكُمْ وَ اَوْلَادِكُمْ عَدُوًّا لَّكُمْ فَاحْذَرُوْهُمْ ج وَاِنْ تَعْفُوْا
وَتَصْفَحُوْا وَتَغْفِرُوْا فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿١٤﴾ اِنَّمَآ اَمْوَالُكُمْ
وَاَوْلَادُكُمْ فِتْنَةٌ ط وَاللّٰهُ عِنْدَهٗٓ اَجْرٌ عَظِيْمٌ ﴿١٥﴾ فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ
وَاسْمَعُوْا وَاَطِيْعُوْا وَاَنْفِقُوْا خَيْرًا لِّاَنْفُسِكُمْ ط وَمَنْ يُّوْقَ شُحَّ نَفْسِهٖ
فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿١٦﴾ اِنْ تُقْرِضُوا اللّٰهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا يُّضٰعِفْهُ
لَكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ط وَاللّٰهُ شَكُوْرٌ حَلِيْمٌ ﴿١٧﴾ عٰلِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ
الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ ﴿١٨﴾

And no calamity befalls (one), but with the leave of Allah. And whoever believes in Allah, He guides his heart. And Allah is All-Knowing about every thing. [11] **And obey Allah, and obey the Messenger. But if you turn away, then Our Messenger has only to convey the message clearly.** [12] **Allah is such that there is no god but He. And in Allah alone the believers must place their trust.** [13] **O those who believe, among your wives and your children there are some enemies for you, so beware of them. And if you forgive and overlook and pardon, then Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful.** [14]

Your riches and your children are but a trial. As for Allah, with Him is a great reward. [15] So, observe *taqwā* (total obedience to Allah in awe of Him) as far as you can, and listen and obey, and spend (in Allah's way), it being good for you. And those who are saved from the greed of their souls are the successful. [16] If you advance a good loan to Allah, He will multiply it for you, and will forgive you. And Allah is Appreciative, Forbearing, [17] the Knower of the unseen and the seen, the All-Mighty, the All-Wise. [18]

Commentary

مَآ اَصَابَ مِنْ مُّصِيْبَةٍ اِلَّا بِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ ۭ وَمَنْ يُّؤْمِنْ ۢ بِاللّٰهِ يَهْدِ قَلْبَهٗ (And no calamity befalls [one], but with the leave of Allah. And whoever believes in Allah, He guides his heart...64:11) In other words, it is a reality that not even a particle can move without the Divine will. Without the will of Allah no one can harm or benefit anyone. If a person does not believe in Allah and the Divine destination, he would not have any means of comforting himself when a calamity befalls him. He receives it with despair, and gropes for means of alleviating it. A believer, on the other hand, who reposes his faith in Divine will and destination is guided by Allah, and his heart is filled with peace and tranquility. Allah will guide his heart to certainty of faith. Therefore, he will know with certainty that whatever difficulty afflicts him could never have missed him, and whatever adversity has missed him could never have afflicted him. As a result of this belief, he is promised a reward in the Hereafter, which he keeps in view all the time. This strong belief in the promise of a reward in the Hereafter alleviates the worst calamity of this world.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِنَّ مِنْ اَزْوَاجِكُمْ وَ اَوْلَادِكُمْ عَدُوًّا لَّكُمْ فَاحْذَرُوْهُمْ (O those who believe, among your wives and your children there are some enemies for you, so beware of them...64:14) Tirmidhī, Ḥākim and others have recorded, with authentic chain of transmitters, on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ, that this verse was revealed regarding those Muslims who embraced Islam in Makkah after the migration of the Holy Prophet ﷺ to Madīnah. They intended to migrate to Madīnah and join the Holy Prophet ﷺ, but their wives and children refused to allow them. [Rūḥ] This was the time when it was compulsory for every Muslim to migrate from Makkah. Therefore, the wives and children who stood in way of loyalty and obedience to Divine laws are referred to as their enemies, and it was

emphasized that they should beware of them, because none can be greater enemy than one who involves a person in the eternal punishment and everlasting Fire of Hell. 'Aṭā' Ibn Rabāḥ reports that this verse was revealed in connection with 'Auf Ibn Mālik Ashja'ī ﷺ. He was in Madīnah. Whenever the occasion arose to go to war or *jihād* and he would intend to participate in the *jihād*, his wife and children would complain: "In whose care are you leaving us?" He would be influenced by their complaint and change his mind. [Rūḥ and Ibn Kathīr]

These two narratives are not in conflict with each other. Both narratives, in their own right, can be the cause of revelation, because wife and children that stand in the way of obeying Allah's laws, whether migration or *Jihād*, they become the enemies of Allah.

وَإِنْ تَعْفُوا وَتَصْفَحُوا وَتَغْفِرُوا فَإِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (And if you forgive and overlook and pardon, then Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful...64:14) The Muslims who were warned by the previous verse that their wives and children were their enemies, decided that they would treat their family members harshly. On that occasion, this part of the verse was revealed. The verse purports to say that 'although your wives and children behaved like enemies and stood in your way to perform your duty towards Allah, do not treat them harshly and mercilessly, but rather treat them politely and leniently. This is better for you because Allah loves forgiving and showing mercy.'

Ruling

Scholars have deduced from the above verse that if the family members do anything in violation of the sacred laws, it is not appropriate to be disappointed with them totally, or to be hostile towards them, or to hate or curse them. [Rūḥ]

Wealth and Children are a Trial

إِنَّمَا أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَأَوْلَادُكُمْ فِتْنَةٌ (Your riches and your children are but a trial...64:15) The word *fitnah* means 'test or trial'. The purport of the verse is to say that Allah tests man by means of his wealth and children as to whether he is so much engrossed in the love of wealth and children as to become heedless of Divine laws and injunctions, or he maintains his love for them within limits and remains heedful of his duties and obligations towards Allah.

The truth of the matter is that the love of wealth and children is a great trial for man. He mostly commits sins for their love, especially when he indulges in earning livelihood through unlawful means. According to a *ḥadīth*, some people will be brought on the Day of Judgment, and the people will look at him and say اَكَلَ عَيَالُه' حَسَنَاتِهٖ (His family ate up his good deeds.) [Rūḥ]. In another narration, the Holy Prophet ﷺ, referring to the children, said: مَبْخَلَةٌ مَّجْبَنَةٌ (They are the cause of one's miserliness and cowardice.) It means that on account of their love, man fails to spend in Allah's way, and on account of their love he fails to participate in Jihād. Some righteous elders have said, اَلْعَيَالُ سُوْسُ الطَّاعَات (Family is the weevil of obedience". A weevil is a small beetle that feeds on grain and seeds and destroys crops. Likewise, a family feeds on man's good deeds and destroys them.

فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ (So, observe *taqwā* [total obedience to Allah in awe of Him] as far as you can...64:16) When the verse اِتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ حَقَّ تُقَاتِهٖ (...Observe *taqwā* as is His due...3:102] was revealed, the blessed Companions felt it very difficult, because it was impossible for anyone to observe *taqwā* of Allah 'as is due to Him'. On that occasion, the present verse was revealed which clarified that no imposition is made on man more than he can bear. *Taqwā* too must be observed as far as it is possible for man to observe. If a person tries to obey Allah totally in awe of Him, that will be sufficient in fulfilling Allah's due. [Rūḥ - condensed]

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah At-Taghābun
Ends here

Sūrah Aṭ-Ṭalāq
(The Divorce)

This Sūrah is Madanī, and it has 12 verses and 2 sections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 7

يٰۤاَيُّهَا النَّبِىُّ اِذَا طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَآءَ فَطَلِّقُوْهُنَّ لِعِدَّتِهِنَّ وَاَحْصُوا الْعِدَّةَ ۚ
وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ رَبَّكُمْ ۚ لَاتُخْرِجُوْهُنَّ مِنْۢ بُيُوْتِهِنَّ وَلَا يَخْرُجْنَ اِلَّاۤ اَنْ
يَّاْتِيْنَ بِفَاحِشَةٍ مُّبَيِّنَةٍ ؕ وَتِلْكَ حُدُوْدُ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّتَعَدَّ حُدُوْدَ اللّٰهِ
فَقَدْ ظَلَمَ نَفْسَهٗ ؕ لَا تَدْرِىْ لَعَلَّ اللّٰهَ يُحْدِثُ بَعْدَ ذٰلِكَ اَمْرًا ﴿۱﴾
فَاِذَا بَلَغْنَ اَجَلَهُنَّ فَاَمْسِكُوْهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوْفٍ اَوْفَارِقُوْهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوْفٍ
وَّاَشْهِدُوْا ذَوَىْ عَدْلٍ مِّنْكُمْ وَاَقِيْمُوا الشَّهَادَةَ لِلّٰهِ ؕ ذٰلِكُمْ يُوْعَظُ بِهٖ
مَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّتَّقِ اللّٰهَ يَجْعَلْ لَّهٗ مَخْرَجًا
﴿۲﴾ وَّيَرْزُقْهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَايَحْتَسِبُ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللّٰهِ فَهُوَ
حَسْبُهٗ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ بَالِغُ اَمْرِهٖ ؕ قَدْ جَعَلَ اللّٰهُ لِكُلِّ شَىْءٍ قَدْرًا ﴿۳﴾
وَالّٰٓـئِىْ يَئِسْنَ مِنَ الْمَحِيْضِ مِنْ نِّسَآئِكُمْ اِنِ ارْتَبْتُمْ فَعِدَّتُهُنَّ ثَلٰثَةُ
اَشْهُرٍ وَّالّٰٓـئِىْ لَمْ يَحِضْنَ ؕ وَاُولَاتُ الْاَحْمَالِ اَجَلُهُنَّ اَنْ يَّضَعْنَ
حَمْلَهُنَّ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّتَّقِ اللّٰهَ يَجْعَلْ لَّهٗ مِنْ اَمْرِهٖ يُسْرًا ﴿۴﴾ ذٰلِكَ اَمْرُ اللّٰهِ
اَنْزَلَهٗۤ اِلَيْكُمْ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّتَّقِ اللّٰهَ يُكَفِّرْ عَنْهُ سَيِّاٰتِهٖ وَيُعْظِمْ لَهٗۤ اَجْرًا ﴿۵﴾

اَسْكِنُوْهُنَّ مِنْ حَيْثُ سَكَنْتُمْ مِّنْ وُّجْدِكُمْ وَلَا تُضَآرُّوْهُنَّ لِتُضَيِّقُوْا
عَلَيْهِنَّ ؕ وَاِنْ كُنَّ اُولَاتِ حَمْلٍ فَاَنْفِقُوْا عَلَيْهِنَّ حَتّٰى يَضَعْنَ
حَمْلَهُنَّ ۚ فَاِنْ اَرْضَعْنَ لَكُمْ فَاٰتُوْهُنَّ اُجُوْرَهُنَّ ۚ وَاْتَمِرُوْا بَيْنَكُمْ
بِمَعْرُوْفٍ ۚ وَاِنْ تَعَاسَرْتُمْ فَسَتُرْضِعُ لَهٗۤ اُخْرٰى ﴿٦﴾ لِيُنْفِقْ ذُوْ سَعَةٍ
مِّنْ سَعَتِهٖ ؕ وَمَنْ قُدِرَ عَلَيْهِ رِزْقُهٗ فَلْيُنْفِقْ مِمَّاۤ اٰتٰىهُ اللّٰهُ ؕ لَا يُكَلِّفُ
اللّٰهُ نَفْسًا اِلَّا مَاۤ اٰتٰىهَا ؕ سَيَجْعَلُ اللّٰهُ بَعْدَ عُسْرٍ يُّسْرًا ﴿٧﴾

O prophet, when you people divorce women, divorce them at a time when the period of *'iddah* may start.[1] And count the period of *'iddah*, and fear Allah, your Lord. Do not expel them from their houses, nor should they go out, unless they come up with a clearly shameless act. And these are the limits prescribed by Allah. And whoever exceeds the limits prescribed by Allah wrongs his own self. You do not know (what will happen in future); it may be that Allah brings about a new situation thereafter. [1] So, when they (the divorced women) have (almost) reached their term, then either retain them with fairness, or part with them with fairness. And make two just men from among you witnesses (of your either decision). And (O witnesses,) keep your testimony upright for the sake of Allah. That is what anyone who believes in Allah and the Last Day is exhorted to do. And whoever fears Allah, for him Allah brings forth a way out, [2] and gives him provision (of his needs) from where he does not even imagine. And whoever places his trust in Allah, He is sufficient for him. Surely Allah is to accomplish His purpose. Allah has set a measure for every thing. [3] And those women from among you who have despaired of (further) menstruation, if you are in doubt, their *'iddah* is three months, as well as of those who have

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(1) *'iddah* means the waiting period prescribed for a divorced woman before she can marry another man. In the case of a divorcee, it is three periods of menstruation. The verse indicates that divorce should be given during *ṭuhr* (when the woman is not in her menstruation period), so that *'iddah* may start from her immediate menstruation period. Conversely, if she is divorced during menses, *'iddah* will start from the next menses period, and she will have to wait for long time before her *'iddah* may start. (Muhammad Taqi Usmani)

not yet menstruated. As for those having pregnancy, their term (of '*iddah*) is that they give birth to their child. And whoever fears Allah, He brings about ease for him in his affair. [4] This is the command of Allah that He has sent down to you. And whoever fears Allah, He will write off his evil deeds, and will give him a huge reward. [5] Provide them (the divorced women) residence from where you reside according to your means, and do not hurt them to straiten (life) for them. And if they are pregnant, spend on them till they give birth to their child. Then if they suckle the child for you, give them their fees, and consult each other (for determining the fee) with fairness, and if you have a deadlock between you, then another woman will suckle him. [6] A man of vast means should spend according to his vast means. And anyone whose sustenance is limited should spend from whatever Allah has given to him. Allah makes no one liable beyond what He has given to him. Allah will soon bring ease after a difficulty. [7]

Commentary

The Status of Marriage and Divorce in Sharī'ah: The Wise Legal Framework

In Ma'āriful Qur'ān, Volume [1], p 573, in Sūrah Al-Baqarah, full details of the subject under similar heading are given. The gist of the matter is that marriage and divorce in any given religion is not like a mutual transaction or contract similar to transactions in buying and selling or in loans and repayments, which the contracting parties may conclude as they wish. In all ages there has always been a consensus among followers of all religions that these contracts have a special sacred nature, far above ordinary contracts. Marriage and divorce must, of necessity, follow the sacred laws. The People of the Book, Jews and Christians, have a celestial religion and a heavenly book. Despite countless changes and distortions, they still retain the religious value of marriage, consider it sacrosanct and are unwilling to change its ceremonial rites. They maintain that traditional restrictions are binding. Idol-worshippers, who do not have any celestial book or religion, but do believe in the Supreme Being, like Hindus, Aryahs, Sikhs, Magi, Fire-worshippers and star-worshippers, all believe in the sacred nature of marriage and divorce and feel bound to fulfil their religious rites when

getting married. All family laws are based on these principles of the various religions.

Only the atheistic group, which rejects outright the existence of God or does not see the need for a religion, feel that marriage and divorce are like any other commercial transaction like 'hiring contract'. The purpose of marriage is no more than gratification of one's carnal desires. Alas, this theory seems to be gaining momentum throughout the world nowadays, which has made man to join the beastly queue. To Allah we belong and to Him we direct our complaint!

The sacred law of Islam is a complete and chaste system of life. Islam has not treated marriage as a civil contract only, but has endowed it with the status of a kind of worship. The institution thus not only allows the satisfaction of carnal desires of husband and wife in a chaste manner, with which they are naturally endued, but it also binds them in a wise and just system of mutual rights and obligations essential to the proper functioning of family life and solving the sociological problems like preserving the human race and upbringing of the children.

Since the proper functioning of human race depends on the proper maintenance of marital relationship, Islam has focused attention on family issues most exhaustively. By a careful analysis of the Holy Qur'ān we notice that commercial contracts like sale, partnership, hiring and so on are though among the most important socio-economic problems, the Holy Qur'ān has restricted itself to setting down their basic principles, and the bye-laws are rarely ever touched upon. In matters of marriage and divorce, on the other hand, not only the fundamental principles have been laid down, but their detailed laws have also been directly revealed by Allah in the Qur'ān and entrenched.

These laws have been scattered in various Chapters, and Sūrah An-Nisā' deals with them more elaborately. The current Sūrah, known as Sūrah Aṭ-Ṭalāq, specifically deals with 'divorce', 'the period of '*iddah*' and so on. Thus, according to some narratives, this Sūrah is also called as Sūrah An-Nisā' Aṣ-Ṣughrā or the Short Sūrah An-Nisā' [Qurṭubī with reference to Bukhārī]

According to the drift of Islamic teachings, when a man and a woman contract marriage, it should establish a permanent relationship for the

whole lifetime. This will maintain stability of husband and wife in mundane, as well as, in religious affairs, and also in the up-bringing of the children born of this wedlock, so that their moral conduct is proper and upright. Therefore, Islam, at every step of the way, guides marriage partners to avoid bitterness in their marital relationship, and even if it does arise, utmost efforts are made to remove it and to patch up differences and reconcile. However, despite all these attempts, it is possible in some cases that there remains no way out for the welfare of the estranged parties except to terminate this relationship. Religions that do not allow divorce cause hardship for their followers when faced with such complicated situations and lead to serious consequences. For that reason, Islam has, like the laws of marriage, laid down principles and rules for divorce as well. However, it has at the same time declared to its followers the guiding principle that, out of all permissible acts, divorce is the most detested one in the sight of Allah. [narrated by Sayyidnā 'Abdullah Ibn 'Umar ﷺ], meaning that people should avoid it as far as possible. They should use this provision only as a last resort, only when they are compelled to do it. Sayyidnā 'Alī ﷺ has narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said تزوّجوا ولَا تطلقوا فانّ الطّلاق يهتزّ منه عرش الرّحمٰن (Marry; do not divorce because divorce causes the Throne of the All-Merciful to shudder.) Sayyidnā Abū Mūsā Ash'arī ﷺ narrates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Do not divorce women without their committing the evil act, because Allah does not love men who merely wish to experience the taste of sex, nor does He love women who merely wish to experience the taste of sex ." [Qurṭubī vide Tha'labī]

Sayyidnā Mu'ādh Ibn Jabal ﷺ narrates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Allah has created nothing on the face of the earth dearer to Him than emancipation of slaves, and Allah has created nothing on the face of the earth more hateful to Him than divorce." [Qurṭubī]

Nevertheless, Islam has though discouraged divorce and has advised its followers to avoid it as far as possible, it has allowed it in cases of necessity under special rules and regulations which require that if termination of marital relationship becomes necessary, it should be done in a fair and dignified manner. Divorce should not be taken as a means of satisfying anger and revenge.

This Sūrah opens with the vocative expression يٰٓأَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ (O Prophet),

which, according to Imām Qurṭubī, is generally used where the rule declared after that is intended to apply to the entire body of the believers. Where the injunction is exclusively meant for the person of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, he is addressed as يَآيُّهَا الرَّسُوْلُ (O Messenger).

In this context, the vocative expression يَآيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ *Yā-ayyuhan-Nabiyu* is singular and as such it required that the verb should be singular as well to comply with the Arabic grammatical rule of concordance, but we notice that the verb used is the second person plural thus اِذَا طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَآءَ (O prophet, when *you people* divorce women)

In terms of literary usage and rules of eloquence, there are two types of plural: plural of number and honorific plural. Plural of number applies to three or more persons, but often the plural may refer to one person only, in which case it expresses respect or honour and is called honorific plural . In the light of this rule, the plural verb addresses the 'prophet' directly as a mark of respect and honour, and at the same time it indicates that the injunction is not restricted to him exclusively, but it applies to the entire body of believers.

Some scholars, however, are of the view that a sentence is understood here in the following way: يَآيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُلْ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ اِذَا طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَآءَ which means: O prophet, say to the believers that when they divorce their wives, they should observe the following procedure'.

Then the verse has laid down some rules relating to divorce as follows:

Rule [1]

فَطَلِّقُوْهُنَّ لِعِدَّتِهِنَّ (...divorce them at a time when the period of "*iddah* may start.[1]' Literally the word ['*iddah* means to 'count' and in the terminology of Sharī'ah the term "*iddah* means the waiting period prescribed for a divorced woman before she can marry another man. There are two ways in which a woman's marriage may be terminated. [1] When her husband dies, in which case the period of waiting is four months and ten days. [2] Her marriage ends when the husband divorces her. In the case of a divorcee that is not pregnant, "*iddah* is three periods of menstruation according to Imām Abū Ḥanīfah and other leading authorities. According to Imām Shafi'i and other scholars, the waiting period for a divorcee is three tuhrs (i.e. three periods of purity after menses). However, there are no days or months fixed for her. Whenever

her three menstrual cycles or clean cycles complete, her waiting period of divorce will be over. Women who do not menstruate, because they have not yet attained puberty, or because they have attained menopausal age, rule about them is forthcoming. Likewise, the rule for pregnant women is also forthcoming, in which case the waiting period for death and divorce is the same. The verse indicates that divorce should be given during *tuhr* (when woman is not in her menstruation period), so that *"iddah* may start from her immediate menstruation period. Conversely, if she is divorced during menses, *"iddah* will start from the next menses period, and she will have to wait for a longer time before her *"iddah* may start.

Ṣaḥīḥ of Bukhārī and Muslim record that Sayyidna Ibn 'Umar ﷺ divorced his wife while she was menstruating. When Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ mentioned this to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, he became very indignant and said:

ليراجعها ثم يمسكها حتّٰى تطهر ثم تحيض فتطهر، فان بدا له فليطلقها طاهرًا قبل ان يمسّها، فتلك العدّة الّتى امرها اللّٰه تعَالٰى ان يطلّق بها النّساء.

"He must take her back and keep her till she is purified, then has another menstrual cycle and is purified. If it then seems proper for him to pronounce another divorce to her, he may do so when she is pure from the menstrual discharge before having conjugal relations with her, for that is the "iddah that Allah has commanded for the divorce of women." [Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī and Muslim as quoted by Maẓharī].

This Ḥadīth clarifies several points. [1] It is forbidden to divorce a woman while she is menstruating. [2] If a person does this, it is necessary for him to retract the divorce, provided that it is revocable as was in the case of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar ﷺ. [3] If a husband wishes to divorce his wife during the clean-period, he must not have had conjugal relations with her. And [4] this is the interpretation of verse [1] of this Sūrah: فَطَلِّقُوْهُنَّ لِعِدَّتِهِنَّ.

From what is cited above the meaning of the verse is explained, in that if a husband wishes to pronounce divorce on his wife, he must do so before her waiting period can commence. Since, according to Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, the waiting period will start with the menstrual cycle that follows the divorce, the meaning of the verse would be that in the clean period in which divorce is intended to be pronounced, no intercourse

should take place, and that it should be pronounced towards the last part of the clean period before the start of the menstrual cycle. But since according to Imām Shāfi'ī, the waiting-period starts with the clean-period, the phrase لِقُبُلِ عِدَّتِهِنَّ (before their waiting-period) implies: 'Divorce them at the start of the clean-period'. This difference of opinion hinges on the differential interpretation of the word *qurū'* occurring in verse ثَلٰثَةَ قُرُوْءٍ [228] of Sūrah Baqarah. The details are available in Volume [1] of Ma'āriful Qur'ān under [2:228]

In sum: The first rule as derived from the verse under comment is that, according to unanimity of the Ummah, it is forbidden to pronounce divorce during the monthly courses. It should be pronounced in the interval between two monthly courses during which the husband and wife should not have had sexual intercourse. If they had intercourse during the interval, it is forbidden to pronounce the divorce. The reason for the prohibition in both cases is that the waiting-period of the wife will be unnecessarily prolonged and will cause her undue hardship. If she is divorced during her monthly course, it will not be counted. She will have to complete her days of menstruation and, according to the Ḥanafī school, the next clean-period or interval will not be counted either. When the second monthly course commences, her *'iddah* will start. This will obviously lengthen her period greatly. According to the Shāfi'ī school, at least the rest of the menstrual days, which passed before the waiting-period, will be increased.

This very first rule about divorce ensures that divorce is not a source of satisfying a fit of anger or revenge. It is rather an arrangement adopted as a last resort for the comfort of both the parties. It is necessary, therefore, to keep in mind from the very outset that the wife should not be unduly harmed by prolonging her waiting period.

This procedure applies in the case of the women whose *'iddah* is calculated by menstrual cycles or clean cycles. It does not apply to women for whom waiting-period is not compulsory, as in the case of a woman who did not have privacy with her husband. If a man and a woman got married but they did not get together in privacy, *'iddah* is not necessary for her at all when she is divorced. Therefore, it is permissible to divorce such women during their monthly courses. Likewise, *'iddah* for a woman who does not menstruate on account of minority of age, or because she

has attained menopausal age, is computed on monthly basis. Their 'iddah is three months. Their menstrual or pure cycles are not taken into account. It is permissible to divorce them in any state, and even after having intercourse with them, as the forthcoming verses will clarify. [[Maẓharī] paraphrased]

Rule [2]

وَأَحْصُوا الْعِدَّةَ (And count the period of *'iddah*...1) The word *Iḥṣā'* means 'to count'. The verse purports to say that the believers, men and women, should keep a careful count of the passing days of the waiting period, lest they forget the exact days and feel, before time, that the waiting-period is over. The responsibility of keeping count of the days has been imposed on both men and women, although only masculine form has been used here. Generally, when the Qur'ān imposes injunctions on men and women, it uses the masculine form but it includes women as well. Another reason for using masculine gender here may be that women are generally more heedless, and therefore, the responsibility has been put directly on the shoulders of men.

Rule [3]

لَاتُخْرِجُوْهُنَّ مِنْۢ بُيُوْتِهِنَّ وَلَا يَخْرُجْنَ (Do not expel them from their houses, nor should they go out...65:1). The construction in this verse contains the phrase بُيُوْتِهِنَّ 'their houses', and implies that, so far as the residence of divorced women is due on men, they have a rightful claim in the home of their former husbands. Letting them reside there is no favour to them, but it is one of the basic rights of a wife that has been imposed upon the husband as an obligation. This verse shows that this right of hers does not end with divorce, but continues till the completion of waiting-period. Expelling a woman from her house before the completion of the waiting-period is unjust and forbidden. Likewise, it is forbidden for women to leave their houses on their own, even though the husband may permit her to leave, because spending the waiting-period in their houses is not only the husband's right, but also the Divine right, in that Allah has imposed on a woman in her period of *'iddah*. This is the rule according to the Ḥanafī school.

Rule [4]

اِلَّا اَنْ يَّاْتِيْنَ بِفَاحِشَةٍ مُّبَيِّنَةٍ (...unless they come up with a clearly shameless act...65:1). It is forbidden to expel divorcees from their homes when they

are passing their period of ʻiddah. However, an exception is made in this part of the verse. The exception applies to a situation when they come up with a clearly shameless act, in which case they may be expelled. What is meant by 'a clearly shameless act'? There are three views regarding this question:

The first view is that 'leaving husband's home on her own' is in itself an act of committing an outright indecency. In this interpretation, the 'exception' is not meant as a real exception. It does not purport to allow women to leave the homes, but to emphasise its prohibition with greater force. Its example is as follows: 'None shall do such-and-such certain work "unless" he has lost his human quality', or 'Do not use obscene language against your mother "unless" you wish to become out-and-out disobedient to your mother'. The first example of 'exception' does not purport to legalise the act, nor does the second example purport to legitimise it. Both examples eloquently emphasise prohibition of the acts. In brief, the injunction in the verse sets down that divorcees are not permitted to leave their husband's homes, unless they have reached the ultimate point of indecency and run away. Thus it does not allow to run away, but stresses its shamelessness and confirms its prohibition. This interpretation of 'clearly shameless act' is ascribed to Sayyidnā ʻAbdullah Ibn ʻUmar ﷺ, Suddī, Ibn-us-Sā'ib, an-Nakhaʻī and others. Imām Abū Ḥanīfah has also preferred this interpretation. [Rūḥ-ul-Maʻānī]

The second interpretation of the phrase فَاحِشَةٍ مُّبَيِّنَةٍ 'a clearly shameless act' is that it refers to 'adultery' in which case the use of 'exception' would be in its normal sense. If a divorced woman commits adultery and it is proved that she is guilty of the crime, she will have to be taken away from her home to implement the prescribed punishment of adultery. This interpretation is attributed to Qatādah, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Shaʻbī, Zaid Ibn Aslam, Ḍaḥḥāk, ʻIkrimah and others. Imām Abū Yūsuf has preferred this interpretation.

The third view about the phrase 'a clearly shameless act' is that it refers to the 'use of abusive language' or 'quarreling'. The sense is that if the woman uses abusive language or is quarrelsome, it is permissible to evict her from her home of ʻiddah . This interpretation of the phrase is ascribed to Sayyidnā Ibn ʻAbbās ﷺ on the authority of several chains of transmitters. According to Sayyidnā ʻAbdullah Ibn Masʻūd ﷺ and Ubayy

Ibn Ka'b ﷺ, the exceptive phrase is read thus إِلَّا أَنْ يَفْحَشْ. The apparent meaning of this reading is ' indecent speech'. This reading confirms the third interpretation. [Rūḥ] In this case as well, the 'exception' is employed in its primary sense - in that if a divorced woman is obscene in words and actions, she can be evicted from her home of waiting-period.

Thus far four rules of divorcing procedure have been set down. More rules are forthcoming, but between them there are a few sentences to stress upon the strict adherence to these rules and to exhort people to carefully refrain from their violation. It is a unique style of the Qur'ān that after every command or injunction, its violation is prevented by instilling Allah's awful reverence in the hearts, and by invoking concern about the Hereafter. Especially the relationship between husband and wife is so delicate that their mutual rights cannot be fulfilled merely by legislation. The only thing that can prevent spouses from violation of the rules is the fear of Allah and the Hereafter.

وَتِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللّٰهِ ۚ وَمَنْ يَّتَعَدَّ حُدُوْدَ اللّٰهِ فَقَدْ ظَلَمَ نَفْسَهٗ ۚ لَا تَدْرِىْ لَعَلَّ اللّٰهَ يُحْدِثُ بَعْدَ ذٰلِكَ اَمْرًا

(And these are the limits prescribed by Allah. And whoever exceeds the limits prescribed by Allah wrongs his own self. You do not know [what will happen in future]; it may be that Allah brings about a new situation thereafter...65:1)

The phrase حُدُوْدُ اللّٰهِ (the limits prescribed by Allah) refers to the sacred laws set down by the Sharī'ah of Islam. The phrase وَمَنْ يَّتَعَدَّ (And whoever exceeds the limits prescribed by Allah) implies 'whoever violates the sacred laws'. The phrase فَقَدْ ظَلَمَ نَفْسَهٗ (wrongs his own self) implies that he has not damaged Allah's sacred laws or the Sharī'ah. In fact, he has caused loss to himself. The loss could be religious, or it could be mundane. The religious loss means that he has sinned by violating the sacred laws, in consequence of which he will suffer in the Hereafter. The mundane loss means that any person who pronounces divorce in violation of the rules prescribed by the Sharī'ah will most probably end up with three pronouncements of divorce, after which it cannot be revoked and even a fresh marriage is not possible. Such a person regrets bitterly and suffers tremendous hardship in this very world, especially if he has children. Many people divorce their wives with the intention of causing harm to them. It may cause some harm to the wives, but such cruel husbands will

be liable to double punishment: firstly for breaking the sacred laws of Allah, and secondly for the cruelty exercised against women. Such a situation has been so eloquently versified by a Persian poet:

پنداشت ستمگر جفا برما کرد......برگردن وے بماند وبرما بگذشت

The oppressor thinks that he has caused misery for us

However our misery comes to an end, but the liability of punishment remains stuck with the neck of the oppressor for good.

لَاتَدْرِیْ لَعَلَّ اللّٰهَ یُحْدِثُ بَعْدَ ذٰلِكَ اَمْرًا (You do not know; it may be that Allah brings about a new situation thereafter....65:1). These words signify that after estranged relations between the espouses, Allah may create a situation where the husband may recall the comforts he enjoyed in her wife's company, and realise the services offered by her in taking care of children and the home. On realising this, He may be remorseful on what he did, retract the divorce and retain her as his wife. This is possible only if at the time of divorcing the limits prescribed by the Sharī'ah is kept in view and instead of making the divorce *bā'in*, a revocable divorce is pronounced, in which case the husband has the right to retract it and retain the wife. Irrevocable divorce should not be resorted to unnecessarily because it terminates the marriage at once. Nor should three divorces should be pronounced, because after the third pronouncement, the husband does not have the right to retract, nor is it possible to renew the marriage contract, even if the divorced parties agree mutually.

Rule [5]

فَاِذَا بَلَغْنَ اَجَلَهُنَّ فَاَمْسِكُوْهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوْفٍ اَوْفَارِقُوْهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوْفٍ (So, when they [the divorced women] have [almost] reached their term, then either retain them with fairness, or part with them with fairness...65:2). The word *ajal* means 'term of "*iddah*' and 'reaching the term' means 'nearing the end of the "*iddah*'. The fifth rule laid down by this verse is that when a divorced woman's term of "*iddah*' is approaching the end, the time has almost come for the absolute termination of the marriage. By now the temporary impulse or momentary fit of anger should have dissipated, and it is the time to make the major decision with a cool and calm head whether it is better to retain the wife, or to terminate the marriage with her finally. If

the decision is to retain the wife, then she should be retained in all fairness with dignity and courtesy, the *masnūn* procedure of which is indicated in the forthcoming verse and in Prophetic Traditions: utter verbally that 'I have revoked the divorce I pronounced to you' and call two upright men as witnesses. If, however, the decision is to end the marriage, the woman should be released with fairness, dignity and courtesy. That is, the '*'iddah*' should be allowed to expire, and once it expires, she is free to contract marriage with someone else.

Rule [6]

At the end of term, whether it is decided to retain the wife or release her, the Qur'ān has restricted either of the decisions with the word *ma'rūf*. Literally, the word *ma'rūf* means 'a recognised way' and it implies that the Muslims are required to implement the approved procedure of Sharī'ah and Sunnah, as recognised by Islam. If the decision is to revoke the divorce and retain the wife, she should not be hurt in future verbally or physically, nor should this be shown as a favour to her. The husband should resolve to bear her weakness that led to divorce in the past, so that it may not cause bitterness to arise again. If, on the other hand, the decision is to release her, then the recognised procedure is as follows: Do not evict her in disrespectful manner, but release her in a courteous manner. When she is made to leave the house, it is at least *mustaḥab* [rewardable] in some cases to give her a suit of clothes, and in other cases it is *wājib* [compulsory] to do so, as other verses of the Qur'ān show. The details are available in books of jurisprudence.

Rule [7]

The seventh rule is derived directly from the above verse that gives the husband two options of retaining the wife or parting with her in fairness, and also indirectly from the preceding verse that says لَعَلَّ اللّٰهَ يُحْدِثُ بَعْدَ ذٰلِكَ أَمْرًا "...it may be that Allah brings about a new situation thereafter." Both these verses indicate that if the husband is forced into a situation of divorcing, it is the divine will that he should keep the option of revoking the divorce open. The approved method of divorce is that he should pronounce the divorce only once in express or clear words. The pronouncement of divorce should not contain any word or phrase expressive of anger that might denote absolute termination of marriage tie, as for instance he might say 'Get out of my house', or say 'I pronounce

severe divorce on you', or say 'No relationship exists between me and you'. When such expressions are uttered as part of the pronouncement of express divorce, or these expressions are uttered with the intention of divorce, the divorce becomes effective at once, and he loses the right of revocation. This in the terminology of Sharī'ah is known as *Ṭalāq Bā'in* or irrevocable divorce. Even worse situation is when the husband pronounces three divorces upon his wife after which the husband not only loses his right of revocation, but they [husband and wife] also lose their right to enter into a fresh marriage, even if they mutually agree as we have seen in Sūrah Al-Baqarah: 'فَإِنْ طَلَّقَهَا فَلَا تَحِلُّ لَهُ مِنْ بَعْدُ حَتّٰى تَنْكِحَ زَوْجًا غَيْرَهُ' (Thereafter, if he divorces her, she shall no longer remain lawful for him unless she marries a man other than him. [2:230]

Three Simultaneous Divorces: Unlawful but Effective

Nowadays, total indifference to religion and heedlessness of its injunctions is widespread, in the society. Not only the illiterate and ignoramus, but also the literate people, like pleaders think that a divorce pronounced or written less than three times is no divorce at all. It is noticed daily that people who pronounce three simultaneous divorces regret bitterly and are in search of legal loopholes, so that they do not lose their wives.

Imām Nasā'ī reports, on the authority of Sayyidnā Maḥmūd Ibn Labīd ﷺ, in an authentic Tradition that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was informed about a person who had pronounced three divorces on the spur of the moment to his wife. The Holy Prophet ﷺ having heard this became angry. Therefore, pronouncing three divorces simultaneously, by consensus of the Ummah, is prohibited. Even if a person pronounces three divorces separately in three different clean periods, that too is reprehensible, by consensus of the Ummah. Qur'ānic verses themselves confirm this by indication. The only disagreement lies in whether or not this procedure of divorce is as prohibited and counted as *bid'ah* as divorcing three times simultaneously. Imām Mālik holds this procedure as prohibited. Imāms Abū Ḥanīfah and Shāfi'ī do not view it as prohibited or as *bid'ah*. In fact, they view it as an approved [*sunnah*] procedure of divorce, but an abominable act nonetheless. Please see Ma'āriful Qur'ān, Vol. [1], PP 578-590 for detailed injunctions regarding three simultaneous divorces.

But just as the Ummah holds by consensus that pronouncing three divorces simultaneously is prohibited, it is also a point of consensus among the entire Ummah that despite being prohibited, if a person pronounces three simultaneous divorces, all the three divorces become effective, and fresh marriage between them, in future, would not be possible. The only people that disagree with the consensus of the four major schools are some of the followers of the *Ah-ul-Ḥadīth* group and the *Shī'ite* group. The four major schools argue that if something is abominable or unlawful, it does not necessarily imply that its legal consequences will not follow. For instance, if a person kills an innocent victim, the latter would die as a result of killing, despite the act of killing being unlawful. Likewise, despite three simultaneous divorces being unlawful, they necessarily take effect. On this issue, not only the four major schools agree unanimously, but there is also overwhelming consensus of the noble Companions. Please see Ma'āriful Qur'ān, Vol. [1], PP 586-590 for a detailed discussion on the action taken by Sayyidnā 'Umar Al-Fārūq ﷺ on the issue of three simultaneous divorces.

Rule [8]

وَاَشْهِدُوْا ذَوَىْ عَدْلٍ مِّنْكُمْ وَاَقِيْمُوا الشَّهَادَةَ لِلّٰهِ (And make two just men from among you witnesses [of your either decision]. And (O witnesses,) keep your testimony upright for the sake of Allah...65:2) This verse purports to say that towards the end of the period of *'iddah*, when a decision is made either to revoke the divorce and retain the wife, or to release her, it is commendable in both cases to call two upright persons to witness the decision. This procedure of having two witnesses is, according to most jurists, a commendable (*mustaḥabb*) practice, and not mandatory. Therefore, revocation of divorce is not contingent upon appointment of witnesses. The underlying wisdom of such appointment is to resolve the possible dispute that may arise later. In case the husband decides to revoke the divorce, it is possible that the wife may deny it, whereupon the witnesses may prove revocation. And in case he decides termination of marriage, a conflict can still arise where the husband himself may make mischief and, being overcome by the wife's love, claim that he had revoked the divorce before the expiration of *'iddah*. The witnesses then may prove that he had decided to release the wife.

The adjectival phrase ذَوَىْ عَدْلٍ (...two just men) refers to reliable

witnesses in terms of Sharī'ah. If the witnesses are not reliable in terms of Sharī'ah, that is, if they are not morally upright, pious and truthful, the Qāḍī would not be able to pass judgement on the basis of such unreliable, impious and untruthful witnesses.

أَقِيمُوا الشَّهَادَةَ لِلَّهِ (...keep your testimony upright for the sake of Allah...65:2) The verse addresses all Muslims in general that should they be required by a court to bear witness in a disputed case of revocation of divorce or complete termination of marriage, they should be unbiased in their testimony.

ذَٰلِكُمْ يُوعَظُ بِهِ مَن كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ (That is what anyone who believes in Allah and the Last Day is exhorted to do...65:2) This verse particularly mentions the Hereafter because the mutual rights and obligations of husband and wife cannot be fulfilled without God-consciousness and the thought of the Hereafter.

The Wise and Educative style of the Qur'ān in the laws of Crime and Punishment

The system of punishment for crimes and compiling their laws is in place among the states of the world since ancient times. Obviously, the Qur'ān is also the Book that explains the divine laws, but its style is unique. Before and after every piece of law, man is made conscious of Allah and the Hereafter, so that he may follow the law, not for fear of police or inspector or, but for fear of Allah, irrespective of whether anyone else sees him, not. In all situations, whether in private or in public, he finds the laws binding. This is the reason why even the harshest law was not difficult to implement among those who have proper faith in the Qur'ān. There was no need for a network of police and its special or secret services.

This unique Qur'ānic style is used in all laws, but it has been especially applied to the laws relating to the marital relations and their mutual rights and obligations, because due to the delicate nature of these relations, it is not possible to secure evidence for every shortcoming on either side, nor is it possible for the judicial system to investigate and estimate the full extent of the shortcomings in the relationship. Proper fulfilment of mutual rights depends only on the inner qualities of the couple and their actions and deeds. Therefore, the *Masnūn Khuṭbah* or

approved sermon that is recited at marriage contains three verses of the Qur'ān, and each one of them begins with laying stress on *taqwā* and ends with laying stress on *taqwā* to indicate that the marrying parties must appreciate that Allah is fully aware of all their covert and overt actions, whether or not they are seen by someone else. Rather, He is well-aware of the innermost thoughts hidden in their minds or hearts. If they fall short of fulfilling the mutual rights and obligations or hurt each other, they will be answerable to the knower of secrets. In the same strain, a few injunctions have been laid down in Sūrah Aṭ-Ṭalāq. Immediately after the first injunction the believers are exhorted: وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ رَبَّكُمْ ('And fear Allah, your Lord') After this exhortation, four more injunctions are set down and then they are admonished that anyone who oversteps Allah's limits will be wronging himself and will have to bear the disastrous consequences, thus 'وَمَنْ يَّتَعَدَّ حُدُوْدَ اللّٰهِ فَقَدْ ظَلَمَ نَفْسَهٗ' Four more indirect injunctions are set down after that, and the admonition is repeated, thus: ذٰلِكُمْ يُوْعَظُ بِهٖ مَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ ('That is what anyone who believes in Allah and the Last Day is exhorted to do...65:2) Followed by this is a verse in which the merits of *taqwā* are mentioned, describing its religious and mundane blessings and benefits. Towards the end of the same verse the blessings and benefits of trust in Allah have been described. Thereafter, a few more injunctions pertaining to waiting-period are set down. Then in two more verses additional benefits and blessings of *taqwā* are described. This is followed by injunctions pertaining to marriage, divorce, the wife's maintenance, children's fosterage and so on. In the course of all these injunctions, the mention of the Hereafter, the virtue of *taqwā* , and the blessings of trust in Allah are interspersed repeatedly. This Qur'ānic style of alternating injunctions with the virtues of *taqwā* apparently seems disjointed, but having grasped the wisdom of the prudent style of the Qur'ān, the close linkage becomes clear.

Now have a look at the interpretation of the foregoing verses:

وَمَنْ يَّتَّقِ اللّٰهَ يَجْعَلْ لَّهٗ مَخْرَجًا وَّيَرْزُقْهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَحْتَسِبُ (And whoever fears Allah, for him Allah brings forth a way out, and gives him provision (of his needs) from where he does not even imagine...2/3) The word *taqwā* primarily and literally means 'to guard' or 'to refrain'. In Islamic terminology it signifies 'to guard against sins'. When the word is related to Allah, it is translated as 'to fear Allah' and implies 'to avoid disobedience of Allah and

guard against sins'.

There are two benefits of تقوٰى *taqwā* mentioned in this verse: [1] By exercising *taqwā* , Allah creates a way out to guard oneself . The question is 'Guard against what?' The correct answer is that it is general, 'against all mundane difficulties and hardships as well as all hardships and difficulties of the Hereafter' and the verse implies that for a God-fearing person Allah paves the way to salvage him from the difficulties and hardships of this world as well as from the horrors of the next world. [2] By exercising *taqwā*, Allah will provide for the God-fearing person *rizq* [literally 'provision'] from where he does not expect. The *rizq* in this context refers to anything one needs, whether any mundane need or any need of the Hereafter. Allah has promised the righteous believers in this verse that He will ease every difficulty of theirs and provide for them all their needs from resources they never expected or thought about. [Rūḥ]

In keeping with the present context, some of the commentators interpret the verse thus: The divorcing husband or the divorced wife, both or whoever of them is God-fearing, Allah will give them salvation from the horrors of divorce or termination of marriage experienced at the time of its happening. In other words, the man will be given a compatible wife and the woman will be given a compatible husband. Obviously the primary meaning of the verse comprehends all kinds of adversities and needs, including the horrors and needs of the husband and wife. [Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī]

The Cause of Revelation of the Above Verse

Sayyidnā 'Abdullah Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ reports that 'Auf Ibn Mālik Ashja'ī ﷺ came up to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and said that the enemies had arrested and kidnapped his son Sālim. His mother is very anxious and he wanted to know what he should do. The Holy Prophet ﷺ ordered him and his wife to recite لاحول ولا قوّة الاّ باللّٰه (There is no strength nor power but with Allah) abundantly. The husband and wife complied with the order. They recited the formula abundantly. It produced its desired effect. One day the enemies became unmindful, and the boy somehow managed to escape and drove a herd of goats that belonged to them to his father. According to other narratives, he found one of their camels and he mounted it and drove the other camels to his father. The father reported the incident to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. Another narration has it that he enquired

from the Holy Prophet ﷺ whether the goats and camels the son brought with him were lawful for them. On that occasion, the verse وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللّٰه (And whoever fears Allah, for him Allah brings forth a way out, and gives him provision from where he does not even imagine...2/3)

According to other versions of the report, when Sayyidnā 'Auf Ibn Mālik Ashja'ī ﷺ and his wife became very restless and anxious because of separation from the son, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ advised them to exercise *taqwā* and recite abundantly لاحول ولا قوّة إلّا باللّٰه (There is no strength nor power but with Allah). [All these narratives are cited in Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī from Ibn Mardūyah through the chain of al-Kalbī from Abī Ṣāliḥ from Ibn 'Abbās]

This occasion of revelation indicates that this verse, though related to divorcing situation in this context, has general application for all circunstances.

Ruling

This Tradition proves that when a Muslim is captured by the non-believers, the captive takes their property and returns home, such a property would be treated as booty, and as such their use would be lawful. It is a general rule of spoils to give 1/5th [*khums*] to the public treasury, but in this case he is not obligated to give 1/5th [*khums*] to the public treasury, because in the narration reported above, the *khums* of the property was not exacted from them. The jurists have ruled that if a Muslim secretly goes away to the Domain of War without seeking permission from them, snatch their property and somehow bring it into the Domain of Islam, the above ruling will apply. However, if he officially sought permission to enter their territory [as it happens nowadays by obtaining a visa] and entered their country, then it is not permissible for him to take their property without their consent. Likewise, if a person is captured and taken into the non-Muslim territory, and a non-Muslim deposits with him an article for safe custody, it is not permissible for him to take it away to the Domain of Islam. In the first case, it is not permissible because by seeking official permission a pact is entered into between them, and he has no authority to dispose of their property without their prior consent. If he does, it would be a breach of the pact. In the second case, there is a practical pact with the depositor, in that whenever he demands his deposited article back, it should be returned.

Failure to return his deposited item is tantamount to breach of contract that is unlawful in Sharī'ah. [[Maẓharī]]

Before the Holy Prophet ﷺ migrated, many non-believers used to keep their deposits with him. At the time of migration, he still had with him some of these deposits. As long as he was in Makkah, he kept them himself, but when he was migrating, he committed them to the care of Sayyidnā 'Alī رضي الله عنه and did not take them with him to Madīnah. In fact, Sayyidnā 'Alī رضي الله عنه was left behind for the sole reason of returning the deposits to the rightful people.

A Proven Prescription to avert calamities and achieve the objectives

According to the above Tradition, Sayyidnā 'Auf Ibn Mālik Ashja'ī رضي الله عنه and his wife were advised to recite لَاحَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ اِلَّا بِاللّٰهِ (There is no strength nor power but with Allah) abundantly to avert afflictions and obtain benefits. Mujaddid Alf Thānī رحمه الله تعالى says that abundant recitation of this formula is a proven prescription to avert all kinds of religious and mundane afflictions and to obtain all religious and mundane objectives and benefits. According to him, its proper way is to recite five hundred times لاحول ولا قوة الا بالله , and to recite Ṣalāh (*durūd*) one hundred times before, and one hundred times after the formula, and then to supplicate to Allah for one's need. [Tafsīr [Maẓharī]] Imām Aḥmad, Ḥākim [grading the chain as *ṣaḥīḥ*], Baihaqī, Abū Na'īm and others have transmitted on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Dharr رضي الله عنه that one day the Messenger of Allah ﷺ continuously recited the verse وَمَنْ يَّتَّقِ اللّٰهَ يَجْعَلْ لَّهٗ مَخْرَجًا وَّيَرْزُقْهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَايَحْتَسِبُ ('And whoever fears Allah, for him Allah brings forth a way out, and gives him provision from where he does not even imagine...2/3) until the reporter started feeling sleepy. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said: " Abū Dharr, if all people choose only this verse, it would be sufficient for them all." [Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī] 'Sufficient' in this statement means it would be sufficient for all people to accomplish their religious and mundane objectives, if they practice it.

وَمَنْ يَّتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللّٰهِ فَهُوَ حَسْبُهٗ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ بَالِغُ اَمْرِهٖ ۭ قَدْ جَعَلَ اللّٰهُ لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدْرًا (...And whoever places his trust in Allah, He is sufficient for him. Surely Allah is to accomplish His purpose. Allah has set a measure for every thing....65:3) In this verse Allah promises those who put their trust in Him that He shall suffice for them against all odds, because Allah will execute His

decisions that He made for them, in whatever way He wills and chooses. Allah set a measure for all things. It is in accordance with this set measure that He decrees all acts. Tirmidhī and Ibn Mājah record from Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ that Allah's Messenger ﷺ said:

لو انّكم توكّلتم على الله حقّ توكّله لرزقكم كما يرزق الطّير تغدوا خماصًا وتروح بطانا.

"If you trust in Allah as He ought to be trusted, He will provide for you in the same way as He provides for the birds. They leave their nests while hungry in the mornings, but come back in the evenings with their bellies full."

Ṣaḥīḥs of Bukhārī and Muslim transmit on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ that Allah's Messenger ﷺ said: "Seventy-thousand of my followers will be admitted to Paradise without account." Among their other qualities, they will be characterised by having trust in Allah." [Maẓharī]

Tawakkul (Trust in Allah) does not mean to forsake the causes and means Allah has created for us to acquire things. One should utilise the means at our disposal. However, instead of relying solely on them, one should rather put his trust in Allah, in that no task shall be accomplished unless Allah wills it. After describing the virtues and blessings of *taqwā* and *Twakkul*, the next verses lay down some more rules about divorce and *"iddah*.

Rule [9]

وَالّٰٓئِىْ يَئِسْنَ مِنَ الْمَحِيْضِ مِنْ نِّسَآئِكُمْ اِنِ ارْتَبْتُمْ فَعِدَّتُهُنَّ ثَلٰثَةُ اَشْهُرٍ وَّالّٰٓئِىْ لَمْ يَحِضْنَ ۭ وَاُولَاتُ الْاَحْمَالِ اَجَلُهُنَّ اَنْ يَّضَعْنَ حَمْلَهُنَّ

(And those women from among you who have despaired of [further] menstruation, if you are in doubt, their *"iddah* is three months, as well as of those who have not yet menstruated. As for those having pregnancy, their term [of *"iddah*] is that they give birth to their child...65:4)

This verse deals with additional rules pertaining to the waiting-period of divorced women. It subdivides divorced women and their waiting-periods into three different categories. Under normal circumstances, the waiting-period of a divorced woman is three menstrual cycles as mentioned in Sūrah Al-Baqarah. In the case of women who have stopped menstruating for good on account of advanced age, or due

to some disease etc. their ʻiddah is three months instead of three menstrual cycles. The same is the ʻiddah of young women who have not yet started menstruating on account of being under age. The ʻiddah for women who are pregnant at the time of divorce continues until they give birth to their child irrespective of the length of the period.

The words إِنِ ارْتَبْتُمْ (if you are in doubt) refer to the doubt or confusion such women may have because the real ʻiddah is counted on the basis of menstruation, but these women's menstruation has ceased, so they are doubtful about how to count their ʻiddah.

وَمَنْ يَّتَّقِ اللّٰهَ يَجْعَلْ لَّهٗ مِنْ اَمْرِهٖ يُسْرًا (And whoever fears Allah, He brings about ease for him in his affair....65:4) The verse further speaks of the virtues and blessings of *taqwā* in that whoever has *taqwā*, Allah will make matters easy for him in this world as well as in the next world. Then the verse emphasises strict adherence to the above laws pertaining to divorce and waiting-period, thus: ذٰلِكَ اَمْرُ اللّٰهِ اَنْزَلَهٗٓ اِلَيْكُمْ (This is the command of Allah that He has sent down to you...5) After this, the verse again draws attention to another virtue of *taqwā*. وَمَنْ يَّتَّقِ اللّٰهَ يُكَفِّرْ عَنْهُ سَيِّاٰتِهٖ وَيُعْظِمْ لَهٗٓ اَجْرًا (And whoever fears Allah, He will write off his evil deeds, and will give him a huge reward...65:5)

Five Blessings of *taqwā*

The merits and blessings of *taqwā* mentioned in the above verses may be summarised in five things: [1] He who has *taqwā* will be given a way out of difficulties and adversities; [2] He will be provided with all his needs from resources that he does not anticipate or expect; [3] Allah will make matters and tasks easy for him; [4] Allah will expiate his sins; and [5] He will grant him an immense reward.

Another blessing of *taqwā* mentioned by the Holy Qur'ān at another place is that a God-fearing person finds it easier to distinguish between right and wrong, thus: اِنْ تَتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ يَجْعَلْ لَّكُمْ فُرْقَانًا (...if you fear Allah, He will provide you with a criterion to distinguish between right and wrong...8:29] The next verses deal with further rules about the waiting period and maintenance of the divorced women and their other rights.

اَسْكِنُوْهُنَّ مِنْ حَيْثُ سَكَنْتُمْ مِّنْ وُّجْدِكُمْ وَلَا تُضَآرُّوْهُنَّ لِتُضَيِّقُوْا عَلَيْهِنَّ (Provide to them [the divorced women] residence where you reside according to your means...65:6) This injunction is related to Rule [3] above which states that

divorced women must not be expelled from their homes. This verse states the positive aspect of the injunction, in that the husbands, according to their means, should let their divorced wives live in some portion of the residence where they themselves live. If the wife is given a revocable divorce, there is no need for any *ḥijāb* or veil. However, if she is given an irrevocable divorce, whether of minor degree [*bā'in*] or of major degree by pronouncing divorce thrice, then marriage tie stands broken. She is required to be in *ḥijāb* in the presence of her former husband. Therefore, the arrangement in the residence should be made in such a way that she lives in the same residence with full observance of the rules of *ḥijāb*.

Rule [10]: Do not Hurt Divorced Women during their *''iddah*

لَاتُضَآرُّوْهُنَّ (...and do not hurt them to straiten [life] for them...65:6) This verse sets down that all the possible needs of a divorced woman must not be harassed by taunts or by curtailing her needful things, so that she is compelled to leave the home.

Rule [11]: Maintenance of Divorcees during their *''iddah*

وَاِنْ كُنَّ اُولَاتِ حَمْلٍ فَاَنْفِقُوْا عَلَيْهِنَّ حَتّٰى يَضَعْنَ حَمْلَهُنَّ (...And if they are pregnant, spend on them till they give birth to their child...65:6) This verse lays down the rule that if a divorcee is pregnant at the time of divorce, her maintenance is obligatory on the husband. On the basis of this verse, there is a complete consensus of the Ummah on this point. Similarly, if she is not pregnant, and the divorce given to her is revocable, her maintenance too is compulsory on the husband till the expiry of her *''iddah*. This point too is agreed upon by all the jurists of the Ummah. However, if a wife is given irrevocable divorce, whether a *bā'in* divorce or the divorce pronounced three times, or if a woman has got her marriage terminated by way of *khul'* [got herself separated from the husband for a compensation], will not have to be maintained by the husband according to Imāms Shāfi'ī, Aḥmad and others. However, according to Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, her maintenance is also incumbent upon the husband. He argues that just as she is entitled to residence during the term of *''iddah* as is provided in verse 6, she is entitled to sustenance too. The husbands are obligated to provide them with these necessities of life during *''iddah*. This is further supported by those Traditions in which it has been reported that when Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ heard the report of Fāṭimah bint Qais who claimed that her husband was not obligated to maintain her

after divorce, he said: "We cannot abandon the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ, on the basis of this narration. [Muslim]

'The Book of Allah' apparently refers to this verse (6). According to Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ, the verse includes maintenance. 'Sunnah' refers to the Tradition reported by Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ himself and transmitted by Ṭaḥāwī, Darquṭnī and Ṭabarānī. Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ reports that he heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say that women divorced by three pronouncements are also entitled to maintenance and lodging.

The details are available in Tafsīr [Maẓharī].

Rule [12]: Fees for Suckling the Child

فَإِنْ أَرْضَعْنَ لَكُمْ فَآتُوهُنَّ أُجُورَهُنَّ (...Then if they suckle the child for you, give them their fees...65:6). In other words, divorcees who are pregnant, their term of *'iddah* ends with the birth of the child. Consequently, their maintenance is not incumbent upon the husband. However, if they are suckling the baby, it is permissible for the mother to claim a fee for suckling the baby from her former husband, and it is incumbent on him to pay it to her, if she claims it. The principle is that as long as the marriage between the parents of the baby is intact, it is the responsibility of the mothers to suckle the children as the Qur'ān states وَالْوَالِدَاتُ يُرْضِعْنَ أَوْلَادَهُنَّ (And the mothers suckle their children...2:233) One cannot receive a fee for an act that is obligatory on him or her, because it amounts to *rishwah* (bribery) which in itself is unlawful to give or take. The period of *''iddah* is akin to the marriage in this respect, because the husband is obligated to maintain her, and therefore she cannot claim a fee for suckling a child during this period too. But once she has delivered the baby, her term of *''iddah* is over and she is absolutely released from the tie of marriage. Consequently, it is not incumbent upon the former husband to maintain her. In this instance, if she suckles the baby, the verse under comment permits giving and taking a payment for the service.

Rule [13]

وَأْتَمِرُوا بَيْنَكُمْ بِمَعْرُوفٍ (...and consult each other [for determining the fee] with fairness...65:6) The word *I'timar* means 'to consult each other' and 'to accept each other's suggestion'. The verse directs the spouses to avoid any conflict in determining the fee for suckling. The divorced wife should not

demand more than the normal rate, nor should the former husband of the divorcee refuse to pay the normal fee. They are advised to settle the issue with mutual understanding and tolerance.

Rule/Injunction [14]

وَإِنْ تَعَاسَرْتُمْ فَسَتُرْضِعُ لَهٗ أُخْرٰى (...And if you have a deadlock between you, then another woman will suckle him...65:6) In other words, if the husband and wife cannot agree on the fee of suckling with mutual consent, or the wife refuses to suckle the child even for a remuneration, then the mother cannot be forced by a court for the service of suckling. Normally, the mother has the most compassion for the child. Despite this, if she is refusing to suckle him, she probably has a genuine reason for that. If she has no genuine reason, and she is refusing merely on account of anger and displeasure, she is a sinner in the sight of Allah, but an Islamic court cannot force her to do the suckling. Likewise, if the husband, on account of abject poverty, is unable to pay the fee for suckling and a wet-nurse is willing to suckle the child without remuneration or for a lesser fee than what the divorcee mother is demanding, he cannot be forced to agree to the demand of the mother and get her to do the suckling. In fact, in either of the cases it is possible to have the child suckled by the wet-nurse. However, if the fee the mother is demanding is the same as the wet-nurse's remuneration, preference would be given to the mother rather than the wet-nurse. This is a point of consensus between all the Muslim jurists.

Ruling

If it is agreed that the wet-nurse would do the suckling, it is incumbent that the wet-nurse should do the suckling while the child is in the custody of the mother. It is not lawful to separate the mother and the baby, because the custody of the child is the right of the mother according to the law of Ḥiḍānah as stated in the authentic Traditions. It is not permissible to usurp this right from her. [Tafsīr [Maẓharī]].

Rule [15]: Quantum of Divorcee's Maintenance

لِيُنْفِقْ ذُوْسَعَةٍ مِّنْ سَعَتِهٖ ۭ وَمَنْ قُدِرَ عَلَيْهِ رِزْقُهٗ فَلْيُنْفِقْ مِمَّآ اٰتٰىهُ اللّٰهُ (A man of vast means should spend according to his vast means. And anyone whose sustenance is limited should spend from whatever Allah has given to him...65:7) In other words, in determining the quantum of the divorced wife's maintenance the financial position of the husband will be taken into

account. If the husband is wealthy, he should spend on his divorcee according to his affluence; and if he is indigent, he should spend according to his limited resources - even if the wife is wealthy. This is the ruling of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah. Other schools of jurisprudence hold differing views. [Tafsīr [Maẓharī]]

لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللّٰهُ نَفْسًا اِلَّا مَآ اٰتٰهَا ۭ سَيَجْعَلُ اللّٰهُ بَعْدَ عُسْرٍ يُّسْرًا (Allah makes no one liable beyond what He has given to him. Allah will soon bring ease after a difficulty....65:7) This is an elaboration of the preceding statement, in that Allah does not demand from anyone more than what he can afford. Therefore, if the husband is indigent, it is incumbent upon him to provide for her according to his level of indigence at that time. The wife, on the other hand, is advised to be content, for the time being, with the amount of sustenance her indigent husband is able to provide. She should not think that the present state of indigence will last for all times to come, because ease and difficulty are in the hands of Allah, and as such He can change indigence into affluence.

Special Note

The verse under comment bears an indication that Allah will create a condition of ease for husbands who try to provide for their wives the obligatory amount of sustenance to the best of their ability, and are not in the habit of keeping their wives under straitened circumstances. [Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī] And Allah knows best!

Verses 8 - 12

وَكَاَيِّنْ مِّنْ قَرْيَةٍ عَتَتْ عَنْ اَمْرِ رَبِّهَا وَرُسُلِهٖ فَحَاسَبْنٰهَا حِسَابًا شَدِيْدًا وَّعَذَّبْنٰهَا عَذَابًا نُّكْرًا ﴿٨﴾ فَذَاقَتْ وَبَالَ اَمْرِهَا وَكَانَ عَاقِبَةُ اَمْرِهَا خُسْرًا ﴿٩﴾ اَعَدَّ اللّٰهُ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا شَدِيْدًا ۙ فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ يٰٓاُولِي الْاَلْبَابِ ۚ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا ۚ قَدْ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ اِلَيْكُمْ ذِكْرًا ﴿١٠﴾ رَّسُوْلًا يَّتْلُوْا عَلَيْكُمْ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ مُبَيِّنٰتٍ لِّيُخْرِجَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ مِنَ الظُّلُمٰتِ اِلَى النُّوْرِ ۭ وَمَنْ يُّؤْمِنْ ۢ بِاللّٰهِ وَيَعْمَلْ صَالِحًا يُّدْخِلْهُ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَآ اَبَدًا ۭ قَدْ اَحْسَنَ اللّٰهُ

لَهٗ رِزْقًا ﴿۱۱﴾ اَللّٰهُ الَّذِیْ خَلَقَ سَبْعَ سَمٰوٰتٍ وَّمِنَ الْاَرْضِ مِثْلَهُنَّ ؕ یَتَنَزَّلُ الْاَمْرُ بَیْنَهُنَّ لِتَعْلَمُوْۤا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلٰی کُلِّ شَیْءٍ قَدِیْرٌ ۙ وَّاَنَّ اللّٰهَ قَدْ اَحَاطَ بِکُلِّ شَیْءٍ عِلْمًا ﴿۱۲﴾

And how many a township rebelled against the command of their Lord, and against His messengers, so We called them to a severe account, and punished them with an evil punishment. [8] **Thus they tasted the evil consequence of their acts, and the end of their conduct was loss.** [9] **Allah has prepared for them a severe punishment; so fear Allah O men of understanding who have believed! Allah has sent down to you a Reminder,** [10] **a messenger who recites to you the verses of Allah, making (the truth) clear, so that He may bring forth those who believe and do righteous deeds from the layers of darkness into the light. And whoever believes in Allah, and acts righteously, He will admit him to the gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein such people will live forever. Allah has made for him a good provision.** [11] **Allah is the One who has created seven skies, and their like from earth. The Command descends among them, so that you may know that Allah is powerful over every thing, and that Allah has encompassed every thing in knowledge.** [12]

Commentary

فَحَاسَبْنٰهَا حِسَابًا شَدِیْدًا وَّعَذَّبْنٰهَا عَذَابًا نُّکْرًا (so We called them to a severe account, and punished them with an evil punishment...65:8). The severe account and evil punishment of nations mentioned in this verse refers to what will happen in the Hereafter. However, the past tense has been employed presumably to indicate the occurrence of these events is as certain as if it has already been materialised. [Rūḥ]. The other possibility is that the *Ḥisāb* or 'account' in this context does not refer to interrogation, but to the determination of punishment, (in which case it may refer to the punishment faced by the infidels right here in this world.) Another possibility is that the 'severe account' will though take place in the Hereafter, it has already been recorded and is being recorded on daily basis in the ledger of deeds and is therefore described as 'called them to a severe account'. In this interpretation, the 'punishment' refers to the past nations who were destroyed by Divine punishment in this world because

they defied Allah's and His Messengers' commandments. In this case, only the next statement اَعَدَّ اللّٰهُ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا شَدِيْدًا (Allah has prepared for them a severe punishment...10) would refer to the terrible punishment of the Hereafter.

قَدْ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ اِلَيْكُمْ ذِكْرًا. رَّسُوْلاً (Allah has sent down to you a Reminder, a messenger...65:10-11). The verb *arsala* 'sent' needs to be understood preceding the object *rasūlan* 'a messenger' which appears at the commencement of verse [11]. The simplest way in which these verses can be interpreted is to translate them thus: 'Allah has sent down to you a Reminder, (the Qur'ān and He has also sent to you) a messenger...65:11) Other commentators have preferred other interpretations. For instance some say that the word *dhikr* ('Reminder') refers to the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself, and the word 'messenger' is an explanatory complement to the word '*dhikr*', because abundance of his remembering Allah made him a personified Remembrance of Allah. [Rūḥ] [1]

Where are the Seven Earths and in What Form?

اَللّٰهُ الَّذِىْ خَلَقَ سَبْعَ سَمٰوٰتٍ وَّمِنَ الْاَرْضِ مِثْلَهُنَّ (Allah is the One who has created seven skies, and their like from earth...65:12). This verse indicates that there are seven earths as there are seven heavens, but the question is where these earths are and in what shape or form. Are they in the form of seven layers one above the other, or each earth is separate from the other. If they form layers one above the other, is there a distance between two earths, just as there is a distance between two heavens? Are there separate creatures living on each earth, just as separate types of angels are residing in every heaven? Is there air, wind, atmosphere and so forth on each earth? Or, are these layers of earth joined and compact with each other? The Qur'ān is silent on these questions. There are Traditions reported on these questions, but the leading authorities of Traditions disagree about their authenticity. Some scholars have authenticated them and others have graded them as 'fabricated'. Rationally all findings are possible, and none of our religious or mundane needs are dependent on resolving these issues, nor will we be questioned about them in the grave

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[1] This explanation is based on the premise that '*dhikr*' in this verse means 'Allah's remembrance'. However, it also means 'reminder'. Taken in this sense, the word 'messenger' in the verse can be easily interpreted as an explanatory complement to the word '*dhikr*', because the Holy Prophet ﷺ is a 'Reminder' to the entire mankind. Our translation in the text is based on this connotation. (Muhammad Taqi Usmani)

or at Resurrection, so that we need to do research about the seven earths, their locale or their inhabitants. The safest position is to believe that there are seven earths as there are seven skies. Allah has created them with His Supreme Creative Power. Qur'ān has mentioned this much only. If the Qur'ān did not find it necessary to give a detailed account of it, there is no need for us to think about it or research it. This was the attitude of our pious predecessors. They formulated the following policy ابهموا ما ابهمه الله "Leave unexplained what Allah has left unexplained" as long as it does not contain any injunction for us to follow, nor does it concern our religious or mundane need. This commentary has been written for the common readers. Purely academic issues have not been included here which might not be needed for them.

يَتَنَزَّلُ الْأَمْرُ بَيْنَهُنَّ (The Command descend among them...65:12) The verse purports to say that Divine commands and decrees are revealed and work in the seven heavens and in the seven earths. The Divine commands or decrees operate in two ways: [1] *Tashrīʻī*; and [2] *Takwīnī*. *Tashrīʻī* command refers to laws Divinely prescribed for people who are legally obligated to observe them. The Divinely legislated laws are revealed through the angels to the Prophets علیهم السلام to be passed on to the humans and *jinns*. These laws pertain to articles of faith, worship, good morals, transactions and way of living. Adherence to them attracts reward and flouting them entails punishment. *Takwīnī* laws pertain to the Divine decrees in connection with the creation of the universe or bringing it into existence from the realm of non-existence, its gradual growth and development, its phenomena of depletion and replenishment, and the phenomena of life and death. These decrees encompass the entire Divine creation. Therefore, if it be proved that between two earths there is atmosphere and distance, and that some kind of creatures inhabits it, even if that kind of creature is not legally bound by the Sharīʻah laws, the description يَتَنَزَّلُ الْأَمْرُ 'The Command descend among them...65:12) will still apply, because Allah's *Takwīnī* decrees encompass them as well. And Allah, the Pure and Exalted, knows best!

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Aṭ-Ṭalāq
Ends here

Sūrah At-Taḥrīm
(The Prohibiting)

This Sūrah is Madanī, and it has 12 verses and 2 sections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 5

يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ لِمَ تُحَرِّمُ مَآ اَحَلَّ اللّٰهُ لَكَ ج تَبْتَغِيْ مَرْضَاتَ اَزْوَاجِكَ ط
وَاللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿١﴾ قَدْ فَرَضَ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ تَحِلَّةَ اَيْمَانِكُمْ ج وَاللّٰهُ
مَوْلٰىكُمْ ج وَهُوَ الْعَلِيْمُ الْحَكِيْمُ ﴿٢﴾ وَاِذْ اَسَرَّ النَّبِيُّ اِلٰى بَعْضِ
اَزْوَاجِهٖ حَدِيْثًا ج فَلَمَّا نَبَّاَتْ بِهٖ وَاَظْهَرَهُ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ عَرَّفَ بَعْضَهٗ
وَاَعْرَضَ عَنْۢ بَعْضٍ ج فَلَمَّا نَبَّاَهَا بِهٖ قَالَتْ مَنْ اَنْۢبَاَكَ هٰذَا ط قَالَ نَبَّاَنِيَ
الْعَلِيْمُ الْخَبِيْرُ ﴿٣﴾ اِنْ تَتُوْبَآ اِلَى اللّٰهِ فَقَدْ صَغَتْ قُلُوْبُكُمَا ج وَ اِنْ
تَظٰهَرَا عَلَيْهِ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ مَوْلٰىهُ وَجِبْرِيْلُ وَصَالِحُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ج
وَالْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ بَعْدَ ذٰلِكَ ظَهِيْرٌ ﴿٤﴾ عَسٰى رَبُّهٗٓ اِنْ طَلَّقَكُنَّ اَنْ يُّبْدِلَهٗٓ
اَزْوَاجًا خَيْرًا مِّنْكُنَّ مُسْلِمٰتٍ مُّؤْمِنٰتٍ قٰنِتٰتٍ تٰٓئِبٰتٍ عٰبِدٰتٍ سٰٓئِحٰتٍ
ثَيِّبٰتٍ وَّاَبْكَارًا ﴿٥﴾

O Holy Prophet, why do you ban (on your self) something that Allah has made lawful for you, seeking the pleasure of your wives? And Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very Merciful. [1] **Allah has prescribed (the way of) absolution from your oaths. And Allah is your protector, and He is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.**

[2] **And (remember) when the Holy Prophet told one of his wives something in secret. So, when she disclosed it (to another wife), and Allah made it known to him, he told (the disclosing wife) part of it, and bypassed another part. So when he informed her about it, she said, "Who told you about this?" He said, "It is told to me by the All-Knowing, the All-Aware.** [3]

(O two wives of the Holy Prophet,) If both of you repent to Allah, then (your conduct calls for it, because) your hearts have diverted. And if you back each other against him (the Holy Prophet), then Allah is his supporter, and Jibrīl and righteous believers and, after all that, angels are his helpers. [4] **It is hoped that, if he divorces you, Allah will give him in your place wives better than you, submissive to Allah, believing, devout, penitent, steadfast in worship, fasting, previously married and virgins.** [5]

Commentary

Cause of Revelation

It is recorded in Ṣaḥīḥ of Bukhārī and in other collection of Aḥādīth, on the authority of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah ﵂, that it was a daily practice of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ to visit each of his wives after *'aṣr* prayer for a short time inquiring about their welfare. Once he visited Sayyidah Zainab ﵂ and spent more time with her than normal and had some honey offered by her. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah ﵂ says: "I developed some envy and in consultation with Ḥafṣah ﵂ decided that when the Messenger of Allah ﷺ would visit any one of us, she should say to him 'you have had *Maghāfīr*', (a herb that resembled gum with a slightly unpleasant smell.)"[1] They executed their plan. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "I have not had any *Maghāfīr*. I only had some honey." The Holy wife said: "It is possible that the honeybee might have sat on the *Maghāfīr* shrub and drank its nectar. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ, because of his natural dislike for unpleasant odour, swore and promised not to take honey any more. However, he did not want the feelings of Sayyidah Zainab ﵂ to be hurt, and therefore he said to his wife that the incident should be kept secret and should not be recounted to anyone else. But she told about it to another wife.

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[1] It should be noted here that these words were spoken by them in an interrogative accent, and therefore it was not a false statement. (Muhammad Taqi Usmani).

Some reports say that it was at the house of Sayyidah Ḥafṣah ﷺ that he was served with honey, and that the wives who planned were Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah, Saudah and Ṣafiyyah رضی اللہ عنہن. Other reports recount the incident in other ways. It is possible that many incidents of similar nature might have taken place and these verses were revealed after them. [Bayān-ul-Qur'ān].

In brief, these verses tell us that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ banned a lawful thing [honey] on himself by swearing an oath. If such an act is done for a genuine need or expedience, [*maṣlahah*], it is permissible; it is not a sin. But the incident does not show that there was no such need for him to have the trouble of baning a lawful thing on himself. He had done this for the pleasure of his holy wives. In such circumstances, it was not necessary for him to have pleased them. Therefore, the verse, compassionately addresses the Holy Prophet ﷺ يَأَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ لِمَ تُحَرِّمُ مَآ اَحَلَّ اللّٰهُ لَكَ ۚ تَبْتَغِىْ مَرْضَاتَ اَزْوَاجِكَ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ (O Prophet, why do you ban (on your self) something that Allah has made lawful for you, seeking the pleasure of your wives? And Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very Merciful...66:1) According to the principles of general stylistics, the Qur'ān does not address the Holy Prophet ﷺ by his name but by his Prophetic title thus: 'O Prophet' which is his special honour. Although this is a loving question posed by way of compassion, it could have created the misunderstanding that he has committed a major error and he is being questioned about it. The concluding phrase allays this suspicion: وَاللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ meaning that even if it would have been a sin (for the sake of argument), then 'Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very Merciful.'

Ruling

There are three ways in which one can prohibit a 'lawful thing' for himself, the details of which were given under verse [87] of Sūrah Al-Mā'idah in Ma'āriful Qur'ān Vol.3/pp239-241. يَأَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَاتُحَرِّمُوْا طَيِّبٰتِ مَآ اَحَلَّ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ 'O those who believe, do not make unlawful good things that Allah has made lawful for you__[5:87] The three ways may be summarised here thus: [1] If someone holds a lawful thing as unlawful as part of his religious belief, it is *kufr* and an enormous sin. [2] If he does not believe it as unlawful in religion, but bans something on himself by swearing an oath without any need to do so, it is a sinful act, and it is necessary for him to break the oath and expiate, which will be discussed

later. However, If this is done for some need or advantage, it is permissible but undesirable. [3] If someone neither believes a lawful thing to be unlawful, nor swears an oath to ban it on himself, but makes a resolve in his/her mind to abandon the lawful thing for ever. If this resolution for permanent abandonment is with the intention of reward, it would be an innovation (*bid'ah*) in the established religion and monasticism which is a reproachable sin. If such a restriction is not with the intention of reward, but rather for some other reason, such as for treatment of a physical ailment or spiritual malady, it is absolutely permissible. Reports about some noble Ṣufīs who abandoned some lawful things fall under this last category.

In this incident, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ swore an oath to abstain from honey. After the revelation of the verse, he broke the oath and expiated for it. As reported in Ad-Durr-ul-Manthūr, he emancipated a slave in payment of his expiation. [Bayān-ul-Qur'ān]

قَدْ فَرَضَ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ تَحِلَّةَ اَيْمَانِكُمْ (Allah has prescribed [the way of] absolution from your oaths....66:2). This verse reminds that where it is necessary or better to break the oath, Allah has prescribed a way to absolve oneself from the liability of the oath by expiation, the details of which are given in other verses.

وَاِذْ اَسَرَّ النَّبِىُّ اِلٰى بَعْضِ اَزْوَاجِهٖ حَدِيْثًا (And [remember] when the Prophet told one of his wives something in secret...66:3). The Holy Prophet ﷺ confided a certain secret in one of his wives. According to most versions of the authentic report, the 'secret' in this verse refers to the ban the Holy Prophet ﷺ imposed on himself about honey, but at the same time he did not want Sayyidah Zainab's رضي الله عنها feelings to be hurt and therefore he directed the wife to keep it secret from others, but the disclosing wife divulged the secret to another wife, as follows in the next verse. Although there are some other reports that explain the 'secret' in some other way, what has been mentioned above is in accordance with the most authentic narrations.

فَلَمَّا نَبَّاَتْ بِهٖ وَاَظْهَرَهُ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ عَرَّفَ بَعْضَهٗ وَاَعْرَضَ عَنْۢ بَعْضٍ (So, when she disclosed it [to another wife], and Allah made it known to him, he told [the disclosing wife] part of it, and bypassed another part...66:3). In other words, when the disclosing wife divulged the secret to another wife, and Allah disclosed

this fact to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, he complained to the disclosing wife about her disclosure, but he did not convey to her the whole information. Instead, he communicated part of it to her and withheld part of it. This was because of the Holy Prophet's ﷺ magnanimity and high morals. If he had disclosed the entire information he had received from Allah, it would have embarrassed her most profoundly. Who was the disclosing wife and who was the one to whom the secret was disclosed? The Qur'ān is silent on their identity and does not name them. According to the best received narratives, it would appear that it was Sayyidah Ḥafṣah رضي الله عنها whom the Holy Prophet ﷺ directed to keep the matter secret, and she divulged it to Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها, as recorded in Bukhārī on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه which will be narrated later.

Some narratives report that when Sayyidah Ḥafṣah رضي الله عنها divulged the secret, the Holy Prophet ﷺ decided to divorce her, but Allah sent Jibra'īl عليه السلام to him, preventing him from divorcing her on the ground that she offered many prayers and kept fasts abundantly. Her name appears in the list of his wives in Paradise. [Maẓharī]

إِنْ تَتُوبَا إِلَى اللّٰهِ فَقَدْ صَغَتْ قُلُوبُكُمَا [O two wives of the Prophet,] If both of you repent to Allah, then [your conduct calls for it, because] your hearts have diverted....66:4). The reference here is made to two of his blessed wives who, as mentioned above in brief, contrived to draw the Holy Prophet ﷺ into swearing an oath and making the aforementioned promise to abstain from honey. Who are they? Bukhārī and other collections of Traditions record a lengthy Tradition about this on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه who narrates that he was always on the look-out to enquire of Sayyidnā 'Umar رضي الله عنه as to who were the two wives to whom reference had been made in the above verse. So, when Sayyidnā 'Umar رضي الله عنه was on his way to pilgrimage, the former joined him. One day, in the course of the journey, the latter went to answer the call of nature. When he returned, the former had arranged water for the latter's ablution. He poured water on his hands. Whilst pouring the water for ablution, he enquired as to who were the two wives to whom reference is made in the dual verb إِنْ تَتُوبَا (If both of you repent) Sayyidnā 'Umar رضي الله عنه asked him in surprise: 'Do you not know who they were?' Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه said: 'No!' Sayyidnā 'Umar رضي الله عنه said they were Hafsah and 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنهما, and then proceeded to recount a lengthy story related to this incident which also contained some incidents

that took place earlier. The details of the incident are available in Tafsīr Maẓharī. This verse addresses the two blessed wives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and requires them to turn to Allah as their hearts have deviated, albeit what they did, stem from their love for the Holy Prophet ﷺ, but in the process they, in consultation with one another, adopted a way that hurt the Holy Prophet ﷺ This is a sin for which repentance was necessary.

وَ إِنْ تَظٰهَرَا عَلَيْهِ فَإِنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ مَوْلٰهُ وَجِبْرِيْلُ (And if you back each other against him [the Prophet], then Allah is his supporter, and Jibrīl and righteous believers and, after all that, angels are his helpers....66:4). The current verse warns the wives that if they do not repent and please the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, they will not cause any loss to him, because Allah is his Protector, and so are Jibril, every right-acting believer and, furthermore, the other angels too will come to his support, and it will be the wives themselves who will suffer loss.

عَسٰى رَبُّهٗ إِنْ طَلَّقَكُنَّ أَنْ يُّبْدِلَهٗ أَزْوَاجًا خَيْرًا مِّنْكُنَّ (It is hoped that, if he divorces you, Allah will give him in your place wives better than you, submissive to Allah, believing, devout, penitent, steadfast in worship, fasting, previously married and virgins....66:5). The verse refutes the possible thought of the wives that if they are divorced, the Holy Prophet ﷺ will probably not get women better than themselves. The verse under comment responds to their assessment of the situation. It purports to say that nothing is beyond Allah's power. If he divorces them, Allah will give him in exchange better wives than he has at the moment. This does not necessarily imply that there were better wives than the present holy wives at that time. Possibly such women were not available at that point of time, but, should the need have arisen, He could make other women better than they are. These verses specifically dealt with the holy wives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, their deeds, their moral reform, their discipline and training. Similar injunctions are given in the verses that follow for the general body of Muslims and believers.

Verses 6 - 7

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا قُوْۤا اَنْفُسَكُمْ وَاَهْلِيْكُمْ نَارًا وَّقُوْدُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ عَلَيْهَا مَلٰٓئِكَةٌ غِلَاظٌ شِدَادٌ لَّا يَعْصُوْنَ اللّٰهَ مَاۤ اَمَرَهُمْ

وَيَفْعَلُوْنَ مَا يُؤْمَرُوْنَ ﴿٦﴾ يٰاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لَا تَعْتَذِرُوا الْيَوْمَ ۚ اِنَّمَا تُجْزَوْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٧﴾

O those who believe, save yourselves and your families from a fire, the fuel of which is human beings and stones, appointed on which are angels, stern and severe, who do not disobey Allah in what He orders them, and do whatever they are ordered to do. [6] **O those who disbelieve, do not make excuses today. You will only be recompensed for what you have been doing.** [7]

Commentary

قُوْٓا اَنْفُسَكُمْ وَاَهْلِيْكُمْ (O those who believe, save yourselves and your families from a fire...66:6). This verse addresses the general body of Muslims and enjoins upon them to safeguard themselves and their families from a fire of Hell whose fuel is people and stones. Then the verse goes on to describe the intensity and horror of the Hell-Fire. Towards the end of it the angels in charge of it, whose name is Zabaniah, are described. They are harsh and terrible from whom no inmate of Hell will be able to rescue himself by force, power, strength, flattery or bribery.

The word اَهْلِيْكُمْ (your families) comprehends wife, children and slaves [males as well as females]. It is not inconceivable to include full-time servants in the imperative like slaves. When this verse was revealed, Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ inquired: "O Messenger of Allah, we understand how to save ourselves from Hell, that is, we guard ourselves against sins and carry out the Divine injunctions, but how do we safeguard our families from Hell?" The Messenger of Allah ﷺ replied: "Instruct them to refrain from deeds that Allah has prohibited, and ask them to carry out deeds that Allah has enjoined. This will rescue them from the Hell-Fire." [Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī]

Education and Training of Wife and Children: Every Muslim's Responsibility

The jurists have pointed out that, according to the verse under comment, it is the responsibility of every Muslim to educate the wife and children in matters of Shar'ī obligations, and in matters of *ḥalāl* and *ḥarām* and train them diligently to act upon them. A *ḥadīth* says, "May

Allah shower His mercy upon a person who says: 'O my wife and children, (be mindful of) your prayers, your fasting, your alms, your indigent, your orphan, your neighbour! It is hopeful that Allah will gather all these with him in Paradise" 'Your prayers, your fasting' and so on' implies 'Take care of them. Do not ignore them.' The phrase مسكينكم يتيمكم 'Your indigent, your orphan and so on' implies 'Fulfil their rights towards them willingly and readily.' Righteous elders have said that the person deepest in punishment on the Day of Judgement will be the one whose family is ignorant and unaware of the religion. [Rūḥ]

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لَا تَعْتَذِرُوا الْيَوْمَ اِنَّمَا تُجْزَوْنَ مَاكُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ (O those who disbelieve, do not make excuses today. You will only be recompensed for what you have been doing....66:7) After advising the general body of believers, the current verse turns attention to the non-believers who are asked not to try to make excuses, because they will not be accepted. They will be told that they are merely being repaid for what they did.

Verses 8 - 12

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا تُوْبُوْٓا اِلَى اللّٰهِ تَوْبَةً نَّصُوْحًا ؕ عَسٰى رَبُّكُمْ اَنْ يُّكَفِّرَ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّاٰتِكُمْ وَيُدْخِلَكُمْ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِىْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ ۙ يَوْمَ لَا يُخْزِى اللّٰهُ النَّبِىَّ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مَعَهٗ ۚ نُوْرُهُمْ يَسْعٰى بَيْنَ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَبِاَيْمَانِهِمْ يَقُوْلُوْنَ رَبَّنَآ اَتْمِمْ لَنَا نُوْرَنَا وَاغْفِرْلَنَا ۚ اِنَّكَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿٨﴾ يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّبِىُّ جَاهِدِ الْكُفَّارَ وَ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ وَاغْلُظْ عَلَيْهِمْ ؕ وَمَاْوٰىهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ ؕ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيْرُ ﴿٩﴾ ضَرَبَ اللّٰهُ مَثَلًا لِّلَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوا امْرَاَتَ نُوْحٍ وَّامْرَاَتَ لُوْطٍ ؕ كَانَتَا تَحْتَ عَبْدَيْنِ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا صَالِحَيْنِ فَخَانَتٰهُمَا فَلَمْ يُغْنِيَا عَنْهُمَا مِنَ اللّٰهِ شَيْئًا وَّقِيْلَ ادْخُلَا النَّارَ مَعَ الدّٰخِلِيْنَ ﴿١٠﴾ وَضَرَبَ اللّٰهُ مَثَلًا لِّلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا امْرَاَتَ فِرْعَوْنَ ۘ اِذْ قَالَتْ رَبِّ ابْنِ لِىْ عِنْدَكَ بَيْتًا فِى الْجَنَّةِ وَنَجِّنِىْ مِنْ فِرْعَوْنَ وَعَمَلِهٖ وَنَجِّنِىْ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿١١﴾ وَمَرْيَمَ ابْنَتَ

عِمْرٰنَ الَّتِيْٓ اَحْصَنَتْ فَرْجَهَا فَنَفَخْنَا فِيْهِ مِنْ رُّوْحِنَا وَصَدَّقَتْ بِكَلِمٰتِ رَبِّهَا وَكُتُبِهٖ وَكَانَتْ مِنَ الْقٰنِتِيْنَ ﴿١٢﴾

O those who believe, turn to Allah with a faithful repentance. It is hoped from your Lord that he will write off your faults, and will admit you to the gardens beneath which rivers flow, on the Day when Allah will not disgrace the Prophet and those who believed with him. Their light will run before them and to their right hands. They will say, "Our Lord, perfect for us our light, and forgive us. Indeed you are powerful over every thing." [8] **O Prophet, carry out *jihād* (struggle) against the disbelievers and the hypocrites, and be harsh with them. And their final abode is *Jahannam* (Hell), and it is an evil end.** [9]

Allah has cited for the disbelievers the example of the wife of Nūḥ and the wife of Lūṭ. Both were married with two of Our righteous slaves, but betrayed them. So they could not avail them at all, and it was said, "Enter the Fire along with those who enter." [10] **And Allah has cited for the believers the example of the wife of Fir'aun (the Pharaoh), when she said, "My Lord, build for me, near You, a house in the Paradize, and deliver me from Fir'aun and his deeds, and deliver me from the unjust people.",** [11] **and (also the example of) Maryam, daughter of 'Imrān who guarded her chastity, so We breathed into her Our spirit, and she testified to the truth of the words of her Lord and His books, and she was one of the devout.** [12]

Commentary

تُوْبُوْٓا اِلَى اللّٰهِ تَوْبَةً نَّصُوْحًا (...turn to Allah with a faithful repentance...66:8). The word *taubah,* literally, means 'to turn' or 'to return', in the sense of turning or withdrawing from sins. In the terminology of the Qur'ān and *Sunnah*, it signifies 'to regret committing sins in the past and to firmly resolve abstaining from them in future'. *Taubah* is qualified in the verse by the word نصوح *naṣūḥ*. If it is taken as the infinitive of *naṣaḥa/ naṣīḥah*, it signifies 'to make pure and sincere'; and if it be derived from *naṣāḥah,* it signifies 'to repair clothes by sewing'. In terms of the first meaning, the expression *naṣūḥ* signifies sincere/faithful [repentance], free from pretence and hypocrisy. In this interpretation, a sinner is

required to regret the sins he has committed and give them up purely for the pleasure of Allah and for fear of Divine chastisement. In terms of the second meaning, *nāṣūḥ* would signify that 'the sinner is required to repair the torn clothes of righteous deeds'. Sayyidnā Ḥasan Baṣrī ﷺ says that *taubatan nāṣūḥā* signifies that a person should regret his past evil actions, and make a firm resolve never to repeat them. *Kalbī* says the phrase *taubatan naṣūḥā* signifies that a person should pray for pardon with his tongue, regret in his heart, and should prevent the limbs of his body from committing sins in the future.

Sayyidnā 'Alī ﷺ was asked as to what is '*taubah*' and he replied that it consists of six elements: [1] to regret one's past evil deeds; [2] to carry out Divine duties that were missed; [3] to restore the rights that were usurped; [4] to ask forgiveness of a person who has been wronged by him physically or verbally; [5] to make a firm resolve of avoiding the sin in future; and [6] to consume one's self in obedience of Allah as one thus far consumed one's self in His disobedience. [Maẓharī]. In fact, all of the conditions of '*taubah*' put forward by Sayyidnā 'Alī ﷺ are recognized by all the scholars. However, some have described them concisely and others in details.

عَسٰی رَبُّکُمۡ اَنۡ یُّکَفِّرَ عَنۡکُمۡ (It is hoped from your Lord that he will write off your faults...66:8). The verb *'asā* means 'it is hoped'. In this context, it purports to mean 'promise', but the expression of 'hope' is used to indicate that taubah or any other righteous deeds are not the just and equal price for the Paradise or the divine forgiveness. In fact, one compensation for man's good deeds has already been given to him in this world in the form of worldly blessings. Therefore, as regards the law of equality, it is not necessary that he is further compensated by the Jannah. It entirely depends on Divine grace and favour as is mentioned in a Ḥadīth which says: 'Your actions alone cannot salvage you.' The Companions inquired: 'O Messenger of Allah, not even you?' He replied: 'No, not even me unless the Divine grace and mercy covers me.' [Bukhārī and Muslim as quoted by Maẓharī]

ضَرَبَ اللّٰہُ مَثَلًا لِّلَّذِیۡنَ کَفَرُوا امۡرَاَتَ نُوۡحٍ (Allah has cited for the disbelievers the example of the wife of Nūḥ and the wife of Lūṭ...66:10). Towards the end of this Sūrah, Allah has set forth examples of four women. The first example comprises two women who were the wives of two Holy Prophets

عليهما السلام. They, in matters of religion, opposed their husbands and secretly sided with the unbelievers and pagans. As a result, they ended up in the abyss of Hell, and their marital relation with the prophets could not save them from the punishment.The name of the wife of Nūḥ عليه السلام is said to be Wāghilah, while the name of the wife of Lūṭ عليه السلام is said to be Wālihah. [Qurṭubī] Some scholars have attributed other names to them.

The third woman is the one who was the wife of the Pharaoh, the worst disbeliever and claimant of godhead, but she believed in Mūsā عليه السلام. She was given such a high rank by Allah that she was shown her place in the Paradise, right here in this world, and the infidelity of her husband did not prove to be an impediment in her achieving this high rank.

The fourth woman is Maryam عليها السلام. She was not wife of anyone, but her faith and virtuous deeds earned for her such a high degree that she was invested with perfections of the prophets, even though she was not a prophet according to the majority of scholars. Verse [11] serves as a warning to the unbelievers who think that they will attain salvation merely by their companionship with believers, the good company will not rescue them in the Hereafter if they persist in their disbelief. So likewise, a disbeliever's disbelief will not harm a believing relative. Therefore, the *auliyas*' and *ambiyas*' wives should not carelessly take for granted that they will attain salvation on account of their husbands nor should the wife of a disbeliever think that his disbelief will harm her. Every person, man or woman, should be concerned about his/her own faith and action.

وَضَرَبَ اللّٰهُ مَثَلًا لِّلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا امْرَاَتَ فِرْعَوْنَ ۘ اِذْ قَالَتْ رَبِّ ابْنِ لِیْ عِنْدَكَ بَيْتًا فِی الْجَنَّةِ (And Allah has cited for the believers the example of the wife of Fir'aun (the Pharaoh), when she said, "My Lord, build for me, near You, a house in the Paradise...66:11) This is the example of the wife of Fir'aun (the Pharaoh) whose name was 'Āsiyah bint Muzāḥim. When Mūsā عليه السلام accomplished his task in defeating the sorcerers who embraced Mosaic faith, she too embraced the Mosaic faith and became a Muslim. Fir'aun ordered that she should be tortured severely and tormented harshly. According to some reports, her hands and feet were pegged with nails to the ground and a huge rock was placed on her chest, so that she might not be able to move. In this state she supplicated to Allah as mentioned in this verse. According to other reports, it was suggested that a huge rock be dropped on her. They had hardly dropped the rock and she prayed to

Allah as quoted in the verse. Allah then showed Sayyidah 'Āsiyah رضي الله عنها her house in Paradise. and while looking at this vision her soul departed. When the rock fell on her body, it was lifeless. [Maẓharī].

وَصَدَّقَتْ بِكَلِمٰتِ رَبِّهَا وَكُتُبِهٖ (and she testified to the truth of the words of her Lord and His books, and she was one of the devout....66:12) The phrase 'Words of her Lord' refers to scriptures that were revealed to the Holy Prophets. The word *kutub* [Books] refers to the well-known celestial books - *Injīl*, Zabūr and Torah. The concluding statement وَكَانَتْ مِنَ الْقٰنِتِيْنَ (and she was one of the devout....66:12) describes the quality of Sayyidah Maryam عليها السلام. The word *qānitīn* is the plural of *qānit* and signifies 'devout and obedient'. Sayyidnā Abū Mūsā رضي الله عنه narrates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Whilst many men have attained spiritual perfection, among women only Sayyidah 'Āsiyah, wife of Fir'aun, and Sayyidah Maryam, daughter of 'Imrān عليهما السلام, achieved this perfection." [Bukhārī and Muslim as quoted by Maẓharī]. Apparently, 'perfection' in this context refers to 'characteristics of Prophethood'. Despite being a woman, she achieved them. [Maẓharī]. And Allah knows best!

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah At-Taḥrīm
Ends here

Sūrah Al-Mulk

(The Kingdom)

This Sūrah is Makkī, and it has 30 verses and 2 sections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 30

تَبٰرَكَ الَّذِىْ بِيَدِهِ الْمُلْكُ ز وَهُوَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿۱﴾ نِالَّذِىْ
خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيٰوةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ اَيُّكُمْ اَحْسَنُ عَمَلاً ط وَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ
الْغَفُوْرُ ﴿۲﴾ لا الَّذِىْ خَلَقَ سَبْعَ سَمٰوٰتٍ طِبَاقًا ط مَا تَرٰى فِىْ خَلْقِ
الرَّحْمٰنِ مِنْ تَفٰوُتٍ ط فَارْجِعِ الْبَصَرَ لا هَلْ تَرٰى مِنْ فُطُوْرٍ ﴿۳﴾ ثُمَّ
ارْجِعِ الْبَصَرَ كَرَّتَيْنِ يَنْقَلِبْ اِلَيْكَ الْبَصَرُ خَاسِئًا وَّهُوَ حَسِيْرٌ ﴿۴﴾
وَلَقَدْ زَيَّنَّا السَّمَآءَ الدُّنْيَا بِمَصَابِيْحَ وَجَعَلْنٰهَا رُجُوْمًا لِّلشَّيٰطِيْنِ
وَاَعْتَدْنَا لَهُمْ عَذَابَ السَّعِيْرِ ﴿۵﴾ وَلِلَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا بِرَبِّهِمْ عَذَابُ
جَهَنَّمَ ط وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيْرُ ﴿۶﴾ اِذَآ اُلْقُوْا فِيْهَا سَمِعُوْا لَهَا شَهِيْقًا وَّهِىَ
تَفُوْرُ ﴿۷﴾ لا تَكَادُ تَمَيَّزُ مِنَ الْغَيْظِ ط كُلَّمَآ اُلْقِىَ فِيْهَا فَوْجٌ سَاَلَهُمْ
خَزَنَتُهَآ اَلَمْ يَاْتِكُمْ نَذِيْرٌ ﴿۸﴾ قَالُوْا بَلٰى قَدْ جَآءَنَا نَذِيْرٌ لا فَكَذَّبْنَا
وَقُلْنَا مَا نَزَّلَ اللّٰهُ مِنْ شَىْءٍ صلے ج اِنْ اَنْتُمْ اِلَّا فِىْ ضَلٰلٍ كَبِيْرٍ ﴿۹﴾ وَقَالُوْا
لَوْ كُنَّا نَسْمَعُ اَوْ نَعْقِلُ مَا كُنَّا فِىْٓ اَصْحٰبِ السَّعِيْرِ ﴿۱۰﴾ فَاعْتَرَفُوْا
بِذَنْبِهِمْ ج فَسُحْقًا لِّاَصْحٰبِ السَّعِيْرِ ﴿۱۱﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ

بِالْغَيْبِ لَهُمْ مَّغْفِرَةٌ وَّاَجْرٌ كَبِيْرٌ ﴿١٢﴾ وَاَسِرُّوْا قَوْلَكُمْ اَوِ اجْهَرُوْا بِهٖ ط
اِنَّهٗ عَلِيْمٌ م بِذَاتِ الصُّدُوْرِ ﴿١٣﴾ اَلَا يَعْلَمُ مَنْ خَلَقَ ط وَهُوَ اللَّطِيْفُ
الْخَبِيْرُ ﴿١٤﴾ ع هُوَ الَّذِيْ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْاَرْضَ ذَلُوْلًا فَامْشُوْا فِيْ
مَنَاكِبِهَا وَكُلُوْا مِنْ رِّزْقِهٖ ط وَاِلَيْهِ النُّشُوْرُ ﴿١٥﴾ ءَاَمِنْتُمْ مَّنْ فِي
السَّمَآءِ اَنْ يَّخْسِفَ بِكُمُ الْاَرْضَ فَاِذَا هِيَ تَمُوْرُ ﴿١٦﴾ اَمْ اَمِنْتُمْ مَّنْ
فِي السَّمَآءِ اَنْ يُّرْسِلَ عَلَيْكُمْ حَاصِبًا ط فَسَتَعْلَمُوْنَ كَيْفَ نَذِيْرِ
﴿١٧﴾ وَلَقَدْ كَذَّبَ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ فَكَيْفَ كَانَ نَكِيْرِ ﴿١٨﴾ اَوَلَمْ
يَرَوْا اِلَى الطَّيْرِ فَوْقَهُمْ صٰٓفّٰتٍ وَّيَقْبِضْنَ ط مَا يُمْسِكُهُنَّ اِلَّا الرَّحْمٰنُ ط
اِنَّهٗ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ بَصِيْرٌ ﴿١٩﴾ اَمَّنْ هٰذَا الَّذِيْ هُوَ جُنْدٌ لَّكُمْ يَنْصُرُكُمْ
مِّنْ دُوْنِ الرَّحْمٰنِ ط اِنِ الْكٰفِرُوْنَ اِلَّا فِيْ غُرُوْرٍ ﴿٢٠﴾ اَمَّنْ هٰذَا الَّذِيْ
يَرْزُقُكُمْ اِنْ اَمْسَكَ رِزْقَهٗ بَلْ لَّجُّوْا فِيْ عُتُوٍّ وَّنُفُوْرٍ ﴿٢١﴾ اَفَمَنْ
يَّمْشِيْ مُكِبًّا عَلٰى وَجْهِهٖٓ اَهْدٰٓى اَمَّنْ يَّمْشِيْ سَوِيًّا عَلٰى صِرَاطٍ
مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ ﴿٢٢﴾ قُلْ هُوَ الَّذِيْٓ اَنْشَاَكُمْ وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَالْاَبْصَارَ
وَالْاَفْـِٕدَةَ ط قَلِيْلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُوْنَ ﴿٢٣﴾ قُلْ هُوَ الَّذِيْ ذَرَاَكُمْ فِي الْاَرْضِ
وَاِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُوْنَ ﴿٢٤﴾ وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ مَتٰى هٰذَا الْوَعْدُ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ
﴿٢٥﴾ قُلْ اِنَّمَا الْعِلْمُ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ ص وَاِنَّمَآ اَنَا نَذِيْرٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿٢٦﴾ فَلَمَّا رَاَوْهُ
زُلْفَةً سِيْٓـَٔتْ وُجُوْهُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَقِيْلَ هٰذَا الَّذِيْ كُنْتُمْ بِهٖ تَدَّعُوْنَ
﴿٢٧﴾ قُلْ اَرَءَيْتُمْ اِنْ اَهْلَكَنِيَ اللّٰهُ وَمَنْ مَّعِيَ اَوْ رَحِمَنَا لا فَمَنْ يُّجِيْرُ
الْكٰفِرِيْنَ مِنْ عَذَابٍ اَلِيْمٍ ﴿٢٨﴾ قُلْ هُوَ الرَّحْمٰنُ اٰمَنَّا بِهٖ وَعَلَيْهِ
تَوَكَّلْنَا ج فَسَتَعْلَمُوْنَ مَنْ هُوَ فِيْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿٢٩﴾ قُلْ اَرَءَيْتُمْ اِنْ
اَصْبَحَ مَآؤُكُمْ غَوْرًا فَمَنْ يَّاْتِيْكُمْ بِمَآءٍ مَّعِيْنٍ ﴿٣٠﴾ ع

Glorious is the One in whose hand is the Kingdom (of

the whole universe), and He is powerful over every thing, [1] the One who created death and life, so that He may test you as to which of you is better in deeds. And He is the All-Mighty, the Most-Forgiving, [2] Who has created seven skies, one over the other. You will see nothing out of proportion in the creation of the Raḥmān (the All-Merciful). So, cast your eye again. Do you see any rifts? [3] Then cast your eye again and again, and the eye will come back to you abased, in a state of weariness. [4] And We have decorated the nearest sky with lamps, and have made them devices to stone the devils, and We have prepared for them the punishment of Hell. [5] And for those who disbelieve, there is the punishment of *Jahannam*, and it is an evil end. [6] When they will be thrown in it, they will hear a terrible sound from it, and it will be boiling, [7] seeming as if it will burst out of fury. Whenever a group is thrown into it, its keepers will say to them, "Had no warner come to you?" [8] They said, "Yes, a warner had come to us, but We had rejected, and said, 'Allah has not revealed any thing. You are only in great error'." [9] And they will say, "Had we been listening or understanding, we would not have been among the people of Hell." [10] Thus they will confess their sin. So, be the people of Hell away (from Allah's mercy). [11] Surely, for those who have awe of their Lord without seeing (Him), there is forgiveness and a big reward. [12] And whether you keep your talk secret or make it aloud, He knows well what lies in the hearts. [13] Is it (imaginable) that He who has created (them) will not have (such a) knowledge, while He is the Knower of the finest things, the All-Aware? [14] He is the One who has made the earth submissive for you, so walk on its shoulders, and eat out of His provision, and to Him will be the Resurrection. [15] Have you become fearless of Him who is in the sky if He makes you sink into the earth, and it starts trembling at once? [16] Or, have you become fearless of Him who is in the sky if He looses a violent wind with stones against you? So, you will soon come to know how was My warning! [17] And of course, those before them (also) rejected (the truth). So, how was My censure? [18]

Have they not looked to the birds above them spreading their wings, and (at times) they fold (them) in? No one holds them up except the Raḥmān (the All-Merciful). Surely He is watchful of every thing. [19] Now, who is

there to become a force for you to help you, except the Raḥmān? The disbelievers are in nothing but delusion. [20] **Or, who is there to give you sustenance, if He withholds His sustenance? Still, they persist in rebellion and aversion.** [21] **Then, tell me whether the one who walks falling down (frequently) on his face is better guided or the one who walks on a straight path?** [22]

Say, "He is the One who has originated you, and made for you the ears and the eyes and the hearts. How little you pay gratitude" [23] **Say, "He is the One who has scattered you on the earth, and to Him you will be assembled."** [24] **And they say, "When will this promise (of the Day of Judgment) be fulfilled, if you are true?"** [25] **Say, "The knowledge (of that day) is only with Allah, and I am only a plain warner.** [26] **Then, once they will see it approaching, the faces of the disbelievers will be turned awkward, and it will be said, "This is what you were calling for!"** [27] **Say, "Tell me, if Allah destroys me and those who are with me (as you wish), or has mercy on us (as we wish), who can (in either case) save the disbelievers from a painful punishment?"** [28] **Say, "He is the Raḥmān; we have believed in Him, and in Him we placed our trust. So, you will soon come to know who is in an open error."** [29] **Say, "Tell me if your water were to vanish into the earth, who will bring you a flowing (stream) water?** [30]

Commentary

The Virtues of Sūrah Al-Mulk

Prophetic Tradition has named this Sūrah as Wāqiyah (protector) and *Munjiyah* (saviour) as well. In a Tradition, the Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said:

هِيَ المانعة المنجية تنجيه من عذاب القبر

"It [the Sūrah] is the protector and saviour which will rescue and redeem him who recites it from the torment of the grave." [Transmitted by Tirmidhī who has graded it as '*ḥasan, gharīb*' as quoted by Qurṭubī]

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه reports that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

"It is my heart's desire that Sūrah Al-Mulk be in every believer's heart." [[Tha'labi]

Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه narrates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ

has said:

> "Verily, there is a Surah in the Book of Allah (Qur'an) containing thirty verses that will intercede on behalf of him who recites it until he is rescued from Hell and admitted to Paradise; and it is Sūrah Tabārak." [Qurṭubī cites it from Tirmidhī].

تَبٰرَكَ الَّذِىْ بِيَدِهِ الْمُلْكُ ۡ وَهُوَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ (Glorious is the One in whose hand is the Kingdom [of the whole universe], and He is powerful over every thing...67:1). The word *Tabāraka* is derived from *barakah*, which literally means 'to grow' or 'increase'. When it is related to Allah, it signifies 'to be highest in all respects' and it conveys a meaning similar to *Allahu Akbar* 'Allah is the Highest'.

بِيَدِهِ الْمُلْكُ (in Whose hand is the Kingdom): The word *Yad* (hand) is attributed to Allah at many places in the Qur'ān, whereas He is beyond having a body, limbs or organs. As a result, the word must, of necessity, be taken as one of the *mutashābihāt*. We need to believe in its reality, but it is not possible for anyone to grasp its exact nature. It is improper to pursue this subject. The word *Mulk* (Kingdom) refers to the Kingdom of the whole universe, of the heavens and the earth and of the mortal world as well as of the Hereafter.

The verse under comment refers to four of the Divine attributes. Firstly, His existence; secondly, His comprehending all the attributes of perfection and being most Exalted; thirdly, His being the ruler of the heavens and earth; and fourthly, His having power over everything. The verses that follow are adduced as proofs of these attributes, which become clear by pondering over the creation of Allah. Therefore, the next verses refer to the various types of creation in the universe as proofs positive of the existence and Oneness of Allah and His all-encompassing knowledge and power. To begin with, reference is made to those proofs of the divine omnipotence that are available in human beings themselves who are the noblest creation in the universe. The words اَلَّذِىْ خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيٰوةَ (the One who created death and life) are meant for this purpose, (as will be explained shortly). Then, several verses (3 to 5) invite consideration to the creation of heavens to find proofs of Allah's omnipotence. Thereafter, verses 15 and 16 call our attention to the creation of the earth and its

benefits. Lastly, the creatures living in the heavenly atmosphere, that is, the birds are mentioned in verse 19.

In short, the basic subject of the Sūrah is to prove the existence of Allah and His perfect knowledge and power by inviting consideration to the marvels of this universe. However, as a subsidiary subject, some other realities are also mentioned like punishment for unbelievers and reward for believers.

The proofs of the divine knowledge and power found in the man himself are indicated in the following two words:

The Reality of Life and Death

خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيٰوةَ (...the One who created death and life...67:2) Out of the human conditions, only two phenomena, i.e. life and death are mentioned here, because they cover all of human conditions and actions of his entire life. The creation of 'life' is quite obvious, because life is a positive reality that can be the object of creation and bringing into existence. However, one may ask how 'death' can be 'created', while it is a negative concept that refers to a state of non-existence. In answer to this question, the leading commentators have come up with different explanations. The most plausible one is that 'death' is not a state of pure non-existence. It actually refers to the removal of soul from the body and its transfer from one place to another. Thus it is a positive phenomenon. Just as 'life' is a phenomenon that relates to a human body, 'death' too is a phenomenon that overtakes him. Sayyidnā 'Abdullah Ibn 'Abbās ﵄ and other leading commentators have mentioned that 'life' and 'death' are two corporal entities. 'Death' has the corporal shape of a ram, and 'life' that of a mare. This statement apparently interprets the authentic Tradition which states that when the inmates of Paradise will have entered Paradise, and the inmates of Hell will have entered Hell, death will be brought in the form of a ram and will be slaughtered near *Ṣirāt* (the Bridge) and it will be announced that there shall be no more death, and every one shall remain in the same state eternally as he or she will have attained. It may not necessarily be deduced from this Tradition that 'death' is a corporal entity in the mortal world also. There are many abstract conditions and actions in this world, which will assume concrete shapes and bodies in the Hereafter. This is verified by many authentic

Traditions. 'Death', which is a condition that overtake man, will also assume the shape of a concretised ram and will be slaughtered. [Qurṭubī]

Tafsīr Maẓharī has stated that although 'death' is a negative phenomenon, it is not pure non-existence. It is a state of non-existence for a thing that will at some time come into existence. All such non-existent things have shapes in the World of Similitudes عالم المثال [*'Ālam-ul-Mithāl*] before coming into existence in the realm of creation عالم الناسوت [*'Ālam-un-Nāsūt*]. Such non-existent things are called الاعيان الثابتة *al-A'yān-uth-Thābitah*. On account of these shapes, they do have some sort of existence even before they come into perceived existence. The existence of the World of Similitude [*'Ālam-ul-Mithāl*] has been proved by the commentator through various *aḥādīth*. And Allah knows best!

Various Categories of Death and Life

It is stated in Tafsīr Maẓharī that Allah, with His Supreme Power and Consummate Wisdom, has divided His creation into different types. Each one is awarded 'life' befitting its type. The perfect and consummate life is awarded to man, which has been invested with the capability to recognise the Divine Being and His Attributes to a specific degree. It is on the basis of this recognition that he is made liable to carry out the sacred laws of Sharī'ah, which has been termed by the Qur'ān as a 'trust'. The heavens, the earth and the mountains feared to bear the burden of this trust but man, on account of his God-given capability, bore it. The antonym of this type of 'life' is the particular type of 'death', which is mentioned in the verse:

اَوَمَنْ كَانَ مَيْتًا فَاَحْيَيْنٰهُ

'Could it be that the one who was dead and We gave him life. [6:122]'

In this verse, a non-believer is referred to as 'dead' and a believer as 'alive', because a non-believer has wasted his 'recognition of Allah' that was the essential characteristic of this type of life. In other types or species of creation, this quality of life is absent, but they do possess senses and capability of movement, which is the second category of life. The antonym of this degree of life is the 'death' referred to by the Qur'ān thus:

كُنتُمْ اَمْوَاتًا فَاَحْيَاكُمْ ثُمَّ يُمِيتُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُحْيِيكُمْ

'...you were lifeless and He gave you life, then He will make you die, then make you live again. [2:28]

In this context, 'life' refers to the ability to sense and move, and 'death' refers to its cessation. Some of the existent entities do not even possess the ability of sensing and movement. They merely possess the capability of growth as in the case of trees and vegetables. 'Life' is attributed to them as well in a limited sense (of growing), and as opposed to this, their 'death' is to lose the ability to grow. In this sense, the Holy Qur'ān has used the words 'life' and 'death' in the following verse:

يُحْيِ الْاَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا

'...how He brings the dead earth back to life. [30:50]'.

These degrees of life are confined to humankind, the animal kingdom and the vegetable kingdom. No other species of creation possesses these qualities of life. Therefore, idols made of stones are referred to in the Qur'ān as

اَمْوَاتٌ غَيْرُ اَحْيَآءٍ

'- dead, having no life__[16:21]

Nevertheless, inorganic matters too have a special (though very limited) element of 'life', which is necessary to the concept of existence. It is due to this element of 'life' that the Holy Qur'ān says:

وَاِنْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ اِلَّا يُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِهٖ

'...And there is not a single thing that does not extol His purity and praise. [17:44]

This analysis also explains why 'death' in the above verse has been mentioned before 'life'. The reason seems to be that death or non-existence is the state that comes before life. In other words, everything that came into existence was in the beginning in a state of lifelessness or non-existence, then it was awarded life.

Another explanation of mentioning 'death' before 'life' could be that the verse itself has declared that the purpose of creating human death and life is 'test',

لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا

'...so that He may test you as to which of you is better in deeds. [2]

This test is more important and is of greater significance in 'death' rather than in 'life', because the one who thinks of death constantly will have the tendency to do more and more righteous deeds. No doubt, the element of test is available in 'life' too, because every step of one's life reminds him of his own inability and powerlessness as against Allah's absolute power, which creates in him the tendency to act righteously. The thought of death, however, is most effective in correcting one's conduct. Sayyidnā 'Ammār Ibn Yāsir ﷺ reports a Prophetic Ḥadīth which says:

كفى بالموت واعظا وكفى باليقين غنى

"Death is sufficient as a preacher, and certitude is sufficient as a cause of being free from needs." [Transmitted by Tabārani]

This signifies that witnessing the death of friends and relatives is the most effective preacher. If that does not exert any influence on one, nothing else will. And he whom Allah has granted the wealth of faith and certitude is the most need-free person.

Sayyidnā Rabī' Ibn Anas ﷺ has stated that the thought of 'death' makes man disgusted with this world and makes him inclined towards the Hereafter.

لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا (...so that He may test you as to which of you is better in deeds....67:2). It should be noted here that Allah did not say 'which of you does *more* deeds', but said 'which of you is *better* in deeds'. This indicates that it is not the quantity of actions that counts, but rather the quality of actions, that is, their being righteous and acceptable in the sight of Allah. That is why man's actions will not be counted on the Day of Judgement, but they will be weighed. In some instances, the weight of one action would be heavier than a thousand actions.

What is a Good Action?

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar ﷺ said that once the Holy Prophet ﷺ recited verse [2] and when he reached the words " better in deeds", he stopped and explained that 'better in deeds' is the person who abstains most from

the things Allah has forbidden and is always ready to obey Him. [Qurṭubī]

فَارْجِعِ الْبَصَرَ هَلْ تَرٰى مِنْ فُطُوْرٍ (So, cast your eye again. Do you see any rifts?...67:3). Apparently, this verse shows that it is possible to see the nearest sky with the naked eyes. Sky, in this context, does not necessarily refer to the bluish atmosphere seen over the earth. In fact, the sky may be very much higher than this, and the bluish colour may be that of the upper atmosphere, as claimed by the scientists. This, on the other hand, does not necessarily imply that the sky cannot be seen at all. It is possible that the bluish atmosphere, on account of being transparent, may not block the vision of the actual sky. However, if it is proved by any evidence that the sky cannot be seen with eyes, then the 'casting ones eyes' in this verse would refer to 'intellectual observation'. [Bayān-ul-Qur'ān]

وَلَقَدْ زَيَّنَّا السَّمَآءَ الدُّنْيَا بِمَصَابِيْحَ وَجَعَلْنٰهَا رُجُوْمًا لِّلشَّيٰطِيْنِ (And We have decorated the nearest sky with lamps, and have made them devices to stone the devils, and We have prepared for them the punishment of Hell....67:5). The word '*maṣabīḥ*' (translated above as 'lamps') stands for 'stars'. The fact that the sky is decorated with stars does not necessarily imply that they should be studded with them inside or under the sky. The decoration is available also to the situation when the stars are far below the sky in space as modern research has proved it by observation. This is not contradictory to the classical interpretation.

The statement '[We] have made them [stars] devices to stone the devils' probably implies that some fiery matters originating from the stars are used to shoot at them, and the stars themselves remain intact in their position. Since this illuminated matter seems to the common people as 'falling stars'. [Qurṭubī]. This further shows that devils who attempt to eavesdrop on celestial conversations for information are driven away before they can reach the stars. [Qurṭubī]. Thus far evidence and proofs of Allah's consummate knowledge and power were adduced with reference to the various types of creation. In the verses that follow the subject of punishment for unbelievers and of reward for believers and the obedient is taken up, thus:

وَلِلَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا بِرَبِّهِمْ عَذَابُ جَهَنَّمَ (And for those who disbelieve, there is the punishment of *Jahannam* ...67:6). The subject runs through seven verses.

Thereafter, the subject of Divine knowledge and power is revisited.

هُوَ الَّذِىْ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْاَرْضَ ذَلُوْلًا (He is the One who has made the earth submissive for you ...67:15) The word *dhalūl* signifies 'submissive'. When *dhalūl* is used for an animal, it means that it is not insolent when someone is riding it. The word *manākib* is the plural of *mankib*, which means 'shoulder', which in animals refer to the upper part of their front legs. Normally, this is not the part of the animals where a rider would sit to ride them. Their back or neck are involved in riding. But an animal that offers its shoulders as well to the riders is very obedient and submissive. Therefore, the verse says that Allah 'has made the earth submissive for you, so walk on its shoulders'. Allah has made the structure of earth such that it is not liquid like water so that it flows, nor is it like mud, mire or slime, because if the earth were to be in any of these states, it would not have been possible for man to live in it. Nor is it made hard like rocks or iron, for in that state it would not have been possible for him to plough the fields to sow his crops and derive various other types of benefit from the earth. Wells and rivers could not have been dug. It would not have been possible to dig trenches into the ground to lay foundations of huge buildings. With such well-balanced infrastructure, He granted him tranquillity that it is possible for buildings to stand on it and for people, moving on its surface, to avoid slipping.

وَكُلُوْا مِنْ رِّزْقِهٖ (...and eat out of His provision ...67:15). After directing man to travel on earth, it is said 'eat out of His provision'. This probably indicates that commercial trips carried out for import and export are the doors for obtaining livelihood from Allah.

وَاِلَيْهِ النُّشُوْرُ (...and to Him is the Resurrection...67:15). This warning tells us that man is permitted to draw benefits of eating, drinking and living from the earth, but he is reminded at the same time not to be neglectful of death and life-after-death. Eventually, he will have to leave this world for the Hereafter. Whilst living on the earth, he must prepare for life-after-death. In this verse, man is warned that eventually he will return to Allah on the Day of Resurrection. The next verse warns that the Divine punishment can overtake him, even when living on the earth.

ءَاَمِنْتُمْ مَّنْ فِى السَّمَآءِ اَنْ يَّخْسِفَ بِكُمُ الْاَرْضَ فَاِذَا هِىَ تَمُوْرُ (Have you become fearless of Him who is in the sky if He makes you sink into the earth, and it starts

trembling at once?...67:16). It means: Though Allah has granted the earth such a balanced infrastructure that man cannot go into it without digging, yet Allah has the power to make the earth swallow up all the communities living on its surface.

The next verse warns people of another type of punishment:

اَمْ اَمِنْتُمْ مَّنْ فِي السَّمَآءِ اَنْ يُّرْسِلَ عَلَيْكُمْ حَاصِبًا ؕ فَسَتَعْلَمُوْنَ كَيْفَ نَذِيْرِ (Or, have you become fearless of Him who is in the sky if He looses a violent wind with stones against you? So, you will soon come to know how was My warning! - 67:17). In other words, they at the moment feel secure that the Supreme Being in the heaven will not release against them a sudden squall of stones together with violent wind. Soon they will realise how true the Divine warning was, but by the time they realise its veracity it would be too late. Now that they are safe, sound and secure, it is the time for them to give it a thought.

The next verse refers to the former nations who denied and rejected the truth and how they were annihilated by Divine scourge. Every person needs to draw a lesson from the punishment meted out to them.

وَلَقَدْ كَذَّبَ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ فَكَيْفَ كَانَ نَكِيْرِ (And of course, those before them [also] rejected [the truth]. So, how was My censure?...67:18)

The next verse turns once again to the central theme of the Sūrah, that is, the description of various forms and functions of Allah's creation to prove His Oneness, His knowledge and power. Thus far human souls, forms and functions of the sky, the stars, the earth and so on were discussed. The next verse mentions birds that fly about in the atmosphere above us.

اَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا اِلَى الطَّيْرِ فَوْقَهُمْ صٰٓفّٰتٍ وَّيَقْبِضْنَ ؕ مَا يُمْسِكُهُنَّ اِلَّا الرَّحْمٰنُ ؕ اِنَّهٗ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ بَصِيْرٌ (Have they not looked to the birds above them spreading their wings, and (at times) they fold (them) in? No one holds them up except the Raḥmān (the All-Merciful). Surely He is watchful of every thing...67:19)

This verse invites attention to the fact that the birds have weight, and in terms of the law of gravity, weighty bodies should fall down on the earth, if they are released from above. Normally, it is not possible for the air to hold them up. But Allah, through His consummate power, has created these birds in such a way that they can hold themselves up in the

air. Apparently, they have no intellect, but Allah has taught them the art to make the air carry their burden and to fly in it by manoeuvring their wings in such a way that at times they outspread them and at other times they fold them back. In this way they subjugate the air to their benefit. It is obvious that enabling air to hold them up, designing the wings of the birds on this particular shape and teaching them the art of controlling the air, all these functions were possible only by Allah's Supreme Creative Power.

Thus far the conditions of various categories and species of existent beings were analysed and considered in order to provide evidence of Divine existence, His Oneness, His unique knowledge and power. If a fair-minded person were to consider them carefully, he will have no choice but to believe in Allah. From the next verse up to the end of the Surah, the non-believers and the unrighteous people of all categories are warned of the Divine scourge. First, they are admonished that if Allah decides to punish any nation, there is no power in the world that can stop Him. There is no fighting force or army of soldiers that can come to the support of the disbelievers and save them. Thus the next verse says:

أَمَّنْ هٰذَا الَّذِي هُوَ جُنْدٌ لَّكُمْ يَنْصُرُكُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِ الرَّحْمٰنِ ط إِنِ الْكٰفِرُوْنَ إِلَّا فِيْ غُرُوْرٍ (Now, who is there to become a force for you to help you, except the Raḥmān? The disbelievers are in nothing but delusion...67:20).

Then the next verse warns the disbelievers that the sustenance Allah grants them by sending down rain from the clouds and by growing plants/ vegetation in the earth is not their personal property. It is a gift and bounty from Allah. If He wills, He can withhold it. This is the import of the following verse:

أَمَّنْ هٰذَا الَّذِي يَرْزُقُكُمْ إِنْ أَمْسَكَ رِزْقَهُ ۚ بَلْ لَّجُّوْا فِيْ عُتُوٍّ وَّنُفُوْرٍ (Or, who is there to give you sustenance, if He withholds His sustenance? Still, they persist in rebellion and aversion. [67:21]'.

The last sentence of the verse purports to express the unbelievers' sad state of affairs. They neither consider the Signs of Allah nor do they pay heed to other people's good advice. They obstinately persist in insolence and deviation from the Truth.

Next, the conditions of non-believers and believers on the field of

Resurrection are described. It is mentioned that the unbelievers will be brought to the field of Resurrection, crawling on their faces instead of walking on their feet. Bukhārī and Muslim record on the authority of Sayyidnā Anas ﷺ that the noble Companions asked the Messenger of Allah ﷺ: "How will the non-believers walk on their faces on the Day of Resurrection?" The Messenger of Allah ﷺ replied: "Is Allah who made them walk on their feet not powerful enough to make them walk on their faces and their heads?" The following verse depicts the scene of such crawling:

اَفَمَنْ يَّمْشِىْ مُكِبًّا عَلٰى وَجْهِهٖٓ اَهْدٰٓى اَمَّنْ يَّمْشِىْ سَوِيًّا عَلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ (Then, tell me whether the one who walks falling down [frequently] on his face is better guided or the one who walks on a straight path...67:22).

The phrase 'the one who walks on a straight path' refers to the believer who is rightly guided. The next verse describes the manifestation of Divine power and wisdom in the creation of man, thus:

قُلْ هُوَالَّذِىْٓ اَنْشَاَكُمْ وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَالْاَبْصَارَ وَالْاَفْـِٕدَةَ ط قَلِيْلًا مَّاتَشْكُرُوْنَ (Say, "He is the One who has originated you, and made for you the ears and the eyes and the hearts. How little you pay gratitude"...67:23).

Specifying ears, eyes and Heart

Of all the human sense organs, only three are mentioned here on which depends knowledge and perception of the external world. Philosophers have identified five sources of knowledge and perception that are called 'five senses': to see, hear, smell, taste or feel something. Allah has equipped man with 'nose' to smell, with 'tongue' to taste, with 'ears' to hear and with 'eyes' to see; Allah has spread 'skin' throughout man's body to feel. But out of the five physical senses, only two have been mentioned, namely, ears and eyes, because man receives a very limited range of knowledge by smelling, tasting and feeling. Man depends for information largely on hearing and seeing. Of the two organs, his sense of hearing is mentioned first, because a careful analysis shows that most of the information gathered in human life is through hearing, not so much by seeing. The third organ mentioned specifically is the 'heart', because that is the centre of knowledge. Knowledge received through hearing and seeing depends on the human 'heart', unlike the theory of the philosophers and scientists who believe that the centre of knowledge is the

human 'brain'.

After this, the non-believers are threatened with punishment. Towards the end of the Sūrah, a statement is once again repeated to remind them which purports to say: 'O you who live on the earth, dig wells and drink water from it to quench your thirst and grow plants and vegetation, do not forget that none of these things is your personal property. They are a Divine gift. He sent down water, and loaded it in the form of ice and reserved it on the peaks of mountains, so that it may not putrefy. Then He caused the congealed water to melt gradually and allow it to seep or soak into the earth through the pores or small interstices of the mountains and allowed a network of melted water to spread throughout the earth without any pipeline. Whenever man requires, he could dig a few meters deep into the earth from its upper surface to obtain water. This is a Divine gift. If He wills, He could send the water down into the depths of the earth, and it would not be accessible to anyone. This is the import of the following verse.

قُلْ اَرَءَيْتُمْ اِنْ اَصْبَحَ مَآؤُكُمْ غَوْرًا فَمَنْ يَّاْتِيْكُمْ بِمَآءٍ مَّعِيْنٍ (Say, "Tell me, Should your water vanish into the earth, who will bring you a flowing [stream] water?"... (67:30).

In other words, if all the water, which people draw from the wells easily, were to disappear into the depths of the earth, do they have any power through which they will be able to obtain pure running water? Obviously, the answer in negative.

It is recorded in a Tradition that when a person recites this verse, he should say

اَللّٰهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِيْنَ "Allah, the Lord of the worlds" That is, it is Allah alone who can bring it back to us. None of us has the power.

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Mulk
Ends here

Sūrah Al-Qalam
(The Pen)

This Sūrah is Makkī. It contains 52 verses and 2 sections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 52

نٓ وَالْقَلَمِ وَمَا يَسْطُرُوْنَ ﴿١﴾ مَآ اَنْتَ بِنِعْمَةِ رَبِّكَ بِمَجْنُوْنٍ ﴿٢﴾
وَاِنَّ لَكَ لَاَجْرًا غَيْرَ مَمْنُوْنٍ ﴿٣﴾ وَاِنَّكَ لَعَلٰى خُلُقٍ عَظِيْمٍ ﴿٤﴾
فَسَتُبْصِرُ وَيُبْصِرُوْنَ ﴿٥﴾ بِاَيِّكُمُ الْمَفْتُوْنُ ﴿٦﴾ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ اَعْلَمُ
بِمَنْ ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيْلِهٖ وَهُوَ اَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِيْنَ ﴿٧﴾ فَلَا تُطِعِ
الْمُكَذِّبِيْنَ ﴿٨﴾ وَدُّوْا لَوْ تُدْهِنُ فَيُدْهِنُوْنَ ﴿٩﴾ وَلَا تُطِعْ كُلَّ
حَلَّافٍ مَّهِيْنٍ ﴿١٠﴾ هَمَّازٍ مَّشَّآءٍ بِنَمِيْمٍ ﴿١١﴾ مَّنَّاعٍ لِّلْخَيْرِ مُعْتَدٍ
اَثِيْمٍ ﴿١٢﴾ عُتُلٍّ بَعْدَ ذٰلِكَ زَنِيْمٍ ﴿١٣﴾ اَنْ كَانَ ذَا مَالٍ وَّبَنِيْنَ ﴿١٤﴾
اِذَا تُتْلٰى عَلَيْهِ اٰيٰتُنَا قَالَ اَسَاطِيْرُ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ ﴿١٥﴾ سَنَسِمُهٗ عَلَى
الْخُرْطُوْمِ ﴿١٦﴾ اِنَّا بَلَوْنٰهُمْ كَمَا بَلَوْنَآ اَصْحٰبَ الْجَنَّةِ اِذْ اَقْسَمُوْا
لَيَصْرِمُنَّهَا مُصْبِحِيْنَ ﴿١٧﴾ وَلَا يَسْتَثْنُوْنَ ﴿١٨﴾ فَطَافَ عَلَيْهَا
طَآئِفٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّكَ وَهُمْ نَآئِمُوْنَ ﴿١٩﴾ فَاَصْبَحَتْ كَالصَّرِيْمِ ﴿٢٠﴾
فَتَنَادَوْا مُصْبِحِيْنَ ﴿٢١﴾ اَنِ اغْدُوْا عَلٰى حَرْثِكُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰرِمِيْنَ
﴿٢٢﴾ فَانْطَلَقُوْا وَهُمْ يَتَخَافَتُوْنَ ﴿٢٣﴾ اَنْ لَّا يَدْخُلَنَّهَا الْيَوْمَ عَلَيْكُمْ

مِّسْكِيْنٌ ﴿٢٤﴾ وَّغَدَوْا عَلٰى حَرْدٍ قٰدِرِيْنَ ﴿٢٥﴾ فَلَمَّا رَاَوْهَا قَالُوْٓا اِنَّا
لَضَآلُّوْنَ ﴿٢٦﴾ بَلْ نَحْنُ مَحْرُوْمُوْنَ ﴿٢٧﴾ قَالَ اَوْسَطُهُمْ اَلَمْ اَقُلْ
لَّكُمْ لَوْلَا تُسَبِّحُوْنَ ﴿٢٨﴾ قَالُوْا سُبْحٰنَ رَبِّنَآ اِنَّا كُنَّا ظٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٢٩﴾
فَاَقْبَلَ بَعْضُهُمْ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ يَّتَلَاوَمُوْنَ ﴿٣٠﴾ قَالُوْا يٰوَيْلَنَآ اِنَّا كُنَّا
طٰغِيْنَ ﴿٣١﴾ عَسٰى رَبُّنَآ اَنْ يُّبْدِلَنَا خَيْرًا مِّنْهَآ اِنَّآ اِلٰى رَبِّنَا رٰغِبُوْنَ
﴿٣٢﴾ كَذٰلِكَ الْعَذَابُ ؕ وَلَعَذَابُ الْاٰخِرَةِ اَكْبَرُ ۘ لَوْ كَانُوْا يَعْلَمُوْنَ
﴿٣٣﴾ اِنَّ لِلْمُتَّقِيْنَ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ جَنّٰتِ النَّعِيْمِ ﴿٣٤﴾ اَفَنَجْعَلُ
الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ كَالْمُجْرِمِيْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾ مَا لَكُمْ ۫ كَيْفَ تَحْكُمُوْنَ ﴿٣٦﴾ اَمْ
لَكُمْ كِتٰبٌ فِيْهِ تَدْرُسُوْنَ ﴿٣٧﴾ اِنَّ لَكُمْ فِيْهِ لَمَا تَخَيَّرُوْنَ ﴿٣٨﴾ اَمْ
لَكُمْ اَيْمَانٌ عَلَيْنَا بَالِغَةٌ اِلٰى يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ ۙ اِنَّ لَكُمْ لَمَا تَحْكُمُوْنَ
﴿٣٩﴾ سَلْهُمْ اَيُّهُمْ بِذٰلِكَ زَعِيْمٌ ﴿٤٠﴾ اَمْ لَهُمْ شُرَكَآءُ ۚ فَلْيَاْتُوْا
بِشُرَكَآئِهِمْ اِنْ كَانُوْا صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿٤١﴾ يَوْمَ يُكْشَفُ عَنْ سَاقٍ
وَّيُدْعَوْنَ اِلَى السُّجُوْدِ فَلَا يَسْتَطِيْعُوْنَ ﴿٤٢﴾ خَاشِعَةً اَبْصَارُهُمْ
تَرْهَقُهُمْ ذِلَّةٌ ؕ وَقَدْ كَانُوْا يُدْعَوْنَ اِلَى السُّجُوْدِ وَهُمْ سٰلِمُوْنَ ﴿٤٣﴾
فَذَرْنِيْ وَمَنْ يُّكَذِّبُ بِهٰذَا الْحَدِيْثِ ؕ سَنَسْتَدْرِجُهُمْ مِّنْ حَيْثُ
لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٤٤﴾ وَاُمْلِيْ لَهُمْ ؕ اِنَّ كَيْدِيْ مَتِيْنٌ ﴿٤٥﴾ اَمْ تَسْئَلُهُمْ
اَجْرًا فَهُمْ مِّنْ مَّغْرَمٍ مُّثْقَلُوْنَ ﴿٤٦﴾ اَمْ عِنْدَهُمُ الْغَيْبُ فَهُمْ يَكْتُبُوْنَ
﴿٤٧﴾ فَاصْبِرْ لِحُكْمِ رَبِّكَ وَلَا تَكُنْ كَصَاحِبِ الْحُوْتِ ۘ اِذْ نَادٰى
وَهُوَ مَكْظُوْمٌ ﴿٤٨﴾ لَوْلَآ اَنْ تَدٰرَكَهٗ نِعْمَةٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّهٖ لَنُبِذَ بِالْعَرَآءِ وَهُوَ
مَذْمُوْمٌ ﴿٤٩﴾ فَاجْتَبٰهُ رَبُّهٗ فَجَعَلَهٗ مِنَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ ﴿٥٠﴾ وَاِنْ يَّكَادُ
الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لَيُزْلِقُوْنَكَ بِاَبْصَارِهِمْ لَمَّا سَمِعُوا الذِّكْرَ وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ اِنَّهٗ
لَمَجْنُوْنٌ ﴿٥١﴾ وَمَا هُوَ اِلَّا ذِكْرٌ لِّلْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٥٢﴾

Nūn, by the pen and what they write, [1] with the grace of your Lord, you are not insane. [2] And you will definitely have a reward that will never end. [3] And you are surely on exalted quality of character. [4] So, you will see, and they will see [5] which of you is demented. [6] Surely your Lord knows best who has strayed from his way, and He is well-aware of those who are on the right path. [7] So, do not obey those who reject (the true faith.) [8] They wish that you become flexible (in your faith), and they will become flexible (in their hostile attitude.) [9] And do not obey any contemptible one who swears much, [10] a slanderer who goes about with calumnies, [11] one who prevents good, (and who is) transgressor, sinful, [12] harsh, (and) after all that, notorious, [13] (do not obey such a person merely) because he is a man of wealth and sons. [14] When Our verses are recited to him, he says, "(These are) the tales of the ancient." [15] We will soon brand him on the snout. [16] We have tested them as We had tested the Owners of the Garden, when they had sworn an oath that they would pluck its fruits on the next morning, [17] and did not make any exception (by saying '*insha'allah*'). [18] Then, there whirled around it a whirl (of calamity) from your Lord, while they were asleep. [19] Thus, on the next morning, it was like a harvested field. [20] So, they called out each other as the morning broke, [21] saying, "Set out early, if you are going to pluck (the fruits)." [22] So they set out while they were whispering to each other, [23] saying, "Let no poor man enter into it upon you today." [24] And in early hours they rushed quickly, while they were (assuming themselves) powerful (to pluck the fruits and prevent the poor.) [25] But when they saw it (the place of the ruined garden), they said, "We have missed the way." [26] (Then, once they realized that the garden is the same, but it has been destroyed, they said,) "No, but we are deprived (of the fruits)." [27] Said he who was the best among them, "Did I not say to you, 'Why do you not pronounce *tasbīḥ* (Allah's purity)?" [28] They said, "We pronounce the purity of our Lord. No doubt, we were wrongdoers." [29] Then, (at the beginning,) they started reproaching one another; [30] (and at last,) they said, "Woe to us! In fact, we (all) were outrageous. [31] We hope that our Lord will give us in exchange something better than this. Truly we turn to Allah." [32]

In this way the punishment comes. And, of course, the

punishment of the Hereafter is even greater, if they but realize! [33] **Surely, for the God-fearing are the gardens of bliss.** [34] **Otherwise, shall We make the obedient like the sinners?** [35] **What has happened to you? How do you judge?** [36] **Do you have a book in which you read** [37] **that for you there is what you choose?** [38] **Or do you have oaths sworn by Us, remaining effective up to the Day of Judgment, that you will get what you decide?** [39] **Ask them which of them stands surety for that.** [40] **Or do they have associate-gods (who have guaranteed safety for them? Then, let them bring their associate-gods, if they are true,** [41] **on the Day when the Shin will be exposed,**[1] **and they will be called upon to prostrate themselves, but they will not be able to.** [42] **With their eyes downcast, they will be enveloped by ignominy. And they used to be called upon to prostrate when they were healthy (but they did not.)** [43]

So, leave Me alone with those who reject this discourse. We will draw them on little by little (towards Hell) from a way they do not know. [44] **And I give them respite. Indeed, My plan is firm.** [45] **Is it that you ask them for a fee, due to which they are burdened with debt?** [46] **Or do they have the (knowledge of the) Unseen, and they write it down?** [47]

So, remain patient with your Lord's judgment, and be not like the Man of the Fish,[2] **he cried out while he was**

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(1). This is the literal translation of the Qur'anic phrase used here. The exegetes have explained it in two different ways. Some of them are of the view that, according to the Arabic usage, 'exposure of the shin' is an idiomatic expression for a severe state of distress. When a person is confronted with such a distress, he normally lays his shins bare. Therefore, exposure of the shin has been taken as indicative of such a state. Given this interpretation, the verse means that on the day when the disbelievers will face the severe distress, they will be called upon to prostrate themselves, but they will not be able to do so, because their backs will be made flat, with no elasticity to bow down. Some other commentators, however, take the phrase in its literal sense. They say that the 'Shin' referred to here is the Shin of Allah Ta'ala, which is one of His attributes, the exact nature of which is neither known to anybody, nor discoverable in this world. (But obviously, it is not like the shins of human beings). According to this interpretation, the verse means that, at some stage on the Day of Judgment, Allah Ta'ala will expose this attribute of His which is called 'Shin', and they will be called upon to prostrate before it. This interpretation is supported by an authentic *hadith* reported by Bukhari and Muslim.

(2). It refers to Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام who was devoured by a fish after he left his nation. Full description of the event has been given in Surah Yūnus.

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in anguish. [48] **Had not a favour from His Lord come to his help, he would have been cast in the wilderness in a reproachable state.** [3] [49] **Then his Lord chose him, and made him one of the righteous.** [50]

And indeed the disbelievers seem to trip you up with their glances [4] **when they hear the Reminder, and say, "He is a madman indeed."** [51] **And it is nothing else but a Reminder for all the worlds.** [52]

Commentary

Linkage of Sūrahs

The preceding Sūrah dealt with the existence of Allah, His Oneness, and His knowledge and power, and adduced, as a positive proof of these attributes, was the fact that Allah is the Creator of death and life, and of the entire universe through whose component parts there runs the beautiful order that pervades the cosmos. He has created man to serve a sublime object and to achieve a noble goal. But man in his ingratitude has always rejected the Divine Message and consequently has been incurring Divine scourge. This is mentioned, in Sūrah Al-Mulk, with particular reference to the pagans of Makkah. The present Sūrah deals with the truth of the Holy Prophet's ﷺ claim, and gives sound and solid proof of it. Thus it rebuts the criticisms and taunts of the pagans against the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Their first criticism was that he is [God forbid!] insane whereas he was perfectly sane person, an embodiment of knowledge and a paragon of virtues. Another reason why they probably called him insane is that whenever an installment of revelation descended upon the Holy Prophet ﷺ, a physical change came over him. For instance the

(3). According to the explanation given to this verse by Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanawi, 'Favour from His Lord' means the acceptance of his repentance, and 'wilderness' refers to the place where he was thrown by the fish. If this verse is read in juxtaposition with Verses 143,144 of Sūrah As-Ṣaffāt, the sense appears to be that if Yūnus عليه السلام had not offered *tasbiḥ* and *taubah,* he would have remained in the belly of the fish for good, and if he had repented, but was not favoured by Allah with the acceptance of his *taubah,* he would have been cast by the fish into the wilderness, due to his repentance, but in a reproachable state. However, since Allah favoured him with accepting his *taubah,* he was no more reproachable. Some other scholars, however, suggest that 'wilderness' in this verse refers to the plain of Ḥashr, and the verse means that if Allah had not accepted his *taubah,* he would have been cast into the plain of Hashr in a reproachable state.

(4). It means that they glare at you with such a hatred and anger as if they were to make you slip from your standpoint due to their aversion.

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colour of his face would change and become red, or he would sometimes snore or he would at other times appear to be in grief, or there were times when he would hang his head down. When any of these states was over, he would recite the revealed verses to the people. This matter was beyond the understanding and perception of the pagans. Therefore, they regarded this experience of receiving revelation as insanity. Or they called him insane presumably because he put forward to his people and to the whole world that there is no object worthy of worship except Allah. He put it to them that their self-carved idols cannot be gods because they are insensate and lacking knowledge; and they lack the ability to benefit or harm anyone. His voice of Truth sounded alone yet with this lone voice of Truth without any apparent means and support, he stood unwaveringly against the whole world. People without any insight or foresight did not think that it was possible for him to achieve his goal and they called it insanity. Some called him insane for the sake of calling him insane, without any reason. Having no excuse to refute the teachings of Allah's Messenger, all the pagans could do was to dub him insane. The initial verses of Sūrah Al-Qalam refute under emphatic oath their false charges.

نٓ وَالْقَلَمِ وَمَا يَسْطُرُوْنَ. مَآ اَنْتَ بِنِعْمَةِ رَبِّكَ بِمَجْنُوْنٍ (Nūn, by the pen and what they write, with the grace of your Lord, you are not insane....68:2). The letter Nūn is one of the isolated letters that have been revealed at the beginning of many Sūrahs. They are the secret signs and symbols and mysteries of Allah. Allah alone knows their hidden meaning, or Allah made their mysterious meanings known to His Messenger. The Ummah is not permitted to investigate the hidden meaning of such isolated letters.

Pen and its Significance

In the phrase *wal-qalami,* the *waw* is the particle of oath [translated here as 'by the pen']. 'Qalam' refers to 'pen', and there are three types of pen: [1] the pen of destinies; [2] the pen of angels; and [3] the pen of human beings. It could refer to any or all of these types of pen. A pen is an object that is used for writing anything [as is the view of Abū Ḥātim Al-Bustī]. According to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﵁, it specifically refers to the pen of destinies. Sayyidnā 'Ubādah Ibn Ṣāmit ﵁ narrates regarding the pen of destinies that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "The first thing Allah created was the pen, and He told it to write, and when it asked Him what it should write, He told it to write what was predestined, so it wrote

what would take place to all eternity." [Transmitted by At-Tirmidhī, saying that this is a Tradition whose chain of narrators is *gharīb*]. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar ﷺ narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Allah recorded the destiny of all creatures 50000 years before creating the heavens and the earth." [Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim]. Qatādah رحمه الله تعالى says that pen is a great gift of Allah that He has endowed upon His servants. Some scholars say that Allah first created the pen, and that was the pen of decrees which recorded the destinies of the entire universe and all the creatures. Then He created the second pen that is used by the inhabitants of the earth. The second pen is referred to in Sūrah Iqra' in verse [96:4], thus: عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ '{He who} taught by the pen'. And Allah knows best!

If *qalam* 'pen' in the verse under comment refers to the pen of destinies, its greatness and its superiority over everything is quite obvious and swearing by it is quite understandable. If it is taken to refer to all pens in general, including the pen of destinies, the pen of angels, and also the pen of human beings, swearing an oath by it is apt because all great tasks are accomplished by pen. In the conquests of territories, pen play a mighty role: 'The pen is mightier than the sword' goes the famous saying. Abū Ḥātim Al-Bustī has encapsulated this idea in two short verses:

اذا اقسم الابطال يوما بسيفهم .... وَعدّوه ممّا يكسب المجد وَالْكرم

When the brave people swear by their sword some day,
And count it among things that give honour and veneration to men,

كفٰى قلم الكتاب عزّا ورفعة..........مدى الدّهر انّ اللّٰه اقسم بالقلم

The writers' pen is sufficient for their honour and superiority
For all times to come, because Allah has sworn oath by the pen

In any case, it is immaterial whether the pen in the verse refers to the pen of destinies or it refers to the pen of creation in general. Then it swears an oath by مَا يَسْطُرُوْنَ 'what they write [1]'.

In other words, swearing an oath by what the pens have written or what they will record in the future, Allah refutes the unbelievers' false charge of madness that they made against the Holy Prophet ﷺ, thus:

مَا اَنْتَ بِنِعْمَةِ رَبِّکَ بِمَجْنُوْنٍ (with the grace of your Lord, you are not insane....68:2). The verse contains the phrase بِنِعْمَةِ رَبِّکَ (with the grace of your Lord....68:2). It states not only the claim, but also evidence to support

and substantiate the statement of claim. [See special note below.] Man is required to turn the pages of history, and he will realize that a person as great as the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, upon whom Allah has conferred great blessings and grace, cannot be insane. Calling such a sane person insane is itself insanity

Special Note

Scholars have explained the Qur'ānic concept of 'oath': Wherever Allah has sworn an oath by an object or a phenomenon, its subject has been cited as evidence or testimony to support and substantiate the claim. Here the phrase مَا يَسْطُرُوْنَ 'what they write [1]'. Is the proof of the claim, that is, world history has been cited as testimony for critics to look into the pages of history, if they can ever find a person of such lofty calibre as the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, with high morals insane. He takes care of other people's sanity. The next verse reinforces the subject.

وَإِنَّ لَكَ لَأَجْرًا غَيْرَ مَمْنُوْنٍ (And you will definitely have a reward that will never end....68:3). The verse exposes the absurdity of the charge of madness. It purports to say that the actions of a madman produce no useful result, but the Holy Prophet ﷺ will eminently succeed in fulfilling the object of his Divine mission, and in bringing about a wonderful revolution in the lives of his degenerate and demented people. This is the significance of the words in the verse 'and for you is a reward that will never end.' No insane person is ever rewarded for his actions. The next verse constitutes a further eloquent comment on the charge of insanity imputed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ , thus:

وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلٰى خُلُقٍ عَظِيْمٍ (And you are surely on exalted quality of character.....68:4). In this verse, the demented people are invited to think carefully about the lofty morals of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

The Holy Prophet's ﷺ Exalted Quality of Character

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه has said that 'exalted quality of character' signifies a 'great religion, and it is Islam, a religion dearest to Allah'. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا was asked about the Holy Prophet's ﷺ character. She replied: "The Holy Prophet's ﷺ character was the Qur'ān itself". In other words, he is the living example of the Qur'ān that teaches high morals. Sayyidnā 'Alī رضي الله عنه said that 'exalted quality of character' signifies the 'good manners which the Qur'ān has taught'. All these

interpretations have almost the same significance. That is to say, not only that the Holy Prophet ﷺ is not an insane person, but he is the sublime and noblest of men possessing in full measure all the moral excellence that combine to make their possessor a perfect image of his Creator. The Holy Prophet's ﷺ humanity was of the most perfect character. He was a complete embodiment of all good moral qualities that a man is capable of possessing. The Holy Prophet ﷺ himself said:

بعثت لاتمم مكارم الاخلاق

> "I have only been sent to perfect noble character/conduct." [Abū Ḥayyān].

Sayyidnā Anas رضي الله عنه said:

> "I served Allah's Messenger for ten years, and he never said a word of displeasure to me, nor did he ever say to me concerning something I had done: 'Why did you do that?' And he never said to me concerning what I had not done: 'Why did you not do this?'" [Bukhārī and Muslim].

Obviously, a ten-year period is a long time during which some unpleasant or objectionable thing might have happened.

Sayyidnā Anas رضي الله عنه said:

> "As a result of the Holy Prophet's رضي الله عنه noble character, any slave-girl of Madīnah would hold his hand and take him wherever she would like to."

Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها said: "Allah's Messenger never struck anyone with his hands except when he was fighting in *jihād* in the cause of Allah." It is confirmed that when he fought *jihād* in the cause of Allah, he killed unbelievers. Otherwise he did not hit any servant, nor any woman. He would never take revenge for any harm or mistake done. He would only implement *Shar'ī* punishment on those who violated Allah's laws. [Transmitted by Muslim].

Sayyidnā Jābir رضي الله عنه says that the Messenger of Allah was never asked for anything for which he said 'No'. [Bukhārī and Muslim].

Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها said:

> "Allah's Messenger was never vulgar, never pretended to be vulgar and he never shouted in the marketplaces. He never

responded to evil by evil, but always pardoned and overlooked."

Sayyidnā Abū-ḍ-Dardā' ﷺ narrates that Allah's Messenger ﷺ said:

"Noble character will be the heaviest thing on a Muslim's scale of good deeds on the Day of Resurrection. Allah detests the rude and foul-mouthed person." [Transmitted by Tirmidhī, grading it as a Tradition which is '*ḥasan*'].

Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا narrates that Allah's Messenger ﷺ said:

"Indeed by virtue of good character, a believer can attain the status of votaries who spend their nights in worship and their days in fasting." [Abū Dāwūd].

Sayyidnā Mu'ādh Ibn Jabal ﷺ narrates that when he placed his foot into the stirrup of his mount, as he was departing for Yemen as the governor of that province, Allah's Messenger ﷺ advised him:

يَا مَعَاذ اَحسِنْ خُلُقَكَ لِلنَّاسِ

"O Mu'ādh, display your best character with people." [Transmitted by Mālik].

All narratives cited here have been adopted from Tafsīr Maẓharī.

فَسَتُبْصِرُ وَيُبْصِرُوْنَ. بِاَيِّكُمُ الْمَفْتُوْنَ (So, you will see, and they will see which of you is demented....68:5-6]. The word *maftūn*, in this context, means 'demented'. In the preceding verses, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was accused of being an insane and demented. This verse turns tables upon the accusers of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and making a prophecy, tells them in challenging words that time will show whether it was he or they who suffered from insanity, or whether his claim to be Allah's Messenger was the outpouring of heated brain, or whether they themselves were so demented as not to read the signs of time, and thus refuse to believe in him. These were the unfortunate, wretched ones who did not see the light of Truth and were thus disgraced and defeated in this world. But, on the other hand, there were thousands of other lucky ones who, at first did not see the light of Truth and denounced him as demented, soon saw the light and embraced the Faith of Islam. They took the love and obedience of the Holy Prophet ﷺ as the capital asset of success, prosperity and happiness.

فَلَا تُطِعِ الْمُكَذِّبِيْنَ . وَدُّوْا لَوْ تُدْهِنُ فَيُدْهِنُوْنَ (So, do not obey those who reject [the true faith]. They wish that you become flexible [in your faith], and they

will become flexible [in their hostile attitude.]....68:8-9]. The interpretation of this verse as adopted in this translation is based on the interpretation of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ as reported by Qurṭubī.

Ruling

This verse indicates that any such compromise with the unbelievers is tantamount to *mudāhanah fid-dīn*, flexibility in religion, and this is forbidden. [Maẓharī]. Such a pact of leniency in matters of religion is not permissible, unless compelled by necessity.

وَلَا تُطِعْ كُلَّ حَلَّافٍ مَّهِينٍ ﴿۱۰﴾ هَمَّازٍ مَّشَّآءٍ بِنَمِيمٍ ﴿۱۱﴾ مَّنَّاعٍ لِّلْخَيْرِ مُعْتَدٍ اَثِيمٍ ﴿۱۲﴾ عُتُلٍّ بَعْدَ ذٰلِكَ زَنِيمٍ ﴿۱۳﴾

(And do not obey any contemptible one who swears much, a slanderer who goes about with calumnies, one who prevents good, [and who is] transgressor, sinful, harsh, [and] after all that, notorious,....68:10-13)

The word *zanīm* refers to 'a person whose legitimate birth from a father is not proved'. The person referred to in this verse was of doubtful birth or his lineage was uncertain.

The preceding verse prohibited any compromise with the unbelievers in general in matters of religion. The current verse prohibits specifically yielding to such mean leader of falsehood as Walīd Ibn Mughīrah, who possessed the base characteristics as listed in verses [10] to [13], the worst mischief-maker. [As transmitted by Ibn Jarīr on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ. Having described this person's bad manners and his arrogance in several verses that follow, verse [16] says:

سَنَسِمُهٗ عَلَى الْخُرْطُوْمِ (We will soon brand him on the snout...68:16). That is, as, disbelievers, out of pride and false sense of power rejected the Divine Message in this world, Allah will disgrace and humiliate them on the Day of Resurrection so that the earlier and later generations will be able to see it. His nose has been described by way of reproach as *khurṭūm* (snout). This refers specifically to the long nose of a pig or a trunk of an elephant.

اِنَّا بَلَوْنٰهُمْ كَمَا بَلَوْنَآ اَصْحٰبَ الْجَنَّةِ (We have tested them as We had tested the Owners of the Garden....68:17). The preceding verses rebutted the criticisms of pagan Arabs levelled against Allah's Messenger ﷺ and gave reasons why the charges are not only unfounded, but also absurd. The

present set of verses mentions a story of the past and the unbelievers of Makkah are threatened with punishment. 'Testing them' could refer to the forthcoming story, in which the owners of a garden were blessed with Divine favours, but they behaved ungratefully. As a result, a punishment came upon them and the favours were destroyed. The greatest Divine favour upon the Makkans was the advent of the Holy Messenger ﷺ. Besides, their businesses flourished and they prospered. This was a test for them to see whether they would behave gratefully to Allah and believe in Him and in His Messenger ﷺ, or whether they would obstinately persist in disbelief. In the other case, they should draw lessons from the story of the owners of the orchard, lest they be visited by a similar punishment on account of ingratitude. This interpretation would apply even in the case where these verses are taken as Makkī, but most commentators take them to be Madanī. The 'test' referred to here is the terrible famine that held Makkah in its grip, as a result of the Holy Prophet's ﷺ prayer against them, for several years during which time people died of hunger and starvation, they were forced to eat carrion and leaves of trees till the Makkans begged the Holy Prophet ﷺ to pray for their deliverance from the scourge. This incident took place after the migration.

The Story of the Owners of a Garden

Some elders, such as Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنهما, mentioned that this orchard was in Yemen. According to one version of Sayyidnā Sa'īd Ibn Jubair's narration, it was about six miles away from Ṣan'ā', the famous capital city of Yemen. Other scholars think that it was in Ethiopia [formerly known as Abyssinia] [Ibn Kathīr]. They were from amongst the People of the Book. This incident took place a while after the Ascension of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام. [Qurṭubī].

They are referred to as the 'Owners of the Garden' in the above verse. The description of the story given in the verses indicates that they did not only have a garden, but they also had large tracts of land which they cultivated and had fields of crops. Possibly, side by side with the orchard there were tracts of cultivated land and fields of crops in between the trees. However, they were called the owners of the garden on account of the popularity of the garden. The incident is reported according to the narration of Muḥammad Ibn Marwān on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn

'Abbās ﷺ as follows: There was a garden about two *farsakhs* (six miles) away from Ṣan'ā' of Yemen. Its name was *Ḍarawān.* This garden was set up by a pious and righteous person. His practice was to pick the fruits or harvest the crops with sickle. He would give some of the crop to the poor and indigent who gathered grains for themselves and did their living.

Likewise, when the crop was thrashed, and the grain separated from the chaff, he would leave the grain for the poor. So also when fruits were picked from the trees of the orchard, some fruits would fall down, and he would leave them for the indigent. For this reason, the poor always gathered at the orchard at the time of picking the fruit, and separating the grain from the chaff. When the righteous person passed away, he had three sons who inherited the orchard and crop-fields. They held a family meeting and discussed that their family has grown large, and the produce of the orchard and land is not sufficient for them. Therefore, it is no longer possible for them to spare any fruit or grain for the poor. According to other narratives, these boys, like other youngsters, felt that their father was a fool to give so much of fruits and grains to them. They thought it was necessary to put a stop to this. The rest of the story is told in the following verses of the Qur'ān.

إِذْ أَقْسَمُوا لَيَصْرِمُنَّهَا مُصْبِحِينَ. وَلَا يَسْتَثْنُونَ (...when they had sworn an oath that they would pluck its fruits on the next morning, and did not make any exception (by saying '*inshā'allah*').... 68:17-18). In other words, they swore that they would harvest very early in the morning and return with it before the throng of poor people could arrive at the garden. They had so much of confidence in their plan that they did not say the redeeming words 'If Allah wills' whereas it is *sunnah* to say '*inshā'allah*' when one mentions that one will do a particular work tomorrow.

وَلَا يَسْتَثْنُونَ (and did not make any exception (by saying '*inshā'allah*'). [68:18]'. The word *isthisnā'* in the original Arabic means 'to make an exception by saying "*inshā'allah*"'. However, some scholars interpret this word, in this context, to mean that 'they would devour the entire harvest themselves, with no exception for the poor. [Maẓharī].

فَطَافَ عَلَيْهَا طَائِفٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّكَ (Then, there whirled around it a whirl (of calamity) from your Lord, while they were asleep.....68:19). The word 'whirl' refers to 'a whirl of calamity' as a result of which Divine

punishment overtook the garden in a sudden and swift sweep. Some narratives report that it was a fire which burnt every standing crop, and reduced it to black ashes.

وَهُمْ نَآئِمُوْنَ (...while they were asleep.... 68:19). In other words, the devastating disaster overtook the entire garden while its owners were asleep.

فَاَصْبَحَتْ كَالصَّرِيْمِ (Thus, on the next morning, it was like a harvested field.....68:20). The word *ṣarm* means 'to harvest or to collect a crop from the fields'. The word *ṣarīm* in the context of the verse is used in the sense of *masrūm* or *maqṭū'*, meaning 'harvested or cut'. This signifies that the fire burnt the field and stripped it bare. The word *ṣarīm* also means 'night'. From this point of view, the verse signifies 'the field became burnt up and black like night'. [Maẓharī].

فَتَنَادَوْا مُصْبِحِيْنَ (So, they called out each other as the morning broke 68:21). This means that they starting waking up each other in the early morning that they should set out early if they wanted to harvest.

وَهُمْ يَتَخَافَتُوْنَ (...while they were whispering to each other ... 68:23). They were speaking in a low voice, lest a poor man should hear their talk and accompany them.

وَغَدَوْا عَلٰى حَرْدٍ قٰدِرِيْنَ And in early hours of the day they rushed quickly, while they were (assuming themselves) powerful (to pluck the fruits and prevent the poor.) [68:25]'. The word *ḥard* means 'to prevent' and 'to express anger'.[5] In other words, they thought they had the power to pick the fruit for themselves and prevent the poor people from having a share in it, and even if they do come to the garden, the owners of the garden decided to chase them out.

فَلَمَّا رَاَوْهَا قَالُوْا اِنَّا لَضَآلُّوْنَ (But when they saw it [the place of the ruined garden], they said, "We have missed the way."....68:26). In other words, when they did not find their garden on that spot, they first thought that they must have lost their way and gone to the wrong place. But when they saw the surroundings, they realized that it was the right place they have gone to, but the garden had been burnt up and destroyed. So, they

(5). This word also means 'to rush quickly'. This meaning of the word has been adopted in the translation of the text. (Muhammad Taqi Usmani)

exclaimed: بَلْ نَحْنُ مَحْرُوْمُوْنَ "No, but we are deprived [of the fruits]....68:27)

قَالَ اَوْسَطُهُمْ اَلَمْ اَقُلْ لَّكُمْ لَوْلَا تُسَبِّحُوْنَ (Said he who was the best among them, "Did I not say to you, 'Why do you not pronounce *tasbīḥ* (Allah's purity)?"....68:28). The middle brother was the best of them. He was righteous like his father. It used to please him to spend in the cause of Allah. He was not niggardly or stingy like the other brothers. He had advised them to recite *tasbīḥ* which, literally, means to pronounce Allah's purity. He told them that they were withholding the share of the poor with the fear that their fruit will be depleted and will not be replenished by Allah, if they gave the poor their share. He told them that Allah is pure from such pettiness. Instead, those who spend in the way of Allah, He will not only make their wealth full again or replace what they have spent, but also will give them over and above what they have spent. [Maẓharī].

قَالُوْا سُبْحٰنَ رَبِّنَآ اِنَّا كُنَّا ظٰلِمِيْنَ (They said, "We pronounce the purity of our Lord. No doubt, we were wrongdoers."..... 68:29). Neither of the brothers had paid heed to this brother's advice at that point. But when the damage was done, they admitted that Allah is Pure, Free from any qualities of weaknesses and shortcomings, and that they were the wrongdoers, in that they were unjust to the poor intending to deprive them of their share and devour it themselves.

Warning

Although the best of the three brothers offered the right advice, he joined the other brothers in following their wrong opinion. So he suffered the same loss. This indicates that anyone who prevents other people from committing sins but does not abstain from them himself and joins them in doing the wrong acts, he will suffer the same fate as the others.

فَاَقْبَلَ بَعْضُهُمْ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ يَّتَلَاوَمُوْنَ (Then, (at the beginning,) they started reproaching one another;...... 68:30). That is to say, at the beginning they made admission of guilt, but then they turned to face each other in mutual accusation, blaming each other for the punishment that visited them, whereas the crime was not committed by only a single person from among them, but it was committed jointly by all or most of them.

A note of caution

A common misdeed, in our days, is that when a calamity befalls a

group of people due to their collective conduct, an additional scourge that befalls them is that, (instead of reforming themselves,) they start wasting their time in accusing each other.

قَالُوْا يٰوَيْلَنَآ اِنَّا كُنَّا طٰغِيْنَ ([and at last,] they said, "Woe to us! In fact, we [all] were outrageous....68:31). At the beginning, they accused one another of the sin. Then when they considered the matter carefully, they admitted that they were all on the wrong. As a result, they lamented and admitted their guilt that amounted to repentance. On the basis of this repentance they hoped that Allah will give them in exchange a garden better than the one destroyed.

Imām Baghawī reports from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ that, according to his information, when these brothers repented truly, Allah blessed them with a better vineyard that bore such large bunches of grapes that a single bunch could be loaded on a mule. [Maẓharī].

كَذٰلِكَ الْعَذَابُ (In this way the punishment comes. And, of course, the punishment of the Hereafter is even greater, if they but realize!....68:33). After a brief reference to the famine faced by the Makkans and a detailed account of the People of the Garden whose garden was burnt as a punishment, the present verse sets down a general rule. When a Divine punishment visits, it visits in this way, and this kind of punishment in the mortal world does not serve as an expiation for the punishment in the Hereafter. The punishment of the Hereafter is greater and more severe.

The following verses give a description of the reward of the righteous, followed by refutation of another false claim of the pagans of Makkah. They denied that Resurrection will ever occur. They thought the story of Resurrection and accountability is fiction. Even if that does happen, they thought, they will get the same type of blessings and wealth as they have in this world. Several verses respond to their false belief. In verse [35] Allah poses the rhetorical question to the disbelievers: 'Shall We make the obedient like the sinners? [35] This is a strange sort of assertion for which they have no authority, nor proof nor any celestial book. Nor is there any promise from Allah that they will get the same type of blessings.

A Rational Proof of Resurrection

These verses give a solid proof to the necessity of the Day of Judgement, because accountability, rewarding the righteous and

punishing the evil are all rationally necessary. It is witnessed by every person in this mortal world, and no one can deny, that the wicked, the evil, the unjust, the thieves and the bandits generally lead a comfortable and enjoyable life in the mortal world. A thief or a bandit sometimes in one night gains so much of wealth that a righteous person might not gain as much in his entire life. The former has no fear of Allah or the Hereafter, nor does he have any sense of shame. He fulfills his selfish desires as he likes - by hook or by crook. The latter fears Allah, and if he does not have that, his sense of shame among his brotherhood overwhelms him. In short, in the mortal world the wicked and the evil ones seem to be successful, and the good people seem to be unsuccessful. If there does not arise an occasion where fair play and justice is established - where the good people would be rewarded and the evil ones would be punished? It would be meaningless to refer to evil as evil. There would be no reason to stop a person from fulfilling his selfish desires and doing the evil acts. On the other hand, justice will have no meaning or significance. How will the believers in God's existence respond to the following question: Where is God's justice?

One may argue that a criminal is apprehended, he is exposed to disgrace and is punished. This distinguishes the innocent persons from the evil ones right here in this world. Laws and statutes of a governments establish standards of justice and fair play. But this is incorrect, because it is not possible for a government to keep an eye on every one, everywhere and in all circumstances. Wherever it does happen, it is not an easy task to gather the necessary judicial evidence, so that the guilty person may be convicted and punished. And even if the judicial evidence could be gathered, there are several escape doors through which the guilty person could get away, such as force, bribery, intercession and pressure. If we review the punishment history of the present-day governments and courts, it would appear that nowadays only those people are punished who are fools, brainless and helpless or without support. They are not cunning enough to find a loophole in the legal system, or an escape route, nor do they have enough money to pay for bribery, nor do they have an influential person to back them or intercede on their behalf or they cannot use these things because of their foolishness. The rest of the criminals are moving freely.

This verse: أَفَنَجْعَلُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ كَالْمُجْرِمِينَ (Otherwise, shall We make the obedient like the sinners?... 68:35). Clarifies that it is rationally necessary that there should come a time when people will have to give account of their deeds, a place where the guilty ones will find no escape routes, an ideal world where there will be absolute justice and fair play, where good and evil will be clearly distinguished. If this is not the state of affairs in the Hereafter, then no evil should be evil, and no sin should be sin in this mortal world. Divine justice would thus be rendered meaningless.

Since it is established that Resurrection is a reality and inevitable, the reward of good deeds is a reality and the punishment of evil deeds is a reality, the verses that follow describe the horrors of the Day of Judgement and the punishment of the evil ones, including the description of the exposure of the Shin [*kashf-us-sāq*] in Verse 42 (the explanation of which may be seen in the foot-note given in the translation of that verse.)

فَذَرْنِيْ وَمَنْ يُّكَذِّبُ بِهٰذَا الْحَدِيْثِ (So, leave Me alone with those who reject this discourse. We will draw them on little by little (towards Hell) from a way they do not know.... 68:44). Here the phrase 'So, leave me alone' in the original Arabic is an idiomatic expression which signifies 'Rely on Allah'. The disbelievers often demanded Divine punishment arguing that if they are really guilty in the sight of Allah, and if He has the power to punish, then why the punishment does not befall them forthwith. These were heart-rending demands on account of which the thought probably must have crossed the mind of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and he might have prayed to Allah to punish them sometime, in the hope that the rest of the people might draw lessons and amend their conduct. On that occasion, Allah revealed [in verse, 45] that He is the best aware of the wisdom behind His decisions. He does not punish them immediately, but He gives them respite to test them and to give them an opportunity to believe.

Towards the end, the story of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام is concisely told that when his people constantly demanded punishment, he became indignant and prayed for the punishment to be sent down. The signs of the punishment started appearing. Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام left the place and transferred himself elsewhere. In the meantime the entire nation wept, wailed, sincerely repented and begged refuge from the Divine punishment. Allah pardoned them and took away the punishment. Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام felt embarrassed and thought that if he goes back

to his people, they might think he was a liar. As a result, without the clear permission of Allah, he acted purely on his *ijtihād* [independent judgement] that he would not go back to his people. At this, Allah, in order to caution him, created a situation where he had to undertake sea voyage, and then was lowered into the sea where he was swallowed up by a fish. Being thus cautioned, Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام sought the Divine pardon. Consequently, Allah once again opened the doors of the former blessings to be restored to him. Full description of the event has been given in Sūrah Yūnus (Verse 10:98) and other Sūrahs. The Holy Prophet ﷺ is comforted by this story not to be impressed by people's demands nor to be anxious to get them punished hastily. Allah's wisdom is profound and unfathomable. Allah alone knows what is in the best interests of the world. Allah should be trusted and relied on.

وَلَا تَكُنْ كَصَاحِبِ الْحُوتِ (So, remain patient with your Lord's judgment, and be not like the Man of the Fish...68:48). It refers to Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام He is named here as 'Man of Fish' because he was devoured by a fish and remained in its belly for some time.

وَإِنْ يَكَادُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَيُزْلِقُونَكَ بِأَبْصَارِهِمْ (And indeed the disbelievers seem to trip you up with their glances when they hear the Reminder, and say, "He is a madman indeed.....68:51). The verb '*layuzliqūnaka*' is derived from *izlāq* which means 'to trip up or to cause someone to fall or make a mistake' [*Rāghib*]. The verse says to the Holy Prophet ﷺ that disbelievers cast angry looks at him that they might frighten him into giving up his mission or intimidate him into yielding to their pressure tactics. When they listen to Divine words, they call him a madman. But far from it, his teaching contains the quintessence of wisdom - the Qur'ān puts it thus:

وَمَا هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ لِّلْعٰلَمِينَ (And it is nothing else but a Reminder for all the worlds.... 68:52). Divine words are a Reminder and an admonition for the entire universe. The Reminder will lift the people from the lowest depths of degradation to the highest summits of greatness and glory. It would also cleanse them and free them from moral blemishes and raise their spiritual stature. Is it possible for an insane person to receive and deliver such a Sublime Divine Message? Can a Prophet of such a high caliber be called a madman? The earlier verses of this Sūrah rebutted the charge of insanity against the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Towards the end of the Sūrah, the same charge of lunacy is rebutted again in a different style.

Imām Baghawī رحمه الله تعالى and some other commentators have reported another event as background of this verse. The evil eye is a reality which causes loss, illness and destruction. Authentic Traditions report that it is a reality. The Arabs also believed that an evil eye is a reality. There was a person famous in Arabia to cast an evil eye on camels or animals to cause instant death or destruction. The pagans of Arabia were enemies of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and in every possible way they were after persecuting him and killing him. They left no stone unturned in harming him. They even contemplated afflicting him with an evil eye. They therefore decided to secure the services of the particular person who could effectively cast an evil eye. He was instructed to cast the evil eye on the Messenger of Allah ﷺ so that he would become ill. He exerted himself to the utmost, but to no avail. Allah protected him and he was unaffected. The verses were revealed in connection with this incident.

Special Note

Sayyidnā Ḥasan Baṣrī reports that if anyone is affected by the evil eye, these verses (51 & 52) may be recited and blown on the person: the ill effect will be dispelled.

Alhamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Qalam
Ends here

Sūrah Al-Ḥāqqah

This Sūrah is Makkī. It contains 52 verses and 2 sections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 52

اَلْحَاۤقَّةُ ﴿١﴾ مَا الْحَاۤقَّةُ ﴿٢﴾ وَمَاۤ اَدْرٰىكَ مَا الْحَاۤقَّةُ ﴿٣﴾ كَذَّبَتْ
ثَمُوْدُ وَعَادٌۢ بِالْقَارِعَةِ ﴿٤﴾ فَاَمَّا ثَمُوْدُ فَاُهْلِكُوْا بِالطَّاغِيَةِ ﴿٥﴾ وَاَمَّا
عَادٌ فَاُهْلِكُوْا بِرِيْحٍ صَرْصَرٍ عَاتِيَةٍ ﴿٦﴾ سَخَّرَهَا عَلَيْهِمْ سَبْعَ لَيَالٍ
وَّثَمٰنِيَةَ اَيَّامٍ حُسُوْمًا فَتَرَى الْقَوْمَ فِيْهَا صَرْعٰى كَاَنَّهُمْ اَعْجَازُ
نَخْلٍ خَاوِيَةٍ ﴿٧﴾ فَهَلْ تَرٰى لَهُمْ مِّنْۢ بَاقِيَةٍ ﴿٨﴾ وَجَآءَ فِرْعَوْنُ وَمَنْ
قَبْلَهٗ وَالْمُؤْتَفِكٰتُ بِالْخَاطِئَةِ ﴿٩﴾ فَعَصَوْا رَسُوْلَ رَبِّهِمْ فَاَخَذَهُمْ
اَخْذَةً رَّابِيَةً ﴿١٠﴾ اِنَّا لَمَّا طَغَا الْمَآءُ حَمَلْنٰكُمْ فِى الْجَارِيَةِ ﴿١١﴾
لِنَجْعَلَهَا لَكُمْ تَذْكِرَةً وَّتَعِيَهَاۤ اُذُنٌ وَّاعِيَةٌ ﴿١٢﴾ فَاِذَا نُفِخَ فِى الصُّوْرِ
نَفْخَةٌ وَّاحِدَةٌ ﴿١٣﴾ وَّحُمِلَتِ الْاَرْضُ وَالْجِبَالُ فَدُكَّتَا دَكَّةً وَّاحِدَةً
﴿١٤﴾ فَيَوْمَئِذٍ وَّقَعَتِ الْوَاقِعَةُ ﴿١٥﴾ وَانْشَقَّتِ السَّمَآءُ فَهِىَ يَوْمَئِذٍ
وَّاهِيَةٌ ﴿١٦﴾ وَّالْمَلَكُ عَلٰۤى اَرْجَآئِهَا وَيَحْمِلُ عَرْشَ رَبِّكَ فَوْقَهُمْ
يَوْمَئِذٍ ثَمٰنِيَةٌ ﴿١٧﴾ يَوْمَئِذٍ تُعْرَضُوْنَ لَا تَخْفٰى مِنْكُمْ خَافِيَةٌ ﴿١٨﴾
فَاَمَّا مَنْ اُوْتِىَ كِتٰبَهٗ بِيَمِيْنِهٖ فَيَقُوْلُ هَآؤُمُ اقْرَءُوْا كِتٰبِيَهْ ﴿١٩﴾ اِنِّىْ

ظَنَنْتُ اَنِّىْ مُلٰقٍ حِسَابِيَهْ ﴿٢٠﴾ فَهُوَ فِىْ عِيْشَةٍ رَّاضِيَةٍ ﴿٢١﴾ فِىْ جَنَّةٍ
عَالِيَةٍ ﴿٢٢﴾ قُطُوْفُهَا دَانِيَةٌ ﴿٢٣﴾ كُلُوْا وَاشْرَبُوْا هَنِيْٓـًٔا بِمَآ اَسْلَفْتُمْ
فِى الْاَيَّامِ الْخَالِيَةِ ﴿٢٤﴾ وَاَمَّا مَنْ اُوْتِىَ كِتٰبَهٗ بِشِمَالِهٖ ۙ فَيَقُوْلُ
يٰلَيْتَنِىْ لَمْ اُوْتَ كِتٰبِيَهْ ﴿٢٥﴾ وَلَمْ اَدْرِ مَا حِسَابِيَهْ ﴿٢٦﴾ يٰلَيْتَهَا كَانَتِ
الْقَاضِيَةَ ﴿٢٧﴾ مَآ اَغْنٰى عَنِّىْ مَالِيَهْ ﴿٢٨﴾ هَلَكَ عَنِّىْ سُلْطٰنِيَهْ ﴿٢٩﴾
خُذُوْهُ فَغُلُّوْهُ ﴿٣٠﴾ ثُمَّ الْجَحِيْمَ صَلُّوْهُ ﴿٣١﴾ ثُمَّ فِىْ سِلْسِلَةٍ ذَرْعُهَا
سَبْعُوْنَ ذِرَاعًا فَاسْلُكُوْهُ ﴿٣٢﴾ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ لَا يُؤْمِنُ بِاللّٰهِ الْعَظِيْمِ ﴿٣٣﴾
وَلَا يَحُضُّ عَلٰى طَعَامِ الْمِسْكِيْنِ ﴿٣٤﴾ فَلَيْسَ لَهُ الْيَوْمَ هٰهُنَا حَمِيْمٌ
﴿٣٥﴾ وَّلَا طَعَامٌ اِلَّا مِنْ غِسْلِيْنٍ ﴿٣٦﴾ لَّا يَاْكُلُهٗٓ اِلَّا الْخٰطِئُوْنَ ﴿٣٧﴾
فَلَآ اُقْسِمُ بِمَا تُبْصِرُوْنَ ﴿٣٨﴾ وَمَا لَا تُبْصِرُوْنَ ﴿٣٩﴾ اِنَّهٗ لَقَوْلُ
رَسُوْلٍ كَرِيْمٍ ﴿٤٠﴾ وَّمَا هُوَ بِقَوْلِ شَاعِرٍ ۗ قَلِيْلًا مَّا تُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٤١﴾ وَ
لَا بِقَوْلِ كَاهِنٍ ۗ قَلِيْلًا مَّا تَذَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿٤٢﴾ تَنْزِيْلٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ
﴿٤٣﴾ وَلَوْ تَقَوَّلَ عَلَيْنَا بَعْضَ الْاَقَاوِيْلِ ﴿٤٤﴾ لَاَخَذْنَا مِنْهُ بِالْيَمِيْنِ
﴿٤٥﴾ ثُمَّ لَقَطَعْنَا مِنْهُ الْوَتِيْنَ ﴿٤٦﴾ فَمَا مِنْكُمْ مِّنْ اَحَدٍ عَنْهُ حٰجِزِيْنَ
﴿٤٧﴾ وَاِنَّهٗ لَتَذْكِرَةٌ لِّلْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿٤٨﴾ وَاِنَّا لَنَعْلَمُ اَنَّ مِنْكُمْ مُّكَذِّبِيْنَ
﴿٤٩﴾ وَاِنَّهٗ لَحَسْرَةٌ عَلَى الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿٥٠﴾ وَاِنَّهٗ لَحَقُّ الْيَقِيْنِ ﴿٥١﴾
فَسَبِّحْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الْعَظِيْمِ ﴿٥٢﴾

The Imminent Happening! [1] **What is the Imminent Happening?** [2] **And what can let you know what the Imminent happening is?** [3] **Thamūd and 'Ād had denied (the happening of) the Shocking Event (the Day of Judgment).** [4] **As for Thamūd, they were destroyed by that (dreadful cry) which exceeded all limits.** [5] **And as for 'Ād, they were destroyed by a violent windstorm** [6] **that He imposed on them for seven nights and eight consecutive days, so you could see them thrown on the**

ground, as if they were trunks of hollow palm-trees. [7] **So, do you see any remnant of them?** [8] **And Fir'aun (the Pharaoh) and those before him and the overthrown towns came up with evil.** [9] **And they disobeyed the messenger of their Lord, so He seized them with an extremely severe seizure.** [10] **When the water overflowed (in the Deluge of Nūḥ ﷺ), We let you (O mankind,) board the floating ship,** [11] **so that We make it for you a reminder, and so that a preserving ear may preserve it.** [12] **Then, when the Trumpet will be blown for the first time,** [13] **and the earth and the mountains will be lifted and crushed into pieces with a single blow,** [14] **then on that Day the Happening will happen,** [15] **and the sky will burst apart, while it will have become frail on that day.** [16] **And the angels will be on its borders. And on that Day, the Throne of your Lord will be carried above them by eight (angels).** [17] **On that day, you will be brought forward in a way that no secret of yours will remain secret.** [18] **Now, as for him who is given his book in his right hand, he will say (to his colleagues), "Come here, read my book.** [19] **I was sure that I would encounter my reckoning."** [20] **So he will be in a well-pleasing life** [21] **in a lofty garden,** [22] **the fruits of which will be close at hand.** [23] **(It will be said to such people,) "Eat and drink with pleasure, as a reward for what you did in advance during past days."** [24] **As for him who will be given his book in his left hand, he will say, " Oh, would that I had not been given my book,** [25] **and I had never known what my account is!** [26] **Oh, would that it (death) had been the end of the matter!** [27] **My wealth has not been of any use to me.** [28] **My power has gone from me for good."** [29] **(Then it will be said to angels,) "Seize him, then put a collar around his neck,** [30] **then, in the blazing fire let him burn.** [31] **Thereafter, fasten him with a chain the measure of which is seventy hands."** [32] **Indeed, he did not believe in Almighty Allah,** [33] **and did not persuade (others) to feed the needy.** [34] **So, he has no friend here today,** [35] **nor any food except from that which flows from wounds when washing,** [36] **which is eaten by none but the sinners.** [37]

I swear by what you see, [38] **and what you do not see,** [39] **it is surely the speech of a noble Messenger, (that he conveys from Allah).** [40] **and it is not the speech of a poet, (but) little you believe,** [41] **nor is it the speech of a soothsayer, (but) little you heed to the advice.** [42] **It is**

a revelation from the Lord of the worlds. [43] **And had he forged some statements in Our name,** [44] **We would have certainly seized him by the right hand,** [45] **and then severed his life-artery,** [46] **so no one from you would have been an impediment against it.** [47] **And it is a Reminder for the God-fearing.** [48] **And, of course, We know that among you there are deniers.** [49] **And surely, it is an anguish for the disbelievers.** [50] **And it is surely an absolute truth.** [51] **So, pronounce the purity of the name of your magnificent Lord.** [52]

Commentary

This Sūrah is almost wholly devoted to the subject of inevitability of the Resurrection, its horrors, the punishment of unbelievers and the reward of believers. The Day of Judgement is variously referred to in the Qur'ān, and in this Sūrah we encounter the following three names: اَلْحَاقَّة Al-Ḥāqqah 'Imminent Happening', اَلْقَارِعَة *Al-Qāri'ah* 'Shocking Event' and اَلْوَاقِعَة *Al-Wāqi'ah* 'Happening'.

The word اَلْحَاقَّة *Al-ḥāqqah* means an 'established fact, or inevitable event, reality or truth'. The word *Al-ḥāqqah* also means 'Something that provide evidence that something is true.' It can be applied to the Day of Judgement in both senses of the word, because in the first sense the Day of Judgement itself is an established truth, and its occurrence is a certainty. And in the other sense the Day of Judgement will prove to the believers the reality of Paradise and to the unbelievers the reality of Hell. This name of the Day of Judgement is followed by two questions regarding it. The questions have been put to make the readers realise how horrifying the experience would be - beyond normal experience or even imagination.

The word اَلْقَارِعَة *Al-Qāri'ah,* literally, means 'rumbling'. The Day of Judgement is so called because there will be rumbling sound which will cause agitation or terror in the hearts of people, and will dreadfully destroy the heavenly and earthly bodies and scatter them apart.

The word اَلطَّاغِيَة *Aṭ-Ṭāghiyah* is derived from *ṭughyān* which means 'to exceed the limit', signifying an extremely severe punishment, that is, 'it would be such high pitched sound which would exceed the limit of any of the sounds of the mortal world, and the human heart or brain would not be able to bear'. When Thamūd exceeded the limit in denying the Day of

Judgement, they were destroyed by that dreadful cry which exceeded all limits. It was a combination of most high pitched sound of thunderbolt together with a flash of lightning that struck them which rent their hearts.

The phrase رِيحٍ صَرْصَرٍ (*rīḥin ṣarṣarin*) (in verse 6) refers to a violent windstorm which is also severely cold.

سَبْعَ لَيَالٍ وَّثَمٰنِيَةَ اَيَّامٍ (seven nights and eight consecutive days'... 69:7). According to some of the narratives, the punishment of windstorm started on Wednesday morning, and lasted till the following Wednesday evening. In this way, it makes up eight days and seven nights.

The word *ḥusūman* (in verse 7) is the plural of *ḥāsim* and means 'cutting them off entirely' or 'causing them to perish completely'.

The word مُؤْتَفِكٰتِ *mu'tafikāt* (in verse 9) means 'adjacent to one another'. The towns of Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام, Sodom and Gomorrah, are so called because they were adjacent to each other or because when the punishment overtook the disbelievers and criminals overthrowing their towns], they were all jumbled up. [1]

فَاِذَا نُفِخَ فِى الصُّوْرِ نَفْخَةٌ وَّاحِدَةٌ (Then, when the Trumpet will be blown for the first time...69:13). Tirmidhī records a Ḥadīth on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar رضي الله عنه that *ṣūr* 'trumpet' is a horn- like object which will be blown on Doomsday.

نَفْخَةٌ وَّاحِدَةٌ ('for the first time...69:13). It means that it will be a sudden and a single continuing sound that will last until all die. The texts of Qur'ān and Sunnah show that the trumpet will be blown twice on the Day of Judgement. The first trumpet is called *nafkhat-uṣ-ṣa'aq* 'the trumpet of swoon', in connection with which the Qur'ān says:

فَصَعِقَ مَنْ فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَنْ فِى الْاَرْضِ

> And all those in the heavens and all those in the earth will faint... [39:68]

With this trumpet all angels residing in the heavens and all Jinns and human beings and animals residing on earth will become unconscious

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(1) Another possible meaning of *mu'tafikāt* is 'overthrown' as mentioned by several exegetes. The translation in the text is based on this meaning.

Muhammad Taqi Usmani

and fall to the ground. Whilst they are in the state of unconsciousness, they will die. The second trumpet is called *nafkhat-ul-ba'th* 'trumpet of Resurrection'. The word *ba'th* means 'to rise'. With this trumpet all the dead will rise from death and stand up. The Qur'ān describes this situation thus:

ثُمَّ نُفِخَ فِيهِ أُخْرٰى فَإِذَا هُمْ قِيَامٌ يَّنْظُرُوْنَ

> Thereafter, it will be blown once again, and suddenly they will stand up, looking around. [39:68]

In other words, then the trumpet will be blown a second time and at once they will be standing upright looking on.

According to some narratives, a third 'trumpet' will also be blown before the two trumpets, which is referred to as *nafkhat-ul-faza'* ('the trumpet of fright or panic). By a careful analysis of all the narratives and texts, it appears that the first trumpet in its initial stage is *nafkhat-ul-faza'* and in its final stage it will become *ṣa'aq* 'the trumpet of swoon or death'. [Maẓharī]

وَيَحْمِلُ عَرْشَ رَبِّكَ فَوْقَهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ ثَمٰنِيَةٌ (...And on that Day, the Throne of your Lord will be carried above them by eight [angels]....69:17). In other words, on the day of Judgement, eight angels will bear the Throne of the Raḥmān above their heads. According to some of the Prophetic narratives, before the Judgement Day this task will be carried out by four angels. On the Judgement Day, four more angels will be added to carry out the task.

As to what is the Throne of the Raḥmān, what is its reality, its form and shape, how the angels carry it - are transcendental matters and are all beyond human intellect. Allah is beyond time, space and matter, and therefore we are not permitted to pursue these matters pertaining to Him to determine its exact meaning. The noble Companions, their pupils and the righteous elders took the attitude that they simply believed in all transcendental matters and never questioned about them. Whatever Allah means by them is the Truth. Their nature and reality are unknown.

يَوْمَئِذٍ تُعْرَضُوْنَ لَاتَخْفٰى مِنْكُمْ خَافِيَةٌ (On that day, you will be brought forward in a way that no secret of yours will remain secret...69:18). In other words, on the Day of Judgement people will be exposed - no concealed act they did will stay concealed. Nothing is concealed from Divine knowledge and

sight even today. The Plain of Gathering has been particularly mentioned in this connection probably because the entire ground will be levelled out as a plain surface. There will be no caves nor mountains, no buildings nor houses nor barriers of any trees. These are the things behind which people normally hide in the mortal world. On the Day of Judgement, none of these things will be available and there will be no possibility of hiding.

هَآؤُمُ اقْرَءُوْا كِتٰبِيَهْ (Come here, read my book... 69:19). The word *hā'umu,* literally means, "come" but, idiomatically, it is used in the sense of the plural imperative verb *khudhū* "take"'. In other words, one who is given his record book in his right hand, he will be elated and, looking at the people around him, will say 'Here, take my account book and read it!'

هَلَكَ عَنِّيْ سُلْطٰنِيَهْ (My power has gone from me for good...69:29). The word *sulṭān*, literally, yields the sense of 'power or overpowering'. Therefore, a government or state is referred to as *salṭanah* and a ruler is referred to as *sulṭān*. In other words, when people gain power and political ascendancy in the world, they become proud, hold sway over other people, perpetrate injustices and commit atrocities. But in the Hereafter all that will vanish and be lost, and the unjust and proud rulers will have no army to obey or support them. They will be miserable and helpless creatures who will not be able to defend themselves.

The word *sulṭān* also stands for 'authority, proof or argument' in which case it would mean : 'Today I have no argument in favour of protecting myself against punishment'.

خُذُوْهُ فَغُلُّوْهُ (Seize him, then put a collar around his neck... 69:30). This instruction will be given to the angels to seize the guilty one and truss him up by putting a collar around his neck - though, however, the wordings of the verse do not mention who will seize and who will truss him up. Narratives indicate that when this order will be issued, everything, like submissive and obedient servants, will rush to apprehend him.

ثُمَّ فِيْ سِلْسِلَةٍ ذَرْعُهَا سَبْعُوْنَ ذِرَاعًا فَاسْلُكُوْهُ (Thereafter, make him enter into a chain, the measure of which is seventy hands....69:32). The phrase 'make him enter into a chain' could be interpreted metaphorically as 'bind him in a chain' but it could be taken in its primary sense, that is, to pierce the chain through one side of the body, so that it could come out from the

other side of it like a string is passed through a pearl or the bead of a rosary. Traditional narratives seem to support the primary sense. [Maẓharī]

فَلَيْسَ لَهُ الْيَوْمَ هٰهُنَا حَمِيْمٌ ۙ وَّلَاطَعَامٌ اِلَّا مِنْ غِسْلِيْنٍ (So, he has no friend here today, nor any food except from that which flows from wounds when washing...69:35-36]. The word *ḥamīm* means 'a sincere or bosom friend'. The word *ghislīn* with *'gh'* bearing the *kasrah* [= i] refers to the water with which the pus and blood of the wounds of the inmates of Hell will be washed. The verses signify that on the Day of Resurrection he will have no friend that will support him or save him from punishment, nor will he have anything to eat except the filthy water with which pus exuding from the wound of the inmates of Hell might have been washed. The words 'nor any food' mean that they will not have any delectable food to eat. This statement does not negate things like *ghislīn* which are distasteful and reprehensible. Therefore, it does not contradict another verse which states that the inmates of Hell will eat *zaqqūm*.

فَلَآ اُقْسِمُ بِمَا تُبْصِرُوْنَ. وَمَا لَا تُبْصِرُوْنَ (I swear by what you see, and what you do not see....69:38-39). This comprehends the entire body of creation. Some say 'what you do not see' refers to the Being of Allah Ta'ālā and His attributes. Others say 'what you see' refers to things of the mortal world, and 'what you do not see,' refers to things of the Hereafter. [Maẓharī] And Allah, the Pure and Exalted, Knows best!

وَلَوْ تَقَوَّلَ عَلَيْنَا بَعْضَ الْاَقَاوِيْلِ ﴿٤٤﴾ لَاَخَذْنَا مِنْهُ بِالْيَمِيْنِ ﴿٤٥﴾ ثُمَّ لَقَطَعْنَا مِنْهُ الْوَتِيْنَ ﴿٤٦﴾

And had he forged some statements in Our name, We would have certainly seized him by the right hand, and then severed his life-artery,... (69:44-46)

The word *taqawwul* means 'to forge, fabricate or concoct' and the word *watīn* refers to 'aorta or life-artery'. This is the main artery that carries blood from the heart to other parts of the body. Once this artery is cut off, death occurs instantly.

The foregoing verses refute the outrageous thoughts of the disbelievers. They used to accuse the Prophet ﷺ of being a poet and a soothsayer. They said that the Qur'ān was the word of a poet or the word of a soothsayer. The Qur'ān denounces their argument - it is not the word

of a poet nor the word of a soothsayer; it is a revelation from Allah to His Messenger. In other words, in verses [37-38] it was claimed that all visible and invisible things prove that the Prophet ﷺ is Allah's true Messenger and that the Qur'ān is Allah's revealed Word and not the imaginary flight of a poet's mind or the wild conjectures of a diviner. In this and the preceding three verses another invincible argument is given in support of his claim. The argument is to the effect that if the Prophet ﷺ had been a forger of lies against Allah, Allah's strong hand would have seized him by the throat and cut off his life-artery and he would have certainly met with a violent death. The invincible argument is put forward in a strong language - assuming the impossible - to make the ignorant realise the worst-case scenario. The expression 'right hand' is used probably because when a convicted criminal is to be executed, the executioner stands in front facing the condemned person. The executioner's left hand faces the guilty person's right hand. The executioner holds the condemned person with his left hand and attacks him with his right hand.

A Cautionary Note

This verse refers to a theoretical situation relating to the Apostle of Allah ﷺ in particular that lest, God forbid, if he were to concoct a word and impute it to Allah, this is the way he would have been dealt with. A hypothetical situation is a possible situation, not an actual situation. Thus this does not necessarily set down a universal principle that any and every impostor, who lays claim to prophethood, would be destroyed as a matter of general rule. History records that many impostors laid claim to prophethood, but no such destructive punishment was ever imposed on them.

فَسَبِّحْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الْعَظِيْمِ 'So, pronounce the purity of the name of your magnificent Lord. [69:52]'. It was shown in the preceding verses that Allah's Messenger never speak from his own whims and fancies. He only conveys pure revelation revealed to him by Allah. The Divine Word is a reminder and an admonition for the God-conscious people. Allah knows that despite knowing the absolutely incontestable truth many people will continue to reject it. Consequently, it will be a source of eternal remorse, disappointment and punishment in the Hereafter for the disbelievers. In the end, Allah says:

وَإِنَّهُ لَحَقُّ الْيَقِيْنِ 'And it is surely an absolute truth. [69:51]'. In other words,

the Qur'ān is undeniably the Truth of Certainty. There is no room for any doubt or suspicion in it.

Finally, Allah addresses the Prophet ﷺ to say:

فَسَبِّحْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الْعَظِيمِ 'So, pronounce the purity of the name of your magnificent Lord.' [69:52]. This signifies that the Prophet ﷺ should not pay any heed to the criticisms of the obdurate disbelievers nor should he feel distressed. He should rather pronounce the purity of Allah's name. This will relieve his distress and grief. On another occasion, the Qur'ān says:

وَلَقَدْ نَعْلَمُ أَنَّكَ يَضِيقُ صَدْرُكَ بِمَا يَقُولُونَ فَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ وَكُنْ مِّنَ السّٰجِدِينَ 'And We know that your heart feels distressed for what they say. [15:97]. So, proclaim the purity, and glory of your Lord and be among those who prostrate. [98]' The Prophet ﷺ is advised not to pay any attention to the disbelievers talking nonsense. The best remedy for his distress and grief is to glorify Allah, praise Him and prostrate before Him.

Abū Dāwūd records a narration from Sayyidnā 'Uqbah bin Āmir Juhanī ؓ that when the verse. فَسَبِّحْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الْعَظِيمِ 'So, pronounce the purity of the name of your magnificent Lord. [52]' was revealed, the Prophet ﷺ instructed this *tasbīḥ* to be reserved for the posture of *rukū'* and when the verse سَبِّحِ اسْمَ رَبِّكَ الْأَعْلَى 'Pronounce the purity of the name of your most Exalted Lord. [87:1]' was revealed, he instructed this *tasbīḥ* to be reserved for the posture of *sajdah*. Therefore, by common consent of the *Ummah* these *tasbīḥāt* are recited in *rukū'* and sajdah respectively. According to overwhelming majority, it is *Sunnah* to recite them and repeat them thrice. Some scholars say it is obligatory.

Alhamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Ḥāqqah
Ends here

Sūrah Al-Ma'ārij

(The Stairways)

This Sūrah is Makkī. It contains 44 verses and 2 sections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 44

سَاَلَ سَآئِلٌ بِعَذَابٍ وَّاقِعٍ ﴿١﴾ لِّلْكٰفِرِيْنَ لَيْسَ لَهٗ دَافِعٌ ﴿٢﴾ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ
ذِى الْمَعَارِجِ ﴿٣﴾ تَعْرُجُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ وَالرُّوْحُ اِلَيْهِ فِىْ يَوْمٍ كَانَ مِقْدَارُهٗ
خَمْسِيْنَ اَلْفَ سَنَةٍ ﴿٤﴾ فَاصْبِرْ صَبْرًا جَمِيْلًا ﴿٥﴾ اِنَّهُمْ يَرَوْنَهٗ بَعِيْدًا
﴿٦﴾ وَّنَرٰىهُ قَرِيْبًا ﴿٧﴾ يَوْمَ تَكُوْنُ السَّمَآءُ كَالْمُهْلِ ﴿٨﴾ وَتَكُوْنُ
الْجِبَالُ كَالْعِهْنِ ﴿٩﴾ وَلَا يَسْئَلُ حَمِيْمٌ حَمِيْمًا ﴿١٠﴾ يُّبَصَّرُوْنَهُمْ
يَوَدُّ الْمُجْرِمُ لَوْ يَفْتَدِىْ مِنْ عَذَابِ يَوْمِئِذٍ بِبَنِيْهِ ﴿١١﴾ وَصَاحِبَتِهٖ
وَاَخِيْهِ ﴿١٢﴾ وَفَصِيْلَتِهِ الَّتِىْ تُـْٔوِيْهِ ﴿١٣﴾ وَمَنْ فِى الْاَرْضِ جَمِيْعًا ثُمَّ
يُنْجِيْهِ ﴿١٤﴾ كَلَّا اِنَّهَا لَظٰى ﴿١٥﴾ نَزَّاعَةً لِّلشَّوٰى ﴿١٦﴾ تَدْعُوْا مَنْ
اَدْبَرَ وَتَوَلّٰى ﴿١٧﴾ وَجَمَعَ فَاَوْعٰى ﴿١٨﴾ اِنَّ الْاِنْسَانَ خُلِقَ هَلُوْعًا
﴿١٩﴾ اِذَا مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ جَزُوْعًا ﴿٢٠﴾ وَّاِذَا مَسَّهُ الْخَيْرُ مَنُوْعًا ﴿٢١﴾ اِلَّا
الْمُصَلِّيْنَ ﴿٢٢﴾ الَّذِيْنَ هُمْ عَلٰى صَلَاتِهِمْ دَآئِمُوْنَ ﴿٢٣﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ
فِىْٓ اَمْوَالِهِمْ حَقٌّ مَّعْلُوْمٌ ﴿٢٤﴾ لِّلسَّآئِلِ وَالْمَحْرُوْمِ ﴿٢٥﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ
يُصَدِّقُوْنَ بِيَوْمِ الدِّيْنِ ﴿٢٦﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ مِّنْ عَذَابِ رَبِّهِمْ مُّشْفِقُوْنَ

﴿٢٧﴾ اِنَّ عَذَابَ رَبِّهِمْ غَيْرُ مَاْمُوْنٍ ﴿٢٨﴾ وَّالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ لِفُرُوْجِهِمْ
حٰفِظُوْنَ ﴿٢٩﴾ اِلَّا عَلٰٓى اَزْوَاجِهِمْ اَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُهُمْ فَاِنَّهُمْ غَيْرُ
مَلُوْمِيْنَ ﴿٣٠﴾ فَمَنِ ابْتَغٰى وَرَآءَ ذٰلِكَ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْعٰدُوْنَ ﴿٣١﴾
وَالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ لِاَمٰنٰتِهِمْ وَعَهْدِهِمْ رٰعُوْنَ ﴿٣٢﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ بِشَهٰدٰتِهِمْ
قَآئِمُوْنَ ﴿٣٣﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ عَلٰى صَلَاتِهِمْ يُحَافِظُوْنَ ﴿٣٤﴾ اُولٰٓئِكَ
فِىْ جَنّٰتٍ مُّكْرَمُوْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾ فَمَالِ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا قِبَلَكَ مُهْطِعِيْنَ ﴿٣٦﴾
عَنِ الْيَمِيْنِ وَعَنِ الشِّمَالِ عِزِيْنَ ﴿٣٧﴾ اَيَطْمَعُ كُلُّ امْرِئٍ مِّنْهُمْ اَنْ
يُّدْخَلَ جَنَّةَ نَعِيْمٍ ﴿٣٨﴾ كَلَّا ۭ اِنَّا خَلَقْنٰهُمْ مِّمَّا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٣٩﴾ فَلَآ
اُقْسِمُ بِرَبِّ الْمَشٰرِقِ وَالْمَغٰرِبِ اِنَّا لَقٰدِرُوْنَ ﴿٤٠﴾ عَلٰٓى اَنْ نُّبَدِّلَ خَيْرًا
مِّنْهُمْ ۙ وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَسْبُوْقِيْنَ ﴿٤١﴾ فَذَرْهُمْ يَخُوْضُوْا وَيَلْعَبُوْا حَتّٰى
يُلٰقُوْا يَوْمَهُمُ الَّذِىْ يُوْعَدُوْنَ ﴿٤٢﴾ يَوْمَ يَخْرُجُوْنَ مِنَ الْاَجْدَاثِ
سِرَاعًا كَاَنَّهُمْ اِلٰى نُصُبٍ يُّوْفِضُوْنَ ﴿٤٣﴾ خَاشِعَةً اَبْصَارُهُمْ تَرْهَقُهُمْ
ذِلَّةٌ ۭ ذٰلِكَ الْيَوْمُ الَّذِىْ كَانُوْا يُوْعَدُوْنَ ﴿٤٤﴾

A demanding person has asked for the punishment that is going to befall [1] the disbelievers, for which there is no one to avert [2] from Allah, the Lord of the stairways [3] to whom ascend the angels and the Spirit, in a day the length of which is fifty thousand years. [4] So, observe patience, a good patience. [5] They see it far off. [6] and We see it near. [7] (This punishment will befall) on the Day when the sky will be like dregs of oil, [8] and the mountains will be like dyed wool, [9] and no friend will ask about any friend, [10] (though) they will be made to see each other. A guilty person will desire that he may ransom himself from the torment of that day even by his sons, [11] and his wife and his brother, [12] and his kindred that sheltered him, [13] and all those on earth, then he may redeem himself. [14] By no means! It is the flaming fire [15] that will pull out the skin of the scalp. [16] It will call him who had turned his back and fled away (from the Truth,) [17] and accumulated

(wealth) and hoarded (it). [18]

Indeed man is created weak in courage, [19] **very upset when touched by evil,** [20] **and very niggard when visited by good (fortune),** [21] **except the performers of *ṣalāh*,** [22] **who are regular in their *ṣalāh*,** [23] **and those in whose riches there is a specified right** [24] **for the one who asks and the one who is deprived,** [25] **and those who believe in the Day of Judgment as true,** [26] **and those who are fearful of the torment of their Lord -** [27] **- Indeed the torment of their Lord is not something to be fearless from.** [28] **and those who guard their private parts,** [29] **except from their wives and those (slave-girls) owned by their hands, because they are not to be blamed,** [30] **but the one who seeks (sexual gratification) beyond that, then such people are the transgressors,** [31] **and those who are careful about their trusts and covenants,** [32] **and those who are upright in their testimonies,** [33] **and those who take due care of their *ṣalāh*.** [34] **Those will be honored in gardens (of Jannah).** [35]

So what has happened to those who disbelieve that they are rushing towards you [36] **from the right and from the left, in groups?** [37] **Does every one of them aspire to be admitted to the garden of bliss? *** [38] **By no means! We have created them from what they know.** [39]** **So, I swear by the Lord of the points of sunrise and those of sunset, We are powerful** [40] **to bring those better than them in their place, and We are not to be frustrated.** [41] **So, leave them involved in pastime and play until they encounter their Day which they are promised,** [42]__ **the Day they will come out of the graves quickly, as if they were rushing toward idols,** [43] **with their eyes downcast, enveloped by ignominy. That is the Day which they were being promised.** [44]

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*. The disbelievers used to come to the Holy Prophet ﷺ in groups mocking at the Muslims, and denying the Islamic beliefs, including Resurrection. But at the same time, they used to claim, in ironical style, that they would enter the Paradise, and enjoy its bliss. This verse refers to this attitude of the disbelievers.

. Since their pretended aspiration to enter Paradise was merely a mockery, and in fact they intended to deny Resurrection, their denial is refuted in this verse by saying that admittedly Allah has created them from a lifeless drop of semen, as they knew it well, and a drop of semen is more difficult to be transformed into a perfect human being. If Allah has power to make it a living man, how easy it is for Him to give life to a dead body! Still, they do not believe in Resurrection. Then, how can they enter Paradise?' **(Muhammad Taqi Usmani)

Commentary

سَاَلَ سَآئِلٌ (A demanding person has asked for the punishment that is going to befall....70:1). The Arabic word *suwāl/su'āl* means to 'ask a question'. The word is used in more than one sense: [1] It could mean to inquire about something. In this sense, the Arabic word is followed by the preposition "*an*' [about]; and [2] It is used in the sense of 'request'. In this sense, the word is followed by the preposition '*bi*' [for] as in this instance.

Nasā'ī transmits a narration from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ that this demanding person was Naḍr Ibn Ḥārith. In rejecting the Qur'ān and the Prophet ﷺ, he daringly demanded:

اَللّٰهُمَّ اِنْ كَانَ هٰذَا هُوَالْحَقَّ مِنْ عِنْدِكَ فَاَمْطِرْعَلَيْنَا حِجَارَةً مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ اَوِئْتِنَا بِعَذَابٍ اَلِيْمٍ .

'O Allah, if this be indeed the truth [revealed] from You, then, rain down upon us stones from the heavens, or bring upon us a painful punishment. [8:32]

The result of this demand was that Naḍr Ibn Ḥārith was killed by Muslims in the Battle of Badr. (Maẓharī, citing the narration of Ibn Abī Ḥātim). The Qur'ān, further setting down the factual position of the demanded punishment, says that the punishment is inevitable and will most certainly occur in this world or in the Hereafter or in both the worlds. It cannot be averted. The impending punishment is from Allah, the Lord of the stairways. The last statement is also the proof of the preceding statement, in that the punishment is from the Lord of the Ascending Steps. It is not possible for anyone to avert it.

The word *ma'ārij* is the plural of *mi'rāj* or *mi'raj*. It means a 'ladder or a staircase, having steps for reaching high places. The Divine attribute given in this verse as '*dhīl-ma'ārij*' [Lord of the stairways] means that He is the Lord of high degrees. This is the interpretation given by Sa'īd Ibn Jubair ﷺ. Sayyidnā Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ says that these stairways or higher rungs are seven heavens one above another, and '*dhīl-ma'ārij*' means '*dhis-samāwāt*', that is to say, *mālik-us-samāwāt* [Lord of the heavens].

تَعْرُجُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ وَالرُّوْحُ (to whom ascend the angels and the Spirit ...70:4). In other words, the angels and Jibra'īl ﷺ ascend these levels which are one on top of the other. Although the word 'angels' include 'Jibra'īl ﷺ',

his name is singled out specifically on account of his special honour.

فِىْ يَوْمٍ كَانَ مِقْدَارُهٗ خَمْسِيْنَ اَلْفَ سَنَةٍ (in a day the length of which is fifty thousand years.. ...70:4). This statement, grammatically, is connected to an understood verb, which is *yaqa'u* [will occur]. The sense is that the inevitable punishment mentioned earlier will occur on a day the measure of which is fifty thousand years. Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd Khudrī ؓ narrates that the blessed Companions asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ about the length of the day that measures fifty thousand years. He replied: "I swear by the Being in Whose control is my life! The day for the believers will be lighter and less than the time during which they would perform an obligatory *ṣalāh*." (Transmitted by Aḥmad, Abū Ya'lā, Ibn Ḥibbān, Baihaqī through a '*ḥasan*' chain of narrators - Maẓharī)

And the following *Ḥadīth* is reported from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ؓ:

يكون على المؤمنين كمقدار مابين الظهر والعصر اخرجه الحاكم والبيهقى مرفوعًا وموقوفًا. (مظهرى)

"The time on this day for the believers will be like that between *'aṣr* and *maghrib*". (This *Ḥadīth* is reported both in *marfū'* and *mauqūf* ways, that is, in some versions, this is the statement of Abū Hurairah ؓ himself, while in others it is attributed by him to the Holy Prophet ﷺ.)

These *aḥādīth* indicate that the length of fifty thousand years is a 'relative term'. In relation to unbelievers the day would be as long as five thousand years, and in relation to the believers it would be as short as the time between *'aṣr* and *maghrib* or even shorter.

The Length of the Day of Judgement - A thousand years or Fifty Thousand Years? An Analysis

According to the above verse, the measure of the Day of Judgement is fifty thousand years but, according to the following verse of Sūrah As-Sajdah, the length of the day is mentioned as one thousand years:

يُدَبِّرُ الْاَمْرَ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ اِلَى الْاَرْضِ ثُمَّ يَعْرُجُ اِلَيْهِ فِىْ يَوْمٍ كَانَ مِقْدَارُهٗۤ اَلْفَ سَنَةٍ مِّمَّا تَعُدُّوْنَ.

He manages (every) matter from the sky to the earth, then it (every matter) will ascend to Him in a day the measure of

which is a thousand years according to the way you count. [32:5]

Apparently, there seems to be a discrepancy between the two verses. The narratives cited earlier resolve this apparent contradiction. Length and shortness of time are relative concepts. It will be different according to different groups and their varying conditions. Relative to the entire body of die-hard unbelievers, it will measure fifty thousand years, and relative to the entire body of righteous believers, the day will be made so easy that it will seem easier than a person performing *ṣalāh* in this world. In between the two bodies of believers and unbelievers are there may be some groups of unbelievers for whom the day will seem to be one thousand years. It is also relative to varying psychological conditions that a person might be experiencing. If a person is feeling upset or is experiencing excruciating pain, time will hardly seem to move for him. An hour sometimes seems like more than a day or even more than a week. When a person, on the other hand, is in comfort and peace, the longest time will seem the shortest.

Maẓharī has interpreted verse [5] of Sūrah As-Sajdah differently. He says that the day of a thousand years mentioned here refers to one of the days of the phenomenal world. Jibra'il عليه السلام and other angels with him descend from the heavens to the earth and then ascend from the earth to the heavens. This is such a long journey that if man were to undertake it, it would take him a thousand years. Authentic *aḥādīth* report that the journey from heavens to earth takes five hundred years and the journey back from earth to the heaven takes another five hundred years, totalling a thousand years according to human travelling. Assuming man were to conquer this distance, a return journey would take him a thousand years between heavens and earth and back, although the angels cover this distance in a very short time. In short, verse [5] of Sūrah As-Sajdah refers to a day of the phenomenal world while the verse of Sūrah Al-Ma'ārij refers to the Day of Judgement which will be very much longer than the days of this world, the length and shortness of which will be experienced differently by different people according to their conditions. And Allah, the Pure and Exalted, knows best!

إِنَّهُمْ يَرَوْنَهُ بَعِيدًا. وَّنَرٰهُ قَرِيبًا (They see it far off, and We see it near....70:6-7). In this context, the expressions 'far off' and 'near' do not refer to time or space, but 'far off' in terms of possibility and occurrence. The verse

purports to describe that the pagans see the occurrence of Resurrection as impossible, and Allah sees its occurrence not only possible, but a certain reality.

وَلَا يَسْئَلُ حَمِيمٌ حَمِيمًا. يُبَصَّرُونَهُمْ (and no friend will ask about any friend, (though) they will be made to see each other....70:10,11). The word *ḥamīm* means a 'sincere friend'. The context describes the horrors of the Day of Resurrection. On that Day, no bosom friend will inquire about his friend - let alone helping him. This is not because they will not be able to see each other. The Divine power, in fact, will make them see each other. Every person will be in a state of 'each for himself'. No person will be able to pay heed to the comfort or discomfort, pleasure or pain of others.

كَلَّا ؕ اِنَّهَا لَظٰى. نَزَّاعَةً لِّلشَّوٰى (By no means! It is the flaming fire, that will pull out the skin of the scalp...70:15,16). The pronoun of *innahā* (it) refers to 'Fire' and the word *lazā* means 'the flaming fire'. The word *shawā* is the plural of *shawāh* and it refers to 'the scalp or the skin of the human head, and also the skin of the hands and the legs'. The verse describes that the Fire of Hell would be a raging blaze that will pull out the skin of the scalp.

تَدْعُوا مَنْ اَدْبَرَ وَتَوَلّٰى. وَجَمَعَ فَاَوْعٰى (It will call him who had turned his back and fled away (from the truth.) and accumulated (wealth) and hoarded (it)....70:17,18). The phrase 'accumulated wealth' signifies 'wealth accumulated by unlawful means' and the phrase 'hoarded it' signifies 'not fulfilling the pecuniary obligations as imposed by the Sharī'ah', as is confirmed by authentic *aḥādīth*.

اِنَّ الْاِنْسَانَ خُلِقَ هَلُوْعًا (Indeed man is created weak in courage...70:19). The *halū'*, literally, means 'one who is greedy, impatient, lacking courage'. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ says that the word *halū'* in the verse refers to a 'person who is greedy about unlawful wealth'. Sayyidnā Sa'īd Ibn Jubair ﷺ says that the word refers to a 'miserly person'. Muqatil says that it refers to a 'person who is impatient and miserly'. All meanings attached assigned to this word are near-synonyms. The word *halu'* comprehends all these meanings. The verses that follow elaborate on the meaning of this word. In the meantime a doubt might arise here which needs to be disposed of. If it is objected that, according to this verse of the Holy Qur'ān, man is created weak in courage, in other words, it is man's nature

or his natural weakness, to be impatient, greedy and miserly - then it is not his fault, and why is he declared 'guilty'? This doubt may be allayed thus: Allah has created human nature such that it has the innate capacity to do good as well as evil. He has endowed him with intellect and intelligence. He has raised His Prophets with His Message and sent down His Books clearly stating the consequences of every action chosen by his free will. He has the right to choose between good and bad. Man, in this sense, will be declared 'guilty', and consequently punished on account of freely choosing to do the wrong deed, not on account of his inborn capacity. This interpretation is confirmed by the following verses that speak only of actions of choice.

اذَا مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ جَزُوْعًا . وَاِذَا مَسَّهُ الْخَيْرُ مَنُوْعًا (very upset when touched by evil, and very niggard when visited by good (fortune)...70:20-21). This verse describes the fickle nature of man. When bad things happen to him he becomes desperate and upset, and loses patience. When good things come to him, such as wealth and comfort, he becomes begrudging and miserly in spending his wealth for good causes. 'Impatience', in this context, signifies 'that which is outside the limits of Sharī'ah'. 'Niggard', in this context, signifies 'failing to fulfill pecuniary obligations imposed by the Sharī'ah' as explained previously. The verses that follow make an exception of the righteous believers to the characteristics of the general body of human beings. This exception starts from اِلَّا الْمُصَلِّيْنَ (except the performers of *ṣalāh*...70:22) and ends at عَلٰى صَلَاتِهِمْ دَآئِمُوْنَ (regular in their *ṣalāh*.... 70:23)

The first exception is expressed with the words 'the performers of *ṣalāh*' [22]. Obviously, it means the believers, but referring to them as 'performers of *ṣalāh*' indicates that '*ṣalāh*' is the greatest sign and the essential characteristic of a believer. In fact, the only people worthy of the name 'believers' are 'the performers of *ṣalāh*'. The following verses describe the qualities of the performers of *ṣalāh*.

اَلَّذِيْنَ هُمْ عَلٰى صَلَاتِهِمْ دَآئِمُوْنَ (who are regular in their *ṣalāh*...70:23). This means that the entire *ṣalāh* needs to be performed with due concentration. Imām Baghawī, on the basis of his own chain of narrators, transmits a narration on the authority of Abūl-Khair that they asked Sayyidnā 'Uqbah Ibn 'Āmir ﷺ about the meaning of this verse (23) whether it implies that they perform their *ṣalāh* constantly and always

without any break or non-stop, he replied that is not its meaning. It means they, from the outset to the end, perform it with due concentration - without an intentional deviation This is similar to the verse 2 of Sūrah Mu'minūn:

اَلَّذِيْنَ هُمْ فِىْ صَلَاتِهِمْ خَاشِعُوْنَ

'who are concentrative in their *ṣalāh* [23:2]'

Thus Verse 23 describes the quality of *Khushū'* ('humbleness) while Verse 34 وَالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ عَلٰى صَلَاتِهِمْ يُحَافِظُوْنَ (and those who take due care of their *ṣalāh*) speaks of those who regularly offer it on its due time and take care of its general etiquette. Thus it may not be surmised that the subject-matter has been repeated. The qualities of the righteous believers given in forthcoming verses are almost the same as those given in Sūrah Al- Mu'minūn.

Rates of *Zakāh* are Specified by Allah

وَالَّذِيْنَ فِىْٓ اَمْوَالِهِمْ حَقٌّ مَّعْلُوْمٌ (and those in whose riches there is a specified right...70:24). This verse shows that the quantifications of *Zakāh* have been fixed by Allah. The details are recorded in authentic *aḥādīth*. These quantifications, whether relating to the *niṣāb* (the minimum limit on which *Zakāh* is payable) or to the rate of payment, being fixed by Allah Ta'ālā cannot be changed by anyone at any time.

فَمَنِ ابْتَغٰى وَرَآءَ ذٰلِكَ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْعٰدُوْنَ (but the one who seeks [sexual gratification] beyond that, then such people are the transgressors...70:31). The preceding verse permitted to have sex with their wives and with slave-girls who are lawfully in their possession. The current verse prohibits sexual gratification beyond this limit. This verse also excludes women who, according to Sharī'ah, fall within the prohibited degree. Similarly, *Mut'ah* (hiring a woman for a temporary period for the purpose of enjoying sex with her) is not a marriage according to Sharī'ah, therefore, it is also included in the meaning of this verse.

Masturbation is Forbidden

According to most jurists, masturbation falls under the generality of verse [31], hence forbidden. Ibn Juraij says that he asked Sayyidnā 'Aṭā' ﷺ about it and the latter replied that it is *makrūh* (reprehensible), adding that he heard that on the Plain of Ḥashr some people will come

whose hands will be pregnant. He feels these will be the people who used to satisfy their sexual lust with their hands. Sayyidnā Sa'īd Ibn Jubair ﷺ says that Allah punished a nation who used to fondle with their private parts with their hands. A *Ḥadīth* reports that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ has said:

مَلعون من نكح يده

"Cursed is he who marries his hand."

The chain of authorities of this *Ḥadīth* is weak. [Maẓharī].

Rights of Allah and Rights of Human beings both are included in Trust Obligations

وَالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ لِاَمٰنٰتِهِمْ وَعَهْدِهِمْ رٰعُوْنَ (and those who are careful about their trusts and covenants...70:32). The word *amānāt* is the plural of *amānah* 'trust and covenant' as in:

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَاْمُرُكُمْ اَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الْاَمٰنٰتِ اِلٰٓى اَهْلِهَا

'Surely, Allah commands you to fulfill trust obligations towards those entitled to them. [4:58]'

The use of plural number indicates that *amānah* does not only refer to 'that which people might deposit with a trustee for safe-keeping' but it also refers to 'all obligatory rights that are necessary to fulfill'. Breach of trusts and covenants is dishonesty. Trust obligations include all Divine rights, such as *ṣalāh*, *ṣiyām*, *ḥajj* and *Zakāh*, as well as all human rights, such as rights that Allah has imposed between human beings, or human beings themselves might have entered into binding contracts and covenants. Fulfilment of them is obligatory. Failure to comply with their terms and conditions would amount to breach, or dishonesty. [Maẓharī, condensed].

وَالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ بِشَهٰدٰتِهِمْ قَآئِمُوْنَ (...and those who are upright in their testimonies, [70:33]'. The word *shahādāt* is the plural of *shahādah*. The use of plural number in this verse too indicates that there are many types and categories of 'testimony', and it is necessary to stand firm by one's testimony of any type. This includes testifying to the faith of Islam, Divine existence and His Oneness, and testifying that Sayyidnā Muḥammad ﷺ is His Final Messenger. It is obligatory to testify to the crescent of Ramaḍān, if one has seen it. Giving a true and accurate

account of Sharī'ah matters as expert witness, and in all judicial hearings is also implied. Everyone is duty-bound to offer the testimony when summoned. It is prohibited to add or omit any part thereof. According to this verse, it is obligatory to bear testimony, to be upright in it and stand firm by it.

Alhamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Ma'ārij
Ends here

Sūrah Nūḥ
(Noah)

This Sūrah is Makkī. It contains 28 verses and 2 sections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 28

إِنَّآ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِۦٓ أَنْ أَنذِرْ قَوْمَكَ مِن قَبْلِ أَن يَأْتِيَهُمْ عَذَابٌ
أَلِيمٌ ﴿١﴾ قَالَ يَٰقَوْمِ إِنِّى لَكُمْ نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿٢﴾ أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاتَّقُوهُ
وَأَطِيعُونِ ﴿٣﴾ يَغْفِرْ لَكُم مِّن ذُنُوبِكُمْ وَيُؤَخِّرْكُمْ إِلَىٰٓ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ط
إِنَّ أَجَلَ اللَّهِ إِذَا جَآءَ لَا يُؤَخَّرُ لَوْ كُنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٤﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّى
دَعَوْتُ قَوْمِى لَيْلًا وَنَهَارًا ﴿٥﴾ فَلَمْ يَزِدْهُمْ دُعَآءِىٓ إِلَّا فِرَارًا ﴿٦﴾
وَإِنِّى كُلَّمَا دَعَوْتُهُمْ لِتَغْفِرَ لَهُمْ جَعَلُوٓا أَصَٰبِعَهُمْ فِىٓ ءَاذَانِهِمْ
وَاسْتَغْشَوْا ثِيَابَهُمْ وَأَصَرُّوا وَاسْتَكْبَرُوا اسْتِكْبَارًا ﴿٧﴾ ثُمَّ إِنِّى
دَعَوْتُهُمْ جِهَارًا ﴿٨﴾ ثُمَّ إِنِّىٓ أَعْلَنتُ لَهُمْ وَأَسْرَرْتُ لَهُمْ إِسْرَارًا ﴿٩﴾
فَقُلْتُ اسْتَغْفِرُوا رَبَّكُمْ إِنَّهُۥ كَانَ غَفَّارًا ﴿١٠﴾ يُرْسِلِ السَّمَآءَ عَلَيْكُم
مِّدْرَارًا ﴿١١﴾ وَيُمْدِدْكُم بِأَمْوَٰلٍ وَبَنِينَ وَيَجْعَل لَّكُمْ جَنَّٰتٍ وَيَجْعَل
لَّكُمْ أَنْهَٰرًا ﴿١٢﴾ مَّا لَكُمْ لَا تَرْجُونَ لِلَّهِ وَقَارًا ﴿١٣﴾ وَقَدْ خَلَقَكُمْ
أَطْوَارًا ﴿١٤﴾ أَلَمْ تَرَوْا كَيْفَ خَلَقَ اللَّهُ سَبْعَ سَمَٰوَٰتٍ طِبَاقًا ﴿١٥﴾
وَجَعَلَ الْقَمَرَ فِيهِنَّ نُورًا وَجَعَلَ الشَّمْسَ سِرَاجًا ﴿١٦﴾ وَاللَّهُ

أَنۢبَتَكُم مِّنَ الْأَرْضِ نَبَاتًا ﴿١٧﴾ ثُمَّ يُعِيدُكُمْ فِيهَا وَيُخْرِجُكُمْ إِخْرَاجًا
﴿١٨﴾ وَاللَّهُ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ بِسَاطًا ﴿١٩﴾ لِّتَسْلُكُوا مِنْهَا سُبُلًا
فِجَاجًا ﴿٢٠﴾ قَالَ نُوحٌ رَّبِّ إِنَّهُمْ عَصَوْنِي وَاتَّبَعُوا مَن لَّمْ يَزِدْهُ مَالُهُ
وَوَلَدُهُ إِلَّا خَسَارًا ﴿٢١﴾ وَمَكَرُوا مَكْرًا كُبَّارًا ﴿٢٢﴾ وَقَالُوا لَا تَذَرُنَّ
آلِهَتَكُمْ وَلَا تَذَرُنَّ وَدًّا وَلَا سُوَاعًا وَلَا يَغُوثَ وَيَعُوقَ وَنَسْرًا
﴿٢٣﴾ وَقَدْ أَضَلُّوا كَثِيرًا وَلَا تَزِدِ الظَّالِمِينَ إِلَّا ضَلَالًا ﴿٢٤﴾ مِّمَّا
خَطِيئَاتِهِمْ أُغْرِقُوا فَأُدْخِلُوا نَارًا فَلَمْ يَجِدُوا لَهُم مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ
أَنصَارًا ﴿٢٥﴾ وَقَالَ نُوحٌ رَّبِّ لَا تَذَرْ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ دَيَّارًا
﴿٢٦﴾ إِنَّكَ إِن تَذَرْهُمْ يُضِلُّوا عِبَادَكَ وَلَا يَلِدُوا إِلَّا فَاجِرًا كَفَّارًا
﴿٢٧﴾ رَّبِّ اغْفِرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيَّ وَلِمَن دَخَلَ بَيْتِيَ مُؤْمِنًا وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ
وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَلَا تَزِدِ الظَّالِمِينَ إِلَّا تَبَارًا ﴿٢٨﴾

We sent Nūḥ to his people saying (to him), "Warn your people before a painful punishment comes to them." [1] **He said, "O my people, I am a plain warner for you** [2] **to say that you must worship Allah, and fear Him, and obey me,** [3] **and Allah will forgive you your sins, and will defer you to an appointed term. Indeed when Allah's term comes, it is not deferred, if you only know!"** [4] **He said, "My Lord, I have called my people night and day,** [5] **but my call did not cause them to progress but in running away.** [6] **And whenever I called them, so that You forgive them, they put their fingers into their ears, and wrapped their clothes around themselves, and grew obstinate, and waxed proud in extreme arrogance.** [7] **Then I called them loudly,** [8] **then I spoke to them in public and spoke to them in private.** [9] **So I said, "Pray to your Lord for your forgiveness, Indeed He is Very-Forgiving,** [10] **and (if you do so,) He will cause the heavens to rain upon you in abundance,** [11] **and will help you with riches and sons, and will cause gardens to grow for you, and cause rivers to flow for you.** [12] **What has happened to you that you do not appreciate Majesty of Allah,** [13] **while He has created you in different phases?** [14] **Did you not see how**

Allah has created seven heavens one upon another, [15] **and has made the moon a light therein, and made the sun a lamp?** [16] **And Allah has caused you to grow out of the earth a perfect growth,** [17] **then He will send you back into it, and will bring you forth once again.** [18] **And Allah has made the earth a spread for you,** [19] **so that you may go about its broad ways."** [20]

And said Nūḥ, "My Lord, they disobeyed me, and followed him whose wealth and children added nothing to him but loss, [21] **and they devised an enormous plan,** [22] **and said, "Never forsake your gods, and never forsake *Wadd*, nor *Suwā'*, nor *yaghūth* and *Ya'ūq* and *Nasr*.** [23] **And they have led many astray. And (O my Lord,) let not the wrongdoers progress in anything but deviation from the right path."** [24] **Because of their sins, they were drowned, and then admitted into the Fire. So they found no helpers for them besides Allah.** [25] **And said Nūḥ, "My Lord, do not leave on earth even a single inhabitant from the disbelievers (surviving).** [26] **If You leave them (surviving), they will lead Your slaves astray, and will beget none but a sinful disbeliever.** [27] **My Lord, grant pardon to me, and to my parents, and to everyone who enters my home as a believer, and to all the believing men and believing women, and do not increase the wrongdoers but in ruin.** [28]

Commentary

يَغْفِرْلَكُم مِّنْ ذُنُوبِكُمْ (and Allah will forgive you your sins,__ 71:4). The particle *min* is often used to indicate division into parts, that is, to refer to only a part of an amount, group or number. If it is taken in that sense here, it would signify that by embracing the faith only those sins would be forgiven which pertains to the Divine rights because violation of human rights would be forgiven only when the believer fulfills the human rights which he has violated [such as pecuniary obligations] and if they cannot be fulfilled [such as hurting somebody physically or verbally], then the person who has been so hurt must first be requested to forgive. The *ḥadīth* which reports that by embracing the faith all sins are forgiven must be understood in the light of the foregoing explanation. In other words, the *ḥadīth* has the same conditions attached to it as the verse under comment, that is, violation of the rights of the human beings is not forgiven except upon fulfillment of those rights or seeking forgiveness from the victims of that violation. Other scholars of Tafsīr

interpret the particle min as *zā'idah,* (having no meaning, and added only because of usage). In this way, it signifies that all their sins would be forgiven. However, on the basis of other texts, this general expression is subject to the conditions mentioned above.

وَيُؤَخِّرْكُمْ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى (and will defer you to an appointed term.__ 71:4). The word *ajal* means 'term' or 'period' and the word *musammā* means 'appointed'. The verse purports to say that if they embrace the faith, Allah will defer them until a specified time and will not destroy them before their appointed time in this world. On the other hand, if they do not embrace the faith, it is likely that they might be punished and destroyed before their appointed term. In other words, when the Divine decree of punishment is in active operation, it cannot be deferred. This indicates that at times the appointed term or life span has a condition attached to it. If a particular person fulfills the attached condition, his life span, for instance, will be eighty years; and if he did not fulfill the condition, he will meet his death at the age of seventy years. If a person is ungrateful to Allah, his life span will decrease; and if he is grateful to Him, his life span will increase. Authentic *aḥādīth* report that maintaining family ties and obedience to parents increase the life span. In short, the verse is proof of the fact that obedience to Allah, righteousness and maintaining the family ties truly increase the life span of a person.

Fluctuation in Man's Life Span

Maẓharī explains in his commentary that there are two categories of Predestination. One of them is termed *taqdīr mubram* 'Final and Definitive Destiny' and the other is termed *taqdīr mu'allaq* 'Conditional Destiny'. The former is defined as the decisive and unalterable Destiny that is never changed; and the latter is defined as the Decree to which is attached a condition. It would be recorded in the Preserved Tablet as conditional statements thus: If a person obeys Allah, then his life span will be extended to, for example, seventy years. 'If he disobeys Him, then he will die at the age of fifty years.' The latter category is alterable. The Qur'ān mentions both the types of Destiny thus:

يَمْحُوا اللَّهُ مَا يَشَاءُ وَيُثْبِتُ وَعِندَهُ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ

Allah wipes off what He wills and affirms (what He wills). And with Him is the Mother Book. [13:39]

The term 'Mother Book' refers to that Book in which is recorded the 'Final Destiny' and Allah is fully aware of whether or not the condition that is recorded in 'Conditional Destiny' will be fulfilled. The 'Final Destiny' is the exclusive domain of Divine knowledge. Recorded there are the decisions, and commands that issue forth as the final outcome after the conditions of deeds have been fulfilled or supplication has been answered. Therefore, that is totally free of obliteration and assertion and addition and deletion.

Sayyidnā Salmān al-Fārisi ﷺ has reported Allah's Messenger ﷺ as saying:

لا يردّ القضآء الّا الدّعاء ولا يزيد فى العمر الّا البرّ رواه الترمذى (مظهرى)

"Nothing but supplication averts the decree, and nothing but good treatment of parents increases life span." [Transmitted by Tirmidhī, as quoted by Maẓharī]

The word *al-birr* means 'to treat parents kindly'. The purport of the *ḥadīth* is to show that on account of these deeds the 'Conditional Destiny' can be changed. In short, the verse under comment says: اَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى (and will defer you to an appointed term ... 71:4).

The deferment is contingent upon embracing the faith. This describes the 'Conditional Destiny' about their life span, the knowledge of which probably was given to Nūḥ عليه السلام. As a result, he explained to his people that they are given respite till their full term during which, if they embraced the faith, Allah will not destroy them by worldly punishment. If they failed to embrace the faith, Allah will destroy them in this world before their appointed term. In addition, they will suffer eternal perdition of the Hereafter. It further shows that death is inevitable when the time specified by Allah in the final destiny arrives, even if they embrace the faith. Death in any case is inescapable. Allah has, in His consummate wisdom, not made this world immortal. It must, of necessity, perish. Faith and obedience, on the one hand, and infidelity and sinning, on the other, do not make any difference. The fragment of the verse that reads:

اِنَّ اَجَلَ اللّٰهِ اِذَاجَآءَ لَا يُؤَخَّرُ (Indeed when Allah's term comes, it is not deferred_ 71:4) refers to this immutable destiny.

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ reports that Nūḥ عليه السلام was commissioned as a

Prophet at the age of forty years and, according to the explicit text of the Qur'ān, he lived for nine hundred and fifty years. During this long life, he neither gave up his attempt at reform nor did he lose hope. His nation persecuted him but he exercised patience.

On the authority of Ḍaḥḥāk's رضي الله عنه narration, Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه reports that Nūḥ's عليه السلام people would beat him up until he falls. They would then wrap him up in a blanket and put him into a house, thinking that he was dead. When he comes to his senses the next day, he would call them towards Allah and preach to them. Muḥammad Ibn Isḥāq narrates from 'Ubaid Ibn 'Amr Laithī that according to a report he has received, when his nation would throttle him, he would fall fainted and when he recovered from his fainting, he would pray for them, thus:

ربّ اغفر لقومى انّهم لاَ يعلمون

"O Allah, forgive my people because they do not know."

When the first generation of Nūḥ عليه السلام failed him, he still held out hope that their children might embrace the faith, but that generation too passed away without faith. Expecting that the third generation might embrace the faith, he continued with his arduous task of preaching the truth, but that generation too frustrated him. Miraculously, Prophet Nūḥ عليه السلام was granted a long life [950 years] but the different generations of his people did not have such long lives.

Prophet Nūḥ عليه السلام preached to his people day and night and spoke to them in public and in private, individually and collectively. He reminded them of the great favours and gifts that Allah had bestowed upon them, and the great blessings that await them in Paradise if they chose the path of rectitude. He also preached to them that if they embraced the faith and acted righteously, the doors of comfort, prosperity, welfare and well-being will open up for them in this world as well. He drew their attention to the manifestation of Allah's perfect power. But they did not pay heed. On the other hand, Allah informed Prophet Nūḥ عليه السلام through revelation that none of his people were going to embrace the faith except for those who have already done so, describing it thus:

اِنَّهٗ لَنْ يُّؤْمِنَ مِنْ قَوْمِكَ اِلَّا مَنْ قَدْ اٰمَنَ

'And it was revealed to Nūḥ that none of your people would ever

believe except those who have already believed_ [11:36]'

He warned them of the evil consequences of rejection of the Divine Message. But all his preaching and warning, his sympathy with and solicitude for, their well-being only met with ridicule, opposition and abuse; and instead of following one whose heart was full of love for them, they chose to follow those leaders who led them to destruction. Prophet Nūḥ's عليه السلام exhortations and preaching of a whole lifetime proved a voice in the wilderness, generation after generation passed away, every coming generation proved to be worse and more wicked than the previous generation. So, he prayed to Allah to ruin and destroy the enemies of the Truth. As a result, the prayer was answered and the entire nation was drowned and destroyed except for the believers who were asked to embark upon the ark. Prophet Nūḥ عليه السلام invited them to believe in, and pray to Allah, to seek His pardon for their past sins and explained to them the worldly advantage of this:

يُّرْسِلِ السَّمَآءَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِّدْرَارًا. وَّيُمْدِدْكُمْ بِاَمْوَالٍ وَّبَنِيْنَ

(and He will cause the heavens to rain upon you in abundance, and will help you with riches and sons, ...71:11-12)

Most scholars have deduced from this verse that, by repenting and asking for pardon of sins, Allah sends down rain in abundance according to the need of time; no famine occurs; and through the blessings of praying for pardon of sins, Allah will reinforce people with more wealth and children. Occasionally, the consummate wisdom of Allah [which is unfathomable] wills the contrary situation. Generally, however, the Divine custom with people is to alleviate calamities if they repent, pray for pardon and give up sins. Versions of *aḥādīth* confirm this.

اَلَمْ تَرَوْا كَيْفَ خَلَقَ اللّٰهُ سَبْعَ سَمٰوٰتٍ طِبَاقًا. وَّجَعَلَ الْقَمَرَ فِيْهِنَّ نُوْرًا

(Did you not see how Allah has created seven heavens one upon another, and has made the moon a light therein? ....71:15-16)

These verses are adduced as proof positive of Divine Oneness and His power. He has created seven heavens, one on top of the other, and placed the moon as a light in them. The prepositional phrase in the verse apparently indicates that the moon is placed in the body of the heavens. The subject is fully discussed in Sūrah Al-Furqān under the following verse:

تَبٰرَكَ الَّذِىْ جَعَلَ فِى السَّمَآءِ بُرُوْجًا وَّجَعَلَ فِيْهَا سِرٰجًا وَّقَمَرًا مُّنِيْرًا ﴿٦١﴾

Glorious is the One who made stellar formations in the sky and placed therein a lamp (sun) and a bright moon. [25:61]

Complaining about his people, Prophet Nūḥ عليه السلام said:

وَمَكَرُوْا مَكْرًا كُبَّارًا (and they devised an enormous plan....71:22). In other words, they hatched a mighty plot. They rejected the message and persecuted Prophet Nūḥ عليه السلام. In addition, they let loose hooligans and hoodlums on him. They agreed that they will not abandon their gods, especially the five major idols whose names appear in the following verse:

لَا تَذَرُنَّ وَدًّا وَّلَا سُوَاعًا وَّلَا يَغُوْثَ وَيَعُوْقَ وَ نَسْرًا (and never forsake Wadd, nor *Suwā'*, nor *yaghūth* and *Ya'ūq* and *Nasr*.....71:23). Imām Baghawī reports that these five were in fact righteous servants Allah who lived in the intervening period between Prophets 'Ādam and Nūḥ عليهما السلام. There were many people who held them in high regard and followed their footsteps. Even after their death, they followed their footsteps and complied with Divine injunctions. A while later, Satan misled them. He put it to them that if they make pictures of their righteous elders and place them in front, their worship would be perfect and they would attain the quality of humility and humbleness. Those people fell into the Satanic trap and carved statues of them and placed them in their temples. When they saw the statues of their elders, their memories were refreshed and experienced a special feeling. That generation gradually died and a new generation came up. Satan played another trick with them. He imparted to them that the object of worship of their elders were statues and idols. They fell for this trick and worshipped them. This is the beginning of idol-worship or idolatry. People of Prophet Nūḥ عليه السلام gradually got steeped in idolatry. They had many idols, the five mentioned in the verse under comment being the most popular because of the deep love they had for them.

وَلَا تَزِدِ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ اِلَّا ضَلٰلًا (...let not the wrongdoers progress in anything but deviation from the right path.....71:24). This is the supplication of Prophet Nūḥ عليه السلام against his people. It may not be surmised that the duty and obligation of a Prophetic office is to guide the people, but here Prophet Nūḥ عليه السلام is praying for increase in his people's misguidance. Prophet Nūḥ عليه السلام did not invoke this curse out of despair or impatience. In fact, he

invoked it when, after doing full justice to his mission for many centuries, his people chose the path of deviation, rebellion, disbelief and obstinacy and persisted in it until they had reached a point of no return, of which Allah informed him thus, 'And it was revealed to Nūḥ that none of your people would ever believe except those who have already believed__ [11:36]'. This situation made it clear to him that his people would definitely and certainly die in the state of disbelief. So he prayed for their final destiny to overtake them sooner and destroy them.

مِمَّا خَطِيْٓـٰٔتِهِمْ أُغْرِقُوا فَأُدْخِلُوا نَارًا، فَلَمْ يَجِدُوا لَهُمْ مِّنْ دُونِ اللّٰهِ أَنصَارًا (Because of their sins they were drowned, and then admitted into the Fire. So they found no helpers for them besides Allah.....71:25). The 'sins' referred to here are unpardonable sins of '*kufr* and *shirk*'. They were drowned in water and emerged in fire, an opposing punishment which is not impossible for Divine power. Obviously, the 'fire' mentioned in the verse does not refer to the fire of Hell, but refers to the fire in the realm of '*Barzakh*' (the existence between the worldly life and the life of the Hereafter). The Qur'ān speaks of the fire in the realm of '*Barzakh*'. It is evident that Sayyidnā Nūḥ's عليه السلام people will be punished in Hell-Fire in the Hereafter after resurrection and accounting for their deeds.

Qur'ān Confirms Punishment in the Grave

The verse under comment confirms that people will be punished in the realm of *Barzakh,* usually referring to the period of stay in the grave. This further proves that, since the evil-doers will be punished in the grave, the righteous believers will also be rewarded and blessed with favours. Authentic and successively transmitted *aḥādīth* report about the reward and punishment in the grave so abundantly and clearly that its reality cannot be denied or rejected. Therefore, there is a total agreement of the Ummah on this issue; and belief in it is the symbol of *Ahl-us-Sunnah wal-Jamā'ah.*

Alhamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Nūḥ
Ends here

Sūrah Al-Jinn

(The Jinns)

This Sūrah is Makkī. It contains 28 verses and 2 sections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 28

قُلْ أُوْحِيَ إِلَيَّ أَنَّهُ اسْتَمَعَ نَفَرٌ مِّنَ الْجِنِّ فَقَالُوْا إِنَّا سَمِعْنَا قُرْاٰنًا
عَجَبًا ﴿١﴾ يَّهْدِيْ إِلَى الرُّشْدِ فَاٰمَنَّا بِهٖ وَلَنْ نُّشْرِكَ بِرَبِّنَا أَحَدًا ﴿٢﴾
وَّأَنَّهٗ تَعٰلٰى جَدُّ رَبِّنَا مَا اتَّخَذَ صَاحِبَةً وَّلَا وَلَدًا ﴿٣﴾ وَّأَنَّهٗ كَانَ يَقُوْلُ
سَفِيْهُنَا عَلَى اللّٰهِ شَطَطًا ﴿٤﴾ وَّأَنَّا ظَنَنَّا أَنْ لَّنْ تَقُوْلَ الْإِنْسُ وَالْجِنُّ
عَلَى اللّٰهِ كَذِبًا ﴿٥﴾ وَّأَنَّهٗ كَانَ رِجَالٌ مِّنَ الْإِنْسِ يَعُوْذُوْنَ بِرِجَالٍ مِّنَ
الْجِنِّ فَزَادُوْهُمْ رَهَقًا ﴿٦﴾ وَّأَنَّهُمْ ظَنُّوْا كَمَا ظَنَنْتُمْ أَنْ لَّنْ يَّبْعَثَ اللّٰهُ
أَحَدًا ﴿٧﴾ وَّأَنَّا لَمَسْنَا السَّمَآءَ فَوَجَدْنٰهَا مُلِئَتْ حَرَسًا شَدِيْدًا
وَّشُهُبًا ﴿٨﴾ وَّأَنَّا كُنَّا نَقْعُدُ مِنْهَا مَقَاعِدَ لِلسَّمْعِ فَمَنْ يَّسْتَمِعِ الْاٰنَ
يَجِدْ لَهٗ شِهَابًا رَّصَدًا ﴿٩﴾ وَّأَنَّا لَا نَدْرِيْ أَشَرٌّ أُرِيْدَ بِمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَمْ
أَرَادَ بِهِمْ رَبُّهُمْ رَشَدًا ﴿١٠﴾ وَّأَنَّا مِنَّا الصّٰلِحُوْنَ وَ مِنَّا دُوْنَ ذٰلِكَ
كُنَّا طَرَآئِقَ قِدَدًا ﴿١١﴾ وَّأَنَّا ظَنَنَّا أَنْ لَّنْ نُّعْجِزَ اللّٰهَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَنْ
نُّعْجِزَهٗ هَرَبًا ﴿١٢﴾ وَّأَنَّا لَمَّا سَمِعْنَا الْهُدٰٓى اٰمَنَّا بِهٖ فَمَنْ يُّؤْمِنْ بِرَبِّهٖ
فَلَا يَخَافُ بَخْسًا وَّلَا رَهَقًا ﴿١٣﴾ وَّأَنَّا مِنَّا الْمُسْلِمُوْنَ وَ مِنَّا

الْقٰسِطُوْنَ ؕ فَمَنْ اَسْلَمَ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ تَحَرَّوْا رَشَدًا ﴿۱۴﴾ وَاَمَّا الْقٰسِطُوْنَ
فَكَانُوْا لِجَهَنَّمَ حَطَبًا ﴿۱۵﴾ ۙ وَّاَنْ لَّوِ اسْتَقَامُوْا عَلَى الطَّرِيْقَةِ
لَاَسْقَيْنٰهُمْ مَّآءً غَدَقًا ﴿۱۶﴾ ۙ لِّنَفْتِنَهُمْ فِيْهِ ؕ وَمَنْ يُّعْرِضْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ رَبِّهٖ
يَسْلُكْهُ عَذَابًا صَعَدًا ﴿۱۷﴾ ۙ وَّاَنَّ الْمَسٰجِدَ لِلّٰهِ فَلَا تَدْعُوْا مَعَ اللّٰهِ
اَحَدًا ﴿۱۸﴾ ۙ وَّاَنَّهٗ لَمَّا قَامَ عَبْدُ اللّٰهِ يَدْعُوْهُ كَادُوْا يَكُوْنُوْنَ عَلَيْهِ لِبَدًا
﴿۱۹﴾ قُلْ اِنَّمَآ اَدْعُوْا رَبِّيْ وَلَآ اُشْرِكُ بِهٖٓ اَحَدًا ﴿۲۰﴾ قُلْ اِنِّيْ لَآ اَمْلِكُ
لَكُمْ ضَرًّا وَّلَا رَشَدًا ﴿۲۱﴾ قُلْ اِنِّيْ لَنْ يُّجِيْرَنِيْ مِنَ اللّٰهِ اَحَدٌ ۙ وَّلَنْ
اَجِدَ مِنْ دُوْنِهٖ مُلْتَحَدًا ﴿۲۲﴾ ۙ اِلَّا بَلٰغًا مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَرِسٰلٰتِهٖ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّعْصِ
اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ فَاِنَّ لَهٗ نَارَ جَهَنَّمَ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَآ اَبَدًا ﴿۲۳﴾ ؕ حَتّٰٓى اِذَا رَاَوْا
مَا يُوْعَدُوْنَ فَسَيَعْلَمُوْنَ مَنْ اَضْعَفُ نَاصِرًا وَّاَقَلُّ عَدَدًا ﴿۲۴﴾ قُلْ اِنْ
اَدْرِيْٓ اَقَرِيْبٌ مَّا تُوْعَدُوْنَ اَمْ يَجْعَلُ لَهٗ رَبِّيْٓ اَمَدًا ﴿۲۵﴾ عٰلِمُ الْغَيْبِ
فَلَا يُظْهِرُ عَلٰى غَيْبِهٖٓ اَحَدًا ﴿۲۶﴾ ۙ اِلَّا مَنِ ارْتَضٰى مِنْ رَّسُوْلٍ فَاِنَّهٗ
يَسْلُكُ مِنْۢ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهٖ رَصَدًا ﴿۲۷﴾ ۙ لِّيَعْلَمَ اَنْ قَدْ اَبْلَغُوْا
رِسٰلٰتِ رَبِّهِمْ وَاَحَاطَ بِمَا لَدَيْهِمْ وَاَحْصٰى كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عَدَدًا ﴿۲۸﴾

Say, "It has been revealed to me that a group from Jinn has listened (to the Qur'ān), and said (to their people), 'Indeed we have heard an amazing Recital (Qur'ān) [1] **that guides to the right way, so we have believed in it, and we will never associate a partner with our Lord.'** [2] **and (then the Jinns started talking to each other) that exalted is the Glory of our Lord; He has taken neither a wife, nor a son,** [3] **and that the fools among us used to attribute to Allah extremely wrong things,** [4] **and that we thought that the humans and the Jinn would never tell a lie about Allah, (therefore, we had followed them in *shirk* under this impression),** [5] **and that some people from human beings used to seek refuge with some people of the Jinn, and thus they increased them (the Jinns) in arrogance,** [6] **and that they (humans)**

thought as you (O Jinns) thought that Allah would never resurrect anyone, [7] and that we sought (to reach) the sky, but we found it filled with stern guards and flames, [8] and that we used to sit at places therein to listen; but if one will (try to) listen now, he will find a flame in ambush for him, [9] and that we do not know whether it is a bad end that is intended for those on earth, or their Lord has intended for them a right thing, [10] and that some of us are (already) righteous, and some of us are otherwise, and we were on different ways. [11] And that we have now believed that we can never frustrate Allah on the earth, nor can we baffle Him by escape, [12] and that when we heard the Guiding Discourse, we believed in it; so if one believes in his Lord, he will have no fear of either any curtailment (in his reward) or any excess (in his punishment), [13] and that some of us are Muslims, and some of us are unjust; so those who submitted to Islam have found out the right path, [14] As for the unjust, they have become firewood for Hell." [15]

"(And it is also revealed to me) that if they (the people of Makkah) had stood firm on the (right) way, We would have supplied water to them in abundance, [16] so that We test them thereby; and if one turns away from the remembrance of his Lord, He will thrust him into a severe torment, [17] and that *masājids* (mosques) belong to Allah; so, do not invoke anyone along with Allah, [18] and that when Allah's slave stood invoking Him, they almost rushed on him in crowds." [19]

Say, "I invoke my Lord, and do not associate with Him anyone." [20] Say, "I possess no power to cause you any harm or bring you to a right way." [21] Say, "No one can ever save me from Allah, and I can never find a refuge save with Him. [22] However, (I have been given mandate) to convey (commands) from Allah, and His messages. And the one who disobeys Allah and His Messenger, for him there is the fire of Hell, wherein they will live forever. [23] (And the disbelievers will continue to deny the truth and mock at it) until when they will see what they are promised, they will know whose supporters are weaker, and whose numbers are less. [24] Say, "I do not know whether that which you are promised is near, or my Lord has appointed for it a distant term. [25] (He is the) Knower of the Unseen. So He does not let anyone know His Unseen, [26] except a

messenger whom He chooses (to inform through revelation), and then He appoints (angels as) watching guards before him and behind him, (so that devils may not tamper with the divine revelation,) [27] **so that He knows that they (angels) have conveyed the messages of their Lord. And He has encompassed all that is with them, and has comprehensive knowledge of every thing by numbers.** [28]

Commentary

Preliminary Remarks

It seems necessary to know a few facts before the start of the study of the Sūrah, which are as follows:

Fact [1]

Before the advent of the Holy Prophet ﷺ the devils used to go up to the heavens and eavesdrop on the conversations of the angels. After his advent, they were pelted with a piercing flame if they attempted to go up and eavesdrop. It is mentioned in Sūrah Al-Aḥqāf that a group of jinn went up to the Holy Prophet ﷺ to investigate the reason for this new phenomenon.

Fact [2]

It was customary in the Days of Ignorance that when people halted in a jungle or valley in the course of a journey, they uttered the following words:

اعوذ بعزیز هذا الوادی من شر سفهاء قومه

"I seek refuge in the leader of this valley from the foolish mischief-makers of his nation" --

believing that the leader of the valley (a Jinn) would protect them.

Fact [3]

A terrible famine held Makkah in its grip for several years as a result of the Holy Prophet's ﷺ prayer.

Fact [4]

When the Holy Prophet ﷺ called the pagans towards Islam, they opposed him tooth and nail. The first two incidents are taken from Tafsīr Durr Manthūr and the last two incidents are taken from Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr.

نَفَرٌ مِّنَ الْجِنِّ (...a group from Jinn....72:1). The word *nafar* is used for a

group consisting of three to ten people. The Jinn referred to here are said to be a group of nine Jinns from a place called Naṣībīn.

Reality of Jinn

Jinn is one of the Divine creatures. They have body and soul. They, like human beings, have intellect and senses, but they are hidden from human eyes. This species of creation is called 'Jinn' because it literally means 'hidden' or 'invisible'. They, like human beings, are created from the four primal elements: dust, water, air and fire, but the element of fire predominates in them, whereas in man the element of dust predominates. They, like human beings, are males and females; and they, like human beings, marry and procreate. Apparently, the word *shaiṭān* [pl. *shayāṭīn*] 'Satan' refers to the 'arrogant mischief-making Jinn'. The existence of Jinn and angels is established by conclusive and incontestable evidence in the Qur'ān and Sunnah, the denial or rejection of which amounts to disbelieving the Qur'ān. [Tafsīr Maẓharī].

قُلْ أُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ Say, (It has been revealed to me.....72:1). This shows that the Holy Prophet ﷺ did not see the group of Jinn who heard him recite the Qur'ān. Allah informed him by the revelation of Sūrah Al-Jinn.

Circumstances of Revelation

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه narrates, as recorded in Ṣaḥīḥ of Bukhārī, of Muslim, and in Tirmidhī and other collections, that Allah's Messenger ﷺ did not by deliberate design make the Jinn listen to the Qur'ān, nor did he see them. The true story is that the Holy Prophet ﷺ, with his Companions, was going to the marketplace of 'Ukāẓ. This incident took place at a time when the devils were barred from going to the skies and eavesdropping on the conversations of the angels by being pelted with piercing flames. When the Jinn realised that they were no longer free to eavesdrop, they discussed among themselves that the incident could not be coincidental. There must be a genuine reason for that. So they divided themselves into groups and each group went in different direction to investigate the cause of the new phenomenon. One of the groups arrived at a place called Nakhlah in Tihāmah where Ḥijāz is situated. At that juncture, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was leading the Ṣaḥābah in Fajr *ṣalāh* and the Jinn had the opportunity to hear the Qur'ān. When this group of Jinn heard the Qur'ān, they listened to it very attentively and concluded on oath that it was the Qur'ān that prevented them from eavesdropping in the heavens. Then they returned to their fellow Jinns and recounted to

them the entire episode, which is mentioned in the following verse:

فَقَالُوْا اِنَّا سَمِعْنَا قُرْاٰنًا عَجَبًا (...and said [to their people], 'Indeed we have heard an amazing Recital [Qur'ān]....72:1). Allah informed His Messenger about the entire incident of the Jinn in the verses under discussion.

Abū Ṭālib's Death and the Holy Prophet's Journey to Ṭā'if

Most commentators say that after the death of Abū Ṭālib the Holy Prophet ﷺ felt lonely, having no friend or supporter in Makkah. So, he undertook a journey to Ṭā'if where he approached Banū Thaqīf for assistance against the hostility and persecution of his people. According to Muḥammad Ibn Isḥāq's narration, when the Holy Prophet ﷺ arrived in Ṭā'if, he approached the three brothers of Banū Thaqīf. They were recognized as the leaders and honorable members of the tribe. The three brothers were 'Umair's sons, their names being 'Abd Yālil, Sa'ūd and Ḥabīb. They had a Quraishite lady in their house. Allah's Messenger ﷺ invited them to the call of Islam and mentioned about his people's hostility and persecution and asked for help. But they responded very harshly and did not speak to him about anything.

Allah's Messenger ﷺ saw that these three people were the most respected leaders of Banū Thaqīf, from whom he expected a favourable response, but he was disappointed. He said to them that if they did not wish to help him, they should at least keep his arrival and request for help confidential and not tell his people; because if they came to know about it, they would persecute him even more harshly. But the oppressors did not concede to this either. On the contrary, they let loose on him foolish hooligans, slaves and hoodlums, so that they may revile him and make violent noises in public places against him. When they made violent noises, more hoodlums and young violent criminal elements joined in. In order to save himself from the mischief of the hooligans and hoodlums, the Holy Prophet ﷺ took refuge in a vineyard which belonged to two brothers, namely 'Utbah and Shaibah. The brothers themselves were in the vineyard at the time. The hooligans and hoodlums left him and went back. The two brothers were watching him, and they also watched how violently the foolish people behaved towards him. Just then the Quraishite lady, who was in the house of the oppressors, came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. He complained to her how her in-laws persecuted him.

When the Holy Prophet ﷺ felt a bit settled in the vineyard, he prayed to Allah. The wordings of the supplication are unusual and on no other

occasion such wordings are recorded:

اَللّٰهُمَّ اِنِّیْ اَشْكُوْا اِلَيْكَ ضُعْفَ قُوَّتِیْ وَقِلَّةَ حِيْلَتِیْ وَهَوَانِیْ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَاَنْتَ اَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمِيْنَ وَاَنْتَ رَبُّ الْمُسْتَضْعَفِيْنَ فَاَنْتَ رَبِّیْ اِلٰی مَنْ تَكِلُنِیْ اِلٰی بَعِيْدٍ يَتَهَجَّمُنِیْ اَوْ اِلٰی عَدُوٍّ مَّلَّكْتَهٗ اَمْرِیْ اِنْ لَّمْ تَكُنْ سَاخِطًا عَلَیَّ فَلَآ اُبَالِیْ وَلٰكِنَّ عَافِيَتَكَ هِیَ اَوْسَعُ لِیْ. اَعُوْذُ بِنُوْرِ وَجْهِكَ الَّذِیْ اَشْرَقَتْ لَهُ الظُّلُمَاتُ وَصَلُحَ عَلَيْهِ اَمْرُ الدُّنْيَا وَالْاٰخِرَةِ مِنْ اَنْ تُنْزِلَ لِیْ غَضَبَكَ لَكَ الْعُتْبٰى حَتّٰى تَرْضٰى وَلَا حَوْلَ وَلَاقُوَّةَ اِلَّا بِكَ. (مظهری باختصار)

"O Allah, I complain to you the weakness of my strength and the shortage of my options, and lack of respect for me in the sight of people. You are the Most Merciful of all, and You are the Cherisher and Sustainer of the weaklings. You are my Cherisher. To whom are You handing me over? - to a stranger who would attack me? Or to an enemy whom You have given control over me (so that he may do as he wishes)? If You are not angry with me, I do not care. Your caring about me is better (which I pray for). I seek refuge in the light of Your blessed Being which dispels all darkness and on the foundation of which all matters related to this world and the next world are set aright. If You send down Your wrath on us, our task is to exert ourselves until we gain Your good pleasure. And there is neither strength nor power except through You." [condensed from Maẓharī].

When Rabī'ah's sons 'Utbah and Shaibah saw this, they felt compassion for him in their heart. They called one of their Christian slaves, 'Addās by name, and asked him to break a bunch of grapes, place it in a plate and give it to that person and ask him to eat. Complying with the instructions, 'Addās kept the plate of grapes in front of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. He recited *bismil-lah* 'In the name of Allah' and stretched his hand towards it. 'Addās was watching all this and said: By Allah! this speech [referring to the formula of *basmalah*] is not used by the inhabitants of this city. The Holy Prophet ﷺ asked him as to where he was from and what his religion was. He replied that he was a Christian and hailed from Nineveh. Then the Holy Prophet ﷺ said to him that this means 'you are from the village of Yūnus Ibn Mattā عليه السلام. He asked: "What do you know about Yūnus Ibn Mattā." The Holy Prophet ﷺ replied: "He was my brother. He was Allah's Prophet. I too am Allah's Prophet." At this, 'Addās fell to the Holy Prophet's ﷺ feet. He kissed the blessed head of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his hands and legs. 'Utbah and Shaibah watched the whole incident. One of them said to the other: "I

hope he has not set our slave awry." When 'Addas returned to them, they asked him: "What has happened? You were kissing his hands and feet ?" He replied: "My masters, at this time there is no person better than he on the face of the earth. He has taught me something which none other than a Prophet can teach." They said: "You miserable wretch, may it not happen that this man turns you away from your religion, because your religion in any case is better than his." When the Holy Prophet ﷺ was completely despaired of Thaqīf's assistance, he returned from Ṭā'if to Makkah. On his way back, he halted at Nakhlah and towards the latter part of the night he performed *ṣalāt-ut-tahajjud.* The delegation of Jinns of Naṣībīn of Yemen had also gone there. They heard the Qur'ān and embraced the faith. They went back to their people and recounted to them the whole incident which Allah has mentioned in the verses under comment. [Maẓharī]

A Jinn Companion of the Holy Prophet ﷺ

Ibn Jauzī, in his book *Ṣifat-uṣ-Ṣafwah,* through his own chain of authorities, reports from Sahl Ibn 'Abdullāh رضي الله عنه that he saw an old Jinn, in a place, who was performing *ṣalāh* in the direction of Ka'bah. He was wearing a woolen cloak that looked beautiful on him and in which he looked graceful. After he completed his prayer, Sayyidnā Sahl رضي الله عنه greeted him. Replying to his greeting, he said: 'You seem to be admiring the beauty of this cloak. This cloak is on my body for seven hundred years. I have met Holy Prophet 'Īsā عليه السلام in this cloak, and in the same cloak I met Holy Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ and I am from among those Jinns about whom Sūrah Al-Jinn was revealed.' According to the Ḥadīth narratives that recount the incident of the 'Night of Jinn',(i.e.the night in which the Jinns visited the Holy Prophet ﷺ Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه was with the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and the Holy Prophet ﷺ met the Jinns in a valley near Makkah for the specific purpose of inviting them to the call of Islam and making them hear the Qur'ān by deliberate design. Apparently, this incident occurred after the incident mentioned in Sūrah Al-Jinn. 'Allāmah Khafājī has said that reliable Aḥādīth confirm that the Jinn delegations met the Holy Prophet ﷺ six times. Thus there is no contradiction between the two versions of the incident, because they are two separate incidents. The Holy Prophet ﷺ was not even aware of the incident of the Jinn's coming to him and listening to the Qur'ān that is

mentioned in Sūrah Jinn. He only learnt about it later through revelation. This incident happened at Nakhlah on his way back from Ṭa'if. The other narratives from which we gather that the Holy Prophet ﷺ met the Jinn by deliberate design in a valley near the city of Makkah to preach to them and make them hear the Qur'ān - is a separate incident which took place after that.

وَأَنَّهُ تَعٰلٰى جَدُّ رَبِّنَا (and [then the Jinns started talking to each other] that exalted is the Glory of our Lord;....72:3). The word *jadd* means 'majesty/glory' used for Allah. Instead of saying '*jadduhū*' with a third person pronoun referring to Allah, the attributive name '*rabb*' 'Lord' is expressly retained which indicates the exalted position of Allah. The Being who is the Cherisher and sustainer of His creation must, of necessity, occupy the lofty position. Commentators have discussed the grammatical conjunctive construction '*wa annahū*' at length in this verse. It might be of no interest to the general readers.

وَأَنَّهُ كَانَ يَقُوْلُ سَفِيْهُنَا عَلَى اللّٰهِ شَطَطًا ﴿٤﴾ وَّأَنَّا ظَنَنَّآ أَنْ لَّنْ تَقُوْلَ الْإِنْسُ وَالْجِنُّ عَلَى اللّٰهِ كَذِبًا ﴿٥﴾

> ...and that the fools among us used to attribute to Allah extremely wrong things, and that we thought that the humans and the Jinn would never tell a lie about Allah, [therefore, we had followed them in shirk under this impression]. (72:5)

The word *shaṭaṭ* means 'vile words, extravagant or exorbitant or enormous lies'. The word also means 'to transgress or act wrongfully, unjustly or exceed the legitimate bounds'. The believers from amongst Jinn used to put forward their excuse for being involved in disbelief and idolatry thus: The foolish people from amongst their nation uttered vile slander against Allah, whilst they did not think it possible for a human being or a Jinn to impute a lie to Allah. They were thus far caught up in the foolish people's vile words and committed *kufr* and *shirk,* but they had now heard the Qur'ān and the reality had later opened up.

وَأَنَّهُ كَانَ رِجَالٌ مِّنَ الْإِنْسِ يَعُوْذُوْنَ بِرِجَالٍ مِّنَ الْجِنِّ فَزَادُوْهُمْ رَهَقًا ﴿٦﴾

> (...and that some people from human beings used to seek refuge with some peoples of the Jinn, and thus they increased them (the Jinns) in arrogance, [72:6]'

This verse describes the situation that it was customary for people in the Days of Ignorance that when they halted in a valley in the course of a

journey, they sought refuge in the Jinn leader of that valley from the foolish mischief-makers of his nation believing that the leader of the valley will protect them. This made the Jinn think that they are better than human beings. That is why, they seek refuge in their leader but this increased the wickedness of the Jinn.

Rāfi' Ibn 'Umair's ﷺ Islam on account of the Jinn

Maẓharī cites in his Tafsīr that it is reported in *Hawātif-ul-Jinn* through his chain of narrators on the authority of Sayyidnā Sa'īd Ibn Jubair ﷺ that the Holy Prophet's ﷺ Companion Rāfi' Ibn 'Umair ﷺ recounts an incident of his embracing the Islamic faith, thus:

'One night I was travelling in a desert. Suddenly I was overcome by sleep. So, I alighted from my camel, and before I went off to sleep I uttered the following formula in keeping with the custom of my people:

انّی اعوذ بعظیم هٰذا الوادی من الجنّ

"I seek refuge in the leader of the Jinn of this valley from the foolish mischief-makers of his nation."

I saw in my dream that there is a sword in a person's hand who wants to place it on my camel's chest. I woke up in a shock and looked around in all directions, but found nothing. So, I said to myself that this was some Satanic nightmare. It was not a true dream and fell back into deep sleep and became completely oblivious to my surrounding. I experienced the same dream again. I got up and looked all around the camel, but found nothing. This time, however, I found the camel shivering. I went back to my place and slept away and saw the same dream. I awoke and found my camel tossing about restlessly. Then I saw a youngster in whose hand was a weapon. This was the same person whom I had seen attacking the camel the first time. I saw he was holding the hand of an old man who is stopping him from attacking the camel. Just then three wild zebras appeared. The old man said to the youngster, 'Choose any one of these zebras, and let go this man's camel.' The youngster took one of the zebras and took leave. The old man then looked at me and said, 'You fool, when you seek refuge in a valley, and you fear any danger from the jinn or devils, recite thus:'

اعوذ باللّٰه ربّ محمّد من هول هٰذا الوادی

"I seek refuge in Allah, the Lord of Muḥammad, from the

horrors of this valley. Do not seek refuge in any Jinn because that time is gone when human beings used to seek refuge in Jinn.'"

I asked him who that person was. He replied that he was the Arabian Holy Prophet ﷺ, neither eastern nor western. He was raised with his Prophetic mission on a Monday. I asked him where he lived. He replied that he lived in Yathrib which is an area where dates grow abundantly. As soon as the morning dawned, I set for Madīnah and urged my mount to move faster and faster until I reached Madīnah. When the Holy Prophet ﷺ saw me, he recounted to me the entire episode before I could tell him anything. He invited me to the call of Islam and I embraced the Islamic faith.

Having narrated this story, Sayyidnā Sa'īd Ibn Jubair رحمه الله said that the following verse was revealed in this connection. وَأَنَّهُ كَانَ رِجَالٌ مِّنَ الْإِنسِ يَعُوذُونَ بِرِجَالٍ مِّنَ الْجِنِّ (and that some people from human beings used to seek refuge with some people of the Jinn.....72:6)

وَأَنَّا لَمَسْنَا السَّمَاءَ فَوَجَدْنَاهَا مُلِئَتْ حَرَسًا شَدِيدًا وَشُهُبًا (...and that we sought [to reach] the sky, but we found it filled with stern guards and flames....72:8). The word *sama'* is used in two different senses: 'sky' as well as 'cloud'. It would appear that here the word is used in the latter sense.

The Jinn Used to Go only up to the Clouds to Eavesdrop, Not to the Sky

The Jinn and the devils used to go up to the sky means that they used to go to the 'clouds', take up positions there to sit and eavesdrop. The proof of this is found in Ṣaḥīḥ of Bukhārī on the authority of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها who reports:

سمعت رسول الله صلّى الله عليه وسلّم يقول ان الملائكة تنزل فى العَنَان و هوالسحاب فتذكر الامرالذى قضى فى السماء فتَستُرق الشّياطين السمع فتسمعه فتتوجّه الى الكُهّان فيكذبون معها مائة كذبة من عند انفسهم (از مظهرى).

" I have heard the Messenger of Allah say that the angels descended in the *'anan* of *sama'* meaning the 'cloud'. There they discussed the decisions Allah has issued in the sky. The devils listened to their private conversations without them knowing about it and passed the information to the soothsayers, mixing it with a hundred lies from their side.'" [Maẓharī].

A narration is recorded in Ṣaḥīḥ of Bukhārī on the authority of

Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ and in Muslim on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ to the following effect:

When Allah issues an order in the sky, the angels flap their wings in readiness to obey the order. When the issuance of the order is over, they discuss among themselves. The devils eavesdrop on this discussion, and pass the information to the soothsayers, admixing it with many lies.

This Ḥadīth apparently contradicts the narration of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا but in actual fact, there is no conflict between the two narratives. This narrative does not prove that the devils go inside the sky to eavesdrop. Probably, when the order is issued in the first instance by Allah, it filters down to the angels from the upper level to the lower level, until the angels come down to the cloud where they discuss it. The devils steal the information from here as mentioned by Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا [Maẓharī].

At any rate, before the advent of the Holy Prophet ﷺ the Jinn and devils had free access to the heavenly information. They used to position themselves in the cloud and eavesdrop on the conversations of the angels and pass the information to the soothsayers. At the advent of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, there arose the need to protect the heavenly revelation. As a result, the access of devils to the upper region was stopped in such a way that if a devil attempted to go up, he would be repelled by piercing flames. This was the new phenomenon that excited the curiosity of the devils and Jinn and, dividing themselves into groups, they went to the east and to the west to investigate. One of the groups arrived at a place called Nakhlah where its members heard the Qur'ān and embraced the faith of Islam as mentioned in Sūrah Al-Jinn.

Meteors Existed Since the Inception of Time, but were not Used to Repel the Devils before the Advent of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. It happened only after his Advent

A doubt that may arise here is that the existence of Meteors, which in common parlance are called *inqiḍāḍ-ul-kaukab* the 'falling stars', is not a new phenomenon. This verse, however, indicates that they showed up to repel the devils as if they are new-age phenomena of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. In response, it may be stated that there is no denying that the meteors did exist since the inception of time and space before the advent of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and that there is no contradiction between what

humanity experienced since the beginning of the world, scientific explanations and the Qur'ānic statement. Philosophers and scientists explain that the meteors may originate from the earth or stars or disintegrating planets, and wander in space at enormous speeds and fall to the earth. Some fiery matter may arise from the surface of the earth and heat up at some point, or the speed of the meteors makes them glow and burn, or a flame emits from a star - and this may have habitually continued ever since. These flames, however, were not used to serve a particular purpose before the advent of the Holy Prophet ﷺ; they were merely a natural phenomena. After the advent of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, meteoric flames were used to serve the purpose of shooting the devils if they attempted to go up and listen furtively the conversation of the angels. See also Ma'āriful Qur'ān, Vol. 5/pp 303-305, under [15:17-18].

وَأَنَّا لَا نَدْرِىٓ أَشَرٌّ أُرِيدَ بِمَن فِى الْأَرْضِ أَمْ أَرَادَ بِهِمْ رَبُّهُمْ رَشَدًا (and that we do not know whether it is a bad end that is intended for those on earth, or their Lord has intended for them a right thing,....72:10). The Jinn and devils were barred from having access to heavenly news. In this case it would be a punishment for the inhabitants of the earth. However, if Allah intends them to be rightly guided, He has barred the Jinn and Satan from having access to the heaven, so that they do not interfere with Divine revelation. Therefore, they expressed their reservations about this to the effect that they had no idea as to whether it was a bad end that was intended for the inhabitants of the earth or whether Allah intended them to be rightly guided.

فَمَن يُؤْمِنۢ بِرَبِّهِۦ فَلَا يَخَافُ بَخْسًا وَلَا رَهَقًا (...so if one believes in his Lord, he will have no fear of either any curtailment [in his reward] or any excess [in his punishment]...72:13). The word *bakhs*, with *bā'* carrying *fatḥa*] and *khā'* carrying *sukūn*, means 'to reduce the right' and the word *rahaq* means 'disgrace'. In other words, anyone who believes in Allah need fear neither curtailment in the reward of his good deeds, nor disgrace by excess in his punishment in the Hereafter.

وَأَنَّ الْمَسٰجِدَ لِلّٰهِ فَلَا تَدْعُوا مَعَ اللّٰهِ أَحَدًا (...and that *masājid* (mosques) belong to Allah; so, do not invoke anyone along with Allah....72:18). The word *masājid* is the plural of *masjid*. Here the word, could be taken in its popular sense, that is, mosques or places of worship dedicated for the performance of prayers. In this case, it would mean that all mosques belong to Allah, dedicated to His sole worship and therefore we are not

permitted to call on anyone else besides Allah, like the Jews and Christians commit *shirk* in their places of worship. In sum, the mosques must be kept clear of all false beliefs and vile deeds.

The word *masājid* could also have another sense. It could be the plural of *masjad*, with the letter *jīm* carrying *fatḥ*, in which case it would be *maṣdar mīmī* 'infinitivity' and mean 'to prostrate or prostration'. The verse in this sense would signify that worship is reserved exclusively for Allah. It is not permitted to prostrate to anyone, because if he calls on anyone else for help, it is as though he is prostrating to him which must be avoided.

Ruling

By common consent of the scholars, prostration to anyone other Allah is totally forbidden. According to some scholars, it is tantamount to *kufr/shirk*.

قُلْ اِنْ اَدْرِىْ اَقَرِيْبٌ مَّا تُوْعَدُوْنَ اَمْ يَجْعَلُ لَه رَبِّىْٓ اَمَدًا. عٰلِمُ الْغَيْبِ فَلَا يُظْهِرُ عَلٰى غَيْبِهٖٓ اَحَدًا

(Say, "I do not know whether that which you are promised is near, or my Lord has appointed for it a distant term. [He is the] Knower of the Unseen. So He does not let anyone know His Unseen....72:25-26)

The non-believers demanded that the Holy Prophet ﷺ should show them the exact time and date when the Resurrection will occur. In verse [25] he is enjoined to say to them that it was not for him to say when the threatened punishment would come, but come it must. Verse [26] is the proof of the preceding verse. The Holy Prophet ﷺ does not know whether the promised day is close or whether a longer time is appointed for it, because Allah alone is the knower of the Unseen. That is His exclusive characteristics, and therefore He does not divulge His Unseen to anyone. The definite article *alif lam* in *al-ghaib* 'the Unseen' is grammatically referred to as *alif lam* for *istighrāq lil-jins* 'the article encompassing and indicating the entire genus' [as stated in *Rūḥ* with reference to *Raḍī*], that is, He is Omniscient - knowing every species of the Unseen and all genera of the Unseen. In the *iḍāfah* [possessive case] construction *ghaibihī* 'His Unseen', the possessive pronoun refers to 'Allah' and reinforces His predominance over the Unseen. Allah's knowledge comprehends and encompasses every *infima species* [species of species]

and every *summum genus* [genus of genera] of His creation. This is a specialized attribute of Allah. He does not divulge His Unseen to anyone indiscriminately, so that he may store and retrieve the secrets of the unknown world as and when he wishes.

The purport of the verse under comment is to affirm the totality of Allah's knowledge of the Unseen so that He alone is fully aware of every particle of His creation, and to negate such total knowledge of the Unseen for anyone other than Allah. It was possible that an unintelligent person might surmise that the Holy Prophet ﷺ did not have any knowledge of the Unseen - so, how can he be a Messenger? Allah reveals to a Messenger thousands of secrets of the Unseen. Anyone to whom no revelation comes down cannot be a Prophet or a Messenger. Thus the following verse makes an exception:

إِلَّا مَنِ ارْتَضَىٰ مِن رَّسُولٍ فَإِنَّهُ يَسْلُكُ مِن بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِ رَصَدًا ﴿٢٧﴾

(...except a messenger whom He chooses [to inform through revelation], and then He appoints [angels as] watching guards before him and behind him, [so that devils may not tamper with the divine revelation,].... 72:27)

Difference between 'Knowledge of the Unseen' and 'Reports of the Unseen Events'

The exception made here is the response to the doubt raised by unintelligent people. The negation of the total knowledge of the Unseen does not necessarily entail absolute negation of every unknown secret. For the office of *risālah*, a Messenger needs a certain amount of knowledge of unseen things which Allah grants him through revelation. When Allah sends down the revelation to His Holy Prophet ﷺ, He sends it down under His special protection, and is completely secure against being distorted or tampered with by devils. First of all, the word *rasūl* [Messenger] determines the type of knowledge granted to a Prophet or a Messenger. Evidently, it is the knowledge of the sacred laws and injunctions in its totality, and of the unseen events according to the exigency of time. The next statement states the heavily protected manner in which the unseen knowledge is granted. It is sent down through angels around whom are posted other angels as sentinels. This explanation clarifies the point that the exceptive sentence that affirms the unseen knowledge granted to a Holy Prophet عليهم السلام and a Messenger is a specialized unseen knowledge which is essential and relevant to the

proper functioning of a Prophetic office.

Technically, this 'exception', in Arabic grammar, is referred to as *istithnā' munqaṭi'* which may be defined as the exceptive sentence in which the exception is severed from, or wholly different in kind from, the general description given before. In this sense, whilst the basic sentence negated total Unseen Knowledge in general terms for anyone besides Allah, the exceptive sentence does not affirm it. It merely affirms specialized acquaintance with some reports of the unseen events which the Qur'ān frequently describes as *anbā'ul ghaib,* thus, for instance:

تِلْكَ مِنْ اَنْبَاءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوْحِيْهَا اِلَيْكَ

'These are some reports from the unseen [events] which We reveal to you. [11:49]'

Some unintelligent people do not grasp the distinction between 'Knowledge of the Unseen' and 'reports of the unseen events'. As a result, they attempt to prove 'total knowledge of the Unseen' for the Prophets of Allah, especially for the Last Prophet ﷺ. They believe that the Holy Prophet ﷺ, like Allah, is omniscient - having knowledge of every particle of the universe. This is clearly *shirk* - assigning to the Holy Prophet ﷺ the status of Godhead, God forbid! If any person discloses a secret to a friend of his, of which no one else has that piece of knowledge or information, such a friend cannot be described as omniscient. Likewise, Allah has granted thousands of pieces of information of the unseen world through revelation to His Holy Prophets ﷺ, but it is not true to say that they are omniscient. The ignorant laity do not understand the difference between the concepts. When they are told that the Holy Prophet ﷺ is not omniscient, they understand this statement to imply that the Holy Prophet ﷺ [God forbid!] did not have any information about anything unseen. No believer in the world ever holds such a belief, nor can he ever do so because if anyone does so the whole structure of *nubuwwah* and *risālah* would come crumbling down. It is not possible for any believer to behave in this way.

The concluding part of the last verse says:

وَاَحْصٰى كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عَدَدًا (...and has comprehensive knowledge of every thing by numbers....72:28). In other words, Allah alone encompasses the perfect knowledge of everything and keeps a meticulous count of it. He has the knowledge of the exact number of particles in the mountains. He has the

knowledge of the exact number of drops in all the oceans of the world. He has the knowledge of the exact number of drops in every rain. He alone has the knowledge of the exact number of leaves on all the trees in the world. Thus it is made clear that the totality of the knowledge of the Unseen is reserved exclusively for Allah, so that there should be no misunderstanding about the above 'exception' clause.

The question of the Unseen Knowledge is fully discussed under [27:65]

قُلْ لَّا يَعْلَمُ مَنْ فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ الْغَيْبَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ

Say, "No one in the heavens and the earth has the knowledge of the Unseen except Allah." [27:65]

Alhamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Jinn
Ends here

Sūrah Al-Muzzammil

(The Wrapped up one)

This Sūrah is Makkī, and it has 20 verses and 2 Sections.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1-20

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الْمُزَّمِّلُ ﴿١﴾ قُمِ الَّيْلَ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا ﴿٢﴾ نِّصْفَهٗۤ اَوِ انْقُصْ مِنْهُ قَلِيْلًا
﴿٣﴾ اَوْ زِدْ عَلَيْهِ وَرَتِّلِ الْقُرْاٰنَ تَرْتِيْلًا ﴿٤﴾ اِنَّا سَنُلْقِيْ عَلَيْكَ قَوْلًا
ثَقِيْلًا ﴿٥﴾ اِنَّ نَاشِئَةَ الَّيْلِ هِيَ اَشَدُّ وَطْاً وَّاَقْوَمُ قِيْلًا ﴿٦﴾ اِنَّ لَكَ فِي
النَّهَارِ سَبْحًا طَوِيْلًا ﴿٧﴾ وَاذْكُرِ اسْمَ رَبِّكَ وَتَبَتَّلْ اِلَيْهِ تَبْتِيْلًا ﴿٨﴾
رَبُّ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ فَاتَّخِذْهُ وَكِيْلًا ﴿٩﴾ وَاصْبِرْ
عَلٰى مَا يَقُوْلُوْنَ وَاهْجُرْهُمْ هَجْرًا جَمِيْلًا ﴿١٠﴾ وَذَرْنِيْ وَالْمُكَذِّبِيْنَ
اُولِي النَّعْمَةِ وَمَهِّلْهُمْ قَلِيْلًا ﴿١١﴾ اِنَّ لَدَيْنَآ اَنْكَالًا وَّجَحِيْمًا ﴿١٢﴾
وَّطَعَامًا ذَا غُصَّةٍ وَّعَذَابًا اَلِيْمًا ﴿١٣﴾ يَوْمَ تَرْجُفُ الْاَرْضُ وَالْجِبَالُ
وَكَانَتِ الْجِبَالُ كَثِيْبًا مَّهِيْلًا ﴿١٤﴾ اِنَّآ اَرْسَلْنَآ اِلَيْكُمْ رَسُوْلًا
شَاهِدًا عَلَيْكُمْ كَمَآ اَرْسَلْنَآ اِلٰى فِرْعَوْنَ رَسُوْلًا ﴿١٥﴾ فَعَصٰى فِرْعَوْنُ
الرَّسُوْلَ فَاَخَذْنٰهُ اَخْذًا وَّبِيْلًا ﴿١٦﴾ فَكَيْفَ تَتَّقُوْنَ اِنْ كَفَرْتُمْ يَوْمًا
يَّجْعَلُ الْوِلْدَانَ شِيْبًا ﴿١٧﴾ اِۨلسَّمَآءُ مُنْفَطِرٌۢ بِهٖ كَانَ وَعْدُهٗ مَفْعُوْلًا

﴿١٨﴾ إِنَّ هٰذِهٖ تَذْكِرَةٌ ۚ فَمَنْ شَآءَ اتَّخَذَ إِلٰى رَبِّهٖ سَبِيْلًا ﴿١٩﴾ إِنَّ
رَبَّكَ يَعْلَمُ أَنَّكَ تَقُوْمُ أَدْنٰى مِنْ ثُلُثَيِ الَّيْلِ وَنِصْفَهٗ وَثُلُثَهٗ وَطَآئِفَةٌ مِّنَ
الَّذِيْنَ مَعَكَ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يُقَدِّرُ الَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ ؕ عَلِمَ أَنْ لَّنْ تُحْصُوْهُ فَتَابَ
عَلَيْكُمْ فَاقْرَءُوْا مَا تَيَسَّرَ مِنَ الْقُرْاٰنِ ؕ عَلِمَ أَنْ سَيَكُوْنُ مِنْكُمْ مَّرْضٰى ۙ وَاٰخَرُوْنَ
يَضْرِبُوْنَ فِي الْأَرْضِ يَبْتَغُوْنَ مِنْ فَضْلِ اللّٰهِ ۙ وَاٰخَرُوْنَ يُقَاتِلُوْنَ فِيْ
سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ۫ فَاقْرَءُوْا مَا تَيَسَّرَ مِنْهُ ۙ وَأَقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتُوا الزَّكٰوةَ
وَأَقْرِضُوا اللّٰهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا ؕ وَمَا تُقَدِّمُوْا لِأَنْفُسِكُمْ مِّنْ خَيْرٍ تَجِدُوْهُ
عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ هُوَ خَيْرًا وَّأَعْظَمَ أَجْرًا ؕ وَاسْتَغْفِرُوا اللّٰهَ ؕ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ
رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿٢٠﴾

O you wrapped up in clothes,* [1] **stand at night (for prayer) except a little** [2] **half of it, or make it a little less,** [3] **or make it a little more; and recite the Qur'ān clearly with *tartīl* (in a distinct and measured tone).** [4] **We are going to send down to you a weighty discourse.** [5] **Truly, rising by night (for prayer of *tahajjud*) is the most effective way to subdue (one's self) and to make speech more upright.** [6] **Surely, in daytime, you have a lengthy work to do.** [7] **And remember the name of your Lord, and devote yourself to Him with exclusive devotion.** [8] **He is the Lord of the East and the West; there is no god but He; so take Him for (your) Guardian.** [9] **And bear patiently what they say, and part with them in a beautiful manner.** [10] **And leave Me (to deal) with the deniers, the people of luxury, and give them respite for a while.** [11] **Surely with Us are fetters and**

* The Holy Prophet ﷺ is addressed in this verse with reference to a particular style of wrapping himself in his clothes. The first event of this kind occurred when the Holy Prophet ﷺ received first revelation in the cave of Ḥirā'. Being his first experience, he felt it very hard, and was caught by a shivery cold, and once he reached home, he asked his blessed wife Khadijah رضي الله عنها to wrap him in a blanket which she did. Some narrations have reported another event: When the Holy Prophet ﷺ was accused, by the pagans of Makkah, of being a magician who separated between friends, he felt aggrieved, and wrapped himself in his clothes out of grief. Addressing him with reference to these events is a loving style adopted by Allah Ta'ala to console him. (Muhammad Taqi Usmani)

flaming fire, [12] and food that chokes, and a painful punishment, [13] on the Day when the earth and the mountains will quake, and the mountains will turn into a slipping heap of sand. [14] We have sent to you a messenger, as a witness over you, just as We sent a messenger to Fir'aun (the Pharaoh). [15] Then, Fir'aun disobeyed the messenger; so We seized him with a severe seizure. [16] So, if you disbelieve, how will you save yourself from a day that will turn the small boys into grey-headed old men, [17] whereby the sky will burst apart. His promise has to be fulfilled. [18] Indeed, this is a reminder; so let anyone who so wishes, adopt a way to his Lord. [19]

Your Lord knows that you stand (in prayer) for nearly two thirds of the night, and (at times) for half of it, and (at times) for one third of it, and (so do) a group of those who are with you. And Allah measures the night and the day. He knows that you cannot do it regularly, therefore He turned to you in mercy. Now, recite as much of the Qur'ān as is easy (for you). He knows that some of you may be sick, and others travelling in the land, seeking the grace of Allah, and yet others fighting in Allah's way. Therefore, recite as much of it as is easy. And establish *ṣalāh*, and pay *zakāh*, and advance to Allah a goodly loan. And whatever good you will send ahead for your own selves, you will find it with Allah much better in condition, and much greater in reward. And seek forgiveness from Allah. Indeed Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [20]

Commentary

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الْمُزَّمِّلُ 'O you wrapped up in clothes [73:1]'. The word *muzzammil* literally means 'one wrapped up in clothes' and its near-synonym '*muddaththir*' comes in the next Sūrah. The Holy Prophet ﷺ is addressed in this verse with reference to a particular style of wrapping himself in his clothes. The first event of this kind occurred when the Holy Prophet ﷺ received first revelation in the cave of Ḥirā'. Being his first experience, he felt it very hard, and was caught by a shivery cold, and once he reached home, he asked his blessed wife Khadījah رضى الله عنها to wrap him in a blanket which she did. A detailed account of this event is reported by Bukhārī in the very first chapter of his book. Then the revelation stopped for some time. Speaking of this temporary break in the revelation [termed as *fatrat-ul-waḥy*], Sayyidnā Jābir ﷺ reports that the

Messenger of Allah ﷺ said in his narrative:

> "Whilst I was walking along, I heard a voice from heaven and I raised up my eyes. Lo! The Angel that had appeared to me in Ḥirā' was sitting on a chair between heaven and earth, and I was struck with awe on account of him and returned home and said, Wrap me up, wrap me up [*zammilūnī, zammilūnī*]. Then Allah revealed the first five verses of Sūrah Al-Muddaththir (chapter 74)." [Bukhārī and Muslim]

According to this narrative, the Holy Prophet ﷺ is affectionately addressed as 'O you, enveloped in a mantle,' whereas in this Sūrah he is addressed as 'O you wrapped up in clothes'. Both forms of address are used affectionately and endearingly to console him. The latter title of address '*muzzammil*' as it appears in this Sūrah could probably be connected to another incident (referred to in the footnote) but it, nonetheless, shows deep love and affection for the Holy Prophet ﷺ. [Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī]. Having addressed him with this special title, the Holy Prophet ﷺ is told in the following verses that praying to Allah in the stillness of night [*ṣalāt-ut-tahajjud*] will prepare him for the heavy task entrusted to him. Some details of the night-prayer have also been set out.

Injunctions Pertaining to *Ṣalāt-ut-Tahajjud* and its Abrogation

Reading into the titles *muzzammil* and *muddaththir* a consensus of scholarly opinion assigns the revelation of this Surah to the earliest period when the five daily prayers had not become obligatory. They were prescribed on the night of Holy Prophet's ﷺ Ascent to heavens. [*mi'rāj*].

Imām Baghawī رحمه الله تعالى says, on the basis of *Ahadith* reported by Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah Ṣiddīqah رضى الله عنها and others, that 'night-prayer' was compulsory for the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the entire Muslim community until the five prayers were not prescribed.

This verse not only prescribes the night-prayer but it also prescribes to stand up in prayer from at least one quarter of the night, because the verse under comment basically commanded to stand up all night to pray except a little portion of it.

Imām Baghawī رحمه الله تعالى says, on the basis of narration of *Aḥādīth*, that the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the noble Companions ﷺ, in compliance with this command, spent the major portion of the night in *tahajjud*, so

much so that their feet would swell and this exertion caused hardship and difficulty to them. This situation continued for a year. After that, towards the end of the Sūrah, the following injunction was revealed:

فَاقْرَءُوْا مَا تَيَسَّرَ مِنْهُ

'...Therefore, recite as much of it as is easy__[73:20]'

It repealed the obligation of staying up for a long time, and granted them concession and permission to stay up for prayer as much as they could easily manage. This is transmitted by Abū Dāwūd and Nasa'ī on the authority of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās says that when the five prescribed prayers became obligatory on the night of *mi'rāj*, the obligatory nature of *tahajjud* was abrogated. It was, however, retained as *sunnah*, because the Holy Prophet performed it most regularly. Most of the blessed Companions were regular with their *tahajjud* as well. [Mazharī] Let us now analyze the wordings of the verses.

قُمِ الَّيْلَ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا 'stand at night (for prayer) except a little__[73:2]'. The word *al-lail* with the definite article 'al' connotes 'the entire night', signifying that he should stay up the whole night for prayer except a little portion of it. As the word 'little' is indefinite, the verse further clarifies:

نِّصْفَهٗٓ اَوِانْقُصْ مِنْهُ قَلِيْلًا 'half of it, or make it a little less, [3] or اَوْزِدْ عَلَيْهِ make it a little more [73:4]'. This is explicative of the exception 'except a little'. A question may be raised here that 'a little' cannot be 'half'. The answer is that the earlier portion of the night is spent in the prayer at *maghrib* and *'ishā'*. 'Half' then refers to the half of the rest of the night. Its total in relation to the whole night amounts to 'a little'. The verse permits to reduce it a little less than half and it also permits to add to it a little more than half. Thus it was compulsory to stay up at least for a little over one fourth of a night for prayer.

وَرَتِّلِ الْقُرْاٰنَ تَرْتِيْلًا '...and recite the Qur'ān clearly with *tartīl* (in a distinct and measured tone). [73:4]'. The word *tartīl* , according to Imām Rāghib as explicated in *al-Mufradāt*, originally means 'to put together and arrange well the component parts of a word and speech and make it distinct'. The purport of the verse is to say that the Qur'ān must not be recited in haste, but in a leisurely manner, distinctly, deliberately and in well-measured tone. At the same time, it is necessary to reflect on its meaning and

message. [Mazharī]. The clause *wa rattil* is grammatically conjoined to *qumil lail* and signifies what is required to be done in tahajjud prayer. Although it comprises many components like *tasbīḥ*, *rukū'* (bowing), *sujud* (prostration) and so on, the verse indicates that the basic component of prayer is recitation of the Qur'ān. The authentic Traditions bear testimony to the fact that the *tahajjud* prayer of the Holy Prophet ﷺ used to be prolonged very much. The noble Companions and their pupils followed the same pattern.

Ruling [1]

The verse under comment clarifies that the recitation of the Qur'ān is required to be with *tartīl* [distinct recitation in well-measured tone]. The Holy Prophet's ﷺ recitation fulfilled the requirements of *tartīl*. Some people inquired from Sayyidah 'Umm Salamah رضی اللہ عنہا about the Holy Prophet's ﷺ recitation of Qur'ān in night-prayers. She emulated his recitation in which every single letter was clear and distinct. [Tirmidhī, Abū Dāwūd, Nasa'ī - as quoted by Mazharī].

Ruling [2]

Tartīl includes slow rhythmic recitation and beautification of the voice while reciting. Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ؓ narrates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Allah does not listen to any recitation as much as he listens to the recitation of a Prophet who recites with a beautiful voice." [Mazharī].

Sayyidnā 'Alqamah ؓ saw a person reciting with a beautiful voice and he exclaimed:

لقد رتّل القراٰن فداہ ابی واُمّی

"He has recited the Qur'an with *tartīl*: May my parents be sacrificed to him!" [Quriubī].

In short, *tartīl* basically signifies that the letters and the words must be pronounced clearly and distinctly that will help understanding the Qur'ān, and paying due care to its meaning. Ḥasan al-Baṣrī رحمہ اللہ تعالیٰ reports that Allah's Messenger ﷺ passed by a person who was reciting a verse of the Qur'ān and weeping. He said to the people, 'Have you heard of the command of Allah' وَرَتِّلِ الْقُرْاٰنَ تَرْتِيْلًا '...and recite the Qur'ān clearly with *tartīl* (in a distinct and measured tone). [73:4]'? This is *tartīl* which this person is doing. [Qurṭubī]

إِنَّا سَنُلْقِى عَلَيْكَ قَوْلًا ثَقِيلًا ('We are going to send down to you a weighty discourse... 73:5)' The word *thaqīl* means 'heavy' and the phrase 'weighty discourse' refers to the Qur'ān, because the Qur'ānic teachings of lawful and unlawful are permanently binding and carrying them out is the weightiest task for human nature, except those for whom Allah makes it easier. According to oft-quoted *Aḥādīth*, whenever a revelation descended upon the Holy Prophet ﷺ, he went into a trance and felt a peculiar sensation, so that even on an extremely cold day drops of sweat fell from his forehead, and he felt his body has become heavier. The Qur'ānic revelation being 'a weighty discourse', his paroxysm was due to this sensation. If the Holy Prophet ﷺ received revelation while he was on his riding animal, it would begin to move the bottom of its neck intensely. [Bukhārī and others].

The verse under comment prescribes *tahajjud* prayer on man, so that he may become accustomed to the difficulty of waking at night. This is a struggle against excess sleep and comfort of the carnal self. This exercise will make it easier to abide by the injunctions contained in the 'weighty discourse', that is, the Holy Qur'ān.

إِنَّ نَاشِئَةَ الَّيْلِ ("Truly, rising by night [for prayer of *tahajjud*] is the most effective way to subdue (one's self) and to make speech more upright.... 73:6). The word *nāshi'ah*, on the grammatical measure of *'āfiyah,* is an infinitive noun which signifies 'to rise by night for prayer'. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها said that *nāshi'at-ul-lail* means 'to rise by night for night-prayer after sleeping'. According to this definition, *nāshi'at-ul-lail* refers to *tahajjud* prayer. Furthermore, the word *tahajjud* itself, literally, means 'to sleep at night and then wake up to perform the prayer'. Ibn Kaisān رحمه الله تعالىٰ has said that prayer at the later part of the night is called *nāshi'at-ul-lail.* Ibn Zaid رحمه الله تعالىٰ says that performing prayer at any part of the night is *nāshi'at-ul-lail.* Ḥasan al-Baṣrī رحمه الله تعالىٰ says that any prayer after the 'Ishā' prayer is *nāshi'at-ul-lail.* Ibn Abī Mulaikah رحمه الله تعالىٰ says that he asked Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās and Ibn Zubair ﷺ about the meaning of *nāshi'at-ul-lail,* they replied as follows: الّيل كلّها ناشئة (The entire night is *nāshi'ah.*" - Maẓharī)

There is no conflict in these interpretations. The point is that the terms *nāshi'ah* of the night and *qiyām* of the night are general, and may refer to any hour of night. Thus the two terms apply equally to

performing night-prayer in any part of the night, especially the one performed after *'Ishā'* prayer as explained by Sayyidnā Ḥasan al-Baṣrī رحمه الله تعالى. However, the constant practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, that of the overwhelming majority of the Companions and their pupils, and that of the righteous predecessors of the *'Ummah* was that they performed this prayer in the later part of the night after waking from sleep, and therefore it is more virtuous, more meritorious and attracts more blessings. Performing any *nafl* [voluntary] prayer after *'Ishā'* prayer fulfills the *sunnah* requirement of *nashi'ah* of the night and *qiyām* of the night.

هِيَ اَشَدُّ وَطْأً (...is the most effective way to subdue (one's self) and to make speech more upright... 73:6). The word *waṭ'an,* with the letter *waw* carrying *fatḥ* [=a], is an infinitive which means 'to subdue' or 'to suppress'. Given this meaning, the sense is that this time of night helps one to suppress his evil desires and keep them under control. This meaning is adopted by Maulānā Ashraf Alī Thānawī رحمه الله تعالى, and the translation of the text is based on this interpretation. In another *qirā'ah* (version), however, the word is pronounced '*wiṭā'an*'. It is an infinitive that means 'to conform'. On another occasion in the Qur'ān, we come across the following verse wherein a verb derived from this root is contained. The word in that verse is used in the same sense, thus:

لِيُوَاطِئُوْا عِدَّةَ مَا حَرَّمَ اللّٰهُ

'...so that they may conform (only) to the number of what Allah has sanctified - [9:37]'

Leading authorities on Tafsīr, like Ibn Zaid and Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, have interpreted the word in the same sense here. Ibn Zaid رضي الله عنه said that getting up in the night for prayer is the most effective means of making the heart, eye, ear and tongue to mutually correspond and conform. Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه said that the phrase means that during this time there is the closest degree of conformity and harmony between the ear and the heart. This is because there is no noise at the time of night when most people are asleep and one will not be disturbed as one is during the daytime. At night time when the tongue recites the Qur'ān, the ears will be conducive to listening to the recitation with due concentration, and the heart will be conducive to understanding and considering its meaning and message .

وَأَقْوَمُ قِيْلًا (And to make speech more upright - 73:6) The word *aqwām* means 'more upright'. The verse signifies that the recitation of the Qur'ān is more upright and concentrated, because during the night there are no noises and commotion to distract the heart or the mind.

In sum, the purport of the verse is to put forward the wisdom underlying the injunction of the 'night-prayer' for the common people. The preceding verse put forward its wisdom for the Holy Prophet ﷺ:

إِنَّا سَنُلْقِي عَلَيْكَ قَوْلًا ثَقِيلًا

'We are going to send down to you a weighty discourse.[73:5]'.

The 'weighty discourse' was concerned specifically with the Holy Prophet ﷺ as it was revealed to him. But for common people, Night-Prayer has two characteristics: [1] bringing harmony between the heart and the tongue; and [2] peace of mind - making it easier to recite the Qur'ān.

إِنَّ لَكَ فِي النَّهَارِ سَبْحًا طَوِيلًا (Surely, in daytime, you have a lengthy work to do... 73:7). The word *sabḥun*, literally means, 'to flow, walk or move about' from which we also get the sense 'of swimming in the water' because when a swimmer swims in the water, he moves about in it freely without any obstruction. Here the word signifies 'long chain of engagements in the day' which refers to multifarious duties to be performed with alacrity, such as educating the people, preaching to them, reforming humanity, performing domestic chores, discharging social responsibilities and moving about to many other tasks and obligations .

The current verse explicates the third point of wisdom as to why night-prayer was enjoined. This relates both to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the general body of the Muslim community. During the day the Holy Prophet ﷺ as well as other people have a long chain of engagements for which they disperse and move about as explained in the foregoing paragraph. As a result, it is difficult for them to concentrate on their worshipping activity. The night should be reserved for this purpose. A person should sleep according to his need and perform his night-prayer as well.

A Special Note

Jurists have said that the verse under comment confirms that scholars

and saintly guides, who are engaged in the service of education, training and human reform, should render their services during the day. It is better to reserve the night for Divine worship and devotional activities. The practice of the righteous scholars and predecessors bear testimony to this fact. If a temporary need arises to serve the cause of education and propagation at night, it may be carried out to the degree of necessity, but this would be an exception. The practice of many scholars and jurists confirm this exception .

وَاذْكُرِاسْمَ رَبِّكَ وَتَبَتَّلْ اِلَيْهِ تَبْتِيْلًا (And remember the name of your Lord, and devote yourself to Him with exclusive devotion... 73:8). The word *tabattul*, literally, means 'to cut off oneself from entire creation to focus attention solely on the Creator to detach oneself from worldly things and devote oneself exclusively and sincerely to the service of Allah' The sentence: وَاذْكُرِاسْمَ رَبِّكَ (And remember the name of your Lord...73:8) is grammatically conjoined to the sentence: قُمِ الَّيْلَ (Stand at night [for prayer].... 73:2) which enjoins upon the Holy Prophet ﷺ to perform the night-prayer, and incidentally his attention is drawn in the following verse to special devotional activities in the course of the day: اِنَّ لَكَ فِي النَّهَارِ سَبْحًا طَوِيْلًا 'Surely, in daytime, you have a lengthy work to do. [73:7]' But the verse 8 enjoins a devotional activity (remembering Allah) that can be performed at any time of day or night. In fact, it can be performed at all times and under all circumstances. Since it is inconceivable that the Holy Prophet ﷺ would never remember Allah, the purport of enjoining *Dhikr* (Remembrance of Allah) is to emphasise ' keeping to it consistently' in the sense that there should be no laxity in it. [Maẓharī]. This is possible only if 'remembering Allah' is taken in its widest possible sense to include 'Reciting His name with tongue', 'Remembrance by heart' and also 'keeping one's body engaged in complying with the commands of Allah'. A narration of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah Ṣiddīqah رضى الله عنها reports the following:

كَان يذكر الله على كلّ حين

"The Holy Prophet ﷺ used to remember Allah at all times."

This Ḥadīth is correct in terms of the wider concept of 'rememberance of Allah' just explained above. Obviously, the Holy Prophet ﷺ did not make *dhikr* by his tongue when answering the call of nature as Aḥādīth distinctly confirm this, but *Dhikr* by heart is possible at all times. There

are, however, two types of *Dhikr* by heart: [1] It may be done through 'imagined words'; [2] by reflecting and pondering on the Divine attributes of perfection. [Shaikh Thanawī].

The next injunction in this verse is:

تَبَتَّلْ إِلَيْهِ تَبْتِيْلًا '..and devote yourself to Him with exclusive devotion. [73:8]'. In other words, the Holy Prophet ﷺ is to detach himself from worldly things and devote himself exclusively and sincerely to Allah. The general import of the verse imparts the injunction that when worshipping Allah, no partners should be associated with Him and the total worship and devotion should be solely for Him. In all his actions and movements, he should single out Allah for reliance. He should not take any creature as possessing the power of benefit and harm or as possessing the power of granting wishes and solving problems. Sayyidnā Ibn Zaid رضي الله عنه said that *tabattul* signifies 'to abandon the world and what is in it and focus attention on what is with Allah'. [Maẓharī]. The *tabattul* which this verse enjoins is completely different from the concept and practice of monasticism which the Qur'ān denounces elsewhere, thus:

وَرَهْبَانِيَّةَ ابْتَدَعُوْهَا

'...As for monasticism, it was invented by them_[57:27]'

and a Ḥadīth denounces it thus:

لارهبانية فى الاسلام

"There is no monasticism in Islam."

Rahbāniyyah or 'monasticism', in the technical language of Sharī'ah, signifies 'to abandon the world and sever all ties which involves the giving up of all pleasures and all lawful and pure things, believing that doing so is 'worship' and thinking that without avoiding them one would not be able to attain the good pleasure of Allah. It also means to sever human relationships in such a manner that human rights are not taken care of or they are violated. This verse enjoins a different type of *tabattul* or severance of relationship. It means that one's relationship with human beings should not overpower his relationship with Allah - whether in terms of belief or in terms of practice. Such a detachment is not contradictory to any business relations, or social contracts and transactions, like marriage and family ties. In fact, they can be combined. *Tabattul,* in this sense, is the characteristic of all Prophets عليهم السلام,

especially that of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. Their lives bear ample testimony to this type of *tabattul* which the pious elders alternatively term as *Ikhlāṣ* (sincerity). [Maẓharī]

An Important Note

In the matter of 'Allah's Remembrance' and 'detachment from the world', the venerable Ṣūfis, whether belonging to the earlier generation or later generation, have always been forward. They said that there are only two steps with which they are exerting their effort to cover the distance and conquer the path day and night. The first step is to detach themselves from the creation and the second step is to reach Allah [i.e. their destination]. The two steps are inseparable, in that where one is operational the other must operate; and if one does not operate, the other will not operate either. The two steps have been stated as two conjoined sentences, thus: وَاذْكُرِ اسْمَ رَبِّكَ وَتَبَتَّلْ إِلَيْهِ تَبْتِيلًا 'And remember the name of your Lord, and devote yourself to Him with exclusive devotion. [73:8]'. In this context, *dhikr* Allah refers to constant Remembrance of Allah where there should be no failing, and at no time there should be forgetfulness. This *maqām* 'station' in Ṣūfī terminology is referred to as *wuṣūl ila-Allah* 'reaching out to Allah. The first statement states the second step and the second statement states the first step. Thus the statements state the order in reverse probably because in practice *tabattul,* in the sense given above, is prior to *wuṣūl ila-Allah* which is achieved after the operation of the former. The main object of a *sālik* (the spiritual traveller) is to achieve the second step, therefore the naturally occurring order has been changed and remembrance of Allah has been mentioned first. This also is meant to show the importance and virtue of remembrance of Allah. How well Shaikh Sa'dī رحمه الله تعالیٰ has versified the two steps:

تعلق حجاب است و بے حاصلی......☆......چوپیوند ها بگسلی واصلی

Worldly relationship is a barrier and brings no (eternal) benefit. When you abandon these relations, you will be the one who reaches out to Allah.

Remembrance of Allah through Repetition of His Personal Name

The verse under comment whilst enjoining *dhikrullah* (remembrance of Allah) has referred to it as 'remembrance of the name of Allah by saying: وَاذْكُرِ اسْمَ رَبِّكَ 'And remember the name of your Lord - [73:8]' and not وَاذْكُرْ رَبَّكَ 'And remember your Lord'.

This indicates that the repetition of Allah's personal name 'Allah, Allah' is also desired and required form of *dhikr* and worship. [Maẓharī]. Some scholars say that such repetition of His personal name is an 'innovation' (*bid'ah*), but this opinion is not correct. And Allah knows best!

رَبُّ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ فَاتَّخِذْهُ وَكِيْلًا (He is the Lord of the East and the West; there is no god but He; so take Him for [your] Guardian...73:9). The word *wakīl*, lexicologically, refers to a 'person who has been given a task to do'. 'To take Allah as guardian' means that all matters and affairs should be entrusted to Allah. Technically, this is called *tawakkul* 'trust'.

The Holy Prophet ﷺ is given several injunctions in this Sūrah. This is the fifth injunction. Imām Ya'qūb Karkhī رحمه الله تعالىٰ says that from the beginning of the Sūrah up to this verse there is reference to the *maqāmāt sulūk* 'journeying or a methodical travelling along the spiritual path through the various states and stations under the direction of a spiritual master or adept'. The references are as follows: [1] solitude at night to worship Allah; [2] preoccupation with Qur'ān; [3] constant Remembrance of Allah; [4] severance of relationship with "everything-other-than-Allah, and [5] total trust in Allah. Preceding the last injunction about trust, Allah's attribute is given, thus: رَبُّ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ 'He is the Lord of the East and the West__[73:9]'. In other words, Allah is the Cherisher and Sustainer of the entire universe. He is responsible to fulfill the needs of all from the beginning to the end. He alone can assist in all matters. Just as He has been singled out for worship, so should He be singled out for reliance, and full trust must be put in Him. Anyone who trusts and relies on Allah will never be deprived of his needs as the Qur'ān puts it:

وَمَنْ يَّتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللّٰهِ فَهُوَ حَسْبُهٗ

'...And whoever places his trust in Allah, He is sufficient for him. __[65:3]'

The Correct Concept of *Tawakkul* [Trust]

Trust in Allah does not imply for anyone to avoid the apparent means of acquiring livelihood, or giving up the normal ways of saving oneself from any affliction. The ways and means that Allah has created for a particular purpose should not be abandoned while placing total trust in Allah. On the contrary, in order to achieve our purpose it is necessary for

us to utilize the God-given power and causes at our disposal to the fullest extent, but we should not repose blind faith in material causes and means. But having adopted actions of choice, the result should then be left with Allah whose will is the Ultimate Cause of everything.

The Holy Prophet ﷺ himself has explained *tawakkul* in this way. Imām Baghawī, in his Sharḥ-us-Sunnah, and Baihaqī, in his Shu'ab-ul-'Imān, have cited the following Ḥadīth:

ان نفسا لن تموت حتّٰی تستکمل رزقها، الاَ فاتّقُوْا اللّٰه واجملوا فی الطلب

"Jibra'īl ﷺ has inspired me with the thought that no person will ever die until he receives, in full, his sustenance that Allah has decreed for him. Therefore, fear Allah and be moderate in your search."

In other words, we should not be over-absorbed in quest for our needs so deeply that the attention of the heart is totally focused on the material causes and means. Instead, after adopting the ways and means to fulfill our needs, we should repose our total trust in and reliance upon Allah in the sense that without His will, no cause can bring any effect.

Tirmidhī transmits a Ḥadīth on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Dharr Al-Ghifārī ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: "*Zuhd* (Renunciation of the world) does not mean to turn lawful things into unlawful or squander the wealth Allah has given you. Renunciation of the world means to have more faith in the things that are in Allah's hands than what are in your hands." [Maẓharī]

وَاصْبِرْ عَلٰى مَا يَقُوْلُوْنَ وَاهْجُرْهُمْ هَجْرًا جَمِيْلًا (And bear patiently what they say, and part with them in a beautiful manner...73:10). According to Imām Karkhī رحمه الله تعالىٰ, this is the sixth injunction given to the Holy Prophet ﷺ that he should bear with patience and fortitude the jibes, opposition and persecution of his enemies. Perfect patience is the supreme station of *sulūk* (methodical travelling along the spiritual path). Spiritual reformers expend their entire strength, energy and life in reforming the deviant people. In return, they have to hear vile language, they are persecuted and wronged in many different ways. In return, they exercise *ṣabr* (patience) in a beautiful manner. In other words, they do not even entertain the thought of revenge. This is the supreme station, which in Ṣūfī terminology, is attained only after *fanā' kāmil:* 'complete negation of

selfish desires'.

وَاهْجُرْهُمْ هَجْرًا جَمِيلًا (...and part with them in a beautiful manner...73:10). The word *hajr*, literally, denotes 'to give up something in a state of grief, anger and temper'. The verse means that rejecters of Truth utter words that hurt. He should not take revenge, but maintain no relations with them either. At the time of severing relations, it is natural for man to utter words of complaint and disgust. Therefore, Allah's Messenger ﷺ is told to cut off relations with the rejecters of Truth, but he must maintain his dignity and integrity. Hence, the verse contains the grammatically restricted cognate accusative, *hajran jamīlan*, 'in a beautiful manner'. The high status and the exalted standard of character require that the Holy Prophet ﷺ should restrain himself from making any abusive remarks at the deniers of Truth.

Some scholars of Tafsīr say that the injunction of this verse is repealed by verses of *jihād* which were revealed later on. But a careful analysis indicates that the injunction is not repealed. The above verses enjoin patience and steadfastness in the face of what the enemies say and cutting off from them courteously. This is not in conflict with verses that deal with reproof, punishment and armed struggle that were revealed subsequently. The injunction of this verse is applicable at all times and under all circumstances, whereas *jihād* is reproof and punishment, and is a specific injunction to be applied under specific conditions. Islamic *jihād* and armed struggle is not a matter of taking revenge or expression of anger, which could be in conflict with patience and fortitude or courteous severance. It is purely acting on the Divine command as is patience and courteous severance under general circumstances. Up to this point the Holy Prophet ﷺ was commanded to be steadfast and to abstain from revenge. The next verse, reprimands the deniers of Truth that instead of being grateful to Allah for "ease and plenty" provided for them, they reject the Divine Message:

وَذَرْنِى وَالْمُكَذِّبِينَ أُولِى النَّعْمَةِ وَمَهِّلْهُمْ قَلِيلًا (And leave Me [to deal] with the deniers, the people of luxury, and give them respite for a while....73:11). The 'deniers' are referred to as 'the people of luxury'. The word *na'mah'*, the first letter [n] bearing *fatḥ* [=a], signifies 'ease and plenty; abundance of wealth and children'. This indicates that people who live a life of ease, plenty and luxury can only be the ones who deny the Hereafter. These

things do often fall to the lot of the believers, but they do not intoxicate them. Therefore, even when they live a life of luxury, their hearts are never, at any time, empty of the thought of the Hereafter. Only the deniers of the Hereafter will live a life of luxury that is neglectful of the Hereafter.

إِنَّ لَدَيْنَا أَنكَالًا وَجَحِيمًا وَطَعَامًا ذَا غُصَّةٍ وَعَذَابًا أَلِيمًا (Surely with Us are fetters and flaming fire, and food that chokes, and a painful punishment...73:12-13). The terrible punishment of the Hereafter is described in these verses. First, there is the mention of *ankāl* which is the plural of *nakāl*. It denotes 'fetter, chain, shackle'. Then, there is the mention of 'flaming fire'. Then, verse [13] describes the 'choking food' the inmates of Hell will be given to eat.

The word *ghuṣṣah* literally denotes 'a thing by which one is choked'. For example, a morsel may block the throat in such a way as it can neither be swallowed nor can it be brought up. The inmates of Hell will be given *ḍarī'* and *zaqqūm* (thorny fruits) to eat. These fruits fit the description.

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ said: "In it will be thorns of fire that will choke." [God save us!]. The verse says in conclusion: وَعَذَابًا أَلِيمًا (...and a painful punishment...73:13).

Having described specific forms of punishment, this description is general - indicating that there will be many more horrible and terrible forms of punishment which man cannot even imagine. [O Allah, save us from all forms of punishment!]

The Righteous Elders' Fear of the Hereafter

Imām Aḥmad, Ibn Abī Dāwūd, Ibn 'Adiyy and Baihaqī record a narration that a person heard this verse and fell fainted. One day Ḥasan al-Baṣrī رحمه الله تعالى was fasting. When the food was brought to him at the time of *ifṭār* (ending the fast), this verse occurred in his mind and he could not eat. As a result, he sent it away. The following day he was fasting again. The same thing happened in the evening and he sent the food away. On the third day the same thing happened. So, his sons went to Thābit Bunānī, Yazīd Ḍabbāī, and Yaḥyā Al-Bakkā' and recounted the story. All three personalities went to Ḥasan and insisted on his eating something. At their insistence, the latter ate a little. [Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī]

يَوْمَ تَرْجُفُ الْاَرْضُ وَالْجِبَالُ وَكَانَتِ الْجِبَالُ كَثِيْبًا مَّهِيْلًا ﴿١٤﴾ اِنَّآ اَرْسَلْنَآ اِلَيْكُمْ رَسُوْلًا ۙ شَاهِدًا عَلَيْكُمْ كَمَآ اَرْسَلْنَآ اِلٰى فِرْعَوْنَ رَسُوْلًا ﴿١٥﴾ فَعَصٰى فِرْعَوْنُ الرَّسُوْلَ فَاَخَذْنٰهُ اَخْذًا وَّبِيْلًا ﴿١٦﴾ فَكَيْفَ تَتَّقُوْنَ اِنْ كَفَرْتُمْ يَوْمًا يَّجْعَلُ الْوِلْدَانَ شِيْبًا ﴿١٧﴾

(on the Day when the earth and the mountains will quake, and the mountains will turn into a slipping heap of sand. [14] We have sent to you a messenger, as a witness over you, just as We sent a messenger to Fir'aun (the Pharaoh). [15] Then, Fir'aun disobeyed the messenger; so We seized him with a severe seizure. [16] So, if you disbelieve, how will you save yourself from a day that will turn the small boys into grey-headed old men...17).

These verses describe the horrors and terrors of the Day of Resurrection. Verse [14] describes that the punishment will take place on the Day when the earth and mountains will shake and the mountains will be reduced to a heap of dust or shifting dunes. Thereafter, reference is made to the story of Mūsā عليه السلام and Fir'aun in order to threaten the pagans of Makkah. Allah sent a Messenger, Muḥammad ﷺ, to bear witness against the pagans of Makkah just as He sent a Messenger, Mūsā عليه السلام, to Fir'aun. But Fir'aun disobeyed Mūsā عليه السلام and Allah seized him with terrible severity right in this world. Likewise, if the pagans of Makkah persist stubbornly in their pagan conduct, they too can be seized similarly with terrible severity in this very world. Towards the conclusion, the verse says that if no torment is inflicted in this world, no one can escape the horrors and terrors and length of the Day of Resurrection that will turn the children grey. This could be a metaphor for the most calamitous happenings which bring about disastrous changes. But some scholars say that this is a description of reality, in that the Day of Resurrection will be so long that a little child will grow old. [Qurṭubī and Rūḥ].

The Obligatory Nature of *Tahajjud Prayer* Abrogated

At the beginning of the Sūrah, the command 'stand at night (for prayer)' prescribed the night-prayer for Allah's Messenger as well as for the general body of Muslims. It was also obligatory for the prayer to be long, but they had a choice in its length. They had to pray for half the night or one-third of the night or two-thirds of the night. A group of noble Companions in the performance of this duty mostly followed the *'azīmah* (preferred original rule of law). As a result, they spent almost two-thirds

of the night in prayer. They performed this prayer every night. During the day they would invite people to Islam and preach and attend to their personal needs. Most of the Companions were either labourers or businessmen. The Messenger's as well as the Companions' feet would swell on account of the long prayers. Waking at night was extremely difficult, and Allah was fully aware of the entire set-up, but it was pre-decreed in His knowledge that the difficulty is temporary and a passing phase. The purpose of this exercise is *riyādah* 'ascetic discipline' of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his Companions. In the initial stages, they were in a condition of disequilibrium. Therefore, they were required to exert themselves in spiritual struggle and ascetic discipline, thus:

إِنَّا سَنُلْقِي عَلَيْكَ قَوْلًا ثَقِيلًا 'We are going to send down to you a weighty discourse. [73:5]'. The Holy Prophet ﷺ was going to be handed over the service of the Qur'ān which is much more difficult than this ascetic discipline. According to the Pre-eternal knowledge of Allah, when the ascetic discipline was completed and with His grace perfect balance was attained, asceticism was replaced by moderation. As a result, the obligatory nature of night-prayer was repealed. According to Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, the above verses merely cancelled the obligatory nature of night-prayer, but the basic *tahajjud* prayer remained intact as obligatory. When the five daily prayers were prescribed on the night of *mi'rāj*, the obligatory nature of *tahajjud* prayer too was cancelled. And Allah knows best!

Apparently, this obligation was cancelled for Allah's Messenger as well as for the entire 'Ummah. However, it is still a supererogatory and laudable deed in the sight of Allah. Furthermore, there is no time or recitation constraint. Every person may perform the prayer according to his own ability in the time available to him and recite the Qur'ān as much of it as is easy for him .

The Concept of Abrogation in Sharī'ah

Legislating laws and abrogating them to proclaim new ones in their place is a routine practice in human governments and institutions. However, abrogation occurs sometimes in a piece of human legislation because the legislators did not fully comprehend the situation at the time of formulating a certain law, and are forced to amend it when they realize that the situation has changed and the law is no longer applicable in the

new circumstances. At other times, a law might be proclaimed in the government gazette in keeping with the prevailing circumstances, but the legislators might not have foreseen that the circumstances might change. When that happens, the old law will have to be repealed and a new one will have to be legislated and promulgated. It is inconceivable that these two forms of repeal will ever apply to Divine injunctions.

A third situation is that when the legislator formulates a law, he foresees that in time to come conditions will change, as a result the law will no longer apply *in toto* in the changed condition. So, when the conditions alter, as the legislator had foreseen, he legislates a new law and makes it public as he had forethought. This is the only form of abrogation that can take place, and has been taking place in Divine injunctions. It has always been the case that a certain piece of Divine law was intended, from the very beginning, to remain in force for a limited time, but Divine Wisdom chose not to disclose this time limit from the people. Because of the general wordings of the legislation, the general community of people thought it was an immutable law whereas Allah had pre-decreed it as a temporary law for a limited period of time. When its temporary period was over, the law was with withdrawn. People took this as the abrogation of law whereas in reality it merely defined the time period. In other words, at that time it is made publicly known to the people that the law was not an immutable one, but promulgated for a limited period of time. Thus the period is now over and the law is no longer applicable .

There are many verses of the Qur'ān that have been repealed, and the commoners find it difficult to grasp the wisdom underlying the repeal, but the foregoing explanation should allay the difficulty. However, the question remains: Was *tahajjud* prayer specially obligatory on the Holy Prophet ﷺ after the verse under comment was revealed? Some scholars of Tafsīr answer it in the affirmative and they base their argument on the following verse:

وَمِنَ الَّيْلِ فَتَهَجَّدْ بِهٖ نَافِلَةً لَّكَ

'And during the night, wake up for *Ṣalāh*, an additional prayer for you [17:79]'

This verse prescribes *tahajjud* as an additional prayer specially for the

Holy Prophet ﷺ. The word *nāfilah* literally denotes 'additional', meaning 'additional obligation'. But according to the overwhelming majority, the correct view is that the obligatory nature of *tahajjud* prayer has been abrogated for Allah's Messenger, as well as the general body of Muslims. However, it still remains an act of supererogation for all. The above verse contains the phrase نَافِلَةً لَّكَ *nāfilatan lak* 'an additional prayer for you'. The word *nāfilah* is used in its technical sense of *nafl* 'supererogatory'. If *tahajjud* is a *nafl* prayer for all, then it is not clear why addressing the Holy Prophet ﷺ the verse adds *lak* 'for you' as if it is a distinctively voluntary act for the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Please see Ma'āriful Qur'ān, Vol. 5/pp533-543 for fuller explanation, especially pp536-537 for whether *tahajjud* is a mere *nafl* (voluntary) or *sunnah mu'akkadah* (the emphasised practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ)

The verse that abrogates the obligatory nature of *tahajjud* prayer starts from -

إِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَعْلَمُ

'Your Lord knows__[73:20]'

and ends at - فَاقْرَءُوا مَا تَيَسَّرَ مِنْهُ '...Now, recite as much of the Qur'ān as is easy (for you) [73:20]' This verse was revealed one year or eight months after the initial verses of this Sūrah. Thus the obligatory nature of night-prayer was abrogated after a year. Musnad of Aḥmad, Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, Ibn Mājah and Nasa'ī record a narration of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رحمه الله تعالیٰ who stated that at the commencement of this Sūrah, Allah had prescribed the night-prayer. The Messenger of Allah and the blessed Companions constantly and consistently carried out the obligation for a year. Allah held back the last part of the Sūrah in the sky for twelve months. It was revealed after a year which abrogated the obligatory status of night-prayer and made concession - reducing its status to supererogation. [Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī]

عَلِمَ أَن لَّن تُحْصُوهُ (...He knows that you cannot do it regularly...73:20). The word *iḥṣā'* literally denotes 'to count'. Some commentators interpret this verse as follows: Allah had not fixed the exact time for night-prayer. They were given the option of choosing time between one-third of the night to two thirds of it. But when the Companions were preoccupied with the prayer, it was difficult for them to calculate whether they had stayed up

half the night, or one-third of the night, or two-thirds of the night, because in those days there were no watches or clocks to measure the time. Even if there were, it was not in keeping with their conditions of involvement in prayers to look at the time repeatedly. They would be absorbed in their prayers, so as to be oblivious to their environment. This is the significance of the phrase *lan tuḥṣūhu.* Other scholars say that the word *iḥṣā'* connotes 'the act of counting', signifying that Allah knows that you will not be able to keep count of the constant prayers during the lengthy hours and hours of sleep. The word *iḥṣā'* is also used in this sense, as is used in a Ḥadīth in connection with the beautiful names of Allah, thus:

من احصاها دخل الجنّه

"He who keeps count of them will enter Paradise"

meaning, to act fully according to the attributes and qualities of Allah, as indicated in His beautiful names. For fuller explanation, please see Ma'āriful Qur'ān, Vol. 5/pp272-273 under the following verse:

وَإِنْ تَعُدُّوا نِعْمَتَ اللّٰهِ لَا تُحْصُوهَا

'...And if you count the bounties of Allah, you cannot count them all. [14:34]'

فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ (...therefore He turned to you in mercy...73:20). The word *taubah* originally means 'to turn'. Repentance for sins is also called taubah in Arabic, because the sinner turns away from his past sins and crimes. In this context, the word simply means 'to turn', that is, Allah took back the obligatory nature of the injunction of night-prayer. Then He says: فَاقْرَءُوا مَاتَيَسَّرَ مِنَ الْقُرْاٰنِ (...Now, recite as much of the Qur'ān as is easy ... 73:20). That is, recite in *tahajjud* prayer which is no longer obligatory. It is supererogatory enjoying the status of *sunnah* or *mustaḥab*. No particular number of verses has been fixed for recitation of the Holy Qur'ān in *tahajjud* prayer. So a worshipper may recite as much of it as is easy for him. This verse answers many legal questions that are available in books of jurisprudence.

وَاَقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتُوا الزَّكٰوةَ وَاَقْرِضُوا اللّٰهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا (And establish *ṣalāh*, and pay *zakāh*, and advance to Allah a goodly loan....73:20). According to majority of the commentators, *ṣalāh* in this context refers to the five prescribed

prayers that were made obligatory on the Night of Ascent (*Mi'rāj*). This indicates that the night-prayer was obligatory for a year. In the meantime, the nocturnal journey took place, and the five daily prayers were prescribed. After that, the above verses were revealed and the obligatory nature of *tahajjud* prayer was abrogated. Towards the conclusion of the Sūrah, where it speaks of establishment of prayer, it refers to the five prescribed prayers. [Ibn Kathīr, Qurṭubī and Al-Baḥr-ul-Muḥīṭ].

وَاٰتُوا الزَّكٰوةَ (...and pay zakah....73:20). *Zakāh* refers to the prescribed *zakāh*. However, it is popularly understood that *zakāh* was prescribed two years after migration to Madīnah whereas this verse is Makkī and, as was said earlier, a consensus of scholarly opinion assigns the revelation of this Sūrah to the earliest period of the call. In response, some commentators express the view that this particular verse was revealed in Madīnah. Ibn Kathīr, however, says that *zakāh* was prescribed in the earliest days of Islam, although its details, like exemption limit and the rate, were fixed in the second year of migration at Madīnah. Even if the verse is treated as Makkī, there should be no problem in taking the word *zakāh* in its technical sense of prescribed *zakāh* as Rūḥ-ul- Ma'ānī explains in detail. Its full analysis will be found in this author's booklet entitled '*Niẓām-e-Zakāt*'.

وَاَقْرِضُوا اللّٰهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا (...and advance to Allah a goodly loan....73:20). In other words, spend in the way of Allah as charitable donations. This would be as if one is advancing a loan to Allah who will multiply it many times and reward him most abundantly. This indicates Divine favour and grace towards him, and it also describes that Allah is the richest of all. The loan will not be lost, but will be richly returned. The command for *Zakāh* has already been mentioned previously, therefore advancing a loan to Allah refers, according to most scholars, to other voluntary charitable donations in the cause of Allah as, for instance, spending on friends and relatives or utilizing for entertainment of guests or investing in the service of scholars and righteous people. Some scholars point out that besides the prescribed *Zakāh*, there are other financial obligations imposed on man, such as maintenance of parents, wife and children. Thus the command to pay *zakāh* in verse 20 covers the injunction of paying out the prescribed *Zakāh*, while other financial obligations are covered by the

words: '...advance to Allah a goodly loan [20]'.

وَمَا تُقَدِّمُوا لِأَنفُسِكُم مِّنْ خَيْرٍ (...whatever good you will send ahead for your own selves [73:20]. In other words, if man does good in his lifetime, it is better for him than advising someone else to do the good deed at the time of his death. This advice for doing good on behalf of the deceased includes financial worship and voluntary charitable donations. It also includes prescribed prayers, fasts and other prescribed worship or duties that were missed out or neglected, it is better to pay out the *fidyah* and/or *kaffārah* with one's own hands while he is living and be absolved of the responsibility rather than expecting the heirs to discharge it. They may do it or they may neglect to do it .

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ once asked the blessed Companions: "Which of you holds his wealth to be dearer to himself than the wealth of his heirs?" They replied: "O Allah's Messenger, there is not a single one of us who does not hold his wealth to be dearer to himself than the wealth of his heir." Allah's Messenger then said: "Consider carefully what you are saying." They submitted: "This is indeed our considered opinion. We do not know any better." He then said: "The wealth of one of you is only that which he sends forth, and the wealth of his heir is that which he leaves behind." [Ibn Kathīr from Abū Ya'lā al-Mawṣilī and said al-Bukhārī transmitted it, reporting from Ḥafṣ Ibn Ghiyāth and so on].

Alḥamdulillāh
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Muzzammil
Ends here

Sūrah Al-Muddaththir
(The Enveloped One)

This Sūrah is Makkī, and it has 56 verses and 2 sections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 56

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الْمُدَّثِّرُ ﴿١﴾ قُمْ فَاَنْذِرْ ﴿٢﴾ وَرَبَّكَ فَكَبِّرْ ﴿٣﴾ وَثِيَابَكَ فَطَهِّرْ ﴿٤﴾
وَالرُّجْزَ فَاهْجُرْ ﴿٥﴾ وَلَا تَمْنُنْ تَسْتَكْثِرُ ﴿٦﴾ وَلِرَبِّكَ فَاصْبِرْ ﴿٧﴾ فَاِذَا نُقِرَ
فِى النَّاقُوْرِ ﴿٨﴾ فَذٰلِكَ يَوْمَئِذٍ يَّوْمٌ عَسِيْرٌ ﴿٩﴾ عَلَى الْكٰفِرِيْنَ غَيْرُ يَسِيْرٍ
﴿١٠﴾ ذَرْنِىْ وَمَنْ خَلَقْتُ وَحِيْدًا ﴿١١﴾ وَّجَعَلْتُ لَهٗ مَالًا مَّمْدُوْدًا ﴿١٢﴾
وَّبَنِيْنَ شُهُوْدًا ﴿١٣﴾ وَّمَهَّدْتُّ لَهٗ تَمْهِيْدًا ﴿١٤﴾ ثُمَّ يَطْمَعُ اَنْ اَزِيْدَ ﴿١٥﴾
كَلَّا ؕ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ لِاٰيٰتِنَا عَنِيْدًا ﴿١٦﴾ سَاُرْهِقُهٗ صَعُوْدًا ﴿١٧﴾ اِنَّهٗ فَكَّرَ وَقَدَّرَ
﴿١٨﴾ فَقُتِلَ كَيْفَ قَدَّرَ ﴿١٩﴾ ثُمَّ قُتِلَ كَيْفَ قَدَّرَ ﴿٢٠﴾ ثُمَّ نَظَرَ ﴿٢١﴾ ثُمَّ
عَبَسَ وَبَسَرَ ﴿٢٢﴾ ثُمَّ اَدْبَرَ وَاسْتَكْبَرَ ﴿٢٣﴾ فَقَالَ اِنْ هٰذَاۤ اِلَّا سِحْرٌ يُّؤْثَرُ
﴿٢٤﴾ اِنْ هٰذَاۤ اِلَّا قَوْلُ الْبَشَرِ ﴿٢٥﴾ سَاُصْلِيْهِ سَقَرَ ﴿٢٦﴾ وَمَاۤ اَدْرٰىكَ مَا سَقَرُ
﴿٢٧﴾ لَا تُبْقِىْ وَلَا تَذَرُ ﴿٢٨﴾ لَوَّاحَةٌ لِّلْبَشَرِ ﴿٢٩﴾ عَلَيْهَا تِسْعَةَ عَشَرَ ﴿٣٠﴾
وَمَا جَعَلْنَاۤ اَصْحٰبَ النَّارِ اِلَّا مَلٰۤئِكَةً ص وَّمَا جَعَلْنَا عِدَّتَهُمْ اِلَّا فِتْنَةً لِّلَّذِيْنَ
كَفَرُوْا ۙ لِيَسْتَيْقِنَ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ وَيَزْدَادَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْۤا اِيْمَانًا وَّلَا
يَرْتَابَ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ وَالْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ ۙ وَلِيَقُوْلَ الَّذِيْنَ فِىْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ

وَّالْكٰفِرُوْنَ مَاذَآ اَرَادَ اللّٰهُ بِهٰذَا مَثَلًا ؕ كَذٰلِكَ يُضِلُّ اللّٰهُ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَيَهْدِىْ
مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ؕ وَمَا يَعْلَمُ جُنُوْدَ رَبِّكَ اِلَّا هُوَ ؕ وَمَا هِىَ اِلَّا ذِكْرٰى لِلْبَشَرِ ﴿٣١﴾
كَلَّا وَالْقَمَرِ ﴿٣٢﴾ وَالَّيْلِ اِذْ اَدْبَرَ ﴿٣٣﴾ وَالصُّبْحِ اِذَآ اَسْفَرَ ﴿٣٤﴾ اِنَّهَا
لَاِحْدَى الْكُبَرِ ﴿٣٥﴾ نَذِيْرًا لِّلْبَشَرِ ﴿٣٦﴾ لِمَنْ شَآءَ مِنْكُمْ اَنْ يَّتَقَدَّمَ اَوْ يَتَاَخَّرَ
﴿٣٧﴾ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ رَهِيْنَةٌ ﴿٣٨﴾ اِلَّآ اَصْحٰبَ الْيَمِيْنِ ﴿٣٩﴾ فِىْ
جَنّٰتٍ ۛ يَتَسَآءَلُوْنَ ﴿٤٠﴾ عَنِ الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ ﴿٤١﴾ مَا سَلَكَكُمْ فِىْ سَقَرَ
﴿٤٢﴾ قَالُوْا لَمْ نَكُ مِنَ الْمُصَلِّيْنَ ﴿٤٣﴾ وَلَمْ نَكُ نُطْعِمُ الْمِسْكِيْنَ ﴿٤٤﴾
وَكُنَّا نَخُوْضُ مَعَ الْخَآئِضِيْنَ ﴿٤٥﴾ وَكُنَّا نُكَذِّبُ بِيَوْمِ الدِّيْنِ ﴿٤٦﴾ حَتّٰٓى
اَتٰىنَا الْيَقِيْنُ ﴿٤٧﴾ فَمَا تَنْفَعُهُمْ شَفَاعَةُ الشّٰفِعِيْنَ ﴿٤٨﴾ فَمَا لَهُمْ عَنِ
التَّذْكِرَةِ مُعْرِضِيْنَ ﴿٤٩﴾ كَاَنَّهُمْ حُمُرٌ مُّسْتَنْفِرَةٌ ﴿٥٠﴾ فَرَّتْ مِنْ قَسْوَرَةٍ
﴿٥١﴾ بَلْ يُرِيْدُ كُلُّ امْرِئٍ مِّنْهُمْ اَنْ يُّؤْتٰى صُحُفًا مُّنَشَّرَةً ﴿٥٢﴾ كَلَّا ؕ بَلْ
لَّا يَخَافُوْنَ الْاٰخِرَةَ ﴿٥٣﴾ كَلَّآ اِنَّهٗ تَذْكِرَةٌ ﴿٥٤﴾ فَمَنْ شَآءَ ذَكَرَهٗ ﴿٥٥﴾ وَمَا
يَذْكُرُوْنَ اِلَّآ اَنْ يَّشَآءَ اللّٰهُ ؕ هُوَ اَهْلُ التَّقْوٰى وَاَهْلُ الْمَغْفِرَةِ ﴿٥٦﴾

O you, enveloped in a mantle, [1] stand up and warn, [2] and pronounce the greatness of your Lord, [3] and purify your clothes, [4] and keep away from filth, [5] and do no favour (to anyone merely) to ask more (in exchange), [6] and for the sake of your Lord, observe patience. [7] For when the trumpet is blown, [8] that day will be a difficult day, [9] not easy for the disbelievers. [10] Leave me (to deal) with the one whom I have created lonely, [11] and I gave him extensive wealth, [12] and sons present before (his) eyes, [13] and extended (power and honour) to him fairly well. [14] Still, he aspires that I should give him more. [15] Never! He is inimical towards Our verses. [16] I will force him to climb (the mountain) sa'ud. [17] He pondered and suggested. [18] Death onto him! How (bad) is the suggestion he has put forward! [19] Again, death unto him! How (bad) is the suggestion he has put forward! [20] Then he looked (to those around him,) [21] then he frowned and scowled, [22] then turned his back, and waxed proud, [23] then said, "This is nothing but traditional magic; [24] this is

nothing but saying of a mortal." [25] **I will put him into Saqar (Hell).** [26] **And what can let you know what Saqar is?** [27] **It neither spares (anything inside it from burning) nor leaves (any disbeliever outside).** [28] **It will disfigure the skins.** [29] **Appointed on it are nineteen (wardens).** [30] **And We did not make wardens of the Fire but (from among) angels, and did not fix their number but as a test for those who disbelieve, so that those who are given the Book may come to believe, and those who believe may increase in belief, and so that those who are given the Book and those who believe may not doubt (its correctness), and so that those having malady in their hearts and the disbelievers say, "What has Allah meant by this (sentence that is as strange as a) proverb?" Thus Allah lets go astray whomever He wills, and leads to the right path whomever He wills. And no one knows the hosts of your Lord but He. And this is nothing else but a reminder for mankind.** [31] **Truly, I swear by the moon,** [32] **and by the night when it goes back,** [33] **and by the morning when it becomes bright,** [34] **it (*saqar*: Hell) is one of the greatest things** [35] **as a warning to the mankind,** [36] **to the one who wishes to come forward (towards good deeds) or to go back (from them).** [37] **Everyone will be detained (in the Hell) because of what he did,** [38] **except the People of the Right, (i.e. those who will be given their Book of Deeds in their right hands)** [39] **who will be in gardens, asking** [40] **about the guilty persons,** [41] **"What has brought you to? (*Saqar*: Hell)"** [42] **They will say, "We were not among those who offered *ṣalāh*, (obligatory prayer)** [43] **and we used not to give food to the needy,** [44] **and we used to indulge (in mocking at the truth) along with those who indulged,** [45] **and used to deny the Day of Requital,** [46] **until when we were overtaken by that which is certain."** [47] **Then intercession of intercessors will not avail them.** [48] **So what has happened to them that they are turning away from the Reminder,** [49] **as if they were wild donkeys,** [50] **fleeing from a lion?** [51] **Rather, every one of them wishes that he should be given unrolled (divine) scriptures.** [52] **Never! But they do not fear the Hereafter.** [53] **Never! Indeed, this is a Reminder.** [54] **So, whoever so wishes may take advice from it.** [55] **And they will not take advice unless Allah so wills. He is worthy to be feared, and worthy to forgive.** [56]

Commentary

Sūrah Al-Muddththir is one of the Sūrahs that was sent down in very early days of the revelation. Therefore, some of the scholars considered this Sūrah to be the first one in order of revelation. However, according to the well-known authentic *aḥādīth*, the first instalment of revelation

comprised the initial verses of Sūrah Iqra'. Traditions show that after a few verses of this Sūrah had been revealed, further revelation stopped for a period of time. The period of time during which there was a temporary cessation of revelation is termed as *fatrat-ul-waḥy*. Towards the end of this period, an incident took place that is recounted by the Holy Prophet ﷺ thus:

While I was walking, I heard a voice from the sky. So I lifted my gaze towards the sky and saw the same angel who had come to me in the cave of Hira'. He was sitting on a chair between the sky and the earth. So I was struck with awe until I fell down to the ground. Then, I went to my family and I said, زمّلونی زمّلونی "Wrap me up, wrap me up" So, they wrapped me up! Allah revealed the initial verses of Sūrah Al-Muddaththir. (Ṣaḥīḥain).

The Holy Prophet ﷺ is addressed in this Sūrah as : -

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الْمُدَّثِّرُ (O you, enveloped in a mantle...74:1) The word *al-Muddaththir* is derived from *dithār* which refers to a 'thick, warm over-garment [such as a cloak or mantle] which a person wears in winter over his other clothes in order to protect himself from cold.' The form of address is affectionate and endearing as was explained under *Al-Muzzammil* in the preceding Sūrah. The two forms of address, *al-Muzzammil* and *al-Muddaththir,* are near-synonyms. Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī cites a report from Jābir Ibn Zaid who says that *Al-Muddaththir* was revealed after *Al-Muzzammil.* Some scholars attribute this narration to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه as well. However, according to the narration previously reported from Ṣaḥīḥain, it is clear that the first Sūrah to be revealed [after the temporary cessation] was *Al-Muddaththir.* If *Al-Muzzammil* was revealed before this, Sayyidnā Jābir Ibn 'Abdullāh رضي الله عنه [the narrator of the Ḥadīth] would have narrated it. Clearly, Al-Muzzammil and Al-Muddaththir, are near-synonyms. Therefore, it is very likely that the two Sūrahs might have been revealed in connection with the same incident - when the Holy Prophet ﷺ, whilst walking, heard a voice from the sky and saw Jibra'īl Amīn عليه السلام sitting on a chair between the sky and the earth, and then went to the house and wrapped himself in a mantle. This at least confirms the point that the initial verses of the two Sūrahs were among the first verses to be revealed after the temporary break in the revelation. It is however not clear as to which set

of the verses was revealed first, and which was revealed subsequently. Authentic narratives confirm that the initial verses of Sūrah Iqra' were first to be revealed. *Al-Muzzammil* and *Al-Muddaththir* were though revealed approximately the same time in connection with the same incident, there is a difference between the two: The injunctions given at the beginning of *Al-Muzzammil* are related to the Holy Prophet's ﷺ personal purification and perfection, and in *Al-Muddaththir* the injunctions are related to preaching, propagation and human reform.

Sūrah Al-Muddaththir lays down the following six injunctions:

Injunction [1]

قُمْ فَأَنْذِرْ (stand up and warn...74:2) 'Stand up' could be taken in its primary sense. It will mean: 'Remove the additional clothes in which you have wrapped yourself'. It is also not unlikely that 'stand up' means 'Prepare yourself for the onerous task of reforming the creation of Allah'. The command *fa-andhir* (and warn) comes from the infinitive *indhār* (warning) which is based on love and affection', such as a father's warning his children against the dangers of a snake, scorpion or fire. The Prophets proclaim the Divine Message and warn its rejecters of the evil consequences of rejection. Therefore, they have received the titles of *nadhīr* and *bashīr*. '*Nadhīr*' means 'the one who affectionately and endearingly warns [people] against harmful things' and '*Bashīr*' refers to 'the one who gives glad tidings'. The Qur'ān has conferred both the titles on the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the Holy Book is replete with them. Here, however, the Qur'ān takes it as sufficient to mention *indhār* 'to warn' because at the time of revelation of this verse there were only a handful of Muslims. The rest of the people were all rejecters and disbelievers. They needed to be warned and did not merit glad tidings.

Injunction [2]

وَرَبَّكَ فَكَبِّرْ (..and pronounce the greatness of your Lord...74:3) It means: "Proclaim the greatness of your Lord both orally and practically. The attribute *rabb* (Lord) has been used in this context because it is itself the effective cause of the injunction, in that He is the Sustainer, Cherisher and Nourisher of the entire world. He alone is worthy of *Kibriyā'*. The word *takbīr* literally signifies 'to say *Allāhu Akbar* '. This includes *takbīr* of *taḥrīmah* in the beginning of prayers and other *takbīrs* also. *Takbīr* is recited outside the prayers as well, such as in *adhān* and *iqāmah*. There

is no indication in the Qur'ān that this injunction specifically refers to uttering *Allāhu Akbar* to commence the prayers.

Injunction [3]

وَثِيَابَكَ فَطَهِّرْ (and purify your clothes...74:4) The word *thiyāb* is the plural of *thaub*. In its primary sense, it refers to 'clothes or garment'. Metaphorically, the words *thaub* and *libās* at times refer to 'action, heart, soul, moral character and religion.' Man's body may also be referred to as '*libās*'. The Holy Qur'ān and Arabic idioms bear ample testimony to this. Scholars of tafsir have taken all these senses into account when interpreting this verse. The variant interpretations may not be suspected of contradiction or conflict. The different interpretations attached to the verse enrich its significance. Thus the verse would signify that the body and clothes must be kept clean from all kinds of physical impurity. The heart and soul must be kept clean from false beliefs and adulterating thoughts, and free from base morals or from moral decadence. From this it is deducible that it is forbidden to trail the pants or loin-cloth below the ankle, because this is likely to pollute the garment. The injunction of cleansing the garment may signify that the garment must not be made or bought of unlawful money. It must not be made in such a way as the sacred law does not permit. Apparently, the injunction of cleansing the clothes is not specific to prayers. The injunction applies under all conditions. Thus the jurists have ruled that it is not permitted to keep the body and clothes unclean, without necessity, even outside prayers. Likewise, it is not permitted to sit in an unclean place. In times of necessity, it would be an exception. [Maẓharī]. The Holy Qur'ān says:

إِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحِبُّ التَّوَّابِينَ وَيُحِبُّ الْمُتَطَهِّرِينَ

'...Surely Allah loves those who are most repenting, and loves those who keep themselves pure.[2:222]'

And according to a *ḥadīth* narrative 'Cleanliness is half the faith'. Therefore, a Muslim, under all conditions and circumstances, needs to keep his body, clothes and house clean and pure and also maintain his inner cleanliness of the heart. And Allah knows best!

Injunction [4]

وَالرُّجْزَ فَاهْجُرْ (...and keep away from filth...74:5). The letters 'RJZ' may be read as *rujz* or *rijz*, and in either case the word has the same significance.

Mujāhid, 'Ikramah, Qatādah, Zuhrī, Ibn Zaid and other leading authorities of Tafsīr interpret the word *rujz* as 'idols' in this context. According to a narration of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās, it signifies 'any sin'. The verse enjoins to give up idols or sins. Although the Holy Prophet ﷺ never indulged in idolatry at any time in his life, he is commanded, for emphasis, to abstain from it in future as he kept away from it in the past. This command is in actual fact directed to the idolaters, so that they may realise the importance of abstaining from idol-worship, as it enjoins the Holy Prophet ﷺ to shun all filth [idols and sins] despite being sinless and infallible.

Injunction [5]

وَلَاتَمۡنُنۡ تَسۡتَكۡثِرُ (...and do no favour [to anyone merely] to ask more [in exchange]....74:6). In other words, no gift should be given to anyone seeking to get back in return more than what was given. This indicates that it is reprehensible to give to someone a gift with the intention that the person will give him a higher gift. Although it seems to be allowed, by another verse of the Qur'ān, for common people, yet it is reprehensible and morally unrighteous - especially for the Holy Prophet ﷺ, it is unlawful, as explained by Ibn 'Abbās.

Injunction [6]

وَلِرَبِّكَ فَاصۡبِرۡ (and for the sake of your Lord, observe patience.....74:7) The word *ṣabr* literally signifies 'to restrain oneself'. In the Qur'ānic context, the word has a very wide scope. It signifies to bind oneself to the laws of Allah, to restrain oneself from things made unlawful by Allah, and to control oneself, as far as possible, from unnecessary bewailing and complaining in times of difficulties and hardships. Thus this injunction is rather comprehensive which embraces almost the entire religion. On this occasion, the Holy Prophet ﷺ is directed to observe patience, particularly because the earlier verses have directed him to invite the people towards the true faith and to avoid the infidelity and *shirk*. It is obvious that he will be opposed and persecuted by the forces of evil, as the result of his missionary efforts. He should, therefore, be ready to bear all opposition and persecution with patience and fortitude .

Having given these few injunctions to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, the verses further refer to the Hereafter and its horrors. The word *nāqūr* means 'trumpet' and the verb *nuqira* means 'to blow into the trumpet so that it

makes a loud high sound'. After stating that the Day of Doom will be very horrible for all the infidels, a particular arrogant and conceited disbeliever has been described. He was a great mischief-maker and the gravity of his punishment will befit the enormity and gravity of his sins.

The Annual Income of Walīd Ibn Mughīrah: Ten Million Guineas

The disbeliever referred to here is Walīd Ibn Mughīrah. Allah had favoured him with abundant wealth, property and children. According to Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ, his land, property and gardens stretched from Makkah to Ṭā'if. According to Thaurī, his annual income was ten million Dinars. Some scholars have estimated less than this amount. It is, nonetheless, agreed that the income and yearly produce of his fields and gardens were available in every season, winter or summer. Thus the Qur'ān says:

وَجَعَلْتُ لَهُ مَالًا مَّمْدُودًا. وَّبَنِيْنَ شُهُوْدًا (and I gave him extensive wealth, [12] and sons present before (his) eyes...74:12-13) He was recognised as the Arab leader. He was known among his fellow citizens by the title of *raiḥānah* (the Fragrance) of the *Quraish*. He himself used to boastfully refer to himself as Waḥīd Ibn-ul-Waḥīd 'Unique, the son of the Unique', meaning 'Neither I have any match in my nation, nor my father Mughīrah.'. [Qurṭubī]. But he was ungrateful to Allah for His favours. Despite accepting Qur'ān as the Word of Allah, he imputed a lie to the Qur'ān, calling it sorcery and calling the Holy Prophet ﷺ a sorcerer. Tafsīr of Qurṭubī recounts the story thus: When the following passage of the Qur'ān was revealed, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was reciting it:

حٰمٓ ﴿١﴾ تَنْزِيْلُ الْكِتٰبِ مِنَ اللّٰهِ الْعَزِيْزِ الْعَلِيْمِ ﴿٢﴾ غَافِرِ الذَّنْبِ وَقَابِلِ التَّوْبِ شَدِيْدِ الْعِقَابِ ۙ ذِى الطَّوْلِ ؕ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ؕ اِلَيْهِ الْمَصِيْرُ ﴿٣﴾

> Ḥā Mīm. [1] This is revelation of the Book from Allah, the Mighty, the All-Knowing, [2] the One who forgives sins and accepts repentance, the One who is severe in punishment, the One who is the source of all power. There is no god but He. To Him is the ultimate return (of all) [3]. [40:1-3].

Walīd Ibn Mughīrah, hearing the recitation, exclaimed spontaneously, in which he was forced to concede as follows:

والله لقد سمعت منه كلامًا ماهو من كلام الانس ولا من كلام الجّن وان له لحلاوة و ان عليه لطلاوة وان اعلاه لمُثمر وانّ اسفله لمغدق وانّه ليعلو ولا يُعلىٰ

عليه وما يقول هذا بشر.

> 'By Allah! I have heard such a speech from him [Muḥammad] as can neither be the speech of a mortal, nor of Jinn. It has sweetness and elegance. Its upper part is fruit-bearing, and its lower part causes water to flow. Its beauty, no doubt, surpasses the beauty of all speeches, and cannot be superseded. It is not the speech of any human being. '

When the Quraish heard about what the great wealthy Arab leader had to say, it created a great convulsion in the Quraish, because it resulted in a wide inclination of the people towards Islam. This was a cause for concern for the leaders of the Quraish. They gathered and discussed (that if Walīd were to embrace the Islamic faith, the rest of the Quraish would soon follow suit.) Abū Jahl put their mind at ease when he took upon himself the responsibility of speaking to him and solving the problem.

Dialogue between Abū Jahl And Walīd: They Concur on the Holy Prophet's Veracity

Abū Jahl went to Walīd and sat next to him, pretending to be very sad. Walīd enquired, 'What is the matter? Why do you look so sad?' Abū Jahl made the reply, 'The Quraish decided to collect money for you and help you in your old age. Now they have learnt that you visit Muḥammad ﷺ and son of Abū Quḥāfah [ie Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ؓ] so that you may have some eatables from them, and to this end you flatter them. You praise their speech. (Obviously, it was a lie that the Quraish was collecting money to help Walīd. The lie was invented merely to make him angry. Similarly it was also a lie that he was getting food from the Holy Prophet ﷺ.)' Walīd was highly enraged on hearing this. His anger knew no bounds and said in arrogance and conceit, 'How can the Quraish think this? I swear by Lāt and 'Uzzā [the two Arabian idols], I am not in need of their food. Do they not know that I am superior to them in abundance of wealth? However, when you say that Muḥammad ﷺ is insane, nobody would believe it. Did you ever see him perform any any act of insanity?' Abū Jahl replied لَا وَاللّٰه 'Never, by God!' He said, 'You claim that Muḥammad ﷺ is a soothsayer. Did you hear him speak like a soothsayer?' Abū Jahl's reply was again in the negative. Then Walīd said, 'You say that he is a poet. Did you hear him recite poetry?' When Abū Jahl declared that he had not, Walīd added, 'You say that he is a

liar. Did you ever heard him telling a lie? Abū Jahl was forced to concede that they had never heard him tell a lie. (In fact, they had conferred upon him the titles of *Aṣ-Ṣādiq* 'The Truthful' and *Al-'Amīn* 'The Honest'.). Then Walīd said, 'You say that he is a soothsayer. Have you then seen him uttering such words or doing such acts as the soothsayers are accustomed to? We know well the utterings of the soothsayers. Muḥammad's discourse cannot be held as the utterance of a soothsayer.' Abū Jahl again had to admit. 'No, by God!' Now Abū Jahl had to withdraw from all such false allegations, but he was wondering what he should say to the people about the Holy Prophet ﷺ to stop them from following him. So, he said to Walīd, "Then, you tell me what we should say about him?" Walīd started thinking, then he raised his eyes towards Abū Jahl, frowned in a hateful manner, and ultimately replied, 'I think he is certainly a magician'. He knew well that the Holy Prophet ﷺ is not a magician either. But in order to devise an excuse for saying so, he argued, 'Do you not see how his speech separates husband from wife, brother from brother and father from son? This is the magical effect of faith. As soon as a person embraces the faith, he begins to hate his unbelieving mother, father and other relatives.' The verses describe him thus:

إِنَّهُ فَكَّرَ وَقَدَّرَ. فَقُتِلَ كَيْفَ قَدَّرَ. ثُمَّ قُتِلَ كَيْفَ قَدَّرَ. ثُمَّ نَظَرَ. ثُمَّ عَبَسَ وَبَسَرَ. ثُمَّ أَدْبَرَ
وَاسْتَكْبَرَ. فَقَالَ إِنْ هٰذَا إِلَّا سِحْرٌ يُّؤْثَرُ. إِنْ هٰذَا إِلَّا قَوْلُ الْبَشَرِ.

(He pondered and suggested. [18] Death onto him! How [bad] is the suggestion he has put forward! [19] Again, death unto him! How [bad] is the suggestion he has put forward! [20] Then he looked [to those around him,] [21] then he frowned and scowled, [22] then turned his back, and waxed proud, [23] then said, "This is nothing but traditional magic; [24] this is nothing but saying of a mortal."...25)

The word *qaddara* is derived from *taqdīr*, and literally denotes 'to suggest'. The wretched Walīd was fully convinced of the veracity of the Messengership of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, but his anger got the better of him, and being vanquished by his arrogance and conceit, he had decided to oppose him. However, he wanted to abstain from lying openly, so that he might not be exposed to shame and disgrace. Therefore, he pondered very carefully, and suggested that he should be labelled a 'magician' on the grounds that his speech causes separation between father and son,

and between brothers, as it happens in the case of sorcery. He is therefore cursed repeatedly in the verses cited above.

Unbelievers Abstained from Telling Lies

When we analyse, it would appear very clearly that all unbelievers and transgressors were involved in committing all kinds of sins and shameful deeds, but they abstained from the enormity of telling lies. Abū Sufyān's statement in the royal court of Heraculus shows that the pagans were willing to sacrifice their lives and children in opposing the Holy Prophet ﷺ, but they were not willing to tell lies lest they are socially stigmatised as liars. Alas, in this so-called progressive world where everything moves retrogressively 'telling lies' is no sin. It is in fact treated as a great art. Let alone unbelievers, even the pious and religious Muslims do not find it hateful. They pride upon telling lies and getting others to tell lies. We seek Allah's refuge from such an attitude.

Children's Stay with the Father is a Great Boon

While mentioning the favours Allah had bestowed on Walīd, the Holy Qur'ān has said,

بَنِيْنَ شُهُوْدًا

'and sons present before (his) eyes, [13]'

This shows that just as the birth of children and their being alive are a boon of Allah, their staying with parents is also a great divine blessing, because it is the cause of coolness of their eyes and a satisfaction of their heart. Additionally, abiding in their presence, children can be of assistance to the parents in their service and businesses. But the progress which this retrogressive age is making is based on gold and silver currencies. Comfort and peace are founded on promissory notes. Parents throw away their children in foreign countries. They are happy at their children's staying overseas for years, and it does not matter if they do not see their faces all their lives as long as they receive news of their huge earnings and salaries or income, enabling them to express their superiority to their family members. This indicates that they are unaware of the concept of peace and comfort. This should be the result of forgetting Allah as the Qur'ān says:

نَسُوا اللّٰهَ فَاَنْسٰهُمْ اَنْفُسَهُمْ

'...those who forgot Allah, so He made them forget their own

selves_[59:19]'

وَمَا يَعْلَمُ جُنُوْدَ رَبِّكَ إِلَّا هُوَ (...And no one knows the hosts of your Lord but He ... 74:31) Muqātil, among the leading authorities, says that this is rebuttal to Abū Jahl's statement. When he heard this verse which says that there are nineteen angels in charge of Hell, he addressed the youth of Quraish and said that Muḥammad ﷺ has only nineteen companions, so there is nothing to worry about. Baihaqī records a narrative from Suddi that when verse 30 was revealed, a foolish Quraishi unbeliever, Abūl-Asalaīn by name, spoke out: 'O nation of Quraish, I alone am sufficient for the nineteen. I will take care of ten with my right arm, and nine with my left arm. Thus I will put an end to all nineteen of them.' On this occasion, this verse was revealed. 'O fools, first of all one angel is sufficient for all. Moreover, the number nineteen refers to the chiefs of angels. Under each of these angels, the number of Allah's angels is legion beyond human count or computation. Allah alone knows their number. They are ready at hand to carry out the punishment to the unbelievers and transgressors.'

In the next verses, there is the mention of the Hereafter and its horrors.

إِنَّهَا لَإِحْدَى الْكُبَرِ (it (*saqar*: Hell) is one of the greatest things....74:35) The pronoun in the phrase *innahā* refers to *saqar* 'Hell' which has been mentioned in one of the preceding verses. The word *kubar* is the plural of *kubrā* which is an adjective for *dāhiyah* or *muṣībah* 'calamity'. The verse purports to say that Hell which the unbelievers will enter will be one of the greatest calamities. Besides, there will be many different kinds of torments and tortures.

لِمَنْ شَآءَ مِنْكُمْ اَنْ يَّتَقَدَّمَ اَوْيَتَاَخَّرَ (to the one who wishes to come forward [towards good deeds] or to go back [from them]...74:37) In this context, 'to come forward' signifies 'coming forward towards faith and obedience' and *ta'akhkhur* 'to go backward' signifies 'moving away from faith and obedience'. The verse purports to warn against the torment and torture of the Hellfire. This applies to all human beings in general. Some accept the warning and are guided by the truth, and the unfortunate ones hold back from accepting the warning, turn away from it and reject it.

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ رَهِيْنَةٌ إِلَّآ اَصْحٰبَ الْيَمِيْنِ (Everyone will be detained [in the

Hell] because of what he did, [38] except the People of the Right, [i.e. those who will be given their Book of Deeds in their right hands].....74:38-39) The word *rahīnah* is used in the sense of *marhūnah* 'will be detained'. The word is derived from *rahn* 'to give something valuable to a pawnbroker as a security for a debt. The valuable thing is thus merely detained by the pawnbroker. He cannot use it or take advantage of it'. Likewise, every person on the Day of Judgement will be detained in lieu of his sins, except those who will be given their Book of Deeds in their right hands. In this context, 'detention' could refer to being detained in Hell. In this case, the statement would mean that every person will be held in pledge in Hell against his sins to receive punishment, except the People of the Right. The context indicates that the People of the Right are those who have repaid their debt, i.e. they have fulfilled their obligations in this world towards Allah and other human beings. In these instances there is no need for them to be detained. This interpretation seems to be plain, simple and straightforward. However, if 'detention' refers to being held at some other place before giving account or before admission into Paradise or Hell, it signifies that every person will be held to give an account of his deeds. No person will be permitted to move out unless the account is taken. In this case, the exception of the People of the Right could refer to the sinless who are not accountable, such as minors or immature children as explained by Sayyidnā 'Alī ﵁. According to a Tradition, a segment of the Holy Prophet's ﷺ community would be exempted from accountability. They will enter Paradise without having to account for actions. Possibly, it could be referring to this segment. According to Sūrah Al-Wāqi'ah, there will be three categories of people on the Plain of Gathering: [1] *sābiqūn* 'the Foremost' and *muqarrabūn* 'who have attained nearness to Allah'; [2] the People of the Right; and [3] the People of the Left. On this occasion, the *muqarrabūn* have been merged with 'the People of the Right', and only the latter people have been mentioned. From this point of view, there is no express text which states that all the People of the Right will be excepted, and will not be detained for accountability. The first interpretation, that is being held in Hell, appropriately fits the context. And Allah knows best!

فَمَا تَنفَعُهُمْ شَفَاعَةُ الشَّافِعِينَ (Then intercession of intercessors will not avail

them...74:48) The attached pronoun of *tanfa'uhum* refers to those sinners who have been mentioned in the preceding verses. They confessed to four crimes: [1] they did not perform obligatory prayers; [2] they did not feed the poor, that is, they did not spend on the necessities of the poor; [3] they indulged (in mocking at the truth) along with those who indulged in opposing Islam or committing sins and shameful deeds; and [4] they denied the Day of Requital.

This verse purports to say that whoever has these characteristics, including denial of the Day of Requital, is an infidel. The intercession of anyone who tries to intercede for an infidel will be of no benefit to him on the Day of Judgement. Even if all the intercessors join forces to intercede, it will not help. This is because intercession is only useful if the conditions for it are met. Therefore, the verse uses the plural expression, thus:

شفاعة الشافعين

'intercession of intercessors'

No Intercession will Benefit an Unbeliever, but will Benefit a Believer

It is deducible from the verse under comment that, besides infidels, all Muslims, even though they may be sinners, will benefit from intercession as many authentic *aḥādīth* bear ample testimony to this. The intercessors will be the Prophets of Allah, Allah's friends and righteous personalities. It is confirmed that the general body of believers will intercede for one another, and their intercession will be accepted.

A Special Note

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ narrates that Allah's angels and Prophets, the martyrs and the righteous will intercede for sinners in the Hereafter, and they will be delivered from Hell by virtue of their intercession, except the four types of sinners who have been classified above, that is, those who failed to perform their obligatory prayer and to pay their Zakāh, those who opposed Islam with the opponents of Islam and denied the Hereafter. This shows that intercession will not be accepted for those who fail to perform their obligatory Ṣalāh and pay their Zakāh. However, other narratives indicate that the correct view with regard to the verse under comment is that the unacceptability of

intercession refers to those sinners who commit the four types of crimes that include the rejection of the Hereafter. Besides the rejection, it is not necessary that sinners committing other sins should be punished in the same way. However, there are other *Ḥadīth* narratives that refer to certain major sins which deprive people of intercession. For instance, if a person denies the veracity of intercession, or if he denies the existence of the Pond of Kauthar, he will have no share in either of the two.

فَمَالَهُمْ عَنِ التَّذْكِرَةِ مُعْرِضِيْنَ (So what has happened to them that they are turning away from the Reminder...74:49)

The word *tadhkirah* (Reminder), in this context, refers to the Holy Qur'ān, because the word literally signifies a 'reminder or something that reminds'. The Qur'ān is unique in reminding Allah's attributes of perfection, His mercy and wrath, and the reward and punishment. Towards the end, the verse 54 has explained that the 'Reminder' is the Holy Qur'ān that is rejected by them. The allergy of the infidels against the Holy Qur'ān has been mentioned in verses 50 and 51 in the following words, كَأَنَّهُمْ حُمُرٌ مُّسْتَنْفِرَةٌ. فَرَّتْ مِنْ قَسْوَرَةٍ "as if they were wild donkeys, fleeing from a lion?" The word *qaswarah* used in verse 51 has two meanings: [1] a 'lion'; and [2] an 'archer' or a 'hunter'. Both meanings have been reported from the noble Companions.

هُوَ اَهْلُ التَّقْوٰى وَاَهْلُ الْمَغْفِرَةِ (...He is worthy to be feared, and worthy to forgive... 74:56) Allah is *'Ahl-ut-taqwā* in the sense that 'He alone is worthy to be feared and entitled to be obeyed'. *Ahl-ul-Maghfirah* signifies that 'He alone is the Being Who forgives the sins of even the greatest sinners whenever He so wishes': No one else has the power to do this .

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Muddaththir
Ends here

Sūrah Al-Qiyāmah
(The Resurrection)

This Sūrah is Makkī. It contains 40 verses and 2 sections

بسم اللہ الرحمن الرحیم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 40

لَآ اُقْسِمُ بِيَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ ﴿١﴾ وَلَآ اُقْسِمُ بِالنَّفْسِ اللَّوَّامَةِ ﴿٢﴾ اَيَحْسَبُ
الْاِنْسَانُ اَلَّنْ نَّجْمَعَ عِظَامَهٗ ﴿٣﴾ بَلٰى قٰدِرِيْنَ عَلٰٓى اَنْ نُّسَوِّيَ بَنَانَهٗ
﴿٤﴾ بَلْ يُرِيْدُ الْاِنْسَانُ لِيَفْجُرَ اَمَامَهٗ ﴿٥﴾ يَسْئَلُ اَيَّانَ يَوْمُ الْقِيٰمَةِ
﴿٦﴾ فَاِذَا بَرِقَ الْبَصَرُ ﴿٧﴾ وَخَسَفَ الْقَمَرُ ﴿٨﴾ وَجُمِعَ الشَّمْسُ
وَالْقَمَرُ ﴿٩﴾ يَقُوْلُ الْاِنْسَانُ يَوْمَئِذٍ اَيْنَ الْمَفَرُّ ﴿١٠﴾ كَلَّا لَا وَزَرَ
﴿١١﴾ اِلٰى رَبِّكَ يَوْمَئِذِ ِالْمُسْتَقَرُّ ﴿١٢﴾ يُنَبَّؤُا الْاِنْسَانُ يَوْمَئِذٍ بِمَا
قَدَّمَ وَاَخَّرَ ﴿١٣﴾ بَلِ الْاِنْسَانُ عَلٰى نَفْسِهٖ بَصِيْرَةٌ ﴿١٤﴾ وَّلَوْ اَلْقٰى
مَعَاذِيْرَهٗ ﴿١٥﴾ لَاتُحَرِّكْ بِهٖ لِسَانَكَ لِتَعْجَلَ بِهٖ ﴿١٦﴾ اِنَّ عَلَيْنَا جَمْعَهٗ
وَقُرْاٰنَهٗ ﴿١٧﴾ فَاِذَا قَرَاْنٰهُ فَاتَّبِعْ قُرْاٰنَهٗ ﴿١٨﴾ ثُمَّ اِنَّ عَلَيْنَا بَيَانَهٗ ﴿١٩﴾ كَلَّا
بَلْ تُحِبُّوْنَ الْعَاجِلَةَ ﴿٢٠﴾ وَتَذَرُوْنَ الْاٰخِرَةَ ﴿٢١﴾ وُجُوْهٌ يَّوْمَئِذٍ
نَّاضِرَةٌ ﴿٢٢﴾ اِلٰى رَبِّهَا نَاظِرَةٌ ﴿٢٣﴾ وَوُجُوْهٌ يَّوْمَئِذٍ بَاسِرَةٌ ﴿٢٤﴾ تَظُنُّ
اَنْ يُّفْعَلَ بِهَا فَاقِرَةٌ ﴿٢٥﴾ كَلَّآ اِذَا بَلَغَتِ التَّرَاقِيَ ﴿٢٦﴾ وَقِيْلَ مَنْ سكتة
رَاقٍ ﴿٢٧﴾ وَّظَنَّ اَنَّهُ الْفِرَاقُ ﴿٢٨﴾ وَالْتَفَّتِ السَّاقُ بِالسَّاقِ ﴿٢٩﴾

إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ يَوْمَئِذٍ الْمَسَاقُ ﴿٣٠﴾ فَلَا صَدَّقَ وَلَا صَلَّىٰ ﴿٣١﴾ وَلَٰكِن
كَذَّبَ وَتَوَلَّىٰ ﴿٣٢﴾ ثُمَّ ذَهَبَ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهِ يَتَمَطَّىٰ ﴿٣٣﴾ أَوْلَىٰ لَكَ
فَأَوْلَىٰ ﴿٣٤﴾ ثُمَّ أَوْلَىٰ لَكَ فَأَوْلَىٰ ﴿٣٥﴾ أَيَحْسَبُ الْإِنسَانُ أَن يُتْرَكَ
سُدًى ﴿٣٦﴾ أَلَمْ يَكُ نُطْفَةً مِّن مَّنِيٍّ يُمْنَىٰ ﴿٣٧﴾ ثُمَّ كَانَ عَلَقَةً
فَخَلَقَ فَسَوَّىٰ ﴿٣٨﴾ فَجَعَلَ مِنْهُ الزَّوْجَيْنِ الذَّكَرَ وَالْأُنثَىٰ ﴿٣٩﴾
أَلَيْسَ ذَٰلِكَ بِقَٰدِرٍ عَلَىٰ أَن يُحْيِيَ الْمَوْتَىٰ ﴿٤٠﴾

I swear by the Day of Resurrection, [1] **and I swear by the self-reproaching conscience, (that Resurrection is a reality.)** [2] **Does man think that We will never reassemble his bones?** [3] **Yes, We are able to reset (even) his fingertips perfectly.** [4] **But man wishes to go on violating Allah's injunctions (even in future) ahead of him.** [5] **He asks, "When will be this Day of Resurrection?"** [6] **So, when the eyes will be dazzled,** [7] **and the moon will lose its light,** [8] **and the sun and the moon will be joined together,** [9] **on that day man will say, "Where to escape?"** [10] **Never! There will be no refuge at all.** [11] **On that day, towards your Lord will be the destination (of everyone.)** [12] **Man will be informed of what he sent ahead and what he left behind.** [13] **Rather, man will be a witness against himself,** [14] **even though he may offer his excuses.** [15]

(O Prophet,) do not move your tongue (during revelation) for (reciting) it (the Qur'ān) so as you receive it in hurry. [16] **It is surely undertaken by Us to store it (in your heart), and to let it be recited (by you after revelation is completed).** [17] **Therefore, when it is recited by Us (through the angel), follow its recitation (by concentration of your heart).** [18] **Then, it is undertaken by Us to explain it.** [19]

Never! (think that your denial of Resurrection is correct) But you like that which is immediate, [20] **and neglect the Hereafter.** [21] **Many faces, that day, will be glowing,** [22] **looking towards their Lord,** [23] **and many faces, that day, will be gloomy,** [24] **realizing that a back-breaking calamity is going to be inflicted on them.** [25] **Never! (think that you will remain in this world forever) When the soul (of a patient) reaches the**

clavicles, [26] **and it is said, "Who is an enchanter (that can save him?)"** [27] **and he realizes that it is (the time of) departure (from the world,)** [28] **and one shank is intertwined with the other shank,** [29] **then on that day, it is to your Lord that one has to be driven.** [30]

So (the denier of the Hereafter) neither believed, nor prayed, [31] **but rejected the truth and turned away (from it),** [32] **then he went to his home puffed up with pride.** [33] **(It will be said to such a man,) Woe to you, then woe to you!** [34] **Again, woe to you, then woe to you!** [35] **Does man presume that he will be left unchecked?** [36] **Was he not an ejaculated drop of semen?** [37] **Then he became a blood-clot, then He created (him) and made (him) perfect,** [38] **and made from him two kinds, male and female.** [39] **Has He no power to give life to the dead?** [40]

Commentary

لَآ اُقْسِمُ بِيَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ. وَلَآ اُقْسِمُ بِالنَّفْسِ اللَّوَّامَةِ (I swear by the Day of Resurrection, [1] and I swear by the self-reproaching conscience, (that Resurrection is a reality.)...75:1-2). The negative particle *lā* 'nay' prefixed to the oath in this context has no meaning. When the object of oath is to refute the false thought of an opponent, this redundant negative particle is used before oath. This usage is commonplace in Arabic idiom. Such usage is sometimes employed in our language [in Urdu] as well [as an answer to some objection or in repudiation of what is said before or] to emphasize an important subject. This Sūrah refutes and rebuts doubts about the possibility of the Resurrection by the rejecters. The Sūrah first swears an oath by the Resurrection, and then by the self-reproaching conscience. The complement or subject of oath is contextually understood - the Day of Resurrection is a reality and it shall come to pass. The object of oath in verse [1] is to affirm and emphasize the importance of the subject about which an oath is taken. In this instance, it is the Resurrection. In verse [2], the object of oath is to lay emphasis on the importance of self-reproaching conscience and its acceptability in the sight of Allah. The word *nafs* means 'soul' or 'life' and the word *lawwāmah* is derived from *lawm* signifying 'reproach or upbraid'. The phrase refers to the human conscience that upbraids him for doing bad deeds. It upbraids him not only for doing bad deeds, but also for doing good deeds - 'why did you not do more good, and attain higher stages [of development]?' In short, a

perfect believer reproaches and upbraids himself all the time whether doing good or bad. His reproaching himself for bad deeds is quite understandable, but why should he reproach, blame or criticize himself for good deeds? He should try to reach for higher goals in life by doing better deeds. He upbraids himself for missing out on that score. This interpretation is reported from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ and other leading authorities on Tafsīr [Ibn Kathīr and others].

On the same basis, Sayyidnā Ḥasan al-Baṣrī رحمه الله تعالى interpreted *nafs lawwāmah* as *nafs mu'minah* meaning, the 'believing soul' and said that 'By Allah! A believer at all times upbraids his own self. It is obvious why he should reproach himself when he commits evil. He reproaches himself when he does good deeds as well, because he feels that he has not performed his duties of servitude and Divine worship adequately. He feels that he has not fulfilled and consummated his obligations of slave-hood perfectly. Therefore, he reproaches himself for his shortcomings in the performance of his duties and obligations.'

Interpretation of *Lawwāmah*

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī رحمه الله تعالى and others have expressed the view that Allah has sworn an oath by the self-reproaching conscience in order to show honour for the believing souls who take account of their deeds, regret, and feel sorry for, their shortcomings and reproach themselves.

Three kinds of *Nafs*

The foregoing interpretation of *An-nafs-ul-lawwāmah* embraces *An-nafs-ul-muṭma'innah.* The two terms are titles of a God-fearing person.

In Ṣūfī terminology, we come across the following concepts. The noble Ṣūfis say that man in his nature goes through three stages of human development. The first stage is called] *An-nafs-ul-ammārah* 'the self that tempts (to evil)' as said by the Holy Qur'ān:

إِنَّ النَّفْسَ لَأَمَّارَةٌ بِالسُّوْءِ

'...Surely, man's inner self often incites to evil_[12:53]'

The second stage of development is called *An-nafs-ul-lawwāmah* 'the self that blames' - translated above as 'the self-reproaching conscience'.

The first stage is developed into the second stage when the traveler perform righteousness, and exerts himself in *riyāḍah* 'ascetic discipline' and *mujāhadah* 'spiritual struggle'. This Self is conscious of its own imperfections. It regrets its evils and shortcomings, but it is not completely cut off from the evils. The third and highest stage of development is called *An-nafs-ul-muṭma'innah* 'the self at peace'. This self develops into this stage when it progressively performs righteousness and attains Divine nearness and applies the sacred laws of Sharī'ah so rigorously that Sharī'ah becomes his nature and develops a natural hatred for anything contrary to Sharī'ah . The title of the self at this stage is *muṭma'innah.*

Then an oft-repeated objection of the disbelievers is mentioned, that is, when they are dead and reduced to bones and dust, how will they be raised again to life. The following verse rebuts this objection, thus:

بَلٰى قٰدِرِيْنَ عَلٰٓى اَنْ نُّسَوِّىَ بَنَانَهٗ (Yes! We are able to reset [even] his fingertips perfectly...75:4). Man is amazed and surprised and thinks that Allah is unable to gather his tiny particles that have been scattered and reassemble his decomposed bones and give him a new life. The verse effectively rebuts this objection by saying that this has happened once before. Every man who grows and develops in the world, his body is composed of particles and elements gathered from different parts of the world. Allah has infinite power to do anything. He will gather the disintegrated bones and the scattered particles of man from different parts of the world and give them life again, as he did the first time. It is not impossible for Him to breathe soul into his structure the second time, as it was not impossible the first time. Why should it be surprising?

Divine Wonders in the Resurrection of Bodies

Allah is able not only to raise man's dead body again, but also to reconstruct every part of his body perfectly up to the minute detail of the very delicate fingertips and individual fingerprints. Man will be given the same body as he had in his worldly life without the slightest difference. Since the inception of time until the end of the world, zillions of human beings of different shapes and sizes come and die. Even if anyone remembers them, it is an impossible task to recompose them precisely. But Allah says in the verse under comment that He is quite able to recreate not only the large limbs, members and organs of the dead, but He is also able to put together his fingertips. The word *Banān* 'fingertips' is specially

mentioned here because they are among the smallest parts of the body. If Allah is able to recreate such small parts [with such precision], it would not be impossible for Him to recreate the larger limbs of the body, such as arms or hands or legs or feet.

Another reason why *banān* 'fingertips' finds a special mention is that Allah has characterized every human body with some identification marks through which one person could be distinctly recognized and distinguished from the other. For instance, the human face is no more than a few square centimeters; yet it has such distinctive characteristics that no two faces look exactly alike. Despite man's tongue and throat being alike, the sounds and voices of young and old, and of men and women are easily distinguishable. Even more amazing than this, are the fingertips and fingerprints. No two thumbprints or fingerprints are alike. Fingertips look alike, but the fingerprints are different. There are zillions of human beings, but the patterns of lines on the skins of the fingers is distinctly recognizable. Thumbprints have played a decisive role in court decisions and judgements. Technical analysis reveals that the patterns of lines are not only on the skin of the thumbs, but also on the skins of all the fingers - distinguishable and recognizable.

In sum, man is amazed as to how Allah will reassemble his bones and give him a new life again, but he should think further than this. He will be raised with the same face, shape and size, and with the same distinctive features, so much so that his fingertips and fingerprints will be reshaped as they were in the first instance of his creation. *Fa-tabārak Allahu Aḥsanul khāliqīn* - 'Glorious is Allah, the Best of Creators!'

بَلْ يُرِيْدُ الْإِنْسَانُ لِيَفْجُرَ اَمَامَهٗ (But man wishes to go on violating Allah's injunctions [even in future] ahead of him...75:5). The word *amām* signifies 'ahead or future'. The verse purports to say that the unbeliever or the unmindful man does not ponder over the manifestations of Divine Omnipotence, so that he may regret his denial in the past and make amends for the future. In fact, he wishes to persist in his denial, polytheism and sins even in the future.

فَاِذَا بَرِقَ الْبَصَرُ. وَخَسَفَ الْقَمَرُ. وَجُمِعَ الشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ (So, when the eyes will be dazzled, and the moon will lose its light, and the sun and the moon will be joined together,...75:7-9). This describes the scenes of the Resurrection.

The verb *bariqa* means for the eyes 'to be dazzled and unable to see'. On the Day of Resurrection, the eyes of all will be dazzled and will not be able to see consistently. The verb *khasafa* is derived from *khusūf* which means 'to lose light and become dark'. The verse purports to say that the moon will lose its light or will be eclipsed. The statement that 'the sun and the moon will be joined together' signifies that not only the moon will lose its light, but also the sun will be eclipsed. Astronomers have discovered that the sun has the original light, and the light of the moon is borrowed from the sun. Allah says that the sun and the moon on the Day of Resurrection will be fused together, so that they both will lose their lights. Some scholars interpret this statement to mean that on that Day the sun and the moon will rise from the same point, as some narratives report. And Allah know best!

يُنَبَّؤُا الْإِنْسَانُ يَوْمَئِذٍ بِمَا قَدَّمَ وَأَخَّرَ (Man will be informed of what he sent ahead, and what he left behind....75:13). Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd and Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنهم are reported to have said that 'what he sent ahead' refers to the good deeds he has sent forth before his death. The words 'what he left behind' refers to the good or bad, useful or harmful custom he invented and left behind which people follow. He will continue to receive its reward or punishment. Qatādah رحمه الله said that 'what he sent ahead' refers to a good deed he did in his lifetime; and 'what he left behind' refers to a good deed he could have done but did not do and wasted his time or opportunity.

بَلِ الْإِنْسَانُ عَلَىٰ نَفْسِهِ بَصِيرَةٌ. وَلَوْ أَلْقَىٰ مَعَاذِيرَهُ (Rather, man will be a witness against himself, even though he may offer his excuses....75:14-15). One meaning of the words *baṣīr* and *baṣīrah* is 'to see'. Another meaning of *baṣīrah* is 'evidence', as for instance in:

قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ بَصَائِرُ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ

'...There have come to you evidences [1] from your Lord_[6:104]'

In this verse the word *baṣā'ir* is the plural of *baṣīrah* and it means 'evidence, proof, argument or insight'. The word *ma'ādhīr* is the plural of *mi'dhār* meaning, 'excuse'. The verse purports to say that for purposes of following the procedures of fairness and justice, man will be shown each

(1). Another meaning of the word is 'insights' according to which we have translated the verse 6:104 in the text. (Muhammad Taqi Usmani)

of his deeds on the Plain of Reckoning, although in fact this will not be necessary for him, because every man knows what he does in this world, and he will recall his deeds in the Hereafter, even though he will make excuses. Furthermore, he will see all his good and bad actions on the Plain of Reckoning as the Qur'ān says:

وَوَجَدُوْا مَا عَمِلُوْا حَاضِرًا

'...And they will find what they did all there_[18:49]'

If the word *baṣīrah* is taken in the sense of 'evidence, or proof', the verse signifies that man will be a clear proof against himself, in spite of any excuses he might offer. However, man fails to realize that in this situation, the limbs of his own body [his hearing, his sight, his two hands and his two legs] will testify against him. This is the meaning of the words 'وَلَوْ اَلْقٰى مَعَاذِيْرَهٗ' 'even though he may offer his excuses. [75:15]'.

Thus far, there was the description of the conditions and horrors of the Day of Resurrection. The next four verses are a special guidance for the Messenger ﷺ of Allah to be followed by him at the time of revelation. When Jibra'īl Amīn عليه السلام descended with a set of verses, the Holy Prophet ﷺ feared that there might be discrepancy in his listening and reciting it accordingly. His other fear was that he might forget some portion of it, or some word might escape his memory. As a result, when Jibra'īl Amīn عليه السلام recited a verse, he would exert himself in repeating the words immediately upon hearing them. In this manner, the strain would be multiplied. Allah revealed four verses in which he is advised not to exert himself so strenuously, because the matter has been simplified for him. Allah has taken upon Himself the responsibility of collecting it in his heart, making him recite it and conveying it to the people, thus:

لَاتُحَرِّكْ بِهٖ لِسَانَكَ لِتَعْجَلَ بِهٖ ﴿١٦﴾ اِنَّ عَلَيْنَا جَمْعَهٗ وَقُرْاٰنَهٗ ﴿١٧﴾ فَاِذَا قَرَاْنٰهُ فَاتَّبِعْ قُرْاٰنَهٗ ﴿١٨﴾

([O Prophet,] do not move your tongue [during revelation] for [reciting] it [the Qur'ān] so as you receive it in hurry. It is surely undertaken by Us to store it [in your heart], and to let it be recited [by you after revelation is completed]. Therefore, when it is recited by Us [through the angel], follow its recitation [by concentration of your heart]...75:16-18).

The word Qur'ān here means 'recitation'. In other words, when Jibra'īl ﷺ recites the Qur'ān, you should not recite it along with him, but listen to it attentively. When its recitation is completed, follow its recitation. Here the words 'follow its recitation', by general consensus of the scholars, means 'when Jibra'īl ﷺ recites, be silent and listen to it.'

Muqtadīs (those praying behind an Imām) should not recite the Qur'ān in *ṣalāh*

According to an authentic Ḥadīth, Imām (one who leads a congregational prayer) in prayer is supposed to be followed by *muqtadīs* (those who follow Imām). Therefore, they follow him. When the former bows, the latter must bow; and when he prostrates, the latter must all fall in prostration. In line with this principle, a Ḥadīth in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim adds: اذا قرا فانصتوا 'When he [the Imām] recites, be silent and listen.'

This explains the function of an Imām. In matters of bowing and prostrating, the followers should do as he does, that is, they should perform the acts of bowing and prostrating along with him. However, following him in the matter of recitation is different. When the Imām recites, the followers should be silent and listen. This is the argument of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah and some other Imāms in holding that the *muqtadīs* should not recite when following an Imām in prayer. And Allah knows best!

In conclusion, the passage says: 'إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا بَيَانَه (Then, it is undertaken by Us to explain it...75:19). In other words, it is Allah's concern to explain the true message of the verses. In fact, the meaning of every single word of the Qur'ān will be made plain to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. He need not be concerned about it. These four verses laid down the injunctions pertaining to Qur'ān and its recitation. Now the Sūrah reverts to its basic theme of Resurrection. It describes the conditions and horrors of the Hereafter. Here a question arises as to the contextual relationship between the four verses and the rest of the Sūrah where they have been studded. Before the four verses, while describing the Resurrection, it was made plain that Allah's knowledge is infinite, so much so that every man will be resurrected in the same state, the same shape and size, in which he was created the first time. His fingertips will be reconstructed with the same precision that they were created the first time; and his fingerprints will be redesigned with the same patterns of lines on their skins as were designed

the before. There will be not a hair's breadth of a difference. This is possible only because Allah is Omniscient; His knowledge is infinite and all-encompassing; and His preserving capacity is incomparable, unparalleled and unique. On the basis of these attributes, the four verses were revealed to console and comfort the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The Holy Prophet ﷺ is told: 'You can forget, and it is possible that you could make a mistake in transmission. But Allah is beyond these things. Allah has taken upon Himself the responsibility of storing the words of the Qur'ān in your heart or explaining the message to you. Do not worry about all this. It is Our concern.' After these four verses, the Sūrah resumes the description of the conditions of Resurrection.

وُجُوهٌ يَّوْمَئِذٍ نَّاضِرَةٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهَا نَاظِرَةٌ (Many faces, that day, will be glowing, looking towards their Lord,...75:23). The word *nāḍirah* means 'fresh'. In other words, many faces that day will be happy, fresh and radiant. The words 'looking towards their Lord' mean 'gazing at their Lord'. This proves that the inmates of Paradise will see Allah in the Hereafter with physical eyes. The scholars of *Ahlus-sunnah* (those following the classic way of interpreting the religion) are unanimous on this issue. The *Mu'tazilites* and the *Kharijites* deny the possibility of seeing Allah, even in Paradise. Their reasoning is philosophical scepticism. They say that there are certain conditions of distance that must be met between the one who sees with his physical eyes and the object that is seen. But these conditions cannot be met between the Creator and the created. The *Ahlus-sunnah* respond that in the Hereafter the Beatific Vision of Allah will be beyond the need of these conditions. He will be seen [unlike any material being] beyond space, direction, shape or form. Ḥadīth narratives make the subject even clearer. The inmates of Paradise will occupy different positions. Consequently, some will see Allah on a weekly basis, on Fridays. Others will see Him daily, morning and evening. Yet others will see Him all the time under all conditions. [Maẓharī].

كَلَّآ إِذَا بَلَغَتِ التَّرَاقِيَ ﴿٢٦﴾ وَقِيلَ مَنْ ۜ رَاقٍ ﴿٢٧﴾ وَّظَنَّ أَنَّهُ الْفِرَاقُ ﴿٢٨﴾
وَالْتَفَّتِ السَّاقُ بِالسَّاقِ ﴿٢٩﴾ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ يَوْمَئِذٍ الْمَسَاقُ ﴿٣٠﴾

(When the soul [of a patient] reaches the clavicles, and it is said, "Who is an enchanter [that can save him?]", and he realizes that it is [the time of] departure [from the world,] and one shank is intertwined with the other shank, then on that day, it

is to your Lord that one has to be driven....75:26-30]

In the preceding verses, reckoning on the Day of Reckoning and conditions of the inmates of Paradise and Hell were described. In these verses, man's attention is drawn to his approaching death, which he should not neglect. He should embrace the faith and do deeds of righteousness before death overtakes him, so that he may attain salvation in the Hereafter. The above verse depicts the scene of death. The unmindful man forgets his death until his soul comes up to his collar-bone [throat]. The healers fail to heal him, and the people look for enchanters to save him. When one shank is entwined with the other, he realizes that it is the final moments of his parting. At this juncture neither is his repentance acceptable nor a righteous deed. Therefore, it is necessary for a wise person to make amends before this moment arrives. In the statement, وَالْتَفَّتِ السَّاقُ بِالسَّاقِ (and one shank is intertwined with the other shank) the word *sāq* means 'shank'. This statement could mean that, being agitated and restless, he strikes one shank on the other, or rubs one shank against the other. It could also signify that if one leg is placed on the other, and the dying person wants to move it, he would not be able to do so. [Sha'bī and Ḥasan have interpreted it in this way].

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ says that the two 'shanks' refer to the two worlds: the Here and the Hereafter. The verse signifies 'the last day of the days of this world and the first day of the days of the Hereafter; one affliction will be joined to another, and the agony of leaving this world will be joined to the agony of the punishment awaiting the disbeliever in the next world'. And Allah knows best!

اَوْلٰى لَكَ فَاَوْلٰى ﴿٣٤﴾ ثُمَّ اَوْلٰى لَكَ فَاَوْلٰى ﴿٣٥﴾

'[It will be said to such a man,] Woe to you, then woe to you! Again, woe to you, then woe to you!...(75:34-35)

The word *aula* is the inverted form of wail which means 'destruction'. The expression 'woe' has been mentioned four times for the person who has made it his habit to deny and reject, and was steeped in wealth, and died in that state. Therefore, destruction has been heaped on him four times: [1] at the time of death; [2] in the grave; [3] at the time of Resurrection; and finally [4] at the time of entering Hell.

اَلَيْسَ ذٰلِكَ بِقٰدِرٍ عَلٰٓى اَنْ يُّحْيِىَ الْمَوْتٰى (Has He no power to give life to the

dead?...(75:40). Can it be imagined that the Supreme Being in whose controlling power is death and life and the entire world is not able to bring the dead to life? The Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said: 'When anyone recites this verse of Sūrah Al-Qiyāmah, he should say: بلیٰ وانا علیٰ ذٰلک من الشّٰهدین "Yes indeed I am among those who bear witness that He has the power to do it"'. The same Hadith narrative states that when a person recites Sūrah Tin and reaches the verse اَلَیْسَ اللّٰهُ بِاَحْکَمِ الْحٰکِمِیْنَ 'Is Allah not the Greatest Ruler of all the rulers? [95:8]', he should utter the same words. The same Ḥadīth states that when a person recites Sūrah Al-Mursalāt and reaches the verse فَبِاَیِّ حَدِیْثٍ بَعْدَهٗ یُؤْمِنُوْنَ 'Now, in which discourse, after this, will they believe? [77:50]', he should say اٰمنّا باللہ 'I believe in Allah'

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Qiyāmah
Ends here

Sūrah Ad-Dahr

(The Time)

This sūrah is Makki, and it has 31 verses, and 2 sections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 31

هَلْ اَتٰى عَلَى الْاِنْسَانِ حِيْنٌ مِّنَ الدَّهْرِ لَمْ يَكُنْ شَيْـًٔا مَّذْكُوْرًا ﴿۱﴾
اِنَّا خَلَقْنَا الْاِنْسَانَ مِنْ نُّطْفَةٍ اَمْشَاجٍ ۖ نَّبْتَلِيْهِ فَجَعَلْنٰهُ سَمِيْعًاۢ بَصِيْرًا
﴿۲﴾ اِنَّا هَدَيْنٰهُ السَّبِيْلَ اِمَّا شَاكِرًا وَّاِمَّا كَفُوْرًا ﴿۳﴾ اِنَّآ اَعْتَدْنَا
لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ سَلٰسِلَا۟ وَاَغْلٰلًا وَّسَعِيْرًا ﴿۴﴾ اِنَّ الْاَبْرَارَ يَشْرَبُوْنَ مِنْ
كَاْسٍ كَانَ مِزَاجُهَا كَافُوْرًا ﴿۵﴾ عَيْنًا يَّشْرَبُ بِهَا عِبَادُ اللّٰهِ
يُفَجِّرُوْنَهَا تَفْجِيْرًا ﴿۶﴾ يُوْفُوْنَ بِالنَّذْرِ وَيَخَافُوْنَ يَوْمًا كَانَ شَرُّهٗ
مُسْتَطِيْرًا ﴿۷﴾ وَيُطْعِمُوْنَ الطَّعَامَ عَلٰى حُبِّهٖ مِسْكِيْنًا وَّيَتِيْمًا وَّاَسِيْرًا
﴿۸﴾ اِنَّمَا نُطْعِمُكُمْ لِوَجْهِ اللّٰهِ لَا نُرِيْدُ مِنْكُمْ جَزَآءً وَّلَا شُكُوْرًا ﴿۹﴾
اِنَّا نَخَافُ مِنْ رَّبِّنَا يَوْمًا عَبُوْسًا قَمْطَرِيْرًا ﴿۱۰﴾ فَوَقٰىهُمُ اللّٰهُ شَرَّ
ذٰلِكَ الْيَوْمِ وَلَقّٰىهُمْ نَضْرَةً وَّسُرُوْرًا ﴿۱۱﴾ وَجَزٰىهُمْ بِمَا صَبَرُوْا جَنَّةً
وَّحَرِيْرًا ﴿۱۲﴾ مُّتَّكِـِٕيْنَ فِيْهَا عَلَى الْاَرَآئِكِ ۚ لَا يَرَوْنَ فِيْهَا شَمْسًا
وَّلَا زَمْهَرِيْرًا ﴿۱۳﴾ وَدَانِيَةً عَلَيْهِمْ ظِلٰلُهَا وَذُلِّلَتْ قُطُوْفُهَا تَذْلِيْلًا

﴿١٤﴾ وَيُطَافُ عَلَيْهِمْ بِاٰنِيَةٍ مِّنْ فِضَّةٍ وَّاَكْوَابٍ كَانَتْ قَوَارِيْرَا ﴿١٥﴾
قَوَارِيْرَا مِنْ فِضَّةٍ قَدَّرُوْهَا تَقْدِيْرًا ﴿١٦﴾ وَيُسْقَوْنَ فِيْهَا كَاْسًا كَانَ
مِزَاجُهَا زَنْجَبِيْلًا ﴿١٧﴾ عَيْنًا فِيْهَا تُسَمّٰى سَلْسَبِيْلًا ﴿١٨﴾ وَيَطُوْفُ
عَلَيْهِمْ وِلْدَانٌ مُّخَلَّدُوْنَ ۚ اِذَا رَاَيْتَهُمْ حَسِبْتَهُمْ لُؤْلُؤًا مَّنْثُوْرًا ﴿١٩﴾
وَاِذَا رَاَيْتَ ثَمَّ رَاَيْتَ نَعِيْمًا وَّمُلْكًا كَبِيْرًا ﴿٢٠﴾ عٰلِيَهُمْ ثِيَابُ سُنْدُسٍ
خُضْرٌ وَّاِسْتَبْرَقٌ وَّحُلُّوْٓا اَسَاوِرَ مِنْ فِضَّةٍ ۚ وَسَقٰىهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ شَرَابًا
طَهُوْرًا ﴿٢١﴾ اِنَّ هٰذَا كَانَ لَكُمْ جَزَآءً وَّكَانَ سَعْيُكُمْ مَّشْكُوْرًا
﴿٢٢﴾ اِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْاٰنَ تَنْزِيْلًا ﴿٢٣﴾ فَاصْبِرْ لِحُكْمِ رَبِّكَ
وَلَا تُطِعْ مِنْهُمْ اٰثِمًا اَوْ كَفُوْرًا ﴿٢٤﴾ وَاذْكُرِ اسْمَ رَبِّكَ بُكْرَةً وَّاَصِيْلًا
﴿٢٥﴾ وَّمِنَ فَاسْجُدْ لَهٗ وَسَبِّحْهُ لَيْلًا طَوِيْلًا ﴿٢٦﴾ اِنَّ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ يُحِبُّوْنَ
الْعَاجِلَةَ وَيَذَرُوْنَ وَرَآءَهُمْ يَوْمًا ثَقِيْلًا ﴿٢٧﴾ نَحْنُ خَلَقْنٰهُمْ وَشَدَدْنَآ
اَسْرَهُمْ ۚ وَاِذَا شِئْنَا بَدَّلْنَآ اَمْثَالَهُمْ تَبْدِيْلًا ﴿٢٨﴾ اِنَّ هٰذِهٖ تَذْكِرَةٌ ۚ
فَمَنْ شَآءَ اتَّخَذَ اِلٰى رَبِّهٖ سَبِيْلًا ﴿٢٩﴾ وَمَا تَشَآءُوْنَ اِلَّآ اَنْ يَّشَآءَ اللّٰهُ
ۗ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلِيْمًا حَكِيْمًا ﴿٣٠﴾ يُّدْخِلُ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ فِيْ رَحْمَتِهٖ ۗ
وَالظّٰلِمِيْنَ اَعَدَّ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا اَلِيْمًا ﴿٣١﴾

There has come upon man a period of time in which he was nothing worth mentioning. [1] **We have created man from a mixed sperm-drop to put him to a test, so We made him able to hear, able to see.** [2] **We have shown him the way to (let him) become either grateful or ungrateful.** [3] **We have prepared for the disbelievers shackles and iron-collars and a blazing Fire.** [4] **Indeed, the righteous will have a drink from a goblet, blended with (a drink from) Camphor** [5] **that will be a spring from which Allah's slaves will drink, making it flow (wherever they wish) profusely.** [6] **They (are the ones who) fulfil the vows, and fear a day whose evil (events) will be widespread,** [7] **and they give food, despite their**

love for it, to the needy, and the orphan, and the captive, [8] (saying to them,) "We feed you only for the sake of Allah; we have no intention of (receiving) either a return from you or thanks. [9] In fact, we are fearful of a day, from our Lord, that will be frowning, extremely frowning." [10] So Allah will save them from the evil of that day, and will grant them bloom and delight, [11] and will give them, in return for their patience, garden and (garments of) silk, [12] wherein they will be reclining on couches, feeling neither heat of the sun, nor intense cold, [13] and shades of gardens will be hanging low on them, and its fruits will be put entirely into their service. [14] And circulated among them will be vessels of silver, and cups that will be (as transparent as) crystals, [15] _crystals (as shining as if made) of silver, measured by those (who filled them) with due measure. [16] And they will be served with a goblet of drink blended with ginger, [17] a spring therein called Salsabil. [18] And circling around them will be serving boys, blessed with eternal youth; when you would see them, you would take them as scattered pearls. [19] And when you will look around there, you will see the Bliss, and a magnificent realm. [20] Upon them will be garments of green *sundus* (a kind of fine silk), and of *istabraq* (a kind of thick silk). And they will be adorned by bracelets of silver, and their Lord will give them a pure beverage to drink. [21] (It will be said to them,) "This is a reward for you, and your effort has been appreciated." [22]

Indeed we have revealed to you the Qur'ān through a gradual process. [23] So, submit patiently to your Lord's decision, and do not obey any one of them who is sinner or ungrateful. [24] And pronounce the name of Allah morning and evening. [25] And in some parts of night, prostrate before Him, and pronounce His purity for long times at night. [26] In fact these people love that which is immediate, and neglect a Heavy Day ahead of them. [27] We have created them, and have made their joints strong. And whenever We will, We would replace them with others like them, a total replacement. [28] Indeed, this is a reminder; so let anyone who so wishes, adopt a way to his Lord. [29] And you will not so wish, unless Allah so wills. Indeed Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise. [30] He admits whomsoever He wills to His

mercy. As for the wrongdoers, for them He has prepared a painful punishment. [31]

Commentary

Sūrah Ad-Dahr has also been called Sūrah Al-Insān (Man) and Sūrah Al-Abrār (The Righteous) [Rūḥ]. The Sūrah describes in a very effective, eloquent and elegant style the inception and end of human creation, reward and punishment of deeds, and the conditions of the Hereafter, Paradise and Hell.

هَلْ اَتٰى عَلَى الْاِنْسَانِ حِيْنٌ مِّنَ الدَّهْرِلَمْ يَكُنْ شَيْئًا مَّذْكُوْرًا (There has come upon man a period of time in which he was nothing worth mentioning.....76:1). The interrogative particle *hal* is used [linguistically] to introduce an interrogative sentence. Often, however, an interrogative construction is used to emphasise a self-evident truth. Such an interrogative means that whenever this question is put to anyone at anytime, the same answer is likely to come forth. There can be no other possibility. For instance, if a question is posed to anyone in the middle of day 'Is it not a day?', it is an interrogative sentence, but the answer is predictable and will emphasise its obviousness. Therefore, some scholars say that the particle *hal* is used here in the sense of *qad* 'indeed'. In both cases, the verse signifies that there has come upon man a period of time in which he was nothing worth mentioning. The word *ḥīnun* with nunation [which is the sign of 'indefiniteness'] signifies 'a long indefinite period of time; The verse mentions that a long period of time came upon man. This indicates that man essentially did exist at that time in one form or another, (but he was not worth mentioning), because time could not have come upon 'man' if he was in a state of pure non-existence [Al-'adam-ul- mahd]. Therefore, most commentators say that the 'period of time' here refers to the period when he was conceived in the mother's womb till his birth, which normally is nine months. This period covers all the stages of his creation, right from his being a sperm-drop up to his having a body and organs, and then his acquiring life and soul. During this time, he is thought existent, neither his gender is known to anyone, nor his name or his shape or size. Therefore, he is unmentionable.

The statement of the verse may also be taken in a wider sense. The inception of human creation takes place with the sperm that is produced by food. This food and its source and substance was existent in one or

other form. If the period of that time is calculated, this long indefinite period of time can stretch into thousands of years. In any case, Allah has drawn man's attention in this verse to a particular fact. If he uses his sense, he will discover his own reality. In addition, he will have no choice but to have complete faith and unshaken belief in the Allah, His Omniscience and His Omnipotence. Suppose, a person of seventy years reflects that he was unmentionable in any way about seventy-one years ago, even his grand parents had not imagined his particular existence, though they might have had a general concept of a child, then what caused his creation, what bewildering power drew together particles from different parts of the world to form a perfect human being, making him an intelligent, a hearing and seeing creature? Such a reflection will spontaneously force such a person to confirm the Persian poet who says:

ما نبودیم و تقاضا ما نبود......لطف تو نا گفته ما می شنود

Neither we were there, nor was there any demand from us.
It is only Your mercy that listened to what we never said.

Verse [2] describes the inception of human creation thus:

إِنَّا خَلَقْنَا الْإِنسَانَ مِن نُّطْفَةٍ أَمْشَاجٍ (We have created man from a mixed sperm-drop __76:2). The word *amshāj* is the plural of *mashj* or *mashīj* which means a 'mixture'. Here obviously it refers to the male and female gametes according to most commentators, but some commentators say, as cited in Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī, that *amshaj* refers to the four fluids of the body [blood, phlegm, choler and melancholy] of which the sperm is composed .

Man Is Made up of Particles from Different Parts of the World

If we reflect carefully, the cardinal fluids are made up of various kinds of nutriment. If we reflect further on man's food, it contains elements of water and air from distant parts of the globe. Thus, if we were to analyse man's present body, we will discover that it is composed of elements and particles that were scattered in every nook and corner of the world. A marvellous system set by Allah has, in a wonderful way, put them together in human structure. If this sense of *amshāj* 'mixed' is taken into account here, it allays the greatest doubt of the rejecters of Resurrection. Their main objection is that when they are dead, reduced to crumbled bones and dust, how will they be raised to life again? They thought this was impossible.

The interpretation of *amshāj* as 'cardinal humours/fluids' allays their doubt once and for all. At the inception, when man was created, he was composed of particles and elements from all parts of the world. Allah did not find this difficult the first time. Why should He find its recreation difficult the second time. According to this interpretation, the addition of the word '*amshāj*' (mixed) could have a special significance of its own. And Allah knows best!

نَّبْتَلِيْهِ (to put him to a test...76:2). The Arabic verb is derived from *ibtila'* which means 'to put to test'. This phrase puts forward the Wisdom underlying human creation. Allah has created man to put him to a test. This test is defined in forthcoming verses. Allah sent Prophets and celestial Books for the purpose of showing him both ways, one leading to Paradise, and the other to Hell. Man has been given a choice to adopt any one of the two ways. This led mankind into two groups, thus:

إِنَّا هَدَيْنَاهُ السَّبِيْلَ إِمَّا شَاكِرًا وَّإِمَّا كَفُوْرًا (We have shown him the way to (let him) become either grateful or ungrateful...76:3). The first group was of those who, appreciating Allah's bounties, offered gratitude to Allah, and believed in Him, while the second group was of those who remained ungrateful to Allah's favours, disbelieved. After the description of the two groups, the next verse describes the punishment and evil consequences of the disbelievers. Allah has prepared, for the disbelievers, shackles and iron-collars and a blazing Fire. On the other hand, huge bounties are mentioned for the believers and righteous people. Out of these bounties, drinkables are mentioned first. They will have a drink from a goblet, blended with (a drink from) Camphor.

إِنَّ الْأَبْرَارَ يَشْرَبُوْنَ مِنْ كَأْسٍ كَانَ مِزَاجُهَا كَافُوْرًا (The righteous will have a drink from a goblet, blended with [a drink from] Camphor....76:5). Some of the commentators say that *kāfūr* (Camphor) refers to a fountain in Paradise. In order to enhance the taste and pleasure of this drink, it will be mixed with water from this spring. If the word 'camphor' is taken in its popular sense, it does not necessarily signify that the camphor of Paradise be equated with the camphor available in this world, because the latter is not palatable.

عَيْنًا يَّشْرَبُ بِهَا عِبَادُ اللّٰهِ (that will be a spring from which Allah's slaves will drink...76:6). Grammatically, *'ainan* (spring) is a complement [*badal*] to *kāfūran* which explains *Kāfūr*. Given this construction, it becomes certain

that *Kāfūr* is the name of a spring. However, if the word *'ainan* is taken as an explanation to *ka's* (goblet), the meaning would be that the goblet will contain a drink from a spring specified for Allah's slaves. In this case, it is also possible that the term 'Allah's slaves' refers to a category other than 'Abrār' (Righteous).

يُوفُونَ بِالنَّذْرِ (They [are the ones who] fulfil the vows...76:7). This describes the reason why the righteous believers and Allah's slaves will receive these favours and bounties. This verse signifies that whenever they vow to do a good act, they invariably fulfil the vow. The word 'vow' literally means 'to take upon oneself an obligation which Sharī'ah has not obligated on him'. Once a vow is taken, it becomes obligatory to fulfil it. Here it is stated that great rewards and favours for the inmates of Paradise would be apportioned to them because they fulfilled the vow. The verse indicates that when they are so particular about fulfilling their vows that are taken by them upon themselves, they would be even more particular about fulfilling the obligations enjoined upon them by Allah. Thus 'the fulfilment of vows' covers the entire spectrum of religious obligations. They would receive the favours of Paradise, if they completely obey Allah and rigorously apply His sacred laws. In any case, this statement emphasises the importance and obligation of fulfilment of vows.

Ruling

There are several conditions that must be met before a vow can be constituted: [1] The vow must be legitimate and permissible - not a sin. If a person swears an oath to commit a sinful act, it is necessary for him to break the oath, and pay the expiation for violating it.(1) [2] It must not be legislated by Allah as an obligatory duty, as for instance if a person were

(1) It should be noted that in the original text of Ma'ārif-ul-Qur'ān, the expression is such that the vow may be confused by a layman with oath. To understand the point, it should be borne in mind that if a person makes a vow to commit a sin, like telling a lie, or drinking liquor, this vow is not recognized in Shrī'ah. It is necessary for such a person to abstain from the sin, and since the vow is not recognized by the Sharī'ah, no expiation (*kaffārah*) is needed. However, it is the rule about oath that has been mentioned in the text above. That is, if someone swears an oath to tell a lie, for example, he has to break the oath and offer *kaffārah*.

(Muhammad Taqi Usmani)

to vow that he will perform the prescribed prayer or *witr* prayer, the vow would be null and void, because it is already a prescribed obligation. [3] According to Imām A'ẓam Abū Ḥanīfah رحمه الله تعالیٰ, it is also a condition that the vowed act must be an act of worship in itself, and such act of worship should belong to those forms of worship which have been made obligatory in some way or the other, as for instance prayers, fasting, charity, sacrifice and so on. If the vowed act is not prescribed as a worship, such a vow will be void. For instance, if a person were to vow that he will pay a visit to a sickly patient, or follow a funeral procession, this vow will not be valid, because although these acts carry rewards as acts of worship, yet they are not acts, of worship in themselves (*Al-'Ibādāt-ul- Maqsūdah*). Detailed rules and principles related to vows and oaths are available in books of jurisprudence.

وَيُطْعِمُوْنَ الطَّعَامَ عَلٰى حُبِّهٖ مِسْكِيْنًا وَّيَتِيْمًا وَّاَسِيْرًا (and they give food, despite their love for it, to the needy, and the orphan, and the captive...76:8). The other reason why the inmates of Paradise will receive these favours is given in this verse, that is, their feeding the needy, the orphans and the captives.

علیٰ حُبِّهٖ (despite their love for it). This would mean that they give food to the needy while they themselves love it and desire it__ not that they eat to their fill and give the left-over food to the needy and poor. That feeding the poor and orphans is a form of worship and attracts reward is obvious. The word 'captive' refers to all prisoners, Muslim criminals, as well as infidels who are kept in prisons according to the principles of Sharī'ah. It is the responsibility of the Islamic government to feed them. Anyone who feeds them is actually assisting the government and the public treasury. Therefore, feeding the prisoners, even Non-Muslims, is an act of reward. In the early days of Islam, especially, feeding the prisoners and taking care of them or protecting them was a responsibility that was shared by the general body of Muslims, as it happened with the prisoners of the Battle of Badr.

قَوَارِيْرَا مِنْ فِضَّةٍ (vessels of silver...76:16). Silver vessels in this world are dense which can never be like glass, and that which is made of glass can never be silver. Thus silver and glass are two contradictory concepts in this world. However, it is a characteristic of Paradise that its glasses will be as bright as silver, and as transparent and sparkling as crystal.

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ said: "The blessings given in Paradise have their likes in this world also, except these vessels that are made of silver, but as transparent as a mirror."

وَيُسْقَوْنَ فِيهَا كَأْسًا كَانَ مِزَاجُهَا زَنْجَبِيلًا (And they will be served with a goblet of drink blended with ginger...76:17). The word *zanjabīl* means 'ginger'. The Arabs loved that their drink should be mixed with ginger. Therefore, it is mentioned in the context of Paradise [so that they are served with drinks flavoured with ginger of paradisiacal quality and splendour]. Some scholars say that the only thing the blessings of Paradise and the blessings of this world share in common is their name, and they have nothing else in common. Therefore, the 'ginger' of this world cannot be equated with the 'ginger' of Paradise.

وَحُلُّوٓا اَسَاوِرَ مِنْ فِضَّةٍ (...And they will be adorned by bracelets of silver...76:21). The *asāwir* is the plural of *siwar* that refers to a 'bracelet'. It is a piece of jewellery worn around the wrist. This verse speaks of 'silver bracelets'. On another occasion [22:23], the Qur'ān speaks of *asāwira min dhahab* 'gold bracelets'. There is no discrepancy between the two verses, because sometimes the silver bracelets will be worn, and at other times the gold bracelets, or some will wear gold bracelets and others will wear silver bracelets.

However, a question arises in any case: A bracelet looks good on women, but does not suit men. Why will the men of Paradise wear bracelets? The Answer is that suitability of any piece of jewellery to men or women depends on custom. The style and appeal of jewellery differ from country to country and vary from nation to nation. In some cultures, a piece of jewellery is treated as highly inappropriate for men, and in other cultures it is regarded as highly beautiful and elegant. The Chosros [Persian kings] used to wear bracelets around their wrists, and various kinds of jewellery used to be studded on their chest and crown. This was counted as a distinctive feature of their prestige and honour. After the conquest of Persian empire, the treasures that fell into Muslims' hands contained the Persian Emperor's bracelets. Thus the various cultures and nations differ in their taste for jewellery in this very world. The flair and taste for jewellery for men in Paradise cannot be equated with their flair for it in this world.

إِنَّ هٰذَا كَانَ لَكُمْ جَزَآءً وَّكَانَ سَعْيُكُمْ مَّشْكُورًا ([It will be said to them,] "This is a reward for you, and your effort has been appreciated....76:22). Allah will address the inmates of Paradise once they have entered Paradise, and will announce to them that the amazing bounties are granted to them as a reward for their good deeds they had done in the world, and their deeds have been appreciated by Allah. These expressions will be made to them by way of congratulation. For the people of love, the Divine congratulatory expressions will outweigh all the other blessings of Paradise put together. The congratulatory words are a proof positive of Divine pleasure.

Having mentioned the general blessings of the inmates of Paradise, special blessings that are conferred on the Holy Prophet ﷺ are listed. Firstly, the blessing in the form of the revelation of the Qur'ān is mentioned. The Holy Prophet ﷺ is, then, directed that the opponents and obdurate non-believers will obstinately reject the message and persecute him. So, he is to submit patiently to Allah's decision, and he should not obey any sinner or ungrateful person. Secondly, he is commanded to pronounce the name of Allah, and worship Him day and night. Further, he should prostrate before Him, during the night, and pronounce His purity for long times at night. This preoccupation will serve as a remedy for the non-believers' persecution. Towards the conclusion of the passage, the verse shows the reason for the persistence of the obdurate infidels. These ignoramus are intoxicated with the fleeting pleasures of this world, and have neglected the Hereafter, whereas if they had pondered in their own being or existence, they would have recognised and understood their Creator and Maker.

نَحْنُ خَلَقْنٰهُمْ وَشَدَدْنَآ اَسْرَهُمْ وَاِذَا شِئْنَا بَدَّلْنَا اَمْثَالَهُمْ تَبْدِيْلاً. (We have created them and have made their joints strong. And whenever We will, We would replace them with others like them, a total replacement....76:28)

Miracles of Nature Respecting Human Joints

This verse alludes to the fact that even though man's limbs and organs are perpetually in motion, and the wear and tear on them is phenomenal, they continue to function from birth to death. When machines made of iron or steel wear out and require regular servicing to

remain functioning for even a short period, man's body, made of soft tissues and muscles, functions for decades and scores of years without maintenance. Let us take the joints of the fingers [or other joints of the human body]. They are moved vigorously in different ways in an uncountable number of times. Heavy pressure and force is applied to them for seventy to eighty years [on an average], yet the finger-joints [and other joints] remain intact. It is certainly only Allah Who makes this possible. 'Glorious is Allah, the Best of Creators!'

Alḥamdulillāh
The Commentary on
Sūrah Ad-Dahr
Ends here

Sūrah Al-Mursalāt

(Those Sent)

This Sūrah is Makkī, and it has 50 verses and 2 sections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 50

وَالْمُرْسَلٰتِ عُرْفًا ﴿١﴾ فَالْعٰصِفٰتِ عَصْفًا ﴿٢﴾ وَّالنّٰشِرٰتِ نَشْرًا ﴿٣﴾
فَالْفٰرِقٰتِ فَرْقًا ﴿٤﴾ فَالْمُلْقِيٰتِ ذِكْرًا ﴿٥﴾ عُذْرًا اَوْ نُذْرًا ﴿٦﴾ اِنَّمَا
تُوْعَدُوْنَ لَوَاقِعٌ ﴿٧﴾ فَاِذَا النُّجُوْمُ طُمِسَتْ ﴿٨﴾ وَاِذَا السَّمَآءُ
فُرِجَتْ ﴿٩﴾ وَاِذَا الْجِبَالُ نُسِفَتْ ﴿١٠﴾ وَاِذَا الرُّسُلُ اُقِّتَتْ ﴿١١﴾
لِاَيِّ يَوْمٍ اُجِّلَتْ ﴿١٢﴾ لِيَوْمِ الْفَصْلِ ﴿١٣﴾ وَمَآ اَدْرٰىكَ مَا يَوْمُ
الْفَصْلِ ﴿١٤﴾ وَيْلٌ يَّوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُكَذِّبِيْنَ ﴿١٥﴾ اَلَمْ نُهْلِكِ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ
﴿١٦﴾ ثُمَّ نُتْبِعُهُمُ الْاٰخِرِيْنَ ﴿١٧﴾ كَذٰلِكَ نَفْعَلُ بِالْمُجْرِمِيْنَ ﴿١٨﴾
وَيْلٌ يَّوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُكَذِّبِيْنَ ﴿١٩﴾ اَلَمْ نَخْلُقْكُّمْ مِّنْ مَّآءٍ مَّهِيْنٍ ﴿٢٠﴾
فَجَعَلْنٰهُ فِيْ قَرَارٍ مَّكِيْنٍ ﴿٢١﴾ اِلٰى قَدَرٍ مَّعْلُوْمٍ ﴿٢٢﴾ فَقَدَرْنَا فَنِعْمَ
الْقٰدِرُوْنَ ﴿٢٣﴾ وَيْلٌ يَّوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُكَذِّبِيْنَ ﴿٢٤﴾ اَلَمْ نَجْعَلِ الْاَرْضَ
كِفَاتًا ﴿٢٥﴾ اَحْيَآءً وَّاَمْوَاتًا ﴿٢٦﴾ وَّجَعَلْنَا فِيْهَا رَوَاسِيَ شٰمِخٰتٍ
وَّاَسْقَيْنٰكُمْ مَّآءً فُرَاتًا ﴿٢٧﴾ وَيْلٌ يَّوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُكَذِّبِيْنَ ﴿٢٨﴾ اِنْطَلِقُوْٓا
اِلٰى مَا كُنْتُمْ بِهٖ تُكَذِّبُوْنَ ﴿٢٩﴾ اِنْطَلِقُوْٓا اِلٰى ظِلٍّ ذِيْ ثَلٰثِ شُعَبٍ

﴿٣٠﴾ لَّا ظَلِيلٍ وَّلَا يُغْنِي مِنَ اللَّهَبِ ﴿٣١﴾ إِنَّهَا تَرْمِي بِشَرَرٍ كَالْقَصْرِ
﴿٣٢﴾ كَأَنَّهُ جِمٰلَتٌ صُفْرٌ ﴿٣٣﴾ وَيْلٌ يَّوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُكَذِّبِينَ ﴿٣٤﴾ هٰذَا
يَوْمُ لَا يَنْطِقُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾ وَلَا يُؤْذَنُ لَهُمْ فَيَعْتَذِرُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾ وَيْلٌ يَّوْمَئِذٍ
لِّلْمُكَذِّبِينَ ﴿٣٧﴾ هٰذَا يَوْمُ الْفَصْلِ جَمَعْنٰكُمْ وَالْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿٣٨﴾ فَإِنْ
كَانَ لَكُمْ كَيْدٌ فَكِيدُونِ ﴿٣٩﴾ وَيْلٌ يَّوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُكَذِّبِينَ ﴿٤٠﴾ إِنَّ
الْمُتَّقِينَ فِي ظِلٰلٍ وَّعُيُونٍ ﴿٤١﴾ وَّفَوَاكِهَ مِمَّا يَشْتَهُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾ كُلُوا
وَاشْرَبُوا هَنِيٓئًا بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٤٣﴾ إِنَّا كَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِي
الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٤٤﴾ وَيْلٌ يَّوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُكَذِّبِينَ ﴿٤٥﴾ كُلُوا وَتَمَتَّعُوا
قَلِيلًا إِنَّكُمْ مُّجْرِمُونَ ﴿٤٦﴾ وَيْلٌ يَّوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُكَذِّبِينَ ﴿٤٧﴾ وَإِذَا قِيلَ
لَهُمُ ارْكَعُوا لَا يَرْكَعُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾ وَيْلٌ يَّوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُكَذِّبِينَ ﴿٤٩﴾ فَبِأَيِّ
حَدِيثٍ بَعْدَهُ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾

(I swear) by those (winds) that are sent one after the other, [1] and by those that blow violently, [2] and by those that spread (clouds) all over, [3] and by those (angels) who differentiate (between right and wrong) distinctly, [4] then bring down the advice, [5] providing excuses (for the believers) or giving warnings (to the disbelievers), [6] that which you are promised is sure to happen. [7] So, when the stars will be extinguished, [8] and when the sky will be split, [9] and when the mountains will be blown away as dust, [10] and when the messengers will be assembled at the appointed time, (then all matters will be decided.) [11] (Do you know) for which day has all this been delayed? [12] For the Day of Decision! [13] And what may let you know what the Day of Decision is? [14] Woe, that Day, to the deniers! [15]

Did We not destroy the earlier people? [16] Then We will cause the later ones to follow them. [17] Thus We deal with the guilty ones. [18] Woe, that Day, to the deniers! [19] Did We not create you from a worthless fluid? [20] Then We put it in a firm place of rest [21] for a known

period. [22] Thus, We did (all this with perfect) measure; so We are the best to measure. [23] Woe, that Day, to the deniers! [24]

Did We not make the earth a container that collects [25] the living and the dead? [26] And We placed towering mountains therein, and provided you with sweet water to drink. [27] Woe, that Day, to the deniers! [28] (It will be said to them that day,) "Push on to what you used to deny. [29] Push on to a canopy (of Hell's smoke) having three branches, [30] that neither has a comfortable shade, nor is it of any use against the scorching heat. [31] It emits sparks (as huge) as castles, [32] as if they were yellowish camels. [33] Woe, that Day, to the deniers! [34] This is a day when they will not speak, [35] nor will they be allowed to offer excuses. [36] Woe, that Day, to the deniers! [37] (It will be said to them,) "This is the Day of Decision. We have assembled you and the earlier ones together. [38] Now, if you have a trick, use the trick against Me." [39] Woe, that Day, to the deniers! [40]

Of course, the God-fearing will be amid shades and streams, [41] and fruits of their desire. [42] It will be said to them, "Eat and drink with pleasure because of what you used to do." [43] This is how We reward those who do good. [44] Woe, that Day, to the deniers! [45] "(O disbelievers,) eat and drink for a while! You are guilty ones." [46] Woe, that Day, to the deniers! [47] And when it is said to them, "Bow down (i.e. submit to Allah's commands')", they do not bow down. [48] Woe, that Day, to the deniers! [49] Now, in which discourse, after this, will they believe? [50]

Commentary

Occasion of Revelation

Ṣaḥīḥ of Bukhārī records from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ that he said:

> "While we were with Allah's Messenger in a cave at Minā, the Sūrah 'wal-Mursalāt' was revealed to him. He was reciting it, and I was learning it from his mouth. Verily, his mouth was moist with it, when a snake leaped out at us. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said, 'Kill it!' So we quickly went after it, but it got away. Then the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, 'It was saved from your harm, just as you all were saved from its harm'." [Ibn Kathīr].

Allah swears oaths in this Sūrah by various phenomena to assert that the Resurrection will certainly take place. The names of the phenomena are not mentioned in the Qur'ān, but their five attributes are given in the following manner (The translation is given below without explanatory brackets for a better understanding of the point):

[1] (I swear) by those that are sent one after the other, (77:1)

[2] and by those that blow violently, (77:2)

[3] and by those that spread all over, (77:3)

[4] and by those who differentiate (between right and wrong) distinctly, (77:4)

[5] then bring down the advice, (77:5)

There is no traceable Ḥadīth that gives the exact interpretation of the phenomena described. Therefore, the interpretation assigned to them by the Companions and their pupils differ. Some scholars say that all five attributes refer to angels. Others say that possibly different groups of angels are bearers of the attributes. Yet other scholars say that they refer to various types of winds. Some authorities on Tafsīr say that they refer to Allah's Prophets and Messengers. Ibn Jarīr Ṭabarī says that, in this matter, it is safer to observe silence. He says that both possibilities exist, but he prefers not to side with any particular interpretation. There is no doubt about the fact that some of the attributes are more appropriately applicable to the angels of Allah, and cannot fit the winds without unusual stretch of imagination, and others are more appropriately applicable to winds, and cannot apply to angels without a fanciful stretch of imagination. Therefore, Ibn Kathīr's approach seems to be the best. He says that in the first three verses of this Sūrah, Allah swears oaths by various types of winds. In verses [4] and [5], Allah swears oaths by the angels.

If verses [4] and [5] are applied to the winds, then the imagination will have to be stretched far to interpret them . Likewise, if the first three verses [*mursalāt, 'Āṣīfāt* and *nashirāt*] are applied to the angels, they have no choice but to assign far-fetched interpretation. According to Ibn Kathīr, the verses signify '(I swear) by those (winds) that are sent one after the other'. The word *'urfan* could signify 'beneficial and useful'. The

winds that bring rain are obviously beneficial and useful. Another meaning of the word *'urfan* is 'one after another'. In this interpretation, the verse signifies 'those winds that bring rain and clouds consecutively'. The word *'āṣifāt* is derived from *'aṣf* that literally means 'winds that blow violently or vehemently'. This refers to fiercely blowing winds that sometimes do occur in the world. The word *nashirāt* refers to 'winds that spread (clouds) all over after the rain is over'. The word *fāriqāt* is the attribute of the angels 'who differentiate (between right and wrong) distinctly by bringing down the Divine revelation'. The phrase *fal-mulqiyāti dhikran* also refers to the 'angels'. The word *dhikr* 'Reminder' refers to the Qur'ān or revelation in general. The verse signifies 'I swear by angels who [by bringing down revelation] separate between truth and falsehood, right and wrong, [and the lawful and the forbidden]'. Likewise, I swear by angels who bring down revelation or Qur'ān to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. This interpretation is plain and simple, and does not require any undue stretch of imagination.

In this interpretation, the question arises as to the contextual relationship between swearing oaths by various types of winds and the angels. First of all, it is not possible to fathom the Wisdom of Divine speech. However, it is possible to hypothesise. Allah swears oaths by useful winds and harmful winds. Winds that bring rain and clouds are useful, while those that blow fiercely and cause destruction are harmful. These belong to the perceptible world. All human beings can observe them. The perceptible things are mentioned first for reflection. The imperceptible world is mentioned later, such as the angels and revelation. If man reflects carefully on them, he will develop certainty of belief in them as well.

عُذْرًا اَوْنُذْرًا (to provide excuses [for the believers] or giving warnings (to disbelievers...77:6) This phrase is complement to verse [5]: فَالْمُلْقِيٰتِ ذِكْرًا 'then bring down the advice, [77:5] The 'advice' refers to the 'revelation' that came down upon the Prophets. Verse 6 says that it serves two purposes. In the case of the people of truth and believers, it persuades them to seek excuse from Allah for their shortcomings, and pray for forgiveness; and in the case of the people of falsehood and disbelievers, it contains a warning for them of Allah's torment, if they oppose His command.

اِنَّمَا تُوْعَدُوْنَ لَوَاقِعٌ (...that which you are promised is sure to happen...77:7)

This is the subject of these oaths. It means that the Day of Judgement, Reckoning, and Reward and Punishment that is promised by the Prophets has certainly to be fulfilled. Allah then describes some of the events that will occur on the Day of Judgement. The stars will be extinguished, which could mean that they will be completely destroyed, or they will exist, but their lights will be lost. In this way the entire world will be plunged in absolute darkness. The second event to occur is the splitting of the sky. The third event to occur is that the mountains will be blown away as dust. The fourth event is described in the following verse:

وَإِذَا الرُّسُلُ أُقِّتَتْ (and when the messengers will be assembled at the appointed time, [then all matters will be decided.] [77:11]' The word *uqqitat* is derived from *tauqīt* which primarily means 'appointment of time'. According to Zamakhsharī, it signifies 'to arrive at an appointed time' [as cited in Rūḥ]. In this context, the second meaning appears to be more appropriate. The verse signifies that the appointed time for the Prophets and Messengers to assemble with their communities will arrive, so that all matters concerning them may be decided. The verses further describe the Day of Judgement as the great and horrible day and the Day of Decision. It shall be the day of destruction for the deniers and rejecters, thus:

وَيْلٌ يَّوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُكَذِّبِيْنَ (Woe, that Day, to the deniers!...77:15) The word *wail* means 'destruction'. According to certain Ḥadīth narratives, the word wail is a 'valley of Hell where the pus of the wounds of the inmates of Hell will be collected. This is the place where the deniers will live. After this, the present-day people are asked to learn a lesson from [the destruction] of the former generations, thus:

اَلَمْ نُهْلِكِ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ (Did We not destroy the earlier people?...77:16) It refers to the nations of 'Ād, Thamūd, nation of Lūṭ عليه السلام and Fir'aun (The Pharaoh) who were destroyed because of their obstinacy.

ثُمَّ نُتْبِعُهُمُ الْاٰخِرِيْنَ (Then We will cause the later ones to follow them....77:17) According to popular reading, Verse 17 purports to say that the present-day infidels, the people of Makkah, will receive punishment soon. They were punished and destroyed by Muslims in the Battle of Badr and so on. The difference between the punishment of former nations and the community of the Holy Prophet ﷺ is as follows: The former nations used

to be destroyed by celestial punishment with all their habitations. The infidels in the community of the Holy Prophet ﷺ do not receive celestial punishment, because of the Holy Prophet's ﷺ special honour. They are punished by the weapons of Muslims. Furthermore, the destruction is not general. Only the obdurate criminal leaders are destroyed.

اَلَمْ نَجْعَلِ الْاَرْضَ كِفَاتًا. اَحْيَآءً وَّاَمْوَاتًا (Did We not make the earth a container that collects the living and the dead?....25, 26) The word *kifāt* is derived from *kaft*. It means 'to gather things together'. Thus *kifāt* is a thing that embodies many things within itself. Earth is created by Allah in a fashion that humans when alive, remain on its back, and when dead, in its belly.

اِنَّهَا تَرْمِیْ بِشَرَرٍ كَالْقَصْرِ. كَاَنَّه' جِمٰلَتٌ صُفْرٌ (It emits sparks [as huge] as castles...77:32) The word *qaṣr* means a 'huge, magnificent castle'. The word *jimālah* is used in the sense of *jamal*, and means 'camel'. The word *ṣufr* is the plural of *aṣfar* which means 'yellow'. The verse describes the fire of Hell. It will emit such huge sparks of fire, as if they were huge and magnificent castles. Then they will break up into little splinters, as if they were yellowish camels. Some scholars have translated the word '*ṣufr*' as 'black' because yellowish colour of camels tends to blackness. [Rūḥ].

هٰذَا يَوْمُ لَايَنْطِقُوْنَ. وَلَا يُؤْذَنُ لَهُمْ فَيَعْتَذِرُوْنَ (This is a day when they will not speak, nor will they be allowed to offer excuses....77:35, 36) In other words, this is the Day in which they will not be able to talk, nor will they be permitted to offer pleas for their misdeeds. However, other verses of the Qur'ān inform us that they will speak and will be permitted to offer excuses. There is no discrepancy between the two verses, because there will be various stages on the Plain of Gathering (*Maḥshar*) through which people will have to pass. Sometimes they will pass through a stage where it would be forbidden for them to speak or offer excuses; and at another stage they will be permitted. [Rūḥ].

كُلُوْا وَتَمَتَّعُوْا قَلِيْلًا اِنَّكُمْ مُّجْرِمُوْنَ ("Eat and drink for a while! You are guilty ones...77:46) This verse addresses the infidels through the Holy Prophet ﷺ. They may eat and drink and enjoy themselves in this world, but the span is short, and then there will be nothing but punishment for them. [Abū Ḥayyān].

وَاِذَا قِيْلَ لَهُمُ ارْكَعُوْا لَا يَرْكَعُوْنَ (And when it is said to them, "Bow down", they do not bow down...77:48) According to most commentators, the word *rukū'*

is used here in its primitive sense 'to bow down and submit'. The verse signifies that when they were told to submit to the Divine commands, they refused to comply. Some scholars take the word *rukū'* in its technical sense and interpret the verse to signify 'when they are called to prayer, they refused to pray.' The *rukū'* is a part of the prayer, but it refers here to the whole prayer . [Rūḥ]

فَبِاَيِّ حَدِيْثٍ بَعْدَه‘ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ (Now, in which discourse, after this, will they believe? ...77:50) The Holy Qur'ān is the last Book of Allah which explains its message and wisdom most lucidly, excellently, eloquently, elegantly, and its arguments most convincingly. Its style is extremely effective and the admonition soul-capturing. If they do not believe in such a Book, then for which word are they waiting? This is to express disappointment in them. A Ḥadīth narrative instructs that when one recites this verse, he should say 'I believe in Allah'. This statement must be made outside the prayer, or in voluntary prayer. He must abstain from this statement in obligatory and *Sunnah* prayer. Ḥadīth narratives are clear on this point. And Allah knows best!

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Mursalāt
Ends here

Sūrah An-Naba'

(The Great Event)

This Sūrah is Makkī, and it has 40 verses and 2 sections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 40

عَمَّ يَتَسَآءَلُوْنَ ﴿١﴾ عَنِ النَّبَاِ الْعَظِيْمِ ﴿٢﴾ الَّذِىْ هُمْ فِيْهِ مُخْتَلِفُوْنَ
﴿٣﴾ كَلَّا سَيَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٤﴾ ثُمَّ كَلَّا سَيَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٥﴾ اَلَمْ نَجْعَلِ
الْاَرْضَ مِهٰدًا ﴿٦﴾ وَّالْجِبَالَ اَوْتَادًا ﴿٧﴾ وَّخَلَقْنٰكُمْ اَزْوَاجًا ﴿٨﴾
وَّجَعَلْنَا نَوْمَكُمْ سُبَاتًا ﴿٩﴾ وَّجَعَلْنَا الَّيْلَ لِبَاسًا ﴿١٠﴾ وَّجَعَلْنَا النَّهَارَ
مَعَاشًا ﴿١١﴾ وَّبَنَيْنَا فَوْقَكُمْ سَبْعًا شِدَادًا ﴿١٢﴾ وَّجَعَلْنَا سِرَاجًا
وَّهَّاجًا ﴿١٣﴾ وَّاَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ الْمُعْصِرٰتِ مَآءً ثَجَّاجًا ﴿١٤﴾ لِّنُخْرِجَ بِهٖ
حَبًّا وَّنَبَاتًا ﴿١٥﴾ وَّجَنّٰتٍ اَلْفَافًا ﴿١٦﴾ اِنَّ يَوْمَ الْفَصْلِ كَانَ مِيْقَاتًا
﴿١٧﴾ يَّوْمَ يُنْفَخُ فِى الصُّوْرِ فَتَاْتُوْنَ اَفْوَاجًا ﴿١٨﴾ وَّفُتِحَتِ السَّمَآءُ
فَكَانَتْ اَبْوَابًا ﴿١٩﴾ وَّسُيِّرَتِ الْجِبَالُ فَكَانَتْ سَرَابًا ﴿٢٠﴾ اِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ
كَانَتْ مِرْصَادًا ﴿٢١﴾ لِّلطّٰغِيْنَ مَاٰبًا ﴿٢٢﴾ لّٰبِثِيْنَ فِيْهَآ اَحْقَابًا ﴿٢٣﴾
لَايَذُوْقُوْنَ فِيْهَا بَرْدًا وَّلَا شَرَابًا ﴿٢٤﴾ اِلَّا حَمِيْمًا وَّغَسَّاقًا ﴿٢٥﴾ جَزَآءً
وِّفَاقًا ﴿٢٦﴾ اِنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا لَا يَرْجُوْنَ حِسَابًا ﴿٢٧﴾ وَّكَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا
كِذَّابًا ﴿٢٨﴾ وَكُلَّ شَىْءٍ اَحْصَيْنٰهُ كِتٰبًا ﴿٢٩﴾ فَذُوْقُوْا فَلَنْ نَّزِيْدَكُمْ

إِلَّا عَذَابًا ﴿٣٠﴾ إِنَّ لِلْمُتَّقِيْنَ مَفَازًا ﴿٣١﴾ حَدَآئِقَ وَاَعْنَابًا ﴿٣٢﴾
وَّكَوَاعِبَ اَتْرَابًا ﴿٣٣﴾ وَّكَاْسًا دِهَاقًا ﴿٣٤﴾ لَا يَسْمَعُوْنَ فِيْهَا لَغْوًا وَّلَا
كِذّٰبًا ﴿٣٥﴾ جَزَآءً مِّنْ رَّبِّكَ عَطَآءً حِسَابًا ﴿٣٦﴾ رَّبِّ السَّمٰوٰتِ
وَالْاَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا الرَّحْمٰنِ لَا يَمْلِكُوْنَ مِنْهُ خِطَابًا ﴿٣٧﴾ يَوْمَ
يَقُوْمُ الرُّوْحُ وَالْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ صَفًّا ۙ لَّا يَتَكَلَّمُوْنَ اِلَّا مَنْ اَذِنَ لَهُ الرَّحْمٰنُ
وَقَالَ صَوَابًا ﴿٣٨﴾ ذٰلِكَ الْيَوْمُ الْحَقُّ ۚ فَمَنْ شَآءَ اتَّخَذَ اِلٰى رَبِّهٖ مَاٰبًا
﴿٣٩﴾ اِنَّآ اَنْذَرْنٰكُمْ عَذَابًا قَرِيْبًا ۚ يَّوْمَ يَنْظُرُ الْمَرْءُ مَا قَدَّمَتْ يَدٰهُ
وَيَقُوْلُ الْكٰفِرُ يٰلَيْتَنِىْ كُنْتُ تُرٰبًا ﴿٤٠﴾

About what are they asking each other? [1] **About the Great Event** [2] **in which they dispute!** [3] **Truly, they will soon know.** [4] **Again, truly, they will soon know.** [5] **Did We not make the earth as a floor,** [6] **and the mountains as pegs?** [7] **And We have created you in pairs,** [8] **and made your sleep a source of rest,** [9] **and made the night a covering,** [10] **and made the day a source of livelihood.** [11] **And We have built seven strong (skies),** [12] **and created a luminous lamp (the sun).** [13] **And We have sent down from the rain-laden clouds abundant water,** [14] **so that We bring out therewith grain and vegetation,** [15] **and thick gardens.** [16]

Surely the Day of Decision is an appointed time, [17] **a day when the trumpet will be blown, so you will come in multitudes,** [18] **and the sky will be opened, so it will become as gates,** [19] **and the mountains will be set in motion, so they will be as mirage.** [20] **Surely Jahannam (the Hell) is set in ambush.** [21] **(It is) an abode for the rebellious people** [22] **who will be abiding in it for ages.** [23] **They will taste nothing cool in it, nor a drink,** [24] **except boiling water and pus,** [25] **this being a recompense in full accord (with their deeds).** [26] **They did not expect (to face) accounting (of their deeds),** [27] **and they rejected Our signs totally.** [28] **And everything (from their deeds) is thoroughly recorded by Us in writing.** [29] **"So now taste! We will never add to you**

anything except torment." [30]

For the God-fearing there is sure achievement, [31] **gardens and grapes,** [32] **and buxom maidens of matching age,** [33] **and goblets filled up to the brim.** [34] **They will not hear therein any vain talk, nor lies,** [35] **this being a reward from their Lord, a sufficing grant,** [36] **(from) the Lord of the heavens and the earth and what is between them, the All-Merciful. No one will have power to address Him,** [37] **on the Day when the Spirit and the angels will stand in rows. They will not speak, except the one who is permitted by the Raḥmān (the All-Merciful) and speaks aright.** [38] **That is the Day which is sure to come. So whoever so wishes may take refuge with his Lord.** [39] **We have warned you of an approaching torment (that will be inflicted) on a day when one will see what his hands have sent ahead, and the disbeliever will say, "O would that I had become dust!"** [40]

Commentary

عَمَّ يَتَسَآءَلُوْنَ (About what are they asking each other?...78:1). The word *'amma* is made up of two particles: [1] The preposition عَنْ *'an* (about); and [2] the interrogative particle مَا *'mā'* (what?) (the last letter, that is, *'mā'* has been omitted according to the grammatical composition. The sense is : About what are they asking each other?' Allah Himself replies to the question when He says:

عَنِ النَّبَإِ الْعَظِيْمِ الَّذِىْ هُمْ فِيْهِ مُخْتَلِفُوْنَ (About the Great Event in which they dispute!....78:2,3). The word *naba'* means 'news' but not every news is *naba'*. It means a 'momentous news of a great event'. This refers to the news of the Day of Judgement. The verse purports to convey that the inhabitants of Makkah ask about the Day of Judgement in which they dispute [while some of them believed in Resurrection, others did not.]

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ reports that when the revelation of Qur'ān started, the pagan Arabs used to form circles and discuss and criticise it, especially about the tremendous import of Resurrection and Judgement referred to in the Qur'ān. The pagans thought this was impossible, and they used to have protracted discussion. The disbelievers persuade themselves to believe that the predicted event will never take place,

though there were others who believed in the event. The Sūrah opens by shunning the enquirers and the enquiry, it wonders that anyone should raise any doubts about Resurrection and Judgement. Some of the commentators express the opinion that their enquiry was not a genuine one where they were keen to learn about the truth. So they ask half-mockingly and half in doubt, when that event, so loudly pronounced, will happen. Qur'ān has responded by asserting one statement twice for emphasis, thus:

كَلَّا سَيَعْلَمُوْنَ. ثُمَّ كَلَّا سَيَعْلَمُوْنَ (Truly, they will soon know. Again, truly, they will soon know....78:5) The particle *kallā* is negative, and means 'never, by no means'. It means here that this matter cannot be understood by question and answer or by disputation and debate. Its reality will be understood by them when they will face it. It is such a reality that has no room for questions, disputation or denial. The Qur'ān says that soon they will come to know about it [and this statement is repeated twice for emphasis]. In other words, when they die, they will discover the realities of the next world. They will see the horrors of the Hereafter with their eyes.

Then the Holy Qur'ān has pointed to different demonstrations of His power to prove that it is not impossible for Allah to destroy this entire world and re-create it once again. Reference is made to the creation of earth, mountains, human beings, males and females and the creation of suitable conditions for human life, health and activities. One of the things mentioned in this connection is :

وَجَعَلْنَا نَوْمَكُمْ سُبَاتًا (and made your sleep a source of rest,...78:9). The word *subāt* is derived from *sabt* which means 'to cut off'. Sleep is something that cuts off the worries and tensions one may have, and thus gives him such a rest that cannot be attained from anything else. Therefore, some scholars translate the word *subāt* as 'rest'.

Sleep Is a Great Gift

After mentioning in verse [8] that Allah has created mankind in pairs, Allaah Ta'ālā states in verse [9] that among the means of their comfort, He created sleep, which is a great divine gift. Sleep is a great source of relaxation for the entire creation - for rich as well as for poor, for learned

people, as well as for the illiterate ones, for kings as well as for labourers. This gift is made available equally and simultaneously for all. Rather, experience shows that this gift is most readily available to the poor and labouring class, as compared to the affluent and the elite class. The latter class has all the means of comfort, they have comfortable homes, they have moderately warm and cold places, they have comfortable mattresses and pillows that are rarely available to the poor. But the gift of sleep is not dependent upon the mattresses, pillows, cottages and bungalows. It is purely a divine gift that is given directly by Allah. Often the poor, with no means of comfort and without bed or bedding, enjoy the best sleep in an open space. Sometimes, the affluent and the men of means suffer from insomnia and can only get sleep when they take sleeping pills. Often the pills do not work either. Not only that this great gift is given to all creatures - humans as well as animals - and it is given free of charge, without working for it. Allah has made it compulsory for everyone in a way that even if he wishes to keep awake because of load of work, sleep is imposed on him by Allah's mercy, so that his tiredness is removed and he is refreshed to work further. This arrangement is a wonderful means of providing rest and peace for man.

وَجَعَلْنَا الَّيْلَ لِبَاسًا (and made the night a covering...78:10) This points to the fact that man naturally feels sleepy when light decreases and darkness prevails, when there is tranquillity all around and there is absence of noises. The verse under comment additionally signifies that Allah did not only give man sleep, but created in the entire world conditions that are suitable for sleep. That is to say: [1] darkness of night; [2] the state of sleep is imposed on all humans and animals simultaneously, so that they sleep at the same time. In this way, there will be peace and tranquillity throughout the world. Like other works, if there are different times for different people to sleep, no one will have peace and tranquillity.

Thereafter the verse reads:

وَجَعَلْنَا النَّهَارَ مَعَاشًا (and made the day a source of livelihood....78:11). Man requires, together with sleep, other essentials of life, such as livelihood. Otherwise, the sleep will turn into death. If the world would have had only nights and no days, and man would have continued to sleep all the time, how would he have obtained his livelihood and other essentials,

whereas day is the time when he could work hard and make activities in the daylight in order to earn a living. Thus the verses under comment purport to say that Allah has, in order to complete the comforts of life, made the night a cloak and the day for earning a living. وَجَعَلْنَا سِرَاجًا وَّهَّاجًا.

Now attention is drawn to the comforts we get from the sky. The most useful thing in the sky is the light of the sun. It is mentioned in the following verse: وَجَعَلْنَا سِرَاجًا وَّهَّاجًا (and created a luminous lamp [the sun]....78:13). Then, among the useful things below the sky, the most beneficial and the most essential thing is the raining clouds which are mentioned thus: وَاَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ الْمُعْصِرٰتِ مَآءً ثَجَّاجًا (And We have sent down from the rain-laden clouds abundant water,...78:14). The word *mu'ṣirāt* is the plural of *mu'ṣirah* 'rain-laden cloud'. This indicates that rain comes down from the cloud. There are verses, however, that indicate that rain comes down from the sky. Those verses too probably refer to 'upper atmosphere'. There are many verses in the Qur'ān where the word *samā'* is used in that sense. Having mentioned these Divine blessings, the Sūrah reverts to its original theme of Resurrection and Judgement:

اِنَّ يَوْمَ الْفَصْلِ كَانَ مِيْقَاتًا (Surely the Day of Decision is an appointed time...78:17). 'The Day of Decision' refers to the Day of Resurrection. It is a fixed appointment. Other verses indicate that the trumpet will be blown twice. When it is blown the first time, the entire world will come to an end. When it is blown the second time, people of the entire world, the earlier generations as well as the latter generations, will be resurrected and come in multitudes and droves. Sayyidnā Abu Dharr Ghifārī ﵁ reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: "On the Day of Resurrection, people will come in three different groups: [1] a group will come in the Plain of Gathering whose stomach will be full, wearing clothes and riding mounts; another group will come to the Plain of Gathering bare feet; and a third group will be brought on the Plain of Gathering being dragged on their faces." [Maẓharī cites the following authorities: Nasā'ī, Ḥākim and Baihaqī]

Some narratives report ten types of group. Some scholars say that the groups on the Plain of Gathering will be divided according to their deeds and character. The narratives are not conflicting. All of them may be true.

وَسُيِّرَتِ الْجِبَالُ فَكَانَتْ سَرَابًا (and the mountains will be set in motion, so they will be as mirage....78:20). The word *suyyirat* 'set in motion' signifies that mountains, which are taken as an example of firmness and strength, will

be shifted from their positions, and will become like little particles of dust flying about in the atmosphere. The word *sarāb* literally means 'to disappear' and it also refers to 'mirage' or an optical illusion, as of a sheet of water, that sometimes appears in a desert, because it seems to be a sheet of water from a distance, but when a person comes near it, it disappears. [Ṣiḥāḥ and Rāghib].

إِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ كَانَتْ مِرْصَادًا (Surely Jahannam [the Hell] is set in ambush. 78:21). The word *mirsād* means 'an ambush' or 'lying in wait to attack unawares' or 'a secret position for surprise attack'. Here Hell refers to the bridge of Hell. The angels of reward and punishment will lie in wait. The angels of punishment will make a surprise attack on the inmates of Hell, and the angels of reward will lie in wait to accompany the inmates of Paradise and take them to their abode. [Maẓharī]

Sayyidnā Ḥasan Baṣrī رحمه الله تعالى said that there will be an outpost of guardian angels on the bridge of Hell. If anyone has a permit to enter Paradise, he will be permitted to enter; but if anyone does not have the permit to enter Paradise, he will be prevented from entering it. [Qurṭubī]

لِلطَّٰغِينَ مَآبًا ([It is] an abode for the rebellious people...78:22). The combined sense of verses 21 and 22 is that the bridge of Hell is set in ambush for all, the good and the bad. They will have to go over it. But Hell is the abode of the rebellious people. The word *ṭāghīn* is the plural of *ṭāghī*, being derived from *tughyan*, meaning 'rebellion'. Thus the word *ṭāghī* refers to a 'person who exceeds the limit in disobeying the authority [of Allah]'. This is possible only when he gives up his faith. Hence, the word *ṭāghīn* in this context would refer to the disbelievers. It may also refer to the stray groups of Muslims who have deviated from the limits of Qur'ān and Sunnah, though they may not have adopted *kufr* expressly, such as Rawafiḍ, Khawārij, Mu'tazilah and others. [as in Maẓharī].

لَّٰبِثِينَ فِيهَآ أَحْقَابًا (who will be abiding in it for ages....78:23). The word *lābithīn* is the plural of *lābith* which means 'one who abides'. The word *aḥqāb* is the plural of *ḥiqbah* and means 'ages or a long time'. Scholars differ on the exact length or specific amount of time meant by this word. Ibn Jarīr has recorded that Sayyidnā 'Alī ﷺ states that *ḥiqbah* is eighty years, and the year constitutes twelve months, and every month comprises thirty days, and each day is equivalent to one thousand years, thus one *ḥiqbah* totalling about twenty million and eighty-eight hundred

thousand years . Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah, 'Abdullah Ibn 'Umar, Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنهم and others say that one *ḥiqbah* is seventy years instead of eighty years. The rest of the calculation remains the same. [Ibn Kathīr]. In Musnad of Bazzār, Sayyidnā 'Abdullah Ibn 'Umar ﷺ traces the following Ḥadīth to the Holy Prophet ﷺ:

لايخرج احدكم من النّار حتّى يمكث فيه احقابًا، والحقب بضعٌ وثمانون سنة، كل سنة ثلثمائة وستون يوما ممّا تعدّون

> "Those who will be put in Hell for punishment of their sins, they will not be able to come out until they tarry therein for a few *Aḥqāb*. One *ḥiqbah* will be a little over eighty years, and the year has three hundred and sixty days according to your reckoning [in this life]."

This Tradition, though does not interpret this verse, it does explain the sense of the word *aḥqāb*. Some of the Companions mention that one day is equivalent to a thousand years. If they had heard this from the Holy Prophet ﷺ, there is conflict in the narratives. In the face of such conflict, it is not possible to settle on one narration. However, there is a common denominator between the two conflicting narratives, that *ḥiqbah* means 'an extremely long period of time'. Therefore, Baidawī has interpreted the word as 'many long periods of time successively following the others.

Problem of Eternity of Hell

If it be argued, as some do, that the inmates of Hell, after serving the long ages in Hell, will be released because no matter what the length of *ḥiqbah*, it is, nonetheless, finite and limited and will come to an end some time or other. But looking at other clear verses of the Qur'ān, the argument does not hold up. We come across express text like:

خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَآ اَبَدًا

> '[They, the disbelievers] shall remain therein [in the Fire] for ever'.

Therefore, there is the consensus of Ummah that neither Hell will perish, nor will the disbelievers be released at anytime.

Suddi reports from Sayyidnā Murrah Ibn 'Abdullah ﷺ that if the inmates of Hell are informed that they will abide in Hell for the number of pebbles in the entire world, they will be happy even at this information,

because these pebbles though will count into billions or zillions, still they are finite. If so, their punishment will, some time or the other, come to an end. If the same information is given to the inmates of Paradise that they will abide therein to the count of billions of pebbles in the entire world, it will sadden them, because, in that case, no matter how long the space of time they will live in Paradise, they will be expelled after this period. [Maẓharī]

In any case, the notion that after a few *aḥqāb* the disbelievers will be released from Hell is contrary to the explicit texts and common consent of the Ummah, and as such it is unworthy of consideration, because the verse does not mention what will happen after the *aḥqāb*. It merely mentions that they will have to abide in Hell 'for ages [*aḥqāb*]'. This does not necessarily imply that there will be no Hell after *aḥqāb* or its non-believing inmates will be released. Therefore, Sayyidnā Ḥasan ﷺ says that no specific period has been defined for the inmates of Hell, so that they will be released after that. It is that which has no end to it. Whenever one *ḥiqbah* [era] is over, a new *ḥiqbah* will start; when the second era come to an end, a third *ḥiqbah* will start; when the third *ḥiqbah* ends, the fourth *ḥiqbah* will start; and it will carry on ad infinitum. Sayyidnā Sa'īd Ibn Jubair ﷺ also interprets the word *aḥqāb* as referring to 'the time which has no end to it. Whenever one era ends, a new era follows it until eternity'. [Ibn Kathīr and Maẓharī]. Ibn Kathīr describes another possibility which Qurṭubī supports and Maẓharī adopts. The possibility is that the word *ṭāghīn* 'rebellious people' probably does not refer to the disbelievers, but to the people of *Tauḥīd*, who, on account of their false beliefs, fall into one of the categories of deviant groups. Traditionalists refer to them as *ahl-ul-ahwa'* 'heretics whose beliefs are not in keeping with the common consent of the People of *Ahl-us-sunnah wal-jama'ah*. In this case, the verse purports to say that they are the people of Tauḥīd, but bordered on the boundary of disbelief on account of false beliefs. They, however, did not cross into the boundary of explicit disbelief. They will therefore abide in Hell for the period of *aḥqāb*, and then discharged therefrom by virtue of the creed of *tauḥīd*.

Maẓharī, in support of this possibility, has cited the Prophetic Ḥadīth which was reported earlier on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullah Ibn 'Umar ﷺ with reference to Musnad of Bazzār, in which the Holy Prophet

ﷺ said that after the period of *aḥqāb* has passed, these people will be taken out of Hell. Abū Ḥayyān, however, disputes this on the grounds of the verses that follow the present verse:

إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا لَا يَرْجُونَ حِسَابًا. وَّكَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا كِذَّابًا

(They did not expect [to face] accounting [of their deeds], and they rejected Our signs totally....78:28)

These verses contradict the possibility that *ṭāghīn* 'rebellious people' could be referring to people of Tauhid and deviant groups, because in the concluding verses it is expressly mentioned that they explicitly reject reckoning and utterly deny the Prophets عليهم السلام. Likewise Abū Ḥayyān rejects out of hand Muqatil's opinion that this verse is abrogated.

A group of commentators find a third interpretation of this verse. A statement after this verse, namely, لَا يَذُوقُونَ فِيهَا بَرْدًا وَّلَا شَرَابًا إِلَّا حَمِيمًا وَّغَسَّاقًا (They will taste nothing cool in it, nor a drink, except boiling water and pus...78:25) - is circumstantial clause to *aḥqāb*, in which case the verse purports to say that for the countless aeons of *aḥqāb* that they will be in Hell they will not be tasting any coolness of air nor any food or drink excepting for boiling water and [scalding] pus. When the *aḥqāb* is over, the condition may change, and other kinds of punishment may be imposed. The word *ḥamīm* means 'intensely boiling water if brought near the face, it would burn its flesh, and when put into the stomach it would cut into pieces the internal organs'. The word *ghassāq* means 'blood and pus, and washings of wounds that will ooze from the inmates of Hell'.

جَزَآءً وِّفَاقًا (this being a recompense in full accord [with their deeds].....78:26). The punishment given to them in Hell will be based on justice and equity - a fitting recompense - on account of their false beliefs and evil deeds. They will not be wronged in the least.

فَذُوقُوا فَلَنْ نَّزِيدَكُمْ إِلَّا عَذَابًا ("So now taste! We will never add to you anything except torment."....78:30). In other words, in the world they continued to add disbelief. If death did not overtake them by coercion, they would have continued to add disbelief, and today their punishment will be increased.

Thus far the punishment of disbelievers was depicted. As opposed to this, the reward and blessings of the righteous believers are depicted below.

جَزَآءً مِّنْ رَّبِّكَ عَطَآءً حِسَابًا (this being a reward from their Lord, a sufficing

grant...78:36). The blessings of Paradise described above is the reward of the believers and is an abundant grant from their Lord. Here two things are mentioned. First, these blessings are a reward of their deeds. Secondly, they are a Divine grant. Apparently, they seem to be contradictory, because reward means receiving something in lieu of doing some service, whereas grant is given gratis. The Qur'ān has combined the two words in order to indicate that the blessings of Paradise are reward for the inmates of Paradise only apparently, and in reality they are a Divine grant given to them gratis, because human deeds cannot be the reward of even those blessings which were given to him in the world, let alone the blessings of the Hereafter which depend entirely on Divine grace as is confirmed by the Tradition of the Holy Prophet ﷺ: "No one can enter Paradise merely by virtue of his deeds, unless Allah shows His grace." The Companions asked: "What about you, Messenger of Allah." He replied: "Nor will I enter Paradise merely by virtue of my action."

The word *ḥisāban* has two meanings: [1] a grant [that is] sufficient [and] abundant. This meaning is adapted from the following idiom: أَحْسَبْتُ فُلَانًا اى أَعْطَيْتُه' ما يَكْفِيهِ حَتّٰى قَالَ حَسْبِىْ '*aḥsabtu* means that I gave him so much so that it was sufficient for him until he yelled out "enough, this is too much for me"; and [2] the second meaning 'balancing of account' and 'comparing'. Sayyidnā Mujāhid رحمه الله says that in this context the verse purports to say that the Divine grant will be given gratis to the inmates of Paradise. The grant will be in keeping with the degree of sincerity as reported in authentic Traditions. The deeds of the noble Companions are greater than the deeds of the rest of the Ummah. If a Companion were to spend in the way of Allah one *mudd* = [815,39 grams] and a non-Companion were to spend to the equivalent of Mount Uhud, the Companion's one *mudd* will weigh heavier than the mountain. And Allah knows best!

لَايَمْلِكُوْنَ مِنْهُ خِطَابًا (...No one will have power to address Him,...78:37)

This sentence is probably connected to the preceding verse: جَزَآءً مِّنْ رَّبِّكَ عَطَآءً حِسَابًا (this being a reward from their Lord, a sufficing grant...78:36) In this case, it would mean that when Allah grants a certain grade of reward, no one dare speak about the grade as to why someone got more and others got less. But if this sentence is treated as an isolated one, it will mean that no one in the Plane of Gathering will have the power to speak to Him without His permission. This permission will be granted in some of

the positions of Gathering, and not in others.

يَوْمَ يَقُوْمُ الرُّوْحُ وَالْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ صَفًّا ۖ لَّا يَتَكَلَّمُوْنَ اِلَّا مَنْ اَذِنَ لَهُ الرَّحْمٰنُ وَقَالَ صَوَابًا (on the Day when the Spirit and the angels will stand in rows. They will not speak, except the on who is permitted by the Rahman [the All-Merciful] and speaks aright -78:38). Rūh (Spirit), according to some of the commentators, refers to the angel Jibra'il عليه السلام. He has been mentioned before the other angels in general in order to show the greatness of his status. According to certain Prophetic traditions, Rūh is not an angel but a huge army of Allah. They have heads, hands and legs. In this interpretation, there will be two rows. One row will be that of Rūh and the other will be that of the angels.

يَوْمَ يَنْظُرُ الْمَرْءُ مَا قَدَّمَتْ يَدَاهُ (...on a day when one will see what his hands have sent ahead....78:40) Apparently, this refers to the Day of Judgement. Every person will see his deeds with his own eyes in the Plane of Gathering. This might happen in one of two ways: [1] his ledger of deeds will be given in his hands and he will see it; or [2] his deeds will appear in the Plane of Gathering, epitomized in a visible shape, as certain narratives confirm this. Still a third possibility exists. The word 'day' may refer to 'the day of death'. And the words 'will see' means to see in the grave or barzakh, as explained by Mazharī.

وَيَقُوْلُ الْكَافِرُ يٰلَيْتَنِىْ كُنْتُ تُرٰبًا (and the disbeliever will say, "O would that I had become dust...78:40) Sayyidnā 'Abdullah Ibn 'Umar رضي الله عنه reports that on the Day of Resurrection the entire earth will become a plane surface where all human beings, *Jinn*, domesticated animals and wild animals will be gathered. If one animal had wronged another animal in the world, it will be given the opportunity to take its revenge. If a goat with horns had wronged a goat without horns, it will be granted the opportunity to take its avenge. When this phase is over, all animals will be commanded to become dust. They will become dust. At that moment the disbelievers will wish that they were also animals and would become dust like them, so that they would have been spared the torment of reckoning and punishment of Hell. We seek refuge in Allah from it! Allah knows best!

Alhamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah An-Naba'
Ends here

Sūrah An-Nāzi'āt

(Those Who Pull Out)

This Sūrah is Makkī, and it has 46 verses and 2 sections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 46

وَالنّٰزِعٰتِ غَرْقًا ﴿١﴾ وَّالنّٰشِطٰتِ نَشْطًا ﴿٢﴾ وَّالسّٰبِحٰتِ سَبْحًا ﴿٣﴾
فَالسّٰبِقٰتِ سَبْقًا ﴿٤﴾ فَالْمُدَبِّرٰتِ اَمْرًا ﴿٥﴾ يَوْمَ تَرْجُفُ الرَّاجِفَةُ ﴿٦﴾
تَتْبَعُهَا الرَّادِفَةُ ﴿٧﴾ قُلُوْبٌ يَّوْمَئِذٍ وَّاجِفَةٌ ﴿٨﴾ اَبْصَارُهَا خَاشِعَةٌ ﴿٩﴾
يَقُوْلُوْنَ ءَاِنَّا لَمَرْدُوْدُوْنَ فِى الْحَافِرَةِ ﴿١٠﴾ ءَاِذَا كُنَّا عِظَامًا نَّخِرَةً
﴿١١﴾ قَالُوْا تِلْكَ اِذًا كَرَّةٌ خَاسِرَةٌ ﴿١٢﴾ فَاِنَّمَا هِىَ زَجْرَةٌ وَّاحِدَةٌ
﴿١٣﴾ فَاِذَا هُمْ بِالسَّاهِرَةِ ﴿١٤﴾ هَلْ اَتٰىكَ حَدِيْثُ مُوْسٰى ﴿١٥﴾ اِذْ
نَادٰىهُ رَبُّهٗ بِالْوَادِ الْمُقَدَّسِ طُوًى ﴿١٦﴾ اِذْهَبْ اِلٰى فِرْعَوْنَ اِنَّهٗ طَغٰى
﴿١٧﴾ فَقُلْ هَلْ لَّكَ اِلٰٓى اَنْ تَزَكّٰى ﴿١٨﴾ وَاَهْدِيَكَ اِلٰى رَبِّكَ فَتَخْشٰى
﴿١٩﴾ فَاَرٰىهُ الْاٰيَةَ الْكُبْرٰى ﴿٢٠﴾ فَكَذَّبَ وَعَصٰى ﴿٢١﴾ ثُمَّ اَدْبَرَ
يَسْعٰى ﴿٢٢﴾ فَحَشَرَ فَنَادٰى ﴿٢٣﴾ فَقَالَ اَنَا رَبُّكُمُ الْاَعْلٰى ﴿٢٤﴾
فَاَخَذَهُ اللّٰهُ نَكَالَ الْاٰخِرَةِ وَالْاُوْلٰى ﴿٢٥﴾ اِنَّ فِىْ ذٰلِكَ لَعِبْرَةً لِّمَنْ
يَّخْشٰى ﴿٢٦﴾ ءَاَنْتُمْ اَشَدُّ خَلْقًا اَمِ السَّمَآءُ بَنٰىهَا ﴿٢٧﴾ رَفَعَ
سَمْكَهَا فَسَوّٰىهَا ﴿٢٨﴾ وَاَغْطَشَ لَيْلَهَا وَاَخْرَجَ ضُحٰىهَا ﴿٢٩﴾

وَالْاَرْضَ بَعْدَ ذٰلِكَ دَحٰىهَا ﴿٣٠﴾ اَخْرَجَ مِنْهَا مَآءَهَا وَمَرْعٰىهَا ﴿٣١﴾
وَالْجِبَالَ اَرْسٰىهَا ﴿٣٢﴾ مَتَاعًا لَّكُمْ وَلِاَنْعَامِكُمْ ﴿٣٣﴾ فَاِذَا جَآءَتِ
الطَّآمَّةُ الْكُبْرٰى ﴿٣٤﴾ يَوْمَ يَتَذَكَّرُ الْاِنْسَانُ مَا سَعٰى ﴿٣٥﴾ وَبُرِّزَتِ
الْجَحِيْمُ لِمَنْ يَّرٰى ﴿٣٦﴾ فَاَمَّا مَنْ طَغٰى ﴿٣٧﴾ وَاٰثَرَ الْحَيٰوةَ الدُّنْيَا
﴿٣٨﴾ فَاِنَّ الْجَحِيْمَ هِيَ الْمَاْوٰى ﴿٣٩﴾ وَاَمَّا مَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهٖ
وَنَهَى النَّفْسَ عَنِ الْهَوٰى ﴿٤٠﴾ فَاِنَّ الْجَنَّةَ هِيَ الْمَاْوٰى ﴿٤١﴾
يَسْئَلُوْنَكَ عَنِ السَّاعَةِ اَيَّانَ مُرْسٰىهَا ﴿٤٢﴾ فِيْمَ اَنْتَ مِنْ ذِكْرٰىهَا
﴿٤٣﴾ اِلٰى رَبِّكَ مُنْتَهٰىهَا ﴿٤٤﴾ اِنَّمَآ اَنْتَ مُنْذِرُ مَنْ يَّخْشٰىهَا ﴿٤٥﴾
كَاَنَّهُمْ يَوْمَ يَرَوْنَهَا لَمْ يَلْبَثُوْٓا اِلَّا عَشِيَّةً اَوْ ضُحٰىهَا ﴿٤٦﴾

I swear by those (angels) who pull out (the souls of the infidels) vigorously [1] and by those (angels) who untie the knot (of the souls of the believers) smoothly, [2] and by those who float (in the atmosphere) swiftly, [3] then proceed forward quickly, [4] then manage (to do) everything (they are ordered to do,) [5] (you will be resurrected) on the Day when the shocking event (i.e. the first blowing of the trumpet) will shock (everything), [6] followed by the next one (i.e. the second blowing of the trumpet.) [7] Hearts, on that Day, will be throbbing, [8] (and) their eyes will be downcast. [9]

They say, "Are we going to be brought back to our former state (of Life)? [10] Is it when we will have turned into decayed bones?" [11] They say, "If so, that will be a harmful return." [12] So, it will be only a single harsh voice, [13] and in no time they will be (brought) in the plain (of *hashr*). [14]

Has there come to you the narrative of Mūsā? [15] (Recall) when his Lord called to him in the blessed valley of Tuwa: [16] "Go to Fir'aun (the Pharaoh). Indeed, he has crossed all bounds (in making mischief). [17] And say (to him,) "Would you like to purify yourself, [18] and that I guide you to your Lord, so that you fear (Him)?" [19] So he showed him the biggest sign. [20] But he rejected and disobeyed, [21] then he turned back, and

tried hard (to refute the Messenger), [22] **then he gathered (his people) and shouted** [23] **and said, "I am the supreme lord of yours."** [24] **So, Allah seized him for the deterrent punishment in the Hereafter and the present world.** [25] **Indeed, there is a lesson for him who fears (Allah).** [26]

Are you more difficult to be created or the sky? He has built it, [27] **He has raised its height, then made it proper,** [28] **and darkened its night, and brought forth its daylight,** [29] **and, after that, He spread out the earth.** [30] **From it, He brought out its water and its meadows,** [31] **and firmly fixed the mountains,** [32] **(all this) as a benefit to you and your cattle.** [33] **So when the Biggest Havoc will come** [34] **on the day when man will recall what he did,** [35] **and the Hell will be exposed for all who see,** [36] **then for the one who had rebelled,** [37] **and preferred the worldly life (to the Hereafter),** [38] **the Hell will be the abode,** [39] **whereas for the one who feared to stand before his Lord, and restrained his self from the (evil) desire,** [40] **the Paradise will be the abode.** [41]

They ask you about the Hour (the Day of Judgment) as to when it will take place. [42] **In which capacity are you to tell this?** [43] **With your Lord is the final word about it.** [44] **You are only a warner for anyone who fears it.** [45] **The day they will see it, it will seem to them as if they did not live (in the world), but only for one afternoon or for the morning thereof.** [46]

Commentary

وَالنّٰزِعٰتِ غَرْقًا (I swear by those [angels] who pull out [the souls of the infidels] vigorously ...79:1). The word *nāzi'āt* is derived from *naz'* and it means 'to draw vigorously'. The word *gharqan* is its corroborative because the word *gharq* is used here in the sense of *ighrāq* and means 'to exert oneself much or to the utmost extent in the thing'. The Arabic idiom has it اغرق النّازع فى القوس 'He drew the bow with great vigour'. The Sūrah begins with an oath by certain characteristics of the angels to affirm that the Resurrection is a certainty. The subject of the oath, however, has been contextually deleted. The oath of the angels is probably apt on this occasion because they are all the time involved in the administration and running of the world. They are executing their duties loyally. On the Day of Judgement, all material causes will be severed. Unusual events will

occur and the angels will be involved in them.

Five characteristics of the angels are mentioned which are concerned with or related to the extraction of the soul at the time of death. The purport of the verses is to affirm that Resurrection is a certainty. It starts with human death. Every man's death is his partial Day of Doom, and this has an important impact on his belief in Resurrection. The five qualities are as follows:

The first quality of the angels:

وَالنّٰزِعٰتِ غَرْقًا I swear by those (angels) who pull out (the souls of the infidels) vigorously.

This refers to the angels of punishment who draw the souls of the infidels vigorously and harshly. The words 'vigorously' refer to spiritual pain. The humans around the dying person may not be sensitive to the pain. Often it is noticed that the soul of an infidel apparently slips out easily, but this ease is perceived by humans around the dying man. The pain is felt by the soul of the dying person. Who can perceive it? We are aware of it only because Allah has informed us about it in this verse.

The second quality of the angels :

وَّالنّٰشِطٰتِ نَشْطًا (and by those [angels] who untie the knot [of the souls of the believers] smoothly, [2]' The word *nashiṭāt* is derived from *nashṭ* and it means 'to untie the knot'. This signifies 'to untie the knot of something which contains water or air, so that it may be released easily'. This is metaphor for drawing out the souls of the believers gently, unlike the souls of the infidels which are plucked out harshly. In this case too the adverb 'smoothly' refers to the spiritual smoothness, and not to the physical experience. Sometimes, it happens that there is a delay at the time of death of a righteous believer. This may not be suspected to mean that he is undergoing some sort of suffering, although physically it may seem so. When the soul of an infidel is extracted, the entire scene of the punishment of *barzahk* comes in front of him. It is frightened by it, disperses throughout the body and tries to hide or escape. The angels forcefully extract the soul just as wet wool wrapped around a skewer is forcefully removed. When the soul of a believer is extracted, on the other hand, the reward, the blessings and the welcome news of the *barzahk*

come in front of him.

The third quality of the angels :

وَّالسّٰبِحٰتِ سَبْحًا (and by those who float [in the atmosphere] swiftly...79:3). The word *sabḥ* literally means to 'swim' or 'float'. Here it signifies 'to glide along swiftly as in the sea where there is no mountain barrier'. The one who swims fast and goes far in swimming or a boatman who moves directly towards his final destination. The 'angels who float swiftly' refer to the quality of the angels of death who extract human souls and take them quickly towards the sky.

The fourth quality of the angels :

فَالسّٰبِقٰتِ سَبْقًا (then proceed forward quickly...79:4). According to Divine instruction, the angels do not delay in transporting the souls of people to their good or their bad abodes. The soul of a believer is transported to the atmosphere and blessings of Paradise, and that of an unbeliever to the atmosphere and torment of Hell.

The fifth quality of the angels :

فَالْمُدَبِّرٰتِ اَمْرًا (then manage [to do] everything [they are ordered to do,]...79:5). In other words, the last task of these angels of death will be as follows: Those who are commanded to reward and comfort the deserving souls, will gather means of reward and comfort for them; and those who are commanded to punish and cause pain to [the evil souls] will organise means for that.

Reward and Punishment in the Grave

The Sūrah thus far confirms that at the time of death, the angels will arrive and extract human souls. Then they will take them to the sky and swiftly transport them to their abodes, the good souls to the good abode and the bad souls to the bad one. There they will organise means of reward or punishment and pain or comfort for them. The verses show that the reward and punishment will take place in the grave or *barzakh*. Thereafter the reward and punishment will be meted out on the Day of Judgement. Authentic Traditions give elaborate details of this. There is a lengthy Tradition of Sayyidnā Barā' Ibn 'Āzib ؓ cited in Mishkāt-ul-Maṣābīḥ with reference to Musnad of Aḥmad.

Nafs [Self] Rūḥ [Spirit - Soul]: Qāḍī Thanā'ullah's Research and Analysis

The readers are referred to a special research and analysis by the Baihaqī of his time, Qāḍī Thanā'ullah Pānipatī, that was presented in this book under verse [29] of Sūrah Ḥijr. Here the learned commentator has added some more details which dispose of many doubts which arise from the above Tradition: The human soul is a refined body which permeates the dense material body. The [ancient] doctors and philosophers called it as *rūḥ* or soul. But the real spirit is an abstract substance and a subtle divine creature connected in a special way with this physical soul or *nafs*, the life of which is dependent on the Divine Spirit. The pure, abstract and non-material spirit is the life of the first soul on which depends the life of the body, and therefore it is called the 'soul of soul'. The real nature of the connection between these two kinds of soul is not known to anyone. It is known to Allah alone. Perhaps an illustration would clarify the matter. If we were to hold a mirror against the sun, then, despite that the sun is 149.6 million kilometres away from the earth, its reflection comes into the mirror. And because of the light, that too starts glowing like the sun. The same thing applies to the human soul. If it exerts itself in spiritual struggle and ascetic discipline in keeping with the teachings of [Divine] revelation, he will be enlightened. Otherwise he would be polluted with the bad effects of the physical body. This is the refined bodily soul that the angels transport to the heaven and transport him back with honours if he is enlightened. Otherwise the doors of the heaven are not opened for him and is thrown down from top. This is the refined bodily soul, the Tradition notes, which Allah created from dust and to it He will return him and from it. He resurrect him. It is this refined bodily soul that gets enlightened and becomes fragrant. But the same body can stink because of [the filth of] disbelief and idolatrous practices. The 'abstract spirit' is connected with the dense body through the refined bodily soul. The abstract spirit never dies. The reward or punishment of grave is experienced by the refined bodily soul which keeps connected with the grave whereas the abstract spirit remains in *'illiyyūn*, and it feels the effects of reward and punishment indirectly. Thus the statement that 'the soul is in the grave' is true in the sense that 'soul' in this context refers to the bodily soul. The statement that 'the soul is in *'Ālam-ul-arwāḥ* or *'illiyyūn'* is also true, because the 'soul' in this context refers to *rūḥ*

mujarrad or 'abstract spirit'. Thus it is possible to reconcile the apparently conflicting statements.

فَإِذَاهُمْ بِالسَّاهِرَةِ (and in no time they will be [brought] in the plain [of *hashr*]...79:14). The word *sāhirah* refers to 'the surface of the earth'. When the earth will be re-created at Resurrection, it will be a completely level surface. There will be no mountain barriers, no buildings or caves. This is referred to as '*sāhirah*'.

The Holy Prophet ﷺ used to be hurt by the stubbornness of the obdurate rejecters of Resurrection. The next verses recount the story of Mūsā عليه السلام and Fir'aun to console him, and to show that the adverse attitude of the pagans is not confined to him. The previous prophets have also faced similar situations, but they endured them with patience. The Holy Prophet ﷺ too should exercise patience and fortitude.

فَأَخَذَهُ اللّٰهُ نَكَالَ الْأٰخِرَةِ وَالْأُوْلٰى (So, Allah seized him for the deterrent punishment in the Hereafter and the present world....79:25). The word *nakāl* means an 'exemplary punishment' or 'an extremely severe punishment given to an offender to deter others against committing a similar offence or sin'. The phrase 'punishment of the '*ākhirah*' refers to the punishment of the Hereafter that will be meted out to Fir'aun (the Pharaoh). The phrase 'punishment of the *'ūlā'* refers to the punishment meted out to Fir'aun (the Pharaoh) and his army in this world whereby they were destroyed by drowning.

Further, the Qur'ān again disposes of the doubt of the rejecters of resurrection who pose the question: "Are we going to be brought back to our former state (of life)? Is it when we will have turned into decayed bones?" [10-11] In other words, this is a negative rhetorical question. They purport to say that it is not possible for them to be restored to life after death when they have become perished and worm-eaten bones. Allah responds that the Supreme Creator, Who drew out this universe without any pre-existing matter and without any instrument, certainly has the Supreme power to give existence to things after destroying them. Why should it be a surprise?

In the verses that follow, the horrors of the Day of Judgement are depicted. It is mentioned that on that Day, every person will be presented with his deeds. Described also are the abodes of the inmates of Paradise

and Hell. Towards the end, special traits of the people of Paradise and those of Hell are portrayed by which a man can decide in this very world whether, according to the rules, his abode would be Paradise or Hell. The expression 'according to the rules' has been used because many verses and narratives indicate that there could be 'exceptions to the rules'. For example, a person might attain freedom from Hell and enter Paradise by virtue of intercession or directly through the grace of Allah. This is an exception to the rule. The general rule is the same as has been mentioned in these verses.

First, the special marks of the inmates of Hell are described. They have two characteristics:

فَاَمَّا مَنْ طَغٰىۙ وَاٰثَرَ الْحَيٰوةَ الدُّنْيَا (then for the one who had rebelled, and preferred the worldly life [to the Hereafter]...79:38). In other words, [1] instead of remaining loyal to Allah and His Messenger and following their commands, they adopt the line of rejection and rebellion; and [2] prefer the life of this world to that of the Hereafter. In other words, if he were to do a deed that gives comfort and pleasure in this world but punishment in the Hereafter, he would prefer the comforts and pleasure of this life to the pleasure of the next life. Those who are characterised by these two qualities the Blazing Fire, that is Hell, will be their abode, thus: فَاِنَّ الْجَحِيْمَ هِيَ الْمَاْوٰى (the Hell will be the abode...79:39).

Thereafter, the special marks of the inmates of Paradise are described. They too have two characteristics:

وَاَمَّا مَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهٖ وَنَهَى النَّفْسَ عَنِ الْهَوٰى (whereas for the one who feared to stand before his Lord, and restrained his self from the [evil] desire, 79:40). In other words, [1] the first characteristic of a God-fearing person is that, in this life, he shudders at the thought of appearing before Allah to account for his deeds on the Day of Reckoning; and [2] forbids the baser self from its evil desires. Those who are characterised by these two qualities have the good news that the Paradise will be their abode, thus: فَاِنَّ الْجَنَّةَ هِيَ الْمَاْوٰى (the Paradise will be the abode....79:41)

Three Levels of Suppressing [the Base] Self

The verse under comment lays down two conditions of attaining the abode in Paradise, but carefully considered, the two conditions, in terms of consequence, are one. The first condition is the fear of accountability in

the presence of Allah. The second condition is to restrain oneself from the evil desires. As a matter of fact, fear of Allah causes one to restrain oneself from evil desires. Qāḍī Thanā'ullah Pānipatī has written in his Tafsīr Maẓharī that there are three levels of suppressing evil desires, as follows:

The first level is that one avoids false beliefs which are in conflict or incompatible with express texts [of the Holy Qur'ān and established Sunnah] and consensus of [the righteous] predecessors. In this level, a person deserves to be called 'Sunnī Muslim'.

The second level is the middle one. A person, in this stage, may think of committing sin. Then he may remember that he has to account for his deeds before Allah [on the Day of Reckoning]. As a result, he abandons the thought of committing sin. The complement to this level is that one abstains from doubtful things and those acts that are permissible in themselves, but there is apprehension that if committed, they may lead one to slip into impermissible acts. Sayyidnā Nu'mān Ibn Bashīr ﷺ narrates that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: "He who abstained from doubtful things has protected his honour and religion. He who indulged in doubtful things will eventually indulge in forbidden things." The expression 'doubtful things' signifies those acts about which one is not certain whether they are permissible or not, both possibilities being equal. Let us consider a few examples: if a person is ill and can take [wet] ablution, but he is not sure whether taking [wet] ablution in this state would be harmful. Thus the permissibility of dry ablution (*tayammum*) becomes doubtful. Likewise a person is able to perform prayers in a standing position, but feels great difficulty. He is now in doubt whether or not it is permissible for him to perform prayers in a sitting position. On such occasions, one should abandon the doubtful thing or act, and prefer what is definitely certain. This is *taqwa* and the middle course of suppressing the selfish desires.

Tricks of the Base Self

There are acts whose sinful nature is obvious to every one. The selfish desires prompting to such sinful acts may be suppressed by one's deliberate efforts and firm resolution. However, there are evils prompted by one's base self even during his acts of worship and other good deeds, such as self-conceit, (*'Ujb*) vanity, (*Kibr*), and show off (*Riyā'*). These are such sins whose sinful nature is often not discoverable to a common

person, still they are very severe and firmly ingrained evil desires of one's base self. One is at times deceived by them, because he continues to think that his actions are right. It is extremely necessary that first and foremost this lower self must be suppressed. But this cannot be achieved by one on his own. It is necessary for one to search for a perfect spiritual master (*Ash-shaikhul-kāmil*), and hand himself over to him for guidance. He acts as the authentic guide and the only one to whom a seeker of Truth should turn in his quest and follow his advice. In turning to the spiritual master, the seeker is turning to Allah Almighty. The *shaikh* engages him in the spiritual struggle and endeavour [*mujāhadah*] against the passions and tendencies of the lower self [*'uyūb-un-nafs*].

Shaikh Imām Ya'qūb Karkhī رحمه الله تعالیٰ says that in his young age he was a carpenter. He found laziness, and felt darkness in his inner self. So, he intended to keep fasts for a few days so that he may get rid of the laziness and darkness. Co-incidentally, one day, while he was fasting, he went up to Shaikh Imām Bahā'uddīn Naqshbandī. The Shaikh called for meals for his guests. He was also invited to partake of the meal, and the Shaikh said: "He is a very bad slave who is the slave of his base self that misleads him. It is better to partake of meal than to keep fast with evil desires of the base self." Shaikh Karkhī says that at that moment he realised that (by fasting) he was falling prey to self-complacence, self-conceit and pride, which the Shaikh Naqshbandī perceived. On that occasion, Shaikh Karkhī realised that a spiritual master's permission and guidance is needed to take up an optional act of worship, because the spiritual master is aware of the hidden tricks of the evil desires of the base self. If an optional act of worship will be accompanied by such motives, the will put a stop to it [for remedial purposes]. He asked Shaikh Naqshbandī: "If I cannot find a Shaikh who is called in Ṣūfī terms as *fānī fillah* and *bāqī billah,* (the explanation is coming in the next paragraph.)what must I do?" He replied: "Recite *istighfār* abundantly and recite *istighfār* [seek Allah's pardon] twenty times regularly after every prayer, so that it works out to a hundred times reciting it five times a day." The Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said: "Sometimes I feel my heart disturbed, and I recite *istighfār* [seek Allah's pardon] a hundred times a day."

The third and the highest level of suppression of the base self is that

by abundant *dhikrullah* [remembrance of Allah] and constant *mujāhadah* [spiritual struggle and endeavour against the evil passions] and *riyāḍah* [ascetic discipline], one's self (*nafs*) is so much cleansed and purified that the desires that tempts him to evil are totally eliminated. This is the special stage of *wilāyah* [Divine friendship], which in Ṣūfī Terminology is called *fānī fillah* and *bāqī billah*. The Qur'ān says regarding such people [addressing the Satan]:

إِنَّ عِبَادِي لَيْسَ لَكَ عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطَٰنٌ

'My servants are such that you have no power over them [15:42]'

The following Tradition applies to the same category of *walī*:

لَا يُؤْمِنُ أَحَدُكُمْ حَتَّى يَكُونَ هَوَاهُ تَبَعًا لِمَا جِئْتُ بِهِ

'None of you can be a [perfect] believer unless his [base] desires of self follow my teachings.'

Towards the end of the Sūrah, the Holy Qur'ān responds to the *mala fide* demand of the infidels that the Holy Prophet ﷺ should let them know the exact date and time of the Day of Judgement. They are told that knowledge of the time and date is within Allah's own special prerogative. Allah's consummate wisdom did not pass the information to any angel or Prophet عليهم السلام. Therefore, the demand is futile.

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah An-Nāzi'āt
Ends here

Sūrah 'Abas

(Frowning)

This Sūrah is Makkī, and it has 42 verses and 1 section.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 42

عبس وتولى ﴿١﴾ ان جاءه الاعمى ﴿٢﴾ وما يدريك لعله يزكى

﴿٣﴾ او يذكر فتنفعه الذكرى ﴿٤﴾ اما من استغنى ﴿٥﴾ فانت له

تصدى ﴿٦﴾ و ما عليك الا يزكى ﴿٧﴾ واما من جاءك يسعى

﴿٨﴾ وهو يخشى ﴿٩﴾ فانت عنه تلهى ﴿١٠﴾ كلا انها تذكرة ﴿١١﴾

فمن شاء ذكره ﴿١٢﴾ في صحف مكرمة ﴿١٣﴾ مرفوعة مطهرة

﴿١٤﴾ بايدي سفرة ﴿١٥﴾ كرام بررة ﴿١٦﴾ قتل الانسان ما اكفره

﴿١٧﴾ من اي شيء خلقه ﴿١٨﴾ من نطفة خلقه فقدره ﴿١٩﴾ ثم

السبيل يسره ﴿٢٠﴾ ثم اماته فاقبره ﴿٢١﴾ ثم اذا شاء انشره ﴿٢٢﴾

كلا لما يقض ما امره ﴿٢٣﴾ فلينظر الانسان الى طعامه ﴿٢٤﴾

انا صببنا الماء صبا ﴿٢٥﴾ ثم شققنا الارض شقا ﴿٢٦﴾ فانبتنا فيها

حبا ﴿٢٧﴾ وعنبا وقضبا ﴿٢٨﴾ وزيتونا ونخلا ﴿٢٩﴾ وحدائق غلبا

﴿٣٠﴾ و فاكهة وابا ﴿٣١﴾ متاعا لكم ولانعامكم ﴿٣٢﴾ فاذا جاءت

الصاخة ﴿٣٣﴾ يوم يفر المرء من اخيه ﴿٣٤﴾ وامه وابيه ﴿٣٥﴾

وَصَاحِبَتِهِ وَبَنِيهِ ﴿٣٦﴾ لِكُلِّ امْرِئٍ مِّنْهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ شَأْنٌ يُغْنِيهِ
﴿٣٧﴾ وُجُوهٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ مُّسْفِرَةٌ ﴿٣٨﴾ ضَاحِكَةٌ مُّسْتَبْشِرَةٌ ﴿٣٩﴾ وَوُجُوهٌ
يَوْمَئِذٍ عَلَيْهَا غَبَرَةٌ ﴿٤٠﴾ تَرْهَقُهَا قَتَرَةٌ ﴿٤١﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْكَفَرَةُ
الْفَجَرَةُ ﴿٤٢﴾

He (the Holy Prophet ﷺ) frowned and turned his face, [1] because the blind man came to him! [2] And what could tell you (O Holy Prophet about the prospects of the blind man?) May be, (if you had attended him properly,) he would have attained purity, [3] or have taken to the advice, and the advice would have benefited him. [4] As for the one who does not care (about faith), [5] you are anxious to pursue him, [6] while there is no blame on you, if he does not attain purity. [7] As regards the one who has come to you rushing eagerly, [8] while he fears (Allah), [9] to him you pay no heed! [10]

Never! (you should never act in this way,) Indeed this (Qur'ān) is an advice. [11] So, whoever so wills, let him remember it. [12] It is (recorded) in those scripts (of the Preserved Tablet) that are honoured, [13] exalted, purified, [14] in the hands of those scribes [15] who are honourable, righteous. [16]

Death be unto the man! How ungrateful he is! [17] From which stuff did He (Allah) create him? [18] From a drop of semen! He created him, and designed him in due proportion, [19] then He made the way easy for him, [20] Later, he made him die, and put him into the grave, [21] thereafter, when He will intend, He will raise him up. [22] No! He has not yet fulfilled what He (Allah) had commanded him. [23]

So, let the man look to his food, [24] how well We poured water, [25] then how nicely We split the earth, [26] then We grew in it grain, [27] and grapes and greens, [28] and olive and date-palms, [29] and gardens, full of thick trees, [30] and fruits and fodder, [31] as a benefit for you and your cattle. [32]

So when there will come the Deafening Noise, [33] the Day when one will flee from his brother, [34] and from his mother and father, [35] and from his wife and sons, [36] every one of them will have enough concern to make

him careless of others. [37] **Many faces, on that day, will be bright,** [38] **laughing, rejoicing,** [39] **and many faces, on that day, will be stained with dust,** [40] **covered by darkness.** [41] **Those are the disbelievers, the nefarious.** [42]

Commentary

Circumstance of Revelation

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Umm Maktūm ﷺ, the companion of the Holy Prophet ﷺ was a blind man. It once happened that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was engaged in a talk with the leaders of Quraish about some matters of belief. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Umm Maktūm ﷺ arrived there. Imam Baghawi adds that being blind and unable to see the surroundings, he did not realise that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was occupied with the others. He, therefore, burst into the circle and called the Holy Prophet ﷺ repeatedly. [Maẓharī]. According to Ibn Kathīr, he requested the Holy Prophet ﷺ to teach him a verse of the Qur'ān and insisted an immediate enlightenment on the question. On that occasion, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was occupied with the non-believing leaders of Makkah in the hope that they would embrace the faith of Islam. The leaders to whom the Holy Prophet ﷺ was speaking were 'Utbah Ibn Rabī'ah, Abū Jahl Ibn Hishām and the Holy Prophet's ﷺ uncle 'Abbās ﷺ [who had until then not embraced the Islamic faith].

The Holy Prophet ﷺ disliked the intrusion, and showed his displeasure by turning aside from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Umm Maktūm, thinking that he was a committed Muslim who frequently visited him, and therefore he could speak to him at another appropriate time. There was no religious loss in postponing the response to him. On the other hand, the Quraish leaders neither frequented the Holy Prophet's ﷺ company, nor could the Word of Allah be conveyed to them at any time. At that particular moment, they were listening to the Holy Prophet's ﷺ discourse and there was hope that they would embrace the Islamic faith. But if the conversation was rashly interrupted, apparently they would have been deprived of the faith. In view of this situation, the Holy Prophet ﷺ showed adverse reaction by turning aside from 'Abdullāh Ibn umm Maktūm ﷺ, and continued his discourse with the Quraish leaders. When the assembly broke up, the verses of Sūrah 'Abas were revealed to record Allah's dislike for this attitude, and to give directions for future.

This attitude of the Holy Prophet ﷺ was based on *ijtihād* or 'an

opinion based on personal reasoning'. He thought that if a Muslim were to adopt a speech style that is not in keeping with etiquettes of a gathering, he needs to be reprimanded, so that in future he may be careful in future. That is the reason why Holy Prophet ﷺ turned his face away from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Umm Maktūm رضي الله عنه. Secondly, disbelief (*kufr*) and polytheism (*shirk*) are the most severe sins, and an effort to eradicate them should take priority over the subsidiary precepts of Islam on which Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Umm Maktūm رضي الله عنه asked for enlightenment. Allah Almighty, through this Surah, did not confirm the correctness of this *ijtihād* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and explained to him that educating a genuine seeker will most certainly benefit him, while the benefit of discussion with the opponents (who disdainfully turn away their face when the Holy Prophet ﷺ talks to them) is shaky and doubtful. Doubtful thing cannot be preferred over certainty. As for the violation of etiquette committed by Sayyidnā 'Abdullah Ibn Umm Maktūm, its excuse is pointed out by the Holy Qur'ān in the word 'blind'. It is indicated by this word that being a blind man, he could not see what the Holy Prophet ﷺ was doing and with whom he was engaged in conversation. Thus he was excusable, and was not liable to be subjected to aversion. This indicates that if an excusable person were to break any rule of etiquette unwittingly, he should not be reprimanded.

عَبَسَ وَتَوَلّٰى (He [the Holy Prophet ﷺ] frowned and turned his face, 80:1). The word *'abasa* means 'he frowned' and the word *tawallā* means 'he turned aside'. Since the reference here is to the Holy Prophet ﷺ who himself is addressed, the verbs should have been in the second person: 'you frowned and you turned aside'. But the Holy Qur'ān on this occasion uses the third person in order to maintain the honour of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, as if this attitude were shown by some other person, and in a subtle way it alludes to the point that what the Holy Prophet ﷺ did was not befitting his high status. Then the next sentence وَمَا يُدْرِيكَ (and what could tell you? ...80:3) alludes to the fact that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was excusable, because it did not come to his attention that the Companion is asking something whose effect will be certain and the effect of conversation with others is dubious. The second sentence abandons the third person, and switches to the second person in order to maintain the

honour of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Had he not been addressed in second person at all, it might have created the impression that he is not addressed directly because of his unapproved conduct, which would have been an unbearable pain and grief for the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Just as the third person in the first statement is meant to show respect to him, the second person in the following sentence is also meant to honor and console him.

لَعَلَّهُ يَزَّكّٰى اَوْيَذَّكَّرُ فَتَنْفَعَهُ الذِّكْرٰى (May be, [if you had attended him properly,] he would have attained purity, or have taken to the advice, and the advice would have benefited him....80:4).

In other words, because Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Umm Maktūm رضي الله عنه was a genuine believer, any advice given to him would have benefited him and served to purify him. The companion sought enlightenment and its benefit was certain. If the Holy Prophet ﷺ enlightened him on the topic, he would have purified himself and attained perfection. If that did not happen, he would have at least attained the basic benefit of Divine remembrance. He would have improved the love and fear of Allah in his heart. The word *dhikrā* means 'to remember Allah abundantly' [Ṣiḥāḥ].(1)

On this occasion, the Qur'ān has used two sentences *yazzakkā* and *yazzakkaru*. The first statement signifies 'to be purified' and the second statement signifies 'he may take heed and the reminder may benefit him'. The first stage is that of the 'righteous' who cleanse their inner and outer selves. The second stage is that of *mubtadī* 'beginners on the spiritual journey'. At this stage, the beginner is reminded of Allah which enhances the greatness and awe of Allah in his heart. The two sentences are disjoined by disjunctive particles *au* (or) and technically they are not necessarily exclusive to one another. The sense is that 'Abdullāh Ibn Umm Maktūm رضي الله عنه would have attained either both benefits, or at least, the second one, that is, increase in Allah's remembrance and in His awe, which is the initial step towards perfection [Maẓharī]

An Important Qur'ānic Principle of Teaching and Preaching

On this occasion, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was faced with two different

(1) This interpretation is based on taking the word '*dhikrā*' in the sense of rememberance of Allah'. However, some other exegetes have taken this word to mean 'advice', and the translation of the text, as well as the explanation following in the next paragraph, is based on it. (Muḥammad Taqi Usmānī)

requirements at the same time. On the one hand, he was required to teach a Muslim and to encourage him on attaining perfection. On the other hand, he had to provide guidance to non-Muslims. The principle laid down here makes it clear that the first requirement takes priority over the second one. It is improper to delay the first task (educating Muslims) because of the second task. This indicates that education of Muslims and their reform are more important than, and take priority over, getting the non-Muslims to embrace the faith.

Scholars should avoid any such indulgence when disposing of any doubts of the non-Muslims, which may create doubts or complaints in the minds of the general body of Muslims. The teachers, preachers and reformers need to keep in mind these Qur'ānic guidelines to maintain the welfare and priority of the Muslims. How beautifully Akbar Allahabadi, the Urdu poet, versifies this principle:

بے وفا سمجھیں تمہیں اہل حرم اس سے بچو...... دَیر والے کج ادا کہدیں یہ بدنامی بھلی

'Protect yourselves from a position where people of the Ḥaram (Muslims) call you unfaithful.

As opposed to this, if People of temple [non-Muslims] call you 'ill-mannered', (because of your faithfulness to your religion), this dishonor is better.

The following verses clarify the principles more elaborately:

اَمَّا مَنِ اسْتَغْنٰى فَاَنْتَ لَهٗ تَصَدّٰى (As for the one who does not care [about faith], you are anxious to pursue him!...80:6).

In other words: 'Those who turn away from you and your religion, you are pursuing them under the hope that some how they should become Muslims, while this is not your responsibility. If they do not embrace the faith, there will be no blame on you.

Thereafter, in verses 13 and 14, Allah Almighty has described the high status of the Holy Qur'ān, thus:

فِىْ صُحُفٍ مُّكَرَّمَةٍ. مَّرْفُوْعَةٍ مُّطَهَّرَةٍ (It is [recorded] in those scripts [of the Preserved Tablet] that are honoured, [13] exalted, purified - 14).

The word *ṣuḥuf* refers to *lauḥ maḥfūẓ* 'the Preserved Tablet'.

Although it is a single thing, but *ṣuḥuf,* the plural form of *ṣaḥīfah* is used because all divine scriptures are written in it, or because the angels copy their scriptures from them. The word *marfū'ah* means 'exalted in the sight of Allah'. The word *muṭahharah* (purified) means 'people in the state of sexual defilement, menstrual discharge, post-natal bleeding and people in the state of minor uncleanness are not permitted to touch it'.

بِأَيْدِي سَفَرَةٍ. كِرَامٍ بَرَرَةٍ (in the hands of those scribes who are honourable, righteous. [80:15-16])

The word *safarah,* with *fatḥah* [=a+a] on the first two letters, may be the plural of *safir* which means a 'scribe'. In this case, it would refer to the recording angels, or to the Prophets عليهم السلام and those of their aides who write down the revelation. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ and Mujāhid hold this view.

The word *safarah* may be used as the plural of *safīr* in the sense of 'envoy'. In this case, it would refer to the angels who convey the revelation, and Prophets عليهم السلام and their companions who write the revelation. The *'ulama'* (knowledgeable persons) of the Muslim community' are also included in this term, because they too are envoys between the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the Muslim community. The messenger of Allah ﷺ is reported to have said that he who recites the Qur'ān and is an expert in the art of recitation, he will be with the honorable, righteous envoys. He who is not an expert in the art of recitation, but recites it correctly with difficulty, he shall receive double reward.[Transmitted by Shaikhain from 'Ā'ishah - Maẓharī]. This shows that a non-expert will receive double reward - one for recitation of Qur'ān, and the other for bearing the difficulty. This also indicates that an expert will receive countless rewards. [Maẓharī]

The preceding verses mentioned that the Qur'ān is exalted and that belief in it is incumbent. Subsequently, the rejecters of Qur'ān are cursed and they are warned against showing ingratitude towards Divine favours. That the Holy Qur'ān is a great Divine blessing is understood only by the men of Divine knowledge and understanding. Further, there is the mention of those Divine favours that Allah confers on man since his inception to the end of his life. These are material and physical things

that a man with basic intellect can understand. Human creation is mentioned, thus:

مِنْ اَيِّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقَهُ. مِنْ نُّطْفَةٍ (From which stuff did He [Allah] create him? From a drop of semen! ..80:18-19).

First a question is raised: 'O man! Consider what Allah has created you from?' Since its reply is so obvious that there can be no other reply, the next verse itself says: 'From a drop of semen!' Thus the verse draws pointed attention to the very humble beginning of man, so that it may be brought home to him that Allah having created him from such an insignificant thing as a sperm-drop, created him and proportioned him:

'خَلَقَهُ فَقَدَّرَهُ' (He created him, and designed him in due proportion..80:19). In other words, He has made him with a special design and with great wisdom. His stature, body-structure, his face, his length and breadth of the limbs, his joints, his eyes, nose and ears are all well-proportioned in their creation. If any limb or organ loses its proportion, man's face will go awry, and every activity will become a problem.

The word *qaddara* is derived from *taqdīr* which is also used in the sense of 'predestination'. Taking the word in this sense, the verse may also mean here that when man is under creation in his mother's womb, Allah predetermines four things for him: his life span, his sustenance, his deeds and whether he would be miserable or happy [as in the ḥadīth of Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ recorded by Shaikhain].

'ثُمَّ السَّبِيْلَ يَسَّرَهُ' (then He made the way easy for him...80:20) Allah through His consummate wisdom creates man in his mother's womb, creation after creation, within three layers of darkness [i.e. the belly, the womb and the amniotic membrane]. It is kept in a safe place in the belly. The mother in whose belly all this is happening is totally unaware of any of the details of this process. Thereafter, when the baby becomes perfect with all its limbs and organs, Allah made it possible that a body weighing 3 to 4 kg comes out through an extremely narrow passage, and the mother does not suffer unduly. So blessed be He Who is the best Creator!

'ثُمَّ اَمَاتَهُ فَاَقْبَرَهُ' (Later, he made him die, and put him into the grave..80:21) After mentioning the inception of human life, Allah points to its end, that is, death and grave. Death has been mentioned here in the context of

blessings of Allah. It indicates that death is a blessing rather than a calamity. The Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have put it thus: تحفة المومن الموت "The gift of a believer is death." Moreover, there is a profound wisdom in death at macro level for the entire world.

The phrase 'فَأَقْبَرَهُ' *fa-aqbarah* (and put him into the grave) describes another blessing of Allah, in that when man is dead, he is not left lying on the earth like other animals where he might rot, blow up and burst [and probably be ravaged by vultures or beasts]. But, even after death, he is honoured in the most befitting manner. His body is washed ceremonially, enshrouded in clean cloths, and buried in a grave with respect.

This verse also indicates that it is obligatory to bury a dead human body.

'كَلَّا لَمَّا يَقْضِ مَآ اَمَرَهُ' (No! He has not yet fulfilled what He [Allah] had commanded him...80:23).

Having mentioned in the preceding verses the beginning and the end of human life, Divine Omnipotence and Divine blessings, the current verses warn the non-believing man that the demand of Divine Signs and blessings was to carefully ponder and believe in Allah, and comply with His injunctions, but the unfortunate creature failed to do so. Further, the Divine favours are mentioned that were conferred on man between the beginning and end of his life. Man is then asked to consider the sources of his food. Allah showers down water abundantly from the clouds. He cleaves the earth with new growth. Thereupon He causes grain to grow out of it. At first, a fragile shoot germinates and sprouts. Then many different kinds of grain, fruits and gardens come into existence. Having warned man several times about these Divine blessings, the Sūrah concludes with the mention of Resurrection, thus:

فَاِذَا جَآءَتِ الصَّآخَّةُ (So when there will come the Deafening Noise..80:33). The word *ṣākhkhah* means 'deafening cry or shout' and it refers to the blowing of the trumpet, which will be a deafening sound.

يَوْمَ يَفِرُّ الْمَرْءُ مِنْ اَخِيْهِ (the Day when one will flee from his brother..80:34). This depicts the scene when all the people will have gathered in the Plain of Gathering. Each person will be worried about himself, and the

situation will be so horrifying and tense that it will make people heedless of anything around them. In the world, there are relationships between people that make one willing to lay down his life for the other, but on the Day of Resurrection there will be such horror and chaos that they will be unable to take care of anyone. In fact, even if one sees the other in front of him, he will turn away from him. They will try to flee from their brothers, from their mothers and fathers, from their spouses and their children. They will not be able to help any of them in the Hereafter, despite the natural attachment they had with them in the world. Normally, one is more anxious in this world about his parents than about his brothers, and he is more anxious about his wife and children than about his parents. Keeping this in view, the relationships, in the present verse, are arranged from lower order to higher order.

The Chapter ends on a note of warning to disbelievers that if they reject the Qur'ānic message and persist in opposition to the Holy Prophet ﷺ they will have to face a day of reckoning when misery, shame and ignominy will be their lot. The righteous believers, however, will reside in Gardens of Bliss, their faces beaming with joy and happiness.

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah 'Abas
Ends here

Sūrah At-Takwīr
(The Folding)

This Sūrah is Makkī, and it has 29 verses and one sections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 29

اِذَا الشَّمْسُ كُوِّرَتْ ﴿۱﴾ وَاِذَا النُّجُوْمُ انْكَدَرَتْ ﴿۲﴾ وَاِذَا الْجِبَالُ
سُيِّرَتْ ﴿۳﴾ وَ اِذَا الْعِشَارُ عُطِّلَتْ ﴿۴﴾ وَاِذَا الْوُحُوْشُ حُشِرَتْ
﴿۵﴾ وَاِذَا الْبِحَارُ سُجِّرَتْ ﴿۶﴾ وَاِذَا النُّفُوْسُ زُوِّجَتْ ﴿۷﴾ وَاِذَا
الْمَوْءٗدَةُ سُئِلَتْ ﴿۸﴾ بِاَيِّ ذَنْۢبٍ قُتِلَتْ ﴿۹﴾ وَاِذَا الصُّحُفُ
نُشِرَتْ ﴿۱۰﴾ وَاِذَا السَّمَآءُ كُشِطَتْ ﴿۱۱﴾ وَاِذَا الْجَحِيْمُ سُعِّرَتْ
﴿۱۲﴾ وَ اِذَا الْجَنَّةُ اُزْلِفَتْ ﴿۱۳﴾ عَلِمَتْ نَفْسٌ مَّآ اَحْضَرَتْ ﴿۱۴﴾
فَلَآ اُقْسِمُ بِالْخُنَّسِ ﴿۱۵﴾ الْجَوَارِ الْكُنَّسِ ﴿۱۶﴾ وَالَّيْلِ اِذَا عَسْعَسَ
﴿۱۷﴾ وَالصُّبْحِ اِذَا تَنَفَّسَ ﴿۱۸﴾ اِنَّهٗ لَقَوْلُ رَسُوْلٍ كَرِيْمٍ ﴿۱۹﴾ ذِیْ قُوَّةٍ
عِنْدَ ذِی الْعَرْشِ مَكِيْنٍ ﴿۲۰﴾ مُّطَاعٍ ثَمَّ اَمِيْنٍ ﴿۲۱﴾ وَمَا صَاحِبُكُمْ
بِمَجْنُوْنٍ ﴿۲۲﴾ وَلَقَدْ رَاٰهُ بِالْاُفُقِ الْمُبِيْنِ ﴿۲۳﴾ وَ مَا هُوَ عَلَى الْغَيْبِ
بِضَنِيْنٍ ﴿۲۴﴾ وَمَا هُوَ بِقَوْلِ شَيْطٰنٍ رَّجِيْمٍ ﴿۲۵﴾ فَاَيْنَ تَذْهَبُوْنَ
﴿۲۶﴾ اِنْ هُوَ اِلَّا ذِكْرٌ لِّلْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿۲۷﴾ لِمَنْ شَآءَ مِنْكُمْ اَنْ يَّسْتَقِيْمَ
﴿۲۸﴾ وَمَا تَشَآءُوْنَ اِلَّآ اَنْ يَّشَآءَ اللّٰهُ رَبُّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿۲۹﴾

When the sun will be folded up, [1] and when the stars will swoop down, [2] and when the mountains will be set in motion, [3] and when the ten-months pregnant she-camels will be abandoned, [4] and when the wild beasts will be gathered together, [5] and when the seas will be flared up, [6] and when the people will be arranged in categories, [7] and when the girl-child that was buried alive will be asked, [8] for what sin she was killed, [9] and when the scrolls (of deeds) will be unrolled, [10] and when the sky will be stripped off, [11] and when the Hell will be set ablaze, [12] and when the Paradise will be brought close, [13] then everyone will know what he (or she) has put forward, [14]

So, I swear by those (stars) that recede, [15] that proceed, that withdraw from the scene, [16] and by the night when it departs, [17] and the morning when it starts breathing, [18] it (the Qur'ān) is surely the word of a noble messenger (Jibra'īl عليه السلام), [19] the one possessing power, and a high status with the Lord of the Throne, [20] the one obeyed there, trusted. [21] And your companion (Muhammad ﷺ) is not a madman. [22] And he did see him (Jibra'īl عليه السلام) on the clear horizon. [23] And he (the Prophet ﷺ) is not stingy about (the news of) the unseen. [24] Nor is it the word of an outcast satan (devil). [25] Then where are you going? [26] It is nothing else but a message of advice for all the worlds, [27] for the benefit of any one from among you who intends to go straight. [28] And you cannot intend (to do anything) unless it is so intended by Allah, the Lord of all the worlds. [29]

Commentary

إِذَا الشَّمْسُ كُوِّرَتْ (When the sun will be folded up...81:1) The word *kawwara* is derived from Takwīr which denotes for the sun 'to lose its light'.[1] Sayyidnā Ḥasan Baṣrī رحمه الله تعالى has attached this interpretation to it. Another sense of the word is 'to cause to fall'. Rabī' Ibn Khaitham assigns the following interpretation to this verse: The Sun will be thrown into the ocean, and as a result of its heat the entire ocean will turn into fire. The two interpretations are not contradictory. They may be reconciled thus: first, its light will be put off and then it may be thrown

(1) Another meaning of Takwīr is 'to fold', and the translation in the text is based on this meaning. The sense of folding the sun is that its function will come to an end, and it will lose its light. As such, it comes to mean same thing as mentioned in first interpretation. Muhammad Taqi Usmani

into the ocean. Ṣaḥīḥ of Bukhārī records from Sayyidnā Abū Huharirah ﵁ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that on the Day of Resurrection the Sun and the Moon would be thrown into the ocean. Musnad of Bazzār has the addition that they will be thrown into Hell. Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Ibn Abid-Dunyā and Abush-Shaikh stated that on the Day of Resurrection Allah will throw the Sun, the Moon and all stars into the ocean. Then a violent wind will blow over them, as a result of which the entire ocean will turn into fire. Thus it is correct to say that the Sun and the Moon will be put into the ocean. It is likewise correct to say that they will be put into Hell, because the entire ocean at that time will have been turned into Hell. [Derived from Maẓharī and Qurṭubī]

وَإِذَا النُّجُومُ انْكَدَرَتْ (and when the stars will swoop down...81:2). The word *inkadarat* is derived from *inkidār* and it denotes 'to fall'. The righteous predecessors have interpreted it thus. It signifies that all the stars from the sky will fall into the oceans as explained in the preceding verses.

وَإِذَا الْعِشَارُ عُطِّلَتْ (and when the ten-months pregnant she-camels will be abandoned...81:4). The Arabic word *'ishār* is the plural of the word *'usharā'* and is applied to she-camels having ten months pregnancy. Such she-camels were considered by the Arabs to be a very valuable asset, because they expected her to give birth to more camels and abundant milk. As such, they used to protect her and never left her free. The verse referring to this custom of the Arabs, who were the immediate addressees, depicts the horrible scene of the Doomsday when even the most favorite wealth, like such a she-camel, will be abandoned and neglected by its owners because of the calamity they will be facing.

وَإِذَا الْبِحَارُ سُجِّرَتْ (and when the seas will be flared up...81:6). The word *sujjirat* is derived from *tasjīr* and it signifies 'to set ablaze'. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﵄ assigns this interpretation to the word in this context. Another sense of the word is 'to fill' and a third sense of the word is 'to mix or admix'. Some commentators have interpreted it in this sense. None of these interpretations is contradictory to each other. First, the salt and sweet water are admixed and the rivers are made to flow forth into the sea; then the seas will meet together and become one and having more water; then the seas will be set on fire; and then the Sun and the Moon and the stars will be thrown into the water. Then all the water will be turned into fire which will become part of Hell. [Maẓharī]

وَإِذَا النُّفُوسُ زُوِّجَتْ (and when the people will be arranged in categories...81:7). It means that the people on the Plain of Gathering will be grouped, like with like, in terms of belief and deeds. Disbelievers will be grouped together and believers will be grouped together. There are differences between the deeds and habits of believers and there are differences between the deeds and habits of disbelievers. The non-believers will be re-grouped according to their essential characteristics and the Muslims too will be re-grouped according to their essential characteristics as is reported in Baihaqī on the authority of Sayyidnā Nu'mān Ibn Bashīr ﷺ that Sayyidnā 'Umar Ibn Khaṭṭāb ﷺ said that the people doing similar deeds, good or bad, will be joined together. For example, the knowledgeable persons from among the Muslims who were serving Islamic studies will be made into one group; the people who devoted themselves for worship will be made into another group; the people performing *jihād* will be together, and the people whose main characteristic was to spend in charities will be gathered in one place. On the other hand, those who were involved in wicked activities like thieves, robbers, adulterers will also be assembled in their respective groups. Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ based this statement on the verse of the Holy Qur'ān in which Allah says in Sūrah Al-Wāqi'ah: وَكُنْتُمْ أَزْوَاجًا ثَلٰثَةً [and you will be (divided into) three categories. (56:7) It is mentioned further in that Sūrah that out of the three categories, two will attain salvation who are named as the 'foremost' and 'people of the right' while another group, namely the 'people of the left' will be comprised of the infidels.

وَإِذَا الْمَوْءُودَةُ سُئِلَتْ (and when the girl-child that was buried alive will be asked, for what sin she was killed...81:8-9) The word *mau'ūdah* is the girl-child buried alive. It was a common practice in pre-Islamic time of ignorance that people would take the birth of a girl as a matter of shame for their fathers, and therefore they would bury them alive as soon as they were born. Islam has abolished this barbaric practice completely. This verse, while depicting the scene of Resurrection, mentions that the girls who were buried alive will be questioned for what crime they were killed. Apparently, it seems that the question will be posed to the girl herself. This will give the victim an opportunity to prove her complete innocence and thus the perpetrators of this crime will be hauled up in the Divine Court of Justice, and will be duly punished for their wrongdoing.

It is also possible that the question will be posed to the killers of the girls why they committed infanticide.

Important Note

In any case, one question may arise here: The day referred to in these verses is named as the 'Day of of Requital' and the 'Day of Judgement'. This name itself sows that every person, on that day, will be put to a trial where he will be asked all sorts of questions about his deeds. Why has the Holy Qur'ān, at this place, singled out only the question asked about the girl that was buried alive. Carefully considered, it would appear that such a girl was the victim of the barbarism of her own parents. As such, there was no one to raise a plaint against such a brutal act, and to demand retaliation, especially when she was buried secretly with no evidence left. The verse, therefore, signifies that on the Day of Reckoning, even those criminals will be exposed and hauled up in the Divine Court of Justice against whom there was no evidence, nor was there anyone who could stand up on their behalf to demand justice. Allah knows best!

Abortion After Four Months is Tantamount to Infanticide

Ruling [1]

Burying alive infants or killing them is a major sin and a heinous brutality. Aborting a foetus after four months falls under the same category in Sharī'ah, because within four months the foetus receives the soul and treated as a living human being. Likewise, if a person strikes on the stomach of a pregnant woman which causes the baby to abort, then, according to the common consent of the Muslim jurists, it would be incumbent upon him to set free a slave or pay its price in blood-wit or *diyah*. If the baby was alive at the time of aborting and then died, full *diyah* will be incumbent. Abortion before four months is also unlawful, except in cases of necessity, but compared to the first case, it is a sin of lesser degree, because it does not amount to killing of a living human being clearly.

Ruling [2]: Birth Control

Birth control, whose many forms are invented today, is also termed by the Holy Prophet ﷺ as 'hidden infanticide' in a *ḥadīth* reported by Muslim from *Judhāmah* bint Wahb رضي الله عنها. There are, however, some ahadith in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have allowed *'azl* (coitus interruptus) or to have observed silence when asked about it,

which is a sign of permissibility of such an act. But it should be remembered that its permissibility is restricted to genuine needs, and that too in a way that productivity of the woman is not permanently blocked. [Maẓharī]. The present-day medical science has invented some measures that prevent pregnancy forever. The Sharī'ah does not permit such measures under any circumstances. Allah knows best!

وَإِذَا السَّمَآءُ كُشِطَتْ (and when the sky will be stripped off...81:11) The word *kushiṭat* is derived from *kashṭ*, and it literally means 'to strip off' the skin of an animal. Probably, this condition will prevail at the first blowing of the Horn, which will happen in this world. The stars, the Sun and the Moon that contributed to the beauty of the sky will all lose their light and lustre and will be thrown into the ocean. The outlook of the sky will be changed. This phenomenon is termed in this verse as: 'The sky will be stripped off'. Some commentators interpret the word *kashṭ* in the sense of 'folding up'. The verse, according to them, purports to say that the sky that surrounds the upper atmosphere over our heads will be folded up.

عَلِمَتْ نَفْسٌ مَّآ أَحْضَرَتْ (then everyone will know what he [or she] has put forward...81:14). It means that when Resurrection, with all the horrors mentioned above, will take place, man will realise what he has brought with him. The word 'what' here refers to his good and bad deeds, all of which will be in front of him, either in the form of the Record of Deeds that will be given in his hands or his deeds will assume a specific body shape as is understood from certain Traditions. Allah knows best!

Having described the horrors of Resurrection, and the accountability of deeds, Allah swears an oath by a few stars to confirms that the Qur'ān is the truth that has been sent down, fully protected from any interruption or distortion, and that the Prophet ﷺ who has received it is a great personality, and the angel (Jibra'īl ﷺ) who descended with it was known to him before hand. Therefore, there can be no room for any doubt about its veracity. The verses here swear an oath by five stars which the ancient Greeks called *khamsah mutaḥayyirah* or 'the five wandering stars ', since they seemed to stray irregularly across the sky. At times they are seen moving from East to West, and at others, from West to East. Different reasons have been assigned to their irregular movements. The ancient Greeks hold several contradictory explanations for this. The research of modern scientists concurs with some of the ancient

philosophers, and differs from some others. The Creator alone knows the truth and reality. The scientists merely guess and conjecture which may be wrong. The Qur'ān has, therefore, not involved its readers in such a useless debate. Allah showed us what was beneficial, that is, to observe the Divine Omnipotence, His Consummate Wisdom and to repose our faith in Him.

إِنَّهُ لَقَوْلُ رَسُوْلٍ كَرِيْمٍ. ذِىْ قُوَّةٍ عِنْدَ ذِى الْعَرْشِ مَكِيْنٍ (it [the Qur'ān] is surely the word of a noble messenger [Jibra'īl], the one possessing power and a high status with the Lord of the Throne...81:19-20). This is the subject of oath that affirms that Qur'ān is the word brought by a noble messenger. Then three qualities are attributed to this noble messenger. The first quality is that he possesses power. The second quality is that he has high status and lofty rank with Allah, and he is obeyed in the upper realm. The third quality is that he is trusted, and there is no possibility of his committing any breach of trust or tampering with the message he conveys. The word 'noble messenger' obviously refers to the angel Jibra'īl ﷺ, because the word 'messenger' is used for angels as it is used for prophets, and all the three qualities attributed to the 'messenger' in the next verses are truly present in Jibra'īl ﷺ. His being powerful is mentioned in Sūrah An-Najm in the following words;

عَلَّمَهُ شَدِيْدُ الْقُوٰى

It is taught to him by one (angel) of strong faculties.[53:5)

It is established through the *hadīth* of Mi'rāj that he is obeyed by other angels, because when he accompanied the Holy Prophet ﷺ to the sky and ordered the angels appointed on its doors to open them he was obeyed by them. That he is trust-worthy is too obvious to need a proof.

Some commentators, however, take the phrase 'honourable messenger' to refer to the Holy Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and accordingly have made an attempt to take all the three qualities referring to the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

In the next verses, the Holy Qur'ān has mentioned the high status of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and has refuted the silly objections raised against him by the infidels.

وَمَا صَاحِبُكُمْ بِمَجْنُوْنٍ (And your companion [Muhammad ﷺ] is not a

madman....81:22) This is rebuttal to the foolish criticism of the enemies who said that Muḥammad ﷺ is [God forbid!] insane.

وَلَقَدْ رَاٰهُ بِالْاُفُقِ الْمُبِيْنِ (And he did see him [Jibra'īl عليه السلام] on the clear horizon. ...81:23) In other words, Muḥammad saw Jibra'īl عليه السلام on a clear horizon. A similar statement occurs in Sūrah An-Najm as follows:

وَهُوَ بِالْاُفُقِ الْاَعْلٰى

while he was on the upper horizon....53:7)

The purpose of mentioning this is to show that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was well-acquainted with Jibra'īl عليه السلام, the angel of revelation. He had seen him in his original shape. Therefore, there can be no room for doubt in the veracity of revelation he brings to him.

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah At-Takwīr
Ends here

Sūrah Al-Infiṭār
(Cleaving)

This Sūrah is Makkī. and it has 19 verses.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 19

إِذَا السَّمَآءُ انفَطَرَتْ ﴿١﴾ وَإِذَا الْكَوَاكِبُ انتَثَرَتْ ﴿٢﴾ وَإِذَا الْبِحَارُ
فُجِّرَتْ ﴿٣﴾ وَإِذَا الْقُبُورُ بُعْثِرَتْ ﴿٤﴾ عَلِمَتْ نَفْسٌ مَّا قَدَّمَتْ وَأَخَّرَتْ
﴿٥﴾ يٰٓأَيُّهَا الْإِنسَانُ مَا غَرَّكَ بِرَبِّكَ الْكَرِيمِ ﴿٦﴾ الَّذِى خَلَقَكَ فَسَوّٰىكَ
فَعَدَلَكَ ﴿٧﴾ فِىٓ أَىِّ صُورَةٍ مَّا شَآءَ رَكَّبَكَ ﴿٨﴾ كَلَّا بَلْ تُكَذِّبُونَ
بِالدِّينِ ﴿٩﴾ وَإِنَّ عَلَيْكُمْ لَحٰفِظِينَ ﴿١٠﴾ كِرَامًا كٰتِبِينَ ﴿١١﴾ يَعْلَمُونَ
مَا تَفْعَلُونَ ﴿١٢﴾ إِنَّ الْأَبْرَارَ لَفِى نَعِيمٍ ﴿١٣﴾ وَإِنَّ الْفُجَّارَ لَفِى جَحِيمٍ
﴿١٤﴾ يَّصْلَوْنَهَا يَوْمَ الدِّينِ ﴿١٥﴾ وَمَا هُمْ عَنْهَا بِغَآئِبِينَ ﴿١٦﴾ وَمَآ
أَدْرٰىكَ مَا يَوْمُ الدِّينِ ﴿١٧﴾ ثُمَّ مَآ أَدْرٰىكَ مَا يَوْمُ الدِّينِ ﴿١٨﴾ يَوْمَ لَا
تَمْلِكُ نَفْسٌ لِّنَفْسٍ شَيْـًٔا وَالْأَمْرُ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِّلّٰهِ ﴿١٩﴾

When the sky will be cleft asunder, [1] and when the stars will disperse, [2] and when the seas will be burst forth, [3] and when the graves will be overturned, [4] then one will know what he sent ahead and what he left behind. [5] O man! What has deceived you about your Gracious Lord, [6] who created you, then perfected you, then brought you in due proportion? [7] He composed you in whichever form He willed. [8] Never! (i.e. one should never be heedless

towards him.) But you deny the Requital, [9] **while (appointed) over you there are watchers,** [10] **who are noble, writers (of the deeds),** [11] **who know whatever you do.** [12] **Surely the righteous will be in bliss,** [13] **and surely the sinners will be in Hell,** [14] **in which they will enter on the Day of Requital,** [15] **and they will not (be able to) keep away from it.** [16] **And what may let you know what the Day of Requital is?** [17] **Again, what may let you know what the Day of Requital is?** [18] **A Day when no one will have power to do any thing for another! And all matters, on that Day, will belong to Allah (alone).** [19]

Commentary

عَلِمَتْ نَفْسٌ مَّا قَدَّمَتْ وَاَخَّرَتْ (...then one will know what he sent ahead and what he left behind....82:5) In the preceding verses [1-4] of the Sūrah, Allah depicts the scene of the Day of Judgement that when the sky splits, the stars fall, the seas are poured forth [ie the fresh and salt water bodies will merge to form one mass of water] and the graves are overturned [ie corpses will emerge from their graves], every soul shall come to know what it had sent ahead and what it had left behind. The phrase 'what he sent ahead' means the good or evil act which he has done in his life; and the phrase 'what he left behind' means what he failed to do or refrained from doing. It is also possible that 'what he sent ahead' refers to the acts he has done himself, and 'what he left behind' refers to the acts one has not done himself, but he has laid down a custom in the society. The Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said: "If anyone establishes a good tradition in Islam, he will have a reward for it and the equivalent of the rewards of those who act upon it after him, without theirs being diminished in any respect; but he who establishes a bad custom in Islam will bear the responsibility of it and the responsibility of those who act upon it after him, without theirs being diminished in any respect." This subject was dealt with earlier under the following verse: يُنَبَّؤُ الْاِنْسَانُ يَوْمَئِذٍ بِمَا قَدَّمَ وَاَخَّرَ 'Man will be informed of what he sent ahead and what he left behind. [53:13]'

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الْاِنْسَانُ مَا غَرَّكَ (O man! What has deceived you about your Gracious Lord...82:6) The opening of the Sūrah mentions the violent events that will take place at the end of this worldly life, and the current set of verses reminds us of the inceptive stages of our creation. The sum total of the verses purport to say that if man had considered carefully, he would have believed in Allah and His Messenger, and he would not have deviated a

hair's breadth from Divine injunctions, but he slumped into heedlessness and forgetfulness. In the present verse, he is reprimanded by a rhetorical question and by means of gentle remonstrance as to what has lured him away from His Gracious Lord, and led him to disobedience, despite he knows his beginning, and he knows his end.

The verse further goes on to remind man of the inceptive stages of his creation. First, it says: خَلَقَکَ فَسَوّٰىکَ (who created you, then perfected you, ...82:7). The sense is that not only did Allah create man, but He also perfected his creation and proportioned his body, limbs and organs. Every limb and organ is well placed. The body, height, length and breadth of every limb are kept in harmony, symmetry and balance. Any deviation from the symmetrical construction of the human body, the organs will become dysfunctional. Then the verse says: فَعَدَلَکَ (...then brought you in due proportion?...82:7). Man is granted such symmetry, harmony and balance that no other animal in the world is granted to that degree. Along with physical and physiological symmetry and harmony, he has been granted well-balanced disposition, despite the fact that man is made up of opposing humours - blood, phlegm, black bile and yellow bile. Some are hot and others are cold, and yet the perfect wisdom of Allah prepared a well-balanced disposition. Thereafter a third characteristic is mentioned as follows:

فِیْٓ اَیِّ صُوْرَۃٍ مَّاشَآءَ رَکَّبَکَ (He composed you in whichever form He willed....82:8). This is to indicate that since the basic structure of all human beings is the same, it was expected that the zillions of members of the human society would have shared the same shape, size and features, but the perfect mastery and the wonderful acumen of the Supreme Creator has created them so differently that each one of them has its own unique features that make him clearly distinct from all others, and no one is confused with another.

Having stated the creative acumen of the Great Creator, the verse states: یٰاَیُّهَا الْاِنْسَانُ مَا غَرَّکَ بِرَبِّکَ الْکَرِیْمِ (O man! What has deceived you about your Gracious Lord,...82:6). Allah has endowed man with such natural faculties and abilities that every limb and every joint of his body was enough to remind him of His Creator, and to make him obedient. But he is lured away from his gracious Lord, has forgotten Him and disobeyed Him. The question is: How did he forget his Lord, how did he become

heedless of Him, and how is he lured away from his Lord? On this occasion, the adjective *karīm* (Gracious) used for the 'Lord' points to the answer. The reason for such an ungrateful attitude is that Allah is Gracious and does not punish man immediately after his committing a sin. Rather, his sustenance, welfare and well-being, and worldly comforts [and pleasures] are not curtailed. He misinterprets Allah's magnanimity, and thus falls into deception. If man were to think rationally, he would adopt a grateful attitude and obedient behaviour, rather than adopting an ungrateful attitude and impudent behaviour. Sayyidnā Ḥasan Al-Baṣrī رحمه الله تعالىٰ says:

كم منْ مغرور تحت السّتر وهو لا يشعر

'How many humans are there whose faults are put [by Allah] under cover, (i.e. He did not disgrace them), yet they do not appreciate (and are deluded by His grace.'

إِنَّ الْأَبْرَارَ لَفِي نَعِيمٍ وَّإِنَّ الْفُجَّارَ لَفِي جَحِيمٍ (Surely the righteous will be in bliss, and surely the sinners will be in Hell,...82:13-14) These two statements are connected with verse [5] above: عَلِمَتْ نَفْسٌ مَّا قَدَّمَتْ وَأَخَّرَتْ 'then one will know what he sent ahead and what he left behind. [5]'

The verse informs us that each person, on the Day of Reckoning, will know what he has done, and what will be the consequences of his deeds. The present verse says that the righteous will be in perfect bliss, while the sinners will be in a Blazing Fire of Hell.

وَمَاهُمْ عَنْهَا بِغَآئِبِيْنَ (and they will not [be able to] keep away from it...82:16) The inmates of Hell will never be able to get away from it, because the torment will be eternal, as the concluding verse of the Surah asserts: يوم لَاتَمْلِكُ نَفْسٌ لِّنَفْسٍ شَيْئًا (A Day when no one [with his own free will in the Plain of Gathering] will have power to do any thing for another!). This does not negate intercession, because that will not happen with one's own free will, unless Allah grants permission to someone to intercede on someone's behalf, and then accepts the intercession. And all matters, on that Day, will belong to Allah (alone). [19]' Allah knows best!

Alhamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Infiṭār
Ends here

Sūrah At-Taṭfīf

(Curtailing the Rights)

Sūrah At-Taṭfīf was revealed in Makkah It has 36 Verses and 1 Section.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 36

وَيْلٌ لِّلْمُطَفِّفِيْنَ ﴿١﴾ الَّذِيْنَ اِذَا اكْتَالُوْا عَلَى النَّاسِ يَسْتَوْفُوْنَ ﴿٢﴾
وَاِذَا كَالُوْهُمْ اَوْ وَّزَنُوْهُمْ يُخْسِرُوْنَ ﴿٣﴾ اَلَا يَظُنُّ اُولٰٓئِكَ اَنَّهُمْ
مَّبْعُوْثُوْنَ ﴿٤﴾ لِيَوْمٍ عَظِيْمٍ ﴿٥﴾ يَّوْمَ يَقُوْمُ النَّاسُ لِرَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٦﴾
كَلَّآ اِنَّ كِتٰبَ الْفُجَّارِ لَفِيْ سِجِّيْنٍ ﴿٧﴾ وَمَآ اَدْرٰىكَ مَاسِجِّيْنٌ ﴿٨﴾
كِتٰبٌ مَّرْقُوْمٌ ﴿٩﴾ وَيْلٌ يَّوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُكَذِّبِيْنَ ﴿١٠﴾ الَّذِيْنَ يُكَذِّبُوْنَ
بِيَوْمِ الدِّيْنِ ﴿١١﴾ وَمَا يُكَذِّبُ بِهٖٓ اِلَّا كُلُّ مُعْتَدٍ اَثِيْمٍ ﴿١٢﴾ اِذَا تُتْلٰى
عَلَيْهِ اٰيٰتُنَا قَالَ اَسَاطِيْرُ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ ﴿١٣﴾ كَلَّا بَلْ سكتة رَانَ عَلٰى قُلُوْبِهِمْ
مَّاكَانُوْا يَكْسِبُوْنَ ﴿١٤﴾ كَلَّآ اِنَّهُمْ عَنْ رَّبِّهِمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ لَّمَحْجُوْبُوْنَ
﴿١٥﴾ ثُمَّ اِنَّهُمْ لَصَالُوا الْجَحِيْمِ ﴿١٦﴾ ثُمَّ يُقَالُ هٰذَا الَّذِيْ كُنْتُمْ بِهٖ
تُكَذِّبُوْنَ ﴿١٧﴾ كَلَّآ اِنَّ كِتٰبَ الْاَبْرَارِ لَفِيْ عِلِّيِّيْنَ ﴿١٨﴾ وَمَآ اَدْرٰىكَ
مَاعِلِّيُّوْنَ ﴿١٩﴾ كِتٰبٌ مَّرْقُوْمٌ ﴿٢٠﴾ يَّشْهَدُهُ الْمُقَرَّبُوْنَ ﴿٢١﴾ اِنَّ
الْاَبْرَارَ لَفِيْ نَعِيْمٍ ﴿٢٢﴾ عَلَى الْاَرَآئِكِ يَنْظُرُوْنَ ﴿٢٣﴾ تَعْرِفُ فِيْ

وُجُوهِهِمْ نَضْرَةَ النَّعِيمِ ﴿٢٤﴾ يُسْقَوْنَ مِنْ رَّحِيقٍ مَّخْتُومٍ ﴿٢٥﴾
خِتٰمُهٗ مِسْكٌ ۚ وَفِيْ ذٰلِكَ فَلْيَتَنَافَسِ الْمُتَنٰفِسُوْنَ ﴿٢٦﴾ وَمِزَاجُهٗ مِنْ
تَسْنِيْمٍ ﴿٢٧﴾ عَيْنًا يَّشْرَبُ بِهَا الْمُقَرَّبُوْنَ ﴿٢٨﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اَجْرَمُوْا
كَانُوْا مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا يَضْحَكُوْنَ ﴿٢٩﴾ وَاِذَا مَرُّوْا بِهِمْ يَتَغَامَزُوْنَ
﴿٣٠﴾ وَاِذَا انْقَلَبُوْٓا اِلٰٓى اَهْلِهِمُ انْقَلَبُوْا فَكِهِيْنَ ﴿٣١﴾ وَ اِذَا رَاَوْهُمْ
قَالُوْٓا اِنَّ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ لَضَآلُّوْنَ ﴿٣٢﴾ وَمَآ اُرْسِلُوْا عَلَيْهِمْ حٰفِظِيْنَ ﴿٣٣﴾
فَالْيَوْمَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مِنَ الْكُفَّارِ يَضْحَكُوْنَ ﴿٣٤﴾ عَلَى الْاَرَآئِكِ
يَنْظُرُوْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾ هَلْ ثُوِّبَ الْكُفَّارُ مَا كَانُوْا يَفْعَلُوْنَ ﴿٣٦﴾

Woe to the curtailers [1] who, when they measure something to receive from people, take it in full, [2] and when they measure or weigh something to give it to them, give less than due. [3] Do they not think that they have to be raised up [4] on a Great Day, [5] the Day when all the people will stand before the Lord of the worlds? [6] Never! (i.e. they should never forget that Day.) Indeed the Record of Deeds of the sinners is in *sijjīn*. [7] And what may let you know what *sijjīn* is? [8] A register, inscribed! [9] Woe that day to the deniers, [10] who deny the Day of Requital! [11] And none denies it but every sinful transgressor. [12] When Our verses are recited to him, he says, "(These are) tales of the ancients." [13] No! But that which they used to commit has covered their hearts with rust. [14] No! Indeed they will be screened off from their Lord on that Day. [15] Then they will have to enter the Hell. [16] Then it will be said, "This is what you used to deny." [17]

No! The record of deeds of the righteous is in *'illiyyūn*. [18] And what may let you know what *'illiyyūn* is? [19] A register inscribed, [20] attended by those (angels) who are blessed with nearness to Allah! [21] Indeed the righteous will be in absolute bliss. [22] While (sitting) on thrones, they will be watching (the scenes of Paradise). [23] You will recognize on their faces the glamour of bliss. [24] They will be served with a pure sealed wine to drink, [25] the seal of which will be of musk. And in aspiring for this, the competitors should

compete. [26] **and it will be blended with (a drink from) Tasnīm,** [27] **a spring from which will drink those who are blessed with nearness.** [28]

Indeed those who were guilty used to laugh at those who believed, [29] **and when they passed by them, they used to wink at one another,** [30] **and when they went back to their family, they went enjoying their mockery,** [31] **and when they saw them, they said, "Surely these are the ones who have gone astray"** [32] **while they were not sent as watchmen over them.** [33] **So, today those who believed will laugh at the disbelievers.** [34] **While (sitting) on thrones, they will be seeing** [35] **whether the disbelievers have been paid back for what they used to do.** [36]

Commentary

According to Sayyidnā ʻAbdullāh Ibn Masʻūd ﷺ, Sūrah Taṭfīf was revealed in Makkah. Therefore, most of the copies of the Qur'ān refer to it as the Makkī Sūrah. According to Sayyidnā Ibn ʻAbbās, Qatādah, Muqātil and Ḍaḥḥāk ﷺ, it is a Madanī Sūrah, but only about eight verses are Makkī. Imām Nasā'ī transmits a narrative from Sayyidnā Ibn ʻAbbās ﷺ that when the Holy Prophet ﷺ arrived in Madīnah, the people of Madīnah whose most transactions were based on measurements used to cheat and short measure. For this reason, Allah revealed the Sūrah. It is reported from Sayyidnā Ibn ʻAbbās ﷺ that this is the first Sūrah that was revealed as soon as the Holy Prophet ﷺ arrived at Madīnah. The reason is that it was a common practice in Madinah that the people used to be very strict in measuring when they had to receive something from others, but when they sold something, they used to cheat the buyers. After the revelation of this Sūrah, all of them abandoned this bad custom totally, and mended themselves in a way that they are now well-known in their honesty in weighing and measuring. (Reported by Ḥākim, Nasā'ī, and Ibn Mājah, with sound chain of narrators)

وَيۡلٌ لِّلۡمُطَفِّفِينَ (Woe to the curtailers...83:1) The word *muṭaffifīn* 'those who give short measure or weight' is derived from *Taṭfīf* 'to give short measure or short weight'. The Qur'ānic expression 'Woe to the curtailers' is indicative of the injunction that this practice is prohibited.

Taṭfīf has a Wider Scope

The Qur'ān and Sunnah have prohibited *Taṭfīf* which primarily

signifies 'giving short measure and weight', because generally all transactions are carried out by things that can be measured or weighed. But the basic purpose of weighing or measuring is none else but to give a person what he deserves. It, therefore, indicates that the rule is not restricted to weights and measures only, but it includes all other means through which the rights of someone are evaluated, assessed or appraised. It is obligatory that all rights are given to the deserving persons in full, whether they are assessed by weight, measure, number or any other means. In terms of this concept of *Taṭfīf*, it is prohibited to give to any person less than his due.

It is recorded in Muwāṭṭā' of Imām Mālik that Sayyidnā 'Umar Ibn-ul-Khaṭṭāb ﷺ saw a person curtailing [cutting short] his bowing and prostration postures in prayers, he said to him:

لَقَدْ طَفَّفْتَ

'You have committed *Taṭfīf* (curtailed the right) of Allah.'

Having cited this statement of Sayyidnā 'Umar Ibn-ul-Khaṭṭāb ﷺ, Imām Mālik formulates the following postulate:

لكلّ شيءٍ وفاء وتطفيف

'Everything has a full due and a short measure.'

This postulate can apply even to prayers, ablution, cleanliness and all the rights of Allah and the ways of worship. If someone is deficient in fulfilling these rights of Allah, he is guilty of *Taṭfīf*. Similarly if one cuts short human rights [by failing to perform duties imposed upon him or keeping to the terms of agreement duly], he is covered by the rule laid down by the verse regarding *Taṭfīf*. For example, if an employee has entered into a contract with the employer that he shall work for specified time, it is imperative for him to work for the stipulated hours. If he curtails the hours, he is guilty of *Taṭfīf*. Generally, people - even scholars - are lax in this matter. They do not regard curtailment of their obligations relating to service or labour as sin. May Allah protect us from it!

ḤADĪTH: Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ has narrated that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said:

خمس بخمس

'There are five sins, for which there are five punishments.'

[1] He who breaks his covenant, Allah will cause his enemy to subdue him.

[2] The nation that abandons the sacred laws of Allah, and decides cases according to other laws, poverty will prevail commonly among them.

[3] The nation among whom promiscuity and *zinā* (fornication or adultery) becomes rampant, Allah will punish them with epidemics and endemic diseases.

[4] Those who curtail measures and weights, Allah will cause famine to break out amongst them. and

[5] Those who fail to pay their *Zakāh*, Allah will withhold rain from them.

[Cited by Qurṭubī who said that Al-Bazzār has narrated the over-all sense of this *ḥadīth*, though with different words; and Mālik Ibn Anas has also narrated it from Ibn 'Umar].

Ṭabarānī narrates from Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: "When it becomes rampant in a community to steal from the spoils of war, Allah will cast terror of enemies into their hearts; when usury becomes a common practice in a community, death becomes a frequent occurrence in that society; a community that gives short measure and weight, Allah cuts off their sustenance; those who decide against the truth, murder becomes common among them; and those who betray their agreement, Allah causes their enemies to prevail upon them." [Mālik has also transmitted it, but as a saying of Ibn 'Abbās. See Maẓharī].

Various Forms of Poverty, Famine and Curtailment of Sustenance

The Ḥadīth (cited above) states that people's 'sustenance' may be Cut Off as a punishment to short measuring: This can take different forms. They may be completely deprived of their sustenance; or sustenance may be available, but they may not be able to eat or use it, as it commonly happens nowadays in the case of many diseases. Likewise, 'famine' might take different forms: Items of necessity might be lacking; or they might be

available abundantly, but it might be difficult to purchase them, because the prices are unbearably exorbitant, as is experienced nowadays. The Ḥadīth says that in certain situations *faqr* will prevail in the society. *Faqr* is generally translated as 'poverty', but its real meaning in Arabic is 'being in need' or 'being dependent on someone'. Keeping this meaning in view, the situation of *faqr* pointed out in the Ḥadīth is not confined to lack of money and other necessary things, but it also includes a situation where people depend on others in their business and other necessities of life. The more a person is in need of others, the greater is his degree of *faqr*. Let us consider the conditions of the present age. Man is bound by the most complicated laws that restrict his living, his movement and his intentions, so that he is unable to eat what he wants to eat, or utter what he wants to utter. He possesses money, but he is not free to buy of his choice from where he wants to. He is not free to undertake a journey [or to travel] as and when he wants to. He is bound so much by these restrictive laws that he has no choice but to follow the official procedure for which he has to flatter the officials [at every level] including the peons. Without this, life is difficult. This entire system of dependence on others is a part of *faqr*. This elaborate explanation should dispel the doubts that might apparently arise regarding the statement of the Ḥadīth.

Sijjīn and *'illiyīn*

كَلَّآ اِنَّ كِتٰبَ الْفُجَّارِ لَفِىْ سِجِّيْنٍ (Never! [i.e. they should never forget that Day.] Indeed the Record of Deeds of the sinners is in *sijjīn*. [83:7]' The word *sijjīn* is derived from *sajana* which means to 'imprison in a narrow place'. According to Qāmūs, the word *sijjīn* means 'eternal imprisonment'. Traditions indicate that *sijjīn* is a special place where the souls of the non-believers are kept, and in the same place, the Record of the evil deeds of every wicked person is kept separately. It is also possible that in this there is a consolidated book in which the deeds of all the non-believers of the world are recorded.

Where is this place? According to a lengthy *ḥadīth* reported by Sayyidnā Bara' Ibn 'Azib ﵁, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said that *sijjīn* is beneath the seventh level of the earth, and *'illiyīn* is in the seventh heaven beneath the Divine Throne. [Baghawī, and Aḥmad etc., as quoted by Maẓharī]. According to certain Traditions, *sijjīn* is the seventh earth which

contains the souls of the disbelievers, and *'illiyīn* is the seventh heaven which contains the souls of the believers.

The Locale of Paradise and Hell

Baihaqī has recorded a narration from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Salām ؓ that Paradise is in the heaven, and Hell is in the earth. Ibn Jarīr cites in his commentary on the authority of Sayyidnā Mu'adh Ibn Jabal ؓ a narrative of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, according to which he was asked about the meaning of the following verse:

وَجِايْٓءَ يَوْمَئِذٍ بِجَهَنَّمَ

'and Jahannam (Hell), on that day, will be brought forward, [89:23]'

The Holy Prophet ﷺ was asked from where the Hell be brought forward? He replied: "From the seventh earth." These narratives indicate that Hell will be brought forward from the seventh earth. It will suddenly flare up there, and all the oceans will join its blazing fire, and come forward in full view of all. This interpretation is reconcilable with narratives that define *sijjīn* as the name of a place in Hell. [Maẓharī]. And Allah knows best!

كِتٰبٌ مَّرْقُوْمٌ (A register inscribed!...83:9) The word *marqūm* (translated above as 'inscribed') signifies here *makhtūm* meaning 'sealed'. Imām Baghawī and Ibn Kathīr say that this statement is not the interpretation of *sijjīn*, but rather the explication of a phrase before that, namely:

كِتٰبَ الْفُجَّارِ

'Indeed the record of deeds of the sinners is in *sijjīn*. [83:7]'

It is a book inscribed and sealed. No one can add anything to it, nor can anyone remove anything from it, nor is any alteration possible in it. The place where it will be kept for safe-custody is called *sijjīn*, and it is the place where the souls of the wicked unbelievers are gathered.

كَلَّا بَلْ سكتہ رَانَ عَلٰى قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَّاكَانُوْا يَكْسِبُوْنَ (No! But that which they used to commit has covered their hearts with rust...83:14). The word *rāna* is derived from *rain* and it means 'rust' or 'dust' or 'filth'. In other words, the rust of committing many sins has covered up their hearts. Just as rust consumes the iron, and turns it into dust, in the same way, the rust of

sins has destroyed their innate capacity to distinguish right from wrong. Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ narrates that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: "Surely, when the servant commits a sin, a black dot appears on his heart. If he repents from it, his heart is polished clean. However, if he increases in the sin, the blackness continues to increase. That is the statement of Allah: كَلَّا بَلْ سكه رَانَ عَلٰى قُلُوْبِهِمْ 'No! But that which they used to commit has covered their hearts with rust. [83:14]'." [Baghawī, Aḥmad, Tirmidhī, Nasā'ī, Ibn Mājah, Ibn Ḥibbān and al-Ḥākim have recorded it, and Tirmidhī has rated it as sahih, asquoted by Maẓharī]. The particle *kallā*, in Arabic grammar, is called *ḥarf-ur-rad'* 'particle of disapproval, particle of repelling or averting'. In the preceding verses, mention was made of the attitude of the unbelievers towards the Qur'ānic verses, in that when they are recited to them, they say, "(These are) tales of the ancients." [13]. The present verse uses *kallā* to repel the false idea of the ignoramus [that Qur'ān is the tale of the ancients]. In fact, [the heavy] load of their sins have eclipsed the light and innate capacity to separate the right and the wrong. This capacity is innate and inborn in man. The verse purports to say that their rejection is not based on any logical or intellectual evidence, but their hearts have become blind, as a result they are unable to see the good and the bad.

اِنَّهُمْ عَنْ رَّبِّهِمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ لَّمَحْجُوْبُوْنَ (No! Indeed they will be screened off from their Lord on that Day...83:15). This will be their punishment for their failure to recognise Allah in the world. The unbelievers will remain deprived of seeing their Lord on the Day of Judgement, and a screen will fall between them and their Lord. Imāms Shāfi'ī and Mālik said that in this verse is a proof that the believers and friends of Allah will be able to see Him. Otherwise, the wording that the unbelievers will be screened off from their Lord on that Day will have no real sense.

Special Note

According to some of the learned predecessors, this verse is a proof that man, by virtue of his innate nature, is forced to love Allah. Therefore, all unbelievers in the world, no matter how deeply they are steeped in their form of disbelief or hold false beliefs regarding the [Supreme] Being and attributes of Allah, there is a common denominator in their hearts. They love, respect and honour Allah. They worship Him according to their belief system in quest of Him and His pleasure. Because they have taken the wrong road, they are unable to reach their

destination, but they are, nonetheless, in search of the same destination of truth. If they did not have the desire to see their Lord, it would not have been said, in their punishment, that they will remain deprived of seeing Allah, because if a person is not desirous [rather he is hateful] of seeing Him, it would be no punishment for him.

كَلَّا إِنَّ كِتٰبَ الْأَبْرَارِ لَفِىْ عِلِّيِّيْنَ (No! The record of deeds of the righteous is in *'illiyyūn*....83:18). According to some authorities, *'illiyyūn* is the plural of *'uluww* and it signifies the 'highest point'. According to Farrā', this is the name of a place. It is not a plural, but on the measure of plural. When analysing the word *sijjīn* in the foregoing paragraphs, the traceable Tradition of Sayyidnā Barā' Ibn 'Āzib ﵁ was cited to prove that *'illiyyin* is a place on the seventh heaven beneath the Divine Throne where the souls of the believers and their registers of deeds are kept. The phrase: كِتٰبٌ مَّرْقُوْمٌ (A register inscribed...83:20) is not the interpretation of *'illiyyin*, but rather an explication their records of deeds, as in the verse that precedes it:

يَّشْهَدُهُ الْمُقَرَّبُوْنَ (...attended by those [angels] who are blessed with nearness to Allah!...83:21) The verb *yash-hadu* is derived from *shuhūd* which means 'to attend, to witness, to be present, to observe'. The verse purports to say that the record of deeds of the righteous will be in the custody of angels who are blessed with nearness to Allah. [Qurṭubī]. If *shuhūd* is taken in the sense of 'being present', then the attached pronoun will refer to *'illiyyīn* instead of *kitāb* or 'register' (and 'those who are blessed with nearness to Allah' will refer to the righteous people, and not to the angels), and the verse in that case will mean: 'The souls of those blessed with nearness to Allah will be in the place called *'illiyyīn*' because that is the abode of their souls, as *sijjīn* is the abode of the unbelievers. The proof of this is the narrative of 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ﵁ recorded in Muslim in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that the souls of the martyrs are in the crops of green birds, enjoying the rivers and gardens of Paradise, and their abode will be the lamps suspended from [the Divine] Throne. This indicates that the souls of the martyrs will be under the Divine Throne, and will be able to stroll in Paradise. In Sūrah Yāsīn, we came across the incident of Ḥabīb Najjār, where it is stated that:

قِيْلَ ادْخُلِ الْجَنَّةَ قَالَ يٰلَيْتَ قَوْمِىْ يَعْلَمُوْنَ بِمَا غَفَرَلِىْ رَبِّىْ

'He was told, "Enter the Garden!" He said, "If my people only knew how my Lord has forgiven me [36:26]"'

This indicates that no sooner he passed away than he entered Paradise. Similarly, some Prophetic narratives also show that the souls of the believers are in Paradise. The sum total of these verses and narratives is that the abode of all the souls is in the seventh heaven beneath the Divine Throne. This is the locale of Paradise, and the souls have been given freedom of movement within the Paradise. Here reference has been made particularly to 'those souls who are blessed with nearness to Allah' because of the most exalted ranks they will enjoy. [This does not, however, mean that souls at the lower ranks will not be in this abode.] In fact, this will be the abode of the souls of all the believers as is narrated by Sayyidnā Ka'b Ibn Mālik ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

انما نسمة المؤمن طائر يعلّق فی شجر الجنّة حتّٰی ترجع الٰی جسده يوم القيٰمة.

(رواه مالک والنّسائی بسند صحيح)

'The soul of a believer is a bird that will be hanging in the tree of Paradise, until it returns to its body on the Day of Judgement.' [Mālik and Nasā'ī through an authentic chain of narrators. A Tradition of Umm Hānī' to the same effect is recorded in Musnad of Aḥmad and in Ṭabarānī. See Maẓharī].

The Abode of Human Souls After Death

What is the abode of human souls after death? In answer to this question, reports seem apparently different. Narratives were cited in explanation of *sijjīn* and *'illiyyūn* above which showed that the souls of the unbelievers are in *sijjīn* which is beneath the seventh earth, and the souls of the believers are in *'illiyyūn* which is in the seventh heaven beneath the Divine Throne. Some traditions indicate that the souls of the unbelievers will be in Hell, and the souls of the believers will be in Paradise. Some narratives, like the lengthy narrative of Barā' Ibn 'Āzib, suggest that the souls of all the deceased, believers and non-believers, will be in the graves. When the angels carry the soul of a believer to the sky, Allah says: 'Keep the record of deeds of this servant of mine in *'illiyyūn* and return him to the earth, because I have created him from earth, and to it I shall return him, and from it I shall resurrect him.' Complying with this command, the angels return his soul to the grave. Likewise, the soul

of the non-believer is carried to the sky, but the doors are not opened for him. The angels will be commanded to return the soul to its grave. Imām 'Abdul Barr prefers this narrative and believes that the souls of all [believers and non-believers] remain in their graves. As for the first two sets of traditions, there is no contradiction because, carefully considered, *'illiyyūn* is in the seventh heaven beneath the Divine Throne, and this is exactly the locale of Paradise, as is clear from the Qur'ānic text:

عِندَ سِدْرَةِ الْمُنتَهٰى عِندَهَا جَنَّةُ الْمَأْوٰى

'by sidrat-ul-muntaha (the lot-tree in the upper realm), near which there is Jannat-ul-ma'wa (the Paradise of Abode), [53:14-15]'

This clearly states that Paradise is near the lot-tree in the upper realm, and *aḥādīth* confirm that the lot-tree is in the seventh heaven. Thus it may be argued that since the abode of the souls is *'illiyyūn*, Paradise must be near it. These souls will stroll in and along the Gardens of Paradise. Therefore, their abode may be said to be Paradise.

Similarly, the souls of the unbelievers remain in *sijjīn* which is situated beneath the seventh earth. It is also proved by ahadith that Hell is beneath the seventh earth, and the dwellers of *sijjīn* will receive the heat and torture of the Hell. Therefore, it would be correct to say that their abode is in Hell.

However, the hadith that informs us that the souls of the unbelievers will remain in the graves, is apparently contradictory to the preceding two narratives. The Baihaqī of his time, Qāḍī Thanā'ullah Pānī Patī, in his Tafsīr Maẓharī, has reconciled them thus: It is not far-fetched to assume that *'illiyyūn* and *sijjīn* are the real abodes of the souls, but they have a special connection with their graves. None, besides Allah, knows the actual nature of the connection. However, there is the sun and the moon in the sky, but their rays fall on the earth and provide to it light and heat. Similarly, the souls of *'illiyyūn* and *sijjīn* may have some spiritual connection with the graves. The scholarly view of Qāḍī Thanā'ullah Pānī Patī has just been discussed in Sūrah Nāzi'āt, the sum total of which is as follows: There are two types of soul: The one is a subtle substance that permeates the human body. Despite being a material substance, it is too subtle to be visible, and its other name is *nafs*. The other soul is abstract and non-material, pure essence. The pure, abstract and non-material soul

is the life of the first soul, and therefore it is called the 'soul of soul'. Both the categories of souls are connected to human body, but the first type of soul resides in the human body. When the soul leaves the body, death occurs. The second type of soul is connected with the body more closely than the first type, but Allah alone knows the nature of the connection. The first soul, after death, is taken to the heaven, and then returned to the grave. Grave is its abode where it is rewarded and punished. The abstract soul remains in *'illiyyūn* or *sijjīn* [as the case might be]. Thus we have several views on the issue. The final destination of souls is Paradise or *'illiyyūn*, or its opposite Hell or *sijjīn*. The abode of the abstract souls is *'illiyyūn* or *sijjīn*. The souls of the first type, the *nafs*, or the body, remains in the grave after death. And Allah knows best!

وَفِیْ ذٰلِکَ فَلْیَتَنَافَسِ الْمُتَنٰفِسُوْنَ (and in aspiring for this, the competitors should compete....83:26) The word *tanāfus* means for a few people 'to try or strive to gain some desirable things before others can get them.' Having mentioned the bounties of Paradise, the attention of heedless people are drawn to the fact that they are thinking that certain material things are desirable, and therefore they are competing one another to obtain them before others. They are told that the material blessings [after which they are running] are perishable. They should not be made the ultimate goal of life, nor the object of racing. Man should be content with what he has for the comfort of the fleeting period of this life. If he loses the means, it should not hurt him much, because it is not a loss that cannot be recovered. However, people with aspiration should aspire, race and compete for the blessings of Paradise that are perfect and eternal in every possible dimension. How aptly the late poet Akbar has put it:

یہ کہاں کا فسانہ ہے سود و زیاں، جو گیا سو گیا جو ملا سو ملا
کہو دل سے فرصت عمر ہے کم، جو دِلا تو خدا ہی کی یاد دِلا

'Gain and loss - what fiction is this?
What is lost is lost, what is gained is gained
Say to the mind, the life is little.
If you wish to remind me, remind me of God.'

اِنَّ الَّذِیْنَ اَجْرَمُوْا کَانُوْا مِنَ الَّذِیْنَ اٰمَنُوْا یَضْحَکُوْنَ (Indeed those who were guilty used to laugh at those who believed, 83:29). In these verses, Allah depicts fully the attitudes of the followers of falsehood [non-believers] towards the

upholders of truth [the believers]. The non-believers used to laugh at the believers in the worldly life. In other words, they would mock at them and despise them. Whenever they would pass by the believers, they would wink at each other in contempt of them. When the non-believers returned home, they would take great pleasure in describing the mocking manner in which they treated the poor believers, saying that Muḥammad has misled the simpletons.

If we review the situation today, [it is no better.] People whose minds are contaminated with contemporary secular education, are careless about the religion and the Hereafter. Belief in Allah and the Holy Prophet ﷺ is nominal. They treat the [religious] scholars and righteous people exactly in the same manner as the non-believers used to treat the Companions in the days of the Holy Prophet ﷺ]. May Allah salvage the Muslims from this painful scourge. There is much solace in this verse for the righteous believers. Never bother about their laughter and mockery. How well a poet puts it:

ہنسے جانے سے جب تک ہم ڈریں گے
زمانہ ہم پہ ہنستا ہی رہے گا

'So long as we fear people's laughter [at us],
the people will continue laughing at us'

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah At-Taṭfīf
Ends here

Sūrah Al-Inshiqāq
(The Splitting)

This Sūrah is Makkī, and it has 25 verses and 1 section.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 25

اِذَا السَّمَآءُ انْشَقَّتْ ﴿۱﴾ وَاَذِنَتْ لِرَبِّهَا وَحُقَّتْ ﴿۲﴾ وَاِذَا الْاَرْضُ
مُدَّتْ ﴿۳﴾ وَاَلْقَتْ مَافِيْهَا وَتَخَلَّتْ ﴿۴﴾ وَاَذِنَتْ لِرَبِّهَا وَحُقَّتْ
﴿۵﴾ يٰٓاَيُّهَا الْاِنْسَانُ اِنَّكَ كَادِحٌ اِلٰى رَبِّكَ كَدْحًا فَمُلٰقِيْهِ ﴿۶﴾ فَاَمَّا
مَنْ اُوْتِيَ كِتٰبَهٗ بِيَمِيْنِهٖ ﴿۷﴾ فَسَوْفَ يُحَاسَبُ حِسَابًا يَّسِيْرًا ﴿۸﴾
وَّيَنْقَلِبُ اِلٰٓى اَهْلِهٖ مَسْرُوْرًا ﴿۹﴾ وَاَمَّا مَنْ اُوْتِيَ كِتٰبَهٗ وَرَآءَ ظَهْرِهٖ
﴿۱۰﴾ فَسَوْفَ يَدْعُوْا ثُبُوْرًا ﴿۱۱﴾ وَّيَصْلٰى سَعِيْرًا ﴿۱۲﴾ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ فِيْٓ
اَهْلِهٖ مَسْرُوْرًا ﴿۱۳﴾ اِنَّهٗ ظَنَّ اَنْ لَّنْ يَّحُوْرَ ﴿۱۴﴾ بَلٰٓى اِنَّ رَبَّهٗ كَانَ بِهٖ
بَصِيْرًا ﴿۱۵﴾ فَلَآ اُقْسِمُ بِالشَّفَقِ ﴿۱۶﴾ وَالَّيْلِ وَمَا وَسَقَ ﴿۱۷﴾
وَالْقَمَرِ اِذَا اتَّسَقَ ﴿۱۸﴾ لَتَرْكَبُنَّ طَبَقًا عَنْ طَبَقٍ ﴿۱۹﴾ فَمَالَهُمْ لَا
يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿۲۰﴾ وَاِذَا قُرِئَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقُرْاٰنُ لَايَسْجُدُوْنَ ﴿۲۱﴾ السجدة بَلِ الَّذِيْنَ
كَفَرُوْا يُكَذِّبُوْنَ ﴿۲۲﴾ وَاللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا يُوْعُوْنَ ﴿۲۳﴾ فَبَشِّرْهُمْ
بِعَذَابٍ اَلِيْمٍ ﴿۲۴﴾ اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ لَهُمْ اَجْرٌ غَيْرُ
مَمْنُوْنٍ ﴿۲۵﴾

When the sky will split apart, [1] **and will listen to (the command of) its Lord, and it ought to,** [2] **and when the earth will be stretched (to give room to more people),** [3] **and it will throw up whatever it contains, and will become empty,** [4] **and will listen to (the command of) its Lord, and it ought to, (then man will see the consequences of his deeds.)** [5] **O man, you have to work hard constantly to reach your Lord, then you have to meet Him.** [6] **So, as for him whose book (of deeds) will be given to him in his right hand,** [7] **he will be called to account in an easy manner,** [8] **and he will go back to his people joyfully.** [9] **As for the one whose book (of deeds) will be given to him from his back side,** [10] **he will pray for death,** [11] **and will enter the blazing fire.** [12] **He had been joyful among his people.** [13] **He thought he would never revert (to Allah).** [14] **Why not? Indeed his Lord was watchful over him.** [15] **So, I swear by the twilight (after sunset),** [16] **and by the night and what it envelops,** [17] **and by the moon when it develops at the full,** [18] **you shall certainly ascend from stage to stage.** [19] **So, what has happened to them that they do not believe,** [20] **and when the Qur'ān is recited to them, they do not offer *sajdah* (prostration)?** [21] **Rather, those who disbelieve deny (the truth).** [22] **And Allah is most aware of what they store.** [23] **So give him the 'good news' of a painful punishment,** [24] **but those who believed and did righteous deeds, for them there is a reward that will never be interrupted.** [25]

Commentary

The present Sūrah depicts the conditions that will prevail on the Day of Judgement, such as reckoning and accountability, reward of good and torment of evil. The heedless man is asked to look into himself and his environs, which will lead him to believe in Allah and the Qur'ān. [The powerful opening of the Sūrah sketches some of the scenes of universal upheaval]. First, it speaks about the sky that will split apart. Then it goes on to speak about the earth that will be stretched and will throw up whatever it contains - whether natural treasures, or buried treasures, or dead human bodies, and then it will become empty. A new earth will be prepared for *Ḥashr* (Gathering of the Day of Requital). It will have neither caves nor mountains, neither buildings nor trees. It will be flat and smooth. It will be stretched so that there is ample room for the former as well as the latter generations to gather on the plain. This description

has been given in other Sūrahs with different styles, but in the present verses, there is an addition. About what Allah will demonstrate about the heaven and earth on the Day of Judgement, the following comment is made:

وَاَذِنَتْ لِرَبِّهَا وَحُقَّتْ (and will listen to (the command of) its Lord, and it ought to,...84:5) The verb *adhinat* means 'it will listen'. Here listening includes obedience. The verb *ḥuqqat* may be interpreted as 'It had an obligation to listen and obey Allah's command'.

Two Categories of Divine Commands

The obedience of the heaven and the earth, referred to here, may have two meanings, because the Divine commands are of two kinds: [1] the Divinely legislated [*tashrī'ī*] injunctions; and [2] the cosmic and destined [*takwīnī* and *taqdīrī*] commands. In the former case, the command appears as a law the violation of which is punishable. However, men are not practically coerced in the sense that they become practically unable to violate it. Instead, they have their free will to choose whether to abide by the law or to violate it. Such laws are imposed upon those who are endowed with intellect like humans and Jinn. This divides them into believers and non-believers, obedient and disobedient. In the former case, the commands are implemented by force. No one can deviate from them in the least. The entire universe, including humans and Jinn, follow them by force. The cosmic commands [which Allah has decreed] are applied forcefully and all the creatures, whether believers or unbelievers, pious or impious, have no choice or will but to do according to that command.

ذرّہ ذرّہ دہر کا پابستۂ تقدیر ہے
زندگی کے خواب کی جامی یہی تعبیر ہے

'Every particle in this world is bound by the Divine Decree.
Jāmī, this is the interpretation of the dream of life.'

It is possible that Allah will, on that day, endow the sky and the earth with special sense and perception like humans and Jinn. When they receive a command from Allah, they, of their own volition choose to act upon it. Alternatively, the command may refer to the second kind, that is, the cosmic command that no one can violate. But the words, وَاَذِنَتْ لِرَبِّهَا وَحُقَّتْ "and will listen to [the command of] its Lord, and it ought to," are closer to the first meaning of command, while the second one is possible, if these

words are taken in their figurative sense.

وَاِذَا الْاَرْضُ مُدَّتْ (and when the earth will be stretched [to give room to more people]...84:3) The word *madda* means 'to stretch, spread, expand out'. Sayyidnā Jābir ibn 'Abdullāh ؓ narrates that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that on the Day of Judgement the earth will be stretched out like leather (or rubber) and expanded into a smooth plain, and there will be just enough space on it for all individuals of human race to keep their feet. To understand this tradition, it is necessary to keep in mind that on the Day of Resurrection all individuals who will have been born from the inception of creation till resurrection will be brought back to life simultaneously. Thus each individual will have just enough space on the earth where he could place his feet. [Transmitted by Ḥākim with a good chain of authorities - Maẓharī].

وَاَلْقَتْ مَافِيْهَا وَتَخَلَّتْ (and it will throw up whatever it contains, and will become empty...84:4) The earth will, with one convulsion, throw up whatever it contains in its belly, whether natural treasures or buried treasures, or mines, or dead human bodies and their remains and particles.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الْاِنْسَانُ اِنَّكَ كَادِحٌ اِلٰى رَبِّكَ كَدْحًا فَمُلٰقِيْهِ (O man, you have to work hard constantly to reach your Lord, then you have to meet Him...84:6) The word *kadḥ* means to 'exert one's efforts fully', and 'to your Lord' means 'to meet your Lord'. In other words, every effort of man would end at his Lord.

Return to Allah

Mankind is addressed in this verse and shown a road that if he were to think about it carefully, and use his sense and intelligence, he could exert his efforts in the right direction that will ensure for him welfare, well-being and safety in this world, as well as in the Hereafter. First, it has been pointed out that man, whether he is good or bad, believer or non-believer, has the natural tendency to exert himself in order to achieve his goal. A good-natured person will work hard and adopt lawful means to acquire his livelihood and necessities of life. A bad person cannot obtain his needs and objective without working hard. Thieves, robbers, rouges, cheats and looters apply their minds and exert their physical strength in order to achieve their objective. Secondly, it has been pointed

out that if the intelligent man were to think carefully, all his movements and pauses are stations of a long journey he is going through, though unconsciously. This journey will end at his presence before Allah, that is, at death. This is stated in the phrase *ilā rabbika* 'to your Lord'. This is a statement of reality which none can deny. All efforts, [good or bad], must end with death. The third point is that after death, in the presence of his Lord, he will have to give an account of his movements and deeds, and of his efforts. This is rationally necessary and justified, so that the consequences of good and bad may be separately known, because such distinction is not known in this life. A good person may work hard for a month or so in order to obtain his livelihood and necessities of life, but thieves and looters may obtain them overnight. If there is no time of reckoning or punishment, both of them [the good and the bad] will be equal, which is contrary to reason and justice. At the end, the verse says: فَمُلٰقِيهِ (then you have to meet Him.) The translation given above is based on the assumption that the attached pronoun (*hī*) refers to Allah. The sense is that every person has to meet his Lord and to present himself before him to give the account of his deeds. Another possible interpretation is that the attached pronoun (*hī*) refers to '*kadḥ*' (working hard). Given this interpretation, the translation of the verse would be: "O man, you have to work hard constantly to reach your Lord, then you have to meet it." And the sense would be: 'you have to meet the good or bad consequences of your working hard.'

The verses that follow depict separately the consequences of the good and the bad people, of the believers and the non-believers. First, the ledger of deeds must be received in the right or the left hand. Those who receive the ledgers in their right hands will be the inmates of Paradise with its eternal blessings. Those who receive the ledgers in their left hands will be the inmates of Hell. The point for careful consideration is that necessities of life, as well as unnecessary desires are fulfilled by both righteous and wicked people in this world, and thus both spend their lives in some way or the other, but the consequences of the two [for the Hereafter] are diametrically opposite to each other. One results in eternal and unending comfort, and the other results in eternal perdition, torture and torment. Man still has the chance [while he is living] to redirect his attention to working hard towards switching the situation in a direction

that not only fulfils his legitimate needs and desires in this world, but also attains the eternal pleasures of the Hereafter.

فَاَمَّا مَنْ اُوْتِيَ كِتٰبَهٗ بِيَمِيْنِهٖ ﴿٧﴾ فَسَوْفَ يُحَاسَبُ حِسَابًا يَّسِيْرًا ﴿٨﴾ وَّيَنْقَلِبُ اِلٰٓى اَهْلِهٖ مَسْرُوْرًا ﴿٩﴾

(So, as for him whose book [of deeds] will be given to him in his right hand, he will be called to account in an easy manner, and he will go back to his people joyfully....7-9)

This verse describes the condition of the believers. Their books of deeds will be given to them in their right hands. An easy reckoning will be taken from them and the welcome news of Paradise will be given to them. They will return to their families joyfully.

It is reported in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Bukhārī from Sayyidah 'Ā'shah رضی اللّٰہ عنہا that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said:

من حوسب يوم القيٰمة عذّب

"He who is required to account for [or questioned about] his deeds will have to be punished."

At this Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللّٰہ عنہا asked, "What is the meaning of the [following] verse ?" يُحَاسَبُ حِسَابًا يَّسِيْرًا (he will be called to account in an easy manner,..84:8). The Holy Prophet ﷺ explained that the verse signifies 'the deeds will merely be presented before Allah without being questioned. As for the person whose deeds are scrutinised, he will never be able to escape torment'.

This explanation of the Holy Prophet ﷺ clarifies that the deeds of the believers will also be presented before Allah, but by virtue of their faith, not all of their actions will be scrutinised. This is referred to as 'account in an easy manner'. The words 'he will go back to his people joyfully' may be interpreted in one of two ways. This may refer to the Houris who will be his family members in Paradise, or it may refer to his family members in the world who will be present in the Plain of Gathering, and he, after knowing about his success, will impart to them, according to the custom of this life, the welcome news of his achievement. The commentators have mentioned both possibilities in interpreting this sentence. [Qurṭubī].

اِنَّهٗ كَانَ فِيْٓ اَهْلِهٖ مَسْرُوْرًا (He had been joyful among his people...84:13). This verse tells us that those who will be given their Record in their left hands

from behind their backs, they will desire death and destruction under the impression that this might end their misery. But it will not be possible for them to die. One of the reasons given here for his misery is that he used to live joyfully among his people in the world, and he was completely oblivious of the Hereafter. The believers, on the other hand, never for a moment were oblivious of the Hereafter in the life of this world. At every moment of pleasure and comfort, they were anxious and worried about the Hereafter. The Qur'ān quotes the believers on another occasion as saying:

إِنَّا كُنَّا قَبْلُ فِيٓ أَهْلِنَا مُشْفِقِينَ

'Indeed we were afraid (of Allah's punishment) when we were amidst of our family, [Aṭ-Ṭūr 26]

In other words, they lived among their families and yet were fearful and conscious of the Hereafter. The consequences of the two groups will be appropriate to their respective positions. Those who led a life of luxury and pleasure in this world with their families oblivious of the Hereafter, their portion will be punishment of Hell in the next world. Those who were aware of reckoning and feared punishment in the next world will live with their families in eternal luxury, pleasure and happiness. This indicates that a believer should not be immersed in the comforts of this life. At no time and in no circumstance should he be oblivious to the reckoning of the Hereafter.

فَلَآ أُقْسِمُ بِالشَّفَقِ وَالَّيْلِ وَمَا وَسَقَ. وَالْقَمَرِ إِذَا اتَّسَقَ (So, I swear by the twilight [after sunset], and by the night and what it envelops, and by the moon when it develops at the full...84:16-18) In these verses Allah takes oath by four phenomena and reinforces what was asserted in :

إِنَّكَ كَادِحٌ إِلَى رَبِّكَ

'you have to work hard constantly to reach your Lord'

If we consider the four phenomena by which oath is taken, it bears evidence to the subject which is forthcoming in the complement of the oath, that is, the condition of man never remains the same at all times. He undergoes changes and unexpected phases all the time. The first phenomenon that brings about a change in his life is the twilight after the sunset, or the red glow that remains on the west side of the sky after

the sunset in the evening. This is the beginning of the night. This is the harbinger of a massive change in human conditions, that is, the light is disappearing and a flood of darkness is setting in. The second phenomenon by which oath is taken is night itself which completes the change in his life. The third phenomenon by which oath is taken includes all things that night envelops or shrouds. The primitive sense of the word *wasaqa* means to 'pile, gather, heap up the thing'. If it is taken in general sense, it embraces every member of the entire universe which the darkness of night covers, such as animals, vegetation, minerals and inorganic matter, mountains and oceans. By extension, the word would comprehend all things that normally disperse in the light of day and retreat to their own places at night. Human beings return to their homes, animals to their habitats and birds to their nests. Business goods and merchandise are or piled up in one place. This massive change is related to man himself. The fourth phenomenon by which oath is taken is in the following verse: وَالْقَمَرِ إِذَا اتَّسَقَ (and by the moon when it develops at the full...84:18). The word *ittisāq* is also derived from *wasaqa* and it means 'to gather'. The 'gathering of moon' signifies that it gathered its light, and it became complete and full *[badr]* the moon of the 14th night. The phrase إِذَا اتَّسَقَ *idhat-tasaqa* in relation to moon points to the phenomenon that it goes through various phases. First, it appears as a very fine semicircle. Then its light grows progressively night after night, until it becomes *badr kāmil* [full moon of the 14th night]. Having taken oath by the vicissitudes of the four phenomena, the Sūrah asserts the subject: لَتَرْكَبُنَّ طَبَقًا عَنْ طَبَقٍ (you shall certainly ascend from stage to stage....84:19) The word *ṭabaq* or *ṭabqah* refers to a 'stage'. Its plural is *ṭabaqāt*. The verb لَتَرْكَبُنَّ *latarkabunna* is derived from *rukūb* which means 'to mount or mount up'. The verse purports to say that mankind from the inception to the end of his life will continue to mount up stage by stage, or will pass through all the conditions, gradually and in stages referred to in the preceding verses, that is, periods of light and darkness and other phenomena. He never remains in one condition all the time. He gradually goes through the vicissitudes of life.

Vicissitudes of Human Life, His Eternal Journey and His Final Destination

In the first instance the male sperm is united with the female egg to

form a new human organism. This is turned into a blood-clot which transforms into a lump of flesh, and the lump is formed into bones, and the bones are clothed in flesh. The limbs of the human body thus were completed. Then the soul was breathed into him, and he became a living human being. His first food in the womb of his mother was the unclean blood of the mother's womb. Nine months later, Allah made his way easy to come into the world. Now instead of the unclean blood, he got the [pure] milk of his mother's [breast]. When he saw the wide atmosphere and air of the world, he began to grow and develop. Within the first two years of his life, he started moving and walking about, and was able to talk. He weaned and began to eat more delicious and different types of food. As he grew a little older, he made play and amusement his daily preoccupation. When his intelligence developed [sufficiently], he was tied up in educational and training activities. When he grew into a youth, he abandoned all previous activities and replaced them with youth activities and ushered himself in a new era where marriage, children and house-keeping became his day-to-day preoccupation. Eventually, this era too neared its end. His physical and other prowess began to give up, and every day he fell prey to new ailments. Old age set in. The final stage of this life, that is, death, began to mount. All this happens in full view of everyone. No one dare deny this. But the ignoramus assumes that death or grave is his final stage, and there is nothing beyond. Allah, the Creator of the universe, the Omniscient, made it known, through the various Prophets [through the ages], to the heedless man that grave is not the final stage of his life, but it is merely a waiting-room to enter an enormously large and gigantic world that is yet to come, where the final examination will be conducted and the final stage of his life will be determined. In this world, he will celebrate the Divine remembrance and enjoy eternal comfort and pleasure or he will suffer eternal perdition and damnation [depending on the final assessment]. This is where the vicissitudes of his life will end. Thus the Qur'ān says:

إِنَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ الرُّجْعَىٰ

'Surely, to your Lord is the return [96:8]'

إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ الْمُنْتَهَىٰ

'and that to your Lord is the end (of every one), [42]'

اِنَّكَ كَادِحٌ اِلٰى رَبِّكَ كَدْحًا

'you have to work hard constantly to reach your Lord [84:6]'

The ignoramus and unmindful man is made aware of the fact that the vicissitudes of life are stages in the journey to his final destination. Man ought to realise that walking, moving about, sleeping, waking, and standing and sitting are conditions, in the process of which he is covering the stages of his journey. Eventually, he will reach his Lord and, accounting for his life-long deeds, he will find his final abode that will be a place of never-ending comfort, luxury and pleasure, or [God forbid!] a place of never-ending retribution, torture and torment. A wise person should treat himself in this world as a traveller and prepare himself for the next world. His main goal in this life should be to cultivate for the next life as the Prophet ﷺ said:

كُنْ فِي الدُّنْيَا كَاَنَّكَ غَرِيْبٌ اَوْ عَابِرُ سَبِيْلٍ

"Be in this world as though you are a stranger or a wayfarer."

Under the phrase above *tabaqan 'an ṭabaq* 'from stage to stage', a similar narration is cited by Abū Nu'aim from Sayyidnā Jābir Ibn 'Abdullāh ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ stated that these verses remind the unmindful of his creation, the vicissitudes of his life and instructs him to reconsider his position and the consequences [of his attitude in this life as there is still time] and to prepare for next life. However, despite these clear guidelines, there are people who never desist from their heedlessness. Therefore, the verse concludes:

فَمَا لَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ، وَاِذَا قُرِئَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقُرْاٰنُ لَا يَسْجُدُوْنَ

> So, what has happened to them that they do not believe, and when the Qur'ān is recited to them, they do not offer *sajdah* [prostration]? (84:20-21)

It means that when the Qur'ān, replete with clear guidelines, is recited to them, they do not bow in submission.

The word *sajdah / sujūd* literally denotes 'to bow' and it connotes 'obedience'. Obviously, the word here is not used in its technical sense. It is used in the sense of bowing in submission with respect, humbleness and humility. The reason [for this interpretation] is quite clear. This verse does not command to prostrate at the time of recitation of a particular

verse. It is related to the entire Qur'ān. If the word *sajdah* had referred to the technical prostration, it would necessarily entail that prostration be offered at every verse of the entire Qur'ān, which by unanimous agreement of the Ummah is not the case. Neither *salaf* nor *khalaf* subscribe to this view. Now remains the question whether or not a *sajdah* is obligatory when this verse is recited. (There is a disagreement among the jurists on this point) By a long stretch of imagination, it is possible to use this verse in evidence or support of arguing in favour of prostration being obligatory on recitation of this verse, as some of the Ḥanafī jurists have done. According to them, the definite article al- 'the' in the word al-Qur'ān stands for the article that is used to indicate previous knowledge, and thus the word al-Qur'ān here refers to this particular verse under comment, not to the entire al-Qur'ān or the Holy Book. However, this interpretation is after all merely a possibility, but the clear context of the verse indicates that it seems to be far-fetched to take the verse in this sense. And Allah knows best! The true interpretation can be determined by prophetic narratives, the practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and that of the noble Companions. The narratives pertaining to *sajdah* of *tilāwah* differ. Some indicate that it is an obligatory duty to make *sajdah* on this verse, and others indicate that it is not. As a result, there is a difference of opinion among jurists. Imām Abū Ḥanīfah holds the view that prostration at this verse is an obligatory duty as is obligatory at other verses of *mufaṣṣal*. Imām A'ẓam adduces the following Aḥādīth in favour of his opinion:

Bukhārī recorded from Abū Rāfi' ؓ that he prayed the 'Ishā' [Night] prayer behind Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ؓ, and the latter recited: إِذَا السَّمَآءُ انْشَقَّتْ (When the sky will split apart) and at the relevant verse, he prostrated. So, Sayyidnā Abū Rāfi' ؓ asked him what type of prostration it was. Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ؓ replied: "I prostrated at this verse behind Abul Qāsim in a *ṣalāh*, and I will never cease prostrating during its recitation until I meet him on the Plain of Gathering." Muslim transmitted a narrative from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ؓ that they prostrated with the Holy Prophet ﷺ at relevant verses of this Sūrah, and of اِقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ

Qurṭubī reports from Ibn-ul-'Arabī that the veritable view is that this verse is one of the verses at which it is an obligatory duty to prostrate

when read or recited or heard being recited. However, the people among whom Ibn-ul-'Arabī lived' it was not customary among them to prostrate at this verse. They probably followed an Imam, according to whom the prostration was not obligatory. As a result, Ibn-ul-'Arabī says that whenever he led the congregational prayer, he would avoid reciting Sūrah Al-Inshiqāq, because in his view prostration at the relevant verse is obligatory. If he does not perform the prostration, he would be sinning. If he does perform the prostration, the entire congregation would regard it an unnecessary act. Therefore, he felt he should not unnecessarily split the community. And Allah knows best!

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Inshiqāq
Ends here

Sūrah Al-Burūj
(Stellar Formations)

This Sūrah is Makkī, and it has 22 verses

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 22

وَالسَّمَآءِ ذَاتِ الْبُرُوْجِ ﴿١﴾ وَالْيَوْمِ الْمَوْعُوْدِ ﴿٢﴾ وَشَاهِدٍ
وَّمَشْهُوْدٍ ﴿٣﴾ قُتِلَ اَصْحٰبُ الْاُخْدُوْدِ ﴿٤﴾ النَّارِ ذَاتِ الْوَقُوْدِ ﴿٥﴾
اِذْهُمْ عَلَيْهَا قُعُوْدٌ ﴿٦﴾ وَّهُمْ عَلٰى مَا يَفْعَلُوْنَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ شُهُوْدٌ ﴿٧﴾
وَمَا نَقَمُوْا مِنْهُمْ اِلَّآ اَنْ يُّؤْمِنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ الْعَزِيْزِ الْحَمِيْدِ ﴿٨﴾ الَّذِىْ لَهٗ
مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ط وَاللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىْءٍ شَهِيْدٌ ﴿٩﴾ اِنَّ
الَّذِيْنَ فَتَنُوا الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَالْمُؤْمِنٰتِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَتُوْبُوْا فَلَهُمْ عَذَابُ جَهَنَّمَ
وَلَهُمْ عَذَابُ الْحَرِيْقِ ﴿١٠﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ لَهُمْ
جَنّٰتٌ تَجْرِىْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ ط ذٰلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْكَبِيْرُ ﴿١١﴾ اِنَّ بَطْشَ
رَبِّكَ لَشَدِيْدٌ ﴿١٢﴾ اِنَّهٗ هُوَ يُبْدِئُ وَيُعِيْدُ ﴿١٣﴾ وَهُوَ الْغَفُوْرُ الْوَدُوْدُ
﴿١٤﴾ ذُو الْعَرْشِ الْمَجِيْدُ ﴿١٥﴾ فَعَّالٌ لِّمَا يُرِيْدُ ﴿١٦﴾ هَلْ اَتٰكَ
حَدِيْثُ الْجُنُوْدِ ﴿١٧﴾ فِرْعَوْنَ وَثَمُوْدَ ﴿١٨﴾ بَلِ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا فِىْ
تَكْذِيْبٍ ﴿١٩﴾ وَّاللّٰهُ مِنْ وَّرَآئِهِمْ مُّحِيْطٌ ﴿٢٠﴾ بَلْ هُوَ قُرْاٰنٌ مَّجِيْدٌ
﴿٢١﴾ فِىْ لَوْحٍ مَّحْفُوْظٍ ﴿٢٢﴾

I swear by the sky, the one having stellar formations, [1] **and by the Promised Day,** [2] **and by that which attends, and that which is attended,** [3] **cursed were the People of the Trench,** [4] **the (people of the) fire that was rich with fuel,** [5] **when they were sitting by it,** [6] **and were watching what they were doing with the believers.** [7] **And they had blamed them for nothing but that they believed in Allah, the All-Mighty, the Worthy of All Praise,** [8] **the One to whom belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth. And Allah is witness over every thing.** [9] **Surely, those who persecuted the believing men and the believing women, then did not repent, for them there is the torment of Jahannam (Hell), and for them there is the torment of burning.** [10] **As for those who believed and did righteous deeds, for them there are gardens beneath which rivers flow. That is the big achievement.** [11]

The seizure of your Lord is severe indeed! [12] **Surely He originates (creation) and repeats (it after death).** [13] **And He is the Most-Forgiving, the Most-Loving,** [14] **the Master of the Throne, the Glorious.** [15] **He is ever doer of what He intends.** [16]

Has the come to you the story of the forces, [17] **of Fir'aun (the Pharaoh) and Thamud?** [18] **But those who disbelieve are (engaged) in denying (the truth).** [19] **And Allah has encircled them from all sides.** [20] **The reality is that it is the glorious Qur'an,** [21] **(recorded) in the Preserved Tablet (Lauh Mahfuz).** [22]

Commentary

وَالسَّمَآءِ ذَاتِ الْبُرُوْجِ (I swear by the sky, the one having stellar formations....85:1) The word *burūj* is the plural of *burj* which means 'a large mansion or fortress'. The Qur'ān says:

وَلَوْ كُنْتُمْ فِىْ بُرُوْجٍ مُّشَيَّدَةٍ

'...even though you are in fortified castles [4:78]'

Here the word *burūj* means 'castles'. The primitive sense of the word *barj* is to become manifest'. The word *tabarruj* means 'to display one's beauty' as in the verse:

وَلَا تَبَرَّجْنَ تَبَرُّجَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ الْأُوْلٰى

'...and do not display your beauty as it was previously displayed

in the Time of Ignorance [33:33]'

According to the majority of commentators like Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās, Mujāhid, Daḥḥāk, Ḥasan Al-Baṣrī, Qatādah, Suddī ﷺ and others, the word *burūj*, in this verse, refers to 'giant stars'. Other commentators take the word *burūj*, in this place, to refer to mansions and castles that are reserved in the sky for the guardian angels. Some of the later commentators chose the astronomical view in which the sky is divided into twelve parts, each one called a *burj*. The primitive philosophers believed that the *thawabit* (stationary) stars are fixed in these *burūj*. The planets move with the movement of their particular sky and the planets descend in these *burūj*. But this is absolutely incorrect. According to the Qur'ān, Allah has not fixed the stars and planets in the skies. In fact, every star and planet has its own orbit and revolves by itself as in Sūrah Yā Sīn:

وَكُلٌّ فِىْ فَلَكٍ يَّسْبَحُوْنَ

'...And each one is floating in an orbit. [36:40]'

The word *falak* in this verse does not refer to the sky, but rather to the orbits of the stars and planets in which they move. [Maẓharī]

وَالْيَوْمِ الْمَوْعُوْدِ. وَشَاهِدٍ وَّمَشْهُوْدٍ (and by the Promised Day, and by that which attends, and that which is attended...85:2,3) With reference to a prophetic *Ḥadīth* reported by Tirmidhī, the phrase 'the Promised Day' refers to the Day of Judgement; the phrase 'that which attends' refers to 'Friday'; and the phrase 'that which is attended' refers to the day of 'Arafah. Thus in this verse, Allah has taken oath by four objects: [1] 'the sky, the one having stellar formations'; [2] 'the Day of Judgement'; [3] 'Friday'; and [4] 'the Day of 'Arafah'. The relationship between the objects of oath and the subject of oath is as follows: They bear evidence to the Divine omnipotence, and they are a proof of reckoning and reward and punishment on the Day of Judgement. Friday and the day of 'Arafah (the main day of Hajj that is 9th Zul-Hijjah of the Islami Calender) are blessed days for the believers to accumulate treasures for the Hereafter. Further, the subject of oath curses the infidels who burned the Muslims on account of their faith, and gives cheerful news to the righteous believers of securing elevated ranks in the Hereafter.

The Story of the People of Trench

Verse 4 refers to the People of the Trench. Their story is recounted in a

Ḥadīth reported by Imām Muslim as follows: There was an infidel king who lived in bygone times. He had a soothsayer , or, according to some narrations, a magician. The infidel king is identified as the ruler of Yemen. His name, according to Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ, was Yūsuf Dhu Nuwās, and he lived about seventy years before the birth of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The soothsayer or magician [occult teacher] said to the king that he should be given an intelligent boy, so that he could train him in the skill of foretelling or the black magic. Accordingly, the king sent a boy, 'Abdullāh Ibn Tāmir by name, to be trained by the soothsayer or magician [occult teacher]. Whenever the boy went to his teacher, he had to pass by a Christian monk. He followed the true religion of 'Isā عليه السلام and worshipped Allah. Since the religion of 'Īsā عليه السلام was the true religion in those days, the monk was, in fact, a Muslim. The boy sat with the monk and was very much impressed by his teachings. As a result, he frequented the monk's house and sat with him for long hours before proceeding to his teacher, and ultimately embraced Islam. Allah had blessed him with such a strong faith that he was prepared to bear any pain and persecution for the sake of Allah. His teacher used to beat him for his coming late. On his way back from the occult teacher, he would spend some time again with the monk and used to go home late. The family would then beat him up for being late. But he was so keen to have the company of the monk that he managed to sit regularly with the monk without fear of persecution. Through the blessings of this, Allah had gifted him with many miracles [*karamah*]. Once it happened that the boy saw a lion has blocked the path and prevented people from passing. They were perturbed. He picked a stone and prayed: "O Allah! If the religion of the monk is true, then kill this beast with this stone [so that people may pass]. And if the soothsayer or magician is true, then the beast must not die with my stone." So praying, he aimed at the lion and it died instantly. The news spread among the people that the boy possesses wonderful knowledge. A blind man heard about this and came up to him. He requested him to restore his sight. The boy conceded on the condition that he embraces Islam. The blind man agreed. The boy prayed and Allah restored his sight. The blind man became Muslim. The king came to know about these incidents, and he got the boy, the monk and the blind were apprehended. They were brought before the king. He got the blind and the monk killed, and ordered that the boy be taken to the summit of a mountain and be thrown

from there. But those who had taken him up there fell and died. The boy went home safely. Then the king ordered to have him drowned in the sea. The boy escaped safely, while the people who took him to the sea were drowned. The boy then himself told the king how to kill him. He told him to take an arrow from his quiver and place it in his bow, and reciting, بِاسْمِ اللّٰهِ رَبِّی 'In the name of Allah, my Lord' they should shoot. They did that and they boy finally died. In this way, the boy gave his life away but seeing this, the entire nation of the king cried out spontaneously: "We believe in Allah." At this, the king was greatly enraged and, after consultation with his cabinet, ordered for deep trenches to be dug and filled with fire. An announcement was then made that the people must renounce their faith in Allah. If they refuse, they would be thrown into the fiery furnace. Eventually, a woman carrying her infant child was brought to a trench, but she hesitated. Allah granted speech to her child who said: "O mother, be steadfast, because you are certainly on the truth." In this way, many people were burned. According to some reports, about twelve thousand people were burned to ashes and, according to other reports, the number is put more than this. Consequently, Divine wrath descended on the People of the Trench and fiery furnace. Reference in verse 4 is made to this incident after taking an oath.

In a narration of Muḥammad Ibn Isḥāq, it is reported that the place where the boy 'Abdullāh Ibn Tāmir was buried had to be dug up for some important reason during the time of Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ. It was found that the body of 'Abdullāh Ibn Tāmir was intact, and he was sitting up. His hand was placed on his hip joint, where the arrow struck him. Someone moved his hand out from that place, and his wound started bleeding. When the hand was placed back in its position, the bleeding stopped. There was a ring in his finger which had the inscription: اَللّٰهُ رَبِّی "Allah is my Lord." The governor of Yemen informed Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ about this, and he wrote back in reply: "Bury the body back as it was with his finger-ring." [Ibn Kathīr]

Special Note

Ibn Kathīr, with reference to Ibn Abī Ḥātim, writes that the incidents of 'trenches of fire' took place many times in history in different parts of the world. Then Ibn Abī Ḥātim specifies three particular incidents: [1] a trench in Yemen. [This incident took place during the period of *fatrah*

(the interval between 'Īsā عليه السلام and the Holy Prophet ﷺ), about seventy years before the advent of the Prophet ﷺ]; [2] a trench in Syria; and [3] a trench in Irān. He further states that the incident the Qur'ān refers to here in Sūrah Burūj is the first one that occurred in Najrān, the trench of the kingdom of Yemen, because that was in Arabia.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ فَتَنُوا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَتُوبُوا (Surely, those who persecuted the believing men and the believing women, then did not repent,...85:10) This verse describes the torment of the wrong-doers who burned the Muslims in the fire pit only on account of their faith. The description points out two things: [1] فَلَهُمْ عَذَابُ جَهَنَّمَ (for them there is the torment of Jahannam) and [2] وَلَهُمْ عَذَابُ الْحَرِيقِ (and for them there is the torment of burning). The second sentence may be treated as explicative of the first sentence, a statement for emphasis. It signifies that they will be put into Hell and will have to suffer eternal torment of the fire. Another possible interpretation is that the second statement describes the wrong-doers' torment in this world, as is narrated in some reports. The believers, who had been cast in fire pits, were spared the torture of fire, in that the souls of the believers were taken out before the fire could touch them. Only their dead bodies were lying in the fiery furnace. After that the fire flared up so high that it spread out wildly through the city and burned all those who were watching the fun of burning the Muslims. Only Yūsuf Dhu Nuwās managed to run away, and threw himself into the sea in order to save himself from the rage of the fire, but he got drowned and died. [Maẓharī].

Attached to the torment of Hell and the torment of burning for the wrong-doers is the restrictive phrase: ثُمَّ لَمْ يَتُوبُوا (then did not repent). That is, this torment is for those who did not repent of their deed and did not offer *taubah*. Thus this part of the verse invites people to repent. Sayyidnā Ḥasan رضي الله عنه states: "Look at Allah's compassion and benevolence. They burned Allah's friends alive, yet He invites them towards repentance and forgiveness." [Ibn Kathīr].

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Burūj
Ends here

Sūrah Aṭ-Ṭāriq
(The Night-Comer)

This Sūrah is Makkī, and it has 17 verses

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 17

وَالسَّمَآءِ وَالطَّارِقِ ﴿١﴾ وَمَآ اَدْرٰىكَ مَا الطَّارِقُ ﴿٢﴾ النَّجْمُ الثَّاقِبُ
﴿٣﴾ اِنْ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ لَّمَّا عَلَيْهَا حَافِظٌ ﴿٤﴾ فَلْيَنْظُرِ الْاِنْسَانُ مِمَّ خُلِقَ
﴿٥﴾ خُلِقَ مِنْ مَّآءٍ دَافِقٍ ﴿٦﴾ يَّخْرُجُ مِنْ بَيْنِ الصُّلْبِ وَالتَّرَآئِبِ
﴿٧﴾ اِنَّهٗ عَلٰى رَجْعِهٖ لَقَادِرٌ ﴿٨﴾ يَوْمَ تُبْلَى السَّرَآئِرُ ﴿٩﴾ فَمَالَهٗ مِنْ
قُوَّةٍ وَّلَا نَاصِرٍ ﴿١٠﴾ وَالسَّمَآءِ ذَاتِ الرَّجْعِ ﴿١١﴾ وَالْاَرْضِ ذَاتِ
الصَّدْعِ ﴿١٢﴾ اِنَّهٗ لَقَوْلٌ فَصْلٌ ﴿١٣﴾ وَّمَا هُوَ بِالْهَزْلِ ﴿١٤﴾ اِنَّهُمْ
يَكِيْدُوْنَ كَيْدًا ﴿١٥﴾ وَّاَكِيْدُ كَيْدًا ﴿١٦﴾ فَمَهِّلِ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ اَمْهِلْهُمْ
رُوَيْدًا ﴿١٧﴾

I swear by the sky and the Night-Comer, [1] and what may let you know what the Night-Comer is? [2] The star of piercing brightness! [3] there is no human being, but there is a watcher over him. [4] So, let man consider of which stuff he is created. [5] He is created of a spouting water [6] that comes out from between the loins and the chest-bones. [7] Surely He is Powerful to bring him back [8] on a day when all the secrets will be searched out, [9] and he will have no strength (to defend), nor a supporter. [10] I swear by the sky that rains, [11] and

the earth that cracks open (for plants), [12] **this is a decisive word,** [13] **and it is not a joke.** [14] **They are devising plans,** [15] **and I Am devising plans.** [16] **So leave the disbelievers at the moment; give them respite for a while.** [17]

Commentary

After swearing an oath by the sky and stars, in this Sūrah, Allah asserts that He has assigned a guardian angel to every human being who watches over his deeds and actions, and accurate and immediate record is kept on the basis of which the reckoning will be made, and on the Day of Reckoning, all secrets will be revealed. The rational conclusion is that man must ponder over the consequences of the deeds he is doing in this life. Therefore, he should not, at any moment of his life, lose sight of what is to happen on the Day of Reckoning. Thereafter, the verse disposes of a doubt that the Satan perennially casts into the people's hearts. When they are dead and have become dust and decomposed particles, how will they be recomposed and life be brought back? This seems to be an imaginary thought, rather, in the view of the general public, it is impossible. In answer to this doubt, man is invited to reflect on his origin. At the inception, he was created from various elements collected from throughout the world, and Allah's Power transformed them into a human being who is able to listen and see. Allah Who has created him and looked after him is well able to bring him back to life after death. Then some events of the Day of Judgement are mentioned. Then, after swearing an oath by the earth and the sky, the negligent man is told that the Hereafter he is urged to care about is no joke or amusement, but it is a reality that has to come to pass. Towards the end of theSūrah, the unbelievers pose the question: If Allah abhors disbelief, idolatry and sins, why then does He not punish us in this life? The Sūrah ends with a rebuttal to this question. Let us now explain some expressions used in the Sūrah:

The first oath, in the beginning of the Sūrah, is by the sky and *ṭāriq*. The word *ṭāriq* means the 'Night-Comer'. Stars normally disappear during the day and only appear at night, therefore they are called *ṭāriq*. The Qur'ān itself raises the question:

وَمَآ اَدْرٰىكَ مَا الطَّارِقُ (and what may let you know what the Night-Comer is?...86:2) and then answers the question thus: اَلنَّجْمُ الثَّاقِبُ (The star of

piercing brightness!...86:3). The word *najm* means 'star'. The Qur'ān does not specify any particular 'star'. Therefore, it may be applied to any star. Some of the commentators say that *najm* refers to the Pleiades or Saturn, and they quote specimens of Arabic speech to confirm their argument. The word *thāqib* means 'piercing brightness'.

إِنْ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ لَّمَّا عَلَيْهَا حَافِظٌ (there is no human being, but there is a watcher over him....86:4). This is the subject of the oath. The particle in at the beginning of the statement is used in the sense of 'no', that is, a negative particle; and the particle *lammā* is used in the sense of 'but/except', that is, it is an exceptive particle in the dialect of Banū Hudhail. The verse purports to say that there is not a single person over whom there is not a watcher [*ḥāfiẓ*]. The word *ḥāfiẓ* may mean 'guardian' who may watch over someone's actions and deeds, so that the reckoning is made on that basis. The word *ḥāfiẓ* may also be used in the sense of 'one who protects from calamities'. In the first sense, the word hafiz refers to the angels who record the deeds. Here the word *ḥāfiẓ* , although appears in the singular form, it is used in the generic sense, because there is not just a single recording angel, but there is a host of them as another verse testifies to this fact:

إِنَّ عَلَيْكُمْ لَحٰفِظِيْنَ كِرَامًا كٰتِبِيْنَ

'While [appointed] over you there are watchers,who are noble, the writers [of the deeds],[82: 10-11]'

According to the second sense of the word, *ḥāfiẓ* refers to the angels who have been appointed to protect man from all kinds of calamities that befall him day and night, except the calamities that Allah has decreed for him, as the following verse explicitly states:

لَهٗ مُعَقِّبٰتٌ مِّنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهٖ يَحْفَظُوْنَهٗ مِنْ اَمْرِ اللّٰهِ

'For him there are angels replacing each other, before him and behind him, who guard him under the command of Allah [13:11]

A tradition has reported the Messenger of Allah ﷺ saying that Allah has appointed three hundred and sixty angels for every believer. They protect every limb of his. Of the three hundred and sixty, seven angels alone protect man's eye. These angels defend man from every calamity that is not decreed, like a fan chases away the flies coming to a vessel containing honey. If there are no security guards for man, the devils will

snatch them away. [Qurṭubī].

خُلِقَ مِنۡ مَّآءٍ دَافِقٍ يَخۡرُجُ مِنۡ بَيۡنِ الصُّلۡبِ وَالتَّرَآئِبِ (He is created of a spouting water that comes out from between the loins and the chest-bones...86:6,7). The general body of commentators have explained that the spouting water (sperm) comes out from the loins of men and the chest-bones of women. However, the research of embryological science on the subject shows that the seminal fluid comes out from every part of human body, and every part of the foetus is made of the seminal fluid that has come out from that part of the man's and woman's body. The brain, of course, plays the greatest role in this matter. Thus experience shows that people who indulge in excessive cohabitation mostly suffer from weakness of mental weakness. The embryologists have at the same time discovered that the seminal fluid separates from all parts of the body, and through the spinal cord, collects in the testes and from there it spouts.

If these findings have any value, it is not far-fetched to reconcile them with the explanation of some of the commentators. Embryologists agree that the brain plays the most important role in the preparation of seminal fluid. The representative of the brain is the spinal cord that has come into the backbone from the brain, up to the loins and the testes. Some of its branches have come into the chest-bones. It is likely that the seminal fluid coming from the chest-bones into the woman's seminal fluid and the seminal fluid coming from the loins into a man's seminal fluid have a greater role to play . (Baidawi)

If we analyse the verse of the Qur'ān carefully, we notice that it does not specify 'man or woman'. It merely says 'He is created of a spouting water that comes out from between the loins and the chest-bones.' This may simply signify that the seminal fluid comes out from the entire body of both men and women. The expression 'the entire body' is understood from the mention of the principal organs of front and back. The front part of the body is chest and the back part of the body is the loin. These are the principal parts of the body. The expression, 'the spouting water that comes out from between the loins and the chest-bones' may mean 'comes out from the entire body'.

إِنَّهٗ عَلٰى رَجۡعِهٖ لَقَادِرٌ (Surely He is Powerful to bring him back...86:8) The word *raj'* means 'to bring back'. The verse signifies that Allah Who has

created him from a drop of seminal fluid is well able to bring him back to life after death a fortiori.

يَوْمَ تُبْلَى السَّرَآئِرُ (on a day when all the secrets will be searched out..86:9). The word *tubla* literally means 'to test/examine' and *sarā'ir* means 'secrets'. On the Day of Reckoning, the secrets will be tested and examined and laid bare. Man's beliefs, his thoughts, and his motives and intentions that were hidden in this life, and no one knew about them, will be revealed in the Hereafter.

Likewise, his deeds and actions that he had done secretly, and no one was aware of them in this world, all of them will be tested and scrutinised on the Plain of Gathering and will be laid bare. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar رضي الله عنه has said that on the Day of Judgement Allah will disclose the secrets of all human beings. The sign of every good or bad belief and action will be displayed on man's face, in the form of beauty or darkness or gloom [depending on each individual's situation].[Qurṭubī].

وَالسَّمَآءِ ذَاتِ الرَّجْعِ (I swear by the sky that rains...86:11) The word *raj'* refers to 'the rain that comes down repeatedly'. In other words, the rain that comes down and stops and then returns.

إِنَّهُ لَقَوْلٌ فَصْلٌ (this is a decisive word..86:13) In other words, the Qur'ān is truly a Decisive Word that decides between truth and falsehood, and there is no room for any doubt in it.

Sayyidnā 'Alī رضي الله عنه says that he heard the Holy Prophet ﷺ as saying about the Holy Qur'ān:

كتاب فيه خبرما قبلكم وحكم ما بعدكم وهوالفصل ليس بالهزل

> '[It is] a book which describes the stories of past communities and [it contains] injunctions for future generations. It is truly a Decisive Word. It is no joke.'

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Aṭ-Ṭāriq
Ends here

Sūrah Al-A'lā
(The Most Exalted)

This Sūrah is Makkī, and it has 19 verses

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 19

سَبِّحِ اسْمَ رَبِّكَ الْاَعْلَى ﴿١﴾ الَّذِىْ خَلَقَ فَسَوّٰى ﴿٢﴾ وَالَّذِىْ قَدَّرَ
فَهَدٰى ﴿٣﴾ وَ الَّذِىْٓ اَخْرَجَ الْمَرْعٰى ﴿٤﴾ فَجَعَلَهٗ غُثَآءً اَحْوٰى ﴿٥﴾
سَنُقْرِئُكَ فَلَا تَنْسٰٓى ﴿٦﴾ اِلَّا مَاشَآءَ اللّٰهُ اِنَّهٗ يَعْلَمُ الْجَهْرَ وَمَا
يَخْفٰى ﴿٧﴾ وَنُيَسِّرُكَ لِلْيُسْرٰى ﴿٨﴾ فَذَكِّرْ اِنْ نَّفَعَتِ الذِّكْرٰى ﴿٩﴾
سَيَذَّكَّرُ مَنْ يَّخْشٰى ﴿١٠﴾ وَيَتَجَنَّبُهَا الْاَشْقَى ﴿١١﴾ الَّذِىْ يَصْلَى
النَّارَ الْكُبْرٰى ﴿١٢﴾ ثُمَّ لَايَمُوْتُ فِيْهَا وَلَايَحْيٰى ﴿١٣﴾ قَدْ اَفْلَحَ مَنْ
تَزَكّٰى ﴿١٤﴾ وَذَكَرَ اسْمَ رَبِّهٖ فَصَلّٰى ﴿١٥﴾ بَلْ تُؤْثِرُوْنَ الْحَيٰوةَ الدُّنْيَا
﴿١٦﴾ وَالْاٰخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ وَّاَبْقٰى ﴿١٧﴾ اِنَّ هٰذَا لَفِى الصُّحُفِ الْاُوْلٰى
﴿١٨﴾ صُحُفِ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَمُوْسٰى ﴿١٩﴾

Pronounce the purity of the name of your Most Exalted Lord, [1] who created (everything), then made (it) well, [2] and who determined a measure (for everything), then guided (it), [3] and who brought forth pasturage, [4] then turned it into blackening stubble. [5] We will make you recite, then you will not forget [6] except that which Allah wills. Indeed He knows what is manifest and what is hidden. [7] And We will facilitate for you (to reach)

the easiest way. [8] So, extend advice (to people) if advice is useful. [9] The one who fears (Allah) will take to the advice, [10] and it will be avoided by the most wretched [11] who will enter the Biggest Fire, [12] then he will neither die therein, nor live (a life worth mentioning). [13] Success is surely achieved by him who purifies himself, [14] and pronounces the name of his Lord, then offers prayer. [15] But you prefer the worldly life, [16] while the Hereafter is much better and much more durable. [17] Indeed this is (written) in the earlier divine scripts, [18] the scripts of Ibrahim and Musa. [19]

Commentary

Ruling [1]

Scholars have ruled that when anyone recites the verse: سَبِّحِ اسْمَ رَبِّکَ الْاَعْلَی (Pronounce the purity of the name of your most exalted Lord...87:1) it is commendable to say:

سُبْحَانَ رَبِّیَ الْاَعْلٰی

'I pronounce the purity of my most exalted Lord.'

This was the practice of all the noble Companions, like Sayyidna 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbaā, Ibn 'Umar, Ibn Zubair, Abū Mūsā and 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd رضی اللہ عنہم اجمعین. Whenever they started reciting the Sūrah, they would recite:

سُبْحَانَ رَبِّیَ الْاَعْلٰی

'I pronounce the purity of my most exalted Lord.' [Qurṭubī].

It should be noted that the desirability of reciting this is outside of the prayer.

Ruling [2]

Sayyidnā 'Uqbah Ibn 'Āmir Al-Juhanī ﷺ narrates that when the Sūrah Al-A'lā was revealed, the Holy Prophet ﷺ instructed:

اجعلوها فی سجودکم

'Say this (Subḥāna Rabbiyal-A'lā) in your *sujūd* [prostrations]'

سَبِّحِ اسْمَ رَبِّکَ الْاَعْلَی (Pronounce the purity of the name of your Most exalted Lord.) The word *tasbiḥ* means 'to pronounce the purity' and سَبِّحِ اسْمَ رَبِّکَ signifies to 'honour the name of your Lord'. When the name of Allah is pronounced, it should be done with utmost humility and respect.

His name should be kept pure and free from anything that is unbecoming to His sublime status. Allah should be called by the names He Himself has stated or taught the Holy Prophet ﷺ. It is not permitted to call Him by any other name.

Ruling [3]

Besides, it is also included in the above imperative that there are some names exclusively meant for Allah; calling human beings or any other creation by those specific names is contrary to declaring the purity of Allah. Therefore, it is not permissible. [Qurṭubī]. Nowadays, people are not particular about names like 'Abdur Raḥmān, 'Abdur-Razzāq, 'Abdul Ghaffār and 'Abdul Quddūs. They call the persons bearing these names 'Raḥmān', 'Razzāq', 'Ghaffār', 'Quddus' and so on, for short. People have got into the habit of shortening such names without realising that the speakers as well as the listeners are committing a sin. People commit this joyless sin day and night without any reason.

Some commentators interpret the word *'ism'* does not mean 'name' in this verse. Instead, they say, it is referring to the *Dhāt* or the 'Being' of Allah. According to the Arabic expressions, this interpretation is not unlikely, and the Qur'ān has used the word *'ism'* in that sense also. The Ḥadīth that instructs us to recite the *tasbīḥ* in *sajdah* [prostration] is not "I pronounce the purity of the name of my most exalted Lord, but "I pronounce the purity of my most exalted Lord". This indicates that in this context *'ism'* is not used in the sense of 'name' but it refers to the Being of Allah Himself. [Qurṭubī]

Subtle and Profound Wisdom in the Creation of the Universe

ٱلَّذِى خَلَقَ فَسَوَّىٰ وَٱلَّذِى قَدَّرَ فَهَدَىٰ (who created [everything], then made [it] well, and who determined a measure [for everything], then guided [it]...87:2,3). All these are the attributes of the 'Most Exalted Lord'. The first attribute is *khalaqa* which does not simply mean 'to make' or 'manufacture'. It has a deeper significance: 'to bring out something from pure non-existence into the realm of existence without the help of any pre-existing matter'. (This is the correct meaning of 'creation'. If something is made with the help of some pre-existing matter, it cannot be called 'creation' in its original sense.) This is not within the power of anyone else. Only the perfect power of Allah can bring things into existence, whenever He wills, without the help of any pre-existing matter.

The second attribute, which is connected with *takhlīq* (creation), is *sawwā*. This word is derived from *taswiyah,* and it literally means 'to make well or equal'. The verse signifies that Allah made the constitution of everything symmetrical or made it congruously consistent in its several parts, the body structure, shape and size, limbs and organs. Man and every other animal is adapted to the requirements of wisdom. The hands and legs, the tips of the fingers and toes have joints with different types of springy connective tissues that make it possible to bend and fold in different ways. If we look at another limb or organ of human body, its symmetry and balance baffles our imagination and is sufficient for us to believe in the consummate wisdom and power of the Creator of the universe.

The third attribute is *qaddara* which is derived from *taqdīr* and it means 'to determine; to measure; to balance; to design symmetrically; to decree/ decide'. The word is used in the last sense here. The verse purports to say that things in the world have not been created without purpose. Everything has been created for a specific purpose, and has been endowed with natural capacities to fit its function. If we look carefully, the principle does not apply only to specific species. Every member of the universe has been assigned a specific function to perform. We witness the manifestation of the assignments in the sky, the stars, lightning, rain, humans, animals, vegetation and minerals.

Maulānā Rūmī رحمه الله تعالیٰ **says:**

خاک و باد و آب و آتش بندہ اند..........بامن و تومُردہ باحق زندہ اند

'The earth, the wind, the water and the fire___all of them are slaves of Allah.

According to me and you, they are senseless, but according to Allah, all of them are alive and sensible.

Allah has especially geared man and every species of animals to do particular works and they perform them according to their natural inclination, and their predisposition pivots around their respective tasks.

ہریکے رابہر کارے ساختند...............میل اور اوردلش اند اختند

Allah has created everything for a particular purpose
And has filled its heart with inclination towards it.

The fourth attribute of Allah is *fa-hadā* 'then guided it'. In other words, The Creator of the universe did not create things and left them to their own mercy to perform their particular function as they like, but they are shown the way in which they should be performed. As a matter of fact, He guided the entire creation by equipping each member of it with suitable nature to function for which it was created, whether the member is the sky or celestial creation, or it is the earth or the earthly creation. They all possess a special type of sense, though it is of a lower than that of man. The Qur'ān says:

رَبُّنَا الَّذِیٓ اَعۡطٰی کُلَّ شَیۡءٍ خَلۡقَهٗ ثُمَّ هَدٰی

'Our Lord is He Who gave to each thing its form and nature, then guided it aright . [20:50]'

As a result, since the inception of their creation, the skies, the earth, the stars and planets, mountains and oceans are all performing their functions accurately, without any failure or deviation. Humans and animals, in particular, whose intellect and sensibility can be observed easily, have been invested with capabilities of fulfilling their minute needs and repelling harmful things in a way that baffles the one who thinks about it. Since man possesses sense and intelligence of a higher degree, his capabilities may not be so much surprising, but let us look into wild animals, ferocious animals or beasts of prey, birds and insects. Each and everyone of them is able to obtain its necessities of life. They are able to find their habitats. They have not acquired the skills of fulfilling their individual and communal needs through a teacher that may educate or train them, nor did they need any school or college to acquire this knowledge and skill. Their education and training comes directly from the Creator of the universe. It is this divine guidance that has been referred to in the Holy Qur'ān by saying,

رَبُّنَا الَّذِیٓ اَعۡطٰی کُلَّ شَیۡءٍ خَلۡقَهٗ ثُمَّ هَدٰی

'Our Lord is He Who gave to each thing its form and nature, then guided it aright . [20:50]'

and in this Sūrah thus:

وَالَّذِیۡ قَدَّرَ فَهَدٰی

'and who determined a measure (for everything), then guided (it), [3]'

The Knowledge of Science is a Divine Gift to Man

Allah has equipped man with the higher order of intelligence and sense. The entire universe is made subservient to him,__the earth, mountains and oceans and everything created therein are made to serve man and created for his benefit. However, full advantage of them is not possible unless man acquires knowledge and skill to put various things together and produce a new item. Nature has provided man with intelligence and understanding to excavate mountains and dive into the oceans to obtain minerals and marine objects. He composes certain items like wood, iron, steel, copper, brass and so on and makes new items of his need. This knowledge and technology is not dependent on scientific research and college or university education. Even illiterate people have been doing this since the inception of human existence . This is intrinsic science that Allah has endowed upon man as a natural gift. Later, man developed the capability of doing technical and scientific research. He thus made progress in various fields of science and technology. The capability to do this is also a Divine gift.

Obviously, science and technology does not create anything, but it merely shows the way to use the created things. The initial knowledge about their use is taught by Allah, but there is a wide scope to make progress in it by the capabilities Allah has bestowed to man, the manifestation of which we are witnessing in this scientific age day by day, and what further range of these abilities and talents will manifest in future is unknown. All this is the interpretation of *hadā* '[He] guided (it), [3] In other words, Allah has placed in them potentials and capabilities to perform their natural functions. But alas! the scientists are getting more and more negligent, rather blind to these realities day by day.

وَالَّذِىٓ اَخْرَجَ الْمَرْعىٰ. فَجَعَلَه‘ غُثَآءً اَحْوٰى (and who brought forth pasturage, then turned it into a blackening stubble....87:4, 5)

The word *mar'ā* means 'pasturage'. This is the land that has grass growing on it, and that is used for animals to graze. The word *ghuthā'* refers to 'stubble, and scum borne upon the surface of a torrent'. The word *aḥwā* is derived from the root *ḥuwwah* which refers to 'a kind of black colour that comes upon a dense vegetation'. The verse purports to depict the Divine power and wisdom related to herbage and vegetation. He grows the green vegetation and then He gradually turns it into black

colour, and it loses its freshness. This directs man's attention also to his end. His body radiating with health, beauty, smartness and alertness is a Divine gift, but its tenure of life is limited. Eventually it will come to an end.

سَنُقْرِئُكَ فَلَا تَنْسٰٓى. اِلَّا مَاشَآءَ اللّٰهُ (We will make you recite, then you will not forget, except that which Allah wills. Indeed He knows what is manifest and what is hidden....87:6,7). In the preceding verses, Allah depicted the manifestation of His Omnipotence and [profound] wisdom. Thereafter, a few guidelines are given to the Holy Prophet ﷺ regarding his prophetic obligation. Before putting forth the guidelines, he is given the cheerful news of making his task easier. When the Qur'ān was revealed initially, and as Jibra'īl عليه السلام began to recite, the Holy Prophet ﷺ made haste to repeat, lest any word or sentence should be lost. He was, therefore, told not to make haste with it, and to wait until the angel had delivered the whole message, and then to repeat the words of the revelation, being assured that it was a Divine arrangement, and that nothing would be lost. On this occasion, he is still more plainly told: 'then you will not forget, except that which Allah wills.'

While Allah made the Holy Prophet ﷺ remember all of the Qur'ān, there were certain verses which Allah made him forget, because they had been abrogated. This was done by Allah's command, and is not done without reason. There are several ways in which this is done. One way of doing this is that a second clear injunction is revealed contrary to the first injunction. Another way of abrogating a particular verse is to obliterate a verse from the memory of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the memory of all other Muslims, as stated in:

مَانَنْسَخْ مِنْ آيَتٍ اَوْنُنْسِهَا

'Whenever We abrogate a verse or cause it to be forgotten. [2:106]'

Some scholars interpret the exceptive sentence 'except that which Allah wills' differently. They say that for some reason Allah blots out temporarily a verse from Holy Prophet's ﷺ memory, but he may remember it again, in support of which the following narrative may be adduced: One day the Holy Prophet ﷺ recited a Sūrah, but omitted one of the verses. Sayyidnā Ubayy Ibn Ka'b رضي الله عنه, one of the Prophet's scribes,

was present. He thought it might have been abrogated. On inquiry, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that it was not abrogated, but that it was omitted by mistake. [Qurṭubī]. In this interpretation, it may be summarised that forgetting a verse temporarily, and then remembering it again, does not go against the promise made in this verse. [In fact, it is an exception from this promise.] Allah knows best!

وَنُيَسِّرُكَ لِلْيُسْرٰى (And We will facilitate for you [to reach] the easiest way....87:8). The phrase 'the easiest way' refers to the sacred laws of Islam. Apparently, according to the demand of the context, it should have been stated 'We will make the Sharī'ah easy for you'. But the Qur'ān chose, instead, to state 'And We will facilitate for you (to reach) the easiest way. [8]'. The reason for that, probably, is to indicate that Allah will predispose him to the sacred laws, so that they will become part of his nature, and he will become an embodiment of Sharī'ah.

فَذَكِّرْ اِنْ نَّفَعَتِ الذِّكْرٰى (So, extend advice [to people] if advice is useful....87:9) The preceding verses described the facilities created by Allah for the Holy Prophet ﷺ in performing his Prophetic obligation. This verse commands him to perform his obligation. The verse contains the conditional particle '*in*' (if) that apparently makes the sentence a conditional statement. But, in fact, the command is not intended to be made conditional. It is rather an emphatic statement. This is similar to the grammatical phenomenon in many languages. The particle 'if' is sometimes used when something is always true. It is used for introducing a situation that always has the same meaning, result or effect. For example: "If you are a 'man' [obviously he is a man], then you will have to do this work;" In neither of such sentences, the particle 'if' is conditional, but rather emphatic. Likewise, the verse purports to say that preaching truth and righteousness is certainly useful. Therefore, the beneficial thing should never be abandoned at anytime.

قَدْ اَفْلَحَ مَنْ تَزَكّٰى (Success is surely achieved by him who purifies himself,..87:14) The word *tazakkā* is derived from *zakāh*, the primitive meaning of which is 'to purify'. The *zakāh* of wealth is so called because it purifies the rest of man's wealth for him. In this context, the word *tazakkā* is used in a general sense, which comprehends the purity of faith and character, and purity of wealth.

وَذَكَرَاسْمَ رَبِّهٖ فَصَلّٰى (and pronounces the name of his Lord, then offers prayer....87:15). This covers all categories of prayer, obligatory as well as supererogatory. Some commentators say that it refers especially to *'Id* prayers. This interpretation too can fall under the preceding category.

بَلْ تُؤْثِرُوْنَ الْحَيٰوةَ الدُّنْيَا (But you prefer the worldly life,...87:16). Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ says that people generally prefer the worldly blessings and comforts to the blessings and comforts of the Hereafter, because the former is visible and readily available, while the latter is invisible and unavailable readily. People unaware of reality preferred the visible to the invisible, which became the cause of eternal loss. In order to spare them the eternal loss, Allah, through His Messengers and Books, described to them the blessings and comforts of the Hereafter so clearly as if they can perceive them [through their sense organs]. It has been made plain to them that what they think is readily available and preferred, is actually fragile and will very soon perish. It is unwise to put one's heart into, or faith in, it and waste one's energy on it. Thus the Qur'ān says:

وَالْاٰخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ وَّاَبْقٰى (while the Hereafter is much better and much more durable...87:17). The verse purports to warn those who prefer this life to the Hereafter that they should use their intelligence to find out what they have preferred and what they have abandoned. They are, first of all, made to realise that the highest degree of comfort and pleasure in this life is not free from the mixture of grief and hardship. In the second place, it is not permanent. We experience in our daily life that a king of today becomes a pauper tomorrow. A vigorous youth of today becomes old tomorrow. In the Hereafter, on the other hand, there will be freedom from both these defects. All its blessings and comforts will be 'much better' and they cannot be compared to the blessings and comforts of this life. Most importantly, it is *abqa* 'much more durable'.

Let us consider the following scenario: It is said to a person that there are two houses in front of him, one of which is a magnificent mansion, fully furnished and another an ordinary, substandard house, not properly furnished. He has the choice to take the mansion, but only for a month or two. Thereafter, he will have to vacate the mansion. Or he may take the underdeveloped house that he will own permanently. Which of the two houses a wise person will prefer? The answer is obvious that he will prefer the second option. On this analogy, one should prefer the blessings of the

Hereafter even if, for argument's sake, they are substandard, because they are permanent and eternal. But the fact is that they are not only permanent, but also much better and far more superior to the worldly comforts. In this situation only an unfortunate fool will prefer the blessings of this life to the bounties of the Hereafter.

إِنَّ هٰذَا لَفِى الصُّحُفِ الْأُوْلٰى صُحُفِ إِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَمُوْسٰى (Indeed this is [written] in the earlier divine scripts, the scripts of Ibrāhīm and Mūsā....87:18, 19] In other words, either all the themes of this Sūrah or its last theme, that the Hereafter is much better and much more durable than this life, was written in the earlier Divine scriptures. It is further explicated that this theme was written in the scriptures of Prophets Ibrāhīm and Mūsā عليه السلام. Probably, it refers to other scriptures that were given to Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام before Torah. It is also possible that it refers to Torah itself.

Themes of the Scripts of Prophet Ibrāhīm عليه السلام

Ājurrī transmits a narration from Sayyidnā Abū Dharr Al-Ghifārī رضي الله عنه that he inquired from the Prophet ﷺ as to the contents of the scripts of Prophet Ibrāhīm عليه السلام and the Holy Prophet ﷺ replied that they contained educating parables . A story is told in it about a tyrant king where he is addressed and told: You haughty, arrogant and oppressive ruler! I did not give you kingdom so that you may amass wealth, but I had given you power so that you may let the supplication of the oppressed against the oppressor reach me, because my law does not reject the supplication of an oppressed, even though it may be uttered by an unbeliever.

Another parable addresses the general public thus: A wise person should divide his time into three parts. One part should be reserved for the worship of his Lord and supplication to Him. The second part should be reserved for self-assessment of his deeds, and reflection on the Omnipotence and creation of Allah. The third part should be allocated for acquisition of livelihood and fulfilling the natural needs. It further imparts that a wise person should keep himself abreast of the circumstances of his time, and keep himself busy in performing his intended work. He should take care of his tongue. He who takes speech as one of his works, his speech will be confined only to the things of real need .

Themes of the Scripts of Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام

Sayyidnā Abū Dharr Al-Ghifārī رضي الله عنه says that he then inquired from the Holy Prophet ﷺ as to the contents of the scripts of Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام and the Holy Prophet ﷺ replied that they contained lessons of wisdom. Some of them are as follows:

- I am surprised at the person who believes that he will certainly die, and yet he is lives happily.
- I am surprised at the person who believes in Divine destiny, and yet he is despondent and aggrieved.
- I am surprised at the person who experiences the vicissitudes of life and rise and fall of nations, and yet he is content with the world.
- I am surprised at the person who believes in the Reckoning of the Hereafter, and yet he abandons [good] deeds.

Sayyidnā Abū Dharr Al-Ghifārī رضي الله عنه says that he asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ whether anything from these scriptures was revealed to him, he replied in the affirmative and asked Sayyidnā Abū Dharr Ghifārī رضي الله عنه to recite verses 14-19 of this Sūrah. [Qurṭubī]

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-A'lā
Ends here

Sūrah Al-Ghāshiyah

(The Overwhelming Event)

This Sūrah is Makkī, and it has 26 verses

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 26

هَلْ اَتٰىكَ حَدِيْثُ الْغَاشِيَةِ ﴿١﴾ وُجُوْهٌ يَّوْمَئِذٍ خَاشِعَةٌ ﴿٢﴾ عَامِلَةٌ نَّاصِبَةٌ ﴿٣﴾ تَصْلٰى نَارًا حَامِيَةً ﴿٤﴾ تُسْقٰى مِنْ عَيْنٍ اٰنِيَةٍ ﴿٥﴾ لَيْسَ لَهُمْ طَعَامٌ اِلَّا مِنْ ضَرِيْعٍ ﴿٦﴾ لَّا يُسْمِنُ وَلَا يُغْنِىْ مِنْ جُوْعٍ ﴿٧﴾ وُجُوْهٌ يَّوْمَئِذٍ نَّاعِمَةٌ ﴿٨﴾ لِّسَعْيِهَا رَاضِيَةٌ ﴿٩﴾ فِىْ جَنَّةٍ عَالِيَةٍ ﴿١٠﴾ لَّا تَسْمَعُ فِيْهَا لَاغِيَةً ﴿١١﴾ فِيْهَا عَيْنٌ جَارِيَةٌ ﴿١٢﴾ فِيْهَا سُرُرٌ مَّرْفُوْعَةٌ ﴿١٣﴾ وَّاَكْوَابٌ مَّوْضُوْعَةٌ ﴿١٤﴾ وَّنَمَارِقُ مَصْفُوْفَةٌ ﴿١٥﴾ وَّزَرَابِىُّ مَبْثُوْثَةٌ ﴿١٦﴾ اَفَلَا يَنْظُرُوْنَ اِلَى الْاِبِلِ كَيْفَ خُلِقَتْ ﴿١٧﴾ وَاِلَى السَّمَآءِ كَيْفَ رُفِعَتْ ﴿١٨﴾ وَاِلَى الْجِبَالِ كَيْفَ نُصِبَتْ ﴿١٩﴾ وَاِلَى الْاَرْضِ كَيْفَ سُطِحَتْ ﴿٢٠﴾ فَذَكِّرْ اِنَّمَآ اَنْتَ مُذَكِّرٌ ﴿٢١﴾ لَسْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِمُصَيْطِرٍ ﴿٢٢﴾ اِلَّا مَنْ تَوَلّٰى وَكَفَرَ ﴿٢٣﴾ فَيُعَذِّبُهُ اللّٰهُ الْعَذَابَ الْاَكْبَرَ ﴿٢٤﴾ اِنَّ اِلَيْنَآ اِيَابَهُمْ ﴿٢٥﴾ ثُمَّ اِنَّ عَلَيْنَا حِسَابَهُمْ ﴿٢٦﴾

Has there come to you the description of the Overwhelming Event? [1] Many faces on that day will be humbled, [2] working hard, exhausted. [3] They will enter

into the scorching fire. [4] **They will be made to drink water from a boiling spring.** [5] **There will be no food for them except from a thorny plant** [6] **that will neither nourish, nor satisfy hunger.** [7] **Many faces on that day will be full of glamour,** [8] **well pleased with their endeavour,** [9] **in a lofty garden,** [10] **in which they will not hear any absurd talk.** [11] **In it there is a running spring.** [12] **In it there are couches, elevated,** [13] **and goblets, well placed** [14] **and cushions, arrayed** [15] **and carpets, spread around.** [16]

So, do they not look at the camels how they are created, [17] **and at the sky, how it is raised high,** [18] **and at the mountains, how they are installed,** [19] **and at the earth, how it is spread out?** [20] **So, keep on preaching; you are only a preacher.** [21] **You are not a taskmaster set up over them,** [22] **but whoever turns away and disbelieves,** [23] **Allah will punish him with the greatest torment.** [24] **Surely towards Us they have to return,** [25] **then it is Our job to call them to account.** [26]

Commentary

وُجُوهٌ يَّوْمَئِذٍ خَاشِعَةٌ. عَامِلَةٌ نَّاصِبَةٌ (Many faces on that day will be humbled, working hard, exhausted...88:3). On the Day of Judgement, there will be two separate groups of people, believers and unbelievers, and their faces will be different. This verse describes the faces of the unbelievers. They will be downcast. The word *khāshi'ah* from the root word *khushū'* means 'to humble, humiliate, cast down'. This is the meaning of casting oneself down before Allah in prayer. People who did not cast themselves down before Allah in this world, their faces on the Day of Judgement will be downcast with humiliation and disgrace .

The other conditions of the unbelievers are *'āmilah* and *nāṣibah*. The word *'āmilah* from *'āmal* means 'to work hard' and *'āmil* or *'āmilah* in Arabic is used for 'a person who works continuously, so as to become completely tired'. The word *nāsibah* is derived from *nasab*. This word also refers to 'one who toils unceasingly so as to become totally exhausted'. It seems that the latter two conditions of the unbelievers relate to this world, because Hereafter is not a realm in which one has to work to become so tired and exhausted. Therefore, Qurṭubī and other commentators are of the view that the humbleness of their faces relates to the Hereafter, but their working hard and being exhausted refers to their work in this world. Given this interpretation, the sense is that many unbelievers exert

themselves in their false rituals, and work hard in their presumed acts of worship in the world, as for instance the Hindu Yogis and many Christian monks do. They endure many difficulties in the devotional acts of worship sincerely in order to seek the good pleasure of Allah, but being on wrong and idolatrous ways, they are not acceptable to, or rewarded by, Allah. Thus their faces show signs of exhaustion in this world; and in the Hereafter they will show signs of disgrace and humiliation.

Sayyidnā Ḥasan Baṣrī رحمه الله تعالىٰ reports that when Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ went to Syria, a Christian monk came to him. He was an old man, and on account of his religious exercises and great endeavours, his face was exhausted, his body was dry and his dressing was miserable. When Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ looked at him, he began to weep. People asked him about the cause of his weeping. He replied: "I pity the condition of this old man. This poor soul worked so hard and showed such readiness to lay down his life to achieve a particular purpose (that is, to gain the pleasure of Allah) but, alas! He could not achieve it. Then he recited the following verse:

وُجُوهٌ يَّوْمَئِذٍ خَاشِعَةٌ. عَامِلَةٌ نَّاصِبَةٌ

> Many faces on that day will be humbled, 'working hard, exhausted. [88:2-3]'

نَارًا حَامِيَةً (...[the] scorching fire...88:4). The word *ḥāmiyah* literally means 'hot' and 'scorching'. Although this is the natural property of fire that needed no mention, yet the specific reference to this quality of the fire brings out the point that the fire of Hell cannot be compared to the fire of this world. The heat of the fire of this world, some time or the other, is reduced or ends. But the fire of Hell is everlasting and eternal. Its heat will neither reduce nor end.

لَيْسَ لَهُمْ طَعَامٌ إِلَّا مِنْ ضَرِيعٍ (There will be no food for them except from a thorny plant...88:6) The only food available for the inmates of Hell would be *ḍarī'*. In the world, this is a kind of thorny grass that spreads on the ground. No animal goes near it. It is foul-smelling, poisonous and thorny. [As interpreted by 'Ikrimah, Mujāhid, and quoted by Qurṭubī].

How will Grass or Tree Survive in Hell

One may ask the question that the grass or trees are among things that burn in fire. How will they survive in Hellfire? The answer is that

the Supreme Creator Who cherished and sustained them in this world with water and air, has the power and ability to make the fire itself the nutrient of these trees, so that they may flourish.

Another question may be raised here. The Qur'ān mentions several things as the food of the inmates of Hell. Here it refers to their food as *ḍarī'*. On another occasion, it refers to *zaqqūm*, and on a third occasion it refers to *ghislīn*. This verse restricts their food to *ḍarī'*, thus: 'There will be no food for them except from a thorny plant...88:6)

The answer is that the restriction in this verse is in contrast to a palatable food that may be fit for [human] consumption. *Ḍarī'* is cited here as an example. The verse means that the inmates of Hell will not get any palatable food. They will get worst, most disgusting and loathsome food like *ḍarī'*. Thus the purpose of mentioning *ḍarī'* is not restriction. In fact, *ḍarī'* includes *zaqqūm* and *ghislīn*. Qurṭubī says that it is possible there will be different levels in Hell, and on different levels there will be different kinds of food. On one level, there will be *ḍarī'* and on another level, *ghislīn*, and so on.

لَايُسْمِنُ وَلَا يُغْنِى مِنْ جُوْعٍ (that will neither nourish, nor satisfy hunger...88:7). When the preceding verse was revealed in which it was stated that the inmates of Hell will get food like *ḍarī'*, some of the pagans of Makkah [mockingly] said that their camels eat *ḍarī'* and yet they are fat and healthy. In response to their statement, the following verse of the Qur'ān was revealed which means that they should not compare the *ḍarī'* of this world with that of the Hereafter. The latter will neither provide nutrition, nor satisfy their hunger.

لَا تَسْمَعُ فِيْهَا لَاغِيَةً (in which they will not hear any absurd talk...88:11). It includes the words of disbelief, futile or idle talk, obscene language, calumny or false accusation, or any other talk that hurts people's feelings. On another occasion, the Qur'ān puts it thus:

لَايَسْمَعُوْنَ فِيْهَا لَغْوًا وَّلَا تَأْثِيْمًا

> 'They will hear neither an absurd talk therein, nor something leading to sin, [56:25]

This shows that false accusation and absurd talks are hurtful. That is why the Holy Qur'ān has described it as a blessing to the inmates of Paradise that no such foolish words will come across their ears that may

pollute their hearts.

Etiquette of Living

وَأَكْوَابٌ مَّوْضُوعَةٌ (and goblets, well placed...88:14) The word *akwāb* is the plural of *kūb* and it refers to a 'goblet', a 'glass' or a cup for drinking water. It has been qualified by the adjective *mauḍū'ah* and it means 'well placed'. This signifies that the glasses or cups or containers will be set in their due places close to water. This description opens an important chapter in setting down some of the rules of correct behaviour in social situations. The drinking containers for water ought to be placed near the water in the designated place. They should not be misplaced so that the other members of the household will have to look for them when they wish to drink water. This situation is irritating. Other household items of daily use, such as cans, glasses, towels, and so on, should be arranged in their designated places, and after using them, they must be kept back in their respective places, so that the other members of the household do not face any difficulty in finding them out. All this is deducible from the word *mauḍū'ah* 'well placed', because Allah has arranged the goblets near the water for the comfort of the inmates of Paradise.

اَفَلَا يَنظُرُوْنَ اِلَى الْاِبِلِ كَيْفَ خُلِقَتْ (So, do they not look at the camels how they are created...88:17) The Qur'ān first described the conditions of the Hereafter; and it then went on to depict the reward of the believers and the retribution of the unbelievers. Now it turns attention to rebuff the obdurate unbelievers' foolish denial of the Hereafter. They reject it on the ground that after death and decomposition of the body and bones it is inconceivable that they would be recomposed and resurrected. For their guidance, Allah invites their attention to reflect carefully on a few of His Signs. There are uncountable Signs of Allah in the universe. These verses refer to four of them specifically which suited the condition of the desert Arabs. They often travelled through the desert. In such a situation, all they saw were camels they travelled on. They mounted camels and covered long journeys. Above them was the sky and beneath them was the earth. All around them [left, right, front and back] they saw mountains. The Arabs are commanded to ponder over these four natural phenomena which make Allah's might manifest.

Among animals, the camel has certain peculiar characteristics that can be a reflection of Divine wisdom and power. It is the largest, most

robust and durable animal. Although elephant is a much larger animal than the camel, Allah has mentioned the camel rather than the elephant, because the Arabs knew camels and scarcely saw an elephant. Despite the fact that a camel is such a huge animal, a Bedouin Arab will not find it difficult to look after it even if he is poor. If he is unable to gather or afford food for it, it has to be let loose and will gather its own nutriment and live on leaves. It has a long neck to reach the tops of the high trees. The food of elephants and other animals work out expensive. In Arabian deserts, water is a scarce commodity. It is not available everywhere or anytime. Yet it can survive for about a week without water as Allah's Power has provided it with a small narrow-mouthed pouch in its paunch in which it stores up extra water [which it uses up gradually for seven to eight days]. Thus it is a superb draught beast. Nature has created it uniquely, so that it is perfectly adapted to survive the hazards of the harsh climate of the desert.

There is no need to set up a ladder to climb up the high animal. Allah has divided its legs into three levels. Each leg has two knees that it manoeuvres to sit down so that it becomes easier for riders to climb up and down. It is the chief beast of burden in deserts, and as such, it is able to carry large loads. It is most difficult to travel in daytime in Arabia because of scorching sunlight. Allah has made it possible for the camel to keep on travelling the whole night. Camels are so obedient that that even a little child can lead them along anywhere. Camels are very valuable to them in many other ways that teach man that Allah is Omnipotent and has consummate wisdom.

In conclusion of the Chapter, the Messenger of Allah is comforted thus:

لَسْتَ عَلَيْهِم بِمُصَيْطِرٍ (You are not a taskmaster set up over them,....88:22) The Holy Prophet ﷺ is told that he is only a preacher, and as such he must keep on preaching. He should not worry beyond that. It is for Allah to call the unbelievers to Him to render account of their deeds and actions, and punish them accordingly.

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Ghāshiyah
Ends here

Sūrah Al-Fajr

(The Dawn)

This Sūrah is Makkī, and it has 30 verses

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 30

وَالْفَجْرِ ﴿١﴾ وَلَيَالٍ عَشْرٍ ﴿٢﴾ وَّالشَّفْعِ وَالْوَتْرِ ﴿٣﴾ وَالَّيْلِ اِذَا يَسْرِ
﴿٤﴾ هَلْ فِىْ ذٰلِكَ قَسَمٌ لِّذِىْ حِجْرٍ ﴿٥﴾ اَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ فَعَلَ رَبُّكَ بِعَادٍ
﴿٦﴾ اِرَمَ ذَاتِ الْعِمَادِ ﴿٧﴾ الَّتِىْ لَمْ يُخْلَقْ مِثْلُهَا فِى الْبِلَادِ ﴿٨﴾
وَثَمُوْدَ الَّذِيْنَ جَابُوا الصَّخْرَ بِالْوَادِ ﴿٩﴾ وَفِرْعَوْنَ ذِى الْاَوْتَادِ ﴿١٠﴾
الَّذِيْنَ طَغَوْا فِى الْبِلَادِ ﴿١١﴾ فَاَكْثَرُوْا فِيْهَا الْفَسَادَ ﴿١٢﴾ فَصَبَّ
عَلَيْهِمْ رَبُّكَ سَوْطَ عَذَابٍ ﴿١٣﴾ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَبِالْمِرْصَادِ ﴿١٤﴾ فَاَمَّا
الْاِنْسَانُ اِذَا مَا ابْتَلٰىهُ رَبُّهٗ فَاَكْرَمَهٗ وَنَعَّمَهٗ فَيَقُوْلُ رَبِّىْۤ اَكْرَمَنِ ﴿١٥﴾
وَاَمَّاۤ اِذَا مَا ابْتَلٰىهُ فَقَدَرَ عَلَيْهِ رِزْقَهٗ فَيَقُوْلُ رَبِّىْۤ اَهَانَنِ ﴿١٦﴾ كَلَّا بَلْ
لَّا تُكْرِمُوْنَ الْيَتِيْمَ ﴿١٧﴾ وَلَا تَحٰٓضُّوْنَ عَلٰى طَعَامِ الْمِسْكِيْنِ ﴿١٨﴾ وَ
تَاْكُلُوْنَ التُّرَاثَ اَكْلًا لَّمًّا ﴿١٩﴾ وَّتُحِبُّوْنَ الْمَالَ حُبًّا جَمًّا ﴿٢٠﴾ كَلَّاۤ
اِذَا دُكَّتِ الْاَرْضُ دَكًّا دَكًّا ﴿٢١﴾ وَّجَآءَ رَبُّكَ وَالْمَلَكُ صَفًّا صَفًّا
﴿٢٢﴾ وَجِاىْٓءَ يَوْمَئِذٍۭ بِجَهَنَّمَ يَوْمَئِذٍ يَّتَذَكَّرُ الْاِنْسَانُ وَاَنّٰى لَهُ
الذِّكْرٰى ﴿٢٣﴾ يَقُوْلُ يٰلَيْتَنِىْ قَدَّمْتُ لِحَيَاتِىْ ﴿٢٤﴾ فَيَوْمَئِذٍ لَّا يُعَذِّبُ

عَذَابَهٗٓ اَحَدٌ ﴿٢٥﴾ وَّلَا يُوْثِقُ وَثَاقَهٗٓ اَحَدٌ ﴿٢٦﴾ يٰٓاَيَّتُهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ ﴿٢٧﴾ ارْجِعِيْٓ اِلٰى رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً ﴿٢٨﴾ فَادْخُلِيْ فِيْ عِبٰدِيْ ﴿٢٩﴾ وَادْخُلِيْ جَنَّتِيْ ﴿٣٠﴾

I swear by the dawn, [1] and by the Ten Nights, [2] and by the even and the odd, [3] and by the night when it moves away, [4] Is there (not) in that an oath (enough) for a man of sense? [5] Have you not seen how your Lord dealt with (the people) of 'Ād [6] of *Iram*, the men of tall pillars, [7] the like of whom were never created in the lands, [8] and (how He dealt) with (the people of) Thamūd who had carved out the rocks in the Valley (of Qura), [9] and with Fir'aun (the Pharaoh), the man of the stakes, [10] all those who had rebelled in the cities, [11] and spread a lot of mischief therein. [12] So, your Lord unloosed on them the whip of torment. [13] Surely your Lord is ever on the watch. [14] As for man, when his Lord tests him, and thus gives him honour and bounties, he says, "My Lord has honoured me." [15] But when he tests him, and thus straitens his provision for him, he says, "My Lord has disgraced me." [16] No! But you do not honour the orphan, [17] and do not encourage one another to feed the needy. [18] And you devour the inheritance with a sweeping gulp, [19] and love wealth, with an excessive love. [20] No! When the earth will be crushed thoroughly to be turned into bits, [21] and your Lord will come, and the angels as well, lined up in rows, [22] and Jahannam (Hell), on that day, will be brought forward, it will be the day when man will realise the truth, but from where will he take advantage of such realisation? [23] He will say, "O Would that I had sent ahead (some good deeds) for (this) my life!" [24] So, that day, no one can punish as He will punish, [25] nor can anyone shackle like He will shackle. [26]

(As for an obedient man, it will be said to him,) "O content soul, [27] come back to your Lord, well-pleased, well-pleasing. [28] So, enter among My (special) servants, [29] and enter My Paradise." [30]

Commentary

This Sūrah, by swearing five oaths in its beginning, emphasises the

following fact:

إِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَبِالْمِرْصَادِ

Surely your Lord is ever on the watch. [89:14]

This means that Allah is watching over whatever you do, and reward or punishment for your deeds is certain and inevitable.

The first among the five oaths sworn at the beginning is Fajr (dawn). It may refer to the dawn of every day that brings about a great change in the world, and thus directs man's attention to the absolute Omnipotence of Allah. It is also possible that it refers to the dawn of some specific day. Commentators like Sayyidnā 'Alī, Ibn 'Abbās and Ibn Zubair ﷺ say that the word is general, and it refers to any dawn. According to another narration of Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ, it refers to the dawn of the first of Muḥarram which is the start of the lunar-Islamic calendar. Sayyidnā Qatādah ﷺ, among others, has interpreted it in the same way.

Some commentators, like Mujāhid and 'Ikramah, refer this to the dawn of 'the Day of Sacrifice' on the tenth of Dhul Ḥijjah. A narration from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ concurs with this view. The reason for this specification is that according to Islamic principles, Allah has made a night to precede the day. All days are preceded by their respective nights, except the 'the Day of Sacrifice', because the night that precedes the Day of Sacrifice is not the night of Sacrifice. In fact, the preceding night, according to Shari'ah, is the night of 'Arafah. Staying at 'Arafāt is the most important and foremost rite of Ḥajj. If a pilgrim is not able to reach 'Arafāt on the 9th of Dhul Ḥijjah, any time in the day or in the night following it to halt there for a while, he will not be considered to have performed Ḥajj at all. However if he arrives there any time during the night before the break of dawn on the 10th of Dhul Ḥijjah, his halt in 'Arafah will be acceptable and his Hajj will be considered valid. This shows that the day of 'Arafah has two nights, one preceding it, and another following it. The Day of Sacrifice [10th of Dhul Ḥijjah] has no night. From this point of view, the dawn of the day of Sacrifice, among all the days of the year, occupies a special position. [Qurṭubī].

Next, it says:

لَيَالٍ عَشْرٍ (and by the Ten Nights...89:2) According Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās

ﷺ, Qatādah, Mujāhid, Suddi, Daḥḥāk, Kalbī and other leading commentators, the 'ten nights' refers to the [first] ten nights of Dhul Ḥijjah. It is recorded in Ḥadīth that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that the first ten days of Dhil Hijjah are the most meritorious days for Allah's worship. Every fast of the day is equivalent to fasts of the whole year. Worshipping Allah every night during this period is equivalent to worshipping Him on the night of Qadr. [Transmitted by Tirmidhī and Ibn Mājah with a weak chain of authorities from Abū Hurairah ﷺ- Maẓharī]. Abū-z-Zubair narrated from Sayyidnā Jabir ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said : وَالْفَجْرِ وَلَيَالٍ عَشْرٍ (I swear by the dawn and by the Ten Nights' refers to the first ten days of Dhul Ḥijjah. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ said that these are the ten nights that are mentioned in the story of Prophet Mūsā ﷺ: وَأَتْمَمْنٰهَا بِعَشْرٍ '... then We supplemented them with ten' [7:142]. Thus these are the ten nights in the whole year which are most meritorious. Imām Qurṭubī says that the Ḥadīth reported by Sayyidnā Jābir ﷺ indicates that the ten nights of Dhul Ḥijjah are most meritorious, and that the same ten nights of Dhul Ḥijjah were designated for Prophet Mūsā ﷺ.

وَالشَّفْعِ وَالْوَتْرِ (and by the even and the odd,...89:3). The Qur'ān has not specified what the words 'the even' and 'the odd' refer to. Therefore, the commentators have assigned different interpretations to them. Nevertheless, it has been mentioned in a Prophetic Ḥadith narrated by Abū-z-Zubair from Sayyidnā Jābir ﷺ thus:

(وَالْفَجْرِ.وَلَيَالٍ عَشْرٍ) هوالصّبح وعشر النحر والوتريوم عرفه والشفع يوم النّحر

'*Fajr*' refers to the dawn, and 'the ten nights' refer to the first ten nights of Dhul Ḥijjah [which include the Day of Sacrifice], and that *al-watr* [the odd] refers to the day of '*Arafah* [because it falls on the ninth] and *ash-shaf'* refers to the Day of Sacrifice [because it falls on the 10th day of Dhul Ḥijjah].'

Qurṭubī cites this narration and confirms that its chain of authorities is more authentic than the other tradition narrated by Sayyidnā 'Imrān Ibn Ḥusain ﷺ which talks about odd [three] and even [two/four] units of prayers. Therefore, Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ 'Ikramah and Naḥḥās رحمهما الله تعالى have preferred the view that 'even' refers to the Day of Sacrifice and 'odd' refers to the day of 'Arafah.

Some commentators like Ibn Sīrīn, Masrūq, Abū Ṣāliḥ and Qatādah رحمهما الله تعالى said that 'even' refers to the entire creation, because Allah

has created them in pairs, and thus He says:

وَمِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقْنَا زَوْجَيْنِ

> 'And from everything We have created (a pair of) two kinds [51:49]'

- belief/disbelief, happiness/unhappiness, light/darkness, night/day, cold/heat, sky/earth, human/Jinn and male/female as against all of these pairs, Allah is the only One Being 'odd' that does not have a pair:

هو الله الاحد الصّمد

'He, is Allah, the One, Besought of all, needing none'

وَالَّيْلِ إِذَا يَسْرِ (and by the night when it moves away...89:4). The word *yasr* is derived from *sarā* and means 'to walk in the night' or 'travel by night'. The verse says when the night itself moves away. It signifies 'when the night departs and goes away.' After taking oath by these five items, the next verse says:

هَلْ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ قَسَمٌ لِّذِيْ حِجْرٍ (Is there [not] in that an oath (enough) for a man of sense?...89:5). An intelligent person is, in a very special style, invited to think and reflect. The word *ḥijr* literally denotes 'to prevent'. The intellect has been called *ḥijr* because it prevents the person from doing which is unbecoming of him – actions or statements. Are these oaths not sufficient for a man possessed of intellect, sound reasoning, understanding and religious discernment? This sentence is in the form of interrogation to awaken man from his slumber. The subject of oaths is implied, though not stated explicitly. The verse purports to say that when man considers into the Majesty of Allah and reflects on the greatness of objects of oaths, it would be confirmed and verified that everyone has to give account of his deeds, and reward and punishment in the Hereafter is sure. In this connection, reference is made to the destruction of three previous nations: [1] the nation of 'Ād; [2] the nation of Thamūd; and [3] the nation of Fir'aun (the Pharaoh). 'Ād and Thamūd are two nations whose genealogy link up with Iram. Thus Iram may refer to both, 'Ād as well as Thamūd. Here however with 'Ād only the name Iram is linked for genealogical reasons:

اَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ فَعَلَ رَبُّكَ بِعَادٍ. اِرَمَ ذَاتِ الْعِمَادِ (Have you not seen how your Lord dealt with [the people] 'Ād of Iram, the men of tall pillars...(89:6-7). The word

'Iram' in verse [7] is, grammatically speaking, either *'aṭf bayān* (syndetic explicative) or *badal* (complement). The purpose of the construction is to specify one of the two tribes of 'Ād. This statement specifies that it refers to *'Ād-ul-'ūlā* (the early generation of 'Ād). A remnant from the former generation is referred to as *'Ād-ul-'Ukhrā,* because they are linked with their great-grand father Iram more closely than *'Ād-ul-'Ukhrā.* Here the Qur'ān refers to the first tribe as 'Ād Iram. In Surah An-Najm, they are described as: عَادَ نِ الْأُولَى (the earlier 'Ād,) [53:50]'

They are introduced here by the epithet: ذَاتِ الْعِمَادِ (the men of tall pillars)

The word *'imād'* and *''amūd'* means 'pillar'. The people of 'Ād are mentioned as the men of tall pillars because they were very tall in stature. They were a stronger and more powerful people than any other nations. The Qur'ān describes them explicitly, thus:

لَمْ يُخْلَقْ مِثْلُهَا فِي الْبِلَادِ (the like of whom were never created in the lands...89:8) The Qur'ān made it clear that this nation was the tallest and the strongest in their physical stature, but the Qur'ān did not state the exact measurement of the people because it was unnecessary [for Qur'ānic purposes]. Therefore, that detail has been left out. Israelite traditions, however, narrate such incredible reports about their stature, height and power that are difficult to believe. It is reported from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ and Muqatil that they were six yards or eighteen feet [5.46] tall. This too seems to be derived from Israelite reports. And Allah knows best!

Some commentators say that 'Iram' is the name of the 'paradise' which 'Ād's son Shaddād had built. The epithet 'possessor of tall pillars' [translated above as 'men of tall pillars'] is used for him. The [so-called paradise] was a lofty structure standing on tall pillars built with gold and silver and studded with jewels, gems and other precious stones, so that people may prefer an instant and ready at hand paradise instead of Paradise of the Hereafter. When this magnificent palace was ready for use, and Shaddād, together with the leaders of his kingdom, wanted to enter, Divine punishment overtook them. They, together with the palaces, were completely destroyed. [Qurṭubī]. In this interpretation, the verse refers to a specific punishment which descended upon the paradise built by 'Ād's son Shaddād. In the first interpretation, which the majority of

the commentators prefer, it refers to all the punishments that descended upon the nation of 'Ād.

وَفِرْعَوْنَ ذِى الْاَوْتَادِ (and with Fir'aun [the Pharaoh], the man of the stakes...89:10). The word *autad* is the plural of *watad* that means 'peg or stake or nail'. Fir'aun (the Pharaoh) is referred to as 'the man of the stakes'. There are several reasons for this. Majority of the commentators hold the view that he was so called because of the brute torture and cruel torment he inflicted on the people. When he was angry with people, he would hammer stakes into the ground and tie them to these, so that they could be tortured; or he would hammer stakes into their hands and feet, as they lay on the ground in the scorching heat of the sun, and leave them to the mercy of snakes and scorpions. Other commentators have recounted a lengthy story about his wife 'Āsiyah. She embraced 'Īmān (the True Faith) and expressed it to Fir'aun (the Pharaoh). This angered him and he inflicted on her the same type of brute torture and destroyed her. [Maẓharī].

فَصَبَّ عَلَيْهِمْ رَبُّكَ سَوْطَ عَذَابٍ (So, your Lord unloosed on them the whip of torment....89:13). The punishment inflicted upon them as a result of their mischief is referred to here as a 'whip of torment'. It signifies that just as lashes are inflicted across different parts of the body, the torment these nations received was similar to it in that they suffered different kinds of punishment.

اِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَبِالْمِرْصَادِ (Surely your Lord is ever on the watch....89:14]. The word *mirṣād* or *marṣad* [is derived from the root *raṣada* which means 'to lie in wait or on watch']. Thus it means 'an ambush, or a place of observation; it is usually used for a place where persons have to travel through a pass in which someone is lying in wait to strike them'. The verse purports to say that Allah is ever watching and observing their movements and activities. No one should think that he could escape Divine torment, because all are under His authority and Power, and He may administer His punishment whenever He wills. Some commentators state that this verse is the subject of the five oaths mentioned taken in the first five verses of this Sūrah.

Wealth and Poverty are no Signs of One's Acceptance or Rejection

فَيَقُوْلُ رَبِّىٓ ہ فَاَمَّا الْاِنْسَانُ اِذَا مَا ابْتَلٰىهُ رَبُّهٗ فَاَكْرَمَهٗ وَنَعَّمَهٗ ، فَيَقُوْلُ رَبِّىٓ اَكْرَمَنِ وَاَمَّآ اِذَا مَا ابْتَلٰىهُ فَقَدَرَ عَلَيْهِ رِزْقَهٗ لا

اَهَانَنِ (As for man, when his Lord tests him, and thus gives him honour and bounties, he says, "My Lord has honoured me. But when he tests him, and thus straitens his provision for him, he says, "My Lord has disgraced me...89:15-16). The word 'man' here primarily refers to an 'unbelieving man' who may form any thought about Allah as he feels like, but in its general sense, the word may include a Muslim as well who has the same thought as an unbeliever. When Allah gives abundant wealth and good health to such people, the devil puts into their head two false ideas. First, they succumb to their baser instincts; they become haughty and arrogant; and they think that the wealth and health is the result of their superior intellect, personal capability, efforts and achievement. Secondly, they think that they are enjoying a favourable status with Allah. If they did not enjoy the favourable position with Him, they would not have been granted such an abundance of wealth. By the same token, if Allah curtails their sustenance i.e. they suffer some degree of poverty, they regard it as a curse from Allah, and complain that He is humiliating or dishonouring them, while they deserved honour and respect. The unbelievers and idolaters do hold such thoughts and ideas, as the Qur'ān has pointed out on many occasions, but it is regrettable that many Muslims nowadays fall into similar ideas. Allah refutes man's belief by the expression كَلَّا Kallā 'No/never!' The matter is not as he claims. Wealth does not indicate acceptance of a man by Allah, nor does poverty indicate rejection. [For indeed Allah gives wealth to those whom He loves and those whom He does not love. Likewise, He withholds sustenance /wealth from those whom He loves and those whom He does not love.] Often the matter is quite the contrary. Fir'aun (the Pharaoh) claimed godhead and lordship, yet he never suffered from any headache. Some of Prophets ﷺ were sliced, by enemies, into two pieces with a saw. The Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said that the poor refugees will enter Paradise forty years before the wealthy *muhājirs* (Immigrants). [Imām Muslim has transmitted it from 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar رضي الله عنه - Maẓharī]. In another narration, the Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said that whomever Allah loves, He keeps him away from the worldly luxuries as people keep away their sickly patients from water. [Aḥmad and Tirmidhī transmitted it on the authority of Qatādah Ibn Nu'mān__ Maẓharī].

Spending on the Orphan is not Sufficient. Their respect is also necessary

لَاتُكْرِمُوْنَ الْيَتِيْمَ (No! But you do not honour the orphan....89:17). The

unbelievers are warned, in these verses, against some of their evil character traits. First, as is mentioned in this verse, they do not honour and treat the orphans kindly. The basic objective of the verse is that they deprive them of their rights, and do not spend on them what is due to them, but the expression used is that they do not honour them, probably to indicate that the requirement of Allah's gratitude, and also of humanitarian sense, is not only that the orphans are given their dues by spending wealth on them, but it is also necessary to honour them and treat them kindly. The guardians should not despise and look down upon their wards, and to discriminate them against their own children. This is apparently a rebuff to the unbelievers who think that wealth is an 'honour' and poverty is a 'dishonour'. After refuting their thoughts and ideas with the expression Kallā 'No/ never!', the verse under comment progresses to say *bal* 'But' that they are deprived of sustenance, because they squander it in immoral pursuits, depriving the orphans of their rights in it.

وَلَاتَحٰٓضُّوْنَ عَلٰى طَعَامِ الْمِسْكِيْنِ (and do not encourage one another to feed the needy....89:18). This is the second evil trait of the unbelievers. The style of this verse, in condemning the evil trait of the unbelievers, indicates that it is an obligation of the affluent to spend on the poor and indigent from their own wealth. Obviously, the poor are unable to spend owing to lack of means, but they should at least encourage others to feed the needy.

وَتَاْكُلُوْنَ التُّرَاثَ اَكْلاً لَّمًّا (And you devour the inheritance with a sweeping gulp...89:19). The word *lamm* means to 'gather, amass, concentrate the thing'. This is the third evil trait of the unbelievers, and the verse signifies that they devour inheritance with voracious appetites however they can get it, whether by lawful means or unlawful means. They gather them all together to make a sweeping gulp. When someone passes away, they take their own shares, together with the shares of others, regardless of whether the shares belong to orphans, widows or people who are absent. [As a matter of principle,] it is not permitted to mix up lawful and forbidden wealth in any transaction. Here, however, 'inheritance' has been particularly mentioned, probably because having a greedy eye on it and pursuing it are a proof of man's greed and voracity for wealth. He stares at it like a beast of prey waiting for the person to die, and looking for the opportunity to distribute the estate. But an honourable man of

principle and a noble person would not look at the wealth of the deceased with greedy eyes.

وَتُحِبُّوْنَ الْمَالَ حُبًّا جَمًّا (and love wealth, with an excessive love....89:20). The word *jamm* means 'excessive'. This verse refers to the fourth evil trait of the unbelievers. They have an insatiable love for wealth. The word 'excessive' indicates that love of wealth in itself, in a sober sense, is a natural instinct of man. That has not been condemned here. What is denounced is the excessive or insatiable love of wealth. After describing the evil traits of the unbelievers, the passage reverts to the main theme that was emphasised in the earlier part of the Sūrah with five oaths, that is, the punishment of the Hereafter. In this connection, it first mentions the process of the end of the world, and subsequently the establishment of the Day of Resurrection, thus:

كَلَّا اِذَا دُكَّتِ الْاَرْضُ دَكًّا دَكًّا (No! When the earth will be crushed thoroughly to be turned into bits...89:21). The word *dakk* literally means 'to pound or crush a thing into bits and pieces'. This refers to the earthquakes that will crush and ground the mountains to dust. The world will thus be dissolved. This will be the first stage of Resurrection. When this stage of Resurrection ends, the second stage of Resurrection will begin. The word *dakkan* is repeated in order to show that there will be a series of earthquakes before the dissolution of the world.

وَجَآءَ رَبُّكَ وَالْمَلَكُ صَفًّا صَفًّا (and your Lord will come, and the angels as well, lined up in rows....89:22) They will arrive in the Plain of Gathering. The words 'your Lord will come' is an allegorical expression. No one, besides Allah, knows the nature of His coming. The words 'and the angels [will arrive] as well, lined up in rows' are clear in meaning.

وَجِایْٓءَ یَوْمَئِذٍ بِجَهَنَّمَ یَوْمَئِذٍ یَّتَذَکَّرُ الْاِنْسَانُ وَاَنّٰی لَهُ الذِّکْرٰی (and *Jahannam* [Hell], on that day, will be brought forward, it will be the day when man will realise the truth, but from where will he take advantage of such realisation?.... 89:23). No one, besides Allah, knows how exactly 'Hell' will be brought forward in the Plain of Gathering. Apparently, 'Hell' which is at the moment beneath the seventh earth will at that moment will flare up, and the oceans become part of the flame. In this way, Hell during the gathering will be in front of all.

یَوْمَئِذٍ یَّتَذَکَّرُ الْاِنْسَانُ وَاَنّٰی لَهُ الذِّکْرٰی (it will be the day when man will realise the

truth, but from where will he take advantage of such realisation? - 89-23). The word *tadhakkur* in this context means 'to realise'. The unbelievers will realise the errors of their ways in the Hereafter, but it will be too late, because it is this present world where 'Īmān and good deeds benefit the people. The Hereafter is the place only for reckoning and retribution. Man will express his remorse thus:

يَقُوْلُ يٰلَيْتَنِىْ قَدَّمْتُ لِحَيَاتِىْ (He will say, "O Would that I had sent ahead [some good deeds] for [this] my life!"....89:24). When he faces the torment of disbelief and idolatry on that day of devastation, man will lament that he should have carried out good deeds and refrained from sin in this world to be saved from punishment in the Hereafter. But it will be of no avail. Allah says: 'So, that day, no one can punish like He will punish, nor can anyone shackle like He will shackle....89:26] Having described the torment of the unbelievers, the conclusion of the Sūrah gives cheerful news to the believers that they will be admitted into Paradise. Thus it says:

يٰٓاَيَّتُهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ ("O contented soul...89:27). Here the soul of the believer is referred to as *nafs muṭma'innah* 'the contented soul'. The word *muṭma'innah* literally means 'calm'. It refers to the soul that is 'peaceful and tranquil' as a result of remembrance and obedience of Allah. When he abandons it, he feels restless. This is probably the same soul as is made pure, through spiritual exercises and discipline, from the evil traits and bad conduct. Obedience of Allah and His remembrance becomes his predisposition. Sharī'ah becomes his nature.

اِرْجِعِىْٓ اِلٰى رَبِّكِ (come back to your Lord....89:28). The words 'come back' indicate that his first place was with his Lord, and now he is commanded to go back to Him. This confirms the narration that the souls of the believers, together with their Book of Deeds, will be in *'illiyīn*. *'Illiyīn* is a place on the seventh heaven in the shade of the Throne of the Most-Merciful Lord. This is the original resting-place of all human souls, from where they are brought out and put into human body. After death, the souls are returned to that place.

رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً (...well-pleased, well-pleasing....89:28). [The true believer's] soul is well-pleased with decrees destined by Allah and His legislative commands, and Allah too is well-pleased with His slave. The slave's being pleased with Allah's decrees and injunctions is a sign that Allah is pleased

with him. Had Allah not been pleased with him, he would not have had the ability to be pleased with Allah's decree. The true believer's soul is pleased even on his death at the moment of death. Sayyidnā 'Ubādah Ibn Ṣāmit ﷺ narrated from the Holy Prophet ﷺ, as follows:

من احب لقاء الله احبّ الله لقائه، ومن كره لقاء الله كره الله لقائة.

"He who loves to meet Allah, Allah loves to meet him; and he who dislikes to meet Allah, Allah dislikes to meet him."

When Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها heard this, she asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ: "We will be able to meet Allah only after death, but we do not like death." The Holy Prophet ﷺ replied: "That is not the case. The truth of the matter is that when death approaches a believer, the angels give him the cheerful news of Paradise and Allah's pleasure. This news makes death dearer to him. Likewise, when death approaches an unbeliever, the torment and punishment is presented to him. This situation makes the death a hateful and reprehensible thing to him." [Transmitted by Bukhārī and Muslim - Maẓharī]. In short, the love and hatred for death of the present time is not counted. What counts is [the love of] death, or [the love of] meeting Allah at the time of the extraction of soul [from the physical body] and [the love of] Allah's pleasure. This is the significance of the phrase: "Well-pleased, well-pleasing"

فَادْخُلِىْ فِىْ عِبٰدِىْ (So, enter among My [special] servants...89:29). In other words, the contented soul will be addressed [compassionately], and first asked to enter the fold of righteous and sincere slaves, and then to enter Paradise. This indicates that entry into Paradise depends on their being, first and foremost, in the fold of the righteous believers. Then they will enter Paradise all together. This shows that joining the company of the righteous in this world is a sign that he will enter Paradise with them. Thus Prophet Sulaimān عليه السلام prayed:

وَاَدْخِلْنِىْ بِرَحْمَتِكَ فِىْ عِبَادِكَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ

'...and admit me, by Your mercy, among Your righteous slaves...[27:19]'

Prophet Yūsuf عليه السلام prayed:

وَاَلْحِقْنِىْ بِالصّٰلِحِيْنَ

'...and make me join the righteous. [12:101]'

The above supplications indicate that the company of the righteous is such a great blessing that even the Holy Prophets ﷺ cannot do without, as a result they pray for it.

وَادْخُلِي جَنَّتِي (and enter My Paradise.....89:30]. In this verse, Paradise is attributed to Allah, and Allah said 'My Paradise'. This is a great honour, and indicates that Paradise will not only have all sorts of eternal comfort, but above all it is a place of Allah's pleasure.

The preceding verses describe the reward of the believers in such a manner that on behalf of Allah, the angels will address their souls honourably and in a befitting manner, as in the verses. It is not clear when they will be addressed. Some commentators say that they will be addressed on the Day of Reckoning after the reckoning is over. The context of the verses confirms this. The punishment of the unbelievers was described above. That will take place in the Hereafter after the Judgement has been passed. It is obvious that the believers will be addressed at the same time. Other scholars indicate that the believers will be addressed in this world at the time of death. Many authentic traditions bear testimony to the veracity of this view. Ibn Kathīr, on the other hand, reconciles the apparently conflicting statements thus: Allah will address the soul of the believers twice with these words. Once at the time of death, and again on the Day of Judgement.

Sayyidnā 'Ubādah Ibn Ṣāmit's ؓ narration cited earlier supports the view that the address will be at the time of death. In a lengthy narration of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ؓ, recorded in Musnad of Aḥmad, Nasā'ī and Ibn Mājah, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: "When death approaches a believer, the angels of mercy bring to him a piece of white silk and say: اخرجی راضية مرضيّة الى روح الله وريحانه 'Come out [from this body], well-pleased and well-pleasing, to Divine mercy and to the eternal comforts of Paradise' [to the end of narration.]" Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ says that one day he recited the verse يٰٓاَيَّتُهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ (O contented soul) in the presence of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, Abū Bakr ؓ who was present in the assembly, said: "O Allah's Messenger, what a fine address and honour!" The Holy Prophet ﷺ said: "Behold, the angel will address you thus after your death."

A Few Strange Incidents

Sa'īd Ibn Jubair ؓ reports that Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ passed

away in Ṭā'if. After the funeral was prepared, a strange bird, the like of which was never seen before, came and entered the body, but no one saw it coming out of it. When it was lowered into the grave for burial, an invisible voice was heard reciting from the side of the grave: يَٰٓأَيَّتُهَا ٱلنَّفْسُ ٱلْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ Everyone looked around, but could not find anyone. Another incident is recorded by Ḥāfiẓ Ṭabarānī in his book Kitāb-ul-'Ajā'ib. He narrates with his chain of authorities, an incident about Fattān Ibn Razīn Abī Hāshim that once they were imprisoned in a Roman city. They were presented before their king. The king was an infidel. He coerced them to adopt his religion, and threatened them that if anyone refuses to comply with his command, he would be beheaded. They were a few people. Three of them feared for their lives, adopted his religion and thus became apostates. The fourth person refused to adopt the king's religion. He was beheaded and his head was thrown into a nearby river. When it was thrown, the head went to the bottom of the river. Later, it emerged from the water and came to the surface. Then it looked at the other three persons, and calling each one of them by name, recited:

يَٰٓأَيَّتُهَا ٱلنَّفْسُ ٱلْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ ﴿٢٧﴾ ٱرْجِعِىٓ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً ﴿٢٨﴾ فَٱدْخُلِى فِى عِبَٰدِى ﴿٢٩﴾ وَٱدْخُلِى جَنَّتِى ﴿٣٠﴾

"O contented soul, [27] come back to your Lord, well-pleased, well-pleasing. [28] So, enter among My (special) servants, [29] and enter My Paradise."[30]

After that it dived back into the water.

This was an unusual incident which everyone witnessed and heard. When the Christians of that place witnessed this, almost all of them embraced Islam which shook up the king's throne. The three persons who had become apostates reverted to Islam. Caliph Abū Ja'far Manṣūr had them all released from their [enemy's] prison.

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Fajr
Ends here

Sūrah Al-Balad

(The City)

This Sūrah is Makkī, and it has 20 verses

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 20

لَآ اُقۡسِمُ بِهٰذَا الۡبَلَدِ ﴿۱﴾ وَاَنۡتَ حِلٌّۢ بِهٰذَا الۡبَلَدِ ﴿۲﴾ وَوَالِدٍ وَّمَا وَلَدَ ﴿۳﴾ لَقَدۡ خَلَقۡنَا الۡاِنۡسَانَ فِىۡ كَبَدٍ ﴿۴﴾ اَيَحۡسَبُ اَنۡ لَّنۡ يَّقۡدِرَ عَلَيۡهِ اَحَدٌ ﴿۵﴾ يَقُوۡلُ اَهۡلَكۡتُ مَالًا لُّبَدًا ﴿۶﴾ اَيَحۡسَبُ اَنۡ لَّمۡ يَرَهٗۤ اَحَدٌ ﴿۷﴾ اَلَمۡ نَجۡعَلۡ لَّهٗ عَيۡنَيۡنِ ﴿۸﴾ وَلِسَانًا وَّشَفَتَيۡنِ ﴿۹﴾ وَهَدَيۡنٰهُ النَّجۡدَيۡنِ ﴿۱۰﴾ فَلَا اقۡتَحَمَ الۡعَقَبَةَ ﴿۱۱﴾ وَمَاۤ اَدۡرٰىكَ مَا الۡعَقَبَةُ ﴿۱۲﴾ فَكُّ رَقَبَةٍ ﴿۱۳﴾ اَوۡ اِطۡعٰمٌ فِىۡ يَوۡمٍ ذِىۡ مَسۡغَبَةٍ ﴿۱۴﴾ يَّتِيۡمًا ذَا مَقۡرَبَةٍ ﴿۱۵﴾ اَوۡمِسۡكِيۡنًا ذَا مَتۡرَبَةٍ ﴿۱۶﴾ ثُمَّ كَانَ مِنَ الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا وَتَوَاصَوۡا بِالصَّبۡرِ وَتَوَاصَوۡا بِالۡمَرۡحَمَةِ ﴿۱۷﴾ اُولٰٓئِكَ اَصۡحٰبُ الۡمَيۡمَنَةِ ﴿۱۸﴾ وَالَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا بِاٰيٰتِنَا هُمۡ اَصۡحٰبُ الۡمَشۡئَمَةِ ﴿۱۹﴾ عَلَيۡهِمۡ نَارٌ مُّؤۡصَدَةٌ ﴿۲۰﴾

I swear by this city, [1] and (O Holy Prophet,) you are going to be allowed to fight in this city [2] and by the father and that which he begot, [3] Indeed We have created man (to live) in hard struggle. [4] Does he think that no one has power over him? [5] He says, "I have spent a lot of wealth." [6] Does he think that no one has seen him? [7] Did We not make for him two eyes, [8] and a tongue and two lips, [9] and showed him the two

ways? [10] **Yet he did not make his way through the steep course,** [11] **And what may let you know what the steep course is?** [12] **(It is) freeing of the neck of a slave,** [13] **or giving food in a day of hunger** [14] **to an orphan near of kin,** [15] **or to a needy person lying in dust** [16] **then he did not join those who believe and advise each other to be patient and advise each other to be merciful.** [17] **Those are the People of the Right Hand. (i.e.their books of deeds will be given in their right hands)** [18] **As for those who reject Our verses, they are the People of the Left Hand. (i.e. their books of deeds will be given in their left hand.)** [19] **Upon them will be the Fire, enveloping them with closed exits.** [20]

Commentary

لَآ اُقۡسِمُ بِهٰذَا الۡبَلَدِ (I swear by this city...90:1). The particle *lā* ('no') in the beginning of this sentence has no meaning here. Such particles in Arabic language are commonplace. However, the more appropriate view is that when a Sūrah begins with a *lā* (no) followed by an oath, it was revealed in refutation to a false assumption of the opponents. In other words, Allah is saying, 'No, what you [the unbelievers] are saying or thinking is not correct, but the truth is what We are swearing about...'. The word *al-balad* 'the City' refers to the Holy City of Makkah, as in Sūrah Aṭ-Ṭīn [95:3] where Allah swears an oath 'by this peaceful City [of Makkah] وَهٰذَا الۡبَلَدِ الۡاَمِيۡنِ The adjective attached to the 'City' is 'peaceful'. This shows the superiority and honour of Makkah over other cities. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Adiyy ﷺ reports that when the Holy Prophet of Allah ﷺ was migrating from Makkah to Madīnah, he addressed the city of Makkah and said: "By Allah, you are dearer to Allah than the entire earth. If I was not forced out of this place, I would never have abandoned you." [Transmitted by Tirmidhī and Ibn Mājah vide Maẓharī].

وَاَنۡتَ حِلٌّۢ بِهٰذَا الۡبَلَدِ (and [O Holy Prophet,] you are going to be allowed to fight in this city....90:2). The word *ḥillun* bears two possibilities: [1] It could be derived from *ḥulūl* which signifies to reside in or to descend on some place. In this sense, *ḥillun* signifies 'a dweller or resident' and the verse purports to say that the city of Makkah itself is sacred, and since Holy Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ is the inhabitant of this city, it adds to the sanctity, honour and glory of the place. Thus, on account of the Holy Prophet's residing in that city its honour and sanctity has been enhanced and augmented. The second possibility is that it is derived from *ḥillatun*

which means 'the thing the doing of which is lawful'. From this point of view, *ḥillun* could signify one of two things: One that the pagans of Makkah consider it lawful to do the Holy Prophet ﷺ any harm, even to kill him, in this City of Makkah which is so sacred that the doing of harm to a living creature in its precincts, not to say of killing it or hunting it, is strictly forbidden even according to their own belief system . Secondly, this may be a prophecy that the city of Makkah is going to be made lawful for the Holy Prophet ﷺ in the sense that fighting in it will be allowed for him for a specified time, and He will alight in this City of Makkah, as it happened on the occasion of the Conquest of Makkah. On this occasion, all the injunctions and ordinances of the *ḥaram* were suspended for one day, and it was made lawful to kill the disbelievers. Maẓharī cites three possible meanings, and says that all three of them are equally possible.

وَوَالِدٍ وَّمَا وَلَدَ (and by the father and that which he begot,...90:3) The word *walid* refers to Holy Prophet 'Ādam عليه السلام, the father of mankind, and the phrase مَاوَلَدَ 'that which he begot' refers to his children from the inception of the world to the end of the world. Thus this phrase swears an oath by Holy Prophet 'Ādam عليه السلام and all his children. The subject of the oath follows next, thus:

لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ فِيْ كَبَدٍ (Indeed We have created man [to live] in hard struggle...90:4) The word *kabad* means 'labour, 'toil' or 'difficulty'. The verse purports to say that man's life is a series of hard and toilsome works. Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه says: 'Man was conceived and held in his mother's womb. The mother bore the pangs of birth. The hardship of sucking the mother's milk and the difficulty of weaning. This is followed by seeking livelihood and other necessities of life with hardship. Then he endures hardships and long-suffering of old age, death, grave, resurrection, accountability of deeds before Allah, reward and punishment.' These difficulties and hardships are not confined to man. Other animals too share them. Man has particularly been mentioned in this connection because of his intelligence. The more the power of a creature's intelligence, the higher the degree of his legal obligation. Lastly, the greatest difficulty and hardship would be borne at resurrection and life-after-death, when we will be required to give an account of the deeds we might have done throughout our life. Other species of animals will not be required to do this.

Some scholars say that no creation suffers as much difficulties or hardships as human beings, despite the fact that his body is smaller and weaker than most other animals. Man's brainpower, however, is most powerful. Therefore, he has been specifically mentioned. Swearing an oath by Makkah, 'Ādam عليه السلام and his children, Allah has made it plain that man has been created in difficulties and to endure hardships. This is a proof that man did not come into existence on his own but his Creator is an All-Powerful Being who has, in His wisdom, created every species of creation with specific predisposition and capacity of actions. If man had any part in his own creation, he would never have allowed such difficulties and hardships for himself. [Qurṭubī]

Absolute Comfort, without Hardship, Is not Possible in the World: Man Must be Prepared to Endure Hardships

The oath and its subject makes plain to man that his desire to live peacefully and comfortably in this world, without enduring any hardship, is a silly idea and false notion, which is not possible to happen. Therefore, it is necessary for difficulty, hardship, distress and affliction to befall every person. Since they are bound to befall, a wise person should be in readiness to work hard for something that may help him for an eternal life. The only factor that will help him for this is faith and obedience to the Truth.

Then, after describing a few of the ignorant disbeliever's qualities, the following verse says about an unbeliever: اَيَحْسَبُ اَنْ لَّمْ يَرَهٗٓ اَحَدٌ (Does he think that no one has seen him?...90:7) that is, his evil deeds. He should realise that his Creator watches every action of his.

اَلَمْ نَجْعَلْ لَّهٗ عَيْنَيْنِ ﴿٨﴾ وَلِسَانًا وَّشَفَتَيْنِ ﴿٩﴾ وَهَدَيْنٰهُ النَّجْدَيْنِ ﴿١٠﴾

(Did We not make for him two eyes, and a tongue and two lips, and showed him the two ways?....90:8-10)

The word *najdain* is the dual form of *najd* which means an elevated or conspicuous road. The word *najdain* signifies the two high and conspicuous ways of good and evil, or of success and destruction. The preceding verse pointed out the ignorance and heedlessness of man. He thinks that Allah has no power over him, and that there is no one watching over his actions. The current verse mentions a few of the organs and abilities that Allah has endowed him with. If he reflects carefully on these endowments, he will appreciate His infinite wisdom and power within himself. He has a pair of eyes. The optic nerves and tissues are

rather delicate. They send nervous impulses to the brain when stimulated by light rays from external objects. The structure of the eye itself is most delicate. Each eye consists of a hollow, spherical capsule [eyeball], made up of several layers and structures. It is set into a socket in the skull, and is protected by eyelids and eyelashes, and eyebrows. It works like an automatic machine. When a harmful object is seen coming from the front, the eyelids close on their own. The eyelashes block the dust from getting into the eyes. The eyebrows help keep things away from falling into the eyes directly from top. The facial bones, especially the orbit [eye socket and the cheek bones], protect the eye, if one were to fall on one's face or something were to fall on the face.

The second gift that man is endowed with is the 'tongue'. This organ - the articulator - is the most amazing and important creation. It is the long piece of flesh fixed to the bottom of the mouth that can represent thoughts of the heart, the automatic and mysterious machine. The heart works in an amazing way. A thought occurs in the heart, the brain interprets it, and prepares appropriate topic and words. The words are uttered by the tongue. Such a complex task is performed so swiftly that the listener does not even realise how many systems have worked before the distinguishable sounds, letters and words were uttered. Nature has equipped man with two lips that play an important role in articulating the different sounds, letters and words. Nature has made the tongue such a swift-working articulator that within half a minute it may utter a word which may take him out from Hell and admit him into Paradise, as the word of faith, or may endear him to his enemy in the world, as by seeking forgiveness of his shortcomings. The same tongue within the same short span of time may take him to Hell, as by uttering the word of disbelief, or may make him his biggest enemy who was previously his closest friend, as by using obscene language against him. The tongue has many benefits as well as many ways of destruction. It is a double-edged sword that can operate against an enemy, and it can also cut one's own throat. Therefore, Allah has kept it covered within the case of two lips. Probably, this is the reason why the pair of lips is mentioned. The Creator Who has endowed man with tongue has equipped him with a pair of lips in order to protect it. Therefore, he should be careful in its use. He should not unsheathe it unnecessarily. Allah has equipped him with a pair of eyes, a pair of lips and a tongue, and has equipped him with the ability to distinguish good from evil and right from wrong, thus:

فَأَلْهَمَهَا فُجُورَهَا وَتَقْوٰهَا

then inspired it with its [instinct of] evil and piety [91:8]'

Thus in the first instance man receives guidance from his own conscience. This is supported by the guidance of the Holy Prophets عليهم السلام and celestial books that clarify it.

In sum, an ignoramus and heedless person, who denies the power of the Omnipotent, should look into his own being, he would be able to observe His attribute of perfect power and consummate wisdom. He should observe with his two eyes and confess with his tongue. He has been shown the two ways of good and evil; and of right and wrong so that he may choose between the two. Obviously, he should choose the good way. In his make-up, there exists the ability to take either way. All these bounties have not motivated man to attempt the steep course. Then the heedless man is warned that he should reflect on the clear proofs and arguments pertaining to Allah's Omnipotence, pertaining to the Day of Judgement, life after death and Reckoning, and believe in these articles of faith. This faith requires that man should be a source of benefit and comfort to others; he should abstain from hurting them; he should believe in Allah; he should amend his own conduct and think of reforming others also, so that, on the Day of Judgement, he may be among the people of the right hand, the inmates of Paradise, enjoying a happy recompense for what he has done in this life. The unfortunate ones who persistently denied the Truth shall be encircled by the Hell-fire. This theme has been taken up from this point onward to the end of the Sūrah. Failing to do a few of the good deeds have been [selectively] described in a unique style.

فَلَا اقْتَحَمَ الْعَقَبَةَ ﴿١١﴾ وَمَآ أَدْرٰكَ مَا الْعَقَبَةُ ﴿١٢﴾

(Yet he did not make his way through the steep course. And what may let you know what the steep course is? ...90:11-12]'

The word *'aqabah* means 'hill, high place or a steep road'. It also refers to a 'low area of land between two hills or mountains, that is, a valley'. *'Aqabah* helps a man in saving himself when pursued by an enemy by ascending the summit of the mountain, or in escaping by descending into the valley. Here the word *'aqabah* refers to obedience and devotion. Just as it saves man from an enemy, righteous deeds save man from the punishment of the Hereafter. The righteous deeds are as follows:

فَكُّ رَقَبَةٍ ([It is] freeing of the neck of a slave...90:13). This is a great

devotional act [and carries a great reward because] it moulds a man's life.

اَوۡ اِطۡعٰمٌ فِیۡ یَوۡمٍ ذِیۡ مَسۡغَبَةٍ (or giving food in a day of hunger...90:14). Although it is an act of great reward to feed any hungry person, it carries even a greater reward to feed certain people, as follows:

یَتِیۡمًا ذَا مَقۡرَبَةٍ ﴿۱۵﴾ اَوۡ مِسۡکِیۡنًا ذَا مَتۡرَبَةٍ ﴿۱۶﴾

(to an orphan near of kin, or to a needy person lying in dust....90:15-16)

If an orphaned family member is given food to eat, its reward is two fold, for satisfying the hunger of a hungry person and for maintaining family ties and fulfilling his rights.

فِیۡ یَوۡمٍ ذِیۡ مَسۡغَبَةٍ (in a day of hunger...90:14). It means that feeding him in a day when he is hungry will attract more reward. If an orphan is not a close relative or family member, but he is so poor as to be wallowing in dust, spending on him will yield a greater reward. The poorer the person is, the greater will be the reward for the spender.

Obligations of a Believer

ثُمَّ کَانَ مِنَ الَّذِیۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا وَتَوَاصَوۡا بِالصَّبۡرِ وَتَوَاصَوۡا بِالۡمَرۡحَمَةِ (then he did not join those who believe and advise each other to be patient and advise each other to be merciful...90:17). The verse points out that the doing only of good actions mentioned in the foregoing verse is not enough for raising the all round stature of the Muslim community. Good ideals and right principles, combined with continuous and sustained adherence to the path of moral rectitude and teaching of virtues to others, are equally essential for the attainment of the high aim. Thus the verse after 'faith' draws the attention of a believer to his socio-moral obligation to the effect that he ought to teach his other Muslim brothers to be patient and to be merciful. The word *ṣabr* signifies 'to withhold oneself from evil deeds and to act upon good deeds'. The word *marḥamah* signifies 'to show mercy to one another or to empathise with others and abstain from hurting them.' This embraces almost all the injunctions of the entire religion.

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Balad
Ends here

Sūrah Ash-Shams
(The Sun)

This Sūrah is Makkī, and it has 15 verses

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 15

وَالشَّمْسِ وَضُحٰهَا ﴿١﴾ وَالْقَمَرِ اِذَا تَلٰهَا ﴿٢﴾ وَالنَّهَارِ اِذَا جَلّٰهَا ﴿٣﴾
وَالَّيْلِ اِذَا يَغْشٰهَا ﴿٤﴾ وَالسَّمَآءِ وَمَا بَنٰهَا ﴿٥﴾ وَالْاَرْضِ وَمَا طَحٰهَا ﴿٦﴾
وَنَفْسٍ وَّمَا سَوّٰهَا ﴿٧﴾ فَاَلْهَمَهَا فُجُوْرَهَا وَتَقْوٰهَا ﴿٨﴾ قَدْ اَفْلَحَ مَنْ
زَكّٰهَا ﴿٩﴾ وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسّٰهَا ﴿١٠﴾ كَذَّبَتْ ثَمُوْدُ بِطَغْوٰهَآ ﴿١١﴾ اِذِ
انْبَعَثَ اَشْقٰهَا ﴿١٢﴾ فَقَالَ لَهُمْ رَسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ نَاقَةَ اللّٰهِ وَسُقْيٰهَا ﴿١٣﴾
فَكَذَّبُوْهُ فَعَقَرُوْهَا فَدَمْدَمَ عَلَيْهِمْ رَبُّهُمْ بِذَنْۢبِهِمْ فَسَوّٰهَا ﴿١٤﴾ وَلَا يَخَافُ
عُقْبٰهَا ﴿١٥﴾

I swear by the sun and his broad light, [1] and by the moon when she follows him, [2] and by the day when it shows its brightness, [3] and by the night when it envelops him, [4] and by the sky, and the One who built it, [5] and by the earth, and the One who spread it, [6] and by the soul, and the One who made it well, [7] then inspired it with its (instincts of) evil and piety, [8] success is really attained by him who purifies it, [9] and failure is really suffered by him who pollutes it. [10] (The People of) Thamud denied the truth because of their transgression, [11] when rose up the one who was most wretched of them. [12] So, the Messenger of Allah said to them, "Be careful of Allah's she-camel and her right to drink."

[13] **But they rejected him and killed her, so their Lord sent eradicating torment upon them, and made it equal for all.** [14] **And He has no fear of its consequence.** [15]

Commentary

Allah swears by the objects and phenomena mentioned in verses [1-7], which gives these creations an added significance and draws man's attention to them. Man ought to reflect on these phenomena and try to appreciate their value and the purpose of their creation. The first oath is taken by:

وَالشَّمْسِ وَضُحٰـهَا (I swear by the sun and his broad light,...91:1). The phrase 'and his broad light' is, though conjoined to 'by the sun' by means of the conjunctive particle 'and', the context indicates that 'broad light' is in adjectival position qualifying *shams* 'the sun', that is to say, 'I swear by the sun when it is in the time of forenoon. The word *duha* is that part of the day when the sun rises [early in the morning] and goes up slightly higher [on the sky], and its light spreads on the earth. Man observes it to be near to himself and observes it fully on account of lack of heat.

The second oath is taken by:

وَالْقَمَرِ اِذَا تَلٰىهَا (and by the moon when she follows him,...91:2). This signifies one of two things: [1] The moon following the sun is seen clearly during the middle of the lunar months when the full moon rises to dominate the sky with its radiance after sunset. [2] The phrase 'when she follows him' could signify just as the sun is seen in full in broad light, so does the moon, following the sun, becomes full. The third oath is taken by:

وَالنَّهَارِ اِذَا جَلّٰىهَا (and by the day when it shows its brightness...91:3). The attached pronoun *hā* 'its' may possibly refer to the earth or the world, although neither of the nouns precedes it. Such usage in Arabic is commonplace, especially if the phenomenon, such as the earth or the world, with which man is generally familiar. In such a case Arabs commonly refer to the phenomenon simply by using a pronoun without making prior reference to it. The addressee understands the meaning by implication. The Qur'ān has many examples of, and bears ample testimony to, this grammatical phenomenon. The verse thus signifies 'by the day and by the world or the earth which the day has brightened up'. In other words, 'by the day when it is fully bright'. Another possibility, which is more pertinent to the context, is that the pronoun 'its' refers to the 'sun' in which case it signifies 'by the day when it brightens up the

sun'. This relation of attribution, in this case, would be a metaphorical relationship. Although the sun is usually understood to be the cause of the day to come out, here the day is said to brighten up the sun. Thus the verse would signify 'when the sun is seen brightened up because the day is out'.

The fourth oath is taken thus:

وَالَّيۡلِ اِذَا يَغۡشٰهَا (and by the night when it envelops him,...91:4). In other words, when it [the night] sets in, the brightness of the sun is concealed [and only darkness prevails].

The fifth oath is:

وَالسَّمَآءِ وَمَا بَنٰهَا (and by the sky, and the One who built it...91:5). Most clearly the context suggests that the *mā* may be taken as infinitival particle [*masdariyyah*], signifying 'by the sky and its make ' as elsewhere in the Qur'ān غَفَرَلِی رَبِّیۡ '...how my Lord has forgiven me [36:27]'[(1)]

The sixth oath is:

وَالۡاَرۡضِ وَمَا طَحٰهَا (and by the earth, and the One who spread it...91:6). The *mā* in this phrase too stands for *maṣdariyyah* or infinitival particle, signifying 'by the earth and its expanse'. The word *ṭaḥwun* means 'to spread'. Thus in the two verses above attention has been focused on the great Designer and Architect of the sky and earth [that is, the universe], and on the perfection and complete freedom from flaw or defect in the design and creation of the universe. Sayyidnā Qatādah ؓ and others reported this interpretation. Kashshāf, Baiḍāwī and Qurṭubī preferred this interpretation. Some of the commentators have taken *mā* in the sense of man 'the One Who' and refer it to 'Allah', signifying 'by the sky and its Maker and by the earth and One who spreads it. Thus far, all the oaths were taken by the created objects and phenomena. In between is taken oath by Allah. And Allah knows best! The seventh oath is taken thus:

وَنَفۡسٍ وَّمَا سَوّٰهَا (and by the soul, and the One who made it well,...91:7) If, in this phrase, the particle *mā* is taken to function as infinitival particle, it signifies 'by the human soul and its perfection'. If *mā* is taken in the sense of *man* (مَنۡ), it signifies 'by the soul and the One who proportioned it'. The

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1. It should be kept in mind that the translation of the text is not based on this construction. It is based on taking '*mā*' as *mousulah* in the sense of 'the one' as adopted by Maulānā Thanawī, and explained by the author in the following verse.

(Muhammad Taqi Usmani)

word *taswiyah* means, to proportion, balance, perfect. The meaning of this word has been explained in the previous Sūrah.

فَاَلْهَمَهَا فُجُوْرَهَا وَتَقْوٰىهَا (then inspired it with its [instincts of] evil and piety...91:8) The word *ilhām* denotes 'to cast into the heart'. The word *fujūr* denotes 'open transgression'. The meaning of *taqwā* is well-known. This sentence is linked with the seventh oath وَنَفْسٍ وَّمَا سَوّٰىهَا 'and by the soul, and the One who made it well, [91:7]', signifying that Allah has equipped man with human soul which has the capacity to distinguish between good and bad, and right and wrong. In other words, in his make-up Allah has built in him a special ability to choose freely the righteous path or the sinful path. Whichever way he takes out of his own free will, he will be rewarded or punished. This interpretation is deducible from a traceable Ḥadīth which is transmitted by Muslim on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Imrān Ibn Ḥuṣain ﷺ. The Holy Prophet ﷺ was sitting in the company of his followers. They asked him a question regarding Divine Destination. In response, the Holy Prophet ﷺ recited this verse. This verse will allay the doubt about Divine Destination only if the words 'then inspired it with its (instincts of) evil and piety, [91:8]' are taken in the sense that human soul has been inspired with conscience to distinguish between right and wrong, and has also been granted the ability to do good as well as the ability to commit sin. Man is not a creature of pure force or coercion. He has free will to choose his path of good or evil. He, in fact, has the option to do good or refrain from sin. The choice is his, for which he is rewarded or punished.

Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah and Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ report that whenever the Holy Prophet ﷺ recited the verses [91:7-8] under comment would stop and recite the following supplication aloud:

اَللّٰهُمَّ اٰتِ نَفْسِىْ تَقْوٰىهَا اَنْتَ وَلِيُّهَا وَمَوْلَاهَا وَاَنْتَ خَيْرُ مَنْ زَكّٰىهَا

'O Allah! Give my soul its good. You are its Guardian and Master, and the best to purify it.'

قَدْ اَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكّٰىهَا وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسّٰىهَا (success is really attained by him who purifies it, and failure is really suffered by him who pollutes it....91:10). This is the subject of the seven oaths. The primitive meaning of *tazkiyah* is 'inner cleanliness', signifying 'he who obeyed Allah and purified his inner and outer selves.' Verse [10] signifies 'he who caused his soul to sink in the swamp of sins will be deprived'. The word *dassa* is derived from the basic word *dass'* which denotes 'to bury in the ground' as for instance it

occurs elsewhere in the Qur'ān, thus:

اَمْ يَدُسُّهٗ فِى التُّرَابِ

'...or put it away into the dust? [16:59]'

Some of the commentators have analysed that the pronouns of *zakka* 'He purified' and *dassa* 'He caused to pollute' as referring to 'Allah', signifying that 'he is successful indeed whose soul Allah has purified and he has failed whose soul Allah pollutes '. This verse has divided the entire mankind into two groups: [1] successful; and [2]nsuccessful. An example of the second group has been cited to show how it rejected the message of Allah and consequently how Allah destroyed them. Such a group will receive severe punishment in the Hereafter. Sometimes, however, an instalment of punishment is meted out to them in this world as in the case of Thamūd. Their story is recounted fully in Sūrah A'rāf [S.7:73-79; S.11:61-68; S. 26:141-159; S.27:45-53; S..41:17-18; S.54:23-32; and S. 69:4-5]. Here a brief reference is made to that story and their punishment.

فَدَمْدَمَ عَلَيْهِمْ رَبُّهُمْ بِذَنْبِهِمْ فَسَوّٰىهَا (... so their Lord sent eradicating torment upon them, and made it equal for all. And He has no fear of its consequence....91:14-15). The word *damdama* refers to such tormenting scourge as is unleashed on a person or a nation again and again, until it destroys or crushes them completely. *Fa-sawwāhā* signifies that the scourge overtook the entire nation, men, women, children, and young and old.

In conclusion, the verse says: وَلَا يَخَافُ عُقْبٰهَا 'Allah has no fear of its consequence'. It means that Divine torment that destroys a nation completely cannot be compared to the torment inflicted by the greatest king of this world, because a tyrant king who destroys his people on a large scale, fears for his life, lest the survivors or the supporters of the people destroyed should revenge on him and rebel against him. Whoever destroys others is himself in danger of avenge. Those who attack others must necessarily bear the brunt of counter-attack except Allah. When a people incur Divine punishment and are thus destroyed, Allah has no fear from any one.

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Ash-Shams
Ends here

Sūrah Al-Lail

(The Night)

This Sūrah is Makkī, and it has 21 verses

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 21

وَالَّيْلِ اِذَا يَغْشٰى ﴿١﴾ وَالنَّهَارِ اِذَا تَجَلّٰى ﴿٢﴾ وَمَا خَلَقَ الذَّكَرَ
وَالْاُنْثٰۤى ﴿٣﴾ اِنَّ سَعْيَكُمْ لَشَتّٰى ﴿٤﴾ فَاَمَّا مَنْ اَعْطٰى وَاتَّقٰى ﴿٥﴾
وَصَدَّقَ بِالْحُسْنٰى ﴿٦﴾ فَسَنُيَسِّرُهٗ لِلْيُسْرٰى ﴿٧﴾ وَاَمَّا مَنْۢ بَخِلَ
وَاسْتَغْنٰى ﴿٨﴾ وَكَذَّبَ بِالْحُسْنٰى ﴿٩﴾ فَسَنُيَسِّرُهٗ لِلْعُسْرٰى ﴿١٠﴾
وَمَا يُغْنِيْ عَنْهُ مَالُهٗۤ اِذَا تَرَدّٰى ﴿١١﴾ اِنَّ عَلَيْنَا لَلْهُدٰى ﴿١٢﴾ وَاِنَّ لَنَا
لَلْاٰخِرَةَ وَالْاُوْلٰى ﴿١٣﴾ فَاَنْذَرْتُكُمْ نَارًا تَلَظّٰى ﴿١٤﴾ لَا يَصْلٰىهَاۤ اِلَّا
الْاَشْقَى ﴿١٥﴾ الَّذِيْ كَذَّبَ وَتَوَلّٰى ﴿١٦﴾ وَسَيُجَنَّبُهَا الْاَتْقَى ﴿١٧﴾
الَّذِيْ يُؤْتِيْ مَالَهٗ يَتَزَكّٰى ﴿١٨﴾ وَمَا لِاَحَدٍ عِنْدَهٗ مِنْ نِّعْمَةٍ تُجْزٰۤى ﴿١٩﴾
اِلَّا ابْتِغَآءَ وَجْهِ رَبِّهِ الْاَعْلٰى ﴿٢٠﴾ وَلَسَوْفَ يَرْضٰى ﴿٢١﴾

I swear by the night when it covers (the sun), [1] **and by the day when it is unveiled,** [2] **and by the One who created the male and the female,** [3] **your efforts are diverse:** [4] **As for the one who gives (in charity) and fears Allah,** [5] **and believes in the best (religion),** [6] **We will facilitate for him the way to extreme ease (i.e. the comforts of Paradise).** [7] **But the one who is miser and deems himself self-sufficient,** [8] **and rejects the best**

(religion), [9] **for him We will facilitate the way to extreme distress.** [10] **And his wealth will not help him when he will fall down (into Hell).** [11] **Of course, it is undertaken by Us to guide,** [12] **and in Our control is the Hereafter and the worldly life.** [13] **So I have warned you of a blazing fire.** [14] **None will enter it but the wretched one** [15] **who rejected (the truth) and turned away (from it).** [16] **And saved from it will be the most God-fearing one,** [17] **who gives his wealth (in charity) to become purified,** [18] **while no one has conferred any favour on him for which he would give a return,** [19] **but (he gave his wealth in charity) only to seek the Countenance of his Lord, the Most High.** [20] **And surely he will soon be happy.** [21]

Commentary

إِنَّ سَعْيَكُمْ لَشَتّٰى (your efforts are diverse....92:4). This statement is like the statement in Sūrah Inshiqāq, verse [6]:

إِنَّكَ كَادِحٌ اِلٰى رَبِّكَ كَدْحًا

'O man, you have to work hard constantly to reach your Lord. [84:6]'

which has already been explained in that Sūrah. The sense is that man, by his nature, is used to making efforts for one objective or another. But the nature and the results of these efforts are different. Some people work hard for an objective that brings eternal happiness to them, and others work hard for an objective that makes them suffer eternal perdition. It is reported in a Tradition that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Each morning when a man gets up, he goes to conduct his business and keeps himself busy. His business is either successful and emancipates himself from Hell, or unsuccessful and his efforts become the cause of his destruction." Therefore, a wise person should first apply his mind to think whether his efforts will pay dividends, and he should never undertake those efforts that bring about temporary comfort and pleasure, but eternal perdition and grief.

The Two Diverse Types of Human Efforts Divide Humankind into Two Groups

The Qur'ān further shows that, broadly speaking, the humankind may be divided into two opposing groups in terms of their opposing efforts. Each of the two groups are characterised by three qualities. The

first group is a successful one, and its three characteristics are: [1] they give in charity in the cause of Allah; [2] fear Allah and avoid violating the injunctions of Allah in every aspect of life; and [3] believe in the 'best word'. The 'best words' refer to the credo of 'there is no god but Allah' [as Ibn 'Abbās, Ḍaḥḥāk ﷺ have explained]. Testifying to the *kalimah* signifies 'to profess the True Faith'. Faith or belief is the essence of all actions, and comes first in order of rank, but on this occasion, it is mentioned last, probably because the main theme in this context is that of physical exertion, efforts and actions. 'Īmān or faith, on the other hand, pertains to the heart. It signifies the acceptance and confirmation of Allah and His Messenger with one's heart. Confession of this must be made by means of reciting *kalīmah shahādah* 'testimony of faith'. Obviously, none of these things involve physical exertion or effort, nor are they generally counted as actions.

The second group is [the unsuccessful one] and its three characteristics are: [1] they are misers to such an extent that they even fail to pay the *zakāh* and other obligatory alms; [2] they deem themselves self-sufficient rather than obeying Allah; and [3] they reject the 'best word' [that is, the *kalīmah* of *'Īmān*]. Referring to the first group, the verse says:

فَسَنُيَسِّرُهُ لِلْيُسْرٰى (We will facilitate for him the way to extreme ease [i.e. the comforts of Paradise]....92:7). The word *yusrā* literally denotes 'ease and comfort' or a thing in which there is no difficulty, but here it refers to "Paradise"'. Likewise, referring to the second group it says:

فَسَنُيَسِّرُهُ لِلْعُسْرٰى (for him We will facilitate the way to extreme distress...92:10). The opposite of *yusrā* is *'usrā* which literally denotes 'extreme distress, referring to "Hell"'. The two statements signify that those who exert their efforts in the first three acts, that is, spending in the cause of Allah, fearing Allah and testifying to the *kalimah*, Allah will pave their way to extreme ease, that is, to deeds that will lead them to the comforts of Paradise. On the other hand, those who exert their efforts in the latter three acts, Allah will pave their way to extreme distress, that is, make easy for them to perform deeds that will lead them to Hell. By right, here it should have been said that the deeds of Paradise or Hell are made easy for them, because 'easy' or 'difficult' qualify deeds, and not persons or people. But the Qur'ān says that the people or the people themselves

will be made easy to do the deeds. This probably implies that the first group will be predisposed to behave in a particular way that behaving otherwise will make them feel uneasy. The second group will be predisposed to behave in a way that will make them feel comfortable to do deeds of Hell, and they will feel uneasy doing deeds of Paradise. Each of these two groups will have their own nature and predisposition, and will find it easier to behave in that particular way. A Ḥadīth confirms that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

اعملوا فكل ميسرلما خلق له' امّا من كان من اهل السّعادة فييسّر لعمل السّعادة' وامّا من كان من اهل الشّقاوة فييسّر لعمل اهل الشقاوة

"Perform deeds, for everyone will have the deeds of what he was created for [Paradise or Hell] made easy for him. Those people who are the people of happiness, they will have the deeds of the people of happiness made easy for them. And those who are the people of misery, they will have the deeds of the people of misery made easy for them."

But both these things are the results of the use of the God-given choice and free will. Therefore, man is rewarded or punished.

Thereafter the unfortunate inmates of Hell are warned, thus:

وَمَايُغْنِىْ عَنْهُ مَالُهٗ' إِذَا تَرَدّٰى (And his wealth will not help him when he will fall down...92:11). The word *taraddā* literally denotes 'to fall into a pit and perish'. The expression 'When he fall' signifies that when Divine decree regarding his destruction comes into operation, nothing - not even his wealth - will save him, whether in grave after his death, or on the Day of Judgement, when he will be falling into the abyss of Hell.

لَايَصْلٰىهَآ إِلاَّ الْاَشْقَى. الَّذِىْ كَذَّبَ وَتَوَلّٰى (None will enter it but the wretched one who rejected [the truth] and turned away....92:16). This describes the fire of Hell. It is quite clear that only a *kāfir* will reject Allah and His Messenger. Apparently, it seems that a sinful believer who does not reject the truth will not enter Hell, whereas the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth are replete with clear texts that a sinful believer will enter Hell, unless he had repented, or someone interceded for him, or was forgiven out of pure Grace. He will abide in Hell until he has received punishment for the sins he has committed. After paying for his sins, he will be taken out of Hell, and through the blessings of his faith, he will be admitted into Paradise.

Apparently, the wordings of the verse are contrary to this interpretation. Therefore, it is necessary that the interpretation of the verse under comment be brought in line with other Qur'ānic verses and authentic Aḥādīth. Its plain and simple interpretation would be that this verse refers to entering the Hell for good, which is peculiar to the unbelievers. They will be tortured eternally in the Hell-fire. The sinful believers, on the other hand, will receive punishment for their sins and will eventually - at some time or the other - be taken out of Hell. Other scholars of Tafsīr have given some other interpretations too, which can also be appropriate. Tafsīr Maẓharī has come up with another explanation according to which 'the wretched one' and 'the most God-fearing one' should not be taken in its general sense. Both words refer particularly to people who lived during the blessed time of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. From amongst them, no Muslim, who lived at that time, will enter Hell through the blessings of the Holy Prophet's ﷺ company, even though he might have committed some sins incidentally.

All of The Blessed Companions will be Saved from the Ordeal of Hell

The reason for this is that the Companions rarely ever committed sins. Furthermore, even if they did commit sins, they must have repented by dint of the fear of the Hereafter - as their living conditions indicate . If any of them committed a sin, his good deeds are so many that they can wipe out the sin as the Qur'ān says:

إِنَّ الْحَسَنَاتِ يُذْهِبْنَ السَّيِّئَاتِ

'...Surely good deeds erase bad deeds_[11:114]'

Adopting the company of the Holy Prophet ﷺ is an act that can outweigh all other good deeds. The Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said regarding the righteous members of the community:

هم قوم لايشقىٰ جليسهم ولايخاف انيسهم

'The one who sits with them is never deprived, and the one who feels happy in their company is never unsuccessful.' [Ṣaḥīḥain]

Obviously, a person who sits in the company of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and is his intimate associate cannot be wretched. Therefore, there are express texts available in the authentic Traditions that all the noble

Companions are safe from the punishment of Hell. The Qur'ān itself bears testimony that -

وَكُلًّا وَّعَدَ اللّٰهُ الْحُسْنٰى

'...and to each Allah has promised good [4:95]'

Ḥusnā in this statement refers to 'Paradise'. In another verse, the Qur'ān says:

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ سَبَقَتْ لَهُمْ مِّنَّا الْحُسْنٰى ۙ اُولٰٓئِكَ عَنْهَا مُبْعَدُوْنَ

Surely, those for whom the good (news) from Us has come earlier shall be kept far away from it. [21:101]

Ḥusnā in this statement also refers to 'Paradise'. The pronoun 'it' in the phrase 'from it' refers to 'Hell', signifying that they will be far away from Hell. A Tradition says that 'Hell-Fire will not touch him who has seen me'. [Tirmidhī transmitted it from Jābir ؓ].

وَسَيُجَنَّبُهَا الْاَتْقَى. الَّذِىْ يُؤْتِىْ مَالَهٗ يَتَزَكّٰى (And saved from it will be the most God-fearing one who gives his wealth [in charity] to become purified,....92:17-18). This verse describes the reward of the most God-fearing person, as opposed to the punishment of the most wretched in the preceding verse. The word *atqā* is the superlative form and signifies a man of *taqwā*, that is, the most God-fearing person, who spends his wealth in obedience of his Lord in order to purify himself from sins, will be kept far away from the fire of Hell.

The wordings of the verse give good news, in general, to anyone who spends in Allah's cause in a state of faith, but the occasion of revelation indicates that *atqa* refers to Sayyidnā Abū Bakr Aṣ-Ṣiddiq ؓ in particular. Ibn Abī Ḥātim reports from Sayyidnā 'Urwah ؓ that seven Muslims had been enslaved by the Makkan disbelievers. When they became Muslims, they were persecuted in a variety of ways. Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ؓ spent a great amount of his money, and purchased them and set them free. Verses [17-21] were revealed on this occasion. [Maẓharī]

وَمَا لِاَحَدٍ عِنْدَهٗ مِنْ نِّعْمَةٍ تُجْزٰىٓ (while no one has conferred any favour on him for which he would give a return,...92:19) Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ؓ did this great favour by spending abundant wealth. The emancipated slaves had not done him any favour in the past, so that one could say that he was

returning their favour. He took this step for one purpose only as the verse says:

إِلَّا ابْتِغَآءَ وَجْهِ رَبِّهِ الْأَعْلٰى (but [he gave his wealth in charity] only to seek the Countenance of his Lord, the Most High....92:20). Mustadrak of Hakim records that it was a usual practice of Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ﷺ that he used to purchase Muslim slaves from the disbelievers and set them free whenever he found them in their bondage. Generally, these people were weak and helpless. Abū Qaḥāfah, the father of Abū Bakr ﷺ, said to him: "Since you are emancipating slaves, why do you not set free strong and brave people, so that they may assist you in fighting the enemies and protect you." He replied: "My purpose of emancipating them is not to expect any benefit in return. My only purpose is to seek the pleasure of Allah." [Maẓharī]

وَلَسَوْفَ يَرْضٰى (And surely he will soon be happy...92:21). Whoever spends in Allah's way with pure and good intentions of pleasing Allah, and not for any personal worldly gains, will acquire the pleasure of Allah in the Hereafter by achieving the wonderful and eternal blessings of Paradise. It is confirmed that these verses were revealed about Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ﷺ. Therefore, this last verse of the Sūrah is a great and splendid news and honour for him given in this very world by Allah.

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Lail
Ends here

Sūrah Aḍ-Ḍuḥā

(The Forenoon)

This Sūrah is Makkī, and it has 11 verses

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 11

وَالضُّحٰى ﴿١﴾ وَالَّيْلِ اِذَا سَجٰى ﴿٢﴾ مَاوَدَّعَكَ رَبُّكَ وَمَا قَلٰى ﴿٣﴾
وَلَلْاٰخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ لَّكَ مِنَ الْاُوْلٰى ﴿٤﴾ وَلَسَوْفَ يُعْطِيْكَ رَبُّكَ فَتَرْضٰى
﴿٥﴾ اَلَمْ يَجِدْكَ يَتِيْمًا فَاٰوٰى ﴿٦﴾ وَوَجَدَكَ ضَآلًّا فَهَدٰى ﴿٧﴾
وَوَجَدَكَ عَآئِلًا فَاَغْنٰى ﴿٨﴾ فَاَمَّا الْيَتِيْمَ فَلَا تَقْهَرْ ﴿٩﴾ وَاَمَّا السَّآئِلَ
فَلَا تَنْهَرْ ﴿١٠﴾ وَاَمَّا بِنِعْمَةِ رَبِّكَ فَحَدِّثْ ﴿١١﴾

I swear by the forenoon, [1] and by the night when it becomes peaceful, [2] your Lord (O Holy Prophet,) has neither forsaken you, nor has become displeased. [3] And the Hereafter is much better for you than the present life. [4] And of course, your Lord will give you so much that you will be pleased. [5] Did He not find you an orphan, and give you shelter? [6] And He found you unaware of the way (the Shari'ah), then He guided you. [7] and He found you in need, then made you need-free. [8] Therefore, as for orphan, do not oppress him, [9] and as for the beggar, do not scold him. [10] And about the bounty of your Lord, do talk. [11]

Commentary

Occasion of Revelation

Bukhārī, Muslim and Tirmidhī have narrated from Sayyidnā Jundub

ﷺ that once a finger of the Holy Prophet ﷺ was wounded and started bleeding, he said:

ان انت الّا اصبع دميت......وفى سبيل اللّٰه مالقيت

'You are merely a finger that is bleeding; [what does it matter] if you are hurt: it all happened in Allah's cause.'

Sayyidnā Jundub ﷺ narrated this incident and said that revelation of the Qur'ān to the Holy Prophet ﷺ came to a halt, and that Jibrā'il ﷺ stopped coming to him for a while. The unbelievers taunted, saying: "Muḥammad's Lord has forsaken him, and is displeased with him." Sūrah Ad-Ḍuḥā was revealed on this occasion. According to the narration in Bukhari by Sayyidnā Jundub ﷺ, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was unable to wake up for a few nights for *tahajjud* prayer owing to illness. In this narration, there is no mention of 'delay in revelation'. In Timidhī's narration, there is mention about the 'delay in revelation' but no mention about his inability to wake up for *tahajjud* prayer. These reports are not conflicting. The narrator might have narrated one incident at one time, and reported another incident at another time. The lady who taunted the Holy Prophet ﷺ was Umm Jamīl, the wife of Abū Lahab, as other reports indicate. 'Delay in revelation' took place twice. Once in the very early stage of the call. This is known as *fatrah al-waḥy* 'temporary break in the revelation'. This was the longest period. Another narration states that when the pagans or the Jews asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ about the soul, he promised them that he would give them a reply the next day. However, he forgot to add *insha 'Allah* (if Allah wills). As a result, revelation ceased for a few days. The pagans began to taunt the Holy Messenger ﷺ, saying that Allah had abandoned him, and is displeased with him. It was on this occasion that the Sūrah was revealed.

وَلَلْاٰخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ لَّكَ مِنَ الْاُوْلٰى (And the Hereafter is much better for you than the present life....93:4). The word *'ākhirah* may be taken in its popular sense of the 'Hereafter' and its opposite *'ūlā* may be taken in the sense of the present 'world'. With these words, Allah tells the Holy Prophet ﷺ not to be disturbed by the taunts of the pagans, because they will see in this world that their assumptions and accusations were absolutely false. In the Hereafter, he will be blessed with Divine favours to his heart's content -

much more than what he will receive in this fleeting world. The word *'ākhirah* may also be taken in its primitive sense i.e. 'the later state or condition' as opposed to *'ūlā* 'the former state or condition'. The verse, in this case, would mean that every succeeding moment of the Holy Prophet's ﷺ life is better than the preceding one. It includes progress in knowledge and wisdom, as well as in degrees of his nearness to Allah, and it also includes progress in economic and political fields.

وَلَسَوْفَ يُعْطِيكَ رَبُّكَ فَتَرْضَى (And of course, your Lord will give you so much that you will be pleased....93:5). Allah does not specify here what he will give him. The statement is open and general. The Holy Prophet ﷺ will be granted everything he desires so much that he will be pleased. Among his desired thing is the progress of Islam; the general spread of Islam in the world; fulfilment of every need of the Ummah; triumph of the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself over his enemies and raising the word of Allah in the land of the enemy. When this verse was revealed, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

إِذًا لَّا أَرْضَى وَ وَاحِدٌ مِّنْ أُمَّتِي فِي النَّارِ

'If that is the case, then I will not be pleased as long as one [single member] of my Ummah [remains] in Fire.' [Qurṭubī].

In a narration by Sayyidnā 'Alī رضي الله عنه, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: "Allah will accept my intercession for my Ummah [community]. Allah will ask: رضيت يامحمد 'O Muḥammad, are you pleased?'" He will reply: يَارَبِّ رَضِيتُ "My Lord, I am pleased." Muslim records from Sayyidnā 'Amr Ibn-ul-'Āṣ to the effect that the Holy Prophet ﷺ recited a verse concerning the Prophet Ibrāhīm عليه السلام:

فَمَنْ تَبِعَنِي فَإِنَّهُ مِنِّي وَمَنْ عَصَانِي فَإِنَّكَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ

'...So, one who follows me is surely mine, and the one who disobeys me, then You are Most Forgiving, Very Merciful. [14:36]'

Then he recited a verse which contains the words of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام

إِنْ تُعَذِّبْهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ عِبَادُكَ

'If You punish them, then, they are Your slaves [5:118]'

Then he raised his hands, he wept and prayed:

اَللّٰھُمَّ اُمَّتِیْ اُمَّتِیْ

'O Allah, my *ummah,* my *ummah!*'

Allah sent Jibra'īl ﷺ to inquire as to why he was weeping [while Allah knows the reason]. Jibrā'il Amīn ﷺ came and inquired why he was weeping. The Holy Prophet ﷺ replied: "I seek my *ummah*'s forgiveness." Allah sent Jibra'īl ﷺ back to inform him that He has pardoned them, and that Allah would please him and would not displease him regarding his *ummah.*

In response to the unbelievers' taunts, it was briefly mentioned that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has already been blessed with many Divine favours. The Sūrah elaborates on three of them in particular.

Favour [1]

اَلَمْ یَجِدْکَ یَتِیْمًا فَاٰوٰی (Did He not find you an orphan, and give you shelter?...93:6). The Holy Prophet ﷺ was an orphan. His father died before he was born, leaving no wealth or property to look after him. The words 'and gave you shelter' signify that the Holy Prophet ﷺ received such deep love and affection from his grand-father, 'Abd-ul-Muṭṭalib, and after him from his uncle, Abū Ṭālib , who took care of him more than their own children.

Favour [2]

وَوَجَدَکَ ضَآلًّا فَھَدٰی (And He found you unaware of the way [the Sharī'ah], then He guided you....93:7). The word *ḍāll* has two meanings: [1] stray; and [2] unaware. Here it stands for the second meaning. The verse signifies that before Muḥammad ﷺ was commissioned as the Prophet, he was unaware of Divine Sharī'ah. He was granted the status of the Prophet ﷺ and thus was guided.

Favour [3]

وَوَجَدَکَ عَآئِلًا فَاَغْنٰی (and He found you in need, then made you need-free....93:8). The word *'ā'il* is derived from *'ailah* which means 'to be in need'. The verse signifies that Allah found him impoverished and enriched him. This happened in the beginning through a business partnership with Sayyidah Khadījah al-Kubrā رضی اللہ عنہا, then once she became his wife and 'Mother of the Faithful', her entire wealth was

devoted to his service.

After elaborating on the three favours of Allah, three injunctions follow:

Injunction [1]

فَأَمَّا الْيَتِيمَ فَلَا تَقْهَرْ (Therefore, as for orphan, do not oppress him,...93:9). The word *qahr* means 'to treat people who are less powerful in an unfair and cruel way'. In the present context, the verse means: 'Since you were a poor orphan, and Allah sheltered you, do not oppress the orphan.' [In words, 'do not seize their wealth by force and squander it. Do not scorn them, humiliate them or despise them. Rather, you should be kind and gentle to them.'] As a result, the Holy Prophet ﷺ emphasised that the orphan be treated kindly and gently, and has forbidden any hurting attitude towards them. The Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said that the best house of a Muslim is the one in which there is an orphan who is treated kindly, and with love and affection. The worst house is the one in which there is an orphan who is treated badly. [This is transmitted by Bukhārī in Al-Adab-ul- Mufrad, and by Ibn Mājah and Baghawī, as quoted by Maẓharī].

Injunction [2]

وَأَمَّا السَّائِلَ فَلَا تَنْهَرْ (and as for the beggar, do not scold him....93:10). The verb *tanhar* is derived from *nahr* which means 'to scold'. The word *sā'il* means 'one who asks'. It includes a person who asks people's wealth, that is, a beggar, and it also includes the one who asks a question of knowledge, that is, an academic investigator. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has forbidden to berate either of them. The best course of action is to give the beggar something. If one is unable to give a beggar anything, one should at least apologise to him politely [so as not to give him any further grief]. Likewise, anyone who is searching knowledge and asks questions, it is forbidden to respond to him harshly and unkindly. The teacher should reply kindly and politely. However, if the investigator is unreasonable in his approach, it is permissible to scold him to the degree that is necessary.

Injunction [3]

وَأَمَّا بِنِعْمَةِ رَبِّكَ فَحَدِّثْ (And about the bounty of your Lord, do talk....93:11). The verb *ḥaddith* is derived from *taḥdīth* which means 'to talk' meaning,

'just as you were poor and needy, and Allah made you wealthy, then talk about Allah's favours upon you'. Talking about Divine favours to people is one way of thanking Allah. If a person has done something good to another, he should be thanked. Therefore, the Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said: "Whoever is not thankful to people on their favours is not thankful to Allah." [This is transmitted by Aḥmad. The chain of authorities are reliable - vide Maẓharī].

The Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said: "Whoever has done good to you, you ought to return the good. If you are unable to return the pecuniary good, then praise him in public, because he who praises people in public fulfils his moral obligation." [Al-Baghawī transmitted it from Jābir Ibn 'Abdullah, vide Maẓharī].

Ruling

It is obligatory to offer gratitude to Allah on every favour He has bestowed. (But the way of offering gratitude may be different.) If Allah has granted a person wealth, a part of that wealth may be spent with the sincerity in Allah's way. If Allah has given a person strong body, his bodily strength may be utilised in fulfilling Divine obligations. If Allah has granted a person Divine knowledge, he should impart it to others. [Maẓharī].

Ruling

It is *sunnah* to recite *takbīr* at the beginning of every Sūrah from Sūrah Ḍuḥā to the end of the Qur'ān. The wordings of the *takbir,* according to Shaikh Ṣāliḥ al-Miṣrī, are as follows:

لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ وَاللّٰهُ اَكْبَرُ

'There is no god except Allah and Allah is the greatest' [Maẓharī].

According to Ibn Kathīr, the *takbir* may be recited at the end of every Sūrah and, according to Baghawī, it may be recited once at the beginning of every Sūrah. [Maẓharī]. Either way the requirement of *sunnah* will be fulfilled. And Allah knows best!

Note

In most Sūrahs from Sūrah Ḍuḥā to the end of Qur'ān, Allah's special

favours upon the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his special virtues and characteristics are mentioned. In a few of the Sūrahs, the Day of Judgement and its conditions are mentioned. The earlier part of the Qur'ān asserts the greatness and authenticity of the Qur'ān, while the later part asserts the greatness of the personality to whom the Qur'ān was revealed.

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Aḍ-Ḍuḥā
Ends here

Sūrah Al-Inshiraḥ

(Peace of Heart)

This Sūrah is Makkī, and it has 8 verses

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 8

أَلَمْ نَشْرَحْ لَكَ صَدْرَكَ ﴿١﴾ وَوَضَعْنَا عَنْكَ وِزْرَكَ ﴿٢﴾ الَّذِىٓ أَنْقَضَ ظَهْرَكَ ﴿٣﴾ وَرَفَعْنَا لَكَ ذِكْرَكَ ﴿٤﴾ فَإِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا ﴿٥﴾ إِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا ﴿٦﴾ فَإِذَا فَرَغْتَ فَانْصَبْ ﴿٧﴾ وَإِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ فَارْغَبْ ﴿٨﴾

Did We not cause your bosom to be wide open for your benefit? [1] **And We removed from you your burden** [2] **that had (almost) broken your back,** [3] **and We raised high for you your name.** [4] **So undoubtedly, along with hardship there is ease.** [5] **Undoubtedly, along with hardship there is ease.** [6] **So when you are free (from collective services), exert yourself (in worship),** [7] **and towards your Lord turn with eagerness.** [8]

Commentary

It was mentioned at the end of the preceding Sūrah that twenty-two Sūrahs from Sūrah Ad-Ḍuḥā to the end of the Qur'ān are mainly concerned with Divine favours conferred upon the Holy Prophet ﷺ and with his greatness. Only a few Sūrahs are concerned with the conditions of the Hereafter or some other subject. Sūrah Al-Inshiraḥ is concerned with special favours that Allah conferred upon the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Its style is the same as that of the preceding Sūrah - the interrogative style. In the preceding Sūrah, the style was 'Did He not find you...?' [Here the style is]:

اَلَمْ نَشْرَحْ لَکَ صَدْرَکَ (Did We not cause your bosom to be wide open for your benefit?...94:1). The word *sharḥ* literally denotes 'to open, to cause the bosom to be widely opened'. [In the present context] it is to cause the bosom to be wide open to comprehend the Divine mysteries. The verse signifies that Allah illuminated his bosom with wisdom, Divine light and peace and made it spacious, vast and wide as is said in another verse:

فَمَنْ يُّرِدِ اللّٰهُ اَنْ يَّهْدِيَه‘ يَشْرَحْ صَدْرَه‘ لِلْاِسْلَامِ

'So, he whom Allah wills to give guidance, He opens his heart for Islam [6:125]'

The Holy Prophet's ﷺ bosom was expanded to receive the knowledge and wisdom and the gracious morals and ethical qualities, which the greatest philosophers could not match. As a result of this expansion of heart, *tawajjuh ilal-makhlūq* (attentiveness to the creation) did not disturb his attentiveness to and concentration on Allah. Some of the authentic Traditions report that the angels, with Allah's permission, physically opened the blessed chest of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Some of the commentators interpret this 'expansion of the chest' to refer to the same miracle, as mentioned in Ibn Kathīr and others. And Allah knows best!

وَوَضَعْنَا عَنْکَ وِزْرَکَ الَّذِیْٓ اَنْقَضَ ظَھْرَکَ (And We removed from you your burden that had [almost] broken your back...94:2-3). The word *wizr* literally denotes 'burden' and the phrase *naqḍ-uz-zahr* means 'to break one's back as for instance when a heavy load is put on one's back, it bends'. This verse signifies that Allah had relieved him of his burden that was breaking his back. What was that burden or heavy load? One answer to this question is that now and then the Holy Prophet ﷺ did certain permissible deeds, thinking that they were of benefit and in the interest [of spiritual development]. Later on he discovered that they were not in keeping with wisdom, or they were undesirable. The Holy Prophet ﷺ was conscious of his high status and close proximity to Allah. He regarded even such things as serious infractions. This was naturally a very heavy load that made him grieved. But Allah relieved him of his burden in that a blanket pardon was granted to him and it was declared that he would not be held accountable for such things.

Some commentators say that *wizr* (burden) refers to the effect of revelation. It weighed heavily on him in the initial stages of the

Prophet-hood. He was saddled with a nerve-racking and back-breaking task of raising [a morally degenerated people], through propagation of *Tauḥīd* and elimination of *kufr* and *shirk*, [from the depths of moral turpitude to the peaks of spiritual excellence, and then through them to cleanse and purify the whole of mankind of the dross of iniquity, ignorance and superstition]. The task enjoined:

فَاسْتَقِمْ كَمَا أُمِرْتَ

'So, stand firm - as you have been commanded [11:112]'

The Holy Prophet ﷺ used to feel the heavy weight of this task and responsibility. Some narration report that a few strands of his beard had turned grey as a result of this command. The Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said that the following verse has made me old:

فَاسْتَقِمْ كَمَآ أُمِرْتَ

'So, stand firm - as you have been commanded [11:112]'

Verses [2-3] give the cheerful news that Allah will remove from him the load which was weighing down his back. The following verses show how the back-breaking load will be removed, and every difficulty will be followed by ease and relief. By means of expansion of bosom, Allah gave the Holy Prophet ﷺ so much of courage that no instance of hardship seemed hardship, and no burden of any magnitude seemed a burden. And Allah knows best!

وَرَفَعْنَا لَكَ ذِكْرَكَ (and We raised high for you your name....94:4). The meaning of raising the name of the Holy Prophet ﷺ is that his blessed name is remembered together with the name of Allah in all the symbols of Islam, like the *kalimah,* the *adhān*, the *iqāmah*, and in sermons from the minarets and pulpits [throughout the world]:

اَشْهَدُ اَنْ لَّآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ

اَشْهَدُ اَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَّسُوْلُ اللّٰه

(I bear witness that there is no God worthy of worship except Allah; I bear witness that Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allah.'

No sensible person utters the Holy Prophet's ﷺ name without respect and honour even though he may not be a Muslim.

Note Carefully

Here three verses mention three favours that are bestowed on the Holy Prophet ﷺ: [1] opening of the bosom widely; [2] removal of the burden; and [3] raising of the name high. Each of the sentence is composed of a verb, an object and between them is a prepositional phrase thus:

شرح صدر

'for your benefit? [1]'

وضع وزر

'from you your burden [2]'

رفع ذكر

'for you your name. [4]'

This indicates the essential characteristic and special greatness of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, in that all this is done for the sake of him.

فَإِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا. إِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا (So undoubtedly, along with hardship there is ease. Undoubtedly, along with hardship there is ease....94:6). Grammatically, if the Arabic definite article *al-* is prefixed to an Arabic noun and is repeated with the same definite article *al-*, they refer to the same antecedent. However, if the same noun is repeated without the definite article, they refer to different antecedents. The word *al-'usr* '[the] hardship' in verse [6] is the repetition of *al-'usr* '[the] hardship' occurring in verse [5]. It does not refer to a new hardship. In contrast to this, the word *yusr* 'ease' in both verses occur without the definite article. This indicates that the second *yusr* 'ease' in verse [6] is a different antecedent to the *yusr* 'ease' occurring in verse [5]. Thus it may be concluded that there is only one *'usr* 'hardship' and two *yusr* 'twofold ease'. 'Twofold ease' does not mean twice as much. In fact, it means 'manifold ease'. The verse signifies that only one kind of hardship will face him, but in the wake of it many kinds of ease are assured.

Sayyidnā Ḥasan Al-Baṣrī رحمه الله تعالى reports that once the Holy Prophet ﷺ emerged from his home in a very happy mood and, giving cheerful news to his Companions on the basis of the current verse, said: "One hardship cannot overcome twofold ease". Thus history and

biographical books written by Muslims and non-Muslims - all bear ample testimony to fact that the most difficult task, even the seemingly impossible task, became easy for him. The above narration further indicates that the Arabic definite article *al-* signifies that it is an article used to indicate previous knowledge [that is, *al- lil 'ahd*] and refers to the hardship of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his Companions. Allah kept to His promise to them in such a way that the world saw it visibly how in the wake of every hardship the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his Companions experienced the manifold ease that made their task easy. If a person does not achieve 'ease' after 'hardship', it does not contradict this verse. In fact, even now Allah's universal principle applies. One needs to exercise fortitude against hardship, rely on Allah with purity of heart, devote oneself totally to Him, hold onto high hopes for His grace, and one should not despair of His mercy if there is delay in success - He certainly will grant relief after every instance of hardship. [Fawā'id-e-'Usmāniah]. Ḥadīth narratives support this.

The Command for Teachers and Preachers to Remember Allah During Spare Hours

فَإِذَا فَرَغْتَ فَانْصَبْ. وَإِلَى رَبِّكَ فَارْغَبْ (So when you are free [from collective services], exert yourself [in worship], and towards your Lord turn with eagerness....94:8). The Holy Prophet ﷺ is commanded in these verses that when he has finished his day's work of teaching and training his followers and other temporal affairs, he should turn to Allah as ever with all his heart, that is, prayers, remembrance of Allah, supplication and seeking Allah's pardon. This is the interpretation assigned to this verse by most commentators. Some scholars have interpreted it differently, but the foregoing interpretation appears to be the closest. The sum total of this interpretation is as follows: The Holy Prophet ﷺ exerted himself greatly to spread the word of Allah and reform human beings. Exerting himself to human reform was his greatest form of 'worship' but it was 'indirect worship' through planning and executing the plan of human reform. The verse purports to say that the indirect worship is not sufficient. So, when he is free from collective services to humanity, he should devote time to turn to Him by carrying out 'direct worship' by turning to Allah in prayer for the success of his efforts, because this 'direct worship' is what man is created for. Probably, that is why the 'indirect worship' has been

mentioned as something that may be finished and one may be free from, because that is based on need, and a believer can free himself from it, but the 'direct worship' of Allah is such that he cannot free himself from it. He has to spend his entire life and expend all his energy in it.

Note

This indicates that scholars [who are involved in education, propagation and human reform] should not be unmindful of 'direct worship'. Some time should be devoted specifically, in privacy, to attentiveness to, and remembrance of Allah as the biography of the righteous predecessors bear testimony to the fact that without it neither education nor preaching can be effective. It would be devoid of light and blessings.

Note

The word *fanṣab* derived from *naṣab* means 'to be tired'. The verse signifies that one should tire oneself when carrying out acts of worship. One should not carry out acts of worship only when one finds it convenient. Binding oneself to a *waẓīfah* (a usual course of optional worships) is itself quite exerting and tiring, no matter how little.

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Inshirāḥ
Ends here

Sūrah At-Tīn

(The Fig)

This Sūrah is Makkī, and it has 8 verses

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 8

وَالتِّينِ وَالزَّيْتُوْنِ ﴿١﴾ وَطُوْرِ سِيْنِيْنَ ﴿٢﴾ وَهٰذَا الْبَلَدِ الْاَمِيْنِ ﴿٣﴾ لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْاِنْسَانَ فِيْٓ اَحْسَنِ تَقْوِيْمٍ ﴿٤﴾ ثُمَّ رَدَدْنٰهُ اَسْفَلَ سٰفِلِيْنَ ﴿٥﴾ اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ فَلَهُمْ اَجْرٌ غَيْرُ مَمْنُوْنٍ ﴿٦﴾ فَمَا يُكَذِّبُكَ بَعْدُ بِالدِّيْنِ ﴿٧﴾ اَلَيْسَ اللّٰهُ بِاَحْكَمِ الْحٰكِمِيْنَ ﴿٨﴾

I swear by the Fig and the Olive, [1] **and by Tur, the mount of Sinai,** [2] **and by this peaceful city,** [3] **We have created man in the best composition,** [4] **then We turned him into the lowest of the low,** [5] **except those who believed and did righteous deeds, because for them there is a reward never ending.** [6] **So, what can make you, after all this, to deny the Requital?** [7] **Is Allah not the Greatest Ruler of all the rulers?** [8]

Commentary

وَالتِّينِ وَالزَّيْتُوْنِ (I swear by the Fig and the Olive...95:1). This verse takes an oath by four objects. Two of them are trees, the fig tree and the olive tree. [The third object] is Tur, the mount of Sinai, and the fourth object is the City of Makkah. The two trees have been specified because they possess abundant blessings and advantages in the same way as Ṭūr and the City of Makkah possess abundant blessings. Some authorities say that the 'fig' and the 'olive' symbolise, in this context, the lands in which these

trees predominate: that is, the countries bordering on the eastern part of the Mediterranean, especially Palestine and Syria. Most of the Prophets lived and preached in these lands, including Holy Prophet Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. The latter Prophet ﷺ was made to migrate from here to Makkah. The oaths, in this way, comprehend all the holy places where Allah-inspired men were born and raised as Prophets ﷺ. Syria was the land and home of all the Prophets. Mount Sinai stresses specifically the messengership of Mūsā عليه السلام where Allah spoke to him. 'Peaceful City' refers to Makkah, the birth-place and residence of the Final Messenger of Allah ﷺ.

The subject of the four oaths is: لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنسَانَ فِيٓ أَحْسَنِ تَقْوِيمٍ (We have created man in the best composition...95:4). The word *taqwīm* literally denotes 'to set a thing aright or lay the foundation straight or even; or to form something into an appropriate shape in a moderate regulation'. The verse signifies that man has been endowed with the best natural powers and qualities which other creatures have not been endowed with. Physically too he is cast in the best composition - having no parallel in other creatures.

Man is the Most Beautiful of Allah's Creation

Allah has created man the most beautiful of all His creation. Ibn 'Arabī asserts that there is no creature of Allah more beautiful than man, because Allah, besides granting him life, he gave him knowledge, power, speech, hearing, sight, planning and wisdom. All these, in fact, are the qualities of Allah. It is mentioned in a ḥadīth of Bukhārī and Muslim:

إِنَّ اللّٰهَ خَلَقَ اٰدَمَ عَلٰى صُوْرَتِهٖ

'Allah has created Adam in His image'

It could only mean that man has been characterised by some of the qualities of Allah, because Allah is beyond any [physical] shape or image. [Qurṭubī].

A Wonderful Story of Human Beauty

Qurṭubī, on this occasion, cites a story of 'Īsā Ibn Mūsā Hāshimī. He was a high ranking officer in the royal court of Caliph Abū Ja'far Manṣūr. The officer loved his wife very much. Once he was sitting with his wife in a moonlit night and suddenly cried out:

انت طالق ثلاثًا ان لم تكونى احسن من القمر

'You are divorced thrice if you are not more beautiful than the moon.'

As soon as the wife heard this, she went into seclusion and veiled herself, on the grounds that the husband has pronounced three express divorce on her. It was said in joke. However, the law of express divorce is that it becomes effective whether uttered jokingly or seriously. 'Īsā Ibn Mūsā spent the night restlessly and in grief. The next morning, he paid a visit to Caliph Abū Ja'far Manṣūr and recounted to him the whole story. Caliph Abū Ja'far Manṣūr invited all the jurists of the city and put the case before them. All the jurists unanimously agreed that the divorce has become effective, because no human being can possibly be more beautiful than the moon. There was, however, one scholar, a student of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, who remained silent. Manṣūr asked him: "Why are you so quiet?" He recited '*Bismillah* to the end' and then recited Sūrah Tīn and explained: "Ruler of the Faithful, Allah says that He has created man in the best composition or in the finest mould. Nothing can be more beautiful than man." Having heard this, all the scholars and jurists were perplexed. None of them opposed him. Manṣūr ordered that the divorce is not effective.

This indicates that man is the most beautiful creation of Allah outwardly and inwardly, in terms of elegance and attractiveness and in terms of bodily structure. Every limb of the human body is able to move in many different ways. He is able to hold, move and lift various things by moving his hands and arms. The thumb alone is a masterpiece of creation without which man will not be able to hold things. The functioning of the ears, the eyes, the mouth, the teeth, the nose, the chest and the stomach are all wonders in their own right. Gathered together on his head, they form a beautiful and coherent assortment, each one complementing the other. The flexibility of the tongue, the arrangement of the teeth and the mastery of the vocal cords allow him to roar like a lion and sing as beautifully as a nightingale. All this makes human body look like a sophisticated factory where automatic machines are able to accomplish the delicate work. This is the reason why philosophers call man 'microcosm' [a miniature universe as opposed to 'macrocosm' {a large universe}]. The microcosm epitomises the macrocosm. [Qurṭubī]

The Ṣūfis have supported this concept. Some scholars have analysed in detail - from head to toe - to show how man is the epitome of the large universe.

ثُمَّ رَدَدْنٰهُ اَسْفَلَ سٰفِلِيْنَ (then We turned him into the lowest of the low...95:5). In the preceding sentence, it was stated that man is created in the best composition and is the most beautiful being. In the prime of his life, man is brimming with strength and vigour and all his faculties are functioning at their best. As opposed to that, this sentence states that when man ages, he physically grows weaker and his health deteriorates all the time. He even begins to lose his physical beauty. He no longer has a good-looking and attractive face. He begins to look uglier. He becomes useless and a burden to others. Other animals, on the contrary, are useful to the end of their lives. Man utilises them for milk, for mounting, for luggage-loading and for myriad of other things. When they are slaughtered or dead, man still utilises their hide, hair, bones and every other part or fibre of theirs usefully. Man, on the other hand, becomes useless when he falls ill or grows old. From the worldly point of view he is unable to do anything. Even when he dies, no part of his body is of any benefit to any man or animal. In short, the phrase 'the lowest of the low' refers to bodily condition. His body bends over and legs can barely carry him. The man who was once supporting others now needs others to support him. [Ḍaḥḥāk and others vide Qurṭubī].

اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ فَلَهُمْ اَجْرٌ غَيْرُ مَمْنُوْنٍ (except those who believed and did righteous deeds, because for them there is a reward never ending....95:6). The foregoing interpretation of the preceding verse should not be misunderstood. The exceptive sentence does not mean that the believers will not attain to decrepit old age. It would not be correct to exclude the believers from this, because some of them are also overcome by the senility of old age. The sense, however, is that they do not suffer a big harm due to their physical or mental deterioration in old age. Only those will suffer from it who spent their entire energy on improving their physical condition that has now ended. They shall have no portion of it in the Hereafter. The righteous believers will have an unfailing reward. This verse makes it clear that even after reaching old age, a believer never becomes useless. Even in decrepitude he can accumulate rewards -

comfort and high positions - for the Hereafter that are eternal. During the period of senility when he is unable to do righteous deeds, the good deeds will be recorded in his Record Book which he used to do in good health. Sayyidnā Anas ﷺ narrates that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that when a Muslim falls ill Allah instructs the recording angels to record the good deeds he used to perform in good health. [Al-Baghawī transmitted it in Sharḥ-us-Suunah from Abū Mūsā, and Bukhārī has reported the same rewards for a traveller and a person suffering from a disease.) Here instead of mentioning the rewards and blessings of Paradise for the righteous believers, the verse reads: لَهُمْ اَجْرٌ غَيْرُ مَمْنُوْنٍ (for them there is a reward never ending.) This could signify that their reward starts in this mortal world [and continues in the Hereafter eternally]. Allah gathers around them in their decrepit old age such sincere companions who benefit from them spiritually until the last moment of their life. They serve them in every possible way. The righteous servants of Allah in decrepitude are productive while generally the senile and people in bad health are thought to be unproductive.

Some commentators say that the statement - رَدَدْنٰهُ اَسْفَلَ سٰفِلِيْنَ (We turned him into the lowest of the low) does not refer to human beings in general. It refers specifically to unbelievers who destroyed the God-given best composition, human perfection, honour and intellect by pursuing physical pleasures. As a result of their ingratitude, they will be turned into the lowest of the low. In this interpretation, the exception - اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا (except those who believed and did righteous deeds, because for them there is a reward never ending) will carry its basic interpretation, in that they will not be turned into the lowest of the low. For those who believed and did righteous deeds, there is a reward that is unending. [Thus in al-Maẓharī].

فَمَا يُكَذِّبُكَ بَعْدُ بِالدِّيْنِ (So, what can make you, after all this, to deny the Requital?...95:7). In the preceding verses man is made to realise that Allah created him, He bestowed on him special favours and the revolution that He brought about in his old age. Man will move from stage to stage, finally reaching the grave and the Hereafter. But he rejects the Hereafter, as a result he is warned. He has seen the scenes of Divine omnipotence and revolutions - how dare he denies and rejects the Hereafter! Is Allah not the Greatest Ruler of all the rulers? [8]

Ruling

Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ narrates that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that while reciting Sūrah At-Tīn, when one reaches the end of it:

اَلَيْسَ اللّٰهُ بِاَحْكَمِ الْحٰكِمِيْنَ

'Is Allah not the Greatest Ruler of all the rulers? [8]'

one should recite:

بَلٰى وَاَنَا عَلٰى ذٰلِكَ مِنَ الشّٰهِدِيْنَ

'Yes, indeed, Allah is the Ruler of the rulers, and I bear witness to it.'

The jurists have ruled that it is *mustaḥab* (preferable/desirable) to recite the words.

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah At-Tīn
Ends here

Sūrah Al-'Alaq

(The Clot)

This Sūrah is Makkī, and it has 19 verses and 1 section.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 19

اِقْرَاْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِىْ خَلَقَ ﴿١﴾ خَلَقَ الْاِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ ﴿٢﴾ اِقْرَاْ
وَرَبُّكَ الْاَكْرَمُ ﴿٣﴾ الَّذِىْ عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ ﴿٤﴾ عَلَّمَ الْاِنْسَانَ مَالَمْ يَعْلَمْ
﴿٥﴾ كَلَّآ اِنَّ الْاِنْسَانَ لَيَطْغٰۤى ﴿٦﴾ اَنْ رَّاٰهُ اسْتَغْنٰى ﴿٧﴾ اِنَّ اِلٰى رَبِّكَ
الرُّجْعٰى ﴿٨﴾ اَرَءَيْتَ الَّذِىْ يَنْهٰى ﴿٩﴾ عَبْدًا اِذَا صَلّٰى ﴿١٠﴾ اَرَءَيْتَ
اِنْ كَانَ عَلَى الْهُدٰۤى ﴿١١﴾ اَوْ اَمَرَ بِالتَّقْوٰى ﴿١٢﴾ اَرَءَيْتَ اِنْ كَذَّبَ
وَتَوَلّٰى ﴿١٣﴾ اَلَمْ يَعْلَمْ بِاَنَّ اللّٰهَ يَرٰى ﴿١٤﴾ كَلَّا لَئِنْ لَّمْ يَنْتَهِ لَنَسْفَعًا
بِالنَّاصِيَةِ ﴿١٥﴾ نَاصِيَةٍ كَاذِبَةٍ خَاطِئَةٍ ﴿١٦﴾ فَلْيَدْعُ نَادِيَهٗ ﴿١٧﴾ سَنَدْعُ
الزَّبَانِيَةَ ﴿١٨﴾ كَلَّا لَا تُطِعْهُ وَاسْجُدْ وَاقْتَرِبْ ﴿١٩﴾

Read with the name of your Lord who created (every thing), [1] He created man from a clot of blood. [2] Read, and your Lord is the most gracious, [3] who imparted knowledge by means of the pen. [4] He taught man what he did not know. [5] The fact is that man crosses the limits, [6] because he deems himself to be free of need. [7] Surely to your Lord is to return. [8] Have you seen him who forbids [9] a slave of Allah when he prays? [10] Tell me, if he is on the right path, [11] or bids to piety,

(would the former still forbid him?) [12] **Tell me, if he rejects (the true faith) and turns away,** [13] **does he not know that Allah is watching (him)?** [14] **No! If he does not desist, We will certainly drag (him) by forelock,** [15] **a lying, sinful forelock.** [16] **So let him call the men of his council,** [17] **We will call the soldiers of the Hell.** [18] **No! Never obey him, and bow down in sajdah, and come closer.** [19]

Beginning of The Qur'ānic Revelation

It is universally agreed that the first five verses of Sūrah Al-'Alaq or Iqra' mark the very beginning of Qur'ānic revelation. [Baghawī]. Bukhārī, Muslim, other authentic sources and overwhelming consensus of scholars, ancient and modern, all concur on this point. However, some scholars state that Sūrah Al-Muddaththir was the first Sūrah to be revealed, and yet others say that Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah [The Opening] was revealed first. It is possible to reconcile between these different views as follows: After the revelation of Sūrah Al-'Alaq or Iqra', there was a temporary break in the revelation during which the Holy Prophet ﷺ used to be very sad, but after some time, the Angel Jibra'īl appeared to him once again, and he faced the same situation as he faced when the first verses of Sūrah Iqra' were revealed to him. On this occasion, the opening verses of Sūrah Al-Muddaththir were conveyed to him by the angel. From this point of view, it may be said that the first Sūrah to be revealed after the temporary break was Sūrah Al-Muddaththir. Some of the Companions held the view that Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah was the first Sūrah to be revealed. They probably meant to say that this was the first Sūrah to be revealed in a complete form. Undoubtedly, some verses (of Sūrahs Al-'Alaq or Iqra', Al-Muzzammil and Al-Muddaththīr) were revealed earlier, but the rest of the verses of those Sūrahs were revealed at later dates. Al-Fātiḥah is the first Sūrah that was revealed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ in its entirety, all seven verses at once. [Maẓharī]

The Holy Prophet's ﷺ First Experience of Revelation

In a lengthy narration, as recorded in the Ṣaḥīḥs of Bukhārī and Muslim, the Mother of the Faithful, Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا says that revelation to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was started by true dreams. Whatever he saw in a dream would happen in reality as clearly as the light of dawn. Then solitude became dear to him, and he used to seclude

himself for worship in the cave Ḥirā', (a cave in the mount known today as 'Jabal-un-Nūr, which is clearly visible in front of Jannat-ul-Ma'lā, the famous graveyard of Makkah) and therein he devoted himself to Divine worship for several nights before he came back to his family and took provisions for his retirement; then he would return to the Mother of the Faithful, Sayyidah Khadījah رضی اللہ عنہا and take more provisions for a similar period. (The period of his stay in the cave is mentioned differently by different reports, but the report of *ṣaḥīḥain* maintains that it was a month, the whole month of Ramaḍān. Authentic traditions are silent about the mode of worship he adopted during this period. Some scholars have opined that he used to worship according to the Sharī'ah of Nūḥ, Ibrāhīm and 'Īsā علیهم السلام, but neither any authentic report supports it, nor is it likely, because he was an '*ummiyy* (unlettered). It is, therefore, more likely that his worship was concentration and reflection on Allah Almighty and His omnipotence until the Truth, that is, the revelation came to him while he was in the cave of Ḥirā'; so the angel came to him and said, اِقْرَأْ 'Read'. The Holy Prophet replied, ما انا بقاری 'I am not the one who can read'. (The Holy Prophet ﷺ was under the impression that he was directing him to read a written document. Since the Holy Prophet ﷺ could not read or write, he replied accordingly.) Then the angel embraced him and pressed him so hard that he felt extreme pain, then he released him and said, اِقْرَأْ 'Read'. The Holy Prophet replied, 'I am not the one who can read'. Then he embraced him and pressed him a second time so hard that he felt extreme pain, then he released him again and said, اِقْرَأْ 'Read'. The Holy Prophet ﷺ replied, ما انا بقاری 'I am not the one who can read'. Then he embraced the Holy Prophet ﷺ and pressed him a third time, then he released him and said,

اِقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِىْ خَلَقَ ﴿١﴾ خَلَقَ الْاِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ ﴿٢﴾ اِقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْاَكْرَمُ ﴿٣﴾ الَّذِىْ عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ ﴿٤﴾ عَلَّمَ الْاِنْسَانَ مَالَمْ يَعْلَمْ ﴿٥﴾

'Read with the Name of your Lord Who created [everything], He created man from a clot of blood. Read, and your Lord is the most gracious, who imparted knowledge by means of the Pen. He taught man what he did not know.'

The Messenger of Allah returned with this message [of five verses] while his heart trembled and he came to Sayyidah Khadījah رضی اللہ عنہا, saying زمّلونی زمّلونی 'wrap me up, wrap me up', and she wrapped him up, until the awe left him. (It should be noted that the fear felt by the Holy

Prophet ﷺ was due to the great responsibility delegated to him, and due to the unusual event of seeing an angel in his original form.)

Then he said to Sayyidah Khadījah رضی اللہ عنہا while he related to her what had happened: "I feared for myself." Sayyidah Khadījah رضی اللہ عنہا said: 'Nay, by Allah, Allah will never expose you to disgrace, because you unite the ties of kinship, and bear the burden of the weak, and earn for the destitute, and offer hospitality to the guests, and help (people) in real distress.'

Then Sayyidah Khadījah رضی اللہ عنہا took him to her cousin, Waraqah Ibn Naufal. He was a man who had adopted Christianity (which was a true religion at that time) during the days of Ignorance, and he used to write the Hebrew script, and translate it into Arabic. He was a very old man who had turned blind. Sayyidah Khadījah رضی اللہ عنہا said to him, O Uncle's son! Listen to your brother's son. Waraqah asked him, My brother's son! What have you seen? So the Messenger of Allah related to him what he had seen. Waraqah said to him, This is the very same confidant [angel Jibra'īl عليه السلام] whom Allah sent to Holy Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام; would that I were a young man at this time - would that I were alive when your people would expel you! The Messenger of Allah asked in surprise, "Will they expel me?" He replied. Yes; never has a man appeared with the like of that which you have brought, but he has been held in enmity; and if your time finds me alive, I shall help you with the fullest support. After that, not much time had passed before Waraqah died, and the revelation broke off temporarily. [Bukhārī and Muslim]

The temporary break of revelation, according to Suhailī, lasted for about a year and half. Other reports say that it lasted to about three years. [Maẓharī]

Verse [1] اِقْرَاْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِىْ خَلَقَ (Read with the Name of your Lord, Who created [everything]) In the prepositional phrase *bismi rabbika* [with the name of your Lord], the addition of the word *ismi* is significant in two ways [1] that whenever the Qur'ān is being recited, the reader should begin by reciting the formula بسم اللہ الرحمٰن الرحیم "With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful". When Jibra'īl Amīn عليه السلام suddenly appeared to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and said *'iqra'* (read) , he tendered

apology that he is unable to read or recite, because he is unlettered. The phrase b-ismi rabbika points to the fact that under present circumstances you, O Holy Prophet ﷺ, may be *'ummiyy'* or unlettered, but Allah has the power to grant you the highest level of knowledge, the most elegant style of oration and eloquence, so that you would surpass and subdue the most educated or literate people, as it became manifest later on. [Maẓharī].

[2] Allah has many Beautiful Names, but the blessed name *rabb* is particularly chosen in the verse here probably because it supports and emphasizes the theme that Allah cherishes and sustains the Holy Prophet ﷺ through all the different stages of his development, until he is fully consummated. He can make him read and recite, despite being unlettered. In the relative clause *al-ladhī khalaqa* [Who created], particularly contains the Divine attribute of *takhlīq* [creating] presumably because the first Divine favor is *wujūd* or 'existence' as a result of His drawing out beings from the realm of non-existence into the realm of existence. Many other favors of His follow. The verb *khalaqa* [created] is transitive and it requires an object that is absent here. This indicates the verb is used absolutely, and it signifies that the Creator has created the entire universe and every existent thing it contains.

Verse [2] خَلَقَ الْإِنسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ (Created man from a clot of blood.) The previous verse referred to the creation of macrocosm, the large or entire universe in general. In this verse, the phrase is *khalaqa'l-insān* which refers to the creation of microcosm 'the best, noblest or most honourable creation', Man. If analysed carefully, we notice that man is the epitome of macrocosm or the large universe. He is a small scale representation, analogue, or miniature of the large and complex universe. Another reason why man has been particularly mentioned is that the purpose of Prophet-hood, messenger-hood and revelation of the Qur'ān is the implementation of Divine ordinances, injunctions and laws and acting upon them: This is the essential peculiarity of mankind. The word *'alaq,* being the plural of *'alaqatun,* means 'congealed blood'. The creation of man has passed and passes through various phases. His primordial creation is from the four major elements, that is, earth, water, fire and air. His procreation is from an insignificant and humble state, the sperm which then transforms into congealed blood. This is the primary state of

the embryo which happens after the conception. Then it takes the shape of a lump of flesh and then the skeletal structure is created. *'Alaqah* is the middle phase in the whole process of creation. The specific mention of *'alaqah* covers the initial stage and the final stage of the process of creation.

Verse [3] اِقۡرَاۡ وَرَبُّکَ الۡاَکۡرَمُ (Read, and your Lord is the most gracious.) The command *iqra'* [Read] has been repeated in this verse for two reasons: The first command in verse [1] was for the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself to read or recite. The second command in this verse is to proclaim, convey, communicate and teach or preach. It is not inconceivable that the command *iqra'* is repeated by deliberate design for emphasis. The Divine attribute *al-Akram* 'the Most Gracious' signifies that Allah did not create the world or man for any ulterior motive, for selfish motivation or for His own benefit. He has done it out of His infinite grace, generosity and magnanimity. He endowed upon the universe the great favour of existence without asking for it.

Verse [4] الَّذِیۡ عَلَّمَ بِالۡقَلَمِ (Who imparted knowledge by means of the Pen.) The preceding verse spoke of the creation of man. The current verse speaks of man's education or literacy, because knowledge, as part of education and literacy, distinguishes man from all other animals and creatures, and occupies the position of the crown of creation. There are two means, methods or media through which knowledge is imparted: [1] oral or spoken method or by word of mouth; and [2] Pen or written method. The command *iqra'* [read] at the beginning of Sūrah refers to the oral or spoken method. However, the current verse, which speaks more explicitly about imparting knowledge, speaks of the written method of recording and transmitting knowledge from generation to generation.

Pen and Writing: The First and Most Important Means of Transmitting Knowledge

An authentic narration of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضی اللہ عنہ reports that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

لَمّا خلق اللّٰه الخلق کتب فی کتابه فهو عنده فوق العرش، ان رحمتی غلبت غضبی

"When Allah created the creation, He inscribed a document which is with Him above the Throne: Indeed My mercy has preceded My anger."

In another narration, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is reported to have said:

اوّل ما خلق اللّٰه القلم، فقال له: اكتب، فكتب مايكون الى يوم القيٰمة فهو عنده فى الذكر فوق عرشهٖ

"The first thing Allah created was the pen. He told it to write, so it wrote what was to take place till Doomsday. This is with Allah on His Throne." [Qurṭubī]

Three Types of Pen

Scholars have said that there are three types of pen in the world: [1] a Pen that Allah created with His own hand and instructed it to write the decree of the universe; [2] the pen of the angels who record the events that are to occur and their magnitude, they also use it to record the deeds of human beings; and [3] the pen of human beings, which they use to reduce their speech to writing. Writing, in fact, is a kind of speech [or a manifestation of it]. Humans are biologically programmed by Allah for speech , and it is thus natural, inborn and innate faculty. [Qurṭubī] The leading authority on Tafsīr, Mujāhid, cites from Abū 'Amr that Allah created four things in the entire universe with His own Creative hand, and the rest of the creation came into being by His cosmic command of *kun* [be] and they became. The four things are: [1] the pen; [2]The Divine Throne; [3] the Garden of Eden; and [4] Holy Prophet 'Ādam عليه السلام.

Who was First Trained in the Writing Skill and Art ?

Scholars have differed on this question. Some say the art and skill of writing was first imparted to the father of mankind, i.e. the prophet 'Ādam عليه السلام and he was the first one to write. [Ka'b Aḥbār]. Others say that this art was first taught to the Holy Prophet Idrīs عليه السلام and he was thus the very first scribe. [Ḍaḥḥāk]. Some others have observed that the art and skill of writing is the Divine knowledge given as a gift to anyone whom Allah wills.

Writing Skill and Art: A Great Divine Gift

Sayyidnā Qatādah رضي الله عنه has stated that Pen is a great Divine gift. If Allah had not granted man the art and skill of writing with pen, it would not have been possible for him to preserve or protect the religion in its pristine form, nor would it have been possible for him to conduct his worldly affairs in the proper manner. Sayyidnā 'Alī رضي الله عنه has stated that it

is a great generosity that Allah has granted His servants knowledge of things they did not know. He drew them out from the darkness of ignorance and brought them into the light of knowledge. He urged them to acquire the art and skill of writing as it accrues great benefits. Only Allah is able to keep count of the benefits of writing. All sciences and philosophies are codified by means of pen. The history of the former and latter nations are compiled by means of pen. Their chronicles and monographs are preserved in writing. The Divinely revealed Books are committed to writing, and shall be preserved till the world lasts. 'The pen' is thus able to make great contribution towards the propagation and dissemination of spiritual sciences and Divine secrets revealed by the Qur'ān and of physical sciences to which the study of the Qur'ān imparted a great stimulus. Without the pen, all worldly and religious works will come to a standstill.

Writing Skill and Art: Attitude of Scholars in All Ages

Scholars of the former and the latter times have always realised the stupendous role pen plays in the preservation and transmission of knowledge, as a result they made a great use of it and left behind a huge legacy of books and writings. It is regretful to notice that in this age students and scholars have ignored the importance of this skill and art. As a result, scarcely a few people in a few million people have mastered the art, or developed the skill, of writing. To Allah do we direct our complaint!

Writing Skill and Art: The Reason Why the Holy Prophet ﷺ was not Taught

It is really very significant that mention should have been made of 'Pen' in a Book which was revealed to a person, the Final Messenger ﷺ, who himself did not know how to read and write. The reason for this is the profound Divine wisdom underlying it. Allah had willed that the dignity and status of the Final Messenger should be far above the thinking of the general populace. Allah placed the Holy Prophet ﷺ in an environment which was not favourable for any spontaneous accomplishments, nor was it conducive to any achievements by natural exposure. His birth-place was the rugged and rocky mountainous terrain. The desert of Arabia had fewer plants apart from the date-palms, little water apart from the *zam zam* well and the weather was always dry, far away from civilisation, and completely cut off from the cradle of knowledge and wisdom. The communications system or network was

inaccessible; as a result, the people of Arabia had no contact with Syria, Iraq, Egypt and other civilised areas of the world. Hence, all the Arabs were referred to as 'unlettered' who generally had no respect for knowledge, wisdom and writing. Very rarely people had the opportunity to learn knowledge or to acquire the art and skill of writing. The Holy Prophet ﷺ was born in such bare region, among such illiterate tribes and in such harsh environment. He was never given the opportunity to become literate. It was inconceivable that a person born in such a surrounding will be gifted with knowledge, wisdom and high morals. He was, however, suddenly granted the cloak of Prophet-hood, together with incessant flow of knowledge and wisdom. The greatest of poets and orators of Arabia were subdued by the eloquence of the unlettered Holy Prophet ﷺ. This was his open and overt miracle. Every open-minded person should be able to see with his eye of certainty that his attainments were not the result of acquisition by his own efforts or human exertion, but they were the result of the invisible generosity of Allah Who endowed him with the Prophetic gift. This is the Divine wisdom underlying the reason why the Holy Prophet ﷺ was not trained in the skill and the art of writing. [Adapted from Qurṭubī]

Verse [5] عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ (Taught Man what he did not know." The preceding verse was concerned with a particular means of teaching, namely, 'pen', the written method.

Many other Means of Teaching

The present verse purports to say that the real teacher is Allah, and He has innumerable ways and means, besides pen, to impart knowledge. Therefore, the verse says that Allah taught man things with which he was unacquainted previously. The verse does not mention 'pen' or any other means of teaching. The reason for that is man is taught from the very inception of his life. First, he is gifted with intellect, the greatest means of receiving knowledge. Man, by the right use of intellect, is able to understand many things. Further, his entire environment is the manifestation of the perfect power of Allah and studded with the evidence of Divine power by witnessing which he is able to recognise his Creator. Revelation and inspiration are other means of knowledge. The knowledge of many essential things are learnt intuitively. Intuition is the God-given ability to know or understand things through feelings, rather than by considering facts or evidence. As a result, there is no need for tongue or pen. When a baby is born, it is not conscious of how its environment

operates. However, it instinctively reaches out for the mother's breast, when it feels hungry and feeds itself. Who teaches it and who can teach it? Allah has taught it the 'skill' of crying since its birth. The cry of the baby is the means of satisfying all its needs. When it cries, it becomes a cause of concern for the parents to find out what is wrong. The baby's cry satisfies its hunger, thirst, heat and cold. Who teaches the new-born baby how to cry? All this is instinctive knowledge with which Allah has programmed every living organism, especially man. After the instinctive knowledge, man's knowledge continues to increase by word of mouth, and then by the supra-rational organ of intuition, called the heart. Apparently, there was no need to say مَالَمْ يَعْلَمْ (... what he did not know) because normally knowledge is imparted of things that are not known. It is explicitly stated here, probably because man may not assume that the God-given knowledge and skills are the results of his own efforts and exertion. The concluding phrase مَالَمْ يَعْلَمْ "what he did not know" has been added in order to make man realise that there was a time when he knew nothing, thus in [16:78] we came across اَخْرَجَكُمْ مِّنْ بُطُوْنِ اُمَّهٰتِكُمْ لَاتَعْلَمُوْنَ شَيْئًا (And Allah has brought you forth from your mothers' wombs when you knew nothing...). This shows that knowledge is not an ingrained personal excellence of man. It is the gift of the Creator and the Master. [Maẓharī]. Some scholars interpret the word 'man' to be referring to the Holy Prophet 'Ādam عليه السلام because he was the first man to whom knowledge was imparted, thus in [2:31] وَعَلَّمَ اٰدَمَ الْاَسْمَآءَ كُلَّهَا (And He taught 'Ādam the names, all of them...). And others say the reference is to the Final Messenger ﷺ whose knowledge embraces the knowledge of all the previous Prophets.

As stated earlier, these five verses of this Sūrah represent the very beginning of the revelation of the Qur'ān. Verses [6-19] of the Sūrah are of much later date. We assert this on the following grounds: These verses were revealed in connection with an incident in which Abū Jahl prevented the Holy Prophet ﷺ from offering *ṣalāh*. In the initial stages of revelation and Prophet-hood, the Holy Prophet ﷺ had no enemies in Makkah. All used to call him by the title of 'al-Amīn' [the honest or upright]. They respected and loved him. Abū Jahl's enmity and opposition obviously started when the Holy Prophet ﷺ proclaimed his propagation openly, called the people towards Islam publicly, and performed the *ṣalāh* in the Sacred Mosque. *Ṣalāh* was prescribed on the Night of Ascent, (Mi'rāj). Therefore, prevention from *ṣalāh*, referred to in these verses, may not be imagined before that time.

Verses [6-7] كَلَّآ اِنَّ الْاِنْسَانَ لَيَطْغٰىۤ. اَنْ رَّاٰهُ اسْتَغْنٰى (The fact is that man crosses the limits, because he deems himself to be free of need.) Although the verse immediately refers to a particular person, namely, Abū Jahl who insulted the Holy Prophet ﷺ, the statement is general which draws man's attention to one of his weaknesses. So long as man is in need of others, he walks straight; but when he thinks that he does not need anyone, he tends towards transgression, and develops the tendency to wrong-doing, tyranny and oppression. This is generally the behavior of the affluent people, government officials, and people with abundant children and friends or servants. They become purse-proud and intoxicated with the leadership power they exercise on their groups. Abū Jahl was a typical example of this. He was one of the well-to-do and prosperous people of Makkah. All the members of his tribe and inhabitants of the city respected and obeyed him. He became arrogant and insulted the leader of all the Prophets ﷺ - the noblest of creation. The next verse warns such arrogant people about the evil consequences of their behavior.

Verse [8] اِنَّ اِلٰى رَبِّكَ الرُّجْعٰى (Surely to your Lord is the Return.) The word *ruj'a*, like *bushrā*, is the verbal noun of infinitive - meaning all will be returning to their Lord. The apparent meaning is 'returning to the Lord after death and giving account of good and bad deeds and seeing with their own eyes the evil consequences of arrogance.' The profounder meaning of the verse is that though man has been endowed with great natural powers and has been created in the best make, he errs grievously if he thinks that he can ignore Allah's help and guidance. He constantly stands in need of Divine assistance, because his capacities and capabilities - either as an individual or in his collective capacity - are at best limited. The proud and arrogant man is thus not self-sufficient. If he thinks deeply, he will find that he needs Allah for every movement and pause. If He has apparently not made any member of the human species in need of another, he is at least in need of Allah for all his needs. Thinking that human beings are not in need of one another is also a fallacy. Allah has made man a social being, and as such he cannot satisfy all his needs by himself. Allah has made the social system or network such that all human beings need one another to satisfy their needs some time or the other. Let us consider an example: A fresh morsel of food that goes into our mouth and we swallow it unreflecting, is the result of thousands of human beings and animals who worked hard for a long period of time. It is not

possible for anyone to engage so many thousands of human beings in his service. The same applies to clothes and other needs which require the services of thousands of millions of humans and animals to prepare the needful things. None of them is his servant. Even if he hires them at a rate of wages to work for him, it would not be possible for him to pay them their wages or salary. This secret or mystery dawns upon man when he realizes that the system of preparing all his needs is set into motion by the consummate wisdom of the Creator of the universe. He inspired someone to become a farmer, He cast into another's mind to become a woodcutter or a carpenter, He kindled in someone else's mind to become a blacksmith, He stimulated others to be content with labouring or working for somebody else, He ignited in others the burning desire to be involved in commerce or business, trade or industry. In this way, Allah has set up a *bazaar* of human needs which no government, nor its legal system or an individual could ever set up. A careful thinking along this line must lead us to the natural corollary that إِنَّ إِلَى رَبِّكَ الرُّجْعَى (Surely to your Lord is the Return.", that is, we witness that ultimately all things are under Divine power and wisdom.

Verses [9-10] أَرَءَيْتَ الَّذِي يَنْهَى. عَبْدًا إِذَا صَلَّى (Have you seen him who forbids a slave of Allah when he prays?) From here to the end of the Sūrah, the verses allude to an incident. When the Holy Prophet ﷺ was enjoined to perform the *ṣalāh*, he started performing it at first privately, later in public in the Sacred Mosque. Abū Jahl stopped him from performing *ṣalāh* and threatened him that if he were to perform *ṣalāh* and prostrate, he would [God forbid!] trample his neck. Verse [14] أَلَمْ يَعْلَمْ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ يَرَى (Does he not know that Allah is watching?) is in response to the threat made by Abū Jahl, and the verse does not mention whom He is watching. It is of general application - He is watching the pious personality who is performing the *ṣalāh*, as well as the wretched, miserable person who is obstructing the performance of the *ṣalāh*. Here the statement merely asserts that Allah is watching everything and everyone. It does not specify what will happen at Resurrection, because the horrible, terrible and dreadful scenes of that are unimaginable.

Verse [15 - concluding part] لَنَسْفَعًا بِالنَّاصِيَةِ (...We will certainly drag [him] by forelock.) The *nasfa'an* is derived from the infinitive *saf'uun* which means 'to seize and drag' and the word *nāṣiyah* means 'forelock', that is, the front part of a person's hair that falls forward over the

forehead. When a person's forelock is seized , he becomes helpless in the hands of the seizer.

Verse [19] كَلَّا لَاتُطِعْهُ وَاسْجُدْ وَاقْتَرِبْ (No! never obey him, and bow down in *sajdah* {Prostration}, and come closer.) The Holy Prophet ﷺ is advised to ignore and disobey Abū Jahl when he stops him from praying. He is asked to be steadfast in prayer and prostration.

Acceptability of Supplication in the Posture of Prostration

It is recorded in Abū Dāwūd on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ؓ that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: اقرب مايكون العَبد من ربّه وهو ساجد فاكثروا الدعاء (The closest that a servant can be to his Lord is when he is in prostration. Therefore, make abundant supplications [while prostrating]) Another authentic Tradition states: فانّه قمن ان يستجاب لكم (...because it is fitting and proper that supplications be accepted in the state of prostration.)

Ruling

It is valid to supplicate in the supererogatory (*nafl*) *ṣalāh* while prostrating. In certain narrations, special words of the supplications are recorded from the Holy Prophet ﷺ. It is better to recite those transmitted prayers of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. There is no proof or evidence of such supplications in the prostration of obligatory *ṣalāh*, because the obligatory *ṣalāh* needs to be short.

Ruling

A prostration is compulsory for one who recites this verse and listens to it. A narration of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ؓ states that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ used to prostrate when he recited this verse. Allah knows best!

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-'Alaq
Ends here

Sūrah Al-Qadr
(The *Qadr*)

This Sūrah is Makkī, and it has 5 verses

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 5

إِنَّآ أَنزَلْنٰهُ فِى لَيْلَةِ الْقَدْرِ ﴿١﴾ وَمَآ أَدْرٰىكَ مَا لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ ﴿٢﴾ لَيْلَةُ
الْقَدْرِ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ أَلْفِ شَهْرٍ ﴿٣﴾ تَنَزَّلُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ وَالرُّوحُ فِيهَا بِإِذْنِ
رَبِّهِم مِّن كُلِّ أَمْرٍ ﴿٤﴾ سَلٰمٌ هِىَ حَتّٰى مَطْلَعِ الْفَجْرِ ﴿٥﴾

We have sent it (the Qur'ān) down in the Night of *Qadr*. [1] **And what may let you know what the Night of *Qadr* is?** [2] **The Night of *Qadr* is much better than one thousand months.** [3] **The angels and the Spirit descend in it, with the leave of your Lord, along with every command.** [4] **Peace it is till the rising of dawn.** [5]

Occasion of Revelation

Ibn Abī Ḥātim has reported from Mujāhid (as *mursal ḥadīth*) that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was told about a *mujāhid* [warrior in the cause of religion] from amongst the Children of Israel who carried weapons of war on his shoulders for a thousand months during which time he never laid down his arms. The Companions were amazed when they heard this. On that occasion, this Sūrah was revealed which describes that worship in the Night of *Qadr* granted to this *Ummah* exceeds by more than a thousand months of *jihād* persistently fought by that warrior. According to another narration of Mujāhid cited in Ibn Jarīr, a worshipper from among the Children of Israel used to worship Allah the whole night, and

as soon as the dawn broke, he would arm himself and fight the whole day. This continued consecutively for a thousand months. This Surah was thus revealed. This shows the superiority of the *Ummah* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and that the Night of *Qadr* is a special characteristic of this *ummah*. [Maẓharī].

Meaning of The Night of *Qadr*

One meaning of the word *Qadr* is 'greatness, honour or dignity'. Zuhrī and other scholars have assigned this meaning to it. The night is called the Night of *Qadr* because it is a night of greatness, honour, majesty and dignity. Abū Bakr Warrāq has stated that this night is so called because a person becomes a man of honour and dignity on account of repentance, seeking pardon and righteous acts during this night, whilst prior to this he might have lacked honour and dignity on account of unrighteous life he might have led.

Another meaning of the word *Qadr* is 'predestination'. From this point of view, the night is so called because the destiny of individuals and nations that was decided in pre-eternity is assigned to the relevant angels who are appointed for cosmic planning. Every man's age, death, sustenance, rain and other things are measured out to the angels to be implemented for a complete year from one month of Ramaḍān to another. If an individual is destined to perform Ḥajj in the forthcoming year, it will be prescribed. According to Ibn 'Abbās ؓ, there are four angels in charge of cosmic planning: [1] Isrāfīl; [2] Mīkā'īl; [3] 'Izrā'īl; and [4] Jibra'īl عليهم السلام.

It is clearly stated in [44:3-5]

إِنَّآ أَنزَلْنَٰهُ فِى لَيْلَةٍ مُّبَٰرَكَةٍ ۚ إِنَّا كُنَّا مُنذِرِينَ ﴿٣﴾ فِيهَا يُفْرَقُ كُلُّ أَمْرٍ حَكِيمٍ ﴿٤﴾ أَمْرًا مِّنْ عِندِنَآ ۚ إِنَّا كُنَّا مُرْسِلِينَ ﴿٥﴾

We have sent it down in a blessed night, (because) We had to warn (people). [3] In that (night), every wise thing is decided [4] through a command from Us. We were to send the Messenger [5]. (44:3-5)

'*Laylatun Mubārakah*' or the 'blessed', according to overwhelming scholars of the Qur'ān, refers to the Night of *Qadr*. The angels record and

descend with whatever Allah has destined or decreed for the coming year. Some scholars hold that the 'blessed night' in 44: 3 refers to the fifteenth night of *Sha'bān*, that is, '*Laylatul Barā'ah* ' or the 'Night of Immunity'. This view may be reconciled with the former one by holding that the initial Divine decrees are decided on the Night of Immunity, and the details are recorded and handed over to the relevant angels on the Night of *Qadr*. This is supported by a narration of Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ which Baghawī has recorded on the authority of Abūḍ-Ḍuḥā which states that Allah decrees all cosmic matters on the Night of Immunity, but they are only handed over to the relevant angels on the Night of *Qadr*. [Maẓharī].

Date of the Night of *Qadr*

It is explicitly stated in the Qur'ān that the Night occurs in the blessed or auspicious month of Ramaḍān, but its exact date has not been disclosed. As a result, it is disputed and debated among scholars. There are about forty opinions recorded. Maẓharī states that the most authentic opinion is that the Night of *Qadr* occurs in the last ten nights of *Ramaḍān*, but no specific date has been fixed. It could be any of the last ten odd nights which may alternate from year to year. According to authentic Traditions, it could be one of the following nights: 21, 23, 25, 27 and 29. Thus all the apparently conflicting Traditions relating to the odd nights are reconciled. All the Traditions pertaining to the date of the Night are authentic, and there is no need for any convoluted interpretation. Most eminent jurists - like Abā Qilābah, Imām Mālik, Imām Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, Sufyān Thawrī, Isḥāq Ibn Rahwaih, Abū Thawr, Muzanī, Ibn Khuzaymah and others - agree that the Night occurs in the last ten odd nights, alternating. Imām Shāfi'ī has two opinions. In one he sides with the majority, and in another he holds that the night is fixed and does not alternate. [Ibn Kathīr].

Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah's رضى الله عنها narration is recorded in Ṣaḥīḥ of Bukhārī, according to which the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is reported to have said: تحرّوا ليلة القدرفى العشر الاوَاخر من رمضان "Look for the Night of *Qadr* in the last ten nights of Ramaḍān." Ibn 'Umar ﷺ narrates, as recorded in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: فاطلبوها فى الوتر منها "Search for it in the last ten odd nights of Ramaḍān." [Maẓharī].

The Value and Importance of the Night and a Special Du'ā for the Night

The greatest virtue of the Night is mentioned in the Sūrah itself, that is, the acts of worship performed in this single night is better than worship in one thousand months which amounts to eighty-three years and four months. The figure here and elsewhere in the Qur'ān does not signify its precise number, but simply denotes a very large or high number. Allah alone knows how much more or better.

It is recorded in Bukhārī and Muslim on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "He who spends the Night of *Qadr* in the worship of Allah, all his past sins will be forgiven." Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ narrates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "All the angels resident at the 'Lote Tree of the Uttermost Boundary' descend in the leadership of Sayyidnā Jibra'īl ﷺ and greet every believer, man or woman, except one who takes wine or eats pork." Another narration reports that anyone who is deprived of the good of the Night of *Qadr* is in fact deprived of all good. On the Night of *Qadr* some people experience and witness special *anwār* [lights]. However, it may be noted that this is not experienced or witnessed by all and sundry nor is it part of the blessings and reward of the Night. Therefore, people should not concern themselves about it.

Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا once asked the Messenger of Allah ﷺ what supplication she should make if she finds the Night. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ advised her to make the following supplication: اَللّٰهُمَّ اِنَّکَ عَفُوٌّ تُحِبُّ الْعَفْوَ فَاعْفُ عَنِّیْ "O Allah! Verily, You are the Oft-Pardoning, You love to pardon, so do pardon me." [Qurṭubī].

Revelation of the Holy Qur'ān

Verse [1] اِنَّآ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ فِیْ لَیْلَةِ الْقَدْرِ " We sent it [the Qur'ān] down in the Night of *Qadr*."This verse makes explicit that the Holy Qur'ān was revealed on the Night of *Qadr*. This could have one of two meanings: [1] the entire Holy Qur'ān was revealed on this Night from the Preserved Tablet. Then Sayyidnā Jibra'īl ﷺ, according to the exigency of circumstances, brought it down to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ piecemeal over a period of twenty-three years; and [2] it is related that the first revelation,

consisting of the opening verses of Sūrah [96], took place in the month of Ramaḍān on the Night of *Qadr*, when the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was at his devotion in the cave of Ḥirā'. The rest of the Qur'ān was revealed little by little according to the need of different occasions.

All Heavenly Books were revealed in Ramaḍān

Sayyidnā Abū Dhar Ghifārī رضي الله عنه narrates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Holy Prophet Ibrāhīm's عليه السلام Scriptures were revealed on 3rd of Ramaḍān; Torah was revealed on 6th of Ramaḍān; Injīl was revealed on 13th of Ramaḍān; Zabūr was revealed on 18th of Ramaḍān; and the Holy Qur'ān was revealed on 24th of Ramaḍān." [Maẓharī].

Descent of the Angels and the Spirit with Divine Decrees

Verse [4] تَنَزَّلُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ وَالرُّوْحُ (The angels and the Spirit descend in it, with the leave of their Lord, along with every command.) 'Spirit' here refers to Jibra'īl عليه السلام.

Sayyidnā Anas رضي الله عنه narrates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "When the Night of *Qadr* occurs, Jibra'īl عليه السلام descends on the earth with a huge throng of angels and all of them pray for every servant of Allah, man or woman, busy in *ṣalāh* or *dhikr*, to be blessed by Allah." [Maẓharī]. In the phrase مِنْ كُلِّ اَمْرٍ (along with every command), the preposition *min* is used in the sense of 'with' as in [13:11] يَحْفَظُوْنَهٗ مِنْ اَمْرِاللّٰهِ' The verse under comment means the angels bring down, during the Night of *Qadr*, the decree for everything destined to occur in the coming year. Some of the commentators, like Mujāhid and others, say that the phrase مِنْ كُلِّ اَمْرٍ *min kulli amrin* is syntactically related to *salām*, and the word *'Amr* means 'every thing'. Thus they interpret the statement to mean: 'The night is a security from every evil, harm and calamity.' [Ibn Kathīr].

Verse [5] سَلٰمٌ (Peace it is till the rising of dawn.) The word Salām [peace] stands for a complete sentence meaning 'it is all peace, equanimity and complete goodness, having no evil in it.' [Qurṭubī]. Some scholars treat the word *Salāmun* as a sentence qualifying مِنْ كُلِّ اَمْرٍ *min kulli amrin,* meaning 'the angels come with every such matter which is good and peace'. [Maẓharī].

هِيَ حَتّٰى مَطْلَعِ الْفَجْرِ The concluding expression of the verse means the blessings of the Night of *Qadr* are not restricted to any particular part of

the night. They start descending at the fall of night and continue till the break of dawn.

Special Note

According to there verse 'The Night of Power is better than a thousand months' which equals eighty-three years and four months. Obviously, each year will contain a *laylatul Qadr* which will be better than a thousand months. As a result, the Night of *Qadr* will recur *ad infinitum*, that is, repeat or continue without an end. For this reason, some of the commentators say the expression 'more than a thousand months' does not include nights of *Qadr*. Thus this should not pose any problem. [Ibn Kathīr on the authority of Mujāhid].

On account of geographical positions, the time will vary from place to place. As a result, the Night of *Qadr* will not occur in all the regions of the world simultaneously. This is not a problem because people of each location should calculate and consecrate the night and receive its blessings according to their geographical position. Allah, the Pure and Exalted, knows best.

Ruling

If anyone performs the 'Ishā' and Fajr *ṣalāhs* in congregation, he will receive the blessings and reward of the Night of *Qadr*. The more one performs acts of worship in this night, the more he shall receive its blessings. It is recorded in Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim that Sayyidnā 'Uthmān ﵁ narrates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "If a person performs his 'Ishā' *ṣalāh* in congregation, he will attain the blessings of spending half the night in devotion; and if he performs Fajr *ṣalāh* in congregation, he will attain the blessings of spending the entire night in devotion."

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Qadr
Ends here

Sūrah Al-Bayyinah
(The Clear Proof)

This Sūrah is Madani, and it has 8 verses

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 8

لَمْ يَكُنِ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْ اَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ وَالْمُشْرِكِيْنَ مُنْفَكِّيْنَ حَتّٰى
تَاْتِيَهُمُ الْبَيِّنَةُ ﴿١﴾ رَسُوْلٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ يَتْلُوْا صُحُفًا مُّطَهَّرَةً ﴿٢﴾ فِيْهَا
كُتُبٌ قَيِّمَةٌ ﴿٣﴾ وَمَا تَفَرَّقَ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ اِلَّا مِنْۢ بَعْدِ
مَاجَآءَتْهُمُ الْبَيِّنَةُ ﴿٤﴾ وَمَآ اُمِرُوْٓا اِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ مُخْلِصِيْنَ لَهُ الدِّيْنَ
حُنَفَآءَ وَيُقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَيُؤْتُوا الزَّكٰوةَ وَذٰلِكَ دِيْنُ الْقَيِّمَةِ ﴿٥﴾ اِنَّ
الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْ اَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ وَالْمُشْرِكِيْنَ فِيْ نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ خٰلِدِيْنَ
فِيْهَا اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمْ شَرُّ الْبَرِيَّةِ ﴿٦﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ
اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمْ خَيْرُ الْبَرِيَّةِ ﴿٧﴾ جَزَآؤُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ جَنّٰتُ عَدْنٍ تَجْرِيْ
مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَآ اَبَدًا رَضِيَ اللّٰهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوْا عَنْهُ
ذٰلِكَ لِمَنْ خَشِيَ رَبَّهٗ ﴿٨﴾

Those who disbelieved from among the People of the Book, and the polytheists, were not (expected) to desist (from their wrong beliefs) unless there came to them a clear proof, [1] a messenger from Allah who recites the

purified scrolls [2] **containing (right and) straight writings.** [3] **And those who were given the Book did not disagree but after the clear proof came to them,** [4] **while they were not ordered but to worship Allah, making their submission exclusive for him with integrity, and to establish *ṣalāh* and pay *zakāh*. And that is the way of the straight religion.** [5] **Surely those who disbelieved from among the People of the Book and the polytheists will be in the fire of Jahannam, in which they will be living forever. Those are the worst of all human beings.** [6] **As for those who believed and did righteous deeds, they are the best of all human beings.** [7] **Their reward, with their Lord, is gardens of eternity beneath which rivers flow in which they will be abiding forever. Allah is pleased with them, and they are pleased with Him. That is for him who has awe of his Lord.** [8]

Situation of the People of the Book and of the Pagan Arabs before the advent of the Final Messenger of Allah ﷺ

Verse [1] draws attention to the situation of the world before the advent of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ: The entire world was sunk deeply in the darkness of ignorance, superstition, corruption, disbelief and paganism. When the whole world was so benighted, the infinite grace, mercy and wisdom of the Lord of the worlds bubbled up to dispel the darkness, to cure the obnoxious diseases and to dissipate the universally prevailing calamities. The moral and spiritual maladies were acute, excruciating, serious and severe. As a result, there was a need for an effective, expert and a competent healer who would be able to cure them. Such a healer was raised in the person of the Final Messenger of Allah ﷺ who is described as *al-Bayyinah* 'The Clear Proof'. The healer came with a Book. Now follows some of the important characteristics of the Holy Qur'ān.

Verses [2-3] يَتْلُوا صُحُفًا مُّطَهَّرَةً. فِيهَا كُتُبٌ قَيِّمَةٌ (a messenger from Allah who recites the purified scrolls containing [right and] straight writings. - 98:2,3) The verb *yatlū* is derived from the infinitive *tilāwah*, meaning 'to read out or to recite'. However, not every reading or reciting is *tilāwah*, but only the one that is very closely followed according to the teacher's instruction. Probably, this is the reason why the word *tilāwah* is specifically used, in common idiom, for 'the recitation of the noble Qur'ān'

. The word *ṣuḥuf* is the plural of *ṣaḥīfah* and it refers to 'a leaf or a page of a book or some leaves of paper on which something is written'. The word *kutūb* is the plural of *kitāb* and it may mean: [1] a leaf or page of a book or some leaves of paper on which something is written. From this point of view, the words *kutūb* and *ṣuḥuf* are synonyms; or [2] now and then the word *kitāb* [pl. *kutūb*] is used in the sense of a 'writ ' as in [8:68] لَوْلَا كِتٰبٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ سَبَقَ "Had there not been a writ from Allah which came earlier..." the word *kitāb* is used in the sense of a 'writ'. In this context, the second sense seems to fit in more appropriately because if it is taken in the first sense, the words *kutūb* and *ṣuḥuf*, being synonyms, the prepositional phrase *fīhā* is rendered meaningless. The pronoun *-hā* in the phrase refers to *ṣuḥuf* , and the two statements would mean: 'reciting purified written pages in which are true written pages'. This is not in keeping with the lofty rules and principles of Qur'ānic eloquence.

The word مُطَهَّرَةً *muṭahharatan* [purified] is an adjective qualifying the noun *ṣuḥuf* [pages/scrolls]. According to Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ, the Scriptures are completely free from all possible flaws, forgeries, doubt, hypocrisy and deviations. The word *qayyimah* is used in the sense of 'straight', and is the adjective of the noun *kutūb*, and it means its laws, ordinances and injunctions are upright, straight, just and balanced. It could also mean 'lasting and permanent'. In this instance, the phrase would signify that the Divine injunctions of the Holy Qur'ān will last permanently till the Day of Judgement. The verse thus purports to say that the sending of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ [as the Clear Proof] was essential to the transformation of the people of earlier revelations and the pagans who had ended up in disbelief and could not have departed from their erring ways without the help of his ﷺ Prophetic mission. His ﷺ mission was to recite the pure scrolls to them which contained clear Divine injunctions. Initially he ﷺ did not recite from the Scriptures but from his memory, but the sense here is that he recited to them a discourse that was later written and preserved in scrolls. The Qur'ān [as the Clear Proof] is the compendium of all that is good, lasting and immutable teachings.

Verse [4] وَمَا تَفَرَّقَ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ اِلَّا مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا جَآءَتْهُمُ الْبَيِّنَةُ (And those who were given the Book did not disagree but after the Clear Proof came to them.) The verb *tafarraqa* here means 'to deny, reject or differ and disagree'. The

verse means to say that the People of the Book had eagerly awaited the advent of a great Holy Prophet ﷺ about whom clear prophecies were found in their Scriptures, clear description of the Holy Prophet ﷺ was given, in that the Qur'ān would descend upon him and it would be compulsory for them to obey and follow him, but when he appeared in fact, then instead of accepting him, they rejected him. The Qur'ān points out that there was a complete agreement among the Jews and the Christians that the Final Messenger ﷺ will make his appearance, as in [2:89] وَكَانُوا مِنْ قَبْلُ يَسْتَفْتِحُونَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا "...while earlier, they used to seek help against those who disbelieved..." That is, the Torah had in several places foretold the coming of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. In fact, the Jews themselves used to tell the pagan Arabs that a new Prophet was soon to come who will vanquish them, and the Jews claimed that they would be with him, so they would be victorious. Further in [2:89] the Qur'ān states فَلَمَّا جَآءَهُم مَّا عَرَفُوا كَفَرُوا بِهِ "...yet when there came to them that they did identify, they denied it... ". The phrase 'that they did identify' could refer to the 'Final Messenger' ﷺ or the 'new Divine Book [the Qur'ān]' or the 'religion of Truth'. The same theme runs through the verse under comment: Many people accepted the new Prophet ﷺ, the new Book and the new religion in terms of the prophecies made in their revealed Scriptures, but a large number, especially the Christians, rejected them. It is a strange phenomenon that before his advent they believed in him without a single dissenting voice, but when he appeared as the Clear Proof, dissention arose and a large number rejected him while a small number believed in him.

Since this phenomenon was restricted to the People of the Book, it did not include the pagans, unlike verse [1] which includes the pagans also. Allah knows best!

Verse [5] وَذٰلِكَ دِيْنُ الْقَيِّمَةِ (And that is the way of the straight religion.) The word *qayyimah* [the straight] is apparently the qualifier of the noun *kutūb* [Books] which occurred earlier. Some treat the adjective as qualifying the noun *millah* [religion]. The verse purports to say that Allah commanded the People of the former Scriptures that they should render full and sincere obedience to Divine commandments, that is, to worship Allah alone. They should also establish the regular prayers and

pay the obligatory alms. Then the Qur'ān reminds them that this is not their distinctive feature exclusively. All former religions that are upright and received Books from Allah have the same features. This is the true religion of all the Prophets ﷺ that they preached to their respective people. It would appear that the phrase *kutubun qayyimah* [(right and) straight writings], contextually, refers to the Qur'ānic ordinances and injunctions. From this point of view, the verse would signify that the ordinances and injunctions of the Sharī'ah of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ are exactly the same as those that were given to them in their revealed Scriptures. They were not divergent so that they could find a pretext to oppose.

Verse [8] 'رَضِیَ اللّٰہُ عَنۡہُمۡ وَرَضُوۡا عَنۡہُ ؕ ذٰلِکَ لِمَنۡ خَشِیَ رَبَّہٗ' (Allah is pleased with them, and they are pleased with Him; that is for him who fears his Lord.) This verse points to the highest stage of spiritual development of the inmates of Paradise, that is, the Divine pleasure with no danger of Divine displeasure. This is the greatest reward with which the people of faith will be blessed. The God-fearing people are well-pleased with Him because of the comprehensive favours He has given them. Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd Khudrī رضی اللہ عنہ narrates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

> "Undoubtedly, Allah shall address the inmates of Paradise: یَا اَھۡلَ الۡجَنَّۃِ 'O Inmates of Paradise!' "
>
> They will reply: لَبَّیۡکَ رَبَّنَا وَسَعۡدَیۡکَ وَالۡخَیۡرُ کُلُّہٗ فِیۡ یَدَیۡکَ Our Lord, we are present and ready to carry out Your orders. All good is in Your control.'
>
> Allah shall ask them: ھَلۡ رَضِیۡتُمۡ Are you happy?'
>
> They will submit: 'How can we not be happy when You have given us what You have not bestowed on any of Your creation? '
>
> Allah will tell them: 'Shall I not grant you something superior to all of this?'
>
> They will exclaim: 'What can be superior to this?'
>
> Allah will reply: 'I shall grant you My pleasure, and I will never be angry with you in the future.'". [Transmitted by al-Bukhārī vide Maẓharī].

It should be noted here that there are two types of *riḍā'* [pleasure]:

one in general sense; and second in specific or higher sense. In the general sense, *riḍā' bil-qadr* (i.e. to be pleased with every decree of Allah) is part of the obligations of a servant of Allah. A consummated slave is only ever satisfied and content with Allah Himself, and thus sincerely accepts the Divine decree. However, here the word is used in the higher sense, that is, Allah bestows upon a slave all his specific wishes and ambitions without leaving out any of them as in [93:5] وَلَسَوْفَ يُعْطِيكَ رَبُّكَ فَتَرْضٰى (And of course, your Lord will give you so much that you will be pleased.) Here also the word '*riḍā*' means the fulfillment of every wish of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. When this verse was revealed, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ expressed his wish and ambition that he would not be pleased until every single believer is taken out of Hell. [Maẓharī]

Verse [8 - the concluding phrase] 'ذٰلِكَ لِمَنْ خَشِيَ رَبَّهٗ (...That is for him who has awe of his Lord.) The word 'fear' or 'awe' here is not used in the sense of an 'agitated, disturbed or perturbed feeling' which we naturally have for an enemy, a beast, a ferocious animal or an obnoxious thing that might harm us. '*Khashyatullah*' (Allah's awe) is, on the contrary, a feeling of deep, reverential awe that leads man to Allah's obedience. It is the awe of Allah's Majesty and His Incomparability that makes the perfect slave do every work under every circumstance to attain the Divine pleasure and evade every occasion of His displeasure. This is the axis on which rotates the religious perfection and all bounties of the Hereafter.

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Bayyinah
Ends here

Sūrah Az-Zilzal

(The Quake)

This Sūrah is Madanī, and it has 8 verses

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 8

إِذَا زُلْزِلَتِ الْأَرْضُ زِلْزَالَهَا ﴿١﴾ وَأَخْرَجَتِ الْأَرْضُ أَثْقَالَهَا ﴿٢﴾ وَقَالَ
الْإِنْسَانُ مَا لَهَا ﴿٣﴾ يَوْمَئِذٍ تُحَدِّثُ أَخْبَارَهَا ﴿٤﴾ بِأَنَّ رَبَّكَ أَوْحَىٰ لَهَا
﴿٥﴾ يَوْمَئِذٍ يَصْدُرُ النَّاسُ أَشْتَاتًا لِيُرَوْا أَعْمَالَهُمْ ﴿٦﴾ فَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ
مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُ ﴿٧﴾ وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُ ﴿٨﴾

When the earth will be trembled with its quake, [1] **and the earth will bring forth its burdens,** [2] **and man will say, "What has happened to it?"** [3] **That day it will describe all its happenings,** [4] **because its Lord will have so commanded it.** [5] **That day the people will come back (from the place of reckoning) in different groups, so that they may be shown (the fruits of) their deeds.** [6] **So, whoever does good (even) to the weight of a particle shall see it.** [7] **And whoever does evil (even) to the weight of a particle shall see it.** [8]

The Merits of Surah Az-Zilzal

Sayyidnā Anas and Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنهما report that the Messenger of Allah said that Sūrah Al-Zilzāl equals half the Qur'ān, Sūrah Al-Ikhlāṣ equals a third of the Qur'ān and Sūrah Al-Kāfirun equals a quarter of the Qur'ān. [Transmitted by al-Tirmidhī, al-Baghawī and al-Maẓharī].

The Scene of the Day of Resurrection

Verse [1] إِذَا زُلْزِلَتِ الْأَرْضُ زِلْزَالَهَا (When the earth will be trembled with its quake.) It is not clear whether this earthquake refers to the convulsion that will take place in the world before the 'first blowing of the trumpet', as is mentioned in connection with the portents of the Doomsday, or it refers to the quake that will occur after the 'second blowing' when the dead bodies will be resurrected and thrown out of their graves. Narratives and views of the commentators differ on this issue. It is not inconceivable that many quakes and convulsions would occur: first, before the 'first blowing'; and second, after the 'second blowing' at the time of raising the dead. Here it probably refers to the second quake, and the context supports it, because the Sūrah later on describes the scenes of the Day of Resurrection, such as reckoning, weighing and evaluating of deeds, and recompense . Allah knows best. [Maẓharī]

Verse [2] وَأَخْرَجَتِ الْأَرْضُ أَثْقَالَهَا (and the earth will bring forth its burdens.) Muslim has recorded in his Ṣaḥīḥ from Abū Hurairah ﷺ that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

"The earth will throw out the pieces of its liver [contents]. Gold and silver will come out like columns. A murderer will come and say: 'I killed for this ?' The one who broke the ties of kinship will say: 'For this I severed the ties of kinship?' The thief will say: 'For this I got my hand amputated?' Then they will leave it there, and no one will take anything from it."

Verse [7] فَمَنْ يَّعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَّرَهٗ (So, whoever does good [even] to the weight of a particle shall see it.) The word 'good' here refers to what is good in terms of Sharī'ah, that is, only a good deed done in the wake of faith is recognized by Allah. Any good deed done in the state of disbelief is not recognized, and consequently it will not be rewarded in the Hereafter, though it might have been rewarded in this world. It is argued on the basis of this verse that anyone who has an atom's weight of faith will eventually be taken out of Hell. The reason being that, according to the promise made in this verse, man must reap the fruit of his righteousness in the Hereafter. If he has not done any righteous deeds, faith itself is a great righteousness. Thus no matter how sinful a believer may be, he will

not be condemned to Hell for good. On the other hand, if a non-believer has done tons of good deeds, they will be rendered vain in the Hereafter on account of lack of faith. He will, however, receive reward for them here in this world.

Verse [8] 'وَمَنْ يَّعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَّرَه' (And Whoever does evil [even] to the weight of a particle shall see it.) By 'evil' here is meant the evil for which the evil-doer has not repented. The Qur'ān and the Sunnah bear ample testimony to the fact that any sinner who sincerely repents for his sins Allah will most certainly accept his repentance. However, the sins for which the sinners have not repented in this world shall certainly bring their results, no matter how trivial or petty they might have been in their appearance. That is why the Messenger of Allah ﷺ warned Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنها to beware of the sins that are belittled, for indeed they will be taken account of by Allah." [Transmitted by Nasā'ī and Ibn Mājah].

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه says that this verse is most robust and comprehensive verse of the Holy Qur'ān. Sayyidnā Anas رضي الله عنه in a lengthy narration reports that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ referred to this verse as الفاذة الجامعه "the unique, most comprehensive verse".

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Az-Zilzāl
Ends here

Sūrah 'Al-Ādiyāt

(The Running Horses)

This Sūrah is Makkī, and it has 11 verses

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 11

وَالْعٰدِيٰتِ ضَبْحًا ﴿١﴾ فَالْمُوْرِيٰتِ قَدْحًا ﴿٢﴾ فَالْمُغِيْرٰتِ صُبْحًا ﴿٣﴾
فَاَثَرْنَ بِهٖ نَقْعًا ﴿٤﴾ فَوَسَطْنَ بِهٖ جَمْعًا ﴿٥﴾ اِنَّ الْاِنْسَانَ لِرَبِّهٖ لَكَنُوْدٌ
﴿٦﴾ وَاِنَّهٗ عَلٰى ذٰلِكَ لَشَهِيْدٌ ﴿٧﴾ وَاِنَّهٗ لِحُبِّ الْخَيْرِ لَشَدِيْدٌ ﴿٨﴾ اَفَلَا
يَعْلَمُ اِذَا بُعْثِرَ مَا فِى الْقُبُوْرِ ﴿٩﴾ وَحُصِّلَ مَا فِى الصُّدُوْرِ ﴿١٠﴾ اِنَّ
رَبَّهُمْ بِهِمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ لَّخَبِيْرٌ ﴿١١﴾

I swear by those (horses) that run snorting, [1] then those that create sparks by striking (their hoofs) on the stones, [2] then those that invade at morning, [3] and raise a trail of dust therein, [4] then enter, at the same time, into the centre of the (opposing) host, [5] man is, indeed, very ungrateful to his Lord, [6] and he himself is a witness to that fact. [7] And in his love for wealth, he is very intense. [8] Does he not then know (what will happen) when all that is contained in the graves will be overturned, [9] and all that is contained in the hearts will be exposed. [10] Surely your Lord, that day, will be fully aware of them. [11]

Place of Revelation

According to Sayyidnā Ibn Mas'ūd, Jābir, Ḥasan Baṣrī, 'Ikramah and

'Aṭā' رحمهم الله تعالیٰ, Sūrah Al-'Ādiyāt was revealed in Makkah and, according to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās, Anas, Imām Mālik and Qatādah, the Sūrah was revealed in Madīnah. [Qurṭubī].

In this Sūrah Allah describes the special features of war-horses or chargers, and swears by them. The subject of the oath states that man is very ungrateful to his Lord. It has been explained time and again previously that it is the prerogative of Allah to swear oath by any of his creatures to recount an event or set down ordinances. It is not permitted for any of the human beings to take oath by any of the creatures. The purpose of swearing an oath is to confirm or give weight to a subsequently stated truth. It is also mentioned earlier that when the Holy Qur'ān swears an oath by an object, it has some nexus with the subject of the oath. Here the hard tasks of the war-horses are called to bear testimony to the fact that man is very ungrateful for Allah's favours. In other words, man needs to look at the horses, especially the war-horses, who risk their lives to travel under very dangerous and difficult conditions, especially in the battlefields where they follow the commands of their masters, whereas man has not created them, he has not even created the fodder he gives to them. His task is merely to give them the fodder that Allah has created. The horses recognize and acknowledge this little favor man does to them, and are prepared to risk their lives and bear the greatest of hardships. As against this, Allah has created man with an insignificant drop of sperm and endowed him with high faculties, abilities, intellect and senses to perform various types of tasks, thus making him the crown of His creation. He [Allah] provided him with all types of food. Facilities are created for all his needs and necessities in an amazing manner. But man does not recognize and acknowledge any of these sublime favors, nor does he express his gratitude to his Creator.

Lexicographical Analysis

The word عَادِيَات *'ādiyāt* is derived from the root *'adw'* which means 'to run'. The ضَبْح *dabh* means 'the sound coming out of the chest of a horse when it runs fast and breathes laboriously; panting.' The word مُورِيَات *mūriyāt* is the active participle of the infinitive of إِيرَاء *'īrā'*. The infinitive means 'to strike or produce fire with a particular piece of wood.' The word قَدْح *qadh* means 'to strike or produce fire with a flint; striking sparks of

fire when the horse runs fast on a rocky ground with horse-shoes on'. The word مُغِيرَات *mughīrāt* is active participle of the infinitive إِغَارَة *ighārah*. The infinitive means 'to attack, or make a sudden hostile excursion upon, an enemy'. The word *ṣubḥ* means 'morning or dawn'. This time has been specifically mentioned because it was the practice of Arabs to attack their enemy at dawn, and not at night in order to show off their bravery. They thought making a hostile excursion on the enemy in the darkness of night was an act of cowardice. The word أَثَرْنَ *atharna* is derived from *'ithārah,* which means 'to raise dust'. The word نَقْع *naq'* means 'dust'. This implies that the dust became stirred up and spread upon the horizon, especially in the morning when the horses run fast. Normally, this is not the time for clouds of dust to fly in this way, unless it was caused by very fast running.

Verse [100:5] فَوَسَطْنَ بِهٖ جَمْعًا (then enter, at the same time, into the centre of the [opposing] host) In other words, they penetrate into the centre of the enemy forces without the least degree of fear.

The word *kanūd*, (100:6) according to Ḥasan Baṣrī رحمه الله تعالى, refers to the one who counts the calamities that befall him, and forgets Allah's favours. Abū Bakr Wāsiṭī said that *kanūd* is the one who spends the bounties of Allah for sinful purposes. Tirmidhi said that *kanūd* is the one who looks at the bounty, and not at the Bounteous Lord. In short, all these interpretations lead to the sense of 'ungratefulness to favours and bounties' and hence the expression *kanūd* means 'ungrateful'.

Verse [100:8] وَإِنَّهٗ لِحُبِّ الْخَيْرِ لَشَدِيْدٌ (and in his love for wealth, he is very intense.) Literally, the word *khair* means 'any good thing'. Idiomatically, the word *khair,* in Arabic, means 'wealth' implying that 'wealth' is an embodiment of goodness and benefit. However, some type of wealth can involve man in untold misery. In the Hereafter, this will be the position of all wealth acquired through unlawful means. Sometimes, wealth in this world too can prove to be nuisance and disaster. Nonetheless, according to Arabic idiom, worldly goods in this verse have been described as *khair* as the same word in another verse [2:180] إِنْ تَرَكَ خَيْرًا "...he leaves some wealth...". In this verse as well the word *khair* means 'wealth'.

To recap, having taken oath by war-horses, the subject states two

points: [1] man is ungrateful or he is a blamer of his Lord who remembers misfortunes and forgets His favours; and [2] he is passionate in his love for wealth. Both these points are evil, rationally as well as from the Sharī'ah point of view. These statements warn man against these evils. The evil of ingratitude is quite obvious and needs no elaboration, but the evil of man's violent love for wealth is not that obvious, and needs some elaboration. Wealth is the axis of man's needs and necessities. Shari'ah has not only permitted its acquisition, but it has also made its acquisition obligatory to the degree of his needs. Therefore, what is condemned in the verse is either the 'intense' or excessive love for wealth that makes one neglectful to one's obligations, and oblivious of the divine injunctions, or the sense is that earning wealth, even saving it according to one's needs is though permissible, having its love in the heart is bad. Let us consider the following illustration: When man feels the need to answer the call of nature, he does it out of necessity. In fact, he makes arrangements for it, but he does not develop love or passion for it in his heart. Likewise, when he falls sick and takes medication, or even undergoes surgery, but he does not develop attachment for it in his heart. He does it only out of necessity. The believer should treat the wealth in this way: A believer should acquire wealth, as Allah has commanded him, to the extent of his need, save it, look after it and utilize it whenever and wherever necessary, but his heart should not be attached to it. How elegantly Maulānā Rūmī رحمه الله تعالیٰ has put it in one of his verses!

آب اندر زیر کشتی پُشتی است...... آب در کشتی هلاك کشتی است

"As long as the water remains under the boat, it helps the boat [to sail]; but if the water seeps into the boat, it sinks it."

Likewise, as long as the wealth floats around the boat of heart, it would be useful; but when it seeps into the heart, it will destroy it. Towards the conclusion of the Sūrah a warning has been sounded against these two evil qualities of man for which he will be punished in the Hereafter.

Verses [100:9-11] اَفَلَا يَعْلَمُ اِذَا بُعْثِرَ مَافِى الْقُبُوْرِ وَحُصِّلَ مَافِى الصُّدُوْرِ. اِنَّ رَبَّهُمْ بِهِمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ لَخَبِيْرٌ (Does he not then know [what will happen] when all that is contained in the graves will be overturned, and all that is contained in the hearts will

be exposed. Surely your Lord, that day, is fully aware of them.) Divine retribution will be meted out, in the Hereafter, to each person commensurate with his deeds, good or bad, as Allah is well-aware of them. Therefore, it would be wise for man to abstain from ingratitude, and he should not have such a violently passionate love for wealth and indulgence in worldly riches as to be unable to separate the good from the bad.

Special Note

The current set of verses describes these evil qualities of man in general terms, while Prophets عليهم السلام, friends of Allah and many of His righteous servants are free from these evil qualities or from any earthly attachments. They acquire wealth through lawful means and abstain from acquiring it through unlawful means. They are ever so grateful to Allah for the wealth He has given them and spend it in the way of Allah. So how these evils are attributed to man in general terms? The answer is that most people have these evil qualities, but this does not imply that all, without any exception, are characterized by these qualities. The upright people are excluded from the general statement. Some of the scholars restrict the word 'man' to 'unbelievers'. These two evil qualities are the essential characteristics of unbelievers, and if they are found in a Muslim [God forbid!], he needs to reflect and be careful. Allah knows best!

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-'Adiyāt
Ends here

Sūrah Al-Qāri'ah

(The Striking Event)

This Sūrah is Makkī, and it has 11 verses

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 11

اَلْقَارِعَةُ ﴿١﴾ مَا الْقَارِعَةُ ﴿٢﴾ وَمَآ اَدْرٰىكَ مَالْقَارِعَةُ ﴿٣﴾ يَوْمَ يَكُوْنُ
النَّاسُ كَالْفَرَاشِ الْمَبْثُوْثِ ﴿٤﴾ وَتَكُوْنُ الْجِبَالُ كَالْعِهْنِ الْمَنْفُوْشِ
﴿٥﴾ فَاَمَّا مَنْ ثَقُلَتْ مَوَازِيْنُهٗ ﴿٦﴾ فَهُوَ فِىْ عِيْشَةٍ رَّاضِيَةٍ ﴿٧﴾ وَاَمَّا
مَنْ خَفَّتْ مَوَازِيْنُهٗ ﴿٨﴾ فَاُمُّهٗ هَاوِيَةٌ ﴿٩﴾ وَمَآ اَدْرٰىكَ مَاهِيَهْ ﴿١٠﴾ نَارٌ
حَامِيَةٌ ﴿١١﴾

The Striking Event! [1] **What is the Striking Event?** [2] **And what may let you know what the Striking Event is?** [3] **(It will happen) on a day when people will be like scattered moths,** [4] **and the mountains will be like carded wool.** [5] **Then, the one whose scales (of good deeds) are heavy** [6] **will be in a happy life.** [7] **But he whose scales are light,** [8] **his abode will be Abyss.** [9] **And what may let you know what that (Abyss) is?** [10] **A blazing fire!** [11]

Human Deeds, Good or Bad, will be Weighed

This Sūrah mentions the weighing of human deeds. He whose scales are heavy will be led to Paradise, and he whose scales are light will be led to Hell. Please see Ma'ariful Qur'ān, Vol. 3/ pp 539-547, for a full and complete analysis of the Weighing of human deeds. The analysis also

allays the doubts raised against the concept of weighing of deeds.

We have also explained there that it appears from reconciliation of conflicting narrations and Qur'ānic verses that the weighing on Plain of Resurrection will take place twice. The first weighing will be to separate the believers from the non-believers. Anyone whose Book of Deeds is put on the scale and contains the belief (*'Īmān*) will be heavy, and the scale of anyone whose Ledger of Deeds does not contain *'Īmān* will be light. At this stage, the believers will be separated from the non-believers. Weighing on the second time will be to distinguish between good and evil deeds of the believers. The reference, in the present Sūrah, is probably to the first weighing in which the scale of every believer will be heavy regardless of his other deeds, while the scale of an unbeliever will be light, even though he might have performed some good acts.

It is explained in Maẓharī that the Holy Qur'ān generally contrasts the unbelievers and righteous believers, when speaking of retribution [reward or punishment], because the latter are the perfect believers. As for the believers who have performed righteous as well as unrighteous deeds, the Qur'ān is generally silent on the issue. However, the principle may be noted that on the Day of Judgement human deeds will not be counted, but weighed. Fewer good deeds with high degree of faith and sincerity, and in accordance with Sunnah will be heavier than many good deeds - prayers, fasting, charity and pilgrimage with lesser degree of faith and sincerity, or not completely in accordance with Sunnah.

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Qāri'ah
Ends here

Sūrah At-Takāthur

(Competition in Amassing)

This Sūrah is Makkī, and it has 8 verses

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 8

أَلْهٰكُمُ التَّكَاثُرُ ﴿١﴾ حَتّٰى زُرْتُمُ الْمَقَابِرَ ﴿٢﴾ كَلَّا سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٣﴾ ثُمَّ كَلَّا سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٤﴾ كَلَّا لَوْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ عِلْمَ الْيَقِيْنِ ﴿٥﴾ لَتَرَوُنَّ الْجَحِيْمَ ﴿٦﴾ ثُمَّ لَتَرَوُنَّهَا عَيْنَ الْيَقِيْنِ ﴿٧﴾ ثُمَّ لَتُسْئَلُنَّ يَوْمَئِذٍ عَنِ النَّعِيْمِ ﴿٨﴾

You are distracted by mutual competition in amassing (worldly benefits), [1] **until you reach the graves.** [2] **No! (This is not a correct attitude.) You will soon know (the reality).** [3] **Again, you will soon know.** [4] **No! if you have had sure knowledge (of the Hereafter, you would not have been so distracted)** [5] **You will certainly see the Hell,** [6] **then you will see it with an eye of certainty.** [7] **Then you will be asked about all the pleasures (you enjoyed in the world).** [8]

Special Merit of Sūrah At-Takāthur

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ is reported to have once asked the noble Companions: "Is there anyone from amongst you who has the strength to recite one thousand verses a day?" The blessed Companions replied: "Who can recite a thousand verses a day? " The Holy Prophet ﷺ said: "Can you not recite Sūrah At-Takāthur?" This implies that Sūrah At-Takāthur equals in weight and worth to a thousand verses, thus stressing its great

importance. [Maẓharī with reference to Ḥākim and Baihaqī on the authority of Ibn 'Umar ﷺ].

Warning Against Materialistic Attitude

Verse [1] أَلْهَـٰكُمُ ٱلتَّكَاثُرُ (You are distracted by mutual competition in amassing [worldly benefits].) The word *takāthur* is derived from the root *kathrah,* and means 'to amass much wealth'. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ and Ḥasan Baṣrī رحمه الله تعالى have assigned this interpretation to it. Qatādah ﷺ says that this word is also used in the sense of 'taking pride in the abundance of material goods'. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ reports that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ recited this verse and explained its meaning, thus: "Acquiring wealth but not paying out of it the obligatory dues." [Qurṭubī].

Verse [2] حَتَّىٰ زُرْتُمُ ٱلْمَقَابِرَ (until you reach the graves.) Here the words 'reaching the graves' mean 'to die and be buried in the graves', as the following Prophetic Ḥadīth bears testimony to this interpretation. Referring to verse [2] of this Sūrah, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: حتّٰى يأتيكم الموت "until death overtakes you" [Ibn Kathīr, from by Ibn Abī Ḥātim]. The verse thus implies that many people are engrossed in acquiring worldly goods and racing each other in wealth and children etc. and remain neglectful of the Hereafter till death comes upon them, and then they are seized by the divine punishment. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Shikhkhīr ﷺ reports that one day he visited the Holy Prophet ﷺ while the latter was reciting Sūrah At-Takāthur and was saying:

يقول ابن آدم مالی مالی وهل لك من مالك الاّ ما اكلت فافنيت اولبست فابليت اوتصدّقت فامضيت، وفی روايةلمسلم وما سوىٰ ذٰلك فذاهب وتاركه للناس.

(ابن کثیرو قرطبی بروایت مسلم،ترمذی احمد)

"The Son of 'Ādam says: 'My wealth, my wealth.' But you do not reap any benefit from your wealth except for that which you ate and you finished it, or that which you clothed yourself with and you wore it out, or that which you gave as charity and you have spent it."

And in a narration by Muslim: "Everything else other than that will go away, and he will leave it for other people.(i.e. inheritors)" [Ibn Kathīr and Qurṭubī as transmitted by Muslim, Tirmidhī and Aḥmad].

Imām Bukhārī records from Sayyidnā Anas ﷺ that the Messenger of

Allah ﷺ said:

لوكان لابن ادم واديًا من ذهب لاحبّ ان يكون له واديان ولن يملاء فاه الاّ التراب و يتوب الله على من تاب.

"If the Son of 'Ādam has a valley of gold, he would love to have two valleys, and nothing but the dust of grave will fill his mouth. And Allah accepts the repentance of him who turns to Him in penitence."

Sayyidnā 'Ubayy Ibn Ka'b رضي الله عنه, referring to the Tradition quoted above, says, "We used to think that this was a part of the Qur'ān until the first verse of Sūrah At-Takāthur was revealed." It seems that the Holy Prophet ﷺ recited the verse and interpreted it in his own words. As a result, some of the Companions were under the impression that the Prophetic words were part of the Qur'ān. Later on, when the Sūrah was recited in its entirety, it did not contain the Prophetic words. This made them realize that the Prophetic words were actually of explanatory nature, and not part of the Qur'ān.

Verse [102:5] كَلَّا لَوْ تَعْلَمُونَ عِلْمَ الْيَقِينِ (No! if you have had sure knowledge..) The word 'if' requires a principal clause that seems missing here, but the context suggests that the sense is the following: "If you had the sure knowledge of accountability on the Day of Judgement, you would not have engrossed yourselves in mutual competition in acquiring worldly goods and taking pride in their abundance."

Verse [102:7] ثُمَّ لَتَرَوُنَّهَا عَيْنَ الْيَقِينِ (...then you will see it with an eye of certainty.) The phrase '*'ain-ul-yaqīn*' (translated above as'eye of certainty') refers to the certainty attained by physical observation, and this is the highest degree of certainty. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه reports that when Holy Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام was on the mount of Ṭūr, his people started worshipping a calf. Allah informed him about this while he was still on the mountain. This piece of information did not affect Mūsā عليه السلام so much. However, when he returned and saw the Children of Israel, with his own eyes, worshipping the calf, he became so indignant that the tablets of Torah involuntarily fell from his hands. [Transmitted by Aḥmad and Ṭabarāni with an authentic chain of narrators, as quoted by Maẓharī].

Verse [102:8] ثُمَّ لَتُسْأَلُنَّ يَوْمَئِذٍ عَنِ النَّعِيمِ (Then you will be asked about all the pleasures [you enjoyed in the world].) This means that, on the Day of

Judgment, all of you will be questioned whether you had shown gratitude towards Allah's favors, or did you misuse them and were ungrateful to Allah? Some of these favors and bounties are explicitly mentioned elsewhere in the Qur'ān:

إِنَّ السَّمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ وَالْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُولَٰئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْئُولًا

> (...Surely, the ear, the eye and the heart - each one of them shall be interrogated about.) [17:36]

These organs and their faculties comprehend millions of blessings of Allah, and man will be questioned as to how he used them every moment of his life.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ is reported to have said that first question that will be put by Allah to every person is: "Did I not give you good health, and did I not give you cold water to quench your thirst?" (Tirmidhī, and Ibn Ḥibbān, with rating as *ṣaḥīḥ*, from Abū Hurairah ؓ, as quoted by Ibn Kathīr)

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ is also reported to have said that no man will be able to move from his place unless he answers five questions: [1] How did he spend his life?; [2] In what pursuits did he expend his youthful energy?; [3] How did he earn his wealth - (by lawful means or unlawful means?); [4] Where did he spend his wealth - (in lawful ways or unlawful ways?;) and [5] Did he act upon the knowledge Allah gave him? (Bukhārī).

Mujāhid, the leading authority on Tafsīr, says that this question on the Day of Judgement relates to every delight of the world that he enjoyed - whether it is in connection with food, clothes, house, wife, children, kingdom, government or honor. Qurṭubī, having cited this, concludes that this is absolutely true, because the question does not specify any particular blessing.

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah At-Takāthur
Ends here

Sūrah Al-'Aṣr
(The Time)

This Sūrah is Makkī, and it has 3 verses

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 3

وَالْعَصْرِ ﴿١﴾ إِنَّ الْإِنسَانَ لَفِي خُسْرٍ ﴿٢﴾ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالْحَقِّ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالصَّبْرِ ﴿٣﴾

I swear by the Time, [1] **man is in a state of loss indeed,** [2] **except those who believed and did righteous deeds, and advised each other for truth, and advised each other for patience.** [3]

Virtue of [Studying] Sūrah al-'Aṣr

Sayyidnā 'Ubaidullāh Ibn Ḥiṣn ﷺ reports that whenever two Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ met, they would not part company until one of them had recited Sūrah Al-'Aṣr in its entirety to the other. [Transmitted by At-Ṭabarānī]. Imām Shāfi'ī says that if people thought about Sūrah Al-'Aṣr carefully, it would be enough for their guidance. It is a concise but comprehensive Sūrah, which in three verses, outlines a complete way of human life based on the Islamic worldview.

In this Sūrah, Allah swears an oath by the 'Time' and says that mankind is in a state of loss; exception, however, is made of people who are characterized by four qualities: [1] faith; [2] righteous deeds; [3] advising each other for Truth; and [4] advising each other for patience. This is the only path to salvation in this world, as well as in the next world. The Qur'ānic prescription comprises, as we have just seen, of four

elements. The first two of them relate to man's own personal betterment, and the other two relate to other people's guidance and reform. [Ibn Kathīr].

Relationship between 'Time' and 'Human Loss'

The first point we need to analyze here is the relationship between the 'oath of time' and 'its subject' because there needs to be a relationship between an 'oath' and its 'subject' The commentators, generally, state that all conditions of man, his growth and development, his movements, his actions and morality - all take place within the space of 'Time'. Man will lose the capital of his existence. Hours, days, months, and years of life pass quickly, spiritual and material potentialities decline, and abilities fade. Man is like a person who possesses great capital and, without his permission and will, every day, a portion of that capital is taken away. This is the nature of life in this world; the nature of continual loss. How well this has been put poetically:

حَيَاتُكَ اَنْفَاسٌ تُعَدُّ فَكُلَّمَا......مَضٰی نَفَسٌ مِنْهَا انْتَقَصْتَ بِهٖ جُزْءًا

"Your life comprises a few breaths that can be counted; when one of them is sent out, a part of your life has diminished."

Allah has granted man the invaluable capital of his life, so that he may invest it in profitable business venture. If he invests his capital of life sensibly in good works, there will be no limit to the profitable returns; but if he invests it unwisely in evil works, then, let alone attracting profitable returns, he will even lose his capital, and. In addition, he will incur the dreadful scourge of committing numerous sins. If however a person did not invest his life-capital in good deeds or in evil deeds, then he, at least, loses both the profit as well as the capital. This is not merely a poetic imagery, but is supported by a Prophetic Ḥadīth, according to which the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is reported to have said:

كُلٌّ يَّغْدُوْ فَبَائِعٌ نَفْسَه، فَمُعْتِقُهَا اَوْمُوْبِقُهَا

"When a person wakes up in the morning, he invests his soul or life in a business enterprise: some of the investors free or save the capital from loss and others destroy it."

The Qur'ān itself has used the word *tijārah* in relation to 'faith' and 'righteous deed', thus:

هَلْ اَدُلُّكُمْ عَلٰى تِجَارَةٍ تُنْجِيْكُمْ مِّنْ عَذَابٍ اَلِيْمٍ

"...shall I tell you about a trade that saves you from a painful punishment? [61:10]"

Since 'Time' is man's capital of life, the man himself is the trader. Under normal circumstances, his capital is not a frozen thing that may be kept for a while and used up later when the need arises. The capital is fluid or flowing all the time, every minute and every second. The man who invests it needs to be very wise, intelligent and agile, so that he is able to swiftly and readily reap the profit from a flowing capital. One of the old scholars said that he had learnt the meaning of this verse from an ice-seller whose trade required utmost diligence, and if he were neglectful for a moment, his entire capital would melt away. That is why this verse has sworn an oath by the 'time' to indicate that it is a melting capital, and the only way to escape loss is to take every moment of his life as valuable, and use it for the four acts mentioned in the Sūrah.

Another possible reason for swearing by 'Time' may be that the 'Time' (in the sense of history) bears testimony to the fact mentioned in the Sūrah. If one thinks on the causes of the rise and decline of individuals and nations, he would certainly believe that it is only these four acts (mentioned in the forthcoming verses) that may ensure the real success and betterment of mankind. Whoever has ever abandoned them has suffered a great loss, as is evident from numerous events recorded by history.

Let us now study the 'four principles' mentioned in the Sūrah. As pointed out earlier, faith and righteous deeds are related to man's moral and spiritual growth and development. They are not in need of elaboration. However, the last two principles ['advising each other for truth'] and ['advising each other for patience'] require some elaboration.

The infinitive *tawāṣī* is derived from *waṣiyyah* which means 'to advise somebody strongly and effectively about the best thing to do in a particular situation'. The term *waṣiyyah* also refers to a 'will or testament' where a testator advises his executor regarding the disposal of his estate on his death.

The two parts are in fact two chapters of the same testament: [1] advice to truth; and [2] advice to patience and fortitude. These two concepts may be explained in different ways. One way to explain them is

that *ḥaqq* ('truth') refers to the package of 'correct faith' and 'good deeds', and *ṣabr* ('patience') refers to abstinence from all sins and evil deeds. Thus the first concept refers to 'enjoining good actions' and the second concept refers to 'forbidding evil actions'. The cumulative sense of the Sūrah is that believers have been enjoined not only to adopt right faith and good deeds themselves, but to advise others strongly and effectively to adopt them, and thus help in the creation of a healthy atmosphere around them.

It is also possible to interpret 'Truth' as referring to articles of faith, and to interpret 'patience' as referring to all good actions and abstinence from evil deeds. The word *ṣabr*, originally meaning 'to withhold oneself and to bind oneself ', encompasses binding oneself down to the performance of righteous deeds and abstaining from sins.

Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Taimiyyah has stated in one of his monographs that there are normally two factors that restrain a person from faith and righteous deeds: The first cause is some doubts about the true faith. When such doubts arise in the mind of people, it destroys their faith and leaves them confused and confounded. As a result, it adversely affects their righteous deeds. The second cause is the selfish desires that stop man from doing good, and involve him in evil deeds. In this situation, he theoretically believes that he should do good and abstain from sins, but his selfish desires lead him to stray from the right path. The current verse indicates to remove both causes of one's distraction. By stressing upon 'advice of truth' it has catered to the first cause, and that it should be removed by reforming others on theoretical and academic level, and by emphasizing on 'advice of patience' it has taken care of the second cause by enjoining upon the Muslims to advise others to give up the base desires and remain firm against their evil demands. Put differently, 'enjoining the truth' means 'improving the knowledge of Muslims or their intellectual development' and 'enjoining patience' means 'improving the practical life of Muslims'.

Need to Salvage the Entire Muslim Society

This Sūrah lays down the important principle of guidance for the Muslims that inviting other Muslims to keep to the true faith and good deeds is as much necessary as their own submission to the Holy Qur'ān and Sunnah. Without sincere efforts, to the best of one's ability, to invite

others to the right path, one's own good deeds are not enough to one's salvation. Especially, if a person does not take care of the spiritual and moral welfare of his wife, children and family and turns a blind eye to their unrighteous deeds, he is blocking his way to salvation - no matter how pious he himself might be. Therefore, the Qur'ān and the Sunnah make it obligatory upon every Muslim to do his best to invite others to the good deeds, and warn them against the evil acts. Unfortunately, let alone the general public, many learned people are lax in this matter. They think it is sufficient for them to be concerned about their own moral and spiritual well-being. They are not concerned about the well-being of their family and children. May Allah grant us the ability to act upon this verse.

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-'Aṣr
Ends here

Sūrah Al-Humazah

(The Backbiter)

This Sūrah is Makkī, and it has 9 verses

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 9

وَيْلٌ لِّكُلِّ هُمَزَةٍ لُّمَزَةِ ﴿١﴾ الَّذِي جَمَعَ مَالًا وَّعَدَّدَهُ ﴿٢﴾ يَحْسَبُ أَنَّ مَالَهُ أَخْلَدَهُ ﴿٣﴾ كَلَّا لَيُنبَذَنَّ فِي الْحُطَمَةِ ﴿٤﴾ وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا الْحُطَمَةُ ﴿٥﴾ نَارُ اللَّهِ الْمُوقَدَةُ ﴿٦﴾ الَّتِي تَطَّلِعُ عَلَى الْأَفْئِدَةِ ﴿٧﴾ إِنَّهَا عَلَيْهِم مُّؤْصَدَةٌ ﴿٨﴾ فِي عَمَدٍ مُّمَدَّدَةٍ ﴿٩﴾

Woe to every backbiter, derider [1] **who accumulates wealth and counts it.** [2] **He thinks that his wealth has made him eternal.** [3] **Never! He will certainly be thrown into the Crusher.** [4] **And what may let you know what the Crusher is?** [5] **It is Allah's kindled fire,** [6] **that will peep into the hearts.** [7] **It will be closed on them,** [8] **in outstretched columns.** [9]

Warning against dreadful end of those committing three obnoxious sins

This Sūrah warns of the severe punishment on three grave sins, and then highlights the nature of that severe punishment. The three sins are backbiting, deriding and selfish hoarding of wealth. The words *hamz* and *lamz* are used in several senses. Most commentators agree that the word *hamz*, from which is derived the word *humazah,* means to 'backbite', that is, to speak ill of a person behind his back. The word *lamz,* from which is

derived the word *lumazah,* means to 'slander' or 'to deride', that is, to speak ill of a person to his face. Both these sins are morally and socially obnoxious and deadly. The Qur'ān and the Sunnah have sounded a stern warning against these sins. However, 'backbiting' is, from one perspective, worse than 'slander'. 'Backbiting' is worse because the ill of a person is spoken behind his back; the victim is not present to defend himself and put an end to it; thus the sin continues to be committed to a greater and increasing degree. 'Slander', on the other hand, though an obnoxious sin in itself, is relatively less in degree than backbiting, because the victim is present to defend himself and put an end to face-to-face insulting or fault-finding with him. From another perspective 'slander' is worse than 'backbiting', because to speak ill of a person to his face is tantamount to insulting him and denigrating him. This is morally and socially more harmful and hurting, and therefore its punishment is more dreadful. According to a *Ḥadīth,* the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said,

شِرَارُعِبَادِ اللّٰهِ تَعَالٰى اَلْمَشَّاءُوْنَ بِالنَّمِيْمَةِ اَلْمُفَرِّقُوْنَ بَيْنَ الْاَحِبَّةِ الْبَاغُوْنَ اَلْبُرَآءَ العنت

"The worst servants of Allah are those who speak ill of someone, creating enmity between friends and finding fault with innocent people."

The third evil quality denounced severely in this Sūrah is greed, that is, the selfish hoarding of wealth, against which is the stern warning of the dreadful end of those who have passion for worldly riches. This verse, however, refers to the love of, and passion for, wealth which is accumulated and counted over and over again. Other verses and *Aḥādīth* bear testimony to the fact that amassing of wealth in principle is not prohibited or sinful. Therefore, verse [2] must be interpreted in the light of those verses and traditions. This verse purports to say that anyone who accumulates wealth and does not pay his obligatory dues or has greed for wealth that leads him to pride and arrogance, or has love of wealth that engrosses him in the hoarding of wealth so profoundly that he forgets his religious obligations, his practice is condemned in the strongest terms, and a person attaching such profound love, greed and passion for material riches will suffer eternal perdition as described in the verses that follow.

Verse [104:7] تَطَّلِعُ عَلَى الْاَفْئِدَةِ (that will peep into the hearts). In other words, the fire of Hell will reach their hearts. The basic property of fire is to burn every particle of the things that fall into it. When people are put

into the Hell-fire, it will devour every limb and organ of the body until it reaches their heart, but the person will not die. This characteristic of the Hell-fire is especially highlighted in the verse because the fire of this world kills the person even before reaching the heart. The fire of the Hell, on the other hand, will reach the heart in the state of life, and man will experience the torture of the burning of the heart while alive.

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Humazah
Ends here

Sūrah Al-Fīl
(The Elephant)

This Sūrah is Makkī, and it has 5 verses

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 5

اَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ فَعَلَ رَبُّكَ بِاَصْحٰبِ الْفِيْلِ ﴿١﴾ اَلَمْ يَجْعَلْ كَيْدَهُمْ فِىْ
تَضْلِيْلٍ ﴿٢﴾ وَّاَرْسَلَ عَلَيْهِمْ طَيْرًا اَبَابِيْلَ ﴿٣﴾ تَرْمِيْهِمْ بِحِجَارَةٍ مِّنْ
سِجِّيْلٍ ﴿٤﴾ فَجَعَلَهُمْ كَعَصْفٍ مَّاْكُوْلٍ ﴿٥﴾

Have you not seen how your Lord dealt with the People of the Elephant? [1] **Has He not turned their plan into nullity?** [2] **And He sent upon them flying birds in flocks,** [3] **throwing upon them stones of baked clay,** [4] **and thus He turned them into an eaten-up chaff.** [5]

Commentary
The subject-matter of the Sūrah

This Sūrah refers to the story of the People of the Elephants who came with an army of elephants for the purpose of destroying the House of Allah in (The Holy Ka'bah) in Makkah. But their plan backfired and the Divine scourge overtook them. Allah destroyed the army with a flock of ordinary birds. Thus their plans were foiled and thwarted.

When did the event take place?

This event took place in the very year in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ was born at Makkah, according to some traditions and the popular view among the historians. [Ibn Kathīr]. The scholars of *ḥadīth* have taken this

event as a special type of *mu'jizah* (miracle) of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, but the term *mu'jizah*, in its real sense, refers to an abnormal event shown by Allah to prove the claim of a prophet to having been sent by Him. Therefore, a *mu'jizah* is shown after a prophet's Divine commission. However, sometimes it happens that a miraculous event takes place before a prophet's claim to prophet-hood. This, in the parlance of the scholars of *ḥadīth*, is called *irhāṣ* which means 'prologue or introduction'. The word *rahṣ* means a 'foundation stone' [Qāmūs]. As the miraculous events taking place before the advent of prophets or before their claim to prophet-hood are meant to introduce and affirm that soon a particular prophet will be Divinely commissioned, they are referred to as *irhāṣ*. Many miraculous incidents of this nature [*irhāṣāt*] occurred before the birth and the advent of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and one of them was the incident of the 'People of the Elephants' who were miraculously prevented by the Heavenly scourge from destroying the House of Allah.

Story of the People of the Elephants

Ibn Kathīr, the leading authority on Prophetic Tradition and history, recounts the story as follows: Yemen was under the control of the rulers of Ḥimyar. They were idolaters. Their last king was Dhū Nuwās, an idolater himself, was the enemy of the righteous Christians of his time, who believed in and worshipped One Allah. He persecuted the believers, who were opposed to idol-worship, by burning them alive. Most scholars agree that he killed, in cold blood, by throwing about 20 000 sincere and righteous Christians in his city into a large fire pit, burning them alive in an effort to get them to give up their sincere religion. This is the story of the 'People of Fire-Pit' referred to in [85:4-7]. Two men somehow managed to escape from him. They fled to Syria and took refuge with Caesar, who was himself a Christian and the emperor of Syria. They requested the emperor to avenge this cruel act of Dhū Nuwās. Caesar wrote to Najāshi (Negus), the king of Abyssinia [now Ethiopia], who was closer to the home of the man. Najāshi sent two governors with him: Arbāṭ and Abrahah, along with a huge army.

The army invaded Yemen and freed the whole country from the possession of Ḥimyar. Dhū Nuwāṣ tried to escape, but was drowned in the sea and died. Yemen thus became part of the Abyssinian dominion and Abrahah was appointed its viceroy. However, he and Arbāṭ fought

each other until Arbāṭ was eventually killed and Abrahah emerged victorious. The latter was appointed the commander of the Abyssinian army in Yemen, and the governor of that region. Having captured Yemen, he built a superbly luxurious cathedral in his area. The purpose was to attract the people of Yemen to make pilgrimage to this cathedral instead of *Ka'bah* in Makkah. It was huge and tall so that a person standing at the bottom was not able to see the top. He decorated the structure with gold, silver and other precious gems. In short, he meant it to be an architectural masterpiece, second to none or unsurpassed in the world, to be revered by all and sundry and divert pilgrims from the Sacred Mosque in Makkah to his cathedral in Yemen. He did this after he had witnessed the love and enthusiasm of the Yemeni Arabs - which were the same as those felt all over the Arabia - for the *Ka'bah*, with the aim of making them forsake their attachment to the Mosque of Makkah and turn instead to his new luxurious cathedral. Thus he proclaimed throughout his kingdom that no one should ever visit the *Ka'bah* in Makkah, and that the pilgrimage should from now on take place to his so-called '*Ka'bah*' in Yemen.

Although the Arabs were idol-worshippers, the love and reverence for the religion of Prophet Ibrāhīm عليه السلام and the *Ka'bah* had permeated their hearts. As a result, the 'Andān, Qaḥṭān and Quraish tribes were enraged and infuriated by this proclamation. One night, someone entered the church and defecated in it. According to other narratives, a nomadic tribe halted near the church and started a fire for their own needs. The wind on that day was blowing violently and the cathedral caught on fire and sustained much loss. When Abrahah came to know about it, and learnt that a Quraishi had done this, he swore to march to the House of Makkah and destroy it stone by stone. Thus he prepared himself and set out with a huge and powerful army, so that none might prevent him from carrying out his mission. He asked for Najāshi's permission. He permitted him and sent for him, particularly for this expedition, a special elephant whose name was Maḥmūd. It was unusually huge in size and powerful in strength the like of which had never been seen before. The king of Abyssinia sent in eight more elephants as reinforcements for the army. Their intention was to use this extraordinary elephant to demolish the *Ka'bah*. They planned to do this by fastening chains to the pillars of the

Ka'bah and placing the other ends around the neck of the elephant. Then they would make the elephant pull on them in order to tear down the walls of the *Ka'bah* [God forbid!] all at once. When the Arabs heard of Abrahah's expedition, they considered it their moral obligation to defend the Sacred House and thwart the evil plans of the conspirators. Thus, the Arabs raised a large army under the command of Dhū Nafr, a Yamenite Arab. He called the Arabs to go to war against Abrahah and fight in defense of the Sacred House, so that the enemy is unable to tear it down. The people responded to him readily and entered into battle with the enemy, but he defeated them. This was due to Allah's will that no humans should protect His House and His intent to expose the enemy to embarrassment and venerate the Sacred Sanctuary to the highest degree. Dhū Nafr was captured and taken prisoner.

The army continued on its way until it came to the settlement of the Banū Khath'am tribe. Their leader, Nufail Ibn Ḥabīb, led his entire tribe against the army, but they too were defeated and Nufail was taken prisoner. Abrahah at first decided to kill him, but at second thought he forgave him and took him as his guide to show him the way to Ḥijāz.

When the army approached Ṭā'if, the people of Thaqīf went out to Abrahah. They wanted to pacify him, because they had heard about the fate of those who had resisted him previously. Also, they were afraid that he would demolish their temple consecrated in the name of their idol Al-Lāt. Therefore, they did not resist him on the understanding that he would not touch the idol of Lāt. He was compassionate to them, and they sent a guide with him by the name of Abū Righāl. When they arrived in a place called Al-Maghmas, near Makkah, they settled there. This was the pasture where the camels of the Quraish grazed. Abrahah sent his troops on a foray to capture the camels and other grazing animals of the Makkans. They accomplished their mission. They also drove away about two hundred camels of 'Abdul-Muṭṭalib, grandfather of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ and the leader of the Quraish. Abrahah then sent an emissary named Ḥanāṭah Al-Ḥimyarī to enter Makkah and bring to him the leader of the Quraish. He mandated him to convey to the leader of the Quraish his message that the king did not come to fight with the Makkans unless they stood in his way of destroying their Sacred Sanctuary. Arriving in the city, Ḥanāṭah was directed to 'Abdul-Muṭṭalib

Ibn Hāshim, to whom he communicated Abrahah's message. According to Ibn Isḥāq's narration, 'Abdul-Muṭṭalib replied: "By Allah! We too have no desire to fight him, nor do we have the might to do so. This is the Sacred Sanctuary of Allah built by His friend Prophet Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. If He wills to prevent Abrahah from pulling it down, He will protect it. And if He allows him to approach it, by Allah, we have no means to defend it." So Ḥanāṭah told him: "Come with me to Abrahah." So 'Abdul-Muṭṭalib went with him.

When Abrahah saw him, he was highly impressed, because 'Abdul-Muṭṭalib had the most handsome, charming and attractive personality. He descended from his throne and sat with the latter on a carpet on the ground. He then said to his interpreter to ask him: "What do you need?" 'Abdul-Muṭṭalib replied to the interpreter: "I want the king to give back my two hundred camels which his soldiers have taken from me." Then Abrahah told his interpreter to relay to him: "When I first set my eyes on you, I admired you greatly and had great respect for you. But all that is now lost. You speak only of your two hundred camels while you fully well know that I have come to tear down your *Ka'bah* which is the embodiment of your religion and the religion of your forefathers. You did not even say a single word to persuade me to spare it." 'Abdul-Muṭṭalib calmly responded: "I am the owner of my camels and am concerned about them. I am not the owner of Allah's House. The Master of the House knows how best to protect His House." Abrahah rudely rebuffed: "Your God cannot protect it from me." 'Abdul-Muṭṭalib made a rejoinder: "Then do as you like or [take your chance!]" According to other narratives, there were other chiefs of Quraish with 'Abdul-Muṭṭalib at the time of this negotiation. They proposed to Abrahah that if he withdrew from the Sanctuary, the entire region of Tihamah would pay him a third of their agricultural produce annually as tribute. But he turned down the offer. He then gave back 'Abdul-Muṭṭalib's camels to him. 'Abdul-Muṭṭalib took his camels and went back home, ordering his people to leave Makkah and seek shelter at the top of the mountains. He feared that atrocities might be committed by the army against them. Then he went with a few figures of the Quraish to the Sacred Sanctuary. He held the metal ring of the door of *Ka'bah* and prayed Allah to give them victory over Abrahah and his army. While hanging on to the ring of the *Ka'bah*'s door, he earnestly

implored: "We have no strength to face the army of Abrahah. So, O my Lord! Defend Your *Ka'bah*." Having so prayed in all earnestness, 'Abdul-Muṭṭalib led all the Makkans to the neighbouring mountains, because they were convinced that Allah's scourge would overtake Abrahah and his troops. This is the reason why they spoke to Abrahah about their camels, and not about the House of Allah.

When the next morning dawned, Abrahah prepared to enter the sacred city of Makkah. He prepared the elephant named Maḥmūd and mobilized his army, and they turned the elephant towards the *Ka'bah*. At that moment Nufail Ibn Ḥabīb, whom Abrahah had captured earlier, approached it and stood next to it, and taking it by its ear, he said: "Return safely where you came from, because you are, verily, in the Sacred City of Allah." Then he released the elephant's ear and it knelt and sat down forthwith. The elephant drivers exerted all efforts to persuade the elephant to enter the City, but their efforts were in vain. Then they tried striking it with large iron spears and putting iron arrowheads in its trunk. They beat it on its head with axes and used hooked staffs to pull it out of its resistance and make it stand, but it refused. So they turned it towards Yemen, and it rose and walked quickly. Then they turned it towards Syria, it walked fast. Then they turned it towards the east and it walked briskly. Then they turned it towards Makkah, it knelt and sat down again .

This was one aspect of the manifestation of the Divine power unfolding itself miraculously. On the other hand, some flocks of birds were seen coming from the sea. Each bird carried three pebbles of the size of gram seeds or lentils, one in each claw and two in its beak. According to Wāqidi's narration, the birds looked unusual which were never seen before. They looked smaller than pigeons, and their claws were red in colour. They flew over Abrahah's army and pelted them with the pebbles. Each pebble was more devastating than the bullet of a revolver . When it fell on anything, it tore directly through the body and settled deep in the ground. Seeing this scourge, the elephants fled in panic, except one which was harmed and destroyed by the pebble. Not all of Abrahah's men were destroyed instantly. People escaped in different directions. They died excruciatingly on their way back. As Allah had willed that the most distressful scourge should be inflicted upon Abrahah, He did not allow

him to die immediately. In fact, Allah afflicted him with a deadly disease. A kind of poison spread thoroughly through his entire body and caused every single part to decay - his limbs began to rot and separate from the rest of his body and he started losing one finger after another. His body was carried back in that state to Yemen. By the time they arrived back in Ṣan'ā', the capital of Yemen, his body was broken down limb by limb until he eventually died. Two of Maḥmūd's (name of elephant) drivers remained in Makkah, but both of them became blind and paralyzed. Muḥammad Ibn Isḥāq reports that Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah ﵂ narrates that she saw them blind and paralyzed. Her sister, Sayyidah Asmā' ﵂, says that she saw the two blind and paralyzed men begging. The 'People of the Elephants' is a momentous event in Arab history, which was witnessed by hundreds of Arabs. It is to this well-known historical incident that this Sūrah refers.

Lexical Analysis

Verse [105:1] اَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ فَعَلَ رَبُّكَ بِاَصْحٰبِ الْفِيْلِ (Have you not seen how your Lord dealt with the people of the Elephant?) In the phrase *alam tara* [have you not seen], the second person pronoun refers to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. It is interesting to note that the event took place before the blessed birth of the Holy Prophet ﷺ He could not have seen or witnessed it with his own eyes. However, the incident was so widely known as if the Prophet ﷺ had seen it with his own eyes, which is a sign of the certainty of its happening. Such a knowledge is described by the word *ru'yat* [seeing]. As reported earlier, Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah ﵂ and her sister, Sayyidah Asmā' ﵂, both say that they had seen the two camel drivers had become blind and paralyzed and used to go around begging . In this way, the traces of this event were seen even after the birth of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

Verse [105:3] طَيْرًا اَبَابِيْلَ (... birds in flocks.) The word *abābīl* is plural and is said to have no singular. It means birds in flocks, or swarms of birds. It is not the name of a particular bird. In Urdu usually *abābīl* refers to 'swallows', they are not implied in the verse as indicated in the above narration. These birds were somewhat smaller in size than pigeon and they were birds that were never seen before. [Sa'īd Ibn Jubair, as quoted by Qurṭubī].

Verse [105:4] بِحِجَارَةٍ مِّنْ سِجِّيْلٍ (...stones of baked clay.) The word *sijjīl* is a

compound Persian word, Arabiciszed, made up of two Persian words: *sang* [stone] and *gil* [clay]. They refer to ordinary or common clay rolled into little balls and then baked to harden. These pebbles are not heavy or hard like rocks chipped off mountains. They in themselves did not have any devastating power, but it was Allah who created in these stones the high capability of explosion and blowing-up even more than the bullets of a revolver.

Verse [105:5] فَجَعَلَهُمْ كَعَصْفٍ مَّأْكُولٍ (And thus He turned them into an eaten-up chaff .) The word *'aṣf* means 'chaff, straw, husk or bran'. Usually the *'aṣf* is scattered and when it is eaten or devoured by animals, it does not remain in the same state. This is what happened to Abrahah and his army .

Conclusion

The miraculous event of the 'People of the Elephant' enhanced in the hearts of the entire Arabian society the love, respect and honor of the Quraish. When Arabia witnessed that Allah has, on their behalf, miraculously destroyed their enemy, they were convinced that the Quraish are men of God, and custodians of the Sacred House of Allah [Qurṭubī]. That is why they were respected and protected wherever they went; although other caravans in Arabia had to fear attacks from highway robbers, the Quraish travelled untouched and enjoyed high social status. As a result, they could freely and safely carry out their commercial activities in the neighboring states, and enjoy economic prosperity. The Sūrah that follows refers to these journeys and invites the Quraish to be thankful to Allah and worship Him alone for providing them with all of their needs.

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Fīl
Ends here

Sūrah Al-Quraish

(The Quraish)

This Sūrah is Makkī, and it has 4 verses

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 4

لِإِيلَٰفِ قُرَيْشٍ ﴿١﴾ إِيلَٰفِهِمْ رِحْلَةَ الشِّتَآءِ وَالصَّيْفِ ﴿٢﴾ فَلْيَعْبُدُوا رَبَّ هَٰذَا الْبَيْتِ ﴿٣﴾ الَّذِىٓ أَطْعَمَهُم مِّن جُوعٍ وَءَامَنَهُم مِّنْ خَوْفٍ ﴿٤﴾

Because of the familiarity of the Quraish, [1] **that is, their familiarity with the trips of winter and summer,** [2] **they must worship the Lord of this House,** [3] **who gave them food against hunger, and gave them security against fear.** [4]

Commentary

The Subject-matter of Sūrah Al-Fīl and Sūrah Al-Quraish

All commentators concur that the subject-matter of the two Sūrahs is so closely related that in some of the copies of the Qur'ān they had been written as a single Sūrah without the insertion of *bismillah* between them. But when Sayyidnā 'Uthmān ﷺ compiled a standard copy of the Holy Qur'ān with the consensus of all the companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, he separated these two Sūrahs and inserted *bismillah* between them, and the two Sūrahs.

Lexical Analysis

لِإِيلَٰفِ قُرَيْشٍ (Because of the familiarity of the Quraish 106:1). The particle *li* is a preposition. According to the rules of Arabic grammar, it should be linked with another sentence. What is that sentence here? In answer to this question, different possibilities are highlighted by the exegetes.

Keeping in view the close relation of the present Sūrah with the previous one, some of them have held that the following sentence should be taken as understood here: انّا اهلكنا اصحٰب الفيل "We [Allah] destroyed the 'people of the elephant' so that the Quraish, who were familiar with two commercial trips during winter and summer, may not have any obstacle in their trips, and by this trading activity they might develop a certain prestige for them and respect them." A second school of interpreters has taken the following sentence as understood: اعجبوا (One should wonder on the Quraish undertaking winter and summer journeys freely and safely.) A third school of interpreters says that this is the *lam* of *ta'lil* and it is syntactically related to the sentence that follows it فَلْيَعْبُدُوْا رَبَّ هٰذَا الْبَيْتِ (they must worship the Lord of this House.) The Sūrah draws attention to the fact that the Quraish used to make two trade-journeys - one in winter to Yemen and another in summer to Syria. These trade-journeys made them wealthy and affluent. This was possible because Allah annihilated their enemies, the people of the elephant, in an exemplary way and created in the hearts of the people an awe and reverence for them. People held them in high esteem, respect and honor in all the territories where they went.

Superiority of Quraish

This Sūrah indicates that Quraish, of all the tribes of Arabia, was most acceptable in the sight of Allah. The Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said: "Verily, Allah selected Kinānah from the offspring of Prophet Ismā'īl عليه السلام and selected Quraish from the progeny of Kinānah. From the Quraish, Allah selected Banū Hāshim and from Banū Hāshim He selected me." [Baghawī on the authority of Wāthilah Ibn Asqa']. Another Tradition reports that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "People will follow Quraish in matters of good as well as in matters of evil." [Muslim on the authority of Jābir, as quoted by Mazharī]. The reason for the selection of the tribes mentioned in the first Tradition is presumably on account of their special abilities, innate capacities and natural endowments. Even in the days of paganism and ignorance, when people practiced *kufr* and *shirk*, their morals and inborn abilities were of a very high standard. They had the perfect capacity to accept the truth. This is the reason why most of the blessed Companions and Friends of Allah were Quraishites. [Mazhari]

Verse [106:2] رِحْلَةَ الشِّتَآءِ وَالصَّيْفِ (...their familiarity with the trips of winter and summer.) It is a known fact that Makkah is situated in an utterly bleak and arid valley where no agricultural produce grows, nor are there any orchards where the people of Makkah could reap any kind

of fruits. Therefore, the founder of the House of Allah, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm Khalīl-ullah ﷺ, prayed to Allah at the time of founding the city, thus: [2:126] رَبِّ اجْعَلْ هٰذَا الْبَلَدَ آمِنًا اُرْزُقْ اَهْلَهٗ مِنَ الثَّمَرٰتِ (My Lord, make this a city of peace, and provide its people with fruits) and this fact is mentioned in [28:57], thus: يُجْبٰى اِلَيْهِ ثَمَرٰتُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ (to which the fruits of everything are drawn)". The Quraish thus needed to make these commercial trips out of Makkah into the neighboring territories to bring the necessities of life to their city. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ reports that the people of Makkah were in a state of abject poverty and Hāshim, the great grandfather of the Prophet ﷺ, exhorted the Quraish to undertake the trading caravans to the neighboring territories. As Syria was a cold region, they went there in summer; and Yemen had a warm climate, so they went there in winter to carry out their commercial activities. They, after their commercial ventures that brought to them great profits and gains, would return to their city safely due to the respect that the people had for them, because they were the keepers and custodians of Allah's sanctuary. Therefore, whoever knew them would honor them. Even those who came to them and traveled with them, would be safe because of them. Hashim was the leader of the Quraish and maintained the economic principle to distribute among the rich and the poor members of the Quraish the gains and the profits made in their business. As a result, even the poor people lived like the wealthy people. Furthermore, an additional Divine favor was granted to them: Allah spared them the trouble of making these annual trips, in that the areas adjacent to Makkah such as Yemen, Tabālah and Ḥarsh were made fertile, fecund and productive where corns, food grains and other agricultural produce grew abundantly - even more than their need. As a result, they had to carry these agricultural produce to Jeddah where they sold them. Thus most of the necessities were available in Jeddah. The people of Makkah, instead of undertaking the two long journeys, went to Jeddah, merely two stations away, to bring their necessities of life. In the current verse, Allah mentions His favor upon them.

Verse [106:3] فَلْيَعْبُدُوْا رَبَّ هٰذَا الْبَيْتِ (they must worship the Lord of this House.) Having mentioned the Divine favors, the Quraish are especially enjoined to express their gratitude to 'the Lord of this House'. Here, out of many attributes of Allah, 'the Lord of this House' is singled out, because it was this House that became the source and fountain of all blessings for them.

Verse [106:4] اَلَّذِيْٓ اَطْعَمَهُمْ مِّنْ جُوْعٍ وَّاٰمَنَهُمْ مِّنْ خَوْفٍ (Who gave them food against hunger, and gave them security against fear.) The verse comprehensively captures all that was needed for the Quraish to live

happily and peacefully in the world. The first phrase أَطْعَمَهُم مِّن جُوعٍ (Who gave them food against hunger) implies that they were provided all year round with every kind of fruit and food. The security referred to in the second phrase آمَنَهُم مِّنْ خَوْفٍ (and gave them security against fear) includes security from enemies and robbers (who, out of their respect to them as guardians of Ka'bah, spared them from their attacks), and it also includes security from the punishment in the Hereafter (for those who fulfilled the necessary conditions of faith).

Special Note

Ibn Kathīr says that whoever worships Allah according to the command given in this verse, Allah will give him safety, not only in this world, but also security from punishment in the Hereafter. And whoever deviates from this command, He will deprive him of both types of safety and security as exemplified in the following verse [16:112] :

ضَرَبَ اللّٰهُ مَثَلاً قَرْيَةً كَانَتْ اٰمِنَةً مُّطْمَئِنَّةً يَّأْتِيهَا رِزْقُهَا رَغَدًا مِّنْ كُلِّ مَكَانٍ فَكَفَرَتْ بِأَنْعُمِ اللّٰهِ فَاَذَاقَهَا اللّٰهُ لِبَاسَ الْجُوعِ وَالْخَوْفِ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَصْنَعُوْنَ ﴿١١٢﴾

(And Allah has given an example that there was a town, secure and satisfied, with its sustenance coming in plenty from every place. Then, it turned ungrateful to the bounties of Allah; so, Allah made it taste hunger and terror [cast over it] like a garment in return of what its people used to do. [16:112]

A Great Benefit

Abul Ḥasan Qazwīnī has stated that anyone who fears his enemy or an affliction, should recite Sūrah Al-Quraish. It will give him security from fear and calamity. This is cited by Imām Jazrī and he says that this Sūrah has been tried and tested successfully for this purpose. Qāḍī Thanā'ullah Pānī Pattī رحمه الله تعالى cites this in his Tafsīr Maẓharī and says that his Shaikh Mirzā Maẓhar Jān-i-Jānān instructed him to recite this Sūrah at the time of fear and danger, and said its recitation has been tested and tried to avert all kinds of calamities and afflictions. Qāḍī Thanā'ullah says that he has experienced it several times.

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Quraish
Ends here

Sūrah Al-Mā'ūn
(The Small Gifts)

This Sūrah is Makkī, and it has 7 verses

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 7

أَرَءَيْتَ الَّذِىْ يُكَذِّبُ بِالدِّيْنِ ﴿١﴾ فَذٰلِكَ الَّذِىْ يَدُعُّ الْيَتِيْمَ ﴿٢﴾ وَلَا يَحُضُّ عَلٰى طَعَامِ الْمِسْكِيْنِ ﴿٣﴾ فَوَيْلٌ لِّلْمُصَلِّيْنَ ﴿٤﴾ الَّذِيْنَ هُمْ عَنْ صَلَاتِهِمْ سَاهُوْنَ ﴿٥﴾ الَّذِيْنَ هُمْ يُرَآءُوْنَ ﴿٦﴾ وَيَمْنَعُوْنَ الْمَاعُوْنَ ﴿٧﴾

Have you seen him who denies the Requital? [1] **So he is the same one who pushes away the orphan.** [2] **and does not persuade (others) to feed the needy.** [3] **So, woe to those performers of *ṣalāh*,** [4] **who are neglectful of their *ṣalāh*,** [5] **who (do good only to) show off,** [6] **and refuse (to give even) small gifts.** [7]

The love of the world causes nations to lose faith and consign Allah to oblivion

This Sūrah denounces some of the evil actions of the pagans and the hypocrites, and it holds out a threat of destruction to those who commit them. If these evil actions are committed by believers, who do not reject the true faith, they are still heinous and gravely sinful, but the threat of chastisement made in this sūrah does not apply to them. Therefore, verse [107:1] أَرَءَيْتَ الَّذِىْ يُكَذِّبُ بِالدِّيْنِ (Have you not seen him who denies the Requital?), as a preamble, makes plain that the person who performs

these evil deeds is one who cries lies to the Doom, and thus the warning of punishment mentioned in this Sūrah is for those who deny the religion and the Day of Judgement. The verse contains a subtle indication that the moral sins condemned in this Sūrah are far too inconceivable from a believer; only a non-believer or hypocrite would commit them. The morally bad and sinful deeds mentioned here are: [1] oppressing and insulting the orphan, and being unkind to them; [2] despite the means, failing to feed the poor or failing to urge others to feed them; [3] praying [in public only, not in private] only to show the people; and [4] failing to pay the Zakāh [obligatory alms]. These actions are intrinsically bad and gravely sinful, but their commission in the wake of *kufr* [disbelief] and *takdhīb* [rejection] are even more aggravating, because they attract eternal perdition, which in this Sūrah is described as *wail* [heavy affliction or calamity or disaster or destruction].

Verses [107:4-6] فَوَيْلٌ لِّلْمُصَلِّيْنَ. الَّذِيْنَ هُمْ عَنْ صَلَاتِهِمْ سَاهُوْنَ. الَّذِيْنَ هُمْ يُرَآءُ وْنَ. (So woe to those performers of *ṣalāh* who are neglectful of their *ṣalāh*,who [do good only to] show off.) These verses describe the characteristics of the hypocrites who used to perform the prayers only to make a display of them to the people and prove that their claim of being sincere Muslims is true. As they do not believe in the obligatory nature of the prayers, they are not regular at them, and they do not observe the prescribed times, but offer them carelessly at the eleventh hour or completely out of time. They perform them only when they must to make a display of them, otherwise they have no place in their lives. The preposition 'an (translated above as 'of') in the prepositional phrase عَنْ صَلَاتِهِمْ "[neglectful] of their *ṣalāh*" is significant. It indicates that they [the hypocrites] are neglectful of the very concept of *ṣalāh*. This does not refer to the unintentional errors, slips and mistakes that Muslims make in their prayers. The Holy Prophet ﷺ also made this type of unintentional mistakes in his prayers. The warning of Hell by the expression of wail does not apply to such mistakes. If that was the case, the prepositional phrase would have been *fi salatihim* [in their prayers] instead of ['*an Ṣalatihim* [neglectful of their prayers].

Verse [107:7] وَيَمْنَعُوْنَ الْمَاعُوْنَ (And refuse [to give even] small gifts.) The word *mā'ūn* literally means 'any small or petty thing' and idiomatically it refers to 'small household articles of common use such as axe, hoe, cooking pot which at the time of need neighbors borrow from one another'.

Anyone who is unwilling to lend such small items is morally a very miserly and mean person. However, in the current verse the word *mā'ūn* is taken in the sense of *Zakāh* [obligatory alms] because it is a little amount out of much wealth - only 2½% out of the entire wealth. Majority of the commentators - like Sayyidnā 'Alī, Ibn 'Umar, Ḥasan Baṣrī, Qatādah, Ḍaḥḥāk ﷺ and others - hold the view that *mā'ūn* implies *Zakāh*. [Maẓharī]. The threat of *wail* (torment of Hell) can only be for failure to fulfil one's legal obligation. Giving small items to help out one's fellow human beings is a humanitarian and philanthropic gesture that carries much reward in the Hereafter, but it is not an obligation at all, the violation of which could lead to eternal perdition. Traditions reporting that *mā'ūn* refers to pots and pans, and other household items of daily use are to show that if a person is reluctant to part with such small items, how will he have the heart to part with 2½% of his wealth? The Traditions purport to say that these people are so narrow-minded that they are not willing to make the least bit of selfless sacrifice for the welfare and well-being of others. They are morally mean, low and miserly in the extreme. Therefore, they do not pay their legal alms. Thus the threat of punishment in Hell-fire is not on account of failure to do one's neighborly acts of kindness, but for failure to pay the legal alms and perhaps for their extreme niggardliness.

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Mā'ūn
Ends here

Sūrah Al-Kauthar

(The Kauthar)

This Sūrah is Makkī, and it has 3 verses

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 3

إِنَّآ أَعْطَيْنٰكَ الْكَوْثَرَ ﴿١﴾ فَصَلِّ لِرَبِّكَ وَانْحَرْ ﴿٢﴾ إِنَّ شَانِئَكَ هُوَ الْأَبْتَرُ ﴿٣﴾

(O Prophet,) surely We have given to you Al-Kauthar (a river in Paradize). [1] **So, offer *ṣalāh* (prayer) to your Lord, and sacrifice.** [2] **Surely it is your enemy whose traces are cut off.** [3]

Cause of Revelation

It is reported by Ibn Abī Ḥātim, on the authority of Suddī, and by Baihaqī, in *Dalā'il-un- Nubuwwah,* on the authority of Muḥammad Ibn 'Alī Ibn Ḥusain, that the Arabs used to taunt and revile people who have lost their male issues. They used to refer to such a person as '*abtar*', meaning 'having no male offspring or no male issue'. In keeping with this social evil, when the young son of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, namely Qāsim passed away, some leaders of Quraish, especially 'Āṣ Ibn Wā'il, started taunting the Holy Prophet ﷺ telling the people that they no longer need to bother about him, because he had no sons to carry on his name and that he would be forgotten after his death; he is '*abtar*', that is, his lineage is cut off. On this occasion, the Sūrah was revealed. [Baghawī, Ibn Kathīr, Maẓharī].

According to some narratives, Ka'b Ibn Ashraf, a Jew of Madīnah,

came to Makkah and the Quraish asked him: "You are the leader of the people. What do you think about this young man who claims that he is better than us (in religion), while we are the people who serve the pilgrims; we are the custodians of Ka'bah and supply water to the pilgrims." He replied: "You are better than him." This Sūrah was revealed on that occasion. [Ibn Kathīr cites this incident from Bazzār with an authentic chain of narrators; and Maẓharī says that Muslim also transmitted the incident].

According to these narrations, this Sūrah was sent down when the unbelievers of Makkah taunted the Holy Prophet ﷺ because he had lost all his male issues, and called him *'abtar'* or insulted him for some other reason. The present Sūrah gives an answer to the taunts of the unbelievers, and maintains that there is no justification for calling the Holy Prophet ﷺ an *'abtar'* only because he had no male child alive, not only because his lineal offspring will remain till the Day of Judgment, though from his daughters, but he was destined to be the spiritual father of a multitude of sons in all ages to the end of time, sons who were to be far more faithful, obedient and loving than the sons of any father, and they will outnumber the followers of all the Prophets that came before him. The Sūrah has also dismissed the statement of Ka'b Ibn Ashraf, and highlights the great honor and respect given to him by Allah.

The River or Fountain of Kauthar

Verse [108:1] إِنَّا أَعْطَيْنٰكَ الْكَوْثَرَ ([O Prophet,] surely, We have given you Al-Kauthar [a river in Paradise].) The word 'Al-Kauthar' literally means 'abundant goodness'. Imām Bukhārī has recorded on the authority of Sa'īd Ibn Jubair ﷺ that Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ said about 'al-Kauthar': 'It is the abundant goodness that Allah gave to him [Holy Prophet ﷺ]'. A special pupil of Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ said: "I asked Sa'īd Ibn Jubair ﷺ that people claim that it is a river in Paradise." Sa'īd Ibn Jubair ﷺ replied that the river in Paradise is part of the goodness that Allah gave him. Therefore, Mujāhid interprets that it is the abundant goodness of this world, as well as of the next world. This explanation includes the river in Paradise and other things as well.

The following Ḥadīth is recorded in Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dāwūd and Nasā'ī from Sayyidnā Anas ﷺ that he said:

بينا رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم بين اظهرنا فى المسجد اذ اغفى اغفاءةً، ثم

رفع رأسه متبسّمًا. قلنا: ما اَضحكك يا رسول اللّٰه؟ قال: لقد انزلت عليّ انفًا سورة فقرأ بسم اللّٰه الرّحمٰن الرحيم انّا اعطينٰك الكوثر الخ ثم قال: اتدرون ما الكوثر؟ قلنا: اللّٰه ورسوله اعلم، قال: فانّه نهرٌ وعدنيه ربّی عزوجل عليه خيرکثير، وهو حوض ترد عليه امتی يوم القيامة، انيته عدد نجوم فی السّماء، فيحتلج العبد منهم، فاقول ربّ انّه من امّتی فيقول: انّك لا تدری ما احدث بعدك.

"While we were with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ in the mosque, he went into some kind of slumber or doziness. Then he lifted his head smiling. We asked : 'O Messenger of Allah! What has caused you to smile?' He replied: 'A Sūrah has just been revealed to me.' Then he recited Bismillah and Sūrah Al-Kauthar. Then he asked: 'Do you know what is Al-Kauthar?' We replied: 'Allah and His Messenger know best,' He said: 'It is a river that my Lord, the Mighty and Majestic, has promised me and it has abundant goodness. It is a fountain where my Ummah will come on the Day of Judgement. Its containers are as numerous as the stars in the sky. Then a servant of Allah from among them will be prevented from it, and I will say: 'O Lord! Verily, he is from my Ummah [followers.] ' Then Allah will say: 'You do not know what he introduced [or innovated] after you.'"

This is the wording of Muslim. Ibn Kathīr, having cited this Tradition, writes further:

وقد ورد فی صفة الحوض يوم القيٰمه انّه يشخب فيه ميزابان من السّماء من نهر الكوثر و ان انيته عدد نجوم السّماء.

"It is reported regarding the description of the fountain on the Day of Judgement that two channels will lead from the sky to supply the fountain with the water of Kauthar. It will have more cups than the stars in the sky."

The Tradition cited above clarifies many points.

[1] It indicates the cause of the revelation of Sūrah Al-Kauthar.

[2] It gives its authentic interpretation, that is, 'abundant goodness' and that it includes the fountain of Kauthar which will quench the thirst of the Prophet's ﷺ followers on the Day of Judgement.

[3] The actual river of Kauthar is in Paradise, and the fountain of Kauthar will be on the Plain of Gathering. Two channels will flow from the river of Paradise into the fountain of Gathering, augmenting

its supply of water.

[4] It reconciles the narratives that tell us that the believers will arrive at the fountain of Kauthar before their entry into Paradise.

[5] Some people will be turned away from the fountain, because they later on turned away from Islam, or they were not Muslims at all, but expressed their Islam only hypocritically. Their hypocrisy was exposed after the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Allah knows best!

There are Traditions that describe the cleanness and sweetness of water of Kauthar, and that its banks are adorned with pearls.These qualities cannot be compared with anything in this world.

If the revelation of Sūrah Al-Kauthar is in response to the taunting of the heathens who called him '*abtar*' because he had lost his sons, as explained earlier, this Sūrah comforts him. They used to say that when he would pass away, there shall be none to take his name on account of having no male offspring and his activities will cease. This Sūrah tells him that he has been granted Al-Kauthar and completely dismisses the reproach of his enemies, in that his lineage does not stop here in this world, but his spiritual lineage will continue till the Day of Gathering. His spiritual sons and daughters will outnumber the Ummahs of the previous Prophets. They will also enjoy the greatest respect and honor.

Prayer and Sacrifice

Verse [108:2] فَصَلِّ لِرَبِّكَ وَانْحَرْ (So, offer *ṣalāh* [prayer] to your Lord, and sacrifice.) The imperative *inḥar* is derived from *naḥr* which means 'to sacrifice by stabbing upwards into the jugular vein [the way of slaughter for camels as opposed to other cattle]'. As the Arabs generally used to sacrifice camels, the verse employs the imperative *wanḥar.* Occasionally, the word *naḥr* is used in the general sense of 'sacrifice'.

Verse [108:1] vehemently denounces the false notion of the unbelievers and gives glad tidings of Kauthar to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ in this world as well as in the next world. He will have the abundant goodness in both the worlds immeasurably. The current verse directs the Holy Prophet ﷺ the way to express his gratitude to Allah on this good tiding: [1] prayer; and [2] sacrifice. Ṣalāh is the highest form of physical worship; and sacrifice is highest form of pecuniary or monetary form of worship.

Sacrifice in the name of Allah is a fight against idolatry, because the idolaters used to sacrifice in the name of their idols. On that basis, Islamic sacrifice is distinctive and important. On another occasion, the Qur'ān jointly mentions prayer and sacrifice, thus: [6:162]

إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ

My prayer, my offering, my life and my death are all for Allah, the Lord of the worlds. [6:162]

According to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنهما, 'Ata', Mujāhid, Ḥasan Baṣrī رحمهم الله تعالى and others, the imperative *wanhar* means 'sacrifice or offer oblation'. Some people have attributed to some leading exegetes that they have taken this imperative to mean: 'Fold your hands or arms on the chest' Ibn Kathīr holds such narrations as *'munkar'*, (that is, a narration which is narrated by a weak narrator and contradicts the narration of a stronger and more reliable authority.)

The Enemy of the Prophet ﷺ is Cut Off

Verse [108:3] إِنَّ شَانِئَكَ هُوَ الْأَبْتَرُ (Surely, it is your enemy whose traces are cut off.) The word *shāni'* as used in the original is derived from *sha'n* and means 'one who hates, traducer, insulter'. This verse was revealed in connection with the unbelievers who used to taunt the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and referred to him as *'abtar'*. Most narratives identify the traducer as 'Āṣ Ibn Wā'il, others identify him as 'Uqbah and yet others identify him as Ka'b Ibn Ashraf. Allah granted the Messenger of Allah ﷺ the Kauthar, that is, abundant goodness which includes a multitude of children. How wonderful are the works of Allah! There is no scarcity of lineal children of the holy Prophet ﷺ. Furthermore, a Prophet is the spiritual father of his entire Ummah which comprises his spiritual children. The Holy Prophet ﷺ is the spiritual father of his entire Ummah till the end of time and as such will have the largest number of spiritual children compared to the Ummahs of the previous Prophets. In this way, the enemy has been rebutted, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, their argument has been rebuffed that it is not the Prophet ﷺ, but his enemies are, *'abtar'* or cut off.

Note

Imagine how Allah has raised the name of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and exalted his reputation in every nook and corner of the world since the

inception of his prophet-hood till today, and it will continue to be so until the end of time. His blessed name is recited along with Allah's name five times a day from the minarets. In the Hereafter, he will be granted the (Al-Maqām Al-Maḥmūd) Praised Station where he will make the Grand Intercession on behalf of the entire progeny of 'Ādam ﷺ. On the contrary, ask the world history: Where are the children of 'Āṣ Ibn Wā'il? Where are the children of Ka'b Ibn Ashraf ? where are the children of 'Uqbah, and what happened to their families? Their very own names have been lost to the world. No one cares to remember them. They have become unknown who thought that soon the Holy Prophet ﷺ will become unknown. They have left this world and the strings of their lineage have been cut off. Their names have been preserved in Islamic traditions only for purposes of interpretation of relevant verses. فَاعْتَبِرُوْا يَا أُوْلِى الْأَبْصَارِ "So, O People of insight, take note !" [59:2].

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Kauthar
Ends here

Sūrah Al-Kāfirūn
(The Disbelievers)

This Sūrah is Makkī, and it has 6 verses

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 6

قُلْ يَٰٓأَيُّهَا الْكٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿١﴾ لَآ اَعْبُدُ مَا تَعْبُدُوْنَ ﴿٢﴾ وَلَآ اَنْتُمْ عٰبِدُوْنَ مَآ
اَعْبُدُ ﴿٣﴾ وَلَآ اَنَا عَابِدٌ مَّا عَبَدْتُّمْ ﴿٤﴾ وَلَآ اَنْتُمْ عٰبِدُوْنَ مَآ اَعْبُدُ ﴿٥﴾
لَكُمْ دِيْنُكُمْ وَلِيَ دِيْنِ ﴿٦﴾

Say, "O disbelievers, [1] **I do not worship that which you worship,** [2] **nor do you worship the One whom I worship.** [3] **And neither I am going to worship that which you have worshipped,** [4] **nor will you worship the One whom I worship.** [5] **For you is your faith, and for me, my faith."** [6]

Virtues and Characteristics of the Sūrah

Sayyidah 'Ā'shah رضي الله عنها reports that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ has said that it is better to recite two *sūrahs* in the *sunnah* prayer of *fajr*, namely, the Sūrah Al-Kāfirūn and Sūrah Al-Ikhlāṣ. [Transmitted by Ibn Hishām as quoted by Maẓharī]. Ibn Kathīr cites several traditions in which a large number of Companions report that they heard the Messenger of Allah often recite Sūrah Al-Kāfirūn and Al-Ikhlāṣ in the *sunnah* prayer of *fajr* and *maghrib*. Some of the Companions requested the Messenger of Allah ﷺ to teach them some supplications to recite at the time of sleeping. He taught them to recite Sūrah Al-Kāfirūn and said that this will give them immunity from idolatry. [Transmitted by Tirmidhī and Abū Dāwūd]. Sayyidnā

Jubair Ibn Muṭ'im ﷺ says that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ asked him whether he wished to be the happiest, most prosperous and well-to-do person among his comrades when he goes out on a journey. He replied: "Yes, Messenger of Allah, I certainly do wish that." The Holy Prophet ﷺ asked him to recite the last five surahs of the Qur'ān starting from Sūrah Al-Kāfirūn to the end, and to start every surah with *Bismillah*, and to end with *Bismillah*. Sayyidnā Jubair ﷺ says that in those days he used to be distressed, miserable and man of little provisions for journeys compared to his comrades. But when he started acting upon this teaching of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, he became more prosperous than others. [Maẓharī with reference to Abū Ya'lā]. Sayyidnā 'Alī ﷺ reports that once a scorpion bit the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, so he asked for water and salt. He applied the water on the spot where the scorpion bit him, and he recited Sūrah Al-Kāfirūn, Sūrah Al-Falaq and Sūrah An-Nās. [Maẓharī]

Cause of Revelation

Ibn Isḥāq reports from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ that Walīd Ibn Mughīrah, 'Āṣ Ibn Wā'il, Aswad Ibn 'Abdul-Muṭṭalib and Umayyah Ibn Khalaf approached the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and proposed a compromise to him to the effect that he should worship their idols for a year, and they would worship Allah for a year. [Qurṭubī]. According to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ, as recorded in Ṭabarānī, the pagans of Makkah proposed to the Messenger of Allah: ﷺ "We shall give you so much of wealth that you will become the richest man in Makkah; we shall give you whichever woman you like in marriage; we are willing to follow and obey you as our leader on condition that you do not speak ill of our gods. If you do not agree to this, then let us agree that you worship our gods for a year and we would worship your God for another year" [Maẓharī].

According to Abū Ṣaliḥ's report, Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ narrates that the pagans of Makkah made the following proposal for compromise: "At least touch some of our gods, we will believe in you." Upon this, Jibra'īl ﷺ descended with Sūrah Al-Kāfirūn.

This Sūrah is the Sūrah of disavowal from the actions of the pagans, and enjoins the Muslims to worship Allah alone to the exclusion of all forms of pagan worship.

The Traditions cited above indicate that the pagans had made many

proposals to the Holy Prophet ﷺ not once or in a single session, but on different occasions and in different sessions in the hope that at one time or another a compromise might be reached. Therefore, there was a need to respond to all the proposals definitely and decisively, and thus frustrate their hope once and for all. All these incidents might have taken place at different times and different places. The purport of the Sūrah is to prevent or prohibit any such compromise.

Verse [109:2] لَا أَعْبُدُ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ (I do not worship that which you worship,) In this Sūrah, the statements are repeated. The repetition has been explained in different ways by different authorities. Bukhārī explains it thus: When two identical, or near identical, expressions occur side by side, many commentators interpret one of them as happening in the present time and the other as going to happen in the future time. Thus there is no meaningless repetition. The second and the third verses refer to the present time, meaning 'I do not worship at the present time what you are worshipping, nor do you worship at the present time what I am worshipping'. That is, 'I believe in Oneness of Allah and worship Him only, whereas you believe in multiple gods and goddesses and worship them'. Verses [4 and 5] refer to the future time, meaning 'neither is there a possibility that I will ever worship what you are going to worship in the future, nor will you worship what I will persist in worshipping.' In other words, 'I will persist in my belief of Divine Oneness and worship of Him and you will persist in belief of multiple gods and goddesses and worship of them'. Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānawi رحمه الله تعالىٰ has preferred this interpretation in Bayānul-Qur'ān, (and the translation given above is based on it.) However, he disagrees with Bukhārī's interpretation of the word *dīn*, which Bukhārī interprets as 'the religion of disbelief and the religion of Islam' respectively, in verse [6] لَكُمْ دِينُكُمْ وَلِيَ دِينِ "For you is your faith, and for me, my faith" meaning the proposed compromise or peace agreement is not acceptable. I shall continue to follow my faith and you may go on following your faith, and suffer its disastrous consequences. In Bayānul-Qur'ān, however, the word *dīn* has been interpreted as *jazā'* or 'retribution or requital'.

Ibn Kathīr prefers another interpretation. He expounds that the particle *ma* is used in two ways: [1] as *mawṣūlah* or relative pronoun in the sense of *al-ladhī* [that which]; and [2] as masdariyah transforming

into infinitive the verb it governs. In this Sūrah, the first *mā* is a relative pronoun in the sense of *al-ladhī*, and the second *mā* is an infinitival particle. Thus in verses [2 & 3] the particle is a relative pronoun and may be paraphrased thus: 'I do not worship the deities that you worship nor do you worship the One Whom I worship' and in verses [4 & 5] the particle is an infinitival particle and may be paraphrased thus: ولا انا عابدٌ عبادتكم ولا انتم عابدون عبادتى 'I will never adopt your mode or manner of worship, nor will you adopt the manner in which I worship'. In this way, verses [2 & 3] show that the objects of worship are different from each other, and verses [4&5] show the differences in the modes of worship. In sum, 'neither our objects of worship, nor our manner of worship, are commonly shared by us; they are different.' In this way, it is seen that there is no real repetition, because while the formal expressions might be identical or near identical, but deeper semantic meanings are different . The mode of worship was revealed to the Prophet by Allah ﷺ and passed on to the Muslims through him. The pagan manner of worship is self-fabricated. Ibn Kathīr prefers this interpretation, and says that this is the exact meaning that emanates from the credo of Islam: لا اله الاّ الله محمّد رسُول الله "There is no object worthy of worship except Allah, Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allah". Only the mode and manner of worship sanctioned by Allah is credible, and should be followed by Muslims. Ibn Kathīr adds that the concluding verse لَكُمْ دِيْنُكُمْ وَلِيَ دِيْنِ (For you is your faith, and for me, my faith) yields the sense of other verses in the Qur'ān, as for instance in [10: 41] فَإِنْ كَذَّبُوْكَ فَقُلْ لِّي عَمَلِيْ وَلَكُمْ عَمَلُكُمْ And if they belie you, say, for me, my deeds, and for you, your deeds and in [28:55] لَنَآ اَعْمَالُنَا وَلَكُمْ اَعْمَالُكُمْ (For us, our deeds, and for you, your deeds). Thus the sum total of the word *din*, according to Ibn Kathīr, refers to the 'deeds of religion' and its purport would be the same as explicated in Bayānul-Qur'ān, in that each one will be requited for his own deeds.

Other commentators have interpreted the two sentences in a third way. According to them, the particle is retained in both places as a relative pronoun, and in both the sentence is taken as representing present tense. They in fact maintain that the repetition of the two sentences have been used as a rhetorical device and employed by deliberate design to secure emphasis. Not every repetition is unpleasant or meaningless, even though the same idea may be reiterated by the same

wording, as for instance in [94: 5-6] فَإِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا إِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا (Undoubtedly, along with hardship there is ease. Undoubtedly, along with hardship there is ease) Verse [6] is the repetition of verse [5] and is deliberately reiterated to secure emphasis, as well as to reject outright the several proposals made on different occasions. [Ibn Kathīr, Ibn Jarīr].

Peace Treaty with Unbelievers is Permissible in Some Cases but not in Others

Sūrah Al-Kāfirūn dismisses out of hand the many proposals of compromise offered by the pagans and declares dissociation from them. But the Holy Qur'ān itself has said in [8:61] وَإِنْ جَنَحُوا لِلسَّلْمِ فَاجْنَحْ لَهَا (And if they tilt towards peace, you tilt towards it." that is, enter into peace treaty with the infidels or pagans or non-Muslims. Moreover, when the Holy Prophet ﷺ migrated to Madīnah, he entered into peace treaty with the Jews . Therefore, some of the commentators have opined that Surah Al-Kāfirūn has been abrogated. Their basic argument pivots around the verse لَكُمْ دِينُكُمْ وَلِيَ دِينِ (For you is your faith, and for me, my faith). They contend that this is apparently in conflict with the ordinances of *jihād*, but this is not true, because the verse does not guarantee, nor does it even permit, the infidels to maintain their infidelity. It simply means what is stated in [28:55] لَنَا أَعْمَالُنَا وَلَكُمْ أَعْمَالُكُمْ (For us, our deeds, and for you, your deeds), that is, as you sow, so shall you reap. In fact, the correct position held by the majority of the scholars is that this Sūrah is not abrogated. The proposals of compromise that were offered by the pagans at the time of the revelation of the present Sūrah are still prohibited, and the peace treaties allowed by 8:61 or entered into by the Holy Prophet ﷺ are still permissible. It is necessary to understand the circumstances and conditions of the treaty and take a proper decision accordingly. In one of his Traditions, the Holy Prophet ﷺ laid down the general principle of peace treaty with the infidels and pagans, thus: الاصلحاً احلّ حرامًا اوحرّم حلالاً (Every compromise is permitted except the one which turns prohibited things into lawful and lawful things into forbidden.) If the various peace proposals made by the pagans are carefully analyzed, they were all certainly and definitely purported to mix elements of pagan beliefs and practices with Islamic beliefs and practices, thus creating confusion; and in some cases they required Muslims to renounce Islam [albeit temporarily] and commit themselves to paganism. Sūrah Al-Kāfirūn

denounces such treaties, and declares dissociation from paganism. Analyzing the peace pact with the Jews, on the other hand, it is seen clearly that it did not in anyway require Muslims to denounce or renounce Islam, nor did it require them to mix elements of un-Islamic beliefs with the true faith. Islam is the religion that stands for tolerance, kindness, politeness and peace more than any other religion. However, all these ethical principles can be applied in the matters of human rights. There is no room for compromise in the matter of Divine Law or the basic tenets of Divine religion . Allah knows best!

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Kāfirūn
Ends here

Sūrah An-Naṣr
(The Help)

This Sūrah is Madnī, and it has 3 verses

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 3

إِذَا جَآءَ نَصْرُ اللَّهِ وَالْفَتْحُ ﴿١﴾ وَرَأَيْتَ النَّاسَ يَدْخُلُونَ فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ أَفْوَاجًا ﴿٢﴾ فَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ وَاسْتَغْفِرْهُ إِنَّهُ كَانَ تَوَّابًا ﴿٣﴾

When there comes Allah's help and the Victory, [1] **and you see people entering Allah's (approved) religion in multitudes,** [2] **then pronounce the purity and praise of your Lord, and seek forgiveness from Him. Surely He is Ever-Relenting.** [3]

Name of the Sūrah and place of its revelation

According to the consensus of scholars, this Sūrah was revealed in Madīnah. Its other name is Sūrah At-Tawdī'. The word Tawdī' means 'to bid farewell'. As this Sūrah indicates the approach of the demise of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, it bids farewell to him and is thus entitled Sūrah At-Tawdī'.

The Last Sūrah and the Last Verses of the Noble Qur'ān

It is recorded in Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ that Sūrah An-Naṣr was the last Sūrah to be revealed. [Qurṭubī]. This means that this was the last complete Sūrah that was revealed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. No complete Sūrah was revealed after this. Some individual verses reported to have been revealed after this are not in conflict with this statement, because no complete Sūrah was sent

down after the present one. It is like Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah which is said to be the first Sūrah, while a few verses of Sūrah Al-'Alaq, a few verses of Sūrah Al-Muddaththir, and a few verses of other Sūrahs were revealed even before Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah, because it means that it was the first Sūrah to be revealed completely. No complete Sūrah was revealed before Al-Fātiḥah.

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar ﷺ reports that this Sūrah was revealed during the Farewell Pilgrimage, and shortly after that a fragment of verse [3] of Sūrah [5] اَلْيَوْمَ اَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِيْنَكُمْ (...Today, I have perfected your religion for you_[5:3]) was revealed. After these two revelations, the Messenger of Allah lived only for eighty days, after which he passed away. After these two revelations, the Holy Prophet ﷺ received the verse of *kalalah*. Then the Holy Prophet ﷺ lived for fifty days. After that he received the following verse [9:128] of Sūrah [9] لَقَدْ جَآءَكُمْ رَسُوْلٌ مِّنْ اَنْفُسِكُمْ عَزِيْزٌ عَلَيْهِ مَاعَنِتُّمْ (Surely, there has come to you a Messenger from amongst you , hard on whom is your suffering, for the good of you he craves...) After this revelation, he lived for 35 days. After this verse was revealed the following verse: [2:281] اِتَّقُوْا يَوْمًا تُرْجَعُوْنَ فِيْهِ اِلَى اللّٰهِ (And be fearful of a day when you shall be returned to Allah...). After this verse he lived only for twenty-one days, and according to Muqātil, he lived for seven days only and passed away. [Qurṭubī].

Verse [110:1] اِذَاجَآءَ نَصْرُاللّٰهِ وَالْفَتْحُ (When there comes Allah's help and the victory). The expression 'victory' here is in reference to 'the promised Victory or Conquest of Makkah'. There is complete unanimity on this historical fact. However, the scholars disagree whether this Sūrah was revealed before or after the Conquest. The phrase *idhā jā'a* [when there comes] apparently indicates that its revelation took place before the Conquest. Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī cites a narration from Al-Baḥr-ul-Muḥīṭ which concurs with this view, in which it is stated that this Sūrah was revealed while returning from the expedition of *Khaibar*. It is a known fact that the victory of *Khaibar* took place prior to the Conquest of Makkah. Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī cites, on the authority of 'Abd Ibn Ḥumaid, Sayyidnā Qatādah's ﷺ statement that the Prophet ﷺ lived for two years after the revelation of this Sūrah. Narratives that report that it was revealed on the occasion of the Conquest of Makkah or on the occasion of the Farewell

Pilgrimage may be explained by saying that the Holy Prophet ﷺ might have recited this Sūrah and proclaimed it on one of those occasions; as a result people must have thought that it was revealed on that occasion. Please refer to Bayānul Qur'ān for fuller explanation.

Several Prophetic Traditions and statements of the Companions narrate that this Sūrah indicates that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has fulfilled his task, and accomplished his mission of life, and he could look forward to returning to his Lord in full favor as his death was approaching fast. The Sūrah teaches the Holy Prophet ﷺ the beautiful manners of asking Allah's forgiveness and offering constant praise and thanks to his Lord.

It is reported in Muqātil's narration that when this Sūrah was revealed, the Holy Prophet ﷺ recited it in a gathering of the blessed Companions, among whom were Sayyidnā Abū Bakr, 'Umar, Sa'd Ibn Abī Waqqāṣ ؓ. All were happy at the revelation of this Sūrah, because it contained the glad tidings of the Conquest of Makkah, but Sayyidnā 'Abbās ؓ began to weep. The Holy Prophet ﷺ asked him the reason for weeping, and he replied that it covertly conveys the termination of your life and nearness of your death. The Holy Prophet ﷺ confirmed this. Ṣaḥīḥ of Bukhārī records a similar explanation of this Sūrah given by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ in which there is the addition that when Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ heard this, he concurred with him and said: 'I do not know anything about it other than what you [Ibn 'Abbās ؓ] have said'. [Transmitted by Tirmidhī who graded it as *ḥasan, ṣaḥīḥ* vide Qurṭubī]

Verse [110:2] وَرَاَيْتَ النَّاسَ يَدْخُلُوْنَ فِيْ دِيْنِ اللّٰهِ اَفْوَاجًا (And you see people entering Allah's [approved] religion in multitudes,) Before the conquest of Makkah there were many people who were almost convinced of the verity of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ and Islam, but there were several factors that were obstructing them to embrace the religion. Some people were afraid of the Quraishite opposition, or they were hesitant for some other reason. The Conquest of Makkah removed those obstacles, and people entered the fold of Islam in throngs. Seven hundred people from Yemen embraced the religion, and joined the Holy Prophet ﷺ. On the way, they recited the call to prayer [*adhān*] and recited the Qur'ān. In this way, the populace of Arabia embraced the religion of Islam and entered into its fold

in droves.

When the approach of death is sensed, one needs to exert oneself immensely in *Tasbīḥ* and *Istighfār*

Verse [110:3] فَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ وَاسْتَغْفِرْهُ (then pronounce the purity and praise of your Lord, and seek forgiveness from Him...) Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah Ṣiddiqah ﷺ says that after the revelation of this Sūrah, whenever the Messenger of Allah ﷺ performed a prayer, he would recite the following supplication: سُبْحَانَكَ رَبَّنا وبحمدك اللّٰهُمَّ اغفرلى (I pronounce Your purity, O Allah, our Lord, and praise be to You, O Allah, forgive me.) [Bukhārī].

Sayyidah 'Umm Salamah ﷺ says that after the revelation of this Sūrah, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ used to often recite the following supplication: سُبْحَانَ اللّٰهِ وَبِحَمْدِهٖ اَسْتَغْفِرُاللّٰهَ وَاَتُوْبُ اِلَيْهِ (I pronounce the purity of Allah, and praise be to Him. I seek Allah's forgiveness and I repent to Him.) He used to say, "I have been commanded to do so." In evidence, he used to recite this Sūrah.

Sayyidnā Abu Hurairah ﷺ says that after the revelation of this Sūrah, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ used to exert himself in the worship of Allah so immensely that his feet would swell. [Qurṭubī].

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah An-Naṣr
Ends here

Sūrah Al-Lahab
(The Flame)

This Sūrah is Makkī, and it has 5 verses

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 5

تَبَّتْ يَدَآ اَبِىْ لَهَبٍ وَّتَبَّ ﴿١﴾ مَآ اَغْنٰى عَنْهُ مَالُهٗ وَمَا كَسَبَ ﴿٢﴾ سَيَصْلٰى نَارًا ذَاتَ لَهَبٍ ﴿٣﴾ وَّامْرَاَتُهٗ حَمَّالَةَ الْحَطَبِ ﴿٤﴾ فِىْ جِيْدِهَا حَبْلٌ مِّنْ مَّسَدٍ ﴿٥﴾

Perish the two hands of Abū Lahab, and perish he! [1] **Neither his wealth availed him, nor what he earned.** [2] **He will soon enter a fire, full of flames,** [3] **and his wife as well, the wicked**[1] **carrier of firewood.** [4] **In her neck there is a rope of twisted palm-fibre.** [5]

Name and Nickname of Abū Lahab

Abū Lahab [Father of Flame] was the Nickname of 'Abd-ul-'Uzzā, one of the sons of 'Abdul-Muṭṭalib. As he was ruddy in complexion, he was nicknamed Abū Lahab [Father of Flame]. The Qur'ān did not mention his real name, because it smacked of paganism, and the last element *'lahab'* [Flame] in the nickname has also nexus with the flame of Hell. This person was the inveterate enemy and persecutor of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and violently opposed Islam. Whenever the Holy Prophet ﷺ invited the people to Islamic Faith, he would stand up and cry lie to his message. [Ibn

(1) The word 'wicked' is though not available in the text in express terms, the *naṣb* on *ḥammālah,* which is termed in Arabic grammar as *'naṣb 'aladh-dhamm'* carries this meaning. (Muhammad Taqi Usmani)

Kathīr]

Cause of Revelation

It is recorded in the two Ṣaḥīḥs that when the verse وَاَنْذِرْ عَشِيْرَتَكَ الْاَقْرَبِيْنَ (Warn your closest relatives - 26:214) was revealed, the Holy Prophet ﷺ ascended the mount Ṣafā and cried out to the tribe of Quraish in a manner that was known among them for warning of an attack by the enemy. Some narratives maintain that he called the different Makkan clans by name, the clan of Banū 'Abd Munāf, Banū 'Abdul-Muṭṭalib and others. All the clans of Quraish gathered around him, and he said to them: 'If I were to tell you that the enemy is about to attack you in the morning or in the evening, would you believe me?' They all unanimously replied in the affirmative. Then he said: 'Verily, I am a warner sent to you before the coming of a severe torment (as a result of disbelief or paganism). Abū Lahab then responded: تَبًّا لَكَ اَلِهٰذَا جَمَعْتَنَا 'Ruin may seize you ! Is it for this purpose that you have called us together?' and picked up a stone to hit him. Thus this Sūrah was revealed.

Verse [111:1] تَبَّتْ يَدَآ اَبِىْ لَهَبٍ وَّتَبَّ (Perish the two hands of Abū Lahab, and perish he!) The word *yad* literally means a 'hand'. Because hands play a very important role in all of human works and actions, often yad (hand) refers to the human person, as in the phrase ذٰلِكَ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ يَدَاكَ (...All this is due to what your hands have sent forth...22:10). Baihaqī has recorded on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه that one day Abū Lahab said to the people that Muḥammad ﷺ says that such-and-such a thing will happen after death. Then, pointing to his hands, said that none of those things have come into these hands; then he addressed his hands and said: تبًّا لكما ماارىٰ فيكما شيئًا ممّا قال محمد (Perish you! I do not see any of the things Muḥammad ﷺ said in you.) Therefore, the Qur'ān attributes his destruction to his hands.

The verb *tabba* is derived from *tabab* which means 'to perish'. In verse [1], the first sentence تَبَّتْ يَدَآ اَبِىْ لَهَبٍ (Perish the two hands of Abū Lahab) is in the form of a prayer invoking or imprecating destruction upon Abū Lahab, and the second sentence *wa tabba* is the declarative sentence prophesying the consequence of the invocation. The first sentence was invoked against him to satisfy the indignation of the Muslims, because when Abū Lahab imprecated destruction upon the Holy Prophet ﷺ, it was the desire of the Muslims that imprecation be invoked against him.

Allah thus fulfilled their desire, and also informed them that the invocation has taken effect and he perished. Seven days after the battle of Badr, he developed a terrible case of plague because of which people avoided him. They regarded the disease as infectious and were afraid that it might be transmitted by contact, so they forced him to live in an isolated house, and they did not come into contact with him at all. He at last died in this state. His dead body lay untouched in his house for three days. When his body began to rot giving out unbearable stench, people taunted his sons, and they hired laborers to take it away and bury it. They dug a pit in the ground, pushed his body into it with a stick and covered it with stones. [Bayān-ul-Qur'ān from Rūḥ].

Verse [111:2] مَآ اَغْنٰى عَنْهُ مَالُه‘ وَمَا كَسَبَ (Neither his wealth availed him, nor what he earned.) The phrase *mā kasab* [what he earned] could refer to the profits that accrued to him from investment of his wealth in business, and it could also imply 'children', for the children of a person are also referred to (in Arabic) as his earning. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah ﵂ reports that the Messenger of Allah said:

ان اطيب ما اكل الرّجل من كسبه وان ولده من كسبه

"The best and the purest thing a man eats is from his earnings and his children are part of his earnings".

This means that eating from the earnings of one's children is tantamount to eating from one's own earnings. [Qurṭubī]

Therefore, Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah ﵂, Mujāhid, 'Aṭā', Ibn Sīrīn and others interpret *mā kasab* [what he earned] as referring to 'children'. Allah had granted Abū Lahab abundant wealth and many children, and these two factors led him to be ungrateful, and caused him to be proud and arrogant. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﵄ says that when the Messenger of Allah ﷺ called his people to faith and warned them about the Divine punishment, Abū Lahab said: "Even if what my nephew says is true, I will save myself from the painful torment on the Day of Judgement with my wealth and my children." Thus Allah revealed verse [2] مَآ اَغْنٰى عَنْهُ مَالُه‘ وَمَا كَسَبَ, that is, when the Divine torment seized him in this world, neither his wealth nor his children benefited him!

Verse [111:3] سَيَصْلٰى نَارًا ذَاتَ لَهَبٍ (He will enter a fire, full of flames.) That is, either on the Day of Judgment or immediately after his death, while in

grave, he will be pushed into the blazing fire. There is a rhetorical relationship between Abū Lahab and *dhāta lahab* [full of flames].

The Fate of 'Umm Jamīl, the Wife of Abū Lahab

Verse [111:4] وَامْرَأَتُهُ حَمَّالَةَ الْحَطَبِ (And his wife as well, the wicked, the carrier of firewood.) As Abū Lahab was a vehement enemy of the Holy Messenger ﷺ, his wife too was supportive of her husband in his disbelief, rejection, obstinacy, and in persecuting the Holy Prophet ﷺ. She was a sister of Abū Sufyān, and daughter of Harb Ibn 'Umayyah. Her nickname was Umm Jamīl. The Qur'ān makes plain in this verse that this wretched woman will also roast with her husband in the fire of Hell. She is described as حَمَّالَةَ الْحَطَبِ which literally means 'the carrier of firewood'. Idiomatically, Arabs use this expression to refer to a 'tale-bearer ', that is, one who gathers pieces of gossip and carries them between individuals and families in order to ignite the fires of discord and enmity between people, exactly as one would gather firewood to kindle the fire. This telltale woman improperly carried information concerning the private affairs of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, and the blessed Companions in an attempt to ignite and instigate trouble. In this verse too, the phrase 'the carrier of firewood' has been interpreted by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, Mujāhid, 'Ikrimah رحمهما الله تعالى and a group of commentators to mean that 'She was a tale-bearer' while Ibn Zaid, Ḍaḥḥāk and other commentators رحمهم الله تعالى retain it in its original sense, and explain that she literally used to collect thorny branches from the jungle, and place them in the path of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ in order to harm him - hence the description: 'carrier of firewood'. [Qurṭubī, Ibn Kathīr].

Some scholars explain that just as she used to help her husband in this world to promote disbelief and tyranny and to assist him in harming the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, she will add to the torment of her husband in the Hereafter. She will collect the branches of *zaqqūm* and other trees and add them as fuel to the fire of Hell in which her husband would be roasting. [Ibn Kathīr].

Tale-Bearing: A Gravely Major Sin

It is recorded in the two Ṣaḥīḥs that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is reported to have said that a tale-bearer (to harm others) will not enter Paradise. Fuḍail Ibn 'Iyāḍ رحمه الله تعالى says that there are three evil deeds of man that destroy all his righteous actions . They are: [1] backbiting; [2]

tale-bearing; and [3] lying. 'Aṭā' Ibn Sā'ib رحمه الله تعالیٰ says that he asked Sha'bī رحمه الله تعالیٰ about the Prophetic Tradition in which the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is reported to have said: لایدخل الجنّة سافک دم ولا مشّاء بنمیمة ولا تاجر یربی "Three types of people will not enter Paradise: [1] a murderer; [2] a tale-bearer; and [3] a trader who is involved in usury." 'Aṭā' رحمه الله تعالیٰ says that I cited this Tradition to Sha'bi and asked him in a surprising tone that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has equated 'a tale-bearer' with a murderer and a usurer. He replied: "Indeed, tale-bearing is the root cause of murder and usurpation of wealth." [Qurṭubī]

Verse [111:5] فِیْ جِیْدِهَا حَبْلٌ مِّنْ مَّسَدٍ (In her neck there is a rope of twisted palm-fibre.) The *masd* with the letter-s-bearing *sukūn* [quiescence or rest] is an infinitive which means 'to twist rope or cord, or to twist it strongly and tightly'. If the word is read as *māsād* with the letters *m-s* bearing *fatḥa* [= a-a], the word refers to fibres. It is also a rope made of 'twisted fibres of palm tree' or 'tightly braided fibres of coconut tree' or 'cord that has been woven strongly' or 'coil or cable formed by winding iron strands together'. [al-Qāmūs]. Some scholars have preferred to translate it specifically as 'a rope made of twisted fibres of palm tree' and no other string or twine. This is in conformity with the general usage of the Arabs. Basically, it refers to any string or twine or rope or cord or coil or cable formed by intertwining strands of any material. In keeping with this general sense of the word, Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, 'Urwah Ibn Zubair رضي الله عنه and others said that in this context the phrase حَبْلٌ مِّنْ مَّسَدٍ "rope of masad" refers to 'rope formed by twisting iron strands'. This will be her condition in Hell where an iron-collar will be in her neck. Sayyidnā Mujāhid رضي الله عنه interprets *min masad* as *min ḥadīd*, that is, 'of iron'. [Maẓharī].

Sha'bi, Muqātil and other commentators have taken the phrase *min masad* to refer to 'a rope made of twisted fibres of palm tree' and said that Abū Lahab and his wife were extremely wealthy and were looked upon as leaders of their nation but, on account of his wife's mean disposition and miserliness, she used to collect firewood from the jungle, bind them together with a rope, place the bundle on her head and put its rope round her neck, so that it might not fall from her head. This practice of hers one day led to her destruction. She had a bundle of wood on her head and the rope in her neck. She felt tired and sat down. Then fell, was choked and

died. According to this second interpretation, the verse describes her mean disposition and the disastrous consequences of her sadistic behavior. [Maẓharī]. However, such a conduct in Abū Lahab's family, especially of his wife, was hardly conceivable; therefore, most commentators have preferred the first interpretation. Allah knows best!

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Lahab
Ends here

Sūrah Al-Ikhlāṣ

(The Sincerity)

This Sūrah is Makkī, and it has 4 verses

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 4

قُلْ هُوَ اللّٰهُ اَحَدٌ ﴿۱﴾ اَللّٰهُ الصَّمَدُ ﴿۲﴾ لَمْ يَلِدْ ۙ وَلَمْ يُوْلَدْ ﴿۳﴾ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَّهٗ كُفُوًا اَحَدٌ ﴿۴﴾

Say, "The truth is: Allah is One. [1] **Allah is Besought of all, needing none.** [2] **He neither begot anyone, nor was begotten.** [3] **And equal to Him has never been any one."** [4]

Cause of Revelation

Tirmidhī, Ḥākim and others have recorded that the pagans of Makkah asked the Messenger of Allah ﷺ: "O Muḥammad! Tell us about the ancestry of your Lord." So Allah revealed this Sūrah. Some narratives ascribe this inquiry to the Jews of Madīnah. In view of these conflicting reports, there is a divergence of opinion as to whether this is a Makkī Sūrah or Madanī Sūrah. According to Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ؓ, Ḥasan Baṣrī, 'Aṭā', 'Ikrimah and Jābir ؓ, the Sūrah is Makkī and, according to Qatādah, Ḍaḥḥāk ؓ and others, it is Madanī. According to one narration of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās ؓ, it is Makkī and, according to another, it is Madanī [Qurṭubī].

According to another narration, the pagans added to their question whether Allah was made of gold, silver or some other stuff, in response to which this Sūrah was revealed.

Virtues of the Sūrah

Imām Aḥmad has recorded a narration in his Musnad that a person came up to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and said, "I love this Sūrah [Al-Ikhlāṣ] immensely." The Holy Prophet ﷺ replied: "Your love for it will cause you to enter Paradise." [Ibn Kathīr].

Tirmidhī has recorded on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه that once the Messenger of Allah ﷺ asked the people to gather and said: "I shall recite to you a third of the Qur'ān?" When the people had congregated, he recited Sūrah Al-Ikhlāṣ and said: "This is equal to a third of the Qur'ān." [Muslim].

In a lengthy Ḥadīth, Abū Dāwūd, Tirmidhī and Nasā'ī have recorded that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Anyone who recites Sūrah Al-Ikhlāṣ and the *mu'awwadhatain* (i.e. the last two *sūrahs* of the Holy Qur'ān) morning and evening, they shall be sufficient for him." In another narration, the wordings are: "They will suffice him against every affliction."]. [Ibn Kathīr]

Imām Aḥmad has recorded a narration in his Musnad on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Uqbah Ibn 'Amir رضي الله عنه that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "I shall show you three such Sūrahs that are revealed in Torah, Injīl, Zabūr and the Qur'ān. Do not sleep at night until such time that you have recited them. They are Sūrah Al-Ikhlāṣ and the *mu'awwadhatain*." Sayyidnā 'Uqbah Ibn 'Amir رضي الله عنه says that since I have heard this, I did not miss reciting them. [Ibn Kathīr].

Oneness of Allah

Verse [112:1] قُلْ هُوَ اللّٰهُ أَحَدٌ Say, (The truth is: Allah is One.) The imperative *qul* (Say) is directly addressed to the Holy Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, thus indicating that he is Allah's Prophet and Messenger. This verse directs and commands him to convey Allah's message to mankind. 'Allah' is the personal name of that Necessary Being Whose non-existence is inconceivable. He comprises all the attributes of perfection and is free from, or above, or overrides all kinds of imperfections. The epithets *aḥad* and *wāḥid* are both applied to Allah which are normally translated as 'One' but the word *aḥad* includes an additional sense which signifies that Allah is beyond composition, plurality and resemblance, which means that He is neither composed of

any elements, nor does He have any partner, nor has He any resemblance to anything. This is a response to those who asked about Allah whether He is made of gold or silver or pearls. This concise statement covers all aspects of discussion on the Divine Being and His attributes. The imperative *qul* [say] points to the messengership of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. If analyzed properly, this brief sentence covers all the detailed discussions expounded in voluminous books of theology.

Verse [112:2] اَللّٰهُ الصَّمَدُ (Allah is Besought of all, needing none) The word *ṣamad* bears several literal senses. Therefore, the Qur'ānic exegetical scholars have assigned different meanings to this verse. Ṭabarānī , the leading authority on Prophetic Traditions, in his *kitāb-us-Sunnah,* has collected all the interpretations of the Divine attribute *Aṣ-ṣamad* and concluded that they are all authentic, and comprehend all the attributes of our Lord that have been assigned to Him, but originally it refers to 'the chief who has no superior and to whom the people turn for the fulfilment of their desires and needs; thus all people depend on him, but he does not depend on any one.' [Ibn Kathīr].

Allah is Above having Children and Procreating

Verse [112:3] لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُوْلَدْ (He neither begot anyone, nor was begotten.) This verse responds to those who had questioned about the ancestry of Allah. There is no analogy between Allah, the Creator, and His creation. While His creation comes into being through the biological process of procreation, Allah Himself has no children, nor is He the child of anyone.

Verse [4] وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَّهٗ كُفُوًا اَحَدٌ (And equal to Him has never been any one.) The word *kufuwan,* as used in the original, means an 'example', a 'similar thing', 'one equal in rank and position'. Thus this verse means that there is no one in the entire universe, nor ever was, nor ever can be, who is similar to Allah, or equal in rank with Him, or resembling Him in His attributes, works and powers in any degree whatsoever.

Sūrah Al-Ikhlāṣ: A Comprehensive Concept of Allah's Oneness and a complete Negation of Shirk

There were many types of people who denied the Divine Oneness, and set up partners or rivals to Allah. Sūrah Al-Ikhlāṣ negates all types of such wrong belief systems, and imparts a comprehensive lesson of Divine Oneness. Among the unbelievers, several types may be identified. There

is a group that denies the very existence of God [the atheists]. Another group believes in the existence of God, but denies that His existence is 'Necessary'. A third group believes in God's existence and in His existence as 'Necessary' but denies His attributes of perfection. A fourth group believes in God's Necessary Existence and in His attributes of perfection, but denies Oneness of God and believes in and worship more than one gods and goddesses, and thus practices polytheism. Verse [1] refutes vehemently all such false belief systems. Verse [2] refers to the practices of those who do worship Allah alone, but believe that there are also other helpers who can fulfil their needs, desires and ambitions. The Divine attribute *Aṣ-ṣamad* denounces outright any such notion. A fifth group ascribes children to Allah and the phrase *lam yalid* [He neither begot anyone] repudiates this notion of theirs in the strongest terms. Allah, the Pure and Exalted, knows best!

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Ikhlāṣ
Ends here

Sūrah Al-Falaq
(Break of Dawn)

This Sūrah is Madanī, and it has 5 verses

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 5

قُلْ اَعُوْذُ بِرَبِّ الْفَلَقِ ﴿١﴾ مِنْ شَرِّ مَا خَلَقَ ﴿٢﴾ وَمِنْ شَرِّ غَاسِقٍ اِذَا وَقَبَ ﴿٣﴾ وَمِنْ شَرِّ النَّفّٰثٰتِ فِى الْعُقَدِ ﴿٤﴾ وَمِنْ شَرِّ حَاسِدٍ اِذَا حَسَدَ ﴿٥﴾

Say, "I seek refuge with the Lord of the daybreak [1] **from the evil of everything He has created,** [2] **and from the evil of the dark night when it penetrates,** [3] **and from the evil of the women who blow on the knots,** [4] **and from the evil of an envier when he envies.** [5]

Preliminary Remarks

This and the next Sūrah were revealed on the same occasion, and in the same event, as will be explained in the 'cause of revelation'. Ḥāfiẓ Ibn-ul-Qayyim has, therefore, written their commentary together. He writes that their blessings and benefits are abundant. All of the people require them and no one can dispense with them. They are very efficacious remedy for sorcery or magical spell, evil eye, and for all of the physical and spiritual calamities. In fact, if its reality is grasped fully, people will understand that they require it more than their breath, food, water, clothing and everything else.

Cause of Revelation

Musnad of Ahmad records that a Jewish person cast a magical spell on the Holy Prophet ﷺ, as a result of which he fell ill. Jibra'īl عليه السلام came

to him and informed him that a particular Jew had cast a spell on him, that he had tied knots in his hair to accomplish this objective, and it is thrown into a particular well. The Holy Prophet ﷺ sent some of his Companions to bring it from the well Jibra'īl عليه السلام had described. The Holy Prophet ﷺ untied the knots, and he was instantly cured. Jibra'īl عليه السلام informed him of the name of the Jew and the Holy Prophet ﷺ knew the culprit, but it was not in keeping with his compassionate disposition to avenge anyone in his personal matter. Therefore, this was never brought to the attention of the Jew guilty of the black magic, nor did any sign of complaint ever appear on the blessed face of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Being a hypocrite, he regularly attended the Holy Prophet's ﷺ gatherings.

The details of this incident are recorded in Sahih of Bukhari on the authority of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها that a Jewish man cast a magic spell on the Holy Prophet ﷺ, as a result of which he sometimes felt confused whether or not he had done something. One day the Holy Prophet ﷺ said to Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها that Allah has shown him what his illness was and added: "Two men came to me in my dream. One of them sat by my head side while the other sat by my feet, and the following conversation ensued:

Question: 'What is wrong with this man?'

Answer: 'He is bewitched.'

Question: 'Who has bewitched him?'

Answer: 'Labīd Ibn A'ṣam. He is a member of the tribe of Banū Zuraiq who is an ally of the Jews, a hypocrite.'

Question: 'With what did he bewitch him?'

Answer: 'With a comb and hair from the comb.'

Question: 'Where is the comb?'

Answer: 'In the dried bark of a male date palm under a rock in a well called *Dharwan*.' "

Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها says that the Holy Prophet ﷺ went to the well to remove the comb with the hair and said: "This is the well I was shown in my dream." He removed it from the well. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها asked

the Holy Prophet ﷺ: "Will you not make this public?" He replied: "Allah has cured me and I hate to cause harm to anyone." This implies that the Holy Prophet ﷺ did not want to be the cause anyone's molestation, death or destruction, because this is what would have exactly happened if the incident was publicised.

According to a narration in Musnad of Aḥmad, this illness of the Holy Prophet ﷺ lasted for six months. According to other narratives, some of the Companions knew that this wicked act was performed by Labid Ibn A'sam, and they courteously said to the Holy Prophet ﷺ: "Why should we not kill this wicked person?" He made the same reply to them as he did to Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها. According to Imām Tha'labī's narration, a Jewish boy was the attendant of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, the hypocritical Jew flattered the boy and talked him into getting for him strands of the Prophet's ﷺ hair from his comb, and a few of its teeth. Having obtained these items, he tied eleven knots on a string and a needle was stuck into each knot. Labīd then placed this spell in the spathe of a male palm tree, and buried it under a stone in a well. On this occasion, the two Sūrahs were revealed, comprising eleven verses. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ recited one verse at a time and untied one knot each time, until all the knots were untied, and he felt freed from the tension of the witchcraft. [All these narratives have been adapted from Ibn Kathīr.]

Magic and its effect on the Holy Prophet ﷺ

Some people are surprised that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ should be affected by black magic. This is because some people do not have a complete grasp of how magic operates. It actually operates under physical causes, and the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was not immune to the influence of physical causes, as for instance feeling the burning or heating sensation of fire, and feeling the cooling sensation of water; or certain natural factors causing fever or body temperature to rise; or other factors causing aches and pains, and other illnesses. The Holy Prophet ﷺ, or any other prophet for that matter, was not immune to the effects of such natural or physical causes. They can be affected by the hidden operations of magic which are no less natural or physical. Please see Sūrah Al-Baqarah, Ma'āriful Qur'ān, Vol. 1/ pp 264-278 for fuller explanation, especially p. 276 on 'Magic and Prophets'.

Mu'awwadhatain are Sūrahs that afford protection against physical and spiritual afflictions

It is a settled doctrine of every believer that Allah is the intrinsic cause of every gain and loss in this world as well as in the next world. Without the Divine will not a jot of gain or loss can be caused to anyone. The only way to fortify against all physical and spiritual injuries and harm is for man to place himself under the protection of Allah, and by his actions he should attempt to make himself capable of entering the Divine shelter.

Sūrah Al-Falaq directs how to seek the Divine protection against worldly calamities, and Sūrah An-Nās tells the way to seek Divine protection against the calamities of the Hereafter.

Virtues of _Mu'awwadhatain_

Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim records a Tradition on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Uqbah Ibn 'Āmir ﷺ who reports that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Do you not see that there have been revealed to me verses tonight the like of which has not been seen before? Those are Sūrah Al-Falaq and Sūrah An-Nās." According to another narration, the like of *Mu'awwadhatain* has not revealed even in Torah, Injīl, or Zabūr or anywhere else in the Qur'ān. Another narration of Sayyidnā 'Uqbah Ibn 'Āmir ﷺ reports that the Messenger of Allah taught him *Mu'awwadhatain* while they were on a journey. Then he recited them in the *maghrib ṣalāh* and said: "Recite these two Sūrahs whenever you go to sleep and whenever you get up." [Nasā'ī] According to another report, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ has advised people to recite these two Sūrahs after every *ṣalāh* [Transmitted by Abū Dāwūd and Nasā'ī].

Imām Mālik recorded from Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah ﷺ: "whenever the Messenger of Allah ﷺ suffered from an ailment, he would recite the *Mu'awwadhatain,* blow over his hands, and then wiped his whole body with those hands. When his pain became acute on his death-bed, I would recite the *Mu'awwadhatain,* blow over his hands, and then he wiped them over himself, because my hands could not be the fitting substitute for his blessed hands. [All these narratives have been adapted from Ibn Kathīr].

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Khubayb ﷺ reports that it was raining one night and the sky had become intensely dark. We went out looking for the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, and when he was found, he said: "Say ." He

asked: "What should I say?" He said: "Recite قُلْ هُوَاللّٰهُ اَحَدٌ and *Mu'awwadhatain.* Reciting them thrice in the morning and thrice in the evening will fortify you against all kinds of perturbations."

In sum, it was the practice of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and his Companions to recite these two Sūrahs to protect themselves against all types of privations, trials and tribulations of life in this world, as well as of life in the next world.

Lexicological Analysis of important words and interpretation of the Sūrah

Verse [113:1] قُلْ اَعُوْذُ بِرَبِّ الْفَلَقِ (Say, "I seek refuge with the Lord of the Daybreak.") The word *falaq* means 'to split or cleave' and here it is used in the sense of 'break of dawn'. In another verse, a similar quality of Allah is used in [6:96] فَالِقُ الْاِصْبَاحِ ([He is] the One who causes the dawn to break). Of all the Divine attributes, this particular attribute is used presumably because the darkness of night often causes evils and difficulties, and the daylight removes them. This attribute of Allah points to the fact that anyone who seeks protection in Allah, He will remove all afflictions from him. [Maẓharī]

The word *Sharr:* 'Allāmah Ibn Qayyim's Exposition

Verse [113:2] مِنْ شَرِّ مَا خَلَقَ (From the evil of everything He has created.) 'Allāmah Ibn Qayyim expounds that the word *sharr* (evil) is employed in two different senses: [1] pain, loss, injury, trouble, grief, distress and affliction which affect man directly, and they are by themselves troubles and afflictions; and [2] the factors that cause losses, injuries and afflictions. The second type covers unbelief, idolatry and all sins. The things from which the Qur'ān and Sunnah require man to seek refuge in Allah are either of these two types. The Traditional supplication that is *masnūn* after *ṣalāh* includes seeking of refuge from four things: [1] punishment of the grave; [2] punishment of the Hell-Fire; [3] hardships and privations of life; and [4] trials and tribulations of death. Of these, the first two are afflictions and punishments in their own right, and the last two are causes of afflictions and punishments.

Verse [113:2] مِنْ شَرِّ مَا خَلَقَ (From the evil of everything He has created) covers the evil of the entire creation. This verse was sufficient to guard against all mischief and calamities. But three particular forms of evil have

been singled out to seek protection which often cause calamities and afflictions.

The first thing singled out appears in verse [113:3] وَمِنْ شَرِّ غَاسِقٍ اِذَا وَقَبَ (and from the evil of dark night when it penetrates.) The word *ghāsiq* is derived from *ghasaq* (to become dark or intensely dark). Thus Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ, Ḥasan and Mujāhid say that the word ghasiq stands for 'night'. The verb *waqaba* is derived from *wuqūb* which means for utter darkness 'to overspread completely and intensely'. The verse means : 'I seek refuge in Allah from the night when its darkness has completely and intensely overspread'. The word 'night' has been specifically mentioned because this is the time when Jinn, Satans, harmful insects, animals and reptiles appear. Thieves and robbers emerge at this time to carry out their crimes of stealing and other acts of wickedness. The enemies attack at this time. Black magic has the worst effect when it is intensely dark at night. As soon as the dawn approaches, the effects of all these things disappear and fade away. ['Allāmah Ibn Qayyim]

Verse [113:4] وَمِنْ شَرِّ النَّفّٰثٰتِ فِى الْعُقَدِ (and from the evil of the women who blow on the knots.) The word *naffāthāt* is derived from *nafth* which means 'to blow'. The word *'uqad* is the plural of *'uqdah* which means 'a knot'. The magicians usually tie knots on a string or piece of thread, recite magical incantations or formulae and blow on them as they do so. The phrase اَلنَّفّٰثٰتِ فِى الْعُقَدِ (...the women who blow on the knots) refers to female magicians. It is possible that the pre-adjectival noun of the adjective *naffāthāt* be *nufūs* [souls]. Thus this verse may be translated as 'the evil souls who blow on knots'. This translation would include men and women who carry out this evil practice. But most probably its pre-adjectival noun is 'womenfolk'. Women have been specifically mentioned perhaps because generally womenfolk have the natural disposition to carry out the evil practice of witchcraft; or probably because Labīd Ibn A'ṣam, whose black magic was the cause of revelation of this Sūrah, got this most heinous act done by his daughters. Hence, the act of witchcraft is ascribed to them.

The reason why protection is sought against magicians is firstly that the cause of revelation of these two Sūrahs was the incident of magic. Secondly, people are normally unaware of the act of magicians, and they do not pay attention to getting themselves exorcised. They are under the impression that it is some kind of medical ailment and try to get

themselves medically cured. In the meantime the magical effect continues to grow worse.

The third thing from which people are asked specifically to seek protection is *ḥasid* [jealous] and *ḥasad* [jealousy]. This has been specified for the same reasons as given above, because black magic was worked on the Prophet ﷺ on account of jealousy. The Jews and the hypocrites could not bear to see the rapid progress and expansion of Islam. They could not defeat him in outer combat; therefore they tried to satisfy their jealousy by performing witchcraft on him. There were uncountable number of green-eyed monsters against the Prophet ﷺ. That is the major reason why protection was sought against them. Jealousy of the jealous one gives him restless days and sleepless nights. He is at all times after causing loss to his envied person. Therefore, the harm he wishes to inflict is severe.

Ḥasad [Jealousy] and *Ghibṭah* [Envy]

The Arabic word *Ḥasad*, the English equivalent of which is 'jealousy', is invariably used in the bad sense. It generally means to desire the deprivation of the other man rather than one's own acquisition of any bliss that he may possess. Simply put, *Ḥasad* means that a person should feel unhappy at the better fortune and good quality that Allah has granted to another, and wishes that it should be taken away from the other person and given to him, or at least the other should be deprived of it. *Ḥasad* in this sense is totally forbidden and a major sin. This is the first sin that was committed in the heaven and also the first one committed on the earth. The Iblīs was jealous of 'Ādam عليه السلام in the heaven and the latter's son Qābīl was jealous of his brother Hābīl on earth. [Qurṭubī].

Ghibṭah, on the other hand, means to desire for oneself the same blessing as the other man has, without any idea of the latter's losing it. This is not only permissible but also desirable.

Summary and Conclusion

Apart from the general protection that is sought in this Sūrah, protection is sought from three specific evils. These are mentioned separately in verses three, four and five. Furthermore, in the first and the third specific evils particular restrictions are placed. The first specific evil *ghāsiq* [darkness] is restricted by the phrase إِذَا وَقَبَ "when it penetrates".

The third specific evil *ḥāsid* is restricted by the phrase إِذَا حَسَدَ "when he envies". The practice of witchcraft is left unrestricted because its harmful effect is general. The harmful effect of darkness is felt when there is total absence of light, plunging the night in intense and utter darkness. Likewise, jealousy may not cause harm to its object until the jealous one takes a practical step with word or deed to satisfy his heart. For until he takes a practical step, his being unhappy may be harmful to himself, but it is not harmful for the other person so that he may seek refuge from it. Hence, restrictions are placed on the first and the third specific evils.

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Falaq
Ends here

Sūrah An-Nās

(The Mankind)

This Sūrah is Madanī, and it has 6 verses

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 6

قُلْ اَعُوْذُ بِرَبِّ النَّاسِ ﴿١﴾ مَلِكِ النَّاسِ ﴿٢﴾ اِلٰهِ النَّاسِ ﴿٣﴾ مِنْ شَرِّ
الْوَسْوَاسِ ۙ الْخَنَّاسِ ﴿٤﴾ الَّذِىْ يُوَسْوِسُ فِىْ صُدُوْرِ النَّاسِ ﴿٥﴾
مِنَ الْجِنَّةِ وَالنَّاسِ ﴿٦﴾

Say, "I seek refuge with the Lord of mankind, [1] **the King of mankind,** [2] **the God of mankind,** [3] **from the evil of the whisperer who withdraws (when Allah's name is pronounced),** [4] **the one who whispers in the hearts of people,** [5] **whether from among the Jinn or Mankind.** [6]

Introductory Remarks

This Sūrah, the second of the *Mu'awwadhatain*, constitutes an extension of its predecessor and is in a way complementary to it, in that in Sūrah Al-Falaq the believers were enjoined to seek refuge with Allah against the hardships and privations of life in this world, while in the current Sūrah protection is sought from the trials and tribulations of the Hereafter. It was explained in Sūrah Al-Falaq that the word *sharr* could stand for 'evil' or 'harm' or even 'that which causes harm, anguish or distress'. In the present Sūrah, we are to seek refuge from the evil that is the cause of all sins, namely, the whisperings and insinuations of Satan. As the anguish and distress of the Hereafter is most severe, the Qur'ān

appropriately emphasizes at the end to seek Allah's protection against these evil powers.

Verse [114:1] قُلْ اَعُوْذُ بِرَبِّ النَّاسِ Say, (I seek refuge with the Lord of mankind,) The attributive name of Allah *rabb* stands for 'one who nurtures', and implies that the Supreme Nurturer takes care of everything under all circumstances. In the present verse, He is referred to as 'the Lord of mankind', while in the previous Sūrah He was referred to as 'the Lord of the daybreak', because in the foregoing Sūrah the purpose was to seek protection against the outer bodily hardships and privations of life, and they are not confined to human beings. Animals also suffer bodily hardships and difficulties, unlike the Satanic instigations which are restricted to man, and the Jinn are subjoined to him. [Maẓharī from Baiḍāwī]

Verses [114:2 & 3] مَلِكِ النَّاسِ. اِلٰهِ النَّاسِ (the King of mankind, the God of mankind.) The reason for adding these two attributes is that the word *rabb*, attributed to a particular thing, could refer to someone other than Allah also, as for instance رَبُّ الدَّار *rabb-ud-dār* [land-lord] or رَبُّ الْمَال *rabb-ul-māl* [owner of wealth]. But not every master or owner is a king. That is why the attributive name *malik* [King] has been added to indicate that He is not only the 'Lord of mankind' but also the 'King of mankind'. Furthermore, not every king is worthy of worship. Thus the third attributive name *ilāh* [God] has been added to *nās* [people]. The Divine wisdom in combining all three Divine attributes is that each attribute motivates protection. Every master has servants and takes care of them. Likewise, every king has subjects and looks after them. That the worshipped God protects His worshipper is even more obvious. Only Allah, and no other being, is characterized by these three attributes simultaneously. Therefore, seeking Allah's protection by invoking these attributes is the greatest protection, and the invocation is readily acceptable.

Since the first sentence contains the word *nās* (people), the second and the third verses should apparently refer to them with the pronouns by saying, مَلِكِهِمْ *malikihim* [their king] rather than repeating the word *nās* (people). However, this is an occasion of supplication and praise, and as such repetition needs to be employed by deliberate design to add force and clarity to the sublime emotion by creating natural rhyme, rhythm and

melodic sequence. Some scholars have explained the repitition of the word '*nās*' differently. They say that the word *nās* occurs five times in this Sūrah. In its first occurrence, it refers to the children. The word *rabb* that refers to nurturer-ship of Allah is a hint to this, because children need nurturing the most. Its second occurrence refers to youth, and the hint in the context is the word *malik* which refers to kingship of Allah. It bears political connotation and is appropriate to the youth. Its third occurrence refers to old age. Old people cut themselves off from the world and look up to Allah alone as the real support of life, and render Him alone true and unconditional obedience and to make Him alone the real object of his love and adoration. The context for this is *ilāh* [God] which points to the Divine worship. Its fourth occurrence refers to the righteous servants of Allah. The contextual hint for this is the word *waswasah* [evil whisperings] because the devil is the enemy of the righteous servants of Allah. His work is to cast evil prompting into the hearts of such people. Its fifth occurrence refers to mischief-makers because protection is sought from their mischief.

Verse [114:4] مِنْ شَرِّ الْوَسْوَاسِ الْخَنَّاسِ (from the evil of the whisperer who withdraws [when Allah's name is pronounced].) After invoking three attributes of Allah, the present verse describes the one from whom protection is sought. He is 'the whisperer who withdraws'. The word *waswās* is originally an infinitive in the sense of *waswasah* 'to whisper [that is, to use breath instead of voice, when saying something in barely audible way]'. But here it is used as an hyperbolic expression to refer to 'Satan' in the sense that 'he is an embodiment of whisper'. Whispering of the Satan means that he invites people to his obedience by a superstitious discourse in a way that its subject is cast into man's heart, but no voice is heard. [Qurṭubī].

The word خَنَّاس *khannās* is derived from *khanasa* which means 'to sneak, recede or withdraw furtively'. The Satan is so named because he puts himself in a squatting [perched] position on the heart of man. So, when the latter becomes heedless, the former whispers, but when he remembers Allah, he withdraws furtively. When man becomes unmindful of Allah again, the Satan returns. Whenever man remembers Allah, he withdraws. This practice continues persistently. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ is reported to have said:

"Allah has built two houses in the heart of man, in one of which an angel resides and in the other the Satan. The angel urges him to do good works and the Satan induces him to do evil works. When man remembers Allah, the Satan withdraws. And when he stops remembering Allah, the Satan perches on the heart of man and pecks with his beak to whisper into it to do evil things." [Transmitted by Abū Ya'lā on the authority of Anas ﵁, as quoted by Maẓharī].

Verse [114:6] مِنَ الْجِنَّةِ وَالنَّاسِ (whether from among the Jinn or Mankind.) This is explicative of the expression *waswās* occurring in verse [4], meaning that the devils from amongst mankind and the Jinn whisper into the breasts of mankind. Thus the Messenger of Allah ﷺ has been enjoined to constantly seek protection against the mischief of sneaking devils, whether from amongst the Jinn or from amongst human devils.

A question may arise here. It is obvious that the Satans can cast a voiceless evil prompting furtively into the hearts of people, but how the human devils can cast evil whisperings? They come forward publicly and use their voice, which is not *waswasah* [whisper]. The answer is that human beings too often cast doubts in the minds of people in an indirect way without uttering them explicitly. Shaikh 'Izzuddīn Ibn 'Abdus-Salām states, in his monograph 'al-Fawā'id fī Mushkilāt-il-Qur'ān', that the 'whisperer from mankind' refers to the whispering of one's own *nafs* (base faculties of the man himself). Just as the Satan casts evil thoughts into man's mind, likewise the base self of man urges him to do evil works. That is why the Messenger of Allah ﷺ has directed us to seek protection in Allah from the evil of our own self in the following supplication:

اَللّٰهُمَّ اَعُوْذُبِكَ مِنْ شَرِّ نَفْسِىْ وَشَرِّ الشَّيْطَانِ وَشِرْكِهٖ

"O Allah! I seek asylum in You from the evil of myself, from the evil of the Satan and from the evil of idolatry."

The Importance of Seeking Protection against Satanic Whisperings

Ibn Kathīr states that Allah invokes three of His attributive names in this Sūrah, *rabb* [Lord], *malik* [King] and *ilāh* [God], and instructs man to seek refuge with Him against diabolical whisperings, because a Satanic companion is attached to every man, and at every step of the way, the latter's attempt is to destroy the former in different ways. First of all, he induces him to commit sins, and paves the way for him to willfully violate

the Divine laws and injunctions. If he does not succeed in this, he tries to contaminate and destroy his acts of obedience and worship by casting the thoughts of dissimulation, hypocrisy, pride and arrogance. He attempts to create doubts about authentic beliefs and doctrines of Islam in the minds of the learned scholars. The only one who can be saved from the evil of such Satanic pranks is the one whom Allah gives His protection.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ is reported to have said: "There is not a single one of you, but his companion [a devil] has been assigned to him." The Companions enquired: 'Is such a devil companion joined to you also, O Messenger of Allah,?' He replied: 'Yes. However, Allah has helped me against him and he has become submissive to me. As a result, he only commands me to do good.'"

It is also confirmed in the two Ṣaḥīḥs from Sayyidnā Anas رضي الله عنه, who reported the story of Sayyidah Ṣafiyyah رضي الله عنها. Once while the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was performing *I'tikaf* in the mosque, one of his wives Sayyidah Ṣafiyyah رضي الله عنها paid him a visit. When she decided to leave, he gave her company to the boundaries of the mosque. On the way, two men of the Anṣār saw them together, The Holy Prophet ﷺ said: "Wait! This is Ṣafiyyah bint Ḥuyayy [my wife]!" The two Companions exclaimed: سُبحان الله "Pure is Allah, O Messenger of Allah, [how can we have ill thoughts about you?]" The Messenger of Allah ﷺ replied: "Indeed, the devil runs through man's veins like the blood circulates. I feared that he might whisper evil thoughts in your minds. [That is why I had to call you and clarify that the lady with me was no other than my own wife.]"

Special Note

Just as it is necessary for man to avoid evil deeds, it is essential for Muslims to avoid occasions that may cause others to have ill thoughts about them. Should there arise an occasion which may give rise to such bad thoughts, they should immediately clarify the situation, and put an end to it then and there. In sum: This Tradition indicates that Satanic pranks are highly dangerous. It is not easy to avoid them unless we seek refuge with Allah.

A Clarification

There are two types of evil thoughts: [1] voluntary; and [2] involuntary. Here we are warned against voluntary thoughts that

proceed from the will or from one's own free choice. The involuntary thoughts are thoughts that occur without one's will or free choice. Such thoughts come to mind involuntarily and pass away. They are not harmful, nor are they sinful as long as they do not act upon them or speak about them .

A subtle difference between the two Sūrahs of *Mu'awwadhatain*

In the present Sūrah, *rabb* [Lord], *malik* [King] and *ilāh* [God], three Divine attributes have been invoked, while the evil from which protection is sought is only one, that is, the whispering. Conversely, in the previous Sūrah, only one attribute of Allah is mentioned, that is, *rabb-il-falaq* [Lord of the daybreak], but the evils from which protection is sought are many which are mentioned in three verses. This goes to show that the mischief of the Satan is the worst type of evil. The hardships and calamities that befall man in this world, affect his body and mundane affairs, unlike the Satanic pranks which affect man's mundane affairs as well his affairs of the Hereafter. The Satan is always after destroying man's after-life, and that is the most dangerous situation. If man suffers from physical injury or harm, he can find cure or remedy for it; but because the Satan lurks or lies hidden in ambush in every nook and corner of man's life to assault him unnoticed and pull him downwards, away from the Divine, it is not possible to resist him except with the protection granted by Allah. (Therefore, protection from him is sought by invoking three attributes of Allah.)

Human and Satanic Enemies: their differential treatments

One may have some enemies from mankind, and some from Satanic origin. The Holy Qur'ān has directed us to deal with these two kinds of enemies in different ways.

Ibn Kathīr in the preface of his commentary of the Holy Qur'ān has cited three verses of the Holy Qur'ān pertaining to this subject. All three of them have two parts. In the first part, Allah has instructed man to treat his human enemy with kindness, politeness, patience, mercy and compassion. If he does not desist from his evil ways, then *jihād* is prescribed in other verses. We need to wage armed struggle against the devilish elements of human society. But the only way to resist the Satanic enemy is to seek refuge with Allah. The first verse to this effect is in Sūrah Al-A'rāf [7:199]:

خُذِ الْعَفْوَ وَأْمُرْ بِالْعُرْفِ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْجٰهِلِيْنَ

(Take to forbearance, and bid the Fair and ignore the ignorant.)

This pertains to defense against human enemy: In other words we need to grant courteous allowance for his offence, bid him to do good and forego revenge against injustice he might have committed. We must be easy in dealing with him and avoid causing him difficulty. This injunction is defence against human enemy and must be carried out in the first instance. But the next verse [7:200] of the same Sūrah pertains to the Satanic enemy as follows:

وَإِمَّا يَنْزَغَنَّكَ مِنَ الشَّيْطٰنِ نَزْغٌ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللّٰهِ إِنَّهُ سَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ

"And if you are stricken with a strike from the Satan, seek refuge with Allah. Surely He is All-hearing, All-knowing."

In other words, if an evil suggestion comes to us from the Satanic enemy, then we need to seek refuge in Allah.

The second verse is in Sūrah Al-Mu'minūn [23:96-98]:

اِدْفَعْ بِالَّتِيْ هِيَ أَحْسَنُ السَّيِّئَةَ

"Repel evil with that which is best.

وَقُلْ رَّبِّ أَعُوْذُبِكَ مِنْ هَمَزٰتِ الشَّيٰطِيْنِ وَأَعُوْذُبِكَ رَبِّ أَنْ يَّحْضُرُوْنِ

And say: 'O my Lord, I seek Your refuge from the from the strokes of the satans, and I seek Your refuge from that they come to me".

In the first sentence of these verses, the direction is given to repel the evil caused by human beings with good behavior. But, when it comes to repel the evil caused by Satan, the direction given is to seek refuge in Allah.

The third verse dealing with the same subject is :[41:34]

اِدْفَعْ بِالَّتِيْ هِيَ أَحْسَنُ فَإِذَا الَّذِيْ بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ عَدَاوَةٌ كَأَنَّهُ وَلِيٌّ حَمِيْمٌ

Repel (evi) with what is best, and you will see that the one you had mutual enmity with him will turn as if he were a close friend." [34]"

This part of the verse directs how to repel the evil caused by human enemy. If we repel evil deed with a better deed, it would be possible for us

to win over our human enemies and they would become our most devoted friends. As opposed to a human enemy, the other part of the situation is contained in the next verse [36]. It deals with the slinking devil who is invisible, but effective in his attack. The verse reads:

وَإِمَّا يَنزَغَنَّكَ مِنَ الشَّيْطٰنِ نَزْغٌ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللّٰهِ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ

> "And should a stroke from Shaitan (Satan) strikes you, seek refuge with Allah. Surely, He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing." [41:36]

The wordings of this verse are more or less the same as they occur in Sūrah Al-A'rāf. In other words, if an evil suggestion comes to us from the Satan, we are required to seek refuge in Allah, because that is the only defensive weapon against the invisible slinking, sly and cunning enemy. [Ibn Kathīr]

In sum, all three sets of verses discussed above enjoin that a human enemy needs to be treated at first kindly, politely, patiently and compassionately, because human nature was in the primordial state created uncorrupted, and as such kindness, politeness, mercy and pardon could subdue him. However, human beings who have lost their primordial state of innocence, and are deeply sunk in the ocean of ignorance, the passions and the vices of the lower self or base self drag man downwards away from Allah. Some have become infidels, unbelievers and tyrants. They have thus become frontal enemies and come out armed with weapons of war to wage a frontal combat against the believers. The Qur'ān prescribes in other verses that such human enemies should be repelled by force of arms. Unlike the accursed Satan, he is evil in his primal nature, and as such kindness, compassion and pardon does not bring a good effect on him. It is also impossible to have an armed conflict with him. So, the only defence against such an enemy is the celestial weapon of *dhikrullah* [Allah's Remembrance] and *ta'awwudh* [seeking refuge with Allah], with which the entire Qur'ān is replete and the Qur'ān appropriately ends with it.

Moreover, while dealing with a human enemy, a believer is never a loser. If he overcomes the enemy and prevails upon him, his victory is obvious. If the enemy overcomes him or even kills him, then too he will attain high rewards, and a high degree of martyrdom in the Hereafter

which is far better than any worldly attainments. In other words, if a believer is defeated by a human enemy he has not lost anything nor is he harmed in anyway. But the case of the Satanic enemy is totally different. It is sinful to flatter him or please him; and if someone is defeated by him, it is to destroy his entire future in the Hereafter. This is the reason why the best defensive weapon against him is to seek refuge in Allah. This celestial weapon is so powerful and potent that all Satanic guile and treacherous cunning or craft are rendered weak and ineffective.

The Guile of Satan is Feeble

On account of the reasons given above, it may not be misunderstood that fighting the Satan is difficult. To dispel this misunderstanding, Allah has said:

إِنَّ كَيْدَ الشَّيْطٰنِ كَانَ ضَعِيْفًا

"...No doubt, the guile of the Satan is feeble." (4:76)

It is further clarified in Sūrah An-Naḥl:

فَإِذَا قَرَأْتَ الْقُرْاٰنَ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللّٰهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطٰنِ الرَّجِيْمِ ﴿٩٨﴾ إِنَّهٗ لَيْسَ لَهٗ سُلْطٰنٌ عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَلٰى رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُوْنَ ﴿٩٩﴾ إِنَّمَا سُلْطٰنُهٗ عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ يَتَوَلَّوْنَهٗ وَالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ بِهٖ مُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿١٠٠﴾

"So, when you recite the Qur'ān, seek the protection of Allah against Satan, the accursed. He is such that he has no power over those who believe in Allah and place trust in their Lord. His power is only over those who befriend him and those who associate partners with Him. [16:98-100]"

Please see Ma'āriful Qur'ān, Vol. 5/pp 412-415 for concise commentary and fuller details of related rulings.

Relationship between the Prologue and the Epilogue of the Qur'ān

Allah prefaced the Qur'ān with Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah which began with His Personal name. It further described His predominant attributes as being *Rabb* or Maintainer of the universe; as being the All-Merciful and Very Merciful and the Sole Judge of rights and wrongs. It defined religion as being His worship alone and imploring Him alone for help - all else being powerless in comparison. It further taught man to pray for true

guidance so that he is able to find the right path, and be established in it. He is taught to pray to be saved from being among those who are condemned and those who have lost the right path after having received it. These factors serve the purpose of man's success and prosperity in this world and in the next world, that is the Hereafter. However, in the process of achieving this purpose man is obstructed by the accursed Satan. He lays various traps inconspicuously utilizing people's different weak points, their sensual and unhealthy desires which he detects and exploits. The Satanic traps or snares need to be shattered or broken to pieces. Seeking refuge in Allah is the only effective protection against these evil powers. That is why the Qur'ān most fittingly ends on this.

Conclusion

All Thanks are due to Allah that the *tafsīr* of the noble Qur'ān has ended with the grace of Allah, and His kindness and help. Praise be to Allah from the beginning to the end, outwardly and inwardly non-manifestly and manifestly. We would not have found the way, had Allah not guided us. May Allah shower His blessings upon the best of creation, Muḥammad ﷺ, His chosen Messenger, the Seal and the leader of the Prophets and Messengers عليهم السلام. Upon him and the other Messengers be His blessings and peace, upon his family and his Companions, all of them. O 'Our Lord, accept from us! Indeed, You - and You alone - are the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing! This work completed on Saturday morning 21st of Sha'bān 1392 AH. Co-incidentally, this is the day I was born. I completed 77th year of my life and turned 78 years old. I pray to Allah and hope that the last days of my life would be the best part of my life, doing the best deeds; and that the best days of my life would be the day when I meet my Lord with the blessing of His clear Book and His trustworthy Prophet ﷺ; and that the efforts of this humble servant would be accepted, whose soul was exhausted by ailments, grief, distress and anxieties, and lack of strength; and that He would pardon my errors and shortcomings if the obligations toward His noble Book were not fulfilled; and that the Muslims would benefit by it for aeons of time; and that He makes this work a treasure-trove for the Day when there will be no trading and no friendship, when neither wealth nor family will be of any help. My ability and help to do things come from Him. Pure is Allah; praise be to Him; Pure is Allah, the Great!

The 8th volume of Tafsīr of Ma'āriful Qur'ān was revised between 3rd of Ramaḍān 1392 AH and Friday 10th of Shawwāl 1392 AH, taking about forty days. Praise be to Allah!

Alhamdulillah, the revision of the English version is completed on the night of 29 Ramadan 1424 A.H. corresponding to 25 November, 2003. May Allah bless this humble effort with His approval and pleasure, and make it beneficial for the readers. 'Āmīn

صَدَقَ اللّٰهُ الْعَظِيْمُ

Ṣadaqallāh-ul-'Āẓim

وَصَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَى النَّبِيِّيْنَ، مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلٰى آلِهٖ وَصَحْبِهٖ وَسَلَّمْ

Wa ṣallallāhu 'ala nabiyyinā Muḥammadin wa 'alā 'Ālihī wa ṣaḥbihi wa sallam.

Alḥamdulillāhilladhīl-ladhī Ibni'matihī tatimmuṣṣāliḥāt

The translation of the text of the Holy Qur'ān completed on 16 Rabī'ul-Awwal 1424 A.H. corresponding to 19 May 2003 at Karachi on 11:25 forenoon

Muḥammad Taqi Usmānī, May Allah forgive him, and accept this humble effort in the service of the Holy Qur'ān, His eternal book of guidance. May Allah give us tawfiq to recite it, understand

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah An-Nās
Ends here

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